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*Richard Parks*

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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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## STATUS OF THE GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER IN NORTH GEORGIA, AND A NESTING RECORD OF THE LAWRENCE'S WARBLER

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Golden-winged Warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) were considered "fairly common summer residents" in North Georgia when Burleigh wrote *Georgia Birds* in the 1950s. There are numerous records for Golden-winged Warblers during this time, as they were found in at least five counties: Fannin, Dawson, Union, Towns, Dade, and possibly a sixth, Whitfield (Burleigh 1958). There also is substantial evidence that Golden-winged Warblers were common in the Southern Appalachians, including North Georgia, during the 1800s if not earlier. One of the earliest ornithological explorations of the Southern Appalachians (Brewster 1886) found Golden-winged Warblers to be "quite common, especially in open oak savannah and second growth on hillsides" (implying then that they were found in both logged and unlogged areas). It is interesting to note that nothing resembling 'open oak savannah' remains in the Southern Appalachians, probably due to fire suppression and historic logging. This may explain the apparent current dependence of Golden-winged Warblers upon artificial habitats such as clearcuts (Klaus and Buehler 2001). In addition to William Brewster's and Burleigh's well-documented records, a nest was found in Georgia in 1859 by Alexander Gerhardt (Burleigh 1958).

In recent decades, populations appear to have declined dramatically, however, Golden-winged Warblers are so uncommon that few trends can be tested for significance. Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicate a

trend of -18.7% from 1966-1979 ( $p = 0.64$ ) in Georgia, after 1979 no Golden-winged Warblers were detected on BBS routes in Georgia (Sauer et al. 2005). Golden-winged warblers were not encountered during any degree block surveys for the Georgia Breeding Bird Atlas (T. Schneider unpubl. data), and Golden-winged Warblers were not encountered during any Georgia North American Migration Counts (Amerson 2000).

Nowhere in the Southern Appalachians can Golden-winged Warblers be considered common, probably due to changes in preferred habitat availability. Besides the elimination of open oak savannahs frequented by Golden-winged Warblers in Brewster's time, changes in land use have further reduced available habitat. Clearcutting, which provides valuable habitat for this species (Klaus and Buehler 2001), is a management tool rarely used today by the major landowner in the area, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The USFS owns nearly half of some counties within the historic Georgia range of Golden-winged Warblers (i.e., Union County, 45% USFS). Furthermore, lands at suitable elevation for Golden-winged Warblers (generally greater than 2,800 ft) throughout the Southern Appalachians are nearly all owned and managed by the USFS. The reduction of early succession habitat on USFS lands is likely a major cause of the decline of this species of warbler. Private land in North Georgia, which once consisted of subsistence farms and which provided habitat in the form of old fields and woodlots, is today composed of primary and secondary homes, usually with either mature forest or residential lawns. Combined, these changes in land use on public and private land probably are responsible for the widespread elimination of Golden-winged Warblers from North Georgia. This includes numerous areas, noted by Burleigh and others for their Golden-winged Warbler populations, which are no longer occupied, including Blood Mountain, Young Harris, Lake Winfield Scott, and Ivy Log. Very little new habitat has been created in the last decade, leading to serious concerns for this species' viability in North Georgia and throughout the Southern Appalachians.

### Methods

North Georgia was systematically surveyed for Golden-winged Warblers between 1 April and 15 June, 1999-2003. In 2002, we surveyed as part of the Golden-winged Warbler atlas project of Cornell University. We used 1:24,000 U.S. Geological Survey quad maps and satellite imagery to identify routes running through likely habitat. In addition, all known sites where this species was historically found were surveyed. Sites generally were visited between the second week of May and the second week of June, before 1100 hrs. A roadside survey method of one to two minutes of listening, followed by playback of the Type I and Type

II Golden-winged Warbler calls (Ficken and Ficken 1967), and concluding with at least five additional minutes of listening, was used in all old field, clearcut, powerline right of way, and roadside habitats. Forest stand inventory data (CISC) was searched on public lands, and all clearcuts of suitable age (<10 years) and elevation (>2,800 ft), as well as areas of intense fires, were visited and surveyed on the Brasstown, Tallulah, Toccoa, and Cohutta ranger districts using the above methods, along with any suitable habitat encountered along the way. Many sites with apparently suitable habitat that were initially found to be unoccupied were revisited on subsequent years. Nest searching was conducted opportunistically at occupied sites. All known occupied sites were revisited in subsequent years.

### Results

Over four years we spent about 230 hours searching nine North Georgia counties: Murray, Gilmer, Fannin, Lumpkin, Union, Towns, White, Rabun, and Habersham. Dade County and Whitfield County were not searched though they have historic records. As there have been no breeding season records of Golden-winged Warblers in these latter two counties for several decades, we elected to spend our time in areas with recent records. Approximately 75% of our time was spent surveying from roads; the remaining 25% was spent surveying likely clearcuts on USFS land.

Six sites were found occupied (Fig. 1), five within 10 miles of one another. Three of the five sites were on private land in old field habitat (Johnny Gap sites); one was in an area damaged by hurricane Opal and later salvage-logged (Brawley Mountain); and one was the site of an intense fire (Chestnut Mountain). Sixteen Golden-winged Warblers (not including hybrids) were seen over four years (Table 1). Very little early successional habitat was encountered at locations of suitable elevations.

Though no nests were found, evidence of reproduction was observed at two sites. On 7 May 1999 at the Johnny Gap I site, the female of the pair was seen carrying nesting material. A thorough search revealed no nest and it was assumed that nest building was in its earliest stages. Unfortunately, the site was not revisited later that season and was taken over by Blue-winged Warblers (*Vermivora pinus*; BWWA) the following year. On 4 June 2002 at the Brawley Mountain site, two indications of reproduction were observed. The first involved a female Lawrence's Warbler which responded to the Type II Golden-winged Warbler playback. She approached within 20 feet carrying what appeared to be a lepidopteran larva and flew off within a few minutes. She was later seen two times making trips (assumed to be carrying food) in a similar heading, but no

nest or young were located. To our knowledge this is the first record of a *Vermivora chrysoptera* x *Vermivora pinus* hybrid nesting in Georgia, though this is not unexpected, since most Golden-winged Warbler populations in Georgia are sympatric with Blue-winged Warblers, and hybridization between the species is known to occur elsewhere.

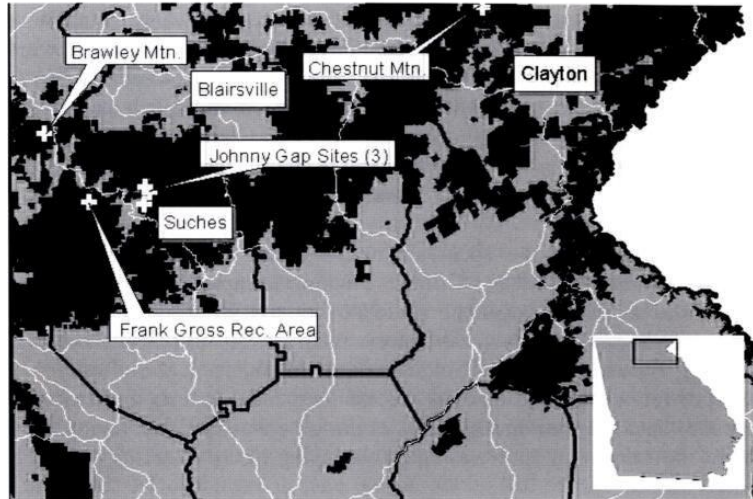


Figure 1. Areas surveyed and sites found occupied (indicated with crosses) by Golden-winged Warblers, 1999-2003. Areas in black are USFS, white lines are major roads, and black lines are county lines.

Approximately two hours after the sighting of the female Lawrence's Warbler, a male Golden-winged Warbler was seen carrying food. Following his line of flight over several trips revealed five recently fledged (still downy) Golden-winged Warblers being fed by the male and foraging in a recently logged area. Though the young were observed over the next two hours, no female was seen in their vicinity. It is assumed that the female Lawrence's Warbler was not their parent since she was seen in a different location and carried her food in a different direction. In addition, all five young appeared to be phenotypically pure.

## Discussion

It is likely that not all occupied sites were surveyed, either because they were not identified as potential habitat on our maps or because they were not accessible. Because of these limitations this count cannot be considered a true measure of this species' population in Georgia. However, these data can serve as an index of the change in this species' numbers. Golden-winged Warblers can no longer be considered "common" in any sense of the word; populations have suffered serious declines from the levels found in both the 1800s, and from those of just a few decades past. However, these data are extremely useful to direct management for this species since they indicate that most of our known remaining Golden-winged Warblers are concentrated in a relatively small area.

The first priority in managing this species should be to augment remaining populations, although it is unlikely that Georgia's population(s) is viable on its own. It is estimated that 1,000 breeding pairs are necessary for a species dependent upon ephemeral habitat to have a viable population, viability in this case being defined as having a 95% probability of being extant in 100 years (Thomas 1990). Luckily, wildlife populations do not recognize political boundaries. North Carolina still maintains a sizeable population of Golden-winged Warblers, especially on the Cheoah and Wayah ranger districts of the Nantahala National Forest. By maintaining connectivity (grouped patches of early succession habitat along high elevations) to the North Carolina Golden-winged Warbler population it is likely that North Georgia populations can continue at least as a metapopulation.

Besides augmenting existing populations, maintaining this connectivity through the strategic creation of habitat at appropriate elevations should be a management priority. Relatively small patches of apparently suitable habitat which go unoccupied probably are the result of lack of viability. These sites probably are too isolated, too small to support a viable population in their own right, and may lack a source population to fill this habitat.

Because loss of suitable habitat is extirpating Georgia's Golden-winged Warbler populations and threatens to eliminate them from the southeast, creating new habitat through a combination of prescribed fire or timber harvests is the only way to keep this species in the Southern Appalachians. Although some may advocate prescribed fire alone to create Golden-winged Warbler habitat, only one site in the Southern Appalachians known to have Golden-winged Warblers was created in this manner, Chestnut Mountain. This site only was found occupied in 2002. Using fire of this

intensity may not be practical in many areas, but it is interesting to note that natural forces, e.g., wildfire, are capable of creating habitat for this species of warbler. Unfortunately, most natural forces that may have created Golden-winged Warbler habitat, e.g., fire, beavers, and browsing by elk have been suppressed or eliminated for nearly a century, even in designated wilderness areas. It is implausible to rely on other natural forces to provide early succession habitat while actively suppressing wildfire. Using timber harvests to establish early succession habitat, followed by repeated fires of manageable intensity to maintain it, may be a more practical approach. Although the use of fire to maintain high elevation early succession habitat was until recently theoretical, Golden-winged Warblers seemed to respond well to a prescribed fire in 2003 on Brawley Mountain.

Georgia's Golden-winged Warbler populations have dramatically declined in recent decades. Populations in adjacent Tennessee and North Carolina face similar threats and are experiencing dramatic declines. Without coordinated active management on the part of the USFS and state wildlife agencies, the long-term viability of the Southern Appalachian population of Golden-winged Warblers is in question. Georgia once supported a sizeable population of Golden-winged Warblers and can again make a significant contribution to the conservation of this species.

#### Acknowledgments

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Table 1. Locations of all Golden-winged Warbler and hybrid sites found through survey efforts, 1999-2003.

