

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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March was much warmer than normal, thanks to warm spells 1-17 and 27-31 March, during which high temperatures were 10-20° F above normal most days and as high as 30° warmer than usual on 9 March. April was much more seasonable, with mean temperatures close to normal most days, but May was again unusually warm, with high temperatures exceeding 80° on five days. The 2.7" of precipitation that fell in March was slightly above normal, but both April and May saw less than 50% of normal rainfall. Below normal precipitation, combined with the low to absent snow-pack leading into the spring, resulted in very dry conditions, with few vernal pools and many normally permanent ponds low or entirely dry by mid-May.

Abundant open water in March provided plentiful resting and feeding areas for migrating waterfowl, unlike the previous two years when virtually every body of water was frozen over until well into April. As a result ducks were well reported this spring. Continuing the trend for progressively earlier spring passage, the Snow Goose migration was virtually over by 19 March. The season started with great excitement as a duck on the St. Lawrence River at Fisher's Landing was initially identified as a Smew by almost all who saw it, but was eventually deemed a hybrid, with several suggested combinations of parental species. The leading hypothesis is that this duck was a Bufflehead X Hooded Merganser cross, although that is certainly not a unanimous opinion, with many observers thinking that Smew must have been involved somehow.

Sandhill Cranes returned to known or suspected nesting sites at Lakeview and Upper and Lower Lakes WMAs during April, and a flurry of apparent migrants passed through Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties during the last few days of May. The number of crane reports in Region 6 has increased steadily for at least a decade, but the rate of increase seems to have jumped substantially over the past two or three years, and this species now seems to be a regular component of the Regional avifauna.

Somewhat paradoxically, most of the season's rarities were shorebirds despite a rather dismal shorebird migration. Two banded adult **Piping Plovers** returned to Lakeview WMA, where a pair successfully raised young last summer, although most people who made the significant effort required to get to the nesting beach in May did not see them. Greg Lawrence checked Wilson Hill WMA daily for shorebirds for most of May and was able to rack up a decent list of species given the poor shorebird flight. Highlights were a **Willet** and **Marbled Godwit** together on a mud bar on 22 May. Shorebird numbers at Wilson Hill were lower than last spring, and everywhere such typically common

species as Solitary Sandpiper and Greater Yellowlegs were unusually tough to find.

The **Varied Thrush** that visited a Canton feeder for much of the winter was last seen about a week into March and was the rarest songbird of the season. The only other passerine rarity was a **Dickcissel** Richard MacDonald found in Russell on 20 March. While rare, Dickcissel probably occurs in Region 6 more frequently than most birders realize, but most known occurrences have been during the summer, and to my knowledge a March record is unprecedented. Ben Dixon found the only Orange-crowned Warbler of the season at Jacques Cartier State Park on 11 May. Over the past decade spring Orange-crowned Warblers have been reported about two out of every three years in Region 6.

Although a good diversity of finches was present for the season, most were scarce. Red Crossbills nested in the Adirondacks, but few observers spent any time looking for them in St. Lawrence County, and the few reports I received lacked details on number or location. A White-winged Crossbill at Coles Creek State Park in late March was the only report for the season. Pine Siskins were ubiquitous, but mostly in low numbers, based on the reports I received, although I heard rumors that some feeders were being swarmed by siskins to the point where people were having trouble keeping seed in them. Common Redpolls were rather scarce all winter, but there was a fairly sizeable movement through St. Lawrence County during the first half of April.

As has been the case most recent springs, migration was earlier than historic averages. The mean arrival date for a subset of 93 species for which arrival dates are tracked annually was five days earlier in 2016 than their long-term averages. Of these species, 52 were first detected more than one day earlier than their long-term average arrival dates, and just 14 were first seen more than one day later than normal. Generally speaking, short and medium distance migrants arrived early and Neotropical migrants arrived at roughly normal dates or were late; although not all species fit this generalization. Species that tied or set new record early arrival dates included Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Veery, Northern Waterthrush, Vesper Sparrow, and Savannah Sparrow.

