

or the AOU Check-list depends on the sight records provided by the legion field birders. As the number of birders and sight records increases it becomes more important than ever to treat these records as the important scientific data they are. The most important function of NYSARC is not to accept or reject individual records, but to preserve the written or photographic documentation of sight records for future evaluation by ornithologists. Without these documents it will be impossible to evaluate many sight records twenty years hence. Birders have a unique opportunity to make a real scientific contribution through their hobby; it is an obligation we should all heed.

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As this issue of *The Kingbird* goes to press, the Editors have learned with sorrow that Robert W. Smart died suddenly in Ocean City, Maryland, on February 3, 1979. Bob Smart was a long time friend and field companion of many Federation members and was until recently the Editor of the Regional Reports and "Highlights of the Season" in these pages.

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

Once more the season was governed by the whimsical jet stream, which this fall remained well north in Canada, pulling the storm centers along beneath it. Although the resulting persistent southerly winds blowing into these lows gave birders lovely gentle weather, the migration, with but few bright exceptions, was a dismal void. Even expected late-lingering species were few and far between despite a superabundance of wild fruits, including the best beechnut crop in some seven years (Eaton). About the only complaints in the food department were an absence of acorns and a shortage of rabbits.

With September nearly average for both temperature and rainfall, October was a bit colder than normal and fairly wet. However, November, which basked in Indian summer the first two weeks, was both unusually warm and very dry. At Buffalo, temperatures averaged 6° F. (3.3° C.) above normal, and precipitation was lower by 2.2 in. (5.6 cm.). Almost no snow fell except for a couple of inches during the last week of the period when smaller lakes began to freeze over. (Data from WIVB TV, Buffalo, and Water and Light Plant, Wellsville).

Encouraging for the season were 1) fair Whistling Swan and duck flights, 2) many Rough-legged Hawks, promising a good winter season, and more than usual Marsh Hawks, 3) about normal Ruffed Grouse and Turkey populations, 4) a modest increase in counts for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Red-headed Woodpeckers, 5) a slight rise in E. Phoebe numbers, 6) an invasion of Red-breasted Nuthatches and a good flight of Brown Creepers, 7) E. Bluebirds doing well according to faithful reporting on our beautiful state bird, 8) large flocks of Am. Robins and Cedar Waxwings enjoying the wild cherry crop in October (Eaton), 9) higher census tallies for the E. Meadowlark, Rusty Blackbird and Brown-headed Cowbird, but lower for the Com. Grackle, 10) a few Evening Grosbeaks, many House Finches, and a promising representation of winter finches, 11) Savannah, Chipping and Field Sparrows possibly in better shape, and 12) excellent numbers of White-crowned, White-throated and Lincoln's Sparrows.

Depressing this season were: 1) a light loon flight, 2) a generally poor raptor migration, 3) continued decline of Ring-necked Pheasant numbers, 4) very few Am. Woodcocks, 5) lower counts for the Chimney Swift, both the Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, E. Wood Pewee and Horned Lark, 6) Titmice numbers remaining low but some found feeding on beechnuts (Ives), 7) pathetic wren tallies and no Mockingbirds, 8) thrush, kinglet and warbler migration "the poorest in the past 13 years of banding" (Clark), 9) lower census figures for the Red-winged Blackbird, and 10) fewer Cardinals and Purple Finches, as well as Vesper, Fox and Swamp Sparrows.

Rarities include Mute Swan, Red Phalarope, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Saw-whet Owl, Common Raven, Prairie Warbler, House Finch, and Dark-eyed ("Oregon") Junco.

Abbreviations: BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; Cem—Cemetery; GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NP—Nature Preserve; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; RC—Regional Bird Census, Oct. 8, with H+ = record high, H = second highest ever, L = low, and L- = record low fall counts for some species (Compiled by H. and W. Klabunde); Res—Reservoir; SF or SP—State Forest or Park.

