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REPRODUCTIVE SUCCESS OF AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS AT MANAGED SITES IN GEORGIA

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In recent decades, increasing development and recreation throughout the Georgia coastal region has generated new concern over the status of Georgia's beach-nesting birds (Georgia Coastal Management Program 1997). With a total U.S. population of American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*) as low as $10,971 \pm 258$ individuals (Brown et al. 2004) and naturally low levels of annual productivity (Nol and Humphrey 1994; Davis 1999; Davis et al. 2001), American Oystercatchers could be especially vulnerable to habitat loss and other anthropogenic pressures. American Oystercatchers currently are listed as a species of extremely high priority in the Southeastern Coastal Plain-Caribbean Regional Shorebird Plan (Hunter 2000) because of habitat loss along the southeastern coast and perceived population declines on the Atlantic coast of Florida and in the species' historical stronghold of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina (Hunter 2000; Davis et al. 2001). The American Oystercatcher also is listed as a Georgia rare wildlife species (Ozier et al. 1999).

While originally considered common in Georgia, American Oystercatcher numbers were reduced during the early twentieth century because of unregulated hunting and egg collecting (Erichsen 1921; Bent 1929). The species began a slow recovery following passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (1918) and as many as 35 pairs nested on the Georgia coast by mid-century (Burleigh 1958). The first coast-wide survey of American Oystercatchers conducted in 1980 produced an estimate of 70 nesting pairs (Rappole 1981) and aerial surveys in 1999 placed the state breeding population at 86 pairs (Winn 2000). Despite this apparent increase, oystercatchers have proliferated only in Georgia's remote areas (Winn 2000), not in areas that are easily accessed by people. Recent expansion of recreation into remote areas, combined with studies suggesting that human disturbance may affect Georgia's beach-nesting birds negatively (Rappole 1981; Corbat 1990), led the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish recreation restrictions at five DNR-managed sites in 1998 (Board of Natural Resources Rule 391-4-7). Our study (George 2002) was initiated in 2000 with the goal of providing baseline breeding data for a subset of Georgia's American Oystercatchers, including those breeding at DNR-managed sites. The purpose of this paper is to present reproductive success, fledgling production, and recreational disturbance data for four DNR-managed sites used by DNR and used by breeding American Oystercatchers in 2000 and 2001.

Study Sites and Methods

Surveys of nesting American Oystercatchers were conducted from March to July, 2000 and 2001, at three DNR-managed sites: Egg Island Bar, St. Catherines Bar, and Williamson Island (Fig. 1). A fourth DNR-managed site, Pelican Spit, was surveyed from March to July, 2001. Each of these sites received recreation restrictions according to Board of Natural Resources Rule 391-4-7. All sites were accessible only by boat.

Although previously an important site for nesting shorebirds, Pelican Spit eroded away in 1999 and was unavailable to nesting birds in 2000. Accretion of sediments continued through 2000 and a small section of the spit (~1 ha) was available to nesting birds by March 2001. Recreation was prohibited on a portion of Pelican Spit, but signs were not posted during this study because of the spit's small size. No mammalian predators inhabited the site. Egg Island Bar's large size (25 ha), extensive topographic variation, and absence of mammalian predators provided high-quality nesting habitat for oystercatchers and other beach-nesting birds. Management at the site included prohibitive regulations against recreation, indicated by a large sign, and occasional use of fire to control woody vegetation, ants, and soft-bodied ticks. A portion of the site was

burned in March 2000. Although not measured quantitatively, density and coverage of vegetation at Egg Island Bar was visibly greater in 2001 than in 2000. St. Catherines Bar was influenced heavily by tides and storms in 2000 and 2001. The 5 ha consisted of a tidally-influenced interior mud flat, encircled by a perimeter of low-elevation, sparsely-vegetated dunes and sand flat. Management at the site included prohibitive restrictions on recreation, indicated by a large sign. Mammalian predators did not inhabit the site. Williamson Island (30 ha) was similar in size to Egg Island Bar and provided ample high-topography, sparsely-vegetated habitat. Unlike the other DNR-managed sites, Williamson Island was linked to an adjacent barrier island by tidal salt marsh and was readily accessible to mammalian predators, including raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), mink (*Mustela vison*), and river otter (*Lontra canadensis*). Management at the site included a prohibition on dogs and other domestic pets. Recreation was permitted along the island's beach and southwest tip, but was prohibited throughout the interior to protect beach-nesting bird habitat. These regulations were indicated by signs at numerous locations throughout the island.

Surveys for nesting American Oystercatchers were conducted by boat and on foot by one or two observers using binoculars or spotting scopes during high or rising tides, from March through July. When a pair was observed, its location was charted on a map and its behavior was recorded. If incubating, the nest was marked at a distance (2-3m) with a numbered stake, and nest number, clutch size, and nest coordinates (determined by a handheld Trimble Geoexplorer Global Positioning System unit) were recorded. Time at each nest was less than five minutes, thus adults were flushed off the nest; however, they returned within seconds of our departure. Sites were revisited approximately every 5 to 6 days to document clutch status. Nests were not monitored more frequently due to the extensive study area and difficult boat access to nesting sites; both factors increased time between site visits. Cause of failure during the egg stage was surmised when possible from predator tracks, broken eggshells, or evidence of flooding. Hatching success and fledging success were defined as hatching or fledging one egg or chick, respectively, and were calculated as a percentage of total nesting attempts. Following Davis et al. (2001), production of fledglings at each site was calculated as the ratio of fledglings produced to total number of nesting oystercatcher pairs estimated at each site. To assess levels of recreation at each site, instantaneous point counts of all people within an estimated one km radius of the observer were conducted from March to July 2001. Point counts were conducted during each nest survey, were limited to daylight hours, and were conducted by the same observer to limit observer variability. Counts were randomized with respect to daylight hours by pulling potential point count times in ten minute intervals (e.g., 12:20, 12:40,

12:50...) from a hat before each nest survey. Because point counts were conducted randomly with respect to time, and movement throughout sites was relatively constant and thorough, location of point counts was essentially random relative to location. Relatively flat topography at each site ensured that all recreationists present were counted.

Results

Two American Oystercatcher clutches were documented at Pelican Spit on 19 June 2001. These clutches were apparently initiated by two oystercatcher pairs that nested unsuccessfully on the south tip of nearby Little St. Simon's Island earlier in 2001. One clutch was washed out during a high tide and the other hatched one of three eggs. The chick disappeared before fledging during an unusually high tide that submerged the entire spit. No other avian species nested at Pelican Spit in 2001. Recreational use was frequent at this accessible sand spit; point counts conducted in 2001 averaged 1.4 ± 1.7 (95% CI) people per count ($N = 13$).

Egg Island Bar provided nesting habitat for numerous avian species in 2000 and 2001, including American Oystercatchers, Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), Royal Terns (*Sterna maxima*), Sandwich Terns (*S. sandvicensis*), Gull-billed Terns (*S. nilotica*), Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*), Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*), Willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*), Wilson's Plovers (*Charadrius wilsonia*), Mottled Ducks (*Anas fulvigula*), Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris*), and Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*). An estimated 17 pairs of American Oystercatchers defended territories at Egg Island Bar in 2000 (Table 1). Eighteen clutches were documented and 44% of clutches ($N = 8$) hatched at least one chick. Fledging success was calculated as 33% ($N = 6$) and 0.35 fledglings were produced per pair ($N = 6$ fledglings). Cause of clutch failure during the egg stage was undetermined in 90% ($N = 9$) of cases and one nest failed because of flooding. An estimated 25 pairs of oystercatchers defended territories in 2001, representing a 47% increase in oystercatcher pairs from 2000. More clutches were documented in 2001 ($N = 42$) than in 2000 because of an increase in nesting pairs and an apparent increase in the number of replacement clutches. Hatching and fledging success in 2001 were 14% ($N = 6$) and 5% ($N = 2$), respectively, and fledgling production was estimated as 0.12 fledglings per pair ($N = 3$ fledglings). Cause of clutch failure during the egg stage was undetermined in 39% ($N = 14$) of cases and 31% ($N = 11$) of failures were attributed to predators (presumably avian). At least one clutch failure resulted from interspecific, antagonistic interactions between neighboring pairs of nesting oystercatchers. Nine nests flooded in 2001 (25%) and two nests were apparently abandoned for unknown reasons.

No signs or sightings of mammalian or reptilian predators were observed at Egg Island Bar during the study. Laughing Gulls frequently nested in close proximity to oystercatchers at the site and were observed depredating eggs and chicks on numerous occasions. Other potential avian predators frequently observed at the site included Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Boat-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus major*), Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*), Great Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus*), and Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*). Potential non-avian predators of chicks included fire ants (*Solenopsis* sp.) and ghost crabs (*Ocypode quadrata*). Recreationists were only observed at the site on one time in 2000 and had no known effect on beach-nesting birds. Accordingly, point counts of recreationists in 2001 averaged 0.0 ± 0.0 (95% CI) recreationists per count ($N = 42$).

Four pairs of American Oystercatchers defended territories at St. Catherines Bar in 2000. Of the six clutches documented in 2000, all failed before hatching. Five clutches flooded and one clutch failed for unknown reasons. Three pairs nested at the bar in 2001, but all seven clutches failed before hatching. One clutch washed out during floods, one clutch was apparently lost to an avian predator, four clutches failed for unknown reasons, and one clutch was apparently abandoned. The abandoned clutch and two clutches of unknown fate were incubated for the full 26-day incubation period, yet failed to hatch. Bird tracks and droppings observed on higher points following spring tides in 2000 and 2001 indicated that the bar was used as a roost by Brown Pelicans, gulls, and other birds during spring tide events. During such events, the area of land above water was reduced considerably. No signs or sightings of mammalian or reptilian predators occurred during 2000 or 2001, but ghost crabs were observed frequently. Despite the bar's close proximity (~250 m) to the north beach of St. Catherines Island (which is frequented by recreationists), no people were observed on the bar during the study. Human footprints were observed on one occasion in 2001. Point counts of recreationists in 2001 averaged 0.0 ± 0.0 (95% CI) people per count ($N = 17$). Wilson's Plovers were the only other beach-nesting birds that nested on St. Catherines Bar during the study. A single Wilson's Plover chick was observed in 2000.

Three pairs of oystercatchers nested at Williamson Island in 2000. One of four clutches hatched two eggs, but the chicks were lost prior to fledging for unknown reasons. Of the three failed clutches, one clutch flooded, one clutch was depredated (apparently by raccoons), and the last clutch was lost for unknown reasons. Three pairs were again documented in 2001, but ten clutches were located, suggesting the possibility of a fourth, undocumented oystercatcher pair. All ten clutches failed before hatching. Six clutches were apparently depredated by raccoons and the other four clutches disappeared for unknown reasons. Based on the

abundance of tracks, sightings, and scat raccoons were suspected in most uncertain clutch failures in 2000 and 2001. No avian predators nested at the site, but potential avian predators (e.g., Fish Crows, Boat-tailed Grackles), mink tracks, and ghost crabs were observed frequently. Human-related factors were not implicated directly in any clutch failures at Williamson, but human and dog footprints were frequently observed within the protected area. Dogs were observed on the island on 31% ($N = 5$) of visits in 2000 and 37% ($N = 7$) of visits in 2001. Forty-nine boats and over 200 recreationists were observed on the southwest tip on one occasion in 2000. Randomly conducted point counts in 2001 averaged 4.1 ± 4.6 (95% CI) people per count ($N = 22$) and ranged as high as 46 people. Wilson's Plovers nested at the northeast tip of the island in 2000 and 2001. Willets used the marsh on the leeward side of the island in 2000 and 2001, but nests were not confirmed.

