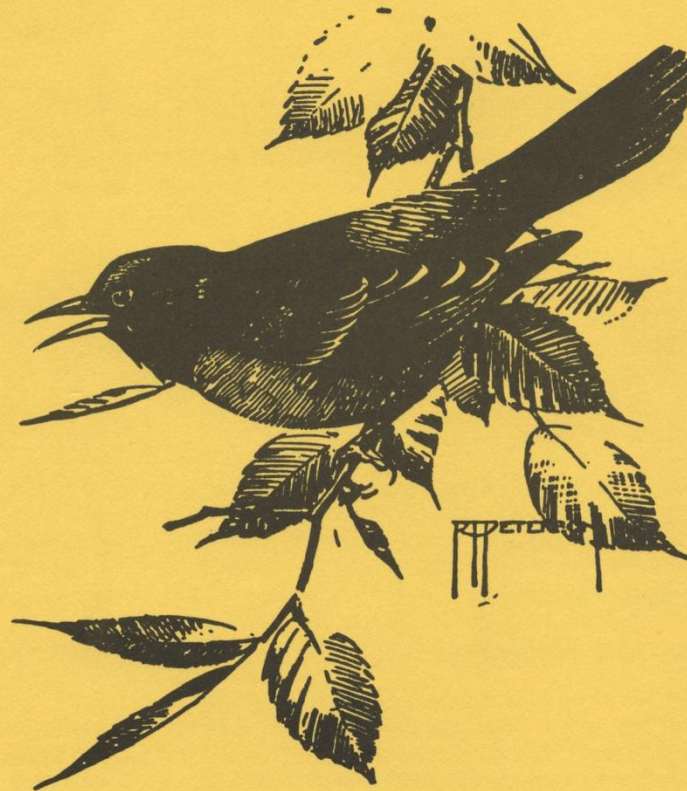


# THE ORIOLE

A Quarterly Journal of Georgia Ornithology; Official Organ of the  
Georgia Ornithological Society



*VOL. 39*

*JUNE-SEPTEMBER, 1974*

*NOS. 2 & 3*

# THE ORIOLE

## EDITOR

Leslie B. Davenport, Jr., Biology Department, Armstrong State College, Savannah, Ga. 31406

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## FIRST RECORD OF THE SMOOTH-BILLED ANI IN GEORGIA

Terry S. Moore

On March 3, 1974, at approximately noon, a Smooth-billed Ani (*Crotophaga ani*) was discovered on Jekyll Island, Georgia, by Tom and Ann Bailey, Eileen Hutcheson, Ruth Young, and the author. The bird was seen off and on for over an hour before being lost from sight in the dense brush.

When discovered the bird was near the small, open, freshwater pond which is on the right after driving onto Jekyll Island from the mainland. The bird was first seen simultaneously and identified independently by Tom and Ann Bailey and myself. We then called the others in our party over to make sure that they saw the bird before it disappeared.

When the bird first appeared, it flew to the top of a small shrub where it was passed off as one of the abundant Boat-tailed Grackles (*Cassidix major*) which were continuously in sight. It then gave its characteristic high-pitched ascending call which I remembered from having observed the bird in southern Florida. The Baileys and I were approximately 150 feet apart, but at the sound of the unusual call we all realized that we had something different and upon seeing the bird through our binoculars, we identified it as an ani.

During the first few seconds we were able to observe the high-arched upper mandible which definitely separated it from the Boat-tailed Grackles. When it flew we noticed the peculiar flight of a few flaps and a long glide plus the rather loose-jointed appearance the bird has in flight.

By the time that Eileen and Ruth were able to see the bird it had moved 100 yards away in short flights parallel to the road towards the marina. In order to get another close look at the bird, Eileen, Ruth, and I drove down the road while Tom and Ann tried to keep track of it



through a telescope. We reached the spot where it was last seen, but were unable to find it again. When last seen, Tom thought that the bird went into a small patch of cattails.

At this point we decided to drive further down the road toward the marina in hopes of once again finding it. We carefully searched the roadside all the way to the marina, but were unable to relocate it. We then headed back toward the pond and luckily found the bird perched out in the open on a limb of a dead tree.

While the ani stayed in the tree we were able to put both our telescopes on it. With the use of the high power of the telescopes (up to 60X), we were able definitely to identify the bird as a Smooth-billed Ani, since the upper mandible was smooth and not grooved.

Since we wanted to alert some of the local birders to the ani's discovery, I left the group to make some phone calls, hoping the ani would remain long enough for others to see it. Unfortunately I was not able to contact anyone and returned to the pond just in time to see the bird disappear.

