

Literature Cited

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Prairie Warbler as a regular breeder at Alvar sites in Jefferson County: Bonney (1988) in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* stated the Prairie Warbler is a southern species reaching the northern limit of its range in New York. He noted the epicenter of its range in the state included the Hudson Valley, eastern Long Island and the central southern tier. North of the New York State Thruway the species is much less frequent, particularly in central and western sections of the state where atlas workers found it to be a rare breeder.

In Jefferson county prior to 1986 the species was considered a rare migrant with little evidence of breeding. The probable breeding record noted by the atlas involved two pair of Prairie Warblers observed by me during 1984 and 1985 at The Nature Conservancy's Limerick Cedar's Preserve in the Town of Brownville. This preserve is largely composed of Calcareous Pavement Barrens mixed with Limestone woodland communities. These communities are characterized by open forests of small trees containing substantial amounts of Red Cedar interspersed with areas of exposed limestone bedrock and open grassy areas. Although these Alvar type communities are rare globally, northwestern Jefferson county contains several of the best remaining examples in North America.

During the 1987 and 1988 breeding seasons, in the course of my duties as The Nature Conservancy's Central New York Land Steward, I visited several of these Alvar sites. At the newly acquired TNC 772 acre Chaumont Barrens Preserve a minimum of 10 pair of Prairie Warblers were present in 1988. Also during 1988 a minimum of 5 pair were present at Limerick Cedars. During brief visits to 3 other Alvar sites in this region singing males were found at all sites. In addition one singing male was present at the El Dorado Beach preserve located in southwestern Jefferson County. These observations indicate the species is a locally fairly common breeder on limestone barrens sites in the area. It is likely detailed surveys of suitable habitat in the towns of Cape Vincent, Lyme, Chaumont and Brownville would locate several dozen pair. In addition Prairie Warblers may occur in lesser numbers in small areas of the towns of Hounsfield and Henderson and perhaps elsewhere in Jefferson County.

This Prairie Warbler population is approximately 100 miles north of any other substantial breeding population in the state. Quilliam (1973), however, found the species to be a rare but increasing breeder in the nearby Kingston, Ontario region. This area is 20-40 miles from the Jefferson County sites. Bonney (1988) noted this species was found by Ontario atlas workers in southern Ontario and is also continuing to expand in New York. Although

the Jefferson county population may represent a fairly recent range expansion, the nearly thirty year history of the Kingston, Ontario population suggests that these birds may have been present for at least one to two decades. Competent and active field birders are in short supply in northern New York and many of the best sites for Prairie Warblers, such as Limerick Cedars and Chaumont Barrens are areas unlikely to attract birders. It is likely that these factors, combined with insufficient atlas coverage, were responsible for the previous lack of information on this population.

Northwestern Jefferson County contains a number of species, primarily plants but also birds including Clay-colored Sparrow, exhibiting western affinities. Recent work by several botanists, primarily at Alvar sites have found populations of plant species rare in New York State but more widely distributed farther west. It is interesting to speculate that similar intensive avian field work in this poorly studied area may result in species such as Western Meadowlark and Clay-colored Sparrow being more widely reported. The presence of a substantial breeding Prairie Warbler population in this region may support Bull's (1974) suggestion that this species is invading New York from the west.

Current data suggest this Prairie Warbler population is closely tied to habitats in Alvar communities. Given the slow rate of natural succession at these sites and intense interest in their observation it is likely suitable nesting habitat will be available to Prairie Warblers here for some time to come. Hopefully increasing interest on the part of birders will result in more information on this and other locally distributed species in the bird-rich but observer-poor areas of northern New York.

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Late Nesting of Black-backed Woodpecker: On 26 Aug, 1988, Kathryn McIntyre and I were birding on a lumber road between Big Moose Station and Stillwater, Herkimer County. My attention was called to a swampy hemlock area by loud "pic" calls and a noisy assortment of rattling cries. The last sounded like young woodpeckers. We soon located two adult Black-backed Woodpeckers (*Picoides arcticus*) and at least three, possibly four young. I could see three juveniles at one time and was hearing the same noises coming