

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Fall 2003 was generally mild and wet. According to Albany International Airport, September averaged 2.4°F above normal, with precipitation occurring on nearly half the month's days. October was similarly wet and slightly cooler. November's precipitation was less than 1" above average, with a few strong storms and high winds. The first frost occurred in early October, and water bodies remained open through the period.

The greatest weather news of the season was the loosened energy of Hurricane Isabel, a downgraded tropical storm that scattered windblown terns and petrels from Baltimore to Buffalo. Unfortunately, the storm brought little more than light rain and high hopes to this Region. Despite many birders who stationed themselves along the Hudson and Mohawk rivers to glimpse a few ocean-seeking terns, nothing unusual entered our records. A few weeks after the storm, however, Bill Lee did discover a pelagic species, a **Northern Gannet**, at Saratoga Lake, Saratoga County. This sighting is only the third gannet for the Region.

Incredibly, the other two both occurred at Saratoga Lake (an immature bird spotted in 1994 and a specimen collected in 1880).

Besides the gannet, the greatest news of the season was the discovery of a **King Eider** on the Hudson River, the fifth record for Region 8. The bad news is that we learned of its existence only after a duck hunter shot it. Rich Guthrie examined the specimen, photographed it and submitted a brief report to The New York State Avian Records Committee.

King Eiders, and other vagrant waterfowl, are not specifically protected from licensed hunters in New York (see Volume 6, Section 2.30, N.Y. Code of Rules and Regulations, Migratory Game Birds). The rationale, apparently, is that rare ducks such as King Eiders do not require explicit protection in New York because they do not commonly occur here. The ethical birder might question this leniency, and a growing number of birders also question liberal allowances granted for other uncommon species such as scoters, redheads, canvasbacks and teal, despite the fact that these species have stable populations elsewhere in the country and in the state. Various sources of data, including Christmas Bird Counts and January waterfowl counts, show that these species never occur in large numbers in Region 8, yet generous hunting allowances persist.

When reviewing state bag limits for wild ducks, one also notices longstanding allowances for many rails and shorebirds. At a time when motivated atlasers find very few Virginia Rails, Soras, snipe, moorhens and coot in the Hudson and Mohawk valleys, one questions current bag limits. Any individual hunter, for example, can legally shoot up to 16 Virginia Rails each season. Despite the fact that rails are famously secretive and may very well be underrepresented despite New York State Breeding Bird Atlas efforts, I seriously doubt that many habitats in our area support populations even remotely large enough to survive this kind of harvesting. If, as some have suggested, only a very small minority of hunters are interested in hunting "rails, gallinules, and snipe" in New York, perhaps it is only more fitting to remove these birds from the state's list of game species.

Great Cormorants, an upper Hudson River sighting that was once considered as rare as a King Eider, now appear annually on our Region's rivers. Almost undetected here before 1987, they've been spotted every year since, occasionally lingering to be tallied on Christmas Counts. A mid-November adult was seen this year at Germantown, Columbia County.

Bob Kirker, who compiles the Camp Pinnacle Hawk Watch data each fall, reported hawk sightings are down by more than a third this year. This fall's observers discovered half the number of Broad-winged Hawks that they saw last year, as well as fewer sightings of Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Goshawk and American Kestrel. Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk and Red-shouldered Hawk, however, all posted modest increases despite many days with poor viewing conditions. Two reports of Golden Eagle, in addition to two other sightings outside the official hawk watch, were lucky glimpses of a species that only trickles through our Region.

Other than an escaped **Orange Bishop** that appeared for several days at Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve in Saratoga County, the only unusual passerine of the season was a **Dickcissel**, a “very fat” hatching-year male banded by Bob Yunick in Montgomery County.

A total of 178 species was observed this fall, exactly the number reported last fall.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Bill Cook, Mark Fitzsimmons, Jane Graves, Rich Guthrie, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Bob Kirker, Bill Lee, Andrew Mason, Gail & Rich Nord, Barbara Putnam, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMS – T Amsterdam MONT; AUS – T Austerlitz COLU; CAT – T Catskill GREE; CLA – T Claverack COLU; CPHW – Camp Pinnacle Hawk Watch ALBA; EGR – T E Greenbush RENS; FtE – T Ft. Edward WASH; HR – Hudson Ri; HP – Hannacroix Preserve ALBA; GAN – T Gansevoort SARA; GER – T Germantown COLU; JL – Jenny L SARA; LIV – T Livingston COLU; MR – Mohawk Ri; NBA – T New Baltimore GREE; NL – Nassau L RENS; SL – Saratoga L SARA; SP – Stanton Pd ALBA; TR – Tomhannock Res RENS; VF – Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: 72 Bells Pd LIV 2 Nov, 3 blue morph; 30 NBA 8 Nov; 9 GER 11 Nov; 1100 Glen MONT 17 Nov; max 1500 Glen MONT 26 Nov; 1000 Troy RENS 26 Nov.

