

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

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Continuing the cold, wet theme from the summer of 1992, this fall generally ran cold, particularly in the western Regions. Only Region 7 specifically noted a warm September. Precipitation levels were average to wet through the season, but below average in Regions 8 and 9 in September and Regions 2, 3, 9, and 10 in October. Snowfall touched Regions 5 and 7 in September and Regions 1 and 9 in October. Hurricane Danielle brought wind and water to Long Island, but few unusual birds there, or elsewhere in the State for that matter. Weather patterns in September and October produced few fronts from the north that pushed migrants south in Regions 1, 2, and 5, but brought many good flights in Regions 4, 6, and 9. November generally was cool, wet, and gray. Wild food crops were generally poor, except for cones, in Regions 1, 2, and 5, but good to abundant in Region 4.

As usual, a mixture of conditions existed across a State this size. Overall, water birds ran average to low in numbers and late in arrival, with many notes of concern for individual species. Raptors fared similarly, though with a few bright spots. Shorebird counts generally were depressed by high water and little habitat, but some excellent records were obtained at the drawn down Whitney Point Reservoir in Region 4. Such reports remind us that shorebirds appear to pass south over a very wide front, and ground records mainly are a function of habitat availability. Gulls and terns were generally low in numbers and late. Passerine numbers also were generally low, and irruptives, including winter finches, were essentially nonexistent. However, most Regions noted an excellent variety of rarities and the season produced a fair number of especially high counts and very late departure dates. Quoting from the Region 10 report, Fall birding has become a sport of chasing rarities rather than enjoying numbers. Specific studies that support these views appear in the October Count summary and banding notes from Region 1; banding, loon counts, and a new hawk watch in Region 3; shorebird notes and the Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch data from Region 4; banding data from Regions 7 and 8; hawk watch data from Regions 9 and 10; and pelagic trips from Region 10.

Focusing on particular groups and species, we can assemble many more interesting details from the Regional reports. It was interesting to

find that only three species were noted by all 10 Regional editors: Peregrine Falcon, American Pipit, and Snow Bunting, a strange mix. Both of our regular loons were noted in fairly good numbers in most Regions, with good Lake Ontario counts and an excellent peak of 1800 from Region 3. Red-necked Grebe was more widely reported than in recent years. Double-crested Cormorant numbers continue high across the State. Mute Swan reached a record inland high of 11 in Region 2. Snow Goose and Brant both were noted in good numbers in several Regions. Wood Duck was noted in six Regions, with a record high count in Region 5. Ducks of special concern included Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, and Canvasback. Scaup, scoters and mergansers were in good shape, but few dark-winged scoters appeared on Lake Ontario and the usual massing of mergansers in Region 6 didn't happen this fall. Eider and Harlequin Duck reports came only from Region 10. Raptors produced late Turkey Vulture reports in several Regions, including late November dates in Regions 6 and 10. Bald Eagle reports were off a bit, very few Rough-legged Hawk appeared, but a very high Golden Eagle total was obtained in Region 4. Low numbers for Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon were the rule. While shorebird counts generally were off, there were some good Lesser Golden-Plover counts, a very late Solitary Sandpiper in Region 9, Hudsonian Godwit in seven Regions mainly in October, Red Knot in five inland Regions, and yellowlegs and dowitcher counts were low. Jaegers were noted in Regions 2, 5, and 10. Interesting gull observations were few until a bonanza arrived in late November on the Niagara River in Region 1. Little Gull numbers remained low for the season at both of its Region 1 and 2 gathering sites, though six noted in Region 7 was a good count there. Tern numbers generally were poor, with the only reports of note a record late Caspian Tern in Region 2 and late Royal Tern in Region 10. The cuckoos received only a single mention across all Regions. A possible late nesting Barn Owl in Region 1, a good echo flight of Snowy Owl reaching all but Region 4, and a **Northern Hawk Owl** in Region 7 were noteworthy. The goatsuckers remain species of serious concern. Ruby-throated Hummingbird tarried in Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8, with the Region 5 bird captured and placed in a zoo to overwinter. Black-backed Woodpecker was spotted out of its usual haunts only in Region 2.

