

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

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It was a cold spring, reinforcing the popular belief that there are really only two seasons in Buffalo - summer and winter. However, the birds provided evidence that migration still occurs in spite of the weather. But this spring - with the warblers at least - if you blinked, you missed it.

March was cool and very wet. Precipitation, often in the form of snow, fell on all but six days. The total of 4.47 inches was well above the average of 2.68 inches. Snowfall measured 3.6 inches above the norm of 10.3 inches and the temperature was 0.7 degrees below the average of 33.8°F. The waterfowl migration was generally on time, but despite weather which might have kept them here, large concentrations were not reported.

It was another cool April, with the temperature average of 42.3°F being nearly 3 degrees below normal. At least it was not unpleasant birding as it was quite dry - precipitation was only 1.65 inches versus the average of 2.87. With few strong warm fronts, though, there was nothing to really spur the migration. The last snow of the season fell in April, pushing the winter total to 97.6 inches, four inches above normal. Ice jams caused problems below Niagara Falls on the Niagara River. Thus, the ice boom on Lake Erie was left in place longer than usual. When high winds pushed vast quantities of lake ice under the boom, it produced an unusual spring concentration of gulls at the Peace Bridge in Buffalo.

At long last, it was May! Unfortunately, May was very much like April, which this year was like March, which in Region 1 is still winter! The bright spot was that there was no snow. The temperature average of 50.6°F was an impressive six degrees below normal. Rainfall totaled 3.61 inches, somewhat above the norm of 3.14 inches. May was marked by a streak of 29 consecutive days of below normal temps. Birders, in the Buffalo area at least, bemoaned the lack of warblers until a good push was finally enjoyed on the 19th, a Monday. This writer is left to wonder if the birds were being held back in our Southern Tier - again we received very few reports from CHAU and CATT. One report from that area after the breakthrough on the 19th, however, was from Chautauqua Lake. Thirteen species of warblers there on the 22nd, with four additional species the next day, was a fairly good total for inland in the Southern Tier. With such weather in May, it is not surprising that there were several late sightings and peak counts up to two weeks late.

The cold weather retarded vegetation growth and insect hatches, pressing many birds to sample different food sources. Vivian Pitzrick reported that at least one American Robin was eating her fine cracked corn in March and April, a most unusual observation. Masses of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks befuddled the

many feeder monitors who are only casual bird watchers (BRBA). Baltimore Orioles fought with Scarlet Tanagers over orange slices in the Town of Clarence while Black-throated Blue Warblers sipped at hummingbird feeders (BRBA) and nectared at barberry (personal observation). Orchard Orioles were also reported eating oranges while Baltimores were observed eating suet (BRBA).

The Buffalo Ornithological Society held its April Bird Count on the 13th. It was compiled by Gail Seamans, Gerry Rising, and Terry Yonker. The comments below refer to the entire count region which includes the Niagara Peninsula of Ontario, about ten percent of the total area. Light rain, cool temperatures, and wind in the afternoon probably had as great an effect upon the birders as the birds and may help to explain the many low counts. Twelve-year highs for species averaging over 100 were recorded by Red-breasted Merganser and Am. Coot, while Bufflehead was at a 19-year high. The 101 Ruddy Ducks may have been an all-time high - large numbers continue to frequent the Batavia Sewage Lagoons. Twelve-year lows included Killdeer*, Rock Dove**, Mourning Dove**, N. Cardinal, and House Finch** while 19-year lows included Canada Goose, Am. Black Duck*, Red-tailed Hawk*, Am. Kestrel**, Ring-necked Pheasant**, White-breasted Nuthatch*, and Song Sparrow*. A single asterisk indicates species which I have flagged for a low count once previously in this column and a double asterisk indicates those which were flagged at least twice.

The presence of a Great Horned Owl nest at the Buckhorn Island SP cormorant colony in the Niagara River would certainly explain their complete abandonment of the site this year. It is also highly suggestive as to why they failed every previous year there. The cormorants, instead, moved to Motor Island in the river where they may be nesting directly over the heronry. (The herons use the shorter bushes and trees, not the tall trees.) Less than a decade ago, cormorants in Hamilton, Ontario completely wiped out one heronry when their guano eventually killed the nesting trees used mainly by Black-crowned Night-Herons. At Motor Island the vulnerable species include Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Blue Heron, and Great Egret. The latter has returned for its third season with at least four nesting pairs.

Greater White-fronted Goose, regular in recent years, put in its best showing ever with at least four reports involving nine individuals. In addition, reports of five in the Town of Sherman CHAU (BRBA) and one in Batavia (BRBA) were unverified and thus not included.