Site Name	Lat./ Long.*	Year(s) occupied	Nesting found (Comments)	Habitat
Johnny Gap 1	34° 44' / 84° 04'	1999-2000	Yes (1 pair, BWWA took over the site in 2001)	Clearcut
Johnny Gap 2	34° 43' / 84° 03'	2001-2003	No (1 male, no female seen, BWWA also present in 2003)	Old field, spring seep
Johnny Gap 3	34° 44' / 84° 04'	2001	No (1 male, no female seen)	Clearcut
Chestnut Mtn.	34° 58' / 83° 31'	2002	No (1 male, no female seen)	Burned area
Frank Gross Recreation Area	34° 42' / 84° 08'	2003	No (1 Brewster's present, possibly other birds)	Clearcut
Brawley Mtn.	34° 48' / 84° 12'	2001-2003	Yes (2002 at least 3 territories, 3 males, 1 female, 5 fledglings, plus 2 adult hybrids were seen, burned spring 2003; 12 singing males in 2003)	Timber salvage following hurricane Opal

\* Locations generalized to protect the site.

## BIRD POPULATIONS IN TWO SOUTH GEORGIA HABITATS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WOODPECKER ACTIVITY

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Bird populations were surveyed in two dissimilar wood plots in April and May 1998, in Americus, Sumter County, Georgia. Apart from estimating abundance of all recorded species, we examined numerous trees for signs of wood excavations. Our main objective was to compare and contrast the two areas, including habitat preference by woodpeckers. The study areas were on the campus of Georgia Southwestern State University. Site One, more centrally located, is landscaped, mowed, and otherwise regularly maintained. This upland area, about five acres in extent, is bordered by several buildings and parking lots as well as a busy thoroughway. The dominant vegetation on this site consists of large deciduous and evergreen trees, mostly oaks, pecans, and pines, that are rather widely spaced. Smaller trees and shrubs fringe the buildings, and there is an extensive lawn. At times many people and cars are in the area. Site Two, a lowland area to the south and east, is characterized by much denser vegetation. It is near College Lake and covers about 15 acres. The trees generally are smaller, forming a broken canopy, with shrubs and vines in the understory, and compared to Site One, has fewer evergreens. Ground cover is mostly herbaceous, partly weedy, and there is no lawn. This tract is bisected by a small stream and a narrow paved road (closed to traffic), and is crisscrossed by trails. Although it borders, in part, on a residential area, this lowland plot, as compared to the upland, is relatively wild and untended, and has far less noise disturbance and human activity. Tree species present on both sites are listed in Table 1.

### Methods

*Census Methods for Relative and Absolute Density and for Comparison of Species Composition.* -- A breeding-bird census, starting at 0700 hrs and based on a meandering transect was performed within each study plot. Site One was censused on 1 and 8 May 1998; Site Two, on 12 and 19 May

1998. The number of individuals of each species was recorded once along each transect for a 10-minute period and subsequently, during six successive 10-minute periods. In each of these, all birds seen or heard were registered in the same manner. Between, but not within, periods, there was some repetition of recording of individuals (double-entries). By adding up the total tallies of individuals of each species and dividing by the number of periods (7), the average number of tallies per 10-minute period was obtained. This was recorded as a decimal number (i.e., averages for all species, when summed, provided the average for the whole population). This value, representing the average number of tallies per unit of time, is a measure of relative density or abundance.

Absolute abundance (density per unit area) was then determined by means of conversion factors (see below), enabling one to convert relative to absolute values. Such conversion factors for many common, forest-adapted birds of the Southeast were worked out by Norris (1994; unpublished manuscript). The remainder of this paragraph and part of the next relate to how these factors were derived and, therefore, relate to this earlier study, which provided a basis for the one here presented. This "double census," done in morning hours, was repeated several times during each of six seasons (prevernal, vernal, aestival, serotinal, autumnal, and hibernal) for three consecutive years. This was done on a carefully mapped area (marked, in grid fashion, with bright ribbons). Each individual bird was recorded by both its position on the map and its occurrence within each 10-minute period. The double census was made along the same meandering transect, which covered the whole plot. On any given morning, each individual was counted only once during a particular 10-minute period, as explained above and only once was it pinpointed on the map. A fresh photocopied map was used each day. Most counts lasted about 2.5 hours or 150 minutes (thus, 15 periods). For each census, the array of spot records on the map provided an estimate of the number of individuals of each species on the 40 acres, enabling calculation of the number per 100 acres. In the vernal period (early breeding season) spot records for most species were due to singing males. Because of undetected birds (e.g., incubating females), it is safe to say that most counts were underestimates. For each group of double censuses within a seasonal period, a table of conversion factors was set up. This made it possible to convert, for each species, the average number of tallies per 10-minute period to the number that occurred within 100 acres. Conversion values for the vernal period (grand, or three-year-averages) were employed in the present study. Such values for 16 species, both permanent and summer residents, ranged from 16 to 42, and averaged approximately 25. To give a specific example, the conversion value for the Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) during the vernal period is 24.

On Site Two, the lowland woods, the redbird's relative abundance value, or average number per 10 minutes, was 1.86. Hence, 1.86 times 24 equals 45, an approximate estimate of the number of cardinals per 100 acres. The absolute or areal density was determined in this manner for each species on both sites One and Two.

Table 1. Tree species on Sites One (on campus) and Two (near College Lake) on the Georgia Southwestern University Campus<sup>a</sup>.

Site One	Site Two
Yaupon Holly <i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Southern Red Oak <i>Quercus falcata</i>
American Holly <i>Ilex opaca</i>	Laurel Oak <i>Q. hemisphaerica</i>
Crape Myrtle <i>Lagerstroemia indica</i>	Water Oak <i>Q. nigra</i>
Southern Magnolia <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Willow Oak <i>Q. phellos</i>
Laurel Oak <i>Quercus hemisphaerica</i>	Mockernut Hickory <i>Carya tomentosa</i>
Water Oak <i>Q. nigra</i>	Sassafras <i>Sassafras albidum</i>
Loblolly Pine <i>Pinus taeda</i>	Southern Haw <i>Crataegus flava</i>
Longleaf Pine <i>Pinus palustris</i>	Loblolly Pine <i>Pinus taeda</i>
Shortleaf Pine <i>Pinus echinata</i>	Laurelcherry <i>Prunus caroliniana</i>
Laurelcherry <i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Black Cherry <i>Prunus serotina</i>
Flowering Dogwood <i>Cornus florida</i>	Sparkleberry <i>Vaccinium arboreum</i>
American Sycamore <i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Red Maple <i>Acer rubrum</i>
Pecan <i>Carya illinoensis</i>	Osage Orange <i>Maclura pomifera</i>
Eastern Redcedar <i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Black Willow <i>Salix nigra</i>
	River Birch <i>Betula nigra</i>

<sup>a</sup> Names follow Duncan and Duncan, 1998

*Methods for Evidence of Woodpecker Activity.* -- On both sites trees were searched by the senior author for woodpecker signs, e.g., borings or wood excavations of various kinds. This survey included 115 trees on Site One and 104 on Site Two. Trees on all of Site One and about five acres of Site Two were examined. The presence or absence of borings was recorded for each tree. Also recorded were tree diameter at breast height (dbh), the extent of dead or decaying wood, type of boring (large versus small, depending on diameter of entrance), and whether the trees were deciduous or evergreen. Measurements of dbh were taken at a height of 4 feet from the tree base with a calibrated Lufkin measuring tape. Only trees with a dbh greater than or equal to 10 cm were recorded.

Trees with 50% or more visible dead or decaying wood were recorded as dead, and those with less than 50% were recorded as alive. Large borings, greater than or equal to 4 cm in diameter, were presumed to have been made by most of the permanent-resident picids in the area. In

addition to the species listed in Table 2, these included the Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), as well as the Downy (*Picoides pubescens*) and Hairy Woodpeckers (*P. villosus*). Many of the smaller borings, less than 4 cm in diameter, may have been excavated by winter-resident Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus varius*). While some excavations may be due to other cavity-nesting birds, notably the Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*), Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*), and Brown-headed Nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*), most were considered to be the work of woodpeckers.

## Results and Discussion

*Species Composition and Absolute Abundance.*-- Species composition and absolute abundance values and quantitative comparisons of the two sites are presented in Table 2. These density estimates may be regarded as preliminary. Site One was estimated to have approximately 257 birds per 100 acres; Site Two, 185 birds per 100 acres. The Red-bellied (*Melanerpes carolinus*) and Red-headed Woodpeckers (*M. erythrocephalus*) were the only woodpeckers recorded at Site One, with the former being more abundant. Other prominent birds sighted or heard at Site One included the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*), Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*), Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*), and Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*).

The fact that breeding-season density was greater on Site One is consonant with findings of other investigators (Pitelka 1942; Johnston 1970). Johnston (1970) notes two factors that may account for high-density bird populations in relatively artificial or park-like wooded areas such as Site One. The first factor involves the presence of cultivated plants, which form a "shrub layer" and create an edge effect preferred by many bird species for nesting. Second, the presence of open areas for foraging and the substantial distance between trees, well-exemplified by Site One, also are preferred conditions for many kinds of birds.

Odum's (1950) method of comparison by means of percentage differences (Table 2) enables one to compare the total bird population for both sites, taking into account both the species present and their varying densities. A 100% difference between sites would indicate that no similarity exists. Therefore, the 78% difference between the bird assemblages at Site One versus Site Two (Table 2) is deemed highly significant, indeed striking.

Considering birds present at both sites, the greatest disparities exist among the Northern Cardinals, Great Crested Flycatchers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Brown Thrashers, and Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*). All

of these except the cardinal have populations at Site One, which are at least twice as large as those at Site Two (Table 2). The cardinal's density at Site Two was more than three times as great as that on the central campus. The most common picid on Site Two was the Pileated Woodpecker, followed by the Red-headed Woodpecker. The latter was noted at the periphery, near residences. Other frequently noted birds at Site Two, in addition to the Northern Cardinal, were the White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*), Blue Jay, and Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*). The Barn Swallow's (*Hirundo rustica*) presence was due to a nest site under a small bridge crossing a small stream. The Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) was noted only where the woods bordered an open, grassy swath beneath a power line. The Swainson's Warbler (*Limnethlypis swainsonii*), recorded only once, was a transient visitor.

This study suggests that Site One, the central campus, provided adequate conditions for woodpeckers. Here they made up 14% of the total population, whereas the lowland picids comprised only 5% (Table 2). It is suspected that the large-sized trees, including pines, are a major reason for this difference. Among 12 breeding-bird censuses conducted in deciduous woods (all in or near Coastal Plain areas of four Southeastern states), picids made up 6% or less of the total populations (Rohwer and Woolfenden, 1969). This corresponds to the relatively low percentage of woodpeckers seen on Site Two. Admittedly, if the censuses of the sites reported in this study had been extended for a longer period, a few additional species, including picids such as the Downy Woodpecker, almost certainly would have been added to the lists.

Table 2. Comparisons of the percentages and differences in species (i.e., number of birds per 100 acres) between Sites One and Two on the campus of Georgia Southwestern State University<sup>a</sup>.

