

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FALL SEASON

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The fall of 1994 brought generally uniform weather across the whole State. Very pleasant weather prevailed for most of the season. Temperatures after the first week of September ran from about average to well above average until the last week of the season. November saw average temperatures 4°F or more above normal in many Regions and 12.5°F above average in Region 4! Total monthly precipitation was average or slightly below in September and November in most Regions and well below normal, typically a third to half the norm, in October. First frosts generally occurred toward the middle of October upstate, and the first snowfall in many Regions was the latest ever, occurring on 22 or 23 Nov. Much of the rainfall that fell came in bursts, and there were few major frontal systems. Hurricane Gordon, threatening 18-20 Nov, produced little in terms of weather or birds.

The flat weather brought generally poor birding conditions, with few groundings of migrating birds. There were good night flights on 14-15 Sep in Region 1 and on 30 Sep in Region 3, plus some good banding reports for Regions 1, 3, and 7. Notes of good numbers tallied in Regions 8 and 9 all suggest that many migrants simply overflew the State during the many clear nights. Still, for the typical birder in most Regions, this was a poor fall season, the poorest in memory to some. Negative notes for various families and species abound. A few new high counts, some early and late dates, and the rarities provide the bright spots for the season's reports. Excellent nut, cone, and berry crops noted in several Regional reports provide some hope that winter will bring some interesting half-hardy and vagrant records.

This season's summary of major groups starts at sea off Region 10. The sole pelagic trip produced counts typical of recent years, with an *Audubon's Shearwater* and over 500 Greater Shearwaters plus a Yellow-breasted Chat as a bonus "seabird." Ashore, upstate, there are new, regularly staffed water bird watches in Region 2 on Lake Ontario and Region 3 on Cayuga Lake. There, loon, grebe, and waterfowl flights tended toward late arrival and lower counts for divers, although a record one day count of Red-throated Loon was recorded in Region 2 and the Common Loon total approached 6000 for the season in Region 3. In Region 8, a pair of Common Loon with two chicks on 15 Sep ties the State record late date. All across the state, water bird peaks seemed generally low. However, there were a number of highlights. Red-necked

Grebe was noted in all Regions reporting, with a Regional record early arrival on 11 Sep in Region 2. Double-crested Cormorant maxima were generally reduced, perhaps reflecting the nesting failure on Lake Ontario, but nests with juvenile birds were noted in Region 1 for a first successful Regional nesting. Great Cormorant penetrated inland to the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers in Region 8. Heron notes of particular interest were few, but several Regions reported good Great Egret totals. Waterfowl trends across the state mirrored the generally lackluster results from water bird watches. Interesting records include neck-banded Snow Geese in Region 7; a new Brant peak count in Region 8 shattering the former Regional max; two *Ross's Goose* reports, including a first New York report of the very rare blue morph in Region 9; another very high Wood Duck peak in Region 5; Eurasian Wigeon in Regions 1, 3, 4, and 10; *Common Eider* inland in Regions 1 and 2; scoters widely reported; and Barrow's Goldeneye in Regions 7 and 8.

Hawk watch results are summarized from the usual fall watches in Regions 3, 4, 9, and 10. In Region 3, the usual movements were delayed or missing. The Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch in Region 4 was just a bit off from last year's high for their six years of operation. Region 9 provides tables for their four major watches and Region 10 noted a general drop in peak counts at the beach watches, with noteworthy peaks and totals cited. Turkey Vulture continues to increase all across the State, including now Region 10, and to linger later, with five Regions noting birds into November. *Black Vulture* sightings increased to over 35 reports in Region 9. All Regions also noted Bald Eagle, with numbers particularly good in Region 10. Accipiter reports were generally down a bit, as were Broad-winged Hawk totals at inland watches. Few Rough-legged Hawk had moved into the State by season's end. Golden Eagle reports were up, with birds reported from six Regions and the Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch surpassed a 100 bird total once again. Merlin and Peregrine Falcon were well reported, with the latter in seven of the nine Regions reporting this Fall and with a couple of birds roosting on the Irondequoit Bay Bridge through the season in Region 2, a future nesting site? Rarities included *Mississippi Kite* and *Swainson's Hawk*, both at Region 9 hawk watches, and *Gyr Falcon* at Franklin Mountain.

