

## REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

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Weather in the Finger Lakes Region from March through May continued a trend of little precipitation that produced near drought conditions. Unlike the previous two years, there was no significant snowfall in March. Only between 3 and 7 inches of snow fell, and total precipitation was 1 inch below normal. Water levels in rivers and creeks throughout the Region, in particular the Chemung River, were already beginning to be abnormally low. A high pressure ridge situated over the entire eastern United States from 12 to 18 Mar was the most significant weather factor for the month. Precipitation levels in April were 1 to 2 inches below normal, and river and stream water levels were now significantly below normal. The month was unseasonably cool, averaging 3 to 6°F below normal. While winter weather conditions prevailed during the first week of the month, there were no significant frontal passages through the Region. Temperatures in May continued on the cooler side but not nearly as cool as April. Precipitation was between 1 and 3 inches below normal. A major weather disturbance on 10 May, when a series of thunderstorms passed through the Region, was the most significant weather event for the month.

The dry, cool weather conditions appeared to have influenced bird migration into and through the Finger Lakes Region. Herons, egrets, and shorebirds arrived earlier than their usual, while flycatchers, thrushes, and warblers tended to arrive on their average date, and swallows arrived later. Water levels were low, due to the light snow melt, lack of precipitation, and low water levels that were maintained at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, and at Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. Consequently habitat used by herons, egrets, and shorebirds was available early. The cooler than average temperatures in April may have prevented the early arrival of passerines. For example, in 1995 daily point counts at the Cornell University Plantations and the Laboratory of Ornithology at Sapsucker Woods recorded few species and low numbers of passerines until the second week in May. Counts made last year in the same areas recorded large numbers of both species and individuals in the last week in April and first week in May.

Several weather related events initiated exciting bird activity. The arrival of a high pressure ridge over the eastern portion of the United States in mid March brought an unprecedented number of Golden Eagle over the Mt. Pleasant hawk watch near Ithaca. The other significant

weather event occurred 10 through 13 May. The aforementioned line of thunderstorms and southerly winds created fog conditions throughout the Region. The consequence of this was a large fallout of migrating passerines and an influx of southern birds. Point counts at the Cornell Plantations recorded only 5 or 6 warbler species until 10 May. Afterward over a dozen species and numerous individuals were observed. This weather event also brought several bird species that are more commonly associated with more southern areas, including *Tricolored Heron*, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Whip-poor-will, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

The managers of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge can be credited with producing excellent habitat during the late spring shorebird migration period. Beginning the first week of May, water levels in Tsache Pool were lowered. This created a huge mudflat that by the end of May held shorebirds in numbers and variety that have not been seen in some time. A total of 21 species of shorebirds were reported from the drained pool. The most numerous species was Dunlin. Several uncommon species were also observed, most notably American Golden-Plover, *Western Sandpiper*, and *Willet*. It is hoped that the managers of MNWR are pleased with these totals, and will continue to provide crucial shorebird habitat.

A total of 232 species of birds were observed this season. In addition to the aforementioned reports, other highlights were Eurasian Wigeon, *Harlequin Duck*, Iceland Gull, Lesser-black Backed Gull, Little Gull, Short-eared Owl, *Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler*, *Brewer's Blackbird*, Henslow's Sparrow, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. A very early Indigo Bunting was reported from Geneva.

**Observers:** Fred Bertram, Jack Brubaker, Dick Clements, Carl David, Bill Evans, John Gregoire, Kevin Griffith, Chris Hymes, Steve Kelling, Kevin McGowan, Tom Nix, Bard Prentiss, Ken Rosenberg, Dave Russell, Robert Spahn, Laura Stenzler, Cayuga Bird Club, Chemung Valley Bird Club, Eaton Bird Club, Schuyler Co. Bird Club. Many reports were gleaned from the computer internet CAYUGABIRDS and NEWYORKBIRDS listserves as well as the Ithaca RBA.

