

# Central Southern



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The weather cooperated for the birders along the coast this spring, if not for the birds, with fronts on 7, 11, and 26 April and 2 May leading to significant fall-outs on at least parts of the Gulf coast. Inland at Starkville, by contrast, it was yet another unexceptional spring for passerine migration. Some small consolation could be had, perhaps, in the number of early arrival dates to go with the early warm weather there. Early and late records for various areas of the Region were too numerous to mention.

Abbreviations: FW.B.S.F. (Ft. Walton Beach Spray Fields, FL); L.S.U.M.N.S. (Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science).

### LOONS THROUGH RAILS

An ad. Red-throated Loon in basic plumage at Dauphin I., AL 27 Mar (SA) was rare for the

Region, as was a Pacific Loon in *Tishomingo*, MS 2 Mar (WP). A first-basic Red-necked Grebe in New Orleans 6 Mar (DPM, PAW) was the 4th for Louisiana, and one molting into alternate plumage in *Prairie* 13 Apr (KN, LN) was the 4th for Arkansas and the first in 34 years. A report of 70 Northern Gannets in Breton Sound, LA 29 Apr (SWC, DLD) was a large number for such a late date. Four tubenose species were among the highlights of three pelagic trips this season (Table 1).

There were six Regional reports of American Bittern, with a high of 15 from White L. Marsh, LA 9 Apr (GG et al.) and a late date of 8 May (2 birds) from Clobber Cr., AR (CM). Tricolored Herons were inland in Arkansas, with 2 at Millwood L. 28 Mar (CM) and one at Wapanocca N.W.R. 15 May (KN, LN). Two White-faced Ibis at Noxubee N.W.R., MS 19–26 Apr (*vide* TS) provided only the 3rd area record, and 5 alternate-plumaged birds in *Prairie*, AR 7 May (KN) were unusual, as was the one in *Mobile*, AL 1 May (GEH). Roseate Spoonbills continue their range expansion, with an imm. bird e. at Waveland, MS 21 May (NB, JB) and one n. at Cache River N.W.R.,

AR 25 May (*vide* SJD). Like the spoonbills, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are rapidly expanding in the Region. The most unusual of many reports this season were from Arkansas, with one at Bald Knob N.W.R. 25 & 26 Apr (KN, LN et al.) and 2 in *Monroe* 30 May (MMC). A Fulvous Whistling-Duck, on the review list in Mississippi, was seen near Waveland 5–13 Apr (NB). Columbus L., MS was the site for 300 migrating Canvasbacks, a large number for the area (RW, LW, TS). Surf Scoters were more numerous than usual this spring, with 5–7 in New Orleans 6–7 Mar (DPM, PAW) providing the largest number and one in *Cameron* 8 May (DPM, PAW) being the latest. Another one in *Ok-tibbeha*, MS 11–13 Apr (TS, MS) was rare for the area. The only other scoter was a Black 3–8 May in *Cameron* (JVR et al.). Two female Hooded Mergansers with downy young solidified recent reports of nesting near Kiln, MS 6 & 20 Mar (NB, JB). The only Common Merganser reported was an ad. female at L. Ferguson, AR 12 Apr (P&LF).

Swallow-tailed Kites were well reported in Louisiana, with a new nesting location near Laplace 27 May (JC et al.). A single Sharp-shinned Hawk near Ladelle, AR 31 May (LA) was in an area where the species is not known to breed. There were several reports of Swainson's Hawk from Louisiana, including three different reports from the se., where rare. Continuing reports from sw. Louisiana in May feed ongoing suspicion of breeding, but hard evidence of breeding has yet to be discovered for the state. Found in a flock of 25 Wild Turkeys 6 & 18 Mar near Mathiston, MS (TS, MS) were 2 leucistic birds, both mostly white with some grayish areas on the wings and tail. Single Yellow Rails were reported from *Sunflower*, MS 7 Apr (SS, DT) and Dauphin I. 27 Apr (RAD, LRD et al.). The only Black Rail report was from FW.B.S.F. 5 May (AK), providing the first May record for the w. peninsula.

