

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The first half of the season was quite mild, much the same as the preceding winter. Ice-out on many lakes occurred by 8 March. The period of 8–19 April was especially warm, and migrants were arriving about 10–12 days ahead of schedule.

However, after a cold front on the 19th, the winds were mostly out of the north or west through 24 May. That period covered what is normally the peak hawk flight at Derby Hill and much of the May songbird migration.

The average temperature in March was 36.3° F, 2.7° above normal. There was 2.75" of precipitation, which was 0.27" less than average, and 14.1" of snow. The average April temperature was 48.3°, 3° above the average. There was 4.38" of precipitation, 0.99" above normal, and only 2.6" of snow. May was wet and chilly, with 5.77" of rain, 2.38" above normal, and an average temperature of 54.0°, which was 3.1° below average. There was no snow recorded in Syracuse, but as late as 18 May, 5" fell at elevations over 1400 feet. In northern Herkimer County, 2" of snow on 18 May was followed by flurries over the next three days, most likely forcing early-nesting swallows and warblers to desert their nests.

Both American Bittern and Least Bittern arrived early and there were several reports of Great Egret, but none persisted. There was a large flock of Tundra Swans, Snow Goose numbers were again high, Brant arrived earlier than usual and Ring-necked Ducks were reported in good numbers. Eurasian Wigeon was the only uncommon duck and the rest of the waterfowl flight was routine.

Totals for the hawk flight at Derby Hill were the lowest since daily counts started in 1979, as unfavorable winds in late April pushed many raptors south of Lake Ontario. Broad-winged Hawks were a few days ahead of schedule, with the peak flight on 17 April on light northerly winds. Species most affected by the offwinds were Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and Golden Eagle. A good flight of mostly immature Northern Goshawks gave observers reason to believe that the spring of 2003 will be the peak year of the 9–11 year cycle. Sandhill Crane was another highlight at Derby Hill, with a single flock of 13 and a total of 22 for the season.

The Great Swamp Conservancy land in northern Madison County shows promise as a shorebird stopover, although that may change as the swampland matures. There was only one report from Sandy Pond, traditionally the Region's best late spring shorebird location, and many shorebird species were missed.

In a season with few rarities, gulls were the exception. **Lesser Black-backed Gull** is still uncommon in the Region and one on the Seneca River in March was a good find. On consecutive days in May, there were adult **Laughing** and **Franklin's gulls** at different locations; both gulls were carefully described, ruling out a single individual. A late Snowy Owl spent part of a day in downtown Syracuse, Long-eared Owl was found in greater numbers than most years and, in Verona, the Short-eared Owls lingered into April.

Some highlights were Sedge Wren at three locations and notable Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch and House Finch flights at Derby Hill. The warbler numbers reported were very low. Readers will notice that many are not cited in the species account since maxima were rarely above 2–3 per day. May 5 was mentioned as a good flight day, and although there was some talk of birds put down in the rain and chill of 12–13 May, no numbers were reported. **Prothonotary Warbler** returned to Big Bay Swamp in West Monroe, while an

overshoot made it to Thendara. Prairie Warblers were again found in Georgetown and Dewitt.

Many of the later migrants, such as Ruby-throated Hummingbird, cuckoos, flycatchers, Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting were very scarce until the last week of May and numbers were low. Matt Perry noted a lack of migrant Winter Wrens and other reports tend to confirm that. Most sparrow numbers were also down, although that is due in large part to the closing of the access road to the Nine Mile Point nuclear plants, where the open grounds attract sparrows. Fox Sparrow was one species which arrived early and lingered at many feeding stations, with a record spring count in Parish.

Many of the winter irruptive species stayed into March. Bohemian Waxwings remained in southeastern Herkimer and southern Oneida counties into April, but Pine Grosbeaks departed by the middle of March. Common Redpolls stayed into April, with one May report. Small numbers of Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks lingered through May. White-winged Crossbills were present in small numbers, but no Red-winged Crossbills were reported.

For the season, a total of 235 species and three forms was reported. That total is lower than most recent years and reflects the lack of unusual species. Highlights were **Laughing Gull, Franklin's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler** and Hoary Redpoll.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Adks – Adirondacks; Bvllc – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DH – Derby Hill; DL – Delta L; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; GSC – Great Swamp Conservancy, n MADI; HVWMA – Happy Valley WMA; LOL – L Ontario Littoral; Noyes – Noyes Sanctuary T New Haven; Oneil – Oneida L; OnonL – Onondaga L; SFWS – Spring Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Kirkland; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse; TRWMA – Three Rivers WMA.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: DH 5 May, only report.

