

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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Although this season provided a strong contrast in temperatures with last summer, there were many similarities in the reports of birds. Last summer was cold. This summer, all Regions reported hot spells, with highs over 90°F in either July or August. June and July were wetter than average in all but Region 7, though in many of the Regions much of this rainfall came in brief bursts. Except in Region 10 August averaged cooler and a bit drier than the rest of the season, with Regions 3 and 5 both recording days with record low temperatures. Regional commentary generally suggested that this was a good breeding season and a good summer to be out birding, yet as the fall migration progressed there were comments on the low numbers of juveniles reported for both shorebirds and warblers. Upstate, concern over very high water levels along the Great Lakes this spring was followed by a rapid drop which eventually produced the best habitat for shorebirds there in at least 10 years.

Reporting of the breeding season once again suffered from the lack of an Atlas driving force. Only Regions 1 and 3 provided substantial, quantitative reports. Summaries of Vivian Pitzrick's nest finding efforts, made more difficult this season by particularly lush foliage, and of Walter Klabunde's compilation of the results of the Region's breeding bird surveys are in the Region 1 report and a summary of waterfowl nesting success at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge appears in the Region 3 report. Apparently only in Region 1 do clubs regularly conduct mini breeding bird surveys, and no one seems sufficiently interested or motivated to gather, analyze, and summarize results of other efforts such as the USF&WS Breeding Bird Routes run each summer in New York.

Additional noteworthy reports of breeding birds include a report of the progress of the Osprey hacking program in Region 1, where birds have returned to the hack site but have not yet nested and from which a hacked bird has nested well to our south, and a new Bald Eagle nest in Region 3, with a puzzling three adults in attendance. Large numbers of Great Blue Herons are now nesting at Montezuma NWR. Interesting comments about nesting terns are in Region 10's report. A Barn-Owl nested in Region 1 but no Fish Crows were reported from Region 3. Good nesting success for Eastern Bluebird was indicated in 7 of the 8 Regions reporting, with some losses during a cold snap from 14-17 July in Region 1 emphasizing that breeding success depends both on *what* and also precisely *when* during the nesting cycle critical events occur.

Once again only three Loggerhead Shrike nests were located, in spite of an intensive search effort coordinated by Paul Novak. An interesting warbler collection in Allegany State Park in Region 1 again included a singing male Yellow-throated Warbler. Grassland sparrow declines were again flagged in Regions 2, 3 and 5. Possible nesting of Pine Siskin in Regions 1 and 2 perhaps was a result of increased niger seed feeding. Finally, crossbill reports are suggestive of successful nesting in Region 7 and of a possible crossbill winter to follow.

While this season contains a part of both the spring and fall migrations, there were few notable reports of tardy spring migrants. There were few really late spring migrants other than the typically late-migrating flycatchers, thrushes, and warblers. Late (*i.e.*, June) records of special note included only a Common Goldeneye and a White-crowned Sparrow in Region 2 and a Wilson's Phalarope in Region 1. There also was an especially large variety of "winter waterbirds" tarrying through the summer in Region 10. By contrast, fall migrants elicited much more commentary. Shorebird observations were up, with interesting reports from the continuing survey at Jamaica Bay NWR in Region 10 and from the upstate Regions with improved habitat this year. Particularly early fall migrants included Horned Grebe in Region 8, Pectoral Sandpiper in Region 10, Red Phalarope in Region 2, Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Region 3, Philadelphia Vireo in Region 1, Fox Sparrow in Region 2, White-winged Crossbill in Region 2, and Evening Grosbeak in Region 2. The first impressions of the fall food crop were mixed, with Region 3 suggesting it would be "good" and Region 9 indicating that it was so poor that birds already were eating the multiflora rose hips. Reports of several highly successful pelagic trips from Region 10 through the season are hard to assign to migration period.

