

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Spring seemed slow to come, ending somewhat cool and rainy. Significant snow accumulations occurred into the third week of March, and many areas saw ice-covered water a week or so past the official beginning of spring. A persistent upper level low over the northeast ushered in cold and rainy conditions in early spring, which seemed to delay many early migrants. April had some erratic outbreaks of sun, notably a high of 83°F on the 20th. April's total rainfall was below average, but this masks the fact that much of the month's last two weeks experienced clouds and drizzling rain. May was 3.6° cooler than average, with many small misting showers that may have interfered with early nesting insectivores such as swallows and wrens. The last frost occurred on 13 May. The waterfowl migration was unremarkable and ended abruptly in early April. There were no reports of unusual species, but the Region did stage large numbers of Snow Geese and there were several dozen reports of Pied-billed Grebe, compared to the usual spring reports of only two or three. Common Loon reports have curiously increased in our Region over the last few years, with more reports from smaller bodies of water and reports of lingering adults into May. Typical springs produce a handful of migrant sightings only on large bodies of water such as Lake George, Great Sacandaga Lake and the Hudson River.

Sora arrived in Saratoga County on 7 April, one day behind the earliest Regional arrival date. Shorebirds were either unnoticed, e.g. no reports of Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Sandpiper or Pectoral Sandpiper, or late. This spring was the first since 1990 in which no observer reported a single species of migrating tern.

Many casual birders and office workers were treated this spring to the aerial predatory acrobatics of the pair of Peregrine Falcons that have successfully nested and reared young on the Dunn Memorial Bridge in Albany. Fortunately, there has only been praise and admiration for the adult falcons that routinely snatch and share a pigeon lunch near the sandwich-nibbling office workers in such urban parks as Albany's Corning Preserve.

Speaking of Rock Pigeons on the menu, Bob Yunick sent along the following interesting anecdote regarding the Region's expanding Common Raven population: "A very unusual story has been told to me independently by several employees at the Schenectady International chemical manufacturing plant in Lower Rotterdam Jct., Schenectady County, where Rock Pigeons have become a problem due to their nesting and roosting on plant equipment. They have witnessed on numerous occasions a Raven attack, kill and carry off adult Rock Pigeons!"

With lingering snowy conditions in March, some winter residents may have tarried a bit longer in the area. Rough-legged Hawks were common until the end of March, the last Northern Shrike was seen on 18 March and Snow Buntings

occurred regularly in small flocks until 23 March. The last American Tree Sparrow was observed on 29 April and Dark-eyed Juncos remained at low elevations (below 1000 feet) until about the same date.

The passerine migration was mixed, with most swallows, thrushes, vireos and emberizids arriving either close to historic averages or early. A Northern Waterthrush was seen at Visser Ferry, Saratoga County, on 16 April, a near record early date for the Region. Flycatchers as a group were late. The early species of warblers, Pine, Palm and Yellow, arrived early, and nearly all other species of warblers were late.

The rarest sighting of the spring was a male **Blue Grosbeak** spotted in Athens, Green County, by Jeremy Taylor, who was visiting his parents. He was encouraged to compile a NYSARC report, but the details of his sighting were convincing enough to include here. Despite their regular appearance in southern NY, this bird remains rare in Region 8. A Blue Grosbeak was first recorded in our Region in 1957, followed by a strange irruption of six additional birds in 1962-63. There exists only one other sighting between the 1960s and the present, a 1998 sighting in Rensselaer County. This 2005 bird is the third reliable report for Greene County. The observer's mother, who apparently also successfully identified the bird, had seen it visit her feeder off and on for a few days. She didn't report the bird to anyone, which illustrates, I believe, how much more work we have left to educate the general feeder-watching public about how and when to report rarities. What other fine birds have been spotted by grandmothers casually sipping their morning coffee?

Finally, a topic that is only tangentially related to birding: In response to a blitz of subdivisions and real estate development descending upon the Hudson Valley and parts of the Capital District, a growing number of town zoning boards are establishing moratoriums on major housing proposals. The hope is to delay the push in development until town governments can map out master plans that can accommodate some development while preserving some much-needed open space and habitat. In practice, only substantial wetlands enjoy limited protection when local zoning boards perform their environmental impact assessments. Clear cutting of mature woods and wholesale development of seasonally wet vernal pools, fields and woodlots are common. Let those of us who care about the welfare of birds encourage this intelligent review of land use. The annoyance and expense of such measures, I believe, will no doubt be compensated by a more diverse array of birds and other wildlife.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Bill Cook, Peter Doherty, Kate Dunham, Mark Fitzsimmons, Jane Graves, Rich Guthrie, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Jesse Jaycox, Bill Lee, Andrew Mason, Gail & Rich Nord, Tom Palmer, Barbara Putnam, Kathy Schneider, Joan Steiner, Jeremy Taylor, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

BCM – Black Creek Marsh WMA ALBA; CHA – T Chatham COLU; CL – Collins L, Scotia SCHE; FtE – T Fort Edward WASH; HR – Hudson Ri; JL – Jenny L SARA; NBA – T New Baltimore GREE; VF – Vischer Ferry NHP SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: arr Bells Pd Livingston COLU 16 Mar; 5 FtE HR 21 Mar; max 5000 HR SARA 26 Mar; 1000 Schuylerville SARA 27 Mar; last HR COLU 3 Apr.

