

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

Summer 1991 was sunny, hot and dry. Especially, it was dry! National Weather Service statistics from Broome County's Link Field indicated average temperatures nearly 3.5° higher than normal in June and about 2° above average in July and August. A record high of 93° was set 20 Jul, preceded by a tie of 91° records on 17 and 19 Jul. Serious drought problems developed as summer progressed. Precipitation was about 1.5 inches below normal in both June and July, continuing May's dry weather. Broome had no measurable precipitation from 12 Jun until 2 Jul. Good soaking rains never came and the precipitation that did fall was sporadic. Timely showers left many communities and farms in good shape. Less fortunate neighbors were missed completely. Water evaporated faster under the continuous hot sun adding to the dryness. Finally, August precipitation of 3.78 inches was slightly above the normal 3.53 inches but did little to raise the water table. Meteorologists blamed the continuous warm, dry weather on a persistent high pressure ridge in the upper atmosphere which settled over the eastern United States and Canada through most of the season.

Rivers ran low all summer. Deeper lakes, though lower, looked normal, but creeks dried up. Reservoirs and sizable ponds kept shrinking until by late August they were reduced to shallow pools. Rick Marsi, in one of his weekly newspaper columns, pointed out that the drop in water levels also affected fish and crustaceans, confining them to ever smaller areas. To the numerous Great Blue Herons, it was "easy pickings." The pickings may be what attracted good numbers of uncommon Great Egret and other water birds to stop as they moved south. Ducks, however, which had poor counts all summer, were further squeezed for habitat. Mud-loving shorebirds arrived early and many remained the rest of the period.

We were fortunate to have a total of eight Breeding Bird Surveys run this year, compared to only four last year. These, plus June reports from our regular, faithful observers, afforded a very representative account of the birds present and probably nesting in Region 4 this season. However, many species widely recorded in June were not heard of again, and for others, there were only a few reports. The scarcity was not for lack of active birders, even if there were fewer than had been out in June. All indications were that breeding success was only fair this year, especially for swallows, thrushes and most warblers. Cutler and Jeannette Baldwin, reported from Owego,

"We had only four nesting pair of Tree Swallows in our boxes this year compared to the usual 14 to 20. We also found three adults and one nestling dead in the boxes." Additional stress for N. Rough-winged Swallow and Cliff Swallow was caused by New York State's bridge improvement projects, which disturbed areas for weeks. I only saw four Cliff Swallows in June at an Otego bridge where normally at least 25 would be diving under the span to feed young in their nests. Harriet Marsi, who complained of the same problem, also reported that "English Sparrows, driven out to the country by House Finches, were evicting Cliff Swallows, especially where the nest was a single or the colony, small." Harriet was concerned for woodland species in Broome County where "The heavy gypsy moth infestation continued into June. This brought in both species of cuckoo, but it also thinned foliage making it easy for predators to spot nests. Did it impact on fledgling success?" she asked. Certainly, it might have been an added reason for low counts of Veery, Hermit Thrush, Solitary Vireo and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Lack of water may have been a problem for nesters and their young, but food was not. It was a banner year for bugs of all kind. Wildflowers and weeds, seemingly unaffected by scant rain, bloomed abundantly and set their seed earlier than usual. Berries too were plentiful.

Breeding Bird Census run were Corbettsville, Downsville, Dryden (mostly Cortland County), Lisle, McDonough, Milford, Oneonta and Whitney Point. Robert Miller, who does the Milford BBC, submitted a five-year comparison of species counted. Data was not conclusive, but he was concerned that this year, for the first time, he had no Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler or Northern Waterthrush. Interestingly, the winter range of all three species includes the United States! The Eastern Kingbird was one species with a really good breeding record this year, according to an *Oneonta Star* story. A total of 109 kingbird nests were found in the Oneonta area by Michael Murphy, assistant professor of biology at Hartwick College, and his students, as part of an ongoing study of the kingbird's genetic background. A new dimension in our reports was a canoe trip 15 Jun down the Tioughnioga River from Marathon to Chenango Valley State Park by Greg Butcher and Dryden Boy Scouts.

