

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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1992 — a year without a summer. Maybe that's a bit of an overstatement, but certainly it was one of the coldest, wettest summers on record all across the state. All Regions recorded temperatures about 3°F below long-term averages for each month of the season. All noted a wet July, with June actually a bit short on rainfall in most western Regions and August below average in the southeast corner of the State. Most Regions expressed concern over cold in mid to late June, and Region 7 recorded *frost* somewhere in the Region in each month. Several editors commented specifically on rain falling on at least one day of each weekend for a month to as long as the whole season. Experts fingered the recent irruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines as the ultimate setback to the "global warming" that has typified recent seasons.

Cold and wet it was, but what were the weather's effects on bird life? The only well documented general effects of this gray, chilled breeding season were significant nestling losses for Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebird and probably Purple Martin. Beyond that, we find only isolated notes of loss and much speculation, the latter even with suggestions of above average success for some breeding species. Region 1 expressed concern that so many ground nesters were brought in for rehabilitation, and House Wren nest success was off locally. Region 2 notes some impact on the nesting success of American Kestrel and concern for marsh nesters due to high water levels. Such high waters drowned Oneida Lake Ring-billed Gull and Common Tern colonies in Region 5, though renesting reduced some of this loss for the terns. There were almost as many comments concerning impact of the weather on vegetation — late crops, delayed haying (maybe a plus for grassland species) and lots of greenery — as there were of specific negative breeding notes.

By scanning the introductory comments of the Regional reports, you can find many positives for the season as well: the summaries of Breeding Bird Surveys in Regions 1 and 4 and notes from Region 6; in the Bicknell's Gray-cheeked Thrush survey results from Regions 7, 8,

and 9; in a banding station report from Region 8; and in notes of increased local interest in wetlands and wildlife and of a positive outcome from a questionable grading project in Region 10.

Moving past immediate concerns precipitated by the weather, there were many interesting records and notes about the several aspects of this complex season. This was one of the more interesting ends to a spring migration in several years. Among the most interesting records are Brant lingering into June in Regions 2 and 9 and to July in Region 6; Common Goldeneye persisting to mid June in Region 8; Rough-legged Hawk on 15 Jun in Regions 2 and 3 and summering in Region 6; a record high count for Red Knot in Region 3; late Dunlin in Regions 2 and 5; Snowy Owl to mid June in Region 2, though highly likely a rehabilitated individual released 3-4 weeks earlier about 5 miles west of the sighting locale; many late warbler migrants, including a state late record for Orange-crowned Warbler in Region 5; and a state record late American Tree Sparrow noted in Region 7. Some of the early June "late" dates seemed more like those considered normal in the 1970's and are notable only relative to their absence in the past five years or so.

There were a host of summer records of unusual non-breeding birds. All but one of the reports are of water-related species: Red-throated Loon in Region 2; Common Loon in eight of 10 Regions, some overlapping with breeding individuals; a July Great Cormorant in Region 10; Horned and Red-necked Grebes in Region 3; a good dispersal of Great Egret in most Regions; a Snowy Egret to Region 7; Snow Goose in Region 9; Northern Pintail in Regions 3 and 9; Greater Scaup in Regions 6, 7, and 9; high numbers Ruddy Duck in Region 1; Pomarine Jaeger in Region 10 and Parasitic Jaeger in Region 1. The lone land bird is Rough-legged Hawk in Region 6. Interestingly, Rough-legged Hawk summered well south elsewhere in the United States this year.

