

Winter could be characterized as warm and dry. December was cool with rain early, while January and February seemed almost balmy. Temperatures reached near or above 70° F on several dates, while going below freezing on only a few dates.

## LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Red-throated and Pacific Loons, once difficult to find in the Region, are now almost commonplace. Single Red-throated Loons were reported from Guntersville, Marshall, AL 29 Dec (SWM, m.ob.), Choctawhatchee Bay, Okaloosa, FL 16 Dec (DWA), Grenada L., Grenada, MS 4 Dec (SJD), Bay Springs L., Tishimongo, MS 5 Dec–28 Feb+ (SJD, WP, PP), and Bayou Caddy, Hancock, MS 2 Jan (NB). Two Pacific Loons were at Guntersville, AL 23 Dec–13 Feb (SWM, m.ob.). Rare in Arkansas, 2 Pacifics were in the Caddo Bend area of DeGray L., Clark 23 Jan–20 Feb (GG, EG, DH, HR, LY, JM). Singles were seen at Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa, FL 9–30 Jan (RAD, LRD) and Gulf Islands N.S., Santa Rosa, FL 22 Jan (JB, PM, RM). Up to 3 were on Bay Springs L., MS 5–28 Dec (SJD, WP, PP).

Single Red-necked Grebes were at Guntersville, AL 12 Dec–2 Jan (RAR, LBR, m.ob.) and in Tunica, MS 16 Jan (GK, SK, JRW), where the species is accidental. Eared Grebes put in a fair showing, with 5 on the Pine Bluff C.B.C., Jefferson, AR 29 Dec; 2 at the Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields, Okaloosa, FL 4 Dec–10 Feb (RAD, LRD, m.ob.); and up to 5 on Ross Barnett Res., Madison, MS 26–29 Dec (GK, SK, SJD). An accommodating Western Grebe, Alabama's 4th, was at Spring Cr., Lawrence 19 Jan–5 Feb (DJS, m.ob.).

A Masked Booby at Perdido Pass, Baldwin, AL 2 Jan (SWM) was most unexpected. As in recent years in the Region, American White Pelicans wintered far inland. In Alabama, 10 were at Spring Cr. 25 Dec (SWM); up to 34 were on Limestone Bay, Wheeler N.W.R., Limestone 9 Jan–4 Feb (SWM, GDJ, DGJ, CDC); 22 were at Bear Cr., Colbert 24–26 Jan (PDK); and 50 were near Birmingham, Jefferson 5 Feb (GJH). In Arkansas, 23 were found on the Conway C.B.C., Faulkner 18 Dec, and 77 were recorded on the Pine Bluff C.B.C. 29 Dec. Single Anhingas were near Gulf Shores, Baldwin, AL 4 Feb (CB) and at Noxubee N.W.R., Noxubee, MS 1 Dec–20 Jan, representing the 6th area winter record. Single Cattle Egrets, rare in Arkansas in winter, were seen near Clarendon 11 Dec and along Hwy. 165 between DeWitt and Stuttgart 23 Dec (JP).

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks have been noted in modest numbers in Louisiana over the past few years. However, the report of "several thousand" (DBo, *vide* JHu) throughout the period in the rice field–crayfish complex between Gueydan and L. Arthur

# Central Southern



(Cameron/Jefferson) is phenomenal but should be verified carefully. Ross's Geese were found in 11 locations, with a maximum of 3000 in Humphreys, MS 16 Jan (SJD, PB). With the elevation of Cackling Goose to full specific status, a flood of records came in. In Alabama, up to 4 were present 20 Nov–30 Jan on Limestone Bay, Wheeler N.W.R. (m.ob.); 2 were near Lillian, Baldwin 30 Dec (RAD, LRD, HEH, LC, m.ob.); and 19 were at Fairhope, Baldwin 25 Jan (DPI, ALM). Two reports from Louisiana included 5 at E. Jetty, Cameron 18 Dec (DPM, PAW) and an amazing 1500–2000 near L. Arthur, Cameron/Jefferson (DPM, PAW, RDP, PC, JB). In Mississippi, up to 4 were at Browning Creek L., Oktibbeha 15 Dec–24 Feb (TLS, RW, LW); 1–3 were in Leflore 4 Dec–1 Jan (SJD); 2 were at Sardis State Refuge, Lafayette 18 Dec (GK, VT); 14 were in Humphreys 31 Dec (SJD); up to 9 were in Tunica 1 Jan–19 Feb (GK, SK, SJD, m.ob.); and 2 were in Quitman 15 Jan (SJD). Trumpeter Swans were reported from three locations in Arkansas. Two, including a neck-collared female released in Iowa in 2001, were at Mammoth Springs S.P., Fulton 24 Dec (GP); 2, with red neck-collars indicating release in Iowa, were found at Siloam Springs, Benton 2 Feb (AD); and an amazing 88 were at Magness L., Cleburne through 18

