

FROM THE FIELD

DECEMBER 2006 - FEBRUARY 2007

Note: The appearance of observations in this section does not suggest verification of acceptance of a record. Records need to be documented and submitted to the Checklist and Records Committee for consideration.

The winter season is generally one of the best times of the year to turn up rarities around the state. This season we enjoyed a large diversity of rare birds, many of which remained where they were discovered long enough to be seen by numerous eager birders. In general, it was not a good season for seeing irruptive finches and typical wintering species. However, the winter started out well with exciting observations of WESTERN GREBE, PACIFIC LOON, COMMON EIDER, and EURASIAN WIGEON, along with good numbers of scoters and other ducks. The Christmas Bird Counts from around the state produced their share of exciting birds, including ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER, BEWICK'S WREN, and WILSON'S WARBLER. Not to be outdone, the gulls and seabirds made a good showing when LITTLE GULL, CALIFORNIA GULL, RAZORBILL, and MANX SHEARWATER were all sighted along the coast or just offshore. Last, but certainly not least, a quiet Dublin backyard hosted not one, but 2 western vagrants, BULLOCK'S ORIOLE and WESTERN TANAGER, and the homeowners graciously welcomed eager birders who stopped by to see these beautiful birds.

Abbreviations used include: ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, Beaton et al. 2003, GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AWEC - Arrowhead Wildlife Education Center in Floyd Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, McIntosh Co.; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CRC - Checklist and Records Committee; CRNRA - Cochran Shoals Unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Cobb Co.; ELHLAF - E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co.; ENWR - Bradley Unit of Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Stewart Co.; JI - Jekyll Island, Glynn Co.; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Cobb Co.; LSSI - Little St. Simons Island, Glynn Co.; m.ob. - many observers; MBBP - Merry Brothers Brickyard Ponds, Richmond Co.; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; SCSP- Sweetwater Creek State Park, Douglas Co.; v.ob. - various observers; WMA - Wildlife Management Area; and WPD - West Point Dam, Troup Co.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - Bryan Fobbus observed 2 birds in the Warner Robins area on 7 December. Two more birds were observed in Bartow Co. on 21 December, and remained in the area throughout the winter (fide Terry Moore). That number increased over the next 2 months, as Joshua Spence observed 9 birds in the same location on 20 February. Steve Barlow reported another bird from ELHLAF on 1 January, and Carol Lambert saw a second bird at Lake Blalock in Clayton Co. on 2 January. Trey Mccuen found 2 birds in the Dublin area on 24 February.

SNOW GOOSE - Walt Chambers found a bird on a small farm pond in Talbot Co. on 1 January, and Ken Blankenship observed at least 10 birds in Bartow Co. on 15 January.

ROSS'S GOOSE - Walt Chambers found a bird at WPD on 1 December (CRC 2009-02 pending). The resident Ila farm pond goose was still present with the domestic geese when Grant McCreary checked on it on 27 January. The bird has been resident near Ila in Madison Co. for the past 9 years.

ACKLING GOOSE - Walt Chamber found 5 birds at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 6 January, for a good sighting of this recently-split species (CRC 2009-01 pending).

WOOD DUCK - Paul Sykes reported an excellent count of 548 birds at a roost site in northern Greene Co. on 9 December.

AMERICAN WIGEON - The highest count came from Garden Lakes near Rome, where Marion Dobbs recorded 126 birds on 18 February.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL - Jeff Sewell and Carol Lambert had a good count of more than 100 birds along Andrew's Island Causeway adjacent to Brunswick on 5 January.

CANVASBACK - Joshua Spence found 16 birds on a small lake in Whitfield Co. on 21 February, which was unusual for the Mountain Region.

REDHEAD - Eric Boehm tallied a good high count of 75 birds at WPD on 3 December.

