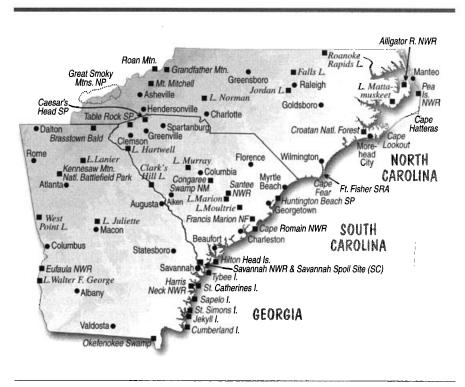
# Southern Atlantic



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his fall's weather started out by continuing the drought conditions of previous seasons. By late August and September, rain returned to much of the Region, much of it on the coast associated with the passage of tropical systems (Gustav and Kyle), which brought a few seabirds into the Region as well. By the period's end, the drought had lessened considerably in many areas. Temperatures were still quite mild for most of the season. Strong cold fronts that tend to produce good flights of migrants were few and far between. Nevertheless, some excellent counts of certain migrants were obtained. Rarities included Georgia's first documented Brown Booby, a Cave Swallow invasion, North Carolina's first White Wagtail, and the Region's first Scott's Oriole.

Abbreviations: B.R.C. (Bird Records Com-

mittee); C. Hatt. (Cape Hatteras, NC); E.L.H. (E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, *Clayton*, GA); H.B.S.P. (Huntington Beach State Park, SC); Hoop. (Hooper Lane, *Henderson*, NC); K. Mt. (Kennesaw Mt. National Battlefield Park, GA); P.I. (Pea I. N.W.R., *Dare*, NC); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, *Jasper*, SC).

### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Good loon reports included an inland Redthroated on Clarks Hill L., Columbia, GA 3 Nov (JFl, EH) and 2 Pacifics at Figure Eight 1., NC 16 Nov (DC). Pelagic highlights from North Carolina this fall included Herald Petrels on three different trips, a Fea's Petrel off Hatteras 24 Aug, and 2 White-tailed Tropicbirds off Hatteras 10 Aug (BP et al.). Georgia pelagic trips off Savannah yielded a Masked Booby 24 Aug, 2 Maskeds 7 Sep, and a Brown Booby 24 Aug (RW, JFl et al.). Photographs of the latter provided the first documented evidence for that state. Inland pelicans of note included 2 American White Pelicans over Clarks Hill L., Parkville, SC 15 Sep (PC et al.), a Brown at Walter F. George L., GA 7 Nov (WC), and a Brown at Buckhorn Res., Wilson, NC 5 Nov (RD). The large flock frequenting the ACE Basin area of South Carolina continued, with 300 over the Combahee R. 3 Aug (CR, KO). The Great

Cormorant near Rimini, L. Marion, SC 13 Nov (MT) provided possibly the first inland report for that state. Magnificent Frigatebirds are normally strictly coastal, thus of interest were one offshore of Hatteras, NC 10 Oct (SSt, *fide* BP) associated with Hurricane Kyle's passage, one somewhat inland at L. Moultrie, SC 31 Aug (*fide* TK), and one far inland at L. Allatoona, GA 29-30 Oct (GS, v. o.).

Interesting long-legged wader reports included a Great Blue Heron at an elevation of 1890 m at Mt. Mitchell, NC (fide DP), Great White Herons at Duluth, GA 3 Aug (fide KT) and Gould's Inlet, GA 6 Oct (BB et al.), and Reddish Egrets from all three states, with the best count being of 4 at the S.S.S. 24 Sep (SC). Roseate Spoonbills were reported more than usual. The farthest inland were from one to 2 birds at several sites in the Augusta, GA area mid-Aug-early Sep (AW, MH, PC, GB, v. o.). Along the coast, one was at Bulls I., SC in early Oct (fide TP), and many were present at the S.S.S. until at least 8 Nov, with the peak being an impressive 8 on 6 & 24 Sep (SC). The farthest inland Wood Storks were up to 37 along Long Cane Cr., Clarks Hill L., SC 15 Sep (PC), 3 in Jackson, GA 7 Sep (MF), and 6 at the E.L.H. 2 Oct (CL).

