

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

March weather seemed just a continuation of the brutal winter. Snow dominated the landscape even when it wasn't falling, and Binghamton had 28 inches of snow during the month. High snowbanks were everywhere and melted very slowly. Harold Hollis, National Weather Service observer, measured a 22 inch snow cover at Cooperstown on 20 Mar, the first day of Spring! Furthermore, March was cold. The average daily temperature of 29.4°F was three degrees colder than normal. The Vernal Equinox, however, ushered in milder temperatures that reached 60°F on 23 Mar. Spring was possible! April was about 3° warmer than usual with a record high of 83°F on 15 Apr. May temperatures, however, averaged 2° colder than normal. Both March and April had above average rainfall. March rains totaled 5.74 inches, almost three inches over the norm. April rainfall was an inch above normal while May precipitation was an inch under average. Rivers were at least partly open from the beginning of the period. By late March water levels rose to flood stage and fields became lakes. The high water continued through April.

The migration got off to a very late start. Red-winged Blackbird, our first heralds of spring, did not arrive in numbers until about 20 Mar, a good two weeks late. Water birds, including unusual Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe, were among the earliest migrants. Flooded corn fields attracted better than average numbers for many of the 18 duck species seen. Shallower flooded areas were good early feeding spots for some of the 10 shorebird species reported. A *Short-billed Dowitcher*, not seen for at least 16 years, was a special find. The usual pair of Upland Sandpiper was missing from its BROO nesting area for the first spring since 1987. The two were usually the only Regional sighting, so

the report of three in CORT was a compensation. Raptor migration was average for spring. Numbers were small, but all species were seen except Northern Goshawk and Golden Eagle.

Migration of songbirds was, as usual, difficult to assess. There was no sizable fallout and very few transients were reported. Weather patterns were not particularly favorable. We experienced many May days with strong northwest winds. American Pipit was a surprising candidate for top migrant of the season. Spring arrival dates suggest that the migration was on time or early. For many species, however, movement stalled. Most of the flycatchers were at least a week behind the vanguard of their species. It took Wood Thrush and Red-eyed Vireo two weeks to catch up. Once here, how did bird populations look? Observers' reports were more negative than positive for Eastern Kingbird, Bank and Barn Swallows, Hermit Thrush, and most of the warblers and birds of the grassland. For positive comment Chris Vredenburg, at his Franklin Mt. home, saw "more Nashville Warblers and Am. Redstart than ever before, a lot of Blackburnian Warblers and good counts of Wood Thrush and Veery." Bob Miller, coordinator of the 26th annual DOAS Big Day May Count, 21 May, reported a record of six Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Winter finches, which had gone farther south to escape our snow and cold, crossed paths with our spring migrants as all moved north. Feeder reports described such contrasts as "a very late Snow Bunting in my feeder 10 May and Indigo Bunting ground feeding below" (MD); "Evening Grosbeak and Rose-breasted Grosbeak feeding together in my feeder early May" (CV).

Canada Goose as a nest parasites? Jeannette Baldwin described the situation: Five years ago her brother, Jud Spencer bought a pair of Black Swans for his TiOG lake. Several Canada Geese had already moved in there. "The swans nested successfully a few years. However, this spring when they left their nest with young, they had three Canada goslings instead of any cygnets. Evidently, because the Canada Goose made her nest close to the swans' nest, the goose laid some some eggs in the swans' nest. Then the goose eggs hatched first. (40 days incubation for swans and 28-30 days for geese.) So the swan left the nest with three goslings and the Canada Goose with four at the same time."

A Sharp-shinned Hawk landed on the deck of Susan Moran's Afton home moments after a Mourning Dove had crashed into the glass doors. She watched as the hawk struggled to lift its prey and finally fly off with its meal.

Spring rarities included Red-throated Loon, *Short-billed Dowitcher*, *Great Black-backed Gull*, Cerulean and Kentucky Warblers and Common and *Hoary Redpoll*. Misses included American Bittern, Gadwall, Canvasback, Northern Goshawk, Virginia Rail, Olive-sided, Yellow-bellied and Acadian Flycatchers, Marsh Wren, Henslow's

Sparrow and Wilson's Warbler. The total of 204 species plus two hybrids was a record high for years dating back to 1979. The previous high of 193 was set last spring. Some figures from Regional North American Migration Count on 14 May are included in this report.

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Abbreviations: ChB - Chenango Bridge; ChF - Chenango Forks; DOASMC - Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society May Count, 21 May; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; NAMC - North American Migration Count total, 14 May; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; UL - Upper Lisle, BROO; WNC - Waterman Nature Center.

