

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

The summer period was uniformly hot and dry, the latter condition adding to the moderate spring precipitation deficit and the former accelerating water loss from already low marshes and ponds.

Explorations of local areas for breeding birds continued apace. Trips were taken to the Tug Hill Plateau June 7 and July 3 and 5 to Quaker Hill (elev. 1800 ft.) near Hamilton June 14 and July 5 to Rome Sand Plains June 21, and to Highland Forest July 19. Abundant distributional data accrued from these trips, particularly on breeding warblers.

Features of this summer included very late spring migrants such as Black-bellied and Semipalmated Plovers at Sandy Pond June 15 and single Black-poll'd Warbler and Ruby-crowned Kinglet and two Pine Siskins still present in the Tug Hill country June 7. Of equal migratory interest were very early southbound Bobolinks, Kingbirds, and Yellow Warblers, and enormous swallow flights. Migrant shorebirds arrived on time and in better than usual numbers.

Over three-quarters of the regional observers indicated that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Phoebes, Hermit Thrushes, and House Wrens were regretfully low, the last perhaps at an all-time low; a small but encouraging increase in Bluebirds was apparent. About half of the birders noted decreases in Tree Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, Veery, and Warbling Vireo.

Rarities for the period include Red Crossbill, Yellow-throated Warbler, and a breeding King Rail.

Loons — Ducks: Great Blue Heron: wandering immatures appeared near Skaneateles Jun 19 and groups of eight to ten were noted at Onondaga Lake in early August. Common Egret: numerous scattered reports around Port Byron and Weedsport; one on Jul 11 at Three Rivers Game Management Area (TRGMA) and up to eight at Shackleton Point, Oneida Lake. Green Heron:: late July counts of 12-15 per small marsh with a three: two immature: adult ratio indicate a good nesting season. Least Bittern: one to four/day seen at the Sandy Pond marshes thru late July; they may be either more common this year and/or more conspicuous because of the early low water level there.

Breeding ducks — Mallard, Black Duck, and Blue-winged Teal enjoyed an excellent season with the last achieving a record count on the local brood censuses but some of the late Blue-winged Teal broods, especially those in smaller marshes, were stranded without water by late July and were forced to move to adjacent available ponds. Gadwall, Pintail, and Shoveler: two, 14, and four nestings respectively observed at Howland's Island Game Management Area (HIGMA) this summer; a male Gadwall was seen intermittently thru the summer at Sandy Pond (e.g. in eclipse plumage Jun 11) and may have been the drake of the pair present in late May on Mexico Bay. Green-winged Teal: broods of four, Jul 7, and nine, Jul 11, noted at Steven's Pond near Phoenix, the second consecutive year they have bred there; three drakes and two ducks of this species also summered there. Wood Duck: brood counts approximately as good as last year; first flocking noted is an evening flight of 65, Aug 11, at Steven's Pond.

Summering ducks — American Widgeon: single males at Steven's Pond and HIGMA stayed until Jul 7 and Jul 19 respectively. Summering diving ducks were very scarce on Lake Ontario and the honor of this group was maintained only by individual Lesser Scaup at HIGMA Jun 15 and Sandy Pond Aug 8. Redheads at Beaver Lake, HIGMA, and TRGMA are presumed to be locally released stock.

Migrant ducks — Pintail and Green-winged Teal: first arrivals were 16 and one respectively at Sandy Pond Jul 26. Hooded Merganser: two immatures capable

of strong sustained flight, Jul 26, on a small wildlife marsh north of Mexico could be local products but were more likely very early migrants along with the above dabblers.

Hawks — Owls: Sharp-shinned Hawk: a male carrying prey at Gully Road near Skaneateles Jun 28 and food-calling young there Jul 27 (Spofford) suggest a breeding of this locally very scarce accipiter. Broad-winged Hawk: two noted Jun 7 in the Tug Hill country and one Jun 14 over Quaker Hill, Hamilton (Whites) suggest local breeders. No Marsh Hawks bred at Sandy Pond this summer.