SURF SCOTER - John Horton and Lucy James observed 12 birds at the south end of JI on 2 December, and Max Medley found a female bird at Carter's Lake on 7 February.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - Two birds were seen at Bear Creek Reservoir in Athens on 1 December (Mark Freeman), and they remained there through most of the season. John Horton and Lucy James had a good count of 5 birds on JI on 2 December.

BLACK SCOTER - A single bird was observed at Bear Creek Reservoir in Athens by Mark Freeman on 1 December, and it remained there through most of the winter. The peak count of more than 1500 birds was reported from the south end of JI by John Horton and Lucy James on 2 December. Sandy Pangle reported an inland sighting during the Dalton CBC on 16 December.

COMMON GOLDENEYE - Eric Beohm found 10 birds at WPD on 3 December. Russ Wigh reported the annual arrival of a male bird to the same pond on Skidaway Island, Chatham Co., for the 7th consecutive year, on 5 December. A single bird was a good find by Ellen Miller in Jasper Co. on 10 December. Jim Throckmorton found 6 birds in Rabun Co. on 13 January, which was an unusual location for this species. A female bird was seen at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park throughout January (fide Lois Stacey). The peak count of 16 birds was reported from WPD by Pierre Howard on 6 February.

COMMON MERGANSER - Amazingly, 4 birds were found on a small lake in Carrolton by Stanley Tate on 16 February, and remained in the area through the end of month, long enough to be seen by many birders (CRC 2008-16 pending).

RED-THROATED LOON - There were several inland reports this season. Walt Chambers found a bird at WPD on 1 December, and Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a bird at Walter F. George Dam on 2 December. The peak count of more than 100 was tallied on Tybee Island by Eric and Michael Beohm on 17 December. Tom Striker found a bird at Lake Blue Ridge on 17 February, which was a very good Mountain Region record. Jim Flynn and Jerry Amerson observed another bird on Lake Juliette on 24 February.

PACIFIC LOON - A single bird was seen off of Tybee Island on 15 December (fide Jeff Sewell). A single bird was seen in the same area by observers on a pelagic trip out of Tybee Island on 14 January (fide Pierre Howard; CRC 2007-11 accepted), and again from the Tybee Island beach by Carol Lambert on 11 February.

PIED-BILLED GREBE - Mark Freeman had a very good high count of 85 birds in Lake Park on 8 December.

RED-NECKED GREBE - Eric Beohm saw a bird at Lake Seminole on 6 December, and again on 27 December. Hugh Garrett located a bird on Lake Spivey on 23 December, but the bird could not be relocated. Earl Horn and Jim Flynn observed a bird at Carter's Lake on 13 January, which remained in the area and was seen by many birders until 20 January. Leslie Curran and Jackie Heyda also reported seeing a bird at Carter's Lake on 8 February.

EARED GREBE - Darlene Moore and Eric Beohm observed at least 20 birds at Lake Juliette on 4 December, and Hugh Garrett found a single bird at SCSP

on 10 December.

MANX SHEARWATER - This species is rarely reported, so 3 birds seen during the 14 January pelagic trip out of Tybee Island were a very good find (fide Pierre Howard; CRC 2007-10 accepted).

NORTHERN GANNET - Sheila Willis reported a very high count of 183 birds seen during the Cumberland Island CBC on 16 December.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - Jim Flynn and Earl Horn had a very good count of more than 100 birds at Bagby State Park in Fort Gaines on 2 December, and 20 birds were seen at Andrew's Island Causeway on 17 December (Eric and Michael Beohm). Three birds were observed at Lake Walter F. George on 27 December by Eric Beohm. That number grew to a flock of 45 birds observed by Bob and Deb Zaremba on 4 February.

ANHINGA - Paul Sykes reported a bird soaring southward over the Oconee River in northern Greene Co. on 9 December, for a rare winter report. Not to be outdone, Carol Lambert reported a bird at ELHLAF on 1 January, another rare winter record for the Piedmont Region.

AMERICAN BITTERN - Carol Lambert had a very good sighting of a bird at ELHLAF on 20 December, which was unusual for that site.

