

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

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Add another year to the list of generally lackluster fall migration seasons. Although species counts were good for many Regions, the impressions of poor totals of individuals and of species with poor peak counts were numerous and widespread. As usual, weather played a strong but relatively fuzzy role. You will read of many frontal passages, but from the southwest rather than the northwest as is typical of fall. Thus, there were few groundings, particularly in the normal concentration points along the coast. We simply don't have enough historical data to relate weather patterns to expected patterns of observations. The simplest of observations can be explained: with abnormal system patterns, we missed groundings at normal places; peak raptor and shorebirds counts on the coast occurred on the two occasions of frontal passages from the northwest; a warm fall, especially in October and November, was accompanied by numerous late reports; and loads of great rarities were scattered over the state.

Looking more closely, we find weather patterns similar across the state: near normal to cool, with average to slightly deficient precipitation, over all but the southeast section in September, then all but Regions 6 and 7 warm and wet through both October and November. Record high temperatures were scattered all over the state in November, particularly near 28 Nov. Heavy storms hit central areas in mid October, with flooding noted in Region 3. There was note of high winds for Regions 5 and 7 and of the tail end of hurricane Lilli from Region 10. From Region 9 we hear of flowers and katydids through November. Food crops generally were noted as poor, except for acorns in Region 1, but were reported as good, including acorns, in Regions 4 and 9.

Some of the more general avian highlights may make sense in the context of these weather patterns. The southwesterly air flow may account for the many interesting heron records: Am. Bittern in seven Regions; Great Egret in eight Regions, including 26 in Region 1 and 16 in Region 3; an excellent high of 50 Black-crowned Night-Heron in inland Region 3; late Green-backed Heron in Region 8; very late Glossy Ibis in

Regions 1 and 2; and a very rare **White Ibis** in Region 1. Relatively poor waterfowl counts through the season also may owe to the disruption of normal weather patterns. The Region 3 report again provides peak counts for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge for comparison with years past.

Other notes of particular interest include: a peak of only(!) 625 Wood Duck in Region 5; poor counts for N. Pintail and Redhead; and note of scoters on Cayuga Lake on 12 Oct after a storm and before their arrival in Region 5 to the north. For the raptor watchers we have notes from a new watch staffed for a second year on Franklin Mt. near Oneonta in Region 4, with some excellent numbers, especially for Red-tailed Hawk and Golden Eagle. From the longer term fall watches comes note of significant shifts in patterns, possibly excepting some of the stronger flyers which could ignore the unfavorable winds. The recent pattern of late Turkey Vulture reports extended to Regions 1, 5, 8 and 10, and Black Vulture was noted in Regions 9 and 10. The fall incursion of Rough-legged Hawk reached all Regions between 10 Oct and 11 Nov, with the best count an excellent 55 on the Pt. Peninsula in Region 6.

Shorebird reports were generally poor, owing mainly to a habitat problem stemming from too much precipitation. There were again good spots on Long Island, Region 3 provided good peak counts for Long-billed Dowitcher and Wilson's and Red-necked Phalaropes, and Region 10 yielded many late departure dates. All four regions bordering Lake Ontario produced jaeger reports. The most widespread rarities came from the gulls, with Lesser Black-backed Gull in eight Regions and, amazingly, Sabine's Gull in Regions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 9. Region 10 produced a state record late Royal Tern. Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers received red flags from multiple Regions, while Alder Flycatcher set near simultaneous record late dates in Regions 2 and 9. As usual, swallow reports were too few for general assessment, but Region 10 noted very high counts over an extended period, 20 Sep to early October. Thrushes provided mixed reports, with concern expressed in Regions 6 and 9. Nonetheless, some very late dates came from Regions 6 and 10, with a state record late Veery in Region 10. Vireos and warblers collected widespread notes of concern; how much is directly due to the weather patterns? Highlights included many late dates in Region 10; only Region 5 noting any of the Blue-winged/Golden-winged Warbler complex; Orange-crowned Warbler in

Regions 2, 5, 6 and 10; N. Parula very scarce; Yellow-throated Warbler in Regions 4 and 10; record late inland Black-throated Blue Warbler in Region 4; and record late inland Bay-breasted Warbler in Region 2 and very late in Region 10. Adults feeding three young Black-throated Green Warbler on 15 Sep may be a record late fledging for that species. Concern was expressed for Brown Thrasher and Scarlet Tanager.

Winter incursive species were very poorly represented: owls were little mentioned, with Snowy Owl scarce although noted in four Regions; no movements of Red-breasted Nuthatch or Boreal Chickadee; Bohemian Waxwing only in Region 5; few Northern Shrikes, though recorded from seven Regions; and only scattered reports of finches, except for Pine Siskin in nine Regions (but in low numbers) and small numbers of Evening Grosbeak in all Regions.

