

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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It was another warm fall, with monthly mean temperatures ranging between two and five degrees warmer than average. September and November were relatively dry, but October was modestly wetter than normal. Widespread dry to drought conditions persisted through September, with most bodies of water very low and many small ponds and wetlands entirely dry until heavy rain during the third week of October filled many ponds. Despite generally dry conditions, water levels remained very high on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River all fall, leaving relatively little exposed shoreline.

As seems to be becoming the new norm, Snow Geese were virtually absent from Region 6 all fall, and Canada Goose numbers were also low. A single Cackling Goose in Watertown on 31 October was the only unusual goose reported. Ducks were plentiful, especially at Wilson Hill WMA, where the annual *Aythya* gathering was among the best seen in years, including more than 5400 Ring-necked Ducks and 2300 Redhead, the latter being about four times the typical maximum fall tally at this site. The season's only Eurasian Wigeon was also at Wilson Hill on 20 October. No other rare waterfowl were noted.

An American White Pelican that wandered around the eastern end of Lake Ontario for much of the fall put in a brief appearance on Black River Bay, where Wayne Fidler was lucky enough to be the only birder who saw it in Region 6. A gathering of Great Egrets at Perch River WMA through early October peaked at 28 in late September, far more than is usually seen in Jefferson County. Conversely, scattered single Great Egrets were in northeastern St. Lawrence County, but the large groups seen in this area in past years went unreported. Sandhill Cranes continued from the summer at Perch River and Wilson Hill WMAs, and two migrants were in a Dekalb cornfield on 22 November.

Shorebirds were tough to find, as most traditional shorebird spots had either too little or too much water. The main exception was Perch River WMA, where continuing low water provided habitat for a wide assortment of shorebirds, with particularly high counts of both yellowlegs. Rarely seen in Region 6, Long-billed Dowitchers were at Perch River on 23 September and 7 October. Shorebird numbers remained relatively high at Perch River until mid-October's heavy rains flooded the mudflats on Stone Mills Pool.

Aerial insectivores were very scarce throughout the fall, perhaps because dry conditions resulted in reduced abundance of flying insects. Tree Swallows were most conspicuously absent, with only two reports Regionally for the entire season and a maximum count of 65 individuals. Comparing Tree Swallow numbers between 2015 and 2016 at the Stone Mills Pool at Perch River WMA provides a particularly stark contrast. During September of 2015, Tree Swallow

counts at this site ranged between 250 and 1000 per day through the entire month, but in September 2016 not a single swallow was detected on weekly visits to this site. Barn Swallows were similarly scarce Region-wide, and unlike many years, Chimney Swifts, Bank Swallows, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows all seemed to disappear well before the beginning of the fall reporting season.

As it was during the fall of 2015, the passerine migration was very slow with few large movements noted. In fact on many mornings it seemed like virtually no birds were moving at all, even when conditions seemed good for migration. The main exception was during a few days at the end of September and beginning of October, when songbird volume is often the highest. During this period a seasonally typical mix of sparrows, warblers, and thrushes was widely reported moving in very large numbers. A few species lingered into the fall later than is typical, including a Black-throated Green Warbler in Hounsfield on 17 October and a Magnolia Warbler at El Dorado on 23 October.

Although no significant irruption of northern finches had developed by the end of the season, a surprising number of such species was detected at least once. Modest numbers of Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were observed throughout the season, with the latter species being most numerous in the Brasher State Forest. One report each of Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, and Common Redpoll made for greater finch diversity than during many years. Three reports of Bohemian Waxwing from the Brasher area rounded out the northern irruptives.

For the season I received reports of 224 species, one more than last year and one fewer than the year before that, so very much an average tally. That this year's species total was not below average was something of a surprise, given the many species that typically linger into early September but went unreported this season. True rarities certainly didn't make up the difference; rather the continued increase in reports coming from eBirders likely resulted in a higher than usual number of detections of species that are regular but in very low numbers. Finally, the bird of the season was certainly the American White Pelican, but unfortunately only one person saw it in Region 6.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFWMA – Ashland Flats WMA; BI – Barnhart I, T Massena; BRB – Black River Bay; CCSP – Coles Creek SP; CV – T Cape Vincent; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg; FD – Fort Drum Military Installation; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; LWMA – Lakeview WMA; MP – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg, JEFF; RMSP – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; PilPt – Pillar Pt, 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; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP; WHWMA – Wilson Hill WMA; WISP – Wellesley I SP; WP – Whalen P, T Louisville.

