

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

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"All in all a delightful fall..." from a quick summary in the Region 10 highlights, probably was an appropriate statement for most of us. With local variations, most of the state saw nearly average temperatures and precipitation for much of the Fall. Most of the state experienced a sunny, warm spell in late October and early November, then turned cold for the last two weeks of the season. Region 10 again experienced very heavy rainfall totals for both September and October, while both the Region 1 and 6 reports note the potential fallacy of using average values only. In Region 1 there was a 40 day difference in the length of the growing season across the Region and, in Region 6 there were large differences in precipitation between the lowlands and the higher areas, e.g., only a few inches of snow over most of the Region compared to 5 ft(!) at Barnes Corners. For several Regions the weather event of the season was the passage of the remnant of Hurricane *Hugo* on 22-23 Sep. The bulk of the avian fallout from this storm occurred in Regions 3 and 8. Both Regional reports summarized this passage, and Ken Able also discussed generally when and where one should look for the greatest fallout relative to such a passage. Apart from these Regions, the only other probable hurricane assisted waifs were Willet in Regions 1 and 5 and Long-tailed Jaeger and Gray Kingbird in Region 10. For the remaining Regions, the hurricane passage brought no records of note and even the fact that a passage had occurred often was not reported.

The passage of major groups awaited and monitored by many was somewhat disappointing for most observers again this fall. Among the water birds, numbers generally were quite low, especially for grebes, many of the puddle ducks, Redhead, scaup and scoters. Positive notes included good loon counts in Regions 1, 2 and 5; a large Horned Grebe gathering in Region 2; widespread counts, some unprecedented, of Snow Goose across the state; good Brant counts in Regions 2 and 5; peak counts of over 1000 Wood Duck in Regions 3 and 5; good Canvasback counts only in Regions 1 and 3; and high maxima for Hooded Merganser in Regions 1, 3 and 5. Rarer waterfowl records were few, with the best Eurasian Wigeon and Tufted Duck in Region 10, King Eider in Regions 5 and 10, and Barrow's Goldeneye in Region 7. The Region 3 and 5 reports provided the most comprehensive summaries of peak counts of water birds.

Fall hawk watch data was summarized in a table in the Region 9 report and in the commentary from Region 10. Elsewhere there was either no significant hawk migration, no concerted observation effort, or no data reaching the Regional editors. In the Region 10 report you may read of the contrasts between barrier beach and inland sites and of an hypothesis about the correlation between hawk flights and small bird

flights relative to passage of strong fronts. This hypothesis deserves testing in future autumns. Away from the hawk watches we have late Turkey Vulture in Regions 5 and 8; a late Osprey in Region 8; Bald Eagle reported in all Regions, with special note of their recovery in Region 7; few Northern Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk reports; a late Broad-winged Hawk in Region 8; Rough-legged Hawk arriving in late October or November in eight of the nine reporting regions, but at a Regional record early date of 13 Sep in Region 5; and Merlin and Peregrine Falcon reports scattered across most Regions in small numbers and more substantial counts at the beach hawk watches in Region 10.

Among the shorebirds, variety reported was good, but relatively low counts were the rule for most species. In Region 8 a reservoir drawdown and sod farm visits produced relatively good reports this fall. Positive shorebird notes included good counts of Lesser Golden-Plover in Regions 2, 5 and 10; Willet in Regions 1 and 5; two very high counts of Baird's Sandpiper in Region 10; more Buff-breasted Sandpiper than usual, with records in Regions 2, 5, 9 and 10, and a very high count of 16 in Region 10. On the negative side were the generally low maxima recorded for most species. Gulls, terns and their relatives provided little excitement, with the best being the Long-tailed Jaeger in Region 10; Lesser Black-backed Gull in Regions 1, 3, 8 and 9; an unprecedented five species of gulls at Lake Placid in Region 7 in late November; an inland record late date for Caspian Tern on 12 Nov in Region 5; an Arctic Tern in Region 1; hurricane related Greater Shearwater and Least Tern in Region 8; and Black Tern only in Regions 5 and 6.

