

central southern region



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Paradoxically, the “breeding season” report to this journal is the most heterogeneous—since the records span a two-month period which includes part of the breeding season and parts of both spring and fall migrations. Weather during this period is likely to have its effects mostly on nesting success, however, and usually in ways that are not immediately apparent (if at all) to the non-specialist. Even so, we duly report that the season was dry, with June temperatures below or near normal and those in July in the high 90s over much of the Region. There was no tropical weather to mitigate the effects of low rainfall or to raise the spirits of observers thinking about storm waifs, but the lack of severe storms enhanced the chances of successful nesting of colonial birds on low-lying barrier islands, especially along the Louisiana coast.

Abbreviations: LSUMNS (*Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science*).

BREEDING RECORDS OR RECORDS SUGGESTIVE OF BREEDING

GREBES

THROUGH DIURNAL RAPTORS

Only an occasional breeder in Alabama, an ad. Pied-billed Grebe with three young in *Limestone* 30 Jul (DRC, RC) was noteworthy. Four records of single Anhingas from n. Mississippi (*Tallahatchie*, *Leflore*, *Noxubee*, and *Sunflower*) spanned the period 9 Jun–31 Jul (FB, MS, SJ, MM); a basic-plumaged male was in *Lonoke*, AR, 12 Jun (LY). Reports of Least Bittern, about which there

is some concern, were highlighted by six adults and one nest in *Sunflower*, MS, 18 Jun (FB). An ad. Tricolored Heron was seen in *Lake*, TN, 5 Jun (JRW) in an area where the species has previously nested. An estimated 2500 Little Blue Herons (about 50% white-plumaged immatures) were seen in a rice field in *St. Landry*, LA, 5 Jul (BL). Several pairs of Reddish Egrets nested along with six other ciconiiform species at Belle Pass, mouth of Bayou Lafourche, LA (RDP, DPM et al.); about 25 pairs of Roseate Spoonbills in this heronry established the first nesting in Louisiana e. of the Isle Dernieres–Timbalier barrier islands. Single post-breeding spoonbills reached n. Mississippi by the end of July in *Tallahatchie* and *Quitman* (FB, WMD, GK, SK), 92 were seen in *Evangeline*, LA, 18 Jul (CL), and one was seen in the Pascagoula R. marsh, MS, 28–30 Jul (KK et al.). At least 100 White Ibis nests with adults on eggs were counted at Tallahatchie N.W.R. on 9–10 Jun (FB), probably the northernmost nesting record for Mississippi.

Forty Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks 1 Jun on Fabacher Rd. in *Calcasieu* (SWC, DLD)—with three still present 13 Jun (MS, RG, JS)—represented a good number away from the Lacassine pool area. Records from *St. Charles*, LA—five on 17 Jun, two on 19 Jun (PY), and four on 7 Jul (PW)—though surprising, came on the heels of several recent reports from near the Mississippi R. in *Jefferson* and *St. Charles*. Three reports from Arkansas—19 in *Lafayette* 3 Jun (DA, RD), and four 12 Jun (CM, MD) and two 23 Jun, both in *Miller* (DA)—are assumed to be of non- or post-breeders.

Two ad. Ospreys with three chicks close to fledging in *Fulton*, MS, 24 Jun (KK) possibly represented the first nesting record for the Tennessee–Tombigbee waterway; two adults successfully fledged a nestling in *Lafayette*, MS, during the last week of July (WMD). The Swallow-tailed Kite surveys by Jennifer Coulson et al. continue to yield important results, typified this year by over 50 seen in the Splice I. area of the Atchafalaya basin in *St. Martin*, LA, 5 Jun (JC, TC, DR, ST, RH) and 45 counted in an aerial survey of pre-migration roosts in the basin 26 Jul (JC, DR, ST, PS). Topping these impressive numbers were 153 found in an aerial survey of a portion of the Pearl R. basin