Ruffed Grouse: very scarce in the Tug Hill Plateau this season and a brood of five Jul 5 at Quaker Hill, Hamilton, was the only brood recorded.

There was a frank profusion of rail records, especially Virginia Rail, this season, probably due to the early and unusually rapid drying-up of local marshes, a condition which permitted food concentration for the rails and ease of observation for birders. King Rail: an adult with seven downy young seen at the King (no relation) Marsh, North Syracuse Jul 25 (Rusk) to Aug 6 (numerous observers) is a first recent local breeding record; the late date suggests a renesting or a second brood as fully fledged Sora and Virginia Rails were noted two weeks earlier near Cicero. Virginia Rail: four seen and heard at three grassy beaver meadows Jul 3 at Tug Hill Plateau were the first observed there. American Coot: adults with downy young Jul 11 at Sandy Pond is proof of previously only suspected breeding there.

Upland Plover: of interest are reports of a single bird in mid-June near Pompey (Propst) and of two adults and a young bird Jul 19 near Fabius as they had been unreported from the hill country for the past five years.

Migrant shorebirds arrived early and in good numbers this summer. Water levels at Lake Ontario, Oneida Lake, Onondaga Lake, and Delta Lake were low, producing excellent mud flats early in the season. Unfortunately the better areas at Oneida Lake (Sylvan and Verona Beaches) and along Lake Ontario (Sandy Pond) were plagued with a wealth of people relief from the heat with consequent lower counts of shorebirds, gulls, and terns. For any shorebird, even such a placid one as a Semipalmated Plover, to seek food and rest amongst the people, dogs, airplanes, and beer cans of a Sandy Pond July Sunday afternoon would approach sheer avian heroism or stupidity. Fortunately for birders smelly Onondaga Lake and more remote beaches along Lake Ontario were available. Counts of Pectoral and Spotted Sandpipers were high thru July, and a marked rise in almost all species occurred in the first two weeks of August. The tabulation below gives arrival dates and maxima (to Aug 15) of the migrant shorebirds. Semipalmated Plover: Jul 11 (early); max. 108, Aug 15. Black-bellied Plover: Aug 8; max. 14, Aug 15. Ruddy Turnstone: Jul 31; max. 22, Aug 15. Common Snipe: Jul 7; 12 on Jul 26 and Aug 8, 20 on Aug 15. Solitary Sandpiper: Jul 7; max. 12, Jul 26. Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs: Jul 18 and 9 respectively; max. six and 46 respectively. Pectoral Sandpiper: Jul 13; max 25, Jul 26. Least Sandpiper: Jul 10; max. 99. Dowitcher: Jul 11; max four (very scarce). Semipalmated Sandpiper: Jul 11; max. 450, Aug 15. Sanderling: Jul 26 (late); max. 16 (low). Knot and Baird's Sandpiper: one each, Aug 8, Sandy Pond Inlet were the only reports to end of the period. Stilt Sandpiper: first noted Jul 27; between then and Aug 15, 31 (exceptionally high) noted in nine observations, mostly along Onondaga Lake.

Great Black-backed Gull: an immature Aug 15 at Sandy Pond Inlet is, either an early fall migrant or a tardy summer bird as most of these birds, including immatures, leave by Jul 10. Forster's Tern: a winter plumaged bird seen Jul 26, Sandy Pond Inlet, was rather early. Common Tern: only five young at Sandy Pond in early July; the colony there is essentially gone; the Oneida Lake colonies appeared to have had as good a season as last year. Caspian Tern: up to ten in first two weeks of August along Onondaga Lake, a place where one is unusual. Black Tern: two colonies of three and six pairs respectively northwest of North Syracuse.

Barred Owl: four vigorously hooting birds Jul 3 Tug Hill Plateau are the first reported, though not unexpectedly, there.

