

Southern Atlantic



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This summer's weather began with a somewhat cooler and wetter June but ended with July being about average in temperature and precipitation. There was an early-season storm, Hurricane Dennis, which affected the western parts of Georgia 11-13 July. This storm produced some interesting waterbird sightings in that portion of the Region. Nesting season success was apparently about average, with no major disruptions other than the usual nest-predation and cowbird parasitism. Continuing from the May period, gadfly petrels generated excitement offshore, while onshore, North Carolina had its first documented nesting of Wood Stork.

Abbreviations: E.L.H. (E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton, GA); H.B.S.P. (Huntington Beach S.P., Georgetown, SC); Hoop. (Hooper Lane, Henderson, NC); Kennesaw Mt. (Kennesaw Mt. National Battlefield Park, Cobb, GA); Pea I. (Pea Island N.W.R., Dare, NC); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper, SC).

LOONS THROUGH STORKS

Common Loons are regular lingerers in the Region each summer. This year's more notable sightings involved an impressive count of 40+ in the Oregon Inlet, NC area 5 Jun (RD), one with a broken wing in Georgetown, SC 24 Jun (JG), and one on L. Blue Ridge, Fannin, GA 19 Jul (fide TS). Another lingerer was the Horned Grebe in alternate plumage at L. Juliette, GA 12 Jul (MB); only a handful of summer reports exists for that state.

Pelagic trips produced a Fea's and 2 Herald Petrels off Hatteras, NC 11 Jun, 2 dark-morph Herald and 3 Fea's Petrels off Hatteras 19 Jun (BP), and a Bermuda Petrel off Hatteras 3 Jul (BP et al.). The latter bird was most unusual in that it exhibited a white nape, thus looking much more like a Black-capped; this is the first record of such a plumage according to D. B. Wingate. Other tubenose reports of note involved an excellent count of 237 Greater Shearwaters off Charleston, SC 10 Jun (ND), single Manx Shearwaters on a handful of trips off Hatteras, NC in Jun (BP), and single Band-rumped Storm-Petrels off Charleston, SC 10 Jun and 15 Jul (ND et al.). A storm-petrel at

West Point L., GA 11 Jul (fide LW) after Hurricane Dennis was not seen well enough to identify. Tropicbird sightings were about average, with single White-taileds off Manteo, NC 24 Jul and off Hatteras, NC 25 Jul (BP) and single Red-billeds off Hatteras, NC 12 Jun (BP), 16 Jul (SS, fide BP), and 30 Jul (BP); as usual, charter boat captains reported others, not identified to species. The imm. Brown Booby reported from the Oregon Inlet, NC area in late spring was possibly the same bird seen off Hatteras, NC 5 Jun (BP) and again onshore at Coquina Beach 3 Jul (SD) and 7-8 Jul at Nags Head Pier (MO, LZ). In South Carolina, an imm. Brown Booby washed up on Isle of Palms 8 Jun (MS). American White Pelicans continue to reside in the Region in good numbers, as evidenced by the 95 at Andrews I., GA 23 Jul (BZ). Very rare inland pelicans included 4 American Whites on a small lake in Transylvania, NC 11 Jun (fide WF), 3 Whites on L. Murray, SC 8 Jun (fide RC), and a Brown at L. Alatoona, GA 12 Jul (SP), the latter no doubt brought in by Hurricane Dennis. That storm also transported several Magnificent Frigatebirds into Georgia: 5 at Colquitt, Miller 9 Jul (fide MBI), 2 at L. Walter F. George 11 Jul, and 6 at L. Seminole 11 Jul (MB, EB). Coastal reports from North Carolina included singles near Cape Lookout 5 Jun (fide NB), at Ft. Macon 23 Jun (fide TP), and over Pea I. 14 Jun (S&MA). This species was also found offshore, where rarely observed, with one off Charleston, SC 15 Jul (ND et al.) and one off Savannah, GA 23 Jul (RW et al.).

