

REGION 5 - ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

Mary Alice Koenek¹ & Bill Purcell²

1. 362 Nine Mile Point Road, Oswego NY 13126

2. 281 Baum Road, Hastings NY 13076

The spring of 1996 was notable primarily for the persistence of winter conditions well into May. Temperatures recorded at Syracuse were below normal for March, April, and May with above normal precipitation in each month. March had an average temperature of 29.8°F (4.1°F below normal) and 32.2 inches of snow for the month made it the tenth snowiest March on record. The average temperature in April was 43.2°F (2.5°F below normal) and 4.28 inches of rain for the month made it the seventh wettest April on record; 4.8 inches of snow also fell during the month. May had an average temperature of 55.0°F (2.1°F below normal). The last snowfall occurred on 12 May when 2.1 inches of snow fell pushing the seasonal snowfall record to 170.9 inches and making it the second snowiest winter ever and the second snowiest May on record.

The snowstorm on 12 May brought many Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings and Baltimore Orioles into feeders throughout the Region. Dorothy Crumb reported 15 Baltimore Orioles on 12 May eating oranges, peanut butter-suet combination, and hummingbird nectar at her feeders in Jamesville. Her feeders were also visited by ten Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, four Indigo Buntings, Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak. Many others reported a similar scenario and many birds stayed around feeders for up to 7-10 days after the snowfall. The snowstorm and subsequent cold weather on May 12 & 13 also grounded most warblers and thrushes. Large numbers of warblers (dozens to 100's) could be found over these two days within three feet of the ground, sheltering from the wind and gleaning the only insects available, those on the ground. Gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrushes were recorded, though not in large numbers. However, there were more reports of these normally shy species and at times they were found feeding in very open areas.

The reluctance of winter to release its grip on the Region slowed northward migration and caused wintering birds to linger. Late dates were recorded for Snow Goose, Iceland Gull, Great Gray Owl, Fox Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, and Common Redpoll.

Waterfowl migration through Region 5 was exceptional in the number of rarities reported. An Eared Grebe found on Oneida Lake stayed for 9

days. A Western Grebe, found by Molly Thompson at Beaver Lake Nature Center stayed for 14 days. A first Regional record, the length of its stay allowed many distant birders to enjoy the sighting! Three American White Pelicans were initially reported from Onondaga Lake and later from Oneida Lake marking the second year in a row for this species in Region 5. Greater White-fronted Goose and Eurasian Wigeon were reported singly and appear to be occurring more regularly in the Region. All three scoter species were reported during the period. A male Barrow's Goldeneye put in an appearance off Mexico Point for a lucky Birdathon team on 18 May!

Hawks and other raptors migrated over Derby Hill Bird Observatory in between interruptions of bad weather. Hawk numbers at Derby were lower than average due to a March with only 3 days of consistent, moderate south winds and bad timing in April. Large flights of raptors that developed along the Lake Ontario shoreline on 21 and 26 April were blown inland by the passage of cold fronts and resulting NW winds before they reached the eastern end of the lake. Two Swainson's Hawks provided a highlight in the seasonal totals. The two Peregrine Falcons continuing in downtown Syracuse were presented with a nest box complete with video camera by the NYSDEC. The birds declined to use the nest box and no attempt at nesting was documented. Two Great Gray Owls were reported during the period: one, seen infrequently, was hit by a car; the other - a record late bird, was present in Brewerton, Onondaga County for two days before leaving.

Shorebirds were found in most of the usual locations, though numbers seem to be low. Black-bellied Plover and Ruddy Turnstone were each reported only once. A Willet was found during the North American Migration Count on 11 May and stayed through 12 May.