That evening we were able to contact Joe Brent and Buzzy Pickren to tell them where we had seen the ani. I later heard from Joe that he was able to find and photograph the bird on March 5. The bird is known to have remained in the area for about two months and was seen by a number of observers. The last known observation was by John Swiderski and myself on April 29, 1974.

A search through *The Oriole* did not reveal any previous records of the Smooth-billed Ani in Georgia. The *A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds* (Fifth Edition - 1957) mentions only four records along the Atlantic coast north of Florida. Two of these records are from New Jersey and two from North Carolina. Although the bird has been expanding its range in Florida over the past ten years, no records could be found in *American Birds* for the Smooth-billed Ani north of Florida.

On the basis of a large number of people having seen the bird and a number of excellent photographs being taken, the Smooth-billed Ani can now be added to the list of Georgia birds as an accidental.

Apt. 10-F, 1185 Collier Rd. NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30318

## THIRTY YEARS OF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS IN ATLANTA, GA.: 1941 - 1970

Wallace D. Dreyfoos

A summary of Christmas Bird Counts in Atlanta, Ga., for the 30 year period, 1941-1970, appears in the accompanying tables. During this period 116 species were seen and approximately 570,000 individual birds were recorded. Yearly counts varied from a low in 1951 of 56 species to a high in 1952, 1955, and 1959 of 76 species. The average over the 30 year span was 69 species per year. Numerical counts of individuals vary with so many factors that they have little scientific meaning. However, for the statistician the low count was in 1942 with 2,460, and the high count of 135,795 was the result of locating a blackbird roost in 1957. A simple mathematical average for the period was approximately 19,000 per year.

**HISTORICAL DATA** - According to an article by Branch Howe, Jr., in the September-December, 1944, issue of *THE ORIOLE*, the first Christmas Bird Count in Georgia was held in Atlanta in 1903, only three years after the count was started nationally by *AUDUBON MAGAZINE*. In this first count, then called a census, 30 species and 556 individuals were recorded. The next recorded count in Atlanta was in 1911 with a total of 21 additional counts through 1940. For this period the records indicate only number of species and estimated individuals. The average for the period was 50 species and 2,568 individuals per year. In 1929, 17 species and 251 individuals were a low and suggest maybe only one observer and bad weather. In 1939, however, the number of 79 species was observed, and this is the highest yearly count on record. Starting in 1941, detailed records were maintained by the Atlanta Bird Club. These records came into my hands when I became the compiler, and I have attempted to summarize these data for this report.

**LOCATION** - Atlanta is located in the Piedmont region of Georgia with an average elevation of 1,050 feet above sea level. The topography of the land is rolling with several ridge lines whose drainage basins separate run-off into the river systems which on the east eventually reach the Atlantic Ocean and on the west, the Gulf of Mexico. The Christmas Count area was a 15 mile diameter circle with its center at 33° 45'N, 84° 23'W at Five Points in downtown Atlanta. Within this circle there are no major bodies of water and only several small lakes - Piedmont Park, East Lake, Atlanta Water Works, Constitution



Lakes, and the lake at Lakewood Fairgrounds, where waterfowl may be found. The area is heavily wooded with both hardwoods and pines, but there are few wetlands or swampy areas.

**POPULATION GROWTH** - TABLE 1 shows the increase in population during the period of this report. This growth reflects a massive (148%) increase in the metropolitan area with a considerably smaller (67%) in-city increase. However, by any standard the increases were significantly large and materially changed the land use pattern within the count area.

**Table 1.** City/Metro Area Population Growth, Atlanta, Ga.

YEAR	POPULATION (1,000's)		GROWTH (10 yr.)		% Growth	
	City	Metro	City	Metro	City	Metro
1940	302	559				
1950	438	727	136	168	45%	30%
1960	487	1,017	49	290	11%	40%
1970	503	1,390	16	373	3%	37%
		30 yr. Total	201	831	67%	148%

**LAND USE/HABITAT**-During the 30 year period there was an extensive change in the land use pattern for the Atlanta metropolitan area. In 1941 the City of Atlanta was the central area for both commercial and residential purposes. Surrounding the city limits were unincorporated residential areas such as Druid Hills and Buckhead, while several miles farther out were small incorporated communities which were largely residential. In between there was open land and, particularly south of the city (within the Count Area), there were several large farming tracts which attracted many birds.

Thirty years later the City Limits had expanded northward by several miles while the metropolitan area comprised a five county expanse. The area within the city limits was still the main commercial center, while the suburbs and adjacent incorporated communities were extensively residential with a corresponding commercial growth to support the population increase.

