

Appalachia



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It was an unseasonably mild and dry fall throughout much of the Region. On the plus side (from a birding standpoint), this led to low water levels and extensive mudflats at many lakes and reservoirs, which translated into more than the usual number of interesting shorebird sightings. The lack of strong cold fronts or storms resulted in a late and comparatively light waterfowl migration, with no major fallouts through the end of the period. The generally weak frontal passages also did not precipitate heavy fallouts of passerine migrants, but the clement weather provided consistently favorable conditions for the daily operation of the Region's three big songbird banding stations, and totals at two of these were well above average. At Powdermill Nature Reserve in the mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania, a record 10,641 birds were banded, which was a remarkable *three* standard deviations (S.D.) above the 40-year average of 6190. Banders at the Three Rivers Migration Observatory in southern West Virginia also enjoyed their best fall migration (5522 birds banded) since the inception of that program in 1995. In contrast, 3826 birds banded at the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory

in northeastern West Virginia was the sixth lowest fall total in 44 years and just 67% of average (GH). For complete fall banding totals at two of these stations, readers are referred to <<http://www.westol.com/~banding>> (for Powdermill) and <<http://www.brooksbird-club.org/afmo.html>> (for Allegheny Front).

Abbreviations: A.F.M.O. (Allegheny Front Migration Observatory, Grant, WV); P.N.R. (Powdermill Nature Reserve, Rector, Westmoreland, PA); P.I.S.P. (Presque Isle S.P., Erie, PA); T.R.M.O. (Three Rivers Migration Observatory, Raleigh and Mercer, WV); Y.C.S.P. (Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana, PA).

LOONS THROUGH IBISES

As usual, most Red-throated Loon sightings came from P.I.S.P., where 48 were listed during a systematic waterbird count, including an early bird 4 Oct (JMc); s. of L. Erie, singles were at Pymatuning Res., PA 14 Nov (RFL), Y.C.S.P. 20 Nov (MH*i*, DJ), Bald Eagle S.P., PA 25-26 Nov (RSt), and at Salem, WV 6 Nov (PC). The best migration count of Common Loons was of 271 flying over Y.C.S.P. 20 Nov (MH*i*, DJ). An exceptionally early Red-necked Grebe appeared at N. Fork Dam, Cambria, PA 15 Aug (KGe), one was at Codorus S.P., York, PA 28-30 Sep (PR), and 2 were at P.I.S.P. 18-23 Nov (JMc). Up to 2 Eared Grebes were at P.I.S.P. 17-27 Nov (JMc), and one was at Pymatuning 18 Nov (RFL); at S. Holston L., TN, where they have been found for eight consecutive autumns, 4 Eared Grebes had

returned by 17 Sep, and 10 were seen 21 Oct (RK*n*). Four American White Pelicans were a rare find at Douglas L., TN 2-7 Nov (RK*n*). The Double-crested Cormorant flight peaked at the end of Oct with 239 on L. Arthur, Butler, PA on the 27th (DY) and 275 at Pymatuning on the 28th (RFL).

A Least Bittern found dead in Parkersburg 19 Oct was a first record for Wood, WV (*vide* JE). There were good counts of Great Egrets throughout Appalachia; 20 were along the Susquehanna R. at W. Fairview, Cumberland, PA in early Aug (RK*o*), up to 15 were at Mosquito L., OH, in Sep (DH, CB*a*), and a high count of 75 was made at Rankin Bottoms, TN 9 Sep (RK*n*). Among other s. herons, a Snowy Egret at Brunner's I., York, PA 24 Sep represented the season's sole report (AS), as did a Tricolored Heron at W. Fairview, PA 5 Aug (RK*o*). There were two reports of Cattle Egret: one in Wood, WV 27-30 Oct (NO) and one in Garrett, MD 2 Nov (KD). **Wood Storks** created much excitement among birders when an imm. was found near Mosiertown, Crawford, PA 12-31 Aug (AT, ph. JMc, m. ob.), providing the 2nd record of the species for nw. Pennsylvania, and another imm was at Littlestown, Adams, PA from mid-Aug through 3 Sep (ph. RW, TFe, PR, m. ob.). Another exceptional Pennsylvania find was an imm. **White Ibis** at Y.C.S.P. 19-27 Aug (M&EF, m. ob.), while in Tennessee an unidentified *Plegadis* ibis was a notable rarity at Rankin Bottoms 8 Aug (*vide* RK*n*).

