

REGION 10 – MARINE

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The summer season was generally very cool. For all three months, average temperatures were at least 1.3° F below longterm averages: -1.3° (Jun), -2.5° (Jul), -2.0° (Aug). Rainfall was also far below average in June (-2.47”), but fairly close to longterm averages in July and August.

Reports of summering waterfowl throughout the Region could represent either lingerers or potential breeders. Clearly in the former category were a few Brant at various sites throughout the period; probably in the latter were Blue-winged Teal and some others at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. The most exciting news of breeding waterfowl actually dates back to May, but is reported in *The Kingbird* for the first time here. In a message posted to an RI/CT e-mail group, Glenn Williams wrote, “I was doing a gull nesting census on South Dumpling and Flat Hammock Islands on Wednesday, May 19 with one of Mike O’Connor’s Waterford High Oceanology classes and Project Oceanology. We had about 30 adult Common Eider, ~10 baby eider from three broods, and four active nests on

South Dumpling. I did this census at the same time last year and saw about 40 eider adults, but no nests or young.” These sites, close to Fishers Island, produced New York’s first nesting of this species as recently as 1999 (unconfirmed) and 2000 (*The Kingbird* 50:442; 51:583-585).

Red-throated Loon is much scarcer than Common Loon in summer and the only reports were a bird in worn first summer plumage at Fire Island Inlet 14 August and one at Shinnecock Inlet 15 August. Atlas effort revealed several potential breeding sites for Pied-billed Grebe – an encouraging result for an embattled species in our Region. This summer’s news was also positive for two other Regionally scarce breeders that depend on freshwater wetlands: Least Bitterns were reported from several sites on LI, including JBWR, a traditional breeding site from which they have gone unreported in recent summers; and American Coots continue at a site on private property in Aquebogue, near the mouth of the Peconic River.

Reports of tubenoses were lackluster, consisting mainly of modest numbers of Sooty Shearwaters and Wilson’s Storm-Petrels, plus a few Manx Shearwaters, from the LI South Shore. Most unusual were two Greater Shearwaters from land as far west as Breezy Point 12 August (Tom Fiore), but the novelty of these pales in comparison to Region 9’s Manx Shearwater off Rye, in western LI Sound, 8 August (Tom Burke). The latter record might inspire observers on LI’s North Shore to seek this species from appropriate vantages along the Sound.

Summer incursions of Brown Pelicans are now expected annually. This year’s influx began 5 July with several at Democrat Point (Tony Poldino), extended as far east as Smith Point County Park 9 July (Maureen Dunn), penetrated beyond the outer beach at Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside 3 August (fide NYC RBA) and ended in early August. An individual that passed Robert Moses State Park on 1 August required 100 minutes to reach Jones Beach State Park (11 miles), implying an astonishingly slow flight speed of seven mph, or perhaps a hiatus along the way (Andy Guthrie, et al.).

The first Double-crested Cormorant breeding colony in Great South Bay involved 20 nests in shrubbery on the Line Islands (John Zarudsky). Nearby, on the LI “mainland,” the established colony at Argyle Park, Babylon was active again this year, but by season’s end all the trees on the island had been razed. Although this species is perceived as abundant and increasing – and is certainly no favorite among the fishing and wildlife management communities – it is important to stress that (a) it is a native species; and (b) it shares a number of critical attributes (very few breeding sites in Region, dependence on predator-free islands near suitable feeding areas, etc.) with other, more charismatic, colonial waterbirds that currently enjoy much better public relations and conservation concern.

A small heron near Moriches Inlet 4 June (Kenny Frisch) through at least 8 June resembled a Little Egret by virtue of its generally white plumage, gray lores and two lanceolate occipital plumes. After much analysis, it was deemed most likely an odd second calendar-year (SY) Little Blue Heron (P. Pyle, in litt., “ID-Frontiers” Internet forum). Several summering Turkey Vultures

on LI were newsworthy and continue to prompt speculation about possible breeding.

