

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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September was relatively warm and dry, which most North Country residents found to be a great relief after the seemingly endless cool, damp weather that predominated throughout most of the spring and summer. The average temperature in Watertown for September was 60.9° F, which is just 0.8° above normal, but the 2.3" of rain that fell was exactly half of average. This dry respite from a generally cold and wet year ended in October, as the month's mean temperature was 46.4°, or 1.8° below normal, and measurable precipitation fell on 12 of the first 13 days of the month. This precipitation fell much as it did earlier in the year, a little bit at a time most days of the week, and total

precipitation for October was 4.7", only 0.9" above normal. November was unseasonably warm, with a mean temperature of 42.3°, or 4.8° above average. The 3.1" of precipitation that fell in November was 1.5" below normal. Not surprisingly, given the relatively warm November, Watertown received no measurable snowfall for the season.

High pressure predominated throughout September, and with a few exceptions migration was very slow. Several observers commented on the scarcity of migrants, and a question I heard frequently all fall from both birders and non-birders was "Where are the geese?" Small numbers of Canada and Snow Geese passed through the Region from mid-September through early October, but after that virtually no sizable movements were noted through the end of the period. Presumably these birds stayed to our north into December. Consequently, most goose observations for the period consisted of local movements between feeding and roosting sites. The most notable exception was a **Ross's Goose** seen in a flock of low-flying Canada Geese over Fort Drum during mid-October on one of the few days when geese moved conspicuously. As usual, I received a few Brant reports, but this species mostly passed through the Region unnoticed.

A few species highlighted the duck migration. For the second consecutive fall, an adult male **Eurasian Wigeon** was at Wilson Hill WMA, this time for at least a month. Five King Eiders at Montario Point in late November marked the second time in three years that multiple eiders were found at this location. Black Scoters made an impressive showing, with several reports from inland locations, including 58 on the Black River, 130 at Upper and Lower Lakes WMA on 2 November, and smaller tallies at several locations during October and November. These Black Scoter numbers are the highest reported from the Region in about 20 years, but many earlier high counts came from the head pond above the Robert Moses Dam in Massena, which is no longer accessible to birders because of concerns about terrorism. Most other duck species were observed in average to below average numbers.

Loons and Grebes mostly moved through in modest numbers, although daily November counts of 1-5 Red-necked Grebes on the St. Lawrence River between Waddington and Massena were more than usual. Certainly the highlight among wader reports was the **186 Great Egrets** at the roost site in Stockholm; it seems that this site is setting Regional record high egret counts annually. An American Bittern at Perch River WMA on 24 October was somewhat later than usual. American Coots were notably scarce, especially compared with the previous two falls, when good numbers of coots were observed at several locations in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties.

Generally speaking, raptor numbers were lackluster, and by the end of the season it certainly did not look like the winter was going to be a particularly good one for raptor watchers. There were a few highlights, including three Golden Eagles and five Peregrine Falcons, but most species were observed in relatively low numbers. Merlin was notable among these species, as the two reports I received was well below the totals reported in recent falls. The first Rough-legged Hawk, found in Hounsfield by Gerry Smith on 17 September,

was about a month earlier than usual, but this was the only report until mid-October, when a modest number of birds began showing up. By season's end raptor numbers were low to average in most traditional wintering areas.

High water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River continued well into September, and shorebirds were consequently hard to come by during the traditional peak of migration for most species. Water levels dropped steadily throughout most of September, and by early October a fair amount of shoreline was exposed, so it was natural to expect that some of the typically late migrating species might be seen in good numbers, but shorebirds remained scarce throughout. Despite this general scarcity, 19 species were reported, which is better than some recent falls. The highlight was a Red Phalarope at Coles Creek SP on the St. Lawrence River on 1 November. Other notable shorebirds included a Whimbrel at El Dorado and 11 American Golden-Plovers in a recently harvested cornfield in Louisville, representing the largest group of golden-plovers reported in Region 6 in many years.