Although arrival dates may not support this, the bulk of passerine migration seemed to be a week to ten days behind schedule, not getting into high gear until mid-May. When the winds and weather favored migration, as they did on 11 and 18 May, birds were everywhere and birders were elated - particularly as the days coincided with the Migration Day Count (11 May) and the Onondaga Audubon Birdathon (18 May). This coincidence provided lots of coverage of popular areas at a time when many birds were present and the results are reflected in the spring species accounts. One of the best spring migration days in years occurred on 18 May. Veteran observers in the Region called it the best day in the past ten years! The annual Birdathon had an unprecedented 198 species cumulatively recorded during the 24-hr. period. Derby Hill Bird

Observatory recorded more than 100 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 4000 Blue Jays, 1000 Bobolinks, and 2000 Baltimore Orioles flying over on that single day!

The flight of 18 May was incredible and many observers remarked that it was the best in years! After strong south winds during the night and early morning thunderstorms, the sky on the morning of 18 May was filled with birds! Most birds hardly stopped to rest or feed continuing to stream over head until midday. Circumstances on 11 May were similar but of a far less magnitude though good numbers of some species were recorded - particularly Veery, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Palm Warbler, and Black-and-white Warbler. On 18 May good numbers of Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Wilson's Warbler were noted.

Carolina Wren, however, continue to show the species in Region 5 has not recovered from the severe winter of a couple of years ago. Only three reports of Carolina Wren were submitted. Bohemian Waxwing and Northern Shrike were still present into April in several locations.

A Clay-colored Sparrow was the next rarity to be found at Beaver Lake. Located on 22 May, it was still present through the end of the spring reporting period. On the same day the Clay-colored Sparrow was discovered, Marge Rusk found a female **Painted Bunting** in the same vicinity while observing the Clay-colored Sparrow. The Painted Bunting was not as cooperative however, it did not stay long enough to be observed by others. Added to the Western Grebe record, it is safe to say that Beaver Lake Nature Center has the record for the most rarities in one report period!

Proving that luck has much to do with finding rarities while birding, a female tanager was found on 4 May by three observers. However, before it could be identified with certainty as a female **Western Tanager** it disappeared into a thicket and was lost to view. Despite a thorough search for several hours the bird could not be relocated. By an incredible stroke of luck it was relocated again by two of the original observers on the following morning, as it called from the roadside. It was positively identified, photographed and eventually seen by a number of observers. Additional western and southern passerine species reported around Region 5 were: **Black-billed Magpie**, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, and Orchard Oriole. The weather certainly played a tremendous role in the reporting results for Region 5 - influencing migration and challenging not only the birds but the birders.

Contributors: Sue Adair, Sue Boettger, Joseph Brin, David Cesari, Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Robert Evans, Natalia Garcia, Bill Gruenbaum, Gene Huggins, Mary Alice Koenke, Andy Leahy, Gary Lee, Robert Long, David Nash, Matt Perry, Wayne Powell, Bill Purcell, Marge Rusk, Jean Ryan, Mickey Scilingo, Tony Shrimpton, Gerry Smith, Zach Smith, Maureen Staloff, Molly Thompson, Judy Thurber, Ken Zoller.

