

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

RICHARD C. ROSCHE

Continuing the recent trend of late seasons, autumn 1961 was no exception. Average temperatures throughout the period were above normal and, except for the last half of August, precipitation was below normal. In many ways September was more summerlike than either July or August. While no heat records were broken, local statistics show only one previous September that was warmer (1881). Side effects from the remnants of Hurricane Carla produced the most severe weather conditions of the month on the 13th and 14th — gale winds and 2.17 inches of rain. There was scattered light frost in rural areas on the 17th, 29th and 30th and sunshine was 10% above normal. October was warmer and more sunny than usual. The first wet snow fell in some areas on the 14th and 15th and heavy frost occurred on the 22nd and 23rd. November, likewise, was a pleasant month, particularly during the weekends. An 80 degree temperature reading on the 3rd set a new record for the day, for the month, and for so late in the season. The first appreciable amount of snow — some five to seven inches in parts of the Southern Tier — fell on the 8th and 9th. This was followed by minimum temperatures as cold as any reported in the nation on the 10th. The end of the month saw little snow cover anywhere in the region and all water areas were ice free.

Toward the end of the period water levels in Lake Erie and the Niagara River were at an all time low. Newspaper reports stated that the level of the river in gorge below Niagara Falls was from six to eight feet lower than usual for that time of the year. Whether or not this condition had an effect on the bird life of this area is, of course, problematical. However, local field men speculated that this condition or related ones contributed to: 1) one of the poorest shorebird seasons, both as to numbers and species, in several years at the western end of Lake Erie; 2) a poor November gull flight on the Niagara River with numbers much reduced over those of the past several years and reports of the usual autumn rarities such as Forster's Tern, Little Gull, Franklin's Gull and jaegers much fewer as compared with recent years; and 3) generally poor waterbirding.

The generally static weather conditions prevailing through most of the period produced fewer and less pronounced "waves" of passerines than in the average year. Comments by a number of field observers indicate that, in many cases, the "waves" that did occur were, more or less, local. Transient warblers and other small passerines first appeared in moderate numbers Aug 19-27. However, this movement was confined for the most part to areas near the south shore of Lake Erie. At Niagara Falls, Heilborn reported the first migration of a few warblers Sep 4. Minor cold fronts passing through on Sep 12 and 15 caused "extremely large warbler waves" on the south shore of Lake Erie. Able estimated about 500 warblers in this area Sep 12 and 800-1000 Sep 15. Eaton reported a fair warbler flight Sep 20 in the Olean area. An oscillating cold front Sep 24-25 brought in what many called the most pronounced "wave" of the season. While this movement was more widespread than most others, observers in some areas on Sep 24 found relatively few small landbirds. Sep 27-29, Oct 2-4, and Oct 14-15 were other periods during which typical seasonal transients were especially abundant.

Highlights of the season included: 1) an unusually early Evening Grosbeak flight; 2) a good November Pine Grosbeak flight; 3) an extensive October-early November chickadee movement; and 4) a number of species that lingered in the region much later than usual, probably as a result of the mild season. Rarities included: King Rail, Purple Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Northern Phalarope, Wilson's Phalarope, Boreal Chickadee, and Bohemian Waxwing.

Abbreviations used below are as follows: BISP—Buckhorn Island State Park; Bos—Buffalo Ornithological Society; JAS—Jamestown Audubon Society; OOGMA—Oak Orchard Game Management Area.

Loons — Ducks: A single Red-throated Loon Nov 14 on Lake Erie near Hamburg was the only report (Bourne). The two Horned Grebes noted in the previous report remained in the gorge at Niagara Falls until at least Sep 30 (Able). At the same locality an Eared Grebe was reported Sep 30 (Able). Other reports of this species came from Lake Erie near Hamburg — single birds Oct 16 and 26 (Bourne). Single Double-crested Cormorants were observed Sep 28 off Woodlawn (Bourne), Oct 1 in the Niagara River at Buffalo (Able) and Oct 21 in the Lewiston-Youngstown area (Klabundes). The Common Egret was not reported during the period, making this

