

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

Jeffrey S. Bolsinger

98 State Street, Canton NY 13617

Fall in northern New York was slightly warmer and drier than average. Mean monthly temperatures at Watertown International Airport were less than half a degree above normal each month, with precipitation totals 70-90 percent of normal. Mild temperatures were the rule throughout the period except for a cold snap that began on 8 November. On that date, the high temperature was 39° F in Watertown, one day after the mercury hit 60°. High temperatures were in the 30s four out of the next six days, for the only notably cool stretch of the entire fall. Unlike some years, when winter weather settles in well before Thanksgiving, mild conditions persisted throughout November, with most of the Region receiving no more than a dusting of snow by month's end.

The mild temperatures did not keep the winter birds from arriving, and some species, e.g. Rough-legged Hawk and American Tree Sparrow, appeared somewhat earlier than usual. By the last half of November wintering raptors were present in good numbers in the northern Jefferson county grasslands, but appeared to be less abundant than during the previous winter. A sizeable wave of Pine Siskins in October represented the only observed movement of winter finches, and at least in my yard, the arrival of the siskins coincided with the departure of the American Goldfinches that had been mobbing my feeder for weeks. Aside from siskins, there were few reports of northern finches, with only a single group of three Common Redpolls noted from Canton on 30 November. Rumors of an early invasion of northern owls in southern Canada and Minnesota had birders throughout the Region anticipating a similar phenomenon here, but the only hint of an owl incursion by season's end was a single report of two Snowy Owls along the Canadian border in Massena.

Several species with generally southerly distributions appeared in good numbers. Great Egrets also made a good showing, with sightings throughout the St. Lawrence Valley and Lake Ontario Plain. Red-bellied Woodpecker was reported from two locations and Carolina Wren and Tufted Titmouse were reported from backyards throughout the area. No migratory half-hardies, such as American Robin and Song Sparrow, were reported after late October, and most neotropical migrants had left by the beginning of November. Two reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeak on 4 and 25 November were an exception.

Perhaps the most surprising observation was of a Trumpeter Swan family Bob and Ellen Long found on Chippewa Creek near Black Lake in St. Lawrence County. Ellen briefly observed these swans in August, but their identity was not confirmed until later in the fall. This sighting represents the only presumed nesting record in the Region away from Perch River Wildlife Management Area, where breeding was first documented in 1995. It is unclear whether the Chippewa Creek swans represent dispersal from Perch River or if these birds were released in Ontario or elsewhere. Also of questionable origin were two coveys of Gray

Partridge found in Massena for at least the third consecutive year in an area where no partridge were reported for nearly 20 years.

Other highlights from the fall included: larger numbers of shorebirds than in most recent years, especially Dunlin and Sanderling and including a rare sighting of Purple Sandpiper at Eldorado Shores; observations of both Whip-poor-will and Northern Saw-whet Owl in northern St. Lawrence County; Red-headed Woodpecker from one of the last strongholds for this species in the Region at Cape Vincent; and impressive movements of sparrows during late September and early October. Disappointments included the continued low numbers of scaup in Black River Bay compared to historic numbers; the generally low number of ducks reported; and the paucity of passerines in general and rarities in particular among observer reports. This latter point probably reflects low observer effort and is not necessarily indicative of a poor fall flight.

CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Badger, Jeff Bolsinger, Dick & Marion Brouse, Carol Cady, Michael Greenwald, Anne Johnson, Jerry & Judi LeTendre, Ellen & Robert Long, Mark Manske, Chris Reidy, Mike Sheard, Gerry Smith, Eve Sweatman, Bob & June Walker, David Wheeler.

ABBREVIATIONS

Can – T Canton STLA; CV – T Cape Vincent JEFF; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg JEFF; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; HP – Holmes Pt T Morristown STLA; KC – Kelsey Creek T Watertown JEFF; KPSP – Kring Pt SP T Alexandria JEFF; Lou – T Louisville STLA; Mas – T Massena STLA; Mor – T Morristown STLA; PiPt – Pillar Pt T Brownville JEFF; PRGC – Partridge Run golf course T Canton STLA; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Pt Peninsula T Lyme JEFF; PtSa – Pt Salubrious JEFF; RMSP – Robert Moses SP T Massena STLA; SLR – St. Lawrence R; StPt – Stony Pt T Henderson JEFF; TMPt – Three Mile Pt T Chaumont JEFF; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton STLA; WATN – T Watertown JEFF; WH – Wilson Hill WMA; WS – Winthrop Swamp north of Winthrop Rt 420 Stockholm STLA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS — VULTURES

Snow Goose: 6 CV 20 Oct.

