

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

Every season has a beauty and delight all its own, especially for birders, even though this fall's weather was too nice for really good migratory fallouts or for arrival of many northern species which often spend the winter here. Since there was little snow, and lakes and ponds continued open, some birds stayed with us later than usual, but avoided well-stocked feeders as they took advantage of the bumper wild food crop. Although there was a bounty of acorns, cones and wild grapes, the scarcity of rodents, both voles and rabbits, resulted in low raptor numbers.

Temperatures were about normal except for November when a week of unusually warm Indian Summer beginning the 15th raised that month's average 3.3° F. (1.8° C.) higher than usual. Rainfall was near normal even though during October and November there was precipitation on half the days. Because of the cloudy, damp early October, leaves fell early, baring the branches for the regional census day. Then, to make itself memorable and presaging the winter to come, the season cut loose with one "wing-dinger" of a snowstorm November 30th, piling up some three feet of the stuff in and around Buffalo, and making "snow," for those residents, a dirty word.

Positives for the fall were 1) a record fall Whistling Swan flight; 2) improved numbers of the Ruffed Grouse and Turkey and a slightly better count of the Ring-necked Pheasant; 3) good reports of the Red-bellied Woodpecker; 4) slightly better tallies of the Horned Lark; 5) a record Purple Martin nestling date; 6) lots of Black-capped Chickadees; a good flight of the Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Brown Creeper; and a few more Winter Wrens; 7) several late robins; 8) better numbers of the Golden-crowned Kinglet; 9) widespread large flocks of the Cedar Waxwing; 10) an interesting warbler flight; 11) record count of the Red-winged Blackbird; 12) continued proliferation of the House Finch; and 13) a few more Vesper and Swamp Sparrows.

Negatives for the season were 1) low numbers of loons and herons; 2) scarcity of geese and ducks; 3) fewer hawks and owls—no irruption of Rough-legged Hawks and no Snowy Owls; 4) a poor shorebird flight; 5) annual flight of the Common Nighthawk missing and numbers very low; 6) fewer Belted Kingfishers, Downy Woodpeckers and Rough-winged Swallows; 7) continued low tallies for the Tufted Titmouse; no Carolina or Long-billed Marsh Wrens and almost no Mockingbirds; 8) a weak Ruby-crowned Kinglet flight; shrike numbers way down; 9) a poor Rusty Blackbird flight but record high count of the Common Grackle; 10) lower tallies of the American Goldfinch; and absence of most "winter" finches; and 11) reduced numbers of the Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow and Song Sparrow.

Rarities include Glossy Ibis, Mute Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Parasitic Jaeger, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Sabine's Gull, Barn Owl, Saw-whet Owl, Common Raven, White-eyed Vireo and Dickcissel.

Abbreviations: BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; mob—many observers; NP or NS—Nature Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; RC—Regional Bird Census, Oct. 14, directed by the BOS, with H+ = record high, or tied, and L- = lowest since 13 or more years, for fall counts for some species (compiled by B. A. Lown); Res—Reservoir; SF or SP—State Forest or Park.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Loons were scarce with highest count of the Com. Loon only 15 at Olcott Oct. 27, and of the Red-throated, a single at Olcott Oct. 27 and at nearby Wilson the next day, and one in Niagara F. gorge Nov. 11. Individual Red-necked Grebes were seen at Olcott Oct. 29 and in Niagara F. and R. areas Nov. 2 and 26. In addition to a Double-crested Cormorant on the RC, were three at Barcelona Nov. 11. The only substantiated fall report of a Great Egret was one at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9, while maximum of the Black-crowned Night Heron was but four at Tifft Farm during Sept. Only two Am. Bitterns, on the RC, were reported. Exciting for the season was the GLOSSY IBIS at Burgeson Sanctuary Oct. 21 and 22 where the bird was watched by a dozen observers and photographed (RS+). A MUTE SWAN was identified at Buffalo Sept. 26 (Partridge), and maximum of a splendid Whistling Swan flight was 1000 (!) over Burgeson Sanctuary Nov. 10 (Beals, Grisez), a record fall concentration. Canada Geese numbered only 4006 on the RC and maximum other than the census was 350 at Burgeson Sanctuary Nov. 10, but a fine flight of Brant included high counts of 500 at Ft. Niagara Oct. 27 and 125 at Olcott the same day. The only Snow Geese reported were 48 (blue morph) at Iroquois NWR Nov. 21 and 25. Among noteworthy duck tallies from the RC were: Black Duck, 231; N. Shoveler, nine; Wood Duck, 117; Redhead, 31; Canvasback, five; Greater Scaup, 4420 (highest in 20 years); White-winged Scoter, 73; Surf Scoter, five; Black Scoter, nine; Ruddy Duck, 84; and Com. Merganser, 119 (H+). Some Ring-necked Ducks appeared early: one at Forest Lawn staying on from summer through Sept. (DF+), and six at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9 (AM, WM+). Interesting maximum duck reports, other than the census, include: Mallard, 400 at Burgeson Sanctuary Nov. 10; Gadwall, ten at Iroquois NWR Sept. 30; Blue-winged Teal, 350 at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9; Am. Wigeon, 100 at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9; Wood Duck, 40 at Cuba L. Sept. 17-21; Redhead, two at S. Buffalo Sept. 23 and two at Times Beach Oct. 4; Greater Scaup, 15,000 at Niagara F. Res. Oct. 27; BARROW'S GOLDENEYE, one at Niagara F. Nov. 21, 23 and 24 (Wilcove, FR+); White-winged Scoter, 300 at Olcott Oct. 8; Surf Scoter, 12 on the Niagara R. Nov. 4; Black Scoter, 100 at Olcott Oct. 27; Ruddy Duck, 56 at Niagara F. Res. Oct. 27; Hooded Merganser, 70 at Iroquois NWR Nov. 21; and Com. Merganser, singles at Times Beach Sept. 27 and at Cuba L. Nov. 14.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: The only report of a GOSHAWK was one at Kennedy Oct. 21 (Gagne *vide* RS). Sharp-shinned Hawks numbered 12 on the RC and 14 were reported from seven areas, while 14 Cooper's Hawks were tallied on the RC and singles were found in but scattered locations. Other noteworthy raptors include: Red-shouldered Hawk, four on the RC and only one other, in Angelica Twp. Sept. 1; Rough-legged Hawk, four on the RC and singles in three areas; BALD EAGLE, one, a sub-adult, over Williamsville Sept. 7 (DF) and an immature at Iroquois NWR Sept. 9 (AM, WM+); Marsh Hawk, 30 on the RC and at least 14 reported from 13 locations; Osprey, six on the RC and seven tallied from six areas; and Am. Kestrel, 63 on the RC with fewer other reports than usual. On the RC 46 Ring-necked Pheasants were found and four were noted in Allegany Co. during early Oct. 155 Turkeys were tallied on the RC (H+). A Virginia Rail was spotted at Cuba Marsh Oct. 21 (AnS) and

