
REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

Tom Williams

153A Consaul Rd., Albany, NY 12205
trwdsd@fastmail.fm

The 2015 fall season began with a very warm and wet September. At the Albany International Airport, the monthly mean temperature was 6.7° F above normal, with a three-day heat wave on 7-9 September. Precipitation was more than twice the usual 3.3", although nearly 4" fell on the last two days of the month alone. October featured near-normal conditions, with the first below freezing readings recorded on the eighteenth day of the month at Albany. November offered a return of well above normal temperatures, with only about half the typical precipitation. Only a trace of snow was recorded during the period.

Two reports of **Greater White-fronted Goose** were received this fall. Nancy Kern found the first in a flock of Canada Geese feeding in a harvested cornfield near Kinderhook, Columbia County, in early November. The following day, Alan Mapes picked one out among a throng of Canada Geese at the north end of the Tomhannock Reservoir. Very few Snow Goose reports were gathered, mostly just individuals and small groups, the main population remaining in the unfrozen north. Brant made their usual fleeting passage over the area, with only a few observations on 18 and 23 October. Tristan Lowery obtained good images and video of a Cackling Goose at the Corning Preserve in Albany, also on 18 October. Stanton Pond, in Coeymans Hollow, Albany County, had its typical assortment of easily viewed dabbling ducks, and maintained its reputation as the Gadwall hotspot of the Region. Loughberry Lake, in Saratoga County, continued to host large groups of diving ducks in the fall, especially Ring-necked Duck. All three species of scoter were scarce, and Long-tailed Duck was equally hard to find. Single Red-throated Loons were seen on the Hudson River from the Cossackie Boat Launch on 3 November and at the southern end of Alcove Reservoir on 21 November.

A group of seven **Sandhill Cranes**, a Regional rarity, was observed at midday on 17 September, flying just above the treetops near the Columbia County Airport. Shorebird migration stopover seemed underwhelming this season, with lower than average numbers and few surprises. Two reports of **White-rumped Sandpiper**, an uncommon visitor, were collected, one from 1 September at Stuyvesant in Columbia County, the other a very late sighting on 18 October from the Hudson River across from Fort Miller. The epic 2015

Franklin's Gull flight to the East Coast of the United States on 13 November went unobserved by Regional birders, but a hunt for stragglers the following day led to the discovery of a single first-winter **Franklin's Gull** mixed in with a flock of gulls in their morning repose at the Kmart parking lot in Queensbury! A tip of the hat to Lindsey Duval for tracking down the bird.

The Conservation Science team at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve began a preliminary effort to band **Northern Saw-whet Owls** this fall in order to get a better understanding of timing, distribution, and habitat usage by the diminutive birds. On the second night of the effort, the group, led by Field Ecologist Amanda Dillon, netted and measured one owl. Remarkably, the bird was a recapture, having been banded only a few nights earlier at a banding station near Williamstown, Massachusetts.

A juvenile **Red-headed Woodpecker**, another infrequent visitor to the Region, was observed on 9 November by Bruce Dudek, while he was driving near his home in suburban Colonie, Albany County. It was gathering and caching acorns in a large woodlot with much suitable woodpecker habitat and was seen almost daily through the end of the month. Two reports of Regionally-rare **White-eyed Vireo** arrived in early October, one from the Rogers Island Overlook in Columbia County on the sixth, seen by Bill Cook and Will Yandik, and one from a suburban Newtonville, Albany County, backyard, photographed by Sam Gonzalez on 10 October. A **Dickcissel**, found in a flock of House Sparrows on 25 October along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail at Scotia/Glenville by Bill Cook, was apparently a one-day wonder.

While walking the Indian Ladder Trail at John Boyd Thacher Park in Albany County on 18 October, Craig Thompson saw a bird he didn't recognize. As he recently retired as Director of the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar and has watched birds and nature all of his life, that was a big deal. He later consulted a field guide and determined that it was a **Townsend's Solitaire**. The bird fed on the abundant fruits of eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) trees growing along the edge of the Helderberg Escarpment, and it remained for at least three weeks after the initial sighting, allowing birders from across Eastern New York and the New York City area to enjoy this splendid thrush.

A homeowner observed and correctly identified a **Harris's Sparrow** coming to his backyard bird feeders in Loudonville, Albany County on 11 November. He and his wife graciously arranged for the local, and not-so-local, birding community to come onto their property and view this Regional rarity, thanks to the excellent negotiating skills of Rich Guthrie. The bird was seen until about the end of the month. The entire episode, with one minor hiccup, was a fine example of birders on their best behavior, encouraging the residents to embrace their feathered guest and share it most generously.

218 species were reported during the 1 September-30 November period.

