Western Great Lakes



Peder H. Svingen

xcept for a cold period in October, the Region experienced above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation. Jaeger-watching was exceptional at the western end of Lake Superior. Irruptions of American Three-toed Woodpecker and Gray Jay were detected. Each state had its share of rarities, and many warbler species lingered late along Lake Michigan.

Abbreviations: Big Stone (Big Stone N.W.R., Lac Qui Parle, MN); Muskegon (Muskegon Wastewater System, Muskegon, MI); North Shore (North Shore of L. Superior, ne. MN); Shiawassee (Shiawassee N.W.R., Saginaw, MI); U.P. (Upper Peninsula of Michigan); W.P.B.O. (Whitefish Point B.O., Chippewa, MI).

WATERFOWL THROUGH PELICANS

Michigan's first Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was shot by a hunter near Alma, Gratiot 5 Nov (SA), Ross's Geese appeared in 16 Minnesota and seven Wisconsin counties; reports were also up in Michigan, including a flock of 5 at Shiawassee 24 Oct (p.a., DIP). A mid-Nov census by U.S.F.W.S. recorded an astonishing 52,000 Tundra Swans at Upper Mississippi River N.W.R. Minnesota reported "inland" Surf Scoters in 11 counties; numbers were up at W.P.B.O., where 801 more than doubled last fall's tally. A total of 3058 White-winged Scoters at W.P.B.O. was near average, but 112 Black Scoters was fewer than last fall, and 11,688 Long-tailed Ducks was well below average. A drake Barrow's Goldeneye was shot by a hunter in Bay, MI 19 Nov (p.a., fide SM), and another visited Milwaukee, WI 23 Nov (TCW). High for Michigan was 5899 Ruddy Ducks at Muskegon 13 Oct (IP).

Low for W.P.B.O. was a total of 181 Redthroated Loons (peak of 36, 3 Oct). Normally a very rare fall migrant in Minnesota, at least 4 Red-throateds transited Duluth, and one was on Mille Lacs L. 18-28 Oct (AXH, PHS, AS). An influx of 12+ Pacific Loons was detected in eight Wisconsin counties. Seven Pacifics was near average for Minnesota, with

one as far s. as Washington 25-26 Nov (BRL. IWH). Surveyors found a record-high 2729 Common Loons on Mille Lacs L., MN 18 Oct (AXH, PHS), but the W.P.B.O. seasonal total was only 1960 (peak of 126 on 4 Oct). Rednecked Grebes were similarly scarce at W.P.B.O., where 6708 was less than half of last fall's total. Eared Grebes showed up in three U.P. locations, plus Berrien and Muskegon in the Lower Peninsula. In Wisconsin, Eared Grebes loitered in Sheboygan 1 Nov (CS) and Ozaukee 23 Nov (TCW). Casual for Michigan was a Western Grebe in Baraga 5-20 Nov (ph. IY); another Aechmophorus reported from Houghton 7-11 Nov (MH, JK) was also likely Western. Wisconsin had 7 Western Grebes in six counties ranging from Ashland 1 Sep (RSB) to Manitowoc 17 Nov (CS). Out of range in Minnesota was a Western Grebe at Two Harbors, Lake 20-21 Oct (DS et al.). Record high for Wisconsin was the count of 2500 American White Pelicans on L. Pepin 20 Sep (RPR).

HERONS THROUGH RAILS

A remarkable concentration of 14 Snowy Egrets was found at the Karn Plant in Bay, Ml 23 Aug (JS). Each state attracted at least one Little Blue Heron. Wisconsin's were in Dodge 9 Aug (SC) and Dane 11-14 Aug (ME), Michigan's at Shiawassee 10 Aug (DJP) and in Liv-



Michigan's first Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was unfortunately shot by a hunter near Alma, Gratiot County on 5 November 2006. *Photograph by Stan Anthony.*

ingston 16-23 Aug (RW, SB), and Minnesota's at Big Stone 17-21 Sep (MM, BJU). Cattle Egrets were also in all three states, including a record-late bird in Winona, MN 24 Nov (KRE). Unprecedented numbers of Plegadis ibis were found in w. Minnesota, including counts of 20-23 birds in three different locations. Most were first-fall birds, as was one in Buffalo, WI 14-19 Oct (NS, m.ob.).

