

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Summer 2008 began warm and wet and ended cooler and drier than average. June ended with temperatures 4.1°F above average, with precipitation 1.71" above average at the Albany International Airport. July continued warm and wet, 2.4°F above average with precipitation 3.44" above average, with rain that fell in a handful of heavy downpours. August began a cooling trend. Monthly temperatures never topped 88°F despite 20 cloudless days without precipitation. Fruit and mast crops appeared close to historic summer averages and no unusual insect outbreaks were reported.

Birders pounced into action this summer chasing a report from Richard Crossley of a Black-bellied Whistling Duck that appeared in Broadalbin, Fulton County. Excitement tanked shortly thereafter, when birders noticed a yellow tag around one of its legs, confirming that the bird was not wild. Enterprising birders, however, never pass up the chance to learn something and the episode

sparked an interesting online discussion about other species of vagrant waterfowl including tips on assessing their status as wild or escaped.

Chris Winters heard what she thought was a Barn Owl in open grasslands in Chatham, Columbia County and was lucky enough to confirm it by sight in early August. Barn Owl has not been reported in Columbia County since 1991, and, with scarcely any breeding records of this species in the Hudson Valley, they remain an almost ghost-like rarity. The bird was not found after August despite searching, suggesting that it was a tarrying migrant.

The Region's birders documented the usual roster of breeding birds this summer. Noteworthy, however, is Ron Harrower's report of 11 Whip-poor-wills on Cold Spring Road in Saratoga County, a maximum number seldom reported in central eastern New York.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation negotiated a land-management plan with a developer that wants to build a 635,000-square-foot Beech-Nut baby food factory on vacant land at the Florida Development Park in Montgomery County. The state will monitor 90 acres of productive grassland habitat where state biologists found resident Northern Harriers when conducting a review of wetland boundaries at the site last year. As part of the \$124 million project, the developer will fund monitoring and mowing of the fields for five years before passing on management costs to Montgomery County. The eastern Mohawk Valley is one of the last vestiges of productive grassland habitat for harriers, Upland Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, and a diverse list of grassland sparrows, so let's hope the program jumpstarts larger efforts to provide incentives to landowners to maintain these vanishing habitats. It's easy to argue that grasslands preservation is a hopeless cause since natural succession produces forests in our Region, but with 99% of the Midwestern tall-grass prairie under corn and soybeans perhaps we all share some responsibility for providing habitat for these threatened species.

The John Burroughs Natural History Society planned their June field trip to grasslands in Schoharie County and found a colony of Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, and a **Clay-colored Sparrow**. Continuing the theme of interesting grassland birds, Hope Batchellor found a **Dickcissel** in the grasslands of Fort Edward in Washington County. Finally, two observers found an **American Tree Sparrow** in Columbia County, an unusual June species, but backed up with good supporting details.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Dave Baim, Hope Batchellor, Mona Bearor, Woodrow Bynum, Steve Chorvas, Gerry Colborn, Bill Cook, Tim Dormady, Corey Finger, Dave Gibson, Jane Graves, Richard Guthrie, Ron Harrower, John Hershey, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Nancy Kern, Eric Kranz, Bill Lee, Alan Mapes, Dave Martin, Andrew Mason, Roger Miller, Mike Morgante, Frank Murphy, Gail & Rich Nord, Mike Peterson, John Piwowarski, Barb Putnam, Bob Ramonowski, Will Raup, Bill Ruscher, Joan Suriano, Bill & Marion Ulmer, Alison Van

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCM – Black Creek Marsh, ALBA; COH – T Cohoes, ALBA; COX – T Cocksackie, GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards, WASH; HR – Hudson Ri; VF – Vischer's Ferry, SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Brant: L George WARR 9 Jun.
Gadwall: 6 Stanton Pd ALBA 12 Jun; Stillwater SARA 29 Jun.
Blue-winged Teal: Stanton Pd ALBA 30 Aug.
N. Pintail: Stillwater SARA 29 Jun.
Green-winged Teal: Stillwater SARA 29 Jun; COH 31 Jul-28 Aug.
Ring-necked Duck: Castleton RENS 4 July.
SURF SCOTER: Glen Lake WARR 9-11 Jun.
Com. Loon: 2 Alcove Res ALBA 17 Jul; 2 Tomhannock Res RENS 26 Aug.
Horned Grebe: Saratoga L 1 Jun; HR at Ft Miller 9 Jun.
Am. Bittern: Meadowdale ALBA 12 Jun; Delmar ALBA 30 Aug.
Least Bittern: 2 BCM 4-17 Jul; max 4 BCM 8 Aug.
Great Egret: Livingston COLU 31 Jul; COX grasslands 3 Aug; 2 Schenectady 5 Aug; VF 6-16 Aug; Moreau SARA 8 Aug; 4 Troy RENS 28 Aug.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: VF 6 Aug.
Black Vulture: Hoosick Falls RENS 23 Jun; 2 NYS Thruway Exit 21 1 Jul; 3 I-90 ALBA 25 Jul; Petersburg RENS 17 Aug.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

