

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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The fall started out warm and wet and ended cool and dry. Watertown had mean temperatures that were 1.2° F and 3.6° above normal for September and October, respectively, but November's mean temperature was 1.4° below average. The 7.5" of rain that fell in September was 3.2" above normal, but October's precipitation total was 0.8" below normal, and November's was 2.8" below normal. Temperatures for much of November were actually typical of the season or even a little warm, but winter asserted itself during the last week of the month, with cool temperatures and light snow nearly every day that week.

Hurricane *Sandy*, the meteorological event of the season across the eastern United States, brought numerous rarities to New York State and the Northeast, but no truly rare species were seen in Region 6, and locally the birding was generally poor during the week or so following *Sandy*'s passage. Gerry Smith spent several days checking the Lake Ontario shoreline for storm birds, but the best he could turn up were six Parasitic Jaegers and one Pomarine Jaeger. I spent slightly less time watching the lake and saw one **Black Vulture** and two Black-legged Kittiwakes. With the possible exception of the Black Vulture, these species probably all pass through the Region annually, so it not clear whether the presence of any of these species was a direct result of the storm, and no seabirds or other obvious storm-blown birds were reported. In fact the most unusual report of the season from Lake Ontario was an adult **Northern Gannet** that Tony Shrimpton saw fly past Stony Point on 13 October, well before *Sandy* developed.

Waterfowl numbers were generally good, with impressive counts of a few species. The most impressive concentration of ducks was at Wilson Hill WMA on 27 October, where **8200** Ring-necked Ducks and 835 Redhead dominated the ten species present. Typical numbers of Long-tailed Ducks and scoters were at favored locations along Lake Ontario, but the 120 Black Scoters at Coles Creek State Park on 3 November was a good tally away from the lake. Highlighting waterfowl rarities was the continuing **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** in Clayton, which was reported by no birders, to eBird or otherwise, after July, but which continued to appear at the house of Richard and Nancy Powers until 2 October. Unfortunately, the whistling-duck was next heard of during early November when a hunter shot it on nearby Grindstone Island.

Waders and *rallids* were well reported this fall, the highlight being a **Glossy Ibis** seen by Dick Brouse along the Point Peninsula shoreline on 2 September. During the late summer Great Egret numbers seemed to build at the Winthrop roost as they have during the past few years, but on 7 September only 10 egrets were present at daybreak, far fewer than the 150-190 counted around the same date the previous five years. Unfortunately, this was the only count of the fall made at a time of day that would indicate how many birds used the roost

on a given night, and it is unclear whether fewer egrets actually used the roost this fall. Two Sandhill Cranes were in Ellisburg in early November, in the same general area where nesting has been suspected for several years.

The water level on Lake Ontario was already very low at the end of the summer and continued to drop throughout the fall, resulting in more exposed shoreline than has been seen in many years. Unfortunately, the hoped-for shorebird bonanza never materialized, and few to no shorebirds were observed on many visits to El Dorado and other lakeshore sites. During 2011 the Canton sewage ponds had the best numbers of shorebirds of any site away from Lake Ontario, but shorebird numbers and diversity at this site were poor this fall, although a Red-necked Phalarope here on 17 September was among the shorebird highlights of the season. Other notable shorebirds included a juvenile Red Knot Nick Leone saw on Point Peninsula 14 September and a juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher on Coles Creek 5 October.

By the end of the fall numbers of *buteos* were quite low and winter owl numbers were no better. Red-tailed Hawks were scattered throughout the Region but not common anywhere, and only a very few Rough-legged Hawks were present. The only Snowy Owl reports were from Wilson Hill WMA. Given the mid-October date, nine Short-eared Owls on Fort Drum 14 October were surprising, but none could be found at this location by the end of the month.

