

REGION 10 – MARINE

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The month of June started out warmer and much wetter than normal, although without any significant daily deviations from the norm. This was followed by a cool dry July. Taking the two months together, the rainfall approached normal, with the temperature for the two months 2.4° below normal. This all changed in August. After a summer with only four days over 90°F, there was an August heat wave. Eight of the first ten days were over 90°, and Central Park reached a new high of 103° on 8 August. The heat was finally broken by a sharp line of showers lasting from the 10th to the 14th. Still, only two-thirds of the normal rain fell during the month, almost none outside of this mid-month period.

The summer season is mostly about late spring migrants, interesting breeding records (helped this year by Atlas 2000), and the usual unusual early fall migrants. Some of the less common breeders seen in our area this season (not all confirmed) included Ruffed Grouse, Yellow-throated Vireo, Northern Parula, Worm-eating Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lark Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak and Bobolink.

Seabirds occur in our waters from late June on. Since these diverse groups are not readily accessible and occur together, it is best to report them together, presented here in chronological order. We begin with reports of pelagic species seen close to shore, followed by off-shore reports. The earliest and by far the best of the reports starts with this note from Patricia Lindsay: "On 23 June, Shai Mitra and I had a **South Polar Skua** sitting in the surf about 200 feet off the beach with a couple of Greater Shearwaters [at Democrat Point]. Eventually it flew off and we had great looks at it flying as well. We got John and Gerta Fritz on the cell phone and they came down. [The skua was gone by the time they arrived]. We ended up with a total of 60 shearwaters, mostly Greater and some Cory's. Also three Wilson's Storm-Petrels and one Northern Gannet. Neat stuff for the June doldrums!" We couldn't agree more!

On 24 June, a seawatch from Parking Field 2 at Robert Moses State Park on Fire Island produced two Cory's Shearwaters, eight Greater Shearwaters, ten Wilson's Storm-Petrels, ten plus immature Northern Gannets, one Pomarine Jaeger and two Parasitic Jaegers.

Also on 24 June, Dan Heglund reported from Montauk: "Never saw so many Wilson's Storm-Petrels so close to the Point. Usually while chumming for sharks well offshore, these birds are seen in great numbers. The highlight of the day was a Greater Shearwater that landed 20 feet off the back of the boat at least a half dozen times. These birds were all less than a half mile from the Point."

On 30 June, a Sooty Shearwater found at Robert Moses State Park was brought to a rehabilitator, but the bird died. On 4 August, a seawatch off Robert Moses

State Park reported seeing 19 Wilson's Storm-Petrels moving offshore; three were seen at Shinnecock the same day. On 6 August, a small number of Wilson's Storm-Petrels were seen off Jones Beach Parking Field 6 and Robert Moses Parking Field 2. On 15 August, there were eight to ten Wilson's Storm-Petrels feeding off Shinnecock Inlet, most moving east to west late in the morning. On 17 August, two Cory's Shearwaters and two Black Terns were seen from Democrat Point and a Parasitic Jaeger was found at Democrat Point 19 August.

Offshore reports start with a trip 40 miles south of Shinnecock. On 10 June, Anthony Graves (*fide* Hugh McGuinness) saw five Cory's Shearwaters, six Greater Shearwaters and 50 Wilson's Storm-Petrels. On 25 June, Orhan Birol, on a fishing trip 16 miles southeast of Shinnecock, saw very few shearwaters, mostly Greaters, and a few Wilson's Storm-Petrels. On 12 July, 20 miles south of Montauk Point, Steven Biasetti saw two Manx Shearwaters and 12 Wilson's Storm-Petrels.

On 24 August, an alternate-plumaged **Eared Grebe** was found at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. The previous earliest date for this species was 6 September, with only two prior summer records of 24 July and 4 August. The bird remained into the next season.

On 16 July, there were more than 300 Brown Pelicans reported from Barnegat Bay in New Jersey (about two-thirds adults). One would have expected to see an influx of some of these birds into New York waters, but our reports consisted of a single bird seen sitting on a sandbar north of Shinnecock Inlet on 16 July, six flying east at Fort Tilden on 28 July, a bird off Robert Moses State Park on 4 August, and two on the bar at the Jones Beach West End Coast Guard Station on 5 August.

