

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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"Where are the birds?" Letters, long-distance telephone calls, and even queries in the local press repeated the question. Deer hunters and more sedentary window-watchers agreed that from forest to feeders birds seemed to be scarce through most of the fall. Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees appeared reduced in numbers, warblers seemed to slip through early, and the sparrow migration went by almost unnoticed. Evening Grosbeaks were around, but late in flocking and certainly down in numbers at feeding stations. Yet if this "Silent Fall" raised alarms, certain species seemed more numerous than usual: American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Dark-eyed Juncos, White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins, and American Goldfinches, to mention a few. Paradoxically, the autumn of missing birds may have presaged one of the memorable winters of the century, both in variety and in numbers. Fall remains a largely subjective season, except perhaps for hawk watches and banding totals, while winter provides better quantitative data from the Christmas bird counts and NYS waterfowl count.

At least part of the absence of an influx of migrants could be attributed to the weather. The season began cold, turned balmy, fluctuated back and forth between both extremes, and then closed as it had begun. Newcomb touched 32° F. on 6 September, some ten days before the average date of first frost even in that garden spot of the North Country. Whiteface Mt. had snow on 16 September, and by 28 September the mercury had dropped considerably in the milder lowlands of the Champlain Valley, with Plattsburgh down to 36° F.

By 6 October, Newcomb was the coldest spot in the nation at a nippy 12° F., although the lake effect kept Plattsburgh from dropping below 26° F. on the same date. Most of the month, however, provided perfect Indian Summer weather, with clear nights for migrants around the 9 October full moon. By 31 October, seasonal temperatures remained about 9½% on the mild side, and L. Champlain had dropped to 94.64', exposing more mudflats for migrants, with a water temperature of 54° F.

Newcomb dropped back to 21° F. on 1 November, and on 13 November the first major snowfall left from one to seven inches across the four-county region. Just when the month was becoming miserable for birds and birders, a second Indian Summer developed on 26 November. Lake Champlain's water temperature had dropped to 47° F. by 27 November, but consider that on the same date the air temperature in Newcomb was down to 17° F. The seesaw continued, with Plattsburgh at a record high of 65° on 28 November, and the season closing with colder, more usual, conditions. Many warblers and sparrows may have moved through during the breaks in the weather, without stopping off in numbers to feed or being forced down by frontal conditions.

Certainly the presence of those species that did appear in good numbers was encouraged by the superb bumper crop of wild foods. At lower elevations the bounty included Red Cedar and buckthorn berries, wild grapes, seeds of lilac and White Birch, and hemlock cones. Higher up, White Spruces were weighted with the best crop of cones since the winter of 1974-75, while Yellow Birch and

Mountain Ash produced well, too. The mast crop was good on red oaks, but only fair on beech trees. Not surprisingly, berry and seed eaters predominated at lower elevations, while those specialized for cones gathered higher up.

A census of the Great Blue heronry at Kings' Bay WMA by Mark Gretch on 16 and 23 September turned up a total of 37 nests in 19 trees (large Red Oak, ash, and Red Maple). All of the trees were marked with numbered aluminum tags for future studies. The Coot Hill hawk watch was visited only on 22 September for 3½ hours with light south to southeast winds. Birdbanding near Elizabethtown was limited to just six days between 20 September-5 October, with only 31 individuals of seven species banded.

Some 130 species were reported, with many more birds undoubtedly present. In spite of widespread concerns for missing birds, this was the same total as a year ago when Regional birding was judged more interesting. Rarities included Red Phalarope and Northern Wheatear. The perfect finale to the five-year Atlas effort was provided by the first NYS Confirmed records of White-winged Crossbill on the Essex-Franklin Co. line in September, in Essex Co. in October, and from Hamilton Co. in November.

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LOONS-DUCKS: The last inland Com. Loon was reported from Tupper L. 9 Nov. (CD); last Pied-billed Grebe was on L. Alice 12 Nov., where max 15 gathered in Oct. (MG). Two Horned Grebes arr. Tombley Bay 27 Oct. (JG, MG), building to a max 30 on North West Bay by 21 Nov. (EJ, JP). Great Egret: max 3, Treadwell Bay 9 Sept. (LB), singles along Great Chazy R. between Mooers and Mooers Forks 7 Sept. and King's Bay campsite 16 Sept. (JG, MG); King's Bay also had a Snowy Egret 12 Sept. Two Tundra Swans spent ten days on Mud L. in the Canada Lakes Wilderness in Nov. (*vide* GL). A record-early Snow Goose arr. Chazy Landing 12 Sept., a skein of 80 were over Fleming Pd. 16 Oct., max 1,000 Chazy Landing 27 Oct., and 60-70 still at Essex in late Nov. A Brant was at Port Henry 8 Nov. (GC). This was the best year ever for the local population of Canada Geese at Tupper L., with 68 at the municipal park 27 Oct. Three migrant geese at L. Alice 16 Oct. wore yellow collars: two were banded in PA in Dec. 1983; the third was the same bird (J47P) banded Jan. 1984 in NJ and spotted 18 April at Chazy Landing on L. Champlain. This individual has apparently divided its time almost equally, spending six months to the south, the other half year to the north (MG). N. Pintail: six, Trombley Bay 27 Oct. Ring-necked Duck: up to 300 L. Alice in Oct., a few to 12 Nov.; by 7 Oct. a large mixed raft of thousands of Ring-necked Ducks and Greater Scaups were gathering at Plattsburgh. Com. Goldeneye: five arr. Tupper L. 4 Nov. (CD). Bufflehead: one arr. Trombley Bay 27 Oct. (MG); 34 were at the outlet of Mountain View L. by 31 Oct. (JT). Hooded Merganser: max 28 Tupper L. 24 Nov. Com. Merganser: no large concentrations noted.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Six Turkey Vultures passed over Coot Hill hawk watch 22 Sept. (EJ, JP). Osprey: Mountain View L. to 31 Oct. (JT). Tupper L. had an imm Bald Eagle 16 Nov. (CD), an adult there 24 Nov. (GS). Feeder birds at Tupper Lake were pursued by a Sharp-shinned Hawk that set up residence 1 Oct. Broad-winged Hawk: four Coot Hill 22 Sept. Red-tailed Hawk: six Coot Hill 22 Sept. Rough-legged Hawk: several reports in late Nov. from the Champlain Valley. Am. Kestrel: 11 Coot Hill 22 Sept. A male Spruce Grouse

