

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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According to the Northeast Regional Data Center, Watertown's mean temperature for September was 62.3° F, or 2.2° warmer than normal, and the month's total of 4.4" of precipitation was within 0.2" of normal. However, this summary attributes to 1 October the 3.2" of rain that actually fell on 30 September, resulting in a record-high October precipitation total. If not for this one very wet day the first two months of the season would have been only slightly wetter than normal. The relative warmth gradually moderated through the season, as mean monthly temperatures were 1.3° above normal in October and 0.8° warmer than average for November. The last month of the period was also fairly dry, with just 3.3" of precipitation, 1.2" below average. The first snow flakes noted in lowland areas fell 31 October, but the first snow that amounted to anything fell on Thanksgiving weekend.

Waterfowl numbers were mixed, with some species present in good numbers but others rather scarce. Numbers of dabbling ducks were particularly low, as I was reminded frequently by several of my duck hunting coworkers. Diving ducks were generally present in good numbers, highlighted by multiple reports of all three scoter species from inland bodies of water. Common Mergansers were an exception, with low numbers at traditional staging areas on the St. Lawrence River, but perhaps they were using different parts of the river, such as Wolfe Island on the Canadian side, where I heard late reports of record numbers. Waterfowl rarities include a male **Eurasian Wigeon** at Wilson Hill WMA for the third consecutive fall and single King Eiders at Montario Point on two dates. Up to five Ruddy Ducks were at Perch River and Upper and Lower Lakes WMAs, good numbers compared with recent years.

Among the most notable water birds was Red-throated Loon, a species that is scarcely reported in the Region most years but was seen in modest numbers this season. A report of three Red-throated Loons migrating up the St. Lawrence River past Coles Creek State Park on 1 October was notable, as this species is rarely reported from the river. The best loon tally of the season was the 115 Common Loons that Nick Leone counted off Point Peninsula 16 November. An early September tally of 90 Pied-billed Grebes on Lower Lake is about average, but it should be noted that a complete census of Upper and Lower Lakes WMA would give a much higher count. Both Horned and Red-necked Grebes were seen in modest numbers. Just a few years ago a count of 151 Great Egrets would have been unheard of in the Region, but this tally from the Winthrop Swamp roost is actually slightly lower than last year's high count.

There are no active hawk watches in the Region, and consequently the size and quality of the raptor migration is difficult to assess. For instance, no Broad-winged Hawks and only one Red-shouldered Hawk were reported, the latter

coming from Point Peninsula, where this species is scarce at any season. But both of these species must have passed through the Region in some numbers in September. Dates with good raptor movements included 1 October, when migrant raptors over or near Fort Drum included one Golden Eagle, three Merlins, and one Peregrine Falcon, and 18 November, when two Golden Eagles passed over Fort Drum. By the end of the season Rough-legged Hawks and other winter raptors were present in modest numbers.

A Virginia Rail in Stockholm and a Sora on Fort Drum on successive days were the only report for each species. A raft of more than 100 American Coots was at Wilson Hill WMA for several weeks, but this species was scarce elsewhere. A report of two Sandhill Cranes in Lisbon in early September, with a note that they had probably been present all summer, generated some discussion about the status of this species as a breeder in Region 6. Rumors persist that Sandhill Cranes successfully nested in Lisbon sometime prior to 2005, perhaps predating the first nesting record for New York, but documentation is lacking. Until 2009 there were no summer reports from Lisbon after the rumored nesting attempt, and the suggestion made by at least one person on a listserv that Sandhill Cranes have been nesting in Lisbon "since the early 2000s" is to my knowledge not supported by facts.

