

REGION 1- NIAGARA FRONTIER

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The spring of 1999 followed yet another strange winter for all of western New York. The total snowfall for the season was actually normal or slightly above over all areas, but this masked the fact that the bulk of the winter was actually quite mild and open. In March the only severe weather occurred in the early part of the month. After a very mild and dry February, winter roared back into the Region during the first week with two major snowstorms. The first one, on the 4th, brought record snowfall to the Genesee Valley and focused on that area with two feet of snow and blizzard conditions for over six hours. To the west of that region in most of the Region 1 territory amounts dropped off rapidly, with just 3-4 inches in the Buffalo area. Another storm affected the Region on the 6th, dropping 6-12 inches across the area. This storm was followed with slowly moderating temperatures for the next two weeks. A final storm occurred on the 21st and 22nd of the month, when several inches of snow dropped on the higher elevations of the area. Average temperature for the month was 31.0°F, 3 degrees below normal, with no record high or low temperatures set. The 31.0° average equaled the February average, creating the unusual statistic of being only the seventh time in this century that March failed to be warmer than February.

April started like a roller coaster during the first three weeks and ended with some very fine spring weather during the last week. It averaged out at 46°, only 0.8° above normal. The month ended up being dry and sunny, with the higher temperatures occurring in the early part. With abundant sunshine and lack of precipitation, this La Niña period created a somewhat delayed migratory movement and a colder than normal feel to the air. This was unlike the El Niño conditions that prevailed during the spring of 1998.

The spring period concluded with May being warm, dry, and sunny. The Buffalo Weather Service reported the average monthly temperature at 59.7°, 3.1° above normal in the Buffalo area, with other locations in western New York reporting as high as 5.8° above the norm. While Buffalo recorded 2.2 inches of precipitation, 0.32 inches below normal for the month, the community of Wellsville in Allegany County recorded 1.38 inches below normal precipitation. Sunshine was present for 62% of the possible time. By month's end, the Lake Erie temperature was record-

ed at 55°. Weather data was provided by Steven McLaughlin of the Buffalo National Weather Service Office and Richard Rosche, reporter for *The Prothonotary*, the newsletter of the Buffalo Ornithological Society.

The lack of ice across Lake Erie brought hope to many that an early spring was in the making. For hawkwatchers, however, the persistent high-pressure systems and east to northeast winds proved otherwise. Counters at the Ripley watch recorded 14,002 birds for the period, which was the lowest number since spring of 1995. The number was particularly significant in that both Broad-winged and Rough-legged hawks were being recorded some distance inland from the lake shore, in some cases in record numbers, thus confirming their movement though not at the official count site. Despite the low overall totals, annual high count records were reached for Cooper's Hawk and Golden Eagle, and the Peregrine Falcon sightings tied the 1998 high. All in all, the conditions did not dampen the enthusiasm of the increasing number of volunteer counters who appeared at the site.

Another highlight from the Region was three Black-crowned Night-Herons roosting in pine trees in northwest Buffalo for three to four months on the private property of Norma Dittiger. Waterfowl made several noteworthy movements early in spring, with reports of hundreds and thousands being sighted throughout the entire Region. Included are an unusually high count of 72 Snow Geese on 19 March in Chautauqua County and a count of 7030 Oldsquaws on 8 March in the Niagara River.

Larids were evident in the lower Niagara River, with reports of 4240 Bonaparte's Gulls on 29 March by Gordon Bellerby and 52 Little Gulls by Susan O'Donnell on 17 March. Bellerby also noted a high count of 85 Little Gulls in the same area on 19 March. The **Black-headed Gull** reported in the winter report was still spotted during the month of March. A **Black-headed Gull** was reported again in early April in full breeding plumage, but whether this was the same bird or not is unknown. March also produced two fine reports of Short-eared Owls, with sightings of 4 to 6 birds at the Dunkirk Airport from the 8th through the 26th and the observations of 5 to 9 birds in the Town of Shelby in Orleans County.

Sandhill Cranes made several appearances during the spring in Chautauqua County over the period 2-15 April near the village of Ripley, in the Point Gratiot area in Dunkirk, and at the Cheney Marsh in the Town of North Harmony. Sightings also occurred at the Tillman Wildlife Management Area and in the Town of Shelby in Orleans County. Additional reports were received of a bird at the Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area in Niagara County on 1 May and from the town of Alabama in Genesee County on 15 May. Certainly an impressive num-

ber of sightings over an extended date range.

