

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The late spring rains continued into June, with heavy showers during Four Brothers banding on the 15th. Lake Champlain had risen to 98.64' by 21 June, and monthly rainfall wound up 3.30" above normal. Early July was extremely hot and humid. Beginning 6 July, birders along the Québec border experienced the smell of smoke, haze and red sun from the Nomaska forest fires near eastern James Bay, until heavy rains that reached Franklin and Clinton counties on the evening of the 8th began to extinguish them. But rainfall diminished and by the hot, humid 92° day of 22 July, Champlain had dropped back to 97.02', below the level of late May. Monthly rainfall was only 3.35", or over 0.5" below normal. Most of August was extremely hot, with a 12-13 day heat wave beginning on the 7th. On 13 July, a 92° day, a rapidly-moving afternoon thunderstorm sparked a one-acre forest fire on Pok-o-Moonshine. Another broke out the next day near Ausable, and by 15 August there were 14 forest fires in Clinton and Essex counties, all started by lightning. Not until 28 August were the 70 forest fires in the Adirondacks declared mainly under control. In spite of the brief thunderstorms, monthly rainfall was only 1.10", and Champlain had dropped to 95.22'. Normal rainfall in July-August is 6.68", but

only 3.61" fell during 2002, leaving the Region more than 3" short and headed back into drought.

Bird-banding operations were conducted during June-July on Four Brothers, and 827 birds of six species were banded: 76 Double-crested Cormorants, 5 Cattle Egrets, 70 Black-crowned Night-Herons, 1 Canada Goose, 600 Ring-billed Gulls and 75 Herring Gulls. Several additional cormorants were banded under High Peaks Audubon's master-station permit and fitted with satellite transmitters and color bands, in cooperation with the University of Vermont. The annual census was also conducted with the assistance of UVM researchers. On 15 June, a single Great Egret was on Island "D" and a mystery grayish, egret-type chick on "B" was thought to be a Glossy Ibis. For the first time since 1982, there were not enough Ring-billed Gull chicks to band the standard sample of 1,000, undoubtedly linked to the closing of landfills.

As might be expected, Atlas 2000 observers had some exciting encounters. Following their May discovery of **Wilson's Phalaropes** (a female and two males) on the traditional Laurin Farm field, Bill Kueger and Charles Mitchell found four more (two females, a male and a juvenile) at a pothole just south of the Little Chazy River, west of Lake Shore Road, a posted site they hadn't previously searched. Krueger noted, "Possibly they were breeding here all along and we missed them from 1998-2001 because the fields are so vast and viewing from the road necessarily limited. We also observed wing-lifting behavior among the four."

Krueger and Mitchell had an even better discovery at the nearby Gravelle Farm on 30 July when they heard the unmistakable sound of a **Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow**, verified with a tape that day and viewed through a scope for more than a minute the following day. The 1984-89 Québec Atlas confirmed breeding in seven of the 36 Atlas squares in which the species was reported, with an estimated provincial population of 1000 along the St. Lawrence. This population is *A. n. subvirgatus*, while the subspecies *A. n. alterus* has been reported at the James Bay coast on the Québec side and in a few locations on the Ontario side (Réginald Ouellet, in *The Breeding Birds of Québec*, 1996). In freshwater habitat along the St. Lawrence, this sparrow is found in the tall grasses of wet meadows, much like that at the lakeside Gravelle Farm, where one to two birds lingered until 24 August.

Other noteworthy summer finds included **Least Bitterns** at Scotion Creek, several Upland Sandpipers in Clinton and Franklin counties, **Black Terns** feeding young at Point au Fer, Philadelphia Vireos from a number of Adirondack Atlas blocks, **Sedge Wrens** from three locations and "Yellow" Palm Warblers and **Clay-colored Sparrows** from two sites each. Yet even flickers and tanagers provided interesting sightings, as the following species reports reveal, and one of the more bizarre birds was ultimately thought to be a quite long-legged "pouter pigeon," an apparent escapee frequenting a New Russia feeder. A total of just 176 species was reported, short of the totals of 182 and 187 during the first two Atlas summers. Observers are again reminded that the goal is to at least match the 202 *breeding* birds (179 Confirmed) recorded in Region 7 during the 1980-85 Atlas. But we're getting there, and adding a few new finds.