Discussion

The small size and low topography of Pelican Spit likely were responsible for the low number of American Oystercatcher pairs, failure of one nest, and loss of one chick at that site. However, the arrival of two breeding pairs midway through the breeding season indicated greater plasticity in oystercatcher nest site selection than is generally cited in the literature (Nol and Humphrey 1994). Since 2001, the area and topography of the spit have fluctuated, presumably in response to natural accretion and erosion. During periods of accretion when nesting habitat is naturally enhanced (i.e., high topography, greater area), it may be beneficial to reinstate recreation regulations before onset of the nesting season. In addition to benefiting nesting oystercatchers, such actions would likely benefit Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*), which have nested at Pelican Spit in the past.

During this study, Egg Island Bar was the most important nesting site for American Oystercatchers and other beach-nesting birds in Georgia. The greater number of oystercatcher pairs and increased productivity at Egg Island Bar compared to the other DNR-managed sites were probably due to the bar's large size, apparent absence of mammalian predators, relatively high-topography habitat, and minimal human disturbance to nesting birds. Previous studies in New York (Zarudsky 1985) and Florida (Toland 1999) have also documented increased productivity of oystercatchers at isolated islands with low levels of disturbance and no mammalian predators. Greater productivity at the site in 2000 as compared to 2001 was notable. A previous study (Davis et al. 2001) found that oystercatcher productivity fluctuates yearly in response to changing environmental variables (e.g., habitat quality, predation rate, storms,

extremely high tides). As such, greater productivity in 2000 may have resulted from natural factors. However, the controlled burn in March 2000 may have benefited oystercatchers by reducing vegetation, thereby reducing inter- and intraspecific competition for nest sites. Conversely, the increase in oystercatcher pairs in 2001, coupled with perceived increase in vegetative cover, probably increased competition for nest sites, which may have reduced productivity (Nol and Humphrey 1994). Evidence of greater inter- and intraspecific competition in 2001 than 2000 was provided by: 1) documentation of clutch failure due to interactions among neighboring oystercatchers, 2) increased rates of predation, and 3) increased rates of flooding (i.e., selection of low-elevation, low-quality habitat) despite lower tidal extremes (National Ocean Service, unpublished data).

Future management at Egg Island Bar should strive to prevent encroachment of woody vegetation, as oystercatcher numbers will likely decrease if vegetative cover increases substantially (Soots and Parnell 1975; Nol and Humphrey 1994). Maintenance of sparsely-vegetated habitat could also benefit other Georgia state-listed beach-nesting birds, such as Gull-billed Terns, Least Terns, and Wilson's Plovers (Ozier et al. 1999) that prefer sparsely-vegetated nesting habitat (Soots and Parnell 1975; Parnell et al. 1995; Thompson et al. 1997; Corbat and Bergstrom 2000). Additionally, expansion of Egg Island Bar's area, topography, and vegetation could create refugia for mammalian predators. Surveys should be conducted for predators before the onset of each nesting season and contingency plans should be developed to control mammalian predators if they become established at the site. Natural factors (e.g., erosion, tidal overwash) may control encroachment of woody vegetation. If natural factors prove ineffective, more aggressive use of fire and herbicides may be warranted. The effectiveness of herbicides in maintaining shorebird nesting habitat is well documented (Evans 1986; Linz et al. 1994; Root 1996; Linz and Blixt 1997). Although recreational disturbance at Egg Island Bar was insignificant during this study, future increases in recreation could affect beach-nesting birds negatively (Toland 1999). If recreational use increases in the region, better placement of more visible regulatory signs at Egg Island Bar would be warranted.

Despite an absence of recreation and mammalian predators, the small size and low topography of St. Catherines Bar resulted in frequent flooding of oystercatcher nests. Use of the bar as a roost site by gulls, terns, and pelicans also may have contributed to clutch failures indirectly through abandonment of nests or directly through increased depredation of eggs and chicks. Nonetheless, the relatively large number of clutches that failed despite being incubated the full 26-day term is disconcerting and warrants future monitoring. Since 2001, St. Catherines Bar has fluctuated in size

much like Pelican Spit. Although the site remains closed to the public year-round because it is an important roosting and foraging site for wintering and migratory birds, special care should be taken to enforce regulations during years when nesting habitat is naturally enhanced.

The abundance of mammalian predators at Williamson Island was the primary cause of low reproductive success at that site. Other studies of oystercatchers have found that, when raccoons and other mammals are present, depredation is the most frequent cause of clutch failure (Nol 1989; Davis et al. 2001). Recreational disturbance may have contributed to low reproductive success at Williamson Island indirectly by increasing predation rates. Davis (1999) found that recreational use was correlated with increased raccoon density on North Carolina beaches. High raccoon densities likely increase predation rates, thereby reducing reproductive success of beach-nesting birds. Although not documented in this study, recreation can also directly reduce reproductive success in oystercatchers and other shorebirds through trampling of nests, increased nest abandonment, slowed chick growth, and increased exposure of eggs and chicks to natural or domestic predators (Erwin 1980; Safina and Burger 1983; Rodgers and Smith 1995; Toland 1999).

Williamson Island provided poor-quality habitat for nesting oystercatchers during this study, primarily because the site was accessible to mammalian predators. Any protection provided by recreational restrictions was probably outweighed by predation rates and the fact that recreationists were permitted on the beach. Recreational restrictions would be beneficial in the future if habitat quality improves. Barring natural reductions in predator populations or physical changes in landscape (i.e., erosion) that reduce accessibility to predators, Williamson Island will likely remain poor habitat for nesting oystercatchers. Control of predators has been shown to benefit shorebirds (Witmer et al. 1996) and would probably benefit oystercatchers and other beach-nesting birds at Williamson Island. Unfortunately, predator removal can be prohibitively expensive, logistically difficult, politically controversial, and can have unintended ecological effects (Garretson et al. 1996; Witmer et al. 1996; Hecht and Nickerson 1999). Consequently, costs and benefits of such management should be considered before initiating such measures.

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Year	Site	No. of clutches	Mean clutch size	No. of hatched clutches (%)	No. of fledged clutches (%)	No. of pairs	No. of fledglings produced	Fledglings produced per pair
2000	Egg Island Bar	18	2.0	8 (44)	6 (33)	17	6	0.35
	St. Catherines Bar	6	2.2	0 (0)	0 (0)	4	0	0.00
	Williamson Island	4	2.0	1 (25)	0 (0)	3	0	0.00
	Total	28	2.0	9 (32)	6 (21)	24	6	0.25
2001	Egg Island Bar	42	2.0	6 (14)	2 (5)	25	3	0.12
	Pelican Spit	2	2.0	1 (50)	0 (0)	2	0	0.00
	St. Catherines Bar	7	2.3	0 (0)	0 (0)	3	0	0.00
	Williamson Island	10	1.7	0 (0)	0 (0)	3	0	0.00
	Total	61	2.0	7 (11)	2 (3)	33	3	0.09

Table 1. Clutch size, hatching success, fledging success, and fledgling production of American Oystercatchers at four Department of Natural Resources-managed sites in coastal Georgia, March-July, 2000 and 2001. Oystercatchers did not nest at Pelican Spit in 2000.

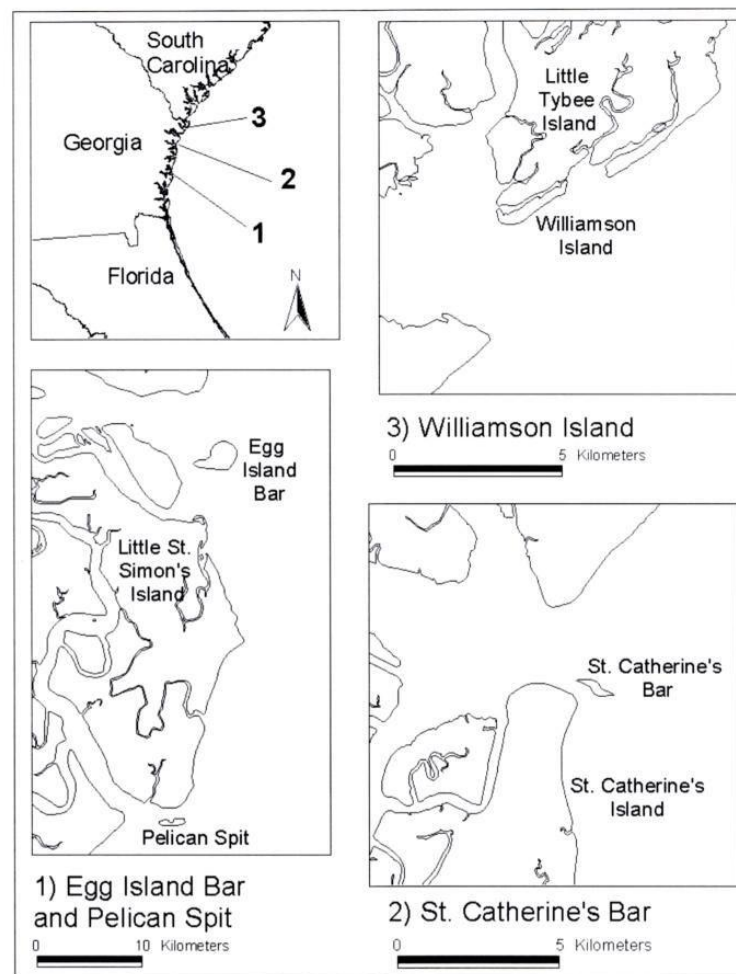


Figure 1. Location of four Department of Natural Resources-managed sites along the Georgia coast: 1) Pelican Spit and Egg Island Bar, 2) St. Catherine's Bar, and 3) Williamson Island.

LITTLE BLUE HERONS AND SNOWY EGRETS USE RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS AS "BEATERS"

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Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula*) use a variety of animals as "beaters," following them and taking prey disturbed by them. Birds used as beaters by this species have included Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) (Parsons and Master 2000 and references therein), and Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*; Parks and Bressler 1963, Emlen and Ambrose 1970, Lamm 1975). Little Blue Herons (*Egretta caerulea*), however, do not commonly use beaters (Rodgers and Smith 1995), but commensal feeding with White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*; Kushlan 1978) and West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*; Scott and Powell 1982) is known. We report here on Little Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets jointly using Red-breasted Mergansers as beaters at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel Island, Florida.

On 11 March 2001 at 0940 hrs we were watching herons forage in the extensive shallow inlet adjoining Cross Dike Trail on the refuge, when we observed three Little Blue Herons closely following four female-plumaged Red-breasted Mergansers, and a second association of five Little Blue Herons and a Snowy Egret following a single merganser. The tide was out and water depth was about 6-9 inches, such that the mergansers were sometimes wading rather than swimming. Some of the same birds may have been involved in both associations. Positions of the herons and egret relative to one another varied, but generally the Little Blue Herons were closest to the merganser. The herons were stabbing at prey flushed by the swimming/wading mergansers in somewhat of a feeding frenzy. The birds were at least 150 meters from us, so it was not possible to determine if prey attacks by herons were successful, even with our 10X binoculars. The herons followed the mergansers, turning when the mergansers turned and never falling more than a meter or so behind them. Another Snowy Egret and three more Little Blue Herons joined the groups following the mergansers. The herons broke up into groups of two or more associated with individual mergansers, following and sometimes surrounding a foraging, diving bird. The mergansers moved quickly, sometimes with

extended wings as they "ran" seemingly in response to the presence of the herons. They often appeared to be trying to distance themselves from the herons, and the herons sometimes had to fly to keep up. We watched for about ten minutes as the birds moved across our field of view more than 200 m before intervening vegetation obscured our view.