Canada Goose: flocks of 1000-2000 at many ponds and riverbanks Oct-Nov.

Brant: 150 Saratoga Springs 7 Oct; 25 NBA 9 Oct; Chatham COLU 1 Nov; Coeymans 18 Nov.

Wood Duck: max 100 Black Creek Marsh ALBA 20 Sep.

Gadwall: 4 SP 16 Oct; CLA 26 Oct.

Am. Wigeon: 15 VF 15 Nov; max 100 SP 26 Nov; MONT 30 Nov.

Am. Black Duck: max 50 GER 11 Nov; scarce on MR.

Mallard: max 100 SL 25 Oct.

Blue-winged Teal: VF 6-12 Sep.

N. Shoveler: 3 SP 16 Oct; 5 Canal Rd MR 1 Nov.

N. Pintail: 4 Mile Pt GREE 9 Nov; 3 NL 12 Nov; max 12 SP 26 Nov.

Green-winged Teal: max 5 VF 15 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: 2 VF 1 Nov; 4 TR 1 Nov; 2 Bells Pd LIV 3 Nov; 8 L Taghkanic COLU 18 Nov.

Greater Scaup: male SL 9 Oct; 3 NL 9 Nov; LIV 14 Nov.

Lesser Scaup: 3 NL 1 Nov; 10 Copake L COLU 29 Nov.

KING EIDER: shot by hunter Germantown Flats COLU 10 Nov, specimen ph, NYSARC (RG).

Surf Scoter: fem MR SCHE 1 Oct (mob); 3 imm SL 9 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: max 10 SL 9 Oct.

Black Scoter: max 5 SL 9 Oct.

Long-tailed Duck: 2 Bells Pd LIV 5 Nov, fem NL 23 Nov; VF 26 Nov.

Bufflehead: max 21 NL 2 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: max 18 TR 10 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 25 TR 10 Nov.

Com. Merganser: max 200+ NL 15 Nov.
Red-breasted Merganser: Four Mile Pt
GREE 9 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: max 20 NBA 9 Nov.

Ring-necked Pheasant: s. RENS 16-17
Oct; 2 Ancram COLU 9 Nov.

Ruffed Grouse: max 6 Partridge Run
ALBA 9 Sep.

N. Bobwhite: Kinderhook COLU 23 Sep,
presumed introduced or escaped; NYS
Thruway MONT 26 Sep.

Red-throated Loon: NL 15 Nov, only
report.

Com. Loon: 3 Great Sacandaga L FULT
4 Sep; 2 SL 9-25 Oct; HR COLU 9 Nov;
3 TR 11 Nov; Alcove Res ALBA 18 Nov.

Pied-billed Grebe: VF 9 Sep-1 Nov;
Collins L SCHE 12 Oct; TR 3 Nov.

Red-necked Grebe: Synder Pd Copake
COLU 1 Oct, only report.

NORTHERN GANNET: SL 9 Oct (BL),
3rd Reg report.

Double-crested Cormorant: last GER 29
Nov.

Great Cormorant: HR at GER 11 Nov.

Am. Bittern: 2 Kayaderosseras Ave
SARA 21 Sep.

Great Egret: Stockport COLU 9 Nov;
FtE 22 Nov, late.

Snowy Egret: Chatham 13 Oct, only
report.

Green Heron: Feller Rd LIV 6 Sep; GER
25 Sep.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: imm
Ooms Pd Chatham COLU 1 Sep,
nonbreeding dispersal; Ballston L Boat
Launch SARA 13 Sep.

Turkey Vulture: 30 roosting Coeymans
ALBA 26 Sep; last LIV 13 Nov.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Goeffroy's Pd COLU 1 Sep;
NBA 26-28 Sep; last Stockport Creek
COLU 6 Nov; total 30 CPHW 4 Sep-23
Nov.

