

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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September was warm and wet, temperatures averaging 4° above normal and precipitation 2 inches above normal. Rain fell on 20 days of the month at Buffalo. Bees had great difficulty harvesting the goldenrod nectar flow on the Allegheny plateau but there was no frost at Amity Lake and most other places in southern tier counties. The warbler migration was described as "lackluster" by Terry Mosher at Dunkirk and "most disappointing" by Don Clark at Farmersville Station. Although difficult to prove, most observers in western New York felt that migrant warblers from the North are at population lows and have been for several reasons. Art Clark called TV tower kills south of Buffalo the lowest since he began monitoring them in 1967.

By 1 Oct Lake Erie had cooled to 66°, two degrees warmer than normal, but the 11 month stretch of above average temperature at Buffalo came to a close in October. Temperatures averaged 6.5° below normal, which gave Buffalo the chilliest autumn in 11 years. The first frost occurred rather generally across the Allegheny Plateau on 4 Oct, which was 24 days later than normal at Amity Lake. Frost along the lake plains did not occur until 26 Oct, which made their growing season 205 days (4 Apr to 26 Oct), the longest since 1938 according to the *Buffalo News*. Snow fell in the snowbelt in the lee of Lake Erie on the 11, 21 and 27 Oct. Fall foliage peaked about mid month and Lake Erie cooled to 53 by the end of the month.

November was the warmest in five years and the sunniest in 23. Only the last week of the month was gloomy with an average 12% of possible sunshine during that week. Snow fell on nine days but the ski areas in the snow belt had to settle for only about four inches. Amity Lake in Allegany County and Eaton's pond in Cattaraugus County froze over on 22 Nov, the first of several tries. Lake Erie had cooled to 45° by 30 Nov.

The fruit crop which produces much food for our wintering birds generally was good on the Allegheny Plateau. For the first time in several years wild Black Cherry produced abundant fruit not only in the fertile lowlands but also in the unglaciated hills of southern Cattaraugus County. This also applied to White Ash. Last year White Ash produced abundant seed in the valleys but not in the unglaciated soils. The reverse occurred this year. Turkeys, Ruffed Grouse and deer were seen eating the cherries and Turkeys and Evening Grosbeaks ate the White Ash seed. Eastern Hemlock produced one of the finest seed crops in several years. After every snowstorm the snow surface was peppered with their small seeds and Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch and Dark-eyed Junco fed on these. After one snow melt these same birds were noticed feeding on the seeds on the ground, an unusual habit for chickadees and nuthatches. In the hemlock trees large flocks of Pine Siskins, up to 100 individuals, broke into the small cones and fed on the seeds. Hawthorn fruit was abundant on some species and wild apples did well. One road-killed Ruffed Grouse examined had 106 *Crataegus* berries in its crop. White Pine and Norway Spruce produced abundant cones, not just near the tops of trees but further down on

lower branches. Grape, elderberry, dogwood and viburnum produced good fruit crops. White Oak in southern Cattaraugus County produced good numbers of acorns which were found by a few Wild Turkey flocks and many deer, but Red Oak, which needs at least 2 years to mature, was still 'put back' by the Gypsy Moth.

