

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

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Summer was hot, sunny and very dry with clear, blue skies most days. At Cooperstown, temperatures for the three month season were 8.3°F above normal, according to Harold Hollis, National Weather Service observer. Both June and July were 3°F warmer while August was 2.3°F over average. The season's highest temperature reading was 96°F on 15 Jul, a record for the date. After minimal snow accumulation last winter and below normal spring rainfall, we entered the summer season with a severe precipitation shortfall that worsened each month. A good all-day rain soaked the Region 12 Jun. After that, areas prayed to be hit by one of the few sporadic thunderstorms. On 17 Jul, Oneonta had 1.50 inches of rain, which completely missed Binghamton. In a turnabout, Binghamton was drenched with 1.96 inches of rain 4 and 5 Aug while Oneonta stayed dry. No measurable rain fell in the Region from 16 to 31 Aug, one of the longest dry spells on record. Binghamton's precipitation for the season was recorded as 3.65 inches below normal. By August, most ponds and smaller creeks were bone dry. Water level of the Susquehanna River was so low that fishermen at Oneonta were seen standing in the middle of the river to cast their lines. Cattail marshes were mostly high and dry. Drought alerts were expected any day. Many wild foods had not matured well despite an excellent early growing season. Black Cherry trees and such shrubs as dogwoods and nannyberry, which had all been heavy with fruit last year, had small fruit clusters if any. Birds were going to be disappointed.

Water birds were most affected by the dry summer. A pleasant surprise was the record number of Great Egret which began to arrive in late July. Many Great Blue and Green Herons also took advantage of the shallow feeding areas. However, Common Loon, rarely missed, was absent this summer. Only three duck species were reported, no marsh birds, and few migrating shorebirds.

Eight Breeding Bird Surveys were run in June, the same number as in five of the last six years. As usual they are invaluable in comparing this year's nesting populations with those of past years. Another such indicator is the CORT Nest Box Program, which is even more complete because it extends until the birds fledge. However, only three species are studied. Bill Toner, compiler, reported a record number of 29 American Kestrel fledged from seven of the 11 nesting attempts in this eighth year of the kestrel program. Also a record were the 161 Tree Swallows

fledged from 33 of 48 nesting attempts. Bill's "Queen of the Swallows" was an 9-year-old female, who had seven eggs and fledged seven young. Excellent success was also achieved by Eastern Bluebird with 29 fledged from nine nest boxes. The swallow and bluebird programs date back to 1981.

An excellent nesting season was indicated for Wild Turkey. More reports than usual were recorded for both species of cuckoo, due perhaps to a late spring infestation of forest tent caterpillar. Also reports were good for Upland Sandpiper, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Common Raven and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Flycatchers were scarce. Lack of snow cover may have reduced the number of surviving insects. Robert Miller recorded only one Alder and three Least Flycatcher on his Milford BBS, record lows for the last nine years of his records. A continuing decline was indicated for thrushes, even American Robin. However, nesting Swainson's Thrush was a possibility in DELA. Warbling Vireo and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were scarce as were most warblers. The fourth straight year of decline of Yellow Warbler was noted on Miller's BBS report. Of Indigo Bunting, Don Windsor wrote, "I didn't see it where it normally has been found." Lack of rain and dry stream beds may have further stressed birds to find new nesting and feeding areas. And for most birders, it was too hot a summer to spend long hours afield searching. One exception was Elva Hawken who found Henslow's Sparrows during a survey for the NYSDEC. Other grassland sparrows continued scarce, and Field Sparrow was down for the third successive year.

Good species counts for raptors were reported, but Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel were the only confirmed nesters. Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch opened its seventh season in August. The clear, hot weather, however, discouraged hawks from much movement. The Region's best bird of the season was its first *Swainson's Hawk*. Another rarity, *Short-eared Owl*, was seen and heard in July. Unfortunately, no nest was found.

Early fall migration was minimal. Birds either had moved out after nesting season or fall migration will be late. Fall reports will tell.

A total of 148 species was reported, an average figure which ties three of the last four years. Other than birds already mentioned, *Connecticut Warbler* was the only great rarity. Missed species included Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Hooded Merganser, Virginia Rail, Common Moorhen, Horned Lark, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler and Hooded Warbler.

