

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

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Summer 2001 was generally quite nice for people and probably also for many bird species. June was a little warmer than normal, July a little cooler than normal and August quite a bit warmer than normal (by 3.7°F). The thermometer barely reached 90° on four occasions in June and July, but exceeded that mark on four consecutive days, 7–10 August. Precipitation varied greatly across the Region. Ithaca received above average rainfall every month while Elmira totaled less than half the normal amount for the summer season.

As you read the following, keep in mind not only the above weather factors, but also some significant alterations in the norms of Finger Lakes Region birding activity. Large contributions to summer data in each of the last several years have come from the Ithaca June Count. Up until last year, that count, like a Christmas Bird Count, was entirely conducted on one calendar day. Last year, because many of the usual participants had conflicts with the scheduled date, the format was changed to allow participants an entire week to cover their assigned areas. Although one would expect the result to be better coverage, and therefore more birds, this was not the case. Warbler numbers on the count were actually down last year. Participants may have been better prepared for the new format this year. As a result, they recorded the highest numbers ever for many species.

This year was also the second year for Atlas 2000, which kept birders in the field through the summer. One effect of the project is that the Region's (and state's) birders are more evenly distributed, and this distribution changes each year of the project. Favored birding areas are likely to only receive the concentrated effort of one volunteer in only one of the five years of the project.

The following account includes comparisons of reported bird populations in the Region between summer 2001 and summer 2000, with occasional reference to a species' status in previous summers. 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 238 species reported the last four summers in the Region, 147 species showed no significant change in populations between summer 2000 and summer 2001. Sixty-four species increased and 27 species decreased.

The controversial Double-crested Cormorant control program in Lake Ontario may finally be demonstrating the desired effect of the program's proponents. The number of cormorants in Region 3 was down 42% from last year when numbers were exceedingly high. Another colonial nester, Great Blue Heron, was the only species whose summer numbers increased for the third consecutive year. Hopefully, this is a sign of improving water quality and food supply. Green Herons

and Black-crowned Night-Herons both decreased substantially. Low water levels in wetlands in drought-ridden parts of the Region may be partially responsible. Less intense Atlas coverage of the spottily distributed wetland habitats may also account for a large part of the decline. Dave Russell and Geo Kloppel spent much less time in wetlands this year.

Turkey Vultures were up this year. For the same reasons stated above, Wood Duck, American Black Duck, Mallard (second consecutive decline), Blue-winged Teal and Hooded Merganser all demonstrated declines. Some of these species also must contend with the aggressive and larger Canada Goose for space. Canada Geese were up another 56% from last year. On a more positive note, the river-dwelling Common Mergansers increased with the decrease in water levels. Slower, clearer waters with interspersed exposed shoals favor this fish-eating species. A few Ring-necked Ducks lingered into the summer, with a male lingering well into June, last seen with a female in the marsh at The Center at Horseheads. These and the Ruddy Duck found by John and Sue Gregoire in a farm pond in Horseheads both constituted first summer records for Chemung County. Most unusual were the two sightings of a White-winged Scoter, once in June and once in July, at the north end of Seneca Lake.

While summer raptor numbers are usually stable, three species showed increases this year. A high count of Red-shouldered Hawks and a full nest in the Town of Orange gave this species an increase. A migratory movement of a half-dozen Northern Goshawks and 100 Broad-winged Hawks in one day at Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory was responsible for the increased numbers in these species.

Wild Turkeys, benefiting from a relatively easy winter and last autumn's good mast crop, increased. Rails didn't seem to change numbers much, although American Coots decreased. Bob Guthrie and Carol and Joe Slattery found a Sandhill Crane in the Town of Jerusalem.

Shorebirds produced a mixed picture. Least and Pectoral sandpipers and Short-billed Dowitchers all declined for the second year in a row. American Golden-Plover, Killdeer, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs, and Spotted and Semipalmated sandpipers all increased. Jeff Gerbracht and Ken Rosenberg turned up the only Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Gary Chapin found the only Red-necked Phalarope.

Among gulls, Ring-billed decreased slightly and Herring Gull nearly doubled last year's numbers. Bob Fogg discovered the season's only Laughing Gull on a visit to Myers Point. Single Bonaparte's Gulls appeared in Elmira and at Montezuma. Perhaps as a side effect of the cormorant control program, Caspian Terns were up in numbers. Gil Weakland estimated at least 100 flying high over Eldridge Park in Elmira. The single Forster's Tern found on the Ithaca June Count was very unusual both in being the only summer report and in its occurrence in mid-June rather than in the latter half of the season.

