

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

WILLIAM C. D'ANNA

The weather of this fall season was pleasant across the Region. At Buffalo it was the warmest in 17 years, the driest in ten, and the sunniest in 30 years. Besides good weather, the birds had plenty of food. Vivian Pitzrick in ALLE noted good crops of acorns, hickory nuts, cones, cherry, multiflora rose, and dogwood fruits. Similar bounty was found in NIAG. September was one of the driest on record until the skies opened up the last week of the month and brought the rainfall total to near average. Temperatures were exactly average and with relatively little variation. October was Buffalo's sunniest in 30 years and also was dry, its 1.87 inches of rain 1.22 inches below normal. Temperatures averaged a degree above normal. The first frost at Buffalo was on 11 Oct while, inland at Amity Lake ALLE, it came on 3 Oct, late for both areas. November was the warmest in 19 years, 4.5°F above normal. Precipitation was about average. Buffalo did not receive its first snow of the season until the 22 Oct, setting a record for the latest ever. Gulls, particularly Bonaparte's, were late in building on the Niagara River. However, by the end of November numbers of Bonaparte's Gull were the highest since 1990. Only one Sabine's Gull was found this year. A species which may be in trouble, Franklin's Gull, was reported only once. Lesser Black-backed Gull was the most frequently seen of the uncommon gull species. A fierce windstorm on 28 Nov produced a Black-legged Kittiwake.

After several attempts at nesting on the Niagara River at Buckhorn Island SP (as many as 46 nests this May), Double-crested Cormorant was finally successful, a Regional first. But the successful nests were at a different location. Bill Watson found several nests and three juvenile cormorants on the lighthouse in Buffalo Harbor on the late date of 18 Sep.

September generally was not a good month for observing neotropical migrants. However, from 1:00 to 2:00 AM on 15 Sep, Patrick O'Donnell heard more migrants over his house in Niagara Falls than ever before. Then, during the daylight hours he found Goat Island NIAG alive with neotropical migrants, especially warblers. On the same day, Elizabeth Brooks netted 80 birds, including 15 warbler species, at her banding station in Alfred, her second best day in 17 autumns. Magnolia Warbler was the most common migrant that day. The weather on 14 and 15 Sep

was cloudy, warm, and humid. A stationary front was just south of our Region and the birds had moved without northerly winds.

The 59th Annual B.O.S. October Bird Count was conducted on 9 Oct and compiled by Mike Hamilton, Gerry Rising, and Terry Yonker. The Region 1 portion of the data was separated by Gerry, who also provided the averages from the previous five years. A total of 76,597 birds of 141 species was recorded, which is a whopping 24% fewer individuals than average. Looking just at species that average over 100 individuals, we find only seven that were above average and 45 that were below. Among the many negatives were the waterfowl, which were down 39%. This group migrated very late this year, which partly explains its reduction. Species which were more than 25% below average were Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, Mallard, American Wigeon, both scaup, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Bonaparte's Gull, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, both kinglets, Am. Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping, Field, Song, Swamp, White-throated, and White-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, House Finch, Am. Goldfinch, and House Sparrow. The toll last winter took on Carolina Wren was striking. Only Double-crested Cormorant and Common Grackle were more than 25% above average. Such an across the board drop, which includes both species that are known to be decreasing as well as those that are increasing, suggests that the windy weather and precipitation may have kept many birds, and perhaps some birders, under cover.

The Batavia Sewage Lagoons continued to host a good variety and an increasing number of ducks. A female *Common Eider* there was only the sixth in the Region in the last 90 years. Birders looking for the eider came across the the Region's first October and latest ever Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Although the staff at the facility welcomed the throngs of birders that arrived, a concern for liability prompted the city to prohibit vehicles. Birders on foot are still welcomed at this large and productive complex.

There were no real hotspots for shorebirds until October. During that month Stafford's Pond on the Oak Orchard WMA produced Long-billed Dowitcher, the first in the Region since 1987, some later than usual sightings, and numbers of both yellowlegs, Dunlin, and Pectoral Sandpiper.

The more notable sightings this fall include Greater White-fronted Goose, *American Avocet*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and Connecticut

Warbler. Winter finches were almost absent after last year's good showing.

