

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES REGION

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Summer 2000 was rather pleasant, with June and August temperatures near normal and July temperatures well below normal, the highs more than 4°F below normal. June continued the wet trend of the previous five months, with precipitation about 30% above normal. July reversed that trend with only 2.90" compared to a normal of 3.45". August was emphatically dry, with only half the normal precipitation.

The effect of the weather on the birds was not readily apparent. Water levels in wetlands were generally good and likely promoted successful breeding. At The Center at Horseheads Marsh, the early high water levels overcame sandbagging at the south end and resulted in the water at that end escaping into the Susquehanna drainage system. The north end, however, which drains into the St. Lawrence system, maintained good levels. The Main Pool at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge had plenty of water in contrast to last year's drawdown level. Bill Evans noted in early August that Cayuga Lake had been the highest throughout the summer that he had seen in his 12 years in the Ithaca area. He observed that the high water and cooler temperatures were probably responsible for the lack of floating vegetation, which in turn was causing a much lower concentration of Mallards in the area than last year.

Numerous changes in birder activity probably masked weather effects. Many of the Region's birders were busy searching for evidence of breeding birds for the Breeding Bird Atlas Project. Few people shared their Atlas sightings, however. Dave Russell and Geo Kloppel did post many of their sightings, which supplemented my own Atlas observations. Perhaps because of the volunteer time put into the Atlas, no one undertook a regular monitoring of the shorebirds at Montezuma. Offsetting this to some extent was the new Once-a-Month Count at Montezuma, which provided a new source of data. Regular monitoring of the Chemung River in downtown Elmira was curtailed, partly because of the Atlas and mostly because both Dave Russell and I changed job locations away from the City of Elmira. Dave Russell conducted a census by canoe of the Chemung River between Big Flats and Elmira. Even the Ithaca June Count changed this year. In anticipation of lower than usual availability of June counters for the previously one-day event, counters were given an entire week to cover their assigned areas. Last year I was making regular extended visits to The Center at Horseheads Marsh. This year Dave Russell covered the area for the Breeding Bird Atlas.

The following account includes comparisons of reported bird populations in the Region between summer 2000 and summer 1999, with occasional reference to a species' status in summer 1998. Unless otherwise noted, the cited comparisons showed statistically significant changes ($\chi^2 > 3.84$; $P = 0.05$). A discussion of my

methodology and its limitations can be found in the Region 3 report that appeared in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird*. Of the 228 species reported in the last three summers in the Region, 142 showed no significant change in populations between summer 1999 and summer 2000. Thirty-one species increased and 55 decreased.

Double-crested Cormorant numbers increased in the Region. Perhaps some birds in the Region were among those dispersed by control measures exerted on breeding populations in Lake Ontario. Great Blue Heron was one of just three species to increase for the second consecutive year. Great Egrets and Black-crowned Night-Herons were also more numerous. Turkey Vultures were reported in lower numbers. Mike Powers tallied Chemung County's first ever **Black Vulture** while on his daily commute from Steuben County to Tompkins County.

Canada Geese and Mallards were both down in numbers. The lack of Mallards on Cayuga Lake at Stewart Park in Ithaca was largely responsible for the lower numbers of Mallards. The lack of reports of any kind from the Lowe Pond area in Big Flats is largely responsible for the apparent difference in Canada Geese. An influx of Blue-winged Teal at Montezuma NWR in late August accounted for that species' increase. A large increase in Hooded Mergansers on the Ithaca June Count plus a couple of families in Chemung County bolstered that species to its second consecutive summer increase. Successful breeding of Common Mergansers along the Chemung River probably led to the large gathering in Elmira. Northern Pintail, Canvasback and Redhead were rare summer sightings at Montezuma.

Raptors showed no gains. Reports of Northern Harrier, Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and American Kestrel were all down. Wild Turkeys were way down from the previous summer.

Virginia Rails were more scarce this summer, particularly at The Center at Horseheads Marsh. Common Moorhens and American Coots were decidedly higher in numbers. The water-filled Main Pool at Montezuma with lots of emergent vegetation resulting from last year's drawdown created ideal conditions for these species. Moorhens doubled and the coots went from four to 152.

