

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

Jeffrey S. Bolsinger

98 State Street, Canton NY 13617

jsbolsinger@yahoo.com

September was very warm, with high temperatures exceeding 80°F in Watertown on twelve days, including a seasonal high of 92° on 5 September. Temperatures were more seasonable through October and the first half of November, but the last three weeks of the season were much colder than average, with low temperatures dropping to -7° on the nights of 21-22 and 22-23 November, very early for subzero temperatures. September was dry throughout Region 6, but, while precipitation totals for Watertown were 1-2 inches below normal in October and November, much of the Region was much wetter than average both months.

Waterfowl numbers and diversity were generally unexceptional. For yet another fall season, very few Snow Geese were reported in Region 6. One Greater White-fronted Goose at the Canton sewage ponds on 14 October and a Richardson's Cackling Goose at Upper and Lower Lakes WMA 17-19 October were the only unusual goose reports of the season. On 27 October one Eurasian Wigeon was at Wilson Hill WMA, where this species has been found annually for about a decade. Unlike most recent falls, both Canvasback and King Eider were unreported, and maximum counts of most regular duck species were lower than usual.

Nick Leone has found a **Pacific Loon** in Chaumont Bay or Guffins Bay annually since 2012 and this year saw one in Chaumont Bay on 21 October. Surprisingly, a second Pacific Loon turned up in the St. Lawrence River at Waddington on 17 November, an apparent first record for St. Lawrence County. A high count of seven Red-throated Loons at Tibbetts Point on 20 October was a decent count for Region 6, but Nick Leone's high Common Loon count of 44 in the bay complex west of Watertown was about one-third his normal maximum count, and counts from elsewhere on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River were similarly low.

Shorebirds were surprisingly scarce given the seeming abundance of foraging habitat that resulted from continuing dry conditions through September. For instance low water at the Stone Mills Pool at Perch River WMA exposed vast mudflats that appeared ideal for large flocks of shorebirds, but most visitors noted modest numbers and relative low diversity. Yellowlegs were present on the Stone Mills Pool in decent numbers well into October and were joined by a smattering of other species, most notably two Stilt Sandpipers on 21 September. In typical fashion, most visits to the Lake Ontario shoreline turned up few to no shorebirds, but there were a few nice surprises, including the season's only Ruddy Turnstones, which Eileen Wheeler saw at El Dorado on 5 September and a Regionally rare **Purple Sandpiper** that Logan Kahle saw flying from a jetty at Mud Bay in Cape Vincent on 20 October. The usual autumn drawdown of the St. Lawrence River between the Iroquois and Robert Moses dams exposed extensive mudflats that were reliably good for shorebirds for several weeks, leading to the season's only phalarope sightings: one Red-necked Phalarope, which Hollis White photographed at Robert Moses State Park on 23 September, and a Wilson's Phalarope at Coles Creek State Park on 27 October.

For most of the season the fall passerine migration seemed about average, and there certainly wasn't anything like the spectacular pulse of warblers that was seen on Fort Drum during late August and early September last year. A few species seemed more abundant than usual. The 39 Philadelphia Vireos reported this fall is twice the previous maximum seasonal tally and three times the seasonal average for the past 15 years. It includes a daily high count of six at Fort Drum on 13 September. Similarly, the 28 Orange-crowned Warblers documented this fall is well more than double typical fall tallies. During most years, the last Orange-crowned Warbler report comes before 23 October, but this year eight reports came after this date, including a bird I found in Canton on 4 November and one Steve Kelling saw on Point Peninsula on 11 November. A number of other songbirds lingered past typical departure dates, most notably Nashville Warbler, with numerous reports in mid October and one on Point Peninsula as late as 18 November. A Hooded Warbler on Fort Drum on 5 October was a very rare fall sighting for Region 6.

As expected, several finch species irrupted into northern New York, although numbers were generally modest. Evening Grosbeaks first arrived on 5 October, and by the end of the month were widespread in Region 6 in low numbers, creating much excitement based on the number of people who happily told me they had Evening Grosbeaks at their feeders for the first time in many years. Common Redpolls started filtering in during late October, and on 26 October the first Pine Grosbeak was heard over El Dorado. The main influx of Pine Grosbeaks did not arrive until mid-November, and few were seen in the Region away from central and northern St. Lawrence County. Pine Siskins were widely reported, but there were just two Red Crossbill and one White-winged Crossbill reports, all of birds heard flying over Fort Drum.

