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BIRD USAGE OF A HERON ROOST IN AUGUSTA FROM 1980-1987

Anne Waters

There has been a large pre- and post-breeding heron roost in the Merry Company Brickyard Ponds in Richmond County, Georgia, for as long as most Augusta birders can remember (over 25 years) but to my knowledge, no records of numbers were ever kept. Waders known to roost here before and after nesting elsewhere include the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*), White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*), Snowy Egret (*Egretta thula*), Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) and Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striatus*).

Prior to 1980 Clarence Belger, Vernon Waters and I observed the flights of waders into the area but due to the inaccessibility of the location, the birds could never be counted. In July 1980, Clarence Belger discovered a major roosting site in a newly created pond. Previously this area had been an active dig site where clay was mined but once mining was completed, the pond began to fill with water. Black Willows had colonized many of the clay ridges forming islands which the waders used for their roosting sites. This roost was especially easy to observe since the willows were in clear view from several vantage points allowing excellent observation of incoming and landing waders. There was also good visibility from most directions so that waders flying toward the roost could be followed with binoculars for several minutes before they landed. Clarence, Vernon and I observed this roost from August 1980 through April 1983, and I kept records on all birds that used the roost as well as those utilizing the pond around the actual roost.

Birds were counted as they came into the roost. In order to get a fairly accurate count of the waders, it was necessary to arrive at the roost site at least 1-1.5 hours before sunset and to stay at least 30-40 minutes after sunset. Once the birds landed in the willows, they settled down into the lower branches making it impossible to count them accurately. They had to be identified and counted as they flew into the roost. Early in the season, 2 counters were sufficient but later on, during peak counts, we used 3 and even 4 people, assigning particular species to each counter. Attempts were made to count individual birds although at times they streamed in so quickly, they had to be counted by 10's or even by 25's. One useful method was to have one person count all small "white waders" while another looked at bills and legs to get a number on Little Blue Heron immatures and Snowy Egrets. These numbers could then be subtracted

from the total to obtain the number of Cattle Egrets. Because of the several factors mentioned above, there was probably a 50-100 bird (plus or minus) variance in the Cattle Egret and Little Blue Heron counts during peak usage. As the roost wanes in September, the time required to count decreases to about an hour from 30 minutes before to 30 minutes after sunset.

When the waders returned from breeding in early July 1983, they found most of the willows in the roost dead from a combination of rising water and heavy bird usage from previous years. Due to these factors, the roost was moved into a thick area of willows in the middle of the next pond, in a much less accessible area of Merry Ponds. The birds could still be counted but not as easily nor as accurately since those entering from the west and north were obscured. Once they landed in the willows, they were totally out of view.

In 1984 and 1985 the waders became even more difficult to count as they moved to an area even deeper in the pond area. Also, my husband and I took extensive vacations these 2 years causing our absence during June, July and August. In 1985 Clarence reported approximately 1200 birds using the roost on 3 Aug. but due to location, they were very hard to identify. Most appeared to be Cattle Egrets and immature Little Blue Herons but he did separate out 40 Great Egrets, one White Ibis and two Tricolored Herons.

In 1986 there were no waders coming to the roost in Merry Ponds. We were again on vacation but on 20 Sept. Vernon and I finally located the roost in an extremely remote section of Beech Island swamp on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River, southeast of Augusta. There is little access to this swamp. Waders could be seen flying into the area but the actual roost could not be seen. We estimated between 1,000-1,500 birds at that time with the greatest number being Cattle Egrets.

1987 proved to be a much better year. On 17 April I found approximately 100 Cattle Egrets roosting in a new pond in Merry Ponds that was easy to observe. Although the willow island seemed too small to support a large roost, approximately 100 Cattle Egrets used this area until mid-May. In the summer a gravel operation adjacent to Merry Ponds moved their operation about .5 mile south, leaving a large pond with a sand ridge and shallow sandbar colonized by Black Willow. We discovered the roost at this pond on 6 July 1987, and observed it through 19 Oct. 1987 (results shown in Table 1). Conditions for observing waders coming into the roost were excellent. The pond was surrounded by high cliffs from which you could observe the birds coming into the roost from all directions, with the sun setting behind your back. This made it much easier to separate out the "white waders" and to distinguish immatures from matures. On 6 July there were 444 waders using the roost but only 5 Great Egrets. Since more had been observed feeding in the area, I felt there might be a second roost nearby. On 9 July, 30 Great Egrets were discovered roosting in the remnant of dead willows in the 1980 roost and 26 Great Egrets were also seen flying into the Beech Island swamp that was used as a roost in 1986. Although the egrets did appear to roost in these locations on 9 July, subsequent visits revealed that late in the season they were merely used as staging areas before flying to the main roost.

Waders using the roost do not use Merry Ponds to breed so usage is restricted to pre- and post-breeding. Typically, pre-breeding usage of the roost begins in

Table 1. 1987 Post-breeding roost usage. The main roost was used from July through October but on 13 Nov. It was deserted and the Great Egrets were found to be using the old 1980 roost.

