

# THE ORIOLE

Quarterly Journal of the Georgia Ornithological Society



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# THE ORIOLE

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*The Oriole*, a quarterly journal of Georgia ornithology, publishes original articles that advance the study of birds in the state of Georgia and adjoining regions. *The Oriole* welcomes submission of articles describing the occurrence, distribution, behavior, or identification of birds in Georgia, as well as scientific studies from all fields of ornithology.

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# THE ORIOLE

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## BREEDING BY HORNED LARKS ON THE LOWER COASTAL PLAIN OF GEORGIA

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The Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) extended its breeding range into Georgia approximately 50 years ago (Griffin 1951, Burleigh 1958), but it continues to be an uncommon and local breeding bird in the state (Haney et al. 1986). Most breeding records are from the northern half of the state, with breeding activity extending onto the upper coastal plain near Macon, Augusta, and probably Dublin (Burleigh 1958, Haney et al. 1986, Patterson 1991). Nevertheless, summer records extend as far south as Decatur County (Sewell 1995), and the species might be expected to breed well onto Georgia's coastal plain (possibly overlooked there because of a relative lack of field work). We recently documented nesting by Horned Larks in southern Bulloch County on the upper reaches of the lower coastal plain. To the best of our knowledge, this represents the first documented nesting record for this species on the lower coastal plain of Georgia and the southernmost nesting record in Georgia.

On 4 May 1997, we observed two adult Horned Larks feeding two newly fledged young at the East Georgia Turf Farm, Bulloch County, Georgia (32° 21' N, 81° 49' W). The East Georgia Turf Farm is an approximately 300-ha sod farm. Harvesting of sod creates a mosaic of short grass and bare ground that supports large numbers of wintering Horned Larks and American Pipits (*Anthus rubescens*). In July and August of 1995 and 1996, we observed 3–5 independent juveniles among the Horned Larks at this site. However, because of the possibility of dispersal by independent young, it was not until our observation of newly fledged young that we were able to confirm breeding.



The two fledglings that we observed had partially sheathed rectrices (approximately 50% of adult length) and some down visible at the tips of feathers of the crown and supercilium. They flew weakly and spent most of their time running along behind the adults begging for food. Both adults fed the fledglings several times. The presence of down, weak flight, and dependence on the adults suggest that these birds fledged recently from a nest at the sod farm. Approximately 30 min after locating the two fledglings, we observed another juvenile Horned Lark on another part of the sod farm. This individual was apparently independent (it was not in the company of any adults) and had fully grown flight feathers. Nevertheless, it was in heavily streaked juvenal plumage and may represent a second successful nest at the site. In addition to the three juveniles, we observed a total of five adults. Two of these adults were singing actively, including flight songs.

Sites such as airports, sod farms, and golf courses have created suitable habitat for nesting by Horned Larks throughout southern Georgia. We suspect that more intensive field work will reveal other nesting records for Horned Larks on Georgia's lower coastal plain. Observers attempting to document nesting by this species should be aware that Horned Larks can nest very early, at a time when wintering larks are still present in substantial numbers. The age of the fledglings we observed suggests that incubation was initiated in early April, and Griffin (1951) reported eggs on 9 April. In states to the north of Georgia (e.g., Kentucky, Mengel 1965), clutches have been reported as early as February. Complete clutches can occur on the piedmont of Virginia by mid-March (CRC, pers. obs.). By March, Georgia birders should carefully search "wintering" Horned Larks for evidence of breeding.

Our observations are also relevant to the "safe dates" established for Horned Larks as part of the current Georgia Breeding Bird Atlas project (Georgia Department of Natural Resources 1996). The atlas project established appropriately conservative dates of 1 May to 15 July because of the possibility of late migrants through April. However, our observations and published breeding records for Georgia (e.g., Griffin 1951, Burleigh 1958) show that Horned Larks can complete nesting and produce apparently independent young by early May. If any of these independent young (or adults whose nests fail before 1 May) quickly disperse from the nesting site, they might be encountered during the safe period well away from the actual location where breeding occurred. Thus, the categories of possible or probable breeder should be assigned with caution for Horned Larks after 1 May.

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## GENERAL NOTES

**BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH FEEDS EASTERN BLUEBIRD NESTLINGS** — On 29 April 1997 I observed a Brown-headed Nuthatch being chased by a pair of Eastern Bluebirds that had four approximately one-week-old nestlings in a nest box in my yard in Covington, Georgia. Throughout the day, the nuthatch approached the nest box, only to be chased by one or both bluebirds. The next day, on 30 April, I observed the nuthatch (presumably the same individual from the previous day) actually enter the nest box carrying food while the adult bluebirds were gone. The nestling bluebirds were very quiet while the nuthatch was in the box. By the next day, the nuthatch was entering the box with food more frequently (more often than the adult bluebirds) and was greeted by noisy begging from the nestling bluebirds. The male bluebird occasionally chased the nuthatch. From 2–7 May, the nuthatch continued to feed the nestling bluebirds (Fig. 1) and was chased by the adult bluebirds when both species happened to arrive at the box at the same time. Otherwise, the

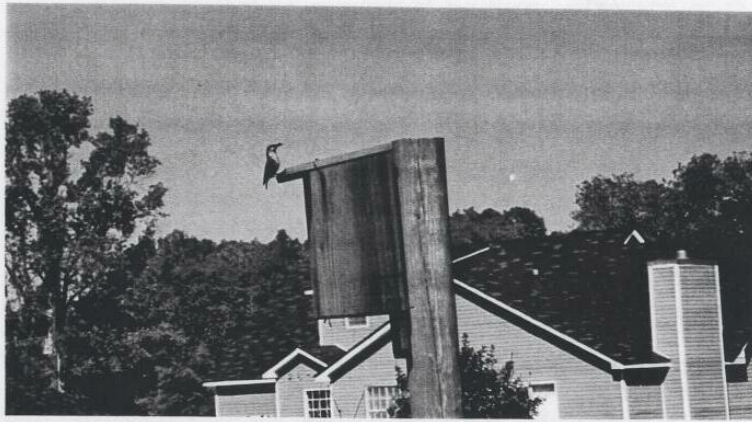


Figure 1. Brown-headed Nuthatch delivering food to Eastern Bluebird nestlings, 2 May 1997, Covington, Georgia. Photo by Jane Allsop.

adult bluebirds would sit nearby while the nuthatch fed their nestlings. On 8 May the bluebirds had fledged, and I did not see them or the nuthatch again.

Jane Allsop, 20 Willow Tree Terrace, Covington, Georgia 30209

**OPPORTUNISTIC FORAGING ON SEEDS IN ATTACHED CONES OF LONGLEAF PINE BY NORTHERN CARDINALS** — The Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) is primarily a granivore during winter when their diet is composed of a variety of seeds obtained on or near the ground (O. L. Austin, Jr., 1968, *U. S. Nat. Museum Bull.* 237; H. R. Pulliam and F. Enders, 1971, *Ecology* 52:557–566). Two male Northern Cardinals feeding on tulip-poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) seeds on one autumn date in South Carolina (R. A. Norris, 1963, Contrib. Charleston Museum 14) is the only reference to this species feeding on attached seeds of trees that I could find. This note documents cardinals feeding on seeds in attached cones of longleaf pines (*Pinus palustris*) in natural habitat. The observations described here occurred on 12-ha study plots located in different stands of mature longleaf pine forest in the Apalachicola Ranger District of the Apalachicola National Forest (ANF), near Sumatra and Wilma, Liberty County, Florida. The mast crop of longleaf pine in the autumn of 1996 was exceptional, the greatest in the district since the winter of 1981–1982 (R. Hamlin, pers. comm.).

I watched 1–6 Northern Cardinals (both sexes) feed on longleaf pine seeds in attached, open brown cones in two plots, and within 25 m of another plot, on four dates from 8 January to 17 February 1997. All observations occurred in plots that had not been prescribed-burned for over one year, though the groundcover lacked shrubs or other dense cover suitable for cardinals. The birds usually fed quietly in the mid- to upper-canopy, except when they occasionally tore off pine cone bracts to obtain access to a seed. The birds walked or hopped along branches or limbs, or made short flights within a tree, to visit new cones. One foraging bout of four birds lasted at least 15 min. Cardinals also occasionally foraged at the base of tufts of needles when in these pines. These longleaf pines were 30–120 m from adjacent wetland forests where low dense cover was available. The cardinals made direct flights downward in a diagonal from the pines to this dense cover after they finished feeding on the pine mast. The two flocks flew in a close, cohesive line, while uttering contact notes.

