

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMER SEASON

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The summer of 1993 lacked a single outstanding theme or event. There were a few late spring migrants and some exciting summer finds. It was thought to be a very good summer for breeding birds. The start of fall migration was a bit early and more lively than that of recent years. Much of the state saw a cool early June, with some concomitant Eastern Bluebird nesting losses, particularly in Regions 4, 5, and 8. The rest of the season was warm to hot and dry over all of the State. "Driest in (variably long periods)" appears in several Regional reports and drought is mentioned in Regions 4, 6, 8, and 9. Region 7 seems to have enjoyed the most pleasant summer, while Region 10 reported the largest contrast among intraregional sites, a nearly two inch rainfall difference between The City and eastern Long Island.

After reviewing the reports of late spring migrants, it seems that some observers already have lost a bit of historical perspective. Not very long ago, some migrant flycatchers, thrushes, warblers, and many shorebirds were expected during at least the first third of June. Some of this year's interesting late spring records included late Brant in Regions 2, 6, and 9; Oldsquaw in Region 2; White-winged Scoter in Regions 2, 6, and 7; Common Goldeneye in Region 3; a first county record for Willet and a first regional record for Hudsonian Godwit in Region 7; Laughing and Iceland Gulls in Region 2; Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in several Regions; Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Regions 4 and 6; Northern Parula in Region 9; and Bay-breasted and Blackpoll warblers in several Regions.

There were many exciting summer visitors or stragglers. It is sometimes hard to separate these from late spring or early fall migrants, but here is a try. A rare Red-throated Loon tarried in Region 10, and Common Loon did the same in several Regions (in addition to the normal breeding populations), and Horned Grebe appeared in Region 3. Pelagic trips in Region 10 produced some great birds and excellent counts through the season, with the best skuas in each month - **Great Skua** in June, an unidentified skua in July, and **South Polar Skua** in August; a record high count for Greater Shearwater; and a record high for Manx Shearwater. A Great Cormorant in Region 9 was a first summer record, while Northern Gannet and **Brown Pelican** in Region 10 are now regular, but still relatively rare. Wandering herons were noted across the state, with very good counts for Great Egret. Less widespread were Snowy Egret in Regions 1, 4, and 8; Cattle Egret only in Region 7; Little Blue Heron in Regions 2 and 9; Tricolored Heron and Yellow-crowned

Night-Heron in Region 9; Glossy Ibis in Regions 1 and 9; **White-faced Ibis** in Region 10; and a very rare "Cory's" Least Bittern well described in Region 10. Snow Goose straggled in Regions 2, 3, 6, and 9; Northern Pintail in Regions 2, 5, 7, and 9; American Wigeon in Regions 1 and 9; Redhead in Regions 6 and 7; Greater and Lesser Scaup in Region 9, with the former also in Region 4; and Red-breasted Merganser in the Regions bordering Lake Ontario. Among the raptors, Black Vulture was noted in Region 9, where it seems inevitable that someone will prove it nests; a first Regional Mississippi Kite graced Region 3; Osprey and Bald Eagle reports were widespread, while an immature Golden Eagle was a surprise in Region 6; and a few Peregrine Falcon were noted away from known nesting sites. **King Rail** was noted in Regions 2 and 3. Northern Bobwhite was reported more widely than usual, but with no more information to support a hypothesis other than escape as their origin. **Sandhill Crane** lingered in Region 2 and was a surprise in Region 6, where one was found cavorting (consorting?) with *the* Common Crane which has been reported from various sites around the state for over a year. Unseasonal passerines were Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Region 6, the lone Loggerhead Shrike report from Region 7, Wilson's Warbler in Region 2; Summer Tanager in Region 9; Clay-colored Sparrow in Regions 5 and 7; Sharp-tailed Sparrow in Regions 2 and 6 (the latter a first Regional record), White-crowned Sparrow in Region 2, Red Crossbill in Regions 2, 3, and 4 (possibly breeding in the latter), Pine Siskin from six Regions; and many reports of Evening Grosbeak from Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, and 9, where nesting is also a possibility.

Summer is the nesting season, so it is fitting that a good number of interesting breeding records appear in the Regional reports. Starting with the positives, we find Common Loon had a good season; Double-crested Cormorant continues to explode inland (see especially Regions 5 and 6). Canada Goose nesting increases, Am. Black Duck nesting was up a bit in Regions 4 and 6, Northern Pintail nesting was confirmed for the first time in Region 2 and for the first time in 30 years in Region 5; Canvasback nested successfully again in Region 3; and Common Merganser breeding was noted in six Regions. Nesting of Red-breasted Merganser in Region 3, a first for the interior of the state, unfortunately was not accompanied by details to support species identification. Osprey nesting was noted in six Regions, with the first nest in 72 years on Staten Island; Bald Eagle nesting was attempted in five Regions; and a new Merlin nest was found in Region 7. Nesting of **Wilson's Phalarope** was confirmed in the State for the first time in Region 7. Breeding records continue to grow for Ring-billed Gull at inland sites in Regions 3, 5, and 6. Few breeding owl reports were typical, with Short-eared Owl as a probable nester in Region 3 the most notable. There were

