

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

Thru the fall a continuing series of warm, wet weather systems, moving from southwest to northeast, brought incessant east or south winds, unseasonably mild weather, many rainy and windy days, and virtually no birds. Day after day birders would record only a skimpy scattering of migrants. The one exception to this was a huge sparrow flight October 13 at Syracuse and Pompey but, as soon as the local fog conditions which produced it dissipated, that flight also vanished. An eight inch snowfall October 3-4 added to the strange fall weather and birding might have been good the day following the storm had the driving not been so absolutely wretched. That particular storm definitely triggered the exodus of many icterids and what few local dabbling ducks were present.

The combination of abundant food, primarily fruit, and the mild weather contributed to the array of November half-hardy species reported and the departure dates for some species (cf. House Wren, warblers) would be more appropriate for Virginia or Arkansas than central New York. Farmland rodents seem very scarce except in isolated patches—farmlands at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, around Oneida, and at Fair Haven—and local mousing raptor distribution is similarly spotty.

Positive features for the fall follow—1) an excellent but brief Brant flight; 2) a fair number of fall raptors; 3) incursions of both Rough-legged Hawk and Snowy Owl; 4) good numbers of later, i.e., October, shorebirds; 5) good tallies of certain flycatchers; 6) continued expansion of Carolina Wren, and, to a lesser degree, of Tufted Titmouse and Mockingbird; 7) excellent fall tallies of House Wren, American Robin, Hermit Thrush, and Cedar Waxwing; 8) high counts in a very few warbler species with an odd array of late departure dates (q.v.); and 9) a tremendous sparrow flight in the first half of October, particularly strong in Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned, White-throated, Field, Swamp, and Song Sparrow.

Negatives for the period abound, including 1) a terrible Canada Goose flight; 2) miserable numbers of virtually all ducks, most notably in Northern Shoveler, all Aythya, all Scoters, and Hooded and Common Mergansers; 3) a paucity of Ruffed Grouse and a continued decline of Ring-necked Pheasant; 4) a dismal early and mid-fall shorebird flight; 5) a paucity of terns; 6) a dearth of Common Nighthawk and most swallows; 7) poor numbers of most vireos and of the majority of warbler species (q.v.); 8) a very poor winter finch flight—small numbers of Evening Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, and Purple Finches with virtually nothing else to grace the brumal season; and 9) a panregional scarcity of Vesper and Fox Sparrows.

Rarities for the fall are Bald Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, the three species of phalarope, Parasitic Jaeger, Franklin's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Yellow-breasted Chat, Connecticut Warbler, and Pine Grosbeak.

Initialed observers: GC—G. Church; DWC—D. W. Crumb; PAD—P. A. DeBenedictis; FL—F. LaFrance; JWP—J. W. Propst; B & SP—B. & S. Peebles; MSR—M. S. Rusk; FGS—F. G. Scheider; GAS—G. A. Smith.

Areas abbreviated—DH—Derby Hill near Texas; FH—Fair Haven, Cayuga Co.; HIGMA—Howland's Island Game Management Area near Port Byron; LOL—Lake Ontario littoral; LSB—Little Sodus Bay; NPT—Northern Pompey Township; Onon L—Onondaga Lake; SP & SPI—Sandy Pond and Sandy Pond Inlet; SSSP—Selkirk Shores State Park near Port Ontario; Sylvan B or S & VB—Sylvan and Verona Beaches at the eastern end of Oneida Lake; L—lake.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: 11 individuals Oct. 24-Nov. 17, primarily from LOL. Red-necked Grebe: max nine (high for fall) Oct. 27 east end of Oneida L (B. DeSi-

none). Horned Grebe: max 253 Oct. 24 LOL; otherwise scarce.

Black-crowned Night Heron: ten individuals Aug. 15 to Sept. 29, better than average.

Canada Goose: terrible fall flight—max only 1500 Beaver L Nov. 2 (JWP); most counts below 500/day with no big passage flights noted. Brant: 3800 Oct. 13 DH flying over, headed southeast, with none of those thousands settling on the lake; last Nov. 30 two Nine Mile Pt (JWP).

