

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

Mike Morgante
59 Briar Hill Road,
Orchard Park NY 14127
morgm@adelphia.net

June was dry but cool. The average temperature was 63.6°F, 2.2° below average. Only 2.02" of rain fell, 1.8" below normal. July was very wet and cool. The average temperature was 69.0°, 1.8° below normal. Rain was frequent and heavy, with 6.04" of precipitation, 2.9" above the average. It was the cloudiest July on record, very unusual for summer near the Great Lakes. The cool and cloudy weather continued in August, but at least it was dry. The average temperature was 67.2°, 1.9° below normal. There was 1.86" of precipitation, 2.01" less than usual. It was the third coolest summer on record and the cloudiest in 89 years. Weather data was excerpted from National Weather Service *Monthly Weather Summary* for Buffalo.

The fifth summer of the Atlas 2000 project produced some interesting reports and observer feedback. The most notable reports included confirmed breeding of Yellow-throated Warblers and White-eyed Vireos. In early June, Tim Baird found **Yellow-throated Warblers** near the Administration Building in the Red House Section of Allegany State Park. Baird and others continued to monitor nesting activity and an adult feeding a fledgling was observed on 18 July. This year's nest was in the same area as one of the nests found during the first atlas project in 1984 (also located by Baird). This species was occasionally reported in the same location during the gap between the two atlas projects, but nesting was never confirmed. An even bigger surprise was the discovery of a Yellow-throated Warbler at Chestnut Ridge Park in Erie County, approximately 40 miles north of Allegany State Park. I found a persistently singing male on 11 July, and many observers were able to see the bird through 1 August. No evidence of nesting could be found and it was apparently an unmated male. This species was unprecedented in Erie County during the summer months. A pair of **White-eyed Vireos** was found building a nest at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown. Solon Morse and Jim Berry documented the activity and many other birders were able to see the pair and active nest. This was the first confirmed nesting of this species in Region 1.

Atlas efforts turned up **Northern Goshawks** in at least four locations, more than the usual number of summer reports. This species is present in low numbers in the southern tier and is probably also slightly under-reported there. A bigger surprise on the raptor front was an adult **Golden Eagle** found by Region 1 Atlas Coordinator Richard Rosche in the Town of Alma, Allegany County, on 4 June. This species is unexpected but not without precedent in summer, including one sighted during the first atlas project and one reported in Allegany County several summers ago.

Merlins returned to the SUNY Buffalo south campus starting on 29 July, with up to four found roosting by the end of the summer. It was mentioned here in last summer's report that there was some possible breeding evidence in a nearby neighborhood. However, a follow up this spring with the source of the report indicated that last summer's nest was likely that of a Cooper's Hawk. Given the affinity Merlins have for this area, in addition to some early summer reports in recent years, it is still worth checking this populated area for evidence of breeding.

Several birders commented on the absence or low density of Eastern Meadowlarks in habitat where this species is expected. As an example, I could not locate a single individual of this species within four contiguous blocks in eastern Chautauqua County that had many fields with suitable habitat. Some other birders lamented on the now increased rarity of finding nesting Common Moorhens and Blue-winged Teals. The exploding population of Canada Geese is perceived as the primary cause for reduced nesting of these wetland species, but that answer is certainly not definitive.

Double-crested Cormorant nests continue to increase around Lake Erie and the Niagara River. Mark Kandel of NYSDEC and Bill Watson have been tracking the nesting colonies and occurrence of this species in Western New York since 1992. This year they reported that the number of nests was a few shy of 1000. Primary nesting colonies include several locations on the Buffalo waterfront, Strawberry and Motor Islands, near Buckhorn Island State Park and Niagara Falls.

There were some good finds this summer beyond the breeding species, including some unexpected rarities and some species that are now expected. For the fifth consecutive summer, both **Eared Grebe** and **American Avocet** were reported and these species are now expected rarities. Three Eared Grebes were found on 28 August at Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, where the species has been nearly annual since the mid 1990s. An impressive count of 13 American Avocets, a Regional maximum, was tallied at Dunkirk Harbor on 10 August and another group of five was sighted there on 31 August.

Brett Ewald observed four jaegers on the morning of 30 August on Lake Ontario as viewed from the Town of Wilson. He identified two of these birds that were traveling together as **Long-tailed Jaegers**. This species is unprecedented in the Region during the summer months and a NYSARC report is strongly encouraged for this sighting. The sightings coincided with a strong showing of jaegers that day in Region 2.

