

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

June 1 – August 15

ALLEN E. KEMNITZER

In most sections of the state the early part of the summer was wetter and cooler than usual. A tornado and several other less violent storms killed many nestlings in Region 1, and a spell of cold, windy, rainy weather in late June was thought to have ruined nestings in Region 5. Toward midsummer both precipitation and temperature approached more normal levels throughout much of the State.

The continuation of extensive breeding bird studies in several areas during the past summer contributed additional interesting and useful information about the often neglected nesting season in New York State.

Among the passerines, blackbirds continued to thrive in contrast with the smaller numbers of many other species reported. In particular, Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles appeared to be continuing their increase in numbers. A late Rusty Blackbird record provided the first June sighting of this species ever recorded from New York City.

Birds of prey numbers generally were down following the discouraging trend of recent years. The reported successful nesting of the Golden Eagle, location undisclosed, was cause for much rejoicing among Adirondack Mountain birders. Apparent good nesting success for the Sparrow Hawk was reported for the entire Finger Lakes Region. Of interest, too, were the breeding records of Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl, and Short-eared Owl in Region 1 where these three species are considered uncommon during the summer months. Near Orleans, a Saw-whet Owl was recorded Aug. 12.

With the disappearance or disturbance of more and more of their suitable habitat, marsh birds and all the herons were notable this summer only for their continued scarcity and small numbers. Post-season wanderings of egrets were mainly unnoticed or unreported.

The unpredictableness of the finch family was demonstrated once again by the numerous observations this summer of both Red Crossbills and White-winged Crossbills in several regions. Of special interest was the Jones Beach, July 26 record of 13 Red Crossbills landing on a jetty and flying out to sea. One regional editor mentioned the late cone crop in the north woods as a possible explanation for the number of crossbill reports. Some observers wondered whether this summer's crossbills were only the vanguard of much heavier fall and winter flights.

The shorebird migration was well underway by mid-July, but, because of the high water levels in upstate New York, shorebirding was fair to poor in many of the usually productive locations. In spite of this, a num-

ber of rarities were observed including Avocet, Piping Plover, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Willet, and Ruff.

Some of the other features of interest for the summer season were: (1) the first authentic breeding record of Myrtle Warblers for western New York, (2) the successful nesting of Brown Creepers behind a shutter at Geoffrey Carleton's home near Elizabethtown, (3) observations of Lawrence's Warblers and Kentucky Warblers, and (4) a Linnean Boat Trip off Jones Beach which recorded Greater Shearwaters, Wilson's Petrels, and Gannet.

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REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Report for period April 1-May 31.

The weather during the spring of 1969 saw a reversal of the usual pattern. April was considerably warmer and with somewhat more precipitation than average. The last five days were unusually mild. Most of May was cooler and wetter than average. A tornado caused considerable damage in the Chautauqua County village of Sinclairville on May 16.

General trends included: (1) a poor showing of herons, rails and other marsh birds, except in the Oak Orchard refuge complex, (2) low counts for most forms of waterfowl, (3) relatively small numbers of hawks moving on several days in April with a substantial flight on the 26th, (4) a poor showing of shorebirds, (5) a generally modest or poor showing by most passerine groups during April, excepting the warblers and blackbirds, (6) an excellent showing of warblers with thirteen species during April and thirty two species plus one hybrid during May, (7) continuing high numbers of icterids, except the always rare Orchard Oriole, (8) record or near-record counts of Cardinals, (9) a fine return flight of Evening Grosbeaks with a few other reports of northern finches, (10) excellent spring counts of several other fringillids including the Slate-colored Junco, Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow and Song Sparrow.

Noteworthy records include Ruff, Common Raven, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler (away from usual locality, Oak Orchard), Connecticut Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel, Oregon Junco and Harris' Sparrow.

Abbreviations: ABC—April Bird Count; Alleg Rd—Alleganny Road, Hanover Township, Chautauqua County; Bflo—Buffalo; BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; Chaut—Chautauqua; INWR—Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; MBC—May Bird Count; Nia—Niagara; OO—Oak Orchard; OOGMA—Oak Orchard Game Management Area; TGMA—Tonawanda Game Management Area.

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LOON—DUCKS: Common Loon: arr 4 Apr 11 Prendergast Pt (RAS, Penoyer); max 33 Apr 19 Cuba L (LDB). Red-throated Loon: only report—1 Apr 23 Pt