

REGION 6 – ST. LAWRENCE

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Summer in northern New York was warm and wet. Mean daily temperatures were 5°F above normal in June and 3° above normal in July and August, and the temperature topped 80° on most days between 1 June and mid-August. The season was dry early — Watertown received just two-thirds of normal precipitation for the month — but both July and August were wetter than normal. Watertown had measurable rainfall on 14 days in July, adding up to 4.2" or 70% above normal. The high August rainfall total of 6.5", more than twice normal precipitation, came largely from the remains of Hurricane Katrina, which dropped around 4" of rain on the Region on 31 August. More rain fell on this one day than the Region usually receives for the entire month.

Boreal species were reported in good numbers, primarily thanks to last-minute work to finish the Breeding Bird Atlas. At the beginning of the year, 33 atlas blocks in Region 6 had not been visited, mostly in the Adirondacks and on the Tug Hill. So several block-busters were hired to clean up. As a result of this work, Black-backed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, Gray Jay, Palm Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow were reported in higher than usual numbers. Most of these species, Gray Jay and Palm Warbler excepted, were found in good numbers on the Tug Hill as well as the Adirondacks, and the only **American Three-toed Woodpecker** report came from the Tug Hill. No Spruce Grouse were reported in the Region by atlas workers this year despite coverage of several historic nesting locations.

At least two grassland bird research and monitoring projects resulted in the reporting of unusually high numbers of grassland birds. Sarah Lazazerro, a graduate student at SUNY-Brockport, found numerous Upland Sandpipers, Grasshopper and Henslow's sparrows and other grassland nesting birds during the course of her Henslow's Sparrow research and provided excellent details on her sightings. Mike Morgan at Audubon New York also provided information from his grassland bird work in St. Lawrence County. The high numbers of Upland Sandpiper and Henslow's Sparrow reflect better coverage and do not indicate increasing numbers of birds; most observers reported that both of these species were generally hard to find in 2005. Sedge Wren, on the other hand, was unusually common for the second consecutive year, especially on Fort Drum. Like last year, many Sedge Wrens were on territory by 1 June instead of arriving during late in June or July, as is often the case.

Among the most intriguing observations of the season were five sightings of an adult Golden Eagle from the Fort Drum area, where one adult was observed in May as well. This makes the third year out of the last four in which adult Golden Eagles have been seen on or near the Army installation during the late spring or

summer. No evidence of nesting has been observed since Mickey Scilingo and others saw what they believed to be courtship behavior by two adults on a field trip to Fort Drum during 2002. In fact, the numbers of sightings have been lower than one would expect if eagles are nesting on the installation. Perhaps these eagles are wandering non-breeders or birds that are attempting to nest elsewhere and only occasionally wander into the Fort Drum area.

The biggest surprise of the season was a **Whooping Crane** that a local farmer reported to Chris Reidy. Chris confirmed the identification and was able to read the color band combination, which he reported to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This crane is part of a reintroduced population being established in Wisconsin (breeding) and Florida (wintering). This particular individual began wandering during the northward migration and was observed in Ontario and Vermont before being spotted in Lewis County. The crane flew off shortly after Chris saw it and had not been relocated by the end of the summer.

Trumpeter Swan, another reintroduced species, this time in Ontario, has clearly become established as a breeder in Region 6. Trumpeters have nested at Perch River WMA for more than 10 consecutive years, and Bob and Ellie Long observed a pair with young on Chippewa Creek in St. Lawrence County for the second year in a row. Bob learned from locals that the swans at the Chippewa Creek site have been present for several years.

Excluding the Whooping Crane, I received reports of 188 species for the season. Highlights included an adult male **Orchard Oriole** that Chris Reidy found in Rutland during late May and relocated in June. Other highlights included a **Willet** at El Dorado shores, multiple summer sightings of an adult Golden Eagle on and near Fort Drum, American Three-toed Woodpecker on the Tug Hill, high numbers of Black-billed and Yellow-billed cuckoos and Sedge Wrens, and breeding Palm Warblers in multiple locations. Shorebirds were generally reported to move through in disappointing numbers, although I only received a single report that actually listed species and numbers.

CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Badger, Jeff Bolsinger, Dick & Marion Brouse, Pat Burdick, Carol Cady, Sheila Cerwonka, Joan Collins, Julie Covey, Michael Greenwald, Lee Harper, Sarah Lazazzero, Nick Leone, Jerry & Judi LeTendre, Mike Manske, Irene Mazzochi, Mike Morgan, Chris Reidy, Mike Sheard, Gerry Smith, Eve Sweatman, Bob & June Walker, David Wheeler.

ABBREVIATIONS

CB — Chaumont Barrens Preserve; CV — Cape Vincent JEFF; ED — El Dorado Shores Preserve T Ellisburg JEFF; FD — Fort Drum Military Reservation; KC — Kelsey Creek T Watertown JEFF; LGI — Little Galloo Island; Lou — T Louisville STLA; PRWMA — Perch River WMA; RMSP — Robert Moses SP T Massena STLA; SLR — St. Lawrence Ri; ULLWMA — Upper and Lower Lakes WMA T Canton STLA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS — VULTURES

Trumpeter Swan: 2 ad with 4y FL PRWMA 16 Aug; 2 ad with 8y FL Chippewa Creek STLA, breeding confirmed at this site for second consecutive year.

Com. Merganser: max 30 Lou 28 Aug.

Wild Turkey: 3-5 broods per day late Aug central JEFF & sw STLA.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 25 PRWMA 16 Jul.

Double-crested Cormorant: 3453 nests E L Ontario islands JEFF; 387 nests NY side SLR.

Am. Bittern: more than 30 reports.

Least Bittern: Hounsfield JEFF 22 Jun; several ULLWMA mid-Jun.

Great Egret: 1-5 per day Stockholm last two weeks Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 4-7 seen nightly flying between PRWMA and Black River Bay thru; 5 Lyme JEFF 22 Jul.

HAWKS—ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: at least 4 imm Long Sault Islands SLR 18 Jun; most reports of ad near known nest sites, but multiple reports from Clifton STLA and FD where no nests known.

N. Harrier: >25 reports mostly JEFF & STLA, including 2 from Adirondack bogs.

Cooper's Hawk: 2 FL Canton, in same woodlot pair successfully nested previous 2 years.

N. Goshawk: CO in 3 blocks Tug Hill.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 3 FD Jun, low.

Rough-legged Hawk: light-phase imm FD 1 Jun, late.

GOLDEN EAGLE: ad reported 5 times FD and vicinity mid Jun-mid Jul (JB).

Am. Kestrel: 200 ne STLA where 112 nest boxes established; local population increasing.

Merlin: pr upset adults Colton 17 Jul; nest Piercefield Jun.

Peregrine Falcon: KC 8 Aug.

WHOOPIING CRANE: color-banded bird from Florida reintroduction Watson 12 Aug (CR), report to NYSARC.

Black-bellied Plover: 3 ED 17 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: ED 17 Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: 2 ED 17 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: 16 ED 17 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: Clare 12 Aug.

WILLET: ED 13 Aug (DW).

Upland Sandpiper: 23 total JEFF; max 5 T Orleans 9 Jun; 2 FL Orleans 30 Jun.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 20 ED 17 Aug.

Least Sandpiper: 25 ED 17 Aug.

Baird's Sandpiper: ED 13 Aug.

Ring-billed Gull: 50,000-60,000 nests LGI; 1500 nests Murphy 1 SLR.

Great Black-backed Gull: ad on 3 eggs Whaleback 1 SLR 12 Jul, 2nd SLR nesting record.

Caspian Tern: 1788 nests LGI, population increasing.

Com. Tern: 725 nests at 22 sites SLR.

Black Tern: new nest location approx 0.5 mile n of ULLWMA; only other reports from vicinity of known colonies at PRWMA and ULLWMA.