Spring reports: **Red-throated Loon:** Endwell 30 Mar (SK), 31 Mar (BNC), often missed. **Com. Loon:** arr BROO 6 Apr, "watched it struggle to swallow six inch yellow perch" (JH); max four 7 May (BNC), two Otsego L through May. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr 26 Mar Oneonta; max three Endwell 30 Mar; two singles BROO Apr, one May, good count. **Horned Grebe:** singles Endwell 12 Mar; Otsego L 1 Apr; Whitney Pt Res 4 Apr, low count. **Red-necked Grebe:** Endwell 11 Mar (SK); two there 12 and 17 Mar (WW); singles Goodyear L 1 Apr, Hillcrest BROO 14 Apr (MDv) high count. **Double-crested Cormorant:** eight Apr reports, max 12 BROO, OTSE; one CHEN 11 May, continued expansion. **Mute Swan:** OTSE 19 May through period. **Great Blue Heron:** rookery Susquehanna R, Owego, for second year, max 37 y; new site Holly Hill Road Vestal, 12 birds, reported to WNC. **Green Heron:** max three BROO 21 May; six others reported. **Snow Goose:** only one flock CHEN. **Canada Goose:** first migrating flocks 9 Mar; nesting pair numbers keep increasing; first five goslings 13 May; *intro.* **Wood Duck:** max 12 two BROO reports Apr; hen with y Otego 22 May. **Green-winged Teal:** seven reports 20 Mar to 14 May, max six. **Am. Black Duck:** max 20 Endwell 21 Mar. **N. Pintail:** seven reports, max five, high count. **Blue-winged Teal:** four reports 9-27 Apr Max two, scarce. **N. Shoveler:** two Endwell 29-30 Mar; UL 9, 11, and 14 Apr, often missed. **Am. Wigeon:** eight reports, max five, 17 Mar-11 Apr, good numbers. **Redhead:** ChF 1 Apr (T&NT) often missed. **Ring-necked Duck:** max 40 ChF 1 Apr; last seven OTSE 14 May. **Lesser Scaup:** record max 60, flooded fields Afton 11 Apr (SM). **Scaup, sp.:** ChB 23 Mar (T&NT). **Oldsquaw:** max four Apalachin 14 Apr; one CHEN 17 Apr. **Com Goldeneye:** max 12 Endwell 20 Mar; last two Boland Pd 2 Apr. **Bufflehead:** max 15 20 ChF 1 Apr; 12 reports to

23 Apr, good numbers. **Hooded Merganser**: max 14 OTSE 14 May; average number of March/April reports but fewer birds. **Com. Merganser**: max 18 Cannonsville Res 5 Apr. **Red-breasted Merganser**: Dorchester P BROO 7 Apr, only report.

Turkey Vulture: 75-100 birds soaring regularly near Walton (*Oneonta Daily Star*, 14 May), area suitable for nesting. **Osprey**: max seven OPM 24 Apr. **Bald Eagle**: max four DOASMC. **N. Harrier**: max four CORT 3 Apr. **Sharp-shinned Hawk**: *intro*. **Cooper's Hawk**: nesting pair Windsor 30 May (JS); good counts through period. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: arr Oneonta 27 Apr; CHEN 28 Apr; UL 14 May. **Broad-winged Hawk**: arr T Maine 31 Mar. **Rough-legged Hawk**: max four CORT 21 Mar; last two OTSE 14 APR. **Am Kestrel**: max six T Lisle 4 Apr (MP); pair in nest atop Binghamton Telephone Co. Building hatched four eggs late May (SR). **Merlin**: Burlington Flats OTSE 17 Apr (NW), first spring in six years. **Peregrine Falcon**: Franklin Mt 18 May (CV), rare in spring. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: only three singles. **Ruffed Grouse**: max five Morris 2 May. **Wild Turkey**: max 125 at 10 BROO/CHEN sites 14 Mar (T&NT); hen accidentally flushed from nest with 18 eggs OTSE 20 May. **N. Bobwhite**: OPM 5 May; Binghamton 23-29 May. **Com. Moorhen**: Paukett Wetland CHEN 14 May (JH), often missed. **Killdeer**: max 40 OPM 26 Mar. **Lesser Yellowlegs**: max five OTSE 14 May, not seen every spring. **Solitary Sandpiper**: max 12 OTSE 14 May. **Spotted Sandpiper**: max four OTSE 14 May. **Upland Sandpiper**: *intro*. **Least Sandpiper**: max five DOASMC. **Short-billed Dowitcher**: one off Route 12A at Chenango Bridge 4 Apr (T&NT). **Com. Snipe**: three April reports, max two, scarce. **Am. Woodcock**: max 12 WNC 25 Apr. **Bonaparte's Gull**: arr six CHEN 8 Mar (DW); max 38 CORT 17 Apr, high count. **Ring-billed Gull**: 75 nesting CORT County Landfill May (BT). **Great Black-backed Gull**: two CORT early Mar; one on ice eating large fish Boland P BROO 1 Apr (JH), probably first Regional reports for spring.

E. Screech-Owl: only report Binghamton 4 May. **Great Horned Owl**: four widespread reports, max two. **Barred Owl**: three BROO sites two CHEN, one TIOG and OTSE, high count. **Com Nighthawk**: Binghamton after 17 May; Vestal 23 May, scarce. **Chimney Swift**: max 10 T Union 28 May; eight OTSE 14 May, scarce. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: IBM Dog Runs BROO 14 May (I&RT), first in three springs. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: max 11 OTSE 14 May. **Pileated Woodpecker**: several pairs widespread.

