

# HUDSON-DELAWARE REGION



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This region baked in summer 1999. In northerly Rochester, NY, the temperature reached or exceeded 89°F on half the days in July, and by month's end the worst drought conditions in thirty years prevailed. It may have been harder for birders than for birds; many observers confessed to inactivity. The main effects on bird life are likely to show themselves later, in the form of low seed and fruit crops.

Opinions differed concerning the direct impact of heat and drought on nesting. Some thought numbers were down, but birds may have been skulking. Song ended early (SRL, WP), and neotropical migrants seemed to start leaving in mid-July (RR). High productivity, however, was observed in closely watched populations of Bald Eagle, Osprey, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Tree Swallow, and Eastern Bluebird. Nesting was largely completed before maximum heat. As for box-nesters, the main causes of mortality are wet, cool weather in June, raccoons, and blowfly larvae. Only the latter was exacerbated by dry heat (RPY, VP). R. P. Yunick, who has banded Tree Swallows for 11 years in *Montgomery* and *Fulton*, NY, minimized blowfly mortality by destroying contaminated nests and replacing the young in a new nest of dried grass, which young and parents "accepted without hesitation."

Strong easterly winds during the weekend of 11–13 Jun brought pelagic birds inshore (see shearwaters, storm-petrels, jaegers, Arctic Tern). Survey work yielded interesting data on Golden-winged Warbler and grassland species (see Upland Sandpiper, sparrows). The summer's well-documented rarities were few but choice: Little Egret, Little Stint, Franklin's Gull, Bridled Tern, and Lark Sparrow.

**Abbreviations:** Bombay Hook (*Bombay Hook Nat'l Wildlife Ref., near Smyrna, DE*); Brig (*Brigantine Unit, Edward P. Forsythe Nat'l Wildlife Ref., Atlantic Co., NJ*); Chazy riverlands (*L. Champlain shore around Chazy river mouths, Clinton, NY*); Conejohela Flats (*Susquehanna R. at Washington Boro, Lancaster Co., PA*); The Four Brothers (*islands in L. Champlain, Essex Co., NY*); Jamaica Bay (*Jamaica Bay Wildlife Ref., Queens Co., New York City*); LI (*Long Island, NY*); Little Creek (*Little Creek Wildlife Area, near Dover, Kent Co., DE*); Montezuma (*Montezuma N.W.R., n. end of L. Cayuga, Seneca Co., NY*); Little Galloo (*Little Galloo I., e. Lake Ontario, off Henderson Harbor, Jefferson Co., NY*); NYDEC (*New York Department of Environmental Conservation*); Port Mahon (*marshes and bayshore east of Little Creek, Kent Co., DE*).

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The "Loon Rangers" of the New York Loon Conservation Project found 404 ad. Com. Loons and 86 chicks at 149 sites last summer; this summer's report was incomplete at press time. In the easterly blow of 11–13 Jun, in addition to a few Sooty, Cory's, and Greater shearwaters seen from shore, two much rarer Manx Shearwaters passed Sagaponack, LI, 13 Jun (HMCG), and an Audubon's Shearwater was reported off Cape May Pt. 10 Jun (PB, B. Sullivan). Wilson's Storm-Petrels were commoner inshore than usual, peaking at 40–50 off Sagaponack, LI, 13 Jun (HMCG), 46 off Montauk 26 Jun (NYRBA), 50+ off Cape May 21 Jun (PB, RC), and several off Cape Henlopen 13 Jun (MG). Sixteen even ventured up the Delaware R. as far as Port Mahon 20 Jun (A. Guarente). One Leach's Storm-Petrel at the 30-fathom line, 40–45 mi off Delaware 19 Jun (F. Rohrbacher, APE, Friends of Nature Tours) offered a rare look at a species that is probably regular but nocturnal. An Am.

**SA** The Double-crested Cormorant population in L. Ontario, breeding principally on Little Galloo I., rebounded from none in 1940 to a few hundred pairs in the 1970s to over 7500 nests in 1997. Mounting protests by fishermen climaxed in the illicit shooting of some 1000 birds at Little Galloo on 27 Jul 1998. Nine men pleaded guilty to this act on 8 Apr 1999 in Federal District Court at Syracuse and were sentenced to \$2500 fines, home confinement, and \$5000 contributions to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (*NY Times*, 9 Apr 1999). The NYDEC, reluctantly implementing a plan to reduce this colony to about 1500 pairs over 5 years (*NY Times*, 4 May 1999), oiled 13,000 eggs in ground nests this summer. Only 36 young hatched in these nests, though the remaining tree nests (cormorant droppings kill the nest trees) were more productive (RL).