PIGEONS — WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: 2-6 per day FD; similar numbers elsewhere.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 1-3 per day FD (max 5); similar numbers throughout.

E. Screech-Owl: Lou 1 Jun.

Long-eared Owl: 2 Lafargeville Jul.

Com. Nighthawk: 2-5 per day FD; no other Jun or Jul reports; max 22 Dekalb 22 Aug.

Whip-poor-will: singles calling 2 sites Gouverneur, Pierrepont, CB; 1-5 per day FD, only site where more than single birds reported.

Red-headed Woodpecker: at least 5 ad CV thru; 2 pr FD thru.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Brasher Falls 2 Aug.

AM. THREE-TOED WOODPECKER: Tug Hill 10 Jul (GS).

Black-backed Woodpecker: in 4 atlas blocks Adirondacks & Tug Hill.

FLYCATCHERS—WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: in 17 atlas blocks Adirondacks & Tug Hill.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: in 13 atlas blocks Adirondack & Tug Hill.

Philadelphia Vireo: in 11 atlas blocks Adirondack & Tug Hill; ad with FL Pitcairn 12 Aug.

Gray Jay: in 6 atlas blocks Adirondacks.

Horned Lark: max 7 FD 15 Aug.

Purple Martin: first summer without nesting in Henderson martin house in 17 years; last CV 16 Aug, earlier than recent years.

Cliff Swallow: 140 nests on intake structure Massena 18 Jun; many 100s of nests RMPD.

Boreal Chickadee: in 1 atlas block Tug Hill.

Tufted Titmouse: 2 T Clayton JEFF thru; Lou and Massena 1 Jun.

Carolina Wren: different locations Canton 14 Jun, 20 Jul.

Sedge Wren: 43 singing m JEFF & STLA, including 21 on FD, many heard repeatedly thru Jun and Jul, high.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: in 5 atlas blocks Tug Hill.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: 1 STLA.

N. Mockingbird: Macomb STLA 11 Jun; Massena 10 Jul.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: 22 singing m FD Jun; m feeding y Brasher Falls 6 Jul.

Golden-winged Warbler: 40 singing m FD Jun; last Potsdam 13 Aug.

Tennessee Warbler: last FD 3 Jun; possible nesting Clare & Piercefield.

N. Parula: m feeding y in nest Piercefield 29 Jul.

Prairie Warbler: singing m Stockholm 5 Jun, in pine plantation; Clayton 22 Jun.

Palm Warbler: Horseshoe Bog, Massawepie Mire, 2 bogs along Rt. 56 n of Sevey Corners.

Cerulean Warbler: 3 T Dekalb 30 Jun; 2 singing m FD 8 Jun.

Canada Warbler: 91 singing m FD Jun, only a small percentage of potential habitat surveyed.

TANAGERS—WEAVERS

Clay-colored Sparrow: Clayton 22 Jun; Brownville thru late Jul; CB 10 Jun; 16 singing m FD Jun and Jul, including FL 29 Jun.

Vesper Sparrow: Stockholm 5 Jun; Hopkinton 5 Jun; 5-12 per day FD Jun; numerous flocks of 5-15 FD late Aug.

Savannah Sparrow: singing m in bog habitat Massawepie Mire & in large bog along Rt. 56 n of Sevey Corners.

Grasshopper Sparrow: 84 singing m throughout JEFF; 2 STLA.

Henslow's Sparrow: 23 m JEFF; at least 9 Dog Hill Rd Orleans; 5 FD; only concentrations.

Lincoln's Sparrow: several reports numerous individuals in bog habitat Piercefield, Clare, Colton; 3 Tug Hill.

Bobolink: max 236 in two fields Lyme 26 Jul.

ORCHARD ORIOLE: ad m Rutland May-4 Jun (CR).

Red Crossbill: Piercefield 4 Jul.

Pine Siskin: FD 3 Jun.

