

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 13 January 2011

Between the holidays and poor weather little effort has been made to find birds on Fort Drum during the past month, and even when somebody managed to get out to look for birds there weren't all that many to see. Slow birding is generally par for the course during the winter here, but there have been a few more species than usual for this time of year. The most notable birds of the season so far have been half-hardies, Bohemian Waxwings, and a couple of species of finches.

This winter has been a relatively good one for half-hardies, which are species that normally migrate south for the winter but sometimes overwinter in small numbers. Examples from this winter include Northern Flicker, American Robin, Song and White-throated Sparrows, and Red-winged Blackbird. Flickers and robins are found on Fort Drum during the winter perhaps two out of every three years, but numbers this year seem a little higher than usual, with sightings of 1-2 flickers in several locations throughout December, and groups of up to 30 American Robins in the Cantonment Area. Most of the Song and White-throated Sparrows have also been in the Cantonment Area; no Song Sparrows have been seen since 22 December, but up to 4 White-throated Sparrows per day were seen through the first week of January. Red-winged Blackbirds were observed in two locations in the southern portion of Fort Drum on 16 and 22 December.

So far this winter has featured modest numbers of northern irruptives, primarily Bohemian Waxwings and Common Redpolls. Bohemian Waxwings have been observed throughout the western training areas and the Cantonment Area, usually in flocks of 5-20 individuals. Common Redpolls are also widespread, occurring just about anywhere that birches are found. Most flocks have been small, numbering up to about 40 birds, although a few groups of up to 125 have been encountered. So far no Hoary Redpolls have been observed, but this has been a good winter for Hoarys elsewhere in New York and Ontario, so it seems likely that a few are probable mixed in with some of the redpoll flocks on Fort Drum. Other irruptive finches have been scarce, but the highlight of the winter so far came on 13 January, when a flock of 9 Red Crossbills was found in a red pine plantation on Lake School Road about 0.4 miles north of Rt. 3A. Crossbills have been scarce in the northeastern United States this winter, so this is a very nice find.



Common Redpoll in Training Area 14D.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 13 January 2011

Small numbers of waterfowl continue on Fort Drum, but diversity is quite low. Canada Geese continued to move over Fort Drum to at least 2 January, but have been absent since. Small numbers of Mallards and American Black Ducks can be found in some of the small streams that haven't iced over, primarily in and adjacent to the Cantonment Area, such as West and Pleasant Creeks. The amount of available open water continues to decrease, so these ducks may be forced to move soon.

Raptor numbers have remained modest since the fall, although there appeared to be a small movement of Rough-legged Hawks in mid to late December. Generally only 1-2 Rough-legged Hawks have been seen per day along Antwerp Road in TAs 12 and 13, but on 22 December 7 Rough-legs were seen. Additional Rough-legged Hawks have been seen regularly along the western boundary of the installation (Pleasant and Gardnerville Roads). Several Northern Shrikes have also been seen along the western boundary.

Species observed on Fort Drum 15 December through 13 January:

Canada Goose	Horned Lark
Mallard	Black-capped Chickadee
American Black Duck	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Ruffed Grouse	White-breasted Nuthatch
Wild Turkey	Brown Creeper
Bald Eagle	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Red-tailed Hawk	American Robin
Rough-legged Hawk	European Starling
Herring Gull	Bohemian Waxwing
Rock Pigeon	Cedar Waxwing
Mourning Dove	American Tree Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	White-throated Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	Snow Bunting
Northern Flicker	Dark-eyed Junco
Pileated Woodpecker	Northern Cardinal
Northern Shrike	Red-winged Blackbird
Blue Jay	Red Crossbill
American Crow	Common Redpoll
Common Raven	American Goldfinch
	House Sparrow

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 24 February 2011

Bird activity has been typically low for mid-winter, although there are certainly more birds around than there was last year at this time. Open water has been scarce for the past several weeks, but there has been enough to allow small numbers of American Black Ducks and Mallards to remain on and near Fort Drum through the winter so far. On 18 January 38 black ducks and 12 Mallards were counted in the Cantonment Area, on Pleasant Creek in TA 3, and on the Black River adjacent to TA 6A. A few Canada Geese persisted on Fort Drum to early January, but none were observed on Fort Drum for about a month until 23 February, when 26 were on West Creek.

This season has not been a particularly good one for wintering raptors, and most of the buteos that were present through early January apparently moved elsewhere as the snow piled up in late January and early February. Rough-legged Hawks were never numerous on the installation this winter, but the birds that were present in TAs 3, 4, 12, and 13 through mid-January apparently moved out by the third week of the month. Four Rough-legged Hawks seen along Antwerp Road on 23 February may have been individuals that moved northward on the warm winds of 17-18 February. There are still a few Red-tailed Hawks, but not as many as earlier in the winter. Several immature and adult Bald Eagles have been observed in widely scattered locations throughout Fort Drum, the most recent sighting being an immature along the Black River in TA 6 on 17 February. Accipiters continue to be seen in scattered locations throughout Fort Drum, with most observations consisting of Cooper's Hawks. On 17 February a Merlin was in the Cantonment Area near Magrath gym.

Little effort has been made to find owls so far this season, but there have been a few daytime sightings. Most notably, on 6 February two Snowy Owls were in a field in the center of TA 17C. This location was very difficult to get to because of deep snow, and two subsequent visits to the general area failed to turn up the owls. Since mid-January field personnel have also seen at least one each Great Horned Owl and Barred Owl active during mid-day, perhaps an indication that these birds are having difficulty finding food.

Northern Shrikes continue to be seen in roughly average numbers this winter, with 1-2 individuals seen on most days spent in the field. During the past week shrikes have been observed in three different locations along Carr Road. Shrikes have also been seen along Pleasant and Antwerp Roads and along Rt. 3A.



Northern Shrike in Training Area 13A.

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Wildlife Viewing Report – 24 February 2011

Small to moderately-large flocks of waxwings, mostly Bohemian, continue to roam around the southwestern portion of Fort Drum, with most sightings coming from the Cantonment Area or TA 3. In late January 24 Bohemian Waxwings were observed drinking water at a wetland along Pleasant Road. The largest flock of waxwings seen all winter was a group of approximately 170 Bohemian Waxwings with at least 6 Cedar Waxwings along Iraqi Freedom Drive in the Cantonment Area.

It has been a good winter for half-hardies in northern New York generally, but none of the sparrows and other such birds that were present in December has been seen recently. American Robins continue in good numbers, including up to 15 per day along West Creek in the Cantonment Area, a group of 12 in TA 12A along the western boundary on 16 February, and scattered smaller groups seen on various days.

Finches have been sporadic and somewhat frustrating to find this winter. Redpolls have been present since November, with generally small flocks wandering throughout Fort Drum's birch woodlands, but they have been extremely difficult to find since mid January. Repeated efforts to find redpoll flocks after mid January turned up nothing except the occasional birds heard calling overhead until finally a flock of about 30 redpolls was found along Pleasant Road between TAs 3 and 4 on 18 February. This flock included one relatively large, pale redpoll that was certainly a Hoary, and another pale individual that may have been a Hoary, but the flock flew away before the latter bird could be studied well.



Red Crossbills were discovered in TA 7A off Lake School Road in early January, but several searches of the red pine plantation where they were found failed to result in any further detections, and similar searches of pine plantations and other conifer stands in TA 14 turned up nothing as well. On 17 February, Red Crossbills were finally heard again in TA7A, with at least 10 individuals calling as they flew overhead, but none of these birds were seen in the trees, and it remains unclear where they are hanging out.

Red Crossbill. (Image: USFWS).

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 24 February 2011

Warm weather and southerly winds 17-18 February appears to have brought a small number of very early spring migrants to the Fort Drum area. On 17 February, a Killdeer was at a manure spread on a farm field immediately adjacent to Fort Drum. About 200 Snow Buntings and 50 Horned Larks were also on this spread, with many individuals flying over TA12C on their way to or from the farm. Buntings and larks are often heard flying over Fort Drum during the winter, but observations tend to be scarce in the Training Areas when the snowpack is deep, and it is much easier to find these birds in active farmland at manure spreads or other places where soil is exposed. On 23 February an early Great Blue Heron was in a patch of open water along West Creek in the Cantonment Area. Both Killdeer and Great Blue Heron usually arrive to northern New York during the second or third week of March, so these individuals were very early. A couple of American Robins in TA 3 on 23 February may have been early migrants as well, but there was no indication of a large influx of migrating birds.