There were the usual Reddish Egret reports this summer, with the best count being 10 on Little St. Simons I., GA during the period (BN). One along the Pamlico Sound shore near Hatteras, NC 9 Jul (BP) was the farthest north. Interesting inland reports included a Cattle Egret in the mts. at Hoop. 2 Jun (WF) and a *Plegadis ibis* flying over I-75 in Fulton, GA 22 Jul (EB). Roseate Spoonbills made an impressive showing this summer: excellent counts were 35 on Little St. Simons I., GA 25 Jul (BN), 24 at Andrews I., Brunswick, GA 2 Jul (GK), and 10 in the Savannah N.W.R., GA area late Jun-early Jul (fide DCh). Reports in North Carolina involved one in the Ocean Isle Beach area in mid-Jul (LS) and another or the same at Twin Lakes, Sunset Beach 31 Jul (E&CDe). Wood Storks made news this season, especially in North Carolina, where nesting took place at a lake on private property in extreme s. Columbus. First noted at the site during the spring season, 32 nests were counted during an aerial survey 1 Jun (MM,

SA Greater Shearwaters came through in better-than-average numbers this summer and unfortunately were involved in one of the biggest mortality events of the species seen in the Region in decades. Dead or dying Greaters were found along the entire Regional coastline in Jun, part of a phenomenon observed along much of the Atlantic coast. Several large counts of dead birds included 50+ shearwaters at Kiawah I., SC 13 Jun (CW) and 15+ on Little St. Simons I., GA in Jun (BN).

DA). While the species has been increasing in the area for some years, this constituted the first known breeding of storks in North Carolina; given this species' precarious status in the United States, it is a welcome addition to our breeding avifauna. Other interesting Wood Stork reports included singles out of their normal range at McDonough, Henry, GA 12 Jul (*fide* CL) and at Oxbow Meadows, Columbus, GA 11 Jul (WC).

WATERFOWL THROUGH CRANES

Lingering geese included a Snow Goose in Sumter, GA 16 Jun (PH), a Ross's Goose near Troy, Montgomery, NC 3 Jun (SCb), and a Cackling Goose at L. Junaluska, Haywood, NC 3-5 Jul (BO, JM), which may have been the same bird that wintered there. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were once again found in the Region, and a few were outside the usual south-coastal South Carolina areas. Three were at Shaw A.E.B., Sumter, SC 1 Jun (*fide* LM), 2 were at the Savannah, GA Airport ponds 4 Jun (DB et al.), and 2 were s. of Quitman, Brooks, GA 27 Jul (*fide* JS). Interesting ducks for the summer season involved a Redhead in a canal at Cedar Island N.W.R., NC 31 Jul (JV, *fide* JF), multiple Ring-necked Ducks from Georgia and North Carolina, a Lesser Scaup at Goose Creek, Pamlico, NC 8 Jun (CD), up to 2 Surf Scoters at Oregon Inlet, NC 8 Jul+ (JL), and single Red-breasted Mergansers at Jekyll I., GA 2 Jun (LT) and Little Tybee I., GA 3 Jun (RH). Nesting waterfowl of note included a female Hooded Merganser with 3 young near Alpharetta, GA 9 Jun (*fide* TM) and a female Ruddy Duck with 8 young at the S.S.S. 17 Jul (SC). Ruddy Shelducks of unknown provenance were a surprise at the E.L.H., with one 27 Jun and 2 noted 7-10 Jul (MD, CL). In the mid-Atlantic states, the great majority of reports of this highly nomadic species come from summer, as is also true in mainland w. Europe, the British Isles, Iceland, Greenland, and Nunavut.