There were no rarities this Summer, but good sightings included possibility of Pied-billed Grebe breeding (two confirmed during Atlas years, but only one other mid summer in 12 seasons), successful nesting for N. Harrier and Upland Sandpiper, and reports of both hybrids of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warbler. Misses included Common Loon, Blue-winged Teal, N.

Goshawk, Am. Coot and Swainson's Thrush. The total of 148 species was average for summer.

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Abbreviations: ChFk - Chenango Forks; CVSP - Chenango Valley State Park; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; JC - Johnson City; NNM - North Norwich Marsh; OnRes - Oneonta Reservoir; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; TRCT - Tioughnioga River canoe trip; UL - Upper Lisle.

LOONS-DUCKS: Pied-billed Grebe: three JC Swamp 1 Jul, two Pendell Swamp in Lisle 15 Jul (MP); arr Sanford 28 Aug. Double-crested Cormorant: one UL 6 Jun (MDv); one NNM 11 Aug, first for CHEN (DW); two Lounsberry 12 Aug (HM, BB, GK); four Goodyear L 14 Aug (IW), continued range expansion. Am. Bittern: only one Goodyear L 6 Aug (IW). Least Bittern: one TIOG Aug (RB), no details. Great Blue Heron: *intro*. Great Egret: arr and max three Port Crane 26 Jul; five BROO and three OTSE reports Aug including three together and two reports of birds remained week; high count. Green-backed Heron; max six Susquehanna R Vestal 29 Aug (MP). Black-crowned Night-Heron: four Susquehanna R near Goudy Station remaining a week late Aug (HM, BB, GK), only report. Canada Goose: six on three BBS; pair with five y CHEN 8 Jun (JS); two pair 15 y BROO 15 Jul. Wood Duck: only nine reports of hens with y; max 12 Oneonta 12 Aug; scarce. Am. Black Duck: only one CHEN 12 Aug (DW). Mallard: max 42 JC Swamp 29 Jul. Com. Merganser: six ad plus 1 hen with 13 y TRCT 15 Jun; BROO 15 & 29 Jul & 30 Aug (HM, BB, GK), only reports. Hooded Merganser: only one Morris OTSE Jun (JF),

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: max 13 Goodyear 13 Jul; 7-10 reports/month. Osprey: arr Susquehanna R OTSE 24 Jul (MD), early; one 24 and 30 Aug (HM, BB, GK), only reports. N. Harrier: bred successfully (two y) same area Milford as last three years; one BROO 14 Jun and 28 Aug; one TIOG Aug. Sharp-shinned Hawk: only one Jun-Jul; five scattered Aug reports, scarce. Cooper's Hawk: two/three month BROO, OTSE, TIOG. Red-shouldered Hawk: two singles 15 Jun TRCT (GB) and State land off Hammerle Rd CHEN (DW); one BROO 25 Jun (HM, BB, GK), only reports. Broad-winged Hawk: seven widespread Jun reports; ad and imm OPM 23 Aug. Red-tailed Hawk: four on three BBS; max four OPM 13 Aug (one with snake). Ring-necked Pheasant: three BROO, TIOG Jun, only reports. Ruffed Grouse: max nine (safely) crossing Route 45 OPM 8 Aug; few reports after Jun. Wild Turkey: four hens with three broods Windsor 19 Jun (JS); two ad 12 y TIOG 9 Jul (MP). N. Bobwhite: only one BROO 27 Jun (MP) "called about 10 times." Sora: only one Portlandville Marsh 1 Aug. Killdeer: one with FL OPM 15 Jul; max 42 four OPM sites 23 Aug. Lesser Yellowlegs: NNM 11 Aug (DW), only report. Solitary Sandpiper: arr BROO 12 Jul; max 10 OnRes 15 July; one-three OTSE through period. Spotted Sandpiper: max eight TRCT 15 Jun. Upland Sandpiper: Edwards Hill Rd in Lisle 14 Jun (HM, BB, GK);

