

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

Jeffrey S. Bolsinger

98 State Street, Canton NY 13617

jsbolsinger@yahoo.com

Overall, summer was warmer and slightly wetter than average, with above normal temperatures all three months, but precipitation falling disproportionately during the late summer. June and July were both between 2° and 3° warmer than normal, and August was just 1.1° above average. Precipitation was all over the place, as June's total of 3.1" was almost exactly average, the 2.0" that fell in July was 1.3" below normal, and August's tally of 6.5" was 3.3" above normal. Hurricane *Irene* contributed modestly to local rainfall totals, but this storm was largely a non-event in Region 6, causing neither the devastation wrought in eastern New York nor the bonanza of avian rarities seen coastally.

Waterfowl were generally unexceptional except for a **Barnacle Goose** photographed by Michele Nelligan in Alexandria Bay on 31 July. This goose apparently was unbanded and showed no obvious signs of captive origins, but given the date it seems highly unlikely to represent natural vagrancy. Less exceptional but still unusual were two reports of Northern Shoveler in Jefferson County. Late summer Wood Duck numbers at Upper and Lower Lakes and Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Areas were substantially lower than that reported in 2009 and 2010 but were typical or above average elsewhere.

At least two observers reported seeing fewer than normal Ruffed Grouse broods and suspected that the very wet spring resulted in low nest success. Perhaps other early ground-nesting species also suffered high nest losses, but hard evidence supporting reduced nest success is lacking for any species. The Spruce Grouse nest found in Parishville during late May was abandoned by mid-June, and the female was not seen again.

Peregrine Falcons apparently nested successfully in Region 6 for the first time in recent history. Pairs at Payne Lake and on the Ogdensburg Bridge fledged one young each, but a nest on the Long Sault Dam apparently failed. These three locations have supported nests for at least two-three years with no known successful nesting attempts. Merlins on the other hand appear to be

nesting all over the place given ongoing increases, with many reports of nesting pairs or summering individuals.

The towns of Ellisburg and Lisbon hosted Sandhill Cranes for the fourth and third consecutive years, respectively. A juvenile crane observed in Ellisburg on at least two dates suggests that this pair successfully reproduced, although the juvenile was fully capable of flight by the time it was observed and thus could potentially have come from somewhere else. At least three adults spent the summer in Lisbon, but no young or indications of nesting behavior were noted.

As has been the case in recent years, shorebird numbers were low this summer, but more species were seen than during any recent summer, including some of the seasonal highlights for Region 6. Chief among these was a **Marbled Godwit** found by Tony Shrimpton in a flooded cornfield near Lake Ontario on 3 June. Six Ruddy Turnstones were on a cement navigation cell in the St. Lawrence River on 5 June, and I have since received word that this species regularly shows up on navigation cells in late May and early June, with some turnstones even predated Common Tern nests. Two White-rumped Sandpipers at a marshy farm pond in Dekalb on 14 June marked the end of the northward shorebird migration. Notable southbound migrants included two Stilt Sandpipers at the Canton Sewage Ponds and a Red-necked Phalarope at Wilson Hill, both on 26 August. American Golden-Plovers are rarely reported in Region 6 during the summer, so individuals on Fort Drum 16 August and Waddington 20 August were notable.

While taking the boat tour to Boldt Castle from Alexandria Bay, Nick Kiehl, a visiting birder from Pennsylvania, was surprised to see an adult **Laughing Gull**. This was the best of several reports submitted to eBird that I likely would not otherwise have known about. The Common Tern nesting population on the St. Lawrence River continues to increase in response to work funded by money from the New York Power Authority. The 1177 nests found this year was a new record total and is a 37.8% increase since 2009. All of this year's nests were found on the New York side of the river. Black Terns also made a good showing, with reports from several locations in addition to the usual nesting spots at Perch River and Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Areas.

