

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON—SPRING 2011

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THE WEATHER

Spring 2011 was exceptionally wet. April was particularly wet, with damaging floods reported over much of northern New York. Poor weather impeded landbird migration for extended periods, but a break in the weather toward the end of the April was accompanied by a huge push of migrants.

WATERFOWL AND WATERBIRDS

When bird populations grow and their distributions expand, things change fast in the birding world. The rapidity with which our conventional wisdom can be revolutionized is illustrated superbly by this spring's waterfowl migration in New York State. "Richardson's" Cackling Goose was barely known among New York birders until a few pioneering students began working them out in the late 1990s; this spring about 100 were recorded across the state. Greater White-fronted Goose was barely accepted as a naturally occurring species in New York prior to the 1970s; this spring the state hosted groups of 12, seven, and four in Regions 9, 1, and 10. New York's first Ross's Goose wasn't found until 1983, and as recently as 1998 the total number known to have occurred statewide was about a dozen; this spring at least 20 were widely distributed across the state, and nine were tallied at one site near Pine Island, Region 9. Until just five years ago, all Barnacle Geese were considered suspect in New York, regardless of date, context, and appearance; now they are expected every year and have fallen awkwardly low on the list of worrisome/exciting species that trouble the sleep of New York's competitive year-listers. Amazingly, **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** also seems to be following these trajectories, at least in terms of accelerating occurrence, if not in terms of geographical origins. Region 9 scored all five of these species during spring 2011, due in great part to Rob Stone's efforts, beginning with the discovery of some of the arctic-breeding geese in early March and concluding almost three months later with a flock of five striking whistling-ducks. Mike Bochnik's Region 9 report is well worth close reading in this regard.

At least 17 Eurasian Wigeon were recorded, distributed across all Regions except 4 and 6, and at least five "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal were tallied in Regions 3 and 10. These robust totals may be related to the major incursions of *The Kingbird* 2011 September; 61 (3)

these taxa that were detected in Atlantic Canada during the winter of 2010-11 (e.g., 40+ wigeon in Nova Scotia and 35 teal near St. John's, Newfoundland; *North American Birds* 65: 234). Predictably, careful observers also detected hybrids or intergrades of these taxa with their closest North American relatives, American Wigeon and Green-winged Teal. Less expected were reports of hybrids such as Snow Goose x Canada Goose (Regions 2 and 3), Blue-winged Teal x Northern Shoveler (Region 3; see article this issue), Ring-necked Duck x scaup (Region 3), and **Tufted Duck** x scaup (Region 10).

An adult **White Ibis** that visited Staten Island from 25 April into May was on the vanguard of a major incursion that unfolded during the summer. Equally remarkable were no fewer than four **White-faced Ibises**, all upstate, including the first ever for Region 2.

RAPTORS

Eastern New York shared in this spring's northward push of Swallow-tailed Kites, with reports from Regions 8, 9, and 10. Mississippi Kites were recorded in Regions 2, 8, and 9. An exceptional total of five Swainson's Hawks was recorded this spring (Regions 2, 3, and 5), of which three occurred with a warm front along the Lake Ontario shore 27-28 April. This same front yielded New York's greatest single-day flight of Broad-winged Hawks on 27 April, with **39,417** passing Braddock Bay.

SHOREBIRDS, GULLS, TERNS, AND ALCIDS

Four reports each of American Golden-Plover and "Western" Willet from upstate were more than usual for spring. Even more remarkable was a Piping Plover at Sandy Pond, *Oswego*, Region 5 from 10-21 May, which represented the first local record since 1984. Also unusual as to date and place was a Laughing Gull at Fair Haven, *Wayne*, Region 5 on 27 May.

Other rare gulls reported from the Great Lakes Plain this spring included **Slaty-back-backed**, **California**, and **Thayer's**. In this regard, the gull-watching exploits of Willie D'Anna, Jim Pawlicki, and Dave Tetlow deserve commendation. A count of 13 Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Riga, *Monroe*, Region 2 on 22 Mar was notable for upstate New York and suggestive of how early adults of this rapidly increasing species pass northward in our region. Consistent with this observation, four well-watched winter-resident adults on Long Island departed 10-25 March. Another wave of Lesser Black-backs surged up the coast two months later, when as many as 15 immatures were recorded in southwestern *Suffolk*, Region 10 in mid May.

