
REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

Jeffrey S. Bolsinger

98 State Street, Canton NY 13617
jsbolsinger@yahoo.com

Fall weather was generally pleasant with few storms but little north wind to push birds southward until late November, when winter settled in abruptly. September was a little cool and dry, as Watertown's mean temperature was 60.0° F, 1.3° below normal, and 2.5" of precipitation fell for the month. October was relatively warm and pleasant, as the mean temperature of 51.9° was 2.8° above normal, and the 4.5" of precipitation was within 0.1" of average. November's mean temperature was 3.6° below normal, thanks to a final week that was very cold with several nights in the single digits. The 5.1" of precipitation that fell in November was 0.5" above normal and included 10" of snow during the cold snap late in the month, so that the last week or two of the season had a definite mid-winter feel.

The waterfowl migration was very slow, with many species occurring in much lower than usual numbers. Except for a handful of individuals seen in late September Canada Goose flocks, Snow Geese were virtually unreported until late November and then in widely scattered small flocks. Brant were similarly scarce on Lake Ontario. Two individual Cackling Geese were observed, one in Hounsfield in late September and one over Fort Drum in October, the only goose rarities. Numerous observers commented on the scarcity of ducks all fall, and nearly all species seemed to occur in lower than usual numbers. This scarcity was most obvious at Wilson Hill WMA, where duck numbers were very low except during a brief period in late October, when the expected *Aythya* rafts finally developed. Still, the high count of 2280 Ring-necked Ducks here was just one-fourth that seen the previous fall and comes after several years of steady increases. Also at this time a male Eurasian Wigeon was at Wilson Hill for the fifth fall out of the last six. Upper and Lower Lakes WMA was about the only location with typical duck numbers, including Regionally notable counts of 165 Blue-winged Teal on 5 October and 390 Northern Pintail on 15 October.

Loons and grebes were among the highlights of the fall, with peak numbers during the last week of October. On 23 October Nick Leone observed **348** Horned Grebes on Point Peninsula, a very high tally for Region 6, and on the same date I saw 11 Red-necked Grebes at Wilson Hill WMA. A week later Nick Leone had 11 Red-throated Loons, 154 Common Loons, and one **Pacific Loon** in Black River Bay. The Pacific Loon was in the same area Nick found one last December and apparently remained until at least 7 November. However, by the second week of November very few loons and grebes could be found in Black River Bay.

There were a few interesting raptor observations, but hawk numbers overall were very low in November, when few open-country buteos could be found. Of particular interest was an immature Northern Goshawk Bob Washo found in his Canton chicken coop sitting on a pile of 20 dead chickens it had clearly killed. Fortunately for the goshawk, Bob has spent some time working with raptors and was able to remove and release it unharmed. Other noteworthy diurnal raptors were three Golden Eagles and six Peregrine Falcons away from known nesting sites, both higher totals than reported most seasons. Very few Rough-legged Hawks had arrived by the end of November, but two Snowy Owls during the last week of November gave hope that some predatory birds might show up for the winter.

Regular readers of the Region 6 report are probably tired by now of the annual rant that appears here regarding how poor was the most recent shorebird migration, but even by Region 6 standards shorebird numbers were awful this fall with a couple of exceptions. Just one each Semipalmated Sandpiper and Dunlin were reported, and, for the first time in many years, no Sanderling were observed at all. Very high water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River once again was a major culprit, and by the time water levels dropped in late September few shorebirds seemed to be around, or at least very few were observed at El Dorado and other traditional Lake Ontario sites. Given the poor shorebird numbers generally, it was a pleasant surprise when Nick Leone found

a Regionally rare Hudsonian Godwit on 30 October at Sherwin Bay on Pillar Point, along with several Black-bellied Plover and Pectoral Sandpipers and a single Dunlin that together made up one of the few actual shorebird aggregations of the fall. The only other significant shorebird report of the fall was at least 50 *Pluvialis* plovers seen by a casual birder in a plowed field in Chaumont on 15 September. These were initially reported as Black-bellied Plovers, but after additional study the observer later came to think they were mostly American Golden-Plovers. If the latter, this would be a record count for Region 6. But unfortunately no photographs were obtained, and these birds were not seen again.

Other than a few common species, Larids are chronically under-reported in Region 6, and many rarities almost certainly slip through the Region undetected every year. Notable this season was an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull at Point Peninsula on 23 October, at least one Forster's Tern with two other poorly seen *Sterna* terns off Southwick Beach State Park on 24 October, and the season's first Iceland Gull off Barnhart Island on 30 November. As usual, however, Region 6 birders collectively spent very little time watching Lake Ontario, and no jaegers or other pelagic species were detected.

