

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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When I wrote the "Highlights of the Spring Season" (*Kingbird* 30: 154-159), I chose to attempt a correlation between that season and the "Blue List" compiled by Robert Arbib (*American Birds* 33: 830-835). As a result, I received several letters, all critical. Even so, it was nice to know that someone was reading the department. One of the letters complained that so many of the birds on that list were so common that observers did not bother reporting them. I can only advise that writer to refer to the original "Blue List" in order to determine the criteria used by Arbib. Another letter pointed out that my attempted analysis should not have been made on a spring or migrant season, but instead on a summer or breeding season. Well, faced with the task of doing a summer highlights, I am going to take another crack at it. I will again omit those species which are either extralimital or do not breed in New York State, and will refer only to those regions in which the species are known to have bred. One must also keep in mind that the birders of this state are actively into the second year of the Atlas project, which fact should make for more current information. However, the results of this summer's efforts are by no means completely covered in this issue. These highlights do not include any records from Region 4.

Common Loon—The only regions in which to look for this bird would be 6 and 7. Both report it, but not in large numbers. There is not much doubt that encroaching civilization is taking its toll.

Double-crested Cormorant—The number of breeding birds continues to rise each year in Region 6, from the 14 nests first discovered there in 1945. A total of 415 nests is reported this year from Little Galloo Island alone. This species was also found breeding in Region 10 in 1977, but no mention of this is made for this season.

Great Blue Heron—The species is not even mentioned in Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10. Could it be that it is no longer breeding in western New York except for Region 2, where the editor states that the breeding population is in "good shape"? Region 6 comes up with some encouragement—"another banner year, they were everywhere."

Black-crowned Night Heron—It is mentioned in every region but Region 3, but specific breeding reference is made only in Regions 6, 8 and 9. The Region 9 report of breeding is the first in many years and the breeding status in Region 10 is excellent. One wonders

about the other regions, since this wader has bred virtually throughout the state.

Least Bittern—This species is to be expected in Regions 1, 2, 3, 9 and 10. It goes unrecorded in both 1 and 3, with a good count in 2, but with breeding specifically noted only in Region 10.

American Bittern—One would assume that this bird breeds in every region in the state. Read the reports. It is mentioned in every region but Region 3, but there is not a single report of breeding.

Black Duck—Here is a species believed to be in the process of being genetically absorbed by the Mallard. Does that account for the fact that it is listed only in Regions 3 and 8, with breeding confirmed only in Region 8?

Turkey Vulture—This species seems to be doing well with breeding confirmed in Regions 1, 2 and 8 and sight records continuing in Region 10, where formerly it was rarely reported.

Sharp-shinned Hawk—Sharp-shins are not mentioned in Regions 1, 5 and 9, but breeding is confirmed in Regions 2, 3 and 8 and good numbers are noted elsewhere. This raptor has become the dominant fall migrant on the outer beaches of Long Island, attesting to a population explosion.

Cooper's Hawk—Records are roughly parallel to the Sharp-shin. However, there is no parallel increase in numbers on the beaches in the fall.

Red-shouldered Hawk—Breeding is confirmed in Regions 1, 6 and 9. The record for Orange County in Region 9 is the first in that county in many years.

Marsh Hawk—For this formerly widespread breeder, you will find a "probable" in Region 8 and no other breeding mention.

Osprey—Things continue to look up for this magnificent bird. Breeding was confirmed in Regions 1, 3, 7, 9 and 10, with the bird being recorded in all other regions as well. Region 10, which has always had the largest breeding population in the state, shows a full 25% increase in the production of young over last year.

Bobwhite—Mentioned in only three regions in the state, with breeding confirmed only in Region 8. I guess it belongs on the Blue List.

American Kestrel—Surprisingly kestrels are not reported in four regions, but they are well reported in the balance of the state.

Piping Plover—This beach dweller is to be expected only in Region 10, where it seems to be holding its own against considerable odds.

Common Tern—Region 10 is of course the major breeding area in the state and the colonies in that region have been productive this

year. However, there is a problem in Region 6 where the population cannot compete for nesting space with Ring-billed Gulls.

Roseate Tern—Although this species was not mentioned in any of the regional reports, it had a good year at its colonies in Region 10.

Least Tern—The destruction of 300 chicks as described in the Region 10 report has to be a major blow to this species in this state, as it breeds nowhere else in New York.

Black Tern—Bull (1974, *Birds of New York State*, p. 305) says, "locally numerous breeder on and near the Lake Ontario plain." The only mention made this season is from Region 6 and does not refer to breeding birds.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo—Considering the available food supply during the last couple of years, one is surprised to see the mixed results, with numbers down in Regions 1 and 2, up in Region 3, only two mentioned in Region 5, confirmed in Region 8, and not listed in Regions 6, 7, 9 and 10. However, it has always been rare in Regions 6 and 7, if present at all.