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LOONS—DUCKS: The mild season helped to make the Com. Loon flight lighter than usual with but ten counted on the RC and regional max 11 over Hamburg Town Park Nov. 19. A single Red-throated Loon was seen at Niagara Falls Gorge Nov. 12. In addition to

three Double-crested Cormorants appearing for the RC, at least seven were reported from two locations, one of these being at Barcelona Sept. 24. Noteworthy heron reports include: Great Blue, 129 on the RC (H); max Black-crowned Night Heron, 15 at Tiff Farm Sept. 6; and the only Am. Bittern, one near Birdsall Sept. 9. The MUTE SWAN at South Buffalo Nov. 8 (DF) and at Porter Ave., Buffalo, Nov. 12 (RA, Daniels), was probably the same bird that was in a nearby area all summer. Peak of the Whistling Swan flight was 340 (!) at Mayville Nov. 25 (FR+). The fall build-up of Canada Geese reached 10,000 at Iroquois NWR Sept. 24 (DD), a single Brant was spotted at Prendergast Point Nov. 25 (FR+), and the regional max of 75 Snow Geese was at Rushford L Nov. 14 (HH). Regional duck maxima, other than RC, unless otherwise indicated, were: Mallard, 158 in Hume Oct. 25; Black Duck, eight at Fillmore Oct. 21; Gadwall, eight at Olcott Oct. 15; Pintail, 50 at Buckhorn Is. SP Nov. 22; Blue-winged Teal, 25 at Farmersville Sta. Sept. 4; Green-winged Teal, eight at both Cuba L. Nov. 13 and Beaver Is. SP Nov. 22; Am. Wigeon, 15 at Times Beach Sept. 19-20; N. Shoveler, one at Tiff Farm Oct. 24, 27 and Nov. 19; Wood Duck, 58 in Hume Sept. 2; Redhead, early arrivals, one at Buffalo Harbor Sept. 3 (RA) and two at Times Beach Sept. 26 (O'Dell), and regional max 91 at Mayville Nov. 25; Ring-necked Duck, 500 at Cuba L. Nov. 13; Canvasback, 800 on the Niagara R. Nov. 18; Greater Scaup, 1600 at the same place the same day; Lesser Scaup, one at Farmersville Sta. Nov. 15; Com. Goldeneye, four at Farmersville Sta. Nov. 21; Bufflehead, 100 at Cuba L. Nov. 13; White-winged Scoter, 285 at Olcott Oct. 15; Surf Scoter, 22 at Porter Ave., Buffalo, Oct. 9; Black Scoter, 62 at Point Gratiot Oct. 14; Ruddy Duck, 161 near Niagara Falls Nov. 5; Hooded Merganser, 167 at Mayville Nov. 25; Com. Merganser, 20 at Cuba L. Nov. 13; and Red-breasted Merganser, 15 at Cuba L. Nov. 19.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: As noted several times in the past, Cooper's Hawks outnumbered Sharp-shinned Hawks. Sharp-shinned Hawks tallied nine on the RC and a total of six were seen in five areas, but 14 Cooper's Hawks appeared for the RC (H+), and seven areas reported single birds. Other interesting raptor notes include: Red-shouldered Hawk, eight on the RC, with only four other birds reported—all from Allegany Co.; Broad-winged Hawk, one a week late at Shelby Oct. 21 (Brooks, Foster); Rough-legged Hawk, one arr early for the RC in Cattaraugus Co. (SE) and 25 others totaled from here and there; Marsh Hawk, 48 birds on the RC (H+) and other reports of 21, total, from 12 locations. Ospreys tallied three on the RC and among scattered reports of at least nine birds, singles staying late were at Tonawanda Oct. 28-30 (Hulls) and at Belmont thru Nov. 11 (DB+). The Belmont Osprey met a tragic end, being found shot dead at the Belmont Conservation Club Nov. 13 (DB, LB). Only 31 Ring-necked Pheasants were discovered for the RC (L-). A splendid fall concentration of Am. Coots materialized again at Mayville with max 800 on Nov. 25 (FR+). Highlights from the unimpressive shorebird flight are: Am. Golden Plover, max 70 at Shelby Oct. 21; Ruddy Turnstone, two on the RC, one at Clarence Sept. 25, and two at Bird Island, Buffalo, Oct. 9; Com. Snipe, three on the RC, lowest in 37 years, and max 12 at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9; Whimbrel, two at Times Beach Sept. 1 (RA+); Upland Sandpiper, one the last of season, at Clarence Sept. 1; Greater Yellowlegs, max 12 at both Times Beach Sept. 20 and at Iroquois NWR Oct. 14; Lesser Yellowlegs, max 15 at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9; Red Knot, one, still with "reddish breast," at Allegheny Res. Sept. 8 (SE); Pectoral Sandpiper, one on the RC and max four at Hume Sept. 14 (KP); White-rumped Sandpiper, two at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9 (DF); Baird's Sandpiper, one at Prendergast Point Sept. 3 and one at Bemus Point Sept. 10, and 16 (RS); Dunlin, three at Clarence Nov. 5—only report; and **RED PHALAROPE**, one, early, at Point Gratiot Oct. 9 (RA, PA). Noteworthy larid reports include: Glaucous Gull, singles at Niagara Falls Gorge Nov. 18, and Nov. 24, and over Cheektowaga Nov. 28; Great Black-backed Gull, 204 on the RC (H+), breaking the record set last year; **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**, an adult at Niagara Falls Gorge irregularly Nov. 3-18 (FR+ mob); Ring-billed Gull, 100 at the Allegheny Res. Sept. 8—a good number away from the Great Lakes; Franklin's Gull, no less than nine birds, total, from Buffalo and Niagara Falls areas; Bonaparte's Gull, max 14,000 at the Niagara R. Nov. 18; Little Gull, two

