

STORMS AND UNUSUAL VISITORS IN LAKE CHAMPLAIN AREA

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The coincidence of unusual migrants and severe wind storms has often been observed (Kingbird vol. 1, No. 2). Lake Champlain situated as it is between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Coast provides, no doubt, an alternate route for migrants meeting adverse weather conditions in the east. Storms to the east of Lake Champlain produce a wide variety of visitors but storms from the west bring only the normal species. From September through December these storms appear to drive many species into the Lake Champlain area and if these birds should continue their southern migration probably they would follow Lake George and the Hudson River back to the Atlantic Coast. Records kept for a six year period, 1948-1953, are summarized below.

On Oct. 28-29, 1948 a severe storm in the Gaspé Region of the Gulf of St. Lawrence brought large flocks of Oldsquaws down the Richelieu River into Lake Champlain. This species, though seen on the Lake every year, is not common.

On Nov. 23-24, 1949 severe storms centered in the same area produced numerous Greater Snow Geese on Lake Champlain. Small flocks of thirty to fifty and larger flocks from 100 to 200 were observed for several days. Their normal flight route is down the Atlantic Coast.

On Nov. 25, 1950 a hurricane moved into the area from the east and on Dec. 10 and 11 Brunnick's Murres and Dovekies were observed. Reports from Redpath Museum at McGill University, Montreal, P. Q., stated that both species were very numerous in the St. Lawrence at Montreal. It is also interesting to note that many Snowy Owls were recorded during this same period.

During 1951 no unusual species were noted.

In 1952 the heaviest storms occurred on December 10 and 11, and on the thirteenth Dovekies, Brunnick's Murres and Parasitic Jaegers were observed in the Lake Champlain area.

Already in 1953 several storms have moved into this area. On September 4-6 a great storm moved in from the Atlantic and drove migrants off course down into the Lake Champlain region. On September 7 the Florida Gallinule, Wilson's Phalarope and numerous Common Terns were seen.

There is reason to believe that other species affected by these storms, and equally foreign to the area, have passed through undetected for lack of interested observers.

The importance of Lake Champlain as an alternate route for migrants during these storms must not be overlooked. What is needed are trained observers at strategic points along the Lake. When this is accomplished we can expect a wealth of interesting records to support or disprove this idea.

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