

## REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The season was considered to be cool and wet, but the 9.53" of rain recorded at the Syracuse Airport for the three-month period was 1.58" below average. June had an average temperature of 65.6°F, 0.3° above normal, and 4.46" of rain, 0.67" above normal. July was the coolest ever recorded in Syracuse, with an average temperature of 67.1° (-3.1°) and with 2.73" of rain (-1.08"). August's average temperature was 68.2° (-0.2°), with 2.34" of rain (-1.17").

It was a fine year for cone, fruit and seed production. Pine, spruce and hemlock all had a good supply of cones, with white pine and white spruce branches weighted down by the heavy crop in some areas. Maples and ash had a lot of fruit, oaks produced a very good acorn crop and gray birch had a lot of catkins. The seed and berry crops were also good.

Common Loons were found on the Lower Salmon River Reservoir in the Tug Hill in June and July but breeding could not be confirmed. American Bitterns were common in several wetlands in Oswego County and Least Bitterns were found in the large marshes across the Region, but verifying breeding for either of these secretive species proved difficult. Black-crowned Night-Heron was found in more areas than normal, although the August sightings may have been dispersals from breeding colonies outside the Region. There were no reports of night-herons at Snake Swamp in Oswego this year.

Arthur Brooks found an unfledged Turkey Vulture in Dewitt and a photo was sent to Dorothy Crumb. This is only the third record of breeding, although vultures are certainly nesting across the Region. New Osprey nests continue to be reported each year and several immature Bald Eagles floating along Lake Ontario may be prospecting for new nest sites. Merlins were again found at the east end of Stillwater where they nested in 1999.

Migrant dabbling duck numbers were very low through the end of the season; Gadwall, American Wigeon and Northern Pintail were missed. The spring and early summer rains seemed to have had a negative effect on some waterfowl and rail species in Utica Marsh where Matt Perry reported there was little in the way of the usual family activities of Virginia Rail and Sora. The last shorebirds going north were found through the first week of June, but the return flight was poor due to high water at many sites. The official recording station at the Syracuse Airport received only 86% of the usual precipitation for the season, but many areas in the Region did see a lot of rain and ponds remained full through August with shorebird numbers suffering as a result. Delta Lake, the most productive shorebird site in recent years, had been drawn down only slightly as the season ended. Also, with the Atlas project underway, some observers spent July and even part of August documenting breeding birds rather than seeking out migrants as they would have in other years.

Black Tern numbers were low during the breeding season and none were reported from Sandy Pond during the August migration. In Durhamville, Mark and Beth Taylor reported a **White-winged Dove** at their feeder on 11 June. It was verified by Brenda Best for a first Regional record. Many observers got to see the dove as it stayed for about four days. There was a good count of Yellow-billed Cuckoos from Howland Island and both cuckoos were well reported again this year.

Jeanne Ryan heard a Short-eared Owl while taking an evening walk near her home in Cazenovia and over the next few days she and Dorothy Crumb observed a pair bringing food to a nest site for the first Regional breeding record. Jim D'Angelo of the Sterling Nature Center had a Barn Owl at his home in Victory on several occasions during July and August, although no roost or nest site was ever found. There were no reports of Red-headed Woodpecker from known breeding areas this season.

Passerines seemed to have a good breeding year. There was some Tree Swallow loss in early June during a short cold spell, but the cool July did not seem to affect the availability of caterpillars or flying insects which were being stuffed into young birds' mouths everywhere. This comment came from Matt Perry's report: "The excessive rainfall from spring through early summer had its effects on the local bird populations. Many songbirds seemed to benefit from an abundant insect population brought on by the wet conditions. Ground and near-ground nesting passerines also seemed to benefit from the lush, healthy forest understory that the rains made possible. Coming on the heels of two successive summers of drought, this summer's relative abundance of bird song and activity was a very refreshing change."

Perry documented these species feeding cowbirds: Blue-headed Vireo, 2 Red-eyed Vireos, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Ovenbird, several Common Yellowthroats and several Song Sparrows. Passerine highlights during the breeding season included Pine Warbler, which was in many more locations than during the last Atlas project, and four pairs of Orchard Orioles reported breeding this season, with the possibility of an expanding population in the old Erie Canal corridor.

Fall warbler migration was quite slow until the last few days of August. Grasshopper Sparrows continue to do well at landfill caps and, at another site, renested after the field was cut in late May. Henslow's Sparrows remain elusive, with reports only from the one location in Mexico. No Pine Siskins or Evening Grosbeaks were reported over the summer, a few Red Crossbills were found in Herkimer County and there were two sightings of White-winged Crossbills in traditional irruption areas.

