

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

The season might best be called the Drought of '95. Showers on 3 Jun were about the last meaningful rainfall for many weeks, including one 19 day stretch with no precipitation over most of the Region. Or, to look at it another way, there were only 18 days in three months with as much as a sprinkle in HAMI. In early June, Lake Champlain was still above 95 ft. Plattsburgh thermometers reached 100°F on 19 Jun, with even Northville a sweltering 99°F that day. Lightning generated forest fires on Mount Discovery and Raven Mt, ESSE, sandwiched the editor's domicile in the Boquet Valley, with the Discovery fire burning for more than a week in early July. Weather continued hot, although there was a half inch of rain 6 Jul that helped halt the Discovery fire. Plattsburgh temperatures again soared to 97°F on Bastille Day, and Lake Champlain was down to 94.4 ft. Then came the great mid-season blowdown and subsequent downpour. Extremely strong winds ripped across Franklin and Hamilton Counties about 5:30 AM on 15 Jul, blowing Osprey nests out of trees just two days after the NYSDEC aerial survey, and flattening forests, but accompanied by only a few showers. Rain finally began about 10:30 PM on 16 Jul at Elizabethtown, continuing to bring a full inch the next day, the first meaningful rainfall of the summer. By 1 Aug, Plattsburgh was back at 93°F and the lake still 94.4 ft. Three days of rain 3-5 Aug were welcome. Chazy had rain and hail 11 Aug, but most of the month continued hot. At the end of the month, mudflats were still fairly well exposed, with Champlain at 94.69 ft. Last year, by comparison, the lake was at 96 ft at the end of July and still well above 95 ft through August.

Shorebirding certainly improved this year, with 21 species reported. Five of these set early arrival dates, perhaps suggestive of the impact of drought and fires across northern Canada during the summer. Best find was a *Ruff*. Other good shorebirds included *Whimbrel*, *Western Sandpiper*, and *Purple Sandpiper*, all in Clinton County. Wilson's Phalarope probably nested in the Chazy Rivers area for the third consecutive year. The male was seen rising from the same grassy area, but the field was drier this year, and the dairy cattle were let into it two weeks earlier than usual.

Banding operations were conducted on the Four Brothers Islands 10 Jun-14 Jul. In addition to the standard annual sample of 1,000 Ring-billed Gull chicks (plus three adults), species banded were Double-

crested Cormorant, Cattle Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Common Merganser, Herring Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull. Great Blue Heron nested for the third consecutive year, and Cattle Egret returned for the second. Black-crowned Night-Heron again nested on two islands. A young Great Blue Heron *swimming* in deep waters off Island "D" 14 Jul was able to lift directly off the water; when forced to land on the lake again by dive-bombing Herring Gull, the heron swam in and sedately walked ashore. High Peaks Audubon Society continued the study of cormorant diet and placed new sanctuary signs on all four islands.

Regional Osprey production was initially felt to be no better than last year's rather disappointing output, and then the 15 Jul windstorm led to losses. Only one Ausable Point platform was used, and it failed. The Crown Point platform is still unused. On the bright side, however, the long vacant Lake Alice platform finally produced two young, and a new platform at Scomotion Creek fledged three. The tree nest at Webb Royce Swamp, the only natural site in the Champlain Valley, also produced two young Osprey. Bald Eagle had a good season after last year's total failure. Six eaglets fledged from three (of five known) nests in the Region.

Merlin successfully nested at two Lake Placid sites and were also seen at Raquette Lake in late July. The pair at the 16th green of the Mirror Lake golf course in Jun fledged four young by 14 Jul. The same day a pair on Victor Herbert Road were still feeding young in a nest atop a dead snag, fledging three young by 18 Jul. One of these young falcons was subsequently taken in for rehabilitation by Dr. Nina Schoch, banded by the editor, and successfully released 17 Aug.

Peregrine Falcon fledged ten young in 1993 and five last year, so a dozen fledglings this year was an improvement. There are now ten known active eyries, and several others suspected. The known sites include Chesterfield (two young fledged in '95), Elizabethtown (territorial adult), two Keene sites (one young and two young fledged), new Moriah site (two fledged), North Elba (territorial adult), Schroon (none seen this year), Westport (two fledged), Willsboro (two fledged), and Wilmington (one fledged). All known active sites are in ESSE.

