

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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In continued contrast with the Drought of '95, rains extended into June and July, finally giving way to a sunny August. June 11-12 were especially hot, muggy days, with Plattsburgh thermometers reaching 86°F and heavy evening thunderstorms dumping rain across the Region. By mid-month, June had seen 3.25" of rain, bringing the yearly total to over 20 inches, and Lake Champlain stood at a high 98.72', covering most of the shingle beaches at the Four Brothers Islands. More downpours 3-4 July washed out railroad tracks, and by mid-month the lake had only dropped to 97.32', with annual rainfall 7.5" above normal. Chasm Falls registered a 3.5 Richter scale earthquake on 23 July, and Plattsburgh received three inches of rain the same day. More showers actually raised the lake to 97.49' by 30 July, covering most of the usual shorebird beaches. August also began cloudy and rainy, but a week of sunny, hot weather began 4 Aug, with 7 Aug the hottest day of 1996 at 89°F. Most of the month was pleasant, with the lake dropping to about 96 feet by season's end. The meteorological event with greatest impact upon the summer nesting season, however, was the late spring snowstorm of 12 May that hit the rarer nesting raptors especially hard.

Banding operations were conducted on the Four Brothers Islands 8 June - 12 July. Yellow color bands were placed on the right tarsus of 500 Ring-billed Gull chicks in cooperation with the New York City Dept. of Environmental Protection as part of the filtration avoidance plan for City reservoirs. Also banded were 71 Double-crested Cormorants, five Cattle Egrets, 81 Black-crowned Night-Heron nestlings, another 500 Ring-billed Gull chicks plus 16 adults without accompanying color bands, plus 162 Herring Gull and two Great Black-backed Gull chicks. Great Blue Heron nested for the fourth year, and the number of nests increased from three to 27. (Not coincidentally, perhaps, the two dozen pairs in the Webb Royce Swamp just 13 miles south deserted that heronry after the resident and belligerent Osprey pair usurped one of the old Great Blue Heron nests there!) A "resident" Canada Goose wearing neck collar "7LU" was accompanied by three goslings at the islands, where another pair reared two young this year.

The effect of the Mother's Day snowstorm was apparent during the first NYS DEC Osprey survey flight, when only about half of last year's sites were

active, although three new nests helped numbers somewhat. By the second flight, it appeared that only about half of those occupied had produced young.

Five Bald Eagle sites were active, including two new FRAN nests, but all failed, with up to 9" of fresh snow covering them on 12 May. An adult male eagle banded at Upper Saranac Lake during the winter was one of the nesting parents, proving that some Adirondack breeders also overwinter here.

Peregrine Falcons had a similarly difficult time, fledging just seven young, down from a dozen reared last year. Nine active eyries were monitored: Chesterfield (one fledged in '96), Elizabethtown (territorial pair), two Keene sites (one failed 12 May, the second fledged a single bird from four eggs), Moriah (one fledged), North Elba (single adult seen), Westport (two fledged), Willsboro (one fledged), and Wilmington (first attempt failed, one fledged from renesting). Mike Usai spotted an eastbound Peregrine Falcon passing the Four Brothers Islands on 8 June, apparently headed across the main lake to pigeon rich Burlington, VT, from the active Willsboro eyrie on NYS mainland cliffs. One was also chasing Mallards at the islands 8 August.

Bob Hagar "would hazard a guess that there may be dozens of nesting **Merlins** in the Adirondacks now or in the near future." Based upon this summer's numerous sightings by just a handful of birders, he's probably correct. Observations were clustered near Owls Head, Lake Placid, Paul Smiths, and Saranac Lake, with at least two young fledged in the last village. Hagar explains that on 27 August, "It was like trying to count chickadees around a feeder. They were going into white pines and coming out so fast, I really don't know how many young were raised, but I did have four in the air at one time."

In spite of high lake levels that covered many of the usual shorebird beaches, a respectable 18 species (only three fewer than the drought year of '95) were reported, and they included several local rarities and some unusually large flocks. Most sightings came from the productive Chazy Rivers area along the CLIN shoreline, others from the inland Malone Recreational Park in northern FRAN, and none from the lengthy ESSE shoreline, except from the somewhat higher shingle beaches of the Four Brothers Islands. Many of the reports were of late northbound migrants, including 14 Black-bellied Plover, 8 Semipalmated Plover, 21 Ruddy Turnstone, all three small "peeps," and 49 Short-billed Dowitchers during June. During the southbound migration, four **Stilt Sandpipers** were carefully identified: Bill Krueger had two adults and an immature at the Chazy Rivers between 5-22 August and Jan Trzeciak found another at the Malone Recreational Park on 24 August.