By all accounts the landbird migration was slow with few movements of any size. Throughout the fall I typically start my mornings by spending a few minutes well before sunrise listening for nocturnal migrants over my driveway, and this fall I heard far fewer night flight calls than I have during any previous autumn, and no large numbers of calls on any morning. Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes were especially poorly represented in my admittedly small sample, as I heard just a few Swainson's calls on three or four mornings and Gray-cheeked Thrushes just one morning of the entire season. The experiences of birders on the ground seemed to match what I heard—or didn't hear—overhead, that there just weren't many migrants around. Given the generally nice weather that dominated September and much of October, it is entirely possible that many birds simply flew over the Region and kept going, but it certainly seemed that they weren't coming our way at all.

Numbers of most species seemed to peter out rather early in the season, and those that usually persist into late October or November generally were hard to find during the latter half of the fall. But individuals of a few species lingered well past normal departure dates. A few notable late observations from Fort Drum included: an adult Red-headed Woodpecker on a territory that has been continuously occupied since May of 2012, thanks to two consecutive years with very large acorn crops; a very dark Yellow Warbler on 15 October of one of the northern subspecies, most likely *Setophaga petechia amnicola*, although subspecific identification wasn't certain; and a Pine Warbler in a pine plantation on 7 November. Elsewhere, Tree Swallows were present on Point Peninsula in unusually high numbers well into November despite intermittently very cold temperatures, and Yellow-rumped Warblers persisted on and near Stony Point well after they had departed most other areas thanks to abundant red cedar berries.

Mixed species warbler flocks were few and far between, but all of the usual warbler species were detected with no real rarities. Somewhat paradoxically, Blackpoll Warblers seemed less common than usual, but Tennessee, Cape May, and Bay-breasted Warblers were all relatively abundant. The closest to a rarity among warblers was Orange-crowned Warbler, with individuals on Fort Drum on 11 and 17 October.

The sparrow migration seemed especially slow, with low to very low numbers of most species. For the second consecutive fall, my high counts of White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco barely exceeded 50 in locations where I usually find flocks in the hundreds during late September and early October. Fox and White-crowned Sparrows, while normally less common, were particularly scarce, and Lincoln's Sparrows were also less common on Fort Drum than during the preceding few years. Despite the generally poor sparrow migration, a **Le Conte's Sparrow** on Fort Drum 10 and 11 October was one of the season's highlights.

A few other passerine sightings are worth highlighting. Single observations of Sedge Wren and Clay-colored Sparrow came from Fort Drum, where these species often linger on breeding territories as late as mid-October but can be very difficult to locate during the fall. On 29 October Nick Leone saw a flock of approximately 1600 Rusty Blackbirds, the largest single flock reported in Region 6 in at least 10 years. Four Northern Mockingbird reports from Jefferson County is an unusually high fall tally. Irruptive waxwings and finches were notable by their absence, as there was just one each report of Bohemian Waxwing and Pine Siskin, and no reports for the other irruptive finches.

For the season I received reports of 217 species, a lower tally than during any of the previous three years, but not really surprising given the slow migration. The general lack of any sizeable migratory movements through the Region was the big disappointment of the season, with the lack of shorebirds being particularly disappointing, and loons and grebes being among the few taxonomic groups that bucked the trend. Pacific Loon and Le Conte's Sparrow were the only true rarities of the season and would have to be considered the highlights of the season, although typically for Region 6 virtually nobody other than their initial observers saw these birds.

CONTRIBUTORS

Janet Akin, Jeff Bolsinger, Mary Bowman, Dick & Marion Brouse, Carol Cady, Bernie Carr, Joan Collins, Julie Covey, Rose DeNeve, Ben Dixon, Doug Emlin, John Good, Willis Haller, Rebecca Heagle, Monica LeClerc, Nick Leone, Eugene Nichols, Fred Ossman, Bill Purcell, Mandi Roggie, Robert Scranton, Antony Shrimpton, Gerry Smith, Thomas Smith, Tom & Eileen Wheeler, Mary Beth Warburton, Bob Washo, Andrea Wiggins, Hans & Madeline van der Zweep

ABBREVIATIONS

BI – Barnhart I, T Massena, STLA; BRB – Black River Bay; CCSP – Coles Creek SP; CV – T Cape Vincent; CWF – Canton Wastewater Treatment Facility, T Canton; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; GPSP – Grass Point SP; HH – Henderson Harbor; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; KPSP – Kring Point SP, JEFF; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Piercefield and Colton; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg, JEFF; PilPt – Pillar Pt, JEFF; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course trail, T Canton; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Point Peninsula, JEFF; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP; SLR – St. Lawrence Ri; StPt – Stony Pt, T Henderson, JEFF; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley Island SP.

