

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

STEPHEN W. EATON

September, often the nicest month on the Niagara Frontier, was not gloomy but perhaps mournful as stated by the *Buffalo News*. Less than 50% sunshine than possible, a third of an inch of rain above normal (3.73") and an average temperature of 58.5° made the difference. Most of the rain came between 10 and 15 Sept. with thunderstorms on 2nd and 25th adding to the precipitation and high winds. On the 20th winds from the southwest gusted to 47 mph and drove some interesting pelagic species into the shelter of the Niagara River. The season's first frost hit on 6 Sept. but no general freeze occurred until 5 and 6 Oct. The trees stayed green throughout the month.

October, in contrast to September, left pleasant memories of the fall season as high pressure parked over the northeast. It was warmer and drier than usual—real bluebird weather. Rainfall for the month totaled less than an inch (0.86") and half of that came on 1 Oct. Temperatures averaged 2° above normal (53.2°). One thought the fall color, so spectacular in the northeastern hardwoods, was never going to develop but by 10 Oct. the maples, as well as the normally later oaks, had changed to brilliant hues. November was generally pleasant with temperatures averaging 39° (1.3° below normal) and precipitation totaled 2.66" (about 1" below normal.) The season's first measureable snowfall at the Buffalo International Airport occurred 6 Nov., about four days later than normal. Earlier snows occurred to the south on the Allegheny Plateau, though not of their usual intensity. On the 16th, a band of lake-effect squalls dumped 2-5" of snow on southern Erie, northern Chautauqua and northern Cattaraugus Counties. Lake Erie temperatures dropped 13° during the month to 45° on the 30th. Small farm ponds on the Allegheny Plateau in sheltered areas froze over on 20 Nov. and remained closed through the rest of the month though larger ones such as Amity Lake were free again the 29th.

Affecting bird traffic at feeders and migrants in general was the general lack of major storms. Arthur Clark reported a very light kill of birds at TV towers south of Buffalo, which totaled 258 individuals of 19 species. One species was a Blue-winged Warbler 11-12 Sept., when the highest kill of the fall occurred. Don Clark at Farmersville Sta., Catt. Co.; Elizabeth Brooks at Alfred, All. Co.; Elva Hawken at Stafford, Genesee Co.; and Morgan Jones at Fredonia, Chaut. Co. all found banding to be the poorest in several years, but several species of warblers lingered longer than usual.

The weather was certainly partly to blame but the fields, edges and woods had generally the greatest crop of fruits I've seen in 35 growing seasons with few exceptions. There appears to be no white ash seed in Catt. (SE) or All. (VP) Counties and the beech blight appears to have much reduced the beechnut crop which, like the apples, was spotty. Red and White Oak produced a fair crop and Wild Black Cherry good crops, only in the better soils. All species of maples produced good seed crops. In Oct. flocks of over 100 American Robins ravished the seeds of the Cucumber Tree (*Magnolia acuminata*) and these were sometimes accompanied by Hermit Thrushes and Pileated Woodpeckers. All dogwoods

and viburnums produced unusually good crops of seeds and elderberry, laden with great bunches, dropped under the weight to gladden the hearts of the pie and wine makers. Grapes were abundant on valley and upland species. Yellow and Black Birch seed sprinkled the snow as though Paul Bunyan had returned with a giant pepper shaker. All conifers produced excellent seed crops, particularly the E. Hemlock.

The water bird migration, never very interesting over much of the Region except for swans and geese, was normally light, and the shorebirding poor inland where few mud flats were exposed, but normal along the Canadian shore often frequented by our Region's birders. Hawks, as usual, generally slid by the Region to the north.

Rarities: Cattle Egret at two localities, Sabine's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, and Bohemian Waxwing.

Abbreviations: All-Allegany, BOS-Buffalo Ornithological Soc., C-Census, Catt.-Cattaraugus, Chaut.-Chautauqua, DH-Dunkirk Harbor, NWR-National Wildlife Refuge, S-Sanctuary, SP-State Park, WMA-wildlife management area.

