

Southern Atlantic Coast Region

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The weather this season was rather uneventful. March was average in both temperatures and precipitation, while April was warmer than normal and May was cooler and drier. The warm April provided optimum conditions for keeping migrants on the move, thus many went unnoticed. Many observers commented on the lack of numbers of migrants, but there were a few reports of good days for birding. The main excitement this spring came from a couple of rarities, including North Carolina's first Snowy Plover, a cooperative Black-whiskered Vireo, and the Region's first report of Tropical Parula!

Abbreviations: C. Hatt. (*Cape Hatteras*); Kenn. Mt. (*Kennesaw Mountain*).

Loons to Mergansers

After the winter influx, several reports of the very rare Pacific Loon continued to come from North Carolina. Singles were at Figure Eight I., Mar. 5 (DC) and C. Lookout Mar. 18–28 (PSP, *fide* JF), and two were at Figure Eight I., Mar. 26 (DC). With the large num-

ber of reports during the past year, we still do not have documentation for many sightings! This is a bird which requires detailed and carefully written notes, and photos would be most desirable. Red-necked Grebes invaded North Carolina in record numbers during February and the event continued into March. Numbers kept building along the Outer Banks with the count of 138 from C. Hatt. to Rodanthe Mar. 5, and 27 more from Pea I. to Nags Head Mar. 6 (SD, SG), providing a truly phenomenal count. Inland Red-neckeds included at least six in the Greensboro area in March (m.ob.) and two–four at Jordan Res. in March (J&AP, RD). The latest report was of one at L. Brandt near Greensboro May 4–7 (HH, HLi). Western Grebes were again reported, with two different birds along the Outer Banks Mar. 5 (SD, SG). These could possibly be the birds reported during the past winter.

There were a handful of pelagic trips off of North Carolina in May with average numbers of the expected species. The highlights were three Herald Petrels off Hatteras May 29 (BP *et al.*) and one–two Cape Verde Petrels off Oregon Inlet May 30 (MT *et al.*). Even though the Herald is being found more frequently, the Cape Verde is still a very rare bird and all sightings of the "soft-plumaged" petrel complex need detailed documentation. The only Manx Shearwater found was one seen from shore at C. Hatt., May 31 (NB).

American White Pelicans were at Fr. Fisher, NC Mar. 19 (RW), while the birds found along that state's Outer Banks during the winter were not reported past February. An imm. Great Cormorant flying over L. Townsend near Greensboro, NC May 7

(HH, PF) provided one of only a couple inland records for the Region. The farthest inland migrant Anhinga was one near Jordan Res. near Chapel Hill, NC Apr. 20 (DS, *fide* WC). Inland nesting Yellow-crowned Night-Herons included a pair in Atlanta, GA for the 8th consecutive year (*fide* PB) and in Winston-Salem, NC for the 3rd year (*fide* RS). Roseate Spoonbills were found at the usual Jekyll I., GA causeway area, with seven May 21 (PR *et al.*).

After many reports during the winter, the Mute Swan was found only at L. Mattamuskeet, NC May 25 (FE) for a rare and late record. Geese and ducks were in normal numbers during the spring, even after the very good numbers present in the winter. Some of the better reports were of five Com. Eiders present near Oregon Inlet, NC throughout March (m.ob.) and up to two Harlequin Ducks in the Ocean Isle-Holden Beach, NC area during April (RM, MM). Always noteworthy in the region, a pair of Hooded Mergansers nested successfully at the Silver Bluff Sanctuary, Jackson, SC in early spring (A&VW). The rare Com. Merganser was reported from C. Hatt., NC Mar. 27 (SD, SG), Laurens, GA Apr. 6 (TP), and Greenville, NC May 1 (J&PW).

Osprey to Razorbill

The report of 300–400 Ospreys migrating past Cumberland I., GA Mar. 19 (GG, *fide* JS) is astounding. Obviously this species continues to do well in the Region. A pair nested in the Atlanta, GA area in May for a first local record (PB). Migrant Swallow-tailed Kites were found at several sites, as usual, but the three at Cumberland I., GA

Mar. 19 were the earliest for that state by one day (GG, *fide* JS). Mississippi Kites made news, with four at Kenn. Mt. near Atlanta, GA May 30 (PH, BB) being quite rare in that part of the state. One in McIntosh, GA Apr. 18 (D&DC) provided a new early date for the state. Another N. Harrier nest was found in North Carolina, this time at Cedar I. in May (SW, *fide* SD). The Cooper's Hawk is another sporadic nester in the Region, thus a nest with young in the Green Swamp, Brunswick, NC in May (RM) was interesting. The Golden Eagle was reported once, an adult flying over the Tryon, NC area Mar. 10 (ST). Nesting Am. Kestrels were found at Roanoke Rapids, NC in late April (FE) and at the Savannah R. Site, Jackson, SC in May (A&VW). Merlins are rare inland in spring, thus of note were singles at Landrum, SC Mar. 28 (ST), downtown Greensboro, NC Apr. 9 (H&ELi), and near Scotland Neck, NC Apr. 26 (FE).



