

FROM THE FIELD

MARCH - MAY 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.

Temperatures throughout the period remained slightly above average, with some notable extremes including a record March temperature of 90 °F in Brunswick on the 22nd, the lowest May temperature since 1945 of 37 °F in Athens on the 5th, and a record May high of 104 °F in Waycross on the 23rd. Precipitation was equally variable across the state, with the north receiving 200-300% of the average rainfall for March and April, less than 25% of the average in the east for April, and less than 10% of the norm in the southwest. It was a record season for tornadoes, causing widespread damage, power outages, and at least 35 deaths. The storm system on 26-28 April may have been responsible for the appearance of a late inland White-winged Scoter in Columbus, and a string of interesting sightings at Lake Lanier including 2 Pacific Loons, a Laughing Gull, and 2 Caspian Terns.

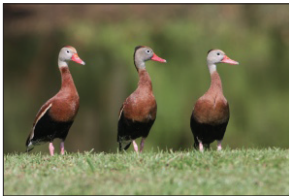
Abbreviations: ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003, Beaton, G. et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AIC - Andrews Island Causeway and spoil site, Glynn Co.; AP - American Proteins settling ponds, Forsyth Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, McIntosh Co.; BCL - Bartow Co. Loop, a cluster 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 - The eBird high count from AWMA was 43 on 11 April (Nathan Farnau). One was at PSNP on 18 March (Mark McShane, Trey McCuen), with 8 present on 20 May (Jim Hanna). Fifteen birds were on Skidaway Island on May 17 (ph., *fide* Beth Roth), 8 were at Sweetwater Creek SP, Douglas Co., on 13 May (Phil Delestrez), and 5 were at Lake Sheri, Valdosta, on 25 May (Marvin Smith).



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Richmond Co., 25 May, by Marvin Smith

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - Four were in Fannin Co. on 1 March (Tom Striker) and one was in Murray Co. on the same day (Josh Spence). Two birds continued at Braswell Church Road, Walton Co., until 27 March (m. ob.).

SNOW GOOSE - Singles were reported from Murray Co. on 1 March (Josh Spence), and Glennville WTF, Tattnall Co., on 5 March (Gene Wilkinson). The

long-staying blue-phase bird continued in Morgan and Walton Co. throughout the period (m. ob.), and appeared to be paired with a Canada Goose.

Snow Goose, Morgan Co., 16 March, by Joel McNeal

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK - Two were in Hall Co. on 13 March (Peter Gordon); two were seen in Clarke Co. on 26 March (m. ob.); and one was at Oconee WMA, Putnam Co., on 17 April (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn).



CANVASBACK - Two birds were seen at AWMA on 13 March (Dan Vickers).
 REDHEAD - The last report was of 3 birds from PSNP on 13 April (Matt Malin).

GREATER SCAUP - Away from the coast, single birds were reported from Lake Chapman, Clarke Co., on 6 March and 27 March (m. ob.).

SURF SCOTER - Four were seen at Clarks Hill Reservoir, Columbia Co., on 28 March (Eugene Zielinski), and 7 were at Lake Varner, Newton Co., on 22 April (Jeff Sewell).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - An immature male, possibly an injured bird, was in Cooper Creek Park, Columbus, on 26 April and represents a new late date for this species in the Piedmont (Walt Chambers).

BLACK SCOTER - Inland, one was at Lake Varner, Newton Co., on 20 and 27 March (Patrick Brisse, Jeff Sewell), 5 were at ELHLAF on 29 March (Nathan Farnau, Bob Sattelmeyer), and 4 were at Lake Lanier on 30 March (Jim Flynn).

COMMON GOLDENEYE - One drake was at Bear Creek Reservoir, Jackson Co., on 4 March (Joel McNeal). Three were at Bussey Point, Lincoln Co., on 6 March (Jim Flynn), and one drake was at Lake Varner, Newton Co., on 11-13 March (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert, Bob Sattelmeyer).