Owls made some lasting impressions this summer. The Ithaca June Counters located 16 Barred Owls. Calling fledglings were also discovered in the Towns of Erin and Addison. Kevin McGowan and Arthur Smith, Jr. both enjoyed observing

foraging families of Long-eared Owls in the Towns of Ledyard and Big Flats, respectively. A colony of Short-eared Owls, first observed by several members of the Chemung Valley Audubon Society in March, continued to occupy a grassland slope on the Chemung and Schuyler county border through at least early July. As many as seven birds were observed. Surprisingly, Roger Sleeper observed yet another Short-eared Owl on several occasions in the Town of Veteran.

Although not reported then, two Whip-poor-wills were singing in the Town of Addison last year, and both returned to serenade Jodi and Mike Crane this year. Meanwhile, Ken and Liz Smith also enjoyed the now rare song of the Whip-poor-will in the Town of Groton. In spite of a decrease in the number of accessible chimneys, Chimney Swift numbers were up thanks to a couple of large late summer flocks.

As it did with most woodland species, the Ithaca June Count turned up all-time highs for five woodpecker species. When combined with other reports, the only three that showed significant increases were Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker (more than double last year's number) and Northern Flicker. Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, and Warbling and Red-eyed vireos all increased. Warbling and Yellow-throated vireos and other riverine tree nesters faced a special challenge this year. Birds that chose American Sycamores as nest sites found their nests quite exposed by the defoliation that the trees experienced this spring. Horned Lark was reported in smaller numbers. Purple Martins and Bank Swallows both decreased. Tree Swallows increased.

West Nile Virus didn't get much local publicity this year and, if present in the Region's corvid populations, produced inconsistent effects. American and Fish crows were down. Blue Jays and Common Ravens were up.

Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice and Red-breasted Nuthatches increased. Carolina Wrens were up, but House Wrens went down for the second straight year, Marsh Wrens decreased and Sedge Wren numbers dropped to zero. All of the locally breeding thrush species were up in numbers. Chris Tessaglia-Hymes heard calls of one or more night-migrating Swainson's Thrushes in late August. An increase in Gray Catbirds was the only mimid change. Perhaps the best bird found on the monthly bird count in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex was the American Pipit on the June count.

Yellow Warbler was up but other riverine warblers, Cerulean Warbler and Northern Waterthrush, were down. Conifer-dwelling Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green and Blackburnian warblers all increased. The more deciduously associated Ovenbird was also up. Perhaps the drier weather in the Southern Tier may have caused greater nesting activity by these species, making them easier to find. Two shrub-loving species, Mourning Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, also increased. Among the more exciting warbler finds were Joan Scrocarelli's and Anne Thurber's Northern Parula in Southport in June, Don Marks's Yellow-breasted Chat at Tanglewood Forest and Jay McGowan's migrating Golden-winged Warbler.

Bolstered by the high number on Ithaca's June Count, Scarlet Tanagers

increased. Among sparrows, Eastern Towhee and Savannah, Grasshopper and Song sparrows were all up. Unfortunately, the rare Henslow's Sparrow was down. Pete Hosner and Charlie Smith reported three singing Clay-colored Sparrows in Lodi. Among icterids, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle increased. Brown-headed Cowbird decreased. Indigo Bunting, House Finch and American Goldfinch all increased. Finally, all of the European exotics changed significantly from last year. Rock Doves and European Starlings both increased. House Sparrows, perhaps in response to the recovering House Finch population, declined.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CayL – Cayuga L; CVT – Catharine Valley Trail SCHU; ElmD – Elmira Dam; FGSP – Fillmore Glen SP; Hors – Horseheads; IJC – Ithaca June Count; KH – Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory; MNWR – Montezuma NWR; MWC – Montezuma Wetlands Complex; MyPt – Myers Pt; SRBP – Seybolt Rd Bait Ponds; TF – Tanglewood Forest.