The passerine highlight of the season was the long-awaited documentation of **Cave Swallow** in Jefferson County, in this case six foraging over a breakwater at Westcott Beach State Park on 23 November. There are at least two prior Region 6 November records of *Petrochelidon* swallows that were likely Cave Swallows, but in both cases the birds in question were too distant to be identified to species. Cave Swallows have almost certainly passed through the Region without being detected during other years as well, with the paucity of lake watchers in the Region explaining the lack of records. A combination of unfamiliarity with Cave Swallows and the late date might make one suspect that the four or five Cliff Swallows reported from Grenadier Island by a relatively novice birder on 13 October were actually Cave Swallows, but detailed reports of late Cliff Swallows came from several locations in New York State, and these birds could have been of either species.

There were a few other noteworthy landbird reports from the fall but no true rarities. At least three Red-headed Woodpeckers remained on their summer territories at Fort Drum through November and appeared to be settling in for the winter, no doubt thanks to a massive acorn crop. Most passerines seemed to pass through the Region in typical numbers, including Blackpoll and Cape May Warblers, two species that were unusually abundant during the fall of 2011. One exception was Lincoln's Sparrow, which seemed about twice as numerous as usual, with up 13 per day seen on Fort Drum. The nights of 26-27 and 27-28 September and 3-4 October saw some of the heaviest nocturnal movements of the season, with large numbers of Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes heard over Canton and Fort Drum. Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak, and Common Redpoll all arrived in late October or early November and were well established by the end of the period. One Hoary Redpoll was on Fort Drum 20 November,

where several more redpolls showed Hoary-like traits but could not be identified to species with certainty.

The species tally for the fall was 225, fewer than the 230 documented during the fall of 2011 but higher than any other recent autumn. The recent increase in reports is thanks to a combination of more extensive coverage by two or three observers and the submission to eBird of records by visiting birders that historically would not have made it to the Regional Editor. The documentation of Cave Swallows in Region 6 after years of disappointment is certainly the highlight of the season, although there was more competition than usual given the relatively numerous rarities. The overwhelming disappointment of the season, and probably the year, was the absence of any of the storm-blown rarities that were seen at the west end of Lake Ontario and elsewhere; for the second year in a row a hurricane that brought large numbers of rarities to New York was a total bust for Region 6.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BI – Barnhart Is, T Massena, STLA; BRB – Black River Bay; CCSP – Coles Creek SP; ChB – Chaumont Bay, JEFF; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; HH – Henderson Harbor; HP – Hawkins Point, T Massena, STLA; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; KPSP – Kring Point SP, JEFF; LWMA – Lakeview WMA; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Piercefield and Colton; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg, JEFF; PilPt – Pillar Point, JEFF; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Point Peninsula, JEFF; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; RWSP – Robert G. Wehle SP; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP; SLR – St. Lawrence River; StPt – Stony Point, T Henderson, JEFF; SWG – St. Lawrence County Wetlands and Grasslands Management District, T Dekalb; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley Is SP; WS – Winthrop Swamp, T Stockholm.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK:

continued feeding at Clayton house thru 2 Oct (RP & NP); shot by hunter Grindstone Is. 1st week Nov.

Greater White-fronted Goose: WHWMA 28 Sep (TS).

Snow Goose: modest movement 13-27 Oct; scarce Nov.

