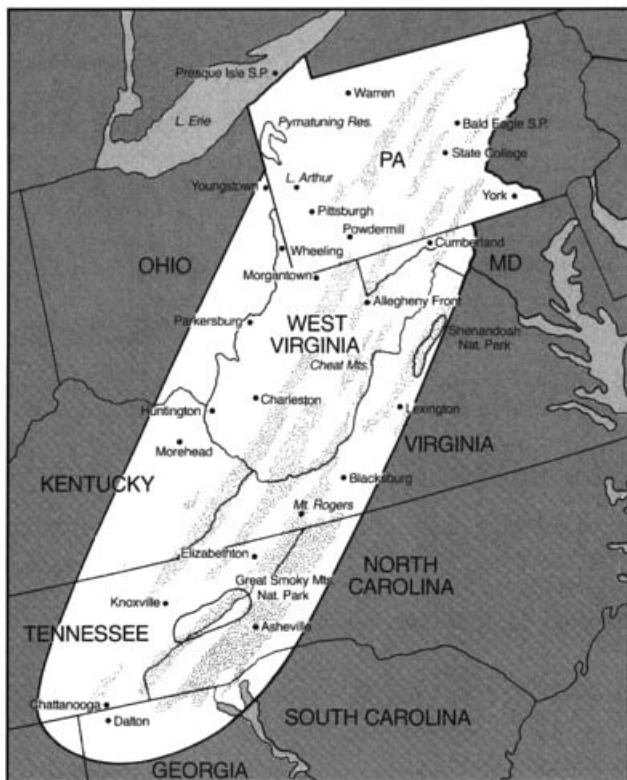


# Appalachia



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**H**ot, unseasonably dry weather prevailed over most of the Region this summer, although it reportedly was wetter than usual in southern West Virginia, and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia received more rain than most surrounding areas, though it is still in drought. Nesting birds undoubtedly benefited locally from the emergence of Brood VIII of the 17-year cicada in western Pennsylvania. Recent projects involving extensive breeding bird surveys in agricultural and reclaimed stripmine habitats across Pennsylvania are beginning to provide a clearer picture of the population status in northern Appalachia of nesting grassland species such as Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper, Savannah, and Henslow's Sparrows. From a bird conservation perspective, however, it continues to be clear to this editor that the Region's extensive, intact forests—important refugia for innumerable nesting warblers, thrushes, and other Neotropical migrants in the eastern United

States—represent its most significant conservation priorities.

This is the final seasonal report for the Appalachian Region as such. Several Regions east of the Mississippi River have been restructured to follow state lines rather than physiographic provinces. Beginning with Volume 57, I will edit a region comprised of the states of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. Contributors who have sent reports from the western Carolinas and Georgia, please send your reports for fall 2002 to Ricky Davis (RJDNC@aol.com), who edits the new Southern Atlantic Region, now made up of all of North and South Carolina and Georgia. For those who have submitted reports from eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, those states will now be edited together, as a new separate Region by Brainerd Palmer-Ball (Brainerd.Palmer-Ball@mail.state.ky.us) and Chris Sloan (chris.sloan@comcast.net) two energetic contributors with a deep knowledge of bird distribution in those states. For those who have contributed from the little bit of northeastern Alabama formerly in this Region, please forward your notes to the various seasonal editors of the Central Southern Region. Western Maryland and Virginia will revert to the Middle Atlantic region, edited by Marshall J.

Illif (miliff@aol.com). New to this editor will be western Ohio and eastern Pennsylvania. I look forward to communicating with editors and contributors from these areas in the season to come.

**Abbreviations:** B.B.S. (Breeding Bird Survey), P.I.S.P. (Presque Isle S.P., Erie, PA), P.N.R. (Powdermill Nature Reserve, Rector, Westmoreland, PA).

