

REGION 6 – ST. LAWRENCE

KENNETH L. CROWELL and GERALD A. SMITH

Wet, cold, windy. That was the summer weather in a nutshell. All three months of the period were 2 to 3° cooler than the 30 year average and had 70% more rain than usual. Much of the Region experienced below freezing temperatures on 3 Jun; all three months were marked by violent thunderstorms with hail falling in many localities on 16 Jun. The weather was poor for birding, but no observers reported adverse effects from the weather on nesting success of upland birds. However, there were marked effects on waterfowl, marsh birds and shorebirds. Sheila Cerwonka found American Bittern more prevalent in transitory wetlands along roadsides but felt that Virginia Rail may have been flooded out. As evident from the species accounts, Gerry Smith found waterfowl and shorebirds extremely scarce at ElDorado Beach Preserve due to the high level of Lake Ontario. The **only** shorebirds for the period are listed in the species accounts below. The lake did not undergo its usual drop in mid-summer, resulting in the poorest shorebird flight in a decade with birds arriving late and in greatly reduced numbers.

A total of 129 species including 18 waders and waterfowl, 22 shorebirds, and 77 passerines were reported. Double-crested Cormorant continues to increase along the St. Lawrence River, but there still is no confirmation of it breeding there. According to C. Weseloh, the colony on Little Galloo Island in Lake Ontario contained 1400 nests in early June. Away from the colony site maximum numbers were 1-300 per day at ElDorado Beach in June. The rapid expansion of the Little Galloo colony has fueled increased grumbling from fishing guides and some fishermen regarding alleged depredations on fish stocks. Although no evidence supports these claims, they are receiving increasing attention from the media. As cormorant populations grow, so will the controversy.

Summer reports of Bald Eagle may bode well for possible reoccupation of more of its historic breeding range in the future. These include a first-year immature at ElDorado Beach; from 31 May through mid-July, a fourth-year subadult there 20 Jul to mid-Aug, and an immature on Rainbow Falls Reservoir in So. Colton in mid-Aug. In addition, two young were again fledged from the nest in Jefferson Co.

S. Harris and K. Griffith report several days' observations from Lorraine and Parishville, respectively. A summary of their counts of migration insectivores is instructive. During their ten birding-days they found no Eastern Wood-Pewee but 11 Great Crested Flycatcher and 28 Eastern Kingbird. Of the spot-breasted thrushes they saw 15 Veery, 9 Hermit Thrush and 10 Wood Thrush. They found only one Yellow-throated Vireo as well as four Warbling and 37 Red-eyed Vireos. Among 12 species of warbler were one Magnolia, four Black-and-white, 13 Ovenbird and one Mourning but neither Blackburnian nor Northern Waterthrush. They found no Scarlet Tanager.

With regard to species expanding their ranges into this Region, Turkey Vulture continues to increase in highland sections with counts of one to four per day

throughout the Region. Many reports of Wild Turkey from the Sixberry Lake area near Redwood, Potsdam and Colton are evidence of expanding populations. No Red-bellied Woodpecker were reported. G. Smith found, as usual, a pair of Alder Flycatcher at ElDorado where Willow Flycatcher predominates. This is not the case yet in St. Lawrence Co., but I observed a singing Willow Flycatcher in a brushy marsh in Lisbon 5 Jun. Sightings of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher by Fiona Reed on 10 May and 28 June in Canton, near Russell, are among the very few reports from St. Lawrence Co. Four young-of-the-year Tufted Titmice were observed in Henderson by Lee Chamberlaine feeding at his hummingbird feeder! P. Novak saw Northern Mockingbirds in the towns of Antwerp and Lyme, Jefferson Co., on 9 Jul and 7 Jun, respectively. He also heard "a perfect Blue-winged Warbler song at a woods-pasture edge" in Alexandria, Jefferson Co. 3 Jul, but did not see the bird. Northern Cardinal continues to increase throughout the Region, with more reports from the rural foothills in St. Lawrence Co. House Finch now outnumber Purple Finch in the Canton area and Lee Chamberlaine calls it "a pest" in Henderson, where Purple Finch also was down. P. Novak observed a possible family group of Evening Grosbeak near the Bog River Flow, Colton; L. Chamberlaine reports six ad at Henderson 19 Jul – almost 2 months earlier than his previous records, and four eating cherries on 25 Jul. There were two reports of the species in St. Lawrence Co. in Aug.

There were several reports of grassland sparrows including a singing male Clay-colored Sparrow at Limerick Cedars Preserve June through mid-July and a second in Clayton 8 Jul (G. Smith). These sightings are a first county record for Jefferson Co., and the first Regional sightings since 1972. A pair of Grasshopper Sparrow also was resident at Limerick Cedars during June and July, and P. Novak reported singing males from ten sites in Brownsville, Hounsfield, Henderson and Lyme, a major distribution center which may not show up in the Breeding Bird Atlas. Vesper Sparrow was reported from Hounsfield and Parishville.

