

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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Rain. One of the main topic of discussion all over the Northeast this year. It was almost nonexistent. Predicted rain went north or south. It was the ninth driest and ninth hottest summer season since Central New York started keeping records. And the differences between those drier and hotter years is measured in tenths of an inch or degrees. With the recent winter and spring season also being dry, the drought was serious. Gary Lee, a forest ranger in the Adirondacks, wrote the following: "In a 15 July storm the winds were so strong that acres of forest blew down in the Big Moose Lake and Stillwater Reservoir areas. Some of the roads aren't open yet and some of the trails may never be opened. It is the driest summer in the thirty years that I have lived here. Many springs and small streams have dried up that never did before."

In June, there was only 1.0 inches of rain, which is 2.79 inches below normal. The highest temperature in June was 95°F, the lowest 42°F, for an average of 69.5°, or 4.2° above normal. The heat immediately evaporated the little moisture that fell. There was little change in July with 1.98 inches of rain, 1.83 inches below normal and an average temperature of 73.5°F, 3.1° above normal. A heavy downpour on 15 Aug was a relief, but not enough. The Region was still 0.01 inches below normal with a total of 3.5 inches of rain. August had a high temperature of 96°F, for an average of 71.9°, which was 3.5° above normal. If we hadn't had that one storm, this would have been the second driest summer on record. There were twice the normal number of 90+°F days.

It is difficult to conclude how this hot, dry weather affected birds. Eastern Bluebird had one of the most successful nesting seasons in a number of years. There were no late frosts after a mild winter. John Rogers, who runs a bluebird trail of over 400 boxes north of Oneida Lake, reports fledging 571 young with 25% occupancy by bluebirds. A new bluebird trail being established from east to west across New York State along Route 20 also reported much success, even though this is the first year of the project. Because of dryer conditions, insects seemed very scarce near swamps and other areas that are normally extremely wet. This did not seem to affect the bluebirds, but there is no real way to know if it affected other species.

American Bittern continued very scarce with only four sightings for the summer. Eighty juvenile Double-crested Cormorant were banded on Oneida Lake to try to record dispersal patterns. There was no study on

nesting Common Tern on these Oneida Lake islands this summer. A Common Goldeneye near these islands was our first summer record since 1973. Scaup, unidentified to species, were seen regularly on Oneida Lake from 29 June. An injured male Oldsquaw also spent the summer at this location. Both Hooded and Common Merganser nested on a beaver pond in Holland Patent. This is a new nesting location for both species.

Raptors created quite a stir in the Region this summer. The most exciting event was that two *Peregrine Falcon* selected Syracuse with its tall buildings and ample supply of pigeons as a place to live. They were first seen on the MONY tower in downtown Syracuse by Martin Farrell on 2 Jun and they stayed through the period. Both birds had been previously banded. The female was hacked in Rochester in 1994 and the two year old male came from a nest under the Marine Parkway Bridge leading to Far Rockaway, New York City. A nest box was installed on top of the MONY tower in hopes that they would nest next year. There are not even any historical records of Peregrine Falcon nesting in the Region.

A pair of *Bald Eagle* nested successfully and fledged one young just south of Howland Island. As near as can be determined, the nest is exactly on the CAYU/WAYN County line that separates Region 5 from Region 2. Bald Eagle last nested in the Region in 1960 near Derby Hill. Cooper's Hawk nested successfully this summer in back yards that have plenty of trees for cover. A pair in Pompey hatched five young on 2 June and fledged at least four young. The last one was seen in the nest on 29 June. Osprey were again successful in the Town of Lysander, with a total of three young fledging from two nests. A third pair built a nest, but it was late in the season.

No definite proof was found that the *Fish Crow* that took up residence on Syracuse's north side attempted nesting, although two were seen in that same vicinity on 13 Aug. Carolina Wren was found by only one reporter during the season. Tufted Titmouse, however, did not seem to suffer from the bad winters as other southern species did. They were reported by nearly every observer.

Sangerfield, which has traditionally been a good area for Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers, continues to shelter these nesting birds. In addition to a number of sightings of both of these species, a nest of a Brewster's/Blue-winged Warbler pair was found there this year by Matt Perry. Northern Parula is a rare nester in Region 5 outside of the Adirondacks. A singing male found in Whiskey Hollow, town of Van Buren, near where they nested in 1994, continued through the

period. Good number of Cerulean Warbler were found in Whiskey Hollow. Hooded Warbler also continued its range expansion, with several new nest locations found in both MADI and ONEI. The woods around Hamilton College in Clinton harbored Hooded Warblers throughout the summer.

Reports of grassland species are still scarce. This includes Eastern Meadowlark, Savannah (except for one improved report from ONEI), Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrow. Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrow were not reported this season, although the latter was present during the spring period.

Do reports of small Evening Grosbeak flocks at low elevations in July and August mean we may get an invasion of these big yellow seedeaters this winter? A single Red Crossbill and two White-winged Crossbill sightings were all away from the Adirondacks.

