

## REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The La Niña drought which began in the spring continued throughout the summer. Plattsburgh experienced record highs of 94°F on 7 June, 91° on 24 June, and a sweltering 96° on 27 June when a Bermuda high settled over the Region. June had only 1.68" of rain, and the average monthly temperature of 74.3° broke the 1893 record of warmest. By month's end, Lake Champlain stood at 94.90', a half foot lower than normal and 3 feet lower than a year before.

Another Bermuda high 3-6 July brought more hot, muggy weather, with Plattsburgh 93° on 5 July. Mid-month saw a respite of highs in the 70s and 80s, before the hottest day of the year hit on 17 July, when thermometers topped out at a record 97°. The month ended with another record high of 96° on the 31st, and the thundershowers scattered throughout July brought only another 1.68" of rain, the same as June. The lake, too, still stood at 94.86'. By the Palmer Drought Index, the Adirondack-Champlain Region was in "Severe Drought."

August began with a 15-acre forest fire on the 1,968' summit of Raven Hill, just over a mile south of the editor's home, finally brought under control after 0.5" of light rain on 4 August and multiple water deliveries by NYSDEC helicopter from Barber Pond. Monthly rainfall improved by an inch to 2.81", and August closed on a cool note with 32° at Inlet and frost in the Moose River Recreational Area on the 30th and Saranac Lake dropping to a frosty 31° on 31 August. Total summer rainfall was just 6.17", above the record low 4.51" of 1894, but some 7" below the yearly average. By comparison, summer rainfall was 24.77" in 1998. This

wound up as the fifth driest summer ever, and by season's end wells and reservoirs were drying up across the Region.

With Lake Champlain down to 94.22' by season's end, mudflats were exposed at Westport, but the Chazy riverlands saw too much of a good thing and vegetated into grasses and sedges. Newly retired Forest Ranger Gary Lee observed that the summer was the driest ever in his several decades in the Adirondacks, adding that "several springs and brooks that never dried up are bone dry." With the fuel load left by the Great Ice Storm of '98 and the woods tinder-dry, forest fire was a major concern. The drought also led to a failure of the berry crop, leading to depredations on feeders by hungry Black Bears. In Tupper Lake, Charlie Delehanty reported their feeders knocked down and pulley-line feeder hauled down, so they were unable to feed birds for several weeks. Paul Kelly reported from Speculator, "The drought brought at least three bears to my feeders and bird baths, and they continue to visit at night." Raccoons made similar nightly forays at other feeders.

In a study of lead levels in Common Loons, a team from the USF&WS, NYSDEC and Loon Preservation Committee took blood samples and banded seven loons on five Hamilton County lakes: Lake Durant (1 adult, 1 chick), Ferris Lake (1 adult, 1 chick), Indian Lake (1 chick, Common Merganser), Mason Lake (1 adult) and Sheriff Lake (1 chick).

Highlight of the season was the addition of **GLOSSY IBIS** to the list of breeding birds in the Region. On 12 June, during banding and census operations on the Four Brothers, Essex County, Lissa Richardson called the team's attention to three adults flying over Island "B." A nest with deep blue eggs believed to be those of Glossy Ibis was found that day, but solid confirmation waited until 23 July, when three nestlings and an almost-fledged ibis were banded by wildlife manager Mike Peterson, warden Rich MacDonald and bander Bob Wei. Three adults and an immature were seen feeding at Shelburne Bay, Vermont, on 14 August by Ted Murin.

Other colonial waterbirds banded at Four Brothers 12 June and 23 July included: 90 Double-crested Cormorants, a Great Blue Heron, 3 Cattle Egrets, 67 Black-crowned Night-Herons, 1,175 Ring-billed Gulls (175 color-banded adults and 1,000 chicks), 109 Herring Gulls and 6 Great Black-backed Gulls. A total of 1,372 cormorant nests were counted, down 1.5% from 1998. Great Blue Herons had a record 39 nests, while Black-crowned Night-Herons also increased to a record 227 nests. The population of this attractive night-heron has more than doubled in the past three years relative to the population of about 90 pairs present on Four Brothers in 1954. Figures are provided to the Great Lakes Colonial Waterbird Census.