The L. Champlain colony on The Four Brothers, where cormorants have bred since 1981, remained stable at 1372 nests. Banding reveals that these birds migrate down the Atlantic coast while the L. Ontario birds descend the Mississippi (JMCP). Buffalo, where nesting began only in 1992, saw up to 292 nests (WW). The New York harbor colony was stable at 741 nests (PK). A 2nd year's nesting attempt at the Peace Valley Nature Center, Bucks, PA, failed (AM), though Pennsylvania's first colony persists with a few nests on the Susquehanna near Harrisburg (DB). The revival of cormorant populations (related probably to cleaner water) is an international phenomenon. Fishermen fight burgeoning Great Cormorant populations similarly in W. Europe.

White Pelican, now annual in this region, turned up 22–23 Jul along the upper Susquehanna R. in Windsor Twp., Broome, NY (ESu).

The NY Audubon Society's Harbor Herons Project, in its 15th year, found long-legged waders generally stable in New York harbor, even though Prall's I. and Shooter's

I. have been deserted because of human encampments. This summer, 1596 nests of 8 species were recorded: 1010 Black-crowned Night-Heron (63% of the total), 206 Great Egret (13%), 178 Glossy Ibis (11%), 164 Snowy Egret (10%) six Cattle Egret, four Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, and two Little Blue Heron nests, as well as one nest each for Tricolored and Green herons (PK). Northward-expanding Great Egrets still nest on Motor I., in the Niagara R. at Buffalo (now a reserve), and an amazing 45 were in n.e. *Saint Lawrence*, NY, in late July (M. Manske). These birds likely came from the colony established in the late 1980s on Dickerson I., s.w. Québec. What is assumed to be this spring's **Little Egret** turned up again at Bombay Hook 5 Jun (MG, BP), where it was widely observed until its head plumes disappeared in late July. A Tricolored Heron around Buffalo in July (WW) furnished a 5th local record; another was far afield at Riestville Pond, *Lebanon*, PA, 24 Jul (R. Miller). Only two Yellow-crowned Night-Heron colonies are known in Pennsylvania: in *Lancaster* and at W. Fairview, *Dauphin*, on the Susquehanna R. near Harrisburg. The latter had a "great count" of 13 adults and one immature (Rko). This sought-after species also nested at two *Bergen*, NJ, sites: Allendale (2nd consecutive year, S. Thomas) and Overpeck Cr. Park (G. & E. Mahler). Glossy Ibis established what may be its northernmost nest in the world on The Four Brothers, in L. Champlain, where Peterson banded four young on 23 Jul. Elsewhere they wandered inland into Pennsylvania at Hibernia Park, *Chester*, 17 Jul (J. Mountjoy), L. Ontelaunee, *Berks*, in mid-July, and Chambers L., *Chester* (Phila. Birdline). Coastal colonies, however, have shrunk in recent years. White-faced Ibis observations rose to three: one at Brig (R. Kane, J. Danzenbaker) and at least two at Bombay Hook after 5 Jun (MG, BP).

It is now official: as we have long suspected, Black Vultures breed in New York. A nest was discovered 27 April 1997 near New Paltz, *Ulster*, though the information was disseminated only later (J. T. Bridges, *Kingbird* 48: 289-298). Spahn reports that breeding waterfowl around Rochester are a "pitiful remnant," except for Wood Duck and three human commensals: Mute Swan, Canada Goose, and Mallard. Three ad. and five young N. Shoveler, a rare breeder in upstate New York, were at Batavia, *Genesee*, 10 Jun (WW). A female Com. Goldeneye with six young at the Chazy riverlands 19 Jun (W. Krueger, C. Mitchell) was a nice find of this

scarce northerly breeder. A female Hooded Merganser with two young at Bombay Hook 12 Jun (CC) was far south of its normal range. Among the usual lingering diving ducks and geese, the oddest was a Brant at Peebles Island S.P., *Saratoga*, NY, 11 Jul (WE).

