

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Spring 2006 was warmer than average and moderately wet. The Hudson River was open throughout the period and ice cleared off the Mohawk River and most other bodies of water by the first week of March. At Albany International Airport, March was 1° warmer than average, relatively dry, and moderately windy. The last significant snow of 1.2 inches fell on 15 March amidst blustery wind and traces of rain. April began a seasonal warming trend, ending 2.9° warmer than average. The last frost occurred on 29 April. May was frequently foggy and 1.64 inches wetter than average. May's temperature seesawed between daily highs in the 50s and a high of 89° on the 30th, producing a median temperature close to historic averages.

Snow Geese failed to rest in large numbers this spring in traditional areas in Saratoga and Rensselaer Counties. Rich Nord found several "Blue" Geese in a flock of 60 Snow Geese at Bells Pond in Livingston, Columbia County. Several observers reported "large flocks" of Brant on the Hudson River on 18 May, but none attempted to quantify the number of birds. Obviously, more information is preferable to less and I encourage observers to try to make estimates when specific counting is not possible.

Observers in the Region counted 7 Red-necked Grebes, a high number considering that the Great Lakes did not freeze this winter. Catherine Klatt spotted a **Glossy Ibis** at Vischer's Ferry in Saratoga County. Ibises are becoming increasingly frequent spring visitors to our Region.

Will Raup received a surprise when watching Bald Eagles circle over Stanton Pond in Coeymans, Albany County. He noticed that two adult Bald Eagles harassed what appeared to be an immature. Closer inspection revealed that the darker eagle was an adult Golden Eagle. The Bald Eagles eventually lost interest in their pursuit, and the Golden Eagle resumed its flight north.

Peter Lamboy in Scotia found what I believe is the first record of **Sandhill Crane** in Schenectady County. As cranes expand breeding opportunities at the margins of their range, we can probably expect to see an increasing number of overshoots into eastern New York and New England. A Whooping Crane was observed in adjacent Vermont this spring, but did not drift over the border despite the hopes of many eager Region 8 birders. Let's hope that this much rarer crane will someday enjoy a Sandhill-like expansion.

A single Upland Sandpiper was recorded in Stuyvesant, Columbia County, near County Route 21. Although Upland Sandpipers once bred in the county, they have not been observed in its shrinking grasslands for several years. The only other shorebird of note, a Pectoral Sandpiper, was seen regularly at Goeffroy's Pond, an unassuming splotch of mud in Columbia County that has yielded a diverse list of shorebirds in recent decades. It is precisely this type of locality most at risk that is most in need of the protection of motivated birders. Many upstate townships now have some measure of zoning laws. By casually monitoring land sale offerings and development proposals at the local level, we can better voice our concerns at planning board hearings when important habitat is at risk.

There were few surprises among this spring's passerine migrants. When you eliminate a handful of very early outliers, the bulk of neotropical migrants arrived within three days of historic average dates. Regional birders flocked mostly to traditional spring hotspots such as Black Creek Marsh in Albany County and Vischer's Ferry in Saratoga County to observe the season's first flycatchers, vireos, warblers, tanagers, and orioles. Marsh Wren, Eastern Towhee, and White-crowned Sparrow were all remarkably early.

We had good reports of Hooded Warbler this spring. Sue Adair discovered a singing territorial male on Route 157 near Thatcher State Park. Observers also found this species at new locales in Albany and Rensselaer Counties.

A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** is the single rarity of the season, spotted by Melissa Koos on 15 April at her home in Comstock, Washington County. The bird was seen feeding on sunflower seeds in a small flock of Common Grackle and Red-winged Blackbird.

Alison Van Kueren reported a comparatively large flock of 65 Rusty Blackbirds at Black Creek Marsh. Such numbers, considered modest by many living birders, are uncommon now in Region 8. National Breeding Bird Survey data shows a significant decline of this species for reasons that are not clear.