Other than these observations, I have rarely detected Northern Cardinals in any plot in longleaf pine forest in three years. On three of the five other occasions, they fed on the ground within 6 weeks of a winter-season prescribed burn.

In summary, Northern Cardinals rarely visited study plots in mature longleaf pine forest in the ANF, where they occasionally fed on pine seeds in attached cones during an exceptional mast year. Foraging by Northern Cardinals on pine mast has not been documented before. These observations and further observations of foraging on the ground in these pine forests after prescribed winter-season burns document the ability of Northern Cardinals to forage



opportunisticly in habitat where adequate ground cover for escape from predators was absent.

I thank R. Hamlin for sharing his knowledge of the natural history of the ANF. I also thank R. N. Conner for his review of a draft of this manuscript.

Douglas B. McNair, *Tall Timbers Research Station, Route 1, Box 678, Tallahassee, Florida 32312*

**APPARENT LONGEVITY RECORD FOR THE GREAT BLUE HERON** — On 6 February 1974, we counted ducks on Gary Pond, Millpond Plantation, Thomas County, Georgia (R. L. Crawford and L. Neel, 1976, *Oriole* 41:1-7). We recorded other species there that day, including one Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). Our attention was drawn to this bird when it took flight, for it was boldly marked by partial albinism. The entire tail was white, and the primaries of both wings had a large white spot. In subsequent years, Neel and Paul Massey saw this bird at Gary Pond regularly, many times per year, during their forestry consulting and land management practice, and while participating in the Thomasville Christmas Bird Count.

Butler (1992, *Birds of North America*, No. 25) gives the longevity record for this species, determined by banding, as 23 years. We saw this bird at Gary Pond on 5 March 1997. Because a volant Great Blue Heron in south Georgia in early February is certainly a second-year bird, in March 1997 this Great Blue Heron was at least 24 years old.

We call this an apparent longevity record because we recognize that this bird was not uniquely marked with a numbered band, and we have no photographic record. We believe it is unlikely, however, that two or more Great Blue Herons with the same unusual plumage pattern could have occurred at Gary Pond in sequence.

Robert L. Crawford, 208 Junius Street, Thomasville, Georgia 31792 and Leon Neel, P. O. Box 1043, Thomasville, Georgia 31799

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT ON ST. CATHERINES ISLAND, GEORGIA** — On the morning of 31 January 1997, we watched a single Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) fly past the north end of Middle Beach to the southern tip of North Beach on St. Catherines Island, Liberty County, Georgia. It landed well away from a large flock of Marbled Godwits (*L. fedoa*) and a smaller number of Willets

(*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*). From our position on Middle Beach, we examined the bird carefully for about 20 min with a Bausch and Lomb 15-60x scope. Its black tail tipped with white and the long, slightly tapering, slightly upturned bill distinguished it from the nearby Willets.

Crossing the inlet between Middle and North Beaches, we approached the bird slowly to within about 30 m, watching it with 10x binoculars. We then persuaded the bird to fly in order to check the color of its wing linings. They were dark. The bird did not join the nearby Marbled Godwits and Willets, but flew back across the inlet and down Middle Beach out of sight. As it flew away we could see narrow bands of white on the upper aspects of the wings, in contrast to the wide bands of white on the Willets. Over the next 3-4 weeks several people, including us, tried to relocate the bird, but we were not successful.

Haney et al. (1986, *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, GOS Occasional Publ. No. 10) list the Hudsonian Godwit as a provisional species for Georgia on the basis of two valid sightings. We have found no subsequent records in the literature, and inquiry with several birders around the state elicited no additional records.

L. B. Davenport, Jr., 726 Windsor Road, Savannah, Georgia 31419 and Peter M. Hayes, St. Catherines Island, 182 Camellia Road, Midway, Georgia 31320

**A ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK IN NORTHWEST GEORGIA** — On 15 March 1997 at approximately 13:00, Michael Bell and I were birding at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources boat ramp on the Oostanaula River at Turkey Mountain Road (Georgia Highway 140) in Floyd County. We were scanning the marsh adjacent to the boat ramp's parking lot when we spotted a Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*) approaching us low over the marsh. As the hawk flew over the marsh, it stopped to hover two or three times. After 30-45 sec, the bird veered to the southwest, gaining altitude and moving away from us. It spent most of its time soaring, with an occasional heavy flapping of the wings.

We were able to observe the bird for approximately 10 min with both binoculars (8 x 56) and scope (20 x 77) in good light. Based on our observations, Michael and I agreed that the bird was a light-phase immature. The most prominent features that we observed during the first moments were dark carpal patches that contrasted strongly with the lighter underwings, a mostly solid dark belly, and a relatively thin, but distinct, subterminal band on a mostly white tail. There was



brown streaking on the otherwise pale head and chest. Overall, the hawk appeared pale, and white patches at the base of the primaries could be seen on the otherwise brownish upperwings. This white patch was mostly concentrated in the outer primaries, but extended as far as the inner primaries. Clark and Wheeler (1987, *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America*, Houghton Mifflin) state that this white patch is not present on adults. In contrast, Dunne et al. (1988, *Hawks in Flight*, Houghton Mifflin), state that all individuals have this patch, at least on the outer primaries. They do note, however, that immatures probably have more extensive white patches and that individual variation is substantial. The difference between adults and immatures is probably one of degree, but the bird we observed had prominent white primary patches. The flight feathers appeared silvery white below; the underwing coverts were white with light brown streaking. I believe an adult would have shown heavier streaking on the underwing coverts and breast.

One slightly puzzling aspect of this bird's plumage, particularly because this was a new bird for both of us, was the tail. Most of the references that I checked indicated that the subterminal band on an immature Rough-legged Hawk is broader and more indistinct than on a female (the male has a multi-banded tail). The bird we observed had a relatively narrow and very distinct, dark subterminal band with a white tip. Quite possibly, there is a certain amount of variation in this aspect of the Rough-legged Hawk's plumage. In all other aspects, this bird was clearly an immature. The contrast between the dark carpal patches and dark belly, and the rest of the underparts is greatest on immature birds (W. S. Clark and B. K. Wheeler, 1987, *A Field Guide to Hawks of North America*, Houghton Mifflin), and the bird we observed showed strong contrast in this respect.

Hitt and Blackshaw (1996, *A Birder's Guide to Georgia*, GOS Occasional Publ. No. 13) indicate that Rough-legged Hawks were "almost givens" in the Lookout Plateau region of Georgia in January–February 1996. However, I was not able to find reports of this species in *The Oriole* for the period mentioned. Burleigh (1958, *Georgia Birds*, Univ. of Oklahoma Press) described the Rough-legged Hawk as casual in Georgia during the winter and reported four records from the state. All four of these records were from below the fall line. Haney et al. (1986, *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, GOS Occasional Publ. No. 10) described the Rough-legged Hawk as rare and irregular in winter over most of the state.

Aubrey Scott, 2346 Parkview Circle, College Park, Georgia 30337

**SONG SPARROW NESTING IN MIDDLE GEORGIA** — The Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) is a common breeder in north Georgia, nesting south to Royston, Athens, Atlanta, and Rome (J. C. Haney et al., 1986, *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, GOS Occasional Publ. No. 10). Song Sparrows nested as far south as Milledgeville, 48 km northeast of Macon, in 1950–1952. On 27 May 1997 at Lake Wildwood, a subdivision in western Bibb County, I observed what is apparently Georgia's southernmost nesting record for Song Sparrows.

The birds nested on a slope covered with young trees and brush below the subdivision's clubhouse and pool. This slope is cut approximately every three years to maintain a clear view of the lake. At the time of this observation, the brush was 1–2 m tall. On 27 May I observed two adult Song Sparrows and a single fledgling; on 30 May I observed the adults and two fledglings. Both fledglings followed the adults while begging with a diminutive "see." The family fed in the bushes surrounding the pool, occasionally hopping around the clubhouse area.

When I first found the fledglings, they were approximately half the size of the adults. According to Harrison (1975, *Birds' Nests*, Houghton Mifflin), incubation takes 12–13 days. Bent (1968, *Life Histories of North American Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Buntings, Towhees, Finches, Sparrows, and Allies*, Dover Reprint) states that the nestlings remain in the nest 7–14 days. Thus, the pair must have begun nesting in early May. I found one singing Song Sparrow at this location on 7 May. This was probably one of the nesting pair that I observed later in the month.