### SHOREBIRDS

The threatened Snowy Plover was reported from Louisiana at Fourchon, with 2 birds 4 Apr (vt. PAW, BMM, RDP), and at Rutherford Beach, with 6 seen 24 Apr and one 9

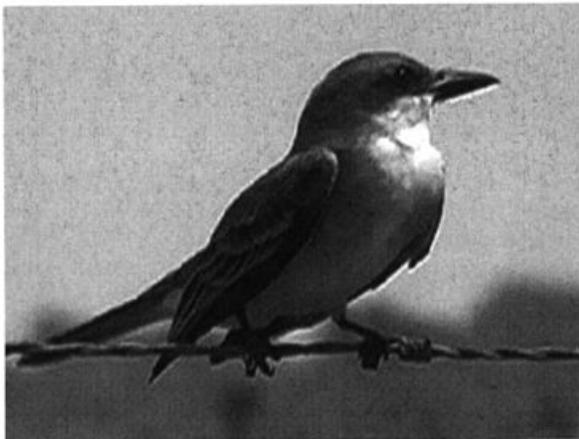
Table 1. Summary of spring 2004 pelagic trips off Venice, Louisiana (5 & 20 May) and Destin, Florida (23 May).

	5 May	20 May	23 May
Audubon's Shearwater	1	2	0
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	3	5	3
Leach's Storm-Petrel	2	0	0
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	0	0	28
Masked Booby	0	0	1
Northern Gannet	6	1	0
Bridled Tern	2	9	4
Sooty Tern	0	0	2

May (PAW et al.). Also a species of concern, 2 Piping Plovers were at Fourchon 4 Apr, and different single birds were in Cameron 24 & 25 Apr (PAW et al.). An American Avocet at Oktibbeha County L., MS 6 May (TS et al.) provided the first spring record for the area. Rarely encountered migrating across the Gulf, 10 Solitary Sandpipers 68 km s. of Southwest Pass 5 May (SWC, DLD et al.) made for an interesting "pelagic" species. Unusual inland sightings of Willet included 13 at Bald Knob N.W.R., AR 22 Apr (KN, LN), and 62 near Kaplan, LA 23 Apr (DLD, SWC) provided a large number. The largest number of Hudsonian Godwits was 30 in Vermilion and Cameron, LA 8 May (JPK, JK). The species is decidedly rare in the e. part of the Region, so a bird at Dauphin I. 15-17 Apr (JRW, ph. GDJ, DGJ) was noteworthy. An extremely early Semipalmated Sandpiper 14 Mar was well documented (vt. DPM, RDP, BMM). There were three reports of Baird's Sandpiper from the se. part of the Region, where it is a rare spring migrant: up to 4 birds were spotted at FWB.S.F. 9-22 Apr (AK, BM, RAD et al.), Mobile hosted 2 birds 15 Apr (ph. GDJ), and 2 were at New Orleans 17 Apr (DPM). A Red-necked Phalarope, on the review list for Mississippi, was seen 16 May at the Tupelo W.T.P. (WP), providing the state's first spring record away from the coast. High counts of shorebirds included 400 Black-bellied Plovers at Lacassine N.W.R., LA 20 Mar (JPK, WC), 26 American Oystercatchers in Breton Sound, LA 29 Apr (SWC, DLD), 50 Solitary Sandpipers in New Orleans 27 Apr (DPM, PAW), 300 Whimbrels in Vermilion, LA 7 May (DPM, BMM, PAW), 534 Red Knots at Grand I. 1 May (RDP, PAW, DPM), 2000 Dunlin in Vermilion 8 May (JPK, JK), and 3000 Long-billed Dowitchers in Jefferson Davis, LA 20 Mar (JPK, WC).

