

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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Fall started out relatively warm, with September's mean temperature ranging from 0.3° F above normal in Watertown to as much as 2° above normal in most of the St. Lawrence Valley. October was even warmer, with a mean temperature in Watertown that was 4.2° above normal and a high of 81° on 15 October. The weather changed markedly in November, with a monthly mean of 35.5° that was 2.9° below normal, although, as with earlier in the fall, temperatures fluctuated dramatically all month. The most startling example of this fluctuation came in late November, when, after three days of heavy lake effect snow that dropped two feet on Watertown and significantly more on the Tug Hill starting on the 18th, the temperature climbed to as high as 71° on the 24th and 25th, melting all of that snow very rapidly. Overall the fall was a little drier than usual, with September and November each receiving about 70% of normal precipitation, while October's rainfall was less than 5% above normal.

Numbers for most waterfowl species seemed lower than usual, but there were a few impressive high counts, and the total species tally was higher than usual as well. One Greater White-fronted Goose in Canton was well documented between 2 and 12 October, and, after many weeks with no sightings, one was again seen in the area on 26 and 29 November. The recent trend for very late passage of Snow Geese through Region 6 continued, with very few reports before the end of November. Cackling Goose is reported virtually every fall now, with this season's only report consisting of two individuals in a flock flying over Robert Wehle SP on 12 October. Nick Leone tallied over 600 Tundra Swans on Black River Bay on 30 November, the highest count in recent years at this traditional staging area. Maximum counts for most sea ducks were relatively low, but a flock of approximately **750** Black Scoters on the St. Lawrence River near the mouth of Coles Creek was exceptional and is apparently a record-high count for Region 6. Other notable duck sightings included two Eurasian Wigeon, one at Wilson Hill WMA, where this species has been seen at least six out of the last seven years, and one found by Nick Leone at Black River Bay; two female Harlequin Ducks Mike Jeziorski found at Montario Point on the last day of the fall; and an early Barrow's Goldeneye Nick Leone saw at Point Peninsula on 24 November.

Among the season's highlights were two western waterbirds, a **Pacific Loon** Nick Leone found off Pillar Point on 27 October and a **Western Grebe** I saw on the St. Lawrence River on 11 November. This is the third consecutive fall that Nick Leone has seen a Pacific Loon in the complex of bays between Pillar Point and Point Peninsula, but unlike previous years this bird was only

seen once. When I found the Western Grebe it was floating downstream past Barnhart Island toward the Robert Moses Dam head pond, where there is a large expanse of open water that is not accessible from land, and not surprisingly the grebe was not seen again. This is the first Western Grebe report in Region 6 since 2006, when Bob Long found one on the St. Lawrence River near Morristown in September, and perhaps the same individual was reported to eBird in October near the site of this fall's bird. Also noteworthy this season was an unusually large number of Red-necked Grebe reports, including a high count of 18 at El Dorado on 12 October and many reports of 1-9 individuals, with a seasonal total of at least 80-90 individuals. Red-necked Grebe reports have increased substantially during the past decade, although it is not certain whether this reflects changes in bird numbers or observer behavior.

Shorebird numbers were characteristically low, but the 20 species reported is more than many recent falls. The shorebird highlight was a **Ruff** Nick Leone found in a marsh on private land on Pillar Point on 6 October. Unfortunately, the Ruff moved into an area that was inaccessible to Nick and was not seen again. The summer's very high water levels began dropping in September and by the end of that month were sufficiently low that conditions looked good for shorebirds at El Dorado, but very few were present on most visits. Among the scarce species of note at El Dorado were a Red-necked Phalarope on 12 September and two White-rumped Sandpipers on 30 September. Shorebird numbers were better at Wilson Hill WMA, but most birds were distant and difficult to identify. Still, the season's only Baird's Sandpiper was at Wilson Hill on 13 September, as was a seasonal high of seven American Golden-Plovers on 27 September.

This fall there were several reports of species that are often missed, not because they don't occur regularly in Region 6 but because there aren't enough birders active in the right places to see them. For instance, there is no local tradition of lake-watching, nor any well-known lake watch sites, so species like jaegers often go unreported. Tony Shrimpton had this season's only jaeger report, a Parasitic Jaeger off Stony Point on 21 September. Among other reports of likely regular species that are usually missed were one Lesser Black-backed Gull at Jacques Cartier SP in late November and at least two Forster's Terns on Pillar Point in early October. On 7 November single Cattle Egrets were noted in Alexandria and Henderson, and on 9 November one was in Mannsville, perhaps one of the previous two individuals.

