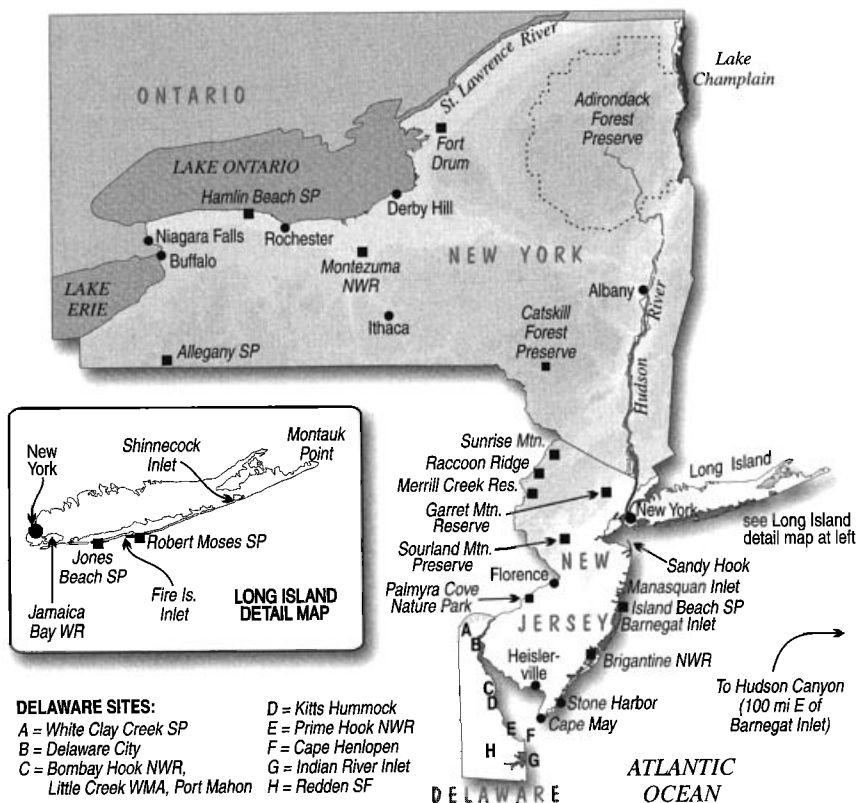


Hudson-Delaware



Spring 2003 was cold and wet, and it followed an exceptionally cold winter during which much of the fresh water in the Northeast remained frozen for six weeks and most states recorded substantial snowfall. Passerine migration was generally slow and delayed throughout the Region, but there were three dates on which substantial numbers of passerines (12 May in New York, 9–14 May in Delaware, and 21 May at Sandy Hook) and raptors (18–20 April at Braddock Bay) were counted at traditional migration spots. The progression of low-pressure systems along the coast probably influenced the occurrence of some seabirds such as phalaropes and Roseate Terns at coastal sites, but there were no major flights of pelagic birds. Perhaps the most dramatic ornithological occurrence of the spring was the substantial incursion of Red-necked Grebes into upstate New York and south to the New Jersey and Delaware coasts.

We thank P.A. Buckley and Paul E. Lehman for their assistance with this report.

Abbreviations: Braddock Bay (Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Rochester, NY); Brigantine (Forsythe N.W.R., NJ); Bombay Hook (Bombay Hook N.W.R., DE); Captree (Captree State Park, Long I., NY); Derby Hill (Derby Hill Hawkwatch, Oswego NY); Hamburg (Hamburg Hawkwatch, near Buffalo, NY); Hamlin Beach (Hamlin Beach S. P., near Rochester, NY); J.B.W.R. (Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Gateway National Park, Jamaica Bay, New York City); Jones Beach (Jones Beach S. P., Long I., NY); Moriches (Moriches Bay and Inlet, Long I., NY); Little Creek (Little Creek W.M.A., DE); Montauk (Montauk Pt., Long I., NY); Riis (Jacob Riis Park, Queens, New York City); Ripley (Ripley Hawkwatch, Chautauqua, NY); Sagaponack (Sagaponack Pond, Bridgehampton, Long I., NY); Sandy Hook (Sandy Hook Unit/Gateway National Recreation Area, NJ); Shinnecock (Shinnecock Bay and inlet, Long I., NY); Ted Harvey (Ted Harvey Conservation Area/Logan Lane Tract, DE).

