

FROM THE FIELD

DECEMBER 2007 - FEBRUARY 2008

Note: The appearance of observations in this section does not suggest verification or acceptance of a record. Observations of Review Species need to be documented and a rare bird report submitted to the Georgia Checklist and Records Committee (GCRC) for consideration.

A great year for birding in Georgia, 2007 ended with a flourish of rarities and a total of 346 species recorded across the state during the calendar year. The New Year began where the previous year left off, with several great finds in 2008 that kept birders on their toes if they wished to see them all. All 6 species of geese historically recorded in the state were represented this winter, along with the amazing discovery of all 3 regularly occurring species of scoter and a Long-tailed Duck in the same small flock - inland! On the coast, the second Snowy Plover on record in Georgia was discovered, and a new state high count of 10 Manx Shearwaters continued to change our understanding of the distribution of that species in offshore zones. The beautiful Green-breasted Mango was observed through the end of the season by birders who came from far and wide to the town of Dublin in Laurens Co. to see this rare visitor. For a short period in early January, it was actually possible to observe Georgia's first record of Smith's Longspur along with a Sprague's Pipit, Lapland Longspurs, a Limpkin, and a Say's Phoebe - rarities which are all on the GOS Review List - all on the *same day* and all within a 60-mile radius of one another! One of the most significant invasions of Red-breasted Nuthatches on record spread to all corners of the state, and it was also a good winter for other irruptive species such as Purple Finch and Pine Siskin. Northern Saw-whet Owls also staged an incursion into the Southeast this winter, though only one was recorded in Georgia -- at a banding station.

Abbreviations: AB:62 - American Birds 108th Christmas Bird Count, Volume 62; ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003, Beaton et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, McIntosh Co.; BUENWR - the Bradley Unit of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Stewart Co.; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CI - Cumberland Island, Camden Co.; CLRL - Carter's Lake Re-regulation Lake area, Murray Co.; CSU - Cochran Shoals Unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Cobb Co.; FCCR - Floyd Creek Church Road, Bartow Co.; GVMSP - Georgia

Veterans Memorial State Park, Crisp Co.; LSSI - Little St. Simons Island, Glynn Co.; LWFG - Lake Walter F. George, Clay Co.; m. ob. - multiple observers; MSS - Marshallville Super Sod Farm, Macon Co.; MWS - Midwinter Waterbird Survey, GA DNR; NAB - North American Birds (journal of the American Birding Association); NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; OM - Oxbow Meadows Environmental Learning Center, Muscogee Co.; PCR - Pine Chapel Road, Gordon Co.; PSNP - Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, Richmond Co.; RBA - Rare Bird Alert; SCI - St. Catherine's Island, Liberty Co.; v. ob. - various observers; WMA - Wildlife Management Area.

Note: Species that appear in a bold-faced font represent those that were considered "review" species by the GCRC during the year of the sighting. This list changes from year to year. The current review list may be viewed at the following link: <http://www.gos.org/checklists/reportables.html>

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK - A high count of 12-15 individuals of this established breeding resident at AWMA was recorded on 5 December (Nathan Farnau). Other reports there included 5 birds on 27 December (Tom Beal), 13 birds on 30 December (Bob Zaremba, Earl Horn), and single birds on 6 January (Roger Clark) and 12 January (Mark McShane, Max Medley).

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - A single bird was seen at AWMA on 30 December (Bob Zaremba, Earl Horn). Two birds were reported on 12 January at FCCR for the third consecutive winter (Ken Blankenship); presumably, the same individuals were re-located there by v. ob. through the end of the season. Three birds were seen on private property in Monroe Co. on 27 February (Dan Adrien).

SNOW GOOSE - A dark morph adult was found at Gillsville Lake in Banks Co. on 1 December (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn). Single birds were found at separate locations on 4 December: one at Shamrock Lake in Clayton Co. (Carol Lambert), and the other at a pond in Whitfield Co. (David Hendrix). Two birds were found on 5 December at PCR (Joshua Spence) and stayed for several weeks. A flock of 12 birds was seen on 8 and 9 December on Fite Bend Rd in Gordon Co. (Joshua Spence). A single bird was found on Lake Blackshear on 9 December (Cheryl Kanes), and on 12 December another single bird was seen in Brunswick (Chris Daughtry). Another was found on 16 December along GA Hwy 219 near the Troup/Harris Co. line (Walt Chambers). On 21 December a bird originally

reported in fall 2007 was re-located at an unusual urban location near Perimeter Mall in Dekalb Co. (Darlene Moore). A single bird was seen on 22 December at GVMSP (Bob Zaremba, Dan Vickers), and another single bird was found on 24 December along GA Hwy 315 near the Talbot/Harris Co. line (Walt Chambers). Two birds were seen on PCR on 29 December (Joshua Spence). A single bird was at West Point Lake on 31 December (Warren Tidwell), and a juvenile bird was reported from the Okefenokee Swamp on 14 January (Gene Wilkinson).

ROSS’S GOOSE - A single bird was found at a pond in Whitfield Co. on 4 December (David Hendrix). Another was located on private property in Floyd Co. on 24 December (Richard White). Providing interesting migratory data was a bird shot on the weekend of 5 January, which proved to have been banded in Manitoba, Canada in 2005 (fide Owen Kinney).

BRANT - An immature bird was observed at Tybee Island north beach on 7 February for a very rare Georgia record (Brenda Brannen, Jackie Gay; accepted, GCRC 2008-05).

