

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

Mike Morgante

59 Briar Hill Road, Orchard Park NY 14127

morgm@adelphia.net

It was the warmest June in 39 years. The average temperature was 71.8°F, 6.0° above average. Only 3.27" of rain fell, 0.55" below normal, much of which fell on the 9th and 10th. Following the persistent heat of June, July was the warmest in 50 years. The average temperature was 75.0°, 4.2° above normal. Rain was sparse, with 1.82" of precipitation, 1.32" below average. The hot weather continued in August, but there were finally some heavy rains. The average temperature was 72.8°, 3.7° above normal. There was 5.92" of precipitation, 2.05" more than usual. The remnants of Hurricane Katrina passed on 30-31 August and brought 3.0" of rain. Overall, it was the warmest summer on record in Buffalo. Weather data was excerpted from National Weather Service *Monthly Weather Summary* for Buffalo.

There were fewer summer reports of breeding birds due to the decreased coverage in the last year of Atlas 2000. However, birders didn't retire their binoculars for the summer season, as many observers tracked some rare breeding species and the shorebirding season was better than usual.

A pair of **Sedge Wrens** took up residence adjacent to a trail at Tillman WMA in Clarence. An apparently unmated male **Yellow-breasted Chat** was also present there. The combination of these very visible rare breeders, in addition to the regularly occurring Upland Sandpipers and Grasshopper Sparrows, brought many observers to this location in June. Sedge Wren was reported at three other locations, and there were four other reports of Yellow-breasted Chat, the highest number of summer reports for these species in many years.

Allegany State Park, with its high diversity of breeding songbirds, is another favorite place for birders to visit in summer. For the second year in a row, **Yellow-throated Warblers** were found nesting near the Administration Building in the Red House Section of the park. Sightings occurred throughout June, and two fledglings were observed with adults on 28 June. The park is the only place in the Region where **Northern Parulas** can regularly be found as breeders. Five were found there on 5 June, a good count for this rare breeder. Just outside of the park on the Allegheny Indian Reservation, a **Worm-eating Warbler** remained through June after first being observed in mid-May. The presence of a mate could not be determined.

Atlasing efforts turned up some other good warbler finds. During a block-busting trip to Royalton Ravine Park, Willie D'Anna and Bill Watson were shocked to hear a persistently singing **Louisiana Waterthrush**. While this species is locally common throughout the southern portion of the Region, it was without precedent in Niagara County in summer. Also in Niagara County, **Nashville Warbler** was found for the second consecutive summer though at a new location. These findings are indicative of the aging, successional growth in much of the county. Richard Rosche found a territorial male "**Lawrence's**" **Warbler** in the Town of Independence, Allegany County. This hybrid is still rare, especially for the location. **Pine Warblers** continue to increase as breeders

throughout the Region. and several observers commented that **Prairie Warblers** are increasing locally. **Prothonotary Warblers** continue to be found only at Tonawanda WMA.

The **Merlins** nesting on the west side of Buffalo were successful, as three young fledged on 14 July. The birds were very visible throughout the summer. Alec Humann indicated that their primary diet consisted of House Sparrows. This was the first documented nesting of this species in the Region. In July, Tim Baird reported the **second Merlin nest**. Ms. Connie Bierfelt found a down-covered bird on her backyard lawn in Salamanca that she thought was a kestrel. She took the bird to Dr. Seleen at the Jamestown Veterinary Hospital, who raised it. When the bird feathered out, it was identified as a Merlin. Baird was notified and visited the yard in late July where he found what he believed to be the female and one other fledged young. Ms. Bierfelt indicated that the birds nested in her yard last summer as well.

Peregrine Falcons were once again successful in nesting in downtown Buffalo. Four chicks fledged between 18 and 21 June. The falcons were very visible throughout downtown Buffalo this summer.

NYSDEC implemented a program to reduce the number of Double-crested Cormorants in the Niagara River area. Efforts in previous years were limited to nest reduction at Motor Island and Strawberry Island, in part to protect the other colonial waterbird nesting species. Bird reduction was part of this year's program, and staff shot several hundred cormorants in early June. It is notable that this summer's maximum of 681 was lower than the summer maxima from the last few years.

The nesting success of Common Terns at the Buffalo Harbor colony was decreased this year due to the heat. Temperatures of the break wall surface exceeded 100°F on the hottest days, and many of the larger chicks perished. Fledgling chicks were also lost at the small colony at the Tonawanda water intake on the Niagara River after the 4th of July fireworks were launched from a barge placed adjacent to the intake. The tern fledglings jumped in the water and drowned.

