

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

Teresa Pegan and Hope Batcheller

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

tmp49@cornell.edu and hjb58@cornell.edu

In the summer of 2013, Region 3 experienced slightly more rainfall and slightly colder temperatures than average. All counties in Region 3 had above average rainfall in June, July, and August, but the levels differed by less than 3% in

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almost all cases. Temperatures in June were about 0.6° F lower than usual, but on some occasions in early and mid June temperatures dropped to 10° below average. July was slightly warmer than average, by 1.3°, but in August temperatures dipped below average again by 2.3°. Although this summer's weather did not overall differ very much from average levels, the cold snaps in June came during critical periods of the Tree Swallow breeding season, as observed by the long-running swallow project run by Dr. David Winkler at Cornell, and was one of the factors causing this breeding season to be one of the least successful ever observed in nearly 30 years for the experimental population. It seems likely that these cold snaps may have affected other birds' breeding attempts this year as well, especially those of aerial insectivores.

As usual, Montezuma's Knox-Marcellus Marsh turned up a number of rarities over the summer. A rather early eclipse male Eurasian Wigeon was found there by Jay McGowan on 23 July. He noted that it was only the second eBird record for New York in July. Another Eurasian Wigeon was found at Knox-Marcellus a month later on 30 August this time by David Nicosia and Melissa Penta.

Another notable waterfowl report from the summer was a new high count of Snow Geese, with four being seen both at Island Park on 7 June by Ken Burdick and at Emerson Park on 22 July by Ann Walter-Fromson.

Other birds from Knox-Marcellus include the American White Pelican first reported by Mickey Scilingo that was widely observed from July continuing into the fall, when it was joined by a second bird. It was seen fishing in the marsh on several occasions. Large numbers of Ardeids spent the summer at the marsh, including new high counts of 111 Great Egrets observed on 11 August and 55 Black-crowned Night-Herons on 18 August. A Glossy Ibis first reported in May by Larue St. Clair and Jackie Bakker was also seen on 1 June by Brent Bomkamp.

Knox-Marcellus is well known for its diversity of shorebirds, and this summer was no exception. Notable sightings include new high counts of Stilt Sandpipers in early August and American Golden-Plovers and Greater Yellowlegs later in the month; widely observed rarities like Jay McGowan's Marbled Godwit in early August, the Whimbrel reported by Jason Huck, and the 48 Hudsonian Godwits reported by Jay McGowan, Tim Lenz, and Andy Johnson later in the month; Buff-breasted Sandpipers, seen multiple times toward the end of August, and a Wilson's Phalarope that continued from July to the end of August. Three Red Knots were spotted at the Marsh in early June by Larue St. Clair, Jackie Bakker, and Chuck Gibson. A new high count of four Ruddy Turnstones was seen on 27 July by Jay McGowan.

Knox-Marcellus was also host to good numbers of Larids this summer, including new high counts of six Bonaparte's Gulls and 262 Caspian Terns in the first week of August. Other notable Larids include a Laughing Gull seen by Bill Ostrander at the Elmira Dam and two Forster's Terns seen a few times at Myer's Point on Cayuga Lake. An adult and a hatch year bird were found by Jay McGowan on 2 June, and later he also found a basic-plumaged bird at Stewart Park. Though not in the marsh itself, another unusual bird found by observers on

East Rd. (one of the main Knox-Marcellus viewing areas) was a Sedge Wren that was present 4-7 August, first reported by Jessie Barry and Chris Wood.

Myer's Point is also often a good place for unusual shorebirds and waterfowl, and this summer a heavily molting female-type Red-breasted Merganser was found there by Jay McGowan. The bird continued there for nearly the entire month of August. A new high count of seven Sanderlings was reported on 28 July. An especially interesting bird from the same day was a banded first Tompkins County record Red Knot found by Kevin McGowan and Lee Ann Van Leer. The bird had a green leg flag with the number 096 and had apparently been banded in the Delaware Bay. Some notable passerines from Myer's Point include a Dickcissel associating with a Bobolink flock and a late Orchard Oriole singing from Salt Point, both reported on 27 August by Chris Wood.

Though usually known for producing rare gulls in the winter, Cornell's compost piles off of Game Farm Rd. were notable this summer because of three Black Vultures found there by Jay McGowan on 28 August. One was seen flying over Cornell's Beebe Lake on the same day by Ben Barkley. The birds at the compost piles stayed through the end of August, and the species has continued to be reported sporadically in the area into the fall. An early Lesser Black-backed Gull was also seen at the compost piles several times at the end of July, first reported by Chris Wood.

Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in Danby hosted a number of interesting birds this summer, including a possible immature Northern Goshawk on 10 June seen by Ken Rosenberg. The species has bred there in the past and was also observed near the preserve at Bald Hill Rd. on 13 June by Diane Morton, Ken Kemphues, and Gary Kohlenberg. The Bald Hill bird's agitated behavior suggested that it had a nest nearby. A goshawk was also seen at Finger Lakes National Forest on 5 July.

One of the most interesting birds from the season was a Clay-colored Sparrow that was seen consistently at Lindsay-Parsons between 16 June and 4 July, found by Dave Nutter. A different Clay-colored Sparrow first reported by Jay McGowan was also seen regularly for most of June at the Christmas tree farm on Lick St. near Summerhill State Forest. Although no nest or hybrid fledglings were ever confirmed, the Lindsay-Parsons bird seemed to be involved in a nesting attempt with a Field Sparrow. The bird was a male that sang almost constantly during the time it was present, making it easy for many people to find it. On 19 June Benjamin Freeman and Alexandra Class described seeing the bird carry a moth into a dense tangle of grass and then emerge without it, strongly suggesting that it was attending young. They did not search for a nest because they worried about accidentally trampling it in the dense grass. No one ever reported seeing more than one Clay-colored Sparrow in the area, but several people including Benjamin Freeman, Jay McGowan, and myself saw it associating with a Field Sparrow. On 29 June Brent Bomkamp described seeing a female Field Sparrow carrying food when the Clay-colored Sparrow flew in and landed next to her, also carrying food. The Clay-colored Sparrow then unsuccessfully attempted to copulate with the Field Sparrow. Clay-colored

Sparrows and Field Sparrows are known to occasionally produce hybrids in the Midwest.

Other breeding birds of interest from Lindsay-Parsons were the Worm-eating Warblers that tend to breed in the Thatcher's Pinnacles area of the preserve. People began looking for the birds there in early May, and by the end of May Dave Nutter had watched the birds nest-building. The species was seen and heard regularly throughout the summer from Lindsay-Parsons and the surrounding area. Jay McGowan saw five of them on 2 July, an adult pair, a different adult with a young fledgling, and a fourth lone adult.

Golden-winged Warblers were present in the Region a few times over the summer—Tom Schulenberg had one in his yard in Ithaca on 24 August and Kevin McGowan had one at Yellow Barn State Forest on the same day. However, light yellowish wash on the chest of the Yellow Barn bird led Kevin McGowan to conclude that it was a “Lawrence’s” Warbler type Golden-winged x Blue-winged hybrid.

Although never observed breeding, a Prothonotary Warbler was consistently present in the marshy area off of Armitage Rd. near Montezuma this summer. The bird was first found in early May by Gary Chapin and was seen until the end of July by those who managed to endure the clouds of mosquitos in the area. This location has been good for Prothonotary Warblers in the past. There were reports from both Regions 3 and 2, with birds seen both south and north of the road.

Near the Prothonotary but somewhat easier to see was the pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers that bred in a stand of dead trees near Mays Point Pool. Mark Miller spotted one on 2 June being mobbed by blackbirds. Although the birds were not seen for a while after that, by early July they were consistently reported and David Nutter observed the pair copulating on 11 July. The pair did nest in the area, and on 25 August at least one nestling could be seen poking its head out of the cavity. The birds showed a range of feeding behaviors over the summer, including flycatching and foraging on wild grapes and other berries, and they were also seen bringing grapes into the nest cavity, perhaps to feed their young. David and Debbie Suggs also had a single Red-headed Woodpecker at Fries Cove on Cayuga Lake for most of the summer. The bird would sometimes visit their suet feeder. This was the third summer it has been present, and it had apparently failed to find a mate all three years.

Other notable passerines seen this summer include a Red Crossbill in Geneva reported by James Norwalk on 16 June and new high counts of Acadian Flycatchers (four) from Fillmore Glen State Park on 4 July and Baltimore Orioles (30) from the Finger Lakes National Forest on 6 August. A total of 220 species was reported this season. eBird data were analyzed using Swan Swan Hummingbird, courtesy of David Wheeler.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jackie Bakker, Ben Barkley, Jessie Barry, Brent Bomkamp, Joseph Brin, Ken Burdick, Gary Chapin, Alexandra Class, Doug Daniels, Benjamin Freeman,

Chuck Gibson, Louise Gomez, Eric Gulson, Andy Guthrie, Jason Huck, Andy Johnson, Logan Kahle, Steve Kelling, Ken Kempfues, J Gary Kohlenberg, Tim Lenz, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, Mark Miller, Ann Mitchell, Diane Morton, David Nicosia, James Norwalk, Dave Nutter, Bill Ostrander, Teresa Pegan, Melissa Penta, Larue St. Clair, Paul Rodewald, Ken Rosenberg, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Livia Santana, Tom Schulenberg, Mickey Sclingo, Antony Shrimpton, Eric Sibbald, David & Debbie Suggs, Jim Tarolli, Brad Walker, Ann Walter-Fromson, Benjamin Van Doren, Lee Ann van Leer, David Wheeler, Chris Wood, Cornell Lab Young Birders Event.