a few breeding reports for Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers; Black-backed Woodpecker was noted in Regions 5, 6, and 7, and Three-toed Woodpecker in Regions 6 and 7. The passerine positives included Acadian Flycatcher nesting in Regions 2, 3, 5, and 9; Common Raven noted in seven Regions and probably present in at least two others but no longer considered noteworthy; Carolina Wren a first confirmed Regional nesting in Region 6; Sedge Wren in Regions 1, 2, and 5, and numerous in Region 6; Yellow-throated Vireo reports more widespread than usual; Red-eyed Vireo counts very high in Regions 2, 4, 5, and 6; Northern Parula nesting confirmed in Region 5's lowlands; a State record late egg date for Nashville Warbler in Region 7; Prairie Warbler reports up across the state; Yellow-throated Warbler again present in Region 1; high counts for Cerulean Warbler in Region 3; Prothonotary Warbler in Regions 1, 3, 4, and 5; Kentucky Warbler probable nesting in Region 9; Orchard Oriole up in Regions 1, 8, and 9; and House Finch noted down a bit in Region 8.

The litany of negatives for breeding birds is nearly as long as the positives. Some of these species deserve closer study, so we can more accurately assess their status. The negatives include American Black Duck nesting unreported in Region 2; Blue-winged Teal nesting down in every Region that reported it; Bald Eagle fledging success down in Regions 7, 8, and 9; few nesting reports for Northern Goshawk or Red-shouldered Hawk; American Kestrel numbers causing more concern; Gray Partridge records down in Region 6; Spotted and Upland Sandpiper nesting records down in most Regions; Black Tern colonies along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence suffered from early very high water levels; numbers of both cuckoo species were very low; breeding reports for all of the goatsuckers continued to decline in nearly all Regions; Eastern Wood-Pewee was way down in Regions 1 and 6, Great Crested Flycatcher and Eastern Kingbird flagged for watching in Region 6; Horned Lark was scarce in the three Regions it was noted; Purple Martin low in Regions 1, 4, 6, 9, and 10, and many other swallows species were of concern in one or more Regions, with post-breeding maxima reported this year unimpressive at best; Carolina Wren numbers decreased in Regions 4 and 8; Marsh Wren numbers were low in Regions 1, 4, and 7, Brown Thrasher in Regions 1, 4, and 6 but not mentioned elsewhere, and Mourning Warbler numbers of concern in several Regions; Chipping Sparrow way down as a breeder at the well monitored Jenny Lake area of Region 8, this following large decreases for Purple Finch and then Dark-eyed Junco in the same area in recent years; all grassland sparrows are still of concern, though colonies of Grasshopper and Henslow's Sparrows were noted in Regions 3 and 6; Bobolink was down in Regions 1 and 9, but had maxima over 100 in Regions 2, 4, 5, and 6; and Eastern Meadowlark was scarce in Regions 1,

5, and 9. Certainly the plus and minus sides present a mixed picture and lots of potential study projects for next summer.

The final major event of the season is the start of the fall migration, beginning with the earliest shorebird arrivals, Lesser Yellowlegs this year. Shorebird variety was good, numbers typically relatively low. Willet was reported in Regions 2, 7, 9, and 10; Whimbrel reports were more widespread than usual, from five Regions; Marbled Godwit appeared in Regions 1 and 2, as well as the usual Region 10; peeps were all reported, but peak counts were low; Stilt Sandpiper was noted in seven Regions; Buff-breasted Sandpiper was recorded in Regions 3, 8 and 10; dowitcher numbers were low, except for a good count for Short-billed in Region 10; and Red-necked Phalarope was reported in Regions 3, 9, and 10. Gull-billed Tern was noted in Region 9 and continues to nest in Region 10. Generally, the fall tern movement was only fair inland, although Forster's Tern was noted in Regions 2, 3, 5, and 9. There were some good counts for migrating Common Nighthawk in many Regions in late August. Among migrant passerines were Olive-sided Flycatcher in nine Regions; Yellow-bellied Flycatcher recorded in seven Regions, with a State record early arrival banded in Region 3; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Region 9; early signs of Black-capped Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatch irruptions in Regions 8 and 10; Tennessee Warbler setting a record early inland fall arrival date in Region 3; and several other warblers reported across the state at typical August dates but in better numbers than seen in the past few years.

Once again, the Regional reports contain a wealth of information in the introductory sections. This runs from the usual summaries of weather and its impact to summaries of banding and breeding bird route data and newly found good birding areas are discussed in Regions 7, 8, and 9. Interesting notes included Ruddy Turnstone egg predation in the Oneida Lake tern colony in the Region 5 report, and observation of mixed flock feeding frenzies involving diverse bird species and flying insects in the Region 10 report. See what else you can find of special interest to you!

This season, nearly all of the rarities already have been mentioned. All that remains is to present the BOTS Award for the Summer. This time I split the award into two parts. The one for the breeding BOTS goes to the first confirmed nesting of Wilson's Phalarope in Region 7. The second, for the rarity BOTS, goes to the first documented occurrence of Rufous Hummingbird in the state in Region 9.

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