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# Central Southern Region

## GREG D. JACKSON

Veterans of many battles, the troops responded to the call. Into the field they marched, clutching Zeiss and Leica, Kowa and Questar. Heavy were the early volleys from legions of large waders and lingering/early-migrant waterfowl; the force remained undaunted. Hordes of raptors flanked their left, a mixed band of shorebirds threatened the right. The troops engaged the strong waves of passerines at mid-field, with many opponents persisting late in the fray. It was a good day to bird.

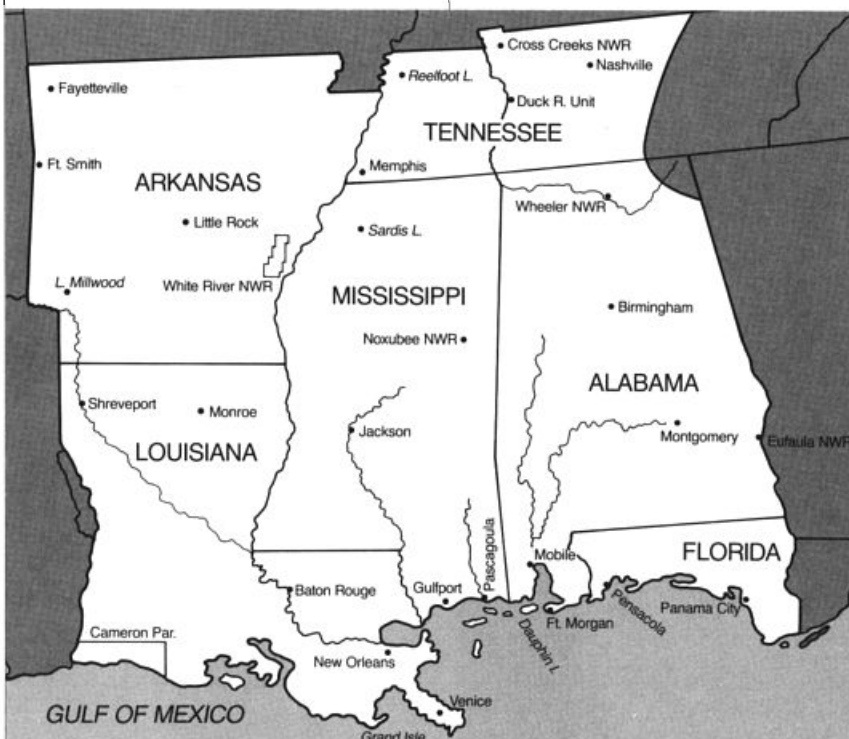
The weather this autumn was not exceptional; there were no direct hits in our area from the tropics, though one storm brushed the coast. Temperatures were generally normal to slightly low. Precipitation in north Alabama was average, though September was wetter than usual; record rainfall was reported from west Tennessee, though.

Top raptor days at Fort Morgan, Alabama, were reported by Cimprich and Fos-

dick as October 4, 8–11, and 18–19; the peak occurred October 9. For passerines at the coast, September 13, 17, 20, and 29, and October 8–12 and 19 were notable. Following a strong front, Bob Duncan reported the best autumn warbler fallout in memory on the Florida coast September 29. Cimprich and associates had a stellar day October 19 after a front; birding also was good October 8–12 after tropical storm *Josephine* transited the northern Gulf.

I have followed a policy over the years of *personally* reviewing documentation of all rarities, basing the need on the status of the species and difficulty of identification. I must feel comfortable with the details to list a significant rarity in this column, whatever the decision of other reviewers; the exception is for a properly processed specimen. This evaluation is fundamental to the job of a *Regional Editor*. All observers, no matter their experience, are held to this standard for the sake of fairness. Again this year, I was disappointed to exclude several undoubtedly valid sightings for which I could not obtain details. I appreciate the many observers and Subregional Editors who take the time to include rarity documentation with their material, responding also to occasional queries.

Abbreviations: b. (*banded*); C.P. (*Cameron Parish, s.w. LA*); L.S.U. (*Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, Baton Rouge*); N.N.W.R. (*Noxubee N.W.R., e.c. MS*); p.a. (*pending acceptance by the state bird records committee*); S.L.



(*Sardis L., n. MS*); T.N.W.R. (*Tallahatchie N. W.R., n.w. MS*); T.E.C. (*The Earth Complex, a.k.a. Ensley Bottoms, Shelby Co., s.w. TN*); W.P. (*w. Panhandle—westernmost three counties, FL*).

### Loons to Wood Stork

Several rare Red-throated Loons pleased observers in the n. portion of the Region. Up to four were at Pace Pt., *Henry, TN*, beginning Nov. 9 (JRW, m.ob.). An early record for Alabama's Tennessee Valley was set by one bird Nov. 17 at Wilson Dam, *Colbert (SWM, ALM, ADM)*; another was at Guntersville, *Marshall, AL*, beginning Nov. 19 (BS, D&RC, m.ob.). A Red-throated was spotted at S.L., Nov. 28 (WMD). Even more unusual was the **Pacific Loon** in *Obion, TN* Nov. 13 & 19 (JRW); three were outstanding at Pace Point, TN Nov. 29 (JRW, m.ob., ph.).

