

## REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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It was an unusually warm fall, with above average temperatures all three months. The average monthly departure from normal temperatures ranged from +2.0° F for October to a whopping +6.0° for November. Precipitation was relatively light during the beginning and end of the period, with 3.5" in September and 3.1" in November, which are 0.7" and 1.5" below normal, respectively. October was wet, with 6.0", or 1.6" above normal. Not surprisingly, given the warm November temperatures, little snow fell during the period, with minor snowfall on 17 and 23 November that did not accumulate in most areas.

The dominant weather feature of this fall was a persistent wind that seemed to come out of the south every day for weeks at a time and out of the north hardly at all, frustrating birders hoping for big migratory movements. Few large movements of songbirds were noted all season, and in fact the largest warbler flocks I saw this "fall" passed through in August. The lack of north winds and accompanying flights of birds extended through the waterfowl season and into December.

This season's waterfowl migration conformed to the recent pattern of late passage of dabbling ducks and geese compared to long-term norms. Once again few Snow Geese passed through the Region during the fall reporting season, with a weak push of birds during the first half of October and then almost none until after the end of November. Many species of dabbling ducks showed a similar pattern, and I heard complaints from several hunter acquaintances that the current duck hunting season in Region 6 no longer matches the period when ducks are most numerous. Diving ducks bucked this trend, especially Ring-necked Ducks, which were present in excellent numbers, including more than 5,000 at Wilson Hill WMA. Notable waterfowl included a Cackling Goose on the Canton sewage ponds 7 October, an adult male Eurasian Wigeon at Wilson Hill for the fourth consecutive fall, and a Harlequin Duck on the St. Lawrence River in Cape Vincent. A Trumpeter Swan at Lucky Star Lake wearing a green wing tag with black numbers was one of two swans banded and tagged at nearby Perch River WMA in August.

Most water birds were present in typical numbers, although there did not seem to be as many Pied-billed Grebes at Upper and Lower Lakes as in recent years. More Red-necked Grebes were tallied on the St. Lawrence River than usual, but this may be the result of increased observer effort. The 191 Great Egrets counted at the Stockholm roost was a new record high count for Region 6, five more than the previous record from the same site. A Cattle Egret in a Waddington hayfield on 27 November was the first reported in Region 6 since

November 2006. Three Sandhill Cranes in Ellisburg during October were believed to be the same family group observed there during the summer.

More species of shorebirds were reported this fall than during any recent year, almost entirely because of increased effort by Tony Shrimpton, who visited El Dorado fairly regularly throughout the fall, and myself, as I was almost single-minded in my efforts to find shorebirds this season. Between the two of us we tallied 23 species of shorebird during the fall reporting season, which may not sound like much to coastal birders but is the highest Region 6 tally in more than a decade. Among the shorebird highlights were several species that are rarely reported in Region 6, including a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on a large lawn in Canton 5-6 September, a Red Knot at El Dorado on 11 September, and all three phalarope species. It's worth noting that although the species tally was higher than usual, numbers of individuals were not particularly high, and shorebirding remained a frustrating, hit-and-miss endeavor. For example, the best day of the season at El Dorado was 11 September, when I observed more than 100 individuals of 14 species. On my next visit to El Dorado the following week I saw no shorebirds at all, not even a Killdeer!

There is no lake-watching tradition in Region 6, which largely accounts for the historical paucity of reports of a number of species of birds that rarely occur away from Lake Ontario. Somewhat better coverage of the lake this year yielded observations of a few of these species. Forster's Terns have not been reported in Region 6 in several years, so five found by Steve Kelling on Point Peninsula on 11 September and another by Alexandra Class and Benjamin Freeman at Lakeview WMA in October were welcome reports. Several lake watches in October and November produced one Pomarine and four Parasitic Jaegers on strong westerly winds.

