

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

Jeffrey S. Bolsinger

98 State Street, Canton NY 13617

jsbolsinger@yahoo.com

Summer was mostly warm, with mean monthly temperatures in Watertown exceeding long-term averages by 4.3° F for both June and August, but July's mean temperature was 1.8° below normal. Precipitation was the weather story of the summer, as a six-month dry spell ended abruptly with the start of frequent, heavy rain in late June, although it wasn't enough to keep June from being the sixth consecutive month with below normal precipitation. July and August were very wet, with 7.4" and 6.5" of rain, respectively, more than double the mean for the former month and nearly so for the latter month. By the end of the summer standing water was evident in many places that looked parched at the start of the season.

Summer sightings of Snow Goose and Brant have increased in recent years, so three reports of Snow Goose in late June and July and a single Brant on the St. Lawrence River on 11 June weren't terribly surprising. Trumpeter Swans continue to increase throughout the Region but especially at Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, where multiple nests were documented this year and last, and for the second year in a row double-digit counts of apparently non-breeding adults were routine. Through the first two years of Atlas 2020 Trumpeter Swan nesting has been confirmed in ten blocks in Region 6, up from two in Atlas 2000. Jane Hores photographed a female Common Goldeneye with four chicks off Murray Isle on the St. Lawrence River, immediately east of Picton Island where goldeneye broods were seen in 2020 and several prior years. Goldeneye are not known to nest anywhere else in Region 6. One each male Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Duck were on Perch Lake 19 July, but access restrictions prevented observers from regularly checking this site so it is not known whether these ducks were present for the entire season or represent nesting attempts.

A large outbreak of *Lymantria dispar*, the moth formerly known as Gypsy Moth but now waiting for a new common name, was apparent in oak woodlands on Fort Drum and in scattered patches of mostly oak woods elsewhere. Likely in response to this outbreak, Yellow-billed Cuckoos were unusually abundant throughout Region 6, and Black-billed Cuckoo numbers were high as well. On Fort Drum Red-headed Woodpeckers were observed eating *Lymantria* caterpillars

on several territories. Also noteworthy was that one pair of these Red-headed Woodpeckers still had a nestling on the late date of 30 August.

On 10 June Sandy Pudulka photographed a Sandhill Crane incubating eggs at Lakeview WMA, and pairs with colts were seen near the Lisbon Swamp on 12 July and at Upper and Lower Lakes WMA on 17 July. Family groups were at Perch River WMA in late July and Wilson Hill WMA in late August, but it is unclear where these cranes nested. Cranes have been suspected to nest in each of these locations for several years, but nesting has rarely been documented. A group of eight American Coots at Wilson Hill WMA in August was a high Regional count for summer, and single coots were also at Lakeview WMA and Perch River WMA.

Shorebird habitat on Lake Ontario was scarce because of high water levels, and nine Sanderling at Lakeview WMA was one of the few shorebird reports from the lake shore. Water was also high along the St. Lawrence River, including the stretch between the Iroquois Dam and Moses-Saunders Dam, where management typically results in low water and extensive mudflats by late August. The only location where shorebirds were reliably seen was the Stone Mills Pool at Perch River WMA, which was mostly dry, and where a variety of shorebirds were observed, highlights including a Stilt Sandpiper and at least two Baird's Sandpipers present through the last half of August.

On 10 June Connie Bond saw a Cattle Egret on Point Peninsula, the first summer sighting in many years. Great Egrets colonized the Murphy Islands on the St. Lawrence River during 2020, with at least nine nests this year, for the only known nesting site in Region 6. A large Black-crowned Night-Heron colony and growing numbers of Great Blue Herons also nest on the Murphy Islands, along with many Double-crested Cormorants despite cormorant nests having been removed last year. Unfortunately, I received no colonial waterbird count data this year.

Grassland birds continue to hold on in Jefferson County despite many threats. Nesting was confirmed for Upland Sandpiper in two atlas blocks at Fort Drum, and additional sightings came from Ashland Flats WMA and two sites in Clayton, about typical for recent years. Somewhat surprising was an adult Upland Sandpiper Bernie Carr found in Canton on 11 July, a rare breeding season find for St. Lawrence County. On 4 June Greg Dashnau found one Henslow's Sparrow in a field at Chaumont Barrens that had hosted multiple individuals for several years, but shortly after his visit The Nature Conservancy posted this area off-limits. Despite the presence of four singing males this field was looking too grown up for Henslow's Sparrow in 2020, so a decline to one male this year wouldn't be surprising. As usual, most Henslow's Sparrow reports came from Dog Hill Road at Perch River WMA, where up to five were present, and the only other report was from Fort Drum. About 15 Sedge Wrens were reported from ten locations, more than were expected early in the summer when most fields were extremely dry. Although a few small solar farms have been around for a year or two, development of new solar projects accelerated rapidly this summer, and although

clean energy development is certainly needed, these projects are concerning to local birders as many seem to be planned for some of the best remaining grassland bird habitat in Region 6.

