



Blanchard and Mark Davis).

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FROM THE FIELD

DECEMBER 2005 – FEBRUARY 2006

Note: The appearance of observations in this section does not suggest verification of acceptance of a record. Records need to be documented and submitted to the Checklist and Records Committee for consideration.

This season was marked with several new state records and some occurrences of rarely seen western species, making for an exciting winter. Highlights included first state records for California Gull and Cackling Goose. Both of these species were well documented and accepted by the records committee and added to the regular list of Georgia Birds. Also exciting was the discovery of two wintering Bullock's Orioles in the state, both within the same week in December. It seems we always are finding good wintering western hummingbirds as more people tend feeders during the winter, but the occurrence of three Broad-tailed Hummingbirds in the state is unprecedented. These hummingbirds represented the fourth through sixth records for the state. Some of the other rare sightings for the season included a Common Merganser in the northwest, a Northern Saw-Whet Owl in the northeast, and several scattered reports of Short-eared Owls. It was a very exciting winter season for Georgia birders.

Abbreviations used include: ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003, Beaton, Giff et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AWEC - Arrowhead Wildlife Education Center in Floyd Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area in McIntosh Co.; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CRC - Checklist and Records Committee; 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.; JI - Jekyll Island; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Cobb Co.; LSSI - Little St. Simons Island; m.ob. - many observers; MBBP - Merry Brothers Brickyard Ponds; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; SCSP - Sweetwater Creek State Park; v.ob. - various observers; WMA - Wildlife Management Area

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - Paul Lehman found six birds at AWMA on 16 December, an unusual sighting for the coast. Earl Horn observed 11 birds on 19 December at ENWR for the highest count of the season, and he saw two more





birds in Newton Co. on 5 January. Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett, and Terry Moore found two birds on a small farm pond in Bartow Co. on 16 January, and the birds remained in the area until 27 January. Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found two birds in Irwin Co. on 29 January.

SNOW GOOSE - The five birds flying over a field in Bartow Co. were a good find by Dan Vickers on 4 December. Earl Horn located 12 birds at ENWR during the CBC on 19 December.

ROSS'S GOOSE - Amazingly, the bird originally discovered by Earl Horn in 1999 is still present at the small farm pond in Madison Co. Ken Blankenship reported finding the bird on the same pond on 15 January.

CAKLING GOOSE - This species was recently split from Canada Goose. Jim Flynn and Earl Horn were the first to discover five birds on a small farm pond in Twiggs Co. on 19 February. These birds stayed on the lake long enough for many observers to relocate them and document the sighting. This was the first state record for the species (CRC record 2006-07).

TUNDRA SWAN - Lois Stacey found a wintering bird at MBBP on 7 January that remained at the location until 28 January.

GADWALL - Carol Lambert had a high count of 176 birds at ELHLAF on 7 January, and Hugh Garrett and Patrick Brisse counted more than 215 ducks on a small lake in Coweta Co. on 5 February.

AMERICAN WIGEON - Garden Lakes appears to be the best location in the beginning of the season for this species, and Marion Dobbs reported finding a high count of 165 ducks there in January.

NORTHERN SHOVELER - Carol Lambert had a high count of 151 birds at ELHLAF on 7 January.

NORTHERN PINTAIL - We rarely get large congregations of this species in the state, so Michael and Eric Boehm's report of 28 ducks at Lake Seminole on 3 December is very noteworthy.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL - Lois Stacey and Ruth Mead had a very good count of more than 600 ducks at Phinizy Nature Park on 17 December.

CANVASBACK - Chuck Saleby reported finding two birds on Lake Acworth on 2 December, which was an unusual sighting for that location. Carol Lambert had a good count of 14 birds at ELHLAF on 7 January.

REDHEAD - Eric and Michael Boehm had a good early count of 12 birds at Lake Horton on 10 December. Ted Gustin had a very good count of 30 birds at ELHLAF on 17 January, and Marion Dobbs had the highest count with 150 birds seen at Garden Lakes near Rome on 23 February.