In addition to being early, migration was also mostly slow, with few large waves of migrants. Much like the previous spring, it seemed like songbirds appeared on territory without much visible sign of active migration. Most of my conversations with other birders focused on how slow the birding was, something that changed little for most of the season until suddenly, it seemed, all of the breeding species were back.

For the season I received reports of 237 species, besting by one the tally from 2013, which had been the record since I began compiling the Region 6 report full-time in 2005. Continued improvement in coverage, primarily fueled by eBird, is likely the primary reason for the high species tally. The highlights of the season were the Willet and Marbled Godwit at Wilson Hill, seen by several local birders thanks to Greg Lawrence getting the word out quickly. The general

sluggishness of migration was probably the biggest disappointment of the season.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFWMA – Ashland Flats WMA; BI – Barnhart I, T Massena, STLA; BPWMA – Black Pd WMA, T Ellisburg; BRV – Black River Valley; CCSP – Coles Creek SP; CV – T Cape Vincent, 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 Pt SP; LWMA – Lakeview WMA; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, STLA; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course, T Canton, STLA; PRWMA – Perch River WMA, JEFF; PtPen – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme, JEFF; SLR – St. Lawrence Ri; StPt – Stony Pt, T Henderson, JEFF; ULLWMA – Upper & Lower Lakes WMA; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WI – Wellesley I.

WATERFOWL - VULTURES

Snow Goose: heavy movement 6-19 Mar; lingering flocks to 27 Mar; scattered singles to 27 May.

Ross’s Goose: with Snow Geese over ULLWMA 23 Mar (JB, ph!).

Brant: Massena 22 May;

Mute Swan: max 80 WI 5 Mar (JM, LS).

Trumpeter Swan: max 9 ULLWMA 4 Apr; other reports from PRWMA, PtPen, BPWM & T Dekalb.

Tundra Swan: max 11 ULLWMA 26 Mar, high for STLA (BP).

Wood Duck: widespread arr 12 Mar; female apparently paired with Mandarin Duck T Lyme 25 Mar (NL).

Gadwall: max 37 PRWMA 1 Apr.

Eurasian Wigeon: 2 WHWMA 11-13 Apr (TS, HW, ph!).

Am. Wigeon: max 160 PRWMA 1 Apr.

Am. Black Duck: max 150 ULLWMA 9 Apr.

Blue-winged Teal: arr T Hounsfield 15 Mar; max 14 BRV 3 Apr.

N. Shoveler: arr ULLWMA 13 Mar; max 27 BRV 3 Apr.

N. Pintail: arr CV 8 Mar; max 46 BRV 22 Mar.

Green-winged Teal: widespread arr 12 Mar; max 72 BRV 22 Mar.

Canvasback: 2 T Ellisburg 12 Mar; max 3 LWMA 12 Mar; 6 T Dekalb 20 Mar; only reports.

Redhead: max 500 CV 11 Mar.

Ring-necked Duck: max 635 ULLWMA 2 Apr.

