

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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September was warmer and drier than average, but the rest of the fall was very wet with near normal temperatures. The mean September temperature in Watertown was 61.8° F, which is 1.7° above normal. Mean temperatures for October and November were both within 0.3° of normal. Watertown received 3.0" of precipitation in September, 1.6" below normal, but October and November totals were 7.1" and 5.4", which are 3.4" and 2.0" above normal, respectively. Each of the last two months included a 3-4 day stretch, beginning 25 October and 25 November, during which the precipitation totals were within about half an inch of the historic means for each full month. The first significant snowfall occurred on the night of 28-29 October, when many areas received 6-12" of wet snow. Mixed snow, sleet, and rain characterized much of November, particularly the latter half of the month.

The general opinion of both birders and duck hunters was that waterfowl numbers were generally low with a few exceptions. The first Snow Geese showed up in late September, but few were noted, perhaps because many passed through after the end of the fall reporting period. I received few reports of Brant, most likely because virtually nobody spent any time watching Lake Ontario, but 60 migrating over farm country during a snowstorm on 29 October were noteworthy. Birders are clearly becoming more knowledgeable about distinguishing Cackling and Canada Geese, as I received a number of reports of the former, several of which included good details. Among the species that seemed to be present in lower than usual numbers were American Black Duck,

Mallard, Green-winged Teal, all three scoters, and Common Merganser. American Wigeon numbers were better, and one male **Eurasian Wigeon** spent at least a week at Wilson Hill WMA. Wilson Hill also had the Region's high count of Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, and Hooded Merganser. The only report I received of Greater Scaup on Black River Bay indicated numbers that were an order of magnitude below what usually occurs here, but it's unclear whether scaup numbers really were low or the apparently poor showing reflects low observer effort. Bufflehead numbers were very good along the shore of Point Peninsula.

Nick Leone's tally of 21 Red-throated Loons on Black River Bay was a good total for Region 6. Common Loons were present in typical numbers along the Lake Ontario shoreline. The 43 Common Loon carcasses (out of 54 total carcasses) found on DEC botulism mortality surveys of the Lake Ontario shoreline represents a substantial reduction from the previous two years, providing evidence that the outbreak has lessened in severity. The Great Egret roost in Winthrop continued to host Regionally high numbers, with tallies of 90+ in early September.

Raptor highlights included three Golden Eagles, five Peregrine Falcons, and many Merlins. This latter species continues to increase, both as a breeder and a migrant. I received late word that a pair of Peregrine Falcons fledged one chick from a nest on the Ogdensburg Bridge during July 2008, but that the fledgling died a week or two after leaving the nest. This appears to be the first confirmed nesting in Region 6 in many decades. The season's first Rough-legged Hawk was seen on 14 October, which is about average.

In marked contrast to the fall of 2008, when very low water levels contributed to relatively good shorebird numbers, water was high everywhere and shorebirds were scarce. Diversity was better than in some recent years, but this likely represents a modest improvement in reporting, and numbers of individuals were low. An American Golden-Plover on Fort Drum and Stilt Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone in Hounsfield were the highlights, but no true rarities were observed. El Dorado Shores Preserve, once the undisputed shorebird hotspot in Region 6, was even poorer this fall than the past few, and the handful of reports I received from this location commented on the almost total lack of shorebirds present. The season's only notable larid was a juvenile Parasitic Jaeger seen chasing a Bonaparte's Gull over the St. Lawrence River at Wilson Hill.

Good numbers of Snowy and Short-eared Owls were present in traditional areas by the end of the season. Snowy Owls began showing up the last week of October, with migrants apparently accounting for most early reports. The 12 Snowy Owls that were reported represents the largest yearly total for Region 6 in several years. Short-eared Owls were at their traditional roosting area in Cape Vincent by 31 October, with at least 16 present by the end of November. A Northern Saw-whet Owl was at Indian Creek Nature Center on 7 November.

The passerine migration was generally slow, but large numbers of migrants were noted on several dates. Particularly heavy movements of vireos, thrushes, and warblers were noted 16-18 September, 29-30 September, and 1-2 October.

On 16 September three Philadelphia Vireos were seen along a 50-yard stretch of trail on Fort Drum, making for an unusual concentration. Also at Fort Drum, an impressive fallout on 1 October included one each Orange-crowned and Connecticut Warblers among 13 warbler species. Another Orange-crowned Warbler was on Fort Drum on 3 October.