The season's first Snowy Owl was seen on the relatively early date of 10 November, near Big Island in the St. Lawrence River in Hammond. This site is less than three miles from where a Snowy Owl was photographed in early August, suggesting that this owl may have summered in the area rather than being a new arrival. The next report was from Massena on 16 November, with numerous reports during the last week of the month.

Overall the songbird migration was relatively slow, with few large movements or congregations of migrants noted. Perhaps the most notable

exception was on 27 October, when I encountered large numbers of sparrows on Fort Drum, including a very conservative count of 36 Fox Sparrows on a one-mile walk through habitat that appeared to be occupied by many more individuals. Also in the area on this day was a late Black-billed Cuckoo, the only one reported in Region 6 all fall. Also notable from Fort Drum was a Nelson's Sparrow on 10 October, and Eugene Nichols found another Nelson's Sparrow at Wilson Bay marsh on 18 October. The passerine highlight of the fall was a **Northern Wheatear** Tony Shrimpton found on Stony Point on 21 September and seen by many observers over the next two days. Tony has racked up a nice list of rarities since he started spending time on the Jefferson County lakeshore a few years ago, none more impressive than this wheatear.

Several species of irruptive finches appeared in generally low numbers this fall, with Pine Siskin being the only species that was widely observed. One redpoll was heard calling over Fort Drum on 24 October, but there were no more reports until 26 November, when Joan Collins found a small flock of Common Redpolls at Hawkins Point in Massena that surprisingly included one Hoary Redpoll. Single White-winged Crossbills were found at two locations on the Lake Ontario shoreline in late October and early November, and there was a handful of Evening Grosbeak reports from the same period. However, neither of these species seemed to be present in Region 6 in significant numbers, at least not outside the Adirondacks. By season's end Bohemian Waxwing had not yet been detected.

For the season I received reports of 225 species, tying the second highest fall tally over the past decade. By Region 6 standards there was an exceptional number of rarities, and Pacific Loon, Western Grebe, and Ruff all make claims to having been the season's best bird, but I think the Northern Wheatear earns the title as it was the only one of the great rarities that was seen by anybody other than the original finder.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jeff Bolsinger, Richard & Marion Brouse, Carol Cady, Bernie Carr, Joan Collins, Benjamin Dixon, Doug & Ann Emlin, Wayne Fidler, Nathan Goldberg, Matthew Hobart, Mike Jeziorski, Andy Keister, Nick Leone, James Maine, Garrett MacDonald, Kevin McGann, Brian Miller, Ellen Miller, Anne Moomey, Eugene Nichols, Fred Ossman, Mandi Roggie, Linnea Rowse, Antony Shrimpton, Gerry Smith, Thomas Smith, MaryBeth Warburton, Tom & Eileen Wheeler, Patty Williams, Hans & Madeline van der Zweep.

ABBREVIATIONS

BI – Barnhart Island, 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; HP – Hawkins Pt, Robert Moses SP; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; JCSP – Jacques Cartier SP; KC – Kelsey Creek,

T Watertown; KPSP – Kring Point SP, JEFF; LWMA – Lakeview WMA; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Piercefield and Colton; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg, JEFF; RWSP – Robert G. Wehle SP; PilPt – Pillar Point, JEFF; PRGC – Partridge Run Golf Course trail, T Canton; PRWMA – Perch River WMA; PtPen – Point Peninsula, JEFF; SLR – St. Lawrence River; StPt – Stony Pt, T Henderson, JEFF; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley Is SP; WP – Whalen Park, T Louisville.

WHISTLING-DUCKS—VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: T Canton 2-12 Oct (BD, EW, JB, photos!); no reports Canton until singles 26 & 29 Nov (JB).

Snow Goose: few reports of 1-10 with Canada Geese before late Oct; first flocks CV 25 Oct; 450 T Dekalb 30 Oct; 400 T Henderson 7 Nov; few scattered reports but no major movement rest of Nov.

Brant: arr 20 CCSP 19 Oct; max 73 T Alexandria 31 Oct.

“Richardson’s” Cackling Goose: 2 flying with 60 Canada Geese RWSP 12 Oct.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 BRB 13 Oct.

Tundra Swan: max 612 PilPt 30 Nov.

Wood Duck: largely absent after 4 Nov.

