

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

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Fall 1994 was a wish come true, weatherwise. Well, maybe not for birders! But even they had to appreciate the mild temperatures, abundant sunshine, beautiful and extended foliage season and scarcity of heavy rains. The first week of September was cold, lowering the month's average temperature 2°F below normal. October's mean temperature was slightly above normal. Although frosts started nipping less hardy plants 3 Oct in the Region's northern sector especially, the National Weather Service station at Binghamton recorded no temperature readings below 32°F all month. November was the shocker! The mean temperature for the month exceeded the norm by 12.5°! On 4 Nov the mercury climbed to 75°F at Oneonta's weather station, shattering the old record of 70° set in 1946. Precipitation was below normal each month, especially October when a scant 0.90 inch of rain was measured, two inches below average. The first snow held off until Thanksgiving Eve, 23 Nov when 3.6 inches fell at Binghamton Airport. Exit Indian Summer. The period's mild, dry weather made for a poor but topsy-turvy migration season. The roster of missed birds is one of the longest ever. Some birds had left in August or earlier. At the other extreme, many individual birds stayed to set record late departure dates for their species, notably American Redstart and Broad-winged Hawk in November!

September dawned on the heels of a cold late August and a very wet summer. There were no exposed mud flats and scant tempting shoreline. Water levels remained high in rivers, lakes, ponds until mid October. Loons, grebes and herons appeared in usual to good numbers. Unprecedented numbers of Brant were sighted but Snow Goose was missed for the first time in at least ten years. Canada Goose was most noticeable for flocks of up to 250 birds that settled on local lakes and ponds in October and remained through the period. Such numbers are a problem in the making. Most migrating ducks passed us by. So did our usual visiting shorebirds. An exception was a rare *Willet*.

Despite balmy weather and lack of strong Canadian cold fronts, 4,248 raptors were counted at Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch, for the second highest total in its six year history. Last year's 5,125 birds holds the record. Chris Vredenburg, compiler, noted that declines were obvious among early migrants such as Broad-winged Hawk, down 57% from last

year, and Osprey, down 41%. Even though the weather continued unseasonal, later migrants were plentiful. Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk and Merlin topped their previous season records. Golden Eagle surpassed 100 birds for the third successive year. The raptor highlight of the season, however, was a very rare *Gyr Falcon*.

Flycatchers, swallows, thrushes, vireos, warblers, sparrows—you name it, they were all hard to find. From Norwich, Don Windsor wrote, "If you ever wondered what the world would be like without any birds, you should have been on some of my field trips." From Vestal, Gail Kirch graded her October banding as "dismal - 100 fewer birds than Oct '93 for the same number of net hours - very few sparrows." Her reward might be considered the *White-eyed Vireo* she banded.

Desirable insects may have vanished by September, but summer had been a good growing season and most fruits, berries, seeds and nuts were abundant. Mountain Ash and Gray Dogwood, still loaded with berries at Thanksgiving, were cited by observers as proof that birds had just passed over our area. Declining populations of course can't be ignored. Puny suggestions of migration fallout were a small flurry of a dozen warblers at a Franklin Mt. wetland on 24 Sep and another at Morris on 26 Sep that included mostly single birds of eight warbler species. A Weed Walkers field trip 7 Oct at Johnson City was considered "a Great Day" by Marie Petuh. "Four species popped out of a large cherry tree to scold a passing cat. From top down, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Song Sparrow, House Wren and finally, about a foot from the ground, a very uncommon Yellow-breasted Chat." It was the fourth fall sighting in the last 15 years for both the chat and the gnatcatcher. Of the winter finches, only token Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak had been seen by period's close.