Date	Cattle Egret	Little Blue Heron		White Ibis		Great Egret	Snowy Egret	Tri-colored Heron	Glossy Ibis	Green-backed Heron	Total
		Ad.	Imm.	Ad.	Imm.						
6 July	61	11	226	-	-	5	-	1	-	140	444
10 July	74	20	404	-	3	11	-	4	-	173	689
18 July	210	27	552	-	30	24	7	1	-	187	1038
31 July	2035	31	421	1	100	62	2	-	-	177	2829
3 Aug.	2238	37	398	-	86	101	5	6	-	84	2955
8 Aug.	2789	36	400	1	103	65	2	5	-	116	3780
17 Aug.	3246	27	320	2	76	64	1	8	1	35	3780
5 Sept.	2541	16	297	-	76	81	2	13	2	23	3051
11 Sept.	1803	9	290	-	77	65	2	3	-	16	2265
18 Sept.	1385	1	138	-	42	74	11	11	-	5	1667
30 Sept.	812	1	104	-	11	74	15	3	-	-	1020
9 Oct.	163	-	29	-	8	59	8	-	-	-	267
19 Oct.	2	-	9	-	9	39	5	-	-	-	64
13 Nov.	-	-	-	-	-	36	-	-	-	-	36
18 Nov.	-	-	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	-	35
12 Dec.	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	20
26 Dec.	-	-	-	-	-	47	-	-	-	-	47

March or early April but declines in late May as they leave to nest. 1985 represented a typical pre-breeding sample. On 7 April there were 93 Cattle Egrets and 4 adult Little Blue Herons. By 4 May there were 85 Cattle Egrets, 13 Little Blue Herons and 19 adult White Ibis. By mid-May they were gone. There is then a post-breeding influx of birds in July which includes many immatures. The numbers build up throughout July and peak sometime in August. (Table 2 shows the peak usage for the various roosts from 1980 through 1987 with exceptions already noted.) Typically the roost then diminishes throughout September and October. It is during this post-breeding dispersal that we usually see rarities which are attracted to the roost.

The predominant wader using the roost is the Cattle Egret with the second most common species being the Little Blue Heron followed by the White Ibis. Although not as numerous, the Great Egret utilizes the post-breeding roost for the longest period of time, usually well into December. On 5 Dec. 1981 there were 35 Great Egrets using the roost. More recently, 47 Great Egrets were counted 26 Dec. 1987 in the 1980 roost for the Augusta Christmas Bird Count, although it is not known why they moved from the newer roost site. On one occasion, 5 Dec. 1981, White Ibis stayed into December. On that date 2 adults and 20 immatures were seen coming into the roost, but we haven't recorded roosting ibis in Dec. since 1981. Snowy Egret and Tricolored Heron usage of the roost is small but has increased somewhat over the years. The greatest numbers seen were in 1987 with a high count of 15 Snowy Egrets on 30 Sept. and 13 Tricolored Herons on 5 Sept.

Although not common, one or two Glossy Ibis have been seen in the roost almost every year since 1981. According to data obtained from *Heron and their*

Table 2. Peak usage of Merry Ponds roost. The table shows the peak number of total birds using the roost for that year. It does not show the peak numbers for each species as some species peak earlier than others. There were no counts taken in 1984. In 1986 the roost moved to an inaccessible swamp in South Carolina and the count was taken after the peak time (20 Sept.).

Date	Cattle Egret	Great Egret	Little Blue Heron	White Ibis	Snowy Egret	Green-backed Heron	Glossy Ibis	Tri-colored Heron	Total
14 Aug. 1980	1000?	100?	25	700?	-	3	1	3	1832?
22 Aug. 1981	1286	38	173	143	-	4	-	-	1644
24 Aug. 1882	1004	22	160	4	8	8	-	2	1208
19 Aug. 1983	1894	56	289	39	-	10	2	6	2296
3 Aug. 1985	*	40	*	1	-	-	-	2	1200?
1986	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1000-1500?
17 Aug. 1987	3246	64	347	78	1	35	1	8	3780

? - Count was approximated (Clarence Belger).

* - Location of the roost made separation of these two species difficult this year.

allies: Atlas of Atlantic coast colonies 1975-1976, by R. Osborn and T. Custer (Biological Services Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, FWS/OBS-77/08), Glossy Ibis nest commonly along the coast in North Carolina and at 5 sites along the South Carolina coast, especially Drum Island near Charleston where they nest by the hundreds. They are also listed as nesting sparingly in south Georgia on the Satilla River.

A real change in 1987 was the Green-backed Heron usage of the roost. In previous years, there were only a few which flew into the willows around the roost to settle down for the night. The 10 recorded 19 August 1983, was the largest number previously recorded. Yet on 6 July 1987, we counted 140 coming into the roost plus 5 which flew over it headed elsewhere. While many of them flew in typically low over the water, almost half of them came in quite high and spiraled down into the roost in a manner more typical of Little Blue Herons.

Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*), although seen in the area, do not use the roost. They prefer to roost by themselves in other areas, but are seen flying over the roost.

By far the most unusual visitors to the roost pond were the two white morphs of the Great Blue Heron (*A. h. occidentalis*). Like the Great Blue Herons, they never roosted with the other birds but were seen nearby on six occasions between 5 June and 10 August 1982. One heron bore an orange wing tag with the number 149 on it. Information was later reported to Augusta Audubon that this was one of 200 fledglings tagged in the northern part of Florida Bay during Feb. 1982 and that number 149 came from Buchanan Key (*Oriole* 47:14-15).

