

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 February 2010**

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Birding on Fort Drum has been extremely slow this winter, much more so than the previous few winters. Unlike the past few years, there has been no significant irruption of northern birds, particularly of finches, and most irruptive species have been entirely absent this winter. Winter raptor numbers are also relatively low, as there are very few Rough-legged Hawks on Fort Drum this winter, and Snowy Owl has not been seen at all. Add to this the scarcity of “half hardies”—species that mostly migrate south for the winter but sometimes stick around in very small numbers—and there aren’t many birds to see.

As is typical during the winter on Fort Drum, most water bodies are completely frozen over, and waterfowl are scarce. Small numbers of American Black Ducks persist, and can sometimes be seen on Pleasant Creek downstream from Remington Pond and other open stretches of moving water. Mallards appear to be scarce, although there have been one or two seen with the Black Ducks in January. No other duck species has been observed on Fort Drum since December.

The grassland and other open communities throughout the western Training Areas sometimes support good numbers of wintering raptors, but hawk numbers are low for the third consecutive winter. A typical drive along the length of Antwerp Road is turning up 1-2 each Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, and no Northern Harriers or American Kestrels have been seen since early December. The Rough-legged Hawks tend to cover fairly large areas, but often a dark-phase individual is in TA 12B and a light-phase bird is often near the intersection of Antwerp and Dogwood Roads. Several Bald Eagles have been observed on Fort Drum, including an adult that flew over the Cantonment Area on 7 January and sightings of both adults and immatures from the northern Training Areas. On February 9 an immature Northern Goshawk was seen flying over Antwerp Road about a mile north of Dogwood Road. Somewhat surprisingly, not a single Sharp-shinned or Cooper’s Hawk has been seen on Fort Drum yet this year, although perhaps this isn’t so surprising after all given the relative scarcity of other birds on the installation.

Northern Shrike numbers seem slightly lower than usual, but several individuals have been seen fairly reliably over the past 5-6 weeks. Perhaps the most reliable location this winter has been along Antwerp Road just west of the intersection between this Road and U.S. Military Highway. Other shrikes have been seen in TA13A along Antwerp Road (at least two individuals), at the north end of Carr Road in TA 17D, in TA12A along the boundary of Fort Drum just north of Black Creek; and along the Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield fence line along the Main Tank Trail.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 February 2010**

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No notable passerines have been observed this winter. Irruptive finches and waxwings have been entirely absent, and in fact the only finch species recorded on Fort Drum so far in 2010 has been American Goldfinch. There have been a few recent Snow Bunting sightings, but numbers are much lower than they were in December, and the same applies to Horned Lark as well. Even resident species such as Black-capped Chickadee have seemed relatively scarce in recent weeks. Fortunately, the first signs of spring migration should appear during the next 3-4 weeks. Until then, the birding is likely to remain very slow.



***Northern Shrike in Training Area 13A.***

Species observed on Fort Drum 1 January through 11 February:

American Black Duck	Horned Lark
Mallard	Black-capped Chickadee
Ruffed Grouse	Brown Creeper
Wild Turkey	White-breasted Nuthatch
Bald Eagle	European Starling
Northern Goshawk	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	American Tree Sparrow
Rough-legged Hawk	Snow Bunting
Mourning Dove	American Goldfinch
Rock Pigeon	House Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	
Downy Woodpecker	
Hairy Woodpecker	
Pileated Woodpecker	
Northern Shrike	
Blue Jay	
American Crow	
Common Raven	

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 18 March 2010**

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A winter remarkable for its lack of birds is coming to an end, and the early stages of spring migration are now underway. During the week of 8-12 March a few early signs of spring were noted, including the first Turkey Vulture and Belted Kingfisher of the season. Migration picked up this week, with heavy movements of Canada and Snow Geese, Killdeer, Ring-billed Gulls, and blackbirds noted on several days. By 18 March many ponds and lakes were opening up, providing resting and foraging areas for waterfowl that were on the move.

Large numbers of geese were first reported passing over the general Fort Drum area on 14 March, and numerous flocks have been seen passing over the installation daily through 18 March. As an example of the magnitude of the passage, during one hour on 16 March approximately 4800 Canada Geese and 1400 Snow Geese passed over TA 12C. Other birds moving with the geese included Ring-billed Gulls and Killdeer.



***Snow geese (Image: USFWS).***

During early March ducks were scarce on Fort Drum, with a handful of Mallards and American Black Ducks accounting for all duck sightings. The season's first Wood Ducks were seen on 16 March, but this species was probably present on the installation during the previous week. The amount of open water available for ducks increased substantially this week; for instance the Matoon Marsh in TA17B was entirely iced over on 16 March, but was almost entirely open on 18 March, when 2 Gadwall, 3 American Wigeon, and 4 Mallards were present. Similarly, on a newly open patch of water on Indian Lake that same day were 1 Common Goldeneye, 4 Hooded Mergansers, and 1 Common Merganser.

The raptor migration is also well underway. The first Turkey Vulture seen in the general Fort Drum area was on 7 March, although none were seen over Fort Drum until more than a week later. Bald Eagles have been especially conspicuous recently, with one adult migrating over TA 17C on 16 March, and four seen on 18 March, including an adult and an immature along the Indian River in TA 14A, and two immatures in TA 18A. The season's first Red-shouldered Hawk was calling over TA18A on 18 March. Migrating Red-tailed and Cooper's Hawks have also been fairly conspicuous, but the few Rough-legged Hawks that wintered on and near Fort Drum appear to have left the area.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 18 March 2010**

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Blackbirds account for a large portion of the passerines moving so far, with large numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds and smaller numbers of Common Grackles passing through. American Robins are also fairly common now, and Horned Larks have been moving in good numbers since late February. The first Eastern Bluebird seen on Fort Drum was at a bluebird nest box on 18 March, but this is another species that likely was around for several days before being seen. A few wintering songbirds still remain, including a Northern Shrike that was near the intersection of Birch and Antwerp Roads on 16 March, and American Tree Sparrows seen in several locations on 18 March.

Other signs of spring noted this week include the first frogs and butterflies of the year. Two species of frogs—spring peeper and western chorus frog—were heard calling on the night of 17 March. Butterflies seen flying on Fort Drum include a Mourning Cloak on 17 March and an Eastern Comma on 18 March. Bird species that can be expected to arrive during late March or very early April include Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, and Song Sparrow.

### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 1 March – 18 March:**

Snow Goose	Downy Woodpecker
Canada Goose	Hairy Woodpecker
Wood Duck	Pileated Woodpecker
Gadwall	Northern Shrike
American Wigeon	Horned Lark
American Black Duck	Blue Jay
Mallard	American Crow
Common Goldeneye	Common Raven
Hooded Merganser	Horned Lark
Common Merganser	Black-capped Chickadee
Ruffed Grouse	White-breasted Nuthatch
Wild Turkey	American Robin
Bald Eagle	European Starling
Red-shouldered Hawk	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	American Tree Sparrow
Rough-legged Hawk	Snow Bunting
Killdeer	Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull	Common Grackle
Mourning Dove	American Goldfinch
Rock Pigeon	House Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	



# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 02 April 2010**

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Migration continues to progress nicely, with many species appearing on Fort Drum at or slightly earlier than their long-term mean arrival dates. The goose migration has slowed substantially since mid-March, but Snow and Canada Geese continue to fly over the installation in modest numbers. For instance on the morning of 1 April a single flock of about 65 Snow Geese and several flocks of Canada Geese totaling about 400 individuals were observed passing over TAs 12 and 17. Ducks continue to be seen in low densities at various ponds, rivers, and marshes on Fort Drum, with the best diversity generally coming from Matoon Marsh in TA 17B and the large wetland complex that parallels U.S. Military Highway in the eastern portion of TA 13A. On 1 April Fort Drum's first Pied-billed Grebes of the year were heard in both of these locations.

