

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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September temperatures were slightly above normal until the remains of Hurricane *Hugo* arrived on Sep 23 with peak bursts up to 41 mph. Then temperatures dropped much below normal until the end of the month. This produced an average temperature at Buffalo of 60.8° (1.3° below normal). There were twelve days with at least a trace of precipitation and a total of 3.85 inches of rain, about one half-inch above normal. There was a trace of snow on the plateau at Amity Lake and Vandalia on 24 Sep and a general frost the preceding night giving us a 114 day growing season. In Buffalo frost did not occur until 3 Nov, extending the lake plains growing season by two additional months. The first ten days of October were cloudy and cooler than normal. This was followed by five days of fine 'bluebird weather,' then five days of rain, followed by ten days of 80% sunshine with seven days over 70°. Precipitation was slightly above normal at 2.98 inches. The first 15 days of November continued the fine warm weather of late October, giving a period of 3.5 weeks of unusually warm, dry weather at a time when many birds normally leave the Region. This stretch of good weather and an abundance of fruits such as dogwoods and viburnums may have set the pattern for the Eastern Bluebird to remain north of their usual wintering areas. The last half of November brought cold, windy days with wind gusts over 40 mph on 12 days. Precipitation in the form of rain totaled 4.83 inches (normal 3.62) and snow totaled 7.8 inches (normal 12 inches) at Buffalo. Amity Lake and our farm pond near Vandalia froze on 22 Nov and Lake Erie was at 42° (1 below normal) at month's end. Lake effect snow bursts hit northern Niagara County on 17 and 18 Nov and the traditional snow belt twice near the end of the month.

The fruit crop on the Allegheny Plateau was generally good to excellent depending on the species. Both valley and upland species of grapes (*Vitis* sp.) produced good crops as well as elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*) and blackberries (*Rubus* sp.). The best mast producer was Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) as many trees in many different ecological sites produced abundant acorns. Although last year was a fair year for their acorns, this year was the first year for abundant fruits since the defoliation in the Allegheny Hills by Gypsy Moths. Large flocks of Wild Turkeys tore up the forest floor, deer pawed up the leaves and later the snow to feed on the fruit. Grey Squirrels feeding on and storing acorns were abundant and became pests chewing up the tubing of the maple sugar producer. I watched a porcupine, at arms length, push its nose through the leaves and come up with an acorn, rock back on its

haunches and chew the acorn held in its forepaws. Ruffed Grouse often picked up the leavings of acorns left by the deer and also found a few beech nuts (*Fagus*) where these were still healthy. Three bears running the ridge above our house ate acorns and somewhere found an abundance of pokewood (*Phytolacca*) fruit. There was a good crop of wild apple and hawthorn (*Crataegus* sp.) but there were almost no White Ash and wild Black Cherry fruits, possibly due to the late frost on 11 Jun. Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and White Spruce (*Picea glauca*) produced abundant fruit and attracted small flocks of White-winged Crossbill and larger flocks of Pine Siskin. The Cucumber Tree (*Magnolia acuminata*) produced an excellent crop of fruit and for two weeks at mid-October attracted large flocks of American Robin.

The October Count conducted by the Buffalo Ornithological Society for the past 53 years, with coverage of 28 regions, five of which are on the Niagara Peninsula in Canada, was held 8 Oct. Gerry Rising has organized the results in the New York portion of the count and Michael Galas has organized, summarized and compared this year's count with previous counts (*Prothonotary* 55(11):131-136). A special thanks to both. The number of participants in this year's count are available in the reference above. Common Loon at 208 (all but 3 in Canadian portion) was at an all time high but Pied-billed Grebe and Horned Grebe continued in lower numbers than in the 1970's and 1980's. Great Blue Heron was reported in the highest numbers ever at 187 (181 in the New York portion) and Great Egret with a count of four has been reported the last four years but previously only once in the 1970's and twice in the 1930's. The 6212 Mallard in the New York portion was a new high as was Northern Pintail at 141. Turkey Vulture has been increasing steadily on the counts since the 1940's and was at a high of 152, all in New York. Cooper's Hawk was another species with a new high, 22. Ring-necked Pheasant, still feeling the shock of urban sprawl and agribusiness farming, continued its decline with a count of 12 (previous low 19). The extent of the Red-breasted Nuthatch invasion was documented with an all time high count of 159 from 16 of the BOS regions. The count of five Vesper Sparrows from only two BOS regions on the October count (391 were tallied in 1969) tells the plight of this species. Even populations to the north must be in trouble.

