

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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September 2017 was warmer and drier than normal. In fact, September was the fifteenth warmest since 1950 and the sixth driest. October temperatures were about six degrees above average, and the month was a little drier than average. It was the fourth warmest October since recording began in 1950. November was about 1.5 degrees warmer than average and was the tenth driest.

On 9 October, the remnants of Hurricane Nate went through the Region, and on 10 October, 40 Ruddy Ducks, six Red-breasted Mergansers, one Red-Necked Grebe, and three Lesser Black-backed Gulls were observed at various parks around the Whitney Point Reservoir in Broome County. There is no definitive proof that the storm front was a causal factor in these observations, but it is suggestive.

Later in the season a Greater White-fronted Goose was discovered by Catherine Murphy on Plymouth Reservoir in Chenango County amidst Canada Geese on 9 November. Then on 24 November, another (or perhaps the same bird?) was found at Dorchester Park in Broome County by Jon Weeks. Many birders were able to see and photograph this bird as it remained at the park or at

a nearby quarry for a week or so. It was in the company of a great many Canada Geese. Both birds are eBird first records for their respective counties. *Bull's Birds of New York State* (1998) says that "About 130 sightings were reported in *The Kingbird* from 1975 to 1995." It also states that it is a rare fall visitor more common in spring and winter, and the increase in sightings could be attributed to both an increase in numbers and more observers perusing the flocks of Canada Geese for geese with bands (or more recently for Cackling Geese). On 4 November, seven Common Loons were seen on Pepacton Reservoir, which was a maximum for the Region. Single sightings of Red-throated Loons were seen in a few locations in October and November.

A **WOOD STORK** was found on 2 October by Doug Amadon near East Meredith in Delaware County. To quote his eBird report, "While driving, saw and said, 'what the heck was that?' and went back and photographed." The bird was near a section of County Route 22 where Kortright Creek widens out considerably so that it looks rather like an area that a heron or other wader might consider inviting. The photographs reveal a young Wood Stork colored in black and white with a huge bill, standing on a log in the creek. The cream or brown color on its neck seems to indicate a first or second year bird. *Bull's Birds of New York State* notes there have been at least 20 records, with 5 of those coming in the nineteenth century. Eight of those records were coastal. Most were in the summer, most likely post-breeding wandering. Great Egrets were also seen in good numbers along the Susquehanna River mostly in September. However one Great Egret was seen and photographed at Cincinnatus Lake in Chenango County on 29 November.

Soaring on to raptors, Andy Mason reports that numbers from the Franklin Mountain hawk watch were somewhat down yet again this year. The total count was 3,860 raptors, which was 25% below the 16-year average of 5,178. Broad-winged Hawks were 22% below their 16-year averages with 1,159. The total number of Bald Eagles at 214 was 30% above average. Osprey recorded at 64 was greater than the last year's total of 52 but was still 45% below average. Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Cooper's Hawks were all down significantly from their 16-year averages. Golden Eagles were 24% above their average, with 214 tallied. November was a particularly good month for Golden Eagles with 186 being counted, the highest number for November ever at the hawk watch. Franklin Mountain is one of the best places to spot Golden Eagles, and, in fact, Andy Mason states it led all eastern hawk watches in the total number of goldens seen this season. In addition, six Black Vultures were seen this season, while the total for all previous 28 years was just two.

Much of the decline this year at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch was the drop in Red-tailed Hawks. Last year 1,132 were seen, while this season only 739 were recorded. Per Andy Mason this was the second lowest amount ever recorded at Franklin Mountain. Only the initial year of the FMHW in 1989 was lower but with only 54 hours of coverage. Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania also

had the lowest amount of Red-tails in 82 years of coverage. What is the cause for this year's decrease? Changing migration patterns with the hawks staying north has been suggested. There does not seem to be a good answer, since as Andy Mason says, Red-tails are long-lived birds not given to sudden population swings.