Com. Loon: max 97 DH 19 Apr.

Pied-billed Grebe: arr 3 DeRuyter Res 25 Mar; max 5 Beaver L 2 Apr.

Horned Grebe: max 29 southern MADI 5 Apr; last DH 25 May.

Red-necked Grebe: arr Hatch L 25 Mar; max 22 Brewerton 6 Apr; 8 OnonL 14 Apr.

Double-crested Cormorant: arr 30 DH 7 Apr; 8 Fourth L Adks 15 May.

Am. Bittern: arr Eaton Res 26 Mar, early.

Least Bittern: arr Schroepfel 16 Apr (BC), record early; W Monroe after 17 May; West Dead Creek Bvile 25 May.

Great Blue Heron: max 15 DH 7 Apr.

Great Egret: arr CM 13 Apr; max 4 W Monroe 18 May.

Snow Goose: max 18,000 DH 29 Mar; 6000 Durhamville 31 Mar; 5000 Van Buren 12 Apr.

Brant: 2 Oswego 24 Mar (GP), wintering or arr with Canada Geese?; 40 Woodman Pd 27 Apr, early for large flock; max 900 OneiL/LOL 25 May.

Mute Swan: 2 migrants DH 17 Mar.

Tundra Swan: max 72 OneiL 14-17 Mar.

Wood Duck: max 28 CM 5 Apr.

Gadwall: max 36 W Monroe 24 Mar.

Eurasian Wigeon: Maple Bay OneiL to 7 Mar; W Monroe 17 Mar.

Am. Wigeon: max 70 W Monroe 24 Mar.

Blue-winged Teal: possible breeding 6-7

sites GSC.

N. Shoveler: max 14 Cato 6 Apr.

N. Pintail: max 60 DH 9 Mar.

Green-winged Teal: max 61 CM 31 Mar; 35 DH 18 Apr.

Canvasback: max 8 Toad Harbor 8 Apr.

Redhead: max 40 Toad Harbor 12 Mar.

Ring-necked Duck: max 1264 Toad Harbor 8 Mar.

Greater Scaup: max 600 Toad Harbor 6 Apr.

Lesser Scaup: max 820 Toad Harbor 8 Apr.

White-winged Scoter: max 33 Toad Harbor 14 May.

Long-tailed Duck: max 300 Oswego 12 Apr.

Com. Goldeneye: max 430 Toad Harbor 12 Mar.

Hooded Merganser: max 225 W Monroe 25 Mar.

Com. Merganser: 210 W Monroe 16 Mar.

Ruddy Duck: max 10 Woodman Pd 25 Mar.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Derby Hill Hawk Migration Totals				
Species	Arrival	Max	Max Date	Total
Turkey Vulture	25 Feb	1136	30 Mar	4948
Osprey	30 Mar	61	30 Apr	293
Bald Eagle	24 Feb	9	9 Mar	93
Northern Harrier	25 Feb	63	8 Apr	499
Sharp-shinned Hawk	24 Feb	388	12 Apr	2510
Cooper's Hawk	25 Feb	32	29 Mar	338
Northern Goshawk	25 Feb	11	12 Apr	56
Red-shouldered Hawk	8 Mar	98	29 Mar	678
Broad-winged Hawk	12 Apr	2521	17 Apr	9922
Red-tailed Hawk	24 Feb	981	11 Apr	5805
Rough-legged Hawk	25 Feb	41	9 Mar	254
Golden Eagle	26 Feb	16	9 Mar	67
American Kestrel	8 Mar	30	12 Apr	238
Merlin	9 Mar	5	11 Apr	26
Peregrine Falcon	28 Mar	3	30 Apr	9
Total (including unidentified and rarities)				25,746

