

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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Too much or too little. Central New York weather can never decide which to burden us with. The winter brought very little snow and there were no late spring storms. The average maximum temperature was 48.1°F and the average minimum was 26.7°F. The average temperature in March of 37.4°F was 3.5° below normal. The minus 1° tied the record as the lowest temperature ever on 10 Mar. The total precipitation was 1.31 inches, less than half normal. Moreover, snow total was only 6.9 inches, 10.6 inches below normal. This combination tied the record for the sixth driest March. April followed suit with only 1.88 inches of precipitation, which is 1.45 inches below normal. This made it the tenth driest April on record. It was also the eleventh coldest. Temperatures averaged 42.4°F, 3.3° below normal. The highest temperature for the month was 75°F on 27 Apr. It didn't warm up much in May with the 56.9°F average still 0.2° below normal. The highest temperature for the month was 82°F. A total of 1.31 inches of precipitation was again less than half normal. Below normal precipitation of 4.5 inches for the three months produced a poor collection of ground water. The combination of lack of water and cooler weather slowed vegetation down somewhat. But, as usual, there were leaves on the trees to obscure the warblers from view when migration began.

Unusual waterfowl or wading birds created quite a splash this spring. An Eared Grebe was the first since 1986 and is the first Regional spring record. Two Glossy Ibis and a Little Blue Heron flew past Derby Hill. Two Great Egret were seen many times in a large Great Blue Heron colony after mid May, sometimes in a nest and sometimes just feeding at the base of the flooded trees. Greater White-fronted Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, and Barrow's Goldeneye were unexpected waterfowl.

It is amazing to look back in the old records and see maxima of one to ten Double-crested Cormorant in the 1960s, ten to twenty in the 1970s, up to a thousand in the 1980s. Now, half way through the 1990s, the daily maximum already is in the thousands.

Although there were long, dull stretches of north winds at Derby Hill during the entire season, the few days of south winds helped to make up for many boring days of searching the skies. Ten of the 14 species

normally seen at Derby Hill came through in record numbers. This included Turkey Vulture, both eagles and Merlin. The Bald Eagle total is up 32 from last year. The Golden Eagle totals included 28 adults. Good weather during March and consistent flights on off-wind days both contributed to a record totals for Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged Hawks. But to quote Brian Sullivan, the Derby Hill observer, "1995 will be remembered as the year of the Red-tailed Hawk." Huge flights of this species through the entire season added up to a record shattering total of 19,531. This season total is the highest anywhere in the world. Stranger still, is the fact that such a huge flight occurred in the spring, when the bulk of the birds are adults. The peak flight was 4,591 on 11 April, an astonishing record. These numbers are well above average, reflecting the excellent weather in early March as well as this species' solid foothold in the Northeast. A large number of western Red-tailed Hawks was observed, including 10 dark morphs, 2 rufous morphs and 5 Krider's Red-tailed. One *Swainson's Hawk* added to the total of western species identified. Merlin set a record late date for the species, after the official count ended.

Five each of *Sandhill Crane* and Short-eared Owl were unusual at Derby Hill. The two observers at Derby Hill attempted to estimate the magnitude of some of the passerine flights for the month of March. The peak days were 19 and 20 March with over one million birds. Totals for Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Starling and American Robin appear below. The estimate of Red-winged Blackbird for the month was 1,650,150, and American Crow totaled 70,679 for the month. Needless to say, this census is a difficult task when you are trying to count, age and sex the raptors that are also flying overhead.

Cooper's Hawk seem to be moving closer to habitation (or is it the other way around?) A pair moved into an evergreen grove in a Pompey back yard to lay five eggs in a newly constructed nest. A pair of Cooper's Hawk also nested in a more secluded, but new location at Sandy Pond OSWE. There were two unusual sightings of Merlin, including one in the Adirondacks at the end of May. Nesting of Merlin in the Adirondacks has already been documented and we hope this bird foretells nesting in this Region.

There were the normal few shorebirds on the normal dates. However, as is also usual in the spring, there had to be a few exceptions.

Sanderling, seldom seen here in the spring, appeared three weeks earlier than the earliest prior date. White-rumped Sandpiper and a small flock of Whimbrel, only the third spring record since 1970, were also unusual spring sightings. However, the previous report of Whimbrel in May 1992 was also of a small flock.

