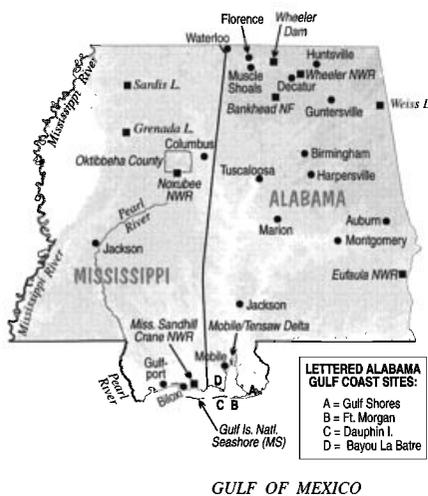


Alabama & Mississippi



Greg D. Jackson

It was a good season to be a birder in the Region! Several strong fronts produced excellent birding opportunities; peak dates for passerine migrants were 8, 15, and 20 September, 7-8, 13-15, and 21 October, and 3 November. Temperatures and rainfall showed little variation from normal in any month. Thankfully, the Region avoided tropical storm activity this year. Several fine rarities are detailed below, including a first record for Mississippi.

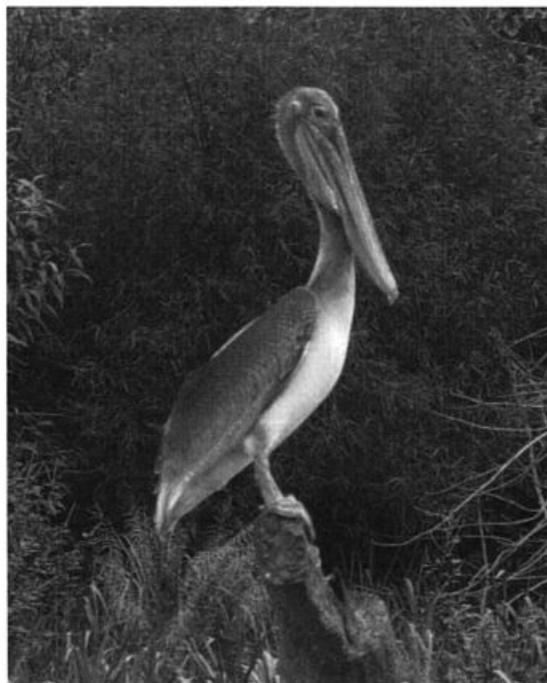
Abbreviations: Belzoni (catfish ponds w. of Belzoni, *Humphreys*, MS); Dauphin (Dauphin I., *Mobile*, AL); Ft. Morgan (Ft. Morgan State Historical Park, *Baldwin*, AL); I.C.P. (Inland Coastal Plain Region of s.-cen. Alabama); M.R. (Mountain Region of n. Alabama); Noxubee (Noxubee N.W.R., *Noxubee/Oktibbeha/Winston*, MS); Swan Creek (Swan Creek W.M.A., *Limestone*, AL); T.V. (Tennessee Valley Region of n. Alabama); Wheeler (Wheeler N.W.R., *Limestone/Morgan/Madison*, AL); Yazoo (Yazoo N.W.R., *Washingtton*, MS).

WATERFOWL THROUGH STORK

Two ad. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, rare but now annual in Mississippi, were at Yazoo 3 Aug (p.a., SJD), and another was in *Adams* 18 Sep (p.a., WDM). Greater White-fronted Geese arrived early in that state 30 Sep, with 44 in *Lowndes* (GCK, m.ob.) and 21 in *Noxubee* (LC, GCK, m.ob.). Another Greater White-fronted was locally rare in *Colbert*, AL 27 Nov (DJS). Two Snow Geese, likely rare summering birds, were discovered 3 Aug at Yazoo (SJD). Rare but now expected in small numbers, single Ross's Geese were at Wheeler 12 Nov (SWM), in *Russell*, AL 13 Nov (EB), at Noxubee 17 Nov (TLS), and in *Colbert*, AL 27

