

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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March was mild, dry, and sunny. Temperatures averaged 4°F above normal while precipitation was half of normal. Notably, there was only one significant weather event, a cold front on the night of 6-7 Mar which lowered the temperature 32° and brought rain, sleet, and wet snow. A very mild period from 11 to 16 Mar helped to thaw shallow pools and to bring many waterfowl into the Region. Steve Eaton stated that this was the worst year for foods of woody plants on the Allegany Plateau in 45 years of observations. He noted that birds flocked to feeders in March, especially American Goldfinch and Purple Finch. The latter was noted in unusually good numbers by other observers as well. Often under the influence of high pressure, April was 3° cooler than normal and also dry, with half the normal amount of precipitation. The migration progressed at a trickle until late in the month. Significant movements were noted on 22 and 27 Apr. May temperatures averaged normal and precipitation was 0.75 inches below normal. By early in May nearly all of the ponds in fields had dried, giving shorebirds few locations to rest and refuel. The warbler migration began slowly but strong migration was noted on 10, 18, 21, and 24 May. For the three month period temperatures averaged nearly normal but it was the driest spring in 24 years. In spite of the general lack of severe weather, conditions for migration were often unfavorable due mainly to northerly winds or low pressure systems to the south of our Region. This delayed arrivals and peak movements of many species, which in turn contributed to some high maxima when conditions became more conducive to flight.

The waterfowl migration was generally uneventful, with average to below average numbers. However, on the Buffalo Ornithological Society's April Count, which also includes part of Ontario, Wood Duck was at an all time high while Oldsquaw and Bufflehead were well above average. The hawk migration produced few good days and no significant flights of Broad-winged Hawk. Single day high counts were made for Osprey and Turkey Vulture in the Town of Hamburg ERIE, however. As mentioned, the migration of many passerines and some water birds was delayed. Yellow-rumped Warbler was relatively scarce until the last few days of April, when several observers noted high numbers including a record count. A record count also was tallied for Palm Warbler late in April. Shorebirds, held back by weather and with few places to feed, were impressively concentrated at Wood Marsh on

the Tonawanda WMA. This pool, and Goose Pond on the Oak Orchard WMA, were drained at the right time by NYSDEC personnel to provide what were almost the only good mudflats known in the Region.

The Bald Eagle success story continues, though fitfully. In 1994 a pair showed interest in an Osprey nest on the Allegany Reservoir but abandoned the attempt. This year they tried to nest. Birders watched the pair with high hopes. By the end of the period, however, they were still incubating and it appears that their eggs may have been infertile. Another pair on the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation near Gowanda apparently was successful in fledging young last year. Reports on their status this year were not received. The Region's original nest in the post-DDT era at Iroquois NWR had two nestlings by the end of the period. In this tenth straight year of activity at this site, a camera was installed directly over the nest enabling thousands to enjoy an intimate view of the eagles' activities.

Another species on the rebound, Common Raven, also continues to do well. A fledged juvenile was reported and a phenomenal 17 were unofficially tallied on the Buffalo Ornithological Society's May Count, all in ALLE and CATT. It seems only a matter of time before they will also be found in WYOM, where habitat is plentiful but observers are few.

Bill Watson continues to monitor the water bird colonies of the Niagara River and elsewhere in the Region. This spring, while observing the Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron colony on Motor Island, he noted the presence of Great Egret. From his vantage point a half mile away, Bill determined that two pairs probably were nesting on the island. Although he could not see a nest through the woody vegetation, the consistent location of the birds as well as other behavior makes it very likely that at least an attempt has been made. If confirmed, which Bill hopes to do during the summer season, this would represent the first breeding record away from coastal areas in the state.

Vivian Pitzrick, who tends a bluebird trail in ALLE, found five nestling Eastern Bluebird, apparently unattended and near death. She moved the birds to a nearby box on top of four eggs, later found to be infertile. The next day the nestling bluebirds were noisy and active and the adopted parents acted aggressively at her approach. They had readily accepted their new charges!

