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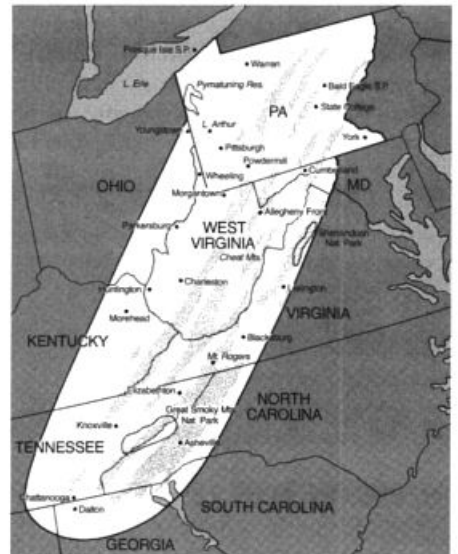
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appalachian region

ROBERT C. LEBERMAN

Moderate to severe drought conditions prevailed over most of the Appalachian Region this summer, and it was hotter than usual. For the most part, however, observers did not think that this negatively affected nesting success. In fact, an observer in *Venango*, Pennsylvania, believed that the combination of warm favorable weather in late spring coupled with a dry summer may have resulted in higher than usual breeding success for many species of birds. However, based on long-term population studies by J. Merritt at Powdermill Nature Reserve in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania, small mammals also did very well, and in an ongoing study of Louisiana Waterthrushes in the same region, Mulvihill found small mammal and other predation on nests considerably higher this summer than last. In 1998 about 20 percent of 43 waterthrush nests under study were depredated, compared to 40 percent of 42 nests this season.

Several southern birds continued to expand their breeding ranges northward within the Appalachians. In Pennsylvania White-eyed Vireos, once confined to the extreme southeastern corner of the state, were found nesting as far north as *Crawford*, and one was seen at Presque Isle State Park, *Erie*, in June. Yellow-throated Warblers, unknown as breeding birds in western Pennsylvania before 1978, are now common along most rivers and are extending their range along smaller mountain streams as well. Conversely, many birds of the mountain uplands continue to be found farther south and at lower elevations each year. This summer the trend was especially evident for Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green warblers. Each of these was found at numerous sites well away from the mountain ridges, often in maturing spruce or pine plantations or in regenerating mixed forests that had been cut over earlier this century. A scattering of Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins added interest to summer



birding on several of the higher Appalachian peaks.

Abbreviations: G.R.W.A. (*Grand River Wildlife Area, Trumbull, OH*); G.S.M.N.P. (*Great Smoky Mountains N.P.*); M.L.W.A. (*Mosquito L. Wildlife Area, Trumbull Co., OH*); P.I.S.P. (*Presque Isle State Park, Erie, PA*); P.N.R. (*Powdermill Nature Reserve, Rector, Westmoreland Co., PA*); Y.C.S.P. (*Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana Co., PA*).

GREBES THROUGH HERONS

Despite the drought, water levels remained high, and breeding success was good for Pied-billed Grebes in the Conneaut Marsh and Pymatuning regions of n.w. Pennsylvania (RFL, RCL). In *Trumbull*, OH, nesting Pied-billeds were found at both Shenango and Grand R. state wildlife areas (DJH, CB). An imm. Com. Loon lingered at Chickamauga L., *Hamilton*, TN, 4–11 Jun (HS, JW), and in Pennsylvania singles were at Y.C.S.P. 6–8 Jun (GL), Prince Gallitzin S.P. 11 Jun (JSa), and Kahle L., *Venango*, 24 Jul (RS). Double-crested Cormorants were nesting near Kingsport, TN, where a few breeding pairs have been present since 1992 (RK); elsewhere, numbers were down from recent years, with a high count of 25 non-breeders summering at Meander Res., *Mahoning*, OH (NB). The Am. Bittern was reported only from Geneva Marsh, *Crawford*, PA, 27 Jun (RFL). Up to three Least Bitterns were at Roderick Wildlife Reserve, *Erie*, PA, 3 Jun–3 Jul (JM, LM), and one was at G.R.W.A. 26–27 Jun and 11 Jul (CB).