A Mississippi Kite flew northward over the Cedar Grove Hawk Banding Station in *Sheboygan*, WI 30 Sep (HM), quite late. Minnesota's only Prairie Falcon briefly visited

Hamden Slough N.W.R. 17 Aug (PBB). Record-late for Wisconsin was an injured Yellow Rail found at the base of a Milwaukee skyscraper 19 Oct (SD). Wisconsin reported King Rails in Dodge 9 Aug (SC) and Brown 28 Aug (RM). Noteworthy for Michigan were 3 Common Moorhens at Lake Erie Metropark 12 Sep (WGP) and one in Berrien 21 Oct (KM, m.ob.). Moorhens in six Minnesota counties was encouraging and included 11 birds at Noonan Marsh, Waseca (JPS).

SHOREBIRDS

Pluvialis plovers were relatively scarce, e.g., a high count of only 159 American Golden-Plovers in Traverse, MN 15 Oct (WCM). Snowy Plover was last reported at Big Stone 27 Aug (PCC, PHS) following the Region's first successful breeding. Record high for Minnesota was 329 Semipalmated Plovers at Big Stone 6 Aug (PCC, PHS). Wisconsin had only one Piping Ployer in Sheboygan 3 Aug (IF), and Minnesota managed only one report of 2 birds in Lac Qui Parle 29 Aug (BJU). Michigan reported only 2 American Avocets; more typical were avocets in six Wisconsin counties, including a late bird in Milwaukee 1 Nov (BA). Willets peaked at 15 in Iosco, MI 6 Aug (RE). Wisconsin reported 7 Willets in five counties, and Minnesota reported 19 in seven counties. Record high for Minnesota

was 72 Spotted Sandpipers at Big Stone 6 Aug (PCC, PHS).

Minnesota and Wisconsin each had one Whimbrel, at Duluth 11 Sep (KRE) and in Kewaunee 4 Oct (AP), respectively; Michigan hosted one at W.P.B.O. 15 Aug, one on 2 Sep, and 2 on 10 Sep in Berrien (CB), plus 2 in Allegan 10 Sep (RB). Also in Michigan were single Hudsonian Godwits in Berrien 21 Aug (CB) and Arenac 9 Oct (SAJ). Normally a rare fall migrant, 24 Hudsonian Godwits were at Big Stone 3 Sep (PCC, PHS), and small numbers visited four additional Minnesota counties, including a late juv. in Aitkin 18 Oct (AXH, PHS). Seven

Hudsonian Godwits at Wisconsin Pt. 22 Sep (TlB) was an unusual number for that location. Two Marbled Godwits in *Dodge* 18-28 Aug (SF) and one in *Burnett* 17 Sep (BD) were all for Wisconsin, while Michigan only had one in *Berrien* 14 Aug (CB).

Single Red Knots in Big Stone, MN 9 Sep (BJU) and Ashland, W1 15 Aug (RSB) were the only reports of this declining species. Semi-palmated Sandpipers peaked at 1754 at Big Stone 6 Aug (PCC, PHS). In Wisconsin, Western Sandpipers were reported in Manitowoc 21-26 Aug (CS) and Dodge 16 Sep (DT). Back

in Minnesota, Baird's Sandpipers peaked at 267 in Lac Qui Parle 20 Aug (PHS, JMJ). Minnesota's 5th Purple Sandpiper, at L. Winnibigoshish, Cass 26-29 Sep (vt. BAW, m.ob.), was that state's earliest ever by more than a month. Wisconsin reported one in Sheboygan 5-7 Nov (TCW) and another in Manitowoc 26 Nov (AH). Purple Sandpipers arrived in no fewer than eight Michigan locations in Nov, including a flock of 3 at the AuSable R. mouth, Iosco 8 Nov (BH, GM). Stilt Sandpipers peaked at 845 at Big Stone 6 Aug (PCC, PHS).

