

The 2004 nesting season was better than the cold, wet spring and early summer of 2003. This year, a cool, sunny June followed a pleasant spring, and nesting success was generally reported as high. The beach-nesting species, however, faced flooding by high lunar tides 3 June and 2 July, and predation from foxes, gulls, and feral cats (see Piping Plovers, Least Terns, Black Skimmers) took a heavy toll. American Kestrel, Spotted Sandpiper, and ground-nesting woodland birds, among others, continued their long-term decline.

July was very wet but without serious cold. Monthly rainfall was more than twice normal in Rochester. Over a foot of rain fell on Smyrna, Delaware 12 July and across the bay in Burlington County, New Jersey, though not in southern Delaware. Many classic shorebirding spots were flooded and remained so well into the peak of adult migration, but temporary rain pools attracted exciting shorebirds in the Great Lakes floodplain at several spots, such as Newfane, Niagara County, at the Perinton Farm Pond, near Rochester, and in a wet field near the Geneseo airport. Rarities reported included Brown Booby, Red-necked Stint, and Swainson's Warbler. Many thanks to Carl Perry and Laurie Larson for their special help with this report.

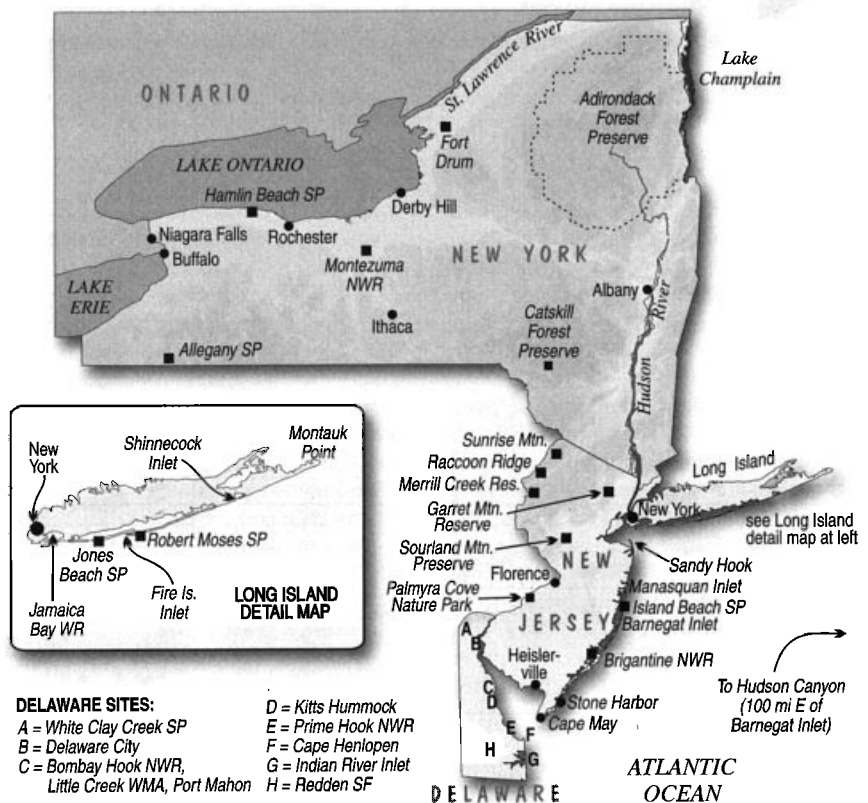
This column mourns the death on 16 September of David A. Cutler, our senior Regional Editor and a devoted supporter of *North American Birds* and its predecessors for nearly fifty years.

Abbreviations: Bombay Hook (Bombay Hook N.W.R., Kent, DE); Brig (Brigantine Unit, Edward P. Forsythe N.W.R., Atlantic, NJ); D.N.R.E.C. (Delaware Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation); Broadkill Beach (unit of Primehook N.W.R., Sussex, DE); Jamaica Bay (Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York City); Little Galloo (I., e. L. Ontario, off Jefferson, NY); Montezuma (marshes and N.W.R. in Cayuga-Seneca-Wayne, NY); N.J.D.F.G.W. (New Jersey Division of Fish, Game & Wildlife); N.Y.D.E.C. (New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation); Port Mahon (coastal impoundments, Kent, DE); Sandy Hook (unit of Gateway N.R.A., Monmouth, NJ); Stone Harbor Pt. (spit on n. side of Hereford Inlet, Cape May, NJ).