CONTRIBUTORS

Larry Alden, Will Aubrey, Ramona Bearor, Susan Beaudoin, Mike Birmingham, Matt Brunelle, Nancy Castillo, Glen & Malinda Chapman, Steve Chorvas, Jeremy Collison, Bill Cook, Alan Devoe Bird Club recent sightings, Amanda Dillon, Craig Driggs, Bruce Dudek, Lindsey Duval, Larry Federman, Debra Ferguson, Mark Fitzsimmons, Brianna Gary, Sam Gonzalez, Bernie & Chris Grossman, Rich Guthrie, HMBirds Yahoo Group, Larry & Barbara Hall, David Harrison, Ron Harrower, John Hershey, John Kent, Nancy Kern, Bill Lee, Naomi Lloyd, Tristan Lowery, Larry Main, Alan Mapes, Leigh McBride, Thom McClenahan, Steve Mesick, Joyce Miller, Frank Mitchell, Frank Murphy, Jenny Murtaugh, Bill Ostrander, Ellen Pemrick, Will Raup, Gregg Recer, Neal Reilly, John Roosenberg, Jeanette Roundy, Kathy Schneider, Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, Marian Sole, George Steele, Scott Stoner, Craig Thompson, Alison Van Keuren, Phil Whitney, Tom & Colleen Williams, Donna Wright, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

5R – Five Rivers EEC, ALBA; APBP – Albany Pine Bush Preserve, ALBA; AR – Alcove Res, ALBA; BCM – Black Creek Marsh, ALBA; BCR – Basic Creek Res, ALBA; BMB – Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail, SARA; CCGP – Cossackie Creek Grasslands Preserve, GREE; CF – Cohoes Flats, ALBA; CL – Collins L, SCHE; CRM – Cline Rd. Marsh, FULT; FtEG – Ft. Edward Grasslands, WASH; FV – Franklinton Vlaie, SCHO; HP – Huyck Preserve, ALBA; OCA – Ooms Conservation Area, COLU; PRWMA – Partridge Run WMA, ALBA; SNHP – Saratoga National Historical P, SARA; TR – Tomhannock Res, RENN; VFNHP – Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve, SARA; WMP – Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary, COLU.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

(R8): Stuyvesant COLU 5 Nov (NK); TR 6 Nov (AM).

Brant: max 100 HP 18 Oct (JK).

Cackling Goose: Corning Preserve ALBA 18 Oct (TL).

Gadwall: max 50 Stanton Pd ALBA 29 Nov.

Am. Wigeon: max 80 Stanton Pd ALBA 21 Nov.

Mallard: max 450 Galway L SARA 25 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: max 40 Stanton Pd ALBA 18 Sep.

N. Shoveler: max 10 Stanton Pd ALBA 11 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 12 Stanton Pd ALBA 31 Oct.

Green-winged Teal: max 60 Saratoga L SARA 11 Nov.

Canvasback: Loughberry L SARA 5 Oct.

Redhead: max 6 Loughberry L SARA 22 Nov.

Ring-necked Duck: max 800 Loughberry L SARA 16 Nov.

Greater Scaup: max 60 Loughberry L SARA 22 Nov.

Lesser Scaup: max 150 Loughberry L SARA 22 Nov.

Surf Scoter: 2 BCR 26 Oct.; Vischer Ferry SARA 14 Nov.

White-winged Scoter: max 8 Saratoga L SARA 11 Nov.

Black Scoter: max 18 AR 18 Oct.

Long-tailed Duck: max 6 Saratoga L SARA 11 Nov.

Bufflehead: max 150 Saratoga L SARA 28 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: arr TR 30 Oct.

Barrow's Goldeneye: Fenimore Bridge SARA 26 Nov (LD).

Hooded Merganser: max 300 BCR 14 Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser: 4 Saratoga L SARA 23 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: max 402 BCR 4 Nov.

Red-throated Loon: Cossackie Boat Launch GREE 3 Nov; AR 21 Nov.

Horned Grebe: 3 AR 23 Oct; 3 Saratoga L SARA 11 Nov.

Red-necked Grebe: max 6 Saratoga L SARA 6 Nov.

Am. Bittern: Ft Edward WASH 20 Sep.

Great Egret: max 17 VFNHP 10 Sep.

Green Heron: last Petersburg RENN 10 Oct.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: BCR 6 Oct.

HAWKS – LARIDS

Osprey: last OCA 18 Nov.

Broad-winged Hawk: max 246 Helderberg Hawk Watch ALBA 15 Sep.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr FtEG 11 Nov.

Am. Coot: max 11 AR 12 Oct.

SANDHILL CRANE (R8): 7 Columbia Cty Airport COLU 17 Sep (MB)

Black-bellied Plover: max 4 CF 21 Oct.

Semipalmated Plover: last 2 Greenwich WASH 14 Sep.

Killdeer: last Center Hill Pond COLU 3 Nov.

Spotted Sandpiper: last Gay's Point COLU 28 Oct.

Solitary Sandpiper: last 5R 3 Oct.

Greater Yellowlegs: last CF 2 Nov.

Lesser Yellowlegs: last Schuylerville SARA 8 Oct.

Dunlin: Harris Rd. SARA 18 Oct; CF 21 Oct.

