

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

Mike Morgante

16 Lakeside Crescent, Lancaster NY 14086
morgm@localnet.com

June was cool over the first three weeks but ended up warmer than usual over the last week. The average temperature was 67°F, 1.2° above average. It was a dry month as only 1.47" of rain fell, which was 2.35" below normal. It was the first month since November 2001 with below normal precipitation in Buffalo. Sunshine, heat and humidity characterized July in the Niagara Frontier. The average temperature was 73.4°, 2.6° above normal. It was very dry over the first three weeks until several thunderstorms occurred during the last week. Precipitation was 3.24", only 0.10" above the average. Sunshine was nearly constant at 77%. August was also very warm, sunny and dry. The average temperature was 71.5°, 2.4 degrees above normal. Rain was scarce, with only 1.77" falling, 2.1" less than usual. Overall, it was the third driest summer on record for Buffalo and the sunniest since 1988. [Weather data excerpted from National Weather Service Web site *Monthly Weather Summary* for Buffalo.]

The Region's birders again made some interesting finds during the third summer of the Atlas 2000 project.

Sedge Wrens made a much better showing than usual. Individuals in Clymer and Wilson were from new locations. Four in Pomfret were found at a site where occasional sightings were documented in recent years. Three separate, protected locations at Iroquois NWR again held singing birds this year according to refuge staff. Other than at Iroquois, where selected habitat is being managed for grassland bird species, increased sightings are likely due to enhanced observer effort from the Atlas. I suspect that this rare local breeder still goes undetected in some wet meadows and weedy fields. Targeted searches would be difficult but could turn up more birds.

Henslow's Sparrows were found at several previously documented breeding areas. Concerned about development plans for the William Street site in Lancaster, I contacted NYSDEC and completed forms for the Natural Heritage Registry. On the evening of 25 July, Mark Kandel (NYSDEC) and I conducted a conservative count at the site and tallied 15 individuals. This count is the highest for the Region since 1967 and the location represents the largest known population of this species in Region 1. The location is approximately 15 miles east of Ontario, Canada, where this species is virtually absent and is listed as endangered. Hopefully, this documentation will help NYSDEC and the Town of Lancaster develop a strategy to protect this area or to conserve local habitat for this species. Birders are encouraged to share their knowledge of state-threatened and endangered species with their local NYSDEC office.

Follow-up visits in search of a **Yellow-breasted Chat** observed in late May at the Schoolhouse Marsh parking area at Iroquois NWR resulted in the discovery of

three actively singing chats in the vicinity. Several birders observed these birds throughout the month of June. Chats are irregular and local breeders in the Region and this apparent small colony was unexpected.

Atlas 2000 work has already documented the increase of breeding Pine Warblers in the Region. Observations were made from eight locations this summer. Breeding was only known from a few locations prior to the first Atlas 2000 season. It was also encouraging to have Prothonotary Warblers reported from two previously documented breeding areas at Iroquois NWR and nearby Tonawanda WMA. Breeding has been infrequently recorded in recent years from these locations.

Peregrine Falcons successfully nested again at both the Statler Tower site in downtown Buffalo and the gorge at Niagara Falls. Three fledglings were reared at both nests. The breeding female from the Buffalo nest was banded as a wild fledgling in New Brunswick, Canada (700 miles east of Buffalo) in 1998. This was her fourth year as a productive female in Buffalo.

Great Egret nestlings at the Motor Island Colony were fitted with red leg bands by NYSDEC. Twenty nestlings were banded in early June and an impressive total of 37 egrets was present on 3 July. Please look for banded egrets and report any sightings to NYSDEC or to Bill Watson. On 31 August, a record Regional count of 55 Great Egrets was made at Iroquois NWR, where the late summer numbers of dispersed egrets have increased in recent years.

There were some notable records this summer beyond the breeding species. Rita Kautz closely observed an unusual oriole at the oriole feeder in her Attica backyard on 13 June. She then went to her bird books and identified it as an adult male **Bullock's Oriole**. The bird did not return to the popular feeder in the following days. A report was filed with NYSARC; this would represent a first for Region 1 if accepted.