Both yellowlegs, Solitary, Semipalmated, Least and Pectoral sandpipers, Sanderling, Short-billed Dowitcher and Common Snipe decreased in numbers. Upland Sandpipers dropped precipitously from 35 to three. Dana Rohleder found a godwit at Montezuma, but did not have good enough conditions to identify it to species. Forster's Tern, rare in the Region in summer, was reported from Montezuma NWR three times. It was almost inevitable that all five super birders named Matt would eventually appear at the same time in the same place. The time was 26 August and the place was the birder corral at May's Point, Montezuma NWR. Then and there, Matts Medler, Sarver, Victoria, Williams and Young together found the Region's only Buff-breasted Sandpiper of the summer.

In spite of a relatively high Rock Dove count on the Ithaca June Count, Rock and Mourning doves were reported in lower numbers throughout the Region. Cuckoos and owls were all up this year, but not significantly. Matt Young found a

Long-eared Owl in Summerhill. Common Nighthawks passed through Elmira in good numbers the last week of August.

The Ithaca June Count's high count of Belted Kingfishers contributed to a Regionwide increase for the species. None of the woodpeckers showed changes. Several people went to see the Red-headed Woodpecker that appeared in Brooktondale in June. James Manley also had one in his backyard near Corning.

Alder Flycatchers and Eastern Phoebees were down this year, but Acadian Flycatchers, reported from several new locations, were up. John Greenly discovered and Chris and Diane Tessaglia-Hymes confirmed a Loggerhead Shrike in late June in Lansing. All of the swallows showed significant changes. Purple Martins, Bank and Barn swallows were all up. Tree, Northern Rough-winged and Cliff were all down. This is exactly the opposite of last year's situation.

In spite of the arrival of West Nile Virus in the Region, American Crow numbers held steady. Fish Crows were down, but not significantly, in spite of their absence from their traditional stronghold at Stewart Park. Blue Jays and Common Ravens were both down.

House Wrens were down, but Marsh Wrens were up, thanks primarily to the Montezuma Once-a-Month Count. Dave Russell found no Marsh Wrens at The Center at Horseheads where there were several last year. Sedge Wrens appeared at two locations in Tompkins County.

Veerys and robins were down, but Hermit Thrushes were up. Bill Evans reported hearing more than a dozen Veerys during the last three hours of 10 Aug and the first three hours of 11 Aug. Northern Mockingbirds decreased from last year. Cedar Waxwings were up and European Starlings were down.

Although the Ithaca June Count had record lows for several warbler species, Atlas reports bolstered their numbers so that most were unchanged from last year. The Montezuma Once-a-Month Count pushed Cerulean Warbler numbers up. Dave Russell's canoe trip down the Chemung River aided the increase in Northern Waterthrushes. Strangely, another streamside species, the American Redstart was down. Common Yellowthroat was up. Tim Whitens rediscovered the "**Lawrence's**" Warbler in Cameron that Dave Russell and I had found in May. Bill Evans reported two early-arriving Bay-breasted Warblers in late August. Even more unusual, Meena Haribal discovered one in her Atlas block near Cayutaville in early July.

Indigo Bunting was down, as were many of the sparrows and blackbirds. Savannah, Grasshopper, Song, Swamp and White-throated sparrows all decreased. Bobolinks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern Meadowlarks and Baltimore Orioles were all down as well. Eastern Towhee was the only sparrow species to increase. Brown-headed Cowbirds was one of the three species to increase for the second year in a row. Purple Finches were up from last year. Pine Siskins made summer appearances. John and Sue Gregoire were even able to confirm breeding of siskins for the first time at the Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory. House Finches, American Goldfinches and House Sparrows all declined.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ChR – Chemung River; CoH – Connecticut Hill; DrL – Dryden Lake; EWMA – Erwin State Wildlife Management Area; FLNF – Finger Lakes National Forest; GAWS – Gleason Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary; GlMe – Gleason Meadows; IJC – Ithaca June Count; KH – Kestral Haven Avian Migration Observatory SCHU; MNWR – Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; MtPl – Mt. Pleasant TOMP; MyPt – Myers Point; SCP – Salmon Creek Preserve TOMP; SF – State Forest; StP – Stewart Park TOMP; TCAH – The Center at Horseheads CHEM; U – University; WMA – Wildlife Management Area.

