

REGION 10-MARINE

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The weather for the season was warmer at the start, by 2°F for September, normal in the middle, and slightly warmer at the end. There were no extreme excursions in temperatures. Daytime highs were within reasonable bounds, as were nighttime lows. We were well into early November before the thermometer dipped below 40°. There was no semblance of fall, with one season just gradually drifting into another. The first cold snap occurred at Christmas, along with 1-2 inches of snow.

With the warm weather there was a gradually decreasing amount of rain. September was 0.44 inches below normal, October 0.79 inches below, and November 2.99 inches below. An inch fell on 26 November, preventing the month from being the second driest on record. Fall color was at least two weeks late, and the fall of leaves at least three.

This fall was notable for the extended mild weather and its effects on migration. Many birds appeared to drift through our Region in an ongoing dribble, while others were in noticeably larger than usual numbers. Both Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Orange-crowned Warblers, to name two, were widespread and stayed late. Large sparrow flights were absent for the most part; either because there were fewer birds or because the migration was spread over a longer period. Red-breasted Nuthatches also were scarce.

Some less common species were seen more frequently and in greater numbers, e.g. Red-headed Woodpecker, American Pipit, Dickcissel, and Blue Grosbeak. Most pipits fly over in migration and are identified by call. This year was unusual because of numerous reports of them feeding on the ground from Staten Island to the Hamptons. As for Dickcissel, for a few days there were four at the Jones Beach Coast Guard Station, and there were many other widespread reports.

The Region had its share of rare birds. Not just rare, but highly unusual. The best bird of the Fall, just as it was for the Summer Season, had to be the **Broad-billed Sandpiper**. It barely got into the season being last seen at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge on 4 September. Other rarities were; a **Black Vulture** at the Staten Island landfill on 3 September, a bird

that should be looked for in our Region as it increases to the west and north of our area; a **Swainson's Hawk** on Great Gull Island, the first substantiated record for Long Island (photographed and documented); a **Long-billed Curlew** at The Sore Thumb; an adult and an immature **Sabine's Gull** at Democrat Pt. and Shinnecock, respectively; and two Cave Swallows at Riis Park. Some additional details follow.

Joseph DiCostanzo sent us the following report for the **Swainson's Hawk** (slightly edited here). "On the weekends of 18-20 September and again on 2-4 October, Helen Hays was out on Great Gull Island for some maintenance work. The group found a very dark, very tame buteo on the island. It also frequently hovered while feeding. A number of pictures were taken of the bird. It was a while before the pictures were sent to Helen here at the Museum. I saw the pictures for the first time Monday evening and immediately knew it was something good - my first thought being young Swainson's. Yesterday I looked at skins with Dean Amadon, George Barrowclough, Carol Griffiths, and Manny Levine here at the Museum and everyone agrees the bird is a young Swainson's Hawk. It is a young of the rufous or dark morph. The bird was very dark below with pale, barred undertail coverts. When perched the wings extend to the end of the tail, actually projecting slightly beyond in one photo. The five photos I have seen so far are quite lovely and there are apparently some more that we haven't received yet. The observers for the bird should be listed as Helen Hays, Lisa Neild, Melissa McClure, John and Margie Haggerty. We will be writing up a report for NYSARC".

The **Long-billed Curlew** was seen by John Fritz on the beach, flying westward from the Sore thumb area near Oak Beach on 23 September. There were no subsequent sightings. We received a copy of the NYSARC report.

Isaac Grant & Gene Herskovics reported seeing a **Cave Swallow** flying around at the entrance to the Riis Park Golf Course on Friday 27 November. It was later seen in the afternoon, and there were a two on Saturday, the next day. They were observed by many and photos were taken. The birds were not relocated on Sunday or subsequently. This is the second record for the state.

