

Hudson-Delaware Region

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June and July were very hot and muggy. It was the third hottest July on record in New Jersey, and temperatures ran 3.3° F above normal in July in Rochester. June was nearly as bad in the north, and much worse in the south: It was the hottest June on record in Philadelphia. Most of the region was dry, though frequent thunderstorms brought above-average rainfall to some upstate New York highlands. Some young Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows died of the heat in their boxes. Other weather effects included the flooding of some low-lying tern colonies in New Jersey and reduced fledging in Northern Ospreys and eagles because of the cold, late spring. Weather had much less effect, however, than human disturbance, predation, and competition for scarce nesting sites, which posed major problems in this densely populated region.

Highlights included continued nesting of Merlin in the Adirondacks and Wilson's

Phalarope along Lake Champlain, vagrant terns and shorebirds in Delaware, and first confirmed nesting for Blackpoll Warbler and Evening Grosbeak in Pennsylvania. At-lasing continued for its second year in New Jersey, but we lacked information from some parts of Pennsylvania and New York.

Abbreviations: Braddock Bay (*Braddock Bay S, P, and vicinity, Monroe, N.Y.*); Bombay Hook (*Bombay Hook N.W.R., near Smyrna, DE*); Brig (*Brigantine Unit, Edward P. Forsythe N.W.R., Atlantic, NJ*); Conejohela Flats (*Susquehanna R. at Washington Boro, Lancaster, PA*); Four Brothers Is. (*islands in L. Champlain off Willsboro Pt., Essex, NY*); Jamaica Bay (*Jamaica Bay Wildlife Ref., New York City*); LI (*Long Island, NY*); Logan Tract (*Delaware bay shore s. of Kitt's Hummock, Kent, DE*); Little Creek (*Little Creek Wildlife Area, near Dover, Kent, DE*); N.Y.D.E.C. (*New York Dep't of Environmental Conservation*); Little Galloo (*Little Galloo I., in e. Lake Ontario, off Henderson Harbor, Jefferson, NY*); Port Mahon (*marshes and bay shore east of Little Creek, Kent, DE*); S.B.C. (*Summer Bird Count*).

Loons to Cormorants

A few loons—almost all Common, as usual—summered along the coast, but ≤ 15 through June on L. Ontario at Hamlin Beach, *Monroe, NY* were exceptional numbers (WS). Red-necked Grebes summer rarely, but after last winter's record incursion, one—two remained around Cape May, two at Liberty S.P., *Hudson, NJ*, and one in Peconic Bay, LI, in July. An Eared Grebe in alternate plumage at Broadkill Beach June 17 (GS) was Delaware's first summer record. Brown Pelicans moved up the coast rather late. The only sizable build-up occurred in Barnegat Bay, NJ, which held 111 July 29 and 131 by August 9, 70% of them immature. About a dozen made a start at nest-building, as in 1992, but once again this came to nothing (JBu). As usual a few reached Long Island, where 22 July 7 off Tobay (A.Ott) was the only substantial count. The Double-crested Cormorant megacolony on Little Galloo declined to 3700 nests and raised only about 200 young, apparently because the cold winter and spring

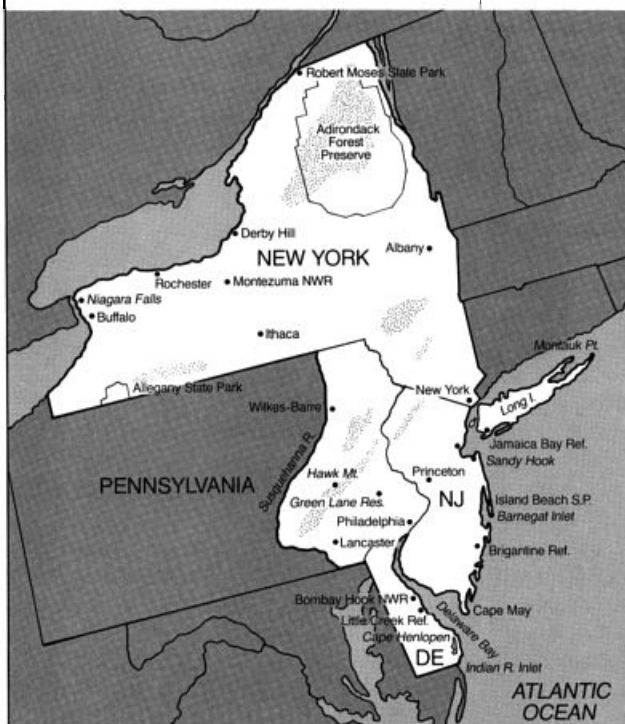
kept the L. Ontario alewife population far offshore (BMi). Elsewhere, however, they spread unabated. The colony on Four Brothers Is. grew from 532 to 785 nests; 21 were found dead there, perhaps shot by irate fishermen (JMCP). Cormorants established their first colony in the New York City watershed, with 4 nests on W. Branch Res., *Putnam, NY* (JA). Breeding is now possible on any sizeable body of water in the Region.

