

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

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This season the Regional editors struggled a bit to remain upbeat.. Many concentrated on the few bright spots in this fall migration. Gene Huggins, our new Region 5 editor, probably summed up the picture best with, "The fall 1986 migration became one of the worst fall migrations ever witnessed by many of our avid birders." As you read this summary of the Regional reports that follow, there are bright spots to be found in every Region, but generally this was a season characterized by low counts and few really good birding days.

The fall season across the Regions which reported was generally cool to downright cold and wet, except for November. The only real deviation came from Region 7, where the season was termed "often pleasant" although this was tempered by the earliest major snowfall of this century and a record low temperature for the U.S. one November morning, and Region 4, which was milder and drier than most regions to the west. One might have expected the fronts of September and early October to ground some migrants or for the warmer interlude that followed to lead to some very late departure dates, but such was not the case. Once past the waterfowl in the checklist you will find very few high counts and many more very early rather than late departure dates. In the Region 4 report, even the waterfowl report is dismal. The major flights of fall provide a few of the season's highlights.

The loon migration was the best in years, with record high counts of 1008 Red-throated Loon in Region 2 and Common Loon peaks of 3000 in Region 2, 300 in Region 3, and 442 in Region 5. It is interesting to note that both Regions 1 and 6, flanking these regions, reported very low counts for these species. The waterfowl picture was mixed. Many regions comment on low numbers for most species, but in contrast we find a good Brant movement in late October in Regions 2 and 5; excellent counts for several species at Montezuma NWR in Region 3 including 47000 Mallards, 22000 Black Ducks, and 1100 Ring-necked Ducks; 2016 Wood Ducks in Region 5; and a very high 476 Hooded Mergansers in Region 2. Once again Blue-winged Teal was flagged as a species of concern, this time in Region 6.

The major fall hawk watches in our state all are in Regions that failed to report. However, good news among the raptors includes Bald Eagles and Merlins reported from all regions and Peregrine Falcons from four of the seven, with at least 11 individuals from Region 2. Obviously, it would be most interesting to learn of the numbers of species such as the Peregrines passing along the coastal beaches.