Species observed on Fort Drum 14 January through 23 February:

American Black Duck	Northern Shrike
Mallard	Blue Jay
Ruffed Grouse	American Crow
Wild Turkey	Common Raven
Great Blue Heron	Horned Lark
Bald Eagle	Black-capped Chickadee
Sharp-shinned Hawk	White-breasted Nuthatch
Cooper's Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Red-tailed Hawk	Brown Creeper
Rough-legged Hawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Killdeer (off-post)	American Robin
Rock Pigeon	European Starling
Mourning Dove	Bohemian Waxwing
Snowy Owl	Cedar Waxwing
Great Horned Owl	Snow Bunting
Barred Owl	American Tree Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Common Redpoll
Hairy Woodpecker	Hoary Redpoll
Pileated Woodpecker	Red Crossbill
	American Goldfinch
	House Sparrow

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 06 April 2011

Spring migration is well underway, although as of 6 April many species that were present by the first of the month last year still have not returned to Fort Drum. In fact so far the migration seems to be running later than the recent average, with a few notably very early migrants. A couple of these early arrivals were highlighted in the last wildlife viewing report, including Killdeer and Great Blue Heron that were seen 2-3 weeks earlier than the mean arrival dates for these species. Another exceptionally early arrival was an American Bittern along Dogwood Road in TA12 on 23 March, beating the previous record early arrival date for northern New York by nine days!

The first organized migratory movement of birds noted on Fort Drum this year occurred on 3 March, when a stiff southerly breeze brought substantial numbers of Ring-billed Gulls and a modest raptor flight. Most of the raptors observed on this day were Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks, but one Bald Eagle and one Golden Eagle were seen flying over the Cantonment Area. Other suspected migrants heard flying overhead included Horned Larks and Snow Buntings.

Migrating waterfowl became conspicuous during the second week of March, with large flocks of Snow and Canada Geese passing over the installation on several dates. The first sizable flock of migrating geese was seen on 11 March, with the largest number noted over Fort Drum occurring on 14 March. By 25 March most of the Snow Goose migration seemed to be over already, and only a few small flocks have been observed over Fort Drum since, although modest numbers of Canada Geese continue to pass overhead.

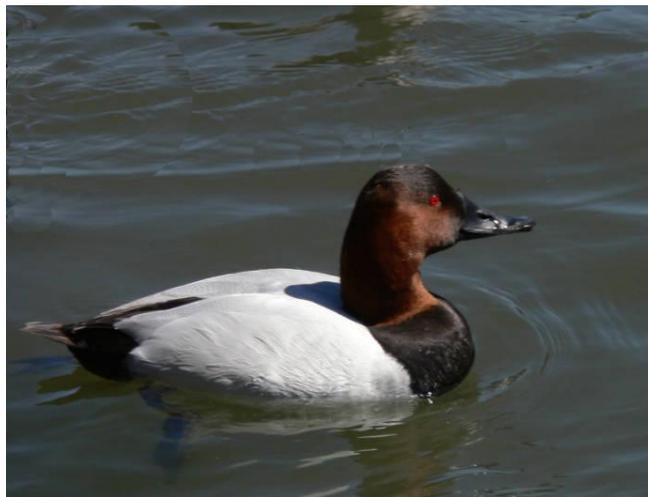
Other than American Black Duck and Mallard, which overwintered on Fort Drum, the first duck observed this spring was a Hooded Merganser in a tiny patch of open water on a small stream in TA3 on 3 March. Throughout most of March few ducks were seen other than these three species and a few Wood Ducks, with a lone American Wigeon on 23 March being the exception. Shallow ponds and marches on Fort Drum finally opened up during the last few days of the month, with a consequent increase in waterfowl on the installation. A visit to the Matoon Marsh in TA 17B on 1 April turned up 3 Green-winged Teal and small numbers of Wood Duck, American Black Duck, and Mallard. On 5 April at the same site were 28 Green-winged Teal, 1 Blue-winged Teal, 1 American Wigeon, and 3 Hooded Mergansers. Also on 5 April, Ring-necked Ducks were noted on at least six bodies of water across the installation, and one flock of 11 Ring-necked Ducks in TA 14B included one female **Canvasback**, something of a rarity on Fort Drum. Indian Lake was still two-thirds iced over on 5 April, but there was enough open water for the first Common Loon of the season.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 06 April 2011

The first wave of migrating songbirds occurred during the second week of March, and consisted primarily of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Eastern Meadowlarks. Song Sparrows and American Woodcock began trickling in during the third week of March, but this week also saw a return of very cold temperatures and persistent north winds that substantially slowed down migration. Several species of birds that have arrived to Fort Drum during late March the past few years were still absent by the beginning of April, including Wilson's Snipe, Tree Swallow, and Eastern Bluebird. The first snipe of the year was finally heard on the evening of 4 April during a frog survey. Also heard that evening were 3 Great Horned Owls, 1 Barred Owl, and scores of peenting woodcock. A pair of bluebirds finally showed up at a bluebird box in the Cantonment Area on 6 April, and a Rusty Blackbird was heard nearby.



Male Canvasback (Image: USFWS)

Winter birds continued on Fort Drum through the month of March, and many of these species can still be found on the installation, although most will depart during the next 2-3 weeks. Rough-legged Hawks, American Tree Sparrows, and Common Redpolls continue to be observed daily, and Northern Shrikes have been seen as recently as 5 April. During early March most waxwings observed on Fort Drum were Bohemian Waxwings, but by the end of the month Bohemians were scarce and Cedar Waxwings had increased in abundance.

Amphibians and reptiles have also emerged. Frogs (including Wood Frogs) and Jefferson salamanders have been seen on Fort Drum. Turtles and snakes have also been seen in the region.

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Wildlife Viewing Report – 06 April 2011

Species observed on Fort Drum 25 February through 6 April:

Snow Goose	Northern Shrike
Canada Goose	Blue Jay
Wood Duck	American Crow
American Wigeon	Common Raven
American Black Duck	Horned Lark
Mallard	Black-capped Chickadee
Blue-winged Teal	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Green-winged Teal	White-breasted Nuthatch
Canvasback	Brown Creeper
Ring-necked Duck	American Robin
Bufflehead	European Starling
Hooded Merganser	Bohemian Waxwing
Ruffed Grouse	Cedar Waxwing
Wild Turkey	Snow Bunting
American Bittern	American Tree Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Song Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	White-throated Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Harrier	Northern Cardinal
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Eastern Meadowlark
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-winged Blackbird
Rough-legged Hawk	Rusty Blackbird
Golden Eagle	Common Grackle
American Kestrel	Brown-headed Cowbird
Killdeer	House Finch
American Woodcock	Common Redpoll
Wilson's Snipe	American Goldfinch
Ring-billed Gull	House Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	
Mourning Dove	
Great Horned Owl	
Barred Owl	
Downy Woodpecker	
Hairy Woodpecker	
Pileated Woodpecker	

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 27 April 2011

Up until 26 April this spring's bird migration was very slow, with most species arriving late and occurring in very low numbers for a week or more after the arrival of the first individuals. The winter-like weather that predominated throughout most of the month hasn't helped, and in fact finding birds was often a challenge on many cold, windy days. This situation changed dramatically during a spell of warm weather with south winds beginning 26 April, when large numbers of migrants arrived to Fort Drum, many of them several days to a week earlier than average.

By 7 April the bulk of the goose migration seemed to be over, with just a few small flocks of Canada Geese passing over most days. Snow Geese apparently migrated through northern New York rapidly during March, and none have been observed flying over Fort Drum in April. Ducks seen during the period include the usual mix seen migrating through Fort Drum at this time of year, including American Black Duck, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Hooded Merganser. The only relatively unusual species observed since 7 April was Lesser Scaup, with 1-2 individuals per day in a settling pond in TA 4 throughout the middle of the month.

Raptor migration is in full swing, with good variety throughout April. Osprey and adult Bald Eagles have been seen regularly at Indian Lake, with widely scattered observations elsewhere. A small raptor movement noted over TA 4A on 12 April included the season's first Broad-winged Hawk as well as several each Sharp-shinned Hawks and American Kestrels. Many raptors were seen migrating over the installation on 26 and 27 April, including many Osprey and Sharp-shinned and Broad-winged Hawks, one Bald Eagle each day, and smaller numbers of several other species. Other notable raptors include a Northern Goshawk over TAa5B on 19 April, Red-shouldered Hawks over TA 4B on 25 and 27 April, and Merlins in the Cantonment, TA4A, and near Indian Lake. It is not clear yet whether any of these Merlins are breeding birds, but this species, which rarely nested in New York 10 years ago, has increased as a breeder dramatically, including on Fort Drum.