Rarities not previously mentioned include a **Dickcissel** heard over El Dorado on 14 September and a **Nelson's Sparrow** in a Fort Drum marsh on 24 September. This latter sighting is the third record involving four individual Nelson's Sparrows on Fort Drum since 2014. It seems likely that this species occurs in Region 6 more frequently than records suggest. On 22 October, an **intergrade Northern Flicker** was at Fort Drum, a male showing a red malar stripe and yellow feather shafts. Unfortunately this flicker was only seen briefly and could not be relocated or photographed.

For the season, I received reports of 238 species, the highest fall tally by eight species over the last 15 years and perhaps the highest ever documented in Region 6. This high species tally is largely thanks to the continued increase in the number of birders visiting the Region from elsewhere, raising the odds that rarities or low-density migrants will be detected. It should also be noted that prior to about 2005 there really was no consistent effort to document every species that was reported in the Region each season. Many historic Region 6 reports seem to show a lack of occurrence or reporting for numerous species that surely were present.

CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Berg, Adam Bleau, Jeff Bolsinger, Richard & Marion Brouse, Matthew Brown, Carol Cady, Gary Chapin, Hobart Collins, Martha Collins, Jeremy Collison, Benjamin Dixon, Elyse DuBois, Kevin Ebert, John Good, Nick Kachala, Logan Kahle, Steve Kelling, Tom Langen, Brian Miller, Daniel Miller, Ellen Miller, Brian Morse, Brook Morse, Mike Pierce, Deanna Piiparinen; Lauri Piiparinen; Bill Purcell, Mandi Roggie, Robert Scranton, Gerry Smith, Julian Warren, Tom & Eileen Wheeler, Hollis White.

ABBREVIATIONS

BI – Barnhart I, T Massena; **BRB** – Black River Bay; **BRV** – Black River Valley; **CCSP** – Coles Creek SP; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **CWF** – Canton Wastewater Treatment Facility; **ED** – El Dorado Preserve; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Installation; **JEFF** – Jefferson County; **HH** – Henderson Harbor; **HP** – Hawkins Pt, T Massena; **ICNC** – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; **JCSP** – Jacques Cartier SP; **KC** – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; **LPSP** – Long Pt SP; **LWMA** – Lakeview WMA; **MM** – Massawepie Mire; **MP** – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg; **OCP** – Otter Creek Preserve, T Alexandria; **PilPt** – Pillar Pt, JEFF; **PRWMA** – Perch R WMA; **PtPen** – Pt Peninsula, JEFF; **RBP** – Red Barn Preserve, T Morristown; **RMSP** – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; **RRT** – Remington Recreation Trail, T Canton; **RWSP** – Robert G. Wehle SP; **SBSP** – Southwick Beach SP; **SLR** – St. Lawrence R; **TP** – Tibbetts Pt, T Cape Vincent; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; **WHWMA** – Wilson Hill WMA; **WP** – Whalen P, T Louisville.

WATERFOWL - HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: arr FD 5 Oct; only 7 other reports; max 250 each T Croghan & T Pinckney 18 Nov; no significant flight by end Nov.

Greater White-fronted Goose: CWF 14 Oct (JB), only report.

Brant: arr & max 325 MP 15 Oct; last 3 JCSP 11 Nov.

“Richardson’s” Cackling Goose: ULLWMA 17-19 Oct (JB), only report.

Mute Swan: 2-6/day W JEFF thru; no other reports.

Trumpeter Swan: rep from 6 loc, including new sites in T Rossie & T Theresa.

Tundra Swan: arr ED 26 Oct; max 300 PtPen 24 Nov.

Wood Duck: last 5 BRV 9 Nov.

Blue-winged Teal: max 120 PRWMA 2 Sep; last ULLWMA 18 Oct.

N. Shoveler: max 4 PRWMA 26 Oct, low.

Gadwall: max 90 PRWMA 26 Oct.

Eurasian Wigeon: transitional m WHWMA 27 Oct (JB), only report.

Am. Wigeon: max 1125 WHWMA 27 Oct, high.

Am. Black Duck: max 120 WHWMA 27 Oct.