Fall Departures

1986

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Osprey	25 Oct	16 Nov	20 Oct	11 Nov	16 Nov	26 Sep	1 Nov				29 Oct
Broad-winged Hawk	1 Sep	16 Aug	15 Sep	10 Oct	16 Sep	27 Sep	15 Oct				18 Sep
Black-bellied Plover	19 Oct	26 Oct	29 Sep		16 Oct	16 Sep					9 Oct
Semipalmated Plover		24 Sep	27 Oct		4 Oct	7 Oct	29 Sep				6 Oct
Greater Yellowlegs	4 Nov	22 Oct	10 Nov		8 Nov	20 Sep	26 Oct				25 Oct
Lesser Yellowlegs	14 Oct	19 Oct	3 Nov	9 Nov	22 Oct		28 Oct				26 Oct
Spotted Sandpiper		21 Sep	11 Nov	27 Sep	28 Sep	22 Sep	31 Aug				28 Sep
Sanderling	12 Nov	8 Nov	6 Oct		23 Nov	30 Oct	19 Sep				26 Oct
Semipalmated Sandpiper		20 Oct	3 Nov		18 Oct	30 Sep	22 Sep				12 Oct
Least Sandpiper		27 Sep	3 Nov	4 Oct	19 Oct	6 Sep	29 Sep				4 Oct
Pectoral Sandpiper	15 Oct	9 Oct	27 Oct		12 Oct	16 Sep					9 Oct
Caspian Tern	27 Sep	11 Oct	22 Sep		28 Sep	27 Sep					29 Sep
Common Tern	9 Nov	1 Oct	20 Oct		6 Oct						16 Oct
Black Tern	4 Sep	30 Aug			13 Sep						5 Sep
Chimney Swift	7 Oct	25 Sep	29 Sep	24 Aug	21 Sep	4 Sep					18 Sep
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	23 Sep	29 Sep	4 Oct	28 Sep	15 Sep	18 Sep	16 Sep				23 Sep
Eastern Wood-Pewee	5 Oct	21 Sep	6 Oct	20 Sep	28 Sep	12 Sep					25 Sep
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1 Sep	8 Sep	29 Sep	21 Sep	8 Sep						13 Sep
Least Flycatcher	24 Sep	15 Sep		21 Sep	28 Sep	12 Sep	10 Aug				13 Sep
Eastern Phoebe	16 Oct	16 Oct	19 Oct	14 Oct	18 Oct	3 Oct	6 Sep				8 Oct
Great-crested Flycatcher	21 Sep	13 Sep	15 Sep		21 Sep		10 Sep				16 Sep
Eastern Kingbird		14 Sep	15 Sep	3 Sep	9 Sep	13 Sep	22 Jul				2 Sep
Tree Swallow	5 Oct	31 Oct	3 Nov	26 Jul	15 Oct	6 Oct	9 Sep				30 Sep
Barn Swallow	8 Sep	25 Oct	28 Oct	10 Sep	2 Oct	13 Sep	9 Sep				26 Sep
House Wren	1 Oct	26 Oct	5 Oct	3 Oct	18 Oct	1 Sep	8 Aug				25 Sep
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	11 Oct	5 Oct					17 Sep				1 Oct
Veery	14 Sep	20 Sep	29 Sep	2 Sep	1 Sep		9 Sep				12 Sep
Swainson's Thrush	5 Oct	24 Oct	12 Nov	28 Sep	12 Oct		5 Oct				14 Oct
Wood Thrush		25 Oct	29 Sep	20 Oct	3 Oct		20 Sep				7 Oct
Gray Catbird		29 Oct	24 Nov	20 Oct	1 Nov	27 Sep	22 Oct				25 Oct
Brown Thrasher	5 Oct	4 Oct	29 Sep	8 Oct	3 Oct	26 Sep	20 Sep				30 Sep

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Solitary Vireo	19 Oct	5 Oct	5 Oct	18 Sep	18 Oct	12 Oct	14 Oct				8 Oct
Yellow-throated Vireo		8 Sep	21 Sep	15 Sep	14 Sep		28 Sep				17 Sep
Warbling Vireo	28 Sep	21 Sep	15 Sep	13 Aug	28 Sep						14 Sep
Red-eyed Vireo	2 Sep	15 Oct	6 Oct	2 Oct	7 Oct	11 Sep	23 Sep				26 Sep
Blue-winged Warbler	14 Sep	23 Aug	15 Sep	30 Sep	1 Sep						10 Sep
Tennessee Warbler	2 Oct	4 Oct	14 Oct	7 Oct	3 Oct		22 Sep				3 Oct
Nashville Warbler	19 Oct	9 Oct	13 Oct	7 Oct	3 Oct	25 Oct	7 Oct				11 Oct
Northern Parula	5 Oct	27 Sep	20 Oct		25 Sep						4 Oct
Yellow Warbler		12 Sep	11 Sep	30 Sep	15 Sep						17 Sep
Chestnut-sided Warbler		5 Oct	6 Oct	4 Sep	2 Oct		15 Sep				24 Sep
Magnolia Warbler	19 Oct	5 Oct	6 Oct	2 Oct	2 Oct		19 Sep				3 Oct
Cape May Warbler	12 Oct	14 Oct	29 Sep	21 Sep	21 Sep						1 Oct
Black-thr Blue Warbler	27 Sep	17 Oct	6 Oct	13 Aug	2 Oct		18 Sep				23 Sep
Black-thr Green Warbler	21 Sep	5 Oct	6 Oct	21 Sep	7 Oct		22 Sep				28 Sep
Blackburnian Warbler	9 Nov	21 Sep	4 Oct	14 Aug	25 Sep						26 Sep
Bay-breasted Warbler		5 Oct	18 Oct	18 Sep	2 Oct						3 Oct
Blackpoll Warbler		16 Oct	6 Oct	27 Sep	16 Sep						1 Oct
Black-and-white Warbler	22 Sep	21 Sep	6 Oct	20 Aug	27 Sep		10 Sep				17 Sep
American Redstart		8 Oct	6 Oct	1 Oct	3 Oct		3 Sep				28 Sep
Ovenbird	12 Oct	2 Oct	27 Sep	12 Oct	2 Oct		22 Sep				2 Oct
N. Waterthrush	26 Sep	2 Aug		1 Sep	29 Sep						6 Sep
Common Yellowthroat	24 Sep	25 Oct	6 Oct	12 Oct	5 Oct		18 Sep				5 Oct
Wilson's Warbler	26 Sep	8 Oct	29 Sep	17 Oct	25 Sep		14 Sep				29 Sep
Canada Warbler		5 Oct	22 Sep	4 Sep	21 Sep						20 Sep
Scarlet Tanager	8 Sep	1 Oct	29 Sep	18 Sep	2 Oct		1 Oct				24 Sep
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	27 Oct	24 Oct	2 Oct	1 Oct	25 Sep	27 Oct	25 Sep				10 Oct
Rufous-sided Towhee	23 Oct	25 Oct	20 Oct	21 Oct	18 Oct		3 Oct				18 Oct
Lincoln's Sparrow	12 Oct	18 Oct		13 Oct	9 Oct		22 Sep				8 Oct
White-crowned Sparrow	28 Sep	20 Oct	27 Oct	17 Oct	30 Oct	8 Oct	20 Oct				17 Oct
Bobolink	12 Oct	5 Oct	25 Sep	23 Aug	1 Sep						19 Sep
Northern Oriole		5 Oct	25 Sep	23 Aug	2 Sep						13 Sep

