

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

WILLIE D'ANNA

2257 Cayuga Drive Extension, Niagara Falls NY 14304-4522

After another summer without a 90 degree day, September could not even muster 80 degrees - the first time that has occurred in 22 years. In 1997 only 23 days reached 80 degrees, the fewest in 55 years at Buffalo - normal is 51 days. September's average temperature of 60.5°F was 1.5° below normal. Precipitation was one half inch above normal thanks in large part to 1.37 inches that fell on the 29th, a record for that date. A good count of nocturnal migrant thrushes on the 23rd was followed by a "fallout" in ALLE on the 24th (VP). Good days for passerines were noted on 14 and 27 September around Buffalo and Niagara Falls. October started out mild but the second half of the month found a return to cool and even cold temperatures pulling the monthly average down 0.5 degrees below normal. Precipitation was 0.8 inches below normal but included an early snowfall on the 22nd, the fifth earliest measurable snow in 50 years. The day before, the Southern Tier received a few inches of lake effect snow. According to the National Weather Service, fall foliage color did not peak until the end of October, exceptionally late. At an average of 37.6°F, November was 2.5° below normal and was also the ninth month in the last ten to log below normal temperatures. At 4.32 inches precipitation was only 0.5 inches above normal. However, 16.5 inches of snow made this the third snowiest November on record; 9.5 inches fell on the 14th and the ground remained snow covered the rest of the month. Contrasting considerably with Buffalo, Amity Lake in ALLE was 3.6 inches above normal precipitation in September and 4°F above normal in November (VP). Wild food was noted as plentiful in ALLE including a good crop of spruce cones. White-winged Crossbills, however, utilized mainly white pine cones this season instead of their traditional favorite, spruce.

The 62nd annual Buffalo Ornithological Society October Bird Count was held on the 12th and was compiled by Gerry Rising, Mike Hamilton, and Terry Yonker. The 151 species found equaled the decade average while the nearly 200,000 individuals was about 50% above the decade average. A large count of European Starling (78,758 versus a decade average of 40,273) was the main influence on the total number of individuals. Positive notes included all time high counts for White-winged Scoter (596), Great Horned Owl (26), Barred Owl (11), Red-bellied Woodpecker (46), and Common Raven (17). A count of 13 Carolina Wrens was the highest since 1992 when a record 24 were recorded. Although not quite as fast a recovery as the stock market, this species has made a rapid comeback from the crashes of winters 92-93 and 93-94. The bad news from this year's count included 16 Greater Scaup (lowest since the 60's), 53 Am. Kestrels (lowest since the 60's), 4 Common Terns (lowest since the 50's), 688

Cedar Waxwings (lowest since the 70's), and a decade minimum of 601 House Finches. The only real surprise to me in all of this is Great Horned Owl, a species I have previously flagged at least three times for low numbers. Light winds and greater observer effort may be the explanation for this apparent reversal.

The Batavia Sewage Lagoons continue to rival the Niagara River as the premier location for waterfowl. Record counts of N. Shoveler (400, previous high 238 here last year) and Ruddy Duck (1139, previous high 344 Chautauqua Lake 24 Nov 1972) were the highlights.

Shorebirds were of interest at several inland sites, especially the Countryside Sand and Gravel Pits, the Batavia Sewage Lagoons, Allegheny Reservoir, and Allegany S.P. Although, by Region-wide standards, numbers were not particularly impressive, they were good for these locations and local birders made the most of their rare opportunity.