A Greater White-fronted Goose at the Henderson, NC W.T.P. 12 Nov (WF) provided a probable first for the county. Ross's Geese included singles at P.I. 27 Oct (KW) and Mayesville, Sumter, SC 28-30 Nov (LG), while one continued in Madison, GA (GB, v. o.). Another high-elevation record was provided by a male Wood Duck found dead on Mt. Mitchell, NC at 1800 m 9 Oct (DP). Several interesting duck reports included an impressive count of 223 Bluewinged Teal at the Henderson, NC W.T.P. 22 Sep (WF), 10 early Northern Pintail near Blairsville, GA 27 Aug (fide TM), an absurdly early Canvasback in Wilkinson, GA 8 Sep (EH, JFl), and a Common Eider in the Hatteras, NC area in mid-Oct (BP, TP et al.). The best inland scoter reports included 4 Surfs at Piedmont N.W.R., GA 13 Nov (fide WCa), 4 at Sweetwater Cr. S. P., GA 14 Nov (CLo), and 3 Blacks at Clarks Hill L., SC 14 Oct (PC).

## **KITES THROUGH TERNS**

The farthest inland Swallow-tailed Kites included 7 near Pendleton, SC 6 Aug (*fide* SG) and one near Rome, GA 5 Aug (PB). Other interesting hawks included an ad. Northern Goshawk seen briefly at Southern Pines, NC 23 Oct (SH), a Rough-legged Hawk at Roanoke I., NC 8 Nov (JL), an imm. Golden Eagle in *Jones*, GA 26 Nov (EW et al.), an ad. Golden at H.B.S.P. 1-21 Oct (RL, JP et al.), and an imm. Golden in Brunswick, NC (TV, DC). Broadwinged Hawks passed through in the usual numbers, with the best one-day total received being 10,918 from Pores Knob, Brushy Mt., NC 29 Sep (BR). The always-noteworthy Yellow Rail was reported once, with 4-6 birds being flushed during Nov in the L. Mattamuskeet, NC Area (fide KD). Also, the only Black Rails noted were 2 at the usual n. Greene, GA area 4 Aug (PS). Sandhill Cranes away from the usual Georgia migration corridor included 3 in Sumter, SC and one in Lee, SC 30 Nov (LG).

Due to the dry conditions, shorebird habitat was in good supply at many inland sites, at least into Sep, whereas most coastal refuges' impoundments were completely full of water and held no shorebirds. Some of the best totals included 23 American Golden-Plovers at the Orangeburg Sod Farm, SC 10 Sep (RH), 56 Piping Plovers at Little St. Simons I., GA 6 Oct (GB et al.), 42 Upland Sandpipers at the Marshallville, GA sod farm 8 Aug (WC), 4 Willets at Buckhorn Res., Wilson, NC 23 Aug (RD), 61 Western Sandpipers at Jordan L., NC 28 Aug (MS), and over 200 Dunlin at Hoop. 30 Oct (WF). Rare inland were the Piping Plover at Falls L., NC 18-25 Aug (BF, LT, v. o.), the Black-necked Stilt at L. Mattamuskeet, NC 3 Nov (R&SB), the Red Knot at Jordan L., NC 18 Aug (DS), the 8 Wilson's Phalaropes at Jordan L., NC 22-26 Aug (MS, v. o.), and the Red Phalarope at Legacy Sod, Bartow, GA 1-4 Sep (MD, v. o.). An American Avocet was a good find at Jordan L. NC 17-18 Aug (SS et al.). Long-billed Curlews were found sparingly as usual, with the best counts being 2 at Shackleford I., NC 10 Nov (fide JF) and 2 on Little St. Simons I., GA 6 Oct (GB et al.). Most unusual was the flock of godwits found inland at the Orangeburg Sod Farm, SC 31 Aug, which consisted of 35 Hudsonians and one Marbled (DCh et al.)! This is undoubtedly a record total for Hudsonians in the Carolinas, at least inland. Other rare inland Marbleds were at Jordan L., NC 21-22 Aug (BY, MS) and L. Mattamuskeet, NC 19 Nov+ (KD). Baird's Sand-

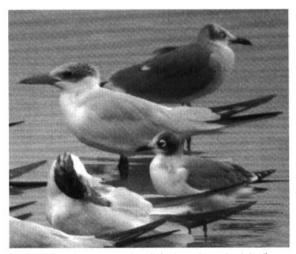
pipers were reported from all three states, with about 20 different sightings. The best totals were the 3 at Falls L., NC 25 Aug (BF, LT) and 3 at Bucksport Sod, SC 2 Sep (JP). Also of note was a very late Baird's at Hoop. 10 Nov (ST, WF et al.). Video footage of



Two Masked Boobies were found on the Navy Tower 72 km east-southeast of Tybee Island on 7 September 2002. Along with one other Masked on the earlier 24 August trip, these birds provided the state's fifth and sixth reports. Photograph by James Flynn, Jr.