Possible Cave Swallows were seen twice in November, but in both cases the birds were too distant for definitive identifications. The best evidence that Cave Swallows occurred in Region 6 came from the St. Lawrence River, where Gerard Philips saw three Cave/Cliff Swallows flying over New York water from the Canadian side. The next day Bruce DiLabio had good looks at three Cave Swallows approximately six miles west of this location on the Canadian side of the river. It therefore seems almost certain that Cave Swallows were present in Region 6 during 2008, but this species remains frustratingly unconfirmed. Hopefully when the next invasion occurs a coordinated effort can be made to have sufficient observers watching Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

Certainly the bird of the season was a **Northern Wheatear** Tom Magarian found in the yard of the house he was renting on the Tug Hill. The wheatear was only seen on 15 October, but Tom made heroic efforts to get the word out, allowing more than a dozen birders to make it to this remote location in time to see the bird. Bill Purcell commented on the incredibly small odds of a single wheatear just happening to put down in the yard of one of the few people in Lewis County who could possibly identify it.

Fall surveys of the Fort Drum grasslands documented late dates for several species that are not normally reported during this season. Sedge Wrens were consistently seen on their nesting or natal territories through September, with the last sighting occurring on 14 October. Two Henslow's Sparrows seen on 8 September included one individual undergoing heavy molt. Repeated efforts to find these or other Henslow's Sparrows after this date failed. Clay-colored Sparrows were found sporadically at recent nesting locations until 3 October. It was generally a good season for sparrows, with reports of every species that regularly occurs in Region 6, including at least eight Lincoln's Sparrows. White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco numbers seemed low, with maximum counts well below those reported during the previous two falls.

Following their summer influx, White-winged Crossbills apparently staged a second invasion of northern New York during October and November. Numbers were particularly impressive on the Tug Hill, where on 3 November Tom Magarian counted **1,660** individuals in less than two hours. Tom also saw several juveniles suggesting that at least a few crossbills may have nested locally. White-winged Crossbills were seen virtually everywhere in Region 6, although numbers were much lower in lowland areas than on the Tug Hill or in the Adirondacks. Smaller numbers of Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins were reported. Purple Finches were widespread through late October, but were scarce by early November and virtually absent by the end of the reporting period. Two reports each of Pine Grosbeak and Common Redpoll hinted at the potential for winter flights.

For the season I received reports of 202 species, excluding the possible Cave Swallow. The Northern Wheatear was the clear highlight, although the apparent decline in the severity of the botulism outbreak on Lake Ontario is certainly good news. Other highlights were multiple Cackling Geese, Parasitic Jaeger, Connecticut and Orange-crowned Warblers, and the White-winged Crossbill bonanza. The biggest disappointment was the failure once again of anybody to confirm Cave Swallow in Region 6, although perhaps this year's close calls may help focus efforts to find this species the next time it invades the northeastern United States.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRB – Black River Bay; CPSP – Cedar Point State Park; CV – Cape Vincent; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, Canton; KC – Kelsey Creek, Watertown; LPd – Leonard Pond trail, Colton; MM – Massawepie Mire, Piercefield and Colton; MP – Montario Point, Ellisburg; PilPt – Pillar Point; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Pt. Peninsula; RMPD – Robert Moses Power Dam; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP; SLR – St. Lawrence River; TP – Tibbet's Point, Cape Vincent; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WS – Winthrop Swamp, Stockholm.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: arr Dekalb 18 Sep; max 600 over MM 19 Nov.

Brant: 120 CV 10 Oct; 60 flying over Philadelphia hayfields during snow storm 29 Oct.

Cackling Goose: Lowville 15 Oct (CW, JB, TL, MI); Hammond 16 Oct (GS!); ULLWMA 19 Oct (JB); 2 Canton 25 Oct (JB).

Tundra Swan: max 168 PtPen.

Wood Duck: last 2 FD 12 Nov.

Gadwall: max 75 ULLWMA 22 Oct.

EURASIAN WIGEON (R6): m WHWMA 10 Nov, 16 Nov (JB).

Am. Wigeon: max 400 WHWMA 11 Oct.

Am. Black Duck: max 30 ULLWMA 12 Nov, low.

Blue-winged Teal: max 58 ULLWMA 20 Sep; last ULLWMA 25 Oct.

N. Shoveler: PRWMA 13 Oct, 8 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 7 PRWMA 3 Nov.

Green-winged Teal: max 132 Whalen Park Louisville 27 Sep.

Redhead: max 450 WHWMA 10 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: max 1350 WHWMA 24 Oct.

Greater Scaup: arr SBSP 29 Sep; max 230 PilPt 17 Nov, very low.

Lesser Scaup: max 200 CV 19 Oct.

Surf Scoter: 2 SLR Massena 11 Oct; 3 SLR Massena 24 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: MP 29 Oct; CPSP 2 Nov.

Black Scoter: MP 29 Oct; BRB 17 Nov.