Arctic Terns were reported by careful observers at sea near Block Canyon 21 May and during a shore-based seawatch on Long Island 22 May. These reports are very credible, but I think it is worth emphasizing that photographic documentation is almost wholly lacking for these contexts in New York, and

that every effort should be made to photograph ocean-going migrants of this difficult to identify species.

Through repeated trips offshore and assiduous seawatching from eastern Long Island, Angus Wilson recorded five of New York's six regularly occurring alcids this spring. The missing species was Thick-billed Murre, which, despite historical periods of more regular occurrence, has proven frustratingly difficult to find in recent years—especially offshore.

LANDBIRDS

Redpolls were abundant and widespread statewide. Among the many flocks, Hoary Redpolls were more widespread than ever, and careful attention to detail yielded a well-documented report of the nominate subspecies *hornemanni*, historically poorly known in the state, from Region 2. Similarly, keen observers discerned “Greater” Common Redpolls in Regions 2, 6, and 7. Both of these taxa breed in Greenland and were reported widely in eastern Canada and the northeastern United States this past winter; it is hoped that evidence documenting the New York reports will be sent to NYSARC, where it can be reviewed and archived.

As far as breeding landbirds were concerned, most of the news seemed to be bad for species garnering special concern in recent years, such as Northern Bobwhite, Chuck-will's-widow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Sedge Wren, and Henslow's Sparrow. There were, of course, predictable exceptions to this trend. Clay-colored Sparrow was recorded in Regions 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and many of the southeastern-breeding Neotropicals made good showings.

A major wave of landbirds pushed through the state in association with a warm front 26-27 April. Even apart from this event, however, the trend toward earlier spring arrival dates couldn't be ignored this year. The accompanying date tables show, for instance, that each of 22 common and widespread warbler species arrived earlier than its 25-year average. The flipside of this precession was that migration appeared to many observers to have essentially ended by mid-May, formerly the time when the greatest flights were expected. In this regard, some very robust mid-May counts by Jay McGowan in the Ithaca, Region 3 area were heartening: 85 Tennessee and 17 Blackburnian Warblers must have been quite a pleasure to eyes and ears!

BIRD OF THE SEASON

My choice for this spring's Bird of the Season is the group of nine Ross's Geese that visited Pine Island, *Orange*, Region 9 in early March. Not only was this one of the largest counts recorded to date in the state, but the group also included an example of the species' very rare dark morph (see photo, page 244). Furthermore, accompanying these birds were a Barnacle Goose, three “Richardson's” Cackling Geese, and 12 Greater White-fronted Geese! Finally,

all of these birds persisted long enough to allow many observers to study and enjoy them.

SPRING ARRIVAL DATES FOR 2011

Region	Species Reported ¹	Seasonality ² vs. 1987-11	Advance ³ (Days)	Record Early Spp.
1	91	-1.49	-1.67	10
2	93	-2.69	-3.93	4
3	90	-1.97	-2.83	5
4	84	-3.75	0.87	4
5	92	-3.06	-2.04	9
6	90	-4.13	4.12	12
7	90	0.03	9.28	1
8	88	-2.44	1.10	3
9	79	-0.56	-0.70	5
10	87	-1.50	-4.20	4

¹Maximum number of species = 93.

²Average arrival in a Region compared to that Region's 25-year average.

³Average arrival in a Region compared to the average of all Regions.

Given difficulties in estimating arrivals of some species in some Regions, estimates of Seasonality and Advance should be interpreted with caution.



