

Ricky Davis

This winter's weather was generally mild, with December and January temperatures decidedly warmer than usual. Only in February were temperatures closer to normal. Rainfall was definitely not normal. Many areas, especially the inland portion of the Region, experienced rainfall deficits averaging over 15 cm. The mild winter was probably not too rough on the wintering birds and was clearly responsible for increased numbers of lingering species and winter rarities, as well as for reduced numbers of waterfowl. Highlights this season involved the continued increase in goose numbers, more reports than usual for western Red-tailed Hawks, a good variety of flycatchers, wintering Cave Swallows, wintering warblers and tanagers, and an influx of Bullock's Orioles.

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); L. Matt. (L. Mattamuskeet N.W.R., Hyde, NC); Pea I. (Pea Island N.W.R., Dare, NC); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper, SC).

WATERFOWL THROUGH WADERS

Wintering goose numbers were again higher this winter, continuing the trend that started in the 1990s. Greater White-fronted Geese were found in all three states, in eight Georgia, three North Carolina, and two South Carolina locations. The best total was 17 on the Eufaula N.W.R., GA C.B.C. 19 Dec (*vide* SP). Snow Goose numbers at the traditional e. North Carolina wintering areas passed the 90,000 mark: 72,053 on the Pettigrew S.P. C.B.C. 30 Dec (*vide* LW) and 18,000 on the L. Matt. C.B.C. 29 Dec (*vide* AB). Small groups of Snows were also found throughout the Region, the farthest s. being 12 on Little St. Simons I., GA 19 Jan (*vide* NVL). Ross's Geese were noted in all three states; 8 at the Bradley Unit, Eufaula N.W.R., GA 11-13 Dec (SM, PL, PH) was the largest count. Cackling Geese, all apparently *hutchinsii*, were reported again:

1-3 at L. Matt. 11-29 Dec (RD, HL, WC), 2 at Bear I. W.M.A., SC 5-6 Jan (RS, DF, RC, CE et al.), one at the Pungo Unit, Pocosin Lakes N.W.R., NC 4 Feb (RD), 5 in s. Twiggs, GA 19 Feb+ (JFL, EH et al.), and one at Santee N.W.R., SC 26 Feb (LG). Puddle duck numbers were down in many areas this winter, as is expected in mild winters. Diving ducks seemed to be present in normal numbers, with interesting counts including 150 Red-heads at Garden Lakes, Rome, GA 23 Feb (MD), almost 2200 Ring-necked Ducks at the E.L.H. 7 Jan (CL et al.), and 33 Black Scoters at Carters L., GA 3 Dec (BZ et al.), the latter providing a new high count for the Piedmont of that state. There were only two reports of Common Eider in each of the Carolinas, while South Carolina had 2 Harlequin Ducks: an ad. male at Myrtle Beach 17 Jan-early Feb (PL et al.) and an imm. male at H.B.S.P. 7-15 Jan (ST et al., ND et al.). Noteworthy inland waterfowl included a White-winged Scoter at West Point L., GA 7 Dec (EB, MB), up to 19 Common Goldeneyes there 26 Dec (KB), a

the best count once again coming from Plant Scherer-L. Juliette area, Monroe, GA 3 Dec (JS et al.). Rare from shore were 2 Manx Shearwaters, one at Ft. Fisher, NC 21 Dec (JE) and one at Nags Head, NC 5 Jan (RK).

American White Pelicans continue their increasing presence in the Region. The best counts included 109 on the ACE Basin, SC C.B.C. 1 Jan (*vide* PLa), 80 near St. Mary's, Camden, GA 3 Feb (PS et al.), and up to 30 at Drum Inlet, Carteret, NC 22 Jan (*vide* JF). The farthest inland were the 15 at West Point L., GA 3 Dec (EB, MB) and 9 at Eufaula N.W.R., GA 8 Jan (JFL et al.). Only one inland Brown Pelican was found, that being at Eufaula N.W.R., GA 3 Dec (JFL, EH). Farther inland than usual in winter was the Anhinga at Holt's L., Johnston, NC 10 Dec (CS). The most unusual reports of long-legged waders were a Great Egret far inland on the Peachtree City, GA C.B.C. 17 Dec (*vide* TM), 2 Cattle Egrets at Phinizy Swamp, Augusta, GA in Jan (LS), and a Green Heron far inland at L. Acworth, Cobb, GA 10 Jan (SPg). Georgia had single



There are few documented winter reports of Chuck-will's-widow in North Carolina. This individual was located in Buxton Woods, Dare County, North Carolina 27 December 2005; a photograph from the same location appears in *North American Birds* 55: 247. Photograph by Audrey Whitlock.