The always exciting Yellow Rail was seen in early May at Cedar I., NC (SW, *vide* SD) for the only spring report. And the Black Rail was found once again at the usual n. *Greene*, GA site May 22 (BD, JS). We hope that this area can continue to remain in its present state for this and other marsh species. In the "out of its element" department, was the Am. Coot 40 feet up in a tree near the summit of Kenn Mt., GA Apr. 5 (GB)! There was a second coot hiding among the roots of a nearby tree. One wonders if the birds ever got off that mountain and continued their migration. In Georgia, the best Sandhill Crane count was 88 in n. *Greene* Mar. 5 (PS) and a late individual was in *Oconee* Apr. 2 (P&JS).

American Golden-Plovers are very rare in spring in the Region, thus one at Landrum, SC Mar. 28–29 (ST) was very noteworthy. Easily the best shorebird of the season was the **Snowy Plover** found at New Drum Inlet, Core Banks, NC Apr. 30–May 3 (SPh, SD). Although not photographed, the bird was seen by 2 different observers and was well described, leaving little doubt about its identity. This is the first record of this species for North Carolina and follows closely on the heels of Georgia's first last year and South Carolina's first 2 years ago. A Black-necked Stilt at the *New Bern*, NC quarry May 29 (BH) provided a possible first county record and was rare away from the immediate coast. Upland Sandpipers were reported more than usual, with the best records being five near Goldsboro, NC Mar. 30 (ED), seven in n. *Kershaw*, SC Apr. 9 (RC), seven at Greensboro, NC Apr. 16 (H&ELi), ≤ 20 at the Orangeburg Sod Farm, SC Apr. 9–28 (S&JP, m ob), and a late individual at Bahama, *Durham*, NC May 7 (HL). The count of 75 Semipalmated Sandpipers at the E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton, GA May 13 (JS) was impressive for an inland spring report. Eleven White-rumped Sandpipers there May 28 (JS, CL, PB) was a good inland total. The only report of Purple Sandpiper was a good count of 34 at the Huntington Beach S.P., SC jetty Apr. 1 (SD). As expected the only Curlew Sandpiper was found along North Carolina's Outer Banks at South Pond, Pea I., May 10 (SD, SG). Four Stilt Sandpipers, rare inland spring transients at the E. L. Huie Facility, Clayton, GA May 13 (JS *et al.*), were noteworthy. Wilson's Phalaropes, rare in spring, were found 3 times, with singles at C. Hatt. and Pea I., NC May 10 (SD, SG) and at the E. L. Huie Facility, Clayton, GA May 11–13 (BHu, JS *et al.*).

The only Long-tailed Jaegers were found in North Carolina waters, with individuals off Hatteras May 14 & 28 (BP *et al.*) and off Oregon Inlet May 30 (MT *et al.*). Good inland records of Laughing Gull were four at L. Crabtree near Raleigh, NC Apr. 13 (DS,

vide WC) and one at the E. L. Huie Facility, Clayton, GA Apr. 26 (KD). North Carolina got its first good record of an inland Little Gull when a first-winter bird was found at Jordan Res. near Chapel Hill Mar. 6 (RD); it was seen again there Mar. 26 (J&AP). Rather late was one at Wrightsville Beach Apr. 2 (SC) and another off Pea I., May 5 (HH, HLi). Bonaparte's Gulls moved through in better-than-average numbers, with >20 in the Greensboro, NC area late March–early April (HH), >38 near Tryon, NC Mar. 27 (ST), and 125 at L. Lanier, GA Mar. 17 (JS). North Carolina's second California Gull, present in the C. Hatt. area since late December, was seen Mar. 5 (SD, SG). Very late and locally rare was the 2nd-winter Iceland Gull found at Sunset Beach, NC May 14 & 15 (DH *et al.*). The only Glaucous Gull reported was a first-winter individual at Ocracoke, NC Mar. 5 (SD, SG). A good count for inland Georgia was the seven Caspian Terns at the Merry Brickyard Ponds, Augusta Apr. 23 (A&VW). Roseate Terns were found at 2 locations in North Carolina; four were at C. Hatt., May 10 (SD, SG) and two were at C. Lookout May 24 (JF). Offshore reports of Arctic Tern included four off Hatteras, NC May 14 (BP *et al.*) and 11 off Oregon Inlet, NC May 30 (MT *et al.*). These totals were more than last year but considerably less than 2 springs ago. Sooty Terns returned to C. Hatt. again, with up to six May 17 (JH). Definite nesting was observed by at least 2 pairs May 28 (SG, WC) for the 2nd consecutive year. The Razorbill invasion in North Carolina which began in February continued into March but the numbers decreased. The best spring counts were 77 from Avon to Rodanthe Mar. 5, and 39 off Pea I., Mar. 6 (SD, SG). The latest record was of one at Oregon Inlet Mar. 27 (SD, SG). The only South Carolina report was of four off Murrell's Inlet Mar. 5 (LG).

