

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Western New York residents will likely remember the summer of 2000 as being cool and very wet. June was the fifth wettest in 100 years, with almost twice the normal rainfall at the Buffalo Airport (6.51") and even more to the north. It rained during 18 days of the month and was the cloudiest June of the century, leaving many people eager for summer to really begin. The average temperature was one degree below normal at 64.9°F.

July brought a little relief from the rain as rainfall was near normal at 2.9". However, the summer didn't warm up much. The average temperature was 67.6°, 3.5° below normal. It was the third coolest in 58 years, and sunshine was less than normal at 54%.

The first two weeks of August were very wet, but the rest of the month saw a hot and humid finish to summer. The average temperature was 68°, 1° below normal. Sunshine was below normal again at 57%, but rainfall was an inch less than usual at 3.21". [Weather data excerpted from National Weather Service Web site *Monthly Weather Summary* for Buffalo.]

The Breeding Bird Atlas project brought renewed enthusiasm to early summer birding in the Region. Some great finds were made and the Atlas volunteers also discovered some previously unbirded or underbirded areas that will now likely be covered with more regularity. My personal thoughts on the Atlas echo those of many other local observers in that the project is very rewarding, albeit difficult in some cases, and is a great learning experience for beginner and expert birder alike. This will be a great contribution to our knowledge of birds in the Region.

The best Atlas find was a pair of **Dickcissels** that nested near Lake Erie in the Town of Pomfret. Dick Miga discovered a singing male on 13 June on the same road where a small colony of Dickcissels nested in 1976. A female appeared later in June and by early August three fledglings were observed. This was the first documented nesting by this species in the Region since 1988. Preliminary research by Bill Watson found a direct connection between historical breeding records of Dickcissels in the Region and drought conditions in the Midwest (*The Prothonotary*, Buffalo Ornithological Society, Volume 66, No. 7, July 2000).

Another significant Atlas find in the Town of Pomfret was a pair of **Sedge Wrens** documented by Terry Mosher. This was the first documented sighting of this species in the Region since 1993, and like the Dickcissels, the birds were found in an historical nesting location (1986).

Some other grassland species, such as Upland Sandpiper and Grasshopper Sparrow, were reported in greater numbers than in recent summers past. However, this was a result of increased observer effort for the Atlas project. Eleven singing Henslow's Sparrows were found in Lancaster at previously unknown breeding

locations. This significant find represents the highest numbers in the Region for this species in over 20 years.

Fifteen young Great Egrets, from a probable six nests, were counted at the Motor Island rookery. A pair of **Snowy Egrets** was observed several times in June and July at the island and three were observed on 30 June at adjacent Strawberry Island, a new high for the Region. These sightings contribute to optimistic anticipation of future nesting at this location.

Three broods of Redheads were documented by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. There has been a Redhead release program in recent years at the refuge.

Peregrine Falcons successfully nested at two locations in the Region. Four young fledged from the Statler Tower site in downtown Buffalo and were banded by NYSDEC personnel. The video camera installed behind the nesting ledge provided some incredible footage for the second year in a row. Peregrines also nested in the Niagara Gorge at Goat Island and two fledglings were reported.

Vivian Pitzrick reported that the number of species was the highest ever but the population of territorial males was the fourth lowest since inception of her breeding bird study plot in Belmont, Allegany County, in 1984. She also indicated that abundant wild foods included rabbits, voles, weed seed, hickory nuts, wild grapes, and fruit of gray-barked dogwood, buckthorn and honeysuckle.

Besides breeding birds, there were also some great transient records this summer. Two different **Eared Grebes** were sighted at the Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, continuing the species' affinity for this location. A **Tricolored Heron** at Tiff Nature Preserve in June follows the only previous June record from last summer. Another very impressive find was an immature **Parasitic Jaeger** at Dunkirk Harbor on the unusual date of 14 July. This sighting marks only the second jaeger record for July for the Region.

Some heavy rain in early August grounded a number of shorebird migrants but there were no consistently good locations throughout the season. Many local birders head to the Canadian shore of Lake Erie for shorebirding, which contributes to the low number of Regional records. Some very good species salvaged the otherwise poor summer shorebird season: **American Avocets** were seen on at least two dates at Dunkirk Harbor, Willet and Whimbrel were reported from Chautauqua County, several Western Sandpiper sightings were more than usual, and two separate Red-necked Phalaropes were warmly welcomed.