Great Blue Herons definitely are increasing in the north, with many new small nesting colonies reported. An especially large rookery near Lordstown, *Trumbull*, OH, contained 394 nests in 88 trees this summer (CB); an incredible 120 Great Blues were counted in a feeding concentration around a one-acre remnant pond at the recently drained (for dam repairs) Tamarack L., Meadville, PA, 26 Jul (RCL). The usual summer influx of Great Egrets came later than usual, and although widespread, numbers were lower than normal in most areas. The only Snowy Egret report was of one at P.I.S.P. 1 Jun (GR). Concentrations of Black-crowned Night-Herons, all near nest sites, included over 200 birds at Cherokee Dam (DEd) and 20 at Douglas Dam, TN (RK). Yellow-crowned Night-Heron sightings came only from Tennessee: one at Elizabethton, where the species has nested for over 20 years (RK), and two immatures at Chickamauga L. 12 Jul (KC).

WATERFOWL THROUGH MOORHENS

A lone Mute Swan was at P.I.S.P. 14–30 Jun (GR), and a pair nested along the Allegheny R. at Starbrick, *Warren*, PA (TG). An oddity was an unmarked Trumpeter Swan in late July at L. Arthur, *Butler*, PA, that required PA Game Commission assistance to remove loosely wrapped fishing line from around its head and bill (DD, WS). Three Gadwalls were a rare summer find at Kingston Steam Plant, *Roan*, TN, 28 Jun (KC) and 25 Jul (DEd, DT). Two N. Pintails at P.I.S.P. 29 Jul represented just a 2nd July *Erie* record, and a male Canvasback lingered there 20 Jul through the period (JM). A Lesser Scaup was at Kingsport, TN, 12 Jun (RK) and at

Shelocta, *Indiana*, PA, 2–4 Jun (MRH). A Hooded Merganser at Bells Lane 15 Jun represented the first summer record for *Staunton*, VA (YL). Sightings of Com. Mergansers, out of their usual breeding range within n.c. Pennsylvania, included one at Conneaut Marsh 3 Jul (RFL), one at Pymatuning L., *Crawford*, 19–30 Jul (RCL), three at P.I.S.P. 31 Jul (JM), and four (probably a hen and three juveniles) at Confluence, *Somerset*, 22 Jun (JPa). A Ruddy Duck was on Pymatuning L. near Linesville 18 Jul (RFL, RCL).

The breeding population of Bald Eagles continues to expand in the Region. There were 24 active nests in w. Pennsylvania (11 in *Crawford* alone) producing 21 young (*fide* DB). A nest at Douglas L. was the first for Tennessee e. of Knoxville (PW). A family group of Sharp-shinned Hawks at Staunton, VA, 28 Jul provided the 2nd breeding record for that area (*fide* YL). A Golden Eagle near Garland, *Warren*, PA, 8 Jun was most unusual at this season (DP, *fide* TG). On a nest box route in *Warren*, PA, Am. Kestrels used 38 boxes, and 129 young fledged—about average for recent years (DW). An unusually early imm. female Merlin was seen at P.I.S.P. 31 Jul (JM). For the 3rd consecutive year, Peregrine Falcons nested in G.S.M.N.P. (RK); a pair near Chickamauga Dam, TN, fledged one young 6 Jun that was later believed to have been lost in the river (KC); the pair nesting on the Gulf Tower building in Pittsburgh, PA, fledged four young (DB). Ruffed Grouse populations were high near Morgantown, WV (GB), and very high in the Laurel Highlands of s.w. Pennsylvania (RM, RCL); a brood of grouse was considered a good find at Hinch Mt., *Cumberland*, TN, 19 Jun (RDS). A Northern Bobwhite at Sayre,

Bradford, PA, 24–25 Jul was unusual so far north (RSh); the only other report was of one in *Rockingham*, VA, Jun 29, where the species has been scarce in recent years (MS). Virginia Rails were common at the Conneaut Marsh and Pymatuning L. areas of *Crawford*, PA (RCL, RFL); in Ohio they were found at 4 sites at M.C.W.A. in early June (DJH), and at least three were at G.R.W.A. 26–27 Jun (CB). A high count of 12 Com. Moorhens came from Hartstown, *Crawford*, PA, 22 Jun (MB); in Ohio an adult was at Shenango Wildlife Area 18 Jun (DJH), and several were at G.R.W.A. 26–27 Jun (CB).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