Observers who remember the days (not so long ago) when Cooper's Hawk was scarce in Region 10 outside of fall migration are adjusting to its new status as the most widespread and numerous woodland-breeding raptor on LI. The fortunes of Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon also continue to rise, with widespread reports of the former and many pairs of the latter throughout the NYC area (including several pairs in Nassau County and one pair as far east as Captree State Park in Suffolk County). Although Peregrines historically never nested on LI, these opportunistic inhabitants of bridges and towers conceivably could come to outnumber American Kestrel, once an abundant and characteristic species on LI, in Region 10.

Reports of migrant shorebirds included most of the expected species and one astonishing rarity: a Long-billed Curlew seen flying past Shinnecock Inlet 15 August by Andy Baldelli and Brian Kane. Given the brevity of the encounter and the extraordinary scarcity of the species in the Northeast, documentation of this report is especially important. Many observers commented on the late arrival and small totals of juveniles of arctic-breeding species. Mid-August flocks of species such as Least and Semipalmated sandpipers, Greater and Lesser yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitcher were essentially devoid of juveniles, and it was not until the very end of the period that the proportion of young birds rose. Reports of poor weather and widespread breeding failures (of geese as well as shorebirds) in northern Canada provided a possible explanation for this trend, and will be followed up in greater detail in the fall season report.

Maritime breeding species such as Piping Plover; American Oystercatcher; Herring, Great Black-backed and Laughing gulls; Gull-billed, Common, Forster's, Roseate and Least terns and Black Skimmer appear to be facing at best a zero-sum game. With their habitat severely constrained by human recreation, beset even within protected areas by overt human disturbance and human-commensal mammalian predators, and inescapably tied to the dynamic vagaries of storm and tide, it is unrealistic to expect sustained positive trends for all species, every year. Complicating matters further is the fact that several of these species affect each other directly and negatively, through competition for nest sites or predation. This inevitable antagonism tends to force conservation decision-making into a sort of "Judgement of Solomon," where it actually becomes necessary to ask whether we can embrace gulls along with the terns they sometimes eat, and cormorants along with the egrets they sometimes displace. To summarize reports from LI this season, positives included an incipient Roseate Tern colony on Cartwright Island (fide Robert Paxton) and limited direct human destruction of nests and nesters; negatives included beach flooding caused by exceptional tides 3 June and 2 July, and predation attributed to feral cats, Red Foxes and all three species of Regionally breeding gulls.

An absolutely fresh-plumaged juvenile Ring-billed Gull photographed by John Fritz at Jones Beach on the early date of 28 July probably hatched in a

Great Lakes colony, but Region 10 observers ought not be overly surprised if this species further extends its breeding range toward or even onto the coastal plain. After all, less than a century ago, Eaton considered it rare anywhere in the state and Griscom took pains to cite specimens documenting its winter occurrence on LI!

Joan Quinlan's Eurasian Collared-Dove at Jones Beach 25 August represented at least the fourth documented NYS report of a rapidly expanding species that seems destined to be accepted soon as an authentic member of the state's avifauna.

Concerns were voiced again for many species of woodland breeding birds on LI. Species as diverse as Ruffed Grouse, Broad-winged Hawk, Whip-Poor-Will, Veery, Black-and-white Warbler and Ovenbird share many ecological attributes: their populations depend on woodlands of at least modest size and integrity; they are being reported from fewer and fewer sites on LI; and their remaining LI populations are probably undervalued in conservation planning. Indeed, given the plethora of environmental concerns on LI and the extent to which Regional priority falls to maritime-nesting species, it seems difficult to muster much will to preserve our surviving patches of mesic deciduous woodlands, such as those in East Hampton's Northwest Woods. Admittedly, LI's second-growth woodlands are smaller, less diverse and less critical to most species' statewide and global status than are the extensive woodlands upstate, but this rationale undervalues their Regional significance. It is disheartening to think that many once widespread and numerous woodland breeders will probably survive on LI only in a few small relict preserves, if at all. Critical analysis of the just-completed Breeding Bird Atlas will lend quantitative insight into geographical trends for these species on LI. In the meantime, the qualitative prognosis, based on perceptions of LI's most experienced naturalists, is not encouraging.