Sandhill Crane reports continue to increase, with two noted in both Regions 3 and 5 and a single in Region 9. Shorebird reports were generally poor both for species and counts. The Region 3 report has the best summary from regular visits to census Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge shorebird areas. Notable shorebird reports include American Avocet in Regions 1 and 10; a first Regional Willet in Region 4;

a very rare *Long-billed Curlew* from Region 10; Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Regions 1, 2, 3, and 10; a Ruff in Region 7; and very poor dowitcher totals, though Region 1 had its first Long-billed since 1987.

Gulls and terns were similarly lackluster. The only widespread trend of note was the continued increase in Lesser Black-backed Gull reports, with over 25 birds noted from five Regions. The bulk of the unusual records came from Region 10, including: the lone Common Black-headed Gull report, Gull-billed Tern, Royal Tern into November, and both a good late count and a very late date for Forster's Tern. Upstate, Sabine's Gull was found again on the Niagara River, but otherwise typical concentrations had not assembled by the season's end. Jaegers were noted at the usual locations in Regions 2 and 5 on Lake Ontario, and from Region 10.

Owls provided the usual scattering of reports, a single Barn Owl in Region 2, very few Snowy Owl reports including a State record early arrival on 17 Oct in Region 2, and Short-eared Owl flagged decreasing in Region 10 most notable. Common Nighthawk numbers ran a bit lower than even the meager peaks of recent years. *Rufous Hummingbird* brought some added excitement to Region 8 birders. The bird was finally netted and transported to a more suitable winter location in early December. Woodpeckers were sparsely reported as is typical and low counts for Red-headed Woodpecker at the edges of its range and a flag for Red-bellied Woodpecker in Region 4 were two possible trends worth watching.

Finally we come to the huge order Passeriformes. In most family and subfamily groupings, there are too few entries to see long term trends. However, for the season the general picture was one of scarcity. In a particularly warm fall, we saw a fair number of late departure dates, though the Departure Dates Table shows the overall average matching that of the past eight seasons of collecting the data carefully and 5 days early relative to the 1961-1986 baseline average. Probable reasons have been presented in these pages numerous fall reports over that period. Over all Regions reporting, only Great Crested Flycatcher departed earlier than average by a statistically significant margin. Within individual Regions, you may find the lists of species missed this Fall as long or longer than the tardy departures. This aspect of the migration is not included in the averages. In spite of the complaints of scarcity and in addition to the general picture, we have, as usual, many interesting notes and observations. There were good birding days in late September and banding operations did have good days or even seasons, as summarized in the Region 1, 3, and 7 reports. This season also produced