Merlin (Image: USFWS)

The land bird migration, notably woodpeckers and songbirds, progressed at a sluggish pace until recently, with most species arriving a few days to a week later than average. Most species that normally arrive March through mid-April generally arrived this year at or later than average arrival dates, and arrived considerably later than they did the past two years. A few comparisons illustrate this difference. During 2010, Hermit Thrush, Pine Warbler, and Field and Vesper Sparrows were all present by 6 April. The dates these species were first encountered this year were 11 April for Field and Vesper Sparrow, 12 April for Pine Warbler, and 21 April for Hermit Thrush. A few other 2011 arrival dates include Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on 10 April, Eastern Towhee and Chipping Sparrow on 12 April, Ruby-crowned Kinglet on 15 April, and Brown Thrasher on 19 April.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 27 April 2011

The pattern of 2011 arrivals relative to historic means changed beginning 26 April, when a strong southerly flow of air brought numerous species to Fort Drum, most of which usually arrive to northern New York in early May. New species found on 26 April were Blue-headed Vireo and Northern Waterthrush, but the main wave appeared the next day, when 15 species were documented for the first time in 2011. New arrivals seen on the 27th were Green Heron, Least and Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbird, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, House Wren, Wood Thrush, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, (Western) Palm, and Black-and-white Warblers, Ovenbird, and Common Yellowthroat. April 27 is six days earlier than the average arrival date for this group of species.

A few winter birds continue to occur on Fort Drum. Rough-legged Hawks have been more numerous in TAs 12 and 13 than at any time during the last year, with up to 10 per day along Antwerp Road, although 2-4 per day have been more typical during the last week of April. A Northern Shrike was in TA 4A on 12 April, and another was along Poagland Road 27 April. American Tree Sparrows were seen daily to at least 19 April. On 25 April either a Lapland Longspur or Snow Bunting was heard calling over TA 4, but it was so distant that specific identification could not be made. Finch sightings include the last Common Redpoll of the season heard flying over Fort Drum on 12 April, and at least two Evening Grosbeaks over TA 3A on 25 April.

Fort Drum biologists are conducting amphibian and reptile surveys this year, and have noted a late season for these groups as well. Frogs were first heard calling on the evening of April 10, substantially later than the last two years. Turtles and snakes were first observed on 12 April, as temperatures prior to this date were too cold for these animals to be active. To date Painted Turtle is the only turtle species that has been observed this season. Frogs currently calling include Wood Frog, Chorus Frog, Spring Peeper, and Northern Leopard Frog. Mink and Pickerel Frogs have been observed and will begin congregating soon. Night surveys for salamanders along installation roads have turned up many Spotted, Jefferson, and Blue-spotted Salamanders, and perhaps some hybrids between the latter two species.



Leopard Frog

Finally, during the past two weeks bears have been seen in TA 3A and in the northern portion of the Cantonment Area away from residential housing.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 27 April 2011

Species observed on Fort Drum April 7 through April 27:

Canada Goose	Rock Pigeon	American Robin
Wood Duck	Mourning Dove	Brown Thrasher
Mallard	Great Horned Owl	European Starling
Green-winged Teal	Barred Owl	Yellow Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	Belted Kingfisher	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Lesser Scaup	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler
Bufflehead	Downy Woodpecker	Black-throated Green Warbler
Common Goldeneye	Hairy Woodpecker	Pine Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker	(Western) Palm Warbler
Common Merganser	Pileated Woodpecker	Black-and-white Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Least Flycatcher	Ovenbird
Wild Turkey	Eastern Phoebe	Northern Waterthrush
Common Loon	Great Crested Flycatcher	Common Yellowthroat
Pied-billed Grebe	Eastern Kingbird	Eastern Towhee
Double-crested Cormorant	Northern Shrike	American Tree Sparrow
American Bittern	Blue-headed Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Blue Jay	Field Sparrow
Green Heron	American Crow	Vesper Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Common Raven	Savannah Sparrow
Osprey	Horned Lark	Fox Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Tree Swallow	Song Sparrow
Northern Harrier	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Swamp Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Bank Swallow	Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco
Cooper's Hawk	Cliff Swallow	Northern Cardinal
Northern Goshawk	Barn Swallow	Eastern Meadowlark
Red-shouldered Hawk	Black-capped Chickadee	Red-winged Blackbird
Broad-winged Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Rusty Blackbird
Red-tailed Hawk	White-breasted Nuthatch	Common Grackle
Rough-legged Hawk	Brown Creeper	Brown-headed Cowbird
American Kestrel	House Wren	Purple Finch
Merlin	Winter Wren	Common Redpoll
Killdeer	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	American Goldfinch
Upland Sandpiper	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Evening Grosbeak
Wilson's Snipe	Eastern Bluebird	House Sparrow
American Woodcock	Hermit Thrush	
Ring-billed Gull	Wood Thrush	

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 6 June 2011

Sedge Wrens just started arriving on Fort Drum during the first few days of June, and now all of Fort Drum's regularly occurring grassland birds can be found. At least five Sedge Wrens were in TA12B south of Poagland Road on 4 June, two of which were relatively close to the road. The Sedge Wren nearest to the road was on the south side of Poagland opposite a gravel road that heads northeast from Poagland Road, mid-way between the Fort Drum boundary and Antwerp Road.



Sedge Wren in Training Area 12D.



Henslow's Sparrow in Training Area 13A.

Grassland bird surveys have also turned up 8-10 Henslow's Sparrows, but most of these birds are in areas that are inaccessible to birders. The easiest Henslow's Sparrow to see is in TA 13A, on the east side of Antwerp Road about 0.25 mile north of Poagland Road. Often this Henslow's Sparrow is directly across the road from the site with the old helicopters (you'll know you're in the right place when you get there) and just south of a small gravel road that enters TA 13A. Participants of a Fort Drum birding tour on 29 May were treated to close-up views of this sparrow as it sang from a perch within 20 feet of the road, and several other visiting birders have reported seeing a Henslow's Sparrow here as well. Please note that TA 13A is usually closed to recreation, so birders should keep to the road when looking for this bird. A scope is often helpful here.

Northern Harriers and American Bitterns occur throughout the grasslands of TAs 12 and 13, and both species have been observed frequently at the locations described above for both Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrow. Clay-colored Sparrows occur in both places as well, but most singing males are well off the roads and usually not detectable from a road. The highest densities of Clay-colored Sparrows on Fort Drum are in the northwest and southwest corners of TA 13A, and perhaps a few of these birds can be picked up from the road, particularly east of Antwerp Road between Gray and Poagland Roads.

A different assortment of grassland birds nest on sandy soils, and these species can usually be found on the Main Tank Trail west and north of Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows are easily found along the airfield fence line and in patches of grass all along this road. Several Clay-colored Sparrows occur along the Main Tank Trail as well, including 1-2 males near the large red and white water tower and at least two on the north side of the airfield about 100 yards west of Bagram Road. At this latter site on 28 and 29 May an Upland Sandpiper was observed displaying over the heads of field tour participants for 10-15 minutes at a time. Nearly all of Fort Drum's Upland Sandpipers nest within the airfield fence and are generally very difficult to observe. On 28 May two Horned Larks were heard singing inside the airfield fence at this same location, but this species is also scarce outside the airfield fence.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 6 June 2011

Several pairs of Red-headed Woodpeckers are nesting in TA 5D, although during most days these birds have been very quiet and surprisingly difficult to find considering their flashy plumage. Several patches of oak woodland in the northeast corner of TA 5D host nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers, and the same may be true of the woodlands in TA 5B near the intersection of Main Tank Trail and Bagram Road, although this stand has not yet been adequately surveyed this year.

A few interesting raptors have been observed recently. At least two light-phase Rough-legged Hawks were in TA 12 through the first week of May, and a dark-phase “Roughie” was over TA 13A on 24 May. Merlin continue to be seen regularly in several locations, including near the Fort Drum Natural Resources Permit Office, along Antwerp Road in TA 11B, and in the Indian Lake area. Bald Eagles were observed on both Fort Drum birding tours, including an adult at the Carr Road bridge over the Indian River on 28 May, and an immature in TA 12C on 29 May. On 26 May a Northern Goshawk was seen over TA 15C.

So far this season considerable survey effort has been devoted to Golden-winged Warblers, which along with Blue-winged Warblers and hybrids can be seen in many locations on Fort Drum. Both species are relatively easy to find along Reedville Road (many locations), Antwerp Road (primarily between Reedville and Birch Roads), Carr Road, and Figert Road. Some specific locations where Golden-winged Warblers have been seen lately include the intersection of Old Canfield Road and Reedville Road; Birch Road about 50 yards east of Antwerp Road; Antwerp Road on the northeast side of the railroad tracks that are just north of Reedville Road; and Figert Road about 100 yards south of Russell Turnpike. The fields and woods near the intersection of Figert Road and Russell Turnpike have hosted Golden-winged, Blue-winged, Brewster’s, and Lawrence’s Warblers for several years. This year a male Lawrence’s Warbler has been seen along Figert Road just south of this field. A short walk on the grassy trail into TA 14 D from Figert Road and just south of Russell Turnpike leads to a tree line, on the north side of which is a territorial Blue-winged Warbler and on the east side of which is a patch of scrubby woods that supports at least two Prairie Warbler territories. A reliable location for Mourning Warbler is farther south on Figert Road, just north of the sandy trail that leads to Black Creek (marked on the map as a fishing site). Mourning Warblers are locally common on Fort Drum, and can most easily be found in 2-5 year old timber sales, such as those along FUSA Boulevard east of Indian Lake, Old Canfield Road about 0.4 mile west of U.S. Military Highway, and Canfield Road immediately east of U.S. Military Highway.



