

REGION 10 – MARINE

HUGH D. MCGUINNESS

(Summer report received too late for publication in October.)

June and July offered auspicious conditions for local breeders for the first time in at least two years. The data collected tends to confirm a successful breeding season, although this may be misleading due to the dearth of reports. Noticeably absent were the results of an aerial survey of the major breeding bird colonies on Long Island.

The Captree June "Christmas" Count was successfully held for the third year in a row; the idea of holding a one-day count to ascertain a macroscopic picture of the status of various breeding birds has proven attractive to participants, and presents itself as a viable method of obtaining large amounts of breeding bird data. The alternative is the breeding bird census which has been so unpopular in the past that its spotty and uncorrelated data is meaningless in this respect. Once again, Connetquot River State Park, probably the only unspoiled tract of land left on Long Island, proved to be the superstar of the count—producing birds unknown as breeders elsewhere in the region. It is almost unfortunate that Connetquot offers the opportunity to look into the past, for it manifests the potential which once existed but has been destroyed by the human onslaught.

On the brighter side were a number of interesting reports concerning breeders like Great Horned Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Bluebird, Red Crossbill, Sharp-tailed and Seaside Sparrows, and a number of probable breeders including Black Rail, Chuck-will's-widow, Acadian Flycatcher, Hermit and Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-throated Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, and Summer Tanager. Rare birds included in this report are Magnificent Frigatebird, Skua, Sabine's Gull, and Sandwich Tern.

Abbreviations: CBC—Captree Breeding Census; CRSP—Connetquot River State Park; JBWR—Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.

Collaborator: Thomas H. Davis—editor NY Rare Bird Alert; dial 212-832-6523 for a taped message of unusual birds in the NY City area.

Sub-regional Compilers: Ralph Cioffi; Fran File; Lore J. Schore; Joe Zeranski.

Contributors and Observers: JA—Jim Ash; PAB—Paul A. Buckley; TWB—Thomas W. Burke; SBD—Steve B. Dempsey; HM—Hugh McGuinness; PMP—Peter M. Polshek; DP—Dennis Puleston; LW—Leroy Wilcox.

Breeding Reports

Colonial Nesters: Herons: no reports received; Gulls: no reports received; Terns: (all of the following Michael Gochfeld unless otherwise noted):

1. Breezy Point: 75 prs Least Tern (JA); as recently as three years ago this area held 1500-2000 prs of Common Terns
2. Meadowbrook 1: 60-80 prs Common Tern. Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls are encroaching and have reduced the numbers of terns.
3. Meadowbrook 2 (Loop Causeway): 120-150 nests Common Tern. 20-30 nests Least Tern, 61 nests Black Skimmer, and 20 nests Herring Gull which are expanding here.
4. West End. Jones Beach: Common Tern. 1800-1900 prs; Black Skimmer, 31 prs.
5. Short Beach Jetty: Common Tern, 140 nests; Black Skimmer, 23 nests; Least Tern, 1 nest—first in recent years.
6. West End 2: Common Tern, 1 nest; Least Tern, 20 nests.
7. Wantagh Causeway at Jones Beach: Common Tern, 1 nest; Least Tern, 8 nests.
8. Gilgo Beach: Least Tern, 5-6 prs.
9. Cedar Beach: Common Tern, 2100+ 200 nests; Roseate Tern, 25-30 nests; Least Tern, 6 nests; Black Skimmer, 78 nests.