LOONS – DUCKS

Pied-billed Grebe: max 16 MNWR 7 Aug.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 100 MNWR Jul.
Am. Bittern: MNWR 4 Jun-15 Aug; TCAH 9 Jun; DrL 19 Aug.
Least Bittern: MNWR 4 Jun-1 Aug; TCAH 4-15 Jun.
Great Blue Heron: max 131 MNWR 15

Aug.

Great Egret: max 30 MNWR 15 Aug, high.

Green Heron: 9 TCAH 9 Jun; max 33 IJC 15 Jun, high.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr 2 Elmira Dam 18 Jul (BO), early; max 10 MNWR 20 Aug.

BLACK VULTURE: Big Flats 23 Jun (MPol), first CHEM report.

SNOW GOOSE: MNWR 6 Jun (MS&V), only report, very late.
Gadwall: IJC 15 Jun; max 7 MNWR 7 Aug.
Am. Wigeon: max 2 MNWR 13 Aug; MNWR 15 Aug.
Mallard: max 259 IJC 15 Jun; 201 StP 28 Aug.
Blue-winged Teal: max 81 MNWR 26 Aug.
N. Shoveler: max 3 MNWR 7 Aug.
N. PINTAIL: MNWR 2 Jul (MOMBC); MNWR 25 Jul (MS&V).
Green-winged Teal: 5 TCAH 12 Aug; max 81 MNWR 26 Aug.
Canvasback: max & arr 1 MNWR 28 Jul (BRo); MNWR 21 Aug (CW).
Redhead: max 4 MNWR 2 Jul, Aug 6 (MOMBC), high; MNWR 15 Aug (MS&V).
scaup (Sp): MNWR 1 Aug (MS&V); only report.
Hooded Merganser: max 15 IJC 15 Jun, high; 9 TCAH 15 Jun.
Com. Merganser: max 34 Elmira 22 Aug, high.
Ruddy Duck: max 6 MNWR 2 Jul, high.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: max 11 MNWR 7 Aug, high.
Bald Eagle: max 6 MNWR 15 Aug.
N. Harrier: max 3 FLNF 3 Jun; MyPt 13 Jun.
Broad-winged Hawk: max 7 IJC 15 Jun, high; 2 Beech Hill Gorge TOMP 11 Aug.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 30 IJC 15 Jun; 7 Chr 22 Jul.
Am. Kestrel: max 8 IJC 15 Jun; 3 MtPl 18 Aug.
Merlin: arr MNWR 20 Aug; MNWR 26 Aug; Sapsucker Woods TOMP 29 Aug.
Peregrine Falcon: last FLNF 3 Jun (D&KGr); arr MNWR 20 Aug; max 2 MNWR 21 Aug.
Ruffed Grouse: max 9 IJC 15 Jun; 5 Lansing 20 Aug.
Wild Turkey: max 15 Rathbone 21 Jul;

11 Orange 23 Jul.
Virginia Rail: max 3 TCAH 15 Jun.
Sora: max 3 TCAH 3 Jun; MNWR 9 Jun.
Com. Moorhen: 20 TCAH 22 Jun; max 40 MNWR 6 Aug.
Am. Coot: max 151 MNWR 7 Aug, high.
Black-bellied Plover: last MyPt 3 Jun; arr MNWR 8 Aug; max 5 MNWR 16 Aug.
Am. Golden-Plover: arr MNWR 26 Aug; max 2 MNWR 27 Aug.
Semipalmated Plover: last 2 MNWR 16 Jun (A&JW), late; arr MyPt 11 Jul (BF), early; max 16 MNWR 13 Aug, low.
Greater Yellowlegs: last 2 MNWR 16 Jun (A&JW), late; arr MNWR 14 Jul; max 20 MNWR 13 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 2 MtPl 8 Jul; max 21 MNWR 13 Aug, low.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr MNWR 14 Jul; 2 FLNF 18 Jul; max 4 MNWR 26 Aug.
Spotted Sandpiper: 8 IJC 15 Jun; max 12 StP 28 Aug.
Upland Sandpiper: max 3 Fayette 20 Jun.
GODWIT (SP): MNWR 15 Aug (DRo).
Ruddy Turnstone: max 3 MyPt 7 Jun; last MyPt 13 Jun; arr MNWR 15 Aug.
Sanderling: MyPt 3 Jun; last MyPt 7 Jun; arr MyPt 10 Aug.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: last 2 MNWR 16 Jun; max 22 MyPt 3 Jun, low; arr MNWR 26 Jul; 20 MNWR 26 Aug.
Least Sandpiper: last 2 MNWR 16 Jun (A&JW), late; arr 10 Jul; max 100 13 Aug.
White-rumped Sandpiper: 3 MyPt 7 Jun; max 6 MyPt 4 Jun; arr MNWR 19 Aug.
Baird's Sandpiper: arr MNWR 1 Aug; max 3 MNWR 24 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr MyPt 22 Jul; max 26 MNWR 13 Aug.
Dunlin: MNWR 26 Aug (JC, BRo); only report.
Stilt Sandpiper: arr MNWR 23 Jul; max