LOONS THROUGH CORMORANTS

Far fewer Red-throated Loons linger in summer than Commons; one in alternate plumage at Woodhull L., Herkimer, NY 30 Jun (Gary Lee) was the first for the Oneida L. Basin in summer. Since Pied-billed Grebe is in trouble in the Region, all breeding records should be reported. This summer, we learned of one certain and one possible Delaware breeding site and three possible

Hudson-Delaware



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SA A white "mystery heron" with two occipital plumes at Cupsogue and Westhampton Beaches, Suffolk, Long I. 4 & 8 Jun (ph. Kenny Frisch, Patrick Santinello; see image on page 501) was first thought to be a Little Egret. Occipital plumes are not unknown in breeding Little Blue Herons, however, and this bird matched second-year Little Blue Heron otherwise: head and bill shape, two-tone bill, bluish lores, dusky-tipped primaries. Peter Pyle's study of the photographs suggested two possibilities: a leucistic ad.; or a precocious second-year Little Blue that developed head plumes and bred, thus retarding the prebasic molt into blue feathers.

sites on Long Island. In New Jersey, 15 ads. with 11 chicks at the dredge spoils at National Park, Gloucester (PD) were gratifying, while a hardy pair raised young among tank farms and chemical factories at Carteret, Middlesex (Pat McNulty). Ken Feustel notes that "this species seems to prefer locations such as narrow, vegetation-choked streambeds and small ponds that are not accessible to Mute Swans." The rips off Cape May Pt. were probably the best place to see pelagic species from land. The best day was 16 Jul, when one Sooty, 5 Cory's, and 3 Greater Shearwaters were present. Sooty Shearwaters are more common early in the season before they begin their long circular voyage east and south: se. winds brought at least 10 off Shinnecock Inlet, Long I. 5 Jun (TWB). Manx Shearwaters were seen only off Long I. in ones and twos. Wilson's Storm-Petrels, the easiest tubenose species to see from shore, were often visible from e. Long I. points or at Cape May. More unusual were 12 well inside Delaware Bay off Norbury's Landing Viewing Area, Cape May, NJ 9 Jun.

A subad. **Brown Booby** was a surprise off Cape May Pt. 16 Jul (PEL et al.). Only one previous spring record exists for New Jersey, also from Cape May. American White Pelicans, once a genuine rarity, have become annual visitors since recolonizing areas e. to Minnesota and w. Ontario in the 1980s. One visited Little Galloo 21 Jul+ (ph. IM, Peter Doherty). Up to 2 were seen around w. Long I. 12 Jun (Sean Sime) through late Jul. Still another soared over Bivalve, Cumberland, NJ 3 Jun (Jim Dowdell, Clay Sutton). It, or another, settled at Brig in late Jun+. Brown Pelicans, annual since 1982, were scarce until 25 Jun, when 20 appeared off Cape May. Thereafter they were frequent offshore, peaking at 26 at Cape Henlopen, DE 4 Jul (Adam Dudley) and reaching n. to Smith's Point S.P., Suffolk, Long I. 9 Jul (Maureen Dunn). The N.Y.D.E.C. continues to oil eggs and destroy nests of Double-crested Cormorants on Little Galloo and nearby islands. In mid-Jun this year, 3964 were censused there, down from 8410 pairs in 1996 (JF). Despite control efforts, new colonies keep cropping up, for example, on Long I., at Stony Brook, on the n. shore (Joel Horman), and on the Line Is., Hempstead Twp. The 20 nests at Hempstead, a first for Great South Bay, were placed in shrubbery (JZ). They started breeding in Delaware in 2002 on channel markers in the Delaware R. s. of New Castle; eight nests were there this sum-

mer (CC). But they declined in New York Harbor for the 2nd consecutive year to 872 nests, for unknown reasons; they are a problem in the heronry because their feces kill trees (PK).

HERONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

The 20th New York Harbor heronry survey, sponsored by New York City Audubon, reported 1711 nests of eight species on seven islands, about par for the last four years but below the 2000 or so considered normal in the 1990s. This year's study also scouted foraging areas that may need protection or may be sources of pollution (PK, EJM). For the Pea Patch colony in the Delaware R., we have only rough estimates based on birds observed entering or leaving the colony. The highest Jun counts from both sides of the river total only about 2700 (CB), a far cry



As open lands are increasingly lost to urban sprawl, some bird species are adapting to other environments. Red-tailed Hawks have nested in New York City in Manhattan's Central Park (made famous by the book *Red-Tails in Love*), but this nest on a sixth-floor fire escape marks the first time that Red-tailed Hawks have nested on a building in the Bronx. The young were removed by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (not by a state agency, as published earlier). Photograph by Deborah Allen.

from 12,000 pairs 10 years ago. Encouraging Least Bittern reports included three probable breeding sites on Long I.; up to six pairs at Palmyra, Burlington, NJ, on the Delaware R.; and "a better than average year" at three locations in Delaware (APE), with a maximum of 5 at Bombay Hook 14 Jul (Matt Hafner, Zach Baer). Two Great Blue Herons summered in the Canarsie Pol heronry, Jamaica Bay—intriguing because that species does not breed near the coast in this Region except at Pea Patch. Eleven Little Blue Heron nests in New York harbor were the most ever (PK), while wandering ads. were real rarities on L. Ontario at Hamlin Beach, Monroe 31 Jul (Dave Tetlow) and in the Adirondacks at