Brant: 100+ each PtPen & SLR Waddington 6 Oct; 289 SLR Louisville 13 Oct; 95 SBSP 30 Oct.
“Richardson’s” Cackling Goose: 4 ULLWMA 7 Oct (JB); FD 8 Nov (JB).
Trumpeter Swan: SWG 6 Sep; 3 ULLWMA 10 Nov thru; 6 PRWMA 12 Nov.
Wood Duck: max 175 WHWMA 14 Sep; scarce after 28 Oct.
Gadwall: max 325 PRWMA 23 Nov.
Eurasian Wigeon: m BRB 30 Oct (GS).
Am. Wigeon: max 450 PRWMA 2 Nov.
Am. Black Duck: max 143 WHWMA 5 Oct.
Mallard: max 380 WHWMA 5 Oct.
Blue-winged Teal: max 125 SWG 1 Sep; last ULLWMA 28 Oct.
N. Shoveler: max 30 PRWMA 12 Nov.
N. Pintail: max 84 WHWMA 5 Oct.
Green-winged Teal: max 1550 ULLWMA 28 Oct.
Canvasback: WHWMA 5 Oct & 17 Nov.
Redhead: max 785 WHWMA 27 Oct.
Ring-necked Duck: max 8200 WHWMA 27 Oct; 1200 ULLWMA 10 Nov;
Greater Scaup: max 400 PtPen 13 Oct.
Lesser Scaup: max 90 PRWMA 12 Nov.
Surf Scoter: max 26 CCSP 13 Oct.
White-winged Scoter: max 210 MP 30 Oct.
Black Scoter: max 205 MP 30 Oct.; 120 SLR CCSP 3 Nov good tally away from L Ontario.
Long-tailed Duck: arr 3 Henderson 15 Oct; max 750 MP 12 Nov.
Bufflehead: max 105 PtPen 9 Nov.
Com. Goldeneye: few before 1st week Nov; max 340 SLR Massena near Eisenhower Lock 18 Nov.
Hooded Merganser: max 374 WHWMA 17 Nov.
Red-breasted Merganser: arr ULLWMA 15 Sep; max 151 StPt 30 Oct.
Ruddy Duck: max 8 KPSP 14 Nov; 7 other reports 17 Sep to 27 Nov.
Spruce Grouse: MM 18 Oct at same location multiple reports past 3 years (JC).
Red-throated Loon: max 6 PilPt 20 Nov (NL).
Com. Loon: max 155 PilPt 9 Nov (NL).
Pied-billed Grebe: max 136 WHWMA 14 Sep; 126 ULLWMA 12 Oct; scarce after 10 Nov.
Horned Grebe: arr SLR Ogdensburg 8 Oct.
Red-necked Grebe: arr ED 1 Sep; CCSP 13 Oct & 17 Nov; ULLWMA 18 Oct; SLR Massena 17 Nov; PilPt 30 Nov.
N. GANNET (R6): ad StPt 13 Oct (TS).
Double-crested Cormorant: max 2100 flying N past MP 15 Oct; scarce after 17 Nov.
Am. Bittern: FD 18 Sep; WHWMA 21 Sep.

Great Egret: max 10 WS roost 7 Sep, where typically 100+ on same date prev 5 years; last 5 Canton 30 Sep.
Green Heron: last WHWMA 28 Sep.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: 2 WS 7 Sep, only report.
GLOSSY IBIS (R6): PtPen 2 Sep (DB).
BLACK VULTURE (R6): HH 30 Oct (JB).
Turkey Vulture: last 7 StPt 2 Nov.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: last StPt 2 Nov.
N. Harrier: scare at inland areas after October and near L Ontario by late Nov.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 15 reports.
Cooper’s Hawk: 16 reports.
N. Goshawk: CCSP 19 Nov.
Red-shouldered Hawk: last SWG 28 Sep.
Broad-winged Hawk: last FD 24 Sep.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr FD 29 Oct; low numbers Nov.
Golden Eagle: WBSP late Oct (GS); StPt 2 Nov (TS); LWMA 12 Nov (JB).
Com. Gallinule: last ULLWMA 8 Oct.
Virginia Rail: last FD 2 Oct.
Sora: last ULLWMA 8 Oct.
Am. Coot: arr WHWMA 21 Sep; max 55 PRWMA 12 Nov.
Sandhill Crane: 2 Ellisburg 2 Nov (TS), only report.
Black-bellied Plover: 4-6/day WHWMA 21 Sep to 5 Oct; last PtPen 3 Nov.
Am. Golden-Plover: ULLWMA 15-16 Sep.
Semipalmated Plover: max 8 WHWMA 14 Sep; last ED 2 Nov.
Killdeer: last Canton 26 Oct.
Spotted Sandpiper: last CCSP 21 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: last ICNC 30 Sep.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 14 WHWMA 5 Oct; last SWG 26 Oct.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 10 WHWMA 8 Oct; last ED 2 Nov.
Whimbrel: Pamela 4 Sep; ED 9 Sep.
Red Knot: PtPen 14 Sep (NL).
Sanderling: max 45 MP 30 Oct; last MP 2 Nov.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: no reports!
Least Sandpiper: last ED 23 Nov, late (TS, JB).
White-rumped Sandpiper: WHWMA 14 Sep; 2 ED 30 Oct.
Pectoral Sandpiper: 2-4/day SWG thru 13 Sep; max & last 5 Coles Creek T Louisville 13 Oct.
Dunlin: max 35-40/day MP & LWMA 30 Oct to 12 Nov.
Long-billed Dowitcher: juv Coles Creek T Louisville 5 Oct (JB).
Short-billed Dowitcher: ULLWMA 15 Sep; max 10 Massena 27 Sep.