Species	Site One	Difference	Site Two
European Starling	40	40	0
Common Grackle	32	32	0
Great Crested Flycatcher	30	24	6
Blue Jay	28	14	14
Red-bellied Woodpecker	21	21	0
Brown Thrasher	19	14	5
Mourning Dove	18	18	0
Red-headed Woodpecker	14	11	3
Northern Cardinal	14	31	45
Northern Mockingbird	10	10	0
American Robin	10	10	0
Tufted Titmouse	6	3	9
Brown-headed Nuthatch	5	5	0
Gray Catbird	5	5	0
House Finch	5	5	0
Carolina Wren	0	16	16
White-eyed Vireo	0	29	29
Wood Thrush	0	2	2
Common Yellowthroat	0	10	10
Eastern Towhee	0	14	14
Barn Swallow	0	10	10
Pileated Woodpecker	0	6	6
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	0	5	5
Swainson's Warbler	0	6	6
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	0	5	5
Total species/difference	15		16
Total individuals	257	346	185
Woodpeckers/100 acres	35(14%)		10(5%)

Difference between the Site One and Site Two populations = 78%  
[346/(257+185)]

<sup>a</sup>This method of comparing populations was employed by Odum (1950).

*Additional Evidence of Woodpecker Activity.*-- In both sites more than a third of the trees showed no visible evidence of picid workings. The rest, about 64 percent, were bored or excavated to varying degrees. Those bored and considered mainly dead were sparse, and included 4% or less of the total trees. In contrast, those bored and considered mainly alive were more prevalent, comprising about 60% of the total sample. The affected trees on the two plots were similar in those respects. Two size classes of borings (holes greater vs. less than 4cm in diameter) also were about the same on both sites. There were more large trees, as assessed by both height (estimated) and dbh (measured), on the central campus plot, where the maximum dbh was 71cm. Among the relatively large trees, the prevalence of bored trees was about 1.6 times that of non-bored trees. On Site Two the maximum dbh was 29cm and the prevalence of bored trees was about 1.3 times that of non-bored trees. In contrast to deciduous trees, evergreens, mostly pines, were more dominant on Site One. Here they outnumbered their deciduous associates by more than 50%. The generally greater size and number of evergreens on the central campus are believed to be the major factors determining its comparatively large population of woodpeckers.

### Summary

In April and May of 1998, breeding-bird populations were censused in two unlike woodland habitats in Americus, Sumter County, Georgia. The same areas were examined for woodpecker signs, including wood borings or excavations. Site One, on the central campus of Georgia Southwestern State University, displayed larger, more widely spread trees and more evergreens, primarily pines. It was landscaped, having extensive lawns. Site Two, on lower ground and close to water, featured more deciduous trees, had denser vegetation, and was less artificial, or less modified by man. A well-tested census technique was employed, the method being described. The total avian population was greater on Site One: 257 birds per 100 acres (15 species) versus 185 on Site Two (16 species). The denser population on the central campus appeared to be due to the larger trees and park-like aspect. In species composition, the two populations were markedly different: about 78 %. Woodpeckers made up a small fraction of the total population, 14 % on Site One and 5% on Site Two. Wood borings of various picids were examined. The two habitats were similar in (1) average size of holes and in (2) relative prevalence of borings in dead wood versus live wood. These signs were more evident on larger trees and on evergreens, primarily pines. The larger evergreens were better represented on Site One. This difference between sites is considered to be

a major reason for greater abundance of woodpeckers on the central campus.

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## GENERAL NOTES

FIRST AUGUSTA RECORD OF NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW – On the morning of 9 December 2000, a group of 11 people met at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park near Augusta's sewage treatment plant for an Augusta Audubon field trip. A cold drizzle persisted most of the morning with heavier rain at times. We concentrated on the older ponds completed in 1998, which have thick masses of cattails, bulrush, and sedges on either end with an area of open water in the middle. In the edge of a cattail area, a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) was observed. First the bird lurked in the cattails, coming out into view on the edges, but then it sat out in plain view only three meters away so that all of us present could see it well. We called out field marks to each other: a gray patch on the face below the eye surrounded by an ochre triangle; flattened head shape with a dark brown crown; light colored bill, especially when seen from the side; distinct ochre bib on the upper breast with pale gray stripes ending in a distinct line which separated it from the white belly below, with the gray streaks continuing lower on the flanks; warm brown wings especially on the shoulders in contrast to the gray of the back. We watched the sparrow for over ten minutes. After I wrote down all of the field marks we had observed and we had discussed them, we were not sure which type of sharp-tailed sparrow it was. None of us had a guide that had details of the recent split of the sharp-tailed sparrows.

Once home, I consulted the June 1996 article in *BIRDING* by David Sibley, *Field Identification of the Sharp-tailed Complex*. From this I determined that the bird was an adult of the Atlantic population of Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow that winters in Georgia marshes on the coast. Subsequent conversations with others who were on the field trip corroborated the identification.

J.C. Haney et al. (1986, *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, GOS Occasional Publ. No. 10) state that the sharp-tailed sparrow is a rare spring and fall transient in the interior. According to records obtained from Giff Beaton (pers. comm.), the record early and late migration dates for this species are from Macon (17 Sept. 1982 and 14 May 1932).

Others who observed the bird were: Richard Lux, Joan and Gene Howard, Fletcher Bingham, James and Joyce Keener, George Reeves, and Carol Barton. This was a first Augusta record for this sparrow. The bird was not located in the area after this date.

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UNPRECEDENTED NUMBERS OF INLAND ROSEATE SPOONBILLS IN 2002 – The late summer and early fall of 2002 brought unprecedented numbers of Roseate Spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*) to inland locations in Georgia, with up to six individuals present at some locations. Prior to 2002, there were 17 records of inland spoonbills in Georgia, 12 in the Coastal Plain and five above the Fall Line (Beaton et al. 2003, *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds*, GOS, Occasional Publ. No. 14). In 2002, there were spoonbills in at least seven inland locations with at least 14 individuals involved (Table 1), with additional reports from adjacent states.

The first report was of a single immature bird ranging along the Altamaha River from Goose Creek to Hughes Old River between mid-June and mid-August (J. Sandow, pers. comm. and photos). This area is roughly centered by Goose Island, on the Long and Wayne County line.

The next report was of a single adult present at Stegall's Pond in Thomas County from 14-17 August (B. Crawford, pers. comm.). Following that were several observations of multiple birds in widely scattered locations. On 19 August, two immatures were found at Magruder Pond, a private irrigation pond in Burke County (M. Hodges, pers. comm.). The same two birds were seen there through 31 August (pers. obs.), and then on 8 September there were four immatures there (B. Zarembo, pers. comm.).

Meanwhile, in Sumter County, two birds were noted at Blue Hole Pond on 28 August and stayed until 12 September (J. Greene, pers. comm.). At Lake Philema, about 10 km away, four birds were found on 14 September and seen until 12 October, when the number increased to six. Presumably the Blue Hole Pond birds had moved over to that location. Those six were seen until 20 October (C. Rainey and P. Hardy, pers. comm.).

Another individual appeared in Tift County at a small farm pond on 29 August and was present until 31 August (J. Dowlen, pers. comm. and photo). Finally, another immature spoonbill appeared at Phinizy Swamp in Richmond County from 29 August through 2 September (A. Waters, pers. comm.).

Some of these sightings may involve the same individuals, but in cases where different ages or simultaneous presence at widely separated locations was noted there were clearly multiple birds involved. The Altamaha River and Thomas County birds were different individuals based on age, and could have shown up in the later observations. However, late August and early September brought sightings of at least eight birds at four locations, and it is highly unlikely that every wayward spoonbill in Georgia during this period was reported. Other waterbirds are prone to large-scale movements such as this one, typically from some type of water-related event (usually a drought in or near breeding areas), but efforts to explain

this event in Florida where most southeastern spoonbills occur were unsuccessful.

Adjacent states also reported unusual spoonbill sightings in 2002. Alabama had about 25 total records prior to 2002, but had two inland and four coastal sightings in 2002 (G. Jackson and S. McConnell, pers. comm.). In South Carolina, the only inland observation in 2002 was a single immature from Silver Bluff Sanctuary (southeast of Augusta and close to Phinizy Swamp) from 9-26 August (L. Glover, pers. comm.). Tennessee had two sightings in 2002: three immatures in Shelby County on 24 August (this location is in extreme western Tennessee and the source region may not be Florida, as is assumed for the Georgia birds) and one bird in Greene County (far east, near the North Carolina state line) from 7-20 Oct (K. Calhoon, pers. comm.). Although the reason(s) for all these inland reports of Roseate Spoonbill in 2002 is not clear, the fact that there was a widespread movement of them certainly is!

Table 1. 2002 Roseate Spoonbill sightings in inland Georgia.

Dates of observation	Numbers/description	County	Location
mid-June to mid-August	1 adult	Long/Wayne	Carter Island and Altamaha River
14-17 August	1 adult	Thomas	Stegall's Pond
28 Aug - 8 Sep	2-4 immatures	Burke	Magruder Pond
28 Aug - 20 Oct	up to 6 spoonbills	Sumter	Blue Hole Pond and Lake Philema
29-31 Aug	1 adult	Tift	Farm pond
29 Aug - 2 Sep	1 adult	Richmond	Phinizy Swamp

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**SWAINSON'S WARBLER MAY SHIFT TERRITORIES IN RESPONSE TO SPRING FLOODING** -- As part of research investigating the response of Swainson's warblers to canebrake restoration an interesting pattern of territory shifts in response to flooding was revealed. Nine Swainson's Warbler territories had become established in and around our research plots since their creation in 1999. These territories were found on Falling Creek and Little Falling Creek, Piedmont NWR (Jones County); Rum Creek, Rum Creek WMA (Monroe County); and White Oak Creek, Joe Kurz WMA (Meriwether County). Most of these territories had been stable (singing males present every year) since 2001, three since at least 1999. In 2003, no Swainson's Warblers were detected in any of these territories or on any other experimental plots. All nine territories were located in floodplains, eight of these plots were heavily flooded one or more times in the spring of 2003, several to a depth of 12 feet. This was the first year of normal rainfall following four years of drought. It is unclear whether flooding preceded territory shifts or whether Swainson's Warblers were able to anticipate the potential for flooding and adjust territories accordingly; however one territory occupied 1999 to 2002 was vacated in 2003 though no flooding occurred. This was the only territory below a dam (Rum Creek WMA), which effectively prevented spring flooding, and may suggest Swainson's Warblers establish territories based on perceived flooding potential rather than relocating after flooding, but this is a tenuous supposition at best based on only one territory. Regardless, Swainson's Warblers appear to be very dynamic in their choice of territory location, avoiding flood prone areas in unusually wet years, occupying them in dry years, which probably represents a balance between nesting as close as possible to detritus-rich floodplains and their associated prey bases, and avoiding possible loss of nests to flooding. This adds a new twist to the management of Swainson's Warblers, a high conservation priority, since apparently unoccupied territory may be critical habitat in alternate years.