GREAT EGRET - A lingering bird was still at ELHLAF from 29-31 December (Carol Lambert). Even more impressive was a bird still in Gordon Co. on 19 January (Joshua Spence). In the Atlanta area, 2 reports of wintering birds were received. One bird was observed at the Chattahoochee Nature Center in Roswell by Patrick Brisse on 10 February, and the other was reported from northeast Atlanta by Eran Tomer on 16 February.

LITTLE BLUE HERON - An immature bird spent the winter at MBBP near Augusta, which was unusual for that location (fide Lois Stacey).

WHITE IBIS - Walt Chambers saw an immature bird at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 12 December, which was rare for that area in winter.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL - Bob Churi reported a bird on the Tolomato Causeway pond near Darien on 9 December, and Lydia Thompson saw 4 birds on JI on 19 December. The Cumberland Island CBC on 16 December tallied an excellent count of 13 birds, 2 of which were seen on Cumberland Island, and the remaining 11 were found at the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base (fide Sheila Willis).

OSPREY - Stacey Zarpentine reported a rare winter sighting of a bird at the Chattahoochee Nature Center on 18 February.

NORTHERN HARRIER - Bob and Deb Zaremba reported a good count of 38 birds at the Cobb owl fields in Sumter Co. on 6 January.

GOLDEN EAGLE - Sheila Willis relayed a report of an adult bird in the company of Bald Eagles that was frequenting a landfill in Folkston, adjacent to the eastern entrance to Okefenokee Swamp NWR. Staff at the landfill had been regularly seeing the bird throughout the winter. Tom Beal of Maryland informed Sheila that he had seen an adult bird at AWMA on 26 December. Parrie Pinyan and Dan Searcy observed a bird on the Spring Creek section of Lake Seminole on 27 December, and David Brown observed a bird in the Subligna area in Chattooga Co. on 11 February.

MERLIN - A bird spent most of the winter in the Bartow Co. area near Floyd Creek Church Road, and was seen by many observers throughout the period.

PEREGRINE FALCON - Jeff Sewell observed 2 birds in midtown Atlanta on 2 December.

BLACK RAIL - Two birds were reported calling at the AWMA by Eric and Michael Boehm on 17 December.

VIRGINIA RAIL - Four birds were heard calling in a northern Greene Co. marsh by Paul Sykes on 14 January.

SANDHILL CRANE - There was a very large movement of cranes through the state in early December. The peak count was more than 1500 birds over Atlanta on 10 December (Steve Ehly). That movement was dramatically dwarfed during the week of 20 February, when more than 4900 birds were reported from Atlanta by several observers.

PIPING PLOVER - A total of 163 birds were tallied during the Winter Water Bird Count on the coast on 22 January.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER - Nick Van Lanen reported a very good count of 172 birds tallied on LSSI during the Winter Water Bird Count on 22 January.

AMERICAN AVOCET - At least 300 birds were reported from coastal locations near JI and Brunswick between 5-14 January (v.ob.).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS - Nine birds were spotted at the ENWR by Steve Barlow on 19 February.

WHIMBREL - There were very few birds reported this winter. A single bird was reported during the Harris Neck CBC on 15 December (fide Diana Churchill), and 2 birds were observed on the JI Causeway near the visitor's center on 24 February (Steve Barlow).

LONG-BILLED CURLEW - Three birds were observed during the Winter Water Bird Count on LSSI on 22 January (fide Nick Van Lanen).

MARbled GODWIT - A high count of 76 birds was tallied on the Winter Water Bird Count on LSSI on 22 January (fide Nick Van Lanen).

RED KNOT - Sheila Willis reported a very good count of 101 birds seen on Cumberland Island on 17 December.

PURPLE SANDPIPER - Low numbers of this species were reported from the typical wintering locations on Tybee Island. The highest count was the 9 captured and banded by Department of Natural Resources officials on 12 December.