Wisconsin experienced another good migration of Buff-breasted Sandpipers, with 22 reports from 10 counties; 106 birds in 16 Minnesota counties, however, was low for the 4th consecutive fall. Unusual for W.P.B.O. was a high count of 12 Buff-breasteds 23 Aug. Cooperative in Wisconsin was a juv. Ruff in Oconto 16-18 Aug (TIB, m.ob.). Possibly Minnesota's best migration of Red-necked Phalaropes included a flock of 200 birds at Heron Lake W.T.P., Jackson 22 Aug (JSc); the statewide total was ca. 600 birds in 25 counties. Wisconsin had single Red Phalaropes in Milwaukee 13-18 Sep (JI) and Waukesha 18 Oct (MG).

GULLS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Michigan hosted the Region's only Laughing Gull at Baw Beese L., Hillsdale 12-13 Sep (JR). All three states reported above-average numbers of Little Gulls. Minnesota welcomed an ad. at L. Winnibigoshish, Cass 15 Oct (BAW) and an imm. at Ironton W.T.P., Crow Wing 17-27 Oct (JSB, BAW, DST). Up to 4 visited Du-

luth 18 Sep-7 Oct (m.ob.), with one also seen across the state line in Douglas, W1 9-22 Sep (R]). Wisconsin had 7 Little Gulls in Sheboygan 6 Aug (TCW) and one in Ashland 17-25 Oct (RSB). Michigan reported single Little Gulls in Arenac and Berrien, several in Iosco, including a juv. 27 Aug (RDz), 3 in Huron 19 Oct (DD, MW), and one at W.P.B.O. 12 Nov. Black-headed Gull was documented in Douglas, WI 30 Sep (RJ), Milwaukee, WI 11 Nov (DT), and Jackson, MN 21-22 Oct (CMB, JWH, ph. DWK). Almost expected was the Mew Gull in Milwaukee,

WI 4-14 Nov (TCW, m.ob.). Neither Michigan's California Gull at St. Joseph, *Berrien* 1 Nov (ph. CB) nor Minnesota's in *Clay* (BWF, ph. RMD, KRE et al.) could be refound. Furnishing a 2nd Wisconsin record was an ad. Slaty-backed Gull at Superior, *Douglas* 17-19 Nov (RJ, ph. LS). Present since 21 Jul, Minnesota's first Slaty-backed was found dead in



Establishing the fifth Minnesota record, and earliest ever by more than a month, was this juvenile Purple Sandpiper at Lake Winnibigoshish 26-29 (here 26) September 2006. Photograph by Ben A. Wieland.

Cook 15 Aug (*Bell Museum of Natural History). Stay tuned for more in winter!

Unusual for Michigan was a flock of 6 Sabine's Gulls at Keweenaw Bay, Baraga 22 Sep (ph. JY et al.). Most Michigan sightings are singles, such as the ad. in Berrien 13 Sep (TBa). Up to 4 Sabine's were shared by Minnesota and Wisconsin at Duluth–Superior 20-23 Sep, and singles visited Brown, MN 9 Sep (ph. BTS) and Portage, WI 30 Sep—3 Oct (GJ). Michigan had another good flight of Blacklegged Kittiwakes, including 4 at W.P.B.O.,



This stunning juvenile Little Gull was found at Tiscomia Beach in Berrien County, Michigan 1 September 2006. Photograph by Matt Hysell.

one in *Berrien* 3 Nov (TBa), and one in *St. Clair* 19 Nov (JPe, ph. AR). Two kittiwakes loitered in *Ashland*, WI 10-19 Nov (ph. RSB). An Arctic Tern visited Wisconsin Pt. 23 Sep (m.ob.). Exceptional numbers of jaegers at relatively close range were enjoyed by many at Wisconsin Pt. and Park Point, Duluth, MN. At least 2 Pomarines and 10 Parasitics were

documented, plus up to a dozen unidentified jaegers. During late Sep, it was not uncommon to have 6 jaegers in view simultaneously! Also exceptional were "inland" Pomarine Jaegers in Marquette, WI 30 Sep (DC, TRS) and Blue Earth, MN 15-19 Oct (RMD, CCB, ph. JPM). Michigan also reported good numbers of jaegers, including a juv. Pomarine in Wayne 11 Nov (AR) and 5 Parasitics (plus 54 unidentified jaegers) at W.P.B.O. Also at Whitefish Pt. was a juv. Long-tailed Jaeger 23 Sep (TA, DJ); another flew by Wisconsin Pt. 22 Sep (RJ).