Least Sandpiper: last Stanton Pond ALBA 6 Oct.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER (R8): Stuyvesant COLU 1 Sep (NK); Harris Rd. SARA 18 Oct (LD).

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr CF 17 Sep; max 4 BCR 26 Oct, scarce.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 11 Stuyvesant COLU 1 Sep.

FRANKLIN'S GULL: Queensbury WARR 14 Nov (LD), NYSARC, *intro*.

Bonaparte's Gull: max. 20 Athens GREE 5 Sep (RG).

Iceland Gull: arr Crescent Power Plant ALBA 15 Nov.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: arr Waterford SARA 21 Nov.

Caspian Tern: Lock 2 SARA 7 Sep.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: last Johnstown FULT 13 Sep.

N. Saw-whet Owl: APBP 8 Nov, banded (AD).

Com. Nighthawk: last Colonie ALBA 6 Oct (CD).

Chimney Swift: last Quack I RENN 15 Sep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last Guilderland ALBA 5 Oct.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (R8): Old Valley Rd, Colonie ALBA 9-30 Nov (BD), *intro*.

Am. Kestrel: max 9 Knox ALBA 12 Sep.

Merlin: 2 HP 5 Sep.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: PRWMA 2 Sep; CL 5 Sep; Five Combines Trail WASH 13 Sep.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 3 APBP 9 & 11 Sep, banded; Five Combines Trail WASH 11 Sep.

Alder Flycatcher: Five Combines Trail WASH 11 Sep, late

Willow Flycatcher: last Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, Scotia/Glenville SCHE 12 Sep.

E. Phoebe: 5R 30 Nov, late

Great Crested Flycatcher: last 5R 22 Sep; Buckingham Pd ALBA 22 Sep.

E. Kingbird: last Athens GREE 13 Sep.

WHITE-EYED VIREO (R8): Rogers I Overlook COLU 6 Oct (BC, WY); Newtonville ALBA 10 Oct (SG).

Yellow-throated Vireo: last VFNHP 24 Sep.

Blue-headed Vireo: TR 5 Nov, late

Philadelphia Vireo: 17 reports 7 Sep - 4 Oct.

Cliff Swallow: last Stuyvesant COLU 1 Sep.

House Wren: last U Albany ALBA 10 Oct.

Marsh Wren: last BCM 14 Oct.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: VFNHP 3 Oct, late (JC)

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: Thatcher Park ALBA 18 Oct - 8 Nov (CT), NYSARC, *intro*.

Veery: last Buckingham Pond ALBA 22 Sep.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: BMB 23 Sep; Schodack I SP RENN 5 Oct.

Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush: BMB 4 Oct.

Swainson's Thrush: max 5 APBP 21 Sep.

Wood Thrush: last 2 Schodack I SP RENN 4 Oct.

Brown Thrasher: last Towpath Rd WASH 4 Oct.

Am. Pipit: max 32 nr Schuylerville SARA 22 Oct.

Bohemian Waxwing: at Harris's Sparrow site, Loudonville ALBA 13 Nov (TW).

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: arr Thompson's Lake SP 26 Oct.

Ovenbird: last Schodack I SP RENN 5 Oct.

Tennessee Warbler: last U Albany ALB 19 Oct.

Orange-crowned Warbler: 6 reports 2 Oct - 31 Oct.

Connecticut Warbler: APBP 18 Sep, banded (AD); APBP 23 Sep (TW).

Mourning Warbler: U Albany ALBA 10 Sep; Austerlitz COLU 12 Sep.

Cape May Warbler: 7 reports 2 Sep - 3 Oct.

N. Parula: last 2 Rogers I Overlook COLU 6 Oct.

Bay-breasted Warbler: 8 reports 2 Sep - 21 Sep.

Yellow Warbler: 12 reports 2 Sep - 27 Sep.

Blackpoll Warbler: last Spring Hill Ponds WARR 15 Oct.

Palm Warbler: max 14 Scotia SCHE (DH), high count.

Wilson's Warbler: 15 reports 2 Sep - 4 Oct.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr CL 31 Oct.

Chipping Sparrow: last Lock 6 State Canal Park SARA 22 Nov.

Vesper Sparrow: 6 reports 22 Sep - 19 Oct.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 10 Towpath Rd, Kingsbury WASH 17 Oct.

HARRIS'S SPARROW: Loudonville ALBA 11 Nov - 29 Nov, NYSARC, *intro*.

Scarlet Tanager: last Schodack I SP 5 Oct.

Indigo Bunting: last U Albany ALBA 22 Oct.

DICKCISSEL (R8): Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, Scotia/Glenville SCHE 25 Oct (BC).

Bobolink: 5R 3 Sep.; Towpath Rd, Kingsbury WASH 12 Sep.

Rusty Blackbird: max 23 VFNHP 3 Oct (BO).

Baltimore Oriole: last Five Combines Trail WASH 13 Sep.

Com. Redpoll: max 13 Thacher Park ALBA 23 Oct.

Pine Siskin: max 140 Thacher Park ALBA 20 Oct (JC).