Both Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons often feed in mixed species associations, but Little Blue Herons tend to be less active foragers, hunting in a methodical, slow-walking fashion (Rodgers and Smith 1995). Thus the active pursuit involved in using mergansers as beaters is an unusual foraging behavior for the species.

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Editor's Note—In the March/June 2003 issue of *The Oriole* (68:5) there is an error. The first sentence of the third paragraph should read "Later, Roger painted a spectacular Orchard Oriole in full color for our 50th anniversary issue" not 25th.

GENERAL NOTES

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER AT KENNESAW MOUNTAIN NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK -- This paper documents the sighting of a Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Cobb County, Georgia. On 8 September 2003, I was birding Kennesaw Mountain with Bob and Deb Zaremba, Bill Lotz, and Sterling Blanchard. I was standing at the "saddle," a point on the paved mountain road where a hiking path leading to Little Kennesaw Mountain crosses it. Below the road is a large open area containing some scattered mature hardwoods, privet and other undergrowth, with hardwood trees growing along the right side of the path.

At about 0930 hrs, I noticed movement in a small hickory on the right edge of the clearing. As the bird emerged from the leaves, I was able to observe it with my 10 x 42 binoculars at a distance of about 25 m. I saw a warbler about the size of a Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*), with a striking black and white face pattern. As I looked more closely, I could see the bright yellow supraloral spot. I immediately shouted "Black-throated Gray Warbler" and started down the path to where it had disappeared in the thick leaves. At about 0950 h, I relocated the bird in some low privet at the bottom of the clearing. It was actively feeding, flitting and hovering as it searched for insects. I was able to observe it for about 20 seconds and confirm the identification. The bird disappeared again and was refound at around 1030 hrs by Bill Lotz, who spotted it in a large winged elm (*Ulmus alata*) in the middle of the clearing near the paved mountain road.

The Black-throated Gray Warbler stayed in the vicinity of the winged elm until 1530 hrs that day and was seen by many observers. With longer views, observers could see that the black in the throat did not extend all the way to the base of the bill. It was photographed by Pierre Howard, Bob Zaremba, and others and the photographs are in the GOS archives. The bird was not seen on the next day, 9 September 2003, but it was seen on 10 September 2003 and finally on 11 September 2003 by Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba, and me.

The age and sex of the bird has been the subject of some discussion and no satisfactory conclusion has been reached. This bird presented an identification conundrum because of the markings that it showed in the throat and chin. It had more black in the throat than is shown in drawings of the adult female in *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America* (Dunn, J. and K. Garrett. 1997. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York), but less black there than is shown for the first winter male. It had a strongly white chin in sharp contrast to the black of the throat. This field

mark would rule out adult male, which shows black in the throat and chin to the base of the bill, and first winter female which shows little or no black in throat. Kimball Garrett looked at the photographs and could not determine the sex or age of the bird. He said that the date of the sighting suggests that the bird was an adult female because that would be in keeping with known migration patterns of the species. (Garrett pers. comm.).

Black-throated Gray Warbler is an annual, though rare, visitor in eastern North America, in late fall and winter along the Gulf coast. In the Southeast, it has been recorded in all coastal states and in Tennessee. (Dunn, J. and K. Garrett. 1997. *A Field Guide to the Warblers of North America*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York). Beaton et al. (2003. *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*. GOS Occasional Publ. No. 14) list Black-throated Gray Warbler as accidental on Jekyll Island) and note an undocumented "report from Crooked River State Park on 1 Feb 1989 (*Oriole* 54:35)."

This sighting was accepted unanimously by the Records Committee of GOS on 6 March 2004. It is the second accepted record for the species in Georgia. It may appear on the Georgia coast more frequently than records indicate considering its almost annual appearance in the Florida panhandle and in other locations in the eastern United States.

Pierre Howard, 2843 Dover Road, Atlanta, Georgia 30327

CINNAMON TEAL AT ALTAMAHA STATE WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT AREA -- On 28 February 2004, I birded the Altamaha State Waterfowl Management Area near Darien, GA. I arrived at about 0830 hrs and walked to the observation tower on the east side of GA Hwy 17. The impoundments were well flooded with hundreds of ducks present. From the platform, I could see Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*), Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), American Wigeon (*Anas americana*), Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), and Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*). The predominant species present was Blue-winged Teal, with close to 1000 birds moving around in small flocks.

After about 30 minutes of searching through the flocks for something unusual, I put my scope over my shoulder and started down the steep steps of the tower. As I was half-way down, a small flock of about 15 teal settled into the impoundment approximately 90 yards away, between the tower and Hwy 17 on the left side of the path from my vantage point. I paused and looked at the flock through my binoculars, holding them in one hand and trying to steady them.

At first, I saw nothing but Blue-winged Teal. Suddenly, a small duck swam into view from behind some of the Blue-wings. I was astonished that it appeared to be solid reddish-brown or cinnamon in color, with a black rear end. The bird then swam behind some of the Blue-wings and out of view. When I tried to tip-toe to the bottom of the steps to set up my scope for a better look, the flock flushed and flew south toward the other end of the impoundments and out of sight.

Confident that I had seen a Cinnamon Teal (*Anas cyanoptera*), but wanting a longer look, I trudged to the back ponds in the general direction of their flight and searched for the Cinnamon Teal for about 45 minutes with no success. Jeff Sewell and Ian Stephenson then arrived and joined the search.

A short time later, we spotted some teal swimming in one of the small channels in the cutgrass that fills some of the impoundments. The flock swam across a small opening in the cutgrass, affording us only a brief look. As we searched the flock, Jeff shouted, "Cinnamon Teal." Just then the flock flushed again. Iain was able to pick the Cinnamon out of the flock in its twisting flight toward open water. When they settled in the big south pond, we were able to get excellent views through our spotting scopes. We could see the field marks including the red eye, the rich reddish-brown color of the head, neck, breast and sides, as well as the buff tertials and the black undertail coverts and femoral tract. The bill was clearly more spatulate than that of the other teal nearby. It was a spectacular breeding plumaged male Cinnamon Teal.

Cinnamon Teal is a review species in Georgia. The Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds lists it as accidental in winter with six records from Augusta since 1977 (Waters and Waters, *Oriole* 63:32) and one record from the coast at the Altamaha State Waterfowl Management Area 1 March -16 April 1988 (Wigh, *Oriole* 53:53).

The Cinnamon Teal was subsequently seen by several observers on 28 and 29 February. Photographs taken by Earl Horn, Dan Vickers, and Giff Beaton were posted on the GOS website.

Recognition is due to Jeff Sewell and Dr. Ian Stephenson for their role in the relocation of the bird after the initial sighting.

Pierre Howard, 2843 Dover Road, Atlanta, Georgia 30327

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES NEST IN BEN HILL COUNTY: A FURTHER EXTENSION OF BREEDING RANGE FOR INTERIOR GEORGIA -- Regular readers of *The Oriole* know that Boat-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus major westoni*) have extended their range from the Gulf Coast into Thomas County in extreme southern Georgia (McNair, D. B. and W. W. Baker. 2000. *Oriole* 65:50-54). The purpose of this note is to record a further northward extension of this species into central South Georgia.

On 28 July 2003, Milton Hopkins and Carol Hopkins Weeks pulled into a parking space near a dumpster behind a fast-food restaurant, following up on a report by local logging contractor, Tim Parker. The location is approximately 2.5 km south of the courthouse in Fitzgerald, Ben Hill County, Georgia, near US 129. It is approximately 200 km to the Gulf of Mexico. Here a female Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*) flew up and landed on the rim of the dumpster, then flew into the container and reappeared moments later with food in its beak. Hopkins returned on subsequent days and saw one to four individuals of both sexes searching for food in the same manner. The birds were flying to and from a willow-lined drainage ditch, passing over several parking lots before landing on the ground or the dumpster.

On several occasions juveniles were noted in a food-begging mode with beaks agape, calling to adults of both sexes. These observations strongly suggest that breeding has occurred in this area. Based on the dark brown eyes of the adults, these grackles were judged to be representatives of the Gulf Coast subspecies, *Quiscalus major westoni*. Their dark eye color, in contrast to the yellow of the Atlantic subspecies, was well observed later, on 8 August, when at least 25 Boat-tails were counted over and around a Wal-Mart parking lot in the same general area. Still later that day, Snow and Hopkins had excellent views of more than 20 birds, their eye color clearly discernible, for many were walking on the ground within five m of our vehicle.

Continued monitoring of this population through the ensuing year revealed successful nesting when on 26 May 2004, fledglings were observed at nests. On this day a visit to a nearby abandoned 20 ha oxidation pond .75 km west of our previous observations revealed 35-50 Boat-tailed Grackles either perched in clumps of cattail or milling about black willows (*Salix nigra*). Mats of floating vegetation included Pennywort. Baker waded in 30 cm deep water and found several nests fastened to cattail leaves. The 110 mm diameter nests were constructed entirely of cattail leaves varying from brown to green in color. Several fledglings capable of short flight were flushed. Other species observed at this site included Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*), Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius*

phoeniceus), Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), and Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*).

Milton Hopkins, Jr., 360 Peacock Road, Osierfield, GA 31320; W. Wilson Baker, Tallahassee, FL; and Frankie Snow, Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, South Georgia College, Douglas, GA 31533

GOS SPRING 2004 MEETING PROGRAM ABSTRACTS

23-25 April 2004

Milledgeville, GA

BIRDS AMONG MAMMOTHS: AVIFAUNA FROM CLARK QUARRY, BRUNSWICK, GEORGIA. *Robert A. Bahn, Alfred J. Mead, and Robert M. Chandler, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061*

Abstract: Pleistocene mammoth (*Mammuthus columbi*) and bison (*Bison* sp.) remains are the dominant vertebrate macrofossils thus far recovered from the Clark Quarry near Brunswick, Georgia. Five avian orders have been identified from post-cranial material recovered by screen washing sediments. The orders include Pelecaniformes, Anseriformes, Gruiformes, Charadriiformes, and Passeriformes. Many vertebrate taxa serve as paleoenvironmental indicators. The presence of the grazing mammoths and bison indicate a terrestrial environment. The occurrence of land tortoises (*Hesperotestudo crassiscutata*) suggests a temperate climate. Alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*), emydid turtles, water snakes (*Nerodia* sp., *Thamnophis* sp.), and gar (*Lepisosteus* sp.) demonstrate a freshwater influence. However, the bones lie immediately above a layer of broken oyster shells that includes gastropods, crabs, and drum fish, suggesting a marine influence. Minor abrasion on large bones and the lack of "stone-bones" indicates a relatively low energy depositional environment. The abundance of freshwater fish and reptiles demonstrates the presence of permanent water. The enclosing sediment is a well sorted, sub-rounded to subangular, medium to coarse grained quartz arenite lacking peat and muddy sediment. This suite of evidence suggests that the fossils were deposited in or along a small coastal stream flowing into a back-barrier marsh.

EARLIEST RECORD OF A NEW WORLD QUAIL FROM THE EAST LAKE LOCAL FAUNA, OTAY FORMATION (LATE OLIGOCENE) OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. *Ashley S. Cooper and Robert M. Chandler, Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, Georgia 31061-0490*

Abstract: A fossil New World quail (Aves: Galliformes, Odontophorinidae) is described from the Eastlake Local Fauna of the Otay Formation, San Diego County, California. The East Lake Local Fauna is late Oligocene (early Arikarean, NALMA, 28.5 - 23.8 Ma) in age. Therefore, this is the earliest record for a New World quail yet known to science predating the previous record by nearly five million years. This new species is systematically interesting and morphologically distinctive. The long, gracile legs indicate that it was a better runner than a flier.

Ratios of the legs to wings of the new species compares closest to extant birds that live in a chaparral environment (i.e., of low growth evergreen oak). North American early Arikarean faunal assemblages are rare and any additional evidence of late Oligocene paleoenvironment is important.