Doug Futuyma reported on a cormorant colony: "The nesting colony of Double-crested Cormorants at the mill pond in Stony Brook is dwindling. It had more than 75 nests for the past several years and early this season looked as if it might again have that many. However, a pedestrian path has been built along the rear side of the pond, below the nest trees, and there appear now to be only about three active nests." Dave Künstler reported that the colony present for several years on an island in Argyle Lake on the west side of Babylon contained 39 nests. This site is mostly inaccessible.

A possible Little Egret was reported 18 July by a single observer in Port Washington Bay near the entrance to Leeds Pond Preserve. In spite of an extensive search, the bird could not be relocated. There are periodic reports of this species, but to date there has not been sufficient documentation to NYSARC in the form of photographs or multiple-observer verification reports to allow the species to be accepted for the state list.

When one thinks of raptors, one usually thinks of wilderness and wide-open places. Not so! Robert DeCandido supplied us with a summary of probable and confirmed raptors nesting within the borders of New York City this season. This preliminary listing is to be confirmed by Atlas 2000 reports. By county:

Bronx: Osprey (possible), Cooper's Hawk (**first in NYC since 1955**), Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel (probable), Barn Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned Owl.

Kings: American Kestrel, two Peregrine Falcons and Barn Owl (probable).

New York: Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, **seven** Peregrine Falcons and Eastern Screech-Owl.

Queens: Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel (probable), Peregrine Falcon, Barn Owl and Great Horned Owl (probable).

Richmond: Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, two Peregrine Falcons, Barn Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl and Great Horned Owl.

In addition, Peregrine Falcons have nested on the Nassau University Medical Center in Nassau County every year since 1997. This building is one of the highest in the county and represents the first known breeding site on Long Island. Several water towers in the Town of Hempstead and the Jones Beach water tower have been active winter roosting spots for some years now. They may become additional future Long Island breeding sites.

The usual shorebird trek started at the beginning of July. By mid August, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Reserve hosted, along with the more usual species, American Avocet, Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Reeve and Wilson's Phalarope.

On 25 July, Paul Maldonado found a first winter Glaucous Gull at Bergen Point in Babylon. Then, on 5 August, Shai Mitra and Pat Lindsay found a bird in first winter plumage at Shinnecock. Although usually seen only in winter, this species has been found in our Region in every month. It is rare in summer and both sightings are presumed to be of the same bird.

On 5 August, a **Franklin's Gull**, appearing to be an adult approaching winter plumage, was spotted resting with Laughing Gulls on the island just off the Jones Beach West End Coast Guard Station by Al Wollin. The gull sat on the island for a while, but could not be relocated later.

The program to protect the Piping Plover is having a positive effect on Least Terns, which are nesting again in several small colonies on Jones Beach West End.

On 10 June, a **White-winged Dove** was found along a dune ridge in Flanders by Andy Baldelli.

A Barred Owl was confirmed as a breeder on Fishers Island, the only one confirmed in the Region so far in Atlas 2000 field work. Fishers Island held the only confirmed breeding in the Region during the last Atlas as well.

Peter Dorosh reported from Prospect Park that 19 species of warblers were seen on 25 August, including Kentucky, Worm-eating and Yellow-breasted Chat. Two Olive-sided Flycatchers were also seen. This date was the first significant migration day of the fall season.

Confirmed breeding of Northern Parula had not occurred for half a century in our Region. Three Atlas blocks recorded possible breeding and two are shown as probable in the last Atlas period, 1980–1985. Then, last year, at the start of Atlas 2000, Eric Miller confirmed the species in Alley Pond Park. On 7 July, Joe Giunta and Eric Salzman saw a female Northern Parula feeding a fledgling at Fresh Pond, Hither Hills. This is the first recent confirmed breeding record for Eastern Long Island. In addition, there were reports out east of at least half a dozen singing, territorial males.

An adult **Lark Sparrow** was found on the north side of Gabreski Airport, Westhampton, on 19 July, then relocated 24 July. The species is very rare in summer; there are only a handful of prior July records.

