

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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The fall of 1993 was the coolest in 17 years according to National Weather Service data for Buffalo. September was both cool, at an average of 59.4°F, and wet, with 5.5 inches of precipitation although over 3 inches of the rain fell 26 to 28 Sep in a lake enhanced storm. These totals marked departures of 2.5° below and 2.04 inches above the norms, respectively. Very unusual were two tornadoes that touched down during the month, one causing two deaths in Batavia on 3 Sep and another causing minimal damage on Grand Island on 23 Sep. October continued cool and wet with a mean temperature of 49.2°F, 1.9° below normal, and 3.69 inches of precipitation, 0.6 inches above normal. Several days with strong southwesterly winds produced relatively few notable bird sightings at the eastern end of Lake Erie, even though the wind was strong enough to produce localized flooding along the shoreline on 21 Oct. Linda Holmes noted a small hawk flight over Sinking Ponds in ERIE on 27 Oct. Her tally of 48 raptors was mostly Red-tailed Hawk. Numbers of migrating raptors are seldom recorded in the fall in this Region. Three inches of snow fell on the last day of the month, an early date for that much. November's mean temperature was only 0.9° below normal at 39.6°F, and precipitation, at 3.58 inches, was a quarter inch below the norm. The month was consistently damp and cloudy, with precipitation falling on 23 days and only 29% of the possible sunshine, exactly normal here at the eastern end of Lake Erie. Five inches of snow fell, which is half of normal, but more fell in the snow belts south of Buffalo. Steve Eaton in CATT and Vivian Pitzrick in ALLE both noted excellent Red Oak and Apple crops. Steve added that Thornapple, Black Elderberry, Nannyberry, Gray Dogwood, and bottomland Black Cherry also had excellent years.

Data for the New York portion of the Buffalo Ornithological Society's 58th Annual October Count on 10 Oct was split out by Gerald Rising, no small effort. Nearly 76,000 birds of 146 species were tallied. Total individuals were down 35% from the average. Of the groups of birds that average at least 200 per count, the only group that did not decline was finches. Waterfowl, gulls, thrushes, and blackbirds had the greatest declines, ranging from 36% to 69%. Hawks, shorebirds, gulls, woodpeckers, tits, thrushes, warblers, sparrows and allies, and

blackbirds were the other major groups that declined. The native finches were up 2%. As Gerry has pointed out before, the count data are highly weather dependent, and the count day this year was a sharply colder one. Also, the comparison base is only four years and the averages could still change markedly. Nonetheless, it might be useful to look at species that had significant increases this year in spite of the weather and short database. The species which had at least 100 individuals recorded and a 25% increase were Double-crested Cormorant (up 91%), American Wigeon (30%), Red-tailed Hawk (64%), Common Moorhen (103 versus an average of only 4), Rock Dove (up 31%), Mourning Dove (25%), Black-capped Chickadee (40%), Field Sparrow (68%), and House Finch (36%).

There were a few good days of warbler migration. Gerry Rising noted good movements in Williamsville Glen, ERIE, on 17 and 27 Sep while Betsy Potter enjoyed birding Goat Island on 1 Sep and this writer found Fort Niagara SP productive on 12 Sep. Due to an abundance of stray cats, Elizabeth Brooks had to cut back on the number of nets used at her ALLE banding station this season. She still managed to ring 544 birds of 66 species at an average of 26.5 birds per 100 net hours, the highest rate since 1982. Her most interesting bird was a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, at least eleven years old, which she first banded in 1983.

There was a good Black-capped Chickadee flight. Birders hoped that the good migration of Red-breasted Nuthatch this fall would foretell the long awaited arrival of winter finches. I do not know how this notion came about but this season it had some degree of accuracy. By season's end good numbers of Evening Grosbeak and Common Redpoll were in the Region, with lesser numbers of Pine Siskin, and a scattering of Pine Grosbeak and both crossbills. Finally, there was a belated report of a juvenile White-winged Crossbill from a Hamburg feeding station on 5-6 Aug.

