

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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High pressure dominated the fall, providing numerous warm, sunny days and a seemingly unending southwesterly flow of air for nearly the entire season. September and November were both considerably warmer than normal, and neither month offered many days with conditions that were suitable for large movements of migrating birds. October was slightly cooler than usual, thanks to a series of cold fronts that brought some of the best migration weather of the season. Precipitation was within 0.1 inches of normal during September and October and slightly below normal in November.

Waterfowl diversity was about typical but numbers of several species were notably low. Snow Geese were nearly unreported all fall, with fewer than five seen in a few flocks of Canada Geese but no large groups or significant movements noted. Although still the most abundant duck at several WMAs, maximum Ring-necked Duck numbers were the lowest they have been since 2009. Similarly, late November counts of Long-tailed Ducks at favored Lake Ontario sites were unusually low, and Common Goldeneye were scarce on the St. Lawrence River.

The unusually productive shorebirding that was such a highlight of the spring and summer seasons continued into the fall, although numbers were never as high as during August. At the beginning of the fall the best shorebirding was at Perch River WMA, where the drained Stone Mills Pool continued to attract a nice assortment of species until it began to refill during the second half of September. During that same month wild swings in the water levels on the St. Lawrence River between the Iroquois and Robert Moses dams provided intermittently extensive mudflats that when exposed provided foraging habitat for a good assortment of species. Single Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, and Ruddy Turnstone were observed on such mudflats between Waddington and Massena.

The passerine migration was mostly sluggish with few large movements noted, especially during September when migrant flocks were particularly tough to find. A tally of 17 warbler species on Fort Drum 4 September was a seasonal high and occurred on one of the few mornings following a decent songbird flight all month. Large numbers of thrushes were heard overhead on the nights of 10-11 and 20-21 September, but migrants were scarce on the following mornings. The volume of migrants observed during the first half of October picked up substantially, with Ruby-crowned Kinglets, “Myrtle” Warblers, and White-throated Sparrows occurring in normal or above-normal numbers. A few species lingered later in the fall than usual, especially Northern Waterthrush in September and Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson’s Thrush, and Hermit Thrush in October.

Emblematic of the season's songbird flight was the scarcity of migrants in an oak woodland on Fort Drum, where a large flock of Pine Warblers, Chipping Sparrows, and Eastern Bluebirds has been detected annually since at least 2008. During most years this flock forms in late August and persists until early October, with a constantly changing mix of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and other songbirds joining the flock daily. This fall numerous checks of the area turned up a few Pine Warblers and Eastern Bluebirds but no coherent flocks and far fewer birds than in any recent year. However, a flock of more than 100 Chipping Sparrows was seen in this area on 13 October, a relatively late date for such a large number.

The only rarities of the season were found in October, the first being a **Lark Sparrow** seen for a few minutes on Fort Drum on 5 October. The standout rarity of the season was a **Bronzed Cowbird** seen and photographed by Nora Lee in her Norfolk yard for two weeks in October. The homeowner who found the cowbird is not a birder, so it was impressive that she recognized that it was unusual, obtained documentation, and submitted a record to eBird. Unfortunately, this was her first submission to eBird and she made an error that prevented it from being widely known until after the cowbird departed, so no birders saw this first state record (subject to NYSARC acceptance, of course).

For the season I received reports of 223 species, about average for the past five years. The Bronzed Cowbird was clearly the bird of the season, but also the biggest disappointment because birders were able to see it. The very slow pace of migration for nearly the entire season was also a big disappointment, although the relative abundance of shorebirds somewhat made up for the lack of passerines.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