WATERFOWL

Rare anywhere in Appalachia, a Greater White-fronted Goose was at Long Arm Res., York, PA 23 Nov (BM). A Brant was another good find at P.I.S.P. 24 Nov+ (JT, m. ob). Although 5 early Tundra Swans were at Pymatuning 28 Oct (RFL), the flight was generally late and few really large flocks were noted—an exception being 797 flyovers at Y.C.S.P. 20 Nov (MH*i*, DJ). The waterfowl find of the season was the female **Harlequin Duck** that put down on a small pond in Richmond Township, where it was a first record for Crawford, PA (ph. BS). Seasonal totals of 11 Surf, 12 White-winged, and 11 Black Scoters were listed on the P.I.S.P. waterbird count (JMc); elsewhere a White-winged stopped on S. Holston L., TN 4-11 Nov (MB*r*, m. ob.), and 2 Blacks put down on Colyer L., Centre, PA 11 Nov (MHe). The Hooded Merganser migration was heavy at Pymatuning, peaking at 3600 birds 18 Nov; Red-breasted Mergansers also were fairly numerous there, with a maximum of 500 on 12 Nov (RFL). The presence of 6 Common Mergansers on the Cheat R. at Rowlesburg, WV throughout Aug and into Sep suggested the possibility that the species may be



One or two Bohemian Waxwings, part of a small but solid flight of the species toward the eastern and lower Great Lakes and New England, made it south to Presque Isle State Park, Pennsylvania, 10 and (here) 17 November 2001. Birds of this species south of northern Pennsylvania are genuine vagrants in the East. Photograph by Jerry McWilliams.

breeding in the state (GF), and in the Tioga-Hammond Dam area in *Tioga*, PA an exceptional total of 1000+ was seen 13 Nov (RSh). Two early Ruddy Ducks were at P.I.S.P. 16 Aug (JMc); the season's high count was of 1100 on two *Garrett*, MD lakes 3 Nov (FP).

RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

In general, the hawk migration through the Region was good to excellent based on results at several organized hawk watches in the mountains of w. and cen. Pennsylvania. A good Osprey flight included 432 at Waggoner's Gap, Carlisle (DGr), 122 at Tuscarora Summit, *Franklin* (DGe), 111 at Allegheny Front, *Bedford* (CM), and 109 at Stone Mt., *Huntingdon* (GG); in Tennessee, a late migrant was still at Ft. Loudoun L. 30 Nov (CW). A Swallow-tailed Kite was a rare late summer wanderer to Oak Ridge, TN 8 Aug (*fide* JCa); another was observed from the Mendota, VA hawk watch 16 Sep (LMc). Excellent numbers of Bald Eagles were observed at Allegheny Front (38), Stone Mt., PA (42), and Waggoner's Gap (132), but 15 was a low count at Tuscarora Summit. High count for Northern Goshawk was 144 at Waggoner's Gap. There was an excellent flight of Red-tailed Hawks, including 4420 at Waggoner's Gap, a record-high 2779 at Allegheny Front, and a 2nd highest 1543 at Stone Mt. The only report of Swainson's Hawk came from the Stone Mt., PA 9 Nov (*fide* GG). A very good flight of Golden Eagles included 186 at Waggoner's Gap (DGr), a record 140 at Allegheny Front (CM), 109 at Stone Mt. (GG), and 52 at Tuscarora Summit (DGe).