WATERFOWL - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 50 T Colton 25 Sep; 5 rep of 1-2 ind each; virtually no movement thru.

Brant: arr MP 23 Oct; max 100 RMSP 10 Nov; few reports.

Cackling Goose: T Watertown 31 Oct (BM), only report.

Canada Goose: fewer than usual.

Mute Swan: max 34 T Clayton 7 Nov.

Trumpeter Swan: SLR T Ogdensburg 2 Sep; 5 Dexter Marsh 17 Oct; only reports away from nesting sites at PRWMA & ULLWMA.

Tundra Swan: arr BRB by 23 Oct; max 193 BRB 25 Nov.

Wood Duck: max 60 PRWMA 9 Sep.

Gadwall: max 180 PRWMA 23 Oct.

Eurasian Wigeon: WHWMA 20 Oct (JB), only report.

Am. Wigeon: max 740 WHWMA 29 Oct.

Am. Black Duck: max 95 MP 11 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: max 120 ULLWMA 9 Oct.

N. Shoveler: max 15 PRWMA 17 Nov.

N. Pintail: max 56 WHWMA 29-30 Oct.

Green-winged Teal: max WP 24 Sep.

Canvasback: WHWMA 20 Oct, only report.

Redhead: max 2340 WHWMA 20 Oct (JB), high.

Ring-necked Duck: max 5470 WHWMA 20 Oct (JB).

Greater Scaup: arr & max 300 CV 1 Oct.

Lesser Scaup: max 200 WHWMA 10 Oct.

Surf Scoter: 11 rep 15 Oct - 19 Nov; max 23 MP 23 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: arr 14 Oct; max 40 WBSP 17 Nov.

Black Scoter: 17 rep 22 Oct - 27 Nov; max 26 WBSP 19 Nov.

Long-tailed Duck: arr PtPen 22 Oct; max 250 MP 26 Nov.

Bufflehead: arr Lake Ozonia 2 Oct; max 65 PtPen 19 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: arr ULLWMA 25 Oct; max 112 BRB 27 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 76 T Hounsefield 10 Nov.

Com. Merganser: max 101 CCSP 15 Oct.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 400 Guffin Bay 27 Nov (DW).

Ruddy Duck: 7 rep; max 6 PRWMA 17 Nov.

Red-throated Loon: max 8 BRB 26 Nov (NL).

Com. Loon: max 108 BRB 3 Nov (NL).

Pied-billed Grebe: max 83 ULLWMA 9 Oct (JB).

Horned Grebe: max 24 PtPen 28 Oct.

Red-necked Grebe: 16 rep 14 Oct thru; max 7 CCSP 14 Oct (BD).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 340 CCSP 24 Sep.

AM. WHITE PELICAN: BRB 28 Nov (WF, photos!).

Am. Bittern: 3 rep; last 3 ICNC 2 Oct.

Great Egret: max 28 PRWMA 23 Sep (JB), high for JEFF.

Green Heron: last ICNC 2 Oct.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 7 PRWMA 28 Sep; last ICNC 2 Oct.

Turkey Vulture: max 140 T Canton 12 Sep; last T Leray 4 Nov.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: last T Chaumont 15 Oct.

N. Harrier: fewer than usual after Sep.

N. Goshawk: T Potsdam 14 Nov, only report.

Red-shouldered Hawk: last T Colton 13 October.