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**GOS FALL 2003 MEETING POSTER ABSTRACTS**  
**10-12 October 2003**  
**Jekyll Island, GA**

EFFECTS OF DISTURBANCE AND PREDATION ON AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS (*HAEMATOPUS PALLIATES*) DURING THE BREEDING SEASON, CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE, GEORGIA, 2003. John B. Sabine<sup>1</sup>, J. Michael Meyers<sup>2</sup>, and Sara H. Schweitzer<sup>2</sup>; <sup>1</sup>USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Warnell School of Forest Resources, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-2125 ([johnsabine@hotmail.com](mailto:johnsabine@hotmail.com)), <sup>2</sup>Warnell School of Forest Resources, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-2125

**Abstract:** Human disturbance and predation may contribute to low reproductive success for American Oystercatchers at Cumberland Island National Seashore, Georgia; however, no recent studies have focused on identification of causes of egg and hatchling losses. Our objectives are: (1) to determine nest success, (2) to determine depredation rates and sources, (3) to determine disturbance frequency and duration (primarily related to activities of humans and their pets) and its effects on nesting success, and (4) to quantify a threshold of tolerance to disturbance. During our first year (2003), we accomplished our objectives by video-monitoring nests and collecting time-activity data on all juvenile American Oystercatchers and nesting adults, and by documenting human disturbance. During the 2003 breeding season, 10 nesting oystercatcher pairs made 19 nest attempts. Four nests were successful, fledging six chicks. Nests failed because of predation (n=10), overwash (n=1), feral horse trampling (n=1), unknown (n=2). Predators included raccoon (*Procyon lotor*, n=6), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*, n=3), and ghost crab (*Ocypode quadata*, n=1). We collected more than 300 hours of time-activity data and disturbance data. In the next year, we will use multiple regression analysis to compare these data. We will compare nesting success of disturbed and undisturbed areas using the program CONTRAST.

AVIAN RESPONSE TO THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIVE WARM-SEASON GRASSES IN THE PIEDMONT OF GEORGIA: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS. Angela B. McMellen, Sara H. Schweitzer, and Phil E. Hale; Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30606 ([mcmellen@uga.edu](mailto:mcmellen@uga.edu))

**Abstract:** Southeastern early successional habitat has experienced large-scale conversion to high-intensity agriculture, pine plantations, and exotic grass pastures. Many native grasses have been virtually eliminated. Birds that depend on grassland communities for breeding and/or wintering habitat have experienced precipitous declines. We established 12 plots in the Piedmont of Georgia. Piedmont NWR has six plots in forest openings. Joe Kurz WMA has six plots in an open agricultural landscape. At each location, three plots were planted with a combination of big bluestem, little bluestem, switch grass, and Indian grass, and three control plots remained under current management (mowing/burning). Mist netting and vegetation measurements were conducted in all plots in spring 2002, winter 2003, and spring 2003 to quantify the establishment of the grasses and the avian response. Planted plots had lower vegetative species richness than unplanted plots in 2002. Grass cover in the planted plots was lower than unplanted plots in 2002. Over 300 individuals of 41 species of birds were captured during the three seasons. Bird species richness was lower in planted plots in 2002. Joe Kurz plots had lower bird species richness during summer 2002 and 2003, but higher richness during winter 2003. Bird community composition between locations varied more in the spring than the winter.

## FROM THE FIELD

### JUNE-JULY 2003

As is usually the case, the birds and the birding tend to slow down during the summer months. The breeding birds have ceased their singing and are busy tending to their young. A lot of birders are probably doing the same. We still managed some interesting sightings over this period. Russ Wigh provided us with a rare opportunity to monitor bird life off Gray's Reef during several weeks in June. E.J. Williams' work with the Swallow-tailed Kites continues to increase our understanding of this species' breeding and wintering ranges both in Georgia and in South America. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have once again successfully nested at the McDonough site, and a new site in northwest Georgia was discovered. Several birders made trips to the Georgia Mountains to observe and report on the breeding warblers, vireos, tanagers, and grosbeaks in the northeast and northwest corners of the state. Probably one of the more interesting sightings was one from Augusta by Bill Lotz and Dan Vickers of Red-breasted Mergansers at a location along the Savannah Lock and Dam Park. This was a very rare inland report for this species. Of course, a review of this period would not be complete without noting the start of migration. Whether you call it post-breeding dispersal or early migration, there is no denying that birds are on the move throughout the state in July. The early coverage at Kennesaw Mountain, beginning in early July, has shown us that species like Cerulean Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Black-and-white Warbler, none of which breed anywhere near Kennesaw, can be found in increasing numbers as the month progresses. But, of course, it's just a prelude to the real fall migration, and it gives us something to do in July!

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

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**MOTTLED DUCK** - Brandon Noel reported two adults and four ducklings on a pond at Little St. Simons Island on 3 June.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** - The only report, by Carol Lambert, was a single bird still at ELHLAF on 9 June.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** - A very surprising report of three birds observed by Bill Lotz and Dan Vickers on 14 July at the Savannah Lock and Dam Park near Augusta, feeding along the shore, was extremely unusual for the lower Piedmont area. It's difficult to say if these were extremely early or extremely late, but they were definitely a good find!

**RUFFED GROUSE** - The only report for this period was from Jeff Madsen, who reported seeing young birds at Ivy Log Gap Road on 15 June.

**CORY'S SHEARWATER** - Three birds were recorded off Gray's Reef by Russ Wigh between 12 June and 15 June.

**GREATER SHEARWATER** - One bird recorded off Gray's Reef by Russ Wigh on 15 June was a great find, only 17 nautical miles off the coast of Georgia.

**AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER** - One bird was reported flying over the surf-line at Jekyll Island on 18 July by Brad Winn, for a very unusual coastal sighting.

**WILSON'S STORM-PETREL** - One bird was reported just 8.5 miles from Wassaw Island on KC Reef on 20 July by Russ Wigh. Two birds reported off Gray's Reef on 16 June and one bird on 27 July were all good sightings by Russ Wigh.

**BROWN PELICAN** - Gene Keferl reported a good count of 303 birds on the beaches of Jekyll Island and Gould's Inlet on 25 July.

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** - Brad Winn reported a juvenile on 10 & 11 June over Blackbeard and Little St. Island during aerial surveys of the area.

**LEAST BITTERN** - There were several reports from around the state, with the best counts being four on 11 July at Phinizy Swamp (Bill Lotz and Dan Vickers) and four on 19 July at AWMA (Bob and Deb Zaremba). Dot Bambach had a single bird fly by at Harris Neck WMA on 9 June.

**GREAT BLUE HERON** - Joshua Spence found an active nest, with an adult feeding three fledged young, in Murray County on 3 July. The most interesting sightings were of two white morphs reported within days of each other, the first on 27 July at Lake Sinclair (Jim Flynn and Earl Horn) and another on 30 July at Floyd College near Rome (Jeff Dixon).

**GREAT EGRET** - Earl Horn and Jim Flynn had 50 below the dam at Lake Sinclair on 27 July, which was a good count away from the coast.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** - Four immature birds were observed in northern Greene County on 6 July by Paul Sykes and Steve Holzman.

**TRICOLORED HERON** - Michael Bell found a single bird at Fairchild Park in Seminole County on 22 June.

**CATTLE EGRET** - The highest count reported was 83 by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn from Jefferson County on 13 July.

**REDDISH EGRET** - A single bird was seen at Gould's Inlet on 19 July by Bob and Deb Zaremba. Brandon Noel reported seeing three birds at Little St. Simons Island on 3 June, while Deb Barreiro also observed three at Tybee Island on 5 July.

**WHITE IBIS** - A good inland report of a single bird, present through the end of July, at the sod farm in Bartow County was unusual (Bob and Deb Zaremba). A high count of 200 birds in Macon County in a cow pasture on Old Stagecoach Road was an excellent inland count on 3 July by Dan and Pam Guynn.

**GLOSSY IBIS** - A high count of 63 birds was very good at the AWMA on 12 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

**ROSEATE SPOONBILL** - Several reports away from the usual roost sites included three birds on Snipe Pond in Harris Neck NWR on 3 June, reported by Matt Ryan and Dot Bambach. Three birds were reported by Beth Roth and Regi Sonnen from Skidaway Island in Savannah between 26 June and 12 July. Brandon Noel reported nine birds on Little St. Simons Island from 19 July through 21 July.

**WOOD STORK** - Several inland reports were received, including six birds in

Wilcox County on 22 June, a high count of 18 birds in Houston County on 5 July, and two birds in Dooly County on 11 July (Dan and Pam Guynn).

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE – A single bird was reported on 1 June in Wheeler County by Dan and Pam Guynn. E.J. Williams reported that 12 young fledged from 18 nests located in 2003. She also stated that all in all, nesting efforts in 2003 were depressed, probably due to later nesting initiation and lower than average nest success. A good report away from the coastal plain was submitted by Donna Jackson who reported two birds near Peachtree City, Fayette County, on 16 July. The highest number of foraging kites was reported on 26 July by Dan Kennedy, who saw 35 birds over a field in Long County. Michael Bell and Oscar Dewberry found 17 birds foraging over a field near Faceville in Decatur County on 30 July.

MISSISSIPPI KITE - The highest count was again from fields in Long County and Tattnall County, where Mark Davis reported seeing five birds in each field on 28 July.

BALD EAGLE – Carol Lambert observed two birds carrying food in Clayton County in early June.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK – Marion Dobbs observed an adult bird and a recently fledged bird in the same area near Lavender Mountain in Floyd County. A bird seen in Decatur County on July 20 by Michael Bell was unusual.

AMERICAN KESTREL – A report of a bird seen by Tim Keyes in downtown Atlanta on 6 June was unexpected for this rare summer resident. Bill Harbin also observed a pair in downtown Rome in June that may have nested.

PEREGRINE FALCON – Jim Ozier reported that the pair nesting in downtown Atlanta had at least two young hatched out by 20 June. Jim also reported that a second pair in midtown Atlanta nested successfully on 26 June.

BLACK RAIL – Two birds were observed in northern Greene County on 6 July by Paul Sykes and Steve Holzman.

KING RAIL – While surveying beside the Conasauga River, Joshua Spence found a bird calling on 3 July. One bird was seen at AWMA on 19 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba), and Michael Bell reports having heard one or two birds at Ichuaway Plantation in Baker County on 12 July.

PURPLE GALLINULE – A high count of 12 birds seen at the AWMA on 19 July included five juvenile birds (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

SANDHILL CRANE – Brad Bergstrom reported finding birds at the usual location in Grand Bay WMA on 26 July.

WILSON'S PLOVER – Brandon Noel reported having 45 to 50 chicks on the beach at Little St. Simons Island on 3 June.

PIPING PLOVER - Gene Keferl reported finding one bird on the beach at Jekyll Island on 25 July.

BLACK-NECKED STILT – Bob and Deb Zaremba reported a high count of five birds at AWMA on 12 July. Walt Chambers found two birds at the Bradley Unit of ENWR on 6 June.

WILLET – Brandon Noel reported seeing the first Willet chick on the beach of Little St. Simons Island on 3 June. The only birds reported away from the coast this season were two birds seen at Lake Sinclair Dam by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn on 27 July.

WHIMBREL – Russ Wigh reported seeing one bird on Skidaway Island in July.

LEAST SANDPIPER – Four birds seen at ELHLAF by Carol Lambert were the first birds seen this period.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER – Two birds seen on 14 July and 23 seen on 26 July at the sod farm in Bartow County were the first reported for the summer season (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

STILT SANDPIPER – One bird was seen at AMWA on 12 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

BRIDLED TERN – A single bird off Gray's Reef on 11 June was a great sighting by Russ Wigh.

BLACK TERN – A flock of 35 birds off Gray's Reef were the first birds reported for the season (Russ Wigh). The earliest report of inland birds was of two birds seen at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park near Augusta by Bill Lotz.