Gadwall: max 57 ULLWMA 9 Nov.

Eurasian Wigeon: ad m PilPt 8-22 Oct (NL); ad m WHWMA 21 Oct-1 Nov (TS, JB), where has been seen every fall but one since 2008.

Am. Wigeon: max 480 WHWMA 1 Nov.

Am. Black Duck: 87 PtPen 24 Nov.

Mallard: max 337 T Brownville 4 Oct.

Blue-winged Teal: max 250 ULLWMA 28 Sep; last 3 ULLWMA 31 Oct.

N. Shoveler: max 6 PilPt 2 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 60 WHWMA 1 Nov.

Green-winged Teal: max 149 WP 13 Oct; scarce after 16 Nov.

Canvasback: 2-5/day WHWMA 10 Oct to 8 Nov; f CV 4 Nov, only other report.

Redhead: max 540 WHWMA 1 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: max 4200 WHWMA 13 Oct.

Greater Scaup: several reports 10 or fewer from 13 Sep; 1st sizeable flock 850 CV 28 Sep.

Lesser Scaup: max 48 ULLWMA 19 Oct.

Harlequin Duck: 2 f MP 31 Nov (MJ).

Surf Scoter: max 4 ED 12 Oct, CCSP 19 Oct & KPSP 31 Oct; 3 other reports 1-2 each.

White-winged Scoter: arr CCSP 13 Oct; max 35 JCSP 31 Oct.

Black Scoter: max 750 SLR at mouth Coles Creek 19 Oct (JB), probable Reg record high.

Long-tailed Duck: arr ED 12 Oct; max 275 MP 7 Nov.

Bufflehead: arr ULLWMA 10 Oct.

Com. Goldeneye: 2 WHWMA 6 Sep only report before late Oct; arr CV & JCSP 31 Oct.

Barrow’s Goldeneye: ad f PtPen 24 Nov (NL), only report.

Hooded Merganser: max 148 Coles Creek T Waddington & Louisville 8 Nov.

Com. Merganser: max 210 Coles Creek T Waddington & Louisville 11 Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 114 BI 29 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: 3 arr CWF 17 Oct; max 4 ULLWMA 9 Nov; last 3 BRB 26 Nov.

Red-throated Loon: 3 RWSP 12 Oct; PilPt 4 Nov.

PACIFIC LOON: PilPt 27 Oct, where present for 3rd consecutive year (NL!).

Com. Loon: max 71 PilPt 9 Nov; SLR max 41 mouth Coles Creek 11 Nov.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 38 ULLWMA 5 Sep, low.

Horned Grebe: max 15 ED 12 Oct.

Red-necked Grebe: max 18 ED 12 Oct; 1-9/day at several SLR sites 27 Sep to 23 Nov, where reports increasing.

WESTERN GREBE: BI 11 Nov (JB), 3rd STLA & Reg record, report to NYSARC.

Double-crested Cormorant: scarce after 11 Nov.

Am. Bittern: last FD 20 Oct.

Great Blue Heron: many reports 1-2/day last week Nov.

Great Egret: many reports 1-3/day central & NE STLA to 20 Oct.

Cattle Egret: T Alexandria 7 Nov (PW, photos!); T Henderson 7 Nov (JB); T Mannsville 9 Nov (AS, KM, WF).

Green Heron: last ICNC 28 Sep.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: ULLWMA 14 Sep, only report.

