

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Even after the Great Ice Storm of '98, there were a few more meteorological surprises. The early season was warm, with Plattsburgh reaching 44° F on 2 March and 53° on 9 March, before dropping abruptly from 49° to 21° with snow on the 10th. Up to 8 inches of wet sugar snow fell on 14 March, but the big storm came on 21-22 March with the arrival of Spring. Ellenburg Depot got 18 inches, Malone a foot, and Keene Valley 10 inches. In a swift turnaround, a southerly warm flow pushed Plattsburgh to 51° just four days later, 65° the day after, 80° on 30 March with 1.5 inches of rain along the Quebec border, and 84° on the last day of the month. Then a cold front moved down, dropping temperatures 40 degrees in an hour and down to 36° by 11 p.m. The quick thaw led to massive flooding along the Great Chazy, Salmon, Saranac, Schroon, and Trout rivers, and by month's end Lake Champlain was at 100.22 feet and rising. March snowfall was 21.5 inches, 9 inches above normal, and rainfall was 3.61 inches, an inch and a half above average.

April Fool's Day brought another 0.5 inch of rain, and we saw the lake rise 3 feet in a week, to over the 100-ft. mark. Champlain finally crested at 101.82 ft. on 5 April, just inches below the all-time record of 101.89 set 23 April 1993. Except for late showers 16 April, the rest of the month was sunny and warm, and the lengthy drought allowed the lake to fall back below 100 ft. by month's end. April sunshine was 61% (49% is normal) and the temperature was 2° milder than usual.

Badly needed rain finally arrived 2-5 May, bringing an early rush of foliage. The Crown Point banding station opened 8 May to a rainy weekend, but then the sun came out for three weeks. With a full moon 11 May, this also meant three weeks of moon and stars for night migrants. Rain only returned with severe thunderstorms 31 May that set the Pharaoh Lake Wilderness and other dry forests ablaze, the first time Forest Ranger Gary Lee remembers lightning starting fires in May.

Gordon Howard, veteran of a dozen seasons at the Crown Point banding station, termed this "an aberrant year." Bob Hagar, witness to 40 or more spring migrations in Saranac Lake, added: "I get the same comments from local birders and feeder-watchers and acquaintances ... 'Where are the birds this spring?' I concur – my feeder and yard observations have hit an all-time low. El Niño? Mexican fires and smoke over the Gulf? Any ideas?" Foliage and insects were two weeks ahead of normal, while migration lagged by as much as two weeks — an unprecedented spread of 3-4 weeks.

The bird-banding station at Crown Point State Historic Site, now in its 23rd year, was in operation for 18 days, from 8-25 May. A total of just 228 birds of

41 species was banded and released. Virtually the same effort saw 1,706 individuals of 70 species banded in 1996 (admittedly, a record spring) and 1,239 birds of 62 species in the "late" spring of '97.

Where were the birds? Of the early migrants, Geoffrey Carleton has seen Black-and-white Warbler in Essex Co. as early as 22 April (1976), yet Crown Point visitor Keith Murphy reported seeing some still in the Dominican Republic 15 April this year, and Bill Krueger saw the first here on 1 May. Among the later migrants, we only saw and heard single Blackpoll Warblers 22 and 25 May at Crown Point and banded none. Perhaps because, as bander Bob Wei later reported, the waves of Blackpolls had only reached Central Park by 31 May, a week after we folded the nets. Aberrant indeed. If the Essex Co. late date for transient Blackpolls, set by Jeff Carleton at Elizabethtown on 4 June 1926, is ever to be challenged, this may be the year.

We did manage to band some fine birds, though. Since 1976, we'd banded a total of 28 "Western" Palm Warblers [nominate *Dendroica palmarum palmarum*] at Crown Point. We never expected to band the earlier "Yellow" Palm Warbler [*D. palmarum hypochrysea*] that moves through in April and had never been seen later than 4 May in the county. A bonus of the late passage was our first "Yellow" Palm, banded **11 May**! Susan Peterson radioed back that the wing nets to the north were full on 18 May, and one of the birds was a female **Blue-winged Warbler**, a species, banded only once before, back on 9 May 1981, when an unbanded bird was also seen and heard the next day. The same productive wing net yielded Pat Thaxton a subadult male Orchard Oriole on 10 May, and one sang near the picnic pavilion 13-16 May. This was only the fourth Orchard Oriole banded. Our eighth-ever Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was banded 9 May.