HOODED MERGANSER - Breeding was confirmed by the presence of a female and chicks at both Standing Boy WMA, Muscogee Co., on 4 May (Walt Chambers) and CSU on 29 May (Steve Reidich). A female was seen in Greene Co. on 22 May (Jim Hanna, Paul Sykes), and 2 birds were at Arrowhead, Floyd Co., on 28 May (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn).

RUDDY DUCK - Late birds included a drake in Lowndes Co. on 14 May (Brad Bergstrom), and a drake and 2 females at ELHLAF on 29 May (Carol Lambert, Jeff Sewell).

RED-THROATED LOON - Inland, singles were reported from Lake Lanier on 1-2 March (Jim Flynn) and at WPD on 11 March (Walt Chambers). The last report was of 9 birds from TI on 12 March (Scott Somersshoe).

PACIFIC LOON - An immature was at Lake Lanier from 27 April - 1 May, and an alternate-plumaged adult was found there from 28 April - 2 May (both Jim Flynn, m. ob.; pending, GCRC 2011-22).



Pacific Loon, Hall Co., 28 April, by Mark McShane

RED-NECKED GREBE - One was at Bear Creek Reservoir, Jackson Co., on 4-7 March (Joel McNeal, m. ob.).

EARED GREBE - Two birds continued at the Plant Scherer Ash Pond, Monroe Co., on 16 March (Joel McNeal).

WOOD STORK - One flew over Robins Air Force Base, Houston Co., on 23 April (m. ob.).

GREAT CORMORANT - The wintering adult was present at LWFG until at least 22 March (Joel McNeal, m. ob., pending, GCRC 2012-07).

ANHINGA - A flock of 89 observed flying over JI on 26 March (Lydia Thompson) represents a new high count for the state. Inland reports were of 2 from Dawson Co. (Darlene Moore, Dan Vickers) on 22 April and one from Greene Co. the same day (Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett and Jeff Sewell), and 2 from Heard Co. on 15 May (Jim Flynn).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - Inland, 26 landed on Long Pond, Lowndes Co., on 26 March (Julius Ariail). Two flew over Lake Acworth, Cobb Co., on 30 March (Sandy Pangle), and 9 were on Cardinal Lake, Gwinnett Co., on 4 April (ph., John Deitsch). A total of 232 were seen along the coast during an aerial survey on 4 April (Tim Keyes).

BROWN PELICAN - Eleven birds translocated from the Gulf Coast last year reappeared in the breeding colony on Little Egg Island Bar during this period (Tim Keyes).

AMERICAN BITTERN - Nine reports of 16 birds were received from across the state, with a maximum count of 4 from ELHLAF on 21 March (Carol Lambert).

LEAST BITTERN - One was first seen at Euharlee Marsh, Bartow Co., on the early date of 20 April (Ken Blankenship). Three birds were seen there on 28 May, 2 of which were actively nest-building (Jim Flynn, Krista Gridley, Richard Hall, Earl Horn).

LITTLE BLUE HERON - An adult was observed at Lake Herrick, Clarke Co., from 29 March - 3 April (Richard Hall, m. ob.).

TRICOLORED HERON - Always rare in the Piedmont, 1 was at BUENWR on 6 April (Walt Chambers).

CATTLE EGRET - Away from the Coastal Plain, reports were received of 10 from Clarke Co. on 10 April (Richard Hall), 19 from Bartow Co. on 28 April (Darlene Moore), and 2 from Greene Co. on 28 May (Vanessa Lane).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - In the Piedmont, singles were in Fulton Co. on 3 April (Doug Murray) and Cardinal Lake, Gwinnett Co., on 6 April (John Deitsch).

TURKEY VULTURE - A large flock of at least 500 flew over Tattnall Co. in 2 minutes on 9 March (Gene Wilkinson).

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE - A mixed-species flock of 12 Swallow-tailed and 21 Mississippi Kites was first seen in Lowndes County on 30 April, and continued throughout May (m. ob.).

RED-TAILED HAWK - Krider's Hawks were reported from the JI Causeway on 3 March (Lydia Thompson), and at BUENWR on 4 March (Mark McShane, Max Medley, George Parsley).