Bear Pond, Hamilton 22 Jul (Mitch Erickson). Considering the Cattle Egret crash, a straggler was remarkable at Dunville, near Buffalo 22 & 25 Jul (WW), but the maximum of 659 at Pea Patch (CB) was only a fraction of the 4000 pairs of 10 years ago. They have declined 90%+ in the last decade in New York Harbor, though six nests this summer marked a slight improvement (PK). At least two pairs of Green Herons bred again in Central Park, New York City, though they have not been found nesting in the harbor for five years. Black-crowned Night-Herons still predominate in New York Harbor, but whereas about 1000 nests have been normal, constituting 60–65% of the total, only 841 were found this summer. This reduction, which affected only some islands, remains unexplained (PK). A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, rare north of its Long Island breeding frontier, was noteworthy at Fishkill Creek, Dutchess, NY 26 Jun (Binnie Chase).

Glossy Ibis have made a "remarkable comeback" in New York Harbor, where 350 nests were the most in seven years (PK). One prospected far afield at Montezuma 3 Jul (Julian Thomas).

Three first-year White Ibis in the Broadkill Beach impoundments 25 Jun (Liz & Lou Dumont) reappeared 32 km n. in the Logan Lane Tract of the Ted Harvey W.A. 27 Jun (FR) and then overflowed Bombay Hook the same evening, clearly driven by a northward urge. Two White-faced Ibis at Bombay Hook (FR) and Brig in Jun were a bit below what we have come to expect. The northerly Black Vulture records of the spring continued, with one at Manitou, on L. Ontario

w. of Rochester 8 Jun (D. Niven, R. Mather). Up to 3 Turkey Vultures, not long ago very scarce after May on Long I. where breeding remains unconfirmed, hung around the East End all summer. Among the usual summering Black and Surf Scoters, a White-winged Scoter (AG) and a Common Eider at Cape Henlopen were less expected.

DIURNAL RAPTORS

The Maryland kite circus spilled slightly into nw. Delaware, with 3 single Mississippi Kites between Glasgow and Newark 3–10 Jun (AG, Eric Braun, PEL, BR). In New Jersey, while they avoided Cape May in Jun for the first time in years, one reached Sandy Hook

2 Jun (SB), following the May record there. More unexpected were 2 subads. 4–26 Jun at Bull's I., in the Delaware R., *Hunterdon*, NJ, gorging on cicadas and dragonflies (Robert Horton, Arlene Oley, FS, m.ob.). They departed when the cicadas abated. A bird that may have been one of them was nearby in Alexandria Twp., *Hunterdon* 27 Jun (FS). Bald Eagles surged again in New York by 12% to 84 breeding pairs; successful pairs grew 20% to 66, and eaglets fledged soared 28% to 111. New nests were widely distributed in the state. They included a first on the Mohawk R., new sites on L. Erie tributaries, and one far n. at Plattsburg, though, surprisingly, none has yet nested on L. Champlain (Pete Nye, N.Y.D.E.C.). In New Jersey, 44 active pairs laid eggs, 35 of which successfully fledged 52 eaglets (KC), much better than last year's 40. Delaware, which had four active nests in 1982, had 32 in 2004; 24 of them fledged 37 eaglets (CB, Kitt Hecksher).

Cooper's Hawks' newfound success in heavily populated areas is not a localized phenomenon. Successful nests were at Egbertsville, within greater Buffalo, and at Yorklyn, near downtown Wilmington, DE (Jim White). Red-tailed Hawks explored man-made nesting sites beyond Manhattan, such as an electric pylon in Schenectady (*vide* Barbara Putnam). American Kestrels nest in New York City but are missing from apparently good habitat on Long I. (Ron & Jean Bourque; SM); only 3 were reported in Delaware. Peregrine Falcons increased again to 51 territorial pairs in New York, 44 of which bred, and 37 of which produced 79 young, well below the record of 96 in 2001 and last year's 88 (Barbara Loucks, N.Y.D.E.C.). A pioneering pair raised 2 chicks on an Osprey platform on Parsonage I., in Great South Bay, Hempstead Twp., Long I., outside historic breeding range. The female had been banded and fitted with a transmitter, now silent, in Virginia in 2001 (JZ).

RAILS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Common Moorhen continues to decline away from Montezuma. Only one possible breeding attempt was reported on Long I., and they are missing even from some good habitat farther n., such as the lakeshore w. of Rochester (RGS). Eight in the Hackensack Meadows of ne. New Jersey in late Jun, one at Cape May Meadows 10 Jul, and an ad. with 3 chicks at Dragon Run, near Delaware City 30 Jul (CC) were welcome reports. The Sandhill Crane pair that provided this Region's first nesting record last summer produced 2 more young near Savannah, *Wayne*, NY, in the Montezuma Wetlands complex. The "colts" were reportedly injured and disappeared (*vide* RGS). One at Branchport, *Yates*, NY 14 Jul (Bob Guthrie) was in an area where courtship ac-

