

# Southern Atlantic Coast Region

## RICKY DAVIS

The weather this summer could best be described as "about normal" in June and hot and wet in July. There were many humid and rainy days across the Region in July, and southwestern Georgia was flooded out due to tropical storm *Alberto*. The effects on birdlife were mostly negative, especially ground nesters. Also, early transient shorebirds had to keep flying due to the resulting high water levels. In general, though, the breeding season across the Region went well. And there was no shortage of rarities, especially from the Outer Banks of North Carolina, where such goodies as Red-billed Tropicbird, Brown Booby, Great "White" Heron, Black-tailed Godwit, and Eurasian Collared Dove were found. A Regional first was the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper in South Carolina.

## Petrels to Herons

Pelagic birds once again provided excitement off North Carolina's Outer Banks. Almost expected the past couple of years, one

dark-morph Herald Petrel was off Hatteras July 29 (BP *et al.*). An exceptional count for Audubon's Shearwater was 607 off Hatteras July 30 (BP *et al.*). Storm-petrels were represented by the usual Wilson's on most trips; a peak of 18 Leach's was seen off Hatteras June 5 (AH *et al.*); an exceptional peak of 36 Band-rumpeds was found off Hatteras July 31 (BP *et al.*); and the always exciting White-faced found off Hatteras July 30 (BP *et al.*). Many observers will remember the "Tropicbird Summer" off the Outer Banks. White-tailed Tropicbirds were found throughout the period, with one adult off Hatteras June 5 (AH *et al.*), four adults off Oregon Inlet June 18 (BP *et al.*), and  $\leq$  five adults and one immature off Hatteras July 29-31 (BP *et al.*). Mixed in with these birds was an imm. Red-billed Tropicbird July 24 (BP *et al.*). This is a much sought-after species and it had been over 11 years since the last good Red-billed report in North Carolina. Not to be outdone, boobies also made news. A Masked was off Hatteras July 31 (BP *et al.*) for a noteworthy record. Much more exciting was the presence of a sub-ad. Brown Booby off Oregon Inlet July 9 and probably the same bird off Hatteras July 24 (BP *et al.*). Photos were taken and should provide North Carolina with its first well-documented record. A local boat captain said the bird had been seen offshore since early June. This season's token Magnificent Frigatebird report was of a female flying high over Frisco, NC June 20 (*fide* MLy). And finally, Georgia had a pelagic bird of its own when a Greater Shearwater was grounded in a backyard along L. Lanier,



After the passage of tropical storm *Alberto*, this Greater Shearwater was found inland near Lake Lanier, Georgia, on or about July 30, 1994. Photograph/Jim Cook, Jr.

*Hall* July 28 (*fide* BF, v.o.). This bird, obviously brought in by tropical storm *Alberto*, was very weakened; it was taken to a rehab center on the Georgia coast, where it survived until Aug. 14. This was only the 2nd inland Georgia record.

Least Bitterns are reported each season in the usual small numbers, thus the report of 25 in an area of *McIntosh*, GA in June (MH) was extraordinary! There were few reports concerning the nesting success of long-legged waders. One exception was Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, where a belated report of the first nesting along North Carolina's Roanoke R. occurred in April 1991 (MC, *fide* ML). Lynch also reported that the largest inland heronry in North Carolina in *Bertie*, along the Roanoke R., contained about 800 nests each of Great Blue Heron and Great Egret! Post-breeding wanderers included good numbers of Great Egrets and Little Blue Herons in Georgia (PS) and Reddish Egrets in North Carolina, where  $\leq$  six different individuals were found along the coast. One of these was an ad. white-morph bird near Harker's I., *Carteret* July 2 (SD, SG), one of only a handful of records of this morph for the state. Another rare heron was the Great "White" Blue Heron found at Pea I., NC from July 21+ (m.ob.). There are only a couple of records of this form of Great Blue for North Carolina.

## Waterfowl to Coot

In North Carolina some of the more interesting duck nesting records included 40 Blacks near Sneads Ferry, June 20 (NM), a good number away from the Outer Banks areas; and the presence of at least 4 different broods of Hooded Mergansers in the Roanoke R. basin, *Martin*, in May and June (ML). These merganser broods represented the first breeding records for the Roanoke R. area. Ruddy Ducks once again summered near Sneads Ferry with 3 pairs present (NM). Unlike last year, no young were found this summer.



