

# middle atlantic coast region



## MARSHALL J. ILIFF

**A**fter one of the coldest springs on record, temperatures in June warmed up to only slightly below average, with continued warming in July producing average temperatures and a number of days above 90° F. A prolonged lack of rain from mid-June through mid-July produced moderate to severe drought conditions over much of the Region, with Maryland's Eastern Shore particularly hard hit. Half of the corn crop was lost on the Eastern Shore, and nearly two-thirds of the soybean crop. We did see some violent storms, including a Nor'easter in early June that caused some coastal flooding, and the influence of the remnants of Hurricane *Danny*, which passed far offshore July 24.

A number of interesting breeding records were reported, including significant range extensions for Double-crested Cormorant and probably Willow Flycatcher, and new breeding locales for Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Little Blue Heron, American Coot, and Pied-billed Grebe. Brown Pelicans remain on the increase, the Woodbridge Mississippi Kite outpost continues to be manned, and terns are generally doing well, with record numbers of Least

Terns and Maryland's third-ever nesting of Sandwich Tern. The Nor'easter that hit the coastline June 2–8 had a number of interesting effects on the birdlife. Several species of seabirds were pushed close to shore and were seen by observers at coastal lookouts. A small landbird fallout occurred at Chincoteague, which included 10 species of migrant flycatchers and warblers, mostly at a small wooded patch on Tom's Hook (a long peninsula at the southernmost tip of Assateague Island). The strong east winds also produced extremely high tides, and Mathews County observers noted its effects on low marsh nesters and beach nesters, while surveyors of tern and gull colonies noted that nesting was running late. Maryland's Royal Tern colony, the species' most northerly major outpost, had record numbers, almost certainly due to the nesting failure of larger colonies to the south because of this flooding. During a period of July easterlies, some dead Greater Shearwaters washed up on shore, calling to mind more massive die-offs of the past. Unfortunately, little evidence of the die-off was reported, and we cannot even guess how this year's event may have compared to those of the past.

This summer was marked by tragedy, as we lost Claudia Wilds to a long battle with cancer on June 8, 1997. One of the supreme field ornithologists in the Region, she founded the Region's "Voice of the Naturalist" (the local Rare Bird Alert) in 1973, serving as its "voice" through 1990, and wrote the Region's only comprehensive bird finding guide, *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area* (1983, rev. 1992). She was active in the Maryland Ornithological Society, the Virginia Society for Ornithology, and the Audubon Naturalist Society, but her influence extended well beyond Regional boundaries. Among her many accomplishments were her devotion to the American Birding Association through her long service as a board member and editorial consultant with *Birding* magazine. Wilds will also be remembered for her work on several field guides, including *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding* and the *National Geographic Society Field Guide*, and the authoring of numerous identification articles (including definitive articles on tern, dowitcher, and yellowlegs identification). A superb teacher and author, and a truly dynamic individual, she will be very much missed by her friends and students alike. This column is devoted to her memory. Refer to Paul Lehman's excellent *A Tribute to Claudia Wilds* (*Birding* XXIX (5): 358–360, October 1997) for a more eloquent and inclusive celebration of her life and accomplishments.

On a happier note, I am pleased to report the publication of the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia* (Robbins and Blom 1996). It is available from the Maryland Ornithological Society, and is a must for anyone who birds the Region.

**Abbreviations:** Assat. (*Assateague I. National Seashore*); Bay (*Chesapeake Bay*); Black. (*Blackwater N.W.R., MD*); C.B.B.T. (*Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel*); Chinc. (*Chincoteague N.W.R., VA*); Conowingo (*Conowingo Dam, MD*); Craney (*Craney I. Disposal Area, Portsmouth, VA*); D.C. (*District of Columbia*); D.N.R. (*Department of Natural Resources*); Hart (*Hart-Miller I.,*

MD); p.a. (pending acceptance by state records committee); P.R.N.A.S. (Patuxent R. Naval Air Station); P.L.S.P. (Pt. Lookout State Park).

All locations in the report can be assumed to be in Maryland, except that each Virginia location is annotated the *first time* it is mentioned in the text.

