

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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This summer season was generally hot and dry in all Regions. Rainfall was spotty among Regions and local within Regions, and drought was a concern in several areas. Hurricane Bob brought heavy rain and some pelagic and southern species to Region 10, primarily eastern Long Island, but elsewhere it only pushed rainfall to nearly normal monthly averages in Regions 3, 8 and 9, and no birds of interest were found inland. Some speculated that the season should have been good for nesting birds, with the possible exception of grassland species hurt by early mowing. The most obvious effects of the early warmth, continuing from the spring, were early plant growth and early nesting. This must be taken into account in assessing the results of Breeding Bird Surveys, as crop land coverage and nesting were both far advanced relative to normal at typical route-running dates. As the season progressed, many noted abundant crops of wild fruits, nuts, and berries, though not especially good cone crops. There was some evidence of an early onset to fall migration with early August arrival dates for a few species, though numbers and variety at that point were again poor in most Regions.

Let us look more carefully at the three regular events of this season, beginning with the tail end of spring migration. I can still recall years with a solid week of good spring birding in June; late flycatchers, thrushes, and warblers, large numbers and good variety of shorebirds, and hawk flights. Again, this was not the case this spring. Winds were consistently "wrong" in western New York, so neither the Braddock Bay nor Derby Hill hawk watches observed any substantial flights in June. There was no mention good numbers or variety of shorebird, only a few individual stragglers in mid June, headed north, south, or summering? It's often an open question. Among these were mid June records of Semipalmated Plover and Solitary Sandpiper in Region 9. Other notable early to mid June stragglers included Brant in Regions 8 and 9, Rough-legged Hawk in Region 2, White-eyed Vireo in Region 2, and Am. Pipit in Region 8. Perhaps this paucity was to be expected, given the very advanced spring and summer experienced this year.

The heart of the period, the breeding season, was a bit more interesting. The many positive notes included: Common Loon breeding at outlying locales in Regions 1 and 5 and first successfully using an artificial nesting island in New York in Region 7; Am. Bittern up a bit in several Regions,

noted in six; 1000+ Great Blue Heron nests in the Ironsides Island colony in Region 6; Am. Wigeon continuing to breed and/or summer in Regions 1 and 2; Osprey, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon breeding recovery efforts continuing to bear fruit in several regions; Common Moorhen numbers improved a bit; cuckoos, particularly Black-billed, locally numerous in Regions 4, 6, 7 and 8; Barn Owl reported in good shape in Region 10 and at least present in Region 4; Ruby-throated Hummingbird noted by six Regions, many with increased summer presence; Red-headed and Red-bellied woodpeckers doing well at the edges of their range; Olive-sided Flycatcher in good numbers in boreal habitat in Regions 6 and 7; Willow Flycatcher expanding in Regions 6 and 7; Least Flycatcher at a new post-Atlas location in Region 10; Carolina Wren exploding in numbers both breeding and post-breeding across the state; Eastern Bluebird nestbox trails doing well, so long as managers pay attention to predator exclusion (see notes from V. Pitzrick in the Region 1 report); Red-eyed Vireo particularly abundant in Region 4; Golden-winged Warbler in good numbers in Region 6; Cerulean Warbler at several sites in Region 6; and a decrease in Common Grackle in Region 1. Mixed signals were noted for quite a few species, including Pied-billed Grebe, E. Wood-Pewee, Purple Martin, and Golden-winged Warbler. Unfortunately, the negative notes match or exceed the positives. In many cases these are red flags from a single or a very few Regions. Region 4 provided a large number of these this season. Summarizing, we find the continued increase of Double-crested Cormorant; low numbers of Green-backed Heron and Black-crowned Night-Heron; the spread and increase of Mute Swan upstate in Regions 2, 5 and 6; few nesting Blue-winged Teal in three Regions; few reports of N. Goshawk; few nesting Red-shouldered Hawk; Am. Kestrel in trouble in Region 10; continued problems for Spotted and Upland Sandpipers and for Black Tern; Great Crested Flycatcher scarce in Region 1; Blue Jay down in Region 8; House Wren down; only two reports of Sedge Wren, both from Region 5; concern for Veery, Wood Thrush, and Brown Thrasher in several Regions; only single Loggerhead Shrike present in Regions 3 and 6; Chestnut-sided and Black-and-white Warblers flagged in Regions 4 and 10 and Northern Waterthrush also in Region 4; only two single Yellow-breasted Chat noted (Regions 3 and 10); Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak flagged; Rufous-sided Towhee and all the grassland sparrows noted of concern in multiple Regions; and red flags for Song Sparrow in Region 1, Swamp Sparrow in Regions 1 and 10, and Dark-eyed Junco in Region 8.