There was a total of 187 species reported for the season, somewhat on the low side. Highlights were Stilt Sandpiper, Little Gull, **White-winged Dove**, **Barn Owl**, breeding **Short-eared Owl** and Orchard Oriole.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Betty Armbruster, Sue Boettger, Joseph Brin, Arthur Brooks, Bernie Carr, Lee Chamberlaine, Dorothy W. Crumb, Jim D'Angelo, Bill Gruenbaum, Barbara Herrgesell, Gene Huggins, Bettye Hughes, Andy Leahy, Kevin McGann, Margaret Napoleon, David Nash, Matt Perry, Bill Purcell, Marge Rusk, Jeanne Ryan, Tom Salo, Maureen Staloff, Chris Tessaglia-Hymes, Matt Young.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Bvllle – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DH – Derby Hill; DL – Delta Lake; HIWMA – Howland Island WMA; OneiL – Oneida Lake; OnonL – Onondaga Lake; SFWS – Spring Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Paris; SPd – Sandy Pond; SSSP – Selkirk Shores State Park; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse; TRWMA – Three Rivers WMA; UM – Utica Marsh.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Com. Loon:** 2 alt Lower Salmon River Res 2 Jul, no breeding documented.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** breeding UM and W Monroe.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** nesting mainland swamp OneiL; max 400 OneiL 3 Aug.

**Am. Bittern:** found at 5 sites W Monroe and Hastings.

**Least Bittern:** reports from Bvllle, CM, HIWMA, SPd, UM.

**Great Egret:** arr Clay 27 Jul; reported from 10+ sites Aug including Paris and W Winfield where unusual; only 2 DL where more numerous in recent years.

**Green Heron:** max 20 CM 4 Aug.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** UM 9 Aug; 2-3 Willow Bay OnonL end of Aug; ad + imm UM 28 Aug.

**Turkey Vulture:** nest with y Dewitt in Jul, first confirmed breeding since early 1980s.

**Mute Swan:** pair on nest Verona Jun.

**Am. Black Duck:** none east end Stillwater Res early Jul where Mallards are common.

**Blue-winged Teal:** 4 Paris 15 Aug.

**Green-winged Teal:** arr UM 20 Aug.

**Hooded Merganser:** reports of y at 5

sites.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** Cleveland 3 Aug, unusual in summer.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Osprey:** new nests Altmar, Van Buren, Lysander; established nests prospering.

**Bald Eagle:** occasional sightings Seneca R may be related to Cross L pair; regular sightings along L Ontario, possibly from Salmon R or birds attempting to establish new territory.

**N. Harrier:** breeding Peterboro, Sullivan; Nelson Swamp 3 Jun; Beaver R HERK in Jul.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** breeding 6th consecutive year Hamilton College.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** active nest lost in high winds SFWS 2 Jun.

**Merlin:** pair present Stillwater Res early Jul in 1999 breeding area.

**Ruffed Grouse:** family groups common Tug Hill and Adirondacks.

**Virginia Rail:** 2 CM 2 Aug.

**Sora:** CM 14 Jun; Fulton 7 Jun.

**Com. Moorhen:** SSSP 7 Jun; breeding W Monroe, Phoenix, UM.

**Am. Coot:** last UM 5 Jun.

**Black-bellied Plover:** SPd 20 Aug; only report.

**Semipalmated Plover:** arr SVB 26 Jul; max 5 SPd 26 Aug.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** arr 22 Jul; only 3 reports of 5 birds.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** arr Sullivan 2 Jul.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** arr Sterling 18 Jul; max 5 WM 30 Jul.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** max 5 SPd 11 Aug.

**Upland Sandpiper:** ad with y Sullivan 8 Jul; 3 or more Silk Rd landfill cap Fulton in Jun, display noted.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** SPd 12 Aug.

**Red Knot:** SPd 24-26 Aug.

**Sanderling:** last 3 SPd 7 Jun; max 16 SPd 20 Aug.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** last 8 SPd 7 Jun; arr SVB 28 Jul; max 20 SPd 20 Aug.

**Least Sandpiper:** arr Sullivan 4 Jul; max 4 SPd 11 Aug.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** SPd 20 Aug.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** arr WM 30 Jul.

**Dunlin:** last 3 SPd 7 Jun.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** arr Sullivan 2 Jul; only report.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** last 3

Schroeppel 5 Jun; arr 4 Sullivan 2 Jul.

**Com. Snipe:** flight displays Remsen, Stueben, East Floyd in Jun; 4 displaying Breaver R 2 Jul.

**Little Gull:** ad SPd 26 Aug.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** arr SVB 13 Jul; max 62 SPd 26 Aug.

