

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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A typical Central New York spring. There wasn't one. March continued the past winter's cold weather and brought more snow. The east end of Lake Ontario near Derby Hill remained essentially ice-bound until mid March. The temperature was 3.1°F below normal and precipitation was 2.37 inches above normal. The official Syracuse records, measured at the airport, recorded only 25.3 inches of snow for March. However, a huge Nor'easter started on the morning of 3 Mar with sleet and freezing rain and then dumped from 1 to 3 feet of snow just south of the city of Syracuse. April was typically fickle with mid 80s one day, mid 40s the next. There were seven days with highs over 70°F and eight days with high temperatures 50°F or less. Overall, April averaged 47.9°F, 2.2° above normal, and produced 3.7 inches of snow. May tried to kick start the summer, but frost was still evident in rural areas as late as the last week in the month. Even though the highest temperature of the month was 87°F on 31 May, the average temperature was 3° below normal. Maureen Staloff reported that the ice wasn't completely out of Delta Lake, ONEI, until 23 Apr. Gary Lee reports that the temperature in the Adirondacks ranged from 6° on 2 March to 82° on 31 May. Nine days in March started 10° or colder. There were still about two feet of snow in the Adirondacks until 15 Apr, when the temperature soared to the 70s and turned most of the snow to liquid form.

The spring period was very exciting due to the many rare or uncommon species reported from all parts of the Region. Derby Hill seemed to be the best birding spot in the Region for several reasons. First, for the period 15 Feb through 31 May, record totals were set for six raptor species: Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon. Individual day marks were set by Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, and Peregrine Falcon. Amazing was the average of 74.3 raptors per hour over the entire 81 day period when the weather was good enough to allow observations. If record raptor counts were not enough, there were sightings of rarities at or near Derby Hill and several reports of very large numbers of bird besides raptors. On 14 May, the first Regional *Swainson's Warbler* (NYSARC) was found by Brian Sullivan. Brian heard this southern warbler, whose northern most regular range limit is Virginia, singing and was also able to see it after a long search. The bird was never relocated. Almost as exciting was the *Yellow-throated Warbler* (NYSARC) observed by Brian on 9 May in the trees near the north lookout. Not

regularly seen anywhere in New York, Yellow-throated Warbler has only been reported in our Region four times and not since 1962. Other unusual sightings in the Derby Hill area were *Sandhill Crane*, six dark morph and three "Krider's" Red-tailed Hawks, *Loggerhead Shrike*, Yellow-headed Blackbird, and Orchard Oriole. Tuesday, 26 Apr, was an incredible day to be at Derby Hill. Ned Brinkley recorded 108 total species, including Pine Siskin, Purple Finch and Evening Grosbeak, along with 10 warbler species and 1200 Yellow-rumped Warblers! All migrants were noted while standing in one spot on a hill on the southeast corner of Lake Ontario that is most noted for raptors. Because of its location on the lake, Derby Hill also features an outstanding migration passerine birds. This year's record raptor counts and unusual passerine migration underline the fact that Derby Hill is one of the most exciting spots in the northeast for spring migration.

Just seven miles west of Derby Hill near Nine Mile point, Mary Dreiling located a *Scissor-tailed Flycatcher* (NYSARC, ph) on 28 May. This bird only stayed for 45 minutes, long enough for Mary Alice Koenke to photograph it, but not long enough for other birders to see it. The only other record for the species was in the fall of 1979, when a bird lingered for about 45 days instead of 45 minutes.

While scanning a flooded corn stubble field that had a flock of over 2000 Snow Geese near Chittenango in Madison County, Dorothy Crumb located a *Ross' Goose* (NYSARC, ph) on 28 Mar. The bird remained with the ever dwindling flock through 14 Apr and was seen by many observers who were patient enough to find it in the flock or to locate it as it disappeared, then reappeared, while swimming behind or around the rows of last year's corn. Interestingly, the only other previous Regional record of *Ross' Goose* also was located by Crumb in a flock of Snow Geese in 1979, also on 28 March.

The season for the usual migrants can only be described as normal with roughly average arrival dates, counts and numbers of species reported. There were no extraordinary waterfowl records. Horned Grebe continued to be scarce. The peak Double-crested Cormorant count on Lake Ontario indicate the continued growth of this species, but is not a record. Green Heron seemed particularly scarce during the period. On 20 May, a presumably non-migratory Peregrine Falcon was seen flying west and circling low near Nine Mile Point in OSWE. A different observer also saw a Peregrine at the same location the next day. The Common Tern nests in Oneida Lake were once again predated by Ruddy Turnstones (see *Kingbird* 43(4):327).