On 8 Sept. 1981 an immature Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*) was spotted by Clarence Belger coming into the roost. According to the Atlas (mentioned earlier) Roseate Spoonbills are only listed in the Florida rookeries with a few nesting as far north as Volusia county. I do not know if their breeding range expanded further north between 1976 and 1981 as no more recent data could

be found. If not, this would represent a post-breeding dispersal of well over 250 miles.

Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*) also use the area of the heron roost as a place to roost. After the sun has set, they descend into the pond in large flocks and swim amid the willows of the roost out of sight. They, too, must be counted as they come in. Forty-two came in on 30 Sept. 1987 and 141 on 19 Oct. 1987. This represents a substantial increase in numbers from 1981 when only 29 were observed on 22 Aug. and only 14 on 14 Sept.

Yellow-crowned (*Nycticorax violaceus*) and Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) are also seen around the pond. Occasionally one will fly into the roost with the other waders, only to fly back out later. This is especially true of immatures.

Throughout the years that this roost has been in existence, other unusual birds have been sighted in the pond near the roost. Some of these can probably be regarded as mere chance happenings since they are not seen here with any regularity, but I also feel that the presence of such a large number of birds using one area attracts other birds to that area. The following sightings represent only a few of the birds attracted. An American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) came in with the waders on 8 Sept. 1981 and three Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) joined the pre-breeding roost on 17 April 1982. Two Forster's Terns (*Sterna forsteri*) flew in with the Cattle Egrets on 11 Sept. 1987 to feed in the pond. A Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*) which came in with the waders on 17 Aug. 1987, circled the pond with them and landed on a sandbar. This is quite early for this species in our area.

I also suspect that 2 species which are much more common in Augusta now than they were in the early 1980's were attracted to our area by the roost. One Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) was observed coming in with the waders on 16 April, 1 June and 22 August 1981. This trend continued throughout 1982 and in 1987 there were between 10 and 15 using the dead willows in the 1980 roost. An Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) roosted with the waders on 22 August 1981, and 19 Oct. 1981, with three roosting on 9 Sept. 1981. Several were observed coming to the roost in other years but never regularly. In 1986 when the roost was in South Carolina, we observed 6 Anhingas perched up in trees near the roost in the Beech Island swamp. They too are much more common in our area now than in the early 1980's.

Changes in roost sites and inconsistency of observations make evaluation of the data and comparison with past years difficult but it is hoped that this information can be added to in future years to better understand bird usage of pre- and post-breeding roosts. Possibly, future study will also determine whether out of range birds are attracted to the area by the presence of such a roost.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their help in counting the roost: my husband Vernon, my son Dan, Clarence Belger, Mike and Kathy Wright, Mike Rhoden and Dick Lux. Without their help, the collection of data would have been impossible. I would also like to thank Clarence Belger for supplying data for the peak counts in 1980 and 1985 in Table 2 when I was not in Augusta during that time.

CHANGE IN STATUS OF SOME BIRDS IN SOUTHWEST GEORGIA

Robert L. Crawford

Crawford and Dozier (1973) and Crawford and Neel (1976) presented existing knowledge of the birds of Thomas County, Georgia. Inevitably, as observations are made over time, more complete knowledge of some species will cause past evaluations to be obsolete. Also, new species for the area will be detected. This paper does not deal with new species for the Thomas County list, nor with species about which much more information is available because their habits are better known (e.g., migrating shorebirds, previously thought to be rare, are often easy to find in open grassy areas with water, particularly after storms [Hopkins 1958]). It does deal with species that have, apparently, undergone a genuine change in status in Thomas County during the last 15-20 years, a change seemingly attributable to the behavior of the birds and not to the behavior of the observers. Two recent publications, Robbins *et al.* (1986) and Cox (1987) have documented changes in breeding bird populations in Georgia and Florida and, although I make reference to those publications, they did not suggest the changes reported here: local field observers have been discussing these for several years.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

Only four records were reported by Crawford and Dozier (1973); Crawford and Neel (1976) upgraded the species' status to "uncommon winter visitant" to be expected from August-April. The species is now fairly common in winter and there has been one summer record (24 June 1986, an immature).

Green-backed Heron (*Butorides striatus*)

Previously considered a summer resident, two recent winter records of this species, one on 27 December 1981 and two on 21 December 1982, probably indicate the additional status of an occasional or rare winter visitant.

White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*)

Previously considered a common, but non-breeding, summer resident, the species has now been recorded 7 times in winter since 1977. A total of 41 ibis has been counted between 17 December (1980) and 22 January (1984); virtually all were immatures.

