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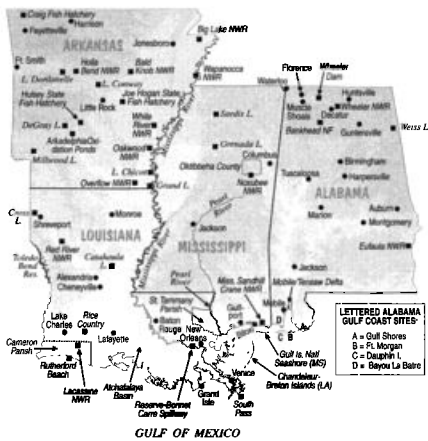
son, W. Rob Peeples (w. Tennessee), June Perkins, Bill Pulliam (BPu), Frank Renfrow, Veronica Renfrow, Rochelle Renken, David Roemer, Cynthia Rohrbach, Harold Sharp, Michael Sledjeski, Adam Smith, Brian Smith (BSm), Scott G. Somershoe, Barbara H. Stedman (BHS), Stephen J. Stedman, Bryan Stevens (BSt), Dale & Jean Swant, Mark Trabue; Budd Veverka, Shawchyi Vorisek, Carol Williams, Jim Williams (JWi), Jeff R. Wilson,

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## Central Southern



### Robert D. Purrington

**D**ominating all other issues this breeding season, especially along the Gulf coast, was the question of survival of resident landbirds in areas devastated by Hurricanes *Katrina* and *Rita* in 2005. Anecdotal reports uniformly decried the paucity of such species as Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Cardinal, and other passerines, though hard data have been difficult to come by. Christie Riehl observed that cavity nesters were especially hard hit and noted, as others have, that Loggerhead Shrike numbers seem to have taken a dive. Last winter's Christmas Bird Counts have provided much of the actual data, which have been analyzed by Peter Yaukey. Although his summer transects in New Orleans have not yet been fully processed, he suggested that while the breeding season started with many species at very low levels, reproductive success seemed to be high.

Ned Boyajian (writing in the Mississippi Ornithological Society newsletter) described the effect on breeding birds of a small woodland in coastal Hancock County, Mississippi, where

the number of nesting species dropped after *Katrina* to 13 from 30 or more, and from 180 to 22 breeding pairs. Although his impression was that permanent residents suffered more than summer residents, as one would expect, the data did not bear this out. Common Grackles and European Starlings seemed to benefit from the fragmented conditions.

As if the hurricanes were not a sufficient blow, much of the Region suffered from prolonged drought conditions immediately following the departure of last summer's storms. The drought persisted through August 2006, leaving New Orleans as much as 51 cm below normal precipitation by late summer. Although the normal subtropical rainfall patterns resumed in July and August along the coast, the drought can be assumed to have affected breeding in the spring and early summer, and water levels were very low in non-tidal areas.

Louisiana's Chandeleur Islands were cut to ribbons by *Katrina*, and islands like Curlew and Grand Gosier that usually host huge Royal and Sandwich Tern colonies were reduced to shoals or worse. Some of the birds had moved to spoil islands near the mouth of Baptiste Collette Bayou in Plaquemines Parish. Michael Carloss of the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission reported that there was no nesting habitat left on the Chandeleurs, with the entire beach rim being gone, but that was under storm tide conditions. Richard DeMay of Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program said that "not much of the chain was above water," but that North Breton Island had 2625 pairs of Sandwich Terns, 350 pairs of Royal Terns, and 525 pairs of Gull-billed Terns. North Island in the Chandeleurs had 450 pairs of Sandwich Terns, and Bird Island, near Baptiste Collette, had 1900 pairs of Sandwich Terns. The good news, if there is any, is that after the devastating Hurricane *Camille* in 1969, which also washed away the

islands, birds were back nesting on Curlew and Gosier by 1973 or 1974—though *Katrina's* effects seem considerably worse.

This is the final column to countenance bird records across the mega-region called the "Central Southern," which a decade ago included western Florida and most of Tennessee, in addition to the current four states. In subsequent issues of this journal, bird records from this area will be further divided into two-state regions, "Alabama & Mississippi" and "Louisiana & Arkansas." (Please refer to the Editor's Notebook in this issue for information on new Regional Editors.) It has been a pleasure to edit this column in one form or another for nearly 40 years, and for *North American Birds*, along with my colleagues Phillip Wallace and Bob and Lucy Duncan, for the past six years. We will continue to work with new and returning veteran Regional Editors—Steve Cardiff (Louisiana & Arkansas) and Dwight Cooley, Greg Jackson, and Steve McConnell (Alabama & Mississippi)—and want to thank the many contributors of bird records for their hard work and generosity. Your contributions have made our task in composing this column most enjoyable.

