

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

Mike Morgante

6405 Woodberry Court, East Amherst, NY 14051
morgm@roadrunner.com

There was a prolonged cool start to June 2019 before more summery weather took over. The mean temperature at the Buffalo weather station was 65.2° F, 1.1° below normal, with 4.60" of precipitation, 0.94" above average. July was warmer, drier, and more humid than usual. The mean temperature was 74.0°, 2.9° above average. Precipitation was 1.83", 1.40" below average. August was typical and pleasant. The average temperature was 70.3°, 0.7° above normal.

Rainfall was 3.62", 0.36" above normal. Weather data excerpted from National Weather Service *Monthly Weather Summary* for Buffalo.

The two most recent Regional breeders continued in 2019. Trumpeter Swans bred at Cayuga Pool at Iroquois NWR for the second year in a row, with seven young observed by many throughout the summer. Caspian Terns bred in Buffalo Harbor for the third consecutive year and seem to have become a fixture in the area. Unlike the Common Terns that stay very close to their Buffalo Harbor breakwall nesting areas along the Niagara River and Lake Erie, it is not unusual to see Caspian Terns flying around and foraging on ponds in the Buffalo suburbs.

There were Black Vulture sightings in Lewiston again but no evidence of breeding other than their presence in summer (and throughout the year). It will be a challenge to locate nesting evidence during the NY BBA III project for this species that has probably been breeding in the area in recent years.

There were summer sightings of three other species that could possibly represent new Regional breeding species at some point in the future. Fish Crow has yet to be confirmed as a breeder in Region 1 although scattered summer reports, increasing reports in other seasons, and documented nesting to the immediate west and east of the Region provide reasonable assurance that it's only a matter of time. A group of eight Fish Crows found by Joel Strong, Rachel Wilson, and Willie D'Anna at Olcott on 9 June represents a new Regional maximum. A **Black-necked Stilt** was photographed by Paul Leuchner on 19 June while kayaking on the Niagara River near the newly created Frog Island WMA. As I commented two years ago when a stilt stuck around Iroquois NWR into June, this species should be considered as a breeding possibility based on breeding records around the Great Lakes in this century. While this bird was not refound, there have now been sightings in two of the last three Junes, with May reports in both of those years (2017, 2019) as well. Reports of American White Pelican have increased in recent years and there were two sightings this summer including a long-staying bird on the Buffalo waterfront. With recent news that pelicans have been documented nesting in western Lake Erie, it's well within the realm of possibility that they eventually find the colonial waterbird colony islands of the Niagara River.

There wasn't much of note from the less common and/or declining breeding species typically tracked in this summer season report. Upland Sandpiper was only found at a landfill adjacent to Tillman Road WMA again, plus a nocturnal flyover report. Another sharp decline in breeding distribution should be expected for the upcoming atlas for this species. There were no mid-summer reports of Common Nighthawk in Buffalo or Jamestown, the only recent locations of suspected breeding. Sandhill Cranes were present in Iroquois NWR and Randolph although I'm not aware of confirmed breeding this year. Merlins bred at several locations; it will be interesting to see how much expansion there will be in the upcoming atlas. Sedge Wren was found at one

location, although little effort is typically spent trying to find this species. Clay-colored Sparrow sightings continue to expand to new locations, especially near Lake Ontario. Golden-winged Warbler was not found other than two likely migrants in late August. Prothonotary Warbler was documented at Tonawanda WMA, the only regularly documented breeding location in the Region; however, I suspect there are more locations around Iroquois NWR and the adjacent WMAs as well as elsewhere in Region that this species could occur. Hopefully we find more locations in the next few summers of atlas searching.

Least Bittern presumably nested at Times Beach NP for at least the second summer in a row, with several reports of five bitterns and even a careful count of seven on 31 August by Shelley Seidman. Their presence is one of the many rewards from the 5+ year invasive species removal and natural habitat restoration demonstration project undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Information on this project can be found at <https://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/District-Projects/Times-Beach/>.

There were some notable shorebird sightings in early June at the end of spring migration including a Red Knot at Dunkirk Harbor, a Whimbrel at Buffalo Harbor, and a Willet in Wilson, where rare for Niagara County. “Fall” migrant shorebirding produced a few interesting reports but overall was rather dull as no good concentration areas were found until mid-August when North Marsh at Oak Orchard WMA produced some good numbers and variety. Woodlawn Beach SP on Lake Erie produced one American Avocet on 30 July and two on 28 August. Willets were reported at three locations including eight at Times Beach NP on 18 August, and a Whimbrel was spotted in Wilson on 17 July.