## LOONS TO RAILS

Six reports of Com. Loons were average, but a count of six at Rigby's Folly, *Talbot*, July 26 (HTA) was quite high for mid-summer. Pied-billed Grebes are regular breeders at only a couple of locations in Maryland, so two adults accompanied by three juveniles at Easton Sewage Plant July 4 (ph. MJJ) constituted an unusual record and a first *Talbot* nesting. They did not nest this year at E. A. Vaughn W.M.A., though Dyke saw two adults there June 3 and July 19.

Fishing trips out of Ocean City produced the only pelagic reports this season. A June 8 trip produced one Cory's and four Manx shearwaters, along with Sooty and Greater shearwaters and Wilson's Storm-Petrels (BP), while a July 10 trip (EB) recorded four Cory's, seven Greater, and one Audubon's shearwaters, along with 50 Wilson's Storm-Petrels. Sea watchers had success finding tubenoses during periods of strong onshore winds June 2-8 and July 1-4. Numbers of Wilson's Storm-Petrels were seen in the former period from Assat., *Worcester*, MD (SHD); *Chinc.*, *Accomack*, VA (PCh); and the C.B.B.T. (BT), where a June 4 count of 138 matched record-high counts from Hurricane *Bertha* last year. In addition, two Greater Shearwaters were seen from Assat. July 1 (BH), and three Cory's, three Greater, and one Sooty shear-

**SA** Periodically, dead and dying Greater Shearwaters wash ashore in the Region, usually emaciated after apparently starving to death. One of the more severe such kills occurred in mid-June 1969 (*Maryland Birdlife* 25(4):111), when 18 were found on Assateague June 19 and many more were found at Chincoteague and on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. In late summer 1975, another event affected the species throughout the mid-Atlantic states, with 13 washing up at Chincoteague (*Maryland Birdlife* 31(3):116). This year, six dead birds were found at Assateague in July (*vide* DBr) and four washed up at Chincoteague July 1-4 (PCh), but many more birds may not have been reported.



**On the Poplar Islands, Talbot County, where Maryland's first colony of Double-crested Cormorants was established in 1990, nesting continued through the 1997 season, when this photo was taken on July 4. Photograph/Marshall J. Iliff**

waters were seen from Chinc. in the period July 1–4 (PCh).

Wilson's Storm-Petrels are now to be expected in the Bay as far north as *Saint Mary's* and *Somerset*. This year, small numbers were seen by Cribb between Pt. Lookout, *Saint Mary's*, and Smith I., *Somerset*, on 4 dates in late July. A count of 24 June 5 (MS) off *Saint Mary's* represented a record high for the Maryland portion of the Bay. While data are scant and the apparent increase may be due to increased awareness, it is not unreasonable to suggest the species is increasing in the Bay, especially given the booms in such species as N. Gannet, Brown Pelican, and Double-crested Cormorant.

Very high numbers of N. Gannets remained and were pushed near shore with other seabirds: 18 were seen from Assat. June 4 and 12 June 8 (SHD), while eight were seen from Chinc. during the early July easterlies (PCh). There is more positive news regarding Brown Pelicans in the Bay. Very high counts were 73 in the Northern Winter Harbor area, *Mathews*, June 8 (D&JM) and 89 near Bloodsworth I. and Spring I., *Dorchester*, July 5 (HTA, PRS). Most, if not all, of these reports are a result of the 7-year-old colony on Shank's I., *Accomack*, VA, where 70 young were banded July 16 (JSW, DBr). Double-crested Cormorants, which first bred in Maryland on the Poplar Is., *Talbot*, in 1990, continue to breed there in good numbers. Over 300 nestlings were there July 5, with about 7 tree nests and several hundred ground nests (ph. MJI, ph. JLS). Another colony was active at Shank's I. July 16 (JSW, DBr). More exciting, a pair was discovered nest building June 13 (PP) on an island in the Potomac R., *Montgomery*, just opposite Turkey Run Park, *Fairfax*, VA. Observers are urged to

watch any summer concentration areas, especially on islands with dead trees, for signs of nesting. An Anhinga near Little Texas, *Southampton*, VA, was unusual July 5 (MI) as they are regular only at Stumpy L., more than 50 mi to the northeast. American Bitterns breed very locally in very low densities in Maryland, so one at King's Cr. Preserve, *Talbot*, July 26 (JR) was unusual, especially if it bred there.