Probably the highlights of the last two weeks were the observations of immature Golden Eagles on 30 March and 1 April. The first of these eagles was observed soaring over the southern boundary of Fort Drum being harassed by a raven. The 1 April Golden Eagle was soaring over the Matoon Marsh, and was obviously a different individual as its white wing patches were much more restricted, especially on the upperwings, compared to the earlier individual. Other recent raptors include a Red-shouldered Hawk over Carr Road on 25 March and a migrating Rough-legged Hawk over the Matoon March on 1 April. American Kestrels began returning to Fort Drum during the last week of March.

The pace of the songbird migration is finally starting to pick up somewhat. New passerines for the year seen or heard on 1 April included Eastern Phoebe, Winter Wren, and Savannah and Swamp Sparrows. An obviously migrating Golden-crowned Kinglet was also observed; this species usually occurs on Fort Drum during winter, but is relatively uncommon except as a migrant. Only single individuals of each of these species were found on 1 April, but the warm weather and southerly winds forecast for the first week of April ought to bring good numbers of early spring migrants, including perhaps early individuals of some species that normally arrive a bit later in April.

Now, and continuing for the next several weeks, is a good time to get out in the evening to listen to displaying American Woodcock and Wilson's Snipe as well as frogs. Woodcock and snipe are now present in good numbers and can be found throughout the more open Training Areas in the western half of Fort Drum. During the past few days spring peepers, western chorus frogs, and wood frogs have become very vocal, adding to the richness of the evening chorus.



***American Woodcock on Fort Drum.***

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 02 April 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 18 March – 02 April:**

Snow Goose  
Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
American Wigeon  
American Black Duck  
Mallard  
Green-winged Teal  
Ring-necked Duck  
Hooded Merganser  
Ruffed Grouse  
Wild Turkey  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Great Blue Heron  
Turkey Vulture  
Bald Eagle  
Northern Harrier  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Golden Eagle  
American Kestrel

Killdeer  
Wilson's Snipe  
American Woodcock  
Ring-billed Gull  
Rock Pigeon  
Mourning Dove  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Pileated Woodpecker  
Eastern Phoebe  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
Horned Lark  
Black-capped Chickadee  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Brown Creeper  
Winter Wren  
Golden-crowned Kinglet

Eastern Bluebird  
American Robin  
European Starling  
Savannah Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Dark-eyed Junco  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Purple Finch  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 22 April 2010**

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Waterfowl and waterbirds continue to trickle through Fort Drum, even as some local breeders are incubating eggs. Canada Geese have been observed sitting on eggs since the first week of April, and by 20 April it had become routine to see groups of male Mallards scattered on installation ponds with no females in sight, a sure sign that the females are sitting on eggs. Common Loons appeared on Indian Lake during the first week of April.

Perhaps the highlight of the spring so far was three Horned Grebes in breeding plumage on the settling pond for a vehicle wash facility on 15 April; although long expected, this is the first time Horned Grebes have been documented on Fort Drum.



***Horned Grebe with young (Photo: USFWS).***

Osprey have been seen on Fort Drum regularly since 8 April; most of these birds are probably migrants, but at least one nesting pair is now present in TA 19. The first Broad-winged Hawk of the year was heard calling over TA 9A on 15 April; Red-shouldered Hawks were also in the area. American Kestrels, present in small numbers during the first week of April, can now be found in open areas throughout Fort Drum. An apparent pair of Merlins was seen regularly near the Fort Drum Recreation Permit office 20-22 April and is behaving as if they may nest in the area. If nesting is confirmed, this will be the first documented nesting for Fort Drum, although breeding has been suspected for several years.

On 6 April several species were seen for the first time in TAs 4 and 5, including Hermit Thrush, Pine Warbler, and Field and Vesper Sparrows. Nobody had been out on Fort Drum looking for birds during the previous four days, so it's not clear when these species first arrived on Fort Drum. Assuming 6 April was their arrival data (although they probably showed up earlier), then these species showed up 12 days earlier than the long-term average arrival dates reported for northern New York (although some of these published dates are likely based on very small sample sizes). Eastern Towhees were already present on 2 April, which is 15 days before their average arrival date, and species continued to show up earlier than usual into mid-April, including Virginia Rail by 8 April (average arrival is the 27<sup>th</sup>), Blue-headed Vireo by the 15<sup>th</sup> (average is the 29<sup>th</sup>) and Brown Thrasher by 19 April (average is the 25<sup>th</sup>). The record early arrival date to northern New York for all species combined was set in 2009, and so far it appears that migration is well ahead of the pace needed to break that record in 2010.

On 15 April, moose scat was found on Alexandria Rd. in TA 8. Although young bull moose are occasionally seen in the fall, a spring sighting would be a first.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 22 April 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 03 April – 22 April:**

Canada Goose	Eastern Phoebe
Wood Duck	Northern Shrike
Mallard	Blue-headed Vireo
Green-winged Teal	Blue Jay
Ring-necked Duck	American Crow
Lesser Scaup	Common Raven
Bufflehead	Tree Swallow
Common Goldeneye	Black-capped Chickadee
Hooded Merganser	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Ruffed Grouse	White-breasted Nuthatch
Wild Turkey	Brown Creeper
Common Loon	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Pied-billed Grebe	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Horned Grebe	Eastern Bluebird
Great Blue Heron	Hermit Thrush
American Bittern	American Robin
Turkey Vulture	Brown Thrasher
Osprey	European Starling
Northern Harrier	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Pine Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Eastern Towhee
Red-tailed Hawk	Chipping Sparrow
American Kestrel	Field Sparrow
Merlin	Vesper Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Savannah Sparrow
Killdeer	Fox Sparrow
Wilson's Snipe	Song Sparrow
American Woodcock	Swamp Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Dark-eyed Junco
Rock Pigeon	Red-winged Blackbird
Mourning Dove	Rusty Blackbird
Great Horned Owl	Common Grackle
Barred Owl	Brown-headed Cowbird
Belted Kingfisher	Purple Finch
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	American Goldfinch
Downy Woodpecker	House Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	
Northern Flicker	
Pileated Woodpecker	



# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 May 2010**

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Temperatures near or above 80° F on three of the first five days of May brought large numbers of migrating birds to Fort Drum, including the first substantial wave of warblers, vireos, flycatchers, orioles, and other neotropical migrants. Few people were on the installation during the beginning of this warm spell to document the arrival dates for most species that appeared during this time, but by 5 May a large percentage of the species that normally arrive to northern New York during the first 10 days of May were present. Among these species were some of the most sought after breeding species on Fort Drum, including Upland Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Clay-colored and Henslow's Sparrows.

Except for Sedge Wren, which normally arrives later in May or even June, all of Fort Drum's regular nesting grassland bird species are now present, although some are still in relatively low numbers. Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows are abundant in the large fields in TAs 12 and 13, but so far only one Henslow's Sparrow has been located, in TA13A due east of the pond in TA 12C (where the old helicopters are). Formal grassland bird surveys begin later in May, and presumably more Henslow's Sparrows will be found then. The same goes for Grasshopper Sparrows, only a couple of which have been heard so far in the Cantonment Area and at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. Upland Sandpipers have been found in two locations within the airfield fence: one individual was heard calling at the northern end of the airfield on 5 May, and another was seen perched on a phone pole just north of Rt. 26 on 14 May. At least two Clay-colored Sparrows have been heard singing from regenerating clearcuts along the Main Tank Trail west of the airfield.

A visit to the Matoon Marsh in TA 17B on 13 May turned up one American Coot, a species not seen frequently on Fort Drum. Also seen in the marsh were at least five Pied-billed Grebes, including two that were performing their spectacular displays in which the grebes run across the surface of the water; one American Bittern calling; and two Common Moorhens. So far no Least Bitterns have been seen or heard here, but this species breeds annually in this marsh.