Other noteworthy species seen or heard (but not banded) include Blackbilled Cuckoo, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, and a transient Red-breasted Nuthatch added to the Historic Site checklist on 19 May. There were 28 returns of seven species banded at Crown Point in past years, the oldest a Gray Catbird now six years, 11 months old.

Regionally, a total of 206 species was reported, down from last spring's record 219. In spite of the generally late arrivals, some species took advantage of the mild spring: Killeer at Westport 1 March was record early for Essex County. Both common species and birds less frequently reported here put on some strong showings. There were seven sightings of Fox Sparrow, many more than usual, between 29 March-21 April. Dark-eyed Juncos invaded about the same time, returning to Speculator 28 March, where Paul Kelly tallied 1,000+ on 4 April, speculating, "I would not be surprised to learn that as many as 100,000 or more were around."

In addition to the Blue-winged Warbler banded at Crown Point, there were several other Regional rarities. Hal Klein spotted a **Great Cormorant** at Point

au Roche. Bill Krueger located an adult **Ross's Goose** along the Lake Shore Road in Clinton County. Mark Gretch heard a **Cerulean Warbler** in Elizabethtown. And John and Pat Thaxton picked out an immature male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** amidst large, mixed blackbird flocks in Westport. All in all, a most interesting spring, but one we're not eager to repeat anytime soon.

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Abbreviations: AP - Ausable Point WMA; BB - Bloomingdale Bog; CH - Cumberland Head; CP - Crown Point State Historic Site; CR - between the Chazy & Little Chazy Rivers; FB - Ferd's Bog; MRRA - Moose River Recreational Area; PtR - Point au Roche SP; SL - Saranac Lake; SPB - Spring Pond Bog; TL - Tupper Lake; WRS- Webb Royce Swamp.

LOONS-DUCKS

Com. Loon: arr SL 29 Mar (TD), early FRAN.

Pied-bill Grebe: arr AP 28 Mar (J&RH); five reports.

Red-necked Grebe: 3 arr Westport 20 Apr (TB,JP), only report.

GREAT CORMORANT: PtR 30 May (HK), 2nd CLIN record.

Double-crested Cormorant: arr AP 28 Mar (J&PT), early CLIN by 6 days; Port Henry 4 Apr (RM,JP), early ESSE by a day; 3 Raquette L 15 May (GL) and Rock Pd, FRAN, 30 May (MM,RM,DR), both unusual inland sightings.

Great Blue Heron: 2 nests Lake Pleasant 21 Apr (PK).

Great Egret: Wells 21-22 May (PK), 2nd HAMI record.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr Willsboro Bay 24 May (MM).

Turkey Vulture: arr 6 Wells 25 Mar (PK); Essex & L Flower 27 Mar; PtR 28 Mar; Elizabethtown & Keene Valley 30 Mar, all early; max 20 CP 4 Apr.

Snow Goose: arr 2 flocks L Eaton 25 Mar (GL); est 4 -5,000 over BB 28 Mar (TD), included a few "Blues"; 1000's CR same day (J&PT); 35 TL Marsh 14 Apr; 15 TL park 16 Apr (CD); lingered Cumberland Bay to 24-26 May (NO).

ROSS'S GOOSE: ad Lake Shore Rd, CLIN, 27 Mar (BK). Brant: 50+ CH 17 May (BK), only report.

Gadwall: CR 6 Apr (BK), a good find.

Am. Wigeon: pr WRS 28 Mar (MG); CR 6 Apr (BK), locally rare.

N. Shoveler: arr CR 2 Apr (BK); TL 27 May (CD), an excellent find.

Green-winged Teal: 5 arr WRS 28 Mar (MG).

Ring-necked Duck: arr AP 5 Mar (BK,CM), early CLIN by 5 days; max 75 TL

31 Mar (CD); pr CP and 3 WRS 4 Apr; 10 AP 26 Apr; MRRA & Muskrat Pd 17 May (GL).

Greater Scaup: 20 AP 28 Mar (J&PT), only report.

Lesser Scaup: 6 Westport 4 Apr (RM,JP), only report.

Hooded Merganser: 5 Essex 1 Mar, where present from 14 Feb; 4 other reports.

Ruddy Duck: pr beaver pd Rts. 9N-73 Keene 2 Apr (PB,RM), 5th ESSE record.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Osprey: arr WRS 28 Mar; one nest there 25 Apr (MG); AP 30 Mar (H&RB). **Bald Eagle:** max 12 (4 ad, 8 imm) Westport 13 Mar (JP,PT); new nest Cedar R Mar-Apr (GL); 2 working on Great Blue Heron nest Lake Pleasant 19-20 Apr, but abandoned with herons' return (PK); 2 ads attacked by pr of small falcons on the wing Forest Home Rd, SL (KW); reports of at least 6 others.