A **Rufous Hummingbird** was reported from a feeder in the Town of Pomfret, Chautauqua County, on 20 August. The bird was reportedly photographed but no details were provided. A NYSARC report is strongly encouraged for this sighting. For the second summer in a row, a **Western Kingbird** was reported. This year's bird was found in the Town of Eden on 28 August by Bob Andrie and subsequently videotaped by Mike Zebehazy. Doug Happ found a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** in the Town of Hamburg on 7 June. This very rare vagrant could not be relocated during subsequent searches. This sighting represents only the third occurrence of this species in the Region.

There were more shorebird reports than usual this summer, mostly attributed to the discovery of a flooded field in the Town of Newfane. Up to 200 shorebirds frequented this field through much of July and early August. Highlights from this location included a **Wilson's Phalarope**, a group of 23 **Stilt Sandpipers** and a **Franklin's Gull** that lingered for several weeks after being found on 1 August. Most of the other shorebird reports came from Dunkirk Harbor and Batavia WWTP. Besides the previously mentioned avocets, a **Red Knot** was a notable find at Dunkirk Harbor and a new Regional maximum of nine **Baird's Sandpipers** was the highlight from Batavia.

Pine Siskins were reported from six locations in June. Early summer reports are occasional, but six in one year is exceptional and likely attributed to breeding activity in the spring.

Other highlights for the season included **Black Scoter**, **Whip-poor-will**, **Sedge Wren**, **Prothonotary Warbler**, **Kentucky Warbler** and **Clay-colored Sparrow**.

CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Andrle, Tim Baird, Jim Berry, Elizabeth Brooks, Bill Burch, Willie D'Anna, Gary Dye, Brett Ewald, Kurt Fox, Frank Gardner, Joanne Goetz, Doug Happ, Mike Hamilton, Carol Hardenberg, Paul F. Hess (PFH), Paul Hess INWR (Phi), Mark Kandel, Karen Landau, Jerry Lazarczyk, Timothy Lenz, Dick Miga, Mike Morgante, Solon Morse, Terry Mosher, Dave Neveu, Susan & Tom O'Donnell, Jim Pawlicki, Don Roberson, Richard Rosche, Gail Seamans, Nick Sly, William Watson, Peter Yoerg, Mike Zebehazy.

ABBREVIATIONS

AISP – Allegany SP CATT; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant GENE; CHMUA – Carlton Hill Multiple Use Area WYOM; DH – Dunkirk Harbor CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR GENE/ORLE; LESP – L Erie SP CHAU; NF – Niagara Falls NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA GENE; PG – Pt Gratiot CHAU; RTPI – Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown CHAU; SPNS – Sinking Ponds NS, E Aurora ERIE; TBNP – Times Beach Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA GENE/NIAG; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Mute Swan: 2 ad + 8 yg WTSP 5 Jun (TO), new breeding location, only report.
Am. Wigeon: BWWTP 17 Jul; OOWMA 4 Aug; Wilson NIAG 18 Aug; only reports.

Am. Black Duck: 2, 6 BWWTP 13 Jun, 28 Aug; Wilson NIAG 9 Aug; SPNS 14

Aug; 2 Newfane NIAG 28 Aug; more summer reports than in recent years.

Blue-winged Teal: arr Newfane NIAG 31 Jul; max 110 BWWTP 28 Aug.

N. Shoveler: BWWTP 13 Jun; max 41 BWWTP 28 Aug.

N. Pintail: BWWTP 28 Aug; only report.

Green-winged Teal: BWWTP 4 Aug; 16

Newfane NIAG 18 Aug; max 45
BWWTP 29 Aug.

Ring-necked Duck: 3, 5 BWWTP 26
Jun, 28 Aug (WW), nearly annual in
summer at this location.

Greater Scaup: Wilson NIAG 28 Aug
(BE), early.

Lesser Scaup: 6 BWWTP 26 Jun thru
(WW), good count for summer; 4 Wilson
NIAG 28 Aug (BE).

White-winged Scoter: Buffalo NR 3 Aug
(MH, MM!); 8 Wilson NIAG 24 Aug
(BE); 25 GHSP 31 Aug (WW!, JP),
record summer count; unusual in summer.