***Golden-winged Warbler
in Training Area 17A.***



Blue-winged Warbler at Fort Drum.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 6 June 2011

Of all of Fort Drum's regularly occurring bird species, the Cerulean Warbler is among the most difficult to find, at least partly because most sightings come from areas that are not often open to recreation. On 26 May three singing male Ceruleans were found in TA 15C, in maple stands near OPs 5 and 5A. A Hooded Warbler was also seen near OP 5A; this species is rarely observed on Fort Drum.

Both Common Nighthawks and Whip-poor-wills have been readily heard along the Main Tank Trail around the airfield. Nighthawks can often be observed booming from many locations on this road at sunrise and sunset, and occasionally at other times of day as well. Whip-poor-wills can be heard from virtually any stop on this road, with as many as 5-6 birds heard calling from any one location. Fort Drum biologists will be performing nightjar surveys later in June.



Whip-poor-will in Training Area 7A.

The best location for wetland birds on Fort Drum is the Matoon Marsh in TA 17B, but this area has not been surveyed well this year (something that will be rectified later this week). This marsh is just north of the northernmost curve in Matoon Creek Road, and is the only reliable site on Fort Drum for Least Bittern. Other species that nest here include Pied-billed Grebe, Common Moorhen, Sora, Virginia Rail, and March Wren, and Black Tern and Black-crowned Night-Heron have been seen here.

This report will end with a few odds and ends from the past month. The most impressive day of the songbird migration was 12 May, when 22 species of warbler were observed along Figert Road, including a Cape May Warbler and multiple Bay-breasted Warblers. Very unusual was a report of a Black-backed Woodpecker called in by four birders visiting from Rochester on 29 May. The Black-backed Woodpecker was reportedly along the road that connects Reedville and Doolins Roads. Other birders could not relocate this bird during the rest of the Memorial Day Weekend. The birding tour of Fort Drum on 28 May had several migrants, including many Blackpoll Warblers, one Tennessee Warbler, and one Olive-sided Flycatcher that gave great looks to all. Many fewer migrants were found on the 29 May trip. Finally on a negative note, cuckoos seem to be exceptionally scarce this year. Black-billed Cuckoos observations have been unusually scarce and no Yellow-billed Cuckoos have been found. Cuckoo numbers had been very high for several years after they exploded during the 2002-2005 tent caterpillar outbreak, but it is looking like the local populations of these two species have crashed.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 6 June 2011

Species observed on Fort Drum May 1 through June 6:

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

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 29 June 2011

Grassland bird surveys have turned up 8-10 Henslow's Sparrows in June, all in TA 13A. Unfortunately, most of these birds are well away from roads and TA 13A is closed to recreation most days, so Henslow's Sparrows have been difficult to impossible for most visiting birders to see. During late May and early June one male was very near Antwerp Road immediately east of the site where the old helicopters are located, but by mid-June this male either stopped singing or moved. The latter is a distinct possibility, as Henslow's Sparrows that occupy territories close to roads on Fort Drum often seem to abandon their territory after 2-3 weeks. During many years a second wave of Henslow's Sparrows arrive on Fort Drum in late June and July, so it is still possible that birds will appear in accessible areas. Based on habitat conditions, the most likely places where such birds would appear are in TA 12C just south of Hunter Creek and in several places in TA 13A, especially northeast of the east end of Poagland Road, and the fields south of Coolidge Road.

Sedge Wrens have been found in three locations so far, including two sites close to roads. At least 3 and as many as 5 males are on territory in TA 12B just south of Poagland Road; look for a gravel road that heads northeast from Poagland Road mid-way between Antwerp Road and the western boundary of the installation. The easternmost Sedge Wren in this cluster sometimes sings across Poagland Road from this gravel road, with the remaining males holding territories to the west. Another Sedge Wren has been singing just south of Dogwood Road approximately 0.25 mile west of Antwerp Road. Any visit to the TA 12 and 13 grasslands is likely to turn up several Northern Harriers and American Bitterns, as well as numerous Savannah Sparrows and Bobolinks.

The remaining grassland birds visiting birders often hope to see on Fort Drum can best be found around the perimeter of Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. A drive up the west and north side of the airfield, on the Main Tank Trail, should yield Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows in virtually any grassy spot, with many individuals perching on the airfield fence. Upland Sandpipers occur here as well but are extremely difficult to find. During late May a displaying Upland Sandpiper was often seen overhead at the north end of the airfield; the best location to see this bird was along the Main Tank Trail about 0.2 mile west of Bagram Road. Now that this bird is no longer displaying, the best chance for seeing an Upland Sandpiper is to scan the larger expanses of grass along the Main Tank Trail, but the chances for spotting one will be low until August, at which time individuals often gather at the south end of the airfield just north of Rt. 26.



***Upland Sandpiper on a sign near
Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield in 2011.***

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 29 June 2011

Most of Fort Drum's Clay-colored Sparrows occur in the two general areas just described. Several singing males are often heard in regenerating clear cuts around the airfield, such as at the location described above for the Upland Sandpiper. The largest number of Clay-colored Sparrows occur in TAs 12 and 13, but most of these males occupy territories hundreds of meters from any road. The portion of TA 13A east of Antwerp Road between Gray and Poagland Roads is one area with a high density of Clay-colored Sparrows that is relatively close to a road. Some of these males can usually be heard and sometimes seen from Antwerp Road, but again this TA is often closed to recreation. On 17 June a Clay-colored Sparrow was found singing on the western boundary of TA 7D, in a pine plantation 0.4 miles south of the South Tank Trail along the gravel road that follows the boundary of this TA.



Brewster's Warbler near Russell Turnpike in June 2011.

Except for the odd individual, Golden-winged Warblers have essentially stopped singing during daytime, as is typical in late June. Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers will still sing at dawn, which may be the best way to find them, although identifying them is a different story, given that these two species sing each other's songs. Generally, the mix of deciduous woodlands, fields, and swamps along Reedville Road is the best location on Fort Drum where good numbers of Golden-winged Warblers occur with relatively few Blue-winged Warblers. Specific places where Golden-winged Warblers have been seen during the past two weeks include intersections along Reedville Road with Purcell and Lake School Roads as well as near every bridge on Reedville or a short distance down side roads off of Reedville Road. An early morning check of all these sites, as well as appropriate habitat elsewhere along Reedville Road, would give a reasonable chance at finding a Golden-winged Warbler. In addition to numerous Blue-winged Warblers, a good number of hybrid Golden-winged/Blue-winged Warblers were found on Fort Drum, including 9 male Brewster's Warblers in one day in TA 15C, and Lawrence's Warblers along Figert Road and in TA 15C.

Visiting birders often express interest in seeing several other species of warbler, including Mourning, Prairie, and Cerulean. Mourning Warblers occur widely on Fort Drum but are often difficult to find. On 23 June several males were singing along or near Lake School Road approximately 0.6 miles south of South Tank Trail. One male was just west of Lake School in a small clearing at the end of a dirt road, and at least 1 and perhaps 2 males were immediately south right along the road. Other places where Mourning Warblers have been seen recently include Figert Road immediately north of the fishing site on this road, and along the connector road between Reedville Road and Alexandria Road, just south of the bridge over Black Creek.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 29 June 2011

Prairie Warblers are found in three general areas: TAs 7D and 14D and around the airfield. Perhaps the best location is in TA 14D, where a walk into the training area on several sandy trails off of Russell Turnpike usually turns up one or more singing males. As is often the case the only Cerulean Warblers that have been found this year are in TA 15C, in stands of large maples west of OPs 5 and 5A.

Fewer Red-headed Woodpeckers have been found this year than in most recent years. So far four territories have been located in TA 5D, all in open oak stands. The easiest location to see Red-headed Woodpeckers is just east of Bagram Road about 0.5 mile south of Main Tank Trail. As of 24 June these woodpeckers all had nests with young in them, and birders should watch them at a distance to avoid undue disturbance.



Prairie Warbler in Training Area 6A in June 2011.

Six nightjar routes were conducted on Fort Drum on the night of the full moon (15 June), and three of them were repeated during subsequent days. Each route consists of 10 stops located at one-mile intervals, and on the 60 total stops 129 Whip-poor-wills and 11 Common Nighthawks were detected. The nighthawk tally is lower than during some years, but this species is notoriously difficult to count accurately. As is the case most years, the highest density of nightjars occurred along the route that followed the Main Tank Trail and other roads around the west and north side of the airfield, continuing on to TAs 7D and 7G. At many locations along this route it is often possible to hear 3-6 Whip-poor-wills at any given time. Barred Owls were heard on most of the nightjar routes, and along FUSA road a presumed Long-eared Owl was heard barking.