about the poorest flight year since 1958. Unlike a year ago when only one was reported during this report period in the entire region, a maximum of 12 Black-crowned Night Herons was counted Sep 3 in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo (Brockner). According to published records, this appears to be the highest count since 1956. Additional birds were observed Aug 25 over Hamburg (Able) and Aug 28 near Jamestown (Swanson et al). Again, of special interest was the Whistling Swan that remained on a small pond at Mayville through the summer (noted in previous report as "near north end of Chautauqua Lake"). This bird, an adult with conspicuous yellow lores, remained there until at least Oct 28 when it was seen by a number of JAS and BOS members. It showed no evidence of injury at any time (Pillsbury et al). November concentrations of Whistling Swans on Chautauqua Lake were especially noteworthy: 200 on Nov 4 (Swanson), 300 on Nov 6 (Hiller), 113 on Nov 7 (Pillsbury), 17 on Nov 25 (Rew et al). Three other observations — 50 on Lake Erie near Hamburg Nov 5 (Bourne), 26 flying south-southeast over Vandalia Nov 5 (Eaton), and 150 over Jamestown Nov 8 (Beal) — complete the story of a much better than average fall flight through the region. The Canada Goose flight, commencing somewhat earlier than usual in mid September, was slightly better than average. Results of the BOS October Bird Count on Oct 15 show the third highest count in 26 years. An interesting report of an irregular fall transient was the observation of 42 Snow Geese Nov 4 on Chautauqua Lake (Swanson). Although usually reported in some numbers from the south shore of Lake Ontario during autumn, a single Brant Nov 12 on Lake Erie at Barcelona (Swanson) was the only report this year. Dabbling ducks, especially Mallards, Blacks and American Widgeon continued their recent five year decline as shown by the BOS Bird Count results. Two Gadwall occurred Oct 12-22 at BISP (Coggeshall et al) and two male Shovelers were noted Nov 7 at OOGMA (Schaffner et al). The Wood Duck continues to thrive well in this region as reflected by maximum counts of 125 Sep 3 in the North Java region (Rosche) and 60 Sep 23 at BISP (Heilborns). Redheads, Canvasbacks, and Ruddy Ducks showed little noticeable population change over last year during the peak of the fall flight. Maximum counts for these three species in the region all came from Chautauqua Lake as follows: Redhead — 60 on Nov 21 (Pillsbury) and 27 on Nov 25 (Red et al); Canvasback — 17 on Nov 11 (Rew et al); Ruddy Duck — 25 on Nov 9 (Pillsbury) and 26 on Nov 11 (Rew et al). A maximum count of 44 Ring-necked Ducks Nov 11 on Chautauqua Lake is interesting because this species has usually been thought to be uncommon here during autumn (Rew et al). A single Oldsquaw was reported from the gorge at Niagara Falls Aug 23 (Schaffner et al). Somewhat earlier than usual were two Surf Scoters Sep 28 on Lake Erie near Hamburg (Able).

Hawks — Owls: Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks continue to show definite evidences of a general decrease in populations. Even during the peak of migration in October there were far fewer reports this year than in past years. Single Goshawks were observed Oct 15 near the small hamlet of Oak Orchard (Seeber) and Nov 25 at Derby (Braunberns et al). A movement of Red-tailed Hawks was apparent Nov 11 on the Lake Ontario Plain when 17 were counted (Ulrich et al). The only Broad-winged Hawk reported was one Sep 17 at Derby (Brockner). Rough-legged Hawks appeared in some numbers earlier than usual. Seven were noted on the Oct 15 Bird Count. Early November saw a good movement on the Lake Ontario Plain with 18 counted on Nov 7 (Schaffner et al) and 36 Nov 11 (Ulrichs et al). Southern tier records of Rough-legs are always noteworthy because few individuals apparently penetrate the hilly sections of the region. One was noted Oct 28 over Cassadaga Lake (Rew et al) and another occurred Nov 9 over Jamestown (Beal). A single Bald Eagle, an immature, was observed Aug 27 near Barcelona (Swanson et al). Like last year, Ospreys were notably less numerous than in previous years. In fact, there were even fewer reports than last year. One was observed at Springbrook Oct 11 (Danner) and two were seen in the Jamestown region Oct 15 (JAS). A Pigeon Hawk was reported Sep 2 from Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo (Freitag et al) and another was observed Oct 15 at Grand Island (Ulrich). An unusually late Pigeon Hawk was observed Nov 13 near Hamburg (Bourne). The Peregrine Falcon, a rare bird here in recent years, was observed Oct 1 at Niagara Falls (Dorst), Oct 15 in the Lancaster area (Wendlings et al) and Oct 22 over Attica Center (Rosche). Thirteen Bobwhite were observed Oct 15 in the Batavia area where they have occurred regularly for the past two years (rep. Pixley). Steve Eaton reported that Turkeys seem to be still expanding their ranges and appear to have had a fair reproductive season. He observed three adult males feeding on white ash seeds Oct

