

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON – FALL 2022

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Except for a few unusual events, the fall weather season was generally normal. September was about average temperature-wise; precipitation was variable with some dry areas across the state. October was dry throughout most of the state except in Regions 6 and 10. November was warmer than average throughout New York. The remnants of Hurricane *Nicole* on 10 November brought significant rainfall, and likely contributed to a wetter than average season throughout most of the state. The warm temperatures of Lake Erie and heavy winds combined to whip up a three day storm beginning 17 November that brought a record 88 inches of lake-effect snow to Buffalo, and the westerly winds delivered 50 inches of snow to the Watertown area on 18 November, significantly hampering both areas.

Sightings of fall waterfowl migrants were as expected in most Regions but lower than usual in eastern Lake Ontario where they gather in large rafts in Region 6. Greater White-fronted Goose was seen in all but two Regions, all in small numbers. Cackling Goose is annual throughout most of the state and Ross's Goose remains rare, but was reported from four Regions. A Pink-footed Goose was found 27 November in Suffolk County. Two Tufted Ducks, one on Lake Champlain and a female at Buffalo Harbor, were among the rarities, which also included Eurasian Wigeon in three Regions. The only Barrow's Goldeneye reported was at Pillar Point in Region 6. Unusual were a high count of 422 Black Scoters in Region 6, as well as a dozen Black Scoters found at two inland locations: Whitney Point Reservoir and on Plymouth Reservoir in Chenango County. Perhaps most unusual was a Mottled Duck observed for a month in Amityville, Region 10, no doubt the same bird that had briefly appeared there five months earlier, then rediscovered by its original finder!

Rufous Hummingbirds were seen in two Regions (1 and 10), and a very rare Calliope Hummingbird visited a feeder in Region 10. For the second year in a row, Adam Troyer found a Yellow Rail on his farm in Tioga County, this one on 15 October and seen and photographed by others the following day. But the most amazing story among the rails this fall was a Limpkin, a first state record, found on the Niagara River in Lewiston (Region 1) on 9 November. It remained in a small area feeding on snails until 18 November when it was captured in the face of the massive snow storm that struck the Region. It was later successfully released in North Carolina. A detailed account can be found in the article in *Kingbird* 73 (1): pp. 7-14. Two Neotropic Cormorants were found, one on each side of the state in Regions 1 and 9, both in October. Reports of Eared Grebe came from five Regions (1, 2, 3, 9, and 10), generally singles and those in the western part of the state were lingering birds.

Regions 1, 4, 6, and 7 reported a lackluster year for shorebird migrants; however, good shorebird habitat in Regions 2, 5, and 10 allowed local birders to find some exciting records. American Avocets were recorded in two upstate
The Kingbird 2023 June; 73 (2)

Regions with a maximum of three at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, as well as five from Region 10, a good showing. American Golden-Plovers have diminished in fall numbers in the past 30 years but two large flocks, 36 in Region 3 and 44 in Region 10, afforded encouraging news. Eight Hudsonian Godwits provided a new high for Region 6 at Sherwin Bay. Many observers were fortunate to see a Ruff found by Dave Kennedy in Wayne County, 20-22 October. This bird was always seen accompanied by a Lesser Yellowlegs; the pair would come and go together to a flooded area along Armitage Road. (See photo, p. 124)

Rare gulls were widely distributed throughout the state with the Niagara River providing the greatest number of species. Surprisingly, Black-legged Kittiwake was reported from seven upstate Regions, plus Region 10 where more regular. Sabine's Gulls were seen in the three Regions bordering Lake Ontario. Franklin's Gulls, rare in the eastern US, were recorded in Regions 1 and 3. The only reported Black-headed Gull was one that spent half a year on Jamaica Bay's East Pond (Region 10). Jaegers made a good showing upstate with many reports from Regions 2 and 5. A total of five Pomarine Jaegers were reported statewide. Data from Lake Michigan indicates that the median date of arrival of inland jaegers has become earlier (K. Brock, personal communications). Analysis of long term data from Hamlin Beach State Park from 1994 through 2017 supports this premise of earlier arrivals by approximately ten days over that period to a median date of 28 September (author, unpublished data).

