

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

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The summer season of 1986 was unusually cold and rainy. Stationary fronts repeatedly dominated the weather in the Region as well as throughout the State. A stationary front in the early days of June brought heavy rains – up to 2½ inches – and some localized flooding. As this front was displaced by a high pressure system from Canada, temperatures dropped to the 30's. Ithaca set a record low of 31° on 3 Jun. Cloudy and rainy weather returned from 5 through 8 Jun, with precipitation totaling 1 to 2 inches. Rainy weather persisted until 16 Jun, when a powerful cold front crossed the state and brought severe thunderstorms. A 15-minute storm containing several downbursts with winds estimated at 70 to 90 mph hit Cortland, causing property damage estimated at more than \$3 million. However, much of the Southern Tier had no more than ½ inch of rainfall during this brief period. June 17 and 18 were sunny and cool, and the remainder of the month generally was rainy.

July was characterized by four separate stationary fronts over a period totaling 13 days. As a result of heavy rains associated with these fronts, there was flooding in Broome County on 13 Jul, as well as in Steuben and Chemung Counties on 20 Jul, when the Elmira-Corning Airport reported 3½ inches of rain. July usually is New York's sunniest month, but sunshine was scarce this year. However, there was indication that the season's heavy rains may have benefited some crops, as corn and fruits were rated in good to excellent condition. By late August, apple and pear harvests were underway with above average yields and good quality.

Early August was characterized by another stationary front from the 1st to the 3rd, with up to 4 inches of rain in the Southern Tier. Thunderstorms on 6 Aug brought more flooding in Broome County, and 3+ inches of rain was recorded in Deposit. A cool high pressure system, bringing much sunshine, passed through on 12 and 13 Aug. Severe thunderstorms returned on 15 Aug, when Ithaca received 3.3 inches of rain in a 10-hour period. The final 4 days of August were all much colder than normal. Daytime highs in the Region were only in the 40's or 50's during this period.

The abnormally wet weather had many noticeable effects on birds this season. High water levels virtually eliminated shorebird habitats, and although many shorebird species were reported after mid-July, there were few individual birds. Three individuals or fewer of Black-bellied Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Dunlin, and Solitary, Semipalmated, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers were reported. There were no reports of Semipalmated Plover or of either dowitcher species.

During June, several observers reported difficulty in finding birds, particularly warblers and flycatchers. The usual number of warbler species were reported. However, individuals were more difficult to find than usual. As a group, the warblers either were present in substantially lower numbers, or present and too cold, wet, or busy searching for food to sing. Swallows, as a group, may have

been affected substantially by the season's adverse weather conditions. Purple Martins were absent or scarce, and there was only one report of Northern Rough-winged Swallow. Two known swallow nesting sites were unused this season: the Bank Swallow colony at Ithaca's Larch Meadows, and the Cliff Swallow colony at Big Flats. Grassland sparrow species, such as Vesper, Grasshopper, and Henslow's, were scarce or unreported this season. These species were present early in June at the usual locations at the Arnot Forest, although their breeding success following the June cold spell is not known.

Two species, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Cedar Waxwing, may have benefited from abundant summer fruit crops. Those two species were present all season and reported in substantial numbers. At Willseyville on 31 Jul there were 200+ Cedar Waxwings and 40 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Black Cherry, Wild Grape, Viburnum and Dogwood species all produced abundantly this season.