An imm. Red-necked Grebe was very rare Nov. 23 at Britton Ford, *Henry, TN* (JRW). It was a good season for Eared Grebe, expected in small numbers in the w. parts of the Region and along the coast. Ten were unusual, though not unprecedented, at S.L., Nov. 28 (WMD). A Horned Grebe at T.N.W.R., Aug. 11–19 (FB) probably was summering; unusually abundant were the 375 Horneds Nov. 28 at S.L. (WMD). Very rare was a **Western Grebe** beginning Nov. 23 at Britton Ford (JRW *et al.*, ph., p.a.); this may be the first *Aechmophorus* identified to species in Tennessee.

Alabama's 19th Greater Shearwater was a good find from shore in *Baldwin* Sept. 14 (AMB, p.a.). **Leach's Storm-Petrel** is rare but increasingly recorded in the n. Gulf; one was discovered Sept. 14 about 45 mi s. of South Pass, LA (DPM, L.O.S., p.a.). Infrequently observed, and rarely documented well, an imm. Masked Booby was seen at close range at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin, AL* Oct. 9 (PCT, RAD, ALM, m.ob.). Good numbers of Am. White Pelicans were noted as they transited inland areas; high count was 580 pelicans at T.E.C., Nov. 2 (JRW). Tennessee's 4th



Very rare inland, this Brown Pelican provided Tennessee's fourth record beginning August 27, 1996, in Lake County. Photograph/Jeff R. Wilson.

**Table 1: Early migrant and/or summering ducks**

Sightings marked by an asterisk provided new early state or local records.

|                         |     |               |            |             |
|-------------------------|-----|---------------|------------|-------------|
| Green-winged Teal       | 3   | Sardis L., MS | Aug. 11    | WMD         |
| N. Pintail              | 3   | T.N.W.R., MS  | Aug. 11+   | FB          |
| N. Shoveler             | 1   | N.N.W.R., MS  | Aug. 23    | TLS         |
| N. Shoveler             | 3–7 | Sardis L., MS | Aug. 24–28 | WMD         |
| N. Shoveler*            | 1   | Perry, AL     | Aug. 25    | GDJ         |
| Gadwall                 | 1   | T.N.W.R., MS  | Aug. 25+   | FB          |
| Canvasback*             | 1   | Okribbeha, MS | Oct. 24    | TLS         |
| Ring-necked Duck        | 1   | T.N.W.R., MS  | Aug. 11+   | FB          |
| Lesser Scaup            | 2   | T.N.W.R., MS  | Aug. 11+   | FB          |
| Lesser Scaup            | 1   | Lafourche, LA | Aug. 31    | PW, CS, BMM |
| Lesser Scaup*           | 1   | Columbia, AR  | Sept. 21   | EL&SSL      |
| Com. Goldeneye          | 3   | Sardis L., MS | Nov. 15    | WMD         |
| Hooded Merganser*       | 1   | Baldwin, AL   | Oct. 7     | AMB         |
| Red-breasted Merganser* | 2   | Benton, AR    | Nov. 1     | MM, JR      |
| Ruddy Duck              | 5   | Tunica, MS    | Aug. 3     | BB, WRP     |
| Ruddy Duck              | 1   | Mobile, AL    | Aug. 10+   | AMB, m.ob.  |
| Ruddy Duck              | 2   | T.N.W.R., MS  | Aug. 11+   | FB          |

**Brown Pelican** record was provided by one at Reelfoot Lake S.P., *Lake, Aug. 27–Sept. 1* (park personnel, m.ob., ph.). Also very rare was a **Neotropic Cormorant** Aug. 11 at T.E.C. (JRW, ph.).

In *Lake, TN*, an Am. Bittern was very late Nov. 28 (JRW, WGC). The 1200 Great Egrets in the same county must have been an impressive sight Aug. 18 (WGC, WRP, VBR *et al.*); >1000 were found Sept. 7 in *Prairie, AR* (K&LN). Well away from the routine dispersal path up the Mississippi R., a Tricolored Heron was unusual at N.N.W.R., Aug. 3 & 31 (TLS). Single Glossy and White-faced ibises provided first n. Mississippi records at T.N.W.R., Aug. 31 (FB, JRW *et al.*). Another White-faced was rare at Arkadelphia, *Clark, AR* Sept. 29 (DH). Becoming regular in late summer and fall, I received several reports of Roseate Spoonbills in Arkansas and w. Tennessee. More unusual was the immature at N.N.W.R., Aug. 18–Nov. 18 (BL, MC, m.ob., ph.).

Excellent numbers of Wood Storks were reported; encouragingly often large proportions of immatures were noted. Significant counts included 600 birds Aug. 10 in *Vermilion, LA* (MP, GP), >400 in *Jefferson Davis, LA* Aug. 15 (RJB), and 362 storks at N.N.W.R., Aug. 20 (MC, TLS, m.ob.). Surpassing them all was the impressive tally of 713 in *Chicot, AR* Sept. 2 (DRS). Four Wood Storks in *Barbour* Nov. 7 (AMB) set a late record for Alabama.

