

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

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Temperatures in Ithaca were 1.3 F cooler than normal in June, exactly normal in July and 2.0 warmer than normal in August. Precipitation was above normal in all three months in Ithaca, but above normal only in July in Elmira. July precipitation was nearly twice normal.

While we hope to discover some things about bird populations from data provided by birders, it should be noted that data can be affected by variations in how and where the Region's birders acquire data and how faithfully they report them. More than the usual amount of data for this season came from Breeding Bird Atlas efforts in Seneca and Steuben counties. Birders in Chemung County were less active than usual, at least in their own county. The Ithaca June Count was successfully compiled this year. Totals from the count were unavailable last year. I have made no comparison of this year's locally breeding bird population indicators to previous years' numbers. However, I have made the usual comparisons for transient species, for species affected little by the Ithaca June Count, such as those occurring in marsh habitat, and for species whose late summer flocking behaviors produce such large numbers that the Ithaca June Count numbers for those species become relatively insignificant.

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge was the source of most of the waterbird data for the season. Numbers reported for goose and duck species were generally stable or up from last year. One might surmise that the "good duck weather" of the rainy summer really was good for the ducks. Unusual in summer was a Eurasian Wigeon that Carol and Joe Slattery found at Montezuma 28 August. A Greater Scaup was also there 4 June. One Red-breasted Merganser was found on the Ithaca June Count and three were at Aurora Bay in early June. Allison and Jeff Wells and maybe their baby, Evan, spotted the only flock of Brant reported as it was migrating north 1 June. In spite of a nine-year low single-site maximum for Ruffed Grouse, the total number for the Region was statistically unchanged.

Common Loons were not reported last year, but made several appearances this year. Horned Grebes were also back on Seneca Lake. Double-crested Cormorant numbers were stable for the second consecutive year. American Bittern and Black-crowned Night-Heron both had nine-year single-site highs, but only Great Blue Heron showed a significant increase Region-wide.

Jesse Ellis's sighting of a Merlin in mid-June in Dryden supported the notion that the species is expanding its breeding range southward. Jeff Holbrook, who discovered Steuben County's first Bald Eagle nest last summer, observed the county's first fledgling Bald Eagle this summer. John and Sue Gregoire reported seeing an immature Golden Eagle in late August over their banding operation in Hector and also reported the first nesting of Osprey in Queen Catharine Marsh, south of Seneca Lake.

Single Sandhill Cranes were seen at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge on at least two occasions in August. Coots and moorhens were in good numbers at Montezuma.

Most sandpiper species showed little change in numbers from last year. Baird's Sandpipers were unusually numerous and peaked at Montezuma with 22 on 26 August. Highlight species were Willet on the northward migration and Western Sandpiper on the southward migration. Red-necked Phalarope also made a couple of appearances in late August.

Contrary to my predictions about the effect of vegetation growing on the new Ring-billed Gull colony site in the Chemung River in downtown Elmira, the gulls returned to the gravel pile and seemed to prefer the vegetated portions. The vegetation grew on the top of the pile where it was out of reach of the eroding rain-swollen river. The first birds to return took the vegetated high spots. Later nesters took lower graveled sites where they were more exposed to the fluctuating level of the river. About 500 pairs occupied the small island and 222 young of all ages were counted on just one side of the island. The most unusual gull of the season was a Laughing Gull at Myers Point, Tompkins County, in mid-June. Caspian Tern numbers were down significantly for the second consecutive summer.

Numbers for both cuckoo species seemed very good this summer. Both showed significant increases over last year. While the Black-billed's increase may simply be the result of the return of the Ithaca June Count report, Yellow-billed's increase was certainly supported by Region-wide numbers. Abundant eastern tent caterpillars were probably one factor influencing the increase. Common Nighthawks were still migrating in early June. Their numbers for the entire season were down significantly for the second consecutive year. Whip-poor-wills failed to return to Addison for the first time in anyone's memory there. The species was not reported anywhere in the Region.

Geo Kloppel reported a not quite pure Golden-winged Warbler on territory in West Danby in early June. A Yellow-breasted Chat was singing in mid-June at the Dorothy McIlroy Preserve. At least two Clay-colored Sparrows were on territory in Tompkins County and another in Chemung County. The only Henslow's Sparrows reported were at a single colony near Jasper. A White-crowned Sparrow lingered in Slaterville Springs through 1 June. A Pine Siskin appeared in a yard in Ithaca in mid-summer.

Fall banding activities at Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory in Hector began 4 July when the first migrant Yellow Warblers were noted. From then through the end of the season, John and Sue Gregoire banded 1457 individuals of 72 species, including their first Belted Kingfisher and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in 18 years of banding.

