

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

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The summer period began with unusually warm and dry weather in Region 3. The mean temperature for June in Ithaca at 67°F was 3° higher than usual, while total precipitation of 0.73" was about one-fifth of the historical average for the month. July temperatures and precipitation almost perfectly matched historical averages. A dry spell came again in August, with total monthly precipitation 1.44", about 43% of the historical mean. August was also cool, with an average temperature of 64° F, 3° below the norm.

Dabbling ducks were notably numerous and diverse at the Main Pool at Montezuma NWR in August, perhaps in part because of favorable weather conditions for early migration and surely also because of the creation of abundant habitat through managed flooding for weed control. On 11 August, Chris Wood and Jessie Barry noted record seasonal highs for American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, and Blue-winged Teal. Separately, Chris also logged a record American Wigeon count, and Marshall Iliff found a remarkable 3100 Mallards, another new summer high. In addition, Gary Chapin found a Eurasian Wigeon here on 30 August.

In early June, Chris found a female Long-tailed Duck at MNWR. In mid-August, about two months before expected first fall arrival, several birders again noted a female Long-tailed Duck, this time at Aurora Bay. Multiple observers noted a Greater White-fronted Goose at MNWR from early July through August. This bird's presence long before the usual window of fall migration, as well as at least one documented instance of its tolerance of close approach by vehicles, raises doubts whether the goose was wild. Aside from the anatids, one other water bird appeared out of season at the refuge—an Eared Grebe in breeding plumage, found by Bob McGuire on 12 June.

Janet Akin, Doug Daniels, and many others saw a Snowy Egret at the Casella Wetlands near Flint from 5 to 7 June. Bill McAneny reported a Little Blue Heron flying over downtown Ithaca on 9 June. Bill noted size, shape, and color consistent with this species, but regrettably, photographic documentation or corroborating observations desirable for confirming this rare species are not available. On 16 July, Theresa Orzeck found a Cattle Egret in her pasture outside Trumansburg. Multiple observers saw and photographed this bird the following day.

Birders turned up no very unusual raptor sightings this season, though again two Merlins apparently attempted to breed in downtown Ithaca. No one has reported definitive information on fledging success or failure this year. This marks at least the fourth consecutive year that Merlins have attempted to breed in Ithaca and/or neighboring Cayuga Heights.

Common Moorhens evidently continued their recent trend of breeding success at MNWR, with Chris Wood reporting a summer-record 108 on 29 July. Two Sandhill Cranes were reported to eBird this summer in the southern portions of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex; these birds were possibly members of the family that bred just across the Wayne/Seneca county line in Region 2.

Managed flooding at MNWR, while good for waterfowl, meant limited habitat for shorebirds. Numbers and diversity were generally low, with no extreme rarities noted. The main highlight was a flock of five Hudsonian Godwits, which Mike Powers found and photographed on 28 August. Bob McGuire found two Buff-breasted Sandpipers together at MNWR's Knox-Marcellus Marsh on 31 August. In addition, multiple observers found and photographed Long-billed Dowitchers around the MNWR Visitor Center, with Ryan Douglas reporting 10 on 15 August, tying the seasonal high. At this same location, Dave Nutter and Paul Hurtado found two Wilson's Phalaropes on 18 August. Dave also found three Red-necked Phalaropes, a high for the season, later that day further north on MNWR's Main Pool. Upland Sandpipers spent the summer as usual at the Empire State Farm Days fairgrounds in Seneca Falls, but unlike last year, no reports of multiple fledglings were submitted to eBird or other public sources.

Laughing Gull, always a rare find upstate, appeared twice in the Region this summer. Chris Wood had the first sighting, at Myers Park in Lansing on 2 June. Jay McGowan had the second on 13 August at Stewart Park in Ithaca, where many others saw the bird over the following few days. Other notable larid records included a new season-high nine Bonaparte's Gulls persisting at the Union Springs Marina until at least June 7, another Bonaparte's Gull at Myers Park on 7 June, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull first found by Kevin McGowan on 24 July, then present again on 16 August, at Cornell University's compost facility on Stevenson Road in Dryden.

The season yielded no unexpected records of owls or nightjars, though Lee Ann van Leer did find a family group of five Eastern Screech-Owls in the Ithaca City Cemetery on 23 June, a high point count for recent summers. Rhea Garen found one Red-headed Woodpecker in Aurora on 5 July.

A few passerines made unusual appearances in June and July. One or more Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen by Matt Young on 5 June and by Paul Hurtado on 7 July at Summer Hill State Forest in Cayuga County. Breeding activity is certainly plausible, but was not confirmed. Ryan Douglas found a lone Northern Parula in Sapsucker Woods on 8 July. On 1 June, Mike Harvey saw and photographed a Yellow-breasted Chat at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve.

North winds in late August brought a rich variety of migrant warblers and other songbirds, highlighted by a Golden-winged Warbler found by Ryan Douglas on 27 August on Bomax Drive in Lansing. The emberizids of the season were a singing Henslow's Sparrow found by Kevin Griffith in the Finger Lakes National Forest on 1 July, and one Clay-colored Sparrow, found by Gary Chapin by the MNWR Visitor Center on 9 August.

Montezuma NWR hosted record-shattering flocks of icterids this summer. Tim Lenz counted 1200 Bobolinks along the Wildlife Drive on 19 August. Counting flocks for a minute at a time, Chris Wood and Jessie Barry tallied 235,000 Red-winged Blackbirds, with a peak flow of 45,000 per minute, and 60,000 Common Grackles, with peak flow of 17,000 per minute, at MNWR on 11 August. Of course it is unclear whether these prodigious totals really reflect increased numbers of birds or whether they result from a different level of observer effort. Away from MNWR, Geo Kloppel made another notable find on 27 June—at least two family groups of Orchard Orioles, an uncommon local breeder, together near Lick Brook in Ithaca, totaling at least seven birds, another season high.