On the Niagara River, the number of Bonaparte's Gulls and overall gull diversity was down, only 12 species being reported for the season. However, a number of possible hybrids kept birders' interests up, especially for those who wanted to tag the name of a rare species on a few of the odd gulls. While figuring out Great Black-backed x Herring Gull and Glaucous x Herring Gull (the latter known as "Nelson's Gull") is not too difficult, most of the possible hybrids defied attempts at identification. The many races of Herring Gull were also considered but most were too dissimilar. One, however, was believed to be a nominate race Herring Gull from Scandinavia but, unfortunately, photographs were not obtained. While most of these odd gulls were pink-legged, a couple had pale yellow legs and all had mantles between Herring and Lesser Black-backed gulls in darkness. Some of these birds were actually identified as California Gulls. You could hardly blame the birder who found one of these slightly darker gulls with yellow legs, a black mark on the bill, and a streaked and rounded head when he called out his life California Gull. A second look revealed the bird had a yellow iris!

This fall was one of the best in many years for winter finches. The rare White-winged Crossbill was the star, but with good showings by Common Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, and Red Crossbill, too. Pine Grosbeak also appeared though in small numbers. Except for the redpoll, all of these species arrived early which is typical for an invasion year. Anticipation of a winter filled with these colorful finches was high. However, a poor cone crop, with the one exception of white pine, leaves the winter status of the crossbills, at least, in doubt.

This is my last report as Regional Editor. I want to thank all the contributors over the years who, by going out into the field and sending in their records, are the real writers of this column. Several people made a special effort on a consistent basis and deserve mention here. Vivian Pitzrick never missed a month and her reports are a model of neatness and accuracy with included notes

on the season and the weather. Gerry Rising, computer sage, put together all the Buffalo Ornithological Society's many counts so that meaningful comparisons could be easily made. Bill Watson and Mike Morgante, two of the most active birders in the Region, supplied volumes of interesting records. Joe Thill provided the Buffalo weather data every month. Betsy Brooks sent in her banding records along with her regular reports. David Suggs, who orchestrates the well done Buffalo Rare Bird Alert, mailed me monthly transcripts of the tape. Bob Andrie and Fran Rew, the B.O.S. Statisticians, gave me access to the Society's many monthly records, which are very ably compiled by Mike Morgante. Finally, thanks to the Allegany County Bird Club and the Jamestown Audubon Society for sending me their newsletters, arrangements for which were made by Vivian Pitzrick and Bob Sundell, respectively. I shall miss this job, which I have enjoyed immensely, and the connections it has given me to the many birders in the Region. I know that you will support the new Regional Editor in the same enthusiastic manner you have me.

The new Editor is **Richard Miga**. Please send in all future reports to Richard at **38 Elm St., Fredonia, N.Y. 14063** or E-mail at **REMELM2463@AOL.COM**. See you in the field!

Contributors: Robert Andrie, Tim Baird, Molly Barton, Gordon Bellerby, Ned Brinkley, Robert Brock, William Broderick, Elizabeth Brooks, Bruce Chilton, Glenn Coady, Willie D'Anna, Michael Davis, Carl Dickerson, Dean DiTommaso, Brett Ewald, Kurt Fox, Walt Franklin, Mike Hamilton, Tom Harper, Barbara Henderson, Paul Hess, Jane Heyer, Lyle Hotchkiss, Alec Humann, Dave Junkin, Brendan Klick, Hans Kunze, Mike Morgante, Cathy Mueller, Patrick O'Donnell, Tom O'Donnell, Susan O'Donnell, Michael Pitzrick, Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Frances Rew, Gerald Rising, Donald Roberson, Olga Rosche, William Ruscher, Bert Schweigert, Gail Seamans, Audrey Spencer, David Suggs (Buffalo RBA), Debra Suggs, Joe Thill (weather data), Michael Turisk, William Watson, Larry Wilson, Jim Wojewodzki, Peter Yoerg, Mike Zebehazy

Abbreviations: BSL-Batavia Sewage Lagoons GENE; BOSOC-Buffalo Ornithological Society October Count, 12 Oct; BRBA-Buffalo Rare Bird Alert; CSG-Countryside Sand and Gravel pits, T Dayton CATT; DH-Dunkirk Harbor, City of Dunkirk; INWR-Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; NF-Niagara Falls; NPP-Niagara Power Project on Niagara River, Town of Lewiston; NR-Niagara River; Tift NP-Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo.