Bald Eagle: numbers consistent with
previous fall; total 14 CPHW 4 Sep-23
Nov.

N. Harrier: 2 CLA 1 Sep; arr Cocksackie

Flats GREE 5 Oct; max 6 FtE 23 Nov;
total 32 CPHW 4 Sep-23 Nov.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: total 157 CPHW
4 Sep-23 Nov, low count.

Cooper's Hawk: total 35 CPHW 4 Sep-
23 Nov.

N. Goshawk: Schenectady SCHE 6 Oct;
Green 1 ALBA 30 Oct; 2 New Salem
ALBA 7 Nov; Helderbergs ALBA 10-20
Nov; total 7 CPHW 4 Sep-23 Nov.

Red-shouldered Hawk: New Salem
ALBA 7 Nov; total 7 CPHW 4 Sep-23
Nov.

Broad-winged Hawk: total 537 CPHW 4
Sep-23 Nov.

Red-tailed Hawk: total 384 CPHW 4
Sep-23 Nov.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr LIV 4 Nov;
Cocksackie Flats GREE 9 Nov; Glens Falls
WASH 15 Nov; GAN 20 Nov; dk phase
Northumberland SARA 21 Nov; total 2
CPHW 4 Sep-23 Nov.

Golden Eagle: imm Stuyvesant COLU
24 Oct; imm Helderbergs ALBA 7 Nov;
total 2 CPHW 4 Sep-23 Nov.

Merlin: Collins L SCHE 12 Oct; VF 18
Oct; total 4 CPHW 4 Sep-23 Nov.

Peregrine Falcon: Peebles 1 ALBA 18
Sep; 2 AMS 22 Sep; Green 1 ALBA 23
Sep; Schodack 1 RENS 17 Nov; FtE 23
Nov.

Am. Coot: Copake L COLU 29 Nov, only
report.

Killdeer: last LIV 19 Oct.

Greater Yellowlegs: GAN 7 Nov; Best-
Luther Rd EGR 7 Nov.

Lesser Yellowlegs: TR 25 Oct, only
report.

Spotted Sandpiper: last Mayfield FULT
26 Sep.

Least Sandpiper: 25 Goeffroy's Pd CLA
29 Oct.

Pectoral Sandpiper: Lock 7 SCHE 4
Sep.

Wilson's Snipe: 2 AMS 17 Oct; 6
Goeffroy's Pd CLA 29 Oct.

Am. Woodcock: last Colonie ALBA 6
Sep.

Com. Tern: NBA 28 Sep, only report (RG).

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: last Partridge Run ALBA 7 Sep.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Old Chatham COLU thru 27 Oct.

Com. Nighthawk: max 35 Slingerlands ALBA 7 Sep.

Chimney Swift: last AUS 8 Oct.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: 128 banded JL Sep thru, 57 recaptures (RY); last GER 20 Sep.

Red-headed Woodpecker: imm AUS 23 Nov, only report.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: not observed at lower elevations (below 1000') until 15 Oct.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 4 HP 26 Nov.

N. Flicker: intergrade (red tail, red and yellow mixed in primaries) banded JL 20 Nov (RY).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last CLA 1 Sep.

Alder Flycatcher: last CLA 1 Sep.

E. Phoebe: last LIV 2 Nov.

Great Crested Flycatcher: last CLA 1 Sep.

E. Kingbird: last Taghkanic COLU 26 Sep.

N. Shrike: Elka P GREE 9-12 Nov; FtE 23 Nov; Glen MONT 26 Nov.

Yellow-throated Vireo: CLA 1 Sep; NBA 3 Sep; LIV 4 Oct.

Blue-headed Vireo: last GAN 18 Oct.

Warbling Vireo: last VF 1 Oct.

Philadelphia Vireo: Peebles I ALBA 18 Sep; VF 5 Oct.

Red-eyed Vireo: last VF 5 Oct.

Fish Crow: Cocksackie GREE 19 Sep.

Horned Lark: Helderbergs ALBA 3 Nov.

Tree Swallow: last LIV 31 Oct.

Barn Swallow: last Stockport Creek COLU 20 Sep.

House Wren: last LIV 2 Nov.