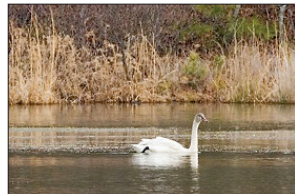
CAKCLING GOOSE - A single bird was found with a group of Canada Geese and 2 Snow Geese on PCR on 29 December (Joshua Spence; accepted, GCRC 2008-03) and was re-located by v. ob. the following day.



From left: Canada Goose, “Blue Phase” Snow Goose (background), Cackling Goose, Canada Goose, “White Phase” Snow Goose, Gordon Co., 29 December, by Joshua Spence

TUNDRA SWAN - A first-winter bird was found on J.W. Smith Reservoir in Clayton Co. on 5 January (Carol Lambert et al.), and was re-located by m. ob. as late as 2 February.

**Tundra Swan, Clayton Co., 13 January,
by Linda Godwin**



GADWALL - A good count of 267 was made at Garden Lakes in Floyd Co. on 29 December (Marion Dobbs).

AMERICAN WIGEON - A good count of 257 was made at Garden Lakes in Floyd Co. on 29 December (Marion Dobbs).

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK - Among several reports this winter was a good count of 16 at the annually reliable pond at Chicopee Woods, Hall Co., on 21 January (Jim Flynn).

MOTTLED DUCK - There were two reports of this uncommon coastal resident this winter from AWMA.

NORTHERN PINTAIL - A good count of 29 was made at Lake Hartwell, Hart Co., on 1 December (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn). On 8 February a single bird was found at CSU, a rare sighting for that location (Pierre Howard).

CANVASBACK - Among several reports this winter was a count of 17 at J. Strom Thurmond/Clarks Hill Lake in Columbia Co. on 17 February (Eugene Zielinski).

REDHEAD - A very high count of 400 was made at Lake Hartwell on 1 December (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn). This is the second-highest count of the species in the state on record; the highest count of 498 was only recently established on 24 November 2007 at West Point Dam.

COMMON EIDER - A single bird was reported from CI on 31 December (Patrick Leary).

SURF SCOTER - Three birds were found at West Point Dam on 3 December (Bob Zaremba et al.). Four were seen on the CI CBC on 15 December, while 5 were found on the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January. A nice count of 12 was made on 18 January at CI (Chris Skelton). On 21 January a remarkable group of sea ducks was discovered on the lake at Ft. Yargo State Park in Barrow Co. (Brandon Best). The group contained one of this species among several others. Another nice group of scoters was found at CLRL on 22 January (Max Medley), which contained a single Surf Scoter, one Black Scoter, 3 White-winged Scoters, and 4 unidentified scoter species. On 9 February, 2 birds were found on J. Strom Thurmond/Clarks Hill Lake, Columbia Co. (Mark McShane, Greg and Natalie Bailey), and were re-located on 17 February (Eugene Zielinski).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - A single bird was found at West Point Dam on 3 December (Bob Zaremba et al.). A good count of 7 birds was made on the CI CBC on 15 December. On 10 January, 2 were found on a small pond in Whitfield Co. (David Hendrix). A single bird was seen on 18 January on CI (Chris Skelton), and 4 were found on 21 January at Ft. Yargo State Park in Barrow Co. (Brandon Best). On 22 January, at least 3 birds were found at CLRL (Max Medley). On 9 February, 7 were found on Strom Thurmond/Clarks Hill Lake, Columbia Co. (Mark McShane, Greg and Natalie Bailey), and presumably the same group had increased to 9 birds by 17 February (Eugene Zielinski). On 16 February, a single bird was found at the Charlie Elliot Wildlife Center on Fox Lake (Joel McNeal et al.).

BLACK SCOTER - There were a total of 9 reports (3 inland, 6 coastal) of Georgia's most common wintering scoter species, including high counts

of 81 on the CI CBC on 15 December and 60 on the Sapelo Island CBC on 29 December.

LONG-TAILED DUCK - On 21 January, a remarkable group of sea ducks was discovered on the small lake at Ft. Yargo State Park in Barrow Co. (Brandon Best). The group contained a single Long-tailed Duck among three species of scoter.



From right: Long-tailed Duck, 2 White-winged Scoters, Black Scoter, 2 White-winged Scoters, Surf Scoter, Barrow Co., 21 January, by Brandon Best

COMMON GOLDENEYE - Two birds were found at West Point Dam on 3 December (Bob Zaremba et al.). On 6 December, a male returned to the same pond on Skidaway Island for the seventh year in a row (Russ Wigh). Two were seen at BUENWR on 7 December (Chris McClure), and a single bird was reported from Blalock Reservoir in Clayton Co. on 12 December (Carol Lambert). On 14 December, a single bird appeared on a private pond in Cherokee Co. (Vicki DeLoach), while on the same date a bird at Harris Neck NWR was recorded for that area’s CBC (Gene Keferl). A single bird was found on Lake Horton on 16 December (Eric Beohm), and 2 were recorded on the Floyd Co. CBC on 30 December. A single bird was found at the J.W. Smith Reservoir in Clayton Co. on 5 January (Carol Lambert et al.), and one was found at Andrew’s Island Causeway on 14 January (Gene Wilkinson). Another was found at a small pond in Lumpkin Co. on 21 January (Jim Flynn), and 2 birds were seen there on 2 February (Mark McShane). Back at Harris Neck NWR, 2 birds were found on 26 January (Lois Stacey et al.). On 18 February, a single bird was reported from Clayton Co. (Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett).

