

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON—SPRING 2009

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This season was largely uneventful in its weather. The most interesting bird-related weather event came in the form of a large southerly flow at the end of April, which nearly all Regional editors commented on in their respective reports. This period of warmth and southerly winds started downstate on 23 April and lasted through at least 27 April, when temperatures hit 90° F on Long Island. This system prematurely ushered in a huge number and diversity of neotropical migrants, including a suite of warblers and others not expected until the first week of May. Note the exceptional number of early records scattered throughout the Regional reports—this weather event was clearly very well documented statewide through its birdlife.

Of the numerous rarities reported this period, several outstanding birds were especially noteworthy. A Tufted Duck that spanned the Ulster and Dutchess County line headlined waterfowl for the season. An Anhinga in Orange County (R9) was a typical spring overshoot. A Swallow-tailed Kite in Green County, several Swainson's Hawks in R2 and R5, and four western Red-tailed Hawks in R5 were remarkable raptor records. Detailed documentation on this number of western Red-tailed Hawks, which are thought to be very rare in the east, is desirable. Two separate Northern Hawk-Owls continued into the season in R7, and a Boreal Owl was found at Wilson-Tuscarora S.P. (R1). A Eurasian Collared-Dove, still very rare in the state, continued in Monroe County. A male Ruff in Rye (R9) was the shorebird highlight of the season.

Among passerines, a Lark Sparrow at Montezuma NWR was very rare on spring migration (more regular in fall, especially on the coast), and a "Greenland" Hoary Redpoll carefully studied among other Hoaries at Hamlin Beach SP. was an outstanding record for that subspecies. The clear passerine highlight, though, was a Townsend's Warbler at Prospect Park (R10) during the late April surge of early migrants.

Three sightings provided interesting high counts. 100 Long-tailed Ducks on Lake George in the Adirondacks (R8) were noteworthy for an inland location at high elevation. 188 Black Terns were at Perch River WMA (R6). A huge flock of blackbirds numbering over half a million (mostly Common Grackles) was documented by Tom Carrolan near the Seneca River in R5.

Notable trends that characterized the season included an upstate push of southern waders, continued expansions into the state (Black Vulture and Sandhill Crane), and winter invasions carrying over into the period (Snowy Owl and finches).

Though spring often brings a small vanguard of waders upstate, this spring proved exceptional. Three Snowy Egrets were found in R1 and R3, a Tricolored Heron appeared in R1, a Little Blue Heron was seen in R8, a Cattle Egret was in

R1, and three Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were found in R3 and R5. One of these Snowy Egrets was tracked along the entire length of Cayuga Lake from Ithaca to Montezuma NWR.

Sandhill Cranes continue their increase in northern, western, and central New York, with numerous reports of migrants as well as a strong number of presumed breeders—a “Lesser” Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis canadensis*) reported from Braddock Bay would be just the second for the state of this highly migratory subspecies (almost all records, including breeders, appear to refer to the larger *G. c. tabida*).

Though not surprising given long-term distributional trends in the species, Black Vultures continue to push northward in spring, with reports from Regions 1, 2, 5, and 7 away from typical haunts (though such a pattern has been established along the Lake Ontario plain that Black Vulture is virtually expected there in spring).

Several Snowy Owls lingered into late spring after a strong showing this winter. Along the eastern Lake Ontario Plain, several lingered into May, with one bird in Clayton (R6) remaining through the end of the period.

The finch flight of the winter 2008-2009 carried on into the season, with White-winged Crossbill and Pine Siskin reported in all Regions. White-winged Crossbill lingered and appeared to breed in numerous locations (they were even found in Region 10 until 23 May!), though their numbers were dwarfed in April and May by high numbers of apparently breeding Pine Siskins.

Though the crossbill scene was very much dominated by White-wingeds throughout the state, Red Crossbills were present in an interesting variety. Matt Young reports documenting five different “call types” of Red Crossbills across Central New York (types 1,2,3,4 and 10) during the season (see the R4 report). Redpolls staged a small flight into northern and western New York, but 10 Hoaries (including the aforementioned “Greenland” bird) among 300 Commons at Hamlin Beach S.P. (R2) were especially noteworthy.