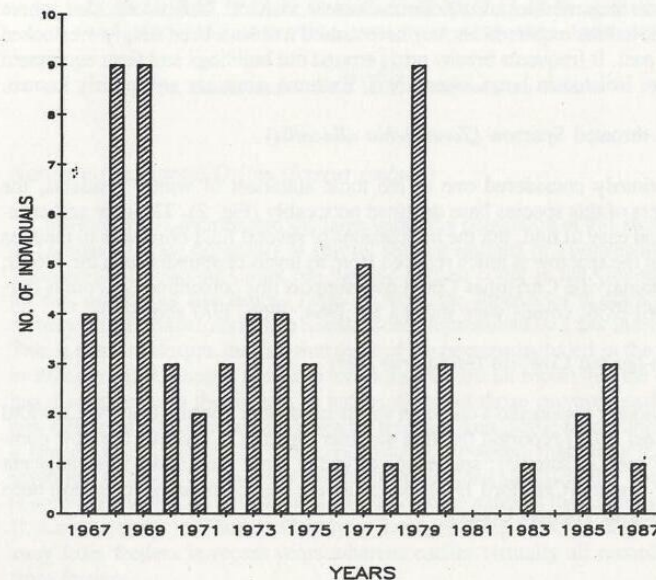
Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Previously known from three records in autumn. We have accumulated additional migration records and, since 1982, four January records, some of which were of individuals seen repeatedly for weeks at a time. Thus, the species may be considered a rare (but increasing) winter resident.

Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*)

Previously considered a common summer resident, the species has become quite scarce during the breeding season, although it is still a common migrant. During the summers of 1984-1987, I saw no more than 2 individuals in each year outside of migration. I have no counts from Thomas County for the breeding season, but W. Wilson Baker has generously allowed me to present his nighthawk data from the Fowlstown, Georgia, Breeding Bird Survey (BBS, Robbins *et al.* 1986) route. Baker has been the observer each year during 1967-1987. The route runs west to east in Decatur and Grady counties, the immediate two counties to the west of Thomas County. Baker's nighthawk data (Fig. 1) show a significant change in frequency after the late 1970's; in the first ten years, 42 were recorded; 24 were noted in the next ten years ($P < 0.05$ by Chi-squared test). Robbins *et al.* (1986) reported significant widespread declines for this species in Georgia and Florida.

Figure 1. Common Nighthawk: Breeding Bird Survey data from Decatur and Grady Counties, 1961 - 1987.



Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*)

Previously noted as a common winter resident, Crawford and Neel (1976) reported the first known nesting and updated the species' status to that of a rare breeder. Catbirds are now fairly common breeders in Thomasville, and they have colonized natural habitats outside of town as well: I have seen obvious breeding pairs along a titi (*Cyrilla*) strand in a pristine longleaf pine-wiregrass community (area described in Engstrom [1980]).

Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*)

Previously considered a common summer resident, even though individuals had been noted on 1 March (1959) and 12 February (1960). Individuals seen on 27 February 1972, 19 December 1978, 5-17 December 1980, 14 February-7 March 1982, and 5 January 1986, indicate the species is now also an uncommon or rare winter visitant. All but one of the recent winter records were associated with feeders.

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)

Previously unknown from the county, the species was first recorded on 19 December 1976. Since then it has been easily recorded most years on the Thomasville Christmas Bird Counts from at least three sites in the county, and it is now regarded as an uncommon winter visitant. This is one case where specific habitat requirements may have caused it to have been simply overlooked in the past. It frequents brushy areas around old buildings and farm equipment that are isolated in large, open areas. Extreme dates are still poorly known.

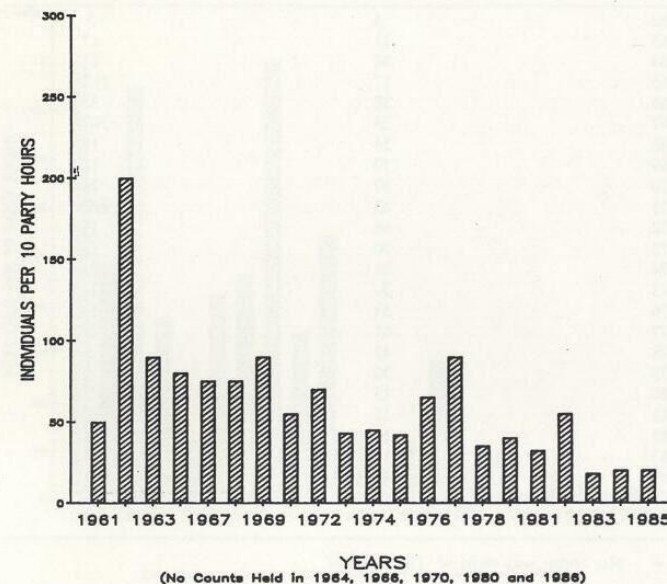
White-throated Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)

Previously considered one of the most abundant of winter residents, the numbers of this species have declined noticeably (Fig. 2). They are still common and easy to find, but the impressions of several field observers in the area are that the sparrow is much reduced from its levels of abundance in the 1960's; the Thomasville Christmas Count data support this contention (21 counts during 1961-1986; counts were missed for 1964, 1966, 1970 and 1980).

Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*)

Previously considered a common winter resident in Thomas County, Crawford and Neel (1976) reported the first summer sighting. Cowbirds are now commonly seen in summer; specimens of young birds are known from adjacent Grady County (Crawford 1974), but no actual host nests or feedings have been observed in Thomas County.

Figure 2. White-throated Sparrow: Thomasville Christmas Count data, 1961 - 1986.