HOODED MERGANSER - A new state-wide CBC total of 3274 was established, continuing a 10-year increasing trend (AB:62).

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER - The high count of 570 was made on the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January.

RUDDY DUCK - A new state-wide CBC total of 5687 was established, continuing a 10-year increasing trend (AB:62).

PLAIN CHACHALACA - A single bird was heard on 7 December and photographed the following day on Sapelo Island, where an isolated introduced population of the species is resident (Bob Zaremba, Dan Vickers).

RUFFED GROUSE - A single bird was found on 16 December on the Chattahoochee National Forest CBC. Another was recorded on the Blue Ridge CBC on 5 January. A single bird was observed on Brasstown Bald on 25 February (Connie Head).

WILD TURKEY - A count of 143 on the Floyd Co. CBC on 30 December represents a new state high count, eclipsing the published record of 137 set in 1998 (ACOGB).

NORTHERN BOBWHITE - This species and a few others are in decline in the state due to loss of early successional habitat partly caused by fire exclusion, which provides nesting cover, brood range, and escape cover. Loss of this habitat is also due to changes in land use (intensive agriculture and forestry practices) and urbanization. The species was recorded on 14 out of 26 CBC circles this season, for a total of 66 individuals. The highest count was 16 on the Callaway Gardens CBC on 29 December. During the period 1959-1989, the average total of individuals reported state-wide on the CBC was 434; the highest total was 702 in 1974-1975, and the lowest total was 147 in 1988-1989. By comparison, during the period 1990-2007, the average total number of individuals reported state-wide on the CBC was 98; the highest total was 209 in 1992-1993, and the lowest total was only 35 birds in 1999-2000. The Callaway Gardens CBC is a good barometer of the status of the species over the long-term, as its data roughly mirror this state-wide trend. During 1959-1989, the circle average total for Callaway's CBC was 57 birds, with an average of 24 observers on each count. The high count (unpublished) for this CBC during that 31-year period was 365 on 1 January 1973 (which is the actual record state high count vs. 291 published in the ACOGB), and the low count was zero on 2 January 1988. In the recent period 1990-2007, the circle average total for Callaway's CBC was just over 5 birds with an average of 36 observers on each count (even better coverage), featuring a high count of 20 on 19 December 1992, and a low count of zero, which was recorded *six times* during the 18-year period!

RED-THROATED LOON - Four birds were seen on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.). On 14 December, 8 were seen from the beach on Tybee Island (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn). On 29 December, 13 birds were recorded on the Sapelo Island CBC. Another count of 8 birds came from Tybee Island on 12 January (Mark McShane, Max Medley). A single bird was a nice inland find on 27 January on Lake Lanier (Brandon Best), and on the same date one was reported from Tybee Island (Lois Stacey). Two were seen again on Lake Lanier on 2 February (Mark McShane), and a single bird was seen from Tybee Island on 7 February (Brenda Brannen, Jackie Gay).

COMMON LOON - A count of 500+ was made on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.); this represents a new offshore record high count.

HORNED GREBE - The high count of 145 was made on 1 December at Lake Hartwell (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn).

EARED GREBE - A good count of 28 birds was made on the Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA CBC on 17 December. A single bird was found on the Lake Blackshear CBC on 20 December. On 23 February, a new state high count of 40+ birds was made at Plant Scherer-Rum Creek WMA in Monroe Co. (Mark McShane, Max Medley), besting the previous record of 30+ recently established on 17 November 2007 at the same location.

MANX SHEARWATER - A new state high count of 10 birds was made on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.; pending, GCRC 2009-11). This species is listed in the most recent ACOGB (2003) as an accidental fall and winter visitor to offshore zones. Data gathered from the growing number of sea-birding expeditions over the past 5 years, along with more observers learning how to accurately identify this species (vs. the similar Audubon's Shearwater), support the assertion that its status in the state may now be considered rare to uncommon in winter. The species has been consistently recorded on Georgia winter pelagic birding trips, including counts of 6 on 21 February 2003, 3 on 11 January 2005, 2 on 12 February 2005, and 3 on 14 January 2007.



**Manx Shearwater, Atlantic Ocean, 9 December
by Rachel Cass**

NORTHERN GANNET - A notable high count of 500+ birds was made on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.). Another high count of 134 was made on the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January.

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - The high count of 76 birds came on 8 December from the south end of Tybee Island (Paul Sykes). On 29 December, 4 birds were reported from AWMA (fide Jim Flynn). On 18 January, 13 birds were seen at CI (Chris Skelton). On 27 January, a single bird was seen at LWFG, for a rare inland record (John and Margaret Cole). On 17 February, a single bird was reported at the annually reliable location at Andrew's Island Causeway in Glynn Co. (Mark McShane, Max Medley). On 23 February, a single bird was found inland at Woodruff Dam, Lake Seminole (Jim Flynn et al.).

BROWN PELICAN - On 27 January, a single bird was seen at LWFG, for a rare inland record (John and Margaret Cole).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT - A very high inland count of 1676 was made on the Lake Oconee CBC on 23 December. On the coast, a count of 2490 on the SCI CBC on 15 December is only 10 short of the record count of 2500

on 28 October 1989 at Tybee Island (ACOGB). Notably, a new state-wide CBC high count of 10,032 was established this year (AB:62). Additional research has turned up an (unpublished) count of 3380 on the SCI CBC on 21 December 1996; this effectively renders this year's highest CBC circle totals "very high counts," but not record counts.