N. Harrier: Rensselaerville RENS 19 Jun; COX grasslands 23 Aug.
N. Goshawk: Pittstown SF RENS 17 Aug.
Red-shouldered Hawk: Blenheim SCHO 8 Jun-4 Jul.
Merlin: Albany 18 Aug.
Peregrine Falcon: Peebles I SARA 31 Jul; 2 Troy RENS 21 Aug.
Virginia Rail: max 8-10 BCM 17 Jul.
Sora: BCM 17 Jul.
Semipalmated Plover: Rensselaerville RENS 13 Jul; 3 COH 28 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: 3 COX grasslands 3 Aug.
Greater Yellowlegs: COH 31 Jul; 2 Wilton SARA 26 Aug.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 16 COH 28 Aug.

Least Sandpiper: Rensselaerville RENS 13 Jul; Hillsdale COLU 23 Jul; 2 COH 31 Jul; COX 3 Aug.
Bonaparte's Gull: 3 L George WARR 1-2 Jun.
Com. Tern: L George WARR 1-2 Jun.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

BARN OWL: Chatham COLU 30 July-5 Aug (CW), last COLU report 1991.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Niskayuna SCHE 15 Jul.
Com. Nighthawk: 3 Meadowdale ALBA 14 Aug; Glenville SCHE 21 Aug; COX grasslands 23 Aug; 3 Albany 26 Aug; Livingston COLU 30 Aug.
Whip-poor-will: max 11 Cold Spring Road SARA 1 Jun (RH); Ghent COLU 31 Jul.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: max 5 Twin Mt GREE 7 Jun.
Horned Lark: Greenwich WASH 18 Jun.
Purple Martin: 10 Round L SARA 25-27 Jul; Meadowdale ALBA 21 Aug.
Cliff Swallow: Meadowdale ALBA 14 Aug.
Bicknell's Thrush: max 12 Plateau Mt GREE 1 Jun.

WARBLERS

"Brewster's Warbler": COX grasslands 9 Aug.
Tennessee Warbler: Berne ALBA 3 Aug.
N. Parula: E Greenbush RENS 13-18 Jul.
Worm-eating Warbler: Deer Mt Preserve GREE 12 Jun.
Mourning Warbler: Bennett Hill ALBA 5 Jun; 2 Petersburg RENS 11 Jun; Fulton SCHO 27 Jul.
Hooded Warbler: Holt Preserve ALB A 1-16 Jun; Bennett Hill ALBA 5 Jun; New Salem ALBA 13-27 Jun.
Wilson's Warbler: Berne ALBA 7 Aug.
Canada Warbler: Rensselaer Forest Tract IBA RENS 12 Jun; Livingston COLU 24 Aug; Petersburg RENS 25 Aug.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: last Austerlitz COLU 1 Jun, unusual in Jun.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: Kilts Road SCHO 15 Jun.

Grasshopper Sparrow: FtE grasslands SARA 13 Jun; Saratoga Battlefield 29 Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: 3-4 Kilt's Road SCHO 15 Jun-4 July.

DICKCISSEL: FtE grasslands SARA 13 Jun (HB).

Bobolink: max 17 COX grasslands 3 Aug.

E. Meadowlark: max 10 Saratoga battlefield SARA 2-18 Jun.

Orchard Oriole: Bethlehem ALBA 18 Jun, nesting pr.

White-winged Crossbill: 6 Fulton SCHO 27 Jul (TW).

Evening Grosbeak: Providence SARA 29 Jul.

