

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

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A pleasant and dry June was welcome relief following a very wet spring. The average temperature was 66.8° F, 1.0° above average. A total of 3.47" of rain fell at the Buffalo airport, 0.35" below normal, with much of it falling 22-24 June. July was the third warmest month in the 141 year record for Buffalo. The average temperature was 75.2°, 4.4° above normal. Rainfall was 2.72", 0.42" below average. The warm summer weather continued through August. The average temperature was 71.3°, 1.7° above normal. There was 3.94" of rain, 0.68" above average. Hurricane *Irene* hit the east coast on 28 August but brought no rain to the Region. Some gusty winds may have grounded a few shorebirds, but no notable storm-birds were discovered. Weather data was excerpted from National Weather Service *Monthly Weather Summary* for Buffalo.

I read or received few comments about nesting success. The wet spring followed by a hot summer likely had both winners and losers. Jeff Reed remarked that Eastern Meadowlarks did well for a second year in a row, aided by the longer and thicker grass from the wet spring.

We are fortunate that NYSDEC continues to monitor colonial waterbirds on Motor Island and elsewhere. Great Egrets had another banner year, with a new nest count maximum of 53 at Motor Island and five nests on the islands above Niagara Falls, a new nesting site. Nesting of Great Blue Herons, and Black-crowned Night-Herons to a lesser extent, were negatively affected by a surge in Double-crested Cormorants. Cormorants have preferred nesting on nearby Strawberry Island, but a Bald Eagle set up territory (no nest) there this spring and many cormorants took to Motor Island. The number of cormorant nests swelled by more than 600 from last year to 1,476 this year, including 399 at Motor Island, where there were none for at least the last three years. NYSDEC culled or oiled 61% of the nests to protect the heron and egret colonies from being taken over by cormorants.

Common Tern nests increased in 2011 to 1,721 pairs, aided in part by a NYPA-funded gravelling project on one of the Buffalo Harbor breakwalls. Chick mortality was increased due to the prolonged heat, minks reaching one of the breakwalls, Great Horned Owl depredation (chicks and adults), and cormorant guano from above nests. Herring Gull nests on Donnelly's sandpit were up to 199. Ring-billed Gull nests are counted every five years, with the next survey due next year. The last count in 2007 had 37,407 pairs in the Region.

There were seven territorial **Peregrine Falcon** pairs, six nests, and 16 chicks from the five successful nests. **Merlins** were found in three areas in June and July, two of which were near previous breeding locations. The other was found by Brendan Klick in Snyder in early July. Osprey and Bald Eagle nests

remain on the increase. A pair of Osprey took up residence on a platform at Tift Nature Preserve.

There were few of the grassland obligate breeders reported this year. **Upland Sandpipers** were found only at Tillman Road WMA, a regular breeding location, and a migrant was observed in late August over Grand Island. Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrow went unreported; this is the fourth consecutive year for the later.

Most of the other uncommon and/or declining breeding species were found in similar numbers as in recent years. Potential breeding **Common Nighthawks** were in North Buffalo again, and one in Hinsdale on 3 July is more likely a possible breeder than migrant based on date. Migrant nighthawk reports were not numerous in late summer. **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were reported in decent numbers for recent years. Golden-winged Warbler went unreported, but effort to find this species may have been very low. **Yellow-throated Warbler** was present in the Red House Section of the Allegany SP, a regular occurrence for most the last decade. **Prothonotary Warblers** were at their regular location at Tonawanda WMA again, with an additional sighting in Iroquois NWR. **Clay-colored Sparrows** were reported from three locations, including one new location in North Harmony, Chautauqua County. A **juvenile Pine Siskin** was photographed in Wilson in mid-July.

Uncommon for location were White-throated Sparrows along Lake Ontario in Wilson, with a juvenile in late July and an adult in late August. An adult in East Aurora was also beyond expected range in summer. Previous breeding, with few exceptions, has occurred in the Southern Tier. Similarly, a Dark-eyed Junco in Wilson throughout the summer was well north of breeding areas in the Region.

The summer shorebird season was average, with most reports coming from Iroquois NWR, Batavia WWTP, and Dunkirk Harbor. **American Avocet** sightings are nearly annual now and there were two sightings this summer. Joe Gula and Joanne Goetz reported one at Dunkirk Harbor on 21 August, and Joe Fell found a group of six at Woodlawn Beach SP on 30 August. An **adult Long-billed Dowitcher** was photographed by Willie D'Anna at Kumph Marsh at Iroquois NWR on 27 August. A **Wilson's Phalarope** was observed by several birders at Kumph Marsh 17-20 August.

