

GENERAL NOTES

THIRD DOCUMENTED STATE RECORD PACIFIC LOON, AND FIRST COUNTY RECORD RED-NECKED GREBE, MONROE COUNTY, GEORGIA — On 22 October 2006, Terry Johnson and Michelle White observed a Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) at the 304-ha ash pond on Plant Scherer property, Monroe County, Georgia (Thompson 2006). Terry Johnson returned with Jerry and Rose Payne later that day and observed the bird again (Keyes 2006). The bird was not seen on 23 October, but Tim Keyes and Terry Johnson observed it again on 26 October, and Tim Keyes, Jerry Amerson, Jerry and Rose Payne, and Jim Ozier located the bird once more that afternoon (Keyes 2006). On 28 October, Ken Blankenship and others observed the bird (Georgia Birders On-line Listserv [GABO-L], 28 October 2006), and Jerry Amerson, Terry Johnson, Paul Hoinowski, and I observed it on 4 November 2006. Terry Johnson and Melissa Hayes recorded the next sighting on 15 November, and Terry Johnson and Chuck Thompson saw the bird the next day. Johnson saw the loon on 17 November during his winter bird count survey. On 22 November, Johnson and Ron Lee found the loon on the nearby settling pond for the first time. On 24 November, Johnson took birders Donna Johnson, Todd Dupree, Malena Dupree, Angela Dupree, and Anna Leverett to see the bird, which was once again located at the ash pond. Terry Johnson saw the loon again on 10 December, and the bird stayed in the area until at least 18 December, the date of the Christmas Bird Count at Rum Creek Wildlife Management Area (Beaton 2007). Terry Johnson checked the ash pond multiple times through 25 January 2007, but he did not locate the loon again. This Pacific Loon was Georgia's third documented state record.

Terry Johnson noted the loon's size, straight bill, dark collar, and dark head patch (pers. comm.) during the first sighting on 22 October. He stated that the bird was "much smaller than a Common Loon," and "the bill was straight." The collar was dark "on the neck, and the dark head patch extended through the eye." In addition, Johnson noted that "The head appeared dark gray across the top and down the back of the neck, and light gray edges could be seen on some feathers and on the back" (pers. comm.). Jerry Amerson, Terry Johnson, Paul Hoinowski, and I arrived at the ash pond at Plant Scherer on the morning of 4 November 2006. We spotted the loon farther out in the water than it had been during the previous week. In Amerson's photographs (Fig. 1 and 2), the bird's necklace and the light area under its eye can be seen clearly. Sibley (2000) noted a "sharp contrast and straight border on neck" as identification features, and

these features are evident in the photographs (Fig. 1 and 2). We observed the bird feeding actively in foamy water near a mud spit. Terry Johnson described the location as, “. . . with all the sandy-looking ash piles and flows, it looks something like a small bay at the seaside” (Thompson 2006). Once we observed the loon fly off the pond and circle at a very high altitude. We were surprised when it returned and landed back in the water, because we thought it might have left permanently.

During that same visit to the ash pond on 4 November, Jerry Amerson noticed another odd bird that turned out to be a Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*), also a new Monroe County record. It was “larger than a Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*),” and it had a “sharp long bill,” a “forehead with sharp angle,” and a “long neck,” according to my field notes. It was drab all over as seen through a telescope at a distance, but in photographs taken by Jerry Amerson (not included here), the characteristic light chin and ear strap were evident. I had seen a cormorant within the past hour; thus, I recorded that it appeared to be a “cross between a cormorant and a loon,” due to its unique shape. In the same area, we saw Horned Grebes, 2 to 3 dozen Eared Grebes (*Podiceps nigricollis*), and Pied-billed Grebes (*Podilymbus podiceps*); thus, we saw 4 grebe species in a single day! There is only one other previous sighting of the Red-necked Grebe in Middle Georgia: the “Holboell’s” Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena holboelli*), which was seen in Taylor County on 22 November 1958 (Cater 1973). That sighting could have been either in the Upper Coastal Plain or in the Piedmont. In the Piedmont of Georgia, the Red-necked Grebe is a “rare winter resident and transient” with 16 records (Beaton et al. 2003). Other Red-necked Grebes were reported from January – March 2007 in other Piedmont lakes (GABO-L records, 13, 19, and 20 January; 2 and 8 February; 2, 10, and 25 March, etc.). On 6 November, Terry Johnson, Father Francis Michael, John Jensen, and Jim Ozier located the Plant Scherer grebe, and on 9 November, Terry Johnson, Mike Chapman, and others found the grebe again. Members of the Ocmulgee Audubon Society and Terry Johnson found the grebe again on 18 November, and Johnson found the grebe on 23 November. The last sighting was on 24 November by the Johnson, Dupree, and Leverett group (pers. comm. with Terry Johnson).

