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Western Great Lakes Region

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It was a very quiet summer for both Wisconsin and Minnesota. For Wisconsin birders, this was almost a relief after the previous five months that produced an unbelievable flood of rarities. It gave them a chance to "recharge their batteries" for the fall migration.

Weather conditions were somewhat variable, but generally June and especially July were cooler than normal. The one exception was late June, when very hot (mid- to upper 90's F.), humid weather settled into the Region for about a week. June rainfall was above normal, with unusual high amounts occurring in many areas. July rainfall was generally more normal, with a dry period settling in during the latter half of the month.

Due to the late spring, many birds extended their migration into June. This was especially true for an assortment of warblers, as evidenced by the numerous late sightings. Southern herons put on a

fine show in both states, with especially good finds at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, mainly along Highway 49. There was only one major rarity sighted, an adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, but due to the short observation period it will undoubtedly be considered as probable.

Unfortunately readers will find no Michigan sightings in this summer's summary, as no report was received for the state.

Loons to Ibises

The Red-throated Loon at Superior's Wisconsin Pt., June 9 was a late spring migrant (SR). Most unusual was a Pacific Loon present on Minnesota's L. Harriet, *Hennepin*, between July 2–22 (CM *et al.*). Out-of-range Com. Loons included Milwaukee June 4 (MB) and *Vernon* June 14 (JD), both Wisconsin. There was an unusual number of Horned Grebe sightings in Minnesota. They included two July 6 at Thief Lake W.M.A. (JB, TS), five that included four adults and one immature July 7 at Duluth (AH), and 16 (!) at the Roseau River W.M.A., July 7 (PS). There was no confirmed nesting. One was found in Wisconsin's *Door* July 30 at Bailey's Harbor (JR). Two Eared Grebes that appeared during May on Wisconsin's L. Maria, *Green Lake*, lingered well into June (JF *et al.*). American White Pelicans appeared at many Wisconsin sites. Numbers generally ranged between 15–50. However, on Green Bay (*Brown* and *Oconto*) >150 spent the summer, with the 2nd state nesting occurring on the s. end of the Bay. There were 50 nests with about 30 young fledged (TE).





Adult Tricolored Heron at Horicon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, Wisconsin, in July 1996. Photograph/Jack Bartholmai.

Southern herons made news this summer. Snowy Egrets were found in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. In the former, singles were present June 9 in *Roseau* (AE), mid-July+ in *Ramsey* (m.ob.), and July 28 in *Big Stone* (LE). In the latter state singles were found at Horicon N.W.R. during the summer and at Manitowoc June 6–12 (CS). They again nested at Green Bay, with 2–3 nests present on one of the s. islands (TE). Likewise, Little Blue Herons were found in both states. Minnesota's sightings included *Anoka* (JHo), *LeSueur* June 1–2 (WS), and *Otter Tail* July 3 (SM). In Wisconsin, two were present at Horicon N.W.R. during July (m.ob.). Also at Horicon N.W.R. were two **Tricolored Herons**. The first was discovered by Frank June 9, and was soon joined by the second, both remaining well into August. They were most frequently seen feeding along Highway 49 during the early morning. Cattle Egrets were found in ≥ 7 Wisconsin sites, and included nesting on Green Bay (*Brown* and *Oconto*) with between 25–30 nests (TE). For Minnesota, they were seen in *Wilkin* June 7 (S&DM), and four were in *Big Stone* July 6 (LE). Yellow-crowned Night-Herons nested in *Milwaukee* (v.o.), with a single in Wisconsin's *Grant* June 8 (CW). For Minnesota, singles were present in *Anoka* July 18 (AH) and *Ramsey* July 19 (m.ob.). While unsuccessfully waiting for the appearance of the Tricolored Herons at Horicon N.W.R. the evening of June 15, O'Brien and Sigler were appeased with the brief (4 min.) appearance of a **White-faced Ibis**.