## LOONS THROUGH IBIS

There were more than the usual numbers of summering Common Loon from Appalachia, including 2 as far s. as Laurel River L., Laurel, KY 13 Jun—25 Jul (*fide* BPB), one near Waynesboro, VA much of the season (AL), and one on Chickamauga L., TN 29 Jul (*fide* KC) Four Pied-billed Grebes were heard calling at Grand River W.A., OH 16 Jun (CB), several family groups were observed at Conneaut Marsh, Crawford, PA this season (RFL, RCL), and for the 2nd year in a row breeding was documented at Yellow Cr. S.P., Indiana, PA (MHi)

An imm. **Brown Pelican** that appeared on Chickamauga L. 5-11 Jul was a first for se Tennessee and represented just the 6th record for the state (KC, m. ob.). Nonbreeding Double-crested Cormorants, increasingly common in summer throughout the Region, peaked at 36 birds at Pymatuning L., PA 23 Jun (MB).

After a decade or more of low numbers, American Bitterns appeared to be on the rebound at Conneaut Marsh, where 4 were heard calling near Geneva, PA 3 Jun (RFL) Least Bitterns, rare and local in the s. mountains, were possibly nesting at Standifer Gap Marsh, Hamilton, TN this summer (*fide* KC), and well-known breeding populations seemed stable at Conneaut Marsh and P.I.S.P. in nw Pennsylvania (m. ob.). Great Blue Herons continue to do well in Appalachia: "excellent numbers" were seen throughout s. West Virginia (RC), and a colony at Lordstown, OH contained 375 nests scattered over 88 trees (CB) Single imm. Little Blue Herons wandered to Hendersonville, NC 29 Jul (WF) and to Standifer Gap Marsh, TN 22 Jul (DSp), while an ad. was a rare find at S. Williamson, Pike, KY in mid-Jul (LE). The only report of Cattle Egret was of 9 at Baylor L., Hamilton, TN 16 Jul (BH). A **Tricolored Heron** on the Shenandoah R., Jefferson, WV 31 Jul—6 Aug (MO, JTr, m ob.) provided a first state record of the species Becoming more regular in s. Appalachia in recent years, 3 imm. White Ibis appeared at Four Seasons Marsh, Hendersonville, NC 29 Jun (MW, WF), while in Hamilton, TN, singles were at Amnicola Marsh 9 Jun (BH) and Brainerd Levee 27 Jun (KC).

## WATERFOWL THROUGH CRANES

The eventual breeding of Mute Swans seems inevitable at P.I.S.P., where a group of 11 appeared in mid-Jun and remained through the end of the season (BC, JM); an out-of-season Tundra Swan was spotted there 15 Jun (JM). A Gadwall was a rare summer find at Pymatuning L., PA 21 Jun (MB, NT); even more unusual was an American Wigeon on the Ohio R. at Blennerhassett I., Parkersburg, WV 20 Jul (JB, DE, JTh). A Green-winged Teal was a seasonal rarity near Huntingdon, PA 15 Jun (*vide* GG), as were a Greater Scaup 4-8 Jul and up to 3 Lesser Scaup at P.I.S.P. 2-27 Jul (BC). The stray duck of the season, however, may have been the male Common Goldeneye spotted on Chickamauga L., TN 23 Jul (DWM). Up to 5 Ruddy Ducks were on the upper reservoir at Pymatuning L. (where they have been known to breed occasionally) during mid-Jun (RFL, MB), 2 males and 2 females were at Old Crow wetlands, *Huntingdon*, PA through 15 Jun (MHe, JD), and one was at P.I.S.P. 16 Jun—6 Jul (LM, BC).

