

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON – FALL 2017

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September and October were both warmer months than normal throughout the state, but November had normal average temperatures. September averaged about 2-3°F above normal throughout the state. October was one of the warmest on record across the state, with temperatures 6-8° above normal. The average temperature in the eastern part of the state from New York City to Massena was the warmest ever recorded for October. Many migrant passerines lingered due to the warmer conditions. Precipitation throughout the state showed strong gradients. The Regions along Lakes Erie and Ontario had higher than normal precipitation through the fall, adding to the high water level problem on Lake Ontario. Tropical storms José in September and Nate and Phillippe in October all contributed to the weather gradients across the state, with some of the eastern and southern Regions seeing wind and rain, but these storms relieved the drought conditions in the eastern part of the state. Away from the Great Lakes, precipitation was closer to normal levels other than the effects of the tropical storms, which appeared to remain more confined. November's average temperatures and precipitation were about normal, but there were several snow events in the Great Lake Regions.

Through the quarter, the most significant trend was the warm fall that resulted in a high number of passerines lingering in the state. Fall waterfowl counts were reported lower than average in a number of areas, but good numbers were reported at Montezuma NWR. Lower than average hawk counts were recorded at Chestnut Ridge, Franklin Mountain, and Fire Island, but a few species counts were average or above average. High water levels on the Lake Ontario Plain resulted in poorer than expected shorebird habitat and a lower number of records, but the diversity in the western part of the state was as expected. There was low winter finch activity despite a good food supply. In the northern Regions, the excessive natural food supply reduced the number of local feeder birds. Throughout the state, total species recorded in each Region were close to average except in Region 10. The warm fall that delayed the passerine migration led to many late records and an exceptional number of extralimital species in Region 10. In that Region, a bird survey/competition, the Seatuck LI Birding Challenge conducted in September, also added species, bringing the total for the quarter to 328 species recorded. That is really amazing.

Among the exceptionally unusual sightings throughout the state, an Anna's Hummingbird, photographed at a feeder, and a Northern Wheatear were found in Region 1. An immature Calliope Hummingbird was a spectacular visitor at a feeder on Long Island, Region 10. Yellow Rail was photographed in Region 2 when it appeared on the porch of a residence. Say's Phoebes were found in

Regions 3, 9, and 10. Cave Swallows were again reported in Regions 2, 7, and 10. Wood Stork showed up in Region 4. A Corn Crake, NY's first sight record of a living bird, was seen and photographed for two days along the Ocean Parkway on Long Island before it was killed by a car. (See articles pp. 2-10.) A Hammond's Flycatcher was seen by many in Central Park; it lingered for over a month. There were many other rare migrants or extralimital birds that were reported around the state. Many of these are mentioned below but the reader should consult the various Regional reports for highlights.

Among waterfowl, a maximum of 60 Trumpeter Swans was counted at the Northern Montezuma Wetland Complex, mostly birds that breed in the surrounding Regions and possibly a few Canadian birds. Greater White-fronted Goose sightings continue to increase. The species was reported in nine of the 10 Regions. Pink-footed Goose was reported in Regions 7 and 10, and Barnacle Goose in Region 10. The past prediction that the sightings of Pink-footed Goose would continue to increase is indeed happening. Ross's Goose was recorded in four Regions. Two hybrid geese were seen in Region 3, a Barnacle x Cackling and a Snow x Canada. Eurasian Wigeon was found in Regions 3, 6, and 10. King Eiders are annual in small numbers on Lake Ontario, but one found in Region 7 was unusual, as was a Great Cormorant. Exotic waterfowl reported included Whooper Swan (Region 9), Mandarin Duck (Region 9), Common Shelduck (Region 7), and Ruddy Shelduck (Region 2).

A Northern Gannet in Region 2 was seen at three different locations along Lake Ontario as it flew west on 19 November. Pacific Loon and American White Pelican were each reported from two Regions. In addition to the four species of shearwaters seen annually in Region 10, other pelagic birds seen from shore included Dovekie, Razorbill, Brown Booby, Bridled Tern, and Northern Fulmar. Cattle Egrets were reported in six Regions in late October and November, continuing a trend of recent years but also suggesting a higher influx perhaps due to the warm October. Black Vulture sightings are also continuing to increase, especially in the western part of the state. A Sabine's Gull on 7 September in Region 7 and three Long-tailed Jaegers on 5 September in Region 2 were noteworthy sightings. It was another irruptive year for Snowy Owls. They were reported in seven Regions, with the earliest report on 23 October from Region 6 and a total of at least 20 through the end of November in Region 2.

The number of late records for lingering passerines was most evident in the eastern part of the state. In Region 10, 15 species of warblers were seen in the last week of November. Other Regional editors indicated a few late records but did not focus on late departures. A Loggerhead Shrike found on 31 August in Region 1 was present for two days. Connecticut Warblers were reported in seven Regions in the fall. White-eyed Vireo was recorded in four Regions that were outside of their normal occurrence, Regions 2, 4, 6, and 8. Three Bicknell's Thrushes were banded in Region 2, which lies west of their normal migration corridor. Nelson's Sparrow was seen in Regions 1, 2, 6, and 10, and a LeConte's

Sparrow was photographed in Region 10. There were many other noteworthy species which are described in the Regional reports.

The weather was very accommodating for those who wanted to get out and search for fall migrants, and there was more than expected species diversity. Many birders ran down to the New York City area to chase some of the outstanding rarities. Among the rare birds found this quarter, the Corn Crake and the Pink-footed Goose are ABA Code 4 and the Yellow Rail, Brown Booby, and Northern Wheatear are ABA Code 2. In addition to these there were more than twenty extralimital passerines and other species throughout the state. It was a very rewarding fall. The Bird of the Season Award must go to the Corn Crake.

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