Fall Departures

1994

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Osprey	29 Oct	27 Oct	22 Oct	19 Nov	3 Nov		9 Oct	6 Nov	26 Oct	3 Nov	29 Oct
Broad-winged Hawk		19 Aug		28 Nov	1 Oct		21 Sep	19 Sep	8 Oct	30 Sep	30 Sep
Black-bellied Plover	30 Oct	7 Oct	15 Oct		20 Nov		21 Sep	17 Sep	10 Nov		17 Oct
Semipalmated Plover	16 Oct	17 Oct	7 Oct		6 Nov		8 Sep	4 Sep	31 Oct	16 Oct	9 Oct
Greater Yellowlegs	29 Oct	5 Nov	29 Oct		12 Oct		24 Oct	30 Oct	10 Nov		28 Oct
Lesser Yellowlegs	30 Oct	15 Oct	29 Oct		22 Sep		8 Nov	1 Oct	2 Oct		15 Oct
Spotted Sandpiper	29 Sep	16 Sep	9 Oct	11 Sep	23 Oct		29 Sep	23 Oct	3 Oct	17 Sep	1 Oct
Sanderling	9 Oct	9 Oct	4 Sep		22 Oct		12 Aug				23 Sep
Semipalmated Sandpiper	22 Aug	16 Oct	24 Sep		18 Sep		22 Aug		13 Oct	17 Sep	18 Sep
Least Sandpiper	16 Oct	8 Sep	15 Oct		18 Sep		15 Sep	1 Oct	17 Oct		30 Sep
Pectoral Sandpiper	30 Oct	29 Oct	29 Oct		2 Oct		30 Sep	1 Nov	15 Nov	18 Oct	23 Oct
Caspian Tern	2 Oct	2 Oct	2 Oct		28 Sep						1 Oct
Common Tern	30 Oct	8 Oct			2 Nov		7 Jul		1 Oct	23 Nov	6 Oct
Black Tern	31 Aug	26 Aug			29 Aug		15 Aug			17 Sep	29 Aug
Chimney Swift	18 Sep	6 Sep	24 Sep	1 Sep	8 Sep		15 Jul	17 Sep	12 Oct	9 Oct	12 Sep
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	20 Sep	30 Sep	15 Oct	28 Sep	20 Sep		3 Oct	8 Oct	13 Oct	13 Sep	30 Sep
Eastern Wood-Pewee	9 Oct	14 Sep	30 Sep	2 Oct	1 Oct		13 Oct	29 Sep		15 Oct	2 Oct
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	31 Aug	12 Sep	20 Sep	18 Sep	29 Aug		8 Aug				4 Sep
Least Flycatcher	17 Sep	25 Sep	24 Sep	4 Sep	3 Sep		28 Sep	26 Sep		4 Sep	16 Sep
Eastern Phoebe	9 Oct	13 Oct	22 Oct	4 Nov	23 Oct		10 Oct	24 Oct	1 Nov	4 Nov	22 Oct
Great Crested Flycatcher	4 Sep	10 Sep	17 Sep	19 Aug	2 Sep		8 Sep				4 Sep
Eastern Kingbird	4 Sep	1 Sep	3 Sep	13 Sep	5 Sep		17 Oct	13 Sep			12 Sep
Tree Swallow	16 Oct	12 Nov	5 Nov	5 Sep	18 Sep		14 Sep	1 Oct	1 Nov		9 Oct
Barn Swallow	22 Oct	29 Oct	22 Oct	5 Sep	8 Sep		17 Sep	4 Sep	1 Oct		28 Sep
House Wren	9 Oct	7 Oct	7 Oct	7 Oct	6 Oct		17 Jul	23 Sep	19 Oct	3 Oct	27 Sep
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3 Sep	14 Sep	11 Sep	7 Oct	9 Sep		31 Aug	9 Sep			11 Sep
Veery	15 Sep	17 Sep	11 Sep	25 Sep	12 Sep		31 Aug	11 Oct	21 Oct	3 Oct	22 Sep
Swainson's Thrush	13 Oct	7 Oct	30 Sep	12 Oct	17 Sep		5 Oct	17 Oct		7 Oct	6 Oct
Wood Thrush	26 Sep	10 Oct	15 Oct	16 Oct	21 Sep		16 Sep	5 Oct		22 Oct	5 Oct
Gray Catbird	30 Oct	27 Nov	11 Oct	15 Oct	23 Oct		12 Oct	19 Oct			24 Oct
Brown Thrasher	25 Oct	20 Oct	18 Sep	11 Sep	6 Oct		25 Sep	1 Oct	5 Oct	7 Oct	3 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	16 Oct	14 Oct	13 Oct	12 Oct	22 Oct		10 Oct	16 Oct	18 Oct	13 Oct	14 Oct