The show of winter finches, though somewhat better than last year, still was not exceptional by the end of the period. There were several reports of Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Snow Bunting and more Lapland Longspur than usual, but only small numbers of White-winged Crossbill, Common Redpoll and Evening Grosbeak were seen.

Probably the most interesting bird of the period was the first fall plumaged **Arctic Tern** which was seen on each side of the Niagara River near the Peace Bridge from 12-19 Nov. Other birds which quickened the

heart beat were Peregrine Falcon, Bohemian Waxwing, Dickcissel and Brewer's Blackbird.

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Abbreviations: BIP - Bird Island Pier, Buffalo; BOS - Buffalo Ornithological Society; ChauL - Chautauqua Lake; DH - Dunkirk Harbor; GHSP - Golden Hill State Park; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF - Niagara Falls; NR - Niagara River; PTwn - Pomfret Township, Chautauqua Co.; TNP - Tiff Nature Preserve; TWMA - Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: two arr GHSP 4 Nov. Com. Loon: max 200 GHSP 28 Oct, *intro*. Red-necked Grebe: arr GHSP 31 Oct. Double-crested Cormorant: max 84 L Ontario off Wilson 15 Oct. Am. Bittern: one INWR 22 Oct, only report. Least Bittern: two TNP 3 Sep, one INWR 13 Sep (ED). Great Egret: *intro*; max 23 TWMA 4 Sep, last INWR 28 Oct. Green-backed Heron: last TNP 12 Oct, late. Tundra Swan: arr 25 Hamburg 18 Oct, max 402 ChauL 25 Nov. Snow Goose: arr Lewiston 5 Oct; one ChauL 25 Nov; last for period INWR 29 Nov. Brant: arr DH 17 Oct; max 65 DH 19 Oct; one GHSP 22 Oct. Canada Goose: max 3097 INWR 29 Nov. Canvasback: max for period 2000 NF 6 Nov. Redhead: arr 30 Four Mile Creek SP 4 Nov, max 38 NF 22 Nov. Ring-necked Duck: arr BIP 6 Oct, max 46 Lewiston Res 29 Nov. Lesser Scaup: max 9,500 Lewiston Res 8 Nov. Oldsquaw: max 30 lower NR 19 Nov. Black Scoter: arr two BIP 6 Oct. Surf Scoter: arr eight BIP 6 Oct; max 21 DH 15 Oct. White-winged Scoter: arr five Porter Twn NIAG 17 Sep. Hooded Merganser: max 153 INWR 13 Nov. Ruddy Duck: max 15 Mayville, ChauL 25 Nov.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: two ad, two imm Mohawk Pool INWR 27 Sep and 11 Oct, singles TWMA 30 Sep and Akron 8 Oct. Rough-legged Hawk: arr Clarence Turf Farm ERIE 22 Oct; ten reports 4-29 Nov (BOS). Merlin: one feeding on Cedar Waxwing Arkwright Twn 12 Nov. Peregrine Falcon: one Canadaway Creek, Dunkirk 8 Oct (D&K Bryant). Ruffed Grouse: populations crashed in Allegheny Hills. Wild Turkey: populations still strong on lake plain and plateau. Am. Coot: max 900± Mayville ChauL 25 Nov. Killdeer: two Eden Twn ERIE 24 Nov, late. Willet: one Wright Park, Dunkirk 25 Sep, one TNP 28 Sep, two INWR 30 Sep, possibly the nominate race following Hurricane *Hugo* but without collecting usually considered the western race *inornatus*. Whimbrel: one Canadaway Creek Dunkirk 12 Sep (GJ,Jr). Purple Sandpiper: arr six NF 5 Nov. Pectoral Sandpiper: max 11 Allegheny Res 3 Oct. Short-billed Dowitcher: max six INWR 4 Sep. Red-necked Phalarope: two TNP 12 Oct, late. Bonaparte's Gull: max 14,900 mouth NR 28 Nov. Iceland Gull: arr ABH 17 Nov. Lesser Black-backed Gull: two NR 19-26 Nov. Glaucous Gull: arr Somerset Twn (L.Ontario) 14 Nov. Sabine's Gull: one BIP 28 Sep-1 Oct. **Arctic Tern:** *intro* (Galas, mob).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Barn Owl: one BOS region 28 ALLE 8 Oct. Short-eared Owl: only report one INWR 5 Oct (ED). Com. Nighthawk, max 71 Tonawanda-N.Tonawanda 5 Sep; one BIP 2 Oct, late. Chimney Swift: max 200+

