

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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March started cold, with the temperature on the first day of the season dipping to -9° F in Watertown, but mild conditions prevailed for most of the month, and March's mean temperature of 36.7° was 6.1° above normal. Mild conditions continued to 8 April, but a prolonged cold spell began on 9 April and temperatures were consistently below normal for the following four weeks. Consequently, mean monthly temperatures for April and May were 2.8° and 1.9° below normal,

respectively. Warm temperatures returned for the last half of May, with a seasonal high of 88° on 27 May. The 2.5" of precipitation that fell in March was just 0.2" above normal, but a nearly identical April rainfall total was 0.4" below normal, and the 1.5" that fell in May was just half of average.

Weather conditions were favorable for migration in March and early April, and most species that typically arrive during this period were early. The five species that arrived at record early dates this spring, including Virginia Rail, Osprey, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird, and Hermit Thrush, all appeared in Region 6 by 11 April. From mid-April to mid-May weather was rarely conducive to migration, and I heard many complaints about the sluggish and delayed pace of arrivals. An exception to the lagging migration was a large wave of migrants that arrived 2-3 May during what seemed like the only favorable nights for northbound migration in a weeks-long span.

Given the widespread perception by Region 6 birders that migration was late, it was surprising to find that arrival data showed that the majority of species actually arrived earlier than average. Of the 93 species that are tracked by *The Kingbird* to monitor the timing of migration, reasonable arrival dates were obtained for 91 species. Of these, 56 species arrived more than two days earlier than long-term average arrival dates, 28 species arrived within two days of normal, and just seven arrived more than two days later than average. Most of these species, especially Neotropical migrants, first arrived at dates comparable to those from the previous few years, but remained scarce for several days to a week or more before becoming widespread. It seems likely that relatively high observer effort this spring resulted in the detection of more early arrivals than is the case most years, and perhaps a relatively more accurate picture of when many species first appeared in the Region.

Waterfowl numbers were about average, with a decent flight but few rarities. There was one report each for **Ross's Goose**, **Greater White-fronted Goose**, and **Cackling Goose**, all from western Jefferson County in March. Oddly, given the especially large numbers of birders present in the Region in May, Brant went entirely unreported. Barrow's Goldeneye was the only unusual duck reported, with a male on Point Peninsula 1 March and a female at Jacques Cartier State Park 19 April.

Shorebird diversity was typically low, but an **American Avocet** found by Betty Hughes and Nick Leone at a farm pond in Clayton on 28 April stayed for a week and was seen by many shorebird-starved birders. Very high water on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River left little habitat for migrating shorebirds, but the East Pool at Wilson Hill WMA was lowered for habitat management and did attract some shorebirds, although nothing unusual. The most noteworthy sighting of the season on the exposed mudflats at Wilson Hill was a group of 74 Semipalmated Plover on 23 May, a fairly high number for Region 6 in spring.

The vole population on Fort Drum was extremely high this spring, contributing to some interesting raptor observations. At least 15-23 Rough-legged Hawks were seen daily in a relatively small area on Fort Drum throughout March

and April, and the total number present was thought to be in excess of 30. During some years when Rough-legged Hawks are present in large numbers on Fort Drum at least one or two remain into the summer, but the last sighting this spring was on 14 May. Two pairs of Short-eared Owls attempted to nest on Fort Drum, and one nest with six eggs was found on 29 April. Northern Harriers seemed unusually abundant as well. Unfortunately, I received no information to indicate whether vole abundance, and resulting raptor numbers, was similarly high elsewhere in the Region.

Easily the songbird of the spring was a **Townsend's Solitaire** that Steven Mix photographed at Robert Wehle State Park on 12 March. Unfortunately, the solitaire was only seen briefly and could not be relocated. Other notable passerine sightings included a handful of Red Crossbills and even fewer White-winged Crossbills in the Adirondacks of southeastern St. Lawrence County. Both species were likely more widespread in the northeastern Adirondacks than these few sightings indicated, but as usual few observers visited this area. Louisiana Waterthrush is typically documented, if at all, at just 1-2 locations a season in Region 6, so 12 reports from seven locations is high. Most of these locations were known or suspected nesting sites for Louisiana Waterthrush, but one found by Eileen Wheeler in Colton appears to be a previously unknown location. Orange-crowned Warbler, always scarce in spring, was also better documented than usual, with one on Fort Drum 15 May, one at Lakeview WMA 16 May, and one at Hammond 16-19 May.

