

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

GENE HUGGINS

The month of June was close to the average for summer weather in Region 5. There was a brief period of cold temperatures which resulted in the mortality of some species, but fortunately not to a great extent.

From the beginning of July until the second week in August, extremely dry conditions existed throughout the Region. The dry spell helped to prolong and expand the exposure of mudflats for migrating shorebirds. One feature which became apparent during this migration was the extreme paucity of immature shorebirds on these exposed areas. Unfortunately these same areas, such as the north and south spit at Sandy Pond, the east shore of Oneida Lake and the mudflats at Onondaga Lake, are becoming subject to more and more human disturbance. Throughout the Region agricultural land is being increasingly converted into what one birder so aptly describes as the "corn desert," favorable only to icterids, but no haven for other birds. This is especially true for the Savannah, Grasshopper, and Henslow's Sparrows. Along with this expansion of cultivated acreage comes the removal of hedgerows, a valuable habitat for mimids and sparrows.

The last two weeks in August brought badly needed rain and a resurgence of green growth that almost seemed like a second spring. During this time impressive numbers of early migrating vireos, warblers and flycatchers passed through the area.

Intracontinentally wintering species such as wrens, kinglets, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are all showing low numbers, in large part due to the last two severe winters.

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Abbreviations: Breeding Bird Surveys—BBS; Howland's Island—Higma; Lake Ontario littoral—LOL; Onondaga Lake—Onon L.; Sandy Pond—SPd.

Observations for which no observer is listed should be credited to F. G. Scheider.

LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: one lingering on Oneida L. Sylvan Beach June 3 (B & S Peebles) and two at SPd. July 15; Pied-billed Grebe: max. ten Higma Aug. 11 (PDeB); Double-crested Cormorant: up in numbers, max 26 LOL Aug. 26 (MSR) with one on Onon L. Aug. 31; Black-crowned Night Heron: max seven near Manlius Ct. Aug. 3 (KC); Least Bittern: very low numbers, max two Sterling Creek Marsh July 7; Am. Bittern: scattered singles, one each from Clay Marsh, Deer Cr. Marsh, and Rome Marsh; Black Duck: max 18 Onon L, Amboy Pool Aug. 3, becoming increasingly scarce; Gadwall: one to two/day July 4 thru Aug. 31 Onon L, SPd; Pintail: two arriving Onon L July 25; Blue-winged Teal: max 37 LOL Aug. 25 (MSR); N. Shoveler: four arriving Onon L. Aug. 25; Wood Duck: max 45 Scott Swamp Aug. 26; Lesser Scaup: one at Onon L July 30, no other diving ducks for the period.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: expanding but poor in numbers, max four/day with two at Hinckley Res. July 13 (MacS); Marsh Hawk: scattered singles in the Region; Ruffed Grouse: max 11 Chittenango Gorge June 16 (MacS); Ring-necked Pheasant: one to two/day

continuing to decline; Virginia Rail: max 11 Utica Marsh June 10; Sora Rail: one adult, six immatures DeWitt Marsh July 10 (KC); Com. Gallinule: max 12 Sage Cr. Marsh Aug. 24 (MSR); Semipalmated Plover: max 25 Sylvan Beach Aug. 11 (DWA), arriving July 20, Onon L; Black-bellied Plover: max seven Onon L Aug. 29 (KC), arriving Aug. 16 Sylvan Beach (DWA); **WHIMBREL**: three birds SPd. Aug. 30 (FGS & DWC); Ruddy Turnstone: max three SPd. Aug. 26, arriving July 27 Onon L (KC); Upland Sandpiper: max 19 Canastota area Aug. 26 (KC); Spotted Sandpiper: max 32 Onon L July 14; Solitary Sandpiper: two arrived Amboy Pool July 5; Greater Yellowlegs: scarce one to five/day, arriving Amboy Pool June 29; Lesser Yellowlegs: max 127 Amboy Pool Aug. 24, arriving June 28, Onon L; Knot: two adults Onon L July 27 thru 29 with a max three at the same locality Aug. 31; Pectoral Sandpiper: max 41 Onon L July 26, arriving July 19; Baird's Sandpiper: max seven Onon L Aug. 21 (PDeB), first date July 25; Least Sandpiper: max 75 Onon L Aug. 13, arriving June 28; Short-billed Dowitcher: max 25 Sylvan Beach Aug. 24 (DWA), earliest date, Onon L July 4; Stilt Sandpiper: max 24 Onon L Aug. 24, arriving July 15; Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 178 Onon L July 26, first date July 15; Sanderling: max 18 Sylvan Beach Aug. 1 (DWA), arriving July 20 Onon L; Wilson's Phalarope: an impressive flight for the Region max five Onon L, Amboy Pool July 27 (DWC), arriving Onon L July 4, a total of 12 for the period; N. Phalarope: one to two/day SPd, Onon L Aug. 16 thru 31; Parasitic Jaeger: four light phase birds Derby Hill Aug. 25 (GS); Great Black-backed Gull: max four at midsummer SPd. July 15; Bonaparte's Gull: one at Onon L July 20 (PDeB); **LITTLE GULL**: one SPd Aug. 19 (FGS); Caspian Tern: Onon L in recent years has become a staging area with a max 28 Aug. 19; Black Tern: very low numbers, max nine along Salmon R July 19; none at Scott Swamp or Clay Marsh.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Yellow-billed Cuckoo: max three N Victory BBS June 1; Black-billed Cuckoo: max five through the period; Short-eared Owl: one at SPd. flats Aug. 19; Com. Nighthawk: an increase of five birds and two breeding pairs over the previous year for a total of 19, Syracuse (B. Long); Chimney Swift: max 150+ Oneida June 25 (B & S Peebles); Red-headed Woodpecker: max five s. Madison Co. July 9 (GC); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: scarce on the Tug Hill Plateau, max 7 July 5.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: E. Kingbird: max 41 Oswego Co. Aug. 12; E. Phoebe: scarce with a max four/day; Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: one arrived at Hickory Grove LOL Aug. 12; Least Flycatcher: max 22 Tug Hill Plateau Aug. 5; Tree Swallow: max 1,200 SPd. Aug. 26; Barn Swallow: max 9,000 SPd. Aug. 26; Bank Swallow: max 2,000 SPd. Aug. 26; Cliff Swallow: eight nests under a barn roof at Holland Patent (Van Dresar); Tufted Titmouse: two adults and one immature at Clinton July 27 thru Aug. 3 (DeSimones); Brown Creeper: singles only, scarce as breeders on the lake plain due to the shedding of bark from dead American elm; House Wren: max 14/day through the period; Long-billed Marsh Wren: max 53 Sterling Creek Marsh by canoe 3.5 mi. July 7; Mockingbird: nesting pairs at Whitesboro and DeWitt-Syracuse area; Brown Thrasher: max 13 Kasoag BBS (MSR); Hermit Thrush: one to three in the Tug Hill Plateau very low; E. Bluebird: in the Oneida area there were 250 boxes with 36 active nests and 20 nesting pairs. From those active nests 157 eggs were laid with 128 hatching and 97 being fledged. The Eaton area had 29 out of the 82 boxes with fledged young. Golden-crowned Kinglet: one each from the N. Wilmurt BBS, and the McKeever BBS.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Philadelphia Vireo: one arriving at SPd Aug. 19; Warbling Vireo: max 19 N. Victory BBS June 1 (MSR); Golden-winged Warbler: max 19 cent. Oswego Co. Aug. 12; "Lawrence's" Warbler: one at Pratt's Falls June 2 thru 22 (FGS, KC); Tennessee Warbler: one at Pompey July 12, a very early arrival date (DWC); No. Parula: one at SPd Aug. 30; Yellow Warbler: max 39 SPd Aug. 16; Magnolia Warbler: one in cent. Oswego Co. Aug. 12 with a max 48 Pompey Aug. 28 (DWC); Black-throated Blue Warbler: Max 17 Tug Hill Plateau Aug. 5; Black-throated Green Warbler: max 25 Old Forge BBS June 27; Chestnut-sided Warbler: max 35 on the McKeever BBS and a max 21 Kasoag BBS; Bay-breasted Warbler: one arrived in cent. Oswego Co. Aug. 12; Pine Warbler: one at Pine Grove near Sel-

