

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

GERALD R. RISING

The period was marked by near average temperature and precipitation, those data masking wide variations within each month. In September the mean temperature of 62° was normal and the total rainfall of 3.2 inches was a quarter inch below normal. However, splitting the month gives a different picture: from 1 to 18 Sep, temperature mean was 68° and rain totaled 0.7 inches; from 19 to 30 Sep, the temperature averaged 52° and rain totaled 2.5 inches, finally breaking the year long drought. Despite this, the ground remained very dry causing some structural damage to homes and leading one town to ration water. Several of the pools at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge failed to refill after their summer draw down. Rural areas experienced early frosts on 20 and 21 Sep, but the first widespread killing frost was on 30 Sep. October's mean temperature, 53°, was 1.5° above average with the usual ups and downs characteristic of this month. Total rainfall, 3.1 inches, was 0.2 inch above average and even included record early measurable snowfall on 4 and 6 Oct. It was a spectacular month for foliage color. November was 1° below average at 39°, but the pattern of September was reversed: from 3 to 10 Nov the average was 14° below normal while from 14-23 Nov, it was 7° above normal. Low temperature records were set on 8, 9, and 10 Nov, and a high on 30 Nov. Precipitation of 4.0 inches was a half inch above normal, with at least a trace recorded on all but two days. Much of this fell as snow, the 18 inch total at the Buffalo airport the most for November since the blizzard winter of 1976-77. Most of the snow fell in lake effect storms on 3 and 24 Nov, the 4-8 inches on 3 Nov being the earliest major snowstorm since 1909.

Mild September winds with a northerly component on only nine days provided little massed migration activity but Willy D'Anna marked 15 and 21 Sep for good passerine flights. On the latter date he and Pat O'Donnell recorded 101 species, including 11 warblers. On 15 Sep with Betsy Potter he found 15 warbler species at Fort Niagara.

On 13 Oct the intensive coverage of the Buffalo Ornithological Society's 56th Fall Count found 143 species, down 5 from last year and 15 from 1989, despite the fact that the count of individuals was up almost 30%. Compared with the high counts of the previous two years, waterfowl were up a remarkable 36% in the face of national declines, and blackbirds were up 86%.

Compared with the low counts of those years, thrushes were down 40%, mimic thrushes down 55%, warblers down 34%, and sparrows down 16%. The effect of 133 birders in the field on fall departure date records also is evident in the summary chart.

With a few notable exceptions, this was an excellent year for fruit and seed crops in the Southern Tier. Steve Eaton reports good crops for viburnums, Gray Dogwood, White Ash, wild Black Cherry "being scratched up by deer and Wild Turkey," Sugar Maple, White and Chestnut Oak, and wild grape, and "bumper crops" of wild apple and hawthorn. He found no Red Oak acorns and notes that very high squirrel population had already gathered and stored other acorns by the end of the period. Vivian Pitzrick adds good crops of dogwood, Box Elder, crabapple, and buckthorn. Unfortunately Steve also notes a terrible decline of American Beech in the Olean area: 60% already are dead and another 30% infected by beech scale. Only a few smaller trees appear healthy. And the effects of the 3-5 March ice storm continue to be evident in the southern counties.

Gordon Bellerby's flyby counts recorded a November drop in the number of Bonaparte's Gulls in the lower Niagara River from 4000 on 15 Nov to a 305 low on 20 Nov, then rising rapidly to 13,500 on 29 Nov. Large numbers of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls also moved into the river at the end of the month, possibly from the west, for an unusual 20,000 Ring-billed Gulls were observed by Lois Buck and Fran Rew in Dunkirk on 10 Nov.

In 2428 net hours from 11 Aug to 10 Nov Elizabeth Brooks banded 148 warblers of 21 species, but more than 5 individuals of only 6 species: 13 Nashville, 37 Magnolia, 20 Yellow-rumped, 8 Black-throated Green, 8 Ovenbird, and 27 Common Yellowthroat. Last year 8 species made this list. On the other hand Don Clark's warbler banding was well up from last year's low. Good news that is probably really bad news: Art Clark's continuing count of tower kills south of Buffalo produced less than 50 birds this year, second lowest in 25 years of recording. The average count is over 800. Weather has a significant influence on these records, but Art notes that the trend since a high in 1982 has been down.