LOONS-WATERFOWL

Red-throated Loon: arr T Yates 25 Oct; max 85 T Somerset 11 Nov, good count; T Stockton CATT 15 Nov (BRBA), rare inland.

Com. Loon: arr Fort Niagara SP & T Wilson 21 Sep.

Horned Grebe: BSL 4 Sep (WW), very early, but one seen L Ontario in Aug.

Red-necked Grebe: arr T Yates 19 Oct; BSL 1 Nov, only report away from L Ontario.

Eared Grebe: 2 BSL 1 Sep-19 Oct (mob!), originally found 31 Aug.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 1070 Buckhorn I SP 13 Sep (WW), short of last year's record.

Am. Bittern: last 2 ALLE BOSOC.

Least Bittern: last 2 Tift NP 13 Sep.

Great Egret: max 10 BSL 4 Sep & 19 INWR 26 Sep, high counts; last 2 INWR 19 Oct.

Cattle Egret: T Porter 9 Nov (SO!,TO), about the sixth fall record, most in Nov.

Green Heron: last 3 BOSOC.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: INWR 4 Sep, only report away from Buffalo vicinity.

Snow Goose: arr 4 BOSOC; eight other reports.

Brant: arr and max 170 T Somerset & T Yates 25 Oct, good count; Woodlawn Beach SP 25 Oct, much less frequent on L Erie than on L Ontario.

Tundra Swan: arr Amity L ALLE 10 Oct (VP,MP), early; max 300 Chautauqua L CHAU 16 Nov.

Gadwall: max 60 INWR 31 Oct (JH), high count.

N. Shoveler: 40 BSL 1 Sep, high early count; 400 BSL 19 Oct (MM), record max.

N. Pintail: max 100 BSL 1 Nov.

Green-winged Teal: max 37 Allegheny Res, high count for location.

Canvasback: arr 2 BSL 19 Oct; max 4000 NF-NR 15 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: 200 BSL & 150 NF-NR 1 Nov, max counts.

Greater Scaup: 16 BOSOC, lowest count since the 60s; max 5000 NF-NR 15 Nov.

Lesser Scaup: max 300 BSL 1 Nov.

King Eider: 2 Golden Hill SP 11 Oct WD,BP), rare.

eider species: 2 T Somerset 25 Oct (MM), rare.

Harlequin Duck: T Somerset 8 Nov (MM), rare.

Surf Scoter: arr 2 Golden Hill SP 4 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: arr T Wilson 21 Sep; 596 BOSOC, count record; 2 BSL 18 Oct & 7 CSG 27 Nov, unusual inland.

Black Scoter: arr T Somerset 11 Oct.

Oldsquaw: arr 27 BOSOC.

Bufflehead: arr 5 BSL 18 Oct.

Com. Goldeneye: arr 2 T Yates BOSOC.

Hooded Merganser: max 86 INWR 31 Oct, good count.

Com. Merganser: 3 arr away from Allegheny Res. CSG 28 Sep.

Red-breasted Merganser: arr 12 T Somerset 11 Oct.

Ruddy Duck: arr away from BSL Tift NP 1 Oct; record max 1139 BSL 1 Nov (WW); many reports, especially from Southern tier.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max up to 6 Allegheny Res.; numerous reports.

N. Goshawk: T Somerset 9 Nov (MT!,BP,WD), rare.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr T Yates 19 Oct; 5 locations CATT; only reports.

Am. Kestrel: 53 BOSOC tied last year's count, lowest since the 60's.

Merlin: CSG 14 Sep (BS!,FR!,WW!), rare inland.

Peregrine Falcon: 5 reports NR and Great Lakes; good showing.

Com. Moorhen: last BSL 26 Oct.

Am. Golden-Plover: max 115 T Dayton 14 Sep & 75 T Clarence 13 Sep, high counts; last T Dayton 26 Oct.

