

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES REGION

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Spring 2004 was generally wet and warm. Precipitation varied from being a little to a lot less than normal in March, but was way above normal in April and May. The precipitation figures from Ithaca were 92% of normal in March, 131% in April and 189% in May. Every month was above normal in temperature: +4°F in March, +0.7° in April and +5.4° in May. Thanks to the warmer temperatures, little of the precipitation fell as snow. February passed a 6" snow cover on to March, but it melted the very first day. Nothing more than a trace occurred after that until 17 March when another 6.5" fell, followed by another 2.4" the next day. This snow kept the ground covered for one week. The only other snowfall of the spring was 2" 6 April.

It was a generally good season for waterfowl. Snow Geese were present in record numbers with more than 1,000,000 estimated at one site on Cayuga Lake. Attempts were made, both in the field and using photos afterward, to quantify the estimate, recognizing that it represents a large proportion of the eastern continental population of Snow Geese. For the interested, photos are posted at: <<http://birds.cornell.edu/CayugaBirdClub/WBird2004.htm>>. Both Snow and Canada geese were in significantly higher numbers for the second consecutive year. This was also true for several duck species, including American Black Duck, Mallard, Redhead and Ring-necked Duck. Northern Pintails were up for the third consecutive year and have increased exponentially, with a 45% increase in 2002, a 243% increase in 2003 and a 504% increase in 2004. With all of the season's rain, turbid water may have been the reason for the decrease of all three merganser species. While Ross's Goose was not noted in significantly different numbers than last year, looking for them among the huge numbers of Snow Geese may have been discouraging to most birders. Jay McGowan and Bard Prentiss managed to

find, identify, and Jay carefully described, a Snow Goose X Ross's Goose hybrid. Eurasian Wigeon showed up at both the Savannah Mucklands and Montezuma NWR. Jay McGowan discovered a Eurasian Green-winged Teal in the flooded field on George Road, Dryden, 5 March; it stayed through 7 March. Another, or possibly the same one, appeared at the same location 24-25 April. A Barrow's Goldeneye was at Myers Point when the season started and remained through 5 March. Dave Wheeler saw what was probably the same bird at Mud Lock the next day, but it was not reported again.

Loons and grebes were all down in numbers. As expected after last year's record numbers, Red-necked Grebe numbers were down, but still quite good compared with other years. It was another cold winter and there may have been some movement again due to freezing on the Great Lakes. The Eared Grebe continued in Aurora Bay, Cayuga Lake through 21 March.

None of the herons showed a significant change in numbers, but there were some interesting species. An eBird report noted a Snowy Egret at Montezuma NWR on 7 May. It was there the following day, however, when it gained listserve publicity by posing next to a Tricolored Heron for photographs by Joe Brin and members of the Cornell Ornithology Class. Another heron of note was a Cattle Egret at the George Road flooded field on 24 April. Another appeared at Montezuma NWR on 26 May.

The only raptor to show a significant change was Golden Eagle, which was down in numbers. Candace Cornell and Nancy Ostman reported the only Gyrfalcon. It was hunting at Montezuma NWR on 12 April.

While most shorebird numbers were similar to last year's, Black-bellied and Semipalmated plovers and Lesser Yellowlegs showed huge increases. High water was certainly to blame for the decline in Spotted Sandpipers and perhaps in Pectoral Sandpipers. Dunlin increased for the fourth consecutive year – a very rare feat for any species. There were a number of very interesting shorebird reports. The draining of the Knox-Marcellus pool in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex contributed to the increased plover numbers and also produced a rare spring record of three American Golden-Plovers, found by Bob Spahn, and two Red Knots found by David Neveu. Tim Johnson watched a Willet fly away from the construction site adjacent to the Hawthorn Orchard, a location that Ithaca birders know as a hot spot for warblers. Bob Guthrie watched 32 Whimbrels fly by at Montezuma NWR and also discovered the Ruff at the refuge's Benning Marsh. The McGowan family, minus ornithologist father, Kevin, but with Bob McGuire and Bard Prentiss, found three Wilson's Phalaropes at the George Road flooded field. Finally, Allison Wells found a Western Sandpiper at Myers Point in Lansing.