Hérons to Waterfowl

No statewide heron counts were taken, but Manomet Bird Observatory conducted a special study of the Pea Patch heronry in Delaware Bay off Delaware City. We believe this is the biggest heronry n. of Florida. It has doubled from about 6000 pairs in the mid-1970s. Although censusing is difficult in the *Phragmites* that house most of the nests—except those of Great Egret and Great Blue Heron, the total changed little in 1994; *i.e. ca.* 12,000 pairs, about one-third Cattle Egrets, and another third split between Snowy Egret and Glossy Ibis (K. Parsons). This vast heronry may compensate somewhat for the decline of the Stone Harbor colony and the disappearance of the Washington Boro, PA colony on the Susquehanna, but such concentrations are vulnerable to oil spills or disease.

Elsewhere Manomet reported that the 5 major heronries in New York Harbor have recovered normal productivity since the oil spills of 1990. Total heron nests there dropped from about 2000 to about 1600 nests this year, however. The decline was due largely to Black-crowned Night-Herons, whose numbers were also down at Pea Patch, perhaps because of winter mortality. On L. Champlain, however, Black-crowneds persisted on Four Brothers Is., despite the overwhelming cormorant presence; J.M.C. Peterson banded 43, the most in recent years. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons increased at both Pea Patch and New York Harbor, though totals reached only a few dozen.

Exceptional numbers of post-breeding Great Egrets reached the Region's n. limits. Five singles in *Jefferson* and *Saint Lawrence, NY* were the most ever recorded there (REL); ≤ 6 daily in n. *Franklin*, in the Adirondacks, may have come from recently established breeding areas in Quebec (JMCP). They also had a record post-breeding dispersal to the upper Susquehanna R., with a maximum of 17 at Plains, *Luzerne, PA* in late July (R. Kovel); 32 on the Conejohela Flats July 25 (RMS) was also a notable count. Twenty-one Cattle Egret nests on Four Brothers Is., after a long absence (JMPC), and one at Utica Marsh June 8—the first spring record in the L. Oneida district of New York since 1987 (DCr), were



encouraging signs of recovery. A Green Heron bred in New York City's Central Park for the first time this century.

An imm. White Ibis appeared at Sheariness Pool, Bombay Hook July 23 (GS *et al.*) and two (possibly including the first) were nearby in the Logan Tract at the end of the month (MG, BP). A single White-faced Ibis was widely reported around Bombay Hook/Little Creek from June 3 (PV) into early July (MG, BP), by which time it was in basic plumage.

Mute Swans persist in their old foothold on L. Ontario in the Niagara region and their new one at Braddock Bay; Kurtz documented their increase in the New York City area by counting 232 on the e. pond of Jamaica Bay (RJK).

Among the scarcer breeding ducks, a N. Shoveler had young at the Chazy R. area, Clinton, NY (JMCP) and an Am. Wigeon had seven young at Beaver Island S.P., Erie (RA). A Tufted Duck at E. Aurora, Erie, NY in late July (WW, LH, RA) may have been an escape. Over a thousand White-winged Scoters remained into early June from the exceptional spring build-up on L. Ontario at Hamlin Beach, Monroe (WS).

Common Mergansers had young on the Delaware R. farther south than usual at W. Trenton, NJ (LL), and were present as far south as New Hope, Bucks, PA (*fide* AH).

Raptors

The last northbound raptors were still moving in early June along the s. shore of L. Ontario past the Braddock Bay Hawk Watch, which counted 463 hawks June 1–10 (including 384 Broad-winged, 35 Red-taileds, 19 Turkey Vultures, 10 Bald Eagles, and seven N. Harriers). Nesting Osprey were down slightly in coastal Delaware, where state officials removed some duck blinds used as nest sites, but increased in Delaware Bay (APE). Elsewhere they filled in new areas such as the e. end of the s. shore of Long Island (Shinnecock Bay for first time in over 50 years, ES). Far fewer young were fledged in the Adirondacks this season, however, probably because of bad spring weather (21, compared to 39 last year), but the general trend is still upward. In upstate New York Ospreys established 3 new sites on the St. Lawrence R., including one on an active navigation cell which will be moved to an unused one (BaL). Within New York City, the Jamaica Bay breeding population increased to 3 pairs. For the 2nd time since 1976, no Mississippi Kites remained after late May around Cape May, NJ.