ANHINGA - This species is rare but increasing in the Piedmont, but still quite scarce in winter. Thus, 2 birds (and possibly a third) seen at Lake Shamrock in Clayton Co. on or about 4 December were a great find (Carol Lambert); at least one bird was present into February.

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD - A single bird was found on 15 December on the CI CBC, the first state CBC record (AB:62).

AMERICAN BITTERN - There were a total of only 6 reports of this reclusive species. Three birds were recorded on 15 December on the Augusta CBC. One was seen on 24 January on Clayton Co. Water Authority property (Carol Lambert). A single bird was seen at AWMA on 28 January (Bob Zaremba). On 2 February, one flew over a group of birders at BUENWR (Wesley Kiggins), and the same phenomenon took place on 9 February at PSNP (Ken Blankenship et al.). Single birds were seen at BUENWR on 18 February (Mark McShane, Max Medley) and 24 February (Walt Chambers).

GREAT EGRET - Rare winter records for the Piedmont included 2 birds at Lake Horton on 2 December (Patty McLean) and 12+ at the same location on 16 December (Eric Beohm). On 28 December, a single bird was seen at Lake Blalock in Clayton Co. (Carol Lambert).

REDDISH EGRET - A single bird was recorded on 15 December on the CI CBC, and on 18 January another rare winter sighting reported from this location



(Chris Skelton) may have been the same individual. On 18 February, one was discovered in an odd location- a freshwater lagoon on Skidaway Island (Stan Gray).

Reddish Egret, Skidaway Island, 18 February, by Doug Herrick

CATTLE EGRET - Two birds were seen at PSNP on 26 December, for a rare inland winter record (Ken Cheeks). Notably, this species wintered at this location the

previous year.

GREEN HERON - A bird was observed as late as 9 January, for a rare wintering record in Laurens Co. (Lance Jones).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - On 15 February, a bird was found in Camden Co., for an uncommon wintering record (Todd Womack), though the species appears to be increasing on the coast in winter.

WHITE IBIS - Two birds were reported from Lake Horton on 16 December, for a rare Piedmont winter record (Eric Beohm).

ROSEATE SPOONBILL - A single bird was seen at the Jekyll Island amphitheater pond from 3 January (Lydia Thompson) until as late as 15 January (Gene Wilkinson). Two birds were recorded on the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January. On 15 February, a single bird was seen in Camden Co. (Sheila Willis). This species is another wader that appears to be increasing on the coast in winter, with 7 reported on CBCs (in 3 circles), only the second year it has been recorded on any count (AB:62).

GOLDEN EAGLE - On 17 December, an adult bird was recorded on the Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA CBC. Another bird was seen during the Okefenokee NWR CBC on 29 December. One bird was reported on private property in Spalding Co. on 21 February (Eric Beohm).

MERLIN - Listed as a rare to uncommon winter resident in the latest ACOGB (2003), this species is being reported more often every year in the winter months, especially in open habitat such as pastures and farmland, and along the coast. This may indicate that the species is increasing in Georgia in the winter, or that more observers know to look for them in appropriate habitat, or (most likely) a combination of both factors. Merlins were recorded on 13 out of 26 CBC circles for a total of 27 birds, a new high count (AB:62). Additionally, there were 11 other reports from across the state this winter making a total of 38 individual sightings.

PEREGRINE FALCON - Two birds were seen from an office window in downtown Atlanta on 14 December (Liz Horsey). Two were recorded on the SCI CBC on 15 December, while a single bird was seen at Harris Neck NWR on 16 December (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn). One was seen on 2 January at MSS (Chris Skelton). On 28 January, one bird was seen at AWMA (Bob Zaremba).

BLACK RAIL - A bird was calling on the morning of 28 January in the high part of the salt marsh on the east edge of St. Marys, Camden Co. (Paul Sykes).

LIMPKIN - A bird was found at GVMSP on 20 December during the Lake Blackshear CBC, and was re-located by m. ob. as late as 3 January (pending, GCRC 2009-09). On 24 December, staff at Reed Bingham State Park confirmed that the species was seen there regularly during the winter, but no specific dates were given. This is one of only 2 somewhat reliable locations for the species in the state (the other being Chickasawhatchee WMA in Calhoun Co. and Dougherty Co.).

WHOOPING CRANE - On 3 December, 2 banded birds from the Wisconsin re-introduction program stopped at the Okefenokee Swamp (Sheila Willis). On 6 December, another individual presumably from this same population was seen on a small island in the Chattahoochee River on the Georgia side of BUENWR (fide Jim Flynn). On 11 January, 2 banded birds were seen in Carroll Co. (Gary Cottrell, Larry Ross).

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER - A new state high count of 1901 was reported from CI during the MWS on 28 January (Paul Sykes, John Fry); the species reached a new state CBC high mark with 2275 recorded (AB:62).

SNOWY PLOVER - A single bird was a great find on Jekyll Island south beach on 29 December (Walt Chambers; accepted, GCRC 2008-18A/B), and was



present into the spring. This represents only the second record of the species for Georgia, and was also a CBC first (AB:62; *photo* NAB Vol. 62, pg. 227).