10 MNWR 30 Aug.
BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER: 26 Aug; only report.
Short-billed Dowitcher: arr MNWR 26 Jul; max 26 13 Aug.
Long-billed Dowitcher: arr MNWR 21 Jul; MNWR 27 Aug; MNWR 28 Aug.
Com. Snipe: max 7 MNWR 19 Aug.
Am. Woodcock: max 3 IJC 15 Jun; CoH 10 Aug.
Wilson's Phalarope: arr MNWR 20 Aug; MNWR 30 Aug.
Red-necked Phalarope: MNWR 21 Aug; MNWR 27 Aug.
Bonaparte's Gull: MNWR 6 Aug.
Ring-billed Gull: 120 Elmira 27 Jul; max 200 StP 20 Aug, low.
Caspian Tern: arr 7 MyPt 27 Jul; max 51 MyPt 10 Aug; 31 MNWR 15 Aug.
Com. Tern: MyPt 7 Jun; arr MNWR 23 Jul.
FORSTER'S TERN: arr MNWR 26 Jul (BF); MNWR 27 Aug (BF); MNWR 29 Aug (MY).
Black Tern: max 12 MNWR 16 Jun, high.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: max 202 IJC 15 Jun, high.
Black-billed Cuckoo: 2 FLNF 3 Jun; max 6 IJC 15 Jun.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: max 10 IJC 15 Jun, high.
LONG-EARED OWL: Summerhill 21 Jul (MY).
Com. Nighthawk: max 101 Southport 25 Aug; 32 Elmira Dam 22 Aug.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: max 43 IJC 15 Jun; 11 KH 14 Aug.
Belted Kingfisher: 27 IJC 15 Jun, high; 6 MNWR 7 Aug.
Red-headed Woodpecker: Brooktondale thru 10 Jun; Coming 14 Jun.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: max 138 IJC 15 Jun, low; 11 ChR 22 Jul.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: KH 4 Aug; max 2 KH 14 Aug, high; CoH 31 Aug.
Acadian Flycatcher: max 5 Fillmore Glen SP 24 Jul; 2 SCP 11 Jul.
E. Kingbird: max 46 IJC 15 Jun, low; 10 DrL 19 Aug.
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE: Lansing 25-26 Jun (JGry, C&DTH).
Yellow-throated Vireo: max 17 IJC 15 Jun; 3 MNWR 4 Jun.
Warbling Vireo: max 48 IJC 15 Jun, low.
Blue Jay: max 238 IJC 15 Jun, high.
Am. Crow: max 751 IJC 15 Jun, high; 131 Elmira 11 Aug.
Fish Crow: max 4 IJC 15 Jun; 4 Dryden 29 Aug.
Com. Raven: max 4 ChR 22 Jul, high; 4 KH 1 Jun.
Horned Lark: max 20 KH 11 Jun.
Purple Martin: max 100 Schuyler Co Fairgrounds 20 Aug; 100 MNWR 19 Aug.
Bank Swallow: 72 IJC 15 Jun; max 2000 Fayette 23 Jul, high.
Cliff Swallow: max 6 Dryden 19 Jun, low; 6 Ledyard 22 Jul.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 15 IJC 15 Jun; 10 Summerhill 25 Aug.
Carolina Wren: max 5 IJC 15 Jun; 2 ChR 22 Jul.
House Wren: max 183 IJC 15 Jun, low.
Winter Wren: max 10 IJC 15 Jun; 2 CoH WMA 14 Jun.
SEDGE WREN: max 2 Dryden 20 Jul-16 Aug (KMc).
Marsh Wren: max 56 MNWR 2 Jul, high.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 32 IJC 15 Jun.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: max 26 IJC 15 Jun; 12 ChR 22 Jul.
E. Bluebird: max 35 IJC 15 Jun; 10 MtPl 18 Aug.
Veery: max 202 IJC 15 Jun, low; 12 CoH 10 Aug.
Hermit Thrush: max 34 IJC 15 Jun; KH

1 Jun.

Wood Thrush: max 228 IJC 15 Jun; 10 Beech Hill Gorge TOMP 11 Aug.