### Waterfowl to Raptors

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck is gradually increasing in the Region, though it is still rare in most areas; a lone bird was discov-

ered Oct. 12 at Millwood L., *Little River, AR* (J&EW). One Tundra Swan, often difficult to find in the Region, appeared Nov. 28 in *Lauderdale, TN* (JRW, WGC). Thirty Greater White-fronted Geese were early Sept. 14 in *St. Martin, LA* (DLD, SWC); the highest tally away from Louisiana concentrations was of 58 in *Tunica, MS* Oct. 27 (JRW). Ross' Goose continues to appear in small numbers throughout our area, with fewer birds to the east. As many as seven were early in *Tunica, MS* Oct. 27–Nov. 2 (JRW); two Ross' furnished the 19th record for Alabama in *Limestone* beginning Nov. 14 (AMB, GH, m.ob.). Much more unusual was the **Brant** Nov. 12–30 at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (EC, m.ob.), providing a first W.P. record. The sighting of three Brant in *Lawrence* Nov. 22 (SWM, p.a.) was only the 6th for Alabama.

Early duck reports were widespread this season (Table 1). Summering individuals may have been involved. It often is difficult to separate early transients from the lingerers; early August reports may be more likely of the latter, especially for diving ducks. A new maximum for n.w. Arkansas was furnished by 64 Redheads at Centerton Fish Hatchery, *Benton, Nov. 1* (MM, JR). It was a good autumn for inland Oldsquaw and scoters, rare but regular in our area. The maximum number of Oldsquaws reported was four at Reelfoot N.W.R., *Obion, TN*, beginning Nov. 19 (refuge personnel, m.ob., ph. JRW). Five Black Scoters were rare in *Lawrence, TN* Nov. 10 (SWM), and were accompanied by five Surfs. There were 6 additional inland Surf Scoter reports involving 11 birds beginning

Oct. 19. A White-winged Scoter provided a scarce local record in *Noxubee*, MS Nov. 2 (TLS, MHS). The flock of 106 Red-breasted Mergansers set a n. Mississippi maximum at S.L., Nov. 3 (WMD).

Alabama's 10th, and earliest, **White-tailed Kite** came at Ft. Morgan Sept. 22 (CF, SW, p.a.); another was rare, but more expected, in *Lafourche*, LA Nov. 17 (RSB, GW). A Mississippi Kite in *Shelby* Oct. 23 (JAF) set a new departure date for Tennessee. Alabama's previous maximum for Sharp-shinned Hawk was superseded by 408 counted in 10 hours at a Ft. Morgan hawk watch Oct. 9 (CF). Very rare in n. Mississippi, a Swainson's Hawk was spotted at Arkabutla L., *Desoto/Tate*, Oct. 27 (JRW). Presumably a returning vagrant, an ad. **White-tailed Hawk** was noted Nov. 30 at *Jefferson Davis*, LA, at the site of last winter's observation (DPM, p.a.). A bird fitting the description of the very rare light-morph "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk was in *Benton*, AR Nov. 9 (MM, JR). Rough-legged Hawk is rare but regular in the Region in winter; one was at T.E.C., Nov. 2 (JRW).

Four scarce Golden Eagles were located. An immature was in *Washington*, AR Oct. 25 (KB), and an adult and immature were reported from *Franklin*, AR Nov. 11 (MB, *vide* MM). Another Golden Eagle was at Pace Pt., TN, beginning Nov. 24 (SWM, JRW). Good numbers of falcons were spotted at coastal and inland locales. At Ft. Morgan, AL, 117 Merlins were counted Sept. 11–Oct. 28 (CF). The Prairie Falcon at Centerton Fish Hatchery, AR Nov. 15 (MM, JH) was very rare. Notably early was a Peregrine Falcon in *St. Landry*, LA Sept. 1 (TAW). A good seasonal count of 129 Peregrines was recorded at Ft. Morgan, AL (CF). Seven were seen inland in *Grenada*, MS Oct. 5 (FB), and 14 Peregrines were spotted migrating W in 3.5 hours at Gulf Breeze, FL Oct. 7 (RAD).

### Rails to Shorebirds

Envision lunch at the country club after a round of golf; now imagine looking out the window from your table at a Yellow Rail on the restaurant patio! This bizarre sighting, likely of an impact-stunned bird, occurred in Gulf Breeze Oct. 19 (WJB, GB); there are only a few W.P. records. The first November W.P. records for Purple Gallinule came in *Okaloosa* Nov. 20 (RAD) and in *Santa Rosa* Nov. 20–25 (PCT, CWM). An Am. Coot at N.N.W.R., Aug. 12 (TLS) furnished a new local arrival date. Two Sandhill Cranes Nov. 17 in *Lowndes*, MS (TDW) were rare for that area.

Though Black-bellied Plovers were less obvious than usual at T.E.C. (JRW), good

numbers were noted in n. Mississippi and Alabama; highest count was 16 in *Lafayette*, MS Aug. 26 (WMD). It was a good season for Am. Golden-Plover, uncommon in autumn in our Region. Largest tally was 17 at T.E.C., Sept. 14 (JRW). Mississippi's 2nd Mountain Plover was a great find at Sardis L., Oct. 30 (GCK, RB, m.ob., p.a.). Nesting Black-necked Stilts were reported in good numbers near the Mississippi R., with a high of 134 at T.E.C., Aug. 8 (JRW). Inland Am. Avocets can be difficult to find, but this fall small numbers were seen at multiple sites. The largest flock reported from a well-inland location was 16 in *Rapides*, LA Oct. 18 (RJB).