SA Piping Plover populations have responded well to protection, doubling on Long I. between 1985 and 1999, but these obligate beach-nesters may have reached the ceiling imposed in this Region by limited habitat and proliferating predators. In New Jersey, after a string of five annual increases, they slipped 8% to 133 pairs (144 last year). Statewide productivity was only 0.62 chicks fledged per pair (0.92 last year), below replacement level (TP). The problems were human disturbance, beach flooding, and predation by foxes, gulls, and cats. At Gilgo Beach, *Suffolk*, Long I., 19 pairs fledged only 10 chicks because of foxes (Sallie Phillips). At Silver Beach, *Nassau*, Long I., only one chick escaped Laughing Gull predation (DR). Only in Delaware were things looking up, but that is because they could hardly get worse. The last breeding Piping Plovers in the state, seven pairs in Cape Henlopen S. P., followed up a banner year in 2003 (14 young fledged) with a creditable 8 chicks fledged out of 19 hatched in multiple tries (CB; HN).

tivity had been noted in spring (BO).

Our spring report noted how the crucial shorebird stopover habitat in Delaware Bay has been damaged by the rapidly expanding harvest for bait of Horseshoe Crabs, whose eggs are the shorebirds' principal food source as they fatten up for the flight to the Arctic breeding areas. This year, Horseshoe Crab spawning peaked with the full moon tide of 3 Jun. By that time, Red Knots had already begun leaving. The aerial census of 1 Jun showed 7000 still present, down from the 13,300 of late May (an all-time low, contrasting sadly with 80,000 in the 1980s).



This unusual egret photographed at Westhampton Dunes, Suffolk County, Long Island, New York 8 June 2004 appeared most like a Little Blue Heron in structure and pigmentation, but its two long, thin head plumes (aigrettes) were most similar to Little Egret. See the SA Box on page 500 for more on this bird. Photograph by Patrick Santinello.

Numbers of other shorebird species, such as Sanderling (4000 remaining 1 Jun) and Ruddy Turnstone (31,700 on 1 Jun), were also subnormal. Many left late: "tens of thousands" of Semipalmated Sandpipers remained off Slaughter Beach, *Sussex*, DE 4 Jun (CB), and the final aerial census 8 Jun found 540 Red Knots.

Mid-June shorebirds are probably not "late" but non-breeders headed nowhere. There seem to be more each summer at se-

lected spots. Stone Harbor Pt., one such site, housed 10 species of shorebirds 16 Jun (PEL et al.). Notable there were the w. race of Willet, 39 Red Knots, and 10 Dunlin 12 Jun, a Marbled Godwit 13 Jun, and a Whimbrel 22 Jun. Pike's Beach, Westhampton Dunes, *Suffolk*, Long I. held 21 Red Knots, 4 White-rumped Sandpipers, and several Short-billed Dowitchers 19 Jun (TWP, Gail Benson). A Hudsonian Godwit 12 Jun at Bombay Hook (FR) probably belongs to this category. Were these birds malnourished, or simply subadult? It would help to know the plumage of all mid-summer shorebirds. Two-thirds of the Red Knots and half the Dunlin at Stone Harbor wore alternate plumage. Ad. males of some early-departing waders such as Lesser Yellowlegs and Short-billed Dowitchers, are typically already on the move by late Jun, and this year, they found many traditional stopover sites flooded by rain. Temporary rain pools attracted locally rare shorebirds, especially on the Great Lakes plain. Such a pool at Newfane, *Niagara*, NY housed an astonishing 200 shorebirds in early Jul, including locally rare Ruddy Turnstone, Stilt Sandpiper, and Wilson's Phalarope. An impressive 175–200 Lesser Yellowlegs visited a rain pool near the Geneseo Airport, *Livingston*, NY 18 Jul, while one (or perhaps 2) Whimbrel there 27–28 Jul provided the first county record (JK). A male Wilson's Plover was an outstanding find 16 Jun at Stone Harbor Pt. 12 Jun (CV, Cameron Cox, ph. RC). A former New Jersey breeder, this species is now very rare n. of the Virginia Eastern Shore, where about 20 pairs remain.

An ad. Red-necked Stint retaining some alternate plumage was studied for forty-five minutes 31 Jul at Bombay Hook (MG, FR) but could not be relocated; another reported on Long I. could not be confirmed. The only Curlew Sandpipers were one in alternate plumage at Port Mahon 2 Jun (Dirk Robinson) and another in partial alternate plumage at Stone Harbor 24–31 Jul (Nicholas Haass, RC, Michael O'Brien). As usual, coastal Delaware was the best place for Ruffs. A black Ruff turned up 27 Jun in the impoundment along the road to Broadkill Beach, Prime Hook N.W.R., joined 1 Jul by a gold Ruff and by a Reeve 3 Jul (FR, Ed

Sigda, Michael Guenther). Two similar males (perhaps the same) were at Bombay Hook 10–14 Jul (BR, Matt Hafner), and one identified as juv. was there 23 & 30 Jul (Andy Urquhart). A Ruff frequented Brig off and on 18–25 Jul, along with a Reeve 24–28 Jul. In addition to the usual ones and twos along the coast, single Wilson's Phalaropes were good inland at Newfane 27–28 Jul and near the Geneseo airport after 18 Jul (JK). Red-necked Phalaropes were noticed only at the end of spring passage: a female at Fortescue, Cumberland, NJ until 1 Jun, one at Bombay Hook in early Jun (Bruce Peterjohn), and 2 in the surf at Elberon, Monmouth, NJ 6 Jun (SB).