Canada Goose: 500-1000+ /day thru.

Brant: 54 ED 20 Oct.

Mute Swan: max 43 PRWMA 23 Nov.

Tundra Swan: 31 PtPen 15 Nov.

TRUMPETER SWAN: 2 ad with 6 yng on Chippewa Creek near Rt 58 bridge Mor 10-18 Oct, group first observed mid

Aug (EL, BL, photos!, NYSARC); 2 ad with 6 yng flying along SLR past HP Mor 11 Nov (BL).

Wood Duck: max 30 Can 1 Oct.

Gadwall: 4 WS 15 Oct.

Am. Black Duck: 3 ULLWMA 19 Sep; 4 ED 16 Oct; 4 WS 20 Nov.

Mallard: 50+ ULLWMA 20 Sep; 36 PtSa 4 Nov; 30 PiPt 9 Nov; 55 PtPen

15 Nov; 26 KPSP 23 Nov.
Blue-winged Teal: 2 1 Sep Mas.
N. Pintail: 4 PtSa 4 Nov.
Green-winged Teal: 8 ULLWMA 20 Sep.
Ring-necked Duck: 6 WS 15 Oct.
Greater Scaup: 2000 PiPt 9 Nov.
Long-tailed Duck: 3 PtPen 4 Nov, low.
Bufflehead: 122 PtPen 4 Nov; 62 PiPt 13 Nov.
Com. Goldeneye: 26 PtPen 15 Nov.
Hooded Merganser: 5 Mas 27 Oct; 10 WS 22 Nov; 1 m KC 5 Nov.
Com. Merganser: 42 PtSa 4 Oct; 8 Red Lake T Theresa JEFF 23 Nov.
Gray Partridge: 2 coveys (total 15 birds) Mas 12 Nov, present in this area for three years after absence of nearly 20 years, perhaps recently released.
Ring-necked Pheasant: T Henderson JEFF 24 Sep; 1 Mas 10 Oct.
Ruffed Grouse: 1 drumming ULLWMA 10 Oct.
Wild Turkey: 100 n JEFF 25 Sep thru.
Com. Loon: max 36 PtPen 4 Nov.
Pied-billed Grebe: 3 ad, 5 imm ULLWMA 20 Sept.
Horned Grebe: 2 PtPen 4 Nov; 2 PiPt 13 Nov; 2 TMPt 16-18 Nov (low).
Am. Bittern: 1 T Brasher Falls STLA 1 Sep; 2 ULLWMA 20 Sep.
Great Blue Heron: last 20 Nov.
Great Egret: T Dekalb STLA 13 Sep; 3 T Potsdam STLA 22 Sep; StPt early Oct; Mas 15 Oct.
Turkey Vulture: max 17 PtPen 5 Oct; 3 ED 20 Oct.

HAWKS—ALCIDS

Osprey: last Lou 15 Nov.
Bald Eagle: ad T Chaumont JEFF 7 Sep; 2 ad ULLWMA 20 Sep; ad KC 19 Oct; imm WH 1 Nov.
N. Harrier: 5-10/day n JEFF late Oct thru.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 6 reports of singles.
Cooper's Hawk: 1 near Can feeder several dates Sep and Oct; 1 WATN 19 Nov.
N. Goshawk: WATN 3 Nov.
Red-tailed Hawk: influx late Oct; 10-15/day late Oct thru.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr CV 29 Sep, early; 15-25/day n JEFF late Oct thru.
Golden Eagle: ad T of Lawrence STLA 19 Sep (MM), feeding on deer carcass.
Merlin: CV 29 Sep.
Black-bellied Plover: 13 ED 20 Oct; 1 PtSa 4 Nov.
Greater Yellowlegs: 2 Lou 11 Sep; 3 PtSa 4 Nov.
Lesser Yellowlegs: 1 PtSa 4 Nov.
Sanderling: 100 ED 16 Oct; 58 ED 3 Nov.
White-rumped Sandpiper: ED 16 Oct.
Purple Sandpiper: 1 ED 16 Oct (BW).
Dunlin: 100 ED 16 Oct; 288 ED 3 Nov; 19 PiPt 13 Nov.
Bonaparte's Gull: RMSP 11 Oct; 50 PtSa 4 Nov; 25 PiPt 13 Nov; 6 TMPt 26 Nov.
Caspian Tern: 2 CV 7 Sep.
Com. Tern: 4 RMSP 4 Sep.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS

E. Screech Owl: CV 14 Sep; Lou 18 Nov.
Snowy Owl: 2 RMSP late Nov.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Lou 11 Sep.
Whip-poor-will: T Brasher Falls STLA 17 Sep.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 2 CV 14 Sep.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: Lou 16 Oct - 20 Nov; KPSP 23 Nov.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 2 CV 7 Oct.
N. Flicker: 2 Mas 30 Nov.
Pileated Woodpecker: 2 T Brasher Falls STLA thru.