RING-NECKED DUCK - Earl Horn and Jim Flynn reported a very high count of 2,000 birds at ENWR on 3 December. That report was topped by a count of 2,188 birds at ELHLAF on 7 January by Carol Lambert.

GREATER SCAUP - Michael and Eric Boehm had a good count of 22 birds at WPD on 7 December. Paul Lehman reported finding one on a farm pond in Bartow Co. on 11 December, 12 at Walter F. George Dam on 12 December, and more than 300 birds at JI and St. Simons Island on 16 December.



SURF SCOTER - The only reported birds were from JI this period. Pierre Howard and Chuck Saleeby observed a single bird on 18 December, and Russ Wigh also found a single bird on 12 January.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - Inland records of this species are always noteworthy. Eric and Michael Beohm observed a bird at WPD on 7 December. Bob and Deb Zaremba saw two birds off JI on 3 February, a more typical sighting.

BLACK SCOTER - This species is unusual away from the coast during the winter, so a report of a flock of 33 birds at Carter's Lake on 3 December was very interesting (Bob and Deb Zaremba). The peak count was from Paul Lehman, who counted 3,000 birds off JI on 16 December. Bob and Deb also reported a high count of more than 700 birds off JI on 3 February.

LONG-TAILED DUCK - There were very few reports this season, so a bird found by Walt Chambers off JI on 30 December was very good.

COMMON GOLDENEYE - The highest count was at WPD, where Ken Blankenship observed 19 birds on 26 December. Four birds found at Peachtree City Lake were an excellent find by Donna Jackson on 27 December. A single bird at Lake Acworth was a good find by Sandy Pangle on 24 January.

COMMON MERGANSER - Joshua Spence had an excellent report of a female bird found at Carter's Lake on 28 February. The bird remained in the area and was seen and photographed by many observers, though documentation has not been submitted to the CRC.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER - Chris Loudermilk had a good count of 21 birds at SCSP on 8 December, and Michael and Eric Beohm had a very good inland count of 29 ducks at WPD on 14 December.

RED-THROATED LOON - Eric and Michael Beohm found an adult and an immature bird at WPD on 14 December. Paul Sykes reported finding three birds off Cumberland Island on 3 February, and the highest count reported was seven off Tybee Island on 4 February (Bob and Deb Zaremba).

PIED-BILLED GREBE - Giff Beaton reported counting more than 100 grebes on a farm pond in Burke Co. on 7 December. Earl Horn and Bob Zaremba had a high count of 84 birds at the same location on 7 January.

HORNED GREBE - Chris Loudermilk reported a good count of 16 birds at SCSP on 15 December.

RED-NECKED GREBE - There have been very few reports of this species over the past few years, so a bird seen and photographed at Lake Walter F. George on 19 February was a great find by Eric and Michael Beohm.

EARED GREBE - The ash ponds at Plant Scherer seem to be the best location in the state for this species. Terry Johnson reported finding 21 birds there on 2 December. Away from that location, Paul Lehman found a single bird on Andrew's Island on 16 December, and Julius Ariail found a single bird at Long Pond near Valdosta on 20 December.

NORTHERN GANNET - The highest count reported this season was 49 birds off Cumberland Island on 3 February by Paul Sykes.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - There were several reports from around the state

this season. Michael and Eric Beohm reported finding several groups of birds at WPD during the period, with the highest count being 15 on 3 December. The most reliable location for seeing this species was Andrew's Island, where the highest count was 49 birds seen on 23 December (Gene Keferl). Nine birds were observed at ENWR on 8 January (fide Jim Flynn), and Paul Sykes reported finding 80 birds resting on a shell bank near St. Marys in Camden Co. on 3 February.

AMERICAN BITTERN - Carol Lambert had an unusual sighting of a bird flying over I-675 near Atlanta on 12 January. Three birds seen at Grand Bay WMA on 4 February by Todd Womack were a good find.

GREAT EGRET - There were several sightings from the northern part of the state, which is a rarity. Sandy Pangle reported finding a bird in Gordon Co., for an unusual winter report for that region, and Joshua Spence found single birds in Gordon Co. on 5 January and in Murray Co. on 10 January.

