

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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Watertown's mean monthly temperature for September was 59.6° F, almost exactly the long term mean for the month, and the 3.35" of precipitation that fell was within 0.4" of normal. October's mean temperature was 2.5° above normal, which wasn't as exceptional as the 7.8" of rain Watertown received, which was 4.2" above normal. November was much drier, with about half of normal precipitation, but was also very cold with a mean temperature of 32.0°, or 6.3° below normal. The arrival of cold weather was unusually abrupt this fall, when after a week-and-a-half of nights with low temperatures in the 20s and 30s, the mercury dropped to 8° on 12 November and -7° on 13 November, the latter a whopping 31° colder than average for the date. Below normal temperatures lasted the rest of the month, although there was only one additional night below zero.

A relatively warm October may have contributed to the presence of some passerines for a week or two after typical departure dates, but the sudden and extreme cold snap in mid-November surely had a dramatic impact on birds. Nearly all still water in the Region iced over early and virtually overnight, pushing waterfowl and waterbirds out of places where they often linger to late November or early December. Overall bird abundance seemed lower than usual during the latter half of November, especially for waterfowl and water birds.

For yet another autumn hardly any Snow Geese were reported passing through Region 6, and waterfowl numbers were generally unexceptional. For only the second year in the last decade no Eurasian Wigeon were reported, despite the presence of higher than usual wigeon numbers at Wilson Hill WMA, where Eurasian Wigeon is nearly annual. Scaup numbers were especially low, and the rafts of multiple thousands of mostly Greater Scaup that typically congregate in Black River Bay during the fall went unreported. Numbers of many water birds seemed uncharacteristically low, for instance maximum loon counts at several traditional gathering sites were much less than half of normal. One exception was

Horned Grebe, with a high count of **259** off El Dorado on 21 October, far more than is reported most seasons in Region 6.

Continuing very high water on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, and the lack of any lowered pools at the Region's Wildlife Management Areas, resulted in even fewer shorebirds than usual. Shorebirds were scarce even when extensive shorebird habitat was available, such as along the St. Lawrence River between the Iroquois and Moses-Saunders dams during periods of low water in September and October. Despite this general scarcity there were a few notable sightings, highlighted by a Regionally rare **Purple Sandpiper** at El Dorado on 25 October and three Red Phalaropes off Montario Point 2 November. A group of 14 American Golden-Plover Matthew Brown found at Lakeview WMA on 5 October was another highlight.

Certainly the most unusual bird of the fall was a **Black-headed Gull** Steve Kelling saw off Tibbetts Point on 4 November. Parasitic Jaegers were at El Dorado on 18 October and Sacketts Harbor on 1 November. Presumably jaegers occur in Region 6 more frequently than sparse records suggest, but are missed because few observers spend any time watching Lake Ontario in Jefferson County. Black Terns are rare anywhere in Region 6 after August, and sightings at Upper and Lower Lakes on 2 September and along the Black River in the town of Rutland on 3 November seem to be the first documented reports for the fall season since the 1980s, although this could well be a function of poor reporting rather than an absence of terns.

In terms of volume the songbird flight seemed about average to slightly below average, with a fairly steady but generally low volume passage of birds. All of the expected passerines were reported, mostly in low to average numbers, although a few species of boreal wood-warbler seemed a bit more common than usual, including Tennessee, Cape May, and Bay-breasted Warblers. Numbers of Philadelphia Vireo and Orange-crowned Warbler, two species that were unusually abundant during the fall of 2018, reverted to normal. Several species seemed to linger later than usual, including a very late Bay-breasted Warbler at Indian Creek Nature Center on 23 October. Late October also saw an unusually heavy sparrow flight, with the season's largest groups of Song Sparrows at a time when this species is usually declining rapidly, and a significant push of Vesper Sparrows.