Bold Regional Record Late

Italics also isolated later report(s).

Shorebirding nearly unanimously was termed poor due to lack of habitat. The importance of habitat availability was highlighted by Region 3, where a drawdown of the May's Point Pool at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (scheduled to be an annual occurrence now) provided some excitement. Even there, shorebird numbers were not particularly great, except for the record 125 Stilt Sandpipers. Variety was more striking. Overall, there were no real shorebird "misses," though most local areas showed glaring gaps. There were no really exciting finds either. Gulls again exhibited lackluster scarcity, save for the fantastic concentrations and variety in Regions 1 and 6. The Moses Saunders Power Dam on the St. Lawrence River may rival Niagara Falls as the Gull Capital as more birders venture there. Turn to the Region 6 report for the details.

The passerine migration was particularly poor. A few high points include late departure dates for "Traill's" Flycatcher in Region 7, Swainson's Thrush in Region 3, and White-eyed Vireo in Region 2; and a record early arrival for Common Redpoll in Region 2. The winter finch flight was slim except for redpolls and Pine Siskin in most Regions and a scattering of Pine Grosbeaks in Regions 4, 5, 6 and 7. The only other widespread winter irruptives were Rough-legged Hawk, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Northern Shrike, which arrived early and in good numbers.

Additional species commentary and interesting notes are scarce enough this season to be lumped. You can find three late breeding-related notes, two a bit difficult to evaluate without more detail: Double-crested Cormorant in Region 7, Ruffed Grouse in Region 7, and Red-bellied Woodpecker in Region 5. A roost of 200 Great Blue Herons in Region 6 in September is a non-breeding high count, and note the census of the Valcour Island heronry in Region 7. From Region 1 we are reminded of the plight of the American Beech and the potential impact of a major wildlife food supply; this fall Region 4 reports Am. Crow feeding on beech mast. Regions 1 and 3 report very few tower kills, in agreement with the scarcity of passerine migrants or weather to bring them low enough to strike towers. The expansion of some of our species of more southerly origin toward the north often appears as a seesaw struggle. This season Tufted Titmouse hangs on in Region 6, but Red-bellied Woodpecker was unreported. Carolina Wren appeared at feeders in the Adirondacks after going unreported for many years. Ring-necked Pheasant numbers are generally reported low, but in Region 7 we have the added note of 1148 released this fall with 0 reports following. Finally, we can finish with a note on the last of the list, House Sparrow carrying grass on 25 November, surely just to line a winter roost?!