Bald Eagles increased to 10 active nests in Delaware, which fledged seven young (LG-I). New Jersey had 9 active nests (up from 5 last year). In addition to the new site in *Hun-*

tendon mentioned in the spring column, the first in n. New Jersey since 1952, a new site in *Burlington* was the first on Atlantic drainage in recent times. New York had 23 occupied breeding sites, up 3 from last year, but only 12 of them fledged 21 young, possibly due to harsh spring weather upstate. One of the new nests was in s.w. New York in Delaware R. drainage; the other 2 were in the central w. part of the state (P. Nye, N.Y.D.E.C.).

Atlasers confirmed a gratifying 20 Cooper's Hawk nests in New Jersey, and a good many more were possible (JW); this species has done better in New Jersey than Sharp-shinned Hawk in recent years. The Central Park pair of Red-tailed Hawks tried again on the facade of a Fifth Avenue apartment building.

American Kestrels seemed scarce in the s. part of the region; only 2 certain nests were known in c. New Jersey, and 4 other possible pairs (LL). Merlins were found breeding for the 3rd season in the Adirondacks. Nests or recently fledged juveniles were found in *Essex*, *Hamilton*, and *Franklin*; a calling bird was at another *Franklin* location; and a copulating pair was observed in *Clinton* in the spring (R. Hagar, B. Budliger, F. Latif, JMCP). Peregrine Falcon hacking programs continue in Rochester, NY; Harrisburg, Reading and Williamsport, PA; and Trenton, NJ. Among new aeries established this year was one on the w. tower of the George Washington Bridge between New York City and New Jersey. The most exciting Peregrine news of the season was a new cliff aerie along the lower Hudson R., the first natural site occupied in the lower Hudson Valley since 1961 (JA) and, indeed, in the s. part of the Region since the restoration of the Peregrine population began. Active breeding pairs have reached 15 in New Jersey and 21 in New York (including 10 pairs in the Adirondacks, on cliff sites).

Shorebirds

Shorebird migration was well underway by mid-July. Seven species of shorebirds were on the Conejohela Flats July 9–10, and 11 species were at Wildwood, *Cape May*, NJ July 16 (DGi). Numbers were kept low until late July, however, by dry conditions at Bombay Hook, and by high water in L. Ontario.

New Jersey had 124 nesting pairs of Piping Plovers, down 3 from last year, but productivity of 1.15 young per pair was a marked improvement (DJ). Long Island's total pairs crept above last year's 193 (M. Alfieri, N.Y.D.E.C.). "Predator exclosures" were installed over their eggs, to excellent effect on Long Island and at the Sandy Hook unit of Gateway N.R.A., *Monmouth*, NJ, where 36 pairs produced 71 chicks, a fledge

rate (1.97) double that of 1990, when there were only 18 pairs (TBa). Farther south in New Jersey, ghost crabs and grackles got through the mesh (DJ). Delaware's Piping Plovers are barely hanging on under pressure of recreational beach use and other predators. Although the Cape Henlopen pair failed again (Red Foxes may have taken the young), 3 pairs raised 10 young at Gordon Pond on a wash-out where a winter storm had leveled the *Phragmites* (LG-I). It was the best result in Delaware in 4 years.

The first mainland Am. Oystercatcher nest in New York was at Marshlands Conservancy, Rye, *Westchester* (M. Usai), further testimony to this species' resilience in finding substitutes for its original beach nesting habitat. Two Black-necked Stilts were away from their usual Delaware stronghold at Cape May, NJ in mid-July (R. Minott, J. Herder).

Post-breeding Am. Avocets arrived at Little Creek July 10 (GS), unlike previous summers where a few are normally present in June. Two were at Brig, however, June 6–25, though none were reported wandering farther north.

Upland Sandpipers bred in New Jersey at McGuire AFB, *Burlington*; Lakehurst Naval Air Station, *Ocean* (J. Connor); and probably at Atlantic City airport; and were present in early June in at least 2 other locations Linvale, s. *Hunterdon*, (LL), and Featherbed Lane, near Sharptown, *Salem* (CF). There are "very few" in e. Pennsylvania (DB), and only in upstate New York are they fairly widespread as breeders.