***Pied-billed Grebe in Training Area 17B.***

Among the large influx of birds during early May were several Red-headed Woodpeckers to TA 5D east of the airfield. On 5 May two were observed in an intense territorial skirmish near the eastern end of TA 5D. Based on recent years, the best places to see Red-headed Woodpeckers this year are likely going to be the in the open oak woodlands and savannah in TAs 5B and 5D immediately east and northeast of the airfield.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 May 2010**

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The first Whip-poor-will was heard on 28 April, which is the average arrival date for this species to Fort Drum over the past few years. Whip-poor-wills increased in abundance rapidly over the subsequent week, and now can be heard in many locations throughout the installation. Among the best places are in the open woodlands surrounding the airfield. So far no Common Nighthawks have been observed on Fort Drum.

The majority of breeding songbirds are now present on Fort Drum, although species that typically arrive during the last two weeks of May haven't been found yet. Examples of the latter include Alder and Willow Flycatchers and Mourning Warbler, species that should begin arriving in the next week or so. Aside from Mourning Warbler, the only normally occurring warbler species that has not yet been detected is Cerulean Warbler, but given that this is among the rarest breeding species on Fort Drum, it isn't surprising none have been found yet. One of the best places to see many of the 20 breeding warbler species on Fort Drum is along Figert Road. On 14 May warblers seen in the fields at the intersection of Figert Road and Russell Turnpike included 2 Blue-winged and 2 Golden-winged Warblers working out territory boundaries and the first Prairie Warbler of the season.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 May 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 1 May – 14 May:**

Canada Goose	Eastern Phoebe	Magnolia Warbler
Wood Duck	Great Crested Flycatcher	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Mallard	Eastern Kingbird	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Black Duck	Yellow-throated Vireo	Black-throated Green Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Blue-headed Vireo	Blackburnian Warbler
Wild Turkey	Warbling Vireo	Pine Warbler
Common Loon	Red-eyed Vireo	Prairie Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Blue Jay	Black-and-white Warbler
American Bittern	American Crow	American Redstart
Great Blue Heron	Common Raven	Ovenbird
Turkey Vulture	Horned Lark	Northern Waterthrush
Osprey	Tree Swallow	Canada Warbler
Northern Harrier	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Eastern Towhee
Broad-winged Hawk	Bank Swallow	Chipping Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Barn Swallow	Clay-colored Sparrow
American Kestrel	Black-capped Chickadee	Field Sparrow
Merlin	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Vesper Sparrow
Common Moorhen	White-breasted Nuthatch	Savannah Sparrow
American Coot	Brown Creeper	Grasshopper Sparrow
Killdeer	Brown Creeper	Henslow's Sparrow
Solitary Sandpiper	House Wren	Fox Sparrow
Upland Sandpiper	Winter Wren	Song Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Swamp Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Eastern Bluebird	White-throated Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Veery	White-crowned Sparrow
Black-billed Cuckoo	Hermit Thrush	Dark-eyed Junco
Great Horned Owl	Wood Thrush	Scarlet Tanager
Barred Owl	American Robin	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Whip-poor-will	Gray Catbird	Indigo Bunting
Chimney Swift	Brown Thrasher	Bobolink
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	European Starling	Red-winged Blackbird
Belted Kingfisher	American Pipit	Eastern Meadowlark
Red-headed Woodpecker	Cedar Waxwing	Rusty Blackbird
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Blue-winged Warbler	Common Grackle
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Golden-winged Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Downy Woodpecker	"Brewster's" Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Hairy Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler	Purple Finch
Northern Flicker	Northern Parula	House Finch
Pileated Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler	American Goldfinch
Least Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler	House Sparrow

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 June 2010**

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Spring migration is largely over, although a few migrants continue to trickle through. Blackpoll Warblers make up the majority of migrants that have been moving in recent days, and this species will likely continue to pass through Fort Drum through the first week or so of June. Early on 1 June an Olive-sided Flycatcher was in TA 6A; this is another species that is sometimes seen migrating through the area well into June. Except for these species and possibly a couple of others, migration is about finished, and all of the regular breeding bird species are now present on Fort Drum.

All of the regularly occurring grassland bird species have now been found on Fort Drum this year. The last to appear was a Sedge Wren, the first of which was found on 24 May in TA 13A just southeast of the intersection between Antwerp and Poagland Roads; a wren was seen in this location again on 29 May. Two more Sedge Wrens were found in TAs 12C and 13A on 25 May, but these birds have not been relocated. At least eight Henslow's Sparrows have been found so far this season, with the best location being in the fields on both sides of Antwerp Road in TAs 12C and 13A, in the immediate vicinity of the helicopters. As always, we request that birders observe Henslow's Sparrows and other grassland birds from the roads instead of walking through the fields and potentially trampling nests. Other species seen in the vicinity of the locations listed in this paragraph include American Bittern, Clay-colored and Savannah Sparrows, and Bobolink.



***Sedge Wren in Training Area 13A.***

Clay-colored Sparrows are most abundant on Fort Drum in the TA 12 and 13 grasslands, but they are easiest to observe in the regenerating clearcuts along the Main Tank Trail west and north of Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. On 29 May three Clay-colored Sparrows were seen along this stretch of road. Also seen here was an Upland Sandpiper inside the airfield fence near the northeastern corner of the airfield, a Northern Mockingbird immediately to the east, and a Prairie Warbler perched for a time on the fence about 0.5 mile east of the intersection between the Main Tank Trail and Elm Road. Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows occur in grassy areas along the entire length of the airfield fence and can frequently be seen perched on the fence.

Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to be most conspicuous in TA 5D. On 26 May at least 11 and as many as 14 Red-headed Woodpeckers were round in the open oak woodlands in the western and central portions of TA 5D. One of these woodpeckers was observed excavating a nest hole, and several pairs were engaged in courtship behaviors. On 26 May a Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen in TA 12B near Birch Road. Red-bellied Woodpeckers remain scarce on Fort Drum, although they are generally increasing in northern New York.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 June 2010**

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Three nightjar survey routes have been completed on Fort Drum this year. As is usually the case, the survey route that follows the perimeter of Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield and then meanders south to TA 7D recorded the highest number of nightjars, with 34 Whip-poor-wills and 12 Common Nighthawks. Generally, nighthawks are restricted to open areas on sandy soils (essentially the southern one-third of the installation), and Whip-poor-wills tend to occur at their highest densities in these same locations, although this species is much more widespread on Fort Drum than is nighthawk. Both for accessibility and numbers, the Main Tank Trail around the airfield is probably the best location to listen for nightjars, but the roads along the western boundaries of TAs 7D and 7G are good as well.

On 24 May the season's first Least Bittern was heard calling in the Matoon Marsh in TA 17B. This is the only location on Fort Drum where Least Bitterns are regularly observed. Other species in the marsh include Pied-billed Grebe, Virginia Rail, Common Moorhen, and Marsh Wren. The Matoon Marsh is accessible from the northernmost curve on Matoon Creek Road; look for a grassy trail heading northeast from the gravel road.

Golden-winged Warblers are in full voice and should be relatively easy to find through the first two to three weeks of June, although Blue-winged Warblers and hybrids are also common. Good places to look for Golden-winged Warblers include along Reedville Road, Carr Road, Antwerp Road between Reedville and Birch Roads, and in the fields along and near the intersection of Figert Road and Russell Turnpike. On 29 May a male Lawrence's Warbler was observed in this latter location; this is one of only three locations where Lawrence's Warblers have been observed on Fort Drum. Brewster's Warbler, the more commonly seen hybrid form, is widespread, and on 1 June three singing males were on the main road into TA 6A.

A few other warblers are potentially of interest to visiting birders. So far the only Cerulean Warbler found on Fort Drum this year was a singing male in TA 15A near the latrine on Canfield Road (just east of U.S. Military Highway). Mourning Warblers are relatively common in two types of habitats on Fort Drum: open woodlands with a dense shrub layer, and recent timber sales with extensive growth of blackberry and raspberry. Good locations with the first habitat type include many spots along Reedville Road and the areas listed above along Figert Road and Russell Turnpike. The latter habitat conditions are well represented along FUSA Boulevard, especially near Indian Pond. Canada Warblers occur widely on Fort Drum, although most are well away from roads. Wet shrubby areas within the forested portions of TAs 3, 4, 5B, 7, 8, and 9 are particularly good for Canada Warblers. These latter Training Areas support a good diversity of woodland warblers generally, and many species, such as Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, can be found along Alexandria or Lake School Roads, for instance.



# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 June 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 15 May – 1 June:**

Canada Goose	Northern Flicker	Northern Parula
Wood Duck	Pileated Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler
Mallard	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Chestnut-sided Warbler
American Black Duck	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Magnolia Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Alder Flycatcher	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Willow Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Wild Turkey	Least Flycatcher	Black-throated Green Warbler
Common Loon	Eastern Phoebe	Blackburnian Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Great Crested Flycatcher	Pine Warbler
American Bittern	Eastern Kingbird	Prairie Warbler
Least Bittern	Yellow-throated Vireo	Blackpoll Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Blue-headed Vireo	Cerulean Warbler
Green Heron	Warbling Vireo	Black-and-white Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Red-eyed Vireo	American Redstart
Osprey	Blue Jay	Ovenbird
Bald Eagle	American Crow	Northern Waterthrush
Northern Harrier	Common Raven	Mourning Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Tree Swallow	Wilson's Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Canada Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Bank Swallow	Eastern Towhee
American Kestrel	Barn Swallow	Chipping Sparrow
Merlin	Black-capped Chickadee	Clay-colored Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Field Sparrow
Common Moorhen	White-breasted Nuthatch	Vesper Sparrow
Semipalmated Plover	Brown Creeper	Savannah Sparrow
Killdeer	House Wren	Grasshopper Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Winter Wren	Henslow's Sparrow
Solitary Sandpiper	Sedge Wren	Song Sparrow
Upland Sandpiper	Marsh Wren	Swamp Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Eastern Bluebird	White-throated Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Veery	Scarlet Tanager
Mourning Dove	Hermit Thrush	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Wood Thrush	Indigo Bunting
Black-billed Cuckoo	American Robin	Bobolink
Great Horned Owl	Gray Catbird	Red-winged Blackbird
Barred Owl	Northern Mockingbird	Eastern Meadowlark
Common Nighthawk	Brown Thrasher	Common Grackle
Whip-poor-will	European Starling	Brown-headed Cowbird
Chimney Swift	Cedar Waxwing	Baltimore Oriole
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Blue-winged Warbler	Purple Finch
Belted Kingfisher	Golden-winged Warbler	House Finch
Red-headed Woodpecker	"Brewster's" Warbler	American Goldfinch
Red-bellied Woodpecker	"Lawrence's" Warbler	House Sparrow
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Tennessee Warbler	
Downy Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler	
Hairy Woodpecker		

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 September 2010**

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Due to the break in web site service, a summary of the breeding bird season is provided.

### **BREEDING BIRD SEASON SUMMARY**

Grassland birds were among the focal areas for avian field work this summer, with a particular focus on Henslow's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens. Slightly more than 20 territorial male Henslow's Sparrows were found in 2010, but the exact number of males is hard to determine because some males were found singing at a particular location for only a short time, and it is unclear whether their silence at other times of the season was because they moved or just didn't sing. The majority of Henslow's Sparrows held territories in TA 13A in several fields east of Antwerp Road, with just three or four males occupying widely scattered territories in TA 12. As is typical for this species, males have been very difficult to find since they stopped singing in late July and early August, although a concerted effort to find Henslow's Sparrows on 17 August turned up three individuals.



***Henslow's Sparrow in  
Training Area 12D.***

In 2010 Sedge Wrens exhibited a completely different pattern of arrival and territorial occupation than they did last year, which is characteristic of this highly unpredictable species. In 2009, Sedge Wrens did not appear on Fort Drum until June, and the majority of the nearly 40 territorial males that eventually occupied territories didn't arrive until July or even early August. This year, several singing males were on territory by the end of May, and all of the 17-20 males that we found arrived by the end of June. The majority of Sedge Wren territories this year were in the southwest corner of TA13A and the south end of TA 12C, with a few scattered territories in TA12B. Also somewhat uncharacteristically, most Sedge Wrens stopped singing by early August, and none have been heard since mid-August. Usually during years when Sedge Wrens are present in decent numbers (i.e. more than 5 or 6) they sing well into August and sometimes into September. Their early silence this year has led to speculation that they nested early and did not attempt a second brood, and perhaps many moved elsewhere during the latter half of the summer.

The majority of Fort Drum's Clay-colored Sparrows occur in the portions of the Fort Drum grasslands in TAs 12 and 13 that include numerous scattered shrubs. Prior to 2010 one of the largest clusters of Clay-colored Sparrows was in TA 12B, where 15-20 could often be found in a day, but an April wildfire seems to have made some of this habitat unsuitable for this species, as only 9 males were found here this year. Conversely, surveys along the western portion of TA 13A turned up at least 31 singing male Clay-colored Sparrows. A few scattered individuals were found elsewhere in TA 12, and at least 6-10 more occupied territories in the regenerating clearcuts adjacent to Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield.

# **Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program**



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 September 2010**

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As in past years, the grassy fields around the airfield contained numerous Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows, two species that are scarce to absent from the old hayfield grasslands in TAs 12 and 13. Upland Sandpiper has also been restricted as a breeder to the airfield area since about 2004 (this species formerly bred in TA 12 and 13), and only two territories were found on Fort Drum this year, none in places convenient to birders. Upland Sandpipers are usually much easier to observe on Fort Drum during the late summer than during the main breeding season (see below).

Red-headed Woodpeckers were another focal area for bird monitoring this year. Approximately 8-10 territories (probably 9) were located in the open oak woodland immediately east and northeast of the airfield in TAs 5D and 5B. As of this writing juveniles have been found on five territories, and several pairs are acting as if they still have active nests. These territories will continue to be monitored until the woodpeckers depart in the fall, which usually happens in mid- to late-September.

Golden-winged Warblers have long been of particular interest on Fort Drum, but the local population appears to have reached a discouraging milestone this year with respect to numbers of Blue-winged Warblers. Final numbers have not yet been calculated, but the number of Blue-winged Warblers in 2010 was very nearly equal to the number of Golden-wings. Add in hybrids and the total percentage of all winged warblers that were phenotypic Golden-wings was well below 50%. Particularly discouraging was the discovery of several Blue-winged Warblers and hybrids but no Golden-wings in the patch clearcuts in TAs 7 and 14 that were hoped to provide habitat for this species (and still will ensure the long-term availability of shrubland bird habitat on Fort Drum). The only bright spot was the continued existence of several areas where Golden-winged Warblers continue to occur in good numbers with few to no Blue-wings, the largest of these being the wet successional woodlands along much of Reedville Road (although even here hybrids are increasing).



***Golden-winged Warbler  
in Training Area 11B.***

As usual, 20 species of nesting warblers were documented on Fort Drum. Cerulean Warbler is the rarest of these species, and appears to have declined in recent years. In 2010 only one Cerulean Warbler was found, a singing male in an open stand of large maples in TA 15C. Another locally scarce breeder is Prairie Warbler, which was found in its usual locations in scrubby open woods in TAs 7 and 14 and in the oak regeneration along the edges of the airfield. Canada and Mourning Warblers continue to nest widely throughout Fort Drum in generally low densities, although both species are common in some locations. Canada Warblers are especially common in wet successional woodlands that have a dense shrub layer, and Mourning Warblers in recent timber sales with dense growth of blackberry and raspberry, and also in open woodlands with a dense understory.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 September 2010**

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Results from the six nightjar routes conducted in 2010 were 125 Whip-poor-wills and 18 Common Nighthawks. The highest Whip-poor-will tallies were from routes that ran around the perimeter of the airfield and into TA 7 (max of 34 individuals) and up FUSA Boulevard (25 individuals). The 12 Common Nighthawks on the airfield route was easily the highest tally of this species, as most of the other routes had just 1-3 individuals. Whip-poor-wills were still calling for brief periods just before sunrise as of 24 August, and Common Nighthawks were still booming as of 25 August, although the latter species is now migrating as well.

