

REGION 5 - ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The season was warm and wet, very wet. Syracuse had its highest recorded rainfall for July, Utica had 8.66 inches of rain in June, and Old Forge had 8 inches of rain over three days in June. At the Syracuse Airport the average temperature in June was 67.2° F, 1.3° above normal, with 5.09 inches of rain, 1.38 inches above normal. In July the average temperature was 74.1°, 3.2° above normal, with 10.12" of rain, 6.1" above normal. It was the wettest July on record. The average temperature for August was 69.2°, the same as the long-term average, with 3.22" of rain, 0.34" below normal.

There was lack of waterfowl variety over the summer. American Wigeon was the only unexpected species. There were no reports of lingering Brant or the odd summering Snow Goose and no divers other than mergansers. Two Snowy Egrets spent a week at a relatively quiet pond behind a shopping plaza. Great Egrets were widespread across the Erie Canal corridor and sightings at Hamilton and Stillwater Reservoir were at higher elevations. Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen late in the season at Stillwater Reservoir and Utica Marsh but may have been post-breeding wanderers. There is no firm evidence that the species breeds in the Region.

Gary Lee reported that many Common Loon nests were lost in Herkimer County after heavy June rains. At Dart Lake a floating nest with three feet of slack attached to a 60 pound block moved a thousand feet to the outlet. It was noted after heavy June rainfall that Utica Marsh looked more like a reservoir, and high water in many wetlands must have covered nests. Some species renested as several family groups of Common Moorhens were seen in Utica Marsh late in August. A Sandhill Crane was photographed in Oneida County, a first summer record for a species we hope will expand into the area as a breeder. There is one record of an unidentified crane flying over Camillus in the summer of 1980.

High water from all of the rain closed portions of the Erie Canal for long periods of the summer, and no water needed to be drawn from Delta Lake to

maintain canal levels. As a result, there was no shorebird habitat at the lake and few herons, egrets, and waterfowl feeding there. With the lack of habitat, shorebird numbers were generally low although most species were reported and there was one high count of Semipalmated Sandpipers. American Golden-Plover had arrived by the end of the season, Buff-breasted Sandpiper had not, and there was no fall arrival for Black-bellied Plovers during the season. Good sightings included two small flocks of Whimbrel, two Wilson's Phalaropes, Ruddy Turnstone, White-rumped and Baird's sandpipers, and Stilt Sandpiper.

The Region experienced a widespread forest tent caterpillar infestation this year. Both Perry and Purcell felt that singing birds were present in about the usual numbers in affected areas, but it would seem that the defoliation must have had a negative effect on breeding success. Yellow-billed Cuckoo certainly took advantage of the caterpillars as they were found on the Tug Hill Plateau and into the Adirondacks, where seven were recorded on the McKeever BBS route. By way of comparison, they had never been found on that route through 2004.

A mid-June report of a Snowy Owl near Onondaga Lake was checked, and the result was the Region's first summer record for the species. The owl, thought to be a young male, appeared to be healthy and was capable of flying and feeding itself. Southbound Common Nighthawk numbers were up somewhat this year, but all of the reports received for this species were of migrants. There are no known breeding nighthawks in the Region. The only Whip-poor-will report came from an historic site that is seldom visited at night.

A late Olive-sided Flycatcher was moving through in mid-June, and two southbound birds were noted in August. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Philadelphia Vireo were both seen by the end of the season. Warbler migration was off to a good start, with small flocks moving during the last ten days of August. Prothonotary Warbler continues to nest at Toad Harbor, and Cerulean Warbler was found at a new location in Hannibal. Pine Warbler may well be nearing peak numbers as pine plantations mature. On the McKeever BBS route, Pine Warbler was first observed in 1992 and in 2006 a total of 17 were found. There was a single report of Golden-winged Warbler on territory.

A male Dickcissel was at the Oswego County Airport in Fulton on June 17, and a female was found on the 23rd. The male was seen feeding the female on July 4, but only the female was seen afterwards. Breeding was never confirmed, but the pair were the first Dickcissels reported in the Region during the breeding season since 1937. Eastern Meadowlark is a species of concern, and both Garcia and Herrgesell noted declines in areas they recently covered for the Breeding Bird Atlas.

