

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Summer 2011 was among the wettest at Albany International Airport since record keeping began, mainly due to two tropical storms that dumped up to 15" of rain in some parts of the Catskill Mountains, caused region-wide flooding, and, in some cases, severe damage to habitats both natural and human. June ended a degree and a half warmer than average, with nearly an inch more rain than average. July continued to warm, ending 3.8° above average, with a heat wave topping out at 99° on the 21st. August ended slightly warmer than average, with seven more inches of rainfall than average at Albany. Several towns south of Albany, particularly in Schoharie and Greene counties, received more than 10" of rain from the remnants of Hurricane *Irene*, leading to historic flooding that destroyed entire hamlets and attracted national attention to the unprecedented scale of flooding and damage.

Many birders tried to scan the fields and rivers for hurricane-driven accidentals. Jesse Jaycox reported a neighbor who found a **White-tailed Tropicbird** on the side of the road in Stephentown, Rensselaer County, and attempted to send the bird to a rehabilitator. Unrelated to the storm, but nearly as tropical, many area birders were able to locate a wandering **American White Pelican** in the Capital District from Hudson to Cohoes between 8-16 August.

Although it may be hard for our birding neighbors in the Adirondacks and on Long Island to believe, it is big news in Region 8 that a **confirmed nesting record for Osprey** is at hand for the Hudson River. A pair has nested on one of the navigation stations very near the river border of Columbia and Greene Counties. For reasons difficult to understand, Ospreys have always been fairly common in summer on the mid-Hudson, having access to snags and suitable nesting sites and with broad open stretches of water with suitable prey, but the birds have never successfully bred here. In the 1980s, nesting platforms were erected in several locations along the Hudson, with no reports of success. We'll be keeping an eye out for any future breeding of this species in our Region.

The Region had three reports of **Sandhill Crane** this summer. One report, in Ancram, is the sixth record for that county. The first, according to Alan Devoe Bird Club records compiler, Bill Cook, occurred in 1967. Although increasing statewide, cranes are still a rare occurrence in the Region.

While conducting his annual mid-June dawn survey on Hunter Mountain, Steve Chorvas reported three Ruby-crowned Kinglets singing alternately and defending territories. They are an uncommon breeder on some of the highest peaks of the Catskills in our Region. Steve also recorded 15 Bicknell's Thrush near the Hunter summit this year.

A wet, late spring caused farmers to dive into their hayfields during a dry window in early June and cut as fast as they could, which likely led to poor

breeding outcomes for many grassland nesting birds. Richard Nord reported nesting success for a few pair of meadowlarks in Claverack, Columbia County. Rich frequently talks with the farmers who own the fields adjacent to his home, informs them of the birds' declining status, and asks if they could delay mowing. This sort of local action probably has just as much chance of saving grassland breeding birds as any national policy, and we commend Rich for just this sort of effort.

A few birders drove up to Ames, Montgomery County, this summer and recorded Henslow's Sparrows there, sparking an interesting conversation on where we can still find this sparrow elsewhere in the state and whether we should now consider this species threatened. It's a familiar story in our state, of declining farmland, forest succession, and fragmentation of suitable open grassland habitats, but what is new is a growing discussion of how amateurs, especially using free online software such as eBird, can help to document the status of this species and others between major efforts such as the Breeding Bird Atlas Program. These casual observations cannot supplant systematic study or replace statistical rigor, but so many ears and eyes can surely be put to good use. I would encourage ecologists, land managers, graduate students, and others to notify Regional editors if there are species of concern that we should be taking note of, especially species that might be common here now but declining significantly in other parts of their region- or continent-wide ranges.

CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Abrahamsen, Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Dave Baim, Hope Batchellor, Mona Bearor, Steve Chorvas, Gerry Colborn, Bill Cook, Tim Dormady, Corey Finger, John Finley, Dave Gibson, Elizabeth Grace, Jane Graves, Richard Guthrie, David Harrison, Ron Harrower, John Hershey, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Nancy Kern, Eric Kranz, Bill Lee, Alan Mapes, Dave Martin, Andrew Mason, Kelly McKay, Roger Miller, Mike Morgante, Frank Murphy, Gail & Rich Nord, Paul Novak, Tim O'Conner, Mike Peterson, John Piwowarski, Neil Powell, Bill Purcell, Barb Putnam, Bob Ramonowski, Will Raup, Steph Restuccia, Bill Ruscher, George Steele, Joan Suriano, Bill & Marion Ulmer, Alison Van Keuren, Marlene Vidibor, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, Tom Williams, T. Lloyd Williams, Chris Winters, Allan & Phyllis Wirth, Chad Witko, John Workman, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

COX – T Cossackie, GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards, WASH; HR – Hudson Ri; VF – Vischer's Ferry, SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

N. Shoveler: HR SARA 20 Jul.

Ruddy Duck: Schodack RENS 3 Jun.