To the more mundane, birders on the morning of 4 October at Jones Beach saw hundreds of Snow Geese migrating all morning. These birds were moving south in unprecedented numbers and were seen and noted by observers all the way back to New England. The following is indicative of what was going on that day with first, details from the East and then to the North. Eric Salzman reported: "a spectacular flight of geese all day today over our Weesuck Creek/Shinnecock Bay property starting

almost at first light and continuing well on into the night. The early waves at dawn and the late ones at dusk were almost all Snow Geese, literally wave after wave with hundreds and thousands of birds flying high overhead. Of the flocks that could be well observed, numbers of 'Blue' Geese were also seen — something on the order of 5% to 10% overall. These flights were virtually all from the northeast to the southwest. These birds apparently come down the New England coast, cross Long Island Sound to the North Fork, and come down the Gardiner's and Peconic Bay system, crossing over to the South Shore at Flanders, a route that brings them right over our heads".

Richard L. Ferren, from Rhode Island reported (from the RI internet site) a "prodigious flight of Snow Geese passing through Rhode Island over the weekend of 10/3-5/98 during the annual Block Island birding weekend. This flight was a major eye-opener concerning the passage of this species through southern New England and was unprecedented in Rhode Island. A strong cold front associated with heavy low pressure in eastern Quebec passed through southern New England in the afternoon of Thursday, 10/1/98, followed by six straight days of persistent high pressure and clear skies. During most of Sunday, 10/4, sunny skies and scattered light clouds prevailed, with light NNE winds, and this day bore witness to a completely unprecedented flight of Snow Geese in Rhode Island".

The results of the FI Hawkwatch courtesy of Drew Panko, are both interesting and alarming. The larger raptors are doing well, but the smaller ones continue their downward spiral. American Kestrel and Sharp-shinned Hawk are substantially down from the 13 year average kept since the watch has been in existence. On a positive note, Northern Harrier and Osprey are up, with Osprey, at 412, breaking the previous season record set in 1993. Both Merlin and Peregrine Falcon had the second best year for both, with Merlin about equaling the number of American Kestrel instead of being about half the number. The number of Bald Eagles was six, a new high. Buteos, always rare on the outer beaches in migration, consisted of one Red-tailed Hawk at the watch and a second seen at Jones Beach West End.

A Red-necked Phalarope appeared at the island in front of the Jones Beach Coast Guard Station on 7-8 November. The plumage exhibited by the bird was that of a late immature, not recorded in any field guide. With the very far viewing distance, there was some question of an ID overlap with Red Phalarope. A study of the skins at the American Museum of Natural History confirmed the ID as a Red-necked Phalarope. This uncommon bird in very unfamiliar plumage gave a number of birders a lesson in identification.

There was a major eruption of **Franklin's Gulls** to the east of their normal range this Fall. The first seen in our Region was on Hook Pond on 13 November. Then a bird was seen on Georgica Pond on the 14th, at Shinnecock on the 15th, and finally Mecox on the 18th, perhaps the same bird.

The largest numbers of Black Terns in recent years were seen migrating along the ocean on 13 September when flocks of 340, 75 and 40 were seen at Montauk, Shinnecock and Fire Island, respectively. The Montauk total and the combined totals are the largest in our area since the early 70's.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CB-Cedar Beach; CP-Central Park; CLP-Clove Lake Park, SI; CSP-Cupsogue State Park; DP-Democrat Pt., FI; FI-Fire Island; FBF-Floyd Bennett Field; FP-Forest Park; FIHW-Fire Island Hawk Watch; GKP-Great Kills Park, SI; JRP-Jacob Riis Park, JBWR-Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JBCH-Jones Beach; JBWE-Jones Beach West End; LI-Long Island; MEC-Mecox Bay; MP-Montauk Point; NYRBA-New York Rare Bird Alert; PL-Point Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP-Prospect Park; RSF-sod fields north of Riverhead; RMSP-Robert Moses State Park; RF-Rottkamp Farm, Upper Brookville; SHIN-Shinnecock Inlet; VCP-Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-necked Grebe: PL 9 Nov thru.

BLACK VULTURE: Staten Island land fill 3 Sep (HF).

Turkey Vulture: regular migrant this fall.

Greater White-fronted Goose: ad with orange bill Cutchogue 1-11 Nov; Marratooka Lake 2-15 Nov; Hook Pond 27 Nov, these may be the same bird.

Snow Goose: major flight through Region, est. 10,000 4 Oct, intro; 2 blue morph on East Pond, JBWR 15 Nov.

Tundra Swan: 4 GKP 14 Nov (CH); 15 Hook Pond 15 Nov, 8 from early Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: PP 14 Nov; 3 East Pond JBWR 15 Nov, records away from usual haunts.

