

REGIONAL REPORTS OF SUMMER RESIDENT AND FALL MIGRATION

REGION 1 — WESTERN NEW YORK

The summer season in western New York was both hotter and drier than normal. A drought, one of the most serious on record, was the most important feature of the period, and undoubtedly had its effect on the bird life of the area's swamps and marshes. On the other hand, the waters of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario were extremely high, influencing most of the migrant shore birds to seek inland mud flats, which in our area are few in number.

Loons — Ducks:

The incursion of southern herons was below average, with only a few American Egrets making an appearance. Yellow-crowned Night Heron was reported in both July and August from nearby Ontario, but we received no western New York record. A female Hooded Merganser with six young was found at the Audubon refuge south of Buffalo, June 7 (Nathan, Schaffner).

Hawks — Owls:

King Rails were found breeding in Cedar Road Swamp north of Akron for the first time. The shore bird migration has been sub-par. Even the extra-territorial Canadian shore of Lake Erie contributed little of note. Best record was of a Willet on the Buffalo breakwall August 23 (B. O. S. census). The Niagara River above the Peace Bridge lived up to its reputation as a favorite port of call for Black Terns, with a high count of 3500 on August 23 (Mitchell).

Swifts — Shrikes:

Cliff Swallows, rare in our northern counties, common in the southern, are being reported more frequently. Purple Martins again joined with Robins and Grackles in some of the enormous Starling roosts in Buffalo and its suburbs. These roosts continue to be a serious problem.

Vireos — Warblers:

The warbler migration was off to an excellent start, both in species and numbers. The timing was normal or slightly early for most, extremely early for some, notably Myrtle. Best waves occurred on August 13 and 23.

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REGION 2 — SOUTHERN TIER (PART 1)

(Including some records from Region 9)

While part of August was marked by little rainfall, this section did not suffer from the drought which was noted in other areas of the state and country. Temperatures averaged a little higher than normal during the summer, but in other respects, it was an average season. Lake levels were high, and it was not until the middle of September that mud flats appeared along Cayuga, offering feeding grounds for shore birds.

Loons — Ducks:

A Common Loon was observed on Cayuga Lake the last of August by Dr. J. T. Lloyd. Two Double-crested Cormorants were seen by R. W. Robinson the middle of August and another on September 15 by Professor Kellogg, at the head of the lake.

Great Blue Herons fed on carp exposed by the draining of the main pool at Montezuma, in large numbers in early and mid-September. American Egrets were seen all summer at Montezuma, but appeared to have left early this year. An immature Little Blue Heron, unusual in this area, was seen by Prof. Oliver Hewitt just south of Spencer, N. Y. on August 11th.

Ducks appear to have had a successful nesting season. Mallards and Blacks were plentiful in September and large numbers of Wood Ducks were seen coming from the wooded areas of Montezuma. The last week in September, about 300 Baldpates were at Montezuma, and many appeared all along Cayuga, as well as Pintails, Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal. Ruddy Ducks were seen at Montezuma in August (Allen) but there was no evidence of breeding. One Green-winged Teal observed north of Binghamton, June 21 (Bemont, Rising).

Hawks — Owls:

In spite of a radio appeal for observations, there were no indications of a hawk migration in this area. The breeding population seemed normal. An Osprey was seen several times in late August and September near Ithaca (A. A. Allen). On the 19th of September, a Duck Hawk at Montezuma was heckling shorebirds (W. J. Hamilton III).

Grouse continued to be at a high level of population and Ring-necked Pheasants too were plentiful, although east of this area they reportedly had a bad season. (Paul Kelsey).

Coots and Gallinules were low in numbers again this summer.

Shore birds—During the 3rd week in August, unusual numbers of Dowitchers and Northern Phalaropes were seen at Montezuma for a few days (Hewitt). The middle of September, as mud flats became exposed at the head of Cayuga, shore birds appeared in numbers at the Hog Hole, and with the draining of the main pool at Montezuma, for carp control, concentrations appeared there also. W. J. Hamilton III reported 65 Lesser Yellow-legs, 35 Pectoral Sandpipers and 5 Stilt Sandpipers, among others, on the 14th of Sept. at Montezuma, and over 100 Pectorals on the 19th, along with 15 Black-bellied Plovers and 17 Golden Plovers.

A pair of Upland Plovers was observed all summer near Dryden, but no young were seen (Kelsey).

A Red Phalarope appeared on Sept. 29th at the Hog Hole (south-western corner of Cayuga) and was still present on Oct. 1st. It was very tame and permitted numerous observers to get close (Allen, Kellogg, et al).