There were no unusual gulls, but the usual species were all up in number except Bonaparte's, which was down. Increases by Ring-billed and Herring gulls were the second consecutive for both species. A pair of Herring Gulls was incubating at the Ring-billed Gull colony in downtown Elmira and a second pair was nesting by itself on the edge of another island to the west. About 1500 adult Ring-billed Gulls were in the nesting colony this spring, in spite of having to evacuate the island several times due to high water before egg laying began. Only

the usual terns were around this spring. Both Caspian and Forster's showed significant increases.

The Rock Pigeon's new name seems to have done the species some good. It has shown gains each of the last two years. Hopefully, the Federation's change to the Association will have similar effects on the organization's membership. Observations of migrating Common Nighthawks increased, but there was no evidence that any were staying in the Region to nest. The best passerines of the season were two White-eyed Vireos. Mike Andersen and Tim Lenz found one at Cornell University's Mundy Wildflower Garden and Bob Guthrie found one at Bluff Point near Keuka Lake in Yates County.

In spite of West Nile Virus, all of the corvid species were up, though Common Raven was not up significantly. It was the second straight increase for Fish Crow. Both Tufted Titmouse and the two nuthatch species numbers were up as well. Carolina Wren numbers were down by just over 50%. The difficult winter of 2002-03 did not have an immediate effect on their numbers until after the spring season last year. This winter was also cold and snowy. If there is a delayed effect again, Carolina Wrens could be way down by later this year.

Eastern Bluebird, American Robin and Gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrush numbers were all down this spring. It was the second consecutive decline for the robin. The robin's frequent companion in fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, Cedar Waxwing, also had its second consecutive decline.

There was nothing particularly unusual among the warblers. Best was Roger Sleeper's discovery of a Yellow-breasted Chat at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve on the early date of 30 April. Tom Fredericks of Van Etten had the only Cape May Warbler reports. Northern Parula numbers were down for the second straight year. Yellow and Blackpoll warbler numbers were both up for the second consecutive year. From the birder's perspective, the Blackpoll Warblers showed up in numbers too early, signaling an early end to spring warbler migration.

Most of the sparrow numbers were stable. White-crowned Sparrows increased for the second consecutive year. Clay-colored Sparrows returned to the same site in Caroline that they occupied last year. Tim Whitens also found one in the Town of Niles and John and Sue Gregoire banded one at their station in Hector. Red-winged and Rusty blackbirds and Common Grackles decreased from last year, but Bobolinks increased for the third year in a row.

The winter's redpoll invasion continued into the spring season. Julie Siler and Matt Young found a remarkable four Hoary Redpolls in a day of birding in Summerhill. Matt Young also found a White-winged Crossbill in Dryden. Ken Smith discovered Red Crossbills in Fillmore Glen State Park. Pine Siskins were widespread throughout the Region. American Goldfinches increased for the second consecutive spring. Except for the two crossbill species, finch numbers were up this spring.

The following data include comparisons of bird populations in the Region between spring 2003 and spring 2004, with occasional reference to a species' status in prior years. The cited comparisons, designated by a "+" or "-" at the end of each species account, showed statistically significant changes ($X^2 > 3.84$; $P = 0.05$). A discussion of my methodology and its limitations can be found in the Region 3 report that appeared in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird*.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BH – Beam Hill TOMP; CLB – Cayuga L Basin; CWMA – Cayuga L WMA; CygL – Cayuga L; DLP – Dryden L Pk; DLT – Dryden L Trai; , eB – report on e-Bird; EIRW – East Ithaca Recreation Way; GRFF – George Rd Flooded Field TOMP; KH – Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory SCHU; LPBP – Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve TOMP; ML – Mud Lock CAYU; MNWR – Montezuma NWR; MWC – Montezuma Wetlands Complex SENE; MyPt –

Myers Pt TOMP; SaMu – Savannah Mucklands SENE; SHSF – Shindagin Hollow State Forest TOMP; SLSP – Seneca L SP; StP – Stewart Park Ithaca; SW – Sapsucker Woods TOMP; TCAH – The Center At Horseheads CHEM; WCB – Wells College Boathouse CAYU; WERF – West Elmira Riverine Forest CHEM.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: est max 1,000,000 CygL 11 Mar (JMc, BP), record high; attempts were made to quantify the estimate; *intro*; last MNWR 19 May, +.

