

FROM THE FIELD

MARCH 2010 - MAY 2010

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 perfect end to a historically cold winter, the northern tier of the state was dealt a rare heavy snowfall along with more bitterly cold temperatures in the first week of March. April featured below-average precipitation, with warm weather finally returning to the South during the month. Ironically, May was characterized by exceptionally hot conditions, with rainfall that varied greatly; some flooding occurred as a result of localized severe weather. A powerful line of thunderstorms pushed east across the northern half of Georgia early in the month, producing some impressive shorebird fallouts (see “Spring Shorebird Fallout”), while 2 pelagic trips late in the month were likewise productive (see “Late Spring Pelagic Birding”). Though rare western vagrants are always exciting, this spring delivered 2 bird sightings which were simply astonishing. A Pacific Brown Pelican appeared on the coast, and a Red-faced Warbler was discovered in Harris County, likely representing the first record east of the Mississippi River.

Abbreviations: ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003, Beaton, G. et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AIC - Andrews Island Causeway, Glynn Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, McIntosh 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.; CRNRA - Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area; CSU - Cochran Shoals Unit of the CRNRA, Cobb Co.; ELHLAF - E.L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co.; HP - Henderson Park, DeKalb Co.; JIBS - Jekyll Island Banding Station, Glynn Co.; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Cobb Co.; LSSI - Little St. Simons Island, Glynn 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.; MWS (Mid-winter Waterbird Survey of the Georgia coast, 6 February); *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 Rd, Gordon Co.; ph. - “photographed by,” indicating that a photo is on file with GOS; PSNP - Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, Richmond Co.; Region - when capitalized, refers to Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina; SCI - St. Catherine’s Island, Liberty Co.; SP - State Park; SSI - St. Simons Island, Glynn Co.; v. ob. - various observers; WMA - Wildlife Management Area

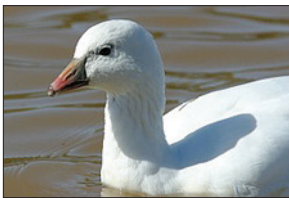
Note: Species that appear in a **bold-faced font** represent those that were considered “review” species by the GCRC during the year of the sighting. This list changes from year to year. The current review list may be viewed at the following link: <http://www.gos.org/checklists/reportables.html> GCRC 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 - This species continues to expand its range. Breeding is suspected at PSNP, where 2 adults were observed entering a tree cavity on 15 May, and up to 15 were seen sporadically into summer (ph. Lois Stacey, m. ob.). Four were seen at ELHLAF on 16 May (Lloyd Snyder), and 2 were in an area where the species bred last year in Baker Co. on 16 May (Wayne Schaffner).

SNOW GOOSE - Odd for the date was a white morph in Terrell Co. on 12 May (Bill Lotz).

ROSS’S GOOSE X SNOW GOOSE - A bird seen in the Milledgeville area on 6 March was a reminder of the identification challenges presented by hybrids between these 2 species (ph. Jerry and Marie Amerson).



Ross’s Goose X Snow Goose, Milledgeville, 6 March, by Jerry Amerson

BRANT - One occurred on a private pond in Savannah from 21 April - 4 May (ph. Amy Roberts; accepted, GCRC 2010-20).

CAKCLING GOOSE - One mingled with Canada Geese in Murray Co. from 27 April - 5 May (ph. Joshua Spence, m. ob.; accepted, GCRC 2010-35).

TUNDRA SWAN - A wintering bird was last seen in Rome on 24 March (Marion Dobbs).

LESSER SCAUP - A massive flock of approximately 20,000 was observed off Jekyll Island on 13 March (Jeff Sewell).

COMMON EIDER - Two females remained at Sea Island until at least 22 March (Liz Horsey et al.; accepted, GCRC 2009-34).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER - A group of 5 first observed during winter remained at Lake Varner, Newton Co., on 13 March (James Neves). A lone female was at Piedmont NWR from 9-26 March (Darlene Moore, m. ob.).

HOODED MERGANSER - A female with 6 ducklings was at the Johnson Ferry Unit of the CRNRA on 16 April (Dennis Lacoss). A female was observed with 4 ducklings in northern Effingham Co. on 23 April (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn), providing a rare breeding record for the lower Coastal Plain. Nesting continues annually at the Arrowhead Environmental Center, Floyd Co., as evidenced by an adult female and 6 immature birds seen there on 21 May (Joshua Spence).