Noteworthy summer raptor reports involved a late Swallow-tailed Kite e. of the North R., Carteret, NC 15 Jun (*fide* JF), a rare-in-summer Sharp-shinned Hawk in Durham, NC 9 Jul (MT), an ad. and 2 juv. Cooper's Hawks in Chapel Hill, NC 19 Jul (RG), and an ad. Golden Eagle over Craggy Gardens, Buncombe, NC in the first week of Jun (Helmuth Mueller). The only Black Rails reported came from the usual n. Greene, GA site, where 2 were calling 17 Jul (PWS). For the 2nd year in a row, several Common Moorhens nested at the E.L.H.; young were observed in early Jul (CL). American Coots are locally rare-but-regular summer residents, and this year 2 spent the entire period at Buckhorn Res., Wilson, NC (RD). Also unusual was the Sandhill Crane from the

spring lingering into Jun along Audubon Rd., Dekalb, GA (RT).

PLOVERS THROUGH TERNS

Observers at Hoop. 2-3 Jun noted an impressive group of shorebirds: a Black-bellied Plover, 16 Semipalmated Plovers, 30 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 2 Western Sandpipers,

H.B.S.P. jetty 12 Jun (ST). There were only 2 Curlew Sandpipers reported this summer, with singles at Little St. Simons I., GA 12 Jul (BW, *fide* BN) and at the S.S.S. 17 Jul (SC). These reports, if accepted by the respective state B.R.C.s, would represent South Carolina's 3rd or 4th and Georgia's 5th. American Woodcock is a very localized uncommon



This Greater Shearwater at Avon, Dare County, North Carolina was photographed in the surfline 20 July 2005, clearly an ailing bird. Hundreds of this species turned up dead and dying along the East Coast in June and July 2005. Photograph by Brian Taber.

and 5 White-rumped Sandpipers (DS, RS, WF). These birds were obviously late spring migrants and provided a most unusual report for that locality; Western Sandpipers are rather rare after mid-May. Other inland shorebirds of note this summer involved an American Avocet near Redbone, Lamar, GA 16 Jul (JO), a Willet at Hoop. 14-15 Jul (MW), a Sanderling at Carrboro, NC 2 Jun (GT), and 3 Short-billed Dowitchers at Hoop. 13 Jul (JLi, WF). Hurricane Dennis was most likely responsible for the single Willets (subspecies not reported) at West Point L. 10 Jul (BF et al.) and Oxbow Meadows 11 Jul (WC). An Upland Sandpiper was somewhat early at the Orangeburg, SC Sod Farm 10 Jul (TK), but the Whimbrel at Jekyll I., GA 16 Jun (LT) was either a very late spring or a very early fall transient. Long-billed Curlews returned to several of their usual locations somewhat early; 3 were on Little St. Simons I., GA by early Jul (BN), and 3 were at C. Romain N.W.R., SC 21 Jul (*fide* ND). Other inland shorebirds of note came from a new rice-farming operation in the fields just sw. of Roper, Washington, NC. Constant checking produced 3 Hudsonian Godwits 22 Jul, 3 Marbled Godwits 29 Jul, and 3 Short-billed Dowitchers 28 Jul (DR). Both godwits are very rare and unexpected away from the coast in the Region.

In the lingering shorebird department, a Purple Sandpiper was extremely tardy at the

summer resident: reports included 2 at Waco, Cleveland, NC 8 Jun (STp), one on Kiawah I., SC 13 Jul (JJ), one found dead on a road in Johnston, NC in early Jul (ET), and up to 2, including a juv. bird, at Leland, Brunswick, NC late Jun-early Jul (JE).