There was a handful of irruptive finch reports, but overall little sign of a significant irruption. Flocks of Red Crossbills were known to be in the Adirondacks by September, but were only reported twice in southwestern St. Lawrence County and nowhere else in Region 6. Only five Pine Siskin reports and two single Common Redpolls illustrate the general scarcity of finches. Many birders were hoping for an echo of the previous year's terrific Evening Grosbeak flight, but one heard over Fort Drum on 8 October was the season's only report. Bohemian Waxwings also failed to show.

For the season I received reports of 219 species, three species below the average for the previous decade, but well below the record-high 238 species documented during fall 2018. Few species stood out as being particularly unusual,

with Black-headed Gull being the clear stand-out, but as is so often the case none of the season's more unusual birds was seen by anybody other than the original observer.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BI – Barnhart I, T Massena, STLA; **BRB** – Black River Bay; **CCSP** – Coles Creek SP; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **CWF** – Canton Wastewater Treatment Facility; **ED** – El Dorado Pres, T Ellensburg; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Reservation, JEFF & LEWI; **HH** – Henderson Harbor; **HP** – Hawkins Pt, T Massena; **ICNC** – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton, STLA; **JCSP** – Jacques Cartier SP; **JEFF** – Jefferson Co; **LEWI** – Lewis Co; **LPSP** – Long Point SP; **LWMA** – Lakeview WMA; **MM** – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, STLA; **MP** – Montario Pt, T Ellensburg; **OEC** – Oswegatchie Education Center, T Croghan; **PilPt** – Pillar Pt, JEFF; **PRWMA** – Perch Ri WMA, JEFF; **PtPen** – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme, JEFF; **RRT** – Remington Recreation Trail, T Canton; **SBSP** – Southwick Beach SP; **SH** – Sackett's Harbor; **SLR** – St. Lawrence Ri; **STLA** – St. Lawrence Co.; **TP** – Tibbetts Pt, T CV; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; **WBSP** – Westcott Beach SP; **WHWMA** – Wilson Hill WMA; **WISP** – Wellesley I SP; **WP** – Whalen P, T Louisville.

WATERFOWL-HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: single with Canada Geese WP 29 Sep only report before 19 Oct; max 70 WBSP 29 Nov; only 7 other reports mostly 1-3 each; very poor flight.
Brant: 8 reports between 18 Oct & 4 Nov; max 72 T Canton 2 Nov.
Cackling Goose: 4 Cranberry L T Ellensburg 18 Oct (DW, CW).
Mute Swan: max 12 BRB 1 Sep.
Trumpeter Swan: max 13 ULLWMA 6 Oct.
Tundra Swan: max 220 BRB 29 Nov.
Wood Duck: max 60 ULLWMA 27 Sep; no reports after 30 Oct.

Blue-winged Teal: max 360 PRWMA 14 Sep; last 2 PRWMA 2 Nov.
Northern Shoveler: max 8 WHWMA 14 Oct.
Gadwall: max 52 PRWMA 2 Nov.
American Wigeon: max 950 WHWMA 15 Oct.
Mallard: max 140 WHWMA 21 Sep.
American Black Duck: max 30 WHWMA 9 Nov.
Northern Pintail: max 55 CCSP 3 Nov.
Green-winged Teal: max 187 WHWMA 29 Sep.
Canvasback: WHWMA 9 Nov only report.
Redhead: max 1385 WHWMA 9 Nov.
Ring-necked Duck: max 3740 WHWMA 3 Nov.