Twelve Whimbrels at Cow Meadow, Freeport, *Nassau*, LI July 27 (*fide* TWB) were a good early fall count. Single Hudsonian Godwits July 3 at Bombay Hook (L. Lewis) and the Logan Tract (MG, BP) constituted the earliest recorded Delaware arrival date (APE). But the region's best count by the end of July was only three at Bombay Hook July 16 (GS, MG, BP). Only two single Marbled Godwits were reported, from the Line Islands, *Suffolk*, LI, and Wildwood, NJ (DGi), both in the 2nd week of July.

A Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage at Broadkill Beach, DE, June 6–15 (WWF, m.ob.) was a splendid find. It furnished Delaware's first fully confirmed record, and only the 3rd fully confirmed Regional record. A Rufous-necked Stint at Jamaica Bay July 8 and again July 30–Aug 3 (AB, m.ob.) ran it a close second. This was the 8th Regional record since the first in 1984, a rate that suggests it was probably overlooked before July shorebirding became intensive. Two Least Sandpipers were unexpected at pools on Susquehanna R. flats at Plains, *Luzerne*, PA July 1 (R. Kovel).

Curlew Sandpipers went unreported from Long Island, but two late spring birds were reported at Brig June 6 (J. Danzenbaker) and \leq three returning birds at Kitt's Hummock, DE in late July (JFS). Stilt Sandpipers were in good numbers along the coast at the end of July, with *maxima* of >100 at Brig (TBa) and 56 at Jamaica Bay, Kurtz's highest count there in 14 years. A Ruff was at Broadkill Beach, DE in mid-June (J. Janovski, B. Lantz, GS), and at least two Ruffs and a Reeve were in the Bombay Hook/Port Mahon area through July (APE, GS, MG, BP). Elsewhere one was at Brig in July (CDC) and another at Cow Meadow marsh, *Nassau*, LI July 22 (M. Levine). Far more unusual was a Reeve June 4 at L. Ontelaunee, *Berks*, PA, the first there since 1965, with 11 White-rumped Sandpipers (K. Lebo).

Wilson's Phalarope chicks at the Chazy R. area, *Clinton*, June 29 and July 15 (B. Krueger) confirmed breeding in New York for a 2nd season. Breeding is possible elsewhere, but a pair in breeding plumage along the road to Broadkill Beach, DE June 30 (SD) was the only other June record. July numbers were low, rising to the usual double digits only in the last days of July when rain revived Bombay Hook. Single Red-necked Phalaropes were ashore July 7 at Jamaica Bay (L. Chipkin), the Conejohela Flats July 9–10, and Bombay Hook July 23 (RMS, GS). The only Red Phalarope reported was far off Montauk Pt., LI June 4.

Gulls to Terns

The Port Authority's 4-year campaign of shooting Laughing Gulls at JFK airport (see *The Economist*, Aug. 6–12, 1994) has reduced the adjacent colony in Jamaica Bay only slightly, to 5000 pairs from the 1990 peak of 7500, but runway incidents seem to have declined. About 4000 birds, fewer than in past years, were shot this summer (DR). The numerous young Laughing Gulls visible on Long Island beaches in late summer must be wandering from New Jersey, for no other substantial Long Island colony has been found to date. One was far from home near Ithaca, NY July 2 (N. Brinkley).

One–three imm. Little Gulls were a surprise at Hamlin Beach, *Monroe*, NY at the beginning of June (WS, BMa), since adults are far more normal on the s. shore of L. Ontario in summer. Com. Black-headed Gulls have become more regular in summer; singles were at Jamaica Bay June 27 (PAB) and at the Logan Tract July 30 (JFS). Far more unusual was one about 30 mi inland at Hammononton, *Atlantic*, NJ July 20 (K. Bennett). In addition to the usual few non-breeding summering Bonaparte's Gulls along the coast, one was unexpected in the Adirondacks at Abanaki L., *Hamilton*, NY (G. Lee).

Expanding Ring-billed Gulls established a colony at an ornamental pond at Marketplace Mall, 5 or 6 mi inland from L. Ontario near Rochester, which contained hundreds of adults and 20 young in mid-June (RGS); the Mall owners fenced off part of the parking lot, but their tolerance may not be infinite.

