

REGION 3 - FINGER LAKES

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The 1990 summer season was average for temperatures and above average for precipitation. The first week of June and the final week of August brought the coldest temperatures of the summer season, as expected. Cool spring weather with frost warnings persisted until 5 Jun, when warm unstable weather caused a rapid series of summertime storms and temperatures in the 70's. Another batch of thunderstorms brought heavy rains on 14 Jun, with a third thunderstorm outbreak following on 21 Jun. Periods of rainy weather were the pattern into the first days of July, when a severe storm system on 4 Jul damaged trees and brought down power lines. Strong thunderstorms and rains occurred on 11, 20 and 23 Jul, interspersed with hot and humid summer temperatures. The storm of 20 Jul dropped golfball-sized hail in Cayuga County near Montezuma and brought down large trees and power lines in Chemung County. There was enough rainfall during July to cause excessive flow of the Chemung River. The final period of severe thunderstorms in the Region occurred on 27-28 Aug, when a powerful system moving from west to east created lightning and funnel clouds, and caused widespread tree and building damage and cut off power service.

It was a productive agricultural growing season, with first cuttings of alfalfa, clover-timothy and grass silage underway during June, followed by excellent haymaking conditions throughout the summer. Hot weather with frequent showers helped corn grow rapidly in July, and New York's onion crop was the best in years. Wild food crops including serviceberry, Black Cherry, and chokecherry were abundant this year, as were nut crops of Red Oak and hickory. Pines and spruces had little or no cone production this year. Birds feeding upon the available wild food crops were Cedar Waxwing, American Robin and Blue Jay, which were common throughout the Region all season. Near Yellow Barn State Forest, many Blue Jay were feeding upon the abundant cherry and nut crops there late in the Season. These jays were observed imitating vocalizations of Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, as well as the sharp whistle of Woodchuck (known to colonial settlers as "whistle-pigs").

Throughout the Finger Lakes Region, birds associated with

agriculture and large woodlands were common. There were many reports of Ring-billed Gull, Wild Turkey, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker and American Crow. Other species were scarce or little reported, including Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird and Carolina Wren. The absence of summer reports may indicate a decline in Carolina Wren, though they were reported in peak numbers on 1990 Christmas Counts in the Region. Northern Cardinal and Northern Mockingbird were steady in numbers and thought to be increasing.

Public lands in the Finger Lakes Region supplied the greatest diversity of bird species, as expected. Shindagin Hollow, Connecticut Hill Management Area, Finger Lakes National Forest, and both Hammond Hill and Yellow Barn State Forests were locations of many interesting reports this season. There were five singing **Acadian Flycatcher** along creekbeds and ravines in the southern part of Connecticut Hill in June. A second visit to this location on 19 Jul produced three singing adult Acadian Flycatchers along with one adult feeding two juveniles (W. R. Evans). Also observed at Connecticut Hill during the summer were a Common Raven, and singing males of **Pine Warbler**, Prairie Warbler, and Hooded Warbler (W. R. Evans). Other unusual breeding species in the Region were confirmed nestings of Northern Goshawk, Sedge Wren and **Orchard Oriole** on or near the Finger Lakes National Forest. Winter Wren, Hooded Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow were also present and singing at FLNF this summer, as well as Upland Sandpiper.

For another consecutive season, water levels at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge were drawn down late in the summer to create shorebird resting and feeding habitat at May's Point Pool. A total of nineteen shorebird species were observed during the late summer. Typical sightings during August included Semipalmated Plover, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Sanderling, Semipalmated, Least, Pectoral, and White-rumped Sandpiper and Long-billed Dowitcher. Killdeer, Common Snipe and Spotted Sandpipers were breeding species present all season at MNWR. There were single reports of Black-bellied Plover, Lesser Golden-Plover, Whimbrel, Baird's Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Dunlin and Wilson's Phalarope. There was even a report of a color-banded Semipalmated Sandpiper, which was forwarded to Manomet Bird Observatory. Other birds of interest at MNWR included **Snowy Egret**, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Great Egret, Double-crested Cormorant, Wild Turkey, Virginia Rail, Sora, Lesser Black-backed Gull,