Swans to Cranes

Tundra Swan summered in w. *Brown*, WI (v.o.). A complete surprise was the Greater White-fronted Goose present in Minnesota's *Scott* July 17 (DNR staff). A Snow Goose was in Menasha, WI, mid-June–mid-July (DN). Canvasbacks were found at 5 Wisconsin sites, including an

individual that summered in *Dunn* (JP). A maximum of ten Greater Scaup summered at Manitowoc (CS *et al.*) and Milwaukee (MK *et al.*). Lesser Scaup were found in 11 Wisconsin counties, including summering birds at Manitowoc and Milwaukee. On June 1 a **Common Eider** was photographed at Wisconsin's New Port S.P., *Door*, by Ekblom. It awaits evaluation by the records committee. If accepted it would be one of the few state sightings, besides occurring on a most unusual date. Only slightly less unexpected were Harlequin Ducks that appeared in both states. A male was present at Manitowoc, WI, between June 10–14 (CS, MP). For Minnesota, two males were found at Tofte June 9–17 (MR, AP), while a pair were in *St. Louis* June 17–18 (TJ). Other out-of-place ducks included a Bufflehead in *Dane* June 30 (KB), a Com. Goldeneye July 8–16 and a Com. Merganser June 15–August in *Winnebago* (DN), all WI.

There were 3 unexpected hawk sightings this summer. A Ferruginous Hawk was seen by Stensaas June 9 in *Traverse*, while Risen and Hertzler had one in *Clay* June 15 and July 1, both Minnesota. Hard to explain were the Rough-legged Hawk sightings in both Wisconsin and Minnesota. In the former, single birds were seen June 5 in *Douglas* (JF), June 9 in *Marathon* (DT), and July 4 in *Price* (TSo). In the latter, singles were present June 25 in *Clearwater* (AB) and July 6 & 20 in *Roseau* (PS). Only Minnesota's 2nd and 3rd summer Prairie Falcon sightings occurred when Janssen had an individual June 10 in *Lac Qui Parle* and Beneke had one June 18 in *Norman*. Both were found on BBS routes. For the 3rd consecutive summer Minnesota had only a limited number of Gray Partridge reports (11 counties). Also discouraging was a 24% drop in Sharp-tailed Grouse numbers on leks in n.w. Minnesota (DNR staff). Good numbers of Yellow Rails were present in both states. For Minnesota, > 8 were present at McGregor Marsh (WN), with 20 in one *Roseau* location July 20 (PS). In Wisconsin, ten were found at the Crex Meadows Wildlife Area (v.o.), three at Powell Marsh (v.o.), while at the Comstock Bog in *Marquette* several called through the summer (v.o.). The only King Rails were several at Wisconsin's Rat River Wildlife Area, *Winnebago*.

Shorebirds

Sixteen species extended their spring migration into June. For Wisconsin the more interesting observations included single Am. Avocets at Milwaukee June 4 (DG) and Manitowoc (CS) and *Eau Claire* June 14 (JP); a Lesser Yellowlegs at

Marinette June 20 (JR), a Solitary Sandpiper in *Winnebago* June 13 (PB), a Whimbrel at Superior's Wisconsin Pt., June 8 (m.ob.), Ruddy Turnstones at Manitowoc until June 20 (CS), a W. Sandpiper at *Fond du Lac* June 5 (DT), a White-rumped Sandpiper at Milwaukee June 12 (DG), two Baird's Sandpipers in *Fond du Lac* June 10 (DT), and Pectoral Sandpipers in Madison (PA) and *Oconto* June 13 (J&KS). Minnesota had a tardy Hudsonian Godwit in *Marshall* June 1 (S&KS). The fall migration commenced with a Lesser Yellowlegs June 28 and a Pectoral Sandpiper July 1 at Horicon N.W.R. (BD), and a Solitary Sandpiper in *Walworth* WI June 30–July 1 (PP). Among the more noteworthy sightings for Wisconsin was an Am. Golden-Plover in *Dane* July 8–9 (KB, SR), two Am. Avocets at Milwaukee July 1 (MK), with singles at Madison July 2 (PA) and Manitowoc July 7 (CS). Single Willets were at Madison July 12 (PA) and Milwaukee July 21 (MK). The Horicon Marsh-Beaver Dam area had good concentrations of several species, including 200 Lesser Yellowlegs and 55 Stilt Sandpipers July 29 (DT), and 65 Short-billed Dowitchers July 13 (DT). Single Red-necked Phalaropes were in *Dane* July 12 (SR) and Horicon N.W.R., July 28–29 (DB, DT). Easily the most exciting find was a probable ad. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** July 31 at Horicon N.W.R. (BB). Unfortunately the bird, after a brief viewing, flew across Highway 49 back into the marsh. It could not be relocated that or ensuing days, although various birders searched diligently. This sighting is subject to the state records committee review. For Minnesota, the shorebird news was mixed. No Piping Plovers were reported, although it is hoped that they still nested in small numbers in *Lake of the Woods*. Willets appeared in 4 counties, including three birds July 6 in *Big Stone* (LE). Upland Sandpipers were reported from 16 counties, down from the 1982–1991 average of 25 counties. This species is having major problems not only in Minnesota but Regionwide.