For many of us, the passerine passage was thin, late, or just plain missing. For most species, too few Regions provided sufficient notes to

detect trends. However, some of the most interesting notes include a State record high of 100+ Eastern Phoebe from Region 10; Common Raven numbers still good, and Carolina Wren numbers remain high across the state. This was an off year for Red-breasted Nuthatch; kinglet counts were good and thrush counts generally poor; there were few reports of waxwings. Northern Shrike had reached six Regions by late October, but there was only one Loggerhead Shrike report, in Region 6. Philadelphia Vireo was noted in nine Regions. Warbler numbers typically were very low, yet Orange-crowned, Pine, Palm, and Connecticut Warbler reports were good and a Yellow-throated Warbler was noted in Region 10. Cape May Warbler numbers were high in Region 4, yet it was unreported in nearby Region 2 and almost so in Region 5. Good sparrow movements were reported in Regions 9 and 10 in mid October, while hundreds of White-crowned Sparrows were spotted in late September in Region 3; American Tree Sparrow arrived during a narrow date range over nine Regions. Blackbird reports of note were few, but a count of 100 Eastern Meadowlark in Region 9, a **"Bullock's" Oriole** was found in Region 10, and a Brewer's Blackbird in Region 5 are particularly interesting. Finally winter finches occurred only in very small numbers scattered across the Regions and through the season.

Once again, the Regional reports contain a host of additional worthwhile tidbits which I feel obliged to note, to induce all of you to read the full reports carefully. See how Region 1's Fall Count compares with other years, and how it impacts departure dates for that Region. Anyone who regularly watches birds at a fixed site can make important contributions to our data documenting departure dates by submitting their observations. The Region 3 report discusses several population study projects undertaken recently; they are worth consideration in other Regions. The Region 5 report provides many peak or average numbers of birds per day; are these numbers interesting or useful to you? The Region 6 report notes as a highlight of the season an increased numbers of reporters, great news for that Region! In the Region 7 report, note goose neckband records, news of the issue of a Crown Point checklist, and many reports of spectacular raven courtship flights. The Region 8 report features the gulls of the Niskayuna landfill and banding data for Purple Finch that suggest poor nesting success. The Region 9 and 10 reports provide good hawk watch summaries, while Region 10 adds many observations of rarities other than raptors spotted at the hawk watch sites.