Cuckoos have been remarkably scarce on Fort Drum this year. As one example, surveys in TA 15C during the first week of June usually result in 10+ Black-billed Cuckoos, and during the past 6-8 years, 3-5 Yellow-billed Cuckoos; 2010 results were 16 Black-billed and at least 5 Yellow-billed Cuckoos. This year surveys in this area during the first week of June resulted in 0 cuckoos, and most days of survey work this month have been similarly cuckoo-free. Also scarce this year are tent caterpillars (i.e. cuckoo food). Most of the few cuckoo reports this year have come from TA14, including a calling Black-billed Cuckoo on 14 June in TA 14D near Russell Turnpike, and one Yellow-billed Cuckoo and an unidentified cuckoo heard at about midnight during a nightjar survey along Weaver Road.

Birders visiting from downstate often want to see Ruffed Grouse when they are on Fort Drum. Grouse are fairly common throughout most of Fort Drum, and enough time spent driving the roads in any wooded or semi-wooded portion of the installation will eventually turn up one crossing the road. So far no broods have been reported on Fort Drum, but young should appear any day now, assuming that the seemingly interminable heavy spring rains didn't result in excessive nest losses.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 August 2011

The following is a summary of the 2011 breeding season on Fort Drum. Generally, several species of conservation concern were detected in lower numbers than in recent years, although late season surveys suggest that at least one or two of these species may have been more abundant than point counts and other survey methods indicated.

In the old hayfield grasslands, Henslow's Sparrow numbers were down this year, and Sedge Wrens were present in roughly average numbers. Surveys conducted in late May and early June suggested that 6-8 Henslow's Sparrow territories were present in TA 13A and none in TA 12. Only one male occupied a territory in a location that was accessible to visiting birders, and this male either stopped singing or abandoned his territory by the third week of June, as all subsequent efforts to find him failed. By this time only three singing males could be found consistently, although an apparent new arrival appeared in TA 12C during late July. About 10 Sedge Wren territories were found in 2011, mostly in TA 12B south of Poagland Road, with single territories in TAs 12C and 12D. Participants on a field trip 2 July watched one Sedge Wren repeatedly flying to and from an apparent nest location, dropping fecal sacs periodically as it left the site, and field crews found dependant fledglings on several more territories. Other birds in the old hayfield grasslands included several pairs of Northern Harriers and many American Bitterns.

Surveys at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield found 4-5 Upland Sandpipers, although it is not known how many of these birds successfully attracted mates or raised young. As usual, numerous Grasshopper and Vesper Sparrows nested in and near the airfield, and these species continue to be seen in good numbers along the fence line in several places. Northern Mockingbirds, fairly rare on Fort Drum, occupied territories in two locations in the airfield vicinity, with apparently two pair near the intersection of Main Tank Trail and Bagram Road at the north end of the airfield, and another near the Natural Resources Permit Office to the south.

Clay-colored Sparrows occupied territories in moderately shrubby portions of the TA 12 and 13 grasslands as well as in regenerating clearcuts in and near the airfield. At least 12 territories were found in the airfield area, and probably more occurred in restricted areas near the north end of the airfield. No effort was made to systematically count Clay-colored Sparrows throughout TAs 12 and 13, but daily counts of 9-12 singing males were found in several different locations within these Training Areas, and the total numbers of territorial males was certainly in excess of 45.



Grasshopper Sparrow in Training Area 12.



Clay-colored Sparrow in Training Area 12.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 August 2011

The most exciting find of the year was a **Western Kingbird** seen for one day only on 12 July on the airfield fence along Bagram Road. This bird was observed by seasonal field biologists surveying grassland birds inside the airfield fence, and is the first record for this species on Fort Drum. Although usually a vagrant to the northeastern United States, there is at least one record of possible nesting in New York, and the habitat in the area where the kingbird was found looks very much like the kind of place a Western Kingbird would find attractive for a breeding territory. Unfortunately, efforts to relocate the kingbird throughout the remainder of July resulted in no definite sightings. There was one other regionally rare bird found on Fort Drum this summer: a **Dickcissel** heard calling over TA 6A on 3 August. This was the 5th record of Dickcissel from Fort Drum, the first having been a male that occupied a territory in TA 12C during June of 1996, with birds heard calling overhead accounting for the remaining three records.



Western Kingbird (Image: USFWS).



Dickcissel (Image: USFWS).

Red-headed Woodpeckers were very quiet this summer, and for most of the season it appeared that only 5 pairs occupied territories in TAs 5 and 6, but this perception changed once the young were out of the nest. By late July Red-headed Woodpeckers were conspicuous throughout the western portion of TA 5D and adjacent areas, and more than five family groups seemed to be present. On 5 August four field biologists tracked individual pairs with young, finding what seemed to be at least 8 different family groups and perhaps as many as 10, all but one of which had young. One adult with a fledgling that was probably about a month out of the nest carried food into a cavity and departed the cavity without food, indicating that at least one pair is raising a second brood. There was also much more drumming and calling on this date than on any day this area was surveyed during May and June. The lack of conspicuous breeding activity during the early and middle of the nesting season was initially interpreted as indicating that fewer pairs were present this year than during the recent past, but this interpretation now seems incorrect.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 August 2011

Cuckoos were also quiet this year, and all indications are that this was because cuckoo numbers really were low. Of the two cuckoo species that occur on Fort Drum, Black-billed usually far outnumbers Yellow-billed, but based on detections of vocalizing cuckoos both species seemed to be present in similar numbers this summer and well below what has been present during each of the previous 10+ years. Cuckoo detections increased modestly in July compared to earlier in the season, but remained well below usual numbers.



Black-billed Cuckoo in Training Area 3.

Nightjars were present in typical numbers this summer. Whip-poor-wills were counted on six survey routes in mid-June, resulting in the detections of 135 calling individuals. This tally is slightly higher than that reported earlier in the summer, as two routes that had few individuals when initially run were repeated with better results. Common Nighthawks are notoriously difficult to count accurately on such surveys, but this species seemed to be present in average numbers, with particularly high numbers around the airfield. On 5 August at least 6 Common Nighthawks were actively calling and booming over TA 5D; this level of activity seemed high for so late in the nesting season, given that nighthawk migration should be underway in a week or two.

The most interesting raptor sightings were the continued increase in Merlin reports throughout Fort Drum. This year Merlins were regularly observed in three locations, including near the Fort Drum Natural Resources Permit Office, where participants on several Fort Drum field tours had excellent looks at adults perched on a snag along the side of Rt. 26. Merlins also occupied territories in TA 11 and near Indian Lake. During the second week of August Merlin family groups were observed near the permit office (at least one fledgling) and at Indian Lake (two fledglings). Other noteworthy raptors included Osprey nesting north of Indian Lake, several Northern Goshawk reports from the North Tank Trail, and continued sporadic Bald Eagle sightings in the Indian Lake and Mud Lake area.

Winged warbler data have not been compiled fully yet, but based on anecdotal observation it appears that Blue-winged Warblers and hybrids continue to increase, and Golden-winged Warblers continue to decrease. Blue-winged Warblers are particularly abundant in upland shrublands, and in some areas have almost entirely replaced Golden-winged Warblers. This includes TA 6A, where a large two year old clearcut supported territories for at least 10 Blue-winged Warblers, two Brewster's Warblers, and only one Golden-winged Warbler. One older clearcut in TA 15C was loaded with hybrids, and on 8 June nine Brewster's Warblers were seen here in a single day, with only 1 Blue-winged and two Golden-winged Warblers observed in the same area. Golden-winged Warblers appear to be holding their own in a variety of shrubby, wet areas, including red maple swamps and alder thickets, with particularly good numbers occurring along Reedville Road and adjacent wet semi-wooded areas. Such wet areas generally seem to have lower occupancy rates for winged warbler than upland shrublands, but Blue-winged Warblers are rarely found in such sites (although hybrids do occur).

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 August 2011

Several other breeding warbler species are worth mentioning. At least five Cerulean Warbler territories were located along the eastern boundary of TA 15C along Canfield road; two males were opposite OP5 and the northernmost male was opposite OP 5A, with at least two and as many as four more males in between these locations. This represents the largest cluster of Cerulean Warbler territories found on Fort Drum in at least five years. Prairie Warblers were present at traditional nesting sites in TAs 7D and 14D, with a few territories in the brushier portions of the airfield and a new cluster of territories in a 2-year old clearcut in TA 6A. As usual, Canada and Mourning Warblers were locally common in appropriate habitat throughout Fort Drum.

For the first time in recent memory no Least Bitterns were documented on Fort Drum this summer, but the Matoon Marsh was surveyed less frequently than usual, so perhaps low effort explains this miss. Late July and early August visits to this marsh turned up broods of Blue-winged Teal, Pied-billed Grebes, and Common Moorhens, with Green-winged Teal, American Bitterns, Virginia Rails, and Northern Harriers also seen.

