

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

This was a season of superlatives, with the month of June the coldest, July very near the hottest and driest, and August the hottest—in thirteen years. In early June, during a miserable three days of cold and wet, including frost and snow in local areas, some nestlings were lost and eggs chilled. With the total summer rainfall 1.5 inches (5.8 cm.) below normal, shallow-rooted plant life, already retarded from a dry May, developed slowly. The superb weather, along with less vegetation to hamper hiking or hide nests, made it a most successful nest-hunting year. However, it is sobering to remember that predators, too, can locate nests more easily with these conditions, and precautions must be doubled when invading the privacy of the birds. Migrants arrived on schedule with a good representation of shorebirds and warblers. An abundance of wild foods included fair red oak acorns for three successive years, excellent blackberry, beech and black cherry crops (Eaton), many mice and voles and a good rabbit population.

Results from 15 out of 19 runs of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) were negatively influenced by the cold June. Findings from 16 of the 18 routes of the Allegany County "Mini" Run Breeding Bird Survey (Abbs) were near normal, with the Prairie Warbler new this year. Below, status for a species is indicated by: H+ or L- = highest or lowest ever, or tied; H or L = above or below normal; sd+ or sd- = above or below one standard deviation; and no letter = stable.

Summer positives include 1) a first-for-the-state hacking project, 2) several state record-breaking egg dates and more firsts for Allegany Co., 3) exciting loon news, 4) most long-legged waders doing fine, 5) a scattering of Turkey Vultures, accipiters well-reported and Broad-winged Hawks more prevalent, 6) the Ruffed Grouse and Turkey production excellent and a small gain for the Ring-necked Pheasant, 7) the Mourning Dove count up, 8) a good flight of the Common Nighthawk, 9) the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Common Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on the upswing, 10) an impressive flycatcher discovery, and the Great Crested and Alder Flycatchers doing well, 11) best ever count of Black-capped Chickadees on Abbs, and House Wrens recovering, 12) the mimic thrushes, except the Mockingbird, in fair numbers and the Eastern Bluebird thriving, 13) Cedar Waxwings very prolific in spite of loss of most first nestings, 14) fewer Starlings, House Sparrows and Brown-headed Cowbirds, 15) more Blue-winged, Yellow, Magnolia and Black-throated Green Warblers as well as Ovenbirds and Common Yellowthroats; and the Prairie Warbler expanding territories, 16) Cardinals increasing, and many Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings, 17) a mob of Purple Finches, and House Finches nearly everywhere, and 18) Savannah Sparrows numerous in open meadows, and good counts for Chipping and Swamp Sparrows.

Negatives for the summer include 1) count of both the Mallard and the Blue-winged Teal down on BBS, 2) the Red-tailed Hawk population still below normal and very few reports of the Marsh Hawk, 3) Common Snipes rare, 4) the Spotted Sandpiper possibly joining the Upland in scarcity, 5) Rock Doves de-

clining on Abbs for fifth consecutive year, 6) almost no Screech Owls, and the Chimney Swift continuing its downward trend, 7) fewer Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, 8) reduced numbers on breeding surveys for Eastern Phoebe, Least Flycatchers and Eastern Wood Pewees, 9) no improvement for the Horned Lark, 10) a disastrous Tree Swallow season, and Cliff Swallow and Purple Martin colonies missing or weakened in some localities, 11) a drop in numbers of the Blue Jay, Common Crow and White-breasted Nuthatch on BBS, 12) the Tufted Titmouse and wrens, except for the House Wren, still seldom seen, 13) no shrikes, 14) poor breeding survey tallies for the Red-eyed Vireo, Chestnut-sided Warbler and American Redstart, as well as for the icterids, 15) lower counts for American Goldfinches, Rufous-sided Towhees and Savannah, Field and Song Sparrows, and the usual near-absence of Vespers.

Rarities include Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, "Brewster's" Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and *addenda*, Wilson's Warbler (Nov. 1979), Summer Tanager (May 1980).