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Feb (JOG, SJG, KR). One on Ross Barnett Res., MS 25 Dec (SJD) was presumably the same bird that has been present there for more than a year. Up to 4 Tundra Swans were present in Lauderdale, AL 3–29 Dec (DJS, m.ob.).

Alabama's 11th Eurasian Wigeon was a male at Eufaula N.W.R., Barbour 12 Feb (GEH, TH). The 5105 Ring-necked Ducks reported on the C.B.C. at Wheeler N.W.R. 18 Dec was an Alabama maximum. A female-type Surf Scoter was at Guntersville, AL 29 Dec (LWe, SWM); 2 imms. were reported from fish farms in Prairie, AR 8 Dec (KN, LDN); and a juv. was on L. Caroline, Madison, MS 26 Dec (SJD). In Louisiana, up to 7 were recorded from L. Pontchartrain, Or-



A juvenile light-morph Ferruginous Hawk photographed 4 January 2005 in Tunica County, Mississippi represents the first confirmed state record and about the seventh state report overall. This cooperative bird was present for several weeks and seen by many. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

leans 26 Jan–21 Feb (BMM, RDP, DPM, PAW). Single White-winged Scoters were on Browning Cr. L., MS 18 Nov–10 Dec (TLS, m.ob.) and L. Caroline, MS 26 Dec (SJD). A female Black Scoter was on Wheeler N.W.R., AL 7–8 Jan (JH, SS, PDK, m.ob.), while an imm. was on L. Dardanelle, Yell, AR 2 Jan (KN, LDN, DB, SDV). A female Long-tailed Duck was a good find near Leighton, Colbert, AL 23 Feb+ (DJS), as were a male and female on L. Pontchartrain, LA 11–24 Dec (PAW, DPM, BMM). The only Common Merganser reported was a female on Grenada L., MS 24 Dec (SJD). The 1300 Ruddy Ducks on Guntersville L., AL 20 Jan (GDJ, DGJ) was a good number.

The only White-tailed Kites reported were a pair near Lacassine N.W.R. Pool, Jefferson Davis, LA 30 Dec–7 Jan (LH, LD, THy, NH). Alabama's 5th Northern Goshawk was an imm. photographed and seen well in Birmingham 24–31 Jan (SWi, m.ob.). A Broad-winged Hawk near Tensaw L., Baldwin, AL 9 Jan (CK, KK) was unexpected. Singles were in Louisiana at Ft. Jackson, Plaquemines 2 Jan–28 Feb+ (CR, DPM, PAW) and near Galiano, Lafourche 27 Feb (PAW, DPM, RDP). Swainson's Hawks wintered at three locations in Louisiana, with an ad. at Bayou Sauvage N.W.R., Orleans 11–21 Dec (PAW, DPM), one at E. Jetty 18 Dec (DPM, PAW), and an imm. near Venice, Plaquemines 2–30 Jan (DPM, CE, MT, PAW). Mississippi's 2nd Ferruginous Hawk was a juv. near Robinsonville, Tunica 28 Dec–6 Jan (JRW, m.ob.). An ad. Rough-legged Hawk was in Tunica, MS 15 Jan–19 Feb (GK, SK, JRW, RB); an ad.

female was carefully studied along Hwy. 1 between St. Charles and DeWitt, Arkansas 23 Dec (JP). The only Crested Caracara report was of 2 at Goose I., Cameron, LA 7 Jan (LH, LD).