The water birds along the Great Lakes, Chautauqua Lake and the Niagara River put on a good show in October and November. The 136 Common Loons on the BOS October Count (11 Oct) was seen in highest numbers since 1935, while counts of 136 Pied-billed Grebe and 166 Horned Grebe were the highest in 10 years. A count of 105 Double-crested Cormorant at Fort Niagara State Park on 22 September on Lake Ontario further documents the increase of this bird inland. Great Egrets stayed late in good numbers as did a Cattle Egret in Chautauqua County. A nice flock of Brant and a flock of 33 Snow Geese (all blue) were seen in Chautauqua County. High counts of Canvasback in the Niagara River and of Redhead and Scaup at Lewiston Reservoir was encouraging news. The BOS fall count, summarized by Kathleen Hentz, seemed to indicate that four southern species reduced in numbers in western New York during the winter of 1976-1977 are recovering. These are Red-bellied Woodpecker (seen in second highest numbers ever), Tufted Titmouse (in second highest numbers in 10 years), Carolina Wren (6 were reported and 4 more were known to be in Region but not reported), Northern Mockingbird (third highest ever). Three other species which were reduced in numbers in southern states during the winter of 1976-77 seem to be regaining population strength. These are Eastern Phoebe (10 year high), Golden-crowned Kinglet (10 year high), Eastern Bluebird (highest numbers since 1971). Hermit Thrush and Gray Catbird, which winter a little further south, also may be increasing from the winter of 1976-77 but comparative data from the BOS count are not at hand.

Still another optimistic note is the continuing success of raptors. The BOS October 11 count had the second highest ever totals of Turkey Vulture (106) and Red-tailed Hawk and the highest count ever of Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier (164) and Short-eared Owl (6).

No very unusual species were seen during the period in the Region but enough interesting finds encouraged the dedicated birder to continue this rewarding activity. We will miss the thorough and active birding by Dave Gagne, who has moved to Massachusetts; hopefully we will hear from him on vacations.

Contributors: Allegany Bird Club, Robert Andrie, Tim Baird, Tony Bielat, Betsy Brooks, Lois Buck, Buffalo Ornithological Society, Lou and Doris Burton, Cattaraugus County Bird Club, Art Clark, Don and Jane Clark, William D'Anna, Steve Eaton, Don Endres, Dave Gagne, James Gregory, Joe and John Gula, Thomas Harper, Kathleen Hentz, Paul Hess, Johnson, D. King, Walter and Hulga Klabunde, J & N Luensman, Terry Mahoney (TMa), Terry and Judy Mosher, Neveu, Raymond and Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Fran Rew, Robertson, Arthur and Olga Rosche, B. Smalley, David Suggs, Robert Sundell, VanScoys, Joe Thill, William Watson, Cyril Wolfing.