Other notable reports include: **N. Gannet** in Regions 1 and 2 and at very high counts in Region 10; a very high count of Double-crested Cormorants in Region 3; **Sandhill Crane** in Regions 3 and 8 on 9 and 11 Oct, respectively; only three cuckoos reported. Common Nighthawk peaks continuing **low**; a good count of 590 Chimney Swift in Region 1; Common Raven in six Regions; and both Sedge Wren and Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Regions 2 and 3 during Oct.

Having dispensed with my traditional review, on to the true highlights, the confusion between the reports and the tabulated data and the super rarities. First, the statistics. Overall, 5 of the 10 Regions averaged significantly early departure dates, and the grand average over all Regions was very highly significantly early. Of the 62 species tracked, 46 averaged early across the 10 regions, 9 were a bit late, and 7 were right on their 25-year average value. Looking at the individual species over all the regional data, of the 525 (of a possible 620) dates actually reported this season, 77 varied more than 2 standard deviations from their 25-year local averages. Of these 59 were early and 18 were late. Now the confusion. This year I finally completed compiling the long-term data for Region 2 for comparison with the 25-year table of *Kingbird* dates to test the hypothesis that prior reporting guidelines had biased that table's data for Region 2 (and presumably other Regions). This year's departures ran about 3 days early relative to the 25-year base line, yet nearly 7 days late relative to the more complete, long-term Region 2 data. Similarly, shorebirds and warblers piled up a long list of late departure dates in the written Regional highlights this Fall, yet in analyzing the departure date data from this Fall's table, all shorebirds and 17 of the 20 warblers in the