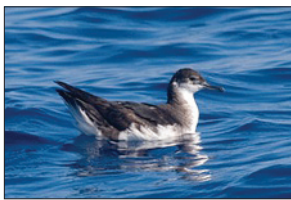
PLAIN CHACHALACA - Six were seen on Sapelo Island on 25 May (Bob Sattelmeyer).

PIED-BILLED GREBE - For at least the fourth year in a row, this species nested on lands belonging to ELHLAF (Jeff Sewell, Carol Lambert).

BLACK-CAPPED PETREL - Fifty-four were seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.).

CORY'S SHEARWATER - Ten were seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.), and 14 were seen by Bill Lotz et al. during a pelagic trip on 30 May.

MANX SHEARWATER - Twenty were foraging off LSSI on 9 March (ph. Clay George, Tricia Naessig; pending, GCRC 2011-07), and 2 were found off Tybee Island on 28 May, the latest date the species has been recorded in the state (Nathan Dias et al.; pending, GCRC 2011-26).



Manx Shearwater, Atlantic Ocean, 28 May, by Darlene Moore

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER - Nine were seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.), and one was seen by Bill Lotz et al. during a pelagic trip on 30 May.

WILSON'S STORM-PETREL - Twenty-five were seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.), and 8 were seen by Bill Lotz et al. during a pelagic trip on 30 May.

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL - One was seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.; accepted, GCRC 2010-36).

LATE SPRING PELAGIC BIRDING: A SEA OF POSSIBILITIES

Due to trends identified via fieldwork in North Carolina, and interpretation of available data concerning birds observed in Georgia offshore waters, birders are now focusing more attention on an apparent peak movement of many pelagic birds in the western Atlantic from mid-May through early June (Table 1). As these pelagic bird surveys increase in frequency, the data gathered should provide a more complete picture of the status and distribution of species in our state's waters. This includes those already known to be relatively common such as Black-capped Petrel, Cory's, Great, Manx, and Audubon's Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, and Sooty and Bridled Tern. Routine surveys should also elucidate the status of species that are considered rare or accidental such as Sooty Shearwater, Leach's and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Red-billed Tropicbird, Arctic Tern, and South Polar Skua (Table 1). First state records may eventually be recorded as well, with the likely top candidates being Trinidad (Herald) Petrel and Fea's Petrel, and more distant possibilities including Bermuda Petrel, European Storm-Petrel, and Swinhoe's Storm-Petrel.

Table 1. A comparison of species currently considered rare, accidental, or yet to be recorded in Georgia, but which are regularly encountered in offshore North Carolina waters in May.

Species	Georgia May records/ total Georgia records ¹	Frequency of observation on May trips, North Carolina ²
Trinidad (Herald) Petrel	0 / 0	37%
Fea's Petrel	0 / 0	32.6%
Bermuda Petrel	0 / 0	10.9%
Sooty Shearwater	7 / 10	81.2%
Manx Shearwater	1 / ± 20	31.2%
Leach's Storm-Petrel	6 / 11	67.4%
Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	1 / 10	84.8%
Red-billed Tropicbird	2 / 3	10.9%
Arctic Tern	9 / 13	36.4% ³
South Polar Skua	0 / 5	17.4%

¹Through 2010 data reported in this volume.

²Through 2008, $N = 138$ trips. Data courtesy of Brian Patteson, Inc. (<www.patteson.com>)

³Out of 143 trips from 1994-2009.

WOOD STORK - A high count of 950 was recorded at the Region's largest rookery at Harris Neck NWR on 29 May (Paul W. Sykes, Jr., Bill Blakeslee). A restored 36-ha wetland in Mitchell Co. hosted at least 125 nests of this species. **MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** - One was reported on Jekyll Island on 2 May (fide Lydia Thompson).

GREAT CORMORANT - One in breeding plumage that was last reported at LWFG on 17 March (Bill Lotz) is likely the same individual that spent the winter in the same area the previous winter.



Great Cormorant (right), Lake Walter F. George, 15 March, by Roy Brown

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - A notable inland high count of 40 was recorded at Sweetwater Creek SP on 16 April (Phil Delestrez), while 18 seen soaring over AWMA on 29 May were fairly late (Paul W. Sykes, Jr., Bill Blakeslee).