WILLOW FLYCATCHER – A single bird was seen and calling at the Ingles Parking lot in Blairsville on 4 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

LEAST FLYCATCHER - One bird was singing on Hale Ridge Road in Rabun County on 4 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba). Another report of two birds in Murray County on 8 July by Joshua Spence suggests that this species may be breeding in the northern Piedmont more often than we may be aware.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER – A new pair was found by Dan Jacobsen in Trenton, Dade County, on 7 June. The McDonough site pair were seen still feeding young on 24 July (Bob Cheek).

HORNED LARK – Three juvenile plumaged birds found by Bob and Deb Zaremba on Dig Road, Bartow County, were possible local breeders. This species is becoming increasingly difficult to find in the Piedmont area.

TREE SWALLOW – The number of nesting birds seems to be increasing in the Piedmont. Michael Beohm reported finding a pair with young at Big Lazar WMA in Talbot County in June. Ann Stewart observed a pair nesting in a Purple Martin gourd on her property in Rome, Floyd County, on 29 June.

BANK SWALLOW – A single bird seen on 26 July was extremely early from KMT (Chuck Saleeby).

CLIFF SWALLOW – A count of 40 birds migrating in northern Greene County on 6 July by Paul Sykes and Steve Holzman indicated some early movement of this species.

BARN SWALLOW – Nathan Klaus reported an amazing count of 5000 to 6000 birds converging on some cornfields in Lamar County on 14 July.

VEERY – Several birds were reported singing at Brasstown Bald, Rabun County, by David Trently on 16 July.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER – A single bird was seen on 31 July at KMT (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

NORTHERN PARULA – One bird seen on 17 July was the first for the season at KMT (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – Eight birds were found in Rabun County on 4 July. Four adults feeding young were seen by Bob and Deb Zaremba on the jeep trail to Rabun Bald.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER – The first birds seen moving through KMT were on 4 July, with a high count of 12 on 31 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.). Marion Dobbs reported an impressive total of 13 birds seen in Whitfield County in the Chattahoochee National Forest on 4 June.

**BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** – A single bird seen on 31 July at KMT was the first of the season (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** – Two birds seen at KMT on 23 July were the first of the season (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** – A new late date for the state was set by Russ Wigh, when he observed a bird which came aboard a boat near Gray's Reef on 17 June.

**CERULEAN WARBLER** – The earliest report was two birds seen on 17 July, and high counts of 10 on 23 July and 11 on 31 July all from KMT were good for this species (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** – Three birds seen on 8 July were early migrants at KMT (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**AMERICAN REDSTART** – A single bird seen on 21 July was the first of the season reported from KMT (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**WORM-EATING WARBLER** – One bird seen on 14 July was the first for the season and set, by seven days, a new early date at KMT (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.). Marion Dobbs reported four birds from the Chattahoochee National Forest in Whitfield County on 4 June, while on the same day Stephen Stewart reported having five birds at John's Mountain in Floyd County.

**OVENBIRD** – There were many reports of this species this season, with birds singing on territory in many new areas of the Piedmont. A bird singing in McDuffie County observed by Giff Beaton on 5 July, just north of the Fall Line, adds to the number of possible breeding birds near the Fall Line in Bibb County. Marie and Jerry Amerson observed a bird in Screven County on 5 July in the Tuckahoe WMA.

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** – Earl Horn reported a bird in northwestern Baldwin County on 27 July, which is a new early date for the Piedmont.

**HOODED WARBLER** – The first fall bird seen moving through KMT was on 19 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**CANADA WARBLER** – David Trently reported two birds still singing on 16 July from Rabun Bald in Rabun County.

**SUMMER TANAGER** – The high count at KMT was 11 on 14 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Giff Beaton et al.).

**SCARLET TANAGER** – A good report for the lower Piedmont was submitted by Michael Beohm when he reported five singing birds from FDR State Park in southern Meriwether County on 10 June.

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** – David Trently reported a good count of ten birds from Rabun Bald on 16 July.

**PAINTED BUNTING** – An adult male was seen inland by Dan and Pam Guynn on 1 June at a location in Wheeler County.

**DICKCISSEL** – A single bird was singing on Brandon Farm Road in Bartow County on 27 July (Bob and Deb Zaremba, Karen Theodorou).

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** – Barbara Edwards observed an adult male and fledgling birds getting water from a pond in Macon's Central City Park on 4 June.

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

## FROM THE FIELD AUGUST-NOVEMBER 2003

This season had some amazing highlights in the state of Georgia. Kennesaw Mountain was host to two incredible records this fall when Pierre Howard discovered a Black-throated Gray Warbler and Giff Beaton found a very rare Bell's Vireo for only the second record in the state for each of these species. The fall migration period was also highlighted by many late reports of lingering birds due primarily to the mild weather that we enjoyed well in to November. Another exciting birding location near Atlanta was discovered as David Hedeon provided us with daily reports from the Robinson Nature Preserve. David found some great birds there like Mourning Warbler, Western Kingbird, and Clay-colored Sparrow. Hopefully, birders will continue to enjoy this wonderful location for years to come. Speaking of birding paradises, Brandon Noel's coverage of Little Saint Simons Island has kept all of us envious of his full time position as the naturalist on this Georgia coastal gem. His reports dominated most of the shorebird, gull, and tern reports for the state. If you ever have the chance to visit the island and enjoy the diverse habitats and bird life jump at it! Russ Wigh's pelagic endeavors have also helped us better understand the status of birds off the Georgia shore, as was highlighted by another amazing record this fall of two Brown Noddies seen offshore on a pelagic trip out to the gulf stream in August. This was truly a wonderful fall for birding in Georgia. Enjoy the detailed sightings that follow!

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

### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** – This species showed up in pretty good numbers this season. The earliest arriving birds were four seen by Doris Cohrs at the AWMA on 24 October. Judy Gaines reported a single bird with a flock of Snow Geese on her property in Bartow County from 16 November through 19 November. Dan Guynn found two birds in Irwin County on 23 November that remained until 25 November. Several reports from the coast later in the month by Mike Chapman included eight birds on 22 November from the AWMA and finally, two birds were found at Tybee Island on 29 November by Steve Barlow. **SNOW GOOSE** – We are continuing to see growing numbers of reports for this species each year. The first report received was on 12 November when Chris Loudermilk located a single bird at SCSP. The next day, 13 November, Rusty Trump had a group of 26 birds in Suwanee. On 19 November, Judy Gaines

reported a group of 12 birds in a small pond on her property in Bartow County. The birds remained at least until 19 November, but were moving around the many small farm ponds in that area and sometimes difficult to find. Finally, Doris Cohrs reported a single bird from the observation tower at the AWMA on 16 November. Apparently, the week of 12 November was a good week for migrating Snow Geese.

**ROSS'S GOOSE** – A single bird at Lake Juliette was reported by Eric Beohm on 13 November. Later in the month, Karen Theodorou found another bird at Collins' Park on 24 November, which was later seen by Earl Horn.

**TUNDRA SWAN** – The only report for this period was a bird found by Paul Champlin at the Merry Brothers Brickyards in Augusta on 30 November.

**WOOD DUCK** – Jim Flynn had a high count of 36 birds in Dawson Forest WMA on 30 September.

**GADWALL** – Steve Barlow recorded a very early date when he located two birds at Harris Neck NWR on 24 August. The ACOGB states the extreme date for arriving wintering birds to be 12 October on the coast. There was another August record for Glynn County, 18-20 August 1989 (Oriole 55:25) listed as accidental. It would be worth documenting this sighting for the Oriole as well. More in line with their normal status, Eric Beohm reported 28 birds at Lake Juliette on 20 November.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** – Marion Dobbs has been monitoring the waterfowl at Garden Lakes in Rome the past few years and noted the arrival of this species with 12 birds on 14 October. The numbers of birds gradually built to a high count of 95 on 30 November. This location has been a very reliable spot for this species over the years.

**AMERICAN BLACK DUCK** – Karen Theodorou reported finding six ducks at Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve on 17 November. Michael Boehm at Lake Horton and Bob Zaremba at Lake Acworth found single birds, both on 9 November.

**MOTTLED DUCK** – With the return of good habitat on the east side of the AWMA, this species is getting easier to find once again, and Bob Zaremba found four birds on 12 October. From other locations on the coast, Gene Keferl found 12 birds on Rhett's Island and 18 birds on Egg Island Bar on 1 September. Finally, Brandon Noel reported seeing this species on Little Saint Simons Island on 16 September.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** – The earliest reported birds were from ELHLAF where Carol Lambert found a group of 11 birds on 17 August. Later in the month, Jerry Amerson found this species at the Macon Brickyards and Bob Zaremba found four birds on 25 August and 30 birds on 30 August in Bartow County. Terry Johnson recorded the highest count on 20 September of 62 birds in Monroe County.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** – The first report was from Patrick Brisse who located four birds at ELHLAF on 17 August. The high count grew to 80 birds at ELHLAF on 16 November, reported by Carol Lambert.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** – There were few reports of this species during the period, so a single bird at ELHLAF reported by Jeff Sewell and Carol Lambert on 20 September was very good. Bob Zaremba also reported finding this species at the AWMA with six birds on 10 October and eight birds on 12 October.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL** – The earliest arriving birds were once again at

ELHLAF, where Carol Lambert reported four birds on 20 September. The highest reported total was from Gene Keferl and Mark Freeman who reported over 200 birds at the AWMA on 2 November.

**CANVASBACK** – The only report of this species was from Michael Beohm who had two birds at Lake Horton on 9 November.

**REDHEAD** – Walt Chambers reported 15 birds at West Point Dam on 15 November. A week earlier, on 8 November, Eric Beohm reported seeing 19 birds at the J.W. Smith Reservoir in Clayton County.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** – The highest count for this species was an incredible 1500+ birds reported by Paul Champlin from Phinizy Swamp on 9 November.

**LESSER SCAUP** – Sterling Blanchard had a count of 150 birds on 14 November from the lake at Plant Wansley in Carroll and Heard counties.

**SURF SCOTER** – This species usually shows up in small numbers, scattered around the state in small lakes and on the coast. The earliest report was from Bear Creek Reservoir where Mike Freeman found two birds on 28 October. The next day, Malcolm Hodges located a single bird at ELHLAF in Clayton County. Chris Loudermilk found two birds at SCSP on 9 November, followed the next week by Michael Beohm who found two birds on Lake Horton on 14 November. Finally, Steve Barlow found four birds of Jekyll Island on 30 November.

**WHITE-WINGED SCOTER** – This species is usually more difficult to find than Surf Scoter, so three off shore at the south end of Jekyll Island was a very good find for Gene Keferl on 23 November.

**BLACK SCOTER** – The usual wintering flocks off Jekyll Island began arriving in November. Lydia Thompson reported seeing 100+ birds off the south end of Jekyll on 7 November.

**BUFFLEHEAD** – The first report of this species was from Carol Lambert with six birds at ELHLAF on 8 November.

**HOODED MERGANSER** – Patrick Brisse reported a high count of more than 300 birds at ELHLAF on 16 November.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** – The highest count was from Walt Chambers who reported seeing 35 birds at West Point Dam on 14 November.

**RUDDY DUCK** – The first arriving bird was one that Carol Lambert reported from ELHLAF on 6 October. Patrick Brisse had a high count of 29 birds in the same location on 16 November.

**PLAIN CHACHALACA** – This species continues to thrive at Sapelo Island. Earl Horn reported seeing three birds on 11 October in the usual place on the island near the garbage dump.