The most notable raptor sightings were of Merlin, a relatively recent addition to Fort Drum's nesting avifauna, with two new nesting locations identified this year. One of these was in the woods adjacent to the Fort Drum Recreation Permit office, and the other was in TA 13A near the open grasslands, where the adults frequently hunted. In fact in the latter location it was not unusual this summer to see one or more each Merlin and American Kestrel hunting over the same fields. Northern Harrier numbers seemed about average, with 3-5 pairs nesting in the TA 12 and 13 grasslands, an apparent pair nesting near the airfield, and a few more pairs scattered in large old fields and wetlands throughout the installation. Red-shouldered Hawks were regularly heard in their usual locations in the south-central Training Areas (especially along Lake School Road) and in the northeastern portion of Fort Drum. During most years one or two Northern Goshawk territories are found on Fort Drum, but this species was not observed during the 2010 nesting season.

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were rare on Fort Drum prior to a major tent caterpillar outbreak during the years 2003-2005, and predictably, this species increased dramatically in response to the caterpillar infestation (cuckoos specialize in eating tent caterpillars). The big surprise is that Yellow-billed Cuckoos continue to be found regularly on Fort Drum several years after the caterpillar outbreak ended, and this year it was not unusual to hear 2-4 per day in stands of large oak and/or maple. Black-billed Cuckoos remain much more common on Fort Drum relative to Yellow-billeds, with daily high counts reaching low double digits, although 1-6 per day was more typical. Both cuckoos have been especially vocal during mid and late August, particularly during the first couple of hours after sunrise. On several dates between 12 and 20 August 3-4 Black-billed Cuckoos were heard singing simultaneously in various locations around Fort Drum, and on 25 August 2 Yellow-billed Cuckoos were heard singing at the same time in TA 5D (something that was unheard of prior to the big tent caterpillar outbreak).



***Black-billed Cuckoo in Training Area 3A.***



# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 September 2010**

### **“FALL” MIGRATION**

Shorebirds typically account for the first obvious migrants seen each “fall”, with migrating juveniles of several species arriving in July. During a typical year Fort Drum has very little habitat for migrant shorebirds, and high water levels this year meant there was even less habitat than usual. Solitary Sandpipers have been seen regularly along the edges of small ponds throughout Fort Drum since 13 July, and a few Lesser Yellowlegs and Least Sandpipers have been heard calling as they flew over Fort Drum in late July and August. Upland Sandpipers often congregate on mowed fields on sandy soil during August, and several such gatherings have been observed this year, including 5 individuals along the Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield fence line paralleling Rt. 26 on 4 August, and 13 individuals in a large field in the Cantonment Area on 11 August. More “Uppies” have been heard calling as they flew over Fort Drum throughout the month, with the most recent observation coming on 26 August.

It can be difficult to determine whether raptors seen flying over Fort Drum are migrants or local birds at this time of year, but a Peregrine Falcon seen flying over TA 13A on 24 August almost certainly came from somewhere else. Several high-flying Northern Harriers and Red-tailed and Broad-winged Hawks seen during the last half of August were also thought to be migrating.

By the middle of August mixed species groups of songbirds were being seen regularly. The first obviously migrating songbird (because this species does not breed on Fort Drum) seen this fall season was a Swainson’s Thrush on 12 August in TA 8C, and another Swainson’s Thrush was in TA 6A on 19 August. By 14 August mixed flocks of warblers, vireos, and other songbirds were being seen most days, but most of the species seen in these flocks nest on Fort Drum, and the first certain migrant warbler was a Blackpoll Warbler in TA 7D on 16 August. The largest obvious movement of songbirds so far this season occurred on the night of 23/24 August, and on the next morning a good-sized flock of warblers in TA 12A included Northern Parula; Tennessee, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll, and Black-and-white Warblers; and American Redstart. Numerous Common Yellowthroats and a singing Golden-winged or Blue-winged Warbler were nearby. The latter wasn’t seen so can’t be identified to species—it may have even been a hybrid—and both species occupied territories in the immediate vicinity this year. On 26 August the season’s first Philadelphia Vireo was in TA 17B, and several groups of 12 to 16 Eastern Kingbirds were observed throughout Fort Drum. Another Philadelphia Vireo was in TA 3B on 30 August, and a large movement of thrushes was noted 31 August in TA 4D, including many Wood Thrushes and Veerys and at least a couple of Swainsons Thrushes. In the same vicinity was a flock of warblers that included Tennessee, Bay-breasted, and Blackpoll Warblers.



***Eastern Kingbird in  
Training Area 12C.***



# Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



## Wildlife Viewing Report – 1 September 2010

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### A NOTE FROM THE AQUATIC BIOLOGISTS

In early July, Fort Drum Fish Biologists sampled the hornyhead chub, *Nocomis biguttatus*, in the West Branch of Black Creek. Identification was verified by biologists at the NYSDEC and a specimen was sent to the New York State Museum of Natural History for storage. This is the first documented hornyhead chub population in the Oswegatchie River Basin which drains the Indian River and all waterways, except the Black River Watershed, on Fort Drum. The likely origin of the West Branch of Black Creek hornyhead chub population is baitfish introductions.

All anglers are reminded that live transport of all fish without a permit (except certified baitfish with a receipt) is illegal in the State of New York.



***Hornyhead Chub from the West Branch of Black Creek.***

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 20 September 2010**

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Small gatherings of Wood Ducks, Mallards, American Black Ducks, and Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal have been noted on Fort Drum since August, but waterfowl migration finally seems to be picking up. A visit to the Matoon Marsh in Ta 17B on 20 September turned up all of the species listed above except Blue-winged Teal, and also 23 Northern Pintails and one each American Wigeon and Ring-necked Duck. Also seen in the marsh on the 20<sup>th</sup> were the usual Pied-billed Grebes and Common Moorhens, plus one each American Bitter and Sora. The Canada Goose migration also seems to be picking up slightly, although nothing resembling a heavy flight has occurred so far.

Migrating Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks have been seen daily at a bird banding station on the west side of Fort Drum. Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel are also daily occurrences at this station, although all of these species nested in the immediate vicinity this year and it's not clear that these birds were migrating. A Merlin flew over the Cantonment area on 9 September. On 20 September an immature Bald Eagle was observed soaring over TA 13A.

Shorebirds have been characteristically scarce on Fort Drum this fall, as the installation lacks mudflats or other suitable foraging areas for migrants, but there have been a few observations. On 10 September a Black-bellied Plover was heard calling as it flew over the installation. A few Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers have also been heard calling overhead, although the latter species has been less commonly observed this month than it was in August. On 20 September one each Solitary Sandpiper and Lesser Yellowlegs and 26 Wilson's snipe were foraging in a beaver pond in TA13A.



***Immature bald eagle flying over Training Area 13A.***

At least five adult Red-headed Woodpeckers continue in the oak woodlands in TA 5D, but no juveniles have been observed recently. Fledged young were confirmed on five territories this year (of 8-11 total territories), and the total number of young observed this season seemed lower than usual. Still, juveniles were observed regularly to the end of August, and these young birds probably moved out of the area in early September.