Mississippi Kites must be holding their own in the Region, as reports of the species are becoming numerous each season. One of the more interesting records was of a nest in downtown Camden, SC (JW, *vide* JC) during June and July. In this Region, most Swallow-tailed Kites nest in pines, so the report of a nest in a deciduous tree in the Savannah R. Swamp, *Jasper*, SC during June (JC) was noteworthy. Even though the Bald Eagle will be downlisted to Threatened status, continued monitoring of our Region's nesting population is highly important. In North Carolina, where there are about 10 nesting pairs, the successful fledging of one young from a nest in the Triad area of the Piedmont was encouraging (HH). Summer accipiter records included from one–three Sharp-shinned in the Winston-Salem, NC area in June (LR, *vide* RS); one Sharpie at Kennesaw Mt., GA July 23 (BD, JS); one–two Cooper's near Tryon, NC in June (ST); one–two Cooper's in *Wake*, NC (ML); and one Cooper's in *Halifax*, NC June 25 (ML). No evidence of breeding activity was noted with any of these sightings. Last year Am. Kestrels were found breeding near Goldsboro, NC and this summer a pair was again present, though no nesting evidence was found (GH). In North Carolina a new breeding season locality for Black Rail was found along the Deep Cr. marshes in mainland *Dare* July 20 (JF). Black Rails were again found in the n. *Greene*, GA marsh in July (PS, BB *et al.*) where they have been present for several years. An Am. Coot at Sweetwater Creek S.P., *Douglas*, GA June 25 (PR) was probably a non-breeding lingerer.

### Plovers to Terns

There were no reports received on the nesting success of colonial waterbirds, so it was assumed that there were no major failures for species such as the Piping Plover. Migrant Upland Sandpipers came through in good numbers, with a best count of 35 at the Orangeburg Sod Farms, Orangeburg, SC July 31 (RC, CE). The shorebird of the season in North Carolina was the **Black-tailed Godwit** found at Pea I., July 23–31 (m.ob.). This individual was rapidly changing into basic plumage but was closely observed by countless observers; it represented only the 2nd documented record for the state and Region. Water levels at inland lakes remained relatively high, thus shorebirds were harder to find than last year. Sites such as the E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, *Clayton*, GA and the Orangeburg Sod Farms, Orangeburg, SC were best for inland shorebirding. Some of the rarer birds were two Short-billed Dowitchers at E.L. Huie July 23 & 28 (PR, JS); one Long-billed Dowitcher at Orangeburg July 28 & 31 (PW, RM, RC, CE); and the region's first **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** at Orangeburg July 24–31

(RC, CE, PW, v.o.). The bird, apparently a fading adult, proved difficult to locate and no photos were taken for documentation, thus the record is awaiting acceptance by the South Carolina Bird Records Committee. The only summer Curlew Sandpiper was one in partial breeding plumage at Pea I., NC July 31 (HL, DC, ML). Always a good find on land, a Red-necked Phalarope was at Bodie I., NC June 2 (NB). The only Wilson's Phalarope reported was one at North Pond, Pea I., NC July 27–31 (m.ob.).

Jaegers made news off North Carolina with two Pomarines off Hatteras June 5, including a very rare "all-dark" morph individual (NB) and  $\leq$ four imm. Long-taileds off Hatteras July 24–31 (BP *et al.*) for a very good summer count. The only S. Polar Skuas reported were singles off the Outer Banks June 4 (NB) & 18 (BP *et al.*). Georgia had 2 perplexing gull records, both involving juv. birds of species not known to breed in the state! A Ring-billed was at a reservoir in *DeKalb* July 30 (BD) and a Great Black-backed was at St. Simon's I., July 31 (MH). Where did these young birds come from? A Caspian Tern at L. Pomona, Midway, GA June 17 (BD, JS) was just as confusing; was it a lost migrant or just hanging around? There are no Georgia breeding records for this species either. The tern colony at C. Hatteras point, NC again hosted Sooty Terns. Birds were observed sitting on nests in June and July, with a peak of four adults June 4 (NB). Black Terns were noted inland at several sites, with the best counts being 14 at the Bethel, NC Lagoons July 23 (RD) and seven in n. *Greene*, GA July 23 (PS).

### Doves to Vireos

It was bound to happen. North Carolina got its first **Eurasian Collared-Dove** when an individual was seen on a wire at Salvo on the Outer Banks July 31 (HL, DC, ML). When will South Carolina's first report of this invading species come? The finding of a nest of a Com. Ground-Dove at Edisto Beach, SC June 25 (JC) was noteworthy in light of this species' current decline in the Region. For the 3rd consecutive year, a thorough search on all of the s. beaches in North Carolina failed to turn up any birds (RD). Summer reports of Black-billed Cuckoo came from Simpsonville, SC during June and July (PW) and two areas in *Dare*, NC July 24 & 25 (JF). These were calling and the *Dare* birds were interestingly found in tall *Gordonia* trees; could this suggest a habitat preference for out-of-range birds? There were four reports of Gray Kingbird in North Carolina, with singles seen at Buxton June 1 (DD), C. Lookout June 4 (RM), Frisco June 5 (NB), and near Beaufort June 26 (*vide* TP). All were considered wandering individuals, with no breeding behav-