Matt Young found Red Crossbills in the highest elevations of Onondaga and Madison Counties, with breeding occurring in at least one area of the latter county. With the good cone crop, as noted below, there are hopes for a large winter finch invasion for this winter, but with similar conditions throughout the Northeast U.S. and into Canada, the birds might not get this far south.

The cone crop was abundant for white and red spruce, Norway spruce, balsam fir, hemlock, red pine, and larch. Most white pines had no cones. Deciduous trees with a good seed crop included ash, beech, birch, black cherry,

black gum, hickory, ironwood, and maple. Alder, common elderberry, and common buckthorn all had good production. Oaks had a mostly fair to moderate production.

For the season 197 species were reported. Highlights included Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Sandhill Crane, Whimbrel, White-rumped Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, Snowy Owl, Dickcissel, and Red Crossbill. Species missed included Red Knot, Little Gull, Red-headed Woodpecker, and, in what has become a worn refrain, Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrow were not found.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CM - Clay Marsh; DH - Derby Hill; HIWMA - Howland Island WMA; HVWMA - Happy Valley WMA; OneiL - Oneida Lake; OnonL - Onondaga Lake; SCH - T Schroepfel; SHF - Sky High Sod Farms, T Sullivan; SFNS - Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; Skan - Skaneateles; SPd - Sandy Pond; SVB - Sylvan & Verona Beach; Syr - Syracuse; TRWMA - Three Rivers WMA; UM - Utica Marsh; WM - West Monroe.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Am. Wigeon: 2 Skan 8 Aug.

Am. Black Duck: 4 SCH 4 Jun.

Blue-winged Teal: 4 TRWMA 6 Jul.

Green-winged Teal: 4 Lenox 22 Jul; 8 SPd 22 Aug.

Hooded Merganser: 2 Skan 13 Aug.

Com. Merganser: 3 Salmon R Res 7 Jul.

Red-breasted Merganser: 1-2 LOL to 8 Jun.

Com. Loon: HERK nests inundated by heavy rains.

Double-crested Cormorant: Woodull L 13-15 Jul.

Least Bittern: reports from SCH 6 Jul & UM in Aug.

Great Egret: max 7 Jordan 26 Aug; Stillwater Res 22 Aug, unusual; widespread along Erie Canal corridor.

Snowy Egret: 2 Oneida 29-31 Jul (DL, mob).

Green Heron: max 15 CM 7 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: imm Stillwater Res 28 Aug (TS); ad UM 30 Aug (JK).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Merlin: nesting Old Forge, Big Moose, and Stillwater Res, areas frequented by birders; Camillus 20 Aug; SCH 26 Aug.

Peregrine Falcon: 3 y Syr fledged 17 Jun.

Sora: TRWMA 29 Jul; 5 UM 30 Aug.
Com. Moorhen: ad & 3 fl TRWMA 6 Jul; 8 juv UM 23 Aug.
Sandhill Crane: Paris 30 Jul (fide JH, ph), first summer record.
Black-bellied Plover: 2 OnonL 3 Jun, only report.
Am. Golden-Plover: arr 2 SHF 26 Aug.
Semipalmated Plover: max 8 SPd 22 Jul.
Killdeer: max 150 Hannibal 23 Aug.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 6 OneiL 21 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 21 WM 27 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: max 4 Skan 10 Aug & 4 Granby 19 Aug.
Spotted Sandpiper: max 27 OnonL 6 Jul.
Upland Sandpiper: 6 Sullivan 22 Jun; 6 Remsen 25 Jun; 5 Fulton 20 Aug.
Whimbrel: 9 DH 2 Aug (GS); 3 DH 20 Aug (BP, DW).
Ruddy Turnstone: SPd 22 Jul & OneiL 29 Jul.
Sanderling: max 22 SPd 22 Jul.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 3 OnonL 3 Jun; max 380 SPd 22 Jul.
Least Sandpiper: max 25 SPd 14 Jul.
White-rumped Sandpiper: 2 OnonL 3 Jun; arr Lenox 3 Aug.
Baird's Sandpiper: 3 SHF 26 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: 2 OneiL 29 Jul; 4 Lenox 3 Aug.
Stilt Sandpiper: SPd 22 Jul & 22 Aug; Lenox 23, 30 Jul.
Short-billed Dowitcher: SPd 14 Jul; max 4 SPd 22 Jul.
Wilson's Phalarope: Lenox 5 Jul (BB) and 3 Aug (GC).
Bonaparte's Gull: max 210 SVB 20 Aug.
Caspian Tern: max 75 SPd 22 Jul.
Com. Tern: max 170 SVB 10 Jun.
Black Tern: max 23 SPd 27 Jul.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: 3-5 per day.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: max 7 McKeever BBS 25 Jun; widespread, 2-3 per day.
SNOWY OWL: OnonL 14-28 Jun (MV, ph, mob), first summer record.

