

Central Southern Region

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Few contributors commented upon the weather, though the New Orleans area suffered a "five-hundred year" (please!) rain event May 8–9; in places twenty inches fell in a few hours. Otherwise, weather was near normal. There were a scattering of good fall-outs along the coast, but it is becoming increasingly difficult for even the most skeptical among us to believe that the volume of trans-gulf migration across the Gulf of Mexico has not suffered some serious decline.

My apologies to observers in northwest Florida and western Tennessee for my failure to include records from those regions in last year's confused report.

ABBREVIATIONS: A.B.R.C. (*Alabama Bird Records Committee*); F.H. (*Fish Hatchery*); F.P. (*Fort Pickens*); G.I.N.S. (*Gulf Islands National Seashore*); L.B.R.C. (*Louisiana Ornithological Society/Louisiana Bird Records Committee*); L.S.U.M.N.S. (*Louisiana State Univ. Museum of Natural Science*);

M.B.R.C. (*Mississippi Ornithological Soc. Bird Records Committee*); p.a. (*pending acceptance*); T.R.B.C. (*Tennessee Rare Bird Committee*).

Loons to Cormorants

Both reports of Red-throated Loons came from inland locations, where perhaps marginally less expected than on the Florida-Alabama coast: a holdover from winter on Enid L., *Yalobusha*, MS Jan. 24–Mar. 11 (v.o.) and a brief appearance on L. Purdy in *Jeff and Shelby*, AL Apr. 12 (AM, AC). The only Pacific Loon reported was, as expected, from the s.e. coast at Dauphin I., Apr. 25–27, for Alabama's 19th record (J&JP, m.ob.). Some impressive numbers of Horned Grebes were noted during what must have been the peak of their migration: >400 in *St. Tammany*, LA Mar. 12, 240 in *Benton*, AR Mar. 15, and 365 in *Dekalb*, TN Mar. 18 (PW, CS, DPM, BMM; MML; SJS). Eared Grebes were unexpectedly far east Mar. 4 in *Lauderdale* (JRW) and Mar. 26 in *Clay*, TN (SJS). Individuals were also quite late in *Washington* May 28 and *Benton*, AR May 29–30 (MML). Mississippi's 12th Red-necked Grebe remained from the winter on Enid L., Jan. 7–Mar. 8. Louisiana has surprisingly few credible records and none recently, thus a Red-necked Grebe in *St. Tammany* Mar. 11 was long overdue (SWC, DLD *et al.*, p.a. L.B.R.C.). Completing a trio of rarity holdovers from winter on L. Enid was the W. Grebe Jan. 7–Mar. 8. An *Aechmophorus* sp. in *Benton*, AR Mar. 15–27 (MML, H&MP) showed a perplexing com-

bination of characters. A Wilson's Storm-Petrel 37 mi s.s.w. of Grand Isle, LA Apr. 8 was early, though the timing of this petrel's arrival in the n. Gulf is poorly known (CGB).

SA Our knowledge of pelagic birds of the n. Gulf of Mexico is primitive, owing largely to 2 factors—the distance from port to the edge of the continental shelf, and the relatively low density of birders available to finance pelagic trips. What we do know is based largely upon storm waifs, and upon the observations of birders and ornithologists who have been fortunate enough to find space on deep sea fishing trips or who have taken jobs in the offshore petroleum industry, or occasional observations made from scientific transects. All these largely incidental sightings have painted a picture that is pretty bleak—a few thinly distributed individuals of only a few species. On May 27 an L.O.S. sponsored trip went farther south and into deeper water than any previous pelagic birding trip, obtaining surprisingly good, if not to say inspiring, results. Trip advisor Dwight Peake, based upon observations he had made as a volunteer bird observer on marine mammal transects, concluded that the most exciting potential lay in very deep water, so the boat plunged south, all but ignoring the blue water rip and the lines of sargassum that occupied previous trips, and reached about 60 mi s.s.e. of the jetties at the South Pass of the Mississippi R., with a depth of over 5000 feet. The boat remained in water well over 3000 feet deep for almost 4 hours, travelling NW up the Mississippi Canyon, returning to port at Venice, LA *via* Tiger Pass. An incredible 45 storm-petrels of 3 species, with perhaps a dozen Wilson's identified, 2 dozen Band-rumped Storm-petrels and a single Leach's Storm-petrel (m.ob., p.a. L.B.R.C.), shattered Louisiana's previous best one-day results. There is one specimen of Leach's Storm-petrel for Louisiana, and Band-rumped has not yet been added to the list, though other records await review. The unprecedented number and variety of storm-petrels seen will doubtless inspire a new level of energy for birding offshore Louisiana.

