

REGION 10 – MARINE

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September was very warm and wet, with temperatures exceeding the average by 1.3°F and rainfall 3.03" above average. Temperatures in October and November were closer to average, though still slightly above, but both months were decidedly dry. Their rainfall totals fell 2.47" and 0.95" below their respective averages. A peculiar feature of the weather this fall, which was noted by virtually all the active observers in the Region, was the scarcity of northwesterly winds. The prevailing orientation of weather systems moving through the Region was such that, even following the passage of cold fronts, we experienced mostly northeasterly winds and a dearth of heavy landbird flights along the outer coast, particularly in eastern LI. An outstanding exception to this rule was a classic Columbus Day flight on 11 October, during which I estimated more than 10,000 "Myrtle" Warblers arriving on and sweeping along the barrier beach at Fire Island just after sunrise.

The scope of nesting failure among arctic-breeding geese and shorebirds, alluded to in the summer report, is still being assessed. In our Region, the extreme scarcity of juvenile shorebirds perceived in August was somewhat ameliorated in September. Baird's and Buff-breasted sandpipers, represented in Region 10 almost exclusively by juveniles, were not particularly scarce this fall, and flocks of juvenile Sanderlings and Red Knots ultimately appeared. All of these impressions, however, are necessarily imprecise and anecdotal because I did not receive any systematic data documenting age ratios for particular species throughout the southbound migratory season. If any of our readers have such information, it would form the basis of a valuable note or article in *The Kingbird*. Observers on the South Shore gave some attention to Willets, with an eye toward clarifying the status of the two subspecies. By early September, the overall

numbers of Willets in our Region are much reduced compared to the very large numbers often present in July and early August, and conventional wisdom holds that western *inornatus* predominates among the sparse late-season birds. My observations at Fire Island Inlet in early September were consistent with this view. Of 13 Willets present on 3 September, eight were judged to be clearly referable to *inornatus* and just two to the locally breeding form, *semipalmatus*, while three were deemed indeterminate. All six present there on 11 September appeared to be *inornatus*.

A flock of 27 Hudsonian Godwits seen by Al Wollin and Sy Schiff at Jones Beach West End on 9 September was among the highest counts ever recorded on LI. Although the coastal maximum cited in *Bull's Birds of New York State* is just 17, I am aware of records of 26 around North Line Island 4 August 1990 (NYRBA), 26 at Cedar Beach on 19 August 1990 (A. J. Lauro and Tom Burke) and 41 at Montauk Point, in the eye of Hurricane Bob, on 19 August 1991 (A. J. Lauro, P.A. Buckley, et al., KB 41: 287). Note also that the two records from 1990 were apparently conflated when originally published (KB 40: 279), as confirmed by A. J. Lauro and Tom Burke.

Veteran observers have long opined that vagrant landbirds are either difficult to discern during heavy fall flights or actually arrive under different circumstances than those producing such flights. This season, with its paucity of high volume events, provided some insights into this perception. The general consensus was that numbers and variety of vagrants and scarce migrants were not, in fact, depressed over most of the Region – especially in comparison to the markedly depressed numbers observed for many staple species. At least five western or midwestern species that Region 10 birders typically seek in September – Red-headed Woodpecker, Western Kingbird, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Sparrow and Dickcissel – appeared in average to excellent numbers this year and were often encountered on days when total numbers of commoner migrants were conspicuously low. In particular, Red-headed Woodpeckers staged their biggest coastal flight since 1998. In contrast, no large counts were reported for many of our most numerous long distance migrants, such as Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush and Common Yellowthroat.

Red-breasted Nuthatches staged a minor coastal flight and were joined by a smattering of other woodland irruptives, such as Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatch and Black-capped Chickadee, all of which were somewhat more numerous than usual along the outer beaches. This year's flight of Red-breasted Nuthatches, which followed last year's even less impressive flight, might indicate a shift away from the recent biannual trend in which irruptions have occurred during the autumns of odd-numbered years. Pine Siskins staged a minor coastal flight, but Purple Finch numbers were unimpressive and other irruptive finches were completely absent.

This fall Region 10 hosted several seasonally unusual birds. A Broad-winged Hawk and a Wood Thrush, Neotropical migrants unexpected in NYS after mid October, lingered through the end of November at Central Park. An Acadian Flycatcher observed by John Sep at Dam Pond 10 September was apparently described well. Documentation is extremely important for non-singing

Empidonax in general and for fall records of this species in particular. Silent Acadian Flycatchers are easily confused with the Regionally more numerous Willow and Alder flycatchers, among others, and I am not aware of any fully documented fall sight records of this species from our Region. Note that the species account in *Bull's Birds of New York State* incorrectly states that 11 Acadian Flycatchers banded at Fire Island Lighthouse in 1970 were captured during the fall. In fact, all of these, and all but a very few Acadian Flycatchers ever banded at this site, were captured in spring.