For the 2nd consecutive fall, Ancient Murrelet showed up at W.P.B.O. (p.a., TA); though 24 km away and four days later, this may have been the bird found at the mouth of the Tahquamenon R. 14 Oct (ph. TA). Elsewhere in Michigan, up to 4 Eurasian Collared-Doves continued at Chum's Corners, Grand Traverse (fide AMB), and 2 lingered in Berrien, MI through mid-Aug; Wisconsin had them in three counties. Outstanding was the presence of a White-winged Dove at W.P.B.O. 1-15 Nov (EBu, TA, KZ), and 2 birds were seen together there 4-11 Nov. Tardy Yellowbilled Cuckoos were at W.P.B.O. 2 Oct and Dane, WI 16 Oct (PA). A Barn Owl was picked up dead in Milwaukee, WI 4 Nov (SD). Probably related to last winter's irruption were Snowy Owls in Bay, MI 22 Aug (LD) and Marathon, WI 29 Aug (DB). The 4th occurrence of Burrowing Owl in Minnesota for 2006 was a pair in Stevens Jul-14 Aug (ph. DO). Exceptionally late was the Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Clinton, MI 9 Nov (RBa,



Michigan's sixth Ancient Murrelet spent an hour at the Tahquamenon River mouth, Chippewa County 29 October 2006 (here). *Photograph by Tom Auer.*

fide ATC). Minnesota's 4th Anna's Hummingbird visited a feeder in Dakota 29-31 Oct (p.a., ph. SY). Also at feeders were a Rufous Hummingbird in Dane, WI 15 Oct-4 Nov (JL) and single Rufous/Allen's in Roseau, MN 10 Aug (ph. TAd) and Kenosha, WI early Sep+ (EB).

WOODPECKERS THROUGH FINCHES

Two-dozen American Three-toed Woodpeckers in n. Minnesota was the most reported there in decades. Michigan reported up to 3 birds in *Keweenaw* (p.a.), and Wisconsin attracted one in *Douglas* 24 Nov+ (LS). Wisconsin's 3rd Say's Phoebe was found 10 Sep at Mequon Nature Preserve in *Ozaukee* (JSt). Less unusual was one at Big Stone 4 Sep (ph. BJU). Providing a 3rd Michigan record was an imm. male Vermilion Flycatcher at Big Bay, *Marquette* 11 Oct+ (ph. HC, SH, PCC, CP, m.ob.). The Region's only Scissor-tailed Flycatcher visited *Keweenaw*, Ml 30 Sep (ph. JK, KT et al.).

A White-eyed Vireo lingered through 24 Aug in Iowa, WI (AH). The largest irruption of Gray Jays in 20 years was evident by Oct along the North Shore and subsequently in nw. Minnesota. Tufted Titmouse strayed as far n. as Iron, WI 15 Oct (BRo) and Dickinson in the U.P. (RWa, fide GO, EO). Carolina Wrens also marched northward to Itasca and Otter Tail in Minnesota, and Delta and Emmet in Michigan. Nicely documented was a Rock Wren in Alger, MI 15 Oct (ph. AI). Loitering

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers included one in Milwaukee, WI 20 Oct (TW) and one at W.P.B.O. 15 Nov.