Snowy Plover, Jekyll Island, Glynn Co., 11 January, by Darlene Moore

WILSON'S PLOVER – The high count of 51 on the SCI CBC on 15 December was particularly outstanding given that: a) the species was not recorded in any other CBC circle and b) this count surpasses all historical CBC *state-wide* annual totals! Two were seen on 11 January on Jekyll Island south beach (Lydia Thompson et al.), and 3 were at the same location on 11 February (Brenda Brannen, Sandy Beasley). On or about 30 January, a group of 20 birds was seen at SCI (Tim Keyes), perhaps the vestiges of the large flock recorded there on the CBC. Formerly considered rare in winter, this species may be considered locally uncommon on Georgia's coast in the colder months, a trend illustrated by 3 years of MWS data: 11 birds in 2006, 39 in 2007, and 66 on 28 January 2008.

PIPING PLOVER - A high count of 31 birds was made on the CI CBC on 15 December. On 28 January during the MWS, a count of 14 birds was reported from LSSI, 7 of which were banded (Bob Zaremba); on the same day 16 birds were reported from CI (Paul Sykes, John Fry).

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER - A high count of 67 was made on the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER - A single bird found at CSU on 29 February is a rare wintering record this far north in the Piedmont (Terry Moore). The species is known to winter uncommonly along the Chattahoochee River from Columbus

southward, but is also occasionally found further north on that river system in winter.

WHIMBREL - A good winter find was 5 birds on the Harris Neck CBC on 14 December. A single bird was seen at the Jekyll Island Visitor's Center on 3 January (Diana Churchill), 27 January (Grant McCreary), and again on 17 February (Mark McShane, Max Medley); this species is considered rare in winter on the coast, and these reports likely pertain to the same individual.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW - Three birds were recorded during the MWS on 28 January on LSSI (Bob Zaremba). The species is a rare winter visitor to the state, and is found almost exclusively on remote, undeveloped barrier islands with little to no beach driving such as LSSI and SCI.

MARbled GODWIT - Notable counts included 53 birds on the SCI CBC on 15 December and 31 birds on Jekyll Island south beach on 11 January (Mark McShane, Max Medley). The high count of 65 was recorded during the MWS on 28 January on LSSI (Bob Zaremba).

RED KNOT - A good count of 406 was made on the CI CBC on 15 December.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER - A single bird at OM on 11 January represents only the fifth inland winter record of this species in the state (Walt Chambers).

PURPLE SANDPIPER - There were a total of 9 reports of this uncommon wintering species from the only reliable location in the state: Tybee Island north beach in Chatham Co. The high count of 15 birds was made on 28 December (Brandon Best).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER - A new state high count of 1800 was reported from CI during the MWS on 28 January (Paul Sykes, John Fry).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER - Seven birds were recorded on the Macon CBC on 15 December. On 18 January, 4 birds were found in Macon Co. (Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett).

RED PHALAROPE - A high count of 500+ birds was made on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.).

BONAPARTE'S GULL - The high count of 221 was made on the Lake Oconee CBC on 23 December.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL - Among several reports of this uncommon coastal wintering species was one unusual inland record on 21 January from Clarks Hill/J. Strom Thurmond Lake (Jim Flynn). There are fewer than 10 inland records of this species in the state.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL - There were a total of 8 reports of this uncommon wintering species from the coast. The high count was 5 birds, recorded on the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January.

POMARINE JAEGER - Single birds were seen on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.), and during the SCI CBC on 15 December.

PARASITIC JAEGER - Three birds were seen on a pelagic birding trip off Tybee Island on 9 December (Bob Zaremba et al.). On 15 December, 2 birds were recorded on the SCI CBC.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE - On 8 December, one was found at a residence on Tybee Island where the species has been seen in the past (Bob Zaremba et al.); v. ob. sporadically re-located a bird there as late as 17 February. On 9 January, one appeared at feeders at a residence in Savannah for the third consecutive year; two birds were present at this location on 26 January (Steve Wagner).

COMMON GROUND-DOVE - A single bird reported at CLRL on 7 December (Theresa Hartz) was a very rare find for the Ridge and Valley region of the state, where the species is considered accidental.

SHORT-EARED OWL - The first report of the season was 2 birds on 9 December (Cheryl Kanes) from the annually reliable location along Cobb Cheek Rd in Sumter Co; there were 12+ reports from this location this winter, with a high count of 10 coming the week of 8 February (Phil Hardy). Single birds were seen on 16 December at BUENWR (Walt Chambers) and on 20 January at OM (Walt Chambers).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL - Despite a major irruption occurring in eastern North America this winter and many nocturnal attempts made by birders using audio lures, there was only one definitive record of the species this year in Georgia. On 2 December, a bird was captured and banded in Lamar Co. (Charlie Muise; accepted, GCRC 2008-14). The true winter distribution of this highly-migratory species in eastern North America is not fully understood.



It is likely that numbers of birds are present in the South every year, even when a major flight does not take place. In a very exciting project, 200 Northern Saw-whet Owls will be outfitted with newly-developed geolocator devices in fall 2009 in an effort to study their winter movements (Scott Weidensaul, pers. comm.).