SNOW GOOSE X ROSS'S GOOSE (Hybrid): SaMu 11 Mar (JMc!, BP).

ROSS'S GOOSE: max 2 Ithaca 14 Mar; last SaMu 14 Mar.

Canada Goose: max 10,000 SLSP 4 Mar, +.

Brant: arr & max 50 Emerson P CAYU 9 May; last StP 26 May, +.

Mute Swan: arr ML 7 Mar; max & last 3 MNWR 8 May.

Tundra Swan: max 450 ML 7 Mar; last MNWR 19 May (DG, BT), late.

Trumpeter Swan: max 2 MWC 21 Mar; last MNWR 29 May.

EURASIAN WIGEON: arr SaMu 28 Mar (GCh); last MNWR 6 May (GCh, DSh).

Am. Wigeon: arr 3 East Shore P TOMP 4 Mar; max 150 SaMu 14 Mar; last MNWR 8 May, +.

Am. Black Duck: max 100 SaMu 21 Mar, +.

Mallard: max 203 MWC 26 May (StF), high, +.

N. Shoveler: arr 3 CWMA 3 Mar; max 40 MNWR 28 Mar.

N. Pintail: max 6000 SaMu 14 Mar (eB), high; last 2 MNWR 1 May, +.

Green-winged Teal: max 21 GRFF 25 Apr, -.

Canvasback: max 200 ML 7 Mar, low; last MNWR 8 May, -.

Redhead: max 5000 CygL SP 14 Mar (KR), high, +.

Ring-necked Duck: max 250 MNWR 17 Apr; last 2 TCAH 15 May, +.

Greater Scaup: max 20 SLSP 7 Mar; last

many SLSP 9 May, +.

Lesser Scaup: max 50 MNWR 11 Apr; last 2 StP 1 May.

White-winged Scoter: max 29 SLSP 9 May; last 2 DLP 9 May.

Black Scoter: Park Station CHEM 15 May (DR), only report.

Long-tailed Duck: max 30 MNWR 27 Mar; last 2 DLP 6 May.

Bufflehead: max & last 101 Marcus Whitman ECO Property YATE 8 May, -.

Com. Goldeneye: max 100 CygL 13 Mar; last StP 18 May (KR), late.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: MyPt thru 5 Mar (B&GP); last ML 6 Mar (DWh).

Hooded Merganser: max 49 Erray's Marina SCHU 17 Mar (J&SGg), high, +.

Com. Merganser: max 100 CygL 13 Mar, -.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 20 CLB 24 Mar; last Elmira Dam CHEM 27 May, -.

Ruddy Duck: arr 3 StP 11 Mar; max 21 MNWR 14 May, -.

Red-throated Loon: max & last 2 DLP 20 Apr (BP), early, -.

Com. Loon: max 13 SW 7 Apr; last 3 Keuka L SP 31 May, -.

Horned Grebe: max 58 MyPt 28 Mar; last DLP 27 Apr, -.

Red-necked Grebe: max 13 CygL 3 Mar; last SLSP 9 May, -.

EARED GREBE: WCB 5 Mar (DG, BT); WCB 19 Mar (AMJ); last WCB 20 Mar (TL).

Double-crested Cormorant: arr 2 CygL 11 Mar (JMc, BP), early; max 42 StP 26 Apr; last MNWR 31 May.

Great Egret: arr MNWR 12 Apr; max 3 MNWR 6 May; last Chemung R 30 May.