**Abbreviations:** CL - Cayuga Lake; CLB - Cayuga Lake Basin; CV - Chemung Valley; KHMO - Kestrel Haven Migration Observatory, Burdette; MNWR - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; MPt - Myers Point, Lansing; QCM - Queen Catherine Marsh, Montour Falls; SCMC - Schuyler County Migration Count, 13 May; SL - Seneca Lake; SW - Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Sapsucker Woods; TCMC - Tompkins County Migration Count, 13 May;

**Spring reports:** **Com. Loon:** numbers down, max third week of Apr. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr CV 15 Mar; entire period MNWR. **Horned Grebe:** scattered SL, CL Mar; max 42 CV 4 Apr; five Geneva 31 May, late. **Red-necked Grebe:** only reports one Aurora 3 Apr (CD), two Dryden L 4 Apr (BP). **Double-crested Cormorant:** arr two Dryden L 4 Apr; max eight CL 8 Apr; one TCMC. **Am. Bittern:** singles QCM 15 Apr, MNWR 29 May. **Least Bittern:** one SCMC. **Great Blue Heron:** scattered Mar, arr CV 12 Apr; max. 23 SCMC. **Great Egret:** singles CV 22 Apr, 20 May. **Snowy Egret:** one MNWR 14 May (FB). **Tricolored Heron:** one MPt 13-16 May (TN, mob). **Cattle Egret:** one MPt 12 May (CD). **Green Heron:** one WG 21 Apr; max three SCMC. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** arr Brooktondale 18 Apr; two Ithaca 25 Apr; two CV 12 May. **Mute Swan:** one SCMC. **Tundra Swan:** arr six Geneva 5 Mar; max 14 CV 17 Mar; last 12 MNWR 24 Apr. **Snow Goose:** arr SL 12 Mar; max 5000-10000 MNWR 21 Apr, 90% blue morph; last MNWR 20 May. **Brant:** one MNWR 15 May. **Wood Duck:** arr QCM 8 Mar; max 34 SCMC. **Green-winged Teal:** arr QCM 8 Mar; max 53 QCM 20 Mar; scattered reports through mid-May. **Am. Black Duck:** scattered but numbers low. **Blue-winged Teal:** scattered through Region. **N. Shoveler:** arr QCM 22 Mar; numerous MNWR early Apr. **Gadwall:** 14 WG 14 Mar; scattered through Region. **Eurasian Wigeon:** one-three MNWR 6-29 May (mob). **Am. Wigeon:** CL entire period; arr CV 14 Mar. **Canvasback:** MNWR entire period. **Redhead:** scattered reports through Region; last MNWR 7 May. **Ring-necked Duck:** max 100 MNWR early Apr; last CV 13 May. **Greater Scaup:** one WG 5 Mar; numerous MNWR Apr; 40 CV 4 Apr. **Lesser Scaup:** one WG 5 Mar; 10 CV 4 Apr; numerous MNWR Apr. **Harlequin Duck:** one Union Springs 24 Mar (BP, NYSARC). **Oldsquaw:** max 52 CV 4 Apr; last 10 SL 20 May; more numerous than usual. **Surf Scoter:** two CL 7 May; one CV 13 May. **White-winged Scoter:** one Geneva 11 Mar; one MNWR 25 Mar, two on 1 May; two SL 20 May. **Com. Goldeneye:** max 100 CLB 4 Mar; last Aurora 21 Apr. **Bufflehead:** numerous CL; max 91 CV 4 Apr; last CV 13 May. **Hooded Merganser:** scattered reports. **Red-breasted Merganser:** good numbers. **Com. Merganser:** good numbers. **Ruddy Duck:** arr CL 25 Mar; last MNWR 7 May.