Black Scoter: Wilson NIAG 28 Aug
(WD!), 2nd Regional summer sighting.

Com. Merganser: NF 11 Jul (WW), only
report.

Red-breasted Merganser: TWMA 9 Jun
(PFH), unusual location for date.

Ruddy Duck: 98, 318, 290 BWWTP 26
Jun, 17 Jul, 28 Aug, regularly summers at
this location.

Com. Loon: Buffalo NR 22 Jun (GD),
unusual location for date; 1, 2 Wilson
NIAG 21, 22 Aug; unusual in summer.

Pied-billed Grebe: Birdsall ALLE 3 Jun
(EB), uncommon breeder in ALLE;
CHMUA 19 Jun; 1 ad + 3 yg Tillman
WMA 23 Jun, regular breeding location.

EARED GREBE: 3 BWWTP 28 Aug
(WW!), fifth straight summer and nearly
annual since mid 1990s at this location.

Double-crested Cormorant: 118 Motor I
NR 2 Jun (WW); 250 Buffalo Harbor
ERIE 15 Jun; 356 nests Buffalo Harbor
ERIE, 88 nests GI, 46 nests BuSP 21 Jun
(MK), increasing nest numbers overall;
max 971 BuSP 25 Aug (WW).

Am. Bittern: TWMA 3 Jun (STO); Tift
NP 28 Aug; only reports.

Least Bittern: TWMA 3 Jun (STO), only
report.

Great Egret: max 21, 28 Motor I NR 25
Jun, 29 Jul (WW); Tillman WMA 23 Jun;
Concord ERIE 17 Jul; Newfane NIAG 7
Aug; Attica WYOM 15 Aug; 3 TBNP 19
Aug; 7 BWWTP 28 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 3 INWR
22 Aug; WTSP 29 Aug; DH 31 Aug; only
reports away from NR.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Tift NP 17 Jul; Wilson NIAG
24 Jul, 1 Aug; DH 3-19 Aug; SPNS 12
Aug; Ripley CHAU 18 Aug; only reports
away from nesting areas.

Bald Eagle: imm Alma ALLE 15 Jun;
imm Tift NP 24 Jul; imm Wilson NIAG
3, 21 Aug; imm Hanover CHAU 15 Aug;
imm DH 15 Aug; imm Wilson NIAG 21
Aug; all reports away from nesting areas.

N. Goshawk: Poland CHAU Jun (JB);
Alma ALLE 7 Jul (RR); Willing ALLE
13 Jul (RR); Allen ALLE 20 Aug (EB);
more reports than usual due to Atlas
effort.

Broad-winged Hawk: 2 Wilson NIAG
22 Aug (BE); summer, fall migrants
rarely noted in Reg.

GOLDEN EAGLE: ad Alma ALLE 4
Jun (RR), very rare in summer.

Merlin: 4 Buffalo ERIE 29 Jul thru
(PY!), similar return date to roosting area
as last summer.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 ad + 2 yg Buffalo
ERIE 15 Jun thru (BB).

Com. Moorhen: BWWTP 26 Jun; 2
family groups Tift NP 21 Jul; decreasing.

Am. Coot: 9 ad + 2 yg INWR 9 Jun; 5
Buffalo Harbor ERIE 13 Jun.

Black-bellied Plover: arr 2 Newfane
NIAG 14 Aug; 5 Wilson NIAG 28 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: arr 2 Newfane
NIAG 24 Jul.

AM. AVOCET: 13 DH 10 Aug (DM),
record high; 5 DH 31 Aug (DM); annual
at this location in recent summers,
NYSARC reports still encouraged.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr Wilson NIAG 12
Jul.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr Wilson NIAG 13
Jul; max 90 Newfane NIAG 1 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr Newfane NIAG
20 Jul.

Upland Sandpiper: 2 Tillman WMA 30

Jun; 2 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 15 Aug (MM); nocturnal migrant Buffalo ERIE 17 Aug (PY).

Ruddy Turnstone: arr Newfane NIAG 22 Jul; DH 15 Aug; BWWT 28 Aug.

Red Knot: arr DH 27 Jul (DM), only report.

Sanderling: WTSP 1 Aug; 2 DH 15 Aug; only reports.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr BWWT 17 Jul; max 26 Newfane NIAG 28 Jul.