was seen at the height of land (BM el. 1965') along the Blue Ridge Rd., Essex Co., in early Oct. (NM, DS). Lower lake levels along Champlain helped provide records of 15 shorebird species, all but three clearly migrants. Black-bellied Plover arr. Bulwagga Bay 13 Sept. (GC), present at King's Bay to 9 Nov., max. seven there 6 Nov. (MG). Semipalmated Plover: King's Bay 12 Sept. and 6 Oct. Killdeer: max 26 King's Bay 29 Sept., last seen 6 Nov. Greater Yellowlegs: King's Bay 12 Sept. to 24 Oct. Lesser Yellowlegs: King's Bay 23 Sept. (MG). Sanderling: three Bulwagga Bay and Port Henry 7 Sept., last at Bulwagga Bay 13 Sept. Semipalmated Sandpiper: four Port Henry 4 Sept. (GC); King's Bay 12 Sept. to 10 Oct. Least Sandpiper: 12 Sept.-10 Oct. White-rumped Sandpiper: three King's Bay 9 Nov. (MG). Baird's Sandpiper: Bulwagga Bay 7 Sept. Pectoral Sandpiper: four arr. Bulwagga Bay 13 Sept. (GC), King's Bay 16 Sept. until 9 Nov., max eight (MG). Dunlin: arr. King's Bay 10 Oct., last seen 9 Nov., max. 25 there on 10 Oct. and 16 Oct. (MG). Com. Snipe: two Bulwagga Bay to 22 Sept. (EJ, JP). **RED PHALAROPE**: swimming and spinning on North West Bay 21 Nov. (GC, NM), for the second Regional and Adirondack Park record, and the first viewed from the mainland. An imm. Little Gull was at Westport 17 Sept., last seen 27 Sept. (GC), where Bonaparte's Gulls gathered through most of the fall and some 500 Ring-billed Gulls were gathered by 24 Oct. From one to several Great Black-backed Gulls are present at Westport on a regular basis.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: An emaciated Snowy Owl was picked up along the Northway median near North Hudson 27 Nov., but died in spite of efforts by the NYS DEC and a veterinarian. A pair of Barred Owls engaged in the courtship routine near Paradox most of the night of 6 Sept., where a Long-eared Owl was heard 16 Nov. (MB). N. Saw-whet Owls were calling near Elizabethtown and – where else but Owl's Head – during Oct. Two Chimney Swifts at Port Henry 3 Sept. were rather late (GC), and a late Ruby-throated Hummingbird was peeping through a window at Plattsburgh, eyeing the geranium within, 1 Oct. (HB, RB). A Black-backed Woodpecker was feeding in a dead spruce at Newcomb 25 Nov. (WC).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: migrant Peru 3 Sept. (VM). A late E. Kingbird was spotted at Cedar R. Flow 30 Sept. (RM). The Barn Swallow at Plattsburgh 5 Oct. was also notably late (HB, RB). A Gray Jay visited an Owl's Head feeder 22 Oct. (JT); two Gray Jays were feeding on innards of white-tailed deer left by hunters near North Point, Raquette L., 18 Oct. (WC), and Com. Ravens were reported "waxing fat on deer kill remains" near Paradox 6 Nov. (MB), as they undoubtedly were all over the Adirondacks at about the same time. Two Boreal Chickadees have returned to a Newcomb feeder for the third straight winter (AC, WC). A Winter Wren was heard at Paradox 24 Sept. (MB), and the last Ruby-crowned Kinglet was at Tupper L. 23 Oct. (CD). On 28 Sept., a **NORTHERN WHEATEAR** was found in a field bordering the Bobsled Run Rd. near Rt. 73, outside Lake Placid (CL, RL). The bird appeared to be a fall male, very showy and quite approachable, and represented the second Regional and Adirondack Park record; the wheatear was last present 29 Sept. (GTC, TD, AF, RH, PT). E. Bluebird parents were feeding two young at Owl's Head on the late date of 12 Sept. (JT), while two early transients were at Cobble Hill, Elizabethtown, 17 Sept. (GC). A juv. Veery practiced singing at Paradox to 11 Sept.; a young Swainson's Thrush practiced to 2 Sept. (MB), last Swainson's was at Tupper L. 16 Sept. Hermit Thrush: heard at Paradox 24 Sept., last at Tupper Lake 26 Oct. Wood Thrush seen at Paradox 25 Sept. Large numbers of Am. Robins were migrating at L. Alice 24 Oct., but across the Region many remained into winter, some still singing, with 24 feeding in a Mountain Ash at Tupper L. 6 Nov. A flock of 25 Water Pipits was along North Farm Rd. 6 Oct. (MG). A sharpie showed little respect for rarity as it scattered a flock of Bohemian Waxwings along the Whallon's Bay Rd. during the fall. Meanwhile, Cedar Waxwings remained into winter, with flocks widely reported from Cedar R., Newcomb, Tupper L., and Westport.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Solitary Vireo was in song near Paradox 30 Sept. Red-eyed Vireo heard there 11 Sept. (MB). Last seasonal sightings at Tupper L. included Red-eyed Vireo