Although drought conditions contributed to low marsh bird (but high shorebird) counts over much of Appalachia, water levels remained high at Conneaut Marsh, Geneva, PA, where good rail counts included 5 Virginias 22 Aug and 22

Common Moorhens 18 Sep (RFL). A family of 4 Sandhill Cranes from the *Lawrence/Mercer*, PA breeding population remained through the fall (NT, m. ob.); the first migrant arrived at Hiwassee W.R., TN 29 Oct, where the flock totaled 3000 birds by late Nov (KAC). An unusually good diversity (30 species) of shorebirds was reported from the Region, including multiple records of seldom-reported species like White-rumped, Baird's, Upland, and Buff-breasted Sandpipers. Sod farms at *Henderson*, NC attracted 11 Black-bellied Plovers 1 Sep and 8 American Golden-Plovers 6 Oct (WF, BO). A record-late Semipalmated Plover was at P.I.S.P. 17-30 Nov (JMc). Increasingly regular in Appalachia in recent years, an American Avocet was at Littlestown, *Adams*, PA 4 Aug (*fide* PR), 2 were at Prince Gallitzen S.P., PA 17 Aug (JSa), one was at Kingston Steam Plant, TN 20 Sep (AH), and a flock of 14 was at Bristol, TN 21 Oct (KH, m. ob.). Lone Whimbrels were at P.I.S.P. 20 Aug and 11 Sep (JMc); one was at Conneautville, PA 1 Sep (AT), while a bird at Shenango Res., *Mercer*, PA 12 Sep was a county first (NT). Single Hudsonian Godwits were rarities at P.I.S.P. 28 Aug (JMc) and 13 Sep (SS). A late Ruddy Turnstone was still at P.I.S.P. 30 Nov (JMc), and one near Ligonier, PA on 17 Sep was a rare find in the mountains (FN). Four Red Knots at Rankin Bottoms, TN were an unusual find there 14-21 Sep (RKn). A flock of 100+ Least Sandpipers was exceptionally large for the Canaan Valley, *Tucker*, WV 17 Aug (*fide* GF). Two *Ruffs* appeared at Rankin Bottoms 23 Sep (DM, ALo, LN) for the 3rd e. Tennessee record. A Wilson's Phalarope stopped at Shenango Res., PA 5-8 Aug (JSt, KGo, m. ob.), and one was at Kingston Steam Plant, TN 11 Aug (*fide* RKn). In Tennessee, single Red Phalaropes were at Kingston Steam Plant 16-23 Sep (JHe) and

Rankin Bottoms 23-24 Sep (RKn); in Pennsylvania, one was at P.I.S.P. 27 Oct (BC). Two Red-necked Phalaropes were rare finds at Trout Run W.W.T.P., *Garrett*, MD 21-22 Aug (FP). An imm. Pomarine Jaeger was well described from P.I.S.P. 18 Nov (JMc), and single unidentified jaegers were observed there 8 Oct (JMc) and 23 Nov (JF). A Laughing Gull wandered inland to Warren, PA 3 Aug (JF), one was spotted at P.I.S.P. 4 Oct (JMc), and 5 were at Rankin Bottoms, TN 14-19 Sep (RKn). A Lesser Black-backed Gull was an exciting find at P.I.S.P. 22 Sep (BC). Rare away from L. Erie, single Great Black-backed Gulls were at W. Fairview, *Cumberland*, PA in early Aug (RKO) and at Pymatuning L. 16 Aug (RFL). The season's only Least Tern appeared at Shenango Res, *Mercer*, PA 12 Aug (MMc, m. ob.)—a county first.

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

A Eurasian Collared-Dove at Fairview, PA 25 Nov was a first for *Erie* (JMc). A few Snowy Owls invaded Appalachia in late Nov, with one at Glen Rock, *York*, PA 15-16 Nov (*fide* PR) and one at Willow I. Dam *Pleasants*, WV 20-29 Nov (*fide* JE); another found injured at Lafayette, *Walker*, GA during the last week of Nov later died at a rehab station (*fide* MB). Up to 6 Short-eared Owls at Imperial, *Allegheny*, PA in Nov (CT) topped numerous w. Pennsylvania sightings, and one was a rare find at Masontown, *Preston*, WV 21 Nov (GF). Northern Saw-whet Owls were widely reported in Pennsylvania, including a remarkable 172 banded at Shaver's Cr Environmental Center, *Huntingdon*, this fall (*fide* GG). Better Common Nighthawk counts included 500+ near Black Moshannon S.P., PA 24 Aug (*fide* CBa), 136 in one flock in the upper Cedar Cr. Valley, *Shenandoah*, VA 24 Aug (DD), and 100 at Athens, WV 22 Aug (JP). The Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration at P.N.R., where 210 were banded, was 3rd best there in 40 years (RM, RCL), and a record 844 hummingbirds was counted in passage at A.F.M.O. (*fide* GH, RB). An imm. *Calliope Hummingbird* visited a feeder at Little R., *Transylvania*, NC 4-8 Nov (NS, WF) for a 2nd county record in two years. In Tennessee, a female Rufous Hummingbird was banded in *Sevier* 4 Nov (CS), and one was in *Sequatchie* 11 Nov (CBl); an unidentified *Selasphorus* was in *Henderson*, NC 8-30 Nov (WF, BO).