Mountain Bluebird was found in five Minnesota locations, including 2 females in Chippewa 19 Aug (RBJ) and a male in Big Stone 30 Oct (BJU); the others were along the North Shore. A total of 39 Townsend's Solitaires was the most ever found in one season in Minnesota. Michigan also had more than usual, with four reports from the U.P., including 2 in Keweenaw 19 Nov (LD, JK) and 2 in Alger 24

Nov (PM, fide SH). In Wisconsin, a Townsend's Solitaire passed through Douglas 5 Oct (RSB), and 2 returned to their usual wintering location in Sauk 11 Nov (PR). Most unusual for the North Shore was a Sprague's Pipit in St. Louis 17 Sep (JCG, JG).

Lingering warblers in Wisconsin included

a Blue-winged in Milwaukee 22 Oct (RD), a Magnolia in Door 8 Nov (SP), and a Cape May in Milwaukee 14 Nov (DG). Easterly was an Audubon's Warbler in Milwaukee, WI 2 Nov (DG). Wisconsin's 2nd Townsend's Warbler was found by many and photographed (11) in Milwaukee 29 Oct-4 Nov: another was briefly seen in Houghton, Ml 7 Nov (p.a., JK, RHa). A Yellow-throated Warbler appeared in Berrien, MI 5 Oct (WEI). Late warblers in Milwaukee included Prairie 5 Nov+ (BC, m.ob.), Blackpoll 14 Nov (DG),

and Hooded 5 Nov (TW); the latter 2 were record late for Wisconsin.

Another Summer Tanager strayed to the North Shore in Lake 8-25 Nov (KEH, ph. LME, JWL); s. Minnesota had Summer Tanagers in Hennepin, Olmsted, and Steele. Michigan's summer pair lingered in Berrien through 16 Aug, and another Summer Tanager was late in Alger, Ml 26 Nov+ (TB, ph. SCH). In Michigan, Marquette's first Green-tailed

SA Experienced Wisconsin birder Jim Frank encountered an unfamiliar warbler near Bradford Beach, Milwaukee 21 Oct. Careful observation from as close as 15 feet as it foraged for 20 minutes with numerous kinglets, permitted minute documentation of every field mark. Frank eventually concluded that it was a Yellow-browed Warbler (Phylloscopus inornatus). If accepted by the Wisconsin records committee, it would be placed on the state list as a hypothetical species, since it was a single-observer sight record. This would be the first interior report of this Siberian species known for its vagrancy to w. Alaska; the species was also located in Baja California Sur, Mexico in Mar 2007.

Towhee lingered in Taccolini's back yard 13 Oct+ (LT, AMB, CP, m.ob.). Most unusual among 4 Spotted Towhees in Minnesota was one at Hoyt Lakes, St. Louis 14 Oct (ALE, NAJ). Behind schedule were Clay-colored Sparrows in Ashland, WI 5 Nov (RSB) and Keweenaw, MI 17 Nov (ph. JK, LD). The North Shore attracted a Lark Bunting at Split Rock Lighthouse S.P. 18 Aug (ph. DAG). Less widespread than normal for Wisconsin were Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in Milwaukee 18 Sep-8 Oct and Dane 20 Sep-4 Oct (ST), but more than usual were migrants in nine Minnesota counties. Away from its usual migration route in w. Minnesota was a Smith's Longspur at Castle Danger, Lake 5-7 Oct (JWL et al.). An ad. male Painted Bunting was photographed at Maplewood, Ramsey, MN 18 Nov (p.a., RA). An early Rusty Blackbird reached Ashland, WI 31 Aug (TO). Late for Wisconsin was a Baltimore Oriole in Dane 5 Nov (AP); even later was a male in Rochester, MN 10 Nov (ph. WJK). Furnishing Minnesota's 13th record were 3 Graycrowned Rosy-Finches in Carlton 27 Nov+



Michigan's ninth Green-tailed Towhee appeared in the Marquette backyard of Louis Taccolini 13 October 2006 and remained through the fall (here 28 October) and winter seasons. *Photograph by Robert Epstein*.

(ph. MS, m.ob.). Michigan's long-staying Eurasian Tree Sparrow was last reported in Cass 12 Nov (DLI).