The passerines are a major element of the fall flights, but most observers agreed that, at best, there were few groundings. For most families and species there were too few reports across Regions to allow assessment of significant trends. In contrast with the general feeling, Regions 3, 5, 9, and 10 did report isolated very good days in late September or mid October. Working through this part of the checklist we find among the flycatchers, a very late Eastern Kingbird in Region 2; fair numbers of Horned Lark in most Regions; a typical peak of 10,000+ Tree Swallow in Region 10; Common Raven reports from 6 Regions; Boreal Chickadee only in Regions 5 and 7; an irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatch noted in Regions 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9; good Carolina Wren numbers; a state record late fledging date, from a nest box(!), for Winter Wren in Region 8; good kinglet counts; few comments about thrushes; good numbers of Northern Mockingbird, with a peak count of 15 in Region 8; an irruption of Bohemian Waxwing noted in reports from Regions 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7, with a peak of 250+ in Region 7 and the arrivals there at Regional record early dates. Shrikes were represented by Northern in 7 Regions and two reports of Loggerhead in Region 3. Vireo and warbler reports were generally skimpy, with exceptions in some good counts

from Regions 5 and 10 and Elva Hawken reporting the best warbler migration in 10 years in Region 5. Yet, positive notes were few, with the best being Orange-crowned Warbler from four Regions; Prairie Warbler in Region 5, Cerulean Warbler in Regions 5 and 8, and Worm-eating Warbler in Region 8, all three species seldom reported in the fall; and Connecticut Warbler found in Regions 1, 3, 5, and 10. The most interesting sparrow reports included American Tree Sparrow arriving over a very narrow range of dates in all Regions; grassland sparrows scarce or unreported in most Regions; Fox Sparrow numbers good and date ranges similar across Regions; and White-crowned Sparrow counts good in several Regions, especially so in Region 8 in mid October. Records of note among the blackbirds included Brewer's Blackbird in Region 1 and single late reports for both orioles, a Northern in Region 1 and an Orchard in Region 10. Although late summer and early fall reports raised hopes for a winter finch invasion, it never really materialized aside from pockets of good Pine Siskin numbers and large numbers of White-winged Crossbill in Region 7.

After this relatively discouraging review of the major groups, we can glean a few additional interesting notes from the Regional reports. First, abundant wild seed, berry, and cone crops suggested that there will be plenty of food for lingering half hardies this winter and the possibility that the finches will yet come, find cones, and persist. There were additional, mostly isolated high counts, including Double-crested Cormorant noted in all Regions reporting with maxima over 100 in Regions 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10, and one individual spending several hours in a backyard pool in Region 5; Great Egret in notably high numbers in Regions 1 and 3; a count of 90 Snowy Egret in Region 10; Wild Turkey continuing to increase wherever noted; a good count of American Coot, a bird which has seemed to be in some trouble in recent years, from Region 1; counts of hundreds of Chimney Swift from Regions 1 and 9; a large concentration of American Crow in Region 6 coinciding with a warm spell on 17 Oct; good Snow Bunting counts in Regions 1, 5, and 9; and very large blackbird counts in Regions 6 and 9. On the flip side, a few additional negatives include very low peak counts for migrating Common Nighthawk, only one Region noting Scarlet Tanager, and the usual very few reports of rails and owls and none for Snowy Owl this fall. For a look at the kind of effort and data we really need to track trends, see the preliminary analysis of the Buffalo Ornithological Society's 53rd annual October census in the Region 1 report. Finally, in a year of generally very early departures, very late dates were recorded for Savannah Sparrow in Region 5, Bobolink in Region 9, and Yellow and Mourning Warblers and Orchard Oriole in Region 10; and to close on a fun note, read of the River Otter playing with Canada Geese in Region 7.

Fall Departures 1989

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

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

Bold Regional Record Late

Italics also isolated later report(s).

I turn now to the departure date data in the two summary tables. I continue to separate this from the rest of the report because I have had no feedback or comment from any readers on their feelings relative to either the validity or utility of this effort and I still have strong reservations about these data and the value of the effort required to produce it. This fall's analysis is complicated by two completely missing Regions and two others from which departure dates were provided for less than half the species. It is very hard to make comparisons among Regions or to assess the validity of "Seasonality" when so much data are missing, particularly without the capability to null separate blocks of data from the 25-year base line for statistical comparison by computer. Given this "pre-ramble", the results can be quickly summarized. Departure dates this fall again averaged very highly significantly early relative to the 25-year base line and using the hopefully appropriate variances derived from Region 2 data only. (As noted in previous highlights, these are the only data for which I have enough detail to do this.). Among the 62 species in the tables, 48 averaged early departure, three time "on time," and 11 were late, averaging across the Regions reporting and modifying the 25-year base line averages for the missing data points of this season. Of the 11 late departures, only three appeared to be statistically significant and on close examination two of those were strongly biased by a few extremely late, probably isolated reports. Only Broad-winged Hawk generally averaged significantly late departure. Twenty-seven species had statistically significantly early average departure dates, many of these **very early**. These included 13 of the 20 species of warblers in the table and four of the six swallows. Early departure has been the norm since we began analyzing this data. I cannot determine whether this is a real trend or an artifact of the base line data being highly biased by the inclusion of departure dates from several Regions which were reported mainly because they were exceptionally late, with normal dates in most seasons going unreported. I suspect that there is some contribution from each effect, but enough of the latter to compromise the validity of these data.

