

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

Mike Morgante

59 Briar Hill Road, Orchard Park, NY 14127
morgm@roadrunner.com

The first half of June was pleasant and warm while the second half of the month was very cool and wet. The average temperature was 67.9°F, 2.1° above average. A total of 4.91" of rain fell, 1.09" above normal. July held mostly fine summer weather although there were more thunderstorms than usual. The average temperature was 71.4°, 0.6° above normal. Rainfall at the Buffalo airport was 2.80", 0.34" below average. However, twice as much fell in some of Buffalo's northern and eastern suburbs. August was cooler and wetter than normal. The average temperature was 68.5°, 0.6° below normal. There was 5.33" of rain, 1.46" above average. Weather data was excerpted from National Weather Service Monthly Weather Summary for Buffalo.

Spring migration continued into early June, as usual. There were several more impressive counts of Semipalmated Sandpipers following the unusually large numbers that were found in late May. A late Willet at Oak Orchard WMA on 3 June was only the second Regional report for June. Common Nighthawks arrived late in May this year and several migrants continued into early June. June migrant warblers included Blackpoll, Wilson's, and Mourning, and flycatchers included Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided.

Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup lingered at several locations. Batavia WWTP hosted its usual summer contingent of Ruddy Ducks, with no signs of breeding as usual. A wing-tagged Trumpeter Swan continued from May throughout the summer at Clay Pond WMA. It was determined to be a 2006 hatching year male from the Ontario introduction program.

Possible evidence Common Loon breeding in the Region arrived belatedly. Nicki Tiffany indicated that a baby loon was observed with two adults several times throughout the summer from their cottage on a protected cove along Lake Ontario in Orleans County. The first sighting of the dark gray downy juvenile was in mid-June. As there have been no documented nesting attempts in the Region in over 70 years and no photographs were obtained, this should not be considered "hard evidence." However, a few nesting attempts were confirmed on the north shore of Lake Ontario during this decade in the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas work. Five Common Loons at Chautauqua Lake in early June continued the trend of early, non-breeding records from this location.

The heronry at Motor Island in the Niagara River continues to thrive. Bill Watson counted 89 Great Egrets, including young, on 10 July. Great Blue Heron and Black-crowned Night-Herons continue to nest in good numbers at Motor Island as well. Gerry Teal photographed an adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron while kayaking around nearby Strawberry Island on 3 July. While this species is only very rarely seen in the Region, a breeding attempt should be watched for at

these islands or at the Black-crowned Night-Heron colony above Niagara Falls. American Bittern sightings were again limited to Iroquois NWR and vicinity, and the only Least Bittern sightings occurred at Tifft Nature Preserve, where breeding has been documented previously.

Peregrine Falcons and Ospreys returned to the Grand Island area after their inaugural nests there last summer. Four Peregrine chicks were banded by the NYSDEC at the nest platform on the northbound North Grand Island Bridge in early June. Fortunately, the Ospreys picked a safer nest location this year, going for a nest platform at Buckhorn Island SP rather than atop dangerous electrical towers. Peregrines also continued in their traditional Buffalo and Niagara Falls locations and a pair was also seen regularly in Buffalo away from the downtown nesting area. No Merlin nests were reported this summer, ending the string of three consecutive years with nesting on the west side of Buffalo. Bald Eagles continue to thrive.

Two Sandhill Cranes were observed on two occasions at Iroquois NWR this summer, thereby continuing the summer reports in this area. It's likely only a matter of time before an actual breeding attempt is documented.

