

REGION 10 – MARINE

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The Region's late spring developed into a slightly cooler and wetter-than-average summer with no apparent weather-related effects on local breeding activity. Little land bird migration was noted in August, although shorebird migration seemed normal.

June Bird Counts

Observers in three Christmas Count circles continued their June bird counts: Captree for the seventh year, Northern Nassau for the fifth, and Central Suffolk for the fourth consecutive year. One difficulty common to all three counts is the problem of attracting enough participants to maintain continuity in the areas covered so that meaningful comparisons are possible. The Central Suffolk compiler noted that the number of participants this year was just barely adequate to cover the major areas, and urged that efforts to recruit more observers be made in future years. Perhaps some readers can find the time to help census these circles next June and preserve the continuity of this valuable data.

The Captree count totaled 127 species with seven new to the count: Snow Goose, Lesser Yellowlegs, Royal Tern, Kentucky Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Bobolink and Pine Siskin. High counts of 6011 Common Terns (up from a 1974 high of 5000) and 706 Least Terns (296 the previous high) were reported. Perhaps some of these birds were from displaced Long Island Sound populations.

Northern Nassau tallied 111 species. New to the count were Whip-poor-will, American Bittern, Bonaparte's Gull, Northern Waterthrush, and Rusty Blackbird. Canada Geese have increased from 190 in 1974 to 391 in 1978. A similar increase in the number of Mallards (240 to 445) also reflects a number of birds on small suburban ponds maintained, at least in part, by handouts. In places, these birds represent a substantial pollution problem. A high of 55 Laughing Gulls was part of a general increase in the number of that species present during the breeding season in Long Island Sound waters. Least Terns (60) have been reduced in number from a 1974 high of 613, when the colonies left the area because of human disturbance. Also down in numbers were Chimney Swifts, Long-billed Marsh Wrens, Red-eyed Vireos, White-eyed Vireos, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Chipping Sparrows.

As part of the Northern Nassau count the village of Sea Cliff was counted street by street for the fourth straight year. Sixty-one species were found. The numbers of individuals of several common species recovered from low figures of the last two years, revealing what may be regularly recurring cycles. Notably free from fluctuation was the Mockingbird, with tallies of 15, 19, 19 and 18 for the four years. This conspicuous bird is less apt to be overlooked than some others, and may have saturated suitable locations.

The Central Suffolk count had a high total of 142 species with eight new to the area: Pintail, White-winged Scoter, Hooded Merganser, Common Snipe, Marbled Godwit, Chuck-will's-widow, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and White-throated

Sparrow. Species in significantly higher numbers than previous years were: Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Canada Goose, Mallard, Gadwall, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Coot, Common Tern, Screech Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Wood Pewee, Tree Swallow, Brown Creeper, Common Yellowthroat, and House Finch. Species showing significant declines were Wood Duck, Bobwhite, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Am. Robin, White-eyed Vireo, Brown-headed Cowbird, Indigo Bunting, Rufous-sided Towhee and Vesper Sparrow. The compiler attributed the Bobwhite decrease to the last two severe winters. He termed the White-eyed Vireo "alarmingly scarce" in the area. Screech Owl numbers depend almost entirely on the amount of time spent calling them. This species is undoubtedly more numerous in all count areas than the numbers indicate.