Other highlights for the season include: Tundra Swan, Bufflehead, Sandhill Crane, Long-eared Owl, Whip-poor-will, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow and Pine Siskin.

Special thanks go to Richard Rosche for his Region 1 Breeding Bird Atlas summary article and Dick Miga for supplying Chautauqua County records.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BBA – Breeding Bird Atlas project; BuSP – Buckhorn Island SP, ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; GHSP – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; GI – Goat Island, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, GENE/ORLE; JAS – Jamestown Audubon Sanctuary, CHAU; JDSP – Joseph Davis SP, NIAG; LBSP – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; NR – Niagara River; OOWMA – Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area, GENE; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, East Aurora, ERIE; Tiff NP – Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; WeBSP – Wendt Beach SP, ERIE; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

LOONS – DUCKS

Com. Loon: DH 14 Jul (DM); 7 Chautauqua L CHAU 19 Jul (LC), impressive count for summer.
EARED GREBE: BWWTP 26 Jul (WW!) thru 7 Aug (WD! BK!); BWWTP 26 Aug (MM!) thru 31 Aug (BK!), different bird showing more facial plumes; 2nd and 3rd reports from this location this year.
Double-crested Cormorant: 56 nests Reef Lighthouse NR 5 Jul; 620 Strawberry I NR 16 Aug; 1250 BuSP 25 Aug (WW); high counts continue.
Least Bittern: CO y BuSP Jun (BBA); CO INWR (BBA); Cheney Rd Marsh CATT 17, 19 Jul (MMi, KV); good atlas finds.
Great Blue Heron: max 150 OOWMA 4 Jun; 49 nests Motor I, NR (WW).
Great Egret: 15 y Motor I, NR 12 Jul

(WW); Sherman CHAU 19 Jul; Attica WYOM 20 Jul; Cheney Rd Marsh CATT 8 Aug; 4 BWWTP 11 Aug; max 26 INWR 21 Aug, high count.
SNOWY EGRET: 3 Strawberry I, NR 30 Jun (WW!), Regional record high count; 2 Motor I, NR 9 Jun, 26 Jun, 6 Jul (WW!), continued presence from late May.
TRICOLORED HERON: Tiff NP 12, 14 Jun (RA! BK!), 2nd Regional summer record.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: Chautauqua L CHAU 24 Jun (DM), unusual location.
TUNDRA SWAN: ad Niagara Falls NIAG 3 Jul thru (TY, LL, WD!), possibly injured.
Am. Wigeon: 2 Tonawanda ERIE 15 Jun; 2 BWWTP 2 Jul; 3 Times Beach ERIE 4 Jul; OOWMA 3 Aug; more

locations than usual for summer.

Am. Black Duck: BWWTP 16 Jul; OOWMA 3 Aug; WTSP 8 Aug; summer sightings now notable.

Blue-winged Teal: arr 6 BWWTP 11 Aug; max 80 BWWTP 26 Aug.

N. Shoveler: 3 BWWTP 2 Jul; Alabama GENE 11 Jul; max 113 BWWTP 31 Aug.

N. Pintail: OOWMA 3 Aug; 2 BWWTP 31 Aug.

Green-winged Teal: Wethersfield WYOM thru 10 Jul; OOWMA 3 Aug; max 20 BWWTP 26 Aug.

Redhead: max 6 INWR 11 Jul; 3 broods of y documented at INWR by USFWS (BBA); 2 BWWTP 26 Aug, unusual summer location.

Lesser Scaup: BWWTP 5-31 Aug.

Bufflehead: BWWTP 2 Jul thru; very rare in summer.

Com. Merganser: DH 12 Jul; 8 BWWTP 16 Jul; Motor I, NR 16 Aug; unusual summer locations.

Ruddy Duck: INWR 19 Jul; max 69 BWWTP 26 Jul, previous high summer count was 22 at this location in 1998.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Amity L ALLE 14 Jun; BuSP 22 Jun; multiple sightings near Allegheny Res CATT (several nests) and INWR (no known nests).

Bald Eagle: 2 ad at nest INWR thru season; 2 ad (no nest) Attica Res WYOM thru season; imm FNSP 9 Jul (RDR); ad Findley L CHAU 5 Aug (ST); imm Charlotte CHAU 29 Aug (FR).

N. Goshawk: ad Alfred ALLE 4 Jun (BK); 2 ad + 3 y Eagle WYOM 25 Jun (PY, MS), 4th straight summer at this location.

Broad-winged Hawk: ad Grand I ERIE 3 Jun (WD, BP), unusual location; LBSP 28 Aug, first migrant noted.