A Tundra Swan at Tar Bay, *Dorchester*, June 12 (HTA, JWT) was the only one of the season. A female Hooded Merganser had six young at P.W.R.C., *Prince George's*, June 24 (ph. MJI). Well above average, 12 species of lingering diving ducks were recorded (including multiples of Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, both scaup, Oldsquaw, Black and Surf scoters, Red-breasted Merganser, and Ruddy Duck). Single Bufflehead at Georgetown Res. June 12–July 13 (TU, DB) were unusual, but paled in comparison to C.B.B.T. sea ducks. An imm. male Com. Eider was at the C.B.B.T. Island #4 and an ad. male Harlequin Duck was there June 8 (BT), with a female there July 18 (ph. LL). There are only a couple of previous summer records for these 2 species in the Region.

For the 3rd consecutive year, a pair of ad. Mississippi Kites returned to Woodbridge, *Prince William*, VA, the northernmost nesting location on the East Coast, and successfully fledged a juvenile for the 2nd consecutive year (*vide* VK). This remains Virginia's only confirmed nest site. Another two adults were seen June 11 (NB) over the Meherrin R., *Greensville/Southampton*, VA. Bald Eagles had another record year in Maryland, as 219 nests produced 282 young, with *Dorchester* leading at 53 nests and 93 young (*vide* Maryland D.N.R.).

Among the few eagle nests away from tidal areas were singles at Triadelphia Res., *Howard*; the Potomac R., *Montgomery*; Loch Raven Res., *Baltimore*; and three along the Susquehanna R., *Harford*.

Just two Black Rails were found at Elliot I., *Dorchester*, July 27 (LMD, HLW), with one remaining the next night (HLW, LMD, m.ob.). The only other was at King's Cr., *Talbot*, July 26 (JR), vocalizing vehemently at 10 a.m. Wierenga has suggested that Barn Owls may be preying upon the diminutive rails. Recent nest box programs have provided Barn Owl nesting habitat in the center of large marshes like those at Elliot, where there were numerous Black Rails (and no Barn Owl nest sites) just 10 years ago. A Purple Gallinule at Chinc. June 6 (PCh) was the first in the Region in a number of years.

Easton Waste Water Treatment Plant is producing swarms of very visible and vocal Com. Moorhens: at least 20 were there July 4 (MJI) and 18 July 27 (NS). More remarkable, it became Maryland's 4th breeding locale for Am. Coot, when an adult and two young were observed July 4 (ph.MJI). Maryland's first nesting was discovered at Deal, *Somerset*, in 1970, and they have since been confirmed at Fairmont W.M.A., *Somerset*, and in *Montgomery*. Another individual lingered at Centennial L., *Howard*, June 1 (JE, TDK).

#### SHOREBIRDS TO TERNS

Although they laid eggs in late spring, and showed signs of courtship all season, Am. Oystercatchers apparently did not nest successfully in *Mathews* (JBB). Extremely high tides June 4–8 almost certainly destroyed the nests, as well as those of other beach nesting species (gulls and terns) and low marsh nesting species (Clapper Rails and Willets). Black-necked Stilts were reported from Craney July 24 (GS) and Fishing Bay W.M.A., *Dorchester*, where two were seen July 28 (LMD, HLW). American Avocets were reported at Craney as well, with eight July 8 (LW). Maryland had 16 adults in alternate plumage at Hart, *Baltimore*, June 21–July 5 (EJS), and 11 there July 12 (EJS). Upland Sandpipers appear to have nested again at Remington, *Fauquier*, VA, where eight were seen June 8 (JBB). Another *Mathews* Red Knot record came June 4 when seven were seen at Bethel Beach Preserve (D&JM). A very out-of-season Dunlin was at P.R.N.A.S., *Saint Mary's*, July 17 (KR). Such birds should be checked carefully, as some at this season have proven to be of the smaller, duller, shorter-