Barn Owl—There are only three records in the entire state. With owls, one never knows whether the difficulty in locating them is the major reason for low numbers.

Long-eared Owl—While the Long-ear is generally believed to be a widespread breeder, an individual found dead in Region 6, and a pair in Region 2, are the sum total of records for this season.

Short-eared Owl—Reports of five birds in Region 6, and a pair that bred in Region 10, are not encouraging.

Whip-poor-will—While mentioned in small numbers throughout the state, the Whip-poor-will is not given breeding status except in Region 8. It is hoped that the full Atlas reports will change this for Region 10, where the numbers should be the highest.

Common Nighthawk—This species seems to be doing well, including an adventurous pair that raised at least one young in the wilds of lower Manhattan.

Red-headed Woodpecker—The reports throughout are good, with increased sightings and nesting reports.

Hairy Woodpecker—The sunny report on its relative above is not followed through here, with seven regions showing a total blank, with numbers being down in Region 1, and only Region 8 filing a positive report.

Eastern Phoebe—While this species is mentioned in every region, where comparisons were made to last year, the trend was downward.

Willow Flycatcher—Evidently the genus *Empidonax* represents less of a problem to other birders than it does to me, as Regions 1, 9 and 10 show good increases, and breeding has been confirmed in Regions 6 and 8.

Least Flycatcher—My own fall observations lead me to believe that the species is down, and you really can't make head or tail of the summer reports which go something like this—down in Region 1, no observable trend in Region 2, no mention in Regions 3 and 5, common in Region 6, good in Region 7, breeding in Region 8, and no mention in Regions 9 and 10.

Purple Martin—Only Region 3 gives us some good news while Regions 1 and 6 mention that numbers are down.

Eastern Bluebird—Excellent reports and production of young. Hats off to those who have dedicated themselves to restoring our official New York State bird.

Winter Wren—Reports only from Regions 1, 6 and 7 with Ted Mack specifically mentioning that numbers are down.

Carolina Wren—It seems to be recovering nicely from the severe winters of several years ago, at least in Regions 1 and 10.

Golden-crowned Kinglet—A few reports in each of Regions 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9, and not much else to go on.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet—Recorded in Regions 1, 6 and 7—again not much to go on.

Loggerhead Shrike—Reports of confirmed breeding in Regions 2 and 6 is heartening for a species which was thought to be on its way to extirpation in this state.

Warbling Vireo—Excellent numbers are reported in Regions 1, 6 and 7 and there are scattered records from other regions.

Yellow Warbler—In the spring of 1980, seven of the ten regions did not even list this species. This summer season's reports show numbers to be good throughout.

Yellow-breasted Chat—The reports just show a scattering of chats, never widely distributed.

Eastern Meadowlark—Where this species is specifically mentioned, its numbers are down.

Grasshopper Sparrow—Numbers are up in Regions 1 and 3, down in Region 6, and the species is not mentioned in Region 10, where the bulk of the state's breeding population used to occur.

Henslow's Sparrow—This species is up in Region 1 and holding the line in Regions 2, 3 and 9.

Vesper Sparrow—Vesper Sparrows are down in Region 1, scarce in Region 2, up in Region 3 and not recorded elsewhere.

Let us hope that the "green sheets" of the Atlas project will fill in some of the missing data, if indeed it is the data that is missing and not the actual birds, and let me once again ask the regional editors to encourage their observers to report, if not all avifauna, certainly those birds on the "Blue List."

Now for some good news. Two new breeding birds have been added to the New York State list. I refer to the successful nesting of a pair of Forster's Terns on Long Island in Region 10, and the apparently successful nesting of a pair of Boat-tailed Grackles as indicated by the presence of adults feeding young birds, also on Long Island in Region 10. Breeding of Boat-tailed Grackles had been suspected for some years now, and breeding of Forster's Terns had been expected following the establishment of Gull-billed Terns and Laughing Gulls as breeders in Region 10.

Picking the "Bird of the Season" is easy for this period. It belongs to the wayward Sharp-tailed Sandpiper found by Tom Davis on 18 July at that "zoo without bars," Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. It remained through 24 July and was seen by people from many parts of the state and some from other regions of the country as the news spread.

Also, if I may institute a new seasonal award, one for the "Phrase of the Season," how about Vivian Mills Pitzrick's "end-of-May debinoculation"?

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REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

Ah—summer! How sweet it is, but spent too soon. Although the delightful birding weather was fairly fruitful, with a long list of rarities and assiduously earned nest discoveries, it is hoped that the paucity of reports is a reflection of fervent atlasing rather than the ofttime end-of-May debinoculation. The nice warm season averaged 1.1° F. ($.6^{\circ}$ C.) above normal. However, the continued drought is worrisome for those whose springs are going dry, with precipitation again below normal, June and July by about half an inch (1.3 cm.) and August