The south shore of Lake Ontario continues to provide excellent vantage points for viewing waterfowl movements, such as an impressive movement of Red-breasted Mergansers on April 10th observed by Mike Morgante. The birds were sighted flying eastward against an unfavorable north wind at the rate of about 500 birds/ten minutes. Accompanying these birds were Oldsquaws, Common Loons, and a single Caspian Tern.

Noteworthy sightings for the month of April included: **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Eurasian Wigeon**, and a **Green-winged Teal** of the **Eurasian race** (*Anas c. crecca*). The goose was found in the Town of Newstead in Erie County and the wigeon and teal in the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area near Batavia . The teal represents the third report for the nominate of this species in Region 1 since 1960. A **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was found in Lockport in Niagara County and a **Brewer's Blackbird** in the Town of Oakfield in Genesee County, providing two fine western *icterid* observations for local birders.

The fine weather during the month of May produced many reports of more typically southern species, such as **Blue Grosbeak**, Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Orchard Oriole. The female **Blue Grosbeak**, reported by J. Douglas and Sharon Beattie in the Town of Bethany in Genesee County, was the second record for this Region since 1975, when a male was found by me and photographed by Allen Benton on the campus of SUNY Fredonia. The specifics of the other southern species are found below in the bird report data.

The spring season closed out with individual reports of Willet on 8 and 9 May and of a hybrid "Lawrence's" Warbler observed by the members of the Lake Erie Bird Club along the Sheldon trail in Chautauqua County on the 22nd of May as it sang a Blue-winged Warbler song.

To close out this report, I would like to briefly summarize the April bird count conducted in Region 1 under the auspices of the Buffalo Ornithological Society. The count was conducted on 11 April, 1999 under partly sunny skies early in the day followed by strong winds, heavy rains, thunderstorms, and snow and drizzle. The resulting data included new low counts for the most recent 21 years of the count for Northern Pintail, Rough-legged Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Great Horned Owl, Song Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and House Sparrow. New highs were recorded for Wild Turkey, Great Black-backed Gull, Barred Owl, and Winter Wren, with Eastern Kingbird and Blue-headed Vireo appearing for the first time. Compilers were Ed Fuchs, Mike Hamilton, and Terry Yonker.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BISP - Beaver Island State Park - Grand Island; BWWTP - Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant GENE; BuSP - Buckhorn Island State Park - Grand Island; BRBA - Buffalo Rare bird Alert; DH - Dunkirk Harbor, City of Dunkirk; FMCSP - Four Mile Creek State Park - NIAG; GHSP - Golden Hills State Park - NIAG; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge - GENE/ORLE; NF - Niagara Falls; OOWMA - Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area - GENE; Tiff NP - Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TiWMA - Tillman Wildlife Management Area - ERIE; TWMA - Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area - WYOM; WTSP - Wilson-Tuscarora State Park - NIAG.

LOONS - DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 2 T Yates ORLE 27 Mar; 1 FMCSP 8 May (WD).

Com. Loon: 15, 27 T Somerset NIAG, T N Harmony CHAU 10, 16 Apr; 1 NF 31 May (MM).

Pied-billed Grebe: 3 DH 12 Mar.

Horned Grebe: max 28 T Oakfield GENE 4 Apr (GS); 1 NF 29 May (MM).

Red-necked Grebe: arr 2 T Somerset NIAG 20 Mar (WD); 2 Tiff NP 4 Apr (WW).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 570 LaSalle Park Buffalo 25 Apr (GR); 293 BISP 20 May (WW); nesting activity tak-

ing place on Motor Island and Strawberry Island in the Niagara River with 7 and 8 nests respectively (WW); One cormorant appeared in Amity Lake in ALLE on 22 May (VP).

Am. Bittern: arr 3 TWMA 1 May.

Least Bittern: arr 1 TWMA 15 May.

Great Blue Heron: 29ad & 29 nests Motor Island Niagara River 11 Apr; 21ad, 7yg Motor Island 21 May.

Great Egret: arr 1 Motor Island Niagara River 6 Apr.