P. Novak spent the summer searching the region unsuccessfully for **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE**, but P. Kelly observed two im. with one parent in Brasher Falls on 7 Jul – the first breeding in the county in several years. In addition, G. Smith saw one shrike near Oak Pt. 15 Jul. Other noteworthy sightings include nesting(!) Caspian Tern and Lincoln's Sparrow at unexpected localities.

Lee Chamberlaine reported migratory movements of several species in mid-Aug, including Northern Flicker, American Crow, Bobolink (heavy – with over 100 per day), and Northern Oriole. American Robin began migration in early August while the last broods were yet to fledge. House Wren was gone by mid-Aug and the first migrant Red-breasted Nuthatch arrived on 31 Aug.

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Abbreviations: EDB–ElDorado Beach Preserve; ULLWMA–Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area; SLR–St. Lawrence River.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: singles EDB 22 Jun and 10 Aug (GAS) probably involve the same summering individual; on the latter date in appeared to be in heavy molt and in poor physical condition. Com. Loon: scattered single and pairs present

SLR but no evidence of successful breeding; two Hyde L, Town of Theresa, 31 Jul, are unusual for summer and may be non-breeders. Pied-billed Grebe: successful breeding at ULLWMA and five Canton 6 Jun, only reports. Least Bittern: singles Black Pd WMA 12 Jul and Stony Creek Marsh 18 Jul (LBC), only reports. Great Blue Heron: 746 nests at Ironsides Is. SLR is a new record high count for that colony and represents approximately a 14% increase over 1985. Black-crowned Night-Heron: approximately 80 nests on Little Galloo Island 7 July (GAS). Mute Swan: two ad and seven j PRWMA (LBC). Am. Black Duck: a few singles only from lowland areas, where they are gone as a breeder. Mallard: max 44 EDB 23 Aug. N. Pintail: arr one EDB 22 Jul, only report away from SLR breeding areas. Hooded Merganser: female and four young Stockholm 22 Jul, only report. Com. Merganser: two at ULLWMA 16 Jul and one to nine per day EDB 9-25 Jul probably are post-breeding wanderers; max 30 EDB 22 Aug.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: one EDB 13 Jun, presumably a late spring migrant; a new nest in the town of Clayton was destroyed by a wind storm; lack of migrants along L. Ontario during Aug is unusual. Sharp-shinned Hawk: ad near Henderson Harbor 3 Jul, only report. Cooper's Hawk: one to two per day, scattered. Am. Kestrel: one to three per day, still scarce. Ruffed Grouse: many ad with y during June (LBC). Black-bellied Plover: arr one 9 Aug; 1-11 per day late Aug. Killdeer: scattered one to two per day only; scarce. Greater Yellowlegs: one 18 Aug only report. Lesser Yellowlegs: arr one 13 Jul, only report and unbelievably scarce!! Solitary Sandpiper: two-six per day June-July, four-ten per day in August; max 16 on 30-31 Jul; the only shorebird at EDB in reasonably normal numbers. Ruddy Turnstone: arr and max 7 EDB on 31 Jul; one to six per day thereafter. Red Knot: one EDB 30-31 Aug only report. Sanderling: arr EDB 23 Jul; two-eight per day 30 Jul-31 Aug. Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr three EDB 22 Jul; max 69 on 31 Jul is 10-15% of normal max. Least Sandpiper: arr two EDB 23 Jul, two-eight per day to 31 Aug. **CASPIAN TERN:** 112 nests counted on Little Galloo I on 7 Jul (CW, details to be published separately) is first documented nesting colony in the state. Com. Tern: 522 nests recorded along the SLR and E. Lake Ontario is 10% below the 1982-86 average; most colonies continue to experience poor reproductive success. Forster's Tern: one EDB 25 Jul-3 Aug, always unusual in this Region. Black Tern: a few reports of one to four per day, very scarce; this species appears to be in severe decline locally.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Barred Owl: one Parishville 30 Jun, only owl reported. Mourning Dove: continues to increase. Black-billed Cuckoo: several reports. Com. Night-hawk: none by LBC, but several in Massena-Louisville area through period. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: doing well, 14 reported by five observers. Red-headed Woodpecker: a pair in Gouverneur 10 Jun is unusual (PN).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Brown Creeper: only one reported. E. Bluebird: many reports indicate real increase; max 15 Stockholm during Aug (FR). Horned Lark: three separate sightings in Hounsfield 7 Jun on Watertown Breeding Bird Survey suggest local population.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Prairie Warbler: a pair at Limerick Cedars during June and July (as was the case in 1984), and singing males at Schoolhouse Rd., Brownville on 22 May and VanAnslytne Rd., Clayton 8 Jul (GAS and PN).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Indigo Bunting: numbers down in SLaw Co. Field Sparrow: max eight Parishville 30 Jun. Lincoln's Sparrow: two including singing male Stockholm 7 Aug (FR), unexpected at this locale. E. Meadowlark: numbers are up (LC, KC). Red Crossbill: two calling in tall spruce and pine near Hitchins Pd, Colton 10 Aug.

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