Reports of Northern Parula, Northern Waterthrush, Hooded Warbler and Canada Warbler from Mashomack, Shelter Island, in early June were intriguing (TD). All of these are rare breeders on LI (the waterthrush has never been proven to breed), but all are known to breed together in similar habitat just a few miles away in eastern Connecticut and Rhode Island. Furthermore, Shelter Island was the epicenter of LI's historical Northern Parula population – echoes of which were detected again this year in the Grace Estate and near Montauk. Perhaps most of the Shelter Island birds were late migrants or wanderers, but the Hooded Warbler at least appeared to be on territory, singing consistently through 15 July.

The news from our pine barrens, the type of woodland generally accorded the highest conservation status on LI, was generally positive this year – at least for breeding species characteristic of edges and disturbed areas. Indigo Buntings were described as numerous on the Brookhaven National Lab site and were found at many scattered sites both west and east of there. Blue Grosbeak and Summer Tanager, two southern species pioneering northward, both summered in LI's Pine Barrens region again this year.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BNL – Brookhaven National Laboratory; BP – Breezy Pt QUEE; CCP – Cupsoque County P; CP – Central P; DP – Democrat Pt FI; FBF – Floyd Bennett Field; FI – Fire I; FTT – Fort Tilden QUEE; JBCH – Jones Beach SP; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long Island; MEB – Mecox Bay; MNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MOR – Moriches; MP – Montauk Pt; NWW – Northwest Woods, East Hampton; PB – Pikes Beach, Westhampton; PP – Prospect P KING; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten I.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Brant: 8 SHIN 19 Jun; 25 Jul JBWR.

American Wigeon: 6 Jun, 11 Jul JBWR; arr 14 Aug.

Blue-winged Teal: m JBWR 11 Jun (SM); JBWR 25 Jul thru.

Northern Shoveler: 6 Jun, 18 Jul thru.

Northern Pintail: JBWR 25 Jul, 14 Aug thru.

Green-winged Teal: 6 Massapequa Preserve 29 Aug (PL).

Greater Scaup: 2 Westhampton 10 Jul (AM); PB 15 Aug.

Common Eider: breeding near Fishers I (GW; *intro*).

Surf Scoter: a few ocean beach and inlets thru.

Black Scoter: flock Georgica Beach 11 Jun (BH); SHIN 6 Aug (BK, HM).

Red-breasted Merganser: PB 5 Jun, killed by GBBG.

Ruffed Grouse: no reports.

Wild Turkey: Nissauogue Ri SP 28 Jun; 4 Pine Meadow Co P (JF); many reports of hens with large broods South Fork.

Northern Bobwhite: ad & 7 yg near MP 3 Jun (VB); calling Rt 51 5 Jun (PL, SSM).

Red-throated Loon: FI Inlet 14 Aug (PL, SM), only report.

Common Loon: a few along ocean beaches thru; 1 summered Orient Bay.

Pied-billed Grebe: JBWR 15 Jul thru.

Horned Grebe: Southold 8 Jun (RW), very rare in summer.

Cory's Shearwater: 27 Jun (pelagic, DH).

Greater Shearwater: from shore: MOR 28 Jun (SB); 2 RMSP 5 Jul (TWB, GB); 2 BP 12 Aug (TF), unusual from shore so far west; pelagic reports: 27 Jun, 12 Jul "several dozen" (CO); 32 The Dip 22 Jul (AGr).

Sooty Shearwater: LI outer beaches JBCH to MP, mostly early Jun.

Manx Shearwater: *intro*; MP 19 Jun (TWB, GB); 2 off MP 14 Jul.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: LI outer beaches BP to MP, mostly early Jun; a few e LI Sound 15 Jul thru; pelagic max just 50 The Dip 22 Jul.