Nov (DJS). A probable Cinnamon Teal in a female-type plumage was studied 6-11 Oct near *Artesia, Lowndes* (p.a., TLS, MHS); if accepted, this would be a first record for this part of Mississippi and one of few for the state. Probably summering, single Green-winged Teal and Redhead were in *Sunflower*, MS 3 Aug (SJD). Scoters are rare inland treats; a Surf was in *Lee*, AL 5-6 Nov (BM et al.), up to 2 White-winged provided the 4th I.C.P. record 14 Nov+ in *Elmore* (HHK, m.ob.), and a Black was in *Marshall*, AL 27 Nov (LBR, RAR). Another inland rarity was the Long-tailed Duck 12 Nov on *Ross Barnett Res.*, *Rankin*, MS (ph. WM).

Unusual so early, particularly in the M.R., a Common Loon was in *St. Clair* 15 Aug (HHK, m.ob.). Rare, especially away from the coast, single Eared Grebes were in *Oktibbeha*, MS 13 Oct (TLS) and at *Swan Creek* the following day (GDJ, DGJ). In recent years, American White Pelican has increased significantly inland, remaining to winter in some areas. Of several Alabama reports, most significant were 250+ at *Weiss L.*, *Cherokee* 3 Nov (W&LB) and 56 in *Marengo* 12 Nov (D&JS). Only occasional inland in Alabama, single imm. Brown Pelicans were discovered 1 Aug on the Alabama R. in *Monroe* (JTG et al., ph.) and at *Gantt L.*, *Covington* 4-5 Nov (ph. JTG). Rare but becoming regular in the Delta region of Mississippi, single Neotropic Cormorants were found 3 Aug at *Belzoni* and in *Sunflower* (p.a., SJD); the former was probably the same



Occasional but possibly increasing as a vagrant inland in Alabama, an immature Brown Pelican was a surprise 1 August 2006 (here) on the Alabama River in Monroe County. Photograph by Jeff T. Garner.

individual photographed 2 Jul at that site (SJD). Fifteen Anhingas at *Noxubee* 13 Sep (TLS, m.ob.) were notable.

Not often detected in the M.R., an American Bittern was in *Shelby* 1 Oct (DPG). Three imm. White Ibis, rare in the T.V., were at *Wheeler* 5 Aug (SWM). Increasing in the Region, but particularly in Mississippi, 15 rare White-faced Ibis were at *Yazoo* 3 Aug (SJD); a lone ad. was even more unusual 30 Sep-4 Oct in *Lowndes* (TLS, JP et al.). In Alabama away from the coast, any *Plegadis* ibis is rare and only occasionally identified to species; a sin-

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"Ha-cha-cha-chaaaaaa!"—Jimmy Durante

Paradoxically grotesque but beautiful, ungainly yet elegant, Roseate Spoonbill captures the heart of any birder. Persecuted heavily by plume hunters in the Southeast in the late nineteenth century, this singular species has rebounded thanks to legal protection and has increased dramatically in our Region in recent years. The upturn has been most prominent in Mississippi, particularly in the Delta country along the Mississippi River. Before 2002, it was considered quite rare in the state, but beginning that year, spoonbills became regular in some numbers, even breeding for the first time in *Yazoo* in 2004. This fall, an exceptional total of 99 of these spatula-fronted waders provided a new state maximum 3 Aug at three sites in the Delta e. of *Greenville* (SJD); a dazzling 89 birds were counted at *Dutch Brake, Sunflower* that day! Up to 5 set a new coastal high in *Hancock* 15 Jul-1 Sep (NB), 2 were photographed in *Chickasaw* 11 Aug (WRP), and 3 birds graced *Lafayette* 1-15 Sep (TH, GCK, SK).

