

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

GERALD R. RISING

Information from the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Buffalo indicates that Regional 1992 fall weather was mixed but not extreme. September's mean temperature, 62°F, was just below normal and its total precipitation, 5.6 inches, was 2.2 inches above normal. That rainfall statistic is misleading in that almost all of the rain fell on three days. Interior areas suffered their first frost on 24 Sep, but the first frost in Buffalo was not until 6 Oct. After a gloomy summer, the near normal amount of sunshine during this month was well received. The October temperature mean, 48°F, was down 4°, but the 2.8 inches of precipitation was near normal. There was an unusually early half inch snowfall in Buffalo on 20 Oct, with southern parts of the region receiving up to 3 inches. November's barely below normal temperature mean of 40°F was just enough to make this the sixth straight month below average. Precipitation was an inch above normal at 4.9 inches. There was an intense lake effect storm from 12-17 Nov that contributed most of the total 14 inches of snow for the month at the Buffalo Airport. As is often the case, the snow depth increased from 6 inches near Lake Ontario to over 30 inches in the snow belt west and south of the city. Still, the most significant feature of this month was its dreariness. The percent of possible sunshine was 17% — compared to 57% in September and 41% in October — and through the last ten days there were only nine minutes when the sun was visible!

There were only eight days with any northerly components to the winds in September, and 4, 11, and 23-25 Sep each followed fronts and, thus, were good candidates for southward movements. Willy D'Anna and Betsy Potter and, separately, Linda Holmes noted many migrants on 12 Sep. Similar winds and fronts seemed not to produce many migrant birds in October or November.

This year the Buffalo Ornithological Society's 57th Fall Count was mounted on 11 Oct by 237 observers. New York sections produced 78,177 birds of 138 species, compared with the prior three year averages of 117,509 and 150. (These counts extend into Canada, and New York sections have been broken out only since 1989.) With the overall numbers down 33%, you expect declines in subgroups and that is exactly the case: waterfowl down 32%, hawks down 25%, shorebirds

down 25%, and passerines down 25%. Dabbling ducks down 32% and divers down 23% reverse the national trend. Among the passerines the greatest drop was in warbler numbers: they were down 63%. Other than Yellow-rumped Warbler, the high count for single species was three and that was achieved by only three species: Nashville, Black-throated Green, and Blackpoll Warblers! Those Yellow-rumped Warbler were not an exception to the decline either: the 387 recorded was down 62%. Such single year declines are often the result of bad weather conditions, but the weather on this count day was quite pleasant. The effect this single day of intensive coverage is further evident in the chart summarizing departures.

In 3118 hours (compared to 2428 hours last year) from 1 Aug to 10 Nov, Elizabeth Brooks banded 91 warblers of 17 species (against 148 warblers of 21 species in 1991.) More than two individuals of only five species were ringed: 11 Nashville, 18 Magnolia, 10 Yellow-rumped, 7 Ovenbird, and 16 Common Yellowthroat. Last year six and the year before eight species made this list.

This was a mixed year for fruit and seed crops. In the Southern Tier, Steve Eaton reports hemlock cones abundant but a month and a half late in dropping seed, and White Spruce cones also were abundant. He found White Ash seeds variable and dependent on soil base: bottomland trees good but spotty on upland unglaciated soils. The birds Steve calls "the beechnut guild" — turkeys, grouse, jays, chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers — found a fair crop of these nuts, but no acorns or Black Cherries. A few miles to the east Vivian Pitzrick notes, "A poor mast crop but abundant spruce cones. Dogwood fruits abundant but apples spotty. Good Box Elder fruits but Multiflora Rose, wild grape and ash fruits scarce or nonexistent." In Niagara and Orleans County I found a fair crop of elderberries, wild grape, and apples along the Erie Canal. Almost no winter finches were reported.

It was a quiet fall in the Niagara Gorge that produced very few unusual species among the thousands of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, the hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls and the dozens of Great Black-backed Gulls. It took much searching to find single birds of several expected species: Little, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls. But unexpectedly at the end of November Marlene and Ron Planck identified three extremely rare gulls, and international birders converged on the area. As nearly as can be determined only one of the three exotics, **California Gull**, had made its way across the Niagara River into New

York State by the season's end, but a search is on for records of the other two. A quarter mile makes a big difference here. The only other great rarities located were **Ross's Goose**, **Sandhill Crane**, a **Lark Sparrow** on the 11 Oct Count and, for the second year in a row, a **LeConte's Sparrow**.