Unprecedented numbers of Red-throated Loon were seen migrating west on Lake Ontario during November. Counts of 227 and 181 on 11 and 14 Nov off of eastern NIAG and western ORLE surpass the previous high of 125 for the Region. The old high count was made in the fifties, implying that significant flights rarely occur here and that there has not been one in a very long time. Observations from Region 2, however, suggest otherwise. That Region occasionally hosts numbers that greatly eclipse these totals on Lake Ontario. Red-throated Loon off Somerset and Yates were flying at the limit of identifiability, much further out

than Common Loon, and it may be that the shoreline orientation which funnels raptors east over Braddock Bay in Region 2 also tends to concentrate loons flying west past that Region's preferred lookouts. It also is interesting that the maximum count in Region 5, includes the southeastern corner of Lake Ontario, is only 16. But why are Red-throated Loon heading west? They winter on both coasts of North America are are rare on the Great Lakes and inland.

Tom Harper of Darien had the great fortune of being able to study diurnal hunting by Great Horned Owl at his backyard pond. He first noticed an owl flying away from the pond with a muskrat in its talons. The next morning his wife and son noticed a young Great Horned Owl eating a muskrat on the dike. Two days later Tom watched an adult owl capture a muskrat in shallow water and struggle to carry it onto the dike. A few minutes later a Red Fox came out of the woods and proceeded down the dike toward the owl. After a ten second stare down, the fox made a wide circle and went on its way. The following day Tom saw a young owl on his bird feeder. Checking every five to ten minutes he eventually saw the owl with a muskrat on the bird feeder. Four kills in five days! Although Tom saw the owls a few more times, he found no evidence of muskrats and figures that the owls may have cleaned out the entire family group.

Paul Benham tells of an interesting encounter with a Ruffed Grouse while skiing in the T Concord, ERIE. A grouse flew past Paul and his party to alight nearby. They approached slowly as the bird "muttered to itself." After a few minutes the grouse took raisins from the snow at their feet, and finally from the hand!

Rarities this fall included Kentucky Warbler, Eared Grebe, and unprecedented numbers of Bohemian Waxwings. It was a very poor year for the Bonaparte's Gull migration on the Niagara River. Even the strong winds from Lake Erie failed to push significant numbers to Buffalo. Still, Parasitic Jaeger, a single Franklin's Gull, Little Gull, Sabine's Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake were found at the Peace Bridge. Either there was a slight die-off of Carolina Wren last winter or observers consider it too frequent to mention.

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Abbreviations: BOSOC - Buffalo Ornithological Society October Count, 10 Oct; EA - East Aurora; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF - Niagara Falls; NPP - Niagara Power Project on Niagara River, Town of Lewiston; NR - Niagara River.

Fall reports: **Red-throated Loon:** *intro*. **Horned Grebe:** arr 18 BOSOC. **Eared Grebe:** one T Yates 30 Oct (WD!), first ORLE record. **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 834 NF 2-29 Sep (WW), about the same as last year; *intro*. **Am. Bittern:** last T Machias 16 Oct (BS). **Great Egret:** three-four T Machias 4-19 Sep (BS), very uncommon away from INWR; max 19 INWR 4-27 Sep. **Tundra Swan:** arr T Yorkshire 23 Oct (BS), max 275 Mayville (RS). **Mute Swan:** T Newfane 7 Nov (PY, BH), only report. **Snow Goose:** arr white morph T N Collins 26 Oct (LH). **Brant:** 30 off Lakeside Beach SP 27 Oct (TH); one off Four Mile Creek SP 21 Nov (WD), only reports. **Green-winged Teal:** max 63 Burgeson Wildlife Sanctuary 13 Oct (RS). **Blue-winged Teal:** last three T Dayton 24 Oct (BS). **N. Shoveler:** max 36 INWR 2 Nov (WW). **Am. Wigeon:** 200 INWR 6 Sep (LH, MSa), many so early; *intro*. **Canvasback:** arr 180+ NF 18 Oct (WD, BP). **Redhead:** up to 27 at INWR all season are considered releases; arr BOSOC. **Ring-necked Duck:** arr TWMA 18 Sep; four INWR 18 Sep; one TNP 26 Sep, early. **Greater Scaup:** arr four Buckhorn I SP 6