Merlin: arr Kenmore ERIE 27 Aug (JT!); WeBSP 28 Aug (DH); continues recent pattern of earlier migrants.

Peregrine Falcon: 4 y Buffalo ERIE,

successfully fledged 12-16 Jun (BB); 2 GI 11 Jun (TO), 1-2 y fledged from well-concealed nest on Niagara Gorge cliffs GI (BB).

Virginia Rail: 2 Reinstein Preserve ERIE 3 Jun; ad + 4 y Tonawanda ERIE 22 Jul (WW); new locations discovered from atlas work.

Am. Coot: CO Buffalo Harbor ERIE (BBA), unusual location.

SANDHILL CRANE: flying west over Wilson Harbor NIAG 24 Jun (BE), 4th June record.

Semipalmated Plover: arr 12 OOWMA 3 Aug.

AMERICAN AVOCET: DH 20 Jun (DM); 2 DH 10 Jul (TW); impressive showing.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr 12 OOWMA 2 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 2 BWWTP 16 Jul.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr 3 Burgeson NS CHAU 17 Jul; 28 OOWMA 3 Aug (WD, BP), high count.

Willet: 2 DH 7 Aug (JG); less than annual in summer.

Upland Sandpiper: Niagara Falls Airport NIAG 2 Jun; Sheldon WYOM 4 Jun; 4 East Otto CATT 12 Jun; 3 Otto CATT 12 Jun; 3 Tillman WMA 16 Jun; increased sightings from atlas coverage; 5 Buffalo Airport ERIE 14 Aug, first migrants noted.

Whimbrel: Dunkirk Airport CHAU 3 Aug (JG); less than annual in summer.

Sanderling: arr 5 DH 21 Jul; only report.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr DH 21 Jul.

WESTERN SANDPIPER: 4 GHSP 21 Aug (WW! BK! DS!); 2 BWITP 31 Aug (BK!); good showing for this rarely recorded species.

Least Sandpiper: arr BWWTP 16 Jul.

White-rumped Sandpiper: arr INWR 28 Aug, only report.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 60 OOWMA 2 Aug (BK).

Stilt Sandpiper: 15 OOWMA 3 Aug (WD, BP), good count; 2 JAS 17 Aug.
Short-billed Dowitcher: arr DH 20 Jul; Pomfret CHAU 21 Jul; 8 BWWT 26 Jul; max 29 OOWMA 2 Aug (BK).
Com. Snipe: 2 East Otto ERIE 12 Jun (WD, BP); INWR 21 Aug; only reports.
Red-necked Phalarope: Jamestown Airport CHAU 17 Aug (KV); Barker WWTP NIAG 28-29 Aug (BK, DH, WW); less than annual in summer.
PARASITIC JAEGER: imm DH 14 Jul (DM), unverified; 2nd Jul record for Region.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 114 WoBSP 28 Aug, occasional summer loafing area.
Caspian Tern: 5 DH 25 Jun; BWWT 2 Jul; slightly early summer records; max 19 Olcott NIAG 13 Aug.
Forster's Tern: Barcelona Harbor CHAU 25 Jul (BS); BWWT 26 Jul (WW!); Jul records unusual; DH 1 Aug (DM); Somerset NIAG 13 Aug (BK).
Black Tern: max 9 INWR 11 Jul; JAS 30 Jul.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 5 Porter to Somerset NIAG 4 Jun (WD), high BBS count.
Long-eared Owl: GHSP 18 Jun (WW, BK), follow up on May sighting there.
Com. Nighthawk: 2 Buffalo ERIE 29 Jun (MG); decreased sightings even in downtown Buffalo; max 200 Cambria and Wilson NIAG 25 Aug (SO), high migratory count.
WHIP-POOR-WILL: Lockport NIAG 17 Jun (BRBA), 1st summer record since 1988.
Red-headed Woodpecker: OOWMA 4 Jun; Shelby ORLE 7 Aug; Somerset NIAG 13 Aug; 3 other CHAU reports where species occurs more frequently along L Erie.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Reinstein