Yellow-throated Vireo	15 Sep	10 Sep	11 Sep		11 Sep			9 Sep		28 Sep	14 Sep
Warbling Vireo	18 Sep	20 Sep	24 Sep	7 Sep	18 Sep		17 Sep	23 Sep		2 Sep	16 Sep
Red-eyed Vireo	9 Oct	6 Oct	2 Oct	1 Oct	10 Oct		18 Oct	9 Oct		13 Oct	8 Oct
Blue-winged Warbler	14 Sep	8 Sep	17 Sep	26 Sep	1 Sep		28 Aug	3 Sep	15 Sep	15 Sep	10 Sep
Tennessee Warbler	9 Oct	30 Sep	10 Oct	8 Oct	4 Oct		29 Sep	9 Oct	28 Sep	10 Sep	1 Oct
Nashville Warbler	9 Oct	11 Oct	4 Oct	8 Oct	8 Oct		10 Oct	9 Oct	22 Sep	10 Oct	6 Oct
Northern Parula	30 Sep	17 Sep	3 Oct	25 Sep	24 Sep		10 Oct	2 Oct	30 Sep	6 Oct	29 Sep
Yellow Warbler	22 Sep	8 Sep	6 Sep	2 Oct	11 Sep		28 Aug		20 Sep	21 Sep	14 Sep
Chestnut-sided Warbler	26 Sep	20 Sep	29 Sep	25 Sep	24 Sep		16 Sep	29 Sep	18 Sep	30 Sep	24 Sep
Magnolia Warbler	9 Oct	23 Oct	5 Oct	26 Sep	9 Oct		10 Oct	2 Oct	10 Oct	10 Oct	8 Oct
Cape May Warbler	9 Oct				16 Sep		30 Sep		26 Sep	6 Oct	29 Sep
Black-thr Blue Warbler	18 Oct	14 Oct	17 Oct	24 Sep	8 Oct		1 Oct	9 Oct	7 Oct	18 Oct	9 Oct
Black-thr Green Warbler	15 Nov	13 Oct	11 Oct	8 Oct	29 Oct		30 Sep	9 Oct	4 Oct	16 Oct	15 Oct
Blackburnian Warbler	21 Sep	30 Sep	22 Sep	23 Oct	18 Sep		5 Sep	29 Sep	25 Sep	20 Sep	24 Sep
Bay-breasted Warbler	9 Oct	30 Sep	24 Sep	26 Sep	18 Sep		7 Aug	18 Sep	3 Oct	7 Oct	22 Sep
Blackpoll Warbler	9 Oct	17 Sep	24 Sep	8 Oct	19 Sep		18 Sep	9 Oct	1 Oct	6 Oct	29 Sep
Black-and-white Warbler	9 Oct	27 Sep	25 Sep	4 Sep	24 Sep		3 Sep	29 Sep	28 Sep	7 Oct	24 Sep
American Redstart	4 Nov	10 Oct	30 Sep	22 Nov	25 Sep		6 Oct	2 Oct	1 Oct	9 Dec	19 Oct
Ovenbird	9 Oct	10 Oct	22 Sep	12 Oct	24 Sep		22 Sep	29 Sep	19 Sep	15 Sep	28 Sep
N. Waterthrush	22 Sep	16 Sep	20 Sep	11 Sep	5 Sep				21 Sep	24 Oct	21 Sep
Common Yellowthroat	9 Oct	22 Oct	20 Nov	17 Nov	15 Oct		17 Oct	12 Oct	16 Oct	24 Oct	23 Oct
Wilson's Warbler	1 Oct	13 Sep	30 Sep	26 Sep	20 Sep		25 Sep	2 Oct	15 Sep	3 Oct	25 Sep
Canada Warbler	26 Sep	29 Aug	25 Sep	14 Sep	17 Sep		12 Sep	7 Sep	17 Sep	12 Sep	14 Sep
Scarlet Tanager	2 Oct	22 Sep	5 Oct	16 Sep	24 Sep		25 Sep	2 Sep	5 Oct	6 Oct	25 Sep
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	26 Oct	26 Sep	2 Oct	10 Oct	5 Sep		2 Jul	23 Sep	2 Oct	3 Oct	20 Sep
Rufous-sided Towhee	30 Nov	16 Oct	6 Nov	15 Oct	24 Oct			3 Oct	16 Oct		24 Oct
Lincoln's Sparrow	11 Oct	29 Oct	20 Oct	19 Oct	22 Oct		8 Oct	9 Oct	25 Oct	3 Oct	16 Oct
White-crowned Sparrow	5 Nov	22 Oct	11 Nov	30 Oct	22 Oct		9 Oct	6 Nov	23 Oct	11 Nov	29 Oct
Bobolink	3 Sep	13 Aug	8 Sep	27 Aug	2 Sep			2 Oct		30 Sep	7 Sep
Northern Oriole	10 Sep	9 Sep	17 Sep	2 Oct	22 Aug		9 Aug	7 Sep	5 Nov	6 Oct	16 Sep

