

REGION 10 — MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF AND ALVIN WOLLIN

According to the Brookhaven National Laboratory Weather Bureau, the summer months of June, July and August were the driest in their 44 years of record keeping. The average rainfall for this period is 11.1 inches, an amount slightly less than the average of 12.01 inches at New York City. This year the actual rainfall was only 4.8 inches at Brookhaven, but was 8.60 inches in Central Park. Thus, eastern Long Island was much drier than the city to the west, and very much drier than average. This summer was also 1-2° warmer than average in every month. While not the hottest summer on record, there were four new or tied highs. The temperature reached a sweltering 102°F on 10 Jul. The combination of hot clear days and controlled irrigation was good for the Long Island farmers, although having to pump water was costly. Home lawns suffered. Surprisingly, late August brought few mosquitoes to bother birders at the beaches, probably a result of less standing water.

On a field trip to Jamaica Bay on 28 Aug, Elsbeth Johnson saw a puzzling small dark Least Bittern. What was described to us proved to be a "Cory's Bittern," a very rare color morph of the Least Bittern. Cory's Bittern was once considered a separate species, although Chapman suspected circa 1895 that it might only be a color morph of the Least Bittern. At best Least Bittern is hard to see and not too plentiful, without the added complications of a polymorphism. The recent literature and field guides make no note of this color phase by name, but do describe a rare color form. This is the first "Cory's Bittern" report of which we know.

For the first time in 72 years, a pair of Osprey nested on Staten Island. Before a success could be recorded, Henry Flamm reported that a violent storm on 10 Jun blew down the nest and breeding for the season was suspended when the birds promptly abandoned the site. On a more positive note, breeding success for Osprey on Long Island has reached a most satisfactory level. For the second year in a row, the Department of Environmental Conservation has removed one of the birds of a clutch to reintroduce the species at the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area in the northwest part of the State. In all 12 birds were taken in 1993. They were released in the hopes they will form a permanent colony.

Whimbrel are increasingly more evident along the south shore, mostly on the western half of Long Island. There was one at Democrat

Point on 6 Jul, with reports thereafter from Jamaica Bay, Cow Meadow, the Line Islands, Jones Beach West End, Cedar Beach, and Oak Beach marshes through the end of the period. The peak period was the end of July to beginning of August, when 37 were at Jamaica Bay on July 29 and a dozen were at Cow Meadow about the same time.

Tom Burke, the voice of the NYRBA, in a summary of the season's reports supplied us with most of the following reports of pelagic trips. This year the jet stream was out of its usual place, responsible for the unusually dry summer, and probably affected the Gulf Stream and its associated birds. In any case, this year's reports are unusual for variety and numbers. In the reports following, pelagic species marked MPt were 20–30 miles south of Montauk, and those marked FI were off Fire Island Inlet. In addition, "thousands of shearwaters and petrels" were at Fire Island Inlet on 5 Jul. Later in the season, an Okeanos Foundation boat trip on 20 Aug included a **South Polar Skua**, Cory's Shearwater and Greater Shearwater.

Bob Adamo reported seeing "a flock of about 75 gulls, mostly Laughing Gull, hawking insects like the six Common Nighthawk that were busy working the edges of this unique swarm" at Wading River on 25 Aug. On the next day Peter Martin reported a similar sight at Jones Beach. Here Laughing Gull, Herring Gull and American Crow were feeding on aerial swarms of flying ants. While this type of feeding habit is not extremely rare, it certainly is unusual. The sight of so large a bird as a gull gyrating in the air certainly has its more interesting aspects, particularly when there is a whole sky full of them.

Properly managed Purple Martin colonies held their own this year. Predators and House Sparrows appear to be the major problem. Environmentalists have not paid enough attention to this species. They have not done as much toward maintaining the present population and encouraging new colonies with housing as they have done for Osprey and Barn Owl.

In an after note to the storms of the past year, according to East End fishermen, the flushing action of the tides is supposed to reduce the level of the "brown tide" which has plagued Long Island waters the past few years. They may be correct, since there have no reports of brown tide in the press this year and the scallop harvest has increased.

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Abbreviations: JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JFKWS – John F. Kennedy Wildlife Sanctuary, Tobay Beach; JBCH – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JnIn – Jones Inlet; MPt – Montauk Point; NYRBA – New York Rare Bird Alert; RMSP – Robert Moses State Park; ShIn – Shinnecock Inlet.

