

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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The winter's brutal cold continued into the spring season, with temperatures dropping below zero every night during the first week of March, and Watertown seeing a mean temperature for the month that was 8.1° F below normal. April was warmer relative to historic norms than March and included a few pleasantly warm days, but the month's overall mean temperature was still 1.3° below average. May finally put an end to a long string of colder-than-normal months, with a mean temperature exactly 1° above normal. A strong southerly flow contributed to exceptionally warm conditions 8-9 and 12-15 May, when daily maximum temperatures ranged from 12° to 20° above normal. Precipitation in

March was within 0.1" of normal and included 31.5" of snow, but rainfall exceeded normal by more than one inch during both April and May.

Thanks to the prolonged winter, most ponds, lakes, and streams were iced over well into April, so that waterfowl and water bird habitat was hard to find in March. By early April a few ponds and streams had opened up, providing for large, very local concentrations of birds. For instance, the ponds at Lakeview WMA were loaded with ducks, grebes, and loons during the first week of April, including such species as Surf Scoter and Red-throated Loon that more commonly use Lake Ontario. However, well after most inland ponds had thawed, near-shore Lake Ontario had very little open water, as wind had pushed large quantities of ice into the east end of the lake, and this ice persisted through at least the third week of April.

Although the waterfowl migration seemed to start late, it was fairly impressive once it got going, with good numbers and diversity through the first half of April. Snow Goose illustrates how the timing of this year's waterfowl migration differed from recent years, as this species started moving through the Region about 12 days later than in 2013 and peaked on 29 March, the same date that marked the end of the Snow Goose flight last year. Unusual waterfowl included one Greater White-fronted Goose in a low-flying flock of Snow Geese passing over the St. Lawrence River in Ogdensburg on 6 April, and a Eurasian Wigeon Bill Purcell saw in a roadside puddle in extreme southern Jefferson County on 8 April.

The avian highlight of the spring was New York's first **Willow Ptarmigan**, found by Eugene Nichols on Point Peninsula on 24 April and seen by hundreds of observers over the next three days. By 28 April the ptarmigan had disappeared as far as birders knew, but it turned up again on private land nearby on 16 May and was observed by a few dozen observers until it was found dead on 23 May. The ptarmigan's carcass was collected and transported to the American Museum of Natural History, where it now resides. Jeff Groth, who skinned the ptarmigan at the museum, noted head trauma consistent with a window or car collision. The only other real rarity observed this spring was a **Great Cormorant** seen flying west past the Thousand Islands Bridge on 8 May.

Sandhill Cranes continue to be reported with increasing frequency, with many reports coming from Lakeview WMA and vicinity, where cranes have likely nested for six or seven years. Additional late May reports came from Fort Drum and Turin in the Black River Valley, the former seemingly still migrating, but the latter perhaps representing a new nesting location. Shorebirds were characteristically scarce, with the only real highlight being a Sanderling Tony Shrimpton saw at Black Pond WMA on 10 May. Although Sanderling are relatively common on the Jefferson County shoreline in fall, few are reported anywhere in Region 6 during the spring.

Large numbers of Snowy Owls continued well into the spring throughout lowland areas of Region 6 and didn't seem to start thinning out until early April. A few owls remained on their winter territories through April but by May were

hard to find. The latest migrating Snowy Owl report I received was of an individual in Canton on 25 May. The only Short-eared Owl reports of the spring were from Point Peninsula, where a few birders chasing the Willow Ptarmigan observed at least one individual.

Most observers felt that spring migration was very slow, with many species arriving late through at least the beginning of May. However, an analysis of arrival dates for 89 species summarized annually indicates an overall average arrival date three days earlier than normal, with Green Heron, Sora, and Blue-headed Vireo arriving at record early dates. My subjective impression was that for most of March and April migration was quite slow, with most species trickling into the Region in very small numbers within a few days of normal, but remaining scarce for quite some time, with most individuals seeming to arrive rather late. This arrival pattern changed during the warm spell that began 8 May, when impressive waves of neotropical migrants swarmed into northern New York, making for a one of the best weeks of spring birding in several years. It seemed like most species that typically arrive in May showed up all at once, with many of these arrivals coming in relatively early. Spring ended with another small burst of arrivals, with species such as Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and Blackpoll and Wilson's Warblers making their last big push through the Region.