23 Jul (JC, TC, SH, PS) and a record count of 246 from a flight over the same area a week later (JC, TC, DR, PS). These surveys covered parts of *St. Tammany* and *Washington*, LA, as well as *Pearl River* and *Hancock*, MS. Elsewhere, 41 Swallow-taileds were counted in *Jackson*, MS, 3 Jun (JB, MW), and up to 133 at a time were noted on 12 boat surveys of the Pascagoula R. in *George* and *Jackson*, MS, 31 Mar–20 Aug (JB, MW). As usual, the only White-tailed Kite reports came from Holly Beach, *Cameron*, LA, where a nest was found with two adults and three young ready to fledge on 1 Jun (SWC, DLD). Reports of Mississippi Kites from *Lowndes*, MS, where they had been present since late April, peaked at a record 10+ on 2 Jul (JP, DP); another was in *Oktibbeha* 29 Jun (TS); and one was seen in *Chicot*, AR, 30 Jun (DS) carrying an ad. male Baltimore Oriole. Suggesting nesting for Bald Eagle were two adults and two fledglings in *Ittawamba*, MS, 1–28 Jun (KK) and two adults and three fledglings in *Monroe*, AR, 7 Jun (RS). A Cooper’s Hawk at Venice, LA, 11 Jun (SWC, DLD) provided further evidence of breeding in s.e. Louisiana, and there were two records from w. Tennessee (*fide* MGW) and one from *Washington*, AR (MMI). A pair of adults and a juv. Crested Caracara—a species which rarely finds its way into these reports—were seen in *Calcasieu*, LA, 1 Jun (DLD, SWC).

COOTS THROUGH OWLS

An Am. Coot in *Oktibbeha*, MS, from early May to the end of the period (DP, JP, TS) represented a 4th area record, while up to six summering in the rice fields of s. Louisiana (JK, CF, KF et al.) raised at least the possibility of nesting; another was in *St. Charles*, LA, 12 Jul (PW). A pair of Am. Oystercatchers, present since late April and apparently nesting at the Sabine R. in *Cameron*, LA, were again noted 1 Jun (SWC, DLD) and 5 Jun (CL, RB). Other Louisiana records came from the Chandeleurs and near the mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou, *Plaquemines*. There were several summer records of Black-necked Stilts in n. Mississippi, where breeding is spotty, including up to 17 with three young in *Tallahatchie* 25 Jul (FB), 15 in *Sunflower* 22 Jul (FB), and six in *Tallahatchie* (GK, SK) and 50 in *Adams*

SA The Kelp/Herring/hybrid gull saga continued unabated, with one–three “pure” Kelp Gulls seen on Curlew I., LA, along with as many as 30 Kelp x Herring hybrids there and on Gosier I. (SWC, DLD; LO’M). On 11 Jun, Cardiff and Dittman found that a presumed pure Kelp paired with a hybrid had at least one chick, and there were 14 pairs of mostly Herring-like hybrids. Two hybrids were nesting on Gosier I. There was less evidence of Herring Gull nesting than in previous years. Five or six first-year Kelp x Herring hybrids were seen on a sand spit near the mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou 17 Jun (DPM, RDP, PY) along with an ad. hybrid and what appeared to be a pure 3rd-year Kelp; the latter birds associated with a huge Laughing Gull colony (10,000 individuals) on an adjacent spoil island.

(MW, CY) 26 Jul. Seven hundred stilts were counted in a rice field near Eunice, LA, 5 Jul (BL).

