

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Early March was cold, with Saranac Lake -20°F on the 3rd. The first vernal rains arrived on the 20th and 22nd, and by 24 March Plattsburgh reached a sunny 55°. At month's end there was a 6" snowfall at Peru by 11 p.m. on the 30th, and Inlet had 6" by the following day. On April Fool's Day, Inlet was -2° and added another 2" of snow. Plattsburgh had warmed to 53° on the 10th and Elizabethtown and Ticonderoga soared to 82° on 15 April. Ellenburg Depot and Malone received 3" of wet snow on the 24th, but by 28 April Plattsburgh was back up to a sunny 80°. May began with two days of rain, a harbinger of much of the weather throughout the remainder of the month. There was rain on eight of the 18 days that the Crown Point banding station was open, between 9-26 May, and by the 19th there had already been 2.61" of monthly rainfall.

Both foliage and birds were late, due to the prevailing cool weather in May. Shorebirds were scarce and late. Not until 30 May did Glen Drapeau and Bill Krueger find seven species at the Chazy riverlands before a Merlin cleared the area. Next day, Krueger and Charlie Mitchell found three more species, most notably a **Sanderling** in basic plumage, the first spring record for the Region and for Clinton County. Krueger reported that farming practices in the area have destroyed more valuable habitat. The fields where he and Mitchell relocated Wilson's Phalarope last summer have been tilled and plowed. "They will no longer be flooded in the spring, nor will they be suitable for phalaropes," Krueger reported, adding, "While

they may not become an avian desert, they won't be home to anything like the variety that we have always found there."

An unexpected delight was the **Western Grebe** that frequented the shoreline north of Westport, between the Palisades and Split Rock on 26-27 May, viewed from a canoe by Betsy & David Tisdale. Equally delightful was the first Regional and Franklin County record of **Black-headed Gull** that Charlie Delehanty saw resting with ~25 Ring-billed Gulls in the Tupper Lake municipal park on 29 April. She returned the next day and found the gull bathing in a puddle along with the Ring-billeds, and she noted the black head, light mantle, and red bill and legs. On 6 May the same park had two Bonaparte's Gulls, also with black head and reddish legs, but black bills.

Among breeding birds, it is encouraging to learn that **Short-eared Owl** has been confirmed in Clinton County. One, sometimes two, of these owls was observed hunting over an unused pasture on Cumberland Head from 27 March to 27 April by Suzy Johnson and Bill Krueger. On 12 April and again on 19 April, an owl caught prey and delivered it to the same spot in the grass. No attempt was made to view the nest. The thick mat over the entire field was riddled with small holes, presumably leading to countless meadow vole passageways, tunnels, burrows and nests. The area also served as a daytime diner for a pair of Northern Harriers (confirmed on 7 May by two field workers from Dr. Neil Buckley's SUNY Plattsburgh study of grassland birds, who found a nest with two eggs), and Sharp-shinned, Rough-legged and Red-tailed hawks.

Mark Gretch reported an aberrant (spectacled) Dark-eyed Junco at his Elizabethtown feeder on 18 April. There was a white ring around each eye, but the rings were not bilaterally symmetrical. Around the left eye there was white feathering that narrowly circled the eye and broadened both anterior and posterior to the eye into a more extensive band. Around the right eye there was white feathering that narrowly circled the eye, and only anteriorly did it broaden into a more extensive band. Dean Spaulding (*The Kingbird* 45:1, pp. 14-15) reported a similar aberrant junco, but with a more extensive white cheek patch. Spaulding's sighting occurred 15 miles from Gretch's observation, but temporally there were nine years between the two sightings.

This marked the 28th consecutive year of operation of the bird-banding station on the Crown Point State Historic Site, open 9-26 May. Three days of northerly winds when the station opened were followed by heavy rain and showers and a south wind that brought a fallout of 81 birds of 15 species on 12 May. Rain followed by clearing on the 14th produced another fallout of 66 birds, but numbers declined thereafter, although the best day for variety came on 22 May, with 18 species banded. By the time the station closed on Memorial Day, 504 individuals of 43 species had been banded. There were 33 returns of 13 species banded at Crown Point in previous years, the oldest an Eastern Kingbird at least nine years, 11 months old, which ties the North American longevity record for the species. The permitting process for the green ash thinning project is now complete, and we appreciate the support of staff at the Historic Site, NYS OPR&HP, NYS DEC and

NY Natural Heritage Program. The High Peaks Audubon bird banding was featured in a digital video broadcast by the "Journey North" program on migration to over 10,000 school classrooms in North American, reaching perhaps a million or more children.