GULLS THROUGH SKIMMERS

An ad. Little Gull on the South Amboy mudflats at Morgan, Middlesex, NJ 6 Jul (Tom Boyle) was exceptional in summer. The only Black-headed Gull reported was a first-year bird at Sandy Hook 6 Jun (SB). A few subad. Bonaparte's Gulls normally linger along the coast, but 30 at Morgan with the aforementioned Little Gull was a large number, while another was remarkable inland at Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon 24 Jul (FS). An imm. Iceland Gull was a surprise off the beach at Sea Girt, Monmouth, NJ 18 Jul (Joe Caragher). Summering Lesser Black-backed Gulls were widespread, including one on L. Ontario near Wilson, Niagara, NY 30 Jul (Jim Pawlicki, Willie D'Anna, WW), a first-year at Sagaponnack, Long I. 9 Jun (HMcG), at least 6 at Stone Harbor Pt. in mid-Jul, and up to 7 at Port Mahon 17 Jul (Adam Dudley).

Stone Harbor Pt. hosted eight species of terns 22 Jun, including two pairs of Gull-billed Terns (for the 2nd consecutive year) and individual Sandwich Terns 22 Jun and 8 Jul. Roseate Terns summer there in gradually increasing numbers (maximum this summer 6 in early Jul), but breeding remains unproven in modern times between the Florida Keys and Long I. Single Arctic Terns, an ad. and a first-year, also visited Stone Harbor again (Gail Dwyer, CV et al.). This species was once almost unknown ashore s. of Cape Cod. The Stone Harbor ternery was harassed non-stop by Laughing Gulls and seriously plagued by feral cats fed from a nearby parking lot (DJ). The superlative Roseate Tern colony on Great Gull I., off e. Long I., slipped a little again but remains at around 1700 pairs (HH). On the positive side, efforts by a Great Gull I. team under Michael Male to establish an alternative to the Cedar Beach, Suffolk, colony, which was terminated by foxes in 1994–1995, appears to be succeeding. About 300 pairs, encouraged by decoys and site management, nested on Cartwright I., off the s. fork of Long I., alongside about 1000 Common Terns (HH); a few also still breed in Shinnecock Bay

(MW). Five Caspian Tern nests with eggs on the Four Brothers Is., off Willsboro Pt., Essex, NY, though ultimately unsuccessful, constituted the first breeding record for L. Champlain, following several attempts on the Vermont side (JMCP). Elsewhere, the great Caspian Tern colony on Little Galloo, founded in 1986, remained nearly steady at 1560 nests (JF). A pair bred once again on Tow I., Beach Haven Inlet, Ocean, NJ (JaB). Post-breeding wanderers arrived early, with one notable inland at Spruce Run Res., Hunterdon, NJ 29 Jul (FS).

Common Tern nesting was seriously disrupted again by flooding on the lunar high tides of 3 Jun and 2 Jul. In Barnegat Bay, NJ, it was the worst year since 1976 (JaB). Forster's Terns continue to establish themselves on Long I. The Jamaica Bay colony, founded in 1992, doubled to 150 pairs (DR), and about 335 pairs nest now in the Great South Bay, Hempstead Twp. (JZ). One was far inland at Spruce Run Res. 15 Jul (FS). Least Terns are struggling. New Jersey had about 1250 ads., considerably below last year's 1737 and below the average of the past 10 years (TP). Productivity was low (below 0.5 chicks per pair) because of predators and flooding. One colony in Hereford Inlet, Cape May, NJ was abandoned after one feral house cat left 20 pairs of Least Tern wings and a dead ad. Piping Plover (DJ). Least Terns bred only "minimally" in Delaware (HN). Once again, a few pairs tried to nest at Cape Henlopen, only to be flooded out. As for the state's other current site, South Bowers Beach, Kent, this small colony "which is found on private property was disturbed by ORVs and dogs and did not produce any young" (CB). A biannual census found about 178 breeding pairs of Black Terns (Threatened) in New York, slightly up from 155 in 2001 (IM). Six at Island Beach, NJ 5 Jun and a remarkable 5 at Merrill Creek Res., Warren, NJ the same day (Rich Kane) were very late, while 5 in Suffolk, Long I. 7–10 Jul (Carl Safina, Andy Baldelli, John Fritz) were early enough to suggest nesting failure. Stone Harbor Pt. now contains the largest Black Skimmer colony in New Jersey, with 400–800 birds. While nesting success was high in cen. New Jersey (JaB), flooding and predation reduced it elsewhere (DJ). Although skimmers hung around in Delaware, they did not nest except for the colony mentioned last summer on Fenwick I., on the Maryland line, which is censused by Maryland.

DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A Eurasian Collared-Dove frequented Route 9M near the entrance to the Cedar Swamp W.A., New Castle, DE, in Jul (FR), some distance from the well-known population (of questioned provenance) at Selbyville near

the Maryland border. An ad. male Rufous Hummingbird visited the Craig Simon feeder in Smithville, Atlantic, NJ 19–22 Jul. As is often the case with ad. males (first to leave the breeding grounds), his stay was brief. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker seem to be expanding as a breeder in the New Jersey highlands. Although only two nests were found during 1990s atlasing, 20 were in High Point S.P. and Stokes S.F., Sussex in early Jul (Don Freiday). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Hamburg, Erie 7 Jun (Doug Happ) was the third early-summer record around Buffalo; the species is expanding eastward. A White-eyed Vireo nest at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown, Chautauqua (Solon Morse, Jim Berry) was the first in w. New York. Sedge Wrens are widespread only in the St. Lawrence valley, with 21 reports (JBo). A few others were welcome finds in upstate New York in the Tonawanda W.M.A. (Tom & Susan O'Donnell, WW) and near Savannah, Wayne, in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

Golden-winged Warblers hang on in the New Jersey highlands, in the Delaware Water Gap N.R.A., Warren, and in the Pequanock Watershed, w. Passaic, where they favor powerline cuts. A Lawrence's Warbler may have bred in the Culloden forest, near Montauk Pt., Long I. (Vicki Bustamente). Yellow-throated Warblers continue to move into w. New York via the Delaware R. Valley. A nest in Allegany S.P. in mid-Jun (Tim Baird et al.) was in a historic area, but a persistently singing male in Chestnut Ridge Park, Orchard Park Twp., Erie, apparently unmated, was well n. of known breeding areas (MM et al.). The apparent Northern Parula x Magnolia Warbler hybrid reappeared in Stokes S.F., Sussex, NJ (Tom Sudol). At least two pairs of Prothonotary Warblers established for four years at Toad Harbor, West Monroe, Oswego, NY marked this species' n. limit (BP). A Swainson's Warbler sang at Higbee Beach W.M.A., Cape May, NJ 30 Jun–5 Jul (Karl Lukens et al.), a 10th accepted state record and unusually late. A Kentucky Warbler 3 Jun in the Red House area of Allegany S.P., Cattaraugus, NY (Frank Gardner) was in a historic area where this species may be reestablishing itself. A breeding pair of Hooded Warblers 23 Jun in Walton Twp., Delaware (Andy Mason) was outside this species' normal ranges in s. and w. New York. A Louisiana Waterthrush apparently on territory in Downersville S.F., Russell Twp., St. Lawrence, NY (JBo) was n. of any confirmed nesting areas.

An Eastern Towhee fledged young in Central Park for what is believed the first time since 1948 (DA). Few ground-nesters succeed there. Although Clay-colored Sparrows did not repeat last year's incursion around Rochester, they returned to recently colo-

nized areas in *Cattaraugus*, *Allegany*, and *Tompkins*, NY. Henslow's Sparrows were found only in upstate New York, and only with difficulty. Only two nesting groups were located around Rochester despite extensive searching: at Sonyea, *Livingston* (Steve Taylor) and Byron, *Genesee* (KG). The only Dickcissel was a male that seemed to be defending a nesting female Song Sparrow near Dryden, *Tompkins*, NY (BO et al.).

Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds visited New Jersey at Bivalve, *Cumberland* 1 Jun and Parlin, *Somerset* 3 July (Jarrod Ward). Purple Finches continued their recovery after the unexplained crash of 1992. Our best data come from long-term banding at Jenny L., *Saratoga*, NY, where 154 were captured during the season, many infected by the worst outbreak of conjunctivitis ever seen there (RPY). Some Evening Grosbeaks in the area also had this disease, which has decimated some House Finch populations. A few Pine Siskins remained to breed in the Appalachian Plateau (e.g., s. *Madison*, NY; Matt Young) and along the L. Ontario shore.

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Arguably, North American bird conservation arose in the Northeast, and in the United States generally, around the end of the nineteenth century, when progressive urban dwellers in Boston and New York united against the slaughter of colonial and beach-nesting species whose feathers or bodies were used to adorn hats and women's clothing. The ensuing bird conservation movement's many triumphs include the end of bounties for and legalized shooting of birds of prey—a widespread rite of passage for male adolescents at Cape May and Hawk Mountain just two generations ago—and the protection of large areas of land and numerous species theretofore unprotected. In a century's time, we have moved palpably beyond the meager conservation ethos and modest efforts of 1904.