Spoonbills are far more unusual in Alabama, with a daily historic maximum of only 5 birds; however, the species has shown a significant increase recently. Of 40 definite state records, only three were before 1970, with nine sightings in the period 1971-1996; this contrasts with 28 occurrences in the past decade. Lone spoonbills gave joy to birders in *Shelby* at *L. Purdy* 11-22 Aug (HHW, m.ob., ph.) and at *Saginaw* 15 Aug (ph. LK), doubling the number of M.R. records. Another individual was spotted near the *Mobile Causeway, Baldwin* 29 Oct (BA).

gle Glossy and 2 White-faced were photographed 20 Sep at Eufaula N.W.R., *Barbour* (BGM), the latter representing only the 4th inland Alabama record. Six Wood Storks 15 Aug+ in *Shelby* (LK, m.ob., ph.) were rare for n. Alabama.

RAPTORS THROUGH LARIDS

A Swallow-tailed Kite on the Tennessee R., *Madison/Marshall* 20 Aug (M&MR) provided only the 3rd T.V. record. Locally rare was a Mississippi Kite 24 Aug in *Marion*, AL (JJ); the ad. 27 Oct in *Pearl River*, MS (NB) was far behind schedule. Swainson's Hawk is rare and erratic on the Alabama coast, but this was a banner season. Five to 6 birds were split between two locations in s. *Baldwin* beginning 18 Oct (DP, BS, J&KD, m.ob., ph.); another was on Dauphin 21 Oct (DBo, JB). Rarely noted, a Golden Eagle appeared in *Macon*, AL on the early date of 7 Oct (ECS), and another was at *Belzoni* 31 Oct (PJB). A Peregrine Falcon was early 26 Aug in *Baldwin*, AL (MJJ). Both locally rare in fall, a Virginia Rail was in *Oktibbeha*, MS beginning 29 Sep, and one or more Soras were at the same spot 10 Oct+ (both TLS). Three rare reports were received of (presumably) summering American Coots, with a high of 9 birds in *Hale*, AL 12 Aug (GJH). For only the 2nd summer Alabama record since 1960, a Sandhill Crane was in *Sumter* 6 Aug (TK, GJH, m.ob.).

An impressive, though not record, tally of 542 Black-necked Stilts was made at *Belzoni* 3 Aug (SJD). Rare away from the coast, 6 American Avocets were reported from four sites; particularly unusual was an M.R. sighting in *St. Clair* 12 Aug (TK, HHK, HHW et al.). Also notable inland were four reports of 15 total Willets, with 7 birds 20 Aug in *Montgomery* (CTS, PS) tying the previous I.C.P. fall maximum. A Long-billed Curlew 24 Sep at *Sardis L., Lafayette* (GCK, SK) represented only the 3rd for n. Mississippi. Not often found inland, a Ruddy Turnstone was in *Montgomery*, AL 4 Sep (CTS). A lone White-rumped Sandpiper was unusual for fall 21 Aug in *Colbert*, AL (CAB). Baird's Sandpiper is rare but regular; this fall produced six reports of 12 birds, beginning with an early individual 3 Aug at *Belzoni* (SJD) and ending with 4 late birds 9 Nov at *Swan Creek* (DJS). The count of 884 Stilt Sandpipers 3 Aug at *Belzoni* (SJD) was noteworthy, as was a flock of 20+ Buff-breasted Sandpipers in *Shelby*, AL 9 Sep (FC). A female Ruff was a fine discovery 3 Aug at *Belzoni* (SJD) for the 11th Mississippi record. Wilson's Phalarope is only occasional in the M.R.; one was in *Shelby* 30 Sep–4 Oct (HHW, S&FF, JMI et al.).

Rare but regular in the T.V., 4 Laughing Gulls were reported from three sites (SWM,



Providing a fourth inland Alabama record, this White-faced Ibis was one of two visiting Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Barbour County 20 September 2006 (here). Photograph by Ben G. Moore.