With this growth there was a major reduction in wildlife habitat within the entire metropolitan area. This was particularly true for the

15 mile diameter circle which comprised the Count Area. Many of the better birding areas were severely reduced in size and some, such as Sawtell's Farm in the southern part of the area, were completely paved over and had become truck parks for several highway express companies. It must be noted, however, that in spite of all the growth sufficient pockets of suitable habitat remained so that with diligent planning and hard work (even into the late 60's) a representative list of birds could be secured.

**SUMMARY OF BIRDS OBSERVED**-Table 2 has been subdivided into ten year periods for ease in analysis. Within each period and for each species both the number of yearly sightings (Y) and the approximate number of individuals (I) seen is recorded. There is also a total for the entire thirty year period. Since this study covers in its entirety the period when the 4th and 5th Editions of the A.O.U. Check list were the birders' bible, there has been no attempt to make what adjustments might be required to be compatible with the new 6th Edition. (This is not to suggest that the author does not agree with the Editor's decision to use the 6th Edition, for in fact I do agree. This just appears as a special case, and so the old listing is being reported.)

**Table 2.** Thirty Year Summary of Christmas Bird Counts in Atlanta, Ga.

Species	'41-'50		'51-'60		'61-'70		Total	
	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I
Common Loon	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pied-billed Grebe	8	105	10	169	9	51	27	325
Great Blue Heron	3	4	4	6	3	4	10	14
Green Heron	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	3
Blue Goose	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Mallard	1	3	6	36	3	21	10	60
Black Duck	1	3	1	1	0	0	2	4
Gadwall	1	1	2	2	0	0	3	3
Green-winged Teal	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
Blue-winged Teal	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
American Widgeon	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Wood Duck	1	2	2	2	3	36	6	40
Redhead	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2
Ring-necked Duck	6	10	8	72	2	20	16	102
Canvasback	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	5
Lesser Scaup	2	5	5	11	1	1	8	17
Common Goldeneye	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1



Species	'41-'50		'51-'60		'61-'70		Total	
	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I
Bufflehead	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	2
Oldsquaw	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Ruddy Duck	0	0	1	1	1	4	2	5
Hooded Merganser	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	2
Red-Breasted Merganser	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
Turkey Vulture	10	268	9	47	5	10	24	325
Black Vulture	9	112	4	11	1	2	14	125
Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	6	6	12	3	6	14	24
Cooper's Hawk	7	12	8	24	6	7	21	43
Red-tailed Hawk	9	37	9	51	10	71	28	159
Rough-legged Hawk	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Harlan's Hawk	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	8	32	10	46	8	18	26	96
Broad-winged Hawk	1	2	0	0	2	3	3	5
Marsh Hawk	4	7	5	9	3	3	12	19
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Sparrow Hawk	10	54	10	77	9	39	29	170
Bobwhite	8	183	9	249	9	208	26	640
Common Gallinule	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
American Coot	7	17	9	163	3	86	19	268
Killdeer	10	602	10	1,771	10	417	30	2,790
American Woodcock	1	1	2	4	6	18	9	23
Common Snipe	6	32	9	100	10	121	25	253
Mourning Dove	10	501	10	1,270	10	1,919	30	3,690
Barn Owl	0	0	2	2	3	3	5	5
Screech Owl	3	5	2	2	5	6	10	13
Great Horned Owl	0	0	3	3	2	2	5	5
Barred Owl	2	2	6	8	1	2	9	12
Short-eared Owl	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Belted Kingfisher	10	36	10	62	10	54	30	152
Yellow-shafted Flicker	10	236	10	367	10	365	30	968
Pileated Woodpecker	8	14	10	48	10	77	28	139
Red-bellied Woodpecker	10	111	10	299	10	470	30	880
Red-headed Woodpecker	9	85	10	140	10	143	29	368
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	10	37	10	72	10	155	30	264
Hairy Woodpecker	10	47	10	53	10	51	30	151
Downy Woodpecker	10	180	10	310	10	321	30	811
Eastern Phoebe	10	58	10	61	9	28	29	147
Horned Lark	5	44	4	32	6	103	15	179
Blue Jay	10	1,235	10	1,812	10	2,725	30	5,772
Common Crow	10	953	10	2,043	10	1,155	30	4,141