**Remarkable in summer so far south was this female-plumaged Harlequin Duck at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Virginia, on July 18, 1997. Photograph/Larry Lynch**

billed Greenland races. A Ruff at Papermill Mudflats at Loch Raven Res., *Baltimore*, July 26–29 (p.a. TM, SWS) provided the 2nd record there and the 7th for Maryland's Piedmont. Of the Wilson's Phalaropes, two at Chinc. June 13 (PCh) may have been headed N, while singles at the Wildfowl Trust, *Queen Anne's* (JSe), and Craney July 24 (GS) were certainly returning south. After a remarkable lack of shorebirds the week prior (just 2 species), Hart was host to 9 species June 14 (EJS), including one Black-bellied and six Semipalmated plovers, a Ruddy Turnstone, three White-rumped and 14 Semipalmated sandpipers, five Dunlin, and two Short-billed Dowitchers. It is likely that the same factors affecting some of our migrant landbirds delayed the shorebirds as well. Six Short-billed Dowitchers at Bethel Beach Preserve as late as June 23 (D&JM) were probably also going north.

The onshore winds June 8 produced the only jaeger report, an ad. light-morph Parasitic at the C.B.B.T. (BT). A few Laughing Gulls nested in *Dorchester*, with 17 nests at a small island off Barren I. June 12 (HTA, JWT) and 12 pairs at Spring I. July 5 (HTA, PRS). The larger gulls continue to expand their breeding range in the Bay. This year *Queen Anne's* had its first Herring Gull nesting when 3 pairs on Little Bodkin I. (JSW) produced at least five flightless young by July 31 (MJI, JLS). Suspected of nesting by Weske, two not-quite-fledged Great Black-backed Gulls provided *Queen Anne's* first nesting of this species there July 31 (ph. MJI, JLS). Rusted barges off the Poplar I. chain, *Talbot*, provided suitable

nesting habitat for Herring Gulls July 5, the first known to have nested in *Talbot* since 1955–1958, when a colony was present on Sharp's I. Up to 20 young and one nest with eggs were seen there July 5 (ph. MJI, JLS), but there was no sign of nesting by Great Black-backed Gulls. The summer gull flock at Hart built to 685 Great Black-backed and 2078 Herring gulls July 21 (EJS) and 2115 Ring-billed Gulls there July 14, with a seasonal high of 13 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (EJS). These high counts of Lesser Black-backed Gulls are expected in summer (the high is 19) and were composed exclusively of immatures (six first-, five 2nd-, and two 3rd-summer July 14). More noteworthy was Maryland's 2nd-summer season report of Iceland Gull, a first-summer bird there June 8 (EJS).

Gull-billed Terns were at expected coastal locales, with the exception of two adults which flew over Poplar I., July 4 (†MJI) for the 3rd *Talbot* record. Consistent weekly counts of about 100 Caspian Terns at Hart, and a July 26 peak of 130 (augmented by migrants) were surprising (EJS). The species is not known to nest in the state, though if such large summering flocks continue it may be the next addition to our breeding avifauna. Extremely high tides associated with the Nor'easter that affected our coastline June 2–8 produced record numbers of nesting terns at Maryland's 7-year-old Royal Tern colony on Skimmer I. at Ocean City. The previous best year there was 1994, when similar conditions early in the season produced 442 Royal Terns and two Sandwich Tern pairs, the first since Maryland's first nest

was discovered in 1974. This year, 673 Royal Tern nests were counted, along with 2 Sandwich Tern nests. Unfortunately, the Sandwich Terns did not fledge any young, though the 2 nests contained one egg and one chick July 8 (DBr). The Fisherman's I., *Accomack*, VA, colony also did well, with 1516 Royal Tern young banded there July 14 (JSW). An equal number of nests with eggs there that day was evidence of late re-nesting due to the washout (JSW). Five Sandwich Tern young were also banded there July 14 (JSW).