Northern (Baltimore) Oriole (*Icterus galbula*)

Crawford (1973) documented the large wintering population of this subspecies in Thomas County, especially at several feeding stations in Thomasville. The Thomasville Christmas Count has had the highest count in the United States for this subspecies five times (Table 1). Now, the subspecies is often missed entirely on the counts, and when noted, is only represented by a few individuals. This is the case despite the fact that most of the persons included in the survey in 1972 are still feeding at the same locations. Almost all report that the orioles just do not come to the feeders as before. Some of those surveyed earlier are now deceased, and others have given up feeding. And, some new feeders have a few orioles occasionally. The consensus is, however, that since the mid-seventies, numbers of orioles at feeders have declined significantly. This trend is correlated with a decline in the magnitude of the national high counts (Table 1). Concurrently, in Thomas County, a few have been detected in the woods away from feeders in recent years whereas earlier virtually all records were from feeders.

Table 1. Northern (Baltimore) Oriole Christmas Count Data comparing national high counts against Thomasville, GA counts.

Count Year	U.S. High Count	Thomasville
61-62	5	5
62-63	17	17
63-64	34	18
64-65	17	NC*
65-66	38	38
66-67	28	NC*
67-68	24	12
68-69	70	18
69-70	37	26
70-71	43	NC*
71-72	46	19
72-73	70	13
73-74	31	31
74-75	39	25
75-76	33	13
76-77	41	8
77-78	42	5
78-79	26	6
79-80	13	0
80-81	15	NC*
81-82	16	0
82-83	17	0
83-84	10	0
84-85	8	8
85-86	8	1

* - No count was held at Thomasville.

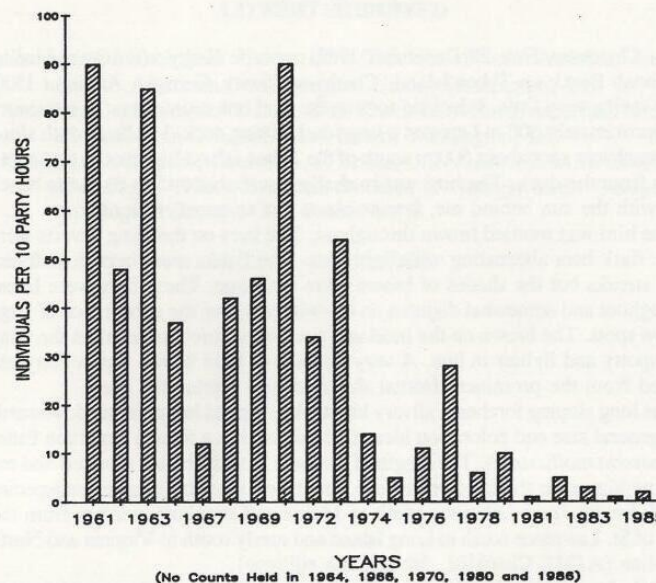
House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Formerly considered an abundant resident, House Sparrows have declined in numbers on the Christmas Counts since the early 1970s (Fig. 3), and they seem as reduced in other seasons. Also, the species does not seem to be such a pest on feeders as it was in the past. Cox (1987) reported that BBS data showed significant population declines for this species in Florida, as did Robbins *et al.* (1986) for Georgia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons have contributed to the records reported herein, especially W. Wilson Baker, James Cox, Beth Crawford, Steve Jones, Leon Neel, Katie NeSmith, and Noel O. Wamer.

Figure 3. House Sparrow: Thomasville Christmas Count data, 1961 - 1986.



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COMMON EIDER ON TYBEE ISLAND

Johnny T. Parks

On Christmas Eve, 24 December 1987, my wife Kathy and I were birding Savannah Beach on Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia. At about 1500, after seeing very little, I decided to scan the surf one more time. At a distance of approximately 600 m I spotted a large dark diving duck. I walked south along the beach to a spot about 500 m south of the Tybee Island Lighthouse and about 75 m from the duck. The bird was in shallow surf about 45 m from the beach and with the sun behind me, I was able to get an excellent look.

The bird was mottled brown throughout. The bars on the wing coverts were bold, dark bars alternating with light bars. The flanks were barred with less bold streaks but the shades of brown were the same. These bars were linear throughout and somewhat disjunct on the wings to give the appearance of large brown spots. The brown on the head and neck was more mottled than the wing and spotty and lighter in hue. A very distinctive light brown superciliary extended from the prominent frontal shield to well behind the eye.

The long sloping forehead, silvery blunt white-tipped bill pointing downward, and general size and coloration identified this bird as a female Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*). The length of the bare frontal shield, rounded and extending almost to the bold brown eye, identified it as the *dresseri* subspecies which breeds from Labrador south to Maine and regularly winters from the Gulf of St. Lawrence south to Long Island and rarely south to Virginia and North Carolina (A.O.U. Checklist, 5th and 6th editions).

While I was observing this bird, she fed often, diving at 20 second intervals and remaining underwater for 30 to 35 seconds. When she dove, she slightly separated her wings from her body so that the light undersides of the primaries could be seen. I watched her for 30 minutes and there was no vocalization. I used 7-15X35 binoculars and a 15-60X60 spotting scope. With the good lighting conditions and the closeness of the bird, I was able to fill my scope with the image. The sky cover was broken with considerable sunlight and the temperature was in the mid to upper 70's, which makes it even more outstanding that an eider would be at Savannah Beach at this time.