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; HP – Hawkins Point, Robert Moses SP; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; LWMA – Lakeview WMA; MM – Massawepie Mire, T Piercefield and Colton; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg, JEFF; RMSP – Robert Moses Sp; RWSP – Robert G. Wehle SP; 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 R; StPt – Stony Pt, T Henderson, JEFF; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley I SP; WP – Whalen P, T Louisville.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: arr 2 T Dekalb 30 Sep; scarce thru.
Brant: arr CCSP 10 Oct; max 80 SBSP 17 Oct.
Cackling Goose: CV 11 Oct (NL); ULLWMA 3 Nov (JB); only reports.
Trumpeter Swan: 2 PtPen 2-28 Nov, only report away from known nesting sites at PRWMA & ULLWMA.
Tundra Swan: arr PilPt 6 Nov; max 300 PtPen 30 Nov.
Wood Duck: max 200+ FD several dates thru early Oct; last T Massena 8 Nov.
Gadwall: max 36 ULLWMA 24 Oct.
Am. Wigeon: max 270 WHWMA 31 Oct.
Am. Black Duck: max 90 BRB 14 Nov.
Mallard: max 1000 confluence Coles Creek & SLR 12 Sep.
Blue-winged Teal: max 42 ULLWMA 6 Oct; last PRWMA 23 Oct.
N. Shoveler: max 26 CWF 5 Nov.
N. Pintail: max 78 WP 10 Oct.
Green-winged Teal: max 600 WP 18 Oct.
Canvasback: PtPen 24 Nov.
Redhead: max 500 WHWMA 18 Oct.
Ring-necked Duck: max 1785 WHWMA 10 Oct; 1270 ULLWMA 3 Nov.
Greater Scaup: 1500 CV 13 Oct.
Lesser Scaup: max 20 PRWMA 18 Oct.
Surf Scoter: arr ULLWMA 9 Oct; max 5 CCSP 31 Oct.
White-winged Scoter: arr CCSP 10 Oct; max 31 StPt 11 Nov.
Black Scoter: max 29 MP 29 Oct.
Long-tailed Duck: arr CCSP 10 Oct; max 200 StPt 9 Nov; fewer than usual Lake Ontario late Nov.
Bufflehead: arr CCSP 18 Oct; max 46 PtPen 24 Nov.
Com. Goldeneye: arr ULLWMA 9 Oct; max 300 PtPen 30 Nov.
Hooded Merganser: max 43 CCSP 31 Oct, low.
Com. Merganser: max 238 StPt 26 Sep.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 110 StPt 14 Nov.
Ruddy Duck: ULLWMA 1-7 Nov, only report.
Red-throated Loon: SLR Waddington 12 Oct; MP 9 Nov; CCSP 21 Nov; PilPt 26 Nov.

Com. Loon: max 133 PilPt 26 Oct (NL); 131 RWSP 9 Nov.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 53 ULLWMA 9 Oct, low for this site; last 8 ULLWMA 11 Nov.

Horned Grebe: max 20 ED 23 Oct.

Red-necked Grebe: max 26 ED 23 Oct (JB); 16 PilPt 26 Oct (NL).

Double-crested Cormorant: scarce after 8 Nov.

Am. Bittern: last ULLWMA 17 Oct.

Great Egret: last 3 T Massena 8 Nov, late.

Green Heron: last CV 1 Oct.

Turkey Vulture: last CV 14 Nov.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: last T Stockholm 8 Nov (BD), late.

N. Harrier: 2-6/day FD & PtPen thru.

N. Goshawk: juv FD 15 Oct, only report.

Red-shouldered Hawk: last ICNC 25 Sep.

Broad-winged Hawk: last T Massena 27 Oct (HyZ, RS), late.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr T Massena 25 Oct.

Golden Eagle: imm FD 22 Oct (JB), only report.

Virginia Rail: last T Adams 22 Sep.

Sora: max 3-7/day ULLWMA to 25 Sep; no reports after 25 Sep.

Com. Gallinule: max 11 FD 15 Sep; last 3 FD 30 Sep.

Am. Coot: max 40 PRWMA 23 Oct.

Black-bellied Plover: max 20 ED 23 Oct; last WP 8 Nov.

Am. Golden-Plover: max 2 WHWMA 20 Sep; singles PRWMA 10 Sep, PtPen 19 Sep, ED 26 Sep & CCSP 10 Oct.

Semipalmated Plover: max 23 PRWMA 8 Sep; last RMSP 17 Oct.

Killdeer: max 35 T Hammond 20 Sep; last 2 ED 23 Oct.

Spotted Sandpiper: last ED 4 Oct.

Solitary Sandpiper: last ED 26 Sep; unusually scarce.

Greater Yellowlegs: max 9 CCSP 20 Sep; last WP 8 Nov.

Lesser Yellowlegs: max 6 PRWMA 21 Sep; last WHWMA 15 Oct.