With the future of Plattsburgh AFB still in limbo following base closure, Gretch again surveyed the runway grasslands, counting Horned Lark, Vesper, Savannah, and Grasshopper Sparrows. The apparent small decrease in Grasshopper Sparrow is probably not significant. This year the day of the survey was cloudy, in contrast to last year's better weather, and there was a light drizzle which depressed bird song.

Visitors to the ever popular Ferd's Bog, HAMI, report that the sign for Camp Buckhorn has been removed, and there is a new trail head 3.6 miles from the beginning of Uncas Road, 50 feet before the now unmarked red Buckhorn cabin. Marked with red reflective tape, the new trail bypasses Buckhorn's private property. This is the most consistent site in the Region to find both Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpecker.

A respectable total of 185 species were reported, an improvement from 174 in 1993 and 171 last summer, much of the gain probably attributable to improved shorebird habitat, following several years of high lake levels along Lake Champlain. In addition to the species already mentioned, other birds of special local interest include Least Bittern back at an historic wetland, summer Brant, *Sedge Wren* at a new wetland, Golden-winged Warbler, and a persistent male *Clay-colored Sparrow*. Altogether, it was quite an interesting summer. Both crossbills made a respectable summer showing after the invasion and nesting last winter. We're grateful to the many observers, especially Adirondack visitors, who took the time to submit reports of their finds.

Contributors: Tom Barber, William Barber, Kate Beale, Robert Boehm, John Ciaccio, Dorothy Crumb, Charlcie Delehanty, Tom Dudones, Walter Ellison, Jim Farrel, Don Feuss, Frank Gill, Mark Gretch, Richard Guthrie, John Hayes, Shannon Indoe, Selma Isil, Hal Klein, Frank & Trude Knighton, Bill Krueger, Michael Kudish, Wesley Lanyon, Gary Lee, Rich MacDonald, Ted Mack, Mark Manske, Larry Master, Charles Mitchell, John & Susan Peterson, David Russell, Mina Schoch, Nathan Schucker, Justace Scott, Mary Seeger, Dean Spaulding, Langdon Stevenson, John & Pat Thaxton, Jan Trzeciak.

Abbreviations: APt - Ausable Point; BB - Bloomingdale Bog; CR - between the Chazy & Little Chazy Rivers; ESM - Essex Station Marsh; FB - Ferd's Bog; FBI - Four Brothers Islands; GBBS - Gabriels Breeding Bird Survey (15 Jun); MRRA - Moose River Rec. Area; PAFB - Plattsburgh AFB; SRF - St. Regis Falls BBS (19 Jun); TL - Tupper Lake; TM - Ticonderoga Marsh; WRS - Webb Royce Swamp.

Summer Reports: **Com. Loon:** Lincoln Pd 15 Jun (MG), unexpected. **Pied-billed Grebe:** three downy chicks L Alice 11 Aug; also Cedar R Flow 1 Aug. **Double-crested Cormorant:** 804 nests FBI, up only slightly from 785 last year, 27 banded FBI. **Am. Bittern:** max eight SRF. **Least Bittern:** three TM 21 Jun, where last reported before the marsh disappeared in years of high lake levels in the 1980s. **Great Blue Heron:** six nests new heronry MRRA. **Great Egret:** Ft. Covington 3 Jun. **Cattle Egret:** six banded FBI. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** 63 banded FBI,

WRS 19 Aug (MG). **Brant**: one FBI 22 Jun (RM, DS). **Canada Goose**: max 90 TL municipal park 4 Aug. **Green-winged Teal**: hen WRS 6 Aug (JP, DS, J&PT). **Gadwall**: mouth Boquet R 21 Jul (MG), probably from FBI. **Ring-necked Duck**: pair Oseetah Pd 28 Jun (TD); max 15 TL marsh 25 Aug (CD). **Com. Merganser**: hen banded FBI.