## RAPTORS

Osprey recovery continues. After years of hanging out around Montezuma, a pair nested at Clyde, *Wayne*, a first for the Genesee region of New York. The biennial New Jersey census found 331 pairs, up from 250 in 1997. Even more encouraging was the high productivity after 2 unproductive seasons in coastal nests (KC). A count of three Mississippi Kites at Cape May through 11 Jun (VE, M. Costello, A. Pochek, L. Federico, G. Gordon) was below that of recent summers. One reported at Braddock Bay, *Monroe*, NY, on L. Ontario 6 Jun (DT, M. Davids) followed several there at similar dates during the last decade. A late sub-ad. Mississippi Kite at Great Gull I., off e. Long I., 26 Jul (H. Hays, †D. Young, G. Cormons) was the 2nd there. Bald Eagles enjoyed a banner year. New York's breeding pairs rose from 40 to 45, close to the 10-15% increase of recent years. Productivity made this year remarkable. Probably aided by a dry winter and spring, the 36 active pairs produced an "incredible" 64 young (P. Nye, NYDEC). Most of the increases were in s.e. New York, though a site was added in the Adirondacks in *Franklin* (N. Olson). Pennsylvania saw a "dramatic increase" from 12 to 16 active nests (DB). New Jersey "soared" from 14 to 21 nesting pairs that produced 25 young. But contaminants still cause concern in the Delaware Bay population, where nests failed (KC). Delaware's 14 active nests produced 20 young, up from four nests and one young at the low point in 1970. When the nest tree at Churchman's Marsh, DE, blew down in a storm, other pairs accepted the three young.

We know of two broods of Cooper's Hawks from *Berks* and *Bucks*, PA, (H. Voelker et al.), but none of Sharp-shinned Hawk. Nesting N. Goshawks at Jenny L., *Saratoga*, NY, terrorized cottage residents who approached without heeding Yunick's advice to raise a leafy branch. After several scalps had been bloodied, neighbors asked him to find a "conservation agency" to relocate nest and young. Something *can* be done about Am. Kestrel decline. Kestrel Research, a box program, banded 335 nestlings in *Northampton*, PA. The warm, dry spring seemed to increase productivity (S. Boyce, R. Wiltraut). Merlins, known only since

1992 to breed in this Region, nested again in the Adirondacks, at Abanakee L and Raquette L., *Hamilton*, NY (G. Lee). A nest photographed near Bolton Landing, on L. George, *Warren*, NY (B. & B. Bidwell), marked a notable southward expansion. Peregrines flourished. New York's 42 breeding pairs were up from 36 last year; 37 of them produced a "whopping" 79 young. In New Jersey, out of 16 nesting pairs, 12 produced 30 young. Video images of the successful Peregrine family atop the Kodak building in Rochester were accessible on the Kodak website.

## RAILS THROUGH TERNS

The first Black Rail in *Berks*, PA (located in the wrong county in the spring report), discovered May 17 (M. Monroe, M. Miller), was heard by hundreds and seen 23 May (J. Majdan) before falling silent (or leaving) in early June. Sandhill Cranes, once a great rarity, now come in multiples. This season's reports came from Elba, *Genesee*, NY, 4 Jun (W. Symonds) and Bombay Hook 11 Jun (K. Liehr).