A few sightings of species that regularly occur on Fort Drum were observed on unusual dates. Perhaps the most interesting of these was a singing male Tennessee Warbler in TA11A opposite Range 17 found on the 2 July field trip. Three visits to this location during the following two weeks failed to turn up the Tennessee, suggesting that this bird was not a local breeder, but perhaps a failed northern breeder. This is the second Fort Drum record from early July, the first having been a bird captured at a banding station where this species had not otherwise been detected.

Among seasonal rarities were several species that regularly breed in the Adirondacks within a few miles of Fort Drum but are rarely seen on the installation during the breeding season; such sightings included a singing Golden-crowned Kinglet along Lake School Road on 22 July, a singing male Northern Parula in TA 7B on 27 June, and a juvenile Slate-colored Junco along Antwerp Road on 26 July. Common Mergansers also breed in Jefferson and Lewis Counties, but have never been documented nesting on Fort Drum or even occurring during the months of June or July, so an adult female flying down Black Creek on 5 July was intriguing.



Golden-crowned Kinglet in Training Area 7.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 11 August 2011

Species observed on Fort Drum June 1 through August 10:

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
American Black Duck
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Green-winged Teal
Hooded Merganser
Common Merganser
Ruffed Grouse
Wild Turkey
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
American Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Green Heron
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
American Kestrel
Merlin
Virginia Rail
Common Moorhen
Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Upland Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe
American Woodcock
Ring-billed Gull
Caspian Tern
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Black-billed Cuckoo
Eastern Screech-Owl
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Common Nighthawk
Eastern Whip-poor-will
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher

Red-headed Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Alder Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
WESTERN KINGBIRD
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Horned Lark
Tree Swallow
N. Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Winter Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Blue-winged Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler

"Brewster's" Warbler
"Lawrence's" Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Northern Parula
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Pine Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Mourning Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Canada Warbler
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow
Henslow's Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Slate-colored Junco
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
DICKCISSEL
Bobolink
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
Purple Finch
House Finch
American Goldfinch

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 7 September 2011

Although the calendar still says it is summer, “fall” migration is well underway, and at least some birds have been actively migrating through or over Fort Drum for several weeks. Eastern Kingbird, Yellow Warbler, Bobolink, and Baltimore Oriole are among the songbird species that begin migrating early, and movements of all of these species were noted during early August, and in the case of Bobolink even late July. These species all breed on Fort Drum, though, so in many cases it is unclear whether flocks represent migrants or local birds. The first obvious migrants—meaning species that do not breed on Fort Drum--observed during the fall migration were a Tennessee Warbler in TA 6A on 10 August and a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in a hemlock stand at the south end of Plank Road on 16 August. Also seen in the latter area on the 16th was a group of at least 4 Common Nighthawks and several Canada Warblers, but these may have been local breeders and their offspring.

Small numbers of migrating warblers were noted almost every day during the last two weeks of August, with the first large mixed flock occurring in TA 7A on 22 August. A total of 17 species were observed in this flock, including a bright male Lawrence’s Warbler and one each Cape May, Blackpoll, and Bay-breasted Warblers. Also seen foraging among these warblers was a juvenile Golden-crowned Kinglet, although this bird was not likely a migrant, as kinglets do not usually migrate before mid-September, and a territorial male was found near this location in June. Another large mixed migrant flock was in TA 5D on 25 August and contained numerous Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, and Black-and-white Warblers, with several Northern Parulas and smaller numbers of several other species. Also with this group was a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and another Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was in TA 3 on 31 August, along with several calling Willow Flycatchers.

The songbird migration has been relatively slow during early September so far, but a few interesting migrants have been seen most days. Some of the more interesting sightings have included a Purple Martin and a heavily molting Swainson’s Thrush on 1 September, Wilson’s Warblers on 2 and 6 September, and especially high numbers of Magnolia and Blackburnian Warblers on several dates.

Waterfowl are beginning to gather at several traditional places in northern New York, but so far the waterfowl migration has barely registered on Fort Drum. A few small flocks of Canada Geese have been observed flying over the installation, but not in numbers substantially higher than that present during the summer. A casual survey of installation ponds and wetlands on 30 August turned up numerous Wood Ducks everywhere and smaller numbers of Mallards on a few ponds, but no ducks of any other species. Wigeon, teal, and other ducks should be appearing on Fort Drum soon if they are not already present.

Fort Drum is not a particularly good place to see shorebirds, as there is a lack of extensive mudflats or other suitable areas for migrating shorebirds to gather. Most shorebird sightings on Fort Drum are of the five local breeding species (Killdeer, Spotted and Upland Sandpipers,

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Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 7 September 2011 (continued)

Wilson's Snipe, and American Woodcock) or one of a handful of migrants that regularly occur. The latter group consists primarily of Solitary and Least Sandpipers and Lesser and Great Yellowlegs, any of which can occur on ponds and small wetlands throughout the installation.

For instance a small pond in TA 14A just north of Rt. 3 has been visited by up to 4 Solitary Sandpipers per day for several weeks. It is always exciting when other shorebirds appear on Fort Drum, although they are often only observed flying overhead, as was the case on 16 August when 5 Semipalmated Plovers and 1 American Golden-Plover were seen flying low over Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. During most years Upland Sandpipers gather during August on the south end of the airfield near Rt. 26, but no such gathering was observed this year, perhaps because the grass was allowed to grow to a greater height than is usual.

Although recent bird observations have been dominated by migrants, at least a few birds are still in breeding mode. On 19 August a Red-headed Woodpecker was observed feeding a nestling that appeared to be within a few days of fledging in TA 5E. On 25 August a Northern Mockingbird was found attending a nest with fairly old nestlings; the nestlings were still in the nest on 26 August but had fledged by the 29th, and the adults were observed feeding at least one fledgling on 6 September. Most species have stopped singing for the year, but a few songs continue to be heard. Noteworthy among late-season singers have been multiple Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers and hybrids of the two heard singing mostly Type 2 song (the late season song shared by both species) for brief periods each day through at least 6 September. Presumably these birds have finished molting and have started singing again for a short time before they begin their southward migration. Another noteworthy singer was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in TA 6C on 17 August.

On 30 August a survey of several areas in the TA 12 and 13 grasslands failed to turn up any Henslow's Sparrows or Sedge Wrens. Henslow's Sparrows are extraordinarily difficult to find once they stop singing for the year, so it was no surprise none were found on this date. During some years Sedge Wrens are fairly easy to find well into September or even October, although during other years none are found after August, and it's not clear whether the difference in detectability reflects differing departure dates. In any case, the location searched on 30 August supported several pairs that raised young in 2011, and such areas in the past have been where most late season observations have occurred.

Before listing the birds seen during the period, a few insects are worth noting. Fort Drum biologists have been conducting formal and informal surveys of a variety of invertebrate taxa in an effort to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the installation's biota. During the summer of 2011 several species of previously undocumented dragonflies were observed on Fort Drum, including Least Clubtail, Twin-spotted Spiketail, and Black Saddlebags. Fort Drum's butterfly list is more comprehensive with 60+ species. The most notable butterfly sightings this year were of Giant Swallowtails on 18 and 23 August. Giant Swallowtail is a primarily southern butterfly that only occasionally makes it as far north as Jefferson County.



Twin-spotted Spiketail on Fort Drum.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 7 September 2011 (continued)

Species observed on Fort Drum August 12 through September 7:

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

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 17 October 2011

It has been more than a month since the last wildlife viewing report, and the bulk of the bird migration has occurred during that time, at least with respect to songbirds. This period had been characterized by persistent southerly winds, and few large-scale bird movements have been noted. Instead, birds seem to have slowly but steadily trickled through the installation, and it is not clear how many songbirds have yet to migrate. Normally during early and mid-October large flocks of sparrows occur throughout open and semi-open habitats, but such flocks have been small and widely scattered this year, perhaps suggesting some sparrows have yet to move.

The waterfowl migration on Fort Drum has mostly been slow, with few large movements and only a handful of species observed. Persistent south winds seems to be holding back the goose migration, with the only sizeable movements coming during the week following 23 September, when winds were generally out of the north. Ducks have been even scarcer, with just a few scattered observations of Mallards, Green-winged Teal, and Hooded Mergansers, but few other species noted. The one exception has been Wood Duck, with good numbers reported from many locations.

Raptors have been similarly scarce with a few exceptions. American Kestrels were widely observed in open areas up to the past week, but many kestrels appear to have departed since about 8 October. Merlins continue to be observed regularly throughout Fort Drum. Aside from a few Northern Harriers the grassland areas of TAs 12 and 13 have hosted few raptors recently, but Rough-legged Hawks should show up any day.