Also seen May 27 were two Masked Boobies, and adult and immature, about 40 mi out (m.ob.). The report of an imm. Red-footed Booby at the mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou May 4 (BR, p.a. LBRC) defies explanation, and provides only the 2nd Louisiana



(and Regional?) record. Some 7000 Double-crested Cormorants aggregating at an evening roost on Reelfoot L., TN Apr. 13 must have been a spectacle (JRW, JG).

Herons to Raptors

A lone Tricolored Heron was detected wandering around s.w. Arkansas Apr. 2–May 29 (CMi, D&DoH), where unusual at any season. White Ibis may be gaining a foothold as breeders in s.w. Arkansas (*fide* CMi). Two *Plegadis* sp. inland at Noxubee N.W.R., MS May 5 was unprecedented for spring (DA), while another was in *Lauderdale*, AL May 21 (JTG). White-faced Ibis wandered N and E of s. Louisiana: one in Mobile, AL Apr. 21–25 (SSH, DG, m.ob.); one in Memphis, TN Apr. 22–23 (MLG, m.ob.); and at the Centerton F.H., AR May 6 (JSh, MMI). Unusual spring sightings of Wood Storks were obtained with three May 25 in *Cameron*, LA (M&GP) and one at Millwood L., AR May 29 (D&DoH, CMi).

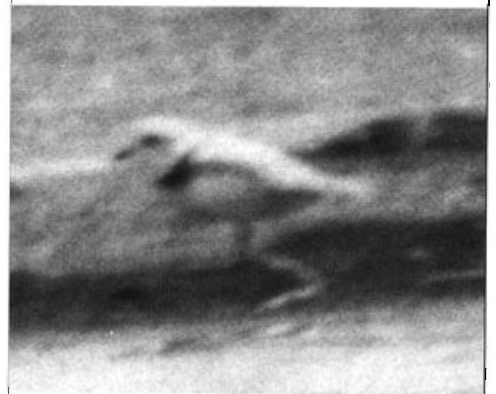
Two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks at Ft. Pickens G.I.N.S., FL Mar. 21 (RAD) were well east (or northwest, though the species was known to occur sporadically in the panhandle before it colonized the peninsula); three were well north in *Chicot*, AR Apr. 18 (DRS). A Ross' Goose in *Colbert*, AL Mar. 13 provided the state's 13th report (DJS); two birds were detected there the following day (JTG, SWMc). One immature was present in *Benton*, AR Mar. 5–May 13, providing a very late date (MMI, DC). A Eurasian Green-winged Teal at Black Bayou W.M.A., TN Apr. 15 was an outstanding Regional find (WGC, p.a. T.R.B.C.). A Cinnamon Teal in *Gibson* Mar. 29–30 provided Tennessee's fifth record (MAG, p.a.). A Eurasian Wigeon at White Lakes W.M.A., Mar. 8 provided Tennessee's 10th record (WGC, p.a.). Three Oldsquaw were reported, all from coastal locations in April. The only scoter reports were of Surf Scoters from Arkansas, Tennessee, and Louisiana, all but one in May. The only reported Com. Mergansers were a female at Dauphin I., Mar. 16 (HH), a possible winter holdover, and >three in *Macon* Apr. 15–16 (FB, LFG), the latest record for Alabama.

A pair of White-tailed Kites successfully bred in *Cameron* this spring (BR, m.ob.); this was only the 2nd nest actually found in Louisiana. Maximum counts of migrating Mississippi Kites were 115 in *Baldwin*, AL (a state all-time high) Apr. 25 (MLB, m.ob.) and 77 in *Shelby*, TN May 20 (JRW). As usual, a scattering of Swainson's Hawks were reported from s.w. Louisiana. The Harris' Hawk that wintered near the Vincent Refuge in *Vermillion*, LA was last reported Mar. 19 (NLN, JPS). Peregrine Falcons were reported well into May across the Region.