SNOWY EGRET: arr MNWR 7-19 May (MA!, JBr ph, COC, SH, LMa ph, DWi).

TRICOLORED HERON: MNWR 8 May (MA!, JBr ph, COC, SH, LMa ph, DWi).

CATTLE EGRET: arr GRFF 24 Apr (J!&Ke&PMc, AW); last MNWR 26 May (StF).

Turkey Vulture: max 20 MNWR 11 Apr, low.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 11 MWC 3 May (fide CSa), high.

Broad-winged Hawk: arr MNWR 12 Apr; max 13 Mt Pleasant TOMP 21 Apr.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 4 Veteran 17 Mar; last Veteran 26 Apr.

Golden Eagle: Groton 23 Mar; last DLT 18 Apr, -.

Merlin: last Long Pt SP 28 Apr.

Peregrine Falcon: max Dryden 21 Mar; last MNWR 24 Apr.

GYRFALCON: MNWR 12 Apr (CC!, NO).

Com. Moorhen: max 16 MNWR 25 Apr (JKr, BO, RY), high.

Am. Coot: max 210 Clute Memorial P SCHU 14 Apr, -.

Sandhill Crane: arr SaMu 27 Mar; max 2 Branchport 6 May.

Black-bellied Plover: max 34 Potter Mucklands YATE 25 May (BBc), high, +.

AM. GOLDEN-PLOVER: arr 3 MWC 30 May (BS).

Killdeer: max 9 TCAH 16 Apr (eB), low.

Greater Yellowlegs: max 19 MNWR 18 Apr (CSa), high.

Lesser Yellowlegs: max 25 MNWR 17 Apr (SH, EH, LSa, BW), high, +.

WILLET: EIRW 11 May (TJ!).

Spotted Sandpiper: max 6 StP 25 Apr, -.

Upland Sandpiper: arr 2 Fayette 6 May; max 7 Seneca Farm Days Fairgrounds SENE 7 May.

WHIMBREL: arr MyPt 20 May (KR); max 32 MNWR 27 May (BG), high.

Ruddy Turnstone: arr MyPt 13 May; MWC 31 May.

RED KNOT: 2 MWC 31 May (DNe).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max swarms MWC 31 May.

WESTERN SANDPIPER: MyPt 15 May(AW!).

Pectoral Sandpiper: max GRFF 30 Apr, -

Dunlin: arr SaMu 10 Apr; max 200 MWC 26 May (StF), high, +.

RUFF: MNWR 7 May (BG, GCa, LL!).

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 5 MyPt 15 May (MC); max 8 MyPt 22 May.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE: arr & max 3 GRFF 30 Apr (J&Ki&PMc, BoMc, BP), early.

Bonaparte's Gull: arr 9 TCAH 27 Mar; max 55 Gibson Bridge STEU 17 Apr; last MNWR 30 May, -.

Ring-billed Gull: max 1500 Seneca Falls 20 Mar, +.

Herring Gull: max 6000 MWC 14 Mar (Sa&StK), high, +.

Iceland Gull: max 3 SaMu 14 Mar (eB), high; last 2 MNWR 28 Mar, +.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 4 SaMu 14 Mar (eB), high; last MWC 27 Mar, +.

Glaucous Gull: Co Rt 5 Sweet Potato Field ONTA 3 Mar; last MyPt 6 Apr (JGn!), late.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 300 MWC 14 Mar (Sa&StK), high, +.

Caspian Tern: max 18 StP 20 Apr (KR), high; last 2 MNWR 13 May, +.

Forster's Tern: arr StP 22 Apr; max & last 11 City Pier Canandaigua 28 May (eB), high, +.

Black Tern: max 25 MNWR 4 May (MHa), high.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 205 CLB 22 Mar (eB), high, +.

Mourning Dove: max 15 Genoa 14 Mar, +.

Black-billed Cuckoo: max 3 McIlroy Preserve CAYU 15 May (MY), high.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr SW 13 May;

max 6 KH 17 May (J&SGg), high.