Broad-winged Hawk: max & last 6 PtPen 24 Sep.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr PtPen 17 Oct.
Golden Eagle: T Canton 30 Oct (TW), only report.
Virginia Rail: no reports.
Sora: no reports.
Com. Gallinule: last PRWMA 28 Sep.
Am. Coot: singles 14 & 17 Sep PRWMA, only reports.
Sandhill Crane: PRWMA thru 28 Sep (mob); 3 WHWMA thru 14 Oct (BD, TW); last 2 T Dekalb 22 Nov (JB).
Black-bellied Plover: max 13 PtPen 14 Oct.
Am. Golden-Plover: 2 PRWMA 16 Sep (JB); WHWMA 24 Sep (JB); only reports.
Semipalmated Plover: max 15 PRWMA 2 Sep.
Killdeer: max 22 PRWMA 2 Sep.
Spotted Sandpiper: only 4 reports; max & last 4 ED 5 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: 5 reports 1-3/day at swamp on private property T Canton thru 2 Oct; 2 sites FD only other reports; unusually scarce.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 61 PRWMA 7 Oct (JB).
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 71 PRWMA 23 Sep (JB).
Whimbrel: ED 5-6 Sep (AS, RB), only reports.
Ruddy Turnstone: 3 LWMA 16 Oct; BI 30 Oct; only reports.
Stilt Sandpiper: 3 PRWMA 4 Sep (SK), only report.
Sanderling: max 25 StPt 4 Sep.
Dunlin: max 10 WHWMA 15 Oct.
Baird's Sandpiper: 4 rep 2 - 16 Sep PRWMA, where max 3 on 9 Sep (JB, SK); ED 2 Sep (JB).
Least Sandpiper: max 22 PRWMA 2 Sep; last PilPt 4 Nov (NL), late.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 19 PRWMA 23 Sep & 10 Oct.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 15 PRWMA 4 Sep.
Short-billed Dowitcher: 2 PRWMA 23 Sep, only report.
Long-billed Dowitcher: 2 PRWMA 23 Sep (JB); PRWMA 7 Oct (JB); rare Region 6.
Wilson's Snipe: 2 rep of 4 ind; extremely low.
Am. Woodcock: scarcely reported by birders but encountered by hunters through mid Nov at least.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 199 PtPen 23 Oct.
Little Gull: PtPen 22 Oct (NL), only report.
Iceland Gull: arr BI 30 Oct (JB, BD); 3 rep W JEFF, where max 2 Guffin Bay 27 Nov (DW).
Herring Gull: max 350 BI 30 Oct.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: BI 30 Oct (JB, BD); Guffin Bay 27 Nov.
Glaucous Gull: BRB 27 Nov (WF), only report.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 30 BI 30 Oct.
Caspian Tern: last WHWMA 24 Sep.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: FD 1 Sep, only report.
E. Screech-Owl: T Lyme 23 Sep; WISP 3 Oct; only reports.
Snowy Owl: arr PtPen & T Brownville 25 Nov (WF); 3 other rep late Nov.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 3 rep 23 Sep - 17 Oct.
Com. Nighthawk: last CV 8 Oct (DM), late; no other reports after 6 Sep.
E. Whip-poor-will: T Croghan 4 & 5 Sep; only reports.
Chimney Swift: no reports.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last CV 26 Sep.
Red-headed Woodpecker: max 18 FD 6 Sep, where breeders apparently departed by mid-September; KC 23 Sep, only report away from FD.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last KC 7 Oct.
Am. Kestrel: nearly absent except for W JEFF after Oct.
Merlin: about 25 rep from throughout Region.
Peregrine Falcon: PRWMA 2 & 28 Sep; T Watertown 6 Oct; WHWMA 10 Oct; FD 18 Oct; ULLWMA 25 Oct; only reports away from Massena nest site where present thru.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Five Ponds Wilderness 3 Sep; FD 8 Sep; only reports.
E. Wood-Pewee: last T Watertown 21 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: FD 19 Sep, only report.
Willow Flycatcher: last FD 15 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last FD 15 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last FD 2 Nov.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last FD 23 Sep.
E. Kingbird: last FD 6 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr ICNC 29 Oct.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last T Croghan 10 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last T Lowville 16 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last ICNC 25 Sep.
Philadelphia Vireo: 9 rep of 12 ind 4 - 25 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last KC 4 Oct.
Horned Lark: max 30 T Hounsfield 22 Nov.
Tree Swallow: only 2 rep; max & last 65 LWMA 16 Sep; shockingly scarce.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: no reports.