Don Harris and Brendan Klick found a **Least Tern** at Woodlawn Beach State Park on 17 August. Many birders were able to observe the noticeably weakened bird in the following days until it was reportedly found dead on 20 August. Subsequent searches to recover the specimen were unsuccessful. This represents the third documented and first summer record for the Region. Reports of at least two other wayward Least Terns on the Great Lakes were made during the same time frame in Ohio and Indiana.

Eared Grebe is becoming expected at the Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant. It has been nearly annual at this location since the mid 1990s, including the past two summer seasons. One was found on 17 August, followed by a Regional high count of four on 25 August. It is suspected that the same individuals are returning each year in late summer and remaining deep into the fall.

Severe outbreaks of Type E botulism caused extensive mortality to piscivorous waterbirds on Lake Erie during the previous two years. While increased mortality occurred during the fall seasons, there is also an impact during the summer, primarily on gulls. At the Bethlehem Steel Plant gull colony in Lackawanna, an estimated total of 4000 Ring-billed Gulls, adults and young of year, were found

dead over the first two weeks of July. Type E botulism was believed to be the cause of death for the majority of these birds because of a confirmed test result and because both adults and young were affected. NYSDEC conducted weekly counts for dead birds this summer along the Lake Erie shoreline. Nine species were recorded: Ring-billed Gull (92), Herring Gull (7), Great Black-backed Gull (7), Sanderling (2), Common Loon (1), Canada Goose (1), Mallard (1), Black Scoter (1) and Red-tailed Hawk (1). The majority of these birds were believed to be dead from botulism. NYSDEC is very concerned that this outbreak could spread to Lake Ontario. Several gulls found dead along Lake Ontario in Niagara County were submitted for analytical testing. Fortunately, Type E botulism was not confirmed. However, Type E botulism was diagnosed in other gulls collected in eastern Lake Ontario.

Spring migrant shorebirds lingered into early June, including a late **Wilson's Phalarope** in Newfane on 12 June. Summer shorebirding was highlighted by increased numbers of Baird's Sandpipers found during the last week of August. A Regional record count of eight was made at Batavia WWTP while counts of six and seven were made at Woodlawn Beach State Park and Lakeside Beach State Park, respectively. For the third consecutive summer, **American Avocet** was sighted in Chautauqua County. Other notable shorebirds included a Red Knot at Woodlawn Beach, **Western Sandpiper** at Dunkirk Harbor, **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** at Iroquois NWR and a Red-necked Phalarope at Batavia WWTP.

Other highlights for the season included sightings of Canvasback, Northern Goshawk, Merlin, Laughing Gull, White-eyed Vireo, "Lawrence's" Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow and Pine Siskin.

I'd like to thank Ken Roblee and Mark Kandel of NYSDEC and Dick Miga for their contributions.

CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Andrie, Jim Berry, Elizabeth Brooks, Bill Burch, Willie D'Anna, Leonard DeFrancisco, Kurt Fox, Don Harris, Paul Hess (INWR), Paul F. Hess (PFH), Joanne Goetz, Joe Gula, Linda Holmes, Rita Kautz, Brendan Klick, David Mark (DMA), Dick Miga (DMi), Miley Miller (MMi), Mike Morgante (MMo), Terry Mosher, Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Fran Rew, Gerry Rising, Mark Schlacter, Jack Skalicky, David Suggs (Buffalo RBA), Dave Tetlow, Michael Turisk, William Watson, Jim Wojewodzki, Peter Yoerg.

ABBREVIATIONS

AlSP – Allegany SP, CATT; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; Carlton Hill MUA – Carlton Hill Multiple Use Area, WYOM; ChauL – Chautauqua L; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; LBSP – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NR – Niagara River; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA,

GENE; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, E Aurora, ERIE; Tiftt NP – Tiftt Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA, GENE/NIAG; WeBSP – Wendt Beach SP, ERIE; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

LOONS – DUCKS

Com. Loon: dead L Erie shoreline 2 Jun (DEC); Farmersville CATT 6 Jun; AISP 8 Jul; NF 11 Aug; unusual in summer.