Mallard: max 415 Nov. 16 Woodman's Pond near Eaton (GC); most other counts 10 to 100/day—where are the thousands of a few years ago? Black Duck: scarce—max 168 (very low) Nov. 16 Woodman's Pond (GC); other counts ten to 50/day—very scarce for a duck formerly recorded in the hundreds to thousands. Pintail: max 287 Oct. 2 DH (GAS); otherwise scarce with many observers seeing singles only. Green-winged Teal: max only 25 Oct. 3 SP, SSSP; scarce otherwise (two-eight/day). Blue-winged Teal: 120 Sept. 29 DH (GAS) is the only high count; all other counts below 75/day; strangely, birds present into early Dec. American Wigeon: max 450 Oct. 22 Beaver L (JWP); scarce elsewhere; present to Nov. 30 eight FH (MSR). Northern Shoveler: extremely scarce—max only four Sept. 20 Onon L—total for entire fall only 11 individual birds (16 observers).

Redhead: very scarce—max only 32 Nov. 3 FH plus Beaver L; none reported from Onon L and the Oneida L max is only four Nov. 23 (D. Ackley). Ring-necked Duck: max 214 Nov. 3 FH plus Beaver L (FGS). Canvasback: disastrous—max 46 (miserably low) Nov. 30 FH—almost none from Oneida L where formerly observed in the thousands. Greater Scaup: max 4000 Nov. 7 DH (DWC, FGS); all other counts 40–500/day; no big flocks noted on Oneida L. Common Golden-eye: arr Oct. 3 one SP; max 362 Nov. 7 LOL; like most diving ducks, very scarce on both Onon and Oneida L—? why? Bufflehead: max 260 (way up!) Nov. 7 DH (DWC); scarce otherwise.

The scoter flight was a miserable shadow of former years—max White-winged Scoter 120 Oct. 3 DH and SP, max Surf Scoter 29 Oct. 3 DH and SP, and max Black Scoter 600 Oct. 13 SP, the last mostly adult males; the worst scoter flight in a decade. Ruddy Duck: max 25 Nov. 3 Beaver L; virtually unrecorded elsewhere.

Hooded Merganser: incredibly scarce—usually noted in the low hundreds but max this fall only 32 Nov. 15 LOL (GAS). Red-breasted Merganser: max 3000 Nov. 7 Oswego to SP; virtually none from Oneida or Onon L.

HAWKS—OWLS: Fall hawk tallies from hilltop observations south of Vernon (B and S Peebles) produced some excellent counts but the lack of previous data there precludes comparison; future tallies from that sector would be most appropriate—and appreciated—in view of the current precarious status of many of the eastern raptors. Turkey Vulture: max 12 Sept. 18 SSSP; dep date Oct. 17 one SSSP. Goshawk: rotten fall flight—only seven individuals reported Oct. 4–Nov. 16 (16 observers). Sharp-shinned Hawk: max eight Sept. 22 south of Vernon (B & SP). Cooper's Hawk: total of ten individuals for fall (16 observers).

Red-tailed Hawk: excellent fall flight—max 26 Oct. 13 SP, SSSP with numerous birds (six–12/day) in the fields east of L Ontario and south of Oneida L. Red-shouldered Hawk: max three Oct. 18 south of Vernon (B & SP); however, only seven total for the entire fall. Broad-winged Hawk: max 343 Sept. 16 Hatalla Rd., Oneida (B & SP), the only high count for the fall. Rough-legged Hawk: arr Sept. 14 (very early) one NPT (DWC); a rich fall flight with max 32 Nov. 7 SP, SSSP (DWC, FGS); most common in the open country around Pulaski and Mexico but numerous singles elsewhere. *BALD EAGLE*: only report is an adult Sept. 6 near Waterville (GC).

Harrier: max four each Sept. 19 south of Vernon (B & SP) and Nov. 2 SP, SSSP. *GYRFALCON*: an immature gray phase, close enough to see the bluish feet, Nov. 2 SP dunes (K Kaufman, E Cooke, FGS). No Peregrine or Merlin for the fall—sad. American Kestrel: max 18 Sept. 2 SP, Onon L; present in small numbers elsewhere.

Ruffed Grouse: numbers still way down—max 7 Nov. 9 FH; most tallies only one-two/day. Ring-necked Pheasant: a dying-out exotic—one-nine/day, decreasing everywhere.

Virginia Rail: one persistent to Nov. 30 Eaton (GC). Common Gallinule: still scarce in local marshes—max 22 Sept. 25 DeWitt Marsh (K Coyle) with dep date Oct. 26 one SP.

