

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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The season started off cool, with below average high temperatures most days during the first half of September. However, the mean temperature for the month was 1-3 degrees above average for most of the Region thanks to an unseasonable warm spell that lasted for much of the last half of September, with highs reaching or exceeding 80°F in Watertown on 11 consecutive days starting on 17 September. Relatively warm weather persisted through most of October, with temperatures cooling off during the last week of the month. Temperatures were up and down through the rest of the season, with November's average temperature being slightly cooler than normal. September was very dry, and about average precipitation fell in November, but October was very wet, especially near Lake Ontario, where many locations received more than double average precipitation for the month. Most of October's rain fell during three storms, with Watertown receiving 1.2" on 4 October, 3.7" on 9 October, and 4.4" on 29-30 October.

Waterfowl numbers were widely reported to be rather low with a few exceptions, such as at Wilson Hill WMA, where a refilling pool that NYSDEC had drained during the spring and summer attracted large numbers of dabbling ducks but very few of the diving ducks that usually gather here. For instance over the past decade peak counts of Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal in this pool never exceeded 100 until this year, when high counts nearly reached 1000 for both species. By contrast, the raft of 2000-4000 or more Ring-necked Ducks and other *Aythya* that normally forms here never materialized, but Canadian birders reported unusually large numbers of these diving ducks a few miles to the northeast. Other noteworthy waterfowl at Wilson Hill included a Greater White-fronted Goose on 28 October and a Eurasian Wigeon found that same date and seen for a little over a week. Elsewhere, the only notable duck sightings were three King Eider, including one shot by a hunter on an island in the St. Lawrence River, where this species is rarely documented, and rafts of 63 Ruddy Ducks at Kring Point State Park and 92 Ruddy Ducks at Perch River WMA, both exceptional in a Region where double-digit counts are exceedingly

rare. Goose migration barely registered this season, with Snow Geese virtually absent, but impressive numbers of Tundra Swans congregated at the Black River Bay staging area in November.

Shorebirds were surprisingly scarce at Wilson Hill WMA in early September, where rising water did not start to cover the extensive mudflats until the middle of the month. The shorebird highlight from Wilson Hill was a Red Phalarope that made a brief appearance on 4 November, the third record on the New York side of this stretch of river since 2009. Several American Golden-Plovers were at Wilson Hill in September, but far more shorebirds used nearby mudflats along the edge of the St. Lawrence River, where power authority management led to highly variable but mostly very low water levels for much of September and early October. The bulk of the season's shorebird reports came from such areas, especially Whalen Park, within two miles of Wilson Hill and where a **Western Sandpiper** on 4 September was the most noteworthy find. Elsewhere, very high water levels throughout the season left little shorebird habitat along Lake Ontario or the St. Lawrence River upstream from the Iroquois Dam, but Nick Leone managed to find a few shorebirds near the lake, including five Long-billed Dowitchers at a wetland in Lyme on 10 October. Shorebirds were largely unreported away from these few locations.

With one exception, the songbird migration was widely considered to be lackluster, and in many areas it seemed like very few warblers moved at all. The exception was the southern part of Fort Drum, where the heavy passerine migration first seen in late August continued well into September, and migrant flocks were both larger and more numerous than usual. Some of these flocks included warbler numbers that far exceed what is normally reported in Region 6, for instance 70+ Cape May Warblers in one huge foraging flock on 8 September compared to typical maximum daily counts of ten or fewer. Other species that were unusually abundant included Tennessee, Nashville, and Bay-breasted Warblers, but, at least on Fort Drum, most warbler species passed through in excellent numbers. The very active migration was welcome after the previous two very slow fall seasons on Fort Drum, and this difference was nowhere more noticeable than in a patch of open oak woodland where Pine Warblers, Eastern Bluebirds, and Chipping Sparrows usually form the nucleus of a large, persistent foraging flock. During 2015 and 2016 the flocks at this site were very small compared with the previous seven years, but this year were the largest documented, with high counts of 60 Pine Warblers, 32 Eastern Bluebirds, and 160 Chipping Sparrows joined by a constantly changing mix of other migrants. Oddly scarce was Blackpoll Warbler, often among the most abundant fall migrants, but this year few were reported everywhere, even among the large warbler flocks on Fort Drum.