There were mixed reports on grassland-nesting species. Jeff Reed indicated that Savannah Sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks were very successful at and near his property in Cattaraugus County and that Bobolinks were gone by 4 July, earlier than usual. However, veteran birders continue to feel that both Savannah Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark have decreased considerably in recent years, and the U.S.G.S. breeding bird survey results back up that sentiment. Upland Sandpiper breeding records were limited to only Tillman WMA and the town of Colden, both previously documented breeding areas. While plenty of habitat remains for "uppies" and they are likely underreported from areas that are infrequently birded, it is still safe to say that the species has declined considerably in recent decades. A record Regional count of 14 Grasshopper Sparrows was made on 15 June at Tillman WMA by Richard Salembier. While breeding may be doing well at this location, it remains an uncommon species in grasslands throughout the Region. This is likely the first year that Henslow's Sparrow went unreported in the Region. None were detected by the NYSDEC at the William Street field in Lancaster where their presence has held up expansion of a subdivision. However, the developer and landowner reduced survey access after losing a legal challenge to NYSDEC's authority. The site was discovered during the Atlas effort in 2000 and numbers have declined in the last few years. Unless any new sites are found, this may mark the end of the last regular breeding location in the Region.

Among other uncommon and/or declining breeding species, Common Nighthawks were again reported in small numbers in North Buffalo in June and July. Red-headed Woodpecker reports were up compared to recent summers, but still mostly limited to the Lake Erie and Lake Ontario shorelines. For the third summer in a row, no Golden-winged Warblers were confirmed. There was a report of an unseen warbler singing a Golden-winged song in suitable habitat at a previously documented breeding location. However, a hybrid cannot be ruled out. Yellow-throated Warblers nested in the Red House Section of the Allegany

State Park for the fifth year in a row. Prothonotary Warblers were at their regular location at Tonawanda WMA again, and Dave and Vanna Harding reported one from the education center at Oak Orchard WMA in early July. Clay-colored Sparrow was reported from three locations, only one of which was a previously documented breeding area.

Shorebird reports were primarily from Dunkirk Harbor, the Iroquois NWR complex, and Batavia WWTP; however, birder effort seemed reduced compared to recent summers. Plus, the first choice of many Regional birders for shorebirding is outside the Region along the Canadian shore of Lake Erie. The shorebird highlight was once again the number of American Avocet reports. Over the past ten years, avocet sightings have been nearly annual along Lake Erie, mostly from Chautauqua County. There was an early report from late June and then groups of five and four birds during the second week of July, all from Dunkirk Harbor. On 13 July, two Willets were with the avocets, providing more evidence that these birds are adults traveling from their Great Plains breeding grounds toward the mid-Atlantic coast for migration and/or wintering.

The exciting finds at Dunkirk Harbor were not limited to shorebirds. Peter Yoerg spotted an adult Franklin's Gull there on 20 July. It is only the third Regional record for July, and adults in breeding plumage are rarely seen in the Region. Willie D'Anna's repeated checking of the piers in Wilson on Lake Ontario resulted in some interesting finds. An Iceland Gull on 2 June and a Lesser Black-backed Gull on 24 June were believed to be the same birds identified at this location in May. Caspian Terns and Common Terns were seen at the piers on several occasions throughout June, which is the summer month that they'd be least expected without a nearby breeding location. Bonaparte's Gulls, which were likely non-breeding lingerers, were also seen there on several occasions in June.

An unseasonal July movement of Red Crossbills was documented, which was concurrent with similar observations in Ontario and central New York. On 21 July, I was shocked to see a flock of at least a dozen birds briefly alight atop a large spruce tree in my Orchard Park yard and then continue off in a southeasterly direction. That was a short-lived record Regional summer count, as Bruce Chilton witnessed a flock of approximately 50 Red Crossbills near Lake Ontario at Oakland Rural Cemetery in Porter flying east only four days later. Up to six birds were found in August at Palmer's Pond in West Almond, Allegany County, which is the most regular breeding location in the Region. Matt Young identified the birds at this location as Type 1 via sound recording analysis, consistent with the most likely type to occur in summer in central NY. Dick Rosche indicated that he had several Red Crossbills at three undisclosed state forests in Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties in August as well.

