

Fort Drum Natural Resources



Wildlife Viewing Report – 28 August 2018

Birds

Since our last report most of Fort Drum's bird species have completed their nesting seasons, although a few species are still feeding young. A family group of Blue-winged Warblers in Training Area (TA) 6A that included two begging juveniles on 20 August represents a very late nesting attempt for this species. On 23 August a mixed species flock in TA 5D included Eastern Wood-Pewees and Yellow-throated Vireos feeding young, but also several species of obvious migrants, including Bay-breasted Warbler and Tennessee Warbler, along with a mob of Red-eyed Vireos and Baltimore Orioles. Such mixed species flocks are being seen daily on Fort Drum, although few have dependent young in them as most consist of actively migrating birds. During the next two weeks the diversity of birds occurring in such flocks should peak, with the potential for 20 or more species of warbler as well as many vireos, thrushes, grosbeaks, orioles, and other songbirds. Flycatcher migration is probably peaking already, as these aerial insectivores are among the earliest species to depart northern New York in the fall. On 27 August all of New York's breeding flycatcher species were seen on Fort Drum, including 4 Olive-sided Flycatchers, 2 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, and many actively migrating Eastern Kingbirds. Other migrants observed since 20 August include an Olive-sided Flycatcher in TA 6A on 20 August and again on the same perch on 24 August; three Wilson's Warblers also in TA 6A on 20 August; two Cape May Warblers in TA 7G on 23 August; and Swainson's Thrushes and Tennessee, Magnolia, and Bay-breasted Warblers on multiple dates.

Given that this is our first report since late June here a few highlights and updates from the latter half of the nesting season, starting with grassland birds. The Short-eared Owl thought to be nesting in TA12B was remarkably difficult to see for most of the season, but a juvenile was finally found calling at the suspected nest site on the evening of 29 June. Typically Short-eared Owls are relatively easy to see around their nest sites during the hour or two before dark each evening, but the owls here rarely allowed themselves to be seen. In our last report we noted that a dozen Sedge Wrens were on territory in May but many had moved by late June, but it turns out that only a couple actually seemed to abandon their early territories. Late June and July surveys documented the presence of 13-14 territories, with a one-day high count of 23 individuals on 8 July that included 12 singing males, 6 of which were accompanied by calling individuals thought to be adult females, and one family group with one adult and four juveniles. Unlike many years, no additional Henslow's Sparrows arrived on Fort Drum late in the nesting season, and only five territories were found for the year. A juvenile Henslow's Sparrow was in TA12C on 6 August.



Short-eared Owls in Training Area 13A in 2015.

The Philadelphia Vireo that occupied a territory in TA 13A remained on territory through at least 16 July, the last date it was heard singing. That it returned in 2018 was somewhat surprising because it did not seem to attract a mate in 2017, the first year it or any Philadelphia Vireo was documented on Fort Drum during the nesting season. Philadelphia Vireos are uncommon migrants through Fort Drum, and the first southbound migrant of the year was in a mixed species flock in TA 6A on 20 August.

A second round of nightjar survey routes was conducted on the night of 29-30 June, with three observers surveying four routes. A total of 73 Eastern Whip-poor-wills were heard on these surveys, slightly fewer than was expected but it seems like whip-poor-wills do not call as well in late June as they do in May or early June. Only 6 Common Nighthawks were heard on these nightjar surveys although many more are known to occur in the surveyed areas, not surprising given that nighthawks are notoriously difficult to survey. The Chuck-will's-widow that was on Fort Drum in 2017 apparently did not return in 2018, or at least it could not be found on several efforts to determine whether it had returned.

Only eight Red-headed Woodpecker territories were found in TAs 5 and 6 this year, fewer than the 9-15 that have been documented in past years. There may well have been more territories this season outside of known traditional nesting areas, as there is extensive habitat that appears suitable but is rarely used as far as is known, and much of this habitat is not surveyed every year. However two patches of habitat that formerly supported nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers annually have not been used in several years, and the total number of pairs seems to be declining despite fairly high productivity most years.

Open sandy areas near the oak woodlands where the Red-headed Woodpeckers nest support large numbers of several sparrow species, as indicated by a survey of this area on 3 July. Highlights of this survey included 24 Clay-colored Sparrows, 37 Grasshopper Sparrows, and 34 Vesper Sparrows, many of which were seen carrying food. At least 7 Upland Sandpiper territories were found in open sandy grasslands during 2018, mostly in areas that are not accessible to visiting birders. On 23 June a pair of Upland Sandpipers was found with at least one tiny chick in TA 7.



Philadelphia Vireo in Training Area 13A in 2018.

Species observed on Fort Drum from 1 July – 28 Aug 2018:

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