DJS et al.). Franklin's Gull is a regular fall transient, generally scarce but sometimes occurring in flocks. From Mississippi came six reports of 12 total Franklin's, beginning 17 Oct in *Oktibbeha* (TLS). Of Alabama's seven Franklin's reports, most notable were an early imm. 24 Sep in *Marshall* (ph. SWM), an ad. for the 6th I.C.P. record in *Elmore* 6–19 Nov (BKF m.ob.), and 40+, a new maximum for inland Alabama, in *Marshall* 9 Nov (LBR). Rare in Alabama, though regular and increasing, a first-year Lesser Black-backed Gull was at *Wilson Dam, Colbert/Lauderdale* 18 Nov (GDJ, DGJ, ph.); a subad. appeared in s. *Baldwin* 28 Nov (BS). More unusual in Alabama, though nearly annual, is Great Black-backed Gull, an ad. and a third-year bird were early beginning 26 Sep at *Pelican I., Mobile* (RAD, LRD, m.ob., ph.), and a first-year bird 7 Oct in *Marshall*



Earliest on record for inland Alabama, a first-year Great Black-backed Gull dominated the scene 7 October 2006 (here) at Guntersville, Marshall County. Photograph by Steve W. McConnell.

(ph. SWM) provided a new early inland Alabama date. Always a spectacular find, and only the 9th for Mississippi (4th inland), a juv. Sabine's Gull was found swimming in a catfish pond in *Chickasaw* 1 Sep (p.a., ph. WRP). Highly unusual outside the context of tropical storm activity, especially far inland, a juv. Sooty Tern was spotted 17 Oct in *Oktibbeha*, MS (p.a., TLS). A Caspian Tern at *Noxubee* 20 Oct (TLS) was late. More than 300 Black Terns

2 Sep at *Wheeler Dam, Lauderdale/Lawrence* (SWM) provided the 2nd highest count for inland Alabama, and an estimate of 12,400 at *Dauphin* 11 Sep (JNW) was impressive.

DOVES THROUGH PIPITS

At least 30 White-winged Doves were in *Silverhill, Baldwin* 3 Sep (BS, ph.), continuing a recent upward trend for this species on the Alabama coast. Rare and erratic in Alabama, single Short-eared Owls were in *Lauderdale* 8 Nov (DJS, JM) and in *Lawrence* 28 Nov (DJS) An avian Whirling Dervish, 2000+ Chimney Swifts provided a spectacle going to roost in *Morgan*, AL 12 Sep (SWM, VM). Buff-bellied Hummingbird is rare but increasing in Alabama; one was banded in *Mobile, Mobile* 25 Aug (FB, V&PDC, ph.) to set a new state arrival date by a wide margin. Of similar status in Alabama, single Allen's Hummingbirds were in *Cullman* as early as 26 Aug (CL, fide RRS, ph.; a returning bird), in *Jefferson* 17 Oct–15 Dec (R&SR, RRS, b., ph.), and in *Baldwin* 25 Oct+ (FB, D&CD, b., ph.).

Rare but regular, 3 Olive-sided Flycatchers were at *Dauphin* 16 Sep (HEH, T&JS, MSVH et al., ph.), and another was spotted in *Jefferson* 24 Sep (GJH). An Eastern Wood-Pewee was behind schedule 3 Nov in *Birmingham, Jefferson*, AL (TK et al.). Ten reports of 11 Yellow-bellied Flycatchers 8 Sep–13 Oct, most from Alabama, was par. Rare but regular in coastal Mississippi, a Vermilion Flycatcher was in *Hancock* beginning 24 Oct (NB). Western Kingbird is scarce inland, and the individual 22 Nov in *Shelby* (HHW, JG) represented only the 7th M.R. record. Establishing a new fall maximum for Alabama, 54 White-eyed Vireos were banded 15 Oct at *Ft. Morgan* (RRS, MBS, DB, m.ob.); at that site, a rare-but-regular Bell's Vireo was discovered 1 Oct (MJJ et al.). Locally rare so early was a Blue-headed Vireo 16 Aug in *Winston*, AL (LB). Scarce in Alabama, single Warbling Vireos were at *Ft. Morgan* 26 Sep (RAD, LRD) and in *Jefferson* 29 Sep (LFG). The Philadelphia Vireo 7 Sep at *Noxubee* (TLS) set a new local early record.