Shorebird habitat was better than usual at Oak Orchard WMA, Tonawanda WMA and Woodlawn Beach SP, resulting in many reports and some uncommon to rare species. Goose Pond, also known as Stafford Pond, at Oak Orchard WMA held the most shorebirds, with occasionally as many as 200 present. The highlight at this location was a **Wilson's Phalarope** on 20 August. A **Whimbrel** was unusual inland at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge on 28 August. A **Western Sandpiper** was documented on two occasions at Woodlawn Beach SP and a **Willet** was also observed there.

Increased numbers of shorebirds were found after passage of the Hurricane Katrina remnants. Good local counts of Sanderlings were made at Woodlawn and Dunkirk Harbor. Brett Ewald observed a number of shorebirds while lake watching at Lake Ontario, with the highlight of four **godwits**, unidentified to species because of the distance, but highly likely Hudsonian given the number, date and location. He also saw a **Parasitic Jaeger**, two unidentified jaegers and 17 **Black Terns** on 31 August.

There were some tardy spring passerine migrants that extended into June. Betsy Brooks saw a Blackpoll Warbler and two Bay-breasted Warblers, record late, on 11 June. A Yellow-breasted Chat in Wilson on 13 June was considered by the observers to be a late migrant. The first notable days of passerine migration in late summer were 17 and 19 August, when a good diversity of migrants was noted at several locations.

A group of **Dickeissels** was an unexpected find on remote, private property in Somerset on 20 June. At least five males and one female were conservatively counted, making it the second highest summer count in the Region. The males were singing nearly continuously throughout the morning. There was a modest increase in sightings to the west in Ohio and Michigan and also at least two sightings in Ontario, likely indicative of roaming prospective breeders rather than range expansion. Such extralimital occurrences are often associated with unfavorable environmental conditions (i.e. drought) in the primary breeding range.

Two **American White Pelicans** were observed flying southwest over the Lake Erie shoreline in Silver Creek during the evening of 20 June. The birds were not found despite searches along the shore in subsequent days. An **Eared Grebe** was found at Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant for the sixth consecutive summer. Other highlights for the season included: **Tundra Swan**, **Clay-colored Sparrow** and **Pine Siskin**.

CONTRIBUTORS

Connie Adams, Robert Andrle, Tim Baird, Connie Bierfelt, Elizabeth Brooks, Bruce Chilton, Melissa Coniglio, Willie D'Anna, Dean DiTommaso, Brett Ewald, Kurt Fox, Alec Humann, Paul Hess, Linda Holmes, Tim Horst, Dave Junkin, Brendan Klick, Jim Landau, Mike Morgante, Terry Mosher, Dave Neveu, Susan & Tom O'Donnell, Jim Pawlicki, Betsy Potter, Don Roberson, Richard Rosche, John Thill, William Watson, John Welte, Jordan Whitney (JWh), Peter Yoerg.

ABBREVIATIONS

AISP —Allegany SP CATT; BuSP — Buckhorn I SP ERIE; BWWTP — Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant GENE; DH — Dunkirk Harbor CHAU; INWR — Iroquois NWR GENE/ORLE; NF — Niagara Falls NIAG; NR — Niagara R; OOWMA — Oak Orchard WMA GENE; SPNS — Sinking Ponds NS, E Aurora ERIE; TBNP —Times Beach Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; Tift NP — Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; Tillman WMA —Tillman WMA ERIE; TWMA —Tonawanda WMA GENE/NIAG; WoBSP —Woodlawn Beach SP ERIE; WTSP —Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG.

WHISTLING-DUCKS — VULTURES

Mute Swan: n WTSP thru (BE), only one cygnet fledged this year.

Tundra Swan: Somerset NIAG 20 Jun (MM), very rare in summer, injured?

Am. Wigeon: Buffalo NR 12 Jun; Clarence ERIE 19 Jun; 4 OOWMA 23 Jul; only reports.

Blue-winged Teal: arr OOWMA 14 Aug.

N. Shoveler: 2 BWWT 4 Jun; max 5 BWWT 15 Aug.

N. Pintail: TWMA 20 Aug; max 23 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug; only reports.

Green-winged Teal: arr 9 BWWT 15 Aug.

Redhead: 4 TWMA 4 Jul, only report.

Lesser Scaup: 2 BWWT 4 Jun, only report.

