

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

A Shorebird Haven on Lake Champlain: In the autumn of 1979 I discovered what has proved to be one of the best shorebird viewing areas in the Adirondack-Champlain region (Region 7). This site on King's Bay in Clinton County is described neither in Philip H. Warren's, *Birds of Clinton County* nor in Susan Roney Drennan's *Where To Find Birds In New York State*. Since 1980 I have reported shorebirds observed at this site to the Region 7 editor of *The Kingbird*. I believe this is the only reference to this Lake Champlain hot spot in print. I have referred to this area as the King's Bay Campsite area when reporting to *The Kingbird*.

Lake Champlain is not a major stopping-off point for shorebirds on either their northward or southward migration. There are relatively few areas along Lake Champlain that are suitable for shorebirds. Some of these areas are suitable only in low water years. The only other areas in Clinton County besides King's Bay where numbers of shorebirds stop consistently are Chazy Landing to the north and the Georgia-Pacific mudflats on Plattsburgh Bay.

To reach this site in northeast Clinton County, travel south out of the Village of Rouses Point about two miles to Point Au Fer Road. This road runs along King's Bay Wildlife Management Area. About one-tenth mile further south on Route 9B a dirt road enters King's Bay Campsite, a privately owned trailer park. Ask for permission to enter and follow the road down to King's Bay. Here there is a narrow strip of shoreline about three-tenths of a mile long where shorebirds stop and feed. The proximity to King's Bay Wildlife Management Area perhaps helps shorebirds find this narrow strip of habitat. Suitable feeding habitat is uncovered along the shoreline only as the lake level approaches 95.5 feet above sea level. During the spring migration the lake level is above 96 feet in most years. Only as summer approaches does the lake level recede sufficiently to expose mudflats ideal for feeding. The best months for shorebird abundance and diversity are September and October.

Between the access road to the trailer park and the edge of the lake there are two distinct vegetational zones. Nearest the road is a zone of tall (1-3 feet) vegetation about 75 feet wide made up of lamb's quarters, smartweed, green amaranth, ragweed, cocklebur, some sedge and a few small clumps of cattails and spike rush. This band of vegetation helps buffer any disturbance from the adjacent trailer park. The zone closest to the shoreline is about 75-90 feet wide in September and October. Vegetation here is less than about 4-5 inches in height and is patchy in distribution. A prostrate form of lamb's quarters is most common, interspersed with patches of short grass, some smartweed, beggar-ticks and moss. Part of this zone is covered with aquatic vegetation that has been washed ashore. As the lake level recedes, many different types of habitat are available for feeding: mudflats, small pools of water, sandy areas, shoreline covered by aquatic vegetation,

shoreline covered by various types of herbaceous vegetation, and tall vegetation for cover. The diversity of feeding habitats probably explains the diversity of shorebirds found here.

Since 1979 I have observed twenty-one species of shorebirds at this site. The most common visitors are: Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Least and Semipalmated Sandpiper, Semipalmated Plover, Black-bellied Plover, Common Snipe and Pectoral Sandpiper. Less common are: Spotted Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Red Knot, Solitary Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone. Others observed only rarely are: American Woodcock, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Sanderling and Western Sandpiper. This site rivals or surpasses all other areas in Region 7 for diversity of shorebirds in the fall.

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