Flocks of 1500+ Fish Crows flying to roost in *Macon* late Sep–early Oct (ECS) set a new Alabama maximum; occasional in the T.V., but showing signs of increase, one was noted 9 & 28 Nov in *Lawrence* (DJS, JM). Unusual so far s. into the I.C.P., a White-breasted Nuthatch was in *Montgomery* 7 Sep (CTS, PS). An exciting first Mississippi record, unexpectedly inland, a Rock Wren delighted observers at G. P. Cossar S.P., *Yalobusha* 15 Oct–4 Nov (p.a., GCK, SK, m.ob., ph.). Scarce now in our area, a Bewick's Wren was spotted in *Adams*, MS 21 Nov (WDM). Furnishing a new fall maximum for Alabama, 50+ Hermit



Finding a Sabine's Gull in a catfish pond in northeastern Mississippi certainly made for a memorable day's birding! This juvenile furnished the state's ninth record 1 September 2006 (here) in Chickasaw County. Photograph by Wayne R. Patterson.

Thrushes were at Ft. Morgan 3 Nov (RAD, LRD). At least 6 rare and elusive Sprague's Pipits were ferreted out of the grass at two sites in s. Baldwin, AL beginning 5 Nov (BS, m.ob.); another was found 21 Nov in Hancock, MS (p.a., NB).

WARBLERS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

The rare hybrid Brewster's Warbler was a nice catch at Ft. Morgan 6 Oct (RRS, MBS, DB, m.ob., b.). Of several uncommon Nashville Warbler reports, most notable were the 5 birds 15 Sep in Colbert (DJS, m.ob.), setting a new fall T.V. maximum. Single Cape May Warblers, rare in fall, were observed 17 Oct in Yalobusha, MS (TLS, GCK, SK) and 21 Oct on Dauphin (HEH, JSt et al.). Of a few rare inland Black-throated Blue Warbler reports, outstanding were 3 in Jefferson, AL 3 Sep (DB); a male in Autauga about 1 Nov (DH) provided a new late date for inland Alabama. Good counts in Hancock, MS of 15 Prairie Warblers 1 Sep and approximately 300 Palm Warblers 24 Oct (both NB) must have set some tails wagging; a Prairie in Barbour 17 Nov (LW) established a late I.C.P. record. Only occasionally recorded in fall, a Connecticut Warbler was an excellent find at Ft. Morgan 20 Sep (LRD, BT). Rare but regular, a Mourning Warbler was in Jefferson, AL 3 Sep (RRS, MBS). At Ft. Morgan, a Canada Warbler banded 19 Oct (RRS, MBS, DB, m.ob.) was

the 2nd latest for Alabama. A Scarlet Tanager in Jefferson, AL 3 Nov (TK et al.) was tardy.

Quite scarce inland, lone Clay-colored Sparrows were in Oktibbeha, MS 25 Sep (TLS) and in Barbour, AL 9 Nov (LW). Clay-colored is an expected, low-level transient in autumn on the Alabama coast; single birds were at two sites in s. Baldwin 10-11 Nov (LFG). Fifteen was an excellent count for Lark Sparrow 25 Aug in Colbert, AL (DJS). Furnishing a local area arrival record, 3 Savannah Sparrows were in Oktibbeha, MS 25 Sep (TLS). The secretive Henslow's Sparrow is only occasionally discovered in the M.R., so the bird 30 Sep-1 Oct in Shelby (S&FF, JMI, HHW et al.) was notable; another was spotted 31 Oct in Barbour (LW), where rarely reported. Providing the 7th inland Alabama record, a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was in Shelby 30 Sep (S&FF, JMI, HHW). The White-throated Sparrow in Oktibbeha, MS 1 Oct (TLS, MHS) set a new local arrival date. Rarely spotted so late inland, a Painted Bunting was in Oktibbeha 26 Sep (TLS). The Dickcissel in Pearl River, MS 4 Aug (NB) was early. Occasional inland, and rare in the Region, an imm. male Yellow-headed Blackbird was w. of Tusculumbia, Colbert, AL 26 Sep (JS, *vide* DJS).

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