Whimbrel: LWMA 4 Sep; WHWMA 12 Sep.

Hudsonian Godwit: RMSP early Oct (HW).

Ruddy Turnstone: WP 12 Sep, only report.

Stilt Sandpiper: PRWMA 14 Sep (JB), only report.
Sanderling: 4 WHWMA 12 Sep, only report.
Dunlin: max 11 CCSP 18 Oct; last WP 8 Nov.
Least Sandpiper: max 48 PRWMA 4 Sep; last WHWMA 18 Oct.
White-rumped Sandpiper: max & last 4 WHWMA 31 Oct.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 8 PRWMA 21 Sep; last WP 10 Oct.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max & last 33 PRWMA 14 Sep.
dowitcher sp: 6 apparently both spp but poor viewing conditions prevented certain identifications WHWMA 18 Oct.
Wilson's Snipe: last ED 18 Oct.
Am. Woodcock: last ED 14 Nov.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 15 PtPen 20 Nov.
Herring Gull: max 800 SLR Massena 31 Oct.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: SLR Massena 31 Oct (JB); RWSP 9 Nov (JB); T Ellisburg 14 Nov (AS); PtPen 26 Nov (CN).
Great Black-backed Gull: max 110 HP 28 Nov.
Caspian Tern: last WHWMA 20 Sep.
Com. Tern: last SBSP 17 Oct (TL, LK).
Forster's Tern: RWSP 13 Sep (BP).

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: last CV 5 Oct (DM), late.
Black-billed Cuckoo: last T Massena 11 Sep.
E. Screech-Owl: max 3 SBSP 21 Sep & WISP 30 Oct.
Snowy Owl: arr PtPen 26 Nov.
Long-eared Owl: WISP 31 Oct (TL), only report.
Short-eared Owl: last at FD breeding territories 2 Sep.
N. Saw-whet Owl: MM 7 Oct (AB); T Lyme 10 Nov (CN), only reports.
Com. Nighthawk: max 29 FD 1 Sep; last 2 KC 6 Sep.
E. Whip-poor-will: last 3 RWSP 18 Sep.
Chimney Swift: last KC 3 Sep.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last T Croghan 11 Sep.
Belted Kingfisher: scarce after 10 Oct.
Red-headed Woodpecker: last FD 29 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last T Watertown 14 Oct.
Black-backed Woodpecker: Cranberry Lake 6 Sep; MM 25 Sep; only reports.
N. Flicker: fewer than usual.
Am. Kestrel: mostly departed by 15 Oct but more than usual Nov.

Merlin: 17 reports mostly from JEFF.
Peregrine Falcon: multiple reports PRWMA, ULLWMA, & T Watertown 1-21 Sep; only reports away from SLR Massena where resident.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: last WISP 24 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: PRWMA 6 Sep; FD 9 Sep.
Willow Flycatcher: last PRGC 6 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last T Croghan 11 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last CV 23 Oct.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last T Croghan 10 Sep.
E. Kingbird: last T Chaumont 6 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr FD 5 Nov.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last T Croghan 12 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 21 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last T Hammond 20 Sep.
Philadelphia Vireo: 2 FD 4 Sep; CV 5 Sep; PRWMA 6 Sep; Cranberry Lake 6 Sep; 2 WHWMA 12 Sep; 2 ICNC 12 Sep; 2 T Croghan 12 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last SBSP 17 Oct (TL, LK, photos!), late.
Gray Jay: max 4 MM 7 Oct.
Horned Lark: arr FD 15 Oct; max 18 T Waddington 31 Oct.
Tree Swallow: max 250-1000/day PRWMA 4-21 Sep; last PRWMA 23 Oct.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: last PRWMA 4 Sep.
Bank Swallow: last PRWMA 6 Sep.
Barn Swallow: last 3 ICNC 20 Sep.
House Wren: last 2 FD 5 Oct.
Winter Wren: unusually scarce.
Marsh Wren: last ULLWMA 7 Oct.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr GPSP 19 Sep; last active migrants FD 19 Oct.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 20 Sep; max 46 on 1-mile transect FD 5 Oct (JB); last ED 14 Nov (JB).
E. Bluebird: max 23 RWSP 17 Oct; scarce after 21 Oct.
Veery: last FD 8 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: 3 SBSP 21 Sep; 2 FD 24 Sep; only reports.
Swainson's Thrush: last FD 15 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last FD 16 Nov.
Wood Thrush: last T Rossie & WISP 23 Sep.
Am. Robin: max 140 FD 21 Oct.
Gray Catbird: last FD 16 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last T Watertown 2 Oct.

