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THE ORIOLE

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GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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WOOD STORKS NESTING ON THE GEORGIA COAST

Ron R. Odom

Although the Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana* Linnaeus) is a fairly common visitant to the Georgia coast, no nesting has ever been reported. The only authenticated nesting records for Georgia are from the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge (Hall and Cone, 1970; Metzen, 1977, Pers. Comm.). Menaboni (1950) mentions the existence of a Wood Stork rookery on Little Sapelo Island (McIntosh County); however, this colony has never been referred to in subsequent years, nor is it in existence now. Mary's Hammock, an extension of Little Sapelo, does have a small fresh water pond that is frequented by feeding Wood Storks; however, no signs of nesting Wood Storks have been observed.

On 18 May 1977 a small Wood Stork breeding colony was spotted in Camden County (Fig. 1) by J. W. Guthrie and myself, while we were conducting aerial heronry surveys of the Georgia coast. After circling the colony in the air and taking a number of photographs, we landed the helicopter in a nearby field and walked on foot into the colony.

The colony was located near the Little Satilla River in a small cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) swamp of approximately four acres. The site occurs on privately owned land which is easily accessible. Water depth under the colony varied from 1-3 feet. Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) dominated the understory. Cypress trees ranged from 15-30 feet in height, with nests constructed at various levels. The exact location of the colony will not be revealed in order to assure that the colony will remain undisturbed in future years; however, records are available to qualified scientific researchers at the Department of Natural Resources, Social Circle Office.

On this initial visit into the colony approximately fifty adult Wood Storks, ten Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*), and several Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) were present and nesting. Approximately twenty-five Wood Stork nests were present in the colony. Nests were large and were constructed of large sticks mingled with fresh, green vegetation which appeared to be cypress. Most of the birds were either on or near nests and were extremely reluctant to leave. Unlike other Wood Storks that I have encountered, these birds remained in the



Figure 1. Aerial view of Wood Stork breeding colony.
Camden Co., Ga., 18 May 1977.

trees or near the nests even as I waded directly beneath them. The exceedingly shy nature of the Wood Stork has been described by others (Bent, 1926; Burleigh, 1958). Their behavior strongly suggested incubation; however, several birds were observed carrying nesting material and appeared to be constructing nests. This first visit to the colony was made brief in order to keep disturbance at a minimum.

A second visit was made to the colony on 6 July 1977. Approximately 90% of the pond had dried up, leaving only small stagnant pools scattered underneath the nests. Approximately half of the nests contained young Wood Storks that appeared to be near the fledgling stage (Fig. 2 & 3). Most could not yet fly and when disturbed either hunkered down on the nest or climbed further away from the intruder. One nest contained a pair of young approximately 3-4 weeks old. Two adults remained at their side and were reluctant to leave. Many of the young apparently had already fledged, as indicated by many unoccupied nests. Two partially decomposed half-grown chicks were observed in old nests.

On 20 July 1977, during a final aerial survey of coastal heronries, we checked out a report by Dr. John Bozeman and Pilot Charles Spillner of

a large concentration of birds in the Altamaha River swamp upstream from Darien, Georgia. Pilot Spillner reported observing this same colony the previous year at the same location. This large concentration of birds turned out to be a fairly large breeding colony of Wood Storks. By this date most of the young were near fledgling stage and were quite large, although most were not flying. We photographed the colony from the air and could clearly see large Wood Stork young in nearly all nests.

This nesting site is in McIntosh county and occupies several acres of densely forested land covered by standing water. Nests were located primarily in the tops of mature black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) trees in an area largely inaccessible from the ground. The colony occurs on privately owned lands and should be reasonably secure. Time limitations did not allow inspection of this colony on foot; however, good data were obtained from the air. Records of the exact location of this colony are on file at the Department of Natural Resources, Social Circle Office.



Figure 2. Several nests containing Wood Storks.
Camden Co., Ga., 18 May 1977.

Based on aerial observations and photographs, we estimated that a total of 75 plus or minus 20 nests occurred in this colony. Although aerial estimates sometimes can be misleading, these estimates were felt to be fairly accurate, since all of the nests were large and quite conspicuous in the tops of the trees. Approximately 200 adult storks were in the area, either feeding along the river or sitting on nests. No other species were observed nesting in the vicinity although one adult Great Egret was observed perched in a tree at the edge of the colony. Most nests contained 2-3 young birds nearly fledged.

Fair numbers of Wood Storks are observed annually during the heronry surveys. It is common to see small numbers of storks feeding in or near various colonies along the coast; however, no signs of breeding have ever been noted during our surveys. Our annual heronry surveys run only from I-95 east and therefore exclude much potential Wood Stork nesting habitat. It seems possible that other nesting colonies of Wood Storks may occur in similar cypress-swamp habitat west of Interstate Highway 95. Additional aerial surveys over this inland cypress swamp type may reveal additional Wood Stork nesting colonies.