Black-billed Cuckoos were unusually scarce in Region 6 this summer, but relatively high Yellow-billed Cuckoo numbers continue five years after the end of the last big tent caterpillar outbreak. The unusual result was that the two species were present in roughly equal numbers throughout. Red-headed Woodpecker numbers on Fort Drum also seemed down through June and most of July, as these birds were largely silent when surveys were conducted, but once young were out of the nest it became clear that the usual 9-10 pairs were present.

Henslow's Sparrows were at Fort Drum, where annual surveys found fewer than during the previous three summers; at Perch River Wildlife WMA, where several birders from other regions but apparently no local observers found up to five singing males; and in large hayfields in Hammond, where six males were reported in June but subsequent visits failed to find any. At least 11 Sedge

Wren territories on Fort Drum constituted the majority of reports, with one or two in three other locations. Upland Sandpipers were slightly more widespread but still found in low numbers compared with 10 years ago. Unfortunately, there is a growing tendency for most birders to visit either Fort Drum or Perch River to look for Henslow's Sparrows and other rare grassland birds, leaving most of the Region's potential habitat unexamined.

The obvious passerine highlight of the summer was a **Western Kingbird** Gabe Luongo found on Fort Drum 12 July (and this Regional Editor cannot resist commenting on his frustration at being on vacation and away from Fort Drum at the time). This kingbird was in an oak savannah area that seems very similar to nesting habitat in the western United States, and in combination with the date might suggest a breeding attempt, but this bird was only definitively seen on one day. A **Dickcissel** on Fort Drum on 3 August was the only other truly rare songbird report. A singing Golden-crowned Kinglet on Fort Drum 22 June was the first summer record for the installation, and a juvenile was found nearby during August. Surveys throughout the St. Lawrence Valley turned up good numbers of Golden-winged Warblers with few Blue-winged Warblers, but the latter species continues to increase on Fort Drum. Although Blue-wings remain scarce in St. Lawrence County, hybrids are increasing, and the northward expansion of Blue-winged Warblers seems inevitable. A very uncooperative Louisiana Waterthrush was at Downerville State Forest, where this species is annual. Irruptive finches were mostly absent, with one report each for Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak. Although Red Crossbills were reported elsewhere in the state, efforts to find this species at Leonard Pond and other St. Lawrence County locations with suitable habitat were entirely unsuccessful.

For the season I received reports of 203 species in addition to Barnacle Goose and Trumpeter Swan. This tally is the highest for the summer reporting season since I began compiling reports in 2005. This species tally was aided by visits to Region 6 by many birders from around New York and other states, as few birders who live in the Region submitted any sightings. Highlights include several rarities, with Western Kingbird being the clear stand out; improved shorebird diversity over recent years; and evidence suggesting that Sandhill Cranes nested in the Region, although solid confirmation remains elusive.

CONTRIBUTORS

Ginny Alfano, Andrew Baksh, Alan Belford, Jeff Bolsinger, Tom Burke, Richard & Marion Brouse, Bernie Carr, Carol Cady, Kelly Close, Joan Collins, Wayne Fidler, Lee Harper, Anne Johnson, Steve Kelling, Nick Kiehl, Josiah LaCelle, Monica LeClerc, Patricia Lindsay, Gabe Luongo, Mike McBrien, Shai Mitra, Michele Neligan, Robert Scranton, Tony Shrimpton, Kimberly Sucy, Mary Beth Warburton, David Wheeler, Tom & Eileen Wheeler, Hans & Madeline van der Zweep.

ABBREVIATIONS

CB – Chaumont Barrens, T Chaumont, JEFF; CV – T Cape Vincent; CWF – Canton wastewater facility; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; LPd – Leonard Pond trail, T Colton; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Piercefield and Colton; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; SLR – St. Lawrence River; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley Island SP; WS – Winthrop Swamp, T Stockholm.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Brant: CV 4 Jun (WF), late.

BARNACLE GOOSE: Alexandria 31 Jul (MN, photos!), date suggests escaped exotic.

Trumpeter Swan: max 9 PRWMA 3 Jul, presumably included y but report lacked details; no other report suggested successful reproduction.