Osprey continue to do well at Allegheny Reservoir but have not been found nesting anywhere else in the Region. Peregrine Falcons nested again on City Hall in Buffalo. Unfortunately, the attempt was unsuccessful. It was an excellent spring for shorebirds. Good numbers were found at Tonawanda WMA, Lake Ontario plain, Batavia Sewage Lagoons, and Countryside Sand and Gravel Pits CATT (CSGP). Unfortunately, one of the best reports was

unverified - 42 Willets at Cheney's Point on L. Chautauqua 6 May (BRBA). It was only last spring that there was a record smashing count of 55 Willets at Goat Island in the Niagara River. Another report of four Willets at CSGP 19 May was also unverified (BRBA).

As previously mentioned gull numbers were impressive near the Peace Bridge in April. Ring-billed, Herring, and Bonaparte's gulls were in high numbers there. On the lower Niagara River Bonaparte's Gulls were in record numbers and they lingered with several Little Gulls well into May. The eight gull species reported in the Region are possibly a May record.

The peak days for warbler migration occurred 19 and 24 May in the northern counties. The last weekend of the month, 31 May and 1 Jun, produced great numbers of flycatchers in the Buffalo area and Allegheny County and an excellent "May day" for so late in the season. With May's weather holding and holding and holding up the migrants, however, such an occurrence was more expected than not.

Rarities which enlivened the spring were **Am. White Pelican**, Snowy Egret, *Plegadis* ibis species, Greater White-fronted Goose, Golden Eagle, **Gyr Falcon**, Am. Golden-Plover, Whimbrel, Ruff, Wilson's Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, "Lawrence's" Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Dickcissel, and Orchard Oriole.

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Abbreviations: Batavia SL-Batavia Sewage Lagoons; BOSAC-Buffalo Ornithological Society April Count, 13 Apr; BOSMC-Buffalo Ornithological Society May Count, 18 May; BRBA-Buffalo Rare Bird Alert; CSGP-Countryside Sand and Gravel Pits, Town of Dayton CATT; FLC-Forest Lawn Cemetery Buffalo; GHSP-Golden Hill SP; GI-Goat Island NIAG; INWR-Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NR-Niagara River; OOWMA-Oak Orchard WMA; TNP-Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TWMA-Tonawanda WMA; NR-Niagara River; WG-Williamsville Glen ERIE; WTSP-Wilson-Tuscarora SP

LOONS-WATERFOWL: **Red-throated Loon:** six T Somerset & T Yates 9 Mar (WD,DD), early movement; max 29 BOSAC; last BOSMC. **Com. Loon:** arr six inland ERIE & WYOM 29 Mar, usually found on Great Lakes first. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr TNP 19 Mar. **Red-necked Grebe:** max 367 Shadigee ORLE 20 Apr, high count though well short of last years's record; one, two INWR 6, 29 Apr and last two Buckhorn I SP 2 May, only inland reports. **AM. WHITE PELICAN:** Strawberry I - NR 24, 25 May (AW,MM!,WD!), same location as last spring; about the 12th record. **Double-crested Cormorant:** abandoned colony at Buckhorn I SP-NR, probably due to Great Horned Owl nest; new colony at Motor I-NR is over the heronry there. **Great Blue Heron:** two y in nest Motor I-NR 24 Apr (WW), very early. **Great Egret:** max 14 Motor I-NR 21 May, at least four nests here. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** seven Buffalo back yard where seen previous years 1 Mar, possibly overwintered. **Plegadis ibis species:** TWMA 26 Apr (AB!), reported as Glossy but White-faced not ruled out. **Tundra Swan:** max 750 Olean CATT and 400 Chautauqua L part of big movement 6-13 Mar; last Attica Res. WYOM 17 May. **Mute Swan:** Attica Res WYOM 10 Mar; record max six INWR 27 Apr-11 May (WW!); T Freedom 26 Apr; reports increasing. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** T Yates 2 Mar (TH!), earliest ever; six INWR 9 Mar (PY!,MD!); T Newstead 13 Apr (PY!); reports of five others were unverified. **Snow Goose:** arr two T Yates 2 Mar; 44 T Angelica 8 Mar, high inland count; max 47 T Yates 9 Mar. **N. Shoveler:** arr T Newstead 9 Mar. **Eurasian Wigeon:** no verified reports. **Canvasback:** 550 Chautauqua L circa 13 Mar, high spring count. **Redhead:** Belmont ALLE 1-9 Mar, unusual location; 170 Chautauqua L circa 13 Mar, high spring count. **Surf Scoter:** T Somerset 9 Mar (WD!,DD), early; two BSL 28 Mar (WW!), early and rare inland; Lewiston Res. 13 Apr; five 20 Apr and one 11 May T Somerset; Delaware Park Buffalo circa 15 May; increasing. **White-winged Scoter:** Attica Res WYOM 10 Mar; three TWMA 22 Mar; very uncommon inland. **Bufflehead:** INWR 31 May (WWt!,DW), late. **Ruddy Duck:** arr Amity L ALLE 11 Mar (VP!), early; max 81 Batavia WWTP 23 Apr, regular in large numbers here.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Turkey Vulture:** 788 T Hamburg Hawkwatch 27 Mar (FR); 971 Silver Creek CHAU 3 Apr (MO), record count. **Osprey:** several nests Allegheny Res but no other locations. **Bald Eagle:** at least two nest sites INWR and Allegheny Res; no report from Cattaraugus Indian Reservation site; many reports - doing well. **N. Goshawk:** T Hamburg Hawkwatch 21,24 Apr (FR), only report. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** arr T Lewiston 19 Mar; max only 36 T Hamburg Hawkwatch 24 Mar and WTSP 27 Mar. **Broad-winged Hawk:** arr L Erie shore 15 Apr; max 872 Hamburg Hawkwatch 27 Apr. **Rough-legged Hawk:** last two Hamburg Hawkwatch 5 May. **Golden Eagle:** ad Beaver Meadow Wildlife Refuge WYOM 16 Mar (DJ!); subadult Hamburg Hawkwatch

