

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Summer 2005 was hot and humid and the heat began early. June at Albany experienced eight days with 90+°F temperatures and ended the month 6.5° warmer than average. Rain occurred in heavy drenchers, some severe, causing portions of I-87 in Warren County to wash away in mid-June. July and August continued with high humidity, above average temperatures and a few periods of heavy showers. The season maintained a tropical humidity that most of the unfeathered sort found very unpleasant.

Northern Bobwhites were found this summer in Albany County at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, causing a very short debate about whether the birds are freely reproducing. Our Region has more than a century's worth of reported bobwhites, but, as Bob Budliger pointed out on a local listserve, our Region's historic record in many cases erroneously lists bobwhites as wild. It is unclear how far back in the record one must travel before trusting reports of wild bobwhites, but certainly those observed in the last few decades represent

releases from hunting clubs or random "deposits" from suburban farmers who believe that a nature center is a fine new home for unwanted birds.

A few truly wild birds that created some excitement this summer were the several reports of Upland Sandpiper, including Larry Alden's report of nine birds in Root, Montgomery County. Fort Edward in Washington County and a few scattered farms in Saratoga County typically send in two or three sightings each summer, but there were many sightings this year from previously unreported locations. Sadly, the once locally-famous Cocksackie flats in Greene County, having been nibbled away by development projects, can no longer be considered an annual breeding site for these sandpipers. Most of the increased number of reports stems from last-minute atlas work in the eastern Mohawk Valley. Reports of multiple individuals in Schoharie County were also new and noteworthy. Much of the habitat for these birds consists of privately-owned farmland and fallow lots, which may be even more vulnerable than the birds that reside on them.

The headline news of the season also involved productive and previously unstudied hayfields in the northwestern part of the Region. Peter Dougherty, a farmer who deliberately delays mowing to allow grassland birds a chance to nest, discovered and photographed a colony of **Dickcissels** that successfully fledged four nestlings on his property. This undisturbed enclave also attracted three **Sedge Wrens**, that also fledged a brood. Special thanks to Jane Graves for following up on these reports and including these records in the NYS Atlas. As many birders drove to the area to observe the Dickcissels, good numbers of Grasshopper Sparrows and a previously unknown colony of **Henslow's Sparrows** were discovered. Like the breeding locales of Upland Sandpiper, these lands are entirely unprotected and highly vulnerable to development and other disturbances.

Bob Yunick had some interesting summer encounters with Red Crossbills. He reported hearing a single bird on 22 August calling a very rapid "gyp-gyp-gyp-gyp," apparently dissimilar to the calls of the *minor* and *neogaea* subspecies. Any summer crossbill is news for Region 8, but an unusual subspecies would be very interesting indeed. Bob spotted four more on 26 August and reported "they flitted about, but I could not get my binoculars on them." Some later looks suggested a rather large-billed *neogaea*. We wish him good luck on this most difficult task of passerine parsing.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Gerry Colborn, Bill Cook, Peter Dougherty, Kate Dunham, Mark Fitzsimmons, Elizabeth Grace, Jane Graves, Rich Guthrie, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Bill Lee, Andrew Mason, Joyce Miller, Gail & Rich Nord, Barbara Putnam, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

AUS — T Austerlitz COLU; BCM — Black Creek Marsh WMA ALBA; CHA — T Chatham COLU; COH — New St T Cohoes ALBA; CP — Cherry Plains SP RENS; FtE — T Fort Edward WASH; GP — Geoffroy's Pd T Claverack COLU; HR — Hudson Ri; JL — Jenny L SARA; MR — Mohawk Ri; NBA — T New Baltimore GREE; VF — Vischer Ferry NHP SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS — VULTURES