WHISTLING-DUCKS—VULTURES

Snow Goose: few ind in Canada Goose flocks late Sep; scarce until 17 Nov; max 2000 Hounsfield 30 Nov.

Brant: 110 CCSP 20 Oct; 241 GPSP 21 Oct; PilPt 8 Nov.

“Richardson’s” Cackling Goose: Hounsfield 29 Sep (AS); FD 24 Oct (JB).

Trumpeter Swan: 1-2/day PRWMA thru 22 Nov; 3 WISP 3 Oct; 6 ULLWMA 5 Oct.

Tundra Swan: max 223 PtPen 9 Nov.

Wood Duck: scarce after 21 Oct except for 50 FD 2 Nov, high for date.

Gadwall: max 84 ULLWMA 11 Nov.

Eurasian Wigeon: m WHWMA 27-30 Oct (JB, TS).

Am. Wigeon: max 225 WHWMA 27 Oct; low.

Am. Black Duck: max 500 PilPt 30 Oct.

Mallard: max 250 BI 30 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: max 165 ULLWMA 5 Oct; last SLR Massena 15 Oct.

N. Shoveler: max 12 ULLWMA 5 Oct.

N. Pintail: max 390 ULLWMA 15 Oct.

Green-winged Teal: max 60 PilPt 31 Oct, low.

Canvasback: 5 reports singles between 19 Oct & 27 Nov.

Redhead: max 620 WHWMA 27 Oct.

Ring-necked Duck: max 2280 WHWMA 27 Oct; 740 ULLWMA 11 Nov; lowest numbers in several years.

Greater Scaup: 555 arr CV 28 Sep; leucistic ind PilPt 30 Oct; max 2000 BRB 30 Oct.

Lesser Scaup: max 50 PRWMA 13 Nov.

Surf Scoter: max 7 BRB 19 Oct; 5 rep 1-3 ind.

White-winged Scoter: max 60 CCSP 6 Oct; low.

Black Scoter: 4 MP 7 Oct; 3 PilPt 27 Oct; 2 SLR Massena 15-17 Nov.

Long-tailed Duck: arr MP 7 Oct; max 385 SBSP 23 Nov.

Bufflehead: 6 arr PtPen 16 Oct; max 75 HH 23 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: arr CCSP 14 Oct; max 66 SLR Waddington 30 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 72 Little Sucker Brook Waddington 9 Nov.

Com. Merganser: max 84 ED 28 Sep.

Red-breasted Merganser: arr ED 12 Oct; max 131 CV 24 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: arr BRB & WHWMA 19 Oct; 6 PRWMA 23 Oct; max 8 PRWMA 22 Nov; 6 KPSP 29 Nov; only reports.

Red-throated Loon: max 11 PilPt 30 Oct; 2 CCSP 15 Nov.

PACIFIC LOON: PilPt 30 Oct in same area where present Dec 2012 (NL!).

Com. Loon: max 154 PilPt 30 Oct (NL).

Pied-billed Grebe: max 108 ULLWMA 5 Oct.

Horned Grebe: max 348 PtPen 23 Oct (NL).

Red-necked Grebe: arr PtPen 23 Oct; max 11 WHWMA 27 Oct.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 805 SLR Massena 22 Sep; scarce after Oct.

Am. Bittern: last KPSP 29 Oct.

Great Blue Heron: scarce after 9 Nov.

Great Egret: max 45 Norfolk 1 Sep.

Green Heron: last Potsdam 19 Oct.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 5 Norfolk 1 Sep, only report.

Turkey Vulture: max 76 Massena 1 Oct; last Canton 10 Nov.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: last New Bremen 12 Oct.

N. Harrier: scarce after mid-Nov.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 10 reports.

Cooper’s Hawk: 15 reports.

N. Goshawk: imm in chicken coop sitting on 20 chickens it had killed Canton 11 Sep (BW); imm FD 17 Sep.

Red-shouldered Hawk: FD 13 Sep; New Bremen 26 Sep; Low's Ridge/Upper Dam trail 1 Oct; only reports.

Broad-winged Hawk: last FD 8 Oct.

Red-tailed Hawk: fewer than usual by end Nov.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr FD 6 Nov; still scarce by end Nov.

Golden Eagle: imm FD 17 Oct (JB); ad WISP 12 Nov (GS); Leyden 28 Nov (JA).

