

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

The season began auspiciously enough. On 4 Jun, Ted Mack and Bob Hagar birded from Tupper Lake north through Saranac Lake to Moira, compiling a record Franklin County "century run" of **106** species. Over the entire three-month summer period, however, only 152 species were reported; their single day effort had located two-thirds of all summer birds noted in the Region. By comparison, over two hundred species were recorded as breeders during the Atlas period, with over 180 confirmed as nesting (and remember, too, that the 1986 summer total includes migrants, as well as breeders).

What happened? Well, for one thing, it rained. It poured rain on something like 11 weekends during the summer. Shorebirds were a relative disaster, with only six species reported, and none from along the inundated beaches bordering Lake Champlain. For another thing, there were fewer observers: about 40 contributed records, and of those only about half had been active Atlas workers. For a variety of reasons, even experienced birders were far less active.

As a result, something like a quarter of all breeding birds in the Region went unreported, many of them relatively common: Green-backed Heron, Cooper's Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Woodcock, Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, and Rufous-sided Towhee. Others are admittedly a bit more difficult to locate: Least Bittern, Sora, Common Moorhen, Long-eared and Short-eared Owls, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Some misses were more southerly birds: Eastern Screech-Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Louisiana Waterthrush. Others were northern specialties: Gray-cheeked Thrush, Philadelphia Vireo, Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Wilson's Warblers, and Rusty Blackbird. Yet even those species reported were poorly represented: Vesper Sparrow, a special concern species in NYS, was found in 82 Regional blocks between 1980-85, while this summer there was but a single report.

In spite of the adverse weather and abrupt decline in birding effort following six years of active field work for the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas project, there were a number of interesting observations. In late August, Hollis White encountered a large flock of 75 unidentified white egrets at a beaver pond on the St. Regis Indian Reservation. Turkey Vultures continued to penetrate the Adirondacks with Hamilton County sightings near Indian Lake and Speculator on 16 Jun and six frequenting the Oxbow Lake landfill all summer, still present 30 Aug. Two peregrine hawk site attendants watched a **SANDHILL CRANE** fly over Blue Mountain Lake on 21 June (RC, GM *fide* Ted Mack), for only the second regional record and a first for Hamilton County and the Adirondack Park. The North American Rare Bird Alert (NARBA; B&PO) received a report of a **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** on Long Pond, Franklin County, in August for a first county record.

The most important find of the summer, however, was the discovery by Tim Barnett, Greenleaf T. Chase, and Gary Randorf of a pair of (**YELLOW**) **PALM**

WARBLERS on Spring Pond Bog, Franklin County, on 1 Jul. The birds occupied an area of stunted black spruce and tamarack muskeg habitat near a small pond on the 500-acre bog. Like neighboring Bay Pond Bog, where the first NYS nesting record of Palm Warbler was obtained in 1983, Spring Pond Bog is part of the projected 75,000 acre Boreal Heritage Preserve being formed by The Nature Conservancy. As recently as 1981, the Adirondack Park Agency held hearings on proposals to harvest mechanically the sphagnum layer from Spring Pond Bog for sale as a horticultural medium. Last year the Adirondack Conservancy purchased 5,886 acres – 3,065 acres in fee (including Spring Pond Bog) and 2,821 adjoining acres through conservation easement (including Bay Pond Bog) – for a total cost of over \$360 thousand. This summer the Conservancy chose to pay a penalty of \$22,937 to remove a large portion of the Preserve around Spring Pond Bog from Act 480A cutting provisions in order to save what remains of these boreal woodlands. Atlas observers recorded 130 species of breeding birds on the Preserve, including such rarities as Spruce Grouse and Palm Warbler.

On the Four Brothers Islands, a total of 12 Black-crowned Night-Herons, 1,000 Ring-billed Gulls, and 262 Herring Gulls were banded between 7-27 Jun. Two banded adult Ring-billed Gulls were found dead on Island C on 24 Jun; one had been banded as a chick on the same island 12 Jun 1983; the other was banded on Little Galloo Island, Lake Ontario, 7 Jul 1974, and was almost 12 years old when recovered. Only ten birds of nine species were banded near Elizabethtown 16-18 Aug, but a female Veery returned on 18 Aug that had been banded as an adult at the same station on 18 Aug 1981!

By late June a good white pine cone crop was forming across parts of the Region. Merry Baker reported the first Red Crossbills near Paradox 13 Jun, in song there by 15 Jul, and still singing 29 Aug, with several apparent family groups noted by late summer. In Franklin County, there was a pair at Osgood Pond 9 Aug and several also paired at Paul Smiths College during the rest of the month. Merry Baker also heard a White-winged Crossbill on Scofield Mt., Essex Co., 12 Aug. Evening Grosbeaks were travelling in large flocks by late July, with reports from Essex, Franklin, and Hamilton Counties of groups numbering up to 50 birds.