Once again, low water levels on Lake Ontario provided little shorebird habitat, and few shorebirds were reported. Water levels dropped throughout September until the heavy rains on the 30th flooded the shoreline and ruined any chances for good late-season shorebirding. In addition to high water, human disturbance is becoming a severe problem at El Dorado, as increasing numbers of visitors to the beach south of the Nature Conservancy preserve seem to view the preserve as part of the public beach. On 10 September 64 Sanderling were at El Dorado, but none of the other 15 or so reports I received from this site included more than 10-20 individuals, mostly of the same few species. Excluding species that breed in the Region, the only other report of double-digit shorebirds from any location was a flock of nearly 90 Dunlin at Wilson Hill WMA on 30 October. The only unusual species of the season were American Golden-Plover, with birds heard at Fort Drum and Indian Creek Nature Center; two White-rumped Sandpipers at El Dorado; and a Baird's Sandpiper at a farm field along Coles Creek.

Among the season's highlights were several rarely reported gulls, mostly from Lake Ontario. An immature Black-legged Kittiwake was at Montario Point on 20 November, Little Gulls were at Robert G. Wehle State Park in September and Black River Bay in November, and Lesser Black-backed gulls were reported from both Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. None of these species have been reported with any regularity since the Robert Moses Power Dam was made off-limits to visitors in 2001. The only white-winged gull of the season was an Iceland Gull Nick Leone found at Tibbet's Point 20 November.

Regular early morning visits to Whip-poor-will breeding areas on Fort Drum documented calling individuals regularly through 9 September, with the last bird heard on 20 September. Typically Red-headed Woodpeckers depart Fort Drum nesting sites by the last week of September, so this year's last date of

1 October is slightly later than usual. Red-headed Woodpeckers are often seen in this area during the early fall moving with large numbers of flickers and Blue Jays, but such groups were not noted this year, and no large movements of Northern Flickers were reported anywhere. Instead, flickers remained relatively common and widespread through the end of the period.

Compared with 2009, the fall passerine migration was more prolonged and generally more active. Good numbers of flycatchers were reported, including both Willow and Alder Flycatchers identified by call notes. Similarly and somewhat unusually, all of the Region's breeding swallows except Purple Martin were reported in September. Unfortunately, the season's biggest miss was the failure, again, of anybody to document Cave Swallow during the now annual northeastern invasion. The timing of the largest incursion to eastern Lake Ontario during mid-week did not help, as apparently none of the Region's already scarce birders were able to get away from work to watch the Lake Ontario shoreline for swallows.

One of the best migratory events of the season came on the nights of 9-10, and 10-11 September, when large numbers of Swainson's Thrushes were heard passing over Canton. Oddly enough, a visit to Indian Creek Nature Center on 11 September turned up few thrushes and no Swainson's, but the 20 warbler species seen that day represented the best *parulid* diversity of the season. Another heavy thrush movement early on the morning of 1 October included large number of both Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, including the season's heaviest movement of the latter species. The sparrow migration was heaviest during the first week of October, particularly on 7 October, with high counts of Chipping, Lincoln's, and White-crowned Sparrows.

Sadly, one of the few true rarities of the season was a dead **Yellow-breasted Chat** found by David Buckley in his yard. The chat showed no obvious trauma, and the reason for its demise is unclear. The other warbler highlight was a Connecticut Warbler on Fort Drum 5 October, seen well before it vanished into dense underbrush. Notable passerines not previously mentioned include eight Philadelphia Vireos, the last on 18 September, and five Orange-crowned Warblers between 26 September and 17 October.

It was generally a modest year for winter irruptives, but Bohemian Waxwings were rather scarce. I kept expecting to see or hear about this species based on reports from other Regions of New York, but only a single report came in by the end of November. Finch numbers were better, beginning with a few Pine Siskins moving in September. Siskins increased in October and by the beginning of November were joined by good numbers of Evening Grosbeaks, then modest numbers of Common Redpolls. A few White-winged Crossbills also passed through the Region in November, and there was a single report of 2 Red Crossbills flying over Fort Drum. By late November feeder-watchers were reporting Pine Siskins from throughout the Region and good numbers of Evening Grosbeaks primarily from the Adirondacks and foothills, but crossbills were absent and redpolls were scarce at feeders.

