

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

Spencer Hunt

493 Glenmary Drive, Owego NY 13827
shunt493@yahoo.com

Precipitation for summer 2012 was typical for the Region, with a short wet spell in the beginning followed by dry periods through July. However, the June and July totals were almost exactly equal to normal levels. August had precipitation on the fewest days of the three months, but it totaled 2.3" above normal. As is typical for the season, there were extended dry periods, 58 out of the 92 days, interspersed with days of heavy rainfall that prevented the excessive drought problems experienced by the middle of the country.

Temperatures for June were almost exactly normal. July was hotter than normal, with 26 days above normal and 234 cooling degree-days compared to the normal 153. August was only slightly above normal temperatures. There

were five 90-degree days, two each in June and July and one in August. The highest temperature of 91° was in mid-July. All data is from the Binghamton weather station.

In summary, weather was fairly uneventful as a factor in reproduction or finding food for most species. Timing would probably have been the only way it would have been much of a factor. Shorebirds and wading species would have found ample feeding areas because of low water levels due to only normal rainfall but above normal temperatures in the middle part of the season.

The bird of the year for Region 4 could possibly be the **Red-headed Woodpecker** seen at the Robinette residence in Chenango Bridge, Broome County. Several observers were welcomed over two days to see and photograph it.

Wood Ducks seemed to be plentiful this year, with many sightings including some with high numbers. **American Black Ducks** were scarce, as usual, with only one observation. Two **Common Loons** were reported on the Whiney Point Reservoir in early June. One was reported to be in non-breeding plumage. It is not exceptional to have a summer season loon sighting in the Region, but it is not common (no pun intended). On the other hand, **Great Egrets** are commonly found, especially along the Susquehanna River from mid-season on, but not in the numbers that Marty Borko found at the Carantouan Greenway. The Greenway is in the very southwestern corner of Region 4 in Tioga County only a short distance from Pennsylvania and Chemung County. It is also only a short distance off I-86/Rt 17 at Exit 61 and is worth a stop for anyone traveling through the area. The website for the reserve is: <www.carantouangreenway.org/wildwoodreserve.html>. Further east in Owego, another location, a mile off Exit 65, is the Brick Pond, or as Dan Watkins suggested, “**Green Heron Pond**.” His observation of herons there far surpassed what was reported elsewhere in the Region.

Two **Osprey** were found at Canadarago Lake at the north end of Otsego County in late July, which might bring up speculation that nesting might have occurred nearby in Region 4 or just north of there in Region 5. Another Osprey in late August at Aquaterra Park in Broome County was probably an early migrant. **Bald Eagles** have become so common that many observers along the river valleys are seeing them as “yard birds”, sightings visible from their own homes. Reports of **Northern Harriers** were limited, as in past years.

There were four sightings of **Merlin**, one with successful breeding in Wilber Park, Oneonta, Otsego County, where they have reproduced before. Members of the Naturalist's Club of Broome County again observed nesting of **Peregrine Falcons** in downtown Binghamton, Broome County.

With lower water levels this year, marsh and shorebird observations returned to the usual numbers at the usual locations. A **Virginia Rail** was found throughout the season at the Carantouan Greenway. Areas along the Susquehanna River had the largest number of reports of shorebirds, especially near the Tri-cities airport west of Endicott, in the Town of Union, Broome County. One species found outside of the Susquehanna valley and observed for the first time in the last ten years was the **Upland Sandpiper** found by Matt

Young in Cortland. Tom Salo again was the only one in the Region to find a Wilson's Snipe, in the Town of Burlington west of Cooperstown, Otsego County. West of here, in the Town of Sherburne, Chenango County, Bill Purcell found the only **Common Gallinule**.

A post on the osbirds listserv questioned whether a lack of both cuckoos was correlated with a lack of tent caterpillars. A thread developed, with posts of observers seeing/hearing either **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** or **Black-billed Cuckoo**, but they also noticed the "dearth" of caterpillars. Two BBS routes in the northeastern part of the Region found neither species. Even though they are not expected to be common in our Region, reports of either species were few. A couple of years ago the forest tent caterpillar defoliated large areas of Otsego County, providing plenty of food during the nesting season. The cycle has swung the other way, reducing the food supply. The Eastern tent caterpillar population dropped off this year compounding the problem. Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "All About Birds" states: "Their populations fluctuate considerably from year to year as the birds move from place to place following outbreaks of prey. This variability makes it difficult to determine whether their overall numbers show a trend upward or downward. Several regional (statewide) estimates suggest that populations are declining, however."