According to Haney *et al.* (1986), the Common Eider is not a documented member of the Georgia avifauna. However, according to duck hunters and fishermen aboard shrimp boats, Common Eiders may not be as rare as our records indicate. One hunter reports having a mounted specimen taken in the Wilmington River (pers. comm. Patricia Young).

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THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT IN GEORGIA - A COMMENT

Robert W. Loftin

Oberle's article on the greenhouse effect in Georgia and possible effects on avian distribution was fascinating (*Oriole* 52:1-10). It is worth remembering that we know from fossil evidence the climate was once somewhat warmer than it is today in what we now call Georgia. It was also formerly somewhat cooler.

The Pleistocene fossil deposits at Ladds, Bartow County, Georgia, are poor in birds but relatively rich in mammals, herps, and molluscs. It may come as a surprise to some that there is a record of a Spruce Grouse (*Dendragapus canadensis*) from Georgia, but there is! Fossil, of course. The other 3 species of birds recovered from Ladds were American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*), Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), and Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*).

Turning to mammals, we have a somewhat clearer picture of two groups of animals, some of which clearly northern, others of which are southern. Among the northern group are: Masked Shrew (*Sorex cinerius*), Smoky Shrew (*Sorex fumens*), New England Cottontail (*Sylvilagus transitionalis*), Southern Bog Lemming (*Synaptomys cooperi*), and Fisher (*Martes pennanti*). This is a pretty clear indication that the Spruce Grouse had other northern animals as company. The same picture emerges from looking at the fossil frogs and clams.

We all know about the Ice Age, so perhaps we aren't surprised at northern animals in Georgia, so it comes as perhaps a shock to look at the southern animals which once roamed here.

No southern fossil birds were recovered at Ladds, but among the other animals were: Beautiful Armadillo (*Dasypus bellus*), Round-tailed Muskrat (*Neofiber alleni*), North American Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos floridanus*), Eastern Hognosed Skunk (*Conepatus leuconotus*), Jaguar (*Panthera onca*), probably Jaguarundi (*Felis* sp.) and Vero Tapir (*Tapirus veroensis*). This is strong evidence that the climate was once somewhat more tropical in northern Georgia than it is today. Oberle has done a valuable service in his timely warning that, unless we curb our appetites, it could happen again!

To find out more about the fascinating fossils of Georgia, read Vol. XXV of the *Bulletin of the Georgia Academy of Science* (June, 1967). The whole issue is devoted to the finds at Ladds.

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CORRECTIONS

In the note "Barn Swallows nesting in Wilcox County" by W. Brian Brown which appeared in *The Oriole* (51:70) the last sentence of the first paragraph should read "This is apparently the first nesting record of the Barn Swallow in Wilcox County".

Also, Table 1 in Ruckdeschel and Shoop's "Aspects of Wood Stork nesting ecology on Cumberland Island, Georgia" (*Oriole* 52:23) had some information inadvertently appear under incorrect column headings. A correct copy of Table 1 appears below.

Table 1. Summary of Wood Stork nesting, depredations, and relative water level at heronries on Cumberland Island, Georgia, 1985 through 1987. NA = Not applicable.

Time period	Heronry location	Nesting activity	Initial no. nests	Signs of predation	Relative water level
1985					
June	Heron Pond	yes	4	no	high
August	Heron Pond	yes		no	high
Spring-Summer	Sweetwater	no		NA	high
1986					
May	Heron Pond	yes	13	no	moderate
June	Heron Pond	yes		yes	low
Spring-Summer	Sweetwater	no		NA	dry
1987					
May	Heron Pond	yes	8	no	low
June	Heron Pond	abandoned		no	dry
Early					
June	Sweetwater	yes	18	no	moderate
Late					
June	Sweetwater	yes		yes	low
July	Sweetwater	abandoned		NA	dry

GENERAL NOTES

A LAWRENCE'S WARBLER IN ATLANTA - On 28 August 1987 at 1800 I was sitting on the deck of my house which is located approximately one mile west of downtown Decatur, GA. I glanced up into a mulberry tree about 15 m in front of me to see a yellowish warbler "insecting" under the leaves and up and down limbs. I walked quietly inside to retrieve my binoculars and returned to my seat.

For about 5 minutes I watched this warbler which had yellow wingbars, a yellow crown, and a yellow breast. The only white on the bird was at the vent. There were no white outer tail feathers but the underside of the tail was light. A gray area made a teardrop shape beginning at the bill, extending through the top of the eye and making an oval on the cheek before returning to the bill. The gray cheek patch was very distinctive because the area above and below this patch was light yellow. The chin was gray also but the area was not as dark, nor as carefully delineated as the cheek patch. After consulting the *Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (National Geographic Society, Washington, DC, 1987) and *A field guide to the birds* (Roger Tory Peterson, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1980), I was convinced the bird was indeed a Lawrence's Warbler, the rare hybrid of the Blue-winged (*Vermivora pinus*) and Golden-winged (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) Warblers.

Trina Jackson, 1990 Palifox Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30307.