Figure 3. Young Wood Storks on nest.
Camden Co., Ga., 18 May 1977.

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Department of Natural Resources, Route 2, Social Circle, Georgia.

SPRING TRANSIENT WILDFOWL AND SHOREBIRDS IN THE UPPER COASTAL PLAIN

Thomas K. Patterson

Jackson's pasture, located 17 km NNE of the courthouse in Dublin, is unequalled in Laurens County in its offering of suitable habitat for migrating shorebirds and certain species of wildfowl. Its 200 ha. of gently rolling land are also convenient for the observer, since many of the locations which are attractive to the birds can readily be viewed from points along the five km. of county roads which border the pasture on three sides.

On the western side, pasture marsh, a natural pond usually with little open water and an upper end of marsh grasses, turns into a small grassy lake of about two ha. during winter and spring rains. On the east, Avocet Pond, so called because of the sighting there of an American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*) earlier (Patterson, 1975), can be viewed from the road for wildfowl and the larger waders; however, the pasture must be entered for adequate observation of the shorebird population. The natural pond of about six ha. contains the decaying but still standing trunks of several Water Oaks (*Quercus nigra*). Its gently sloping banks are a combination of mud flats and grassy slopes. The northernmost corner of the pasture serves as a winter feedlot for many of the several hundred head of cattle in the pasture. With spring rains, the grasses begin to encroach on the wet weather pools which form in the corner, and the area becomes excellent feeding ground for the migrating shorebirds. Three other interior watering ponds and marshes on the southern border are attractive primarily to wildfowl.

The pasture was observed for migrating shorebirds and wildfowl on several occasions from late February through May in 1977. The record of these observations is shown in Table 1. Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) and Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*), which wintered in the area, were not included in the counts.

The season was marked with the passage of relatively few strong weather systems. Rainfall in the preceding winter months and into early April was near normal, but the cessation of precipitation during the balance of the observation period caused drought conditions to exist by early June. After a record cold winter, above normal temperatures prevailed in the spring.

The numbers recorded in Table 1 do not represent a precise count of the entire pasture. The interior of the pasture was not entered on every visit; at times when the numbers were greatest, considered estimates only were made of the species totals; and because the "peeps" were usually in mixed flocks, separation by species was difficult. It is believed, however,

that the record presented accurately depicts the general movement of these migratory species through the area during the season.

Certain of the records of species which are considered rare or uncommon to the Upper Coastal Plain deserve special comment.

Lesser Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*). Sunday afternoon, 13 March, was clear, windy, and cool after the passage on the previous evening of one of the few violent weather systems of the season. At approximately 1600 hours William Dopson, Jr., and I entered the pasture and approached to within 200 m. of Avocet Pond from the north. After we had counted the ducks with the aid of a 20-45X scope, our attention turned to the shorebirds.

Feeding in the grassy area on the western end of the pond were a few Pectoral Sandpipers (*Calidris melanotos*). Nearby were two larger shorebirds which, from our distance, could not be identified. As we scanned the area with a scope, we saw a similar bird at the opposite end of the pond, and a fourth bird in the pasture just above the north edge of the pond, only 100 m. away. We viewed the nearest bird for several minutes, noting the short bill, its body and leg coloring, and its behavior. The bird appeared to be a Lesser Golden Plover in winter plumage. By approaching the bird to within 35 m. observing through binoculars and the scope, and by subsequently flushing the bird, noting the call and the flight markings, the identification was confirmed. The other three birds were then approached and carefully observed to give us assurance that these were the same species.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*). On Saturday, 2 April, my son, Tom, and I stopped at the corner shortly after noon. The day was clear and warm, very much like the three or four days prior. Feeding at one end of a small pool were three sandpipers, two of which, from our distance of 40 m., appeared to be Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*) and the other a Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*). However, with binoculars we could see that only one Lesser Yellowlegs was present. The other sandpiper, though it stood on equally long legs, was slightly smaller and had a heavier bill which was "drooped" near the tip. It remained very still as it considered our presence and did not "bob" as did the Yellowlegs.

With the telescope the field marks were observed for several minutes from our position on the road. Comparisons and distinctions were made with the two other sandpipers and, using Peterson's guide (Peterson, 1947), we identified the bird as a Stilt Sandpiper still in winter plumage. The pasture was then entered and observation continued from 20 m. The green leg color was established, and the call and flight markings were noted as the bird was intentionally flushed. The first county record of the species was confirmed.