Finally, we welcome the appearance of *Birdwatching in Vermont* (University Press of New England, 2002) by Ted Murin and Bryan Pfeiffer. Among its many attributes, the book provides a point of reference from the Green Mountains and Vermont side of Champlain for birders in our Adirondack-Champlain Region. Chapter 5, "Species Accounts," will be an invaluable reference for observers on the New York side, especially Atlas volunteers. We highly recommend this book.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CH – Cumberland Head; CR – Chazy Rivers; FBI – Four Brothers islands; LA – L Alice WMA; LL – Long L; PARC – former Plattsburgh AFB; PtR – Point au Roche SP; TL – Tupper L.

LOONS – DUCKS

Pied-billed Grebe: 5 chicks CR 16 Jul (BK,CM); 3 chicks Ausable CLIN 18 Jul (JL); pr W Canada Lks Jul (TB); LL 3 Aug (JC); Atlas surprises.

Double-crested Cormorant: 76+ banded FBI; 3 ads Little Tupper L 14 Jul-3 Aug (JC,BP), calling at night.

LEAST BITTERN: 6 ads Scotion Cr 14 Jun (NO), unprecedented number.

Great Egret: FBI 15 Jun; Hogansburg 4 Jul; Barber Pd 29 Jul; 2 Keene 29-30 Jul; 2 Peru 7 Aug; a strong showing.

Cattle Egret: 5 banded FBI.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 70 banded FBI.

Canada Goose: 1 banded FBI; max 100 TL Munic P by 31 Aug (CD).

Com. Goldeneye: s HAMI 25 Jun (TB,DC), a good Atlas find.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

N. Harrier: hen at 4348' L Tear of the

Clouds 25 Jul; imm over 4240' Big Slide 23 Aug (J&PT).

Merlin: Meachem L, Newcomb, Oregon Plains, Saranac L, plus other Atlas additions.

Gray Partridge: juv Plattsburgh yard 28 Jul (HK), unexpected.

Virginia Rail: Brandon, CR, Huntley Pd area, LA, Skerry, plus others.

Sora: 2 CR 25 Jun (BK,CM); L Durant/Rock L area 9 Jul (NL,EO); always a welcome find.

Com. Moorhen: PtF 9 Jun; CR 6 Jul (BK,CM); with y 23 Jul (BK,NO), scarce here.

Am. Coot: CR 9 Jun (BK); with y 23 Jul (BK,NO); Minerva area 12 Jun; Huntley Pd area 19 Jun (NL,EO); unexpected in Adirondacks.

Black-bellied Plover: max 4 CR 1 Jun; last 2 CR 4 Jun (BK,CM).

Greater Yellowlegs: last CR 9 Jun (BK,CM); arr CR 12 Jul (SJ,BK); 2 LL 29

Jul (PT), rare HAMI.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last CR 9 Jun (BK,GR); arr CR 10 Jul (BK,CM); CR 23 Jul (BK,NO).

Upland Sandpiper: Banker-Stetson Rds CLIN 25 Jun (BK,CM); Crinklow Rd FRAN 5 Jul (DN,JP), still seeming reduced along border since 1980-85.

Sanderling: arr CR 20 Jul (BK).

Semipalmated Sandpiper: last Meachem L 9 Jun (AP); arr 6 CR 20-30 Jul (BK).

Least Sandpiper: arr 6 CR 10-30 Jul (BK,CM), as expected.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr CR 10-30 Jul (BK,CM), early CLIN.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE: m, 2 fem, imm s. Little Chazy R 2 Jul (BK,CM); 2 fem there 3 Jul (SJ,BK); m, 2 imm Gravelle Farm CR 13-14 Jul (SJ,BK,CM); imm there 16 Jul (BK,CM); most welcome Atlas records.

Caspian Tern: CR 1 Jun (SJ,BK); 2 CR 4 Jun (BK,CM); CR 6-30 Jul (BK,CM); suspected to have nested in VT in 2000 (Murin & Pfeiffer 2002).

Com. Tern: CR 1 Jun (SJ,CM); 2 CR 6-31 Jul (SJ,BK), nests in VT (Murin & Pfeiffer 2002).