Pigeons to Shrikes

North Carolina's second Band-tailed Pigeon found in Charlotte during February was still present through most of March, and continued to be easily observed. After reports of a handful of Eur. Collared-Doves in the Brunswick, GA area the past year, it was inevitable that their numbers would increase. A new high count of 10 was seen May 21 (PR *et al.*). When will they spread to other areas? The hard to find Black-billed Cuckoo was reported several times. An early one was in n. *Laurens*, GA Apr. 6 (TP), a rare coastal record was of one in McIntosh, GA (D&DC), and one was in N. *Augusta*, SC May 15 (RC, CE). Frank Enders has been monitoring Barn Owls in e. North Carolina; this spring he reported 17 young fledged from 7 nests. This species needs continued study throughout the Region.

Georgia had 2 reports of the rare **Olive-sided Flycatcher**. One was at Johnson Ferry, along the Chattahoochee R., May 14–16 (JS *et al.*) and another was at Kenn. Mt., May 14 (BD). Yellow-bellied Flycatchers are very rare in e. North Carolina in spring, thus very interesting was one seen and heard near Catfish L., Croatan N.F., May 21 (J&NM). Willow Flycatchers are also rare in spring in e. North Carolina, so 2 reports were noteworthy. One was near Bahama, *Durham* May 7 (HL) and one was singing at C. Lookout May 23 (JF, BH) for only the 2nd *Carteret* record. The only report of Gray Kingbird out of range was of one near Stacy, *Carteret*, NC Apr. 30 (SC). Upstate South Carolina had another Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, following last year's 2 records. One in ad. plumage was near Gramling, *Spartanburg* May 15 (BPo *et al.*). Cliff Swallows continue to increase as breeders, they have begun to use sites not over water. Several colonies were at highway bridges in *Chester* and *Fairfield*, SC (RC, CE). The thrush migration received mixed reviews, but Gray-cheekeds were reported more than usual. One interesting record was of one early at Winston-Salem, NC Apr. 16 (SM, *vide* RS). South Carolina's 8th Sprague's Pipit, present since January at the Orangeburg Sod Farm, was last seen Mar. 11 (RC, CE). An encouraging report was of eight Loggerhead Shrikes on the Rowland, Robeson BBS May 30 (HL) and five more in the nearby Maxton area. There are very few areas in North Carolina with like shrike densities.

Vireos to Warblers

The Warbling Vireo is a rare migrant in the Region, thus 3 reports from Georgia were very noteworthy. Individuals were found at Kenn. Mt., Apr. 29 (BD, T&PM), n. Atlanta May 10 (JC, TM), and in the Oconee Forest May 18 (GB). A Philadelphia Vireo, another rare spring migrant, was seen at Kenn. Mt., May 7 (BD *et al.*) for the only report. A **Black-whiskered Vireo** was found at C. Lookout, NC May 23 (JF, BH) providing the 3rd record for the state and Region. This bird acted very territorial and was seen by countless observers into the summer season!

Observers gave mixed reviews on the warbler migration. Most considered the spring to be a continuation of the decrease in migrant numbers over the last decade. A rare spring Golden-winged Warbler was found in Sumter, SC Apr. 23 (RC), and a count of seven in April at Kenn. Mt., GA (BD, GB) provided a good total. Another rare spring migrant was the Orange-crowned Warbler at Lee S.P., SC Apr. 9 (RC). Undoubtedly the bird of the season was the ♂ **Tropical Parula** found on the levee in Augusta, GA Apr. 27 (AW)! The bird was well described but not photographed. This record is being reviewed and if accepted

would provide a first record for the Region. The report is all the more amazing when one considers that the nearest extralimital records are from Louisiana. A ♂ Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler was found at Little River, SC Apr. 12 (RM) for a rare report of this form. Rare Ceruleans were at Columbia, SC May 13 (CE) and Raleigh, NC Apr. 30 (*vide* RH). A rare breeding record of Louisiana Waterthrush in s.e. North Carolina was of an adult with young near Thomasboro, Brunswick in late May (LR, DH).