Among a long list of rarities the following were seen on only one day: Snowy Egret, Greater White-fronted Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, **Sandhill Crane**, **Western Sandpiper**, Red-necked Phalarope, Laughing Gull, Kentucky Warbler, and Connecticut Warbler. The two warblers were at Goat Island NIAG on the same day. Among the few cooperative rarities

were an overwintering **Gyr Falcon**, Common Black-headed Gull, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Finally, Betsy Potter has spent countless hours over the years scouring the pine plantations of the state parks along Lake Ontario in our Region for N. Saw-whet Owl. She is aware that her efforts would be rewarded more frequently in Braddock Bay SP, outside the Region. Still, she persists here and this spring she was rewarded with a **Barn Owl**, the first presumed migrant in the Region since 1986.

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Abbreviations: BSL- Batavia Sewage Lagoons; BOSAC - Buffalo Ornithological Society April Count, 9 Apr; BOSMC - Buffalo Ornithological Society May Count, 21 May; EA - East Aurora, ERIE; GHSP - Golden Hill SP; GI - Goat Island, NIAG; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; OOWMA - Oak Orchard WMA; TNP - Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TWMA - Tonawanda WMA; NR - Niagara River; WG - Williamsville Glen ERIE; WTSP - Wilson-Tuscarora SP

Spring reports: **Red-throated Loon:** Dunkirk Harbor 4 Mar (LH), rare on L ERIE; max of five sightings from L Ontario 54 T Wilson 3 Apr. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr Celoron CHAU, GHSP 12 Mar. **Horned Grebe:** arr Randolph T Yates CATT 12 Mar. **Red-necked Grebe:** 15 T Somerset, 47 T Yates 1 Apr (WD), excellent counts but none away from L Ontario. **Double-crested Cormorant:** 51 Cayuga Pool INWR 15 May, increasing even away from Great Lakes. **Am. Bittern:** arr TNP 15 Apr; max six TWMA 20 May (MM, ST). **Least Bittern:** arr Buckhorn I SP 13 May (CR, TB), possible breeding location. **Great Egret:** arr GHSP 19 Apr; T Freedom 22 Apr; TWMA 29 Apr; T Hartland 29 May; 2-4 Motor I NR 13-29 May, apparently nesting; a good showing. **Snowy Egret:** Oak Orchard WMA 20 May (KG, RS); T Hartland 29 May (WD!), not quite annual. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** arr Buffalo 6 Mar in backyard spruce tree,

reported many times here previous years (RBr); EA 22-23 Apr (LH), rare away from vicinity of NR. **Tundra Swan**: max 303 over T Hamburg 11 Mar, 400 Buckhorn I SP 12 Mar, 450 T Conewango 12 Mar; BSL 26 May, late. **Greater White-fronted Goose**: INWR 11 Mar (TH!, AM); six T Yates 12 Mar (D&DS!), highest count ever, believed to be of the race *flavirostris*. **Snow Goose**: arr three T Porter 5 Mar; max only 12 T Somerset 1 Apr. **Wood Duck**: max 104 INWR 29 May (WW), includes several broods but still impressive count. **Green-winged Teal**: 37 OOWMA 25 Mar; 13 T Stockton 26 Mar; 16 T Yates 1 Apr; 37 TWMA 29 Apr; good totals. **N. Shoveler**: arr two T Somerset 12 Mar; max 70 BSL 30 Apr (DR). **Gadwall**: arr Chautauqua L 12 Mar. **Eurasian Wigeon**: OOWMA 2,17 Apr (BH!, PY, WW!). **Am. Wigeon**: arr 10 Beaver I SP 9 Mar. **Canvasback**: max 1100 Grand I NR 12 Mar (MD). **Ring-necked Duck**: two INWR 27 May (WS), late. **Oldsquaw**: arr inland BSL 20 Mar. **Black Scoter**: two Dunkirk Harbor 4 Mar (LH), unusual date. **Surf Scoter**: two Buffalo Harbor 25 Mar (WD!), early. **White-winged Scoter**: two Amity L, ALLE 7 Apr (VP); three INWR 22 Apr (WW, AS), rare inland; last two BOSMC. **Ruddy Duck**: arr seven BSL 21 Mar; max 21 BSL 17 Apr.