A South Polar Skua was a surprise less than 2 km off Shackleford Banks, Carteret, NC 6 Jul (RW, *fide* JF), while another was seen about 5 km off the beach during a fishing trip out of Hatteras, NC 6 Jun (*fide* BP). These birds clearly followed the shearwater flocks inshore this season. A Parasitic Jaeger was found inland at L. Seminole, GA 11 Jul (EB, MB) after Hurricane Dennis. Other jaeger reports included a Pomarine off Charleston, SC 10 Jun (ND), a good count of 3 Long-tailed off Hatteras, NC 12 Jun (BP), and a Long-tailed near Cape Pt., Dare 10 Jun (BP). Hurricane Dennis brought numbers of gulls and terns to w. Georgia. On 11 Jul, there were 10 Laughing Gulls at L. Walter F. George, 4 Royal Terns at L. Seminole, a Royal at L. Walter F. George, 2 Least Terns at L. Seminole, 26 Sooty Terns at L. Seminole, and 17 Sooties at L. Walter F. George (EB, MB). Sooty Terns were also at other lakes: 12 at West Point L., GA 12 Jul (EH) and 4 at L. Oliver near Columbus, GA 13 Jul (WC). Other noteworthy inland tern reports involved 5 Caspians late at Sweetwater Creek S.P., GA 1 Jun (CLO) and 2 Least at the E.L.H. 19 Jun (T&PM). Only one Arctic Tern was noted, that being

off Hatteras, NC 5 Jun (BP). Peak offshore totals for tropical terns were the 13 Bridleds off Charleston, SC 10 Jun (ND) and 67 Sooties off Hatteras, NC 30 Jul (BP). Inland Black Tern counts were uneventful; 8 at L. Walter F. George, GA 11 Jul (EB, MB) after Dennis and 8 at Lookout Shoals L., *Catawba*, NC 16 Jul (LMa) made the maxima.

DOVES THROUGH WAXWING

Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported from yet another new locality in the w. portion of North Carolina at Hazelwood, *Haywood* 3-5 Jul (2 birds; BB, BO). White-winged Doves continued to be reported, with singles at H.B.S.P. 27 Jul (PT), in e. *Chatham*, NC 27 Jul (*vide* CF), and in the village of Ocracoke, NC 28 Jul (SW). Easily one of the most unexpected birds of the summer was the ad. male **Broad-billed Hummingbird** photographed at a feeder in Colington, *Dare*, NC 15-16 Jul (MP, MSc, SM, JL). This bird provided the 2nd record for the state, the first being an imm. male present for about a week in Oct 2001 near New Bern.

Several tardy flycatchers were noted this summer; an Olive-sided in n. *Fairfield*, SC 5 Jun (RC) on a B.B.S. route and a Willow in sw. Raleigh, NC 4 Jun (JSn) were the latest of these late migrants. Gray Kingbirds made news this season: 6 were at the usual Jekyll I., GA site 24 Jul (DFr), and up to 2 were at a new site in Savannah, GA 6 Jul+ (SWa, DFr et al.). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers continued their presence in the Region, with one remaining from the spring season below the L. Thurmond Dam, *McCormick*, SC 4 Jun (RC, CE), a pair nesting near Comer, *Madison*, GA late Jun-early Jul (MF et al.), one s. of Pawleys I., SC 5-8 Jul (WA, JP et al.), and the nesting pair at McDonough, GA returning for the 4th year in a row (m.ob.).

A Warbling Vireo found near Morganton, *Fannin*, GA 10 Jun (PHo) was most unusual: it would be considered too late for a migrant, and the species has not been found nesting in that state. Common Ravens were once again found in the Raleigh-Durham, NC area, and farther e., one was observed several times in the Greenville area in late Jun- (VP). Cliff Swallows extended their breeding range southward: several nests were located near Seminole S.P., *Seminole*, GA 26 Jun (MBL). Also of interest was a huge swallow congregation in n. *Greene*, GA, where 385 Cliffs and 425 Barns were tallied 17 Jul (PS). American Robins were noted as being more common than usual along the immediate coast of Georgia and South Carolina, where normally scarce as nesters. A singing Swainson's Thrush below the High Bluff at Roan Mt., NC 26 Jun (RD) was an interesting find. This species is not known to nest in the Region but has bred in the s. Virginia mountains. Hermit Thrush does breed in the

