

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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Weather for the summer season switched from the cool wet season of 2004 to a record setting hot dry season for 2005. The Binghamton Weather Service recorded 23 June days of above average temperatures, producing a record average of 69.4°F, 1.2° warmer than the old record and 5.5° above normal. Measurable rainfall occurred on 11 days, totaling 2.96", 0.84" below normal. July had an average temperature of 71.7°, 3.0° above normal. Precipitation was 1.81", 1.68" below normal. A measurable amount was recorded on 11 of the days but only five of those had over 0.1". August continued with much the same for both temperature and precipitation. The average monthly temperature was 71.9°, 5.3° above normal. Precipitation was 4.84", 1.49" above normal. At first glance it would seem that rainfall for the month was adequate but 3.16", one-third of the season total, occurred on the last two days of the month. If those two days had the same as 21 other days of the month, with no measurable amount, then the month would have been only 0.2" from being the fifth driest one on record. A seasonal record was broken for the most days in a row having a maximum temperature above 80° with 20. However, closer examination shows it was part of a run of 39 days that included one day of 77°, another of 78°, and all the others 80° or over. Summarizing the weather: a mild drought was declared in midsummer, the

season was second overall for average maximum temperature and the season set records for both highest average temperature and highest average minimum temperature.

The weather should not have caused problems for nesting although there may have been some effect on food sources. Some of the berry crops appeared to be plentiful but at many locations on drier soil types they shriveled to dry masses of seeds. Surprisingly the wild grape, crabapple and black cherry crops were good, providing a feast to Cedar Waxwings, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and other frugivores. Although it is only beneficial to a few birds, such as Wild Turkey and Blue Jay, the acorn crop was heavier than most years. Matt Young reported that conifer cones were scarce except white spruce and red pine.

There were several reports of late nesting activity. On 10 August, a flock of 25-30 Wild Turkey was observed in the Town of Owego, Tioga County. There were three distinct age groups of poults. One group was close to the size of the hens, another was about half grown and the other was quite small, indicating hatching no longer than a couple of weeks prior. Since weather was probably not the problem, predation of early nests could be suspected. With the marked increase in the coyote population, ground nesters must be having greater difficulty. On 17 August, an American Robin nest was observed in the Town of Tioga, Tioga County with only one hatchling that was close to fledging. With the dry conditions, it must have been difficult finding enough food to raise the hatchling, possibly being the reason why there was only one. John Birkett reported on 22 August that Eastern Kingbirds were still feeding their young in Bainbridge, Chenango County. On 27 August, a flock of 12 Eastern Bluebirds was observed in the Town of Tioga. Several of them were doing the wing fluttering begging of fledglings, having only left the nest box within the previous two weeks.

Species doing well included Common Mergansers. Tom Salo found them breeding in early June on a pond that generally would be considered unsuitable habitat. He speculated that the dramatic increase in range documented by the Breeding Bird Atlas meant that the good habitat was occupied and they had to use more marginal water bodies. Many reporters commented on the high numbers of Yellow-billed and Black-billed cuckoos. Suggestions were made that it may have to do with localized infestations of forest caterpillars.

Some observers reported that they were noticing a lack of certain species including Eastern Towhee, while others reported that the numbers appeared to be normal. Tom Salo commented that he found a number of them in a timber stand recently thinned for improvement. His comments would lead one to speculate that the reason for some having Eastern Towhees and others not may be due to natural habitat changes as the secondary growth of the forest matures. Tom also found a significant increase in Mourning and Black-throated Blue warblers in those same areas. On the same BBS Route in Delaware County on which he found no Eastern Towhees, where they were once abundant, Bob Donnelly found 19 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. He commented, "In the 1970s, there were none; in the

'80s and early '90s the route averaged less than one per year." As the habitat changes to the detriment of one species it opens up new habitat for others.

Cutler and Jeannette Baldwin, Town of Owego, Tioga County, had a pair of Chimney Swifts nest in their old silo, fledging two young. This is the 53rd consecutive year that swifts have used the silo, but the 10-12 pairs of former years have been reduced to one for the last three years. They also reported that a pair of Bald Eagles frequented a small lake near their home for about two weeks in August. The eagles were fishing and feeding the two immatures with them.

For the third year, Merlins have been found nesting in the Region. Matt Young reported a pair and an immature in Cortland, Cortland County.

A comment should be made about Julie and Matt Young's "annual family day" to Pharsalia Important Bird Area. The numbers that they saw for some species (noted in the species accounts) were not only the high for the Region but were much higher than reported anywhere in the Region for the last two years. The area is also the only one reporting Swainson's Thrushes and Red Crossbills. It is worth a visit for anyone in the area.

