

Ricky Davis

his winter's weather was milder than normal in the first half and closer to normal in the second half. Only one period, mid-January to mid-February, experienced truly cold temperatures. Frozen precipitation was generally lighter than usual in most parts of the Region, and many areas received considerably less rainfall than average for the period. Possibly due to this mild weather, certain birds were mentioned as being more common or less common than usual. Many areas saw increased numbers of puddle ducks, while numbers of sea ducks, loons, gulls, and alcids were definitely reduced. Some passerines such as Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers, thrushes, and some sparrows were mentioned as being present in higher-than-normal numbers. Also there seemed to be a wealth of lingering or overwintering passerines, such as flycatchers, warblers, and a few others. Winter finches however, as one might expect, were definitely present in the Region in very low numbers.

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 VULTURES

Numbers of wintering geese were down slightly from last year, but all three states had Greater White-fronteds again, and Ross's Goose reports were about average. The most interesting sightings involved 2 Greater White-fronteds at L. Townsend, *Guilford*, NC 9 Feb+ (HLi, m.ob.) and a Ross's at Pee Dee N.W.R., NC 28-30 Dec (JB, m.ob.), both rare and unusual at those locations. Cackling Geese, all of subspecies *hutchinsii*, were found again, now that observers are looking for them. Georgia had its 2nd report with 6 at Oxbow Meadows 6-13 Jan (WCh); one was again at L. Matt. 11 Jan (AG); and at least 2-3 were at the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes N.W.R., NC 10 Dec-17 Feb (RD, SS, DC, JPi, LG, JL, CD et al.). Puddle duck numbers were up this year, especially at some coastal sites. American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, and Green-winged Teal were especially numerous at several ne. North Carolina sites. North Carolina had at least 7 Eurasian Wigeons, while one was very rare in Georgia at Jekyll 1. 2 Dec (fide TM). The only Cinnamon Teal was at Savannah N.W.R., SC, present from late Nov until at least 20 Dec (SBe et al.). Always noteworthy, a Eurasian Teal was a good find at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 27 Jan (CBCl). Diving ducks were about average in abundance with the exception of the large flock of around 8000 Redheads at Pea I. 13 Jan (JL). Common Eiders were found in all three states, with the farthest s. being in the Jekvll L-Gould's Inlet. GA area 2 Dec (fide JS, SB) and 23 Feb (SB). Harlequin Ducks made news this winter with an imm. male at Wrightsville Beach, NC 17 Dec-16 Jan (JSo, m.ob.), a female at H.B.S.P. 19-21 Jan (JSm, m.ob.), and a male inland at L. Brandt, Guilford, NC 17 Feb+ (HLi, m.ob.). The latter bird represented the first documented occurrence for the Piedmont of that state. Georgia had all three scoters inland, most unusual for any season. A Surf was at Carters L.,



This Manx Shearwater, one of three found off of Tybee Island, Georgia 14 January 2007, provided rare documentation for that state, although records from adjacent areas of ocean would seem to indicate the species is a regular migrant and perhaps irregular winterer here. *Photograph by Dan Vickers*.

Murray 7-8 Feb (MM, JSp), a White-winged and a Black were at Bear Cr. Res., Jackson until at least 4 Feb (MF, m.ob.), and another Black was at the Dalton W.T.P., Murray 16 Dec (SP et al.). A few reports of Common Merganser were received, with the most interesting being the 4 on Southwire L., Carrollton, GA early Jan+ (fide TM).

Loon numbers seemed down somewhat this winter; however, Georgia had 5 different inland Red-throateds and the only Pacifics found in the Region-singles at Tybee I. 15 Dec (fide JFl) and 11 Feb (CL), offshore of Tybee I. 14 Jan (BZ et al.), on the Piedmont N.W.R. C.B.C. 18 Dec (fide TJ), and at West Point L. Dam 17 Feb (TM et al.). Red-necked Grebes were found in all states, and the farthest s. was one at L. Seminole, GA 6-27 Dec (EB, DM). Eared Grebes were present at the usual locations again this winter; the best total was 20 at L. Juliette, Rum Creek W.M.A., GA 4 Dec (EB, DM). Unusual for the Region, 2 different Western Grebes were found: one in the L. Walter F. George, GA dam area 6 Dec (EB, DM) through at least 19 Feb (CS et al.) and one at L. Norman, NC 17 Dec until late Feb (IWa et al.). The Georgia bird provided only the 2nd or 3rd report for that state. Also rare for that state were 3 Manx Shearwaters photographed off Tybee I. 14 Ian (BZ et al.); this species is usually hard to find in Georgia waters, as it normally occurs far from shore.