**PACIFIC LOON** – Michael Beohm reported seeing this species at Lake Horton, Fayette County on 9 November. If submitted and accepted this would be a very good record for Georgia.

**COMMON LOON** – The first report of this species came from Walter F. George Dam where Walt Chambers found three birds on 28 October. Any sightings away from the coast or large lakes in Georgia are good, so David Hedeon's report of 44 birds flying over Robinson Nature Preserve on 8 November was excellent. The high count for the period came later in the month when Walt Chambers had 73 at West Point Dam on 14 November.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** – Lois Stacey had a very good count of 18 at Merry Brothers Brickyards in Augusta on 30 November.

**HORNED GREBE** – Steve Barlow had a good day finding this species on 9 November when he located a single bird at ELHLAF, 18 at Buford Dam, and nine on Lake Allatoona.

**EARED GREBE** – This period proved to be good for this species which can be difficult to find some years, with several observers finding birds around the state. The first report was from Terry Johnson who found ten birds in Monroe County on 20 September. Eric Boehm had a peak count of 12 at Lake Juliette on 20 November, and a bird at ELHLAF was present through the end of November according to Carol Lambert.

**CORY'S SHEARWATER** – Several pelagic trips out of Savannah produced seven birds on 23 August and two birds on 29 August (Bob Zaremba, Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh). Russ Wigh also reported seeing five birds on 18 October on a trip out to Gray's Reef.

**GREATER SHEARWATER** – Russ Wigh reported a single bird near Gray's Reef on 22 August.

**AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER** – The previously mentioned pelagic trips also resulted in one bird on the 23 August trip and another single bird on the 29 August trip. (Bob Zaremba, Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh).

**WILSON'S STORM-PETREL** – A very good count of 13 birds on the pelagic trip on 23 August, followed by a count of three birds on the trip out on 29 August. (Bob Zaremba, Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh).

**NORTHERN GANNET** – The first report was from Marjorie Clark on a single bird on 29 November off the coast of Jekyll Island.

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – Normally this species is found off St. Mary's in Camden County, so any report away from this site is significant. This period, the reports were widespread, stretching from the west side of the state to the east side and from the coast to the piedmont. The earliest report was from Little Saint Simons Island where Brandon Noel reported seeing five birds on 24 August. He also reported having a group of 14 birds on 4 October on the island. Another coastal report was a bird seen on Sapelo Island on 11 October by Jerry Amerson and Earl Horn. Deb Barrio also reported seeing a flock of 17 birds farther up the coast, flying over Fort Pulaski near Tybee Island on 23 October. Away from the coast, Anne Waters had a good report of this species on 30 October at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park in Augusta. On the other side of the state, Walt Chambers watched a single bird land in the south unit of the Bradley Unit of ENWR on 27 November. Perhaps the most interesting sighting during this period was from Marion Dobbs and Stephen Stewart who found six birds on Garden Lakes in Rome on 13 November.

**AMERICAN BITTERN** – The first report of this species was a bird found in the southern part of the state where Brad Bergstrom had a single bird in Grand Bay NWR on 6 September. Single birds were also found in various locations around the state. Walt Chambers reported finding one bird at the Bradley Unit of ENWR on 10 October. Jerry Bruner located a single bird at South Peachtree Creek Nature Preserve on 25 September. From the coast, Bob Zaremba found single birds on 12 October and 28 November at the AWMA.

**LEAST BITTERN** – The only reports this period were from AWMA where Nathan Klaus had a single bird on 15 August and Bob Zaremba had one bird on 24 August.

**GREAT EGRET** – Carol Lambert had a good count of 34 birds at ELHLAF on 3 August, and one bird lingered later than normal at the same location through 30 November. A count of 15 birds at a roost site in Bartow County on August 5 was a good count away from the coast by Bob Zaremba.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** – Carol Lambert reported a high count of 29 birds from ELHLAF on 3 August.

**REDDISH EGRET** – This species is not known to breed in the state, however, reports are becoming more frequent and the number of individuals seems to be on the increase up and down the Georgia coast. Brandon Noel has had a lot of luck finding this species on Little Saint Simons Island with ten on 20 August, 15 on 9 October, and one on 15 November. Elsewhere on the coast, Gene Keferl found seven birds on Egg Island Bar in the mouth of the Altamaha River on 1 September. Jerry Amerson reported finding a single bird on Sapelo Island on 11 October. The latest report was of a single bird from Gould's Inlet on 29 November by Jeff Sewell and Carol Lambert.

**CATTLE EGRET** – A bird found by Walt Chambers at West Point Dam on 3 November was late for the area.

**WHITE IBIS** – This species is not usually found in large numbers away from the coast, so a high count of 276 birds in Evans County on 12 August by Dan Kennedy was excellent.

**GLOSSY IBIS** – Mike and Kathy Chapman made a great count of 35 birds at the AWMA near Darien on 22 November.

**ROSEATE SPOONBILL** – This is another species that is easily located on the coast, but reports away from the coast are usually scarce. The best reports once again came from Brandon Noel at Little Saint Simons Island, where he reported finding eight birds on 3 August, 14 birds on 20 August, three birds on 9 October, and three birds on the late date of 15 November. Also on the coast, Robert Smith had five birds on Cumberland Island on 10 August. Several reports away from the coast were received. Farthest from the coast, Carol Lambert had an excellent report of a single bird at ELHLAF on 15 and 16 August. Earl Horn and Jim Flynn found a single bird in Calhoun County on 15 November that was both late and a great find away from the coast.

**TURKEY VULTURE** – Several good reports of large kettles of migrating vultures were received during this period. Eran Tomer reported seeing over 120 on 29 October and over 100 on 10 November in midtown Atlanta. Vicki DeLoach has a nice group of 200 over Sweat Mountain in Cobb County on 10 November as well. The highest count came from Emily Jo Williams who observed a mixed group of between 400 and 500 Black and Turkey Vultures west of Rock Eagle on 24 November.

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** – This species congregates in the fall over fields in South Georgia and many birders take the opportunity to observe this beautiful species. Several reports included 60 birds in Glennville found by Pete Moore on 10 August and another 60 birds along the Savannah River on 14 August by E.J. Williams. Bill and Karla O'Grady found a single bird on 2 August north of Sandersville.

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** – Several excellent counts were reported in August from around the state. Bill and Karla O'Grady found 53 birds north of Sandersville on 2 August. Earl Horn had a good count of 52 birds in Taylor County on 17 August.

and Michael Beohm reported 51 birds in Upson County on 8 August.

**BALD EAGLE** – This period we had several reports away from the coast. Stacy Zarpentine had a single bird on 23 August at the Chattahoochee Nature Center. There were two reports in September; one bird near Mountain City on 7 September seen by Georgann Schmaltz and Jim Buckley and the second report was from Donna Jackson of a bird at Lake Horton. Finally, David Hedeem reported seeing a bird on 17 October at the Robinson Nature Preserve in Cobb County.

**MERLIN** – The first report was of two birds at the AWMA on 10 October by Bob Zarembo. Things picked up in November from all around the state starting with one bird reported from ELHLAF on 8 November by Carol Lambert, followed the next day by a report of a single bird at KMT on 9 November. Walt Chambers saw a single bird at Oxbow meadows on 13 November and then reported seeing two birds the next day in Harris County on 14 November.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** – There were several birds reported from around the state this period. The earliest report away from any known nesting locations was a bird reported by Michael Bell at Ichuaway Plantation on 18 September. Earl Horn reported seeing a bird in Marietta on 25 September, and another bird was reported from Cobb County at KMT on 1 October. David Hedeem also reported a bird from Robinson Nature Preserve in Cobb County on 23 October. In a more usual location, Patrick Leary found a juvenile female on the south end of Cumberland Island on 15 November.

**BLACK RAIL** – The only report for this elusive resident was a bird heard at AWMA on 26 October by Gene Keferl.

**PURPLE GALLINULE** – Bob Zarembo reported finding two birds at the AWMA on 24 August.

**SANDHILL CRANE** – This species moves through our state in good numbers beginning in late October and into November. This year was no exception as crane watchers reported their movement daily on the GABO-L. The earliest reports were both on 29 October, but from far apart places in the state. David Hedeem reported seeing 47 birds flying over Robinson Nature Preserve, while Hal Massie reported a nice flock of 85 birds in Crawford County that same day. The peak passages came later in November when Larry Ross reported seeing over 500 birds over Houston County on 14 November. Vickie and Harry DeLoach had the high count when they had over 1600 birds flying over Sweat Mountain in Cobb County on 29 November!

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** – Somewhat away from the normally reported locations, Dot Freeman and Betty Belanger found two birds in Clarksville on 30 August and they were still present on 1 September. Ty Ivey also located this species away from the normal areas when he found two birds in Macon on 6 September. Returning to a more expected locale, Jeff Sewell had a single bird on 7 September at the Bartow County sod farms, and later that month at the same site, Steve Barlow reported a single bird on 13 September.

**WILSON'S PLOVER** – I received two good reports from the coast this period. Brandon Noel had over 50 birds on Little Saint Simons Island on 20 August. Later in the period, Patrick Leary had a nice count of 24 on Cumberland Island on 15 November.

**PIPING PLOVER** – As usual, the best location for this species has been on Little Saint Simons Island. Brandon Noel has done an incredible job tracking the bird

life on the island and has provided a wealth of information to us all from this island paradise. Brandon had excellent totals this fall with counts of 50 birds on 3 August, 69 birds on 20 August, and a high count of 74 birds on 12 September.

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** – Very nice counts were tallied at Little Saint Simons Island where Brandon Noel had 100 birds on 20 August and 300 birds on 12 September. Later in the fall, Patrick Leary reported a nice count of 28 birds on Cumberland Island on 15 November.

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** – A very good report away from the coast, Mary Ann Teal and Stacy Zarpentine found a bird at ELHLAF on 13 August. The birds remained through at least 24 August.

**AMERICAN AVOCET** – Reports away from the coast are scarce, so six birds in Bartow County on 2 August was an excellent find. The two birds found on 20 August at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus by Walt Chambers was a very good report, as were the two birds that showed up on 27 September at ELHLAF reported by Carol Lambert that remained through 10 October.

**SOLITARY SANDPIPER** – Two reports of lingering birds were received this period. Earl Horn had a bird in Glascock County on 19 October and Walt Chambers had a very late bird on 16 November in Columbus.

**WILLET** – Inland reports of this species are always unusual, so two reports from ELHLAF this period were very interesting. Carol Lambert had two birds on 3 August and Mark Beebe had two birds on 5 November.

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** – The best location for this species was the sod farm in Marshallville. Walt Chambers found 24 birds on 15 August, Bob Zarembo had 20 birds on 22 August, and Walt again reported nine birds on 28 August. Away from this location, David Hedeem found a bird at Robinson Nature Center on 25 August for a very unusual report.

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** – Little Saint Simons Island proved to be the only reliable location for this species. Brandon Noel had a single bird on 3 August, two birds on 20 August, and three birds on 10 September, which remained on the island through the end of the period.

**MARbled GODWIT** – The best count was from, you guessed it, Little Saint Simons Island. Brandon Noel had 20 birds on 20 August.

**SANDERLING** – This species is rarely reported away from the coast; so one bird at West Point Dam on 16 September reported by Walt Chambers was an excellent report.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** – Several good counts were received during the period. Patrick Brisse reported 82 birds at ELHLAF on 24 August. Terry Johnson had 34 birds in Monroe County on 20 September.