Bald Eagle: successful nests Fulton and Altmar.
Merlin: Oneida 23 Apr; TRWMA 4 May.
Virginia Rail: max 8 CM 18 May.
Sora: max 7 CM 18 May.
Com. Moorhen: max 6 W Monroe 18 May.
Am. Coot: 3-4 GSC thru.
Sandhill Crane: 13 DH 30 Mar, new Reg high; 2 DH 19 Apr; 1 DH 4 May; 2 DH 22 May; 4 DH 23 May.
Black-bellied Plover: arr W Monroe 21 May, only report.
Semipalmated Plover: max 9 DL 23 May.
Killdeer: max 90 DH 15 Mar.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 6 Schroeppe 21 Apr.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 6 Schroeppe 27 Apr.
Solitary Sandpiper: max 10 GSC 22 May.
Upland Sandpiper: arr DH 20 Apr.
Ruddy Turnstone: OnonL 17 May, only report.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 10 DL 23 May.
Least Sandpiper: max 60 GSC 22 May.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 2 Lysander 29 Apr.
Dunlin: New Haven 18 May, only report.
Com. Snipe: max 7 W Monroe 14 Apr.
Am. Woodcock: max 23 Cicero Swamp 23 May; 10 Green Lakes SP 18 Apr.
LAUGHING GULL: Liverpool 17 May (DW!), 5th spring record.
FRANKLIN'S GULL: SVB 18 May (MY!), 5th spring record.
Bonaparte's Gull: arr 7 Apr; max 30 DH 11 Apr; 8 Utica Marsh 14 Apr, unusual site.
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: Bville 24 Mar (GD).
Glaucous Gull: last Oswego 4 Mar.
Caspian Tern: max 50 Sandy Pd 27 May.
Com. Tern: 16 OnonL 19 Apr, early for such numbers; max 57 FH 19 May.
Black Tern: only 2-3 per day Salmon R

and Deer Creek WMA after 16 May.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: 9 reports with only 2 before 23 May.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr TRWMA 11 May; 3 other reports after 28 May.
Great Horned Owl: ad & 2 y in Great Blue Heron nest Hannibal 27 Apr.
Snowy Owl: downtown Syr 18 Apr.
Long-eared Owl: max 4 Noyes 13 Apr; 12 LOL for season, more than usual.
Short-eared Owl: last 1 from winter roost SVB 4 Apr; DH 12 Apr; Oswego 12 Apr; TRWMA 15 Apr.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Syr 4 Apr, only report.
Com. Nighthawk: max 5 Oswego 23 May; about 8 other reports.
Whip-poor-will: arr Constantia 5 May; migrant Fulton 18 May.
Chimney Swift: max 60 DH 18 May.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: max 20 DH 30 May.
Belted Kingfisher: arr DH 27 Mar.
Red-headed Woodpecker: GSC 4 Apr; arr LOL 10 May; max 2 FH 18 May; birds on territory were 2 Cicero Swamp 12 May and singles Ira & Lysander 25 May.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: Thendara 24 May (GL), Adks colonization on the horizon?
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 13 Pompey 24 Apr.
Black-backed Woodpecker: Windfall Pd 8 Mar; West Pd 17 Mar.
N. Flicker: max 75 DH 11 Apr.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: 2 SFWS 30 May, only report.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: only 4 reports.
Acadian Flycatcher: arr 2 Whiskey Hollow 27 May.
E. Phoebe: arr Big Moose 4 Apr.
E. Kingbird: max 40 DH 16 May.
N. Shrike: DL 15 Mar; DH 5 Apr.
WHITE-EYED VIREO: Proctor P Utica

after 23 May (BA, CA, mob).

Blue-headed Vireo: max 6 Georgetown 27 Apr.

Philadelphia Vireo: singles Noyes and HVWMA 18 May

Blue Jay: arr 150 DH 16 Apr, early; max 9777 DH 7 May.

Am. Crow: max 5600 DH 9 Mar.

Fish Crow: max 5 DH 6 May; 2 Liverpool - OnonL thru.

Com. Raven: Ram's Gulch Dewitt 24 May.

Horned Lark: max 80 DH 14 Mar; 40 DH 25 Mar.

Barn Swallow: arr DH 30 Mar, early.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 200 DH 5 May.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 10 DH 11 Apr.

Carolina Wren: despite mild winters few found north of Oneil.

Winter Wren: max only 2-3 per day when reported.

Sedge Wren: W Monroe after 18 May; Pulaski after 22 May; Deer Creek WMA 28 May; a great spring!