Short-eared Owl: max 6 Canoga Marsh
SENE 1 Mar; last GRFF 3 May (JohB),
late.

Com. Nighthawk: max 6 Seneca Falls 25
May, +.

Belted Kingfisher: max 5 CLB 10 Apr
(CSFO, DNu), high.

Red-headed Woodpecker: arr Riverfront
P CHEM 30 Apr; Ovid 4 May.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 6 WERF
7 Apr (BO), high.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 12 BH 8
Apr (JMc), high.

Downy Woodpecker: max 5 WERF 7
Apr (BO), low.

N. Flicker: max 10 Dryden 18 Apr
(J&Ke&PMc), high.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr EIRW 19
May, -.

Acadian Flycatcher: arr Threemile Pt
Gulf CAYU 20 May.

Alder Flycatcher: max 6 EIRW 19 May
(JMc, BP), high.

Willow Flycatcher: max 10 Danby 31
May, +.

Least Flycatcher: max 15 SHSF 9 May,
+.

N. Shrike: last Stevenson Preserve TOMP
5 Apr.

WHITE-EYED VIREO: Cornell U 1
May (MA, TL); last Bluff Pt YATE 11
May (BG).

Philadelphia Vireo: arr & max 2 EIRW
10 May; last EIRW 14 May, early.

Red-eyed Vireo: max 20 Cayuta 22 May
(eB), high, +.

Blue Jay: max 16 WERF 7 May, +.

Am. Crow: max 600 Ithaca Game Farm
TOMP 1 Mar (KeMc), high, +.

Fish Crow: max 20 Dryden 4 May (LSa),
high, +.

Tree Swallow: max 300 Hile School Rd
Swamp TOMP 25 Apr, +.

Cliff Swallow: max 18 Riverfront P

CHEM 19 May, +.

Barn Swallow: max 32 WERF 3 May,
low.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 13
Spencer Crest Nature Center STEU 6
Mar, low, +.

Tufted Titmouse: max 10 CLB 10 Apr
(CSFO, DNu), high, +.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 3 StP 25
Apr, +.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 5 Camp
Dittmer ONTA 20 Mar, +.

Brown Creeper: max 10 SW 4 Apr (BC,
CSFO), high.

Carolina Wren: max 3 WERF 7 Apr, -.

House Wren: arr Enfield 17 Apr; max 15
DLT 2 May, +.

Winter Wren: arr EIRW 28 Mar; max 6
BH 8 Apr, +.

Marsh Wren: max 21 MNWR 30 May
(MC, MHa), high.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 20 SHSF
25 Apr (CBC, StF), high; last Ontario
Pathways Trail ONTA 15 May.

E. Bluebird: max 6 Big Flats 27 May,
low, -.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: arr EIRW 19
May; last EIRW 27 May, -.

Swainson's Thrush: max & last 3 EIRW
27 May, -.

Am. Robin: max 41 Sullivanville Dam
CHEM 13 Mar, low, -.

Gray Catbird: max 30 DLT 2 May, +.

Brown Thrasher: max 6 LPBP 1 May
(J&Ke&PMc), high.

European Starling: max 1500 Genoa 14
Mar, -.

Am. Pipit: max 100 Fayette 15 Apr; last
many Potter Mucklands YATE 8 May, -.

Cedar Waxwing: max 150 Lansing 25
Mar, -.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: arr Ontario
Pathways Trail ONTA 30 Apr; max 7
LPBP 16 May.