Greater Scaup: max 500 CV 11 Mar to 22 Apr.
Lesser Scaup: max 45 PRWMA 14 Apr.
Surf Scoter: SLR T Waddington 23 Apr, only report.
White-winged Scoter: max 39 MP 12 Mar.
Long-tailed Duck: max 500 StPt 7 May.
Bufflehead: max 140 JCSP 15 Apr; 96 PtPen 7 May, high for so late (AS); last PRWMA 11 May.
Bufflehead X Hooded Merganser: hybrid duck thought to be this cross initially identified by many as Smew FL 3-7 Mar.
Com. Goldeneye: max 600 WI 5 Mar; last JCSP 1 May.
Barrow's Goldeneye: adult m FL 5-6 Mar (mob); 1st winter m FL 6 Mar (NL).
Hooded Merganser: max 56 Three Mile Bay T Lyme 13 Mar.
Com. Merganser: 250 FL 5 Mar; max 252 BI 12 Mar.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 130 FL 5 Mar.
Ruddy Duck: 3 T Lyme 27 Mar; 3 reports 1-3 PRWMA 1-14 Apr; only reports.
Red-throated Loon: StPt 21 May (JB, GL, AS), only report.
Com. Loon: Pt. Salubrious 27 Mar, only report before widespread arr early Apr.
Pied-billed Grebe: arr T Watertown 8 Mar.
Horned Grebe: CCSP 18 Mar; 2 T Waddington 10 Apr; max 4 T Waddington 23 Apr; fewer than usual.
Red-necked Grebe: JCSP 14 Apr; max 3 CCSP 1 May; StPt 21 May; only reports.
Double-crested Cormorant: arr CV 1 Apr.
Am. Bittern: arr ULLWMA 12 Apr.
Least Bittern: arr WHWMA 14 May.
Great Blue Heron: arr FD 17 Mar.
Great Egret: arr ULLWMA 23 Apr.
Green Heron: arr T Watertown 1 May.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr Murphy Islands 30 Apr.
Turkey Vulture: arr BRV 2 Mar.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: arr PtPen & T Orleans 27 Mar, record early.
N. Harrier: gradual increase started first week Mar; major arrival after 20 Mar.
Red-shouldered Hawk: arr FD 9 Mar.
Broad-winged Hawk: arr FD 19 Apr.
Rough-legged Hawk: last T Watertown 30 Apr; rare year with no May reports.
Golden Eagle: T Hounsfield 2 Mar; T Constableville 5 Mar; T Colton 13 Mar; T Pinckney 22 Mar; FD 25 Apr.

Virginia Rail: arr T Rossie 21 Apr.
Sora: arr PRWMA 22 Apr.
Com. Gallinule: arr PRWMA 22 Apr.
Am. Coot: arr PRWMA 10 Apr; max 4 PRWMA 22 Apr.
Sandhill Crane: 2 arr LWMA nesting area 16 Mar; 1-2/day ULLWMA 9 Apr thru, where nesting suspected but not confirmed; presumed migrants CV, French Creek WMA & Galop Island 27 May, PtPen 31 May; increasing.
Black-bellied Plover: WHWMA 26 May, only report!
Semipalmated Plover: arr PRWMA 12 May; max 42 WHWMA 17 May.
PIPING PLOVER: 2 banded ad returned LWMA by 14 May (MB, IM).
Killdeer: arr T Hounsfield 8 Mar.
Spotted Sandpiper: arr PRGC 17 Apr, record early.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr KC 1 May.
Greater Yellowlegs: 6 arr CV 23 Apr; unusually scarce.
WILLET (R6): WMWMA 22 May, with Marbled Godwit, ph! (GL, JB, TW, EW).
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr CV 23 Apr; max 18 CV 4 May.
Upland Sandpiper: arr FD 19 Apr (JB); T Lyme 10 May, T Hounsfield 28 May (WF) & T Clayton 29 May (AS), only reports away from FD.
MARBLED GODWIT: WHWMA 22-23 May initially with Willet, ph! (GL, JB, TW, EW, BD).
Sanderling: WHWMA 30 May (GL), only report.
Dunlin: arr CV 4 May; max 8 WHWMA 17 May; 4 WHWMA 25 May; no other reports.
Least Sandpiper: arr CWF 9 May; max 18 WHWMA 17 May.
White-rumped Sandpiper: WHWMA 25 May, only report.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 7 WHWMA 28 May; 3 other reports 14-25 May.
Short-billed Dowitcher: 2 Whitehouse Point 17 May; PRWMA 21 May; only reports.
Wilson's Snipe: arr PtPen & T Clayton 26 Mar.
Am. Woodcock: arr T Hounsfield 8 Mar.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 2000 PtPen 24-29 Apr (NL, JB).
Little Gull: 3 in large Bonaparte's Gull flock 24 Apr (NL), not seen again despite continued presence of large gull flock.
Caspian Tern: arr BRV 12 Apr.
Black Tern: arr PRWMA 3 May.
Com. Tern: arr ULLWMA 23 Apr.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr AFWMA, ICNC & PRWMA 22 May; 4 other reports more than usual.

