

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 30 November 2017

Birds

November is typically a big month for waterfowl migration, and a few interesting waterfowl were seen on Fort Drum this month, but overall geese and ducks were unusually scarce. Very few Canada Goose flocks and no Snow Goose flocks were seen all month, which would have been shocking just a few years ago when November was the peak month for goose migration through northern New York. Many geese now pass through Jefferson County in December or even early January, and it looks like this year is likely going to fit with the recent trend towards ever-later goose migration. The only unusual goose observations were of two flocks of Brant flying over Fort Drum on 1 and 3 November—Brant are regularly seen over Fort Drum in May but rarely observed in the fall.

Ducks were modestly better represented this month, although the species that are usually most common in November—Mallard, American Black Duck, and Hooded Merganser—were rather scarce. On the other hand, 280 Ring-necked Ducks in Training Area 14B on 7 November was a good tally for Fort Drum, and a Black Scoter on Indian Pond that same date was only the fourth record for this species on the installation. All three scoter species, including White-winged Scoter and Surf



Ring-necked Ducks on Fort Drum in 2014.

Scoter—probably drop onto the lakes and ponds in the northeast corner of Fort Drum at least occasionally during the fall, but such occurrences are rarely detected. As usual, a handful of Bufflehead and at least one Common Goldeneye were observed on Fort Drum this month.

Often by early November winter raptors, especially Rough-legged Hawks, are present in the large complex of fields in Training Areas 12 and 13, sometimes in large numbers. Last winter was among the worst ever recorded for winter hawks on Fort Drum, and although it is early and hawks could still show up, this year is looking like a repeat of last winter. Also as happened last year, Northern Harriers seem to have all left the installation despite an absence of snow cover—during most winters they stick around until the snow piles up—and the only hawks seen on four raptor surveys this month were one Bald Eagle and one Red-tailed Hawk. About the only noteworthy raptor reports this month were of Golden Eagles: a juvenile over the Cantonment on 7 November and an adult over Training Area 14B on 21 November.

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Wildlife Viewing Report – 30 November 2017 (continued)

A number of migrant songbirds were found on Fort Drum at later than usual dates, thanks most likely to the mild fall. Songbirds observed during the first week of the month included Eastern Towhee, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Vesper Sparrow, all species occasionally seen in November but that most years are not found after October. Except for two or three mid-winter records Winter Wrens are almost never seen on Fort Drum after the first week of November, so the three observed on 21 November in Training Areas 6A, 14A, and 19D were a surprise. A Hermit Thrush on that same date was the latest ever documented on Fort Drum, and a Fox Sparrow in Training Area 14E on 29 November represented another record late date for the installation. At least three and possibly four Red-headed Woodpeckers remained in Training Area 5D oak woodlands at the end of November, but these birds are almost certainly overwintering, given that at least two have been observed storing acorns.

Irruptive finches are among the species that birders get most excited about during winter, especially in places like northern New York where relatively few birds occur at this time of year. A handful of finch sightings on Fort Drum hint at the potential for an incursion, but numbers were small. Perhaps the most noteworthy sightings were of single Pine Grosbeaks calling from the tops of trees in Training Area 19A on 3 November and Training Area 6A on 7 November, among only a very few Pine Grosbeaks reported in the northeastern United States so far this fall. This is an irruption year for both species of crossbill in the northeast, but the only Fort Drum observation all fall was of a single Red Crossbill flying over Training Area 6A on 29 November. Purple Finches have been fairly common all fall, and there has been a very modest Pine Siskin flight over Fort Drum. So far no redpolls have been detected on the installation, although redpolls are expected to come south this winter and it seems likely some will eventually turn up here.

Species observed on Fort Drum in November 2017:

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| Brant | Red-headed Woodpecker | Cedar Waxwing |
| Canada Goose | Downy Woodpecker | Snow Bunting |
| Mallard | Hairy Woodpecker | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| American Black Duck | Pileated Woodpecker | American Tree Sparrow |
| Ring-necked Duck | Blue Jay | Vesper Sparrow |
| Black Scoter | American Crow | Fox Sparrow |
| Bufflehead | Common Raven | Lincoln's Sparrow |
| Common Goldeneye | Horned Lark | Song Sparrow |
| Hooded Merganser | Black-capped Chickadee | White-throated Sparrow |
| Common Merganser | Tufted Titmouse | Dark-eyed Junco |
| Ruffed Grouse | Red-breasted Nuthatch | Eastern Towhee |
| Pied-billed Grebe | White-breasted Nuthatch | Northern Cardinal |
| Turkey Vulture | Brown Creeper | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Bald Eagle | Winter Wren | Rusty Blackbird |
| Cooper's Hawk | Golden-crowned Kinglet | Common Grackle |
| Red-tailed Hawk | Ruby-crowned Kinglet | Brown-headed Cowbird |
| Rough-legged Hawk | Eastern Bluebird | Pine Grosbeak |
| Golden Eagle | Hermit Thrush | Purple Finch |
| American Woodcock | American Robin | Red Crossbill |
| Rock Pigeon | American Pipit | Pine Siskin |
| Mourning Dove | European Starling | American Goldfinch |