Preserve ERIE 3 Jun (MM), late spring migrant; WeBSP 28 Aug (DH).
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Alexander GENE 4 Jun (KF), late migrant; arr Snyder ERIE 17 Aug (BK).
Acadian Flycatcher: reported in 7 locations during breeding season from ERIE, GENE, WYOM, CATT; increasing.
WHITE-EYED VIREO: Allenberg Bog CATT (JC, NC), excellent atlas find.
Com. Raven: reported in 6 ALLE locations; 3 Pike WYOM 18 Jul (RDR); Orangeville WYOM 4 Aug (RDR); 2 Wethersfield WYOM 20 Aug (DJ); sightings document increase in WYOM.
Bank Swallow: 500 + 839 nest holes GHSP 16 Jun (WW); impressive colony on L Ontario.
Cliff Swallow: 15 BuSP 10 Jun, building nests; 2 ad + y at nest Niagara Falls NIAG 16 Jul (WD), 1st NIAG breeding location.
Brown Creeper: reported from 5 locations in ERIE, NIAG.
Carolina Wren: reported from 6 locations in ERIE, ALLE, CHAU.
SEDGE WREN: 2 Pomfret CHAU 24 Jun (TM!), 1-3 seen at this location thru 24 Aug; 1st verified record in Region since 1993.
Swainson's Thrush: Tonawanda ERIE 1 Jun, late migrant; 2 AISP 28 Jun (PH).
N. Mockingbird: Darien GENE 21 Jun (TH), unusual location.

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: 2 Barre ORLE 4 Jun; 2 Pendleton NIAG 5 Jun; GHSP 29 Jun; Lancaster ERIE 9 Jul; Tuscarora Indian Reservation NIAG 20 Jun.; BuSP 12 Aug.
"Brewster's" Warbler: Newstead ERIE 4 Jun; 2 Pendleton NIAG 5 Jun; Hanging Bog WMA ALLE 11 Jun (PY); FL fed by female Blue-winged Lancaster ERIE 9 Jul (MM).
Nashville Warbler: Andover ALLE 9

Jun (EB); only report.

Magnolia Warbler: 3 Lewiston NIAG 1 Jul (DR), unusual location.

Cape May Warbler: arr WoBSP 26 Aug.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: SPNS 5 Jun; expanding breeding range.

Pine Warbler: 2 Phillips Creek SF ALLE 4 Jun (BK! RS!); 2 East Otto SF CATT 13 Jun and 22 Jul (WD! BP!); East Aurora ERIE 19 Jun (LH); Bush Hill SF CATT 3 Jul (BK!); increasing as breeder in Region.

Prairie Warbler: reported from 11 ALLE locations.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr GHSP 21 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: three sightings 4 Jun; arr Snyder ERIE 25 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: Tuscarora Indian Reservation NIAG 1 Jul; Alfred ALLE 13 Jul; good atlas finds.

Prothonotary Warbler: INWR (BBA); reports decreased in recent years.

Canada Warbler: arr GHSP 13 Aug.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 2 ad + 2 y Andover ALLE 7 Aug (EB!), plus possible Chipping x Clay-colored hybrid; 2 singing males + 1 juv New Hudson ALLE (RDR).

Vesper Sparrow: 2 Newfane NIAG 4

Jun; 2 Andover ALLE thru Jun; Pomfret CHAU 21 Jul; only reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: reported from 10 locations in ERIE, NIAG, CHAU, ALLE; increase likely from atlas coverage.

Heenslow's Sparrow: 2 Lockport NIAG 1 Jun; 2 Clarence ERIE 4 Jun; 2 N. Harmony CATT 17 Jun; 11 Lancaster ERIE Jun and Jul (MM), highest Regional count since 1979; Otto ERIE 6 Jul; 3 Pomfret CHAU 17 Jul.

White-throated Sparrow: reported from 5 ALLE locations; 1 banded Beaver Meadow NS WYOM 4 Jun (KF).

Dark-eyed Junco: juv FNSP 1 Jul (LL), unusual breeding location along L Ontario.

DICKCISSEL: ad Pomfret CHAU 13 Jun (DM), nesting pair followed, 3 y there 4 Aug (DM); 1st documented breeding in Region since 1988.

Bobolink: 100 Wethersfield WYOM 19-21 Aug (DJ), only large migrant flock reported.

Orchard Oriole: Collins ERIE 29 Jul (BRBA); JDSP 9 Jun (SO); only reports.

Red Crossbill: Almond ALLE 22 Jun (EB); 4 W. Almond ALLE 31 Aug (EB).

PINE SISKIN: Colden ERIE 17 Jul and 24 Aug (KL!); rare in summer.

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