EARED GREBE: arr BWWTP 17 Aug (BK!); max 4 BWWTP 25 Aug (MMo!), record count for Reg; third straight summer and nearly annual since mid 1990s at this location.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 1093 BuSP 28 Aug (WW); high counts continue, apparent breeding increases, nesting at Motor I NR again.

Am. Bittern: TWMA 23 Jun; INWR 24 Jul; 3 OOWMA 17 Aug; 3 TWMA 24 Aug; no reports away from INWR area.

Least Bittern: Wilson NIAG 21 Jun (WD), newly discovered breeding location; Cheney Marsh CATT 21 Jun (MMi); TWMA 23 Jun (PY); Porter NIAG 27 Jun (BRBA); decent showing away from INWR area.

Great Egret: 20 nestlings Motor I NR banded 17 Jun; 37 Motor I NR 3 Jul (WW); 10 TWMA 25 Jul; 8 Tiftt NP 30 Jul; max 55 INWR 31 Aug (BK, DH), record count for Reg.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 2 Newstead ERIE 2 Jun; Yates ORLE 5 Jun; SPNS 7 Jun; Cheney Marsh CATT 29 Jul; only reports away from NR.

Mute Swan: 2 WTSP 14 Jul, only report; up to 35 on L Erie just west of NR in Ontario 3 Aug; increasing to immediate west and east, but still uncommon in Reg.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 Conewango WMA CATT 6 Jun (JB); INWR 8 Jun (DH), banded; BWWTP 15 Jun thru (KF), neck-collared.

Gadwall: 2 BWWTP 7 Jul (WW), unusual location for date.

Blue-winged Teal: arr 20 BWWTP 24 Aug.

N. Shoveler: Clarence ERIE 2 Jun; 5 BWWTP 15 Jun; DH 4 Aug; max 24 BWWTP 17 Aug.

N. Pintail: BWWTP 25 Aug; only report.

Green-winged Teal: 12 INWR 27 Jun (DH), good count for date; 4 BWWTP 24 Aug.

Canvasback: 2 ad m BWWTP 15 Jun thru (KF, BK!), second consecutive summer there; 2 BuSP 20 Aug (WW!); rare in summer.

Redhead: NF 24 Aug; BWWTP 25 Aug; only reports away from INWR.

Greater Scaup: 2 NF 24 Aug (BK! DH); rare in summer.

Lesser Scaup: 12, 11 Amity L ALLE 3, 17 Jun (VP), high counts for date; BWWTP 15, 29 Jun; 3 NF 11 Aug; INWR 17 Aug thru; more locations than usual in summer.

BLACK SCOTER: dead L Erie shoreline 19 Aug (DEC); very rare in summer.

Bufflehead: NF 11 Aug (BK! DH); BWWTP 24-25 Aug (BK! DH); unusual in summer.

Red-breasted Merganser: BuSP 20 Aug; unusual in summer.

Ruddy Duck: 219, 291, 309 BWWTP 15 Jun, 7 Jul, 17 Aug; much higher counts than previous summers there.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Newfane NIAG 19 Jun; Yates ORLE 25 Jul; unusual early summer locations; SPNS 7, 19 Aug; Barcelona CHAU 26 Aug; Persia CHAU 30 Aug.

Bald Eagle: imm BWWTP 15 Jun (KF); 2 imm Newfane NIAG 19 Jun; imm Yates ORLE 11 Jul; reports from non-breeding areas.

N. Goshawk: ad Yorkshire CATT 1 Jun (DH); CHAU 6 Aug (LD); new locations.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Marilla ERIE 13

Jun; 3 Bennington WYOM 5 Jul; good Atlas finds at north end of breeding range.

Broad-winged Hawk: 2 Bennington WYOM 8 Jun, near edge of breeding range in Reg; Elma ERIE 15 Jun, possibly late migrant.

Merlin: 2 INWR 25 Aug (MMo!), slightly early.

Peregrine Falcon: 3 fl Buffalo ERIE (BB), adults seen downtown Buffalo thru; 2 ad, 3 fl NF 29 Jun.

Sora: Wilson NIAG 16 Jun (WD, BP), good Atlas find.

Am. Coot: 21 TWMA 2 Jun; Sherman CHAU 8 Jun; Buffalo ERIE 9 Jun; 2 ad, 2 yg BuSP 20 Aug (WW), irregular breeder in Reg.