There are a host of good breeding season notes. Many echo continuations of concerns or range expansions ongoing for many years. These include low numbers of Pied-billed Grebe and bitterns, some waterfowl in trouble, some raptors recovering and others in trouble; Black Terns just holding on; Common Nighthawk noted very scarce in six Regions; Whip-poor-will rating as high as "ok" only in

Region 6; Common Raven expanding and increasing; Brown Thrasher numbers low; warblers and vireos a mixed lot, with too little concrete data; most grassland species in trouble; and continued scattered notes of concern over some icterid species. Some of the more interesting or surprising particular notes for the season included Double-crested Cormorant to 5000 pairs on Little Galloo, 598 pairs in Region 9, and nest building and sitting, though no young produced, in Region 2; Canvasback nesting successfully in Region 3; young House Finch, Mourning Dove, and American Robin as favorite foods for nestling Sharp-shinned Hawk; Broad-winged Hawk noted as decreased in breeding areas; rail reports up a bit, including King Rail from Regions 1 and 9 and Clapper Rail at new sites in Regions 9 and 10; Barn Owl from Regions 1, 9, and 10; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker numbers up in several Regions; Acadian Flycatcher continuing to spread, Willow Flycatcher reports increasing to the north, and a general negative for Least Flycatcher; surprising positives for Cliff Swallow from several Regions; a record late hatching date for Carolina Wren in Region 9; the most Sedge Wren reports in several years from Regions 2, 3, 5, and 6; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Regions 6 and 7; many interesting notes accompanying the reports on the Bicknell's Gray-cheeked Thrush surveys; Loggerhead Shrike from Regions 2, 3, 5, and 7, though only Region 7 noting a nesting attempt, unsuccessful; Palm Warbler nesting in Region 7, Pine and Prairie Warbler nesting increased, and Worm-eating Warbler feeding young in Region 3; Clay-colored Sparrow at an Atlas site in Region 1; and finally among the finches Red Crossbill nest building in mid August in Region 1 and Evening Grosbeak reports from five Regions, with nesting evident in some. One wonders how much a lack of song on gray days with low temperatures may explain the apparent absence of some of these species.

Beyond these notes are the truly extraordinary breeding season reports: **Great Gray Owl** heard calling *in June* near the Jamestown wintering site; a first state nesting record for **White-winged Tern** in Region 6; the first documented **Merlin** nest for New York in Region 7; a possible **Blue Grosbeak** nesting from Region 4; and **Brewer's Blackbird** perhaps nesting in Region 2.

Even as the breeding season peaks, it begins to wind down with the arrival of fall migrants. Among the earliest are the shorebirds. Among these, we find: both yellowlegs with arrival dates as early as late June, Solitary Sandpiper noted in all ten Regions, as early as 17 Jun; *five* Willet at one time in Region 1; good Whimbrel reports; Western Sandpiper in Regions 2 and 3, plus the first since 1880 in Region 7; a record early Red Phalarope on 24 Aug in Region 10; and good counts of American Oystercatcher and Short-billed Dowitcher also from Region 10. Rounding out these migrant notes, we have Common Goldeneye early in Region 2; Little Gull in Regions 1, 5, and 6; good counts of Chimney Swift in Region 2 and of Cliff Swallow in Region 6; and a record early Lincoln's Sparrow from Region 2. Finally, we have many notes of relatively poor showings for warblers in August, apparently involving both late nesting and late departures or early nest failure and wide dispersal at early dates away from sites of normal fall concentration.

Beyond these relatively typical events, observers found numerous rarities this season. **Brown Pelican** was reported from Regions 1, 8, 9, and in truly impressive numbers from Region 10. **American White Pelican** showed in Regions 1, 5, and 6. Region 10 produced a first state record for **Roseate Spoonbill**, possibly attracted by a troop of pink-dyed Snowy Egret from New Jersey, as well as **Brown Booby**, **Magnificent Frigatebird**, four shearwater species, and **White-faced Ibis**, **Black-necked Stilt**, **Rufous-necked Stint**, and **Long-tailed Jaeger**. **Chuck-will's-Widow** appeared in Regions 2 and 9, as well as in Region 10 where it nests. And the first documented occurrence of a male **Rufous Hummingbird** was reported in Region 9. Given all of these exciting reports and the first nesting records noted above, I find it futile to try to single out one for a BOTS award. Study the details and historical records and nominate your own. While you're doing that, study the Regional reports. All provide insights and observations of some interest.

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Standard abbreviations: Regional rarities appear in **UPPER CASE** boldface type in the species accounts; county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in **UPPER CASE** letters; months are shortened to their first three letters;! — details seen by Regional Editor; 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.