WILSON'S SNIBE - Anne Waters and Lois Stacey had a very good count of 60 birds in a plowed field near Augusta on 24 February.

RED PHALAROPE - More than 100 birds were observed offshore during the 14 January pelagic trip out of Tybee Island (fide Pierre Howard).

POMARINE JAEGER - A bird was observed by Michael and Eric Beohm on St. Simons Island on 17 December, and another bird was seen off of Ossabaw Island's middle beach by Paul Sykes and Jim Ozier on 22 January.

PARASITIC JAEGER - Michael and Eric Beohm saw a bird from the beach at St. Simons Island on 17 December, and a bird was observed on the 14 January pelagic trip from Tybee Island (fide Pierre Howard).

LITTLE GULL - A very rare sighting of a bird seen on the 11 February pelagic trip from Tybee Island was documented with excellent photographs by many observers on the boat (fide Pierre Howard; CRC 2007-13 accepted).

BONAPARTE'S GULL - Carol Lambert had a good sighting of a bird at EHLAF in Clayton Co. on 22 December.

CALIFORNIA GULL - Jim Flynn photographed this rare visitor on St. Catherines Island during the Winter Water Bird Count on 22 January (CRC 2007-12 accepted). There are very few well-documented records for this species in the state, so this sighting is very exciting.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL - Eric and Michael Beohm had a very good count of 52 birds on Tybee Island on 17 December.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL - An unusual sighting of a bird at Lake Oliver in Columbus was reported by Walt Chambers on 15 December.

RAZORBILL - Clay George reported finding 15 birds east of Cumberland Island on 24 January. He was able to document at least one of the birds with an excellent photograph (fide Brad Winn; CRC 2007-14 accepted).

WHITE-WINGED DOVE - Several reports from the coast included a single bird seen on Tybee Island by Steve Wagner on 7 December. Marjorie Clark continued to observe a bird at her JI feeder sporadically during the winter. Away from the coast, John Parrish found a bird in Statesboro on 23 February.

SHORT-EARED OWL - Clive Rainey observed a bird in Sumter Co. on 11 December. Later in the season, many observers reported between one and 3

birds at this location through the end of winter. An unusual sighting of several birds seen during the Harris Neck CBC on 16 December was a surprise for the participants (fide Diana Churchill).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - Rusty Trump reported that at least 8 birds spent the winter around the state and all were banded.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD - Georgia hosted 3, possibly 4, different birds this winter. A wintering male bird returned to Pat White's feeder in Decatur on 5 December (CRC 2007-08 accepted). That bird was replaced by a juvenile bird, which was photographed on 20 December (CRC 2007-07 accepted). After being gone for more than 2 months, either the same bird or a different juvenile male returned to Pat's feeder on 25 February. On the coast, Steve Calver reported a bird visiting his feeder in Savannah on 17 December, which remained until at least 17 February (CRC 2007-09 accepted).

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD - Rusty Trump banded a bird in Mableton, Cobb Co., on 19 December, which remained throughout the season and was seen by many observers (CRC 2007-06 accepted).

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD - Bob and Martha Sargent banded a bird in Chatham Co. on 14 January, and a bird appeared at Rick and Sandy Krause's Gwinnett Co. feeder for the 4th consecutive year on 3 February. In Augusta, Lois Stacey hosted 3 different birds this winter. She reported that a male was banded on 8 December, and a second female bird was banded on 6 February. Rusty Trump reported that a total of at least 33 birds spent the winter in the state, and all were banded.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER - The female bird observed at ENWR remained throughout the winter season (fide Jeff Sewell).

WESTERN KINGBIRD - A bird was seen by John Horton and Lucy James on JI on 2 December (fide Jeff Sewell), and Eric and Michael Beohm found a bird at AWMA on 17 December. Another bird was observed near the Glennville Water Treatment facility on 12 January (fide Jeff Sewell).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE - A bird was recorded on the Marietta CBC on 17 December, now a rare occurrence in that area during winter (fide Bob Zaremba).