Common Merganser at Parr Res., Newberry, SC 12-14 Feb (TK, RC, CE), and another Common at Carter's L., GA 12 Feb+ (JSp et al.). Two Red-throated Loons at West Point L., GA 7 & 14 Dec (EB, MB) and one on L. Norman, NC 23 Dec (DW et al.) were the only ones reported inland. Only one Pacific Loon was noted 31 Dec (DC) in the Common Loon flock at Wrightsville Beach, NC this winter, a far cry from the 3 last year. Red-necked Grebe was at L. Walter F. George, GA 19 Feb (EB, MB), the only report. Eared Grebes were found in normal numbers, with

Reddish Egrets in three locations, about average for recent winters.

RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

There was one report of Northern Goshawk this winter, an imm. seen briefly but well at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 20 Dec (BC). Reports of "Krider's"-type Red-tailed Hawks included an imm. in Gordon, GA 11 Dec (KB), another at the Jekyll I., GA causeway 18 Dec-18 Feb (PH et al., LT, SB), one near Cartersville, Bartow, GA 26 Dec (T&JFo), an ad. at the Savannah N.W.R., SC 1 Jan (SW),

one n. of Santee N.W.R., SC 1 Jan (LM), and an ad. in *Gordon*, GA 21 Feb (JSp). In Georgia, dark-morph *calurus* Red-taileds were reported at Oxbow Meadows 7 Jan (WCh) and in *Bartow* 28 Jan (JS, CL) and 19 Feb (JSp). Single light-morph Rough-legged Hawks were at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 10 Dec



Chris Eley found this Ash-throated Flycatcher vicinity of the campground at Cape Point, in Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Dare County, North Carolina 27 December 2005. There are about 10 previous records for the state. Photograph by Jim Reuter.

and 6 Jan (RD, HL, JP, RK) and in w. *Orange*, NC 10 Dec (DS et al.). This season's Golden Eagle sightings included an ad. in *Walker*, GA 3 Jan (JSp), an ad. at Stone Mountain S.P., NC 3 Feb (EHa), an imm. on the Pettigrew S.P. C.B.C. in North Carolina 30 Dec (SH et al.), an imm. at Alligator River N.W.R. 1 (JL) & 7 Jan (*vide* JL), plus an ad. there 16 Jan (RH et al.). Sandhill Cranes were reported more than usual this winter. The most interesting reports involved the excellent total of 5888 on the Atlanta, GA C.B.C. 18 Dec (*vide* BZ), 35 on the Clemson, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (SG et al.), and up to 6 in *Carteret*, NC 18 Dec+ (JF, m.ob.).

Wilson's Plovers regularly winter in small numbers in s. coastal areas, so of interest was the count of 71 at Jekyll I., GA 12 Jan (RW), record high for that state. Another count of note was of 26 Piping Plovers on Cumberland I., GA 3 Feb (PS). The Black-necked Stilts that lingered at the S.S.S. from the fall were last seen 15 Dec, when 2 were noted (SC, PL), providing a very rare winter report. Spotted Sandpiper reports were lower than usual, but one near Barnardsville, *Buncombe*, NC late Dec-late Jan (KC) was most unusual for the winter season. Seven Long-billed Curlews wintered at Cape Romain N.W.R., SC (ND), the highest count, and 3 were at Little St. Simons I., GA 3 Feb (BZ). Winter reports of Stilt Sandpiper, rather unusual, were of singles at the S.S.S. in late Dec (SC) and in nearby *Colleton*, SC 25 Feb (ND). Also rare in winter was the Ruff photographed in *Col-*

leton, SC 25 Feb (ND). There are few documented winter Ruffs in the Region.

