Figure 2. Long-billed Curlew shortly after eating ghost shrimp, which is visible in the bird's crop. Observed 8 January 2010, at North Beach, St. Catherines Island, Georgia.

Ellen Jedrey, *P.O. Box 275, Cummaquid, MA 02637*

Jenifer Hilburn, *182 Camellia Road, Midway, GA 31320*
Email: ecojen@yahoo.com

NIGHTHAWKING IN THE SOUTHEASTERN COASTAL PLAIN ALONG I-16, FALL 2009 — On the evening of 14 September 2009, as I was driving west on I-16 from exit 160, I noticed a small flock of Common Nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*) flying over the highway as they migrated southward towards their wintering grounds. I immediately began counting the number of nighthawks as I continued westward toward Statesboro, while progressing through Chatham, Effingham, Bryan, and Bulloch Counties, from 1925 to 1955 hrs (EDT). The count covered 48.3 km (between mile markers 160 and 130). Clear evening skies allowed easy views of the nighthawks as I drove westward, and it was 26 C, with a few scattered, overhead clouds. I made a similar survey headed eastward along I-16 from mile markers 130 to 155 (40.2 km) on 15 September, between 1925 to 1950 hrs (EDT), with similar temperature and weather conditions.

I counted 107 Common Nighthawks feeding over the interstate on 14 September, and 164 nighthawks on 15 September. The mean size of the flocks was about 10 birds, with the 2 largest flocks being 22 and 27 nighthawks, each.

I have no explanation as to why the birds were concentrated over the interstate. They seemed to be feeding as they drifted back and forth between the tree-lines, although the concentrations of the nighthawks may have been just as high outside of my view beyond the tree-lines. Most of that expanse of I-16 lacks trees between the east-west lanes, but even in areas where there were trees between the 2 lanes, small flocks of nighthawks were still seen. The high count that I encountered coincides with the high counts reported above the Fall Line, in northern Georgia in mid-September (Beaton, G., P.W. Sykes, Jr., and J.W. Parrish, Jr., 2003, Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, Occ. Publ. 14, p. 68). My account here appears to be the largest count reported for the Coastal Plain, although counts of thousands of nighthawks are not unusual in the northern parts of the state during fall migration (Beaton, et al., *loc sit*).

Unfortunately, nighthawk populations are exhibiting dramatic declines throughout their range. In the United States, where most of the breeding population of Common Nighthawks occurs, the long-term BBS data show a significant decline of 1.83% per year (n = 1537 routes, $P < 0.05$) between 1966 and 2007 and, in the short-term, a significant decline of 2.5% per year (n = 1379, $P = 0.05$) between 1980 and 2007 (Sauer, J. R., J. E. Hines, and J. Fallon, 2008, The North American Breeding Bird Survey, Results and Analysis 1966 – 2007, Version 5.15.2008, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, MD. Web site: *htttp://www.mbrpwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/ bbs.html* [Accessed September 2009]). Even more significant declines in nighthawk populations are being observed in Canada (Savignac, C., 2007, COSEWIC Status Report on the Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* prepared for the committee on the status of endangered wildlife in Canada Web site: http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/biodiv/species_recovery/statusreports/sr_ commonnighthawk.pdf [Accessed September 2009]). It is hoped that the above report may spur future investigations of nighthawk migration through the Coastal Plain of Georgia, to see if Common Nighthawks continue to be abundant during subsequent migrations in the fall.

John W. Parrish, Jr., *303 Meadowlark Circle, Statesboro, GA 30461*
Email: jparrish@georgiasouthern.edu