There were only two reports of Eastern Screech-Owl. This species may be having serious recovery problems from the severe winter of 1993-94. Red-headed Woodpecker, few as they are, returned to their normal locations plus a new location in Jamesville. Acadian Flycatcher was seen in two new places this spring. Many thrushes were heard flying overhead at night during migration, but sightings of birds on the ground were rather few. Three Fish Crow were found at a shopping center on the north side of the city of Syracuse. There was some obvious courtship activity and there is good nesting habitat in a nearby cemetery. They were also heard two different times at Schiller Park, which is only a mile from the shopping center as the crow flies. Fish Crow has not been seen regularly in Region 5 since 1990. A White-eyed Vireo was the first spring sighting since 1991, and Philadelphia Vireo set a Regional record max. Northern Parula was more numerous than usual. A Prairie Warbler returned to its nesting site north of Parish after a year's absence. Cerulean Warbler seems to be on the increase. Warbler rarities found this spring were Connecticut, the first spring sighting since 1986, and Kentucky. A *Blue Grosbeak* with many Indigo Bunting may be the first verified sighting in Region 5. A Dickcissel appeared very briefly at a feeder in April. Henslow's Sparrow returned to a nesting location at West Monroe and stayed through the period for the first report in Region 5 since 1991. Lincoln's Sparrow was observed more than usual in migration, and White-crowned Sparrow produced the second highest spring count for the Region.

There were many rarities or overshoots for the season. The large numbers of hawks of various species is certainly encouraging. The possibility of first Regional nesting by Merlin, Great Egret, and Fish Crow were also hopeful pluses. *Blue Grosbeak* was probably the most unusual bird of the season. On the down side is the slow recovery from our severe winters of Eastern Screech-Owl and Carolina Wren, and grassland species continue to be scarce.

Our thanks to Craig Fosdick, who has been a great help for the four years that he was at Oswego College. We wish him luck and good birding in the future.

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Abbreviations: Adks - Adirondacks; DH - Derby Hill, OSWE. CIM - Clay Marsh, ONON; HIGMA - Howland Island Game Management Area, Cayu; LOL - Lake Ontario littoral, OSWE; LSB - Little Sodus Bay, Fair Haven, and vicinity, CAYU; NPT - northern Pompey Township, ONON; OneiL - Oneida Lake; ONONL - Onondaga Lake; SPd - Sandy Pond, OSWE; SSSP - Selkirk Shores State Park, OSWE; StM - St. Mary's Cemetery, Dewitt, ONON; UM - Utica Marsh.

Spring reports: **Red-throated Loon:** last OneiL 18 May, late. **Com. Loon:** max 110 LOL 26 Apr. **Pied-billed Grebe:** three calling W Monroe through May. **Eared Grebe:** one OneiL 2-7 Apr (MR). **Red-necked Grebe:** max six Toad Harbor OneiL 26 Apr. **Double-crested Cormorant:** record spring max 3120 Oswego Lake 13 May. **Great Egret:** two seen near and around Great Blue Heron colony Toad Harbor mid May through period, nesting status unclear. **Little Blue Heron:** one DH 22 May. **Glossy Ibis:** one DH 22 Apr (SK), one DH 29 Apr (BS). **Tundra Swan:** max nine T Scriba 8 Mar. **Snow Goose:** max 1000+ W Winfield 17 Mar (KZ). **Brant:** max 40 SSSP 20 May. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** singles Biddlecum 14 Mar, DH 20 Mar, the same individual flying 10 miles due north a week later? **N. Pintail:** max 103 Peter Scott Swamp 25 Mar. **Gadwall:** max 50 ONONL 4 Mar. **Eurasian Wigeon:** one Constantia 8 Apr, one Toad Harbor OneiL 18 Apr. **Greater Scaup:** max 1300 LOL 5 Mar (PD). **Oldsquaw:** max 245 Toad Harbor 4 Apr. **Surf Scoter:** three OneiL early May (fide BP), one Oswego Harbor 5 Mar. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** pair SPd 26 Mar (BP). **Ruddy Duck:** max four Toad Harbor OneiL 4 Apr.

Derby Hill summary (*=record):

Species	arrival	max	date	last	total
Turkey Vulture	3 Mar	1048	13 Apr	23 May	*7,537
Osprey	29 Mar	68	28 Apr	23 May	520
Bald Eagle	4 Mar	*13	28 Apr	23 May	*101
Northern Harrier	4 Mar	145	11 Apr	23 May	*1,554
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3 Mar	1024	11 Apr	23 May	6145
Cooper's Hawk	1 Mar	153	11 Apr	21 May	*1,176
Northern Goshawk	22 Feb	12	13 Mar	16 May	79
Red-shouldered Hawk	7 Mar	362	19 Mar	26 Apr	*1,805
Broad-winged Hawk	16 Apr	8604	28 Apr	23 May	23426
<i>Swainson's Hawk</i>		1	21 May		1
Red-tailed Hawk	18 Feb	*4,591	11 Apr	23 May	*19,531
Rough-legged Hawk	18 Feb	154	13 Mar	13 May	*656
Golden Eagle	3 Mar	7	11 Apr	28 Apr	*55
American Kestrel	5 Mar	158	21 Apr	21 May	*931
Merlin	3 Apr	*10	21 Apr	14 May	*53
Peregrine Falcon	31 Mar	1		12 May	6
Totals-15 Feb-23 May					63576