Species	'41-'50		'51-'60		'61-'70		Total	
	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I
Carolina Chickadee	10	632	10	987	10	1,425	30	2,944
Tufted Titmouse	10	628	10	805	10	1,249	30	2,682
White-breasted Nuthatch	10	258	10	302	10	424	30	984
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	4	3	7	5	18	10	29
Brown-headed Nuthatch	10	127	10	160	10	237	30	524
Brown Creeper	10	83	10	71	10	80	30	234
House Wren	3	3	5	9	5	8	13	20
Winter Wren	10	52	10	88	9	35	29	175
Bewick's Wren	5	6	6	7	4	4	15	17
Carolina Wren	10	484	10	614	10	781	30	1,879
Mockingbird	10	359	10	764	10	1,334	30	2,457
Catbird	2	5	3	4	0	0	5	9
Brown Thrasher	10	144	10	237	10	384	30	765
Robin	10	237	10	1,918	10	1,140	30	3,295
Hermit Thrush	10	79	10	89	10	50	30	218
Eastern Bluebird	10	933	10	799	10	472	30	2,204
Golden-crowned Kinglet	10	662	10	237	10	255	30	1,154
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	10	326	10	262	10	569	30	1,157
Water Pipit	10	570	10	1,582	9	350	29	2,502
Cedar Waxwing	9	267	10	2,202	10	2,548	29	5,017
Loggerhead Shrike	10	35	10	67	10	36	30	138
Starling	10	21,446	10	79,237	10	45,147	30	145,830
White-eyed Vireo	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	2
Solitary Vireo	4	7	0	0	0	0	4	7
Black and White Warbler	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2
Orange-crowned Warbler	1	1	2	2	3	5	6	8
Myrtle Warbler	10	256	9	189	10	118	29	563
Pine Warbler	10	148	10	91	9	86	29	325
Palm Warbler	5	18	7	11	0	0	12	29
Yellowthroat	4	13	9	18	9	15	22	45
Yellow-breasted Chat	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
House Sparrow	10	834	10	1,113	10	2,103	30	4,050
Eastern Meadowlark	10	645	10	1,519	10	1,754	30	3,918
Red-winged Blackbird	10	8,193	10	111,720	10	14,761	30	134,674
Baltimore Oriole	0	0	1	1	2	3	3	4
Rusty Blackbird	3	1,836	9	4,094	10	736	22	7,676
Brewer's Blackbird	0	0	0	0	3	104	3	104
Common Grackle	10	27,764	10	88,518	10	20,548	30	136,930
Brown-headed Cowbird	4	71	9	8,090	9	4,746	22	12,907
Cardinal	10	1,156	10	1,339	10	2,087	30	4,568
Blue Grosbeak	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1



Species	'41-'50		'51-'60		'61-'70		Total	
	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I	Y	I
Evening Grosbeak	0	0	0	0	5	233	5	233
Purple Finch	8	378	10	546	10	763	28	1,687
Pine Siskin	6	83	6	194	6	417	18	694
American Goldfinch	10	1,647	10	2,502	10	2,465	30	6,614
Rufous-sided Towhee	10	1,198	10	1,568	10	2,084	30	4,850
Savannah Sparrow	9	309	10	422	10	765	29	1,496
Grasshopper Sparrow	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	2
Leconte's Sparrow	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Vesper Sparrow	6	28	10	62	9	99	25	199
Slate-colored Junco	10	2,063	10	4,055	9	5,062	29	11,180
Chipping Sparrow	10	1,080	9	881	10	580	29	2,541
Field Sparrow	10	2,299	10	2,902	10	2,910	30	8,111
White-crowned Sparrow	1	1	1	1	2	5	4	7
White-throated Sparrow	10	3,644	10	5,838	10	5,393	30	14,875
Fox Sparrow	8	78	10	387	10	128	28	593
Swamp Sparrow	10	834	10	1,315	10	1,117	30	3,266
Song Sparrow	10	2,255	10	2,993	10	2,938	30	8,186
SPECIES (Average)	66		72		68		69	
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	89,694		338,158		142,185		570,037	

**FREQUENCY OF OBSERVATION** - Table 3 shows the number of individual species seen from one to 30 years. Except for the 17 species which have only been seen once, and the 36 that were seen every year, the frequency rate has been combined into five year increments.

**Table 3.** - Number of years individual species seen

No. Years	No. Species
1	17
2 - 5	19
6 - 10	9
11 - 15	7
16 - 25	10
26 - 29	18
30	36
TOTAL NO. SPECIES SEEN 116	

There are many more correlations in the above figures than a quick look would indicate. If the data on population growth, lack of

water, land use, etc., are studied, a clear picture emerges from the following example and the brief analysis of TABLE 3.

In the years '41-'50 Turkey Vultures were seen every year with 268 individuals counted. In the following ten years they were seen nine times with only 27 individuals counted. In the last ten year period there were only five sightings and ten individuals were counted. Black Vulture sightings confirm the validity of the analysis where a more drastic reduction in sightings and individuals is noted.

