

March 2021 Sightings Report

It was another nice, quiet March, in and out like a lion, but only briefly at either end, and with long stretches of quiet with lots of sunshine between. It was a mild month, with little snow and again only one wind event, on the 26th. Temperatures averaged 39.3 °F, 5.0° above normal, while precipitation totaled 1.02", 1.48" below normal. Snowfall at 1.4" was 14.9" below normal. It was the 11th warmest March on record. Record highs occurred on the 10th at 68° and 11th at 71°, with a record high low of 50° on the 25th. With the precipitation, it was the 8th driest March, and the 6th least snowy.

Generally, the month continued the good start for the year, with a record high species count for the month (149 vs. 148 prior) and one of the highest year-to-date totals. Ten species arrived at dates earlier than our 1985 Monroe County Checklist earliest, and Chimney Swift, Least Bittern, and Yellow-rumped Warbler added new record early dates, and Caspian Tern tied its earliest. Most of the typical March arrivals were reported. Also, most of the lingering half-hardies made it into March, though in reduced numbers, and the various irruptive species and winter finches present this winter continued on into this month. The eBird data download for the region was ~ 53,759 lines of reports, up nearly 20 % from last March. Again, we may attribute this to a combination of the general trend of increasing reports to eBird, NY Breeding Bird Atlas III, and COVID-19 limiting the alternative outdoor activities for many people. Also, once more, we have David Brown back as the official hawk counter at Braddock Bay, with an interest in recording all birds passing as well as possible.

Waterfowl begin the usual litany of essentially all expected species reported, but with peak counts for most species low, especially for the diving ducks. Water levels on Lake Ontario and many other bodies of water were on the low side, with little rain or snow melt to raise them through month's end. There were some good Snow Goose and Canada Goose counts. Small numbers of Ross's and Greater White-fronted and good numbers of Cackling Goose were found. Male Eurasian Wigeons appeared at 6 sites. A Harlequin Duck lingered, but no eiders were reported. No Barrow's Goldeneye were found at the usual Point Breeze site, but 2 immature males continued from February in the Genesee River in Charlotte, and one was spotted on the 28th on Irondequoit Bay. Grebes were generally poor, though there were a couple of double-digit Red-necked Grebe counts; hopefully there will be more in April. Sandhill Cranes numbers passing the hawk watch, as well as from other sites, were good this month though down a bit from last year.

Again, good numbers of Killdeer were noted passing the hawk watch, and by month's end very early Dunlin, Pectoral Sandpiper, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe, and both yellowlegs had been added. The first spring Bonaparte's Gull was seen on March 5th, but numbers remained low through the month. Overall, gull numbers were relatively low, possibly due to early ice-out for most

water bodies, where they would normally gather on ice sheet edges. The 3 usual winter gulls (Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous), continued to be reported through the month in low numbers. Caspian Tern arrived on the 28th, tying a record early date.

The start of the spring loon movement was very slow, with no noteworthy numbers reported. Double-Crested Cormorant numbers increased after essentially disappearing with the February cold, but numbers remained low. There was an intriguing audio recording submitted of what sounded like a Least Bittern at what would be a record early date on March 27th from the marshes south of Irondequoit Bay. There were early reports for arriving Great Egret and Green Heron near month's end. The hawk count was off to a good start, with 8,506 by month's end, down about 1/3 from last year at this time, but typical of annual variability. As usual, Turkey Vultures accounted for a high, about 77%, of the total. Typical of recent years, no Northern Goshawks were reported. Golden Eagle numbers were good, and the Rough-legged Hawk count was decent. There were no great surprises. A table with all the details and daily notes can be found on the Hawkcount website.

Only 2 Snowy Owls were reported, one on the 9th at the Genesee County Airport and the second on the 23rd along the Lake Ontario Parkway west of Braddock Bay. The DEC Short-eared Owl surveys out of the Avon office continued, with good numbers for this month's counts but with weather problems on the Tuesday survey dates. Jim Adams reported good numbers from the usual Owl Woods counts, adding 40 more Northern Saw-whet Owls, bringing the spring count to 50. Eleven Long-eared Owls were found, bringing that total to 12 for the season to date. About 30 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported, far above last year's more typical 7. With so many overwintering this year, it will be hard to distinguish a spring arrival date. No Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported. The 3 regular falcons were all reported in good numbers at the hawk watch and elsewhere.