Bald Eagles continued to expand their breeding range almost throughout the Region; in w Pennsylvania, 36 known active nests, five of which were new this year, produced at least 45 eaglets (*vide* DB). After years of low population levels, Northern Harriers also appeared to be increasing in n. Appalachia, with numerous reports from w. Pennsylvania (JP, m. ob.), and summer sightings from *Logan*, *Boone*, and *Grant* in West Virginia (RC). Two Cooper's Hawk nests in *Augusta*, VA (*vide* YL) represented the 2nd and 3rd breeding records for that area. Two Northern Goshawk nests in *Huntingdon* were rare finds for s.-cen. PA (*vide* GG). In the upper Cedar Cr. Valley, *Shenandoah*, VA, no summering Broad-winged Hawks could be found (DD), and they were considered scarce in some areas of w. Pennsylvania. In Tennessee, 2 Peregrine Falcons fledged from a nest at Chickamauga Dam (KC); and two nests on buildings in Pittsburgh, PA both produced 4 young this year (DB). Four Swallow-tailed Kites 31 Jul—Aug in *St. Claire* (Mary Jane Wells, m. ob.) were unusual for Alabama's mountain region.

King Rail sightings at Standifer Gap Marsh, TN 1 & 9 Jun (DP) suggested the possibility that they might be nesting there, and up to 3 Virginia Rails were also seen at Standifer Gap in mid-Jun (*vide* KC). Single Soras at Brainerd Levee 9 Jul (DP) and Amnicola Marsh, TN 16 Jul (DV) both may have been early migrants (*vide* KC); 3 were heard calling at Grand River WA, OH 16 Jun (CB). High water levels favored nesting Common Moorhens in *Crawford*, PA, where records included 4 ads.

and 15 young in one small area of Geneva Marsh 17 Jun (RFL). Summer records of American Coot included 2 at Geneva Marsh 7 Jun, where they possibly nested (RFL), 2 at P.I.S.P. 8 Jul (*vide* JM), and 2 at Yellow Cr. S.P., PA 30 Jul (MHi). A Sandhill Crane at Smith's Swoope, *Augusta*, VA 15-28 Jul represented a first county record (AL, YL, m. ob.) and a very unusual summer sighting for Virginia.

## SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

An American Avocet was a rare find at Chickamauga L., TN 23 Jul (DWM); in Pennsylvania, where avocets have been reported with increasing frequency in recent years, one was at Canoe Creek S.P. 14 Jul (*vide* RBo), 2 at P.I.S.P. 22 Jul (BC), and 9 at Beaver Run Res., *Westmoreland* 23 Jul (MF, MM, m. ob.). Two early Willets also were a good find at Presque Isle 17 Jul, as was an early Sanderling on 4 Jul (BC). A "hot spot" for Upland Sandpipers was cen. *Somerset*, PA, where several pairs were observed on at least a half-dozen agricultural and reclaimed strip-mine sites (JP, RSM); up to 3 Uplands were seen in mid-Jun near Pymatuning L., where they presumably were breeding (MB, NT), and a single bird was at Imperial Grasslands, *Alleghany*, PA 13 Jul (DWT). Two late spring migrant Western Sandpipers stopped at Donegal L., *Westmoreland*, PA 3 Jun (RCL), and 2 late Least Sandpipers, along with a late White-rumped Sandpiper, were at North Branch, *Alleghany*, MD 6 Jun (JC). An early Stilt Sandpiper appeared at P.I.S.P. 8 Jul (BC), and 2 were at Imperial, *Allegheny*, PA 13 Jul (*vide* PH).

At least 15 Herring Gulls fledged from nests at the Highland Park Bridge in Pittsburgh, the Region's only extant colony (SK). Away from L. Erie, an early Caspian Tern was at Yellow Creek S.P., *Indiana*, PA 25 Jun (MHi), and 2 Common Terns were at Pymatuning L. 17 Jun (RFL). A Forster's Tern was an unusual late summer find at L. Julian, *Buncombe*, NC 31 Jul (WF). Up to 4, presumably breeding, Black Terns were at Hartstown Marsh, *Crawford*, PA in Jun (MB, NT), and 2 were at Pymatuning L. near Linesville in Jul (RFL, RCL); a single migrant was at Standifer Gap Marsh, TN 22 Jul (DSp).