24 near Vandalia. Less than 20 Turkeys were taken during the five day open season in Allegany State Park. A King Rail, rare at any season but especially in autumn was first noted Oct 15 in a small marsh bordering Johnson Creek Road, town of Hartland, Niagara County (Lehrer). It appeared to be injured and was last noted Nov 12 (Able). Small number of American Coot were reported from several localities during October but the flight was much less impressive than those of a few years ago. Maximum count of 250 occurred Nov 11 on Chautauqua Lake (Rew et al). Twelve Golden Plover were noted Aug 31 on mudflats bordering Tift Street in South Buffalo (Mitchell). 30 were observed on Oct 1 in the same locality (Able). A single bird was reported Sep 3 from Delaware Park Lake, Buffalo (Freitag). Like last year, reports from Grand Island, where they were so common on the extensive plowed fields only a few years ago, were lacking. Perhaps the outstanding shorebird rarity of the year was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper Aug 23-24 at Prendergast Point on the western shore of Chautauqua Lake (Pillsbury et al). It was observed under excellent conditions by a number of observers at distances as close as 15 feet. This appears to be the first record for the region since Sep 9-10, 1950 when one was observed at the same place (Lenna). Another rarity, a Purple Sandpiper, was noted Oct 26 on the south shore of Lake Erie at Athol Springs (Bourne). An unusually late Short-billed Dowitcher was studied under good conditions at the Tift Street flats Oct 1-2 (Able). With it on Oct 1 were two Long-billed Dowitchers, the details and comparisons as to relative bill lengths, differences in call notes and the conditions under which distinct vertical bars were noted on the sides of the breast, leave little doubt as to their identity (Able). A Wilson's Phalarope occurred Aug 28-Sep 2 at the Tift Street flats and was observed by many local observers under a variety of conditions (Able et al). And last, but by no means less significant than the foregoing rarities among the shorebirds of the region, were two Northern Phalaropes — one Aug 18-20 at Jamestown (Beal et al) and another Oct 6 and 8 at the Tift Street flats (Able et al). An excellent Kodachrome slide of the Jamestown bird was taken by Dr. Lewis Kibler and it is now in the permanent files of the BOS. Two late Semipalmated Sandpipers were reported Oct 28 from Chautauqua Lake at Dewittville (Pillsbury et al). Single Jaegers were observed on Lake Erie Sep 20 at Athol Springs (Bourne) and Nov 19 at Sturgeon Point (Ulrichs et al). Jaegers, mostly Parasitics, have become increasingly more regular at the western end of Lake Erie in recent years. Glaucous, Iceland or Franklin's Gulls were not reported. A Little Gull, the only reported, was noted Sep 26 on Lake Erie near Hamburg (Bourne). Forster's Terns were reported by only one observer this year — five Sep 28 on Lake Erie near Hamburg and three Oct 1 on the Niagara River at Buffalo (Able). For the second consecutive year, an immature Common Tern remained on the Niagara River opposite Buffalo through the end of the period (Schaffner et al). There are few autumn records of Caspian Terns for the New York shore of Lake Erie. Hence, two at the Tift Street flats Sep 16 were of interest (Able). Three Barn Owls were observed Oct 15 in a woodlot in the Town of Hamburg where they nested in 1960 (Hartloff). Single Snowy Owls were observed Nov 23 and 26 at Buffalo (Freitag) and another occurred Nov 25 at Bear Lake (Rew et al). Several others were known to be in the metropolitan Buffalo area during November, but their abundance did not approach that of last year. Four Short-eared Owls were noted Nov 7 at Grand Island (Schaffner et al). Two occurred Nov 19 at Derby (Brockner) — a section of the Lake Erie Plain from which there are seldom any reports. A dead Saw-whet Owl was found Nov 5 in North Buffalo by a Junior Audubon Club member (rep. Webster). Another was observed Nov 18 near Westfield (Bohall et al).

