

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

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The warm and dry summer weather continued until the last week of September, including a rare 90°F day on the 9th. The average temperature for the month was 62.7°, 0.8° above normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 3.45" (normal), but nearly all of it occurred with heavy lake effect rain between the 24th and 27th.

October was warm during the first and third weeks, with early season chill during the second week and some strong winds on several occasions. The average temperature was 53°, 1.9° above normal, and the monthly precipitation was 4.34", 1.25" above normal, but with several towns south and east of Buffalo recording significantly more from lake effect rain events. On the 8th, frost arrived early in areas away from the Great Lakes. There were strong southwest winds on the 15th to 17th and a deep low pressure system to the north brought strong westerly winds and sleet on the 25th and 26th. Birders tallied many wind-blown birds in Hamburg and Buffalo on those days. A cold and windy day on the 14th made viewing conditions less than desirable for the Buffalo Ornithological Society's (BOS) October count.

November was extremely mild, the fourth warmest on record. More incredibly, this was the first snow-free November in 122 years of Buffalo weather history. The average temperature was 46.9°, 6.4° above normal, including nine days above 60°. The monthly precipitation was 3.35", 0.48" below normal, and no snow was 10.4" below normal.

The September to November period was the warmest since 1931 and fourth warmest ever in Buffalo. Fall migration was steady during the calm September when warblers and other passerine migrants were recorded in fair, but not large, numbers each day. The strong storms and wind events during October pushed many birds on Lake Erie toward Buffalo and Hamburg and resulted in sightings of storm-driven jaegers, Sabine's Gulls and phalaropes. The extremely mild November allowed many birds to linger and was likely responsible for fewer gulls than normal on the Niagara River.

Waterfowl migration seemed typical on Lake Ontario and inland locations. High numbers of Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck and Ruddy Duck continued from Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant. "Richardson's" Canada Geese (*B. c. hutchinsii*) were observed on several occasions in good numbers at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, similar to the previous two fall seasons; one was also at Batavia WWTP.

Similar to fall 2000, piscivorous waterbirds along Lake Erie were affected by a severe outbreak of Type E botulism, a disease caused by ingestion of a neurotoxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Only two previous outbreaks

of Type E botulism have been recorded in North America, both on the Great Lakes. Extensive gull mortality occurred in summer 2001 and continued into the fall, with diving ducks and shorebirds also affected. The impact on migrating waterfowl, in particular Common Loons, with nearly 3000 projected dead over two years on the New York shoreline alone, has been severe. The stomachs of the birds most commonly contained bones of Round Goby and Mudpuppy. The NYSDEC is very concerned about the spread of this outbreak to Lake Ontario, the Finger Lakes and other large bodies of water in the state.

The NYSDEC again conducted counts of dead birds at 65 one-hundred-meter transects to document the number killed by species and to make mortality projections for the entire New York State Lake Erie shoreline. One hundred forty-seven birds of thirteen species were found dead during the transect surveys conducted between 4 October and 21 December. The counts and projected mortality included: 57 Common Loons (projected mortality 1039), 27 Ring-billed Gulls (492), 22 Herring Gulls (401), 14 Long-tailed Ducks (255), 7 Great Black-backed Gulls (128), 5 Red-breasted Mergansers (91), 5 Double-crested Cormorants (91), 1 Bonaparte's Gull (18), 1 Sabine's Gull (18), 1 Common Tern (18), 1 American Coot (18), 1 Greater Scaup (18) and 1 Belted Kingfisher (18). Other species found dead during the period outside of transects included a Bald Eagle, found dead 5 September near Ripley, an unidentified jaeger, 25 Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Dunlin.

Region 1 typically has poor conditions for fall shorebird viewing. However, this year was an exception. Dry summer weather exposed more shoreline along Lake Erie and inland locations such as Ischua Creek Dam in Machias. Cayuga Pool at Iroquois NWR had good shorebird habitat due to the dry weather and maintenance drawdowns. Birders flocked there after **Hudsonian Godwits** and **Long-billed Dowitchers** were found late in September. Besides these regional rarities, a record count of White-rumped Sandpipers was made and numbers and diversity of shorebirds were far better than usual. All three phalarope species were recorded this season for the second year in a row.

The "great gull show" on the Niagara River was below average for November, likely because of few cold fronts to bring the gulls in. Overall numbers were low, but the diversity was typical. Twelve species were present on the river, highlighted by **Black-headed Gull** and **California Gull**, while two more, Franklin's and Sabine's, were recorded on Lake Erie during the strong wind events. California Gull has now been documented for ten consecutive years.