Black-billed Cuckoo: arr PRWMA & Red Lake 21 May.

E. Screech-Owl: T Norwood 21 May, only report.

Snowy Owl: 3 reports Mar; last T Brownville 23 Mar.

Short-eared Owl: 4 apparently representing pr & offspring from 2015 nest reportedly remained in same T Stockholm field over winter and departed mid-Apr.

N Saw-whet Owl: T Ellisburg 17 Apr, only report.

Com. Nighthawk: numerous FD by 21 May.

E. Whip-poor-will: arr T Clayton 28 Apr.

Chimney Swift: arr FD 25 Apr.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr T Stockholm 4 May.

Belted Kingfisher: T Canton 13 Mar, possibly overwintering bird; main arr 27 Mar.

Red-headed Woodpecker: arr FD 5 May.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr KC 26 Mar.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 2 reports MM.

N. Flicker: few trickled in Mar; main arr mid-Apr.

Am. Kestrel: arr last week Mar.

Merlin: reports from 10 loc mostly known or suspected nesting sites.

Peregrine Falcon: PtPen 22 Apr, only report away from BI nesting area.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: arr T Massena 26 May.

E. Wood-Pewee: arr ICNC 13 May.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr MM 20 May.

Alder Flycatcher: arr LWMA & PRGC 14 May.

Willow Flycatcher: arr T Rutland 19 May.

Least Flycatcher: arr FD 2 May.

E. Phoebe: arr T Watertown 24 Mar, ties record early date.

Great Crested Flycatcher: arr FD 3 May.

E. Kingbird: arr T Orleans 29 Apr.

N. Shrike: last T Clayton 27 Mar.

Yellow-throated Vireo: arr T Dekalb 7 May.

Blue-headed Vireo: arr T Canton & T Croghan 24 Apr.

Warbling Vireo: arr CV 30 Apr.

Philadelphia Vireo: arr Crooked Creek Preserve 8 May.

Red-eyed Vireo: arr T Canton 11 May.

Horned Lark: FD 3 & 5 May, only reports after 30 Mar.

Purple Martin: arr PtPen 17 Apr.

Tree Swallow: arr ULLWMA 13 Mar, record early.

N. Rough-winged Swallow: arr PRWMA & PtPen 22 Apr.

Bank Swallow: arr LWMA 14 May.

Cliff Swallow: arr ULLWMA 23 Apr.

Barn Swallow: arr T Ellisburg 2 Apr, record early.

Tufted Titmouse: 8 locations T Canton where increasing.

House Wren: arr MP 23 Apr.

Winter Wren: arr FD 1 Apr.

Marsh Wren: arr PRWMA 22 Apr.

Carolina Wren: singles T Canton, ULLWMA & T Ogdensburg.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: arr LWMA 23 Apr.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr KPSP 5 Apr.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr KPSP 15 Apr.

E. Bluebird: arr T Ellisburg 12 Mar.

Veery: arr Sand Flats SF 24 Apr, record early.

Swainson's Thrush: arr MM 20 May.

Hermit Thrush: arr T West Leyden 9 Apr.

Wood Thrush: arr FD 2 May.

VARIED THRUSH: continued Canton feeder thru 1st week Mar (JA & MA).

Gray Catbird: arr T Watertown 30 Apr.

Brown Thrasher: widespread arr 15 Apr.

N. Mockingbird: arr T Leray 16 May.

Am. Pipit: 2 FD 5 May; 21 T Orleans 21 May; only reports, very low.

Bohemian Waxwing: max 110 T Canton 8 Mar; last PRGC 1 May (JB), late.