There were many more negatives than positive notes and comments on specific species. Particularly high counts are nearly all are from Region 10 and are of birds which inhabit the seashore, including 1015 Semipalmated Plovers on 16 Aug, 360 American Oystercatchers on 30 Aug, 46 Willets on 17 Aug, 634 Semipalmated Sandpipers on 6 Jun, 6000 pairs (5000 banded) Common Terns, and 50 Royal Terns on 12 Aug. Notable high counts elsewhere include 34 Forster's Terns on 30 Aug in Region 1 and 500 Chimney Swifts in one school chimney from late July to early August in Region 3. Additional positives of note include Common Loon in 7 of 8 Regions. Double-crested Cormorant continues to increase inland with nesting now confirmed in Region 5. Good numbers of Great Egret were in Regions 1, 2, 9 and 10 and Wood Duck numbers were good all across the state. Possible slight increases were reported for N. Harrier and Red-shouldered Hawk numbers. Cuckoo

numbers were ok in Regions 1, 5, 8 and 9. Common Raven was found in Regions 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9. A few more Sedge Wren were reported than usual. Some encouraging comments on the grassland sparrows appear, and crossbills were widely reported.

The list of species with substantial negative commentary is not consistent from year to year. Of 17 species or groups suggested as worthy of special attention in these pages last year, just 11 were even mentioned in less than half of the Regional reports and only three appear in at least 6 of the 8 reports received before this writing. Species with significant negatives from many Regions or over a number of seasons, and which deserve better reporting in these pages, include Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Green-backed Heron, American Black Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler (no reports), Ring-necked Pheasant, Spotted Sandpiper!, dowitchers, Black Tern (*e.g.* maximum in Region 1 was 60 this season *vs.* 3500 in 1951-52), Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will (except Region 10?), Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Region 5, Purple Martin, Golden-winged Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, grassland sparrows, Eastern Meadowlark, and many other blackbirds(!) in Region 1. There are **many** other species with negative notes from a single Regional report, but not enough data to really assess their status. Your comments are always welcome, either by me or by any of the Regional editors.

As usual, there are buried gems, which may differ in value to different readers, to be found among the Regional reports. Here are a few to whet your appetite. From Region 7 we have note of the bane of the Regional editors, the intriguing and potentially exciting but unverified, second- or third-hand reports, this season including a albino possible Spruce Grouse called various things by different observers and reinforcing one possible explanation of historical "ptarmigan" reports from New York. Region 8 reports a long-term decline in Chipping Sparrow numbers observed in banding data, not even hinted in other regional reports over the years. The interesting, long-term effects of a beaver impoundment are described in Region 9. Finally, we are reminded that Region 10 is a world apart from the rest of the state by such tidbits as a Willet bashing a poor Least Sandpiper, a Ruddy Turnstone defending feeding territory against a Starling, and note of stray, escaped parrots, which formerly were reported most frequently in good variety from Region 9.

Typical of most summer reports, the rarity list is neither as long nor as heady as those from the migration seasons. The best reports from across the state are: Region 1 - Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Peregrine Falcon, and Western Meadowlark; Region 2 - Snowy Egret, Little Blue

Heron, Willet, Red Phalarope, Laughing Gull, "Bullock's" Oriole, and White-winged Crossbill; Region 3 - Common Raven; Region 5 - Clay-colored Sparrow and Western Meadowlark; Region 7 - Stilt Sandpiper. and Little Gull; Region 8 - Fish Crow (breeding) and White-winged Crossbill; Region 9 - Black Skimmer, Connecticut Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Sharp-tailed Sparrow; and Region 10 - Audubon's Shearwater, South Polar Skua, Little Gull, Common Black-headed Gull, Sooty Tern, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. The BOTS Award selection was difficult this season. It fell to sorting out the best of the marine rarities from Region 10 and finally fell to the Brown Pelicans, with the potentially rarer species eliminated by the "no details received" notation which, at least temporarily, relegates them to the dust bin of exciting rumors, not really even records.

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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; CO - nesting confirmed; FL - fledgling; FY - adult feeding young; I - Island; im - immature; *intro* - see introduction to report; juv-juvenile; L - Lake; 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; Rd - Road; Res - Reservoir; SP - State Park; subad - subadult; T-Town of; Twn - township; WMA - Wildlife Management Area; y - young.