A **Little Gull** was found in early July among immature Bonaparte's Gulls at Fort Niagara SP, which continues a trend from recent years. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were again found in early summer as well as one in late August. Nick Sly identified a **Parasitic Jaeger** along Lake Ontario in late August. Two **Forster's Terns** in Wilson on 20-21 June were a little unusual based on the date, as they are not known to breed locally but do occur in the Toronto area.

There were several higher counts of swallows in August with Tree, N. Rough-winged, Bank, and Barn reported in the hundreds. Alec Humann counted 642 Purple Martins in one hour flying west over Grand Island on the morning of 30 August. Migrant warblers were reported in typical numbers over the last two weeks of August.

There were some interesting rarities this summer, highlighted by the two second-ever records. Gil and Jann Randell were nicely surprised to see four **Wood Storks** fly overhead and land in treetops along Route 394 in the town of Chautauqua on 3 August. The storks soon got up and flew to the southwest. A secondhand report on the same day included a sighting of four storks drifting and gliding in circles one half mile to the southwest of where the Randells last saw them flying. The only other Regional Wood Stork record was a group of three seen near Olean over a two week span in August 1978.

August 2010 brought the first **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** record for the Region. August 2011 brought the second. Joe Mitchell was alerted to the find on 24 August at Conewango Swamp WMA by Matt King, a NYSDEC wildlife technician. Mitchell confirmed the sighting, obtained good photographs, and spread the word. Many birders were able to see the bird over the next few days, with undocumented reports into early September.

Miley Miller identified an adult male **Blue Grosbeak** at a feeder at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown on 2 June. It represents the first summer record for the Region.

Some other notable reports of uncommon species included the annual late summer visit by **Eared Grebes** at Batavia WWTP, a **Black Vulture** sighted with Turkey Vultures along the Niagara River in Lewiston, two reports of two **Sandhill Cranes** at Kumph Marsh in late August, and a flyover **White-winged Crossbill** in Alfred.

The Colonial Waterbird and Peregrine Falcon nest data are courtesy of Connie Adams and Jacque Walters of NYSDEC.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AlSP – Allegany SP, CATT; AmSP – Amherst SP, ERIE; BeSP – Beaver I SP, ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWTP – Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; CSWMA – Conewango Swamp WMA, CATT; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; MI – Motor I, NR ERIE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA, ORLE/GENE; PB – Point Breeze, ORLE; PG – Point Gratiot, CHAU; RTPi –

Roger Tory Peterson Institute, CHAU; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo, ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA, GENE/NIAG; WFWMA – Watts Flats WMA, CHAU; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK:

CSWMA 24 Aug thru (JM!, mob, NYSARC), second for Region, two consecutive Augs, *intro*.

Mute Swan: max 7 PB 17 Jul; 2 GHSP 28 Aug; only reports.

Trumpeter Swan: INWR 10 Jul, 27 Aug (WW!, WD!); OOWMA 16 Jul (WW!); suspected same bird present thru summer.

Wood Duck: 141 OOWMA 26 Jun (WW); 123 BWWT 9 Aug (KF); max 147 N. Harmony CHAU 14 Aug (TL).

Gadwall: max 5, 8 BWWT 15 Jun, 23 Aug.

Am. Wigeon: 2, 2, 1 BWWT 5, 26 Jun, 10 Jul; 5, 5 INWR 5 Jun, 20 Aug; only reports.

Am. Black Duck: 2, 4 BWWT 15 Jun, 14 Aug; not reported from any other location.

Blue-winged Teal: Tift NP 1 Jun; arr 2 BWWT 10 Aug; 5, 4 INWR 19, 30 Aug.

N. Shoveler: 2, 1 BWWT 1 Jun, 9 Aug; 3, 4 INWR 20, 30 Aug; only reports.

Green-winged Teal: INWR 5 Jun; 2, 7, 34 BWWT 15 Jun, 24 Jul, 23 Aug; max 62 INWR 30 Aug; 7 CSWMA 25 Aug.

Redhead: no reports.

Ring-necked Duck: BWWT thru (KF, WW), most frequent summer location in Reg.

L. Scaup: DH 2 Jul (TL), unusual in summer.

Com. Merganser: W Seneca ERIE 8 Jun, extending range north along creeks.

Red-breasted Merganser: Olcott NIAG 5 Jun, only report.