There were no notable passerine migration events in August, and birder effort seemed a little less than usual at that time.

Notable sightings from this summer that were not previously mentioned included: the first summer report of Black Vulture, identified by Tim Lenz at Mayville in July; Sedge Wrens identified in Harmony and Porter during breeding bird survey routes; a female Dickcissel observed by Christopher

Hollister in a field in Farmersville on 31 August; and a Pine Siskin at a feeder in East Aurora.

CONTRIBUTORS

Connie Adams, Tim Baird, Doug Beattie, Jim Berry, Elizabeth Brooks, Bruce Chilton, Willie D'Anna, Elaine Dart, Kurt Fox, David Friedrich, Dave & Vanna Harding, Barb Henderson, Paul Hess, Christopher Hollister, David Junkin, Jim Landau, Lynne Landon, Tim Lenz; Carol Levine, Miley Miller (MMi), Mike Morgante (MMo), Terry Mosher, Dave Neveu, Jim Pawlicki, Betsy Potter, Don Roberson, Richard Rosche, Richard Salembier, Mickey Scillingo, Debbie Sharon, Kate Shulgina, Jeanine Smith, Gerry Teal, Nicki & Paul Tiffany, William Watson, John Welte, David Wheeler, Peter Yoerg, Mike Zebehazy.

ABBREVIATIONS

AISP – Allegany SP, CATT; BeSP – Beaver I SP, ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; ChauL – Chautauqua L, CHAU; CHMUA – Carlton Hill Multiple Use Area, WYOM; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; LESP – L Erie SP, CHAU; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE/ORLE; PG – Point Gratiot, CHAU; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, ERIE; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA, GENE/NIAG.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Mute Swan: 2 Chautauqua CHAU 9 Aug (JS), only report.

Trumpeter Swan: Clay Pond WMA CHAU thru 15 Aug (JB, MMi), wing tagged individual from Ontario program.

Wood Duck: max 22 Gainesville WYOM 4 Jun.

Gadwall: 2, 1 BWWTP 1-21 Jun, 4 Jul, only reports.

Am. Wigeon: BWWTP 1 Jun; 2 Buffalo ERIE 8 Jun; Tift NP 2 Aug; only reports.

Am. Black Duck: Attica WYOM 17 Aug, only report.

Blue-winged Teal: 2, 2 BWWTP 4 Jul, 2 Aug; arr INWR 16 Aug.

N. Shoveler: 3 BWWTP 3 Jun; INWR 3 Jun; only reports.

Green-winged Teal: 2, 1 BWWTP 1, 3 Jun; max 6 INWR 4 Jul (WW); arr 2 Villanova CHAU 27 Aug.

Redhead: 4 TWMA 11 Jun, regular breeding location; BWWTP 21 Jun (WW).

Ring-necked Duck: 2 Tift NP 8, 19 Jun, 18 Aug (WW), continued from May; BWWTP 21 Jun, regular in summer at this location.

Lesser Scaup: 2, 1, 2 BWWTP 3, 21 Jun, 2 Aug (WW); DH 8 Jul (DN); lingerers.

Com. Merganser: 2 BWWTP 3 Jun; Silver Creek CHAU 30 Jun; 1 f + 12 yg AISP (PH); max 50 Sheridan CHAU 9 Aug (DN), regular post-breeding staging area on L Erie.

Red-breasted Merganser: Sheridan CHAU 1, 2 Jun (DN); 2 Wilson NIAG 2 Jun (WD); on the late side for spring.

Ruddy Duck: 27, 35, 84 BWWTP 21 Jun, 4 Jul, 2 Aug (WW), no evidence of breeding.