A late spring migrant Black-bellied Plover was at Tamarack L., Meadville, PA, 1 Jun, and an exceptionally high count of 150 Semipalmated Plovers was made there the same day (IF). The last spring Lesser Yellowlegs left Tamarack L. after 4 Jun (RFL), while the first probable fall migrant reached Y.C.S.P. by 22 Jun (MRH). The season's only Willet was spotted at Mill Cr. Park, *Mahoning*, OH, 18 Jul (NB). Rare in Pennsylvania away from L. Erie, a Ruddy Turnstone was at Tamarack L. 1 Jun (IF). Over 200 Semipalmated Sandpipers were estimated at Tamarack L. 1 Jun (IF), with 80 remaining on 4 Jun (RFL). As many as 12 W. Sandpipers stopped over at Mill Cr. Park, OH, 13–28 Jun (NB). Tamarack L., PA, hosted up to four White-rumped Sandpipers on 1–4 Jun (IF, RFL), two Baird's Sandpipers 1 Jun (IF), and five Dunlins 6 Jun (RFL). Six Short-billed Dowitchers had arrived at M.L.W.A. by 13 Jul (DJH). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was a rare find at Y.C.S.P. 22 Jun (MRH).

Summer records of Bonaparte's Gull

SA Three gull chicks delivered to Erie bird rehabilitator Wendy Campbell led to the discovery of the first successful nesting colony of Ring-billed Gulls in Pennsylvania. An estimated 700–800 adults, including many incubating birds, and at least 120 chicks were subsequently located in mid-June near the General Electric plant in e. Erie (LM, JM). The fact that so large a colony had gone undetected, presumably for several years, was no doubt due in part to birders having focused their attention on the favored destination of Presque Isle on the opposite side of Erie. Several previous Ring-billed nesting attempts at P.I.S.P. had all been unsuccessful.



The juveniles interspersed among adults on 17 June at the General Electric Plant on the east side of the city of Erie document the first successful colonial nesting of Ring-billed Gull in Pennsylvania. Photograph/Jerry McWilliams

included single birds at Tamarack L., PA, 5–6 Jun (RFL), Y.C.S.P. 8–9 Jun (GL), and M.L.W.A. 27 Jul (DJH). Three early Caspian Terns were at M.L.W.A. 25 Jun (DJH), and one was at L. Arthur, PA, 16 Jul (DD). Black Terns were barely holding on as breeding birds at their traditional sites in *Crawford*, PA at least one pair was at Pymatuning L. near Linesville in July (RCL), and two birds were seen carrying food for young at near-by Hartstown Marsh 26 Jun (MB).

DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

In June a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** briefly appeared at Conneautville, *Crawford*, PA, the same area where the first state record was established in 1996 (TCN). Black-billed Cuckoos were virtually absent in *Huntingdon* and *Somerset*, PA (GG, JPa), uncommon at Reedsville, WV (GF), and unobserved at Morgantown, WV (GB). Conversely, Yellow-billed Cuckoos were reported to be more common than usual throughout much of the Region. Whip-poor-wills were widely believed to be increasing in numbers; better counts included seven or eight at P.I.S.P. 23 Jun (DS) and 28 along a 7.3 mi stretch of dirt road in *Venango*, PA, 11–15 Jul (GE, m.ob.). New research indicates that the Southern Appalachian form of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker has declined significantly; just 2 nests were found near Konnarock, VA, three pairs near Blowing Rock, NC, and none in Tennessee (JO, *fide* RK). In the north, however, breeding populations were high, and sapsuckers were confirmed nesting in *Trumbull*, OH, providing a new county record (CB).

A late Olive-sided Flycatcher was at Moraine S.P., PA, 1 Jun (PH, DH); one singing in suitable breeding habitat at 3200 ft in *Carter*, TN, 19 Jun could not be relocated later (JMg, RK). A few Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were found breeding this summer in the Allegheny N.F. as well as in *Sullivan* and *Wyoming*, PA (DG). A pair of Loggerhead Shrikes, with two recently fledged young, was at Moscow, *Staunton*, VA, 30 Jun (YL). Tree Swallows continue to increase in e. Tennessee, where a pair nested at a grassy bald on Roan Mt. at 5725 ft (RK). A count of 220 N. Rough-winged Swallows along the Shenandoah R., *Rockingham*, VA, 29 Jun (MS) was impressively high. A colony in *Venango*, PA, had an estimated 600 ad. Bank Swallows on 4 Jul (JSt). A singing Brown Creeper at Rock Bridge 9–10 Jun furnished what is possibly a first summer record for the Cumberland Plateau in Kentucky (FR). Although House Wrens were common along Allegheny Mt.,