LOONS THROUGH PELICANS

There were more Pacific Loons and Eared Grebes than usual reported Regionwide. One Pacific Loon originally discovered 28 Feb at Captree remained until 16 Mar (DD, m. ob.), and another wintering at Allenhurst, NJ remained until 15 Mar (AT, LM). A 3rd was seen for one day only at Cayuga L. 28 Apr (JMcG, BP), a 4th was seen on the East R. in New York City 1–2 May (AL et al.), and a 5th was at Hamlin Beach 14 May (RS). Prior to the winter of

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SA An exceptional incursion of Red-necked Grebes occurred Regionwide in early March, and stragglers from this invasion lingered at various coastal locations through May. The largest numbers were found in upstate New York, e.g., 266 on Cayuga L. 1 Mar (TL, JMcG, KMcG), and ~300 on L. Ontario up to 24 Apr (*vide* DFS). Large numbers also reached the coast, e.g., 78 along the Delaware R. between Bordentown and the Commodore Barry Bridge in the first week of Mar (*vide* PB, SB), 59 between Moriches and Shinnecock Bays 15 Mar (AB), and 57 on the Hudson R. between Croton Point and Peekskill 3 Mar (JAK). Several lingered at coastal locations into May, the latest being one in breeding plumage at Sagaponack 30 May (HM et al.). It seems likely that this incursion resulted from north- or northwest-bound grebes encountering heavier-than-normal ice cover on the Great Lakes and then retreating southeast (rather than having been forced south after attempting to winter on the Great Lakes). Previous incursions in 1936, 1977, and 1994 also occurred between late February and April, the season at which Red-necked Grebes ordinarily migrate northward.

2001–2002, only one had been seen on Long I. since 1950 (in 1992), with only a handful of additional upstate records. Eight Eared Grebes were found this spring, including 2 on Cayuga L. 5 Apr (PH, MY et al.) and one on Lewiston Res., Buffalo, NY 3 May (*vide* DFS). Single Western Grebes were off Riis from 23 (AG, AW et al.) to 30 Mar (PAB) and in Barnegat Inlet, NJ 28 Mar (*vide* PB, SB).

Relatively few tubenoses were seen from land, despite the passage of numerous low-pressure systems and accompanying easterly winds during May. Single Manx Shearwaters were seen from shore at Moriches and Shinnecock 24 May (TWB, AG, GB). A pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon 26 May recorded 150 Northern Fulmars, 240 Greater and 180 Sooty Shearwaters, and 900 Wilson's Storm-Petrels (JCB, AH et al.). Fifty Northern Fulmars were also recorded off Lewes, DE on a boat trip 15 Mar (GLA et al.).

An American White Pelican remained in the vicinity of Little Creek 23 Mar–25 Apr (CDC, MVB). Two-dozen Brown Pelicans were reported flying up the Delaware Bay off Pickering Beach, DE 28 Mar (*vide* APE). An Anhinga soaring over Cumberland, NJ 27 Apr (LL, JW) was the only one reported this spring.

HERONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A Cattle Egret at Aurora near Cayuga L. was considered rare for that locality 2 Apr (MV). Four single White Ibis were found this spring: at Ted Harvey 19–20 Apr (FR), at Goshen Cape May 27 Apr–17 May (CK, m. ob.), at Calverton on e. Long I. 10 May (EL), and at the Pea Patch I. heronry on upper Delaware Bay 28 May (CB et al.), raising the intriguing possibility of a nesting attempt. White-faced Ibis, a species now annual in the Region in spring and summer, appeared in Salem, NJ 25 Mar (PD) and at Brigantine 8–29 May (JCB et al.).

A Whooper Swan was at Kittatinny Valley S.P., NJ 24 Mar (JCB et al.), almost certainly an escapee. Trumpeter Swan reports included 4 in the Buffalo area Mar–Apr (*vide*

DFS) and 2 at Crusoe I., NY 5 Apr (MY). Larger flocks of Tundra Swans outside Delaware were 200 at Mannington Marsh Salem, NJ 9 Mar (*vide* PB, SB) and 100 at Whitesbog, NJ 23 Mar (*vide* PB, SB). A Barnacle Goose continued at Merrill Creek Res., NJ to 8 Mar (RK et al.); the recent population increase of this species and the increase in recent North American records are almost certainly related.