Possibly part of the small disjunct Tennessee breeding population, single Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were seen in *Hawkins* 2 Aug (DE) and in *Claiborne* 11 Aug (JM). Single Olive-sided Flycatchers were reported 1 Aug-12 Sep from six widely scattered localities spanning the full length of the Region (m. ob.). A Northern Shrike had arrived at Pymatuning L. by 9 Nov

(RFL), and one was at Erie N.W.R., *Crawford*, PA 18 Nov (BS) for the season's only reports. The 13,212 Blue Jays counted passing by A.F.M.O. was the 3rd best flight there in 44 years (*fide* GH), and a heavy jay movement was also noted at Morgantown, WV during the first three weeks of Sep (GB). At Pymatuning, an estimated 6200 Tree Swallows were seen 25 Sep, and 2 remained there 22 Oct (RFL). A very late Cliff Swallow appeared at Moraine S.P., PA 27 Oct (ph. SK). A heavy Red-breasted Nuthatch flight brought good numbers to se. Tennessee by mid-Sep (KAC), and 25 were found in *Rabin*, GA 10 Nov (*fide* MB). Despite deteriorating habitat, at least 12 Brown-headed Nuthatches were found at Kingston Steam Plant, TN 23 Sep (FR). A Sedge Wren was a rare find at Curwensville, *Centre*, PA 23 Aug (EZ), and one was in *Henderson*, NC 26 Sep (WF, RSe); in Tennessee singles were at Austin Springs 20-29 Sep (RKn) and Brainerd Levee 20 Sep and 21 Oct (KAC). Surprising was an imm. Marsh Wren, still in juv. plumage, banded at P.N.R. on 16 Aug, about 160 km from any known breeding station (RCL, RM). There was an extraordinary flight of Wood Thrushes at P.N.R.—120 were banded, five times the long-term average and double the previous record high there (RCL, RM). At T.R.M.O., 17 Wood Thrushes was almost three times greater than the six-year average and twice the previous high (RC), but 21 banded at A.F.M.O. was just average. The Swainson's Thrush flight was good at all three stations: 336 at A.F.M.O. and 314 at P.N.R. were a little above average, and a record 79 birds were banded at T.R.M.O. Up to 300 American Pipits were at *Henderson*, NC 10 Nov (WF, BO), and 500 in *Sullivan*, TN 22 Nov was an exceptional count (WC). One or 2 **Bohemian Waxwings** were rare wanderers to P.I.S.P. 10 & 17 Nov (ph. JMc).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Undoubtedly the parulid of the season was w. Pennsylvania's first **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, found at P.I.S.P. 8 Sep (BC, JHo, RF, KCo). Although the warbler migration in general did not make much of an impression on most field observers, some very good one-day counts at Hendersonville, NC 15 Sep included 40+ Chestnut-sided Warblers, 40+ Magnolia Warblers, and 75 American Redstarts (WF, RSe). A locally heavy flight of Tennessee Warblers this fall was evidenced by a record-high total of 806 (200% above average) banded at T.R.M.O. (RC), with a peak of 170 there on 18 Sep and a "massive movement" of 1000+ Tennessees crossing Roan Mt., TN on 6 Sep (RKn). At A.F.M.O., however, 305 Tennessee Warblers banded was just a little above average, whereas 40 banded at P.N.R. was 75% below average. At A.F.M.O., a