The expected passerines were found. New arrivals were as expected for a warm, open March, with a few early, even record early, as noted earlier. Most of our lingering, (overwintering?), half-hardies were still reported, though at fewer sites and in lower numbers after the cold, snowy February. There were no outstanding rarities. Among this winter's finch cohort, Evening Grosbeak, Hoary Redpoll, and White-winged Crossbill were not reported. Some of these may be seen again later in an extended return movement north. The table of noteworthy records to be posted on the RBA website will provide more details and illustrations.

Please send your reports by the 5th of the month to Andrea Patterson, 144 Greystone Lane, #24, Rochester, NY 14618.

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

| | 2021 | 2020 | 10-year Average (2011-2020) |
|----------------------------|------|------|--------------------------------|
| Species for March | 149 | 147 | 141.3 |
| New for the year | 19 | 24 | 17.4 |
| Total for the year to date | 163 | 153 | 151.3 |

Observers: Jim Adams, Janet Akin, Osvaldo Araya, Karl Bardon, Ted Barnett, Mitchell Barry, Sue Barth, Doug Beattie, Don Bemont, Steven Benedict, Linda Clark Benedict, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, Shawn Billerman, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Linda Boutwell, Lynn Braband, Joe Brin, Kyle Brock, David Brown (official BB hawk counter), Mark Brown, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Nancy Casper, Larry Chen, Chris Choate, Robert Cicotta, Kelly Close, Jeremy Collison, Andrew Consler, Lydia Culbert, Kathleen Dalton, Doug Daniels, Gregg Dashnau, Pete Debes, Michael DeWispelaere, Deborah Dohne, Gordon Dutter, Diane Eagan, Daniel Emlin, Mark Fitzsimmons, Debra Florio, Daena Ford, George Ford, Bryan Franz, Joyce Freitas, Jim Fry, Andrew Gaerte, Kyle Gage, Andy Garland, Janis George, Jessica George, Candy Giles, Bill Gillette, John & Karla Gordinier, Sheryl Gracewski, Kate Graham, Jay Greenberg, Kevin Griffith, Bill Gruenbaum, Ralph & Georgia Guenther, Michael Gullo, Andrew Guthrie, Chris Guthrie, Danny Guthrie, Bill Haake, Ryan Hall, Helen & Chris Haller, Mike & Hazel Hanna, Kim Hartquist, Christina Hoh, Debi Holt, Dick Horsey, Bill Howe, Pam Inzinna, Carolyn Jacobs, John Jaenike, Alyssa Johnson, Amy Kahn, Laura & Paul Kammermeier, Sanjay Karanth,

Kenneth Kempfues, David Kennedy, Jim Kimball, Cindy Kimble, Evelyn Kirkwood, Kathy Kirsch, Renee Kittleman, Mike Laird, Chris Lajewski, Greg Lawrence, Gayle Lazoration, Tim Lenz, Joan & Vern Lindberg, Peggy Mabb, Liz Magnanti, Pat Martin, Judy Massare, Lauri Mattle, Kenneth McCarthy, Jacob McCartney, Daniel McDermott, Jay McGowan, Bob McGuire, Ann McMican, Steve Melcher, Jim Miles, Kent Millham, Randi Minetor, Adrielle Mitchell, Ann Mitchell, Christopher Mitchell, Brian & Brooke Morse, Linda Mott, Leah Mould, Sheila Mumpton, Katherine Murphy, Susie Nettleton, Rivka Noll, David Odell, Bill O' Neill, Joe Ovsiovitch, Michael Palermo, Gary Palmer, Lynne Parsons, Andrea Patterson, Shelley Patterson, Michael Peter, Norma Platt, Jo Popma, Jay Powell, Mike Powers, Nick Pusateri, Doug & Elizabeth Rabjohns, Carolyn Ragan, RBA Field Trips, Neal Reilly, Rosemary Reilly, Susan Roberts, Susan Robertson, Brian Rohrs, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Robert Ryan, Kevin Rybczynski, Jackie Salsbury, Livia Santana, Karl Schmidt, Anna Shaheen, Shirley Shaw, Dominic Sherony, Judy Slein, Barb Smith, Roger Smith, Robert & Susan Spahn, Dave Spier, Donna Mason-Spier, Chris Stanger, Rick Stevens, Steve Taylor, Mike Tetlow, Eunice Thein, John H. Thomas, Brian Tuttle, Geoff Twardokus, Nathan Ukens, John & Bonnie VanDerMeid, Jeanne & Tom Verhulst, Jules Wagner, Brad Walker, Mike Wasilco, Bridget Watts, Joe Wing, Glenn Wolford, Paul Wolter, Jim Wood, Martha Zettel.



A dark morph **Snow Goose**. Photo by Jay Greenberg.