

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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June produced much rain, breeding bird censuses, and tardy warblers. July produced heat, early shorebirds, a lot of quiet molting birds and great days at the beach. August produced more beach days, sun tans, a few more shorebirds, and some few very early landbird migrants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird Censuses now dominate the summer numerical data and it behooves every editor to keep serial tallies of each intra-regional census for ready future reference and comparison. The local censor should plan to xerox copies of the tally sheets and mail them to the regional editor for annual review and summary.

Great Blue Herons and Green Herons appeared to have successful season (2, 3, 4, 7, 9,) and an influx of southern herons in 2 and 9 was voted. The high water of Hurricane Agnes June 1972 apparently strikingly reduced breeding populations of marsh birds (Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, rails, Black Tern, marsh wrens) across the inland marshes of upstate New York (3,5,8). Similarly high water along Lake Ontario inundated many marshes, virtually thru the duration of the breeding season, and local marsh birds may be now at a low ebb over most of the available habitat of upstate. However, the Mallard with its more catholic taste — it breeds in Northern Lights Traffic Circle in North Syracuse — continues to increase (3,5). Increased breeding Common Mergansers were noted in 4 and 9 but reduction in breeding numbers was noted in 7, the major in-state breeding area.

Accipiters continue their disastrous decline (2,3,4,5) and Red-shouldered Hawks are now regular as breeders only in the Adirondacks (5,7) and the Mohawk River Valley (8). Broad-winged Hawk sightings increased in 7 — question of more birds or more birders?

Upland Sandpiper were strikingly reduced as local breeders, perhaps secondary to the wet weather and cold of June (3,5,8); it would be interesting to know if they have also declined in the St. Lawrence Valley hayfield country where they are normally fairly common.

Both cuckoos increased markedly upstate (4,5,7,8) but the previous high tallies in 9 collapsed this summer. Common Nighthawk declined further with losses noted in 2,3,5 and 8 and Ruby-throated Hummingbird continued to do likewise (3,4,5,9); numbers of the latter appear stable in 7 and the Adirondack sectors of 8.

Virtually all species of swallows somewhere showed sharp, in some cases, major declines in breeding birds but some evidence of breeding recovery this season appears in 3 and 5. Rough-winged Swallows stand out as particularly depressed (2,3,5) — ?? June 1972 flooding??

Red-breasted Nuthatches are establishing outside the standard high country areas (3,4,5), and conifer plantations planted in the Depression

years (1933-39) should be checked for this species and also for the advancing Golden-crowned Kinglet (q.v. 3,5). Multiple Eastern Bluebird nestbox projects (3,5,9) showed fair utilization but the species still continues incredibly scarce and this virtually statewide. Cedar Waxwings, erratic at best, were increased in 4 and 5; no mention of their Adirondack numbers was made, however.

Loggerhead Shrikes decreased in 2 and were unreported as breeders in 5. Red-eyed Vireos continue to increase upstate (3,5,7) with some parallel increase in Yellow-throated Vireo (4,5) but Warbling Vireos have dropped dramatically (2,4,5,7) — ?? reason-loss of elms, migration disaster?? Numerous late warblers attest to the tardy spring (2,3,4,5) and the overall warbler numbers except for the Yellow Warbler and Yellowthroat were average or low. Both Myrtle and Black-throated Green Warblers were described as low in numbers in the Adirondacks (7) and the Black-throated Green seemed particularly low in breeding areas peripheral to that parulid bastion.

Cardinals continue to increase in 3 and to spread into unoccupied, though suitable, habitat in 5. A residue of winter finches (Evening Grosbeak — 2,5; Red Crossbill — 2,3, 5,7; Pine Siskin — 3,5,7) in June created speculation re possible extra-limital breeding but no documentation of such was obtained. Indigo Buntings, though arriving late — some not to mid-June, exploded upstate (3,4,5) and the Rufous-sided Towhee showed modest extension into the Adirondacks (5,7) where it is very scarce. House Finches expanded in 4,5 and 9 and appeared intermittently in 2. Vesper Sparrows (also Horned Lark) continue to decrease upstate rather closely paralleling the decline in bare-ground (row crop) agriculture. Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows similarly continue to decline (4,5), yet the abandoned grassy fields they require seem to be increasing, if only transiently, upstate; large tract censuses, perhaps whole townships, for these two species might be in order as their tendency to erratic colonization makes assessment of numbers especially difficult.

Rarities for the summer include Whimbrel (5,9), Marbled Godwit (2), Black-necked Stilt (2), Acadian Flycatcher (2,9), Common Raven (7), and Hooded Warbler (8). Unfortunately no summaries were available from Regions 1,6, and 10.

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