Contributors: Mallery & Mary Adams, Robert Andrlé, Tim Baird, Paul Benham, Robert Brock, Elizabeth Brooks, Bruce Chilton, David Cooper, Willie D'Anna, Mike Davids (MDd), Michael Davis, James Gregory, Tom Harper, Barbara Henderson, Paul Hess, Linda Holmes, Jeremy Keller, Walt Listman, Richard MacDonald, Mike Morgante, Catherine Mueller, Patrick O'Donnell, Raymond Pitzrick, Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Frances Rew, Gerald Rising, Donald Roberson, Art Rosche, Olga Rosche, Bert Schweigert, Gail Seamans, Linda Seleen, William Seleen, David & Debra Suggs, Robert Sundell, Steve Taylor, Joe Thill, Michael Turisk, William Watson, Peter Yoerg

Abbreviations: BSL - Batavia Sewage Lagoons, GENE; BIP - Bird Island Pier on Niagara River, Buffalo; BOSOC - Buffalo Ornithological Society October Count, 9 Oct; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF - Niagara Falls; NPP - Niagara Power Project on Niagara River, Town of Lewiston; NR - Niagara River; TNP - Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo.

Fall reports: **Red-throated Loon:** arr 53 L Ontario NIAG 30 Oct (WD). **Com. Loon:** arr NF 18 Sep (MM); numbers below average. **Horned Grebe:** arr Buffalo 17 Sep (WD, BP). **Red-necked Grebe:** seven T Somerset 15 Oct (MM, ST), only report. **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 842 NF 1 Sep (WW), about the same as last year; *intro*. **Least Bittern:** up to three TNP 3-24 Sep; last two BSL 9 Oct (WL). **Great Egret:** max ten INWR 9 Oct; last six INWR 16 Oct (MD). **Green Heron:** last three BOSOC. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** E Aurora 20 Sep (LH), rare away from Great Lakes and NR. **Tundra Swan:** arr seven T Westfield 25 Oct (BS), max only 29 INWR 25 Nov (WW). **Greater White-fronted Goose:** E Aurora and T Marilla 21-26 Oct (LH!), fourth autumn record. **Snow Goose:** arr Amity L ALLE 20 Oct (VP). **Canada Goose:** *hutchinsii* type T Ellery 14 Oct (RS!). **Wood Duck:** max 276 BOSOC, down 19%. **N. Shoveler:** record max 138 BOSOC, most at BSL. **Eurasian Wigeon:** E Aurora 6 Oct-30 Nov (LH!), missing toe, probable escape. **Canvasback:** arr BOSOC. **Redhead:** arr TNP 18 Sep (PY, BH). **Ring-necked Duck:** arr four BSL 1 Oct (WL, MDd); max 130 Lewiston Res NIAG 23 Oct. **Greater Scaup:** arr six BSL 29 Sep (WL). **Lesser Scaup:** arr five BOSOC. **Com. Eider:** female BSL 1-16 Oct (WL, MDd, WW!, D&DS!, MM!, WD!, GS!). **Oldsquaw:** arr T Somerset 22 Oct (WD). **Black Scoter:** arr six T Somerset 29 Oct (WD). **Surf Scoter:** arr three BIP 2 Oct (PY). **White-winged Scoter:** arr 40 T Wilson 19 Sep (WD). **Com. Goldeneye:** arr two BSL 5 Oct (WL). **Bufflehead:** female BSL 2 Oct, summering bird; arr T Ellery

15 Oct (RS). **Hooded Merganser**: max only 40 E Aurora 23 Nov (LH). **Red-breasted Merganser**: arr seven T Wilson 19 Sep (WD). **Ruddy Duck**: arr 15 BSL 29 Sep (WL); max 50 BSL 1-21 Oct.