Passerine highlights included two **Nelson's Sparrows** at Fort Drum on 12 October that were almost exactly where one was found in 2014. There are only five or six records of this secretive species in Region 6, but given the abundance of habitat in Jefferson County it seems likely that Nelson's Sparrow occurs more

frequently than records suggest. A **White-eyed Vireo** in the Lewis County portion of Fort Drum on 5 October was a first county record as far as I can tell and a second record for the Army installation. Songbird highlights elsewhere seemed hard to come by, but there were a few, one being Philadelphia Vireo, as the 26 individuals reported throughout Region 6 was well above average. By the end of the season no large influx of irruptives was apparent, but a few finches were reported, including single Pine Grosbeaks on Fort Drum on 3 and 7 November and Red Crossbills at two locations, including a small group of Type 3 Red Crossbills that Jeremy Collison recorded at the Oswegatchie Education Center in Lewis County.

For the season I received reports of 223 species, about average for recent years. Probably the highlight was the very active songbird migration documented on Fort Drum, including a couple of Regional rarities. But few birders were able to witness these birds, and among the low points was the general lack of migrants in many portions of the Region. Also worth noting is a continued increase in the number of observers reporting birds to eBird throughout Region 6, including both more local residents and more birders visiting from other regions. Not many years ago just two or three observers consistently accounted for 80-90% of all first and last dates cited in this report, but for the past couple of years such sightings have been spread out among a much larger number of birders.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFWMA – Ashland Flats WMA; **BI** – Barnhart Island, T Massena; **BPWMA** – Black Pond WMA; **BRB** – Black River Bay; **BRV** – Black River Valley; **CB** – Chaumont Barrens Preserve; **CCSP** – Coles Creek SP; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **CWF** – Canton Wastewater Treatment Facility; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Installation; **GLR** – Grand Lakes Reserve, T Redwood; **HH** – Henderson Harbor; **HP** – Hawkins Pt, T Massena; **ICNC** – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; **JCSP** – Jacques Cartier SP; **KC** – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; **KPSP** – Kring Point SP; **LWMA** – Lakeview WMA; **MM** – Massawepie Mire; **OEC** – Oswegatchie Education Center, T Croghan; **PilPt** – Pillar Pt, JEFF; **PRWMA** – Perch River WMA; **PtPen** – Point Peninsula, JEFF; **RMSP** – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; **RRt** – Remington Recreation Trail, T Canton; **StPt** – Stony Pt, T Henderson, JEFF; **SBSP** – Southwick Beach SP; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes

WMA, T Canton; **WBSP** – Westcott Beach SP; **WHWMA** – Wilson Hill WMA; **WISP** – Wellesley I SP; **WP** – Whalen Pk, T Louisville.

WATERFOWL - VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: WHWMA 28 Oct (JB), only report.

Snow Goose: arr SBSP 11 Oct; max 175 T Lawrence 18 Nov; no significant migration.

Brant: arr BI 7 Oct; max CCSP 1 Nov; last CCSP 4 Nov.

Cackling Goose: BRV 11 Nov (BP), only report.

Canada Goose: many fewer moving than normal.

Mute Swan: max 17 T Clayton 11 Nov.

Trumpeter Swan: max 10 PRWMA 19 Sep; migrants PtPen 11 Nov & WHWMA 18 Nov.

Tundra Swan: max count 985 at traditional BRB staging area 24 Nov; some observers estimated as many as 2000 at same location.

Wood Duck: last T Canton 7 Nov.

Gadwall: max 160 WHWMA 4 Nov.

Eurasian Wigeon: WHWMA where annual 28 Oct to 6 Nov (JB, EW).

Am. Wigeon: max 750 WHWMA 4-5 Nov.

Am. Black Duck: max 150 WHWMA 4 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: max 240 ULLWMA 30 Sep; last 10 WHWMA 10 Nov.