New Breeding Locations and a Specimen Record

Several newsworthy discoveries were made by Paul and Francine Buckley and Michael Gochfeld in the course of a two-day helicopter survey of colonial waterbird populations on the coastline of Long Island, the sixth such survey. Double-crested Cormorants were discovered nesting on rocky islands off Fisher's Island. This is the furthest SW breeding location of the northeastern population to date. Tobacco Lot Pond on Gardiner's Island held 500+ adult birds, but no nesting activity was discerned. A new heronry was discovered on South Brother Island in the East River where a colony of Snowy Egrets, 30 pairs of Cattle Egrets, and a number of Black-crowned Night Herons were breeding. Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls were breeding on both North Brother and South Brother Islands, using abandoned buildings for nest sites in some cases. The first Laughing Gull nest and eggs on Long Island in 88 years was found on one of the Line Islands north of Jones Beach. Two adult Gull-billed Terns, a species which the Buckleys and Gochfeld first found nesting on the Line Islands three years ago, were seen with two young birds on July 22 (GSR). On August 13, an immature Gull-billed Tern was found dead on North Line Island by AJL to establish a first state specimen record. The skin was deposited in the American Museum of Natural History in New York. At least one singing Alder Flycatcher was present during June in Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx Co., and there were indications that the species may have bred. A nest was critically observed, and appeared to resemble published descriptions and photographs of nests of that species. Unfortunately, absolute proof of breeding was not obtained (JF).

Cox's Ledge Pelagic Trips

<u>Species</u>	<u>May 27</u>	<u>June 3</u>	<u>June 10</u>	<u>July 16</u>	<u>Aug. 8</u>	<u>Aug. 26</u>
Northern Fulmar	21	3				
Cory's Shearwater				50+	30	24
Greater Shearwater	45	379	70	500+		33
Sooty Shearwater	60	436	600+	1	1	1
Manx Shearwater		1		1		
Audubon's Shearwater						1(2)
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	55	9	500	200+	200+	40
Gannet	31	4	3			2
phalarope sp.						1
Pomarine Jaeger	5					4

Species May 27 June 3 June 10 July 16 Aug. 8 Aug. 26

jaeger sp.

1

Black-legged Kittiwake

1

Royal Tern

1

Observers: May 27—K. and S. Blackshaw; June 3—THD, P. Polshek, K. Ray; June 10—G. Tudor, M. Kleinbaum, ROP, P. and F. Buckley, J. Ash, *et al.*; July 16—P. Gillen, E. Hennelly; Aug. 8—A. Keith; Aug. 26—THD, AJL, ROP, BJS, *et al.*

Comments: counts in bold face are highest ever for the Montauk to Cox's Ledge run. The June 10 trip also listed Common Grackle, and "several square miles" of Finback Whales and porpoises. On July 16, a House Sparrow was hopping around the Viking Starship until it jumped ship to a Rhode Island boat and wasn't seen again. The Audubon's Shearwater seen on the Aug. 26 trip was associated with warm 72° F. water from a Gulf Stream eddy. There were probably two birds, although observers concentrated on the closer of the two birds. On Sept. 1 and 2 Al Lorenzetti observed five Audubon's Shearwaters 90 miles SE of Long Island in Hudson Canyon. Water temperature was 73° F. He reported water of 80° F there two weeks earlier. It is likely that Audubon's Shearwater is a regular August occurrence in our area when the Gulf Stream eddies approach closely enough.

Rarities include: Sandhill Crane, Black Rail, Black Vulture, Glaucous Gull, Little Gull.

June Count compilers: Captree, Frances File and Anthony J. Lauro. Northern Nassau, Ralph Cioffi. Central Suffolk, Gilbert S. Raynor.

Contributors and initialed observers: Jim Ash, Francine G. Buckley, Paul A. Buckley, Ralph Cioffi, Arthur P. Cooley, Harry N. Darrow, Thomas H. Davis, Stephen B. Dempsey, Joseph DiCostanzo, John Farrand, Frances File, Michael Gochfeld, David Larsen, Anthony J. Lauro, Emanuel Levine, Alan Lindberg, Peter W. Post, Robert O. Paxton, Gilbert S. Raynor, Barbara J. Spencer, Wade Wander.

