

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

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Almost all of the regional editors were in complete agreement about the weather during the season, but they did not agree as to the results of this weather. September was uniformly cold and wet whereas October and November received nothing but praise. In fact, November, a month to which most birders do not look forward with eager anticipation, made up for the wretched September. Please notice particularly the results of the passage of the minor tropical storm Eloise in late September. Some previously good shorebird habitats were ruined, while some were produced. The cold, wet period of September wiped out the insect population and produced an early migration, and the small numbers of insectivorous birds that had previously been noted in late summer were even further reduced.

Each fall local birders south of the boreal forests wonder if it will be a "good finch" season. In other words, they are hoping that a poor food crop in the north will drive the winter finches south into their areas. This year produced rather ambivalent results. The food supply to the north was certainly poor. Unfortunately, the cone and acorn crop in our areas was also reported as being low to non-existent. Therefore we have reports of good flocks of finches moving through but not stopping. Perhaps there was good feeding for them further south.

One of the major developments in recent years has been the great increase in interest in hawk-watching. The recently established Hawk Migration Association of North America has developed a program which includes observations on both ridges and coasts. Observers are finding that it is not necessary to go to such famous spots as Mt. Tom, Raccoon Ridge, or Hawk Mountain in order to witness a spectacular hawk flight. Notice the various local hawk reports in addition to the usual good numbers from Hook Mountain and Dutchess Hill. It is unfortunate that much of the action during the Broad-wing flight occurred to the east of us in Connecticut where outstanding numbers were reported. Even though some of the local counts may not be in the thousands, the size and direction of these movements are very important in determining the total pattern of the movement. It has become more and more obvious, for example, that the Broad-wing flocks are not restricted to the ridges but move on a wide front

across the countryside. The membership chairman of the Hawk Migration Association is Mrs. Dorothy Crumb, 3983 Gates Road North, Jamesville, N.Y. 13078. Anyone interested in this type of cooperative bird watching should contact the organization.

In general, the shorebird migration continued to be excellent. Region 2 reported 32 species, Region 3, 23 species, and Region 7, 22 species. North Line Island on Long Island continued the excellence of the summer with very large flocks of waders reported.

Very interesting reports from Regions 1 and 3 point up what may be a wasted possibility in other regions. It is unfortunate that there are always a certain number of migrants killed at TV towers and other tall structures, particularly if these are lighted at night. If there are such towers in your area, please check them regularly. The make-up of these tower kills is often vastly different from the feeding flocks that are observed during the daylight hours. A local museum or educational institution will also be glad to have the specimens for their collections.

Another brief note in passing: in the last Highlights I mentioned the impossibility of segregating the seasons exactly into migration, breeding, etc. Note the very late nesting reports from Region 3. Young birds can be found from February to October, and if cross-bills are around, in any month of the year.

As usual, each region has its own share of rarities. I can only ask that you look through them all, for what is rare in one region might be common in another. I was impressed by the reports of Sabine's Gulls from three regions, good numbers of inland jaegers, Yellow Rail and Bewick's Wren from Region 1, Purple Sandpipers from three inland regions, Yellow-throated Warbler from Region 4, Bohemian Waxwings from Region 5, Gray Jay far south in Dutchess County and the wild collection of records from Region 10, including Brown Booby, Black Vulture, and Audubon's Warbler (now only a Yellow-rumped, alas.)

When I first started this job I began the BOTS Award. For anyone who has become a reader since that time, it stands for *Bird of the Season*. Usually there has been one individual of outstanding rarity which was an obvious choice. This season, however, there is one species that has been so widespread and has aroused such interest that it deserves the award—one in which nearly all regions can share. Most observers reported a tremendous influx of Black-capped Chick-

adees and with them came their drawling northern relative. With apologies to the boreal birders in the Adirondacks, the BOTS award goes to the Boreal Chickadee.

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REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

A rugged, cold, wet Sept. was followed by a warm, dry Oct. and Nov. with very little snow, open water everywhere, resulting in a nicely averaged fall season with temperature 1.9°F (1°C) above normal and precipitation almost average. Bird watching was superb with a succession of shifting weather patterns bringing good avian numbers. In late Sept., tropical storm Eloise grounded many birds along L. Ontario as it passed by on the south (DK).

Abundant food was available from White Ash, Box Elder, Locust, Hickory, Gray-bark Dogwood (to Nov. 1), Chokeberry, Multiflora Rose, Wild Grape, Sumac, Rabbits, Mice and Squirrels. There were no acorns or beechnuts and the cone crop was spotty.

On the bright side were: 1) more Com. Loons; 2) a fair goose flight and better grebe and diving duck counts, especially the Canvasback; 3) another big larid season; 4) promise of good owl-watching for the "few there be that find" them, in conifer plantations on the lake plains (DK); 5) a few more Ruffed Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasants and E. Bluebirds; 6) a good shorebird flight; 7) splendid numbers of Tufted Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Winter Wrens (in Oct.) and Mockingbirds; 8) Red-breasted Nuthatches spreading like gossip; 9) an excellent vireo and warbler migration; and 10) many species lingering late.

On the dark side were: 1) poor numbers of herons; 2) scarcity of most dabbling ducks and Turkeys; 3) few Com. Nighthawks, Chimney Swifts and swallows; 4) a record tower kill, 5) lower Icterid numbers, except Com. Grackles which were nearly double; 6) lower RC count of Vesper, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows.

Bird-in-the-hand data from banding at Farmersville Station — netted 141 birds Sept. 2-3 and 164 in three waves Sept. 15-27, with most common: 87 Tennessee Warblers, 37 Magnolia Warblers, and 29 each of Black-throated Green Warblers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. In Oct., high species were 67 Dark-eyed Juncos, 49 White-throated Sparrows, 34 Black-capped Chickadees, 16 Hermit Thrushes and 16 Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Nov. was brightened by the influx of 231 Evening Grosbeaks, 53 Tree Sparrows and 48 more Dark-eyed Juncos (DC).

Another accurate, though grievous, migration sampling was from tower kills with totals, collected this fall by the Buffalo Museum of Science, the highest in seven years (ARC, *fide Courier Express*, Sept. 24). Below three TV towers in Wales and Colden, s. Erie Co., a record high for a one-day kill on Sept. 24 was 1142 birds of 53 species. The total kill, Sept. 18-27, was 2359 individuals of 61 species, with the highest numbers: 332 Bay-breasted Warblers, 272 Magnolia Warblers, 270 Ovenbirds, 185 Swainson's Thrushes, 175 Blackpoll Warblers, and 121 Black-throated Blue Warblers (ARC, AS, RA, MF. J. Hauser).

Seasonal rarities were: Eared Grebe, Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, Yellow Rail, Long-billed Dowitcher, Western Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Red and Northern Phalaropes, Parasitic Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Western Kingbird, Boreal Chickadee, Bewick's Wren,