Nevertheless, the effects of human population growth in the Hudson-Delaware Region have been negative for nearly any bird species one might mention. Suburban sprawl is the most pervasive conservation problem facing the Region, which fits 10% of the nation's population into 1.6% of its space. While the average population density of the United States is 79.6 persons/mi², New Jersey's average is 1,344.4—greater than that of India, for instance. Many people in urban areas wish to live "in the country"—which usually means moving to a subdivision or a five-acre lot. Although the Hudson-Delaware states do have authentic wilderness, mostly in upstate New York, its default condition is housing tracts. In the coastal corridor, the view from the air is of unbroken development, either industrial or residential.

Good news in the "developed" parts of this Region, therefore, is more likely to take the form of species adapting to development than of development unexpectedly giving way to habitat preservation. A case in point is Cooper's Hawk, which has taken to nesting in leafy suburban yards in the past five years or so. In summer 2004, thirty species of birds nested in New York City's Central Park, including some unexpected ones: Green Heron, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Wood Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, and Eastern Towhee. But nesting in urban areas can have its costs. Pollution or predation may actually drain these populations. Herons have recently abandoned rural colonies in favor of predator-free islands in urban settings such as New York Harbor. The New York Harbor heronries are rightly hailed as one of

the finest fruits of the Clean Water Act of 1972, but urban colonies are inevitably exposed to a higher diversity and higher concentrations of contaminants, from oil to heavy metals. Studies began in spring 2004 of heron foraging behavior in New York harbor in order to determine whether chicks are subject to dangerous levels of toxic substances. The New York City Harbor Herons Project is a joint effort of New York City Audubon Society (E. J. McAdams), the Wildlife Trust (Dr. Scott Newman), the Littoral Society (Don Riepe), the National Park Service (Kim Tripp), the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (David Kunstler, William Tai), and Manomet Center for Conservation Biology (Kathy Parsons).

Too, mammalian predators are adapting to suburbia even faster than birds. The overgrazing of the northeastern forest understory by deer puts serious pressure on ground-nesters such as Ovenbird and Black-and-white Warbler. Fox populations have exploded. On the Long Island barrier beach, at Gilgo, 19 pairs of Piping Plovers fledged only 10 chicks in summer 2004 because of foxes. Surely the most inexcusable predators are deliberately maintained colonies of feral cats: in 2003, someone established one inside a tern nesting area on the north shore of Long Island. The Coyote, this Region's newest mammalian predator, may at least help check the feral cat explosion.

The problem of increasing mammalian predators is compounded in this crowded Region by a lack of alternative nesting sites for colonial waterbirds. Colonial waterbirds are by nature nomadic, abandoning one colony and establishing another as predators accumulate, beaches erode, or vegetation changes. In modern times, however, alternative sites are rarely available in case of disease, disturbance, or other trouble in an established site. Long Island's Roseate Terns had become highly concentrated on Great Gull Island, off the eastern tip of the north fork, since the destruction by foxes of the great Cedar Beach colony in 1994–1995. Matthew Male and the Great Gull Island team have used decoys and site management to establish a colony of 300 pairs on Cartwright Island, between Gardiner's Island and the south fork, but few other alternative sites are available.

Human pressure is particularly intense on this Region's coastal areas, which lie in Bird Conservation Region (BCR) 30. Beach use has changed profoundly in just the last quarter-century. Year-round houses and condominium complexes have replaced the seasonal cottages that traditionally closed on Labor Day. Driving on the beach has come to seem a right. The New York State Park Commission has issued 12,000 Outer Beach Vehicle permits, mostly for use on the barrier beaches of the south shore of Long Island. Suffolk County, Long Island



Despite immense pressure from millions of beachgoers and associated real estate development, the coasts of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware are still home to many of the largest remaining colonies of beach-nesting birds in the Northeast, such as these Black Skimmers resting on the beach at Cape May, New Jersey. Most colonial- and beach-nesting waterbirds are declining in number on these coasts. Photograph by Arthur Morris/VIREO.

has issued about the same number, and townships issue thousands as well. Each year, a colossal number of vehicles use the outer beaches. In this Region, then, public ownership of habitats is no guarantee of wildlife protection, and even those colonies with fencing around them suffer the effects of persistent disturbance. Conservationists have been able to close a few areas, among them Breezy Point, at the west end of Long Island, and the tip of Long Beach, Ocean County, New Jersey, south of Holgate. Public outcry, however, limits the number of times this can be done, and some people have taken to sabotage of bird colonies. As yet unstudied is the further impact of small personal watercraft ('sea-doo's) on foraging and resting birds in the bays and salt marshes. Likewise, the impact of off-road vehicles in the mountains and forests is unknown.

Even this Region's most widespread habitats—deciduous and mixed forests—have serious problems. Most of the Region's woodlands fall under the rubrics of BCR 13 (Lower Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Plain—including most of the northern tier of New York), 14 (Atlantic Northern Forests, mostly Adirondack highlands), and 28 (Appalachian Mountains, encompassing the southern tier of New York and northwestern New Jersey). Readers will be familiar with many studies of the way forest fragmentation for access roads, recreational housing, ski slopes, and clear-cuts exposes deep-forest species to species against which they have little defense: cowbirds, raccoons, foxes, and feral cats. Forest-nesting species as diverse as Wood Thrush, Cerulean Warbler, and Acadian Flycatcher are negatively affected by such landscape-level changes. In more northerly zones, in boreal forests and bogs, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Rusty Blackbird are species of concern because of apparent population declines, the reasons for which are not yet clear.