A pair of **Barred Owls** had two young in Chenango Valley SP in Broome County. After fledging, the young were found along one of the trails for many days providing many reports and submissions of photographs. Observations of the **Common Nighthawk** were up this year but still were low in numbers. **Chimney Swifts** were spotted in many locations, but the numbers are not much different from last year. The number of eBird reports and total numbers were about the same. The maximum number of 26 reported is a far cry from single sightings of 200-300 or more during the last ten years.

The **Purple Martin** colony west of Owego on Rte. 17C still exists, but the numbers are down considerably. They were reported from only one other location. A **Bank Swallow** colony was located just outside CVSP. Anne Clark posted the following about it on the Binghamton area listserve: "Around 5 p.m., went to Chenango Valley State Park to make another attempt at watching and photographing Bank Swallows. It clouded up, sprinkled, and, despite a few sun breaks, David and I were gathering to go when a mink wended its way along the edge of the water below the bank of nest holes. Suddenly and purposefully it made its way up the clay bank, slithered along the horizontal clay lines between rows of holes, found a large enough one and disappeared inside. Swallows were swarming and mobbing and moments later, it backed out, with an adult swallow in its jaws. Down the bank and under a large downed tree trunk it went, where I couldn't see. But apparently it killed and deposited the swallow, because it reappeared, made another assault on the bank, tumbling down it twice in a shower of dry dirt. It looked into a hole or two, but never went into another. After the second tumble, it shook itself off and went to its trunk, recovered the swallow and trotted on west around the margins of the tributary and out of sight." Christopher Holden found that a 12 August canoe trip on the Delaware

River was properly timed for his sighting of 500 **Cedar Waxwings**. He reported that they were “lining the river for six miles in vast numbers.”

The NYSDEC Pharsalia Woods Unit Management Plan <<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/67631.html>> encompasses five forest units totaling 13,622 acres of land in northern Chenango County. Part of the area has been designated as the Pharsalia Important Bird Area. Warblers, thrushes, kinglets, and crossbills, missing from most of Region 4 during the summer, can be found there. New Michigan State Forest is made up two of the units. Dave Nicosia and Bill Purcell separately birded there in June. The numbers that each saw were impressive, as can be seen in the species accounts. Matt Young scouted Bucks Brook SF nearby to find his **Red Crossbills**. Their findings show that the State Forests in that area are worth a day trip.

Bobolinks were still showing reduced numbers. The maximum of 20 seen was a low number compared with a few years ago. Last year a total of ten **Eastern Meadowlarks** was observed in seven sightings reported to eBird. This year there were 13 sightings, with a total of 33. Whether this is a real improvement or not is open to speculation, but at least it is not worse.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dawn & Mike Ackley, Diane Allison, Marty Borko, Sandy Bright, Rafael Campos-Ramirez, Anne Clark, Louise Gomez, Scott Hierbaum, Christopher Holden, Marshall Iliff, Maggie Jewett, Stefan Karkuff, William Kuk, Angela Lu Russo, Michele Lyman, Dave McCartt, Naturalist’s Club of Broome County (NCBC), Dave Nicosia, Bill Purcell, Randy Ross, Tom Salo, Charles Scheim, Dan Watkins, Jon Weeks, Glenn Wilson, Matt Young.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bing – Binghamton, BROO; BPd – Boland Pond, BROO; CL – Canadarago Lake, OTSE; CGW – Carantouan Greenway, Waverly, TIOG; CVSP – Chenango Valley SP, BROO; BWDSP – Betty & Wilbur Davis SP, T Middlefield, OTSE; EHR – Edwards Hill Rd., TL, BROO; End – Endicott, BROO; HMF – Heiburg Memorial Forest, CORT; NMSF – New Michigan State Forest, CHEN; TCA – Tri-cities Airport, BROO; TL – Town of Lisle, BROO; TS – Town of Sherburne, CHEN; TU – Town of Union, BROO; TV – Town of Vesta, BROO; WPWMUA – Whitney Point Wildlife Multiple Use Area, BROO.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES		Double-crested Cormorant:	max	15
Wood Duck: 18 TS CHEN 23 Jun; 20 BPd BROO 5 Aug; 29 Bainbridge CHEN 6 Aug; 30 BROO 22 Aug.		WPWMUA BROO 29 Aug.		
Am. Black Duck: 10 TU BROO 1 Aug (GW), only report.		Great Egret: max 26 CGW TIOG 26 Jul (MB); many other single reports.		
Com. Loon: 2 WPWMUA BROO 19, 22 Jun.		Green Heron: max 15 Brick Pd Owego TIOG 18 Jul.		