Clearly, Brant in the Northeast deserve scrutiny. This spring, there were four sightings of Black Brant in New Jersey between Cape May and South Amboy 29 Mar–26 May (RC, SB, LM, PAB, PEL et al.) and one at Floyd Bennett Field 25 Mar (PAB), plus two reports of "Gray-bellied Brant": one seen at both Floyd Bennett Field and at Riis 30 Mar (PAB, RRV) and a different individual at Captree 29 Apr (PAB). Brant in general have increased in recent years, and larger numbers are occurring later in spring and at less-conventional locations, e.g. 10 flying over Tonawanda near Buffalo, NY 25 May (*vide* DFS). Six Greater White-fronted Geese were reported Regionwide 9 Mar–13 Apr. Seven Ross's Geese were reported 24 Mar–22 Apr, including one with a yellow neck ring at Pt. Breeze, Rochester, NY 10 Apr (*vide* MT).

There were about 10 reports of Eurasian Wigeon and three or four of Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal, plus one apparent hybrid Common Teal x Green-winged Teal, the latter at Tobay 29 Apr (SM). Five King Eiders were found at more-or-less traditional locations in New Jersey and Delaware during Mar, and a lone female spent 15 Mar+ on the West Pond at J.B.W.R. (StS). A maximum of 30 Harlequin Ducks was recorded at Barnegat during Mar (PB, SK). Greater-than-usual numbers of Black Scoters were reported coastally, as were inland White-winged Scoters on the Great Lakes. Counts that stand out were of 10,000 Blacks at Montauk 28 Mar (PG) and 1120 White-wingeds on L. Ontario at Porter, near Buffalo, 8 May (*vide* DFS). In upstate New York, many observers commented on large concentrations of ducks; particularly unusual were

25,000 Buffleheads on the upper Niagara R. during the first week of Mar (*vide* DFS). A female Barrow's Goldeneye that wintered at Sandy Hook was there until 4 Mar (MH), and a male was at Bayville, Long I. until 12 Mar (m.ob.).

HAWKS THROUGH GROUSE

Although the weather was generally poor for migrating birds this spring, there were at least four days on which major flights of hawks were recorded. The biggest flight of the spring was at Braddock Bay 20 Apr, when 11,114 Broad-winged Hawks, 720 Turkey Vultures, 380 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 210 Red-tailed Hawks, 170 Northern Harriers, 27 Bald Eagles, 30 American Kestrels, 21 Cooper's Hawks, 13 Northern Goshawks, 12 Red-shouldered Hawks, 14 Ospreys, 11 Rough-legged Hawks, and 2 Golden Eagles passed by. Raptors counted at Hamburg totaled 1324 on 28 Mar and about 6000 on 3 Apr (*vide* DFS). Five hundred raptors were counted 15–16 Apr at Sandy Hook (*vide* PB, SB). Black Vultures farther n. than usual included one over Ripley 17 Mar and one at Iroquois N.W.R. near Buffalo, NY 27 Apr (*vide* DFS).

Single imm. Mississippi Kites were seen at Sandy Hook 10 & 12 May (*vide* PB, SB), 3 or more were at Cape May 14–15 May (*vide* MSG), an ad. was picked up emaciated in Maryland, DE 18 May (AE), and one was unusually far n. at Ripley 30 May (*vide* DFS). The season's only certain Swallow-tailed Kite was at Cape May 14 May (MR), but good descriptions of other probable ones came from near Derby Hill 3 May (*vide* MS) and Clarksville, Allegany, NY 19 Apr (*vide* DFS). Six Rough-legged Hawks Regionwide included one that remained until 16 Apr at Calverton, Long I. (*vide* HM). Imm. Swainson's Hawks were seen at Sandy Hook 16 (*vide* PB, SB) & 28 Apr (WM, MF), and another was at Derby Hill 20 Apr (GP). A Gyrfalcon that spent the winter at Union Springs, NY was last seen 1 Mar (JMcG, KMcG). Northern Bobwhites have undoubtedly declined; there were only 4 reported from e. Long I. this spring (HM).

RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Rail counts on a still and foggy night 29–30 Apr were 12 Soras, 18 Virginia Rails, and 5 King Rails heard at the Thousand Acre Marsh, DE, and 10 King, 30 Clapper, and 15 Virginia Rails heard at Bombay Hook (*vide* AH). Some of these numbers represent the highest counts since the mid-1960s for Delaware (APE). A King Rail was carefully identified in the salt marsh at Shinnecock 10 May (JC); this species is not known to breed on Long I. and is extremely local elsewhere in the Region. Four Black

SA A very substantial decline in the numbers of migrating shorebirds using Delaware Bay almost certainly is a consequence of the recently-expanded horseshoe crab fishery. Both New Jersey and Delaware are now legislating restrictions on the number of crabs that may be taken. While shorebird counts are notoriously variable, the following contrast between identical aerial surveys of Delaware Bay made 20 May 2002 and 20 May 2003 by the New Jersey Endangered and Nongame Species Program give cause for alarm:

	20 May 2002	20 May 2003
Red Knot	27,300	8000
Ruddy Turnstone	56,600	24,300
Semipalmated		
Sandpiper	16,600	4200
Sanderling	14,000	11,000
Dunlin	31,600	10,300

Rails were at Goshen Landing, *Cape May* for most of May (PEL, m. ob.), 2 were at McNamara W.M.A., *Cape May/Atlantic*, and one was on the road to Big Stone Beach, DE 6–7 May (*fide* AH). Sandhill Cranes continue dramatic expansion into the Region. About 25 were reported, including 4 over Hamburg 19 May (*fide* DFS) and 5 at Braddock Bay 23 May (*fide* MT).

Of about 5 American Golden-Plovers reported, the earliest was one at Ted Harvey 15 Mar (MEG). Four pairs of Piping Plovers were nesting in Delaware as of late May (AEH), a number close to the 13-year average of 4.3 pairs. A flock of 250–300 American Avocets was seen at Ted Harvey 22 Mar (AG). Non-Delaware Black-necked Stilts included 3 at Wreck Pond, NJ 1–10 May, 4 at Sandy Hook 28 May, and one at Island Beach 25 May (*fide* PB, SB). A Eurasian Whimbrel was at North Wildwood, NJ 22–24 Apr (FL), at the same location where a Long-billed Curlew, present since last summer, remained until 19 Apr. Two Hudsonian Godwits, always rare in spring, were at Ted Harvey 18 May (AEH). Five Marbled Godwits were together at Nummy I., near Cape May 1 May (GD). Five hundred Ruddy Turnstones together with 3000+ Dunlin constituted unusually large numbers at Shinnecock 16 May (RS, BS).

A Curlew Sandpiper was at Bivalve, *Cumberland*, NJ 10 May (FT et al.), one was at Little Creek 17 May (*fide* AEH), with 2 were there the next day (MEG), and one was at Bombay Hook 17 May (*fide* AEH). A Reeve was at Bombay Hook 29 Mar (MEG), where a Ruff and a Reeve were

seen together 13 Apr (CDC). Additional Ruffs were at Shinnecock 27 Apr (AB) and Pedricktown 24–28 Apr (DM et al.). About 4 Stilt Sandpipers were reported in New Jersey and Delaware, the earliest of which was at Bivalve 30 Mar (*fide* MSG). Three Red Phalaropes were found at coastal sites 17–29 May, and one was at Round Valley Res., NJ 21 Apr (*fide* PB, SB). Five Red-neckeds were found at coastal sites 18–30 May, and one was near Buffalo 24 May, where especially noteworthy (*fide* DFS). In addition, 20 Reds and 5 Red-neckeds were seen at Hudson Canyon 26 May (JB, AH et al.).

Two Long-tailed Jaegers were at Hudson Canyon 26 May (JB, AEH et al.), and one subad. jaeger, almost certainly this species, was seen from shore at Shinnecock 18 May (HM et al.). The Hudson Canyon trip also recorded a Parasitic and 14 Pomarine Jaegers, plus 3–4 South Polar Skuas (JCB, KL, NH, AH et al.). Of about 15 Little Gulls, 6 together at Cape May 15 Mar (*fide* MSG) was the largest group. About 8 Black-headed Gulls were reported. Three Franklin's Gulls were seen: one at Coeyman's Landing near Albany, NY 1–2 Apr (*fide* RG), another at the Sussex County, NJ landfill 10 Apr (FT), and a 3rd at North Wildwood, NJ 3 Mar (HE). A Laughing Gull on the Niagara R. 17 Mar (*fide* DFS) was unusual, both for being that far inland and that early. An ad. California Gull joined an aggregation of gulls feeding on beach-cast starfish at Montauk 1 Mar (AJL). California Gulls are now about annual in occurrence in the Niagara area, but there are still only a handful of records for the coast. An ad. Thayer's Gull was clearly photographed at Cherry I. near Wilmington, DE 1 Mar (ph.; AG, MSh, MEG et al.), and a second bird was seen at Florence, NJ 9 Mar (*fide* SB). A remarkable 192 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted between Wilmington and Florence in early Mar (*fide* AEH).