Abbreviations: DH - Derby Hill, EIC - Niagara Mohawk Energy Information Center at Nine Mile Point, LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OneiL - Oneida Lake, OnonL - Onondaga Lake, StM - Saint Mary's Cemetery, Dewitt, UM - Utica Marsh.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Red-throated Loon:** one OnonL 14 Apr, only report. **Com. Loon:** arr LOL 8 Apr; arr Moss lake Adirondacks 30 Apr. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr New Hartford 31 Mar; max six OnonL 18 Apr. **Horned Grebe:** max 17 Toad Harbor 28 Apr. **Red-necked Grebe:** max 21 OnonL 18 Apr; four Woodman Pond 13 Apr, where two remained through 29 Apr; last Toad Harbor 27 May. **EARED GREBE:** one Toad Harbor 28 Apr-7 May (MR). **WESTERN GREBE:** one Beaver Lake 25 Apr-9 May, first Regional record, NYSARC (MT). **AM. WHITE PELICAN:** three OnonL 29 Apr; one remained on OneiL through 18 May (AL). **Double-crested Cormorant:** arr LOL 4 Apr. **Am. Bittern:** max three Toad Harbor 18 May. **Least Bittern:** two New Hartford 23 May; one Dewitt Marsh 26 May, only reports. **Great Blue Heron:** max 33 DH 25 Mar. **Great Egret:** max three West Monroe 27 Apr; two on nests in Hastings Great Blue Heronry 24 May but breeding still not confirmed. **Cattle Egret:** one West Monroe 22 May, only report (DC). **Green Heron:** max six UM 8 May. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** max five Oswego 18 May; one Fayetteville 5 May, only report away from Oswego. **Tundra Swan:** six Brewerton 11-14 Mar, only location. **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:** one Biddlecum 24 Mar, only report (SA). **Snow Goose:** max 800 Fish Creek, Vienna Mar 26; large numbers in ONEI & MADI; one ad and one imm Sangerfield 18 May, unusually late. **Brant:** arr 70 OneiL 18 May; max 500 OneiL and 1700 DH 23 May. **Canada Goose:** max 4500 Schroepel 23 Mar. **Wood Duck:** max 100 UM 29 Mar. **Green-winged Teal:** max 60 Clay Marsh 10 Apr. **Am. Black Duck:** max 99 OnonL 10 Mar. **N. Pintail:** max 280 Six Mile Creek floodlands 28 Mar. **Blue-winged Teal:** max nine UM 28 Apr. **N. Shoveler:** arr Schroepel 28 Mar; max ten UM 5 Apr; last UM 6 May. **Gadwall:** max 12 UM 29 Mar. **EURASIAN WIGEON:** one OneiL 29 Mar-7 Apr (TS). **Am. Wigeon:** arr DH 2 Mar; max 50 UM 29 Mar. **Canvasback:** arr Syracuse 17 Mar; max 22 OSWE 9 Apr. **Redhead:** max 31 OnonL & 30 LSB 2 Mar; last

17 Mar. **Ring-necked Duck**: max 213 OneiL 1 Apr; last Labrador Pond 13 May. **Greater Scaup**: max 1800 Toad Harbor 27 Apr. **Lesser Scaup**: max 260 Toad Harbor 27 Apr. **Oldsquaw**: max six OsweH 17 Mar; few spring migrants noted. **Black Scoter**: three Oswego 2 Mar, rare in spring. **Surf Scoter**: two OneiL 15-17 May, rare in spring. **White-winged Scoter**: max 62 Toad Harbor 18 May. **Com. Goldeneye**: max 450 Brewerton 13 Apr. **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE**: one male Mexico Pt. 18 May (TS, JT). **Bufflehead**: max 125 OnonL 21 Apr; last five Toad Harbor 14 May. **Hooded Merganser**: max 28 Brewerton 17 Mar. **Com. Merganser**: max 1167 OnonL 2 Mar. **Red-breasted Merganser**: max 80 LOL 17 Mar. **Ruddy Duck**: max ten OnonL 30 Apr, only two other reports of five total.

HAWKS-ALCIDS:

Derby Hill hawk migration totals:

Species	Total	Peak Flight/Date	Range of Occurrence
Turkey Vulture	5,148	1002 - 15 Apr	2 Mar - 28 May
Osprey	327	33 - 19 May	6 Apr - 28 May
Bald Eagle	68	5 - 21 Apr	23 Feb - 23 May
Northern Harrier	460	65 - 15 Apr	2 Mar - 23 May
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4,356	761 - 15 Apr	2 Mar - 23 May
Cooper's Hawk	478	110 - 15 Apr	2 Mar - 28 May
Northern Goshawk	62	9 - 25 Mar	26 Feb - 10 May
Red-shouldered Hawk	811	197 - 25 Mar	2 Mar - 7 May
Broad-winged Hawk	15,327	3,359 - 21 Apr	18 Apr - 28 May
Red-tailed Hawk	7,751	1,650 - 15 Apr	24 Feb - 28 May
Rough-legged Hawk	345	45 - 25 Mar	23 Feb - 19 May
Golden Eagle	27	9 - 19 Apr	13 Mar - 15 May
American Kestrel	474	107 - 15 Apr	14 Mar - 23 May
Merlin	47	14 - 20 Apr	14 Mar - 18 May
Peregrine Falcon	9	5 - 10 May	19 Apr - 20 May