Marsh Wren: 3 Black Creek Marsh

ALBA 2 Oct.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 5 CPHW 8 Oct; NBA 16 Oct; 2 AMS 17 Oct; Kinderhook COLU 21 Oct; Taghkanic COLU 18 Nov.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: last AUS 4 Sep.

Hermit Thrush: AUS 25 Oct; CPHW 30 Oct; 2 VF 11 Nov; HP 25 Nov.

Gray Catbird: max 11 AMS 30 Sep; last LIV 10 Nov.

Am. Pipit: Moreau SARA 10 Oct; 15 Collins L SCHE 15 Oct; 10 AMS 16 Oct; 50 Northumberland SARA 20 Oct.

Cedar Waxwing: max 350 L Taghkanic SP COLU 2 Nov.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: last EGR 18 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: 2 EGR 1 Sep, only report.

Nashville Warbler: 2 CLA 1 Sep; RENS 18 Sep; NBA 28 Sep; AMS 30 Sep; CPHW 8 Oct.

N. Parula: CAT 15 Sep, only report.

Magnolia Warbler: 3 CLA 1 Sep; CAT 15 Sep; CPHW 8 Oct.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: CAT 15 Sep; AMS 7 Oct; CPHW 8 Oct.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 25 LIV 30 Sep; 10 CPHW 8 Oct.

Black-throated Green Warbler: last CPHW 8 Oct.

Blackburnian Warbler: last LIV 15 Oct.

Pine Warbler: AUS 9-10 Oct; 2 EGR 10 Oct.

Prairie Warbler: last CLA 1 Sep.

Palm Warbler: Ghent COLU 28 Sep; AMS 30 Sep; EGR 10-11 Oct.

Bay-breasted Warbler: CAT 15 Sep; AUS 2 Oct; only reports.

Blackpoll Warbler: last LIV 4 Oct.

Black-and-white Warbler: last VF 5 Oct.

Am. Redstart: last CAT 15 Sep.

Ovenbird: 2 JL 6 Sep; departed early.

N. Waterthrush: Green I ALBA 30 Oct, late.

Com. Yellowthroat: last EGR 10 Oct.

Wilson's Warbler: NBA 10 Sep, only report.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: last Ghent COLU 28 Sep.

E. Towhee: last LIV 2 Nov.

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr in flocks of 10-30 by 15 Oct; max 84 FtE 9 Nov.

Chipping Sparrow: last AUS 13 Nov.

Field Sparrow: last NBA 16 Oct.

Savannah Sparrow: AMS 31 Oct, late migrant.

Fox Sparrow: AMS 17 Oct; VF 1 Nov; 2 Ghent COLU 9 Nov.

Song Sparrow: max 63 banded AMS 11 Oct (RY).

Lincoln's Sparrow: max 18 banded AMS 7 Oct (RY); EGR 10 Oct; NBA 15 Oct; GAN 17 Oct.

Swamp Sparrow: max 8 banded AMS 7 Oct (RY).

White-throated Sparrow: commonly seen at elevations below 1000' by 1 Oct.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 26 banded AMS 17 Oct (RY); most abundant migration during 3rd week of Oct.

Dark-eyed Junco: commonly seen at elevations below 1000' by 10 Oct.

Snow Bunting: 15 Cocksackie Flats

GREE 9 Nov; 2 Germantown COLU 11 Nov; 15 Florida MONT 26 Nov.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last AUS 1 Oct.

Indigo Bunting: last LIV 2 Nov.

DICKCISSEL: AMS 11 Oct (RY), banded.

Red-winged Blackbird: 300 GAN 27 Oct.

E. Meadowlark: max 7 FtE 23 Nov.

Rusty Blackbird: NBA 18 Oct; 3-80 mixed with large icterid flocks thru.

Com. Grackle: largest migratory flocks of 1000+ observed 5-25 Nov.

Purple Finch: 211 banded JL, 62 recaptures, Sep, high count (RY).

Com. Redpoll: 3 Helderbergs ALBA 25 Nov.

Pine Siskin: GAN 21 Nov; Helderbergs ALBA 25 Nov; HP ALBA 26 Nov; no flocks reported.

Evening Grosbeak: 3 JL 1-13 Sep; 3 AUS 13 Nov; 8 Jefferson SCHO 21 Nov; 4 GAN 23 Nov; HP 23 Nov.

EXOTICS

Orange Bishop: ad VF 29 Oct.