Finally, the single Eurasian Collared-Dove seen by Carol & Owen Whitby deserves a few words. Every region in the state gets its share of exotics - an orange bishop here, a budgerigar there. We faithfully record these sightings in print, the readers smile, and we go on about our business of tracking New York's "real" avifauna. This species may be different, however. I predict - and mind you, predictions in ecology are notoriously shaky - that we will someday see a lot of Eurasian Collared-Doves. This species is currently leapfrogging around the southern United States. It already has a strong foothold in the Southeast. In 5 years it has colonized most of the counties between Texas and Los Angeles so that the Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America, published in 2002, does not currently describe even 50 percent of its actual range. There are

no reasons to suggest that it cannot colonize the north. It has all the makings of a European Starling or House Finch of the 21st Century. Its diet is general, its habitat requirements are unspecialized, it can breed multiple times a season, and, perhaps most importantly, it has a very high tolerance for humans and our habits. There is a grand and uncontrolled avian experiment at hand. Only time will reveal the result.

It is also my sad duty to report the loss of Kate Dunham, a dedicated contributor to the Alan Devoe Bird Club, one of this organization's oldest member clubs. Kate lost a hard-fought battle with cancer in May. She involved herself in local conservation issues too numerous to list here, and she will be missed by many in the birding community.

CONTRIBUTORS

Sue Adair, Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Marcia Anderson, David Baim, Hope & Mary Batcheller, Ramona Bearor, Bob Carroll, Gerry Colborn, Bill Cook, David Diaz, Kate Dunham, Jessica Evans, Corey Finger, David Gibson, Jane Graves, Rich Guthrie, John Hershey, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Nancy Kern, Peter Lamboy, Jory Langner, Bill Lee, Mitzi Lobdell, Catherine Klatt, Melissa Koos, David & Sandy Martin, Andrew Mason, Steve Mesick, Frank Murphy, Gail & Rich Nord, Tom Palmer, Ellen Pemrick, Barbara Putnam, Will Raup, Susan Scheck, Jeff Schoonmaker, Laura Sommers, Joan Steiner, Vincent Sturm, Bill & Marion Ulmer, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, Alan Wirth, Tom Williams, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

AUS – T Austerlitz COLU; BCM – Black Creek Marsh State Wildlife Management Area ALBA; BER – T Berne ALBA; CLA – T Claverack COLU; FtE – T Fort Edward WASH; GHE – T Ghent COLU; HR – Hudson Ri; JL – Jenny Lake SARA; MR – Mohawk Ri.; NBA – T New Baltimore GREE; VF – Vischer's Ferry NHP SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: arr Bells Pond COLU

13 Mar; 40 SCHE 13-28 Mar; 11 MR
12 Apr.

Brant: arr COLU 13 May; "Large flocks"
HR 18 May, no estimates of numbers
provided, *intro*.

Wood Duck: arr VF 7 Mar.

Gadwall: arr Collins L SCHE 15 Mar.

Am. Wigeon: 50 VF 11-17 Mar; 14
Nassau L RENS 14 Mar; max 74 VF
19 Mar.

Blue-winged Teal: arr VF 31 Mar.

N. Shoveler: arr VF 5 Apr.

N. Pintail: arr VF 11 Mar.

Green-winged Teal: arr Saratoga L 12
Mar.

Canvasback: last AUS 28 Mar.

Redhead: HR at FtE 19 Mar.

Lesser Scaup: arr HR 19 Mar.

White-winged Scoter: SARA L 20 May.

Bufflehead: max 20 Tomhannock Res
RENS 11 Apr.

Com. Goldeneye: max 11 MR 11 Mar.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 4 NBA
11 Apr.

Ruddy Duck: arr GHE 13 Apr; last
Collin L SCHE 24 May.

Com. Loon: max 6 SARA L 20 May.

Pied-billed Grebe: arr VF 19 Mar.

Horned Grebe: arr HR at COX 5 Mar;
Saratoga L 19 Mar.

Red-necked Grebe: 2 Saratoga L
19 Mar; 4 Mile Pt GREE 10 Apr; max
4 COX 14 Apr.

Am. Bittern: arr VF 6 Apr.