American White Pelicans continued to increase in much of the Region. The top totals reported included 697 on the ACE Basin, SC C.B.C. 31 Dec (fide PL) and 467 on the Mc-

> Clellanville, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide ND). The 110 counted on the Bodie-Pea Island, NC C.B.C. 28 Dec (fide PS) was very noteworthy that far north. Impressive for a non-coastal location, 160 were at Bagby S.P., L. Walter F. George, GA 2 Dec (JFl, EH). With numbers like these, and the fact that the species is present along the s. coastal regions practically year-round, can nesting be a possibility in the near future for our Region? Anhingas also continue to winter in increasing numbers. The farthest n. and inland were the 2 at a pond in Halifax, NC 24 Dec-27 Jan (ML, FE). Unusual reports of long-legged waders included a Least Bittern at L. Warren, Hampton, SC 12 Feb (JG), a white-morph Reddish Egret at Ft. Fisher, NC 31 Dec (RD), and a Green Heron far inland on the Greensboro, NC C.B.C. 16 Dec

(fide HH). Roseate Spoonbills, rare in winter in the Region, were present in good numbers at a few sites. Up to 11 were at the S.S.S. until at least 13 Jan (SC), and 13 were found on the Cumberland I., GA C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide SW). Wood Storks also wintered farther n.

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than usual in North Carolina, with highlights being 2-5 at Greenfield L., Wilmington until at least 9 Feb (KK, GM, m.ob.), one s. of Warsaw, Duplin 10 Jan (BS), one at the Grimesland ponds, Pitt 21-22 Jan (JW et al.), and one at the Bald Head I. golf course Jan–Feb (fide JF); another second-hand report came from Manteo, Dare in mid-Jan (fide JL). Black Vultures made news this winter along the North

Carolina Outer Banks: one was on the C. Hatt. C.B.C. 27 Dec (fide PM), 2 were n. of there at Avon 27 Dec (fide GA), and one was on the Bodie–Pea Island C.B.C. 28 Dec (GA). This species had never been reported on the Banks before!

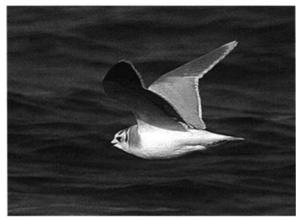
RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

There were 3 Northern Goshawks found in North Carolina this winter, with an imm. near Chapel Hill 10 Dec (DC), an ad. at Raleigh 16 Dec (TS et al.), and an ad. along Canal B road at Pocosin Lakes N.W.R. 20 Jan (R&SBo). Easily the most unexpected wintering bird was the imm. intermediate/dark-morph Swainson's Hawk at

Alligator River N.W.R., NC 17 Dec+ (HL, m.ob.); a Jan record from coastal Virginia and a Dec record from New Jersey are the only comparable records n. of Florida! The only non-Eastern Red-taileds mentioned this winter were the returning light-morph Western in s. *Murray*, GA 8 Dec (JSp) and a Krider's at Fite Bend Rd., *Gordon*, GA 1 Jan (AS et al.). Rough-legged Hawks, as usual, were found only in North Carolina (3 different birds), while Golden Eagles were noted more than usual, with reports from all three states.

Always noteworthy are sightings of Yellow Rails, even though they are regular winterers in coastal areas. This year, 3-6 were present at a wetlands restoration area at North R. Farms, Carteret, NC 10 Dec+ (JF et al.), and one was seen on the Winyah Bay, SC C.B.C. 14 Dec (fide LG). Good sightings of the elusive Black Rail included 2 at the Conway, SC W.T.P. 6 Dec (JP et al.), 2 at the Altamaha W.M.A., GA 17 Dec (EB, MB), one inland on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (fide RC), and one at Jekyll I., GA 22 Jan (fide KB). American Coot numbers rebounded nicely from the past several years with impressive counts of 13,855 on the L. Matt. C.B.C. 29 Dec (fide AB) and 9125 on the Bodie-Pea Island, NC C.B.C. 28 Dec (fide PS) leading the way. Sandhill Crane reports were about average this winter, with the most interesting being the 4 that were near Swansboro, Onslow, NC 20 Jan-mid-Feb (fide JF, m.ob.). Whooping Crane reports this winter involved 2 that wintered for the 3rd year in a row in *Colleton*, SC (m.ob.) and 5 seen near St. Simons 1., GA 26 Dec (RWr). All of these birds are part of the ongoing effort to establish a migratory population that nests in Wisconsin and winters in Florida.