Rails to Gulls

A Black Rail was serendipitously sighted at Dauphin I., AL Apr. 19 (J&JP). Sandhill Cranes are not normally encountered as spring migrants in the Region, except in mid-Tennessee, where northbound migrants from Florida included >700 between Mar. 4–Apr. 21 (SJS, BHS, MAS). A flock of 24 over Arkadelphia Mar. 12 (DoH) was far more unexpected, being perhaps the largest flock seen in Arkansas in this century, and more likely to have originated from one of the isolated flocks that winter in Louisiana. Shorebirds staged a generally good migration through the interior, especially Arkansas (K&LN, MMI), where lack of habitat makes detection difficult. Highlights included: a Piping Plover at Ensley Bottoms, TN May 7 (ph. JRW, GB) along with Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, and 20 other species of shorebirds; and three Red Knots in *White*, AR May 29 (K&LN), for perhaps Arkansas' 2nd spring record. Unusual coastal records of birds e. of their normal migration routes included 4 Am. Avocets in *St. Bernard*, s.e. LA Mar. 12 (GO); 17 Upland Sandpipers at Fort Walton Beach, FL Apr. 4 (RAD); a Whimbrel in *Jackson*, MS Apr. 12–22 (CD, GK, SK, JRW, DMc, MAG, m.ob.); a Long-billed Curlew at Dauphin I., Apr. 22 (DMW, GE); and a Hudsonian Godwit at Mobile, AL Apr. 20–21 (SWMc, m.ob.).

Inland Laughing Gulls included eight at Wilson Dam, AL May 13–19 (JTG, m.ob.) and two at *Oktibehha*, MS May 24 (TLS). Franklin's Gulls away from their usual haunts on *Cameron's* beaches included two at Wilson Dam, AL May 6 (SWMc, m.ob.) and a late bird in *Lafourche*, LA May 21 (NLN). The ad. Little Gull at Sardis L., MS remained until Mar. 4 (GK). A Little Gull at the Pascagoula R. Marsh May 21 was the first on the Mississippi Gulf Coast (CD, DMc, ph. DeMc, CB). An estimated 35,000–45,000 Bonaparte's Gulls seen on a 9 mi stretch of Santa Rosa I., FL Mar. 1 (RAD) represented a phenomenon completely outside the experience of most Gulf Coast observers. Lesser Black-backed Gulls did not repeat their



Piping Plover at Ensley Bottoms, Tennessee, May 7, 1995. Photograph/J. R. Wilson.

record 1994 spring showing on *Cameron*, LA beaches, with only about three individuals present Apr. 29–May 6 (m.ob). More unusual were three first-year birds at a New Orleans landfill Mar. 9 (SWC), and a first-year Lesser Black-backed Gull at Dauphin I., Apr. 8, representing Alabama's 7th record, latest in spring, and first in that plumage (GDJ, DGJ, p.a. A.B.R.C.). An ad. Glaucous Gull at Fort Morgan, AL Apr. 27 (RAD) was very rare, and in a plumage almost never seen at this latitude. Great Black-backed Gulls included: a first-year in *Henry*, TN Mar. 1 (TJW); another in *Lafourche*, LA Mar. 4 (PW, CS, CK) and a 3rd-year at New Orleans Mar. 26 (PW).

Terns to Hummingbirds

A survey of the rooftop colony in Metairie, LA revealed 167 ad. Gull-billed Terns May 24, making this, ironically, perhaps the largest breeding colony in the Region (RDP). An Arctic Tern in *Cameron* May 30 (PC, GaB) was Louisiana's fifth. Two Bridled Terns seen 37 mi s.s.w. of Grand Isle, LA Apr. 8 (CGB) help stretch our knowledge of the temporal distribution of this species in the n. Gulf; 59 counted on the May 27 L.O.S. pelagic trip out of Venice, LA help dispel any lingering ideas about the species rarity in the n. Gulf.