AM. AVOCET: Woodlawn Beach SP 1 Nov (MZ!,RB!,NYSARC), same site as last Aug record and first record outside May-Aug range.

Whimbrel: Lakeside Beach SP 14 Sep (WR), rare.

Hudsonian Godwit: Allegany SP 26 Oct (TB!,BS!), about the 12th record.

White-rumped Sandpiper: T Alien ALLE 12 Oct (LH), good find.

Purple Sandpiper: two NR-NF 30 Nov, only report.

Dunlin: several BSL, CSG, Allegany SP, Allegheny Res., NF-NR, good total & more widespread than usual.

Com. Snipe: 19 T Dayton 5 Oct, high fall count.

phalarope species: T Hamburg 30 Sep (RA), only report.

Parasitic Jaeger: imm T Hamburg 30 Sep (RA!); ad Woodlawn Beach SP 30 Sep (MT!), birds pushed in close by L Erie gale.

jaeger species: Woodlawn Beach SP 30 Sep (MT!).

Franklin's Gull: 1-2 NR-Buffalo 13 Sep - 9 Oct, only report.

Little Gull: max 5 T Somerset 11 Nov, high count away from NR.

Bonaparte's Gull: relatively low numbers on NR.

CALIFORNIA GULL: ad Reservoir SP NIAG 20 Sep (BP,WD!,NYSARC), earliest ever, previously early date in Nov; ad NPP 23,27 Nov (BP,WD!, NYSARC), sixth consecutive year on the NR.

Thayer's Gull: a few NPP and NF through Nov.

Iceland Gull: arr NR-NF 15 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: ad NR-NF 3 Sep (WW!), unseasonal records increasing; probably over a dozen individuals on NR in Nov, all ages.

Glaucous Gull: arr NR-NF 27 Nov.

Black-legged Kittiwake: imm Golden Hill SP 11 Nov (BP,WD!); NR-NF 29 Nov (BP!); rare but regular.

Sabine's Gull: juv NPP-NR 16 Sep; ad NR-NF 1 Nov (GC), rare plumage; only reports.

Com. Tern: CSG 14 Sep, rare inland; 4 BOSOC, lowest since the 50's.

Forster's Tern: 2-1 NR-Buffalo 6-20 Sep; CSG 5 Oct (BK), unusual inland.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: banded T Alfred 14 Sep (EB), rarely found in fall.

Great Horned Owl: 26 BOSOC, count record.

Snowy Owl: none.

Barred Owl: 11 BOSOC, count record.

Long-eared Owl: arr Tift NP 19 Oct, early & much rarer along L Erie than L Ontario; Four Mile Creek SP 2 Nov, only reports.

Com. Nighthawk: last two Buffalo 8 Oct.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Tift NP 20 Sep; 1 BOSOC, only reports.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 46 BOSOC, count record.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr away from breeding areas Tift NP 21 Sep.

Downy Woodpecker: 263 BOSOC, decade max.

Hairy Woodpecker: 49 BOSOC, decade max.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS

Willow Flycatcher: calling Amity L ALLE 16 Sep (VP!), rarely found after Aug.

"Traill's" Flycatcher: Tillman WMA ERIE 13 Sep (MM).

N. Shrike: arr Greenwood ALLE 31 Oct.

Philadelphia Vireo: last two Tift NP 1 Oct.

Blue Jay: partially leucistic bird T Amity 24 Sep (CD,VP).

Com. Raven: 17 BOSOC, all in ALLE & CATT, count record.

Purple Martin: last BSL 19 Sep.

N. Rough-winged Swallow: max 500 Goat I 7 Sep.

Bank Swallow: last BSL 5 Oct (MM!), late.

Barn Swallow: last BSL 19 Oct (MM!,WW!), continues trend of late sightings.

Cliff Swallow: BSL 6 Sep, very uncommon after Aug.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 12 T Wilson 7 Sep, good count; 147 BOSOC, decade max.