Fall Departures 1992

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Osprey	1 Nov	8 Oct	5 Nov	5 Oct	2 Oct	23 Oct	4 Oct	29 Sep	30 Oct	20 Oct	15 Oct
Broad-winged Hawk	13 Sep	31 Aug	9 Oct	24 Sep	28 Sep		6 Oct	11 Sep	10 Oct	25 Oct	27 Sep
Black-bellied Plover	31 Oct	31 Oct	1 Nov	19 Oct	2 Nov	24 Oct	1 Nov		10 Nov		30 Oct
Semipalmated Plover		4 Oct	14 Oct	26 Oct	16 Oct	16 Sep	5 Nov		24 Oct	29 Oct	16 Oct
Greater Yellowlegs	3 Nov	31 Oct	1 Nov	26 Oct	14 Nov	28 Oct	14 Nov	8 Nov	5 Nov		4 Nov
Lesser Yellowlegs	17 Oct	19 Oct	21 Nov	26 Oct	15 Oct	23 Oct	1 Nov	16 Sep	1 Nov	18 Oct	22 Oct
Spotted Sandpiper	11 Oct	17 Sep	3 Oct	29 Aug	10 Oct	3 Oct	10 Oct	6 Sep	10 Oct	14 Oct	29 Sep
Sanderling	17 Oct	27 Nov	23 Sep		14 Nov	18 Nov	17 Sep				24 Oct
Semipalmated Sandpiper	11 Oct	31 Oct			26 Sep		20 Sep	16 Sep	10 Oct	16 Oct	5 Oct
Least Sandpiper		7 Oct	3 Oct		3 Oct	27 Oct	24 Sep		5 Oct	14 Sep	3 Oct
Pectoral Sandpiper	17 Oct	23 Sep	25 Oct	7 Nov	14 Nov	28 Oct	20 Oct	26 Oct	1 Nov	29 Oct	25 Oct
Caspian Tern	22 Sep	30 Sep	30 Sep		20 Sep	20 Sep	26 Jul			5 Oct	17 Sep
Common Tern	1 Nov	9 Oct		11 Sep	11 Oct	20 Sep	12 Aug				25 Sep
Black Tern		29 Aug			13 Sep		26 Jul			21 Sep	30 Aug
Chimney Swift	2 Oct	2 Oct	3 Oct	19 Sep	20 Sep	2 Sep	23 Aug	11 Sep	27 Sep	11 Sep	17 Sep
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	14 Sep	30 Sep	31 Oct	5 Oct	20 Sep	20 Sep	27 Sep	20 Oct	29 Sep	14 Sep	30 Sep
Eastern Wood-Pewee	22 Oct	24 Sep	3 Oct	16 Sep	3 Oct	13 Oct	29 Sep	16 Oct	6 Oct		4 Oct
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	12 Sep	9 Sep	30 Sep	12 Sep	14 Sep				14 Sep	5 Sep	13 Sep
Least Flycatcher	20 Sep	24 Sep	27 Sep	5 Sep	13 Sep	12 Sep	2 Sep		12 Sep		14 Sep
Eastern Phoebe	17 Oct	7 Nov	15 Oct	20 Oct	6 Nov	23 Oct	26 Oct	22 Oct	20 Oct	27 Nov	27 Oct
Great Crested Flycatcher	20 Sep	3 Oct	15 Sep	8 Sep	26 Sep	6 Sep	17 Sep	15 Aug	11 Sep		13 Sep
Eastern Kingbird	12 Sep	9 Sep	12 Sep	9 Sep	4 Sep	7 Oct	3 Sep	3 Sep	10 Sep		11 Sep
Tree Swallow	11 Oct		27 Nov	1 Oct	26 Oct	1 Nov	8 Sep	13 Nov	23 Oct	15 Nov	24 Oct
Barn Swallow	13 Oct	24 Sep	2 Sep	6 Sep	13 Sep		5 Sep	7 Sep	5 Oct	7 Sep	15 Sep
House Wren	11 Oct	5 Oct	9 Nov	13 Oct	18 Oct	23 Sep	23 Aug	12 Sep	15 Oct	17 Oct	5 Oct
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2 Sep	9 Sep			30 Sep		7 Sep		15 Sep	6 Sep	11 Sep
Veery	19 Sep	1 Oct	4 Oct	27 Sep	14 Oct	20 Sep	3 Sep		10 Sep	6 Sep	21 Sep
Swainson's Thrush	17 Oct	4 Oct	16 Oct	14 Oct	1 Oct	17 Oct	29 Sep	24 Sep	20 Sep	27 Oct	7 Oct
Wood Thrush	6 Oct	10 Oct	13 Oct	30 Sep	23 Sep	11 Oct	20 Oct	24 Oct	10 Oct		9 Oct
Gray Catbird	3 Nov	28 Nov	24 Oct	29 Oct	18 Oct	17 Oct	20 Sep	9 Nov			26 Oct
Brown Thrasher	11 Oct	14 Oct	12 Oct	7 Oct	20 Oct	21 Sep	14 Oct	11 Sep	20 Nov	9 Oct	11 Oct