North Carolina mts., and reports this summer came from Roan Mt., where 5 males were on territory 26 Jun (RD), from the Balsam Mts, where 4 separate territorial birds were noted, and from Mt. Mitchell (MW). A Wood Thrush on Skidaway I., GA 21 Jun (RW) was definitely unexpected in summer for that coastal locality. Cedar Waxwings again lingered at scattered sites in the Coastal Plain, and quite a few most likely nested. The best count was an impressive 12 in Manteo, NC 21 Jul, and nesting was confirmed in Tyrrell, NC for the 2nd year in a row (JL).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Blue-winged Warbler in sw. *Randolph*, NC 4 Jul (JaL) was most likely a non-breeding wanderer, but an early migrant would not be out of the question. A probable breeding warbler was the Magnolia singing on territory at Roan Mt., NC 26 Jun (RD), at a site where summer reports have come from in the past. Also in the Roan Mt. area, Yellow-rumped Warblers were once again found in summer. This year, a singing male remained on territory near the High Bluff trail 17 (TMc) & 26 Jun (RD), but no female was observed. Another male Yellow-rumped was at Mt. Mitchell, NC in Jun (TD, MW), again with no evidence of nesting. In the inexplicable department was the Yellow-rumped Warbler found in the Elizabethan Gardens on Roanoke I., NC 1 Jul (JL)! Other late warblers included a Blackpoll at Skyland, *Buncombe*, NC 2 Jun (STp) and a Northern Waterthrush along the New R., *Alleghany*, NC 4 Jun (RD). A female Mourning Warbler seen at the Alleghany unit of the New River S.P. 4 Jun (RD) was a surprise, apparently a migrant, as the bird was on the move. Cerulean Warbler is one of the earliest fall migrants, and this season, one was on the move as early as 4 Jul, when noted in n. *Fulton*, GA (EH). The peak early count at Kenesaw Mt. was 11 on 31 Jul (BZ).

Unusual was the singing Savannah Sparrow at Hoop, 13 Jun (WF). This was probably a non-breeding wanderer, as the species is not known to nest in the s. portion of the state's mountains. Another sparrow pushing the limits of its normal summer range was the Song Sparrow found in *McCormick*, SC 4 Jun (RC). This bird could also have been a wanderer. Obvious late migrants were a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder in Chapel Hill, NC 4 Jun (JFr) and a male in n. *Chatham*, NC 4-5 Jun (MTr). Several Painted Buntings were found at new sites, with 2 males along the Newport R. estuary, *Carteret*, NC 12 Jun (JF) and a male se. of Sardis, *Florence*, SC 26 Jun (RC). Dickcissels were found in the Region in higher-than-normal numbers this summer. The best count involved the amazing

group of at least 27 at North R. Farms, *Carteret*, NC 11 Jun (JF, JFe). These birds remained throughout the period and nesting occurred, as a juv. was noted by early Aug (JF). Other good counts included 10+ in *Oconee*, GA in early Jun (*vide* JFl) and 10 along Crowder Rd., *Newberry*, SC 6 Jun (DSI). In e. North Carolina, a nest was photographed in *Pender* in Jun (*vide* CM), and 2 flightless young were found at Garner's Ferry near Columbia, SC 12 Jun (JW, DSI et al.). Also in the Garner's Ferry area, 3 Bobolinks were quite late 3 Jun (JW et al.). The Purple Finch at a feeder in Todd, *Watauga*, NC 17 Jun (WCo) was absurdly late for that species anywhere in the Region. Red Crossbills were reported several times, with 5 at Mile Hi Overlook, Heintooga Rd., Great Smoky Mountains N.P., NC 4 Jun (MW et al.), up to 8 at feeders in the Suches, *Union*, GA area 11 Jul (BZ), and one along Billingsley Creek Rd., *Rabun*, GA 11 Jun (JFl, EH). A very late or non-breeding wanderer was the Pine Siskin present at a feeder near Chapel Hill, NC 9-10 Jun (KF).

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