4 May (FR). **Merlin**: TNP 2 May (BC!); usually more. **Peregrine Falcon**: unsuccessful nesting Buffalo City Hall (mob); INWR 17 May (MM!); only verified reports. **GYRFALCON**: Point Gratiot Dunkirk 5 Apr (MO!); very rare and the latest ever. **Virginia Rail**: two TWMA 5 Apr (DBr!); earliest since 1949. **Am. Coot**: arr away from wintering areas INWR 1 Mar. **Sandhill Crane**: no verified reports. **Am. Golden-Plover**: 1.2 TWMA 28.30 Apr (PY); first spring record since 1977 - earlier than Black-bellied Plover when it does occur. **Greater Yellowlegs**: 90 TWMA 29 Apr (WW); second highest count ever. **Lesser Yellowlegs**: 80 TWMA 23 Apr (WW); record spring count. **Upland Sandpiper**: arr three Tillman WMA Erie 27 Apr. **Ruddy Turnstone**: arr CSGP 15 May; 1.4 Batavia SL 19.26 May; Woodlawn Beach SP 24 May; more than usual. **Sanderling**: Batavia SL 26 May; only report. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: arr T Carlton 10 May (MM!); a week early; TWMA 16 May; four T Somerset 18 May; three Batavia SL 26 May; a good showing. **Purple Sandpiper**: up to five Goat I until 9 May; last one 25 May (WD!.MT); second latest ever. **Dunlin**: arr ten INWR 11 Apr; third earliest ever. **STILT SANDPIPER**: T Carlton 18 May (MM!.WD!); third spring record. **Ruff**: male TWMA 27 Apr (WW!); about the sixth spring record. **Short-billed Dowitcher**: arr TWMA 10 May; 19 T Clarence & 20 CSGP 19 May; good counts; 28 T Yates 19 May (WW); record count. **Dowitcher species**: TWMA 30 Apr (PY!); very early. **Wilson's Phalarope**: 1.2.2-5 Batavia SL 5.18.26 May (WW!.PY,KF); four T Carlton 17 May (RS); record count; TWMA 17 May; best showing ever. **Red-necked Phalarope**: TWMA 14 May (JW!); Batavia SL 18 May (MM!.WD!); seventh and eighth spring records. **Little Gull**: 61 mouth of NR 17 Apr; short of last year's record of 78 here; Buffalo-NR 19.25 Apr; unusual here in spring; last two mouth of NR 16 May; late. **Bonaparte's Gull**: 50,000 mouth of NR 21 Apr (GB); record count. **Iceland Gull**: two Point Breeze ORLE 10 May (MM!); Niagara Falls 24 May (MM!); both late. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: ad Lewiston-NR 21 Apr (PY!.BH); two imm T Somerset 11 May (WD!); spring sightings increasing. **Glaucous Gull**: last Point Breeze ORLE 10 May. **Caspian Tern**: 210 Barcelona Harbor CHAU 23 Apr (BRBA); record count; 34 Point Breeze ORLE 18 May; high count for so late; increasing.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: **Snowy Owl**: Buffalo-NR circa 24 Apr; only report. **Long-eared Owl**: last Four Mile Creek SP 6 Apr; no reports away from L Ontario plain. **Short-eared Owl**: three T Java 5 Apr; T Porter 13 Apr; only reports. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: WTSP 25.27 Mar; Greenwood ALLE 28 Mar; only reports. **Whip-poor-will**: Blasdell ERIE 10-19 May (MT); third year in a row at this site; Forest Lawn Cemetery Buffalo 15 May; only reports. **Chimney Swift**: 1500 Buffalo 14 May (MH); record count. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: arr Buckhorn I SP 2 May; six other reports in May - more than recent years.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** arr two FLC 15 May. **Alder Flycatcher:** arr nine T Amity 28 May. **SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER:** corn stubble and manured field T Darien GENE 21.22 May (CL!,WD!,TH!,GS!); only previous record was T Ellicott CHAU 4 Jun 1988. **Bank Swallow:** 600 Batavia SL 16 May (MM), record count. **Barn Swallow:** 500 Batavia SL 16 May (MM), record count. **Com. Raven:** max 11 BOSAC, all in CATT & ALLE; nine T Amity 30 Apr (VP), record count for one locality. **Carolina Wren:** two locations, Lake Erie plain, still down. **Winter Wren:** arr two T Hamburg 28 Mar. **Marsh Wren:** arr two TWMA 28 Apr. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Buckhorn I SP 20 Mar (BC!), overwintered. **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** arr GI 14 May. **N. Mockingbird:** 2.3 T Hamburg 27.28 Apr, uncommon here. **Am. Pipit:** arr three Belvidere ALLE 31 Mar; last T Darien 22 May. **N. Shrike:** last T Somerset 16 Mar.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: **White-eyed Vireo:** WG 5.8 May; one ALLE BOSMC; only reports. **Philadelphia Vireo:** arr FLC 15 May. **Blue-winged Warbler:** arr Evangola SP 11 May. **Golden-winged Warbler:** arr WG 12 May. **"Brewster's" Warbler:** GI 19 May. **"Lawrence's" Warbler:** two Crick's Run Allegany SP 30 May, fifth straight year here. **Orange-crowned Warbler:** TNP 4-14 May; T Lewiston 16 May; Four Mile Creek SP 17 May; T Caneadea 21 May, unusual away from lake plains; more than usual. **N. Parula:** arr INWR 4 May. **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 200 20 May. **Pine Warbler:** arr WTSP 6 Apr (WD!), third earliest ever; second arr three locations not until 26 Apr. **Prairie Warbler:** arr three T Amity 22 May, breeding area; no migrants noted. **Palm Warbler:** max 20 T Porter & T Wilson 10 May, well short of last year's record of 79; last two T Somerset 26 May (MM!), late. **Cerulean Warbler:** arr Forest Lawn Cemetery Buffalo 14 May. **Prothonotary Warbler:** arr 4 May Oak Orchard (RS). **WORM-EATING WARBLER:** TNP 3 May (WW!,MM!); GI 9 May (LL,WW!), rare. **Louisiana Waterthrush:** arr T Orangeville 20 Apr, breeding area. **Kentucky Warbler:** TNP 23 May (BC!); rare but regular. **Connecticut Warbler:** TNP 31 May (MM!,AB), rare. **Hooded Warbler:** arr Point Gratiot CHAU 4 May. **Yellow-breasted Chat:** one CHAU BOSMC; Evangola SP 24 May (MT), rare.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** 40 TNP 12 May (BRBA); 25 at Feeders T Clarence; both sightings remarkable. **Dickcissel:** feeder T Evans ERIE 20.21 Apr (MW!,videotape), very rare. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** last T Lancaster 28 Apr. **Chipping Sparrow:** arr 31 Mar, early. **Field Sparrow:** arr Greenwood ALLE 28 Mar. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** 1.3 T Lockport 4.18 May, only report. **Henslow's Sparrow:** two T Lockport 2-18 May (CR), only report. **Fox Sparrow:** arr Evangola SP 29 Mar; last BOSMC, late. **Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco:** INWR 13.16 Mar (WW!,MD!), good

description, rarely verified. **Lapland Longspur**: 8.3 T Yates 9.16 Mar. only report. **Snow Bunting**: last 100 T Yates 9 Mar. **E. Meadowlark**: arr Fredonia CHAU 28 Feb. **Rusty Blackbird**: last TNP 24 May (MM!). late. **Orchard Oriole**: T Porter 18 May (DR!); feeding on orange slices Beaver Meadow Wildlife Refuge WYOM circa 20 May; T Eden also at oranges 21 May (RA!). rare but regular. **Baltimore Oriole**: 12 at feeders Lakeview ERIE mid-May, impressive. **Purple Finch**: widespread entire period. **Red Crossbill**: Bush Hill State Forest 12 max 23 Mar to 18 May, present here for several months: 6+ T Ward 24 Apr: only reports. **Pine Siskin**: no reports. **Evening Grosbeak**: four ALLE BOSMC, only report.