Oct (WW). **Lesser Scaup**: arr eight Lewiston Res 18 Sep (WD). **King Eider**: Pt Breeze ORLE 26 Nov (WL), rare away from NR. **Oldsquaw**: arr two BOSOC. **Black Scoter**: arr T Somerset 24 Oct. **Surf Scoter**: arr two BIP 2 Oct (BC). **White-winged Scoter**: arr 10 T Wilson 25 Sep (WD), max 348 T Somerset 11 Nov (WD,BP). **Com. Goldeneye**: arr two T Hamburg 21 Oct (RA). **Bufflehead**: arr INWR 17 Oct (D&DS); max 310 T Carlton 30 Oct (WD). **Hooded Merganser**: max 350 Mayville 19 Nov (RS). **Ruddy Duck**: one Batavia 10 Sep (WL) unusually early or possible breeding location.

Bald Eagle: only reports involved three imm; one ad along the Allegheny R CATT (BS). **Red-tailed Hawk**: *intro*. **Rough-legged Hawk**: arr four BOSOC. **Merlin**: one BOSOC; Barcelona Harbor 11 Oct (RS); EA 19 Oct (LH), continues to do well. **Peregrine Falcon**: imm T Newfane 26 Sep (WD!, BP), two ad Buffalo 11 Nov (LH!). **Sora**: last Buckhorn ISP 2 Oct (WD, PO). **Com. Moorhen**: last Batavia 19 Oct (WL), *intro*. **Am. Golden-Plover**: last T Yates 20 Nov (MM!), latest in 34 years. **Greater Yellowlegs**: last T Cheektowaga 13 Nov (PB). **Lesser Yellowlegs**: last two INWR 2 Nov (WW). **Red Knot**: two BOSOC, only report. **Purple Sandpiper**: arr NF 21 Nov (RB); Pt Breeze 22 Nov (WL), rare away from NF. **Dunlin**: arr T Ellery 29 Sep (RS). **Red-necked Phalarope**: Batavia 10 Sep (WL); NF 30 Sep (GR). **Red Phalarope**: Barcelona Harbor 11 Sep (RS, HN), rare and early. **Parasitic Jaeger**: singles T Hamburg (RA) and Buffalo (WD) 28 Sep on strong southwesterly winds. **Franklin's Gull**: only report Buffalo 5-29 Sep (GB), less frequent than formerly. **Little Gull**: arr two NF 29 Sep (GB). **Bonaparte's Gull**: max only 6300 NR 9 Nov (GB). **Herring Gull**: low numbers on the NR. **Iceland Gull**: arr NPP 30 Oct (GB). **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: arr NPP 16 Nov (GB). **Glaucous Gull**: arr Fort Niagara SP 7 Nov (WD). **Great Black-backed Gull**: Lime L CATT 13 Nov (BS), unusual inland. **Black-legged Kittiwake**: Buffalo 3, 4 Nov (MM!, GB), only report. **Sabine's Gull**: two NF 28-29 Sep (WD, GB); Bird I Pier 3 Oct (BC) and 3 Nov (PH); NPP 7 Nov (BC), a good season. **Forster's Tern**: one T Ellery 3, 8 Sep (RS), rare inland; only other Buffalo 30 Sep (GR).