Greater Scaup: max 175 LPSP 2 Nov low.
Lesser Scaup: max 35 PRWMA 2 Nov.
Surf Scoter: max 38 TP 3 Nov.
White-winged Scoter: max 18 WBSP 29 Nov.
Black Scoter: max 28 ED 19 Oct.
Long-tailed Duck: max 390 MP 29 Nov.
Bufflehead: widespread arr 19 Oct; max 62 PilPt 30 Nov.
Common Goldeneye: arr WHWMA 6 Oct; max 75 BI 16 Nov & HH 29 Nov.
Hooded Merganser: max 58 SLR T Massena 17 Nov.
Common Merganser: max 55 HP 30 Nov.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 140 TP 3 Nov.
Ruddy Duck: WHWMA 29 Sep; ULLWMA 23 Oct; BRB 20 Nov; only reports.
Spruce Grouse: max 4 MM 19 Oct; 3 other reports MM 12 Sep to 8 Dec.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 52 ULLWMA 19 Oct; last ULLWMA 11 Nov.
Horned Grebe: max 259 ED 21 Oct (JB).
Red-necked Grebe: arr OEC 7 Sep; max 5 JCSP 19 & 27 Oct.
Black-billed Cuckoo: last T Croghan 18 Sep.
Common Nighthawk: max 73 FD 3 Sep; last 2 T Canton 13 Sep.
Chimney Swift: last RRT 9 Sep.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: last T Pamela 24 Sep.

RAILS-LARIDS

Virginia Rail: ULLWMA 2 Sep only report.
Sora: last 2 ULLWMA 27 Sep.
Common Gallinule: max 25 PRWMA 14 Sep; last 2 LWMA 11 Oct.
American Coot: max 5 PRWMA 19 Oct.
Sandhill Crane: TP 3 Nov only report.
Black-bellied Plover: Clarkson Univ 16 Sep; LWMA 19 Oct; SBSP 28 Oct; only reports.
American Golden-Plover: BI 14 Sep; ULLWMA 27 Sep; max 14 LWMA 5 Oct (MB).
Semipalmated Plover: max 14 BI 14 Sep; last ED 21 Oct.
Killdeer: max 32 T Canton 1 Sep; last SLR T Massena 13 Oct.
Sanderling: max 10 LWMA 8 Oct; only 2 other reports.
Dunlin: singles LPSP 20 Oct & SBSP 2 Nov low.
Purple Sandpiper: ED 25 Oct (JB).
Baird's Sandpiper: WHWMA 11 Oct only report.
Least Sandpiper: max 4 WHWMA 1 Sep; only 4 other reports low.

White-rumped Sandpiper: WHWMA 11 Oct only report.
Pectoral Sandpiper: 4 WHWMA 1 Sep only report; low.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 3 T Canton 1 Sep; only 3 other reports.
American Woodcock: no reports after 1 Nov.
Wilson's Snipe: none reported!
Spotted Sandpiper: last 3 CWF 12 Sep.
Solitary Sandpiper: last over Clarkson Univ 16 Sep.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 9 WHWMA 21 Sep; last T Waddington 14 Oct.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 4 WP 21 Sep & PRWMA 20 Oct; last LPSP 29 Oct.
Red Phalarope: 3 MP 2 Nov (JB).
Parasitic Jaeger: ED 18 Oct (CW, DW); SHB 1 Nov (GS); only reports.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 31 SBSP 2 Nov.
BLACK-HEADED GULL (R6): TP 4 Nov (SK).
Herring Gull: max 2000 BI 19 Oct.
Iceland Gull: BI 9 Nov (JB) only report.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: SH 2 Nov; HP 16 & 30 Nov; only reports.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 350 HP 30 Nov.
Caspian Tern: last 2 WP 29 Sep.
Black Tern: ULLWMA 2 Sep (JB); last T Rutland 3 Sep (SM); rare after Aug.
Common Tern: last 4 CV 14 Sep.

LOONS-FALCONS

Red-throated Loon: SH 2 Nov; TP 3 Nov;
Common Loon: max 28 BI 19 Oct.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 1800 MP 18 Oct.
American Bittern: last LPSP 20 Oct.
Least Bittern: WP 1 Sep (BD, JB); last heard over OEC 7 Sep (JC).
Great Egret: max 5 WP 7 Sep; last T Canton 22 Sep.
Green Heron: last CV 6 Oct.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: CV 8 Sep only report.
Turkey Vulture: max 300 T Ogdensburg 4 Oct.
Osprey: last WHWMA 20 Oct.
Golden Eagle: ad T Massena 9 Nov.
Red-shouldered Hawk: last FD 18 Oct.
Broad-winged Hawk: last Soft Maple Res 22 Sep.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr WBSP 4 Oct.
Eastern Screech-Owl: 4 reports all NW JEFF.