Com. Loon: Wilson NIAG 2 Jun (WD); 5 ChauL 7 Jun (JB), good count for date; 2 ad + yg Yates ORLE (N&PT) mid-June and thru summer, baby loon observed with adults, *intro*.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 16 TWMA 2 Aug.
Double-crested Cormorant: 56 BWWT 4 Jul; max 843 BuSP 31 Jul.
Am. Bittern: INWR 3 Jun, 16 Aug; TWMA 4 Jul; traditional locations.
Least Bittern: Tift NP 2, 17 Jul (WW, KS), only reports.
Great Egret: Randolph CATT 1 Jun; 74, 89 Motor I NR 30 Jun, 10 Jul (WW), continued expansion at colony; 3 BWWT 4, 28 Jul; Alexander GENE 13 Jul; max 92 TWMA 27 Jul, 19 Aug (WW), night roost.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: TWMA 1 Jun; 2 BWWT 2 Aug; 2 Bethany GENE 16 Aug; only reports away from NR.
YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON: ad Strawberry I NR 3 Jul (GT!), photographed while kayaking near island, very rare.
BLACK VULTURE: Mayville CHAU 14 Jul (TL), first summer report for Region.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: 2 + n BeSP, follows last year return to NR; 4 nests INWR and vicinity; Hanover CHAU 5, 25 Jun; Bush Hill SF CATT 1 Aug, unusual location.
Bald Eagle: BWWT 1 Jun; max 6, 7 Sheridan CHAU 30 Jun, 12 Aug (DN); 3 imm DH 5 Jul; Busti CHAU 31 Jul; Attica WYOM 6 Aug; Ellicott CHAU 15 Aug; reports away from nesting areas.
Merlin: no reports.
Peregrine Falcon: 4 chicks banded N Grand I Bridge NR 2 Jun (CA), second year nesting at this location; 2 Buffalo ERIE 9 Jun - 23 Jul (KS, PY), away from downtown breeding location; continued nesting in downtown Buffalo and NF; arr PG 26 Aug (DN).
Virginia Rail: FMCSP 2 Jun; 2 Gainesville WYOM 19 Jun; Alexander GENE 22 Jul; Tift NP 2 Aug; only reports; some different locations.
Sora: Alexander GENE 22 Jul; Kiantone CHAU 15 Aug, only reports.
Com. Moorhen: 1 ad + 3 yg Tift NP 2 Jul (WW); Pomfret CHAU 9 Aug (TM); only reports away from INWR and vicinity.
Am. Coot: 4 TWMA 4 Jul; 2 DH 14 Jul; only reports.
SANDHILL CRANE: 2, 2 INWR 7 Jul, 16 Aug (KS, D&VH), irregular summer sightings at/near this location in recent years.