It was only after we checked the literature that we realized the rarity of the sighting. While Burleigh (1958) and subsequent reports in *The Oriole* (Denton and Post, 1963) record coastal sightings in spring and fall and rare fall interior sightings, there are no inland spring records for the species. In Alabama, Imhof (1976) lists the bird as "very rare in spring in the Coastal Plain", but does report a few scattered sightings. Upon recognizing the unusual nature of the record, I went back into the area and found the bird feeding at the same spot where we had seen it two hours earlier. In another fifteen minutes of observation, all field marks were re-confirmed, and I was re-assured of the identification.

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*). As I observed alone at the corner on Saturday afternoon, 7 May, at approximately 1300 hours, a flock of fifteen "peeps" was feeding around a small muddy puddle, the remnant of a much larger pool which had diminished in size as a result of five rainless weeks. Most of the birds were Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*); a few were Semipalmated Sandpipers (*Calidris pusilla*); but one bird, slightly larger, could not be readily identified. Suspecting that it might be a White-rumped Sandpiper, I entered the pasture in order to flush the bird. The white rump, clearly visible as the bird flew, confirmed the identification.

A few moments later, at Avocet Pond, two other birds were singled out of a mixed flock as possibly the same species. I approached the pair to within seven m. and, again, the unmistakable presence of the white rump as the birds flushed confirmed that these two, also, were White-rumped Sandpipers.

Breeding Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). On Saturday morning, 14 May, a male and female Mallard lifted almost vertically from the interior marsh and left the immediate area in full flight, showing no signs of injury or infirmity. A few moments later, as I passed Avocet Pond on my way out of the pasture, I observed the female leave the pond, apparently again disturbed by my presence.

In many visits into this pasture and to the surrounding area over the past few years, I have never seen tame or domestic Mallards in the vicinity. Because of this fact, and because of the wariness displayed by the pair, I believe these to have been wild Mallards.

On the afternoon of 15 May, as my son, Tom, and I approached the pond, we observed a female Mallard with nine young which appeared to be about six weeks old. As we neared the group, they left the area for the cover of the far end of the pond, the young running on top of the water and flapping their still downy wings. During the departure I observed the adult disappear under the surface, only to reappear a few seconds later some distance farther away, but still in company with her unfledged young.

Table 1. Shorebird and wildfowl populations at Jackson's Pasture, Laurens Co., Ga., spring, 1977.

	Date													Period Count
	Time (E.S.T.)													
	25 Feb. 1400	13 Mar. 1600	26 Mar. 1500	2 Apr. 1200	9* Apr. 1600	10* Apr. 1600	11 Apr. 1600	16 Apr. 1600	3* May 1600	7 May 1300	14 May 1000	22 May 1600	28 May 1000	
WILDFOWL														
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	2	4	1	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	10 ⁽²⁾	
Green-winged Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	
Blue-winged Teal (<i>Anas discors</i>)	-	20	71	40	48	38	108	72	-	-	4	3	404	
American Wigeon (<i>Anas americana</i>)	-	17	22	32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	71	
Wood Duck (<i>Aix sponsa</i>)	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	
Ring-necked Duck (<i>Aythya collaris</i>)	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	
Hooded Merganser (<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>)	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	
Total Wildfowl	5	49	105	75	50	38	108	72	-	-	6	3	521	
SHOREBIRDS ⁽¹⁾														
Lesser Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis dominica</i>)	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	
Upland Sandpiper (<i>Barrtramia longicauda</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	15	-	-	-	-	21	
Spotted Sandpiper (<i>Actitis macularia</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	4	
Solitary Sandpiper (<i>Tringa solitaria</i>)	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	
Greater Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa melanoleuca</i>)	-	11	-	4	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	20	
Lesser Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa flavipes</i>)	5	35	17	10	14	37	47	17	2	12	14	-	210	
Pectoral Sandpiper (<i>Calidris melanotos</i>)	1	25	63	20	55	65	65	11	8	2	-	-	315	
White-rumped Sandpiper (<i>Calidris fuscicollis</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	
Least Sandpiper (<i>Calidris minutilla</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	6	7	24	13	-	60	
Semipalmated Sandpiper (<i>Calidris pusilla</i>)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	18	11	7	41	
Silt Sandpiper (<i>Micropalama himantopus</i>)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Total Shorebirds	6	75	80	36	71	111	119	54	23	60	40	8	683	

*Interior of pasture not entered.
(1) Killdeer, Common Snipe not included in count.
(2) Female adult with nine young.

On 28 May, when my son, Hunter, and I visited the pond at 1000 hours, the family was again present. The adult was hardly distinguishable from her young, which appeared to be almost fully grown and with their completed juvenile feathering.