### JAEGERS THROUGH TERNS

The only Pomarine Jaeger report was from Holly Beach, LA 24 Apr (SWC, DLD). An ad. intermediate-morph Parasitic Jaeger was seen from shore at Destin, FL 25 Apr (BM). A Franklin's Gull at Oktibbeha County L., MS 16 Apr (TS) provided the first spring area record. The species' spring route normally allows detection only in the extreme w. part of the Region. The first California Gull for Arkansas, discovered in Jan, remained through 7 Mar at Dardanelle Lock



Louisiana had more than its share of Gray Kingbirds this spring, including this bird, one of a pair from Cameron Parish seen 9 (here) through 15 May 2004. Discovered by David Muth, the birds were enjoyed by many observers over the next few days.

Photograph from videotape by Phillip Wallace.

& Dam. There were four Louisiana reports of Lesser Black-backed Gull, 2 from sw. and 2 from se. areas. The species is much more common in the fall. Alabama had its share of good gulls, with an ad. Glaucous discovered 15 Apr near Ft. Morgan (LC) and an imm. Great Black-backed found a few miles away at Dauphin I. 14 Apr (GDJ). Louisiana's best gull was a first-alternate Sabine's Gull found 20 May 19-21 km se. of South Pass in the Gulf of Mexico. It provided the first specimen for the state, the 3rd spring record, the first offshore, and the 8th-10th state record overall (\*L.S.U.M.N.S., SWC, DLD, CCS et al.). A



This Inca Dove was one of three at Arcola, Washington County, Mississippi and furnished about the third state record, indicative of the rather slow spread of this species away from core range. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

Kelp Gull x Herring Gull hybrid was in Breton Sound, LA 29 Apr (SWC, DLD). A Least Tern at Walls, MS 13 May (G&SK) was considered rare.

### DOVES THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

A White-winged Dove at Danville, AR 3 May

(MLM, EH) is indicative of the expanding range of this species. An Inca Dove was found on a nest at Grand I. 17 Apr (vt. PAW, RDP et al.), and 6 were seen there 1 May (RDP, DPM, PAW). Much rarer in Mississippi, 3 were seen at Arcola 15 May (G&SK, DM). A probable pair of Black-billed Cuckoos was at Wapanocca N.W.R., AR 15 May (KN, LN). Showing how they coped before Europeans arrived, 2 Chimney Swifts were seen entering a natural cavity in a living Bald Cypress at Noxubee N.W.R., MS 24 Apr (TS, MS). Vaux's Swifts—first reported from Baton Rouge in the winter season, with as many as 24 seen at a time (m.ob.)—remained into the spring season, allowing close comparison with Chimney Swifts, as shown

in photographs by Lane. The last report was of a single bird 12 Apr (ph. DFL). The species is very rare in the Region and even more rarely well documented. Vying for honors as the bird of the season was Louisiana's 2nd Green Violet-ear found 9 May and seen again briefly the following morning (CV, ph. DP, PC). Arkansas's 3rd Calliope Hummingbird, which arrived in Nov 2003, departed 1 Apr (P&LF et al.). Overwintering hummingbirds remaining into the spring were too numerous to cite.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WARBLERS

Schiefer's seven-county area around Starkville, MS had never had a spring Olive-sided Flycatcher, so records of single birds 4 & 8 May (TS, AS) were noteworthy. An Ash-throated Flycatcher at Rutherford Beach, LA 24 Apr was a rare spring migrant (vt. PAW, BMM, CCS, \*L.S.U.M.N.S.). A Couch's/Tropical Kingbird found 1 May in Cameron (BMM, GG) did not cooperate by calling. The complex is rare in the Region. A Western Kingbird near Ft. Jackson, LA 19 May (ph. DLD, SWC, CCS, BMM) was late. Gray Kingbirds were well represented in Louisiana, with 2 as far w. as Cameron 9-15 May (vt. DPM, ph. BMM, vt. PAW, m.ob.), one in Fourchon 25 Apr (RDP), and a nesting pair in New Orleans for the 2nd consecutive year 16 May+ (EW, vt. PAW, DPM, m.ob.). A single bird seen 8 May (KW) at Mobile was closer to the expected range of the species, and one at Destin, FL 23 May (BM) was in range.

