

## FROM THE FIELD

DECEMBER 2010 - FEBRUARY 2011

*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.

This winter was one of the chilliest on record, with temperatures in the eastern half of the state 9-11 °F below normal in December, and 4-7 °F below normal in January. It was also one of the driest, with monthly rainfall 50-75% lower than normal in the first half of the period, bringing extreme drought conditions to the southeastern area of the state. In spite of this, the winter was notable for its snowfall, with the Piedmont enjoying a white Christmas. The cold weather may have been responsible for enormous rafts of scaup and other sea ducks seen off the coast, and the large southward incursion of winter finches including the state's first reported Evening Grosbeak since 2005. A storm system on 1 December coincided with a flock of 25 Snow Geese found in Clarke Co. and a large movement of Sandhill Cranes southbound over Atlanta. In the week-long cold snap following a large snowfall on 9 January, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs were found in Bartow Co., but were soon eclipsed by the discovery of the first American Tree Sparrow observed in Georgia since 1978.

**Abbreviations:** ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003, Beaton, G. et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AIC - Andrews Island Causeway and spoil site, Glynn Co.; AP - American Proteins settling ponds, Forsyth Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, McIntosh Co.; BCL - Bartow Co. Loop, a cluster of sod farms, plus cattle ponds on Brandon Farm Road and Taff Road, west of Cartersville, Bartow Co.; BUENWR - Bradley Unit of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Stewart Co.; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CINS - Cumberland Island National Seashore, Camden Co.; CLRL - Carter's Lake Re-regulation Lake area, Murray Co.; COP - Centennial Olympic Park, Fulton Co.; CRNRA - Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area; CSU - Cochran Shoals Unit of the CRNRA, Cobb Co.; ELHLAF - E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co.; GI - Gould's Inlet, St. Simons Island, Glynn Co.; HP - Henderson Park, DeKalb Co.; JI - Jekyll Island, Glynn Co.; JIBS - Jekyll Island Banding Station, Glynn Co.; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Cobb Co.; LCI - Little Cumberland Island, Camden Co.; LSSI - Little St.

Simons Island, Glynn Co.; LTI - Little Tybee Island, Chatham Co.; LWFG - Lake Walter F. George, Clay Co.; MBBP - Merry Brothers Brickyard Ponds, Richmond Co.; m. ob. - multiple observers; MSS - Marshallville Super Sod Farm, Macon Co.; MWSS (Mid-winter Shorebird Survey of the Georgia coast); *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.; ph. - photographed; PSNP - Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, Richmond Co.; Region - when capitalized, refers to Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina; SBG - State Botanical Garden of Georgia, Clarke Co.; SCI - St. Catherines Island, Liberty Co.; SF - sod farm; SP - State Park; SSI - St. Simons Island, Glynn Co.; TI - Tybee Island, Chatham Co.; WMA - Wildlife Management Area; WPD - West Point Dam, Harris Co. and Troup Co.

*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> GCRC activity, including the status of reports listed as “pending” as of press time, may be viewed at the following link: <http://www.gos.org/checklists/gcrc-activity.html>

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK** - One immature bird was still at PSNP until at least 28 January (m. ob.). Eight were seen on the Albany CBC on 18 December.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** - Several reports were received from around the state. The highest count was of at least 16 birds commuting between PCR and Fite Bend Road, Gordon Co., on 13 December (m. ob.).

**SNOW GOOSE** - Widely reported, the highest counts were 25 at Lake Chapman, Clarke Co., on 1 December (Mirko Basen, Richard Hall, Joel McNeal) and 21 at Fite Bend Road, Gordon Co., on 13 December (Josh Spence, m. ob.).

**ROSS'S GOOSE** - One adult was seen at PCR on 2-5 December (pending, GCRC 2010-31). Another single was reported from Berrien Co. on 8 January (Wayne Schaffner, GCRC 2011-09). Two birds were seen at AP (Jim Flynn, GCRC 2011-14), and one was at WPD (Jim Flynn, GCRC 2011-15), all on 6 February. Walt Chambers observed one at OM on 7-9 February (GCRC 2011-21).

CANADA GOOSE - The high count of 665 came from MBBP on 11 December (Lois Stacey). A small race bird, most likely a Lesser Canada Goose (*B. c. parvipes*), was seen at Davenport Farm, Fannin Co., on 29 December and 19 February (Nedra Sekera).



**Probable Lesser Canada Goose, Fannin Co., 29 December, by Al Mast**

MUTE SWAN - One of unknown origin was present at CLRL on 15 January (m. ob.).