Summer reports: **Red-throated Loon:** one RMSP 26 Jun (NYRBA). **Cory's Shearwater:** 25 MPt 10 Jun, ten MPt 25 Jun, 12 MPt 2 Jul, 90 FI 3 Jul, 20 MPt 20 Jul. **Greater Shearwater:** 75 MPt 5 Jun, seven MPt 6 Jun, 60 MPt 20 Jun, 1000 MPt 2 Jul, 30 FI 3 Jul. **Sooty Shearwater:** 12 MPt 5 Jun, 15 MPt 6 Jun, 50 MPt 2 Jul, one FI 3 Jul. **Manx Shearwater:** one MPt 6 Jun, four FI 3 Jul. **Wilson's Storm-Petrel:** 750 MPt 5 Jun, 100 MPt 30 Jun, 150 FI 3 Jul, 85 MPt 6 Jun, 30 MPt 25 Jun, 80 MPt 20 Jul. **N. Gannet:** imm FI 5 Jul (PM), one JBWE 22 Jul (AW). **BROWN PELICAN:** two Moriches 30 Jun (AB), five FI Inlet 12 Jul (JF), 12 Moriches 13 Jul (PM), three JnIn 30 Jul (PM), three JBWE 31 Jul (Naomi Zurcher), a much reduced presence this year. **WHITE-FACED IBIS:** one to two Pd X Lawrence 6 Jun-at least Jul 6 (mob). **Least Bittern:** *intro*.

Osprey: *intro*. **Bald Eagle:** imm Fresh Kills landfill Staten I mid-late June (HF); one again summered in the Hamptons. **Broad-winged Hawk:** several e SUFF Jul–Aug, one Welwyn 26 Aug (PM). **Ruffed Grouse:** one Brookhaven National Laboratory 1 Jul (JR). **Lesser Golden-Plover:** two Democrat Pt 31 Jul, increased to ten by 21 Aug (NYRBA). **Am. Oystercatcher:** 250 Lnl 22 Aug (NYRBA). **Am. Avocet:** one JBWR 5 Aug (JF). **Willet:** 300 Lnl 3 Jul (NYRBA). **Upland Sandpiper:** five Democrat Pt 26 Jul, building to 60 on 15 Aug and 30 on 21 Aug (MOB). **Whimbrel:** *intro*. **Hudsonian Godwit:** three Line I 3 Jul, nine 24 Jul, seven 1 Aug; one FI 29 Jul; one JBWR 24–31 July and after 20 Aug; two Line I 22 Aug (NYRBA). **Marbled Godwit:** one ShIn 11 July, one JBWR 14–20 Aug, one Line I 22 Aug (NYRBA). **W. Sandpiper:** 150 Line I 24 Jul (NYRBA). **White-rumped Sandpiper:** two JBWR 4 Jul, two Line I 24 Jul (NYRBA). **Baird's Sandpiper:** one Cedar Beach 29 Aug (JR). **Curlew Sandpiper:** one JBWR 28–31 Jul (NYRBA). **Stilt Sandpiper:** scarce this year, arr JBWR 17 Jul. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** one Democrat Pt 29 Jul (JF), 11–16 Aug; one Cedar Beach 21–22 Aug; two JBWR 22 Aug (NYRBA); nine Cutchogue 29 Aug (PG). **Ruff:** one Riverhead 9–16 Jul (ES), one JBWR 23 Jul–5 Aug (NYRBA). **Short-billed Dowitcher:** 448 Line I 3 Jul (NYRBA). **Long-billed Dowitcher:** one Line I 24 Jul, one JBWR 31 Jul (NYRBA). **Wilson's Phalarope:** one JBWR 25–26 Jul, two Line I 22 Aug (NYRBA). **Red-necked Phalarope:** one JBWR 10–11 Jul (NYRBA). **Pomarine Jaeger:** two MPt 5 Jun, one MPt 6 Jun, two MPt 2 Jul, one MPt

20 Jul. **GREAT SKUA**: one MPt 5 Jun. **SOUTH POLAR SKUA**: *intro*. **SKUA**, SPECIES: five MPt 2 Jul. **Laughing Gull**: *intro*. **Herring Gull**: *intro*. **Gull-billed Tern**: one JBWR 5-11 Jul and 27 Jul; several pairs bred on bay islands NASS; max four Oceanside Marine Nature Preserve all season; one Cow Meadow (Freeport) 7 Aug; one JBWR 28 Aug (EJ). **Royal Tern**: two FI 12 Aug (PM). **Black Tern**: one Line I 22 Aug (NYRBA), others reported.

Barn Owl: 26 y banded Jamaica Bay by 7 Jul (Don Riepe). **Com. Nighthawk**: *intro*. **Chuck-will's-widow**: calling JFKWS 1 and 6 Jun (PM). **Whip-poor-will**: calling MPt 11 Jun (PM), others Connetquot Preserve SP 11-12 Jun, 13 and 30 Jul (PM).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: one JBWR 15 Aug (IC). **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**: one Eastport 12 Jun (NYRBA, no details). **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: there appears to be an influx this year, birds arrived early and there are more of them.

Hooded Warbler: one Hunter's Woods Riverhead 18 Aug (JF).

Scarlet Tanager: several "orange colored" birds reported.

Grasshopper Sparrow: several Floyd Bennett Field (NYRBA).

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