REDDISH EGRET - Paul Sykes reported finding a dark-phase bird on Cumberland Island on 3 February.

CATTLE EGRET - Two birds spent most of the winter at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park (Lois Stacey).

GREEN HERON - There are very few wintering birds in the Piedmont Region, so a bird found at Lake Acworth by Sandy Pangle on 10 January was a very good sighting for the area.

GLOSSY IBIS - Bob and Deb Zaremba had a nice count of 52 birds at AWMA on 4 February.

GOLDEN EAGLE - Joshua Spence had a very good find of an adult bird in Walker Co. on 3 January.

KING RAIL - The three birds found at ELHLAF on 5 January by Carol Lambert were a good find.

VIRGINIA RAIL - Joshua Spence found a single bird in Murray Co. on 18 January, which was unusual for the Mountain Region. Paul Sykes discovered a bird still calling in a northern Greene Co. marsh on 28 January.

SORA - Lois Stacey and Ruth Mead had an excellent count of 259 birds at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park on 17 December. Joshua Spence found a bird in Murray Co. on 12 February, which was unusual for that region during the winter.

SANDHILL CRANE - The peak passage of birds southward appeared to take place between 9 and 23 December, with more than 20 individual reports totaling more than 6,900 birds. The peak count was on 18 December, when Terry and Peggy Moore counted 3,500 birds over Marietta during the CBC, and Chris Loudermilk observed approximately 2,000 birds in Austell. Another great sighting was the 2,500 birds on the ground in Floyd Co. on 28 January by Marion Dobbs. Todd Womack reported finding another 2,500 on the wintering ground at Grand Bay WMA on 4 February. There were several smaller groups of birds seen in the northern part of the state during February as well. Joshua Spence reported finding 475 on Fite Bend Road in Gordon Co. on 14 February, and as many as 800 birds in Murray Co. on 16 February.

WILSON'S PLOVER - Russ Wigh had an excellent high count of 71 birds on the



beach at JI on 12 January.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER - Paul Sykes had a good count of 3,266 birds on Cumberland Island on 3 February.

PIPING PLOVER - Paul Sykes reported a good count of 26 birds on Cumberland Island on 3 February.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER - Bob and Deb Zaremba had a nice count of 94 birds on LSSI on 5 February.

BLACK-NECKED STILT - Tim Miller reported a wintering bird in Effingham Co., last seen on 21 December.

AMERICAN AVOCET - Paul Lehman had a nice count of 65 birds on Andrew's Island on 16 December.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW - There were several birds reported from the coast. Gene Keferl found a single bird on Doboy Sound on 2 December, and several birders reported as many as three birds on LSSI between 31 December (Ken Blankenship) and 15 February (Grant McCreary).

MARBLED GODWIT - Bob and Deb Zaremba counted 31 birds on LSSI on 4 February.

RED KNOT - Thirty-two birds were seen on the beach at the north end of Cumberland Island on 3 February by Paul Sykes, Diana Swan, and John Fry.

WESTERN SANDPIPER - Paul Sykes had a good count of 431 birds on Cumberland Island on 3 February.

PURPLE SANDPIPER - Diana Churchill had a good count of 12 birds on Tybee Island on 31 December. At least 10 birds were still present on 19 February when Steve Barlow visited the site.

POMARINE JAEGER - Paul Lehman had a very good inland report of a juvenile bird at Lake Walter F. George on 12 December, and Chuck Saleeby and Pierre Howard reported finding a single bird off Tybee Island on 16 December.

PARASITIC JAEGER - On Tybee Island, Chuck Saleeby and Pierre Howard reported finding a single bird on 16 December.

FRANKLIN'S GULL - An immature bird was found on Tybee Island by Chuck Saleeby and Pierre Howard on 16 December. Russ Wigh relocated the bird on 17 December in the same location. This is likely the same bird found by Eric and Michael Boehm in November in the same location.

BONAPARTE'S GULL - A very high count of 511 birds was reported from the first Lake Oconee CBC on 22 December (fide Paul Sykes). This is a new high count for the state during the winter.