Least Sandpiper: arr BWWT 14 Jul.

White-rumped Sandpiper: arr 2 DH 17-19 Aug (DM, JG), only report.

Baird's Sandpiper: arr 2, 1 DH 21, 25 Aug (TM, DN); max 9 BWWT 28 Aug (WW), record count for Reg.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 16 Newfane NIAG 24 Jul.

Stilt Sandpiper: arr 3 Newfane NIAG 31 Jul (WD); max 23 Newfane NIAG 2 Aug (JP), good count.

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr Newfane NIAG 24 Jul; max 9 Newfane NIAG 1 Aug.

Wilson's Snipe: Burns ALLE 23 Jun (EB); max 38 Newfane NIAG 23 Aug (JP).

Am. Woodcock: 1 ad + 4 yg crossing a street in mid-day Alfred ALLE 20 Jun (EB).

Wilson's Phalarope: Newfane NIAG 27, 28 Jul (JP, JL, WD), rare.

jaeger sp.: 2 Wilson NIAG 30 Aug (BE), rarely reported in summer.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER: 2 Wilson NIAG 30 Aug (BE); first Reg summer report, NYSARC report encouraged.

FRANKLIN'S GULL: Newfane NIAG 1-20 Aug (JP, JL), rare.

Little Gull: ad Wilson NIAG 28 Aug (WD), good find.

Bonaparte's Gull: 5 BWWT 13 Jun (KF), unusual for date.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Wilson NIAG 24 Jul (WW!), first Jul record for Reg.

Caspian Tern: 3 LESP 13 Jun; 11 Wilson NIAG 24 Jul; 3 INWR 12 Aug; SPNS 14 Aug; max 12 DH 15 Aug.

Forster's Tern: DH 12-14 Aug (JG), only report.

Black Tern: max 3 INWR 9 Jun.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: max 5 INWR 6 Jun.

Com. Nighthawk: OOWMA 3 Jun (STO); arr 2, max 28 Amherst ERIE 14, 24 Aug; 5 other reports ERIE (max 3).

Whip-poor-will: Bear L CHAU 1 Jun, very rare in summer, probable late migrant.

RUFUS HUMMINGBIRD: Pomfret CHAU 20 Aug, reportedly ph but no details provided, NYSARC report encouraged.

Red-headed Woodpecker: LESP 12 Jun; TWMA 5, 27 Jun; PG 18 Jun-15 Aug; Newfane NIAG 24 Jul; FMCS 12 Aug; Hamburg ERIE 30 Aug; only reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: E Pembroke GENE 29 Jun (GS), slightly north of typical range.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last Ward ALLE 1 Jun (EB); arr Newfane NIAG 20 Aug (JP); Wilson NIAG 24, 25 Aug (WD).

Acadian Flycatcher: 4 ad + nest Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 20 Jun (MM); 7 other reports.

W. KINGBIRD: Eden ERIE 28 Aug (RA! MZ!), very rare.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER: Hamburg ERIE 7 Jun (DH!), 3rd record for Reg.

White-eyed Vireo: 2 + nest RTPI Jun (SM, JB), first confirmed breeding in Reg.

Yellow-throated Vireo: Ellington CHAU 12 Jun (MM); Wilson NIAG 26 Jun (DR); good Atlas finds.

Philadelphia Vireo: arr Tonawanda ERIE 27 Aug (PFH).

Com. Raven: Bennington WYOM 8 Jun (KF); 3, 5 Ellington CHAU 25 Jun, 2 Jul (MM!); 2 Pike WYOM 26 Jun (KF); Wilson NIAG 22 Aug (WD!), very rare in NIAG; only reports away from ALLE, CATT.

N. Rough-winged Swallow: melanistic Buffalo ERIE 13 Jun (MM).

Cliff Swallow: 2, 6 Buffalo ERIE 13 Jun, 3 Aug; 2 Tillman WMA 23 Jun, unusual location; 80 ad, 78 nests N Tonawanda NIAG 23 Jun; continues to increase along NR and Buffalo waterfront.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Hartland NIAG 13 Jun; Cheektowaga ERIE 10 Jul; NF 16 Jul; unusual locations.

Carolina Wren: 7 reports.

Winter Wren: CHMUA 19 Jun; Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 20 Jun; 2 ad + 3 imm Concord ERIE 26 Jun; Wilson NIAG 17 Jul (WD); only reports away from ALLE, CATT.