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DATES AND PLACES OF SEMI-ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE GEORGIA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

(Organized in Atlanta 13 December 1936)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1st Milledgeville 3-4 Apr 1937 | 31st Savannah Beach 8-10 Oct 1954 |
| 2nd Savannah 9-10 Oct 1937 | 32nd Atlanta 15-17 Apr 1955 |
| 3rd Statesboro 23-24 Apr 1938 | 33rd Perry 28-30 Oct 1955 |
| 4th Okefenokee Swamp (Fargo) 8-9 Oct 1938 | 34th Rome 27-29 Apr 1956 |
| 5th Brunswick 15-16 Apr 1939 | 35th Savannah Beach 19-21 Oct 1956 |
| 6th Vogel State Park 14-15 Oct 1939 | 36th Albany 3-5 May 1957 |
| 7th Statesboro 6-7 Apr 1940 | 37th Rock Eagle Park 25-27 Oct 1957 |
| 8th Rome 21-22 Sept 1940 | 38th Waycross 18-20 Apr 1958 |
| 9th Atlanta 19-20 Apr 1941 | 39th Milledgeville 3-5 Oct 1958 |
| 10th Pine Mt. State Park 4-5 Oct 1941 | 40th Jekyll Island 17-19 Apr 1959 |
| 11th Milledgeville 18-19 Apr 1942 | 41st Dalton 9-11 Oct 1959 |
| 12th Atlanta 29-30 Apr 1944 | 42nd Gatlinburg, Tn 5-8 May 1960 |
| 13th Athens 21-22 Apr 1945 | 43rd Statesboro 14-16 Oct 1960 |
| 14th Augusta 27-28 Apr 1946 | 44th Athens 28-30 Apr 1961 |
| 15th Savannah 12-13 Oct 1946 | 45th Calloway Gardens 13-15 Oct 1961 |
| 16th Camp Ray, Lake Burton 10-11 May 1947 | 46th Augusta 27-29 Apr 1962 |
| 17th Atlanta 4-5 Oct 1947 | 47th Atlanta 19-21 Oct 1962 |
| 18th Jekyll Is. State Park 24-25 Apr 1948 | 48th McRae 19-21 Apr 1963 |
| 19th Athens 16-17 Oct 1948 | 49th Rock Eagle Park 11-13 Oct 1963 |
| 20th Statesboro 2-3 Apr 1949 | 50th Dillard 1-3 May 1964 |
| 21st Macon 8-9 Oct 1949 | 51st Thomasville 9-11 Oct 1964 |
| 22nd Savannah Beach 22-23 Apr 1950 | 52nd Jekyll Island 2-4 Apr 1965 |
| 23rd Dalton 21-22 Oct 1950 | 53rd Calloway Gardens 1-3 Oct 1965 |
| 24th Albany 14-15 Apr 1951 | 54th Augusta 6-8 May 1966 |
| 25th St. Simons Island 13-14 Oct 1951 | 55th Darien 14-16 Oct 1966 |
| 26th Gatlinburg, Tn. 25-26 Apr 1952 | 56th Dalton 28-30 Apr 1967 |
| 27th Indian Springs State Park 4-5 Oct 1952 | 57th Athens 29 Sept - 1 Oct. 1967 |
| 28th Milledgeville 25-26 Apr 1953 | 58th Milledgeville 3-5 May 1968 |
| 29th Vogel State Park 17-18 Oct 1953 | 59th Columbus 18-20 Oct 1968 |
| 30th Augusta 7-9 May 1954 | 60th Augusta 25-27 Apr 1969 |
| | 61st Folkston 24-26 Oct 1969 |
| | 62nd Jekyll Island 17-19 Apr 1970 |
| | 63rd McDonough 8-10 Oct 1970 |

64th Brevard, N.C. 28-31 May 1971	71st Dalton 11-13 Oct 1974
65th Jekyll Island 9-11 Oct 1971	72nd Albany 11-13 Apr 1975
66th Clayton 28-30 Apr 1972	73rd Jekyll Island 17-19 Oct 1975
67th Savannah 6-8 Oct 1972	74th Sylvania 30 Apr - 2 May 1976
68th Stone Mountain Park 27-29 Apr 1973	75th Athens 9-11 Oct 1976
69th Thomasville 5-7 Oct 1973	76th Fitzgerald 29 Apr - 1 May 1977
70th Columbus 19-21 Apr 1974	77th Brunswick 14-16 Oct 1977

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GENERAL NOTES

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER STATUS AND NESTING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH GEORGIA— Burleigh (1958. *Georgia Birds*. U. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla.) and Stupka (1963. *Notes on the Birds of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. U. of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, Tenn.) did not record the Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus* (Linnaeus)) in the southern Appalachians during the breeding season. Stupka was inclined to regard it as a permanent resident in the Great Smoky Mountains, but he did not have records during the breeding season. Burleigh on the other hand had no records of the species in the mountain counties of Georgia.

