

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Hot, humid, and very dry. Those three characteristics were remarkably consistent across the Region and through the summer. Starting the third week of June, meteorologists were using the term "severe drought" and that term was still in effect at the season's end. At Buffalo it was third hottest summer ever with an average temperature of 71.9°F, 3.2° above normal. Total rainfall was 6.93 inches, three inches below normal, making this the driest such period in 43 years. Buffalo is noted for its pleasant, less humid summers, the good aspect of being situated on the windward side of Lake Erie. This year, however, winds were generally light or from the wrong direction making for a consistently oppressive summer. In ALLE, where many residents depend on aquifers, Vivian Pitrick reported that similar hot dry conditions lowered the water table drastically, drying up wells and shrinking reservoirs. The observations of this veteran nest finder indicated that the weather had no adverse effect on nesting birds. Insect hatches were obviously down, however, and the thought does occur: what is more critical for nestlings, the lack of violent weather from wind and rain or an abundant supply of insects? The answer is certainly not a simple one.

The event of the season occurred at the heron rookery on Motor Island which is located on the Niagara River in the Town of Tonawanda. The colony was discovered by Bill Watson a few years ago after large numbers of Great Blue Heron were noted wintering in the vicinity. The river is heavily used for recreation there and, occasionally, boaters land on the island greatly disturbing the herons. Nonetheless, it has been a successful nesting location for numerous Black-crowned Night-Heron and Great Blue Heron. This year, Watson found *Great Egret* joining the rookery with two nests. This may represent the first non-coastal breeding ever in the State. Interestingly, during and after the Atlas field work, birders suspected nesting might occur at Iroquois NWR. Despite the presence of many individuals and searches by refuge personnel, no evidence of breeding was ever obtained there. Since Great Egret are only rarely found along the Niagara River, the Motor Island nests were a major surprise. Tragically, however, the attempt ended in failure when vandals destroyed one nest before the three young were ready to fledge. The other nest was found to have two dead nestlings beneath it, which probably succumbed before the vandalism. On a more upbeat note, a young Great Blue Heron was still on the nest at Motor Island on 30 Aug, an extremely late date.

Another colonial breeder, Double-crested Cormorant, continues to increase. Last year saw the first successful nesting in the Region. The same lighthouse at the mouth of Lake Erie hosted several nests this year. It is believed that at least four of them fledged young. Strangely, the colony at Buckhorn I SP, which has had over 75 nesting attempts since it began in 1992, has not seen any successes. In fact, most nests there are abandoned before the eggs even hatch. Why? Disturbance from boaters should be minimal as the current is very swift around the man-made island. Watson suggests predation by the many Ring-billed and Herring Gulls nesting on the island or toxic chemicals in the food chain as possible explanations. In spite of the failure of the Buckhorn I colony, the late summer roost of cormorants on the nearby electrical towers is again increasing.

Southern passerines continue to do well. Multiple sightings of Northern Parula and Pine Warbler were made at Allegany SP. A report from last year provides definite evidence of Pine Warbler breeding in the park, when two adults were seen to repeatedly carry food to a nesting location. There are very few other, if any, confirmed Regional nestings of this species, none during the Atlas period. Yellow-throated Warbler was not found at Allegany SP this year. In ALLE Betsy Brooks has documented a change of status for Prairie Warbler. She located the bird at more than a half dozen locations both in 1994 and in 1995. The increase has not yet been detected outside that county.

Meanwhile, Acadian Flycatcher, found in surprising numbers during the Atlas field work, has increased to the point where it now is almost expected in the proper habitat. In recent years that habitat in the Region has been almost exclusively maple-beech-hemlock forest near a stream, usually in CHAU, CATT, or southern ERIE. It is interesting to note that prior to the species' reemergence as a regular breeder in the Region, historically its nesting range was just the opposite of what it is today, that is, mainly confined to the vicinity of the Lake Ontario. This June, however, Acadian Flycatcher was found on the lake plain in a wet woods in the Town of Yates in ORLE, the northern-most "modern-day" locality. There was no stream and the trees were mainly maple without any beech or hemlock at this site (WD).

It was a rather slow summer for rarities. Shorebirds were almost non-existent, with only very small numbers at the Batavia Sewage Lagoons and the refuge complex at Iroquois.

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Abbreviations: BSL - Batavia Sewage Lagoons, GENE; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF - Niagara Falls; NR - Niagara River; TNP - Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TWMA - Tonawanda WMA.

Summer reports: **Com. Loon:** three NF 29 Jun, only report. **Double-crested Cormorant:** *intro*; record max 1005 Buckhorn I 23 Aug (WW). **Least Bittern:** two Buckhorn I SP 10 Jun (CR, TBu), perhaps a new breeding location; TNP 18 Aug; only reports. **Great Blue Heron:** *intro*. **Great Egret:** six ad Motor I NR 29 Jun, last there 19 Jul; one T Allegany CATT 14 Aug, rare here; max 14 INWR 7 Aug; *intro*. **Green-winged Teal:** four TWMA 18 Jul, only report. **N. Pintail:** six TWMA 18 Jul (WW), unusual number for date. **N. Shoveler:** arr nine BSL 21 Aug. **Gadwall:** INWR and NF through season. **Am. Wigeon:** 12 TWMA 7 Aug; max 60 Motor I NR 3-13 Jul (WW), extraordinary count for the date; five other locations. **Ring-necked Duck:** TWMA 25 Jun and INWR 18 Jul (WW), probably same bird, very rare in summer. **Lesser Scaup:** two-one 1 Jun-31 Jul (VP), rare in summer. **Com. Merganser:** one Allegany SP 22 Jun, breeding location; up to seven NF all summer, non-breeding. **Red-breasted Merganser:** one NF 6 Aug, only report. **Ruddy Duck:** one INWR 17 Jun; 12 BSL 21 Aug, breeding status there unknown.