Goatsuckers— Shrikes: Ruby-throated Hummingbird: very scarce throughout the summer; some almost daily observers went over a month without seeing one. Red-headed Woodpecker: two pair each located at Oneida, Utica, Skaneateles, and Texas; one noted Jul 4 at Highmarket (Ackley, Carter, Rusk) was a new addition to the growing Tug Hill Plateau score. Sapsucker: a pair with three young noted

at Tully thru July (Estoff, Propst); a count of 30 plus seen in six hours in the Tug Hill Plateau Jul 3 belies an earlier statement of "general scarcity" of woodpeckers there made two years ago by this editor.

Kingbird: marked increase noted by most observers this summer; estimates of increase ran up to two times the customary counts; flights of 25 and 65 Aug 8 and 5 respectively noted along the Sandy Pond dunes. Phoebe: easily as scarce as the Kingbird was common; not one seen or heard about the camps and bridges of the Tug Hill country where two years ago they were regularly noted. Least Flycatcher: numbers appeared low for the third straight year, most obvious at Camillus, Shackleton Point on Oneida Lake, and Oneida, places where spraying is not done. Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided Flycatchers: maxima of two and five respectively noted in the Tug Hill area; their presence there Jul 3 almost certainly indicated local breeding.

All swallows appeared to have a markedly successful breeding season with noteworthy rises in Barn and Bank Swallows and Purple Martins. Tree Swallow: almost 500 banded at Shackleton Point this season. Bank and Barn Swallow: great flights noted at Sandy Pond Inlet on Aug 2 (2000 plus and 6000 plus respectively) and again on Aug 8 (10,000 plus and 20,000 plus respectively); a swallow roost at Clay Swamp Aug 3 was estimated to contain 18,000 Barn and 3,000 Bank Swallows, certainly the largest local roost known. Rough-winged Swallow: 35/hour noted migrating Jul 26 at Sandy Pond Inlet when the local Barn, Tree, and Bank Swallows, though flocking, were not migrating. Cliff Swallow: Mrs. Aspinwall located six colonies of this species, the largest with 32 nests, on barns north of Delta Lake; she considered it a productive year for them and a count of 80 Jul 29 (Brockner) in that area supports that view; a small colony was located at Highmarket in the Tug Hill country Jul 4 (Ackley et al).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: last migrant noted Jun 5 (very late) at Syracuse; also found at Seven Mile Creek and Michigan Mills in the Tug Hill country where it probably breeds; Mrs. Aspinwall also noted one in mid-July in the Rome Sand Plains and questions whether it might breed there. Winter Wren: a count of 18, Jul 3, in the Tug Hill area is well above previous tallies (less than ten per day) there. Carolina Wren: a pair Jul 18 at Camillus Valley are almost certainly breeding birds. Short-billed Marsh Wren: singing birds located at four different areas between Syracuse, Bridgeport, and Brewerton, a distinctive change from last year's total absence of same. Robin: flocks of 80-100 noted in the first week of August (early) at Syracuse and Baldwinsville. Hermit Thrush: a count of six, Jun 21, Rome Sand Plains is in striking contrast to 40 plus there three years ago; they were similarly reduced in the Tug Hill country where the Hermit: Swainson's: Veery ratio was 12:35:40 as against previous equal proportions.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: one, Aug 8, migrating with a small group of Yellow Warblers along the Sandy Pond dunes might indicate a breeding station to the north of that place. Loggerhead Shrike: a pair with young located Jul 26 near Sandy Pond; also single birds noted near Altmar and on the Sandy Pond flats, the latter a strange place for a shrike.

Vireos — Warblers: Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos: the suspected increase noted in the spring report was not sustained and both were quite scarce, even at such favored sectors as Camillus, HIGMA, and Oneida. Solitary (Blue-headed) Vireo: maximum of six noted Jun 7 in the Tug Hill Plateau region; one also noted Jul 5 in dry deciduous woods and conifer plantations at Quaker Hill near Hamilton.

For convenience, warblers will be discussed in three parts — Tug Hill warblers; other breeding warblers; and strays and migrants.