CALIFORNIA GULL - Steve Barlow discovered a first winter bird on the beach on Tybee Island on 19 February, which was re-sighted in the same location on 20 February by Jeff Sewell, Bill Lotz, Dan Vickers, and Pierre Howard. This is a long overdue sighting of this species in Georgia, and became the first fully documented record for the state (CRC 2006-09A through 2006-09D).

GLAUCOUS GULL - Anne Waters found a first-winter bird at MBBP on 17 December, which remained in the area until 1 January.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE - Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett, and Terry Moore had an



interesting sighting of a bird in Bartow Co. that was last seen on 23 January by Rick Waldrop. Susan Richmond reported finding as many as three birds frequenting her feeder in Cadwell during the months of January and February.

SHORT-EARED OWL - We rarely hear of birds away from their regular wintering locations in Sumter Co., so several reports this period were very interesting. Walt Chambers found a bird near Omaha on 13 December, and Chris Feeny and Mark Komoroski flushed a bird from the fields at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park on 17 December during the CBC. Richard Boehm observed a bird flying over his yard in Upson Co. around 1 February (fide Eric Boehm).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL - An extremely rare sighting of a bird along Burrell Ford Road was an excellent find by Rachel Cass and Ken Blankenship on 15 January. One or possibly two birds were relocated in the same area on 22 January (Jeff Sewell, Dan Vickers, Bill Lotz) and on 24 January (Rick Waldrop). CRC record 2006-02.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - Rusty Trump banded a wintering female bird in Cohutta on 22 January, and banded a total of four birds this winter.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD - Rusty Trump reported banding a total of four birds this winter.

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD - This was an amazing season for this species in the state, as three birds were found and banded by Rusty Trump. He banded an immature male bird in Forsyth Co. on 2 December (CRC record 2005-19). The bird wintering in Big Canoe at the home of Theresa Hartz was last seen on 13 December (CRC record 2005-17). Another bird showed up at Lake Rabun, which Rusty banded on 7 January, and was last seen on 16 January by the homeowner (CRC record 2006-01). Collectively, these make the fourth through the sixth state records for the species.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD - Rusty Trump reported an average number of birds this season, with a total of 56 birds banded during the winter.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER - Rick Waldrop reported seeing the bird wintering at ENWR on 10 February. This was the last report of the bird.

WESTERN KINGBIRD - David Hedeem had a good find of a bird at the Fulton Co. Airport on 20 December, and the bird stayed in the area through the end of the February. Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found two birds near Fitzgerald on 22 January, and again on 29 January. Gene Keferl found two more birds on JI on 2 February, which remained in the area until 18 February.

PURPLE MARTIN - Jim Flynn and Earl Horn saw the earliest returning bird in Irwin Co. on 29 January.

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW - This species is accidental in the state during winter, so two reports from different parts of the state were very intriguing. Michael and Eric Boehm found a single bird in the Augusta area on 1 December, and found another bird near Lake Seminole on 3 December. Walt Chambers reported a bird from Oxbow Meadows on 7 January that had been in the area for several weeks.

CAVE SWALLOW - This species is starting to turn up almost every fall and winter

in small numbers. Jim Flynn, Earl Horn, and Gene Keferl discovered a single bird at AWMA on 4 February, and it remained in the same area until 18 February (Steve Barlow; CRC record 2006-08).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH - Two birds were found on Burrell's Ford Road in Rabun Co. on 22 January (Jeff Sewell, et al.), and again on 18 February (Ken Blankenship, Rachel Cass).

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER - Paul Sykes found a bird in northern Greene Co. on 3 December for a rare report from that location. The one or possibly two birds seen near Lake Horton on 15 January were unusual (Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett). Neal Cronic found a bird at Oxbow Meadows on 15 January for another good winter report.

GRAY CATBIRD - This species is rare in the winter in the Piedmont Region, so a bird seen at SCSP on 24 February was notable (Chris Loudermilk).

AMERICAN PIPIT - Max Medley and Joshua Spence had a very good count of between 400 and 500 birds at Fite Brend Road in Gordon Co. on 22 February.

NASHVILLE WARBLER - Earl Horn found a wintering bird in Gwinnett Co. on 5 January.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER - Don Youngblood and Marjorie Clark had a very rare wintering bird at the JI campground on 1 February.