Berlin, PA (JPa), numbers were considered low at P.N.R. (RCL, RM), Morgantown, WV (GB), and Canfield, OH (NB). Two Sedge Wrens were on territory at M.L.W.A., OH, 2 Jun (DJH)—the season's only report. In *Pocahontas*, WV, Swainson's Thrushes were believed to be as common as at any time in the past 10 years (GB). In the spruce-fir belt of e. Tennessee, Hermit Thrushes—which have been steadily increasing in their s. range—were found on Roan Mt., Unaka Mt., and Mt. LeConte (RK); and breeding populations were high in *Pocahontas*, WV (GB), and *Hocking*, OH (FR). Comments on Wood Thrush populations were mixed: on Allegheny Mt. near Berlin, PA (JPa), and in *Pocahontas*, WV (GB), they were considered scarce; but a total of 75 were found on 4 breeding bird routes in *Armstrong* and *Indiana*, PA (RMH).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Early southbound Tennessee Warblers were banded at P.I.S.P. 11 Jul (RFL, SS) and at P.N.R. 21 Jul (RM, RES); another was seen at Hidden Valley Recreation Area, *Bath*, VA, 26 Jul (JB). For a 2nd consecutive year, Yellow Warblers were “mysteriously scarce” in *Venango*, PA (JSt); however, they were abundant at P.I.S.P. (RFL, RCL), and at G.R.W.A. 55 migrant Yellows were tallied in 2.5 hrs on 11 Jul (DJH). Several Cape May Warblers lingered during their spring migration through 6 Jun at Mt. Davis, *Somerset*, PA, about a week later than usual (JT). On 23 Jul a Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen carrying food in *Garret*, MD (FP); in West Virginia a pair with three young was at Gaudineer Knob, *Pocahontas*, 9 Jul (GB), and three were at Spruce Knob, *Pendleton*, 23 Jul (JB). Two pairs of Pine Warblers were located in n. *Washington*, PA, where they are rare (CT), and a bird near Clarksville represented the first summer record for *Green*, PA (RB). Several Blackpoll Warblers, including a pair feeding young, were observed in Coalbed Swamp, w. *Wyoming*, PA, where the species was first found nesting in 1993 (DG). Swainson's Warblers were found to be doing well and extending their range at Red R. Gorge, *Wolfe*, KY (FR); in *Nicholas*, WV, none could be found at a traditional site along the Meadow R., but one was heard along Colson Cr. (GB).

On 21 Jun at least five **Clay-colored Sparrows** were singing at a reclaimed stripmine near Sligo, *Clarion*, PA (AB). The *Centre*, PA, Lark Sparrow reported in the *NAB* spring issue was last seen 5 Jun (*fide* P. Rodewald). An extensive survey of grassland sparrows in w. Pennsylvania found over 120

Henslow's Sparrows in 8 counties, and 35 singing males were located at a reclaimed stripmine in s.e. *Garret*, MD, 22 May (MI). A Dark-eyed Junco visiting a feeder 3–4 Jul in *Mahoning*, OH, was unprecedented for the area in summer (RJ, LW, *fide* DJH). Two singing male Blue Grosbeaks were unusual in *Page*, VA, 11 Jul (MS), as was one seen in N. Branch, *Alleghany*, MD, 25 & 31 Jul (RK). For the 4th consecutive year, three Dickcissels were at a site in *Washington*, TN (RK). Over 100 E. Meadowlarks were listed on a count centered at Swoope, *Augusta*, VA, 25 Jul (YL).

A good spruce cone crop apparently accounted for good numbers of Red Crossbills in Tennessee; over 100 were seen at Roan Mt. (RK), and smaller numbers were at both Unaka Mt. (AT) and G.S.M.N.P. (RK). Seven Red Crossbills were on Spruce Knob, *Pendleton*, WV, 23 Jun (JB). Pine Siskins were found in breeding habitat at Swallow Falls, MD, 23–26 May (MI). As many as 40 siskins were seen at Roan Mt. and up to ten on Unaka Mt., TN (AT); one was found on Clingman's Dome, G.S.M.N.P., 17 Jun (MS) and another on Spruce Knob, WV, 23 Jul (JB).

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