Ruddy Duck: 34, 28, 68 BWWT 5 Jun, 17 Jul, 10 Aug, regular in summer at this location; INWR 10 Jun.

Com. Loon: AISP 26 Jun (PY), only report.

Pied-billed Grebe: 3 BWWT 12 Jun; max 35 TWMA 29 Jul.

Red-necked Grebe: Wilson NIAG 21 Aug (WD!), very early.

EARED GREBE (R1): 1, 2 BWWT 20, 25 Aug (JM, DS), annual at this location in late summer and fall.

WOOD STORK: 4 Mayville CHAU 3 Aug (GR! JRa! NYSARC), only second report for Reg, *intro*.

Double-crested Cormorant: 1476 nests from Buffalo Harbor, NR (JWa, CA), way up from last few years, 61% of nests culled or oiled; max 565 BuSP 3 Aug.

Am. Bittern: max 1, 4 INWR 21 Jun, 12 Aug; BWWT 14 Aug.

Least Bittern: Hartland NIAG 5 Jun (WD);

INWR 5 Jun, 1 Jul, 21 Aug; 2 Pomfret CHAU 11-19 Jun; continued nesting pairs at Tift NP Jun; TWMA 29 Jul; good showing.

Great Blue Heron: 21 nests MI 3 May (CA), way down from cormorant intrusion, 88 nests present in mid-April.

Great Egret: 53 n, 50 n MI 3 May, 14 Jun, record nest count (CA); 5 n NF 14 Jun (WW, CA), new loc; 72, 71 MI 20 Jun, 11 Jul (WW); max 150, 139 TWMA 29 Jul, 17 Aug, roost.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 48 nests MI 3 May (CA); 10 INWR 23 Aug.

BLACK VULTURE (R1): Artpark SP NIAG 18 Aug (RR), over NR with many Turkey Vultures.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: expanding as breeder; n Tift NP, new breeding location.

Bald Eagle: well reported from nesting areas.

N. Goshawk: Andover ALLE 29 Jun (EB), only report.

Merlin: 2 Olean CATT 4 Jun, 1 Jul (JRe), near last year's breeding location; Snyder ERIE 6, 8 Jul (BK!); Jamestown CHAU 21-27 Jul (JB); Buffalo ERIE 10 Aug; 2 AISP 18 Aug (CC); CSWMA 24 Aug; BWWT 30, 31 Aug; NF 30 Aug.

Peregrine Falcon: 16 chicks from the five regional nests (JW, CA).

Virginia Rail: Frewsburg CHAU 4 Jun; Tillman WMA 5 Jun; BWWT 12 Jun, 10 Jul, 9 Aug; CSWMA 25, 27 Aug; only reports away from INWR.

Sora: Bethany GENE 25 Jun; INWR 16 Aug; CSWMA 25 Aug; only reports.

Am. Coot: max 21 INWR 12 Jun.

C. Gallinule: max 49 INWR 30 Aug.

Sandhill Crane: 2 INWR 22, 29 Aug (KF, BC!), rare in summer.

Black-bellied Plover: arr INWR 21 Aug; BWWT 28 Aug, only reports.

Semipalmated Plover: arr 3 TWMA 26 Jul; max 7 BWWT 20 Aug.

AM. AVOCET (R1): DH 21 Aug (JGu, JGo); 6 WoBSP 30 Aug (JF!); reports now annual along L. Erie in summer.

Spotted Sandpiper: max 33, 38 BWWT 10 Jul, 14 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr Sherman CHAU 2 Jul; max 12 TWMA 26 Jul.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr TWMA 20 Jul.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last Hartland NIAG 5 Jun; arr 3 INWR 11 Jul; max 54 INWR 16 Aug.
Upland Sandpiper: 2, 7 Tillman Rd WMA ERIE 5 Jun, 1 Jul, regular location; Grand I ERIE 6 Aug (AH), migrant.

Ruddy Turnstone: arr INWR 27 Aug; max 8 BWWT 28 Aug; Olcott NIAG 28 Aug; Wilson NIAG 28 Aug; Buffalo NR 31 Aug.

Sanderling: arr 1 Wilson NIAG 25 Jul; max 18 Wilson NIAG 28 Aug; 11 WoBSP 30 Aug; 2 BWWT 30 Aug; 10 Buffalo NR 31 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: last 19 BWWT 5 Jun; arr BWWT 17 Jul.

Least Sandpiper: arr 2 Sherman CHAU 2 Jul; max 49 BWWT 18 Jul.

