

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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The summer began cool and wet but warmed up and dried out by mid-summer. Watertown's mean June temperature was 62.3° F, 1.2° below normal, and the 4.26" of rain that fell that month was 2.1" above normal, making for the second consecutive very wet month. Temperatures warmed considerably in July, with a mean temperature of 71.3° that was 2.7° above normal. August was more seasonable, as Watertown's mean temperature of 66.8° was within 0.3° of normal. July rainfall was about 0.6" below normal but August saw 0.6" more rain than usual.

The most significant weather-related event of the season was the extremely high water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River that

resulted from the spring's record rainfall in the western Great Lakes. Shorebird habitat was essentially nonexistent along these bodies of water, and many nesting islands were extensively flooded, limiting nesting sites for colonial water birds. Nest counts for several species were lower than in recent years, perhaps most notably for Caspian Tern at Little Galloo Island, where the 1,715 nests counted by DEC biologists was 57% fewer than the record high count from 2018. Common Terns had recently recolonized Little Galloo Island, but no nests were found this year. However, one Common Tern nest on a log in the Lakeview Wildlife Management Area marsh fledged three chicks. The unusual location of this nest likely reflects the scarcity of traditional nest sites for this species.

Northbound migrants passed through during the first few days of June in numbers that seemed unusually high. Two flocks of Brant totaling about 100 individuals passed over Butterfield Lake and Canton on 2 June. On that same day 22 Blackpoll Warblers were at Little Sucker Brook Park. Other typically late migrants, such as Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and Tennessee and Wilson's Warblers were well reported during early June. Many of these species were conspicuous to about 6 June.

Waterfowl numbers were mostly unexceptional, but the only true rarity of the season was a **Black-bellied Whistling-Duck** Nick Leone found in Frenchman's Bay in the town of Clayton on 17 June. Unfortunately this flashy duck did not stick around for others to see it. Trumpeter Swans continued their gradual expansion in the Region, with sightings from six locations, although nesting was not confirmed at any new sites. Blue-winged Teal continue to be scarce during the summer and certainly seem to be harder to find during this season than they were a decade or so ago. An adult female Common Goldeneye at Upper and Lower Lakes WMA in early July was a surprise, but was not found after mid-July and was assumed to be moving. It is unclear whether a juvenile of the same species at Murray Island during late August was from a local breeding attempt or was an early arrival from farther north.

Very few shorebirds sightings came from the Lake Ontario shoreline, not surprising given the extremely high water levels there. Nearly all of the season's migrant shorebird reports came from Perch River WMA, where one pool was lowered for construction and briefly had suitable habitat before the exposed mud dried out, or from Wilson Hill WMA and nearby areas along the St. Lawrence River. Often this stretch of river, between the Iroquois and Moses-Saunders Dams, can be good for shorebirds in late summer when increased power generation results in lower water levels. This year the river was not lowered as much as usual, and when it was, surprisingly few shorebirds appeared. Probably the most noteworthy shorebird sightings were of an early Dunlin at Perch River on 14 August and an American Golden-Plover on a lawn west of Ogdensburg on 29 August. Overall it was the poorest summer for shorebirds in at least five years.

Several grassland birds of conservation concern continue to hang on the in the Region. Upland Sandpipers were at Fort Drum and three other locations in northwest Jefferson County, about typical for the past decade. A total of 13 Henslow's Sparrows were reported at Chaumont Barrens, Perch River WMA, and Fort Drum in just about the only locations this increasingly rare species has been found over the past 4-5 years. A Short-eared Owl at Fort Drum was in the same location that a pair nested in 2018, but it was not seen after early July and nesting was not confirmed. It was a good year for Sedge Wrens with at least 30 individuals at eight locations, the largest number occurring on Fort Drum.

Many birders visit southeastern St. Lawrence County during the summer to search of boreal birds, with Massawepie Mire representing the biggest draw. Despite numerous visitors no Spruce Grouse were detected this summer, which was a little surprising because reports of this rare breeder have increased at Massawepie over the last couple of years. The five Boreal Chickadees Shelley Rutkin and Derek Hudgins found in Piercefield were the only ones reported all summer, which was not surprising as Boreals have been increasingly difficult to find in St. Lawrence County for quite some time. Red Crossbills apparently nested at Massawepie Mire and the Horseshoe Lake area but were not found elsewhere.