A relatively low total of 171 species was reported, down from 185 last summer. Some of the decline may be attributable to the wet weather which

discouraged birders, along with the loss of active observer Dean Spaulding to St. Lawrence Region 6. Noteworthy summer visitants included Great Egret, Snowy Egret, **Snow Goose**, **Brant**, **White-winged Scoter**, and **Connecticut Warbler**. Lang Stevenson had a late migrant Blackpoll Warbler at Peru, CLIN, during the second week of June.

More was learned about numbers and range of **nesting "Yellow" Palm Warblers**. Bud Lanyon banded three of seven singing males at Spring Pond Bog and Willis Brook Bog, FRAN, in July; he estimates a dozen pairs possible in that part of the Boreal Heritage Preserve. Bill Purcell found another **"Yellow" Palm Warbler** on Sabattis Bog, HAMI, on 19 June; this warbler has now been recorded on six Adirondack bogs in three counties.

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Abbreviations: APt - Ausable Point; BB - Bloomingdale Bog; CR - between the Chazy & Little Chazy Rivers; FBI - Four Brothers Islands; MRP - Malone recreational park; TLP - Tupper Lake municipal park.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Com. Loon:** two basic, one alt FBI 8 Jun, late; trans Heart L 2 Aug. **Pied-billed Grebe:** four Cedar R 7 Jun-5 Aug; nest with 6 eggs there 4 Jul (RM). **Double-crested Cormorant:** 1,184 nests FBI, up from 804 last year; ad Little Colby Pd 16 Aug (TD), unusual inland. **Great Blue Heron:** 4th consecutive year nesting on FBI, count increased from three in 1995 to 27 this year. **Great Egret:** CR 18 Jul (CM); Schuyler Falls landfill 28 Aug (J&RH). **Snowy Egret:** *three* CR 19 Jun (BK,CM). **Cattle Egret:** five banded FBI Jun. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** intro. **SNOW GOOSE:** three molting second-yr TLP 30 Jun thru (CD,TD); one ad near large flock of gulls in CR field 16 Jul (BK,CM); two FBI 2 Aug (RM), exceptional for summer. **BRANT:** max **30** Ray Brook marsh 2 Jun (TD,RH); imm CR 18 Jul (CM), similarly striking. **Canada Goose:** 120 TLP 26 Aug (TD), "a good year." **N. Shoveler:** CR 29 Aug (BK,CM), unusual here. **Gadwall:** two nests with eggs FBI 8 Jun (JP), record