Most observers felt that the landbird migration was very slow, and that many species seemed to slip through rather quickly, with few lingering past their typical migration windows. There were relatively few days when substantial movements of birds were noted, the largest passage occurring on 24 September, when a nice diversity of species was observed, with particularly large numbers of Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and White-throated Sparrow. Also observed briefly on this day was a **Dickcissel** on Fort Drum.

Many passerine and near passerine species seemed to vacate the breeding grounds relatively early this fall, as illustrated by systematic searches for three species on Fort Drum in both 2008 and 2009. During 2008, Red-headed Woodpeckers were consistently seen in breeding areas until 18 September, Sedge Wrens until 14 October, and Clay-colored Sparrows until 3 October. This year similar efforts turned up no Red-headed Woodpeckers after 1 September, no Sedge Wrens after 9 September (despite record numbers this summer and apparently excellent productivity), and no Clay-colored Sparrows during the period. Anecdotal observations suggest that many other breeding species departed relatively quickly. Aside from isolated reports of Red and White-winged Crossbill and a few scattered Pine Siskins, there was no movement of northern finches or other irruptives into the area. Consequently, by the middle of November there seemed to be few birds present in upland areas other than resident species, making for quite a contrast with the previous two falls, when finches and other northern irruptives flooded into the Region during this period.

The season's species tally was 198, which is slightly below the average from recent falls, the main difference being that many winter species that have shown up each of the last few Novembers didn't this year. Waterfowl dominated the highlights, including Ross's Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, King Eider, and large numbers of Black Scoter, along with Red Phalarope and Dickcissel. The "lowlight" was certainly the general lack of birds late in the season, an early suggestion that it might be a very long winter for North Country birders.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRB – Black River Bay; CCSP – Coles Creek SP; CV – Cape Vincent; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; GPSP – Grass Point SP; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, Canton; ML – Massawepie Lake, Piercefield; MP – Montario Point, Ellisburg; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course trail, Canton; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Pt. Peninsula; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP; SLR – St. Lawrence River; TP – Tibbet's Point, Cape Vincent; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WP – Whalen Park, Louisville; WS – Winthrop Swamp, Stockholm.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: arr ED 18 Sep; few reports thru.
ROSS'S GOOSE (R6): with 60 Canada Geese FD 15 Oct (JB).

Brant: 8 arr CV 10 Oct; max 250 CV 12 Oct.

Tundra Swan: sev reports 30-100 per day CV & PtPen early Nov thru.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 Pleasant Lake T Champion 25 Sep; 5 PRWMA 2 Oct.

Wood Duck: last FD 3 Nov.

Gadwall: max 60 WHWMA 2 Nov.

EURASIAN WIGEON (R6): ad m WHMWA 7 Oct - 8 Nov (JB).

Am. Wigeon: max 360 PRWMA 24 Oct.

Am. Black Duck: max 272 PtPen 7 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: max 64 ULLWMA 3 Oct; last PRWMA 24 Oct.

N. Shoveler: 2 PRWMA 2, 24 Oct; 2 ULLWMA 3 Oct.

N. Pintail: max 34 PRWMA 24 Oct.

Green-winged Teal: max 143 WP 17 Oct.

Redhead: 365 WHWMA 8 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: 1040 ULLWMA 25 Oct; 1290 WHWMA 13 Nov.

Greater Scaup: 2013 CV 12 Oct; no reports from BRB where Regional high counts normally occur.

Lesser Scaup: max 168 PRWMA 11 Nov.

King Eider: 5 MP 30 Nov (JB).

Surf Scoter: arr 2 GPSP 15 Oct; 2 CCSP 13 Nov.

White-winged Scoter: arr CV 12 Oct; 40 MP 22 Oct; 170 MP 30 Nov.

Black Scoter: 6 Raquette River T Potsdam 22 Oct (CS); 3 Black River T Champion 24 Oct & 58 same location 2 Nov (MJ); 130 ULLWMA 2 Nov (JB); Norwood L T Potsdam 13 Nov (JC); 38 CCSP 29 Nov (JB); 6 additional reports 1-10 L Ontario and SLR 22 Oct thru.