Encouraging were the 150 pairs of Com. Terns that nested on Little Bodkin I. (JSW), though their continued success there may be in doubt with the newly established gull presence on the island. Reports of Com. Terns were enigmatic and probably reflected success of local colonies: Observers in s. Maryland and Virginia reported lower-than-average numbers, while birds feeding off Bay Ridge, *Anne Arundel*, and some other n. Bay locales were the highest in 5 years (MJI). Up to ten Least Terns were also seen in the area, where they are usually absent (MJI). This is almost certainly a reflection of their success nesting on rooftops in the Kent Narrows area, *Queen Anne's*. A new colony at Bethel Beach Preserve, which had 5 nests with eggs July 21 (JBB), was also encouraging. Interestingly, there were 2 inland Least Tern reports, extremely unusual: One was at Schoolhouse Pond, *Prince George's*, June 3 (JLS), and another visited a pond at P.W.R.C. North Tract, *Anne Arundel*, June 29 (GMJ). Forster's Tern numbers seemed generally low. Top *Sterna* honors go to the ad. Roseate sighted from Assat. June



**Rusted barges off the Poplar Island chain furnished a nesting site for Herring Gulls, for the first known nesting in Talbot County, Maryland, in almost forty years. This downy chick and adult were documented on July 5, 1997. Photograph/Marshall J. Iliff**

5 during the strong easterlies (p.a. SHD). A few Black Skimmers dispersed from Eastern Shore colonies to the Western Shore, with birds sighted in *Mathews*, *Saint Mary's*, and *Calvert* (v.o.).

### CUCKOOS TO SHRIKES

Cuckoo reports were very low, with only two Black-billed and extremely few Yellow-billed reported. Yellow-billed Cuckoos were quite common in *Dorchester* (HTA), however, which may contain one of the highest densities of the species in Maryland. A Red-headed Woodpecker pair almost certainly nested near Stanton, *Howard* (fide JS).

Among a late migrant push along the coast were some unusual flycatchers. An Olive-sided Flycatcher was at Chinc. June 3 (SHD) & 4 (PCh), a Yellow-bellied there June 6–8 (PCh), and a Willow June 6 (PCh). At the other end of migration, a very early Yellow-bellied Flycatcher was discovered singing in Pemberton Park, *Wicomico*, July 31 (SHD). A very late Olive-sided Flycatcher was at L. Elkhorn, *Howard*, June 13 (DE). Willow Flycatcher may be expanding in the Region. There are about 4 sites in Maryland's Coastal Plain where the species summers regularly, and breeding is suspected. This year, birds were found at 4 new sites. Singles were found on lone occasions at P.W.R.C. North Tract, *Anne Arundel*, locales June 12 (FF, JFa) & 19 (FF); one (possibly two) were at Greenbury Pt., near Annapolis, *Anne Arundel*, June 17–July 5 (SR, HLW); one was near Cheltenham, *Prince George's*, June 22 (DBY); and, the most unusual, one singing near Vienna, *Wicomico*, July 1 (SHD). Only the Greenbury Pt. bird was refound on later dates, but the other reports may have just as easily been on territory and, with the exception of one of the P.W.R.C. birds, no effort was made to follow up these reports. The P.W.R.C. and Cheltenham reports could pertain to very late migrants, but in light of the summering birds at other new locales, they were late enough to raise the possibility of nesting.

Not unheard of in summer on Maryland's Eastern Shore, but certainly unusual, was a Red-breasted Nuthatch heard near Barclay, *Queen Anne's*, July 1 (MJI). The Brown-headed Nuthatch picture continues to look grim in Maryland and Virginia, and as yet there appear to be no suitable explanations for their decline. A singing Winter Wren in the Catoctin Mts., *Frederick*, was most surprising July 5 (DC). The habitat was good, with hemlocks and large boul-

ders that they prefer, but while the bird was followed around a bit, there was no evidence of a nest or mate. There are no nest records for the Region. A partial albino Am. Robin was at a *Prince George's* office complex June 21 (BR); such plumages are not as unusual in this species as in most others. No specific details were received on the Loggerhead Shrike pair reportedly present at Bluemont, *Loudoun*, VA, over the summer (VK).