Snowy Owls made their best showing in the last few years. At least seven were present during the season. Dave Junkin proved his remarkable Northern Saw-whet Owl bandings last year were not a fluke as he banded ten on the night of 22 October this year.

Don Roberson witnessed a fallout of warblers at Goat Island on 15 October, including an impressive five "**Yellow**" **Palm Warblers**. This subspecies has never been recorded in the Region in such numbers. Roberson observed the five birds together and saw a group of four "Western" Palm Warblers nearby. This sighting

comes on the heels of numerous reports of this subspecies west of the Region in Ontario. Out of season warblers are infrequently recorded in Region 1, so the record late November reports of Blue-winged Warbler and Wilson's Warbler are quite notable.

"Winter finches" were well reported this fall. A modest movement of Pine Siskins started in September. White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks were recorded frequently in late October and November. Pine Grosbeaks were observed in the highest numbers and reports in nearly three decades. Eighty of them were counted along the Lake Ontario Plain on 18 November alone.

In a season with many rare sightings and high counts, the most notable were Great Cormorant, Rufous Hummingbird and Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow. Brett Ewald found the Region's first **Great Cormorant**, an adult on Lake Ontario at Wilson Harbor. The cormorant was considered overdue as the species is recorded nearly annually immediately west and east of Region 1. The **Rufous Hummingbird**, which appeared at a feeder in Panama for more than a week in late October, is the Region's second. Jack Skalicky found two **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows** at Cayuga Pool on 7 October. This species, also considered overdue, had not been reported in the Region since 1983.

The 66th annual BOS October Count was held on the 14th and compiled by Mike Hamilton. The count recorded 151 species with no record high counts and one record low count, only two Horned Grebes. The following species had high counts for the last ten years: Northern Pintail 105, Ring-necked Duck 397, Common Merganser 253, Red-breasted Merganser 63, Bald Eagle 7, Sharp-shinned Hawk 37, Greater Yellowlegs 94, Lesser Yellowlegs 70, Chimney Swift 89, Tufted Titmouse 115, American Tree Sparrow 11. Decade lows were: Bonaparte's Gull 126 and Great Black-backed Gull 138.

Other significant sightings not previously mentioned included: Eared Grebe, Cattle Egret, Greater White-fronted Goose, Western Sandpiper, Pomarine Jaeger, Bohemian Waxwing and "Oregon" Junco.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AmSP – Amherst SP, ERIE; BOSOC – Buffalo Ornithological Society October Count, 14 Oct; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; GI – Goat I, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; LBSP – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on Niagara R, Lewiston, NIAG; NR – Niagara River; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, East Aurora, ERIE; TBNP – Times Beach Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: arr 2 Yates ORLE 20 Oct (WD); max 250 GHSP 24 Nov (KF).

Com. Loon: max 74 Yates ORLE 28 Oct; for details on botulism impact see intro.

Horned Grebe: BWWTP 16 Sep, early; 2 BOSOC, record low; max 49 Mayville CHAU 21 Nov.

Red-necked Grebe: arr Hamburg ERIE 2 Nov; 4 other Nov reports.

EARED GREBE: 2 BWWTP 1 Sep thru 27 Oct (MM! WW! et al), 3 at this location 20 Oct (KF!), last 1 observed 4 Nov (MM!); present since summer.

GREAT CORMORANT: ad Wilson Harbor NIAG 23 Oct (BE!), first for Reg.

Double-crested Cormorant: 1345 BuSP 5 Sep; max 1462 BOSOC; 1200 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 26 Oct, storm driven.

Am. Bittern: last INWR 8 Oct (MT).

Great Egret: max 45 INWR 3 Sep (S&TO!), record count; numbers dwindled to zero at this location by mid Oct.

CATTLE EGRET: Yates ORLE 16 Oct (BE!); Kuckville ORLE 24 Oct (BE!); Newstead ERIE 28 Oct (BK!); best fall showing.

Turkey Vulture: last 2 Pomfret CHAU 19 Nov (TM!), late.

GR. WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: INWR 16 Nov (BK!), only report.

Snow Goose: arr OOWMA 29 Sep

(WW!), early; 5 SPNS 28 Oct (LH); max 9 INWR 11 Nov; Olean CATT 17 Nov.

Canada Goose (*B. c. hutchinsii*): BWWTP 4 Nov (MM!); 10, 33 INWR 11, 18 Nov (MM!); in same location in similar numbers to last fall; 33 is record count.