BROWN PELICAN - Biologists found a Pacific Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) on Little Egg Island Bar on 16 April (ph. Brad Winn, Tim Keyes). Though it mingled with nesting birds, it was only relocated on one out of several subsequent surveys (Tim Keyes). Although western vagrants such as this have shown up along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico from Mexico to Florida, this is only the second confirmed record of a Pacific bird on the Atlantic coast, and the farthest north to date. (Note: The other occurred on the central coast of Florida.)

Pacific Brown Pelican, McIntosh Co., 16 April, by Brad Winn

WHITE-FACED IBIS - Only Georgia's second record, an individual was seen on LSSI on 26 April (David Allen Sibley et al.; accepted, GCRC 2010-21).

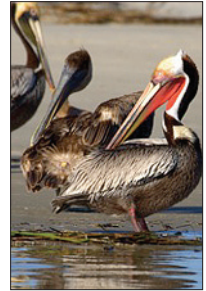
ROSEATE SPOONBILL - Several were observed in a wading bird rookery on Jekyll Island from 4 April through the end of the season (Joshua Spence, m. ob.). The Region's first nest has been anticipated in Georgia for several years, but has not yet been documented. Two were observed collecting nesting material, displaying pair-bonding behavior, and even copulating at this site on 15 April (Lydia Thompson), but successful breeding was not confirmed.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE - A bird soared over KMT on 15 May (ph. Tory Caudle), the first ever recorded at that location.

PEREGRINE FALCON - Two pairs continue to nest successfully on skyscrapers in downtown Atlanta (Jim Ozier).

BLACK RAIL - A presumed migrant was flushed by mowing equipment at Callaway Gardens on 5 April (Cory Croft). Several were first heard calling at the annual nesting site in Greene Co. on 17 April, about 2 weeks earlier than average (Paul W. Sykes, Jr.).

WHOOPING CRANE - A pair was seen at CLRL on 23 March, hopefully on their way to a successful breeding season in Wisconsin (ph. Joshua Spence).



Whooping Cranes, Carter's Lake Re-regulation Lake, 23 March, by Joshua Spence

SPRING SHOREBIRD FALLOUT

On 3 May, a long chain of powerful thunderstorms pushed east across the northern half of the state in only a few hours. Birders visited reliable sod farms and ponds as soon as the weather abated, and were rewarded with some big surprises. A foraging flock at a freshly-formed “sod pond” in Bartow Co. included 10 White-rumped Sandpipers, one Baird’s Sandpiper (rarely found in spring), 30 Pectoral Sandpipers, 23 Short-billed Dowitchers, and 11 Wilson’s Phalaropes (Nathan Farnau, m. ob.). On the same day, 2 Wilson’s Phalaropes were found in Forsyth Co. (Jim Flynn), and 6 White-rumped Sandpipers, one Baird’s Sandpiper, and one Wilson’s Phalarope were found at the Bostwick sod farm in Morgan Co. (Mark McShane, m. ob.). Also on 3 May, one Long-billed Dowitcher and one Wilson’s Phalarope were discovered in Dawson Co. (Jim Flynn).

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER - This species was widely reported, including high counts in the wake of strong westerly winds in mid-March. Fifty were recorded in Bartow Co. on 21 March (Hugh Garrett), establishing a new state high count, while 47 were seen in Dougherty Co. on 26 March (Darlene Moore et al.).

BLACK-NECKED STILT - One was on Brandon Farm Rd, Bartow Co., on 11 April, a good inland discovery (Sue Aughey).

AMERICAN AVOCET - A count of 150 was notable at Jekyll Island on 24 March (Tim Keyes).

WHIMBREL - A male outfitted with a satellite transmitter on LSSI on 22 May was tracked flying over Lake Superior on 29 May, spent time on the western shore of Hudson Bay on 31 May, and finally arrived on breeding grounds in southeastern Nunavut, Canada, by 5 June (Brad Winn). A female tagged on LSSI on 19 May did not depart until 3 June. Oddly enough, one was seen *perched in a tree* at West Point Dam on 24 April (John Barrett, ph. Michael Barrett).