Com. Nighthawk: max 57 Syr 24 Aug; total 139 Syr 19-31 Aug, numbers up over preceding 3 yrs; 11 at four other sites after 17 Aug.
Whip-poor-will: 3 Rome Sand Plains 6 Jul.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: last TRWMA 12 Jun; arr WM 23 Aug; TRWMA 26 Aug.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: DH 4 Jun; arr Hastings 26 Aug.
Acadian Flycatcher: HIWMA 2 Jun; 2 Whiskey Hollow thru Jul.
Willow Flycatcher: max 13 CM 5 Jun.
E. Kingbird: max 18 SPd 22 Jul.
Philadelphia Vireo: arr Hastings 30 Aug.
Fish Crow: Syr University area 21 Jul.
Horned Lark: max 25 SHF 15 Jul.
Purple Martin: max 42 Cicero 20 Aug, postbreeding.
Tree Swallow: max 250 Lenox 18 Aug.
Bank Swallow: max 1000 SHF 15 Jul.
Cliff Swallow: nesting Phoenix 3 Jun; 30 Hannibal 23 Aug.
Barn Swallow: max 300 Skan 8 Jun.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr SFNS 17 Aug, early.

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: m SFNS thru 20 Jun.
Tennessee Warbler: arr SFNS 26 Aug; 2 Hastings 31 Aug.
Nashville Warbler: SFNS 12 Jun, late; arr SFNS 17 Aug.
N. Parula: 3 McKeever BBS 25 Jun; Redfield 20 Jun.
Yellow Warbler: max 85 SPd 22 Jul.
Magnolia Warbler: arr Hastings 23 Aug, max 4 per day after.
Cape May Warbler: arr SVB 20 Aug, early; Hastings 31 Aug.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: 18 McKeever BBS 25 Jun; arr SFNS 26 Aug; 12 UM 29 Aug, early for large numbers.
Black-throated Green Warbler: arr Hastings 26 Aug.
Blackburnian Warbler: arr SFNS 24 Aug.

Pine Warbler: 17 McKeever BBS

25 Jun, excellent count.

Prairie Warbler: Hannibal 17 Jun; pair
Tully 13 Jul.

Palm Warbler: arr UM 25 Aug, early.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr SFNS
21 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: max 2 per day to
7 Jun.

Cerulean Warbler: Hannibal 17 Jun,
new location.

Prothonotary Warbler: breeding Toad
Harbor swamp.

Wilson's Warbler: 1-2 per day several
sites after 23 Aug.

Canada Warbler: 1 per day after
20 Aug.

TANAGER - WEAVER

Scarlet Tanager: max 8 SVB 20 Aug.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 5 m Fulton
26 Jun.

DICKCISSEL: m Fulton 17 Jun - 5 Jul,
and female after 22 Jun.

E. Meadowlark: decline in several areas
since 2000.

Baltimore Oriole: max 16 SVB
20 Aug.

Orchard Oriole: max 3-4 Cato thru Jun;
SFNS 21 Jul, 14 Aug.

Red Crossbill: max 10 Georgetown
4-6 Aug, including several fl; Morgan
Hill SF 10 Aug; Pollack Swamp
31 Aug.