Rare shorebirds for the fall include *WHIMBREL* one Sept. 9-12 SP (FGS); *HUDSONIAN GODWIT* one Oct. 3 SSSP and one Oct. 26 Green Point SP (both FGS), and single *NORTHERN* and *WILSON'S PHALAROPES* in the first half of Sept. and a single *RED PHALAROPE* from LOL in Nov. Other shorebird data are as follows:

SHOREBIRDS: Semipalmated Plover: arr Jul. 11, one Onon L; max 31, Sept. 2 Onon L; dep Oct. 29, one Onon L. Killdeer: max 210, Aug. 4 Mexico Twshp. Golden Plover: arr Aug. 31, five, Mexico Twshp; max 15, Sept. 4 Wampsville; dep Oct. 13, 14 Wampsville. Black-bellied Plover: arr Aug. 23, one, Onon L; max 15, Oct. 17 Port Ontario; dep Nov. 17, one FH. Ruddy Turnstone: arr Jul. 25, four Onon L; max 5, Aug. 24, S & VB; dep Sept. 26, one Sylvan B. Common Snipe: max 70, Oct. 13, SP, SSSP; dep Nov. 9, one SSSP. Upland Sandpiper: max 15, Aug. 4, Cicero. Spotted Sandpiper: max 33, Jul. 12, Onon L; Oct. 8, one Onon L. Solitary Sandpiper: arr Jul. 11, four DeWitt Marsh; max 10, Aug. 25, DeWitt Marsh; dep Oct. 11, one DH. Greater Yellowlegs: arr Jul. 19, one Onon L; max 25, Oct. 26, Port Ontario; dep Nov. 6, two DH. Lesser Yellowlegs: arr Jul. 11, 25 Onon L; max 78, Aug. 13, Onon L; dep Nov. 2, one SP. Red Knot: arr Jul. 24, one Onon L; max 2, Aug. 4-Sept. 19, S & VB; dep Sept. 20, two Sylvan B. Pectoral Sandpiper: arr Jul. 18, two N Syr; max 90, Oct. 6, Port Ontario; dep Nov. 2, three Port Ontario. White-rumped Sandpiper: arr Aug. 25, five Onon L; max 8 Oct. 24-26, SSSP; dep Nov. 2, one SP. Baird's Sandpiper: arr Jul. 17, one Onon L; max 5, Aug. 31 SP; dep Oct. 23, three Onon L. Least Sandpiper: arr Jul. 11, nine Onon L; max 70, Aug. 13 Onon L; dep Nov. 2, one SP. Dunlin: arr Sept. 12, two Onon L; max 250 Oct. 13, SP, SSSP; dep Nov. 20, five Sylvan B. Short-billed Dowitcher: arr Jul. 18, two Onon L; max 7, Sept. 2 Onon L; dep Sept. 29, one SSSP. Stilt Sandpiper: arr Jul. 11, one Onon L; max 6, Aug. 13 Onon L; dep Sept. 29, two SSSP. Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr Jul. 2, one Onon L; max 845, Jul. 25 Onon L; dep Oct. 24, two Onon L. Western Sandpiper: arr Aug. 18, one DeWitt Marsh; max 2, Aug. 24-Sept. 2, Onon L; dep Sept. 4, one Onon L. Sanderling: arr Jul. 19, six Oneida L; max 82, Jul. 27 SP; dep Nov. 2, one SP. Northern Phalarope: arr Aug. 12, one Nine Mile Pt; max one, Aug. 31-Sept. 4, Onon L; dep Sept. 4, one Onon L.

PARASITIC JAEGER: an imm Aug. 25 SPI (FGS) is early—no later fall flight detected. *FRANKLIN'S GULL*: a juv Onon L Aug. 10 (PAD) and an imm Sept. 29 SPI (PAD, FGS). *BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE*: an imm SPI Nov. 16 (FGS) and either the same or another imm at DH the same date (GAS). Caspian Tern: max 28 Aug. 31 SPI and Onon L; smaller numbers (four-eight/day) thru first half of Sept. at Onon L. Black Tern: very scarce—max a miserable three SPI Aug. 25.

Cuckoos maintained their scarcity of mid-summer with a total of five Yellow-billed Cuckoo and seven Black-billed Cuckoos from 16 observers for all fall.

Snowy Owl: a flight year—arr Nov. 7 one SPI, max three Nov. 9-17 Oswego; total of at least thirteen birds reported by Nov. 30.

GOATSUCKERS—STARLINGS: Common Nighthawk: max 38 Aug. 29 Syr (JWP) and 40 Sept. 2 Onon L (GAS); dep date Sept. 14 (very early) one Onon L (G Huggins). Ruby-throated Hummingbird: max 13 Aug. 31 SP, SSSP; dep date Sept. 29 one SP.