Buffalo 23 Sep. Red-headed Woodpecker: one Goat I NIAG 11 Sep; one INWR 17 Sep. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr Porter Twn NIAG 17 Sep.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: 125 estimated PTwn 10,11 Nov. Com. Raven: four Carrollton 9 Sep, singles 11,19 Sep, 14 Oct, 20 Nov; one Alfred 3 Sep; one Ward Twn 10 Oct. Tufted Titmouse: five widely scattered reports through period. Red-breasted Nuthatch: *intro*, 11 reports Sep (BOS); one to 20 Ward and Alfred Twns ALLE Oct; 12 reports Nov (BOS), definitely an invasion year. Carolina Wren: one Alfred Twn 22 Oct; two Times Beach, Buffalo, 29 Oct, only reports (BOS). Marsh Wren: three TWMA 30 Sep. E. Bluebird: six reports e and s Buffalo Oct, four reports Nov (BOS). N. Mockingbird: ten reports lake plain Nov, max nine Lewiston 22 Nov. Am. Pipit: two Newstead Twn ERIE 30 Sep; max 200 PTwn 14 Oct. **Bohemian Waxwing**: max 42 GHSP 29 Oct; also smaller numbers to 7 Nov. N. Shrike: arr INWR 9 Nov (CH); one Beaver Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary 22 Nov, only reports.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Solitary Vireo: arr in non-breeding area Ft Niagara SP 17 Sep. Tennessee Warbler: arr PTwn 2 Sep. Orange-crowned Warbler: arr Allegany SP 2 Oct. Cape May Warbler: arr Tonawanda 5 Sep. Connecticut Warbler: one ERIE 8 Oct.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Dickcissel: one E Aurora 16 Nov. Am. Tree Sparrow: arr three Tonawanda Twn 23 Oct. Vesper Sparrow: *intro*; one PTwn 18 Oct. Fox Sparrow: arr Tonawanda Twn 13 Oct, good late flight to 25 Nov. Lincoln's Sparrow: arr TWMA 21 Sep. White-throated Sparrow: arr Tonawanda Twn 15 Sep. White-crowned Sparrow, arr Portland Twn 27 Sep, now regular in winter on lake plain (*fide* WD). Lapland Longspur, one Eden Twn ERIE 15 Nov, max 60 Somerset Twn 18 Nov, two JDSP 27 Nov. Snow Bunting: max 1000 FNSP 13 Nov; 12 other reports Nov (BOS). Rusty Blackbird: arr two Buffalo 23 Sep; max 100 TWMA 30 Sep. **Brewer's Blackbird**: one Eden Twn ERIE 15 Nov. N. Oriole: one TNP 10 Sep, late. Purple Finch: three reports Oct; five reports Nov (BOS). White-winged Crossbill: arr eight-ten Charlotte Twn 5 Nov, two flocks 15 and 25 on 15 Nov, four Amity Twn ALLE 14 Nov, six Bliss 19 Nov. Com. Redpoll: arr GHSP 28 Oct; one JDSP 27 Nov. Pine Siskin: max 100 GHSP 28 Oct; 12 other reports Oct, eight reports Nov (BOS). Evening Grosbeak: arr two Alfred Twn 2 Nov; max 21 Alfred 29 Nov.

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