number. **White-winged Scoter:** Cumberland Head 25 Aug (BK), highly unusual.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Osprey:** two feeding in freshly-hayed Wadhams field 12 Jul (DS). **Bald Eagle:** Little Tupper L 1 Jul (CD); two ad L. Titus 27 Jul (MB); two ad Mountain View 27 Jul (SD); imm Mountain View L 21 Aug (MT). **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** imm TL feeder Aug, had trouble killing Red-winged Blackbird, but "plucked it anyhow." **Cooper's Hawk:** optimist chasing Barn Swallows Utowana L 11 Jun (TD). **MERLIN:** pr Lake Placid golf course fledged 3+ y (LM); Trudeau Institute Lower Saranac L 23 Jun-5 Aug (RH et al.), fledged at least two; two juv Little Colby Pd 16 Aug; imm RR swamp, Ray Brook, 28 Aug (TD); female on same perch Owls Head firehouse 20 Jun-3 Aug (TM, JT); taking birds daily at Scheuing feeder near there 24-31 Jul (D&FS); noisy pr White Pine Camp, Osgood Pd, 1st wk Jul (HP); female in flight Paul Smith's College 21 Jul (JT); noisily after bird Paul Smiths VIC 19 Aug (JT), probably only suggestive of the increase in this nesting falcon, without benefit of any hacking. **Peregrine Falcon:** intro.; locally disappointing, especially in light of Merlin success since 1991. **Ring-necked Pheasant:** pr with 5 y Wawbeek Corners 31 Aug (TD), unusual inland and only report. **Spruce Grouse:** Catamount Mt 19 Jul (J&RH), only report. **Wild Turkey:** hen TL feeder 15 Jul thru (CD). **Com. Moorhen:** Point au Fer 2 Aug (J&RH); CR 18-31 Aug (BK, CM). **Black-bellied Plover:** max 14 CR 1 Jun; one CR 18 Jun (BK, CM). **Semipalmated Plover:** max eight CR 1 Jun; one CR 19 Jun; arr MRP 16 Aug (JT); seven CR 27 Aug (BK, CM), good numbers. **Greater Yellowlegs:** CR 17 Jul-27 Aug; max nine CR 8 Aug (BK, CM); two MRP 16-23 Aug; Indian L FRAN late Aug (JT). **Lesser Yellowlegs:** CR 16 Jul-29 Aug; max nine CR 8 Aug; three MRP 23 Aug (JT); NCCC pd, Saranac Lake, 26 Aug (TD), dam out. **Solitary Sandpiper:** two SLHS pd 22 Jul; NCCC pd 23 Aug; MRP 23-30 Aug; SL airport 31 Aug. **Spotted Sandpiper:** The Gulf CLIN 26-30 Jun (J&RH), unusual location; heard near 3,500' waterfall on Algonquin-Wright Peak trail 21 Jul (J&PT), also unusual, although confirmed nesting at nearby Wallface Pds and Flowed Land during the Atlas survey of the High Peaks. **Upland Sandpiper:** Ft. Covington 9 Jun; four ad, two chicks Stetson Rd CLIN 12 Jun; Banker & Stetson Rds 14 Jun, only suggestive of population in unbirded expanses along the Quebec border. **Ruddy Turnstone:** max 21 CR 1 Jun (BK, CM), an exceptional number. **Sanderling:** one CR 14 Aug (BK, CM), always a good find here. **Semipalmated Sandpiper:** northbound CR 1 & 19 Jun; southbound CR 24 Jul-27 Aug, with max 15 there 13 Aug; FBI 26 Jul; four MRP 16 Aug. **Western Sandpiper:** northbound CR 2

Jun; three southbound MRP 16 Aug; one MRP 23 Aug; max **four** MRP 24 Aug (JT), exceptional. **Least Sandpiper**: northbound CR 1 & 12 Jun; southbound CR 16 Jul-27 Aug; max 24 CR 16 Jul. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: one CR 13 Aug (BK), an excellent find. **Pectoral Sandpiper**: arr FBI 2 Aug (RM); CR 29 Aug (BK). **Stilt Sandpiper**: ad CR 5-6 Aug; imm CR 12-15 Aug; ad CR 22 Aug (BK); MRP 24 Aug (JT-excellent details), an unprecedented showing. **Short-billed Dowitcher**: max **49** CR 1 Jun; one CR 27 Jun, still northbound [Ed: Many of the mid to late June northbound or southbound notations are just intuitive guesses. Some have argued that most of these are birds which simply will never go far enough north to nest in the particular year.]; one CR 8-15 Aug (BK), southbound, another remarkable showing. **Com. Snipe**: still winnowing Old Forge airstrip 30 Jun (DH); six Cedar R Jun-Jul, good inland numbers; max 15 CR 14 Aug (BK). **Am. Woodcock**: flushed by weasel Moss L trail 28 Jun (DH). **Bonaparte's Gull**: 25 Cumberland Head ferry dock 19 Jun, when they should be in boreal Canada (TD); two Auger Pd ESSE 25 Jul (GH), more expected date, but unusual on inland lake. **Ring-billed Gull**: banded FBI 7 Jun 1986, band # read with binoculars there 8 Jun 1996; yellow band #141 read at Willsboro Bay boat launch 12 Jul; only 25-30 TLP since closure of Tupper Lake landfill (CD). **Herring Gull**: banded FBI 15 Jun 1991 found dead there 13 Jun 1996. **Great Black-backed Gull**: unfledged young Garden I CLIN Jun (HK), first confirmed CLIN nesting and only second site in the Adirondack-Champlain Region (although nesting has undoubtedly occurred on all four of the Four Brothers since 1975). **Com. Tern**: CR 1 Jun-13 Aug; max 15 CR 1 Aug (BK,CM), probably nesting in VT. **Black Tern**: one ad with imm CR 22 Jul (CM), suggests local breeding.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: **Black-billed Cuckoo**: Plattsburgh 3 Jul (BK). **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**: calling Mountain View dam 20 Jun (JT). **N. Saw-whet Owl**: CLIN roadkill 22 Jul (TO), unusual in that county. **Com. Nighthawk**: 2-4 over TL Jul-Aug (CD); Malone 24 Jul, only reports. **Three-toed Woodpecker**: male Helldiver Pd 29 Jun (D&RH,RK), only report. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: nest with young Moose Pd, only report submitted.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: **Olive-sided Flycatcher**: Beaver Brook, BRS BBS, Elk L, Ferd's Bog, Moose River Rd, Owls Head. **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**: BRS BBS, Elk L, Helidiver Pd, Rock Dam, Shallow L, Wakely Mt, Wheeler Pd, Whiteface Mt, typical. **Willow Flycatcher**: Military Tpk & Townline Rd, CL IN, 14 Jun (BK,CM), a good find. **Tree Swallow**: max 500+ Cedar R Flow 2-5 Aug (RM). **Cliff Swallow**: large colony Valcour Ed Ctr