Spring Arrival Dates 2011 Waterbirds												
Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average	25-Yr. Ave
American Bittern	10 Apr	9 Apr	7 Apr	22 Apr	8 Apr	23 Mar	22 Apr	22 Apr	23 Apr		12 Apr	15 Apr
Green Heron	16 Apr	19 Apr	16 Apr	26 Apr	25 Apr	27 Apr	30 Apr	25 Apr	8 Apr	11 Apr	20 Apr	22 Apr
Wood Duck	1 Mar	18 Feb	2 Mar	12 Mar	17 Feb	10 Mar	3 Mar	4 Mar			1 Mar	12 Mar
Green-winged Teal	4 Mar	8 Mar	5 Mar	6 Mar	19 Mar	20 Mar	19 Mar	11 Mar			11 Mar	17 Mar
Northern Pintail	1 Apr	18 Feb		5 Mar	12 Feb	19 Mar	14 Mar	15 Mar			8 Mar	7 Mar
Blue-winged Teal	14 Mar	21 Mar	16 Mar	19 Mar	27 Feb	5 Apr	11 Apr	17 Apr	27 Apr	6 Apr	29 Mar	29 Mar
Osprey	22 Mar	28 Mar	30 Mar	5 Mar	19 Mar	1 Apr	30 Apr	30 Mar	20 Mar		27 Mar	28 Mar
Virginia Rail	21 Apr	7 Apr	7 Apr	17 Apr	10 Apr	29 Apr	29 May	23 Apr	16 Apr	4 Apr	19 Apr	17 Apr
Sora	6 Apr	10 Apr	4 May	1 May	22 Apr	4 May	29 May	15 Apr	14 May		28 Apr	29 Apr
Common Moorhen	18 Apr	17 Apr	22 Apr	29 May	19 Apr	15 Apr	6 Apr	21 May	28 Apr		26 Apr	26 Apr
Black-bellied Plover	17 May	6 May	6 May		18 Apr	24 May	29 May	19 May	22 May		13 May	14 May
Semipalmated Plover	1 May	15 May	23 Apr	16 May	8 May	11 May	12 May	12 May	13 May	10 Apr	6 May	10 May
Killdeer		5 Mar	6 Mar	1 Mar	21 Feb	17 Feb	16 Mar	5 Mar		5 Apr	6 Mar	5 Mar
Greater Yellowlegs	19 Mar	17 Mar	15 Mar	4 Apr	19 Mar	7 Apr	27 Apr	6 Apr	27 Mar	13 Mar	27 Mar	6 Apr
Lesser Yellowlegs	10 Apr	4 Apr	10 Apr	23 Apr	25 Mar	6 May	24 Apr	5 Apr	8 Apr	6 Apr	12 Apr	17 Apr
Solitary Sandpiper	24 Apr	3 Apr	10 Apr	23 Apr	14 Apr	22 Apr	13 May	27 Apr	29 Apr	28 Apr	22 Apr	26 Apr
Spotted Sandpiper	12 Apr	20 Apr	7 Apr	10 Apr	26 Apr	7 May	27 Apr	17 Apr	19 Apr	19 Apr	19 Apr	23 Apr
Sanderling	13 May	23 May					29 May				21 May	17 May
Semipalmated Sandpiper	26 May	23 May	1 May	5 May	17 May	27 May	14 May		15 May	29 Apr	14 May	13 May
Least Sandpiper	1 May	11 Apr	4 May	3 May	6 May	11 May	12 May		3 May	29 Apr	2 May	4 May
Pectoral Sandpiper	6 Apr	4 Apr	13 Apr		17 May		28 May			13 Apr	23 Apr	21 Apr
Wilson's Snipe	21 Mar	15 Mar	20 Mar	2 Apr	8 Apr	30 Mar	24 Apr	3 Mar	5 Apr		28 Mar	24 Mar
American Woodcock	6 Mar	3 Mar	5 Mar	12 Mar	12 Mar	15 Mar	20 Mar	5 Mar	27 Feb		8 Mar	11 Mar
Caspian Tern	4 Apr	3 Apr	4 Apr		10 Apr	7 Apr	7 May	5 Apr	26 Apr	17 Apr	12 Apr	19 Apr
Common Tern	4 Apr	11 Apr	25 Apr		21 Apr	23 Apr	3 May	21 May	2 May	20 Apr	24 Apr	27 Apr
Black Tern	24 Apr	8 May	5 May		3 May	7 May	29 May	14 May	4 May	5 May	7 May	8 May
Marsh Wren	22 Apr	23 Apr	29 Apr	30 Apr	5 May	4 May		22 Apr	26 Apr	9 Apr	25 Apr	30 Apr
Dates in bold type are record early arrivals for the Region.												