Four Snowy Owls in November was high for recent years, indicating the potential for a sizable winter invasion. Eastern Whip-poor-wills were unusually well documented this fall, both by birders in the field and through automated microphones deployed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology on Fort Drum. Although the Cornell data have not been fully analyzed, preliminary results suggest that the last date whip-poor-wills were picked up by the microphones was 3 October, about 10 days later than the last date reported by birders. Red-headed Woodpeckers departed the Fort Drum breeding grounds by the third week of September, slightly earlier than usual. Numbers of Northern Flickers seemed very low this season, with daily maximum totals well below past years.

The passerine migration was fairly slow and steady, with no large pulses noted, as the seemingly interminable southerly winds did nothing to help push birds southward. Despite this slow pace, most species arrived at or before average arrival dates, and less common species such as Philadelphia Vireo and Orange-crowned Warbler were observed in fairly typical numbers. Blackpoll and Cape May Warblers were more common than usual, likely indicative of high reproduction associated with spruce budworm outbreaks in Quebec and Ontario. These warbler species and Yellow-rumped Warbler also persisted in decent numbers longer into the fall than usual. Conversely, the sparrow migration was pitiful, with no large waves noted and maximum daily numbers

of White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos 10-20% of those seen most years. Based on counts of night-calling birds overhead, thrush numbers also seemed down, although large numbers of Swainson's Thrushes were heard on a few nights, particular early in the morning of 23 September, when I could hear what sounded like 2-3 calls per second over my house in Canton.

Modest numbers of irruptive finches appeared during October and November. Pine Siskins and White-winged Crossbills began moving into the Region on 5 October, and Pine Siskins were fairly common Region-wide through late November, but White-winged Crossbills were mostly restricted to the Adirondacks, where numbers were low. A few Common Redpolls passed through in November, but these seemed to be isolated flocks and not part of any significant irruption. Red Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks were entirely unreported, although it is likely that a few occurred in the Adirondacks.

The season's tally of 230 species was higher than any recent year, reflecting a continuing improvement in coverage of the Region overall, albeit still by few observers. Broadly speaking, the season's highlight was the detection of a number of species that normally escape the attention of birders when they occur at all, including Red Knot, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Wilson's, Red-necked, and Red Phalaropes, Forster's Tern, and Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers. These observations illustrate the largely untapped birding potential of Region 6. The slow land bird migration was the season's low point, particularly the very low numbers of Northern Flickers and sparrows.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Jeff Bolsinger, Charlotte Briant, Richard & Marion Brouse, Tom Carrolan, Colby Bowman, Carol Cady, Bernie Carr, Alexandra Class, Joan Collins, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Benjamin Freeman, Doreen Garrett, Steve Kelling, Nick Leone, Tom McDonald, Melanie McCormack, Miranda Monica, Michael Morgan, Jason Murray, Eugene Nichols, Fred Ossman, Gloria Sage, Robert Scranton, John Shea, Tony Shrimpton, Gerry Smith, Thomas Smith, Zachary Wakeman.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BI – Barnhart Island, T Massena; BRB – Black River Bay; CB – Chaumont Barrens preserve, T Lyme; CCSP – Coles Creek SP, T Waddington; CV – T Cape Vincent; CWF – Canton wastewater facility; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; KPSP – Kring Point SP; LWMA – Lakeview WMA, T Ellisburg; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Piercefield and Colton; MP – Montario Point, T Ellisburg; PilPt – Pillar Point; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course trail, T Canton; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Point Peninsula;

RWSP – Robert G. Wehle SP, T Henderson; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP, T Ellisburg; SLR – St. Lawrence River; StPt – Stony Point, T Henderson; TP – Tibbitt's Point, T Cape Vincent; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WS – Winthrop Swamp, T Stockholm.

#### WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

**Snow Goose:** arr 8 SLR Ogdensburg 2 Oct; modest movement of mostly flocks 50-75 thru 16 Oct; few reports after 15 Oct, mostly of individuals in Canada Goose flocks.