Contributors: Mallery & Mary Adams, Becky Albaugh, Robert Andrlé, Margaret Barnett, Gordon Bellerby, Paul Benham, Robert Brock, William Broderick, Elizabeth Brooks, Billie Brown, Lee Brown, Lois Buck, Chris Budniewski, Ray Budniewski, William Burch, Bruce Chilton, Richard Collins, David Cooper, Wilma Csont, Margaret Cunningham, Roger Daniel, Willy D'Anna, Len DeFrancisco, Steven Eaton, Alice Evans, Brett Ewald, Paul Farver, Tom Harper, Mary Ellen Hebb, Paul Hess, Linda Holmes, Audrey Horbett, Matthew Hotchkill, Eileen & Robert Hull, David Junkin, Emma Lou King, Dan Klaybor, John Leunsman, Walt Listman, Tom Madison, Henry Mayo, Ollie Mayo, Alice McHale, Bob McNinch, Dan Nicholson, Katherine Palmer, Dave Peterson, Michael Pitzrick, Raymond Pitzrick, Vivian Pitzrick, Marlene & Rod Planck, Larry Pline, Betsy Potter, Karen Rader, Frances Rew, Gerald Rising, Don Roberson, Olga Rosche, Art Schaffner, Ellen Schoop, Bert Schweigert, Lillian Simons, Robert Sommerville, Robert Spahn, David & Debbie Suggs, Robert Sundell, Joe Thill, John Thill, William Watson, Peter Yoerg.

Abbreviations: ASP — Allegany State Park; BIPB — Bird Island Pier, Buffalo; BOSC — Buffalo Ornithological Society Count; CL — Chautauqua Lake; FNSP — Fort Niagara State Park; INWR — Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; LR — Lewiston Reservoir; NF — Niagara Falls; NR — Niagara River; TNP — Tifft Nature Preserve; TWMA — Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area.

Fall reports: **Red-throated Loon:** arr Four Mile Creek SP and T Somerset 31 Oct (BE; WB,WD), only records. **Com. Loon:** arr three Shadigee 19 Sep (WD); max 71 T Somerset and T Yates 25 Oct (DC, WD). **Horned Grebe:** arr 16 BOSC 11 Oct. **Red-necked Grebe:** arr one Mayville 30 Nov (RS). **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 824 NF 19 Sep (WW), up from 386 last year. **Am. Bittern:** one Burgeson WS 8 Oct (BA), late; one ALLE 11 Oct (BOSC), only records. **Least Bittern:** last TNP 5 Sep (RA). **Great Egret:** last Carlton Station 16 Oct (WL), only two or three singles seen all fall. **Cattle Egret:** one T Chautauqua 20 Oct (DP). **Green-backed Heron:** last three BOSC 11 Oct. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** last NR 21 Nov (BC). **Glossy Ibis:** imm T Hume 10 Oct (AE,

KP!), only report. **Tundra Swan**: arr seven Oak Orchard WMA 25 Oct (WW), max 600 CL 13 Nov (JL). **Mute Swan**: one T Yates (RB,WD!), only record. **Snow Goose**: arr T Porter and T Yates 3 Oct (WD!, BP); max three BOSC 11 Oct. **Ross's Goose**: only one T Randolph 7 Oct (DK, RS!). **Brant**: max 1030 T Somerset 25 Oct (DC, WD). **N. Pintail**: max 155 INWR 29 Oct (AH, DR). **Blue-winged Teal**: last 36 BOSC 11 Oct. **N. Shoveler**: max 28 INWR 18 Oct (DR). **Gadwall**: max 180 INWR 8 Nov (WW). **Am. Wigeon**: max 970 BOSC 11 Oct, four year count high by 41%. **Canvasback**: arr five BOSC 11 Oct; max 3000 NF 6 Nov (WD). **Redhead**: max 115 Mayville 29 Nov (FR). **Ring-necked Duck**: arr five LR 1 Oct (WD); max 203 NF 6 Nov (WD). **Greater Scaup**: arr seven LR 1 Oct (WD); max 2444 11 Oct (BOSC). **Lesser Scaup**: arr 11 LR 13 Sep (WD); max 1711 BOSC 11 Oct. **Oldsquaw**: arr eight FNSP (BE). **Black Scoter**: arr four T Westfield 4 Oct (RS); max 18 Shadigee 31 Oct (WD, WW). **Surf Scoter**: arr and max 12 T Yates 12 Oct (WD). **White-winged Scoter**: arr three T Somerset 12 Sep (WD, BP); max 247 BOSC 11 Oct. **Com. Goldeneye**: arr one FNSP 17 Oct (WD). **Bufflehead**: arr one CL 15 Oct (RS). **Hooded Merganser**: max 1000 CL Nov (JL). **Com. Merganser**: arr 18 Allegheny Reservoir 6 Oct (WW), possibly local breeding birds. **Red-breasted Merganser**: arr six T Somerset 19 Sep (WD). **Ruddy Duck**: arr two BIPB 14 Oct (DR); max 50 CL and one BIPB 7 Nov (TM, TH).