Paul Johnson, 901 Santa Fe Trail, Macon, Georgia 31220



## FROM THE FIELD

August–November 1996

What an outstanding fall this was! Three rare species were found in places where many birders could enjoy them: Georgia's second Townsend's Warbler at Jekyll Island, Snow Buntings at Ft. Pulaski, and a Yellow-headed Blackbird at ELHLAF. A number of coastal species turned up inland in above average numbers; Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were widespread, and a decent warbler season was had, though in nothing like the numbers long-time birders remember. It was a warm fall and a number of species lingered such as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, good numbers of which were seen into October and a few even into November. In spite of the warm fall, ducks made a strong showing, and Purple Finches, but not Pine Siskins, returned in more normal numbers.

I believe this fall saw more birders than ever out in the field and this, no doubt, accounts for many of the great sightings reported here. In view of the gloomy news on the status of many species, it is not logical to think that the increased numbers of some species reported here is due to an increase in real numbers, yet there may be exceptions. At least we can hope that the greater numbers of Roseate Spoonbills, Wood Storks, and American White Pelicans seen on the coast in recent years bode well for these three species, and we can hope that their presence is not simply due to habitat loss on the Florida coast.

Because of the increased numbers of reports I am now receiving, I must, for efficiency's sake and my own sanity, suggest that all reports be put in a standard format. First, give a general impression of the birding for the season, including trends you saw or did not see (good duck flight, fewer thrushes, etc.). Then list the species report in taxonomic order (as shown on the Georgia Field Checklist or the *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*). List the species, the number seen, sex and/or age information, date, location, names of other observers with you and details of the sighting for out-of-date or place birds and those requiring documentation as previously published in *The Goshawk*, or those that are hard to identify. For example:

Least Sandpiper (3: 2 adult, 1 imm.) 11/15/96 – ELHLAF  
Townsend's Warbler (1, an adult male), north end of Jekyll Is., 10/19/96. Details, description, etc.

This will make it a easier for me to get through all the reports. Please call me if you have any comments or suggestions (770-939-

7668).

Abbreviations used include: ACOGB - *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, 1986, Haney, J.C. et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 10, ARE - Altamaha River Estuary, Glynn/McIntosh Cos., ASWMA - Altamaha State Waterfowl Management Area, McIntosh Co., BIAS - Butler Island Altamaha Station, McIntosh Co., CRNRA - Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Cobb Co., EGTF - East Georgia Turf Farm, Bulloch Co., ELHLAF - E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co., JIBS - Jekyll Island Banding Station, Glynn Co., KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Cobb Co., NWR - National Wildlife Refuge, SCSP - Sweetwater Creek State Park, Douglas Co., WMA - Wildlife Management Area.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

- RED-THROATED LOON - The Macon area recorded its first when on 4 November one was seen at Lake Juliette, Monroe Co. (Terry Johnson). The first reported from the coast were five seen on 3 November at Tybee Is. (Paul Johnson), and on 21 November one was seen at Lake Lanier (Giff Beaton). This is about one above average for inland sightings.
- COMMON LOON - A strong movement occurred on 21 November when 78 were counted at Lake Lanier (Giff Beaton).
- PIED-BILLED GREBE - For the location, 15 on 28 September (Jim Flynn) at ELHLAF was a good count.
- HORNED GREBE - The first sighting at Lake Lanier was of 12 on 21 October (Jim Flynn), with the peak movement coming on 21 November when 42 were counted (Giff Beaton). I believe these numbers are of birds seen only on the south end of the lake in the vicinity of Buford Dam.
- EARED GREBE - This once rare species again made a strong showing with three locations harboring small flocks. At Lake Lanier near the dam, four were found on 4 November (Jim Flynn) and were seen continuously through 22 November when seven were reported (Aubrey Scott). Five stayed through the period. At Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., one was seen on 4 November (Terry Johnson); six were seen on 19 November (Kevin Danchisen) and were last reported on 23 November (Jeff Sewell). Even the DeKalb Reservoir hosted three on 17 November and two more farther away that could not be positively identified as Eared (Jeff Petit).
- AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - On 23 September, Tommy Patterson scored Laurens County's first in his 25 years of birding there. The bird stayed until 4 October. The flock on the St. Marys River, as seen from the Cumberland Island ferry, reached 60 in November (Sheila Willis). Elsewhere, five were seen from Ft. Pulaski flying toward the dredge site across the river in South Carolina (John Willis).
- ANHINGA - The Macon area had an excellent count of 27 on 4 August, this being the most ever here. Farther north, one was seen on 23 October in Lawrenceville where they are very rare (Karen Theodorou). This species



pushes farther north every year.

**AMERICAN BITTERN** - The only report was one on 3 October at the ASWMA (Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn, and Kevin Danchisen). Perhaps coastal birders saw more but I did not receive any other reports.

**LEAST BITTERN** - The small colony in northern Greene Co. had one hanger-on as of 12 October (Chris Eberly).

**GREAT EGRET** - Big numbers at ELHLAF perhaps indicate a good nesting season. On 5 August 49 were counted (Carol Lambert).

**SNOWY EGRET** - On 4 August a high count for the Macon area was tallied with 15 at the brickyards (Ty Ivey, Jerry Amerson). ELHLAF did well, too, with six first seen on 5 August (Giff Beaton, Kevin Danchisen), 10 on 24 August (Jim Flynn), and six on 2 September (Patrick Brisse).

**TRICOLORED HERON** - This very rare visitor to the Atlanta area was seen twice this period! One bird showed up on 1 August at Echo Lake in DeKalb Co., a densely populated area (Steve Ehly), and stayed until 15 August (Mark Oberle). Another was seen for one day, 7 August, at ELHLAF (Carol Lambert).

**REDDISH EGRET** - This Florida-based species has been increasing as a post-breeding wanderer to the coast over the last several years, but the number reported this fall was more like the late 1980s or early 1990s, down from the last two years. Whether this reflects an actual decrease this fall, or whether birders no longer bother to report them, I do not know. One thing for sure is that Brad Winn did not see as many as he did last year. He reported one immature on 22 August at the north end of Ossabaw Is. and two immatures farther south on the island on 22 September.

**CATTLE EGRET** - Of six seen on 5 August at ELHLAF, three had dark bills indicative of juvenal plumage. The dark bills are not retained for long after fledging (Giff Beaton, Kevin Danchisen). In Bulloch Co., 500 were counted at a heronry (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert), and 17 November in Macon was a very late departure date for one bird (Paul Johnson).

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** - Although a few winter in Macon, the one seen on 2 September evidently intended to get a jump on later arrivals (Ty Ivey, Paul Johnson, Jerry Amerson). In Augusta, where they also winter, 12 arrivals were seen on 23 November, nine adults and three immatures (Anne Waters).

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** - I suppose the one seen from 2-17 August at Echo Lake in northern DeKalb Co. (Steve Ehly) nested in the vicinity as at least two nest sites are known in the north Atlanta metro area.

**WHITE IBIS** - This species is not terribly uncommon in the Atlanta area these days as a post-breeding wanderer. One immature was seen at ELHLAF on 31 August (call to Rare Bird Alert).

**GLOSSY IBIS** - This species is much rarer inland than its cousin, so two seen on 18 September at ELHLAF (Joe Greenberg) were outstanding. Giff Beaton located a reliable spot for them near the Savannah airport finding six there on 16 August and four on 27 September. He also had a good count of 15 on 20 October at Harris Neck NWR, McIntosh Co.

**ROSEATE SPOONBILL** - For a number of years now this species, which nests much farther south in Florida, has been seen in ever-increasing numbers in Glynn and Camden counties. This season a new high was reached at

the roost site on U.S. 17 south of Brunswick. Wandering individuals returned to this site as early as June and were seen in several places south of Brunswick including Jekyll Is. These are the highlights: On 11 August, 20 were seen in the vicinity of Andrews Is. and Causeway in Brunswick (Mark Oberle), no doubt part of the 30 birds, a new high count, seen roosting in the trees on the west side of U.S. 17, south of the Jekyll Is. Causeway, on 21 September (Pierre Howard). The last report was of one bird seen on 31 October (Paul Johnson). This species is renowned for wandering inland. It has appeared in various places in Georgia inland over the years. This season's inland record was of one, as usual, in Putnam Co. on 9 September (Billy Dunbar).