Thanks to eBird the number of observers reporting in Region 6 has been steadily increasing for several years and seemed to reach a new high this year, so it was a bit surprising that only 199 species were documented for the lowest summer total since 2010. A general lack of shorebirds contributed to this low species tally and was a major disappointment generally. Clearly the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was the greatest rarity found this season, but as so often happens in Region 6, did not stick around for anybody to see it, another disappointment.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFWMA – Ashland Flats WMA; **BI** – Barnhart I, T Massena, STLA; **CB** – Chaumont Barrens Preserve; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Reservation, JEFF & LEWI; **ICNC** – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton, STLA; **IRL** – Indian River Lakes; **JEFF** – Jefferson County; **KPSP** – Kring Pt SP; **LBSF** – Lonesome Bay State Forest, T Hammond; **LGI** – Little Galloo I; **LPd** – Leanoard Pd trail T Colton; **MM** – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, STLA; **PRWMA** – Perch Ri WMA, JEFF; **RRT** – Remington Recreation Trail, T Canton; **SBSP** – Southwick Beach SP; **SH** – Sackett’s Harbor; **SLR** – St. Lawrence Ri; **SLWG** – St. Lawrence Grassland and Wetland Management District; **STLA** – St. Lawrence County; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; **WHWMA** – Wilson Hill WMA; **WISP** – Wellesley I SP; **WP** – Whalen P, T Louisville.

WATERFOWL-HUMMINGBIRDS

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK:

T Clayton 17 Jun (NL) not seen again.

Snow Goose: T Henderson 30 Jul (JC) only report.

Brant: LSBP 2 Jun; max 70 RRT 2 June; 30 Butterfield L 2 Jun; last reports; high for Jun.

Mute Swan: max 7 WISP 23 Jun.

Trumpeter Swan: up to 10/day PRWMA thru; 2 WHWMA 2 Jun; 8 T Alexandria 16 Jun; max 11 ULLWMA 10 Jul; 2 T Lisbon 25 Aug; 2 Dexter Marsh 29 Aug.

Wood Duck: max 660 PRWMA 17 Aug (JB).

Blue-winged Teal: 3 reports PRWMA Jun; AFWMA & T Hammond 9 Jun; only reports before mid July; max 185 PRWMA 24 Aug.

Northern Shoveler: AFWMA 9 Jun & T Clayton 8 Jul only reports before Aug; max 3 PRWMA 17 Aug thru.

Gadwall: 5 BI 11 Jul; PRWMA 24 Aug; only reports.

American Wigeon: 2 PRWMA 17 Aug; WHWMA 25 Aug; only reports.

American Black Duck: max 9 Lowe’s Lake 8 Jul.

Green-winged Teal: none before Aug; max 16 PRWMA 17 Aug, WHWMA & WP 25 Aug.

Ring-necked Duck: max 76 ULLWMA 13 Aug.

Common Goldeneye: ad f ULLWMA 5-10 Jul (JB); juv Murray I 23 Aug (HM, phl).

Common Merganser: max 17 (f w 16 juv) Murray I 16 Jul;

Red-breasted Merganser: WHWMA 25 Aug (BB) only report.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 36 PRWMA 19 Aug.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 22 reports from 14 locations; max 3 ICNC 1 Jun & LBSF 14 Jul.

Black-billed Cuckoo: about 70 reported from 43 locations.

Common Nighthawk: Star L T Fine 9 Jun (DN) & SBSP 12 Jun (DC) only Jun or Jul reports away from FD area where still regular breeder; breeding season max 12 FD 17 Jun; Natural Bridge T Wilna 29 Jun & T Leray 1 Jul near FD boundary; migrants arr T Carthage 15 Aug; max 28 T Watertown 28 Aug.

Eastern Whip-poor-will: max 45 FD 17 Jun; multiple counts also from CB, T Lyme, IRL area.

RAILS-LARIDS

Virginia Rail: 14 reports from 11 locations.

Sora: 6 reports from 4 locations.

Common Gallinule: max 49 PRWMA 24 Aug (JB).

Sandhill Crane: 2 T Lisbon 13 Jul only report.