A Mourning Warbler reported from Central Park 24-27 October constitutes the latest date for the species in NY State. Deserving commendation is Lloyd Spitalnik for recognizing not only the unusual nature of the record but also the particular need to collect documentation to rule out MacGillivray's Warbler, a very similar species that has actually accrued more late fall records in the Northeast than has Mourning. A *Pheucticus* grosbeak present at Central Park in late November showed several characters suggestive of Black-headed Grosbeak, including richly and extensively colored underparts, yellow underwings coverts and a rather dark bill. The bird's coarsely and heavily streaked breast, however, was more consistent with Rose-breasted Grosbeak and this individual was generally referred to under that moniker.

On 14 November, Peter Dorosh observed a Western Grebe at Wolfe's Pond Park, Staten Island, a site frequented by an individual of this species in recent winters. Subsequent efforts to relocate the bird were generally unsuccessful, and judging from later reports on the New Jersey RBA, the bird evidently shifted its activities to the other side of Raritan Bay. The juvenile Golden Eagle found on 29 November by Nick Hamblet and Holly Cronin at Scallop Pond Preserve in North Sea, Town of Southampton, represents one of just a dozen or so documented records of this species from LI. The genuine rarity of Golden Eagles on LI is especially remarkable given that this is a highly migratory species that is widespread and even locally numerous elsewhere in NYS during migration.

On 13 October at Mount Loretto Park, SI, Dick Veit flushed a Yellow Rail from the grass at his feet. This sort of event, which John Bull once described as being a reasonable once-in-a-lifetime expectation for any active observer, was in fact a first for Dr. Veit. Another noteworthy rallid discovered that day was the juvenile Purple Gallinule found by Shane Blodgett at Prospect Park, which was seen by many birders through 22 October.

A basic-plumaged Curlew Sandpiper found by Mary Laura Lamont at Orient Beach State Park on 9 October was noteworthy, as this species has been quite rare in our Region for a number of years, following decades of more frequent occurrence. Although Ruffs are generally regarded as scarce but expected visitors to Region 10, the juvenile discovered 5 September at Rita's Horse Farm in Montauk by Brian Kane and Patrick Santinello represents one of exceedingly few juveniles ever reported from LI. Mike Cooper's species account in *Bull's Birds of New York State* (1998) stated that juveniles have been recorded just twice at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, 25 September 1985 and 28 September 1986, despite the dozens of Ruffs that have been observed there over the years.

The *Selasphorus* hummingbird found on 30 November in Central Park by Lloyd Spitalnik et al. continued into December, when careful study and photography allowed its identification as Rufous. The Ash-throated Flycatcher

discovered by Bob Baines in Prospect Park on 23 November remained into December.

Once again, LI's barrier beaches hosted Cave Swallows during November. Although this species appeared as usual in early November at Cape May, very few were recorded elsewhere in the Northeast until Thanksgiving. During the period 25-27 November, LI logged several records of one-five Cave Swallows from the small area comprising the Fire Island Lighthouse, Robert Moses State Park and Captree State Park. These likely involved some duplication of individuals. One bird was also seen slightly farther west at Jones Beach West End on 26 November. Sedge Wrens are very rarely reported from our Region, so one observed at Prospect Park on 13 September by Peter Dorosh is noteworthy. Mickey Cashman's discovery of a Mountain Bluebird at Robert Moses State Park on 20 November precipitated a spectacular incursion of birders to Fire Island. This cooperative bird was the first on LI since 1990.

Note to contributors:

Despite the convenience of retrieving bird data from the Internet, there really is no substitute for dedicated reports, distilling each observer's data and impressions for a given season or area. I wish to offer my sincere thanks to Deborah Allen, Mike Bochnik, Tom Burke, John Collins, Tom Fiore, John Fritz, Hugh McGuinness, Drew Panko, Joan Quinlan, Dick Veit and the Queens County Bird Club for taking pains to contribute detailed reports on the fall season. Your assistance is deeply appreciated. Please note that in the summary of specific reports below, the following conventions differ slightly from earlier issues: capitalized species names represent those on the NYSARC review list at the time of publication; italicized species names, localities, dates, high counts, or plumages represent other kinds of occurrences that are very unusual in Region 10, for which I would appreciate documentation.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BP – Breezy Pt; CB – Cedar Beach; CHP – Conference House P SI; CP – Central P; CSP – Captree SP; DP – Democrat Pt FI; FI – Fire I; FINS – Fire I National Seashore; FT – Fort Tilden QUEE; GBP – Goethels Bridge Pd SI; GKP – Great Kills P SI; HP – Hook Pd Southampton; In – Inlet; JBSP – Jones Beach SP; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long Island; MEB – Mecox Bay; ML – Marratooka L; MOR – Moriches Inlet; MP – Montauk Pt; MTL – Mount Loretto SI; NYRBA – New York Rare Bird Alert; PB – Pikes Beach Westhampton; PP – Prospect P; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; RSF – Riverhead sod fields; SGP – Sagg Pd Bridgehampton; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten Island; WPP – Wolfes Pd P SI.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: ad HP 26 Nov (BK, HM).

Snow Goose: 18 JBWR 26 Sep; 20 JBSP 30 Sep.

Brant: arr e LI 16 Oct.

Tundra Swan: 6 ML 6 Nov; 2 HP 7 Nov.

Wood Duck: 11 Aquebogue 5 Sep (AM); many.

Eurasian Wigeon: ML 11 Nov.

Am. Wigeon: arr e LI 1 Oct.

King Eider: MP 13 Nov thru.

Com. Eider: MP 9 Oct thru.

Harlequin Duck: 2 Hortons Pt Southold 21 Nov (J&EP).

Surf Scoter: arr e LI 7 Oct; unusually large numbers (tens of thousands) during Nov (fide HM).

Black Scoter: arr e LI late Sep; unusually large numbers (tens of thousands) during Nov (fide HM).

Red-throated Loon: arr early Oct.

Horned Grebe: arr 24 Oct Shelter I (fide NH).

Eared Grebe: no reports.

WESTERN GREBE: WPP 14 Nov (PD).

N. Fulmar: seven 30-70 mi s SHIN 9 Oct (JSh); “numerous” 87 mi s SHIN 29 Oct

(AGr).

Greater Shearwater: 30 mi s SHIN 25 Sep (JSh); “numerous” 87 mi s SHIN 29 Oct (AGr).

Sooty Shearwater: 87 mi s SHIN 29 Oct (AGr).

Manx Shearwater: s SHIN 9 Oct (JSh).

Wilson’s Storm-Petrel: 87 mi s SHIN 29 Oct (AGr).

Snowy Egret: max 50 GBP 11 Sep (RV); a few thru.

Cattle Egret: Drake P BRON 7-27 Oct, unusual location.

Black Vulture: 4 CP 1 Nov.

Turkey Vulture: numerous migrants extreme w end of Reg (e.g., 50 CP 1 Nov); LI records incl: Calverton 14 Sep; Westhampton 19 Sep; 2 Manorville 22 Sep; Montauk 23 Sep; w of Riverhead 3 Oct.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: 36 FINS Hawkwatch 19 Sep.

Bald Eagle: many reports throughout Reg; singles FINS Hawkwatch 6 dates 19 Sep-8 Nov, seasonal max 1982-present.

N. Harrier: 19 FINS Hawkwatch 12 Oct; 17 FINS Hawkwatch 21 Nov; high counts.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Northville 2 Sep (MLL); 33 FINS Hawkwatch 5 Oct; 20 FINS Hawkwatch 8 Nov.

Cooper's Hawk: 4 FINS Hawkwatch 5 Oct.

N. Goshawk: CP 1 Nov; PP 2 Nov; 4 FINS Hawkwatch 8 Nov; Riverhead 27 Oct (JGa, BA).

Red-shouldered Hawk: many reports extreme w end of Reg; Orient 11 Oct (BA); ad CHP 14 Nov (RV); none for season FINS Hawkwatch.

Broad-winged Hawk: "decent" flight CP 19 Sep (fide NYRBA); FINS Hawkwatch 12 Oct, only one recorded.

Red-tailed Hawk: FINS Hawkwatch 3 Oct, only one recorded.

Rough-legged Hawk: FT 5 Oct (SW); Amagansett 3 Nov; none for season FINS Hawkwatch.

Golden Eagle: juv Scallop Pd, North Sea 29-30 Nov (NH, HC); *intro*.

Am. Kestrel: 289 FINS Hawkwatch 19 Sep.

Merlin: 155 FINS Hawkwatch 11 Oct.

Peregrine Falcon: undoubted migrants arr ca 20 Sep; 11 FINS Hawkwatch 26 Sep & 12 Oct.