Regional Seasonality and Advance

Region	Species Reported	Seasonality (days)	Advance (days)
Region 1	47	-7.5	3.5
Region 2	62	-8.0	4.3
Region 3	57	0.1	8.0
Region 4	50	-7.7	-5.7
Region 5	61	-7.6	2.2
Region 6	27	-7.9	-8.9
Region 7	42	-6.3	-11.8
Region 8	0		
Region 9	0		
Region 10	0		

This season we have a new reporting feature which should provide more data for our analysis of seasonal events, particularly as more data is assembled in future years. The departure dates of some 62 species of widespread occurrence across the state are tabulated here. A second table gives estimates of how this year's dates compare with the past within each region (Seasonality) and among regions relative to this year's average (Advance). More detail concerning the specifics of the effort to gather arrival and departure date data is presented in the Editorial in this issue. There are all sorts of potential biases in such data, many (most?) of which should disappear with increasing numbers of observers and as more data are reported. Currently, I am most skeptical of estimates of Seasonality, primarily because of questions about the long-term averages for each Region used as the baseline for comparison with the current season. Three major problems are: 1) For many Regions, there are only 1-3 data points for many species from the 26 years of reports, in which cases, the "averages" may be unrepresentative and misleading. 2) A reason for the lack of data points in several Regions is adherence to a former editorial policy suggesting that all published dates should be noteworthy; thus, those who followed the guidelines reported only arrival and departure dates, biasing the few dates provided toward the very early or very late. 3) I wonder if the average date is the "proper" statistic, or would the median be more appropriate? It is very interesting to note that despite these problems, this fall the Seasonality is very uniform across Regions, except for Region 3 where much of the data is derived from the Laboratory of Ornithology Monday

Seminar meetings and only pinpointed to within a week. [*"Monday Seminar" dates were not included in the 26 year averages for Region 3 when they were specifically identified as such, except for 1986. -The Editor.*] The Advance column, comparing dates among regions for this season, again excepting Region 3, suggests a north to southwest exit of departing species, on average. It would have been much more interesting if data from Regions 8, 9 and 10 had been included. Again, such data will become more interesting and useful as more years are compiled and as better baseline data can be assembled for the Regions which reported few dates in past issues of *The Kingbird*. Until more data allowing assessment of the normal variation of dates within and across Regions is assembled, I don't feel it is useful to start looking for spatial and temporal patterns across the state for individual species.

Rarities did liven the otherwise dull season in many locales. The quality of the list was high. The best of the season were: Region 1 – Sabine's Gull; Region 2 – Western Kingbird, White-eyed Vireo, Sharp-tailed Sparrows, and Yellow-headed Blackbird; Region 3 – Red Phalarope; Region 5 – Eared Grebe, Harlequin Duck, Sabine's Gull, Franklin's Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, and Say's Phoebe; Region 6 – Northern Gannet, Sabine's Gull, Franklin's Gull, Mew Gull, a potential first for the state if accepted by NYSARC, Common Black-headed Gull, and Red Phalarope; and Region 7 – Whimbrel, Little Gull, Iceland Gull, and Carolina Wren. The BOTS award must go to New York's first Rock Wren, present in Region 1 near Fredonia from 29 November to at least 3 December.

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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; arr—arrival or first of season; BBS—Breeding Bird Survey; bnd—banded; CO—confirmed; f—female, FL—fledgling; Ft—Fort; FY—adult feeding young; GMA—Game Management Area; H—Harbor; I—Island; im—immature; *intro*—see introduction to report; 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; R—River; Res—Reservoir; SP—State Park; spm—specimen; T—Town of; Twn—township; wk—week; WMA—Wildlife Management Area; y—young.