Black-bellied Plover: 3 T Dekalb 5 Jun; PRWMA 6 & 22 Aug.

American Golden-Plover: T Oswegatchie 29 Aug (BS) only report.

Semipalmated Plover: max 13 PRWMA 6 Aug.

Killdeer: max 200 PRWMA 14 Aug.

Upland Sandpiper: CB 7 Jun (GD); T Clayton 6 Jul (DD), 2 ad 4 juv 2 T Lyme 1 Jul (LE) where 2 still present 10 Aug (SK); only reports away from FD where 6+ terr (JB).

Sanderling: 5 SBSP 24 Aug only report.

Dunlin: WHWMA 2 Jun; PRWMA 14 Aug (AK, KB, KR, early).

Least Sandpiper: max 50 PRWMA 14 Aug.

Pectoral Sandpiper: max 3 PRWMA 17 Aug.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: 13 WHWMA 2 Jun last northbound migrants; max 22 PRWMA 4 Aug.
Short-billed Dowitcher: max 3 PRWMA 17-19 Aug; WHWMA 25 Aug only other report.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr Cranberry L 12 Jul.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 25 PRWMA 15 Aug.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 10 PRWMA 17 Aug.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 8 SH 9 Aug.
Herring Gull: max 996 nests LGI down from 1159 in 2018.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 5 WP 18 Aug.
Caspian Tern: 1715 nests LGI far below previous year's record high (*intro*).
Black Tern: 7 Wilson Bay marsh 9 Jun; 2 SBSP 12 Jun; up to 10/day WHWMA Jun where rare in recent years; 31 ULLWMA 10 Jul; up to 50/day PRWMA Jun & Jul; 2 Swamp Rd T Lyme 18 Jul; Grant Rd CV 27 Jul; 2 AFWMA 11 Aug.
Common Tern: nest on log LWMA 5 Jul fledged 3 y; no nests LGI for first time since at least 2013; 1070 nests SLR lowest since 2010.

LOONS-FALCONS

Double-crested Cormorant: 3051 nests LGI 12 Jun highest since 2004; record high counts on 8 islands E L Ontario & STLA.
American Bittern: max 6 FD 7 Jun.
Least Bittern: 13 reports from 8 locations; max 3 PRWMA 18 Jul.
Great Egret: max 16 Bombay SF 4 Aug & WP 18 Aug.
Green Heron: max 10 Perch L 12 Aug.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: max 126 nests Murphy I record high.
Northern Harrier: about 50 reports from 21 locations.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 13 reports.
Cooper's Hawk: only 7 reports from 6 locations low.
Northern Goshawk: LPd 21 Jun & MM 7 Jul.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 8 reports IRL Jun & Jul; only 7 reports elsewhere.
Eastern Screech-Owl: T Clayton 8 Jun; FD 17 Jun; only reports.
Short-eared Owl: FD thru 3 Jul only report.

Red-headed Woodpecker: max 11 FD 22 Aug; T Pinckney 28 Jun (GS) & 2 T Champion feeder 12 Aug (SM) only other reports.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: recent expansion into Adirondacks including Cranberry L 6 Jun (NG) & Massawepie L 23 Aug (NK).

Merlin: reports from 25 locations.

Peregrine Falcon: FD 1 Jun prob migrating; MM 24 Aug unusual location.

FLYCATCHERS-SNOW BUNTING

Olive-sided Flycatcher: RRT 2 Jun; PRWMA 4 Jun; T Pinckney 11 Jun; only reports outside Adirondacks.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: northbound migrants outside Adirondacks include 5 RRT 2 Jun, FD 3 & 4 Jun; max 8 MM 7 Jun likely breeders; southbound migrants include FD 26 Aug & RRT 31 Aug.

Alder Flycatcher: max 26 FD 6 Jun.

Willow Flycatcher: max 27 FD 23 Jun.

Philadelphia Vireo: 2 CV (DM) & 2 T Canton (RM) 2 Jun likely late northbound migrants; Crooked Creek Preserve 22 Jun (BB) & FD 23 Jun (JB) unusual locations; T Croghan 10 Aug (MR) likely early southbound migrant.

Canada Jay: max 8 MM 7 Jul.