Apart from the usual handful of sightings of jaegers along the beaches, a juv. Pomarine inland at Walter F. George L., GA 10-12 Dec (SM, PL) was a complete surprise. Franklin's Gull is not expected in the Region during winter, but there were two reports this year. The second-year bird at Tybee I., GA from the fall season was last noted 17 Dec (RW). In North Carolina, one was found at Mann's Harbor, *Dare* 14 Dec (JL), and it remained in the area until at least 15 Jan (DS et al.). What was presumably the same bird was then sighted nearby along the beach in the Oregon Inlet area 19 Jan (DL). Black-headed Gull sightings involved the returning ad. at the L. Matt. causeway 11 Dec-16 Jan (RD, DS et al., RH), one at the Jacksonville, NC W.T.P. 3-24 Feb (GG, JO et al.), and one at the Georgetown, SC W.T.P. 12 Feb (JBH et al.). Georgia got another California Gull report, a first-winter bird at Tybee I. 19-20 Feb (SB, JS et al.). The first for that state came in winter 2004-2005, near Macon, interestingly also a first-winter bird; North Carolina's reports of California Gull involve mostly adults. The only Thayer's Gull reported was the ad. inland at the *Wake*, NC landfill 11 Feb (DC). Other inland gulls of note were an imm. Glaucous at the Merry Ponds, Augusta, GA 17 Dec-early Jan (AW, LS) and a Lesser Black-backed at L. Norman, NC 18 Dec (TP). Alcids were scarce this winter as compared to last. Thick-billed Murre reports included one in the Murrells Inlet, SC jetty area 29 Dec (*vide* JPe) and again 15 Feb (ED et al.) and 2 in the surf at Nags Head, NC 11 Feb (Virginia Society of Ornithology, *vide* WC). Razorbills included one on the C. Hatt. C.B.C. 27 Dec (RD) and 2 on the Wilmington, NC C.B.C. 31 Dec (JF, JFe).

DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

Doves continued to increase, with Eurasian Collared-Doves being found in increasing numbers at various locations throughout the Region, and White-winged Doves again being noted from all three states. The best count of White-wingeds was 3 at Cadwell, *Laurens*, GA during the winter (*vide* BZ). Northern Saw-whet Owls were found several times: 2 at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 1 Jan (JL), 2+ in the Burrell's Ford area, GA/SC 15-24 Jan (KB et al., RWa et al.), and one near Brevard, NC 6

Feb (*vide* NS). Winter goatsuckers included a Whip-poor-will near the Newport R *Carteret*, NC 1 Dec (JF), another on the St Catherine's I., GA C.B.C. 17 Dec (*vide* EU), a Chuck-will's-widow on the C. Hatt. C.B.C. 27 Dec (PS et al.), and another at Ocracoke, NC 31 Dec (*vide* PV). The latter species is considerably rarer in winter than the former species.

Hummingbird reports were once again widespread. Highlights this winter included a female Ruby-throated banded far inland near Cohutta, *Whitfield*, GA 22 Jan (RT), the returning ad. male Black-chinned at Savannah, GA Dec-Jan (SC), an imm. male Calliope banded at N. Augusta, SC 27 Dec (DCu) Georgia's 4th through 6th Broad-tailed Hummingbirds (RT); 2 in the Atlanta area, one in *Rabun*, a female Rufous returning to a Shelby, NC yard for the 7th year (SCb), and the presence of 5 *Selasphorus* together all winter at Bakers Mt. Park, *Catawba*, NC (JSu, DM).

Flycatchers provided much excitement in the Region this winter. An unidentified *Empidonax* was a good find on the Savannah, GA C.B.C. 1 Jan (*vide* SC). North Carolina got its 4th Say's Phoebe when one was found at a large farm complex in *Carteret* 1-6 Dec (SCO, DC et al., WI, JL). In recent years, Vermilion



This Ruff, probably an early migrant, was photographed in Colleton, South Carolina on 25 February 2006, providing documentation of a rare winter-season occurrence for the Southern Atlantic region. Photograph by Nathan Dias.