Turkey Vulture: last E Aurora 22 Oct (LH); max 97 BOSC 11 Oct. **Bald Eagle**: two ad, two imm INWR 3-29 Oct (mob). **N. Goshawk**: imm T Porter 31 Oct (BE!). **Red-shouldered Hawk**: max seven BOSC 11 Oct. **Rough-legged Hawk**: arr near Onoville 13 Oct (LD, LP). **Merlin**: arr T Somerset 12 Sep (WD!, BP); only other one INWR 11 Oct (WB!). **Peregrine Falcon**: one NF 1 Sep (WW!) and 23 Sep (WD!, BP); one Buffalo 27 Sep (WW!); one LR 27 Nov (WD!); only reports, possibly as few as two different birds. **Wild Turkey**: max 194 BOSC 11 Oct. **Com. Moorhen**: last one TWMA 29 Oct (AH, FR). **Am. Coot**: max 1200 Mayville 21 Nov (LB, FR). **SANDHILL CRANE**: one WYOM 11 Oct (E&RH!). **Lesser Golden-Plover**: max 110 T Carlton 1 Sep (WL); last two T Yates 31 Oct (WD). **Solitary Sandpiper**: solitary record one BOSC 11 Oct. **Hudsonian Godwit**: only one T Yates 11 Oct (WW!), rare fall visitor. **Red Knot**: last T Somerset 12 Sep (WD, BP). **Baird's Sandpiper**: only records one BIPB 1 Sep (FR), four T Clarence 5-6 Sep (LH), one Barcelona Harbor 7 Sep (RS). **Purple Sandpiper**: arr NF 22 Nov (RB, LH). **Red Phalarope**: only record one BIPB 1 Nov (D&DS). **Little Gull**: singles LR 20 Sep (WD), Pt Breeze 29 Oct (WL), NF 6, 7 Nov (WD), only reports.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 2500 CL 30 Nov (RS). **CALIFORNIA GULL:** one Niagara Power Project 29 Nov (M&RP!), first Regional record. **Iceland Gull:** arr NR 15 Nov (WD). **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** arr one NF 7 Nov (WD!). **Glaucous Gull:** arr one NR 15 Nov (WD).

Com. Barn Owl: late nesting two T Otto 28 Nov (CR), two failed eggs, one pipped, found in the nest box of this increasingly rare species. **Snowy Owl:** arr T Attica 25 Oct (RD!). **Com. Nighthawk:** max 120 T Kenmore 5 Sep (PB); last T Tonawanda 15 Sep (PH). **Chimney Swift:** last and max 60 BIPB 2 Oct (WW). **Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** one very late Athol Springs at feeder 17, 20 Oct (WC!). **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** arr E Aurora 19 Sep (LH); max three INWR 26 Sep (WW).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: singles Golden Hill SF 5 and 12 Sep (BC), quite possibly the same bird. **Horned Lark:** arr one T Yates 3 Oct (WD!, BP); max 200 T Somerset 8 Nov (D&DS). **Bank Swallow:** last T Clarence 12 Sep (WW). **Com. Raven:** continuing Southern Tier observations two Amity L 8 Oct (RP, VP!); one to two T Carrollton 10, 16-30 Sep (SE). **Winter Wren:** arr FNSP 9 Sep (WD). **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** arr two TNP 27 Sep (WW). **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** arr T Somerset 12 Sep (WD, BP). **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** arr T Alfred 19 Sep (EB). **Am. Pipit:** arr and max 160 T Porter 17 Oct (WD, BE). **N. Shrike:** arr one TWMA 29 Oct (AH, FR).

Philadelphia Vireo: arr two INWR, two FNSP, one Golden Hills SP all Sep 12 (WW; WD, BP; WD, BP); last NF 1 Oct (WD). **Orange-crowned Warbler:** arr FNSP 9 Sep (WD!); last two T Lewiston 3 Oct (WD, BP). **Palm Warbler:** arr E Aurora 21 Sep (LH); last two BOSC 11 Oct. **Am. Redstart:** one NF 11 Nov (WD!), straggler. **Mourning Warbler:** last T Alfred 18 Oct (EB!). **Hooded Warbler:** last E Aurora 23 Sep (LH).

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr E Aurora, one T Yates 25 Oct (LH; DC, WD), several earlier reports unconfirmed. **Chipping Sparrow:** last Eden Valley 16-21 Nov (RA!). **Field Sparrow:** last E Aurora 3 Nov (LH). **LARK SPARROW:** one Bond's L 11 Oct (KR!). **Vesper Sparrow:** max and last 12 BOSC 11 Oct. **Savannah Sparrow:** max and last 28 BOSC 11 Oct. **LeCONTE's SPARROW:** one Brockton 8 Oct (PF!). **Fox Sparrow:** arr T Alfred 20 Oct (EB); last ASP 17 Nov (BE). **Dark-eyed Junco:** arr E Aurora, two T Porter 23 Sep (LH; BE). **Lapland Longspur:** arr five T Somerset 12 Oct (TB, WD); max 15+ T Yates 25, 31 Oct (WD). **Snow Bunting:** arr 31 T Clarence 25 Oct (WW); max 300 T Yates 8 Nov (WW). **Rusty Blackbird:** arr ten E Aurora, one ASP both 7 Oct (LH; WW). **Red Crossbill:** only record 14 T W Almond 25 Oct (EB!). **Evening Grosbeak:** none!

295 Robinhill Drive, Williamsville, New York 14221-1639