Three species were reported during the season for the first time in three years. Tom Salo found Pied-billed Grebe in a wetland at a state forest off Taylor Valley Road in Cortland County. He reported other waterfowl there and said it should be a good area for Wilson's Snipe and Sora. Andy Mason found Ring-necked Ducks in early June and a Wilson's Snipe in late July, both in Delaware County. Andy also found a Clay-colored Sparrow, which had not been reported for two years. Another Clay-colored Sparrow was found in Tioga County by Anne Cook and Lois Bingley.

Species not reported, probably due to the dry conditions, include many migrant shorebirds that were found in previous years. Other species found in the last two years but not reported this year include Great Horned Owl, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler and Pine Siskin. Another one almost missed was Great Egret. A single individual was found on the next to last day of the reporting period. A total of 146 species was reported, which is down from the 162 reported in both of the last two years.

CONTRIBUTORS

Betty & Nick Andrews, Cutler & Jeannette Baldwin, Lois Bingley, John Birkett, Earl Callahan, Eleanor Carson, Anne Cook, Bob Donnelly, Jim Hoteling, Spencer Hunt, Gail Kirch (Vestal Banding Station), Diane & Tim Krein, Sharon Krotzer, Bill Kuk, Andy Mason, Evelun & George Mead, Naturalist's Club of Broome County, Bob Pantle, Sandy Perry, Marie Petuh, Katie Ray, Tom Salo, Charlie Scheim, Rose Smith, Tioga Bird Club, Dan Watkins, Don & Joanne Weber, Jon Weeks, Anne Whitaker, Don Windsor, Colleen Wolpert, Rick Youket, Julie & Matt Young.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ba — Bainbridge CHEN; Bing — Binghamton BROO; BPd — Boland Pond BROO; CR — Chenango Ri; GP — Grippen P BROO; Ha — Harpersfield DELA; Hi — Hillcrest BROO; Ow — Owego TIOG; PIBA — Pharsalia Important Bird Area CHEN; SR — Susquehanna Ri; Ta—Taylor CORT; TB—T Burlington OTSE; TC —T Candor TIOG; TT —T Tioga TIOG; UL — Upper Lisle BROO; VBS— Vestal Banding Station BROO; Ve—Vestal BROO.

WHISTLING-DUCKS — VULTURES

Wood Duck: 4 reports; several broods CR CHEN 4 Jun.
Ring-necked Duck: 2 ad Ha 9 Jun, only report, late.
Hooded Merganser: 1 brood CR CHEN 4 Jun, only report.
Com. Merganser: max 22 SR OTSE (mob).
Wild Turkey: 3 ad, 20-30 imm T Owego TIOG 10 Aug; reported by mob western half of Reg.
Pied-billed Grebe: Ta 29 Jun (TS), only report.
Double-crested Cormorant: Hi 10 Jul, only report.
Am. Bittern: BBS DELA 5 Jun, only report.
Great Egret: Sherburne CHEN 30 Aug, only report.
Green Heron: max 3 Ve 15 Jun.

HAWKS — ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: FY 2 ad, 2 imm Ow mid-Aug, few reports.
N. Harrier: Ha 10 Jul; only 2 reports.
N. Goshawk: 2 imm banded Heiberg Forest CORT 6 Jun (MY); 2 ad, 1 imm T Butternuts OTSE (TS); 2 other reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 4 reports; down from previous year.
Am. Kestrel: 2 reports; numbers down.
MERLIN: 2 ad, 1 imm Cortland Jul thruAug (MY).
Peregrine Falcon: Bing 24 Jun, only report.
Virginia Rail: Ta 29 Jun; BPd 5 Jun, 17 Aug; only reports.
Greater Yellowlegs: Sidney Center

DELA 31 Jul; GP 24 Aug; only reports.

Lesser Yellowlegs: GP 24 Aug, only report.

Solitary Sandpiper: 4 reports; CR BROO 23 Jul; Masonville DELA 10 Aug.

Baird's Sandpiper: SR BROO 17 Aug (NCBC), only report.

Wilson's Snipe: Middletown DELA 22 Jul (AM), only report.

Am. Woodcock: TIOG Jun; T Smyrna CHEN 6 Aug; only reports.

Bonaparte's Gull: CR BROO 21 Jul, only report.

PIGEONS — WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: max 11 BBS DELA 5 Jun, doing well.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: max 3 BBS OTSE 9 Jun, doing well.

Barred Owl: Oxford CHEN 15 Jun, only report.

Com. Nighthawk: Bing 30 Jun; 5 Oneonta OTSE 16 Aug; only 2 other reports, scarce.