The Tug Hill Plateau area produced its expected bonanza of breeding warblers. Counts of singing males over eight miles of logging road Jun 7 showed 20 Black and White, four Nashville (strictly confined to bogs), two Parula, 40 Magnolia, 73 Black-throated Blue, 15 Myrtle, 49 Black-throated Green, 58 Black-burnian, 98 Chestnut-sided, 41 Ovenbird, 15 Northern Waterthrush, 32 Mourning, 48 Yellowthroat, 23 Canada, and 82 Redstart (Paquette, Wayland-Smith, Jones, Scheider); the counts of Black-throated Green and Northern Waterthrush seemed somewhat lower, that of Mourning distinctly higher. Similar counts over lesser distances in early July showed approximately the same numbers but both Mourning and Black-throated Blue Warblers seemed to be in greater abundance, e.g., six female Mourning

Warblers carrying food out of a total of 30 of this species seen. Two broods of Myrtle Warblers were noted there on Jul 3. Of interest is the complete absence of both Nashville and Parula Warblers from the Michigan Mills area Jul 5, a more deciduous, less boggy section of the Tug Hill country (Ackley et al).

Other breeding warblers — Prothonotary Warbler: summer reports indicate two successful nestings at Short Point Bay, Oneida Lake (Evans, Rusk). Golden-winged Warbler: one new site located near Skaneateles; very early song cessation was the rule with this species, and low counts at Camillus and HIGMA are more likely due to that than to an actual population decrease; no Brewster's or Blue-winged Warblers were reported during the summer. Cerulean Warbler: successful broods noted at Camillus and HIGMA Jul 18. Pine Warbler: one, Jun 21, in the Rome Sand Plains and a pair with four young at Selkirk Shores State Park were the only summer records; the conifer plantations at Quaker Hill and Highland Forest will probably not see this species for at least another 25 to 30 years. On Jul 19 the mixed spruce-fir plantations at Highland Forest held Nashville, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers in the ratios of 15 to 25 to 35, the Nashvilles were found about the perimeters of the plantations along with Chestnut-sided Warblers and Yellow-throats; the Magnolia Warblers were in the young bushy spruces and the Black-throated Green in the oldest (25 plus years) pines and spruces. In the Quaker Hill area near Hamilton, Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers were almost conifer plantation equals — 30 vs. 35. Myrtle Warbler: two singing males found Jun 14 in the Quaker Hill area (Whites); also found Jul 19 at Highland Forest but none recorded from the Rome Sand Plains where they were previously regularly noted. Black-throated Green Warbler: now breeding in a White Pine — Red Pine plantation (25 plus years old) at TRGMA, a site previously known to be unoccupied; it will be interesting to see what other species utilize this rather isolated plantation as the trees grow taller. Yellow-throat: rare as agreement is, almost all observers commented on increased or better than average numbers of this brush warbler. Hooded Warbler: three singing males in a brushy maple woods near Marcellus (Spofford) is either old occupancy discovered or spread from proximate nestings (two-five miles); a male seen regularly bathing at a woodland spring near Oneida thru June and July (Thurber) might indicate a nearby breeding pair. Redstart: the decreased numbers noted at Camillus, Highland Forest, and Rome were probably local changes only as the usual numbers were seen at Oneida and around Pulaski.

Strays and migrants — Yellow-throated Warbler: the singing male found at Selkirk Shores State Park on May 31 was present and persistently singing to Jun 15 (Seaman et al). Arrival dates for fall warblers are Tennessee — Aug 15, Yellow-Jul 11, Black-throated Green — Aug 15, Ovenbird and Northern Waterthrush — Aug 8. Late July and early August counts of migrant Yellow Warblers went to the 100 plus mark in an hour or less along the Sandy Pond dunes.

Blackbirds — Sparrows: Bobolink: excellent numbers along the Lake Ontario Plain, slightly scarcer east of Oneida Lake and south of Syracuse; first migrants noted Jul 11 (early) on the Sandy Pond dunes. Redwing, Grackle, and Cowbird: reports indicate an outrageously successful nesting season for these three species, all of which have reached the nuisance level; impressive roosts counts (30,000 plus) noted by late June and 80,000 plus estimated Aug 3 at the Clay Swamp roost.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: noted in numbers, i.e. over ten per day, only in the Tug Hill sector and around Camillus. Indigo Bunting: appeared to enjoy an excellent nesting season, particularly in the Rome Sand Plains, Highland Forest, and around Pulaski. Red Crossbill: a single male picking up grit from the roadside Jul 19, Selkirk shores State Park (Evans), is certainly a most abnormal date and place.