For the season I received reports of 227 species, fewer than were reported the previous three springs but well above the tallies amassed most years before eBird was in wide use. This year's tally would be much closer to last year's record-high spring total had any winter irruptives, other than Snowy Owl, been reported, but none were, including the usually reliable Bohemian Waxwing. There probably were some Red Crossbills and maybe Pine Siskins in the Adirondack or Tug Hill portions of Region 6 this spring, but I received virtually no reports from these Regions. Most birders would probably agree that this year's highlight was the Willow Ptarmigan, but the impressive movement of passerines during the second week of May was also a high point, especially given the sluggish nature of migration during the preceding two months.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFWMA – Ashland Flats WMA; BI – Barnhart Is, T Massena, STLA; BPWMA – Black Pond WMA; BRV – Black River Valley; CB – Chaumont Barrens Preserve; CCSP – Coles Creek SP; CV – T Cape Vincent, JEFF; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg, JEFF; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation, JEFF & LEWI; FL – Fisher’s Landing, T Orleans; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton, STLA; JCSP – Jacques Cartier SP; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; KPSP – Kring Point SP; LC – Limerick Cedars Preserve; LPd – Leonard Pd trail, T Colton; LWMA – Lakeview WMA; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, STLA; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course, T Canton, STLA; PRWMA – Perch River WMA JEFF; PtPen – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme, JEFF; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP; SLR – St. Lawrence River; StPt – Stony Point, T Henderson, JEFF; TMB – Three Mile Bay; TP – Tibbet’s Pt, T Cape Vincent, JEFF; ULLWMA – Upper & Lower Lakes WMA; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley Island SP.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: SLR

Ogdensburg 6 Apr (JB).

Snow Goose: arr PRGC 22 Mar; 27,000 29 Mar; 15,000 FL 1 Apr; last flocks 13 Apr, but several reports 1-2 lingering to at least 7 May.

Brant: arr 6 SLR Waddington 13 Apr (PH), early; 20 T Leray 20 May.

Mute Swan: max 13 FL 23 Mar.

Trumpeter Swan: no reports away from PRWMA & ULLWMA.

Wood Duck: arr FD 19 Mar.

Gadwall: arr W1 2 Apr; max 45 LWMA 11 Apr.

Eurasian Wigeon: m in roadside puddle T Ellisburg 8 Apr (BP).

Am. Wigeon: max 90 LWMA 11 Apr.

Am. Black Duck: max 75 WHWMA 11 Apr.

Blue-winged Teal: arr AFWMA 6 Apr.

N. Shoveler: max 33 BRV 11 Apr.

N. Pintail: arr FD & WISP 2 Apr; max 276 SLR Ogdensburg 4 Apr.

Green-winged Teal: arr FD 27 Mar.

Canvasback: 2-3/day LWMA 11-18 Apr.

Redhead: max 115 FL 23 Mar; last 2 CV 2 May.

Ring-necked Duck: max 990 LWMA 11 Apr.

Greater Scaup: 590 JCSP 2 May, high for date.

Lesser Scaup: max 174 PRWMA 7 May.

Surf Scoter: LWMA 18 Apr; 2 KPSP 2 May; only reports.

White-winged Scoter: 3 BPWMA 18 May, only report.

Long-tailed Duck: last TP 30 May.

Bufflehead: max 160 LWMA 11 Apr; 118

JCSP 2 May, high for date; last SLR

Ogdensburg 11 May.

Com. Goldeneye: 208 JCSP 2 May, very high for date; last 7 CCSP 4 May.

Hooded Merganser: max 41 T Lyme 6 Apr.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 301 TP 10 Apr.

Ruddy Duck: max 5 PRWMA 11 Apr.

WILLOW PTARMIGAN: PtPen 24 Apr seen by hundreds thru 27 Apr; disappeared but relocated nearby on 16 May until found dead 23 May (EN, mob), first State record, photos!, reports to NYSARC.

Red-throated Loon: LWMA 11 May; CCSP 12 Apr; only reports.

Com. Loon: arr CCSP 6 Apr.

Pied-billed Grebe: arr FD 3 Apr.

Horned Grebe: arr BRV & PRWMA 11 Apr; max & last 12 JCSP 2 May.

Red-necked Grebe: 3 arr BRV 11 Apr; max 8 ULLWMA 21 Apr; last ULLWMA 8 May.

Double-crested Cormorant: arr SLR Ogdensburg 4 Apr.

GREAT CORMORANT (R6): flying past Thousand Is. Bridge T Alexandria 8 May (RS, HZ).

Am. Bittern: arr Potsdam 13 Apr.

Least Bittern: PRWMA 24 May.

Great Blue Heron: arr KC 21 Mar.

Great Egret: arr Massena 19 Apr.

Green Heron: arr PRGC 21 Apr.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr Murphy 1 27 Apr.