### CRANES THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Sandhill Cranes were widely reported, with a maximum of 600 wintering at Wheeler N.W.R., AL 14 Nov–23 Feb (CDC, SWM, m.ob.). Five Piping Plovers, the only ones reported, were at E. Jetty Beach, LA 18 Dec (PAW, DPM). Two Black-necked Stilts were in Escambia, FL 31 Jan (CB), furnishing the first local Jan record. Rare in winter, Spotted Sandpiper was seen in Alabama, where one was at Guntersville 20 Jan (GDJ). In Arkansas, singles were at L. Pine Bluff, Jefferson, 26 Dec (RD) and in the White River N.W.R., Arkansas 12 Jan and 24 Feb (JP), while 2 were at Boyd Point Sewage Treat-



This juvenile female Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Port Gibson, Claiborne, Mississippi (here 29 December 2004) was confirmed by banders; the species is a casual winter visitor to Mississippi. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

ment Ponds, Jefferson 29 Dec (RD, WS). The largest concentration of Dunlin reported was 2500 on Grand I., Jefferson, LA 27 Feb (PAW, DPM, RDP). Seventeen Stilt Sandpipers were recorded on the Mobile–Tensaw C.B.C., Mobile, AL 19 Dec (HEH). Over 3000 Short-billed Dowitchers were on Grand I., LA 27 Feb (PAW, DPM, RDP), while 1500 Long-billed Dowitchers were near Skene, Bolivar, MS 16 Dec (GK, SK).

Laughing Gulls continue to winter inland: single ads. were at Guntersville, AL 29 Dec (SWM) and L. Dardanelle Dam, AR 1 Dec–28 Feb+ (m.ob.). An ad. Franklin's Gull was at Wilson Dam, Colbert, AL 30 Nov–5 Dec (DJS, SWM). Little Gulls were in Vermilion, LA 19 Feb (SWC, DLD), on Enid L., MS 11 Dec (SJD), and Ross Barnett Res., MS 25 Dec (SJD, GK), all first-winter birds. Alabama's 7th California Gull was also a first-winter bird, at Guntersville 2 Feb (RAR); a second-winter California was at the Tunica Landfill, MS 30 Jan (GK, SK). Single Thayer's Gulls, all juv./first-winter, were reported from the Magnolia Springs Landfill, Baldwin, AL 30 Dec–13 Jan (RAD, LRD, m.ob.), Speigner, Elmore, AL 19–26 Feb (LFG, BCG), L. Dardanelle Dam, AR 28 Nov–20 Jan (KN, LDN), at the landfill near Abbeville, Vermilion, LA 19 Feb (SWC, DLD), and at the Tunica landfill, MS 15–16 Jan (GK, SK, JRW, RB). Alabama's 4th and 5th Iceland Gulls were first-winter birds at Wheeler Dam/Trinity, Lawrence/Morgan 15–30 Jan (GDJ, JRW, m.ob) and Magnolia Springs Landfill 15 Feb (BS, LC); another in Escambia, FL 20 Feb (LC) provided just the 3rd record for the nw. portion of the state. A reported Thayer's × Iceland Gull was at Guntersville, AL 2–4 Feb (RAR, LBR, m.ob.). Single first-winter Glaucous Gulls in Alabama were at the Magnolia Springs Landfill through 30 Dec (LC, LRD, RAD, m.ob.), along the Tennessee R. ranging widely in Colbert/Lauderdale/Lawrence/Morgan 16 Jan–28 Feb+ (LFG, m.ob.), and at Speigner 12–28 Feb+ (TRP, m.ob.). Lesser Black-backed Gulls put in an impressive showing. In Alabama, a first-winter Lesser was at Wilson Dam 30 Nov (DJS), an ad. was at Wheeler Dam 25 Dec–19 Jan (SWM, m.ob.), and 4 were at the Magnolia Springs Landfill 29 Dec–28 Feb+ (LC, RAD, m.ob.). Another was found on Millwood L., Little River, AR, 19 Dec (CM). Northwest Florida's 5th and 6th records were in Escambia: 2 ads. 30–31 Jan (LC, RAD, CB) and one imm. 20 Feb (LC). In Louisiana, 2 were near Abbeville 15 Jan–19 Feb (SWC, DLD, PC, m.ob.), and an ad. was at L. Pontchartrain 12 Feb (DPM). In Mississippi, 2 were at the Tunica Landfill 15–30 Jan (GK, SK, JRW, RB).