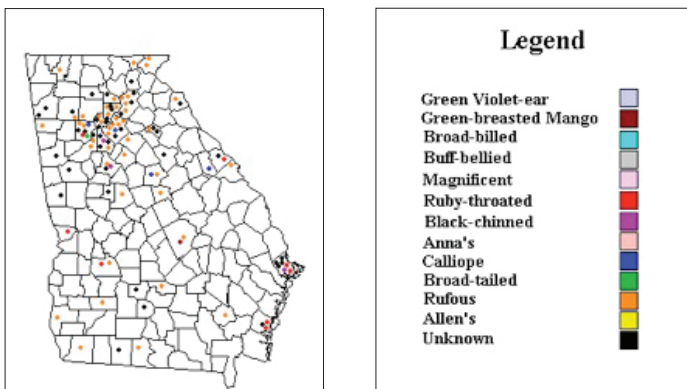
**Northern Saw-whet Owl, Lamar Co., 2 December,
by Tracey Muise**

WINTER HUMMINGBIRDS 2007-2008

Master bander and hummingbird expert Rusty Trump created the map below showing the distribution of hummers in Georgia during winter 2007-2008, and also provided the data in each species account below.

“The 2007-2008 winter hummer season is now complete. We had 105 reports in 46 counties. While the numbers were a little lower than past seasons, it still was a pretty good year for winter hummingbirds. The highlight of this season has to be the first state record of the Green-breasted Mango that spent the whole winter in Dublin. Another first for Georgia was a returning female Broad-tailed Hummingbird in Mableton. The numbers of Calliopes in the state continue to be stronger than we first anticipated. The Calliope Hummingbird is becoming an expected species for Georgia every year.”

- Rusty Trump



GREEN-BREASTED MANGO - This incredibly rare visitor to North America (and first Georgia record) was first reported in fall 2007, and was seen fairly consistently visiting feeders at several residences in Dublin, Laurens Co., through the end of the season. The bird provided the state’s first CBC record, only the third in the U.S. and the first outside of Texas (accepted, GCRC 2008-04; AB:62; *photo* NAB Vol. 62, pg. 227).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - State-wide, there were a total of 8 reports of this species. The only hummingbird which breeds in Georgia, it is rare to uncommon in winter, and is usually found along the coast or in the lower Coastal Plain.

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD - State-wide, there were a total of 3 reports of this species, which is a rare winter visitor across the state.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD - There were a total of 4 reports of North America's smallest breeding bird in Georgia this winter (pending, GCRC 2008-34; pending, GCRC 2008-35). Since it was first recorded in the state in 1998, there have been 26 records of the species in winter. Though it is currently listed



as accidental in the latest ACOGB (2003), data gathered by the Georgia Hummer Study Group indicate that its status in the state may now be considered rare in winter.

Calliope Hummingbird, Gwinnett Co., 3 February, by Darlene Moore

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD - There was only one report of this species this winter, a bird which returned to the same residence in Mableton, Cobb Co. for the second consecutive winter. This female was the seventh Broad-tailed Hummingbird to be documented in Georgia. The species is considered accidental in winter in the state.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD - There were a total of 46 reports of this species, Georgia's most common wintering western hummingbird. Many reported hummingbirds whose identity was not verified this winter likely were this species (fide Rusty Trump).

RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER - A count of 18 birds was recorded on the Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA CBC on 17 December.

SAY'S PHOEBE - On 22 December, this western flycatcher was found along Cobb Cheek Rd in Sumter Co. (Bob Zaremba, Dan Vickers; accepted, GCRC 2008-28), and was re-located by m. ob. as late as 25 January. This is the fourth confirmed record of the species in Georgia.

Say's Phoebe, Sumter Co., 26 December, by Bob Zaremba



VERMILION FLYCATCHER - Presumably the same female that has wintered at BUENWR for three consecutive years was reported sporadically from that location until as late as 24 February (Walt Chambers).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER - This western flycatcher was found on or about 17 February on private property in Baker Co. in southwest Georgia

(Zaroga Goff; accepted, GCRC 2008-20; *photo* NAB Vol. 62, pg. 228), and was re-located by v. ob. until as late as 23 February.



Ash-throated Flycatcher, Baker Co., 20 February, by Darlene Moore

WESTERN KINGBIRD - A group of 4 birds was a great find on the CI CBC on 15 December. On 6 January, a single bird was observed at

AWMA (Roger Clark).

WHITE-EYED VIREO - This species was recorded on 11 out of 26 CBC reports (69 individual birds), the high count of 18 coming from the Harris Neck CBC on 14 December.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO - At least 21 reports of this species were made this winter, and it was recorded on 16 out of 26 CBC reports (125 individual birds). The high count of 25 was made on the SCI CBC on 15 December.

COMMON RAVEN - A single bird was observed flying over northern Rabun Co. on 2 January (Ken Blankenship).

PURPLE MARTIN - The earliest report of returning birds came from Sumter Co. on 3 February (Phil Hardy).

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW - A single bird spotted on the Augusta CBC on 15 December provided a rare winter record (AB:62).

CAVE SWALLOW - At least one bird (possibly 2) was seen mixed in with a large flock of Tree Swallows at Ft. Pulaski in Chatham Co. on 3 January (Jared Fisher).

