

# southern atlantic coast region



## RICKY DAVIS

The weather this summer can best be characterized by two words—hot and dry. Both months were quite warm, except for one week during the middle of June, when temperatures were below normal. Rainfall amounts tended to be lower than normal in most areas and there were no major tropical systems this summer. Breeding success for most birds seemed high and there were no significant nesting failures noted (or reported). We will have to see if the populations of fall migrants show signs of this good nesting season.

**Abbreviations:** C. Hatt. (*Cape Hatteras, NC*); E.L.H. (*E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co., GA*); H.B.S.P. (*Huntington Beach State Park, SC*); O.S.F. (*Orangeburg, SC, Sod Farm*).

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

Summering or lingering Com. Loons were found across the Region. Five were n. of Rodanthe, NC, during July (BB); three were in e. Carteret, NC, June 14 (JF); and one was on L. Russell, Anderson, SC, June 21 (LG, MT). Georgia had multiple reports with singles at Buford Dam, Gwinnett, all summer; L. Horton, Fayette, June 18; Everett, Glynn, July 6; and two on L. Lanier June 6–7 (*fide TM*). The usual pelagic trips out of North Carolina in July found reduced numbers and diversity this year. Some peak trip counts included 137 Black-capped Petrels off Oregon Inlet July 20, 244 Cory's and 20

Greater shearwaters off Hatteras July 18, and 53 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels off Oregon Inlet July 20 (BP et al.). Herald Petrels continued to be found, though, with dark-morph individuals off Hatteras I. July 12 (TPu, *fide BP*) and off Hatteras July 18 & 25 (BP et al.). Only one White-tailed Tropicbird was located, off C. Hatt. July 27 (BP et al.).

Locally unusual pelicans included an Am. White Pelican in the ACE Basin, SC, July 26 (BF, LC); and an imm. Brown at Falls L., NC, July 17 (JSt). If this was the same individual found there last fall, where was he hiding during the winter and spring? Double-crested Cormorants continue to increase as inland residents. A colony of a dozen birds (13 nests) was found on L. Russell, SC, June 21 (LG, MT), farther inland from the usual Lakes Marion and Moultrie strongholds. Only one Magnificent Frigatebird was reported, a female over Ocracoke, NC, June 16 (*fide ML*). This is quite different from the multiple sightings of the past several years.

Inland post-breeding dispersal of long-legged waders seemed to be above average. Some of the best reports were four Snowy Egrets near Chapel Hill, NC, July 26 (WC); five Snowies at E.L.H. July 10 (*fide TM*); and a Tricolored Heron at E.L.H. July 10 & 30 (*fide TM*). White Ibis were everywhere. The farthest inland were two in Winston-Salem, NC, July 6–27 (*fide RS*); five in Townville, SC, June 20 (BM); and one in Roswell, GA, June 20 (*fide TM*). Also farther inland than normal, and quite rare, were six Wood Storks at E.L.H. July 15 until at least July 31, when one was still present (CL). Reddish Egrets once again infiltrated the coastal region with immatures noted at Ft. Fisher, NC, July 29 (*fide TP*); Sunset Beach, NC, July 13 (*fide TP*); H.B.S.P., SC, July 11 (TP et al.); and two at Wassaw I., GA, July 12 (SC, PR). Of special interest was an apparently recently fledged immature at Sapelo I., GA, in July, indicating breeding very close to or within the Region (BW)! Yellow-crowned Night-Herons are local inland nesters and this year some interesting reports involved up to six at an impoundment near Chapel Hill July 5–19

(RG); one immature at L. Allatoona, GA, July 9 (*fide TM*); and up to two at E.L.H. July 15–25 (CL, JS). In the weird department were two different immatures far offshore of Hatteras, NC, July 18 & 25 (BP et al.). One wonders where were these birds coming from? As usual, the only Roseate Spoonbill found was along the Jekyll I., GA, causeway July 18 (*fide TM*).

A species causing considerable excitement (and debate) was the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck. One showed up at E.L.H. June 6 and remained until at least July 5 (*fide JS*); at least three, maybe four (including two paired up) were near Yemassee, Hampton, SC, June 3 into early August (LG, CR, v.o.). True vagrancy in this species has normally been accepted in the mid-west, but in our Region most sightings have been considered to be of escaped individuals. One has to wonder, though, with these sightings and those of the past several years, in South Carolina especially. One was found in the same Yemassee area last spring on May 26, 1997, with two there Sept. 15, 1997 (CR); and two were at nearby Donnelly W.M.A., Colleton, July 30, 1994 (DH et al.). With recent increases in the Florida populations, it is not only possible, but likely that the birds entering our Region now could be considered non-escapes!