I have recorded Red-bellied Woodpeckers on many occasions during my last two years (1975-77) of field work in Union and Towns Co., Georgia. The species is a fairly common permanent resident in these counties. During April and May, 1976, I located a territory, but was unable to locate the nest. The territory was in a mixed oak forest (el. 762m, 2500ft) near Mining Gap (1.8km, 1.1mi, S-SW of Lake Chatuge).

During the 1977 migratory and breeding census I located three Red-bellied Woodpecker territories on the forest edge and forest adjacent to the Blairsville-Wood Grove transmission line (Young Harris to Lake Chatuge). Sight records and locations are summarized in Table 1. A nest was located on one of the territories. The nest was ½km (550yds) west of the 1976 territory record. It was in a 21.4cm (8.4in) DBH (diameter at breast height) red oak (*Quercus rubra* Linnaeus) that had no remaining canopy limbs. The nest entrance was 7.5m (24.6ft) from the ground and 2.0m (6.6ft) from the top of the tree. The surrounding habitat was a disturbed stream cove (el. 646m, 2120ft). Adjacent to the nest tree was a 25m (84ft) wide transmission line corridor which was selectively cleared in 1975. Young were heard and seen being fed on June 5.

Although no other nests were found, I believe the Red-bellied Woodpecker is a fairly common resident of the mountain counties. I have also recorded this species in Blairsville (small woodlot), Friendship (residential), and Young Harris, Union and Towns Co. A total of 32 sight records was made during all seasons of the year from December 1975 - June 1977.

Research was supported by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Georgia Forest Research Council through the School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia. I would like to thank Ernest E. Provost and James H. Jenkins for their helpful suggestions.

Table 1. Red-bellied Woodpecker records during spring and summer, 1977, bird censuses on the Blairsville-Wood Grove transmission line.

Date	Study Area*	Habitat**	Elevation m (ft)
4-12	4	forest	762 (2500)
5-3	4	forest edge-stream	634 (2080)
5-10	4	forest edge-stream	646 (2120)
5-15	4	forest edge-stream	646 (2120)
5-27	4	forest edge-stream	646 (2120)
6-5(nest record)	4	forest edge-stream	646 (2120)
6-21	5	forest	854 (2800)
6-22	5	forest edge-stream	808 (2650)
5-16	6	forest edge-grassland	655 (2150)
5-31	6	forest edge-grassland	655 (2150)
5-31	6	forest	640 (2100)
6-9	6	forest edge-grassland	655 (2150)

* Study areas (territories) were separated by the following distances: 4&5 - 1.5km (1mi), 4&6 - 2.2km (1.5mi), 5&6 - 0.9km (0.6mi).

** Forest refers to forest interior, forest edge is adjacent to the transmission line corridor.

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WINTER OBSERVATION OF A RUFF IN LAURENS COUNTY, GEORGIA — On three successive days in mid-December, 1976, a Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) was observed feeding with Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) and Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*) in a large pasture in the northeastern section of Laurens County, Georgia.

The pasture, approximately seventeen kilometers northeast of the courthouse in Dublin, provides grazing for most of the year for a herd of approximately four hundred cattle in its nearly two hundred hectares. In the winter the northern-most corner of the pasture serves as a feedlot for many of the cattle and, with the usual winter rains, the corner becomes an unattractive area of trampled mud and fecal waste of the cattle. Small ponds of water in the corner are always present under such conditions.

Saturday, 18 December was a clear, warm winter day with temperatures reaching 20 degrees centigrade by mid-afternoon. My father, T. K. Patterson, Sr., and I were checking areas in advance of the first Dublin Audubon Christmas Count, which was scheduled for the following day. At 4:00 P.M. we arrived at the corner and promptly observed Killdeer and Snipe feeding in a rain pond at the edge of the feedlot. A single, stocky, short-legged Sandpiper, approximately the same size as the Killdeer, was feeding with other birds. Since any winter sighting of a shorebird in the upper Coastal Plain of central Georgia is unusual, our attention focused on this bird. Deliberate in its movements, the bird was erect, but not upright, in its posture. There was no "bobbing" action.

Observations continued for approximately twenty minutes. My father observed through a 20X-45X power zoom scope from a distance of about sixty meters, while I, with binoculars, approached the bird with the sun behind me to within a distance of twenty meters. During the observation, the bird flushed on two occasions, providing us the opportunity to observe the wing and tail markings and to hear its call. We noted all field marks and other characteristics, and tentatively identified the sandpiper as the Ruff. However, because of our own lack of knowledge of the species, and because we were generally aware of the rare status of this European sandpiper in Georgia, we desired further confirmation and hoped that the bird would be present again on the following day.