10. Great Gull Island (H Hays): Common Tern, 2500 prs; Roseate Tern, 1300 prs.

LOONS-WOODPECKERS: Yellow-crowned Night Heron: 3 nests, 10 young, Rye (TWB)—location unusual. Mute Swan: tremendous concentrations on eastern LI, notably: 155 June 5 Mecox to Sagaponack (HM). Osprey: DP reports: "My annual survey of the reproductive success of this bird on Long Island indicates a considerable improvement over the past few years . . . pesticide levels in unhatched eggs are going down. For the first time in many years, I could not find a single thin-shelled, cracked or dented egg on Gardiner's Island." Gardiner's Island produced 26 young from 34 active nests (as compared to 18 from 31 nests in 1973), 3 nests on Robin's Island produced 6 young, and one nest at CRSP fledged 3 young. Although the recent turn of events is truly optimistic, the Osprey is just beginning its recovery, and must be carefully watched and guarded in the future. Anyone who knows of any other regional nestings is urged to send details. Harrier: one nest on Gardiner's I fledged 2 young (DP); territorial birds noted at JBWR, and Oak Beach. Virginia Rail: 9-11 pairs Oak Beach (HM)—last known major concentration on LI. Sora: 1 pair territorial Mecox (JA, HM)—only breeding report in region. Black Rail: 5 territorial males Oak Beach (THD, HM)—at least four of these five were noted regularly in the same territories throughout June; the birds were usually found in the phragmites where they probably nested although no absolute proof was found.

Barn Owl: LW reports 3 nesting pairs on eastern LI, at Hampton Bays, Bridgehampton, and Montauk. Screech Owl: this bird is obviously much more common in the region than is realized as indicated by 8 Jun. 8 Heckscher (HM, PMP)—birds found in 1 hour of searching on one path. Great Horned Owl: this bird may also be more common than realized as is indicated by Otto Heck's survey in highly residential northern Nassau County; which turned up 14 adults and 8 young; Will Donaldson also reported a pair which produced one young (same area); unfortunately at least two owls died during nesting, and 2 nests were abandoned as a result of human disturbance. Short-eared Owl: 1 seen in June at Oak Beach (JA)—hopefully nesting. Chuck-will's-widow: 2 males heard calling through Jun. 13 Oak Beach, and through July 7 Staten I (H Fischer *et. al.*)—with the continued occurrence of this species in our area breeding evidence should be searched for. Whip-poor-will: 100+ Jun. 8 CRSP (THD *et. al.*)—despite the tremendous concentration here, none were found at adjacent areas. Red-headed Woodpecker: LW reports a pair nested in Riverhead, this is probably the first known breeding occurrence for region 10, and reflects the recovery that this bird seems to have made in our area in the last few years.

PASSERINES: Crested Flycatcher: 55 Jun. 8 CRSP—more than 3 times the number found elsewhere on the count. Acadian Flycatcher: 1 early June CRSP (THD); June 8 CBC (R Pasquier). Eastern Wood Pewee: 28 Jun. 8 CRSP—high. White-breasted Nuthatch: 18 Jun. 8 CRSP. Brown Creeper: 11 Jun. 8 CRSP—only known breeding locale on LI. House Wren: 52 Jun. 8 CRSP. Carolina Wren: 9 June 8 CBC—first time in years found elsewhere than CRSP which had 7. Catbird: 162 Jun. 8 Heckscher—this is one species that has obviously benefited by the conversion to parklands. Wood Thrush: 12 Jun. 8 CRSP—highest on count by far. Hermit Thrush: 2 Jun. 8 CRSP—breeding likely. Swainson's Thrush: 2 Jun. 8 CRSP—breeding possible, only locale in area. Veery: 56 Jun. 8 CRSP. Eastern Bluebird: 5 prs CRSP; 2 prs Riverhead produced 7 young (LW)—only known locales in region.

White-eyed Vireo: 15 Jun. 8 Heckscher. Yellow-throated Vireo: Jun. 8 CRSP—only known breeding locale in region. Red-eyed Vireo: 51 Jun. 8 CRSP. Black-and-white Warbler: 53 Jun. 8 CRSP—only 56 on count. Prothonotary Warbler: singing male June 3-5 Peconic River (DP); Jun. 18 Carman's River (DP)—when will this species be found breeding in our area! Pine Warbler: 40 Jun. 8 CRSP—very high. Prairie Warbler: 10 Jun. 8 CRSP. Chestnut-sided Warbler: 6 Jun. 8 CRSP—only ones on count. Ovenbird: 59 June 8 CRSP—high. Northern Waterthrush: a singing territorial male Jun. 8 Belmont Lake State Park (T Robben, G Tudor)—no LI nesting record, although it looks possible here. Canada Warbler: 3 Jun. 8 CRSP—only known breeders in region.