Four of the seven Franklin County Bald Eagle nests were successful, producing six eaglets, an improvement over the two fledged in the wet summer of 1998, but short of the eight eaglets (from six nests) in 1997. Of 11 known Peregrine Falcon eyries, all in Essex County, nine were active and produced young this year: two Chesterfield sites (2 and 3 chicks, respectively), Crown Point (adult present), Elizabethtown (inactive), two Keene sites (1 young fledged from each), Moriah (4 fledged), North Elba (2 fledged), Westport (2 fledged), Wilmington (3 fledged), and Willsboro (2 fledged), for a total of 20 chicks produced, the best year since nesting resumed in 1985.

Surprisingly, given the low lake levels, only 11 shorebird species were reported. For a second year, Wilson's Phalarope was absent from the Chazy Rivers nesting site. On the positive side, a **Wilson's Warbler** on the 5-6 June Federation trip was suggestive of breeding by another bird named after the great ornithologist and similarly rare in NYS, but no location was given. **"Yellow" Palm Warblers** at Spring Pond Bog, Franklin County, 5 June and Sabattis Bog, Hamilton County, 18 June provided hope for confirmation in the coming Atlas survey. Gretch reported a decline of grassland sparrows at the former Plattsburgh AFB, now the Plattsburgh Airbase Redevelopment Corp. (PARC) site; see details in the species accounts that follow.

A total of 165 species was reported, an improvement over the 157 in the wet summer of '98 (yet lower than the totals of 179 and 185 species in other recent drought years of 1997 and '95, respectively.)

Congratulations to Gary Lee on his distinguished career as a Forest Ranger in Hamilton County; Gary (315-357-4403) will continue to guide visiting birders as a licensed Adirondack Guide. And a reminder that the new Carleton's *Birds of Essex County, New York*, 3rd Ed., is available from this editor for \$10.50 postpaid, payable to "High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc."

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AP - Ausable Point WMA; BB - Bloomingdale Bog; CH - Cumberland Head; CR - Chazy Rivers; CRF - Cedar River Flow; FB - Ferd's Bog; FBI - Four Brothers Islands; PARC - former Plattsburgh AFB; SB - Sabattis Bog; SLB - Silver Lake Bog; WRS - Webb Royce Swamp.

### LOONS - DUCKS

**Com. Loon:** 7 banded and blood-sampled 5 HAMI lakes; pair setting L Abanakee to 18 Aug (GL); max 10 Little Tupper L 24 Aug (NO); *intro*.  
**Double-crested Cormorant:** 1,372 nests FBI (down 1.5% from 1,394 in '98); 90 banded FBI; Little Tupper L 16-17 Jul (J&PT), unusual inland.  
**Least Bittern:** Ticonderoga 4 Jul (EG); Wadhams 8 Aug (GL); present at former site since 1930s, but latter a new site along Boquet R.  
**Great Blue Heron:** 39 nests FBI, 1 banded; nesting n. Speculator, HAMI (PK).  
**Great Egret:** Boquet R, Essex-Westport line 2 Aug (JP).  
**Cattle Egret:** 6 FBI, "B" 12 Jun (GH, JP, RW); 3 banded FBI 23 Jul (RM, JP, RW), where there were ~ 9 nests.  
**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** 227 nests FBI; 67 banded, a remarkable increase.  
**GLOSSY IBIS:** 3 ad FBI "B" 12 Jun (GH, RM, JP, LR, RW); 4 y banded FBI 23 Jul (RM, JP, RW), northernmost nesting in NYS and apparently worldwide.  
**Turkey Vulture:** 1 Tupper L 2 Aug (CD), fed on table scraps on front lawn, jousting with Am. Crows!  
**Canada Goose:** flock CR 7 Jun (TB, JP), late; pair with 5 goslings Essex 8 Jun (TB, JP); 48 FBI 23 Jul (RM, JP, RW), where known to nest; small race Westport 14 Aug (JP, J&PT); max 80 Tupper L municipal p 27 Aug (DCR).