The small amount of information received concerning the tern colonies on the Chandeleur Is., which were devastated by *Georges* last September, was inconclusive as to the hurricane’s lasting effect. Curlew I., where most of the terns traditionally nested, was greatly reduced in area and height above high tide, and the pieces of Grand Gosier I., home of a large Brown Pelican colony before *Georges*, were reduced to a sand spit and shoals. Only a few hundred Royal and Sandwich terns were noted, suggesting that the main colonies had moved elsewhere, as they did after hurricane *Camile* in 1969; however, the tern colonies had returned to Curlew I. by 1974, 4 years after *Camile* had washed the island away. A Com. Tern nest found with a newly hatched chick and 2 eggs on Freemason I., *St. Bernard*, LA, 11 Jun (DLD) represented the 3rd nesting for the state. Up to 19 Com. Terns were noted along the Mississippi coast between 7 & 30 Jul (KK). Two Least Terns, endangered and uncommon in Arkansas, were in *Miller* 23 Jun (DA). Visits to Curlew I., LA, turned up only a few Sooty Terns, remnants of the small colony which has been there since at least the 1930s. Whether they moved northward onto the main chain of islands is unknown. One Sooty Tern was seen 17 Jun on a spoil island at the mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou, *Plaquemines* (DPM). Astonishingly, another

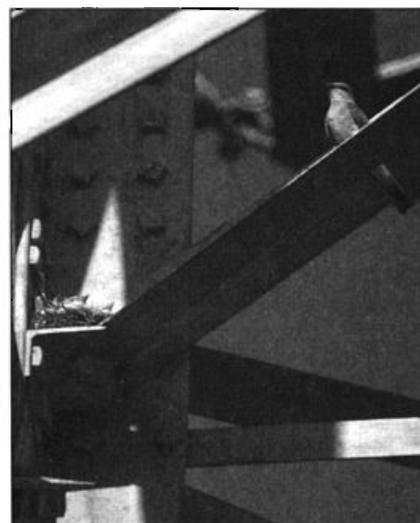
was found in a weakened condition at Ft. Polk, LA, 26 Jun (*fide* JJ, *LSUMNS); it had been banded on the Dry Tortugas in about 1975.

Single White-winged Doves, which have nested locally and sporadically in Louisiana, were seen in *Jefferson Davis* 1 Jun and in *Plaquemines* 11 Jun (DLD, SWC). Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to rapidly expand their range, documented this summer by Mississippi records from coastal *Harrison* to *Washington* and *Noxubee*, including a nest with eggs in *Hinds*; 13, including immatures, were in Little Rock, AR, 10 Jul (WMS, LY) for a first county record. A survey of the Burrowing Owl colony at Eglin AFB, FL, in existence since 1983, yielded 15 individuals, including two breeding pairs and six juveniles (PB, LF).

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

A territorial Willow Flycatcher was noted 10 Jul in *Benton*, AR, where they have previously nested, and a pair of E. Phoebes at Sardis Waterfowl Refuge 18 Jun (WMD) was noteworthy whether it suggested nesting or not. Western Kingbirds bred successfully in the Memphis area, with two nests producing six fledged young (JRW, m.ob., ph.) for the 2nd confirmed nesting in Tennessee. A pair nested successfully in *Little River*, AR, in July, fledging four young (CM, DA), but a nest in *Miller* 12 Jun–3 Jul was unsuccessful (CM, MD, DA, SL, ELL). A trio of Gray Kingbirds nested in *Harrison*, MS, from May through late August; and raised two young (SP, LP, MWe, KK, m.ob.), establishing the 3rd breeding record for the state and the 2nd on the mainland; all five birds were banded 10–21 Jul (KK). Of six reports of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers from Alabama, one represented actual nesting, the others probable: 2 pairs in *Madison* since May 13, with a bird on a nest as late as 13 Jun (KW, DRC, RC); a single bird 13 May at Decatur (SWM et al.), where the species has nested since 1993; records from *Blont* (DB) and *Lee* (BB) 13 Jun; and sightings in Huntsville 29 Jun (JM) and in *Madison* 7 Jul (KW, HG). Two immatures seen 4 Jul (JRW) along the Mississippi R. levee in extreme n.w. Tennessee eventually flew into Kentucky.

