

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

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September 2000 was represented by both warm summer days and cool autumn days. The warmest day of the summer was 1 September (88° F), while a low of 33° was exceptionally cold on the 29th. The average temperature for the month was 61.2°, about 0.7° below normal. The month was mostly rain free, but heavy rain between the 20th and 24th caused local flooding. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 3.92", 0.43" above normal. October was a pleasant month, as it was the second sunniest in 26 years and the driest in 16 years. The average temperature was 52.3°, 1.2° above normal, and the monthly precipitation was 1.11", 1.98" below normal. Conditions were excellent for fall foliage, helped by an unseasonably cold air mass on 7-10 October. A trace of snow fell on 8 October, which dampened the Buffalo Ornithological Society's (BOS's) October count. Lake Erie temperatures were the warmest since 1984, which would be a factor in November.

November's weather was unforgettable. The month started out warmer than usual, but it will be remembered for record-breaking lake-effect snow and unseasonable chill. The average temperature was 38.8°, 1.7° below normal. The monthly precipitation was 5.82", 2" above normal. Snowfall totaled 45.6", which was four times the November norm. More than a foot of snow fell in Erie County during 18-19 November. Just over a day later, a landmark storm event occurred, as described by Steve McLaughlin of the National Weather Service in Buffalo, "A strong southwest flow of arctic air combined with a rather potent upper air disturbance to ignite an intense band of lake snow over Buffalo and its near north and east suburbs on the 20th. Snow fell at the rate of 3" per hour for 6-8 hours across a narrow strip from downtown to the airport. Over 20" fell within this band and the timing (afternoon and evening) created the worst traffic paralysis in the city since the blizzard of 1977. The 24.9" at the airport was the greatest 24 hour snowfall ever in November and the 3rd greatest ever at any time."

Other parts of the Region, such as along Lake Ontario, were mostly snow free during this same time period. Therefore, any impact on birds would be relatively localized.

Fall migration was rather typical for the Region and occasionally spectacular following the passage of some cold fronts with northerly winds. Such an event occurred 24-25 September, and numerous migrants were observed throughout the Region, including an impressive 20 warbler species, plus many thrushes and vireos, seen at Tift Nature Preserve.

Waterfowl numbers seemed low compared to recent years on Lake Ontario. However, it was a very good fall for observing Brant. They arrived early, were frequently sighted along Lake Ontario, and appeared in some inland locations where

they are rare. "Richardson's" Canada Goose (*B. c. hutchinsii*) was observed on several occasions at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, similar to Fall 1999 reports. It may just be that some local birders are paying more attention to searching for this subspecies now. An immature Trumpeter Swan in Newstead, confirmed on 21 October, had been present for over a week at a farmhouse pond. The young swan was untagged and unbanded. Its origin was thought not to be from release programs at Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area or Ontario, and thus believed to be offspring from trumpeters breeding elsewhere in the state.

Waterfowl and gulls along Lake Erie were affected by a severe outbreak of botulism. The NYSDEC received calls about dead mergansers and gulls at Evangola State Park and Sturgeon Point on 16 November. Type E Botulism was confirmed quickly by a NYSDEC pathologist after the testing of blood serum from several carcasses. Ken Roblee of NYSDEC indicated that it appeared from field observations that most of the birds died during a short time period, as many were in fresh condition. The species most affected were Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser and Ring-billed Gull. No sick waterfowl were observed on the shore, which indicates that almost all the birds died some distance out on the lake and were washed ashore. There were a few reports of sick Ring-billed Gulls along the shoreline and their illness was likely the result of secondary poisoning from consumption of carcasses on the shore. Some carcasses found were somewhat decomposed, indicating that there was earlier mortality, most likely in October. On 28-29 November, Roblee, with the assistance of Bob Andrie, conducted counts of dead birds at 65 100-meter transects along the Lake Erie shoreline in an attempt to document the number killed by species. The dead birds found included Common Loon (32), Horned Grebe (6), Mallard (1), Bufflehead (5), Red-breasted Merganser (136), Bonaparte's Gull (2), Ring-billed Gull (94), Herring Gull (13), Great Black-backed Gull (7) and American Crow (1).

Fall shorebirding was unspectacular, but all three phalarope species and Long-billed Dowitchers were impressive finds.

It was an above average gull season on the Niagara River. Twelve species were present, highlighted by California Gull, making its ninth consecutive fall appearance, and multiple Sabine's Gulls. For the second year in a row, no Franklin's Gulls were reported from the river. This species has occurred with less frequency in recent years. Attendees of the first North American Gull Conference in Niagara Falls, Ontario, 24-26 November were treated to a good showing, including several well-observed Thayer's Gulls. Gordon Bellerby's maximum Bonaparte's Gull counts topped 10,000 birds.

