

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The summer was wet and cool, but some observers noted that there were no extended periods of very cool weather and that the rainfall often consisted only

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of short, partial-day deluges. This seemed to allow most species to have a normal breeding year, and there was even an observation that the wet year led to an increase in insects, which helped adult birds feed young.

The temperature for June averaged 63.7°F, 2.1° degrees below normal. There was 2.42" of precipitation, 1.29" below the average. In July the temperature was 69.5°, -1.4°, with 6.95" of precipitation, 4.02" more than usual. The August average of 68.6° was 0.6° below normal and the 5.1" of precipitation was 1.54" above normal.

With the increase in the Snow Goose population, it is becoming routine to find a summer bird such as the one in northern Oneida County this season. However, a small southbound flock at the end of August was very early. Brant and Red-breasted Merganser lingered on Oneida Lake into June, while Ring-necked Duck on an isolated Adirondack lake was a possible breeder somewhat south of the usual range. August sightings at Sandy Pond and Lake Ontario included Horned Grebe, Northern Shoveler, White-winged Scoter and a Common Goldeneye, the latter being seen over the entire month.

While doing Common Loon surveys on Honnedaga Lake, Gary Lee encountered a bird that at first he could not identify, but he was able to paddle close enough to see that it was an adult Red-throated Loon, a first seasonal record for the Region. Separate observers saw two American White Pelicans in flight on Oneida Lake on the same day, but there were no further reports.

Participants will be happy to see the Breeding Bird Atlas wind down after five years, but the project covered areas that are rarely visited by birders otherwise. One such spot is in Oneida County where the grasslands and wetlands of Boonville and Ava are home to species such as American Bittern, Northern Harrier, Sora, Upland Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Marsh Wren and Vesper and Grasshopper sparrows, all needing the specialized habitat.

Highlights for raptors this season included Peregrine Falcons fledging young in Syracuse, a few more Merlins in the breeding season and Bald Eagles, which have established a population at Stillwater Reservoir although nests have been hard to find. It's hoped that a pair of Bald Eagles renovating a heron nest at Three Rivers WMA may provide a breeding record for Onondaga County in 2005. American Kestrel continues to be a concern despite the breeding success noted in Boonville. Northern Harrier habitat is being lost as agriculture declines.

Delta Lake and the Salmon River Reservoir remained high throughout the season, offering no mud flats for shorebirds. The high water level on Lake Ontario reduced available roosting and feeding areas at Sandy Pond, but the area was still used by migrants. Two sites near the Great Swamp Conservancy land in Madison County, a sod farm and a flooded field, also provided shorebird habitat. A small number of Red Knots were the best since 1992. There were also sightings of Western, Baird's, White-rumped and Stilt sandpipers.

There was a single Little Gull report. A pair of Common Terns nested on an old bridge abutment on the Oswego River, but the nest failed, most likely due to gull predation. Black Terns staged at Sandy Pond in August, but breeding pairs remain very low. The Common Nighthawk count in Syracuse recorded a total of 70 over the last 19 days of August, the lowest in the 11 years of the count.

Atlas workers reported Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied flycatchers in several Adirondack wetlands and Northern Saw-whet Owl and Boreal Chickadee near the Oswegatchie River in far northern Herkimer County. There were several reports of Black-backed Woodpecker in northern Herkimer County and also one report of American Three-toed Woodpecker, a species that is believed to nest north of Old Forge but in fact is rarely reported in that mostly roadless area.

Acadian Flycatcher was found at a new location in Hannibal, but the species doesn't appear to be making any inroads past the western edge of the Region. After being drained in 2003, a large pond in the Three Rivers WMA that was being invaded by purple loosestrife is now populated by cattails and had Marsh Wren this year.

Matt Perry reported that several species of warblers and vireos have declined as nesters in his part of southern Oneida County, but it is difficult to get much of a reading on breeding warblers Region-wide. For most species there seems to be little decrease in distribution across Atlas blocks, but that certainly doesn't address numbers of a species per block. There was a summer report of Bay-breasted Warbler near Stillwater Reservoir and Prothonotary Warblers continue to breed in Big Bay Swamp on Oneida Lake. Two Yellow-breasted Chats were seen, each for one day only.

Vesper Sparrow was seen in several locations and there was a nice concentration of both Vesper and Grasshopper sparrows in Boonville. It's unfortunate that their preferred habitat is often the first to be used for housing or planted for other agricultural purposes. Pine Siskin fledglings were documented by Matt Young in southern Madison County, but there were few siskins elsewhere. In the same area, Matt also had a single Red Crossbill and an unusual breeding record for Evening Grosbeak, a species in decline statewide as a breeder.

The fruit, nut and seed crop was mixed this year, but "abundant" was not used to describe anything. The berry crop was fair, with cherries, highbush cranberry and wild raisins good. There was generally poor nut and seed production from trees, although ash was good in spots. There were some spruce cones but most pines were barren. Additional plant species noted included the hawthorn and apple crop as about average, European buckthorn and tartarian honeysuckle good and viburnums producing virtually nothing, due largely to an insect blight that is currently affecting most viburnum species. There was below average production of sumac fruit and wild grape.