Whip-poor-wills continue to call briefly each morning shortly before sunrise, typically about 35-40 minutes before official sunrise on a clear morning and slightly later on an overcast morning. A good place to listen for Whip-poor-wills is along the Main Tank Trail immediately west of Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield, where on the morning of 20 September three individuals were heard calling from one location. Common Nighthawks were heard in this same area daily to the end of August, but no nighthawks have been observed on Fort Drum so far this month.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 20 September 2010**

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The landbird migration has been fairly active all month, with mixed flocks of warblers, vireos, and other species being seen most days. For the second year, fall migration is being monitored at a bird banding station on the western side of the installation. Some of the more interesting species seen at the banding station and elsewhere include:

- Black-billed Cuckoo: one captured at banding station 14 September.
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: different locations 7, 8, 9, and 15 September. One captured at the banding station on 16 September.
- Eastern Kingbird: departed Fort Drum by 7 September.
- Blue-headed Vireo: first one seen at banding station 15 September.
- Philadelphia Vireo: different locations 7, 9, 10, 15, and 17 September. At the banding station one was in a mist net on 15 September next to two Tennessee Warblers, giving an excellent opportunity to compare these similar-looking species.
- Carolina Wren: calling individual in TA 8C 14 September (rare on Fort Drum).
- Golden-crowned Kinglet: first fall migrant 10 September.
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet: first fall migrant 17 September.
- Swainson's Thrush: Heavy movement noted early on the morning of 9 September; smaller numbers of Veery and Wood Thrush also moving.
- Blue-winged Warbler (probable): not seen but where BWWA held territory earlier in season, heard daily late August through 3 September. This species and Golden-winged Warbler (hybrids also) not separable by song.
- Tennessee Warbler: up to 5 per day through mid September.
- Magnolia Warbler: most frequently captured warbler at banding station. Only species with more captures this fall is Gray Catbird.
- Cape May Warbler: two at banding station 10 September.
- Pine Warbler: at least 15 in a mixed flock with 12+ Eastern Bluebirds and 30+ Chipping Sparrows, foraging mostly in oaks in TA 5D.
- Prairie Warbler: a singing male in TA 6A on 9 September, two months after the last one was heard at this location.
- Palm Warbler: 1-2 per day at banding station, virtually all of western subspecies.
- Bay-breasted Warbler: one at banding station 10 September and one in TA 5D 13 September.
- Blackpoll Warbler: at least 1-2 seen most days this month; most common warbler seen some days.
- Wilson's Warblers: 2-3 per day at banding station all month so far.
- Lincoln's Sparrow: several at banding station beginning 14 September.
- White-throated Sparrow: many new arrivals at banding station on 14 September.
- Bobolink: many heard calling overhead daily during first week September; last heard 14 September.
- Rusty Blackbird: first fall migrant 20 September.

Non-bird migrants seen lately include good numbers of Monarch butterflies and Common Green Darners (dragonflies). Monarchs in particular seem much more numerous than they did during the fall of 2009.

# Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



## Wildlife Viewing Report – 20 September 2010

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### Birds seen on Fort Drum 1 – 20 September:

Canada Goose	Red-headed Woodpecker	Nashville Warbler
Wood Duck	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Parula
American Wigeon	Downy Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler
American Black Duck	Hairy Woodpecker	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Mallard	Northern ("Yellow-shafted") Flicker	Magnolia Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Pileated Woodpecker	Cape May Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Yellow-rumped ("Myrtle") Warbler
Hooded Merganser	"Traill's" Flycatcher (probably mostly Willow, maybe 1-2 Alder)	Black-throated Green Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Least Flycatcher	Blackburnian Warbler
Wild Turkey	Eastern Phoebe	Pine Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Great Crested Flycatcher	Prairie Warbler
American Bittern	Eastern Kingbird	Palm Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Blue-headed Vireo	Bay-breasted Warbler
Green Heron	Warbling Vireo	Blackpoll Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Philadelphia Vireo	Black-and-white Warbler
Osprey	Red-eyed Vireo	American Redstart
Bald Eagle	Blue Jay	Ovenbird
Northern Harrier	American Crow	Northern Waterthrush
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Common Raven	Common Yellowthroat
Cooper's Hawk	Horned Lark	Wilson's Warbler
Broad-winged Hawk	Tree Swallow	Canada Warbler
Red-tailed Hawk	Barn Swallow	Eastern Towhee
American Kestrel	Black-capped Chickadee	Chipping Sparrow
Merlin	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Field Sparrow
Sora	White-breasted Nuthatch	Vesper Sparrow
Common Moorhen	Brown Creeper	Savannah Sparrow
Black-bellied Plover	Carolina Wren	Grasshopper Sparrow
Killdeer	House Wren	Song Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Winter Wren	Lincoln's Sparrow
Solitary Sandpiper	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Swamp Sparrow
Greater Yellowlegs	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	White-throated Sparrow
Lesser Yellowlegs	Eastern Bluebird	Scarlet Tanager
Least Sandpiper	Veery	Northern Cardinal
Wilson's Snipe	Swainson's Thrush	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
American Woodcock	Hermit Thrush	Indigo Bunting
Ring-billed Gull	Wood Thrush	Bobolink
Rock Pigeon	American Robin	Red-winged Blackbird
Mourning Dove	Gray Catbird	Rusty Blackbird
Black-billed Cuckoo	Brown Thrasher	Common Grackle
Great Horned Owl	European Starling	Brown-headed Cowbird
Barred Owl	Cedar Waxwing	Baltimore Oriole
Whip-poor-will	Blue-winged Warbler (probable)	Purple Finch
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Tennessee Warbler	American Goldfinch
Belted Kingfisher		

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 30 September 2010**

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Waterfowl migration picked up substantially during the last 10 days of September. Wood Ducks, Mallards, American Black Ducks, and Green-winged Teal are now scattered in wetlands throughout Fort Drum, typically in relatively small numbers at any one locations. Pied-billed Grebes, American Bitterns, and Common Moorhens continue to be seen in the Matoon Marsh in TA 17B. On 28 September a Marsh Wren called persistently from the cattails on the north side of the marsh.

High water has left very little shorebird habitat for species that require mudflats or similar habitats. The grasslands at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield provide foraging areas for those shorebirds that prefer short grass to mudflats, and on 27 September both Black-bellied Plover and American Golden-Plover were heard calling from the airfield grasslands. Unfortunately, access restrictions prevented visual observation of these individuals, so it is not clear how many were present. Other “grasspipers”, such as Baird’s and White-rumped Sandpipers and perhaps even Buff-breasted Sandpiper probably use the airfield grasslands at least occasionally, but to date such use has not been documented.

The predominance of often fairly gusty south winds over the past 10 days, often with rain, seems to have bogged down the passerine migration. Relatively few migrating songbirds have been observed most days during this period, and warbler diversity has been quite low relative to earlier in the month. Among the highlights have been Lincoln’s Sparrows seen in several locations most days, and a Pine Siskin heard calling as it flew over TA 3 on 23 September. At least two adult Red-headed Woodpeckers continue in the open oak woodland in TA 5D, where a large mixed flock of Eastern Bluebirds, Pine Warblers, and Chipping Sparrows is often accompanied by phoebes, vireos, chickadees, kinglets, creepers, warblers, and other species.

Captures at a bird banding station have mirrored the recent absence of migrants on the few recent days when weather conditions were suitable for mist-netting. The only day during the period with high capture rates was 23 September, when large numbers of Gray Catbirds and White-throated Sparrows were captured, with smaller numbers of other species including single Swainson’s Thrush, Tennessee Warbler, and Lincoln’s Sparrow.

Many species have departed Fort Drum for the year, but we still expect to see good numbers of migrants when weather conditions become more suitable for bird migration. Given the long string of days with south winds and stormy weather, it seems likely that the next night with northerly winds and clear skies will provide for a large movement of songbirds.



# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 30 September 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 21 – 30 September:**

Canada Goose	Eastern Phoebe	Blackpoll Warbler
Wood Duck	Blue-headed Vireo	Common Yellowthroat
American Black Duck	Red-eyed Vireo	Eastern Towhee
Mallard	Blue Jay	Chipping Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	American Crow	Vesper Sparrow
Ruffed Grouse	Common Raven	Song Sparrow
Wild Turkey	Black-capped Chickadee	Lincoln's Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Swamp Sparrow
American Bittern	White-breasted Nuthatch	White-throated Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Brown Creeper	Dark-eyed (Slate-colored)
Northern Harrier	Marsh Wren	Junco
Cooper's Hawk	House Wren	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Indigo Bunting
American Kestrel	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Red-winged Blackbird
Merlin	Eastern Bluebird	Rusty Blackbird
Common Moorhen	Veery	Common Grackle
Black-bellied Plover	Swainson's Thrush	Purple Finch
American Golden-Plover	American Robin	American Goldfinch
Killdeer	Gray Catbird	Pine Siskin
American Woodcock	Brown Thrasher	
Ring-billed Gull	European Starling	
Rock Pigeon	Cedar Waxwing	
Mourning Dove	Tennessee Warbler	
Belted Kingfisher	Nashville Warbler	
Red-headed Woodpecker	Magnolia Warbler	
Downy Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped ("Myrtle") Warbler	
Hairy Woodpecker	Black-throated Green Warbler	
Northern ("Yellow-shafted") Flicker	Pine Warbler	
Pileated Woodpecker	Palm Warbler	

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 02 November 2010**

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By the end of September many bird species had departed Fort Drum for the year, but there were still plenty of birds moving during early October. On 1 October a wide variety of species were seen flying over Training Areas 12 and 17, including 1 Snow Goose in a flock of Canada Geese, 1 Common Loon, 3 Merlins, and 1 Peregrine Falcon. A Red-headed Woodpecker in TA 5D on that date was the latest found this year, and six species of warbler were observed: Tennessee, Nashville, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Pine, and Palm Warblers and Common Yellowthroat.