In Chenango County in the Town of Plymouth three adult Sandhill Cranes were photographed in the beautiful October fields. No colts were seen. Scoping on shorebirds, many observed a Baird's Sandpiper in early September on the Susquehanna River in Johnson City. American Golden-Plovers were found in a few different locations in the Region in September and October.

A White-eyed Vireo was seen in the Binghamton University Nature Preserve on 6 October. It now seems as though we find one each fall. Warbler diversity continued to be good, with 29 species recorded. For the three preceding years, the total number of species was 27. There were two Connecticut Warblers seen in the Region, one in mid-September and the other in early October. Also in late September, 20 Tennessee Warblers were seen in Upper Lisle Park in Broome County.

On 12 November a seasonal maximum of 25 American Tree Sparrows was seen at Upper Lisle Park. A Clay-colored Sparrow was discovered on 3 September at Underwood Hill in Cortland County. A flock of 11 Rusty Blackbirds was reported from the Carantouan Greenway in Tioga County on 19 November, and there were seven other scattered reports of this declining species. There were 16 reports of Pine Siskins, some with as many as 85 birds. So far this does appear to be an irruption year. There were also a few sightings of Red Crossbills in various locations throughout the Region.

In summary, 214 species, compared with 213 last year, were reported, with some interesting rarities for the Region. I also want to acknowledge and thank Bill Ostrander who sorted eBird data to identify arrivals, last dates, and high counts.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AqPk – Aquaterra P, BROO; **BoPd** – Boland Pd, BROO; **BUNP** – Binghamton University Nature Preserve, BROO; **CanL** – Canadarago L, OTSE; **CannR** – Cannonsville Res, DELA; **ChenL** – Chenango L, CHEN; **DorP** – Dorchester P, BROO; **FMHW** – Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, DELA; **GrwP** – Greenwood CP, BROO; **LHNC** – Lime Hollow Nature Center, CORT; **LPSF** – Long Pd SF, CHEN; **MHL** – Michigan Hollow L, TIOG; **OtsL** – Otsego L, OTSE; **PepR** – Pepacton Res, OTSE; **SkaL** – Skaneateles L, CORT; **SusR** – Susquehanna R, BROO; **UL** – Upper Lisle, BROO.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 18 Stoller Hill Rd OTSE 28 Sep.

Greater White-fronted Goose (R4):

Plymouth Res CHEN 9 Nov (CM); DorP 24-29 Nov (JW, ph, mob).

Brant: max 60 Ceresna Rd DELA 12 Oct.

Redhead: max 5 Allen L OTSE 21 Nov.

Surf Scoter: max 4 PepR DELA 4-5 Nov.

White-winged Scoter: max 5 DorP 30 Sep.

Black Scoter: 2 ChenL 30 Oct; 2 DorP 4 Nov; 2 LPSF 13 Nov; 2 SusR 27-28 Nov.

Long-tailed Duck: max 4 CannR 4 Nov; max 4 DorP 17 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: max 47 Glimmerglass SP OTSE 25 Nov.

Ruddy Duck: max 40 UL 10 Oct.

Red-breasted Merganser: 6 DorP 10 Oct.

Red-throated Loon: OtsL 25 Oct; PepR 12 Nov; ChenL 14 Nov.

Com. Loon: max 7 PepR 4 Nov.

Red-necked Grebe: DorP 10 Oct; Nathaniel Cole P BROO 15 Nov; DorP 15 Nov.

WOOD STORK: East Meredith DELA 2 Oct (DA, ph).

Great Egret: max 11 William Hill P Broo 6 Sep; last Cincinnatus L CHEN 29 Nov (MD, ph)

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Marshall Andrews P CHEN 14 Nov (RB, ph).

Black Vulture: total 6 FMHW, in the previous 28 years only 2 were counted.

Turkey Vulture: total 884 FMHW, 112% above avg.

HAWKS – LARIDS

(FMHW totals cover 26 Aug to 7 Jan; averages reflect 2001-2016 data, *intro*).