The first documented sighting of a Pacific Loon in Georgia was at another Georgia Power facility, Plant Wansley (Carroll and Heard Counties), from 19-31 December 2002 (Beaton et al. 2003; Georgia Checklist and Records Committee [GCRC] record 2002-26). The second record was reported from Lake Hartwell by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn on 26 February 2005 (Oriole 70/71:46; GCRC

2005-08A and GCRC 2005-08B). The Lake Hartwell loon stayed until 6 March 2005. Following the Monroe County record (GCRC 2008-08) we reported in this paper, the fourth documented Pacific Loon in Georgia was photographed off Tybee Island in Chatham County waters on a pelagic trip on 14 January 2007 (GCRC 2007-11, R. Zaremba).

Five other Pacific Loons have been reported in Georgia in recent years, but no documentation for them has been sent to the GCRC as of May 2009. One Pacific Loon was reported from Lake Horton on 9 November 2003 (GABO-L, 9 November 2003). Two were reported (one photographed at a distance) at Clarks Hill Lake on 18 January 2004 (GABO-L, 20 and 24 November 2004), and one was reported from Lake Walter F. George Dam on 17 November 2006 (GABO-L, 17 November 2006). One was also reported as seen from the shore on Tybee Island on 11 February 2007 (GABO-L, 12 February 2007). The last undocumented sighting was reported on 17 February 2007 at West Point Lake, Georgia (GABO-L, 17 February 2007).

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Figures 1 and 2. Pacific Loons (*Gavia pacifica*) photographed by Jerry Amerson at the ash pond, Plant Scherer, Monroe County, Georgia, on 26 October 2006.

A SUMMER POPULATION OF WILLOW FLYCATCHERS IN BIBB COUNTY, GEORGIA — From 2002 to 2004, a small population of Willow Flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii*) summered in Bibb County in Middle Georgia at the Macon Cherokee Brickyards. This flycatcher is a rare to uncommon summer resident in North Georgia, with known breeding records south to Athens and near Atlanta (Beaton, G., P.W. Sykes, Jr., and J.W. Parrish, Jr., 2003, Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, GOS, Occasional Publ. No. 14). The Willow Flycatcher has been an accidental transient in Middle Georgia (Johnson, P., 1998, Annotated Checklist of Birds of Middle Georgia, 64 pages. Available from: Ocmulgee Audubon Society). This small Macon population was thus about 121 to 161 km south of recently known breeding sites. In 2002, Ty Ivey found one or 2 calling Willow Flycatchers from 8 June to at least 23 July (Oriole 67:65) at the Macon Cherokee Brickyards. In 2003, Ty Ivey found the species from 17 May to early July (Oriole 68:34). In 2003, up to 5 birds were seen. Nesting was suspected, but not confirmed. In 2004, the birds were present from 16 May until at least 11 June (Oriole 69:86). The birds did not return in the following years (2005, 2006, and 2007).

On 8 June 2002, Ty Ivey located the first singing Willow Flycatcher at the Macon Cherokee Brickyards, Bibb County. Marie and Jerry Amerson and Paul Johnson visited the area in June with Ty Ivey, and saw at least one bird. The bird was located at the south edge of the “shop pond,” a formerly mined pit (possibly 20 ha) that is now an open-water wetland, complete with water lotus (*Nelumbo*