The second key is the species that have been recorded only once. Of the 17 species that fall into this classification 13 were sightings of only one individual, three of two individuals, and one of five individuals. Further analysis shows that only two of the sightings were in the '60's, with eight in the '40's and seven in the '50's. An analysis of the 17 species again confirms the problems relating to limited habitats and a general decline in open areas. Ten species were water birds, four were birds of prey, and three were song birds.

On the other end of the scale, there were no surprises in the 44 species which were seen 25 or more times during the 30 counts. In every instance these birds are common winter residents and could be found almost regardless of the changes in land use or habitat. Other samples of species seen only twice or the number of occurrences for water fowl, etc., tend to confirm the basic conclusion that as the Atlanta area has grown in human population there has been a narrowing of avian species using the area for their winter homes, and that those species that do use the area are the more common "backyard" species that frequent our feeders, brush piles, golf courses, and parks.

To those of us who have participated in many if not all of these counts, this conclusion is nothing new. In fact for a number of years it has been pretty obvious. Therefore, with some reluctance the Atlanta Audubon Society started utilizing a new area beginning with its 1974 Count. The new area is now in the northwest segment of the metropolitan area and includes much more open land, a corner of Lake Alatoona, Kennesaw Mountain, and a cross section of residential and commercial area. This past year the count was hindered by poor weather and an unfamiliar area; yet, 75 species, the third highest total ever submitted from the Atlanta area, were recorded. As might be expected there were dramatic changes in the pattern of species reported.



Ten species of water fowl, totaling 894 individuals, were reported. This is the largest count (species and individuals) for the history of Christmas Counts. Some of the figures were truly significant; more Black Ducks, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Ducks, and Hooded Mergansers were seen on the '74 count than the total of the 30 years in this report. Fewer Blackbirds, Grackles, and Cowbirds were recorded, and one new species, the Red Crossbill, was added to the area's list.

One year is not sufficient to prove anything. It does, however, tend to support our theory that the area supported more and different species than the original 15 mile diameter reflected. Maybe ten years from now someone will make a compilation of this new area and a comparison of its growth pattern and bird population can be made with this thirty year study.

4627 Tall Pines Drive, NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30327

### GENERAL NOTES

**FULVOUS TREE DUCKS IN THOMAS COUNTY, GEORGIA AND VICINITY** — Until the late 1940's the Fulvous Tree Duck (*Den drocygna bicolor*) was regarded as an accidental straggler in the eastern United States. Prior to this, its occurrence in North America was limited northward to the southwestern United States, reaching only to southwestern Louisiana in the east. Beginning in 1949 it began to appear in winter in south Florida and along the south Atlantic coast, and by the mid-1960's was regarded as a regular winter resident in those areas—common in south Florida and uncommon along the coast of Georgia and other Atlantic states north to Virginia (Jones, 1966).

The first Georgia record was in McIntosh County near Darien in March, 1961 (Craig and Craig, 1961). The following winter more were seen near Darien and a specimen was taken from a small flock near Augusta (Denton, 1961; Kale, 1962). They are now considered a "rare winter visitant along [the] coast" (Denton and Hopkins, 1969) and the Augusta record is the only previously recorded occurrence in the interior of Georgia.

On 11 January 1974 R. C. Balfour, III, duck hunting on his pond south of Thomasville, saw and heard a large flock of Fulvous Tree Ducks which circled the pond several times. He was able to collect one of this flock (specimen, Tall Timbers Research Station, No. 2779). The next afternoon Neel and his family visited Balfour's pond at 1700. Approached closely by the Neels, the ducks appeared quite fearless. On 16 January Balfour and Neel heard several calling through a thick morning fog and later saw two individuals at this same pond.

On the afternoon of the 16th, at Gary Pond on A. D. Perry's Millpond Plantation (ca. 10 km north of Balfour's pond), Neel and Perry saw 12 tree ducks together with about 3,000 other ducks of 12 species. Neel and Perry were able to collect another out of this flock (specimen, TTRS No. 2780). Two more tree ducks were seen by Neel on 23 January at Lake Bud, Milestone Plantation, and the ducks were last seen in Thomas County on 6 February when one was sighted at Balfour's pond by Neel, Crawford, W. W. Baker, and N. O. Wamer.

Although most records were from Thomas County there is evidence that the tree ducks were in adjacent areas as well. J. A. Bracey



and J. R. Wilson saw 16 on Brice's Pond in neighboring Brooks County, Georgia, on 7 February and there was an unconfirmed report of one killed in December, 1973, on Lake Iamonia, Leon County, Florida, some 20 km south of Thomasville.