Rock Dove: *intro*. **Mourning Dove**: *intro*. **Snowy Owl**: arr T Pomfret 16 Nov (RB). **Short-eared Owl**: three or four T Yates 14 Nov (PY, BH), only report. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: WTSP 26 Oct (BP), only report. **Com. Nighthawk**: last five Buffalo 7 Oct (PH, ESc). **Red-headed Woodpecker**: last Fort Niagara SP 14 Nov (WBr), a former wintering location.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Golden Hill State Forest 4 Sep (BS); T Franklinville 6 Sep (BS). **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** FNSP 18 Sep (WD, BP), only report. *Empidonax* species: one-two Canadaway Creek WMA 11 Oct (PY!, BH), late; Traill's T Alfred 4 Sep (EB), rarely reported into Sep; suspected Acadian EA 16-18 Nov (LH!, WD!), extremely late. **E. Phoebe:** GHSP 14 Nov (TH!, PY!), second latest ever. **Horned Lark:** 79 T Conewango 31 Oct (BS), good number away from the lake plains. **Purple Martin:** last four Buffalo 3 Oct (PB). **Tufted Titmouse:** max 41 BOSC, doing quite well. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max 87 BOSOC, a good migration. **House Wren:** Buckhorn I SP 14 Nov (WW!), record late. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** arr FNSP 6 Sep (BP, WD!), early. **E. Bluebird:** fewer reports than usual. **Gray-cheeked Thrush:** arr FNSP 12 Sep (WW). **Swainson's Thrush:** arr TNP 2 Sep (DR). **Hermit Thrush:** arr two FNSP 25 Sep (DR). **Am. Pipit:** arr 10 T Porter 18 Sep (WD, BP). **Bohemian Waxwing:** record max 101 in three locations T Somerset 11-28 Nov (WD!); one Allegany SP (BS!, TB) 26 Nov, first CATT record. **N. Shrike:** arr T Yates 14 Nov (TH).

Philadelphia Vireo: arr TNP 2 Sep (WW); total six, about average. **Orange-crowned Warbler:** Goat I 1 Sep (BP!), early; only other TNP 26 Sep (WW). **Cape May Warbler:** arr two T Franklinville 1 Sep (LH). **Pine Warbler:** arr Goat I 13 Sep (DR); GHSP 14 Nov (BP, DCr, WD!), late. **Prairie Warbler:** one banded T Alfred 2 Sep (EB). **Palm Warbler:** arr T Ellery 8 Sep (RS). **Kentucky Warbler:** FNSP 12 Sep (WD!, BP), rarer in fall than spring. **Mourning Warbler:** last INWR (WW) and Goat I (DR) 18 Sep. **Hooded Warbler:** last window casualty Carrollton Twp 14 Sep (SE).

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr six T Tonawanda 26 Oct (WW). **Chipping Sparrow:** last Buffalo 5 Nov (PY). **Field Sparrow:** last Whirlpool SP 13 Nov (BC); *intro*. **Vesper Sparrow:** last T Napoli 31 Oct (BS). **Savannah Sparrow:** last two T Dayton 24 Oct (BS). **Fox Sparrow:** arr BOSOC, last two T Tonawanda 12 Nov (PH). **Lincoln's Sparrow:** arr T Alfred 16 Sep (EB). **White-throated Sparrow:** arr Four Mile Creek SP 12 Sep (WD). **White-crowned Sparrow:** arr TNP 24 Sep (RA, JGr). **Lapland Longspur:** arr two BOSOC; one T Allegany 23 Oct (BS), rare away from the lake plains. **Snow Bunting:** arr 70 T Yates 24 Oct (WD). **Rusty Blackbird:** arr EA 24 Sep (LH). **Pine Grosbeak:** arr WTSP 9 Nov (BP); max 11 T Porter 21-28 Nov (WD). **House Finch:** *intro*. **Red Crossbill:** Golden Hill SP 26 Nov (BC), only report. **White-winged Crossbill:** T Alfred 5 Nov (EB), only report; *intro* (RL!, ph, LL, MW, ML). **Com. Redpoll:** arr 50 T Carlton 3 Nov (WL); several reports. **Pine Siskin:** arr 16 BOSOC. **Evening Grosbeak:** arr EA 7 Oct (LH); many reports in Oct and Nov.

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