Fall owl migration is not regularly tracked in the Region, but Dave Junkin proved this year that the owls are indeed passing through. Junkin banded 15 Northern Saw-whet Owls in October, including 13 in one night! The previous Region high was four.

Pine Siskin was the most widespread northern finch this fall. There were only single reports of Common Redpoll, White-winged Crossbill and Evening Grosbeak.

The 65th annual BOS October Count was held on 8 October and compiled by Mike Hamilton. The 160 species recorded tied 1999 for the highest total in the last decade. There were two record high counts (since 1935) this year: 2671 Double-crested Cormorants (20 times the historical average) and 28 Great Egrets (14 times the average). These species were joined by the following with highest counts in the past decade: Ruddy Duck (598), Peregrine Falcon (2), Black-bellied Plover (71), American Golden-Plover (84), Brown Thrasher (7), Palm Warbler (39) and Common Yellowthroat (17). A total of only four Ring-necked Pheasants was a record low count (since 1935), while American Wigeon (141, lowest since 1973), Redhead (2), Great Horned Owl (1, but poor owling conditions), Pectoral Sandpiper (3), Common Tern (3), Rusty Blackbird (39) and House Finch (578) had decade-low counts.

There were some notable rarities recorded this fall. In September, Bill Watson found the Region's third documented Long-tailed Jaeger at Woodlawn Beach State Park. One of the previous records was also from that location. Watson had the other great find, a Summer Tanager at Tifft Nature Preserve in November. Several observers were able to see this mustard-yellow and green bird in the following days.

Other significant sightings not previously mentioned include: Eared Grebe, Cattle Egret, Golden Eagle, Western Sandpiper, Pomarine Jaeger, Barn Owl, Bohemian Waxwing and "Oregon" Juncos.

Special thanks go to Ken Roblee, Steve Kahl and Steve McLaughlin (weather) for their contributions to this article.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AmSP – Amherst State Park, ERIE; BOSOC – Buffalo Ornithological Society October Count, 8 Oct; BuSP – Buckhorn Island State Park, ERIE; BWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; FMCS – Four Mile Creek State Park, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara State Park, NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill State Park, NIAG; GI – Goat Island, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, GENE/ORLE; JAS – Jamestown Audubon Sanctuary, CHAU; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on Niagara River, Lewiston NIAG; NR – Niagara River; OOWMA – Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area, GENE; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, East Aurora ERIE; TBNP – Times Beach Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; Tifft NP –

Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach State Park, ERIE; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora State Park, NIAG.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: arr Yates ORLE BOSOC, early; 2 Somerset NIAG 9 Oct (BK!); max 40 Somerset NIAG 4 Nov.

Com. Loon: max 55 Somerset NIAG 9 Oct; *intro.*

Red-necked Grebe: arr 2 Somerset NIAG 9 Oct (BK!), early; max 5 GHSP 22 Oct (PY).

EARED GREBE: BWWT 1 & 9 Sep (WW!, BK!), 15 Oct (BK!), likely holdover from summer.

Double-crested Cormorant: 1800 DH 20 Sep (DM); 1105 BuSP 1 Oct (WW); 2671 BOSOC, record high for count.

Am. Bittern: INWR BOSOC, only report.

Least Bittern: Jamestown CHAU 9 Oct (JB), only report.

Great Egret: 12 INWR 1 Oct; 28 BOSOC, record high for count; 2 INWR thru 5 Nov (FR!), late.

CATTLE EGRET: Frewsburg CHAU 20 Oct (RL).

Green Heron: last BWWT 15 Oct.

Snow Goose: arr Yates ORLE 24 Sep (WW!), early; 6 other reports.

Canada Goose (*B. c. hutchinsii*): 5 INWR 15 Oct (BK!); 25 INWR 20 Oct (MM!); 10, 9 INWR 4, 17 Nov (BK!); present in same location in similar numbers to last fall.

Brant: arr 7 BOSOC, early; 45 Somerset NIAG 9 Oct (BK!); Concord ERIE 14 Oct; 30 Wethersfield WYOM 18 Oct; 100 Niagara Univ NIAG 18 Oct; 32 BWWT 21 Oct; max 225 GHSP 5 Nov; common on L Ontario and more widespread elsewhere than usual.

Mute Swan: 3 GHSP 22 Oct; Stockton CHAU 11 Nov; N. Collins ERIE 11 Nov.

TRUMPETER SWAN: OOWMA 15 Oct, release location; imm Newstead ERIE 21 Oct (MM!), untagged,

unbanded, not part of local release program, believed to be reared in wild elsewhere in state.

Tundra Swan: max 24 OOWMA 17 Nov.

Gadwall: max 219 OOWMA 20 Oct.

Am. Wigeon: max 287 OOWMA 13 Oct.

Am. Black Duck: max 85 BWWT 4 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: last Tift NP 9 Nov.