**Brant:** arr SLR Ogdensburg 2 Oct; max 260 SBSP 22 Oct; 130 PRWMA 22 Oct; last Waddington 18 Nov.

**Cackling Goose:** CWF 7 Oct (JB, photos).

**Canada Goose:** first significant southward movement FD 27 Sep; up to 20000/day SLR Waddington Nov; lower than usual numbers elsewhere; 2 "Lesser" CWF 18 Nov (JB).

**Mute Swan:** max 17 PRWMA 10 Oct.

**Trumpeter Swan:** up to 8/day PRWMA thru; 2 Lucky Star Lake 30 Oct included one with green wing tag #242 banded and tagged PRWMA Aug 2011; 4 ULLWMA 5 Nov.

**Tundra Swan:** arr 29 ED 11 Nov; max 400+ BRB 24 Nov.

**Wood Duck:** numbers at ULLWMA & WHWMA far below previous 2 years; scarce after early Nov.

**Gadwall:** max 110 PRWMA 7 Nov.

**EURASIAN WIGEON (R6):** WHWMA 2-5 Nov (TS, MM, JB), 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive fall at this location.

**Am. Wigeon:** max 350 PRWMA 7 Nov & WHWMA 30 Nov.

**Mallard:** numbers low thru.

**Am. Black Duck:** numbers low thru.

**Blue-winged Teal:** max 200+ ULLWMA 8 Oct; last 6 Coles Creek Louisville 4 Nov (late).

**N. Shoveler:** 11 CWF 9 Sep; CWF 7 Oct; PRWMA 10 Oct; 2 WHWMA 23 Oct; 12 L Bonaparte 9 Nov; last CB 20 Nov; more than usual.

**N. Pintail:** max 16 PRWMA 10 Oct.

**Canvasback:** shot by hunter CB 22 Oct; WHWMA 2 Nov; only reports.

**Redhead:** max 500 WHWMA 15 Oct.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 1000+ ULLWMA 8 Oct; max 5500 WHWMA 2 Nov where 4000+ thru 18 Nov; 900 PRWMA 7 Nov.

**Greater Scaup:** max 450 SLR CV 25 Nov; no reports from BRB site of traditional fall max counts.

**Lesser Scaup:** max 350 PRWMA 7 Nov.

**King Eider:** imm SLR near Massena Intake 1 Oct (JB), early, rare STLA.

**Harlequin Duck:** CV 25 Nov (JB).

**Surf Scoter:** arr Ogdensburg 2 Oct; scattered reports 1-3/day L Ontario & SLR thru.

**White-winged Scoter:** 2 arr ULLWMA 2 Oct; max 160 SBSP 22 Oct.

**Black Scoter:** ED 16 Oct; 38 ULLWMA 27 Oct; 74 CCSP 4 Nov; 2 KPSP 25 Nov; TP 25 Nov.

**Long-tailed Duck:** 4 arr SBSP 16 Oct; max 500+ ED 11 Nov.

**Bufflehead:** arr PRWMA 22 Oct;

**Com. Goldeneye:** juv WHWMA 3 Sep, prob local/regional product; arr CCSP 23 Oct; max 345 SLR Massena 27 Nov.

**Hooded Merganser:** max 355 WHWMA 27 Nov.

**Com. Merganser:** max 250+ Coles Creek 18 Nov.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** arr SLR Waddington 1 Oct; max 70 MP 10 Nov.

**Ruddy Duck:** max 34 KPSP 25 Nov.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** max 55 ULLWMA 4 Sep; 36 PRWMA 10 Oct; last ULLWMA 12 Nov.

**Red-throated Loon:** 3 SBSP 16 Oct; 3 SBSP 22 Oct; only reports.

**Com. Loon:** max 30+ CCSP 13 Nov.

**Horned Grebe:** 2 arr BI 17 Sep; max away from L Ontario 5-10/day SLR mouth Coles Creek 23 Oct - 13 Nov; max 45+ StPt 7 Nov.