two Soras appeared for the RC. Of the 44 Am. Golden Plovers on the RC, one was found in Cattaraugus Co., uncommon for the Southern Tier. Other notes of interest from the shore-bird flight include: Ruddy Turnstone, four on the RC; Am. Woodcock, five on the RC (L-); Com. Snipe, five on the RC (lowest in 21 years); Pectoral Sandpiper, 18 on the RC and maximum 25 at Clarence Sept. 8 (DF); White-rumped Sandpiper, one on the RC, found in Cattaraugus Co. (JV, RV); and Baird's Sandpiper, one at Clarence Sept. 8 (DF). An extraordinary find for the season was the **BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER**: three at Clarence Sept. 16 (AM, WM), one in Newstead Sept. 16 (AM, WM) and one again at Clarence Sept. 22 (DF). The **PARASITIC JAEGER** found at Olcott Oct. 27 (DF) is probably the same individual as seen at Wilson the next day (RA+). A **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** was identified at Niagara F. Oct. 29 (Ridout), Nov. 2 (FR, Schwartz, Ulrich), and Nov. 23 (FR, Frank). Other noteworthy larid reports include: Great Black-backed Gull, 83 at Niagara F. Nov. 29 (Axtell); **BLACK-HEADED GULL**, one over Niagara F. Nov. 2 (FR); Franklin's Gull, at least a dozen in Buffalo and Niagara R. areas irregularly through the season; Bonaparte's Gull, a record 60,000 on the Niagara R. Oct. 28 (Ridout+); Little Gull, no less than 15 birds at Buffalo and along the Niagara R. through early Nov.; and **SABINE'S GULL**, one on Oct. 15 (Ridout) and two on Nov. 17 and 18 (Axtell) over Niagara F. and R., all immature birds.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: The only cuckoo reports were one Yellow-billed Oct. 10 and a Black-billed Sept. 9, both banded at Farmersville Sta. (DC). An adult **BARN OWL** was seen in Granger Twp., Allegany Co., Oct. 21 to 26 where three yg. were photographed in the nest this past summer by Debby Myers; one of the three fledglings was found dead here in late Sept. (KP). Seldom reported any more is the Screech Owl; five were tallied for the RC and singles were found near Alfred Oct. 1 (EB) and at Farmersville Sta. Oct. 22 (DC). A **SAW-WHET OWL** appeared at Farmersville Sta. Oct. 20 (DC). The last report for the season of the Chimney Swift was one Oct. 19 at Jamestown (Gagne), and a very late Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen near Salamanca Oct. 27 (FM). Unusual tallies on the RC were: Belted Kingfisher, 49 (L-), and Downy Woodpecker, 156 (L-), but Red-bellied Woodpecker, ten (H+); singles of the last species were seen in Orchard Park and Iroquois NWR during Nov. Five Red-headed Woodpeckers were found for the RC and nine others, total, appeared in five areas.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Staying late were two E. Kingbirds at Cuba Marsh Sept. 29 (SB, M. Scott+) and an E. Wood Pewee, banded at Farmersville Sta. Oct. 19 (DC). A single Olive-sided Flycatcher was noted near Olean in early Sept. (mob *vide* FM). On River-view Heights, Wellsville, two pairs of Purple Martins were still feeding nestlings at Dan Nicholson's Sept. 5 (EL)—three weeks past the State record date! Two **COMMON RAVENS** were seen at Little Genesee Oct. 7 (DeGroff) where they have been noted in previous years, and one was watched over the Allegheny R. near Olean Oct. 14 (FM). The Tufted Titmouse was absent on the RC for the first time in 21 years, but other reports of mostly singles totaled ten birds. Also missing on the RC was the Mockingbird, for the first time in 16 years, and the only other reports were of six birds, total, from four locations. A Gray Catbird at an Allentown feeder in Allegany Co. Nov. 20 (LS) may be planning to spend the winter here. On the RC, the Brown Thrasher was absent for the first time in 17 years and only two Wood Thrushes were found (L-), but one of the latter stayed late in Amity Twp. until Oct. 25 (DB, LB). Other notable thrush reports include: an albino Am. Robin at Amity L. Oct. 26, and a flock of 40, typical of the species, at E. Amherst Nov. 29, and a late Swainson's Thrush at Tift Farm Oct. 21 (Freelands). Only 66 E. Bluebirds were located for the RC (L-) but other birders located a total of at least 80 birds from 14 locations. Shrikes were scarce, the only reports being single N. Shrikes at Hartfield Nov. 16 (RS) and at Clarence Nov. 25 (AM, WM), and a Loggerhead in Olean over the weekend of Labor Day (FM).

