

REGION 10 - MARINE

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The most notable thing about the fall was the almost complete lack of strong or sustained northwest winds associated with the passage of weather fronts during the September-October migration period. Even above normal October rains, including three inches on 13 Oct, an aftermath of hurricane Lilli which passed offshore, did not bring any significant front to down migrants. As such, the fall was lackluster and many contributors so noted this. There were birds, and interesting ones, but generally not in any great numbers at any one time. On the other hand, the entire fall was mild. October was 4.2° above normal and November was 3.1° above normal. Both the shorebirds and warblers had many species which were seen much later than normal, many into November. Whether it was a lack of proper winds earlier, or the warmer weather later, the migration extended into the end of the season and made up for the slow earlier part.

Of course not all birds follow the rules of flying on northwest winds. The large strong flyers do as they please. On 4 Oct there were strong winds from the south all day. On this day Manny Levine saw a **Brown Booby** from the vantage of a high dune at the Jones Beach West End hawk lookout. The following week, 11 Oct was another day with strong south-southeast winds. On this day at Fire Island and Jones Beach, where hawk flights are associated with northwest winds, the hawkwatch to the east saw a total of 54 hawks, 23 Peregrine Falcon, 28 Merlin and 3 Northern Harrier. On the same day your editors saw 10 Peregrine Falcon and a Cooper's Hawk at the West End during a morning of birding.

Exceptions to the lack of fronts were 17 Sep, when 15,459 Broad-winged Hawk and 5 Bald Eagle were seen at the Pelham Bay Hawkwatch on northwest winds and the Fire Island Watch also had the highest count of the season with 556 on this day. Another day with northwest winds, 2 Oct, was the third highest count for the season from the Fire Island Hawkwatch, when a total of 317 hawks were seen, including a new daily high total of 49 Peregrine Falcon. Fire Island reported a hawk total 72% less than 1989, but this may be the result of contrary wind patterns and displacement of the migration elsewhere. What is notable is that, while small falcons are down from last year (but still in considerably increased numbers over the totals of eight years ago), there has been a steady

change in the ratio of American Kestrel to Merlin from about 10:1 to 1.4:1 on the ocean beaches. This change has come about from a considerably greater increase in Merlin migrants rather than a decrease in Kestrel, although Am. Kestrel numbers have begun to decline significantly from a peak in 1987. Reports from the Region's hawk-watches can be summarized as follows: The Fire Island Hawkwatch counted a total of 3,903 hawks, predominantly falcons and including 249 Peregrine Falcon but no buteos or eagles. In contrast, the Pelham Bay Watch reported a total of 21,951 hawks, of which 18,739 were Broad-winged Hawk, an extraordinary number including the one day high noted above. Other highlights at Pelham Bay were season totals of 15 Bald Eagle, 22 Turkey Vulture and 1,437 Osprey. For those who are interested in raptors in the New York Region, we direct your attention to *NYCAERIES*, an informative monthly newsletter edited by Saul Frank, 166-25 Powells Cove Blvd., Suite 9L, Beechhurst, NY, 11357; price \$10.00. We have summarized some of the data there in these notes and wish to give due credit here.

Last year we posed the question of the simultaneous mass movement of hawks and small land birds and we said that we would look into it. This year the major flight days for small birds on the south shore were 17 Sep and 16 Oct, almost the only two days with NW winds. The two highest daily hawk counts of the season at Fire Island also occurred on these same two days.

A **Fulvous Whistling-Duck**, first found by Paul Rodewald at Pelham Bay Park on 12 Nov, was found freshly dead on 16 Nov by Bob De Candido and Hugh Martin (see *Notes and Observations* in this issue). This leads to the 'Prime Question' which plagues all birders (much like the question of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?); "While you can't count a dead bird on your lifelist, can you count a fresh kill if the body is still *warm*?"

The following note from Paul Gillan is quoted in its entirety: "Nov 19 and 28: extraordinary concentrations of Northern Gannet in the Montauk Point area. Many thousands, especially in Block Island Sound. On the 19th there were so many I wondered whether a large percentage of the entire North American Gannet population might not be present."