Always rare anytime in the Region, a Connecticut Warbler was found at Kenn. Mt., GA May 10 (GB, JS, KD). Canada Warblers are rare spring transients in e. North Carolina, thus four in the Dismal Swamp, Camden May 18 (JF, HL) was exceptional.

Tanagers to Finches

The Western Tanager was found twice this spring; a female was on the Jordan Res., NC Spring Count May 1 (BR *et al.*) and a male was seen at Bear I., SC Mar. 5 (RC, CE). A ♀ Painted Bunting in upstate SC near Moore, Spartanburg in late May (*vide* LC) provided the 2nd county record in as many years. Another out-of-range Painted was found near LaGrange in w. Georgia May 1 (AW). Dickcissels took up residence in a field near Athens, GA in mid-May, when Brunjes noticed a sizable flock; by the end of the period it had decreased to at least four birds (BD, JS). Evidence of breeding was not noted during this time. Another Dickcissel was rare at Spartanburg, SC May 22 (RC, CE).

What is undoubtedly one of the largest remaining breeding populations of Henslow's Sparrow was documented at the VOA sites in Pitt and Beaufort, NC in May (JW). During a census of VOA-B May 7, 59 singing males were located, and 70 singing males were found at VOA-A May 8. This population has been known for several years but the size was unknown until now. These sites must be maintained in present conditions, but there is concern that discing practices might drastically alter the habitat. It is imperative that this population be monitored yearly and management practices be suggested to the VOA authorities to preserve the habitat. A rare Lincoln's Sparrow was heard singing at Edisto Gardens, Orangeburg, SC Mar. 27 (RC, CE). Brewer's Blackbirds provided a rare occurrence with 13 at Landrum, SC Mar. 27-29 (ST). The ♀ N. "Bullock's" Oriole that spent the winter at a feeder in Wilmington, NC was last seen Mar. 20 (GM). A late Pine Siskin turned up in Durham, NC May 29 (OF). Evening Grosbeaks continued to be found in all 3 states this spring. The largest total was the >100 at Lugoff, SC Mar. 3-Apr. 17 (LG). The latest records were six at Macon, GA Apr. 27 (MH, CP, PS) and a lost individual at C. Lookout, NC May 29 (RT, PE).

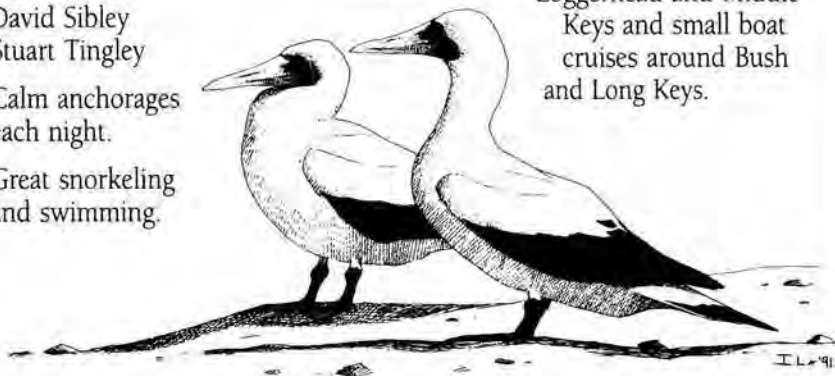
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DRY TORTUGAS

Great seabird spectacle, migrants, sometimes in dazzling numbers, and frequent rarities, all in an appealing setting.

- Three day trips in the spring of 1995 from Key West, Florida on the *Yankee Cpts.*
April 15 - 17
April 18 - 20
April 22 - 24
April 25 - 27
April 28 - May 1
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- **WINGS Leaders** include
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- Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies by the thousands; Magnificent Frigatebirds by the hundreds; Masked and Brown Boobies; Audubon's Shearwaters and Bridled Tern are likely; Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird and Black Noddy are possible.
- Trip cost \$395/person. Ten percent discount for groups of 10 or more. Transport can be provided for campers and their gear at a cost of \$150 round trip from Key West.
- Itinerary includes search for deep-water pelagics on the way to the Tortugas, two mornings at Fort Jefferson, visits to Loggerhead and Middle Keys and small boat cruises around Bush and Long Keys.



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