### WATERFOWL THROUGH STORK

The eastward and northward range expansion of Black-bellied Whistling-Duck continues unabated, as evidenced by seven reports from cen. and se. Louisiana and one from Arkansas. They bred again on Bayou Sauvage N.W.R. in New Orleans (PW); there were 44 ads. with 19 young in the McElroy Swamp near Sorrento, LA 19 Jul (JH); 2 were seen in lower *Plaquemines*, LA 24 Jul (DLD,PC); and 2 in *Sevier*, AR 17 Jun (DA) were the first for that area. Three Snow Geese 16 Jun in *Lee*, AL (BKF) were unusual, as was one 29 Jun in *Sunflower*, MS; a Ross's Goose was at the latter location as well (both SJD). There were four reports of nesting

or probably nesting Mottled Ducks from *Chicot* and *Desha*, AR involving 14 ads. and 20 ducklings. A female Blue-winged Teal with 5 volant juvs. in *Dale*, AL 4 Jul (DS) evidently had nested nearby. Among reports of summering ducks that were clearly not cripples were a male Canvasback 2 Jun in *St. Charles*, LA (RJS), 2 male Ring-necked Ducks late May–21 Jul in *Oktibbeha*, MS (TS), and 2 Ruddy Ducks 9 Jun in *Desha*, AR (DB, SD).

The only pelagic excursion reported was one out of Venice, LA 31 Jul that yielded 3 Audubon Shearwaters and 5 Wilson's and 3-4 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, most of these 80 km off the mouth of South Pass of the Mississippi R. (DLD, SWC, CS, JS, DM, MM). Neotropic Cormorants, rare in the Region away from sw. Louisiana, were seen 2 Jul in *Humphrey* and *Sunflower*, MS (SJD, PB, ph.). Anhingas nested at Noxubee N.W.R., MS, where they have bred for the past several years (TS), one was seen away from the refuge in *Lowndes*, MS 27 Jun (TS); and a total of 43 came from *Desha*, AR 30 Jul (DB, SD). There was one Anhinga nest in the heronry in Audubon Park, New Orleans. An American Bittern, perhaps lingering but possibly summering, was seen in *Pike*, AL 2 Jun (RW). There were four reports of Least Bittern from *Ashley*, *Chicot*, and *Desha* in se. Arkansas, including at least four nests (DB, SD, MB), and there were three records from Noxubee N.W.R., MS during the period (TS). They are uncommon to rare and local nesters in these areas. The same is true of a total of 7 imm. Black-crowned Night-Herons found in *Desha* and *White*, AR in Jun–Jul (DB, SD). A concentration of 450 White Ibis in *Desha* 30 Jul included only 3 ads., and on the same day there were 17 imm. Roseate Spoonbills in the county (DB, SD). One spoonbill was in Houston, AL 11 Jul (WE), and 2 were seen 15 Jul in *Lowndes*, AL (SER, LFG); a juv. was in the Audubon Park heronry in Jun (RDP), but whether it hatched there is unknown. Both Glossy and White-faced Ibises were present at Yazoo N.W.R. 2 Jul (SJD, PB). Reports of Wood Storks included 130 at Noxubee N.W.R., MS 31 Jul (TS) and 119 from scattered sites in *Phillips*, *Chicot*, and *Howard*, AR in late Jul (CM, NA, DB, SD).

## HAWKS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

An unsuccessful Osprey nest in *Lowndes/Clay*, MS in early Jun (JHo, TS) and a successful nesting 27 Jun in *Lowndes* (TS) furnished the first breeding records for the Starkville–Columbus area. Two young fledged from a nest at L Millwood, AR in late Jun (CM). According to Jennifer Coulson, Swallow-tailed Kites returned to nest in the Pearl R. basin despite extensive damage wrought by Hurricane *Katrina*.

Over much of the nesting areas, 70% of the canopy trees were topped or felled by winds. Kites tended to nest in isolated trees instead of stands, and as these were more exposed to the elements, most failed due to high winds. Overall nest success for 27 nests found in the Atchafalaya R. basin, L. Pontchartrain area, and Pearl R. basin was just 30%. A Swallow-tailed Kite 26 Jul in *Winston*, MS (DR) and another 29 Jul in *Vernon/Rapides*, LA (MR) were well away from nesting areas. Reports of Mississippi Kites from Arkansas included 20 in *Pulaski* 3 Jun (EL), a nest there 12 Jul (HC), and 13 in *Nevada* 16 Jul (KC). Up to 2 in *Marion* 23 Jun and 4 Jul (JJ) were n. of their normal breeding range in Alabama. Single ad. Bald Eagles near Sorrento, LA 1 Jun (JH) and at Noxubee N.W.R. 20 Jun (TS) were rather late for this species, which nests in winter in the s. part of the Region; a nest in *Benton* in Jun–Jul, the 3rd in recent years for nw. Arkansas, fledged one young (*vide* JN). Eight records of Cooper's Hawks were received from cen. and n. Arkansas, including four from *White* (KN, LN); a Cooper's in Newton 15 & 22 Jun (MML) was suggestive of nesting, and nests found in *Boone* 18 Jul (JS, MM, SJG) and throughout the period in *Pulaski* (DSc) fledged 2 and 3 young, respectively. Single Swainson's Hawks were noted 9 Jun in *Vermilion*, LA (BV), 17 Jun in *Benton*, AR (MML), and 13 Jul in *Jefferson Davis*, LA (JK).