Tree Swallow: numbers generally low but high counts 935 FD 16 Jul & 550 ULLWMA 1 Aug.

Bank Swallow: 110 FD 4 Jul.

Cliff Swallow: max 200 BI 11 Jul.

Boreal Chickadee: max 5 T Piercefield 15 Aug.

Sedge Wren: T Waddington 2 Jun (JB); French Creek WMA 22 Jun (GS); 1 Judson St Rd T Canton 30 Jun increased to 6 by 9 Jul (JB, BD); max 13 FD 1 Jul; Bevins Rd T Clayton 13 Jul (KR); 2 SLWG 22 Jul (JB); PRWMA 9 Jul (MM) where 2 18 Jul (GB); 2 AFWMA Jul.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: ICNC 10 Jul; Alcoa Ponds T Massena 7 Aug; PRWMA 15 Aug; only reports away from L Ontario shore.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 2 T Clayton 11 Aug only report away from Adirondacks or Tug Hill.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: uo to 4/day Cranberry L thru; Hitchens Pd 7 Jul; T Pinckney 25-30 Aug only report outside Adirondacks.

Swainson's Thrush: southbound migrant arr FD 19 Aug.

Northern Mockingbird: T Canton 2 Jun; T Hounsfield 7 Jul; KPSP 27 Jun; T Croghan 3 Aug; scarce FD where usually regular breeder.

House Finch: only 16 reports unusually scarce

Purple Finch: max 13 T Fine 8 Jun.

Red Crossbill: 10 reports 1-2 each from 5 locations in extreme SE STLA; no other reports.

Pine Siskin: Cranberry L 13 & 24 Jun only reports.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS- CARDINALIDS

Clay-colored Sparrow: Taylor Rd T Leray 6 Jun (SG); Swamp Rd T Lyme & CV 8 Jun-21 Jul (SK, mob); Holmes Rd T Leray 9 Jun (JB); max 16 FD 7 Jun.

Vesper Sparrow: PRWMA 30 Jun (AVK) & CV 2 Jul (DM) only reports away from FD; max 45 FD 21 Jun.

Grasshopper Sparrow: T Lyme 18 Jul; 6 reports 1-2 PRWMA 7 Jun -11 Aug; max 32 FD 29 Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: 2 CB 6 Jun (GD); up to 5/day FD Jun-Jul; max 6 PRWMA Jun-Jul.

Lincoln's Sparrow: max 6 MM 27 Jun & 7 Jul.

Orchard Oriole: T Philadelphia 7 Jun (FB); FD 12 Jun (JB); T Canton 14 Jul (JB); T Pinckney 4 Aug (GS); only reports.

Rusty Blackbird: 3 Cranberry L 16 Jun (NG); 2 Lowe's L 7 Jul (AB).

Louisiana Waterthrush: 2 Lake of the Woods 5 Aug (SM).

Golden-winged Warbler: several reports 6-9/day FD & IRL Jun.

Blue-winged Warbler: max 12 FD 5 Jun.

"Brewster's" Warbler: 9 FD Jun; 4 elsewhere.

"Lawrence's" Warbler: different locations FD 8 & 12 Jun.

Tennessee Warbler: last spring migrant FD 6 Jun; Tug Hill WMA 9 Aug (JH) local breeder?

Nashville Warbler: max 12 FD 20 Jun.

Mourning Warbler: max 8 FD 5 Jun.

Cape May Warbler: Tooley Pd Rd T Clare 24 Jun (AB) rare breeding season; southbound migrants arr RRT 18 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: max 5 LBSF 6 Jun & T Dekalb 9 Jul.

Bay-breasted Warbler: arr RRT 24 Aug.

Blackpoll Warbler: max 22 Little Sucker Brook Park 2 Jun high for Jun; FD & T Morristown 6 Jun last obvious northbound migrants; Low's Ridge, Upper Dam Trail 7 Jun last migrant or breeder?

Palm Warbler: max "Yellow" 14 MM 1 Jun; "Western" fall arr PRWMA 17 Aug.

Prairie Warbler: max 27 FD 21 Jun.

Canada Warbler: max 10 FD 16 Jun

Wilson's Warbler: last 2 spring migrants FD 6 Jun; southbound arr FD 19 Aug.

The cold wet weather of June finally gave way to more seasonal