Osprey: T Clarence ERIE 12 Jun, out of habitat, probably a late migrant; only report away from Allegany Res vicinity breeding area. **Bald Eagle:** two y fledged INWR; attempted nesting at Allegany Res apparently contained infertile eggs; two ad, one imm around Salamanca much of the season; summer record max five imm, one ad INWR & TWMA 19 Aug (MM). **N. Goshawk:** Holland Bog ERIE 14 Jun (PB), unverified. **Peregrine Falcon:** ad, imm downtown Buffalo after mid Jul, breeding not suggested. **Semipalmated Plover:** last four Oak Orchard WMA 4 Jun; five TNP, 30 Aug, only reports. **Greater Yellowlegs:** arr TNP 11 Jul. **Lesser Yellowlegs:** 14 BSL 21 Aug, only report. **Solitary Sandpiper:** arr TWMA 18 Jul. **Upland Sandpiper:** T Concord ERIE 9 Jul, only report away from previously known breeding areas. **Sanderling:** only report TWMA 21 Aug, where rare. **Semipalmated Sandpiper:** last 22 Oak Orchard WMA 4 Jun; 17 BSL 21 Aug, only reports. **Least Sandpiper:** 11 TWMA & 17 BSL 21 Aug, only report. **Baird's Sandpiper:** two BSL 21 Aug, only report. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** BSL 21 Aug, only report. **Bonaparte's Gull:** two Fort Niagara SP 14 Jun, late; arr away from NR Allegany SP 15 Aug. **Caspian Tern:** two NF 29 Jun, unusual

location. **Com. Tern:** four FL 30 Jun NR Buffalo (WW), early. **Black Tern:** 25 TWMA 18 Jul, high count; only singles NR late Jul and Aug, former staging area.

Black-billed Cuckoo: many reports Jun & Jul. **Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** many reports Jun & Jul. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** juv in nest box Amity Lake ALLE. **Com. Nighthawk:** T Wheatfield NIAG 25 Jul, migrant?; arr Kenmore ERIE 19 Aug.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr T Alfred ALLE 15 Aug; Four Mile Creek SP 26 Aug; only reports. **Acadian Flycatcher:** *intro.* **E. Kingbird:** "very plentiful" ALLE (VP). **Barn Swallow:** 300+ T Amity ALLE 19 Jul, good count. **Com. Raven:** doing well in ALLE and Allegany SP. **Tufted Titmouse:** widespread. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** arr Buffalo 25 Aug. **Carolina Wren:** four reports, increasing slowly. **Sedge Wren:** only report Buckhorn I SP 5 Jun-2 Jul, third consecutive summer there. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** Amity L ALLE 20-26 Jul, only report away from INWR. **N. Mockingbird:** only reports away from L Ontario plain T Clarence ERIE 16 Jul, East Aurora ERIE 23 Jul.

Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler: Brewster's type INWR 7 Aug (WW); Lawrence's type Allegany SP 4 Jun & 1 Jul, third straight year there. **Tennessee Warbler:** arr Buckhorn I SP 26 Aug. **Orange-crowned Warbler:** TNP 29 Aug (MS, PP), very early but not verified. **Nashville Warbler:** arr Fort Niagara SP 26 Aug. **N. Parula:** multiple sightings Allegany SP. **Chestnut-sided Warbler:** arr Four Mile Creek SP 26 Aug. **Magnolia Warbler:** arr T Tonawanda & L Ontario plain 26 Aug. **Black-throated Blue Warbler:** arr Four Mile Creek SP 26 Aug. **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** arr TNP 22 Aug. **Black-throated Green Warbler:** last T Wheatfield NIAG 18 Jun, late; arr Fort Niagara SP 26 Aug. **Blackburnian Warbler:** arr Four Mile Creek SP 26 Aug. **Yellow-throated Warbler:** none. **Pine Warbler:** multiple sightings Allegany SP. **Prairie Warbler:** T Ellicottville CATT 3, 4 Jun; *intro.* **Bay-breasted Warbler:** arr INWR 7 Aug (WW!), very early. **Blackpoll Warbler:** last five 10 Jun (WW!). **Cerulean Warbler:** McCarty Hill State Forest CATT 4 Jun (MM), unusual location. **Black-and-white Warbler:** arr Fort Niagara SP 26 Aug. **Prothonotary Warbler:** 2-4 INWR 4-29 Jun, only report. **Wilson's Warbler:** arr TNP 18 Aug. **Canada Warbler:** Tonawanda Indian Res. 7 Jul (WW, PY), rare breeder in northern counties. **Yellow-breasted Chat:** Tillman WMA ERIE 1-26 Jul (WWe), first summer record in years.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: return to Brooks' banding station Alfred ALLE in Aug in its 13th year! **Clay-colored Sparrow:** T Andover ALLE 14 Jun (EB!), not unexpected in ALLE. **Vesper Sparrow:** five reports ALLE, one report CATT. **Henslow's Sparrow:** reported from four locations, two

ERIE, one each NIAG & ALLE, holding on despite extirpation from adjacent Niagara Peninsula of Ontario. **White-throated Sparrow:** 18 territorial males ALLE 12-26 Jun; four locations CATT; doing very well. **E. Meadowlark:** 60 one flock T Alfred 30 Jul, unusual concentration. **Orchard Oriole:** pair T Somerset 18 Jun (WD!), active breeding site; male Golden Hill SP 18 Jun (WD!); only reports. **Red Crossbill:** T West Almond ALLE 23 Jun (EB!), only report.

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