Joel Strong took definitive photos of an adult “Thayer’s” Iceland Gull at Point Breeze on 14 June, which represents a very unusual summer record. A Glaucous Gull at Woodlawn Beach SP was on the late side for 1 June, while a juvenile Laughing Gull found there by Dean DiTommaso on an August morning could not be relocated after park staff groomed the beach. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found along Lake Ontario in June at Wilson and Olcott, consistent with early summer sightings in recent years. The lone Forster’s Tern report came from Wilson Pier in July. Black Terns appeared to do well based on their numbers at Iroquois NWR and adjacent Tonawanda WMA; there were no sightings away from this core area.

The most notable summer waterfowl occurrence was a **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck**. Dean DiTommaso heard and then sighted one flying off Lake Erie at Buffalo Harbor SP on 1 June. Despite searching Tiffit NP and other nearby areas the duck could not be relocated. A few days later, Doug Mutton reported one hanging out at a small pond in Clarence next to the Town Hall and Library buildings, which was very likely the same bird that DiTommaso saw. On 7 June, two days after Mutton’s sighting, Sue Barth found the whistling-

duck at the same Clarence pond and many birders were able to see this rare and handsome duck. This was the first Erie County record and fifth for the Region, all of which occurred in the decade.

Summering diving ducks included a Canvasback and 1-2 Lesser Scaup at Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant. Ruddy Ducks were present there throughout the summer, but numbers are much lower in recent summers than previously. Doug Beattie identified a Horned Grebe there in mid-June, while Eared Grebes went unreported there this summer.

There were a few Pine Siskin reports including one that was sighted through most of the summer attending the Zebehazy feeders in Orchard Park. Tony Dvorak spotted a **Nelson's Sparrow** at Times Beach NP on 4 June that several birders were able to re-find throughout the day; this marks a rare spring migration record for the Region. Two White-crowned Sparrow reports in Niagara County in the first half of June can likely be attributed to late migrants, but I'm not sure what to make of one at Lakeside Beach SP found by Don Bemont on 16 July.

CONTRIBUTORS

Sue Barth, Doug Beattie (DBea), Don Bemont (DBem), David Crowe, Willie D'Anna, Dean DiTommaso, Tony Dvorak, Alec Humann, Sabrina Kornowski, Paul Leuchner, Hans Mann, Celeste Morien, TJ Mudd, Doug Mutton, Joseph Petre, Jeff Reed, Chris Rockwell, Joy Saunders (JSa), Tim Schadel, Karl Schmidt, Shelly Seidmann, Joel Strong (JSt), Kirk Vanstrom, Gale VerHague, Rachel Wilson, Peter Yoerg, Mike Zebehazy.

ABBREVIATIONS

AISP – Allegany SP, CATT; **BeSP** – Beaver I SP, ERIE; **BMAC** – Beaver Meadow Audubon Center, WYOM; **BufH** – Buffalo Harbor, ERIE; **BuSP** – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; **BWWTP** – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant, GENE; **ChauL** – Chautauqua L, CHAU; **CSWMA** – Conewango Swamp WMA, CHAU; **DH** – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; **EvSP** – Evangola SP, ERIE; **FLC** – Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, ERIE; **FMCSP** – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; **GHSP** – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; **INWR** – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; **LBSP** – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; **NF** – Niagara Falls, NIAG; **NR** – Niagara R; **OOWMA** – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE/ORLE; **PB** – Pt Breeze, ORLE; **PG** – Pt Gratiot, CHAU; **RWNP** – Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve, ERIE; **TBNP** – Times Beach NP, Buffalo, ERIE; **Tift NP** – Tiff Nature Preserve, ERIE; **TRWMA** – Tillman Road WMA, ERIE; **TWMA** – Tonawanda WMA, GENE/NIAG; **WoBSP** – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE; **WTSP** – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

WATERFOWL-HUMMINGBIRDS
BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK:
BufH 1 Jun (DD!); Clarence ERIE 5, 7 Jun (DM, SB, mob); first ERIE record; 5th Reg record, all this decade.

Mute Swan: DH thru; max 14 WTSP 22 Jun; 4 GHSP 5 Jul; 6 Carlton ORLE 17 Jul; 7 Olcott NIAG 7 Aug.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 + 7 yg INWR 7 Jun thru (mob), bred at this location for 2nd straight year.

Wood Duck: 150, 123 INWR 1, 20 Aug; max 161 TWMA 31 Aug; 120 BWWT 31 Aug.

Blue-winged Teal: arr Olcott NIAG 7 Aug; 12 TBNP 18 Aug; max 32, 66 INWR 22, 29 Aug.