PEREGRINE FALCON - One flew over the SBG on 13 April (Darlene and Meredith Moore), and one was at Cardinal Lake, Gwinnett Co., on 4 May (John Deitsch). A pair remained in Buckhead throughout, and a nest with 2 chicks was observed on 1 April (Carl Crowley). Another pair fledged 4 young on Atlanta's SunTrust building (Jim Ozier). A wintering pair in the Cumberland Sound remained in the area until at least 3 April (Patrick Leary).

BLACK RAIL - For the first year since the late 1980s, this species was absent from the marshes in northern Greene Co., perhaps due to low water levels (Paul Sykes).

KING RAIL - Up to 2 individuals were calling in a marsh in northern Greene Co. on 10-14 April (Paul Sykes).

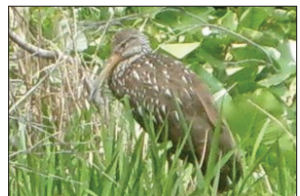
VIRGINIA RAIL - One was at Bear Creek Reservoir, Jackson Co., on 4 March (Joel McNeal).

COMMON GALLINULE - One was at Arrowhead Marsh, Floyd Co., on 6 May (Dan Roper), and one was in Greene Co. on 22 May (Jim Hanna, Paul Sykes).

LIMPKIN - One was seen and photographed at Okefenokee Swamp on 5 April (George Reeves, Calvin Zippler, pending, GCRC 2012-13).

Limpkin, Charlton Co., 5 April, by Calvin Zippler

SANDHILL CRANE - Many birds appeared farther east than usual during their northbound migration, with several large flocks noted over the Athens area in March (m. ob.).



WHOOPIING CRANE - Two migrants were seen over Dawson Forest WMA on 13 March (Georgann Schmalz, Karen and Luke Theodorou).

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER - Single birds were noted at BUENWR on 2 April (Patty McLean); ELHLAF on 2 and 10 April (Linda Liu, Iris Schumacher, Paul Raney); Bostwick SF, Morgan Co., on 5-9 and 22 April (m. ob.); Perry SF, Peach Co., on 8 April (Trey McCuen, Bob Sattelmeyer); and AP on 12 May (Jim Flynn).

BLACK-NECKED STILT - Inland, one was at ELHLAF on 10 April (Darlene Moore, Lloyd Snyder) and 2 were on the BCL on 25 May (Charlie Muise).

UPLAND SANDPIPER - It was a good spring for observing this species in Georgia, especially between 1-23 April. The species was observed in 8 sites throughout the state. The largest flocks were of 12 near Reidsville, Tattnell Co., on 8 April (Gene Wilkinson), 5 at Braswell Church Rd, Walton Co., on 9 April (Marcus Zokan), and 4 in Laurens Co. on 23 April (Jerry and Marie Amerson).

WHIMBREL - "Chinquapin," the bird fitted with a satellite transmitter last spring on Little Egg Island Bar, began migrating north from its wintering ground around April 25. The bird flew over Cuba, and then up the coast of Florida before staging in the mouth of the Altamaha, moving between Wolf Island, Little Egg Island Bar, and Wolf Bar. At least 1500 birds were in a dusk roost at GI on 3 May (Tim Keyes).

MARbled GODWIT - Two observed at Raccoon Key, Chatham Co., on 8 May constitute a new late date for the state (ph., Krista Gridley, Richard Hall, Darlene Moore, Meredith and Jimmy Moore, Dan Vickers).

RED KNOT - The largest flocks reported were of 2500 on Little Egg Island Bar on 30 March, and 4000 on Wolf Island on 26 April (Tim Keyes).

WESTERN SANDPIPER - Inland, there was one record of 2 birds at ELHLAF on 30 March (Carol Lambert).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER - Singles were reported from SCI on 30 April (Mark Freeman, Darlene Moore), Harris Co. on 17 May (Walt Chambers), and AP on 20-26 May with 2 on 25 May (Jim Flynn). Singles were also seen in St Mary's, Camden Co., on 24 May (Chris Depkin, Tim Keyes), and on the BCL on 24-25 May (m. ob.). Three were at ELHLAF on 27 May (Jeff Sewell).