Flycatcher has been almost annual in Georgia in winter. This year's bird was present at the Bradley Unit, Eufaula N.W.R. 12 Dec (PL, SM) through 29 Jan (MEM). North Carolina had at least 2 Ash-throated Flycatchers: at C. Hatt. 27 Dec (CE et al.) and at the Pungo Unit, Pocosin Lakes N.W.R. 28 Jan (*vide* WC) An unidentified *Myiarchus* at Alligator River N.W.R. 13 Jan (JSo) was probably also this species. North Carolina's 3rd Tropical Kingbird, present from the fall near L. Phelps, *Washington*, was last seen 26 Dec (K&JBe) Western Kingbirds were found five times this winter: one on Ocracoke I., NC 7 Dec (PV et al.), one on the Okefenokee N.W.R., GA C.B.C. 30 Dec (*vide* SWi), one at the Fulton County Airport, GA 20 Dec-25 Feb (DH et

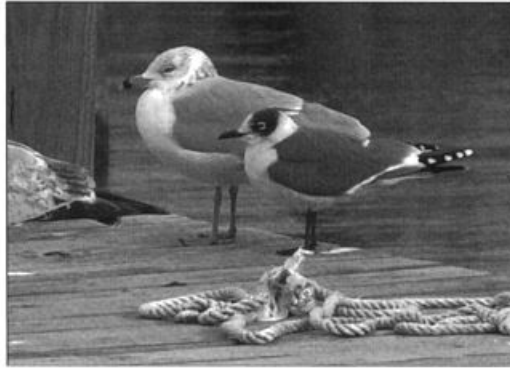
al.), 2 near Fitzgerald, Ben Hill, GA 22-29 Jan (JFI, EH), and 2 at Jekyll I., GA 2-18 Feb (GK, SB). Providing a very rare winter sighting was the Yellow-throated Vireo on Sapelo I., GA 1 Dec (DCo). Compelling documentation of these winter-season Yellow-throated Vireos is lacking and very much needed; confusion with bright Pine Warblers is possible. Not as surprising were the 4 Fish Crows in Cherokee, GA 28 Jan (V&HD); this species has been found farther and farther inland during winter across the Region.

Swallows of note included a Northern Rough-winged Swallow at the Merry Ponds, Augusta, GA 1 Dec (EB, MB), another at Oxbow Meadows, GA through 7 Jan (WCh), a Bank Swallow at H.B.S.P. 7 Jan (ST et al.), a Barn Swallow at Carolina Beach, NC 31 Dec (RD), and another Barn at H.B.S.P. 7 Jan (ST et al.). There are only one or two previous winter reports of Bank Swallow in the Carolinas! Cave Swallows continued in the Region after the fall influx. Amazingly, the H.B.S.P. area hosted a flock of these swallows for almost the entire winter. The peak count was 38+ on 7 Jan (ST et al.), and 20 were still there as late as 18 Feb (JPe). Other Cave Swallow reports included 6 at Pawley's I., SC 29 Dec (SCp et al.), one on the Bodie-Pea I., NC C.B.C. 28 Dec (PS et al.), one on the L. Matt., NC C.B.C. 29 Dec (RD), and one at the Altamaha W.M.A., GA 4-18 Feb (JFI, EH, GK, SB). Red-breasted Nuthatches were scarce this winter as compared to last. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, however, seemed to be somewhat more common than usual at various Coastal Plain sites. Most intriguing was the report of a female Varied Thrush seen three times during the last week of Dec in Orange, NC (GT). There have been a few reports from that state, but the species has never been documented.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Rather rare away from the usual Coastal Plain wintering range were single Orange-crowned Warblers at Charlotte, NC 26 Jan (JB) and in Gordon, GA 1 Feb (JSp). Nashville Warblers were in North Carolina on the Wayne County C.B.C. 17 Dec (Ede et al.), on the Durham C.B.C. 18 Dec (DK et al.), and on the Morehead City C.B.C. 18 Dec (JC). In South Carolina, singles were at Conway 9 Dec (PL), on the Savannah, GA C.B.C. 1 Jan (fide SC), and at H.B.S.P. 27 Feb (D&PD). Georgia hosted one in Columbus 20 Dec (PF et al.) and one in Gwinnett 5 Jan (EH). Eight Nashvilles Regionwide is a high count for winter. Northern Parula reports were up, too, with singles on Roanoke I., NC 12 Dec-10 Jan (JL), on the C.