Willet is scarce inland; this season I received 6 reports of seven birds from w. Tennessee and n. Mississippi Aug. 8–Sept. 23. Northern Mississippi's first Long-billed Curlew observation was a surprise at T.N.W.R., especially as late as Nov. 9–10 and involving three birds (GCK, SK, PH, m.ob.). Ruddy Turnstone is primarily a coastal species, with a handful of observations this year from the n. part of the Region; one lingering to Oct. 31 at Island #13, *Lake*, TN (WGC) was very late. Even scarcer inland is Red Knot, so a juvenile Aug. 27–28 at T.E.C. (JRW) was notable. Good concentrations of knots appeared on the Louisiana coast, with a maximum of 275 in *Lafourche* Sept. 28 (BMM, CS). A Sanderling at N.N.W.R., Nov. 2 (TLS, MHS) far exceeded local departure dates. Semipalmated, Western, and Least sandpipers were noted to be less common than normal at T.E.C. (JRW). Baird's Sandpiper is a regular autumn transient throughout our territory;  $\leq 12$  in *Lake*, TN, Aug. 16–20 (MAG) was noteworthy. Pectoral Sandpiper was reported in lower numbers than usual at T.E.C. (JRW).

**SA** **Buff-breasted Sandpiper, that hardy world traveler with the delicate facade, put on a show in much of the Region. Unprecedented numbers were reported from several states in the first 2 weeks of September. Taking only the maximum recorded at each of 18 sites in Alabama, n. Mississippi, and w. Tennessee, there were reports of  $\geq 346$  Buff-breasted! Peak state counts included 35 birds at Oxford, Lafayette, MS in September (GCK, SK, WMD, PH), and 65 at T.E.C., Sept. 6 (JRW); the latter provided a new maximum for Tennessee. New Alabama regional records were established by 12 birds Sept. 1 in Shelby (RRR, m.ob.) and 10 in Macon Sept. 6 (AMB). These num-**

**bers pale, though, in comparison to the flock seen in mid-September at a sod farm near Gulf Shores, Baldwin, AL. An astounding 136 were counted Sept. 13 (JHo, JFH), increasing to 153 the following day (AMB)! The Alabama historical maximum of 16 puts these figures in perspective.**

**Persecuted relentlessly a century ago, the species has been slow to recover; we are accustomed to detecting only small numbers as they pass from the Arctic to the Pampas. The ink has just dried on the Partners in Flight WatchList 1996, with Buff-breasted Sandpiper in the "High Priority" category. There has been great concern over habitat loss in the wintering grounds and along the migration route. You wouldn't have known it from this season's flight.**

**Two other high Arctic shorebirds, Am. Golden-Plover and Baird's Sandpiper, with similar ranges and habitat affinities to Buff-breasted, also showed well this season. Curiously, for Pectoral Sandpiper—also a grass-loving n. Arctic breeder—numbers seemed abnormally low. In the autumn of 1991, all 4 species were prominent in our Region, so why the divergence this year? Correlation with other Regions will be necessary to see if this was a local phenomenon.**

Very rare in the Region, but almost expected now in the s. Louisiana rice fields, a Reeve was discovered in *Acadia*, Nov. 9 (DLD, SWC *et al.*, p.a.). Earlier than usual was a Com. Snipe at T.N.W.R., Aug. 17 (WMD). In Alabama, single Wilson's Phalaropes Aug. 31 in *Montgomery* (LFG, FBa, P&CS), and the next day in *Shelby* (HHK, m.ob.) were locally rare; two birds in *Mobile* Oct. 11 (SWM) set a late date for the Alabama coast. Lone Red-necked Phalaropes in *Lonoke* Sept. 2 (K&LN, MD, WMS, RD) and in *Prairie* Sept. 16 (K&LN) were rare but not unexpected fall transients in that section of Arkansas. Much more unusual was the Red Phalarope, Mississippi's 9th occurrence, at T.N.W.R., Nov. 7–8 (FB, GCK, PH, ph.).

### Larids to Hummingbirds

Jaegers are rare, but not unexpected, on the coast. A Pomarine was in C.P., Nov. 20 (PW, CS, BMM, ph., p.a.), and a Parasitic appeared Sept. 17 at Gulf Shores, AL (AMB). As usual, there were scattered sightings of far inland Laughing Gulls. Three were at Wheeler Dam, *Lawrence/Lauderdale*, AL Aug. 12–Aug. 25 (GDJ, DGJ, SWM), another three Laughings



**Red Phalarope is a rare vagrant in most of the Central Southern Region, although it winters in good numbers offshore in the Gulf. The ninth record for Mississippi was established in Tallahatchie National Wildlife Refuge November 7-8, 1996. Photograph/Fred Broerman.**

appeared in e.c. Mississippi (TLS), with one Nov. 18 in *Oktibbeha* providing a local late record. Franklin's Gull was noted in customary numbers in most areas, but staged an invasion of the n. Mississippi reservoirs in late October. At Enid L., *Yalobusha*, a new state maximum of 182 was tallied Oct. 23 (GCK, JRW, WMD, SK); 75 Franklin's were noted Oct. 26 at Sardis L. (WMD *et al.*). The ad. Little Gull at Enid L., Oct. 22 (GCK, JRW) represented the 9th for Mississippi. Five ad. Ring-billed Gulls at Wheeler Dam, AL, were unusual as early as Aug. 12 (GDJ, DGJ).