**Gadwall:** drake CR 7 Jun (TB, JP); Westport 29 Jul (J&PT), scarce here.  
**Blue-winged Teal:** drake CR 7 Jun (TB, JP), only report.  
**Green-winged Teal:** drake CR 7 Jun (TB, JP), uncommon here.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** L Serenity and Paul Smiths, only reports.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** hen with 6 ducklings CR 19 Jun (BK, CM), a fine sighting.  
**Com. Merganser:** max 100 FBI 23 Jul (RM, JP, RW), high for summer.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** hen FBI "C" 12 Jun (JP, RW), historic nesting site.

### HAWKS-ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 4 FRAN nests produced 6 eaglets; Tupper L 19 Jun; ad Shingle Shanty Bk, imm L Lila 7 Aug; imm Little Tupper L 24 Aug, suggestive of nesting s. FRAN; imm Mountain View dam 27 Aug.  
**Broad-winged Hawk:** foreign retrap CRF 27 Aug (RM), banded Cape May, NJ, 15 Oct 1993 as a *Cooper's Hawk* (Bird Banding Lab)!  
**Merlin:** nest with 4 y Abanakee L; nest with 4 y Raquette L (GL); female Mountain View 9 Aug (JT), where present in previous years; transient Whallonsburg 12 Aug (JP, DMR).  
**Peregrine Falcon:** 20 chicks produced at 9 ESSE eyries (NYSDEC), *intro*.  
**Spruce Grouse:** male Roaring Bk, North Elba ESSE, 5 Jun (TB), previously

unknown site; male SPB also 5 Jun (JO), well-known site.

**Wild Turkey:** 2 hens, 5 chicks Rt 30, HAMI, 6 Aug (NO); 17 Whippleville late Aug (JT); many n.. FRAN reports; many broods s. FRAN; max 25 Speculator (PK).

**Virginia Rail:** pair with 4 chicks AP 29 Jun (BK, CM), plus other adults.

**Black-bellied Plover:** 2 alt. plumage CR 7 Jun (TB, JP), relatively late.

**Semipalmated Plover:** CR 14 Aug (JP, J&PT), only report.

**Killdeer:** max 40 Westport 28 Aug (JP).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** arr 5 CR 28 Jul (BK); WRS 29 Jul (J&PT); Westport 12-14 Aug (JP, DR, J&PT).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** arr 5 CR 19 Jun; Mountain View L 25 Jul (JT), unexpected; 2 CR 28 Jul (BK, CM); Westport 4 Aug (JP, RW); 2 Westport 12 Aug (JP, DR), more expected.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** arr Westport 12 Aug (JP, DR); max 4 Westport 28 Aug (JP, J&PT, RW).

**Upland Sandpiper:** Westport airport 25 Jun (DS), first ESSE record since nesting was confirmed near Ticonderoga during 1980-85 Atlas survey.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** max 105 CR 7 Jun (TB, JP); 3 there 19 Jun (BK, CM), fairly late; arr Westport 29 Jul (J&PT).

**Least Sandpiper:** arr Westport 20 Jul (JP, RW), present to 28 Aug; CR 11-20 Jul; FBI 23 Jul (RM, JP, RW); max 12 Westport 14 Aug (JP, J&PT).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** 10 CR 7 Jun (TB, JP); arr Westport 4 Aug (JP, RW); max 40 there 28 Aug (JP).

**Ring-billed Gull:** 1,000 chicks, 175 ads banded FBI, the latter with numbered yellow bands on the rt leg. One banded as a chick 12 Jun was caught by entanglement in fishing gear at L Auburn, Maine 13 Aug and released alive (DF).

**Herring Gull:** 109 banded FBI.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** 6 banded FBI.

**Com. Tern:** ad CR 7 Jun (TB, JP); Westport 28 Jun (GH, JP); CR 11 Jul (BK, CM, GW), good finds, although they nest in neighboring Vermont.

## PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** male WRS 8 Jun (TB, JP); Wadhams 19 Jun (JP, CS); male Elizabethtown 24 Jun (JP); a good showing.

**Whip-poor-will:** Redford 14 Jun (DF), first after a 10-yr absence there.

**Black-backed Woodpecker:** FB; Helldiver Pd; Middle Pd, Floodwood Rd; Mountain View L; SLB; Stony Brook Pd, ESSE.

**Three-toed Woodpecker:** no reports.

## FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** FB; L Lila; SLB; only reports.

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** pair with fledged y Blue Mountain Rd 30 Jul (MB); FB; SB; SLB bode well for the coming Atlas project.

**Willow Flycatcher:** singing male Essex 8 Jun (TB, JP); Essex 19 Jun (JP, CS); AP 29 Jun (BK, CM); Scamotion Cr 3 Jul (J&RH).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** transient CH 23 Aug (NO), an excellent find.

**Gray Jay:** BB; FB; Helldiver Pd; Shingle Shanty Bk; usual sites.

**Horned Lark:** 6 PARC (MG).

**Boreal Chickadee:** BB, Blue Mountain Rd; Helldiver Pd; Red R; Shingle Shanty Bk; SPB; usual haunts.

**Tufted Titmouse:** Plattsburgh city beach 2 Jun (GW), a good find.

**Marsh Wren:** AP 7 Jun (TB, JP); Ticonderoga 4 Jul (EG); L Lila 7 Aug (BL), a fine showing from 3 counties.

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** 2 Pt au Fer 8 Jul (GW), only report.

**Bicknell's Thrush:** Whiteface Mt 6 Jun (VF), only report...but assuredly more numerous than gnatcatchers here.

**N. Mockingbird:** CH 20 Aug (NO), only report.

**Brown Thrasher:** Heart Lake Rd 12 Jun (NO), scarce at this elevation.

## WARBLERS

**Golden-winged Warbler:** BB 30 Jul (MB); French Settlement Rd, CLIN 10 Aug (J&RH), scarce here.

**Tennessee Warbler:** SB 18 Jun (WP); singing males SLB 4-10 Jul (J&RH, BK, CM), lend hope of finding first NYS nest during the coming Atlas.

**Yellow Warbler:** CH 20 Aug (NO), fairly late.

**Prairie Warbler:** pair with male singing The Gulf, CLIN 11 Jun (J&RH), northernmost NYS sighting of this regional rarity.

**"YELLOW" PALM WARBLER:** SPB 5 Jun (VF); SB 18 Jun (WP); now known bogs, but still excellent finds.

**Mourning Warbler:** banded Elizabethtown 6 Aug (JP).

**WILSON'S WARBLER:** unspecified location 5-6 Jun (FNYSBC), possible breeder; Tupper L 29 Aug (CD), presumed transient.

#### **TANAGERS - WEAVERS**

**Vesper Sparrow:** 4 PARC (MG), down from 12 in 1994; Mountain View early Aug (JT).

**Savannah Sparrow:** 16 PARC (MG), down from 19 in 1994.

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** 6 PARC (MG),

down from 17 in 1994; Lewis Preserve 28 Jul (J&RH).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** nest with 3 y FB (GL).

**Com. Grackle:** 200 Speculator 15 Aug, with max 300 by late in the month (PK).

**Red Crossbill:** BB 5 Jun (FNYSBC).

**White-winged Crossbill:** SPB 5 Jun (FNYSBC).

**Evening Grosbeak:** 7 hamlet Indian L HAMI, 14-16 Jun (WP); with juv Speculator 23 Jun, 24 Aug (PK); 4 L Serenity 13 Jul (BK, CM); 2 Paul Smiths 29 Jul (MB); 6 CRF (RM); representative of summer distribution.

#### **EXOTICS**

**bobwhite:** CH 2 Jun (BK); bird looked much like Masked Bobwhite, cinnamon overall with black legs, bill, and mask, except for a crescent-shaped white patch on chest, mask that did not extend down the throat, and upper and underparts the same.