N. Pintail: max 210 WHWMA 8 Oct.

Green-winged Teal: max 685 WP 30 Sep.

Canvasback: no reports.

Redhead: max 160 WHWMA 12 Oct, low.

Ring-necked Duck: max 3045 WHWMA 8 Oct.

Greater Scaup: max 700 LPSP 11 Nov.

Lesser Scaup: max 34 WHWMA 8 Oct.

Surf Scoter: arr PtPen 7 Oct; max 7 SBSP 26 Oct.

White-winged Scoter: arr SLR T Louisville 8 Oct; max 14 MP 26 Oct.

Black Scoter: arr PtPen 7 Oct; max 32 JCSP 14 Oct.

Long-tailed Duck: arr BRB 8 Oct; max 340 MP 15 Nov.

Bufflehead: arr ULLWMA 18 Oct; max 50 PtPen 18 Nov.

Com. Goldeneye: arr FD 18 Oct; max 94 PtPen 17 Nov.

Hooded Merganser: max 86 T Louisville 9 Nov.

Com. Merganser: max 79 PilPt 26 Oct.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 161 TP 20 Oct.

Ruddy Duck: ULLWMA 2 Sep & 8-18 Oct; SLR T Massena 4 Nov; only reports.

Spruce Grouse: 3 MM 2 Sep.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 62 ULLWMA 14 Sep; last T Watertown 17 Nov.

Horned Grebe: arr SLR T Hammond 23 Sep; max 8 ED 26 Oct.

Red-necked Grebe: arr SLR T Hammond 23 Sep; 3 rep, max 2 incl SLR T Hammond 26 Sep, CCSP 21 Oct, & ED 26 Oct.

Black-billed Cuckoo: last T Louisville 12 Oct.

Com. Nighthawk: last T Adams 7 Sep.

E. Whip-poor-will: 3 T Croghan 2 Sep, only report.

Chimney Swift: last PWMA & RWSP 2 Sep.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last CV 19 Sep.

RAILS - LARIDS

Virginia Rail: last PRWMA 22 Sep.

Sora: last PRWMA 24 Sep.

Com. Gallinule: max 12 PRWMA 4 Sep; last WHWMA 3 Oct.

Am. Coot: last CV 22 Nov.

Sandhill Crane: WHWMA 1 & 9 Sep; FD 11 Sep; 2 ULLWMA 18 Sep & 2 Oct; PRWMA 22 Sep; ED 26 Oct; last RRT 14 Nov.

Black-bellied Plover: max & last 19 LWMA 2 Nov.

Am. Golden-Plover: Thousand Islands Park 15 Sep; WP 15 Sep; only reports.

Semipalmated Plover: max 59 WHWMA 16 Sep; last WP 27 Oct.

Killdeer: last 2 PtSal 21 Oct.

Upland Sandpiper: heard over T Potsdam 30 Sep (NK), only report.

Ruddy Turnstone: 2 ED 5 Sep (EW) only report.

Stilt Sandpiper: 2 PRWMA 21 Sep (JB), only report.

Sanderling: max 22 ED 8 Sep; last 2 SLR T Massena 4 Nov.

Dunlin: max & last 124 LWMA 2 Nov.

Purple Sandpiper: CV 20 Oct (LK), rarely documented R6.

Baird’s Sandpiper: BI 5 Sep; PRWMA 9 Sep; FD 24 Sep; only reports.

Least Sandpiper: max 53 WP 1 Sep; last WHWMA 8 Oct.

White-rumped Sandpiper: PRWMA 13 Sep; ED 16 Sep & 21 Oct; last 5 SLR T Massena 4 Nov.

Pectoral Sandpiper: max 8 PRWMA 24 Sep; last WHWMA 4 Nov.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 9 PRWMA 20 Sep.

Short-billed Dowitcher: PRWMA 4 & 21 Sep; WP 16-18 Sep; only reports.
Wilson's Snipe: last PRWMA 13 Oct; unusually scarce.
Spotted Sandpiper: last WHWMA 29 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: last T Canton 27 Oct.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 54 PRWMA 21 Sep; last LWMA 2 Nov.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 32 PRWMA 13-26 Oct; last CV 10 Nov.
Wilson's Phalarope: CCSP 27 Oct (JB), only report.
Red-necked Phalarope: RMSP 23 Sep (HW, photos!), only report.
Parasitic Jaeger: TP 20 Oct (LK), only report.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 45 HH 14 Sep.
Iceland Gull: HP 17 Nov & PtPen 30 Nov; only reports.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: HP 17 Nov, only report.
Glaucous Gull: 2 CV 8 Sep (GF), rare before Nov.
Caspian Tern: last CV 23 Sep.
Com. Tern: last ED 8 Sep.