Wilson's Plovers are local but regular wintering birds in small numbers along the Region's coast. Thus of interest was the impressive total of 44 on the St. Catherine's I., GA



This adult Little Gull, found off Savannah, Georgla 11 February 2007, was only the fourth to be documented in that state. *Photograph by Pierre Howard*.

C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide EU). Much rarer in winter is Black-necked Stilt. This year, one was at the S.S.S. until at least 17 Feb (SC), and the impressive count of 15 on a pond in Yemassee, SC 26 Feb (GN) probably represented mostly early spring migrants. Rare away from the coast, especially in winter, was the Willet at L. Juliette, GA 4 Dec (EB, DM). This bird was most likely a very late fall migrant. Longbilled Curlew numbers were down somewhat this year, being found at only the usual wintering sites. Stilt Sandpipers apparently did not winter at the S.S.S. this year, with only 3 lingering until 30 Dec (SC). Quite rare inland in winter were 2 Short-billed Dowitchers found on the Macon, GA C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide MA). The best offshore count of Red Phalarope was 285 off Hatteras, NC 10 Feb (BPI). Gulls seemed to be down somewhat this winter, with the exception of Lesser Black-backed Gull, which continues to increase in the Region. The best counts this winter included 27 on the Kitty Hawk, NC C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide JL) and an impressive total of 52 at Tybee I., GA 17 Dec (EB, MB). Only one Little Gull was reported, that being Georgia's 4th, found off of Savannah 11 Feb (RW et al.). This is the first winter in many years that none were seen in North Carolina! Black-headed Gull reports involved one on the Litchfield-Pawleys Island, SC C.B.C. 29 Dec (PN et al.), the returning ad. being seen sporadically at the L. Matt. causeway 29 Dec-Feb (JL et al.), and a first-winter bird at

the L. Matt. causeway 17-22 Feb (CD et al.). White-winged gulls were practically absent from the Region this winter; a first-winter Glaucous at Conway, SC 3-9 Jan (CH, JP) and an ad. Iceland at Kill Devil Hills, NC 28 Jan (JPi et al.) were the only exceptions. A Great Skua was found off Hatteras, NC 10 Feb (BPI), and Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers were seen from shore in the usual small num-

bers (three sightings of each). The only alcid reported this winter was the expected Razorbill. The best reports included 65+ off Hatteras, NC 10 Feb (BPI) and 15 off Cumberland I., GA 26 Jan (fide KB). Smaller numbers were reported from a few coastal sites in the Carolinas.

DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

White-winged Doves were once again reported from all three states. The farthest n. was at a feeder in Wilmington, NC 23 Dec (BJ). Eurasian Collared-Doves were reported as continuing in their usual spots with no signs of decreasing numbers. Short-eared Owls were mentioned from the usual loca-

tions but in somewhat reduced numbers this winter. Locally rare was the Northern Sawwhet Owl heard near Vance, Orangeburg, SC on the Santee C.B.C. 30 Dec (RC, CE). Two unidentified nighthawks were found this winter: at Aiken Bay, Aiken, SC 23 Dec (LS et al.) and in Conway, SC 28 Dec (CH). As has been mentioned before, Lesser Nighthawk is probably the most likely species to be found in the Region in winter. Single Chuck-will's-widows, very rare in winter, were found on the Litchfield-Pawleys Island, SC C.B.C. 29 Dec (CH et al.) and near Wando, Berkeley, SC 13 Jan (JBe et al.). The more expected Whip-poorwill was found four times, with the most northerly being one found dead in Gloucester, Carteret, NC 11 Feb (fide JF).

Hummingbirds were present in good numbers again this winter. Ruby-throateds continued to winter along the immediate coast in North Carolina, with the best count being an amazing 25 on the Kitty Hawk C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide JL). There were at least 4 Black-chinneds found in coastal South Carolina this winter, and at least 4 Calliopes were present at three sites from Georgia to South Carolina. The rarest hummingbird was easily the female **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** at Mableton, *Cobb*, GA 19 Dec–13 Jan (RT, JFl, EH), providing the 7th record for that state.