Several species continued their expansion in the area. Osprey re-nested at two locations near Baldwinsville and two new nests were located, one near the border of Madison and Onondaga counties on a train trestle and one near Altmar. The nest in Clay Marsh apparently was unsuccessful this year, as the Osprey were not seen around the nest after mid May. Hooded Warbler set an early arrival record for the second straight year and was seen during the nesting season in a new location, St. Mary's Cemetery in Dewitt. Wild Turkey, which has not been reported in the spring since 1989, were counted by over one-half of the Region 5 contributors.

Olive-sided Flycatcher was only reported 26 May near Lake Ontario and there were only three sightings of Black-billed Cuckoo and those were quite late in the period. The only Gray-cheeked Thrush subspecies reported this year was Bicknell's, including a quite detailed report by Sue Adair, who observed the bird in good light for almost three minutes on 19 May in Dewitt. The only other special warbler reports were a Worm-eating Warbler, and several remarks by contributors indicating that Golden-winged Warbler numbers seemed to them to be high this year. The Nine Mile Point area continues to be very reliable for sparrows. Essentially all the migrating sparrows of the area can be seen during one day. A Clay-colored Sparrow was east of Oswego on 20 May and also at Derby Hill on 21 May, the same individual moving along the lake? Northern Cardinal is continuing its expansion northward with a singing male observed at the north edge of Oswego County in the town of Redfield on 28 Apr, an unlikely place in the middle of a mixed forest with northern species such as both crossbills, Solitary Vireo and Winter Wren (Lee Chamberlaine). Indigo Bunting and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were noted at many feeders upon arrival. Possibly the heavy winter snows caused early foods to be less abundant. Both redpolls were seen during the period, including a record late date, 4 Apr, for *Hoary Redpoll* at Paul Radway's feeder in Pompey. Pine Siskin continued in low numbers with very few reports. Evening Grosbeak were observed many times, but in relatively low numbers.

There were 233 species found, plus Bicknell's Thrush, three color morphs and two hybrids, up from the 229 in 1993. The plus side of migration was the number of rarities: *Ross' Goose*, *Sandhill Crane*, *Wilson's Phalarope*, *Scissor-tailed Flycatcher*, *Swainson's Warbler*, *Yellow-throated Warbler*, and *Hoary Redpoll*. Other notable records are the numbers of various species of hawks, the three unusual Red-tailed Hawk morphs, *Loggerhead Shrike*, Worm-eating Warbler, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Bohemian Waxwing, Clay-colored Sparrow and the large numbers of Common Redpoll. Ruby-throated

Hummingbird was more abundant at local feeders. On the down side is the continued scarcity of Eastern Meadowlark and grassland sparrows. Carolina Wren suffered badly in the extraordinary cold and snow and few were reported this spring. Our best wishes to Elva Hawken, who has contributed many exciting species from her corner of MADI for a number of years and is now moving to a new birding locality.

Contributors: Sue Adair, Sue Boettger, Joe Brin, Ned Brinkley, Patrick Burns, Dave Cesari, Lee Chamberlaine, Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Mary Dreiling, Dave Eichorn, Robert Evans, Craig Fosdick, William Gruenbaum, Elva Hawken, Gene Huggins, Mary Alice Koeneke, Gary Lee, Bob Long, David Nash, Bill Purcell, Steve Rulison, Margaret Rusk, Jeanne Ryan, Tony Shrimpton, Maureen Staloff, Brian Sullivan, Jim Throckmorton, Judy Thurber, Judy Wright.

Abbreviations: Adk - Adirondacks; Bid - Biddlecum, n of Phoenix, OSWE; DH - Derby Hill, OSWE; LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OSWE; NMP - Nine Mile Point, OSWE; OneiL - Oneida Lake; OnonL - Onondaga Lake; OH - Oswego Harbor; TRGMA - Three Rivers Game Management Area, OSWE.

Spring reports: **Com. Loon:** Adk arr Old Forge 20 Apr, max 32 Toad Harbor OSWE 22 May. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr two LSB 26 Mar. **Horned Grebe:** max 19 OneiL 22 Apr (BP). **Red-necked Grebe:** max six Beaver L ONON 22 Apr, only four reports. **Double-Crested Cormorant:** *intro* arr OnonL 26 Apr, max 2641 LOL 14 May. **Great Egret:** only two singles, Bridgeport 10 May (Betty Cristin), Island Road Cicero 23 May (John Wright). **Tundra Swan:** three Chittenango 26-29 Mar, only report. **Snow Goose:** *intro* max 2000, including 30 blue morph Chittenango 27-28 Mar. **Ross's Goose:** *intro*.