Spring Arrival Dates 2011 Landbirds												
Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average	25-Yr. Ave
Black-billed Cuckoo	14 May	13 May	12 May	13 May	9 May	17 May	30 May	8 May	7 May	29 Apr	12 May	11 May
Common Nighthawk	2 May	12 May	18 May	21 May	14 May	9 May	20 May	20 May	24 Apr	10 May	12 May	12 May
Chimney Swift	25 Apr	23 Apr	19 Apr	30 Apr	26 Apr	28 Apr	7 May	27 Apr	21 Apr	18 Apr	25 Apr	25 Apr
Ruby-thr Hummingbird	30 Apr	26 Apr	29 Apr	1 May	1 May	6 May	3 May	26 Apr	24 Apr	21 Apr	28 Apr	2 May
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4 Apr	5 Apr	6 Apr	4 Apr	26 Mar	9 Apr	9 Apr	6 Apr		24 Apr	6 Apr	3 Apr
Olive-sided Flycatcher	18 May	22 May	18 May		22 May	21 May	13 May	22 May	7 May	3 May	16 May	18 May
Eastern Wood-Pewee	11 May	7 May	10 May	9 May	12 May	8 May	10 May	10 May	12 May	3 May	9 May	9 May
Alder Flycatcher	14 May	19 May	11 May	15 May	13 May	18 May	20 May		3 May		14 May	17 May
Willow Flycatcher	9 May	10 May	7 May	12 May	12 May	14 May	29 May	11 May	1 May	10 May	11 May	15 May
Least Flycatcher	26 Apr	27 Apr	29 Apr	5 May	27 Apr	27 Apr	7 May	1 May	24 Apr	20 Apr	28 Apr	1 May
Eastern Phoebe	20 Mar	9 Mar	18 Mar	26 Mar	15 Mar	26 Mar	8 Apr	10 Mar	7 Mar	10 Mar	18 Mar	21 Mar
Gr. Crested Flycatcher	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	3 May	27 Apr	27 Apr	8 May	27 Apr	24 Apr	24 Apr	27 Apr	30 Apr
Eastern Kingbird	26 Apr	27 Apr	27 Apr	25 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	12 May	24 Apr	19 Apr	19 Apr	26 Apr	28 Apr
Purple Martin	10 Apr	4 Apr	5 Apr	23 May	1 Apr	24 Apr	29 May	24 May	27 Apr	9 Apr	24 Apr	18 Apr
Tree Swallow	18 Mar	17 Mar	13 Mar	31 Mar	16 Mar	3 Apr	6 Apr	13 Mar	4 Mar		20 Mar	20 Mar
N. Rough-winged Swallow	9 Apr	10 Apr	4 Apr	10 Apr	11 Apr	16 Apr		19 Apr	6 Apr	6 Apr	10 Apr	15 Apr
Bank Swallow	20 Apr	11 Apr	12 Apr	26 Apr	11 Apr	27 Apr	30 Apr	17 Apr	16 Apr	18 Apr	18 Apr	24 Apr
Cliff Swallow	27 Apr	10 Apr	13 Apr	3 May	26 Apr	27 Apr	7 May	24 May	19 Apr	7 Apr	25 Apr	27 Apr
Barn Swallow	5 Apr	4 Apr	5 Apr	9 Apr	30 Mar	7 Apr	9 Apr	7 Apr	5 Apr	5 Apr	5 Apr	10 Apr
House Wren	25 Apr	23 Apr	24 Apr	24 Apr	25 Apr	27 Apr	30 Apr	29 Apr	16 Apr	14 Apr	23 Apr	22 Apr
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4 Apr	8 Apr	2 Apr	9 Apr	6 Apr	15 Apr	27 Apr	8 Apr		5 Apr	9 Apr	6 Apr
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	23 Apr	9 Apr	14 Apr	29 Apr	12 Apr	25 Apr	29 Apr	11 Apr	10 Apr	5 Apr	16 Apr	20 Apr
Eastern Bluebird		8 Mar		18 Mar	22 Feb	26 Mar	4 Apr				16 Mar	9 Mar
Veery	2 May	26 Apr	24 Apr	29 Apr	30 Apr	7 May	8 May	2 May	27 Apr	25 Apr	30 Apr	2 May
Swainson's Thrush	5 May	8 May	4 May	15 May	11 May	20 May	18 May	4 May	4 May	25 Apr	8 May	8 May
Hermit Thrush	8 Apr	9 Apr	2 Apr	13 Apr	5 Apr	24 Apr	15 Apr	12 Apr		3 Apr	10 Apr	7 Apr
Wood Thrush	27 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	29 Apr	28 Apr	27 Apr	7 May	26 Apr	19 Apr	20 Apr	26 Apr	28 Apr
Gray Catbird	26 Apr	9 Apr	5 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	29 Apr	1 May	26 Apr		26 Mar	19 Apr	25 Apr
Brown Thrasher	10 Apr	12 Apr	13 Apr	5 Apr	14 Apr	19 Apr	26 Apr	19 Apr	7 Apr	18 Mar	11 Apr	15 Apr
Blue-headed Vireo	10 Apr	18 Apr	17 Apr	22 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	23 Apr	7 Apr	13 Apr	18 Apr	19 Apr
Yellow-throated Vireo	30 Apr	30 Apr	28 Apr	1 May	30 Apr	1 May		27 Apr	25 Apr	24 Apr	28 Apr	3 May
Warbling Vireo	27 Apr	22 Apr	26 Apr	1 May	26 Apr	29 Apr	1 May	27 Apr	24 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr	30 Apr
Red-eyed Vireo	1 May	29 Apr	7 May	25 Apr	9 May	11 May	13 May	27 Apr	28 Apr	30 Apr	3 May	3 May
Dates in bold type are record early arrivals for the Region												