The 220 species reported represents the highest fall total in recent years. With a few more observers in the Region this tally could easily be much higher,

as certainly many species were missed because of poor coverage. The total of 27 wood warblers summarized here is largely the result of a single observer searching for migrant songbirds daily, and prior to this birder arriving in the Region fall warbler tallies were consistently much lower. Just one birder with a similar devotion to watching Lake Ontario would likely add many species that are usually missed in the Region, Cave Swallow being one very good example. Once again, the lack of any Cave Swallow sightings is among the big disappointments of the season, along with the low shorebird numbers.

CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Badger, Jeff Bolsinger, Dick & Marion Brouse, David Buckley, Carol Cady, Tom Carrolan, Sheila Cerwonka, Joan Collins, Rich Guthrie, Wendi Haugh, Anne Johnson, Robert Meredith, Nick Leone, Jerry & Judi LeTendre, Bill Purcell, Antony Shrimpton, Gerry Smith, Michael Stewart, Robert & June Walker, Tom & Eileen Wheeler, Bob Williams, Hans & Madeline van der Zweep.

ABBREVIATIONS

BRB – Black River Bay; CCSP – Coles Creek State Park; CV – Cape Vincent; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; HH – Henderson Harbor; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, Canton; KC – Kelsey Creek, Watertown; LPd – Leonard Pond trail, Colton; MM – Massawepie Mire, Piercefild; MP – Montario Point, Ellisburg; PilPt – Pillar Point; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course trail, Canton; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Pt. Peninsula; RWSP – Robert G. Wehle State Park; 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: 2 arr CCSP 25 Sep; 101 FD 10 Nov; 100+ Potsdam 26 Nov; few reports.

Brant: 60 SBSP 16 Oct; Castorland 20 Oct only report away from L Ontario or SLR; 125 CV 22 Oct; 24 CCSP; 11 SBSP 23 Nov.

Mute Swan: max 12 PRWMA 22 Oct.

Tundra Swan: max 250+ BRB 25 Nov.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 Wilson's Bay CV Sep; unmarked ad WHWMA 30 Oct-3 Nov; probably same ad at nearby WP 5 Nov.

Wood Duck: HH 23 Nov; 3 Canton 26 Nov; CCSP 28 Nov; good numbers for so late.

Gadwall: max 31 WHWMA 30 Oct, low.

EURASIAN WIGEON (R6): ad m WHWMA 25 Sep-30 Oct (JB), 3rd year at this site.

Am. Wigeon: max 255 WHWMA 25 Sep.

Am. Black Duck: 150+ MP 20 Nov; 200 PilPt 25 Nov; low numbers at most locations.

Blue-winged Teal: max 13 Coles Creek 19 Sep; last ULLWMA 13 Oct.

N. Shoveler: 2 ULLWMA 31 Oct; ULLWMA 7 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 23 FD 20 Sep; 16 ULLWMA 26 Sep.

Green-winged Teal: max 59 WP 13 Nov; low numbers throughout.

Redhead: max 335 WHWMA 30 Oct.

Ring-necked Duck: max 2050 WHWMA 25 Sep; 620 ULLWMA 25 Oct.

Greater Scaup: 350 CV 13 Oct; max 1000+ BRB 25 Nov.

Lesser Scaup: max 40 WHWMA 3 Oct.

King Eider: SY m MP 24 Oct; f MP 20 Nov.

Surf Scoter: SLR Ogdensburg 8 Oct; 16 Lehman Park Potsdam 16 Oct; ULLWMA 29 Oct; 8 SLR Ogdensburg.

White-winged Scoter: 10 SLR Ogdensburg 8 Oct; 61 SBSP 16 Oct; 275+ scoters MP 24 Oct mostly White-winged; 23 CCSP 30 Oct; 13 ULLWMA 31 Oct; raft 400 ducks mostly this species with Black Scoter & Bufflehead L. Bonaparte 6 Nov.