Both crossbills were present again this summer, although breeding has yet to be confirmed in Region 6 for Atlas 2020. Most of the 18 Red Crossbill reports came from the northwest Adirondacks in St. Lawrence County, although Mandi Roggie recorded the season's maximum count of eight in the western Adirondack transition, and there was one report from the edge of the Tug Hill in Jefferson County. All four of the summer's White-winged Crossbill reports came during a ten-day period beginning 15 July, three reports from Massawepie Mire including a season-high four individuals on 23 July, and two calling birds heard flying over Fort Drum on 22 July. The season's only Pine Siskin was at a Norwood feeder on 18 June.

Many fewer birders seemed to visit the northwest Adirondacks this year than in 2020, at least based on eBird checklists, and some boreal species were not well documented. Spruce Grouse and Boreal Chickadee were entirely missed this season, and the latter seems to have disappeared from several locations where it was regular until recently. Probably the most thoroughly birded area in the northwest Adirondacks was around Wanakena. Bernie Carr, who birded the trails south of Wanakena regularly, found a number of interesting birds, chief among them a family group of Rusty Blackbirds on 22 June, a species that had become increasingly scarce as a breeder.

Among the few rarities this season was a **Prothonotary Warbler** Steve Kelling found in Cape Vincent on 21 Jun, the second Regional report this year. Jeremy Collison found the season's only Louisiana Waterthrush near the Oswegatchie River in Rossie on 2 June and a Hooded Warbler in Redfield, one of very few Lewis County records but not too surprising given the proximity of this bird to the well-documented distribution in Oswego County. Northern Parula, historically restricted as a breeder to the Adirondacks and Tug Hill, was noted in seven valley locations, further evidence that this species is expanding its summer range. Nearly two-thirds of the season's 40 Golden-winged Warbler reports were from St. Lawrence County, where only three of 28 Blue-winged Warbler reports came from. It certainly appears that the expansion of Blue-winged Warblers north of about Gouverneur is proceeding very slowly, somewhat surprising given that this species has outnumbered Golden-winged Warblers in much of Jefferson County for nearly a decade. Cerulean Warblers are typically very difficult to find after July, so a male singing on a Dekalb territory 22 August was unexpected.

The summer ended with the most active southbound songbird migration seen in several years. Bay-breasted Warblers were particularly abundant, with at least 60 seen on Fort Drum during the latter half of August, including 33 on 30 August. Tennessee and Cape May Warblers also came through in relatively high numbers. Perhaps the most notable migrant of the season was an early Gray-cheeked Thrush photographed by Haynes Miller on Murray Island on 15 August. Most of the

Region's Gray-cheeked Thrush detections are of nocturnal migrants heard overhead in September.

For the season I received reports of 208 species, slightly more than one species above the most recent 10-year average. There were no real standout rarities, and the few rare birds were only seen by one observer, so it is difficult to pick a clear bird of the season. That Sandhill Cranes were finally documented nesting in several locations where breeding has been suspected for years was among the season's high points. Among the disappointments was the relatively low level of participation in the Breeding Bird Atlas, and through two seasons only two blocks in Region 6 have been completed.