Long-tailed Duck: DH 31 Jul (DD!), rare in summer.

Com. Merganser: 7 Sheridan CHAU 21 Jun (WW); BuSP 24 Jun (WW); max 18 NF 13 Aug (BK).

Red-breasted Merganser: 2 OOWMA 4 Jun (WW), late.

Ruddy Duck: 33, 72, 95 BWWT 4 Jun, 16 Jul, 15 Aug, fewer than last summer; TWMA 12 Aug (TO).

Com. Loon: 2 Wilson NIAG 4 Jun (WD, BP); Buffalo ERIE 11, 12 Jun (MM), unusual location for date; AISP 31 Jul (TB); Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE).

EARED GREBE: BWWT 15 Aug (WW!), 6th straight summer and nearly annual since mid 1990s at this location.

AM. WHITE PELICAN: 2 Silver Creek CHAU 20 Jun (JWh), observed flying southwest along L Erie shore, very rare in summer.

Double-crested Cormorant: 286 n NR various locations Jun (WW), NYSDEC implemented nest and bird reduction at Motor I and Strawberry I NR; max 681 BuSP 23 Aug (WW).

Am. Bittern: TWMA 14 Aug (STO), only report.

Least Bittern: INWR 16, 23 Jul (JP, WD), only reports.

Great Egret: Alfred ALLE 4 Jun (EB); 41 Motor I NR 19 Jul (WW), continued growth at nesting colony; max 47, 55 INWR 14, 19 Aug (BK, KF).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 3, 1 Wilson 9 Jun, 31 Jul; 2 TWMA 2 Jul; Lancaster ERIE 10 Jul; only reports away from NR.

HAWKS — ALCIDS

Osprey: Tillman WMA 10 Jun; BuSP 8 Jul; Grand I ERIE 3 Aug; SPNS 8-16 Aug; Amherst ERIE 24 Aug; only reports away from nesting areas.

Bald Eagle: ad SPNS 14 Jun (LH); im WoBSP 10 Jul; im Lackawanna ERIE 13 Jul; Hanover CHAU (TM); max 7 im, 8 im Sheridan CHAU 14, 31 Aug (DN); Bliss WYOM 28 Aug (DJ); reports away from nesting areas.

N. Goshawk: AISP 3 Jul (PH), only report.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Tift NP 25 Aug (JP, WW), unusual location.

Broad-winged Hawk: Wilson NIAG 5 Jun, late migrant; arr juv INWR 22 Aug, ph.

Merlin: 2 ad, 3 fl Buffalo ERIE thru (AH!), fledged 14 Jul; n, 2 ad Salamanca CATT 29 Jul (CB, TB!), 2nd nest located in Reg; 3 Buffalo ERIE 29 Jul, arrival at SUNY Buffalo roosting area.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 ad, 4 fl Buffalo ERIE thru, frequently seen near nesting area; NF 3 Jun; im OOWMA 20, 28 Aug (WD!, PY); Grand I ERIE 22 Aug (SO).

Com. Moorhen: 2 OOWMA 4 Jun; 9 TWMA 4 Jul; ad, 1 ad, 6 yg BWWT 16 Jul; traditional locations.

Am. Coot: 3 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 12 Jun, only report.

Black-bellied Plover: arr OOWMA 14 Aug; 9 Porter NIAG 31 Aug; max 26 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug.

