

REGION 10 – MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF

603 Mead Terrace. S. Hempstead NY 11550.

ALVIN WOLLIN

4 Meadow Lane. Rockville Centre NY 11570

The Fall was mild without a warm period or a significant cold spell until mid November. The temperature just drifted down throughout the fall. There were no days over 90°F in September, over 80° in October, or over 70° in November. Temperatures did not go under freezing except for spells in mid and then late November. The first two months were normal and the last 4.6° below. What we did have was rain. All three months were significantly wetter than normal, with 4.35 inches falling on 19 October and 1.91 inches falling on 26 November: both record highs for daily precipitation. Rain cooperated and fell mostly mid week sparing the weekends when most birders were out.

Two hurricanes, Edouard and Fran brushed the Region this fall. They contributed some birding excitement without causing appreciable damage or presenting any great rarities. The best summary of results for Long Island was posted on the internet by Paul A. Buckley and with his permission we are quoting excerpts here. Other details and descriptions of the rarer birds were supplied to us by Angus Wilson and the species accounts have some additional information. Paul's report follows:

"Hurricane Edouard, Saturday 2 September

"After Edouard, for the record, nothing was found on LI except a juv **Sooty Tern** at Montauk on 2 Sept., when a few **Wilson's Storm-Petrels**, **Greater** and **Cory's shearwaters** were also seen (up to 100+ in total), plus a single **Manx** and (yes...) **Sooty Shearwaters**, and a few **Parasitic Jaegers**. But all except the **Sooty Tern** had been around for weeks, so were not Edouard birds. At Montauk on Monday 2 September winds never exceeded 35mph, and were first due N then shifting to the NW. Here there was essentially no rain.

"Hurricane Fran, Saturday 7 September

"Jones Inlet: 600+ adult **Black Skimmers** (close to the normal total LI breeding population and there were other large flocks around); Fire Island Inlet (Democrat Point): adult **Sooty Tern**, juv **Long-Tailed Jaeger**, **Audubon's Shearwater**, juv/1st winter **Black-Legged Kittiwake**; Moriches Inlet: adult **Sooty Tern**."

"Hurricane Fran, Sunday 8 September

"Jones Inlet: one adult, one juv **Sooty Tern**; Jones Beach (Zachs Bay): juv. **Sooty Tern**; Fire Island Inlet: juv **Sooty Tern** (previous day's adult's remains found, probably taken by a Red Fox seen there earlier in the week); Montauk Point: a single 1-year old **Sandwich Tern**.

"The storm brought in about 20-30 **Black Terns** along the LI South Shore, but apparently no **Royal** or **Forster's terns**, usual LI hurricane birds. Unlike after Edouard, no shearwaters or storm-petrels were found, save one **Cory's** picked up moribund at Moriches Inlet. Winds (and on the 7th, exceedingly dense fog) were steadily 10-25mph out of the E/SE from late Friday night the 6th through at least late Sunday night the 8th, but essentially no rain occurred."

Two ad and two imm **AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS** were discovered near Peconic in late Sep, then at Southampton 3 Oct. On 9 Oct two imm were seen at Mecox and two (perhaps the same) were at Towd Pt, Southampton the same day. A pair remained in the vicinity until 15 Oct.

A front on 18 Sep was followed by one of the best flight days for the season at the Fire Island Hawk Watch when over 450 raptors were observed including 100+ Ospreys. This day also produced migrating Bobolinks and Evening Grosbeaks. However, overall this was not an auspicious year for raptors. Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk and American Kestrel continue a downward spiral in migration along the outer beaches. These birds are either in trouble or have changed their movements. These species were represented by less than half the numbers of the last 13 year average.

We mentioned the increased numbers of large terns in the last report. Paul Gillen reported 20 Caspian Terns in Mecox Bay on 1 Oct. The number is large and the date is late. He also reported a Royal Tern at East Hampton on the very late date of 7 Nov. Both Royal and Caspian terns were seen by others into November this year.

The most unusual bird this season was a **White-winged Dove** found in a tree at Jones Beach West End by Ken Feustel on 29 Oct. It stayed just long enough to be photographed. A **Bell's Vireo** was seen near the Ponquogue Bridge, Shinnecock on 26 Oct by Eric Salzman. An article on this sighting will appear in *The Kingbird*. Another was reported from Central Park 18-19 Sep (NYRBA), no details.

There has been an the increase in numbers of Clay-colored Sparrow reported in the past few fall seasons. The new and better field descriptions

appearing in the literature may have been a factor. We need to monitor this trend.