N. Shoveler: max 155 OOWMA 4 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 327 OOWMA 20 Oct.

Green-winged Teal: max 680 OOWMA 13 Oct.

Canvasback: arr 250 NF 23 Oct; 11 BWWT 4 Nov; 1000 NF 25 Nov.

Redhead: 7 BWWT 23 Sep; 2 BOSOC, decade-low count.

Ring-necked Duck: arr 4 BWWT 9 Sep; max 255 Lewiston Res NIAG 7 Nov.

Greater Scaup: BWWT 1, 9 Sep (WW!), continued from summer; max 1060 NF 12 Nov.

HARLEQUIN DUCK: fem NF 23, 24, 26 Nov (WD).

Surf Scoter: arr Olcott NIAG 24 Sep (BK!), early.

White-winged Scoter: arr 51 Olcott NIAG 24 Sep.

Black Scoter: arr 5 Somerset NIAG 9 Oct.

Long-tailed Duck: arr 6 BOSOC.

Bufflehead: BWWT 1, 9 Sep (BK! WW!), continued from summer; arr 4 BOSOC.

Com. Goldeneye: arr 4 BOSOC.

Hooded Merganser: max 97 INWR 17 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: max 1206 BWWT 26 Oct; 200 Chautauqua L CHAU 11 Nov; 98 Oakfield GENE 17 Nov.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: juv OOWMA 17 Nov (BK!), record late.

Bald Eagle: reports from 8 locations.

N. Goshawk: Newfane NIAG BOSOC, rarely reported in fall.

Broad-winged Hawk: last 3 BOSOC.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr Porter NIAG 18 Oct.

GOLDEN EAGLE: Rushford CATT 28 Oct (RV), unverified; very rarely reported in fall.

Merlin: INWR 10 Sep; Sturgeon Pt ERIE 19 Oct; 3-4 NIAG 28 Oct (mob); Buffalo ERIE 25 Nov (PY!), at recent winter roost location.

Peregrine Falcon: Westfield CHAU 20 Sep; WoBSP 26 Sep; Alabama GENE 6 Oct; Kiantone CHAU 8 Oct; 2 BOSOC; plus several sightings in Buffalo and NF near nesting areas.

Ring-necked Pheasant: 4 BOSOC, record low since 1935.

Ruffed Grouse: Somerset 24 Sep, rare in NIAG along L Ontario.

Virginia Rail: Almond ALLE 14 Oct; SPNS 17 Oct; fall reports unusual.

Am. Coot: max 540 INWR 17 Nov.

Am. Golden-Plover: 71 Alabama GENE 6 Oct; 84 BOSOC.

Semipalmated Plover: max 36 TBNP 5 Sep.

Greater Yellowlegs: last INWR 17 Nov.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last 3 TBNP 26 Oct.

Ruddy Turnstone: GHSP 21 Sep, rarely reported along L Ontario.

Sanderling: GHSP 19 Oct, rarely reported along L Ontario.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 121 TBNP 6 Sep; last INWR 15 Oct.

WESTERN SANDPIPER: 3 BWWT 1 Sep (WW!), good count.

Least Sandpiper: last INWR 15 Oct.

White-rumped Sandpiper: max 7 TBNP 7 Sep, good count.

Baird's Sandpiper: 3 TBNP 5 Sep; WoBSP 8, 10 Sep; BWWT 9 Sep;

INWR 1 Oct.

Pectoral Sandpiper: last Chautauqua L CHAU 11 Nov.

Dunlin: max 31 INWR 21 Oct.

Stilt Sandpiper: 2 INWR 9 Sep; 2 JAS 11 Sep; only reports.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Clarence ERIE 2 Sep (DH); WoBSP 24, 25 Sep (RA! WW! BK!), slightly late.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER: 2 INWR 23, 24 Sep (BK! WD!); 2 INWR 15 Oct (BK!), rarely reported in Region.

Wilson's Phalarope: BWWT 1, 4 Sep (WW, DH), only report this year.

Red-necked Phalarope: BWWT 4 Sep (DH); WoBSP 21 Sep (WW, PY); 2 OOWMA 6 Oct (BK); good showing.

Red Phalarope: 2 DH 11 Nov (BK, DH), reported less than annually.

POMARINE JAEGER: Porter NIAG 18 Oct (BK!), rarely documented in Region.

Parasitic Jaeger: Somerset NIAG 4 Nov (MM!); FNPS 26 Nov (BK!); coverage along L Ontario in late summer and early fall is poor, otherwise might have more jaeger reports.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER: imm WoBSP 21 Sep (WW!); third Regional record.

jaeger sp: Somerset NIAG 9 Oct (BK!); FMCS 21 Oct (WD!).