Region	Species Reported	Seasonality (days)	Advance (days)
Region 1	62	-3.1	4.8
Region 2	60	-4.3	4.9
Region 3	0		
Region 4	0		
Region 5	61	-5.3	1.9
Region 6	30	-1.8	-6.3
Region 7	46	0.6	-8.4
Region 8	24	7.2	4.0
Region 9	54	-9.5	-13.2
Region 10	57	-9.7	8.5

Moving on to "Seasonality," the average departure across all species reported relative to each Region's overall average, all Regions except for Regions 6 and 7 ran significantly early relative to the base line except for Region 8, which averaged late though with less than half of the target species reported this Fall.

The "Advance" column, measuring relative departures among Regions this season, is very similar to the 25-year average except for Regions 8 and 9, which differed greatly this year in being late and early, respectively. Once again, is this of use to anyone? Do you want more, less, or about the same detail in the attempts at analysis in future seasons?

Finally, the rarities! This season brought a good selection, well distributed across the state. As usual, Region 10 reports a large list of species which would make ornithological headlines in elsewhere, but which are regular on the coast in the Fall and are not even emphasized in that report; these you must dig out for yourselves. The best of the rare visitors by region were: Region 1 - Arctic Tern, Peregrine Falcon, Bohemian Waxwing, Dickcissel, and Brewer's Blackbird; Region 2 - Varied Thrush; Region 3 - Merlin, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Common Raven; Region 5 - King Eider, Willet, Bohemian Waxwing, and Connecticut Warbler; Region 6 - Golden Eagle, Merlin, Sandhill Crane, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper; Region 7 - Iceland and Glaucous Gulls; Region 8 - Great Cormorant, Greater Shearwater, Barrow's Goldeneye, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked and Red Phalaropes, Parasitic Jaeger, Laughing Gull, and Least Tern, obviously many of these associated with Hurricane *Hugo*; Region 9 - Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and Dickcissel; and Region 10 - Long-tailed Jaeger, Gyrfalcon, Curlew Sandpiper and Gray Kingbird. The BOTS

award was a difficult pick from among this season's high quality list, but the award goes, posthumously, to the Black-capped Petrel found in a school yard in Region 3 after Hugo's passage.

CORRIGENDA: It has been brought to my attention that there are at least two factual errors in the highlights commentary for the Summer Season 1989. Such errors should be noted and corrected whenever possible so that they are not repeated as others reference these errors. I do appreciate such input! The line on Blue-winged Warbler on p.221 should read "...a first Franklin County *sight* record...". On p.222, the passage "...a Red-necked Grebe in Region 6, filling in the calendar as the state's first August record." should read "..., the state's second August record.". This type of error is hard to avoid as I do not have either total recall or access to all of the pertinent literature in the time available to assemble the Highlights. My primary resources are John Bull's *Birds of New York* (1974), *The Kingbird* since 1976, and input from the Regional editors who put some of their more interesting records in historical context. If others have additional data, corrections and addition of the new data to these pages is always welcomed.

ADDENDUM: In a letter last fall, Hugh Kingery sent me some data which he had also forwarded to Region 4 and had hoped would appear in the summer report from that region. As a prelude to the White-winged Crossbill invasion of this fall and winter, it is appropriate that we ensure its publication. He estimates a total of 100-200 singing males acting as though on breeding territory in three main state forest areas near Cherry Valley. Actual sightings were: six East Hill, 2 mi e Cherry Valley, 12 Aug; 28 Otsego County State Forest, 15 Aug; seven there 19 Aug; 18 Bear Swamp Pond State Forest on 20 Aug; four in two small state forests near Decatur with higher percentage of larch, less spruce 20 Aug.

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STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS: county names are shortened to their first four letters; months are shortened to their first three letters; ! — details seen by the Regional editor; ad — adult; arr — arrival or first of season; I — Island; imm — immature; *intro* — see introduction to report; j — 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; Res — Reservoir; SP — State Park; spm — specimen; subad — subadult; T — Town of; Twn — township; WMA — Wildlife Management Area; y — young.