

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Fall 2011 brought in very mild and overall wet conditions. September ended 3.2° F above average with 3.32" more rain than average, with much of that moisture associated with the remnants of Tropical Storm *Lee* that dropped more than 3 inches in the Region from 5-8 September. Flooding in many fields, along

watercourses, and in low-lying urban areas was common, especially on the heels of a very wet summer. October continued warm, ending 3.2° above average, with an average amount of rain. The first frost occurred late, not until 28 October at Albany International Airport. The first killing frost did not occur until a freak Halloween snowstorm arrived, dusting pumpkins with a heavy white snow. November ended unseasonably warm, 4.7° above average, and dry. In November, the landscape seemed April-like in the valleys where grass and winter cover crops took advantage of the sun and warmth and looked downright lush in places. All watercourses remained ice free well into Christmas Bird Count season.

The rarest bird of the season, a blow-in from Tropical Storm *Lee*, was a **Magnificent Frigatebird** spotted by Tim O'Connor at South Bay in Hudson, a first ever sighting for Columbia County. The report is awaiting NYSARC verification, but details were good for this distinctive species.

The weather also created another county first for Columbia County and a rare sighting across the Hudson in Greene County, where Rich Guthrie spotted three **Forster's Terns** fly from Coxsackie to Stockport on 10 September. A fairly common fall migrant in the lower Hudson River, Forster's Terns rarely get even as far north as Dutchess County and remain unrecorded for many towns north of that.

Some interesting shorebirds tarried in the Region, despite the high water around many rivers and streams. Area birders recorded **American Golden-Plover**, **Stilt Sandpiper**, and **White-rumped Sandpiper** as well as more common but infrequent shorebirds, such as Short-billed Dowitcher, Sanderling, and Dunlin at an unusual four separate locations.

Bob Yunick echoed other birders when he remarked that raptors were scarce this fall. Usually productive in fall, the Fort Edward grasslands in Washington County turned up only one Rough-legged Hawk and very few Northern Harriers, a species that was tough to find in many places this November. Reports of American Kestrels dribbled in from scattered locations, as did reports of Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and Bald Eagle, all of which are considered so common along the Hudson these days that I often neglect to mention them.

Rich Guthrie also added to the rarity list this year by spotting a **Say's Phoebe** actively feeding and flying about the sun-warmed side of a building near the Coxsackie Grasslands. Typically hyper and phoebe-like, the bird did not tarry long enough for others to get a handle on it.

American Pipits seemed abundant this year. There was an order of magnitude more reports this fall than any other; too many, in fact, to list in the full report. The abundance is perhaps the result of a good breeding year on the tundra? My own experience, admittedly anecdotal, was that I found them even in small fields of 2-3 acres of planted winter rye, the kinds of small fields that most would drive straight by while searching for more promising birding locations. Sparrow migration was mixed, with the beginnings of what seems to be shaping up to be another dreadful year for American Tree Sparrows. A few reports of Lincoln Sparrows and Vesper Sparrow came in, but no *Ammodramus*

sparrows or any rare species. The lack of snow cover or harsh weather seemed to make any passerines hard to find in late fall, and lonely feeding stations abounded. However, higher-than-average reports of Cape May Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, and Orange-crowned Warbler suggest that all of these species had a good breeding year in Canada.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

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

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

(R8): Ft. Miller WASH 5 Nov; Queensbury SARA 13 Nov (mob).

Snow Goose: max 20 Stuyvesant COLU 2 Nov.

Brant: max 30 New Baltimore GREE 19 Oct.

Cackling Goose: Rensselaerville ALBA 2 Oct; 2 Brunswick RENS 18-24 Oct; 2 Germantown COLU 4 Nov.

Gadwall: max 5 Stony Creek Res SARA 23 Oct.

N. Shoveler: max 8 Stanton Pd ALBA 15 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 12 Stanton Pd ALBA 22 Oct.

Ring-necked Duck: max 130 Galway L SARA 25 Nov.

Surf Scoter: 7 TR 23 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: max 11 L George WARR 15 Nov.

Black Scoter: max 12 COX Res 4 Nov.

Long-tailed Duck: 3 Collins L SCHE 11 Nov; 2 Saratoga L SARA 26 Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser: Stanton Pd ALBA 13-15 Nov; TR 25 Nov; Galway L SARA 25 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: last 11 TR 22 Nov.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Kinderhook COLU 26 Oct.

Red-throated Loon: TR 7-30 Nov.

Com. Loon: max 10 Saratoga L SARA 20 Nov.

Horned Grebe: max 10 Saratoga L SARA 20 Nov.

Red-necked Grebe: 2 L George WARR 1-3

Nov; TR 11-25 Nov; Galway L SARA 25 Nov.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD: South Bay Hudson COLU 5 Sep (TO), 1st COLU record.

Double-crested Cormorant: last TR 17 Nov.

Am Bittern: last Hillsdale COLU 21 Oct.