Golden-winged Warbler: arr Lansing 6

May; MWC 28 May.
"Brewster's" Warbler: arr EIRW 7 May; LPBP 16 May.
Tennessee Warbler: max 6 EIRW 11 May; last 2 EIRW 27 May (SH), late.
Orange-crowned Warbler: arr EIRW 6 May; max 2 EIRW 10 May; last EIRW 16 May.
N. Parula: SW 6 May; last EIRW 19 May, -.
Yellow Warbler: max 30 MNWR 19 May, +.
Magnolia Warbler: max 4 EIRW 16 May, -.
Cape May Warbler: last Van Etten 18 May.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr StP 6 Apr; max 101 Marcus Whitman ECO Property YATE 8 May (BBE), high.
Black-throated Green Warbler: max 24 BH 6 May (JMc), high.
Pine Warbler: max 10 Dryden 19 Apr (DSt, SFS), high.
Prairie Warbler: arr LPBP 30 Apr; max 8 Gleason Meadows CHEM 15 May (B&JO), high.
Palm Warbler: max 6 StP 8 May; last 6 TCAH 9 May, -.
Bay-breasted Warbler: max 2 Meads Creek STEU 14 May; last SHSF 19 May.
Blackpoll Warbler: max 20 EIRW 16 May (CSFO, JMo, CTH), high, +.
Cerulean Warbler: arr MNWR 6 May; max 10 MNWR 19 May.
Louisiana Waterthrush: arr Hammond Hill State Forest TOMP 18 Apr, late; max 6 SHSF 19 May.
Hooded Warbler: arr W Danby 8 May; max "lots" Moravia 22 May.
Wilson's Warbler: max 2 EIRW 10 May; last EIRW 27 May (SH), late.
Yellow-breasted Chat: arr LPBP 30 Apr (RS), early.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 14 CLB 22 Mar; last MNWR 1 May.

Chipping Sparrow: max 11 Ithaca 22 Apr, +.
CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: arr Niles 18 Apr; max 2 Caroline 25 May.
Field Sparrow: arr Hector 31 Mar; max 10 Dryden 18 Apr.
Fox Sparrow: arr Dryden 7 Mar; max 11 Dryden 5 Apr; last Ithaca 25 Apr, -.
Song Sparrow: max 67 Lansing 24 Mar, +.
Lincoln's Sparrow: last KH 8 May, early.
Swamp Sparrow: arr 2 Dryden 31 Mar; max 25 MNWR 17 Apr.
White-crowned Sparrow: max 50 Horseheads 4 May (DE), high; last Corning 22 May, +.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 71 Hammond Hill State Forest TOMP 3 Apr, -.
Lapland Longspur: max 3 Lansing 19 Mar; last 2 SaMu 27 Mar.
Snow Bunting: max 70 CLB 21 Mar; last SaMu 27 Mar, -.
N. Cardinal: max 20 CLB 1 Mar, +.
Indigo Bunting: max "lots and lots" Danby 31 May, +.
Bobolink: max 100 Danby 31 May (MHa), high, +.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 1500 TCAH 22 Mar, -.
E. Meadowlark: arr Elmira Dam CHEM 15 Mar; max 10 Dryden 18 Apr.
Rusty Blackbird: arr 10 SW 13 Mar; max 20 DLT 10 Apr; last 3 SW 8 May, -.
Com. Grackle: arr 2 Corning 1 Mar; max 1000 ML 6 Mar, -.
Orchard Oriole: arr EIRW 4 May; EIRW 11 May.
Baltimore Oriole: max 10 EIRW 11 May, +.
Purple Finch: max 16 Covert 19 Apr, +.
House Finch: max 12 Phelps 3 May, +.
Red Crossbill: max 4 Fillmore Glen SP 13 Mar; last Fillmore Glen SP 6 May.
White-winged Crossbill: George Junior Republic TOMP 5 May (MY), only report.
Com. Redpoll: max 540 CLB 22 Mar

(eB), high; last 3 KH 11 Apr, early, +.

HOARY REDPOLL: max 4 Summerhill
18 Mar (JSi, MY), high; last CLB 22
Mar, +.

Pine Siskin: max 60 CLB 22 Mar (eB),
high, +.

Am. Goldfinch: max 91 Caroline 3
Mar, +.

Evening Grosbeak: max 62 Summerhill
6 Mar; last 2 Summerhill 3 May, early, +.

House Sparrow: max 17 Corning 12 Apr,
low, +.