PURPLE MARTIN - Phil Hardy reported the first returning bird in Sumter Co. on 27 January.

TREE SWALLOW - Two early returning birds were seen at ELHLAF by Carol Lambert on 9 February.

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW - A highly unusual sighting of a bird seen at Carter's Lake was reported during 1-2 January (Ken Blankenship, Ann Stewart).

TENNESSEE WARBLER - A bird was observed at the Newman Wetland Center in Clayton Co. on 22 December (Carol Lambert).

OVENBIRD - John Galvani observed a bird at the JI Campground on 31 January.

WILSON'S WARBLER - A single bird was found during the Athens CBC on 16 December (fide Eugenia Thompson).

WESTERN TANAGER - A female bird was observed coming to a jelly feeder in Dublin on 17 February at the home of Marshall and Laurie Jackson (CRC 2008-23 pending). The bird continued to frequent the feeders through the end of the month, and was seen by many observers.

SAVANNAH SPARROW - A bird of the "Ipswich" race was observed on the beach near the end of the JI boardwalk on 20 February, and again on 23 February (Jackie Heyda, Leslie Curran, Steve Barlow).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW - Two birds were seen in Evans Co. by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn on 3 February.

LE CONTE'S SPARROW - Karen and Luke Theodorou reported 4 birds seen at the ENWR on 4 February.

NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW - Fort Pulaski near Tybee Island continued to be the most reliable location for seeing this species on the coast. Ken Blankenship and Rachel Cass reported finding 4 birds on 10 February.

SALTMARSH SHARP-TAILED SPARROW - Two birds were found at Fort Pulaski by Ken Blankenship and Rachel Cass on 10 February.

FOX SPARROW - Ken Blankenship had a good tally of 13 birds at Pine Log WMA on 2 January, and Walt Chambers also had a very good count of 14 birds at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 6 January.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW - Paul Sykes found a bird in western Cobb Co. during the Marietta CBC on 17 December.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - Jim Flynn and Earl Horn had a good count of 22 birds in Sumter Co. on 2 December, and Ken Blankenship tallied at least 20 birds along Fite Bend Road in Gordon Co. on 2 January.

PAINTED BUNTING - Bob Churi reported a bird at his feeder in McIntosh Co. on 12 January that remained through the winter, and Gene Wilkinson observed 2 birds in the Glennville area on 25 January.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD - More than 1000 birds were seen at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park by Ed Maioriello on 9 December, and Trey McCuen had a good count of 372 birds in the Macon area on 16 December. From the Columbus area, Walt Chambers reported another good flock of more than 300 birds at Oxbow Meadows on 13 January. Paul Sykes recorded 310 individuals in northern

Greene Co. on 14 January.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD - Joshua Spence saw 12 birds in Bartow Co. on 20 February.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE - A flock of 10-12 birds frequented a Glennville area feeder throughout the winter (fide Gene Wilkinson), and 5 birds visited a feeder in Dublin during the month of February. Eric Beohm reported seeing at least 3 birds at a feeder in Griffin during February.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE - John Parrish found a bird in Bulloch Co. on 27 December, for a very rare report for the state (CRC 2007-01 accepted). Either the same bird or another bird was discovered in pecan orchards near Statesboro by Earl Horn on 19 January, and the bird remained in the area for several weeks (m.ob.). Amazingly, a third wintering bird showed up at a Dublin area feeder on 17 February, and remained through the end of the month (Marshall and Laurie Jackson; CRC 2008-25 pending).

RED CROSSBILL - One of the very few reports this season was a bird seen in Gordon Co. by Joshua Spence on 20 January. Joshua also reported 2 birds at Carter's Lake on 8 February.

PINE SISKIN - There were very few reports of this species anywhere in the state, but several reports of sightings came from the Rome area between 13-18 February (Marion Dobbs).

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