VIREOS-WARBLERS: Few can expect so delightful a surprise as the **WHITE-EYED VIREO**, unusual here any time of year, banded near Alfred Oct. 1 (EB)—but who knows

what is being overlooked? The only report of the Philadelphia Vireo was one at Times Beach Oct. 4 (RA). Some accents from the warbler flight were: Tennessee Warbler, one, late, banded near Alfred Oct. 24 (EB); Orange-crowned Warbler, one on the RC; N. Parula, four, totaled from three areas; Chestnut-sided Warbler, absent on the RC for the first time in 13 years; Bay-breasted Warbler, one, late, at Tifft Farm Oct. 21 (Freelands); Blackpoll Warbler, one at Niagara F. Oct. 20 (Freelands); Palm Warbler, two on the RC (L-); N. Waterthrush, three banded at Farmersville Sta. in early Sept. (DC); Connecticut Warbler, one at 4-mi. Creek SP Sept. 16 (Freelands); Yellow-breasted Chat, one in Hume Twp., Allegany Co., Sept. 5 (KP)—rarely reported these days; and Hooded Warbler, one in Friendship Sept. 17 (BC).

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Establishing a regional record was the report of an estimated 40,000 *each* of Red-winged Blackbirds and Com. Grackles at E. Amherst Oct. 22 (DF). On the RC the Rusty Blackbird tally was only 160 (lowest in 21 years) and but 19 others of the species were reported. A DICKCISSEL was identified at a feeder in Holland Nov. 30 (EsB), and an exceptionally early Evening Grosbeak male appeared in Jamestown Sept. 20 (Gagne *fide* RS). The House Finch continues to thrive; highest counts were 30 on the RC (H+) and 30 at Eggertsville Nov. 1-30 (AM, WM). Noteworthy as "L" on the RC were: Am. Goldfinch, 1044; Rufous-sided Towhee, 30; and Savannah Sparrow, eight (lowest in 20 years). While a two-week late Grasshopper Sparrow was spotted for the RC, the seven Tree Sparrows on the census were a day early. Few Fox Sparrows were noted: seven on the RC, and singles at Beaver Meadow Oct. 30 (EsB), in Orchard Park Nov. 3 (Saville), and in Wellsville Nov. 26 and 28 (EL). Also, not many Lincoln's Sparrows were found: four on the RC, two at Tifft Farm Sept. 23 (DF+), two at Limestone irregularly Sept. 30 to Oct. 15 (JV, RV), and one, banded late, at the latter location Oct. 27 (RV). A Swamp Sparrow was spotted at Beaver Is. SP Nov. 25 (Klabundes). The first Snow Buntings for the season arrived at Bemus Pt. Oct. 27 (Beal).

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REGION TWO — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

This fall's weather was generally warmer than average with approximately average rainfall, the latter statement clearly indicating the classic fallacy of reporting only averages; as over half this rainfall occurred in one day, Sept. 14, as part of the passage of the end of hurricane Frederick. September was slightly cooler than the long-term average with few movements of weather systems except for David and Frederick which each brought far higher expectations than observations to this region. October seesawed from the first signs of winter to a return to summer—highs 76 to 82° F. (24 to 27° C.), Oct. 19-23. There were several excellent birding dates, Oct. 2, 6, 9, and 27. The final month of the season clung to Indian Summer and early Fall day after day. Birders gathered on the lakeshore on weekends hearing tales of NW storms which would bring jaegers and kittiwakes. The longed-for weather failed to appear, but many good records resulted anyway. The month reached the 28th averaging 3.2° F. (1.8° C.) above normal before a cold snap set in. Snowfall was at a 25-year low, only 1.4 in. (3.6 cm).