

REGION 6 - ST. LAWRENCE

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Weather data for Watertown indicate near average summer temperatures and below average precipitation, although the seasonal rainfall total is somewhat misleading. Mean temperatures were within 1° of normal for June and August and 2° above normal for July. Watertown received 4.5 inches of precipitation in June, which is 1.7 inches above normal, but rainfall totals for July (1.1 inches) and August (1.2 inches) were well below the historic means of 2.5 and 2.9 inches, respectively. Total precipitation for the season was consequently 1.4 inches below normal. Overall, Region 6 did not have the unusually warm and wet summer experienced by much of the state.

The higher than average rainfall in June led to widespread minor flooding that several observers believed responsible for low numbers of fledglings in June and early July, especially of ground-nesting birds. Suspected nest losses were especially noted for waterfowl and grouse; for instance, I saw only two Ruffed Grouse broods on Fort Drum during the entire month of June, well below the 1-2 broods per day I usually encounter late in the month. Similarly, few loon or duck broods were reported before mid-July, suggesting that early nesting attempts failed.

Type E botulism reached eastern Lake Ontario with disastrous results. A team of NYSDEC biologists led by Ward Stone monitored the effects of this outbreak at Little Galloo Island throughout the summer. Caspian Terns were especially hard hit, with more than 700 carcasses collected by the end

of August and additional sick individuals seen on and near the island. All four pairs of Great Black-backed Gulls nesting on the island died from botulism, and numerous sick and dead Double-crested Cormorants and Ring-billed Gulls were present, with small numbers of several other species affected as well. By summer's end DEC personnel were preparing to monitor mortality to migrant and wintering loons and other water birds.

During the late spring DEC personnel drained Stone Mills Pond at Perch River Wildlife Management Area, creating a large expanse of wet mud that attracted numerous birds until it eventually dried out and became overgrown with smartweed. As many as 42 Black-crowned Night-Herons and 5 Great Egrets foraged on these mudflats during June, and on 12 July I found an adult **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** here. Modest numbers of Lesser Yellowlegs and Least Sandpipers gathered here in July, but no large concentrations of shorebirds were noted. Other waders of note included up to 50 Great Egrets on a pond in Canton during much of August.

At least three and possibly four immature Rough-legged Hawks found on Fort Drum during June and early July appeared to be moving through, as each individual was not relocated after the original observations. More surprising were two **Snowy Owls** that appeared on Point Peninsula in July; one was picked up in poor health and taken to a wildlife rehabilitator shortly after Edgar Walker, a local resident, spotted the owls. This owl responded well to treatment, and the other continued to be seen on Point Peninsula in good condition through the remainder of the season. Other raptor highlights included a Peregrine Falcon at Perch River on 19 June, many Merlin reports from throughout the Region, and a Short-eared Owl fledgling in early August, representing the first documented nesting in Region 6 since 2001.

As in most recent years, shorebird reports were few and unimpressive. One possible exception was the report of "many shorebirds" seen by the DEC team monitoring Little Galloo Island, but unfortunately this report did not include numbers or species. Otherwise, most of the reports I received were of small groups of shorebirds at interior ponds with low water levels. Several observers noted high water levels and few birds at El Dorado Shores Preserve and other Lake Ontario sites.

Several nightjar survey routes were run in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties as part of a Regional effort to evaluate and monitor these nocturnal birds. The 27 Whip-poor-wills detected on one Fort Drum route represented the highest number recorded on any route in New York State. Numerous Whip-poor-wills were also present in parts of St. Lawrence County, but the 15 Common Nighthawks detected on one Fort Drum route far exceeded nighthawk numbers found anywhere else. Also on Fort Drum and in much of the surrounding area, the tent caterpillar outbreak of recent years appears to have diminished, and cuckoos were generally less conspicuous than during 2004 and 2005, although Yellow-billed Cuckoos continued to be reported in greater numbers than during most non-outbreak years.

Grassland birds were reported in generally low numbers. Upland Sandpiper has become quite scarce in recent years, and this summer I received only 4 reports. As is often the case, Sedge Wrens were present in small numbers

during early June, but increased modestly later in the month and in July; of the six reports I received, all but one were of multiple singing males (2-5). Most Henslow's Sparrows also arrived late, with apparently new arrivals showing up well into June; this species was reported in slightly higher numbers than in 2005, but still well below the numbers found in the 1990s.

Notable late spring migrant passerines included an Olive-sided Flycatcher on Fort Drum 8 June. Although spring migration generally seemed rather protracted, Blackpoll Warblers moved through more quickly than is often the case, and the last Blackpoll was reported on 3 June. I observed numerous warblers migrating south on Fort Drum during the last week of August, including a Cape May Warbler on 28 August and the first southbound Blackpoll Warbler on 29 August. Also on 29 August, Jerry and Judi LeTendre spotted the first Western Palm Warbler of the season in Cape Vincent.