Angus Wilson accompanied by Andy Guthrie, Tony Lauro and Tom Burke reported on a major flight movement the night of 25 Oct. White-throated Sparrow in numbers greater than 10,000 were estimated to be along the Ocean Highway from JBWE to RMSP on 26 Oct.

The northern finch migration was virtually nonexistent this Fall with a few scattered birds passing through along the South Shore mostly early in the morning.

Notes on identification: The recent splitting of species in the last AOU supplement requires some comments on identification. The splits offer special problems for Region 10, since we see the newly created species primarily in the fall when plumages are most difficult to separate. We are aware of the identification problems and, hopefully, the species accounts which follow this section reflect this concern. Splits which affect the Region and have special identification problems are touched on below.

There is considerable confusion in separating Gray-cheeked Thrush and Bicknell's Thrush. Substantiation of fall migrating birds is still open to question, at present, at least for us. We believe details should be supplied with reports to help confirm any fall sightings.

With the former Sharp-tailed Sparrow now split into Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, birders are faced with separating the two species. While the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) is the only breeding sharp-tailed in the state it is now realized that Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*A. nelsoni*) occurs in winter as well, despite the lack of specimen evidence. Matters further get complicated when birders try to refine *A. nelsoni* down to one of its three subspecies, something made even more difficult by the secretive nature of the bird. The real question, of course, is what have we been reporting on Christmas Counts during the past years?

Another identification problem we are faced with is separating Baltimore Oriole and Bullock's Oriole. Almost all records of the latter species are of fall and winter birds, where there is the difficulty of separation from dull female Baltimore Orioles. Some field guides are not too helpful and the two species are known to hybridize. Look for the line thru the eye in the area of the lores in Bullock's, in addition to other field marks.

Contributors: Bob Adamo, Steven Biasetti, Jim Ash, Howard Boltson, Paul A. Buckley, Thomas W. Burke, Bertel Bruun, Dale Dyer, Lester Feldman, Henry F. Flamm, S. Friedman, John J. Fritz, Ken Feustel, Tom Fiore, Doug Futuyma, Paul H. Gillen, Andy Guthrie, Robert J. Kurtz, Anthony J. Lauro (AJL), Emanuel Levine, Allan Lindberg, Patricia Lindsay, Hugh McGuinness, Peter Martin, Beverly Prentice, Joan Quinlan, Herbert H. Roth, Eric Salzman,

Seymour Schiff, Lore J. Schore, Richard Veit, Steve Walter, Angus Wilson (AnW), Alvin Wollin (AW).

Abbreviations: CA-Calverton; CP-Central Park; CLP-Clove Lake Park, SI; CU- Cupsogue Co Park ; DP-Democrat Point, Fire Island; FI-Fire Island; FP-Forest Park; JBWR-Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JBCH-Jones Beach; JBWE-Jones Beach West End; JNIN-Jones Inlet; LI-Long Island; MOB-Many Observers; MEB-Mecox Bay; MP-Montauk Point; MOR-Moriches; NYRBA-New York Rare Bird Alert; PP-Prospect Park; PtL-Point Lookout; RMSP-Robert Moses State Park; SHIN-Shinnecock Inlet; SI-Staten Island; TOB-Tobay ocean front; ZB-Zachs Bay.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Horned Grebe:** first SHIN 17 Nov. **Red-necked Grebe:** MP 10,11,16,30 Nov. **Cory's Shearwater:** 50 MP 2 Sep; 14 DP 8 Sep; 20 MP 18 Sep; six MEB 13 Oct; MP 22 Oct; three MP 9 Nov. **Greater Shearwater:** two MP 2 Sep; two MP 18 Sep. **Sooty Shearwater:** two MP 2 Sep; TOB 24 Oct. **MANX SHEARWATER:** MP 2 Sep (AnW, AL); RMSP 8 Oct (HR, LS). **AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER:** DP 7 Sep (AnW, AG). **AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN:** two ad and two imm near Peconic late Sep; then Southampton 3 Oct; two imm MEX 9 Oct; two (perhaps the same) Towd Pt. Southampton 9 Oct. **Brown Pelican:** SHIN off Dune Rd 16 Sep (BB). **Great Cormorant:** JBWR East Pond 7 Sep; we are beginning to see this species earlier and later than during the winter. **Am. Bittern:** CP 12-13 Oct; others south shore. **Least Bittern:** JBWR 8 Sep. **Cattle Egret:** JBWR 15 Sep; Horse Farm, MP 9 Nov thru. **Tundra Swan:** 14 Hook Pond, E. Hampton 6 Nov; ten on 21 Nov; two JBWR 17-24 Nov. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** MEB 10 Nov (TB). **Snow Goose:** 4000 over CP 27 Nov. **Eurasian Wigeon:** JBWR 24 Sep thru; Hook Pond 9 Nov thru. **Com. Eider:** 25-30 Jones Inlet 7 Nov; 1000 MP 3 Nov; 3000 9 Nov; 7500+ 30 Nov. **King Eider:** MP 16 Nov. **Harlequin Duck:** one PtL 2 Nov; increasing to five 16 Nov thru; MP 9-10 Nov; SH 23 Nov.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Turkey Vulture:** Clove Lake Pk, SI 10 Sep. **Mississippi Kite:** CP 7 Sep (TF) and 8 Oct (SF *fide* NYRBA). **Bald Eagle:** SI 2 Sep; Jamesport 19 Sep; five CP 19 Sep; ad JBWE 3 Oct (unusual, most migrants on the strip are imm); RMSP 12 Nov. **N. Harrier:** one half the usual numbers past the beach watches. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** half the usual numbers. **N. Goshawk:** JBWE 16 Oct; others. **Rough-legged Hawk:** Ft. Tilden Hawk Watch 14 Oct; CP and JBWE early Nov. **Golden Eagle:** Ft. Tilden Hawk Watch 14, 29 Oct; good numbers CP Hawk Watch. **American Kestrel:** half the usual numbers. **Am. Golden-Plover:** from 76 Doctor's Path, Riverhead 4 Sep increasing to 250 18 Sep; others along South Shore; Bridgehampton 29-30 Nov. **Semipalmated Plover:** nine DP 12 Oct. **Piping Plover:** eight DP 29 Sep, last report. **Am. Oystercatcher:** ten wintering across from JBCH fishing piers.