DUNLIN - Inland, singles were reported from the BCL on 27 March (Ken Blankenship, Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal), and ELHLAF on 28-30 March (Carol Lambert).

STILT SANDPIPER - Singles were reported from ELHLAF on 30 March (Bruce Hallett) and Raccoon Key, Camden Co., on 23 April (m. ob.). Twenty-six were at the AIC on 24 April (Gene Keferl).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER - One was at ELHLAF on 16 April (Carol Lambert), and at least 6 were present there on 28 April (Lloyd Snyder). One observed on the BCL on 20 April was identified as the prairie or *hendersoni* subspecies (Ken Blankenship).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER - Singles were recorded from Braswell Church Road, Walton Co., on 12 March (m. ob.), Burke Co. on 13 March (Jim Flynn), and the BCL on 27 March (Ken Blankenship, Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal). Twelve were on Raccoon Key, Camden Co., on 23 April (m. ob.).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE - One seen on the BCL on 20 April represents a new state early date (Ken Blankenship). One was at AIC on 23-24 April (m. ob.).

LAUGHING GULL - Inland, one was at Buford Dam, Lake Lanier on 27 April (Jim Flynn).

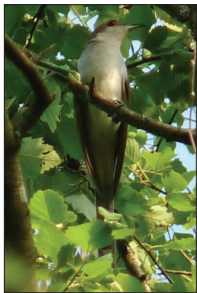
GLAUCOUS GULL - The immature at Tidwell Park, Lake Lanier, remained until 2 March (m. ob.; GCRC 2011-16).

LEAST TERN - One on SSI on 24 March represents a new early date for the state (Gene Keferl).

CASPIAN TERN - Inland, 4 were at CLRL on 11 April (Jennifer Dietrich), one was at Lake Lanier on 15 April (Jim Flynn), one was at Bostwick SF, Morgan Co., on 16 April (Joel McNeal), 4 were in Putnam Co. on 17 April (Chris Skelton), and 2 were at Lake Lanier on 28 April (Jeff Sewell).

FORSTER'S TERN - Away from the coast, one at CLRL on 8 April represented a new early date for the interior (Ken Blankenship). Another was at Lake Chapman, Clarke Co., on 21 April (Mirko Basen, Krista Gridley, Richard Hall, James Neves).

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO - A singing bird was in Putnam Co. on 17 April (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn). One was in Dug Gap, Whitfield Co., on 19 April (Max Medley), and one was at the SBG on 2 May (Jim Hanna, Joel McNeal, m. ob.).



Black-billed Cuckoo, Clarke Co., 2 May, by Richard Hall

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD - The wintering bird on JI was present until 23 March (m. ob.; pending, GCRC 2011-23).

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD - The last wintering bird was reported from Valdosta on 12 March (Brad Bergstrom).

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD - The wintering bird in Braselton was last seen on 13 March (m. ob.; GCRC 2011-04).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER - One was present on the BCL from 23-28 May (Bob Zaremba, m. ob.).

COMMON RAVEN - Away from the known breeding areas in northeast Georgia, 2 were at Grassy Mountain, Murray Co., on 8 May (Ken Blankenship).

CLIFF SWALLOW - One at Panola Mountain SP, Rockdale Co., on 12 March represents a new state early date (Charlie Muise).

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH - Away from the mountains, one was still present at ELHLAF from 5-8 March (m. ob.). One on SSI on 22 April represents a new late date for the coast (Giff Beaton).

MARSH WREN - The last record away from the coast for this species was in HP on 23 May (Jeff Sewell), tying the late date for the Piedmont.

VEERY - One at KMT on 12 April represents a new early date for the Piedmont (Jeff Sewell).

WOOD THRUSH - Many observers noted that numbers seemed lower in the state this year, a trend reflected across the Southeast.

AMERICAN PIPIT - Two birds reported from Decatur Co. on 12 May represent a new late date for the Coastal Plain (Todd Engstrom).

BREWSTER'S WARBLER - One was in Catoosa Co. on 22 April (David Hollie).

SWAINSON'S WARBLER - A good count of 6 birds was noted along the Ocmulgee River, Houston Co., on 3 May (Bob Sargent).