A Royal Tern was quite far upstream for spring at the Delaware end of the Chesapeake-Delaware Canal 12 Apr (MVB). Four thousand Common Terns at Sandy Hook 26 May (*fide* PB, SB) was a remarkable concentration considering that most breeding birds should have been established on colonies by the first week of May. Fifteen Arctic Terns were seen at Hudson Canyon 26 May (AEH et al.). A Roseate Tern at Hamlin Beach 27 Apr provided only the 3rd record for the Rochester area (WS, MD). Other Roseates were scattered along the coasts of Delaware and New Jersey: one at Indian R. Inlet 30 Apr (APE), one at Cape May 7–11 May (GM et al.), and 4 at Stone Harbor 20 May (GM et al.). Forster's Terns arrived early on LI in late

Mar (RK), and one was at Sagaponack 5 Apr (HM). A pair of Gull-billed Terns appeared at Brigantine 27 Apr (*fide* PB, SB), 5 were at Jones Beach 6 May, and 2 were at J.B.W.R. 4 May (AJL, StS).

Dovekie reports included one at Montauk 2 Mar (JC, TC) and 3 exceptionally late birds at Hudson Canyon 26 May (JCB, AH et al.). The Hudson Canyon trip also produced one Atlantic Puffin. Late Razorbills were seen at Dewy Beach, DE 13 Apr (CDC) and Cape May 5–7 May (KMcG et al.).

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A White-winged Dove was in Seaville, *Cape May* 6–7 May (RC); the species is occurring in the Region with increasing frequency, usually in May–Jul. A Eurasian Collared-Dove, present since fall 2002, remained at Hamlin Beach (G. Chapin, J. Barry, MD, RS et al.). Four Short-eared Owls were over the marshes at Jake's Landing, NJ 26 Apr (*fide* MSG). Snowy Owls were scarce; one at Jones Beach until 9 Mar was the only one on Long I. The Northern Hawk Owl at Root, NY remained until 12 Apr, establishing a new late date for the state (*fide* RG). The earliest Whip-poor-will was one calling 28 Mar at Cape May (*fide* MSG). Two Chuck-will's-widows were at East Quogue, Long I. 15 May (BF), and one upstate in Oswego, NY 17–23 May was far n. (Bob and Kayla Fisk, MS et al.). A count of 75+ Common Nighthawks was made at Flatbrookville, NJ over the Delaware R. 19 May (*fide* PB, SB).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS

On 21 May at Sandy Hook, 30+ Least Flycatchers and 30 unidentified *Empidonax* flycatchers were counted (TBo). Of increasingly frequent occurrence in fall in the East but still extremely rare in spring was a Say's Phoebe 16 Apr at Garrett Mt., NJ (ph., JeC, MK). Also exceptionally rare for spring was a Western Kingbird in *Cumberland*, NJ 15 May (JG et al.). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were seen at Sandy Hook 2 (WM) & 10 May (SW, WM et al.); lack of sightings on intervening days suggests possibly different birds.

An ad. Northern Shrike spent 1–13 Apr at Rocky Point, Long I. (DH, m. ob.), unusually late for this species in coastal New York. Another was at Caroline, NY 7–8 Apr (SAK, SK). Common Ravens appeared at their now-usual haunts at Alpine and High Point, NJ and at Millbrook Gap, NY; more unusual were one on the lower Niagara R. 6 Apr (*fide* DFS) and 2 over Connetquot S.P., Long I. 27 Apr (JG). A Cliff Swallow was early at Prospect Park, NY 30 Mar (PDO); 12–15 birds and 6–8 active nests at Appoquinimink Bridge, DE

were subsequently displaced by Barn Swallows 15 May (MVB, E. Braun), but returned to renest (APE).