Brown Thrasher: max 9 IJC 15 Jun, low; 2 Cameron 21 Jul.

Cedar Waxwing: max 480 IJC 15 Jun, high.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: max 46 IJC 15 Jun, low; 6 GIM 1 Jun.

"LAWRENCE'S" WARBLER: Cameron 3 Jun (TW), 24 Jun (BO).

Nashville Warbler: max 2 IJC 15 Jun; Cameron 21 Jul.

Yellow Warbler: max 730 IJC 15 Jun; 25 ChR 22 Jul.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: max 85 IJC 15 Jun, low; 6 TOMP 30 Aug.

Magnolia Warbler: max 39 IJC 15 Jun, high; 9 CoH 31 Aug.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: max 28 IJC 15 Jun; 4 Ithaca College 30 Aug.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 36 IJC 15 Jun, low; 8 Dryden 5 Aug.

Black-throated Green Warbler: max 84 IJC 15 Jun; 9 CoH 31 Aug.

Blackburnian Warbler: max 24 IJC 15 Jun; 4 EWMA 3 Jun.

Pine Warbler: max 2 IJC 15 Jun; Cornell U 8 Jun.

Prairie Warbler: max 8 IJC 15 Jun; 5 GIM 11 Jun.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER: Cayutaville Rd SCHU 9 Jul (MH); max & arr 2 CoH 31 Aug (BE).

Blackpoll Warbler: KH 2 Jun; last MNWR 4 Jun.

Cerulean Warbler: max 43 MNWR 4 Jun.

Black-and-white Warbler: max 18 IJC 15 Jun; 2 Bowman Hill CHEM 2 Jun.

Am. Redstart: max 129 IJC 15 Jun, low; 9 EWMA 3 Jun.

Worm-eating Warbler: max 2 Bowman Hill CHEM 2 Jun; Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve TOMP 2 Jun.

Ovenbird: max 273 IJC 15 Jun, low; 19 EWMA 3 Jun.

N. Waterthrush: max 16 IJC 15 Jun; 16 ChR 22 Jul.

Louisiana Waterthrush: max 16 IJC 15 Jun; 4 EWMA 3 Jun.

Mourning Warbler: 10 IJC 15 Jun.

Com. Yellowthroat: max 657 IJC 15 Jun; 20 FLNF 3 Jun.

Hooded Warbler: max 22 IJC 15 Jun; 2 Cornell U 31 Aug.

Wilson's Warbler: arr KH 24 Aug; max 2 Cornell U 31 Aug, high.

Canada Warbler: max 14 IJC 15 Jun, low; 4 Caroline 24 Jun.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: max 93 IJC 15 Jun; 6 SCP 10 Jul.

E. Towhee: max 103 IJC 15 Jun; 8 GIM 16 Aug.

Vesper Sparrow: max 2 IJC 15 Jun, low; FLNF 3 Jun.

Savannah Sparrow: max 193 IJC 15 Jun; 16 Sullivanville Dam CHEM 3 Jun.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 7 IJC 15 Jun, low; 2 Arnot Forest TOMP 1 Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: max 15 IJC 15 Jun, high; 10 Ithaca 12 Jun.

White-throated Sparrow: 6 IJC 15 Jun.

Bobolink: max 232 IJC 15 Jun, low; 30 FLNF 3 Jun.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 340 Horseheads 29 Aug; 316 IJC 15 Jun.

Orchard Oriole: max 4 Sheldrake 11 Jul, high; Pine City 4 Jul.

Purple Finch: max 41 IJC 15 Jun, high; 7 KH 24 Jul.

House Finch: max 133 IJC 15 Jun, high; 11 KH 27 Jul.

PINE SISKIN: max 3 KH 11 Aug, high; 2 KH 23 Jul; arr Summerhill 3 Aug (MY), early.

House Sparrow: max 483 IJC 15 Jun, low.