YELLOW RAIL: MTL 13 Oct (RV); *intro*.

Sora: a few JBWR.

PURPLE GALLINULE: juv PP 13-22 Oct (SBl et al.).

Com. Moorhen: Quogue Preserve 11 Sep (BR, DiF); Aquebogue 27 Nov (AB); only reports.

Am. Golden-Plover: many counts of 16-37 RSF thru Sep; 16 Cutchogue 9 Sep (PG).

Am. Avocet: MEB thru 5 Sep; Cupsogue 22-26 Sep (JF, DW).

Willet: 13 FI In 3 Sep (8 *inornatus*, 2 *semipalmatus*, 3 indet.); 6 FI In 11 Sep (all *inornatus*); *intro*.

Whimbrel: 5 Old In FINS 24 Sep (RS).

Hudsonian Godwit: 27 JBWE 9 Sep

(AIW, SS), very high count.

White-rumped Sandpiper: 9 MEB 9 Oct; Georgica Pd 2 Nov, late.

Baird's Sandpiper: RSF 3-12 Sep; 2 Montauk 19 Sep; 3 SGP 9 Oct.

Pectoral Sandpiper: max 21 RSF 29 Sep.

Curlew Sandpiper: 1 basic Orient Pt. 9 Oct (MLL) and 13 Oct (BA, LS).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: many counts of 1-4 RSF thru Sep.

Ruff: juv m Montauk 5 Sep (BK,PS), *intro*.

Long-billed Dowitcher: E Moriches 19 Sep (AJL).

Wilson's Snipe: arr e LI 9 Oct.

Am. Woodcock: marked influx of migrants 27-28 Oct.

Red-necked Phalarope: juv JBSP 9 Sep (SM et al.); juv JBWR 11-12 Sep (TWB, GB, AG).

Pomarine Jaeger: 70 mi s SHIN 9 Oct (JSh).

Parasitic Jaeger: 2 MP 9 Oct (PL, SM); 70 mi s SHIN 9 Oct (JSh); 6? mi s MP 22 Oct; JBWE 24 Oct.

LONG-TAILED JAEGER: 70 mi s SHIN 9 Oct (JSh).

Black-headed Gull: ad JBWE 24 Oct (fide NYRBA); ad FI In 24 Oct (TWB et al.).

Iceland Gull: juv DP 23 Oct (PL, SM), very early.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: marked influx juvs and ads 28 Sep-9 Oct throughout South Shore.

Black-legged Kittiwake: *imm WPP*, 2 Oct (J&RB, ET), very unusual location; 2 MP 24 Oct, others there later.

Caspian Tern: 3 DP 2 Oct; 2-4 MEB 5-9 Oct.

Royal Tern: 40 PB 9 Oct; 25 MOR & 65 SHIN 23 Oct; 35 MEB & 10 Georgica Pd 24 Oct; 4 GKP 25 Oct (RV), unusual location; 12 Georgica Pd 2 Nov, late for so many.

SANDWICH TERN: 4 PB 3-4 Sep (BK, BP, HM).

Black Skimmer: 93 Center Moriches 3 Oct (JRo), very high count for e LI.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Great Horned Owl: CP 24 Oct.

Snowy Owl: Old In (FINS) 7 Nov; Napeague 10 Nov.

N. Saw-whet Owl: a few late Oct thru.

Com. Nighthawk: counts of migrants at Wading River, total 134 and last on 7 Oct, very low, probably due to lack of nw winds (JaC).

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: ad fem CP 30 Nov (LS et al.).

Red-headed Woodpecker: 5 RMSP 26 Sep; 3 RMSP/FINS 2 Oct; 5 CHP 5 Oct; 3 JBWE 5 Oct; 10 Barcelona Neck 10 Oct, attracted to combination of dead trees and acorn-rich oaks; many others at these and other sites throughout Reg.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: unusually numerous Sep-Oct FINS, RMSP, Jones Strip; max 12 CHP 17 Oct (RV).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr e LI 20 Sep; max 10 Montauk 5 Oct (VB).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Acadian Flycatcher: Dam Pd 10 Sep (JS).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: PP 23 Nov thru (BB et al.).

Western Kingbird: Gilgo 11 Sep (PL, SM); JBWR 12 Sep (JH); FINS Hawkwatch 23 Sep (SD'A et al.).

N. Shrike: Cedar Beach 30 Oct (DoF).

Yellow-throated Vireo: CHP 5 Oct (RV).

Warbling Vireo: CSP 11 Sep (TWB et al.), unusual on barrier beach.

