

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

DICK CLEMENTS

Cool and dry is an adequate description of the summer season in our Region. Precipitation, as usual, varied from place to place as many hit or miss thunderstorms were much in evidence. Precipitation in the Elmira area was almost an inch and a half below normal for June. After a dry spring, this left many of our streams and ponds either low or dry before warm temperatures were even upon us. July's precipitation was slightly above normal but this statistic is deceiving. Most of the rain came between 9-12 July. On 12 July a series of thunderstorms rumbled through our area, dumping as much as 2.38 inches of rain on Elmira. Temperatures were rather mild with an occasional record low. July had record lows of 44 on 11 July and 42 on 25 July.

With many streams dry in Chemung County, herons were driven to the Chemung River where more and more islands were exposed as the season progressed. In August, it was common to scan the river and spot over a dozen Green-backed Herons and six to eight Great Blue Herons. The river also attracted two Great Egrets and two Black-crowned Night-Herons, ho-hum for Cayuga Lake Basin residents, but a real treat for Elmirans. Conditions appeared ripe for excellent shorebird observations, but this was not the case. Even though good numbers were seen in late August, some of the usually reported species were missing or sparse.

The breeding season on the whole was not spectacular. In fact, your editor can't even report a legitimate rarity—no bold face print this time. Just for interest's sake, a rather tame Ringed Turtle Dove came to a feeder in Elmira in late July. Thrushes provided highs and lows. American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds had very productive breeding seasons, whereas the other species of thrushes were reported in reduced numbers.

Many of us who were involved in finishing the Breeding Bird Atlas Project can agree that some breeding confirmations come by sheer luck. Your editor would like to share his experiences this summer with three elusive species. 1). He had never seen a Purple Martin in Chemung County until he went golfing on a course he had never played before and found three active Purple Martin houses. 2). While testing the brakes on his camper in an elementary school parking lot, he spotted a Cliff Swallow gathering mud, followed it and found nineteen nests attached to the school. 3). Thought he heard a Worm-eating Warbler singing on a steep hillside, but put off making the long climb for three weeks. When he came back to conquer the hill, he found the warbler feeding three young at the bottom only a few feet from the highway. This was the first breeding confirmation for our Region. If only all the birds were that easy! On second thought, we'd probably miss the blood, sweat and tears shed these last six years, wouldn't we?

Abbreviations: Cay—Cayuga; Chem—Chemung; Co—County; L—Lake; M—Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; Pd—Pond; Pk—Park; Schuy—Schuyler; Sen—Seneca; St—State; QC—Queen Catherine Marsh.

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LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: seen in breeding plumage all summer on Cay L, three max; present Sen and Keuka L's thru, no evidence of successful nesting anywhere in our Region. Pied-billed Grebe: reported from M only with no report of young. Horned Grebe: present on Keuka L thru mid-Aug. Double-crested Cormorant: settled at M again this season, no max number reported; sighted at Watkins Glen and Keuka L in June. Am. Bittern: one flying over Route 17 near Aurora in June; one Corning Pd 25 Aug. Least Bittern: only report from Ithaca area on lake near Cayuga Village where single bird was observed in June and July. Great Blue Heron: 50 nests M; 12-15 nests north west of Hornell Reservoirs; 12 nests Middlesex; at least 12 birds Sen L inlet near QC 11 Aug. Great Egret: three M 6 July; two Elmira 2-5 Aug; four M 10 Aug. Green-backed Heron: confirmed nesting near Van Etten. Black-crowned Night-Heron: Texas Hollow July; imms seen Elmira, M, and Varick early Aug. Wood Duck: nested Italy Valley, Hammondsport, Middlesex, Elmira and QC. Hooded Merganser: pair north of Penn Yan.

Maximum waterfowl numbers at M as reported by Refuge personnel:

Canada Goose	423	4 June	Blue-winged Teal	335	27 Aug
Wood Duck	1072	27 Aug	Gadwall	100	26 June
Green-winged Teal	60	7 Aug	Am. Wigeon	18	4 June
Am. Black Duck	104	27 Aug	Ruddy Duck	36	11 June
Mallard	1749	27 Aug	Am. Coot	44	27 Aug

Nesting success of waterfowl and other selected species at M:

Species	Young Produced	Species	Young Produced
Great Blue Heron	250	Blue-winged Teal	45
Black-crowned Night-Heron	115	Gadwall	40
Canada Goose	260	Hooded Merganser	55
Wood Duck	935	Am. Coot	25
Green-winged Teal	20	Com. Tern	9
Am. Black Duck	10	Black Tern	35
Mallard	190		

Wood Duck: nested Italy Valley, Hammondsport, Middlesex, Elmira and QC. Hooded Merganser: pair north of Penn Yan.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: increasing Ithaca and Penn Yan areas; one chased and repeatedly hit by Red-tailed Hawk Elmira, mid-June. Osprey: no report of nesting at M this year; several reports Elmira during Aug; one Sen L St Pk 22 Aug. Bald Eagle: one Cay L 23 June; one possible Jacksonville 8 July. N. Harrier: raised three young west of Keuka L; confirmed nesting near Middlesex. Sharp-shinned Hawk: nested southwest of Canoga. N. Goshawk: none observed. Red-shouldered Hawk: present near Hammondsport and Lamoka L. Broad-winged Hawk: only nesting report comes from near Canandaigua. Ring-necked Pheasant: doing much better in northern sections. Wild Turkey: hen with 15 young often observed at south entrance to Watkins Glen St Pk. Virginia Rail: singing birds Italy Hill; nested again Corning Pd. Sora: young observed Corning Pd late Aug. Com. Moorhen: three imm, one ad Corning Pd 27 Aug. Am. Coot: only at M. Black-bellied Plover: two reports from M and Keuka L areas. Lesser Golden-Plover: Mays Pt. Pool 25 Aug. Semipalmated Plover: several observations from Elmira in Aug. Greater Yellowlegs: one Elmira 22 Aug. Lesser Yellowlegs: sightings in Elmira, Sen L St Pk and M with a max 24 at M 20 Aug. Solitary Sandpiper: two Flint Creek 19 July; ten Guyamosa

Valley 30 Aug. Spotted Sandpiper: numerous Elmira during Aug; brood seen Watkins Glen St Pk. Upland Sandpiper: adult with six chicks Horseheads 16 July. Ruddy Turnstone: one Sen L St Pk 24 Aug. Sanderling: reported from Elmira, Geneva and M during Aug. Semipalmated Sandpiper: numerous Elmira and M. W. Sandpiper: one Sen L St Pk 21 Aug. Least Sandpiper: numerous Geneva, Elmira, M and Keuka L areas. Pectoral Sandpiper: small flock M 14 July. Com. Snipe: three Corning Pd 27 Aug. Red-necked Phalarope: two M 25 Aug. Great Black-backed Gull: imm Aurora 20 July; three juv. Sen L St Pk late Aug. Caspian Tern: present Cay L end of July thru 17 Aug; 16 near Stewart Pk 17 Aug; four Watkins Glen 21 Aug. Com. Tern: nest with eggs in reeds opposite Cay Village 5 July. Black Tern: M only nesting record; one Stewart Pk 17 Aug.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Black-billed Cuckoo: no new nesting confirmations in Steuben Co; more observations Keuka L area; singing several locations in the Watkins Glen area. Yellow-billed Cuckoo: confirmed in two new atlas blocks Steuben Co. Com. Barn-Owl: none observed. E. Screech-Owl: singing birds heard in many locations. Great Horned Owl: more nesting records established in western areas. Com. Nighthawk: usual late Aug migration through the Elmira area with a max of 100 birds seen at once. Whip-poor-will: one Esker Brook Trail early July. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: nest with young and two young birds coming to fuschia plants late July thru, Pine City. Red-headed Woodpecker: nested near Aurora; single bird still calling into July, Elmira. Red-bellied Woodpecker: common only at QC. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: confirmed in five of seven new atlas blocks. Downy Woodpecker: coming to empty suet log Pine City late Aug in anticipation. N. Flicker: had excellent nesting season in Chem Co as young were observed in many locations. Pileated Woodpecker: family gatherings of four Elmira and three Watkins Glen St Pk.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Olive-sided Flycatcher: found at the top of a dead tree two successive days Elmira 3 and 4 Aug. Yellow-bellied and Acadian Flycatchers: none observed. Alder Flycatcher: common Schuy Co. Willow Flycatcher: regular QC Marsh, nest with three eggs found there in June. Great Crested Flycatcher: family of five Elmira mid-July. E. Kingbird: several breeding records in Schuy and Chem Co; increasing Tompkins Co. Horned Lark: decreased breeding populations Penn Yan area. Purple Martin: nested Varick; 23 Sen L St Pk 22 Aug. Tree Swallow: nest with three young in the top of hand water pump Chemung; nest with young South Danby 29 July. Cliff Swallow: large colony Ingersoll Rand Plant in Corning; aborted nesting in Freeville. Blue Jay: observed carrying beheaded vireo (assumed) crossways in its bill mid-Aug. Fish Crow: population steady in Ithaca area. Black-capped Chickadee: abundant Yates Co as 30 responded to owl call. Red-breasted Nuthatch: nested in Schuy Co. Brown Creeper: family observed Italy Hill. Carolina Wren: increasing Yates Co; regular QC. House Wren: one male, two females, three broods Pine City. Marsh Wren: regular at QC. Golden-crowned Kinglet: observed at Montour Falls, Connecticut Hill and Hector Forest. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: usual three to four invade your editor's yard in late July staying almost thru Aug. E. Bluebird: quite successful Schuy, Tompkins and Chem Co; confirmed in nine of fourteen new atlas blocks; pair began successful third nesting Pine City 15 July; over 20 Chem Co 30 Aug. Veery: decreased numbers Yates Co; your editor did not see one after late June. Gray-cheeked Thrush: none observed. Swainson's Thrush: adults banded Penn Yan 19 July, 13 Aug. Hermit Thrush: observed Canandaigua area; singing Watkins Glen St Pk June; adult banded 26 Aug. Am. Robin: over 1000 at Pine City roost. Brown Thrasher: few Tompkins Co.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Solitary Vireo: very few Ithaca. Yellow-throated Vireo: feeding young Chem 16 July. Warbling Vireo: several nesting confirmations Chem Co; eight banded Penn Yan 8 Aug. Philadelphia Vireo: two west of Romulus 3 June, probably late migrants. Blue-winged Warbler: pairs in several locations Schuy Co; numbers up Penn Yan. Golden-