Am. Avocet: JBWR 1-21 Sep. **Greater Yellowlegs:** 500 Massapequa Preserve 8 Oct. a very large number for this location. **Upland Sandpiper:** CA 2 to 8 Sep. **Hudsonian Godwit:** two JBWR 8 Sep; CA 18 Sep. **Marbled Godwit:** two to four JBWR 1-21 Sep; 26 Oct to 24 Nov; SHIN 10-11 Nov. **Baird's Sandpiper:** JBWR 1-15 Sep. **Pectoral Sandpiper:** 15 CA 6 Sep; 175 CA 18 Sep; 40 CA 19 Sep. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** 8+ Cutchogue 20 Sep. last date this site. **Wilson's Phalarope:** JBWR 15-28 Sep. **Red-necked Phalarope:** JBWE 8 Sep. **Pomarine Jaeger:** FI 13 Sep; MP 30 Sep; off RMSP 8 and 14 Oct; two MP 19 Oct. three MP 20 Oct. **Parasitic Jaeger:** FI early to mid Sep; MP early Sep. then sporadically late Sep to early Nov. **LONG-TAILED JAEGER:** juv DP 7 Sep (AnW, AG). **Black-headed Gull:** Miller Field, SI 23 Nov(RV). **Bonaparte's Gull:** five summered at JBWE till late Aug and few appeared after; a small flock appeared in Jones Inlet Oct 31 but no groups thereafter. **Iceland Gull:** MP 29 Nov. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** DP 7 Sep; 3rd year bird TOB 22 Sep; three MEB 28 Sep; CP 8 Oct. JBWE 12-14 Oct; MP 20-22 Oct; five near Hook Pond 19 Oct; two 9 Nov; two MP 16 Nov; JBWE 11-17 Nov. **Black-legged Kittiwake:** juv/1st winter DP 7 Sep; MP 18 Sep; three MP 16 Nov; six MP 30 Nov. **Caspian Tern:** many birds along South Shore early Sep to 7 November. **Royal Tern:** many birds along South Shore early Sep to mid Oct; ocean off E. Hampton 7 Nov. late date (PG). **Sandwich Tern:** MP 8 Sep. **Forster's Tern:** 40 MEB 18 Sep. **Black Tern:** 20-30 along South Shore associated with Hurricane Fran. **SOOTY TERN:** juv MP 2 Sep; ad DP 7 Sep; ad MOR 7 Sep; ad and juv JNIN 8 Sep; ZB 8 Sep. **Black Skimmer:** 600+ JNIN 7 Sep; others same period, aftermath of Hurricane Fran. **Dovekie:** MP 30 Nov. **Razorbill:** MP 9 Nov; two MP 29 Nov; 12 MP 30 Nov. **Black Guillemot:** MP 29-30 Nov (MOB).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: **WHITE-WINGED DOVE:** JBWE 29 Oct (photo to *American Birds*) (KF). **Snowy Owl:** three JBWE 23 Oct. one or more thru; Dune Road 29 Nov thru; others in Nov at Smith Pt Pk, Eatons Neck, CU, Mecox. **Long-eared Owl:** Gilgo 26 Oct; CP 17 Nov thru. **Short-eared Owl:** CU 3 Nov; Great Kills Pk, SI 6 Nov. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** a few mid Nov on Jones strip; CP 28 Nov. **Chimney Swift:** RMSP 11 Oct. **Red-headed Woodpecker:** a dozen birds mid Oct to mid Nov in movement along south shore inc SI and NY city parks.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: **Ash-throated Flycatcher:** SHIN 10 Nov (JA, HMG *fide* ES); RMSP 10 Nov (PL); JBWE 10 Nov (AJL). **Western Kingbird:** JBWE 15 Sep; FI 19 Sep; Gilgo 30 Sep; JBWE 4 Oct. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** few birds this year. **Sedge Wren:** JBWE 30 Oct (DF). **Northern Wheatear:** Dune Rd. SHIN 16 Sep (BB). **Am. Robin:** 1000 FI Hawk Watch 12 Nov; very large flights of this species this fall along the beaches. **Am. Pipit:** fly over