Other waterfowl news involved lingering or summering individuals. Some of the highlights included an Am. Black Duck at E.L.H. June 6 (BH<sub>a</sub>); a N. Pintail at Brier Creek Res., Wake, NC, June 28 (RD); two Redhead in s. Cobb, GA, June 15–16 (*fide TM*); several Ring-necked Ducks in all 3 states; five Lesser Scaup near New Bern, NC, June 2 (BH); an imm. male Com. Eider at Cape Lookout, NC, until early July (*fide JF*); a Black Scoter at Cape Lookout June 7 (*fide JF*); a female Bufflehead (crippled) in Camden, NC, July 14 (ML<sub>y</sub>); a female Hooded Merganser at University L., Chapel Hill, NC, June 4 (SC<sub>a</sub>); and one-two Red-breasted Mergansers at Mt. Pleasant, SC, July 18 (*fide PW*). Confirmed breeding of Hooded Merganser in Georgia involved a female with eight young in Wilcox in June (BW).

## MISSISSIPPI KITES TO TERNS

Unusual summer reports of Mississippi Kite involved one in *Newton*, GA, June 1 (*fide* TM); three at Falls L., NC, June 7 (WC, RE) and five in the same general area June 14 (JR et al.); and two near Jordan L., NC, June 20 (RG et al.). Rare-in-summer Sharp-shinned Hawks included singles at Clemmons, NC, June 21 (LR); Claremont, NC, June 30 (D&LM); Brunswick, GA, June 30 (GB); Sanford, NC, July 9 (JC); and Winston-Salem, NC, July 31 (*fide* RS). Cooper's Hawks continued to increase as summer residents, with reports scattered across the Region. The best breeding evidence noted was of three juveniles in Simpsonville, SC, July 12 (PSh). Always noteworthy are reports of breeding Am. Kestrels. Found this summer were a pair with two young in n.e. Atlanta July 2 (SE); an immature begging for food in Rome, GA, July 31 (GB), and a pair that raised one young near Goldsboro, NC (GH).

Inland Black Rails were found at the usual n. *Greene*, GA, marsh, with 3 active territories (PS, GB). This site also had two Virginia Rails June 18 (PS,GB); two adults with one fledgling were seen at the Kennesaw Mt., GA, marsh July 11 (GB et al.). Locally unusual were the two Purple Gallinules found at L. Juliette, GA, June 17 (TJ), providing a first record for that area. American Coots summered in more places than usual. The best counts were eight at New Bern, NC, June 2 (BH) and five at the Macon, GA, brickyards all summer (TI et al.). Taking honors as the most unexpected bird of the season, was North Carolina's third **Limpkin** found at Fairfield Harbor, New Bern, June 21–July 1 (DS, BH, m.ob.). This bird set up residence at a pond in a residential/golf community and was seen by a horde of observers, providing the state's first documented record. It would be nice to know if this bird's presence was due to drought conditions in its Florida range, and if some went undetected in the other 2 states in the Region. A locally rare summer sighting of a Sandhill Crane was had at Eufaula, GA, June 9 (GB, SR).

The presence of six Am. Avocets, photographed at Salem L., *Forsyth*, NC, July 17 (*fide* RS) provided a first county record. The only Upland Sandpiper reports included nine at the O.S.F., GA, July 26 (TK); up to three at the *Bullock*, GA, turf farm July 26–31 (AK); and two at the Cherry Hospital grounds, *Wayne*, NC, July 30 (ED). Fort Fisher, NC, had the only Long-billed Curlew, July 26 & 29 (GH; *fide* TP). The runner-up rarity of the summer was the

basic-plumaged **Bar-tailed Godwit** found for one morning only at N. Pond, Pea Island N.W.R., NC, July 22 (JW). This individual was of the race *lapponica*, which is the expected form of the species on the East Coast. Another godwit making news in North Carolina was the Marbled found s. of Fayetteville July 20–26 (PC, HB). There are only about 5 previous inland records for the state.

