

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

Hampered by the notion that binoculars should be retired on the first of June until the fall migration, many birders miss one of the most exciting times of year, the nesting season. To the hooked nest-finder, each documented nest is a triumph, each fledgling a miracle, and in addition, the accumulated information is valuable to the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University for its nest-record program.

Grasses already stunted from the dry spring were discouraged by a cool, dry June when many mornings were cold and frost occurred locally the 12th, 25th and 26th. Some lake levels continued low. July, with frequent showers and electrical storms, was relatively warm and wet. However, August, colder than normal by 1.2° F ($.7^{\circ}\text{ C}$), was confusing, with precipitation varying across the Region. At Wellsville and Buffalo, rainfall was near normal, but at Olean, the 4+ in. (10.2 cm.) made this the wettest August in 37 years. On the 7th in Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties, a tornado hit the former, and flash floods struck them both. In several places temperatures dropped below 40° F (4.4° C) the 17th, and during the night of the 29th, more flash floods stunned Buffalo areas.

More than usual infestation of nesting boxes by blood-sucking larvae was noted by one observer. Although no bluebirds were lost to them because of careful monitoring, several Tree Swallow nestlings were, and cocoons from the larvae were also found in a Barn Swallow's and a phoebe's nest after the young fledged. Your Region 1 editor would appreciate further statistics on this problem.

Findings from 17 out of 19 routes of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) indicate numbers holding up well. However, absent for the first time ever were the Common Snipe, Upland Sandpiper, Hermit Thrush and Grasshopper Sparrow. Results of 15 of the 17 routes of the Allegany Co. "Mini Run" Breeding Bird Survey (Abbs) were also near normal. Here, the Marsh Hawk was unrecorded for the first time in nine years. Below, status for a species is abbreviated as: H+ or L- = highest or lowest ever, or tied, H or L = above or below average, sd+ or sd- = above or below one standard deviation, and S = stable.

Summer positives include 1) an excellent fruit crop with Red Oak and Beech plentiful but cone and Black Cherry spotty; 2) Great Blue and Green Herons doing well; 3) splendid Canada Goose and Wood Duck brood production, and more Hooded Mergansers than usual; 4) fair reports of the Turkey Vulture and good numbers of the Broad-winged Hawk; 5) a successful breeding season for the Ruffed Grouse and Turkey; 6) encouraging numbers of the Upland Sandpiper; 7) a steady population of the Common Nighthawk and Ruby-throated Hummingbird; 8) most flycatchers gaining following the setback from two successive wicked winters; 9) a population explosion for the Tree Swallow, and Cliff Swallows showing improvement in numbers, the latter now using overpasses and bridges of the Southern Tier Expressway for nesting sites (Meyer); 10) several summering Red-breasted Nuthatches; House Wrens gaining slowly, and a bear-wren story; 11) a delightful Eastern Bluebird season; 12) continued depletion of

Starlings, House Sparrows and grackles; 13) Warbling Vireos and Yellow Warblers doing fine and Yellow-rumped Warblers expanding their range; 14) modest growth in Eastern Meadowlark and House Finch numbers; 15) more Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows, good counts of the White-throated Sparrow and a neat Song Sparrow-Catbird tale.

Negatives for the season are 1) continued low numbers of Great Egrets, American Bitterns and Black Ducks; 2) fewer Red-tailed Hawks and local scarcity of American Kestrels—two species to be watched; a low Marsh Hawk population; 3) steady decline of the Ring-necked Pheasant and reduced numbers of the Killdeer, American Woodcock and Spotted Sandpiper; 4) dearth of owl reports—none of the Screech Owl; 5) lower numbers of the Chimney Swift, Common Flicker, Hairy Woodpecker, Rough-winged Swallow and Blue Jay, and continued scarcity of the Horned Lark; 6) little improvement for the Tufted Titmouse, nearly all wrens, (other than the House Wren), the Mockingbird or the Golden-crowned Kinglet; 7) no Loggerhead Shrikes; 8) few Black-and-white or Golden-winged Warblers and no Yellow-breasted Chats; 9) decline in the Cardinal population; 10) the Vesper Sparrow still in trouble, and reduced counts for the Field, Swamp and Song Sparrows.

Rarities include Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Bobwhite, Wilson's Phalarope, Northern Phalarope, Prothonotary Warbler, "Brewster's" Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Orchard Oriole and *Addenda* from spring: Wilson's Phalarope, Varied Thrush and Prothonotary Warbler.

Abbreviations: GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NP or NS—Nature Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; SF or SP—State Forest or Park.