Impressive numbers of birds were in a field at the southern end of Pleasant Road on 5 October. The clear highlight here, and the rarest bird observed all month, was a Connecticut Warbler seen briefly in the brushy woods at the edge of the field. This was the second Connecticut Warbler observed on Fort Drum in three years. Other species seen in the area included 8 Winter Wrens, 20 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and scores of sparrows including Lincoln's, Fox, Song, White-throated, and White-crowned.

Another impressive assemblage of migrants was noted on 7 October in the brushy fields along Antwerp Road between Hunter Creek and Dogwood Road. Species tallies from two hours spent along this stretch of road included 1 American Bittern (the last seen this year), 1 Orange-crowned Warbler, 100 Yellow-rumped Warblers, 6 Palm Warblers, 5 Lincoln's Sparrows, 23 Song Sparrows, 10 Swamp Sparrows, 60 White-crowned Sparrows, and small numbers of several other species. That same day a flock of 50+ Chipping Sparrows and 5+ vesper Sparrows was along the Main Tank Trail at the north end of Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield.

Both the number and diversity of migrants dropped substantially after the first week of October, although a few species continued to be seen in good numbers throughout the month, including Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and on some days Rusty Blackbird. Some other notable sightings included a second Orange-crowned Warbler on 14 October, this one in TA 17B, and a rarely seen (on Fort Drum, anyway) Red-bellied Woodpecker on 26 October in TA 12D. By the last week of the month several winter species were present in generally small numbers, including Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Shrike, American Tree Sparrow, and Snow Bunting.

Waterfowl have been mostly scarce on Fort Drum all month. Scattered Wood Ducks, American Wigeon, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Green-winged Teal, and Hooded Mergansers have been reported, but numbers seem low compared to past years, and no large groups of ducks have been seen. Modest movements of Canada Geese were noted during the first half of October, but so far no really big flight has occurred. Aside from the single Snow Goose seen early in the month, this species has been absent. It will be interesting to see whether the trend of recent years holds and we don't see peak numbers of migrating geese until late November and early December again.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 02 November 2010**

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### **Below are the last dates some species were observed on Fort Drum in 2010:**

American Bittern: 7 Oct.	Brown Thrasher: 5 Oct.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 Oct.	Gray Catbird: 7 Oct.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 6 Oct.	Tennessee Warbler: 1 Oct.
Blue-headed Vireo: 13 Oct.	Nashville Warbler: 1 Oct.
Red-eyed Vireo: 13 Oct.	Blackburnian Warbler: 4 October
House Wren: 5 Oct.	Blackpoll Warbler: 12 October
Swainson's Thrush: 4 Oct.	Common Yellowthroat: 7 October

### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 1 – 31 October:**

Snow Goose	Eastern Phoebe	Common Yellowthroat
Canada Goose	Blue-headed Vireo	Eastern Towhee
Wood Duck	Red-eyed Vireo	American Tree Sparrow
American Wigeon	Blue Jay	Chipping Sparrow
American Black Duck	American Crow	Field Sparrow
Mallard	Common Raven	Vesper Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Horned Lark	Savannah Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Black-capped Chickadee	Fox Sparrow
Ruffed Grouse	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Song Sparrow
Wild Turkey	White-breasted Nuthatch	Lincoln's Sparrow
Common Loon	Brown Creeper	Swamp Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	House Wren	White-throated Sparrow
American Bittern	Winter Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed (Slate-colored)
Turkey Vulture	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Junco
Northern Harrier	Eastern Bluebird	Red-winged Blackbird
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Swainson's Thrush	Rusty Blackbird
Cooper's Hawk	Hermit Thrush	Common Grackle
Red-tailed Hawk	American Robin	Purple Finch
American Kestrel	Gray Catbird	American Goldfinch
Merlin	Brown Thrasher	Pine Siskin
Peregrine Falcon	European Starling	
Killdeer	American Pipit	
Greater Yellowlegs	Cedar Waxwing	
Ring-billed Gull	Tennessee Warbler	
Rock Pigeon	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Mourning Dove	Nashville Warbler	
Red-headed Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped ("Myrtle") Warbler	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Black-throated Green Warbler	
Downy Woodpecker	Blackburnian Warbler	
Hairy Woodpecker	Pine Warbler	
Northern ("Yellow-shafted") Flicker	Palm Warbler	
Pileated Woodpecker	Blackpoll Warbler	

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 18 November 2010**

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By the beginning of November the fall passerine migration was mostly over and the avian community on Fort Drum had taken on a distinctly winter-like feel, although with a few species that will certainly depart once winter weather actually settles in. One example of the latter is Great Blue Heron, a species that mostly departs the area by the end of October except for a few individuals that linger as long as there is some open water. Snipe and woodcock often persist in northern New York late into the fall as long as there are places where the ground remains unfrozen and uncovered by snow, so it wasn't much of a surprise to flush a Wilson's Snipe in Training Area (TA) 17B on 4 and 8 November or an American Woodcock in TA 14C on 9 November. A few species that winter on Fort Drum are present in numbers that suggest migration has not ended. Most conspicuous among these species is Dark-eyed Junco, but Brown Creeper and Golden-crowned Kinglet are other examples. A few Eastern Bluebirds sometimes winter in northern New York, but most leave, and the two bluebirds present in TA 6A through at least 18 November may not stick around much longer.

The general scarcity of waterfowl that has typified this fall continued through the first half of November. Snow Geese were virtually undetected this fall until 10 November, when just a couple of flocks totaling about 100 individuals were seen migrating high over TA 6A. Small groups of American Black Ducks, Mallards, Green-winged Teal, and Hooded Mergansers were observed throughout the period, and a few Common Goldeneye showed up on the Black River 18 November, but both duck numbers and diversity were substantially lower than is typical for this time of year.

So far it's not looking like an especially big year for wintering raptors. During some years Rough-legged Hawks can be very common in the open areas of Fort Drum, but so far daily counts have not exceeded two individuals, with most sightings coming from the fields along Antwerp Road in TAs 12 and 13. A few Northern Harriers remain in this area as well, but no American Kestrels have been seen in several weeks. Few migrating raptors were noted during November until the 18<sup>th</sup>, when a small flight was noted, including one Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1 Northern Goshawk, and two Golden Eagles, the latter seen well over TA12D.

Although not strictly a raptor, Northern Shrike is another predatory bird often found in this area, with sightings in three locations so far this season: one just north of Hunter Creek, another about one-half mile north of Dogwood Street, and one one-half mile north of the previous location.



***Northern Shrike in raining Area 13A in 2008.***

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 18 November 2010**

Except for the continued arrival of American Tree Sparrows, most sparrows had departed the area by the beginning of November. Lingering sparrows seen early in the month included one White-crowned Sparrow on Carr Road and a Swamp Sparrow on Lewisburg Road 2 November and one each Fox and Field Sparrow on Plank Road, the latter with a small group of tree sparrows on 8 November. Also on the 8<sup>th</sup> was a White-throated Sparrow near the intersection of Antwerp and Birch Roads, and another White-throat was in TA6A on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The heaviest movement of American Tree Sparrows was noted on 4 November, when a flock of at least 65 was seen in TA 17B and another flock of 50+ was along the western boundary of Fort Drum near Dogwood Street. Several moderate-sized flocks of Snow Buntings have been seen, including a group of about 50 along FUSA Boulevard 4 November, 55+ seen flying over TA 6A on 10 November, and about 75 along the boundary between TAs 13A and 13B on 18 November. Smaller numbers of Snow Buntings have been heard overhead on many days since late October.