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 35 Noyes 13 Apr.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 25 Pompey 4 Apr.

E. Bluebird: max 60 DH 9 Mar.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: arr Scriba 12 May; HVWMA 18 May; Kirkland 24 May; SFWS 28 May.

Swainson's Thrush: max only 2 per day after 12 May.

Hermit Thrush: max 5 Noyes 13 Apr.

Am. Robin: 1000 Frankfort 8 Mar with both waxwing sp; max 2000 DH 8 Apr.

Gray Catbird: max 39 CM 18 May.

N. Mockingbird: arr DH 17 Apr; handful of migrants LOL 4-18 May.

Brown Thrasher: max 4 Split Rock 11 May.

Am. Pipit: 200 Cato 6 Apr, large early flock; max 300 DH 17 May.

Bohemian Waxwing: max 250 Frankfort to 15 Mar; other highs were 20 Hamilton

11 Mar; 80 SFWS 29 Mar; last 8 Frankfort 16 Apr.

Cedar Waxwing: 350 Frankfort 8 Mar; max 400 DH 24 May.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: arr SFWS 5 May; max 4 SFWS 8 May.

Golden-winged Warbler: arr Cicero 8 May.

"Brewster's" Warbler: SFWS 22 May.

"Lawrence's" Warbler: Schroepel after 8 May.

Tennessee Warbler: max 5 SFWS 27 May.

Orange-crowned Warbler: LOL 18 May.

Cape May Warbler: 5 reports.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr DH 14 Apr; max 60 DH 6 May.

Prairie Warbler: 2 Georgetown after 15 May; max 3 Dewitt after 22 May.

Palm Warbler: max 15 DH 2 May.

Bay-breasted Warbler: max 2 HVWMA 11 May.

Blackpoll Warbler: max 17 OnonL 25 May.

Cerulean Warbler: Bolivar 8 May; Scriba 16 May; only reports away from breeding sites.

Prothonotary Warbler: pair W Monroe after 11 May; Thendara 21 May (GL).

Louisiana Waterthrush: arr New Hartford 13 Apr.

Hooded Warbler: arr Whiskey Hollow 7 May.

Wilson's Warbler: max 3 CM 18 May.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: max 8 Split Rock 11 May.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 23 Durhamville 20 Mar; last Cicero 11 Apr.

Clay-colored Sparrow: Dewitt 25-26 May.

Field Sparrow: arr 10 Apr; max 9 Pompey 26 Apr.

Vesper Sparrow: max 5 Pompey 21 Apr.

Grasshopper Sparrow: arr DH 16 May.

Fox Sparrow: arr 9 Mar, early; 2-6 per

day at many feeders; max 35 Parish 8 Apr (MSc), new spring high.

Song Sparrow: max 65 Nine Mile Pt 13 Apr.

Swamp Sparrow: max 27 CM 5 May.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 140 Nine Mile Pt 13 Apr.

Lapland Longspur: 5 Pompey 24 Mar. only report.

Snow Bunting: max 140 DH 24 Mar.

Bobolink: max 200 DH 9 May.

E. Meadowlark: arr DH 9 Mar; max 15 DH 7 Apr.

Rusty Blackbird: arr 5 TRWMA 13 Mar; max 150 DH 17 Apr.

Com. Grackle: max 9000 DH 15 Mar.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 5000 DH 8 Apr.

Orchard Oriole: Frankfort 28 May; Jordan 30 May.

Baltimore Oriole: max 30 DH 6 May.

Pine Grosbeak: max 60 Frankfort 2 Mar; last DH 15 Mar.

Purple Finch: arr 12 Apr; max 30 Georgetown 29 Apr.

House Finch: max 150 DH 9 Mar.

White-winged Crossbill: 6 DH 30 Mar; 2 Lysander to 6 Apr; 2 Marcy 25 May.

Com. Redpoll: max 175 Georgetown 1 Mar; 100 DH 29 Mar; flocks lingering to 15 Apr with last 1 SSSP 18 May.

Hoary Redpoll: last DeRuyter 14 Mar, only report.

Pine Siskin: max 60 DH 9 May; 2-3 per day sporadic at feeders thru.

Am. Goldfinch: max 1500 DH 7 May.

Evening Grosbeak: max 150 Georgetown 1 Mar, where some lingered thru; small flight DH early May.