ABBREVIATIONS

Finger Lakes NF – Finger Lakes National Forest, SENE; Knox-Mar – Knox–Marcellus Marsh area, CAYU (includes Towpath and East Rds.); LPBP – Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve, TOMP; MyPt – Myers Point, TOMP; StP – Stewart Park, TOMP.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 4 Island Park CAYU 7 Jun (KB); 4 Emerson Park CAYU 22 Jul (AW-F).

EURASIAN WIGEON (R3): Knox-Mar 23 Jul (JM); Knox-Mar 30 Aug (DNI, MP).

Red-breasted Merganser: fem MyPt 2-29 Aug (JM), unusual in summer.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (R3): Knox-Mar 21 Jul-21 Aug (MS, mob), continued into fall.

Great Egret: max 111 Knox-Mar 11 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 55 Knox-Mar 18 Aug.

GLOSSY IBIS (R3): Knox-Mar 1 Jun (BBo), continuing from May.

BLACK VULTURE (R3): 3 Compost Piles TOMP 28-31 Aug (JM, mob).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

N. Goshawk: ad Bald Hill Rd 13 Jun, probable nesting; Finger Lakes NF 5 July, scarce.

Am. Golden-Plover: max 28 Knox-Mar 30 Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: max 500 Knox-Mar 18 Aug.

WHIMBREL: Knox-Mar 25-31 Aug (JH, mob).

HUDSONIAN GODWIT (R3): 48 Knox-Mar 18 Aug (AJ, TL, JM, mob), apparent adults.

MARBLED GODWIT: Knox-Mar 2-10 Aug (JM, mob).

Ruddy Turnstone: max 4 Knox-Mar 27 Jul (JM).

Red Knot: 3 Knox-Mar early Jun; MyPt 28 Jul (JM, LAVL), 1st TOMP record, banded, *intro*; Knox-Mar 4 Aug.

Stilt Sandpiper: max 58 Knox-Mar 3 Aug.

Sanderling: max 7 MyPt 28 Jul.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: Knox-Mar 24-27 Aug.

Wilson's Phalarope: Knox-Mar 21 Jul-25 Aug.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 6 Knox-Mar 5 Aug.

Laughing Gull: Elmira Dam CHEM 5 Jun (BO).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Compost Piles TOMP 23 and 27 Jul (CW, mob).

Caspian Tern: max 262 Knox-Mar 4 Aug, high count.

Forster's Tern: 2 MyPt 2 Jun; MyPt 23 Aug, StP 30 Aug.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Red-headed Woodpecker: Mays Point SENE 7 Jul-31 Aug (MM, DNu, mob), breeding pair; Fries Cove CAYU Jun 1-Aug 31 (D&DS).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Acadian Flycatcher: max 3 Fillmore Glen SP CAYU 4 Jul.

Tree Swallow: major nest losses due to cold snaps, *intro*.

SEDGE WREN (R3): East Rd SENE 4-7 Aug (JeB, CW, mob).

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Worm-eating Warbler: max 5 LPBP 2 Jul (DNu, JM, mob), *intro*.

Golden-winged Warbler: Ithaca 24 Aug (TS); Dryden 24 Aug.

“Lawrence’s” Warbler: Yellow Barn SF 24 Aug (KM), *intro*.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (R3):

Armitage Rd. SENE thru 25 Jul, probable breeding.

Cape May Warbler: max 7 Laurel Hill Cemetery SCHU 29 Aug.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW R3): LPBP

16 Jun-4 July (DNu, *et al*), likely paired with a Field Sparrow, *intro*; Lick St. CAYU 2 Jun-26 Jun (JM, mob).

DICKCISSEL (R3): MyPt 27 Aug (CW).

Orchard Oriole: last MyPt 27 Aug.

Baltimore Oriole: max 30 Finger Lakes NF 6 Aug.

Red Crossbill: Geneva ONTA 16 Jun (JN).