***Tree Sparrow in Training  
Area 17 in November 2010.***

Blackbirds have mostly been scarce this month, with just a few flocks seen migrating. Among the largest of these was a group of approximately 100 Rusty Blackbirds that passed over TA 4 on 3 November. The largest flock of Red-winged Blackbirds seen during this period was 60 on 3 November, but smaller migrating flocks were seen occasionally through the 15<sup>th</sup>.

So far finches have not invaded in substantial numbers, but a few individuals of several species have been heard flying over the installation. Small numbers of Pine Siskins have been since August, and a few continued to pass over Fort Drum through at least 2 November. White-winged Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks, just 1 or 2 at a time, were each heard flying over Fort Drum on 3 and 10 November. Also on the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2 Red Crossbills were heard calling over TA6A. Single redpolls were heard passing overhead on 9 and 10 November, and a group of at least 5 were in TA6A on 18 November, but so far no large groups of redpolls have been found. It remains unclear where these finches are the vanguard of a major winter irruption or are simply passing through, although the generally poor conifer cone crop suggests the latter for at least siskins and crossbills.

Interesting non-bird observations include the continued calling of a few spring peepers, heard as late as 15 November. The unseasonably warm weather that has a few peepers calling looks like it is about to end, so surely we won't be hearing them for much longer. Also on the 15<sup>th</sup>, an otter was seen along FUSA Boulevard north of Indian Lake.



# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 18 November 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 1 – 18 November:**

Snow Goose	Horned Lark
Canada Goose	Black-capped Chickadee
Mallard	Red-breasted Nuthatch
American Black Duck	White-breasted Nuthatch
Green-winged Teal	Brown Creeper
Bufflehead	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Hooded Merganser	Eastern Bluebird
Ruffed Grouse	American Robin
Wild Turkey	European Starling
Great Blue Heron	Cedar Waxwing
Turkey Vulture	American Tree Sparrow
Northern Harrier	Field Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Fox Sparrow
Northern Goshawk	Swamp Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	White-throated Sparrow
Rough-legged Hawk	White-crowned Sparrow
Golden Eagle	Snow Bunting
Wilson's Snipe	Dark-eyed Junco
American Woodcock	Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gull	Rusty Blackbird
Rock Pigeon	Purple Finch
Mourning Dove	House Finch
Downy Woodpecker	Red Crossbill
Hairy Woodpecker	White-winged Crossbill
Northern Flicker	Common Redpoll
Pileated Woodpecker	Pine Siskin
Northern Shrike	American Goldfinch
Blue Jay	Evening Grosbeak.
American Crow	House Sparrow
Common Raven	

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 December 2010**

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As has been the case in recent years, the bulk of the goose migration over Fort Drum came during late November and early December. Most goose flocks migrating over the installation through late November consisted entirely of Canada Geese, although sometime a few Snow Geese were mixed in, as for instance on 24 November, when a flock of 80 Canada Geese included 2 Snow Geese. The bulk of the Snow Goose migration occurred between 4 and 9 December, when several flocks of high-flying Snows were seen daily. Larger numbers of Canada Geese were also seen passing overhead throughout this period, and at least a few were still flying south on 14 December.

Ducks have been generally scarce on Fort Drum all fall, and this scarcity became even more pronounced when most of the installation's water bodies iced over in late November and early December. A waterfowl survey conducted throughout the northern training areas on 22 November found very few ducks, with small numbers of Hooded Mergansers on several ponds, 2 Mallards in a pond on North Tank Trail, and 2 Common Goldeneye on Indian Lake. Also on Indian Lake that day was an immature Bald Eagle. There were more ducks on the Black River in TA 6A on 24 November, including a mixed group of 60+ American Black Ducks and Mallards (mostly the latter) and 19 Common Goldeneye. Small numbers of black ducks and Mallards have also been seen on West Creek in the Cantonment Area and Pleasant Creek in TA3, and on 10 December a late Wood Duck was also on Pleasant Creek.



***Rough-legged Hawk in  
Training Area 13A.***

So far only modest numbers of raptors have been documented on Fort Drum. During some years good numbers of Rough-legged Hawks occur in the Fort Drum grasslands along Antwerp Road in TAs 12 and 13, but only 1-2 per day have been seen here this season. Up to 4 Northern Harriers were seen per visit to these grasslands through 24 November, but so far none have been observed in December, and it is possible that the heavy snow during the first week of December convinced the harriers to move on. Red-tailed Hawks are more common and widespread, with daily tallies of 3-6 typical. Northern Shrike, an honorary raptor because of its predatory nature, is characteristically present in widely scattered locations, with recent sightings coming from Pleasant Road about 0.25 mile north of Sycamore Road, and in TA12B along Pleasant Street about 100 yards south of Poagland Road.

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 December 2010**

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Most of the recent Snow Bunting and Horned Lark observations have come from the immediate western boundary of Fort Drum, where these birds use both installation grasslands and perhaps more frequently off-post plowed fields for foraging. For instance on 14 December a flock of at least 160 Snow Buntings was along Pleasant Road, primarily in the plowed field west of TA12C, but also using that training area, and 7 Horned Larks were observed flying from TA3E to the harvested cornfield just to the west. No Lapland Longspurs have been seen on Fort Drum so far this season, but at least one was in a flock of Horned Larks less than a quarter mile west of Fort Drum on 10 December, so longspurs are certainly in the area.

As is typical for this time of year, some of the most interesting birds are lingering species that mostly have departed the area by now. A couple of good examples were seen on 9 December, including a Great Blue Heron in Pleasant Creek along Rt. 26, and a Red-winged Blackbird along Simonet Road on the edge of Fort Drum. The latter bird was certainly present because of a feeder at a house directly across the street. Another late bird of note was an American Woodcock seen flying through the birch woodland in TA 3E before sunrise on 30 November. Although the majority of American Robins migrate out of northern New York for the winter, variable numbers usually are found throughout the colder months, and so far more are present this December than has been the case most recent years. A Golden-crowned Kinglet calling from deciduous woodland along Antwerp Road on 9 December was thought to be a late migrant; this species winters on Fort Drum, but wintering individuals are rarely found away from conifers.

Winter irruptives are another group of species that birders hope for every winter, and so far this season is looking like moderate numbers of these species will be present. Common Redpoll has been the most abundant of these species, with flocks of 40+ along Antwerp Road in TA12C on 9 December and 60+ along Pleasant Road in TA4A on 13 December, with many more observations of singles or very small groups. Bohemian Waxwings have also irrupted south in relatively good numbers this season, but evaded detection on Fort Drum until 14 December, when a flock of 60+ was observed in TA3 along the west boundary of Fort Drum. Other irruptive species, including Pine Siskin, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeak, were observed earlier in the fall on Fort Drum but have not been detected recently, although some may yet remain in the area.



***Common Redpoll in  
Training Area 14D.***

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 14 December 2010**

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### **Birds seen on Fort Drum 19 November – 14 December:**

Snow Goose	Northern Shrike
Canada Goose	Blue Jay
Wood Duck	American Crow
American Black Duck	Common Raven
Mallard	Horned Lark
Common Goldeneye	Black-capped Chickadee
Hooded Merganser	White-breasted Nuthatch
Wild Turkey	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Ruffed Grouse	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Great Blue Heron	American Robin
Northern Harrier	Bohemian Waxwing
Bald Eagle	Cedar Waxwing
Red-tailed Hawk	American Tree Sparrow
Rough-legged Hawk	Dark-eyed Junco
American Woodcock	Snow Bunting
Ring-billed Gull	Northern Cardinal
Downy Woodpecker	Common Redpoll
Hairy Woodpecker	American Goldfinch
Pileated Woodpecker	