Wood Duck: Aug numbers on ULLWMA & WHWMA impoundments only 10-20% that seen Aug 2009 & 2010; plentiful elsewhere.

Gadwall: max 25 PRWMA 24 Aug.

Am. Wigeon: max 25 PRWMA 24 Aug.

Blue-winged Teal: max 26 CWF 29 Aug.

N. Shoveler: 3 Antwerp 30 Jul; 3 Murray Isle 3 Aug.

N. Pintail: ULLWMA 7 Aug, only report.

Green-winged Teal: max 12 CWF 28 Aug.

Redhead: max 32 WHWMA 26 Aug.

Ring-necked Duck: max 136 WHWMA 26 Aug.

Com. Merganser: 5 reports 1-2 outside Adirondacks Jun & Jul.

Red-breasted Merganser: 7 WISP 4 July; ED 24 July.

Ruffed Grouse: broods reportedly scarce.

Spruce Grouse: Parishville nest abandoned by 14 Jun, no further reports from area.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 58 ULLWMA 7 Aug.

Red-necked Grebe: ad SLR Ogdensburg 28 Aug (JB).

Least Bittern: 2 StPt 24 July; 2 WHWMA 15 June.

Great Egret: max 126 WS 22 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: up to 20/day PRWMA thru; max 50 Murphy Is. 19 Jul.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Am. Kestrel: max 12 together FD 26 Jul.

Merlin: nesting population continuing to increase.

Peregrine Falcon: nests at Payne L & Ogdensburg Bridge fledged 1 y each; nest on Long Sault Dam apparently failed.

Com. Gallinule: max 21 PRWMA 21 Jul.

Sandhill Crane: Clayton 9 Jul (ML); pr with juv Ellisburg several dates Jun & Jul apparently first nesting Region 6 (GS, GA); 3 ad Lisbon thru Jul (AJ, MBW).

Am. Golden-Plover: FD 16 Aug; ad Waddington 20 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: northbound max 8 Ellisburg 4 June; southbound max 8 CWF 29 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: max 4 several locations Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: max 3 CWF 26 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: max 35 CWF 29 Aug.

Upland Sandpiper: 3-4 terr FD Jun; White River LEWI 7 Jun; Chaumont 11 Jun; 2 CV 30 Jul; 4 Dog Hill Rd T Orleans 22 Jul; apparently migrating: 3 FD 26 Jul; 1 FD 1 Aug; 1 FD 5 Aug.

MARBLED GODWIT: Ellisburg 3-4 Jun (TS, DW, JB, photos!, report to NYSARC).

Ruddy Turnstone: 6 on concrete navigation cells SLR Massena 5 Jun.

Sanderling: 3 flying up SLR past WHWMA 20 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: with Ruddy Turnstones SLR Massena 5 Jun only northbound report; 4 reports 1-2 late Aug.

Least Sandpiper: max 5 CWF 26 Aug.

White-rumped Sandpiper: 2 at marshy pond Dekalb 14 Jun, only report.

Stilt Sandpiper: 2 CWF 26 Aug (JB).

Red-necked Phalarope: WHWMA 26 Aug (JB).

LAUGHING GULL (R6): ad SLR Alexandria 23 Jun (NK).

Caspian Tern: 5-30/day PRWMA thru.

Black Tern: 30-45/day PRWMA thru early Aug; 20-30/day ULLWMA Jun; 20 Wilson's Bay CV 11 Jun; 4 LWMA 4 Jul.

Com. Tern: 1177 nests SLR highest in recent history and 37.8% increase since 2009 (LH).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 25+ reports.

Black-billed Cuckoo: about 30 reports; much scarcer than most years.

Long-eared Owl: FD 15 Jun.

N. Saw-whet Owl: FD 15 Jun.

Com. Nighthawk: 8-12 per day FD thru mid-Aug; no other breeding season reports.

E. Whip-poor-will: max 41 heard on 10-stop survey route FD 15 Jun.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 8-10 pr FD, where difficult to find until y fledged mid-Jul.