Black Scoter: 2 Lehman Park Potsdam with Surf Scoters; 1-3 SLR Waddington several

dates 30 Oct-19 Nov; 30 ULLWMA 31 Oct; 3 MP 20 Nov.
Long-tailed Duck: max 1200 MP 20 Nov.
Bufflehead: arr WHWMA 3 Oct.
Com. Goldeneye: max 295 SLR Massena 19 Nov.
Hooded Merganser: max 169 WHWMA 11 Nov.
Com. Merganser: max 96 CCSP 11 Nov, low.
Red-breasted Merganser: arr CCSP 3 Oct; max 104 SLR Massena, high for STLA.
Ruddy Duck: 5 PRWMA 11 Oct; 2-5/day ULLWMA 29 Oct-7 Nov.
Red-throated Loon: 3 migrating past CCSP 30 Oct ; 6 reports L Ontario 16 Oct-23 Nov; max 4 PtPen 10 Nov; more than usual.
Com. Loon: max 115 PtPen 16 Nov.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 90 ULLWMA 6 Sep; last ULLWMA 21 Nov.
Horned Grebe: 9 SBSP 16 Oct; 9 MP 24 Oct; 2 ULLWMA 31 Oct, only report away from L Ontario or SLR.
Red-necked Grebe: CV 13 Oct; 4 BRB 23 Oct; 3 SLR Waddington 30 Oct; max 5 PtPen 10 Nov; CCSP 11 Nov.
Great Blue Heron: more than usual late Nov.
Great Egret: max 151 WS 19 Sep; last WS 16 Oct.
Green Heron: last Lisbon 11 Oct.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: 2 WS 19 Sep; last WS 2 Oct.
Turkey Vulture: last Watertown 3 Nov.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: last HH 23 Oct.
N. Harrier: 4-8/day CV Oct & Nov.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 16 reports.
Cooper's Hawk: 12 reports.
N. Goshawk: juv PRWMA 7 Oct, only report.
Red-shouldered Hawk: ad PtPen late Oct, only report.
Broad-winged Hawk: few reports Sep.
Red-tailed Hawk: 12-20/day CV Nov.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr CV 17 Oct; 5-6/day CV & Hammond Nov.
Golden Eagle: Antwerp 1 Oct; FD 5 Oct; 2 FD 18 Nov.
Am. Kestrel: 10-20/day CV to mid Sep; scarce after 7 Oct.
Merlin: 11 reports; max 3 FD 1 Oct.
Peregrine Falcon: Watertown 8 Sep; FD 1 Oct; harassing N. Harriers ICNC 2 Oct; several reports Massena likely resident pr.
Virginia Rail: WS 19 Sep, only report.
Sora: FD 20 Sep, only report.
Com. Moorhen: last Dekalb 4 Oct.
Am. Coot: 13 PRWMA 11 Oct; max 110 WHWMA 3 Nov; 1-2 two other locations.