A Bell's Vireo at Birmingham 7 May (BG, HK) was unusual. A Blue-headed Vireo in Okaloosa, FL 8 May (LW) was the latest for

the area by six days. There were five reports of Black-whiskered Vireo from s. Louisiana, with 2 from *Cameron* 7 (DP) & 25 Apr (DLD, SWC) and 3 from the Grand I. area 9 Apr (PS), 1 May (vt. PAW, vt. DPM, RDP), and 3 May (RDP). One at Dauphin I. 19 Mar (RH) was very early. A Northern Rough-winged Swallow 7 Mar at Shannon, MS (WP) was early, as was a Bank Swallow 20 Mar in *St. Mary*, LA (BFo). The Craig Fish Hatchery, AR hosted 80 Banks 14 May (JN, MM, RG), an impressive number. Early Cliff Swallows were in New Orleans 14 Mar (EW, DPM), and 2 of this species 93 km s. of Southwest Pass 5 May (DLD et al.) were interesting trans-Gulf migrants. Cave Swallows were widespread in the extreme s. part of the Region from as far e. as F.W.B.S.F. 9 Apr (AK et al.) and Ft. Morgan 29 Mar (BKF). In Louisiana, they were seen at their regular location at Sabine Pass throughout the period (m.ob.) and also found among breeding Cliff Swallows 31 May (DPM), for the first documented *Orleans* record. The *Cameron* fallout of 2 May produced 400 Gray Catbirds (BMM, CCS, PC).

Outside of Louisiana, Gold-en-winged Warbler, a species of concern, was reported from Columbus, MS 29 Apr (TS, MS) and Wapvanocca N.W.R., AR 15 May (KN, LN). A Tennessee Warbler was early in New Orleans 23 Mar (DPM). The fallout of 2 May also produced 20 Chestnut-sided and 150 Magnolia Warblers, along with 80 Black-and-whites, 70 American Redstarts, and 25 Northern Waterthrushes (BMM, CCS, PC). Pangburn, AR had 40 Chestnut-sided Warblers 14 May (KN). Cape May Warblers were widely reported 24 Apr-4 May in Louisiana, which is w. of their normal migration route. The largest number was 5 in the Grand I. area 1 May (vt. PAW, RDP, DPM). Black-throated Blues were also w. of their normal path, with a male in *Cameron* 25 Apr (PAW) and a female at Grand I. 1 May (DPM). An alternate-plumaged male *Audubon's* Warbler was a good find at Dauphin I. 15 Apr (LW). A Western Palm Warbler was late at Fourchon, LA 16 May (PAW, BMM, DPM, RDP). Grand I. hosted 2 early Bay-breasted Warblers 13 Apr (CCS, PAW). There were seven reports of the threatened Cerulean Warbler 9-28 Apr from Louisiana and Mississippi. Schiefer reported 20 Swainson's Warblers from the seven-county area in Mississippi 11 Apr+, and 7 were at Pond Creek N.W.R., AR 23 May (DA). A singing

Ovenbird in *Benton*, MS 29 May (WRP) was suggestive of breeding. A Mourning Warbler at Heron Bay, MS 21 May (NB, LB) provided only the 2nd spring record from coastal Mississippi. A count of 94 Hooded Warblers 12 Apr at Grand I. (BMM) was indicative of a strong flight grounded by a front. Myers, who has as much experience as anyone in the Region with trans-Gulf migration, was at a loss to explain the 1420 CDT arrival of the flight, since headwinds



This female Bronzed Cowbird, of the expected *aeneus* subspecies (in which the female is blackish), was paired at Annsley, Hancock, Mississippi with a male Bronzed for most of the spring (here 25 April 2004). Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

should have put the flight much later. Wilson's Warbler, rare in the Region during spring migration, was reported from Tensas N.W.R., LA 4 May (SS), Pangburn, AR 14 May (KN, LN), and Wapvanocca N.W.R., AR 15 May (KN), with 2 at the last location.