	Spring Arrival Dates					Landbirds (cont'd)						
	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average	25-Yr. Ave
Tennessee Warbler	6 May	7 May	8 May	3 May	10 May	7 May	1 May	15 May	4 May	3 May	6 May	8 May
Nashville Warbler	26 Apr	27 Apr	20 Apr	30 Apr	26 Apr	28 Apr	30 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	23 Apr	26 Apr	29 Apr
Northern Parula	27 Apr	26 Apr	25 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	7 May	7 May	26 Apr	22 Apr	21 Apr	27 Apr	2 May
Yellow Warbler	24 Apr	17 Apr	20 Apr	26 Apr	20 Apr	27 Apr	29 Apr	25 Apr	12 Apr	17 Apr	21 Apr	26 Apr
Chestnut-sided Warbler	30 Apr	30 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	7 May	26 Apr	24 Apr	25 Apr	27 Apr	2 May
Magnolia Warbler	27 Apr	30 Apr	22 Apr	26 Apr	6 May	10 May	1 May	6 May	24 Apr	30 Apr	30 Apr	4 May
Cape May Warbler	1 May	27 Apr	27 Apr	28 Apr	11 May	29 Apr	7 May	11 May	3 May	1 May	2 May	7 May
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	27 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	28 Apr	29 Apr	27 Apr	24 Apr	23 Apr	26 Apr	30 Apr
Black-thr Green Warbler	11 Apr	22 Apr	20 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	27 Apr	28 Apr	20 Apr	7 Apr	21 Apr	25 Apr
Blackburnian Warbler	26 Apr	26 Apr	25 Apr	2 May	27 Apr	2 May	22 Apr	27 Apr	25 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr	3 May
Pine Warbler	4 Apr	9 Apr	2 Apr	9 Apr	9 Apr	12 Apr	24 Apr	16 Apr	17 Mar	18 Mar	5 Apr	10 Apr
Palm Warbler	24 Apr	11 Apr	11 Apr	18 Apr	11 Apr		19 Apr	11 Apr	4 Apr	3 Apr	12 Apr	17 Apr
Bay-breasted Warbler	8 May	9 May	5 May	12 May	29 Apr	12 May	18 May	12 May	27 Apr	29 Apr	7 May	10 May
Blackpoll Warbler	10 May	7 May	10 May	13 May	11 May	14 May	13 May	8 May	3 May	28 Apr	8 May	12 May
Black-and-White Warbler	26 Apr	24 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	27 Apr	26 Apr	8 Apr	6 Apr	22 Apr	24 Apr
American Redstart	27 Apr	1 May	26 Apr	1 May	2 May	2 May	10 May	27 Apr	20 Apr	21 Apr	28 Apr	2 May