Long-tailed Duck: max 1200 MP 30 Nov.

Bufflehead: arr FD 8 Oct, early (JB).

Com. Goldeneye: arr Pt. Salubrious 14 Oct; max 275 SLR near Eisenhower Lock 21 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 92 WHWMA 13 Nov; numbers lower than recent falls.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 210 Thousand Islands SP 19 Nov.

Red-throated Loon: SBSP 20 Nov.

Com. Loon: max 33 SLR Waddington & Massena 8 Nov.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 96 ULLWMA 3 Sep.

Horned Grebe: max 16 PtPen 21 Nov.

Red-necked Grebe: TP 15 Oct & 11 Nov; 1-2 per day Barnhart Island 8 Nov thru; 3 CCSP 8 Nov; MP 9 Nov; Leishman Pt T Waddington 13 Nov; 2 PtPen 21 Nov.

Am. Bittern: last PRWMA 24 Oct.

Great Egret: max 186 WS 3 Sep (RS), new Regional high; last Dekalb 30 Sep.

Green Heron: last Dekalb 13 Sep.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 5 WS 3 Sep.

Turkey Vulture: scarce after 24 Oct.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: last Wellesley Is. 15 Sep.

N. Harrier: 1-5 per day thru.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr Hounsfield Sep 17 (GS), early; next reports 15 Oct when arrived in numbers.
Golden Eagle: ad FD 14 Oct; imm chasing imm Bald Eagle FD 2 Nov; imm T Colton 13 Nov.
Merlin: T Champion 25 Sep; FD 5 Oct.
Peregrine Falcon: ED 18 Sep; PtPen 29 Sep; FD 1 Oct; PRWMA 24 Oct; Galop Is SLR 22 Nov.
Com. Moorhen: max 14 ULLWMA 12 Sep; last PRWMA 24 Oct.
Am. Coot: 1-2 per day ULLWMA 6 - 25 Oct; many fewer than previous two falls.
Black-bellied Plover: 6 ED 7 Sep.
Am. Golden-Plover: 11 in harvested cornfield T Louisville 27 Sep; FD 1 Oct.
Semipalmated Plover: max 5 ED 7 Sep.
Killdeer: last ED 17 Oct.
Spotted Sandpiper: last ED 18 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: last FD 30 Sep.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 7 Dekalb 30 Sep; last WHWMA 23 Oct.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 4 ULLWMA 3 Sep; last Dekalb 24 Sep.
Whimbrel: ED 8 Sep.
Ruddy Turnstone: 2 ED 8 Sep.
Sanderling: 25+ ED 8 Sep.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 3 ED 11 Sep.
Least Sandpiper: last Dekalb 18 Sep.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 6 ULLWMA 20 Oct.
Dunlin: 24 WP 17 Oct.
Short-billed Dowitcher: singles ED 11 & 18 Sep.
Am. Woodcock: max 20+ FD 22 Sep.
Red Phalarope: flying past CCSP 1 Nov (JB).
Bonaparte's Gull: max 93 PtPen 20 Nov.
Caspian Tern: last WP 13 Sep.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: Dekalb 18 Nov.
Short-eared Owl: 6-8 per day CV mid-Nov thru.
Com. Nighthawk: 2 Dekalb 2 Sep, only report.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last FD 15 Sep.
Belted Kingfisher: scarce after 17 Nov.
Red-headed Woodpecker: last FD 1 Sep.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: Madrid 21 Nov.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last FD 1 Oct.
Black-backed Woodpecker: max 3 ML 9 Sep.
N. Flicker: scarce after mid-Oct.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last FD 16 Sep.
Alder Flycatcher: last FD 8 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last 2 FD 30 Sep.