The following species listing includes comparisons of observed bird populations in the Region between summer 2002 and summer 2003. A "+" at the end of the species account indicates an increase; a "-" indicates a decrease. Accounts with neither symbol indicate that the species either did not demonstrate a significant change in reported numbers or the change was a decrease caused by the lack of Ithaca June Count data in 2002. 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 in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird* Vol. 49 No. 4.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CP – City Pier ONTA; IJC – Ithaca June Count; KH – Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory, Hector SCHU; MNWR – Montezuma NWR; MyPt – Myers Pt TOMP; StP – Stewart P TOMP.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Brant: 60 Union Springs 1 Jun (A&JW), only report, +.

Mute Swan: MNWR 4 Jun (JMc, BP), only report.

EURASIAN WIGEON: MNWR 28 Aug (C&JSI).

Am. Wigeon: max 9 MNWR 29 Jun, +.

Am. Black Duck: max 6 MNWR 17 Jul, +.

N. Pintail: max & arr 5 MNWR 28 Aug (GP), only report, +.

Canvasback: 19 MNWR 26 Jul (KGr), only report, high, +.

Redhead: max 18 MNWR 15 Jun (BG), high, +.

Ring-necked Duck: 3 MNWR 4 Jun (JMc, BP), only report.
GREATER SCAUP: MNWR 4 Jun (JMc, BP), only report.
Hooded Merganser: max 9 IJC 18 Jun, +.
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: IJC 18 Jun (CaBC); max 3 Aurora Bay 4 & 10 Jun (JMc, BP), +.
Ruddy Duck: max 12 MNWR 8 Jun, high.
Ruffed Grouse: max 5 Von Engeln Preserve TOMP 20 Jul (A&JW), low.
Com. Loon: StP 4 Jun; Long Pt SP 13 Jun; max 2 Carpenters Pt CAYU 11 Jul, +.
Horned Grebe: 2 Seneca L SP 20 Jul (FB), only report.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 36 StP 23 Aug.
Am. Bittern: max 5 MNWR 4 Jun (JMc, BP), high.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: arr MNWR 29 Jun; max 16 MNWR 30 Aug (CT), high.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Cass P TOMP 5 Jun; max 12 MNWR 29 Jun (KGr), high, +.
Bald Eagle: Dryden L Trail TOMP 22 Jun; max 4 MNWR 13 Jul, +.
N. Harrier: max 3 Finger Lakes National Forest 1 Aug, +.
GOLDEN EAGLE: KH 26 Aug.
Am. Kestrel: 16 IJC 18 Jun, high.
Merlin: IJC 18 Jun; arr MNWR 24 Aug.
Peregrine Falcon: arr MNWR 19 Jul (JMo), early.
Com. Moorhen: max 18 MNWR 26 Jul, +.
Am. Coot: max 75 MNWR 13 Jul, +.
SANDHILL CRANE: MNWR 4 Aug; MNWR 24 Aug (MH).
Black-bellied Plover: last CP 11 Jun; max 2 MyPt 10 Jun; arr MNWR 10 Aug.
Am. Golden-Plover: arr 2 MNWR 10 Aug, early; max 7 MNWR 27 Aug, +.
Semipalmated Plover: last 6 MyPt 1 Jun; arr 2 MNWR 10 Jul (GP), early;

max 30 MNWR 25 Aug, +.
Killdeer: max 51 IJC 18 Jun, low, -.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr 4 MNWR 29 Jun; max 24 MNWR 4 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 9 MNWR 28 Jun; max 40 MNWR 15 Jul.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr MNWR 5 Jul; max 9 MNWR 15 Jul.
WILLET: MyPt 4 Jun (JMc, BP!).
Spotted Sandpiper: max 8 MNWR 6 Jul, low.
Upland Sandpiper: max 15 Seneca Farm Days Fairgrounds SENE 19 Jul (J&KMc), high.
Sanderling: arr & max 6 MyPt 23 Jul.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: last 4 MNWR 10 Jun; arr MNWR 10 Jul; max 80 MNWR 28 Aug, +.
W. SANDPIPER: arr Montezuma Wetlands Complex 27 Jul (GB, TB, GP).
Least Sandpiper: arr 10 MNWR 1 Jul; max 101 MNWR 6 Jul.
White-rumped Sandpiper: arr MNWR 24 Aug; max 2 MNWR 30 Aug.
Baird's Sandpiper: arr MNWR 23 Aug, late; max 22 MNWR 26 Aug (CSa), high, +.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr MNWR 15 Jul; max 50 MNWR 28 Aug, +.
Dunlin: last MyPt 1 Jun; max 6 CP 1 Jun (LD BG JuHo CJ LL), high; arr 5 MNWR 16 Aug (St&SuF), early, +.
Stilt Sandpiper: arr MNWR 13 Jul (Rochester RBA), early; max 4 MNWR 26 Aug.
Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 2 MNWR 7 Jul; max 10 MNWR 16 Jul.
Wilson's Snipe: max 2 MNWR 7 Jul, -.
Am. Woodcock: IJC 18 Jun, -.
Wilson's Phalarope: 2 MNWR 23 Aug (WHo), only report.
RED-NECKED PHALAROPE: MNWR 26 Aug (G&KR CSa); MNWR 30 Aug (CT).
LAUGHING GULL: MyPt 14 Jun (MA!).
Bonaparte's Gull: last MyPt 5 Jun; arr MyPt 18 Jul; max 3 MNWR 26 Aug (MDe), high.

