

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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This season saw highly successful mop up work carried out for the Breeding Bird Atlas Project and showed us the whole range of effects that one might expect from this extra effort. Regions 4, 6, and 8 saw the greatest push to complete substantial numbers of previously untouched blocks. You will find an enthusiastic, relatively complete summary of the Atlas activity in the Region 4 report, peripheral mention in the Region 6 report, but no report from Region 8. Wrap-up work at varying levels of intensity occurred in the other Regions, with reporting ranging from much detail from Region 5 to no report from Region 10. In near future summers, certainly less organized breeding data will be gathered. However, the number of reports ready in time for this quarterly summary may increase as observers are released from the burden of Atlas paperwork, which didn't fit well with the timing of these summer Regional reports. Some Atlas workers may even return to areas of special interest and report studies and findings which they couldn't complete due to the push to obtain wider Atlas coverage in recent years. (Hint!!) We shall see.

The weather this season provided a typical summer mix for the state, though averaging a bit cooler than normal. June was cold, particularly in the north central regions, and followed by average to cool temperatures in July and August. Precipitation was average to a bit low throughout. Region 9 alone reported well above average rainfall for August. Major weather-related effects were the loss of many Ring-billed Gull chicks to a storm on 31 May-1 June in Region 7, good shorebird habitat in many regions due to low water levels, and generally good conditions for nesting birds and wandering Atlassers.

This final breeding season with Atlassers afield saw a nearly complete filling of the few void spaces left on the state's map of Atlas coverage. This work provided much reinforcement for changes in breeding status noted in previous summer reports. Some examples include: Double-crested Cormorant numbers again were good in six of the eight Regions reporting; Osprey hacking continued in Region 1, with a returning bird from an earlier hacking reported, and Bald Eagle hacking continued in Region 7 (and Region 8 as well); and the expansion of southern species northward was noted again. Acadian Flycatcher was up in six Regions, White-eyed Vireo numbers were up in Region 1, Orchard Oriole nested in five Regions, and a male Yellow-throated Warbler returned to Allegany State Park, though no nest was located this year. Of special

note this year was: the widespread breeding or suspected breeding of crossbills and Pine Siskins in Regions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9; the late June appearance of a Gray Jay in suitable habitat in Region 2; increased reports of several waterbird and warbler species and Swainson's Thrush in Region 4; and six species not proven to breed in the past 20 years or more plus another low-elevation Osprey all were confirmed nesting in Region 5, where Atlas work in Herkimer Co. extended the known breeding ranges of Common Raven, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Lincoln's Sparrow southward. Negative trends mainly reinforced levels of concern previously noted. Little or no data were reported for: Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Blue-winged Teal, Red-shouldered Hawk, terns, both cuckoos (even where Gypsy Moth numbers were high), Whip-poor-will, Loggerhead Shrike, and the grassland sparrows, generally. An addition to this list of negatives this year is Brown Thrasher from Regions 1, 3, 5, and 9. Additional interesting, breeding-related notes include: Dick Clements' examples of the element of luck involved in obtaining many Atlas nesting confirmations; notes of the early cessation of song this season; the possible effects of heavy, local, insecticide spraying in Region 7; 1110 gull and heron chicks banded on Four Brothers Islands this season; excellent bluebird trail reports from Regions 5 and 9; and a bit of disappointment in Region 9 that the imminent nesting of Double-crested Cormorant and Black Vulture did not come to pass during the Atlas project.

The migrations are generally well summarized in Paul DeBenedictis' statement: "In general the quality of both migrations was poor in terms of numbers of birds found, but not quite so bad in terms of diversity." Most comments were negatives: gulls and terns low, thrushes low, little evidence of passerine movement by late August, and shorebird numbers unimpressive in spite of the best looking habitat in many years. Still, there were many positive notes. A table summarizing the final tally from the Braddock Bay Hawk Watch has few real negatives. Waterfowl and jaegers were noted passing the lake watch on Lake Ontario in Region 2 in late August. Shorebird rarities were observed: Willets inland in Regions 1, 2 and 5; Baird's Sandpiper in Region 9 (less rare farther west); Ruff in Region 2; and Long-billed Dowitcher in Region 5. Really outstanding dates and counts were few this season, with the best: **late**—Red-throated Loon on 9 June in Region 2, Rough-legged Hawk on 30 June in Region 2, Three-toed Woodpecker nestlings on 31 July in Region 7, Olive-sided Flycatcher on 22 June in Region 2, and House Finch nestlings on 23 August in Region 1; **early**—Tennessee Warbler on 19 July in Region 1, Wilson's Warbler on 16 July in Region 4, and Blackpoll Warbler on 17 July in Region 5; and **high counts**—850

Common Nighthawks on 19 August in Region 1 and 11,000 Bank Swallows and 14,000 Barn Swallows both on 3 August in Region 5. Let us hope that next Spring brings an end to the recent series of relatively poor migrations.

Once again a potpourri of additional interesting comments and insights are provided by the Regional editors. A few examples to pique your curiosity include: summaries of the Breeding Bird Surveys within Regions 1 and 5; tables of waterfowl counts and nesting productivity from Montezuma NWR in Region 3; notes from Region 7 on some of those thousands of green-dyed gulls noted in the Spring report, along with their pink-dyed Vermont counterparts; a report that one of the hacked Bald Eagles was found shot in Ontario within ten days of hacking; a Tree Swallow nesting atop a hand pump in Region 3; and finally, from Region 9, notes ranging from the serious—salt water moving up the Hudson River to near the city's intake, a chance to study the effects of salinity increase as a positive bonus, and House Finches as possible bluebird box usurpers—to the simply fun—a hummingbird trying to obtain nectar from the flowers on a set of P.J.'s hanging on a wash line. Certainly there are nuggets for all. Certainly, many of you also could contribute interesting observations of your own; the addresses of the Regional editors are with their reports.

This season the list of rarities is slimmer than usual, but nearly every region reported something. The best of the list are: Region 1—Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, "Lawrence's" Warbler, and Yellow-throated Warbler; Region 2—Sandhill Crane, Ruff, Gray Jay, and Yellow-throated Warbler; Region 4—Painted Bunting; Region 5—Glossy Ibis and Long-billed Dowitcher; Region 6—Yellow-headed Blackbird; Region 7—Red-throated Loon; and Region 9—Wood Stork, Swallow-tailed Kite, Kentucky Warbler, and Black Vulture. From this list it was impossible to extract one occurrence sufficiently outstanding relative to the others to grant a BOTS Award.

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