Ovenbird	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	28 Apr	26 Apr	19 Apr	19 Apr	24 Apr	29 Apr
Northern Waterthrush	26 Apr	24 Apr	23 Apr	2 May	24 Apr	26 Apr	30 Apr	26 Apr	24 Apr	11 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr
Mourning Warbler	12 May	7 May	7 May	7 May	2 May	19 May	18 May	15 May	3 May	13 May	10 May	14 May
Common Yellowthroat	27 Apr	27 Apr	24 Apr	25 Apr	26 Apr	27 Apr	30 Apr	30 Apr	23 Apr	20 Apr	25 Apr	30 Apr
Wilson's Warbler	2 May	11 May	7 May	13 May	10 May	19 May	18 May	12 May	30 Apr	2 May	9 May	11 May
Canada Warbler	7 May	10 May	7 May	4 May	11 May	12 May	11 May	7 May	20 Apr	29 Apr	5 May	10 May
Scarlet Tanager	27 Apr	26 Apr	23 Apr	28 Apr	30 Apr	1 May	18 May	26 Apr	25 Apr	19 Apr	28 Apr	4 May
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	26 Apr	26 Apr	24 Apr	28 Apr	26 Apr	3 May	30 Apr	26 Apr	19 Apr	15 Apr	25 Apr	28 Apr
Indigo Bunting	27 Apr	27 Apr	26 Apr	25 Apr	5 May	13 May	12 May	28 Apr	12 Apr	11 Apr	27 Apr	3 May
Eastern Towhee	18 Mar	9 Apr	13 Mar	19 Apr	9 Apr	12 Apr	22 Apr	20 Mar		6 Mar	31 Mar	10 Apr
Chipping Sparrow	1 Apr	11 Apr	26 Apr	6 Apr	7 Apr	9 Apr	20 Mar	20 Mar	5 Apr	31 Mar	4 Apr	5 Apr
Vesper Sparrow	10 Apr	27 Mar	15 Apr		9 Apr	11 Apr	11 Apr	23 Apr	4 Apr	17 Apr	10 Apr	11 Apr
Savannah Sparrow	3 Apr	24 Mar	9 Apr	13 Apr	7 Apr	15 Apr	5 Apr	20 Apr			8 Apr	7 Apr
Lincoln's Sparrow	26 Apr	26 Apr	29 Apr		10 May	10 May	9 May	4 May	27 Apr	3 May	2 May	4 May
White-crowned Sparrow	11 Apr	12 Apr	5 May	15 Apr	27 Apr	30 Apr	5 Apr	22 Apr			19 Apr	24 Apr
Bobolink	29 Apr	28 Apr	27 Apr	24 Apr	26 Apr	30 Apr	7 May	30 Apr	3 May	29 Apr	29 Apr	2 May
Baltimore Oriole	27 Apr	25 Apr	26 Apr	28 Apr	26 Apr	2 May	22 Apr	16 Apr	25 Apr	19 Apr	24 Apr	29 Apr
Overall Average	19 Apr	17 Apr	18 Apr	21 Apr	19 Apr	25 Apr	30 Apr	22 Apr	20 Apr	16 Apr	21 Apr	23 Apr
	Dates in bold type are record early arrivals for the Region											