LOONS—DUCKS: A summering Red-throated Loon was present at Great Kills Park, Staten Island July 26 (*fide* THD). One, probably two, **AUDUBON'S SHEARWATERS** were seen SE of Block Island Aug. 26 (THD, AJL, ROP, BJS, *et al.*), while five were seen during a two-day stay at Hudson Canyon by Al Lorenzetti. All of these birds were associated with warm Gulf Stream water. An adult Great Cormorant, also summering, was seen at Montauk Aug. 27 (THD). While Double-crested Cormorants are regular in summer, up to eight birds in Central Park Reservoir June 28 through July 6 was noteworthy (R. Welden). The concentration of 500+ birds on Gardiner's Island was perhaps unprecedented (FGB, PAB, MG), as was the presence of breeding pairs near Fisher's Island noted by the same observers. A Cattle Egret was at Jamaica Bay July 22 (GSR) and on July 29 (DL). A remarkable number of 30 pairs of Cattle Egrets were among other herons in a new location on South Brother Island (FGB, PAB, MG). A pair or two of Yellow-crowned Night Herons still persist at Mt. Sinai Harbor (GSR). A pair of Northern Shovelers with six young June 1 at Jamaica Bay was an unusual breeding record (PAB). This is one of the very few locations where these ducks breed on Long Island. A female Black Scoter summered in Moriches Bay as did a few Red-breasted Mergansers.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Turkey Vultures were seen June 30 on Great Gull Island (JDiC), and on Ellis Island July 1 (PWP). Although observed without binoculars, field marks and flight characteristics of a **BLACK VULTURE** sighted in Sea Cliff July 29 were seen well enough