**Caspian Tern:** max 57 SPd 26 Aug.

**Com. Tern:** max 26 SPd 26 Aug.

**Black Tern:** max only 3 SSSP 7 Jun.

#### PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

##### WHITE-WINGED DOVE:

Durhamville 11-15 Jun (BB, mob) (NYSARC), first Regional record.

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** 21 reported.

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** max 8 HIWMA 5 Jun (CT), very high count; 7 other reports.

**BARN OWL:** sporadic T Victory after 4 Jul (JD); last known breeding in 1981.

**E. Screech Owl:** calling many areas end of Aug.

**Barred Owl:** 2 WM 24 Jun; 3 imm with ad New Haven 7 Jul; Boylston 22 Jul.

**SHORT-EARED OWL:** pair bringing food to young Cazenovia 28 Jun; first confirmed breeding for Region (JR, DC); CM 30 Aug, early migrant.

**Com. Nighthawk:** pair Ilion after year's absence; max 101 Syr 27 Aug; 465 total Syr 12-31 Aug.

**Whip-poor-will:** 3-4 calling Constantia Jun.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Lysander 23 Jun, present about a week; Pompey 17 Jul.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** Nine Mile Pt 2 Jun; Salisbury 16 Jun; TRWMA 17-18 Jun, late migrant; arr SFWS 2 Aug, very early.

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** Nine Mile Pt 2 Jun; arr Verona 24 Aug.

**Acadian Flycatcher:** 2-3 pairs Whiskey Hollow; also present Camillus and Hannibal.

**Blue-headed Vireo:** building nest HIWMA 4 Jun; TRWMA 24 Jun; unusual sites.

**Philadelphia Vireo:** arr DL 28 Aug.

**Fish Crow:** singles Liverpool 1-25 Jun.

**Com. Raven:** Hastings 7 Jun; 3 Georgetown 11 Jun, nesting on cell tower.

**Purple Martin:** last 3 Van Buren 28 Aug.

**Tree Swallow:** max 400 Clay 4 Aug.

**N. Rough-winged Swallow:** max 11 Van Buren 28 Aug.

**Bank Swallow:** 515 nest holes OnonL 29 Jul, birds had already departed; max 80 DH 16 Jul.

**Cliff Swallow:** max 100 Lysander 28 Aug.

**Barn Swallow:** pair nesting on ferry traveling 7 mi length of Stillwater Res

(TS); max 1500 CM 24 Aug.

**Tufted Titmouse:** birds in Taberg and northern W Monroe pushing into higher elevations.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** no fall migration noted.

**Carolina Wren:** FL Nine Mile Pt 2 Jul; Bville 23 Jun; Syr 1 Jul; Camillus 1 Jul.

**Winter Wren:** HIWMA 5 Jun, late migrant.

**Sedge Wren:** 3-4 DH thru Jun.

**Marsh Wren:** low numbers UM and scarce at smaller wetlands where found some years.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** pair HIWMA 4 Jun, lower elevation than usual.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** arr DL 28 Aug.

**E. Bluebird:** breeding DH; normally cannot compete with large numbers of Tree Swallows along L Ontario.

#### WARBLERS

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** males singing Manlius and Whiskey Hollow, unusual sites.

**Pine Warbler:** now present many areas not found in old Atlas; singing in red pine plantation Central Square.

**Prairie Warbler:** 4 Georgetown 3 Jun; 3 Dewitt 21 Jun, no breeding evidence.

**Blackpoll Warbler:** 40 Nine Mile Pt 2

Jun; last 4 Jun.

**Cerulean Warbler:** 25+ males HIWMA 5 Jun.

**N. Waterthrush:** Central Square 11 Jul, presumed migrant.

**Wilson's Warbler:** arr SVB 17 Aug, early; SPd 26 Aug.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Grasshopper Sparrow:** reported at 7 sites, 3 of them landfill caps; renested Hastings after field cut.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** only reported from Mexico site.

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** 4 Nine Mile Pt 2 Jun, late; Moss L 27 Jul, only breeding area report.

**White-throated Sparrow:** SPd 26 Aug, early migrant.

**Bobolink:** max 140 Pompey 6 Aug.

**E. Meadowlark:** singing Beaver R 3 Jul.

**Com. Grackle:** max 1300 CM 30 Aug.

**Orchard Oriole:** breeding HIWMA, Sullivan; 2 pairs Van Buren.

**Red Crossbill:** 6 Moss L 27 Jul.

**White-winged Crossbill:** Boylston 18 Aug; Fabius 31 Aug.

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