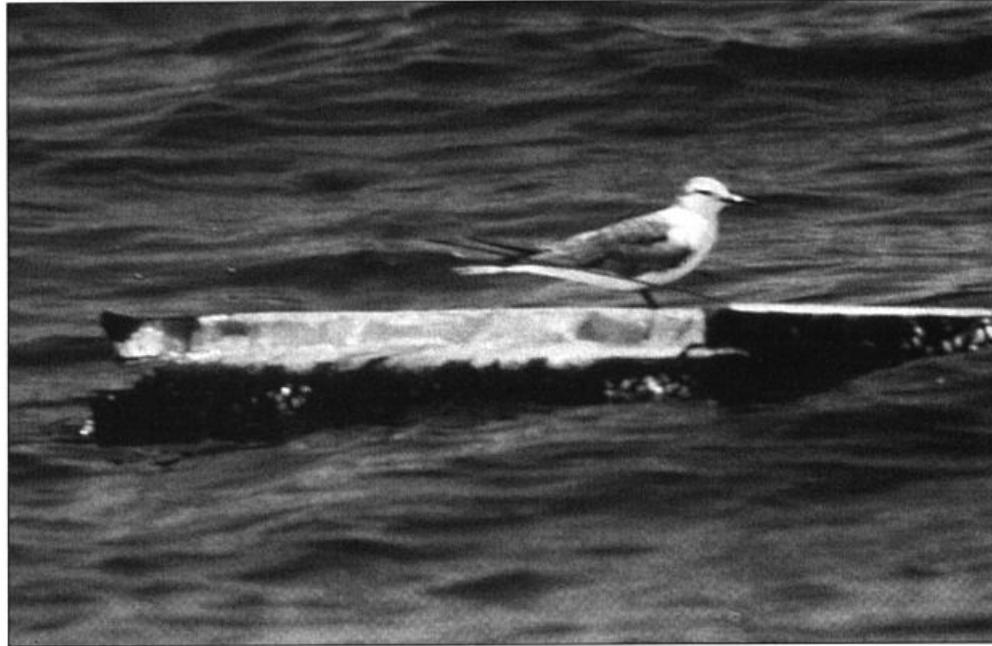
Shorebird habitat was shaped by drought. Many shorebirds were still moving N in early June, when inland waters were already low. Two Black-bellied Plovers were good on 7 Jun at the Chazy riverlands. A Red Knot in partial alternate plumage was a first *Berks*, PA, record at L. Ontelaunee 12-14 Jun (H. Lebo, m.ob.), and a White-rumped Sandpiper was good there on 3 Jun (K. Lebo). Fall migrants found inland wetlands dry, but parched lakes and rivers had lots of exposed mud. Although inland shorebirding produced few rarities in the absence of the downing effect of storms, numbers were high. Least Sandpipers exceeded 150 several times at L. Ontelaunee, *Berks*, PA, and 100 were at Pine Run, near Doylestown, *Bucks*, PA, at the end of July (Phila. Birdline). The Conejohela Flats hosted 12 species in mid-July, including both White-rumped and Baird's sandpipers on 20 Jul (R. Schutsky). Green Lane Res., *Montgomery*, PA, had a Stilt Sandpiper on 14 Jul (AM).

Endangered Piping Plovers barely held on in populous Delaware. They nest now only at Cape Henlopen, where 4 nests fledged six young. An encouraging 246 pairs were counted at 56 sites on Long I., but productivity was limited to little more than one chick per pair by off-road vehicles, unleashed dogs, and predation by crows and foxes (L. Papa, NYDEC). Black-necked Stilts wandered N to Jamaica Bay on 2-3 Jun (B. Klein, m.ob.) and Brig 1 Jun. An

**SA** Upland Sandpipers, among the earliest migrants, began turning up on 27 Jun at the *New Castle* airport, DE (C. Krolowicz), though none breed there. The best south-bound concentration was only 15 at the Johnson sod farm, *Salem*, NJ, 25 Jul (L. Larson, J. Williams). A 19-county grasslands survey in New York associated with a New England survey funded by the Fish and Wildlife Foundation found only 41 Upland Sandpipers at 7 sites (MV). With 15 adults, the best location, in Fayette Twp., *Seneca*, failed when the farmer mowed his drought-stricken field early. The next best site was the celebrated Nations Rd. grasslands, Geneseo Twp., *Livingston*, with others in *Oneida*, *Chemung*, and *Erie*. The prime breeding areas along the Saint Lawrence R. do not appear to have been censused this year. Southerly breeding was confirmed near Riverhead, *Suffolk*, LI (HMcG), and suspected at Lakehurst Naval Air Station, *Ocean*, NJ (RR). We lack information from JFK airport in New York City, recently a prime breeding location.