Turkey Vulture: max 150 T Lowville 9 Oct; last T Louisville 1 Nov.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: last ULLWMA 31 Oct.
N. Harrier: ICNC 2 Nov & KC 13, 20 Nov; only reports after 29 Oct.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 18 reports.
Cooper's Hawk: 30 reports.
N. Goshawk: MM 3 Sep; FD 27 Oct; only reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: last FD 24 Oct.
Broad-winged Hawk: last FD 9 Sep.
Red-tailed Hawk: late Nov numbers higher than previous two years.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr FD 23 Oct.
Golden Eagle: 2 imm soaring together FD 24 Oct; imm PtPen 1 Nov; T Orleans 2 Nov.
Sora: FD 4 Sep, only report.
Com. Gallinule: last ULLWMA 28 Sep.
Am. Coot: 17 ULLWMA 24 Oct.
Sandhill Crane: ULLWMA 5 Sep, 21 Nov.
Black-bellied Plover: max 8 WHWMA 13 Sep; last 2 PtPen 29 Oct.
Am. Golden-Plover: WHWMA 7 Sep; FD 15 Sep; max 7 WHWMA 27 Sep.
Semipalmated Plover: max 5 WHWMA 6 Sep; last WHWMA 27 Sep.
Killdeer: last 3 PtPen & WP 26 Oct.
Spotted Sandpiper: last CWF 5 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: last 2 Higley Flow SP 14 Sep.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 5 WHWMA 6 Sep; max 20 PtPen 31 Oct, where up to 4/day to at least 9 Nov.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 12 PtPen 8 Oct; last PtPen 26 Oct.
Sanderling: max 5 StPt 7 Sep; last ED 9 Nov.
RUFF: ad PilPt 6 Oct (NL!).
Dunlin: max 3 PilPt 22 Nov; last CCSP 11 Nov; unusually scarce.
Baird's Sandpiper: WHWMA 13 Sep.
Least Sandpiper: max 10 WHWMA 6 Sep; last WHWMA 13 Sep.
White-rumped Sandpiper: 2 ED 30 Sep.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 11 PilPt 13 Oct.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 4 WHWMA 6 Sep & ED 21 Sep.
Wilson's Snipe: last FD 15 Sep.
Am. Woodcock: last FD 16 Oct.
Red-necked Phalarope: ED 12 Sep.
Parasitic Jaeger: StPt 21 Sep, only report (AS).
Bonaparte's Gull: max 75 PtPen 26 Oct.
Ring-billed Gull: mostly absent from Region by 15 Nov.
Herring Gull: max 570 BI 11 Nov.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 2 1st-cycle JCSP 28 Nov (NL).

Great Black-backed Gull: max 140 BI 11 Nov.
Caspian Tern: last WHWMA 13 Sep.
Com. Tern: last 4 PilPt 8 Oct.
Forster's Tern: 2 PilPt 6 Oct (NL), 1 still present 12 Oct (JB).

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Black-billed Cuckoo: last FD 27 Oct (JB), late.
E. Screech-Owl: reports from T Canton, KC & LWMA.
Snowy Owl: imm SLR off Oak Is T Hammond 10 Nov (NL), *intro*; next report BI 16 Nov; many arr BI, CV, FD, PtPen, T Lisbon, T Lowville & ULLWMA 23 Nov thru.
E. Whip-poor-will: max 5 calling FD 17 Sep; last T Harrisville flushed by hunter 11 Oct (FO).
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last T Canton 28 Sep.
Belted Kingfisher: last T Potsdam 3 Nov.
Red-headed Woodpecker: max 19 FD 3 Sep; at least 1 ad & 2 juv 26 Nov, on territory that has been continuously occupied since May 2012.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last T Watertown 15 Oct.
Black-backed Woodpecker: several reports MM.
N. Flicker: scarce after 24 Oct.
Am. Kestrel: scarce after 14 Oct.
Merlin: 15 reports; scarce after Oct.
Peregrine Falcon: only reports of probable migrants FD 23 Sep, T Watertown 11 Oct & WHWMA 13 Oct; continuing BI where resident.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last FD 30 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last ED 12 Sep.
Alder Flycatcher: last FD 9 Sep.
Willow Flycatcher: last PRGC 3 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last FD 12 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last WHWMA 26 Oct.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last ICNC 14 Sep.
E. Kingbird: last 3 FD 8 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr T Waddington 8 Nov; unusually scarce.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last T Canton 12 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 15 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last PRGC 19 Sep.
Philadelphia Vireo: FD 3 Sep; 2 T Croghan 9 Sep; ICNC 9 Sep; ED 12 Sep; last Cranberry L 27 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last ICNC 28 Sep.
Gray Jay: max 10 MM 30 Oct.