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Abbreviations: MNWR—Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: two reports, an unspecified number all season on Keuka Lake and two in breeding plumage at the north end of Cayuga Lake in July; no evidence of nesting, although the north end of Cayuga Lake has an extensive area of open water and cattail marsh, bordered by wooded swamp. Pied-billed Grebe: two ad feeding two fledged y near Elmira in July. Horned Grebe: two Keuka Lake during June and July. Double-crested Cormorant: present all season Seneca Lake and MNWR, where not yet breeding although numbers appear to be increasing steadily. Least Bittern: two Cayuga Marsh 20 Jun. Great Blue Heron: an unofficial count of 80 nests MNWR. Great Egret: unspecified number MNWR 8 Jul, also Corning 1 Aug. Black-crowned Night-Heron: Treman Marina 21 Jun and MNWR July, only reports. Brant: one Cayuga Lake 23 and 28 Jun. Canada Goose: max 400 MNWR July census. Wood Duck: max 630 MNWR Jun census. Green-winged Teal: max 240 MNWR Aug census. Am. Black Duck: virtually absent throughout Region all season, with the exception of official MNWR counts of 70 on Aug census and fewer than 10 during June and July. Mallard: max 460 MNWR Aug census. N. Pintail: nine MNWR 19 Aug, only report. Blue-winged Teal: max 280 MNWR 26 Aug. N. Shoveler: no reports. Gadwall: max 20 MNWR 15 Jul, none elsewhere. Am. Wigeon: max 10 MNWR 26 Aug. Redhead: no reports. Ring-necked Duck: im m Himan Swamp near Alpine for several weeks in July. Hooded Merganser: six 23 Jul MNWR only report. Ruddy Duck: six MNWR 18 Jun only report.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: present all season MNWR, several other reports throughout Region. Bald Eagle: one im and three ad MNWR all season; one ad had been hacked at MNWR in 1978. N. Harrier: f Big Flats area 26 and 31 Aug only report. Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks: no reports. N. Goshawk: one near Ithaca 21 Jul and a pair near a traditional nest site in East Corning all season, but nesting not confirmed this season. Red-shouldered Hawk: conspicuously absent. Broad-winged Hawk: 14 Jul Hammond Hill only report. Red-tailed Hawk: only reported in the Ithaca area. Am. Kestrel: scarcer than usual. Merlin: im flying southward over Mt. Zoar 6 Aug (D. Clements). Ring-necked Pheasant: several reports throughout Region. Wild Turkey: increasing throughout Region, max four ad with 20 y. Virginia Rail: two singles from the Corning area 27 Jul and 29 Aug, only reports. Sora: no reports. Com. Moorhen: scarcer than usual in the Corning area, no other reports. Am. Coot: max 10 MNWR 8 Jul. Upland Sandpiper: max seven Elmira area, only one other report. **WHIMBREL:** one King Ferry 19 Jul, fourth in the past 15 years. Com. Snipe: reported frequently at Corning Pond all season, only reports.

Wilson's Phalarope: ad m feeding actively in pools left by heavy rains at Geneva Lake State Park 5-6 Jul. Bonaparte's Gull: max four Geneva Lake State Park 5 Jul. Ring-billed Gull: hundreds reported in cultivated fields throughout Region all season, no evidence of nesting. Herring Gull: virtually absent all season. Caspian Tern: three singles from Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. Com. Tern: two July reports from Cayuga Village and MNWR. Black Tern: one MNWR 26 Jul only report.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Yellow-billed Cuckoo: only one report. Black-billed Cuckoo: no reports. Com. Barn-Owl: no reports. E. Screech-Owl: only one report. Great Horned Owl: single report of one being harassed daily by crows along Sing Sing Creek in the Elmira area, followed by one immature vocalizing at night. Barred Owl: at least one fledged from a traditional nest site in Sapsucker Woods, only report. N. Saw-whet Owl: one heard Ithaca in late July, followed by a similar report a few days later in the same vicinity. Com. Nighthawk: very few reports. Whip-poor-will: not reported in the usual areas this season. Red-headed Woodpecker: not reported.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Acadian Flycatcher: one territorial m at a traditional site in the Arnot Forest early June but absent the following week during the Laboratory of Ornithology field course, which took place during the period of extreme cold; breeding has not yet been confirmed at this site. **WESTERN KINGBIRD**: Dryden 6 Jul (NYSARC), seven previous Regional records, all since 1960. Fish Crow: present Ithaca as of 16 Jun, no reports after this date. White-breasted Nuthatch: two pairs nested in D. Clement's bluebird houses. Brown Creeper: nest located at Hammond Hill State Forest June; breeding success unknown. Carolina Wren: territorial and present in greater than usual numbers in the Ithaca area, but few other reports. Marsh Wren: no local reports and scarce at MNWR. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: four Ithaca reports including a report of breeding.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Philadelphia Vireo: one banded by M. Lerch 24 Aug only report. Brewster's Warbler: single Slaterville 30 Jun and Connecticut Hill in June. Golden-winged Warbler: no reports. Prairie Warbler: one Michigan Hollow 21 Jul. Cerulean Warbler: several territorial males MNWR 3 Jun; also 3+ territorial males near Ithaca early June; more than usual at both sites. Prothonotary Warbler: absent from its traditional site at MNWR 3 Jun.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Bobolink: present in substantial numbers, max 1500+ Ithaca 7 Jul. Brown-headed Cowbird: not as many as usual.

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