BLACK TERN: 4 PtF 1 Jun (SJ,BK); feeding y 18 Jun (BK,CM); ph of y 7 Jul (SJ); a most encouraging Atlas find.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: New Russia feeder ~1 Aug thru (DF, ph), unbanded large mystery bird with exceptionally long, white, pointed primaries, elongated tail, extremely long legs with white feathering to high pink tarsi, seemingly identified via Internet as a "pouter pigeon," far more sedentary than the often-reported and always-banded "racing pigeon."

E. Screech-Owl: red-phase Keene 30 Jun & 3 Jul (J&PT), high; pr CH 20 Jul; FL 31 Jul (BK), 1st Confirmed CLIN.

Com. Nighthawk: St. Armand Beach 6 Jun; near Severance 8 Jun; Miner Inst 20 Jun; w. Beekmantown 1 Aug;

encouraging.

Whip-poor-will: Miner Inst 20 Jun (NO,MS), only report.

Three-toed Woodpecker: m Sixth L mid-Jul (MK), an excellent find.

Black-backed Woodpecker: Little Tupper L, Silver L Mt, etc.; more expected.

N. Flicker: pr Moody Rd & Trout Ri Belmont FRAN 6 Jul (JP), fem appeared pure red-shafted, and was at least an intergrade..

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Churubusco 20 Jun (J&RH), unexpected border location.

Philadelphia Vireo: 2 Klondike Notch 3 Jun (AP); Little Tupper L 18 Jun (BP); Cedar R 9 Jul (RM); singing m Johns Brook Loj early Jul (J&PT); Indian Ri HAMI Jul (TB); an excellent Atlas season.

Gray Jay: Oregon Plains, Sabattis Bog, other Adirondack Atlas reports.

Am. Crow: becoming more "urban" TL village (CD).

Boreal Chickadee: Big Slide, Brothers, Bushnell Falls, Cascade, Catamount, Hurricane, Panther Gorge, Phelps, Saddleback, Wolf Jaws, and many other Atlas sites.

SEDGE WREN: Stillwater Swamp Dannemora CLIN late Jun (J&RH); singing m Walkerville Rd Skerry FRAN 7 Jul (DN,JP) in *dry* hayfield; CR 10-23 Jul (BK,CM,NO); all superb finds.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: singing males Hurricane Mt 1 Jun & Sabattis Bog 5 Jun, among others.

Bicknell's Thrush: Hurricane, Lower Wolf Jaw, Panther Gorge, Phelps, Skylight-Marcy col, Snowy, plus other peaks.

WARBLERS

Tennessee Warbler: Peru 10 Jul (EF), unexpected Atlas find; singing m The Garden, Keene Valley 12-14 Jul (J&PT),

more expected; Oregon Plains 26 Aug (DR), possible transient.

Nashville Warbler: 3920' Big Slide 23 Aug (J&PT), somewhat high.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 60+ Oregon Plains 26 Aug (DR).

Palm Warbler: pr Robinwood HAMI 20 Jun (BP); Sabattis Bog 1 Jul (MD); *D.p. hypochrysea*.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Cheney Pd area 25 Jun (NL,EO), a good find by Atlas blockbusters.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: *orange-variant* Constable FRAN 6 Jul (DN,JP).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 2 singing m CH 10 Jun (BK) to possibly 3 by 21 Jul (NO); Churubusco 20 Jun-mid-Jul (J&RH); great finds.

Grasshopper Sparrow: arr PARC 6 Jun (BK); 5 PARC 12 Jun (MG); a known nesting ground.

NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED

SPARROW: 1-2 ads CR 30 Jul-1 Aug (BK,CM,NO, ph); last heard 9 Aug; last seen 24 Aug (WK).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Stone Rd Belmont FRAN 6 Jul (DN,JP), north of contiguous range.

Purple Finch: max ~20 TL feeder early Aug (CD); many Atlas reports.

Red Crossbill: Beaver Cr CLIN 22 Jul (DR); 2 m Phelps Mt 9 Aug (J&PT); only reports.

White-winged Crossbill: Tahawus Club area 10 Jul (NL,EO), seemingly only summer report.

ADDENDUM

FISH CROW: Crown Pt village outskirts 28 May 2002 (AP); nested in VT at Red Rocks Park S. Burlington 1998, now annual in Burlington area (Murin & Pfeiffer 2002).