Eurasian Collared-Doves are consolidating their presence Regionally, as evidenced



Immature Little Gull at Pascagoula River Marsh, Mississippi, May 21, 1995. First record for the Mississippi coast. Photograph/Dena McKee.

by continuing sightings on the Alabama coast, and inland at Montgomery and Decatur, where a juvenile was noted (*vide* GDJ). Birds continue to be seen at known locations in Louisiana as well, and the state's first nest was found in *St. Charles* Apr. 17 (*vide* SWC). Southwestern doves are also continuing their invasion. A White-winged Dove was still present in New Iberia May 21, indicating the possibility of a new breeding locale for Louisiana (MJM). A group of six, *including one sitting on a nest*, was found in Pascagoula, MS Apr. 16 (JRW, MAG). Inca Doves were also on the move: one was noted Mar. 18 in Arkadelphia (DoH), and one-four were in *Little River*, AR Mar. 31–May 31, with that state's first nest being found May 20 (CMi). A lone bird at New Orleans Mar. 26 (GO) was very far east, and was the first recorded there. The Burrowing Owl discovered in *Washington*, MS Feb. 7 was last seen Mar. 15 (EG, m.ob.). A Short-eared Owl was present in *Cameron*, LA Mar. 2–10 (*vide* JL). It was upstaged by a Northern Saw-whet Owl captured there in a mist net Mar. 25 (SC, p.a.); there are fewer than 5 records for Louisiana, and this is the latest. The lone report of a Lesser Nighthawk was from *Cameron*, LA Apr. 23 (RBr, CL).

The situation with w. hummingbirds in the Region continues to reveal new and unexpected twists. No sooner is a species added to the Regional list, then it starts to become a (seemingly) regular visitor. A ♀ **Blue-throated Hummingbird** graced a Slidell, LA yard Mar. 7–Apr. 25 (P. Siegert, m.ob.); this provided the 3rd record, all since the fall of 1992 (all p.a.). We've also seen this phenomenon with Calliope Hummingbird, first recorded Regionally in 1982: A bird wintering in Slidell, LA remained until Mar. 31 (there are now perhaps 20 state records, *vide* NLN), and a Calliope Hummingbird present in Columbus, MS since Oct. 19 was last reported Mar. 29 (*vide* TLS). This provided Mississippi's 7th or 8th record, and first inland. Also noteworthy was a Broad-tailed Hummingbird which remained from the winter in Slidell, LA until May 8, the latest by about a month. Another Broad-tailed, completing its molt into adult plumage, stopped in Lafayette, LA Apr. 23–25 (v.t. PC).

Flycatchers to Pipits

A singing Alder Flycatcher in *Washington* May 4 was the earliest for Arkansas (MMI). A singing Willow Flycatcher at Muscle Shoals May 6 (SWMc) was the 2nd for the Tennessee Valley of Alabama. A Vermillion Flycatcher was a winter holdover in *Cameron* Mar. 2–4 (CF, *vide* JL). Two pale *Myiarchus* sp. in *Plaquemines*, LA Mar. 26 (GO) may have been Ash-throated/Brown-crested that had wintered locally, though Great-

crested normally arrives by that date. An Ash-throated Flycatcher in *Lafayette*, LA Mar. 2–10 (DP, SWC) provided the only report of a species not often detected in spring. Three Gray Kingbirds overshot westward into s.e. Louisiana: A bird 12 mi offshore from the Mississippi R. delta Apr. 30–May 1 (CD); another was not far away at the mouth of Baptiste Collette May 4 (BR), and one was at Grand Isle May 3 (RDP). Out-of-range Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were one in *Rutherford*, Apr. 29 (SD) and another in *Shelby*, TN May 13 (GP); two birds May 4 and one May 16 at Gulf Breeze, FL (RAD); and one in *Tunica*, MS May 24 (CB, VBR).