GADWALL - An impressive 1495 were recorded at ELHLAF on 2 January (m. ob.)

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK - A high count of 20 came from Lake Hartwell Dam on 9 January (Jim Flynn).

NORTHERN SHOVELER - A new state high count of 525 was recorded at ELHLAF on 25 February (Jeff Sewell).

NORTHERN PINTAIL - The high count of 34 came from ELHLAF on 2 January (m. ob.).

RING-NECKED DUCK - An excellent count of 5450 was recorded at ELHLAF on 2 January (m. ob.).

SCAUP - Huge rafts were reported from along the coast this winter, perhaps due to severe weather to the north. An amazing 80,000 birds seen off of Sapelo Island on 31 December represents the new state high count (Lois Stacey). Rafts of 20,000 birds were reported from Wassaw Island on 14 January (m. ob.) and Sea Island on 22 February (Ken Blankenship, Joel McNeal).

**COMMON EIDER** - One was offshore of Sea Island from 17-24 January (Mark McShane, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2011-33).

SURF SCOTER - The highest coastal count was 15 seen from Sapelo Island on 3 December (Tim Keyes). Inland, 6 were at WPD on 24 December (Walt Chambers).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - Away from the coast, one was at Lake Hartwell on 10 December (Eric and Michael Boehm), 2 were at Fort Yargo SP, Barrow Co., on 14 December (Jeff Sewell), and one was at Richard B. Russell Dam, Elbert Co., on 30 January (Jim Flynn). Two seen at WPD on 26 January increased to 5 by 13-28 February, with another in Columbus on 9 February (all Walt Chambers).

LONG-TAILED DUCK - Five were found on the CINS CBC on 18 December, with singles at St Mary's, Camden Co., and at SCI on the same day (m. ob.). One

was off JI on 13 January (Gene Keferl), and one was off Sea Island, Glynn Co., on 17 and 23 January (m. ob.).

**Surf Scoter (bottom left, center) and Long-tailed Duck (upper right), Glynn Co., 17 January, by Richard Hall**



**COMMON GOLDENEYE** - The high count was 30 seen just downstream of WPD on 5 February (Richard Hall, Vanessa Lane).

**WILD TURKEY** - A good coastal count of 30 was observed on CINS on 24 January (Paul Sykes).

**RED-THROATED LOON** - Inland, singles were reported from Lake Hartwell on 10 December (Eric and Michael Beohm), WPD on 13 February (Walt Chambers), and Lake Lanier on 19 February - 1 March (Grant McCreary, Mark McShane, Jim Flynn). The highest count from the coast was 97 flying past SCI on 24 January (m. ob.).

**RED-NECKED GREBE** - One found in Elijah Clark SP, Lincoln Co., on 5 January (Mac McCall) was joined by a second bird on 8 January, and the next day they were seen displaying (m. ob.). Two were seen from Tidwell Park on 19 February (Grant McCreary, Mark McShane).



**Red-necked Grebes displaying, Lincoln Co., 9 January, by Richard Hall**

**EARED GREBE** - A maximum of 7 were seen at the Plant Scherer Ash Pond, Monroe Co., on 15 January (Rosalyn Payne). One was at AIC on 22

and 24 January (Gene Keferl).

**WESTERN GREBE** - One was seen offshore of Wassaw Island on 14 January (Richard Hall, m. ob., GCRC 2011-11). Two were seen off of Sea Island on 23 January (James Fleullan, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2011-13). It was an excellent winter for this species in the Southeast, with multiple reports from North Carolina, including 5 seen together from Cape Hatteras.

**NORTHERN GANNET** - A flock of 1200 offshore of SSI on 17 January almost doubles the previous state high count (Nathan Farnau, Steve Fox, Paul and Joan Sykes).

**GREAT CORMORANT** - The returning wintering bird at LWFG was present throughout the period (m. ob., pending, GCRC 2012-07).

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** - The highest count from the coast was 38

in Cumberland Sound, Camden Co., on 19 December (Krista Gridley). A rare inland record came from CLRL on 18-20 February (Max Medley, m. ob.).

**BROWN PELICAN** - A total of 2647 constitutes a new statewide CBC high count.

**GREAT EGRET** - A bird seen near Richmond Hill on 13 December (Mike Womble) was banded at Lake Huron, Ontario, in June 2010. One seen on Lake Allatoona on 18 December (Bob Zaremba) was still present the next day and became the first record for the Atlanta CBC.

**TRICOLORED HERON** - One inland in Seminole Co. on 5 February was noteworthy (Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal).