SECOND LINCOLN'S SPARROW SEEN IN AUGUSTA - On 26 Dec. 1987, while participating in the Augusta, GA Christmas Bird Count, my husband, Vernon, and I spotted a Lincoln's Sparrow (*Melospiza lincolni*) in a brush pile along an abandoned bridge in Phinzy Swamp. The dirt road to the bridge is flanked by dried grasses which extend outward into the shallow cypress-tupelo swamp for several hundred feet. The bird was moving around in a pile of brush just off the end of the bridge. From approximately 10 feet away we could see his grayish median crown stripe with brown stripes on either side. As we watched, we both commented on the bird's slim silhouette. The bird then moved into an opening and we could see the upper breast which was washed with a tan coloration, overlaid with fine vertical streaks of dark brown that ended on the upperbreast. The belly was white. It seemed curious about our "pishing" but never did come out of the brush pile and never made a sound. Finally, he flew across the road and disappeared into the thick grasses of the swamp.

We saw our first Lincoln's Sparrow in Augusta on 21 Dec. 1984 (*Oriole* 49:78) in a swamp near Federal Paperboard's settling ponds. These are, to my knowledge, the only two sightings of this wintering sparrow in Augusta in recent years.

Anne R. Waters, 1621 Apple Valley Drive, Augusta, Georgia 30906.

SAY'S PHOEBE WINTERING IN LAURENS COUNTY - The Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*) was first reported in Georgia in April, 1984, in a field between Cordele and Americus (Haney, et al. 1986, *Annotated checklist of Georgia birds*, GOS Occ. Publ. No. 10). In October 1985, a specimen was taken in Irwin County by Milton Hopkins (*Oriole* 51:47). At the Dublin GA Audubon Christmas Bird Count on 27 December 1986, the species was noted for the third Georgia record.

Our party of five, including Rose and Jerry Payne, William and Rebecca Dopson, and I, was driving through a farm area at noon. Near the road were rural homes and farm buildings. Open pastures, plowed fields and farm ponds completed the habitat of the observation, which was 18.4 km N 5°E of the courthouse in Dublin.

The bird was perched on the top strand of barbed wire which separated a field from the lawn of one of the homes. We parked in the driveway a distance of only 15 m from the bird and observed for several minutes.

The Say's Phoebe was "pumping" its black tail. We noted its solid gray back and wings, its lighter gray throat and its rusty, almost cinnamon colored, underparts. The eyes and legs were black, as was its rather heavy bill, "barbed" at the tip. Satisfied with our identification, we departed.

Early the following morning, Hunter Patterson and I returned to the area. We observed the bird perching on a child's swing set and on the flatroof, making feeding forays, with a "stuttered" flight, underneath the eaves of the house. After about 10 minutes, Hunter being satisfied with the identification, we departed.

In the subsequent days and weeks, the Say's Phoebe was seen by several persons who came from the Macon and Atlanta areas. On most of the occasions, the bird was located and observed.

I last saw the bird, at the same house of the first observation, on 8 February 1987.

Thomas K. Patterson, 1409 Edgewood Drive, Dublin, Georgia 31021.

FROM THE FIELD

June - July 1987

It was admittedly a rather dull summer as no real rarities were reported. Maybe that was because few birders ventured out into the dry summer heat. Of some interest were the early sightings of a Whimbrel and Marbled Godwits along the coast in July and the continued documentation of warblers moving throughout the state during the month of July.

Readers are reminded that these reports are mostly undocumented and do not imply an automatic acceptance by the Georgia Checklist Committee. For a record to be accepted by the committee it must be documented completely and then submitted to the Checklist Committee.

Abbreviations used include: CCWTP - Clayton County Water Treatment Plant about 20 miles S of Atlanta, MBBT - Merry Brothers Brick and Tile Company ponds at Augusta, MIA - Macon Industrial Area, NWR - National Wildlife Refuge, PCL - Peachtree City Lake about 20 miles SW of Atlanta, and RCWMA - Rum Creek Wildlife Management Area near Forsyth.

COMMON LOON - The species was more common than usual this summer as four reports were received. A winter plumaged bird was at Lake Lanier on 16 June (John Paget), and two more individuals were found there on 1 July (Trina Jackson). A lone bird appeared for only a day on a small pond in Dublin on 27 June (Tom Patterson) and the last one was at the RCWMA on 9 July (Terry Johnson).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT - This species is rare in the summer in the north Piedmont area. One was at Commerce Lake, Jackson County, on 2 June according to John Paget.

GREAT BLUE HERON - Of note was the nesting of this species in Murray County (*vide* Harriett DiGioia).

HERONS AND EGRETS - The only data on postbreeding roosts came from Augusta. The following high counts were found by Anne Waters on 31 July: 62 Great Egrets along with 2 Snowy Egrets, 452 Little Blue Herons, 9 Tricolored Herons, 2035 Cattle Egrets, 177 Green-backed Herons and 101 White Ibis.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - A very good coastal count was the 200+ found at Youman's Pond near Midway on 18 July by Patrick Brisse and Terry Miller.

WHITE IBIS - For the first time in a few years, two were found in the Atlanta area near Lithonia on 9 July by Paul Raney. An immature was at the MIA on 11 July as mentioned by Ty Ivey and Arlene Clark.