It is difficult to estimate the number of tree ducks that were in the Thomas County area in the winter of 1973-74, because many of the reports we received were from hunters, some of whom are prone to exaggerate. Even taking this into consideration, it seems there were at least 200 birds involved as the flock at Balfour's pond probably numbered over 100 birds on the 11th. Several were seen (and some shot) on small ponds throughout the county and a few were mounted by local taxidermists. Large numbers of tree ducks appeared elsewhere that winter, with 125 being recorded near Beaufort, South Carolina (Teulings, 1974).

Although we choose not to speculate on why the birds appeared in south Georgia in such numbers (other than that they are known to be periodic irruptors [Paxton, 1974]), we can offer an explanation as to why they remained for a month. In the last 25 years there has been a marked development of wintering duck habitat in the Thomasville-Tallahassee area on private land. Over 35 large, controlled, flooded cornfield-marsh impoundments have been constructed for duck hunting and waterfowl over-wintering habitat. These, in conjunction with the large lakes north of Tallahassee (Lake Iamonia, ca. 1,600 hectares, and Lake Micosukee, ca. 2,800 hectares) create attractive wintering areas for several species of ducks and have greatly increased the numbers (and diversity) of "dabbling ducks" (Anatinae) in the region. Most of the impoundments are drained in early spring for planting the food crop (corn, milo, etc.) and then flooded from wells or reservoir ponds prior to the opening of hunting season each year. This combination of ideal habitat and abundant food probably influenced the tree ducks to linger as long as they did.

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 Leon Neel and Robert L. Crawford, Tall Timbers Research Station, Rt. 1, Box 160, Tallahassee, Fla. 32303.

ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF THE SCISSOR-TAILED FLY-CATCHER IN GEORGIA—Hopkins and Baker (1974. *The Oriole*, 39:6-7) recently summarized ten known records of the occurrence of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Musivora forficata*) in Georgia. Not previously reported was the occurrence of a bird at Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia, on October 14, 1970. The bird was discovered by Fielding Dillard about 5:00 p.m. in a formerly cultivated field at the Merry Brothers Brick Company. It was observed perched and feeding over the weeds which were 4-6 feet high. The long streaming tail and pink sides were particularly notable. Mr. Dillard telephoned me as soon as he reached home and reported the bird. I attempted to locate it the next morning, but was not successful.

An additional record not included by Hopkins and Baker was a bird observed near Millen, Jenkins County, Georgia, on October 12, 1971, by Millard R. Lindauer (*Am. Birds*, 26 (1): 48).

J. Fred Denton, 529 Henderson Drive, Augusta, Georgia 30904

AMERICAN ROBIN AND LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH NESTING IN WASHINGTON COUNTY, GEORGIA—Nesting of the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) south of the Fall Line in Georgia has been erratic and seldom reported. Therefore, the nesting of Robins in Sandersville should be of interest. The first known nest in the county was discovered some six or seven years ago at the home of Herman Hawkins in Sandersville. On July 11, 1972, I noted a Robin carrying food and tried to follow it to its nest, but was not successful. However, on July 21 I succeeded in finding the nest 10-12 feet up in a pecan tree in a neighbor's yard. At this time the nest held large young which fledged within the next two days. In 1973 Robins built two nests in pine trees in my garden, but young were fledged from only one of them. In 1974 Robins again nested in my garden in a pine tree 15-20 feet from the 1973 nesting site.

A nest of the Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*) was found at Lime Sinks, about one mile from Tennille, on June 5, 1967, by Mrs. Frank Cummings, her son Newton, and Patrick Nolan of Atlanta. The nest, which was located in the bank of a small stream, held four eggs. I visited the nest on June 7 and observed the four heavily marked eggs. As I sat quietly nearby the female (?) returned to the vicinity of the nest, but did not enter it. Later after I moved further



away the bird crossed the stream, approached the nest and disappeared, presumably into the nest. After the birds finished nesting the nest was collected and found to be typical of described nests of this species.

