

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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This season's highlights represent only upstate New York, as reports from one-third of the Regions (Regions 8-10) encompassing the southeastern quarter of the state were not written. Over the portion of the state reporting, the weather generally was cold and wet throughout. Both record low temperatures and record rainfall were reported at various locales, along with heavy, damaging storms and flooding. In Region 1 there were only 86 days between frosts on 3-4 June and 28-29 August. Rain soaked 11 of the summer weekends in the Adirondacks. In Region 2 the normal summer lawn burnout failed to occur, saving on water expense but possibly cutting into birding time with extra mowing required. All of this rain and cold apparently had little effect on passerine breeding success according to those commenting. However, this weather and the lack of an Atlas driving force resulted in many fewer observers reporting than we have enjoyed in the recent past.

As usual, this season's reports include the tail end of spring migration, the height of the breeding season, and the start of fall migration. There was a typical trickle of late migrant flycatchers, thrushes and warblers into early to mid-June. A selection from the most interesting late spring records includes: very late Olive-sided Flycatchers in Regions 1 and 4; Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in Region 5; Common Loons late or summering in nearly every Region at locations removed from their normal breeding lakes; a very late Red-throated Loon in Region 6; the state's fifth record for Mississippi Kite in Region 2; Glaucous Gull present in Regions 1 and 2 through late June to early July; Iceland Gull to early July in Region 2; and Evening Grosbeaks still migrating on 3 and 4 June in Regions 1 and 2, respectively.

This breeding season is very difficult to evaluate. With the Atlas field work over, numbers of reports were way off in most Regions. The Region 4 report gives much numerical data but, for now, no way to assess it, as there is no basis for comparison in terms of numbers of observers reporting in detail, time spent, how the counts were made, or relationship to history. This same problem applies to much data from the other Regions. However, these numbers are a start for the future. There are several current and proposed projects which will help this situation with time: the Breeding Bird Surveys and Censuses; future Atlas work; Project BirdWatch, a chance for anyone to contribute data on a weekly basis (contact Charles Smith at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology); and proposed systematic studies of selected species, one of which is the DEC's effort to study the Loggerhead Shrike (contact Paul Novak 518-439-7635 with any sightings).

Among the most interesting stories of the breeding season are: the increase of Double-crested Cormorant inland, with 1400 nests on Little Galloo Island in eastern Lake Ontario, a peak of 600 birds on the Four Brothers Islands in Lake Champlain, and up to 100 birds all summer at Montezuma NWR; a first confirmed breeding record for American Wigeon in Region 2; Bald Eagles again fledging young in Regions 1 and 6 and "prospecting" elsewhere; successful Osprey hacking in Region 1; the spread of Turkey Vulture northward in Regions 4, 6 and 7; Wild Turkey increasing in all Regions; Yellow-throated Warblers again in Region 1 near where they first nested two years ago; another Palm Warbler pair in Region 7; the farthest south and west confirmed breeding of Bay-breasted Warbler in Region 5; only three Loggerhead Shrike nests located, in spite of intense effort spent; and a good cone crop holding Red Crossbills in Region 7 for possible breeding. Some special data gathering efforts reported include: the summaries of breeding bird surveys in Regions 1 and 5, nest finding work reported in Region 1, supplementary Atlas work from Region 5, and spruce habitat coverage in Region 4.

The start of the fall migration was very slow, with waterfowl scarce, shorebird habitat poor nearly everywhere and most species in low numbers, and landbird migration very poor through the end of August. Bright spots in this gloomy start to the fall migration were: an inland record high count of 212 Whimbrel in Region 5, 75 unidentified white egrets at one location in Region 7, 1500+ Bobolinks in Region 3, 15,000+ Bank Swallows in Region 2, record early dates for Red Phalarope in Region 2, and for Palm Warbler and Rusty Blackbird in Region 4, and Evening Grosbeak migrants in early August in Region 6. A good August hawk count was tallied at Braddock Bay, with 910 birds, all immatures, on the peak day.

If the reports are organized and data sifted by species, there were a large number of negatives, indicating many species which the Regional editors think should be watched carefully in the future. This list includes: American Bittern, Green-backed Heron, American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Kestrel, Sora, Ring-necked Pheasant, Spotted Sandpiper, Black Tern, both cuckoos, Whip-poor-will, Common Nighthawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Purple Martin, Bank Swallow, Wood Thrush, Loggerhead Shrike, Scarlet Tanager, and the grassland sparrows, especially Henslow's. These species deserve special attention to determine whether the suggested trends are cyclic, long-range or just a function of special variables of this season.

The positives for the season include: Great Blue Heron colony increases and Least Bittern doing well in Region 2, successful Peregrine

Falcon breeding in Region 7, both cuckoos locally common in Region 1, and more breeding Sedge Wren in Regions 1, 2 and 5 than usual. Additional tidbits to tempt you to read in detail include: a Black-billed Cuckoo egg in a Field Sparrow nest in Region 1, young Tufted Titmice at a hummingbird feeder in Region 6, evidence of date/site fidelity in a Veery from a Region 7 banding return, and the Region 7 summary of efforts to establish a Boreal Heritage Preserve in the Adirondacks.

There were few rarities this summer. The best of those not already noted are: Region 2—Snowy Egret, Thayer's Gull, and Clay-colored Sparrow; Region 3—Whimbrel and Western Kingbird; Region 4—Snowy Egret and Acadian Flycatcher; and Region 7—Lesser Black-backed Gull and Sandhill Crane. As this is the breeding season, the B.O.T.S. Award must go to the new breeding species for New York, Caspian Tern, with 112 nests found on Little Galloo Island in Region 6. For perspective, however, note that Caspian Tern nested only 5 miles across the border in Ontario as far back as 1968 (Bull, *Birds of New York State*).

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Standard abbreviations: county names are shortened to their first four letters; months are shortened to their first three letters; ad—adult; Alt—Alternate plumage; arr—arrival or first of season; BBS—Breeding Bird Survey; CO—confirmed; f—female, FL—fledgling; FY—adult feeding young; I—Island; im—immature; j—juvenile; L—Lake, m—male; max—maximum; mob—multiple observers; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC—report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P—Park; Pd—Pond; ph—photographed; Pt—Point; Res—Reservoir; SP—State Park; spm—specimen; subad—subadult; T—Town of; Twn—township; WMA—Wildlife Management Area; y—young.