Inland peep reports of note involved two late spring migrant Semipalmated Sandpipers at E.L.H. June 14 (JS, CL), and an early alternate-plumaged Baird's Sandpiper at O.S.F. July 19 (PW). A Pectoral Sandpiper was late at Hutchinson I., GA, June 4 (SC), but fall migrant Pectorals came through in good numbers with 100+ at the O.S.F. July 26 (TK) and 400 at a *Floyd*, GA, sod farm July 30 (ND). Also unusually early were three alternate-plumaged Dunlin at the O.S.F. July 17–19 (PW). The only Buff-breasted Sandpipers included one at the O.S.F. July 26 (TK), and two at a *Floyd*, GA, sod farm July 30 (ND). Phalarope reports included one–three Wilson's at South Pond, Pea Island N.W.R., NC, July 13–23 (JW et al.) and a male Red-necked at C. Hatt. June 4 (H&ELi).

Only one South Polar Skua was seen offshore, with one off Hatteras, NC, in early July (SS, *fide* BP). An ad. light-morph Pomarine Jaeger on the beach at Kill Devil Hills, NC, July 6 (AW, KW) was a surprise, but three off Morehead City, NC, July 18 (BC) were more expected. Lesser Black-backed Gulls have on occasion been found in summer in the Carolinas, but now Georgia is getting in on the act. Two found at Jekyll I. July 18 (*fide* TM) must have been a surprise. Also unusual was the Great Black-backed Gull found inland at Falls L., NC, July 11 (JSt). The bird was reported to be injured or sick but was not seen at any other times. In the weird department was the pair of Com. Terns which nested on top of a flat concrete bridge support in Beaufort, NC (KR,JF). Two eggs were seen June 11 and two large young were present by July 3, but not seen thereafter. The terns used broken shells as the nest, which were present from gulls dropping the shells onto the platform. How many records of this kind of unusual nest site are known for this species? The only Bridled Terns reported included two off Morehead City, NC, July 18 (BC) and five off Oregon Inlet, NC, July 27 (BP et al.). Two Sooty Terns off Hatteras July 25 (BP et al.) were about normal, but onshore singles were at C. Hatt. June 7 (KW) and Ft. Fisher, NC, July 26 (*fide* TP).



**These American Avocets at Salem Lake, Forsyth County, North Carolina, on July 17, 1998, were far inland on the piedmont and constituted a first record for the county. Photograph/Margaret Mulvey**

A Black Tern was locally unusual at New Bern, NC, June 2 (BH) and at E.L.H. July 28 (CL). The best count was 150 near Blackbeard I., GA, July 29 (PS).

## DOVES TO WAXWINGS

The Eur. Collared-Doves found in the Beaufort, NC, area during the spring continued to be seen the entire summer. Of interest was the observance of one of the Snead's Ferry, NC, birds (also found in the spring) seen carrying material to a nest July 6 (NM). The Beaufort White-winged Doves (from the spring season) made more news this summer: a fully feathered young bird was picked up June 12 (*fide* JF) and two adults were at a nest with one young July 5 (NM). These reports provided the first nesting evidence for the species in the state. Throwing a lot of doubt onto the whole situation, though, is the fact that one of the birds was seen to have a leg band (FE), thereby causing the case for natural arrival of these doves in the Beaufort area to be in serious doubt. So far, information about local release has not been obtained. Other White-wingeds found this summer included one in flight at Atlantic Beach, NC, June 11 (JF) and one on Harbor I., SC, July 11 (JH).

In the totally unexpected department was the "Red-shafted" N. Flicker found in Beaufort July 19 (BC). Records of this western form of flicker are extremely rare in the Region and a summer sighting is even more unexplainable. Probably a late migrant was the calling Willow Flycatcher found at Mason Farm, Chapel Hill, NC, June 8 (SCa).