Northern Gannet: a few LI outer beaches thru.

American White Pelican: 2 Captree I/Argyle Pd 11-25 Jul, one still present 28 Jul; JBWR 12 Jun (Sean Sime), 26 Jul-25 Aug.

Brown Pelican: a few ocean beaches 5 Jul-21 Aug; one inside outer beaches MNSA 3 Aug.

Double-crested Cormorant: nested Argyle Pd SUFF; first big southbound flights 22 Aug.

Great Cormorant: Long Pd, Sag Harbor 5 Jul (HM).

American Bittern: Dune Rd 1 Aug (AJL).

Least Bittern: JBWR thru; Big Reed Pd 10 Jul (VB).

Great Blue Heron: 9 migrants Northville 15 Jul (MLL).

Little Blue Heron: regular as far east as Dune Rd, including an odd individual CCP (*intro*).

Tricolored Heron: regular as far east as Dune Rd.

Cattle Egret: a few JBWR.

Green Heron: max 15 flying west Napeague 16 Jul.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: regular as far east as Dune Rd.

Turkey Vulture: Grumman Airport 27 Jul (JF).

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: ad Shelter I thru 19 Jun (TD); imms Shelter I 29 Jun and later (DC, TD); MEB 3 Jul (HM); CP 7-8 Aug; BP 12 Aug; JBWR 19 Aug.

Northern Harrier: a few LI South Shore thru; migrants CP 13, 22 Aug.

Cooper's Hawk: many reports central and eastern SUFF.

Broad-winged Hawk: Old Brookville 9 Jul; 2 CP 22 Aug; Cutchogue 29 Aug (PL, SM).

Red-tailed Hawk: nest CP, 3 juvs fledged late Jun, 1st nesting in CP itself (fide TF).

Merlin: Shelter I 16 Jun (NH); earliest migrants JBWR 25 Aug, Bridgehampton 29 Aug.

Peregrine Falcon: 3 prs NASS; 1 pr SUFF.

Sora: JBWR 20, 25 Aug.

Common Moorhen: JBWR 17, 25 Aug.

American Coot: probably nested again at traditional site Aquebogue.

Black-bellied Plover: 200 Rt 51 SUFF 31 Aug (JF), many for interior LI.

American Golden-Plover: 6 ads migrating DP 21 Aug (PL, SM); max 12 Rt 105 Riverhead 31 Aug (JF).

Semipalmated Plover: thru 6 Jun; arr JBWR 11 Jul; unusual CP 10 Aug (TF).

American Avocet: JBWR 24-28 Jul, 25

Aug; SHIN 15-22 Aug (AJL, mob).
Solitary Sandpiper: max 6 Aquebogue 24 Jul.
Willet: early reports of *inornatus* include MEB 3 Jul (HM), PB 17 Jul (PL, SM).
Spotted Sandpiper: any breeders? migrants widely reported; max 10 Aquebogue 24 Jul.
Upland Sandpiper: JBCH 15 Aug.
Whimbrel: small numbers LI South Shore 14 Jul thru; max 20 1 Aug.
LONG-BILLED CURLEW: Shinnecock 15 Aug (AB, BK), requires documentation.
Hudsonian Godwit: max 7 JBWR 17 Aug.
Marbled Godwit: widely reported in small numbers LI South Shore inlets.
Red Knot: 150 PB 5 Jun (PL, SM), late for so many.
Sanderling: only 1 juv among 500 ads as late as 28 Aug (PL, SM).
Pectoral Sandpiper: Pussy Pd Springs 15 Jul (RK); Aquebogue 16 Jul (AB); MEB 6 Aug (HM); 4 Rt 51 SUFF 31 Aug (JF).
Dunlin: MEB 3 Jul; JBWR ~1 Aug; 3 PB 13 Aug.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper: DP 28 Aug (PL, SM).
Long-billed Dowitcher: arr JBWR 25 Jul; small numbers there thru.
Wilson's Phalarope: JBWR 22-24 Jul; Aquebogue 13, 16 Aug (AB).
Red-necked Phalarope: ad JBWR 4 Aug.
Parasitic Jaeger: ad Main Beach East Hampton 13 Aug (BK).
Bonaparte's Gull: a few, mostly second-year, LI South Shore thru.
Ring-billed Gull: in fresh juv plum JBCH 28 Jul (JF), early.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: a few 1st summer: JBWE 5, 12 Jul, 15 Aug; DP 21 Aug; MEB 22 Aug.
Caspian Tern: 2 JBWR 8 Aug, PP 8-9 Aug.