Least Bittern: VF 7 May; BCM 20 May.

Great Egret: 2 Bog Meadow Brook
SARA 8 May.

Green Heron: arr VF 26 Apr.

GLOSSY IBIS: VF 2 Apr (CK).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: arr Vosburgh Marsh GREE
8 Apr.

N. Harrier: max 4 COX flats 11 Mar.

N. Goshawk: Thatcher SP 25 Apr,
only report.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Rexford SARA
7 Mar; Wilton SARA 13 Apr; 5 Rivers
ALBA 6 May; Blenheim SCHO 20 May.

Broad-winged Hawk: arr AUS 12 Apr.

Golden Eagle: Stanton Pd Coeymans
ALBA 18 May (WR).

Merlin: Troy RENS 12 Mar; Taghkanic
COLU 17 Mar; Saratoga NP 4 May thru.

Peregrine Falcon: Dunn Memorial
Bridge ALBA 1 Apr, on eggs.

Virginia Rail: arr BCM 2 Apr.

Sora: arr BCM 14 Apr.

Com. Moorhen: arr BCM 20 Apr.

Am. Coot: arr BCM 2 Apr; Vosburgh
Marsh GREE 8 Apr.

SANDHILL CRANE: Scotia SCHE
7 Apr (PL), county record.

Semipalmated Plover: arr 7 Papscanee
1 RENS 24 May.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr GHE 3 Apr.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr NBA 28 Apr.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr Chatham
COLU 7 Apr.

Spotted Sandpiper: arr NBA 18 Apr.

Upland Sandpiper: Stuyvesant COLU
4 May, unusual in COLU.

Least Sandpiper: arr Stillwater SARA
5 May.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr Geoffroy's Pd
CLA 13 Apr (RN).

Am. Woodcock: arr CLA 11 Mar.

Wilson's Snipe: arr CLA 10 Mar.

Bonaparte's Gull: 2 Niskayuna SCHE
15 Apr (RY), only report.

Caspian Tern: arr Peebles I SARA
5 May (CF).

Black Tern: 8 SARA L 20 May.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: arr BCM 6 May.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr Landis
Arboretum SCHO 8 May.

Snowy Owl: GHE COLU Airport
10 Mar (MA).

Com. Nighthawk: arr CLA 18 May.

Whip-poor-will: arr Hillsdale COLU 13
May; Coeymans ALBA 28 May,
only reports.

Chimney Swift: arr Collins L SCHE
2 May.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr
Taghkanic COLU 2 May.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: arr Petersburg
RENS 22 May.

E. Wood Pewee: arr Livingston COLU
23 May.

Alder Flycatcher: arr COX 17 May.

Willow Flycatcher: arr Clermont COLU
13 May.

Least Flycatcher: arr NBA 29 Apr.

Great Crested Flycatcher: arr AUS
2 May.

E. Kingbird: arr Schodack RENS 2 May.

N. Shrike: last New Lebanon COLU 27 Mar.

Yellow-throated Vireo: arr VF 29 Apr.

Blue-headed Vireo: arr Capital District
WMA ALBA 15 Apr.

Warbling Vireo: arr NBA 27 Apr.

Red-eyed Vireo: arr Voorheesville
ALBA 6 May.

Blue Jay: West Sand L RENS
24 May, albino.

Horned Lark: max 26 Florida MONT 1
Mar; SARA County Airport
20 May, breeding.

Purple Martin: arr 6 Glen MONT
2 May, max 20 Kaydeross Ave SARA
5 May thru.

N. Rough-winged Swallow: arr Lock 7 SCHE 15 Apr.

Bank Swallow: arr VF 29 Apr.

Cliff Swallow: arr COLU 13 May.

Barn Swallow: arr NBA 16 Apr.

House Wren: arr Troy RENS 19 Apr.

Marsh Wren: arr BCM 14 Apr, very early.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr NBA 12 Apr.

Veery: arr AUS 11 May.

Swainson's Thrush: arr Cole Hill Forest ALBA 11 May.