Abbreviations: BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; EEC—Environmental Education Center; GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NC, NP, or NS—Nature Center, Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; Res.—Reservoir; SF or SP—State Forest or Park.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Will the Com. Loon that spent all this season in Hume Twp. (KP) return next year with a mate? Tune in next summer . . . This was the only report. An imm. LITTLE BLUE HERON was identified at Barcelona Aug. 16 and 17 (RS). Great Egrets were seen at Iroquois NWR irregularly all season gradually increasing in number to max ten Aug. 31, while singles also appeared at Beaver Meadow EEC Aug. 16 and at Tift Farm NP Aug. 20. A SNOWY EGRET was observed at Buffalo Harbor Aug. 22 (RA+) and again Aug. 31 (AS, ARC). High count of Black-crowned Night Heron was 25 at Buffalo Harbor July 12. Encouraging for the Am. Bittern is the report, even though the only one, of an adult with three yg. irregularly at the Allegheny Res. the second week in July (MFr). With five pairs of Canada Geese nesting in Hume Twp., the flock had grown to around 50 by the end of Aug. (KP); the pair at Farmersville Sta. raised one gosling, building the flock to seven which was joined in June by two additional wild ones, one banded (DC, JC). A successful Mallard nest near Amity L. with nine eggs July 9 (VP) was record late by eight days for New York State. Other noteworthy duck reports are: Mallard, 242 at Buffalo Harbor Aug. 9; Black Duck, four in Amity Twp. Aug. 26; Gadwall, two at Times Beach, June 12 and seven at Buffalo Harbor July 21; Pintail, one at Iroquois NWR June 3, and max two at Buffalo Harbor July 24 and Aug. 1; Am. Wigeon, 17 at Times Beach June 12; N. Shoveler, max five at Iroquois NWR June 3 and Aug. 31; and Com. Merganser, a female on the Genesee R. near Belmont June 21 (VP, RP), the third successive year here for the species on Abbs.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: The Cooper's Hawk nest, in Allegany Co. with five nestlings in May, fledged at least two yg. in June (VP). Another Cooper's nest, in Cattaraugus Co., was found June 19 with three yg. which fledged July 9 (SE)—later by seven days than the previous New

York State nestling record. Of six documented Broad-winged Hawk nests in Allegany Co., three were successful and at one the female was killed by a Great Horned Owl (EB, VP). Following the exciting accounts of the first state Osprey hacking project, held this summer on the Seneca Indian Reservation in Cattaraugus Co., it was gratifying to learn that one yg. fledged successfully (MFr, MA, FM). Other interesting hawk news include: GOSHAWK, singles at Gowanda June 1 and 28 (RA+) and at the Allegheny Res. July 6 (MFr); Sharp-shinned Hawk, singles at eight locations; Cooper's, a total 11, not counting yg. above, from six areas; BALD EAGLE, single imm. at Bear L. June 6 and 8 (FR, Buck), at the Allegheny Res. July 3 to 29 (MFr) and at Iroquois NWR Aug. 31 (AS); Marsh Hawk, three near Alfred in June and July (EB, CK); Osprey, other than those above, singles at the Allegheny Res. July 3 to 17 (MFr), and in Townships of Wirt, Amity and Ward the latter part of Aug. (MJ, VP, King). Although the Ring-necked Pheasant numbered 101 (L) on BBS, it is gradually increasing here; five were noted on Abbs and a female with six yg. was found near Alfred Aug. 16 (Odle *vide* EB). Single Soras were spotted at Times Beach and at Tiffit Farm NP Aug. 9 (AS, ARC). Among noteworthy shorebird records—all at Buffalo Harbor unless otherwise noted—are: Ruddy Turnstone, one on July 21 (AS, ARC); Upland Sandpiper, one near Alfred June 3 (Deverells), adults with two-thirds grown yg. as well as another pair near by "in flight song" on Goodwin's Rd., Conewango, Cattaraugus Co., June 15 (SE), max 27 at Clarence July 13 and Aug. 10 (AM, WM), and two at Jamestown Aug. 10 (RS); Lesser Yellowlegs, 130 July 12 (RA, MF); Red Knot, one early July 24 (RA); White-rumped Sandpiper, one at Canadaway Creek NS Aug. 23 (FR); Short-billed Dowitcher, one on July 8 (RA); and Sanderling, one on July 21 (AS, ARC). Less common in summer, max reports of the Great Black-backed Gull were 28 at Dunkirk Harbor July 13 (AS, ARC) and the same number there again Aug. 23 (FR). The first two Bonaparte's Gulls arrived at Buffalo Harbor July 24 (AS+) and 18 were at Dunkirk Harbor Aug. 23 (FR). Two Caspian Terns were seen at Buffalo Harbor July 24 and Aug. 9 (AS+), and singles were at Dunkirk Harbor Aug. 23 (FR) and at Barcelona Aug. 23 and 24 (RS).

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Cuckoo numbers were near normal and the nest of a Black-billed with two eggs June 10 in Amity Twp. was later aborted (VP). A Barred Owl nest with two yg. near Alfred June 2 was apparently successful (EB). At least six Short-eared Owls visited the Haskell Rd., near Cuba, about 3:00 A.M. Aug. 5 (MFr). Outcome of the Red-bellied Woodpecker nests at Amity L. was uncertain (VP). Very few Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported; three on BBS, one on Abbs and single birds in Amity Twp., Petrolia and Scio during June and near Belmont in Aug. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker nest found near Alfred June 12 fledged at least three yg. (EB) and another pair nested at Farmerville Sta. (DC); seven of the species were tallied on BBS (H+).