With perhaps fifty breeding species unreported, any assessment of the season would be incomplete. Project BirdWatch, which had a trial run in the Region this summer, may provide a fresh alternative to these seasonal reports, following the Atlas effort. The NYS office of National Audubon also proposes a systematic monitoring of the populations of selected native species, urging that the DEC join with other agencies to develop and standardize a compatible data information retrieval system, based upon an ecosystem approach – a proposal we applaud.

Contributors: Bartlett Bailey, Nick Bailey, Russ Bailey, Merry Baker, Thomas Barber, Timothy Barnett, Kevin Boyle, Geoffrey Carleton, Walter Chapman, Greenleaf T. Chase, John Copp, Robert Croso, Charlie Delehanty, Katherine Eagleson, Emily Geddes, Robert Hagar, Anne Hungerford, Elsbeth Johnson, Gary Lee, Theodore Mack, Dorothy McIlroy, Robert McKinney, Ed McMahon, Shirley Meisburger, Edith Mitchell, Frank Morrison, Gale Motter, North American Rare Bird Alert (NARBA), Paul Novak, Bob & Pam Odear, John Parke, John Peterson, Gary Randorf, Walter Spofford, Tim Sterrett, Langdon Stevenson, Jan Treziak, William Weaver, Hollis White.

LOONS-DUCKS: Pied-billed Grebe: two Cedar R Juñ (RM) only report. Double-crested Cormorant: max 600 Four Brothers Islands 22 Aug (LS), chicks still in nest 31 Aug. Canada Goose: 50 headed n Paradox 6 Jun. Wood Duck: max 12 Cedar R Jun. Ring-necked Duck: max 14 Saranac Lakes 12-14 Jul (RM). Com. Goldeneye: 4 arr Four Brothers 29-31 Aug. Hooded Mergansr: max 15 Cedar R Jun. Com. Merganser: max 85 Port Douglas 17 Aug (LS).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: ad Cedar R Rd 2 Jun (GL), im Cedar R Jun (RM), im Tupper L 9-20 Jun (CD), ad Wickham Marsh 20 Jun (JC), singles Tupper L Jul (CD) and Boquet Aug (BB), healthy showing. Golden Eagle: sightings Hami, no nesting observed. Peregrine Falcon: three n Adirondack Jun (RM), nesting. Gray Partridge: Moira 4 Jun (RH, TM) only report. Wild Turkey: Bellmont and Elizabethtown, only reports. Yellow-legs (sp.): St. Regis R Aug (HW), only report. Upland Sandpiper: several Ft. Covington all summer, max three Champlain 25 Jul (PN). Sanderling: arr three Four Brothers Is "A" 29 Aug (RB, JP), one still present 31 Aug (TM, JP). Com. Snipe: max 20 beaver pond St. Regis Res. Aug (HE). Bonaparte's Gull: arr 30 Westport mid-Aug. Black Tern: Cedar R-Indian L area Jun (RM), only report.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Black-billed Cuckoo: July reports from Cedar R, Champlain, Elizabethtown, Ft. Covington, Tupper L good showing. Barred Owl: only owl reported! Com. Nighthawk: Tupper L village July, only report. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: transient Four Brothers Is "D" 31 Aug (TM, JP). Three-toed Woodpecker: nested Ferd's Bog, pair w. Duck Hole in High Peaks 1 Jun (TB).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Gray Jay: max seven Sabattis Rd Bog 21 Jun (CD), incl. ad & four begging y in one group plus ad and one begging y on other side of bog. Blue Jay: begging y Tupper L 6-29 Jul, later than previous species. Am. Crow: max 12-16 Treadway Mt. cliffs 5 Aug (EG). Boreal Chickadee: 3 n Adks June, only report. Loggerhead Shrike: two pair Ft. Covington (2 y, 3 y), one Treambleau Pt Rd near Port Douglas 15 Aug.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Solitary Vireo: singing Paradox 18 Aug (MB). Red-eyed Vireo: singing Paul Smiths 31 Aug (TM). Golden-winged Warbler: Essex June-July (JPa), only report. Tennessee Warbler: singing males Owl Pate Bog, Esse, 26-27 Jun; Letsonville Rd, Paradox, 4 Jul (MB); Silver L Pres, Fran, 19 Jul (WC); migrant banded Elizabethtown 17 Aug. Yellow-rumped Warbler: migrants Four Brothers Is "D" 31 Aug.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS White-throated Sparrow: transient Four Brothers Is "B" 31 Aug. Com. Grackle: max 100 Tupper L Marsh 27 Jul. Pine Siskin: flock over Paradox 18 Aug. Evening Grosbeak: 20 Indian L 14 Jul, five cracking cherry pits Tupper L 18 Jul, 11 Tupper L 19 Jul, max 50 Schroon L 22 Jul (MB), 20 Ft. Covington 23 Jul suggest late July movement, pair Westport feeder 2 Aug (EG).

Discovery Farm, RD 1, Elizabethtown, NY 12932