Having served as wildlife manager of the Four Brothers islands in Lake Champlain since 1982, I'm saddened to report that the Board of Directors of High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc., meeting in Plattsburgh on 18 May, declined to renew their Management Agreement with The Nature Conservancy of Arlington, Virginia, the owner of the islands, for another five years. The 20 consecutive years of data are now broken, and there are no plans at present to continue the annual banding, census and patrols to protect the nine species of colonial waterbirds and five species of waterfowl that nest on Four Brothers. I wish to extend my warmest thanks to our dozen High Peaks Audubon Wardens who served with me over the decades, to the 150+ volunteers who helped with the banding and census teams and to the thousand or so donors to the Four Brothers Fund, whose generosity kept the dream alive. To the researchers from the NYC Department of Environmental Protection and University of Vermont, whose ongoing color-banding projects under Master-Station Permit 21553 issued to HPAS were interrupted, apologies are extended.

A total of 193 species was reported, short of last spring's 210 and the 1997 record of 219, but still a good showing. Atlas observers are reminded that all of their Annual Summary Forms should be submitted to the Regional Coordinator no later than the deadline of Monday, 15 September.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ethel Baker, Thomas Barber, Ricky Bruce, Erika Burkowski, Brendan Collins, Joan Collins, William Cook, Kimberley Corwin, Charlcie Delehanty, John & Susan Delehanty, Glen Drapeau, William Ehmann, James & Pricilla Elliot, Elizabeth Fitts, Bill Frenette, Susie Frenette, Gregory Furness, Bob Gilles, Mark Gretch, Judy & Roger Heintz, Candace & John Hess, Gordon Howard, Mary Humiston, Anne Hungerford, Suzy Johnson, Bill Krueger, Linda LaPan, Gary Lee, Brian McAllister, Jim McGraw, Charles Mitchell, Charles Mitchell Jr., Michael & Wanda Moccio, Daniel Nickerson, Nancy Olsen, Loren Parker, Daniel Peters, John & Susan Peterson, Dana Rohleder, Sally Smith, Dean Spaulding, John & Patricia Thaxton, Betsy & David Tisdale, Susan Turner, Vince Walsh.

ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt WMA; BB – Bulwagga Bay; CH – Cumberland Head; CP – Crown Point SHS; CR – Chazy Ri; IL – Indian L; KB – Kings Bay; LL – Long L; PS – Paul Smiths VIC; PtF – Point au Fer; PtR – Point au Roche SP; WM – Wickham Marsh WMA.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-necked Grebe: 7 L Abanakee 19 Apr (J&PE, M&WM).

WESTERN GREBE: n Westport 26-27 May (B&DT); observers considered and rejected Clark's Grebe, based upon head pattern.

Double-crested Cormorant: 2 IL 20 Apr (DS); 200 CP 14-17 May (JP), with 16 active mainland nests; northbound skein Keene 31 May (J&PT), unusual inland.

Snow Goose: Seventh L 11 Apr (GL), uncommon in HAMI.

Gadwall: 2 CP 21 Mar (DN), only report.

N. Shoveler: arr AP 16 Apr; KB 17 Apr.

N. Pintail: max 200 CR 8 Apr (DP).

Green-winged Teal: L Abanakee 19 Apr (J&PE, M&WM), scarce in HAMI.

Ring-necked Duck: max 60+ TL 5 Apr.

Greater Scaup: 2 drakes and hen BB 18 May (TB, JP), late.

White-winged Scoter: L Abanakee 19 Apr (J&PE, M&WM), excellent HAMI find.

Long-tailed Duck: pr L Abanakee 20 Apr (J&PE, M&WM), excellent HAMI find.

Bufflehead: IL 20 Apr (J&PE, M&WM), another good HAMI duck.

Barrow's Goldeneye: pr Essex harbor 16 Mar (DR); CH 28 Mar (BK, CM); CH 2 Apr (NO).

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Merlin: CR, IL, Limekiln L, LL, Malone, Rouses Pt; reflective of widespread increases.

Peregrine Falcon: Peru 8 Apr; ad CP 15 May, driven off blackbird prey by Am. Crows.

Sora: PtR 22 May (SJ, BK), always a good find.

Com. Moorhen: PtR 28 May, only report.

Black-bellied Plover: arr CR 30 May, late.

Semipalmated Plover: arr CR 30 May, late.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr 2 Wadhams 2 May; CR 4 May.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 3 CR 16 May.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr PtR 12 May.

SANDERLING: CR 31 May (BK, CM),

1st spring record CLIN & Reg.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 20+ CR 30 May.

Western Sandpiper: arr CR 31 May (BK, CM).

Least Sandpiper: max 30+ CR 30 May.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 3 CR 31 May (BK, CM), late.