**Red-necked Grebe:** 2 SLR Waddington 17 Sep; 2 ED 10 Oct; SBSP 22 Oct; 1-2/day SLR mouth Coles Creek 23 Oct - 5 Nov; StPt 24 Oct; PilPt 20 Nov; StPt 29 Oct; ULLWMA 4 Nov; SLR Waddington 18 Nov; good showing.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** 1200+ ED 11 Sep; 2000+ moving S near SBSP 12 Sep.

**Am. Bittern:** last FD 19 Oct.

**Great Egret:** max 191 WS 4 Sep, Regional record high; 37 still present WS 15 Oct, where none by 4 Nov.

**Cattle Egret:** Waddington hayfield 27 Nov (JB).

**Green Heron:** last ED 22 Oct.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** last PRWMA 10 Sep.

**Turkey Vulture:** last 2 ED 11 Nov.

#### HAWKS - ALCIDS

**Osprey:** last FD 8 Nov.

**Bald Eagle:** influx of wintering birds late Nov.

**N. Goshawk:** imm CV 30 Oct; imm ULLWMA 4 Nov.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** last 2 WBSP late Oct.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** last reports late Sep.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** arr FD 22 Oct.  
**Am. Kestrel:** scarce after 2<sup>nd</sup> week Oct.  
**Merlin:** 6 on wintering territories CV farms by late Nov.  
**Peregrine Falcon:** pr Long Sault Dam thru; ED 11 Sep; Canton 18 Sep.  
**Virginia Rail:** Massena 9 Sep.  
**Sora:** ICNC 5 Sep.  
**Com. Gallinule:** last PRWMA 22 Oct.  
**Am. Coot:** max 250 PRWMA 7 Nov; 60 KPSP 25 Nov.  
**Sandhill Crane:** 3 Ellisburg 10 Oct (CB), believed to be local family group.  
**Black-bellied Plover:** max 45 ED 29 Oct; last 8 ED 7 Nov.  
**Am. Golden-Plover:** SLR Louisville 3 Sep; ED 11 Sep; ULLWMA 23 Sep; 2 ED 10 Oct.  
**Semipalmated Plover:** max 34 ED 11 Sep.  
**Killdeer:** last Waddington 23 Oct.  
**Greater Yellowlegs:** last ED 29 Oct.  
**Lesser Yellowlegs:** 30-37/day CWF thru 15 Sep; last ED 10 Oct.  
**Solitary Sandpiper:** fewer reports than recent years; none after mid-Sep.  
**Spotted Sandpiper:** last CWF 23 Sep.  
**Ruddy Turnstone:** max 13 ED 11 Sep; last ED 29 Oct.  
**Red Knot:** imm ED 11 Sep (JB).  
**Sanderling:** max 24 ED 11 Sep; last Murphy I 18 Nov.  
**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** max 8 CWF 15 Sep; last CWF 7 Oct.  
**Least Sandpiper:** max 7 ED 11 Sep & CWF 15 Sep.  
**White-rumped Sandpiper:** 3 ED 11 Sep.  
**Baird's Sandpiper:** WP 7 Oct; ED 7 Nov.  
**Pectoral Sandpiper:** ED 11 Sep; 3 Coles Creek Louisville 7 Oct; scarce.  
**Dunlin:** Waddington 18 Nov; 4 ED 29 Oct; 7 ED 7 Nov; scarce.  
**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** imm on large municipal building lawn Canton 5-6 Sep (JB, photos!).  
**Wilson's Snipe:** max 50 FD 13 Oct; last CB 20 Nov.  
**Am. Woodcock:** last reports by hunters 1<sup>st</sup> week Nov.  
**Wilson's Phalarope:** 2 WHWMA 5 Nov (JB).  
**Red-necked Phalarope:** CWF 1 Sep (JB).  
**Red Phalarope:** ED 16 Oct (JB); CCSP 4 Nov (JB).  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** SLR Ogdensburg 2 Oct (JB).  
**Caspian Tern:** last 4 LWMA 11 Sep.  
**Com. Tern:** last SBSP 22 Oct.  
**Forster's Tern:** 5 PtPen 11 Sep (SK); LWMA 8 Oct (AC, BF).  
**Pomarine Jaeger:** SBSP 11 Nov (JB).