CONTRIBUTORS

Sue Adair, Alan Belford, Brian Berg, Jeff Biby, Jeff Bolsinger (JBo), Connie Bond, Richard & Marion Brouse, Carol Cady, Bernie Carr, Gregg Dashnau, Laura Desmond, Benjamin Dixon, Deborah Earl, Harold Ellingsen, Doug & Ann Emlin, Nick Gabry, Amber Gauthier, Rick Gould, Jane Graves, Elizabeth Frascatore, Lee Harper, Rebecca Heagle, Jane Hores, Jacob Hurlbut, Steve Kelling, Tom Langen, Nick Leone, Rachel Lewis, Nancy Loomis, Katie McNeil-Kiah, Irene Mazzocchi, Brian McAllister, Brian Miller, Daniel Miller, Haynes Miller, Steven Mix, Anne Moomey, Sandy Podulka, Bill Purcell, Asa Reed, Emily Reichert, Chris Rockwell, Mandi Roggie, Vanessa Rojas, Angie Ross, Chris Sayers, Ernest Scribner, Glenn Seeholzer, Gerry Smith, Raymond Spahn, Lynn Sprott, Ila Terry, Elizabeth Truskowski, Alison Van Keuren, Mary Beth Warburton, Tom & Eileen Wheeler, Michael Wickens.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADK – Adirondacks; **AFWMA** – Ashland Flats WMA; **BPWMA** – Black Pd WMA; **BRB** – Black River Bay; **CBr** – Chaumont Barrens Pres; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **ED** – El Dorado Pres, T Ellisburg; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Reservation, JEFF & LEWI; **JEFF** – Jefferson County; **LBSF** – Lonesome Bay State Forest, T Hammond; **LEWI** – Lewis County; **LWMA** – Lakeview WMA; **MM** – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, STLA; **PRWMA** – Perch Ri WMA, JEFF; **RLT** – Richard's Landing Trail, T Massena; **RMSP** – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; **RRT** – Remington Recreation Trail, T Canton; **RWSP** – Robert Wehle SP; **SLR** – St. Lawrence Ri; **STLA** – St. Lawrence County; **StPt** – Stony Pt, T Henderson, JEFF; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; **WHWMA** – Wilson Hill WMA; **WP** – Whalen P, T Louisville.

WATERFOWL – HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: SLR T Oswegatchie 29 Jun (ET); T Massena 8 Jul (JH); T Hounsfield 19 Jul (SA)
Brant: SLR T Oswegatchie 11 Jun (ET) late, only rep.
Mute Swan: max 14 SLR T Hammond 31 Aug.
Trumpeter Swan: max 19 ULLWMA 9 Jun; 2 T Dekalb 13 Jun & 2 French Creek WMA 28

Jun only reps away from well known PRWMA, ULLWMA & WHWMA breeding sites.

Wood Duck: max 55 LWMA 10 Jun (SP).

Blue-winged Teal: max 159 WP 28 Aug.

Northern Shoveler: AFWMA 4 Jun only rep before 10 Aug; max 2 WHWMA 28 Aug.

Gadwall: max 4 WHWMA 31 Jul & 15 Aug.

American Wigeon: ULLWMA 3 Jun & 2 PRWMA 18 Jul only reps before Aug; max 10 WHWMA 23 Aug.

Mallard: max 315 WHWMA 1 Aug.

American Black Duck: max 20 PRWMA 30 Jul.
Northern Pintail: WHWMA 1 Aug thru; RLT 15 Aug; only reps.

Green-winged Teal: max 153 WP 28 Aug.
Redhead: 3 WHWMA 15 Aug only rep.
Ring-necked Duck: max 38 ULLWMA 10 Aug incl 6 broods.
Lesser Scaup: ad m Perch L 19 Jul (JB, IM) only rep.
Common Goldeneye: f w 4 juv Murray I 9 Jun (J Hores) rare breeder SLR.
Hooded Merganser: max 15 WHWMA 28 Aug.
Common Merganser: max 27 RLT 28 Aug.
Red-breasted Merganser: 2 CV 19 Jun to 4 Jul; T Alexandria 15 Jul.
Ruddy Duck: ad m Perch L 19 Jul (JB, IM) only rep.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 49 ULLWMA 10 Aug.
Mourning Dove: max 81 T Henderson 23 Jul.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: reps of at least 34 ind from 30 locations, high; max 3 FD 9 Jun.
Black-billed Cuckoo: 80+ reps, good year.
Common Nighthawk: presumed northbound migrants BPWMA & T Canton 4 Jun, L Ozonia 6 Jun after which StPt 12 Jun & T Lowville 6 Jul only reps away from known FD nesting area until southbound migration; max 17 T Antwerp 18 Aug.
Eastern Whip-poor-will: max 20 CBr 3 Jun.
Chimney Swift: max 34 T Croghan 18 Jul.

RAILS – TROPICBIRDS

Virginia Rail: max 6 T Hermon 7 Aug.
Sora: max 3 T Hermon 24 Jun.
Common Gallinule: max 18 PRWMA 20 Aug.
American Coot: max 8 WHWMA 21-23 Aug; reps LWMA & PRWMA; more than usual for summer.
Sandhill Crane: nest with eggs LWMA 10 Jun (S. Podulka); pr w colt T Lisbon 12 Jul (JBo); pr w 2 colts ULLWMA 17 Jul (A. Ross); fam grps PRWMA 31 Jul, T Lisbon 13 Aug & WHWMA 16-28 Aug (mob).
Black-bellied Plover: max 2 PRWMA 17 Aug.
American Golden-Plover: WHWMA 20 Aug only rep.
Semipalmated Plover: max 30 PRWMA 24 Aug.