Am. Pipit: arr PRWMA 18 Sep; max 13 ED 23 Oct; last FD 5 Nov.
Bohemian Waxwing: arr FD 2 Nov; max 4 St. Lawrence University 3 Nov.
Cedar Waxwing: max 200 CPSP 31 Oct.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: FD 24 Sep (JB), early; PRGC 24 Oct (JB), only other report.
Snow Bunting: arr ED 23 Oct; max 45 ED 9 Nov.
Ovenbird: last FD 1 Oct.
N. Waterthrush: last FD 22 Sep (JB, photos), late.
Golden-winged Warbler: last KC 1 Sep.
Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 10 Sep.
Black-and-white Warbler: last T Chaumont 11 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: last FD 7 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: T Hermon 25 Sep; FD 5 Oct; PRGC 6 Oct; FD 15 Oct; last 2 FD 16 Oct.
Nashville Warbler: last FD 15 Oct.
Mourning Warbler: last PRWMA 23 Sep.
Com. Yellowthroat: last FD 21 Oct.
Am. Redstart: last T Stockholm 23 Sep.
Cape May Warbler: last FD 7 Oct.
N. Parula: last FD 1 Oct.
Magnolia Warbler: last WISP 24 Sep.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last T Parishville 25 Sep.
Blackburnian Warbler: last T Fine 20 Sep.
Yellow Warbler: last 3 Sackets Harbor 20 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last Lewis County Recreation Area 19 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: max 35 FD 24 Sep; last WHWMA 10 Oct.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last KC 30 Sep.
Palm Warbler: last “Western” FD 6 Oct; 5 “Yellow” still on MM nesting grounds 7 Oct.
Pine Warbler: last FD & MM 7 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: last CCSP 31 Oct.
Prairie Warbler: last FD 24 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last CV 5 Oct.
Canada Warbler: last FD 3 Sep.
Wilson’s Warbler: last FD 24 Sep.
Yellow-breasted Chat: T Croghan 18 Sep (MR).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last PRGC 18 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr ICNC 25 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: max 105+ FD 13 Oct; last FD 2 Nov.
Clay-colored Sparrow: last CV 18 Oct.
Field Sparrow: last RWSP 17 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last CV 26 Oct.
LARK SPARROW: FD 5 Oct (JB).
Savannah Sparrow: last FD 14 Oct.
Grasshopper Sparrow: last FD 2 Sep.
Fox Sparrow: arr FD 15 Oct; max 21 FD 27 Oct; last FD 16 Nov.
Song Sparrow: few after 20 Oct.
Lincoln’s Sparrow: last PRGC 24 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: last 3 WISP 15 Nov.
White-throated Sparrow: max 125 FD 16 Oct.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr MM 25 Sep; max 20 MM 7 Oct; last FD 2 Nov.
Dark-eyed Junco: arr FD 24 Sep; max 80 FD 16 Oct.
Scarlet Tanager: last T Croghan 28 Sep.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last PRGC 8 Oct.
Indigo Bunting: last FD 21 Sep.
Bobolink: last ICNC 12 Sep.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 4200 ULLWMA 6 Sep; few after Oct.
E. Meadowlark: last CV 23 Oct.
Rusty Blackbird: arr PRWMA 23 Sep; max 150 ULLWMA 17 Oct; last ULLWMA 22 Nov.
Comm. Grackle: last PtPen 30 Nov.
BRONZED COWBIRD: T Norfolk 16-28 Oct (NL, photos!), 1st State record when approved by NYSARC, *intro*.
Baltimore Oriole: last FD 3 Sep.
Purple Finch: max 30 PRGC 11 Nov.
Red Crossbill: apparently nesting Adirondacks but reports lacked details including location or date.
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: with Common Redpolls HP 26 Nov (JC, photos), 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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