Migrating Merlin again seemed to use Delta Lake as a stopover during migration. Migrating Common Nighthawk were again counted by Gene Huggins at Syracuse University Campus during the peak migration season. In 11 nights of coverage, he counted 300 nighthawks. Mixed swallow species peaked at 1500 in Clay Marsh on 9 Aug.

Two *American White Pelican* were found at Oneida Lake. This is only the fourth sighting in recent years. The second confirmed record of *Blue Grosbeak* for Region 5 was obtained this summer. A *Dickcissel* was the first summer record for Region 5. Other rarities for the Region included Glossy Ibis and Willet.

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Abbreviations: Adks - Adirondacks; CIM - Clay Marsh, ONON; LOL - Lake Ontario littoral, OSWE; NPT - Northern Pompey Township, ONON; OnonL - Onondaga Lake; SPd - Sandy Pond, OSWE; SVB - Sylvan-Verona Beach, ONEI; UM - Utica Marsh, ONEI.

Summer Reports: **Pied-billed Grebe:** max ten UM 10-13 Jul. *Am. White Pelican:* two Oneida L 10 Jul-17 Jul (CA, mob). **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 260 SPd 13 Aug. **Am. Bittern:** three locations, Vienna ONEI 13 Jun, CIM 9 Jun, LOL 12 Jul. **Least Bittern:** max four UM 7 Aug. **Great Blue Heron:** max 127 Port Byron 8 Jul (GW). **Great Egret:** seven locations, becoming regular summer resident. **Glossy Ibis:** one Peter Scott Swamp OSWE 16 Jul-19 Jul (DF, mob). **Wood Duck:** max 200 Delta L

28 Aug. **N. Pintail**: two locations one Oneida L Jul 17, one SVB 20 Aug. **Scaup, sp.**: one Oneida L after 29 Jun, three Oneida L 24 Jul. **Oldsquaw**: injured male Oneida L through period (CA). **Com. Goldeneye**: ad male near Oneida L islands 1 Jul (CA). **Hooded Merganser**: nesting Holland Patent through period. **Com. Merganser**: nesting Holland Patent through period.

Osprey: nest with two y T Lysander 16 Jul, nest with one y T Lysander 16 Jul, third nest started T Lysander 16 Jul. **Bald Eagle**: two reports, one Rome 26 Aug, *intro*. **Cooper's Hawk**: two nesting NPT 1 Jun - 29 Jun, at least four fledged 29 Jun. **Merlin**: max two Delta L SP 28 Aug. **Peregrine Falcon**: one Oneida L 29 Aug; *intro*. **Wild Turkey**: reported by many observers. **Com. Moorhen**: max 25 UM 21 Aug. **Lesser Yellowlegs**: arr OnonL 1 Jul. **Willet**: one SVB 22 Aug (JTh), one SPd 27-30 Aug. **Ruddy Turnstone**: one Delta L 28 Aug (DC). **Red Knot**: one SPd 20 Aug (JTh). **White-rumped Sandpiper**: three locations, max two Delta L 28 Aug. **Baird's Sandpiper**: three locations, max four SPd 13 Aug. **Stilt Sandpiper**: one OnonL 11 Jul. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**: one SPd 28 Aug (DF). **Black Tern**: small numbers at three locations.

Com. Nighthawk: max 56 Syracuse 27 Aug. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: one Paris Station 17 Jun. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: one Old Forge 23 Jun (BP).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: one report T Webb 21 Jul. **Tree Swallow**: max 400 Biddlecum OSWE 9 Jul. **Bank Swallow**: max 2000+ SPd 28 Aug. **Barn Swallow**: max 1453 CIM 9 Aug. **Fish Crow**: two Syracuse 13 Aug. **Com. Raven**: one Fairfield HERK 27 Aug, unusual location. **Tufted Titmouse**: max six SVB 6 Aug. **Carolina Wren**: only report one T Scriba 16 Aug. **E. Bluebird**: max 19 OSWE 21 Jun, 400 boxes OSWE fledged 571 young.

Warbling Vireo: max 14 N Victory BBS 9 Jun. **Red-eyed Vireo**: max 41 Kasoag BBS 16 Jun. **Blue-winged Warbler**: max ten New Hartford 2 Jun. **N. Parula**: max three Old Forge 12 Jul; male Whiskey Hollow ONON 28 May through period. **Ovenbird**: max 47 Happy Valley 14 Jun. **Mourning Warbler**: max ten Remson 4 Jul (MP). **Hooded Warbler**: max seven Clinton 30 Jun, female FY 25 Jul; present at several other sites ONEI and MADI.

Scarlet Tanager: max 25 T Redfield 21 Jun. **Blue Grosbeak**: male T Palermo 19-24 Jun (RS, mob, NYSARC), second Regional record. **Dickcissel**: one Baldwinsville 5 Aug (MT), first Regional summer record. **Savannah Sparrow**: max 90 Paris 17 Jun (GH). **Grasshopper Sparrow**: only report Paris 17 Jun (GH). **Red Crossbill**: male T Sangerfield 14 Jul. **White-winged Crossbill**: male T Sangerfield 7 and 14 Jul. **Evening Grosbeak**: ten T New Haven OSWE 11 July (MK), five Fayetteville 29 Aug (KM).

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