Scarlet Tanager: 11 Jun. 8 CRSP. Summer Tanager: Jun. 5 Commack (FF *et. al.*)—only report. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 2 prs Jun. 8 Belmont (G Tudor). Red Crossbill: 6 prs Jun. 8 CRSP—Definite breeding, after last fall's incursion this was almost inevitable. Rufous-sided Towhee: 148 Jun. 8 CRSP. Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 60 Jun. 8 Oak Beach. Seaside Sparrow: 80 Jun. 8 Oak Beach; these are the highest concentrations known in the area for the marsh sparrows.

Summer Vagrants

LOONS—MERGANSERS: Common Loon: 10 Jun. 8 CBC; 8 at Fire I. Sooty Shearwater: 21 May 19 FI Inlet (D Powers); 19 Jun. 4 Shinnecock (HM); 9+ Jun. 8 Fire I. Greater Shearwater: Jun. 8 Fire I—early. *MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD*: a male Jun. 8 Fire I Inlet (TWB, HM, PMP)—seen heading inland toward Babylon where seen by a reporter for the "Long Island Press." Undoubtedly the same bird was observed the following day at Georgica Pond (M Kalogerakis)—8th state occurrence. Bufflehead: pr. summered at Sag Harbor (LW). Oldsquaw: Jul. 5 Hither Hills (B Dieterich). King Eider: young male summered at Shinnecock Bay (LW); 8 Jun. 11 Montauk Point (PAB)—summer maximum.

VULTURES—OWLS: Bald Eagle: imm Jul. 29 Moriches (O Dunning)—quite unusual in summer. Short-billed Dowitcher: 1300+ Jul. 28 JBWR (HM). Stilt Sandpiper: arr Jul. 13 (W & B Baumann); 50 Jul. 27 JBWR (M Kleinbaum). Western Sandpiper: Jul. 28 JBWR (P Lehman). Marbled Godwit: Jun. 16 JBWR (JA)—first June occurrence, sixth spring occurrence. Hudsonian Godwit: 2 Jul. 21-22 JBWR (JA *et. al.*); 2 Jul. 28-31 (mob). Wilson's Phalarope: Jul. 21-22 JBWR (JA *et. al.*); 2 Jul. 27-31 Oak Beach (mob).

SKUA: Jun. 8 Fire Island (PAB, A J Lauro, R O Paxton)—excellent and lengthy study of an individual as it flew over the surf. Parasitic Jaeger: 13+ Jun. 8 Fire I. Glaucous Gull: Jun. 11 Montauk (PAB)—very rare in summer. *SABINE'S GULL*: Jul. 28 Jones (T Robben)—a well observed individual, close to shore, in almost complete breeding plumage except that the head was changing. Caspian Tern: imm Jul. 20-21 Hempstead Lake State Park (SBD). *SANDWICH TERN*: 2 late May Jones Inlet (M Gochfeld)—well seen, and different calls noted as they flew directly overhead; these followed an uncorroborated report in mid-May at Cedar Beach; 2nd spring occurrence.

GOATSUCKERS—SHRIKES: Red-breasted Nuthatch: Jun. 13 Cedar Beach (HM)—no evidence of breeding despite search; Jul. 4-28 New Rochelle (P Lehman); Jul. 6 Brookville (B Conolly).

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Blackpoll Warbler: Jun. 18, Jun. 26 Wave Hill, Bronx (R Pasquier).

Winter reports due Mar. 5; Spring reports due Jun. 5.

22 East 8th Street, New York, New York 10003