N. Shoveler: max 30 CWF 30 Oct.

N. Pintail: max 950 WHWMA 4 Nov.

Green-winged Teal: max 950 WHWMA 28 Oct.

Canvasback: no reports.

Redhead: max 8 WHWMA 21 Oct; large raft that normally forms WHWMA failed to appear, *intro*.

Ring-necked Duck: max 1365 ULLWMA 7 Oct; 70 high count WHWMA 7 Oct, far below usual max of 2000-4000++, *intro*.

Greater Scaup: max 610 BRB 24 Nov, low.

Lesser Scaup: max 60 WHWMA 28 Oct.

King Eider: f shot by hunter Long Sault Is 4 Nov (photos!); f L Ontario of BPWMA 24 Nov (JB); y m PilPt 30 Nov (NL, RB).

Surf Scoter: arr CCSP 7 Oct; max 4 ED 27 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: arr T Ellisburg 16 Sep; max 41 CCSP 21 Oct.

Black Scoter: arr & max 18 CCSP 21 Oct.

Long-tailed Duck: arr KPSP 27 Oct; max 300 MP 24 Nov.

Bufflehead: arr PtPen 21 Oct; max 70 HH 24 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: arr WHWMA 30 Sep; max 200 CV 12 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 42 PtPen 23 Nov.

Com. Merganser: max 106 CV 11 Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 144 PtPen 25 Sep.

Ruddy Duck: 63 KPSP 27 Oct (JB); max 92 PRWMA 7 Nov (NL); double-digit counts rare R6.

Spruce Grouse: MM 22 Sep (MS), only report.

Red-throated Loon: arr CCSP 7 Oct; max 2 PilPt 4 Nov & CCSP 11 Nov.

Com. Loon: max 77 PilPt 4 Nov, site where high counts usually exceed 100; low numbers generally.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 61 ULLWMA 7 Oct.

Horned Grebe: arr ULLWMA 10 Oct; max 3 PtPen 14 Nov & CCSP 11 & 25 Nov; low.

Red-necked Grebe: arr AFWMA 13 Sep; max 8 JCSP 22 Oct.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 1380 JCSP 22 Oct.

Am. Bittern: last WHWMA 30 Sep.

Least Bittern: AFWMA 13 Sep (CN); last PRWMA 14 Sep (RB); rare fall reports.

Great Egret: max 37 WHWMA 24 Sep; last T Canton 16 Oct.

Green Heron: last T Watertown 19 Sep.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: last 6 PRWMA 19 Sep.

Turkey Vulture: T Denmark 21 Nov, only report after 8 Nov.

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: last FD 11 Oct.

Golden Eagle: 2 ULLWMA 14 Sep; T Hounsfield 18 Sep; PtPen 8 Oct; juv FD 11 Nov; ad FD 21 Nov.

Red-shouldered Hawk: last T Canton 12 Oct.

Broad-winged Hawk: max 200 OEC 9 Sep (JC); last FD 19 Oct.

Rough-legged Hawk: arr ULLWMA 27 Oct.

Virginia Rail: last T Martinsburg 1 Oct.

Sora: 10+ ULLWMA 16 Sep, only report.

Com. Gallinule: max 6 PRWMA 26 Sep & FD 2 Oct; last PRWMA 5 Oct.

Am. Coot: max 100+ PRWMA early Nov.

Sandhill Crane: T Morristown 4 Sep (ET); 2 ad & 2 juv WHWMA 16-30 Sep (mob).

Black-bellied Plover: max 8 WP 14 Oct; last WHWMA 18 Nov.

Am. Golden-Plover: 5 reports 1-2 WHWMA 1-29 Sep; FD 8 Sep; ULLWMA 9 Sep; 2 FD 25 Sep; last T Brasher 20 Nov (HW, photos), late.