Gray Jay: pr BB; one Ferd's Bog; three ads Helldiver Pd; sev Rock Dam Rd, about usual. **Marsh Wren:** two L Durant 4 Jul (RM), first sighting there. **Bicknell's Thrush:** Hurricane Mt 15 Jun; Whiteface Mt 19 Jun; Lyon Mt 12 Aug, all known peaks.

VIREOS-WARBLES: **Philadelphia Vireo:** near golf course Cedar R Rd 29 Jun (D&RH,RK), only report of this thinly distributed, but widespread Adirondack nester. **Cape May Warbler:** singing male Lake Placid golf course 2 Jun (TD,RH); The Gulf 30 Jun (J&RH), unusual along the border; two Indian L 2-5 Aug (RM). **Blackburnian Warbler:** "many" Everton Falls 7-9 Jun (KC). **Prairie Warbler:** trans White Pine Camp, Osgood Pd, 19 Aug (JT); trans APT 25 Aug (J&RH), both good finds. **"Yellow" Palm Warbler:** intro. **Bay-breasted Warbler:** two BRN BBS 21 Jun (BP); singing male Elk L 7 Jul (JP). **Blackpoll Warbler:** trans Peru 9 Jun (LS); six Wakely Mt 17 Jun (BP); two Whiteface Mt 19 Jun (BP); Wakely Mt. 29 Jun (DH); Panther Gorge & Marcy trail all expected; male 2,876' Mt. Jo 2 Aug (J&PT) somewhat low, but long-known from there; 6+ singing males 1,997' Elk L 5-7 Jul (J&SP, RW), quite low for so many, but not unexpected in light of Atlas records from the nearby Boreas River. **CONNECTICUT WARBLER:** trans Crown Point 21 Aug (J&RH-no details); trans Nun-da-ga-o Ridge 31 Aug, with feeding guild of Golden-crowned Kinglets and Yellow-rumped Warblers (J&PT), observers noting "strong eye-ring, complete light gray hood under throat, too, later on low spruce branch had stance like Ovenbird."

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:** former Plattsburgh AFB 14 Jun (MG), found during annual grassland bird survey, which was done well prior to the 17 Aug "Phish" concert. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** former PAFB 14 Jun (MG). **Lincoln's Sparrow:** The Gulf 10 Jun-26 Jul (J&RH), noteworthy, other locations expected. **White-throated Sparrow:** Pine Marten stealing eggs from Duck Hole nest late Jun (TB), score one for the mammals. **Dark-eyed Junco:** male wing-beating Eastern Chipmunk Keene 8 Jun (J&PT), score one for the birds. **Rusty Blackbird:** Moose R Rd late Jun (DH); pr BB 4 Aug (TD), only reports. **Purple Finch:** max 20+ Rand Hill 18 Aug, present at many feeders. **Pine Siskin:** seven BRN BBS 21 Jun; six Cedar R 3-7 Jul, as numbers remain low. **Evening Grosbeak:** max 30-40 Owls Head feeders; bringing young to many feeders.

Addendum: *BARN OWL*: apparent roadkill, Keese homestead, Peru CLIN 10
Feb 1996 (Lincoln Sunderland); being mounted for Point au Roche SP
collection (*fide* Rick Bruce).