

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - The distribution of this species wintering in the Southeast is not fully understood, and some very interesting data were provided by banders and birders. A total of 131 were confirmed in the Region this winter, while an additional 60 probable Ruby-throateds were reported. The vast majority winter on the coast or in the Coastal Plain, with only 5 reported in Georgia (compared to 77 in North Carolina and 49 in South Carolina). Likely influences on this pattern range from public awareness about winter hummingbirds to possible variability in the quality of micro-climates to differences in the availability of insects and nectar-producing plants.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD - One visited a feeder on Skidaway Island from 16-18 December (Russ Wigh).



Black-chinned Hummingbird, Chatham Co., 16 December, by Russ Wigh

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD - As expected, this species was well represented, with 15 confirmed, several of which were returns. Remarkably, a female captured in Good Hope on 15 December (Karen Theodorou) had been banded in Tallahassee, FL, in December 2008; this individual was later recaptured in the same Tallahassee yard on 29 January 2009 (Fred Bassett)!

WESTERN KINGBIRD - A single bird was reported at AWMA on 18 December (Bill Schmid).

WHITE-EYED VIREO - Rare for the Piedmont in winter, one was detected on the Peachtree City CBC on 20 December (Patrick Brisse et al.).

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW - A rare mid-winter sighting and a particularly early arrival were represented by one seen at MBBP on 3 December (Eric Beohm), and 2 seen at OM on 24 February (Walt Chambers).

CAVE SWALLOW - One bird was spotted mixed in with Tree Swallows at MBBP on 3 December (Eric Beohm). As regular readers of this column know, some lingering birds from the late fall flight (a phenomenon which has only developed in recent years) are known to winter successfully in eastern North America.

BARN SWALLOW - Though a few December loiterers and mid-February early arrivals were typical for Barn Swallows, one at Ft. Pulaski on 18 January (Grant McCreary) was quite unusual.

RED-BREADED NUTHATCH - Illustrating how drastically the counts of irruptive species can fluctuate, the CBC total was down 83% in Georgia (from

115 to only 19), and down 88% in the Region (from 626 to only 76 individuals) after last season's unprecedented invasion. Significantly, the majority of this season's birds were found in the Appalachian Mountains, where they are permanent residents.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER - These feisty little birds were out in force, with 133 representing the second highest state CBC total.

AMERICAN PIPIT - A new state CBC high count of 1703 was recorded.

CEDAR WAXWING - A new state CBC high count of 9742 was recorded.

TENNESSEE WARBLER - Representing only the third CBC record for the state, one was found on SCI on 14 December (fide Emil Urban).

NORTHERN PARULA - One was found in Charlton Co. on 17 January (Jim Flynn).

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER - An impressive total of 48 were recorded on Georgia CBCs.

PALM WARBLER - An impressive total of 842 were recorded state-wide on CBCs.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT - One was at the Botanical Gardens in Athens from 12 December - 1 January (Joel McNeal et al.), and one was found dead in Lowndes Co. on 4 January (Brad Bergstrom).



**Yellow-breasted Chat, Clarke Co., 13 December,
by Bill O'Grady**

SUMMER TANAGER - Historically much rarer than its western counterpart in winter, this species surprised birders by appearing at their feeders: one in Fulton Co. from 31 December - 30 January (Diane Schellack), and another in Fulton Co. on 22 February (fide Grant McCreary).

WESTERN TANAGER - A male frequented a suet feeder in Forsyth Co. from 3 February through the end of the period (Rusty Trump; pending, GCRC 2009-22).

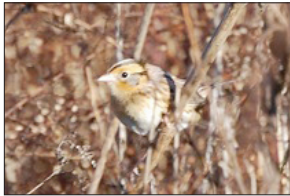
CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - One was spotted at Piedmont NWR on 15 December (Paul Sykes) for the state's fifth CBC record.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW - Tricky to find in winter, one was notable on PCR on 28 December (Joshua Spence).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW - A high count of 10-12 was recorded during a survey and banding effort at the regular wintering site at Paulk's Pasture WMA on 15 January (Tim Keyes); speculation was that as many as 30 may be using

the area. A fascinating discovery was that the species is able to maneuver in flight through fine-gauge mist nets, which normally capture even smaller birds consistently!