This young Brown Booby off Savannah 24 August 2002 provided the first physical documentation for the species in Georgia (though Audubon mentions the species in Georgia in his notes 1840—1844). Photograph by James Flynn, Jr.



A Franklin's Gull at the Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper County, South Carolina spent 13-23 October (here 14 October) 2002 here; photographs of this species in the Southern Atlantic Region are few and far between. Photograph by Steve Calver.

the bird should document one of the latest reports for that species in the Region. Buffbreasted Sandpipers were mentioned in at least 21 reports from all three states and spanned the period 1 Aug—21 Sep. A female Ruff found at Falls L., NC 2-3 Sep (LT, JD) was not only rare but provided the 2nd record for that inland locality. Rare onshore Red-necked Phalaropes were singles at the E.L.H. 9 Sep (*fide* CL) and at the S.S.S. 14 Sep (SC). Also rare on the coast was another Red Phalarope at Andrews I., GA 31 Aug (JG).

SOLTHERN ATTANT.

The only South Polar Skua was off Manteo, NC 31; and the only Longtailed Jaeger was off Hatteras, NC 10 Aug (BP et al.). The best inland Laughing Gull total was of 3 at Jordan L., NC 18 Aug (RD), and over 8,000 were counted at Jekyll I., GA 6 Oct The always noteworthy (PS). Franklin's Gull was found three times, with singles at the S.S.S. 13-23 Oct (SC), at Clarks Hill L., SC 14 Oct (PC), and at West Point L., GA 15 Nov (fide WC). Of interest was a Black-headed Gull along the causeway at L. Mattamuskeet, NC 27-30 Nov (TK, KD, v. o.), an area where one was present the previous winter. Very unusual was the ad. California Gull found on the beach at Holden Beach, NC 4 Aug (GM). This species is annual in that state each winter, but one in early Aug is absurdly early for a returning wintering bird. Another inland gull of note was the ad. Lesser Black-backed found on Clarks Hill L., SC 14 Oct (PC).

Inland tern reports included a high of 10 Caspians at L. Crabtree, *Wake*, NC 6 Oct (SS), 8 Commons at Walter F. George L., GA 4 Aug (WC), 53 Forster's at Clarks Hill L, SC 15 Sep (PC), and 18 Blacks at Falls L., NC 2 Sep (MS). Pelagic tern counts of note were the 23 Bridleds off Hatteras, NC 24 Aug and the 84 Sooties off Hatteras 25 Aug (BP et al.).

#### **DOVES THROUGH PIPITS**

This season's White-winged Doves involved one on the St. Simons I., GA causeway 20 Nov (GB, JFl, EH) and the continuing bird at Beaufort, NC throughout the period (R&rSB). Common Ground-Doves continue to be found inland. Of note were one killed by hunters at Hodges, SC 2 Sep (fide DB), one near Salters, Williamsburg, SC 29 Sep (RC, CE), and one at McDowell Prairie Restoration, s. of

Charlotte, NC 16 Oct (DS, TP KC). Blackbilled Cuckoos away from the usual mountains areas included singles near Avon, NC 16 Aug (BP) and on Roanoke I., NC 12 Sep (JL). Always exciting when found in the Region, a Long-eared Owl was found SA The event of the season was the influx of **Cave Swallows** into the Region in unprecedented numbers. After hearing reports of Caves to our north in mid-Nov, it was only a matter of time before some of these were found in our area. Sure enough, in North Carolina on 28 Nov, 4 were at Ocean Isle Beach and 15 were at Sunset Beach (TP, DC). On 29 Nov, there were 11 at Ocean Isle Beach (JD) and 6 at Sunset Beach (RD, HL, JPi, DC). On 30 Nov, there were at least **31** seen in the Ocean Isle Beach area (WCo), 4 at Sunset Beach (ED), and 2 at Caswell Beach (JPi). Not to be outdone, South Carolina had one near Ravenel, *Charleston 29* Nov (PN). The birds seemed to be staying in the area and would prove to be present on into Dec. All birds seen well enough were considered to be of the sw. race (*pelodoma*).

injured near Brooks, Fayette, GA in late Nov (fide JO). This bird, the first for that state since 1998, was taken to a local rehabber. The Common Nighthawk migration has lessened the last several years; thus encouraging was the 1,000+ seen near our Region.

Olive-sided Flycatchers made a strong showing this fall in the w. portions of the Region. The first was noted 3 Aug near Mills River, *Henderson*, NC (WF et al.), the latest was along Gum Swamp Rd, *Aiken*, SC



Calliope Hummingbird is becoming the Number Two vagrant hummingbird in much of the East, though still far behind Rufous Hummingbird numerically. This bird near Hillsborough, North Carolina was the first documented adult male for the state. *Photograph by Will Cook*.