An ad. California Gull discovered in C.P., Nov. 30 (PW, CS, BMM, SWC, DLD, ph., \*L.S.U., p.a.) added to the growing roster of this vagrant in Louisiana. Lesser Black-backed Gull has become regular in small numbers each year in coastal Louisiana. Beginning Oct. 11,  $\geq$ five were seen in C.P. (DFL, AB, SWC, DLD, m.ob., one \*L.S.U., p.a.). Elsewhere in the Region the species is rare, though also increasing in incidence. Mississippi's 2nd and 3rd inland records came Oct. 15-26 at Arkabutla L., *Desoto/Tate* (WRP, GBe *et al.*) and at S.L., Oct. 18-24 (WMD *et al.*). The 10th Alabama record of Lesser Black-backed Gull was of two adults Oct. 26-27 at Gulf Shores (AMB, p.a.). Rare in Louisiana, a Great Black-backed Gull was spotted Oct. 19 in *Lafourche* (BMM, CS, m.ob., p.a.). An imm. Black-legged Kittiwake Nov. 10 & 28 at Wheeler and Wilson dams (DJS, SWM, p.a.) represented only the 11th for Alabama. Another was a surprise at Oktibbeha County L., MS Nov. 15 (TLS, p.a.).

Noteworthy records of Com. Tern (often not so "common" in our Region) included 150 at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia*, FL Sept. 16 (RAD), and seven in *Oktibbeha*, MS Oct. 1 (TLS). Though expected offshore, Sooty Tern is a rarity on land in Alabama; it was surprising for individuals,

questionably the same, to be observed at Gulf Shores Sept. 9 (AMB) and Dauphin I., Sept. 17 (AMB, GH). At Ft. Morgan Sept. 25, an estimated 15,000 Black Terns (RAD) furnished a new Alabama maximum.

Eurasian Collared-Dove continued to establish new beachheads in multiple areas of the Region, and fortified existing strongholds; the invasion proceeds unabated. Up to four Inca Doves in *Sevier* Aug. 6-Sept. 8 (DA) were rare but now not surprising for s.w. Arkansas.

A Groove-billed Ani at Gulf Breeze, FL Oct. 19 (RAD, LRD, PCT, BT) was the only report along the e. part of our coast. Northern Saw-whet Owl is recorded very rarely in the Region, though it breeds nearby in the Great Smoky Mountains. A first record for the W.P., and only the 5th for Florida, was provided when a dog caught one in a Pensacola yard Nov. 14! Expiring 2 days later, the bird furnished the state's 3rd specimen (A&DF, ph., \* to Archbold Biological Station).

The usual handful of Buff-bellied Hummingbirds appeared in s. Louisiana; an early arrival date was set by one in *St. John the Baptist* Aug. 11 (RJS, SN, NLN). More unusual were three Buff-bellieds at separate sites in Pensacola, FL (RRS, MBS *et al.*, two b.); one of these arrived Sept. 19 for a W.P. early record. Very rare in the Region, an *Anna's Hummingbird* was discovered in *Beauregard*, LA Nov. 2 (MP, ph., p.a.). Arkansas' first **Broad-tailed Hummingbird** delighted observers in DeQueen, *Sevier*, Aug. 28-Sept. 21 (DA, banded PF, m.ob., ph., v.t., p.a.). Rufous Hummingbirds have become an expected part of our winter avifauna, though they are still unusual in the far north of the Region. An ad. female was in *Washington*, AR, beginning Oct. 20 (D&BH, JP, JCN, MM, trapped by DAJ, ph.), and an ad. male was observed in *Gibson*, TN Oct. 21-26 (GL, MAG).

#### **Flycatchers to Vireos**

Olive-sided Flycatcher showed well this season, with a minimum of 14 reported from 9 sites; the hotspot was Gulf Breeze, FL, where five different individuals were located Aug. 14-Sept. 12 (RAD), the most for the W.P. in a single season. There were several reports of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, a scarce but regular transient. Most noteworthy were singles in Montgomery Oct. 5 (LFG), providing the 3rd Alabama Inland Coastal Plain record, and the latest ever for Louisiana Nov. 16 in *Iberville* (SWC, DLD, \*L.S.U.). A calling Least Flycatcher at Ft. Pickens Nov. 29 (RAD, LRD, RSD, WWD) was very late and provided the first November W.P.