Brant: arr Silver Creek CHAU 29 Sep (DN), early; 14 Yates ORLE 6 Oct (BK!), early; 2 GHSP 28 Oct; 2 Yates ORLE 28 Oct; 2 Buffalo NR 10 Nov; only reports.

Mute Swan: 7 Olcott NIAG 3 Sep (BK), record count (believe it or not!); BOSOC; 4 Barcelona Harbor CHAU 14 Nov (FR), only reports.

Trumpeter Swan: banded birds from release program OOWMA in Sep and Oct.

Tundra Swan: arr BOSOC; max 228 Dewittville CHAU 28 Nov (FR); low number of reports.

Gadwall: max 65 INWR 21 Oct.

Am. Wigeon: max 599 BOSOC.

Am. Black Duck: max 95 BOSOC; 62 BWWTP 4 Nov.

N. Shoveler: max 249 BWWTP 4 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 105 BOSOC.

Green-winged Teal: max 223 BOSOC.

Canvasback: arr BOSOC; 144 Mayville CHAU 21 Nov (BK).

Redhead: arr 8 BOSOC; 47 BWWTP 17 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: arr 8 BWWTP 16 Sep; max 622 BWWTP 4 Nov (MM), good count; 82 Attica Res WYOM (BK)

17 Nov.

Greater Scaup: arr 6 BWWT 29 Sep;
max 500 LBSP 18 Nov.

Surf Scoter: arr 5 Athol Springs ERIE 17
Oct (RA); max 31 Yates ORLE 28 Oct;
BWWT 4 Nov (MM), unusual inland.

White-winged Scoter: arr 79 BOSOC.

Black Scoter: arr 2 Somerset NIAG 27
Oct; max 55 Yates ORLE 28 Oct (BK).

Long-tailed Duck: arr 2 Yates ORLE 6
Oct (BK!), early.

Bufflehead: arr 3 BWWT 30 Sep (BK!),
early; max 430 Mayville CHAU 21 Nov
(BK).

Com. Goldeneye: arr 4 BOSOC.

Hooded Merganser: 104 Attica Res
WYOM 17 Nov (BK); max 112 S. Dayton
CATT 24 Nov (BK); high counts.

Ruddy Duck: max 1569 BWWT 27 Oct
(KF); 104 Mayville CHAU 28 Nov.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Farmersville CATT 1 Nov
(MD!); Amity L ALLE 5 Nov (VP); late.

Bald Eagle: reports from 8 locations;
found dead Ripley CHAU 5 Sep
(NYSDEC). see intro.

N. Goshawk: Sheridan CHAU 17 Nov
(CRB), only report.

Red-shouldered Hawk: INWR 8 Oct
(MT); 2 BOSOC; few reported in fall.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr S. Dayton
CATT 6 Nov.

Merlin: Carlton ORLE 6 Oct (BK); SPNS
8 Oct (LH); Somerset NIAG 27 Oct
(WD!); 2 NIAG 28 Oct (PY!); 2 Buffalo
ERIE 29 Oct (PY!), return to winter roost
area; Somerset NIAG 11 Nov (JS!);
increasing reports.

Peregrine Falcon: INWR 29 Sep;
Chautauqua L CHAU 27 Oct (TS); Amity
L ALLE 11 Nov (VP!); 2 Buffalo ERIE at
nesting location 30 Nov (WB!).

Am. Coot: max 843 BOSOC; 800
Mayville CHAU 28 Nov (FR).

Am. Golden-Plover: max 7 BOSOC, low
numbers in Sep and Oct.

Gr. Yellowlegs: 45 INWR 30 Sep; 3

INWR 11 Nov.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last 2 INWR 28 Oct.
HUDSONIAN GODWIT: 3 INWR 29
Sep (BK! et al), seen almost daily until
last 1 BOSOC; rare for Reg.

Ruddy Turnstone: max 8 BWWT 2 Sep
(JS); 3 BWWT 16 Sep; S. Dayton CATT
21 Sep (BK); INWR 22 & 29 Sep
(WD,BK); good showing, especially since
all inland locations.

Red Knot: WTSP 3 & 4 Sep (BK,WW);
DH 20 Sep (JGu); unusual in fall.

Sanderling: 2 WoBSP 3 Sep; WTSP 3
Sep; 2 BWWT 8 Sep; BWWT 29 Sep;
only reports.

WESTERN SANDPIPER: BWWT 29
Sep (WW!), 2nd consecutive fall at this
location.