Tree Swallows arrived early in Arkansas, n. Mississippi, and Tennessee (v.o.), and joined a flock of 5 species and 75,000 individuals (90% Tree Swallow) May 2 at Ensley Bottoms (JRW). A Cave Swallow at Grand Terre I., Apr. 11 (BR) is the first report of a migrant for Louisiana; previous records have been associated with Cliff Swallow breeding colonies. A voiciferous Fish Crow heard in *Colbert* and *Lawrence* Apr. 2 (GDJ, DGJ) was the first heard in Alabama's Tennessee Valley. Three Bewick's Wrens were found Mar. 18–23 in *Washington*, AR (MMI). Elsewhere, there were only 3 reports; a late winter bird in New Iberia, LA Mar. 14 (MJM), a very late migrant in *Cameron*, LA May 9 (MDa), and a nesting pair in *Rutherford*, TN (TJW). Late Hermit Thrushes were seen in *Oktibeha*, MS and *Iberville*, LA Apr. 18 (TLS; DLD), but a bird in Fayetteville, AR May 2 (MMI) was exceptional; specimen evidence indicates that Hermit Thrushes passing through after the departure of the winter population may be vagrants from the west. A Sprague's Pipit, seldom mentioned in this report, was Louisiana's latest Apr. 30 in *Cameron* (SWC, DLD); the small population that winters in s. Louisiana is rarely detected past March.

Vireos to Buntings

A Bell's Vireo, rare at any season, was first detected in February in *Lafayette*, LA and still present Mar. 10 (SWC, DLD). Seven Solitary Vireos in *Putnam*, TN Mar. 19 should help revise estimates of normal arrival dates in lowland Tennessee areas (SJS, BHS). A Yellow-green Vireo, the 2nd or 3rd for Louisiana (3rd or 4th Regionally), was seen in *Cameron* May 12 (Rba, p.a.), and another was reported a few miles west May 14–15 (MDa, p.a.). Eight Black-whiskered Vireos at Dauphin I., AL Apr. 21–23 (*vide* GDJ) were a good showing there, where regular, but none was reported anywhere farther west. A Tennessee Warbler in Birmingham, AL Mar. 28 (GDJ) was well ahead of the pack. Nashville Warblers, increasingly rare eastward in Spring, were in Birmingham

Apr. 26 and at Wheeler N.W.R., AL May 3 (GDJ). An "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler at Lafayette, LA Apr. 6 (PC) presumably wintered.

Four Connecticut Warblers were detected May 11–15 in *Davidson* and *Mansion*, TN (TJW), a good showing. The species was removed from the Louisiana list a few years ago because no specimen or compelling documentation had been obtained for any of the half-dozen previous records. It was fully anticipated that it would soon return to the list, but a period of several years ensued with no records. However, on Apr. 28, 1993, in-hand photographs were obtained of a female captured in *Cameron*, and a male was observed at the same location May 4, 1993 (*vide* JL). There were 2 additional records there this spring. A Connecticut Warbler was captured Apr. 28 in the same *Cameron* chenier as in 1993 (*vide* JL). Another was detected, and cooperated briefly, a few miles w. at Peveto Beach May 1 (Rba, GaB). All are pending acceptance. Two Mourning Warblers were seen e. of their range May 3 at Wheeler N.W.R., AL (GDJ, DGJ) and May 16–18 in *Rutherford*, TN (TJW). The Painted Redstart discovered during the Sabine CBC Dec. 17 in *Cameron*, LA was last reported Mar. 5 (VN, RS). An average number of W. Tanagers was reported from *Cameron*, LA where a few are detected each spring. More unusual were individuals at Grand Terre Apr. 11 (BR) and in Lafayette Apr. 16–19 (GOB). Black-headed Grosbeaks included a winter holdover at a Lafayette, LA feeder until Mar. 8 (*vide* PC) and a female in Petit Jean S.P., AR May 6 (FR). An Indigo Bunting Mar. 26 in Montgomery (LFG) was the earliest inland for Alabama, and may have wintered on the coast.

