

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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The summer season for Region 4 weather began with the wettest month on record for the Binghamton Weather Service with 11.45", surpassing the September 1977 record of 9.66". This total is almost one-third of the normal rainfall expected for the entire year. 27 June had the all-time maximum daily precipitation of 3.70". It should be noted that local reports at that time from the eastern part of the Region were about double the Binghamton area. The result was the highest flood on record for some areas of the Region. Hurricane Agnes in 1972 is the only flood that had a higher flow at the mouth of the Susquehanna River, but that storm dropped most of its precipitation to the west of Region 4.

The rest of the season remained wet. 23.50" of precipitation for the three months was more than double the normal rainfall of 10.64". Heating degree days were 15% below normal and cooling degree days were 13% above normal indicating a slightly warmer than normal summer despite the days with cloud cover and precipitation.

The question is what was the disastrous weather's effect on birds? Since the heaviest precipitation occurred at the end of the breeding season, loss of many nest sites was probably avoided. However, some species were still nesting as demonstrated by dead Tree Swallow nestlings floating in the floodwater. Thousands of acres of habitat were disrupted, which would have caused displacement of large segments of populations at least temporarily. Andy Mason and John Birkett observed expected species either missing or relocated along the Susquehanna River at Oneonta and Bainbridge.

After the flood there was an explosion in the mosquito population in valley areas, which persisted throughout the abnormally wet summer. Along with the

mosquitoes came West Nile Virus paranoia and a clamoring for widespread spraying of insecticides. The WNV epidemic did not materialize. One explanation from Kevin McGowan at the Lab of Ornithology was that "they may very well be the 'floodwater mosquitoes' that are not important in WNV transmission." Dr. Anne Clark at Binghamton University reported "no positive birds in Broome this year" in birds tested by 10 October and only two positive mosquito pools.

Great Egrets appeared sporadically throughout the Region, an improvement over the one seen last year. Two Ardeidae species were seen for the first time in at least the last four years; a Snowy Egret and a Little Blue Heron were seen in the Susquehanna River at Vestal, Broome County.

The first reported nesting of Bald Eagles in Tioga County since their recovery occurred on Hiawatha Island in the Susquehanna River just east of Owego. A male and a female fledgling were banded by NYSDEC. Peregrine Falcons nested in Binghamton with a successful fledging. Unfortunately a dead male fledgling was found on a Binghamton street on 7 August. Tom Salo found a congregation of at least fifteen American Kestrels in Burlington, Otsego County. Otherwise kestrel numbers appear to be down.

Shorebird reports were down. A newcomer to the recent reports was a Sanderling observed off Route 12A in the Town of Chenango, Broome County. Two larids were also new to the Region 4 list. A Common Tern was observed at Dorchester Park and off River Road in Endwell, both in Broome County. The other larid was a Black Tern at the height of a minor flood in early June on the Susquehanna River in Bainbridge, Chenango County.

A Broad-billed Hummingbird was a frequent visitor at Jim Ballard's feeder on Day Hollow Road, Town of Owego, Tioga County during August. He has submitted a NYSARC report on this ultra-rare sighting, the second for the State. One must wonder about the relationship with the earlier late June bird in Wayne County.

In the eastern part of the Region it was noted that there were good numbers of Black-billed Cuckoos, but there seemed to be fewer Eastern Wood-Pewees. This was largely attributed to an outbreak of forest caterpillars defoliating large parts of the forest. Charlie Dahan and Andy Mason are each involved in studies of acid rain effects on E. Wood-Pewees and other species. Could it be that what is beneficial to one species is to the detriment of another species or is there another cause for the missing E. Wood-Pewees?

The Warbling Vireo is doing well as shown by numerous reports and Tom Salo's 12-mile canoe trip down the upper Unadilla River. He "paid close attention" and "heard one singing about every 200 yards." In the less suitable habitat of the last 3 miles "there were only 3 or 4 per mile" to give a total of about 120. Katie Ray reported a "western" subspecies Palm Warbler, with extensive description, at Buckhorn Lake Otsego County. The most notable passerine report was from Matt Young on the number of Red Crossbills he found nesting in the Pharsalia area and in other state forests of the area. He also reported on an abundance of cones on all conifers, except White Pine, that may provide for a good finch year.

Missing from the Region was Golden-crowned Kinglet, and scarce birds included Am. Woodcock and Northern Waterthrush. There were seven single reports for Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the western part of the Region, but surprisingly with the forest caterpillar outbreak in the eastern part there was only one report. There were 154 species reported for the season.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Ba - Bainbridge CHEN; Bing - Binghamton BROO; BPd - Boland Pond BROO; BL - Buckhorn Lake OTSE; CR - Chenango River; CVSP - Chenango Valley State Park BROO; DHRd - Day Hollow Road, T Owego TIOG; DP - Dorchester Park BROO; En - Endwell BROO; OL - Otsego Lake OTSE; PIBA - Pharsalia Important Bird Area CHEN; RS - Richfield Springs, OTSE; SR - Susquehanna River; TB - T Burlington OTSE; TCa - T Candor TIOG; TC - T Chenango BROO; TL - T Lisle, BROO; TO - T Owego TIOG; TOt - T Otego OTSE; UR - Unadilla River OTSE; VBS - Vestal Banding Station BROO; Ve - Vestal BROO.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Wood Duck: max 50+ BPd BROO
12 Jul.

Ruffed Grouse: max 9 T Walton DELA
26 Jul.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 2ad
1 imm Hillcrest BROO 23 Jul.

Am. Bittern: BBS DELA 4 Jun, only
report

Great Egret: SR BROO thru; 10 reports;
numbers up.