For the season, 204 species were recorded, a very good total. It will be interesting to see if there will be a decline in numbers next year, in the first year with no Atlas work being done. Highlights were American White Pelican, Ring-necked Duck, White-winged Scoter, Red Knot, Western Sandpiper, **American Three-toed Woodpecker**, Ruby Crowned Kinglet, Yellow-breasted Chat and Red Crossbill. Misses included Short-billed Dowitcher, Sedge Wren, Clay-colored Sparrow and Henslow's Sparrow.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CM – Clay Marsh; DeR – DeRuyter; DL – Delta L; Geo – Georgetown; LOL – L Ontario Littoral; GSC – Great Swamp Conservancy MADI; OneiL – Oneida L; OnonL – Onondaga L; SCH – T Schroepel; SFNS – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; SPd – Sandy Pd; Syr – Syracuse; TRWMA – Three Rivers WMA; WH – Whiskey Hollow, T Van Buren; WM – West Monroe.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: T Western 19 Jun; 15 southbound over Geo 28 Aug, early.

Brant: OnonL 12 Jun (MR), late.

Am. Black Duck: max 7 Cicero 19 Jun.

Blue-winged Teal: possible nesting Fabius; yg SCH 17 Jul; max 15 DL 23 Aug; low numbers.

N. Shoveler: 2 SPd 8 Aug.

Green-winged Teal: Boonville 25 Jun; 3 SPd 14 Aug.

Ring-necked Duck: 2 Twin Lakes T Ohio 12 Jun, south of expected breeding area.

White-winged Scoter: 5 LOL 8 Aug.

Com. Goldeneye: SPd 4 Aug thru.

Red-breasted Merganser: last 10 Jun Cleveland; max 16 SPd 22 Aug.

RED-THROATED LOON: 1 alt plumage Woodhull L HERK 30 Jun, apparently short-stopped, 1st Reg summer record (GL).

Com. Loon: good nesting year in HERK despite high water (GL, TSa).

Horned Grebe: 1 alt plumage LOL 8 Aug, 4th summer record.

AM. WHITE PELICAN: 2 OneiL 8 Jul (JCa, JCo).

Double-crested Cormorant: Woodhull L 5 Jun; 40 SPd 8 Aug; Fourth L 25 Aug.

Am. Bittern: CM 27 Jun; 3 locations Boonville-Ava Jun.

Least Bittern: 1 per day CM Aug.

Great Blue Heron: 85 active nests WM

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Great Egret: max 6 GSC 1 Aug; singles Utica, WM, OnonL, Van Buren, Camillus, Durhamville.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: GSC 4 Aug.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: nesting on 2 cell towers Oswego Ri.

Bald Eagle: pr TRWMA thru, probable breeders for 2005; common Stillwater & Moshier Falls Res.

N. Harrier: ads & 3 yg Ava into Aug.

N. Goshawk: nest Third L Creek.

Golden Eagle: ad Big Moose L HERK 9 Jul (R&SS), only report

Am. Kestrel: 8-10 family groups Boonville-Ava Jul; max 10 Little Falls 14 Aug.

Merlin: nesting both ends Stillwater Res and North Bay of Big Moose L; 1 Woodgate 19 Jun; 2 Camillus 16 Aug; 1 Van Buren 19 Aug; 1 Durhamville 31 Aug.

Peregrine Falcon: 4 fl Syr 19 Jun thru.

Sora: calling Ava 28 Jun, 7 Jul.

Black-bellied Plover: Sullivan 28 Aug thru.

Semipalmated Plover: 9 ad SPd 11 Aug; 8 juv SPd 14 Aug; max 10 GSC 15 Aug.

Killdeer: max 110 Sullivan 27 Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: max 3 SPd 8 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: max 60 GSC 1 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr Waterville 19 Jul; max 3 GSC 1 Aug & 3 SFNS 8 Aug.
Spotted Sandpiper: 5 per day SPd Aug; max 10 GSC 1 Aug.

Upland Sandpiper: in 3 Atlas blocks Boonville-Ava, probably more numerous there.

Ruddy Turnstone: SPd 29 Aug.

Red Knot: 7 alternate plumage SPd 1 Aug; max 9 alternate plumage SPd 3 Aug; 1 juv SPd 22 Aug.

Sanderling: max 55 SPd 1 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 20 SPd 3 Aug.

Western Sandpiper: basic plumage SPd 8 Aug.

Least Sandpiper: max 38 SPd 11 Aug.

White-rumped Sandpiper: SPd 11 Aug; GSC 15 Aug.

Baird's Sandpiper: max 3 SPd 22 Aug; SVB 25 Aug, unusual there.