Semipalmated Plover: max 17 WP 10 Sep; last WHWMA 28 Oct (JB), late.
Killdeer: max 41 T Lyme; last WHWMA 28 Oct.
Spotted Sandpiper: last WP 24 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: only 3 reports, low; last Perch L 13 Sep.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 17 RMSP 13 Oct; last BRV 11 Nov.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 22 WHWMA 1 Sep; last 6 PRWMA 4 Oct.
Sanderling: max 4 LWMA 8 Sep; last 2 BI 29 Oct.
Dunlin: max 32 CCSP 21 Oct.
Least Sandpiper: max 17 WP 4 Sep; last WHWMA 29 Sep.
White-rumped Sandpiper: CCSP 28 Oct, only report.
Baird's Sandpiper: max & last 4 WHWMA 14 Sep.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 22 WP 15 Oct; last BI 29 Oct.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 70 WP 1 Sep; last WHWMA 19 Sep.
W. SANDPIPER (R6): WP 4 Sep (JB).
Long-billed Dowitcher: 5 T Lyme 10 Oct (NL).
Wilson's Snipe: last T Lyme 10 Oct; many fewer than usual.
Red Phalarope: WHWMA 4 Nov (JB).
Bonaparte's Gull: max 31 PilPt 1 Nov.
Iceland Gull: arr CCSP 11 Nov.
Herring Gull: max 340 BI 24 Sep.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 8 BI 11 Nov (AB), high.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 45 HP 25 Nov.
Caspian Tern: last CV & PtPen 17 Sep.
Com. Tern: last Ogden Is & PtPen 16 Sep.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Black-billed Cuckoo: last KC 13 Sep.
E. Screech-Owl: max 4 WBSP 27 Oct.
Snowy Owl: arr FD 23 Oct, early.
Short-eared Owl: CV 10 Nov, only report.
Com. Nighthawk: last T Canton 12 Sep.
E. Whip-poor-will: last T Diana 7 Oct, flushed by hunter.
Chimney Swift: last T Watertown 22 Sep.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last CV 18 Sep.
Red-headed Woodpecker: at least 3 ad still present FD end Nov, caching acorns.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: largely absent after 10 Oct; WBSP 15 Nov, possibly overwintering.
Merlin: 23 reports.