Abbreviations: BIP-Bird Island Pier, Buffalo; BISP-Beaver Island State Park; BOS-Buffalo Ornithological Society; BOSOC-October 11 BOS Count; BH-Buffalo Harbor; CCNS-Canadaway Creek Nature Sanctuary; DH- Dunkirk Harbor; FMCSF-Four Mile Creek State Park; FNSP-Fort Niagara State Park; INWR-Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NiagF-Niagara Falls; NiagR-Niagara River; TFNP-Tifft Farm Nature Preserve; TWMA-Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: arr 23 Oct. Com. Loon: max 36 DH 27 Oct., 35 NiagR 8 Nov, *intro*. Pied-billed Grebe: max 6 Mayville 8 Nov; *intro*. Horned Grebe: arr Lakewood 10 Oct; *intro*. Red-necked Grebe: one BIP 2 Oct; two BOSOC 11 Oct. Double-crested Cormorant: *intro*; last NiagR and Great Lakes 25 Oct. Am. Bittern: one TFNP 3 Sep., only report. Least Bittern: one TFNP 2 Sep. Great Egret: max 24 INWR 27 Sep, last 25 Oct. Cattle Egret: one Harmony Twn, CHAU, 13 Nov, late. Tundra Swan: arr INWR 24 Oct; max 172 Mayville 22 Nov. Snow Goose: *intro*. Brant: arr Shadagee Rd, NIAG, 31 Oct; 36 Bear Lake, CHAU, 7 Nov (TM, mob). Canvasback: max 3,500 BISP 22 Nov, high for so early. Redhead: arr three Times Beach, Buffalo, 23 Sep; max 2,100 Lewiston Res 14 Nov, high. Scaup sp.: max 20,000 estimated Lewiston Res 28 Oct, high. Oldsquaw: arr 80 Porter Twn, CHAU, 7 Nov. Black Scoter: arr LaSalle Park, Buffalo, 12 Oct. Surf Scoter: max 17 BH 14 Nov. Hooded Merganser: max 146 INWR 7 Nov. Ruddy Duck : max 14 Lewiston Res 1 Nov.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: *intro*. Osprey: 11 reports BOS, last Amity L 29 Sep. Bald Eagle: im INWR 5 Sep; ad INWR 19-20 Sep, 30 Oct, 1 Nov; ad Tuna Creek and Allegheny R 17 Oct. N. Harrier: *intro*. Rough-legged Hawk: arr three Charlotte Twn, CHAU; max 19 CHAU 16 Nov. Ruffed Grouse: one Lewiston Twn, NIAG, 22 Sep, where missed during atlas field work; a good hatching year; *intro*. Wild Turkey: good hatch this year, many flocks of good size. Sora: one TWMA 4 Oct, late and only report. Virginia Rail: one INWR 26 Sep, only report. Am. Coot: max 250 Mayville 10 Oct. Black-bellied Plover: max 30 INWR 25 Oct. Lesser Golden-Plover: max 13 Lewiston Twn, NIAG, 27 Sep. Whimbrel: last Buffalo 13 Oct. Sanderling: max 92 BIP 23 Sep. Western Sandpi per: one INWR 4 Sep. Dunlin: arr BIP 26 Sep. Long-billed Dowitcher: two Eden Twn, ERIE, 27-30 Sep, one 8 Oct (RA). Com. Snipe: max 50 INWR 21 Sep; last Tonawanda Twn, ERIE, 15 Nov. Wilson's Phalarope: one TFNP 3 Sep, late. Red-necked Phalarope: two B IP 26 Sep. Iceland Gull: one Lewiston Twn, NIAG, 29 Nov. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: one NiagF 27 Nov. Black-legged Kittiwake: one NiagF 27 Nov. Sabine's Gull: one-two Squaw I and BIP 7-24 Oct. Forster's Tern: max four DH 3 Sep. Black Tern: max 16 BIP 9 Sep.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: 2153 BOSOC, highest count ever. Yellow-billed Cuckoo: one Stockton Twn, CHAU 3 Sep; one FNSP 20 Sep. Snowy Owl: arr DH 31 Oct and BH 12 Nov; at three other lake plain localities in Nov (BOS). Long-eared Owl: arr So merset Twn, NIAG 14 Nov, only report. Short-eared Owl: *intro*. Com. Night-hawk: 37 Tonawanda Twn, ERIE, 7 Sep; max 50 Olean 8 Sep; last two Goat I 30 Sep. Whip-poor-will: one FMCSF 24 Sep. Chimney Swift: 338 BOSOC is 10 year high. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr FNSP 21 Sep. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one INWR through period; one Belmont 21 Oct, 13, 30 Nov and singles Farmersville Station 27 Nov and Salamanca 11 Dec represent increasing reports from valleys of Allegheny Plateau; 19 BOSOC, 2nd highest since 1935.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: N. Rough-winged Swallow: 250 NiagF 12 Oct, late. Bank Swallow: two Porter Twn, CHAU, 21 Sep, late. Com. Raven: four Scio mid-Sep (DK, *fide* Pitzrick); two Alma Pond, ALLE, 21 Nov (BS). Carolina Wren: reported from Jamestown, L Erie SP, BISP, Vandalia, Olean and junction Tuna Creek and Allegheny R during period; *intro*. Marsh Wren: four BOSOC, 2nd report in 7 years. Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr CCNS 10 Sep, *intro*. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr CCNS 10 Sep. E. Bluebird: one Portland Twn, CHAU, 8 Nov; 227 BOSOC, 61 more than 1986 and first count over 200 since 1971, *intro*. Gray-cheeked Thrush: arr L Erie SP 10 Sep. N. Mockingbird: 24 BOSOC, 3rd highest ever, *intro*. Water Pipit: 300 Westfield Twn, CHAU 18 Oct. N. Shrike: arr J Davis SP 28 Oct, five other localities Oct and Nov (BOS).

