

GENERAL NOTES

STATUS OF WINTER WRENS IN BULLOCH COUNTY, GEORGIA, WINTER 2011 — I found my first Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) of the year in Bulloch County, on the afternoon of 6 January (Fig. 1). This peaked my interest to assess the status of Winter Wrens in the county, as they are listed as relatively uncommon winter residents in the southern Coastal Plain in Georgia (Beaton et al. 2003, Parrish et al. 2006).

I conducted surveys for Winter Wrens on 23 separate days in Bulloch County from 6 January through 16 March 2011. Surveys were conducted mostly along creek-beds of Mill Creek, Black Creek, Spring Creek, Bay Gall Creek, Upper and Lower (Little) Lotts Creeks, and the Ogeechee River, near their intersections with roadways. Winter Wren songs were broadcast via a Memorex™ Portable Speaker at maximum volume using mostly song numbers 1 and 2 from BirdTunes (Elliott 2010). Once a wren was located, it was photographed (with the exception of 6 wrens), and the birdsong recording was turned off.

Surprisingly, 57 Winter Wrens were found along the creeks, the Ogeechee River, and adjacent to several wooded ponds in Bulloch County. The most wrens recorded (22) were found along Mill Creek and 2 of its branches (Newsome and Belcher). The latter findings were influenced by the fact that I had greater access to these water bodies. In comparison to other creeks surveyed, Mill Creek and its branches are intersected by more road-crossings. I also was given permission by several local landowners to walk along portions of Mill Creek that were located on their properties. My discovery on 24 and 29 January of 12 wrens along a 3-km-stretch (4 wrens/km) of Mill Creek compares favorably to the report of 23 Winter Wrens recorded along the 6.6 km (3.5 wrens/km) Cook's Trail in Clarke County in November 2009 (Blankenship 2009). However, results from my survey fall 50% shy of Hall's (2010) recent count of 8 wrens/km along Cook's Trail. My total of 57 Winter Wrens recorded in Bulloch County compares favorably with the 2010 state high count of 53 wrens recorded along Cook's Trail (Richard Hall, pers. comm.).

In addition to the 22 wrens recorded along and near Mill Creek, I observed 10 wrens along Upper Lotts Creek and 2 of its branches (Dry and Big), 5 wrens along Upper and Lower Black Creeks (also Cross Branch), 3 along Bay Gall Creek, 2 near Spring Creek, and one each along Bland and Scott Creeks. Seven other wrens also were found along the Ogeechee River. Interestingly, 4 additional Winter Wrens were found near roadside ponds, most of which were

adjacent to, or surrounded by, moderate to heavily wooded areas. All of the wrens were discovered within about 1-2 min of the short-song playback, which means they were all located within about 1-2 hrs of survey time.

The similar Winter Wren count in Bulloch County and in the more northerly Clarke County suggests that this species could be more abundant in portions of the Coastal Plain than the literature indicates. More surveys for this species in appropriate winter habitats (i.e., along floodplains of heavily wooded creeks with flowing water, and along riverine forests) in the Coastal Plain are clearly needed. It might be interesting to survey Winter Wrens in subsequent years in Bulloch County. The numbers found might be greater and the birds more widely distributed, as this area was drier than normal during my survey due to moderate drought conditions in the county. Since Winter Wrens were found at all of the 7 road intersections I visited along the Ogeechee River, it is likely that a much greater number of birds would be recorded if the river were surveyed in a more accessible manner, such as by boat.

Nearly all of the wrens observed in this study appeared to be *Troglodytes hiemalis*. However, one may have been *Troglodytes pacificus*, as it appeared to feature an overall more rufous and less patterned appearance versus the paler and grayer look of the typical Winter Wren. Unfortunately, that seemingly unusual wren did not emit a call note or sing its song.

Literature Cited

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Figure 1. Winter Wren in Bulloch Co., © 2011, by John W. Parrish, Jr.

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JUVENILE PURPLE GALLINULES IN BIBB COUNTY -- Middle Georgia birders documented 2 juvenile Purple Gallinules (*Porphyrio martinica*) at the Macon Cherokee Brickyards in Bibb County, Georgia, during August and September 2011. This record is the first evidence of breeding by this species in Bibb County. This gallinule is an “uncommon local breeding resident throughout the Coast and Coastal Plain” (Beaton et al. 2003), and is considered to be rare in Bibb County and surrounding areas (Johnson 1998). There is one prior record of a Purple Gallinule at the Cherokee Brickyards, which was observed on 4 September 2004, 3 days before Tropical Storm Frances passed through Georgia (Zaremba 2005-2006). The 2004 record and the sighting reported here documented birds from the same mined pit in the brickyards.

On 3 September 2011, Ty Ivey, Jerry Amerson, Paul Johnson, Ken Clark, and Jim Gilreath found 2 adult Purple Gallinules, each standing on water lotus (*Nelumbo* sp) leaves, in separate areas of the large (approx. 100 ha) formerly mined pit; the sightings were at 2 locations approximately 0.2 km apart, and occurred about 15 minutes apart. The adults were easily identified by their