

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON AUGUST 16 — NOVEMBER 30, 1958

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Most of my birding is confined to the spring season, when I teach a class in ornithology. But I have enjoyed many hours of vicarious birding at all of the best birding spots in the state, while preparing the quarterly reports for publication. In general, it was a reasonably normal fall — a little wet, a little cool, but in most ways fairly normal. As for the birds, there were bright spots and dark spots. Among the bright spots, a spectacular gull concentration was reported from the Niagara Gorge in Region 1. Almost every reporter noted unusually good seed and fruit crops, which may augur well for winter survival, after the poor crops and heavy snows of last year. In a less cheerful vein, diving ducks were almost uniformly low, some reporters indicating a serious decline according to presently available figures. The

fall numbers of herons and egrets seemed very low, with relatively few of even the most common post-nuptial wanderers. Six of the ten regions reported a decline or complete absence of the Carolina Wren, which has been appearing in more northerly areas each year. Bluebirds, which were remarkably hard to find last spring, seemed to have had a good summer, but numbers are still well below normal, according to migration reports.

As usual, rarities turned up here and there. Among those which perhaps merit mention here are: King Rail and Yellow-throated Warbler in Region 3; Little Gull, Purple Sandpiper, and Marbled Godwit from Region 5; Raven and Little Blue Heron in Region 8; Wood Ibis and Purple Gallinule from Region 9; Dickcissel in both Region 9 and Region 10; and on Long Island, such things as the second eastern record for the Sage Thrasher, several Western Kingbird reports, Yellow Rail, Curlew Sandpiper and Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Winter birds are thus far rather scanty. Most regions reported large numbers of Pine Siskins, and White-winged Crossbills were reported often enough to give some hope that this may be a good winter to see this usually scarce species. At present it has not become obvious what kind of a winter bird season we are going to have, but the Christmas censuses will soon be giving us a clue.