Osprey: arr Baldwinsville 27 Mar. **Bald Eagle**: one Beaver Lake 22 Mar & 27 Apr. **N. Goshawk**: one Clay Marsh 27 Apr, only report away from DH. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: two Parish 11 May. **Broad-winged Hawk**: one New Hartford 25 Mar, second earliest Regional report (MP). **Merlin**: singles Syracuse Airport 11 Apr and New Hartford 28 Apr, only reports away from DH. **Peregrine Falcon**: pair Syracuse throughout, no nesting or attempt failed; two other singles reported away from DH. **Ruffed Grouse**: max six Happy Valley WMA 11 May; low numbers away from

Tug Hill. **Wild Turkey**: max 60 West Winfield 20 Mar; flocks of 10-30 common throughout Region first half of season. **Virginia Rail**: max 5 UM 14 Apr. **Sora**: one Sangerfield 18 May, possible new breeding site; max two at several sites. **Com. Moorhen**: max 25 UM 14 May. **Am. Coot**: two Peter Scott Swamp 28 Mar; singles OnonL 18 Apr & UM 23 May, only reports. **SANDHILL CRANE**: two DH 3 Apr & 20 May; one DH 1 May. **Black-Bellied Plover**: one Sandy Pond 26 May, only report. **Semipalmated Plover**: arr LOL 11 May. **Killdeer**: arr DH 14 Mar. **Greater Yellowlegs**: arr DH 18 Mar, ties record early; max 27 Biddlecum 1 May; last Biddlecum 18 May. **Lesser Yellowlegs**: max 28 Mexico 11 May; last two Fabius 27 May. **Solitary Sandpiper**: max 11 LOL 11 May. **WILLET**: one New Haven 11-12 May (SA). **Spotted Sandpiper**: max 37 LOL 11 May. **Upland Sandpiper**: arr DH 20 Apr; max five Syracuse Airport 10 May. **Ruddy Turnstone**: one Delta Lake 13 May, only report. **Semipalmated Sandpiper**: max 3 Schroepfel 8 May. **Least Sandpiper**: max 18 West Monroe 18 May. **Pectoral Sandpiper**: max nine Baldwinsville 6 Apr. **Dunlin**: max 55 Biddlecum 24 May. **Short-billed Dowitcher**: max three Mexico 12 May; three Biddlecum 18 May. **Com. Snipe**: max ten south shore Oneil 1 Apr. **Am. Woodcock**: max 18 Clay Marsh 10 Apr. **Bonaparte's Gull**: max 12 Otisco Lake 24 Apr; last OnonL 18 May. **Iceland Gull**: last one Oswego Harbor 16 May, late. **Caspian Tern**: one OnonL 24 & 30 Apr, only reports away from LOL. **Com. Tern**: max 50 LOL 18 May. **Black Tern**: three UM 14 May; max five Selkirk Shores SP after 8 May.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: **Black-billed Cuckoo**: few reported. **E. Screech-Owl**: max three Noyes Sanctuary 30 Mar; one Sangerfield 26 Apr. **Barred Owl**: nine reported from six locations. **GREAT GRAY OWL**: one New Hartford (MP) sporadically to 18 Mar when struck by car; one Brewerton 23-24 Apr, record late. **Long-eared Owl**: max two Noyes Sanctuary 18 Apr. **Short-eared Owl**: one-two Syracuse Airport 7 Mar through 1 Apr; one EIC 20 Apr, only migrant. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: one New Hartford 19-21 Apr, only report. **Com. Nighthawk**: max two DH 10 Apr. **Whip-poor-will**: single migrants Sterling and Oswego 18 May; DH 22 May; max three Constantia breeding site 25 May. **Chimney Swift**: max 19 Skaneateles 21 May. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**: max 110 past DH 18 May. **Belted Kingfisher**: max seven LOL 11 May. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: max four LOL 19 May; migrant at Pompey feeder 9-12 May. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: max five EIC 13 Apr. **N. Flicker**: max 42 DH 26 Apr.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Olive-sided Flycatcher: one Labrador Pond 26-27 May, only report. E. Wood-Pewee: max eight New Hartford 21 May. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: max four St. Mary's 22 May. Acadian Flycatcher: arr Whiskey Hollow 25 May. Alder Flycatcher: max five Labrador pond 27 May. Willow Flycatcher: max eight UM 27 May. Least Flycatcher: max 13 LOL 11 May. Great Crested Flycatcher: max 11 Cicero 27 May. E. Kingbird: max 22 LOL 14 May. Horned Lark: max 90 New Hartford 19 Apr. Purple Martin: max 43 SW shore Oneil 27 May; many old sites unoccupied. Tree Swallow: max 1000 LOL 27 Apr. N. Rough-winged Swallow: max 35 LOL 18 May. Bank Swallow: max 25 Cliff Swallow: max 20 West Monroe 11 May. Barn Swallow: max 200 LOL 18 May. Blue Jay: max 4000 DH 18 May. **BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE:** one Tully early May; one Cazenovia 30 May (fide DC). Fish Crow: two-four Syracuse throughout; one LOL 16 May. Com. Raven: five singles past DH 16 Mar to 18 May; one Manlius 4 May. Red-breasted Nuthatch: return migration LOL began 20 Apr; few noted in breeding areas before May. White-breasted Nuthatch: max 100 past DH afternoon of 22 Apr. Brown Creeper: max eight New Hartford 19 Apr. Carolina Wren: two Apr & May Syracuse; one DH 10 May, only reports. House Wren: max 12 Camillus 7 May. Winter Wren: arr New Hartford 4 Apr. Marsh Wren: max 16 Clay Marsh 30 May. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 40 StM 19 Apr. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 50 LOL 4 May. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: max nine Clay Marsh 16 May. E. Bluebird: max 32 DH 25 Mar. Veery: max 72 LOL 11 May. Gray-cheeked Thrush: max six EIC 18 May. Swainson's Thrush: max six LOL 11 May; migrants more frequent than usual. Hermit Thrush: max 11 New Hartford 25 Apr. Wood Thrush: max 30 LOL 18 May. Gray Catbird: max 50 LOL 18 May. N. Mockingbird: single migrants LOL 11-18 May. Brown Thrasher: arr New Hartford 20 Apr; max 5 West Monroe 9 May. Am. Pipit: max 100 Fabius 27 Apr. Bohemian Waxwing: max and last 150 Paris 12 Apr. Cedar Waxwing: max 75 LOL 18 May. N. Shrike: max three LOL 3 May; last Rome 8 Apr.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: White-eyed Vireo: one Toad Harbor 18 May, only report. Solitary Vireo: max five Fabius 11 May. Yellow-throated Vireo: max four West Monroe 27 May. Warbling Vireo: max 17 Cicero 27 May. Philadelphia Vireo: arr and max three OSWE 18 May. Red-eyed Vireo: max 31 Pratts Falls 25 May. Blue-winged Warbler: max six New Hartford 28 May. Golden-winged Warbler: max five LOL 11 May. Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: "Brewster's" three New Hartford 16-20; one Labrador Pond 26 May; "Lawrence's" one Pompey 25 May.