RING-NECKED DUCK - Anne and Vernon Waters reported a female with 2 half-grown young on a pond off the Augusta levee on 31 July. The male was never observed. This is the same pond where a female and one young were seen in Aug. 1984.

LESSER SCAUP - A male and female were unusual on 11 June at the RCWMA as noted by Terry Johnson. The species is accidental in the summer in Georgia. A single adult in north Laurens County on 19 July could only be identified as scaup sp. by Tom Patterson.

RUDDY DUCK - Also accidental in the summer was the individual found at the MIA on 21 June by Ty Ivey, Jerry and Marie Amerson.

OSPREY - Rare inland in the summer, one was at MBBT on 18 July (Anne Waters). Of interest was the nesting of the species again at Lake Juliette near Forsyth; two chicks were fledged on 7 and 10 July (Terry Johnson).

AMERICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE - One bird was seen by Paul Raney near Bainbridge in SW Georgia on 12 July.

BALD EAGLE - The pair nesting in Georgia near the Eufaula NWR, was successful this year in fledging two young (*vide* Sam Pate). This is one of the few inland nests in the state.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK - This species is very rare in the summer in Atlanta. A single bird was seen by Peggy Moore near Woodstock on 7 July.

PLAIN CHACHALACA - Although the species is a permanent resident of Sapelo Island it is rarely reported so an observation of the species during the 13-15 June Ocmulgee AS fieldtrip is worth noting.

AMERICAN COOT - Tom Patterson reported that a single bird spent the season in East Dublin. In Atlanta, the species was noted for its absence from PCL for the second consecutive year (Patrick Brisse and others).

LESSER YELLOWLEGS - Early migrants were sighted at MBBT by Anne Waters on 4 July and at CCWTP on 5 July by Patrick Brisse. It would be difficult to say if the four breeding plumaged birds found at CCWTP on 14 June by Patrick Brisse were going north or south.

WHIMBREL - A single bird on the Jekyll Island causeway on 18 July was early (Patrick Brisse and Terry Miller).

MARBLED GODWIT - Terry Miller and Patrick Brisse sighted three early individuals on East Beach (St. Simon's Island) on 18 July.

LAUGHING GULL - Always of note north of the fall line, Laughing Gulls were seen at the RCWMA on 1 July by Kon Grahl, Adam Brooks and Terry Johnson.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL - Two adults and one immature were seen on 18 July at St. Simon's Island's East Beach (Patrick Brisse and Terry Miller). The species is becoming more regular in the summertime along the Georgia coast.



Immature Great Black-backed Gull. Photo by Russ Wigh.

FORSTER'S TERN - John Paget mentioned a single bird at Commerce Lake on 10 June and Jim Shirah saw two more at Eufaula NWR on 14 July.

LEAST TERN - Anne Waters saw an adult at MBBT on 5 June and again nearby over the Interstate on 10 June. The species is still a rare spring transient inland, even in the Augusta area.

COMMON BARN-OWL - Encouraging were the three nests reported to John Paget in the Gainesville area. In Augusta, Clarence Belger reported a nestbox with 3 young on 4th street near the jail. Owl reports are rarely received from Georgia birders anymore so almost any report is of interest.

TREE SWALLOW - Summer records were received from the RCWMA on 11 June (Terry Johnson), and Commerce Lake on 19, 21 and 29 June (John Paget). The pair nesting at CCWTP in May successfully raised two young in June (m.ob.). This represents only the third nesting record of the species in Georgia.

FISH CROW - Birds were recorded during the period in downtown Gainesville (John Paget) and at the Morgan Falls Landfill in Atlanta (Terry Moore).

TUFTED TITMOUSE - Ruth and Jack Cooper had a titmouse coming to a hummingbird feeder at their house in Augusta. Has anyone else seen any other species drinking from a hummingbird feeder?

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER - A bird noted by Peggy and Terry Moore in north Fulton County on 19 July was about 3 weeks early for the area.

NORTHERN PARULA - In Atlanta, a few birds were moving earlier than usual as they were noted in areas where they do not nest. Patrick Brisse had one in Stone Mountain on 2 July and Hugh Garrett saw a couple more in Lawrenceville on 4-5 July.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER - Anne and Vernon Waters sighted an early immature male off the Augusta Levee on 31 July.

CERULEAN WARBLER - Three reports were received from the Atlanta area. Terry and Peggy Moore saw the first one in north Fulton County on 19 July. The high count was 6 as noted by Patrick Brisse and Hugh Garrett on 26 July.

AMERICAN REDSTART - Three birds were already migrating along the Georgia coast on St. Simon's Island on 19 July (Patrick Brisse and Terry Miller).

SWAINSON'S WARBLER - Mike Chapman sighted two birds at the Piedmont NWR on 20-21 June and Terry Johnson saw another in Lamar County on 10 July.

BOBOLINK - Rather unusual and late was a male in breeding plumage three miles northwest of Watkinsville in Oconee County on 1 July (Billy Dunbar).

HOUSE FINCH - Summer populations continue to increase in Atlanta, Columbus and Augusta. Please keep on sending reports, especially from south Georgia.

Patrick Brisse, 4960 Gatehouse Way, Stone Mountain, GA 30088.

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