White-rumped Sandpiper: BWWT 28 Aug (KF), only report.

Baird's Sandpiper: arr BWWT 25 Aug, only report.

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr Kiantone CHAU, 3 BWWT, 2 TWMA 24 Jul.

Stilt Sandpiper: arr 1 TWMA 29 Jul; TWMA 20 Aug; only reports.

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 2 INWR 27 Aug; 2 INWR 31 Aug; 3, 2 BWWT 28, 30 Aug; only reports.

Long-billed Dowitcher: ad INWR 27 Aug (WD!), adults rarely documented.

Wilson's Snipe: 2, 7 Sherman CHAU 2, 15 Jul; max 18 INWR 20 Aug.

Wilson's Phalarope: INWR 17-20 Aug (CM, mob), only report.

Bonaparte's Gull: 4, 6 Wilson NIAG 4, 20 Jun; 116 FNSP 8 Jul; 2 ad Wilson NIAG 25 Jul; 2 BWWT 14 Aug.

Little Gull: FNSP 8 Jun (WW!), continued reports at this location in recent early summers.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 2, 1 Wilson NIAG 4, 14 Jun (WD!); Olcott NIAG 5 Jun (WD!); consistent with recent year sightings in early Jun; Olcott NIAG 28 Aug (NS).

Herring Gull: 199 nests Buffalo Harbor ERIE, highest since 2007 (CA).

G. Black-backed Gull: max 9 Wilson NIAG 4 Jun; 5 Buffalo ERIE 12 Jun; 6 DH 2 Jul; 4 PB 17 Jul.

Caspian Tern: 2 BWWT 12 Jun; 4 DH 23 Jun; max 66 Wilson NIAG 24 Jun; 23 PB 17 Jul.

Black Tern: 17 INWR 13 Jun; max 18 TWMA 10 Jul (MW); Wilson NIAG 21 Aug; 1, 6 BWWT 25, 28 Aug.

Com. Tern: 2323 nests Buffalo Harbor, NR 19 May (CA), highest count in several years, minks predated some breakwall colonies; max 250 N Tonawanda NR 20 Jun; 10 Wilson NIAG 21 Jun; BWWT 17 Jul; 70, 117 Wilson NIAG 25, 26 Aug.

Forster's Tern: 2 Wilson NIAG 20, 21 Jun (WD!), unusual for date.

Parasitic Jaeger: arr Wilson NIAG 28 Aug (NS).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Com. Nighthawk: 2 Buffalo ERIE 5 Jun (PY); Hinsdale CATT 3 Jul (TL); arr 2 Clarence ERIE 16 Aug; 1-3 Tonawanda ERIE 16-31 Aug; 2 INWR 20 Aug; Alden ERIE 30 Aug; only reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 2 + n Hamburg ERIE 1-31 Jun; Wilson NIAG 3 Jul; Squaw I NR ERIE 7 Jul; 2 + n Canadaway Creek NS CHAU 31 Jul; max 9 PG 14 Aug (TL); only reports.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: last AISP 4 Jun (TB).

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr Tift NP 28 Aug; AmSP 31 Aug.

Acadian Flycatcher: max 4 AISP 2-9 Jul.

Least Flycatcher: arr Buffalo ERIE 27 Aug.

Philadelphia Vireo: arr Tift NP 28 Aug; 2, 1 AmSP 29, 31 Aug (RS).

Com. Raven: 2 Marilla ERIE 23 Aug (LH), continued evidence of creeping north.

Purple Martin: 36 Bethany GENE 30 Jun; 50 INWR 28 Jul; 64 NF 26 Aug; max 642 Grand I ERIE 30 Aug (AH!), one hour migration count.

Tree Swallow: 373 BWWT 23 Aug (KF); max 750 BWWT 28 Aug (KF).

N. Rough-winged Swallow: max 125 BWWT 9 Aug (KF).

Bank Swallow: 400 DH 14 Aug (TL); 550 N Tonawanda NIAG 17 Aug (WW); max 750 BWWT 28 Aug (KF).

Cliff Swallow: max 45 Tonawanda I NR 14 Jul.

Barn Swallow: 400 BWWT 9 Aug (KF); max 500 DH 14 Aug (TL).

Sedge Wren: no reports.

Veery: max 30 INWR 21 Jun (WW); arr Wilson NIAG 27 Aug.

Swainson's Thrush: last Buffalo ERIE 7 Jun; max 8 AISP 3 Jul (TL); arr Tift NP 21 Aug (RS).