**Parasitic Jaeger:** SBSP 16 Oct (JB); RWSP 16 Sep (TS); 2 SBSP 22 Oct (JB).

## PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** last FD 7 Sep.  
**E. Screech-Owl:** FD 22 Sep; several reports N JEFF Sep & Oct.  
**Snowy Owl:** WHWMA 10 Nov; LWMA 22 Nov; 2 RMPD 23 Nov; Gouverneur 26 Nov.  
**Short-eared Owl:** 2 Lyme 19 Nov; Chaumont 25 Nov.  
**N. Saw-whet Owl:** injured owl FD taken to rehab 26 Oct.  
**Com. Nighthawk:** none.  
**E. Whip-poor-will:** heard calling CV, Chaumont, FD 10-23 Sep; last calls picked up by automated recording units FD 3 Oct (CLO).  
**Chimney Swift:** last FD 7 Sep.  
**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** last FD 20 Sep.  
**Red-headed Woodpecker:** last FD 18 Sep; imm CV mid-Nov thru.  
**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** last Louisville 15 Oct.  
**Black-backed Woodpecker:** Massawepie L 13 Nov, only report.  
**N. Flicker:** no large movements noted for 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year.

## FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** FD 19 Sep, only report.  
**E. Wood-Pewee:** last FD 13 Sep.  
**Willow Flycatcher:** last *Empidonax* FD banding station 21 Sep, likely Willow based on brown upperparts and wing measurements.  
**Least Flycatcher:** last FD 14 Sep.  
**E. Phoebe:** last FD 1 Nov.  
**Great Crested Flycatcher:** last FD 7 Sep.  
**E. Kingbird:** last FD 2 Sep.  
**N. Shrike:** arr Canton 29 Oct.  
**Yellow-throated Vireo:** last FD 27 Sep.  
**Blue-headed Vireo:** migr arr FD 26 Sep; last 2 FD 12 Oct.  
**Warbling Vireo:** last FD 21 Sep.  
**Philadelphia Vireo:** 2 ICNC 5 Sep; ICNC 10 Sep; max 4 PtPen 11 Sep (SK); MM 13 Sep; 10 reports FD thru 29 Sep.  
**Red-eyed Vireo:** last ED 22 Oct, late.  
**Gray Jay:** 8-10 Five Ponds Wilderness 3-5 Sep; 6 MM 10 Sep.  
**Purple Martin:** last FD 1 Sep.  
**Tree Swallow:** last 35 PRWMA 22 Oct, high total for date.  
**Cliff Swallow:** last 2 ED 11 Sep.  
**Barn Swallow:** last CCSP 17 Sep.  
**Boreal Chickadee:** max 8 MM 13 Sep.  
**House Wren:** last FD 29 Sep.  
**Winter Wren:** migr arr FD 26 Sep.

**Sedge Wren:** PRGC 23 Sep (JB); FD 27 Sep (JB).  
**Marsh Wren:** last FD 3 Oct.  
**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** arr FD 26 Sep.  
**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** arr FD 27 Sep; last FD 26 Oct.  
**E. Bluebird:** max 21 PtPen 22 Oct.  
**Veery:** last FD 14 Sep.  
**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** first night flight calls Canton 21 Sep; also heard nights of 23, 26 & 27 Sep; last FD 5 Oct.  
**Swainson's Thrush:** many night flight calls Canton 14, 21, 23, 26 & 27 Sep; max 100+ calls/minute during 10-minutes Canton 23 Sep; last FD 5 Oct.  
**Hermit Thrush:** last FD 1 Nov.  
**Wood Thrush:** last Canton 23 Sep.  
**Am. Robin:** heaviest movement 24-28 Oct.  
**Gray Catbird:** last FD 11 Oct.  
**N. Mockingbird:** ad feeding y FD 6 Sep (late); Antwerp 26 Sep.  
**Brown Thrasher:** last FD 4 Oct.  
**Am. Pipit:** arr FD 20 Sep.

#### LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

**Lapland Longspur:** CCSP 5 Nov; ED 7 Nov; 2 FD 15 Nov; few reports.  
**Snow Bunting:** arr FD 28 Oct; max 70 CCSP 13 Nov.  
**Ovenbird:** last FD 28 Sep.  
**N. Waterthrush:** last FD 1 Sep.  
**Golden-winged Warbler:** last 2 ICNC 5 Sep.  
**Blue-winged Warbler:** last Chaumont 10 Sep.  
**Black-and-white Warbler:** last ED 11 Sep.  
**Tennessee Warbler:** last FD 11 Oct, singing male.  
**Orange-crowned Warbler:** FD 21 Sep, 6, 14 & 17 Oct; ICNC 2 Oct.  
**Nashville Warbler:** last FD 3 Oct.  
**Mourning Warbler:** last Canton 18 Sep.  
**Com. Yellowthroat:** last FD 6 Oct.  
**Am. Redstart:** last Chaumont 10 Sep.  
**Cape May Warbler:** 1-3/day FD thru 29 Sep, more than usual; last FD 3 Oct.  
**N. Parula:** last FD 23 Sep.  
**Magnolia Warbler:** last FD 6 Oct.  
**Bay-breasted Warbler:** last CCSP 1 Oct.  
**Blackburnian Warbler:** heavy movement 5-10 Sep; last several locations 10 Sep.  
**Yellow Warbler:** last ED 11 Sep.

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** last FD 19 Sep.  
**Blackpoll Warbler:** last 3 ICNC 21 Oct.  
**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** last ICNC 8 Oct.  
**Palm Warbler:** many "Yellow" still on MM nesting grounds 21 Sep; last FD 4 Oct.  
**Pine Warbler:** max 12 FD 13 Sep; last FD 11 Oct.  
**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 80 ICNC 8 Oct; 29 ED 11 Nov, good number for date; 1-3/day near L. Ontario late Nov.  
**Prairie Warbler:** last FD 4 Oct.  
**Black-throated Green Warbler:** last FD 5 Oct.  
**Canada Warbler:** last FD 1 Sep.  
**Wilson's Warbler:** last FD 28 Sep.

#### TOWHEES - WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** last ED 22 Oct.  
**Am. Tree Sparrow:** arr ICNC 21 Oct.  
**Chipping Sparrow:** last FD 31 Oct.  
**Field Sparrow:** last FD 19 Oct.  
**Vesper Sparrow:** last FD 11 Oct.  
**Savannah Sparrow:** last Massena 13 Nov.  
**Fox Sparrow:** arr ICNC 8 Oct; last FD 9 Nov.  
**Song Sparrow:** more than usual late Nov.  
**Lincoln's Sparrow:** 1-4/day FD 12 Sep thru 12 Oct.  
**Swamp Sparrow:** scarce after 5 Nov.  
**White-throated Sparrow:** fewer migrants than usual.  
**White-crowned Sparrow:** arr ICNC 23 Sep; last FD 3 Nov.  
**Dark-eyed Junco:** fewer migrants than usual with few flocks > 25.  
**Scarlet Tanager:** last Canton 18 Sep.  
**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** last FD 4 Oct.  
**Indigo Bunting:** last FD 27 Sep.  
**Bobolink:** last FD 19 Sep.  
**E. Meadowlark:** last 4 FD 28 Oct.  
**Rusty Blackbird:** possible local breeders at Five Ponds Wilderness 4 Sep & MM 10 Sep; arr ICNC 23 Sep; max 580+ ULLWMA 21 Oct flying to roost with other blackbirds.  
**White-winged Crossbill:** 2 arr FD 5 Oct; MM 12 Oct; 2 Massawepie L. 13 Nov.  
**Com. Redpoll:** 4 CCSP 5 Nov; max 20 FD 16 Nov; scarce.  
**Pine Siskin:** 50+ arr FD 5 Oct; 56 Massawepie L. 13 Nov; many reports smaller flocks Oct & Nov.