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** – Dot Bambach reported finding two birds on Blackbeard Island NWR on 25 September while doing shorebird surveys with Matt Ryan.

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** – This species is a rare transient statewide in the fall, so several reports from Bartow, Floyd, Bibb, and Monroe Counties were very good. The first report was of two birds at the Bartow County sod farm on 30 August by Earl Horn and Bob Zarembo. Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers relocated one bird at the same site on 1 September and Steve Barlow had two birds at the same site on 7 September. Terry Johnson found one bird in Monroe County on 20 September and Jeff and Dan found another bird in Floyd County on 1 September. The high count

came on 6 September when Ty Ivey found five birds in Macon.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** – Bob Zaremba reported a high count of 85 birds from the Bartow County sod farm on 31 August.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** – Two reports were received on 29 November, one bird on Tybee Island reported by Bob Zaremba and two birds by Gene Keferl at Sea Island.

**DUNLIN** – This species is seldom seen away from the coast. Marion Dobbs had two birds in Bartow County on 23 November. Carol Lambert found two birds at ELHLAF that remained through 30 November. Steve Barlow had a high count of six birds on 9 November.

**STILT SANDPIPER** – There were many reports scattered around the state. The first report came from Carol Lambert of three birds at ELHLAF from 2 August through 19 August. Walt Chambers found a single bird in Columbus on 20 August. From Macon, Ty Ivey was able to find six birds on 1 September and five birds on 6 September. The highest counts came from the coast where Bob Zaremba found 18 birds at AWMA on 10 October and Gene Keferl found 50 birds on 14 October.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** – There were a few reports around the state, the earliest was of two birds found at ELHLAF on 17 August by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn that remained until 19 August (Carol Lambert). Jerry Amerson found this species in Emanuel County on 24 August. Several reports were received from Bartow County sod farms, Bob and Deb Zaremba found two birds on 30 August and Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers reported a high count of nine birds on 1 September.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** – We received several reports of birds seen away from the coast. Steve Barlow had a single bird in Bartow County at the sod farm on 17 August. Three birds visited the ponds at ELHLAF between 31 August and 9 September (Carol Lambert) and Walt Chambers reported that he and Bill Birkhead had a single bird at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 24 August.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** – The only report of this species was a single bird flying over ELHLAF and calling on 3 September reported by Bob Zaremba.

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** – The only report was a single bird seen in Bartow County at the sod farm by Bob and Deb Zaremba on 30 August.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE** – This species is rarely found inland, so pelagic trips are sometimes the only way to see this species in Georgia. Two trips in August had success finding good numbers off the coast. The 23 August trip found 18 birds and 23 birds were seen on the 29 August trip. (Bob Zaremba, Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh)

**POMARINE JAEGER** – The only report was a bird seen on the 29 August pelagic trip. (Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh)

**FRANKLIN'S GULL** – Most records of this species are from the Chattahoochee River dams, so it was not surprising that the only record for this fall came from Walt Chambers who found a single bird at West Point Dam on 3 November. True to form, this bird did not stay around very long and could not be relocated.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** – This species is being seen with increasing frequency on the coast. Two birds were seen on Tybee Island on 23 August and a single bird was present there on 29 November (Bob Zaremba).

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** – Brandon Noel had a high count of five birds

on Little Saint Simons Island on 25 August.

**GULL-BILLED TERN** – This species is accidental in winter on the coast, so a bird seen on Cumberland Island on 15 November by Patrick Leary was either a late departing bird or possibly wintering on the island.

**CASPIAN TERN** – Any report away from the coast is good, so a single bird at SCSP on 6 September seen by Chris Loudermilk is worth noting.

**COMMON TERN** – Walt Chambers reported seeing over 100 birds at the West Point Dam on 16 September, and 25 birds were seen offshore on a pelagic trip out of Savannah on 23 August (Russ Wigh, Bob Zaremba).

**FORSTER'S TERN** – There were several birds seen away from the coast. Patrick Brisse had two birds at Lake Spivey on 24 August and Carol Lambert had a single bird at ELHLAF on 29 August.

**LEAST TERN** – The best count was 300 birds on Little Saint Simons Island on 20 August by Brandon Noel.

**BRIDLED TERN** – The best way to see this offshore species is aboard a pelagic trip out of Savannah. There were two trips scheduled in August. The high count was 79 birds on the 23 August trip and the 29 August trip produced eight birds. (Russ Wigh, Chuck Saleeby, Bob Zaremba)

**SOOTY TERN** – On the same two pelagic trips out of Savannah, observers found four birds on 23 August and 13 birds on 29 August. (Russ Wigh, Chuck Saleeby, Bob Zaremba)

**BLACK TERN** – This species is a fairly common fall migrant offshore and on the coast. The two pelagic trips turned up a good count of 40 birds on 23 August and 126 birds on 29 August. The highest count from the coast was between 700 and 1000 birds on Little Saint Simons Island on 20 August by Brandon Noel. Away from the coast, Carol Lambert reported two birds at ELHLAF on 21 August and, later in the fall, 14 birds on 4 September. Karen Theodorou had a good count of six birds at Lake Lanier on 30 August. The latest report was from Russ Wigh who had a single bird at Gray's Reef on 18 October.

**BROWN NODDY** -- An excellent discovery offshore on 29 August was two birds seen and photographed on the pelagic trip out of Savannah. This species is rarely encountered anywhere in Georgia and this was only the third report of the species offshore. Interestingly, the other two reports were also in August, on 30 August 1992 and on 22 August 1993. Several reports of this species inland have been associated with severe weather events, either severe storms or hurricanes. (Russ Wigh, Chuck Saleeby)

**BLACK SKIMMER** – Brad Winn reported finding 465 young birds at the mouth of the Altamaha River on 17 August.

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** – This species appears to be declining in many areas of the state below the Fall Line, so reports from around the state are interesting and show some possible expansion. Terry Johnson found four birds in Monroe County on 20 September. Michael Boehm has been noticing an increase in Upson County and reported seeing three birds on 4 November. The farthest out of range, Tim Keyes found two birds at Charlie Elliott WMA on 3 November.

**BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO** – A rare migrant in the fall, a bird at Robinson Nature Preserve found by David Hedeon on 12 September was a good find. Later in the month, a bird was found at KMT on 11 September, and another was found on 30 September and relocated the next day (Giff Beaton, Pierre Howard).

**YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO** – This species is usually a solitary bird, so a high count of 27 birds seen by Nathan Klaus on 23 September at KMT was incredible. Jeff Sewell had a late migrating bird at Robinson Nature Preserve in Cobb County on 1 November.

**BARN OWL** – Two birds at the AWMA pre-dawn on 28 November was a good find by Bob Zaremba.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** – The first returning birds to the owl fields in Cobb and Sumter counties, were two birds reported by Clive Rainey on 23 November.

**COMMON NIGHTHAWK** – The highest count for the period was 160 seen in Marietta on 1 September (Bruce Dralle). Terry Moore reported seeing a late bird in Roswell on 10 October.

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** – Karen Theodorou reported seeing a late bird at her feeder through 17 November in her Lawrenceville yard.

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** – This species is seen sporadically during migration, usually atop the tallest snag in an area. The reports this season were widespread. The earliest report was a bird found by Walt Chambers at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 21 August. The next week, Bruce Dralle reported a bird in Marietta on 29 August, followed the next day by a bird seen by Earl Horn at Suwanee Creek in Gwinnett County on 30 August. Carol Lambert reported seeing a single bird at SPCNP on 7 September. The final report was on 14 September when David Hedeon reported a single bird at the Robinson Nature Preserve in Cobb County.

**EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE** – David Hedeon had a late bird at Robinson Nature Preserve on 6 November.

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** – There were several good reports of this species from around the state, all in September. The earliest report was from KMT where a single bird was seen on 8 September. Jenny Michaels reported finding a bird at SPCNP on 13 September. Once again from Cobb County, a bird was seen in a Marietta backyard on 16 September (Bob and Deb Zaremba). The latest report was a bird seen near Macon at the Ocmulgee National Monument by Jerry Amerson on 28 September.

**LEAST FLYCATCHER** – Walt Chambers found a bird calling in his Columbus yard on 10 August. Two birds were found at KMT on 12 September (Giff Beaton).

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** – A bird found in Sumter County by Phil Hardy and Clive Rainey on 1 November was in the exact location as a bird found in previous year. It is possible that this may indeed be the same bird returning to this area.

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** – Two reports of lingering birds were received, the first was a bird seen by Marion Dobbs in Ben Hill County on 12 November and the second being a bird seen by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn in Candler County on 23 November. There is little doubt that the mild weather in November contributed to these late dates.

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** – There were two reports of this western visitor during the period. Bill Lotz found a bird at Robinson Nature Preserve on 28 October that many observers were able to relocate. Brandon Noel located a bird on Little Saint Simons Island on 11 October.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – A great report from the coast, Shelia Willis

reported a bird on 24 November in the St. Mary's area of Camden County.

**BELL'S VIREO** – Giff Beaton was lucky to be in the right place at the right time when he found this species at KMT on 5 October. The bird was seen well and described in a rare-bird report submitted to the records committee and subsequently accepted for only the second state record for this species. This is an excellent report of a species probably overlooked during migration since it rarely vocalizes. The only other accepted record was of a bird found by Walt Chambers in Columbus in April of 2000.

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** – Jim Flynn and Earl Horn had a very good count of 17 birds on 20 September in Meriwether and Coweta counties.

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO** – This is another species that once was thought to be very rare in migration, but as more birders understand their habitat preferences, more individual birds are being found. There were a total of 20 reports between 17 September and 17 October, mostly single birds. Perhaps we can expect more reports of this species in the future.

**RED-EYED VIREO** – The high count was a total of 25 birds at KMT on 14 September (Giff Beaton).

**COMMON RAVEN** – The only report this fall was one of four birds at Brasstown Bald seen by Anssi Vahatalo on 2 November.

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** – A report of a late-departing bird was submitted by Anssi Vahatalo who had a single bird on 16 November at the State Botanical Gardens in Athens.

**BARN SWALLOW** – The latest reports of this species were a bird seen at Merry Brothers Brickyard in Augusta on 15 November (Bob and Deb Zaremba) and a bird seen at the AWMA on 16 November by Gene Keferl.

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** – This irruptive species did not make much of a movement into the state this fall. The only report was of a single bird seen at KMT on 31 October.

**WINTER WREN** – The first report this fall was of two birds seen at Cochran Shoals of the Chattahoochee River on 25 October (Bob Zaremba).

**SEDGE WREN** – The earliest report was from Jenny Michaels who found two birds at the SPCNP on 30 September. Steve Barlow and Stan Chapman both reported this species from CRNRA on 1 November and 8 November. The high count came from J.L. Lester WMA where Chris Loudermilk found five birds on 2 November.

**MARSH WREN** – Chris Loudermilk found a single bird at J.L. Lester WMA on 1 November and relocated it the next day as well.

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** – The earliest report was from KMT of a single bird on 23 September by Debbie Zaremba.

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** – The high count was 14 birds at KMT on 14 September (Giff Beaton).

**VEERY** – The high count was 15 birds on a nocturnal count at KMT on 20 September.

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** – Two nocturnal counts produced high counts of 18 birds at KMT on 20 September (Deb Zaremba) and 35 birds in Warren County on 5 October (Jim Flynn).