FLYCATCHERS—WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: 5 KC 11 Oct; 1 ED 20 Oct; Mas 27 Oct.
N. Shrike: arr 22 Oct Lou; 6 other reports.
Blue-headed Vireo: Lou 12 Oct.
Blue Jay: max 22 KC 24 Sep.
Com. Raven: 6 T Theresa JEFF 23 Nov; 2 Can 1 Oct.
Tree Swallow: 136 PtPen 5 Oct.
Tufted Titmouse: 3 CV feeder 20 Oct thru; 3 two loc Mas 23 Oct thru; 1 Lou 23 Oct thru; 2 KC feeder 2 Nov thru.
Brown Creeper: 2 Lou 15 Oct.
Carolina Wren: 1 T Lisbon STLA thru; 1 Can 7 Sep thru; 1 HP 2 Oct to 11 Nov.
House Wren: 1 ED 19 Oct.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: 10+ FD 23 Sep, with migrating warblers.
Hermit Thrush: Lou 12 Oct; KC 16 Oct.
Gray Catbird: last Lou 10 Oct.
N. Mockingbird: RMSP 10 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: CV 7 Oct; Lou 10 Oct.
Am. Pipit: CV 12 Oct; 35 ED 16 Oct; 25 T Madrid STLA 26 Oct.

WARBLERS

Nashville Warbler: 2 FD 23 Sep; Lou 27 Sep.
N. Parula: 5 FD 23 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: FD 23 Sep; 3 Lou 3 Oct.
Magnolia Warbler: FD 23 Sep.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: FD 23 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: 6 FD 23 Sep; Lou 12 Oct.
Blackburnian Warbler: Lou 17 Oct.
Pine Warbler: FD 23 Sep; Lou 26 Sep.
Palm Warbler: FD 16 Sep; 6 T Brownville JEFF 26 Sep; Lou 26 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: FD 23 Sep.
Black-and-white Warbler: FD 23 Sep.
Am. Redstart: Lou 24 Sep.
Ovenbird: FD 23 Sep.
N. Waterthrush: Lou 3 Sep.
Com. Yellowthroat: 8 Can 1 Oct.

TANAGERS—WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: Lou 3 Oct.
E. Towhee: 1 KC 18 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr KC 10 Oct, early; 15 PRGC 11 Nov.
Field Sparrow: 50+ FD Sep 28.
Savannah Sparrow: 25-75+/day FD Sep, early Oct.
Song Sparrow: large numbers moving FD late Sep, early Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: 40+ ULLWMA 10 Oct, including several singing.
White-throated Sparrow: 4 Lou 13 Sep; sev CV 7 Oct.
White-crowned Sparrow: 7 CV 29 Sep; 2 Lou 11 Oct.
Dark-eyed Junco: 20 PtPen 28 Sep.
Lapland Longspur: 1 ED 20 Oct; 1-3/day n JEFF early Nov thru.
Snow Bunting: 24 PRWMA 9 Nov.
N. Cardinal: 4 Can feeder thru.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: PRWMA 4 Nov; 2 HP 25 Nov, late.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 600+ ULLWMA 20 Sep.
E. Meadowlark: CV 11 Oct.
Rusty Blackbird: Can 1 Oct; 8 PRGC 16 Oct; 43 KC 8 Nov.
Com. Redpoll: 3 PRGC 30 Nov, only report.
Pine Siskin: arr 8 HP 4 October; 2 ULLWMA 10 Oct; common FD 10-20 Oct; 3 KC 18 Oct - 3 Nov, at feeder; 6 CV 7 Nov, at feeder.
Am. Goldfinch: 25-30/day at feeders Can Sep & early Oct, few afterward; 35 KC 5 Nov.
Evening Grosbeak: pr T Barnes Corners LEWI Oct.

ADDENDUM

The Kingbird 54 (3) **WHITE-EYED VIREO:** T Russel STLA 19 May (JB), at least third record for Region 6.