Up to seven Gull-billed Terns in Bombay Hook in early July (L. Lewis *et al.*) was more than usual; in New Jersey, single nests were found on Champagne Is., Hereford Inlet, *Cape May*, (DGi), and, more unexpectedly, in Barnegat Inlet (JBU). Several pairs were present on Long Island without evidence of breeding (JZ). The great Caspian Tern colony at Little Galloo, still the only one in the region, had 682 nests (C. Weseloh), and more than usual were noted on passage as fall began. A Sandwich Tern was at Cape May in late July (R. Unrath, T. Parsons), and the several Roseate Terns there once again this summer included one with the red-based bill (R. Crossley), characteristic of birds in breeding condition. They must be nesting somewhere in New Jersey. On Long Island this Endangered species has most of its eggs in one basket at Great Gull I. (*ca* 1500 pairs, HH), but welcome supplementary sites include the long-running colony at Cedar Beach (70–75 pairs, JBU, MG), 40–50 pairs still nesting at Shinnecock Inlet (ES, JBU), 2 nests on Fort Tyler in Peconic Bay (HH), and, since last summer, a few at Breezy Point in Gateway N.R.A., New York City (MH). For unknown reasons, possibly food supply, many Roseate and Com. tern nests were abandoned at Cedar Beach (JBU), where Com. Terns are now down to 1000 pairs. Breezy Point has become the 2nd Com. Tern colony on Long Island, rising from zero in 1987 to 4000 pairs this summer (MH). Great Gull I. had "tons of food" and contained about 8000 Com. Tern nests (HH). Com. Tern populations in upstate New York are holding their own against Ring-billed Gull usurpation of the best nest sites, with the aid of chick shelters (BMi).

The new Forster's Tern colony in Jamaica Bay remains at about 50 pairs (DR), but though a few individuals were present farther east (JZ), no other Long Island nest was found. Least Terns endured their usual calamities, from near wipe-out by Red Foxes at Holgate, NJ, which is closed to humans, to competition for nesting space at growing Com. Tern colonies like the Breezy Pt. unit, Gateway N.R.A., New York City. Somehow their overall numbers seem to hold up, but it has been some years since we had statewide surveys. Delaware had some very large colonies this season, the best being 350 pairs at Delaware Shores S.P., n. of Bethany Beach (LG-I). Their readiness to try new sites is what

saves them; this year they tried to nest at Lake-wood Airport, *Ocean*, NJ (D. Sutherland).

Little Creek's now annual White-winged Tern was first seen July 16 (J. Shepard, CDC), after an absence, the same or another was present after Aug. 1. A N.Y.D.E.C. statewide survey of Black Terns counted 246 pairs, down from 284 in 1991, and productivity remains low for unknown reasons (BMi).

Owls to Shrikes

About 25 Barn Owls were banded again this summer at marsh boxes at Jamaica Bay (DR). Chuck-wills-widows are pushing inland in *Middlesex*, c. New Jersey (LL), but have not spread n. of the s. shore of Long Island. While upland populations of Whip-poor-wills are reduced to almost nothing, 12 at Connetquot River S.P., LI June 11 show their continued prosperity in coastal pine barrens.

Two Yellow-bellied Sapsucker nests in *Dutchess*, NY (D. Fleury, ph. C. Pooth) were first county records for this upland species.

Territorial σ Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were present again in spruce swamps in *Wyoming*, PA, where several nests were found during atlas work a few years ago (DGr). Acadian Flycatchers were doing well at their n. limit in New York, with two in *Erie* (RA, LH, F. Rew), two in *Allegany* S.P., *Cattaraugus*, (WW, P. Yoerg), and four in the Finger Lakes area, including a nest in *Schuyler* (JB, T. Nix). What were probably two different Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were in *Camden*, NJ June 21 & 28 (R. Kegel, *file* J. Gotsmuth).

A major revolution in bird populations, which has passed almost unnoticed in these pages (though it made *The New York Times* September 14, 1994), is the explosion of Am. Crow populations in suburbia and even in city parks. We need studies of their numbers and impact. New Jersey's 2nd Com Raven nest in modern times, mentioned in the spring report, fledged two young successfully at High Point S.P., *Sussex*, and another pair of this expanding species was on a Hudson R. cliff in *Putnam* (JA).