Counts on Tug Hill fringillids included 24 Purple Finch Jun 9 (average), 250 White-throated Sparrows Jul 3 (high), and 12 Slate-colored Junco Jul 3 (quite low); in this regard, it is of interest to note 12 Junco at Quaker Hill Jul 5 and ten at Highland Forest Jul 19 but no White-throated Sparrows in either locality.

The current dry season seemed only to insure nesting success of the local sparrows. Aside from some Cowbird parasitism amongst Song and Chipping Sparrows, the local Swamp, Song, Savannah, Chipping, and Field Sparrows appeared to have an abundance of bob-tailed, food-begging young; most pleasant were the opportunities to study changing plumages of juvenile and immature sparrows in TRGMA where the young of eight species of sparrows were located within 200 yards of each

other. Henslow's Sparrow alone appeared to be slightly decreased but this, if true (assessing the actual population of this secretive species would be a summer-long job), would be because of previous seasonal factors and could be explained by the early cessation of song secondary to the protracted hot, dry weather, making it difficult to locate breeding sites.

Corrigenda: Vol IX, #2, page 91 should read — Golden crowned Kinglet: arrival date Apr 1, maxima 70/hour Apr 10; departure date May 6. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arrival date Apr 4 (early) maxima 60/#hour Apr 18; departure date May 17.

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REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

FRANK A. CLINCH

The summer of 1959 was a little warmer than the average, and the rainfall in most places was more than is usual at this season. In general the results of the nesting season seemed to be good, but there is little of the unusual to report.

Loons — Ducks: No Common Egrets were reported this summer. An adult Gadwall was seen at the Wilson Hill Game Management Area in St. Lawrence County Jul 20. At this place there were one brood of Pintails and four broods of Shovelers (Wilson). These are new breeding records for this region. Green-winged Teal were also found to be nesting. Redheads were at Perch River Game Management Area in early June, but then they were not seen for some time. However, they did appear again in August. The results of the breeding season for ducks seem to be fairly good to good.

Hawks — Owls: A Golden Eagle was seen in St. Lawrence County in early June (Allen). Among the birds reported by Fritz Scheider at El Dorado Beach on Aug 2, 8, and 15 are: Killdeer, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Snipe, Spotted Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dowitcher (one), Least Sandpiper and Sanderlings. He also saw one Western Sandpiper Aug 2, and on Aug 15 12 Black-bellied Plovers and a Northern Phalarope. Some observers saw about the usual number of Upland Plovers, while others think there was a slight increase. The cuckoos were seen more often this summer. Most of them were Black-billed.

Woodpeckers — Sparrows: Young Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen at two nests, one early and the other late and several miles away. Around Watertown there were good numbers of Bank Swallows and many seemed to have raised young. Little damage was done to their nests by water or man removing the sand. At one place there were the usual numbers of Barn Swallows, but they raised fewer young. There were few Bluebirds.

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SECTION 7 — ADIRONDACK - CHAMPLAIN

THOMAS LESPERANCE

I am very glad to be back in the North Country again after my visit to Florida, and I want to thank Miss Agnes Amstutz for the very capable job she did as regional editor during my absence.

The almost yearly complaint of summer drought and hot humid days would hold especially true for this season, and the water level of Lake Champlain has been definitely affected. For the second year in a row nesting birds seemed to be relatively scarce in the Keeseville area, but such was not the case in the Tupper Lake region.

Loons — Owls: A large colony of Great Blue Herons was noted along a portion of the western edge of Valcour Island in Lake Champlain, and a Common Egret was noted at the mouth of the Ausable River. The American Bittern and Green Heron seemed to be in usual numbers. The Blue-winged Teal enjoyed nesting success at