

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

Summer 1992 was cold, with a soggy July and minimal sunshine. And it rained almost every weekend! It was the coldest summer since 1930, according to National Weather Service records at Cooperstown. Average temperatures for the season were 2.9°F colder than normal. Each of the three months was close to the 3° deficit. At Link Field, Binghamton's Weather Service Station, the highest temperature reading of the summer was 86°F on 14 Jul. The closest thing to a heat wave was a four day period 25-28 Aug, when temperatures reached the low 80's each day. As for cold nights, how about record lows of 43°F on 22 Jun and 39°F the next night? July rainfall totaled 6.32 inches, nearly twice the norm of 3.39 inches. July's excess was balanced by lower than normal precipitation in June and August. June rainfall, only 1.30 inches, was 2.30 inches less than normal. August precipitation of 2.87 inches missed the month's average of 3.35 inches by about a half inch. The growing season, about two weeks late at the beginning of the season, never caught up as spring's cool damp weather persisted. If it was green, whether grass or leaf, it grew abundantly but the rest of the plant world needed more sun and warmer temperatures. It was an off year for black cherries, a favorite of waxwings, thrushes and tanagers. Most berries were abundant albeit late ripening. Corn, too, was slow to mature, alarming farmers who faced the possibility of early frosts. Even the second cutting of hay was a problem for farmers with soaked fields. High water all summer relieved our drought worries but created problems for birds. It nearly eliminated shoreline feeding for herons, certainly hurt nesting success for ducks and buried mud flats and river islands that might have attracted migrating shorebirds. All this, however, didn't deter a Regionally rare **Black Tern** from visiting Whitney Point Reservoir on 30 Aug, where it was spotted by Jay Lehman.

Bill Toner, who conducts a nest box program in CORT, reported a good nesting season for American Kestrel but lower than average numbers for Tree Swallow and Eastern Bluebird. For the kestrel program, now in its fifth year, Bill recorded eight nesting attempts, of which five were successful. Sixteen young fledged. Of these, six males

had been taken as nestlings by a Cornell Univ. researcher ("having a permit to collect and possess") for studies concerning artificial insemination. Tree Swallow made 35 nesting attempts, of which 16 were successful. However, of the 123 eggs that hatched, only 60 young survived to fledge. Many nestlings were found dead in the boxes after record cold nights 22 and 23 Jun. Cold weather was also blamed for the fact that Eastern Bluebird made only seven nesting attempts. Three of these succeeded and 12 young fledged. Trails for the swallows and bluebirds date back to 1981. "I keep records on all the birds and band what I can," Bill said. "It's interesting, always something to learn."

Eight Breeding Bird Surveys, the same ones as last year, were run with higher 1992 counts of most birds than in 1991. Greg Butcher who does the Dryden (mostly CORT) BBS compared his results with the average number of individuals found on the same route 1966-1977. He concluded "there is good reason to be concerned about pheasants, thrashers, towhee, Savannah Sparrow and meadowlark." Among those he listed with big increases were Ring-billed Gull, Willow Flycatcher, American Crow, Chestnut-sided Warbler and Indigo Bunting.

Hugh Kingery, on his annual August visit to Cherry Valley (OTSE), has done his own census the last four years, adopting the BBS format but not all the rules. He found low counts this year for Hermit Thrush, House Wren, Black-throated Green Warbler and Rufous-sided Towhee. Jay Lehman made a special effort this summer to track endangered sparrows and other "area (CHEN) specialities" which were located during the Atlas years. His excellent findings, including high maxima for woodland warblers, are in the species accounts.