Carolina Wren: 13 BOSOC after none last year, highest count since peak year in 1992.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr away from breeding areas Tift NP & Woodlawn Beach SP 20 Sep.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr 2 T Porter 21 Sep.

Gray-checked Thrush: arr Fort Niagara SP 14 Sep; max 12 night migrants over Buffalo 23 Sep, high count.

Swainson's Thrush: max 43 night migrants over Buffalo 23 Sep, high count.

Hermit Thrush: arr away from breeding areas T Porter & T Wilson 28 Sep.

European Starling: 78758 BOSOC, decade max.

Am. Pipit: arr multiple locations NIAG & CATT 21 Sep; last 3 T Dayton 23 Nov, late.

Bohemian Waxwing: 4 Golden Hill SP 16 Nov, (MM!,WD!), rare.

Cedar Waxwing: 688 BOSOC, lowest count since the 1970's.

WARBLERS

"Brewster's" Warbler: Wilson-Tuscarora SP 13 Sep, only report.

Orange-crowned Warbler: arr T Lewiston 28 Sep.

N. Parula: arr 3 locations NIAG 14 Sep.

Pine Warbler: arr 2 Goat I NIAG 14 Sep.

Palm Warbler: arr 2 Goat I NIAG 6 Sep; max 15 Goat I 14 Sep, high fall count; last Tillman WMA 13 Oct.

"Yellow" Palm Warbler: banded T Alfred 20 Oct (EB!), rarely recorded though probably overlooked.

Mourning Warbler: last Tift NP 1 Oct.
Hooded Warbler: last INWR 26 Sep.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr 3 T Tonawanda 24 Oct.

Chipping Sparrow: last T Darien feeder 19 Nov, late but lingerers and wintering birds more frequent in recent years.

Vesper Sparrow: 1 BOSOC, continues low counts for this species, 62 year count average is still 74 despite recent lows.

Fox Sparrow: arr Buckhorn I SP 11 Oct; more reports than usual late Oct & Nov.

White-throated Sparrow: arr away from breeding areas, 10 T Alfred 6 Sep.

White-crowned Sparrow: arr Tift NP 24 Sep.

Dark-eyed Junco: arr away from breeding areas, 12 Fort Niagara SP 21 Sep.

Lapland Longspur: arr T Dayton 5 Oct (BS!), slightly early; T Yates 1-18 Nov; 2 T Houghton ALLE 15 Nov; more reports than usual.

Snow Bunting: arr 2 T Dayton 5 Oct (BS!), early; max 300 T Yates 16 Nov.

E. Meadowlark: 176 BOSOC, decade max, it's nice to reverse the downward trend.

Rusty Blackbird: Amity L ALLE 24 Nov, on the late side.

Pine Grosbeak: 2 T Lewiston BOSOC (BE!), third ever BOSOC; 1 Amity L ALLE 31 Oct (VPI); 2 T Somerset 8 Nov; T Wilson 18 Nov; good total.

Purple Finch: more reports than usual though not especially numerous.

House Finch: 601 BOSOC, decade min.

Red Crossbill: Tift NP 8 Sep (AH!), very early; Allegany SP 1 Nov; 6 T Wilson 8 Nov; 1 T Wilson 18 Nov; good total.

White-winged Crossbill: arr Allegany SP 19 Oct (BS!), early; max 42 Allegany SP 1 Nov; 20 T Somerset 16 Nov. Many reports, including a few at feeders, perhaps record numbers. Mostly on L Ontario plain and at Allegany SP, usually feeding on white pine.

Com. Redpoll: arr 75 Golden Hill SP 25 Oct; max 250 T Somerset 8 Nov; most reports from L Ontario plain.

Pine Siskin: arr T Colden 5 Sep (JW!), early; multiple reports thru.

Evening Grosbeak: arr Golden Hill SP 4 Oct (WD!,PO), second earliest ever and earliest since mid-40's; max 100 Beaver Meadow Wildlife Refuge 5 Nov; numerous & widespread, especially south & east of Buffalo.

==