Snowy Owl: arr T Hammond 12 Nov.
Short-eared Owl: 2 T Lowville 12 Nov (MR) only report.
Northern Saw-whet Owl: CV 20 Oct; FD 25 Oct; only reports.
Belted Kingfisher: scarce after 25 Oct.
Red-headed Woodpecker: ED 7 Sep (DD); LPSP 6 & 23 Nov (RB, SK).
Red-bellied Woodpecker: reports from 18 locations; still most common W JEFF but slowly increasing elsewhere.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: last Clarkson Univ 29 Oct.
Black-backed Woodpecker: max 2 MM 19 Oct.
Northern Flicker: scarce after 30 Oct.
American Kestrel: scarce away from NW JEFF after late Oct.
Merlin: at least 31 reports from 17 locations.
Peregrine Falcon: LWMA 6 Sep; L Ozonia 19 Sep; WHWMA 6 & 13 Oct; FD 8 Oct; only reports away from downtown Watertown and RMSP where resident.

FLYCATCHERS-SNOW BUNTING

Great Crested Flycatcher: last RRT 7 Sep.
Eastern Kingbird: last CV & PtPen 8 Sep.
Olive-sided Flycatcher: no reports.
Eastern Wood-Pewee: last RRT 29 Sep.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last T Croghan 25 Sep.
Alder Flycatcher: last T Croghan 10 Sep.
Willow Flycatcher: last ED & LWMA 7 Sep.
Least Flycatcher: last FD 26 Sep.
Eastern Phoebe: last FD 4 Nov.
Northern Shrike: arr T Hammond 10 Nov; different locations FD 14 & 18 Nov only other reports.
Yellow-throated Vireo: last WISP 22 Sep.
Blue-headed Vireo: last T Waddington 20 Oct.
Philadelphia Vireo: last FD 3 Oct.
Warbling Vireo: last FD 24 Sep.
Red-eyed Vireo: last ICNC 12 Oct.
Canada Jay: max 8 MM 19 Oct & 24 Nov.
Horned Lark: max 50 CV 3 Nov.
Tree Swallow: max 420 ULLWMA 27 Sep; last ED 18 Oct; fewer reports than expected.
Barn Swallow: max 40 LWMA 6 Sep; last T Clayton 7 Sep.
Tufted Titmouse: 9 locations mostly W JEFF.
House Wren: last FD 10 Oct.
Winter Wren: migrants moving by 16 Sep.
Marsh Wren: no reports after 19 Oct.
Carolina Wren: FD 19 Nov only report.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: Obvious migrants moving by 29 Sep.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr ED 7 Sep; max 43 FD 15 & 18 Oct; last StPt 29 Nov.
Eastern Bluebird: max 30 FD 15 Oct.
Veery: last LWMA 15 Sep.
Gray-cheeked Thrush: FD 24 Sep only report.
Swainson's Thrush: last T Canton 15 Oct.
Hermit Thrush: largely absent after 4 Nov; last T Croghan 30 Nov (MR).
Wood Thrush: last T FD 24 Sep.
American Robin: max 375 FD 30 Oct.
Gray Catbird: last FD 18 Oct.
Brown Thrasher: last FD 15 Oct.
Northern Mockingbird: T Colton 15 Nov (LD) only report.
Bohemian Waxwing: no reports.
Cedar Waxwing: max 105 FD 24 Sep.
American Pipit: max 14 FD 31 Oct.
Evening Grosbeak: over FD 8 Oct; only report.
House Finch: max 16 SH 26 Nov; few reports away from W JEFF.
Purple Finch: max 26 MM 19 Oct.
Common Redpoll: singles Clarkson Univ 8 Nov & CV 13 Nov only reports.
Red Crossbill: 6 Emporium Easement T Colton 5 Oct (BB); 7 MM 24 Nov (BD); only reports.
Pine Siskin: max 9 MM 19 Oct; singles from 4 other widely scattered locations.
Lapland Longspur: 2 arr FD 18 Oct.
Snow Bunting: arr ED 21 Oct.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS-CARDINALIDS