The great rarity of the summer was a pair of **Blue Grosbeak**, probably nesting. Believed the first pair reported in upstate New York, they definitely were the first of their species in Region 4. Unfortunately, breeding was not confirmed. The birds were first encountered by Sara Kinch 10 Jun in an overgrown brushy field about a mile up a hill near her Endicott home. Then and on subsequent visits she heard the male sing and observed behavior from distances of 30 to 40 feet. On one visit she saw a nest about four feet of the ground in a bramble of bushes, but was concerned about disturbing the birds. Later in the month Marie Petuh, and then several members of the

Binghamton Hot Line, saw the grosbeak. After that the birds disappeared. However, Sara found them again in early July about a half-mile farther uphill. "Behavior was the same as that of the first nesting site", she said. This time she was able to get photos of them. At no time, however, were any young found. The adults were last seen 27 Aug. Sara now is waiting for bushes to lose their leaves so that she can relocate the nest she saw and maybe find one at the second site. [Photographs submitted to document this report are not definitive and most resemble Indigo Bunting; additional documentation was not available at press time - *The Editor*]

Counting at Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch began 12 Aug, the earliest date yet in the four year old program, explaining the large increase in raptors present.

It seemed a mostly plus summer. Species missed, such as Pied-billed Grebe, were those affected by high water. **Blue Grosbeak** and **Black Tern** were excellent rarities and several uncommon species, such as Acadian Flycatcher and Common Raven, were present. The total of 148 species for the period is average and ties last year's total.

Abbreviations: CRes - Cannonsville Reservoir; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; FMHW - Franklin Mt Hawk Watch; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; PGMA - Pharsalia Game Management Area; S4C - Sherburne 4-Corners; SkyL - Sky Lake Camp, Windsor; WCC - Waterman Conservation center; WPR - Whitney Point Reservoir.

Contributors: Richard Andrus (Downsville BBS), Cutler & Jeannette Baldwin, Bruce Bozdos, Greg Butcher, Marilyn Davis (MDv), Mary Dobinsky, Elva Hawken (McDonough BBS), Sara Kinch, Hugh Kingery, Gail Kirch, Margaret Layton, Jay Lehman, S. Levin, Harriet Marsi, Rick Marsi, Andy Mason (Oneonta BBS), Robert Miller (Milford BBS), Ron Milliken, Robert Pantle (Lisle BBS & Whitney Point BBS), Marie Petuh, Steve Rice, Joseph Sedlacek, Tom and Norene Tasber, Bill Toner, Weed Walkers of Broome Naturalist Club, Don Windsor, Irene Wright.

Summer reports: **Com. Loon:** CRes 6 Aug, only report. **Double-crested Cormorant:** singles WPR 7 Jun; Tiog 8 Jun, 25 Aug; CRes 6 and 29 Aug; fewer. **Great Blue Heron:** max 12 two sites BROO, TIOG 12 Aug (MP) . **Great Egret:** arr WPR 25 Aug (EH); one Vestal 31 Aug (SL).

Green-backed Heron: max three in 12 widespread reports Jun, Aug. **Canada Goose:** three pairs, total of 14 FL BROO, CHEN, OTSE Jun; 150 Owego all summer. **Wood Duck:** three reports of ad, 18 total FL BROO Jun; post breeding max 24 CHEN 10 Aug (MP), low. **Am. Black Duck:** max 12 IBM Pd 29 Aug, two other reports. **Mallard:** only four reports ad with y Jun, Jul.