TERRESTRIAL VERTEBRATE FOSSILS FROM THE NEOGENE OF TRINIDAD. *Robert M. Chandler, Alfred J. Mead, and William P. Wall, Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061*

Abstract: Recent exploration of Neogene deposits in Trinidad has yielded an array of fossils including those of large terrestrial vertebrates. The material was collected from Plio-Pleistocene oil-saturated sands exposed within the Petrotrin Forest Reserve Oilfield. Petrotrin employees apparently re-discovered the "Glyptodon Locality" in 1957; however, the fauna and flora remain undescribed. It appears that the deposit was initially discovered in 1922 at which time a large collection of insects was obtained and later described. Small vertebrates were also noted in a 1927 publication, yet no formal description was included. Presently identified vertebrate material includes glyptodont, ground sloth, owl, and a small rodent. A variety of aquatic beetles and plant material were also recovered. The fossils at the "Glyptodon Locality" were collected from northwardly dipping oil-saturated sands. Previous geologic mapping of the Forest Reserve fields by Petrotrin geologists indicates surface exposures of Plio-Pleistocene aged sediments of the Mayaro or Palmiste Formations. The Forest Reserve Oilfields lie in between the Los Bajos Fault to the south and the Central Range to the north.

PHYLOGENETIC RELATIONSHIP OF SERIEMAS TO MUSOPHAGIDAE AND OTHER BIRD FAMILIES. *Katie L. Cockeram, Robert M. Chandler, and Michael L. Gleason, Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061*

Abstract: Cytochrome b sequences are being used to investigate the systematic position of the South American Red-legged Seriema (*Cariama cristata*) and Black-legged Seriema (*Chunga burmeisteri*) to the Musophagidae (turacos), Ciconiidae (storks), and Gruiformes (cranes). Genomic DNA from contour feather pith of the seriema species is amplified and then directly sequenced. Comparison of partial sequence data for the seriemas with previously described sequences for turacos and cranes supports a closer relationship of seriemas to turacos, than to the cranes with which seriemas are traditionally grouped. These data are in agreement with osteological and fossil data that previously have been reported. Further analysis of the complete sequence homology data is in

progress and will be described. Evidence that two seriema species should be reclassified into the same genus also will be presented.

LATE PLIOCENE FOSSIL BIRDS OF THE SANTA FE RIVER, FLORIDA. *Daniel Williams and Robert M. Chandler, Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061*

Abstract: Fossil birds from the Santa Fe River (SF1B) include representatives of nine modern orders, 12 modern genera, and 16 species. One notable exception is the Terror Bird, *Titanis walleri*, from South America. The Santa Fe River fossil locality is in Gilchrist County in north central Florida. It is a late Pliocene sinkhole deposit approximately 2.5 million years before present. The Santa Fe River paleo-ecology is hypothesized by comparing the paleo-avifauna with the modern avifauna. By comparing the SF1B birds with other North American paleo-avifauna the late Pliocene continental climate setting can be hypothesized. Furthermore, by comparing the fossil appearance of modern bird genera with their present distribution, the glacial cooling effect can be determined.

SOUTHEASTERN AMERICAN KESTREL USE OF 230KV TUBULAR TRANSMISSION TOWERS IN SOUTH-CENTRAL GEORGIA. *Pamela Maney and John Parrish, Department of Biology, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA 30460*

Abstract: We report a significant and previously unrecognized Southeastern American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius paulus*) population along electrical transmission lines between Dougherty and Pierce Counties (ca. 160 km). These unique power poles have a pair of hollow (ca. 15 cm dia.), horizontal pipes, about 25 m high on H-shaped power poles, which provide nest sites for a kestrel pair. Following preliminary surveys in late summer 2001, 139 adult and immature kestrels were counted at selected points along the transmission line. During surveys in spring 2002, adult kestrels were observed at 64 different power poles. In 2003, kestrels were observed near more than 273 transmission poles. No more than a single pair has been observed nesting at any one of the power poles, which are about 0.2 km apart. We estimate this south-central Georgia kestrel population may consist of as many as 250-275 breeding pairs. Thus, the state's single largest breeding population of *F. s. paulus* is present in a previously undocumented area of southern Georgia, because of the availability of the unusual nest sites in the power poles. The inevitable removal of the badly rusting hollow, cross-armed nest sites prompted a design for a possible "alternative" nest site from 12 inch PVC pipe. We will continue our surveys in the next few years, especially to monitor any use of the PVC nest-sites. This research has been funded by the Avian Powerline

Interaction Committee, the Georgia Power Co., and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

THE FIRST RECORD OF BIRD EGGS FROM THE EARLY OLIGOCENE (ORELLAN) OF NORTH AMERICA. *Robert M. Chandler and William P. Wall, Department of Biological and Environment Sciences, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA 31061*

Abstract: Three bird eggs from the Scenic Member of the Brule Formation, Badlands National Park, Shannon County, South Dakota are the first published record of eggs from the early Oligocene (Orellan) of North America. The fossil eggs compare closest to gruiform birds: cranes, rails, limpkins, and their relatives (Aves: Gruiformes) in size, shape, and eggshell porosity. Our understanding of the Paleogene paleo-avifauna is based on fossil skeletons from a limited number of well-known Eocene and fewer Oligocene localities. Eocene and Oligocene gruiform bird species are known; one of which is the earliest record of a limpkin, *Badistornis aramus* Wetmore, from Shannon County, South Dakota. The eggs described herein compare closest to eggs of the living Limpkin, *Aramus guarauna*.

**GOS/COLONIAL COAST BIRDING FESTIVAL FALL 2004
MEETING POSTER ABSTRACTS**

8-10 October 2004

Jekyll Island, GA

ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION GENETICS OF MOTTLED DUCKS IN GEORGIA AND SOUTH CAROLINA. Guo-Jing Weng, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, (gwx8004@owl.forestry.uga.edu); Sara H. Schweitzer, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602, (schweitz@smokey.forestry.uga.edu)

Abstract: Mottled ducks (*Anas fulvigula*) were introduced to the Santee River Delta and the ACE (Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto Rivers) Basin, South Carolina from Texas, Louisiana, and Florida during 1975-1982 for hunting opportunities. Released birds have established several local populations along the South Carolina and Georgia (SC/GA) coasts. Dispersal of mottled ducks from South Carolina and Georgia is a great concern to ornithologists because of efforts to maintain the Florida Mottled Duck (*A. f. fulvigula*) as a distinct population. Our objectives are to study the life history, behavior, habitat selection, and population structure of SC/GA mottled ducks and to detect gene flow between Florida and SC/GA mottled duck populations. Study sites include Bear Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Savannah Corps of Engineers Confined Disposal Facilities in South Carolina, and Savannah National Wildlife Refuge and Altamaha WMA in Georgia. Mottled ducks seldom used water deeper than 15 cm. Submerged plants and aquatic invertebrate abundance did not appear to be associated with habitat use of mottled ducks. All broods over 2 weeks of age survived to fledge. Ducks from hunters' harvests were collected for genetic analysis. Microsatellite DNA will be used to understand level of gene flow within SC/GA populations and between Florida and SC/GA populations. The results of the genetic analysis will aid management policy and hunting regulations should the SC/GA population eventually colonize near the range of the Florida Mottled Duck populations.

EFFECTS OF DISTURBANCE AND PREDATION ON AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS (*HAEMATOPUS PALLIATUS*) DURING THE BREEDING SEASON, CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE, GEORGIA. John B. Sabine^{1,3}, J. Michael Meyers², Sara H. Schweitzer²; ¹ Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-2152, ² USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Warnell School of Forest Resources, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-2152, ³ (johnsabine3@hotmail.com)

Abstract: Human disturbance and predation may contribute to low reproductive success for American Oystercatchers at Cumberland Island National Seashore, Georgia; however no recent studies have focused on identification of causes of egg and hatchling losses. To identify these causes, predation, disturbance and oystercatcher activity were examined by video monitoring and collection of time activity data on all nesting adults during the 2003 and 2004 breeding seasons. Ten nesting pairs made 32 nest attempts over two seasons. Twelve hatched at least one egg and eight fledged at least one chick (15 chicks fledged). Causes of nest failure during incubation were predation ($n = 13$), overwash ($n = 1$), horse trampling ($n = 1$), abandonment ($n = 2$), human destruction ($n = 1$), and unknown ($n = 2$). We identified three egg predators: raccoon (*Procyon lotor*, $n = 9$), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*, $n = 3$), and American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*, $n = 1$). Because of their mobility, chicks were difficult to monitor. We documented one chick predator: ghost crab (*Ocypode quadata*, $n = 1$). More than 700 hours of time activity data and disturbance data were collected. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be used to compare these data.

REPORT OF THE GOS CHECKLIST AND RECORDS COMMITTEE JUL 2003-SEP 2004

Terry Moore, Chairman, Giff Beaton, Secretary, Bob Cooper, Jim Flynn, Malcolm Hodges, Brad Winn

This report enumerates the decisions of the GCRC during the period July 2003 through September 2004 and covers records numbered 2003-12 through 2004-07. The dates listed with each record are the observation date or dates of the submitted record and the date of report submission. In many cases the birds reported were present for longer periods of time. During this period the GCRC reviewed 16 records. Of these, 13 were accepted as valid, one was not accepted due to questions about the identification of the species involved, and two were sent to a second round of votes in accordance with GCRC Bylaws due to split votes. The reports added one new species to the state list, and several second records for species. The current state list stands at 408 Regular Species and 8 Provisional Species for a total of 416.

GCRC activity is reviewed below, in chronological order.

2003-12, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Andrews Island, 31 May 2003/ 2 Jul 2003. This report with sketches was submitted by Bob Zaremba, and was accepted as a valid wild record. This is the second accepted record of this species for Georgia.

2003-13, Limpkin at Reed Bingham State Park, May 2003/ 11 Aug 2003. This report with photos was submitted by Chet Powell and was accepted.

2003-14, Long-eared Owl near Griffin, 3 Nov 2002/ 2 Oct 2003. This report was of an injured owl found tangled in a fence, and was submitted by rehabilitator Steve Hicks. It was accepted. This is the 24th record of this species in Georgia and continues a recent trend of either dead or injured individuals found for this species.

2003-15, Bell's Vireo at Kennesaw Mountain, 5 Oct 2003/ 11 Oct 2003. This sight report was submitted by Giff Beaton and was accepted. This is the second accepted record of this species for Georgia.

2003-16, Brown Noddy offshore, 29 Aug 2003/ 29 Oct 2003. This report was submitted by Chuck Saleeby with photos by Dan Vickers and was accepted. This is the third offshore and seventh overall record of this species in Georgia.

2003-17, Western Meadowlark near Watkinsville, 15 Nov 2003/ 20 Nov 2003. This report was not accepted due to questions about the identification and the great difficulty separating Eastern and Western Meadowlarks in the field. There is one accepted record (a specimen) of this species in Georgia.

2003-18, Black-throated Gray Warbler at Kennesaw Mountain, 8-11 Sep 2003/ 24 Nov 2003. This report was submitted by Pierre Howard, with numerous photos from Pierre plus several others and was accepted. This is the second accepted record of this species for Georgia.

2003-19, Ross's Goose in Gwinnett County, 24 Nov 2003/ 5 Dec 2003. This report with photos resulted in a split vote due to possible hybrid status. This report is being recirculated in a second round of voting in accordance with GCRC Bylaws. There are 13 accepted records of this species in Georgia.

2003-20, Calliope Hummingbird in Decatur, 5 Dec 2003/ 16 Dec 2003. This report with in-hand photos was submitted by bander Rusty Trump and was accepted. This is the eighth accepted record of this species for Georgia.