**Turkey Vulture:** arr Aurora 7 Mar; increased numbers reported throughout Region. **Osprey:** arr CV 4 Apr; scattered through Region. **Bald Eagle:** one CV 2 Mar; one Mt Pleasant 12 Mar; nesting MNWR. **N. Goshawk:** scarce; two doing courtship displays Mt Pleasant 19 Mar; one Freeville 22 Apr. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** one Shindaigin Hollow 16 Apr. **Broad-winged Hawk:** arr Mt Pleasant 17 Apr. **Rough-legged Hawk:** scattered, last CV 13 May, very late. **Golden Eagle:** total 30 Mt Pleasant

week of 10 Mar, 14 on 12 Mar (TN), 12 on 13 Mar (AF); last MNWR 2 May. **Merlin**: one CV 13 Mar; one Ithaca 21 Apr. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: scattered through Region. **Ruffed Grouse**: good numbers CV; eight SCMC; five TCMC. **Virginia Rail**: max three Dryden L 22 Apr; five SCMC. **Sora**: four SCMC. **Com. Moorhen**: three QCM 28 Apr; six CV 13 May. **Am. Coot**: 241 SL 15 Apr; 100 MNWR 21 Apr; last SCMC. **Black-bellied Plover**: arr MNWR 22 Apr, max 20 on 22 May. **Am. Golden-Plover**: one MNWR 26 May, sixth Regional spring record. **Semipalmated Plover**: numerous MNWR through period. **Greater Yellowlegs**: max 21 Savannah mucklands 21 Apr. **Lesser Yellowlegs**: regular MNWR through period. **Solitary Sandpiper**: max eight CV 12 May; 3 TCMC. **Willet**: two MNWR 21-22 May (BE), third Regional spring record. **Spotted Sandpiper**: numerous CV; two SCMC; four TCMC. **Upland Sandpiper**: arr CV 29 Apr; max six CV 13 May; two Aurora 26 May. **Whimbrel**: seven MNWR 21 May; 20 Canandaigua 22 May. **Ruddy Turnstone**: arr MNWR 6 May; three MPt 24 May. **Red Knot**: nine MNWR 29 May. **Semipalmated Sandpiper**: ten MNWR 22 May. **W. Sandpiper**: one MNWR 29 May, third Regional spring record. **Least Sandpiper**: one SCMC. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: arr MNWR 20 May; max 25 MNWR 26 May. **Pectoral Sandpiper**: arr MNWR 22 Apr. **Dunlin**: arr MNWR 15 Apr; max 2000+ MNWR 21 May; 650 Geneva 22 May; 650 Canandaigua 22 May. **Com. Snipe**: arr CL 20 Mar; eight MNWR 21 Apr; one TCMC. **Wilson's Phalarope**: one MNWR 26 May. **Red-necked Phalarope**: Alt plumaged female Dryden L 13 Apr (BP, CH; NYSARC), very early; one MNWR 30 May. **Little Gull**: two MNWR 29 Apr-1 May (SK, mob). **Bonaparte's Gull**: 24 CV 8 Apr; 140 SL 12 Apr; 50 MNWR 29 Apr. **Ring-billed Gull**: max 800 CLB 20 Mar; 430 SCMC; 138 TCMC. **Herring Gull**: max 300 CLB 20 Mar; three SCMC; three TCMC. **Iceland Gull**: one WG 9 Mar (JB). **Lesser black-backed Gull**: one MNWR 15-27 Apr; one CL 30 Apr. **Great black-backed Gull**: max 20 CLB 5 Mar; one TCMC. **Caspian Tern**: arr ties record early; scattered MNWR. **Com. Tern**: scattered reports MNWR. **Black Tern**: six MNWR 20 May.

**Mourning Dove**: 23 SCMC; 29 TCMC. **Black-billed Cuckoo**: one TCMC; 21 SCMC; three Geneva 21 May. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**: one CV 13 May; one QCM 29 May. **Barred Owl**: two SW entire period; one Connecticut Hill 25 May. **Short-eared Owl**: 14 Kings Ferry 19 Mar; last Kings Ferry 26 Apr. **Com. Nighthawk**: only reports CV 17 May; Lansing 22 and 27 May. **Whip-poor-will**: one Shindaigin Hollow 14 May. **Chimney Swift**: arr CV 18 Apr; 35 SCMC; one TCMC. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**: three SCMC; two TCMC. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: one Ringwood Nature Preserve 5 May; one CV 13 May. **Red-bellied**

**Woodpecker:** seven SCMC; three TCMC. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** arr Newfield 2 Apr; eight Arnot Forest 30 Apr; two SCMC; 11 TCMC. **Downy Woodpecker:** 14 SCMC; 22 TCMC. **Hairy Woodpecker:** five SCMC; eight TCMC; scattered CV. **N. Flicker:** 12 SCMC; 19 TCMC. **Pileated Woodpecker:** max three TCMC; three SCMC.