White-rumped Sandpiper: 66 INWR 29
Sep (BK), record count; last INWR 11
Nov.

Baird's Sandpiper: max 4 BWWT 1
Sep; 2 BWWT 29 Sep; 2 INWR 1 Sep;
TBNP 8 Sep.

Pectoral Sandpiper: max 40 INWR 6 Oct
(WW); last INWR 11 Nov.

Purple Sandpiper: NF 21 Nov (DD); S.
Dayton CATT 23 Nov (DH), first record
inland.

Dunlin: max 80 Wilson NIAG 23 Oct
(BE); 23 INWR 21 Oct; last GHSP 18
Nov.

Stilt Sandpiper: Machias CATT 22 Sep
(MD); 8 INWR 30 Sep (WW); only
reports.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER:
Machias CATT 12-22 Sep (MD!), first for
county; 3 INWR 29-30 Sep (BK!),
frequent Oct reports from this location
with max 9 on 21 Oct (BK!); 2nd
consecutive fall with multiple reports.

Com. Snipe: max 34 Machias CATT 12
Oct (MD).

Wilson's Phalarope: INWR 29 Sep
(BK!), late.

Red-necked Phalarope: Sheridan CHAU
26 Sep (DN); Pomfret CHAU 26 Sep
(DM); 2 INWR 8 Oct (BK); Tift NP 10

Oct (RA); good showing.

Red Phalarope: Hamburg ERIE 25 Oct (DH); GHSP 27 Oct (KF); reported less than annually.

POMARINE JAEGER: WoBSP 17 Oct (WW!), rarely documented in Reg but 2nd consecutive fall.

Parasitic Jaeger: 2 Somerset NIAG 21 Oct (MM!); Athol Springs ERIE 26 Oct (RA!); Hamburg ERIE 26 Oct (FR!); GHSP 11 Nov (MM!).

jaeger sp.: WoBSP 17 Oct (WW!); 2,5,7 Athol Springs ERIE 17,25,26 Oct (MT,PY,RA), storm driven; Yates ORLE 11 Nov (BK!); good showing for jaegers this fall.

FRANKLIN'S GULL: Hamburg ERIE 25 Oct (DH), only report for year.

Little Gull: max 14 Hamburg ERIE 23 Oct (RA); 5 Somerset NIAG and Yates ORLE 27 Oct (WD); DH 20-27 Nov; 5 NR 20 Nov, max reported on NR this season.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: Lewiston NR 26 Nov (GB); NF 27 Nov (MH!); likely same bird.

Bonaparte's Gull: 4 BWWT 29 Sep; max 5000 Buffalo NR 25 Oct (NL); 3760 NR 20 Nov (GB), as counted at Niagara-on-the-Lake flypast; 36 Mayville CHAU 21 Nov (BK), good inland count.

CALIFORNIA GULL: ad NPP 11 Nov (WD!); 10th consecutive year on NR.

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

Iceland Gull: arr NF 10 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 5 NF 23 Oct; max 9 NF-NPP 21 Nov.

Glaucous Gull: arr NPP 22 Nov.

Sabine's Gull: 2,2,3 Athol Springs ERIE 17,25,26 Oct (RA,DH,BK et al), storm driven.

Black-legged Kittiwake: juv Lewiston NR 10, 25 Nov (DH, GB).

Forster's Tern: 2 WoBSP 3 Sep (MM), only report.

Black Tern: 2 BWWT 1 Sep, only report.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: Gl 1 Sep (DR), fall reports unusual.

Snowy Owl: arr Angola ERIE 6 Nov (BM); Sunset Bay ERIE 14 Nov (FR); max 3 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 17 Nov (MM), 1-2 most of month at this location; NF 17 Nov (TH); Wilson NIAG 27 Nov (BE), best showing in last few years.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 10 banded Wethersfield WYOM 22 Oct (DJ); follows exceptional numbers banded last year.

Com. Nighthawk: max 61 Kenmore ERIE 9 Sep (JT).

Chimney Swift: last 89 BOSOC.

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Panama CHAU 18-28 Oct (DM, JB, BS), ph and report to NYSARC; 2nd for Reg.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 2 ad + juv Como P ERIE 3-15 Sep (MM); 2 FNSP thru 16 Nov; only reports.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: INWR 22 Sep (BK!), late.

Gr. Crested Flycatcher: last Tiffi NP 23 Sep.