Multiple nestings of Horned Larks involved eggs, juveniles, and at least eight individuals in *Lowndes*, AL, throughout the period (TAP, LFG et al.) Six or more Tree Swallows seen in *Lafayette*, MS, 18–19 Jun (WMD) presumably were from a local breeding population, as perhaps was one in *Limestone*, AL, 16 Jun (JTG); nesting birds



This Western Kingbird nest was photographed 3 July 1999 in an electric power tower within Memphis city limits at Enley Bottoms. It was the second documented nesting for the species in Tennessee (the first was in 1998) and the first for which successful nesting was confirmed. Western Kingbirds had been seen in the area since 1988, occasionally with immatures (JW). The above nest produced four nestlings, three of which fledged, and one of which made it to independence (JW). Photograph/J. R. Wilson

in *Lafayette* and *Lonoke*, AR, during June eventually totalled nearly 20 adults and immatures (DA, RD, LY). Cliff Swallows expanding westward along US 82 reached Starkville, MS, this year and made 27 nests under a bridge on the e. side of town 28 Jul (TS); range expansion was also documented in Alabama, with new nesting localities in *Tallapoosa* and *Marengo* (SER). One or two **Cave Swallows** continue to be found at the LA 82 bridge over the Sabine R., with at least two noted 1 Jun (DLD, SWC), two on 5 Jun (CL, RB), and one sitting on a nest 13 Jun (MS, RG, JS, WW).

The 2nd nesting locality of Gray Catbird in s.e. Louisiana was established when a pair with one young bird was observed in Covington 21 Jun (PJD); a nest had been located 3 days earlier. Two pairs of Cedar Waxwings showed behavior suggestive of nesting in *Monroe*, MS, 24 Jun (KK); there was a probable nesting in *Morgan*, AL, during June (CDC) and a definite breeding record in *Limestone*, AL, 18 Jun (CDC). In w. Tennessee, a waxwing was seen 2 Jun in *Obion* (RP), and on 10 Jun in *Fayette*, an adult was feeding young (*fide* MGW). Two were also in Benton, AR, 9 Jul (MMI, BC). At least two **Black-whiskered Vireos**, first noted 31 May (DPM, RDP), lingered until

at least 21 Jul at Grand Isle, LA (PW). On more than one occasion one adult was seen carrying food, and on 2 Jul two ad. males were "coutersinging" (SWC, DLD et al.). Although conclusive evidence of nesting was not obtained, there are now ample indications of possible or attempted nestings in s.e. Louisiana, mainly on Grand Isle. A Black-whiskered Vireo was also noted in Gulf Breeze, FL, 1-2 Jun (RAD, LD).

A tally of 151 N. Parulas at Lafitte N.P. 8 Jun (PW) is likely a record one-day count for s.e. Louisiana. Very rare as a nester in Arkansas, a territorial male Chestnut-sided Warbler singing in Newton on 4 occasions into mid-June (MML) was apparently unmated. There were 3 reports of territorial Black-throated Green Warblers—discovered breeding in Arkansas only a decade ago—from *Pope*, *Izard*, and *Stone* totaling 10 males (LA, SO, RD); a female carrying food was noted in Montgomery on 7 Jul (RD). Very impressive were the 13 nests of the elusive Swainson's Warbler found by Donata Roome in her field studies in the Pearl R. bottoms along the Louisiana-Mississippi border.

Strongly suggesting nesting was a Dickcissel in *Jackson*, MS, 14 Jul (SP, m.ob.). It is a sad day when we must list records of formerly common breeding species like Bachman's Sparrow, but this seems increasingly to be the case. Schiefer noted only one in *Winston*, MS, 8 Jun, and I failed to find one on a BBS route in *St. Tammany*, LA, which formerly yielded several. There were 4 reports of Lark Sparrow, two involving actual breeding in Alabama, both from *Lawrence*: a pair 6 Jun (SWM; Courtland BBS) and three-five, with adults feeding young, 16-29 Jun (HHK). In addition, a juvenile was in *Perry*, AL, 21 Jul (GDJ, DGJ), and another was recorded on the Macon BBS route in *Noxubee*, MS, 6 Jun (TS). As many as four Henslow's Sparrows were on territory in the Flanagan Prairie Natural Area of *Franklin*, AR, in early July (WMS, LY), the species was first discovered nesting in Arkansas last year.