on the RC, and at least ten individuals near Lake Erie and along the Niagara R; **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE**, an imm. at Niagara Falls Gorge Nov. 12 (DF+); Com. Tern, 1700 at Niagara R. Oct. 21; Caspian Tern, 11 at Barcelona Sept. 4 (RS)—an unusual number for the Southern Tier; and Black Tern, 750 in the Peace Bridge area Sept. 1 (HA).

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Reaching H+ numbers on the RC were: Rock Dove, 2492; Mourning Dove, 694; Screech Owl, 18 (with few other reports); Great Horned Owl, 18 (tied for this status); Short-eared Owl, two (tied for highest ever); and Com. Nighthawk, 20. A Black-billed Cuckoo was banded at Farmersville Sta. Sept. 6 (DC), the only report. The first Snowy Owl of the season appeared at Times Beach Oct. 31 (Zebehazy), probably the same bird as was seen here several times during Nov. when singles were also noted at Buffalo Harbor and South Buffalo (mob). The only Long-eared Owl reported was one at West Seneca Nov. 3 (O'Dell). A **SAW-WHET OWL** which was picked up in Buffalo, apparently following a store window collision, was nursed for a week by D. Bigelow of Beaver Meadow, and was then banded and released by D. Clark at Farmersville Sta. Nov. 13. Seven Red-headed Woodpeckers were counted on the RC and five areas reported singles.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Of interest from the RC are: 62 E. Phoebes, nearly twice last year's number; only one E. Wood Pewee (six last year); 86 Horned Larks, down over 50% from 1977; 80 Rough-winged Swallows (H+); 1935 Blue Jays (H+); and 3141 Com. Crows (H). Three week-late Tree Swallows were left behind at Wilson Nov. 5 (DF, HM+). Thought to be migrating were a flock of 20 noisy Blue Jays near Alfred Nov. 28 and 70 Com. Crows traveling south near Olean Oct. 25. Exciting news from the hills of the Southern Tier was the identification of a **COMMON RAVEN** near Alfred Oct. 28 (CK). It also must have been thrilling on a four-mile "hike through mature forest" sw of Olean to count 30 Red-breasted Nuthatches Oct. 30 (SE). Only six Tufted Titmice appeared on the RC and but five areas reported a total of 11 birds. The Carolina Wren is even worse off with singles on the RC and at Barcelona Sept. 24 (RS), the only reports. For other wrens, the RC disclosed both good news and bad news, compared with last year: Winter Wrens, 12 (up from eight); House Wrens, nine (down from 12); and Long-billed Marsh Wren, one (down from 11). A late Swainson's Thrush was still at Tifft Farm Oct. 22 (DF+). The E. Bluebird seems to be coming O.K. with 112 found for the RC and other reports totaling at least 89 birds from 13 areas. Kinglets continue to bear watching, with Golden-crowned, 114 on the RC (85 last year) and 14 others counted from five locations, and Ruby-crowned, 198 on the RC (23 last year) with 11 others from eight areas. Max of a good flight of Water Pipits was 140 at Clarence Nov. 14 and of Cedar Waxwings, which totaled 1415 (H) on the RC, was 150 in Hume Oct. 26. At least 11 N. Shrikes, mostly singles, were found hunting in ten areas.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: 11 Philadelphia Vireos were identified from five scattered sites. Although the warbler flight was poor, a few species lifted it from purely dull: Tennessee Warbler, 17 on the RC (H) plus three other birds from two locations; two Orange-crowned Warblers, both banded, one near Alfred Oct. 4 (EB) and one, late, sw of Olean Nov. 6 (SE); N. Parula, one on the RC; a late Bay-breasted Warbler at Tifft Farm Oct. 22 (DF+); Black-poll Warbler, one on the RC and 15 at S. Buffalo Sept. 7 (O'Dell); Pine Warbler, two on the RC and one at Newstead Sept. 9 (DF); **PRAIRIE WARBLER**, one at Tifft Farm Sept. 10 (RA+)—exceptionally rare in the fall; Northern Waterthrush, three at S. Buffalo Sept. 27 (O'Dell); and Hooded Warbler, one at Barcelona Sept. 24 (RS).