Caspian Tern, Common Tern and Black Tern. Both Bald Eagle and Osprey fledged young at MNWR this Season. There was no indication of breeding by either Double-crested Cormorant or Black Tern anywhere in the Region, although there were numerous nest sites of Great Blue Heron. Heavy rains in early summer may have compromised the nesting success of Common Tern, resulting in few reports later in the summer.

Wetlands in the southern Finger Lakes Region produced additional reports of water birds. Breeding species at the Corning Glass Pond and adjacent Big Flats wetlands were Pied-billed Grebe, Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Common Moorhen, Virginia Rail and Sora. Transient shorebirds there included Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral, Least, Solitary and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Osprey nesting is suspected but unconfirmed in wooded areas along the Chemung River. There was also a **Sandhill Crane** in the wetland areas in Big Flats (see Notes and Observations). The Chemung River area in Elmira and Corning also produced the Region's only reports of breeding colonies of Rough-winged and Cliff Swallow, and the sole reports of Least Bittern and Ruddy Turnstone. There was also a Bank Swallow colony at a gravel pit there. There was no evidence of nesting Upland Sandpiper this year at a traditional nesting area known as Holding Point in Horseheads. For several years, this area has been the Region's only known nesting location of Upland Sandpiper, and is currently under human development and construction projects. From nearby Southport came several confirmed breeding reports of scarce or local species for Region 3, including Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow and Vesper Sparrow.

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Abbreviations: FLNF — Finger Lakes National Forest (formerly Hector Land Use Area). MNWR — Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: six imm Seneca Lake near Kashong 14 Jul, three ad same location 19 Jul. Com. Merganser: seven Elmira 25 Jul. Great Egret: max 6 MNWR 30 Aug. **Snowy Egret**: MNWR 19 Aug (mob).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: bred MNWR; at least one carrying food into the woods along the Chemung R at Big Flats 24 Jul, two other reports here during the summer. N. Goshawk: two FL FLNF. Ring-necked Pheasant: several reports from Phelps area but few elsewhere. **Sandhill Crane**: *intro*. Lesser Golden-Plover: two Janius 26 Aug. Upland Sandpiper five ad in the vicinity of the Rothermich/Fish Road intersection FLNF throughout June; *intro*. Whimbrel: one MNWR; also one Charlott 18 Aug, flushed by a dog on beach. Ruddy Turnstone:

seven Elmira 5 Aug, only report. Lesser Black-backed Gull: one MNWR (no details).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Whip-poor-will: heard calling Southport until mid Aug (DC). Red-headed Woodpecker: ad s Auburn 10 Jul.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: **Acadian Flycatcher**: *intro*. Cliff Swallow: *intro*; nesting on bridges in Elmira, Horseheads, and Corning (Clements). Tree Swallow: up to 5000 assembling for migration MNWR 30 Aug. Com. Raven: *intro*. Fish Crow: no reports. Carolina Wren: *intro*; present Kashong Glen and Keuka Outlet. **Sedge Wren**: two singing birds with one FL, Burr Road one mi n of Searsburg Road, FLNF. Marsh Wren: one MNWR 30 Aug.

VIREOS-WARBLES: **Pine Warbler**: singing male in a Red Pine plantation off Carter Creek Road on Connecticut Hill 22 May and 19 Jul. Prairie Warbler: singing male Connecticut Hill 20 Jun. Hooded Warbler: present Connecticut Hill and FLNF. Worm-eating Warbler: none. Yellow-breasted Chat: none.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Orchard Oriole**: female with three FL FLNF. White-winged Crossbill: singing male Pine City 10 Jun. Purple Finch: scarce or absent. Pine Siskin: scarce or absent.

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