The only NYSARC annotated species recorded this fall was a **LeConte's Sparrow**.

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Abbreviations: BIPB – Bird Island Pier, Buffalo; BISP – Beaver Island State Park; BOS – Buffalo Ornithological Society; BOSC – BOS Count; BWS – Burgeson Wildlife Sanctuary; EABC – East Aurora Bird Club; FNSP – Fort Niagara State Park; INWR – Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF – Niagara Falls; NR – Niagara River; TNP – Tiffi Nature Preserve; TWMA – Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: arr two T Somerset and T Yates 26 Oct (BOS). Com. Loon: arr 30 on 13 Oct (BOSC); max 433 T Somerset and T Yates 26 Oct (BOS). Horned Grebe: arr two T Lewiston 5 Oct (WD). Red-necked Grebe: arr two Shadigee 19 Oct (WD). Double-crested Cormorant: max 386 NF 25 Sep (WW). Am. Bittern: one ORLE 13 Oct (BOSC), only record after 1 Sep. Great Egret: max four INWR 15 Oct (BOS); last TNP 20 Oct (WW). Cattle Egret: imm found dying T Ellington 29 Oct (RS). Green-backed Heron: last E Aurora 9 Oct (LH, AR). Black-crowned Night-Heron: max nine BIPB 22 Sep (MG, WW). Tundra Swan: arr 30 Athol Springs (RA), two T Dayton (LB, FR) both 2 Nov. **Greater White-fronted Goose**: Chautauqua L after 9 Nov (RS), first confirmed report for CHAU. Snow Goose: max 12 INWR 2 Nov (RC, MG). Brant: arr max nine 13 Oct (BOSC). N. Pintail: max 25 INWR 6 Oct (D&DS). Blue-winged Teal: last two INWR 2 Nov (WW). N. Shoveler: arr two 15 Sep (WW), max 16 30 Oct (MD, FR), last three 16 Nov (MG, WW), all INWR. Gadwall: max 47 NF 20 Oct (WW). Am. Wigeon: max 275 INWR 6 Oct (D&DS). Canvasback: arr two GENE 13 Oct (BOSC). Redhead: arr 77 BOSC 13 Oct. Ring-necked Duck: arr eight TWMA 28 Sep (WW). Greater Scaup: arr T Lewiston 21 Sep (WD). Lesser Scaup: arr nine T Lewiston 8 Sep (WD). Oldsquaw: arr ten T Lewiston 17 Nov (BOS). Black Scoter: arr six NIAG 13 Oct (BOSC). Surf Scoter: arr one BIPB 22 Oct (EABC). White-winged Scoter: arr 49 L Ontario 13 Oct (BOSC). Com. Goldeneye: arr NIAG 13 Oct (BOSC). Bufflehead: arr two Shadigee 19 Oct (WD). Hooded Merganser: max 100 Mayville 24 Oct (JF, FR). Com. Merganser: arr three BISP 11 Oct (BC). Ruddy Duck: arr Amity L 20 Oct (MA, VP); max 74 Celeron CHAU 22 Oct (RS).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: last five INWR 20 Oct (D&DS). Osprey: last T Alfred 17 Nov (EB), an especially late record. N. Goshawk: ORLE 13 Oct (BOSC), among many accipiters reported this season. Rough-legged Hawk: arr two T Yates 19 Oct (WD, BC). Merlin: one NIAG 13 Oct (BOSC); one Buffalo 26, 27 Nov (ES, DS). Peregrine Falcon: possibly two different birds Buffalo 5, 6 Oct (WD). Am. Coot: max 1400 Mayville 30 Nov (LB,FR). Lesser Golden-Plover: arr T Lewiston 8 Sep (WD); last BWS 11 Nov (RS). Greater Yellowlegs: last three BWS 23 Nov (RS), late. Baird's Sandpiper: last TWMA 27 Oct (WD). Pectoral Sandpiper: last NF 17 Nov (BOS), late. Purple Sandpiper: arr two NF 9 Nov (MG, WW). Short-billed Dowitcher: last five TWMA 6 Oct (D&DS). Red Phalarope: arr two Athol Springs 2 Nov (RA). Parasitic Jaeger: arr eight Athol Springs 2 Nov (RA), unusually large number; three Athol