family of four walking shoulder of that road 3 July (MP) where seen in this area since 1986. Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr BROO 29 Jul; NNM 11 Aug, only reports. Least Sandpiper: arr OnRes 15 July; max six there 23 Aug; two BROO sites 10 and 17 Aug (SR). Com. Snipe: only one NNM 11 Aug. Ring-billed Gull: 11 "breeding" Downsview BBS 10 June (JSh), no details; post breeding max 60 Otsego L 31 Aug. Herring Gull: mostly singles through period.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: 109 on 8 BBS. Black-billed Cuckoo: five on three BBS, good numbers June. Yellow-billed Cuckoo: one OTSE 18 Jun; one BROO 4 Jul; two TIOG Aug, good count. E. Screech-Owl: singles BROO 26 Jul (SR), 13 Aug (LB) and 15 Aug (MDv), good. Great Horned Owl; five BROO, one TIOG sites. Barred Owl: max two "chased by crows" TRCT 15 Jun (GB); one Corbetsville BBS 16 Jun (JL); one BROO 29 Jun-21 Aug (SR), high. Barn Owl: only one TIOG Jul-Aug (RB). Com. Nighthawk: max four at two JC sites 11 Jul; four-six month BROO, OTSE through period; no Aug migration, unusual. Chimney Swift: 21 on five BBS; max 14 JC 11 Jul; three BROO sites still 31 Aug, good count. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: high counts. Belted Kingfisher: max five 1 Aug OPM. Red-bellied Woodpecker: two TRCT 15 Jun; two irregularly TIOG, numbers stable. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: seven on 3 BBS; "down this year" (HM). Pileated Woodpecker: four on two BBS.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Acadian Flycatcher: only one Lisle BBS 21 Jun (BP), uncommon. E. Wood-Pewee: 33 on eight BBS; few reports Jul-Aug. Alder Flycatcher: 20 on 5 BBS, including max nine on Mil BBS; five OPM 29 Jul; last there 24 Aug. Willow Flycatcher: 10 on four BBS; six TRCT 15 Jun; "several" BROO 8 Jun (MP); three sites Jul; one TIOG Aug. Traill's Flycatcher: one banded Vestal 9 Aug and two 18 Aug. Least Flycatcher: max 65 on 8 BBS; last three banded Vestal 30 Aug. Great Crested Flycatcher: max 27 on seven BBS; several OPM sites through period. E. Kingbird: *intro*. Horned Lark: one FY Lisle 9 Jul (MP), only one. Purple Martin: occupied house IBM Golf Course BROO 19 Jun "at least 10 flying" (MP); two sites TIOG (C&JB) and (D&JB); one BROO 12 and 15 Jul (HM, BB, GK), excellent. Tree Swallow: *intro*. N. Rough-winged Swallow: *intro*. Bank Swallow: max 50 Otego 20 Jun; last BROO 29 Jul. Cliff Swallow: *intro*. Am. Crow: 347 on eight BBS. Fish Crow: five "appeared to be a family" CVSP 15 Jun (GB). Tufted Titmouse: singles on four BBS and BROO, OTSE, TIOG through period. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max six OPM 17 Jul, low. Brown Creeper: pair CORT 17 Jul, only three other reports, low. Carolina Wren: one "scolding near nest" Windsor 8 Jun (JS); continued good counts. House Wren: 98 on 9 BBS. Winter Wren: five on 4 BBC; eight sites OTSE June. Marsh Wren: only two Boland Pd BROO 2 Jul (MP). Golden-crowned Kinglet: one CRBVL BBS 16 Jun (JL); one FHNC 7 and 19 Jun, low. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: one Binghamton 8 Jun (SR); one Chenango Bridge 7 Aug (mob), only reports. E. Bluebird: three pair with y CHEN 18 Jun (JS), counts down. Wood Thrush: 81 on eight BBS; several 27 Jul (JS); nine banded Aug (GK), good. Gray Catbird: high counts through period. N. Mockingbird: four-six singles/month BROO, DELA, TIOG, good. Brown Thrasher: 11 on six BBS; four BROO 20 Jun; one banded Vestal 8 Aug, scarce. Cedar Waxwing: max 80 OTSE 28 Aug.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-throated Vireo: four on 2 BBS; last of only three Aug reports one 30 Aug, low. Warbling Vireo: 23 on six BBS; 10 TRCT, good Jun count.