Fall Departures 1990

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Osprey	30 Oct	12 Oct	20 Oct	31 Oct	14 Oct	4 Nov	8 Nov	30 Oct	25 Nov	29 Nov	1 Nov
Broad-winged Hawk		3 Sep	15 Oct	20 Sep	11 Sep	11 Sep	24 Sep	27 Oct	24 Oct	2 Oct	28 Sep
Black-bellied Plover	3 Nov	16 Nov			4 Nov	28 Sep					28 Oct
Semipalmated Plover	14 Oct	2 Oct	3 Oct	10 Sep	10 Nov	16 Sep				25 Nov	11 Oct
Greater Yellowlegs	25 Oct	9 Nov	15 Oct	30 Oct	5 Nov	10 Oct	3 Nov	27 Oct	7 Nov	5 Nov	29 Oct
Lesser Yellowlegs	25 Oct	11 Nov	7 Nov	15 Sep	20 Oct	3 Sep		19 Sep		5 Nov	14 Oct
Spotted Sandpiper	14 Oct	5 Oct		16 Sep	13 Oct	6 Oct			13 Oct	15 Sep	3 Oct
Sanderling	10 Oct	12 Nov			16 Nov	16 Sep					21 Oct
Semipalmated Sandpiper		2 Nov	3 Oct	9 Sep	10 Nov	3 Sep			15 Sep	20 Nov	9 Oct
Least Sandpiper	29 Sep	1 Oct	26 Sep	9 Sep	6 Oct				21 Sep	20 Nov	3 Oct
Pectoral Sandpiper	3 Nov	5 Nov	26 Sep	15 Oct	5 Nov	9 Sep			21 Sep	2 Oct	11 Oct
Caspian Tern	7 Sep	30 Sep	18 Sep		20 Oct	9 Sep			25 Aug	1 Oct	19 Sep
Common Tern	14 Nov	2 Nov	12 Sep		28 Oct	23 Oct			22 Sep	12 Oct	16 Oct
Black Tern	25 Sep	1 Sep			15 Sep					19 Sep	15 Sep
Chimney Swift	14 Sep	22 Sep	26 Sep	22 Sep	22 Sep	8 Sep		20 Sep	5 Oct	23 Sep	21 Sep
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	1 Oct	26 Sep	8 Oct	8 Oct	19 Sep	9 Oct	19 Sep	14 Oct	26 Sep	28 Sep	30 Sep
Eastern Wood-Pewee	30 Sep	7 Oct	23 Sep	14 Sep	5 Oct	27 Sep	27 Sep	13 Sep	5 Sep	14 Oct	25 Sep
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher		25 Aug	17 Sep	9 Sep	12 Aug				3 Sep		31 Aug
Least Flycatcher	23 Sep	26 Sep	10 Sep	16 Sep	25 Sep		12 Sep	19 Sep	6 Sep		17 Sep
Eastern Phoebe	1 Nov	21 Oct	24 Oct	30 Oct	24 Oct	18 Oct	24 Oct	20 Oct	24 Oct	31 Oct	24 Oct
Great Crested Flycatcher	3 Sep	27 Sep		3 Sep	11 Sep	8 Sep	1 Sep	8 Sep	15 Sep	1 Oct	11 Sep
Eastern Kingbird	1 Sep	15 Sep	17 Sep	9 Sep	4 Sep		6 Sep	7 Sep	5 Sep	28 Sep	10 Sep
Tree Swallow	14 Oct	10 Nov	10 Sep	9 Sep	14 Oct	28 Sep	2 Sep	23 Sep	5 Oct	24 Nov	5 Oct
Barn Swallow	29 Sep	6 Oct	9 Sep	19 Sep	7 Oct	2 Sep		15 Sep	15 Sep	27 Sep	21 Sep
House Wren	14 Oct	14 Oct	4 Sep	8 Oct	9 Oct	7 Sep	1 Sep	8 Oct	8 Oct		28 Sep
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	15 Sep	13 Oct		29 Aug	13 Sep			27 Oct	9 Sep	27 Oct	27 Sep
Veery		5 Oct	22 Sep	16 Oct	2 Sep		1 Sep		20 Oct	29 Sep	26 Sep
Swainson's Thrush	14 Oct	20 Oct	17 Sep	16 Oct	12 Oct	16 Oct	8 Oct		30 Oct	16 Oct	13 Oct
Wood Thrush	14 Oct	17 Oct	4 Oct	20 Oct	29 Sep	13 Oct	29 Sep		10 Oct		9 Oct
Gray Catbird	25 Oct	17 Nov	20 Oct	15 Oct	14 Nov	7 Oct		15 Oct	22 Oct	31 Oct	23 Oct
Brown Thrasher	14 Oct	17 Oct	3 Sep	1 Oct	29 Sep		18 Sep	11 Sep	28 Sep	17 Nov	2 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	23 Oct	21 Oct	27 Sep	15 Oct	12 Oct	29 Sep	21 Oct	30 Sep	21 Oct	31 Oct	14 Oct
Yellow-throated Vireo	16 Sep	27 Sep	30 Sep	13 Sep	25 Sep			9 Sep	6 Sep	1 Oct	19 Sep
Warbling Vireo	22 Sep	18 Sep	29 Sep	17 Sep	10 Sep	10 Sep		11 Sep	30 Aug	18 Sep	14 Sep
Red-eyed Vireo	14 Oct	7 Oct	26 Oct	14 Oct	7 Oct	20 Sep	2 Sep	20 Oct	12 Oct	15 Oct	7 Oct
Blue-winged Warbler	8 Sep	4 Sep		14 Aug	18 Aug				5 Sep	25 Aug	27 Aug
Tennessee Warbler	14 Oct	7 Oct	29 Sep	13 Oct	5 Oct	2 Oct	1 Oct	24 Sep	3 Oct	1 Oct	3 Oct
Nashville Warbler	14 Oct	14 Oct	29 Sep	7 Oct	5 Oct	9 Nov	3 Oct	23 Sep	9 Oct	17 Oct	10 Oct
Northern Parula	29 Sep	7 Oct			15 Sep	27 Sep		23 Sep	9 Oct	1 Oct	28 Sep
Yellow Warbler	2 Sep	23 Sep	8 Oct	23 Sep	4 Sep	27 Sep		11 Sep	6 Sep	20 Sep	17 Sep
Chestnut-sided Warbler	25 Oct	24 Sep	12 Sep	16 Sep	16 Sep	18 Oct	5 Sep	3 Sep	8 Sep		20 Sep
Magnolia Warbler	14 Oct	20 Oct	30 Sep	8 Oct	4 Oct	2 Oct	8 Oct	15 Sep	27 Sep	17 Oct	5 Oct
Cape May Warbler	14 Oct	16 Sep	29 Sep	23 Sep	5 Oct	27 Sep	1 Sep	2 Sep	9 Oct	1 Nov	27 Sep
Black-thr Blue Warbler	13 Oct	5 Oct		14 Oct	17 Sep	1 Oct	25 Sep	15 Oct	4 Oct	1 Nov	7 Oct
Black-thr Green Warbler	16 Oct	7 Oct	8 Oct	5 Oct	9 Oct	2 Oct	26 Sep	30 Sep	15 Oct	4 Oct	6 Oct
Blackburnian Warbler	23 Sep	13 Oct	29 Sep	4 Sep	13 Sep	2 Oct	5 Sep	23 Sep	13 Sep	21 Sep	20 Sep
Bay-breasted Warbler	24 Sep	7 Oct	30 Sep	20 Sep	22 Sep	18 Oct		15 Sep		16 Nov	4 Oct
Blackpoll Warbler	9 Sep	26 Sep	30 Sep		4 Oct		12 Sep	19 Sep	17 Oct	5 Oct	26 Sep
Black-and-white Warbler	14 Oct	17 Sep		28 Sep	16 Sep	16 Sep	1 Sep	7 Nov	14 Sep	4 Oct	26 Sep
American Redstart	14 Oct	7 Oct	14 Oct	28 Sep	28 Oct	2 Oct	10 Sep	30 Sep	9 Oct	25 Oct	7 Oct
Ovenbird	28 Sep	16 Sep	17 Sep	28 Sep	5 Sep	17 Oct	14 Sep	3 Sep	14 Sep	24 Oct	22 Sep
N. Waterthrush	28 Sep	11 Sep		4 Aug	10 Sep			2 Sep		14 Oct	11 Sep
Common Yellowthroat	14 Oct	10 Nov	14 Oct	10 Oct	9 Oct	19 Sep	5 Oct	24 Sep	27 Sep	15 Oct	8 Oct
Wilson's Warbler	14 Oct	24 Sep	18 Sep	6 Oct	30 Sep			7 Nov		20 Sep	4 Oct
Canada Warbler	15 Sep	28 Sep	30 Sep	5 Sep	6 Sep		27 Sep	19 Sep	27 Sep	24 Sep	20 Sep
Scarlet Tanager	27 Sep	7 Oct	30 Sep	22 Sep	25 Oct	13 Sep	14 Oct	15 Oct	10 Oct	29 Oct	7 Oct
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	14 Oct	7 Oct	20 Oct	6 Oct	29 Sep	2 Sep	28 Sep	21 Sep	5 Oct	1 Oct	1 Oct
Rufous-sided Towhee	1 Nov	27 Oct	20 Oct	3 Nov	22 Sep		17 Oct	5 Oct	24 Oct	16 Oct	18 Oct
Lincoln's Sparrow	14 Oct	16 Oct	20 Oct	12 Oct	9 Oct		5 Oct	19 Sep	20 Oct	16 Oct	11 Oct
White-crowned Sparrow	5 Nov	10 Nov	2 Nov	22 Oct	31 Oct	11 Oct	26 Nov	25 Oct	4 Nov	1 Nov	1 Nov
Bobolink	28 Sep	11 Aug	17 Sep	9 Sep	3 Sep		29 Oct		17 Oct	15 Nov	27 Sep
Northern Oriole		12 Sep	10 Sep	1 Sep	6 Oct		6 Sep		30 Aug	1 Nov	18 Sep