E. Kingbird: last INWR 1 Sep.

N. Shrike: arr Somerset NIAG 27 Oct; Gasport NIAG 28 Oct; 5 Nov reports.

Yellow-throated Vireo: last 2 INWR 16 Sep.

Blue-headed Vireo: last Lancaster ERIE 26 Oct.

Philadelphia Vireo: 8 Sep reports; well reported.

Com. Raven: reports from 6 ALLE, CATT locations.

Tree Swallow: last 5 BWWT 27 Oct.

N. Rough-winged Swallow: 2 NF 27 Nov (MH!), late.

Carolina Wren: reported from 11 locations, good showing.

House Wren: last 4 BOSOC.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr Snyder ERIE 14 Sep.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: 11 reports; last Tonawanda ERIE 28 Oct (WW!), record

late.

Gray Catbird: Amity L ALLE 8 Nov, on the late side.

Brown Thrasher: last BOSOC.

Am. Pipit: arr 2 BWWT 8 Sep; max 30 WoBSP 30 Sep.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: 2 FNSP 10 Nov (DH); 4 Somerset NIAG 11 Nov (MM!); typical locations for this sp.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: Tift NP 7 Nov (WW!), record late.

Golden-winged Warbler: GI 22 Sep (DR), late, only report.

"Brewster's" Warbler: Tift NP 27 Sep (WW!), late.

Orange-crowned Warbler: 5 reports Sep and Oct.

Magnolia Warbler: max 18 GI 20 Sep (DR).

Cape May Warbler: max 10 GI 20 Sep (DR), very high count.

"Yellow" Palm Warbler (*D. p. hypochrysea*): 5 GI 15 Oct (DR!), record count, observed during fallout with 4 "Western" Palms; subspecies was recorded with increased frequency this fall west of Reg in Ontario.

Connecticut Warbler: SPNS 16 Sep (LH), only report.

Wilson's Warbler: last Somerset NIAG 18 Nov (MM!), record late.

Yellow-breasted Chat: Sherman CHAU 2 Sep, only report this year.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr BOSOC.

Chipping Sparrow: last Colden ERIE 10-11 Nov (JW).

NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED

SPARROW: 2 INWR 7 Oct (JS!), up to 3 in following days; first Reg report since 1983.

Fox Sparrow: arr INWR 10 Oct; max 15 Tonawanda ERIE 28 Oct (WW), impressive count; last 3 Colden ERIE 14 Nov.

Lincoln's Sparrow: arr AmSP 6 Sep; last BOSOC.

White-throated Sparrow: arr GHSP 1 Sep (MM), early for migrant.

Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco (*J. h. oregonus*): Eden ERIE 1 Nov thru (RA!), 2 wintered at same feeder last year.

Lapland Longspur: arr INWR 8 Oct; 18 BOSOC; 6 Yates ORLE 17 Nov.

Snow Bunting: arr BWWT 21 Oct; max 550 Somerset NIAG 28 Oct (WD).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Franklinville CATT 25 Oct (MD!), late.

Rusty Blackbird: max 3000 INWR 10 Oct (KF).

Pine Grosbeak: arr FMCSP 9 Nov (BK); 4 AmSP 13 Nov (BRBA); 2 Tift NP 14 Nov (DH); 7 Yates ORLE 17 Nov (BE); 66 Somerset NIAG & Yates ORLE 18 Nov (MM), multiple groups migrating west, highest count since 1973; 14 WTSP 18 Nov (WD); 6 Youngstown NIAG 26 Nov (MH); best showing since early 1970s.

Purple Finch: 15 INWR 22 Sep (BK), impressive count for location; fewer reports this fall.

White-winged Crossbill: arr Wheatfield NIAG 29 Oct; 3 Silver Creek CHAU 9 Nov; 2 FMCSP 9 Nov; 3 Jamestown CHAU 10 Nov; 3 Somerset NIAG 11 Nov; 2 FNSP 18 Nov; 4 Alfred ALLE 22 & 24 Nov; good showing.

Com. Redpoll: 2 Buffalo ERIE 20 Oct (PY), early; 25 Olcott NIAG 28 Oct; 220 Somerset NIAG to Carlton ORLE 18 Nov (MM); 220 FNSP 18 Nov (BK); many Nov reports.

Pine Siskin: arr 2 GHSP 13 Oct; max 32 Darien GENE 1-30 Nov (TH); numerous reports in Oct and Nov.

Evening Grosbeak: arr 2 BOSOC; max 29 Amity L ALLE 1-30 Nov (VP); 10 other reports.

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