The species list of 158 bird was the lowest since 1986 but only down four from last year. The most exciting rarity perhaps was the Region's first *Northern Wheatear*. Other rarities not already mentioned included Tundra Swan and Short-eared Owl. Notable misses this season were American Bittern, Snow Goose, both scaup, Oldsquaw, all scoters, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Solitary Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Common Snipe, both cuckoos, Great Crested Flycatcher, Gray-cheeked Thrush, American Pipit, Northern Shrike, Yellow-throated Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Indigo Bunting (never missed until last fall), Vesper Sparrow, and Bobolink.

Observers: Cutler & Jeannette Baldwin, R. & J. Barnes, Les Bemont, Binghamton Naturalists Club, Ted Buhl, Peg Burnett, Ken & Nora

Craver, Mary Dobinsky, Sadie Dorber, Walter Ellison, John Fritz, Steve Hall, Elva Hawken, Jim Hoteling, Gail Kirch, Margaret Layton, Mary Mahlum, Harriet Marsi, Nancy Martin, Andy Mason, Ron Milliken, Marie Petuh, Halladay Pierce, Robert Pantle, Joan Quinlan, Tom & JoAnn Salo, Joseph Sedlacek, Gerry Smith, Tom & Norene Tasber, Bill Toner, Ed Treacy, Chris Vredenburg, Don & Joanne Weber, Weed Walkers of BNC, Nancy Weissflog, Don Windsor, Irene Wright.

Abbreviations: CanRes - Cannonsville Reservoir; CHW - Cortland Hawk Watch (Riley Road); FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; FMHW - Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch; JCy Johnson City; RRPd - Railroad Pond Oneonta; OPM- Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; REEC - Rogers Environmental Education Center, Sherburne.

Fall reports: **Com. Loon:** arr and max nine Otsego L 3 Sep (MM); dozens of singles FMHW all period (CV), high count. **Pied-billed Grebe:** seven reports Sep; last two Vestal 19 Oct (WW). **Red-necked Grebe:** TIOG 20 Sep (C&JB), only one. **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 210 in three flocks FMHW 14 Oct, high. **Great Blue Heron:** eight to 10 reports/month, max six 1 Oct, late departure. **Great Egret:** max two at five widespread sites to 26 Sep, excellent count. **Green Heron:** three singles to 10 Sep. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** one Susquehanna R near Milford 5 Sep (T&JS); one TIOG Oct (RP), often missed. **Tundra Swan:** two FMHW 7 Nov (GS), fourth fall since 1979. **Bean Goose:** with Canada Geese Oneonta RRPd 18-24 Oct, probable escape seen other seasons at Otsego L (MD). **Brant:** max about 1,000 in several flocks FMHW 27 Oct (WE), max 700-800 there 2 Nov (JH), last small flock 22 Nov (GS); record max. **Wood Duck:** max 100+ Boland Pd 6 Sep (JH); last five CHEN 10 Nov. **Green-winged Teal:** Oneonta 18 Oct-18 Nov, max four. **Am. Black Duck:** 10 reports, max six Boland Pd 10 Nov. **Mallard:** widespread after late Sep, max 100. **Blue-winged Teal:** three BROO, one TIOG reports to 25 Sep, max six. **Am. Wigeon:** only six CanRes 30 Nov (WW). **Ring-necked Duck:** only report TIOG Nov, scarce. **Bufflehead:** only report White's Pd CHEN 10 Nov (DW), scarce. **Hooded Merganser:** arr Bowman L CHEN 5 Nov (DW), only site, scarce. **Com. Merganser:** max 100+ Goodyear L after 25 Nov (IW,MD), high count.