Turkey Vulture: arr FD 17 Mar.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: arr LWMA 1 Apr.
N. Harrier: scarce before 31 Mar.
N. Goshawk: FD 5 May; ad f at nest near LPd 31 May.
Red-shouldered Hawk: arr FD 6 Mar.
Broad-winged Hawk: arr T Canton 12 Apr.
Rough-legged Hawk: last T Leray 7 May.
Golden Eagle: T Constableville 13 Apr; imm FD 17 Apr.
Virginia Rail: arr PRWMA 26 Apr.
Sora: arr ULLWMA 12 Apr, early.
Com. Gallinule: arr PRWMA 25 Apr.
Am. Coot: PRWMA 13 May.
Sandhill Crane: sev reports LWMA where nests; 2 T Waddington 7 Apr; 2 presumed migrants FD 29 May; 3 T Turin 30 May.
Black-bellied Plover: 3 PtPen 18 May, only report.
Semipalmated Plover: arr T Dekalb 10 May; max 7 T Dekalb 22 May.
Spotted Sandpiper: arr PtPen 29 Apr.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr T Lowville 30 Apr.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr BRV 11 Apr; max 28 CV 24 Apr.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr BRV 11 Apr.
Upland Sandpiper: arr FD 1 May where at least 5 territories by 31 May; 3 T Rutland 17 May; Bedford Corners Road CV 25 May; only reports.
Sanderling: BPWMA 10 May (AS), rare in spring.
Dunlin: arr LWMA 18 May; max 20 SLR Massena 26 May.
Least Sandpiper: arr T Dekalb 10 May; max 58 T Dekalb 22 May.
Pectoral Sandpiper: CV 1 May, only report.
Wilson's Snipe: arr T Lowville 3 Apr.
Am. Woodcock: arr KC 26 Mar.
Bonaparte's Gull: arr LWMA 8 Apr; max 50 Pt. Salubrious 23 Apr.
Ring-billed Gull: arr SLR Ogdensburg 4 Apr.
Iceland Gull: 2 T Ellisburg 8 Mar; last T Ellisburg 18 Apr.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: ad BPWMA 18 Apr, only report.
Caspian Tern: arr LWMA 8 Apr.
Black Tern: arr PtPen & ULLWMA 8 May.
Com. Tern: arr TMB & WHWMA 27 Apr.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: CB & ED 24 May, only reports.
Black-billed Cuckoo: arr FD 19 May.
E. Screech-Owl: PRGC 9 Apr; FD 14 May; only reports.

Snowy Owl: numerous reports Mar & early Apr; last Canton 25 May.
Short-eared Owl: PtPen 25-27 Apr, only reports.
Com. Nighthawk: arr Watertown 12 May.
E. Whip-poor-will: arr Cedar L T Edwards 3 May.
Chimney Swift: arr PtPen 28 Apr.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr T Stockholm 7 May.
Belted Kingfisher: arr FD 2 Apr.
Red-headed Woodpecker: arr dates uncertain FD because of presence of overwintering adults; actively nesting FD by 30 Apr.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr T Parishville 7 Apr.
N. Flicker: several reports Mar likely overwintering birds; migr arr by 11 Apr.
Am. Kestrel: at least 9 of 10 March reports probably winter survivors; migr arr T Dekalb & FD 3 Apr.
Merlin: prob breeders Canton, CV, FD, Ogdensburg, PtPen, & Watertown.
Peregrine Falcon: PtPen 8 & 9 May, only report away from BI nesting area.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: FD 30 May, only report.
E. Wood-Pewee: arr T Leyden 8 May.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: migr FD 28 & 29 May, only reports.
Alder Flycatcher: arr FD 14 May.
Willow Flycatcher: arr Evans Mills 12 May.
Least Flycatcher: arr Cedar L T Edwards 3 May.
E. Phoebe: arr FD 2 Apr.
Great Crested Flycatcher: arr Canton & FD 6 May.
E. Kingbird: arr FD 5 May.
N. Shrike: last FD 9 Apr.
Yellow-throated Vireo: arr FD 9 May.
Blue-headed Vireo: arr FD 15 Apr.
Warbling Vireo: arr CCSP 4 May.
Red-eyed Vireo: arr PRGC 10 May.
Fish Crow: FD 9 Apr.
Horned Lark: max 60 T Ellisburg 8 Mar.
Purple Martin: arr ICNC 20 Apr.
Tree Swallow: arr KC 1 Apr.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: arr LWMA 11 Apr.
Bank Swallow: arr TMB 27 Apr.
Cliff Swallow: arr SLR Massena 19 Apr.
Barn Swallow: arr BRV & LWMA 11 Apr.
Tufted Titmouse: T Canton only site reported away from W JEFF.