Chimney Swift: 2ad, 2 imm T Ow Jun; max 5 Triangle BROO 25 Jun.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 19 BBS DELA 5 Jun; 10 other reports; numbers appear to be up.

FLYCATCHERS — WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 3 banded VBS Aug; 1 other report.

Willow Flycatcher: max 9 BBS OTSE 9 Jun; 5 VBS Aug.

Least Flycatcher: max 12 BBS OTSE 9 Jun; 2 VBS Aug.

E. Kingbird: max 9 BBS OTSE 9 Jun; FY Ba 22 Aug.

Red-eyed Vireo: 79 banded VBS Aug.
Fish Crow: max 6 Chenango Valley SP
BROO 4 Aug; 3 other reports; numbers
increasing.

Horned Lark: TC thru Jun (DW), heard
in field known to have nesting.

Tree Swallow: max 300 SR TIOG
24 Aug.

Bank Swallow: max 18 T Triangle
BROO 25 Jun; few reports; numbers
down.

Cliff Swallow: CO T Ow thru Jun; CO
Glen Aubrey BROO thru Jun; CO T
Kirkwood BROO Jun.

Winter Wren: max 11 PIBA 4 Jul.

Marsh Wren: Boland Pd 29 Jun, 3 Jul;
only report.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 21
PIBA 4 Jul; only 2 reports.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: max 6 UL
24 Jul; few reports.

E. Bluebird: FY TT 27 Aug.

Veery: 11 BBS OTSE 9 Jun; max 18
PIBA 4 Jul.

Swainson's Thrush: 3 PIBA 4 Jul,
only report.

Hermit Thrush: max 10 PIBA 4 Jul.

Am. Robin: FY TT 17 Aug (mob).

Gray Catbird: 49 BBS OTSE 9 Jun;
35 banded VBS Aug; many reports,
doing well.

Cedar Waxwing: max 26 BBS OTSE 9
Jun; 25+ PIBA 4 Jul.

WARBLERS

Nashville Warbler: 4 PIBA 4 Jul,
only report.

Yellow Warbler: max 85 BBS OTSE
9 Jun.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: 30 BBS OTSE
9 Jun; max 32 PIBA 4 Jul.

Magnolia Warbler: max 21 PIBA 4 Jul.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: 3-4 m TB
Jun; max 7 PIBA 4 Jul.

Black-throated Green Warbler: max 29
PIBA 4 Jul.

Blackburnian Warbler: max 28 PIBA
4 Jul.

Pine Warbler: Roundtop Pk BROO 30
Jun, only report.

Prairie Warbler: Glen Aubrey BROO 1
Jun; Ha 1 Jul; only reports.

Black-and-white Warbler: max 3 BBS
OTSE 9 Jun; 3 other reports.

Am. Redstart: max 20 BBS OTSE 9 Jun.

Ovenbird: max 36 PIBA 4 Jul; 34 banded
VBS Aug.

N. Waterthrush: Ve 20 Jul; TIOG no
date; 1 banded VBS 15 Aug; only reports.

Louisiana Waterthrush: 3 BBS OTSE 9
Jun, only report.

Mourning Warbler: TB Jun; max 8
PIBA 4 Jul; 3 other reports DELA.

Com. Yellowthroat: 81 BBS OTSE 9
Jun; 34 PIBA 4 Jul; 16 banded VBS Aug.

Canada Warbler: FY Ba 26 Jun; max 4
PIBA 4 Jul.

TANAGERS — WEAVERS

E. Towhee: max 12 PIBA 4 Jul.

Clay-colored Sparrow: Ha 24 Jun, 1 Jul
(AM); Smithboro TIOG 28 Jun (LB, AC).

Vesper Sparrow: CR CHEN 4 Jun; Ve
19 Aug; only reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: Long Pd SF
CHEN 19 Jun, only report.

Henslow's Sparrow: TC 5 Jul (BP),
uncommon.

White-throated Sparrow: max 59 PIBA
4 Jul.

Bobolink: max 14 BBS OTSE 9 Jun; few
reports, numbers seem down.

E. Meadowlark: max 3 BBS OTSE 9
Jun; 2 other reports; numbers seem down.

RED CROSSBILL: CO 19 ad & imm 30
Jul, FY 13 Aug PIBA nesting activity
centered around white spruce (MY).

CORRIGENDUM

The cited reporter in the following
entry in Vol. 55 No. 3 was erroneous.
The correct name is Dan Watkins.

THAYER'S GULL: Binghamton
14 Mar (DWindsor). [No details.
NYSARC review required.]