**WOOD STORK** - This was a huge season for this recovering species, at least in the Macon area. I got few reports from other inland locations, so I hope I haven't overstated the true situation. At the brickyard ponds, in Macon, (this is private property), 94 immatures and 2 adults were seen on 8 August (Ty Ivey, Jerry Amerson), 76 on 11 August (fide Paul Johnson) and 53 on 14 September (Paul Johnson et. al.) And they stayed late. As of 17 November, about seven remained (Paul Johnson, Jerry Amerson) and at least one remained into December. Elsewhere, one wanderer was spotted near Commerce on 11 August (Jack Carusos, John Paget). On the minus side, Tommy Patterson reported seeing only two in Laurens Co., with one on 4 November, a late date there.

**TUNDRA SWAN** - An immature seen at the Rum Creek WMA, Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., on 11 November (Terry Johnson) was said by Macon birders to be the first in the Macon area since 1972. This species seems to turn up somewhere in the state every two or three years.

**SNOW GOOSE** - It was a good fall for this species, too. Birds were seen all over the state, mostly singles and mostly in November. Best sightings were early arrivals on 12 October in Augusta, one bird (Calvin Zippler), two on 17 October in the mouth of Crooked River, Camden Co., on an oysterbar (Brad Winn) and the only other report of more than one, being eight in Haralson Co., north of Tallapoosa on 17 November (Patrick Brisse).

**AMERICAN BLACK DUCK** - This now difficult to find species was reported in only two locations this fall, running counter to this otherwise good duck season. One was spotted at ELHLAF on 27 October (Jeff Sewell), which stayed several days, and five were found at Lake Horton, Fayette County's new reservoir, on 3 November (David Cree).

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** - It was a fairly good season for this species. Early arrivals were two on 29 September at Kennedy Pond, Bulloch Co. (Ray Chandler), one in Macon on 30 September (Paul Johnson), and one at ELHLAF on 1 October (Bruce Hallett). Four were seen at Lake Horton, Fayette Co., on 3 November (Brock Hutchins, David Cree) and four in Augusta on 9 November (George Reese fide Anne Waters). I had no reports from elsewhere around the state.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** - An outstanding season for this species, assuming these high counts mean lesser numbers were spread proportionally across the state. At the Macon brickyard ponds, 130 were counted on 31 August (Paul Johnson, Ty Ivey), on a small pond in Laurens Co. on 23 September 225 were tallied (Tommy Patterson), at ELHLAF on 1



October 550 were surveyed (Brock Hutchins), the most I have ever heard reported there, and back in Macon, at a lake in his subdivision, Paul Johnson had an amazing 320 on 2 October.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** - This species enjoyed a good year, too, if reports from ELHLAF are representative. Three birds arrived early on 31 August (Jim Flynn) and increased in number throughout the period with a count of 26 on 26 November (Patrick Brisse).

**GADWALL** - If the 155 on a small pond near Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., on 23 November are an indication of their statewide status this fall, this species had a very good year (Jeff Sewell). This is the most I have ever seen in one spot in Georgia.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** - Two birds at the CRNRA on 21 September were early (Bruce Hallett) and 50 or so at the Augusta brickyard ponds on 26 November was a good count (Anne Waters). Other than a report of one in Macon on 6 October (Jerry Amerson, Paul Johnson), and six at ELHLAF on 26 October, I had no other reports of this species.

**CANVASBACK** - Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., produced the best counts, with seven on 16 November (Jerry Payne) and 20 on 23 November (Jeff Sewell) and as many as three spent five or so days at ELHLAF, the high being three on 16 November (Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn). No reports were received from any other locations.

**REDHEAD** - This species was found in slightly above average numbers in the northern half of the state. By far the best report was of 44 at Lake Lanier on 4 November (Jim Flynn). In November, small flocks of fewer than 10 birds were seen at ELHLAF, SCSP, Lake Juliette (Monroe Co.), and in Macon. Six first seen on 9 November at the Augusta brickyard ponds stayed all month (George Reeves *vide* Anne Waters). No reports from the coast were received.

**OLDSQUAW** - The duck sighting of the season was also at Lake Lanier on 21 November. Three male Oldsquaw, two in breeding plumage and one in winter plumage, were seen (Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn). This may be the most ever seen in Georgia at one time, and to have found them inland rather than on the coast where such a count might have been more expected is remarkable.

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER** - Providing only about the sixth Macon area record, one bird was discovered by Terry Johnson on 9 November at Lake Juliette, Monroe Co. It stayed about a week.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** - One on 16 November at Lake Juliette, Monroe Co. (Jerry Amerson) and four at SCSP on 26 November (Giff Beaton) were about average.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** - Decent inland reports were the 13 at Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., on 23 November (Borck Hutchins) and nine at SCSP on 29 November (Giff Beaton). No reports from coastal birders were received.

**TURKEY VULTURE** - The only evidence of migration received was of 75 headed south over downtown Decatur on 5 November (Edward Wheeler *vide* Terry Moore).

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** - A late bird was spotted from I-16 in Emanuel Co. on 25 September (Giff Beaton, Bruce Hallett).

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** - Two late-departing birds were seen. On 14

September Calvin Zippler (*vide* Anne Waters) saw one at the Augusta levee, and Gordon Gridley spotted one on 2 October in the Piedmont NWR, well north of their usual range.

**BALD EAGLE** - This species has been on the increase in Georgia. Reports came mostly from the piedmont and include two (one adult, one immature) on 6 August at ELHLAF (Jep Palmer), one juvenile on 1 November in Laurens Co. (Tommy Patterson), and three (2 adults, 1 immature) in Augusta (Anne Waters).

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** -- Two caught at JIBS were noteworthy as this species is rare on the coast. The lack of reports elsewhere suggests that this species continues to decline.

**COOPER'S HAWK** - Five seen in Glynn Co. on 1 November (Paul Johnson) was an amazing count for this elusive bird. Reports from around the East show this species to be on the increase.

**BROAD-WINGED HAWK** - One seen on 4 October in Cobb Co. was fairly late (Kevin Danchisen).

**RED-TAILED HAWK** - A strangely plumaged bird seen on 20 October at Jekyll Is. was thought to be a rufous morph (Mark Churchill).

**MERLIN** - This species had a good flight through the state this fall with reports from the mountains (Harriett DiGioia) to the coast where on 3 Oct. three were seen in Glynn Co. (Giff Beaton).

**PEREGRINE FALCON** - Also widely reported this fall, singles were seen all over the state with the high count coming from the coast, of course, where on 4 Oct. eight were counted on St. Catherines Is. (Brad Winn).

**WILD TURKEY** - Evidence of another flock in Atlanta was received. Greg Greer reported seeing a flock of about 15 near the Gold Branch Unit, CRNRA, in east Cobb Co. on 19 October.

**VIRGINIA RAIL** - As more birders venture into marshes, more locations for this species are being found, but the best count came from a well-known marsh in Greene Co. where 13 were counted on 14 September (Paul Sykes). A newly discovered marsh in the KMT hosted up to six all fall with sightings 5 August-27 October (Giff Beaton).

**SORA** - A good fall for this species, too, although the same old question may apply here; are we seeing an increase in the species or are more birders getting out in the right habitat? The KMT marsh hosted singles in September and October (Giff Beaton), four were seen in a Greene Co. marsh on 14 September (Paul Sykes), the Macon brickyards came through again with two on 6 October (Ty Ivey, Jerry Amerson), the EGTF had one on 27 October (Ray Chandler, Andy Kinsey), and the best report was the one seen on several occasions 23 September-24 October at a subdivision lake, Lake Wildwood, in Macon (Paul Johnson).

**COMMON MOORHEN** - This species provided several rare inland nesting records this fall with Macon being the host to two nestings. One pair with young was seen in the Macon brickyards from 31 August-September (Ty Ivey, Paul Johnson) and Lake Wildwood, Macon, had its first nesting ever where a pair raised young, the last sighting being on 22 September (Paul Johnson). Ray Chandler saw a pair with 2 chicks at Magnolia Springs, Jenkins Co., on 26 August and again on 27 September.

**AMERICAN COOT** - This adaptable bird showed up in big numbers all across the southeast this fall. On 21 November, 390 were counted at Lake



Wildwood, Macon, and 250 or so at the Macon brickyards (Ty Ivey, Paul Johnson, Jerry Amerson).