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LOONS—DUCKS: A Com. Loon was recorded for the BBS, now the third time in late June. Another was seen in Allegany SP June 2, and one, first for fall, arr at Chautauqua L Aug. 19. A bird at Beaver Meadow June 8 and another at Tonawanda WMA Aug. 12 were the only reports of the Great Egret, but seven Black-crowned Night Herons appeared near Buffalo during July and Aug., and one immature was found in Hume Twp. July 28 (KP), an unusual area. The only Am. Bitterns discovered were two on the BBS (H). In addition to the nesting pair of Canada Geese at Farmersville Sta., five pairs produced at least 15 yg. in n. Allegany Co. where on Aug. 1 the flock totaled about 50 birds. Duck sightings of special interest include: Gadwall, 25 at Iroquois NWR June 10; Am. Wigeon, four at Times Beach June 10 and up to four irregularly in Buffalo areas during July and Aug.; Ring-necked Duck, one, very late, all summer at Forest Lawn Cemetery (DF+); Wood Duck, max report: 35 yg. in Hume Twp. June 9 from ten pairs of ad; Com. Merganser, two near Belmont June 15 for the Abbs, two consecutive years; and Red-breasted Merganser, three at Lakeside Beach SP June 10 and one at Times Beach Aug. 19.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Again tragedy accompanied some hawk nestings. Of GOSHAWK

nests, two were abandoned and two produced a total five yg. A Cooper's Hawk pair successfully fledged four yg. Of seven Red-shouldered Hawk nests, two females were found dead under their nests (cause of death undetermined), three were deserted and two produced a total of three yg. Only nine yg. Am. Kestrels were reported for the season. Outside its usual haunts was the Goshawk at Allenberg Bog Aug. 31 (Chapple). Numbers of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were down slightly with six of the former and seven of the latter, usually singles, at scattered locations. A BALD EAGLE adult was identified near Vandalia June 13 (MA). Only six Marsh Hawks, in addition to one on the BBS (S), and three Ospreys were noted for the season. An ad Ring-necked Pheasant with 16 yg. appeared at Times Beach July 9. Three Soras were found at Tift Farm July 12. A Killdeer nest with four eggs and ad was found July 26 (R. Brooks, EB), 22 days past the record final egg date for N.Y. State; the eggs hatched later the same day. Other noteworthy plover and sandpiper reports, all from S. Buffalo unless otherwise designated, include: Black-bellied Plover, one Aug. 14 and three at Clarence Aug. 29; Upland Sandpiper, a total of nine birds from six areas; Willet, one Aug. 26; Lesser Yellowlegs, max 100 Aug. 10; Red Knot, one July 30; Pectoral Sandpiper, two Aug. 2; Dunlin, one, late, June 20 (MZ); Short-billed Dowitcher, two, early, June 28 (RA, MF), max 24, also early, July 2 and 3 (RA, MF), and max four Aug. 2 and 14 (DF); Stilt Sandpiper, one to two irregularly July 12 to Aug. 14; Sanderling, two at Cuba L June 6 and seven (ASc), rare away from Great Lakes areas; WILSON'S PHALAROPE, one Aug. 19 and 20 (DF, RA, Byron), and NORTHERN PHALAROPE, one, early, Aug. 14 (DF). Noteworthy larids were: a Franklin's Gull at Buffalo Harbor Aug. 21, 28; max two, Little Gulls at LaSalle Park Aug. 15-20; Forster's Tern, one at Buffalo Aug. 11; and Caspian Tern, two at Olcott June 10 and one at Times Beach Aug. 26.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: A Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest at Amity L June 23 (Wilcove, VP+) fledged two yg. A Hamburg pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers produced two yg. in June (MZ) and a total of 15 birds was reported from nine locations during the summer. Nesting Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were found in Farmersville SF (DC) and at Birdsall (RA+), and four birds appeared at Cuba L during late July and mid-Aug. (ASc).

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: In Amity and Scio Twps. 19 pairs of the E. Phoebe, with 12 pairs nesting twice, produced at least 81 fledglings, with only eight nesting failures (VP). In Quaker Run, Allegany SP, there were only four second nestings, a drop from about 30 in 1976 (SE). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was seen in E. Amherst Aug. 10 (DF+). A pair of Tree Swallows nested late at Buttons' Pond in Amity Twp, having four eggs July 11 and 18 and one nestling July 28 to Aug. 10; this nesting was later by 19 days for the eggs and by 27 days for the nestling than the previous N.Y. State record; the yg. bird fledged successfully (VP). Purple Martins, too, broke the N.Y. State record with two pairs still feeding nestlings at Nicholson's on Riverview Hghts., Wellsville, Aug. 31—16 days record-late (EL). One to two Tufted Titmice were seen at Limestone July 13 thru Aug. 28 (RV, JV), the only report. A House Wren nest box at Saunders' Pond, Amity Twp, with six noisy nestlings Aug. 8 was discovered the 15th with post broken off, the sturdy box ripped apart and nestlings gone (VP). On Sept. 4 the Dept. of Environmental Conservation trapped a 150 lb. black bear here at the pond! Other less dramatic but interesting wren reports include: Winter Wren, singles on the BBS (H), at Little Valley June 17 and in S. Wales July 18; Carolina Wren, singles at Lewiston July 15 and near Wellsville July 31; and Short-billed Marsh Wren, one at Somerset June 10. Seven Mockingbirds were tallied from four locations. In Allegany Co., 17 pairs of the E. Bluebird produced at least 70 fledglings from 22 nestings, and in Cattaraugus Co., the two nestings reported fledged eight yg.; a total of seven other individuals was found in five areas. A single Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was in Hume Twp. Aug. 15 (KP). Up to two Golden-crowned Kinglets near Alfred during June and July were seen with yg. Aug. 3 (EB), and two were also found late at McCarty Hill June 17 (RA+).