Abbreviations: BFI - Burlington Flats, OTSE; CVSP - Chenango Valley

State Park; FMHW - Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch; HCPLC - Hartwick College Pine Lake Campus, DELA; JC - Johnson City; OnRes - Oneonta Reservoir; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; UL - Upper Lisle; WNC - Waterman Nature Center, Appalachin; WPt - Whitney Point.

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Summer reports: **Double-crested Cormorant:** two BROO 3 Jun; singles BROO 31 Jul, daily OTSE after 9 Aug, CHEN after 22 Aug, TIOG 27 Aug, BROO 30 Aug, good count. **Great Blue Heron:** max 16 Chenango R, CVSP 9 Aug (JH). **Great Egret:** arr two BROO 24 Jul (JY); max 20 to 25 roosting each evening in dead trees at Brick Pd and on Susquehanna R Owego after 12 Aug (JB); one Tioughnioga R CORT late Aug (BT). **Green Heron:** pair feeding four FL Cutler Pd BROO 19 Jun (MP, FP); pair UL 22 June; three singles BROO Jun; one W Burlington to 15 Jun; four reports Jul, max two; ten widespread reports Aug, max four, high count. **Mute Swan:** Echo L CHEN after 1 Aug (DS). **Canada Goose:** several pairs with y June. **Wood Duck:** max 29 y with three hens farm pd BFI after 29 Jun (NW); hens with y Jun UL, Portlandville, Delhi. **Mallard:** pair with eight y BFI 17 Jun; two ad with 12 y Delhi 18 Jun (AM). **Com. Merganser:** nested in maple tree T Pitcher CHEN, "one dead chick found at base of tree Jun but assume others survived" (WS); hen with 14 y Susquehanna R Oneonta 8 Jun; one Downsville BBS; eight BROO 31 Jul; two OTSE sites Aug, max 14; TIOG, CHEN, high count.

Turkey Vulture: max 48 Goodyear L 18 Jun, 5-18 daily Aug (IW); seen CORT all season. **Osprey:** arr 10 Aug Goodyear L; eight widespread singles Aug. **Bald Eagle:** pair Delhi 18 Jun (AM); near I-88 Unadilla area 8 Jul (MP); Tioughnioga R Cortland 19 Aug (BT). **N. Harrier:** max three FMHW Aug; pair Fenton BROO Jun (JS); frequent W. Burlington. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** two singles Jun, Jul; max three FMHW and CHEN Aug. **Cooper's Hawk:** pair T Fenton, singles two other BROO sites Jun (JS); two singles BROO Jul and OTSE Aug. **N. Goshawk:** FMHW Aug, only report. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** three y Owego (C&JB), same nest site as last summer. **Broad-winged Hawk:** singles Oxford BBS 4 Jun and WNC 12

Jun; JC 21 Jul; two imm OnRes 7 Aug; four FMHW Aug. *Swainson's Hawk*: T New Lisbon OTSE 8 Jun (TS, ph, NYSARC). *Red-tailed Hawk*: nest with four y CORT Jun (BT); nesting Farm-to-Market Road BROO 2 Jun, ad with y 3 Aug (JH); same nest site as last year TIOG (C&JB); y calling for food OTSE 28 Jul (TS). *Golden Eagle*: over golf course Cortland 24 Aug (BT). *Am. Kestrel*: pair with at least two y Greene 10 July (JY); *intro*. *Ring-necked Pheasant*: Vestal 14 Jun (WW); OTSE 23 Aug (JSm); TIOG. *Ruffed Grouse*: max four T Preston CHEN 25 Aug. *N. Bobwhite*: only one JC 20 Jun (JH). *Killdeer*: 26 on seven BBS; post breeding max 15 OnRes 18 Aug, scarce. *Greater Yellowlegs*: Chenango R Norwich after 28 Aug (DW), only report. *Lesser Yellowlegs*: OnRes 28 Aug (MD), only report. *Solitary Sandpiper*: arr Portlandville 8 Aug, only three other singles. *Spotted Sandpiper*: max five Goodyear L 22 Jul (IW) and CVSP 9 Aug (JH). *Least Sandpiper*: five Chenango R Norwich 28-31 Aug (DW), only report. *Upland Sandpiper*: singles in plowed field about a mile from previous site UL 5 Jun (BB, FL); T Exeter OTSE 1 Jun (TS); Franklin Mt. 29 Jun (CV), excellent count. *Com. Snipe*: only one Milford BBS. *Am. Woodcock*: max four T Preston 29 Jun. *Ring-billed Gull*: max 100+ fields n end Otsego L Jul, Aug (LC).