ior noted. This season's Scissor-tailed Flycatcher records included individuals at Harker's I., NC July 1 (JM, NM), L. Murray Dam, SC June 26 (SR), and *Chesterfield*, SC July 30 (BS). Horned Larks were at a new breeding season location in Georgia with  $\leq$ six birds at the Atlanta Motor Speedway area in early July (JS, PB). One of the largest breeding congregations of Tree Swallow ever found in the Region was the >30 adults nesting at Mackay I. N.W.R., June 19 (HL). Breeding records away from the mountains are very rare and this population needs to be checked in the future. A very good count of migrant Bank Swallows was the 200–300 in *Laurens*, GA July 23 (TPa). For the 2nd consecutive year, a Veery was found singing at Fernbank Forest, Atlanta, GA June 14 (GS, *vide* TM). One wonders if this bird will ever find a mate at this locality? The presence of an ad. Cedar Waxwing feeding two fledged immatures at E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, *Clayton*, GA July 2 (PB, *vide* TM) caused mild speculation about local breeding. This sighting was a rare summer occurrence for the Atlanta area. The **Black-whiskered Vireo** found at C. Lookout, NC in late May was seen regularly until the last sighting July 2 (SD, SG). This bird acted strongly territorial throughout its stay and some observers thought a second bird was present, but no positive identification of that bird was made.

### Warblers to Grosbeaks

Georgia had several early migrant warblers with a Golden-winged along the Chattahoochee R., *Cobb* July 29 (JS); a Blackburnian at Kennesaw Mt., July 24 (BD); and a Canada at Kennesaw Mt., July 24 (BD). As last summer, Lynch had amazing counts of several warblers on the Milltail Creek B.B.S., *Dare*, NC May 29 when 80 Prairies, 84 Prothonotaries, 27 Worm-eatings, and nine Ovenbirds were tallied. The Cerulean Warbler situation in the Atlanta, GA area is very interesting! This species has not been documented as nesting in the state, so how does one explain the presence of three in Tucker June 28 (JS) and the appearance of good numbers at Kennesaw Mt. starting in early July? Thorough censusing at Kennesaw produced counts of 2–19 in July and a peak one-day total of 19 July 31 (GB). Are all of these birds early migrants? The presence of at least three territorial Black-and-white Warblers in the Green Swamp, *Brunswick*, NC in May and June (RMu, RD) was a good number for the s.e. coastal plain of that state. Worm-eating Warblers were out of range at 2 localities; one in *Montgomery*, NC June 17 (HL), and another in *Glynn*, GA June 12 (MH). One wonders if these were lost migrants or extralimital nesters? One of the few reports about the effects of tropical

storm *Alberto* on nesters concerned the Swainson's Warbler. Hodges mentioned that after the storm waters receded, he could find none in their usual haunts. How many other species were effected?

Inland Painted Bunting records included four males and one female at the Savannah R. Site, SC during the summer (BDu) and a male in the Fitzgerald, GA area June 2 (MO, MHP). Dickcissels were found in all 3 states this year. In North Carolina  $\leq$ two pairs were near Waco, *Gaston* through the summer (ST). In South Carolina one pair took up residence near Gowansville, *Greenville*, (ST) and four immatures were located at a *Laurens* site July 22 (PW), suggesting local origin. Two pairs nested near Athens, GA (JS, BD, PR *et al.*) and three were found near Albany, GA June 10 (PR). A fly-over Dickcissel at Falls L., NC July 22 (RD) was almost certainly a non-breeding wanderer. The discovery of an ad. Lark Sparrow at Beaufort, NC July 21 (HH) indicated an absurdly early migrant. Another Lark Sparrow was found near Pelion, SC June 2 (SP) and possibly could have been a late spring migrant. Defying explanation was the ad. White-throated Sparrow in Dawsonville, GA July 3 (FM, *vide* TM). Bobolinks made news in North Carolina when 3 pairs nested successfully in a field near Calvert, *Transylvania* during June and July (*vide* NS). There are reports of birds in the mountains and foothills in many seasons, but this is only the 2nd or 3rd documented nesting record for the state. The last Evening Grosbeak report consisted of a late bird at a feeder in Morehead City, NC on June 1 (*vide* JF).

### Corrigenda

The winter report of N. Waterthrush from Liberty, *Tattnall*, GA should have read: near Sunbury, *Liberty*, GA.