As mentioned previously, birder effort seemed unusually high this spring, although still well below what is typical for more heavily populated regions of New York State. Presumably New York's third Breeding Bird Atlas, which started this year, encouraged many observers to spend more time in the field. The COVID pandemic also seemed to result in some people spending more time birding, as solo birding seemed like a relatively safe activity and a good way to stay sane. Whatever the reason, many birders from other parts of the state visited Region 6, especially Jefferson County and a few favored locations in St. Lawrence County such as Massawepie Mire, continuing a trend for increasing birding visits that has been apparent for several years.

For the season I received reports of 230 species, which is about average for the past few years. Certainly the bird of the season was the American Avocet that many were able to add to their Jefferson County lists. Another plus was the relatively large number of birders that spent time in Region 6, especially during late April and May. Given the higher than usual observer effort it was a little surprising that the season's list wasn't a little longer, but perhaps the sluggish migration when most observers were present was responsible.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRV – Black River Valley; **CB** – Chaumont Barrens Pres; **CCP** – Crooked Creek Pres, T Hammond; **CCSP** – Coles Creek SP; **CU** – Clarkson University, T Potsdam; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **ED** – El Dorado Shores Pres, T Ellisburg; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Reservation, JEFF & LEWI; **FL** – Fisher’s Landing, T Alexandria; **HH** – Henderson Harbor; **HP** – Hawkins Pt, T Massena; **JCSP** – Jacques Cartier SP; **JEFF** – Jefferson Co; **JRd** – Jericho Road, T Hounsfield; **KC** – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; **LBSF** – Lonesome Bay State Forest, T Hammond; **LEWI** – Lewis Co; **LGI** – Little Galloo I; **LPd** – Leonard Pd Trail, T Colton; **LWMA** – Lakeview WMA; **MM** – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, STLA; **OCP** – Otter Creek Pres, T Alexandria; **PRWMA** – Perch River WMA, JEFF; **PtPen** – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme, JEFF; **RMSP** – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; **RWSP** – Robert Wehle SP; **SBSP** – Southwick Beach SP; **SLR** – St. Lawrence Ri; **STLA** – St. Lawrence Co; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; **WHWMA** – Wilson Hill WMA.

WATERFOWL – HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: northward passage primarily 4-30 March; max 9700 in 1 hour FD 9 Mar.

Ross’s Goose: over FD 26 Mar (JB) only report.

Greater White-fronted Goose: PRWMA 7 Mar (RB) only report.

Brant: no reports.

Cackling Goose: 2 T Lyme 14 Mar (GL) only report.

Mute Swan: max 66 FL

Trumpeter Swan: reports from 12+ locations; max 16 T Redwood 12 Apr (GSe); increasing.

Tundra Swan: max 4 CCSP 7-8 Mar & T Watertown 8 Mar.

Wood Duck: arr ULLWMA 7 Mar.

Blue-winged Teal: arr PRWMA & T Ellisburg 16 Apr.

Northern Shoveler: arr T Lyme 14 Mar.

Gadwall: arr T Watertown 8 Mar.

American Wigeon: arr T Watertown 7 Mar; max 200 WHWMA 20 Apr.

Mallard: max 277 JRd 17 Mar.

American Black Duck: max 49 JRd 7 Mar.

Northern Pintail: arr JRd 7 Mar; max JRd 14 Mar.

Green-winged Teal: arr CCSP 13 Mar; max 68 WHWMA 16 May.

Redhead: only 4 reports; max 13 PtPen 8 Mar; low.

Ring-necked Duck: max 925 LWMA 14 Mar.

Greater Scaup: max 870 PtPen 8 Mar.