Carolina Wren: no reports from Canton, where several continuously present two years thru Dec 2013.
House Wren: arr KC 18 Apr.
Winter Wren: arr FD 11 Apr.
Sedge Wren: arr AFWMA 18 May (NL); 2 FD 19 May (JB); 2 AFWMA 25 May (JB); T Dekalb 25 May (JB).
Marsh Wren: arr PRWMA 28 Apr.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: arr PtPen 26 Apr.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr PRGC 12 Apr.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr Canton 13 Apr; last FD 13 May.
E. Bluebird: arr FD 7 Apr.
Veery: arr FD 7 May.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: T Leyden 11 May; FD 29 May; only reports.
Swainson's Thrush: arr Mad River Club T Montague 10 May.
Hermit Thrush: arr SBSP 12 Apr.
Wood Thrush: arr FD 5 May.
Gray Catbird: arr FD 8 May.
N. Mockingbird: PtPen 28 Apr.
Brown Thrasher: T Brownville feeder 12 Mar, likely winter survivor; arr FD 15 Apr.
Am. Pipit: max 39 FD 5 May; 4 other reports 4-15 May.
Cedar Waxwing: max 690 StPt 8 Mar.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: last SLR Ogdensburg 6 Apr.
Ovenbird: arr FD 5 May.
Louisiana Waterthrush: Winona SF 18 May; "northern JEFF" 24 May; only reports.
N. Waterthrush: arr FD 30 Apr.
Golden-winged Warbler: arr FD 9 May.
Blue-winged Warbler: arr FD 9 May.
Black-and-white Warbler: arr ICNC 3 May.
Tennessee Warbler: arr ICNC 11 May.
Orange-crowned Warbler: 2 FD 13 May (JB).
Nashville Warbler: arr FD 6 May.
Mourning Warbler: arr FD 15 May.
Com. Yellowthroat: arr FD 7 May.
Hooded Warbler: 3 Winona SF 18 May.
Am. Redstart: arr FD 8 May.
Cape May Warbler: arr ICNC 9 May.
Cerulean Warbler: arr T Dekalb 10 May.
N. Parula: arr T Croghan 8 May.
Magnolia Warbler: arr T Rodman 10 May.
Bay-breasted Warbler: arr ICNC 11 May.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr FD 9 May.
Yellow Warbler: arr WBSP 30 Apr.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr FD 6 May.
Blackpoll Warbler: arr T Croghan 13 May.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr CV & PRGC 8 May.
"Western" Palm Warbler: arr T Theresa 21 Apr.
Pine Warbler: arr T Canton 14 Apr.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr FD 15 Apr.
Prairie Warbler: arr LC 9 May; 4 CB 21 May.
Black-throated Green Warbler: arr WBSP 30 Apr.
Canada Warbler: arr BPWMA 10 May.
Wilson's Warbler: arr LWMA 18 May.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: arr LC 11 Apr.
Am. Tree Sparrow: last FD 1 May.
Chipping Sparrow: arr T Parishville 6 Apr.
Clay-colored Sparrow: arr CV & LC 9 May; 4 T Henderson 20 May; 6 CB 21 May; T Clayton 24 May.
Field Sparrow: arr LC 11 Apr.
Vesper Sparrow: arr LWMA 8 Apr.
Savannah Sparrow: early migrant LB 4 Apr; widespread arr 20 Apr.
Grasshopper Sparrow: arr FD 5 May.
Henslow's Sparrow: arr FD 7 May; surveys of FD, PRWMA & several properties in NYSDEC land owner incentive program found only one male by end Jun.
Fox Sparrow: arr FD 7 Apr, where last 27 Apr.
Song Sparrow: arr FD 19 Mar, but scarce until widespread arr 1-2 Apr.
Lincoln's Sparrow: arr MM 2 May.
Swamp Sparrow: early migr 2 Apr; scarce until after 11 Apr.
White-throated Sparrow: arr FD 12 Apr.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr PtPen 1 May.
Dark-eyed Junco: largely absent outside Adirondacks by 4 May.
Scarlet Tanager: arr PRWMA 8 May.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr KC 29 Apr.
Indigo Bunting: arr T Croghan 10 May.
Bobolink: arr FD & PRWMA 7 May.
Red-winged Blackbird: scarce before 21 Mar.
E. Meadowlark: arr CV 30 Mar.
Rusty Blackbird: arr FD 2 Apr; max 20 PRGC 19 Apr, low; last PRGC 8 May.
Com. Grackle: scarce before 21 Mar.
Brown-headed Cowbird: scarce before 28 Mar.
Orchard Oriole: T Martinsburg 9 May; 2 PtPen 17 May; only reports.
Baltimore Oriole: arr KC 4 May.
Evening Grosbeak: FD 15 Apr; T Martinsburg 8 May; only reports.