Elizabeth P. Newsom, 110 West First Ave., Sandersville, Georgia 31082

**EGG-EATING BY RED-SHOULDERED HAWK** — On 15 April 1974, while conducting a continuing avifaunal survey of St. Catherine's Island, Liberty County, Georgia, I heard loud cawing of Common Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), as if mobbing a predator. Proceeding to the source of the noise in a dense, pure stand of pines, I found about a dozen crows swooping at the top of a pine. Cautiously drawing closer I observed a nest about 35 feet up the tree, occupied by a hawk that proved to be a Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). The nest was relatively small and shallow, appearing to be that of a crow. The hawk, virtually ignoring the swooping and cawing crows, kept dipping its beak into the nest. Sneaking nearer, I saw pieces of egg shells and egg covering the front of the hawk's bill and dripping from it. The hawk continued to peck strongly within the nest, and frequently raised its head, tilting it backward and swallowing. It suddenly caught sight of me peering up at it (I was about 75 feet away from the bird, behind a pine tree) and burst from the nest with the crows pursuing it. I was unable to climb the tree, but it seemed obvious that the hawk had been eating eggs of a pair of crows. I checked the site daily, but did not see the crows near the nest again. I should note that not 20 minutes after the mobbing episode just described, and only a quarter of a mile away, I found a mixed group of Common Crows and Fish Crows (*Corvus ossifragus*) mobbing a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*).

The various reference works that I consulted fail to mention egg-eating habits of the Red-shouldered Hawk. The only other instance of this sort was told me by Gardner Stout of the American Museum of Natural History. Early in 1974 in Corkscrew Swamp, southern Florida, he observed a Red-shouldered Hawk in the nest of a Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*), tearing open and devouring at least one of the kites' eggs between attacks by first a single pair of these kites, and then two pairs that intermittently swooped and struck at the hawk. According to Mr. Stout the hawk responded to these attacks by turning on its side or back within the kite nest and striking out at the swooping

kites with its talons. It would be interesting to obtain further documentation of predation of birds' eggs by Red-shouldered Hawks.

Lester L. Short, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79 St., New York, New York 10024.

**POSSIBLE "SUTTON'S WARBLER" ON ST. CATHERINE'S ISLAND, GEORGIA** — On 16 April 1974, in the eastern part of St. Catherine's Island, Liberty County, Georgia, amid live-oak woodland with a palmetto understory, I observed a peculiar warbler. At first glance it appeared to be a female Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), but with a start I noted its green back. I immediately began to observe the bird closely as it moved through the trees about 25 feet overhead, and to compare it with numerous Parula Warblers (*Parula americana*) and Yellow-throated Warblers that were feeding and flitting about in nearby trees. The problematic warbler was the size of a Yellow-throated Warbler. Its back was completely green, not just tinted greenish, and the green seemed to end sharply in the gray of the uppermost back. The face pattern and streaking of the flanks and sides seemed typical of the Yellow-throated Warbler, and I could find no trace of orange or rust in its yellow throat and upper breast, the yellow of which was bordered by black extending rearward from the face. Thus, except for the green patch on the back, the bird resembled the Yellow-throated Warbler.

Sutton's Warbler (*Dendroica potomac*), undoubtedly a hybrid of the Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler, is known from very few specimens (taken in West Virginia) and from scattered observations. One has been reported from Demorest, Georgia, by Neal (1949, cited in Burleigh, 1958: 701). This "Species," as described and figured by Haller (1940), is intermediate between the Parula and Yellow-throated Warblers in various characters, although field guides (e.g., Robbins, et al., 1966: 264) give the impression that Sutton's Warbler simply resembles the Yellow-throated Warbler, but has a yellow or green back. A hybrid between distinct species such as the Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler would be expected to show intermediacy, generally, in all or most of the features by which the species differ. A bird that resembles one species in virtually all its attributes, but is like another species in one trait, might be a backcross hybrid or more likely represents a mutant or bird with a rare recombination of genes, perhaps showing a feature of some ancestral species.

I have examined the specimens of Yellow-throated Warbler in the American Museum of Natural History, and find no birds resembling



the aberrant individual that I observed. Fall specimens usually show a faint to moderate greenish edging on nape and upper back feathers, but these are not strongly green and do not form a conspicuous patch.

I conclude that the bird I observed was an aberrant, green-backed Yellow-throated Warbler, although I cannot rule out the possibility that it may have been a backcross hybrid (i.e., cross between a Parula-Yellow-throated hybrid and a Yellow-throated Warbler). Such individuals, however rare, could give rise to some reports of Sutton's Warblers, and caution should be taken to observe carefully and note all color and size characters of any bird suspected of being a Sutton's Warbler.

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Lester L. Short, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79 St., New York, New York 10024.

**WARBLING VIREO SIGHTED AT DALTON**—April 23, 1974, was a sparkling clear day with the temperature in the 60° F. range: a day that promised good birding and enjoyment of the beauties to be found in the outdoor world.