Attempts to find several species of conservation concern that nest in the airfield area met with mixed results. No Common Nighthawks were observed after the first week of September, and this species appears to have largely vacated the Fort Drum nesting grounds during late August. The last Eastern Whip-poor-will was heard on the morning of 14 September, but better data on late calling should be available as the Cornell Lab of Ornithology monitored calling whip-poor-wills with remote recording units this year. Black-billed Cuckoos were unusually scarce this season, and none were observed in the field during September, although one was captured at a bird banding station on 8 September. Red-headed Woodpeckers were scarce in TA 5B & 5D breeding sites all month, with the last observation coming on 18 Sep. The last Ruby-throated Hummingbird noted on Fort Drum was at a Cantonment Area feeder on 20 September.



American Kestrel in Training Area 12.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 17 October 2011 (continued)

The songbird migration was relatively slow but steady, with something interesting moving nearly every day, but few large movements noted. Some northern breeders such as Philadelphia Vireo and Tennessee, Bay-breasted, and Cape May Warblers seemed to pass through in larger than usual numbers. Large numbers of Swainson's Thrushes were heard calling overhead during the early mornings of 14 and 21 September, with the largest flight of Gray-cheeked Thrushes detected early 27 September. During most other mornings few to no Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes were heard overhead. On 13 September and several subsequent dates a mixed flock of at least 10 Eastern Bluebirds, 12 Pine Warblers, and 8 Chipping Sparrows was observed moving around mostly oak woodland in TA 5D in the same location where a similar but larger flock was found in 2010. Some other noteworthy songbird sightings from the last five weeks include:

Olive-sided Flycatcher: migrant in TA 3 on 19 Sep; rarely seen on Fort Drum during fall.

Willow Flycatcher: bird caught at banding station 21 Sep probably this species based on measurements; virtually impossible to distinguish in hand from Alder Flycatcher.

Philadelphia Vireo: at least 8 seen in TA 3 between 14 and 29 Sep.

Red-eyed Vireo: last TA 4A 12 Oct.

Sedge Wren: migrant TA 3 on 27 Sep; none found in breeding areas during period.

Marsh Wren: late migrant TA 12C 3 Oct.

Tennessee Warbler: young male TA12C persistently singing 11 Oct.

Orange-crowned Warbler: TA3 21 Sep; TA5D 6 Oct; TA 13A 14 Oct; TA12A 17 Oct.

Cape May Warbler: last of fall 3 Oct; latest documented on Fort Drum.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: last of fall 5 Oct.

Black-throated Green Warbler: last of fall 5 Oct.

Prairie Warbler: last of fall 4 Oct; latest documented on Fort Drum.

Fox Sparrow: first of fall TA 3A 12 Oct.

Lincoln's Sparrow: 1-3 per day TA 3 19 Sep through first week Oct.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: last TA 3A 12 Oct.

Boblink: last of fall heard overhead 19 Sep.

Rusty Blackbird: heard passing over Fort Drum daily beginning mid-Sep.

White-winged Crossbill: 2 heard over TA 4A 29 Sep; first and so far only this fall, but more expected.

Pine Siskin: 47+ heard over TA 4A 29 Sep; heard daily for the subsequent week.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 17 October 2011 (continued)

Species observed on Fort Drum September 8 through October 17:

Canada Goose	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Tennessee Warbler
Wood Duck	Alder/Willow Flycatcher	Orange-crowned Warbler
American Black Duck	Least Flycatcher	Nashville Warbler
Mallard	Eastern Phoebe	Northern Parula
Green-winged Teal	Yellow-throated Vireo	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Blue-headed Vireo	Magnolia Warbler
Ruffed Grouse	Warbling Vireo	Cape May Warbler
Wild Turkey	Philadelphia Vireo	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Red-eyed Vireo	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Double-crested Cormorant	Blue Jay	Black-throated Green Warbler
American Bittern	American Crow	Blackburnian Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Common Raven	Pine Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Black-capped Chickadee	Prairie Warbler
Osprey	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Bay-breasted Warbler
Bald Eagle	White-breasted Nuthatch	Blackpoll Warbler
Northern Harrier	Brown Creeper	Black-and-white Warbler
Sharp-shinned Hawk	House Wren	American Redstart
Cooper's Hawk	Winter Wren	Ovenbird
Red-tailed Hawk	Sedge Wren	Northern Waterthrush
American Kestrel	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Common Yellowthroat
Merlin	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Wilson's Warbler
Killdeer	Eastern Bluebird	Eastern Towhee
Wilson's Snipe	Veery	Chipping Sparrow
American Woodcock	Gray-cheeked Thrush	Field Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Swainson's Thrush	Vesper Sparrow
Herring Gull	Hermit Thrush	Savannah Sparrow
Great Black-backed Gull	Wood Thrush	Song Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	American Robin	Lincoln's Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Gray Catbird	Swamp Sparrow
Black-billed Cuckoo	Brown Thrasher	White-throated Sparrow
Eastern Screech-Owl	European Starling	White-crowned Sparrow
Great Horned Owl	Cedar Waxwing	Northern Cardinal
Barred Owl		Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Eastern Whip-poor-will		Indigo Bunting
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		Bobolink
Belted Kingfisher		Red-winged Blackbird
Red-headed Woodpecker		Rusty Blackbird
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		Common Grackle
Downy Woodpecker		Brown-headed Cowbird
Hairy Woodpecker		Purple Finch
Northern Flicker		White-winged Crossbill
Pileated Woodpecker		Pine Siskin
		American Goldfinch

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 16 November 2011

Numbers of birds on Fort Drum have declined dramatically since the last wildlife viewing report was posted on 16 October. Declines in bird numbers and diversity are typical of this season, of course, but have been exacerbated by seemingly unending southerly winds, so that very little migratory activity has been observed over the past month. The result of this weather pattern seems to be that most migratory species have slowly trickled through the area, with no obvious large movements of birds.

Waterfowl have been generally scarce for the past month, with no significant goose passage and relatively low duck numbers and diversity. Historically, large numbers of geese have migrated through the region at this time of year, but if this weather holds up we are likely to see the third consecutive year with the season's largest goose passage occurring in early December. Ducks have been scarcer than usual all fall, with most sightings consisting of small groups of American Black Ducks, Mallards, and Hooded Mergansers, and occasional Green-winged Teal and Ring-necked Ducks.

Few actively migrating raptors have been observed over Fort Drum during the past month, although several species of hawks have increased in numbers since the beginning of November. The first Rough-legged Hawk of the season was along the edge of TA3E on 20 October, and by mid-November daily counts of 5-7 Rough-legs were typical, suggesting that this winter may be the best for seeing this species in several years. Northern Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks have also been present in the TA 12 and 13 grasslands in good numbers this month. For the first time in several years no Peregrine Falcons or Golden Eagles were observed in October or early November, and American Kestrels have been absent from Fort Drum since early October. A Bald Eagle was along the Indian River in TA19C on 14 November.



***Rough-legged Hawk in
Training Area 12B.***

Visits to two wetlands throughout the period resulted in several interesting observations. At least 8 Wilson's Snipe remained in a wetlands mitigation site as late as 17 October, and it seems likely that snipe continued after this date but were not observed. American Woodcock were seen regularly to the first week of November. A late American Bittern was in the Matoon Marsh in TA17B on 19 October. Several hundred Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles and up to 85 Rusty Blackbirds were in this marsh on various dates in October and early November, but fewer blackbirds have been seen on Fort Drum than usual for this time of year.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 16 November 2011 (continued)

Although the bulk of the passerine migration was over by 10 October, progressively smaller numbers of songbirds continued to pass through Fort Drum during the rest of October and early November. As usual, warbler diversity plummeted after the first week of October, and only three species have been seen since mid-October: an Orange-crowned Warbler in TA12A on 17 October, Yellow-rumped Warblers on several dates with the last occurring 2 November, and a late Blackpoll Warbler along Carr Road on 19 October. Sparrows accounted for a typically large proportion of the October songbird migration, but the two species that are traditionally most common were present in lower than usual numbers. White-throated Sparrows seemed about half as abundant as most years, with daily maximum counts of about 80-100, and Dark-eyed Juncos were much scarcer than usual, as no flocks of more than about 20 individuals were seen, compared to other years when flocks of 100-200+ were routine. Among sparrows that have apparently departed for the season, late dates include the last Vesper Sparrow on 17 October, Field Sparrow on 19 October, Chipping and White-crowned Sparrows on 1 November, and Swamp Sparrow on 3 November. As of the second week of November widely scattered Savannah and Song Sparrows were still being seen in TA 12 and elsewhere.

A few other departure dates are worth mentioning. On 28 October four Eastern Meadowlarks flew over TA 12C. This makes the third consecutive year that multiple meadowlarks were observed in this area in late October. An Eastern Phoebe in TA5D on 1 November was the latest date this species has been documented on Fort Drum. A Hermit Thrush was in TA5B that same day, and although this is the latest date documented on Fort Drum for this species, it seems likely that this species at least occasionally remains in the area later into the fall. The last dates on which Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Winter Wrens (19 and 20 October, respectively) were observed are typical.