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Three areas reported one to two Yellow-throated Vireos during June, and a single Philadelphia Vireo visited E. Amherst Aug. 25. Worthy warbler notes in-

clude: **PROTHONOTARY WARBLER**, one at Iroquois NWR June 3, 10 (AM, WM, DF); Blue-winged Warbler, three fledglings in Amity Twp. June 11 (VP), five days earlier than the previous N.Y. State records; "**BREWSTER'S**" **WARBLER** (hybrid), one on the BBS (H+) and one in Amity Twp. June 22 (VP, MP); N. Parula, one, late, in Allegany SP June 17 (RA+); Yellow-rumped Warbler, four at McCarty Hill, late, June 16 (RA+), four nests found in old breeding territory near Alfred (EB), and discovery of three active nests in a new area, on Reddy Rd., Amity Twp. (VP); Cerulean Warbler, three in Iroquois NWR and two in Allenberg Bog in June; Pine Warbler, one with food for yg. and singing in mature Red Pine, Quaker Run, Allegany SP July 10 (SE); **PRAIRIE WARBLER**, one in E. Aurora June 5 (AM, Ruhls, AU), max four in Amity Twp through July 25 (VP, MP), and two active nests near Alfred in June, one predated, the other abandoned July 1 (EB).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: An **ORCHARD ORIOLE** was identified at Point Breeze June 10 (DF). The first Scarlet Tanager nest to be documented for Allegany Co. was found near Amity L, Amity Twp. 8.5 ft. up in a *Crataegus* with three nestlings June 17, but it failed due to predation (VP). Three late Evening Grosbeaks were tallied on the BBS. Three House Finches were found for the Abbs, a new species this year, and three yg. were noted at Egbertsville during the summer (AM, WM). Single Pine Siskins stayed late at Amity L June 1 (VP, RP) and at Cuba L June 21 (ASc). From 89% of 26 Am. Goldfinch nests near Amity L, 101 yg. fledged successfully (VP)—good production for one area. Sparrow reports of special interest include: Grasshopper Sparrow, an ad. with yg. at Clarence July 27 plus 16 others counted from eight locations; Henslow's Sparrow, a max ten (!) at Clarence June 8 (DF) and five more totaled from four areas; Vesper Sparrow, one yg. at Charlotte June 24 (FR) and four other scattered singles; and White-throated Sparrow, nine on old breeding grounds near Alfred during June and July (EB). In late July a Gray Catbird was seen near Alfred Sta. carefully constructing her stick-nest; however, a Song Sparrow took it over, adding her own materials, and in late Aug. fledged four yg.! (EB).

Addenda: Among noteworthy records received too late for the spring report were: one very early **WILSON'S PHALAROPE** at Bethany May 28 (Kellor, Masons+); 1777 migrating Blue Jays near Hamburg May 8 (ARC, AS); a **VARIED THRUSH** in W. Seneca May 3 (Kitka); max two **PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS** in Iroquois NWR May 14 thru 23 (Daniels+); a single Yellow-breasted Chat in S. Buffalo May 8, 11 (O'Dell); and House Finches nesting in N. Buffalo, May 2, 7 (RA).

Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813

REGION 2 — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

Weatherwise, this season was a bit wetter and cooler than average; both highs and lows for each month averaged 1-2° F (1° C) below normal, June was pleasant with well-spaced rainfall on eight days and with two spells of cold nights, the second setting two record lows, which reduced the blood-sucking insect population to near zero to the benefit of human outdoor activities. The latter cold and lack of flying insects (June 23-26) may have adversely affected breeding birds with young nestlings at that point, otherwise it should have had little effect. July provided a good long hot spell, though again cooler than the peak heat of the past several years. Rainfall was again well-spaced and moderate until a very heavy storm on July 31. August saw the jet stream swing south, resulting in a series of