Springs, one NF after 28 Nov (mob). Little Gull: max six NR Buffalo 6, 7 Oct (WD, GB), scarce compared to recent years. Sabine's Gull: two BIPB 6, 7 Oct (mob), only record. Iceland Gull: arr Dunkirk 17 Nov (JF, JG). Lesser Black-backed Gull: Chautauqua L 15 Sep (RS), early; NF area after 10 Nov (mob). Glaucous Gull: arr NF area 27 Nov (RP). Forster's Tern: arr Barcelona H 7 Sep (RS); max four BIPB 12 Oct (CM), only records. Black Tern: NR Buffalo 30 Nov (GR, WW), very late.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: arr two Dunkirk 1 Nov (mob). Com. Nighthawk: max 21 T Tonawanda before 18 Sep (PH); last Fredonia 2 Oct (SC). Chimney Swift: max 900 BIPB 29 Sep (BOS).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Olive-sided Flycatcher: last Allegany SP 2 Oct (WW). Tree Swallow: last FNSP 23 Nov (BH, PY), very late. N. Rough-winged Swallow: last 30 TWMA 28 Sep (WW). Bank Swallow: last 12 TNP 1 Sep (BOS). Com. Raven: T Carrollton 17 Sep, Allegany SP 20 Nov (both SE). Winter Wren: arr four T Porter, Wilson, INWR 21 Sep (WD, PO). Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr two TNP (WW), four Golden Hill SP (BC), two T Wilson (WD, PO), all 21 Sep. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr Goat I NF 10 Sep (DR); last T Alfred 28 Oct (EB). Hermit Thrush: arr T Wilson 21 Sep (WD, PO). Gray Catbird: two T Aurora 5-12 Nov (LH), late stragglers. Am. Pipit: arr two BIPB 11 Sep (DR). Bohemian Waxwing: three FNSP 17-24 Nov (mob), only record. N. Shrike: arr T Wilson 20 Oct (WD), widespread.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Philadelphia Vireo: last four T Wilson, T Porter, TNP, INWR 21 Sep (WD, PO). Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: 'Lawrence's' TNP 7 Sep (PB, WW). Orange-crowned Warbler: arr INWR 18 Sep (BP); last NIAG 13 Oct (BOSC). N. Parula: arr FNSP 15 Sep (WD, BP). Pine Warbler: arr TNP 7 Sep (WW); last NIAG 13 Oct (BOSC). Prairie Warbler: last two T Amity 7 Sep (VP). Palm Warbler: arr T Tonawanda 13 Sep (WW); last two CHAU 13 Oct (BOSC). Ovenbird: T Aurora 5-11 Nov (LH), late. Connecticut Warbler: T Aurora 11 Sep (LH), only report. Hooded Warbler: last three Chestnut Ridge SP 17 Sep (LH).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Indigo Bunting: last CHAU BOSC 13 Oct. Dickcissel: T Orchard Park 6 Oct (JM), only record for the year. Am. Tree Sparrow: arr 15 BOSC 13 Oct. Chipping Sparrow: last 309 BOSC 13 Oct. Field Sparrow: last T Aurora 20 Oct (LH). Vesper Sparrow: last six BOSC 13 Oct. Savannah Sparrow: last four T Farmersville 1 Oct (GR). **LeConte's Sparrow**: T Hanover 20 Oct (J&TG), confirmed by BOS statisticians. Fox Sparrow: arr BOSC five 13 Oct; last T Aurora 12 Nov (LH). Lincoln's Sparrow: arr T Aurora 18 Sep (LH); last two CHAU, ALLE 13 Oct (BOSC). White-throated Sparrow: arr FNSP 8 Sep (WD). White-crowned Sparrow: arr T Lewiston 5 Oct (WD). Lapland Longspur: arr five NIAG 13 Oct (BOSC). Snow Bunting: arr three T Wilson 20 Oct (WD). Rusty Blackbird: arr twenty TWMA 2 Oct (EABC); max 2078 BOSC 13 Oct; last T Sheridan 28 Nov (R&CB). Com. Redpoll: max 400 FNSP 17 Nov (WD); 17 T Aurora 18 Nov (LH), only other record. Pine Siskin: after six BISP 11 Oct (BC). Evening Grosbeak: after two T Ward 30 Oct (EB); max eight T Chautauqua 3 Nov (FR).

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