On 28 May, Glenn Quinn saw two Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the marsh at Sands Point. The species is a late migrant and this is not an indication of possible breeding south of the normal range.

Boat-tailed Grackles are now found in Staten Island, Jamaica Bay, Plum Beach (Brooklyn), the Five Towns area, Oceanside, Freeport, Jones Beach fishing piers, Cedar Beach, Oak Beach Marsh, Napeague Harbor and Shinnecock. This species continues to expand in our area, nesting primarily on the bay islands behind the South Shore barrier beaches.

Ken Feustel, this Region's Atlas 2000 Coordinator, supplied us with (along with a summary of interesting breeding confirmations, shown under the species accounts) an evaluation of Red Fox versus colonial nesting bird successes in the Region. The fox population has increased dramatically to the detriment of tern and heron colonies. Meanwhile, considerable effort and expense has been expended at Jones Beach West End to protect Piping Plovers. At the same time, an active fox den exists just to the west of that area. Evidently, the authorities are loathe to do anything about this, fearing public reaction. However, no trees are being planted on the Jones Beach strip to replace the dying pines, because crows nest in trees and crows are predators of local nesters such as plovers and terns. You figure it out. [RRE: Easy! Obviously, we don't manage in a vacuum; public reaction is a factor.]

Finally, the Federation Field Trip to Jamaica Bay, on 25 August, under the capable leadership of Mike Bochnik, was a successful day of birding for a predominately upstate group of birders. Notable sightings included an Eared Grebe in alternate plumage, American Golden-Plover in alternate plumage, Hudsonian Godwit, Wilson's Phalarope and Gull-billed Tern.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Alley Pd P; CB – Cedar Beach; CCP – Cupsogue County P; CLP – Clove L P, SI; CM – Cow Meadow, Freeport; CP – Central P; DP – Democrat Pt, FI; FI – Fire I; FP – Forest P; FTT – Fort Tilden, Queens; GA – Gabreski Airport, Westhampton; In – Inlet; JBCH – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long Island; MEB – Mecox Bay; MNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MP – Montauk Pt; NYRBA – New York Rare Bird Alert; PB – Pikes Beach, Westhampton; PBP – Pelham Bay P; PL – Pt Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP – Prospect P; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten Island; VCP – Van Cortlandt P, Bronx.

LOONS – DUCKS

EARED GREBE: JBWR 24 Aug thru; only 2 prior summer records, earliest fall record 6 Sep.

Cory's Shearwater: 5 40-mi south SHIN 10 Jun; several DP 23 Jun; 2 RMSP 24 Jun; 2 DP 17 Aug.

Greater Shearwater: 6 40-mi south SHIN 10 Jun; ~50 DP 23 Jun; 8 RMSP 24 Jun; MP 24 Jun; 16-mi SE of SHIN 25 Jun.

Sooty Shearwater: found at RMSP 30 Jun, brought to rehabilitator, died, skin to AMNH.

Manx Shearwater: 2 20-mi south MP 12 Jul (SB).

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: 50 40-mi south SHIN 10 Jun; 3 DP 23 Jun; 10 RMSP 24 Jun; many MP 24 Jun; 16-mi SE of SHIN 25 Jun; 20-mi south MP 12 Jul; 19 RMSP 4 Aug; 3 off SHIN In 4 Aug; off JBCH Field 6 and RMSP Field 2 on 6 Aug; 8-10 SHIN 12 Aug.

Brown Pelican: on a sandbar north of SHIN 16 Jul; 6 flying east at FTT 28 Jul; off RMSP 4 Aug; 2 JBWE 5 Aug.

Double-crested Cormorant: 3 nests Stony Brook colony (DF); 39 nests Argyle L Babylon (DK).

Great Cormorant: Breezy Pt 9 Jun; late date, previously to 9 Jun but a handful of prior summer dates.

Least Bittern: Big Reed Pd MP 1 Jun; Mashomack Shelter I to 6 Jun.

Cattle Egret: Theodore Roosevelt P MP

28 Jun; JBWR 14-15, 22, 26 Jul-early Aug.

Turkey Vulture: CP 2 Jul; Napeague 10 Jun.