Black-bellied Plover: INWR 3 Jun; arr 3 Tillman WMA ERIE 9 Aug; Newstead ERIE 17 Aug; 2 WoBSP 18 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: 2 INWR 5 Jun, late spring migrants.

AM. AVOCET: Van Buren Pt CHAU 16 Aug (JGo); regular migrant recent summers in CHAU.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr INWR 24 Jul.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 2 Times Beach ERIE 7 Jul; BWWTP 7 Jul.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr Rushford CATT 10 Jul.

Upland Sandpiper: Eagle WYOM 18 Jun (WW); 2 Buffalo Airport ERIE 30 Jul (MMo), likely migrants.

Red Knot: WoBSP 24 Aug (KF); less than annual in summer.

Sanderling: arr Newfane NIAG 18 Jul; 4 WoBSP 17 Aug; max 16 LBSP 27 Aug; 7 DH 31 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 64 TWMA 2 Jun (WW); 15 INWR 5 Jun (WW); arr INWR 24 Jul.

WESTERN SANDPIPER: DH 16 Aug (DMi), unverified.

Least Sandpiper: arr 2 BWWTP 7 Jul; max 36 TWMA 25 Jul.

White-rumped Sandpiper: 3, 1 INWR 3, 5 Jun; 2 Ridgeway ORLE 13 Jun (WW), slightly late.

Baird's Sandpiper: arr 6, 3 WoBSP, DH 24 Aug (KF, DMi); max 8 BWWTP 25 Aug (MMo, PY), highest Reg count in 35 yrs; 7 LBSP 26 Aug (DT); impressive showing.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 2 TWMA 29 Jul; max 25 INWR 17 Aug.

Dunlin: last 11 INWR 3 Jun (DH).

Stilt Sandpiper: arr 14 INWR 17 Aug (BK, DH), impressive count; 2 Tift NP 24 Aug.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER: INWR 24 Aug (BK! DH), slightly early.

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 3 INWR 17 Aug.

Wilson's Snipe: Otto CATT 9 Jun; max 43 INWR 24 Aug.

Wilson's Phalarope: Newfane NIAG 12 Jun (WW!), late.

Red-necked Phalarope: BWWTP 24-31 Aug (WW! mob); regular there in late summer.

LAUGHING GULL: DH 25 Jun (JGu); unusual in any season.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 60 WoBSP 17 Aug.

Caspian Tern: Buffalo NR 9 Jun; 4 DH 11 Jun; max 30 WoBSP 18 Aug; 27 DH 25 Aug.

Com. Tern: 11 ChauL 2 Jun (JB); 2 INWR 13, 22 Jun; unusual locations for date.

Forster's Tern: arr WoBSP 24 Aug; 2 WoBSP 31 Aug (WD, KF).

LEAST TERN: WoBSP 17-18 Aug (BK! DH, mob); third Reg record, first for summer; found dead 20 Aug.

Black Tern: 2 SPNS 13 Jun (LH), unusual location; max 11 TWMA 29 Jun.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Com. Nighthawk: 2 Blasdel ERIE 1-5 Jun (MT); Buffalo ERIE 2, 22 Jun; 3 Clymer CHAU 29 Jun (JB); few sightings in breeding season; 17 Falconer CHAU 25 Aug (LD); max 26 ChauL 26 Aug (MMi).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Charlotte CHAU 3 Jun; 2 WeBSP 10 Jun, 23 Jul;

INWR 16 Jun; Newfane NIAG 19 Jun, newly discovered breeding location; Como P ERIE 24 Jul thru; 3 PG 24 Aug; 2 LBSP 26 Aug.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Como P ERIE 1 Jun-3 Jul; may be expanding breeding range in ERIE.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Stockton CHAU 6 Jun (DMi), late migrant; Tiffit NP 24 Aug (DMa).

Acadian Flycatcher: 7 locations CATT, CHAU, ERIE, WYOM during breeding season; max 4 Boston ERIE 13 Jun (JS).

White-eyed Vireo: WoBSP 24 Aug (KF); rarely reported as summer or fall migrant.