Sora: Dekalb 1 Sep, only report.

Com. Gallinule: last FD 25 Sep.

Am. Coot: max 72 PRWMA 22 Nov.

Sandhill Crane: 2 Canton 19 Oct.

Black-bellied Plover: max & last 12 PilPt 31 Oct.

Am. Golden-Plover: ULLWMA 13 Sep; app 50 *Pluvialis* plovers in farm field prob mostly this sp Chaumont 15 Sep.

Semipalmated Plover: Waddington 1 Sep; ULLWMA 13 Sep; only reports.

Killdeer: max 30 ED 28 Sep; last ED 12 Oct.

Spotted Sandpiper: last PilPt 27 Sep.

Solitary Sandpiper: last ED 1 Oct.

Greater Yellowlegs: last PtPen & Waddington 9 Nov.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last 3 PilPt 30 Oct

Hudsonian Godwit: Sherwin Bay marsh, PilPt 30 Oct (NL).

Sanderling: no reports.

Dunlin: PilPt 31 Oct, only report.

Least Sandpiper: last ED 20 Sep, few reports.

Pectoral Sandpiper: 11 PilPt 30 Oct; max & last 13 ULLWMA 11 Nov, late.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 4 PilPt 30 Oct, only report.

Wilson's Snipe: last Canton 11 Oct.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 73 PilPt 27 Oct.

Iceland Gull: BI 30 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: ad PtPen 23 Oct (NL).

Caspian Tern: last WHWMA 1 Sep.

Com. Tern: last WISP 2 Oct.

Forster's Tern: SBSP 24 Oct (JB).

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Black-billed Cuckoo: last Canton 12 Oct.

Snowy Owl: arr Leray 26 Nov; CV & PtPen 29 Nov.

Short-eared Owl: Lisbon 29 Nov; Massena 30 Nov; only reports.

Com. Nighthawk: 2 Brownville 2 Sep; last FD 3 Sep.

E. Whip-poor-will: 3 Clayton 11 Sep.

Chimney Swift: last Pt. Salubrious 24 Sep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last Leyden 17 Sep.

Belted Kingfisher: scarce after 28 Oct.

Red-headed Woodpecker: max 5 FD 11 Sep; Canton 21 Sep; ad thru on same FD terr continuously occupied since May 2012.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last FD 9 Oct.

N. Flicker: few after 17 Oct.

Am. Kestrel: more than usual Nov.

Merlin: 12 reports to 15 Oct but only 1 after.

Peregrine Falcon: migrants Leray 5 Sep; ULLWMA 6 & 29 Sep; Potsdam 23 Sep; FD 11 Oct; Canton 19 Oct.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: FD 4 Sep, only report.

E. Wood-Pewee: last ED 28 Sep.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: FD 3 Sep, only report.

Willow Flycatcher: last identified PRGC 2 Sep; Traill's FD 3 Sep thought to be this sp.

Least Flycatcher: last ICNC 6 Sep.

E. Phoebe: last PtPen 24 Oct.

Great Crested Flycatcher: last FD 3 Sep.

N. Shrike: arr FD 7 Nov.

Yellow-throated Vireo: last New Bremen 19 Sep.

Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 16 Oct.

Warbling Vireo: last PRGC 24 Sep.

Philadelphia Vireo: 7 reports of 11 ind between 2 & 30 Sep; max 3 ICNC 6 Sep.

Red-eyed Vireo: last PRGC 2 Oct.

Gray Jay: max 7 MM 9 Sep.

Horned Lark: max 24 Belleville 29 Nov.

Tree Swallow: high cts 5000 PtPen 14 Sep & 6000 Lyme 30 Sep; 400 PtPen 27 Oct; 9 PtPen 3 Nov; last 20 PtPen 17 Nov, high for so late (EN).

N. Rough-winged Swallow: ULLWMA 6 Sep, only report.

Bank Swallow: last ULLWMA 6 Sep.

Barn Swallow: max 80 CWF 6 Sep; no reports after 7 Sep.

House Wren: last WISP 3 Oct.

Winter Wren: max 11 FD 30 Sep; last KC 25 Nov.

Sedge Wren: FD 26 Sep, only report.

Marsh Wren: last FD 21 Oct.

Carolina Wren: KC 30 Sep to 16 Oct, only report.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr ICNC 6 Sep; max 47 PtPen 23 Oct.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr CCSP 14 Sep; max 26 FD 30 Sep; last FD 24 Oct.