Derby Hill hawk migration totals (* indicates record numbers):

Species	Arrival	Max	Date	Last	Total
Turkey Vulture	9 Mar	*1503	4 Apr	31 May	*7385
Osprey	2 Apr	156	26 Apr	31 May	500
Bald Eagle	1 Mar	*8	29 May	31 May	*71
Northern Harrier	19 Feb	*235	24 Mar	31 May	1043
Sharp-shinned Hawk	19 Feb	1294	15 Apr	31 May	5973
Cooper's Hawk	19 Feb	117	24 Mar	31 May	*822
Northern Goshawk	17 Feb	10	14 Apr	29 May	125
Red-shouldered Hawk	12 Mar	481	24 Mar	29 May	1316
Broad-winged Hawk	14 Apr	4364	27 Apr	31 May	17104
Red-tailed Hawk	16 Feb	1382	4 Apr	31 May	*10008
Rough-legged Hawk	15 Feb	85	21 Mar	14 May	518
Golden Eagle	12 Mar	4	4 Apr	11 May	19
American Kestrel	14 Mar	151	24 Mar	30 May	734
Merlin	23 Mar	4	15 Apr	9 May	*29
Peregrine Falcon	26 Apr	*3	26 Apr	22 May	*12
Total					45659

Turkey Vulture: *intro* 80 going to roost during migration Texas 26 Mar.
Osprey: *intro*. **Bald Eagle:** four reports away from DH, one OnonL 11 Mar, imm OnonL 13 Mar, one Lakeport 1 May, one T Palermo 16 May.
Merlin: *intro* five scattered singles away from DH. **Peregrine Falcon:** *intro*. **Com. Moorhen:** arr Peter Scott Swamp OSWE 1 May. **Am. Coot:** arr 6 Mar OH, only three other scattered reports. **Sandhill Crane:** *intro*.
Black-bellied Plover: arr West Monroe 1 May, only three other reports, one West Monroe 3 May, one Cleveland 20 May, three Bid 29 May.
Ruddy Turnstone: *intro*; 20 Oneil 31 May (Connie Adamson). **Wilson's**

Phalarope: male Chittenango 16-17 May. **Bonaparte's Gull:** arr six OH 14 Apr and ten Seneca River, Baldwinsville, max 85 OH 17 Apr. **Com. Tern:** *intro*. **Black Tern:** only locations Selkirk Shores SP and Peter Scott Swamp OSWE.

Short-eared Owl: two singles, T Van Buren 3 Mar, DH 8 Mar. **Whip-poor-will:** one calling NMP 26 Apr, again nesting near Constantia Center. **Com. Nighthawk:** only three reports for the period. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** *intro* arr DH 6 May. **Red-headed Woodpecker:** only one report away from LOL, one T Paris 22 May (GH).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: only report NMP 26 May (MAK). **E. Wood-Pewee:** *intro*. **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** *intro*. **E. Bluebird:** record early arr Baldwinsville 19 Feb (JB). **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** *intro*, only four reports. **Brown Thrasher:** record early arr NMP 10 Apr (BP). **Water Pipit:** scarce, five scattered reports, max 49 OSWE 4 May. **Bohemian Waxwing:** only report 30 Rome 1 Apr (DCe). **N. Shrike:** only two reports, TRGMA 14 Mar, Texas 23 Mar. **Loggerhead Shrike:** one DH 24 Mar (BS).

Solitary Vireo: tied record early Oswego 16 Apr (CF). **N. Parula:** record early Oswego 27 Apr (CF). **Cape May Warbler:** tied record early DH 28 Apr (RL). **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** *intro*. **Yellow-throated Warbler:** *intro*. **Swainson's Warbler:** *intro*. **Worm-eating Warbler:** one near Sterling 28 Apr. **Ovenbird:** record early Baldwinsville 27 Apr (JB). **Hooded Warbler:** record early Dewitt 1 May (JThu); *intro*.

N. Cardinal: *intro*. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** *intro*. **Indigo Bunting:** *intro*. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** last six Sandy Pond 30 Apr. **Chipping Sparrow:** record early DH 4 Apr (SR); one NMP 5 Apr (MAK), 22 at one feeder T Pompey 16 Apr, high number. **Clay-colored Sparrow:** *intro*. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** only three reports. **Henslow's Sparrow:** none. **White-crowned Sparrow:** max 150 DH 6 May, good migration flight. **E. Meadowlark:** continues scarce, low numbers on spring count. **Yellow-headed Blackbird:** one DH 26 Mar (BS). **Orchard Oriole:** one DH 26 Apr. **Pine Grosbeak:** one DH 21 Mar, one Thendara 13 Mar. **Red Crossbill:** Seven Boylston 1 Apr, one Boylston 9 Apr. **White-winged Crossbill:** one Hastings 28 Mar, one Dewitt 29 Apr. **Com Redpoll:** many reports, particularly at feeders, max 450 DH 9 Apr. **Hoary Redpoll:** *intro*. **Evening Grosbeak:** max 29.

Corrigenda: Vol 44(1):54 only other record for Yellow Rail was 1991, not 1992.

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