Shorebird notes from Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge courtesy of Arthur Morris and Dave Mizrahi indicate that there were many fewer juvenile birds this season than in the prior two years, particularly Semipalmated

Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher. Ken Feustel sent some notes on the shorebirds at Cedar Beach, where Semipalmated Sandpiper outnumbered Western Sandpiper by two or three to one until the end of October when Western Sandpiper became more numerous, and where the majority of White-rumped Sandpiper after the third week of October were juveniles. Paul Gillen, Jr. and Aline Dove checked the sod fields in Cutchogue this September and found both Lesser Golden-Plover and Buff-breasted Sandpipers present throughout the month, with a peak of 70 on 12 Sep for the former and of eight on 11 Sep for the latter. In addition they saw 20 Pectoral Sandpiper on the 4 and 5 Sep. Other shorebirds in the fields were Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Upland Sandpiper and Least Sandpiper. One added bonus was the sight of a Turkey Vulture feeding on a gull carcass in one of the fields on 7 Sep.

This fall saw the best Tree Swallow migration in years. Thousands of birds were seen milling about on the Jones Beach strip from 20 Sep through the first week of October. This congregation extended all the way to the Jamaica Bay area, but not to Staten Island. What is listed in the species counts are figures as submitted. Most of the observers were conservative in their estimates by their own admission. With the constant movement of the birds, it is possible that 10 times the number of birds reported were present. Having been an observer, Schiff can attest to the difficulty of counting a moving maelstrom. It was spectacular! By early October the swallows were mostly gone. This is in contrast to the years when a constant stream of stragglers passes all Fall. This change to a huge single outpouring is in sharp contrast to what we have come to expect in recent years. In addition the mild weather usually keeps late comers into early winter. This year the swallow flight was quick, fantastic and over.

A **Mountain Bluebird** seen 20 Oct by Bob Machover and a New York City Audubon field trip led by Starr Saphir has to be one of the best land birds of the Fall. This bird, seen on the fence to the west of the Jones Beach Coast Guard Station, stayed just long enough to be identified before it flew off. There were two reports of **Black-billed Magpie** this Fall, one found dead at JFK Airport (possibly an escape?) on 6 Nov and an imm at Montauk Point 17 Nov through the period (Rex Stanford, mob). A **Harris' Sparrow** was discovered on 30 Oct by Matt Bayer at Jones Beach and stayed another day before departing.

A report was received of a Common Raven being harassed by crows in

Riverside Park 27 Nov. Birders are alerted to look for this bird in our Region in the future.

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Abbreviations: CB - Cedar Beach; CLP - Clover Lake Park, Staten Island; DPt - Democrat Point, Fire Island; FI - Fire Island; GKP - Great Kills Park, Staten Island; JBWR - Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JFKWS - John F. Kennedy Wildlife Sanctuary (Tobay); JBch - Jones Beach; JBWE - Jones Beach West End; LI - Long Island; MeB - Mecox Bay; MPt - Montauk Point; Mutn - Muttontown Preserve; NYRBA - New York Rare Bird Alert; PBP - Pelham Bay Park; RMSP - Robert Moses State Park; ShIn - Shinnecock Inlet; SI - Staten Island; SMSP - Sunken Meadow State Park; ZB - Zachs Bay, Jones Beach.

LOONS-DUCKS: Cory's Shearwater: 12 at sea off MPt 10 Sep, four on 4 Sep. Greater Shearwater: 100 at sea off MPt 10 Sep, two on 14 Sep. Manx Shearwater: one at sea off MPt 10 Sep. Wilson's Storm-Petrel: 100 at sea off MPt 10 Sep, 25 on 4 Sep. **Brown Booby**: *intro* 12