Flycatchers provided a great deal of excitement in the Region this winter. North Carolina hosted its 5th Say's Phoebe at the O'Berry Center, Wayne 9 Jan+ (MB, m.ob.) and its 4th

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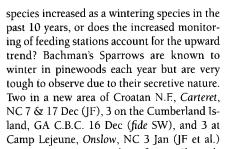
Vermilion Flycatcher, a female at Bettie, *Carteret*, 17 Dec–4 Feb (AB, m.ob.). The latter bird provided that state with its first record of a wintering Vermilion. Elsewhere, the Eufaula N.W.R., GA Vermilion Flycatcher returned for another winter 15 Dec+ (fide SPt, m.ob.). And there were 4 Ash-throated Flycatchers reported this winter! One was near Newton, *Baker*, GA 16 Dec (fide AA), one near Newport, *Carteret*, NC 17 Dec (DA), one

at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 1 Jan (RD et al.), and one at North R. Farms. Carteret, NC 7 Jan (JF et al.). The number of Western Kingbirds reported was definitely up this winter, possibly representing the most ever found in the Region during a season: North Carolina had 4, South Carolina had 3, and Georgia had at least 10 individuals! Common Ravens continued to be found in cen. and e. North Carolina, with 4 on the Chapel Hill C.B.C. 24 Dec (fide WCo), 2 on the Falls Lake C.B.C. 3 Jan (fide BB), and one at Greenville 30-31 Dec (VP, PW). The most unexpected swallows of the season were the single Northern Roughwingeds found on the

Chapel Hill, NC C.B.C. 24 Dec (DC) and at Carters L., GA 1-2 Jan (AS et al., KB) and the Barn Swallow on the Augusta, GA C.B.C. 16 Dec (*fide* AW). Numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches wintering in the Region were down considerably this year, while numbers of Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets were up. Observers from across the three states mentioned good numbers of kinglets especially. They also reported good numbers of American Robins and Hermit Thrushes at many locations in the Region. Cedar Waxwings, on the other hand, were scarce in many areas.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Two lingering Tennessee Warblers were noted this winter: one at Mills R., *Henderson*, NC 2 Dec (MW) and one at the E.L.H. 22 Dec (CL). Also rare in winter were single Northern Parulas at Eufaula N.W.R., GA 15 Dec (fide SPt) and on Roanoke I., NC 31 Jan (JL). The number of Yellow Warblers found this winter was truly unprecedented for the season. One was on the Sun City–Okatie, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide HC), 3 were on the Pettigrew S.P., NC C.B.C. 28 Dec (*fide* LW), and 5 were on the L. Matt. C.B.C. 29 Dec (JL). Several of the latter birds were still present as late as 14 Jan (SS). A Cape May Warbler was a good find on the Duke University campus, Durham, NC 9-10 Feb (TG, CRf et al.), as was a Black-throated Blue Warbler at the same spot 10 Feb (CRf et al.). Another Black-throated Blue was a surprise at Table Rock S.P., SC 6 Jan (PSe), providing a most unusual mt. sighting for the





This Yellow Warbler was one of five different individuals found on the causeway at Lake Mattamuskeet, North Carolina during the Christmas Bird Count there 29 December 2006. This species has been known to winter at that site but not in such numbers. *Photograph by Jeff Lewis*.

winter season. Other very rare and unusual winter warblers reported were an American Redstart at Duluth, GA 8-10 Dec (fide JFl) and a Worm-eating Warbler on the Wilmington, NC C.B.C. 30 Jan (JR). The latter bird was seen well at close range and provided only the 3rd winter report for that state. Ovenbirds are known to winter sparingly at a few coastal locations but are rare inland in winter; thus of note was the one inland on the Congaree Swamp, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide IGr). Another warbler found more than usual for the winter season was Northern Waterthrush. There were seven reports, coming from all three states, and the best total was the 4 on the Savannah, GA C.B.C. 30 Dec (fide SC). Other regularly wintering warblers found in better-than-average numbers included Wilson's Warbler with six reports and Yellow-breasted Chat with eight reports.