King Eider: male MP 18 Oct.

Common Eider: 15 MP 13 Sep, first for season.

Harlequin Duck: PL from 14 Nov.

White-winged Scoter: CP Reservoir late Nov, rare location for a sea duck.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Osprey: 412 FIHW, season total a new high; to 4 Nov.

Bald Eagle: 6 FIHW, season total a new high; these plus another half dozen were reported during migration throughout the Region, the exact total number remains unclear; 4 possibly 5 subadults at St. John's Pond, Cold Spring Harbor 16 Oct (NS).

N. Harrier: 325 FIHW, third best year ever.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 467 FIHW, down 39 % from 13 year average.

Broad-winged Hawk: Staten Island 29 Sep.

SWAINSON'S HAWK: imm Great Gull Island 18-20 Sep and again on 2-4 Oct (HH et al).

Am. Kestrel: 1606 FIHW, down 27 % from 13 year average.

Merlin: 1594 FIHW, season total second best year.

Peregrine Falcon: 213 FIHW, season total second best year.

Sora: PP 29 Sep; RF, unusual place; 10 days mid Oct.

Am. Golden-Plover: 112 RSF 17 Sep, decreased to 140 by 27 Sep, still 40 on 28 Oct; small numbers elsewhere.

Am. Avocet: 2 JBWR 20 Sep - 7 Oct; 1 JBWR 10 Oct.

Lesser Yellowlegs: considerable numbers reported thru late in the season, an Uncommon wintering species .

Upland Sandpiper: RSF 5, 21 Sep.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW: Sore Thumb 23 Sep, NYSARC report (JF).

Hudsonian Godwit: 2 JBWR 2-21 Sep; 3 JBWR 10 Oct, then 1 on 17 Oct.

Marbled Godwit: 3 JBWR 2 Sep; 1 CSP 7 Sep.

Baird's Sandpiper: a few 3 Sep - 10 Oct South Shore LI.

Pectoral Sandpiper: 2 Georgica Pond 15 Nov (DK).

Purple Sandpiper: PL and Atlantic Beach jetties early Nov thru.

BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER: JBWR thru 4 Sep.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: up to 12 RSF Sep; a few others in Sep.

Ruff: female JBWR 4 Sep.

Long-billed Dowitcher: 30 JBWR 17 Oct; 12 Massapequa Preserve 10 Nov.

Red-necked Phalarope: JBWR 7 Sep; JBWE 7-8 Nov.

Parasitic Jaeger: MP 13, 20 Sep, 18 Oct; 6 MP 12 Oct; 3 FI 1 Nov.

Laughing Gull: to mid Nov.

Franklin's Gull: 1 probably the same

bird at Hook Pond 13 Nov; Georgica Pond 14 Nov; SHIN 15 Nov; MEC 18 Nov

Little Gull: DP 5 Sep.

Black-headed Gull: MEC 11, 18 Nov; Georgica Pond 7 Sep thru; RMSP 21 Oct; MEC 11, 27 Nov; Eastport 27 Nov; Port Jefferson 27 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: no longer rare, small numbers throughout Region where gulls congregate 23 Sep thru.

SABINE'S GULL: ad DP 6 Sep (AL, AG); imm SHIN 20 Sep (AL)

Caspian Tern: 25 Sagg Pond 17 Sep (JA), this is the largest coastal concentration ever reported, the previous high being 5; small numbers on South Shore to 29 Oct.

Royal Tern: large numbers resting on Robins Island sand spit jutting into the North Race 26 Aug - 1 Nov, max 51 on 18 Aug; elsewhere small numbers seen thru the season along entire South Shore to 14 Nov.

Sandwich Tern: 3 Democrat Pt 16 Sep (JF).

Com. Tern: to 11 Nov.

Forster's Tern: to 1 Nov.

Black Tern: 75 SHIN 9, 13 Sep; 340 MP 13 Sep (AL); 40 FI inlet 13 Sep; 25 SHIN 20 Sep; 40 MP 20 Sep.

Razorbill: 16 MP 26 Nov.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Long-eared Owl: roosting in tree CP, wintering.