to convince the observers of the identification (RC, BJS). Following the mating display of two well-described Cooper's Hawks seen at Muttontown Preserve this spring (AL), single adult Cooper's Hawks were seen on several occasions in May and June. On July 29, an immature Cooper's Hawk was observed flying 20 feet over one of the field at the Preserve (AL). Six Broad-winged Hawks were at the Preserve, where they breed, on Aug. 22 (AL). A Peregrine Falcon was present in midtown Manhattan Aug. 10-16 (J. Wall), and one was seen at Bethpage State Park Aug. 30 (EL). The most serendipitous find of the summer occurred Aug. 19 when Tim O'Connor looked up from cutting a hedge and saw a soaring **SANDHILL CRANE** overhead. The bird was carefully observed for several minutes with a telescope, well-described, and sketched by Tim, who is an artist. **BLACK RAILS**, displaced from Oak Beach marsh through human disturbance, were heard calling from similar habitat nearby June 25-26 (AJL). A concentration of 81 American Oystercatchers on North Line Island Aug. 20 and 27 may have represented most of the South Shore population. Approximately one-third were birds of the year (AJL). Piping Plovers were present at Jones Beach strip breeding locations in normal numbers (ROP). An Am. Golden Plover arrived at Jamaica Bay July 25 (WW). Hudsonian Godwits appeared at North Line Island in good numbers with a maximum of eight July 22. Four were present at Jamaica Bay July 24 through the period, and several were at Shinnecock. One Marbled Godwit was seen on North Line Island June 15 (PAB) and three were there from July 16 on. Another arrived at Jamaica Bay July 15 (WW). More unusual was the occurrence of a Marbled Godwit on the North Shore at Sands Point, Aug. 10 through Labor Day (G. Quinn). Whimbrels were well reported with a maximum of 27 on Aug. 8 on the Loop Causeway at Jones Beach (R. Miller), and 13 on North Line Island Aug. 12 (AJL). One North Shore bird was seen at Sea Cliff Aug. 1 (BJS), while three were at Moriches Bay Aug. 16 (F. Fairchild). Two Upland Sandpipers were at Calverton on the Grumman airfield Aug. 14-15 (GSR), and a pair was still holding on near the Hofstra campus in Hempstead. An adult with one young bird was found at Floyd Bennett Field (R. Cunningham). Wilson's Phalaropes were reported from several locations: one at Oak Beach marsh July 17-20 (ROP), three July 23-30 (J. Dowdell, ROP), two in the sewage ponds at Pilgrim State Hospital Aug. 20 (AJL), and one at Jamaica Bay July 25. A Northern Phalarope was at Oak Beach marsh Aug. 28 (ROP). 3800 Short-billed Dowitchers were at Jamaica Bay July 22 (WW). At least one Long-billed Dowitcher was present at Jamaica Bay from July 22 (GSR, DL). A maximum of 80 Western Sandpipers were seen on North Line Island July 22 (ROP) with 45 still present Aug. 18 (RC, BJS). Six to eight White-rumped Sandpipers were at Jamaica Bay from Aug. 19 (DL) through the end of Aug., as were 40+ Stilt Sandpipers. An early Stilt Sandpiper was seen at Moriches Inlet June 30 (GSR). A Buff-breasted Sandpiper arrived at Jones Beach Aug. 13 (W. Wilkins). A second-year Glaucous Gull summered June 27 through July 13 at Jamaica Bay (WW). Perhaps the same bird wandered to Sands Point Aug. 2 (RC, BJS). The abundance of summering Laughing Gulls raised hopes of breeding on the North Shore of Long Island. However, Mt. Sinai Harbor was checked for nests June 21 with no sign of breeding. A nest and eggs were found on the Line Islands (above) June 15 (PAB, FGB, MG), the first since 1890, when the last eggs were found at Cedar Beach. July 27, 800+ adult Laughing Gulls were observed around Hempstead Harbor (RC) as summering birds were joined by post-breeding adult birds presumably from New Jersey. (Marked first year birds have come from locations near Barnegat this time of year, previously). A sub-adult **LITTLE GULL** summered at Breezy Point, Queens (PWP). Gull-billed Terns bred successfully again on the Line Islands with two adult and two immature birds seen July 22 (GSR). Royal Terns were present in reduced numbers with only four at Shinnecock Inlet Aug. 20 (GSR). A Royal Tern seen at Napeague June 12 was making scrapes in the sand suggestive of breeding behavior (JA). A Caspian Tern was at Jamaica Bay in mid-June (JA). A breeding-plumaged Black Tern was late at Cedar Beach June 26 (ROP). Black Terns were moving through in August with four at Mecox Aug. 17, one there Aug. 26 (DL), four at North Line Island Aug. 12 (AJL), and four the same day at Sands Point (RC, BJS). Eight to ten Black Terns were reported from Moriches Inlet Aug. 20 (APC).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Yellow-billed Cuckoos were more plentiful during the June count period than usual. A Great Horned Owl flying over the Henry Hudson Parkway at 125th Street July 28 (L. Holland) was probably a post-breeding wanderer. Chuck-will's-widows called through the summer at Oak Beach (AJL), and at Calverton until June 16 (GSR). Nighthawks moved in moderate numbers from Aug. 19 through the period. A Red-headed Woodpecker in Mastic June 24 on the edge of a salt marsh was probably a late migrant or wanderer (GSR).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: The first NW winds Aug. 19 after a prolonged doldrum brought several *Empidonax* flycatchers to Sea Cliff including one Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (BJS). Brown Creepers probably bred at Upton where two were seen in suitable habitat through July 13. Carolina Wrens were sparsely reported although a few persist despite two hard winters. Eastern Bluebirds nested in Riverhead where they were banded by L. Wilcox. A few pairs continue in Connetquot State Park.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: The first groups of warblers arrived in the area Aug. 19. Ten species were in Hempstead Lake State Park with large numbers of Blackburnian Warblers noteworthy; 16 were observed in one hour (EL). A Worm-eating Warbler was at Garvies Point Aug. 20 (BJS). Earlier, an immature Prothonotary Warbler was netted on Great Gull Island Aug. 12 (J DiC).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: Two Pine Siskins lingered at a thistle feeder until June 18 in Deer Park (FF). Grasshopper Sparrows thought to be breeding were observed July 9 and 12 near Pilgrim State Hospital, a new location. A breeding bird survey of the old Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn found 20 singing male Grasshopper Sparrows. The data was gathered by JA to aid in a land use plan by the Park Service.

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