Notable for n.w. Louisiana, up to nine Great-tailed Grackles along I-49 in *Natchitoches* near Powhatan 5 Jun and 7 Jul (CL, RB) suggested nesting. Of 4 Bronzed Cowbird reports away from their center of abundance in s.e. Louisiana, two were unfortunately from Mississippi, where the first record for parasitism for the state was established in *Hancock* 18-24 Jul when one-three fledglings were being fed by—what else?—an Orchard Oriole (KK, SP). An ad. cowbird was seen in Biloxi 23 Jul

(KK), and there was a report from Baton Rouge 7-23 Jun (JS, RG, MS, WW), where they have made less of an impact than in s.e. Louisiana. Orchard Orioles have been virtually eliminated from urban New Orleans by Bronzed Cowbird parasitism, and N. Cardinals are being severely impacted now. A Shiny Cowbird in Gulf Breeze, FL, 8 Jul (RAD) provided the 17th area record; based on an early August report, it is possible that Shiny Cowbird is now present on Grand Isle, LA, in summer (RDP). A pair of Am. Goldfinches seen regularly from early May into mid-July in *Bolivar*, n.w. MS, fledged two young by 9 Jul (NH, JCH).

**RECORDS OF PRESUMED
NON-BREEDING, POST-BREEDING,
OR MIGRANT BIRDS**

LOONS THROUGH LIMPKIN

Of the occasional summering Com. Loons, the most interesting was one in *Panola*, MS, 8 Jun (WMD). Even more interesting was a Pacific Loon at Gulf Breeze, FL, 1 Jun (RAD). Also out-of-season was an alternate-plumaged Horned Grebe in *Okaloosa*, FL, 16-25 Jun (HK, DW)—the 2nd June record for n.w. Florida. Probably the 4th record for Louisiana and only the 2nd specimen, an ad. female **Leach's Storm-Petrel** was taken 64 mi SSE of Belle Pass, *Lafourche*, 1 Jul (DLD, SWC et al.). Up to 25 Wilson's Storm-Petrels were encountered the same day 18-64 mi SSE of Belle Pass. A N. Gannet discovered on the Pass Christian, MS, gulf beach 11 Jun (SP, JB) seemed healthy in spite of a broken lower mandible. A Double-crested Cormorant on 12 Jun in *St. Charles*, LA (PY), and an Am. Bittern at Lacassine N.W.R. 1 Jun (DLD, SWC) were very late and possibly breeders. Ten reports of Wood Storks totalling over 1200 individuals were received from 21 Jun into August—8 of these from 7 n. Mississippi counties. The largest concentration was 894 on 18 Jul in *Evangeline*, LA (CL).

A lingering Snow Goose in *Lowndes* from 4 Jun onward (DP, JP, KK, TS, MS) fed with an ad. Ross's Goose from 1 Jul (KK, TS, JP, DP, MS), the first summer record of Ross's for Mississippi. Three Snow Geese were in Fayetteville, AR, 25 Jul (MMI, DJ). At least 22 records of late or lingering ducks, many presumably unhealthy, involved 13 species. Among the most notable were an apparent Am. Black Duck in *Jackson*, MS, 11 Jul (KK, CD, JP)—a bird which would be interesting even in mid-winter—and three separate individuals in *Shelby* and

Lake, TN, Jun 5 (JRW). Two female Red-breasted Mergansers were in *Benton*, AR, throughout the period. Earliest ever in fall for s. Alabama were 25 Blue-winged Teal in *Hale* 21 Jul (GDJ). A Swainson's Hawk in *Jefferson Davis*, LA, 31 Jul (JK, KF) was far east of its normal breeding range, but even more impressively distant from its Florida haunts was a **Limpkin** in Haywood, TN, 27 Jul (AW, BF). Surprisingly, this was not the first Tennessee record: a Limpkin was in Nashville 10-11 Jun 1961.