King Eider: MP 6 Jun.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: imm Cormorant Pt Hampton Bays 3 Aug; imm MP 9 Aug thru; Theodore Roosevelt P 11 Aug; PP 15 Aug; JBWR 18 Aug.

Cooper's Hawk: nest with yg NY Botanical Garden Bronx, 1st nest in NYC since 1955; a possible 2nd NYC site in VCP, a bird seen several times to 13 Jun.

Red-tailed Hawk: breeding NYC counties: BRON, NEWY, QUEE, RICH.

Am. Kestrel: breeding all NYC counties.

Peregrine Falcon: breeding pairs NYC counties: 7 NEWY, 2 KING, QUEE, 2 RICH; Nassau U Medical Center NASS every year since 1997.

Wild Turkey: established resident populations in the Brookhaven-Riverhead farm area as far west as Yaphank (KF).

Ruffed Grouse: hen with at least 1 chick Bald Hill wetlands SUFF (near Riverhead Community College) 8 Jun (SB), only Atlas report.

N. Bobwhite: APP 2 Jun; Amagansett 6 Jun; MP 6 Jun; Napeague 6 Jun; Rt 51 fields Eastport 8-9 Jun, 15 Jul; Speonk 8, 29 Jun; Caumsett SP 4 Jul; FL early Jul; Eastport 15 Jul; almost all reports were of

single birds.

Com. Moorhen: juv JBWR seen late Aug, first evidence of nesting there in several years.

Am. Golden-Plover: 2 GA 17 Aug; 13 Doctors Path Riverhead 24-25 Aug, 8 on the 28th; 2 JBWR 24 Aug thru; MEB 25 Aug.

Am. Avocet: JBWE 16 Jul; JBWR 25-31 Jul, 12 Aug, 2 on 15-24 Aug.

Upland Sandpiper: 2 in display flight GA 2 Jun; Eastport 24 Jun; PBP on the closed landfill 14 Jul; pr with y GA 18 Jun; 16 there 31 Jul; 17 on 30 Jul, 20+ on 9 Aug, 7 on 11 Aug, 12 on 14 Aug, 18 on 22 Aug, 9 on 25 Aug; Cupsogue 22 Aug.

Whimbrel: 2 flying past the Ponquogue Bridge 8 Jul, 1 on 16 Jul, then 11-12 on 25 Aug; 3 CCP 25 Jul; 2 CM 5 Aug; 3 Cedar Beach Southold 11 Aug; JBWR 19 Aug; MEB 25 Aug.

Hudsonian Godwit: CCP 27 Jun; 1 increasing to 5 JBWR 27- 28 Jul thru; MEB 25 Aug.

Marbled Godwit: CCP 27 Aug; JBWR 12-late Aug; PB 24-27 Aug; North Line Is 29 Aug.

Baird's Sandpiper: Sands Pt 12 Aug (GQ).

Stilt Sandpiper: 39 JBWR 27 Jul, 72 JBWR 5 Aug; large numbers.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: 6 GA 18 Aug; Breezy Pt QUEE 25 Aug.

Ruff: reeve JBWR 29 Jul-4 Aug (TWB et al).

Long-billed Dowitcher: arr CCP 31 Jul.

Wilson's Phalarope: JBWR 18-22 Jul, 4-26 Aug; JBWE 25 Jul; MB mudflats 12 Aug; Goethals Bridge Pd SI 29 Aug.

SOUTH POLAR SKUA: in the surf ca 200' off beach DP 23 Jun (PL, SM).

Pomarine Jaeger: RMSP 24 Jun.

Parasitic Jaeger: FI In 9 Jun; 2 RMSP 24 Jun; DP 19 Aug.

Long-tailed Jaeger: middle LI Sound seen from Bridgeport-Port Jefferson ferry 27 Aug (DM *fide* NYRBA).

FRANKLIN'S GULL: JBWE 5 Aug

(AW).

Glaucous Gull: SHIN 7-8 Jul (NYRBA); 1st winter Bergen Pt Babylon 25 Jul (PM); SHIN 5 Aug (SM, PL).