Turkey Vulture: max six two sites CHEN 21 Jun, OTSE 23 Aug. **Osprey:** arr BROO, OTSE 2 Aug; max four FMHW Aug. **Bald Eagle:** singles Oneonta 20 Jul, DELA, FMHW Aug. **N. Harrier:** max three FMHW Aug; singles BROO 23 Jun, 19 Jul. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** max four FMHW Aug; singles BROO, CHEN, TIOG Jun. **N. Goshawk:** one harassed by jays OPM Jul; one FHNC 17 Aug, sometimes missed. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** arr Vestal 31 Aug (SL). **Broad-winged Hawk:** max 31 FMHW Aug; two singles BROO Jul; imm Oneonta Res 5 Aug. **Am. Kestrel:** *intro*. **Ring-necked Pheasant:** singles CHEN Jun, Aug (JS); Dryden BBS, good count. **Ruffed Grouse:** hen with 8 FL BROO 20 Jun (JS), scarce. **Wild Turkey:** flushed hen, at least four just fledged y, OPM 10 Jun (MD), "terrifying"; six ad, eight y BROO 19 Jul. **Virginia Rail:** five singles BROO, CHEN, OTSE Jun, high count. **Com. Moorhen:** one Boland Pd 8 Jul, one Greene 10 Aug (MP, SK), often missed. **Killdeer:** max 30 IBM Pd 29 Aug, scarce. **Greater Yellowlegs:** several reports early Jun, late; arr two sites 5 Aug, early; max three 7 Aug, all BROO (HM, RM, BB). **Solitary Sandpiper:** only two OTSE 7 Aug (HK), scarce. **Upland Sandpiper:** atop utility pole at usual nesting site T Lisle 14 Jun. **Spotted Sandpiper:** max four Vestal 26 Jun; two juv Broo 8 Jul. **Com. Snipe:** max three S4C 16 Jun (JL,EH); one Downsville BBS. **Am Woodcock:** three Jun reports, one Aug. **BLACK TERN:** *intro*.

Black-billed Cuckoo: max seven on five BBS; last 27 Jun, good count. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** two BROO, one DELA Jun, low. **Great Horned Owl:** three singles Vestal, one TIOG, only owl species reported. **Com. Nighthawk:** max six at two Binghamton sites 15 Jun; one Norwich 3 Jun; one Vestal through period; two Goodyear L often in Aug, scarce. **Chimney Swift:** five to six widespread reports/month, max six, good count. **Belted Kingfisher:** female FY at nest hole Endicott 22, 23 Jun; two nest holes Vestal 26 Jun (MP). **Red-bellied Woodpecker:** one Owego Jun (C&JB); one CHEN 6 Jul (EH), declining? **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 12 on eight BBS, good. **Pileated Woodpecker:** max three (two ad, one y) BROO 8 Jul.

Acadian Flycatcher: one WCC 5 Jun (MP), "nice close look and singing". **Purple Martin:** 12 Vestal until 2 Aug (SR); small colonies IBM Golf Course (MP), Owego (C&JB); last WPR 30 Aug (JL), good count. **Tree Swallow:** *intro*. **N. Rough-winged Swallow:** max three Dryden BBS; one Corbettsville BBS; one TIOG Jun, Jul, scarce. **Bank Swallow:** 20 Murphy's Sand pit Vestal 26 Jun, "old site there with its big colony destroyed by soil mining" (MP); seven widespread reports to 5 Aug. **Cliff Swallow:** max 17 on three BBS; five widespread Jun reports; one TIOG Jul, last eight 17 Aug, scarce and early departure. **Com. Raven:** pair SkyL "acting very territorial, we feel certain they were nesting; also there 1990" (HM, BB). **Tufted Titmouse:** family of five Goodyear L after 23 Jul; four TIOG 5 Aug. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max seven OPM 13 Aug. **Brown Creeper:** only five, scarce. **Carolina Wren:** four on three BBS; "built nest in bluebird house but didn't lay eggs" Owego (C&JB). **Winter Wren:** four on three BBS; only five others, low. **Marsh Wren:** two S4C 6 and 16 Jun; one Boland Pd 8 Jun (MP), scarce. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 14 PGMA 6 Jun; four Oneonta Res 21, 22 Aug, only reports. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** two BROO 12 Jun and 8 Jul; one OPM 1 Aug, only reports. **E. Bluebird:** *intro*. **Veery:** 84 on eight BBS; 10 banded Vestal Aug, high count. **Swainson's Thrush:** 18 PGMA 6 Jun, two there 16 Jun (JL), good numbers, still limited to CHEN. **N. Mockingbird:** 10 on four BBS, good distribution. **Cedar Waxwing:** widespread reports, lower numbers.