# florida



1998 Pelagic Highlights Off Marathon			
Species	15 June	17 June	19 June
Cory's Shearwater	3	3	0
Sooty Shearwater	1	0	0
Audubon's Shearwater	30	18	72
storm-petrel sp.	0	1	0
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	0	1	0
boobysp.	1	0	0
Roseate Tern	0	0	12
Bridled Tern	14	15	28
Sooty Tern	280	220	205
Black Tern (first-summer)	1	0	0
Brown Noddy	10	6	77

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Most Florida summers are characterized by mild phrases like "wetter than normal" or "unusually warm." Not so this year! This was a season of extremes. Temperatures in the triple digits seared the state in June as a ridge of high pressure stalled over Florida for most of the month. The heat was paired with extreme drought even in areas that had been seriously flooded as recently as March. As a result, the most intense fire season since at least the 1930s scorched over 500,000 acres, with fires in every county. None was harder hit than *Volusia*, where over 2000 fires affected 150,000 acres. Fires were most severe where decades of suppression had allowed the unnatural accumulation of fuel and understory. In properly managed natural areas where prescribed burns already had been carried out, fuel was reduced and wildfires caused little damage.



One at the usual n. *Greene*, GA, site June 18 (PS,GB) was most likely a summering bird. Rare and unexpected in summer in the Region, a W. Kingbird was found at L. Horton, *Fayette*, GA, June 16 (BHu). Amazingly this was that state's 3rd sighting of a Western this year (two were found in spring)! Cape Lookout, NC, continued to have Gray Kingbirds since the spring season. One was found June 6 (PB, CRe) and one, maybe two, were there July 2 (NM). No nesting evidence was found. Another Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen, thereby extending the seasonal streak for a couple of years running now. This one was found near Townville, SC, June 28 (D&SCo). The Com. Ravens reported in downtown Greensboro, NC, during the spring season must be there to stay, as at least two were seen during the entire summer (H&ELi). Also on the edge of their breeding range were the Horned Larks with a fledgling seen in *Peach*, GA, July 27 (PJ). A Wood Thrush in the Valdosta, GA, area July 18 (BBe) seemed to be singing on territory. This species is quite rare in that part of the state as a breeder. Amazing was an extremely late Am. Pipit heard calling at C. Hatt. June 1 (RK). This is probably the latest ever for the species as a spring migrant in North Carolina. Cedar Waxwings are sometimes found nesting in e. North Carolina during summer. This year a pair was seen building a nest s. of Moncure, in e. *Chatham* June 21 (RD).

## WARBLERS TO ORIOLES

A very late spring migrant was the Chestnut-sided Warbler found in the Alligator River N.W.R., Dare, NC, June 3 (MLy). A N. Waterthrush found near Bethel, *Fairfield*, SC, June 23 (DB) was probably a very early fall migrant. The pair of Louisiana Waterthrushes on territory in the Green Swamp, *Brunswick*, NC, June 14 (RD) were on the extreme edge of their breeding range. Quite unexpected was the ad. Lark Sparrow found on Hutchinson I., GA, July 7 (SC). This individual must have been a wandering non-breeder; it was too early for this regular fall migrant. Song Sparrows returned to the L. Wildwood, Macon, GA, area, making it two consecutive years as a summer resident (PJ).

Dickcissels were once again found at scattered locations throughout the Region. Some of the more interesting reports included three singing males in e. *Washington*, NC, June 20 (HL, JP); one male in *Dillon*, SC, June 14 until mid-July (LG, SP); and two-four in *Henry*, GA, June 6-7 (v.o.). Bobolinks in e. North Carolina

during summer are quite rare. This year a male was e. of *Greenville* June 19-20 (EM, *fide* JW) and two males were at the VOA-B site s.e. of *Greenville* July 30 (JW). Always rare away from the immediate coast, one was at Grassy Pond, Valdosta, GA, June 16 (GB, BBe). There was a mini invasion of Shiny Cowbirds this summer. During June one was on Cumberland I., GA (*fide* DC); three (two males and one female) were at the Savannah Spoil Site, *Jasper*, SC, June 18 until at least June 25 (SC); one was in *Glynn*, GA, June 25 (*fide* GB); and a male was at the Ft. Fisher, NC, Aquarium feeder July 8-11 (PS, m.ob.).

Baltimore Orioles were found on the e. edge of their breeding range with one near Rutledge, GA, June 11 (GB); one seen carrying food at L. Cunningham, *Greenville*, SC, June 9 (LG); and three confirmed nestings in the Winston-Salem, NC, area (*fide* RS).

## CORRIGENDUM

In the Fall 1997 *Field Notes* (Vol. 52, p.48), the name Baltimore Oriole was left out of the sentence concerning "a flight of 200 going N at Pea I., N.W.R., NC.

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