RUDDY TURNSTONE - A tally of 1500 was a new state high count, recorded on the Ogeechee River Bar, Chatham Co., on 18 May (Charlie Muise et al.).

RED KNOT - Over 2000 were seen at SSI on 2 and 15 May (Ken Blankenship et al., Jerry Amerson).

WILSON’S PHALAROPE - In addition to birds found on 3 May (see note above), 2 were in Bartow Co. on 25 April (Patrick Brisse, Hugh Garrett).

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE - Rarely found on the immediate coast, one was on SSI on 29 May (ph. Ed Konrad).

POMARINE JAEGER - One was seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.), and 2 were seen by Bill Lotz et al. during a pelagic trip on 30 May.

ICELAND GULL – A rare sighting, one was seen on Jekyll Island on 5 March (ph. Beverley Schneider; pending, GCRC 2011-01).



Iceland Gull (foreground), Jekyll Island, 5 March, by Beverley Schneider

BRIDLED TERN – Two were seen during a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.).

ARCTIC TERN - Eight were observed on a pelagic trip on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al.; pending, GCRC 2011-25), and one was perched on U.S. Navy tower M2R6 on 30 May (Bill Lotz et al.; pending, GCRC 2011-29).

Arctic Tern, U.S. Navy tower M2R6, 30 May, by Darlene Moore



SANDWICH TERN - At least 300 were foraging off Tybee Island on 30 May (Bill Lotz et al.). This species nests alongside thousands of pairs of Royal Terns on nearby Thompkins Island, South Carolina.

RAZORBILL - Georgia Department of Natural Resources' right whale monitoring teams continue to provide data to help determine the status and distribution of this species in offshore waters. One was reported off Little Cumberland Island on 6 March (Brad Winn et al.), and 2 were off LSSI on 9 March (ph. Clay George, Tricia Naessig; pending, GCRC 2011-08).

WHITE-WINGED DOVE - One visited a feeder on Sapelo Island on 30 April (ph. Jessie Kanes).

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO - One was at HP on 27 April (Hugh Garrett), while a male calling emphatically near Rabun Bald on 27 May could have been on territory. Later efforts to relocate the bird were unsuccessful (Ken Blankenship).

SHORT-EARED OWL - At least 4 remained at the annual wintering site in Cobb, Sumter Co. on 13 March (Roy Brown).

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER - One was heard calling at Sosebee Cove, Union Co., on 14 May (Joshua Spence). This species has historically nested in the state and is a rare local breeder in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee.

LEAST FLYCATCHER - As many as 6 were calling at the annual local breeding site on Hale Ridge Rd, Rabun Co., on 30 May (Ken Blankenship et al.).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER - One was seen in Fannin Co. on 12 May (ph. Tom Striker).

WARBLING VIREO - Singletons were reported at the Mercer Wetlands on 4 May (Patty McLean) and at Dug Gap, Whitfield Co., the same day (Adam Smith).

CLIFF SWALLOW - A bird observed in Rockdale Co. on 14 March established a new state early arrival date (Ken Blankenship, Nathan Farnau).

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET - More evidence of this species nesting at the southern limit of its breeding range was provided by a male singing constantly and interacting with a female that was collecting nesting material on Hale Ridge Rd, Rabun Co., from 27-28 May (Ken Blankenship; includes voice recordings).

WOOD WARBLERS - Migration was average this spring. The highest species diversity was again reported from KMT, with a maximum of 24 species recorded on 25 and 28 April (Giff Beaton, Bob Zaremba).

VIRGINIA'S WARBLER - Only the state's second record, a wintering bird was last seen in a backyard in Lowndes Co. on 24 March (John Swiderski; accepted, GCRC 2010-14).

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER - A bird was perched on the outrigger of a boat 98 km from the shores of Chatham Co. on 28 May (Nathan Dias et al., ph. Darlene Moore).

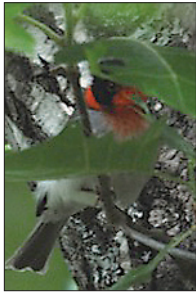
BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER - The first-ever spring report of this rare western vagrant came from SCI on 24 April (Jim Flynn; accepted, GCRC 2010-19).

BLACKPOLL WARBLER - A count of 30 was notable at Dowdell's Knob, Harris Co., on 27 April (Walt Chambers).