Am. Golden-Plover: arr TWMA 27 Aug; max 13 Porter NIAG, 3 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: arr WoBSP 15 Jul; max 16 BWWT 15 Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr 2 OOWMA 16 Jul.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 2 TWMA 2 Jul; max 60 OOWMA 15 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr Little Valley CATT 9 Jul; max 10 OOWMA 20 Aug.
Willet: WoBSP 14 Aug (BK), rare.
Upland Sandpiper: INWR 4 Jun (JW); Colden ERIE 7 Jun (JL); 3, 4 Tillman WMA 12, 27 Jun (PY, JP), traditional location; Somerset NIAG 25 Jun (WD).
Whimbrel: INWR 28 Aug (SO), rare, unusual inland.
GODWIT sp: 4 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE), migrating over L Ontario.
Ruddy Turnstone: arr OOWMA 31 Jul; BWWTP 15 Aug; 2 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 20 Aug; max 16 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE), migrants over L Ontario.
Sanderling: arr DH 25 Jul; TWMA & OOWMA 14 Aug (STO), inland reports uncommon; 40 WoBSP (MM), 43 DH (DN), max 44 Wilson NIAG (BE) 31 Aug; high numbers tied to hurricane passage.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr INWR 17 Jul.
WESTERN SANDPIPER: juv WoBSP 14, 22 Aug (BK!, DD!), rare.
Least Sandpiper: arr TWMA 2 Jul; max 50 INWR 20 Aug; 31 Tift NP 25 Aug.
White-rumped Sandpiper: arr WoBSP 18 Aug; 4 Porter NIAG 31 Aug (WD, BP); only reports.
Baird's Sandpiper: arr OOWMA 14 Aug; 3 WoBSP 15-22 Aug; 3 OOWMA 27 Aug; 2 DH 28, 31 Aug; Wilson NIAG 31 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 18 OOWMA 7 Aug; 35 OOWMA 15 Aug; max 60 Porter NIAG 31 Aug (BE).
Stilt Sandpiper: arr TWMA 17 Jul; 1, 12 OOWMA 31 Jul, 15 Aug (WW).
Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 37 INWR complex 17 Jul (WD, DD).
Wilson's Snipe: max 6 OOWMA 14 Aug.
Wilson's Phalarope: OOWMA 20 Aug

(BP), uncommon.

Parasitic Jaeger: Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE), few reported in summer.

jaeger sp.: 2 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE), rarely reported in summer.

Bonaparte's Gull: DH 21 Jun (WW), unusual for date; 2 BWWTP 15 Aug; max 225 WoBSP 31 Aug.

Caspian Tern: Buffalo NR 12 Jun; TBNP 25 Jun; 2 TWMA 17 Jul; max 14 DH 31 Jul, many reports in late Jul and Aug.

Com. Tern: nesting success decreased due to warm weather, *intro*; 151 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE).

Forster's Tern: 2, 3 WoBSP 18, 27 Aug (DD, MM); 2 DH 29 Aug (DN); only reports.

Black Tern: 10 INWR 4 Jun; 15 TWMA 4 Jul (PY); max 17 Wilson NIAG 31 Aug (BE), good count for L Ontario migrants.

PIGEONS — WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 5 INWR 6 Jun; 5 NIAG 11 Jun; 5 E Youngstown BBS 12 Jun (WD); excellent showing; increasing in NIAG.

Com. Nighthawk: Buffalo ERIE 14 Jul (JT), records are now scarce from former(?) breeding area; arr 1, max 10 Amherst ERIE 12, 28 Aug; 6 other reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 2 TBNP thru; W Seneca ERIE 19 Jun; Silver Creek CHAU 10 Aug thru; Hamburg ERIE 16 Aug; Brant ERIE 20 Aug; only reports.

FLYCATCHERS — WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: last Cherry Creek CHAU 5 Jun (JP, TH).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last Tift NP 3 Jun (WW); arr Amherst ERIE 19 Aug (JP).

Acadian Flycatcher: Carlton Hill MUA WYOM 16 Jul; SPNS 8 Aug (LH), singing, migrant?; 5 other reports.

Least Flycatcher: arr Wilson NIAG 17 Aug.

Yellow-throated Vireo: Eden ERIE 7 Jun (RA), good atlas find; 2 ad + 5 yg Tillman WMA 27 Jun (JP).

Philadelphia Vireo: arr WTSP 24 Aug; GI 31 Aug.

Com. Raven: 8 Bliss WYOM 28 Aug (DJ); only report away from ALLE, CATT.

Cliff Swallow: continues to increase along NR and Buffalo waterfront.

Carolina Wren: 9 reports.

Winter Wren: 2 Sardinia ERIE 4 Jun; Villenova CHAU 11 Jun; Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 18 Jun; only reports away from ALLE, CATT.

SEDGE WREN: 2 Somerset NIAG 20 Jun (MM!); 2 Tillman WMA Jun (m.ob.); INWR 20 Jul (BC!); BuSP 21 Jul (BC!); very good showing.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 2, 1 Royalton NIAG 17, 29 Jun (JP), few breeding locations in NIAG.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: arr Wilson NIAG 17 Aug.

Swainson's Thrush: last Wilson NIAG 4 Jun; AISP 7 Jul (PH).

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: arr Tift NP 25 Aug.

Golden-winged Warbler: OOWMA 4, 11 Jun (JW); Pendleton NIAG 11 Jun (BP, WD); only reports.

"Brewster's" Warbler: Wilson NIAG 19 Aug, migrant, only report.