Royal Tern: MEB 1 Jun (from 28 May); max 60 Dune Rd 14 Aug; 17 Robins I 13 Aug.
Sandwich Tern: SHIN 5 Jun (AB); MEB 13 Aug (BK, HM).
Roseate Tern: a few FI Inlet thru.
Black Tern: 3 CCP 10 Jul; present LI South Shore thereafter.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Eurasian Collared-Dove: JBWE 25 Aug (JQ, GF, JF).
Monk Parakeet: Bayville 7 Jul; Dune Rd 21 Aug (SM, et al).
Common Nighthawk: a few summer reports from Napeague/Hither Hills area; migrants arr Wading River 18 Aug.
Chuck-will's-widow: absent Oak Beach; Napeague Harbor Rd; one or two sites near Riverhead; only reports.
Whip-poor-will: numerous at traditional sites near Riverhead, Napeague, Hither Hills.
Red-headed Woodpecker: nested Amagansett (fide BH).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: 3+ CP 8 Aug; Hither Hills 10 Aug (PS).
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: CP 8 Aug.
Acadian Flycatcher: Sebonac Neck 4 Jun (since 14 May, RG); singing Old Brookville 26 Jun.
Alder Flycatcher: Greenport 8 Jun (TD).
Western Kingbird: BP 15 Aug (TF), very early.
Eastern Kingbird: 80 BP 15 AUG (TF), high.
Warbling Vireo: singing JBWR 11 Jun (SM), unusual locale.
Barn Swallow: migrant counts RMSP: 3000 in 1.5' 14 Aug, 5000 in 2' 15 Aug (PL, SM).
Red-breasted Nuthatch: NWW 9 Jun; arr migrants late Jul.
Brown Creeper: scattered reports nesting e SUFF.

Hermit Thrush: nested several East End sites.

WARBLERS

“Lawrence’s Warbler”: m apparently on territory Culloden Woods (VB).

Tennessee Warbler: arr CP 29 Jul, early.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: FTT 25 Aug (TF), early.

Worm-eating Warbler: migrants on e LI included 2 Northville 18 Aug (MLL).

Northern Waterthrush: Mashomack 2 Jun; migrants mid Jul thru.

Louisiana Waterthrush: many reports of migrants NYC parks; Baiting Hollow 31 Jul (RH).

Mourning Warbler: arr CP 6 Aug.

Hooded Warbler: m apparently on territory Mashomack, Shelter I thru at least 15 Jul (TD, mob).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Summer Tanager: early in season BNL but no nesting evidence this year (JC); f CP 8 Aug.

Vesper Sparrow: on territory Grumman Airport & near Suffolk Community College 19 Jun (JC).

Lark Sparrow: RMSP 22 Aug; E Lake Dr Montauk 23 Aug.

White-throated Sparrow: Orient 11 Jun (TC), very late.

White-crowned Sparrow: ad at feeder Whitestone QUEE 25 Jul (fide RBA), very unusual mid-summer.

Blue Grosbeak: BNL 10 Jun.

Indigo Bunting: “tons” nesting BNL (EL).

Dickcissel: MEB 15 Aug.

Bobolink: arr CP 27 Jul; max 75 FBF 15 Aug (SBI, RJ).

Orchard Oriole: reports of breeding unusually numerous and widespread.