Lesser Scaup: max 45 PRWMA 1 May.

White-winged Scoter: max 65 HH 14 Mar.

Long-tailed Duck: max 200 CV 8 Mar.

Bufflehead: max 175 JCSP 19 Apr; last Otter Creek preserve 17 May.

Common Goldeneye: max 381 PtPen 1 Mar; last JCSP 2 May.

Barrow’s Goldeneye: m PtPen 1 Mar (GL, photos!); f JCSP 19 Apr (JB).

Hooded Merganser: max 28 WHWMA 12 May; broods SUNY-ESF 22 May & Downerville SF 31 May.

Common Merganser: max 53 HH 14 Mar.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 86 CV 15 Mar.

Ruddy Duck: PRWMA 14 Mar only report.

Spruce Grouse: 2 MM 17 May only report.

Wild Turkey: max 70 CV 14 Mar.
Pied-billed Grebe: early arr CCP 21 Mar & T Castorland 22 Mar; widespread arr 4-6 Apr; ad w 2 y FD 20 May early.
Horned Grebe: arr T Watertown 5 Apr; only 2 other reports all singles.
Red-necked Grebe: arr T Watertown 26 Mar; max 5 ULLWMA 14 May.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr LBSF 16 May.
Black-billed Cuckoo: arr T Dekalb 14 May.
Common Nighthawk: arr FD 22 May.
Eastern Whip-poor-will: arr FD 3 May.
Chimney Swift: arr T Watertown 1 May.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr T Macomb 8 May.

RAILS — TROPICBIRDS

Virginia Rail: arr T Canton 29 Mar (EW, TW); early.
Sora: arr FD 20 Apr.
Common Gallinule: arr PRWMA 24 Apr.
American Coot: 2 ULLWMA 25 Apr only report.
Sandhill Crane: arr LWMA 14 Mar.
AMERICAN AVOCET (R6): T Clayton 28 Apr-4 May (BH, NL, mob, photos!)
Black-bellied Plover: arr WHWMA 21 May.
Semipalmated Plover: arr PRWMA & WHWMA 16 May; max 74 WHWMA 23 May.
Killdeer: widespread arr 14 Mar.
Upland Sandpiper: arr FD 20 Apr.
Dunlin: arr LWMA & WHWMA 16 May; 3 T Lyme 17 May only other report.
Least Sandpiper: arr T Clayton 4 May.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr WHWMA 16 May.
American Woodcock: arr T Antwerp & T Louisville 10 Mar.
Wilson's Snipe: arr T Canton 24 Mar.
Spotted Sandpiper: arr T Clayton 1 May.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr KC 3 May.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr T Watertown & WHWMA 29 Apr.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr & max 29 BRV 21 Apr.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 100 T Hammond 9 Apr.
Ring-billed Gull: large influx 6-8 Mar.
Herring Gull: 1247 nests LGI 20 May.
Iceland Gull: T Ellisburg 14 Mar only report.
Caspian Tern: arr PRWMA & T Hammons 14 Apr.
Black Tern: arr ULLWMA 3 May.
Common Tern: arr LBSF 24 Apr.