LOONS – DUCKS

Com. Loon: Long Pt SP 5 Jun; CayL Aug.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 23 MNWR 1 Jul.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 50 MWC 4 Aug; 35 MNWR 5 Jun.
Am. Bittern: Queen Catharine's Marsh SCHU 10 Jun; MNWR 13 Aug.
Least Bittern: Queen Catharine's Marsh SCHU 5 Jun; MNWR 30 Aug.
Great Blue Heron: max 219 MWC 13 Aug (EBC, LJ), high; 200 MNWR 14 Aug.
Great Egret: arr MNWR 22 Jul; max 38 MNWR 13 Aug, high.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr MNWR 27 Jul; max 6 MNWR 15 Aug.
Turkey Vulture: max 66 IJC 16 Jun, high; 21 Cameron 19 Jul.
Canada Goose: 110 MNWR 3 Jun; max 481 IJC 16 Jun, high.
Mute Swan: max 2 MWC 3 Jun; IJC 16 Jun.
Gadwall: max 3 MNWR 3 Jun; last MNWR 5 Jun.
Am. Wigeon: 2 MNWR 15 Aug (JGe, GP), only report.
Mallard: 128 MWC 3 Jun; max 160 IJC 16 Jun, low.
N. Shoveler: 2 MNWR 2 Jun (KR), only report.
Redhead: 3 MNWR 3 Jun (MOCV), only report.
RING-NECKED DUCK: MNWR 2 Jun (JaB); last & max 2 Hors thru 24 Jun (DR), first CHEM summer record.
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER: Seneca L SP 7 Jun (JGe, StK) and 21 Jul (BG).
Com. Merganser: 40 ElmD 17 Jul; max 49 Elmira 2 Aug (B&JO).
Ruddy Duck: max 9 MWC 3 Jun (MOCV), high; Hors 10 Jun (J&SGr), first CHEM summer record.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: max 10 MNWR 3 Jun.
Bald Eagle: max 4 MNWR 3 Jun.
N. Harrier: max 4 Catlin 20 Jun.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 4 Danby 18 Jul; 3 Dryden 31 Jul.

Cooper's Hawk: max 8 IJC 16 Jun, high; 4 Erin 13 Jul.
N. Goshawk: IJC 16 Jun; max 6 KH 22 Aug (J&SGr), high.
Red-shouldered Hawk: max 7 IJC 16 Jun, high; 4 Luce Property 25 Jun.
Broad-winged Hawk: 8 IJC 16 Jun; max 100 KH 22 Aug (J&SGr), high.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 36 IJC 16 Jun, high; 5 Cameron 30 Jun.
Merlin: arr Ithaca 20 Jul (MH), early; Ithaca 29 Aug.
Peregrine Falcon: arr MNWR 27 Aug (MNWRSVV); MNWR 29 Aug (BF).
SANDHILL CRANE: Jerusalem 31 Aug (BG, C&JS), only report.
Black-bellied Plover: arr MNWR 14 Aug; max 4 MNWR 24 Aug.
Am. Golden-Plover: arr MNWR 20 Aug; max 14 MNWR 25 Aug (GC), high.
Semipalmated Plover: last MyPt 9 Jun; arr MNWR 4 Aug; 6 MWC 10 Aug; max 20 MNWR 30 Aug.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr ElmD 22 Jun; max 22 SRBP 29 Jul; 20 MNWR 30 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr Elmira 6 Jul; 10 SRBP 13 Aug; max 150 MNWR 30 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr 2 Dryden L Trail TOMP 4 Jul; max 13 MNWR 25 Jul.
Upland Sandpiper: max 3 Empire Farm SENE 7 Jun; Hors 13 Jun.
Ruddy Turnstone: last MyPt 11 Jun; arr Geneva 5 Aug.
Sanderling: MyPt 25 Jul (MMe, MSa, MatW), only report.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: last MyPt 11 Jun; arr 4 SRBP 29 Jul; max 100 MNWR 30 Aug (JGe, KR), high.
Least Sandpiper: arr MyPt 2 Jul; 15 SRBP 13 Aug; max 20 MNWR 30 Aug, low.
White-rumped Sandpiper: last MyPt 11 Jun (BF, MSa, MatW), late; arr MNWR 15 Aug; max 3 MNWR 30 Aug.
Baird's Sandpiper: arr MNWR 10 Aug; max 3 MNWR 27 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr MNWR 7 Aug; max 7 SRBP 13 Aug; 2 MNWR 15 Aug.