Barn Swallow: only 5 rep; max & last 30 LWMA 16 Sep.
House Wren: last T Canton 7 Oct.
Winter Wren: 3 rep JEFF last week Nov, more than usual for so late.
Marsh Wren: last FD 15 Sep.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 23 Low's Ridge-Upper Dam trail 1 Oct.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 16 FD 6 Nov.
E. Bluebird: max 12 T Canton 29 Sep.
Veery: last T Canton 18 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: 4 rep; max 2 ICNC 25 Sep.
Swainson's Thrush: last RMSP 9 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last FD 18 Nov.
Wood Thrush: last T Croghan 10 Sep.
Am.n Robin: max 170 ULLWMA 29 Oct.
Gray Catbird: last FD 7 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last KC 28 Sep.
N. Mockingbird: T Hounsfield 28 Sep, only report.
Am. Pipit: max 24 PRWMA 12 Oct; 9 additional reports 1-3; low.
Bohemian Waxwing: 275 Brasher SF 15 Nov (HW); 2 singles from same area; only reports.
Cedar Waxwing: max 67 T Watertown 8 Nov.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: PtPen 22 Nov, only report.
Snow Bunting: arr PtPen 23 Oct.
Ovenbird: last KC 4 Oct.
N. Waterthrush: last ICNC 17 Sep.
Golden-winged Warbler: last T Hammond 1 Sep.
Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 19 Sep (JB), late.
Black-and-white Warbler: last CV 21 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: last CV 5 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: 5 rep of 7 individuals 17 Sep - 11 Oct.
Nashville Warbler: last 3 FD 7 Oct.
Mourning Warbler: FD 12 Sep (JB), only report.
Com. Yellowthroat: last ULLWMA 28 Oct (JB), late.
Am. Redstart: last FD 20 Sep.
Cape May Warbler: last FD 19 Sep.
N. Parula: last T Croghan 3 Oct.
Magnolia Warbler: last ED 23 Oct (JB, ph!), late.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last ICNC 25 Sep.
Blackburnian Warbler: last T Lyme 24 Sep.
Yellow Warbler: last T Lyme 24 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last FD 23 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 6 Oct.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: last T Clayton 26 Sep.
Palm Warbler: max & last 9 FD 7 Oct.
Pine Warbler: last T Lyme 24 Sep.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 210 FD 7 Oct; last PRGC 5 Nov.
Prairie Warbler: last T Clayton 4 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last T Hounsfield 17 Oct (AB), late.
Canada Warbler: last T Canton 23 Sep.
Wilson's Warbler: last KC 30 Sep.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last T Watertown 19 Oct.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr ED 23 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: last 4 PRGC 5 Nov.
Clay-colored Sparrow: FD 6 Sep, only report.
Field Sparrow: last PtPen 28 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last FD 1 Nov.
Savannah Sparrow: last T Croghan 19 Oct.
Fox Sparrow: arr FD 11 Oct; max 12 FD 27 Oct; last T Canton 26 Nov.
Song Sparrow: no reports after 8 Nov.
Lincoln's Sparrow: 6 rep 15 Sep - 14 Oct; max 5 FD 7 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: last 2 T Potsdam 7 Nov.
White-throated Sparrow: max 85 FD 11 Oct.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr FD 23 Sep; last T Croghan 19 Oct.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 250 T Lowville 16 Oct.
Scarlet Tanager: last KC 28 Sep.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last ICNC 6 Oct.
Indigo Bunting: last FD 22 Sep.
Bobolink: last 2 heard over ICNC 17 Sep.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 3500 ULLWMA 16 Oct.
E. Meadowlark: last PilPt 4 Nov.
Rusty Blackbird: arr FD 15 Sep; max 225 PRWMA 17 Oct; last ICNC 16 Nov.
Com. Grackle: max 1200 AFWMA 15 Oct.
Brown-headed Cowbird: PtPen 24 Sep, only report!
Baltimore Oriole: last T Croghan 9 Sep.
Pine Grosbeak: 2 T Colton 27 Nov (KO), only report.
Purple Finch: scarce after mid-November.
Red Crossbill: FD 2 Nov (JB), only report.
White-winged Crossbill: CCSP 24 Sep (JB), only report.
Com. Redpoll: PRGC 5 Nov (JB), only report.
Pine Siskin: modest flight mostly Oct; max 30 LWMA 16 Oct, remaining reports all single digits.
Evening Grosbeak: up to 32/day Brasher SF 18 Nov thru; 10 scattered reports 1-5 migrating.