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Solitary Vireo	11 Oct	8 Oct	27 Oct	26 Oct	18 Oct	19 Oct	6 Oct	18 Oct	20 Oct	11 Oct	16 Oct
Yellow-throated Vireo		7 Sep	10 Sep	14 Sep	1 Sep	5 Sep	17 Sep	12 Oct			13 Sep
Warbling Vireo	23 Sep	5 Oct	19 Oct	14 Sep	20 Sep	4 Sep	17 Sep		15 Sep	2 Sep	19 Sep
Red-eyed Vireo	27 Sep	2 Oct	3 Oct	27 Sep	14 Oct	12 Sep	27 Sep	3 Oct	10 Oct	18 Oct	2 Oct
Blue-winged Warbler		4 Sep	8 Sep	5 Sep	8 Sep				6 Sep		6 Sep
Tennessee Warbler	1 Oct	25 Sep	2 Oct	16 Sep	30 Sep		25 Sep		1 Oct	23 Sep	26 Sep
Nashville Warbler	28 Oct	5 Oct	8 Oct	4 Oct	30 Sep	7 Oct	2 Oct	27 Sep	20 Sep	5 Oct	4 Oct
Northern Parula			25 Sep	16 Sep	27 Sep		3 Sep	31 Oct	5 Oct	27 Sep	27 Sep
Yellow Warbler	19 Sep	23 Sep	2 Sep	16 Sep	20 Sep	8 Sep	24 Jul	16 Sep	12 Sep	7 Sep	8 Sep
Chestnut-sided Warbler	11 Oct	30 Sep	19 Sep	16 Sep	23 Sep	30 Sep	23 Sep	7 Sep	20 Sep	7 Oct	24 Sep
Magnolia Warbler	2 Oct	30 Sep	4 Oct	27 Sep	18 Oct	12 Sep	26 Sep	24 Sep	20 Sep	4 Oct	28 Sep
Cape May Warbler	10 Sep		26 Sep	2 Oct	14 Sep	1 Sep	5 Sep	7 Sep	20 Sep	18 Oct	18 Sep
Black-thr Blue Warbler	17 Oct	12 Oct	25 Sep	18 Sep	14 Oct	2 Oct	1 Oct		5 Oct	14 Oct	5 Oct
Black-thr Green Warbler	11 Oct	6 Oct	1 Oct	27 Sep	18 Oct	24 Oct	1 Oct	28 Sep	1 Oct	8 Oct	6 Oct
Blackburnian Warbler	11 Oct	3 Oct	12 Sep	8 Sep	24 Sep	23 Sep	17 Sep		20 Sep	14 Oct	24 Sep
Bay-breasted Warbler	3 Sep	25 Sep	27 Sep	16 Sep	20 Sep	1 Oct	17 Sep		30 Sep	20 Sep	21 Sep
Blackpoll Warbler	11 Oct	20 Sep	3 Oct	3 Oct	27 Sep	2 Oct	26 Sep	28 Oct	15 Oct	25 Oct	7 Oct
Black-and-white Warbler	23 Sep	8 Sep	15 Sep	4 Sep	24 Sep		19 Sep		30 Sep	27 Sep	18 Sep
American Redstart	11 Oct	13 Oct	1 Oct	19 Sep	18 Oct	20 Sep	24 Sep	7 Sep	5 Oct	27 Sep	29 Sep
Ovenbird	11 Oct	14 Sep	30 Sep	27 Sep	3 Oct		22 Sep		10 Sep	18 Sep	24 Sep
N. Waterthrush	9 Sep	28 Sep	8 Sep		4 Sep	6 Sep	15 Sep		15 Sep	20 Sep	13 Sep
Common Yellowthroat	11 Oct	24 Oct	6 Oct	14 Oct	8 Nov	12 Sep	20 Sep		20 Oct	18 Oct	11 Oct
Wilson's Warbler	15 Sep	24 Sep	19 Sep	19 Sep	27 Sep	10 Sep	15 Oct		7 Sep	4 Oct	22 Sep
Canada Warbler	11 Sep	24 Sep	20 Aug	15 Sep	13 Sep	5 Sep	2 Sep		25 Sep	6 Sep	10 Sep
Scarlet Tanager	11 Oct	28 Sep	27 Sep	16 Sep	20 Sep	27 Sep	21 Sep	15 Sep	3 Oct	7 Oct	26 Sep
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	13 Oct	28 Sep	2 Oct	17 Sep	24 Sep	19 Sep	9 Sep	28 Sep	2 Oct	20 Sep	25 Sep
Rufous-sided Towhee	11 Oct	18 Oct	16 Oct	2 Oct	28 Oct	12 Oct	30 Oct	13 Oct	30 Nov	19 Oct	21 Oct
Lincoln's Sparrow	6 Nov	18 Oct	24 Oct	4 Oct	18 Oct		12 Sep	1 Oct	25 Oct	18 Oct	14 Oct
White-crowned Sparrow	15 Nov	15 Nov	7 Nov	28 Oct	28 Oct	28 Oct	30 Oct	2 Nov	25 Oct	12 Nov	3 Nov
Bobolink		19 Sep	2 Sep	4 Sep	12 Aug		7 Sep		1 Oct	10 Sep	7 Sep
Northern Oriole	5 Sep	10 Sep	14 Sep	25 Aug	4 Sep	6 Sep	2 Sep	28 Aug	1 Oct	18 Oct	11 Sep