Am. Avocet, likely to overfly coming from the west, put down at L. Ontelaunee, *Berks*, PA, 17 Jul (Phila. Birdline). The only other straggler was at Jamaica Bay 22–25 Jul (A. Guthrie et al.). The season's best shorebird was a **Little Stint** in worn ad. plumage at the Nature Conservancy Refuge in Cape May, NJ, 11–18 Jul (P. Lehman, m.ob.). Of four Marbled Godwits, only one was away from the coast at Braddock Bay, *Monroe*, NY, 9 Jul (DT), with one Whimbrel; both are less than annual there. The only Curlew Sandpiper was at Little Creek on 27 Jul (P. Dumont). Habitat was unfavorable for Buff-breasted Sandpiper, which went unreported. Ruffs/Reeves were scarce, with only singles at Bombay Hook 25 Jun and Brig 28 Jul (D. Kones, E. Bruder).

A Pomarine Jaeger, much rarer than Parasitic onshore, was at Little Creek 12 Jun in strong easterlies (MG). Parasitic Jaegers peaked at eight off Democrat Pt. 13 Jun (NYRBA), four off Cape May 12 Jun (RC, VE), and four+ off Cape Henlopen, DE, 13 Jun (MG). The controversial Laughing Gull colony adjacent to JFK airport, at Jamaica Bay, is down to about 2000 pairs; airport authorities shot about 2000 this summer (DR). Despite hundreds hanging out in seemingly favorable habitat, no additional colony has formed on Long I. A first-sum-



**This sub-adult 40 miles east of Fenwick Island, Delaware, at the 19 Fathom Seamount, was one of three Bridled Terns reported on a 19 June pelagic trip out of Rehoboth Beach. It provided only the third documented record for Delaware and the first in June; previous documented Delaware records were from 1997 (APE, P. Lehman) and 1992 (fide APE) in September. There have been about 45 reports in the Region, not all of them fully documented or officially accepted. Photograph/Michael Bowen**

mer bird was far north at Pt. Breeze, *Orleans*, NY, 11 Jun (DT). A "2nd calendar year" **Franklin's Gull** on the Mohawk R. Delta at Cohoes, *Albany*, NY, for about a week after 11 Jul was no more than the 3rd local record and the first for mid-summer (WE). The only Little Gull was an immature on 18 Jun at Shinnecock Inlet, LI (AJL), and the only Black-headed Gull was in alternate plumage at Port Mahon on 7 Jul (H. Hallowell). Peterson has placed yellow numbered bands on 175 of the 1175 Ring-billed Gull chicks he banded on The Four Brothers in L. Champlain. Vegetation has cut nests of Herring Gull in New York harbor to 151 and Great Black-backed Gull to 18 (PK). Lesser Black-backed Gulls, rare in mid-summer until recently, made their first summer showing on the L. Ontario shore at several sites around Rochester in July (DT, MD, S. Taylor). Six in the Pickering Beach/Little Creek W.M.A., DE, 20 Jun were "by far the most I have seen on a single day" (BP). One was away from the coast at Mannington Marsh on 17 Jul (WD).

Six tern species visited the Conejohela Flats in mid-July, including Least, Black, Caspian, and Gull-billed. Other Least Terns in Pennsylvania included a 3rd *Montgomery* record at Green Lane Res. on 14 Jul (AM) and a first record at W. Fairview, *Dauphin*, on the Susquehanna on 7 Jul (RKo). These

birds probably originated from inland populations. Coastally, Least Terns struggle for space between dominant Com. Terns and multiple human and animal predators. They had a "disastrous" year in Delaware, where no nest was successful (APE). The east winds of 11–13 Jun brought a "portlandica" Arctic Tern ashore at Captree, LI (S. Mitra), an adult to Sagaponack, LI (AJL), and one or two to Cape Henlopen, DE (CC, MG). Two **Bridled Terns** 10 mi e. of Rehoboth Beach on 19 Jun (MG) and another farther out (ph. M. Bowen, R. Rufe) provided Delaware's 3rd documented record.

#### DOVES THROUGH WARBLERS

A Eur. Collared Dove at Cape May during 6–20 Jul (m.ob.) was the 2nd there—but surely not the last. Single White-winged Doves, spreading more slowly than their exploding relative, were at Jamaica Bay 10 Jul (A. Ott) and at Cape May on 4 Jun (RC, L. Zemaitis). A juv. N. Saw-Whet Owl, unexpected on the lakeshore plain, was photographed at Greece, *Monroe*, NY, 18 Jul (C. & C. Dean), while an adult was calling at State Game Land 110, *Berks*, PA, 27 Jun (M. Spence, B. Uhrich). The only Com. Night-hawk reported was in the species' primordial habitat—among the dunes at C. Henlopen, DE. Although Whip-poor-wills