(NYSARC). N. Gannet: *intro*. Great Cormorant: arr JBWE 21 Sep (KF). Tundra Swan: one Hook Pd 12 Nov, three 24 Nov (JR), five 25 Nov. Mute Swan: 79 East Pd JBWR 2 Sep (SS), appears to be increasing and may prove to be a pest. Snow Goose: one blue morph JBWR 9 Nov, two imm 5 Nov to end of period (TH); flock white morph JFKWS mid Nov to end of period. Com. Eider: ten MPt, 6 Nov; three male, four female MPt 12 Nov (JR), two RMSP 24 Nov. King Eider: female MPt 12 Nov, male and female 21 Nov. Harlequin Duck: ad male Dune Road 19-20 Sep (Carl Starace, JR), two same area 31 Oct, two FI 3 Nov, one MPt 6 and 17 Nov, one Riis P 23 Nov. Bufflehead: 800+ covered the w half of West Pd, JBWR, at dawn 4 Nov (AM). Com. Merganser: two Hook Pd 12 Nov.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: *intro*, last SMSP 29 Nov (HB), very late. **Black Vulture**: one JBch 3 Sep (AW). Turkey Vulture: *intro*, one SI 29 Oct (HF). Bald Eagle: *intro*. Cooper's Hawk: one MPt 21 Nov, also seen in small numbers from the hawk watches and elsewhere on the south shore. N. Goshawk: one JBWE 25 Oct, one JBWR 17-30 Nov. Broad-winged Hawk: *intro*. Rough-legged Hawk: one Fort Tilden 20 Oct, one JFKWS 22 (PM). Golden Eagle: imm JBch 8 Nov (TH), one RMSP 18 Nov, one JBch 19 Nov (Elliott Kutner). Am. Kestrel: *intro*. Merlin: *intro*. Peregrine Falcon: *intro*; one eating a Green-winged Teal JBWR 24 Sep (TH). **Black Rail**: one JBWR 16 Oct (PM). Lesser Golden-Plover: *intro*. Semipalmated Plover: one CB 25 Nov (KF). Am. Avocet: one ZB 8 Nov (Joan Quinlen, JF, TH). Spotted Sandpiper: one JBWE 9 Nov (JF). Upland Sandpiper: 26 Baiting Hollow 1 Sep (JR). Whimbrel: two CB 6 Sep. Hudsonian Godwit: several JBWR 2-26 Sep, two JBWE 27 Sep, one ZB 1-6 Oct, one to two CB 30 Oct-28 Nov. Marbled

Godwit: one JBWR 2-26 Sep, one ShIn 3 Oct. Semipalmated Sandpiper: two CB 20 Nov (KF). W. Sandpiper: *intro*. Least Sandpiper: one CB 20 Nov (KF). White-rumped Sandpiper: five CB 20 Nov (KF). Baird's Sandpiper: one to three CB 3-23 Sep, one Sagaponic Pd 8 Sep, one JBWE 13 Sep. Pectoral Sandpiper: one CB 20 Nov (KF). Curlew Sandpiper: one JBWR to 3 Sep. Stilt Sandpiper: one CB 17 Oct (KF). Buff-breasted Sandpiper: *intro*, others at CB 13-21 Sep. Wilson's Phalarope: one JBWR 2-26 Sep. Red-necked Phalarope: four FI 17 Sep. Red Phalarope: five at sea off MPt 10 Sep. Pomarine Jaeger: one at sea off MPt 10 Sep; several close into the beach at North Bar, MPt (JF). Parasitic Jaeger: three at sea off MPt 10 Sep. Iceland Gull: one GKP 27 Oct (HF), one CB 3 Nov (AL). Lesser Black-backed Gull: one Captree SP 8 Sep, one Dosoris Pd, Glen Cove 30 Sep (RC), one MPt 24 Oct. Glaucous Gull: one RMSP 18-24 Nov. Black-legged Kittiwake: imm seen from Wildwood SP 12 Nov (JC, Loretta Clinton, JR). Caspian Tern: two CB 15 Sep, two ad feeding one young DPt 18 Sep (JF), FI two ZB 6 Oct (KF), two East Pd JBWR 15 Oct (AM). Royal Tern: eight FI 1 Nov, one remaining to 16 Nov (KF), four DPt 20 Oct (JF). Forster's Tern: various sites south shore of LI during Sep, one Sore Thumb 28 Nov (KF). Black Tern: two Sagaponic L, one MeB 8 Sep (JR), one MeB 19 Sep (PG). Black Skimmer: 225 at JBWR 7 Sep (TH).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Barn Owl: one JFKWS 17 Sep (PM). Snowy Owl: one ShIn 19 Nov. Long-eared Owl: one Oak Beach (JF), numbers much reduced on the barrier beaches in past few years. Short-eared Owl: one 27 Oct GKP, one JBWE 30 Oct through period. N. Saw-whet Owl: one JFKWS after 12 Nov; one RMSP early to mid Nov. Red-headed Woodpecker: several migrating on the Jones Beach strip, peak seems to have been 4 Oct. Red-bellied Woodpecker: may be increasing as a migrant on the outer beach (FF).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Least Flycatcher: one JBWE 5 Oct (EL). W. Kingbird: one Mattituck 20 Oct (PG), one RMSP 27-28 Oct (JR), one Baiting Hollow 31 Oct (JR), two RMSP Nov 9-11 (KF), stayed almost to end of period. Tree Swallow: 4000+ JBWE 20 Sep, 3000+ JBWE 21 Sep, 15,000 CB 20 Sep (KF), 1000s JBWR 24 and 26 Sep, 10,000+ CB 29 Sep, 4000 CB 30 Sep, 10,000 JBch/FI 8 Oct. **Black-billed Magpie**: *intro*. Com. Raven: *intro*. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: four JBch 17 Sep (EL), one RMSP 27 Oct (KF); unusual at the beach in Fall. E. Bluebird: 19 SI 29 Oct and three SI 15 Nov (HF). **Mountain Bluebird**: *intro*. American Pipit: two Mutn 17 Oct (Allan Lindberg), six 27 Oct CB, one 11 Nov JBch, various others. Loggerhead Shrike: one CB 4 Nov (TB, AL). Veery: one RMSP 8 Nov (EL, AW).