Killdeer: max 45 RLT 24 Aug.
Upland Sandpiper: multiple reps T Clayton 2-20 Jun; T Canton 11 Jul (B. Carr) rare rep away from W JEFF; AFWMA 16 Jun; breeding confirmed 2 blocks FD 29 Jun & 3 Jul.
Stilt Sandpiper: PRWMA 18 Aug thru.
Sanderling: max 9 LWMA 22 Aug.
Baird's Sandpiper: 1-2/day PRWMA 17 Aug thru; only reps.
Least Sandpiper: last northbound migrants 10 LWMA 6 Jun; southbound migrants arr ED 17 Jul; max 80 PRWMA 21 Aug.
Pectoral Sandpiper: max 8 PRWMA 17 Aug.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 27 RLT 28 Aug.
Short-billed Dowitcher: max 2 WHWMA 17 Jul.
American Woodcock: 5 peenting and displaying same FD field 29 Jul high for so late.
Wilson's Snipe: max 17 PRWMA 20 Aug.
Spotted Sandpiper: max 16 RLT 8 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr AFWMA 7 Jul.
Lesser Yellowlegs: max 64 PRWMA 17 Aug.
Greater Yellowlegs: max 15 PRWMA 31 Aug.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 4 LWMA 6 Jul.
Great Black-backed Gull: 8 reps 1-2 from 6 sites SLR & L Ontario.
Caspian Tern: no nest counts provided.
Black Tern: Sucker L T Fine 17 Aug obvious migrant, only rep away from PRWMA, ULLWMA, WHWMA where nest.
Common Tern: 593 nests SLR lowest in 10 yrs but productivity highest same period.

LOONS – PARAKEET

Common Loon: max 12 ad Chippewa Bay 18 Jul.
Double-crested Cormorant: no nest counts provided.
Least Bittern: reps from 15 locations more than usual.
Great Egret: at least 9 nests at recently colonized Murphy Islands; max 23 WHWMA 13 Aug.
Cattle Egret: Lisa Drive CV 10 Jun (C. Bond).
Green Heron: max 24 ULLWMA 7 Aug.
Turkey Vulture: max 32 T Canton 1 Jul.
Osprey: nesting confirmed in 61 atlas blocks through 2nd year Atlas 2020 compared to 30 blocks Atlas 2000; increase continues.
Northern Harrier: 110 reps from 35+ sites.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 22 reps.

Cooper's Hawk: 24 reps.

Northern Goshawk: T Potsdam 3 Jun (T. Langen).

Bald Eagle: nest confirmed 15 atlas blocks thru two years compared to 9 Atlas 2000.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 18 reports.

Eastern Screech-Owl: juv T Antwerp 23 Jul; 4 reps elsewhere JEFF & STLA.

Red-headed Woodpecker: failed nest CV Jun (N. Leone) only rep away from FD; max 15 FD 22 Jul; nestling still in FD nest 31 Aug (late).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: reps from 30 sites none N of central STLA.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 15 reps from 5 sites SE STLA.

American Kestrel: max 6 T Canton 9 Jul & CV 30 Aug.

Merlin: 80+ reps from 46 sites; increasing everywhere.

Peregrine Falcon: T Rutland 15 Jun; 1-2/day PRWMA 31 Jul thru; T Alexandria 4 Aug; only sites away from known or suspected nesting areas along SLR or in T Watertown.

FLYCATCHERS – SNOW BUNTING

Olive-sided Flycatcher: 31 reps from 12 ADK sites during nesting season; migrants T Croghan 20 Aug & T Brownville 24 Aug.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: last migrant outside ADK FD 16 Jun; max 4 MM 13 Jun low; fall migrants arr Murray I 17 Aug.

Philadelphia Vireo: last spring migrant Blake Sanctuary T Watertown 9 Jun; 2 Cranberry L 15 Jun & LPd 29 Jun only reps from likely nesting locations; fall arr T Croghan 19 Aug.

Canada Jay: max 3 MM multiple dates.

Horned Lark: no reps.

Purple Martin: max 20 Wilson Hill I 16 Jul.

Tree Swallow: max 100 PRWMA 27 Aug, numbers low in many areas.

Bank Swallow: max 40 LWMA 4 Jun but no reps from Sparrowhawk Point where many more likely present.

Cliff Swallow: max reported 12 RMSP 4 Jun & RLT 28 Aug in section SLR where hundreds typically nest.

Barn Swallow: max 127 PRWMA 31 Jul.

Boreal Chickadee: no reps; apparently disappeared from several previously reliable locations SE STLA.