VIREOS-WARBLED: Philadelphia Vireo: three Porter Twn, CHAU, 21 Sep, late. Orange-crowned Warbler: arr Times Beach and Tonawanda Twn, ERIE, 26 Sep. Pine Warbler: one TFNP 24 Sep. Prairie Warbler: one Amity Twn, ALLE, 4 Sep. Palm Warbler: arr Tonawanda Twn, ERIE, 16 Sep. Mourning Warbler: one Silver Creek 24 Sep, late. Hooded Warbler: last TFNP 3 Oct.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS : Indigo Bunting: two Amity L 29 Sep, late. **Dickcissel**: singles Darien 27-31 Oct (TH, WD, mob) and Alden 22 Nov (CW), perhaps the same bird; first Regional record since Apr 1977. Am. Tree Sparrow: arr Hamburg 11 Oct but not in ALLE, CHAU, ORLE or GENE until 7-8 Nov. Vesper Sparrow: one Belmont 1 Nov, late; 14 BOSOC was 2nd lowest total in 29 years. Savannah Sparrow: 12 TFNP 12 Oct, late. Fox Sparrow: 3-4 Pomfret Twn, CHAU, and one Amity Twn, ALLE, 3 Nov, late. Snow Bunting: arr five DH 25 Oct; max 1330 in about 15 mi Youngstown to Shadagee Rd, Wilson Twn, NIAG, 14 Nov; eight other reports BOS in Nov. Rusty Blackbird: arr six INWR 24 Sep. Purple Finch: one Farmersville Station 26-27 Oct; one-five Amity L in Nov. Pine Siskin: arr Porter Twn, CHAU, 24 Sep, where perhaps resident after nesting this spring; five Regional reports BOS through Oct, 100+ Farmersville Station 7-20 Nov; 75 Vandalia Nov; max 225 Porter Twn, CHAU; 52 Amity L 30 Nov; six other reports to BOS 3-30 Nov; *intro*. Evening Grosbeak: arr Amity L 16 Oct; max 45 Nov, and 6 reports BOS throughout Region in Nov.

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REGION 2 — GENESEE

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This fall the low level of Lake Ontario had more of an impact on the season than did the characteristically variable temperatures and rainfall. September was gloomy and wet. Rainfall was nearly two inches above normal at 4.6 inches. The average temperature was 61.6° which was only slightly below normal. October's precipitation was considerably lower than September's, with a reading of 1.65 inches. The temperature kept things cool with an average reading of 47.1°, 4.6° below normal. Two strong cold fronts passed through the region during November and temperatures seesawed. The average was 40.6°. Precipitation totaled 2.74 inches, including a hint of the winter snows to come. The weather had little effect on birding. Major frontal systems were sporadic and some weekends, which normally are peak days for birding, were mediocre. There were a few good days when waves were evident, but some of the clear days brought only looks at birds as they flew overhead. On the whole, the season seemed about average.

The most significant feature of the season was the level of Lake Ontario. The lake level was well below recent averages and, as a result, mudflats and shallow pools were exposed along the lakeshore. Irondequoit Bay became a hotspot. The exposed mud was attractive to many species of shorebirds. Birds that normally might have passed over the Region found good habitat and, therefore, were observed in good numbers. The Region enjoyed shorebirding unlike that of any recent years. There were unusually high numbers of Stilt and Baird's Sandpipers and of Long-billed Dowitchers. Phalaropes, both Red-necked and Wilson's, were reported early in the season but their numbers dropped off in the later months. Hudsonian Godwit reports also were up. Less numerous than usual were Lesser Golden-Plover, Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Purple Sandpiper. An injured Spotted Sandpiper lingered until 23 Nov before it disappeared.