Contributors: All. Co. Bird Club, Robert Andrie, Tim Baird, Ken Balmas, Nancy Bowser, Elizabeth Brooks, Buffalo Ornith. Soc., Lou & Doris Burton, Dick Byron, Catt. Co. Bird Club, Arthur Clark, Bruce Chilton, Richard Christensen, Donald Clark, Dave Cooney, William D'Anna, David Dister, Steve Eaton, Flora Elderkin, Donald Endres, David Free-land, Dave Gagne, Bill Gulvin, Thomas Harper, Elva Hawken, Paul Hess, Jane Heyer, Jamestown Audubon Soc., Morgan Jones, Erma Larson, Alice McKale, R. Miga, Terry & Vivian Mosher, Bill & Linda O'Brian, Grace O'Dell, Katherine Palmer, Vivian & Raymond Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Frances Rew, Vesta Rice, Marty Sanden, Gail Seamans, John Serriano, Mary Shaul, Robert Sundell, Mike Turisk, Harold Ward, James Valente, and Mike Zebezhay.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one Ft. Niagara SP 17 Nov. (WD, BP). Com. Loon: the large flight of 1983 was not repeated along Lake Erie but the species was reported in normal numbers of one to three elsewhere. Pied-billed Grebe: reported only from Chaut., All. and Catt. Cos. Horned Grebe: first arrivals at Iroquois NWR 5 and 7 Nov. (DE). Double-crested Cormorant: three at DH 10 Nov. (TM, RM); one imm. Greenhurst, Chaut. L. 18 Nov. (DG, DD). Am. Bittern: one Tiff Farm, Buffalo, 9 Sept. (T & VS) and one Iroquois NWR 27 Oct. (Heyer +), only reports. Great Egret: two to 11 Iroquois NWR 2-30 Sept.-last seen 26 Oct. (DE). **CATTLE EGRET**: usually seen in spring but two fall records: one imm Hartfield, Chaut. Co. 27 Oct. (BG), and one Town of Pomfret, Chaut. Co. 1 Nov. (T & VM), possibly same bird. Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 11 Times Beach 15 Sept. (PH). Tundra Swan: one Iroquois NWR 20 Oct. (BC) was first; a southbound flock of 48 over Jamestown 37 Oct. (DC); 13 Bertis Bay near Jamestown 31 Oct. (W & LO); 322 Mayville 25 Nov. (FR) was max. Snow Goose: one L. Ontario shore 14 Oct. BOSC. Brant: no reports. Canada Goose: big flight down Genesee Valley of 722 in 13 flocks between 8:55 and 11:05 a.m. over Amity L. (VP). Wood Duck: appeared to have good reproduction in So. Tier Cos.; 50 Tunungwant Creek, Catt. Co. 11 Sept. (TB); 60 Alfred area BOSC 14 Oct.; 24 Wellsville 7 Oct. (HW); 10 Salamanca area BOSC 14 Oct. Green-winged Teal: 20 Bird Swamp, Catt. Co. 30 Sept. (TB +); 14 Burgeson S 25 Oct. (DD); one Cassadaga L., Chaut. Co. 24 Nov. (T & VM). Am. Black Duck: five Hume, All. Co. 18 Sept. (KP); five Bird Swamp, Catt. Co. 30 Sept. (TB +); one Wellsville 7 Oct. (HW); one Town of Hume, All. Co. 2 Oct. (VR, KP); five Iroquois NWR 21 Oct. (RC); three Alfred area BOSC 14 Oct. Mallard: continues doing well; 73 Town of Hume, All. Co. 20 Oct. (VR, KP); 50 Bird Swamp, Catt. Co. 30 Sept. (TB +). N. Pintail: only report Iroquois NWR Sept. and Oct. where perhaps nesting? N. Shoveler: two Bertis Bay, Chaut. L. 30 Sept. (DG, DD); five Iroquois NWR 21 Oct. (RC); one Burgeson S 19 Nov. (DD, DG). Gadwall: four Dunkirk 4