Sedge Wren: 2 LWMA thru 3 Jul (mob); different locations T Clayton 9 & 16 Jun (C. Sayers, M. Wickens); different locations T Canton 6 Jul & 17-25 Jul (T. Langen, JBo); 2 PRWMA 8 Jul & 3 same location 19 Jul (S.

Mix, I. Mazzocchi, JBo); 2 T Hermon 11-26 Jul (JB); 2 near Hickory L SF 13 Jul (JBo); new arr FD 21 Jul & 2 Aug (JBo).

Carolina Wren: reps from 20 sites; more than in several years.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: max 3 LBSF 5 Jul; reps from 6 additional sites.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 3 MM 23 Jul (D. & S. Ceravolo); 10 reps T Fine unclear how many ind.

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Murray I 15 Aug (H. Miller, photos!) early.

Swainson's Thrush: migrants arr RRT 29 Aug.

Northern Mockingbird: 8 reports all W JEFF.

Red Crossbill: 18 reps mostly SE STLA thru; exceptions incl 5 Winona Experimental Forest 5 Jun & max 8 T Croghan 16 Jun.

White-winged Crossbill: 2 MM 15 Jul; 2 FD 22 Jul; max 4 MM 23 Jul; last MM 24 Jul.

Pine Siskin: T Norwood 18 Jun only rep.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS – CARDINALIDS

Clay-colored Sparrow: max 13 FD 12 Jul; reps from 4 additional sites NW JEFF.

Vesper Sparrow: max 39 FD 3 Jul.

Grasshopper Sparrow: max 21 FD 3 Jul; reps from 7 sites away from FD all W JEFF.

Henslow's Sparrow: FD 1 Jun to 28 Jul (JBo); CBr 4 Jun (G. Dashnau) just before site was posted off-limits; 1-5/day PRWMA 16 Jun thru (mob); only reps.

Lincoln's Sparrow: max 12 MM 23 Jul.

Dark-eyed Junco: Red L 26 Jul only Jun-Jul rep outside ADK or Tug Hill; FD 25 Aug presumed early migrant.

Orchard Oriole: T Hounsfield 5 Jun; CV 7 & 29 Jun; LWMA 10 & 13 Jun; T Henderson 19 Jun; only reps.

Rusty Blackbird: Janick's Landing Trail T Fine 16-30 Jun incl fam grp 22 Jun (B. Carr); Cranberry Lake Biological Station 26 Jun (N. Gabry); Dead Creek Flow T Fine 20 Jul (B. Carr); only reps.

Louisiana Waterthrush: T Rossie 2 Jun (J. Collison) only rep.

Golden-winged Warbler: at least 66 ind from about 40 sites of which 25 sites STLA.

Blue-winged Warbler: 28 reports of 65+ ind, all but 3 reps JEFF.

"Brewster's" Warbler: 13 reps of 18 ind.

"Lawrence's" Warbler: FD 29 Jul only rep.

Prothonotary Warbler: CV 27 Jun (SK) only rep.

Tennessee Warbler: arr Murray I 17 Aug; max 18 FD 23 Aug.

Hooded Warbler: Line Brook SF 12 Jun (J. Collison) among few LEWI records although adjacent to known breeding range in Oswego County; 4 reps nearby S JEFF.

Cape May Warbler: 2 arr Murray I 7 Aug early; max 18 FD 30 Aug.

Cerulean Warbler: max 7 LBSF 5 Jul (BB); singing male at traditional T Dekalb nesting site 22 Aug (JB) late.

Northern Parula: LBSF 1 Jun; 2 ICNC 7 Jun; singing m Murray I & PRWMA 19 Jul; different loc FD 28 Jul & 4 Aug & T West Turin 8 Aug; more than usual away from ADK & Tug Hill where common; *intro*.

Magnolia Warbler: several reports 1-2 CBr 15 Jun to 18 Jul; singing m PRWMA 19 Jul;

only reps away from ADK & Tug Hill before Aug.

Bay-breasted Warbler: 3 arr FD 18 Aug where 60 tallied by end month incl max 33 FD 30 Aug (JBo) high.

Blackpoll Warbler: last spring migrant T Rodman 10 J un; southbound migrants arr CBr 19 Aug.

Palm Warbler: max 30 MM 23 Jul; additional nesting reps from Cranberry Lake Biological Station & Low's Ridge Upper Dam trail; migrants arr WHWMA 21 Aug.

Prairie Warbler: max 28 FD 12 Jun; up to 6/day CBr and at least 5 nearby loc; RWSP 25 Jun & 1 Jul only rep away from traditional nesting areas.

Wilson's Warbler: arr ED 25 Aug.