E. Phoebe: last SBSP 16 Oct.
E. Kingbird: last ICNC 3 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr FD 3 Nov.
Blue-headed Vireo: last PRGC 9 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last PRGC 9 Oct.
Philadelphia Vireo: 2 FD 14 Sep; FD 21, 24 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last FD 24 Sep.
Gray Jay: max 4 ML 19 Oct.
Horned Lark: 80 Canton 22 Nov.
Tree Swallow: max 700-800 PtPen 26 Sep; last ULLWMA 12 Oct.
Barn Swallow: last ULLWMA 12 Sep.
Tufted Titmouse: FD 22 Oct; most records this location Oct & Nov.
Carolina Wren: CV 17 Oct.
House Wren: last FD 5 Oct.
Winter Wren: scarce after 25 Oct.
Sedge Wren: last FD 9 Sep.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr ED 25 Sep.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 16 Sep; last ED 22 Oct.
E. Bluebird: scarce after 10 Nov.
Veery: last FD 24 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: ED 1 Oct.
Swainson's Thrush: last FD 19 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last PtPen 2 Nov.
Wood Thrush: last FD 24 Sep.
Am. Robin: peak movement 21 - 25 Oct.
Gray Catbird: last ICNC 10 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last FD 28 Sep.
Am. Pipit: 24 FD 2 Nov; 20 FD 3 Nov, many reports 1-12 per day 14 Sep - 3 Nov.
Cedar Waxwing: max 50+ Henderson 20 Nov.

WARBLERS

Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 10 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: last ED 1 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: ICNC 26 Sep & 10 Oct (JB); FD 28 Sep (JB); Potsdam 29 Sep & 2 Oct (JC); 2 FD 8 Oct; PRGC 9 Oct (JB).
Nashville Warbler: last ICNC 10 Oct.
N. Parula: last FD 30 Sep.
Yellow Warbler: last FD 22 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last FD 17 Sep.
Magnolia Warbler: last ED 1 Oct.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last T Fine 4 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: last FD 30 Oct.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last FD 1 Oct.
Blackburnian Warbler: last FD 14 Sep.
Pine Warbler: last FD 5 Oct.
Palm Warbler: last FD 5 Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last FD 14 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 8 Oct.
Black-and-white Warbler: last FD 9 Sep.
Am. Redstart: last ED 1 Oct.

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Ovenbird: last FD 17 Sep.
N. Waterthrush: last FD 10 Sep.
Mourning Warbler: last FD 8 Sep.
Com. Yellowthroat: last Potsdam 16 Oct.
Wilson's Warbler: last FD 30 Sep.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last FD 14 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr ICNC 25 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: last FD 19 Oct.
Clay-colored Sparrow: none found on regular searches FD where numerous reports 2008 to early Oct.
Field Sparrow: last FD 20 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last FD 15 Oct.
Savannah Sparrow: last FD 29 Oct.
Henslow's Sparrow: FD 9 Sep, only report (JB).
Fox Sparrow: arr ICNC 27 Sep; last FD 9 Nov.
Song Sparrow: scarce after 2 Nov.
Lincoln's Sparrow: 1-3 per day FD 9 Sep - 29 Oct; 2 Potsdam 24 Sep; Potsdam 27 Sep.
Swamp Sparrow: last FD 29 Oct.
White-throated Sparrow: scarce after 2 Nov.

White-crowned Sparrow: arr ICNC 26 Sep; last FD 29 Oct.
Dark-eyed Junco: arr FD 14 Sep; migrants generally in lower than usual numbers.
Lapland Longspur: arr FD 21 Oct.
Snow Bunting: arr PRGC 23 Oct.
Scarlet Tanager: last Potsdam 27 Sep.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last FD 24 Sep.
Indigo Bunting: last FD 24 Sep.
DICKCISSEL (R6): FD 24 Sep (JB).
Bobolink: last FD 17 Sep.
E. Meadowlark: scarce after 24 Oct.
Rusty Blackbird: arr ICNC 20 Sep; max 330 ICNC 26 Sep, early for so many; last 35 PRGC 7 Nov.
Com. Grackle: max 6000 Leray 24 Oct.
Baltimore Oriole: last FD 8 Sep.
Purple Finch: many moving thru Oct; scarce after 10 Nov.
Red Crossbill: 2 FD 24 Nov, only report.
White-winged Crossbill: FD 10 Nov, only report.
Pine Siskin: "few" Fine 11 Oct; few other reports.