For the season I received reports of 194 species. Highlights not mentioned previously include excellent numbers of Common Terns nesting on the St. Lawrence River (thanks largely to the work of Lee Harper), a Hooded Warbler in Mannsville, 35 singing male Clay-colored Sparrows on Fort Drum, territorial Orchard Orioles on Fort Drum and nearby Rutland, and Rusty Blackbirds and Red Crossbills in the Adirondacks. Most notable by their absence are several boreal species (Spruce Grouse and Black-backed Woodpecker) and migrant shorebirds that were formerly reported annually (White-rumped and Stilt Sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitcher, etc.). Despite these misses, I was encouraged by an increase in the number of observers reporting birds, especially from several birders visiting from other regions of the state. To these people I am especially grateful.

CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Badger, Jeff Bolsinger, Dick & Marion Brouse, Carol Cady, Bernie Carr, Joan Collins, Jeff Corser, Chris Dobony, Ken Feustel, Lee Harper, Nick Leone, Jerry & Judi LeTendre, Irene Mazzocchi, David Prosser, Chris Reidy, Mandi Roggie, Mickey Scilingo, Catherine Sheard, Gerry Smith, Eve Sweatman, Edgar Walker, MaryBeth Warburton, David Wheeler, Tom and Eileen Wheeler.

ABBREVIATIONS

CV - Cape Vincent JEFF; CB - Chaumont Barrens Preserve; ED - El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg JEFF; FD - Fort Drum Military Reservation; KC - Kelsey Creek T Watertown JEFF; LG - Little Galloo Island; PRWMA - Perch River WMA; SLR - St. Lawrence River; ULLWMA - Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton STLA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Canada Goose: max 145 ULLWMA 26 Aug.
Trumpeter Swan: pair with 7 y PRWMA 19 Jun.
Wood Duck: max 115 PRWMA 28 Jul.
Am. Black Duck: max 6 ULLWMA 19 Aug.
Mallard: max 150 ULLWMA 19 Aug.
Blue-winged Teal: max 100 PRWMA 22 Aug.
N. Pintail: ED 17 Aug; 2 ULLWMA 26 Aug.
Green-winged Teal: max 32 ULLWMA 19 Aug.
Ring-necked Duck: max 116 ULLWMA 18 Aug, including 6 broods.
Lesser Scaup: 2 PRWMA 22 Aug.
Hooded Merganser: max 16 FD 15 Aug.
Ruffed Grouse: very few broods reported.
Com. Loon: max 10 ad in group and nearby f on nest ULLWMA 5 Jul.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 53 ULLWMA 19 Aug.
Double-crested Cormorant: numerous dead and sick birds LGI Jul and Aug.
Am. Bittern: max 5 Fish Creek WMA 2 Jun.
Least Bittern: Beaver Meadows Marsh Watertown 3 Jun; ULLWMA 4 Jul.
Great Blue Heron: 31 nests Clarkson U. Potsdam 14 Jun.
Great Egret: PRWMA early-mid Jun; 4-50 per day in Canton pond 15-30 Aug (CS), high.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: 35-42 Stone Mills Pond PRWMA Jun through early Jul.
YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON: ad PRWMA 12 Jul (JB, DB, DP; NYSARC), third Regional report.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 6 active nests.
N. Harrier: 2-8 per day FD Jun and Jul; 2 juv PRWMA 28 Jul.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 10 reports from Canton, Parishville, and FD.
Cooper's Hawk: 8 reports from Potsdam, Canton, and FD.

N. Goshawk: Wanakena early Jul.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 4 FD Jun, low; Jadwin SF 18 Jul.
Rough-legged Hawk: 2 light imm FD 2 Jun (JB); 1 dark imm FD 15 Jun (JB); 1 light imm FD 7 Jul (KF).
Am. Kestrel: up to 50 per day N JEFF late Aug.
Merlin: FD 27 Jun; nest Wanakena early Jul; Jadwin SF 18 Jul; Cranberry Lake 16 Aug; Watertown 17 Aug; PtPen 18 Aug.
Peregrine Falcon: PRWMA 19 Jun (MS).
Virginia Rail: max 27 on 13 survey points Fish Creek WMA 15 Jun.
Sora: max 7 ULLWMA 25 Aug.
Com. Moorhen: max 18 PRWMA 28 Jul.
Black-bellied Plover: PRWMA 28 Jul; 4 PtPen 18 Aug.
Semipalmated Plover: 5 Denmark 5 Jul; 2-4 per day ULLWMA 22-28 Jul.
Greater Yellowlegs: 2 PRWMA 18 Jul; ULLWMA 19 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: 12 PRWMA 18 Jul; 11 PtPen 18 Aug; 15 ULLWMA 28 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: 2-6 per day 2-30 Aug JEFF and STLA; max 7 ULLWMA 26 Aug.
Upland Sandpiper: Evans Mills 5 Jun; CV 7 Jun; Rutland 4 Jun; max 4 FD 27 Jul.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 1-4 per day ULLWMA 19-30 Aug.
Least Sandpiper: max 45 PRWMA 19 Jul; 3-12 per day ULLWMA 18-30 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: ULLWMA 22 Aug.
Wilson's Snipe: max 24 ULLWMA 26 Aug.
Ring-billed Gull: 1100 nests Murphy I SLR; numerous sick and dead at LGI colony.
Great Black-backed Gull: all 4 pr LGI found dead during botulism mortality surveys.
Caspian Tern: 717 carcasses collected LGI by end Aug; additional sick birds observed.