Hermit Thrush: arr Rotterdam SCHE 19 Mar.

Wood Thrush: arr Albany 4 May.

Gray Catbird: arr NBA 16 Apr.

Brown Thrasher: arr 5 Rivers ALBA 14 Apr.

Am. Pipit: 25 Middleburgh SCHO 18 Mar; 2 Peebles I SARA 7 May.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: arr Guiderland ALBA 27 Apr.

"Lawrence's Warbler": New Lebanon COLU 24 May (JS)

Golden-winged Warbler: GHE 13 May (CW, OW), only report.

Tennessee Warbler: arr Taghkanic COLU 11 May.

Nashville Warbler: arr Troy RENS 4 May.

N. Parula: arr Saratoga NP 4 May

Yellow Warbler: arr VF 29 Apr.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr Taghkanic COLU 27 Apr (AW), early.

Magnolia Warbler: arr Voorheesville ALBA 6 May.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr Albany 4 May.

Black-throated Green Warbler: arr Slingerlands ALBA 3 May.

Blackburnian Warbler: arr Colonie ALBA 2 May.

Pine Warbler: arr BER 1 Apr.

Prairie Warbler: arr 5 Rivers ALBA 5 May.

Palm Warbler: arr Greenport COLU 12 Apr.

Blackpoll Warbler: arr Papsancee I RENS 20 May.

Cerulean Warbler: arr Clermont COLU 13 May.

Black-and-white Warbler: arr CLA 3 May.

Am. Redstart: arr VF 4 May.

Worm-eating Warbler: arr Coeymans ALBA 20 May.

Ovenbird: arr Saratoga NP 4 May.

N. Waterthrush: arr BCM 20 Apr.

Louisiana Waterthrush: arr Stanton Rd ALBA 14 Apr.

Mourning Warbler: AUS 30 May, only report.

Com. Yellowthroat: arr Troy RENS 4 May.

Hooded Warbler: Rt 157 ALBA 9 May (SA); 2 Hold Preserve ALBA 25 May; New Salem RENS 27 May.

Canada Warbler: arr AUS 13 May.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: arr BCM 6 May.

E. Towhee: arr Albany 19 Mar, very early.

Am. Tree Sparrow: last 18 Apr Gansevoort SARA.

Chipping Sparrow: arr Chatham COLU 26 Mar.

Field Sparrow: arr Livingston COLU 8 Apr.

Vesper Sparrow: arr New Scotland ALBA 14 Apr; Florida MONT 20 Apr; NBA 30 Apr; Saratoga National Cemetery 4 May thru, all reports.

Fox Sparrow: 2 arr BER 15 Mar; max 8 BER 2 Apr.

Lincoln's Sparrow: arr AUS 8 May

White-crowned Sparrow: arr GHE 16 Mar, record early date.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr Niskayuna SCHE 27 Apr.

Indigo Bunting: arr Colonie ALBA 6 May.

Bobolink: arr Taghkanic COLU 6 May.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: m Comstock WASH 15 Apr. (MK), photographed.

Rusty Blackbird: 12 4 Mile Pt GREE 12 Mar; BCM 2-6 Apr; New Lebanon COLU 9 Apr; max 65 BCM 16 Apr (AVK); 4 BCM 20 Apr; 20 Castleton RENS 27 Apr, last BCM 7 May.

Orchard Oriole: arr Rennselaer Tech
Park RENS 26 Apr.

Baltimore Oriole: arr Rensselaer Tech
Park RENS 22 Apr.

Com. Redpoll: 30 BER 1-21 Mar;
Glenville SCHE 16 Mar;

Pine Siskin: numerous scattered reports
of flocks 1-10 individuals.

Evening Grosbeak: 3 BER 21 Mar;
6 W Fulton SCHO 2 Apr; Jefferson
SCHO 7 Apr; JL SARA 9 Apr thru;
Summit SCHO 20 May.

EXOTICS

Eurasian Collared-Dove: Millbrook Rd CLA
13 May (CW, OW).