Hatt. C.B.C. 27 Dec (PS et al.), on the St. Catherine's I., GA C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide EU), and the Cumberland I., GA C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide SWi). Yellow Warbler sightings involved singles at L. Matt. 29 Dec-14 Jan (JL, HL et



This Franklin's Gull was present 14 December 2005 (here) through 15 January 2006 at Manns Harbor, Dare County, North Carolina. Winter records of this species are very few in the Southeast, and the length of stay of this individual was unprecedented in the Southern Atlantic region. Photograph by Jeff Lewis.

al., LD), at Savannah N.W.R., SC 4 Feb (GK et al.), and on the Macon, GA C.B.C. 17 Dec (J&MA). Of interest was the Audubon's Warbler returning for a 2nd year to a yard in Chapel Hill, NC for about a week in late Jan (JM). Always rare in winter, a Black-throated Green Warbler was a good find on the Wayne County, NC C.B.C. 17 Dec (JF et al.). Another



Very rare for the mountains, especially in winter, was this Yellow-headed Blackbird found on the Balsam Christmas Bird Count in Haywood, North Carolina on 29 December 2005. Photograph by Wayne Forsythe.

er warbler of interest was the unidentified *Dendroica* seen briefly on the Floyd County, GA C.B.C. 31 Dec (fide GB). The bird was thought to be a Blackburnian, but the more likely Townsend's was not ruled out. Other warblers of note included 2 Yellow-throated Warblers on the L. Matt. C.B.C. 29 Dec (fide AB), 15 Black-and-white Warblers on the San-tee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 31 Dec (fide LG), an American Redstart on the Hilton Head I., SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide NL), a Northern Wa-

terthrush at the S.S.S. 15 Dec (PL, SC), a wintering Common Yellowthroat in Henderson, NC 18 Dec-8 Jan (ST, BO, MW), a Wilson's Warbler at the Bradley Unit, Eufaula N.W.R., GA 13 Dec (PH), and 2 Wilson's on the Wayne, NC C.B.C. 17 Dec (JF et al.). Wintering Ovenbirds included one at Southern Shores, NC 18 Dec (JK), one on the Pettigrew S.P., NC C.B.C. 30 Dec (AB, RD), one in n. Greene, GA 3 Dec (PS), one on the Harris Neck N.W.R., GA C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide SC), and one on Jekyll I., GA 4 Feb (BZ). Yellow-breasted Chats were reported more than usual, with all three states hosting several individuals.

The Region held three species of tanager this winter. The rare-in-winter Summer Tanager was represented by a female at a feeder in Whispering Pines, Moore, NC 28 Jan+ (SCb), while an even rarer Scarlet Tanager, a female/imm., visited a feeder in Conway, SC 2-20 Dec (GP, JPe). Both birds were photographed. Western Tanager reports were down from last year

but still impressive: a male at a feeder in Morehead City, NC 15 Jan (fide JF), a female in Wilmington, NC Jan-Feb (fide SCb), an imm. male at a feeder in York, SC late Feb+ (fide BHt), and singles in Georgia at Powder Springs, Cobb 9-11 Feb (fide JS, BZ) and Marietta 26 Dec (fide TM). Bachman's Sparrows are notoriously difficult to observe in winter; thus of note were the 7 found in Moody Forest Natural Area, Appling, GA 29 Jan (JFI, EH). Clay-colored Sparrows are rare-but-regular winter residents in the Region. This year, North Carolina had practically all the reports of the species, with the best totals being 4 on the Pettigrew S.P. C.B.C. 30 Dec (AB, RD) and 2 on the L. Matt. C.B.C. 29 Dec (fide AB). Very rare away from the Coastal Plain were single Clay-colored in the French Broad R. area, Henderson 19-22 Jan (WF) and near Lenoir, a bird that wintered for the 2nd year in a row (fide KF). The only Lark Sparrows reported were at Funston Rd., Brunswick, NC 31 Dec (GM) and on the Greenville, NC C.B.C. 31 Dec (KH). The most interesting *Ammodramus* sparrow reports included 10 Grasshoppers on the Clemson, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide DLa), 3 Le Conte's on the Clemson, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide DLa), a Henslow's in Transylvania, NC 1 Jan (EG et al.), and a Nelson's Sharp-tailed at Clemson, SC in the first week of Dec (PC), the latter two furnishing very rare inland reports for those states. Lincoln's Sparrows were reported frequently again, with the best counts being 8 on the Pettigrew S.P. C.B.C. 30 Dec (RD, AB) and 3 on the Southport-Bald Head I., NC C.B.C. 1 Jan (GM et