Eastern Towhee: last FD 4 Nov.
American Tree Sparrow: arr T Carthage 25 Oct.
Chipping Sparrow: last T Canton 18 Nov.
Field Sparrow: last FD 31 Oct.
Vesper Sparrow: max 46 FD 24 Sep; largely departed FD sandplain grasslands where breed by 23 Oct; up to 14/day FD old hayfield habitat where rare in summer 23-29 Oct; last FD 30 Oct.
Savannah Sparrow: last FD 29 Oct.
Fox Sparrow: arr FD 30 Sep; max 13 FD 7 Nov; last T Orleans & T Potsdam 13 Nov.
Song Sparrow: flock 65+ FD 23 Oct high for late Oct; scarce after 7 Nov.
Lincoln's Sparrow: last FD 24 Oct.
Swamp Sparrow: largely absent after 31 Oct.
White-throated Sparrow: max 95 FD 15 Oct.

White-crowned Sparrow: ar FD 23 Sep; max 6 PtPen 5 Oct & T Canton 13 Oct; last FD 29 Oct.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 105 FD 4 Nov.

Bobolink: last heard over RRT 13 Sep.

Eastern Meadowlark: last T Philadelphia 18 Nov.

Baltimore Oriole: last CV 4 Sep.

Red-winged Blackbird: few reports after 15 Nov.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 85 T Henderson 18 Oct.

Rusty Blackbird: arr Grand Lakes Reserve & ULLWMA 22 Sep; max 175 ICNC 5 Oct; last Lonesome Bay SF 10 Nov.

Common Grackle: max 800 WHWMA 19 Oct; no reports after 11 Nov.

Ovenbird: last T Colton 4 Oct.

Northern Waterthrush: last PtPen 14 Sep.

Golden-winged Warbler: last FD 3 Sep.

Blue-winged Warbler: last FD 16 Sep.

Black-and-white Warbler: last FD 23 Sep.

Tennessee Warbler: last FD 10 Sep.

Orange-crowned Warbler: 2 Alcoa Ponds T Massena 2 Oct; singles FD 3, 10 & 15 Oct; LWMA 11 Oct; only reports; far fewer than fall 2018.

Nashville Warbler: last RRT 15 Oct (JB); late.

Mourning Warbler: last heard over Clarkson Univ 3 Sep.

Common Yellowthroat: last FD 24 Oct.

American Redstart: last FD 30 Sep.

Cape May Warbler: last FD 3 Oct.

Northern Parula: last FD 18 Oct (JB); late.

Magnolia Warbler: last ED 5 Oct.

Bay-breasted Warbler: last ICNC 23 Oct (NP); late

Blackburnian Warbler: last FD 3 Oct.

Yellow Warbler: last Chaumont Bay 14 Sep.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: last FD 26 Sep.

Blackpoll Warbler: last FD 3 Oct.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: last T Waddington 11 Oct.

Palm Warbler: last FD 23 Oct.

Pine Warbler: max 55 FD 4 Oct; last FD 18 Oct.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 250 FD 3 Oct; last obvious migrants FD 4 Nov; 3 StPt 29 Nov probable overwintering birds.

Prairie Warbler: 3 Limerick Cedars Pres 8 Sep only report.

Black-throated Green Warbler: last FD 15 Oct.

Canada Warbler: last FD 23 Sep.

Wilson's Warbler: last FD 24 Sep.

Scarlet Tanager: last Grindstone I 28 Sep.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: female at T Champion feeder thru Nov (SM) only report after 30 Sep.

Indigo Bunting: last FD 3 Sep.