Sparrows to Crossbills

A Vesper Sparrow still lingering on the *Cameron*, LA coast Apr. 28 was exceptionally late (SWC, DLD). A Lark Sparrow in *Lauderdale* May 6 (SWMc) was a rarity for the Tennessee Valley of Alabama. Sporadic breeders were located in *Lawrence*, AL (SWMc, NGP); *Wilson*, TN (TJW, DMC); and *Loundes*, MS (TLS). Grasshopper Sparrows, another rare breeder in the n. part of the region, were well reported from Arkansas, Tennessee, and n. Mississippi. The secretive Henslow's Sparrow winters predominantly in grassy open pine flats, a habitat disappearing rapidly in the Region (along with resident Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows); it is rarely detected in other habitats, so one in a weedy field far from pine in *Lafayette*, LA Mar. 10 was unexpected (SWC, DLD). A related species that winters commonly in coastal marshes, but eludes detection on its northward migration, is Sharp-tailed Sparrow; the

2nd for Alabama's Tennessee Valley was seen May 6 in *Lauderdale* (SWMc). Two Fox Sparrows in *Rutherford*, TN Apr. 29 were very late (R&WH). Four nests of Song Sparrows were reported in w. Tennessee: 3 at Ensley Bottoms May 14 (JRW) and one at Reelfoot L., May 28 (JJ, JRW, GWC). A Lincoln's Sparrow at Dauphin I., AL Apr. 18 (J&JP) was uncommonly far east; more unusual inland birds were in *Lauderdale*, AL May 6 (SWMc) and in *Oktibehba*, MS May 10 (TLS). A Harris' Sparrow in *Cameron*, LA Mar. 9 was a late rarity on the coast (*vide* JL). The **Chestnut-collared Longspur** on the *Cameron* beach Mar. 19–22 (BW, *vide* RBr, JPK) would have been unprecedented, except that one was found there during a recent July!

A **Western Meadowlark** in *Lauderdale* Apr. 10+ (JTG, m.ob.) was the first re-verifiable record for Alabama in 30 years. More expected was the individual that lingered from the winter at Ensley Bottoms, TN until Apr. 9 (JRW). Yellow-headed Blackbirds were seen in above-average numbers in various parts of the Region. While a single Great-tailed Grackle in *Rapides* in central Louisiana Apr. 26 (RBr) was a rare find, it took a flock of 400–500 birds way up in Fayetteville, AR to elicit comment (MMI, DC); the species seems to heading N far more rapidly than it is moving east. Speaking of expanding icterid populations, Bronzed Cowbirds continued to expand from their New Orleans stronghold in s.e. Louisiana. They have now reached Grand Isle, 50 mi s. of the city, in force, and individuals were reported from lower *Plaquemines* in the extreme southeast May 26 (JPK, DP) and *Cameron* in the extreme southwest Apr. 22 (DLD, SWC). Shiny Cowbirds in Alabama included: one male Apr. 12 at Ft. Morgan (RAD, CD); two male Apr. 21 at Dauphin I. (SWMc). At least two ♂ Shiny Cowbirds joined the cowbird frenzy on Grand Isle Apr. 14–May 8 (PW, CS, m.ob., AWK); how long can Orchard Oriole hold out in coastal Louisiana under such an assault? Red Crossbills staged a mini-flight in Arkansas: six in *Perry* Mar. 1 (LA), one in *Dallas* Mar. 26 (H&MP), and three elsewhere in the county Apr. 25 (HP). The last date might hint at breeding. The only Pine Siskins reported, after another lackluster winter, were late: one in *Crittendon*, AR May 6; two in *Rapides*, LA May 7 (RBr), and one exceptional bird May 19 in *Claiborne*, LA (ECW).

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Prairie Provinces Region

RUDOLF F. KOES AND PETER TAYLOR

Mild conditions during March brought a wave of early migrants, but thereafter persistent cool weather and prevailing northerly winds stalled migration. Arrivals were one to three weeks later than average Regionwide, until warm weather in the last few days of May brought most of the neotropical migrants back. As well as being late, migration was generally unspectacular, with few significant waves of shorebirds or passerines. Water levels were very high in eastern Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba, and moderately high elsewhere. There was an interesting assortment of vagrants from diverse origins.

Loons to Ducks

At least 100 Com. Loons gathered at Sylvan L., AB May 10 (TT), and 890 Red-necked Grebes at Natalie L., Apr. 28 (PT) provided a Manitoba record count. Two Eared Grebes were early at Frank L., AB Apr. 7 (WS), as were seven Am. White Pelicans at Taber L., AB Apr. 1 (LIB). Only six Great Egrets were reported, but they included rare Alberta