"Lawrence's" Warbler: m Independence ALLE 8 Jul (RR), rare.

Tennessee Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 19 Aug.

Nashville Warbler: Andover ALLE 10, 20 Jun (EB); Pendleton NIAG 11 Jun (BP, WD); 2 AISP 3-8 Jul (PH); TWMA 8 Aug (RR); arr Wilson NIAG 17 Aug.

N. Parula: 5 AISP 5 Jun (PY), good count for rare breeder.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 19 Aug.

Magnolia Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 19 Aug.

Cape May Warbler: arr 1, 3 Wilson NIAG 17, 19 Aug (BP).

Black-throated Blue Warbler: last Wilson NIAG 2 Jun; Cherry Creek CHAU 5 Jun; arr 2 WTSP 24 Aug.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 17 Aug.

Blackburnian Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 19 Aug.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: 2 ad, 2 yg AISP 28 Jun (JP! TB), same area as last summer's nest.

Pine Warbler: 2 Sardinia ERIE 4 Jun (MM); 2 Sheridan CHAU 12 Jun (DN); Chestnut Ridge P ERIE 18 Jun (MM); Palmer Pond SF ALLE 11 Aug (WW, JP); 2 Orchard Park ERIE 28 Aug (MM!); increasing.

Prairie Warbler: Cherry Creek CHAU 5 Jun (JP!, TH); 6 Eagle WYOM 10 Jun (MM!); only reports outside ALLE, CATT; increasing.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Ward ALLE 5 Jun; last 2 Alfred ALLE 11 Jun (EB), very late; arr Wilson NIAG 19 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: Wilson NIAG 6 Jun; last Alfred ALLE 11 Jun (EB), late; arr Wilson NIAG 17 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: no reports away from INWR or southern CATT.

Black-and-white Warbler: Alfred ALLE 7, 11 Jun; Almond ALLE 4 Jul; 2 Salamanca CATT 18 Jul; arr AmSP 16 Aug.

Prothonotary Warbler: 1-4 TWMA Jun (m.ob.), regular recent breeding location; TWMA 6 Aug (RR).

WORM-EATING WARBLER: Allegheny Indian Reservation CATT Jun (TB, PY!), very rare in summer, in area of previous occurrences.

N. Waterthrush: arr SPNS 8 Aug.

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH: Royalton NIAG 5, 17 Jun (WW), unprecedented in summer in NIAG.

Wilson's Warbler: arr Amherst ERIE
19 Aug.

Canada Warbler: arr Amherst ERIE
19 Aug.

Yellow-breasted Chat: Wilson NIAG 2,
13 Jun (BP), late migrants?; Eagle
WYOM 10 Jun (MM); Tillman WMA 12-
26 Jun (m.ob.); Somerset NIAG 20 Jun
(MM); good showing.

TANAGERS — WEAVERS

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 3
Andover CATT 1 Jun -24 Jul (EB);
Wilson NIAG 2-22 Jun (WD), male sus-
pected nesting with female Chipping; 2, 5
Yorkshire CATT 4 Jun, 10 Jul (MM!,
PY!); previously documented locations;
Alfred ALLE 7 Jun (EB).

Vesper Sparrow: Andover ALLE 2 Jun;
Cambria NIAG 2 Jul; Barre ORLE 2 Jul;
2 Ashford CATT 10 Jul; only reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 6 Tillman
WMA 27 Jun (WW); 2 Andover ALLE 9

Jun; Royalton NIAG 5 Jun; Eagle
WYOM 10 Jun; Pendleton NIAG 11 Jun;
3 Somerset NIAG 20 Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: 5, 3 Lancaster
ERIE 26 Jul, 7 Aug (CA, MM),
only location and fewer here than
previous years.

Dark-eyed Junco: arr Wilson NIAG
28 Aug (WD, BP), very early.

DICKCISSEL: 6 Somerset NIAG
20 Jun (MM!), at least 5 males and 1
female, possibly more, very rare,
unprecedented in NIAG in summer.

Bobolink: max 200 OOWMA 14 Aug
(STO).

Orchard Oriole: Porter NIAG 12 Jun; 2
Somerset NIAG 20 Jun; Wilson NIAG
20 Jun-13 Aug; continued good showing
in NIAG.

Red Crossbill: Ward ALLE 10 Jul
(EB), only report.

Pine Siskin: Eden ERIE 14-18 Jun
(RA!), unusual in summer.