LOONS — PARAKEET

Common Loon: PtPen 9 Mar likely overwintered; arr CCSP 27 Mar.
Double-crested Cormorant: arr HP 26 Mar.
American Bittern: arr ULLWMA 27 Mar (JB) early.
Least Bittern: arr PtPen 21 May.
Great Blue Heron: arr date difficult to determine because of overwintering birds; increasing last week Mar.
Great Egret: arr SBSP 25 Apr.
Green Heron: arr T Hammond 27 Apr.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr T Lisbon 2 Apr (JB) early.
Osprey: arr ULLWMA 21 Mar (JB) early.
Golden Eagle: adults T Gouverneur 6 Mar & ULLWMA 24 Mar (JB); imm T Madrid 17 Mar (LD).
Northern Harrier: overwintering birds W JEFF obscure arr dates near L Ontario; arr FD 9 Mar.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 42 reports.
Cooper's Hawk: 51 reports.
Northern Goshawk: FD 25 Mar only report.
Bald Eagle: 200+ reports throughout R6; max 12 WHWMA 24 May; ubiquitous and still increasing.
Red-shouldered Hawk: arr FD 9 Mar.
Broad-winged Hawk: arr L Bonaparte 17 Apr.
Red-tailed Hawk: nest building T Watertown as early as 3 Mar.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 23 FD 1 Apr where last 14 May.
Eastern Screech-Owl: FD 26 May only report.
Snowy Owl: last T Lyme 22 Mar.
Short-eared Owl: nest w 6 eggs FD 29 Apr (JB).
Northern Saw-whet Owl: T Canton 30 Apr only report.
Belted Kingfisher: arr FD 19 Mar.
Red-headed Woodpecker: arr T Ellisburg 8 May; T Hammond 24 May.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: reports from 70+ locations far more than past years.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr T Potsdam 29 Mar.
Black-backed Woodpecker: 3 reports from usual locations SE STLA.
Northern Flicker: arr CU & FD 9 Mar.
American Kestrel: unclear whether birds at nest boxes PtPen overwintered or new arr; arr T Gouverneur 14 Mar.

Merlin: 58 reports from at least 28 locations; more than past few years.

Peregrine Falcon: about a dozen reports from vicinity of known nesting areas; exception CU 6 Mar.

FLYCATCHERS — SNOW BUNTING

Great Crested Flycatcher: arr ULLWMA 3 May.

Eastern Kingbird: arr T Hammond 2 May.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: arr FD 15 May.

Eastern Wood-Pewee: arr T Adams & FD 19 May.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr T Parishville 16 May.

Alder Flycatcher: arr MM 17 May.

Willow Flycatcher: arr FD 19 May.

Least Flycatcher: arr T Leyden 2 May.

Eastern Phoebe: arr T Potsdam 27 Mar.

Northern Shrike: last LBSF 5 Apr.

Yellow-throated Vireo: arr FD 6 May.

Blue-headed Vireo: arr Silver Hill SF 28 Apr.

Philadelphia Vireo: arr PtPen 17 May.

Warbling Vireo: widespread arr 3 May.

Red-eyed Vireo: arr FD 3 May.

Canada Jay: max 3 Bog River Falls 1 May & MM 19 May.

Horned Lark: max 10 T Parishville 1 Mar.

Purple Martin: arr CCSP 12 Apr.

Tree Swallow: arr PRWMA 21 Mar.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: arr T Watertown 11 Apr.

Bank Swallow: arr FD 3 May.

Cliff Swallow: arr RMSP 23 Apr.

Barn Swallow: arr CCSP 12 Apr.

Boreal Chickadee: T Parishville 13 May only report; seems to be getting harder to find.

House Wren: early arr T Canton 18 Apr; widespread arr 28 Apr.

Winter Wren: FD 3 Mar likely winter survivor; widespread arr 4 Apr.

Sedge Wren: early migrant FD 3 May not found again (ID); next report T Potsdam 28 May (BD).

Marsh Wren: arr ULLWMA 20 Apr; scarce before 1 May.

Carolina Wren: reports from 3 locations all JEFF.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: arr T Henderson 23 Apr.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr RRT 11 Apr; last obvious migrant FD 21 May

Eastern Bluebird: arr uncertain because of overwintering birds; apparently increasing by 1 Mar.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: RWSP 12 Mar (SM, photos!) 2nd JEFF record.

Veery: early arr T Leyden 29 Apr; scarce before 3 May.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: LBSF 20 May only report.

Swainson's Thrush: arr T Canton 11 May.

Hermit Thrush: arr T Potsdam 2 Apr.

Wood Thrush: arr T Leyden 29 Apr.

Gray Catbird: arr PRWMA 29 Apr.

Brown Thrasher: arr T Huevelton 11 Apr.

Northern Mockingbird: arr T Brownville 28 Apr.

Cedar Waxwing: max 175 RWSP 14 Mar.

American Pipit: arr ULLWMA 29 Apr; only 9 reports all singles; low.