Common Tern nests were seen on muskrat houses in Montezuma in August (Allen, Max Carpenter). Young Black Terns were evident near Ithaca in early August (Kellogg) having moved in apparently from farther north on the lake. A Caspian Tern, still feeding a full-grown young, appeared at the head of Cayuga Lake the last of August and was still around the middle of September.

The first Black-backed Gull of the season appeared at the head of Cayuga on September 24th (Kellogg).

A pure albino Black-billed Cuckoo was found south of Ithaca on August 7th. It appears to be nearly blind, and has to be hand-fed but is still thriving (Oct. 1st) in Prof. Allen's office, on synthetic caterpillars made of dog-food.

Swifts — Shrikes:

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were reported by several observers as being scarce this summer. The latest report I have received is of one female on Sept. 27th (E. G. Allen). Several successful nestings of Pileated Woodpeckers were reported in the Ithaca area. The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker again raised young in Sapsucker Woods (Allen).

Approximately 300 pairs of Cliff Swallows nested, as they have for many years, on the Sweetland barns south of Dryden. Tufted Titmice were seen all summer in Stewart Park, Ithaca, but no positive evidence of breeding was found. Hermit Thrushes were reported singing on high hills east of Binghamton July 20, 27th (Sheffield and White).

A heavy thrush migration occurred the night of Sept. 26-27 (W. J. H. III) Bluebirds still seemed scarce. 50 Pipits were seen at Montezuma on Sept. 14th (W. J. H. III). Large flocks of Cedar Waxwings were much in evidence throughout September.

Vireos — Warblers:

Breeding and migrating Vireos have seemed normal in number.

Single-non-breeding male Pine and Blackburnian Warblers were observed just north of Ithaca (McKay's Woods) on June 25th (Allen). A large wave of migrating warblers was seen in Danby area Sept. 23rd and 24th (K. Thorp) and the weekend of Sept. 27th brought numerous reports of Bay-breasted, Black-poll, Wilson's, Chestnut-sided, and other species moving through the area. Bemont reports 2 Worm-eating Warblers in Ely Park, Binghamton, on August 9th, and one on Sept. 27th. This area has been covered only relatively recently, and it is possible the species has been there right along. It will bear careful observation next summer, for possible breeding record.

The Kingbird

Blackbirds — Sparrows:

A flock of several hundred Redwings, mostly males, gathered along Fali Creek on Sept. 14th, and many of them were seen feeding in small pools where the creek was unusually low (Hoyt).

Breeding Savannah Sparrows seem to be on the decrease and Henslow's on the increase in this area. Nesting Goldfinches were numerous again this summer, and one not fully fledged was found on the ground in Ithaca on Sept. 24th (Hoyt). The first White-throats were reported Sept. 18th by A. C. Lane. Song Sparrows were migrating in numbers the last week in September.

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REGION 2 — SOUTHERN TIER (PART 2)

The Keuka Park Conservation Club has been developing the Verdi Burtch Memorial Sanctuary, putting up posting signs, and cutting off cat-tails on an area contiguous to the lake to make a mud flat for sandpipers, etc.

The Chemung Valley Audubon Society at Elmira has obtained permission to post a marsh and pond near Big Flats, where there is quite a concentration of Wood Ducks and Canada Geese.

Loons — Ducks:

Common Loons continue to be scarce in the area; the writer's first Loon on Keuka since spring was noted on September 4, and have had it but once more since. 9 American Egrets appeared on the Chemung river near Corning on July 16. Two flocks of Canada Geese were seen near Ridge Road, Elmira, on September 15, the earliest date I have for them this fall; an increased migration of them began about September 28. Mrs. McMurtry of Wellsville saw a dozen Blue-winged Teal on an artificial lake (25 acres) between Wellsville and Alfred on September 1; on the same date first were noted also on the Verdi Burtch Sanctuary.

Hawks — Owls:

Mrs. Welles of the Chemung Valley club reports a Goshawk eating a full-grown chicken in a hemlock grove on September 25. Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks have been more scarce in my own records this year than ever before. Mrs. McMurtry had a Broad-winged Hawk record for the middle of June. Mrs. York had Semi-palmated Plover and Lesser Yellow-legs on the Chemung river on Sept. 10. Mrs. McMurtry saw Upland Plover near Wellsville several times during July, and Pectoral and Least Sandpipers on the artificial lake on September 1. The writer had first Ring-billed Gulls on Keuka Lake on August 4, after a lapse of some two months, and one Caspian Tern at Hammondsport, September 3.