have vanished from parts of this Region, encouraging reports included the first in 10 years at Redford, *Clinton*, NY (D. Fasking), three in Wieser S.F. near Harrisburg, PA (DH), and an amazing 60 which occupied sites in central *Luzerne*, PA, in early June (R. Koval). Yunick banded a record 57 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at Jenny L., *Saratoga*, NY; numbers were genuinely up, as indicated by the record 179 g of sugar water consumed daily (RPY). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers fed young 19 Jun in High Point S.P., *Sussex* (TBa, A. Driscoll, D. Jones), site of New Jersey's first nest last summer. Another on 4-5 Jun at Stoney Cr. in n. Lebanon, PA, was s. of its more usual breeding area on the Appalachian plateau (DB).

Calling Least Flycatchers at Palmyra, *Burlington*, NJ, in June (T. Bailey, WD) suggested breeding. A few nested 30 years ago in the Jersey Pine Barrens (E. Manners), in the Schuylkill R. Valley, PA, and at White Clay Cr., DE (DAC). A lost W. Kingbird was well-described in *Alleghany* S.P., *Cattaraugus*, NY, 5 Jun (†F. Gardner), only the 2nd local spring record. The sole Scissor-tailed Flycatcher report was over the Garden State Parkway n. of Cape May on 3 Jul (F&P Strawbridge). Both White-eyed and Warbling vireos are filling in areas on e. Long I., where they were not found on the 1988 atlas project (GT). A "bioblitz" on 4-5 Jun of 10 square mi along Stoney Cr., n. *Lebanon*, PA, turned up 346 Red-eyed Vireos (DB). Common Ravens have expanded outward to the edge of the Tug Hill Plateau in c. New York (WP) and may have bred in Letchworth S.P., *Wyoming*, NY (R. Rosche). In New Jersey, adults and young in Rockaway and Boonton Twps. confirm that they now nest in *Morris* (RR, B. Gallagher). Elusive Sedge Wrens failed to return in the same numbers to last summer's site on Nations Rd., *Livingston*, NY, but one turned up at Pound Ridge Reservation, *Westchester*, NY, 25 Jul (K&S Feustel), and they frequented a more usual site at Brig in mid-July.

A Yellow-throated Warbler sang through 20 Jun at Letchworth S.P., *Wyoming*, NY, far north and east of its recently established foothold in the upper Delaware R. basin of New York (†KF, DS, M. Tetlow). A Prairie Warbler was n. of any known breeding areas at The Gulf, *Clinton*, NY, in the n. Adirondacks on 11 Jun (J&R Heintz). Others present throughout June around Nunda, *Livingston*, NY (KF, DS, DT), were near n. limits. A w. Palm Warbler was late 4 Jun at the Manitou banding station, *Monroe*, NY (MZ), as were 21 Blackpoll Warblers banded there 2 Jun. Yunick documented a

**SA** Searches for Golden-winged Warblers in New York and Pennsylvania suggest that they are surviving at latitudes and elevations too high for Blue-winged Warblers. Around Black and Indian River Lakes in *Saint Lawrence* and *Jefferson*, NY, there were 75 Golden-winged and eight Brewster's hybrids; the nearest Blue-winged Warblers were 30 mi southwest, leaving a gap without either species (M. Young, S. Barker). Stirling Forest, *Orange*, NY, had 12 male and one female Golden-winged and 11 Brewster's (J. Confer). *Albany*, *Green*, and *Schuylker*, NY, had no Golden-winged. Pennsylvania had both species in *Dauphin* (G. Randolph, J. Plyler) and in *Pike*—10 Golden-winged, two Brewster's, and one Blue-winged (J. Plyler). One Golden-winged was remarkably high in the Adirondacks at Bloomingdale Bog, *Franklin*, NY, 30 Jul (M. Bochnik), recalling Frank Gill's observation of an "altitudinal refuge" for Golden-winged Warblers in the Poconos (*Am. Birds* 44: 1080).

decline in Ovenbirds: he banded none this summer, compared to his earlier average of 20 per year. Yet 280 were found in the Stoney Cr., *Lebanon*, PA, "bioblitz" on 4-5 Jun (DB). Two Kentucky Warblers singing through June in Van Buren Twp., *Onandaga*, NY, far north of known breeding areas, were the first to summer there (WP).

#### SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Clay-colored Sparrows seem to be consolidating their toehold in n.w. New York; they were at Mendon Ponds Park, *Monroe* (MZ, †RGS), and at the more traditional Andover, *Alleghany*, site (EB). A **Lark Sparrow** in Lemon Twp., *Wyoming*, PA, 22 Jun (†WR) was remarkable; they bred occasionally in w. Pennsylvania before 1931. [See also the Appalachian Region report.]

Blue Grosbeaks keep creeping northward. New breeding locations included a first Long I. record near Calverton, *Suffolk* (O. Birol, m.ob.), near Easton, *Northampton*, PA (AK), and at Oxford, *Chester*, PA (Phila. Birdline). The only Dickcissel was a territorial male at Ft. Edward, *Washington*, NY, the first there since 1974 (JG). Bobolinks bred for the first time in many years in n.w. Philadelphia, in an uncut field near the Schuylkill Valley Nature Center (*vide* DAC). Orchard Orioles bred again at Lysander,

*Onandaga*, at their n. limit (WP), and expanded into the n. fork of Long I. where they were not found in the 1988 Atlas (GT). It was a good Purple Finch year at Jenny L. after 5 bad years, and three Pine Siskins arrived 31 Jul, offering a promise of fall irruptions (RPY). A courting pair of Evening Grosbeaks was present Jul 1 at Dutch Mt., *Wyoming*, PA, where the first state nesting record was confirmed in 1994 (S. Conant).

**SA** The 19-county New York grasslands survey (see Upland Sandpiper SA) turned up a healthy 362 Grasshopper Sparrows, including an impressive 25-30 pairs in Eastport, *Suffolk*, LI (HMcG). Vesper Sparrows, by contrast, are doing poorly. The survey found an astonishingly low 16 at 7 sites, mostly in *Steuben* and *Suffolk*, LI. Only 3 sites are known in Delaware (APE). Henslow's Sparrows hang on only in the north during a precise window in old field succession. The New York grasslands survey found 80, by day and night censusing, at 25 sites (MV). The best areas were tracts of abandoned farms in *Steuben*, which accounted for over half the total, and Genesee Twp., *Livingston*, with another 16. They did not breed this year at Saratoga Battlefield, a recent stronghold (JG), and none were found at previous southerly sites like Galesville, s. *Ulster*, where succession has advanced too far (MV). The southernmost Henslow's seem to be the traditional three+ at W. Nicholson, *Wyoming*, PA (WR). The former Plattsburgh Air Force Base, *Clinton*, NY, recently an important grassland, has been insufficiently mowed since the Air Force's departure. Declines were noted there in Vesper, Savannah, and Grasshopper sparrows (M. Gretch).

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# middle atlantic coast region



This Dickcissel posing for the camera in late May at Custis Tomb, Northampton County, later established the first confirmed breeding for the Virginia portion of the Eastern Shore. Photograph/Jamie Cameron

## MARSHALL J. ILIFF

This season was remarkably dry from Maine to North Carolina with almost no rain in June or July. By August many streams were at record low levels, and Maryland had instituted its first water rationing *ever*. There were few comments on how the drought affected our nesting landbirds, but perhaps it was in some way responsible for the pattern of northerly/montane breeders that appeared throughout the Region during mid-summer.

An unusually large number of species typically regarded as summer "lingers" were reported: Sharp-shinned Hawk, Spotted Sandpiper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Magnolia Warbler (singing male), Rose-breasted Grosbeak (male), Henslow's Sparrow (singing), White-throated Sparrow (six, several singing), Savannah Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and breeding Bobolinks. (Reports of Purple Finch and Rusty Blackbird lacked descriptions and were excluded, but these may well have been valid records,

especially given the overall pattern). Few of these species were reported in late May as might be expected for "lingering" birds. Also, the high proportion of males and/or singing males suggests displacement of unpaired birds from the breeding grounds. Extreme drought might lead to sub-optimal breeding conditions and precipitate dispersal such as the Red-breasted Nuthatch invasion that developed. Every one of the above species is typical of mountain areas to the north of the Region, and most occur in mountains just to the west and southwest.