Little Gull: 5 Lewiston NIAG 19 Nov, max reported on NR; 3 reports on L Ontario away from NR.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: Somerset NIAG 22 Oct (BP!), first documented report from L Ontario in Region.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 10875 NR 20 Nov (GB), as counted at Niagara-on-the-Lake flypast.

CALIFORNIA GULL: ad NPP 12 Nov (WD! BK!); ad NF 30 Nov (MM!); ninth consecutive year on NR.

Thayer's Gull: a few NPP and NF thru Nov.

Iceland Gull: arr NPP 5 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: NF 12, 22 Sep; Bourne Beach CHAU 14 Sep (BS); NF 14, 27 Oct; max 8 NF 30 Nov.

Glaucous Gull: arr NPP 12 Nov.

Black-legged Kittiwake: imm 2 FNSP 5 Nov (BP! WD!), early; imm Whirlpool NR 19 Nov (BK); imm NF 29, 30 Nov (BP, MM).

Sabine's Gull: 1-2 juv NF 18 Nov thru; juv Whirlpool NR 19-28 Nov; juv FNSP 19 Oct; good showing.

Common Tern: last NF 21 Nov.

Forster's Tern: DH 1 Sep; FNSP 9 Sep, good fall showing.

Black Tern: WoBSP 21 Sep, only report.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: BOSOC, Oct reports unusual.

BARN OWL: Holland ERIE 14 Oct (DH), very rarely reported.

Snowy Owl: arr NF Airport NIAG 23 Nov (WD, BP), only report.

Long-eared Owl: 1-2 Wethersfield WYOM 19-23 Oct (DJ); Chautauqua CHAU 21 Nov (GR).

N. Saw-whet Owl: 13 banded Wethersfield WYOM 21 Oct (DJ); exceptional number in one night; record Regional count.

Com. Nighthawk: last 6 Eggertsville ERIE 2 Oct.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 6 reports from traditional locations.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Evans ERIE 2 Oct (DH), only report.

N. Shrike: arr OOWMA 20 Oct.

Philadelphia Vireo: max 4 WTSP 24 Sep (WD, BP); well reported this fall.

Com. Raven: 2 Wethersfield WYOM 1 Oct (DJ); continued reports from ALLE.

Cliff Swallow: last BWWTP 9 Sep. swallow sp: Buffalo ERIE 9 Nov; late.

Carolina Wren: reported from 10

locations.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr AmSP 13 Sep.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: last WoBSP 22 Oct (MZ), late.

N. Mockingbird: 2 BWWTP 26 Oct; Pomfret CHAU 29 Oct; unusual locations.

Am. Pipit: arr 2 WoBSP 24 Sep.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: 2 FNSP 25 Nov (BB).

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: arr 2 GI 13 Sep; 7 other reports.

Nashville Warbler: last Alfred ALLE 28 Oct, banded, late (EB).

Yellow Warbler: last Tifft NP 24 Sep (MM!), late.

Pine Warbler: arr GI 12 Sep; Pomfret CHAU 19-30 Nov, at same feeder as wintered last year (SH).

Palm Warbler: arr TBNP 6 Sep; 39 BOSOC, decade-high count.

Bay-breasted Warbler: max 46 GI 12 Sep (BK!), in one tree during morning fallout.

Connecticut Warbler: Somerset NIAG 24 Sep (BK, DH), only report.

Mourning Warbler: last Tifft NP 24 Sep.

Hooded Warbler: last Tifft NP 24 Sep.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

SUMMER TANAGER: Tifft NP 8-12 Nov (WW! DS! BK! WD!), second fall record for Region.

E. Towhee: Darien GENE 30 Nov, lingering at feeder.

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr 2 GHSP 28 Oct.

Vesper Sparrow: 10 BOSOC.

Fox Sparrow: max 3 INWR 19 Oct; 3 Tonawanda ERIE 27 Oct; 3 Portland CHAU 23 Nov.

Lincoln's Sparrow: arr 2 GHSP 24 Sep.

Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco (*J. h. oreganus*): 2 Colden ERIE 21 Nov

(K&JL!); Eden ERIE 21-24 Nov (RA!); reports coincide with others reported in northeast states.

Lapland Longspur: arr 3 BWWTP 15 Oct; max 40 Oakfield GENE 4 Nov.

Snow Bunting: arr Alabama GENE BOSOC, early; max 52 BWWTP 4 Nov.

Indigo Bunting: last BOSOC.

Rusty Blackbird: max 700 INWR 24 Oct.

Baltimore Oriole: last Eden ERIE 18 Sep.

White-winged Crossbill: 19 Somerset NLAG 29 Oct (BK, DH), only report.

Com. Redpoll: 19 Yates ORLE 5 Nov (BK); 15 GHSP 5 Nov (BK); only reports.

Pine Siskin: arr 20 BOSOC; small numbers reported thru OCT, NOV.

Evening Grosbeak: arr 7 Eden ERIE 24 Oct (DH), only report.

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