Tundra Swan: 2 CL 22 Apr; Brunswick RENS 1 May.

Wood Duck: arr Clarks Mills WASH 27 Mar.

Gadwall: 2 Ft Miller WASH 20 Mar; max 6 Hoosic R RENS 27 Mar.

Am. Wigeon: CL 23 Mar; max 100 FtE 24 Mar; last VF 9 Apr.

N. Shoveler: 2 VF 2-9 Apr, only report.

N. Pintail: arr HR COLU 6 Mar; 15 FtE HR 21 Mar; max 21 Schuylerville SARA 27 Mar.

Green-winged Teal: max 10 Vosburgh's Marsh GREE 1 Apr.

Canvasback: Cohoes ALBA 13 Mar; max 100 Cheviot Landing COLU 13 Mar; 7 CL 27 Mar-2 Apr.

Greater Scaup: Cocksackie GREE 6-9 Mar.

Bufflehead: last 8 VF 2 Apr.

Com. Goldeneye: last FtE HR 8 Apr.

Red-breasted Merganser: 2 CL 1-2 Apr.

Com. Loon: Triangle L RENS 22 Apr; Alcove Res ALBA 21 May, ad pr Jenny L SARA 21 May, breeding?

Pied-billed Grebe: max 4 FtE HR 21 Mar-27 Mar, numerous other reports.

Horned Grebe: Ft Miller WASH 8 Apr, only report.

Red-necked Grebe: 3 NBA 21 Mar (RG).

Am. Bittern: arr VF 15 Apr; max 4 BCM 30 Apr.

Least Bittern: arr BCM 30 Apr.

Great Egret: Stockport Station COLU 4 May; Cohoes ALBA Century Run 21 May.

Green Heron: arr Ramshorn-Livingston GREE 16 Apr.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: VF 13 Apr; Middle Grove SARA.

Black Vulture: 2 Colaruso's Quarry Greenport COLU 4 May.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 8 Hudson COLU 10 Mar.

Osprey: arr Rexford Bridge SCHE 8 Apr; max 6 Thompson L ALBA 5 May.

N. Goshawk: Rensselaerville RENS 19 Mar; Stockport COLU 21 Mar; Austerlitz COLU 9 Apr.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Claverack COLU 20 Mar; 2 Middle Grove SARA 10 Apr; Queensbury WARR 16 Apr; VF 16 Apr.

Broad-winged Hawk: arr Stillwater SARA 29 Apr.

Rough-legged Hawk: last 2 Stone Bridge Rd SARA 29 Mar.

Merlin: SCHE 8 Mar, eating starling; Troy RENS 29 Apr; Rensselaerville RENS 19 May.

Peregrine Falcon: ALBA Corning Preserve 9 Mar thru; ALBA DEC Bldg 23 Mar; CL 3 May, taking pigeon.

Virginia Rail: arr BCM 17 Apr; max 5 BCM 30 Apr.

Sora: arr 2 Saratoga SP SARA 7 Apr, very early.

Com. Moorhen: ALBA Century Run 21 May, only report.

Am. Coot: FtE HR 27 Mar, only report.

Semipalmated Plover: ALBA Century Run 21 May, unspecified number.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr VF 16 Apr.
Lesser Yellowlegs: CHA 14 May, late.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr Claverack COLU 3 May.
Spotted Sandpiper: arr NBA 29 Apr.
Upland Sandpiper: 2 Princetown Rd Florida MONT 19 Apr; FtE 21-28 May.
Dunlin: arr 7 Cohoes ALBA 23 Apr.
Short-billed Dowitcher: 24 Moreau SARA 22 May, only report.
Least Sandpiper: arr Gansevoort SARA 15 May.
Am. Woodcock: arr Livingston COLU 19 Mar, late.
Wilson's Snipe: arr Chatham Center COLU 11 Mar.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 7 Four-mile Pt GREE 1 Apr.
Iceland Gull: 3 Cocksackie 4 Mar; lower Mohawk 13 Apr; NBA 4 Mar-19 Apr.
Glaucous Gull: Cocksackie 10-19 Mar (RG).