kirk Shores State Park July 19, and one in cent. Oswego Co. Aug. 12; Ovenbird: max 25 Fairdale June 17 (MSR); Louisiana Waterthrush: one Chittenango Gorge July 30 (MacS), and one at the mouth of Nine Mile Cr. Onon L July 25; Yellow-breasted Chat: one at Pompey June 26, 27 (DWC); Hooded Warbler: one to three/day Oswego Co. lake plain; Canada Warbler: max 12 Tug Hill Plateau Aug. 5.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: Bobolink: max 150 cent. Oswego Co. Aug. 12; Orchard Oriole: one Town Island Rd., Kirkville, two adults and two young last seen June 14; Scarlet Tanager: max 13 Old Forge BBS June 27; Rose-breasted Grosbeak: max 26 cent. Oswego Co. Aug. 12; Indigo Bunting: max 18 N. Wilmurt BBS June 25; Savannah Sparrow: max 8 Deer Creek area July 8, very low numbers; Grasshopper Sparrow: six birds for the period from three separate localities: Syracuse Airport, Town of Redfield, Camden area; Henslow's Sparrow: max 8 Bolivar, DeWitt Marsh area Aug. 5 (KC); Vesper Sparrow: a total of seven birds from six localities in the Region continuing to show a steady decline; Chipping Sparrow: max 37 McKeever BBS June 23; Field Sparrow: max seven Kasoag BBS June 10 (MSR); Swamp Sparrow: max 27 July 7.

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REGION 6 - ST. LAWRENCE

LEE B. CHAMBERLAINE

Summer of 1979 could be called cool. Although highs of low 90° temperatures were recorded, records for lows were broken. On June 13th a low of 39° F (3° C) was recorded. On June 25 a low of 33° F (1° C) was recorded and on July 4 a cool record 40° F low for that date broke a 1927 record. Rainfall was light for June and July. Heavy rain in the beginning of August and mid-August made up the deficits in total rainfall. Lake Ontario water levels dropped during the dry spell but not as low as last year. The dry summer conditions again favored abundant fruit production in almost all wildlife food species and cone production was also up. Indications of an early Fall were evident.

Positive trends for the period are: increases in Turkey Vulture; Bald Eagles all over; improvements in Marsh Hawks and Upland Sandpipers; excellent shorebird reports; multiple Short-billed Marsh Wren sightings; a Loggerhead Shrike nest and some excellent grassland sparrow records.

Negatives for the period include: no Sharp-shinned or Cooper's Hawk sightings; low numbers of American Kestrels; almost nonexistent phoebes, Horned Larks, Vesper Sparrows and low numbers of White-throated Sparrows. Additionally, there are as yet unexplained "local" lows of certain species. Why are cowbirds low in the Henderson area? Perhaps the dry summer weather?

Rarities for the period and there were more than normal included: Great Egret, Mute Swan, Stilt Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Barn Owl, Short-billed Marsh Wren, Louisiana Waterthrush, Yellow-breasted Chat, Grasshopper Sparrow and Henslow's Sparrow.

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