Wilson's Snipe: last Coles Creek T Louisville 17 Nov.
Am. Woodcock: last PilPt 9 Nov.
Red-necked Phalarope: CWF 17 Sep (JB).
Black-legged Kittiwake: 2 MP 2 Nov (JB).
Bonaparte's Gull: max 50+ ChB mid Oct.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1st cycle LB 28 Oct; 2 MP 12 Nov.
Caspian Tern: last ED 26 Sep.
Parasitic Jaeger: ED 6 Oct (JB); 3 BRB 30 Oct (GS); 3 PtPen 31 Oct (GS).
Pomarine Jaeger: BRB 30 Oct (GS).

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Snowy Owl: arr WHWMA 29 Nov, only report.
Short-eared Owl: 9 FD 14 Oct, where 1 still present 25 Oct but none thereafter.
Com. Nighthawk: last 8+ FD 13 Sep.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last WHWMA 14 Sep.
Red-headed Woodpecker: at least 3 ad on FD summer territories thru.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last ICNC 8 Oct.
N. Flicker: scarce after 12 Oct.
Am. Kestrel: generally scarce after 11 Oct, but more than still present lowland areas late Nov.
Merlin: ad last seen FD breeding site 28 Sep; 20+ reports throughout Region.
Peregrine Falcon: pr BI thru; migrants: ULLWMA 23 & 30 Sep, 8 Oct; FD 1 Oct; Ellisburg & Hounsfield 6 Oct.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last FD 25 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: ED 1 Sep; SWG 5 Sep; only reports.
Least Flycatcher: last FD 27 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last FD 1 Nov.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last ED 9 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr FD 25 Oct.
Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 12 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last WHWMA 5 Oct.
Philadelphia Vireo: 2 ICNC 3 Sep; FD 10, 11, 13 & 17 Sep; ICNC 23 Sep; Wellesley Is. SP 25 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last FD 26 Sep.
Gray Jay: max 5 MM 18 Oct.
Horned Lark: migrants SLR 8-25 Nov.
Tree Swallow: max 1000+ LWMA 27 Sep; last LWMA 15 Oct.
Cliff Swallow: max 60 ED 1 Sep, good number for date; unclear whether 4-5 ind. Grenadier Is. 13 Oct this sp or Cave Swallow.
CAVE SWALLOW: 6 WBSP 23 Nov (JB, RB, DP), first regional record.
Barn Swallow: ED 1 Sep.
Boreal Chickadee: max 4 MM 6 Nov.
House Wren: last FD 9 Oct.