Black-backed Woodpecker: Parishville 4 Jul; max 3 LPd 5 Aug.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: migrant ULLWMA 14 Jun; breeding reports from High Falls Trail & Fox Marsh.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr FD 16 Aug; 4 additional reports late Aug.

W. KINGBIRD: FD 12 Jul (GL, photos!, report to NYSARC).

Philadelphia Vireo: MM 2 Jul, only report.

Gray Jay: 2 ad w juv White Hill Wild Area T Parishville 12 Jun; max 10+ MM 27 Jul; 8 LPd 5 Aug.

Horned Lark: max 11 FD 29 Jul.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: singing m FD 22 Jun & juvenile nearby 22 Aug, first documented breeding at this location.

Carolina Wren: Louisville 20 Aug; singing m Canton yard 30 Jul first in this location since Apr.

Sedge Wren: arr Ellisburg 3 Jun; max 11 FD 7 Jul, where y on several terr mid-Jul; 2 Dog Hill Road T Orleans 22 July; Hammond 2 Aug.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: South Sandy Creek Jun; different locations FD 10 Jun & 2 Jul.

N. Mockingbird: 2 pr FD thru, where nest w 3 y 25 Aug fledged 26 or 27 Aug (late); PRWMA 28 Jun; Hammond 12 July.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Louisiana Waterthrush: Downerville SF 26 Jun.

Golden-winged Warbler: many on surveys FD, Indian River Lakes, and W. St. Lawrence Valley.

Blue-winged Warbler: approximately as common as Golden-winged Warbler FD; much less common STLA; several presumed terr m resumed singing FD 18 Aug thru.

Blue-winged X Golden-winged Warbler hybrid: increasing STLA; 2 terr m

“Lawrence’s” FD Jun; migrant “Lawrence’s” FD 22 Aug

Tennessee Warbler: singing m FD 2 Jul not seen again; different location FD 10 Aug.

Hooded Warbler: 2 Winona SF T Lorraine 3 Jun.

Cape May Warbler: arr FD 22 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: 2 Rossie 11 Jun; Dekalb 14 Jun; 5-7 singing m FD Jun.

N. Parula: apparent very late northbound migrant FD 27 June; southbound arr FD 25 Aug.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr FD 22 Aug.

Blackburnian Warbler: many migrating last week Aug.

Yellow Warbler: migrating by 25 Jul.

Blackpoll Warbler: arr FD 22 Aug.

Palm Warbler: singing m Parishville, new location; well documented MM but not elsewhere in Adirondacks.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: apparent migrants FD 1 Aug.

Prairie Warbler: no reports away from traditional breeding sites FD & CB.

Canada Warbler: up to 12/day FD.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Clay-colored Sparrow: 50+ singing m FD Jun & Jul; Henderson 12 Jun (SK); Chaumont 30 Jun (AB).

Vesper Sparrow: 150+ singing m FD thru; no other reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: 50+ singing m FD thru; 6 other locations JEFF; 2 Hammond 14 Jun.

Henslow’s Sparrow: 6 terr m FD Jun declined to 4 Jul; up to 6 singing m reported Hammond 14 Jun could not be relocated; 5 terr m Dog Hill Rd T Orleans 11-12 Jun & 22 Jul.

Lincoln’s Sparrow: several reports each MM & Horseshoe L Bog; lack of reports elsewhere STLA result of poor coverage.

Dark-eyed Junco: 2 Philadelphia 11 Jun; juv FD 26 Jul; only reports away from Adirondacks & Tug Hill.

DICKCISSEL (R6): apparently migrating FD 3 Aug (JB).

Bobolink: migrating by 29 July; steady migration 16 Aug thru.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 1500 feeding in wild rice ULLWMA 28 Aug.

Rusty Blackbird: several reports from High Falls Trail.

Orchard Oriole: Clayton yard thru 23 Jun.

Baltimore Oriole: obvious migrants by 5 Aug.

Pine Siskin: Parishville 4 Jul.

Evening Grosbeak: 4 Hyde L JEFF 28 Jul.