Dunlin: arr CR 30 May (GD, BK), late.

Short-billed Dowitcher: max 50+ CR 30 May (GD, BK), excellent number.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: TL municipal p 19-20 Apr (CD), 1st FRAN & Reg record.

Bonaparte's Gull: arr Oseetah L 20 Apr, on a piece of floating ice; max 24 CH 27 Apr; 2 TL municipal p 6 May.

Com. Tern: arr CR 4 May.

Black Tern: 4+ PtF 21 May, encouraging.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: arr CP 23 May; PtR 27 May; only reports.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: arr CP 17 May (GF, JP), excellent find.

E. Screech-Owl: Willsboro Bay 15 Mar (GL); CP 11-15 May (GL).

Long-eared Owl: calling Elizabethtown 14 Apr (JP), only report.

SHORT-EARED OWL: CH 27 Mar-27 Apr (SJ, BK), 1st confirmed breeding CLIN; Mannix Rd Peru 5 Apr (C&JH), also encouraging.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER: calling CP 18 May (TB, JP); seen across BB in downtown Port Henry 19 May (GH); 5th & 6th ESSE records since 1984.
Black-backed Woodpecker: LL & PS, where expected.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Willow Flycatcher: Banker Rd 16 May (CM), early CLIN.

Horned Lark: Chateaugay early Mar; Wadhams 16 Mar; 2 nominate race LL 28 Mar (JC).

Purple Martin: Plattsburgh 8 Apr (CM), early CLIN.

Black-capped Chickadee: Keene 31 May,

nest in light pole fixture.

Boreal Chickadee: LL, Opalescent R, PS, expected locales.

Tufted Titmouse: AP, Elizabethtown, Keene Valley, Ti, a good showing.

Carolina Wren: Clinton Comm. College 29 May (EF), present from Dec & Mar.

Marsh Wren: arr Oseetah L 20 Apr.

E. Bluebird: arr IL 17 Mar, early HAMI.

N. Mockingbird: Chazy 21 Apr (DR), only report.

Am. Pipit: arr LL 31 Mar (JC); Cedar R golf course 19 Apr (J&PE, M&WM), good in HAMI.

WARBLERS

Cape May Warbler: arr CP 14 May; CH 29 May.

Palm Warbler: 2 singing Upper Dam Trail Bog HAMI 27-28 Apr; singing N-P Trail Bog HAMI 28 Apr; 2 singing PS 28 Apr; singing PS 1 May; all presumed "Yellow" Palms; transient Clayburg 11 May; 2 "Western" banded CP 12 & 14 May (JP).

Bay-breasted Warbler: banded CP 19 May, only report.

Blackpoll Warbler: 3 banded CP 21-22 May, only report.

Wilson's Warbler: 2 migrants banded CP 12 May; singing m True Brook Rd CLIN "in a wet area of willow and alder and responded to a taped call by coming in and flitting around in search of the intruder" 22 May (BK, CM).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: arr PtR 12 May.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 32 Inlet 6-8 Apr.

Vesper Sparrow: arr Cedar R Rd 20 Apr; 2 CH 7 May; only reports.

Fox Sparrow: arr AP 30 Mar (BK, CM), early CLIN; reports to 27 Apr from Cadyville, Elizabethtown, Inlet, Keene, L Placid, TL, Rand Hill, CLIN, a strong showing.

Song Sparrow: overwintered IL (DS).

Lincoln's Sparrow: arr PS 1 May; 4 transients banded CP 12-22 May.

White-crowned Sparrow: arr Peru 1 May; 11 banded CP 11-20 May.

Dark-eyed Junco: aberrant "spectacled" bird Elizabethtown feeder 18 Apr (MG), *intro*.

Snow Bunting: max 130 Peru 1 Mar; Chateaugay early Mar; Gabriels feeder 4 Mar.

Rusty Blackbird: AP feeder 5 Mar (DR), present from Feb.

Rusty/Brewer's Blackbird: West Chazy feeder 24 Mar-2 Apr (LP), experienced observers could not concur on an identification, perhaps because at times there seemed to be as many as 3 "mystery blackbirds" frequenting the Parker feeder, but separate parties saw only 1.

Com. Grackle: record 14 banded CP 16-26 May (JP), thanks to new "Polish net."

White-winged Crossbill: L Colden 7 Mar (J&PT), only report of either crossbill.

Am. Goldfinch: 136 banded CP 9-25 May, abundant at feeders.

Evening Grosbeak: 30+ LL Mar; 12 TL feeder 20 Mar; 3 West Chazy 29 Mar; max 34 Inlet 1 Apr; pr West Chazy 6 Apr as local nesters returned.