Stilt Sandpiper: arr 2 SRBP 13 Aug; max 4 MNWR 15 Aug; 4 SRBP 15 Aug.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER: MNWR 30 Aug (JGe, KR), only report.

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr MNWR 15 Aug, late; max 3 MNWR 30 Aug, low.

Long-billed Dowitcher: arr SRBP 4 Aug (JaB), early; max 2 MNWR 25 Aug.

Com. Snipe: arr & max 3 MWC 10 Aug; MNWR 15 Aug.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE: MNWR 24 Aug (GC), only report.

LAUGHING GULL: MyPt 9 Jun (BF), only report.

BONAPARTE'S GULL: arr Elmira 11 Jul (BO), early; MNWR 21 Aug.

Great Black-backed Gull: last MyPt 24 Jun (CWi), late; arr & max 2 Stewart P TOMP 19 Aug.

Caspian Tern: 31 MyPt 5 Aug; max 100 Eldridge P CHEM 19 Aug (G&LW), high.

Com. Tern: 2 MNWR 5 Jun; max 4 MyPt 9 Jun.

FORSTER'S TERN: IJC 16 Jun (CBC), only report.

Black Tern: max 10 SRBP 13 Aug.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: max 276 IJC 16 Jun, high; 200 Corning 21 Jul.

Mourning Dove: max 484 IJC 16 Jun, high; 75 Elmira 29 Aug.

Black-billed Cuckoo: max 7 IJC 16 Jun; 2 Dryden 24 Jun.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: max 4 IJC 16 Jun; 3 ChR 21 Jul.

E. Screech-Owl: max 4 IJC 16 Jun, high; 3 Ludlowville 29 Jul.

Great Horned Owl: max 3 Lettie Cook Memorial Forest CAYU 7 Jun (BF), high; 3 IJC 16 Jun.

Barred Owl: max 15 IJC 16 Jun, high; 3 Erin 21 Jun.

LONG-EARED OWL: Ledyard 10 Jun (C&KS); 2 Ledyard 11 Jun; max 4 Big Flats 15 Jun (AS).

SHORT-EARED OWL: Veteran 15 Jun (RS); max 7 Catlin and Dix 22 Jun

(D&SCo, B&JO), high; last 2 Catlin and Dix 3 Jul (J&SGr); first CHEM summer records.

Com. Nighthawk: arr MNWR 14 Aug; max 300 Dryden 22 Aug (MH), high; 61 Pine City 27 Aug.

WHIP-POOR-WILL: max 2 Addison 2 Jun (J&MCR), high; Groton 20 Jun (K&LSm).

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: max 53 IJC 16 Jun, high; 22 KH 27 Aug.

Belted Kingfisher: max 33 IJC 16 Jun, high; 4 ChR 21 Jul.

Red-headed Woodpecker: max 4 Brooktondale 3 Aug (SP), high.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 110 IJC 16 Jun, high; 5 FGSP 4 Jul.

Downy Woodpecker: max 133 IJC 16 Jun, high; 8 KH 5 Jul.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 70 IJC 16 Jun, high; 5 Erin 4 Jul.

N. Flicker: max 109 IJC 16 Jun, high; 8 ChR 21 Jul.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: last Dix 5 Jun (MarF, KR), late; arr Cayuta 25 Aug.

E. Wood-Pewee: max 185 IJC 16 Jun, high; 10 ChR 21 Jul.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last Ford Hill TOMP 2 Jun; arr KH 25 Aug.

Acadian Flycatcher: max 6 FGSP 4 Jul.

Willow Flycatcher: 5 Dryden L 3 Jun; max 114 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Great Crested Flycatcher: max 103 IJC 16 Jun, high.

E. Kingbird: max 65 IJC 16 Jun, high; 16 Cornell U 10 Aug.

Yellow-throated Vireo: 2 CVT 8 Jun; max 24 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Blue-headed Vireo: 4 Catherine Creek Gorge STEU 9 Jun; max 59 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Warbling Vireo: max 93 IJC 16 Jun, high; 10 ChR 21 Jul.

Red-eyed Vireo: max 987 IJC 16 Jun, high; 16 ChR 21 Jul.

Blue Jay: max 312 IJC 16 Jun, high; 18

ChR 21 Jul.