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** - One immature found in Oglethorpe Co. on 1 January was a rare winter record for the Piedmont (Brown Widener, Kathy Wright).

**BLACK VULTURE** - A very high count of 400 was reported from Panola Mountain SP, Rockdale Co., on 11 December (Charlie Muise).

**RED-TAILED HAWK** - Individual Krider's Hawks were reported from PSNP on 18 December and 26 February (Lois Stacey), and from Paradise Public Fishing Area, Berrien Co., on 29 January (Wayne Schaffner, m. ob.). A dark western bird was photographed in Forsyth Co. on 6 February (Patty McLean, Kathy Miller, Iris Schumacher).



**Western Red-tailed Hawk, Forsyth Co., 6 February, by Iris Schumacher**

**GOLDEN EAGLE** - One juvenile was seen in flight over Lake Horton, Fayette Co., on 2 December (Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett, Jeff Sewell), and another flew over Lake Blue Ridge, Fannin Co., on 20 February (Jim Flynn).

**PEREGRINE FALCON** - A pair was reported to be on territory in the Buckhead area of Atlanta on 7 February

(Carl Crowley).

**SORA** - Twenty-seven seen at ELHLAF on 2 January was a good count for the Georgia Piedmont (m. ob.).

**PURPLE GALLINULE** - Seven were counted on the Bainbridge CBC on 28 December.

**COMMON GALLINULE** - A new state high count of 105 was recorded at Harris Neck NWR, McIntosh Co., on 17 December (Charlie Muise).

**AMERICAN COOT** - An impressive count of 24,000 was reported from Sealy Point Park, Seminole Co., on 5 February (Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal).

**SANDHILL CRANE** - A large southward movement occurred on 1 December, including a flock of 1550 over Tucker, Dekalb Co., in a 15-minute interval (Jeff Sewell). The northbound movement peaked in the second half of February, with many birds reported east of their normal migration route (e.g., several reports of flocks of up to 150 birds in the Athens area).

**WHOOPIING CRANE** - Tragically, 3 were found shot dead in Calhoun Co. on 30 December. These first-year birds were fitted with radio tags in Wisconsin in October, and their deaths reduced the eastern migratory population to 96. Northbound migrants were seen at an undisclosed location on 17 February (Charlie Muise) and in Murray Co. on 26 February (James Dietrich).

**SNOWY PLOVER** - One was on JI south beach on 2-4 December, constituting the fourth state record if accepted by the GCRC (Lydia Thompson, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2012-09).

**Snowy Plover, Glynn Co., 4 December, by Darlene Moore**



**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** - Reports include impressive counts of 436 from Wolf Island on 4 January, and 532 on Little Egg Island Bar on 8 February (both McIntosh Co., m. ob.). A high concentration of dwarf surf clams and oysters, along with a lack of human disturbance, means that these birds rarely stray outside of the Altamaha River mouth in the winter. The following band re-sights were reported from islands near the river's mouth: MA (Yellow) - 15, NJ (Orange) - 7, DE (Green flags) - 2, VA (Black) - 18, NC (Green) - 22, SC (Blue) - 4, GA (Red) - 181 (*vide* Tim Keyes/GA Department of Natural Resources).



**American Oystercatchers, (L): Chatham Co., 16 January, by Darlene Moore and (R): McIntosh Co., 8 February, by Brad Winn**

**AMERICAN AVOCET** - A good count of 110 was reported from GI on 20 February (Nathan Farnau, Steve Fox).

**RED KNOT** - A flock of 1600 birds was an excellent count from GI on 20 February (Nathan Farnau, Steve Fox).

PECTORAL SANDPIPER - One late bird was at AP on 11 and 18 December (Jim Flynn).

PURPLE SANDPIPER - Away from TI, 2 were found on the CINS CBC on 18 December (m. ob.), and one was on Sea Island, Glynn Co., on 22 February (Ken Blankenship, Joel McNeal). A noteworthy count of 25 was reported from the Savannah River entrance jetty on 13 February (m. ob.).

DUNLIN - Eight were seen at a lake in Wilkinson Co. on 12 December (Jim Flynn).

Impressive counts of 11,870 from SCI (m. ob.) and 6000 on CINS (Paul Sykes) were recorded during the MWSS on 24 January.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER - One was in Dougherty Co. on 1 December and 3 January (Tod Lanier, Wayne Schaffner). Three were found at a farm pond in Twiggs Co. on 3 December (Walt Chambers), and remained until at least 14 January. Two were at the Tolomato Causeway, McIntosh Co., on 3 December (Krista Gridley).