Bold Regional Record Late

Italics also isolated later report(s).

Departure Dates Seasonality and Advance

Region	Species Reported	Seasonality (days)	Advance (days)
Region 1	61	-2.6	5.1
Region 2	61	-8.2	0.0
Region 3	58	-0.8	2.8
Region 4	49	2.4	1.6
Region 5	62	-9.9	-3.1
Region 6	0		
Region 7	57	-3.2	-14.5
Region 8	52	-2.4	-1.7
Region 9	46	-0.6	5.4
Region 10	48	-8.6	6.5

Seasonality measures the average difference (in days) between this year's departure dates and the long term average dates for the *same* Region. *Advance* measures the average difference between this year's departure dates in one Region and the departure dates averaged over all ten Regions. Negative values mean early.

an excellent collection of western and southern wanderers in coastal areas of Regions 9 and 10.

There were few reports for Olive-sided Flycatcher. Eastern Wood-Pewee was flagged as very low in Regions 3 and 4 but many Least Flycatchers were banded in Region 1. The best rarities were *Ash-throated Flycatcher* and *Fork-tailed Flycatcher* in Region 10. Common Raven reports continue good, especially in Regions 4, 8, and 9, with a maximum of 34 counted in the latter Region. A Boreal Chickadee returned on the last day of the season to the feeder in Region 9 where one (it?) wintered last year. Depressed Carolina Wren counts in all Regions fulfilled our expectations following last winter's severity. It was a good fall for *Northern Wheatear*, with one in Region 4 and two in Region 10. Thrush counts were generally of low, excepting estimates from call notes overhead on excellent night flights from Regions 1 and 3, and a record high count of Wood Thrush found in one valley in Region 5 on 5 Sep. The only Bohemian Waxwing reported was in Region 7, where it has been found 14 of the past 16 years. Northern Shrike was noted in six regions, but in low numbers only.

Among the vireos, only Regions 3 and 4, reporting nearly all species, provided many entries; most entries were notes of scarcity, except for fairly good numbers for Philadelphia Vireo and a rare White-eyed Vireo banded in Region 4. Warbler highlights include a record late date for Yellow Warbler in Region 3; record late inland dates for Black-throated

Green Warbler in Regions 1 and 3; over 16 Orange-crowned Warbler reports from six Regions; above average numbers of reports for Pine and Prairie Warblers, the latter including Region 7 where they are rare anytime; very few Black-and-white Warbler reported; American Redstart late inland in Region 4 and late coastally in Region 10; nine Connecticut Warbler reports from six Regions; above average Mourning Warbler numbers; and Yellow-breasted Chat in Regions 4 and 10.

Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting were all poorly reported, the latter scoring a first fall zero in Region 4. Sparrows also were reported in generally poor numbers. Highlights were to be found in the good showing of western and other vagrants, mainly in Regions 9 and 10 where many of these species are nearly annual. The best of the records include Dickcissel in Region 3, Blue Grosbeak, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, and *Harris's Sparrow* in Region 9; and *Lark Bunting*, Blue Grosbeak, Dickcissel, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Lark Sparrow in Region 10. Snow Bunting was noted in eight of the nine Regions reporting, with particularly good counts from Regions 1 and 10. The only blackbird report of note was a *Bullock's Northern Oriole* in Region 10. Finally, the winter finch flight was very sparse, though all species but Hoary Redpoll were noted as at least singles in at least one Region.

Most of the rarities for the season already have been woven into this summary. The one left out to this point is my selection for the B.O.T.S Award, the State's first report for *Ancient Murrelet* in Region 2, then refound in nearby Ontario, whence it must have passed through Region 1 en route.