In addition to Rough-legged Hawks, several species of wintering birds arrived on Fort Drum in late October and early November. American Tree Sparrows arrived on 26 October and have been widespread ever since, with flocks of more than 30 in TA17B. The first Snow Bunting was heard over TA5B on 28 October, with numbers increasing substantially by 8 November. A Northern Shrike in TA5D on 8 November was the first observed this season on Fort Drum, but this species was present elsewhere in the region by 28 October, and was probably present on Fort Drum before the beginning of November as well. At least two Lapland Longspurs flew over TA12C on 15 November on a day when American Pipits were also moving. About 20 Common Redpolls in TA19C were the first observed this season, but the actual arrival date was probably 2-3 weeks earlier.

A few insects are noteworthy given the time of year. During the first week of November Monarchs and Clouded Sulphurs (butterflies) were seen migrating in several areas of Fort Drum. During this same week many meadowhawk dragonflies (species unknown) were observed in TA3B.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 16 November 2011 (continued)

Species observed on Fort Drum October 17 through November 16:

Canada Goose	Eastern Phoebe	Vesper Sparrow
Wood Duck	Northern Shrike	Savannah Sparrow
American Black Duck	Blue Jay	Fox Sparrow
Mallard	American Crow	Song Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Common Raven	Swamp Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Horned Lark	White-throated Sparrow
Hooded Merganser	Black-capped Chickadee	White-crowned Sparrow
Ruffed Grouse	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Dark-eyed Junco
Wild Turkey	White-breasted Nuthatch	Eastern Meadowlark
American Bittern	Brown Creeper	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Winter Wren	Rusty Blackbird
Turkey Vulture	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Common Grackle
Osprey	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Brown-headed Cowbird
Bald Eagle	Eastern Bluebird	Purple Finch
Northern Harrier	Hermit Thrush	Common Redpoll
Sharp-shinned Hawk	American Robin	Pine Siskin
Red-tailed Hawk	European Starling	American Goldfinch
Wilson's Snipe	American Pipit	
American Woodcock	Cedar Waxwing	
Ring-billed Gull	Lapland Longspur	
Rock Pigeon	Snow Bunting	
Mourning Dove	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Belted Kingfisher	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Downy Woodpecker	Blackpoll Warbler	
Hairy Woodpecker	American Tree Sparrow	
Northern Flicker	Chipping Sparrow	
Pileated Woodpecker	Field Sparrow	

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program



Wildlife Viewing Report – 22 December 2011

So far the “winter” of 2011-12 is not looking at all like a normal North Country winter, with mild temperatures and virtually no snow. Typical birds to look for in late November and early December include migrating waterfowl, wintering raptors, wintering songbirds, primarily finches, and lingering migrants that normally depart northern New York earlier in the year. None of these groups of birds have been particularly numerous this season, although as usual there have been a few exceptions.

Waterfowl have been scarce on Fort Drum all fall, and few species have been observed recently. For most of this period pervasive southerly winds have done nothing to bring down migrants from the north, and mild weather has left many small ponds and marshes ice-free, so that ducks were more widely dispersed than usual. One of the few times this season that temperatures were cold enough to completely ice over Matoon Marsh in TA17B was during the third week of November, and on 22 November a group of 90+ Mallards and 30+ American Black Ducks was at a tiny patch of open water on the marsh. This was the only sizeable concentration of ducks seen on Fort Drum all fall. Otherwise, small numbers of these species and Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers were noted at widely scattered locations, but in much smaller than usual numbers. By 20 December most ponds and lakes on Fort Drum were entirely iced over, and ducks went from scarce to virtually absent.

Similarly, almost no geese were seen migrating over Fort Drum for most of the fall until the winds finally shifted out of the north on 16-17 December. During this weekend thousands of Canada Geese passed over Fort Drum, and Snow Geese probably did as well, although none were observed over Fort Drum. Scattered Snow Goose flocks were seen during the subsequent week, however, mostly flying very high over the installation. For instance on 22 December Snow Geese were heard over TA12 but were above the clouds and not visible from the ground.

The numbers of hawks passing through Fort Drum earlier in the fall suggested the possibility of good numbers this winter, but as the season has progressed the number of birds has diminished. Since mid-November weekly raptor counts along Antwerp Road have tallied 3-6 Northern Harriers and 2-5 Rough-legged Hawks per day, although a couple of mid-December counts failed to find any hawks at all. Modest numbers of Red-tailed Hawks are present throughout the installation, but relatively few have been observed in TAs 12 and 13. The avian highlight of the fall occurred on 7 December, when 3 Short-eared Owls were found hunting over the grasslands in TAs 12C and 13A. It is not clear whether these owls were migrating or have settled onto winter territories in this area, but several subsequent attempts to relocate them have failed. On 16 December an adult Bald Eagle was at Indian Lake, and on 22 December an adult Northern Goshawk was observed soaring over Weaver Road.



***Red-tailed Hawk in
Training Area 12B.***

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 22 December 2011 (continued)

During most of the year Ring-billed Gull is the only gull species regularly observed on Fort Drum, and is usually most common around the Cantonment Area. Occasionally one or two Herring or Great Black-backed Gulls are seen flying over Fort Drum, but these species are generally scarce on the installation, and no other species has been documented. That changed on 12 December, when a group of about 18 Herring Gulls and 3 Great Black-backed Gulls passed over the Natural Resources office in “V” formation, apparently migrating. Accompanying them was one young Glaucous Gull. This observation came on the same week as a large movement of gulls along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, and also with the departure of Ring-billed Gulls from Fort Drum.

Although several species of finches can currently be found in good numbers in the Adirondacks, winter finch numbers and diversity are relatively low on Fort Drum. Pine Siskin is the only species of irruptive finch that has been found on the installation in recent weeks, primarily in conifer stands in TA14 near Weaver Road, where up to 40 per day are being seen. Until late November good numbers of Purple Finches were also in this area; most apparently departed in early December, but a few were still present on 22 December. Earlier in the fall a few White-winged Crossbills and Common Redpolls passed through Fort Drum, but these species have not been observed in the last month.

Given the mild temperatures it should come as no surprise that a few lingering migratory species persist on Fort Drum. The most notable have included Great Blue Heron in TA13B on 9 Dec and in the Cantonment Area on 21 Dec; a Belted Kingfisher at Quarry Pond in TA 14B through at least 21 Dec; a Winter Wren in TA15B on 22 December; 2 Song Sparrows at the Matoon Marsh in TA17B through at least 9 December and another in a shrub wetland along U.S. Military Highway on 22 December; and 4 Rusty Blackbirds at the Matoon Marsh on 1 December. Another “half-hardy” (species that can overwinter at this latitude although most individuals migrate south) that continues on Fort Drum is American Robin, of which a very few have been observed scattered throughout the installation in recent weeks, and which is present in fairly good numbers regionally so far this season.

Despite the presence of a few lingerers, overall bird abundance in the training area seems very low this season, partly because of a general lack of irruptive species such as redpolls, and partly because several species of wintering migrants seem to be present in low numbers. Snow Buntings have been almost entirely absent this December, although a fair number were observed migrating during late October and November. Similarly, American Tree Sparrows were common during migration but declined sharply by early December, although numbers seemed to be increasing again by 22 December. This apparent increase may represent a late fall push of birds south once the winds finally started blowing out of the north, or may merely reflect greater bird activity associated with unseasonably mild weather. Northern Shrikes have not shown any unusual pattern of occurrence, but rather seem to be present in typical numbers. In the past couple of weeks shrikes have been observed near the water tower on the south end of the Main Tank Trail, along Antwerp Road about one-half mile north of Dogwood Street and also just west of the intersection with U.S. Military Highway, and in two places along Carr Road.

A note on mammals: Several weasels were seen running across installation roads during the third week of December, all with snowy white coats except for the black tail tip. These weasels were quite conspicuous given the lack of snow cover.

Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program

Wildlife Viewing Report – 22 December 2011 (continued)

Species observed on Fort Drum November 17 through December 22:

Snow Goose	Rock Pigeon	European Starling
Canada Goose	Mourning Dove	Snow Bunting
American Black Duck	Short-eared Owl	American Tree Sparrow
Mallard	Belted Kingfisher	Song Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Downy Woodpecker	Dark-eyed Junco
Hooded Merganser	Hairy Woodpecker	Rusty Blackbird
Ruffed Grouse	Pileated Woodpecker	Purple Finch
Wild Turkey	Northern Shrike	House Finch
Great Blue Heron	Blue Jay	Pine Siskin
Bald Eagle	American Crow	American Goldfinch
Northern Harrier	Common Raven	
Cooper's Hawk	Horned Lark	
Northern Goshawk	Black-capped Chickadee	
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-breasted Nuthatch	
Rough-legged Hawk	White-breasted Nuthatch	
Ring-billed Gull	Brown Creeper	
Herring Gull	Winter Wren	
Glaucous Gull	Golden-crowned Kinglet	
Great Black-backed Gull	American Robin	