RED PHALAROPE - One was seen on a pelagic trip from Tybee Island on 13 February (m. ob.).

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE** - One was located at WPD, an excellent inland find, on 26 January (Walt Chambers, GCRC 2011-19), and stayed until at least 27 February (m. ob.).



**Black-legged Kittiwake, Troup Co., 7 February, by Darlene Moore**

LAUGHING GULL - One was inland at Lake Seminole, Decatur Co., on 5 February (Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal).

**ICELAND GULL** - One was found and photographed on the CINS CBC on 18 December (Brad Bergstrom, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2012-12 A and B).

**Iceland Gull, Camden Co., 18 December, by Brad Bergstrom**



LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL - One seen at WPD on 8 February was a good inland find (Mark McShane, Max Medley).

**GLAUCOUS GULL** - An inland bird found at Tidwell Park, Forsyth Co., on 16 February (Jim Flynn, m. ob., GCRC 2011-16) was present until 1 March.

COMMON TERN - One was seen from Sea Island, Glynn Co., on 1 January (Bob Sattelmeyer).

PARASITIC JAEGER - An adult was found on the CINS CBC on 18 December, and a juvenile was in the same spot the next day (m. ob.). One was seen well off SSI on 17 January (Nathan Farnau, Steve Fox).



**Parasitic Jaeger, Glynn Co., 17 January, by Steve Fox**

WHITE-WINGED DOVE - One was found at St Mary's, Camden Co., on the CINS CBC on 18 December (Joan and Richard Becker).

COMMON GROUND-DOVE - Two were seen and photographed in eastern Clarke Co. on 3 December, north of their usual range (Richard Hall, Mitchell Jarrett).

SHORT-EARED OWL - One, possibly 2, were seen at Little Egg Island Bar, McIntosh Co., on 15 February (Tim Keyes).

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW - One was found dead on Wilmington Island, Chatham Co., on 1 January (*vide* Diana Churchill).

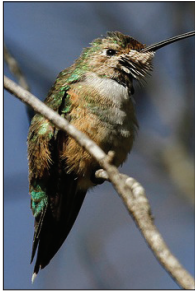
EASTERN WHIP-POOR-WILL - One was in Sardis Cemetery, Folkston Co., on 27 December (Richard Roche).

**BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD** - An adult male first appeared at feeders on JI on 25 October, was identified on 17 December, and was present through 23 March (Pam Russell, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2011-23); this bird represented only the third state record. It was banded near Mobile, AL, in September 2010 (Fred Bassett). The increasing fall and winter vagrancy of this species along the northern Gulf Coast, including documentation of individuals remaining into the summer months, has invited speculation among experts that it may be expanding its breeding range in that region (Fred Bassett). Last year's wintering bird on SSI was recaptured on 18 December in Baton Rouge, LA (per Doreen Cubie).

**BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD** - First seen in early November, one male visited feeders in Douglasville, Douglas Co., until 18 February (Elizabeth and William Holbrook, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2011-32).

**ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD** - An adult female was first observed in Braselton, Hall Co., on 18 December (*vide* Rusty Trump, GCRC 2011-04) and was last seen on 13 March.





**Broad-tailed Hummingbird (left), Douglas Co., 6 February, by Darlene Moore**

**Buff-bellied Hummingbird (right), Glynn Co., 25 January, by Roy Brown**



**RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER**  
- Fifty-nine were recorded on the Piedmont-Rum Creek CBC on 19

December.

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** - One was found on JI on 14-16

December (Jonathan Gray, Lydia Thompson). Another was at the SSI airport on 16 January (Bruce and Traci Dralle).

**COMMON RAVEN** - Two were at CLRL on 5 December and again on 23 December (Josh Spence), with one there on 16 January (Vanessa Lane, James Neves). One was at Nottely Dam, Union Co., on 20 February (Jim Flynn).

**HORNED LARK** - A leucistic bird was in Bartow Co. on 16 January (Vanessa Lane, James Neves), with a maximum count of 125 there on 23 January (Ken Blankenship, Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal).

**PURPLE MARTIN** - One was at Paradise Public Fishing Area, Berrien Co., on 8 January (Wayne Schaffner), setting a new state early arrival date. One seen at PCR on 27 February represents a new early date for the Ridge and Valley (Ken Blankenship, m. ob.).

**TREE SWALLOW** - A group of 22 seen at PCR on 27 February set a new early date for the Ridge and Valley (Ken Blankenship, m. ob.). Up to 7 birds overwintered at ELHLAF for the first time (Carol Lambert).