LOONS - PARROTS

Red-throated Loon: arr SLR T Massena 8 Oct; max 7 TP 20 Oct.
PACIFIC LOON: T Lyme 21 Oct (NL); SLR off Little Sucker Brook Park 17 Nov (JB, EW).
Com. Loon: max 44 PilPt 26 Oct.
Am. Bittern: last RBP 14 Oct.
Great Egret: max 50 ULLWMA 26 Sep; last PRWMA 13 Oct.
Green Heron: last CV 24 Oct.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: last PRWMA 22 Sep.
Turkey Vulture: scarce after 4 Nov; last T Lowville 24 Nov.
Osprey: last LWMA 18 Oct.
N. Goshawk: RRT 11-15 Oct, only report.
Red-shouldered Hawk: last T Philadelphia 13 Oct.
Broad-winged Hawk: last FD 27 Sep.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr PtPen 20 Oct.
Golden Eagle: CCSP 27 Oct, only report.
E. Screech-Owl: 4 reports.
Snowy Owl: arr T Lyme 29 Oct.
Short-eared Owl: 6 PtPen 18 Nov thru.
N. Saw-whet Owl: T Canton 7 Sep, only report.
Red-headed Woodpecker: max 10 FD 12 Sep, where last 27 Sep; T Brownville 19 Oct (AB); last T Lowville 27 Oct (EM).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: scarce after 4 Oct; last PtPen 11 Nov (SK).

N. FLICKER "INTERGRADE": as m FD 22 Oct red malar stripe & yellow flight feather shafts.

Merlin: 32 rep, 27+ ind.

Peregrine Falcon: ICNC 19 Sep; 2 PRWMA thru 26 Oct; only reports away from SLR T Massena & T Louisville and T Watertown, where resident.

FLYCATCHERS - SNOW BUNTING

Great Crested Flycatcher: last FD 17 Sep.
E. Kingbird: last PRWMA 9 Sep.
Olive-sided Flycatcher: last T Canton 16 Sep.
E. Wood-Pewee: last PtPen 22 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last FD 5 Sep.
Alder Flycatcher: last T Croghan 2 Sep.
Willow Flycatcher: last RRT 3 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last PtPen 20 Oct (LK), late.
E. Phoebe: generally absent by 4 Nov; T Leray 29 Nov (JB), late.
N. Shrike: arr FD 24 Oct.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last FD 13 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last PtPen 20 Oct.
Philadelphia Vireo: 21 FD 4 - 27 Sep, incl max 6 on 13 Sep, high; 18 from 12 additional loc, more than usual; last ULLWMA 3 Oct; *intro*.
Warbling Vireo: last RRT 23 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last CUT 10 Oct.
Horned Lark: max 29 T Madrid 18 Nov.
Tree Swallow: last PtPen 29 Oct.
N. Rough-winged Swallow: last 2 LWMA 12 Sep.
Bank Swallow: last PRWMA & RWSP 5 Sep.
Cliff Swallow: last PRWMA 10 Sep.
Barn Swallow: last 4 LWMA 12 Sep.
House Wren: last FD 11 Oct.
Winter Wren: last PtPen 18 Nov.
Sedge Wren: last FD 3 Oct.
Marsh Wren: last FD 17 Sep.
Carolina Wren: 9 rep, 4 ind all W JEFF.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: last PRWMA 2 Sep.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: migr arr 20 Sep; max 17 ED 26 Oct.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr FD 4 Sep; last FD 20 Nov.
Veery: last FD 13 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: nocturnal migr over T Canton & T Potsdam 19 & 30 Sep & 1 Oct; last FD 2 Oct.
Swainson's Thrush: last FD 18 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: last FD 30 Oct.
Wood Thrush: last T Croghan 27 Sep.
Gray Catbird: last FD 16 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last RRT 8 Oct.
N. Mockingbird: PtPen 22 Sep, only report.

