

August 2020 Sightings Report

It was a warm finish to a warm summer; the 13th warmest summer on record. There were 17 days with highs over 80 °F, but none above 90°, and no records were set. A low of 52° on the 6th was the coolest since June 17th. There were 3 cool dips spaced well through the month. Temperatures averaged 70.7°, 1.4° above normal. Precipitation was about 3/4 normal, with almost a 1/3 of that falling on the 3rd. There was only one severe weather event, on the 27th, with large hail and some wind damage south of Lake Ontario between Buffalo and Rochester. Precipitation totaled 2.70", 0.77" below normal.

The total number of species reported approached record high, driven by 27 species each of shorebirds and warblers, a good number of rarities, and good coverage, with many birders still doing Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) work. There were no real "misses", only a few irregular species and some breeding birds that require dedicated searching by this time of year. As usual, there were a few other species seen just outside the region. A total of 536 new bands at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory (BBBO) banding station was up 50 % over last August, but added data from banding in the first half month. The eBird records downloaded were up nearly 50 % from last year at about 38,584, which certainly includes effects of the BBA work and of the COVID rules in some tangled mix.

Waterfowl reported were relatively poor in both the numbers of species and individuals. There were no really outstanding counts. Changes in the Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area (NMWMA) in the Van Dyne Spoor Road or Sandhill Crane Unit and other nearby areas dramatically reduced the habitat with visibility for these and other waterbird species. Diving ducks lingering or arriving early were scarce. Again, Horned Grebe arrived at month's end, and small numbers of Red-necked Grebes were seen passing on multiple dates. Common Nighthawk arrived on the 19th, and mostly singles were seen after that at several sites. The 639 lines of Ruby-throated Hummingbird records in eBird again illustrates the value of that tool for gathering and archiving records, but the need later for much work in analysis; e.g. half of these lines were from repeated observations at only 15 sites and representing as few as 42 individuals as an example.

Rail, gallinule, coot, and Sandhill Crane reports were low due to the habitat issues, since most are usually from the NMWMA areas.

Lake Ontario water levels remained well above average, though dropping. Low rainfall after the inch on the 3rd left puddles in fields scarce and marshes drying. The major shorebird areas were again the wet areas in the NMWMA, the barrier beach constructed off the East Spit of Braddock Bay, and beaches and piers along the Lake Ontario shore. The only rarer visitor was a **Marbled Godwit** in the NMWMA area. Other now-scarcer species included: Upland Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Red Knot,

Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and Willet. There were again no really large shorebird counts in our region.

There was some spice in the gulls and terns, with a **Sabine's Gull** spotted passing off Hamlin Beach on the 30th and a **Laughing Gull** there on the 3rd. There were also the now-usual few Lesser Black-backed Gulls and the continuing bright white Glaucous Gull on several dates. Peak counts for the rest of the gulls and terns were relatively low.

Small numbers of Common Loons were scattered through the month, mostly passing Hamlin Beach. Double-crested Cormorant numbers were good at the usual Lake Ontario shore and bay sites. A bit past mid-month, conditions were right for a couple of BIG counts for Great Blue Heron and Great Egret at the NMWMA (Sandhill Crane Unit). A **Little Blue Heron** was also spotted passing there and then lingered just out of region for a few days.

Only one Black Vulture was reported, from Letchworth State Park. The bird of the season was the region's 6th **Swallow-tailed Kites**, with 2 individuals spotted on private farmland near the Hamlin/Kendall town and county line on July 30, but not noted to the birding world until this month, when they were seen through the 17th, often at close hand from the Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church parking lot at Route 272 and Kendall Creek Road, where permission had been given for birders to gather. Birders came from all over the state to see these birds, life or first state birds for many. There was again a formal, volunteer hawk watch this summer at Braddock Bay, limited by the COVID issues. The numbers reported from there were relatively low. American Kestrel, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon sightings were very good. The only detailed Merlin nesting report in the region came from the town of Ontario. The Rochester Peregrine Falcon story can be followed on rfalconcam.com.

Again, all of the really expected passerine species were reported. There were no outstanding rarities, but some of the scarcer or more interesting species included: Olive-sided Flycatcher, Sedge Wren, and Prothonotary Warbler, the last still present on Armitage Road. There were decent counts for some of the swallows, Cedar Waxwing, and a few other species, plus a count of 40,000 Red-winged Blackbirds from the NMWMA (Sandhill Crane Unit). Other illustrations can be found in the Noteworthy Records table to be posted on the RBA website.

Please submit reports to eBird, post them on geneseebirds, and/or send by the 5th of the month to Andrea Patterson, 144 Greystone Lane, #24, Rochester, NY 14618.

	2020	2019	10-year Average (2010-2019)
Total species for August	207	209	196.1
New species for the year	5	6	5.1
Total for the year to date	278	280	275.5

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

Observers: Jim Adams, Janet Akin, Ted Barnett, Jessie Barry, Jim Barry, Mitchell Barry, BBBO (Andrea Patterson), Sue Barth, Vaughn Bates, Doug Beattie, Betty Beckham, Don Bemont, Linda Clark-Benedict, Steven Benedict, Mike Bergin, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, Terry Bohling, Lynn Braband, Joe Brin, Mark Brown, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Gary Chapin, Robert Cicotta, Kelly Close, Jeremy Collison, Andrew Consler, Kathleen Dalton, Doug Daniels, Willie D'Anna, Sarah Dzielski, Diane Egan, David Esterline, Joseph Fell, Brendan Fogarty, George Ford, Jim Fry, Kyle Gage, Andrew Garland, John Garrett, Janis George, Jessica George, Jeff Gerbracht, Bill Gillette, Candy Giles, Christopher Goetz, James Goetz, John Gordinier, Karla Gordinier, Sheryl Gracewski, Jane Graves, Jay Greenberg, Kevin Griffith, Mike Gullo, Andy Guthrie, Chris Guthrie, Danny Guthrie, Richard Guthrie, Chris & Helen Haller, Kathy Habgood, Kim Hartquist, Christina Hoh, Dick Horsey, Bill Howe, Alec Humann, Carolyn Jacobs, Nicholas Kachala, Amy Kahn, Laura Kammermeier, David Kennedy, Tom Kerr, Josh & Julie Ketry, Bernie Kester, Jim Kimball, Kathy Kirsch, Renee Kittleman, J. Gary Kohlenberg, Karl Kunze, Mike Laird, Chris Lajewski, Tom Lathrop, Leona Lauster, Greg Lawrence, Tim Lenz, Joan & Vern Lindberg, Pat Lindsay,

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One of the Monroe-Orleans County
Swallow-tailed Kites. Photo by Kathy
Habgood.