Osprey: total 64 FMHW, 45% below avg.

Bald Eagle: total 214 FMHW, 30% above avg; many other rep; very widespread.

N. Harrier: total 23 FMHW, 65% below avg.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: total 332 FMHW, 36% below avg.

Cooper's Hawk: total 40 FMHW, 59% below avg.

N. Goshawk: total 9 FMHW, 55% below avg.

Red-shouldered Hawk: total 22 FMHW, 58% below avg.

Broad-winged Hawk: total 1159 FMHW, 22% below avg.

Red-tailed Hawk: total 739 FMHW, 61% below avg; many other rep.

Rough-legged Hawk: total 2 FMHW, 74% below avg.

Golden Eagle: total 214 FMHW, 24% above avg.

Virginia Rail: BUNP 7 Oct, only report.

Sora: Lockheed Martin Pd TIOG 22 Sep, only report.

Com. Gallinule: max 5 Sherburne Railroad Marsh CHEN 17 Sep; last BoPd 28 Oct.

Am. Coot: max 87 OtsL 25 Nov.

Sandhill Crane: 3 Doing Rd CHEN 2-30 Oct.

Am. Golden-Plover: 1 to 2 Town of Coventry CHEN 8-19 Sep; 2 DorP 31 Oct; SusR 2-6 Sep; Chenango R Binghamton BROO 1-3 Oct.

Sanderling: 2 DorP 9 Sep.

Baird's Sandpiper: SusR BROO 2-6 Sep, ph, mob.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 45 DorP 1 Nov.

Laughing Gull: CannR 16 Sep (LV).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 3 UL 10 Oct.

Greater Black-backed Gull: Cortland CORT 29-30 Oct; Goodale L Cort 30 Nov.

Black Tern: UL 7 Sep.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

N. Saw-whet Owl: DELA 25 Nov.

Com. Nighthawk: max 36 SusR 9 Sep, 16 other scattered rep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last DELA 26 Sep.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Taylor Valley SF CORT 16 Sep; Scott CORT 10 Oct.

Am. Kestrel: total 84 FMHW, 12% below avg.
Merlin: total 40 FMHW, 58% above avg.
Peregrine Falcon: total 15 FMHW, 7% below avg; many rep from Binghamton BROO of resident downtown pair.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Downsville DELA 3-4 Sep.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 14 scattered rep most from early Sep.

N. Shrike: 2 MHL 24 Nov; Nanticoke L BROO 31 Oct; only reports.

White-eyed Vireo: BUNP 6 Oct, only report.

Horned Lark: max 25 Moran Rd CHEN 27 Nov.

Marsh Wren: max 4 Sherburne Railroad Marsh CHEN 22 Sep.

Veery: last UL15 Sep.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: last LHNC 12 Oct.

Swainson's Thrush: last UL 1 Oct.

LONGSPURS – WEAVERS

Snow Bunting: max 7 DorP 8 Nov.

Tennessee Warbler: max 20 UL 29 Sep (DN).

Connecticut Warbler: Downsville DELA 11 Sep (LV); Brick Pd TIOG 1 Oct (ST LK).

Mourning Warbler: 4 scattered rep. in Sep.

Hooded Warbler: McGraw CORT 3 Sep, only report.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 25 UL 12 Nov.

Clay-colored Sparrow: Underwood Hill CORT 3 Sep.

Vesper Sparrow: Oquaga Creek SP 19 Oct.

Rusty Blackbird: max 11 Carantouan Greenway TIOG 19 Nov.

Red Crossbill: max 4 Perkins Pond SF CHEN 14 Oct; max 4 Morgan Hill SF CORT 21 Oct; 3 AqPk 28 Nov.

Pine Siskin: max 85 Tubbs Hill Rd TIOG 20 Nov; 80 N Griffin Rd CHEN 19 Nov; 14 other scattered reports.