Up to 4 Inca Doves were near Thibodaux, LA 2 Jan (m.ob.), where they are becoming increasingly regular. Mississippi's first Ruddy Ground-Dove was a male near Skene 14–20 Dec (CS, DR, JM, m.ob.). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Columbus, Lowndes, MS 10 Dec (DP) was the latest area departure date by 42 days. A Lesser Nighthawk was found at E. Jetty, LA 18 Dec (PAW, DPM), while single nighthawks on the Gulf Shores C.B.C. in Alabama 2 Jan (RRR, EGR) and on St. George I., Franklin, FL 1 Dec (TEL) may have been Lessers. Two Vaux's Swifts in Baton Rouge, E.

**SA** The 3 Whooping Cranes found near Belle Mina, Limestone on the Wheeler N.W.R. C.B.C. 18 Dec (RRS, MBS, m.ob.) were the first seen in Alabama since 1899. These Operation Migration Project birds (tag numbers 203, 215, and 216, from the 2002 cohort) frequented a flooded cornfield and were seen by hundred of birders over the next few days. Unfortunately, on 23 Dec, one of the three became separated from the group, and its transmitter's mortality signal was detected by Operation Migration personnel. On 10 Jan, after an exhaustive search, the scavenged body of the crane was found and forwarded for necropsy. In the mean time, the 2 remaining Whooping Cranes departed the area on 26 Dec and arrived at Chassahowitzka N.W.R. in Florida two days later, thus completing their fall migration. Results are still pending on the cause of death of the flockmate.

*Baton Rouge*, LA 3 Feb (ELJ) continued the recent trend of winter sightings at this location. The sheer number of hummingbirds wintering in the Region has been well chronicled in these pages over the past decade. Preliminary reports indicate a surfeit of hummers in the Region this season: Broad-billed (2); Buff-bellied (54); Ruby-throated (64); Black-chinned (106); Anna's (2); Calliope (20); Broad-tailed (6); and Rufous/*Selasphorus* sp. (244); and Allen's (8).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

In Venice, LA, a Least Flycatcher was seen 30 Jan–28 Feb+, an unidentified *Empidonax* was present 30 Jan (both DPM, PAW), and a Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher was documented 2 Jan (PAW, CR, JF, JS). A Brown-crested Flycatcher, rarely reported in the Region, was found in Orleans, LA 26 Dec–28 Feb+ (PAW, DPM). A Bell's Vireo was seen at the W. Jetty, LA 18 Dec (BMM, RDP). The Regional decline of Bewick's Wren has been well documented. The only reports received were of single birds on the Conway C.B.C., AR 18 Dec and near L. Claiborne, Claiborne, LA 8 Feb (BMM, PAW, m.ob.). Two Sprague's Pipits were reported without details from Eglin A.F.B., FL 5 Dec (LF). Single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were found in the White River N.W.R., AR 13 Jan (JP) and 24 Jan (JP, CJ). Wintering vireos in that refuge included a White-eyed 26 Jan (CJ, JP) and single Blue-headed 17 Dec (JP) and 25 Jan (JP, CJ), and a Wood Thrush was videotaped there 24 Jan (JP, CJ), potentially a first state record in midwinter.

Northwest Florida's 2nd Dec Tennessee Warbler was in Pensacola 4 Dec (JL, FB). Single Nashville Warblers were at Ft. Walton Beach, FL 20 Dec (JK, VS) and in Cameron, LA 18 Dec (MW). A Yellow Warbler was present at Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields 10–20 Dec (DWa, RAD, JK, VS). A female Black-throated Gray Warbler was in Venice, LA 30 Jan (PAW, DPM). Single Black-throated Green Warblers were reported in Louisiana at Avery I., Iberville 2 Jan (DPa, PC), Venice 30 Jan (DPM, PAW), and Grand Isle 27 Feb (PAW, DPM). In Louisiana, individual Ovenbirds were at Triumph, Plaquemines (LE, RDP) and Avery I., (DPa, PC), both 2 Jan. Northern Waterthrushes were present at Venice 2–30 Jan (PAW, DPM, CR) and Grand Isle 27 Feb, both in Louisiana. A Yellow-breasted Chat was in E. Jetty Woods, Cameron, LA 18 Dec (PAW, DPM) and in Vermilion, LA 16 Jan (PAW, DPM, RDP, PC).