Peregrine Falcon: T Leray 6 Sep; ULLWMA 9 Sep & 3 Oct; T Canton 27-29 Sep; only reports away from T Massena & T Watertown where pairs resident.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: CV 4 Sep.
E. Wood-Pewee: last CCSP 29 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last CB 17 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last FD 8 Sep.
E. Phoebe: last T Hammond 27 Oct.
Great Crested Flycatcher: last T Croghan 10 Sep.
E. Kingbird: last T Ellisburg 15 Sep.
N. Shrike: arr ULLWMA 11 Oct (JB), early; only 2 other reports.
WHITE-EYED VIREO (R6): FD 5 Oct (JB).
Yellow-throated Vireo: last T Canton 8 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last FD 19 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last CB 19 Sep.
Philadelphia Vireo: 19 reports of 26 individuals, more than usual; last ICNC 25 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last FD 6 Oct.
Horned Lark: max 132 T Lawrence 11 Nov.
Tree Swallow: last WBSP 20 Oct.
Barn Swallow: last RRT 10 Sep.
House Wren: last WISP 8 Oct.
Winter Wren: migrants arr 10 T Croghan 10 Sep; last LWMA 24 Nov.
Sedge Wren: last FD 12 Oct.
Marsh Wren: last PRWMA 5 Oct.
Carolina Wren: T Lowellville 23 Sep; PRWMA 26 Sep; only reports.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: scarce outside Adirondacks before 21 Sep.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr T Canton 7 Sep; max 33 FD 11 Oct; last FD 3 Nov.
E. Bluebird: max 32 FD 3 Oct.
Veery: last T Canton 14 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: OEC 8 Sep; FD 27 & 28 Sep; GLR 1 Oct; only reports.
Swainson's Thrush: last FD 10 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last BPWMA 24 Nov.
Wood Thrush: last 3 ICNC 25 Sep (EW), late.
Gray Catbird: RRT 9 Nov (JB); 2 KC 12 Nov (RB); late.
Brown Thrasher: last FD 10 Oct.
N. Mockingbird: max 3 FD 5 Sep, where 1 still present 25 Sep; last Sackets Harbor Battlefield 24 Oct.
Am. Pipit: last WHWMA 11 Nov; no reports of more than 3 ind.
Cedar Waxwing: max 90 FD 28 Sep; scarce after 4 Nov.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: arr PtPen 21 Oct.
Ovenbird: last FD 2 Oct.
N. Waterthrush: last OEC 9 Sep.
Golden-winged Warbler: last 3 FD 7 Sep.
Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 8 Sep.
Black-and-white Warbler: last FD 28 Sep; only report after 14 Sep.
Tennessee Warbler: max 39 FD 6 Sep; last FD 11 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: arr StPt 10 Sep (AS); 5 FD between 28 Sep & 6 Oct (JB); last 2 WISP 8 Oct (BB).
Nashville Warbler: max 21 FD 6 Sep; last T Croghan 12 Oct.
Mourning Warbler: last OEC 10 Sep.
Com. Yellowthroat: last WBSP 14 Oct.
Am. Redstart: last FD 28 Sep.
Cape May Warbler: max 75+ FD 8 Sep; last FD 6 Oct.
N. Parula: max 5 FD 22 Sep; last CV 6 Oct.
Magnolia Warbler: max 24 FD 7 Sep; last CV & FD 6 Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: max 23 FD 8 Sep; last FD 2 Oct.
Blackburnian Warbler: max 12 FD 6 Sep; last T Ellisburg & T Lyme 17 Sep.
Yellow Warbler: last T Lyme & PRWMA 17 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last FD 28 Sep; one of only 2 reports after 11 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: max 9 FD 8 Sep; last FD 2 Oct; fewer than normal.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last FD 10 Oct.
Palm Warbler: last FD 12 Oct.
Pine Warbler: max 60 FD 3 Oct; last FD 16 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 120 FD 11 Oct; last migrants FD 8 Nov; 5 StPt 24 Nov & singles WBSP 25 & 29 Nov, likely overwintering.
Prairie Warbler: last FD 11 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: max 21 FD 6 Sep; last FD 10 Oct.
Canada Warbler: last FD & OEC 8 Sep.
Wilson's Warbler: last FD 22 Sep.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: last 2 CB 4 Nov.
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr MM 28 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: max 160 FD 3 Oct; last FD, T Croghan, & T Watertown 16 Oct.
Clay-colored Sparrow: last FD 3 Oct.
Field Sparrow: last FD 25 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last FD 1 Nov.
Savannah Sparrow: last FD 12 Oct.
NELSON'S SPARROW (R6): 2 FD 12 Oct (JB, photos!).
Fox Sparrow: arr RRt 30 Sep; last FD 29 Nov.
Song Sparrow: scarce after 8 Nov.
Lincoln's Sparrow: last FD 7 Nov (JB), late.
Swamp Sparrow: scarce after 15 Oct; last FD 30 Nov.
White-throated Sparrow: max 125 FD 11 Oct.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr FD 22 Sep; last 6 FD 20 Oct.
Dark-eyed Junco: StPt 10 Sep early; next FD 25 Sep, more typical arr date; max 120 FD 3 Nov.
Scarlet Tanager: last FD 10 Oct.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last T Canton 1 Oct.
Indigo Bunting: last 2 GLR 1 Oct.
Bobolink: last migrants heard over FD 12 Sep.
E. Meadowlark: singles FD 3, 10 & 11 Oct, only reports!
Rusty Blackbird: arr FD 9 Sep; max 720 FD 3 Nov; last PtPen 11 Nov.
Com. Grackle: max 1100 T Canton 6 Oct; few reports after Oct.
Brown-headed Cowbird: 3 reports RRt, where last 7 Oct; no other reports.
Orchard Oriole: last T Hammond 2 Sep (GS), rare fall.
Baltimore Oriole: last FD 5 Sep.
Pine Grosbeak: FD 3 & 7 Nov (JB), only reports.
Purple Finch: max 10 FD 2 Oct.
Red Crossbill: Beaver Lake 2 Sep; 6 Type 3 OEC 9-10 Sep (JC); flying over FD 29 Nov; only reports.
Pine Siskin: max 22 MM 28 Oct.

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