**Buff-bellied Hummingbird is now expected in small numbers along the northern Gulf Coast, particularly in Louisiana. This bird in Lafayette Parish was observed November 5, 1996. Photograph/Lona Bourque.**



**A Broad-tailed Hummingbird was in Sevier County, Arkansas, August 28 to September 21, 1996. This vagrant has been recorded several times in the southern part of the Region, but not previously in Arkansas. Photograph/Charles Mills.**

record. An Ash-throated Flycatcher, scarce but regular in s. Louisiana, was in C.P., Oct. 26 (DLD, SWC, \*L.S.U.). Providing the 14th specimen for Louisiana, and the earliest record, a rare Brown-crested Flycatcher was discovered in C.P., Sept. 14 (SWC, DLD, \*L.S.U.).

*Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher* is an occasional vagrant to the Region; Louisiana's 3rd, and first in autumn, was a great discovery in Johnson's Bayou, *Cameron*, Oct. 1-2 (DF, BPG, SWC, DLD, \*L.S.U., p.a.). Unusual inland records of Scissor-tailed Flycatcher included singles in *Shelby*, TN Sept. 22 (JRW, ph.), in *Newton*, MS Oct. 18 (JMM), and in *Hinds*, MS Nov. 1 (ML). A good flight of Scissor-taileds occurred Nov. 2 along the coast; there were reports of 22 in C.P. (DPM, PHY, RDP), and seven, setting a W.P. maximum, as far east as Gulf Breeze (RAD). Always exciting in our area, a Cave Swallow was spotted at Ft. Walton Beach, *Okaloosa*, Sept. 24 (PCT); there are no previous autumn records for the W.P., and perhaps the Region. The lone White-breasted Nuthatch at Gulf Breeze, FL Oct. 14 (RAD) was a bizarre visitor to the outer coast.

A good evening thrush flight was recorded in 70 minutes Sept. 19 at

Auburn, *Lee* (AMB); the count of 15 Gray-cheekeds tied the previous Alabama maximum, and 87 Swainson's set a new high tally for the Inland Coastal Plain. Very late was a Wood Thrush in C.P., Nov. 30 (BMM, CS, PW). There are few Regional records of **Varied Thrush**, so the bird at Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, LA Oct. 19 (JF, BMM, CS, m.ob., p.a.) was exceptional. Gray Catbird numbers were noticeably decreased this year at Ft. Morgan, AL (DC *et al.*).

**SA** Star of the season, an ad. **White Wagtail** was discovered near Johnson's Bayou, *Cameron*, LA Oct. 12 (SRE *et al.*, ph., p.a.); unfortunately, the bird could not be relocated on subsequent days. This sighting furnished the first documented record for the Region and, probably, e. North America; the only other wagtail known from our Region was the Citrine in Mississippi in February 1992. Extensive details, including in-flight characters, appear to exclude Black-backed Wagtail, which has occurred in North Carolina. Louisiana's bird was of an Alaskan or Asian race, possessing a black eye line lacking in the two European subspecies.

Setting a local arrival date, a Cedar Waxwing was observed Oct. 9 in *Iberville*, LA (JVR). Bell's Vireo is rare as far east as Alabama, though it is detected most autumns; one was at Dauphin I., Sept. 17 (AMB, GH). Setting a local departure date, a Solitary Vireo lingered to Nov. 17 in *Washington*, AR (MM). Significant records of Warbling Vireo included one bird Sept. 30 and Oct. 2 at N.N.W.R. (TLS), where rare, and a tardy individual Nov. 8 in *Lafayette*, LA (PC). Seven Philadelphia Vireos were noteworthy at T.E.C., Oct. 5 (JRW); the species was unusually scarce this year at Ft. Morgan, AL (DC, RRS *et al.*).

### Warblers to Finches

It was an excellent season for Golden-winged Warbler, especially in the e. portion of our territory. The fall tally in e.c. Mississippi was 36 (TLS); five in *Colbert* Sept. 22 (SWM) set a new autumn maximum for inland Alabama. A Golden-winged at Ft. Morgan Oct. 12 (b. DC *et al.*) furnished a new departure date for the Alabama coast; another tardy bird was spotted Oct. 17–18 in *Lafayette*, LA (PC, DP). Black-throated Blue Warblers usually are sparse as far west as Louisiana. One was located Oct. 20 in New Orleans (PHY). Four birds were surprising in C.P.,

Oct. 26–27 (DLD, SWC, DFL, DF, BPG, two \*L.S.U.), as was another Oct. 27 at Grand Isle (BMM). An early Black-throated Gray Warbler, rare in the Region, was an excellent discovery Sept. 17 in C.P. (BPG, SS, ph.). A Palm Warbler, rare in n.w. Arkansas in autumn, was spotted in *Washington* Oct. 20 (MM).

Fall sightings of Cerulean Warbler are infrequent; I received 8 reports of nine birds, most in mid- to late August. Late Ceruleans were observed in New Orleans Oct. 5 (PHY), and the next day at S.L. (GCK, SK). Another lingerer was the Worm-eating Warbler in C.P., Oct. 26 (SWC, \*L.S.U.). Few Swainson's Warblers are detected in the autumn. One was in *Iberville*, LA Sept. 23 (JVR); one was discovered the following day in *Okibbeha*, MS (TLS), for a local departure record. Also well behind schedule was the Hooded Warbler in *Iberville*, LA Nov. 27 (SWC, \*L.S.U.). Mourning Warbler is a regular, though inconspicuous, transient throughout our area, mostly in September; there were 9 reports of ten birds Sept. 1–Oct. 8, with six banded at Ft. Morgan, AL (DC *et al.*). An early Wilson's Warbler was at that locale Sept. 3 (banded DC *et al.*).