SNOWY EGRET: SR-Ve BROO 16,
17 Jun.

LITTLE BLUE HERON: imm SR-Ve
BROO 26 Jul thru.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: max 2 OL OTSE 2 Jun.

Bald Eagle: CO 2 ad, 2 y banded TO
TIOG thru Jun.

N. Harrier: Oxford CHEN 17 Jun; TC
BROO 23 Jul; only 2 reports.

N. Goshawk: imm PIBA CHEN 13 Aug;
ad T Otselec CHEN, only reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: T Maine
BROO 22 Jun, 23 Jul, only reports:
numbers down.

Am. Kestrel: max 15+ TB OTSE (TS);
numbers down.

MERLIN: PIBA CHEN 13 Aug,
only report.

Peregrine Falcon: CO Bing BROO thru; FL found dead Bing BROO 7 Aug.
Virginia Rail: BPd BROO 1 Jun; VE BROO 8 Jun; West Corners Marsh BROO 16 Jun; only reports.
Greater Yellowlegs: SR-Ve BROO 10, 11 Jul; CR-TC BROO 23 Jul; TL BROO 16 Aug; only reports.
Lesser Yellowlegs: DP BROO 30 Jul; CR-TC BROO 29, 30 Aug, only reports.
Solitary Sandpiper: max 8 SR-Ve BROO 27 Jul.
SANDERLING: CR-TC BROO 29 Aug, uncommon.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: SR-Ve BROO 1 Jun; DP BROO 11 Jun; only reports.
Pectoral Sandpiper: SR-Ve BROO 22 Jul; SR-En BROO 28 Jul; only reports.
Wilson's Snipe: max 8 BBS DELA 4 Jun (BD).
Am. Woodcock: TIOG Jun; OL OTSE 18 Jun; only reports.
COMMON TERN: DP BROO 11 Jun (JW); SR-En BROO 19 Aug (BK), uncommon.
BLACK TERN: Ba CHEN 3 Jun (JBi); SR-En BROO 19 Aug (BK); uncommon.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Black-billed Cuckoo: max 17 BBS DELA 4 Jun, doing well.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: BL OTSE 3 Jul, only report from eastern part of Region; 7 other reports.
Barred Owl: max 2 CVSP BROO 25 Jun; only two other reports.
Com. Nighthawk: 6 Ba CHEN 24 Aug; max 20+ BPd BROO 25 Aug; 15 SR-Bing BROO 28 Aug; two other reports; scarce.
Chimney Swift: 30+ Ve BROO 29 Jul; max 60+ Bing BROO 22 Aug; 8 BL OTSE 22 Aug.
BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD: m DHRd TIOG Aug to 27 Aug (JB), report to NYSARC, 2nd State record both this summer.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Wood-Pewee: few reports in eastern part of Region; many reports elsewhere.

Willow Flycatcher: max 6 UR OTSE 16 Jun.
Warbling Vireo: max 120 UR OTSE 16 Jun, doing well.
Fish Crow: T Tioga TIOG 10 July; SR-En BROO 24 Aug; only reports.
Com. Raven: max 15+ PIBA CHEN 25 Aug.
Horned Lark: TL BROO 25 Jun, only report.
Tree Swallow: many dead nestlings seen floating in SR during floods of late Jun.
Bank Swallow: 16+ nest holes Bpd BROO 9 Jun; max 4 BPd BROO 24 Jun; few reports, numbers down.
Cliff Swallow: UR OTSE 16 Jun; DP BROO 6 Aug; only reports.
Marsh Wren: BPd BROO 1, 10 Jun; West Corners BROO 16 Jun; only reports.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: TO TIOG 4 Aug (C&JB); max 4 Upper Reynolds Rd BROO (MP&RY); only 2 reports.
Veery: max 5 T0t OTSE 19 Jun.

WARBLERS

Magnolia Warbler: TCa TIOG 30 Aug, banded.
Cape May Warbler: DHRd TIOG 30 Aug, only report.
Black-throated Blue Warbler: m TC BROO 5 Jun, only report.
Blackburnian Warbler: CVSP BROO 25 Jun; CO T0t OTSE 9 Jul; Roundtop P BROO 19 Aug; ym VBS BROO 24 Aug.
Pine Warbler: TL BROO 9 Jul; f Middelndorf P BROO 23 Aug; only reports.
Prairie Warbler: CO TCa TIOG Jun, Jul.
Palm Warbler: BL OTSE 31 Aug (KR), "western" subsp; one other report.
Black-and-white Warbler: DP BROO 13 Aug; VBS BROO 24 Aug; TO TIOG 30 Aug; only reports.
N. Waterthrush: T Barker BROO 4 Jun; Bing BROO 18 Aug, found dead; only reports.
Mourning Warbler: max 7 TB OTSE 3 Jun; doing well.
Canada Warbler: TC BROO 19 Jul; ad m VBS BROO 24 Aug; TCa TIOG 30 Aug, banded.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Scarlet Tanager: max 12+ PIBA CHEN
25 Aug.

Vesper Sparrow: Ely P BROO 19 Jul,
feeding Cowbird, only report.

Savannah Sparrow: CO TB OTSE 6
Jun.

Henslow's Sparrow: T Pitcher CHEN no
date (MT), uncommon.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: max 12+
PIBA CHEN 25 Aug.

Bobolink: max 50+ RS OTSE 20 Aug;
few reports, numbers seem down.

Baltimore Oriole: max 50+ PIBA CHEN
25 Aug.

Red Crossbill: CO 15 ad PIBA CHEN
thru 13 Aug (MY).