BARN SWALLOW - A rare winter record of 2 birds was made on 16 December at Harris Neck NWR (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn); these birds likely represent very late migrants.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH - One of the most significant invasions of this species on record continued throughout the season; to the delight of many birders, it became a common “feeder bird.” There were 48+ total reports of the species across the state, most from the Piedmont and mountains, and many of which involved multiple birds. The wave reached at least as far south as Albany in the Coastal Plain and Jekyll Island on the coast, where birds were reported at feeders on several occasions. In addition to these sightings, the species was reported from 69% of CBC circles (18 out of 26), 3 of which took place in the Coastal Plain, 2 on the coast, and the other 13 in the Piedmont and mountains, for a total of 115 individuals. This is the highest state-wide CBC total on record. In comparison, over the past 30 years the average state-wide CBC total is just

18! Also highlighting the magnitude of this winter's invasion, a new state high count of 39 was established on the Amicalola CBC on 29 December, while 3 other CBC circles recorded 10 or more individuals. The only winter with an apparently larger movement of this species into the state was 1980-1981, when 2 CBC high counts of 30+ individuals were recorded in Georgia - both on the coast! An additional eye-opening indicator of how massive that southeastern invasion was: a record total of 202 birds were counted state-wide on CBC circles...in Florida!

BROWN CREEPER - The high count of 14 was made on the Athens CBC on 15 December.

WINTER WREN - The high count of 17 was made on the Amicalola CBC on 29 December.

SEDGE WREN - The high count of 12 was made on the CI CBC on 15 December. On 5 January, a single bird was banded at Panola Mountain State Park, providing a rare Piedmont wintering record (Charlie Muise).

MARSH WREN - The high count of 19 was made on the SCI CBC on 15 December.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER - A good count of 18 of this uncommon coastal wintering species was recorded on the Harris Neck CBC on 14 December.

AMERICAN PIPIT - A good count of 353 was made on the Lake Oconee CBC on 23 December. A very high count of 500+ was made at OM on both 20 and 26 January (Walt Chambers).

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT - A single bird was a very rare find at MSS on 30 December (Devin Bosler; accepted, GCRC 2008-02). This bird was re-located by v. ob. and was last reported definitively on 9 January (Clive Rainey).

CEDAR WAXWING - A notable count of 1989 was made on the Callaway Gardens CBC on 29 December.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER - Among several reports of this wintering species was a high count of 9 on the CI CBC on 15 December.

NORTHERN PARULA - On 15 December, single birds were reported from 2 CBC circles, Augusta and CI, representing rare winter records of the species.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER - A notable count of 14 of this uncommon coastal wintering species was recorded on the SCI CBC on 15 December. A bird singing at PSNP on 9 February represented a rare inland wintering bird or a very early migrant (Ken Blankenship et al.).

PRAIRIE WARBLER - Single birds reported from the Glynn Co. CBC on 5 January and SCI CBC on 15 December represent rare coastal wintering records, while a bird reported on the Floyd Co. CBC on 30 December is an accidental inland wintering record.

PALM WARBLER - Among several reports of this wintering species was a notable count of 103 on the Albany CBC on 15 December.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER - On 15 December, 8 birds were recorded on both the Albany and SCI CBC circles. Single wintering birds were found on 16 December at Harris Neck (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn), on 22 December at GVMSP (Bob Zaremba, Dan Vickers), on 30 December at AWMA (Bob Zaremba, Earl Horn), on 5 January in Bibb Co. (Trey McCuen), on 27 January at Savannah NWR, on 28 January at LSSI (Bob Zaremba), on 11 February at Jekyll Island (Brenda Brannen), and on 24 February at BUENWR (Walt Chambers).

OVENBIRD - A rare wintering bird was found on 5 January on the Glynn Co. CBC.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH - A single bird found at AWMA on 30 December provided a rare wintering record (Bob Zaremba, Earl Horn).

WILSON'S WARBLER - A single bird was found at AWMA on 30 December, for a rare winter record (Bob Zaremba, Earl Horn).

SUMMER TANAGER - A very rare winter record of this species was a single bird calling in Lowndes Co. on 18 December (John Swiderski).

WESTERN TANAGER - A female was discovered coming to feeders at a residence on Skidaway Island, Chatham Co., on 7 February, and was present as late as 16 February (Ann Fenstermacher).



**Western Tanager, Skidaway Island, 8 February,
by Diana Churchill**

BACHMAN'S SPARROW - Two birds were reported on the Lake Blackshear CBC on 20 December, and a single bird was seen on the

Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA CBC on 17 December.

CHIPPING SPARROW - A new state high count of 2729 birds was made on the Dublin CBC on 28 December, with another good count of 1560 on the Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA CBC on 17 December. Notably, both of these counts are higher than the state record of 1413 on the Peachtree City CBC on 17 December 1983 (ACOGB). This year's Dublin count is higher than the previous (unpublished) state high count of 2020, which was made in that same CBC circle the previous year on 29 December 2006.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - On 30 December, 4 birds were found at AWMA (Bob Zaremba, Earl Horn), and single birds were found at the same location on 1 January (Diana Churchill et al.) and 12 January (Mark McShane,

Max Medley). On 13 January, an immature bird was reported from Cobb Cheek Rd in Sumter Co. (Steve Barlow). Back at AWMA, 2 birds were found on 28 January (Bob Zaremba). AWMA has been an annually reliable location for the species during fall migration. Multiple records throughout the winter indicate that it may be an erratic winter resident here; more fieldwork is needed. Birders should be on the lookout at AWMA from fall throughout the winter, especially in the vast fields on Butler Island west of I-95.

VESPER SPARROW - A notable count of 50+ birds was made on Cobb Cheek Rd in Sumter Co. on 1 January (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert).