CONNECTICUT WARBLER - Among an above-average 7 independent reports were 2 noteworthy highlights: two birds at HP from 11-16 May, sometimes heard counter-singing (Jeff Sewell, m. ob.) and a rare capture of a female at a banding station at Panola Mountain SP on 28 May (Charlie Muise).

HOODED WARBLER - A count of 32 was noteworthy at KMT on 25 April (Giff Beaton et al.).

RED-FACED WARBLER - The highlight of the season, this vagrant was discovered at Dowdell's Knob, Harris Co., on 27 April (ph. Walt Chambers; accepted, GCRC 2010-22). Never re-located, this individual likely was the first record east of the Mississippi River.



Red-faced Warbler, Harris Co., 27 April, by Walt Chambers

BACHMAN'S SPARROW - A new state high count of 23 singing birds was established at Chickasawhatchee WMA on 20 March (Wayne Schaffner).

LARK SPARROW - A bird singing on Ft. Benning in Muscogee Co. was a great find on 19 May (Clark Jones).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW - A bird was at the Albany Nursery WMA from 12-23 March (Roy Brown, Alan

Ashley, m. ob.).

LE CONTE'S SPARROW - One that likely wintered at the Albany Nursery WMA was last seen on 20 March (Roy Brown et al.).

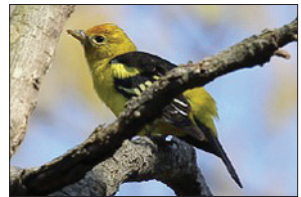
LINCOLN'S SPARROW - The only report of the season, a bird was singing at Lake Herrick, Clarke Co., from 29 April - 1 May (Richard Hall, m. ob.).

DICKCISSEL - The highest confirmed count was 16 at a large breeding colony adjacent to PCR on 15 May (Joshua Spence). Only a fraction of this sprawling private ranch can be birded from a public road, and birders speculated that 50 or more Dickcissels were on the property (fide Joshua Spence).

WESTERN TANAGER - A male briefly appeared in an Atlanta yard on 1 April (ph. Charles Haynes; pending, GCRC 2011-02), and one was in Athens from 20 March - 4 April (Angie Maxted, Mark Nipper, m. ob.; accepted, GCRC 2010-15).

Western Tanager, Atlanta, 1 April, by Charles Haynes

PAINTED BUNTING - Compared to previous years, numbers were much lower at 9 study sites from southeastern North Carolina to northeastern Florida from mid-late May (Paul W. Sykes, Jr.). An inland migrant or overshoot turned up at feeders in Gwinnett Co. on 21 May (fide Jeff Sewell).



YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD - One was spotted at feeders on Pine Island, Glynn Co., on 13 March (Bill Laws).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD - Up to 50 remained at a known wintering site in Bartow Co. on 21 March (Ken Blankenship, Rachel Cass).

RED CROSSBILL - A male and female demonstrating pair-bonding behavior were seen in Pickens Co. from 7-11 April (Gary and Camille Hammond). One was at Fort Mountain SP on 18 April (Joshua Spence), at least 3 adults and 4

juveniles were in Dade Co. from 27 April through the end of the period (Ken and Becky Pennington), and a pair was in Big Canoe on 15 May (Theresa Hartz). PINE SISKIN - Several seen at feeders deep in the Coastal Plain in Hinesville on 5 March (ph. Nicole Janke) and in Glennville on 15 March (Gene Wilkinson et al.) seemed odd for a non-irruptive year, but birds from previous invasions may return to reliable food sources (fide Matt Young).

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JUNE 2010 - JULY 2010

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Temperatures soared this summer because of a high pressure system that remained anchored over eastern and southern states throughout the period. Despite a few localized severe storms that dropped large amounts of rain in small areas, precipitation was well below average. By the end of period, areas of abnormally dry conditions began to appear on the United States drought monitor, particularly in western Georgia. The breeding season brought good news for several species of conservation concern, with Wood Storks, Swallow-tailed Kites, and Wilson's Plovers all recorded in record numbers. Because severe weather thwarted a planned release of rehabilitated Brown Pelicans in Texas, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources received and successfully released large numbers of the birds that had been oiled in the Deep Water Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

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