**SANDHILL CRANE** - Numbers of this species seemed down a bit along their regular migration route, but this could easily be due to folks turning in fewer reports. Peak counts came in clusters: 2-3 November, 12-14 November, and 22 November. Scattered reports continued into December. Highlights were one at ELHLAF on 13 September (Carol Lambert) and 400 seen in November in Whitfield and Murray Cos. (Harriett DiGioia).

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** - Rare inland in Georgia, this species was seen three times inland this fall, way above average. On 27-28 August the EGTF hosted one (Ray Chandler, Andy Kinsey) and two different birds were seen at ELHLAF, one on 1 September (Jeff Sewell) and one on 26 September (Carol Lambert), these being only the fifth and sixth Atlanta area sightings by my count.

**AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER** - Above average counts of this species were reported this fall. Again, this could be due to more birders, more sod farms, or a combination thereof. ELHLAF is a good place to look in the Atlanta area. Two were seen there on 1 September (Jeff Sewell) and stayed until 5 September (Brock Hutchins). The EGTF was the best spot, however, hosting the species 4-25 September with the high count of seven coming on 4 September and 11 September (Ray Chandler). A very late bird was seen on 27 November near Brunswick (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert). Oddly, no reports were received from the sod farm in Peach Co.

**WILSON'S PLOVER** - A rather late bird was spotted from the coast on 30 November (Giff Beaton, Bruce Hallett, Bruce Dralle). This bird may be wintering.

**PIPING PLOVER** - Twenty on 19 September at the ARE was a good count (Brad Winn).

**AMERICAN AVOCET** - The best and only counts again came from the Andrews Is. area in Brunswick, with 37 on 3 October (Giff Beaton) and 17 on 17 October (Paul Raney).

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** - A good fall inland for this species. Lake Horton, a new reservoir in Fayette Co, had 20-30 on 3 November (David Cree, Brock Hutchins), and the Augusta brickyards had five on 23 November, a late date for there though occasionally they do winter (Anne Waters).

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** - Late sightings include one at ELHLAF on 4 November (Giff Beaton) and two on 23 November in Augusta (Anne Waters).

**WILLET** - Laurens Co. had only its fourth record on 28 August (Tommy Patterson), for the only inland sighting this fall.

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** - Above average numbers were seen this fall. Even ELHLAF had one for two days beginning on 20 August (Jim Flynn). Other areas reporting them were the sod farm in Peach Co. with one from 11-25 August (Nancy Gobins et al.), Laurens Co. with one on 28 August (Tommy Patterson), and the EGTF with the best report of three from 29 August-5 September (Ray Chandler). Remember not so many years ago when the only reliable place to see this species was at one farm in Laurens Co. in the spring?

**WHIMBREL** - A good number (12) was seen on 25 August at the old marina on Jekyll Is. (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert).

**MARbled GODWIT** - Paul Johnson saw four near Brunswick on 31 October.

**RED KNOT** - Many of the usual coastal locations we visit are apparently not the favorite stopover sites for this species. A small island in the ARE is. On 19 September Brad Winn tallied 10,000 there.

**SANDERLING** - This was another shorebird seen inland in above average numbers this fall. ELHLAF hosted three on 24 August (Paul Johnson) and one on 28 September-2 October (Jim Flynn, Carol Lambert), and the Macon brickyards hosted one for several days beginning 29 August (Ty Ivey, Paul Hoinowski *fide* Paul Johnson).

**SEMIPALMATED AND WESTERN SANDPIPERS** - These species seemed to be in about average numbers at the usual inland locations.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** - This species was reported in good numbers at several locations. Late August was the time for big numbers as evidenced by 100 or so at ELHLAF on 24 August (Jim Flynn) and about the same number at Plant Scherer, Monroe Co., on 29 August (Terry Johnson). The EGTF had 35 on 27 August (Ray Chandler). Seven seen at Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., on 16 November could have been either late migrants or wintering birds (Jeff Sewell, Jerry Amerson).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** - An amazing count of five at Andrews Is. near Brunswick on 2 October is probably the most ever seen at one time in this state (Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn, and Kevin Danchisen).

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** - The only report was of eight in Laurens Co. on 14 September (Tommy Patterson).

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** - The EGTF proved the best site for the species, too, with birds present from 25 July-27 October with highs of 55 on 27 August and 35 on 22 September (Ray Chandler).

**DUNLIN** - This is yet another shorebird that turned up inland in numbers far above average. At ELHLAF, a total of 15 was spotted on 26 October (Aubrey Scott). This may be the most ever seen there. At least two remained until late November. Three were seen at Lake Juliette, Monroe Co., on 16 November (Jerry Payne), five were seen in the Macon brickyards on 17 November, the first here since 1992, and one was spotted in Laurens Co. on 23 November (Tommy Patterson).

**STILT SANDPIPER** - Inland sightings were far above average. At ELHLAF, three held over from July were last seen on 5 August (Giff Beaton). Laurens Co. had 1-4 on three dates in August and September (Tommy Patterson), and four were at the EGTF on 29-30 August (Ray Chandler). Back at ELHLAF one seen on 22 September (Gordon McWilliams) grew to three on 28 September (Jim Flynn) that stayed for a few days. The last one seen was on 31 October (Mark Oberle).

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** - This is another species that had maybe its best fall flight ever. As was said earlier, this may be due to intense coverage of area sod farms, sites that not too many years ago we did not visit. Beginning in late August, small numbers could be found at ELHLAF, the Peach Co. sod farm, and the EGTF, the highlight being a whooping 20 seen on 7 September at the Peach Co. sod farm (George Griffeth). This, I believe, is the most ever seen in Georgia. In spite of the fact that the ACOGB calls them a "rare fall transient on and near the



coast," Brad Winn had never seen one on a barrier island until 19 September when he and Royce Hayes saw one on a small island in the ARE.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** - Two seen on 11 August at the Macon brickyards (Jerry and Marie Amerson, Nancy Gobris, et al.) and two from Jekyll Is. on 2 October (Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn and Kevin Danchisen) were a bit above average for the period.

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** - Andrews Is. in Brunswick hosted up to six for several days beginning on 21 September (Mike Chapman, Pierre Howard), an excellent count for Georgia.

**LAUGHING GULL** - One seen on 8 August in winter plumage at ELHLAF was a very rare inland visitor (Carol Lambert).

**HERRING GULL** - Dalton is an unusual site for this species where one was seen on 20 November (Jeanette Longley, reported in *Audubon Field Notes*).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** - This relatively recent invader continues to increase its presence on the coast. On 25 September, 2-3 were at Gould's Inlet, St. Simons Is. (many observers). One hung out at the south end of Jekyll Is. beginning in mid-October (many observers), and a very dark adult was seen on Jekyll Is. on 29 Nov. that may have been of the subspecies *intermedius* (Jeff Sewell).

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** - As usual, Gould's Inlet, St. Simons Is. provided the high count. It was 10 this time, on 2 October (Giff Beaton).

**GULL-BILLED TERN** - Five pair with chicks on all three of Ossabaw Island's beaches shows again that this species (as do many others) needs the nesting sites that Georgia's uninhabited barrier islands provide (22 August; Brad Winn).

**CASPIAN TERN** - Gould's Inlet, St. Simons Is. provided a good count of 100 plus on 27 September (Giff Beaton).

**SANDWICH TERN** - Late sightings include 19 at Tybee Is. on 3 November and 35 on 1 November at St. Simons Is. (both by Paul Johnson).

**COMMON TERN** - A count of 50 at Gould's Inlet, St. Simons Is. on 22 September was good (Mike Chapman).

**FORSTER'S TERN** - One inland transient was seen at Lake Wildwood, Macon, on 2 October (Paul Johnson).

**BLACK TERN** - Reports for this migrant seemed down this fall. A few were seen at ELHLAF, as usual, with 4 on 12 August (Carol Lambert) and 5 at Lake Allatoona in Cobb Co. (Bill Bouthillier), but the few other reports received were all of ones and twos.

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** - Sheila Willis received a belated report from Stacie Kendricks of one seen in the week before Thanksgiving on Cumberland Is. Too bad word of this did not get out sooner as I know many birders who would have made the trip for it.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** - Valdosta now has two pair seen on 4 September (Brad Bergstrom), and Clayton Co. had its first on 13 August (Carol Lambert). One was reported in Chattanooga (*Audubon Field Notes*) so it is only a matter of time until this invader fills out the state.