Black-bellied Plover: arr ChauL 11 Aug, only report.
Semipalmated Plover: last 22 OOWMA 3 Jun; arr DH 8 Jul.
AM. AVOCET: arr DH 29 Jun (TL), earliest fall arrival; 5, 4 DH 9, 13 Jul (DN, mob); summer reports along L Erie shore have been nearly annual this decade.
Greater Yellowlegs: arr 2 TWMA 27 Jul.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr DH 21 Jul.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr TWMA 27 Jul; max 9 Villanova CHAU 23 Aug.
Willet: OOWMA 3 Jun (WW), late, only 2nd June record for Region; arr 2 DH 13 Jul (DN); 1-2 DH 25-31 Aug (DN, JS, TM).
Spotted Sandpiper: max 46 BWWT 4 Jul.
Upland Sandpiper: 7 Tillman WMA ERIE 22 Jun, traditional location; 3 Colden ERIE 25 Jun (JL); 2, 1 Buffalo ERIE 1, 18 Aug (PY), heard migrating at night.
Sanderling: arr DH 21 Jul.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 165 BWWT 3 Jun (WW); 14 OOWMA 3 Jun; last 47 Alexander GENE 6 Jun (ED); high counts for inland locations; arr DH 21 Jul.
Least Sandpiper: BWWT, OOWMA 1 Jun; last 4 Wilson NIAG 2 Jun; arr 3 Sheridan CHAU 5 Jul.
Baird's Sandpiper: arr TWMA 30 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 20 FNSP 24 Aug.
Dunlin: 8 OOWMA 1 Jun; last 8, 4 BWWT 1, 3 Jun.
Wilson's Snipe: 2 Alexander GENE 3, 6 Jul; 7 Villanova CHAU 10 Aug; only reports.
Jaeger sp.: FNSP 24 Aug (JP), only report.
FRANKLIN'S GULL: DH 20-21 Jul (PY, JS), early, adult in breeding plumage rarely seen in Reg, only third July record.
Bonaparte's Gull: 2 DH 1-2 Jun; 35 Wilson NIAG 2 Jun (WD); 5, 1 BWWT 1, 3 Jun; Barcelona CHAU 29 Jun; 24 im Wilson NIAG 4 Jul (WD); 4 BWWT 2 Aug; Allegheny Res CATT 3 Aug; only inland reports.
ICELAND GULL: im Wilson NIAG 2 Jun (WD!), first June record for Reg.
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: im Wilson NIAG 24 Jun (WD), continued from May.
Caspian Tern: 2 Buffalo NR 8 Jun; 20, 9, 7 Wilson NIAG 9, 23, 30 Jun; Wethersfield WYOM 21 Jun (DJ), unusual location; many reports in Jul and Aug.
Com. Tern: 6, 8 Wilson NIAG 14, 23 Jun (WD); 2 INWR 22 Jun (PY); slightly unusual locations for date; 80 FNSP 24 Aug.
Forster's Tern: arr 2 Wilson NIAG 26 Jul (WD!, BP), only report.

Black Tern: 2 BWWT 1 Jun (MS, DW), unusual location for date; 2 OOWMA 1 Jun; 16, 26 INWR 21 Jun, 4 Jul; BeSP 23-30 Jul (DS); 1, 5 FNSP 24, 30 Aug.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Com. Nighthawk: 3-5 Buffalo ERIE thru Jul (PY, BH); 6 OOWMA 1 Jun (MS, DW); 2 Tonawanda ERIE, Silver Creek CHAU 3 Jun, late migrants; arr Tillman WMA ERIE 20 Aug; only four other late summer migrant reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1, 4 PG 1 Jun, 14 Jul; Yates ORLE 2 Jun (N&PT); Orchard Park ERIE 10-15 Jul (MZ); S. Wales ERIE 15 Jul; 4, 4 Silver Creek CHAU 16 Jul, 29 Aug (DN); 2 juv LESP 29 Jul (JS); 2 Wilson NIAG 9, 11 Aug (BP); 4 FNSP 26 Aug (LL); more reports than the last few summers.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: last NF 10 Jun (DR).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last Alexander GENE 6-7 Jun (KF); arr Williamsville ERIE 28 Aug.

Acadian Flycatcher: reported from 10 locations; last 2 Holland ERIE 3 Aug.

Yellow-throated Vireo: CHMUA 22 Jun, non-traditional location.

Philadelphia Vireo: last Buffalo ERIE 1 Jun; arr Williamsville ERIE 28 Aug.

Com. Raven: Colden ERIE 2 Jun; 4 Wethersfield WYOM 25 Jun; 2, 1 Arkwright CHAU 13 Jul, 2 Aug; 2, 1 Bethany GENE 26 Jul, 20 Aug; only reports away from ALLE, CATT.

Purple Martin: 18 Wolcottsville NIAG 19 Jul; 9, 30 Bethany GENE 27 Jul, 5 Aug; good counts for inland locations where now scarce.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: arr Wilson NIAG 29 Aug.

Winter Wren: reported from nine locations.

SEDGE WREN: Harmony CHAU 8 Jun, 1 Jul (JB); Porter NIAG 15, 30 Jun (BP, WD), only reports.

Swainson's Thrush: last Buffalo ERIE 5 Jun; AISP 8 Jun, 4 Jul (PY, PH).