E. Bluebird: max 12 PtPen 4 Nov.

Veery: last MM 9 Sep.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: nocturnal migrants over Canton night of 22-23 Sep; FD 30 Sep; only reports.

Swainson's Thrush: last FD 16 Oct.

Hermit Thrush: last PRGC 10 Nov.

Wood Thrush: last FD 18 Sep.

Am. Robin: peak numbers lower than usual.

Gray Catbird: last KC 22 Oct.

Brown Thrasher: scarce after 20 Sep; last Lowville 21 Nov (NL).

N. Mockingbird: Pt. Salubrious 24 Sep (NL); Redwood 13 Oct (ML); Hounsfield 22 Oct (NL); PilPt 27 Oct (NL).

Am. Pipit: max 52 FD 23 Oct; no reports after 24 Oct.

Bohemian Waxwing: heard with Cedar Waxwings ED 19 Nov, only report.

Cedar Waxwing: max 500 WISP 8 Nov.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: arr FD 11 Oct.

Snow Bunting: 2 arr PtPen 30 Oct; max 180 FD 26 Nov.

Ovenbird: last ED 28 Sep.

N. Waterthrush: last FD 5 Sep.

Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 13 Sep.

Black-and-white Warbler: last ED 12 Oct.

Tennessee Warbler: max 11 FD 3 Sep; last PRGC 24 Sep.

Orange-crowned Warbler: FD 11 & 17 Oct, only reports.

Nashville Warbler: last FD 30 Sep.

Mourning Warbler: last ICNC 2 Sep.

Com. Yellowthroat: last FD 16 Oct.

Am. Redstart: last 2 FD 30 Sep.

Cape May Warbler: last FD 23 Sep.

N. Parula: last FD 1 Oct.

Magnolia Warbler: last PRGC 2 Oct.

Bay-breasted Warbler: max 7 FD 3 & 13 Sep; last FD 1 Oct; more than usual.

Blackburnian Warbler: last ICNC 29 Sep.

Yellow Warbler: last presumed *S. p. aestiva* FD 16 Sep; darker green ind FD 15 Oct likely *S. p. amnicola* but subspecific id uncertain (JB).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: last FD 23 Sep.

Blackpoll Warbler: max 43 FD 23 Sep; last ICNC 5 Oct.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: last FD 30 Sep.

Palm Warbler: max 21 FD 26 Sep; last 2 FD 16 Oct.

Pine Warbler: max 9 FD 25 Sep in open oak-pine woodlands where traditionally gather in larger numbers in fall; last FD 7 Nov, late.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 191 FD 23 Sep; scarce after 9 Nov except in red cedar woodlands StPt where many still present late Nov.

Prairie Warbler: last 2 FD 13 Sep.

Black-throated Green Warbler: last FD 1 Oct.

Canada Warbler: last FD 13 Sep.

Wilson's Warbler: last PRGC 21 Sep.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last PtPen 23 Oct

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr New Bremen 9 Oct.

Chipping Sparrow: last 2 PtPen 7 Nov.

Clay-colored Sparrow: FD 13 Sep, only report.

Field Sparrow: last FD 22 Oct.

Vesper Sparrow: max 17 FD 16 Oct; last FD 23 Oct.

Savannah Sparrow: last FD 6 Nov.

LE CONTE'S SPARROW: FD 10-11 Oct (JB, photos!, report to NYSARC).

Fox Sparrow: 9 reports of 17 ind between 6 Oct & 7 Nov, low.

Song Sparrow: few after 5 Nov.

Lincoln's Sparrow: last FD & Massena 15 Oct.

Swamp Sparrow: last PRGC 25 Oct.

White-throated Sparrow: max 76 Wanakena 6 Oct; few after 15 Nov.

White-crowned Sparrow: arr PRGC 24 Sep; max 54 PtPen 11 Oct; last PtPen 29 Nov

Dark-eyed Junco: arr FD 17 Sep.

Scarlet Tanager: last FD 23 Sep.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last ED 12 Oct.

Indigo Bunting: last FD 27 Sep.

Bobolink: max 120 Waddington 1 Sep; last PRGC 15 Sep.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 8000 Dekalb 31 Oct.

E. Meadowlark: max 12 PtPen 11 Oct; last Canton 29 Nov.

Rusty Blackbird: arr FD 16 Sep; max 1600 KPSP 29 Oct (NL); last FD 21 Nov.

Com. Grackle: scarce after 25 Oct.

Baltimore Oriole: last FD 3 Sep.

Purple Finch: 1-6/day thru.

Pine Siskin: 2 FD 26 Sep, only report.

Am. Goldfinch: max 1000 PtPen 11 Oct.

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