2004-01, Calliope Hummingbird in Snellville, 24 Jan 2004/ 30 Jan 2004. This report with in-hand photos was submitted by bander Rusty Trump and was accepted. This is the ninth accepted record for this species in Georgia.

2004-02, Iceland Gull at Tybee Island, 18 Jan 2004/ 29 Jan 2004. This report with photos was submitted by Earl Horn and was accepted. This is the ninth accepted record for this species in Georgia.

2004-03, Yellow-billed Loon at Lake Horton, 29 Dec 2003/ Mar 2004. The original observer declined to submit this report, so the submission was generated from some photos posted to the GOS web site. It was accepted and is the first record for Georgia for this species.

2004-04, Cinnamon Teal at Altamaha WMA, 28 Feb 2004/ 3 Mar 2004. This report was submitted by Pierre Howard with photos by several others and was accepted. This is the eighth accepted record of this species for Georgia.

2004-05, Common Redpoll in Tucker, 29 Jan-3 Feb 2004/ 16 Mar 2004. This report with photos was submitted by Jodi Jones and was accepted. This is the eighth accepted record of this species for Georgia.

2004-06, Razorbill offshore, 29 Feb 2004/ 26 Mar 2004. This sight report resulted in a split vote due to poor documentation. This report is being recirculated in a second round of voting in accordance with GCRC Bylaws.

2004-07, Black-headed Gull on Jekyll Island, 21 Mar 2004/ 28 Mar 2004. This report was submitted by Brad Winn with photos by Art Hurt and was accepted. This is the second accepted record of this species for Georgia.

FROM THE FIELD

DECEMBER 2003-FEBRUARY 2004

Note: The appearance of observations in this section does not suggest verification or acceptance of a record. Records need to be documented and submitted to the Checklist and Records Committee for consideration.

It was an incredible winter season this year. The mild weather in late fall extended into the beginning of the season, which may explain many of the reports of the more cold-hardy migrants such as Black-throated Blue Warbler, Ovenbird, and Tennessee Warblers remaining in the Piedmont. The weather pattern changed and colder weather brought in some very rare winter visitors. The best bird was obviously the Yellow-billed Loon that spent the entire period on Lake Horton in Fayette County. Birders from surrounding states and from up and down the East Coast traveled to the site to see the bird. Another great bird was a Cinnamon Teal found at the Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area near Darien. Although not normally considered a rarity in the state, the third excellent find was a Swainson's Thrush, seen and photographed on the St. Catherines Island Christmas Bird Count. There are very few documented reports of wintering Swainson's Thrush anywhere in the U.S., so this is a significant report. It was a better than average winter for finches. The highlight was a report of a Common Redpoll that was photographed at a feeder in Decatur. The overall period was very exciting, with many interesting reports of rarely seen species.

Abbreviations used throughout this report: ACOGB - *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003*, Beaton. et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AWEC - Arrowhead Wildlife Education Center in Floyd Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area in McIntosh Co.; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CRC - Checklist and Records Committee; CRNRA - the Cochran Shoals Unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in Cobb Co.; ELHLAF - E.L. Huie Land Application Facility in Clayton Co.; ENWR - the Bradley Unit of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge in Stewart Co.; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Cobb Co.; MBBP - Merry Brothers Brickyard Ponds; m.ob. - many observers; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; v.ob. - various observers; SCSP - Sweetwater Creek State Park in Douglas Co.; WMA - Wildlife Management Area.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE – It was a good winter for this species around the state. Walt Chambers and Bill Birkhead had a nice flock of 12 birds on 19 December at ENWR and another flock of six birds on 21 February. Several birds were seen at the MBBP 1-16 January (Earl Horn, Jim Flynn, Mark Davis). Lake Horton hosted six birds on 10 February (Mike Ivie). Dan Vickers found a flock of five birds at ELHLAF on 19 February; they remained until 2 March? (Tim Rose). At MBBP, Calvin Zippler found three birds on the ponds on 7 February. Finally, Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a single bird in Gordon County on 8 February.

SNOW GOOSE – There were many reports of birds around the state but the

largest numbers reported were by Mark Freeman and Chuck Saleeby. Mark found a flock of 15 birds near Athens on 11 December and Chuck found seven birds at Lake Acworth on 22 February.

ROSS'S GOOSE – Eric Beohm had a flock of seven birds at Lake Horton on 16 December and at least one bird continued through the month (m.ob.). Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a single bird in Forsyth County on 1 January; it was seen sporadically during the month by other observers. Three birds were seen at the Florence Marina on 7 February by Walt Chambers and also on 9 February by Jeff Sewell and Carol Lambert.

TUNDRA SWAN – Two birds were seen at the MBBP during the winter and as late as 22 February (Lois Stacey, m.ob.).

GADWALL – Carol Lambert had a high count of 206 birds at ELHLAF on 3 January. Mark Freeman and Carole Ludwig had a very good count of 73 birds at Dyar's Pasture.

MOTTLED DUCK – Steve Barlow had an excellent count of 16 ducks at the AWMA on 26 December. Always a good find away from that location, several of these ducks were seen by Jeff Sewell at Youman's Pond on 17 January.

CINNAMON TEAL – Pierre Howard had another great sighting this season when he found a male bird at the AWMA on 28 February, which remained for only a few days. This species has been absent from the state for many years so this sighting was a nice surprise this winter. Many birders made the trip to the coast to see this beautiful duck, which was seen at least through the end of the month.

NORTHERN PINTAIL – The high count was during the Eufaula CBC at the ENWR on 19 December when Bob Zaremba had more than 200 birds.

CANVASBACK – The high count was from Lake Seminole, where Michael and Eric Beohm found more than 100 birds on 23 January. Elsewhere around the state they were seen in lower numbers, including six at Lake Horton on 30 December (Eric Beohm) and five on 11 February (Pierre Howard) at the same location.

REDHEAD – There were many reports from around the state. Mark Freeman and Carole Ludwig had a good count of 57 in Putnam County on 31 January. Carol Lambert found 26 birds at ELHLAF on 4 February. The highest count was an incredible 204 in Rome on 12 February by Marion Dobbs. Eric Beohm found 40 birds in Spaulding County on 18 February.

LESSER SCAUP – Paul Sykes had a very high count of 2,670 birds at Cumberland Island on 26 January.

SURF SCOTER – There were a few reports from around the state this period. Gene Keferl had four birds at Jekyll Island on 16 December. Two birds at Plant Scherer were seen by m.ob. during the month of December. Pam and Denny McClure found three birds at West Point Dam on 17 January.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER – Since this species is usually difficult to find, two to three birds off Jekyll Island from 16 December to 18 February were a good find (Gene Keferl, m.ob.).

BLACK SCOTER – Gene Keferl had a good high count of 125 birds at Jekyll Island on 16 December.

LONG-TAILED DUCK – This species is rarely seen in Georgia and usually in singles or pairs, so four or five birds at MBBP was an excellent count by Mark Davis. Another good count was between one and three birds seen at West Point Dam on 11-16 January (Paul Miliotis, Eric Beohm).

COMMON GOLDENEYE – There were many reports from around the state. Jim Flynn found four birds at Carter's Lake on 12 December. The highest counts came from West Point Dam where Paul Miliotis and Eric Beohm had a flock of 40 birds on 26 January and David Hedeon had 30 birds on 13 February. Single birds were spread around the state, one at ELHLAF on 13 January (Carol Lambert), one at SCSP on 10 January (Chris Lambert), one in Forsyth County on 1 January (Mark Davis, Sterling Blanchard), and one at ELHLAF on 15 February (Andy Boyce).

YELLOW-BILLED LOON – There is little doubt that the most unusual find of the season, if not the year, was the Yellow-billed Loon found on Lake Horton near Fayetteville on 29 December by Eric Beohm. The bird was seen by observers from all over the state through the end of the period. This report is the first for the state, as well as the only report for the entire Southeast. Many observers were able to photograph the bird and document the record.

RED-THROATED LOON – The only inland reports of this species were from West Point Dam on 4 February (Tony Leukering, Nancy Gobris) and on 18 February (Walt Chambers), where one bird was reported on each occasion.

PACIFIC LOON – Paul Champlin had a good report from Clark Hill Reservoir of one or possibly two birds on 18 January. It is hoped that a report will be submitted to the Checklist and Records Committee.

HORNED GREBE – The highest count was of 70 birds from West Point Dam on 1 February (Jeff Sewell, Bill Lotz).

RED-NECKED GREBE – The only report was a single bird seen by Michael Beohm on the Cumberland Island CBC on 19 December.

EARED GREBE – A single bird found by Carol Lambert on 5 December at ELHLAF remained until the end of February. Eric Beohm reported a record high count of 23 on 20 December from Lake Juliette. The previous record was 11 from the same location.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN – Doris Cohrs found two birds in Doboy Sound on 20 and 26 January. Pierre Howard found a high count of 15 birds at the AWMA on 28 February.

AMERICAN BITTERN – Michael Bell and Chris Borg found a single bird at the Bradley Unit of ENWR on 7 February.

GREAT EGRET – Owen Kinney reported finding a single bird on the Floyd County CBC on 14 December. This is rare for the area.

TRICOLORED HERON – Jack Dozier and John Murphy found a single bird at a sod farm in Perry on 4 January.

REDDISH EGRET – This species seems to be increasing in numbers along the coast during the winter. There were a number of reports from many locations. Lydia Thompson had a bird on Cumberland Island on 20 December, as did Ian Stephenson on 18 January. A bird was also seen at Gould's Inlet by Giff Beaton on 23 December, again on 15 February by Lydia Thompson, and again on 22 February by Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers. Jeff also had a single bird on the St. Catherines CBC.

CATTLE EGRET – This is another species that appears to be increasing its winter range. There were several reports over the period from all around the state. David Brown found a flock of 30 birds at Montezuma on 6 December. Michael Bell found six birds in Seminole County on 1 January. There were three birds

found at MBBP on 1 January by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn. Finally, a flock of 59 birds was found in Seminole County on 23 January by Michael and Eric Beohm. WHITE IBIS – Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers had a very high count of 2,000 birds at AWMA on 22 February.

GLOSSY IBIS – Several good counts were reported this period. Walt Chambers had 20 birds at AWMA on 27 December. At the same site, Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers had a high count of 45 birds on 22 February.

WOOD STORK – Michael Bell found three birds at the Birdsong Nature Center in Grady County on 28 February.

BLACK VULTURE – Earl Horn and Jim Flynn reported a high count of 400 birds on 15 February in Atkinson County.

BALD EAGLE – Patrick Leary had two birds at Cumberland Island on 9 December. Carol Lambert had two birds at the Wetlands Center in Clayton County on 9 February.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK – Doug and Pam McClure reported a possible Rough-legged Hawk on 28 December and again on 12 January from Carroll County. Another interesting report was submitted by John Henderson in Walker County on 15 January. This is a rare winter visitor.

GOLDEN EAGLE – Also from Walker County were two reports from Johns Mountain Lookout, the first by Stephen Stewart on 21 February and the second by Steve Barlow on 22 February.

MERLIN – Several reports were received from around the state. Patrick Leary reported one at Cumberland Island on 9 December. Another bird was seen in Decatur County on 8 February (Michael Bell). Michael also found a single bird in Baker County on 18 February.

PEREGRINE FALCON – Patrick Leary found a bird on Cumberland Island on 9 December. A single bird was reported on the Marietta CBC on 21 December (*fide* Giff Beaton).

VIRGINIA RAIL – Paul Sykes reported finding three birds in Greene County on 6 December and again on 10 January. Joshua Spence found three birds in Murray County on 21 February.