Gulls to Woodpeckers

A Laughing Gull was seen intermittently at Manitowoc during early July (CS *et al.*). The Agassiz N.W.R. staff counted $> 20,000$ Franklin's Gull nests in an aerial survey (*vide* S&KS). In Wisconsin, numbers of one–six were at Kewaunee June 4 (JR), Milwaukee during July (MK *et al.*), and Madison July 12–29 (PA). They also summered at Manitowoc (m.ob.). Again, Little Gulls were hard to find in Wisconsin. A maximum of three were infrequently seen at Manitowoc

between June 26–July 22 (CS *et al.*), with three appearing near Pensaukee July 16+ (J&KS, TE). Sontag counted 1300 Bonaparte's Gulls at Manitowoc July 2, with a Glaucous Gull summering there. There was a surprising number of Great Black-backed Gull observations in Wisconsin. One was at Wisconsin Pt., June 9 (DT), several lingered until June 21 at Two Rivers-Manitowoc (CS *et al.*), three were in Door July 28–31 (JR), and one appeared July 26+ at Green Bay (JH).

Regionwide, both cuckoo species were very late in arriving, with numbers very low, especially for the Yellow-billed. Great Gray Owls continued to make news in Wisconsin, as two–three were found along Highway 13 in Bayfield during July, extending into August (VR, CW *et al.*). As they frequently sat on highway signs, excellent photos were obtained. But unfortunately this proved to be the demise for one, which was killed by a vehicle in late July. With these sightings, the total number of Great Grays found in Wisconsin this year was a record 70 (*fide* DT). In Minnesota they were found in Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, and St. Louis. Also in Minnesota, average numbers of Short-eared Owls were found in Aitkin, Polk, Pennington, and St. Louis. A ♂ Three-toed Woodpecker was seen June 18 in Cook, MN (KE *et al.*).

Flycatchers to Shrikes

Late migrating Olive-sided Flycatchers were reported in Grant June 6 (CW) and in Vernon June 8 (JD), both Wisconsin. Also late migrants were Yellow-bellied Flycatchers in Manitowoc until June 11 (CS) and in Milwaukee June 16 (RG). Out-of-range Acadian Flycatchers appeared in Portage (MBe), with three pairs in Dunn (AG), both Wisconsin. Nesting undoubtedly occurred at both sites. Ellwanger counted 20 W. Kingbirds July 28 in Minnesota's Big Stone, but overall the species was found in only half the average number of counties (11 *vs.* 22). Four Black-billed Magpie nests fledged 18 young in Minnesota's Aitkin (WN). Hard to explain was a Brown Creeper in Wisconsin's Grant July 28 (JD). Carolina Wrens were singing in Grant June 6 (CW) and Menomonee Falls July 7 (TW), both Wisconsin. The Winter Wren that nested in Flandreau S.P., MN, provided a first for Brown (JS). Late migrating Swainson's Thrushes were found during early June in Milwaukee and Oshkosh. Northern Mockingbirds put on a good show in both states. Minnesota had 5 separate sightings, including a pair that fledged three young in Hennepin (TT *et al.*), representing the 3rd state nesting. For Wisconsin, singles were found June 4 at Crex Meadows Wildlife (TW),

June 5 in Oconto (J&KS), and June 13 in Milwaukee (TW). The Loggerhead Shrike picture continued status quo in Minnesota, with 10 reporting counties, the 15-year average. In Wisconsin, a bad situation continues to worsen with only a pair present late May–early June in Green (no confirmed nesting), a nest near Pulaski (BM) Shawano fledging young, and a lone bird found July 22 in Walworth (PP). Apparently the pair near Pulaski had nested successfully for several years but was just "discovered" this summer.