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: 2 CL OTSE 24 Jul; Aquaterra Pk BROO 28 Aug; only reports.
Bald Eagle: max 3 Delaware R DELA 12 Aug; many throughout Region; doing well.
N. Harrier: TS CHEN 21 Jun, 16 Aug; T Barton TIOG 25 Aug.
Cooper's Hawk: 2 ad, 2 y T Windsor BROO 20 Jun.
N. Goshawk: Somerset L T Hancock DELA 20 Jun, 6 Aug.
Am. Kestrel: 13 TL BROO 16 Aug; few reports.
MERLIN (R4): Bing BROO 6 Jun (DW); 2 ad 2 y Wilber Pk Oneonta OTSE 7, 14 Jul (SB, CS); BWDSP OTSE 24 Aug (LG); CL OTSE 30 Aug (TS).
PEREGRINE FALCON (R4): CO Bing BROO 13 Jun.
Virginia Rail: CGW TIOG 6 Jun, 29 Jul, 23, 25 Aug (MB), only report.
Com. Gallinule: TS CHEN 16 Jun, only report.
Black-bellied Plover: TV BROO 2 Jun (DW).
Semipalmated Plover: TU BROO 5 Jun, only rep.
Spotted Sandpiper: max 9 TV BROO 2 Jun.
Solitary Sandpiper: 2 Bainbridge CHEN 6 Aug; 3 TCA BROO 13 Aug; 2 TCA BROO 16 Aug; only rep of multiples.
Upland Sandpiper: Cortland CORT 27 Jul (MY), only report.
Least Sandpiper: max 15 TCA BROO 28 Aug.
Baird's Sandpiper: Bing BROO 25 Aug, only rep.
Wilson's Snipe: T Burlington OTSE 30 Jun, only report.
Am. Woodcock: 5 BWDSP T Middlefield OTSE 22 Jul; few reports.
Caspian Tern: TV BROO 14, 18 Jul, only rep.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: TS CHEN 20 Jun; T Fenton BROO 22 Aug; T Dickinson BROO 22 Aug; few reports.
Black-billed Cuckoo: T Richford TIOG 23 Jun; 7 other single reports.
Barred Owl: 2 ad, 2 y CVSP BROO Jun - mid Jul (mob).
Com. Nighthawk: max 40 End BROO 16 Aug (DN); 20 End BROO 20 Aug (MA); few reports.
Chimney Swift: max 26 TV BROO 2 Jun; few multiple reports.
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (R4): Chenango Bridge BROO 12, 13 Jun (mob), only report.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: max 8 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun.
Least Flycatcher: max 6 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun.
E. Kingbird: max 50 EHR TL BROO 16 Aug (DW).
Blue-headed Vireo: max 6 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun.
Purple Martin: max 4 T Tioga TIOG 7 Aug (JW) Jul; 2 Cortland CORT 11 Aug; only reports, doing poorly.
Bank Swallow: max 35 CVSP BROO 26 Jun.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: 4 CL OTSE 4 Jul; 2 CVSP BROO 30 Jun; TL BROO 19 Aug; only reports.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 27 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun (DN); 10 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun (BP).
Swainson's Thrush: 4 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun; Cherry Ridge Wild Forest DELA 19 Aug; only reports.
N. Mockingbird: max 5 BROO 12 Jun (D&MA); few reports.
Cedar Waxwing: 500 Delaware R DELA 12 Aug (CH).

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Ovenbird: max 76 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun (DN); 32 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun (BP).
Louisiana Waterthrush: max 8 Jones Pk TV BROO 20 Jun.
N. Waterthrush: max 3 HMF CORT 17 Jun.
Nashville Warbler: 2 T Richford TIOG 2 Jun, only report.
Mourning Warbler: max 13 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun (DN); 4 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun (BP).
Hooded Warbler: 2 TS OTSE CHEN 21 Jun, only report.
N. Parula: CVSP BROO 28 Jun.
Magnolia Warbler: max 44 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun (DN); 6 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun (BP).
Blackburnian Warbler: max 52 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun (DN).
Black-throated Blue Warbler: max 7 NMSF CHEN 7 Jun (DN); 5 NMSF CHEN 16 Jun (BP).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Savannah Sparrow: max 12 EHR TL BROO 20 Jun.
Swamp Sparrow: max 5 CGW TIOG 7 Jun.
Bobolink: max 20 EHR TL BROO 20 Jun.
E. Meadowlark: 15 EHR TL BROO 20 Jun; 10 Arnold Hill Rd TL BROO 16 Aug.
Pine Siskin: max 9 Cortland CORT 10 Jun (RR).
Red Crossbill: 15 Bucks Brook SF CHEN 11 Aug (MY).