Alabama's 3rd August record of the rare W. Tanager was of one at Dauphin I., Aug. 31 (GDJ). The imm. ♂ Black-headed Grosbeak Oct. 15 at Ft. Morgan, AL (banded RRS, MBS *et al.*, ph.) was a rare surprise. Late buntings in Louisiana included single Indigos Nov. 30 in *St. Tammany* (CGB) and *Cameron* (PW, CS, BMM), and a Painted in *Iberville* (DLD, SWC) to Nov. 23. Clay-colored Sparrow is routine in small numbers along the coast in midautumn; seven in C.P., Oct. 13 (PC, BF, DP) was the most reported. An unusual sight in C.P. was the appearance at dawn of 600–800 Savannah Sparrows flying out of the Gulf Nov. 3 (DPM, PHY, RDP); apparently the birds were caught over water at first light and choose to return to land.

Normal numbers of the localized Le Conte's Sparrow were noted; the highest tally was of five at T.E.C., Oct. 26 (QBG, JRW). A Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, rarely seen inland, was in *Benton*, AR Oct. 26–27 (JP, RS, K&LN, m.ob.). Providing a new arrival date for the Alabama coast, a Fox Sparrow was observed Oct. 7 at Ft. Morgan (AMB, GMB). The rare Harris' Sparrow in C.P., Oct. 27 (SWC, DLD, \*L.S.U.) established an early record for Louisiana. A Lapland Longspur Nov. 3 in *Benton* (JP, MM, DCh) was the earliest on record for n.w. Arkansas.

At least six vocalizing W. Meadowlarks were fashionable in Chic, *Dyer*, TN Nov.



**Black-headed Grosbeak** is scarce in the Central Southern Region. This immature male was banded at Fort Morgan, Alabama, October 15, 1996. Photograph/Martha B. Sargent.



**Regular along the Gulf Coast** in autumn, a Clay-colored Sparrow was banded September 19, 1996, at Fort Morgan, Alabama. Photograph/David Cimprich.

28 (JRW, WGC). Yellow-headed Blackbird is regular in small numbers in s. Louisiana; a minimum of six were spotted in *Lafourche* and *Cameron* Sept. 15–Oct. 27. More unusual, though still not surprising, were two at Ft. Morgan, AL Sept. 18 (AMB, RAD, GH), and another there Oct. 31 (DC, MDa). Mississippi's first **Great-tailed Grackle** sighting came Nov. 20 near the Pascagoula R., *Jackson*; two birds, a male and female, were studied closely and heard calling in a flock of Boat-tailed Grackles (PWo, p.a.). In *Iberville*, LA, a tardy Baltimore Oriole was noted Nov. 30 (DLD, SWC). Red Crossbill is rare and erratic in our Region. Small numbers invaded w. Arkansas Oct. 26–Dec. 12, with  $\geq 38$  birds spotted in *Washington*, *Scott*, and *Yell*; at 2 sites in *Lafayette*, MS, 13 crossbills were discovered Nov. 10–23 (GCK, SK, PD). The

only Pine Siskins reported were early individuals in *Washington*, AR Oct. 2 (MM, JR) and in Baton Rouge Nov. 1 (DFL).

**Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface):** David Arbour, Fred Bassett (FBa), Ahmet Baytas, Giff M. Beaton, Buddy Beaver, Gilbert Beaver (GBe), Richard S. Bello, Mike Bivin, Kenneth Burton, Christopher G. Brantley, Roger J. Breedlove, Greta Bremser, William J. Bremser, Robert Bricco, Fred Broerman, Adam M. Byrne, **Steven W. Cardiff** (Louisiana), Ed Case, David Chapman (DCh), David Cimprich, Paul Conover, Margaret Copeland, Dean & Raylynn Curten, W.G. Criswell, Michelle Davis (MDa), W. Marvin Davis, Peter Demilio, Donna L. Dittmann, Rob Doster, Lucy R. Duncan, R. Scot Duncan, **Robert A. Duncan** (n.w. Florida), William W. Duncan, Mike Dunn, Steven R. Emmons, Judy Fall, Doug Faulkner, James A. Ferguson, Perk Floyd, Bill Fontenot, Ann & Dan Forster, Craig Fosdick, Lawrence F. Gardella, Murray L. Gardler, Brian P. Gibbons, Q.B. Gray, Mark A. Greene, John Harbison, Dolores Harrington, Geoff Hill, James F. Holmes, Jim Holmes (JHo), Don & Barbara Holt, Prentiss Hooper, Debra G. Jackson, **Greg D. Jackson** (Alabama), Douglas A. James, Helen H. Kittinger, Gene C. Knight, Shannon Knight, Emma Lee & Sterling S. Lacy, Buddy Laird, Mary Landin, Daniel F. Lane, Gay Little, Louisiana Ornithological Society, Steve W. McConnell, Joseph M. McGee, Al D. Miller, Ann L. Miller, C. William Milmore, Mike Mlodinow, David P. Muth, B. Mac Myers, Joe C. Neal, Nancy L. Newfield, Kenny & LaDonna Nichols, Susie Nowell, **Helen & Max Parker** (Arkansas), Dave Patton, W.R. Peebles, Matt Pontiff, Gary Pontiff, John Prather, R.D. Purrington, Robert R. Reid, J.V. Remsen, Virginia B. Reynolds, Jennifer Russell, Martha B. Sargent, Robert R. Sargent, Ragan Satterfield, William M. Shepherd, Marion H. Schiefer, **Terence L. Schiefer** (Mississippi), Damien J. Simbeck, Don R. Simons, Steve Sorensen, Phil & Carolyn Snow, Curt Sorrells, Ronald J. Stein, Bill Summerour, Betsy Tetlow, Phil C. Tetlow, Jerry & Edge Wade, Terry A. Waggenspack, **Martha G. Waldron** (w. Tennessee), Phillip Wallace, Thomas D. Watson, Jeff R. Wilson, Stephan Woltmann, Gary Worthington, Peter Worthington (PWo), Peter H. Yaukey.