That evening I consulted Hollom's *British Birds* (P.A.D. Hollom. 1968. *The Popular Handbook of British Birds*, H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London, E.C. 4, 232, 233pp) for field marks and further details. Our tentative identification appeared to be confirmed and was reinforced by Hollom's observation that

"In winter it [the Ruff] often moves on to meadows or plough, consorting with Lapwings."

The Lapwing (*Vanella vanella*), a European plover, is in many ways the equivalent of our Killdeer.

On the following day, 19 December, under similar weather conditions, morning searches for the bird were unsuccessful. However, at 3:30 P.M. the bird was found in the same wet area as on the previous day. Gerald Knighton, an experienced observer from Augusta, Allen Rhodes of Dublin, and I observed the bird under excellent conditions for almost one-half hour, much of the time from a distance of about thirty meters through the zoom scope. As Knighton viewed through the scope, I read to him from Hollom's and other field guides of the field marks, the feeding habits, and other significant characteristics of the bird. Again, on two occasions as the bird flushed, we observed the flight markings and the call.

The identification was confirmed. The bird, judging from its size—it was slightly smaller than the Killdeer with which it was feeding much of the time—was probably the Reeve, the female of the species.

On the following day an attempt was made to collect the bird. A light cold rain, preceding a cold wave which was scheduled for that night, was falling. My father and I, accompanied by my brother, Tom, Jr., found the bird at a pond some seven hundred meters distant from the place of the first two sightings. Its thick bill, which was slightly de-curved at the tip, was distinctive. It was not so attentive to its feeding, and it flushed before it could be approached. Once again, the oval tail patch was noted, and its call, "tu-whit," was heard.

Efforts to locate the Ruff on the following two days were unsuccessful. Apparently, it had left the area as sub-freezing temperatures had arrived.

This is apparently the fourth known occurrence of the Ruff in Georgia. Previous records are of single birds in Houston County 31 March 1960, at Atlanta 11 July - 3 August 1971, and near Omaha, Stewart County, 1 May 1976 (Denton, J. F., et al. 1977. Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, Georgia Ornithological Society, Occasional Paper #6).

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PRIVET AS A POTENTIAL WINTER FOOD SUPPLEMENT FOR SONGBIRDS — Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) hedges are extremely common throughout the southeast along stream and river bottoms. This plant is a very prolific fruit producer. Wildlife food habit investigations have generally given very little evidence that the fruits of this plant are of value to wildlife.

Privet makes up a large percentage of the winter diet of some fur-bearing animals. Johnson (1970. Agric. Exp. Sta. Bull. 402, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 148pp) reported that privet makes up as much as 60 percent of the total diet of racoon (*Procyon lotor*) in Alabama during November and December. Bird utilization of privet has not been reported in many studies. Martin et al (1951. *American Wildlife and Plants*. Dover Publications, Inc., New York, N.Y.) reported that privet comprised 1/2 to 2 percent of the diet in Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*); Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) in Maryland and Tree Sparrows (*Spizella arborea*) in Maryland; and 5 to 10 percent of the diet of Cedar Waxwings (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) in southeast and northeast. No other study could be found showing any appreciable utilization of privet by songbirds.

Two small hedges of privet (approximately 20 individual shrubs) were observed during late January and early February, 1977, for songbird utilization. One hedge was located on the Oconee River in Greene County, the other was located in Athens, Georgia. Temperatures during this period were averaging below freezing.

One hundred and twenty-four individuals of seven species were observed feeding on the fruit of privet on the two hedges during two hours of observation over a three-week period. The results are shown in Table 1. Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) were the largest consumers of the fruit. Large numbers of Robins could be heard feeding among other hedge rows on adjacent areas. Cedar Waxwings and White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) were also seen feeding on large quantities of fruit. Two Gray Catbirds (*Dumetella carolinensis*) seen feeding on the privet was an unusual record for this area during winter according to Burleigh (1958. *Georgia Birds*, U. of Okla. Press, Norman, Okla.).

A total of 131 bird fecal samples (two of Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), two of Robin, rest unknown) were collected from under one privet shrub and all were found to contain 100 percent privet seeds by volume. In addition to fecal analyses, eight road-killed Robins were collected from three counties and their digestive tracts examined. The

results are shown in Table 2; seven of the eight specimens contained between 85 and 100 percent privet by volume. One specimen was found to contain a total of 68 privet seeds in the digestive tract.