Common Flicker: max 40 Oct. 2 Syr, Pompey and again 40 Oct. 4 Tully (both JWP); many individuals lingering into late Nov. Red-headed Woodpecker: small numbers (two-four/day) at Pompey (FL) and Oswego (C Wernick) but virtually unreported elsewhere. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr Sept. 7 (early) one Tully (JWP); max only six (low) Sept. 26 to Oct. 3 SP; dep date Oct. 23 (early) one Syr (F Dittrich).

Eastern Phoebe: max six (low) Oct. 5 NPT (DWC); dep date Oct. 23 two Syr (F Dittrich).

trich). Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: max ten Aug. 31 SP, SSSP (FGS); dep date Sept. 30 one NPT (JWP). Willow and Alder Flycatchers: max eight Aug. 30 Tully and two Sept. 8 Syr respectively. Least Flycatcher: max ten Aug. 30 Gatehouse Woods near Tully (JWP); dep date Oct. 3 one SP dunes (FGS). Eastern Wood Pewee: good fall flight—max 32 Sept. 2 SP, SSSP with dep date Oct. 5 two NPT (DWC). Olive-sided Flycatcher: dep date Sept. 29 (very late) one Onon Hill (MSR).

Swallow maxima are Tree Swallow 8000 Sept. 21 SP, Bank Swallow 2000 Aug. 25 SP, Barn Swallow 3075 Aug. 31 SP, Cliff Swallow two (incredibly low) Aug. 12 Nine Mile Pt, and Purple Martin 450 Aug. 31 SP, SSSP—the local swallows have not recovered from recent cold springs as counts for Tree, Bank, and Barn Swallows should be in the tens of thousands; dep dates are Tree Swallow Nov. 2 two SP, Bank Swallow Sept. 21 three SPI, Barn Swallow Sept. 29 six SPI, Cliff Swallow Sept. 19 one SP, and Purple Martin Sept. 29 two SPI (virtually all early dep dates.)

Black-capped Chickadee: best local count 75 Oct. 29 NPT (DWC) with better numbers in the Adirondacks—135 Nov. 10 Big Moose area (PAD, P Paquette). Red-breasted Nuthatch: virtually no fall flight—only one—six/day Aug. 20 to Nov. 19; max in Adirondacks, however, was 100 Nov. 10 Big Moose area (PAD, P Paquette) where they were everywhere, almost as common as Black-capped Chickadees—and, if anything, even more excitable.

House Wren: fall max 29 Sept. 8 SP, SSSP, Onon L; dep date Nov. 7 (very late) one NPT (DWC). Winter Wren: arr Sept. 9 one Nine Mile Pt; max 30 Sept. 26, SP, SSSP. Carolina Wren: exploding locally—a dozen different birds reported, primarily from the protected valleys at the Ontario Lakeplain—Alleghany Plateau junction—Syr, Manlius, Pompey, Camillus, E Syr, Chittenango, Oneida, but also from FH (2) and SP dunes (2).

Gray Catbird: max only 25 Sept. 8 SP, SSSP (FGS); last noted Oct. 10 (early) one Beaver L. American Robin: everywhere this fall—counts of 20-30/day in all sectors with max 850 Oct. 27 FH; present in numbers (50-60/day) thru Nov. Hermit Thrush: arr date Aug. 22 (very early) one SSSP; max 30 Oct. 11 DH & SSSP (C & E Farnham) and 27 Oct. 13 NPT (DWC); dep date Nov. 9 (early) one FH. Eastern Bluebird: max 20 Oct. 18 south of Vernon (B & SP); total of 76 reported for fall (16 observers) but sadly most observers saw none.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr date Sept. 5 (very early) one Syr (F Dittrich); max 125 (low) Oct. 11 Nine Mile Pt. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr date Sept. 2 two Sandy Pond dunes; max 150 Oct. 4 SSSP; Nine Mile Pt. Water Pipit: max 150 both Oct. 22 and 25 south of Vernon (B & SP), also 150 Oct. 3 NPT (DWC). Cedar Waxwing: everywhere—max 150 Sept. 19 SP, SSSP but flocks of 40-60/day widely reported.

Northern Shrike: scarce—arr Nov. 9 an adult FH; total individuals for Nov. only seven (16 observers).

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Solitary Vireo: poor flight—arr date Sept. 5 (late) one SP; max six (low) Sept. 21 SP, DH; last noted Nov. 7 (late) one NPT (DWC). Red-eyed Vireo: max 60 Sept. 2 SP, Onon L; dep date Oct. 8 two LOL (DWC).