Green Heron: arr T Lewiston NIAG 17 Apr.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 1-3 Buffalo

1-15 Mar (ND); 14,13,9 Motor Island
Niagara River from 27 Apr through 21
May (WW).
Turkey Vulture: 560 Hamburg ERIE 29
Mar (RA).
GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:
1 T Newstead ERIE 3 Apr (PY!).
Snow Goose: 72 CHAU 19 Mar (FR).
Brant: arr 1 NF 15 May (WD).
Tundra Swan: 10 - 240 throughout
Region 7 Mar - 10 Apr (mob).
Gadwall: 1 BWWTP 30 May.
EURASIAN WIGEON: 1 OOWMA 2
Apr (BC!).
Blue-winged Teal: 2 T Pomfret CHAU 24
Mar.
N. Shoveler: arr 3 BWWTP 20 Mar; max
96 BWWTP 11 Apr.
Green-winged Teal: arr 1 T Pomfret
CHAU 19 Mar.
"EURASIAN" TEAL (*A.c.crecca*): 1
OOWMA 6 Apr (WW), third Regional
report since 1960.
Canvasback: 1900 BISP 7 Mar (BB).
Redhead: 7 BWWTP 27 Mar; 20 BWWTP
3 Apr; 3,1 INWR, TWMA 15 May.
Ring-Necked Duck: 2 INWR 15 May.
Greater Scaup: 2 BWWTP 30 May (BK).
Lesser Scaup: 6 BWWTP 30 May
(MM,BK).
White-winged Scoter: 6 GHSP 23 May
(WD).
Oldsquaw: 7030 Niagara River 8 Mar
(GB); 21 Amity Lake ALLE 4 Apr (VP);
10 Olcott NIAG 15 May.
Bufflehead: 3 NF 15 May (MM).
Red-breasted Merganser: 1000 T
Somerset NIAG 10 Apr.
Ruddy Duck: arr 6 BWWTP 20 Mar; 7
BWWTP 30 May (BK).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: arr 2 INWR 4 Apr.
Bald Eagle: 2 at nest INWR 26 Mar; 1ad,
2eggs INWR 6 Apr; 2yg INWR 22 May;
several imm reported thru from ERIE &
CHAU.
NORTHERN GOSHAWK: 1 T
Eggertsville ERIE 4 Mar; 1 Hamburg
ERIE 18 Apr; 1 T Eagle WYOM 3-29 May
(WW).

Broad-winged Hawk: arr 12 Hamburg
ERIE 17 Apr.
Merlin: 1 University of Buffalo Campus
AMHERST 7,23,25,26 Mar (PY!).
Peregrine Falcon: 2 Hotel Statler Buffalo
3,18,30 Mar; 3 yg Hotel Statler Buffalo 23
May.
Virginia Rail: arr 1 TiWMA & OOWMA
18 Apr.
Sora: arr 1 TiWMA 25 Apr.
Com. Moorhen: arr 1 TWMA 17 Apr.
SANDHILL CRANE: 1-2 throughout the
lake plain area of CHAU 2-21 Apr
(DM,JG,MiM); 1 TWMA 18 Apr (MD et
al); 2 T Shelby ORLE (JS); 1 TWMA 1
May (WD); 1 T Alabama GENE 15 May
(AK).
Black-bellied Plover: arr 3 GHSP 16
May.
Semipalmated Plover: arr 1 T Hartland
NIAG 8 May.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr 1 T Villanova
CHAU 30 Mar.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 3 T Villanova
CHAU 8 Apr.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr 3 INWR 2 May.
Willet: 1 Randolph CATT 8 May (KV); 1
Gainsville WYOM 9 May (R&DR!).
Spotted Sandpiper: arr 1 V Lancaster
ERIE 22 Apr.
Upland Sandpiper: arr 1 T Alabama
GENE 25 Apr.
Ruddy Turnstone: arr 1 Batavia GENE 11
May.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr 8 TWMA
22 May.
Least Sandpiper: arr 1 T Chautauqua
CHAU 29 Apr.
White-rumped Sandpiper: 1 Silver
Creek CHAU 25 May.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 6 T Yates ORLE
1 Apr; 2 T Pomfret CHAU 19 May.
Dunlin: arr 1 Batavia GENE 11 May.
Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 2 T Pomfret
CHAU 22 May.
Com. Snipe: arr 1 TiWMA 21 Mar.
Am. Woodcock: arr 3 Joseph Davis State
Park NIAG 17 Mar.
Little Gull: 52,45 T Lewiston NIAG 17,22
Mar (SO); 85 Niagara River 19 Mar (GB).
BLACK-HEADED GULL: 1 Niagara