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** - On 5 September, 15 were seen in Bulloch Co. a good count (Ray Chandler). This species is declining in many areas of the state.

**COMMON NIGHTHAWK** - Reporting of this species is better than in the last

several years, so all records will not be reported here. Best counts were of 350 in one hour at Stone Mountain on 4 September (Patrick Brisse) and about 200 over Tucker on 10 September (Carol Lambert). Two over Cobb Co. on 6 October were getting late (Kevin Danchisen), and two in Statesboro on 21 November were very late (Ray Chandler).

**WHIP-POOR-WILL** - Was the one reported on 7 September in Emanuel Co. a summer resident or a migrant (Jerry and Marie Amerson)? Giff Beaton found one on Jekyll Is. on 25 September, one on 2 October, and two on 30 November.

**CHIMNEY SWIFT** - On 5 October Jerry Amerson estimated 4000 coming to roost in one chimney at dusk in Macon.

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** - This species seems to be staying later these days. I had several reports of hold-overs at feeders into November, the last being one in Marietta last seen on 13 November (Annette McBrayer). I would assume they remained even later in south Georgia, but I got no reports of late departures from there.

**RUFUS HUMMINGBIRD** - Compared to last year, numbers were a bit down. Perhaps people are growing accustomed to them and not reporting. As of 2 November, 4 were in the Atlanta area (*fide* Buddy Rowe). A few more appeared after that. Macon had its sixth record with one at the feeder of Dan Adrien on 2-8 October, and one was reported from Dalton (*Audubon Field Notes*).

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** - A good fall for this species. Singles were seen at Fernbank Forest, DeKalb Co., on 24 and 31 August (Georgann Schmalz), in Peachtree City on 2 September (David Cree), at KMT on 2 September (Bruce Dralle, Jim Flynn), and in Marietta on 9 September (Giff Beaton).

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** - Another great year for this species. Two were banded in Fernbank Forest, DeKalb Co., on 21 and 23 August (Georgann Schmalz). At the Ocmulgee National Monument, Macon, two and three were seen from 13-15 September (Jerry Amerson); the CRNRA area had two, one on 23 September (Chuck Saleeby) and one on 25 September (Pierre Howard, Bruce Dralle, Bob Zarembo). One was at KMT on 18 September (Bruce Hallett). Two each were banded at JIBS in October (Don and Doris Cohrs).

**"TRAILL'S" FLYCATCHER** - Don and Doris Cohrs captured four in their mist nets at their banding operations at JIBS and BIAS, two at each location, but did not distinguish between Willow and Alder. Doris stated that having this many during the banding season indicated a late migration as these species usually are out of the area before they begin banding.

**WILLOW FLYCATCHER** - Not counting the Traill's above, the only report received was of one at KMT (Giff Beaton, Bruce Dralle) on 1 October.

**LEAST FLYCATCHER** - Also a good fall for this species. KMT had its first on 15 August (Giff Beaton), Macon its second fall record on 2 September (Ty Ivey, Ken Clark, Jerry Amerson, Paul Johnson), and one was seen in an office park in mid-town Atlanta on 13 September (Russ Wigh).

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** - With more birders in the field these days, we seem to find this species more than in the past. On 18 October one was seen at Cumberland Is. (Kristi Avera, Jim Harrell, Bob Zarembo, Brad Winn).

**GRAY KINGBIRD** - This species was reported from the usual site on Jekyll Is.,



but I received no reports from Brunswick itself so I don't know if the sightings of them in town in recent years has led to another outpost.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** - For the third fall in a row this species was seen somewhere in the state. Sheila Willis reported that one was seen in late November on Cumberland Is. by Stacia Kendricks.

**HORNED LARK** - Did I miss some reports? The only one I received was of five, including two immatures, that arrived at the EGTF on 27 August for the winter (Ray Chandler).

**TREE SWALLOW** - Aubrey Scott had the most intriguing reports: 5,000 on 20 October at South Beach, Jekyll Is. and a probable record late-departure date for the Atlanta area with 5 at ELHLAF on 2 November.

**BANK SWALLOW** - An amazing report was received. On 1 September at the sod farm in Peach Co., Paul Johnson counted 210. Even more remarkable, he reminded me that this was only the area's second highest number. In 1986, on 30 Aug. 200-300 were seen by Ty Ivey in Macon. We are accustomed to seeing only a few here and there at the most. Other good reports were received. At ELHLAF, 3 were seen on 24 August (Jim Flynn), and a few singles were seen in September with the last being 2 on 6 October. On 14 September, 20 were seen in northern Greene Co. (Paul Sykes), and 6 were seen on 30 October at Andrews Is. in Brunswick (Giff Beaton).

**CLIFF SWALLOW** - More than the usual number of fall sightings (away from the known nesting areas) were received, including four in Macon on 21 September (Nancy Gobris, Ty Ivey, Jerry and Marie Amerson) and a record late-departure date for the Atlanta area when two were seen on 6 October at ELHLAF (Joe Greenberg).

**BARN SWALLOW** - A rather late departing bird was seen on 1 November near Darien (Paul Johnson).

**FISH CROW** - One hundred in Macon on 3 November was a good count for that date and place (Jerry and Marie Amerson).

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** - On 18 August, three were located along Forest Service Road 46 to Burrell's Ford in northeastern Rabun Co. by Mark Oberle where he has found them before. Nesting has occurred just across the Chattooga River in South Carolina.

**WINTER WREN** - Five at the KMT marsh on 27 October was a noteworthy count for so small an area (Giff Beaton).

**SEDGE WREN** - The KMT marsh proved productive for this species; it was seen from late September to early November with a high count of four on 21 October (Giff Beaton).

**MARSH WREN** - At the KMT marsh, Giff Beaton had at least three from late September-early November with the high count coming on 21 October.

**THRUSHES** - Across the region, many birders noted low numbers of thrushes this migration. An exception was the pre-dawn counts conducted by a small number of fanatics at KMT. Beginning as early as 4:00 AM and continuing until about 7:00 AM, thrushes are counted from the saddle area of KMT as they pass overhead uttering their distinctive night flight call notes. Looking at the numbers counted, one can hope that thrush populations are doing well. For example, from 18 September-3 October, 59 Gray-cheeked Thrushes were counted, with a high of 24 on 30 October (Bruce Dralle). Contrast this with the fact that only one Gray-cheeked

Thrush was reported seen during the period, one on 5 October at Fernbank Forest, DeKalb Co. (Georgann Schmalz).

**BICKNELL'S THRUSH** - A report of this recently split species was received. On 20 October Helen Ogren and Paul Raney reported seeing one at Jekyll Is. Until experts can agree on the field separation of Bicknell's from the Newfoundland race of Gray-cheeked Thrush, I do not see how we can safely call these in the field. I do think any sightings of the species should be carefully documented in *The Oriole*. For more on this, see *The Oriole* 61(1):24.

**CEDAR WAXWING** - Interesting reports were of early arrivals on the coast. On 21 September one was seen at Tybee Is. (Ray Chandler) and on 20 October, 10 were counted at Jekyll Is. (Jeff Sewell).

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** - One was banded at JIBS on 6 October, only the fourth in 18 years (Nancy Gobris).

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO** - It was another good year for this very uncommon migrant (or there are just more birders in the field?). The total (15) topped last year's record. Most reports were from the Atlanta area with four each on 24 September from KMT (Bruce Hallett) and CRNRA (Bruce Dralle). All of the other reports were of singles except a report of three from Jekyll Is. on 25 September seen at close range and described in detail (T. C. Raymond). The species is not known as a coastal migrant, so this sighting should be written up for *The Oriole*.

**WARBLER MIGRATION** - Many birders said this was one of the better migrations in recent years, due perhaps to several good cold fronts that passed through. I shall mention only the more interesting sightings here.

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** - Interesting reports came from Lowndes Co. on 21 September (one) where they are uncommon (*vide* Barbara Passmore) and the CRNRA on 18 October (also one), a late-departing bird (Russ Wigh).

**GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER** - Nearly a year to the day after he saw six last year, Pierre Howard saw the same number this year, on 18 September.

**LAWRENCE'S WARBLER** - The rare recessive hybrid of Blue-winged X Golden-winged was seen and well described by Paul Raney at KMT on 13 September.