Purple Gallinules, which are not usually found far inland, nested for the 7th consecutive year at Noxubee N.W.R. (TS), and one was seen in *Ouachita*, LA 10 & 24 Jun (PS). A Common Moorhen in *Benton* 17 Jun (JN) was the first for the nw. Arkansas Ozarks since 1949; three nests of the species were found in *Chicot*, AR 8 Jun (MB); and there were other breeding records from n. Louisiana (*Ouachita*) and Mississippi (*Noxubee*) and s. Arkansas (*Desha*). American Coots summered in *Noxubee*, MS (TS) and in *Orleans* (EW) and *Ascension*, LA (JH).

Three alternate-plumaged American Avocets 10 Jun in *Prairie*, AR (DB) were late migrants, while singles in *Leflore* and *Humphreys*, AL 2 Jul (SJD, PB) may have been summering. Early southbound migrants included Spotted Sandpipers in *Tupelo*, MS 8 Jul (WP) and in *Prairie*, AR 11 Jul (KN, LN); a Solitary Sandpiper in *Lee*, MS 14 Jul (WP); a Greater Yellowlegs in *Chickasaw*, MS 8 Jul (WP); varying counts of Lesser Yellowlegs in *Sunflower*, MS 29 Jun (SJD, PB), *Jefferson Davis*, LA 3 Jul (JK, ES; 600 birds), *Prairie*, AR 11 Jul (KN, LN), and *Chickasaw*, MS 14 Jul (WP); an Upland Sandpiper in *Coahoma*, MS 1 Jul (SJD); a Sanderling in *Lee*, MS 29 Jul (WP); and Semipalmated, Western, Least, and Pectoral Sandpipers in *Prairie*, AR 11 Jul (KN,

LN). Earlier Least Sandpipers showed up 2 Jul in *Leflore* and *Humphrey*, MS (SJD, PB) and 8 Jul in *Marengo*, AL (DS, JS), while earlier Pectoral Sandpipers were noted 29 Jun in *Sunflower*, MS (SJD) and 8 Jul in *Chickasaw*, MS (WP). The first Stilt Sandpiper and first Long-billed Dowitcher were reported in *Leflore*, MS 2 Jul (SJD, PB). A Long-billed Curlew in *St. Charles*, LA 17 Jun (RJS) represented the first local record of a species that is rare anytime in se. Louisiana, especially in summer.

## GULLS THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

A first-summer Franklin's Gull at Millwood L., AR 20 Jun (CM) was very late for a northbound migrant. The 31 Jul pelagic trip out of Venice, LA found 5-6 Bridled Terns (SWC, DLD, CS, JS, DM, MM). Several reports of probably roof-nesting of Gull-billed Terns were received from the New Orleans area, with one confirmed nesting site near the river in Bywater (RDP). A carefully described ad Arctic Tern at Ft. Morgan, AL 5 Jul (KM) would furnish the first record for Alabama, if accepted by the Alabama B.R.C., the sight record would be considered "hypothetical" Three Forster's Terns in *Chicot*, AR 10 Jun (DB) were locally late, and a Least Tern in *Jefferson Davis*, LA 3 Jul (JK, ES) was far from the coast or any other like breeding site.

Up to 6 Inca Doves in *Lonoke*, AR in late Jul (AM, DSc et al.) reflect the continuing range expansion of this species. There were two unusual summer records of Common Ground-Dove: in *Noxubee*, MS 4 Jun (TS, MS) and in *St. Bernard*, LA 23 Jul (GO, WPr). Two Greater Roadrunners in *Independence*, AR 4 Jun (KN, DN) were at the e. edge of their range. Whip-poor-wills in *Lee* and *Perry* 18-19 Jun (LW, RW) and one in *Hale* 24 Jul (RLW) established new s. limits for breeding in Alabama. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker nesting season in *Ouachita* N.F., AR yielded 32 nesting attempts in 37 active territories by 88 ads. and produced 49 fledglings (JN).