The impact of last winter's harsh weather on Carolina Wrens was evident in S.B.C.s. They dropped from 21 to two, less than a third of the 10-year average, at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, Philadelphia (A. James). Atlasing turned up breeding Sedge Wrens at Lyons, *Somerset*, NJ (ph. S. Sobocinsky, DH). They seemed to be prospering in upstate New York, where there were reports from *Monroe*, *Erie*, and *Essex*. Ten sites in *Jefferson* and *St.-Lawrence* were down from last year, but above the usual 2–3 of previous summers (REL).

Veeries continue to push S into the pinelands of c. New Jersey in areas where oak

has become dominant, in *Ocean* (R. Brown, LL), and are now well-established on e. Long Island (ES). Loggerhead Shrike went unreported.

Warblers to Finches

A ♂ N. Parula and a ♀ Cerulean Warbler were feeding a young Brown-headed Cowbird in E. Hampton, *Suffolk*, LI in June; the former species has not bred on e. Long Island for years, and the other only rarely. There was no evidence the warblers were paired (P. Lindsay). Yellow-throated Warblers were present in New York not only at Allegany S.P., *Cattaraugus* (WW, PY), where they first bred in 1984, but in Arnot Forest, *Schuyler* (JB). Two observations of a single Palm Warbler in *St. Lawrence*, NY late June (J. Fritz, J. Hand) suggest a possible 2nd breeding site in this Region. A Blackpoll Warbler nest in a spruce swamp in *Wyoming* July 8 constitutes the first Pennsylvania breeding record (DGr). A count of 32 Cerulean Warblers on a new S.B.C. including Harriman and Bear Mt. state parks, *Orange-Rockland*, NY and nine on the new *Putnam* S.B.C. indicated a healthy population in the lower Hudson Valley (*vide* JA). Four atlas blocks in w. *Morris*, NJ contained >50 pairs of Worm-eating Warblers (T. Halliwell). The Swainson's Warbler that sang at Higbee's Beach, Cape May, in the spring continued to June 25 (D. Kibbe) but remained unmated. Kentucky Warbler bred in *Ulster*, NY for the first time (B. Wiser), and was present at Montour Falls, *Schuyler*, NY (JB), near its n. known nesting limit.

Single Blue Grosbeaks near Clinton, *Hunterdon*, NJ July 5 (Don Friday) and near Riverhead, LI June 19 (AJL, AB) were well beyond known nesting range. A Painted Bunting, now annual somewhere in this region, was at Higbee's Beach, Cape May, NJ July 31–Aug. 1 (B. Glaser, P. Conway). Single Dickcissels were at Cape May June 19 (D. Sibley) and at Featherbed Lane, near Sharptown, *Salem*, NJ in mid-June (S. Edwards), but the nearest breeding area known to us is several pairs in *York*, PA (DB).

Grasshopper Sparrows and Vesper Sparrows were doing well in appropriate habitat. The former prospered in Delaware, where farms have gone out of cultivation but building has not yet begun (APE). Thirty Vesper Sparrows at Fort Drum, *Jefferson*, NY, plus 5 additional locations in *St. Lawrence*, NY, provided the highest count in recent years (REL). Atlases found 10 pairs in central New Jersey (LL), and they were present at the edge of pine barren habitat on e. Long Island (ES). Although Henslow's Sparrows zeroed in some recent breeding areas (e.g. around Rochester, the Oneida Lake basin), post-midnight listening turned up 34

singing males near Perch Lake W.M.A., *Jefferson* (N. Leone), which lead Long to proclaim it the Henslow's Capital of this Region—plus a demonstration of "what a little planning will bring on difficult species." Noteworthy also were 14 singing males at the Saratoga Battlefield, NY (R. Mazur). We know of 3 sites in n. e. Pennsylvania, near W. Nicholson, *Wyoming* (WR) and 2 in n. *Bradford* (DB).

Boat-tailed Grackle continued to expand eastward on Long Island, though the flying young being fed at Shinnecock Inlet July 3 may have originated farther west (ES).

Purple Finch populations at Jenny Lake, *Saratoga* were the lowest in Yunick's 25 years of banding there. Cones were scarce in the Adirondacks, and few crossbills were reported. A dependent fledgling Evening Grosbeak in *Wyoming* constituted the first confirmed breeding record for Pennsylvania (S. Conant, DGr, DB, WR). Scattered adults were present in June as far south in New York as *Sullivan* (JA).

Exotics

The apparent Ruddy Shelducks that hung around Bombay Hook were thought to be hybrids with Australian Shelducks (M. Anthony). A Eur. Goldfinch, surely an escapee, frequented a feeder at Plattsburgh, NY after mid-July.

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