**NASHVILLE WARBLER** - This species had its best flight in years. Single birds were reported from Macon on 15 September and 6 October (Jerry and Marie Amerson), two were seen at KMT on 14 September (Giff Beaton), and one was at KMT on 2 October (Jim Flynn); one was reported in Athens in late September (Owen Kinney); and JIBS had its second one in two years on 11 October, only the 13th in 18 years (Nancy Gobris).

**YELLOW WARBLER** - On 2 September, 12 (a remarkable count these days) were seen near Macon (Ty Ivey). Oldtimers say this was once the most commonly seen migrant warbler over much of the state.

**BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** - A late-departing bird seen at the KMT marsh on 4 November set an Atlanta area late departure date by 8 days (Giff Beaton, Kevin Danchisen).

**YELLOW-RUMPED (AUDUBON'S) WARBLER** - Don't neglect to check all those butterbutts for yellow throats. An Audubon's was seen at Harris Neck NWR, McIntosh Co., on 24 November (Chris Eberly).

**BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** - Although good numbers were reported at KMT (e.g., 21 on 23 September [Bruce Hallett]; 23 on 11



October [Giff Beaton]), Jerry and Marie Amerson said that only one was seen all fall in Macon, that on 6 October. A late bird was noted at West Point Lake on 3 November (Brad Parks).

**TOWNSEND'S WARBLER** - The most outstanding bird of the period was found on 18 October on the eve of the fall GOS joint meeting with the Association of Field Ornithologists at Jekyll Is. Two Clemson graduate students, Steve Mizrahi and David Wagner, studying under Prof. Sid Gauthreaux who was to speak to the group the next night, found the bird on the north end of the island. Amazingly, it was relocated the next day in the same tree and was seen by all the GOS members who postponed their field trips to come look for it. This is Georgia's second Townsend's, the first being a bird banded at JIBS in 1992.

**BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** - On 6 and 9 October, one each was banded at JIBS only their tenth and eleventh in 18 years of banding (Nancy Gobris).

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** - One seen on 12 October at KMT set a new Atlanta area late date (Jeff Sewell).

**PALM WARBLER** - Augusta birders noted large numbers passing through the brickyards on 23 November. Sixteen were seen in one flock alone (Anne Waters).

**BAY-BREASTED WARBLER** - Macon recorded its earliest-ever fall arrival on 2 September (Jerry Amerson, Paul Johnson).

**PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** - A very late bird was banded at JIBS on 3 October. This species usually departs the state in August before netting begins and is also quite rare on barrier islands. This was only the fifth banded in 18 years of operation (Nancy Gobris).

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** - On 15 September Doris Cohrs banded a bird at BIAS that was recaptured on 4 October in Venezuela. Very exciting.

**MOURNING WARBLER** - Not as many were seen this fall as last, but still more than the usual one or none. The difficult-to-identify immature female was seen on 14 September at the CRNRA (Ken Blackshaw), and one was seen at Berry College, Rome, on 26 September (Nelson Dobbs), perhaps the best place in the state to find one.

**WILSON'S WARBLER** - A great flight was had across the southeast including no fewer than five in Georgia, which may be a record. Here are the reports: one on 14 September in Greene Co. (Paul Sykes), one at KMT on 17 September (Pierre Howard), one at ELHLAF on 22 September (Pierre Howard), and one on 24 September at KMT (Bruce Hallett).

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK** - An early bird was seen in Macon on 14 September, and two late-departing birds were noted at Fernbank Forest, DeKalb Co., on 26 October (Georgann Schmalz). At JIBS, one was banded on 3 October, only the 11th in 18 years of banding (Nancy Gobris). Many feeder watchers reported the sudden and inexplicable appearance of this species and Indigo Buntings at their feeders this fall.

**BLUE GROSBEEK** - A female was seen carrying food to a nest on the late date of 1 September in Macon (Jerry and Marie Amerson).

**PAINTED BUNTING** - Inland sightings of this coastal species continue. The outpost in Macon is doing well. On 15 September four were seen along Lower Poplar St. (Jerry and Marie Amerson). On 3 August one was spotted near Dublin (Tommy Patterson), and a late departing bird was seen on 1 November at BIAS (Paul Johnson). The ACOGB late date is

22 October, although there are records of birds seen in the winter.

**DICKCISSEL** - The only reports, and these are certainly noteworthy, were of two banded at JIBS on 5 October, only the third in 18 years (Don and Doris Cohrs), but they missed netting four that flew over Chuck Hunter there on 20 October.

**CHIPPING SPARROW** - One was banded at JIBS, only their eighth in 18 years of banding (Don Cohrs).

**CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** - It was a good season for this rare, mostly coastal, migrant. One was seen on Cumberland Is. on 2 October (Sheila Willis) and two were seen at JIBS, one banded (Don Cohrs) and one seen nearby, on 20 October (Chuck Hunter).

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** - One seen in Statesboro on 25 October was rare for the location (Ray Chandler).

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** - This species invaded KMT this fall. Sightings include one on 11 October (Bruce Dralle, Giff Beaton, Karen Theodorou), three on 27 October (Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn), and one on 4 November (Giff Beaton, Kevin Danchisen). Only one other was reported, one bird at the Carter Center, downtown Atlanta, on 27 October (Michael Bell). This spot has turned up some very good sparrow reports in recent years.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** - The most interesting reports of this hard-to-find winterer were of one bird seen at Jekyll Is., where they are even more uncommon (Carol Lambert, Jeannie Wright) and five immatures that spent three days beginning on 23 November at the brickyard ponds in Augusta (Anne Waters). Three were seen at KMT during October (Jim Flynn, Giff Beaton).

**SNOW BUNTING** - At last, Snow Buntings were found in an easily accessible place and stayed around a while. On 28 November Shawn Reed, recently moved to Georgia from Wisconsin where he has seen hundreds, discovered three at Ft. Pulaski near Savannah. Word spread quickly and many birders made the trip. At least one remained through the end of the period by which time it seemed obviously unwell, and it was found dead on 4 December (John Stafford). A small flock of 6-8 was found on the north end of Cumberland Is. in late November and stayed through the end of the period (Carol Ruckdeschel *vide* Sheila Willis). This is the best year for this species for at least the last ten years.

**BOBOLINK** - The only inland report received was of 98 seen on 14 September in Greene Co. (Paul Sykes).

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** - This rare western species occasionally visits Georgia. A first-year male was seen on 27 October at ELHLAF (Bill Blakeslee, Jeff Sewell) and stayed another day to be seen by many.

**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** - ELHLAF produced a few this fall where it is very rare. On 10 November one was seen (Jim Flynn) and on 13 November a flock of eight was observed (Steve Ehly). Tommy Patterson reported that as of 11 November only two had appeared at their usual Laurens Co. wintering ground. The rest of the flock of about 300 birds had not arrived by the end of the period.

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** - Reports came in only from the northern half of the state, the high count being eight at KMT on 8 September (Jim Flynn, Bob Zaremba).

**PURPLE FINCH** - Reports received so far give some hope that this species will

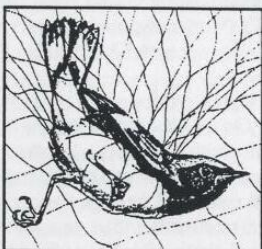


occur in more normal numbers compared to the below-average numbers of the last several years.

**PINE SISKIN** - Pine Siskins, with one exception, again failed to show up in November. This was true across the southeast, not just in Georgia. Marcie Diaz of Gwinnett Co. claimed one at her feeder on 7 November for the only report for our state and for NC, SC, and AL. This doesn't count a report from Mark Oberle that a pair spent all summer in Pickens Co., raised at least one fledgling, and were photographed. I trust this report will be submitted to *The Oriole*.

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## FROM THE FIELD

December 1996–February 1997

This winter season started out with several reports of Snow Buntings and featured many outstanding sightings. December was a great month with very good reporting from around the state, including the Christmas Bird Counts. However, after that period noteworthy sightings trailed off considerably. The last two weeks of February were especially dull, and I struggled to come up with something interesting for the Rare Bird Alert. Perhaps the lack of notable sightings was related to the unusually warm weather over most of the state in February. The big news was the number of SNOW BUNTING reports. This highly eruptive grassland feeder from the central and northern plains has not been seen in Georgia for a long time. The first were seen in late November at Fort Pulaski near Savannah by Shawn Reed, who found three in the grass near the parking lot. This bird stayed in one place through 4 December when the Park Ranger found it dead. Perhaps the weather system that took it so far south also stressed it badly. Three other locations hosted the species. A flock of about 16 was discovered on the north end of Cumberland Island on 25 December and stayed there for several weeks (*vide* Shelia Willis). On 28 January, Brad Winn discovered seven in the Altamaha River delta and on 30 January Malcolm Hodges found six on Little Tybee Island. It is not known whether the birds stayed in these latter two locations.