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# Prairie Provinces Region

## RUOLF F. KOES AND PETER TAYLOR

Weather was generally placid across the Region until an early snowstorm swept through from southwest Alberta to southwest Manitoba October 1. Pleasant weather resumed, punctuated with some strong winds, until winter started in earnest around Halloween. November was cold and snowy in most areas.

Migration was generally a week or two later than average, partly due to the mild early fall, and perhaps partly as a hangover from the very tardy spring. All three provinces were favored with an assortment of rarities.

Abbreviations: I.B.S. (*Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB*); L.M.L. (*Last Mountain L., SK*); O.H.M. (*Oak Hammock Marsh, MB*); Pak. L. (*Pakowki L., AB*).

## Loons to Falcons

Two Red-throated Loons visited Calgary Oct. 9–10 (RW, WS, JR *et al.*) and a 3rd arrived Nov. 2 (RB). Seven Pacific Loon sightings in Alberta Oct. 9–Nov. 10 represented a normal total; another was at L.M.L., Oct. 28 (BL), and one lingered at Churchill Nov. 2 (GL). Single Yellow-billed Loons were noted at Saskatchewan Landing P.P., SK Sept. 22 (D&PA) and Cold L., AB Nov. 3 (RKI, SB).

A juv. W. Grebe was still small enough to ride its parent's back at Medicine Hat, AB Oct. 6 (BV). A pair of Clark's Grebes with three juveniles Aug. 1 (WS) made Pak. L. Alberta's 2nd known breeding location.

Southern herons were in short supply, highlights being two Great Egrets at Reed L., SK in August (CP, MP *et al.*); a Snowy Egret, also at Reed L., Aug. 11 (CP, SB), and ≤12 Cattle Egrets at L.M.L. from August–mid-September (*vide AS*).

Two White-faced Ibises stayed at L.M.L. from mid-July–mid-September (AS *et al.*), but Pak. L. remained firmly established as the Region's ibis capital (see below)

**SA** Pakowki L., AB, has often featured in this report, both as a stronghold for White-faced Ibises and as a botulism black spot in some years. Surveys of the inaccessible lake by W. Smith and C. Wershler this fall turned up some impressive concentrations of water and shore birds, as well as some tantalizing rarities (Table 1).

**Table 1. Highlights from surveys of Pakowki Lake, AB**

| Species                  | Number | Date     | Observer(s) |
|--------------------------|--------|----------|-------------|
| Am. White Pelican        | 560    | Sept. 15 | WS          |
| Double-crested Cormorant | 595    | Sept. 10 | WS          |
| White-faced Ibis         | 96     | Sept. 15 | WS          |
| Am. Avocet               | 450    | Sept. 25 | WS          |
| L. Yellowlegs            | 1900   | Aug. 2   | WS, CW      |
| Long-billed Curlew       | 200    | Aug. 2   | WS          |
| Baird's Sandpiper        | 2000   | Aug. 2   | CW          |
| Pectoral Sandpiper       | 600    | Sept. 15 | WS          |
| Sharp-tailed Sandpiper   | 1 juv. | Sept. 15 | WS          |
| Curlew Sandpiper         | 4 ad.  | Sept. 15 | WS          |
| Dowitcher (ssp.)         | 9000   | Oct. 4   | WS          |
| Wilson's Phalarope       | 3000   | Aug. 2   | CW          |
| Red Phalarope            | 2      | Sept. 15 | WS          |

Snow Geese were very late arriving at O.H.M., with a peak flight of 250,000 birds Oct. 12 (GH, CC *et al.*). Brant were observed regularly at Churchill Oct. 6–23 (BC, DH), with peak counts of 29 Oct. 6 and 21 Oct. 18. Less expected were two Brant at Frank L., AB Oct. 26 (JB).

Botulism struck waterfowl concentrations in all 3 provinces; the 116,000 bodies (72% ducks) salvaged at Whitewater L., MB, represented the largest recorded outbreak on the Canadian Prairies; it is estimated that only one-third to one-half of the dead birds are retrieved in such situations. Also severely hit were Old Wives L., SK (>40,000) and Pak. L. (>10,000).

High counts of Wood Ducks included 202 in Winnipeg Oct. 4 (GG) and 22 at