From these findings it appears that privet may play a more important role in songbird food habits than previously reported. Privet seems to have the potential to be an important supplemental food for some species during periods of severe cold when other foods are not available.

Table 1. Songbird utilization of privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*).

Species	Frequency	Total Min. Use	Percent of Total Min. Use
Robin (<i>Turdus migratorius</i>)	73	1631	69.1
Hermit Thrush (<i>Catharus guttatus</i>)	13	95	4.0
Cedar Waxwing (<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>)	20	200	8.4
Purple Finch (<i>Carpodacus purpureus</i>)	4	40	1.7
White-throated Sparrow (<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>)	11	385	16.2
Gray Catbird (<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>)	2	6	0.3
Mockingbird (<i>Mimus polyglottos</i>)	1	5	0.3
Total	124	2362	100.0

Table 2. Digestive tract analysis of 8 road killed robins for privet.

Specimen	No. Privet Seeds	Percent (Estimate) Volume
1a	31	99
2b	38	85
3c	17	100
4b	68	100
5a	31	100
6a	13	95
7a	18	100
8a	0	0

aOconee County, Georgia

bAthens, Clarke County, Georgia

cOconee National Forest, Green County, Georgia

Robert Lochmiller, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Va. 24061.

BARN SWALLOWS NESTING IN THOMAS COUNTY, GEORGIA

— Within recent years, the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) has extended its breeding range southward into the eastern United States and in Georgia this progression has been noted as far south as the Upper Coastal Plain in Laurens and Muscogee Counties (T. K. Patterson, *Oriole*, 41: 39-40, 1976), the Lower Coastal Plain in Decatur County (J. Kight, *Oriole*, 42: 32-34, 1977), and along the coast in Chatham County (P. R. Schreck, Jr., *Oriole*, 42: 14-15, 1977).

On 21 May 1977 Watt saw Barn Swallows flying about a culvert 4 km west of Thomasville near the junction of U.S. 84 and the Old Cassidy Road in Thomas County, Georgia. He looked into the 1.8 x 1.2 m concrete culvert and saw a cupped nest of mud and plant material adherent to the vertical side of the culvert, 1.0 m above the floor. There were four young Barn Swallows in the nest. On 22 May Richard Izzo of Thomasville took photographs of the adult birds on the nest. On 23 May Crawford photographed the nest and collected one of the young birds for a voucher specimen (Tall Timbers Research Station #3549). By that day the young birds were in advanced stages of prejuvenal molt and half-sheathed remiges and rectrices; the specimen weighed 21.2 g and was quite fat. On 25 May Crawford and W. Wilson Baker banded the remaining three young and by 30 May the birds had left the nest. We saw Barn Swallows in the vicinity of the culvert throughout the first part of June and on 20 June Crawford found that a new nest had been constructed on the original site (the weakened first nest fell and was taken by Watt). On 22 June, however, Crawford found the second nest destroyed, possibly by vandals. There was never any evidence of eggs in the second nesting attempt.

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PROBABLE NESTING OF CANADA WARBLERS NEAR RICH KNOB, GEORGIA — T. D. Burleigh (1958. *Georgia Birds*. Univ. of Oklahoma Press, Norman, pp. 568-569) listed only four known nesting localities in Georgia for the Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*) and J. Fred Denton informs me (*in litt.*) that no more have been found since that publication. On 13 May 1977 along a section of the Appalachian Trail just east of Rich Knob (and thus in northern Towns County), Georgia, M. B. Meschinelli and I saw what appeared to be a territorial pair of Canada Warblers at about 3700 feet (1130 m) altitude about ½ km south of the North Carolina line. The male and female birds called constantly as they foraged rather low (<7.0 m) in a limited area (<20 m

diameter) while we watched for five minutes. The male sang often and three times sallied forth after flying insects. The birds appeared excited. We walked along the same trail on 15 May and at the same site again heard the call notes of a Canada Warbler. Even though these birds may have been slightly lower in elevation than the minimum of 3800 feet (1158 m) for this species given by Denton and M. Hopkins (1969. *Pocket Checklist of Georgia Birds*. Ga. Ornith. Soc., Occ. Paper #6, p. 47), I think it likely that they were a breeding pair.

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WILSON'S PHALAROPE IN LAURENS COUNTY

— On 29, 30 August 1977 a Wilson's Phalarope (*Steganopus tricolor*) was observed feeding in a small hog wallow in the eastern section of Laurens County in the upper Coastal Plain of central Georgia. Feeding with the Phalarope were six Least Sandpipers (*Calidris minutilla*), a Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*), and a Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*). During the two days in which the birds were present they were observed by several of the area G.O.S. members. Identifiable photographs were taken from a distance of approximately eight meters using a 400 mm. lens.