Acid rain is only beginning to be studied as a factor in bird populations. It certainly diminishes fish populations and thins the forest, and may affect bird populations more directly by reducing calcium in the food supply (Graveland 1998, Hames et al. 2002). Addressing such pernicious, multi-source pollution matters is far more difficult even than ending long-standing outdoor recreational practices and will require far-reaching state and federal legislation to alter; the national political climate in the twenty-first century has not been conducive to positive environmental policy-making.

Forests tend to receive more attention in the Region from conservationists than do open and early successional habitats, breeding areas for some of the Region's scarcest species, including Northern Harrier, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Henslow's, Grasshopper, and Vesper Sparrows, and Bobolink—all of which appear to be declining in open-field habitats (Loggerhead Shrike is extirpated)—and Whip-poor-will, Black-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Chestnut-sided, Canada, Blue-winged, and Golden-winged Warblers, Eastern Towhee, and Field Sparrow, species of concern in successional habitats, which have likewise declined as a result of development and fire-suppression regimes. As mowing practices and development pressures reduce the value to birds of private grasslands, airfields and military bases have become major custodians of open habitats in this Region. Some that take that responsibility seriously are the 107,000-acre Fort Drum, north of Water-

town, Jefferson County, NY, where Henslow's Sparrows are still common, and the Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station in Ocean County, one of New Jersey's last breeding sites for Upland Sandpiper.

Heedless destruction of freshwater marshes has created a genuine emergency for species such as Pied-billed Grebe, King and Virginia Rails, Sora, and both bitterns. The public conception that "swamps" are unpleasant wastes that need filling or draining remains deeply ingrained despite efforts to give a positive connotation to wetlands. Although some important freshwater marshes are now in public hands or belong to The Nature Conservancy, the remaining private ones, vital even when small, are hard to protect in the present anti-regulatory climate.

Among the Region's many bird conservation concerns, however, the notorious over-harvest of Horseshoe Crabs in Delaware Bay has perhaps the widest international implications. Delaware Bay plays host each spring to North America's second-largest concentration of shorebirds and its largest concentration of spawning Horseshoe Crabs. About 80% of the Atlantic Flyway's Red Knot population and over half of its population of Ruddy Turnstones and Semipalmated Sandpipers rely on Horseshoe Crab eggs in Delaware Bay to fuel their next stage of migration to the Arctic. The birds need to nearly double their weight during a stay of 8–12 days there. Traditionally, Horseshoe Crabs were harvested for fertilizer and animal food. During the 1990s, the crab harvest grew rapidly, as commercial fishermen discovered that they make

good bait for conch and eel (sold mostly to markets in Asia). Horseshoe Crab blood is also the only known source of the clotting agent Limulus Ameobocite Lysate (LAL), used to test the sterility of vaccines, drugs, prosthetics, and other medical devices. As the crab population has fallen and numbers of crab eggs diminished, migratory shorebirds have failed to gain the necessary weight, and their populations have plummeted. *The spring shorebird concentration in Delaware Bay has declined from over a third of a million in 1986 when aerial surveys started to about a third of that in 2004.*

There is good news, potentially, in this saga, thanks in large measure to sustained efforts by New Jersey Audubon and a coalition of conservation organizations including the American Littoral Society, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, and the Sierra Club. Over the protests of watermen, the Horseshoe Crab harvest has been significantly reduced. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, a consortium of public agencies from fifteen states, developed a Horseshoe Crab management plan in 1998. It set quotas and closed periods and established the 1500-square-mile Carl N. Shuster, Jr., Horseshoe Crab Sanctuary off the mouth of Delaware Bay, effective 7 March 2001. Since 2003, the states of New Jersey and Delaware have imposed quotas of 150,000 crabs per year, and Maryland a quota of 170,000. The crab fishery was closed in Delaware Bay from 1 May through 7 June 2004. Crab spawning seemed improved in 2004, but since Horseshoe Crabs mature slowly, the effect will be gradual. By spring 2004, shorebird numbers in Delaware Bay had reached their lowest numbers in modern times. Red Knots there were down from 80,000 in the mid-1980s to 13,000 this spring.

More reasonably good news comes from the Great Lakes, where toxic contaminants have been reduced 90% by government action since the United States–Canada accord of 1972, though some areas remain seriously polluted, according to a long-term study of Herring Gull eggs led by the Canadian Wildlife Service's Dr. Chip Weseloh (in press). Similarly, the immense Great Gull Island ternery off eastern Long Island no longer produces deformed chicks like those found in the 1970s, according to Helen Hays.

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