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-throated Vireo: Old Westbury 3-4 Sep (Lars Hansen). Philadelphia Vireo: one JBWE 1 Oct (EL), others in Sep. Orange-crowned Warbler: one JBWE 27 Sep, rare before Oct (SS,AW), one JBWE 31 Oct. Nashville Warbler: one RMSP Oct 16 (KF). Black-throated Blue Warbler: one JBWE 1 Nov (EL). Yellow-throated Warbler: one JBWE 8-9 Sep. Black-throated Green Warbler: one JBWE 1 Nov (EL). Prairie Warbler: one RMSP 18 Nov (KF). Bay-breasted Warbler: one RMSP Nov 16 (KF). Ovenbird: one JBWE Oct 24 (KF).

Kentucky Warbler: one at CLP 6 Sep, remained a few days singing from a knot of Japanese Knotweed which is in bloom at this time and full of insects (HF); one JBWE 7 Oct, rare on barrier beach and after mid Sep (SS). Connecticut Warbler: one CLP 5 Sep (HF), several 17 Sep. Mourning Warbler: one 6 Oct CLP (HF). Yellow-breasted Chat: a bird first seen 18 Sep JBWE stayed to the end of the period but not into the Winter period; one Mattituck 20 Oct.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **W. Tanager**: one RMSP 9-12 Nov (KF, AL, mob, ph), one Central Park after 25 Nov. Dickcissel: one RMSP 17 Sep, one Captree SP 24 Oct. Clay-colored Sparrow: one JBWE 3 Nov. Vesper Sparrow: a few in Nov. Lark Sparrow: one JBCh 18 Sep (EL), one RMSP 30 Sep (JR), one CB 17-18 Nov. Sharp-tailed Sparrow: one very brightly colored bird (*nelsoni*?) 16 Oct (SS), this inland race is rare on the barrier beach. Lincoln's Sparrow: two RMSP 4 Oct (JF). **Harris' Sparrow**: intro. Lapland Longspur: several with Snow Bunting at CB. Snow Bunting: six GKP 27 Oct (HF), flock SMSP 22 Nov and after (HB). Bobolink: various isolated reports of a few flying over, 20 at Floyd Bennet Field 12 Sep (Louis DeMarco). Yellow-headed Blackbird: one near Riverhead 31 Oct (Andy Baldelli). Rusty Blackbird: one Dune Road 29 Oct (Robert Spahn), one Alley Pd P 18 Nov (Dick Hirschmann). Boat-tailed Grackle: one ZB 14 Oct, one JBWE 21 Oct, seen more regularly further east. Com. Grackle: 5000+ of a mixed flock, predominantly of this species with European Starlings at Beaver Lake 6-13 Oct (Barbara Conolly). N. Oriole: one **Bullock's** race JBWE 1 Nov (JF, JR), although difficult to identify in some plumages, this race should be sought in late fall and winter. Purple Finch: migrants on the Jones Beach strip, those on SI arrived 7 Nov. Red Crossbill: small flocks at MPt from 17 Nov on, 25 on 19 Nov (PG), 10 on 25 Nov (HB); 14 RMSP 17 Nov. Pine Siskin: migrants on the JBCh strip. Evening Grosbeak: four Mutn 10 Oct (Muriel Stokes), only report.

EXOTICS: Black-hooded Parakeet: six Whitestone 5 Sep (Arty Skopec).

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