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** three Phelps 14 May; one Ithaca 24 May. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** one Ithaca 19 May; one SW 22 May; one KHMO 23 May. **Acadian Flycatcher:** one KHMO 10 May. **Least Flycatcher:** 23 SCMC; 13 TCMC. **E. Phoebe:** 14 SCMC; 21 TCMC. **Great Crested Flycatcher:** five SCMC; nine TCMC. **E. Kingbird:** five SCMC; nine TCMC. **Horned Lark:** 50 Kings Ferry 4 Mar; two SCMC. **Purple Martin:** two CV 5 May; 14 SCMC. **Tree Swallow:** 28 SCMC; 66 TCMC. **N. Rough-winged Swallow:** 10 SCMC; 17 TCMC. **Bank Swallow:** 22 SCMC; 34 TCMC. **Cliff Swallow:** arr Elmira 10 May. **Barn Swallow:** 22 SCMC; 34 TCMC. **Am. Crow:** poor nesting year due to dry conditions (KM). **Fish Crow:** three CV 15 Mar; one KHMO 29 Mar; four TCMC. **Com. Raven:** two Mt Pleasant 19 Mar; one Hammond Hill 1 Apr; two Ithaca 29 Apr; three CV period; four SCMC. **Black-capped Chickadee:** 57 SCMC; 100 TCMC. **Tufted Titmouse:** 13 SCMC; 16 TCMC. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** five SCMC; eight TCMC. **White-breasted Nuthatch:** four SCMC; 14 TCMC. **Brown Creeper:** 15 TCMC. **Carolina Wren:** several CV; three SCMC; one TCMC. **House Wren:** 23 SCMC; 25 TCMC. **Winter Wren:** arr Ithaca 1 Apr. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 12 SW 19 Apr; numerous through Region. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** abundant through Region Apr; 12 SSMC; 30 TCMC. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** 20 SCMC; three TCMC. **Veery:** 10 SCMC; 20 TCMC. **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** arr SW 17 May. **Hermit Thrush:** arr CV 16 Apr; three SCMC; 12 TCMC. **Wood Thrush:** 34 SCMC; 59 TCMC. **Am. Robin:** 134 SCMC; 151 TCMC. **Gray Catbird:** arr Lansing 13 Apr; 40 SCMC; 40 TCMC; numbers down CV. **N. Mockingbird:** scattered through Region. **Brown Thrasher:** numbers declining CV; ten reports CLB, numbers increasing. **Am. Pipit:** 200 CV 18 Apr; last Lansing 8 Apr. **Cedar Waxwing:** 250 Ithaca 14 Apr. **N. Shrike:** last Schu 11 Mar. **European Starling:** 102 SCMC; 108 TCMC.

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** six SCMC; four TCMC. **Warbling Vireo:** arr MPt 23 Apr, record early; four SCMC; 21 TCMC. **Philadelphia Vireo:** one KHMO 17 May. **Red-eyed Vireo:** five SCMC; five TCMC. **Blue-winged Warbler:** arr CV 9 May; 16 SCMC; 16 TCMC. **Golden-winged Warbler:** arr CV 10 May; one Brooktondale 16 May; one Geneva 22 May. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler:** Brewster's type CV 13 May, Danby 20 May; Lawrence's type CV 13 May. **Tennessee Warbler:** scattered reports through May. **Nashville Warbler:** ten SCMC; ten