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Regional max for the **HOUSE FINCH**, again at Eggertsville, was 31 during Nov. (AM, WM). Since Am. Goldfinch numbers were down during the summer, the flock of 200 at Holland Oct. 19 (Becker) is encouraging. A few winter finches were located: Com. Redpoll, one in Clarence Oct. 29 (DF); Pine Siskin, 35 on the RC (only five last year) plus four others, total, from two areas; and White-winged Crossbill, two early at E. Amherst Oct. 28 (DF), six at Charlotte Nov. 4 (FR), one at Oakland Rural Cem. Nov. 5 (DF, HM+) and 30 at Amity L. Nov. 20 (VP). A **DARK-EYED ("OREGON") JUNCO** was watched at E. Amherst Oct. 17-27 (DF). Three Fox Sparrows were tallied on the RC, the

lowest number in 22 years, and the only other reports were a bird at Clarence Oct. 30 (Wagner) and max eight regularly in Amity Oct. 21-Nov. 18 (VP, RP). In addition to the four Lincoln's Sparrows on the RC there were four in Hume Sept. 17 (KP), one at Porter Ave., Buffalo, Sept. 19 (DF), one at Farmersville Sta. Oct. 2 (DC) and one near Alfred Oct. 10 (EB). From all reports, only one lone Song Sparrow remained in the region, at Belmont, by Nov. 28 (DB, LB). The first Snow Buntings for the season were 35 at Lyndonville Nov. 5 and max was 125 at Darien Nov. 8.

Amity Lake, Belmont, N.Y. 14813

REGION 2 — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

The Fall of 1978 can probably best be summarized by the oft-repeated exchange between birders in the field, "What's around today?" "Nothing!" With few exceptions, this exchange is the story of the season. Early, everyone awaited the cold and fall storms that would push the migrants south. Late, many species were still virtually absent, either as migrants or as late stragglers in this very mild fall. Coverage of the area was good; month by month species met or exceeded almost all records for comparable periods of the past five years. It was numbers and expected specialties that were missing. Is it possible that most of the fall migration moved over or around us during this unusually pleasant season?

The weather picture was generally warmer, drier, and sunnier than normal. It was beautiful for hikes and picnics. Birders were in the field in numbers; only the birds were absent. Early September saw the passage of several fronts, these only ripples on an almost uniformly pleasant background. With the exception of a freak snow on the weekend of Oct. 7 and 8, October was similar. November brought hints of a winter to come, but the first skim ice on the shallower ponds was not until the 23rd and snows of Nov. 20 and 27-29 were light and short-lived. The best waterfowl days were during the wildest winds and rains on Oct. 14 and 23 and Nov. 12 and 19.

Extracting real trends from a picture fogged by unusual weather is a hazardous undertaking. Among the more positive observations were: good loon, brant, and scaup flights over Lake Ontario, though mostly too far out to attract observers to long periods of counting; an excellent congregation of Horned Grebes; an outstanding late November concentration of Hooded Mergansers; good numbers of Am. Golden Plovers; an invasion of Snowy Owls; and a few hints of comeback for Winter Wrens and the kinglets. Negatives include: low numbers of Redhead, Canvasback, and all three accipiters, all of which may simply reflect the balmy season, low counts for all heron species, possibly accounted for by high water in the lakeshore marshes during the breeding season followed by their rapid draining and drying later; low gull counts, almost certainly weather related; continued lowering numbers of reports of Carolina Wren, Mockingbird, and Loggerhead Shrike; few out-of-place or date passerine migrants; and no winter finches, certainly as expected from patterns of records over the past 40