Brown Thrasher: Squaw I NR ERIE 7 Jul, interesting location.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Louisiana Waterthrush: reported from seven locations.

N. Waterthrush: max 4 TWMA 13 Jun.

Golden-winged Warbler: no reports.

Blue-winged Warbler: arr AmSP 26 Aug.

Black-and-white Warbler: 3 Allegheny Ind Res CATT 5 Jun (PY); Carroll CHAU 10 Jun (MMo); arr BeSP 17 Aug.

Prothonotary Warbler: TWMA 13, 21 (PH, WW), only regular recent breeding location; INWR 18 Jun (JWe).

Tennessee Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 31 Aug.
Nashville Warbler: 1, 2 Andover ALLE 10 Jun, 4 Jul (EB); arr BeSP 30 Aug.

Hooded Warbler: arr AmSP 26 Aug.

Am. Redstart: arr BeSP 17 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: Carroll CHAU 10 Jun (MMo, PM); max 7 AISP 26 Jun (PY); AmSP 31 Aug (RS), rare in fall migration; only reports away from INWR and vicinity.

N. Parula: 2-8 AISP 4-26 Jun (TB, PY); Yorkshire CATT 16 Jun; arr AmSP 29 Aug.

Magnolia Warbler: arr BeSP 22 Aug.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr Tift NP 21 Aug.

Blackburnian Warbler: arr 2 AmSP, 2 NFSP 26 Aug.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr 2 AmSP 25 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: last Wilson NIAG 5 Jun; arr Buffalo ERIE 27 Aug.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr AmSP, NFSP 26 Aug.

Pine Warbler: reported from six breeding locations; max 8 INWR 10 Jun (WW).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 12 Aug.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (R1): AISP 4 Jun (TB!), nearly annual this loc last decade.

Prairie Warbler: 2 Frewsburg CHAU 4, 10 Jun (JB); N. Harmony CHAU 20, 25 Jun; max 10, 9 Yorkshire CATT 19, 29 Jun (PY, RS).

Canada Warbler: WFWMA 20 Jun, 9 Jul; 3 + yg Ward ALLE 3 Jul; arr Williamsville ERIE 14 Aug (RS).

Wilson's Warbler: arr 2 Wilson NIAG, AmSP 26 Aug.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Clay-colored Sparrow: 2 Ashford CATT 19 Jun (PY); N Harmony 25 Jun (JB, KV), new loc; 4 Yorkshire CATT 26 Jun (ED, DB).

Vesper Sparrow: Newfane NIAG 5 Jun; Andover ALLE 6 Jun; Yorkshire CATT 16 Jun; 3 Ashford CATT 19 Jun; max 5 Ashford CATT 2 Jul; only reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 8 Tillman Rd WMA ERIE 1 Jul (RS); Bethany GENE 30 Jun. **Henslow's Sparrow:** no reports.

White-throated Sparrow: 3 Ward ALLE 12 Jun; max 8 Alfred ALLE 16-21 Jun (EB); Allenberg Bog CATT 9 Jul; ad E Aurora ERIE 20-22 Jul (RR), unusual loc; juv Wilson NIAG 28 Jul (WD!), unusual loc; ad Wilson NIAG 28 Aug (WD!).

White-crowned Sparrow: Portland CHAU 3 Jun (CH); last Wilson NIAG 7 Jun (BP, WD), late.

Dark-eyed Junco: Wilson NIAG 4, 23 Jun, 9, 13 Aug (BP, WD), unusual location for summer.

BLUE GROSBEAK: RTP1 2 Jun (MMi, JB!), first Reg summer record.

Bobolink: max 40 Alfred ALLE 17 Aug; 35 Alexander GENE 26 Aug.

Orchard Oriole: AISP 4, 12 Jun (TB); 3 Porter & Wilson NIAG 5 Jun; Pomfret CHAU 7-23 Jun (TM); Hinsdale CATT 23-26 Jun (JRe); ad + juv Portland CHAU 7 Jun, last of family group seen 11 Aug; Grand I ERIE 30 Aug (AH), late.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL (R1): Andover 11 Aug (EB), heard flight call, very rare in Summer.

Pine Siskin: Wilson NIAG 16, 17 Jun (BP); juv Wilson NIAG 11, 12, 14 Jul (BP, WD!); only reports.

ESCAPES and EXOTICS

N. Bobwhite: Tonawanda Ind Res GENE 22 Jul (DB), presumed escape.