E. Wood-Pewee: only one prior to the six on DOASMC, late. **Alder Flycatcher**: one DOASMC, next report 28 May. **E. Phoebe**: "fewer nesting this year" (NW). **Great Crested Flycatcher**: several BROO, TIOG after mid May (JS). **Horned Lark**: six widespread Mar reports max 50. **Purple Martin**: only TIOG, scarce. **Tree Swallow**: max 50 BROO 30 Mar; eggs starting to hatch mid May CORT (BT); "occupying all our bluebird

and wren houses 29 May" (NW). **N. Rough-winged Swallow**: max eight OPM 13 May and second site 20 May. **Cliff Swallow**: max 25 on 14 May, only OTSE reports. **Fish Crow**: max six Spencer's L May (C&JB); Binghamton 17 Apr and 6 May (JH); chasing Red-tailed Hawk OTSE 9 May (CV), increasing. **Carolina Wren**: three BROO, one TIOG report/month, poor winter survival. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: *intro*. **E. Bluebird**: "lost three nests with y shortly after mid May probably due to weather" CORT (BT). **Swainson's Thrush**: Franklin Mt 10, 11, 16 May, only report. **Brown Thrasher**: max five OTSE 14 May. **Am. Pipit**: arr six Binghamton 25 Mar; 25 CORT 17 Apr; 35+ Morris 2 May; max 40 T Lisle 10 May; last eight Owego 14 May, best count in 11 springs. **Cedar Waxwing**: scarce. **N. Shrike**: Johnson City feeder 18 Mar (MP), first since 3 Jan. **Shrike**, sp.: OTSE 14 May.

Solitary Vireo: max eight OPM 30 Apr. **Warbling Vireo**: max 14 OTSE 14 May. **Philadelphia Vireo**: one DOASMC, often missed. **Blue-winged Warbler**: max four BROO 23 May (MP), fewer reports. **Golden-winged Warbler**: two singles May, scarce. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler**: "Brewster's" type: only one DOASMC; "Lawrence's" type sang Golden-winged song T Union 9 May (MP). **Tennessee Warbler**: singles two OTSE sites 14, 15 May, scarce. **N. Parula**: only one DOASMC. **Yellow Warbler**: max 73 OTSE 14 May. **Magnolia Warbler**: late arrival, scarce. **Cape May Warbler**: CHEN 7 May (DW), only report. **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: max 10 OTSE 14 May; several BROO, TIOG 8 May (JS), good. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: arr BROO, OTSE 15 Apr, low counts. **Black-throated Green Warbler**: 12 OTSE and "numerous" Greenwood P BROO 14 May; otherwise scarce. **Prairie Warbler**: "often" BROO after 27 Apr (JH). **Palm Warbler**: three reports BROO, OTSE 10 to 23 Apr, max two. **Bay-breasted Warbler**: only one OTSE 14 May. **Blackpoll Warbler**: singles OTSE, BROO, TIOG 21-27 May, max two. **Cerulean Warbler**: IBM Dog Runs BROO 5 May (MP/EP), only fourth in 15 years. **Kentucky Warbler**: Franklin Mt 16 May (CV), first in 12 years. **Canada Warbler**: only OTSE, max five.

Scarlet Tanager: max six OTSE 14 May. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**: max 24 OTSE 14 May; at many feeders through May. **Indigo Bunting**: max 14 DOASMC, scarce. **Rufous-sided Towhee**: max 20 DOASMC. **Am. Tree Sparrow**: max nine Endicott 21 Mar, last 27 Apr. **Vesper Sparrow**: only three singles, scarce. **Savannah Sparrow**: max 10 Lisle 30 May. **Fox Sparrow**: ten reports 24 Mar -15 Apr, max six. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: five Binghamton reports 24 Apr-30 May, good count. **Swamp Sparrow**: nesting pair OTSE 29 May, scarce. **White-throated Sparrow**: low numbers. **White-crowned Sparrow**: best ever at my Norwich feeder, max 12" (DW). **Snow Bunting**: five reports 4-14 Mar, max 20; *intro*. **Bobolink**: most reports indicate decline but "in 10 fields T Lisle 30 May" (MP). **E. Meadowlark**: arr CORT 20 Mar; max 12 Binghamton 27 May. **Rusty Blackbird**: arr Burlington Flats 3 Apr; max three OPM 10 Apr, only reports. **N. Oriole**: max 31 OTSE 14 May. **Purple Finch**: max 11 Oneonta 20 Apr, many reports but no influx. **Com. Redpoll**: max 60 Oneonta 9 Apr, last 27 Apr, big spring incursion. **Hoary Redpoll**: Oneonta feeder 10-12 Apr (NYSARC). **Pine Siskin**: arr 17 Apr; max 15 CORT 15 May. **Evening Grosbeak**: many spring reports 11 Mar -21 May, max 20.

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