I decided to do a bit of birding and went to the wooded area across the street from my home. A stream meanders through these woods. In the interlaced low canopy formed by a young Red Maple tree (*Acer rubrum*) and a Flowering Dogwood tree (*Cornus florida*) at creekside, about 10-15 feet up in the low branches and 10-15 feet in front of me, I saw a bird that seemed at first glance to be a different looking Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*). Upon focusing my binocular—Bushnell 7 x 35—on the bird my mind was shouting "Warbling Vireo" (*Vireo gilvus*) and immediately I determined to give this bird the closest scrutiny.

The first field mark I noticed about this bird was the dark eye. This was plainly evident without the aid of binoculars. Here was a bird that was a symphony in shadings of gray and white - there being no other color about this bird. The eye stripe was not the clear white as in

the Red-eyed Vireo, but a light gray which blended into the deeper gray of the head. No black border outlined the eye stripe. I saw no contrast in color between the back and the head; the upper-parts of the bird were a uniform gray. The undersides were whitish. The most notable feature about this bird was the dark eye and I felt I was close enough to the bird to use this as a definite field mark.

As far as I could distinguish, the bird made no sound. I do not have a good ear for bird songs and must rely upon visual observations. Therefore, I hone my sightings to a keen edge. I had two good fairly long looks at the bird as it worked its way along the tree branches and I especially studied the head to get all the details I could. This sighting was made in very good light, about 1:30 PM, with the sun at my back. I did not see the bird again once it flew away. About a half an hour later, in another part of the woods, I saw a Red-eyed Vireo and had a good opportunity to study the differences between these two birds. Despite repeated searching, the bird was not seen again.

Upon my return home, this question nagged at my mind: Would a young last year's Red-eyed Vireo retain its dark eye on the return trip North and perhaps not have a clearly defined and bordered eye stripe? In reading Bent, I found the eye of the Red-eyed Vireo becomes red in the fall of the first year and by the beginning of spring the returning birds have red eyes. I also researched other books for descriptions of the Warbling Vireo.

After much reading, I concluded that I had, indeed, seen a Warbling Vireo. Burleigh puts the Warbling Vireo on the hypothetical list for Georgia - a sighting by W. W. Worthington at the mouth of the Altamaha River, April 28, 1890; and a sight record from Augusta by Dr. Eugene E. Murphey (1937), October 15, 1935. A Warbling Vireo was seen by William D. Matheny on September 12, 1973 - The Georgia GOS hawk, Vol. 1, No. 2, and The Oriole, Vol. 39, No. 1.

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Harriett G. DiGioia, 1309 Lakemont Drive, Dalton, Georgia, 30720



THE RED-BREASTED MERGANSER AS A SUMMER RESIDENT IN GEORGIA—Burleigh, in *Georgia Birds*, gives May 10, 1933, as the latest date in the spring for the Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) in Coastal Georgia and Walter J. Ericksen, in his unpublished manuscript relating to the birds of Chatham County (nine volumes on file at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah) could cite no later occurrence than March 31, 1940.

After having lived on a saltwater stream in Chatham County for more than a half century, it occurred to me that I was always seeing the Red-breasted Merganser in small numbers until mid-summer. This year, 1974, I resolved to watch more closely. This merganser was easily found every weekend in May. June was more difficult, but I succeeded in finding two or three every weekend in that month. On July 6 I was in Glynn County and was pleased to find one lone bird in a saltwater stream near the City of Brunswick. All efforts after this date failed.

None of these birds gave any indication of being breeding birds. Whether all had their flight feathers is debatable for they usually were observed on the water. Perhaps all of our summer residents are first year birds that did not feel the urge to make the spring flight back to the breeding grounds.

Herman W. Coolidge, 13 Bluff Drive, Savannah, Ga. 31406

## NEWS AND COMMENTS

### NOTICE: HAWK MIGRATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA

This notice will serve to introduce the Hawk Migration Association of North America, a newly formed organization which will strive to increase communication between hawk-watchers, to standardize the recording and processing of hawk migration data, and to expand and improve the coverage of hawk migration in North America.

For the purpose of the Association's work, North America has been divided into nine regions, each with a regional representative/editor. Before each spring and fall migration season, all participating hawkwatch and hawk-banding stations will receive, free, as many copies of the HMANA Report Form as are needed. After each season, hawk-watchers will return completed forms to their regional representatives, who will write a regional report. All of these regional reports, plus a continent-wide summary, will be published twice annually, and will be sent to each member.

The association is vitally interested not only in lookouts that are manned regularly, but also in those that are covered infrequently. This allows the exploring hawk-watcher leeway for searching out new watches which will help to expand the coverage throughout the South. If you are interested in learning more about the Hawk Migration Association please contact Robert S. Kennedy, Southern Regional Representative HMANA, Museum of Zoology, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803.



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