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# Florida Region

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Extremely dry spring conditions were followed by summer rains throughout the Region, with many observers reporting near-daily thunderstorms throughout June and July. A "normal" rainy season was a welcome change after five years of unusually dry summers. Tropical storm *Alberto* crossed Florida just west of Tallahassee in early July, causing some local flooding there but missing the peninsula entirely. Lingering effects of hurricane *Andrew* were noted by Ted Below, who found shorebird arrival south of Marco Island on schedule but numbers down by two-thirds. Excellent shorebird numbers were reported, though, at two *Pinellas* barrier islands and also in the Lanark Reef-Carrabelle Beach area of *Franklin*.

Abbreviations: A.B.S. (*Archbold Biological Sta.*), A.P.A.F.R. (*Avon Park Air Force Range*), D.W.P. (*Disney Wilderness Preserve*), E.N.P. (*Everglades National Park*), K.S.C. (*Kennedy Space Center*), P.P.M. (*Polk Phosphate Mines*), S.R.A. (*State Recreation Area*).

### Loons to Cormorants

Two Com. Loons made summer appearances, at a Gainesville retention pond June 11–18 (RN) and at Cedar Key July 24 (DH). An Audubon's Shearwater was seen 5 mi w. of Tarpon Springs July 31 (DG). At Passage Key July 13, an imm. Brown Booby allowed close study (AS, BL). Summering Am. White Pelicans included nine in Rookery Bay June 10 (JM) and 16 at P.P.M., July 16 (PF). The annual G.F.C. Brown Pelican nesting survey tallied just over 10,000 pairs statewide, the highest since 1989 (SN). One new colony was discovered at Lanark Reef, *Franklin*, with 75–85 nests July 13 (GS, JG). Four Brown Pelicans strayed inland into *Highlands*, one at L. Istokpoga June 4 (MM) and three over Highway Park June 5 (KT, MG). A count of 1900 Double-crested Cormorants at P.P.M., July 16 was impressive (PF), while 559 at the Wakulla Springs colony was a local high (DB). Four late July cormorant nests were the first at Rookery Bay since the 1930s (TB).

### Hérons to Flamingos

With Everglades water levels nearly as high as last year, wading birds nesting in the Water

Conservation Areas had an indifferent year. Late nesting by Little Blue Herons (1800 pairs), Cattle Egrets (1400), and White Ibis (2000) boosted total numbers to 9500 pairs, but nesting success was relatively poor. This is an improvement over 1993, when just 6500 pairs of waders were found (and no ibis), but far below 1992 when 20,000 pairs nested, including 10,000 pairs of White Ibis (PFR, RSA). Perhaps due to drier spring conditions in 1994, wading birds at Alafia Bank (Hillsborough Bay) declined to about 7000 pairs from last year's 8800 (RP, AS). In contrast, conditions at K.S.C. were wetter than normal throughout spring and summer, but wader numbers dropped there too—by 40% to 1700 nests (ReS).

Reddish Egret broods were found at 2 new *Pinellas* localities, Alligator Lake and Coffeepot Bayou (RP, AS). Five white-morph Reddish Egrets were present at Shell Key, Pass-a-Grille, July 4 (PB, LH, JH). Just one Reddish was reported from the Big Bend area, a dark-morph immature at St Mark's Light July 29 (NW). Despite the dry spring, White Ibis nesting in Tampa Bay declined just 15% from 1993 numbers, with 6740 pairs at 4 sites. Nesting success, however, appeared much lower in casual but repeated observations (RP, AS). At K.S.C., 862 White Ibis nests were found, a drop of 50% (ReS). An ad. Scarlet Ibis was seen again at Lakes Park, *Lee* July 2 (NP). Roseate Spoonbill nests in Tampa Bay totaled 108 (RP, AS), while 10 were found at K.S.C. (ReS). Immature spoonbills made notable inland stops at Sheppard Rd., *Highlands* June 19 and July 5 (MMi, BP, SH), and at P.P.M., July 16 (PF). Wood Storks began nesting at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in mid-March, their latest start ever at this site. Nest counts peaked at 511 April 18 and remained fairly stable until June. Thereafter rising water levels were associated with a high rate of nest failures, and few if any chicks fledged (TB). Statewide, 3588 nests in 26 colonies were tallied, below last year's 4262 (JRo). Fourteen Greater Flamingos, including some immatures, were seen at Snake Bight, E.N.P., June 5 (TBr).

### Ducks to Hawks

Two Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were seen at Myakka River S.P., June 4–5, for a rare record there (CA, GWi), and five were at Clear Spring Mine near Bartow June 5, providing the 2nd record there (CG, PT). At P.P.M., 326 Mottled Ducks July 16 marked a new local high (PF). Making a rare summer appearance at a *Leon* sewage treatment plant June 23 was a ♂ Redhead (GM). Two Surf Scoters were logged: a male at Captiva I., June 20 (VM, WW) and one at Carrabelle Beach July 4 (GS).