Rough-legged Hawk: last 4 Essex 27 Mar (J&PT).

Golden Eagle: ad TL 4 Mar (TD), feeding on deer carcass on ice.

Merlin: pr nesting Moody Pd, ESSE, 23 Apr thru (RH); pr at nest Lower Saranac L 26 Apr thru (WK); Blue Mountain Lake 25 May (JA,GB,TB), a good start for the breeding season.

Peregrine Falcon: arr pr Wilmington Notch 28 Mar (TD); pr CP Bridge early May (JK,GP), but not seen thereafter.

Wild Turkey: max 20 Lake Pleasant yard as snow began to melt (PK); henon 13 eggs Cedar R Rd 18 May (GL); four other reports.

Killdeer: arr Westport 1 Mar (AR), early ESSE; North Farm Rd 8 Mar (BK,CM), early CLIN by 2 days.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Riley Brook 16 Apr (BK), early CLIN by 4 days.

Upland Sandpiper: SLHS 2 May (TD, RH), highly unexpected; 2 CLIN 18 May (BK, CM).

Ruddy Turnstone: 7 CR 24 May (CM), only report. **Least Sandpiper:** 6 TL 25 May (JA,GB,TB), unusual inland. **Dunlin:** 4 CR 30 May (CM), a good find.

Short-billed Dowitcher: 30+ CR 18 May (BK,CM), identified by call & plumage.

Bonaparte's Gull: 4 TL park 18 Apr (TD), a good interior gull.

Ring-billed Gull: 13,583 nests Island "C" Four Brothers 16 May (RM), down nearly 10% from 15,033 last year. **Herring Gull:** 141 nests Four Brothers 16 May (RM).

Great Black-backed Gull: 4 nests Four Brothers 16 May (RM), census results to Great Lakes Region Colonial Waterbird Survey.

Black Tern: TL Marsh 25 May (JA,GB,TB), first in many years at this historic nesting area.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: CP 13-18 May; 2 there 17 May (TB,J&SP,RW).

E. Screech-Owl: CP 8-23 May (JP,DS,JT), locally rare.

Snowy Owl: killed tom Wild Turkey Limekiln Rd 21 Mar (G&KL).

Barred Owl: on dead Wild Turkey Limekiln Rd 23 Mar (GL); rehab banded Ray Brook Feb retrapped Federal prison there 27 Mar (NS). **Long-eared Owl:** calling Upper Jay 18 Mar (RM).

N. Saw-whet Owl: tooting Elizabethtown 14 Mar (JP); CP 21-23 May (JP,DS); SPB 25 May (JA,GB,TB).

Com. Nighthawk: arr 2 Wells 2 May (PK); CP 19-24 May (JP,DS). **Whip-poor-will:** arr Moriah 7 May (TB); Westport 19 May (AR); Willsboro 23-24 May (MM), always good to hear.

Red-headed Woodpecker: L Alice 15 May (GD), an excellent find.

Three-toed Woodpecker: 3 Old Mr. Van Trail, Adirondak Loj 11 Apr (MB,RM).

Black-backed Woodpecker: headwaters Red R 4 Mar (GL); at 1,700 ft Rand Hill, Dannemora 24 Mar (GK,NO); Bug L trail 1 Apr (GL); SPB 2 May (RM,SO); FB 9 May (WL).

FLYCATCHERS-PIPITS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: on territory Helldiver Pd and SPB 30 May.

N. Shrike: WRS 8 Mar; singing Upper Jay 30 Mar, last reports.

Gray Jay: BB, FB, SPB May (m.obs.), where expected.

Com. Raven: CH 7 Mar (BK), unusual; probably nesting CP May, unusual.

Bank Swallow: new colony SL village sand & gravel operation Pine Ridge esker.

Boreal Chickadee: FB & MRRA.

Tufted Titmouse: pr wintered Elizabethtown to 4 Apr; Plattsburgh Apr-May.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: transient CP 19 May (GL,JP), first for site.

Carolina Wren: confirmed nesting City Beach, Plattsburgh 8-15 May (CM); Scomotion Cr 11 May (J&RH).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: male banded 9 May (GH,JP), pair seen Gray Catbird: banded CP 14 May 93 (JP), found dead Baltimore, MD, 3 May 98 (GS), aged 5 yrs, 11 mos.