Tennessee Warbler: max four New Hartford 19 May. **Orange-crowned Warbler:** 5 individuals 5-19 May, good numbers. **Nashville Warbler:** max 20 New Hartford 15 May. **N. Parula:** max 11 LOL 11 May. **Yellow Warbler:** max 400 OSWE 18 May. **Chestnut-sided Warbler:** max 19 EIC 11 May. **Magnolia Warbler:** max six StM 20 May; EIC 24 May. **Cape May Warbler:** max three LOL 11 May. **Black-throated Blue Warbler:** max 45 LOL 11 May. **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 500 LOL 18 May. **Black-throated Green Warbler:** max 32 LOL 11 May. **Blackburnian Warbler:** max 41 LOL 11 May. **YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:** one Camillus 10 May, fourth Spring record, (NYSARC, SA). **Pine Warbler:** few noted away from breeding sites. **Prairie Warbler:** five different migrants noted 11-27 May, good numbers; two singing at (presumed) breeding site in Parish after 13 May. **Palm Warbler:** max 26 LOL 11 May. **Bay-breasted Warbler:** max 25 New Hartford 19 May. **Blackpoll Warbler:** max 12 New Hartford 26 May. **Cerulean Warbler:** max five Toad Harbor after 13 May. **Black-and-white Warbler:** max 63 LOL 11 May. **Am. Redstart:** max 11 LOL 11 May. **WORM-EATING WARBLER:** one StM 14 May, only report (RL). **Ovenbird:** max 35 LOL 11 May. **N. Waterthrush:** max 14 OSWE 11 May. **Louisiana Waterthrush:** max seven New Hartford 25 Apr. **Kentucky Warbler:** one StM 18 May, only report. **Com. Yellowthroat:** max 25 LOL 11 May. **Hooded Warbler:** max seven LOL 19 May. **Wilson's Warbler:** max nine LOL 18 May. **Canada Warbler:** max four Labrador Pond 27 May. **Yellow-breasted Chat:** one Syracuse 19-20 May, only report.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **SUMMER TANAGER:** one Labrador Pond 11 May, fifth spring record (NG). **Scarlet Tanager:** max 35 LOL 18 May. **WESTERN TANAGER:** one Nine Mile Pt. 4-5 May, first Regional record, ph (NYSARC, SA, MAK). **Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** max 50 LOL 18 May. **Indigo Bunting:** max 20 DH 18 May. **PAINTED BUNTING:** one female Beaver Lake 22 May, first spring record (NYSARC,MR). **E. Towhee:** max 12 Hastings 11 May. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** last 28 Apr. **Chipping Sparrow:** max 66 LOL 11 May. **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:** one Beaver Lake 22 May thru period; one Camillus 23 May. **Field Sparrow:** arr DH 15 Apr; max ten OSWE 11 May. **Vesper Sparrow:** max five EIC 13 Apr. **Savannah Sparrow:** max 21 Syracuse Airport 10 May. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** migrants Nine Mile Point 20 Apr & 18 May, rare away from breeding sites; max seven Syracuse Airport 10 May. **Fox Sparrow:** max five Hastings 1 Apr; last Rome 12 May, late. **Song Sparrow:** max 90 LOL 20 Apr. **Lincoln's Sparrow:** max 15 LOL 18 May, good numbers; last UM 27

May. **Swamp Sparrow**: max 38 Cicero 3 May. **White-throated Sparrow**: max 40 Fabius 13 May. **White-crowned Sparrow**: max 280 LOL 11 May. **Dark-eyed Junco**: max 50 New Hartford 19 Apr. **Lapland Longspur**: one adult male Pompey 18 May, late. **Snow Bunting**: max 180 New Hartford 17 Mar; last New Hartford 28 Mar. **Bobolink**: max 1000 DH 18 May. **E. Meadowlark**: max 30 DH 25 Mar. **Rusty Blackbird**: max 250 Beaver Lake 1 May; 12 DH 18 May, late for such numbers. **Orchard Oriole**: two New Hartford 28 May, only report. **Baltimore Oriole**: large numbers grounded by 12 May snow; many at many feeders thru 22 May; 2000 DH 18 May. **Pine Grosbeak**: five New Hartford 11 May; two Nelson MADI 17 Mar. **Purple Finch**: max 50 OSWE 18 May. **Red Crossbill**: at Fabius thru season, max 19 there 26 Apr. **Com. Redpoll**: max 120 Hastings 26 Mar; one DH 15 May, late. **Pine Siskin**: return flight 15 Apr-20 May. **Evening Grosbeak**: return flight 100-400 day past DH 22 Apr-19 May.

Mkoeneke@aol.com & wpurcell@dreamscape.com