Osprey: arr Cazenovia 21 Mar (JR), record early. **Bald Eagle:** five reports away from DH. **Cooper's Hawk:** active nest with 5 eggs near housing NPT after 15 May, new nest location SPd. **Golden Eagle:** one Peter Scott Swamp 16 Mar, one Leonardsville 18 Mar. **Merlin:** four reports away from DH, one in a chimney in Marcellus on 7 Apr, taken to a rehabilitator, one chasing a gull on Big Moose L Adks late May; last DH 29 May (GS), record late. **Sandhill Crane:** four sightings, max two, DH 29 Mar -29 May. **Ruddy Turnstone:** one SPd 28 May, only report. **Whimbrel:** max 10+ Phillips Pt on Oneil 24 May (WP), unusual in spring. **Sanderling:** ad Basic plumage LSB 23 Apr (PD), record early. **White-rumped Sandpiper:** one SPd 28 May (BP), unusual in spring. **Com. Snipe:** max 29 T Lysander 11 Apr. **Am. Woodcock:** arr Baldwinsville 4 Mar (JB), record early. **Black Tern:** max 14 SSSP 20 May.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: one Whiskey Hollow 26 May. **Short-eared Owl:** only two reports, max two DH 20 May. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** max three Forestport 22 Mar (SK), one Whiskey Hollow 16 Mar-1 Apr. **Red-headed Woodpecker:** new location Jamesville 29 May.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: only report one StM 16 May. **Acadian Flycatcher:** arr Whiskey Hollow 21 May, StM 23 May, new location, T. Manlius 25 May, new location. **Least Flycatcher:** max 21 HIGMA 13 May, highest count since 1979. **E. Phoebe:** arr Syracuse 4 Mar (BH), record

early. **Tree Swallow**: arr DH 12 Mar, ties record early. **Am. Crow**: max 11,000 DH 13 Mar. **Fish Crow**: three Syracuse after 12 Mar, possibly nesting. **Com. Raven**: two reports outside Adks, one DH 2 Mar, one Orwell 20 May. **Carolina Wren**: only two reports. **Wood Thrush**: max 46 HIGMA 13 May, most since May 1971. **Am. Robin**: max 11,000 DH 19-20 Mar. **N. Shrike**: three reports, one DH 12 Mar, one LOL 19 Mar, one Syr 22 Mar. **European Starling**: max 50,000 DH 19-20 Mar.

White-eyed Vireo: one T Camillus 13 May (JH). **Philadelphia Vireo**: record max ten Nine Mile Pt Visitors Center LOL 24 May. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler**: five reports of Brewster's type; one Lawrence's type DH 16 May (DD). **Nashville Warbler**: max 22 LOL 13 May (SA). **Yellow Warbler**: max 180 LOL 13 May. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: max 222 DH 11 May. **Prairie Warbler**: three locations one T Camillus 16 May, one T Parish 20 May, one T Scriba 5 May. **Cerulean Warbler**: max 31 HIGMA 13 May, 14 Whiskey Hollow 21 May. **Kentucky Warbler**: one T Camillus 27 May (JH). **Connecticut Warbler**: one T Ohio HERK 20 May (DD, NYSARC). **Hooded Warbler**: two new nesting sites T Orwell 20 May, still expanding.

Scarlet Tanager: max 35 OneiL 20 May. **Blue Grosbeak**: one DH 21 May (NYSARC), probably Regional first. **Dickcissel**: one New Hartford 26 Apr (FM, ph). **Am. Tree Sparrow**: max 20 Rome 13 Mar. **Chipping Sparrow**: one NPT 4 Apr, record early. **Henslow's Sparrow**: arr and max two W Monroe 13 May. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: max seven LOL 17 May. **White-throated Sparrow**: max 80 StM 27 Apr. **White-crowned Sparrow**: max 682 LOL 13 May (SA), second highest spring max; one T Ira CAYU 11 Mar probably overwintered nearby. **Bobolink**: arr DH 27 Apr, ties record early. **Red-winged Blackbird**: max 750,000 DH 19-20 Mar. **Com. Grackle**: max 200,000 DH 19-20 Mar. **Brown-headed Cowbird**: max 90,000 19-20 Mar. **Red Crossbill**: three sightings. **Pine Siskin**: max 200-300 Big Moose 22 Mar. **Evening Grosbeak**: max 75 Big Moose 22 Mar.

Exotic: Mute Swan: two ONONL through period, six LSB 19-21 May.

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