Vireos to Finches

White-eyed Vireos were only reported from Wisconsin's Governor Dodge S.P. Bell's Vireos were found in 8 Wisconsin counties, including >5 pairs at several locations. Unusual was one in Dunn July 28 (AG). For Minnesota, there were the usual s.e. reports, plus a nesting in Blue Earth (BBo). Tardy was a Solitary Vireo in Milwaukee June 4 (MB), and nesting again occurred in s.e. Wisconsin in Waukesha (AM). Likewise tardy was a Philadelphia Vireo in Manitowoc June 10 (CS). A Blue-winged Warbler at Minnesota's Tamarac N.W.R., June 20 (BBe) represented the second Becker record. Tennessee Warblers were found until June 10 in such widely scattered Wisconsin sites as Wyalusing S.P. (CW), Wisconsin Pt. (DT), and Milwaukee (NZ). The Orange-crowned Warbler June 1 in Koochiching ties Minnesota's latest spring date (AH, PS). A Nashville Warbler was in Milwaukee until June 11 (RG), and one was in LaCrosse June 26 (JD). A Magnolia Warbler was present until July 3 at Wisconsin's Wyalusing S.P., often feeding on insects attracted to a hummingbird feeder at the entrance station (CW). Reportedly it also spent last summer there. Black-throated Blue Warblers were present in good numbers in several Minnesota counties, *i.e.*, Cook and Lake. A Yellow-rumped Warbler was still in Milwaukee June 2 (MK), with one in Winnebago, WI June 15 (DN). Late Black-throated Green Warblers were found in Milwaukee June 12 (DG) and Walworth, WI June 14 (RG). Tardy Blackburnian Warblers were in Milwaukee until June 10 (RG) and Grant, WI June 16 (BD). The territorial Yellow-throated Warbler in Wisconsin's Wyalusing S.P. was joined by two additional males on the strange date of July 22, all three remaining into August (CW). For Minnesota a male was present for the 3rd consecutive summer at Sibley S.P. (m.ob.). The big news from this group was—for the 2nd consecutive summer—the appearance of a ♂ Kirtland's Warbler in Wisconsin. This one proved much more cooperative than the one-day stand of last year. Spahn found it June 30 in



Prairie Warbler in Anoka County, Minnesota, June 18, 1996. Three territorial males present here in June established only the seventh state record. Photograph/Bruce Fall.

mature jack-pines w. of Conover, Vitas. It remained through July 13 to the delight of the numerous birders who made the trip to hear and occasionally see it. During the last few days it moved to a more typical younger jack-pine grove about one-half mi north. Minnesota had its 7th and 8th Prairie Warbler records, with one heard on a BBS route June 13 in Morrison (RM) and three territorial males at the Cedar Creek NHA in Anoka between June 4–24 (JH, BF *et al.*). Wisconsin's territorial male discovered at Wyalusing S.P. in late May remained along the entrance road through July 14 (m.ob.). Bay-breasted and Blackpoll warblers were still migrating on Superior's Wisconsin Pt., June 7 (DT), with the former also in Milwaukee June 11 (MB). Minnesota found normal numbers of Cerulean Warblers, in contrast to last summer's excellent showing. By contrast, Prothonotary Warbler nesting was up in Minnesota, including a possible nesting in Brown (JS). Worm-eating Warblers were again present in Wisconsin's Hemlock Draw, Sauk, and until June 30 in the Brooklyn Wildlife Area, Dane (PA). A Louisiana Water-thrush found by Cutright in Wisconsin's Marinette June 15 was out-of-range. For the 5th consecutive summer, a ♂ Kentucky Warbler was on territory in Minnesota's Seven Mile Cr. County Park (PE *et al.*). As a result of Wisconsin's ongoing atlas project, there was a clearer picture of the number of nesting Kentucky Warblers in Wyalusing State Park. Chris Wood tallied about 50 (!) pairs. Late for s.w. Wisconsin was the Connecticut Warbler June 1 at Wyalusing S.P. (CW). Hooded Warblers were reported at ≥7 Wisconsin sites. For Minnesota, it nested at Camp Ripley, Morrison (SM). Late migrating Wilson's Warblers included June 7 at Wisconsin Pt. (JF, DT) and June 9 at Milwaukee (TW). Hard to explain was a Canada Warbler in Milwaukee until June 25 (MK). A Yellow-breasted Chat was found in Wisconsin's Walworth June 23 (JF), and three were in the Brooklyn Wildlife Area, Dane until July 15 (PA). Nesting was attempted at the latter site.