NASHVILLE WARBLER - Good counts of 4 at KMT (Bob Zaremba) and 4 at Dug Gap, Whitfield Co., (Lauren Billak, Ken Blankenship, Nathan Farnau, Joel McNeal) were recorded on 24 April.

CONNECTICUT WARBLER - This was an above-average spring for seeing this species. In HP, 1-2 birds were present from 4-20 May (m. ob.). At least 3 birds were recorded in the Athens area, with 1-2 at the SBG on 10-12 May, and single birds at Lake Herrick from 14-20 May (Richard Hall, James Neves, m. ob.). Single birds were recorded from KMT on 5 May (Giff Beaton), ELHLAF on 7 May (m. ob.), CRNRA from 13-17 May (Jim and Allison Healy), and Hiwassee Rd., Murray Co., on 15 May (Max Medley).

Connecticut Warbler, DeKalb Co., 6 May, by Dan Vickers



MOURNING WARBLER - One was seen and photographed on 23 May in Catoosa Co. (David Hollie).



Mourning Warbler, Catoosa Co., 23 May, by David Hollie

YELLOW WARBLER - A late pair was seen in breeding habitat at OM on 17 May (Walt Chambers).
BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER - This species was first reported from Big Canoe, Dawson

Co., on 18 March, representing a new early date for the Blue Ridge (Theresa Hartz).

CANADA WARBLER - Fifteen were recorded during point counts on Tray Mountain, Towns Co., on 22 May, representing a new state high count (Ken Blankenship).

WILSON'S WARBLER - Single birds were reported from Bartow Co. on 10 April (Josh Spence) and Whitfield Co. on 5 May (Adam Smith).

YELLOW-BREADED CHAT - A good count of 26 singing birds was made in a small area in northern Greene Co. on 22 May (Paul Sykes).

EASTERN TOWHEE - A male with white eyes seen in Greene Co. on 13 March was an unusual sight away from the coast (Jim Hanna, Paul Sykes).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW - A singing bird in COP on 26-29 April was a rare spring record for the Piedmont (Jeff Madsen, m. ob.).

Clay-colored Sparrow, Fulton Co., 26 April, by Nathan Farnau



LARK SPARROW - One was photographed in Serenbe, Fulton Co., on 24 April (Doug Murray). A pair was observed at Fite Bend Road, Gordon Co., from 6-25 May (Max Medley, m. ob.). The pair exhibited breeding behavior, including copulation and gathering nesting material. Unfortunately, the birds disappeared following plowing of their favored field, but this sighting gives hope that this species, which breeds in neighboring Tennessee, may soon join Georgia's breeding bird fauna.



Lark Sparrow, Gordon Co., 7 May, by Bill Flatau

LE CONTE'S SPARROW - One in northern Greene Co. on 22 May represents a new late date for the state (Jim Hanna, Paul Sykes).

SWAMP SPARROW - A late bird lingered at the SBG until 19 May (Mirko Basen, Richard Hall, Marcus Zokan).

LINCOLN'S SPARROW - A report was received of one bird in Clarke Co. on 20-24 April (Joel McNeal, Richard Hall).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD - An impressive 120 were still present on the BCL on 6 April (Ken Blankenship), with 50 still there on 9 April (Rebecca Kerimbaev). Elsewhere, 12 were reported from Macon Co. on 2 March (Bob Sattelmeyer), 23 from Burke Co. on 13 March (Jim Flynn), and 4 from Morgan Co. on 27 March (Mirko Basen, Mark Freeman, Richard Hall).

PURPLE FINCH - A sick individual lingered at a DeKalb Co. feeder until 16 May, setting a new late date for the Piedmont (Rebecca Kerimbaev).

RED CROSSBILL - Three birds came to feeders in Fannin Co. on 27 March (Nedra Sekera). Four were seen in Pine Log WMA, Bartow Co., on 30 May (Jim and Allison Healy).

PINE SISKIN - Many birds from this winter's invasion lingered into mid-May.

Richard Hall, *Odum School of Ecology, 140 E. Green Street, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602*
rjhall@uga.edu