Turkey Vulture: max 864 T Hamburg (FR), possible record count. **Osprey**: record max 38 T Hamburg 11 Apr. **Bald Eagle**: arr away from NR wintering area INWR 11 Mar; several reports; *intro*. **N. Goshawk**: T Hamburg 19 Mar (FR!); imm Forest Lawn Cemetery Buffalo 14 May (MD!), late. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: arr EA 5 Mar; max only 46 T Hamburg 15 Mar. **Broad-winged Hawk**: arr T Amity, two T Hamburg 16 Apr. **Red-tailed Hawk**: max only 91 T Hamburg 16 Mar. **Merlin**: TNP (D&DS!), WTSP (WD!, BP) 22 Apr; only reports. **Peregrine Falcon**: T Hamburg 19 Mar (FR!); ad TWMA 7 May (WD!, MM); ad TNP 10 May (WD!); TWMA 15 May (WD!). **Gyr Falcon**: wintering bird at Buffalo last seen 5 Mar (PY, BH). **Wild Turkey**: T Tonawanda 15 May (WW), odd urban location; 88 BOSMC record for this count. **Am. Coot**: arr five INWR 5 Mar. **Sandhill Crane**: T Hamburg 16 Apr (FR!, RA!). **Black-bellied Plover**: arr TWMA 29 Apr (WW!), third earliest ever. **Semipalmated Plover**: 70 TWMA 15 May (WD), good count. **Greater Yellowlegs**: max 30 TWMA 7 May. **Lesser Yellowlegs**: record max 150 TWMA 7 May (WD). **Upland Sandpiper**: arr two CATT BOSMC, only report. **Whimbrel**: six BSL 21 May (WD), rare. **Ruddy Turnstone**: 16 BOSMC, only report. **Sanderling**: 12 BSL 21 May, only report. **W. Sandpiper**: EA 30 May (LH!), rare in spring. **Least Sandpiper**: 400 TWMA 15 May (WD), highest count ever. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: arr TWMA 15 May (WD!); four TWMA 26 May (CM); only reports. **Dunlin**: arr T Hartland 23 Apr (WD). **Short-billed Dowitcher**: arr TWMA 7 May

(WD!, MM!), early; 23 BOSMC; only reports. **Red-necked Phalarope:** OOWMA 28 May (RW!, JF), seventh spring record. **Laughing Gull:** imm T Yates 21 May (WW!, RBr!), perhaps first Regional L Ontario record. **Little Gull:** record max 36 at mouth of NR 26 Mar, 29 on 31 Mar and 10 Apr, 37 on 7 Apr (GB, WD); last two Lewiston NR 6 May, late. **Com. Black-headed Gull:** ad NR mouth 26 Mar, 7,10,17 Apr (GB, WD!); Lewiston NR 3, 9 Apr (WD!); probably one bird involved, second year in a row and second ever Apr sightings. **Bonaparte's Gull:** max 8000 NR mouth 28 Mar (GB); 5500 Buffalo 15 Apr; great numbers on NR and L Ontario. **Iceland Gull:** T Porter 15 May (WD!), late. **Caspian Tern:** 69 L Ontario plain 22 Apr (WW, AS), excellent count. **Black Tern:** record early arr 22 Apr INWR (HK!); 40+ INWR 15 May (WD), most since early 1960s.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr five BOSMC. **Barn Owl:** WTSP 29 Mar (BP, WD, ES). **Long-eared Owl:** none away from L Ontario plain. **Short-eared Owl:** eight T Royalton 5 Mar; five BOSAC; only reports. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** Four Mile Creek SP 20 Mar; WTSP 29 Mar; one ALLE BOSMC; only reports. **Com. Nighthawk:** 35 BOSMC, more than usual. **Whip-poor-will:** Blasdell ERIE 10 May (MT); T Tonawanda 12 May (PH); one BOSMC; more than usual for recent years. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 71 BOSMC, record for that count, 40 were in ALLE. **Pileated Woodpecker:** 34 BOSMC, record for that count.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: arr three BOSMC; Buckhorn I SP 27 May; EA 30 May; only reports. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** arr WG 20 May. **Acadian Flycatcher:** arr INWR 20 May; Allegany SP 27 May, Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 31 May, known breeding sites. **E. Kingbird:** max 30 T Somerset 20 May (MM,ST), good count. **Com. Raven:** ad with FL T Carrollton 13 May (SE); 17± BOSMC. **Carolina Wren:** six locations, appears to be recovering. **Tufted Titmouse:** 93 BOSMC, record for this count. **Winter Wren:** WG 10 Mar, early arrival or overwintering. **Marsh Wren:** arr TWMA 23 Apr, unverified, second earliest ever if correct. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 27 BOSMC, record for this count. **E. Bluebird:** intro. **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** arr T Tonawanda 10 May. **N. Mockingbird:** T Allegany 31 May (SE), rare away from L Ontario plain. **Brown Thrasher:** max six TNP 22 Apr. **Am. Pipit:** arr two T Dayton 26 Mar; 42 BOSAC; two T Newstead 20 May; Oak Orchard WMA 29 May (MD!, WD!), late; only reports, scarce. **N. Shrike:** last INWR 18 Mar.