Northern Shoveler: 2 Unity I NR 3 Jun; TBNP 4 Jun; max 33 BWWT 31 Aug.

Gadwall: Somerset NIAG 1, 5 Jun; max 8 Dunkirk CHAU 16 Aug.

American Wigeon: DH 6, 15 Jun; only reports.

American Black Duck: Wilson NIAG 12 Aug; 4 DH 28 Aug; only reports.

Northern Pintail: 3, 1 INWR 18 Jul, 1 Aug; only reports.

Green-winged Teal: 5 INWR 18 Jul; 4 RWNP 22 Jul; max 60 INWR 20 Aug.

Canvasback: BWWT 16 Jun, 13 Jul; 8 Aug (DBea), rare in summer.

Redhead: 2 TWMA 3 Jun; 4 INWR 8 Jun; 3 Canadaway Creek WMA CHAU 23 Aug (GV), unusual loc for date; only reports.

Ring-necked Duck: INWR 8 Jun; only report.

Lesser Scaup: 2, 1 BWWT 16 Jun, 19 Jul (DBea); only report.

Common Merganser: 3 + 11 yg INWR 10 Jun (TS), unusual breeding location; max 36 Buffalo NR 21 Aug.

Red-breasted Merganser: 4 Olcott NIAG 1 Jun; FMCSP, 2 Wilson NIAG 10 Jun; Hanover CHAU 13 Jun; max 18 LBSP 29 Aug.

Ruddy Duck: 6 Middleport NIAG 1 Jun; Tift NP 2 Jun; 6, 4 INWR 7 Jun, 1 Aug; 9, 20, 12 BWWT 16 Jun, 13 Jul, 18 Aug, regular summer location but reduced numbers in recent years.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 19, 34 INWR 19 Jul, 20 Aug (CM).

Horned Grebe: BWWT 16 Jun (DBea); only report.

Common Nighthawk: Caneadea ALLE 1 Jun; Newstead ERIE 7 Jun; Boston ERIE 11 Jun; 2 Jamestown CHAU 19 Aug; INWR 25 Aug; 3 Tonawanda ERIE 26 Aug; max 5 TWMA 31 Aug.

RAILS-LARIDS

Virginia Rail: 1-3 CSWMA thru; 1-3 BMAC thru; Ischua CATT 11 Aug (JR); 2 Hanging

Bog WMA ALLE 26 Aug; only reports away from INWR.

Sora: BWWT 16 Jun; GHSP 1 Jul; BMAC 10 Aug; only reports away from INWR.

Common Gallinule: 35 TWMA 15 Jul; max 36, 42 INWR 20 Jul, 20 Aug.

American Coot: Tift NP 3 Jun, 16 Aug; TBNP 6 Jun, 20 Jul; max 24 INWR 20 Jun.

Sandhill Crane: 3 Randolph CHAU 8 Jun; 2, 5 INWR 9 Jun, 30 Aug; 3 OOWMA 20 Aug; no direct evidence of breeding this year but may have occurred around INWR again.

BLACK-NECKED STILT: Frog Island WMA NR ERIE 19 Jun (PL ph!), not refund; 3rd regional record.

American Avocet: 1, 2 WoBSP 30 Jul, 28 Aug (JSa, SK); only reports.

Black-bellied Plover: BufH 2 Jun; last Somerset NIAG 5 Jun; only reports.

American Golden-Plover: arr Attica WYOM 31 Aug.

Semipalmated Plover: last 2 Wilson NIAG 8 Jun; arr Somerset NIAG 18 Jul.

Upland Sandpiper: 2 TRWMA 11 Jun; Buffalo ERIE 12 Aug (PY), nocturnal flight call; only reports.

Whimbrel: last BufH 1 Jun (SB); arr Wilson NIAG 17 Jul (WD); only reports.

Ruddy Turnstone: 5 BufH, 3 Wilson NIAG 2 Jun; last BufH 6 Jun; arr PB 20 Jul; BufH 21-28 Aug.

Red Knot: DH 3 Jun (GV); only report.

Stilt Sandpiper: arr 2 Porter NIAG 17 Jul; OOWMA 18, 26 Aug; INWR 29 Aug; only reports.

Sanderling: las BufH 2 Jun; arr Olcott NIAG 31 Jul; 22 WoBSP 29 Aug; max 24 BufH, 13 Barcelona CHAU 31 Aug.

Dunlin: last Somerset NIAG 10 Jun.

Least Sandpiper: last Eden ERIE, Wilson NIAG 2 Jun; arr Buffalo ERIE 1 Jul; max 36 Wilson NIAG 17 Jul.