Sept. (TM); one Bertis Bay 30 Sept. (DG, DD); five Iroquois NWR 21 Oct. (RC). Am. Wigeon: six Iroquois NWR 3 Sept. (WD, BP) first fall report; 70 Burgeson S 3 Nov. (RS, DG) max; 49 Town of Chaut. (TM, RM). Canvasback: 400 Mayville, Chaut. L. 3 Nov. (RS, DG) first fall reports though rumors of several thousand on Niagara R. late Oct. Redhead: 103 Mayville, Chaut. L. 3 Nov. (RS, DG). Ring-necked Duck: four Iroquois NWR 29 Sept. (WD, BP) first fall report; 25 Mayville, Chaut. L. 3 Nov. (RS, DG) max for season; seen also Amity L., Langford (S. Erie Co.), Farmersville Sta. King Eider: one Buffalo Harbor 15 & 19 Nov. (GO); one same area 25 Nov. (RA). Black Scoter: 2 Mayville, Chaut. L. 23 Nov. (FR). Surf Scoter: seven Lake Ontario shore 14 Oct. BOSC. Bufflehead: 522 Mayville, Chaut. L. 3 Nov. (RS, DG) max, also reported Amity L, Farmersville Sta. and Red House L. Hooded Merganser: 600 from three bays Chaut. L. 30 Nov. (DD) max. Com. Merganser: 17 Allegheny R. near Salamanca 14 Oct. and 50 + same area 18 Oct. (TB); increase in this species at these early dates hints at local nesting. Ruddy Duck: 140 Bertis Bay, Chaut. L. 12 Nov. (RS, DG) max.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture continues to increase in Region; 130 over Iroquois NWR 21 Oct. (RC), 100 in one kettle; also four towns in All. Co. and one Catt. Co. Osprey: one Amity L. 3, 18, 19, 30 Sept. and one 2, 8, 11 Oct. (VP); one Iroquois NWR 6 Oct. (DE); two Salamanca 21 Oct. (TB) latest. Bald Eagle: two Iroquois NWR 16 Sept. and 21 Oct. (DE) both imm and one had yellow streamer on left wing; one adult and one imm Allegheny Res. most of Nov. (RS). N. Harrier: one Town of Friendship, All. Co. 8 & 22 Sept.; one Birdsall 23 Sept. (L & DB); one Town of Hume, All. Co. 14 Sept. (KP); two Bird Swamp, Catt. Co. 30 Sept. (TB +); one Town of Friendship 24 Oct. (L & DB) latest. Sharp-shinned Hawk: reported as singles from Erie, Catt. and All. Cos. Cooper's Hawk: singles reported Erie, Orleans, Catt., All. Cos. N. Goshawk: one Alma, All. Co. (King, Smith, *vide* VP); one 10 Mile Valley, Catt. Co. 30 Nov. (SE). Red-shouldered Hawk: last of breeding population southern Catt. Co. 20 Oct. calling and diving over nest site; late migrant (?) Grand Island 25 Nov. (DF). Broad-winged Hawk: most bypassed Region to north; two Alfred, All. Co. 1 Sept. (EB); one Bird Swamp, Catt. Co. 30 Sept. (TB +); one imm. Town of Gerry, Chaut. Co. **14 & 18 Nov.** (DC) very late. Red-tailed Hawk: continues as commonest buteo over Region and an albino paired to a normally plumaged bird was on territory all summer near Chaut. Co. Airport. Rough-legged Hawk: one Town of Charlotte, Chaut. Co. 2 Nov. (FR) earliest; one Salamanca 14 & 18 Nov. (TB). Merlin and Peregrine Falcon: no reports. Virginia Rail: one Buffalo 14 Oct. BOSC; one Chaut. Co. 14 Oct. BOSC. Sora: two Chaut. Co. 14 Oct. BOSC. Com. Moorhen: one Martin Rd. Ext. near Jamestown 12 Sept. (FE) where successfully nested this year. Am. Coot: a fantastic max 1100 Chaut. L. (RS, DG). Black-bellied Plover: five Iroquois NWR 7 Oct. (DE); five Tonawanda WMA 21 Oct. (RC); two Tonawanda WMA 27 Oct. (JH +). Lesser Golden-Plover: max seven Clarence, Erie Co. 16 Sept. (AM); latest 16 Oct. Town of Pomfret, Chaut. Co. (TM), only six species of sandpipers (both yellowlegs, Pectoral, Dunlin, Common Snipe and Am. Woodcock) reported from Region which reflects high water tables and the attraction of the north shore of Lake Erie to sandpipers and birders. Parasitic Jaeger: one near Peace Bridge 20 Sept. (RA, DB), driven in from lake by winds gusting to 47 mph along with imm. and adult Little Gull and imm. **SABINE'S GULL.** Iceland Gull: one Adam Beck Hydro Plant near Lewiston 24 Nov. (WD, BP) first season report. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** one Adam Beck Hydro 23 Nov. (RA +), another first of the season. Great Black-backed Gull: continued to increase, 103 DH 30 Sept. (MT, MZ). **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:** two Adam Beck Hydro 11 Nov. (RA +) another seasonal first. Caspian Tern: 10 DH 15 Sept. (TM, MS) late. Black Tern: one Niagara Falls 28 Oct. (G & DS).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: apparently seldom reaching notebooks except where general dearth of birds; 26 Salamanca 11 Sept. (TB). Snowy Owl: one Point Chaut. 21-27 Nov. (JS) was photographed; one Buffalo 23 Nov. (WD). Long-eared Owl: two Town of Amity, All. Co. 13 & 14 Oct. (KB) a once or twice in a lifetime bird in this