White-eyed Vireo: TNP 29 Apr (LH!), third earliest ever. **Solitary Vireo:** 49 BOSMC, record for this count. **Philadelphia Vireo:** arr T Orchard Park 11 May. **Blue-winged Warbler:** arr TNP 29 Apr. **Golden-winged Warbler:** arr four Tonawanda Indian Reservation Gene 20 May.

Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: Brewster's type EA 10 May (LH), GI 11 May (BP); Lawrence's type Crick's Run ALLEGANY SP late May, back for third straight year. **Orange-crowned Warbler:** EA 11 May (LH), only report. **N. Parula:** arr GI 20 Apr (DR!), record early. **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** INWR 11 Mar and Buckhorn I SP 12 Mar, probably overwintered; arr three GI 15 Mar; 75-100 T Alfred 25 Apr (EB); 465 T Somerset including 400 at GHSP 27 Apr (WD!), highest count ever. **Pine Warbler:** arr Lakeview T Hamburg 16 Apr (MT!), early; two Bush Hill State Forest CATT 21 May, one Boyce Hill State Forest CATT 25 May, and one Allegany SP 27 May, all late and possibly breeding. **Prairie Warbler:** arr T Amity 9 May (VP); two T Machias 13 May (BC); T Ellicottville 25 May (BC). **Palm Warbler:** record max 19 Youngstown to Wilson NIAG Apr (WD). **Cerulean Warbler:** arr EA 23 Apr (LH!), record early. **Prothonotary Warbler:** two locations INWR 20-29 May, only reports. **Kentucky Warbler:** GI 24 May (WD!, BP). **Connecticut Warbler:** TNP 14 May (JR!, LR); GI 24 May (BP!, WD!). **Hooded Warbler:** arr EA 10 May; 86 BOSMC, record for this count.

Am. Tree Sparrow: last T Wheatfield 26 Apr. **Field Sparrow:** arr TNP 20 Mar. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** arr T Clarence 20 May. **Henslow's Sparrow:** T Clarence 17 May (MM), only report. **Fox Sparrow:** arr two EA 27 Mar. **Lincoln's Sparrow:** eight TNP 10 May (WD), one short of record max set 18 Sep 1960. **Swamp Sparrow:** arr T Lewiston 2 Apr. **Dark-eyed Junco:** 219 BOSMC record for this count. **Snow Bunting:** one BOSAC, only report. **Red-winged Blackbird:** arr away from wintering areas several locations 4 Mar. **E. Meadowlark:** arr T Otto, T Randolph 13 Mar. **W. Meadowlark:** arr two T Lancaster and two T Clarence 11 Mar. **Yellow-headed Blackbird:** TNP 30 Apr-2 May (WW!, RA!, mob); Orchard P ERIE 25 May (NR, RB). **Rusty Blackbird:** arr EA 19 Mar; last BOSMC. **Purple Finch:** max 12 T Wales in Apr; several reports, unusually numerous. **Pine Siskin:** nine ALLE BOSAC; Lakeside Beach SP 27 Apr; Sanborn NIAG 30 Apr; T Porter 6 May; last four BOSMC; only reports. **Evening Grosbeak:** one BOSMC, only report.

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