Casual in winter, ad. male Summer Tanagers were at Trinity, AL 25 Dec (KM) and Fayetteville, Pulaski, AR throughout the reporting period (SC, BC), while a female was at Pensacola, FL 10–24 Dec (BT, NN, DN). The only Scarlet Tanager reported was one near Point a la Heche, Plaquemines, LA 20 Dec

(JHu). A female Western Tanager was reported from Gulfport, MS, late Jan–25 Feb (JAT).

Single Lark Sparrows, rare in winter, were reported on the Fort Morgan C.B.C., Baldwin, AL 30 Dec; in E. *Baton Rouge*, LA 2 Jan (CW, SaW); at Raceland, LA 2 Jan (LAR, DS); and at the Mississippi State University South Farm, *Oktibbeha*, MS 30 Jan (RW, LW). Two Le Conte's Sparrows were near Waveland, Hancock, MS throughout the reporting period (NB), while 16 found at Sardis State Refuge, MS 18 Dec (GK, VT) was a good number. Harris's Sparrows are rather sporadic in the Region. Seven were in Maysville, Benton, AR 29 Jan (JN, MM); one was in Oak Grove, W. Carroll, LA 15 Dec–28 Feb+ (RO); and one was reported near Kosciusko, Attala, MS 3 Dec–28 Feb+ (FH, m.ob.). A Smith's Longspur was in nw. Arkansas in Washington 11 Dec (MM), where the species has not been seen in more than 10 years, and 2 were in Tunica, MS 6 Jan (WRP, VR).

An ad. male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was recorded at a feeder at Reserve, St. John, LA 26 Dec–4 Jan (TR, PR). Single Blue Grosbeaks were near Gulf Breeze, FL 22 Feb (RAD), where an ad. male provided nw. Florida's 2nd Feb record; near St. Martinville, St. Martin, LA 10 Dec (JHu); and near St. Gabriel, LA 27 Dec–2 Jan (SWC, DLD). The only Painted Bunting reported was an ad.



A species casual in Mississippi, this hatch-year male Spotted Towhee in Bolivar County (here 24 December 2004) showed no obvious signs of hybridization with Eastern Towhee; note especially the thin white stripes on the mantle and the lack of a distinct white patch at the base of the outer primaries. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

male on the Gulf Shores C.B.C. in Foley, Baldwin, AL 2 Jan (HEH, TS). Dickcissels probably occur in the Region much more often than reported. An ad. male was found at Thibodaux, LA 30 Dec (SM, BM). A young male was near Port Gibson 29 Dec (SJD), and an ad. female was recorded near Sidon, Leflore 1 Jan (SJD, PB, KB), both in Mississippi.

Western Meadowlark is an enigmatic species, underreported because of the difficulty in separating it from Eastern. Three were on the White River C.B.C., Arkansas, AR 28 Dec (JRW), while singles were reported from Mississippi at the Indianola Airport, Sunflower 30 Dec (SJD, PB, DM) and in Tunica

ca 1 Jan (GK, SK). Alabama's 10th Bronzed Cowbird was an ad. male on the e. end of Dauphin I. 29 Jan–9 Feb (HEH, m.ob.). Some 3–5 Bullock's Orioles were in one yard at New Orleans, LA 24 Feb. Baltimore Orioles continue to be widely reported, with 17 individuals from 11 locations recorded. A Common Redpoll was present 13–18 Jan near Danville, Yell, AR (GH, m.ob.). Mississippi's 2nd Lesser Goldfinch was a female at Vicksburg, Warren 24 Dec–22 Feb (SW, DW, SSo, m.ob.).

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