area. N. Saw-whet Owl: one Ft. Niagara SP 13 Oct. (WD, BP) first migrant of season. Chimney Swift: 400 Burgeson S 21 Sept. (DG), certainly a sky-full and late; 40 Goat Island 7 Oct. (WD, BP) latest.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: one Times Beach, Buffalo, 4 Sept. (PH) first fall report and one Buffalo 2 Oct. (GO) latest. Com. Raven: continues to be regularly observed in All. and Catt. Cos. and appears to be part of a population increase from west-central PA; two Town of Amity 8 Sept. (KB, JV) also Towns of Willing and Shongo all All. Co.; one town of Great Valley 19 Nov. (SE). Red-breasted Nuthatch: single birds noted in Erie, Chaut., Catt. and All. Cos. but no great exodus from the north. House Wren: three young still in nest box 1 Sept. (EB) seven days later than latest nestling date in Bull. Marsh Wren: three at two ponds near Dunkirk 14 Oct. (MJ). Golden-crowned Kinglet: appears to be wintering in So. Tier cos. in good numbers associated with chickadee flocks and attracted by what appears to be great crop of hemlock seeds. E. Bluebird: took advantage of October's bluebird weather and remained late; latest 31 Oct. Amity L. & Town (VP); large flock migrating south over 10 Mile Rd. Catt. Co. 19 Oct. was typical of late departure. Hermit Thrush: remained late also feeding on abundant fruits. Am. Robin: large flocks remained in wooded So. Tier cos. feeding on abundant *Magnolia acuminata* seeds and other fruits into Nov. Water Pipit: 100 Town of Pomfret, Chaut. Co. 28 Sept. (TM) max. Cedar Waxwing: another species staying late in So. Tier feeding on abundant fruits, often grapes; 140 Salamanca 29 Nov. (TB) a max; large flocks in Chaut., Catt. and All. Cos. **BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** one with flock of 50 Cedar Waxwings Kiantone Rd. and New Warren Rd., Chaut. Co. 12 Nov. (FE). She reported it close to the road in a multiflora rose hedge. Its large size, all grey underparts and overall color, conspicuous white in wings, were clearly seen. The rust undertail coverts, always difficult to detect backlighted, were not observed (report accepted by RS).

VIREOS-WARBLED: noteworthy vireo reports include one late Yellow-throated Vireo, Iroquois NWR 9 Sept. (DE) and one late Warbling Vireo, Ft. Niagara SP 22 Sept. (WD, BP). Philadelphia Vireo: several 15-26 Sept. and one Batavia area 14 Oct. (EH) late. Solitary Vireo: latest was in full song 10 Mile Rd., Catt. Co. 20 Oct. (SE) marking the "swan song" of neotropical migrants for 1984. Fourteen species of warblers were seen on the BOSC 14 Oct. with a total count of 1169 Yellow-rumped Warblers (523 seen same census 1983); best of the rest of warbler migration includes: Blue-winged Warbler: first record of one striking TV tower So. Erie Co. in 19 years of checking 11-12 Sept. (AC); one Tennessee Warbler Town of Pomfret 18 Oct. (TM) late; N. Parula: one imm. Celeron, Chaut. Co. 29 Sept. (DG); Yellow Warbler: one imm. Frewsburg, Chaut. Co. 24 Oct. (RS), one month late; Louisiana Waterthrush: one Sawmill Run, Catt. Co. 14 Sept. (DG), two weeks late in departure from nesting area.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: seems to be down in numbers in So. Tier cos.; one female feeding fully feathered young Salamanca 6 Oct. (TB). Am. Tree Sparrow: one Jamestown 7 Oct. (MS), earliest Chaut. Co. date. Vesper Sparrow: still in very low numbers; one Town of Willing, All. Co. 23 Sept. (HW, EL); three near Fredonia (NB) and two Alfred area 14 Oct. BOSC. Lincoln's Sparrow: one Town of Pomfret 18 Sept. (TM) and one Ft. Niagara SP 22 Sept. (WD, BP) only other. Snow Bunting: 30 DH 31 Oct. (BC) first; 12-15 Town of Portland, Chaut. Co. 10 Nov. (TM, RM); 150+ Youngstown (WD +) and 22 Cassadaga 25 Nov. (FR). Rusty Blackbird: ten Bird Swamp, Catt. Co. 30 Sept. (TB +) was first; 22 BOSC All. Co. Bird Club 14 Oct.; 10 BOSC Jamestown area. Com. Grackle: large flocks up to 200 Salamanca 18-27 Oct. (TB), probably feeding on acorns. Cardueline finches, that notoriously erratic bunch, have foiled us again. Only a few Purple Finches, House Finches still coming on, three Red Crossbills at Youngstown 18 Nov. (TH), very few Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks but Am. Goldfinches abundant and feeding on birch and hemlock seeds 708 BOSC All. Co. and 181 BOSC Jamestown area 14 Oct.

10 Mile Road, Allegany, New York 14706