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD:

Presbyterian Hill Rd Stephentown RENS 29 Aug (JJ), injured bird found along road.

AM. WHITE PELICAN (R8): Hudson COLU 8 Aug; Cohoes ALBA 8-16 Aug (mob).

Am Bittern: 3 HR SARA 14 Jun; HR WASH 29 Jun.

Least Bittern: BCM 17 Jul.

Great Egret: max 6 Cohoes ALBA 6 Aug.

Snowy Egret: New Baltimore GREE 20 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: MR SCHE 10 Jul.

Black Vulture: Ghent COLU 8 Aug; 2 Slingerlands ALBA 18 Aug; Hudson COLU 22 Aug.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

MISSISSIPPI KITE: 2 Root MONT Jun thru.

Osprey: confirmed nesting along the Hudson R seems imminent, *intro*.

N. Harrier: max 2 Ames MONT 14 Jul.

N. Goshawk: Dyken Pd RENS 4 Jun; Saratoga SARA 17 Jul; Partridge Run 5 Aug.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Potic Swamp GREE 12 Jun; Saratoga Airport SARA 14 Jul.

Sora: HR SARA 22 Jul.

Com. Gallinule: BCM 4 Jul.

SANDHILL CRANE (R8): Galway SARA 24 Jun; Ancram COLU 6-7 Jul; County Rt 57 GREE 21 Aug.

Black-bellied Plover: 2 Wright's Loop SARA 3 Jun.

Semipalmated Plover: max 16 Cohoes ALBA 16 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: Nassau RENS 22 Jul.

Greater Yellowlegs: max 3 Cohoes ALBA 4 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: COX grasslands 24 Jul.

Upland Sandpiper: 4 Ames MONT 11 Jun thru.

Sanderling: VF 15 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: COX grasslands 24 Jul.

Least Sandpiper: max 20 Cohoes ALBA 4 Aug.

Dunlin: HR WASH 14 Jun.

Caspian Tern: COX boat launch Aug 21.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Com. Nighthawk: max 22 Colonie ALBA 22 Aug.

E. Whip-poor-will: Cold spring Rd SARA 9 Jun; Ghent COLU 16 Jun; Hillsdale COLU 18 Jun; max 9 Malta Tech Park SARA 10 Jul.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Niskayuna SCHE 5-11 Jun.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: max 5 Hunter Mt GREE 15 Jun; COX grasslands 24 Jul; Partridge Run ALBA 20 Aug.

Cliff Swallow: 2 Saratoga 3 Jun; Alcove Res ALBA 5 Jun.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 3 Hunter Mt GREE 15 Jun, singing territorially.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Austerlitz COLU 28 Aug.

Bicknell's Thrush: max 15 Hunter Mt GREE 15 Jun.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

N. Waterthrush: Chatham COLU 2 Jun.

Mourning Warbler: Partridge Run ALBA 1 Jun-1 Jul; Blackhead Mt GREE 4 Jun; Burnt-Rossman SF SCHO 16 Jun-14 Aug; 2 Clapper Hollow SF ALBA 20 Aug.

Hooded Warbler: Coeymans ALBA 6-24 Jun; New Scotland ALBA 31 Jul.

Blackpoll Warbler: max 20 Hunter Mt GREE 15 Jun.

Canada Warbler: Hunter Mt GREE 15 Jun; 2 Clapper Hollow SF ALBA 20 Aug.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Grasshopper Sparrow: Saratoga Airport SARA 7 Jul; 2 Ames MONT 16 Jul.

Henslow's Sparrow: MacPhail Rd Ames MONT 11 Jul.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Rensselaerville RENS 14 Jul.

E. Meadowlark: 5 Ames MONT 14 Jul.

Orchard Oriole: Germantown COLU 11 Jun.

Red Crossbill: Burnt-Rossman SF SCHO 16 July; 3 Burnt-Rossman SF SCHO 14 Aug.

White-winged Crossbill: Edinburg SARA 19 Jul.

Pine Siskin: Cobleskill BBS route SCHO 5 Jun.

Evening Grosbeak: 5 S Glens Falls WARR 11 Jun; Providence SARA 23 Jun.

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