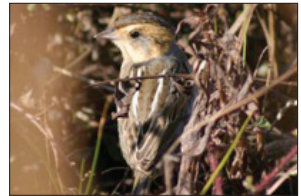
LE CONTE'S SPARROW - By far the most interesting sighting was one on PCR in the Ridge and Valley region on 30 December (Joshua Spence, m. ob.). One was also seen at the annual wintering site at BUENWR on 14 February (Walt Chambers et al.).



Le Conte's Sparrow, Gordon Co., 30 December, by Joshua Spence

NELSON'S SPARROW - Georgia hosted what may be the first 2 well-documented inland winter occurrences of this species in North America, one on PCR on 30 December (Joshua Spence et al.), and one at BUENWR on 2 February (Chris McClure, Austin Mercadante; *photo* NAB Vol. 63, p. 245).

Nelson's Sparrow, Stewart Co., 2 February, by Austin Mercadante



SEASIDE SPARROW - A new state CBC high count of 1027 was established.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW - A species which continues to increase in the Region, several were noted in the state this winter: one in Colquitt Co. on 17 December (Tim Keyes et al.), one banded at Panola Mountain State Park on 7 February (Charlie Muise et al.), and one at feeders in McIntosh Co. on 28 February (Doris Cohrs).

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK - An immature male made a fleeting appearance at feeders on Skidaway Island on 23 December for a very rare winter record (Russ Wigh).

INDIGO BUNTING - One frequented feeders in Glennville, Tattnall Co., from 22 January - 22 February (Gene Wilkinson).

PAINTED BUNTING - Two males visited feeders in Tattnall Co. throughout the season at a residence where the species has wintered for 7 consecutive years (Gene Wilkinson).

DICKCISSEL - Likely a lingering bird from fall, one was photographed at CSU on 5 December (David Hodgson).

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD - One was found and photographed in Loganville from 1-2 February (Thad Weed).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD - Thanks to birders participating in the “Rusty Blackbird Blitz” research project (Smithsonian Institute), there were many reports of this beleaguered species. A total of 1414 established the second highest state CBC total, and 806 on the Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek CBC on 15 December (fide Terry Johnson) made the fourth highest total in any North American CBC circle this winter.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE - There were a total of 8 reports of this locally wintering species in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont, most at feeders, but a few from the field.

PURPLE FINCH - There was no indication of a major irruption, though an incursion into the state did occur on some scale. High counts included 41 on the Carters Lake CBC on 27 December (fide Joshua Spence), 50 at feeders in Washington Co. on 17 January (Lynn Schlup), and 33 at Sandy Creek Nature Center, Clarke Co. on 25 January (Joel McNeal et al.).

RED CROSSBILL - Among a few sightings were counts of 15 on the Chattahoochee National Forest CBC on 14 December (fide Johnny Parks) and 21 in Rabun Co. on 31 January (Ken Blankenship); a flock again appeared sporadically at feeders in White Co. (John McClatchey), where they were first noted in spring 2008.

PINE SISKIN - One of the 2 largest irruptions of this species on record continued throughout the period (the other being the pre-internet winter of 1987-88), with reports from every corner of the Region, including large numbers at feeders all the way to the southern Coastal Plain of Georgia. Flocks of 30-50 birds descending upon and dominating feeding stations were virtually commonplace: a boisterous crowd of 400+ in Washington Co. on 17 January (Lynn Schlup) was exemplary among many reports of 100+ siskins at single sites. Previous high counts were smashed on Christmas counts throughout the Region; record state CBC totals of 2326 in Georgia and a whopping 3038 in North Carolina attest to the magnitude of this invasion.



Pine Siskins (2 of 43), Tattnall Co., January, by Gene Wilkinson

Ken Blankenship, 2400 Barrett Creek Blvd #827,
Marietta, GA 30066
kensblankenship@comcast.net

Giff Beaton (CBC highlights), 320 Willow Glen Drive, Marietta, GA 30068
giffbeaton@mindspring.com