N. Mockingbird: 3 Plattsburgh reports May-15-17.

Am. Pipit: arr 35 Plattsburgh 13 Mar; 20 Plattsburgh 24 Mar (CM); 2 SL 29 Mar (TD).

Bohemian Waxwing: 8 Westport 13 Mar (JP,J&PT); also Ticonderoga Mar (DC).

Cedar Waxwing: 155 Westport 13 Mar (JP,J&PT), continued most numerous waxwing.

WARBLERS

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER: female banded CP 18 May (GH,J&SP), last recorded 1981.

Tennessee Warbler: 2 singing males SPB 30 May (MM,RM,DR).

Cape May Warbler: singing male SPB 30 May (MM,RM,DR).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr Peru 22 Mar (JD); only 29 banded CP.

Pine Warbler: arr Speculator 16 Apr (PK), early HAMI record.

"Yellow" Palm Warbler: singing SPB 2 May (FL,TM), on territory; late migrant banded CP 11 May (GH,JP,J&PT), late ESSE by a week; max 4 singing males SPB 30 May (MM,RM,DR).

CERULEAN WARBLER: singing male Elizabethtown 30 May (MG), heard only.

Am. Redstart: 2nd yr male CP giving single-pitch zweet-zweet-zweetsong, responded vigorously to Borror & Gunn "Warbler" tape of Prothonotary Warbler song; ad redstart singing standard alternating songs nearby!

Louisiana Waterthrush: singing male Moriah 21 Apr (TB), early ESSE; present thru 8 May (TB, RM).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Peru to 6 Apr (JD), overwintered from 27 Nov 97.

Savannah Sparrow: SPB 30 May (MM,RM,DR), on bog.

Grasshopper Sparrow: 12 former Plattsburgh AFB 17 May (BK,CM,GW).

Fox Sparrow: arr Keene 29 Mar, also Elizabethtown, Inlet, SL, Speculator, TL, and Upper Jay, a strong showing.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Clinton CC 7 Apr (J&RH), early CLIN by 4 days.

Swamp Sparrow: arr AP 28 Mar (J&PT), early CLIN.

Dark-eyed Junco: arr Speculator 28 Mar; 1,000+ there 4 Apr, many other reports of flocks numbering 50-75.

Snow Bunting: alternate plumage CH 25 Mar (BK); earlier reports of basic birds from Lake Pleasant, Wadhams, and Westport.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: imm male Westport 11 Mar (J&PT), with large mixed blackbird flocks.

Orchard Oriole: subad male banded CP 10 May (JP,J&PT); singing subad male CP 13-16 May (JP).

Pine Grosbeak: 6 BB 7 Mar (MB,RM,N&WS); last Bloomingdale 28 Mar (TD).

Purple Finch: singing Keene 29 Mar; Speculator 30 Mar; 3 ad males Elizabethtown 1 Apr, increasingly common thereafter.

House Finch: Elizabethtown Apr; Speculator 2 May.

Red Crossbill: 3 SPB 2 May; 1 SPB 25 May, only reports.

White-winged Crossbill: Plattsburgh 1-8 Mar; few Baxter Mt 27 Mar; 10 flying over SLHS 23 May, only reports in wake of winter invasion.

Com. Redpoll: orange cap Plattsburgh Mar (RC); Keene 30 Mar; max 30 TL 1 Apr; last Elizabethtown 13 & 20 Apr.

Hoary Redpoll: Plattsburgh 12 Mar (RC); banded Upper Jay 4 Apr (RM).

Pine Siskin: banded Newland, NC, 16 Feb 98 (GM) netted & released Elizabethtown 17 Apr (JP); 104 banded Elizabethtown 5

Apr-7 May, where in breeding condition by mid-Apr.

Am. Goldfinch: numbers increased Apr, but only 36 banded CP (376 in '97).

Evening Grosbeak: max 50 TL 12 Mar; many breeding prs feeders from Apr onward.

House Sparrow: 1 Lake Pleasant 10 Mar (PK), a good find: nesting Westport 23 Mar (JP).

Double-crested Cormorant: banded as nestling Four Brothers 23 Jun 96 (JP) found dead St. Johns R, FL, 11 Feb 98 (CN), 2nd Florida recovery.

Snow Goose: Chazy 27 Feb 98 (H&RB), early CLIN by 8 days.

Parasitic Jaeger: Indian L, HAMI, 28 Sep 97 (LS), 2nd county record; Eaton cites a record of 22 Aug 1886.

ADDENDA