Long-tailed Duck: 12 CV 18 Oct; 130 TP 21 Nov.

Bufflehead: 300 PilPt 8-9 Nov; 1000 PtPen 15 Nov, high.

Com. Goldeneye: arr CPSP 2 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 165 WHWMA 10 Nov.

Com. Merganser: 10-25 per day SLR Louisville and Massena late Nov; low.
Red-breasted Merganser: 38 CV 21 Nov.
Ruddy Duck: 3 PRWMA 8 Nov.
Red-throated Loon: max 21 BRB 12 Nov.
Com. Loon: max 104 PiPt 12 Nov; 43 carcasses picked up on DEC botulism surveys of L Ontario shore Oct and Nov.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 97 ULLWMA 12 Sep.
Horned Grebe: arr MP 19 Oct; max 23 PiPt 12 Nov.
Am. Bittern: last ICNC 26 Sep.
Great Egret: max 90+ WS 16 Sep.
Green Heron: last ICNC 5 Oct.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: last ULLWMA 13 Oct.
Turkey Vulture: max 200 WBSP 16 Oct; last FD 4 Nov.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: last Massena 21 Sep.
N. Harrier: 1-3 per day late Nov.
N. Goshawk: PRWMA 13 Oct; FD 24 Nov.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 FD 6 Oct.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr CV 14 Oct.
Golden Eagle: WBSP 16 Oct; 2 WHWMA 2 Nov.
Merlin: more than 20 reports.
Peregrine Falcon: Hounsfield 3 Sep; ICNC 20 Sep; FD 2 Oct; SBSP 3 Oct; CV 29 Oct.
Com. Moorhen: last PRWMA 13 Oct.
Am. Coot: max 14 ULLWMA 13 Oct.
Black-bellied Plover: max 17 PtPen 24 Oct; last PtPen 15 Nov.
Am. Golden-Plover: FD 29 Sep.
Semipalmated Plover: ED 19 Sep.
Killdeer: last Waddington 24 Oct.
Greater Yellowlegs: last Croil Is SLR 13 Nov.
Lesser Yellowlegs: last Leray 29 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: last 5 FD 8 Oct.
Ruddy Turnstone: Hounsfield 3 Sep.
Sanderling: max 140 SBSP 9 Oct; 15 MP 29 Oct.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 6 ULLWMA 5 Sep; last SBSP 9 Oct.
Least Sandpiper: last SBSP 9 Oct.
Pectoral Sandpiper: 2 Leray 24 Sep; 5 PtPen 23 Oct.
Dunlin: 37 SBSP 9 Oct.
Stilt Sandpiper: Hounsfield 3 Sep.
Wilson's Snipe: last FD 12 Nov.
Am. Woodcock: last FD 30 Oct when one foot of snow on ground.
Parasitic Jaeger: juv chasing Bonaparte's Gull WHWMA 12 Sep (JB), rare on SLR.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 52 PtPen 24 Oct.
Com. Tern: last WHWMA 24 Oct.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Theresa 26 Oct; RMPD 27 Oct thru; Pamela 9 Nov thru; Antwerp 12 Nov; Ogdensburg 12 Nov; Croil Is SLR 13 Nov; FD 14 Nov thru; Massena 20 Nov; Gouverneur 24 Nov; CV 21 Nov; 2 PtPen late Nov.
Short-eared Owl: 6 CV 31 Oct; 16 CV 28 Nov.
N. Saw-whet Owl: ICNC 7 Nov.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last Canton 28 Sep.
Belted Kingfisher: last FD 18 Nov.
Red-headed Woodpecker: last FD 18 Sep.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: new location FD 10 Oct.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last KC 6 Oct.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last FD 22 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last FD 16 Oct.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last FD 17 Sep.
E. Kingbird: last Potsdam 12 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr CV 14 Oct; Hounsfield 19 Oct; 5 reports FD Oct.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last FD 2 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 15 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last ICNC 26 Sep.
Philadelphia Vireo: Potsdam 13 Sep; 3 FD 18 Sep; ICNC 26 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last FD 15 Oct.
Gray Jay: max 4 LPd 5 Oct.
Horned Lark: 80 Adams 29 Oct.
Tree Swallow: 3 PtPen 2 Nov; Lakeview WMA 11 Nov.
***Petrochelidon* sp:** PRWMA 8 Nov (JB); 3 SLR Lisbon 12 Nov (GP); likely Cave Swallows but too distant for specific id.
Barn Swallow: last FD 10 Sep.
Carolina Wren: KC 26-28 Oct, 5 Nov, 21 Nov.
House Wren: last FD 2 Oct.
Winter Wren: last FD 6 Nov.
Sedge Wren: max 7 FD 8 Sep; last FD 14 Oct.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 22 Sep.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 17 Sep; last FD 27 Oct.
N. WHEATEAR: Lowville 15 Oct. (TM, mob, photos!; report to NYSARC).
E. Bluebird: scarce after 7 Nov.
Veery: last FD 16 Sep.
Gray-checked Thrush: Colton 13 Sep; FD 16 Sep & 6 Oct; ICNC 20 Sep; several Canton & Potsdam 29-30 Sep; CV 18 Oct.
Swainson's Thrush: many moving 16-18 Sep; last Canton 6 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last FD 20 Oct.
Wood Thrush: last ICNC 7 Sep.
Gray Catbird: last FD 16 Oct.