River 29 Mar (GB); NR early April, alt plumage.
Bonaparte's Gull: 4250 Niagara River 29 Mar (GB); 1 Gainsville WYOM 9 May.
Ring-billed Gull: 2 inland nests, 1 egg each BWWTP 24 Apr (GS).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1-3 Lake Ontario plain 8- 23 May (WD).
Caspian Tern: arr 1 T Somerset NIAG 10 Apr (MM); max 55 DH 23 Apr (DN).
Com. Tern: arr 1 T Lewiston NIAG 17 Apr; max 45 BWWTP 8 May.
Black Tern: arr 1 BWWTP 28 Apr; 7 BWWTP 8 May.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: arr 3,1 Tonawanda Indian Reservation ERIE, T Charlotte CHAU 15 May.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 1 T Ward ALLE 24 May.
Long-eared Owl: first 1 WTSP NIAG 24 Mar; 4 T Somerset NIAG 4 Apr.
Short-eared Owl: 4-6 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 8-28 Mar; 5-9 Tof Shelby ORLE 8-28 Mar.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 WTSP 21 Mar (WD,BP); 1 GHSP, Wethersfield WYOM 1, 26 Apr (WD,BP,DJ); 1 T Charlotte CHAU 29,30 May (R&CB,FR)
Com. Nighthawk: arr 1 Hamburg ERIE 12 May.
Whip-poor-will: 1 Silver Creek CHAU 26 May.
Chimney Swift: arr 1 Colden ERIE 21 Apr.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr 1 Cherry Creek & Silver Creek CHAU 1 May.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 sev areas lake plain of CHAU & NIAG 2-16 May (mob).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr 1 Lockport NIAG 3 Apr.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: arr 1 Gainsville WYOM 13 May (R&DR).
E. Wood-Pewee: arr 1 Willaimsville Glen ERIE 12 May.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 1 sev areas

18-30 May.

Acadian Flycatcher: arr 5 Wheelers Gulf T Pomfret CHAU 19 May.
Alder Flycatcher: arr 1 INWR 15 May.
Willow Flycatcher: arr 1 TWMA 15 May.
Least Flycatcher: arr 1 Blasdell ERIE 2 May.
E. Phoebe: arr 1 T Lewiston NIAG 17 Mar.
Great Crested Flycatcher: arr 2 TWMA 1 May.
E. Kingbird: arr 1 T Pomfret CHAU 1 Apr (DN)
White-eyed Vireo: arr 1 Goat Island Niagara River 7 May.
Yellow-throated Vireo: arr 1 INWR 3 May.
Blue-headed Vireo: arr 1 T Lewiston NIAG 17 Apr.
Warbling Vireo: arr 1 Tift NP 2 May.
Philadelphia Vireo: arr 1 Tift NP 15 May.
Red-eyed Vireo: arr 1 TiWMA 6 May.
Com. Raven: 2-3 ALLE (EB,VP), regular.
Purple Martin: arr 1 WTSP 31 Mar (BP).
Tree Swallow: arr 2 Hamburg ERIE 21 Mar (MM).
N. Rough-winged Swallow: arr 1 South Park Buffalo 8 Apr.
Bank Swallow: arr 2 T Sheridan CHAU 2 May.
Cliff Swallow: arr 8,4,6,1 BWWTP, T Somerset NIAG, T Yates ORLE, V Amity ALLE 8 May.
Barn Swallow: arr 2 TiftNP 8 Apr.
House Wren: arr 1 Cattaraugus Creek CHAU/CATT 19 Apr.
Marsh Wren: arr 3 TWMA 1 May.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: 1-6 known breeding areas GENE & ALLE thru.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr 1 TiWMA 5 Apr.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: arr 1 FMSCP 14 Apr.
Veery: arr 1 Evangola SP ERIE 2 May.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: arr 1 WTSP 12 May.
Swainson's Thrush: arr 1 Point Gratiot-Dunkirk-CHAU 6 May.
Hermit Thrush: arr TiWMA 21 Mar.
Wood Thrush: arr 1 TiWMA 1 May.