The observations were made adjacent to an unpaved road 18 km. E.N.E. of the courthouse in Dublin, just 200 m. N.W. of U.S. 319. Weather conditions immediately preceding and following the sightings were stable, with warm temperatures and widely scattered afternoon showers prevailing.

The Phalarope and the Stilt Sandpiper were in their fall plumages; the Dowitcher was in breeding plumage.

T. K. Patterson, 1409 Edgewood Dr., Dublin, Georgia

FROM THE FIELD

The format of this informal column precludes presentation of detailed accounts of rare birds. Records listed here are largely unchecked and their appearance in this column should not be considered to constitute scientific publication. They are intended primarily to bring interesting sightings to the attention of the membership and to alert others to look for unusual species in the areas indicated.

NORTH GEORGIA

Anne and Vernon Waters recorded a male Cinnamon Teal at Merry Ponds near Augusta on 24 Dec 1977. It is also reported to have been there on 5 Feb 1978. (Ed. Note: This species is not recognized in the Official List of Georgia Birds. Publication of this note and a similar one in *The Oriole* for June, 1977 (42(2):37), do not lead to its recognition, the criteria for which were published in *The Oriole*, December, 1975, 40(4):41).

Jean Bevis and Joe Greenburg saw an adult Golden Eagle and an immature Bald Eagle at Freeman Lake on 29 Sept 1977. A Golden Eagle was seen by Terry Moore on 12 Feb 1978 at Lookout Mountain. On 4 Oct Harriett DiGioia saw an Osprey and a Peregrine Falcon from the Cohutta Overlook, Ga. Hwy. 76, Cohutta Ranger District, Chattahoochee National Forest. A Peregrine Falcon was also seen on 3 Jan just outside the Alpharetta city limits by Anne Bailey. Clarence Belger reports a Merlin at Clark Hill on 11 Feb.

Several sightings of Sandhill Cranes have been reported this past winter. In Atlanta Larry Thompson saw 40-50 on 1 Dec 1977 above Cross Creek Apartments. On the same day 175 were seen by Vince Jackson above Peachtree Battle Shopping Center. On 5 Mar 1978 Linda Coker watched 70 flying high over Grove Level Baptist Church in Whitfield County and on 11 March Harriett DiGioia saw 50 flying over Dalton. In Athens, Grady Horne saw 60 on 11 March and 40 on 12 March.

At Merry Ponds, Augusta, Clarence Belger observed a Sanderling on 9 Oct 1977, and Jeanine Angerman saw one at Swan Pond on 15 Oct.

Tom French reports seeing Cliff Swallows at Nickajack Reservoir on 11 Mar 1978.

At Piedmont Park in Atlanta Dick Parks found two Philadelphia Vireos in mid-September, 1977.

Doris Cohrs tells of seeing a House Finch at her East Point feeder on 6 September. Since then there have been five females and one male.

Vince and Trina Jackson found a Brewster's Warbler at Freeman Lake on 1 Oct 1977 and watched this rare hybrid at close range for 10 minutes.

(Compiled by Harriett G. DiGioia, U.S. Forest Service, 401 Old Ellijay Road, Chatsworth, Ga. 30705.)

SOUTH GEORGIA

In Laurens County T. K. Patterson noted early migrating Least Sandpipers on 21 July 1977, Spotted and Solitary sandpipers on 23 July, and a Lesser Yellowlegs on 6 August. An uncommon Stilt Sandpiper was there 5 September and a Dunlin there on 9 October was the second county record. Patterson also noted a Common Loon and a Horned Grebe 25-27 November, 3 Ruddy Ducks on 30 October, an Osprey 19 October - 7 November, and an early Pintail on 17 September.

Charles Erwin had 2 early Blue-winged Teal in Calhoun County on 19 August 1977, and in Dougherty County on 22 August a Whip-poor-will and 2 Cliff Swallows.

From Harris County Bill Matheny and Sam Pate reported a rare (and early) Philadelphia Vireo on 12 September 1977 and on 13 November they saw a Wilson's Phalarope at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge. Matheny also reported an "extremely rare" Yellow-bellied Flycatcher from Columbus on 17 September. In Harris County Florence Lynn had Purple Finches and Pine Siskins on 5 November and Evening Grosbeaks on 29 November. Siskins were very early (and in good numbers: 15) in Thomas County on 20 November (Robert Crawford and Beth Meschinelli). In Grady County Betty Komarek had a Red-breasted Nuthatch on her feeder 23 October and 6 November.

(Compiled by Robert L. Crawford, Tall Timbers Research Station, Rt. 1, Box 160, Tallahassee, Fla. 32303.)

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