30 Sept., Nashville Warbler 1 Sept., Magnolia Warbler 30 Sept., Cape May Warbler 16 Sept., Black-throated Green Warbler 5 Sept., Yellow-rumped Warbler 30 Sept., Black-throated Blue Warbler 16 Sept., and Am. Redstart 29 Sept. (CD). An Ovenbird was singing at Paradox 11 Sept., where an adult Com. Yellowthroat was in full song 2 Sept. (MB). A migrant Wilson's Warbler was at Tupper L. 13 Sept. (CD).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Also in song at Paradox were a Scarlet Tanager 24 Sept. and Rose-breasted Grosbeak 13 Sept. (MB), with an imm. of the latter at Tupper L. to 18 Sept. (CD). Am. Tree Sparrows arr. Cedar R. and Tupper L. in early Nov., widely reported thereafter. Last Chipping Sparrow was at Tupper L. 27 Oct., where a Lincoln's Sparrow was seen 12 Sept. (CD). An off-key White-throated Sparrow was in song near Paradox 29 Sept. (MB). Tupper L. had five White-crowned Sparrows 30 Sept., with one remaining until 17 Oct. (CD). Almost no mention was made of Dark-eyed Juncos as Sept. residents or Oct. migrants; suddenly in Nov. flocks became abundant, with reports from Cedar R., Elizabethtown, Paradox, and Tupper L., and remaining into winter. Snow Buntings were also widely reported, although flock sizes were generally small: 12 on the shore of Low's L. 30 Oct. (WC), 60 bathing at the Westport beach 3 Nov. (GC), one along Rt. 8 near Hoffmeister 6 Nov.; two along the Boquet R. outside Elizabethtown 13 Nov. (EJ, JP); and one near Newcomb (WC). An adult Red-winged Blackbird showed up at Owl's Head feeders 20 Nov. (JT) and 22 Nov. (AH). Tupper L. had 100 Com. Grackles 23 Oct. (CD). A female-type N. Oriole at a Tupper L. feeder 26 Nov. had been present daily for about two weeks previously (CD). Four Pine Grosbeaks were seen near the Cedar R. in early Nov. (RM) and 50 were in Mountain View 29 Nov. (AH). Purple Finch: scattered reports from Cedar R., Elizabethtown, Owl's Head, Paradox, and Tupper L. House Finch: 14 at a Tupper L. feeder 26 Nov. (CD) reflect the continued inland and upland expansion of a species first reported in the Region just a decade ago. Red Crossbill: small flock in spruces near Paul Smiths College early Sept., large flock of about 100 in hemlocks near Cold Brook, south of Saranac L., 8 Sept. (GTC). The first Confirmed records of White-winged Crossbills in five years of Atlas field work came at Bloomingdale Bog 11 Sept. (CB, JP), Owl Pate 10 Oct. (MB), and Sabattis Rd. Bog 25 Nov. (CD); white-wings were also sighted or heard near Chubb R. Swamp, Cold Brook-Sperry Pond, Madawaska, and Teboville Rd. between Sept. and Nov. The only Com. Redpolls were found near Paradox 13 Nov., among a mixed feeding flock of siskins and goldfinches. Pine Siskins and Am. Goldfinches had been feeding on white birch near Paradox since 1 Nov., and were widely reported thereafter. The first reports of flocking Evening Grosbeaks came from Cedar R., Paradox, and Tupper L. in early Nov., but as the season progressed observers were in agreement that numbers at feeders and in the forests seemed lower than in recent years at the same period. Finally, a House Sparrow was spotted entering the back of an oblong street lamp in Malone on 22 Oct. (JT).

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There is no REGION 8 report, as *The Kingbird* has no Region 8 editor at the present time.

REGION 9 – DELAWARE-HUDSON

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As fall seasons go this one was relatively mild. The first and third weeks of September were cooler than average, but were more than balanced by the second