Short-eared Owl: 2 GKP 2 Nov; JBWE 8 Nov thru.

N. Saw-whet Owl: JBWE 8 Nov.

Chimney Swift: thru 28 Sep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: thru 24 Nov.

Red-headed Woodpecker: CP from 5 Oct, reaching 7 by late Nov; many others in migration.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: thru 25 Oct.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: thru 29 Sep.

Least Flycatcher: to 29 Sep.

Great Crested Flycatcher: to 4 Oct.

W. Kingbird: JBWE 9-10 Sep; MP 13 Sep; RMSP 2 Oct; Nappeague 17 Oct.

N. Shrike: Dune Road, SHIN 28 Nov.

Yellow-throated Vireo: to 17 Sep.

Blue-headed Vireo: PP 21 Nov (RJ).

Warbling Vireo: to 29 Sep.

Red-eyed Vireo: to 22 Oct.

CAVE SWALLOW: 2 JRP 27-28 Nov (IG, GH et al), the second record for the state.

Barn Swallow: to 28 Sep.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: very scarce.

Sedge Wren: Gilgo 3 Oct.

Am. Pipit: most migrants flying over, but groups on the ground at VCP, FI, JBCH; others.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: to 12 Sep.

Golden-winged Warbler: JBWR 5 Sep; CP 9 Sep.

Tennessee Warbler: to 4 Oct.

Orange-crowned Warbler: 12 Oct thru.

Nashville Warbler: PP 11 Nov (RJ).

N. Parula: to 1 Nov.

Yellow Warbler: to 17 Sep.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: to 15 Sep.

Magnolia Warbler: to 2 Nov.

Black-throated Green Warbler: to 4 Oct.

Blackburnian Warbler: to 16 Sep.

Bay-breasted Warbler: to 4 Oct.

Blackpoll Warbler: to 11 Oct.

Black-and-white Warbler: to 24 Oct.

Am. Redstart: to 10 Oct.

Prothonotary Warbler: JBWR 26-27 Sep.

Ovenbird: to 5 Oct.

N. Waterthrush: to 12 Oct.

Louisiana Waterthrush: CLP 26 Sep.

Kentucky Warbler: CLP 3 Sep.

Connecticut Warbler: JBWR 5-7 and 13 Sep; CP 11 Sep; PP 17 Sep.

Mourning Warbler: Sands Pt 24 Oct (GQ)

Com. Yellowthroat: Bryant Park, Manhattan (42nd St) 20 Nov.

Wilson's Warbler: to 16 Oct.

Canada Warbler: to 23 Oct.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Summer Tanager: CP 9-17 Sep.

Clay-colored Sparrow: half dozen 9 Sep - 8 Oct.

Vesper Sparrow: VCP to NY city parks thru 25 Oct, more reports than usual.

Lark Sparrow: a few early Sep - mid Oct.

Lincoln's Sparrow: PP 5 Nov

Lapland Longspur: 3 FBF 10 Oct; 1 JBWE

12 Nov; 4 CSP 15 Nov.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: to 25 Oct.

Blue Grosbeak: MP 12-24 Sep; MEC 26 Sep; FIHW 28 Sep, 2 Oct; CP 5, 23 Oct; 2 JBWE 12-18 Oct; 2 MP 18 Oct; Gilgo 10-18 Oct; 2 Piping Rock Country Club 20 Oct; RF 6 Nov.

Dickcissel: more reports than usual 12 Sep thru; 4 JBWE mid Oct, 1 stayed to 8 Nov; JRP 29 Nov.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: JBWR 23 Sep.

Bullock's Oriole: female in vicinity FI bird banding station 27 Sep (SM).

White-winged Crossbill: 1 JBWE 10 Nov.

Pine Siskin: very few this fall

Evening Grosbeak: CP 1 Sep; 2 CP 9 Sep.
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NOTES AND OBSERVERSATIONS

Readers are invited to submit short pieces of interesting sightings, observations or incidents, etc., that do not require full-blown article treatment. No bibliography is necessary unless the author wishes to submit one. If a photograph is included, we require either a black-and-white glossy print or a color negative which we will convert to a b&w print. If the editor believes the note should be expanded to a full article, you will be invited to do so.