JBWE and RMSP mid Oct to late Nov. **N. Shrike**: Bridgehampton 29 Nov; Nissequogue River, Smithtown 30 Nov.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: **BELL'S VIREO**: near Ponquogue Bridge, Shinnecock 26 Oct (ES), supported with lengthy details. **Warbling Vireo**: East Quogue 5 Oct, late date. **Golden-winged Warbler**: ZB 14 Sep; three PP 15 Sep. **Orange-crowned Warbler**: scattered reports 29 Sep to 29 Nov. **N. Parula**: East Quogue 22 Oct, latest date. **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: JBWE Nov 3; Tiffany Creek Reserve (Oyster Bay) 6 Nov (AL). **Yellow-throated Warbler**: CP 1 Oct. **Prothonotary Warbler**: male CP 8-18 Sep; female CP 1 Oct. **Worm-eating Warbler**: Clove Lake Pk, SI 11 Sep. **Connecticut Warbler**: CP 16 and 29 Sep; JBWR 21 Sep; Quogue 26 Sep; FI banding station 30 Sep.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Scarlet Tanager**: last 12 Oct. **Blue Grosbeak**: two MP 8 Sep; CP 18 Sep, 8 Oct; RMSP 11 Oct; PP 22 Oct. **Dickcissel**: MP dump 8 Sep; ZB 14 Sep; two MP dump 29 Sep; Shinnecock 3 Oct; six RMSP 12 Oct; Gilgo 1, 16 Oct; two JBWE 5, 20, 26 Oct, 2 Nov. **Clay-colored Sparrow**: CP 21 Sep; Gilgo 22 Sep; JBWE 12, 15, 18 Oct; CP 20 Oct; two MP 27 Oct; JBWE 3 Nov. **Vesper Sparrow**: more migrants along the Jones Beach strip this year. **Lark Sparrow**: CP 11 Sep; RMSP 14-22 Sep; CB 14 Sep; Gilgo 30 Sep; CP 20 Sep; JBCH 18-24 Oct. **Grasshopper Sparrow**: JBCH 17, 20 Oct; RMSP 26 Oct. **Henslow's Sparrow**: Riis Park 26 Oct (DD *fide* NYRBA). **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow**: 25 Oak Beach Marsh 11 Oct (KF). **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow**: four *subvirgatus* subspecies between Ponquogue Bridge and SHIN 5 Oct (ES); five Oak Beach 21 Oct; two CB 26 Oct. **Lincoln's Sparrow**: three MP dump 8 Sep; JBWE 11-15 Oct; ZB 12 Oct; others CP, RMSP. **White-throated Sparrow**: 10,000+ Jones Beach strip and RMSP (AnW *et al*). **Lapland Longspur**: two JBWE 4 Nov; seven CB 23 Nov; seven JBWE 24 Sep, three 30 Nov. **Snow Bunting**: JBWE 11 Nov thru. **Bobolink**: early Sep to late Oct. **Boat-tailed Grackle**: hundreds at JBWR roost 24 Nov. **Baltimore Oriole**: to Nov 20. **Bullock's Oriole**: female JBWE 26 Oct (DF). **Red Crossbill**: ten JBWE 26 Oct; two JBWE 2 Nov. **Pine Siskin**: 12 JBWE 2 Nov; six JBWE 3 Nov; some CP 2 Nov. **Evening Grosbeak**: three FI 20 Sep.

syschiff@ascensionet.com

Later in the season it became obvious that 21 Mine open pit was continuing to be used by the ravens for night time roosting and day time resting. They seem to know instinctively that this is a safe haven.

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