Pectoral Sandpiper: max 6 GSC 29 Aug.

Stilt Sandpiper: 3 ad GSC & 2 ad SPd 1 Aug.

Wilson's Snipe: 6 reports Boonville-Ava, ample habitat.

Am. Woodcock: max 4 GSC 1 Aug.

Little Gull: 2nd-yr SPd 4 Aug.

Bonaparte's Gull: 28 SPd 1 Aug; max 119 SVB 25 Aug.

Caspian Tern: DL 30 Jul; max 98 SPd 1 Aug.

Com. Tern: pr nesting Oswego Ri Phoenix 5 Jun (GD); 5 DL 30 Jul; max 50 SPd 3 Aug.

Black Tern: max 33 SPd 1 Aug; gone by end of Aug.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

N. Saw-whet Owl: Oswegatchie Ri 22 Jul.

Com. Nighthawk: 1 N Syr 18 Jun; max 24 Syr 28 Aug; total 70 Syr 13-31 Aug count period.

Whip-poor-will: no reports away from Constantia.

Red-headed Woodpecker: pr Volney 11 Jun, with fl 22 Jul; pr Kirkland 7 Jul; fl Van Buren 8 Jul.

AM. THREE-TOED WOODPECKER:

3 Polack Swamp HERK 20 Aug (TSa).

Black-backed Woodpecker: Little Safford Pd 25 Aug; 2 reported north of Stillwater Res Jun.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Gull L outlet 17 Jul; Big Creek wetland 22 Jul; Oswegatchie Ri 22 Jul; Carter Station 23 Jul; single migrants SCH 20 Aug & SFNS 26 Aug.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last WH 7 Jun; max 3 Gull L outlet 17 Jul.

Acadian Flycatcher: Hannibal 26 Jun; breeding pr WH thru.

E. Kingbird: max 22 SPd 15 Aug.

Fish Crow: Liverpool 12 Jun, 28 Jul.

Horned Lark: max 6 Pompey 18 Jul.

Purple Martin: max 24 Cicero 21 Jul; numbers continue to decline along Oneil; 8 SPd 15 Aug.

Tree Swallow: max 900 SPd 15 Aug.

Bank Swallow: max 60 SPd 15 Aug, low.

Cliff Swallow: nesting on mall bldgs Clay thru Jul.

Barn Swallow: max 103 CM 7 Aug.

Boreal Chickadee: Oswegatchie Ri 22 Jul; Independence Ri 15 Aug.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Fayetteville 29 Aug, only likely migrant noted.

Carolina Wren: pr Marshall 29 Jun; nest Waterville 30 Jun; both at > 1200'.

Marsh Wren: SCH 15 Jun, 8 Jul; TRWMA 8 Jul, areas with emerging habitat; 3 Boonville 23 Jul.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: nesting McCauley Mt Jun.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: 2 Boonville 17 Jul, north of expected range.

E. Bluebird: fls up 25 % over 2003 (JR), tied to milder winter to our south.

N. Mockingbird: Old Forge thru.

Brown Thrasher: Old Forge thru.

Cedar Waxwing: 550 Pulaski 6 Jun, large flock for such a late date.

WARBLERS

"Brewster's" Warbler: Hannibal 26 Jun.
Tennessee Warbler: arr Hastings 26 Aug.
Yellow Warbler: max 90 SPd 15 Aug.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: juv SPd 15 Aug.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr SPd 15 Aug.
Pine Warbler: Lysander on N Victory BBS was new.
Prairie Warbler: near Rome 25 Jun, not found again; SPd 15 Aug.
Palm Warbler: SVB 28 Aug, early.
Bay-breasted Warbler: S of Stillwater Res 30 Jun.
Blackpoll Warbler: last 4 Jun.
Am. Redstart: arr SPd 1 Aug.
Prothonotary Warbler: 3 pr Big Bay Swamp WMA.
Ovenbird: arr SPd 15 Aug.
N. Waterthrush: SPd 15 Aug.
Wilson's Warbler: arr 2 SPd 22 Aug.
Canada Warbler: arr SPd 15 Aug.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: W Winfield 23 Jul (BA); SFNS 31 Aug (MP).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Vesper Sparrow: Jun-Jul reports: 1 Rome, 1 Kirkland, 2 Paris, 3 Vernon, 3 Winfield, 3 Boonville.
Grasshopper Sparrow: 6-7 singing m Boonville Jun.
Lincoln's Sparrow: 2-4 per day Adirondack wetlands.
Bobolink: first migrants 10 Aug.
Orchard Oriole: Pulaski 5 Jul, only report.
Red Crossbill: Geo 12 Jun, only report.
Pine Siskin: 2 Syr 7-12 Jun unusual there in summer: 30-60 per day Geo-DeR Jun, numbers dwindled to 5 per day Aug.
Evening Grosbeak: pr & 2 fl Geo 5 July (MY); 2 Salisbury 5 Jul; few Old Forge thru.