Winter Wren: max 10 ED 26 Sep; last FD 5 Nov.
Marsh Wren: last FD 15 Oct.
Carolina Wren: StPt 1 Sep; Canton thru.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr ICNC 16 Sep; 24-30/day ED 26 Sep to 2 Nov; migrants scarce after 5 Nov.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 17 Sep; max 57 FD 27 Sep; last ED 30 Oct.
E. Bluebird: 12 PtPen 15 Nov.
Veery: last FD 17 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: heavy passage nights of 27-28 Sep & 3-4 Oct; last FD 12 Oct.
Swainson's Thrush: heaviest passage night of 27-28 Sep when average 15-20+ calls/min over Canton; large movements also on nights of 26-27 Sep & 3-4 Oct; last Canton 9 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last FD 12 Oct.
Wood Thrush: last FD 27 Sep.
Am. Robin: peak Oct numbers lower than usual.
Gray Catbird: last ICNC 14 Oct.
N. Mockingbird: PtPen 24 Nov, only report.
Brown Thrasher: last PRGC 30 Sep.
Am. Pipit: max 45 Potsdam 10 Oct; last 2 ED 17 Nov.
Bohemian Waxwing: arr 2 ED & 26 WBSP 2 Nov; max 62 Louisville 17 Nov.
Cedar Waxwing: max 95 RMSP 3 Nov.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: arr Waddington 21 Sep; max 3 FD 11 Oct.
Snow Bunting: arr FD 11 Oct (JB), early.
Ovenbird: last FD 27 Sep.
N. Waterthrush: last FD 7 Sep.
Black-and-white Warbler: last ED 26 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: last ICNC 30 Sep.
Orange-crowned Warbler: different locations FD 28 Sep, 3 & 4 Oct.
Nashville Warbler: last FD 4 Oct.
Com. Yellowthroat: last FD 12 Oct.
Am. Redstart: last FD 26 Sep.
Cape May Warbler: last FD 19 Sep.
N. Parula: last FD 26 Sep.
Magnolia Warbler: last WISP 3 Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last WISP 25 Sep.
Blackburnian Warbler: last FD 17 Sep.
Yellow Warbler: last FD 24 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last WISP 25 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 11 Oct.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last FD 4 Oct.
Palm Warbler: max 35 FD 19 Sep; last FD 12 Oct.
Pine Warbler: max 13 with Chipping Sparrows & E. Bluebirds in traditional fall gathering spot FD 17 Sep; last FD 4 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 219 FD 4 Oct; scarce after 2 Nov.

Prairie Warbler: last FD 17 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last FD 12 Oct.
Canada Warbler: RWSP 1 Sep, only report.
Wilson's Warbler: last WISP 25 Sep.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last FD 12 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr FD 25 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: last 7 SBSP 31 Oct.
Clay-colored Sparrow: last FD 11 Oct.
Field Sparrow: last Clayton 13 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: max & last 15+ FD 9 Oct.
Savannah Sparrow: scarce after 29 Oct.
Fox Sparrow: arr PRGC 8 Oct; last WHWMA 8 Nov.
Song Sparrow: scarce after 4 Nov.
Lincoln's Sparrow: arr FD 10 Sep; max 13 FD 27 Sep; last FD 26 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: last Lowville 28 Nov.
White-throated Sparrow: max 153 ICNC 8 Oct; scarce after 29 Oct.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr ED 26 Sep; scarce after 29 Oct; 3 Watertown 5 Nov; 2 PtPen thru.

Dark-eyed Junco: arr FD 11 Sep.
Scarlet Tanager: last FD 9 Oct.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last FD 28 Sep.
Indigo Bunting: last FD 24 Sep.
Bobolink: last WHWMA 14 Sep.
E. Meadowlark: last Leray 1 Oct.
Rusty Blackbird: arr ICNC 23 Sep; max 100 ULLWMA 28 Oct; last PRGC 10 Nov.
Com. Grackle: scarce after Oct.
Baltimore Oriole: last FD 6 Sep.
Pine Grosbeak: arr HP 9 Nov; max 20 Canton 30 Nov.
Purple Finch: scarce after mid-Oct.
White-winged Crossbill: modest movement lowlands 26 Oct thru 24 Nov.
Com. Redpoll: arr PRGC 23 Oct; max 400 FD 29 Nov.
Hoary Redpoll: FD 20 Nov (JB).
Pine Siskin: lowland max 150 Leyden 24 Oct; scarce lowland areas after Oct.
Evening Grosbeak: scarce migrant St. Lawrence Valley 30 Oct thru.