### TANAGERS THROUGH COWBIRDS

An ad. male Western Tanager, especially rare in the Region outside of Louisiana, was found 18 Apr at Ft. Pickens, FL (BS, BM et al.). Bachman's Sparrow, a species of highest concern, was reported from Ouachita N.F., AR 1 Mar (JN), Noxubee N.W.R. 26 Apr (TS, MS), and Ft. Chaffee, AR 8 May (SB), with 3 birds at the last location. Mt. Magazine S.P., AR welcomed the return of 6 singing Rufous-crowned Sparrows 29 Mar (DS). They had been absent from this traditional location for several years until recently. A single Clay-colored Sparrow near Fayetteville 21 Apr (MM) was a scarce spring migrant. There were seven reports of Henslow's Sparrow, a species of highest concern, from Arkansas and Louisiana 14 Mar-17 May. The fallout at Grand I. 12 Apr included 61 Indigo Buntings (BMM), more evidence of a strong flight. *Lazuli Bunting* is rare anywhere in the Region, so 2 this season provided a special treat. The first showed up 22 Apr s. of Oxford, MS (TH),

providing a 3rd state record, and the other was in Alexander 4 May (JP), for the 4th Arkansas record. A single Bobolink at Ft. Pickens 28 Mar (PB, PBe) was either an extremely early migrant or an equally amazing wintering bird! Spectacular is the only way to describe 1000, mostly singing male, Bobolinks 3 May near Waveland, MS (NB). There was one report of Yellow-headed Blackbird from Louisiana and two from Arkansas. The species is uncommon in the Region in spring. The expanding Great-tailed Grackle population was represented by an ad. male in Midway, AR 2 May (KN, LN). Reports of Shiny Cowbirds, unfortunately, were more numerous than usual. The first was in *Escambia*, FL 19 Apr (BF), followed by up to 2 in Grand I. 1 May (vt. DPM, RDP, PAW). A different bird, a first-year male, was in Grand I. 16 May (vt. PAW, RDP, DPM), and on the same day as many as 4, including 2 which were identified as female, were at Ft. Morgan (MJ). Finally, one was in *Orleans* 23 May+ (vt. PAW, DPM).

Initialed observers (subregional editors in boldface): Leif Anderson, David Arbour, Scott Atkin-

son, Peggy Baker, Pam Beasley (PBe), Jerry Bird, Lucy Boyajian, Ned Boyajian, Winston Caillouet, Steven W. Cardiff, Laura Catterton, Jennifer Coulson, Paul Conover, Steve J. Dinsmore, Donna L. Dittmann, Lucy R. Duncan, Robert A. Duncan (w. Florida), Barry K. Fleming, Brian Faherty, Bill Fontenot (BFo), Perk & Leanah Floyd, Ben Garmon, Gay Gomez, Russell Graham, Geoff E. Hill, Robert Hoffman, Tom Hoar, Debra G. Jackson, **Greg D. Jackson** (Alabama), Michael Jordan, Helen Kittinger, Joanne Kleiman, **Joe P. Kleiman** (Louisiana), Gene & Shannon Knight, Alan Knothe, Daniel F. Lane, Don McKee, Marion McCollum (MMc), David P. Muth, B. Mac. Myers, Brian Monk, Charles Mills, Mike Mlodinow, Joe Neal, Kenny Nichols, LaDonna Nichols, **Helen & Max Parker** (Arkansas), Wayne Patterson, Dave Patton, W. Robert Peoples, Janine Perlman, Gary Pontiff, R. Dan Purrington, J. Van Remsen, Allen Stickley, Marion Schiefer, **Terence Schiefer** (Mississippi), Don Simmons, Scott Somershoe, Curt C. Sorrells, Phil Stouffer, Brian Specht, Dan Twedt, Chrys Vildibill, Ed Wallace, Phillip A. Wallace, Louise Watson (LoW), Ralph Watson, Laura West, Katherine White. I received more reports than I had room to include, and I would like to thank those observers I could not cite specifically. ☉