Turkey Vulture: FMHW total 78. **Osprey:** FMHW total 96, max 12 on 18 Sep. **Bald Eagle:** FMHW total 27, season record; max five CanRes 12 Nov; two CHW 30 Sep. **N. Harrier:** FMHW total 100; max eight 3 Nov; CHW total 17. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** FMHW total 449, max 50 on 30 Sep. **Cooper's Hawk:** FMHW total 65, max six on 6 Oct. **N. Goshawk:** FMHW total 62, max five 23 Nov. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** FMHW total 85, max 14 on 10 Nov, record season and one day highs. **Broad-winged**

Hawk: FMHW total 594, max 332 on 15 Sep. **Red-tailed Hawk:** FMHW total 2226, just short of record total; max 407 on 7 Nov; two albinos. **Rough-legged Hawk:** arr FMHW 5 Oct, total 19; CHW total six Nov. **Golden Eagle:** FMHW total 103. **Am. Kestrel:** FMHW total 135, max 31 on 15 Sep, one day record high. **Merlin:** FMHW total 10; TIOG Sep (RP); "hit a window but escaped safely" Nov (C&JB). **Peregrine Falcon:** FMHW total 10; one CHW 29 and 30 Sep. **Gyr Falcon:** gray bird FMHW 17 Nov (GS, RM, ET, MP, JH, SH, NYSARC). **Ring-necked Pheasant:** max seven Bainbridge 5 Sep (DW); several two OPM sites 17 and 19 Oct, four others, high count, released birds? **Wild Turkey:** max 36 OPM 6 Sep. **N. Bobwhite:** four Smithville Flats CHEN 20 Nov (JH). **Com. Moorhen:** Boland Pd 24 Sep (JH), often missed. **Am. Coot:** max 12 Otsego L 25 Nov, good count. **Killdeer:** max 30 BROO 1 Oct. **Greater Yellowlegs:** only one TIOG Sep, scarce. **Willet:** one Mirror L Owego 11 Sep (WWBNC), perhaps Regional first. **Spotted Sandpiper:** only one Chenango R 11 Sep. **Am. Woodcock:** max four Preston CHEN 21 Oct (EH). **Ring-billed Gull:** max 30 Otsego L 19 Nov, low count.

E. Screech-Owl: seven reports, two road kills TIOG. **Great Horned Owl:** eight widespread sites. **Barred Owl:** two CHEN Sep, Oct (EH); one Triangle 1-22 Sep (T&NT); two TIOG 15 Oct to early Nov (JS); one with gunshot wound found at Owego Nov later died (MP); high count. **Short-eared Owl:** Strong Road McDonough 21 Nov (Gary Sweet *vide* EH), third fall report since 1982. **Com. Nighthawk:** max 15 Vestal 7 Sep, last 28 Sep (JH). **Chimney Swift:** only report TIOG Sep. **Red-bellied Woodpecker:** only report TIOG Oct, Nov, scarce. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** seven singles to 13 Oct. **Pileated Woodpecker:** ten scattered reports, good count.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Crumhorn L 2 Sep (MD), not seen every fall. **E. Wood-Pewee:** two singles, scarce. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** banded Vestal 18 Sep, often missed. **Traill's Flycatcher:** only one Vestal 5 Sep. **E. Kingbird:** four reports, max three, low count. **Horned Lark:** arr 16 CanRes 12 Nov (BNC). **Tree Swallow:** max four OPM 1 Sep, scarce. **Com. Raven:** two each three sites, FMHW 18 and 19 Sep; Preston CHEN 22 and 26 Nov; Catatonk 10-27 Nov, high count. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** best counts Oct. **Carolina Wren:** five reports Oct-Nov, max two, scarce. **House Wren:** eight Sep reports, good. **Winter Wren:** two singles Sep, three Oct, low. **Marsh Wren:** Boland Pd 20 Sep, not every fall. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max four BROO 16 Oct. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** arr 1 Oct; last two 3 Nov. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** six reports; *intro.* **N. Wheatear:** near Cherry Valley n OTSE late Sep (TB, NYSARC), identified by "the classic black T-Bar on the white tail." **E. Bluebird:**

max 40-50 W. Bainbridge 15 Sep (K&NC); 32 in flights over two OTSE sites 27 Oct; 22 JCy 5 Nov, good numbers. **Veery**: five banded Vestal mid Sep, better than recent years. **Swainson's Thrush**: only one T Preston 12 Oct (EH), very scarce. **Hermit Thrush**: seven at three sites mid Oct; last Norwich 29 Oct, scarce. **Wood Thrush**: two each Endwell and Catatunk Sep and Oct (JS); one T Preston 13 Sep, scarce. **Gray Catbird**: max 34 Banded Vestal Sep, eight Oct. **N. Mockingbird**: singles four widespread sites Oct, none Nov, low. **Brown Thrasher**: only four singles. **Cedar Waxwing**: max 50 T Preston 12 Sep.