#### Asheville, NC 3 Sep (CW).

Rufous Hummingbirds were once again found in numbers across the Region. Ruby-throateds also continued to be found late in the season, mostly along the coastal areas. There was only one definite Blackchinned reported, that being an ad. male returning to a Savannah, GA feeder 12 Oct for the 3rd year in a row (SC). North Carolina had 2 more Calliope Hummingbirds, with an imm. male near Castalia 15 Oct-20 Nov (SF) and the state's first ad. male near Hillsborough 7 Nov+ (GT). Locally unusual were 6 Red-bellied Woodpeckers flying through Carver's Gap, Roan Mt., NC 29 Sep (RK). Much more unexpected was a Red-shafted Flicker seen flying past Congaree Bluffs Pres., SC 13 Oct (RC et al.). Sightings of this form are extremely rare in

19 Oct (AW et al.), and the best count was the 2 together at Suwannee Cr., Gwinnett, GA 27-28 Sep (EH et al.). Yellowbellied Flycatcher has become one of the most-reported Empidonax flycatchers in the fall. This season, there were at least 22 different sightings. Of the less reported species, of note were calling Alders at Hoop. 3 Aug (BO, MW) and Hickory, NC 5 Sep (DM), and a singing Willow at Falls L., NC 14 Sep (MS). Also a non-calling Alder was tentatively identified along the coast on Blackbeard I., GA 5 Oct (GB et al.). Rare Least Flycatchers included singles at Hickory, NC 5 Sep (DM), Ridgway, Fairfield, SC 14 Sep (RC et al.), Jordan L., NC 21 Sep (WCo), and on the coast at James I., SC 28 Sep (DF). Georgia once again had the only Vermilion Flycatcher, that being a male in nw. Miller 23 Oct-17 Nov (GB, TE, JFl).

Western Kingbirds included singles at Jekyll I., GA 6 Oct (LTh et al.), at Ft. Fisher, NC 27 Oct (BS) and 6-8 Nov (RL, SS, v. o.), and Harris Neck N.W.R., GA 24-26 Nov (DBb, PM). Rare in fall, an imm. Gray Kingbird caused some excitement near Southport, NC 2 Nov (GH, GM, SCo). And finally, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was a good find at the Birdsong Nature Center, Grady, GA 19 Oct (PJ, MB et al.).

Warbling Vireos were excellent finds along the coast, with one on Roanoke I., NC 25 Sep (JL) and 2 on Jekyll I., GA 6 Oct (CL). Philadelphia Vireos were found across the Region, with several observers locating up to 3 in a day! Has this species really increased, or have observers really been looking harder for them? Late swallows included single Northern Roughwingeds in n. *Catawba*, NC 3 Nov (DM) and nw. *Miller*, GA 17 Nov (JFl) and single Barn Swallows in *Calhoun*, SC 14 Nov (MT) and *McIntosh*, GA 19 Nov (DCo).

This fall Red-breasted Nuthatches were practically non-existent, with only a handful of reports. The thrush migration seemed about average compared to the last several years'. Some of the better counts included 40 Veeries, 20 Gray-cheekeds, and 146 Swainson's on a K. Mt. pre-dawn count 29 Sep (BZ), 8 Gray-cheekeds on Roanoke I., NC 10 Oct (JL), and 50+ Woods at Jackson Park, Hendersonville, NC 1 Oct (RS). A Varied Thrush seen briefly at Eastwood, James L., SC 30 Nov (DF) and later that day (EB) was described well. If accepted by the South Carolina B.R.C., this would provide the first for that state

#### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

The warbler migration seemed to be about normal. Always of interest, hybrids observed included the very rare "Lawrence's" in the Buckhead area of n. Atlanta, GA 16 Sep (fide JFl), 3 "Brewster's" in Georgia, and one of each in the two Carolinas. Impressive numbers of Tennessee Warblers moved along Clingman's Dome Rd., Great Smoky Mountains N. P., NC on 7 Sep, with literally thousands seen (KC). One Tennessee was very early at Junction Ridge Overlook, Blue Ridge Pkwy, NC 11 Aug (DM), and one was late at Walter F. George L., GA 7 Nov (WC). Nashville Warblers were reported more than usual, with the best counts being 2 banded at Carver's Gap, Roan Mt., NC 9 Sep (RK) and 2 at P.I. 17 Oct (BP, JL, RD). One was late at P.I. 7 Nov (JL). Other late warblers included a Cape May in Nash, NC 2 Nov (B&PCa), a Black-throated Green at Brevard, NC 14 Nov (BM), a Bay-breasted at