al.); several in the North Carolina mts. provided rare sightings away from the usual Coastal Plain wintering areas: one was on the *Henderson* C.B.C. 18 Dec (WF, BO, ST), 2 were in *Transylvania* 30 Dec (NS), and another was in another part of the county 1 Jan (B&NS). This season's Lapland Longspur reports involved up to 7 at Red Hill, *Edgecombe*, NC 28 Jan–11 Feb (RD, SS et al.), at least 5 n. of St. Matthews, *Calhoun*, SC 10 Dec (RC, PL), 3 at Hoop. 22 Dec (WF), and one at Fite Bend Rd., *Gordon*, GA 17 Feb (JSp). North Carolina had the only Snow Buntings reported: singles were at Oregon Inlet 3 Dec (RD) and 5 Jan (RK), at C. Hatt. 3 Dec (Ede), and at Wrightsville Beach 10 Dec (BS).

Rare winter Indigo Buntings were located at Southport, NC 1 Jan (GM et al.) and at Charlotte, NC 2 Feb (JB). Painted Buntings continued to be found as regular but quite local winter residents, usually at the coast. Thus the most interesting reports were inland, where singles on the Wayne County, NC C.B.C. 17 Dec (R&PT), on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 31 Dec (*vide* LG), and at a feeder in Glennville, *Tattnall*, GA 15 Jan (GW) were documented. Only 2 Dickcissels were mentioned: singles on the Savannah, GA C.B.C. 1 Jan (*vide* SC) and near L. Phelps, NC 2 Feb (DL). Very rare for the mts., and the only one reported this winter, a female Yellow-headed Blackbird was found along Ratcliff Rd., *Haywood*, NC 29 Dec (MW et al., WF). The most interesting Brewer's Blackbird reports involved 3-5 near Townville, SC 17 Dec–28 Feb (SG et al.), 3 near Plymouth, NC 28 Jan (HW et al.), one at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 1 Jan (JL), and one at Congaree Swamp, SC 18 Dec (*vide* RC). There was a mini-invasion of Bullock's Oriole into the Region this winter, with 4 birds being documented by photograph. In Georgia, one was at a feeder in Smyrna, *Cobb* 15-21 Dec (GS et al.), and another was found in an orchard w. of Statesboro, *Bulloch* 27 Dec (JPa, *vide* GB). These provided the 6th and 7th records for the state. In North Carolina, one was at a feeder in Conover 14 Jan (*vide* DM), and another was at a feeder n. of Pittsboro late Jan+ (CC et al.). Baltimore Orioles seemed to be reported in better-than-average numbers across the Region as well.

Red Crossbill sightings of note included an impressive count of 26 on the Chattahoochee, GA C.B.C. 18 Dec (*vide* GB), up to 2 at Carters L., GA 13-28 Feb (JSp), one in *Fannin*, GA 10 Jan (NSe), one at a feeder in s. *Cobb*, GA 12 Jan (PM), one at Jordan L., NC 20 Dec (TKr et al.), and 2 at Johnston's Mill Preserve, Chapel Hill, NC 24 Dec (SPh). An Evening Grosbeak at a feeder in Black Mountain, NC

on Christmas Day (SGi) was the only one reported.

Corrigendum: The Little Egret included in the fall 2005 report (*N.A.B.* 60: 55) was not accepted by the North Carolina Bird Records Committee and should be deleted.

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