Brown Thrasher: arr 1 TiWMA 18 Apr.
Am. Pipit: arr 1,1 Buffalo, Hamburg
ERIE 28 Mar.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: arr 1 V Snyder
ERIE 4 May.
Golden-winged Warbler: arr 1 Silver
Creek CHAU 5 May.
"Brewster's" Warbler: 1 Hunters Creek
ERIE 23 May (JS,MD).
"Lawrence's" Warbler: 1 Sheldon Trail
CHAU 22 May (mob).
Tennessee Warbler: arr 1 Goat Island
Niagara River 5 May.
Orange-crowned Warbler: arr 1 Goat
Island Niagara River 9 May.
Nashville Warbler: arr 1 Williamsville
Glen ERIE 1 May.
N. Parula: arr 1 Goat Island Niagara
River 7 May.
Yellow Warbler: arr 1 Silver Creek
CHAU 23 Apr.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr 3 Saint
Columbans Seminary CHAU 2 May.
Magnolia Warbler: arr 1 Williamsville
Glen ERIE 5 May.
Cape May Warbler: arr 1 T Porter NIAG
2 May (DR)
Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr 1
Evangola SP ERIE 2 May.
Black-throated Green Warbler: arr
Sprague Brook Park 28 Apr.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr 1 T Pomfret
CHAU 29 Apr.
YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: 1
GHSP 15 May (MM!,WD).
Pine Warbler: arr 1 INWR 14 Apr.
Prairie Warbler: 1-2 ALLE May
(VPBC,EB).
Palm Warbler: arr 2 Goat Island Niagara
River 26 Apr.
Bay-breasted Warbler: arr 1 BuSP 6 May.
Blackpoll Warbler: arr 1 T Snyder ERIE
5 May, early.
Cerulean Warbler: arr 4 TWMA 9 May.
Black-and-white Warbler: arr 1,1 Forest
Lawn Cemetery Buffalo Tift NT25 Apr.
American Redstart: arr 1 Saint
Columbans Seminary CHAU 29 Apr
(DN)

Prothonotary Warbler: 1 Tift NP 6 May
(WD!).

WORM-EATING WARBLER: 1

Allegany Indian Reservation
ERIE/CATT 29 May (WD!).
Ovenbird: arr 1 Point Gratiot Dunkirk
CHAU 2 May.
N. Waterthrush: arr 1 Tift NP 25 Apr.
Louisiana Waterthrush: arr 2 Hunters
Creek Park ERIE 25 Apr.
KENTUCKY WARBLER: 1 Tift NP 8
May (MM!).
Mourning Warbler: arr 1 V Lancaster
ERIE 12 May.
Wilson's Warbler: arr 1 Williamsville
Glen ERIE 7 May.
Canada Warbler: arr 1 Amity ALLE 8
May.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: arr Point Gratiot
Dunkirk CHAU 5 May.
E. Towhee: arr 1 Tift NP 1 Apr.
Chipping Sparrow: arr 2 T Wales ERIE 1
Apr.
Field Sparrow: arr 1 T Somerset NIAG 1
Apr.
Vesper Sparrow: arr 1 T Pomfret CHAU
7 Apr.
Savannah Sparrow: arr 3 T Somerset
NIAG 10 Apr.
Grasshopper Sparrow: arr 2 TiWMA 6
May.
Henslow's Sparrow: arr 1 T Somerset
NIAG 15 May.
Fox Sparrow: arr 1 Amity Lake ALLE 21
Mar; max 4 feeder Amity Lake ALLE 1-
19 Apr.
Lincoln's Sparrow: arr 1 Tift NP 1 May.
Swamp Sparrow: arr 1 IWNR 8 Apr.
Lapland Longspur: 30 T Oakfield GENE
2 May (GS).
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr 1
Jamestown CHAU 29 Apr.
BLUE GROSBEEK: 1 T Bethany GENE
11 May (SB!,JD), second regional record
since 1975.
Indigo Bunting: arr 1 Chautauqua
Institute CHAU 4 May.
Bobolink: arr 1 INWR 1 May.
E. Meadowlark: arr 3 Java WYOM 21

Mar.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: 1

Lockport NIAG 23 Apr (AS).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: 1 T Oakfield

GENE 2 Apr (BM).

Orchard Oriole: 1 Allegany Indian

Reservation ERIE/CATT 29 May (WD!).

Baltimore Oriole: arr 1 Lakeview

CHAU 30 Apr.

Red Crossbill: 1 T Ward ALLE 31 May
(EB).