Gull-billed Tern: visiting a tern colony on an island in Jamaica Bay; off MNSA, JBWE, Oak Beach.

Caspian Tern: 2 PP 3 Jun; PP 30 Jul; MEB 25 Aug; JBWR 26-27 Aug.

Royal Tern: area around SHIN and CCP frequented by up to a dozen from 1 on 5 Jun, then late Jul thru larger numbers were present with 12 roosting on the n end of Robbins I 14 Aug.

Roseate Tern: 150 MEB 28 Aug, prior to departing.

Com. Tern: 450 MEB 28 Aug, prior to departing.

Least Tern: 195 pairs nesting at Breakwater Beach Mattituck fledged approx 1.5 chicks per nest; a large colony at MEB; JBWE reported re-nesting in two small groups.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

WHITE-WINGED DOVE: present for about 30 minutes Red Cedar Pt Flanders 10 Jun (AB).

Monk Parakeet: alive and well at various nesting sites.

Barn Owl: breeding NYC counties: BRON, KING, RICH.

E. Screech-Owl: breeding NYC counties: BRON, NEWY, RICH.

Great Horned Owl: breeding NYC counties: BRON, QUEE, RICH.

Barred Owl: confirmed breeding on Fishers I (JW *fide* KF), same area as last Atlas; only report.

Short-eared Owl: Napeague Meadow Rd 2, 26 Aug.

Com. Nighthawk: 35 before dusk PP 28 Aug.

Chuck-will's-widow: Linda Lane Riverhead 3 Jun; 2 Sears Bellow Pd Hampton Bays 9 Jun.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: nested CP, new site since last Atlas project.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Warbling Vireo: nested CP, PP; singing at Peconic Ri Riverhead, Wildwood L Calverton, Sag Harbor, Mashomack on Shelter I (where a fem with brood patch was mist-netted 15 Jun).

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: Riverside P NEWY 14 Aug; Seaview SI 23 Aug; PP 24, 29 Aug.

“Brewster’s” Warbler: PP 29 Aug.

N. Parula: 3 singing males Camp Hero MP 6 Jun; singing Little Peconic Ri (near Riverhead County Center) 8 Jun; apparently territorial male Fresh Pd Napeague 9 Jun; fem & y (FY) Fresh Pd Hither Hills 7 Jul (JG, ES), a return to breeding in Region after an absence of half a century.

Prothonotary Warbler: CP 21 Jun.

Worm-eating Warbler: fem captured Greenport 23 Jun (GR), brood patch had extreme vascularization and fluid; JBWR 1 Aug; CP 6, 17, 30 Aug; PP 22, 25, 31 Aug; East Quogue 19-21 Aug.

Kentucky Warbler: FP 1-3, 14-19 Jun; singing Hecksher SP 9 Jun; fem PP 25 Aug.

Connecticut Warbler: Peconic 20 Aug (LF).

Mourning Warbler: to 7 Jun; 22 Aug thru.

Hooded Warbler: PP 23 Aug; male Wildwood P Wading River 23 Aug.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Summer Tanager: East Hampton 14 Jun.

Lark Sparrow: ad Gabreski Airport Westhampton 19-24 Jul (BM, DK), 5 Aug (JQ); only a handful of prior Jul records.

Grasshopper Sparrow: dozen pairs NYSDEC land/bike trail Rt 51 SUFF (opposite sod farms); now gone from the southern NASS concentrations confirmed in the last Atlas.

Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 2 Sands Pt 28 May.

Blue Grosbeak: male singing near farm field west of Speonk-Riverhead Rd SUFF 8 Jun; 3 (1st spring male, ad male, female) Wading River 10-13 Jun; pair in early Jun in a Calverton field where the species nested several years ago, no evidence of nesting was found and the birds disappeared by mid to late Jun.

Bobolink: confirmed nesting Mount Loretto SI (*fide* HF) where not found in last Atlas.

Boat-tailed Grackle: scattered on the south shore from SI to SHIN; nesting appears to have occurred throughout on various bay islands behind the barrier beaches.

Orchard Oriole: 14 Garvies Pt Glen Cove in Porcelainberry bushes 16 Jul; nesting CP, PP, Inwood P.

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