Mourning Dove: 96 on eight BBS. *Black-billed Cuckoo*: 17 widespread Jun reports max two; two Jul, more than usual. *Yellow-billed Cuckoo*: five Jun reports, max two WPT BBS. *E. Screech-Owl*: singles two BROO sites 20 Jul and 1 Aug (JH); OTSE 20 Aug (TS); CORT late Aug (BT), good count. *Great Horned Owl*: two y Chenango R Norwich 18 Jun (DW); Oneonta 21 Jun (IW). *Barred Owl*: singles Downsville BBS; WNC 12 Jun (NP); JC 1 Aug (JH); T Preston 29, 30 Aug (EH), high count. *Short-eared Owl*: two exchanging the identical "squeal" calls for several minutes Burlington Flats OTSE 10-19 Jul (NW!), the second not heard succeeding nights; first summer report since 1983. *Com. Nighthawk*: two BROO reports late June, one July; migration TIOG last week Aug. *Chimney Swift*: max ten Oneonta BBS 10 Jun and JC 12 Jul (WW); pair nested in silo as usual Owego (C&JB); good counts to 20 Aug. *Red-bellied Woodpecker*: two Windsor 21 Jul (MP); occasional two TIOG sites (C&JB, G&EM). *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker*: 16 on seven BBS. *Pileated Woodpecker*: 11 on five BBS, best count in at least 10 years.

E. Wood-Pewee: 15 on seven BBS; only five Aug reports, scarce. *Alder Flycatcher*: max five each Oxford and McDonough BBS; last 8 Aug. *Willow Flycatcher*: max four Laurens BBS, scarce. *Least Flycatcher*: 37 on eight BBS. *Great Crested Flycatcher*: 26 on seven BBS, almost average. *Purple Martin*: none. *Tree Swallow*: *intro*. *N. Rough-winged Swallow*: max four on two BBS and Portlandville 9 June; singles

UL and TIOG June; two reports BROO Jul, max two, scarce. **Bank Swallow**: at least 130 holes quarry s of Norwich (DW), new location; six on two BBS, only reports. **Cliff Swallow**: max 23 Downsville BBS; at least six building nests Gilbertsville barn 5 Jun (JF). **Barn Swallow**: pair feeding three y OPM 17 Aug; 103 on eight BBS; post breeding max 30 OPM 21 Aug. **Fish Crow**: only report TIOG (D&JW). **Com. Raven**: two Downsville BBS; one calling HCPLC 8 Jul (MP); OTSE 15 Aug (TS); TIOG (C&JB), high count. **Tufted Titmouse**: eight on five BBS. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: max six OPM 7, 18 Aug. **Carolina Wren**: three-four reports month, mostly BROO. **House Wren**: 87 on eight BBS. **Winter Wren**: six on three BBS; none Aug. **Marsh Wren**: CVSP 1, 9 Aug (JH), only report. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: only two singles CHEN. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: singles JC 1 Jun and CHEN. **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**: max three CVSP 9 Aug (JH); Downsville BBS 4 Jun; UL 25 Jun (MP), good count. **E. Bluebird**: *intro*. **Veery**: max 65 on seven BBS; only four banded Vestal last 30 Aug (GK). **Swainson's Thrush**: two Downsville BBS 4 Jun (JSh), first possible nesters other than CHEN since 1985 Atlas report; one banded Vestal 30 Aug. **Hermit Thrush**: six Downsville BBC. **Wood Thrush**: 70 on eight BBS; four banded Aug. **N. Mockingbird**: five Jun reports, two Jul, one Aug max two, all BROO. **Brown Thrasher**: 12 widespread June reports, max three WPT BBS, scarce; nesting pair JC all season, feeding y Jul, two imm at feeder 1 Aug (JH). **Cedar Waxwing**: 62 on eight BBS.