Brown Thrasher: last Canton 4 Oct.
Am. Pipit: arr FD 10 Sep; 109 PtPen 25 Sep;
105 Adams 29 Oct; last Leray 18 Nov.
Cedar Waxwing: max 75 FD 16 Oct.

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: last FD 3 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: last FD 2 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: different locations
FD 1 Oct, 3 Oct (JB).
Nashville Warbler: last KC 6 Oct.
N. Parula: last FD 6 Oct.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last ICNC 7 Sep.
Magnolia Warbler: last Martinsburg 1 Oct.
Cape May Warbler: FD 3 Sep, 22 Sep.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last FD 1 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: last FD 3 Nov.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last LPd 5
Oct.
Blackburnian Warbler: last FD 1 Oct.
Pine Warbler: last FD 3 Oct.
Palm Warbler: max 14 FD 30 Sep; last FD 6
Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last ICNC 26 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 6 Oct.
Black-and-white Warbler: last Martinsburg 1
Oct.
Am. Redstart: last Martinsburg 1 Oct.
Ovenbird: last FD 30 Sep.
Connecticut Warbler: FD 1 Oct (JB).
Mourning Warbler: last FD 4 Sep.
Com. Yellowthroat: last KC 6 Oct.
Wilson's Warbler: FD 3 Sep, 17 Sep; ICNC 7
Sep, 12 Sep.
Canada Warbler: last FD 18 Sep.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: last FD 18 Sep.
E. Towhee: last FD 16 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr Canton 1 Nov.
Chipping Sparrow: last FD 31 Oct.
Clay-colored Sparrow: last FD 3 Oct.
Field Sparrow: last PtPen 24 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last FD 16 Oct.
Savannah Sparrow: last 2 FD 15 Oct.

Grasshopper Sparrow: last PtPen 25 Sep.
Henslow's Sparrow: last 2 FD 8 Sep,
including one in heavy molt.
Fox Sparrow: arr FD 2 Oct; last ICNC 7 Nov.
Song Sparrow: last FD 14 Nov.
Lincoln's Sparrow: 6 reports FD 8 Sep to 3
Oct; Potsdam 30 Sep; Martinsburg 30 Sep.
Swamp Sparrow: last FD 23 Oct.
White-throated Sparrow: max 85 FD 1 Oct,
low.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr WBSP 29 Sep;
last ICNC 7 Nov.
Dark-eyed Junco: arr FD 18 Sep; max 165 FD
15 Oct, low.
Lapland Longspur: ULLWMA 7 Nov, 9 Nov.
Snow Bunting: arr ULLWMA 25 Oct.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last KC 3 Oct.
Bobolink: last FD 17 Sep.
E. Meadowlark: last 4 FD 31 Oct.
Rusty Blackbird: arr 50 ICNC 26 Sep; 45
Potsdam 29 Sep; 270 Potsdam 4 Oct; 250
ULLWMA 22 Oct; 50 KC 22 Oct; 41 PtPen 24
Oct; last Canton 11 Nov.
Baltimore Oriole: last Pamela 1 Sep.
Pine Grosbeak: FD 4 Nov; 6 ULLWMA 11
Nov.
Purple Finch: max 22 FD 27 Oct; scarce after
4 Nov.
White-winged Crossbill: max 1660
Martinsburg 3 Nov (TM); many reports from
all parts of Region; late summer/early fall
nesting suspected on Tug Hill.
Red Crossbill: scattered reports of 1-3 thru.
Com. Redpoll: 30 Canton 1 Nov; 25 ICNC 2
Nov.
Pine Siskin: 35 Hammond 19 Oct; LPd 5 Oct;
Potsdam 6 Oct; max 75 Martinsburg 3 Nov.
Am. Goldfinch: max 150 Martinsburg 16 Oct.

ADDENDUM

Peregrine Falcon: pair fledged one chick from
nest on Ogdensburg bridge over SLR early Jul
2008; fledgling found dead later in month
(MW).