winged Warbler: Chem Co seems to be the best place to find these birds. "Lawrence's" Warbler: feeding young Pine City early July. Tennessee Warbler: adult banded Penn Yan 19 July. N. Parula: one Elmira 30 Aug. Yellow-rumped Warbler: two new locations in Schuy Co. Black-throated Green Warbler: scarce throughout our Region. Pine Warbler: feeding young Hammondsport. Prairie Warbler: feeding young Pine City 16 July. Cerulean Warbler: still another new location in Chem Co. Louisiana Waterthrush: three nestings Penn Yan area. Hooded Warbler: probable nesting near Watkins Glen. Canada Warbler: feeding young Elmira 16 July.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Indigo Bunting: plentiful Ithaca and Elmira. Rufous-sided Towhee: reduced numbers Ithaca area due to "urban sprawl." Vesper Sparrow: common Bath area; lower numbers Penn Yan. Grasshopper Sparrow: nested in Schuy and Chem Co. Henslow's Sparrow: continued nesting success Pine City; down Yates Co. White-throated Sparrow: found in two areas Steuben Co. Orchard Oriole: nest with eggs south of Willard. N. Oriole: prolific nester along Chem R. Red Crossbill: young at feeder Ithaca area 13 June. Evening Grosbeak: nested near South Danby.

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REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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Only one group of people in Region Four found June 1985 ideal. Not children, who would have preferred more sunshine. June had overcast skies almost two-thirds of the time. Not farmers, who desperately needed more rain. The 2.64 inches that fell was 0.74 inches below average. The cloud cover brought dampness but not rain. Home gardeners had similar complaints: little rain, little sun. The average citizen found June cold. Only twice did the high go over 70°. Only one group really loved this cloudy, cool, damp-but-not-wet month. They were the atlasers! The overcast skies kept birds singing late into the day, the cool temperatures kept the gnats and blackflies down, and the lack of rain kept the birders dry.

Atlasers also loved July. More normal weather came at a time when bird song was decreasing and atlasers were concentrating more on spotting fledglings or parent birds feeding young. The brighter, warmer, sunnier days made this more pleasant. Temperature highs were between 70° and the mid-80's. Rainfall, 0.42 inches above normal, fell mostly as cloudburst thundershowers, hard but of short duration.

With the added pressure of knowing that 1985 would be the last year of the program, the atlasers really poured it on. Block after block was covered. Records piled up. Data was accumulated, valuable data which will prove significant for future research. However, it is impractical to compare such data with previous