Swifts — Shrikes:

I believe both species of Cuckoos have been more in evidence this season than usual. Mrs. G. J. Carter had a pair of Black-bills nesting in her door-yard in Avoca. The writer had a Whip-poor-will flying over the Verdi Burtch Sanctuary on September 1. My last date on Hummingbird was September 8. The Red-headed Woodpeckers returned to nest for a second season in the same area about three miles from Branchport. Mr. Andrus of the Chemung Valley club found flocks of migrating Sapsuckers on September 28. Mrs. Carter located three new colonies of Cliff Swallows near Avoca this summer, making six colonies she now knows of in that area; the colony on the farm of Carleton Sturdevant near Prattsburg, continues to increase, and the writer found a new colony of a dozen or so pairs near Hammondsport. There are few either large or fair-sized flocks of Robins thus far this fall; Cedar Waxwings were in evidence almost daily till September 20, and only occasional individuals are on my daily lists since then.

Warblers — Sparrows:

A pair of Worm-eating warblers nested on the property of Mrs. York at Elmira this season, and were photographed by Dr. Allen. Blackburnian Warblers were feeding young near Breesport the first week in July, and a male was singing daily the early part of the summer near Urbana. Palm Warblers have been more common this fall than usual, and the writer has trapped and banded several. Mrs. Carter found four pairs of Mourning Warblers near Avoca. My first fall Rusty Blackbirds appeared on September 27. Indigo Buntings were rare here when I came to the area nearly 20 years ago, but now are common generally over the area, and are still here this first week in October. Mrs. F. B. Weller had an Evening Grosbeak in her yard on September 24, presumably at Watkins Glen. Mrs. Welles has had an interesting return on an Evening Grosbeak which she banded at Elmira on March 18, 1950, and was retrapped on April 13, 1952 at Marquette, Mich. First White-crowned Sparrows arrived at both Branchport and Elmira on September 28; first White-throats at Hammondsport on September 13, and first fall Juncos at Branchport on the 27th.

Charles J. Spiker
Branchport, N. Y.

REGION 3 — LAKE ONTARIO

This report includes records from June, July, August and September. It was a period featured by intense and constant heat and for the most part unusually dry weather. The Rochester Weather Bureau reports a record of 32 days on which the temperature reached ninety degrees or more!

While many swamps and wet areas away from the shoreline of Lake Ontario dried up completely, the lake itself receded only slowly and drained at or near record high levels all summer. Although local duck production undoubtedly suffered in many areas, the breeding season appeared about normal in other respects.

Shore birds were reported in good numbers considering the high water. Variety of species also seemed better than last year although not as good as two years ago.

The fall migration to date has brought a few very exceptional records and many unusually early dates particularly among water fowl and shore birds. The movement of smaller birds thus far, may also be a bit early though not especially unusual in other respects.

Loons — Ducks:

Both Common Loons and Horned Grebe were last reported in spring on June 10th and both reappeared this fall on Sept. 27th. One Whistling Swan, apparently uninjured, summered at Oak Orchard (Folker). A Green-winged Teal was reported in mid-summer at Rose's Marsh (Leubner), and a Lesser Scaup was seen at Shore Acres on July 13th (McNetts). Practically all the surface feeding ducks returned early this fall. Most of these records are from Montezuma marshes in late August. A Canvasback on Seneca Lake, Sept. 1st was likewise very early (Dolan-O'Hara).

Hawks — Owls:

Scattered reports have been received of non-resident hawks and allied species since late August, mostly from the areas adjoining Lake Ontario. These species include Duck Hawk, Pigeon Hawk, Osprey and Broad-winged Hawk. However again this year we were unable to find any evidence of a regular hawk flight through this area in the fall.

A Ruffed Grouse which had evidently strayed from its normal habitat was flushed from the small swamp at Stutson St. Bridge on Sept. 18 (Van Beurden).

Golden Plovers in numbers up to 22 were reported several times in contrast to last fall when only one was seen. Black-bellied Plovers were fairly numerous but no record of Piping Plover was obtained.

At times Ling Road was an excellent shore bird spot. Most numerous species were usually Yellow-legs, Killdeer and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, but a great variety of other species were also present.

Hudsonian Curlew was reported once or twice while Knots, Dowitchers, Stilt and Baird's Sandpipers were fairly common. Both Yellow-legs, Solitary and Least Sandpiper were all back by late June, well ahead of previous early fall dates.

Many reports were received of Forester's Tern which was first recorded in this area last fall. One or two birds were reported almost regularly in late August and September.

The Barn Owl at Weidner Road was regularly seen all summer but whether or not it nested is not known.

The Kingbird