PRAIRIE WARBLER - Records of this species are scarce in the winter, so two reports of the species were very good. Eric and Michael Beohm found a bird at MBBP on 1 December, and Gene Keferl found a bird near Savannah on 18 December.

OVENBIRD - Paul Sykes discovered a bird calling in northern Greene Co. on the very late date of 3 December. Bob and Deb Zaremba found a single bird at the JI campground on 4 February, for another unusual winter sighting.

WILSON'S WARBLER - Pierre Howard had a good find of a wintering female bird at ENWR on 13 December.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT - Reports from the Piedmont Region in the winter are scarce, so a bird found by Jerry Brunner at Clyde Sheppard Nature Preserve on 29 January was very good. Lisa Hurt relocated the bird on 9 February.

WESTERN TANAGER - Laura Brown reported that a male bird made a very brief return on 26 December to a feeder in Marietta that it had been frequenting the past several winters. The bird made several visits to the feeder during the period, but was never reliable. Laura last saw it on 27 February.

BACHMAN'S SPARROW - Earl Horn and Jim Flynn had a good count of seven birds at the Moody Forest Natural Area in Appling Co. on 29 January.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - Michael and Eric Beohm found a single bird at MBBP on 1 December.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW - Paul Sykes observed a bird in northern Greene Co. on 28 January for an unusual report from that area. Earl Horn and Jim Flynn found one bird at the Moody Forest Natural Area in Appling Co. on 29 January.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW - The highest count for the winter was six from Paulk's Pasture on 12 February (Ken Blankenship).

LE CONTE'S SPARROW - Chris Feeney found a bird at the Phinizy Swamp Nature Park on 4 January.

SEASIDE SPARROW - Carol Lambert and Jeff Sewell had an impressive count of 81 birds on the St. Catherine's Island CBC on 16 December.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - Joshua Spence had a very good count of more than 25 birds along Fite Bend Road in Gordon Co. on 8 February.

PAINTED BUNTING - Susan Richmond reported seeing a bird at her feeder in Cadwell from 4 until 31 December, and a wintering bird was seen visiting a feeder in Glennville on 15 January (Gene Wilkinson).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD - Walt Chambers had the high count of more than 200 birds at Oxbow Meadows on 7 January. Chris Loudermilk observed 75 birds on 10 February and 40 birds on 25 February in Lithia Springs.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD - Chris Loudermilk reported finding five birds in Lithia Springs, for an unusual sighting from that area.

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE - An immature male bird seen visiting a feeder in Smyrna on 15 December delighted area birders when the bird returned on 20 and 21 December to be seen and photographed by many observers (fide Georgann Schmalz). Amazingly, John Parrish discovered another immature male bird, this time in Bulloch Co., on 27 December for the seventh state record (CRC record 2005-20).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE - Reports of birds wintering around the state have been increasing and widespread this season. Erica and Michael Beohm found a single bird near Augusta on 1 December, and saw another bird near Lake Seminole on 3 December. Page Luttrell observed a bird near Athens on 17 December, and Carol Lambert observed a female bird at the ELHLAF Wetlands Center on 22 December. Chris Feeney located a bird at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park on 7 January, and a bird was seen visiting John Tiernan's feeder in Douglas Co. from 14 through 26 January. Jennifer Griffith reported a female bird at a feeder in Stone Mountain from 18 through 23 February. Finally, John McMahan and Pete Followill reported single birds in Columbus on 12 and 19 February.

PURPLE FINCH - There were very few reports this winter. Paul Sykes reported up to 10 birds visiting a feeder in Oconee Co. most of the winter period.

RED CROSSBILL - A bird photographed by Pam Moore at a Cobb Co. feeder on 12 January was definitely out of its normal range. The only other report was from the Carter's Lake area, where as many as two birds may have spent the winter and were last reported on 24 February by Joshua Spence.

PINE SISKIN - The highest counts were received from Fannin Co., where Tom Striker counted more than 50 birds on 27 December, and Nedra Sekera counted 75 birds on 24 January.

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