Solitary Vireo: max nine PGMA 6 Jun. **Yellow-throated Vireo:** six on four BBS, scarce Jul, Aug. **Warbling Vireo:** 33 on seven BBS, good. **Red-eyed Vireo:** 236 on eight BBS, high. **Blue-winged Warbler:** five on two BBS; seven reports BROO, CHEN Jun; last 21 Aug, good. **Golden-winged Warbler:** one Wyok Road BROO 4 Jun (ML); one BROO 10 Jun (WW); one Corbettsville BBS, good count. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler:** Lawrence's type banded Vestal 13 Jun (GK). **Nashville Warbler:** arr WPR 25 Aug (EH). **Yellow Warbler:** 198 on eight BBS, high. **Chestnut-sided Warbler:** high counts Jun, Aug. **Magnolia Warbler:** max 20 PGMA 6 Jun (JL); six Downsville BBS, high. **Cape May Warbler:** arr FHNC 25 Aug, only report, scarce. **Black-throated Blue Warbler:** max five Downsville BBS, four singles Jun, two Aug. **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 19 PGMA 6 Jun; 17 on

six BBS. **Black-throated Green Warbler**; ten on five BBS; eight singles Aug, low. **Blackburian Warbler**: max 30 PGMA 6 Jun; two there 16 Jun; (JL); pair SkyL 17 Jun (WW), high. **Prairie Warbler**: pair nesting Endicott (SK); single FHNC 25 Aug, last. **Black-and-white Warbler**: max 21 Downsview BBS. **Am. Redstart**: max 12 Downsview BBS; high count through period. **Ovenbird**: 124 on eight BBS. **N. Waterthrush**: one McDonough BBS; one OTSE 8 Aug, very low. **Mourning Warbler**: max nine PGMA 6 Jun. **Hooded Warbler**: one Norwich 7 Jun, not found every year (JL). **Wilson's Warbler**: singles banded Vestal 25 and 31 Aug, only reports. **Canada Warbler**: max nine four BBS.

Scarlet Tanager: max 40 on seven BBS; 10 to 12 widespread reports Jul, Aug, max seven, low. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**: max 44 on eight BBS; post breeding max five Otse 8 Aug (HK). **BLUE GROSBEAK**: *intro* (NYSARC). **Indigo Bunting**: max 68 eight BBS. **Rufous-sided Towhee**: 14 on five BBS; three banded 6 Aug, scarce. **Vesper Sparrow**: five 6 Jun and one 16 Jun at three CHEN sites "including two Atlas loc" (JL); two Dryden BBS; one OPM 10 Jun, high. **Savannah Sparrow**: 42 on seven BBS, good Jun counts. **Grasshopper Sparrow**: two on Corbettville BBS 14 Jun; none CHEN including three previously known active sites (JL); two T Nanticoke BROO 1 Jul (MP), scarce. **Henslow's Sparrow**: ten Tarbull Farms CHEN 7 Jun and 18 including two imm on 26 Jul "still doing well"; five at different site same area 15 Aug (JL). **Swamp Sparrow**: "common" BROO Jun (JS); 15 Otse 8 Aug (HK). **White-throated Sparrow**: max seven McDonough BBS; several widespread nesting sites Jun. **Dark-eyed Junco**: two feeding two cowbirds Windsor 17 Jun (WW). **Bobolink**: 87 on eight BBS; "common" BROO early Aug; last 30 Aug. **E. Meadowlark**: max 17 Lisle BBS; some good localized reports. **N. Oriole**: max 102 on eight BBS; one FY in cottonwood tree BROO 18 Jun and pair feeding two y 8 and 14 Jul, both BROO sites; last two BROO, OTSE 25 Aug, high. **Purple Finch**: nine on four BBS, scarce.

7 Spencer Drive, Oneonta, New York 13820