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Sandhill Crane: 2 Lisbon early Sep; possibly present all summer (AJ).
Black-bellied Plover: 4 reports 1-2 Sep.
Am. Golden-Plover: FD 27 Sep; ICNC 2 Oct.
Semipalmated Plover: max 2 ED 3 Sep; last ED 11 Oct.
Killdeer: last FD 1 Oct.
Spotted Sandpiper: last ED 9 Oct.
Solitary Sandpiper: last FD 20 Sep.
Greater Yellowlegs: last CV 9 Oct.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 7 ED 3 Sep; last FD 20 Sep.
Sanderling: max 64 ED 10 Sep.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 3 ED 12 Sep; ULLWMA 2 Oct, only reports.
Least Sandpiper: last 3 Dekalb 25 Sep.
White-rumped Sandpiper: 2 ED 8 Oct.
Baird's Sandpiper: Coles Creek Louisville 12 Sep.
Dunlin: max 86 WHWMA 30 Oct.; 7 Pt. Salubrious 1 Nov; last 3 WHWMA 5 Nov.
Wilson's Snipe: max 26 FD 20 Sep; last FD 8 Nov.
Am. Woodcock: 10+ Limerick Cedars 12 Oct; last FD 30 Nov.
Black-legged Kittiwake: MP 20 Nov, only rep.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 53 BRB 5 Nov.
Little Gull: RWSP 8 Sep (BP); first cycle BRB 5 Nov (NL).
Iceland Gull: 1st cycle TP 20 Nov.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 3rd cycle PtPen 8 Nov (NL); ad SLR Massena 28 Nov (JB).
Caspian Tern: last ED 12 Sep.
Com. Tern: last CCSP 25 Sep.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: last FD 14 Sep.
Com. Nighthawk: no reports.
E. Whip-poor-will: 2-3/day FD 2-9 Sep, calling; last 3 FD 20 Sep, heard.
Chimney Swift: last Gouverneur 7 Sep.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last ED 10 Sep.
Belted Kingfisher: scarce after 4 Nov; Canton 14 Nov.
Red-headed Woodpecker: last FD 1 Oct.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: moving through FD 26 Oct.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: scarce after 6 Oct; last PtPen 24 Nov.
Black-backed Woodpecker: none reported away from usual locations MM, LPd.
N. Flicker: no large movement migrants noted; many still present throughout late Nov.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last FD 9 Sep.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 5 reports; last FD 16 Sep.
Alder Flycatcher: last WS 19 Sep, call heard.
Willow Flycatcher: FD 2 Sep; Traill's Flycatcher thought to be this sp. ED 10 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last FD 15 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last Canton 7 Nov.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last ICNC 15 Sep.
E. Kingbird: no reports.
N. Shrike: arr CV 23 Oct.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last ICNC 11 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 13 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last FD 20 Sep.
Philadelphia Vireo: LPd 6 Sep; 5 reports FD 7-17 Sep; ED 10 Sep; last ICNC 18 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last FD 13 Oct.
Gray Jay: max 10 MM 13 Oct, high.
Horned Lark: several flocks flying down center of SLR 11 Nov.
Tree Swallow: last 8 CV 16 Oct.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: last ICNC 11 Sep.
Bank Swallow: last ULLWMA 6 Sep.
Cliff Swallow: last ULLWMA 6 Sep.
Barn Swallow: last Canton 12 Sep.
Boreal Chickadee: max 5 MM 2 Oct.
Tufted Titmouse: Canton 31 Oct.
Carolina Wren: Canton 9 Nov thru.
House Wren: last FD 5 Oct.
Winter Wren: max 14 LPd 6 Sep; 8 FD 5 Oct; last ICNC 17 Oct.
Marsh Wren: last FD 28 Sep.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 10 Sep; last obvious migrating individual FD 18 Nov.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 17 Sep; last FD 26 Oct.
E. Bluebird: scarce after 26 Oct.
Veery: last FD 23 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: nocturnal flight calls early am Canton 11, 16, 17, 20, 23, & 27 Sep; max & last 25-30 flight calls in 5 mins Canton 1 Oct.
Swainson's Thrush: heaviest movements Canton 9 & 20 Sep, 1 Oct; last FD 4 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last FD 26 Oct.
Wood Thrush: last ICNC 11 Sep.
Am. Robin: max 300 FD 27 Oct; many still present lowlands late Nov.
Gray Catbird: last KC 19 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last FD 5 Oct.
Am. Pipit: arr ED 17 Sep; max 225 CV 16 Oct; last FD 28 Oct.
Bohemian Waxwing: several Clarkson U campus Potsdam 19 Nov, only report.
Cedar Waxwing: few flocks after 31 Oct.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: heard over ICNC 18 Sep; Massena 11 Nov; PRGC 21 Nov.