Canada Goose: imm Rensselaerville RENS 15 Jul, caught by bobcat.
Gadwall: 2 BCM 9 Jun; CHA 5 Aug.
Blue-winged Teal: BCM 13 Aug; 6 VF 20 Aug; AUS 21 Aug.
Green-winged Teal: 2 VF 20 Aug.
Hooded Merganser: Box Board Pd CHA 10 Jun, fledglings.
Com. Merganser: CHA 28 Jun, uncommon COLU in summer.
Ring-necked Pheasant: Jefferson SCHO 5 Jun.
Com. Loon: 3 L George WARR 24 Jul; 3 ad JL 26 Jun, no evidence of breeding.
Pied-billed Grebe: GP 29 Aug; 3-4 scattered reports.
Am. Bittern: Schoharie SCHO 30 Jun; BCM 13 Aug.
Great Egret: East Greenbush RENS 23 Jul; 3 COH 31 Jul-11 Aug; 5 VF 13 Aug; 7 Niskayuna SCHE 18 Aug.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: NBA 12 Aug; Livingston COLU 23 Aug; GP 28 Aug.
Black Vulture: Livingston COLU 24 Aug, only report.

HAWKS — ALCIDS

N. Goshawk: AUS 11 Jul.
Red-shouldered Hawk: Blenheim SCHO 13 Jul, confirmed nesting.
Broad-winged Hawk: Efner L SCHE 19 Jun; NBA 10 Jul, carrying a snake.
Am. Kestrel: max 7 Root MONT 4 Jun.
Peregrine Falcon: NBA 2 Jun, feeding fledglings.
Virginia Rail: 3 BCM 9 Jun; 2 Copake COLU 26 Jun; Canajoharie SCHO 30 Jun; BCM 13 Aug.

Sora: VF 4 Jun; Lions Pk MR 24 Jul.
Com. Moorhen: 4 BCM 9 Jun.
Black-bellied Plover: COH 20 Aug.
Semipalmated Plover: 2 COH 13 Aug.
Greater Yellowlegs: GP 18 Aug, max 12 COH 21 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: COH 31 Jul; max 10 COH 11 Aug; GP 21 Aug.
Upland Sandpiper: FtE 4-17 Jun; Rural Grove MONT 4 Jun; max 9 Root MONT 19 Jun (LA); 3 Ames MONT 23 Jun; 3 Canajoharie SCHO 30 Jun.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 4 COH 31 Jul; GP Aug thru.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 5 COH 11-20 Aug; GP 12 Aug.
Short-billed Dowitcher: 2 Rensselaerville RENS 9 Jul (GC).
Least Sandpiper: 7 COH 31 Jul; 15 VF 20 Aug.
Bonaparte's Gull: 3 NBA 12 Aug; Cocksackie GREE 20 Aug.
Great Black-backed Gull: Clermont COLU 19 Jun; L George WARR 21 Jun; HR NBA 12 Aug.

PIGEONS — WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: numerous Region-wide, successful breeding year.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: somewhat less numerous than black-billed Region-wide, successful breeding year.
Com. Nighthawk: Albany 21 Jun-21 Jul; max 9 BCM 15 Aug; CHA 20 Aug.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Plateau Mt GREE 19 Jun, only report.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Deer Mt GREE 1 Jun; Schodack Town Hall RENS 20 Aug.

SEDGE WREN: 3 SHA 18 May-10 Aug, confirmed nesting.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Hunter Mt GREE 12 Jun; CP 25 Jun.

Bicknell's Thrush: max 6 Hunter Mt GREE 12 Jun; Plateau Mt GREEN 19 Jun.

Swainson's Thrush: max 8 Hunter Mt GREE 12 Jun; Blenheim SCHO 13 Jul; AUS 28 Aug.

WARBLERS

Nashville Warbler: FULT 14 Jun; Rensselaerville RENS 14 Jun; CP 25 Jun.
N. Parula: CP 25 Jun; Five Rivers ALBA 13 Jul.

Yellow Warbler: last VF 18 Aug.

Pine Warbler: Saratoga Springs 25 Jun; 3 Tomhannock Res RENS 2 Jul; AUS 24 Jul.

Blackpoll Warbler: Conesville SCOH 2 Jun; FULT 8 Jun.

Worm-eating Warbler: CHA 20 Aug.

Mourning Warbler: Palenville GREE 2 Jun; CON 6 Jun; banded JL 15 Aug (RY).