SORA – Three birds, rare for the Floyd County CBC area, were found by Debbie Zaremba and Karen Theodorou (no dates).

SANDHILL CRANE – Many large movements of birds were noted during this period. Eric Beohm counted approximately 1,250 birds over Upson County on 25 December. The previous day, there was another flock of more than 1,250 birds over Cobb County (Bob and Deb Zaremba). Marion Dobbs noted 1,300 on 3 January and 1,600 on 11 January, both flocks in Floyd Co. February passage included multiple reports totaling between 2,600 and 2,900 birds reported across the state 16-23 February. An unusual occurrence was the two birds that spent the winter in Greene County in January and February (Paul Sykes and Alex Curtis).

WILSON'S PLOVER – This species wintered in higher than normal numbers on Jekyll Island. Lydia Thompson and m.ob. reported high counts of 35 on 18 January, 44 on 19 January, and 38 on 21 February.

PIPING PLOVER – Brandon Noel found a high count of 33 birds wintering on Little St. Simons Island on 27 January.

KILLDEER – Paul Sykes had 126 birds in Greene County on 8 February and 22 February.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER – Brandon Noel reported a high count of 307 on Little St. Simons Island on 27 January.

AMERICAN AVOCET – Good counts from Jekyll Island included 28 seen on 17 January by Ian Stephenson and 74 on 29 February by Mark Freeman.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER – This species is uncommon in winter along the Chattahoochee River south from Columbus, so a single bird seen at Oxbow Meadows by Walt Chambers and two birds at West Point Dam on 1 January by Michael Beohm were good reports.

WHIMBREL – Paul Sykes had a single bird on Cumberland Island on 26 January.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW – Several reports were received from the mid-winter shorebird survey of the Georgia barrier islands. Doris Cohrs found a single bird on 20 January at Sapelo Island. Birds were counted on Little St. Simons, Ossabaw, Jekyll, and Sapelo Islands on 26 January. Earl Horn reported a good find of a single bird behind the Jekyll Island Visitors Center on 25 January.

MARBLED GODWIT – Brandon Noel had a high count of 80 birds on Little St. Simons Island on 27 January.

PURPLE SANDPIPER – The beach at Tybee Island is the most reliable spot for this species. Steve Barlow reported 10 birds on 27 December. Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers had 11 birds at the same location on 21 February. The only report away from Tybee was a bird seen on Cumberland Island on 9 December by Patrick Leary.

STILT SANDPIPER – This species is rare on the coast during winter, so a single bird at AWMA on 22 February seen by Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers was a good find.

POMARINE JAEGER – This is a rare winter visitor on the coast, so a bird at the north end of Jekyll Island on 23 December was a good find. (Giff Beaton, m.ob.)

PARASITIC JAEGER – Giff Beaton reported an excellent high count of five birds on the north end of Jekyll Island on 23 December.

ICELAND GULL – Earl Horn had an excellent find of a bird on Tybee Island on 18 January. This accidental winter visitor was photographed by Earl and later seen again on 20 January by Gene Keferl.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL – This species is very rare away from the coast, so two birds seen at West Point Dam by Michael Beohm on 1 January was an excellent discovery.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL – A high count of 80 birds at Little St. Simons Island was reported by Brandon Noel on 27 January.

GULL-BILLED TERN – A rare wintering bird was seen at AWMA. Originally found by Doris Cohrs and Scott Sumershoe on 15 December, the bird was seen sporadically through the winter in the same location. Gene Keferl located the bird on 19 January. The bird was seen again and photographed on 24 January by Earl Horn, and Bob and Deb Zaremba.

RAZORBILL – A small number of possible Razorbills birds was seen on 23 February (*fide* Russ Wigh) off the coast.

SHORT-EARED OWL – This species was reported in lower numbers than in previous years, perhaps due to changes in the wintering fields near Cobb. Karen Theodorou and Michelle Sheppard had a good count of three birds at the owl fields on 9 February.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – Two birds were banded this winter (no

dates). A bird wintering in Marietta was tallied on the Marietta CBC on 21 December (*vide* Giff Beaton).

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD – Rusty Trump banded an immature male on 5 December in Roswell.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD – There were three birds banded in the state this winter. Rusty Trump banded an adult male in Decatur on 5 December and another bird in Snellville on 24 January.

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD – Rusty Trump reported an amazing count of 75 birds banded in the state this winter.

SELASPHORUS species - There were an additional 52 hummingbirds reported in the state that were not banded and could not be definitively identified.

NORTHERN FLICKER - Michael Bell once again found the red-shafted form in Birdsong on 31 January for the second year in a row.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – A male was seen at Youman's Pond by Iain Stevenson on 17 January. Phil Hardy, Clive Rainey, and Dot Freeman found a wintering bird in Sumter County on the same date. The bird remained in that area through 22 February and was seen by many observers.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER – Emily Jo Williams had a very nice find of a bird in Putnam County on 29 February for the only report this winter.

WHITE-EYED VIREO – Walt Chambers found this bird, an uncommon winter resident in Columbus, on 16 January.

COMMON RAVEN – A report of a bird near Blairsville on 29 February by Steve Barlow was unusual.

PURPLE MARTIN – A bird found by Michael Bell at Birdsong in Decatur County was a good find on 28 January.

TREE SWALLOW – Several reports were received over the period. Two at ELHLAF on 15 February seen by Andy Boyce and two seen on 22 February in Greene County by Paul Sykes were both good reports.

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW – There were several reports over the period, probably due to the mild winter. One bird was at Sweetwater Creek State Park on 12 December. In Moultrie, Walt Chambers saw a single bird on 25 December. Sandy Pangle had a very unusual find of a bird at Lake Acworth on 10 February. Finally, Paul Sykes found a bird in Greene County on 29 February.

BARN SWALLOW – Anne Waters and Lois Stacey found one bird at MBBP on 20 December for a very good record.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH – Very few reports were received this winter for this irruptive species. Steve Barlow found three at Burrell's Ford Road on 24 January.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH – Giff Beaton and Jim Flynn had a high count of 50 on the Amicalola Falls Christmas Bird Count on 29 December.

SEDGE WREN – Michael Bell reported finding four birds at Birdsong Nature Center in Grady County on 31 January.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER – The mild winter produced multiple reports of this species during this period. Single birds were seen in Tucker (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert), in Greene County (Paul Sykes), and at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus (Walt Chambers) (no dates). The highest number was from MBBP, where Calvin Zippler saw four birds on 7 February.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH – Pierre Howard had an incredible find of a bird

wintering on St. Catherines Island. The bird was photographed, and this is one of the very few winter records documented for the U.S. This bird was found on the CBC on 13 December and was seen by many of the participants. A staff member at the island reported that the bird had been seen for several weeks.

GRAY CATBIRD – A number of wintering birds were reported around the state. A bird was seen at South Peachtree Creek Nature Park on 20 December and 17 January (*v.ob.*). Steve Johnson found a bird in Henry County on 1 January. Pierre Howard also had a bird in his Atlanta yard on 18 February.

TENNESSEE WARBLER – There were two reports of this species this winter. Steve Barlow found a bird on the Georgia Tech campus on 11 December. Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a bird at Oxbow Meadows on 4 January. The bird was seen again by Walt Chambers as late as 9 February.

NORTHERN PARULA – A single bird was seen by Roger Clark in St Marys on 20 December.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – Walt Chambers found an adult male at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 7 December. Earl Horn and Jim Flynn found the bird again on 4 January.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER – Several birds were found around the state. Walt Chambers had a bird on 21 December at Oxbow Meadows and again on 9 February. Lois Stacey found one at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park near Augusta on 27 December.

PRAIRIE WARBLER – A single bird was found at ENWR on the CBC on 19 December (Bob Zarembo).

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER – Several birds were seen around the state, one at Oxbow Meadows on 4 January by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn and one at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park on 6 January by Jim Wilson and Georgann Schmalz. OVENBIRD – Jim Flynn and Giff Beaton found a rare wintering bird on the Amicalola Falls CBC on 29 January for the first mountain region winter record of this species.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH – A bird found at the AWMA on 25 January was an excellent find (Earl Horn, Bob and Deb Zarembo).

WILSON'S WARBLER – There were a few reports of this species wintering during the period. The longest recorded stay was of a bird found by Karen Theodorou in her Gwinnett yard (no start date) through at least 21 February. Steve Barlow found a bird on the Georgia Tech campus on 3 and 10 December. At MBBP, Calvin Zippler found a bird on 20 December and again on 7 February.

SUMMER TANAGER – A rare sighting by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn of a bird wintering in Thomasville on 17 January was a good report.

BACHMAN'S SPARROW – Michael Bell had an excellent count of seven birds at Ichuaway Plantation in Baker County on 16 February.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW – A report of a bird from Phinizy Swamp Nature Park on 3 January was very good for the period (Earl Horn, Bob and Deb Zarembo).

VESPER SPARROW – The high count for the period came from Greene County, where Paul Sykes had 42 birds on 10 January.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW – There were two reports this winter. Bob Zarembo found a single bird on the ENWR CBC on 19 December and Michael Bell had two birds at Birdsong Plantation on 28 February.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW – There were several reports from Birdsong Plantation this winter. Michael Bell had four birds 20 December and again on 31 January, and one on 28 February. Iain Stephenson found four birds in Paulk's Pasture WMA on 29 February.

LE CONTE'S SPARROW – The only report this period was of a bird found at ENWR on 31 January (Earl Horn, Pierre Howard, Andy Boyce).

LINCOLN'S SPARROW – Carol Lambert provided the only report which was of a bird seen on 16 February at the Wetland Center of the EHLAF in Clayton County.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW – The best count was 25 seen in Hart County on 8 December by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn.

INDIGO BUNTING – Karen Theodorou found a male bird on 8 December in Lawrenceville.

PAINTED BUNTING – There were several reports of wintering birds this period. Diana Churchill found two birds on Tybee Island on 18 December. Two reports came from Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, where two birds were seen on 6 January by Jim Wilson and Georgann Schmalz and again on 21 February by Anne Waters.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD – The highest count was 200 from Oxbow Meadows on 16 January by Walt Chambers. Paul Sykes had 156 birds in a flock in Greene County on 17 January.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD – Two counts of 200 birds each were received. Walt Chambers saw one flock at Oxbow Meadows and another was seen by Dan Jacobson in Murray County (no dates).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE – It was a good winter for this species. One bird was found on the Atlanta CBC on 21 December (*vide* Giff Beaton). Earl Horn and Jim Flynn found a female at Oxbow Meadows on 4 January and another bird in Atkinson County on 15 February. Calvin Zippler found a single bird at MBBP in Augusta on 7 February.

PURPLE FINCH – Lynn Schlup had a high count of 57 birds on 21 December in Oconee.

RED CROSSBILL – The only report came from Pine Log WMA on 30 January, where two birds were seen (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

PINE SISKIN – It was a fairly good winter for this irruptive species. Reports started to filter in at the beginning of December. Lynn Schlup reported seeing 20 birds at her feeders in Oconee on 5 December. Mark Davis found 12 birds at CRNRA on 12 December. The most southerly report of this species was of two birds at Birdsong Plantation on 31 January (Michael Bell). The highest counts for the winter came from the mountains, where Tom Striker had a large flock of 75-100 birds in Blue Ridge on 5 February and another flock of 86 birds in Cherry Log on 12 February.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH – Lynn Schlup saw 370 birds in Oconee on February 20, which is a very high count.

COMMON REDPOLL – Jodi Jones had a wonderful find when she discovered this species coming to her feeder in her Tucker yard. The bird was seen intermittently until 4 February, when it departed. Jodi was able to get photographs of the bird.