White-rumped Sandpiper: BufH 2 Jun (SB); last 1, 1 Somerset NIAG 5, 10 Jun (JSt).

Pectoral Sandpiper: arr Wilson NIAG 19 Jul; max 11 OOWMA 20 Aug.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 135, last 13 Wilson NIAG 2, 6 Jun (WD); arr Somerset NIAG 18 Jul; 23 OOWMA 22 Aug.

Short-billed Dowitcher: arr 2 Hartland NIAG 11 Jul; 3 Wilson NIAG 18 Jul; 1, 4, 7 INWR 25 Jul, 20, 24 Aug.

Wilson's Snipe: max 22 OOWMA 27 Aug.

Solitary Sandpiper: arr Albion ORLE 5 Jul; max 8 OOWMA 16 Aug.

Lesser Yellowlegs: arr 2 INWR 13 Jul; max 37 OOWMA 16 Aug.

Willet: last Wilson NIAG 2 Jun (WD); arr Hanover CHAU 19 Jul (GV); max 8 TBNP 18 Aug (SB, SS); 3 WoBSP 18 Aug (SB, TJM).

Greater Yellowlegs: arr 2 LBSP 14 Jul; max 17 INWR 20 Aug.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 48 Wilson NIAG 10 Aug.

Laughing Gull: WoBSP 19 Aug (DD!), not refund.

"THAYER'S" ICELAND GULL: ad PB 14 Jun (JSt ph!), first summer record of Thayer's.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Olcott NIAG 9 Jun (WD, JSt, RW); Wilson NIAG 10, 28 Jun (WD); early summer reports becoming more regular.

Glaucous Gull: WoBSP 1 Jun (SB ph!), late.

Caspian Tern: max 75 BuFH 1 Jun; Ischua CATT 16 Aug, unusual location; 73 Olcott NIAG 12 Aug.

Black Tern: max 40 INWR 24 Jun, good breeding conditions at this location.

Common Tern: 27 Wilson NIAG 22 Aug, highest count away from NR.

Forster's Tern: Wilson NIAG 17 Jul (WD); only report.

LOONS-FALCONS

Common Loon: 2 Somerset NIAG 8 Jun; NF 29 Jun, 12 Jul; 3, 1 Ellery Chaul 30 Jun, 14 Aug; LBSP 1 Jul; 3 Mayville CHAU 7 Jul; Busti CHAU 20 Jul; N Collins ERIE 8 Aug (SB), unusual location for date.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 750 DH 15 Aug.

American White Pelican: INWR 3 Jun (CM); BuFH 23 Jun – 12 Jul (HM, mob); followed increased spring presence.

American Bittern: BMAC 15 Jun; max 3 INWR 1 Aug; Tiff NP 23 Aug.

Least Bittern: 2, 2, 3 Tiff NP 2 Jun, 8 Jul, 1 Aug; BeSP 5 Jun; max 3, 4, 7 TBNP 23 Jun, 14 Jul, 31 Aug (SS); 3 TWMA 27 Jun; 1, 2, 2 INWR 27 Jun, 20 Jul, 1 Aug.

Great Blue Heron: max 176 INWR 20 Aug.

Great Egret: 40 Tonawanda NR 4 Jul; max 50, 143 INWR 18 Jul, 20 Aug; 102 TWMA 31 Aug.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 17 INWR 1 Aug, good count away from NR.

Black Vulture: 3, 3, 1 Lewiston NIAG 12 Jun, 27 Jul, 18 Aug; regular at this location in recent years.

Osprey: increasing.

Bald Eagle: increasing.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Wilson NIAG 1 Jun; INWR 8, 22 Jun; Tiff NP 15 Jun; 4 FLC 25 Jul, 5 Aug; E Otto CATT 16 Aug; 4 Olcott NIAG 16 Aug; DH 24 Aug; decent showing.

Merlin: 2 nests, 4 ad + 2 yg Buffalo ERIE 8 Jun, 30 Jul (PY); cont nesting in the city.

Peregrine Falcon: Porter NIAG 17 Jul; juv Wilson NIAG 18 Aug; only reports away from nesting locations.

FLYCATCHERS-SNOW BUNTING

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: WoBSP 1 Jun; last Alfred ALLE 5 Jun; arr EvSP 14 Aug; five other Aug reports.

Acadian Flycatcher: LBSP 2 Jul (DBem), more evidence of expansion in NIAG, ORLE; last INWR 31 Aug (DBem), recorded.

Philadelphia Vireo: arr Lockport NIAG 28 Aug.

Fish Crow: 8 Olcott NIAG 9 Jun (JSt, RW, WD); new Reg maximum.