Goatsuckers — Shrikes: Nesting Common Nighthawks were absent in Wells-ville this year (Madden). Maximum counts of migrating birds occurred Sep 1 when 21 were counted over North Buffalo (Brockner) and Oct 6 when 15 occurred at East Aura (Nelson). These counts are well below those reported in most years. Outside of the Batavia area where it occurs regularly, the Red-bellied Woodpecker is a rare bird in the region. On Nov 8 an adult appeared at a feeding station near Armour and remained in the vicinity through the end of the period (Bacon et al). Another was observed Nov 12 along the Johnson Creek Road, Town of Hartland, Niagara County (Able). Two Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported Oct 15 from the Southern Tier (BOS Count). An immature visited a feeding station Nov 24 at Hamburg (Avery). Unusually late stragglers were two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers

present through Nov 30 in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo (Freitag et al) and a single bird Nov 27-29 at Niagara Falls (Heilborn). Many observers commented on the large number of Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers moving through some parts of the region at the same time the chickadee movement was in progress. A number of Hairy Woodpeckers studied carefully with what appeared to be local resident birds close at hand for comparison were thought to be members of a larger-sized, more northern population. The bird roost at Jamestown, one of the largest presently known in the region, created much excitement among bird students again this year. About 75,000 Purple Martins were estimated there Aug 29 (Beal). A smaller martin roost, containing about 500 birds, was located in suburban North Buffalo Sep 9 (Mitchell). A Crow roost containing about 400 birds Nov 26 was found near Chestnut Ridge Park in central Erie County (Ulrichs et al). We need more information on roosts of this species and others throughout the region, especially in winter. Even persons who possess only a passing interest in birds noticed and commented upon the large scale Black-capped Chickadee invasion of the area. Commencing in late September, the movement appeared to reach its height during late October and early November. Although numbers seemed much reduced later in November, there were more than the usual number of chickadees throughout the region by month's end. During the peak of the flight chickadees were common birds along the streets of Buffalo. The following comments might give the reader a general idea of the extent of the flight: 1) Nov 3 — "Chickadees all over the Kensington area of Buffalo" (Freitag); 2) "Chickadees have been unusually plentiful all through October and November in Niagara Falls" (Heilborn); 3) Nov 5 — 500 estimated along the south shore of Lake Ontario in an aerial distance of about 12 miles (Nathan et al); 4) Oct 8, 22 and Nov 5 — Small flocks (8-15 birds) observed flying shortly after dawn in a southwesterly direction low over the ridges of the northern Allegheny Plateau in Wyoming County (Rosche). Outstanding were two observations of Boreal Chickadee on Nov 25 — one at Hamburg (Bourne) and another at Derby (Braunberns et al). These are the first reports for the region since winter 1954-55. At the same time chickadees were so prominent, a noticeable influx of Tufted Titmice occurred. There were several reports of one-several individuals in various areas not usually considered as regular localities for this species. Two were known to be visiting several feeding stations in late Nov in suburban Buffalo (Mitchell) and one-two visited a feeder during mid Nov in the city of Niagara Falls (Heilborn). A mild movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches began Aug 24-26 and reports for the remainder of the period indicate a fair sprinkling throughout the region through the end of the period. There was a small flight in the High Plateau sector of the Southern Tier (Eaton). Maximum counts of 15 and 18 occurred Sep 12 and 15 in the Hamburg area, coinciding with the previously discussed "warbler waves" in that area (Able). Continuing a regular trend in recent years, Mockingbirds appeared in several localities in Oct and Nov. None were reported between Jun 1 and Oct 14. On the latter date, a single individual was studied carefully in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo (Nathan et al). Another frequented a suburban-type neighborhood in Lewiston Oct 18-20, 29-31 and Nov 1 (Klabundes et al). Still another was reported Nov 29 near Lockport (Broadbent rep. Mitchell). Late Catbirds occurred Oct 28 at Jamestown (JAS) and Nov 11 at Woodlawn (Able). About 600 Robins were estimated at the Jamestown roost Aug 29 (Beal). For the second consecutive year reports of unusually late Veery observations were received and accompanied by satisfactory details of observation. One was observed Sep 27 at Elma (Coggeshall). Another was found dead Sep 23 in Delaware Park, Buffalo (Mitchell et al). If the numbers of Eastern Bluebirds observed during October is any indication of a population increase, than it would seem that this species made a giant step toward recovery of its normal populations this year. Sixty-seven individuals were counted Oct 15 on the Bird Count — by far the highest total since 1957. For the first year since about 1957, at least one was noted in early November — Nov 8 at Hamburg (Able). Four Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were noted Aug 23 at Hamburg (Able). There are usually few late summer reports on this side of Lake Erie. Water Pipits appeared to be scarce again — just as they were this past spring. Cedar Waxwings, on the other hand, were more common, especially during November, than in the average year. Flocks were frequently attracted to shrubs heavily laden with red fruits such as Flowering Crab and Winterberry. With two flocks of Cedars, came the real rarity of the year — two Bohemian Waxwings. One bird fed Nov 18 in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, with a flock of about 25 Cedars. Within several hours after it was found, it was studied by about eight active, local