You can find other breeding notes of interest. In the Region 1 report is a summary of the summary of their 18 BBS route results by Walter Klabunde and commentary on Vivian Pitzrick's nest finding efforts. In Region 2, Wood Duck was found saddled with Hooded Merganser eggs to hatch and raise. Drought impact on duck production, bridge-repair-work impact on nesting N. Rough-winged and Cliff swallows, and House Sparrows evicting Cliff Swallows are noted in Region 4. Common Raven was noted in many Regions, but were a real nuisance in Region 5. The Region 7 report summarizes the annual Four Brothers Islands banding visit and notes a record late date for Black-backed Woodpecker feeding young. The Region 10 report includes a summary of breeding trends and a report of field birds at Floyd Bennett Field. Finally, nest predation was noted in several Regional reports, with Osprey and Eastern Bluebird hit by Raccoon in Region 1, Wood Duck and Am. Kestrel by Raccoon in Region 2, Eastern Bluebird by unidentified enemies in Region 6, Tree Swallow by Raccoon in Region 8, and a large Purple Martin colony targeted by Great Horned Owl in Region 9. Fledging a brood is not easy.

In addition to breeding notes, the heart of the breeding season often sees a collection of summering birds and post-nesting wandering. This year was no exception. Among the more interesting of these reports were Horned Grebe in Regions 3 and 10; wandering herons included Great Egret rare in Region 7 and up to 17 in Region 8, Snowy Egret in Regions 5, 8 and 9, and Cattle Egret in Region 7; Greater Scaup in Regions 2 and 9; White-winged Scoter in Region 9; Common Goldeneye in Region 5; a rare summer Turkey Vulture in Region 10 and **Black Vulture** in Regions 9 and 10; a first regional summer record for Golden Eagle in Region 10 as well as another bird in Region 2; a first mid summer record for **Bohemian Waxwing** in Region 2; and a few crossbills, Red in Region 1 and White-winged in Regions 6 and 7.

The third regular happening of this season is the start of fall migration. Shorebirds come first, some as early as late June. This season, the hot, dry weather left suitable habitat everywhere. Given those conditions, the results are disappointing at best. Arrival dates were generally relatively late. Region 3 notes a front in the third week of July which dropped the first significant groups. In addition to the widespread breeders noted in trouble above, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, and Stilt Sandpiper were flagged as very scarce in passage this early fall. Significant highlights did include some excellent peak counts for Willet, Hudsonian Godwit, Sanderling, and Short-billed Dowitcher in Region 10, and a rare occurrence of Marbled Godwit inland in

Region 5. Normally coastal in distribution, Laughing Gull appeared in Regions 2, 3 and 9. There was sparse reporting of Common and Forster's Terns away from Region 10. Moving to land birds, several Regions noted a slow start to the fall migration, although this impression contrasts with Region 6's comment on movement two weeks early. In fact, there are a scattering of very early fall records across many Regions, but little overall sign of significant numbers pushing southward anywhere. Among the more interesting of the early migrants were Merlin in Regions 5 and 8, Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Region 2, Philadelphia Vireo in six Regions, N. Parula, Blackpoll and Connecticut Warblers in Region 5; and Rusty Blackbird in Region 4. Additional migrants of interest in this period included Common Nighthawk scarce everywhere excepting good late August flights in Region 9; a good count of Chimney Swift in Region 1; a relatively late report for Cerulean Warbler in Region 9; and the season's only Yellow-throated Warbler in Region 10.

The special event, or non-event depending on where you live of the season, was Hurricane Bob. As noted earlier, it brought rain but no unusual birds away from Long Island. On Long Island, the "bird of the storm" was **Sandwich Tern**, with at least a record 12 seen. Those able to bird during the storm produced a list similar to that from a pelagic trip and additional sightings trickled in over the next several days. The Region 10 report does an excellent job of summarizing this event, with species, numbers, locations, and commentary.

As usual for this season, the list of rarities is relatively short. The best were: a possible Brown Pelican in Region 1; Common Raven and **Bohemian Waxwing** in Region 2; **Am. White Pelican**, Franklin's Gull, and Loggerhead Shrike in Region 3; Barn Owl, Fish Crow, and "Lawrence's" Warbler in Region 4; **Am. White Pelican**, Snowy Egret, Willet, **Marbled Godwit**, and Little Gull in Region 5; Loggerhead Shrike and **Blue Grosbeak** in Region 6; Great Egret and Clay-colored Sparrow in Region 7; Red-necked Phalarope and "Lawrence's" Warbler in Region 8; Yellow-headed Blackbird in Region 9; and **Brown Pelican**, **Brown Booby**, **Golden Eagle**, **Sandwich Tern**, **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, and Summer Tanager in Region 10. The Bird of the Season Award goes to the state's second **White-winged Tern** seen and photographed by a lucky few in Region 2.

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Standard abbreviations: county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE letters; months are shortened to their first three letters; ad — adult; Alt — Alternate plumage; arr — arrival or first of season; BBS — Breeding Bird Survey; CO — confirmed; 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.