Although commonly referred to as "very rare" inland, one or two RED-THROATED LOONS now seem to appear somewhere in Georgia between late fall and early spring. This time one was seen on 17 December by Jeff Hill (*vide* Mark Oberle) at a place few of us go – West Point Lake. Rarer still, especially inland, is the RED-NECKED GREBE. After seeing three last winter at Lake Lanier, I thought it would be many more years before I saw one again. Nevertheless, on a cold, windy 8 December, Pierre Howard and I saw one from the same point of land on Lake Lanier where they had appeared last year, the Resource Manager's Office. On the coast one was seen on the Harris Neck NWR Christmas Bird Count by Vic Carpenter (*vide* Pat Metz). Two reports in Georgia in one season is noteworthy.

Also of note was a wintering REDDISH EGRET seen in all three months by Shelia Willis on Cumberland Island. I believe this is the best evidence to date that one has spent an entire winter on the Georgia coast. Macon had its first winter sighting of a CATTLE EGRET – one seen in the brickyard ponds on 2 January by Paul Johnson. GLOSSY IBIS, described as accidental in winter in the Annotated Checklist, were seen on 29 December by Mike Resch (*vide* Giff Beaton), keeping alive a string of winter sightings of this species.

SNOW GOOSE sightings were numerous this period, coming from all around the state. Their population has exploded over the last ten years as a result, it is thought, of their exploitation of human agriculture on the wintering grounds. Topping off the fine goose season was Georgia's fourth ROSS' GOOSE and Atlanta's first. The bird was a large member of its species as it fooled several birders who over the course of three days passed it off as a small Snow Goose among the Canadas at the E. L. Huie ponds in Clayton Co. Had it not been for Bill Blakeslee's "second look" on 16 January, it may have gone undetected because it left the next day. Wintering duck numbers were way up. The Athens CBC



broke its previous record for duck species with 11 and also had the most individuals for the count since 1987. NORTHERN PINTAIL were a first for that count. When I first saw the 12,000± LESSER SCAUP off St. Catherines Island on 22 December I was really knocked out, but was sad later to learn from Royce Hayes that when he first came to the island in the 1970s he commonly saw three times that many every winter.

The most memorable shorebirds were LONG-BILLED CURLEW and RED PHALAROPE. The curlews were seen on two barrier islands: one on 21 December by Ray Chandler on St. Catherines and two on Sapelo Island on 30 January by Giff Beaton and Todd Schneider. I believe that one has been seen on St. Catherines during the winter for several years now. The Red Phalarope stayed about a week at the pond at Epworth-by-the Sea on St. Simons Island, and was last seen on 11 January (*vide* Elaine Young).

Giff Beaton, Jim Flynn, and Malcolm Hodges witnessed what surely must be a first for Georgia when on 15 December they saw six jaegers. One light-phase adult POMARINE JAEGER was seen off Jekyll Island with three PARASITIC JAEGERs; at St. Simons Island they saw two more Parasitics! Two Pomarines were seen off Sapelo Island on 4 January (Bill Dobson), and one Parasitic off Cumberland Island the week of 21 December by Shelia Willis. I don't recall this many ever being seen in a season, and these birds were all seen from land! One wonders what was going on offshore.

Lake Lanier produced the Atlanta area's third and Georgia's fourth inland LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, when on 5 January I saw a first winter bird with 15 Herring Gulls. EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES have colonized at St. Mary's. A small flock has been there now for at least two years according to Shelia Willis. A SHORT-EARED OWL flushed on 21 December by Milton Hopkins, Jr. in a coastal marsh was a first for St. Catherines Island. Hummingbird numbers were down over the last several years based on my compilation; but the best known hummingbirders in Early County, Ikey and Flynn Gregory, added an ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD to their yard list. The first year male arrived on 10 December and stayed most of the winter, departing on 18 February (*vide* Joe Riser).

From the coast more than the usual numbers of WESTERN KINGBIRDS were reported – a total of four, all from barrier islands. Shelia Willis saw two HORNED LARKS on Cumberland Island on 30 January, a very rare occurrence for a barrier island.

Documentation has already been submitted for the sighting of six ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS at Calloway Gardens on 5 January (Hal Massie, Vic & Vickie Williams), and I wonder if a disjunct over-wintering population is developing there as one seems to have spent last winter in that area (LuAnn Creighton). The best sparrow report was a CLAY-COLORED SPARROW seen on 22 December north of Marietta by Giff Beaton. I find that RUSTY BLACKBIRDS are usually difficult to locate, but not so for Ray Manghum who came across a flock 2,000± near Lizell in Bibb Co. (*vide* Paul Johnson). This is the largest flock I've ever heard of in Georgia. Also overwintering were five BALTIMORE ORIOLES seen in four locations in middle Georgia. There were probably more in south Georgia, but I did not receive any reports. For many years, at least until the late 1980s, I was aware of 8–10 birds at a Thomasville feeder, but I have no recent information on the location.

As for winter finches, PURPLE FINCHES have returned to some locales in

normal numbers while in other areas, such as Macon and Augusta, they were quite scarce. PINE SISKINS were almost completely absent. I received only a few reports from the mountains. Even the feeders at Frances Sawyer's house in Stone Mountain had no siskins. In recent years she has had 25–30 birds, even when they were scarce elsewhere. EVENING GROSBEAKS were reported only once, from the Columbus CBC where 60 were reported, but no details were received (*vide* Sam Pate).

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Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*), 6 May 1997, E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton County, Georgia. Photo by Giff Beaton.



## FROM THE LITERATURE

"From the Literature" provides brief reviews of recent ornithological studies conducted in the state of Georgia. The reviews are designed for a general reader and are meant to make ornithological research in Georgia available to a wider audience. — The Editors.

**Nest-site selection of Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks in a managed forest.** C. E. Moorman and B. R. Chapman. 1996. *Wilson Bulletin* 108(2):357–368. — Red-tailed (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Red-shouldered Hawks (*B. lineatus*) are two of the most common raptors throughout Georgia. This study quantified the habitat around nest sites of these two well-known species (12 nests of Red-shouldered and 10 of Red-tails) in managed forests of central Georgia. Compared to randomly selected areas, the landscape around Red-shouldered Hawk nests was characterized by more bottomland hardwood habitat, less mature pine forests (>50 years of age), and larger stands of forest around the nest. The landscape around Red-tailed Hawk nests contained more agricultural habitat, more young pine stands (6–20 years of age), less upland hardwood habitat, less total amount of edge, and fewer and larger stands of trees than randomly chosen areas. The immediate area around Red-shouldered Hawk nest sites had more large (>69 cm DBH) trees and lower canopy cover than random points. Red-tailed Hawk nest sites were close to habitat edges and openings in the canopy, had taller and larger (>69 cm) trees, and greater understory cover than random points. On the sites used in this study, large floodplain forests offering mature trees were important to breeding Red-shouldered Hawks, and mature pine forest edges near openings created by silvicultural and agricultural practices were important to breeding Red-tailed Hawks.

**Olfaction and the homing ability of pigeons in the southeastern United States.** V. P. Bingman and S. Benvenuti. 1996. *Journal of Experimental Zoology* 276(3):186–192. — Ornithologists, as well as birders, have long been fascinated by the accurate navigation and homing abilities of many species of birds. Although the ability of birds to use cues such as the sun, stars, and the earth's magnetic field are now well-documented, the possibility that birds can use locally distinctive atmospheric odors to find their nesting colonies (in the case of shearwaters or storm-petrels) or home lofts (in the case of pigeons) is more controversial. This study used pigeons (Rock Doves, *Columba livia*) from a loft in Savannah to explore the role of olfaction in the homing of pigeons. The homing ability of birds whose nasal passages had been treated with zinc sulfate (which temporarily eliminates the ability to detect odors) was compared to control birds. When released at a familiar training area near Savannah, both groups quickly oriented and returned to the home loft. However, when released at three different unfamiliar sites, only birds that retained the ability to detect odors were able to return to the home loft. This experiment supports the hypothesis that pigeons use atmospheric odors as an important cue for navigation.

## THE ORIOLE

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