observers (Thompson et al). A second bird was found Nov 28 at Lyndonville with a flock of about 150 Cedars (Smith). There will be more to say about the latter bird in the next report. These, in addition to a flock of 15 at Alfred on Feb 5, 1959 (Peakall), are the first, definite, well documented Bohemian Waxwings in the region since the 1880's. A fair flight of Northern Shrikes began in early November. Most reports, however, were confined to the Lake Plains. Single Loggerhead Shrikes occurred Aug 28 in South Buffalo (Schaffner) and Sep 1 near Hamburg (Bourne). With the large numbers of martins and blackbirds at the Jamestown roost Aug 29 were about 75,000 Starlings (Beal).

Vireos — Warblers: Late summer records of Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers are generally few, hence five Golden-wings Aug 24 at Hamburg (Able) and a Blue-winged Sep 7 near North Java (Rosche) were of interest. Unusually late warbler reports were as follows: Parula — one Oct 17 at BISP (Coggshall); Black-throated Blue — one Oct 23 and 27 at Hamburg (Able); Mourning — one Oct 1 at Dunkirk (Rew et al). The only Connecticut Warbler of the season occurred Oct 7 at Chestnut Ridge Park (Bourne).

Blackbirds — Sparrows: Aug 29 estimates of icterids at the Jamestown roost were: Red-winged Blackbird — 7,500; Common Grackle — 3,500; Brown-headed Cowbird — 3,500 (Beal). Somewhat indicative of the major early flight of Evening Grosbeaks to occur in October, was a report of two birds visiting a feeding station Sep 21-24 in suburban Buffalo (rep. Mitchell). During the second week of October, a minimum of two weeks earlier than the previous earliest flight, grosbeaks "invaded" many parts of the region as the following reports indicate: Oct 8 — 40 near Salamanca (Ramsdells); Oct 9 — four at Jamestown (Hiller); Oct 10 — one at Springbrook (Danner); Oct 12 — 25 at East Aurora (Schweikhards); Oct 14 — nine at Belmont (Baker) and 10 at Wethersfield Springs (Rosche); Oct 15 — about 144 reported on BOS Bird Count; Oct 16 — two in suburban Buffalo (Rosche). During November numbers decreased but flocks continued to frequent feeding stations daily through the end of the period. In the Olean area small flocks were frequently seen feeding in wild wooded areas where an abundant crop of white ash seed were still clinging to the trees (Eaton). Many observers thought that Purple Finches were more common than in the average year. Pine Grosbeaks were first reported Nov 1 when two were seen near Youngstown (Klabundes). After that a good flight, the first since winter 1957-58, continued through the end of the period. One was found dead Nov 3 on a city street in North Buffalo (rep. Webster). The earliest record for the southern tier was at Ten Mile Hollow near Vandalia Nov 12 (Eaton). In this area, Dr. Eaton observed this species also feeding on white ash seeds — the one good mast source of the woodlands this year (practically no beechnuts, acorns, wild black cherries, hemlock seeds or birch seeds). He also noted this grosbeak feeding more often on the ground than the Evening. Largest flocks reported of 18 and 24 occurred Nov 20 near Mayville (Bohall) and near Vandalia (Eaton). A few Common Redpolls were observed: 26 Nov 11 on the Ontario Plain (Ulrichs et al); 10 on Nov 12 near Varysburg (Rosche); eight on Nov 19 and two on Nov 26 at Niagara Falls (Heilborns); one on Nov 30 near Armour (Bourne). Unlike a year ago, the siskin-crossbill flight was very light. One to six siskins were observed on three occasions Nov 1-12 on the Ontario Plain. The first for the Vandalia region were noted Nov 5 and small flocks were seen here to the end of the period (Eaton). No Red Crossbills were reported. Three White-winged Crossbills occurred Nov 19 near Youngstown (Rew) and two were observed Nov 26 in Forest Lawn Cemetery Buffalo (Freitag).

Corrigenda: (Vol. 11, No. 3) — 1) p. 153 — Omitted from the printed copy was the second Common Egret report (one Jul 12 at Wolcottsville Sinks (Rosche); 2) p. 154 — The locality mentioned in connection with several shorebird reports should be Prendergast Point **not** Predergast; 3) p. 155 — Insert "and" between the words "young" and "adult" in connection with the Tufted Titmice that were noted at Lakewood, Chautauqua County.

48 Dartmouth Avenue, Buffalo 15.