Bold Regional Record Late*Italics* also isolated later report(s).

Region	Species Reported	Seasonality (days)	Advance (days)
Region 1	57	-2.8	4.3
Region 2	62	-3.1	5.1
Region 3	51	-6.3	-2.7
Region 4	55	-2.8	-5.3
Region 5	62	-6.0	0.2
Region 6	44	-2.3	-8.2
Region 7	39	1.1	-7.8
Region 8	45	-4.6	-4.1
Region 9	55	-8.3	-0.8
Region 10	55	-4.2	13.6

table averaged early departures, with all of the significantly different average dates early and, by a large majority, most of even the significant Regional differences falling early relative to the 25-year data.

The message is we need **lots** more data, gathered under careful guidelines or procedures consistently over many seasons, in order to make any real sense out of the apparent changes we are seeing in populations. Anecdotal reports should be examined with great care, if not suspicion.

In an upbeat finish, it was a **super** season for rarities. Nearly all Regions had visitors which could have reached the season's pedestal in most years. Let us just scan the best and you can read the reports for the rest: Region 1 - **White Ibis**, less than 10 prior state records, very few inland; Region 2 - third state record of **Fork-tailed Flycatcher**, which stayed for over a week; "**Audubon's**" **Warbler**, very rare; and "**Gray-headed**" **Junco**, although only a subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco (relocated again in the same park in February), apparently a first for the Northeast; Region 3 - **American White Pelican** and **Sharp-tailed Sparrow**; Region 5 - **Magnificent Frigatebird**, about the seventh state record, first upstate; Region 6 - **California Gull**, about the fifth for the state (we need a compilation to update this type of data since the 1976 *Supplement to Birds of New York State*); Region 7 - **Brewer's Blackbird**, joining the recent swelling of state records for this species; Region 8 - **N. Wheatear**, a very much sought after rarity; Region 9 - **Wood Sandpiper**,

the winner of the BOTS Award, a first live identification in the state for this species, normally an Attu target bird; and Region 10 - **Brown Booby**, about 3 prior state records; **Fulvous Whistling-Duck**; **Mountain Bluebird**; **Black-billed Magpie**; and "**Bullock's**" **Oriole**; as well as the usual hands and toes full of species the rest of us would rush about to add to our local or state lists. Is this a weather phenomenon, or another indication of population stresses causing lots of displaced individuals to wander????

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Standard abbreviations: county names are shortened to their first four letters and are in UPPER case; months are shortened to their first three letters; ! — details seen by Regional editor; ad — adult; Alt — Alternate plumage; arr — arrival or first of season; FL — fledgling; FY — adult feeding young; 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.