Great Egret: last Ann Lee Pd ALBA 20 Oct.

Green Heron: last Neiber Swamp Livingston COLU 7 Nov, late.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Coming Preserve ALBA 10 Sep.
Black Vulture: Chatham COLU 25 Oct; 2 Slingerlands ALBA 4 Nov.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: last Stockport COLU 5 Oct.
N. Harrier: 5 reports Region-wide, scarce.
N. Goshawk: Powell Sanctuary Chatham COLU 25 Oct.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Westerlo ALBA 5 Nov; Vosburgh Marsh ALBA 15 Nov.

Golden Eagle: Livingston COLU 10 Oct; Powell Sanctuary Chatham COLU 25 Oct.

Am. Coot: max 8 Burden L RENS 30 Nov.

Black-bellied Plover: last Colonie ALBA 20 Oct.

AM. GOLDEN-PLOVER (R8): 24 Germantown COLU 7 Sep; Charlton SARA 23 Oct (mob).

Greater Yellowlegs: last Colonie ALBA 20 Sep.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last Colonie ALBA 17 Sep.

Sanderling: 3 L George WARR 8 Sep.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (R8): 2 Papscafee RENS 12-13 Sep (mob).

Pectoral Sandpiper: max 8 Papscafee RENS 13 Oct.

Dunlin: max 5 Stockport COLU 2 Oct; Colonie ALBA 2-5 Oct; Stuyvesant COLU 25 Oct; Collins L SCHE 16 Nov.

STILT SANDPIPER (R8): Colonie ALBA 17 Sep; Papscafee RENS 29 Sep; Colonie ALBA 4 Oct.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Colonie 17 Sep.

Bonaparte's Gull: TR 17 Nov.

Caspian Tern: Coeymans ALBA 8 Sep.

FORSTER'S TERN (R8): 3 4-mile Pt GREE to Stockport COLU 11 Sep (RG), 1st COLU record.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: last Albany 16 Oct.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Berne ALBA 12-30 Nov.

Com. Nighthawk: last Albany 9 Sep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last Austerlitz COLU 2 Oct.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: max 3 Five Rivers ALBA 7 Sep.

Acadian Flycatcher: Greenport COLU 5 Sep.

Least Flycatcher: last Brunswick RENS 4 Oct.

SAY'S PHOEBE: COX grasslands 19 Nov (RG).

Blue-headed Vireo: last VF 23 Oct.

Philadelphia Vireo: last COX grasslands 2 Oct, 7 reports of singles.

Veery: last VF 23 Oct.

Grey-cheeked Thrush: Partridge Run ALBA 27 Sep.

Swainson's Thrush: last VF 23 Oct.

Am. Pipit: 4 Rensselaerville ALBA 2-8 Oct; 40 Greenwich WASH 21 Oct; max 200 FtE WASH 23 Oct; Halfmoon SARA 24 Oct; 60 Stuyvesant COLU 25 Oct; 30 Stuyvesant COLU 2 Nov; 15 Green Acres Farm Livingston COLU 13 Nov.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: arr Hillsdale COLU 12 Oct.

N. Waterthrush: last Florida MONT 30 Sep.

Black-and-white Warbler: last Florida MONT 30 Sep.

Tennessee Warbler: last TR 23 Oct.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Five Rivers ALBA 1 Oct; Florida MONT 7 Oct; Papscafee RENS 13 Oct; Saratoga SARA 16 Oct.

Mourning Warbler: last Brunswick RENS 17 Sep.

Am. Redstart: last Knox ALBA 16 Oct.

Cape May Warbler: last Partridge Run ALBA 24 Sep, 10 reports of singles.

N. Parula: last Brunswick RENS 4 Oct.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Pine Bush ALBA 8 Sep; 2 Brunswick RENS 8 Sep.

Blackburnian Warbler: last Albany 4 Oct.

Blackpoll Warbler: last VF 23 Oct.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: last Saratoga SARA 13 Oct.

Canada Warbler: Great Sacandaga L FULT 28 Sep.

Wilson's Warbler: Albany 1 Oct; Meadowdale ALBA 2 Oct.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr Austerlitz COLU 12 Oct, low numbers thru.

Vesper Sparrow: Green Acres Farm Livingston COLU 18 Oct.

Lincoln's Sparrow: last Collins L SCHE 24 Oct.

Indigo Bunting: last Florida MONT 5 Oct.

E. Meadowlark: max 11 Rensselaerville ALBA 8 Oct.

Rusty Blackbird: max 30 Ann Lee Pd ALBA 23 Oct; VF 4 Nov.

Red Crossbill: 11 Burnt-Rossman SF SCHO 6 Nov.

White-winged Crossbill: 5 Florida MONT 26 Sep.

Pine Siskin: max 15 Rensselaerville ALBA 9 Oct; Brunswick RENS 2 Nov; Five Rivers ALBA 5 Nov; 2 Perth FULT 25 Nov.