TCMC; one Dryden 30 May. **N. Parula**: arr Ithaca 10 May; one SCMC; one CV 16 May. **Yellow Warbler**: 150 SCMC; 92 TCMC. **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: 15 SCMC; 18 TCMC. **Magnolia Warbler**: five SCMC; nine TCMC. **Cape May Warbler**: one SCMC. **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: eight SCMC; 31 TCMC. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: overwintered, numerous through early May; eight SCMC; 71 TCMC; *Audubon's* type Ithaca 3-5 May (SK, NYSARC). **Black-throated Green Warbler**: 26 SCMC; 48 TCMC. **Blackburnian Warbler**: five SCMC; 17 TCMC. **Pine Warbler**: overwintered Freeville through 17 Mar; three Ithaca after 17 Mar, early; one CV 22 Apr. **Prairie Warbler**: arr CV 6 May; four SCMC; five Caroline 23 May. **Palm Warbler**: arr Dryden L 15 Apr, record early; scattered reports until 9 May, all thought to be eastern Yellow subspecies. **Cerulean Warbler**: arr CV 13 May; three TCMC. **Black-and-white Warbler**: 21 SCMC; eight TCMC. **Am. Redstart**: 17 SCMC; 40 TCMC. **Prothonotary Warbler**: arr MNWR 13 May. **Worm-eating Warbler**: one CV 9 May. **Ovenbird**: 50 SCMC; 44 TCMC. **N. Waterthrush**: two SCMC; six TCMC. **Louisiana Waterthrush**: arr Enfield 13 Apr; three SCMC; four TCMC. **Mourning Warbler**: arr KHMO 13 May. **Com. Yellowthroat**: 162 SCMC; 81 TCMC. **Hooded Warbler**: arr SW 9 May; three Naples 22 May; scattered reports through Region. **Wilson's Warbler**: scattered singles. **Canada Warbler**: five Connecticut Hill 21 May; five SCMC. **Yellow-breasted Chat**: one Michigan Hollow 13 May (JC).

**Scarlet Tanager**: nine SCMC; eight TCMC. **N. Cardinal**: 31 SCMC; 44 TCMC. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**: arr MNWR 22 Apr, record early; 30 SCMC; 43 TCMC. **Indigo Bunting**: arr Geneva 22 Mar (FB), record early; one Ulysses 23 Apr, very early. **Rufous-sided Towhee**: present CV entire period; 21 SCMC; 19 TCMC. **Am. Tree Sparrow**: last Dryden L 22 Apr. **Chipping Sparrow**: 63 SCMC; 90 TCMC. **Field Sparrow**: arr Caroline 16 Apr; 4 SCMC; 27 TCMC. **Vesper Sparrow**: only two reports. **Savannah Sparrow**: one SCMC, very scarce; 32 TCMC. **Grasshopper Sparrow**: arr Aurora 3 May; one SCMC; two TCMC. **Henslow's Sparrow**: arr Ellis Hollow 30 Apr; four Freeville 20 May. **Fox Sparrow**: arr CV 12 Mar; last Shindaigin Hollow 21 Apr. **Song Sparrow**: 89 SCMC; 82 TCMC. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: one SCMC 13 May. **Swamp Sparrow**: arr MNWR 8 Apr; 60 SCMC; 19 TCMC. **White-throated Sparrow**: 32 SCMC; 13 TCMC. **Dark-eyed Junco**: seven SCMC; 59 TCMC. **Lapland Longspur**: one CV 20 Mar. **Bobolink**: 101 SCMC; 89 TCMC. **Brewer's Blackbird**: female KHMO 2 May (JG, NYSARC). **E. Meadowlark**: arr CV 21 Mar; ten SCMC; 18 TCMC. **Yellow-headed Blackbird**: one KHMO 25 Mar (JG); one MNWR 29-30 Apr (mob). **Rusty Blackbird**: scattered, last CV 6

May. **Com. Grackle:** 54 SCMC; 66 TCMC. **Brown-headed Cowbird:** 22 SCMC; 63 TCMC. **Orchard Oriole:** one Sheldrake 25 May. **N. Oriole:** arr Aurora 3 May; 31 SCMC; 39 TCMC. **Purple Finch:** 16 SCMC; eight TCMC. **Pine Siskin:** one KHMO 3 May, only report. **Am. Goldfinch:** 265 SCMC; 153 TCMC. **Evening Grosbeak:** one Caroline 16 Mar-4 Apr; small flock CV through mid-May.

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