The warbler flights this fall were rather thin—slightly above average counts were noted in Tennessee, Cape May, Myrtle, Blackburnian, and Canada Warblers; particularly low were Black-throated Blue, Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, and Mourning warblers and Ovenbirds. Rare warblers for the fall include *CONNECTICUT WARBLER* with four singles Sept. 26-Oct. 6 (better than usual), and a *YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT* on Aug. 24 at NPT (DWC), the only fall report.

BLACKBIRDS—SPARROWS: Eastern Meadowlark: fall max 55 (low) Oct. 8 Richland Twshp. Red-winged Blackbird: max 10,000 Nov. 16 SP; the huge roosts at both HIGMA and at Clay Swamp were apparently not observed this fall. Rusty Blackbird: arr date Sept. 23 (very late) one Syr; Fall max only 200 Oct. 26 SP.

Scarlet Tanager: fall max 20 Aug. 30 Woodmancy Rd, Tully; dep date Oct. 16 (late) one Syr.

Evening Grosbeak: arr Oct. 17 12 NPT (DWC); max 200 Nov. 3 FH, LSB; however, only small flocks noted in the latter half of Nov. Purple Finch: good fall flight—max 33 Oct. 28 NPT; however, 50 still present at Big Moose Nov. 10. House Finch: max 30 at one Syr feeder in Nov. indicates the steady rise in this species locally. *PINE GROSBEAK*: single bird at Big Moose Nov. 10 is the only bird for the season (PAD, P Paquette). American Goldfinch: like Cedar Waxwing, everywhere—flocks of 30-50/day with max 160 Oct. 12 Sterling Twshp; in contrast, however, no Redpolls or Crossbills reported. Rufous-sided Towhee: max 35 Oct. 13 NPT; dep date Oct. 30 (early) one Syr.

Savannah Sparrow: max 43 Sept. 29 SP, SSSP; dep date Oct. 13 (very early) 40 NPT. Grasshopper Sparrow: a single Sept. 18 NPT (JWP) is a rarely observed fall migrant. Vesper Sparrow: incredibly scarce—one-three/day in Oct., the peak flight month; many observers saw none. Dark-eyed Junco: fall max 1500, a whopping count, Oct. 13 NPT; scarce thru latter half of Nov. American Tree Sparrow: arr date Oct. 13 two SP, SSSP; max 110 each NPT and FH both Nov. 3; like Junco, scarce in latter half of Nov. Chipping Sparrow: max 40 each NPT and Syr both on Oct. 13; dep date Nov. 16 (late) one NPT. Field Sparrow: max 200 Oct. 13 NPT in the huge sparrow flight there. White-crowned Sparrow: arr date Sept. 19 one Stone Rd near Mexico; max 1500, a record, in the Oct. 13 sparrow flight in NPT; numerous lesser counts thru Oct. with dep date Oct. 29 (very early) one NPT. White-throated Sparrow: arr date Sept. 1 one SP dunes; max 750 Oct. 13 NPT; small scattered flocks thru Nov. Fox Sparrow: fall flight as bad as the White-crowned Sparrow flight was good—max only two (incredibly low) Oct. 27 NPT; most observers saw none. Lincoln's Sparrow: max four Sept. 18 NPT and again Sept. 22 LOL; dep date Nov. 2 (late, particularly when compared to other migrant sparrows) one Syr (JWP). Swamp Sparrow: heavy fall flight—90 Oct. 8 Richland Twshp and 75 Oct. 13 NPT; many singles lingering into late Nov. Song Sparrow: fall max a stellar 750 Oct. 13 NPT; lesser numbers (50-75/day) thru the remainder of Oct. with small flocks present to late Nov.

114 Rockland Drive, North Syracuse, New York 13212

REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

LEE B. CHAMBERLAINE

Fall of 1974 was a good year for the shorebirder. Lowered Lake Ontario levels provide excellent observations of shorebirds such as Whimbrel, Baird's Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Hudsonian Godwit.

The uplander was not neglected either with good numbers of raptors including a Golden Eagle. Spruce Grouse and an excellent array of warblers and finches made Fall pass quickly.

Waterfowl were again in enjoyable numbers with Redheads and Canvasbacks being sighted in some localities. Migration was early and rapid once it started.

Indications of winter were again late. However, numbers of northern species moving down and some rather early sightings of them were indicative of perhaps an old fashioned north country winter.

Fruit and nut production in Region were exceptional this year and Mountain Ash trees were as if decorated for Christmas.

Location Abbreviations: BRB—Black River Bay; DH—Dry Hill near Watertown; ED—Eldorado Shores; PP—Point Peninsula; PRWMA—Perch River Wildlife Management Area;