Both species of crossbill made fairly frequent appearances in and around Summer Hill State Forest in late July and August, with at least four White-winged Crossbills confirmed at least twice and two Red Crossbills seen and heard once. Dave Nutter and others also found a female Evening Grosbeak in this area on 2 August. Mickey Scilingo found the season's only Pine Siskin at his thistle feeder on Yellow Barn Hill in Dryden on 6 July.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

MNWR – Montezuma NWR; MWC – Montezuma Wetlands Complex; Myers – Myers Park, Lansing; SW – Sapsucker Woods; StP – Stewart Park, Ithaca.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: 1 MNWR 23 Aug (TJ, TL, CWi, SB, NS), early.

EURASIAN WIGEON: 1 MNWR 30 Aug (GC), rare.

Am. Wigeon: max 18 MNWR 29 Jul (CLW et al.), high.

Am. Black Duck: max 46 MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), high.

Mallard: max 3100 MNWR 15 Aug (MI), high.

Blue-winged Teal: max 89 MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), high.

N. Shoveler: max 16 MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), high.

N. Pintail: max 23 MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), high.

Ring-necked Duck: 2 arr MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), early.

LONG-TAILED DUCK: 1 MNWR 7 Jun (CLW, TL, CWi), late; 1 Aurora Bay 15-16 Aug, early.

Bufflehead: arr Seneca Lake 31 Aug.

Pied-billed Grebe: 100 MNWR 23 Aug (TL), high.

EARED GREBE: 1 MNWR 12 June (BMcG).

SNOWY EGRET: 1 Casella Wetlands (Ontario) 5-7 June (JA, DD, FB, et al.).

CATTLE EGRET: 1 Town of Covert, 16 Jul (TO).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Merlin: 2 downtown Ithaca 19 Jun (DS, PH), probable breeding, courtship feeding observed.

Peregrine Falcon: arr MNWR 23 Aug.

Com. Moorhen: 108 MNWR 29 Jul (CLW), high; 1 Farley's Point 7 Jun (DFS), unusual location.

Sandhill Crane: 4 (2 ad, 2 colts) MWC 3 Jun (GK).

Black-bellied Plover: arr MNWR 6 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: arr MNWR 6 Aug.

The Kingbird 2008 December; 58 (4)

Greater Yellowlegs: arr MNWR 11 Jul.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr MNWR 11 Jul.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT: 5 MNWR 28 Aug (MP), only report.

Ruddy Turnstone: arr Myers 11 Aug.

Sanderling: arr Myers 19 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr MNWR 14 Jul.

Least Sandpiper: arr MNWR 5 Jul.

White-rumped Sandpiper: 1 MNWR 9 Aug (RD), only report, low.

Baird's Sandpiper: arr MNWR 21 Aug; max 2 MNWR 31 Aug (TJ et al), low.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr MNWR 19 Jul.

Stilt Sandpiper: arr MNWR 19 Jul; max 12 MNWR 23 Aug (DN).

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: 2 MNWR 31 Aug (BMcG), only report.

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr George Road wetland TOMP 20 Jul.

Long-billed Dowitcher: arr MNWR 3 Aug; max 10 MNWR 15 Aug (RD), high.

Wilson's Phalarope: 2 MNWR 18 Aug (DN, PH), only report.

Red-necked Phalarope: arr Myers 13 Aug (JM); max 3 MNWR 18 Aug (DN).

LAUGHING GULL: 1 Myers 2 Jun (CLW), 1 StP 13-16 Jun (JM et al.).

Bonaparte's Gull: last and max 9 Union Springs marina 7 Jun (CLW, TL); last Myers 7 Jun.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Stevenson Road, Dryden 24 Jul (KM) and 16 Aug (PH).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: max 5 Ithaca City Cemetery 23 Jun (LAvL), high.

Com. Nighthawk: arr Allan Treman St. Marine Pk 12 Aug.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 Aurora 5 Jul (RG).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: arr 1 Durland Preserve TOMP 24 Aug (SF).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr 1 Beam Hill TOMP 15 Aug.

Philadelphia Vireo: arr 1 SW 28 Aug.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: 1 Summer Hill SF 5 Jun, 7 Jul (MY, PH), possible breeding unconfirmed.

Swainson's Thrush: arr 20 Aug Etna.

WARBLERS

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER: 1 Bomax Drive TOMP 27 Aug (RD), only report.

Tennessee Warbler: arr Mundy Wildflower Garden TOMP 30 Aug.

N. Parula: 1 SW 8 Jul (RD), only summer report; arr 1 SW 30 Aug.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr 1 SW 27 Aug.

Wilson's Warbler: arr 2 SW 2 Aug, early.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT: 1 Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve 1-2 June (MH *et al.*).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: 1 MNWR 9 Aug (GC).

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 2 over all counties in Region (eBird), low.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW: 1 Finger Lakes NF 1 Jul (KG).

Bobolink: max 1200 MNWR 19 Aug (TL), high.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 235,000 MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), high.

Com. Grackle: max 60,000 MNWR 11 Aug (CLW, JesB), high.

Orchard Oriole: max 7 Lick Brook (Tompkins) 27 Jun (GK), high.

RED CROSSBILL: 2 Summerhill SF 9 Aug (JGK), 1 Summer Hill SF 13 Aug (PH).

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: arr 1 Summerhill SF 27 Jul (SF); max 4 Summer Hill SF 31 Jul and 13 Aug (TL, MI, PH), high.

PINE SISKIN: 1 Yellow Barn Hill TOMP 6 Jul (MScil), only report.