Com. Raven: 3 Canadaway Creek WMA CHAU 24 Aug (JB); only report away from ALLE, CATT.

Cliff Swallow: 4 Peace Bridge Buffalo ERIE 16 Jun; 26 BuSP 15 Jun; continues increase along Buffalo waterfront and Niagara Ri.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Yates ORLE 29 Jun; ad + yg Newfane NIAG 18 Jul; good Atlas finds on L Ontario Plain.

Carolina Wren: continues apparent increase throughout Reg.

SEDGE WREN: Clymer CHAU 8 Jun (JB!); Wilson NIAG 16-22 Jun (WD!); 4 Pomfret CHAU 21 Jun (TM!); singing at 3 locations INWR 7 Jul (PH); encouraging; good showing.

Swainson's Thrush: last Tonawanda ERIE 8 Jun; AISP 12 Jul (PFH); arr INWR 24 Aug.

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: Newfane NIAG 12, 23 Jun; Barre ORLE 15, 22 Jun; only reports.

"Brewster's" Warbler: WoBSP 24 Aug (KF), unusual migrant find.

"Lawrence's" Warbler: Eagle WYOM 2, 18 Jun (MS! WW!); 2 Barre ORLE 16 Jun (PY!); still very rare despite increase in hybrid types.

Nashville Warbler: Alfred ALLE 3, 14 Jun (EB); Yorkshire CATT 6, 29 Jun; uncommon breeder in Reg.

Pine Warbler: 2 Wilson NIAG 1 Jun (WD!); Darien 8, 15 Jun (MMo!); 2 Sardinia ERIE 8 Jun (MT!); Bolivar ALLE 8 Jun (GR); 3 Bush Hill SF CATT 9 Jun (DH); Friendship ALLE 10 Jun (GR); 2 E Aurora ERIE 19 Jun; Bennington WYOM 5 Jul (MMo!); continues increase as breeder in Reg.

Prairie Warbler: 6 Yorkshire CATT 1 Jun (DH); 3 Andover ALLE 3-30 Jun (EB); 6 Alfred ALLE 8 Jun (EB); 6 Otto CATT 29 Jun (WD); 2 Gerry CHAU 1 Jul (FR!), possible new breeding location.

Blackpoll Warbler: last INWR 2 Jun.

Prothonotary Warbler: INWR 2 Jun (WW); 2, 1 TWMA 23, 29 Jun (PY, DH); historical breeding locations but infrequently reported in recent years.

Hooded Warbler: increasing as breeder NIAG and elsewhere.

Wilson's Warbler: arr Dunkirk CHAU 24 Aug.

Canada Warbler: Yates ORLE 5, 13 Jun (WW), unusual breeding location.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: 3 INWR 8-29 Jun (KF, mob), persistent singers, apparent small breeding cluster, unusual.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 3 Yorkshire CATT 1 Jun (DH!); 2 Andover ALLE thru 21 Jul (EB!), historical breeding area.

Vesper Sparrow: reported 6 locations; max 6 Barre ORLE 15 Jun (DH).

Grasshopper Sparrow: reported 9 locations.

Henslow's Sparrow: 3, 4 Eagle WYOM 2, 18 Jun (MS, WW); 2 Carlton Hill MUA 14 Jun (KF); Barre ORLE 15 Jun (DH); 2 INWR 7 Jul (PH); max 15 Lancaster ERIE 25 Jul (MMo), conservative count made with NYSDEC, highest Reg count in 35 years, site threatened by development.

White-throated Sparrow: Blasdell ERIE
8 Jun (MT!), late migrant or unusual
breeding location.

Bobolink: max 50 INWR 25 Aug.

Orchard Oriole: 2 Eden ERIE thr 24 Jul
(RA!), rare breeder away from lake plains;
Wilson NLAG 30 Jun (WD).

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE: ad m Attica

WYOM 13 Jun (R. Kautz, report to
NYSARC); will be first Reg record if
accepted by NYSARC.

PINE SISKIN: 5 Amity L ALLE 12 Jun
(VP!); Marilla ERIE 13 Jun (MMo!);
Colden ERIE 22 Jun (JW!); possible
breeders.