SA Undoubtedly the bird of the season was the first-winter **White Wagtail** found at Sandling Beach, Falls L., NC 22 Oct (KB, JFr, WCo, JPi, v. o.). Seen only that afternoon, close observation and photographs helped determine that the bird was of the nominate w. European race *alba*. Apparently this constitutes the 3rd documented record of this race for North America and the first for the Lower 48 states. Amazingly, this is the not the first White Wagtail for the Region: the first was an ad. male of the Siberian form at H.B.S.P. 16–21 Apr 1998, and North Carolina already had a record of Black-backed Wagtail from Carteret County, 15 May 1982, a species previously included in the White Wagtail complex.

K. Mt. 3 Nov (TE), a Cerulean along Gum Swamp Rd., *Aiken*, SC 19 Oct (AW et al.), and 2 Yellow-breasted Chats at Bodie I., NC 27 Nov (KC). The six Connecticut Warbler reports came from all three states and spanned the period 14 Sep—13 Oct. The generally rarer Mourning Warbler was found five times, with the 2 at K. Mt. 23 Sep (DZ, PH; KT) being most unusual. Wilson's Warblers were also reported well, with at least 15 sightings. The best count was the 2 at Suwannee Cr., *Gwinnett*, GA 21 Sep (EH, JFl). Locally very rare was the Canada found on Roanoke I., NC 18 Sep (JL).

Late tanagers included a Summer at Duluth, GA 20 Nov (KT) and a Scarlet at K. Mt. 27 Oct (GB). Good numbers of tanagers involved multiple Summers daily in Jackson Park, Hendersonville, NC during Sep (WF, RS) and a count of 30 Scarlets at Jackson Park 28 Sep (RS). The only Western Tanager found was a female at the n. end of P.I. 19 Oct (RD). Clay-colored Sparrows were about normal, with most being found along the outer coast. Four Lark Sparrows were found, with singles at Calhoun, Gordon, GA 2-7 Sep (JG, JPk), Roanoke I., NC 24-25 Sep & 8 Oct (JL), and in Oglethorpe, GA 7 Oct (JFl). The best Grasshopper Sparrow reports involved 2 at H.B.S.P. 31 Oct (ST et al.) and several at Birdsong Nature Center, Grady, GA 23 Nov (MB). Other excellent totals were the 20 Henslow's Sparrows at Paulk's Pasture, GA 30 Nov (GK), 7 Le Conte's at Phinizy Swamp, Augusta, GA 23 Nov (PC), and 410 Songs in one area of n. Greene, GA 30 Nov (PS). Rare inland Nelson's Sharptailed Sparrows involved singles at Phinizy Swamp, GA 16-23 Nov and at the Savannah River Site, SC 15 Nov (PC). Lincoln's Sparrows were reported from across the Region, with about 21 sightings. The best count was the 3 at Alligator R. N.W.R., NC 20 Nov (JL). The only Lapland Longspurs found included one at H.B.S.P. 31 Oct (ST et al.) and 12 at Hoop. 10 Nov (ST, WF). Snow Buntings were also in short supply, with one near Avon, NC 18 Oct (ED et al.) being somewhat early. A Northern Cardinal was a surprise at Carver's Gap, Roan Mt., NC 3 Oct (RK)-the first one that the observer has seen at that elevation. Late Grosbeaks included a Rose-breasted at Chapel Hill, NC 16 Nov (KF) and a Blue at L. Horton, Fayette, GA 9 Nov (JS). Indigo Buntings were also late at Buckhorn Res., Wilson, NC 14 Nov (RD) and in n. Greene, GA 2 Nov (PS). Dickcissels were reported more than usual with the best counts being 8 at the n. end of P.I. 17 Sep (ESB et al.) and 5 in Bartow, GA 2 Sep (SCh). The only Yel-

low-headed Blackbirds found included an imm. at Phinizy Swamp, Augusta, GA 15 Sep (JK, PC et al.) and an ad. male near Richlands, NC 17 Sep (JO). Only one Shiny Cowbird was reported, that being a female seen well at the Cedar 1., NC ferry terminal 7 Oct (R&SB). The runner-up in the best bird of the season category was easily the imm. male Scott's Oriole present at a feeder in Thomaston, GA 3-8 Nov (R&RBe, EBe, MBe). Excellent photos should document this first Regional record, which is also a first for the Southeast. Finches were practically nonexistent, with only a handful of Purple Finches and Pine Siskins reported. And finally, the only Evening Grosbeaks found were the 6 at Whispering Pines, Moore, NC 8 Nov (SCb).

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