Red-eyed Vireo: 187 on 8 BBS, very high. Blue-winged Warbler: four Corbetsville BBS 16 Jun; max seven ChFk 6 Aug (MDv), early migration? Golden-winged Warbler: max four Corbetsville BBS, high. Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: "Brewster's" type Morris through Jun (JF); "Lawrence's" type Triangle 1 Jun (T&NT) and ChFk 15 Aug (MDv), excellent. Tennessee Warbler: one BROO 3 Jun (HM, BB, GK), late. Nashville Warbler: singles BROO, CHEN and two OTSE Jun, hopefully breeders; arr OPM 24 Aug. Yellow Warbler: very high Jun counts; last BROO 30 Aug. Chestnut-sided Warbler: 51 on 3 BBS, down. Magnolia Warbler: max 10 Downsville BBS 10 Jun (JSh); three McDonough BBS 4 Jun (EH), otherwise poor Jun and Jul; five OPM 29 Aug included one recently fledged. Black-throated Blue Warbler: three Dnsvl BBS and CHEN 18 Jun (JS) only reports, scarce. Yellow-rumped Warbler: nesting Candor area Jul (RP). Black-throated Green Warbler: 18 on six BBS plus several BROO Jun; migration max eight OPM 29 Aug. Blackburnian Warbler: 15 on four BBS; last and only other report four OPM 29 Aug, low. Prairie Warbler: one BROO 3 Jun and 26-27 Jun; last banded BROO 27 Aug. Black-and-white Warbler: scarce. Worm-eating Warbler: only one n OTSE 25 Aug (MM). Ovenbird: 136 on eight BBS (36 on Mil BBS), high. Louisiana Waterthrush: four on 3 BBC; only three other reports, low. Mourning Warbler: six on three BBS; singles BROO 2 Jun and OTSE 3 Jun; female with food and scolding OPM 26 Jul; last banded Vestal 26 Aug. Com Yellowthroat: 258 on 8 BBS. Canada Warbler: singles BROO, CHEN, OTSE Jun; family of four OPM 13 Aug; last banded 26 Aug.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Scarlet Tanager: 28 on 7 BBS; post breeding max 10 OPM (three sites) 28 Aug, low. Indigo Bunting: 75 on eight BBS. Rufous-sided Towhee: scant all season. Field Sparrow: 59 on eight BBS. Vesper Sparrow: one Dryden BBS 4 Jun (GB); one BROO 29 Jul (HM, BB, GK) scarce. Savannah Sparrow: 37 on seven BBS; "several" BROO Jul (JS) but down most areas. Grasshopper Sparrow: two Crbtsv BBS 16 Jun; four on three BROO reports Jun; two n Long Pd CHEN 26-27 Aug "latest date yet" (DW). Henslow's Sparrow: only one n Long Pd CHEN 26-27 Aug (DW). Swamp Sparrow: 10 on five BBS. White-throated Sparrow: max seven McDonough BBS 13 Jun (EH); 10 reports Jun; two Aug, scarce. Bobolink: 100 on eight BBS; last four OPM 25 Aug; "early spring haying did not seem to have a noticeable effect on Bobolink or Meadowlark populations" (HM). Rusty Blackbird: one Brick Pd Owego 5 Aug (C&JB). N. Oriole: 60 on eight BBS; male feeding two y 23 Jun (MP). Purple Finch: four on three BBS, scarce. Evening Grosbeak: one Afton 5 Jun (SM *vide* DW), very late.

ADDENDA: N. Parula: one SUNY Nature Preserve 7 May (JS), only report for 1991.

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