Com. Raven: max 11 PtPen 29 Oct.
Horned Lark: arr FD 10 Oct; max 55 FD 29 Oct.
Tree Swallow: last LWMA 10 Oct.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: last WHWMA 13 Sep.
Cliff Swallow: last CWF 1 Sep.
Barn Swallow: last WHWMA 13 Sep.
Black-capped Chickadee: flock 22 apparently migrating through large old fields FD 10 Oct.
Boreal Chickadee: max 4 MM 30 Oct.
House Wren: last FD 15 Oct.
Winter Wren: last FD 7 Nov.
Sedge Wren: last FD 23 Sep.
Marsh Wren: last ED 13 Oct.
Carolina Wren: Canton 13 Sep thru.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr 7 FD 27 Sep; no obvious migrants after 7 Nov.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr PRGC 19 Sep; last PRGC 31 Oct.
NORTHERN WHEATEAR: StPt 21-22 Sep, 2nd JEFF & 3rd Reg record (AS, mob, photos!, reports to NYSARC).
E. Bluebird: max 14 FD 23 Sep; scarce after 27 Oct.
Veery: last Higley Flow SP 14 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: no reports.
Swainson's Thrush: last LWMA 12 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last PRGC 31 Oct.
Wood Thrush: last ICNC 28 Sep.
Am. Robin: peak numbers 18-30 Oct.
Gray Catbird: last ICNC 18 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last FD 25 Sep.
Am. Pipit: arr T Waddington 7 Sep; max 29 ED 12 Oct; last WHWMA 12 Nov.
Cedar Waxwing: max 65 T Canton 28 Nov.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: singles FD 6 & 26 Nov.
Snow Bunting: arr FD 20 Oct.
Ovenbird: last FD 26 Sep.
Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 3 Sep.
Blue-winged X Golden-winged hybrid: Fort Drum 9 Sep.
Black-and-white Warbler: last FD 18 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: last FD 30 Sep.
Orange-crowned Warbler: ICNC 28 Sep; FD 29 & 30 Sep; PRGC 10 Oct.
Nashville Warbler: last T Lowville 10 Oct.
Com. Yellowthroat: last LWMA 12 Oct.
Am. Redstart: last StPt 27 Sep.
Cape May Warbler: last T Parishville 12 Oct.
N. Parula: last FD 30 Sep.
Magnolia Warbler: last T Croghan 9 Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last StPt 27 Sep.
Blackburnian Warbler: last FD 29 Sep.

Yellow Warbler: last LWMA 7 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last Cranberry L 27 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 30 Sep.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last FD 29 Sep.
Palm Warbler: max & last 12 FD 10 Oct.
Pine Warbler: last T Canton 11 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 165 FD 26 Sep.
Prairie Warbler: last FD 17 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last FD & T Lowville 10 Oct.
Canada Warbler: last FD 4 Sep.
Wilson's Warbler: last FD 25 Sep.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last FD 7 Nov.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr ULLWMA 19 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: last KPSP 10 Nov.
Clay-colored Sparrow: last FD 10 Oct.
Field Sparrow: last FD 27 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last 3 FD 21 Oct.
Savannah Sparrow: scarce after Sep.
Grasshopper Sparrow: last 3 FD 23 Sep.
Nelson's Sparrow: FD 10 Oct (JB!); Wilson Bay marsh CV 18 Oct (EN).
Fox Sparrow: max 36 on one-mile walk FD 27 Oct (JB); last T Canton feeder 19 Nov (EW).
Song Sparrow: most departed by 29 Oct.
Lincoln's Sparrow: max 4 FD 30 Sep; last ED 12 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: last FD 3 Nov.
White-throated Sparrow: max 123 FD 10 Oct; scarce after 7 Nov.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr FD 30 Sep; max 36 FD 10 Oct; last FD 30 Oct.
Dark-eyed Junco: arr FD 23 Sep.
Scarlet Tanager: last WISP 29 Sep.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last FD 26 Sep.
Indigo Bunting: last T Ellisburg 27 Sep.
Bobolink: scarce after 8 Sep; last FD 30 Sep.
Red-winged Blackbird: 19 T Croghan 19 Nov, only report of more than 3 after 6 Nov.
E. Meadowlark: at least 2 still present PtPen end Nov.
Rusty Blackbird: arr PRWMA 23 Sep; max 150 ULLWMA 17 Oct; last ULLWMA 22 Nov.
Com. Grackle: last T W Carthage 18 Nov.
Baltimore Oriole: last FD 3 Sep.
Purple Finch: max 15 FD 26 Sep; scarce after 3 Nov.
White-winged Crossbill: ad m CV 28 Oct; ED 7 Nov.
Com. Redpoll: heard over FD 24 Oct; 8 HP 26 Nov; only reports.

Hoary Redpoll: HP 26 Nov (JC, photos), with Common Redpolls, surprising given scarcity of redpolls during period.

Pine Siskin: arr ED 22 Sep; max 120 FD 12 Oct; reports dwindled to single digits after 30 Oct.

Evening Grosbeak: T Canton 4-6 Nov; 4 T Stockholm 8 Nov; 3 T Croghan 10 Nov.

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