Pelagic species are primarily seen off Region 10 from both land and pelagic trips. Leach's Storm-Petrel was seen off Montauk following Hurricane *Ian*. Brown Boobies were seen from four locations in Region 10. On a pelagic trip 17 October, an outstanding pelagic find was a Bermuda Petrel; also reported were a White-faced Storm-Petrel, Black-capped Petrels, and Audubon Shearwater.

There were some interesting reports from the hawk watch sites this season. Chestnut Ridge reported a whopping 19,460 raptors for the fall, the Franklin Mountain hawk flight was below average with several factors at play (see the Region 4 report in the previous issue), and Fire Island saw a decline in numbers for six regularly occurring species. Golden Eagles were seen in nine of the ten Regions, with most reports from the eastern side of the state. The highest count of 125 at Franklin Mountain was 30% below average. The only Swainson's Hawk was photographed at Braddock Bay, Region 2, on 19 September. A Mississippi Kite was seen over Prospect Park, Region 10, on 17 September. A total of 21 Northern Goshawks was reported from six Regions (2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9).

A Crested Caracara, first for Suffolk County and second for Long Island, was spotted at Montauk Point on 2 September, then seen on the privately owned Gardiner's Island, accessible only with permission and by boat, during September and October.

The Motus wildlife tracking stations, an international collaborative research project, uses radio telemetry to track passerines throughout their migration routes. David Wheeler's Region 5 report takes a detailed look at some of the interesting results from this technology. As an example, a Swainson's Thrush that passed Derby Hill in early October later completed a lengthy one-day flight from near

Atlanta, GA to the Yucatan peninsula, a distance of about 1,000 miles. The Motus station data, when added to the night-migration monitoring, will help to further our understanding of passerine migration.

It is difficult to get a measure of overall passerine migration but most reports indicated a normal fall season this year, except in Region 6 which where it was described as lackluster. Several authors reported warbler variety at about average. There were many reports of Evening Grosbeak, but winter finch numbers were light at best.

Connecticut Warbler, always difficult to detect, was found in eight Regions. A Worm-eating Warbler seen in Broome County, Region 4, on 1 September was the only report away from the more eastern and southern counties. Yellow-throated Warblers were found in four Regions (3, 5, 9, and 10). Region 10 recorded a remarkable series of very rare passerines, with highly varied origins in the Arctic, the Caribbean, western North American, and the Neotropics: Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Gray Kingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Cave Swallow, Townsend’s Solitaire, Northern Wheatear, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Townsend’s Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Western Tanager. Other noteworthy sightings include Townsend’s Warbler in Region 1, Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Northern Wheatear in Region 9, and Loggerhead Shrike seen in Regions 5 and 9.

There were many more noteworthy species mentioned by Regional Editors not covered in this summary, such as Black Vulture, Anhinga, White Ibis, White-winged Dove, Cave Swallow, Dickcissel, Nelson’s Sparrow, Bohemian Waxwing, Western Meadowlark, and others. Readers can peruse the bolded notations in the reports to find these species and others, and are encouraged to read all of these well written Regional summaries.

Each quarter we select the “bird of the season”, a win-less task given the diversity of the candidates and number of rare species. I am going to choose the Limpkin from Region 1 for several reasons. It was discovered by a local fishing captain, Frank Campbell, who realized it was unusual; it is a first state record; many people got to see it; it found enough food in a very small patch of brush to live for more than a week; and, by good fortune, escaped a killer snow storm through the efforts a number of concerned citizens.



REGIONAL REPORTS—FALL 2022, IN PART

Because of space limitations, and in an effort to improve the publication schedule of *The Kingbird*, the present issue has been expedited and includes the balance of the Fall 2022 Regional reports (several Regional reports for Fall 2022 were published in the last issue, Vol.73 No. 1.).



Much of the data in the Regional reports is sourced from eBird:
eBird Basic Dataset. Version: EBD_relNov-2022. Cornell Lab of Ornithology,
Ithaca, New York. Nov 2022.