Cedar Waxwing: max 135 T Clayton 18 May.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: last T Clayton 20 Apr.

Ovenbird: arr FD 2 May.

Louisiana Waterthrush: Morgan Gulf 14 & 21 May, only reports.

N. Waterthrush: arr FD 22 Apr, record early.

Golden-winged Warbler: arr ICNC 7 May.

Blue-winged Warbler: arr FD 4 May.

Black-and-white Warbler: arr KC 1 May.

Tennessee Warbler: arr PRGC 13 May.

Orange-crowned Warbler: JCSP 11 May (BD), only report.

Nashville Warbler: arr FD 2 May.

Mourning Warbler: arr BPWMA 14 May.

Com. Yellowthroat: arr FD 5 May.

Am. Redstart: arr T Watertown 5 May.

Cape May Warbler: arr T Leyden 11 May.

Cerulean Warbler: arr T Dekalb 13 May.

N. Parula: arr WHWMA 7 May.

Magnolia Warbler: arr ICNC 8 May.
Bay-breasted Warbler: arr CV 13 May.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr FD 6 May.
Yellow Warbler: arr T Watertown 24 Apr.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr FD 4 May.
Blackpoll Warbler: arr CCSP 19 May.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr T Watertown 7 May.
“Western” Palm Warbler: arr PtPen 22 Apr.
“Yellow” Palm Warbler: many MM 16 Apr where none found 14 Apr (JC).
Pine Warbler: arr JCSP 15 Apr.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr T Lyonsdale 16 Apr.
Prairie Warbler: arr FD & T Lyme 11 May.
Black-throated Green Warbler: arr FD 3 May.
Canada Warbler: arr FD 6 May.
Wilson’s Warbler: arr PRGC 15 May.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: arr FD & T Theresa 1 Apr.
Am. Tree Sparrow: last 2 T Watertown 8 May (LP, DP); other early May reports CCSP & T Potsdam.
Chipping Sparrow: KC 2 Mar, possibly overwintering bird; widespread arr 13 Apr.
Clay-colored Sparrow: arr FD 5 May.
Field Sparrow: arr FD 1 Apr.
Vesper Sparrow: T Russell **20 Mar**, record early; numbers arr FD 1 Apr still early.
Savannah Sparrow: arr T Dekalb **28 Mar**, record early; most arr 15-22 Apr.
Grasshopper Sparrow: arr FD 3 May.

Henslow’s Sparrow: arr PRWMA 14 May; FD 19 May, only other report.
Fox Sparrow: arr T Canton 24 Mar.
Song Sparrow: widespread arr 16 Mar.
Lincoln’s Sparrow: arr PRGC 8 May.
Swamp Sparrow: arr PRGC 13 Mar.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr T Croghan 29 Apr.
Scarlet Tanager: arr FD & T Canton 11 May.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr KC 27 Apr.
Indigo Bunting: arr T Croghan 8 May.
Dickcissel: T Russell 20 Mar (RM!), rare in spring.
Bobolink: arr T Clayton 4 May.
Red-winged Blackbird: arr T Canton 7 Mar.
E. Meadowlark: arr T Lowville 17 Mar.
Rusty Blackbird: arr T Massena 7 Mar (RM), early; most moved through early Apr.
Com. Grackle: arr CV 6 Mar.
Brown-headed Cowbird: arr T Potsdam 8 Mar.
Orchard Oriole: arr T Watertown 9 May.
Baltimore Oriole: arr CV & FD 4 May.
Red Crossbill: sev Adirondack reports lacked details on location or date; FD 5 May, only report outside Adirondacks.
White-winged Crossbill: CCSP 27 Mar (JB), only report.
Com. Redpoll: max 280 ULLWMA 12 Apr; last CCSP 13 Apr.
Pine Siskin: many reports 1-20/day thru; max 51 T Lyonsdale 4 Apr.
Evening Grosbeak: T Brasher feeder 6 Apr - 9 May; only report.