total of 374 Blackpoll Warblers, historically the most commonly banded bird there, was down 37% compared to the most recent ten-year average, 63 Cape May Warblers down 70%, and Bay-breasted Warblers (49 banded) down 43%. At P.N.R., these species were 45%, 90%, and 33% below their 40-year averages, respectively. At T.R.M.O., however, 51 Bay-breasted Warblers banded was the highest fall total since that station began operation in 1995. With 849 banded, Black-throated Blue Warblers were 20% above average at A.F.M.O.; 430 Black-throated Green Warblers at A.F.M.O. were 12% above average. At P.N.R., banding totals for Black-throated Blue Warbler were twice the long-term average, and record-high fall banding totals for Black-throated Green Warbler (130), Magnolia Warbler (523), Hooded Warbler (189), Northern Waterthrush (71), and Black-and-white Warbler (32) were all 130-190% above average. A very late Yellow Warbler frequented a suet feeder in Warren, PA 21-25 Oct (*fide* TG), and a Magnolia Warbler was still in *Hamilton*, TN 17 Nov (*fide* KAC).

Single Clay-colored Sparrows were at P.I.S.P. 21 Oct (RSr) and in nearby Erie on 31 Oct (DB). Nineteen Grasshopper Sparrows at Swoope 16 Sep set a new fall high count for *Augusta*, VA and the Shenandoah Valley (ALa). A late Henslow's Sparrow was banded at P.N.R. 19 Oct (RM, RCL), and one banded at Shady Valley, TN 21 Oct represented the 5th local record (RKn). It was an exceptionally good fall for Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows: one was reported near Mercer, PA 23 Sep (NT), up to 4 were at P.I.S.P. 5-11 Oct (JMc, m. ob.), one was in *Blount*, TN 12 Oct (CM), and 2 were at Brainerd Levee 21 Oct (KAC). An imm. **Gambel's White-crowned Sparrow** 20 Oct was the first of this race ever banded at P.N.R. (ph. RM, RCL). The first Lapland Longspur appeared at P.I.S.P. 18 Sep (BC); others had reached s. as far as *Henderson*, NC by 10 Nov (WF, BO) and S. Holston L., TN 12 Nov (RKn). Two early Snow Buntings were sighted at Elliott Knob, *Augusta*, VA 2 Nov (*fide* YL), and in Tennessee, singles were at Clingman's Dome, Great Smoky Mt. N.P. 3-8 Nov (CM) and Roan Mt. 7 Nov (RKn). A Dickcissel was at McAlevy's Fort, *Huntingdon*, PA 14 Nov (GG). Three Brewer's Blackbirds were rarities at Saybrook, *Warren*, PA 29 Oct (CN), and 2 others were identified at Slippery Rock, PA 3 Nov (GW).

An exceptionally heavy flight of Purple Finches passed through the mountains of sw. Pennsylvania this fall, where more than 900 (six times the long-term average) were banded at P.N.R. (RCL, RM); the flight, however, had largely moved on by early Nov, when good numbers began to appear as far s. as n. Georgia (MD,

MB). A Red Crossbill on 22 Sep and 2 on 19 Oct at Pipestem S.P., WV (JP) may have belonged to one of the resident Appalachian populations, an undoubted migrant was at P.I.S.P. 23 Nov (JF). White-winged Crossbills, in flocks of up to 30, were widespread across w. Pennsylvania by late Oct (m. ob.); the only report elsewhere was of 5 at Poland, OH 5 Nov (NB). Common Redpolls first appeared in *Erie*, PA 30 Oct in flocks of up to 30 (JMc), and 4 were at Beaver Meadows, *Centre*, PA 4 Nov (*fide* EZ). Pine Siskins were in good numbers nearly throughout the Region, appearing at feeders as far s. as *Union*, GA by 25 Nov (DF). An unusually heavy American Goldfinch migration resulted in a record count of 6028 flying past A.F.M.O. (GH, RB) and record banding totals of 1182 at T.R.M.O. (RC) and 1654 at P.N.R. (RCL, RM). Small numbers of Evening Grosbeaks appeared at scattered localities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia during the last week of Oct, and 2 females had reached *Bledsoe*, TN by 5 Nov (*fide* KAC).

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