Evening Grosbeak: 3 Red L 21 May only report.

Purple Finch: widely reported thru.

Red Crossbill: 4 reports SE STLA; max 6 Long Pond T Colton 28 Mar (ZC & CR).

White-winged Crossbill: 2 reports SE STLA; max 9 Emporium Easement T Colton 4 Apr (BB).

Pine Siskin: 8 reports; max 8 LPd 22 Mar.

Snow Bunting: max 300 T Lowville 6 Mar; last T Copenhagen 3 Apr.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS — CARDINALIDS

Eastern Towhee: arr LWMA 4 Apr.

American Tree Sparrow: last T Glenfield 4 May.

Chipping Sparrow: arr KC 2 Apr.

Clay-colored Sparrow: arr FD 5 May.

Field Sparrow: arr LBSF 5 Apr.

Vesper Sparrow: arr FD 6 Apr.

Savannah Sparrow: arr FD 6 Apr.

Grasshopper Sparrow: arr FD 3 May.

Henslow's Sparrow: up to 4/day CB (GD, mob) thru, only report.

Fox Sparrow: arr ULLWMA 25 Mar; last KC 26 Apr.

Song Sparrow: widespread arr 14 Mar.

Lincoln's Sparrow: arr T Hammond 9 May.

Swamp Sparrow: arr ULLWMA 5 Apr.

White-crowned Sparrow: arr T Lowville 18 Apr; last T Potsdam 29 May.

Dark-eyed Junco: scarce outside Adirondacks and Tug Hill after early May.

Bobolink: arr T Gouverneur 2 May.

Eastern Meadowlark: arr RWSP 14 Mar.

Orchard Oriole: arr T Lowville 9 May.

Baltimore Oriole: widespread arr 3 May.

Brown-headed Cowbird: arr FD 6 Mar.

Rusty Blackbird: arr FD 6 Mar; max 300 LBSF 12 May.
Common Grackle: arr KC 5 Mar.
Ovenbird: widespread arr 2 May.
Louisiana Waterthrush: 11 reports from 7 locations more than usual; all from locations with previous reports except T Colton 17 May (EW).
Northern Waterthrush: arr ED 27 Apr.
Golden-winged Warbler: arr ULLWMA 10 May.
Blue-winged Warbler: arr FD 7 May.
Black-and-white Warbler: arr ED 27 Apr.
Tennessee Warbler: arr CV 10 May.
Orange-crowned Warbler: FD 15 May (JB); LWMA 16 May (MBR, photos!); T Hammond 16-19 May (GSe); more than usual in spring.
Nashville Warbler: arr FD 28 Apr.
Mourning Warbler: arr Cedar L 19 May.
Common Yellowthroat: arr T Gouverneur 2 May.
Hooded Warbler: T Ellisburg 17 May only report.
American Redstart: arr T Lawrence 2 May.
Cape May Warbler: arr ULLWMA 1 May.
Cerulean Warbler: arr FD & T Dekalb 15 May.
Northern Parula: arr T Russell 5 May.

Magnolia Warbler: arr T Brasher 5 May; only report before 14 May.
Bay-breasted Warbler: arr Otter Creek Preserve & T Watertown 17 May.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr Silver Hill SF 8 May.
Yellow Warbler: arr Otter Creek Preserve 1 May.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr FD 3 May.
Blackpoll Warbler: arr LWMA 16 May.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: widespread arr 3 May.
Palm Warbler: arr ED 24 Apr; as usual no arr dates from Adirondack breeding sites.
Pine Warbler: arr T Watertown 9 Apr.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: widespread arr 15 Apr.
Prairie Warbler: arr FD 3 May.
Black-throated Green Warbler: arr Crooked Creek Preserve 2 May.
Canada Warbler: arr T Parishville 13 May.
Wilson's Warbler: arr T Hammond 18 May; only 5 reports.
Scarlet Tanager: arr T Ellisburg 11 May.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr T Macomb 24 Apr; scarce before May.
Indigo Bunting: arr T Glenfield 7 May.