Osprey: Boquet R mouth 21 Jul, FBI 29 Jul away from known active nests and platforms; *intro*. **Bald Eagle**: Abanakee 2 Jun (GL); Upper Saranac L 14 Jun (CD); imm Wadhams 6 Aug (JP, mob); *intro*. **N. Harrier**: good reports. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: Baxter, Elizabethtown, WRS 6 & 19 Aug. **Merlin**: *intro*. **Peregrine Falcon**: *intro*. **Spruce Grouse**: Madawaska 15 Aug (CM, LS), only reliable report. **Wild Turkey**: hen TL 1 Jul-6 Aug (CD). **Virginia Rail**: two pair WRS 4 Jun; two TM 21 Jun; Paul Smiths VIC 25 Jun; APt 18 Aug, an excellent showing. **Sora**: Paul Smiths VIC 25 Jun (RB), rarely reported. **Com. Moorhen**: two displaying CR 5 Jun. **Black-bellied Plover**: arr APt 24 Jul (HK, BK, CM), early CLIN. **Semipalmated Plover**: arr King's Bay 19 Jul (BK, CM), early CLIN. **Killdeer**: 12 old TL landfill 19 Aug, good inland number. **Greater Yellowlegs**: arr APt 14 Jul (HK, BK, CM), early CLIN; two mouth Boquet R 21 Jul and Bouquet/Rt 68 (MG). **Lesser Yellowlegs**: arr APt 14 Jul. **Solitary Sandpiper**: arr Westport 9 Jul (RM,DS); two Inlet 1 Aug (TD), unusual for interior. **Spotted Sandpiper**: on nest Westport 4 Jun (RM). **Upland Sandpiper**: two Ft Covington 3 Jun (TD), only report from rarely-birded breeding grounds along Quebec border. **Whimbrel**: flying over n Plattsburgh 26 Jun (CH). **Ruddy Turnstone**: Island "B" FBI 10 Jun. **Sanderling**: APt 21 Jul (BK, mob). **Semipalmated Sandpiper**: arr Westport 8 Jul (J&SP, RW), early ESSE; also APt 21 Jul. **W. Sandpiper**: APt 21 Jul (HK, BK, CM, LS), rare here. **Least Sandpiper**: arr three Westport 8 Jul (J&SP, RW), early ESSE; max 11 Westport 5 Aug (MG); five Westport 10 Aug; APt 21 Jul, representative. **Pectoral Sandpiper**: CR 5 Jun (HK, BK, CM), late. **Purple Sandpiper**: one APt 22 Jul (C&JH), very much out of season. **Dunlin**: n Plattsburgh 6 Jun (CH), late. **Ruff**: striking bird with red head and contrasting white neck ruff APt (John Hayes *fide* RG). **Wilson's Phalarope**: male CR 5, 7 Jun (BK), nesting unconfirmed. **Bonaparte's Gull**: arr three Westport 17 Aug (JP, DS). **Ring-billed Gull**: 1,003 banded FBI. **Herring Gull**: 254 banded FBI. **Great Black-backed Gull**: one banded FBI.

Rock Dove: racing pigeon Malone 20 Jul from Toronto Federation race. **Black-billed Cuckoo**: five reports from GBBS, Mace Chasm Road, Mountain View, SRF and Terry Mt an exceptional summer. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**: Ft Covington 3 Jun (TD), also a good find. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: dead juv SUNY Plattsburgh campus 12 Jul suggests CLIN nesting;