Always rare in the Region during winter, a Summer Tanager frequented a feeder in Gloucester, *Carteret*, NC 21 Jan+ (*fide* JF). And Western Tanagers were again found in all three states with 7 in North Carolina, 2 in South Carolina, and 2 in Georgia. Has this

were thus of note. Clay-colored Sparrow sightings included one at Myrtle Beach, SC 9 Dec (KF), 2 at North R. Farms, NC 10-17 Dec (JF et al.), and one at a feeder in Marshville, Union, NC 11 Feb (JSo). Lark Sparrows found this winter included 3 in the Morehead city, NC area 17 Dec+ (SCo, [F et al.) and one at Brick House Rd., Edisto I., SC 14 Jan (ND). Grasshopper Sparrow reports involved one at North R. Farms, NC 3 & 17 Dec (IF et al.), one on the McClellanville. SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide ND), and 3 on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (ND et al.). Henslow's Sparrows were detected in South Carolina and Georgia, with the best counts being 3 on the

Sapelo Island, GA C.B.C. 30 Dec (fide WD), 2 on the Okefenokee N.W.R., GA C.B.C. 29 Dec (fide SW), and 2 on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (fide RC). Le Conte's Sparrows were found in all three states, highlighted by 5-6 present all winter at North R. Farms, NC (JF et al.), 5 on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (ND et al.), and 4 at Eufaula N.W.R., GA 4 Feb (BZ et al.). Lincoln's Sparrow reports also spread across the Region, with the best count being of 2 on the Falls L., NC C.B.C. 3 Jan (BB et al.). Lapland Longspurs, always noteworthy in the Region, were seen on the Southern Pines, NC C.B.C. 17 Dec (2; BSo), on the Congaree Swamp, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (one; fide JGr), on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (one; RC, CE), and in the Red Hill area of n. Edgecombe, NC 21 Jan-18 Feb (2; RD, DH).

A rare winter Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at a feeder on Roanoke I., NC 14 Dec–Jan (SM). Single Indigo Buntings were at the Butner Game Lands, Durham, NC 17 Dec (NB et al.) and at Santee N.W.R., SC 6 Jan (MMo), while Painted Bunting reports came from all three states, with the farthest inland being

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This Summer Tanager frequented a feeder in Gloucester, Carteret County, North Carolina from mid-January (here 21 January) 2007 until the spring season. Photograph by John O. Fussell.



This Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in a Manteo, North Carolina yard from 14 (here 23) December 2006 into January 2007. Lingering and wintering grosbeaks have become almost an annual occurrence in the Southern Atlantic Region. *Photograph by Skip Morgan*.

one on the Pee Dee Area, SC C.B.C. 17 Dec (fide CC). The farthest n. was at a Roanoke l., NC yard 12 Jan+ (JL). Only one Yellow-headed Blackbird was reported, that being a male at the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes N.W.R., NC 4 Feb (LG). Rusty Blackbird numbers seemed to be on a par with recent past winter seasons. A count of 1000 at Augusta, GA 9 Dec (fide TM) was encouraging for this declining species. The most interesting Brewer's Blackbird reports involved 2 on the Santee N.W.R., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (fide RC) and one at Tanglewood Park, Forsyth, NC 30 Dec (fide PD). Two Boat-tailed Grackles on the Pettigrew S.P., NC C.B.C. 28 Dec (fide LW) added to the sightings of that species in an area away from the usual coastal range. South Carolina had several rare orioles this winter. Extremely rare and unusual at this season were 2 Orchard Orioles, both ad. males: one on the Hilton Head Island C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide NL), the other at a feeder in Sumter 30 Jan (ED). Not as rare but still noteworthy was the **Bullock's Oriole** found on the Clemson C.B.C. 16 Dec (fide DL). Georgia had 2 Bullock's this winter: the male returning to the same pecan orchard as last year near Statesboro, *Bulloch* 27 Dec–3 Feb (JPa, BZ et al.) and another male at a feeder in Dublin 17-23 Feb (JFl, EH, LyW et al.).

Winter finches were definitely in short supply across the Region as compared to last year. Red Crossbill sightings, always noteworthy, involved 6 at Maggie Valley, Haywood, NC 30 Dec (WF et al.), one at Flowery Branch, Hall, GA 18 Jan (fide KB), one at Salacoa Creek Park, Gordon, GA 20 Jan (JSp), and 2 at Carters L., Murray, GA 8 Feb (JSp).

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