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: arr Five Rivers ALBA 14 May.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr East Greenbush RENS 11 May.
Short-eared Owl: 2 Cocksackie Flats 17 Mar; FtE 20 Mar.
Com. Nighthawk: arr Rensselaerville RENS 14 May.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr Troy RENS 28 Apr.
Red-headed Woodpecker: imm Ghent COLU 14 May (CW, OW).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: 2 southern ALBA 29 May.
E. Wood-Pewee: arr Stuyvesant COLU 14 May.
Least Flycatcher: arr JL 6 May.
Great Crested Flycatcher: arr Peebles I SARA 28 Apr.
E. Kingbird: arr BCM 10 May.

N. Shrike: last Florida MONT 18 Mar.
Yellow-throated Vireo: arr Hannacroix P GREE 3 May.
Blue-headed Vireo: arr JL 18 Apr.
Warbling Vireo: arr VF 1 May.
Philadelphia Vireo: CHA 14 May (CW, OW), only report.
Red-eyed Vireo: arr NBA 3 May.
Horned Lark: max 100 Northumberland SARA 29 Mar; FtE 21 May, likely breeding.
Purple Martin: max 12 Saratoga L SARA 10 May.
Tree Swallow: arr Stockport COLU 20 Mar, early.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: arr NBA 2 Apr, early.
Bank Swallow: arr Coeymans ALBA 27 APR.
Cliff Swallow: arr Peebles I SARA 28 Apr.
Barn Swallow: arr Saratoga Sod Farm SARA 14 Apr.
House Wren: arr New Salem ALBA 24 Apr.
SEDGE WREN: Sharon SCHO 18 May (PD).
Veery: arr VF 2 May.
Swainson's Thrush: arr Albany Pine Bush ALBA 12 May.
Hermit Thrush: arr RENS 5 Apr.
Wood Thrush: arr Vosburgh's Marsh GREE 29 Apr.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: arr Ancram COLU 5 May.
"Lawrence's" Warbler: Argyle WASH 21 May.
"Tennessee" Warbler: arr Schodack I RENS 18 May.
Nashville Warbler: arr BCM 10 May.
Yellow Warbler: arr VF 29 Apr.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr Coeymans ALBA 6 May.
Magnolia Warbler: arr Taghkanic COLU 3 May.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr Middle Grove SARA 7 May.
Black-throated Green Warbler: arr Jefferson SCHO 22 Apr.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr Saratoga Springs SARA 14 May.
Pine Warbler: arr Florida MONT 6 Apr.
Palm Warbler: arr VF 14 Apr.
Blackpoll Warbler: arr VF 12 May.
Cerulean Warbler: Schodack I 19 May, Beebe Hill Austerlitz COLU 28 May (JS), far from known breeding sites.
Worm-eating Warbler: 2 southern ALBA 29 May.
Ovenbird: arr Hannacroix P GREE 3 May.
N. Waterthrush: arr Middle Grove SARA 16 Apr, early.
Louisiana Waterthrush: arr RENS 13 Apr.
Mourning Warbler: Hannacroix P GREE 27 May, only report.
Wilson's Warbler: COLU Century Run 14 May, only report.
Canada Warbler: Coeymans ALBA 15 May; ALBA Century Run 21 May; Hannacroix P GREE 27 May.

TANAGERS — WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: arr CHA 6 May.
E. Towhee: arr Hillsdale COLU 22 Apr.
Am. Tree Sparrow: last Wilton SARA 29 Apr.
Chipping Sparrow: arr Feller Rd Taghkanic COLU 6 Apr.
Field Sparrow: arr Ghent COLU 2 Apr.

Vesper Sparrow: FtE 8 Apr; SARA airport 18 May.
Savannah Sparrow: arr FtE 8 Apr.
Grasshopper Sparrow: Ghent 14 May thru.
Fox Sparrow: arr NBA 11 Mar; last Copake COLU 9 Apr.
Lincoln's Sparrow: Manning Blvd ALBA 27 May, only report.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr Taghkanic COLU 3 May.
Snow Bunting: 31 Northumberland SARA 5 Mar; last Stuyvesant COLU 23 Mar.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr Lansingburgh RENS 24 Apr.
BLUE GROSBEAK: m Athens GREE 8 May, at feeder (JT).
E. Meadowlark: arr FtE 20 Mar.
Rusty Blackbird: max 8 VF 9 Apr; 2 Ramshorn-Livingston GREE 16 Apr; max 8 Guilderland ALBA 19 Apr; last Greenport COLU 21 Apr.
Orchard Oriole: VF 10 May; Claverack COLU 15 May; ALBA 21 May.
Baltimore Oriole: arr VF 1 May.
Com. Redpoll: last Guilderland ALBA 16 Mar.
Pine Siskin: Galway SARA 6 Apr; JL 6-20 May, Gansevoort SARA 21 May.
Evening Grosbeak: 3 Jefferson SCHO 30 Mar-13 Apr; Austerlitz COLU 29 Apr, locally uncommon; 26 banded JL 6-29 May (RY).