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** - One was reported from Murphy Candler Lake, DeKalb Co., on 11 December (Jerry Brunner). Two were at PSNP on 18 December (Mac McCall, Lois Stacey), with one still there on 30 December (Brett DeGregorio).



**CAVE SWALLOW** - Two were foraging with Tree Swallows on Sapelo Island, McIntosh Co., on 3 December (Tim Keyes, GCRC 2010-29), and 5 Cave Swallows were seen on Skidaway Island, Chatham Co., on 6 December (GCRC 2012-16).

**Cave Swallow, McIntosh Co., 3 December, by Tim Keyes**

BARN SWALLOW - One seen at PCR on 27 February is a new early date for the Ridge and Valley (Ken Blankenship, m. ob.).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH - It was a moderate invasion year for the species. The southernmost records were of singles in Muscogee Co. on 5 December (Paul Rogers), SCI on 18 December (Darlene Moore), and Brown's Mount, Bibb Co., on 20 February (James Fleullan). A notable count of 6 was made on the Chattahoochee Forest CBC on 19 December (Ken Blankenship et al.).

BROWN CREEPER - Rare in the extreme south of the state, singles were reported in Valdosta, Lowndes Co., on 24 January and 15 February (Brad Bergstrom).

SEDGE WREN - Wintering birds in the Piedmont were detected at CSU on 5 December (Chris Lambrecht), ELHLAF on 10 December (Carol Lambert, Jeff Sewell), and 2 in the Piedmont NWR on 15 January (Patty McLean).

MARSH WREN - Away from the coastal marshes, one seen at the Dalton Utilities WTP on the Dalton CBC on 18 December was a rare winter record for the mountains (Mark Goins, Max Medley, Josh Spence). Two were at ELHLAF on 2 January (Bill Lotz, Dan Vickers).

AMERICAN PIPIT - An impressive 1010 were counted on the Dublin CBC on 27 December (Bob Sargent).

**SPRAGUE'S PIPIT** - One seen at MSS from 3-6 December was an excellent find (Walt Chambers, m. ob., GCRC 2011-18).

**Sprague's Pipit, Macon Co., 5 December, by Luke Theodorou**



**LAPLAND LONGSPUR** - Three were found on the BCL on 17 January (Ken Blankenship, m. ob., GCRC 2011-10A), remaining until at least 2

February. At least 6 were with the first site record of Horned Larks at OM on 27 January (Walt Chambers, GCRC 2011-20).

**SNOW BUNTING** - One was seen on the BCL on 16 January (Denny and Pam McClure, pending, GCRC 2011-12).

**OVENBIRD** - One was present in COP until 11 December (Gene Koziara). Another was found north of Brunswick on 23 January (Gene Keferl).

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** - One was seen at the Richmond Hill Wastewater Treatment Facility, Bryan Co., on 16 January (Steve Holzman, Mark Freeman), and another was on SCI on 24 January (Joel McNeal, Georgann Schmalz).

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER - The record late bird was last seen in COP on 7 December (Nathan Farnau).

TENNESSEE WARBLER - One remained in COP until at least 16 December (Nathan Farnau). Other singles were at AWMA on 2 December (Gene Keferl); on Sapelo Island, McIntosh Co., on 4 December (Tim Keyes); and SCI on 18 December (Darlene Moore).

AMERICAN REDSTART - One found on CINS on 18 December was a first for the CBC (Gordon McWilliams).

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER - One was found in COP on 21 December (Nathan Farnau).

BLACKPOLL WARBLER - One remained in COP until at least 10 December (Nathan Farnau).

PRAIRIE WARBLER - One visited a birdbath on Skidaway Island, Chatham Co., on 8 December (Beth Roth).

WILSON'S WARBLER - One late bird was reported from Lakemont, Richmond Co., on 2 December (Mac McCall).

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT - One was found at PSNP on 18 December on the Augusta CBC (m. ob.). Another was found on the Dalton CBC the same day (Mark Goins).

**AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** - One was found at CLRL on 15 January (Max Medley, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2012-02). It was elusive throughout its stay and was last reported on 21 January. There are only four prior accepted records of this species, the last occurring in February 1978.



**American Tree Sparrow, Murray Co., 16 January, by Vanessa Lane**

SAVANNAH SPARROW - A new state high count of 1526 was recorded on the CINS CBC on 18 December (m. ob.).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW - One was at the Albany Nursery WMA, Dougherty Co., on 10-11 December (Wayne Schaffner, Larry Gridley). At least 7 birds were detected during a banding effort at Paulk's Pasture WMA on 19

February (Todd Schneider et al.).