also Keene and MRRA, more expected sites. **Com. Nighthawk**: one-two TL 1 Jul-9 Aug (CD), only Regional report. **Whip-poor-will**: Clintonville, New Russia, Owls Head, and Teboville, a good showing. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: max 39 SRF, 32 GBBS, high. **Three-toed Woodpecker**: FB 13 Jul (GL), only report. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: ad feeding two fledged y FB 25 Aug (DC, DF), late; other reports from BB, DH, Helldiver Pd, Little Shallow L, Mountain View L, Sand L, Saranac L, Raquette L, and Wright Peak, or ten locations in three counties.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Silver L Bog 31 Aug (BK, CM), late. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**: max 4 SRF; other reports from Algonquin Peak, Cascade Mt, Chubb R Swamp, GBBS, Lost Pd, North Meadow. **Willow Flycatcher**: nested Cross Road Marsh ESSE 3 Jun (RM, DS); also ESM, Ray Brook 1 Jun (TD). **Horned Lark**: six PAFB 14 Jun. **N. Rough-winged Swallow**: record max 100 Lewis 30 Jul (TD). **Gray Jay**: BB, FB, MRRA. **Com. Raven**: 20 in paired display flights over burned Mt Discovery 29 Jul (J&SP). **Boreal Chickadee**: BB, Cascade Mt, FB, Helldiver Pd, Hurricane Mt, Indian Head, MRRA, Mt Colden, typical. **Tufted Titmouse**: two broods from same nest Mooers yard late Jun and early Aug (JF); also Terry Mt 6-8 Jun (CH). **Winter Wren**: 26 GBBS, high. **Sedge Wren**: two ESM 23 Jul (MG) and following weeks, a new site. **Marsh Wren**: common TM 21 Jun (MG), after return of cattail marsh. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: two family groups of five TM Jun (MG), previously known site. **Gray-cheeked Thrush**: three singing male Bicknell's 3,000' + Whiteface Mt 26 Jun; two Iroquis and one Wright Peak 24 Jul (DR).

Yellow-throated Vireo: APt 18 Aug (BK, LS), only report. **Philadelphia Vireo**: singing males Keene Valley 1 Jun (HS) and MRRA 24 Jun (KB, RB). **Golden-winged Warbler**: Mother Cabrini Shrine, Terry Mt, CLIN, 17 Aug (CH), a good find. **Tennessee Warbler**: singing male FB 24 Jun (KB, RB). **Cape May Warbler**: migrant Inlet 27 Aug (GL). **Prairie Warbler**: migrant Inlet 27 Aug (GL). **Palm Warbler**: migrant Inlet 27 Aug (GL), early. **Bay-breasted Warbler**: probable breeders Adirondak Loj 3 Jun (WE), North Meadow 17 Jun (MG), Madawaska, Onchiota, and Vermontville 24 Jun (TB); probable migrant Saranac L 19 Aug (TD); migrant Inlet 27 Aug (GL), a good showing. **Blackpoll Warbler**: breeder Wright Peak 22 Jul (J&PT); migrant Saranac L 20 Aug (TD). **Mourning Warbler**: migrants banded Elizabethtown 12 & 17 Aug (JP). **Wilson's Warbler**: female RR Swamp Saranac L 26 Aug (TD), probable transient.

Clay-colored Sparrow: singing male in scattered cedar-juniper at tip of Crown Pt peninsula daily 2-10 Jun (JC, MG, RM, JP, DS). **Vesper Sparrow**: max 11 singing males PAFB 14 Jun (MG); Adk. Loj Rd 1 Jun

(TD). **Savannah Sparrow**: 22 singing males PAFB 14 Jun. **Grasshopper Sparrow**: 12 singing males PAFB 14 Jun (MG); juv Ray Brook 4 Aug (TD), unusual. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: FY Silver L CLIN 21 Jun. **Rusty Blackbird**: three St. Regis Falls 3 Jul (TD), only report. **Purple Finch**: max 30 Saranac L 26 Aug (TD). **Red Crossbill**: max 16 GBBS; eight St Regis Falls 3 Jul (TD). **White-winged Crossbill**: two Cascade Mt 1 Jun (WE); dozen North Meadow 1 Jun (WL); 17 over Wright Peak 24 Jul (DR); six Northville-Placid Trail 14 Aug (J&PT). **Pine Siskin**: max 60 Madawaska 24 Jun (TB); also reports from Elizabethtown, FB, GBBS, SRF, and TL. **Evening Grosbeak**: max 13 SRF; dozen GBBS; six with female FY TL feeder 4 Jul; Colden 7 Aug, fairly typical summer reports here.

Discovery Farm, RR 1, Box 230, Elizabethtown, New York 12932