



Figure A. Mississippi Kite, Root, Montgomery Co., © Courtney Moore.

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Summer 2009 was cooler than average and very wet. June ended slightly cooler than average with rainfall 1.28" above average at Albany International Airport. July was among the wettest on record. It rained 21 days that month, with rainfall 6.41" above average. The rain flooded streets, rivers, and fields. Farmers couldn't cut hay for most of the month, giving a slight break to nesting grassland birds, but this advantage was probably eclipsed by poor foraging conditions and greater thermoregulatory challenges. August warmed up a bit and dried out. The month ended 2° F above average with rainfall near average. Berries such as blackcaps and wild raspberries benefited from the rain, as did wild grapes, many large-seeded grasses, and sumac. It was an average cone crop and flooding disrupted growth and reproduction of many species of emergent vegetation along the Hudson River and other floodplains.

The rarest birds of the season are without question the county-record sightings of two **Mississippi Kites** in Montgomery County. Steph Restuccia reported that on 1 June, while travelling down Mapletown Road south of Canajoharie, she spotted a pale-colored raptor in a tree. As she checked off its field marks—pale head, solid grey breast, dark tail, and wings that extended just beyond the tip of the tail—she rushed home for her camera and alerted other birders to come see the bird. And come they did, from Buffalo, from Long Island, from beyond. The regular sightings of the bird created excitement, especially one year after documented breeding kites had been recorded in New Hampshire and Connecticut. On 28 June, Rich Guthrie and Kevin McCann spotted a second Mississippi Kite at the same location, fueling speculation that

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the birds could be nesting. Additional study revealed that the two birds represented an adult and sub-adult. For most of July, sightings of the birds were reported almost daily as birders staked out nearby roads and the birds' favorite perching snags. Despite extensive searching effort by many, I am not aware of any confirmed nests or of sightings of fledglings, leaving the question of nesting unfortunately unresolved.

Shorebird migration went largely unnoticed, probably because the high water table erased marginal shorelines and mudflats and flooded meadows were either obscured by high grass or inaccessible. I did receive word of a tarrying Sanderling. Two reports of Snowy Egret were likewise surprising.

T. Lloyd Williams reported an Albany County flock of 80 Common Nighthawks, a number rarely reported in Region 8 anymore. A second report of 60 came in the next day nearby in downtown Albany.

Bill Cook sent word of a **Summer Tanager** that had flown against the window at the Columbia County Golf Club in Claverack on 1 July. The last report of this species in Columbia County was June 2000 when a road-killed female was found by Jens Braun in Chatham and brought to Bill Cook to add to his study skin collection at Columbia-Greene Community College.

Reports of rarer grassland specialists did not materialize this summer. We have no reports of Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, Clay-Colored Sparrow, or Henslow's Sparrow—all the more disappointing because so many birders checked the hayfields and meadows of Montgomery County diligently as they travelled to that area to chase the celebrity Mississippi Kite.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

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

Blue-winged Teal: Neiber Swamp Livingston COLU 2 Aug; Austerlitz COLU 22 Aug.
White-necked Scoter: Saratoga L SARA 17 Jun.

Com. Loon: Galway L SARA 1-18 Jul; L George WARR 13 Aug.

Red-necked Grebe: COH 8-20 Jun.

Least Bittern: 2 Black Creek Marsh ALBA 4 July.

Great Egret: 5 Colonie ALBA 23 Jul; Greenport COLU 23 Jul; COH 25 Jul; COX Boat Launch 25 Jul; Niskayuna SCHE 31 Jul; 2 Scotia SCHE 5 Aug.

SNOWY EGRET: Halfmoon Crescent SARA 26 Aug; Austerlitz COLU 30 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 2 COH 8-12 Aug.

Black Vulture: 3 Ravena ALBA 6 Jun; Greenport COLU 17 Jun; Hillsdale COLU 8 Jul.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

MISSISSIPPI KITE: 2 Root MONT 1 Jun-3 Aug (SR, mob, photographed), 1st county record.

Merlin: Ames MONT 7 Jul.

Black-bellied Plover: L George WARR 1 Jun.

Semipalmated Plover: L George WARR 1 Jun.

Solitary Sandpiper: Western Gateway Bridge SCHE 19 Jul; COX Flats 23 Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: COH 8 Aug; COX 12 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: COH 8 Aug.

Upland Sandpiper: max 7 Ames MONT 29 Jun.

SANDERLING: COX Boat Launch GREE 23 Aug.

Least Sandpiper: max 6 COH 20 Aug.

Bonaparte's Gull: L George WARR 8 Jun; COH 25 Jul.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

SNOWY OWL: Albany County Airport 6 Jun, rare in summer.

Long-eared Owl: max 5 Rensselaerville ALBA 1 Jun-13 Jul.

Com. Nighthawk: max 80 Guilderland ALBA 22 Aug (TLW); 60 Albany 23 Aug.

Whip-poor-will: 5 Cold Spring Road SARA 4 Jun.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Slingerlands ALBA 6 Jun.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: Hunter Mt GREE 6 Jun.

White-eyed Vireo: Hannacroix Creek Preserve ALBA 5 Jun.

Cliff Swallow: 2 Gansevoort SARA 8 Jun; Perth FULT 2 Jul; Southern RENS 29 Jul.

Bicknell's Thrush: 3 Hunter Mt GREE 6 Jun.

WARBLERS

"Brewster's Warbler": Hannacroix Creek Preserve ALBA 4-21 Jun.

Golden-winged Warbler: Hannacroix Creek Preserve ALBA 4 Jun.

N. Parula: Johnsburg WARR 13 Jun.

Cape May Warbler: Partridge Run WMA ALBA 23 Aug.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Saratoga Battlefield SARA 23 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: Hunter Mt GREE 6 Jun, Chatham COLU 28-30 Jun.

Cerulean Warbler: Hannacroix Creek Preserve ALBA 4 Jun; 2 Schodack I COLU 20 Jun.

Mourning Warbler: Hunter Mt GREE 6 Jun; Partridge Run WMA ALBA 15-21 Jun; Petersburg RENS 24 Jun; max 3 Burnt-Rossman SF SCHO 27 Jun.

Hooded Warbler: New Salem ALBA 4-21 Jun; Bennett Hill Preserve ALBA 10 Jun.

Canada Warbler: Salem RENS 24 Jun.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

Vesper Sparrow: Greenwich WASH 24 Jun.

Grasshopper Sparrow: Sharon Springs SCHO 4 Jun; 2 Rensselaerville ALBA 4 Jun-13 Jul; Scotia SCHE 3 Jul; Saratoga Battlefield SARA 16 Jul.

SUMMER TANAGER: Claverack COLU 1 Jul (JF).

E. Meadowlark: FtE WASH 1 Jun.

Orchard Oriole: Saratoga Battlefield SARA 4 Jun.

Red Crossbill: 5 Crane Mt WARR 13 Jun; 4 Partridge Run WMA ALBA 1 Aug; 10 Burnt-Rossman SF 16 Aug; 2 Partridge Run WMA 23 Aug; Fox Hill Road SARA 23 Aug.

White-winged Crossbill: Hunter Mt GREE 6 Jun.

Pine Siskin: Taghkanic COLU 15 Jun; Hillsdale COLU 26 Jun.

Evening Grosbeak: Edinburg SARA 9 Jun; 2 Eleventh Mt WARR 13 Jun.