Philadelphia Vireo: widespread reports with definite peak 19-20 Sep; very scarce e LI.

Red-eyed Vireo: PP 1 Nov, late.

Blue Jay: 500 CHP 21 Sep (TBr); 100 CHP 5, 18 Oct (RV); high counts, all passing migrants headed west.

Purple Martin: last 2 Shelter I 21 Sep (NH).

Tree Swallow: max ca 10,000 LI South Shore late Sep-mid Oct; many small flocks thru.

CAVE SWALLOW: RMSP 25 Nov (AnW); 5 FINS Lighthouse Tract 26 Nov (SF, JS), highest count to date for LI; JBSP 26 Nov (SJ, EM, SS); CSP 26 Nov (PL, SM); 2-3 RMSP 27 Nov (JA, PAB, KF, DoF, AG, mob).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: *intro*.

Winter Wren: max 20 CHP 13 Oct (RV).

Sedge Wren: PP 13 Sep (PD).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr 19 Sep.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: RMSP 20-30 Nov (MC, mob).

Hermit Thrush: arr 1 Oct.

Wood Thrush: CP late Oct thru, very late.

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: very few; singles CHP 22 Oct (RV); CP 21 Nov (TF, MF).

Yellow Warbler: thru 17 Oct.

Cape May Warbler: thru 29 Oct.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: CP 1 Nov, late.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: few really big flights, *intro*; max >10,000 RMSP/FINS 11 Oct (SM).

Yellow-throated Warbler: *albilora* JBSP 17-24 Oct (mob); Pt Lookout 19 Oct (JF).

Bay-breasted Warbler: thru 13 Oct.

Connecticut Warbler: CHP 13, 21 Sep (RV).

Mourning Warbler: CP 24-27 Oct (LS et al.), very late.

Wilson's Warbler: PP 30 Oct.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Summer Tanager: JBWE 13 Oct.

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr 26 Oct.

Clay-colored Sparrow: CCP 23 Sep;
2-3 JBWE 2-13 Oct; BP 7 Oct; MP 11
Oct; RMSP 13 Oct; Hither Hills SP 22
Oct; JBWE 30 Oct.

Vesper Sparrow: Riverhead 11 Sep,
near breeding sites; coastal migrants
arr RMSP 1 Oct; BP 7 Oct; Caumsett
SP 9 Oct; JBWE 13 Oct; 2 MTL 22 Oct;
3 Kissena P 27 Oct; 2 RMSP 28 Oct;
CP 1 Nov.

Lark Sparrow: MTL 17 Sep (RV);
Montauk 19 Sep (PS); 1-2 RMSP
4-6 Oct; FT 13 Oct; RMSP
23-25 Oct.

Grasshopper Sparrow: MP 11 Oct
(HM, AB, PS); RMSP 16-17 Oct (PL,
SM); rarely reported away from
breeding sites.

NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED

SPARROW: *subvirgatus* 9 Oct
(TWB, GB, AG); *nelsoni/alterus* GKP
25 Oct (RV); max 8 *subvirgatus* CB
marshes 27 Oct (JF, DK).

Fox Sparrow: arr 4 Oct East Lake Dr
Montauk & CP 5 Oct, exceptionally
early; others 17 Oct e LI; SI Nov thru,
incl ca 5/day s shore SI thru Nov.

Song Sparrow: max 300 CHP & MTL 13
Oct; 100 Jones Strip 11 Oct.

White-throated Sparrow: max 1000 CHP
& MTL 13 Oct; 150 Jones Strip
11 Oct.

Dark-eyed Junco: Oregon/Pink-sided
type CHP 10-20 Nov (RV).

Lapland Longspur: arr 23 Oct.

Snow Bunting: arr 24 Oct.

N. Cardinal: unusually large numbers
barrier beaches late Oct thru.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: CP late Nov
(dates?), late, *intro*.

Blue Grosbeak: CSP 11 Sep (PL, SM);
RMSP 24 Sep (SM); Shelter I 24 Sep
(NH); CHP 25 Sep (fide NYRBA); 2
Kissena P 28 Oct, unusual location.

Dickcissel: JBWE 5 Oct; PP 5 Oct,
unusual location; Montauk Dump
9 Oct; RMSP 13 Oct.

Bobolink: southbound flight very scanty,
almost no high counts; max 8 CP 4 Oct,
low max.

EXOTICS

Pin-tailed Whydah: imm m CHP 20-22
Nov (RV).

ADDENDUM

The Kingbird 54 (4):

Lesser Black-backed Gull: BP 15 Aug
(JoC, GD).