Snow Bunting: arr 8 MP 24 Oct; heavy migration 28 Oct-4 Nov & 10-11 Nov.
Tennessee Warbler: last FD 1 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: ICNC 26 Sep & 17 Oct; FD 7, 14 Oct; PRGC 8 Oct.
Nashville Warbler: last FD 1 Oct.
N. Parula: last ICNC 26 Sep.
Yellow Warbler: last FD 15 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last FD 17 Sep.
Magnolia Warbler: last MM 2 Oct.
Cape May Warbler: 2 FD 10 Sep; ICNC 11 Sep; only reports.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last Mt. Arab 23 Sep.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 135 FD 1 Oct; last FD 26 Oct.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last ICNC 2 Oct.
Blackburnian Warbler: last FD 4 Oct.
Pine Warbler: up to 20/day in foraging flock with E. Bluebirds and Chipping Sparrows FD most of Sep; last 6 FD 1 Oct.
Prairie Warbler: singing on summer territory FD 9 Sep, only report.
Palm Warbler: last FD 7 Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last ICNC 2 Oct.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 12 Oct.
Black-and-white Warbler: last ICNC 11 Sep.
Am. Redstart: last ICNC 26 Sep.
Ovenbird: last RWSP 25 Sep.
N. Waterthrush: last FD 14 Sep.
Connecticut Warbler: FD 5 Oct, second FD in 3 years, both first week Oct.
Mourning Warbler: last ICNC 18 Sep.
Com. Yellowthroat: last FD 7 Oct.
Wilson's Warbler: last FD 26 Sep.
Canada Warbler: last ICNC 11 Sep.
YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (R6): dead on Piercefield lawn 27 Sep (DB, photos).

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last FD 12 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr FD 7 Oct, early, with 50+ Chipping Sparrows; max 115 FD 4 Nov.
Chipping Sparrow: last FD 3 Nov.
Field Sparrow: last FD 8 Nov, with Am. Tree Sparrows; also last Canton 8 Nov, at feeder with juncos.
Vesper Sparrow: last FD 13 Oct.
Savannah Sparrow: last FD 28 Oct.
Fox Sparrow: arr FD 4 Oct; last FD 9 Nov.
Song Sparrow: scarce after 26 Oct.
Lincoln's Sparrow: max & last 5 FD 7 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: scarce after 26 Oct; last PRGC 27 Nov.
White-throated Sparrow: max 91 ICNC 26 Sep; last large migration 31 Oct; more than usual Nov.

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White-crowned Sparrow: arr ICNC 18 Sep;
last RWSP 8 Nov.

Dark-eyed Junco: arr ICNC 11 Sep; several
flocks 100+ FD 26-27 Oct.

Scarlet Tanager: last ICNC 18 Sep.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last FD 21 Sep.

Indigo Bunting: last FD 24 Sep.

Bobolink: last FD 14 Sep.

E. Meadowlark: few reports; 2 PtPen 29 Nov.

Rusty Blackbird: arr ICNC 18 Sep; 150 ICNC
26 Sep; max 275 FD 14 Oct; 150 KC 20 Oct;
200 ULLWMA 29 Oct; last large flocks 3 Nov
include 100 FD & 135 ULLWMA; many
smaller flocks; last Canton 25 Nov.

Com. Grackle: scarce after 29 Oct.

Baltimore Oriole: last FD 13 Sep.

Purple Finch: many Oct; scarce after 5 Nov.

Red Crossbill: 3 FD 16 Nov, only report.

White-winged Crossbill: 2 FD 3, 10 Nov.

Com. Redpoll: arr Clifton 7 Nov; small
numbers thru.

Pine Siskin: arr FD 23 Sep; many moving 1
Oct to 7 Nov; many at feeders thru Nov.

Evening Grosbeak: migrants widespread in
lowlands 30 Oct-12 Nov; many reports mostly
Adirondacks & foothills feeders late Oct thru.