LARK SPARROW - A single bird originally discovered in the fall was present on Tybee Island as late as 14 December (Cheryl Kanen).

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW - Two birds were found on the Carter's Lake CBC on 5 January, for a rare wintering record for the Ridge and Valley region.

HENSLOW'S SPARROW - Single birds were recorded on 29 December on the Okefenokee CBC and on the Sapelo Island CBC. Three were at the annually reliable location at Paulk's Pasture WMA on or about 30 January (Tim Keyes). Two birds were spotted at the Evans Co. Public Fishing Area on 2 February (Brenda Brannen).

NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW - A good count of 19 was made on the SCI CBC on 15 December.

SALTMARSH SHARP-TAILED SPARROW - A good count of 29 was made on the SCI CBC on 15 December.

SEASIDE SPARROW - A good count of 118 was made on the SCI CBC on 15 December.

FOX SPARROW - A good count of 42 was made on the Callaway Gardens CBC on 29 December. This is notably just one short of the published record high count of 43 on the Atlanta CBC on 17 December 1989 (ACOGB). However, additional research has turned up a much higher count of 109 on the Atlanta CBC on 26 December 1954; this effectively renders the Callaway total a "high count," but not close to being a new record. Other notable (unpublished) high counts include 82 on the Atlanta CBC on 23 December 1956; 81 on the Atlanta CBC on 26 December 1955; and the coast high count is 61 on the Sapelo Island CBC on 25 December 1968.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW - A single bird was recorded on the Atlanta/Marietta CBC on 16 December. A single bird was also at the Paradise Public Fishing Area in Berrien Co. on 29 December (Ken Blankenship, Rachel Cass).

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - A high count of 45 was made on the Carter's Lake CBC on 5 January. This is notably one more than the published record

high count of 44 on the Albany CBC on 27 December 1986 (ACOGB). However, additional research has turned up a much higher (unpublished) count of 130 on the Bainbridge-Lake Seminole CBC on 25 December 1969; this makes both of the aforementioned reports “high counts,” but not new records.

LAPLAND LONGSPUR - As many as 3 birds were found in the company of Horned Larks, American Pipits, and a first state record Smith’s Longspur at MSS on 31 December (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn; accepted, GCRC 2008-01).

SMITH’S LONGSPUR - This species was discovered on 24 December at MSS, for a first Georgia record (Walt Chambers; accepted, GCRC 2008-19A;



photo NAB Vol. 62, pg. 228). The bird was re-located by m. ob. as late as 13 January.

**Smith’s Longspur, Macon Co., 26 December,
by Dan Vickers**

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK - A very rare visit by this western species began sometime in mid-January at a residence in Dunwoody, Dekalb Co. (Jen and Mike Rego; pending, GCRC 2009-14), and the bird visited feeders at this location until as late as 23 February.

**Black-headed Grosbeak, Dekalb Co., 16 February,
by Darlene Moore**



PAINTED BUNTING - A male was visiting feeders at a residence in Glennville, Tattnall Co., from 21 December until as late as 10 January (Gene Wilkinson). On 13 January, a single bird was seen at feeders in Rincon, Effingham Co. (Ramona Bartos).

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD - A male was found in a large flock of blackbirds in rural Dooly Co. on 6 January (Jim Throckmorton). On 12 January, 2 males were located after much searching through huge flocks of mixed blackbirds (numbering 1,000,000+) along rural roads in Houston Co. (Paul Sykes et al.).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD - There were 21+ reports of this declining species, several numbering over 100 birds; in some winters it can be quite scarce. It was recorded on 13 out of 26 CBC circles for a total of 772 individuals. High counts included 244 on the Augusta CBC on 15 December and 250 on 26 January at OM (Walt Chambers).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD - A single bird was found on Taff Rd in Bartow Co. on 7 December (Chuck Saleeby). Ten birds were recorded on the Piedmont NWR-Rum Creek WMA CBC on 17 December. On 17 January, a "good-sized group" was seen on FCCR (Mark McShane). On 23 February two birds were found at CSU (Johnnie Greene).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE - This species, which winters uncommonly below the Fall Line and rarely further north, was reported from 9+ separate locations this winter including several records in the Piedmont. These birds are often found at feeders, where they will readily come to cut citrus fruit, hummingbird feeders, or grape jelly. The high count of 6 birds was made at feeders in Bulloch Co. on 28 December (Brenda Brannen), and at least that many birds frequented feeders at a residence in Dublin, Laurens Co., through the end of the season.

PURPLE FINCH - It was a productive winter for this irruptive species, with 31 total reports from across the state. It was recorded on 12 out of 26 CBC circles, and the high count was an incredible 85+ birds visiting feeders at a residence in Washington Co. on 26 February (Lynn Schlup).

RED CROSSBILL - Twelve birds were recorded on the Amicalola CBC on 29 December. On 3 January, a single bird was seen at the Woodring Branch campground on Carter's Lake (Max Medley). On 5 February, at least 4 were seen coming to feeders at a residence in Fannin Co. (Lisa Finnicum), and returned sporadically throughout the month; a good count of 8 birds was made at this location on 24 February (Mark McShane). The high count was 14 coming to feeders at a residence in Gilmer Co. on 26 February (Patty Park).

PINE SISKIN - This irruptive species was relatively well-reported, with 20 total reports from across the state. Though it was recorded on only 2 out of 26 CBC circles, the Blue Ridge CBC on 5 January produced a notable high count of 101 birds.

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