Bald Eagle: only reports involved three ad INWR, T Dayton, NR-Lewiston and two imm Allegheny Res CATT. **Rough-legged Hawk**: arr T Yates & T Carlton 22 Oct; only other location three CATT (BS). **Merlin**: T Porter 3 Sep (WD!,BP), only report. **Peregrine Falcon**: banded imm Tonawanda WMA 3 Sep (MM!); Lewiston Res 17 Sep (WD!,BP); imm T Kiantone 29 Sep (RS!,WS); imm INWR 1 Oct (WW!); imm BSL 2 Oct (D&DS!); doing well. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: max 21 BOSOC, about average. **Ruffed Grouse**: max 27 BOSOC, slightly below average. **Wild Turkey**: max 161 BOSOC, average. **Com. Moorhen**: last INWR 22 Oct (WD). **Am. Coot**: max 1100 Mayville-Chaut L 25 Oct (RS); 426 INWR 26 Nov (WW); good counts though less than the peaks in the fifties. **Am. Golden-Plover**: last T Kiantone 3 Nov (RS). **Am. Avocet**: Chaut L - T Ellery 9 Oct (WS!, LS), tenth Regional record and first ever after Aug. **Red Knot**: two BSL 1 Oct (WL), rare inland; nine BOSOC; only reports. **Least Sandpiper**: three Oak Orchard WMA 22 Oct (WD!), late. **Still Sandpiper**: four Oak Orchard WMA 22 Oct (WD!), latest ever. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**: T Clarence 3-5 Sep (LH, MM); one BSL 7 Oct (DC!), record late. **Long-billed Dowitcher**: Oak Orchard WMA 2-5 15 Oct (MM!), three 29 Oct (MM!), two 3 Nov (MT!); thirteenth Regional record, all have been between 27 Aug and 12 Nov. **Red-necked Phalarope**: BSL 1 Oct (WL, MDd), only report. **Franklin's Gull**: only report NR-Lewiston 6 Nov (RM!). **Little Gull**: only reports several NR in Nov. **Iceland Gull**: arr NPP 19 Nov (MM). **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: arr NF 11 Nov (WD), max 12 NR 26 Nov; all ages reported. **Glaucous Gull**: arr two NPP 26 Nov (WD). **Great Black-backed Gull**: max 119 BOSOC, still increasing. **Black-legged Kittiwake**: one Peace Bridge 28 Nov (PY!). **Sabine's Gull**: NF 5 Nov (WD), only report. **Caspian Tern**: two Fort Niagara SP 2 Oct (MM), late. **Com. Tern**: last six 30 Oct BIP (MM). **Forster's Tern**: last Buffalo 27 Nov (WD!), very late.

Short-eared Owl: arr over L Ontario at Golden Hill SP 29 Oct (WD), only report. **Com. Nighthawk**: last six Buffalo 15 Sep (MD); few reports and low numbers. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: one-two Fort Niagara SP to end of period.

Least Flycatcher: 16 banded T Alfred (EB), fall record for that station. **Barn Swallow**: Oak Orchard WMA 16 Oct (WD!), second latest ever. **Com. Raven**: T Ward 8 Oct (EB), only report. **Carolina Wren**: only one BOSOC, average 11. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: arr two FNSP & one Wilson-Tuscarora SP 18 Sep. **E. Bluebird**: max 199 BOSOC, average.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: arr T Alfred 15 Sep (EB); Four Mile Creek SP 25 Sep (WD); only reports. **Hermit Thrush:** arr three Golden Hill SP 2 Oct (MM). **Am. Pipit:** arr Lewiston Res 24 Sep (WD). **N. Shrike:** arr INWR 16 Oct (MD).

Philadelphia Vireo: arr Williamsville Glen ERIE 14 Sep (PY). **Orange-crowned Warbler:** three BOSOC, only report. **N. Parula:** arr Goat I NIAG 9 Sep (BP). **Black-throated Green Warbler:** E Aurora 13-15 Nov (LH!, JK, ph), record late. **Pine Warbler:** arr TNP 5 Sep (MM); two Fort Niagara SP 18 Sep (MM); one BOSOC; only reports. **Palm Warbler:** arr Goat I NIAG 9 Sep (BP); last five BOSOC. **Am. Redstart:** TNP 4 Nov (MD), late. **Connecticut Warbler:** Fort Niagara SP 5 Sep (WD). **Hooded Warbler:** last E Aurora 26 Sep (LH).

Indigo Bunting: last T Porter BOSOC. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** arr T Lewiston 9 Oct. **Chipping Sparrow:** last Buffalo 31 Oct (CM). **Vesper Sparrow:** one BOSOC, only report. **Savannah Sparrow:** last two T Dayton 23 Oct (BS). **Grasshopper Sparrow:** two T Clarence 3 Sep (MD), rarely found after Aug. **Fox Sparrow:** arr T Wheatfield 24 Oct (BP, WD). **Lincoln's Sparrow:** arr T Alfred 16 Sep (EB). **White-throated Sparrow:** arr nine 18 Sep ERIE & NIAG. **White-crowned Sparrow:** arr E Aurora 23 Sep (LH). **Lapland Longspur:** 18 T Porter 9 Oct (WD, BP), only report. **Snow Bunting:** arr BSL 17 Oct (WL); max 1000 T Yates 12 Nov (MM). **Rusty Blackbird:** arr T Ashford 18 Sep (BC). **Pine Siskin:** arr three ALLE BOSOC. **Am. Goldfinch:** 250+ T Dayton 13 Nov (BS), good count. **Evening Grosbeak:** two ALLE BOSOC, only report.

2257 Cayuga Drive Extension, Niagara Falls, New York 14304-4522