Fish Crow: max 2 IJC 16 Jun; Heller Creek Flood Control Dam CHEM 2 Aug.

Com. Raven: 7 Cameron Cemetery STEU 16 Jun; max 8 Elmira 2 Aug.

Horned Lark: max 4 Hors 13 Jun; 4 Newfield 30 Jun.

Purple Martin: max 10 CayL 22 Jul & 1 Aug.

Cliff Swallow: 6 IJC 16 Jun; max 7 ElmD 26 Jun.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 735 IJC 16 Jun, high; 16 CVT 29 Jun.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 27 IJC 16 Jun, high; 10 Danby 1 Jul.

Carolina Wren: max 12 IJC 16 Jun, high; 8 Hors 29 Jun.

E. Bluebird: 10 Erwin WMA STEU 7 Jun; max 62 IJC 16 Jun, high.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH: Dryden 29 Aug (CT-H), only report.

Gray Catbird: max 719 IJC 16 Jun, high; 19 CVT 29 Jun.

N. Mockingbird: 3 Hors 5 Jun; max 26 IJC 16 Jun.

Brown Thrasher: 2 MyPt 13 Jun; max 14 IJC 16 Jun.

AM. PIPIT: MNWR 3 Jun (MOCV), only report.

Cedar Waxwing: max 495 IJC 16 Jun, high; 37 ChR 21 Jul.

WARBLERS

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER: Beam Hill TOMP 29 Aug (JM), only report.

Tennessee Warbler: arr Dryden 27 Jul (KR), early; Stewart P TOMP 23 Aug.

Nashville Warbler: max 2 Summerhill 6 Jun; Beam Hill TOMP 29 Aug.

N. PARULA: Southport 2 Jun (JSc, AT), only report.

Yellow Warbler: 30 MNWR 3 Jun; max 916 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: 5 CVT 8 Jun; max 129 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 8 Veteran 13 Jun; max 74 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Black-throated Green Warbler: 10 FGSP

6 Jun; max 154 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Blackburnian Warbler: max 49 IJC 16 Jun, high; 5 Cameron 16 Jun.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr KH 8 Aug (J&SGr), early.

Cerulean Warbler: max 5 Tyre 7 Jun.

Worm-eating Warbler: max 4 Danby 6 Jun.

Ovenbird: 14 TF 15 Jun; max 461 IJC 16 Jun, high.

N. Waterthrush: 6 IJC 16 Jun; max 7 ChR 21 Jul, low.

Mourning Warbler: max 17 IJC 16 Jun; Shindagin Hollow SF TOMP 1 Jul.

Com. Yellowthroat: 63 MNWR 3 Jun; max 892 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Hooded Warbler: max 35 IJC 16 Jun, high; 2 Beech Hill Rd W Danby 6 Jul.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: TF 15 Jun (DM), only report.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: 10 FGSP 6 Jun; max 154 IJC 16 Jun, high.

E. Towhee: 3 TF 15 Jun; max 184 IJC 16 Jun, high.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: max 3 Lodi 7 Jun (PH, CS), high.

Vesper Sparrow: Southport 2 Jun; Mt Pleasant TOMP 3 Jun.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 12 Hors 13 Jun; 8 IJC 16 Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: Ledyard 10 Jun; Hors 13 Jun.

White-throated Sparrow: max 11 Summerhill SF CAYU 6 Jun (JSi, MY), high; 2 Danby SF TOMP 6 Jul.

Indigo Bunting: max 227 IJC 16 Jun, high; 23 KH 27 Aug.

E. Meadowlark: 6 Ledyard 5 Jun; max 123 IJC 16 Jun, high.

Com. Grackle: max 504 IJC 16 Jun; 300 MNWR 13 Aug.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 245 IJC 16 Jun; 25 Hors 26 Jul.

Orchard Oriole: max 2 MyPt 6 Jun (JGy), high; IJC 16 Jun.

Purple Finch: max 46 IJC 16 Jun, high; 8

KH 11 Jul.

House Finch: max 223 IJC 16 Jun, high;
12 Elmira 7 Jul.

PINE SISKIN: 2 KH 4 Jun (J&SGr); last
and max 2 Newfield 24 Jun.

Am. Goldfinch: max 980 IJC 16 Jun, high;
60 Mt Pleasant TOMP 24 Jun.

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