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FROM THE FIELD MARCH-MAY 2004

Note: The appearance of observations in this section does not suggest verification or acceptance of a record. Records need to be documented and submitted to the Checklist and Records Committee for consideration.

This spring season was highlighted by several exciting rare bird sightings of late winter birds, some lingering species, and some unexpected migrants. The most exciting bird from last fall and winter, the Yellow-billed Loon, remained until the early part of the spring season, allowing many birders an opportunity to view the bird. Also exciting was the Cinnamon Teal found at the Altamaha Waterfowl Management area in March. There were several great reports from the coast, such as the Black-headed Gull seen by many observers on Jekyll Island. Spring migration was well represented, with reports from Kennesaw Mountain and elsewhere around the state. Observations suggest that several species may be expanding their nesting ranges within the state. Now that more birders are beginning to use the internet to report bird sightings across the state, reports from areas outside of the typical birding locations are providing a better understanding of the diversity of bird-life in our state.

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SPECIES ACCOUNTS

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE – The highest count was from Jerry and Marie Amerson who found six birds in Twiggs County on 10 March. Two birds remained at ELHLAF and were last seen on 14 March (*vide* Jeff Sewell).

SNOW GOOSE – It was a fairly good winter and spring for this species. There were reports of lingering birds from all around the state. The latest report was of two birds seen at ELHLAF on 15 May by Carol Lambert and Jeff Sewell.

ROSS'S GOOSE – This species is known for taking up residence with domestic waterfowl at times, so the one bird in Ila, Madison County, that has remained for several years now was not unusual in March. However, the second bird that was found there on 26 March by Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn, and Malcolm Hodges was a nice surprise. The only other report came from Big Canoe in Pickens County. Bert Loftman found one bird with a flock of Canada Geese (no date).

CINNAMON TEAL – The bird originally found by Pierre Howard at the AWMA

was last seen on 3 March (Russ Wigh, Giff Beaton, Bruce Hallett).

MOTTLED DUCK – The best count reported this season was 25 birds seen at the AWMA on 26 March (Jim Flynn, et al.). There was evidence of successful breeding early in the season in two locations. Brandon Noel reported finding young on 30 April on LSSI and Steve Barlow reported finding adults with young at AWMA on 29 May.

NORTHERN PINTAIL – Steve Barlow reported that the drake was still at ELHLAF as late as 22 May.

REDHEAD – Lois Stacey had a good count of six birds at MBBP on 13 March. Chris Loudermilk had the high count of 16 birds at SCSP on 21 March.

RING-NECKED DUCK – The latest report was from Carol Lambert who reported birds still on the ELHLAF ponds through the end of May.

GREATER SCAUP – Russ Wigh found a bird on Skidaway Island on 2 May. This would be a new late date for the state and the coastal region.

LESSER SCAUP – At the ELHLAF ponds, Carol Lambert had a female lingering through the end of May.

SURF SCOTER – A male was found on a small pond in Henry County on 13 March that remained until 20 March (James Brooks). The latest report was from the mountain region where Dan Jacobson found a bird in Walker County on 17 April, which is a rare sighting for that region.

BLACK SCOTER – A flock of 75 birds was seen from the north end of Jekyll Island on 26 March. (Jim Flynn, Giff Beaton, Malcolm Hodges)

LONG-TAILED DUCK – A bird seen on LSSI on 9 April was a good find by Brandon Noel and Wendy Paulson.

BUFFLEHEAD – Walt Chambers had a nice count of more than 40 ducks at ENWR on 6 March.

COMMON GOLDENEYE – Brandon Noel reported two birds at LSSI on 14 March. The highest count for the season was at West Point Dam on 27 March where six birds were counted. (Pierre Howard, Bob Zaremba). There was a single bird seen at Lake Horton by Steve Barlow on 27 March. Finally, Carol Lambert reported that the female duck was still present at Lake Horton at least until 29 March.

HOODED MERGANSER – This species may be expanding its breeding range in Georgia. The ACOGB lists approximately 22 breeding records, primarily in the Coastal Plain and a few in the Piedmont. This season there were two confirmed records of breeding in the Piedmont. Leslie Curran discovered a female with three chicks at the Big Creek Greenway in Alpharetta on 27 April. Grant McCreary also found a female with three young at the Atlanta Tract of Dawson Forest on 4 May. Mark Davis found two birds at CRNRA on 15 and 16 May, which may also have been breeding.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER – The latest report for the period was from Doris Cohrs who had a bird along the Altamaha River on 31 May.

RUFFED GROUSE – Giff Beaton had a good sighting of two birds at Unicoi State Park on 24 March, since this was away from the usual locations. Tom Striker reported that he, Johnny Parks, and Nedra Sekera had a bird drumming on Ivy Log Gap Road on 6 May. Jim Throckmorton reported finding them at the Brasstown Bald car park on 22 May.

WILD TURKEY – There were more than 25 reports this period of birds seen

around the Piedmont and Mountain regions. It appears that the number of reports has been on the increase, hopefully indicating that this species is doing well throughout its range.

NORTHERN BOBWHITE – There were fewer than ten reports of this species this period.

YELLOW-BILLED LOON – The last report of this great bird at Lake Horton was by Mike Ivie on 3 April.

RED-THROATED LOON – Deb Barreiro reported a good count of ten birds off the north end of Tybee Island on 4 April.

COMMON LOON – Tom Striker had a good report of three birds still present on Lake Blue Ridge on 13 May.

HORNED GREBE – Two birds in breeding plumage were seen on 8 May at Rum Creek in Monroe County, as reported by Michael Beohm.

EARED GREBE – The latest report of the bird present all season at ELHLAF ponds was on 17 April by Karen Theodorou, Deb Zaremba, and Michelle Sheppard.

CORY'S SHEARWATER – Russ Wigh reported one bird seen offshore on 22 May.

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD – A juvenile bird was found dead on the beach at Cumberland Island on 18 May by Carol Ruckdeschel.

NORTHERN GANNET – The latest report was a bird seen offshore on 22 May by Russ Wigh aboard a NOAA research vessel.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN – There were many reports of this species throughout the state this season. They were widely distributed across the regions. Some of the higher counts came from Jekyll Island, where John Galvani reported seeing between 25 and 30 birds on 20 March. Ralph Morgan found 15 pelicans at Lake Burton on 11 April for a very rare mountain region report. Elsewhere in the state, Jerry and Marie Amerson found two birds on Lake Walter F. George on 30 May, later seen and photographed by Pierre Howard on 31 May.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD – The only report was from Cumberland Island, where Brad Winn and Stacie Hendrix found a bird on 2 May.

AMERICAN BITTERN – This species was widely reported this period. Reports were usually single birds seen in some of the expected places such as Phinizy Swamp, Okefenokee Swamp, and ENWR (m.ob.). Two of the more unusual sightings were a single bird seen at Arrowhead in Floyd County on 13 April by Dan Roper and another found at Cochran Shoals in Cobb County on 11 April by Johnny Parks.

LEAST BITTERN – This species can be difficult to locate away from this location, so James Brooks had a very good find of a bird in Henry County on 28 April. The high count for the period was from the AWMA on 2 May, where Ian Stephenson counted seven birds.

SNOWY EGRET – Dan Vickers found one bird on Lake Nottley in Union County on 11 April. This species is rarely reported in the mountain region.

REDDISH EGRET – This species seems to be becoming more prevalent on the coast, perhaps indicating some expansion. An immature bird was reported from Gould's Inlet on 6 March by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn. Giff Beaton also reported an immature bird from the same location on 27 April. Later in the period, Brandon Noel found an adult bird still on LSSI on 23 May.

CATTLE EGRET – This is another species that appears to be extending its range in Georgia. Jim Flynn reported finding one bird in Rockdale County on 18 April. Paul Raney also reported finding a single bird at ELHLAF on 20 May.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON – Most interesting reports from outside of the expected locations were from several sites around Atlanta. Pierre Howard reported seeing this species at the CRNRA on 11 April, as did other v.ob. later in the period, indicating a possible nesting site there again this year. Leslie Curran reported finding a bird on 13 April at the Big Creek Greenway in Fulton County, and Karen Theodorou found an immature bird on 7 May at the Suwanee Creek Greenway in Gwinnett County.

GLOSSY IBIS – The highest count reported this period was of 60 birds seen at the AWMA on 6 March by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn. Sightings away from the coast are unusual, so a report from Appling County by John Swiderski of three birds in a small farm pond on 5 May was a very good find.

ROSEATE SPOONBILL – The only report away from the normal roosting spots near Jekyll Island was a bird seen on LSSI on 19 March by Brandon Noel.

OSPREY – This species is an uncommon breeder away from the coast, so reports from Charlie Elliott Wildlife Center (Tim Keyes) and from EHLLAF (Carol Lambert) are significant and indicate that this species may be expanding its range. Sheila Willis reported that nesting activity was found on the west side of the Okefenokee near Stephen C. Foster Park away from their typical nesting area east of the Suwannee River Sill. Rare for the mountain region, a report of a bird seen over Blairsville on 17 April by Dot Freeman and another (or possibly the same) bird seen near Lake Nottely on 20 April by Mary Ellen Myers was interesting.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE – The earliest report this period was of a bird seen on 3 March in Long County by Giff Beaton and Bruce Hallett. There were numerous reports beginning 20 March, indicating the arrival of this species back on the breeding grounds. Walt Chambers reported seeing a single bird over Oxbow Meadows in the Columbus area on 4 April, which was out of the normal range.

MISSISSIPPI KITE – Paul Raney had a good sighting close to Atlanta when he saw three birds in Stockbridge on 27 April. Another good sighting was a report of five birds in Douglas on 11 May by Todd Womack. Highest count was 60 seen on 16 May by Walt Chambers at Oxbow Meadows.

NORTHERN HARRIER – A bird seen at KMT on 10 May by Giff Beaton was late for the Piedmont.

PEREGRINE FALCON – Reports from the Atlanta area may be the nesting pair in downtown Atlanta. Steve Barlow saw a bird in the Virginia Highlands area on 13 March. Steve also saw a bird at ELHLAF on 9 May.

BLACK RAIL – Three individuals were heard calling in northern Greene County on 9 May by Paul Sykes and Steve Holzman.

KING RAIL – Two birds were seen at the Bartow County Sod Farm on 7 May for an unusual sighting for that location (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Pierre Howard).

SORA – Birds calling at Phinizy Nature Park in Augusta were late dates for the area (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert).

PURPLE GALLINULE – The first report was from ENWR on 24 April by Steve Barlow.

SANDHILL CRANE – Late migrating birds were seen in April. Two birds were

seen at KMT on 10 April (Pierre Howard). Dot Freeman reported seeing a small flock in Union County on 17 April.

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER – Walt Chambers found two birds at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 3 April and 4 April.

WILSON'S PLOVER – Brandon Noel reported that in a short period of time at Sancho Panza Beach (LSSI), he located 30 adults with 11 chicks, as well as three nests with three eggs each, along a half-mile stretch of beach on 15 May.

PIPING PLOVER – Also on LSSI, Brandon Noel had a high count of 61 birds on 8 April.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER – Brandon Noel confirmed at least two nests and ten additional pairs on LSSI on 15 May.

BLACK-NECKED STILT – There were several reports away from the coast this season. The first was from Oxbow Meadows on 14 and 16 May of a single bird seen by Walt Chambers. The second report was by Lois Stacey of a single bird at the Phinizy Nature Park on 29 May.

AMERICAN AVOCET – The highest count came from Jekyll Island where Deb Barreiro had more than 75 birds on 24 March. Sightings away from the coast are rare, so 17 birds in Bartow County on 5 May was a good report (Bob Zaremba).