Bold Regional Record Late*Italics* also isolated later report(s).

Region	Species Reported	Seasonality (days)	Advance (days)
Region 1	55	-4.0	3.8
Region 2	59	-6.4	2.6
Region 3	58	-0.7	3.1
Region 4	55	-3.5	-5.1
Region 5	62	-4.8	2.5
Region 6	49	1.5	-3.2
Region 7	60	1.2	-9.6
Region 8	38	-5.7	-4.7
Region 9	56	-3.4	4.1
Region 10	50	-12.3	5.3

Let the various Regional editors know what you dislike and, more importantly, like about their reports. Even a little positive feedback goes a long way to maintain the interest and energy Regional [and Highlights - *The Editor*] editors need to keep writing these reports, while the most constructive way to overcome your dislikes is to submit the data, explaining why it is important, which you feel ought to appear in your Regional report.

A note relative to scaup identification in the Region 6 report pushes me to put on my preacher's smock for another line or two. The historical wisdom has been that Greater Scaup is *the* winter scaup of the open Great Lakes. However, locally in Region 2 we have found a large increase in the numbers of Lesser Scaup wintering during the past 5-10 years. This year, for example, one location near Braddock Bay had a flock of about 800 scaup, virtually all Greater, while only a couple of miles east, a flock of about 2000 birds was half or more Lesser Scaup. Similarly, the common winter merganser there has been Common Merganser, yet in recent years over most of Region 2, Red-breasted Merganser now outnumbers it. Common Merganser is found, though in high numbers, at only a couple of spots.

The departure date tables provide relatively little useful information this fall. For many, it seemed that birds departed early. Overall departures were early relative to the 25-year baseline, which unfortunately is biased towards late dates. The departures are not significantly early relative to the past 6 years of data gathered specifically to assemble this information. Without going through the substantial effort to adjust the 25-year and current data for missing Regional dates, the number of early and late departure dates relative to

their average is as expected. Only nine species are more than 2 standard deviations early or late: Eastern Wood-Pewee and Tree Swallow were late and Osprey, Common Tern, Barn Swallow, Tennessee, Yellow, Magnolia warblers, and Bobolink departed early. In the Regional reports we also read that Tree Swallow lingered in numbers in Regions 2 and 3, House Wren set a record late date in Region 3, Sedge Wren set a State late date in Region 2, and a record late Orchard Oriole graced Region 10.

The rarity picture is a full one, at least 44 species reported. Considering only those species of very rare status statewide and not noted earlier, we have **Leach's Storm-Petrel** *from shore* in Region 10; **Ross's Goose** in Regions 1 and 7, **Mississippi Kite** in Region 3, **Swainson's Hawk** in Region 9 and possible **Ferruginous Hawk** in Region 4, **King** and **Yellow Rail** in Region 9, **Ash-throated**, **Scissor-tailed**, and **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** in Region 10, **Gray Kingbird** in Region 8, **Northern Wheatear**, **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, and **Lark Bunting** in Region 10; **Lark Sparrow** in Regions 1 and 10; and **LeConte's Sparrow** in Regions 1 and 3. From this impressive list, many of which would have made headlines a few years back, my choice for B.O.T.S. is the Ferruginous Hawk in Region 4.

Corrections: In the Spring 1992 Highlights (*Kingbird* 42(3); 1992) on p. 146, Lesser Golden-Plover was not in Region 9 (the line should have read "Regions 2, 3, and 10"); and on p. 147 a (1000+) Red-tailed Hawk day also is inaccurately reported.

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