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: The Great Crested Flycatcher numbered 38 on Abbs (sd+), highest ever, but the E. Phoebe tallied 24 on BBS (L) and 52 on Abbs, lowest ever. However, in Scio and Amity Twps. 23 pairs of the latter, with 11 pairs nesting twice, produced 94 fledglings from 23 successful nestings (VP). During June, singing adult ACADIAN FLYCATCHERS were heard on 10-Mile Rd., Quaker Run, Little Bone Run and Phillips Broad Rd., all Allegheny R. tributaries in s.w. Cattaraugus Co., but the exciting news is the discovery in a hemlock of a nest containing three or four yg. about eight to nine days old (SE). Another first for Allegany Co. this season was documentation of an E. Wood Pewee's nest near Alfred, in which the adult was feeding yg. July 6 (EB). It was a disastrous season for Tree Swallows, with only 33 found for BBS (L). Near Amity L., 26 pairs, with seven pairs nesting twice, produced only 68 fledglings from the 19 successful nests; during the cold, wet period of June 8 to 11, at least 44 eggs failed to hatch (chilled?) and 38 nestlings died (VP); near Alfred, eight of 12 nests were also lost at this time (EB). In Almond Twp., Allegany Co., adult Tree Swallows were feeding yg. in a nesting box July 28 (CK)—later by 14 days than listed for nestlings in Bull's *Birds of New York State*. An estimated 83,000 Purple Martins had gathered at Times Beach Aug. 31 (AS, ARC). A Tufted Titmouse was found on BBS and the only others reported were single pairs at Elma and Spring Brook (DD).

Three Red-breasted Nuthatches were counted on BBS (H+) and two adults with two yg. appeared near Alfred June 28 and July 3 (EB); two other locations noted single birds in late Aug. The Brown Creeper nest near Amity L., documented in May as a first for Allegany Co., produced three nestlings which died during the cold, wet period of early June (VP). Most wrens are still in trouble, evidenced by these few reports: Winter Wren, one on BBS (H) and one in the Town of Shelby June 1 to 18 (Schrader); Carolina Wren, one, also in Shelby, June 1 to 30 (Schrader), one to two at Spring Brook July 26 to Aug. 26 (DD), and one at Bourne's Beach, Chautauqua L., Aug. 16 and 24 (RS); and Short-billed Marsh Wren, one at Tonawanda WMA July 6 (AM, WM). A Brown Thrasher fledgling seen with an adult near Amity L. June 4 (VP) was 15 days record early for New York State. Three Hermit Thrush nests, all with eggs in June, were discovered near Vandalia (SE). Although only three E. Bluebirds were tallied on BBS (L), ten were found on Abbs; near Amity L., 13 pairs produced 69 fledglings and no nestings were lost to weather while fly larvae infestation was avoided by treating each egg clutch, as soon as completed, with rotenone (VP); near Alfred three pairs had two successful nestings (EB). A total of 35 other E. Bluebirds was reported from 14 areas. The only Blue-gray Gnatcatcher report was one at Barcelona Aug. 17 (RS). The Golden-crowned Kinglet numbered three on BBS (H) and two adults with three yg. were seen June 6 and 28 near Alfred where up to six adults appeared all summer (EB); also, three other locations noted a total of ten birds.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: After a three-year absence, a Yellow-throated Vireo appeared again on Abbs, and two were counted on BBS. Adults were feeding yg. in a Warbling Vireo nest near Belmont, 45 feet up in a Sugar Maple tree June 22 (VP)—another first documentation for Allegany Co. One to two **PROTHONOTARY WARBLERS** were back at the Oak Orchard-Iroquois wildlife complex June 2 and 3 (Rosches, AM, WM). Up to two "**BREWSTER'S**" **WARBLERS** were verified in Amity Twp. June 26, 28 and July 18 (VP) while another was seen near Clarence July 12 (RA, MF). Other warblers of interest include: Nashville Warbler, four to five summering in both the Alfred and Amity Twp. areas; Magnolia Warbler, five nests near Alfred, three successful (EB); Black-throated Blue Warbler, singles at Cheektowaga June 7 and 10 and near Amity L. June 14, and first migrant, one at Barcelona Aug. 16; Yellow-rumped Warbler, six nests near Alfred in June, two failing, one due to cowbird parasitism (EB), another nest on Reddy Rd., Amity Twp., June 18, also lost to cowbirds, and in the latter area an adult with three yg. Aug. 4 (VP). Other out-of-season Yellow-rumped Warblers, suggesting nesting, were one near Sardinia July 17 and three in Mansfield July 19 (RA, MF). New this year on Abbs was a **PRAIRIE WARBLER**, and five territorial males, all at different locations, were found during June near Alfred where a nest fledged two yg. in July (EB); another nest, in a new area on Reddy Rd., Amity Twp., fledged at least three yg. in late June (VP). Thrilling discoveries for our Region are: a Northern Waterthrush nest, with one yg. still in it, plus one unhatched egg, and apparently other yg. out of nest nearby, in Mt. Moriah Swamp near Vandalia in the Allegheny R. valley June 18 (SE) and a Louisiana Waterthrush nest with three yg. about three to four days old, in 10-Mile Valley near Vandalia June 11 (SE); others of the latter species seen were one on Abbs, and two at Wales June 2 (Rosche) where one was found tower-killed Aug. 23 (AS, ARC). Seldom reported these days, a Yellow-breasted Chat was noted on BBS (H).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: Near Alfred, of 13 Purple Finch nests documented in June, five were successful (EB). House Finches continue to expand with max for the season 14 at Belmont (DB, LB). Although the Am. Goldfinch tally was 280 on BBS (L) and 110 on Abbs (sd-), lowest ever, from 38 nests near Amity L., with 76% successful, 123 yg. were produced. Again as in 1978, Allegany Co. had record-early (for New York State) Am. Goldfinch nests: one near Alfred by nine days with three yg. July 25 (EB) and one near Amity L. by three days with yg. July 31 which fledged Aug. 15 (VP). Another first documentation for Allegany Co., was the Grasshopper Sparrow nest near Amity L. which fledged two yg. July 16 (VP); other reports of this sparrow were: five on BBS (L), four on Abbs, and four others totaled from three areas. In Cattaraugus Co. Henslow's Sparrows are missing except in the