## DOVES THROUGH WARBLERS

The Eurasian Collared-Dove that first appeared at Fairview, *Erie*, PA in Nov 2001 remained in that area and was occasionally seen through the summer period (JM); another was at Greencastle, *Franklin*, PA 26-30 Jun (JD, MH). A Black-billed Cuckoo on 11 Jun on Starr Mt., *Monroe*, TN was a good find for that area (*vide* KC). Both Black-billed and

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were in good numbers in s. West Virginia (RC) and in sw Pennsylvania, where widespread periodical cicadas may have been a factor (PH, m. ob.). High numbers of Yellow-billed Cuckoos in Rothrock S.F., *Huntingdon*, PA correlated with gypsy moth caterpillar activity (GG). The season's only report of Short-eared Owl came from W. Lebanon, *Indiana*, PA 28 Jun (SS). With 15 reported from *Raleigh*, *McDowell*, and *Wyoming*, Whip-poor-wills seemed to be recovering from recent lows in s. West Virginia (RC), and one heard calling 26 Jun in the upper Cedar Cr. Valley suggested breeding in *Shenandoah*, VA after an absence of several years (DD).

An Olive-sided Flycatcher near Berlin, *Somerset*, PA 9 Jun (JP) was a normal late migrant, and one at Paddy Knob 6 Jul in *Highland*, VA was tantalizing (TMG, DJS), but no evidence of breeding was reported from within the Region. A total of 47 Eastern Wood-Pewees was listed on three B.B.S. routes in Rothrock S.F., PA in Jun, compared to a 10-year average of 35 (GG), and 244 Red-eyed Vireos were listed on the Rothrock surveys compared to an average of 161. Cliff Swallow numbers were generally up in the Region, with a high count of 120 active nests (and at least 300 birds) at Linesville Fish Hatchery, Pymatuning L., PA 7 Jun (RFL).

Nesting Red-breasted Nuthatches were considered "very common" at Cranberry Glades, *Pocahontas*, WV this season (GB), and 5 birds, including at least one pair, were at Red R Gorge, *Wolfe*, KY 7 Jul (FR). Five ad. and one imm. Brown-headed Nuthatches were found during a quick survey at Kingston Steam Plant, *Roane*, TN 8 Jun, despite deteriorating habitat (FR), and two small colonies persist, far from any other breeders, in pine stands on the Radford Army Arsenal, *Pulaski*, VA (R Mayhorn et al.). A Sedge Wren at P.I.S.P. 1 Jun (GM) may have been a migrant, but one singing from a hay field at Conneautville, *Crawford*, PA on 30 Jun (CN) suggests possible breeding.

There continue to be strongholds of Golden-winged Warblers in Appalachia, surveys in s. West Virginia, for example, produced a total of 475 Golden-winged, 185 Blue-winged Warblers, and 8 Brewster's Warblers. Three of the Brewster's were found in a 2.4-km stretch on a mountain top removal site along Coal River Mt., *Raleigh*, WV (RC). Among warblers showing significant increases on the Rothrock S.F. surveys in *Huntingdon*, PA were Chestnut-sided (13 compared to 10-year average of 5), Black-throated Green Warbler with 41 (average 23), American Redstart at 33 (aver-

age 25), and Hooded Warbler 26 (average 18; GG). Prothonotary Warbler numbers seemed to be stable at their well-known breeding stations in the Pymatuning/Conneaut Marsh area of nw. Pennsylvania (*vide* RFL, RCL). Elsewhere, in the n. part of the Region, a pair was seen feeding young on Blennerhassett Is., Wood, WV 20 Jul (JB, DE, JT). Singing Swainson's Warblers were found at Big South Fork N.W.R.R.A., Fentress, TN 8 Jun (FR), and at Red R. Gorge, Wolfe, KY 7 Jul (FR); one at Carter Caves S.P. 29 Jun was n. of the documented breeding range in e. Kentucky (SM). Three singing male Cerulean Warblers in Jackson 31 May (CDC, MSG) suggested the first breeding in ne. Alabama in decades.

### TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Summer Tanager was heard singing near Clarksville, Greene, PA 21-22 Jun (RBe), where it is a rare but regular breeder; the only known such site in the sw. sector of the state. A Clay-colored Sparrow was seen in the Piney Track, a known breeding locality in Clarion, PA 1 Jun (JF), and a pair nested in the Canaan Valley, Tucker, WV for the 2nd year in a row (GF). Grasshopper Sparrows were "holding their own" in the upper Cedar Cr. valley, Shenandoah, VA (DD); in Pennsylvania, they were considered more common than usual in Somerset (JP, RSM), and "hundreds" were observed in a grassland survey focused on s. Clearfield (DB). A few Henslow's Sparrows nested in Tucker, WV, where young were found in late Jul (GF), and breeding was confirmed in both Allegany and Garrett, MD (JC, MJI). Three colonies of Henslow's were located in reclaimed strip-mine areas in Somerset, PA (JP), and large numbers were reported during the s. Clearfield surveys (DB). Henslow's Sparrows located on Radford Arsenal, Pulaski, VA have been studied here since 1997 at least; counts as high as 30 singing birds have been made here. Four were seen 1 Jul (R. Mayhorn), and one was seen as late as 8 Jul (TMD, CMS et al.). The **White-crowned Sparrow** at P.I.S.P. 1 Jul (BC) certainly was the passerine most out of time and place this summer.

Breeding Dark-eyed Juncos continue to increase in abundance at lower elevations in Appalachia; and up to 22 birds were seen in Jun (MB) in the Hartstown section of Pymatuning Swamp, Crawford, PA (well w. of the mts.), where they had been considered rare breeding birds since the flooding of most of the swamp in the late 1930s. Indigo Buntings were down in numbers in s. West Virginia (RC) and were scarce in the upper Cedar Cr. Valley, Shenandoah, VA (DD). In early Jun, at least a female and 2 singing male Dickcissels were

found a few km w. of Chambersburg, PA (DSn). Bobolinks were found in good numbers as far s. as Logan, Raleigh, and Fayette in West Virginia (RC); breeding populations seemed high in w. Pennsylvania (m. ob.), and a premigratory assemblage of 300+ young birds and molting ads. was at the Pymatuning Goose Management Area, Linesville, PA 18 Jul (RCL, RFL). The season's only report of Western Meadowlark was of a male singing for much of the summer near Dry Run, Franklin, PA (BK, AT). A pair of Purple Finches was at a feeder in Wood, WV 7 & 14 Jul, well w. of the higher ridges of the Allegheny Mts. (*vide* JE). In Morgantown, WV, House Finches appeared to be increasing after a decline of several years (GB), a trend also apparent at P.N.R. (RCL, RSM). This increase may indicate recovery from the conjunctivitis epidemic.

**Contributors and cited observers:** Carole Babyak, Ralph Bell (RBe), Roy Boyle (RBo), Dan Brauning, George Breiding, Marvin Byler, Kevin Calhoun, Ron Canterbury, John

Churchill, C. Dwight Cooley, Ben Coulter, David Davis, Todd M. Day, Jim Dunn, David Esker, Jeanette Esker, Les Estep, John Fedak, Gary Felton, Wayne Forsythe, Mike Fowles, M Scott Gravette, Greg Grove, Thomas M Gwynn III, Bill Haley, Paul Hess, Molly Heath (MHe), Margaret Higbee (MHi), Marshall J Iloff, Bob Keener, Scott Kinzey, Allen Lerner, YuLee Lerner, Robert C. Leberman (RCL), Ronald F. Leberman (RFL), Geoff Malosh, Tony Marich, Scott Marsh, Mark McConaughy, Jerry McWilliams, Linda McWilliams, Robert Mulvihill, Clare Nicolls, Matt Orsie, Brainard Palmer-Ball (BPB), Jeff Payne, Frank Renfrow, Donald J. Schwab, Richard Shelling, Norma Siebenheller, Dan Snell (DSn), Scott Speedy, David Spicer (DSp), C. Michael Stinson, John Tharp (JTh), John Trapp (JTr), Aden Troyer, Neil Troyer, David Vogt, Marilyn Westphal, Dan Williams (DWM), Dave Wilton (DWt).



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