Bohemian Waxwing: 4 CUT 18 Nov (NK), only report.
Cedar Waxwing: max 135 ED 26 Oct.
Am. Pipit: max 5 ED 26 Oct; last CV 17 Nov.
Evening Grosbeak: arr T Croghan 5 Oct; widespread in low numbers by late Oct; max 22 T Pinckney 9 Nov.
Pine Grosbeak: early arr ED 26 Oct, only report until T Madrid 17 Nov; max 16 ULLWMA 24 Nov.
Purple Finch: steady southbound migration late Sep thru early Nov; max 22 FD 5 Oct.
Com. Redpoll: arr FD 22 Oct.
Red Crossbill: FD 12 Sep & 18 Oct; only reports.
White-winged Crossbill: FD 22 Oct, only report.
Pine Siskin: widespread thru; max 40 LWMA 2 Nov.
Lapland Longspur: arr T Clayton 14 Oct; max 6 CV 22 Nov.
Snow Bunting: arr FD 22 Oct.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS - CARDINALIDS

E. Towhee: scarce after 3 Oct; last CV 20 Nov (DM).
Am. Tree Sparrow: arr FD 23 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: max 150 FD 15 Oct; last KC 9 Nov.
Field Sparrow: last FD 22 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: last T Watertown 20 Nov.
Savannah Sparrow: last PtPen & WHWMA 21 Oct.
NELSON'S SPARROW (R6): FD 24 Sep (JB), where 4th record & 3rd in 5 years.
Fox Sparrow: arr WHWMA 22 Sep; max 26 FD 23 Oct; last T Croghan 17 Nov.
Song Sparrow: mostly scarce after 5 Nov, but many near L Ontario thru.
Lincoln's Sparrow: last FD 22 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: scarce after mid-Oct.
White-throated Sparrow: max 165 FD 11 Oct.
White-crowned Sparrow: arr WHWMA 29 Sep; last T Lowville 24 Nov.
Dark-eyed Junco: arr PtPen 22 Sep.
Bobolink: last WHWMA 22 Sep.
E. Meadowlark: last FD 1 Nov.

Baltimore Oriole: last FD 17 Sep.
Rusty Blackbird: arr PRWMA & RRT 22 Sep; max 40 FD 2 Nov, low; last T Canton 10 Nov.
Com. Grackle: scarce after 10 Nov.
Ovenbird: last WHWMA 3 Oct.
N. Waterthrush: last ED 14 Sep.
Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 17 Sep.
Black-and-white Warbler: last FD 15 Oct.
Tennessee Warbler: last FD 5 Oct.
Orange-crowned Warbler: arr PtPen 22 Sep; 13 FD 27 Sep - 25 Oct, more than usual; last PtPen 11 Nov, late; 13 ind, 8 additional loc; excellent year, *intro*.
Nashville Warbler: 2 FD 18 Oct (JB) late; PtPen 18 Nov, very late (LK, KE).
Com. Yellowthroat: generally absent by 4 Oct, but a few lingered to late Oct; last FD 29 Nov.
Hooded Warbler: FD 5 Oct (JB), rarely reported during fall.
Am. Redstart: last PtPen 22 Sep.
Cape May Warbler: generally absent after 3 Oct, but 1 at KC feeder 29 Oct - 19 Nov (RB, DM, photos!).
N. Parula: max 25 PtPen 22 Sep; last ICNC 6 Oct.
Magnolia Warbler: last Murray I 6 Oct.
Bay-breasted Warbler: last FD 3 Oct.
Blackburnian Warbler: last OCP 3 Oct (JG), late.
Yellow Warbler: last FD & KC 11 Sep.
Chestnut-sided Warbler: last CV 20 Sep.
Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 9 Oct.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: last FD 5 Oct.
Palm Warbler: last T Canton 12 Oct.
Pine Warbler: last FD 15 Oct.
Yellow-rumped Warbler: last T Massena 6 Nov.
Prairie Warbler: last ED 14 Sep.
Black-throated Green Warbler: last FD 11 Oct.
Canada Warbler: last ED 14 Sep.
Wilson's Warbler: last T Watertown 27 Sep.
Scarlet Tanager: last FD 3 Oct.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last RRT 3 Oct.
Indigo Bunting: last PtPen 22 Sep.
DICKCISSEL (R6): heard over ED 14 Sep (JB).

=====