**SHOREBIRDS
THROUGH WARBLERS**

Fifty-six reports for 21 species of transient shorebirds represented nearly one-third of all non-breeding records submitted for the period; reports of early fall migrants were by far the most numerous. A Black-bellied Plover 11 Jun in *Lauderdale* (PDK) was the first June record for n.w. Alabama. Notable fall migrant dates included an Am. Golden-Plover in *Lonoke*, AR, 10 Jul (LY), 5 weeks early, 27 Semipalmated Plovers in *Lafourche*, LA, 9 Jul (PW), a large number so early, and 22 in *Tallahatchie* and *Quitman*, MS, 27 Jul (FB), 19 Piping Plovers, endangered and an early concentration 24 Jul in *Cameron*, LA (JK, DR); and 3 records of Piping Plovers from *Benton* and *Prairie*, AR, 11-28 Jul (MML, AJ, KN). An Am. Avocet, four Marbled Godwits, and 15 Short-billed Dowitchers were noteworthy 19 Jun in *Lafourche*, LA (PW). A Short-billed Dowitcher 6 Jul at mile 771 on the Mississippi was the earliest ever for Tennessee (KJ). A Ruddy Turnstone was in *Quitman*, MS, 27 Jul (FB). Whimbrels, uncommon to rare in fall, were in *Lafourche*, LA, 19 Jun (PW), 1 Jul (PW), and 9 Aug (RDP) and in *Orleans* 25 Jul (PY) where they are rare at any season. Almost unknown in fall migration, White-rumped Sandpipers were in *Prairie*, AR, 10 Jul (KN, LDN) and in *Jackson*, MS, 29 Jul (KK). Fred Broerman made an impressive count of 2583 shorebirds of 16 species on the Black Bayou Unit of Tallahatchie N.W.R. 7 Jul.

Single Laughing Gulls in *Lafayette* 3 Jun (DA, RD) and *Jackson* 13 Jun (KN, LDN) were the first June records for Arkansas. There were 2 Louisiana records of Lesser Black-backed Gulls, always rare in summer a first-year (2nd-summer) bird at the mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou 17 Jun (DPM, PY, RDP) and another in the same plumage 2 Jul in *Lafourche* (SWC, DLD, JBa). Very early for a southbound migrant was an ad. Black Tern 2 Jul at Tallahatchie N.W.R., MS (FB).

A Lesser Nighthawk, the first Florida

panhandle record ever for June, was seen at Gulf Breeze 1 Jun (RAD, LD, WD). The first ever for Louisiana, a **Green Violet-ear** was at the Gail Andriano residence in Lafayette from at least 10 Jun (JO) until at least 21 Jul (WRF, DP et al., v.t.); the state list is now at 451. Also extraordinary, an apparently unmated **Great Kiskadee** at Venice, LA, was present at a nest site from at least 24 Apr and last seen as late as 5 Aug (JK, KF). There were two June records of **Tropical/Couch's Kingbirds** from Louisiana and one from the Florida panhandle, all around the same date: 15 Jun-7 Jul on Fourchon Rd. in *Lafourche* (NLN, PW), 17 Jun in *Calcasieu* (CW, *DGC), and 14 Jun at Gulf Breeze, FL (RAD); the Louisiana specimen keyed out as Couch's (*fide* SWC). There are few previous Louisiana records of either species and only 4 previous n.w. Florida records; none have been in summer. A concentration of 300 N. Rough-winged Swallows in *Marengo*, AL, 4 Jul (SER) was surprising for so early a date. A Bank Swallow in *Mobile*, AL, 20 Jul (LFG) was early, and one in *Jackson* 14 Jul (SP, DM, CD, CB, JP), if a southbound migrant, was the earliest ever for the Mississippi coast. Early records of southbound migrant warblers included a Blue-winged Warbler in

Noxubee, MS, 28 Jul (TS), the earliest ever there by 8 days; an extraordinarily early Ovenbird in Abita Springs, LA, 31 Jul (OC, WC); and a N. Waterthrush 24 Jul in *Cameron*, LA (JK).

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