Ring-billed Gull: max several hundred MNWR 25 Aug, -.

Herring Gull: max 8 MNWR 13 Jul, -.

Great Black-backed Gull: last 2 IJC 18 Jun; arr 2 Treman Marina SP 14 Jul; max 6 StP 23 Aug.

Caspian Tern: arr 2 MNWR 13 Jul; max 26 MyPt 8 Aug, -.

Com. Tern: arr 2 MNWR 26 Jul; max 4 MNWR 23 Aug.

Forster's Tern: max 3 MyPt 4 Jun (KR), high; last 2 CP 11 Jun; arr Hog Hole TOMP 31 Aug, +.

Black Tern: max 25 MNWR 10 Jun.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: 20 IJC 18 Jun, high.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 10 IJC 18 Jun, high.

Barred Owl: 3 IJC 18 Jun, -.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Farleys Pt CAYU 20 Jul (DS), only report.

Com. Nighthawk: max 9 Botchers Landing CHEM 3 Jun; Ithaca 25 Jun; arr 3 Dryden 12 Aug (AF, MF), early, -.

Chimney Swift: max 60 Riverfront P CHEM 26 Aug, -.

Belted Kingfisher: 11 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Farleys Pt CAYU 12 Jul; max 2 Seneca Army Depot SENE 31 Jul.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 36 IJC 18 Jun, low.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Dryden L Trail TOMP 17 Aug (StF), only report.

Acadian Flycatcher: max 3 Fillmore Glen SP 15 Jun; last KH 19 Aug.

Great Crested Flycatcher: 58 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Blue-headed Vireo: 31 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Philadelphia Vireo: last & max 2 Bayberry Program Center SENE 2 Jun (BG), late; arr Sapsucker Woods TOMP 19 Aug (AW), early.

Am. Crow: 627 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Fish Crow: max 10 StP 23 Aug (J&KMc), high.

Com. Raven: max 5 Woodhull Raceway STEU 13 Jun, -.

N. Rough-winged Swallow: 24 IJC 18 Jun, -.

Cliff Swallow: max 18 Botchers Landing CHEM 3 Jun, -.

House Wren: 134 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Veery: 187 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Wood Thrush: 115 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Gray Catbird: 434 IJC 18 Jun, low.

European Starling: max 2600 MNWR 17 Jul (SK, KR), high, -.

Cedar Waxwing: 580 IJC 18 Jun (CaBC), high.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: 44 IJC 18 Jun, low.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER:

Danby 3 Jun (GK), only report.

"Brewster's" Warbler: KH 24 Aug (J&SGr), only report.

Tennessee Warbler: arr Cornell U 31 Aug (DG), only report.

N. Parula: Ledyard 2 Jun (TL), only report.

Magnolia Warbler: 40 IJC 18 Jun (CaBC), high.

Cape May Warbler: arr KH 26-27 Aug (J&SGr), early, only report.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 21 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr Cornell U 28 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: max 4 Caroline 2 Jun (SK), high; last Ashland 6 Jun; arr StP 24 Aug (KR), early.

Cerulean Warbler: max 2 Owasco Flats CAYU 13 Jun.

Black-and-white Warbler: 7 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Am. Redstart: 125 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Ovenbird: 245 IJC 18 Jun, low.

N. Waterthrush: 5 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Louisiana Waterthrush: many Fillmore Glen SP 13 Jun; last Kirk Rd Bridge

TOMP 26 Aug, late (A&JW).

Wilson's Warbler: arr Community
Corners TOMP 25 Aug; max 2 KH 30
Aug.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: McIlroy
Preserve CAYU 13-14 Jun (JSi, MY).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: 58 IJC 18 Jun, low.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:
Newfield 15 Jun (JE); 2 IJC 18 Jun; last
Slaterville Springs 1 Jul (JY).

Savannah Sparrow: 154 IJC 18 Jun, low.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 45 Ovid 15
Jul (JMc, BP), high.

Henslow's Sparrow: 9 Jasper 30 Jun-26
Jul.

Song Sparrow: 771 IJC 18 Jun, low.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:
Slaterville Springs 1 Jun (TJ!).

Bobolink: max 600 Caroline 28 Aug
(StF), high.

Red-winged Blackbird: 1087 IJC 18
Jun, low, -.

Orchard Oriole: MyPt 1 Jun; 2 IJC 18
Jun; Willard WMA SENE 5 Jul; several
Sheldrake 15 Jul (JMc, BP), high.

Baltimore Oriole: 132 IJC 18 Jun, low.

House Finch: 112 IJC 18 Jun. low.

PINE SISKIN: Ithaca 14 Jul (L&SJH).

House Sparrow: 297 IJC 18 Jun, low.