Common Raven: increasing.

Purple Martin: 410 Batavia GENE 7 Jul; max 8000, 3000 BuSP 28, 30 Aug (AH, CR), coming to roost at Grass Island before dusk.

Tree Swallow: 100 TBNP 24 Aug; max 300 BWWTP 31 Aug.

Cliff Swallow: max 50 Unity I NR 12 Jul.

Barn Swallow: max 125 INWR 1 Aug.

Sedge Wren: N Harmony CHAU 22 Jul (KV); only report.

Swainson's Thrush: 1, 3 AISP 1, 22 Jun; last Buffalo ERIE 5 Jun.

Cedar Waxwing: 779 GHSP, 750 LBSP 1 Jun (JSt, RW, DBem), lakeshore migration.

Purple Finch: 10 Fredonia CHAU 13 Aug; max 15 Orchard Park ERIE 13, 20 Aug.

Pine Siskin: Attica WYOM 1 Jun; 3 Sprague Brook CP 4 Jun; Forestville CHAU 30 Jun; Orchard Park ERIE 30 Jun – 2 Jul, 5, 11 Aug (MZ), probably same bird thru.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS-CARDINALIDS

Clay-colored Sparrow: 2, 1, 1 Krull CP NIAG 8 Jun, 1 Jul, 26 Aug; 1, 1 John White

WMA GENE 12 Jun, 23 Jul; Carlton ORLE 16 Jun; Bond L CP NIAG 29 Jun, new summer location.

Vesper Sparrow: Sheridan CHAU 2 Jun; 2 Carlton Hill MUA WYOM 5 Jun; INWR 25 Jul; only reports.

Grasshopper Sparrow: 1, 1, 2 Buffalo ERIE 3, 4, 27 Jun (SS); 3, 1, 1 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 9 Jun, 1 Jul, 1 Aug; 2 Wilson NIAG 13 Jun; max 6 TRWMA 13 Jun; John White WMA GENE 23 Jul.

Nelson's Sparrow: TBNP 4 Jun (TD ph!), rare spring record.

White-throated Sparrow: max 4 Alfred ALLE 5 Jun.

White-crowned Sparrow: Newfane NIAG 2 Jun (JSt); Wilson NIAG 15 Jun (WD); LBSP 16 Jul (DBem), rare in summer.

Bobolink: max 48 Charlotte CHAU 8 Jun; 26 TWMA 31 Aug.

Orchard Oriole: INWR 9 Jun; 2 Franklinville CATT 12 Jun; LBSP 17 Jun; 2 AISP 21 Jun; Westfield CHAU 24 Jun; 2 WoBSP 17 Aug; 2 Krull CP NIAG 26 Aug; Attica WYOM 31 Aug; apparent increase throughout Reg.

Louisiana Waterthrush: reported from five locations.

Northern Waterthrush: arr TBNP 15 Aug.

Golden-winged Warbler: 2 Hanging Bog WMA ALLE 31 Aug (DC, KS); only report.

Black-and-white Warbler: 2 AISP 1 Jun; Alma ALLE 15 Jun; Carrollton CATT 14 Jul; arr INWR 16 Aug.

Prothonotary Warbler: 3 INWR 17 Jun (DC, DBea), regular breeding location.

Tennessee Warbler: arr 2 BeSP 23 Aug.

Nashville Warbler: Alfred ALLE 1 Jun; 2 Sprague Brook CP ERIE 4 Jun; last PG 6 Jun; arr TBNP 22 Aug.

Cape May Warbler: arr Wilson NIAG 31 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: 3 AISP 22 Jun (DC); 2, 2, 1 INWR 25 Jun, 14 Jul, 3 Aug; known breeding locations.

Northern Parula: 2 AISP 4 Jun; Hanging Bog WMA ALLE 9 Jun; Carrollton CATT 13 Jul; arr Lockport NIAG 31 Aug.

Magnolia Warbler: arr OOWMA 22 Aug.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr 2 Lockport NIAG, Hanging Bog WMA ALLE 31 Aug.

Blackburnian Warbler: arr 3 BeSP 23 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: last EvSP 5 Jun.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Franklin Gulf CP ERIE 22 Jun (JP), interesting location.

Pine Warbler: arr 2 Tift NP 26 Aug.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Tift NP 21 Jun; Grand Island ERIE 23 Jun, interesting locations for dates; arr 6 Tift NP 16 Aug.

Black-throated Green Warbler: arr TBNP 24 Aug.

Canada Warbler: arr TBNP 18 Aug.

Wilson's Warbler: last GHSP 1 Jun; arr WTSP 29 Aug.