Two singing male Willow Flycatchers were found in *Bossier*, LA 1 Jun (TD), and in *Boone*, AR there were 4 birds on three territories 3 Jun (JS). A Western Kingbird in *Boone* 22 Jul (EP) was suggestive of nesting, while a pair of Gray Kingbirds May–1 Jul on Dauphin I., AL (MSV) continued the slow return of a species that was eliminated in Alabama by Hurricane *Danny* in 1997 (*vide* GDJ). Despite one spring record, there was no evidence that Gray Kingbirds nested on the New Orleans lakefront this year Pairs of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in *Jackson* 8-11 Jun (HH) and *Colbert* 9 Jul (JW, JP) established new probable breeding sites for Alabama, and two pairs were found in *Craighead*, AR 18 Jun (DB), including a female on the nest

## SWALLOWS THROUGH FINCHES

A juv. Tree Swallow accompanied by an ad. in *Lee*, MS 8 Jul (WP) represented the first nesting in the Tupelo area, and 2 juvs. were with 2 ads. in a family group in *Washington*, AR 11 Jul (MMI). Records from *St. Clair* 4 & 17 Jun (PHF, GJH, PAR, JG) and from *Shelby* 27 Jun (HHK) nicely documented the expanding breeding range of this species in Alabama. Bank Swallows were seen in *Vermilion*, LA 30 Jul (EJ), but the number, 137, was remarkable for this early date, and Barn Swallows seen 23-25 Jul over the Gulf 224 km off Fouchon, LA (NR) were early southbound migrants. The 3rd Jun record for Alabama of a Swainson's Thrush was of one at Dauphin I. 10 Jun (HEH). Up to 2 Gray Catbirds seen on 10 occasions in the latter half of Jun near Covington (JOC, TC) were probably nesting; there are few records for se. Louisiana.

While a Yellow Warbler in *Oktibbeha*, MS 1 Jun (MS) tied the latest spring departure for the Starkville area, one there 17 Jul (TS) was earliest ever in fall. One on a *St. Clair*, AL B.B.S. 4 Jun (PHF) could have been a migrant or a rare breeder. A singing male Chestnut-sided Warbler 24 & 26 Jun in *Newton* (MMI) was at the very sw. edge of its breeding range (which just reaches into n. Arkansas), and the same can be said of one 29 Jun in *St. Clair*, AL (RRS). A Magnolia Warbler in *Jefferson*, AL 27 Jul (RRS, MBS) was very early, and a female Black-throated Green Warbler, a rare nester in Arkansas, with a juv. in *Logan*, AR 15 Jul (DSc, RH) was at the edge of its breeding range. A Yellow-throated Warbler near the coast in *Plaquemines*, LA 24 Jul (DLD, SWC) was an early southbound migrant, but a singing male Cerulean Warbler in *Franklin*, nw. Alabama 20 Jun (SW, PN) represented a new probable breeding site.

A female American Redstart some 224 km off Fouchon, LA 21 Jul (NR) was already well on its way across the Gulf. Probable breeding Worm-eating Warblers in *Russell*, *Crenshaw*, and *Covington*, AL 5-22 Jun (DMW, LW) were unusual that far south. Schiefer noted single Swainson's Warblers in three *Oktibbeha*, MS locations in Jul; all had been present since Apr. Two Canada Warblers in *Jefferson* 29 Jun (RRS, MBS) were the earliest ever in fall for Alabama.

The two reports of Bachman's Sparrow received included 3 in *Winston*, MS (TS), noted on eight dates Mar-Aug and 6 in *Fulton*, AR 6 Jul (DBMA). Three Lark Sparrows, locally rare nesters and near the e. edge of their breeding range, were found 4 Jun on the Macon B.B.S. route in *Noxubee*, MS (TS, MS), while single birds in *Elmore/Autauga* 11 Jun (LFG) and in *Madison* 19 Jun (NC) reflected increasing breeding in Alabama. Three in *Washington*, AR 30 Jul (MMI) were thought to be migrants. Grasshopper Sparrows were reported in Jul from two locations in *Monroe*, MS (WP; 4) and through the end of Jun in *Clay*, MS (TS; 2). Two singing Henslow's Sparrows were recorded in *Fulton* in extreme n. Arkansas 9 Jul (DB), where they are apparently a local breeder. Several Song Sparrows found in *Jefferson* and *St. Clair* 9 Jul (JG, HHW, LB, GJH) indicate the slowly expanding breeding of this species in Alabama. A White-throated Sparrow was seen 24 & 26 Jul in *Cullman*, AL (CL), and White-crowned Sparrows lingered into Jun in two Arkansas locations: 1 Jun in *Fulton* (DB, MA) and 18 Jun in *White* (DB).

Great-tailed Grackles in *Logan* (KN, LN; 4) 3 Jun and in *Benton* 1 Jul (JN, MMI; 5), both in w. Arkansas, were at the e. edge of the species' range. A lingering American Goldfinch was seen 6 Jun in *Lafayette*, LA

(JM, RM), but a pair in *Lee*, MS 23 Jul (WP) was apparently nesting.

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