GREATER YELLOWLEGS – The highest count was from Kathleen in Houston Co. on 28 March where Bryan Fobbus and Bob Sargent had 120 birds.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS – In the same area near Kathleen, Bryan Fobbus and Bob Sargent found 180 birds on 28 March.

UPLAND SANDPIPER – The earliest report was of a bird at the Marshallville Sod Farm on 3 April by Bill Lotz.

WHIMBREL – The best count was of 55 at Jekyll Island and St. Simons Island in Glynn Co. on 27 April by Giff Beaton, et al.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW – Mark Freeman reported finding three birds on Sapelo Island on 13 March for the highest count this season.

MARBLED GODWIT – Mark Freeman also reported the highest count for this species, with 40 individuals seen on Sapelo Island on 13 March.

RUDDY TURNSTONE – High count came from Tybee Island where Deb Barreiro found 150 birds on 4 April.

RED KNOT – A count of more than 1000 birds was an excellent find on LSSI by Brandon Noel on 6 April.

SANDERLING – Jeff Sewell and Ian Stephenson found a single bird at ELHLAF on 31 May, which was a rare sighting away from the coast.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER – A group of five or six birds were seen at ELHLAF for several days around 30 May by Jeff Sewell, et al.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER – Only report was a bird seen at the Marshallville Sod Farm on 17 April by Jeff Sewell, Bill Lotz, and Dan Vickers.

PURPLE SANDPIPER – Reports of lingering birds at the coast were received from two locations. Deb Barreiro found six birds on Tybee Island on 4 April. Two birds were still on LSSI on 6 April (Brandon Noel).

STILT SANDPIPER – Few reports were received this spring. The earliest report was from Spaulding County on 15 April and the latest report was from ENWR on 16 May (Eric Beohm, Walt Chambers).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE – The only report was of a bird seen at the AWMA on 3 May by Tim Keyes and David Hedeem.

FRANKLIN'S GULL – Walt Chambers found an adult bird at West Point Dam on 27 March for a rare spring sighting.

BLACK-HEADED GULL – Brad Winn had the second record of this species for the state when he located an adult bird on Jekyll Island on 21 March. The record was submitted and accepted by the CRC. Unfortunately, subsequent searches for the bird were unsuccessful.

GLAUCOUS GULL – Peter Range found a first winter bird on Wassaw Island on 27 April. This species is rarely reported in the spring.

BLACK TERN – A single bird reported by Earl Horn remained at ELHLAF most of the day on 31 May.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO – Two individuals were found at KMT. The first was seen on 5 May by Bob Zaremba. The second was seen on 7 May by Chuck Saleeby and m.obs.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO – The earliest report was from Jekyll Island where Lydia Thompson found one bird on 9 April.

SHORT-EARED OWL – A very unusual sighting from LSSI was an individual seen on 16 March by Brandon Noel.

WHIP-POOR-WILL – The earliest report was from Crawford County where Hal Massie heard two birds on 6 March.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – The earliest returning bird was in Coffee County, where Annette Bittaker had a male at her feeder on 7 March.

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD – At least one bird was still visiting a feeder in Pine Lake as late as 31 March (Ann McAllister).

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER – One individual was seen at Callaway Gardens on 9 May by Dennie and Pam McClure.

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER – One bird was seen at KMT on 2 May by Malcolm Hodges.

WILLOW FLYCATCHER – Ty Ivey had a good report of three birds near Macon on 16 May, away from the more typical breeding areas in northeast Georgia.

LEAST FLYCATCHER – There were very few reports of this species this spring, so a bird reported by Betty Belanger in Rabun County on 5 May was a good find.

WESTERN KINGBIRD – Ian Stephenson found a rather late bird on Jekyll Island on 1 May.

EASTERN KINGBIRD – Earliest report was from Walt Chambers who found one individual at the ENWR on 27 March.

GRAY KINGBIRD – Lydia Thompson discovered the first returning individuals on Jekyll Island on 16 April.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER – Breeding birds at a power line cut near McDonough appeared to be returning for the fourth consecutive year. A male bird was seen at the location on 16 May (Pierre Howard, Bob and Deb Zaremba).

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO – Walt Chambers had an early sighting of a single bird at ENWR on 22 March.

WARBLING VIREO – An individual bird was found at KMT on 28 April for a very rare sighting in the Piedmont. (Pierre Howard, Theresa Hartz, Roy Hester).

PHILADELPHIA VIREO – Few birds are reported in the spring, so an individual seen at ELHLAF by Carol Lambert on 23 April was a significant find.

RED-EYED VIREO – The earliest report was from Paulk's Pasture in Glynn County where Gene Keferl found a single bird on 21 March. The high count from

the period was from KMT with 47 birds seen on 3 May (Giff Beaton).

COMMON RAVEN – Reports were received from the vicinity of Neels Gap and Blood Mountain in April and the usual locations near Brasstown Bald in May (Stan Chapman, Matt Reid, Jim Throckmorton).

PURPLE MARTIN – The earliest returning birds were seen on 13 March by Phil Hardy near Americus.

BANK SWALLOW – Walt Chambers had a good count of more than 24 birds at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 4 May.

CLIFF SWALLOW – The earliest confirmed returning birds were seen in Jones County on 18 April by Andy Boyce.

BARN SWALLOW – The early report from AWMA of a single bird seen on 11 March by Gene Keferl was very good for the location.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH – There were several reports from the mountain region this season. Giff Beaton found two birds at Unicoi State Park on 24 March. Johnny Parks had a single bird in Gilmer County on 24 April, and Ian Stephenson had a single bird in Rabun County on 8 May.

WINTER WREN – Stan Chapman had a singing bird at Brasstown Bald on 26 May.

VEERY – The earliest report was on 25 April from ELHLAF where Carol Lambert had a single bird.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH – This species went relatively unnoticed this season with only one report from KMT on 7 May (Deb Zaremba).

SWAINSON'S THRUSH – Migration numbers seemed lower than normal this season. The earliest report was from CRNRA on 15 April where a bird was seen by Tim Rose.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER – The earliest report was a single bird at KMT on 17 April (Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER – The earliest report was a single bird at KMT on 20 April (Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

NASHVILLE WARBLER – The earliest report was from Indian Springs State Park on 15 April where Eric Beohm had a single bird.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER – Brandon Noel had a very early bird on LSSI on 7 April.

CAPE MAY WARBLER – The highest count was at Fernbank Forest where 12 birds were seen on 1 May (Georgann Schmalz).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – The highest count was from Fernbank Forest where 22 birds were seen on 1 May (Georgann Schmalz).

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER – The latest report was on 9 May when Ian Stephenson found six birds along Burrell's Ford Road.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER – The first report of the season was from Ken Blankenship who found a single bird at KMT on 21 March. The highest count was also from KMT on 3 April where 20 birds were sighted (Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER – The earliest report was from KMT on 9 April of three birds (Bob Zaremba).

PRAIRIE WARBLER – The earliest report came from Eufaula NWR on 7 March (Steve Barlow).

PALM WARBLER – The high count of 33 on 24 April was seen at KMT (Giff

Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER – The peak count from KMT was five on 7 May (Giff Beaton).

BLACKPOLL WARBLER – Peak counts were at KMT with 15 seen on 28 April and again on 1 May (Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

CERULEAN WARBLER – The earliest report was from KMT on 9 April (Bob Zaremba). The highest count reported was 12 on 12 April from KMT (Giff Beaton).

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER – The highest count reported was 15 on 12 April from KMT (Giff Beaton).

AMERICAN REDSTART – The highest count reported was eight on 7 May from KMT (Giff Beaton).

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER – The earliest report was from Robert Smith of a bird seen on 1 April in Camden County.

WORM-EATING WARBLER – The high count of 14 was from KMT on 12 April (Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

SWAINSON'S WARBLER – The earliest report came from Wilkes County on 9 April where Brandon Anderson found a single bird. For the second consecutive year, singing males were found along Mud Creek in Cobb County during May (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

OVENBIRD – The highest count was from KMT on 15 April when 16 birds were seen (Giff Beaton, Deb Zaremba).

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH – The earliest report was from Goat Rock Dam near Columbus on 13 March by Neal Cronin.

MOURNING WARBLER – A very rare sighting, a singing male was found at KMT on 20 May by Giff Beaton.

HOODED WARBLER – The highest count was from KMT on 13 April of 42 birds (Giff Beaton).

WILSON'S WARBLER – There were several reports this season. The first was of a bird seen in Cobb County by Ken Blankenship on 11 April, another bird was seen on 4 May at Rum Creek WMA by Todd Schneider and Georgann Schmalz, and a third was seen on 7 May by Chuck Saleeby.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT – Dan Roper had the earliest report on 20 April from Arrowhead in Floyd County.

SUMMER TANAGER – The highest count reported was from KMT on 27 April where 17 birds were seen (Deb Zaremba).

SCARLET TANAGER – The earliest report was from Marion Dobbs of one bird near Rome on 3 April. The highest count was on 22 April when 20 birds were reported from KMT (Giff Beaton).

WESTERN TANAGER – Cathie Pate reported a male coming to her feeder in Douglas County from 26 April through 1 May.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW – A single bird was seen by Jack Carusos at CRNRA on 7 March and was last seen on 28 March.

FOX SPARROW – Walt Chambers had the latest report of this species on 12 March from Chattahoochee County.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW – Latest report was from Athens, where Jim Flynn found a single bird on 25 April. It was last seen on 28 April by Chris Skelton.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW – Doris Cohrs reported finding two birds

through the end of May near her home in McIntosh County. This is very late date for the region.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW – Latest reports were from Charlie Elliott WMA on 12 April where Tim Keyes and David Hedeon found a single bird, and in Douglas County Chris Loudermilk had a very late bird on 2 May.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK – Marion Dobbs had the earliest report on 9 April of a male in Rome. The peak count came from KMT with a count of 22 on 24 April (Deb Zaremba).

BLUE GROSBEAK – The earliest report was from Coffee County on 5 April where Annette Bittaker had a male on her platform feeder.

INDIGO BUNTING – A male was early on St. Simons Island on 14 March (Brandon Noel). The high count for the period was from KMT on 23 April where Giff Beaton reported seeing 21 birds.

PAINTED BUNTING – John Johnson reported finding a female on 7 March on St. Simons Island.

DICKCISSEL – The earliest report was on 1 May when five singing males were reported from Bartow County (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Pierre Howard).

BOBOLINK – The highest count came on 4 May when Walt Chambers reported seeing more than 1000 at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD – Gene Keferl found three birds in Glynn County on 14 March for a rare coastal sighting.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD – The latest report was from Bartow County where Pierre Howard found a single bird on 6 April.

SHINY COWBIRD – On Blackbeard Island, Paul Sykes discovered a male performing a courtship display on 20 May. It was in the company of female and male Brown-headed Cowbirds.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE – The earliest report was from Pine Log WMA where Matt Reid found a singing male on 31 March.

PURPLE FINCH – The latest report was on 10 May from the Big Creek Greenway in Fulton County where Leslie Curran found a female bird.

RED CROSSBILL – Two birds were frequenting a feeder near Suches as late as 2 May. The homeowners, Rod and Betsy Chamberlain, reported seeing the birds for about a week at the feeders. Pine Log WMA has become the most reliable spot to find this species and several birders reported finding them as late as 3 May (Tim Keyes, David Hedeon).

PINE SISKIN – Tom Striker reported the highest count during the period with a peak count of 42 at Cherry Log on 25 March. The latest reports of this species came from Steve Barlow and Tom Striker. Steve found a single bird in Union County on 15 May. Tom had two birds in Blue Ridge on 18 May.

Bob Zaremba, 2702 Lillie Lake Drive, Marietta, GA 30064

THE ORIOLE

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