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Iowa & Missouri



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odest rain across Iowa in early August accompanied a welcome relief from 90–100° F temperatures, while Missouri remained dry and hot; in Iowa, temperatures returned to near normal, and precipitation levels were slightly above normal there but much below normal in much of Missouri. The first half of September was mild, and much of Missouri continued dry except for isolated thunderstorms. September gradually grew drier and cooler, and the first freeze of the season was recorded at Spencer, Iowa on the 20th. Relatively mild conditions over most of the Region persisted into early October. Continued southerly winds kept both weather and birds quiet in the skies, but precipitation began to fall in many areas that had seen little in Missouri. A strong cold front 10-12 October resulted in a statewide freeze

in Iowa, with significant snowfall in the north. Another front pushed through at the end of October, plunging temperatures to well below normal. Much of November saw erratic fluctuations in temperature between cold and above-normal temperatures. Heavy snow hit northern Iowa in early November, only to be washed away within a week by rain. The result was a relatively slow and erratic migration, with some early arrival records and some birds lingering late.

Abbreviations: Grammer (Grammer Grove, Marshall, IA); Hitchcock (Hitchcock W.M.A. hawkwatch, Pottawattamie, IA); M.S.L. (Maryville Sewage Lagoons, Nodaway, MO); R.M.B.S. (Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary, formerly Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); Saylorville (Saylorville Res., Polk, IA); S.C.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., Holt, MO); S.R. (Smithville Res., Clay/Clinton, MO); T.G.P. (Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO); T.R.W. (Thompson River Wetlands, Livingston, MO).

WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Low waterfowl numbers in n. Iowa contrasted with large numbers along the Mississippi R. and cen. reservoirs. Waterfowl increased in Missouri after water conditions improved in mid-season. A record of 6 Black-billed Whistling-Ducks, documented at the St. Louis Zoo 8 Aug 2005, is being evaluated by the Missouri Bird Records Committee. A summering Greater White-fronted Goose at R.M.B.S. remained through fall (SS, CM, BR, †JPU, m.ob.). Snow Goose numbers peaked at 102,000 at S.C.R. 28-29 Nov (DE, TR), and 300,000+ flew over Hitchcock 29 Nov (IT).

Ross's Geese peaked at 624 at S.C.R. 28 Nov (DE). Two Black Brant in Clay, IA 10 Oct provided the 2nd state record for the nigricans subspecies (†LAS, †DB, †DA). Cackling Geese arrived early in Iowa, with 4 at Saylorville 21 Sep (AB); the peak was 1630 in Guthrie, IA 29 Nov (SJD). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service counted 52,700 Tundra Swans along the Mississippi R. between Pools 4 and 14 (partly in Minnesota and Wisconsin) 20 Nov. Thousands of wigeon, scaup, and Canvasbacks on the Mississippi R. in Allamakee, IA arrived with the 10-12 Oct cold front, as did 700 Blue-winged Teal at De Soto N.W.R., Harrison, IA (BB), 3045 Greenwinged Teal at Saylorville, and 30 American Black Ducks at Pool 9, Allamakee, 1A (U.S.F.W.S.). Canvasback numbers peaked at 161,750 in Pool 9 on 7 Nov (U.S.F.W.S.). Continuing a recent fall trend, all three scoters were widespread. The first Surf Scoters were at four locations in lowa on 11-12 Oct; Regional totals were 17 at 10 lowa sites and 8 at six Missouri sites. White-winged Scoters appeared in Missouri at R.M.B.S. 1 Nov (IWE, IPU); totals were 14 at four lowa locations and 6 at four Missouri sites. The first Black Scoter was a record-early bird at Saylorville 12 Oct (IG); 7 were at four Iowa sites; and 10 were at six Missouri sites. Each state had five Long-tailed Duck sightings. An early female Bufflehead was at Cardinal Marsh, Winneshiek, IA 20 Aug (DK). Similarly, a Common Merganser was at Saylorville through Sep (†1G, AB, SID, RC).

Gray Partridge was 35% below the 10-year average in Iowa and only reported n. of *Story* (Iowa Department of Natural Resources). Ring-necked Pheasants declined 22% since