WRENS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Four Sedge Wrens were reported: one at Cattus I., NJ 23 May (FL) and 3 in West Monroe, NY 17 May (*fide* MS). Carolina Wrens were notably scarce in NY following the severe winter. A singing (!) Varied Thrush was at Hempstead Lake SP, LI. 15–16 Mar (AWo, m. ob.). Singing Bicknell's Thrushes were at Central Park 8 May (TF) and Rye, NY 21–26 May (TWB, AGu et al.). A peak count of Gray-cheeked Thrushes was of 27 at Sandy Hook 21 May (*fide* PB, SB), and 50+ Swainson's Thrushes were counted at Sandy Hook 21 May (MF). A Veery at Carlton, NY 20 Apr set an early arrival date for that area (*fide* DFS). A Bohemian Waxwing that wintered with a flock of Cedars at Sapsucker Woods was last seen 26 Mar (AWe et al.).

WARBLERS

Seemingly more Orange-crowned Warblers than usual appeared this spring; a total of 10 was reported 3 Apr–12 May. Lawrence's Warblers were seen in Central Park 5 May (*fide* TWB), Thomson Lake S.P. 17 May (*fide* RG), and in Yorkshire, Chautauqua, NY 18 May (*fide* DFS). Two Brewster's Warblers were around Buffalo 8–17 May (*fide* DFS), and about 5 others were reported elsewhere. Cape May Warblers continue scarce, with reports of only about 15 migrants. A Pine Warbler at Manorville, Long I. 23 Mar was almost certainly a local winterer (*fide* HM), as was one in Central Park 9–11 Mar (TF). A Yellow-throated Warbler was early at Farmingdale, Long I. 31 Mar (JM), and 4 others were reported in New York City parks up to 3 May. A possible Sutton's Warbler (Yellow-throated Warbler x Northern Parula hybrid) was reported in the Stokes State Forest 2 May (TS, MDu et al.) near the location where one (likely the same individual) was seen last year; some observers raised the possibility that it could have been a different hybrid combination. Twenty Cerulean Warblers in Stokes S. F. 12 May was the largest concentration reported (*fide* PB, SB). A Worm-eating Warbler was far n. at Buffalo 15–16 May (*fide* DFS), and 15 other migrants were recorded in the New York City area 12 Apr–20 May. There were 8 Prothonotary Warblers away from regular breeding sites; the earliest 2 appeared 30 Apr on Long I. An Ovenbird was very early at Easthampton, NY 29 Mar (PA, JA); it possibly overwintered locally. A Kentucky Warbler 13 Apr in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden set a record-early date

for New York (PDo, m. ob.); 5 others were found in the state 29 Apr–28 May. A Connecticut Warbler was heard in the Buffalo area 18 May (*fide* DFS). Sixteen Hooded Warblers were found in the New York City area, and singles were n. to West Monroe, Oswego 17 May (*fide* MS) and Buffalo 2 May (*fide* DFS).

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Seven Summer Tanagers were found in New York in May, including 3 on the grounds of the Brookhaven National Lab in Upton, NY, where they have bred for several years (JC). The Western Tanager that wintered at Shark River Hills, NJ was last seen 5 Mar (*fide* PB, SB). One or 2 Blue Grosbeaks were especially far n. at Buffalo 5–10 May (*fide* DFS), and at least one returned to one of last year's breeding locations on Long I. by 31 May (RJK). An incursion of Dickcissels included 5 birds in n. Delaware (LG, CDC), 3–5 at Cape May 11–18 May (*fide* MSG), one at Water Mill, L.I. 21–25 Apr (MM), one in Salem, NJ 23 May (*fide* PB, SB), and one at Stockbridge, NY 25 May (*fide* MS). Single Clay-colored Sparrows were at Derby Hill, NY (GP et al.) and Merrill Creek Res., NJ on 9 May (*fide* PB, SB), with other singles at Goshen, Cape May and Cape Henlopen (BGP) the next day. A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was recorded on the unusual date and location of 18 Mar in Prospect Park (TDo et al.). A Lark Sparrow at Cape May 9–10 May (DHa, GD) was the only one reported. There was a good flight of Fox Sparrows reported in late Mar and early Apr; 26 were counted in one backyard in Dryden, NY 1 Apr (AM).

A Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen in Salem County NJ 1–10 Mar (*fide* PB, SB). A Pine Grosbeak on the Kanyoo Trail near Buffalo, NY 27 Apr (*fide* DFS) was far from any known breeding location in a decidedly non-flight year.

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