Solitary Vireo: max five McDonough BBS and OPM 18 Aug. **Yellow-throated Vireo**: ten widespread reports Jun, max two; ad with y UL 12 Jul (WW); five other reports, last 25 Aug, more than usual. **Warbling Vireo**: max 14 on two OTSE BBS; only two Jul reports; last 1 Aug, scarce. **Philadelphia Vireo**: banded Vestal 26 Aug (GK), sometimes missed. **Red-eyed Vireo**: 198 on eight BBS; nine banded Vestal Aug, good count. **Blue-winged Warbler**: 16 reports Jun, max four, expanded areas but fewer birds. **Golden-winged Warbler**: two at two BROO sites Jun (JS), only reports. **Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler**: Brewster's type T Preston often Jun, 5 Aug (EH). **Nashville Warbler**: five reports Jun, max two Oxford BBS, none Jul, three singles Aug. **Yellow Warbler**: 140 on eight BBS, low number. **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: 76 on eight BBS, good numbers through period. **Magnolia Warbler**: six Jun reports max five Downsville BBS; five CHEN 26 Jul; eight Aug reports mostly CHEN, scarce. **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: eight reports Jun, max three; two BROO and two CHEN Jul; three banding reports, max three Vestal Aug; more than usual. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: singing males two sites Vestal to 28 Jun (LB). **Black-throated Green Warbler**: 20 on five BBS,

scarce Jul, Aug. **Blackburnian Warbler**: max six Downsville BBS; two HCPLC 8 Jul (MP); four reports CHEN Aug, max three (EH), scarce. **Pine Warbler**: one found dead Oneonta 2 Aug (CV), only report. **Prairie Warbler**: five Jun, Jul reports, max two BROO, scarce; male Crumhorn Mt 31 Aug (MD), late. **Bay-breasted Warbler**: last Owego 10 Jun (C&JB), late; arr Crumhorn Mt 28 Aug. **Black-and-white Warbler**: max nine Downsville BBS; four T Preston 18 Jul; good Aug counts. **Am. Redstart**: 38 on seven BBS, average. **N. Waterthrush**: only four reports Jun, max two, last BROO 26 Aug (MAC), scarce. **Louisiana Waterthrush**: seven reports Jun; last two Kirkwood 2 Aug (HM, BB, GK). **Connecticut Warbler**: Owego 26 Aug (C&JB), early. **Mourning Warbler**: 11 Jun reports, max six McDonough BBS. **Wilson's Warbler**: banded Vestal 24 Aug (GK), only report. **Canada Warbler**: six reports Jun, max two; last of six Aug reports banded Vestal 29 Aug.

Scarlet Tanager: 49 on seven BBS, good numbers July, Aug. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**: 29 on eight BBS, low; only five Aug reports, scarce; singing male JC through 17 Jul when two juv found, none later (MP). **Indigo Bunting**: 52 on eight BBS, low; last singles banded Vestal 30, 31 Aug. **Rufous-sided Towhee**: max six WPt BBS 13 Jun and JC 10 July, scarce. **Field Sparrow**: 32 on eight BBS, low; last banded 24 Aug. **Vesper Sparrow**: Bfl (NW); OPM 25 Aug, only reports. **Savannah sparrow**: max ten McDonough BBS; eight BROO 18 Jul; newly fledged second brood W Burlington 8 Aug (TS). **Grasshopper Sparrow**: only one W Burlington 13 Jun. **Henslow's Sparrow**: 19 Long Pd state owned grasslands CHEN 6 Jul (EH); Edwards Hill Road BROO 21 Jun (JH). **Swamp Sparrow**: max six Milford BBS, scarce. **White-throated Sparrow**: max ten Oxford BBS. **Bobolink**: two W Burlington 22 Aug, only report after 9 Jul, scarce. **E. Meadowlark**: max nine Lisle BBS; better numbers than last few years Bfl (NW). **N. Oriole**: 48 on eight BBS, decline; last four banded 31 Aug (GK). **Purple Finch**: max 11 T Preston 14, 25 Aug. **Evening Grosbeak**: 12 McDonough BBS 20 Jun, uncommon in summer.

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