White-eyed Vireo: imm banded Vestal 30 Oct (GK), last reported fall 1980. **Solitary Vireo**: five reports each Sep and Oct, max two, scarce. **Warbling Vireo**: three singles BROO, one CHEN, scarce. **Red-eyed Vireo**: 23 banded Vestal, max nine on 10 Sep, good count. **Blue-winged Warbler**: one Vestal 24 Sep; one Morris 26 Sep, second latest departure since 1961. **Tennessee Warbler**: arr Laurens OTSE 5 Sep, three others. **Orange-crowned Warbler**: two Norwich 16 Sep (DW), fifth fall since 1978. **Nashville Warbler**: max seven banded Vestal 17-19 Sep. **Yellow Warbler**: only one TIOG 2 Oct (R&JB). **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: max three T Preston 4 Sep. **Magnolia Warbler**: max three banded Vestal 17 Sep, 15 others. **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: max two, three reports. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: max 20 Crumhorn L on 1 Sep. **Black-throated Green Warbler**: 11 reports Sep, four Oct, max two, scarce. **Blackburnian Warbler**: singles BROO, CHEN 4 Sep; TIOG 23 Oct (D&JW), record late. **Prairie Warbler**: only one FMHW wetland 24 Sep. **Pine Warbler**: only one TIOG Sep (R&JB). **Palm Warbler**: singles JCy 18 Sep and Morris 26 Sep. **Bay-breasted Warbler**: arr W. Laurens 5 Sep (JQ), two others, scarce. **Blackpoll Warbler**: one Morris; two banded Vestal, scarce. **Black-and-white Warbler**: only one BROO 4 Sep. **Am. Redstart**: two singles Sep; and REEC 15 and 22 Nov, record late. **Ovenbird**: 11 banded Vestal Sep, four others, good count. **N. Waterthrush**: three banded Vestal, missed last two years. **Wilson's Warbler**: last of three singles Morris 26 Sep. **Canada Warbler**: four reports, missed last fall. **Yellow-breasted Chat**: *intro*.

Scarlet Tanager: max six OPM 8 Sep. **N. Cardinal**: female feeding two recent FL McGraw 3 Oct (BT). **Rufous-sided Towhee**: max six JCy 3 Sep. **Am. Tree Sparrow**: arr CHEN sites 3 Oct, early. **Chipping Sparrow**: max 12 OPM 20 Oct. **Savannah Sparrow**: several BROO, TIOG Sep; two singles OTSE to 13 Oct, scarce. **Fox Sparrow**: arr CHEN 26 Oct; last of four others 26 Nov, scarce. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: five reports, max two, BROO 24 Sep-19 Oct. **Swamp Sparrow**: last banded Vestal 22 Oct, scarce. **White-throated Sparrow**: four banded Vestal Sep, 20 in Oct. **White-crowned**

Sparrow: arr 1 Oct; max six JCy 16 Oct. **Snow Bunting:** only one CORT 17 Nov (BT). **E. Meadowlark:** three CORT reports, max six on 24 Oct; only two others, scarce. **Rusty Blackbird:** max six FMHW wetland 17 Oct (WW). **Com. Grackle:** max 300+ Milford 6 Sep; last report 4 Nov. **N. Oriole:** imm FMHW 2 Oct, only report, late. **Purple Finch:** max eight T Preston 4 Sep; five other sites. **House Finch:** 31 banded Vestal 6-15 Oct.

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