N. Mockingbird: n Machias CATT 16 Jun (RR), unusual location.

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: INWR 1 Jun (MS, DW), heard only, so hybrids cannot be ruled out; no conclusive reports.

Nashville Warbler: arr 3 Charlotte CHAU 27 Aug.

N. Parula: 10 AISP 8 Jun (PY), good showing.

Magnolia Warbler: INWR 5 Jul (JW), unusual location; arr Hunter's Creek P ERIE 15 Aug.

Cape May Warbler: arr Williamsville ERIE 28 Aug.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: reported from five breeding locations; arr Wilson NIAG 30 Aug.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: AISP 21 Jun (TB!), same breeding area as recent summers.

Pine Warbler: reported from five breeding locations.

Prairie Warbler: 2 Pike WYOM 4 Jun, only reports outside ALLE, CATT; max 8 Yorkshire CATT 5 Jul (PY).

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr Porter NIAG 24 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: last Wilson NIAG 8 Jun (WD), late.

Cerulean Warbler: Deer Lick NP CATT 6 Jul (DN); only report away from INWR or southern CATT.

Black-and-white Warbler: arr Alden ERIE 20 Aug.

Prothonotary Warbler: 1, 2 TWMA 1, 11 Jun (PY, WW), regular recent breeding location; OOWMA 4 Jul (D&VH).

Ovenbird: arr Williamsville ERIE 30 Aug.

N. Waterthrush: arr FNSP 24 Aug.

Louisiana Waterthrush: reported from six locations.

Mourning Warbler: Wilson NIAG 2, 4, 9 Jun (BP, WD), thought to be migrants.

Wilson's Warbler: last Wilson NIAG 2 Jun (BP, WD); arr FMCS 24 Aug.

Canada Warbler: reported from eight breeding locations; arr FNSP 24 Aug.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: NF 22 Jun (DR); Williamsville ERIE 16, 17 Aug (RS); somewhat unusual locations.

Clay-colored Sparrow: Lancaster ERIE 10-24 Jun (KF, mob), apparently unmated male; Tillman WMA ERIE 14 Jun (CH, DF); 2 Andover ALLE 13 Jun (EB).

Vesper Sparrow: Royalton NIAG 9 Jun; Andover ALLE 13 Jun; 2 Newfane NIAG 15 Jun; 3 CHMUA 22 Jun (ED, DB); max 5 Ashford CATT 5 Jul (PY).

Grasshopper Sparrow: 2 Clarence ERIE 5 Jun; 3 Bethany GENE 9 Jun; max 14 Tillman WMA ERIE 15 Jun (RS), record count for Region; 2 CHMUA 22 Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: no reports, *intro*.

White-throated Sparrow: SPNS 4 Jun (LH); Wilson NIAG 23 Jun (WD!), very unusual location for date; 8 Attica WYOM 17 Aug (ED, DB).

DICKCISSEL: f Farmersville CATT 31 Aug (CH), well observed in meadow.

Orchard Oriole: im Conewango Swamp WMA CATT 16 Jun (TB); Tillman WMA ERIE 6 Jul (JP, RS); only reports away from L Erie or L Ontario plains.

Baltimore Oriole: max 25 Wilson NIAG 2 Aug (WD, BP).

Red Crossbill: 1, 1 Ward ALLE 1, 29 Jun (EB); 12 Orchard Park ERIE 21 Jul (MMo!); 50 Porter NIAG 25 Jul (BC!), record summer count; 6 W. Almond ALLE 1-17 Aug (JP, mob); present at 3 S.F. areas CATT, CHAU Aug (RR); *intro*.

Pine Siskin: E Aurora ERIE 2 Aug (RR), unusual date, only report.

EXOTICS:

Spotted Dove: Amherst ERIE 21, 22 Aug (CL, GR), likely escape as species has no pattern of vagrancy in North America.