**SWAINSON'S THRUSH** – The same two nocturnal counts produced the high counts for this species this fall. The highest count was 493 birds at KMT on 20

September (Deb Zaremba) and 325 birds in Warren County on 5 October (Jim Flynn). Diurnal birding produced high counts on 32 at KMT on 8 October and 19 at KMT on 26 September (Giff Beaton). Finally, Chris Loudermilk had an excellent count of 14 birds at SCSP on 18 September.

WOOD THRUSH – The highest count was from the nocturnal thrush count at KMT on 20 September, where Deb Zaremba had 25 birds.

AMERICAN PIPIT – Marion Dobbs reported an excellent count of over 300 birds at Thomas Bros. Sod Farm in Floyd County on 18 November.

CEDAR WAXWING – This species began showing up at KMT on 1 September. The numbers increased over the month, and Jenny Michaels reported 50 birds in Paulding County on 8 November. Eran Tomer reported seeing 100's in November in Northeast Atlanta.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER – The first report this period was from Terry Johnson in Monroe County where he found three birds on 20 September. There were several counts of four birds, one from KMT on 23 September (Giff Beaton) and another from Dawson Forest on 26 September (Jim Flynn). The high count for the period was from Suwanee Creek where Earl Horn found five birds on 27 September.

TENNESSEE WARBLER – Even though this species is much more common in fall than in spring, a high count of 57 on 6 October at KMT is excellent (Giff Beaton). The earliest report was a count of 11 birds seen at KMT on 30 August. The latest reports were from BUENWR on 17 November where Walt Chambers found a late bird and from Marietta where Bob and Deb Zaremba had a late-leaving bird on 18 November.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER – The first reports at KMT occurred on 22 October, with multiple days on which three birds were observed (Giff Beaton).

NASHVILLE WARBLER – We had multiple reports of single birds of this seldom seen migrant from KMT on 15 and 24 September and on 14 October (Giff Beaton). Bob and Deb Zaremba had a bird visiting their yard on 19 October. The latest reports came from the east side of Atlanta where Lisa Hart had a bird at SPCNP on 16 November and Earl Horn had a bird in his Gwinnett County yard on 21 and 22 November.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER – The highest count during migration was 29 birds seen at KMT on 25 September. The latest report was from Terrell County where Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a bird on 2 November.

MAGNOLIA WARBLER – The highest count for this period was 25 birds seen at KMT on 25 September. There were numerous late reports this fall, likely due to the mild weather. Michael Beohm reported a bird in Upson County on 4 November. Mark Davis found a bird at the Cochran Shoals unit of the CRNRA on 6 November, and Walt Chambers had two birds at the Bradley Unit of ENWR on 7 November.

CAPE MAY WARBLER – Bob and Deb Zaremba had a late bird in their Marietta yard on 10 November.

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER – The most exciting report for this period was Pierre Howard's observation of this species at KMT on 8 September. The bird stayed in the same area for multiple observers to see until 10 September. Several observers photographed the bird. The only other accepted report for this species was a bird seen on Jekyll Island 18 October 1975, making this the second

report for the state!

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER – The highest count for this period was 41 birds seen at KMT on 26 September (Giff Beaton). Two reports of late birds both seen on 7 November were from KMT (Giff Beaton), and from the Bradley Unit of ENWR by Walt Chambers.

PRAIRIE WARBLER – Jim Flynn and Earl Horn had a late bird in Candler County on 23 November.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER – The highest count was 12 birds on 5 October at KMT (Giff Beaton).

CERULEAN WARBLER – The many observers at KMT track this species fairly closely. Giff Beaton reported that this season's total of 204 birds was the highest total count since 1997. The highest single day counts were on 3 August and 4 September when 13 birds were found.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER – A high count of 17 birds on 4 August at KMT was very good (Giff Beaton).

AMERICAN REDSTART – The highest count for this species was not from KMT! Jenny Michaels had an excellent count of 25 birds at SPCNP on 6 September.

SWAINSON'S WARBLER – Walt Chambers had a nice count of four birds near Columbus on 6 August.

MOURNING WARBLER – This rarely reported migrant was reported twice this fall. The first was a bird seen by Jeff Sewell and Carol Lambert at the Suwanee Creek location on 27 September. The second report was from Robinson Nature Preserve where David Hedeon found a bird on 30 September.

HOODED WARBLER – The high count came on 7 August when 17 birds were found at KMT (Giff Beaton).

WILSON'S WARBLER – This species is seldom seen in the state during migration, so this seasons multiple reports were very interesting. Most reports were from September, the first being a bird reported on 6 September seen by Jenny Michaels at SPCNP; possibly the same bird was seen again on 13 September in the same location (Jerry Brunner, Jenny Michaels). Bob and Deb Zaremba reported a bird seen in their Marietta yard; the bird remained from 8 September though 11 September. Russ Wigh also reported this species from the coast on 10 September, where he found a bird on Skidaway Island. Also away from Atlanta was a bird found at the Ocmulgee National Monument in Macon on 27 September by Steve Barlow. There were two reports of late birds; one bird was seen at KMT on 8 October (Bob Zaremba). The most exciting report was a bird found by Karen Theodorou in her Gwinnett County yard. The bird was first seen on 27 October and remained through the end of November, perhaps deciding to winter in her yard.

CANADA WARBLER – The highest count received this period was five birds on 7 August at KMT (Giff Beaton). Paul Champlin reported a late bird at Merry Brothers Brickyard near Augusta on 22 November.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT – Also from Merry Brothers Brickyard, Paul Champlin reported a late lingering bird on 30 November.

SUMMER TANAGER – The highest counts received this period were 12 birds seen by Terry Johnson in Monroe and 13 birds seen at KMT on 23 September (Giff Beaton).

**SCARLET TANAGER** – Giff Beaton reported an excellent count of 37 birds seen at KMT on 15 September. Walt Chambers had a good count of 13 birds near Columbus on 4 October.

**CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** – There were several reports of this hard to find species. The highest count came from the AWMA on 12 October where Bob Zaremba and Pierre Howard found three birds while leading a Coastal Birding Festival field trip. This site is proving to be the most reliable location to find this species in the state. Other reports from the coast were received, Brandon Noel found a single bird on Little Saint Simons Island on 11 October and Gene Keferl found a bird at Andrews Island on 25 October. Reports away from the coast are much rarer, so a bird found at Robinson Nature Preserve by David Hedeon on 19 October and a bird found in Upson County by Michael Beohm on 15 October were excellent reports.

**LARK SPARROW** – A report of a bird seen on Tybee Island on 15 September by Anssi Vahatalo was the only report for this species this fall.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** – Tim Keyes saw a fairly early bird at Charlie Elliott WMA on 13 September.

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** – Two reports of late birds were received, one bird seen at AWMA on 10 October (Bob Zaremba) and a single bird at Robinson Nature Preserve on 8 November (David Hedeon).

**HENSLOW'S SPARROW** – The highest count was from the coast, where Earl Horn and Bob Zaremba found eight birds at Paulk's Pasture on 28 November. A good report was also received from Russ Wigh who found one bird on Skidaway Island on 29 October.

**LE CONTE'S SPARROW** – The only report this fall was a bird located at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park in Augusta. The bird was found on 31 October and seen sporadically through 30 November (James Keener).

**NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** – The best reports were away from the coast where Paul Champlin reported seeing two birds at Phinizy Swamp on 9 November and Chris Loudermilk found a bird reported to be of the interior race at J.L. Lester WMA on 18 October.

**SALTMARSH SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** – Earl Horn and Bob Zaremba reported finding four birds on the Andrew's Island Causeway on 28 November.

**SEASIDE SPARROW** – Earl Horn and Bob Zaremba reported a good count of ten birds from the Andrew's Island Causeway on 28 November.

**LINCOLN'S SPARROW** – This species is always difficult to find in the state, so nine reports of the species were unusual, and a testament to the fine work being done by the multiple field observers in the state. Leading the pack, Marion Dobbs found a bird on 22 October at J.L. Lester WMA that remained until 26 October. David Heeden had several reports from Robinson Nature Preserve in Cobb County, the earliest on 13 October and the latest on 19 November. Jim Flynn found a bird on 21 October at Dawson Forest, and later in the fall, he and Earl Horn located a bird in Wheeler County on 8 November. Paul Champlin found a bird on 9 November at Merry Brothers Brickyard near Augusta.

**SWAMP SPARROW** – Perhaps setting a new early date in the Piedmont, an Atlanta Audubon Society field trip reported finding this species at the Newman Wetland Center of the ELHLAF on a trip there on 20 September. Hopefully this report will be written up and submitted to the Oriole in the near future.

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** – The highest count for the period was 23 birds seen at KMT on 26 September. There were numerous reports of late-leaving birds in the Atlanta area. Bill Lotz reported a bird in his Atlanta yard on 27 and 28 November, and Parrie Pinyan had a bird still in her Canton yard on 29 November as well.

**BLUE GROSBEAK** – Several late birds were reported this period. Paul Champlin had a bird at Phinizy Swamp on 9 November. Earl Horn and Jim Flynn found a late bird in Candler County on 23 November. An interesting sighting of a female apparently carrying food on 1 September at Morgan Falls near Atlanta was received from Eran Tomer.

**INDIGO BUNTING** – Paul Sykes had an outstanding high count of 410 birds seen at the AWMA on 12 October. Several new late dates may have been set this fall. David Hedeon had a bird still present in the Piedmont at the Robinson Nature Preserve on 6 November; the previous late date was 3 November. Lydia Thompson also had a late bird at Jekyll Island on 21 November, passing the previous late date of 7 November.

**DICKCISSEL** – This species was reported from multiple locations around the state this fall. Several reports from Bartow County were received; two birds on 25 August and on 7 September (Deb Zaremba, Karen Theodorou) were good finds. David Hedeon reported a bird flying over the Robinson Nature Preserve on 25 August and again on 16 and 19 September. Michael Beohm had a high count of four birds at the Thomaston Airport on 6 October.

**BOBOLINK** – The highest count this fall came from Monroe, where Terry Johnson had 113 birds on 20 September. Jenny Michaels saw a fairly late bird in the Piedmont on 4 October at ELHLAF.

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** – Paul Sykes and Cam Kepler reported finding this species in northern Greene County on 15 November. The report was submitted to the GOS Records Committee but subsequently not accepted. Several observers attempted to relocate the species later that same week but were unable to find the bird.

**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** – David Hedeon found a male and female at the Robinson Nature Preserve on 13 October, and the birds remained until 15 October.

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** – The highest count of this species was 12 at KMT on 5 September. David Hedeon had two late birds in the Dekalb area on 23 November.

**PURPLE FINCH** – This species seldom has been seen in the past few winters, so two females on 8 November reported by Vicki DeLoach from her Marietta yard on 8 November may be a sign of a good winter irruption. Later in the month, Jenny Michaels found three birds in Tucker on 28 November, and Anssi Vahatalo located a female at the State Botanical Gardens in Athens on 30 November.

**RED CROSSBILL** – The only report received was a female found by Johnny Parks in Ringold on 31 October.

**PINE SISKIN** – Bruce Dralle saw a bird on 28 November in his Marietta yard.

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

# THE ORIOLE

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**FIGURES** – Figures should be appropriate for photoreproduction without retouching. Photos should be good-quality color or black-and-white prints.

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