SEDGE WREN: TWMA 9 Jun (WW!); max 4 INWR 30 Jun (PHi).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Ellington CHAU 25 Jun (MM); Independence ALLE 14 Jul (RR); good Atlas finds.

Swainson's Thrush: 2 Alma ALLE 25 Jun (RR); 3 ad, 1 yg AISP 18 Jul (PY).

N. Mockingbird: Hanover CHAU 1 Jun; Independence ALLE 9 Jun; 2 ad, 1 juv Silver Creek CHAU 25 Jul; good Atlas finds.

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: Newfane NIAG 16 Jun (WW); Lewiston NIAG 10 Jul (NS); only reports.

"Brewster's" Warbler: Evans ERIE 12 Jun; Stockton CHAU 15 Jun; Newfane NIAG 16 Jun; CHMUA 19 Jun; Ellington CHAU 2 Jul; more reports than Golden-winged.

Tennessee Warbler: arr WTSP 24 Aug.

Nashville Warbler: AISP 2 Jul; Andover

ALLE 3 Jul; 2 Alfred ALLE 20 Jul; Ashford CATT 4 Jul; Franklinville CATT 1 Aug; good Atlas finds.

N. Parula: max 8 AISP 6 Jun (PY), impressive count for rare breeder in Reg.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr FNPS 20 Aug.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr 2 Wilson NIAG 24 Aug.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: 2 ad, nest, fl AISP 6 Jun-18 Jul (TB! WW! NYSARC), nest in red pine (60') in dense tuft of needles; unmated male Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 11 Jul-1 Aug (MM! NYSARC mob), unprecedented in ERIE in summer.

Pine Warbler: 2, 4 Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 5 Jun, 12 Jul (MM! JP); Brant ERIE 12 Jun, 2 Jul (RR); AISP 28 Jun (WW!); Wilson NIAG 20 Aug (WW!); increasing.

Prairie Warbler: Ellington CHAU 4 Jun, 2 Jul (MM!); 7 Pike WYOM 26 Jun (KF); only reports outside ALLE, CATT.

Black-and-white Warbler: AISP 6 Jun; Alfred ALLE 20 Jun; arr BuSP 9 Aug.

Prothonotary Warbler: 1-3 TWMA 5-20 Jun (PFH, JP); INWR 9 Jun (PFH); historical breeding locations.

N. Waterthrush: arr Amherst ERIE 6 Aug.

Louisiana Waterthrush: max 12 Strykersville WYOM 8 Jun (KF), counted while hiking two large gullies.

KENTUCKY WARBLER: AISP 3 Jun (FG!), rarely found in summer.

Wilson's Warbler: arr Fredonia CHAU 14 Aug.

Canada Warbler: arr Amherst ERIE 14 Aug.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 2

Andover ALLE 1-30 Jun (EB); 3 Yorkshire CATT 13 Jun (JP); previously documented locations.

Vesper Sparrow: Andover ALLE thru 20

Jul; Ashford CATT 4 Jul; Cheney CHAU 19 Jul; Humphrey CATT 22 Jul; only reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 2-4 Andover ALLE thru 20 Jul; Newfane NIAG 7-30 Jun; Pomfret CHAU 12 Jun; Royalton NIAG 13 Jun; Hartland NIAG 13 Jun; 3 Tillman WMA ERIE 27 Jun; Ischua CATT 17 Jul.

Henslow's Sparrow: max 6 Lancaster ERIE (MM, MK); Andover ALLE 20 Jul (EB); only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: Lyndon CATT 1 Jul; 2 Ward ALLE 11 Jul; 4 Alfred ALLE 20 Jul; only reports.

E. Meadowlark: noted absent or in decreased numbers in several Atlas blocks.

Orchard Oriole: 1-4 Silver Creek CHAU 2-18 Jun (CH); ad m Alma ALLE 4 Jun (RR), good Atlas finds.

Red Crossbill: 2 Almond ALLE 23 Jun (EB), only report.

Pine Siskin: Portland CHAU 2 Jun (CH); AISP 6 Jun (PY); Colden ERIE 9 Jun (KL); Cherry Creek CHAU 12 Jun (MM); Mayville CHAU 13 Jun (TL); 5 E Aurora ERIE 17 Jun; likely related to spring breeding.