n.w. corner (SE); on breeding surveys there were six on BBS and eight on Abbs and one to five were reported from Alfred, Alfred Sta. and Amity Twp. A pair of White-throated Sparrows nested near Alfred (EB), and others, also out-of-season, singles, were found in Somerset July 11 (Brock) and near Alfred Sta. Aug. 30 (CK). A Song Sparrow nest in Amity Twp. was later by two days than the New York State record, with two eggs Aug. 13 (VP).

ADDENDA: The Allegany County Bird Club is to be commended for action in late May in giving a life membership to Doris and Lou Burton in recognition of their untiring service to the club. The Burtons have long been faithful contributors to this magazine as well as willing respondents to special requests from near and far.

News of two impressive rarities at Fredonia, both banded and released by Morgan Jones: 1) female **WILSON'S WARBLER** on Nov. 4, 1979, a first November record for upstate, 2) a one year old male **SUMMER TANAGER** on May 10, 1980—rare “even 100 miles north of New York City.” (Bull, 1974).

Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813

REGION 2 — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

Another season of weather contrasts. June was cool, 3.8° F (2.1° C) below normal, and wet, nearly 7 in. (17.7 cm) of rain fell. The impacts on both bird-song and birder activity were both noticeable and negative. There were some reports of nesting failure, particularly for Tree Swallow. July, by contrast, was hot, 1.7° F (0.9° C) above normal, and dry, only 1.9 in. (4.8 cm) of rain, 0.94 in. (2.4 cm) below normal, and 1.03 in. (2.6 cm) of that on one day. A hot and dry August, about 3° F (1.7° C) and .76 in. (1.9 cm) of precipitation above normal, completed the summer. In addition, August weather patterns featured stagnation with few fronts to move migrants.

This season saw observer activity at a very low ebb. The weather of June discouraged many observers and few seemed to return afield in July and August. There was little interest shown in either the annual breeding bird census in the Conesus-Hemlock area or in the Breeding Bird Atlas Project. The few observers reporting listed numbers of species exceeding recent averages for each month with a few interesting dates and species, but with a volume of data really insufficient to draw many conclusions relative to population trends.

Breeding bird survey reports showed very few changes from long-term averages. Trips afield in cool, cloudy June graphically illustrated the effects of sun and temperature on records. On cooler or cloudy days, some species simply don't sing, particularly some flycatchers and warblers. If records are based on too few surveys through their breeding habitats, these birds may appear absent where really there has been little or no population change.

There are a number of more generally interesting observations which can be drawn from the season's records. Among the positives are: local waterfowl enjoyed a good breeding season; the hawk flight total reached a new high, once