Com. Tern: 733 nests on NYS side SLR, highest total since 1982, with 761 chicks banded; 6 nests Carl I eastern L Ontario; 2-8 per day ULLWMA Jun and Jul where marsh nesting suspected.
Black Tern: CV 14 Jun; 24 ULLWMA 5 Jul; 35 PRWMA 18 Jul.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: 2-5 per day FD Jun.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 8 FD Jun, fewer than previous 3 yrs; 4 Little John WMA 16 Jun; 2 Parishville 25 Jun.

SNOWY OWL: 2 PtPen 10 Jul, injured bird picked up PtPen 12 Jul and taken to rehabilitator (EW), second continued through Aug 31 (mob).

Short-eared Owl: ad Philadelphia 26 Jul (JB); juv within 1 mile 3 Aug (MBW).

N. Saw-whet Owl: FD 13 Jun.

Com. Nighthawk: nesting: max 12-15 calling and booming FD 23 Jun; migrants: 15 FD 14 Aug; 6 Potsdam 21 Aug; 30+ West Carthage 28 Aug; 17 FD 29 Aug.

Whip-poor-will: 27 on 4-mile survey route FD; 15 on Hermon route.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 5 pr FD Jun and Jul, y observed Jul; 6 pr CV thru, y not seen until late Aug; 1 KC 18 Jun.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: many reports W JEFF; at Dekalb and Gouverneur feeders.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: migrant FD 8 Jun; 5 reports singing m Clifton, Colton, and Piercefield.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Colton 12 and 16 Jul; other reports from Clifton and Piercefield.

Philadelphia Vireo: territorial m Piercefield 11, 30 Jun; migrant FD 31 Aug.

Gray Jay: 4 Colton 12 Jul.

Purple Martin: 35 Canton 29 Jul.

Boreal Chickadee: 4 incl y Colton 12 Jul.

Tufted Titmouse: most reports from W JEFF; also Philadelphia, Massena.

Carolina Wren: Watertown 30 Jul.

Sedge Wren: 3 Fish Creek WMA 2 Jun (NL); 3 Lakeview WMA 4 Jul (NL); 2 Denmark 5 Jul (NL); 5 Bacon Rd Philadelphia 3 Aug (JB); 2 m FD Jun increased to 9 by mid Jul (JB); Potsdam mid-July through mid-Aug (JC).

Marsh Wren: 18 Jadwin SF Jul.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: 2 m FD 22 Jun; KC 13 Aug.

N. Mockingbird: CV 7 Jun; 2 FD 22 Jun.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: max 4 m FD 15 Jun.

Golden-winged Warbler: max 5 m FD 5 Jun and 14 Jun; outnumbered Blue-winged Warblers on FD by approximately 2 to 1.

"Brewster's" Warbler: 3 m FD Jun, including m FY 29 Jun; PRWMA 6 Jul.

Nashville Warbler: numerous migrants FD 27, 28 Aug.

N. Parula: many reports Clifton, Colton, Fine, and Piercefield.

Cape May Warbler: imm f FD 28 Aug.

Pine Warbler: ad FY FD 31 Aug (late).

Prairie Warbler: 5 m in 3 loc FD Jun, low; 3 CB 5 Jun.

Palm Warbler: CV 29 Aug; FD 31 Aug, western form.

Blackpoll Warbler: last Morristown 3 Jun; arr FD 29 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: Brookside Cemetery Watertown 13 Jun; 2 m FD 15 Jun.

Hooded Warbler: Mannsville 4 Jun (CR).

Canada Warbler: 124 m counted FD during Jun; max 18 FD 20 Jun.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Clay-colored Sparrow: 35 territorial m FD Jun and Jul; ad FY Chaumont 14 Jun (ES); Ellisburg 4 Jul (NL).

Vesper Sparrow: 10-20 per day FD Jun through Aug; reports of 1-2 Ellisburg, CB, Parishville, and Rutland.

Grasshopper Sparrow: 20 FD Jun and July; 12 Ellisburg 4 Jul; FY FD 14 Aug.

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Henslow's Sparrow: 9 FD Jun and early July (JB); Bacon Road, Philadelphia 3 Aug (JB).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Piercefield 11 Jun; Colton 6 Jul.

Bobolink: max 300+ Philadelphia 17 Aug, numerous migrants overhead 15 - 31 Aug.

Rusty Blackbird: 2 Five Ponds Wilderness early Jul.

Orchard Oriole: 2 m Rutland 4 Jun; ad m FD 11 Jun (JB).

Red Crossbill: FD 22 Jun (JB); 3 Low's Ridge-Upper Dam trail Piercefield and Colton 30 Jun (JC and field trip participants).

Evening Grosbeak: 2 FD 6/28; ad with y Wanakena early Jul.