### WARBLERS TO FINCHES

An early June warbler fallout at Chinc. was testament to the lateness of this spring's migration. While there were indications that the spring flight was delayed (i.e. fewer birds than are typical in mid-May), a surprisingly small flight materialized in late May. The period of strong easterly winds in early June appeared to have affected a number of late migrants which may have been migrating offshore, creating a small fallout at Chinc. The effect could have been more widespread, but observer coverage in coastal locales is spotty at best, and at inland sites few people are out birding their favorite migrant traps in early June. In addition to several flycatchers mentioned earlier, the Chinc. landbird flight June 6 contained single Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Bay-breasted, and Canada warblers (PCh). June 8 produced 10 each Magnolia and Blackpoll, a great count of four Mourning, and single Canada and Blackburnian warblers (PCh). Probably our latest migrant warbler is the Blackpoll, but one June 21 in *Howard* (JS) was a bit late even for that species (though presumed migrants have occurred into July).

Blue-winged Warbler is a rare breeder on Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore, but one was heard singing near Furnacetown, *Worcester*, June 21 (SHD). No longer sought by hordes of birders, but still regularly reported in the area, Swainson's Warbler is hanging on in Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore. Dyke heard one along the Pocomoke R., *Worcester*, July 7. Just a week behind the state arrival date, a N. Waterthrush banded at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, *Anne Arundel*, was shockingly early nonetheless July 29 (DBY).

This year was not particularly good for Dickcissels; singing birds were found at single locations in *Frederick*, *Dorchester*, *Somerset* (the first summering and first suggestion of nesting there), *Saint Mary's*, and *Loudoun*, VA, and at Curles Neck Farm, VA (v.o.). The Curles Neck Farm group was the largest, and some commented that at

least 10 birds there was the largest group ever; Dickcissels have a pretty long history at this locale. Five Vesper Sparrows found singing in fields in n. *Queen Anne's* were not particularly surprising, but were among the first reports there since the Atlas ended in 1987.

A candidate for the imminent-splitting fever is the coastal race of Swamp Sparrow (*M. g. nigrescens*). Quite common in several brackish marshes in the Region, surprisingly little is known about the extent of its range in the Bay area—and nothing is known about where it winters. Reports referable to this race included birds through the summer at Hart (EJS), a singing bird July 5 at the Poplar I. chain (JLS), and birds at Dyke Marsh, *Fairfax*, VA, through June (v.o.), which included a pair and a juvenile July 1 (LC). A White-throated Sparrow was at an Allview, *Howard*, feeder June 23 (ES). Despite widespread indications that House Finch numbers have crashed in the Region due to the conjunctivitis outbreak, Armistead reports that it “continues its modest increases in S. Dorchester.” The species never really colonized that area as thoroughly as elsewhere, and perhaps the small size of the population there has reduced contact with afflicted birds, allowing the population there to grow slowly.

### ADDENDA

Hurricane *Fran's* effects are still being realized: Angle reports that the Museum of National History just received a specimen representing Maryland's first confirmed **Black-capped Petrel**. It was picked up alive Sept. 11, 1996, at a shopping mall in Saint Michael's, *Talbot*. This was only 5 days after the passage of *Fran*. Maryland has 2 previous reports: One June 14, 1980, was not accepted by the Maryland Records Committee, and the other, July 18, 1979, was undocumented. Additionally, there were 3 Maryland reports of *Pterodroma* or possible *Pterodroma* during Hurricane *Fran* last year.

A late report from the spring season is a **Yellow-legged Gull**, seen well for several minutes and described in detail, found Mar 2 at C.B.B.T. Island #4 (p.a. †JB, AJ). If accepted, this will provide a first Virginia record. Previous Maryland reports include a well-photographed bird that visited D.C. and/or adjacent Maryland during the winters of 1990, 1990–1991, 1991–1992, and December 1994; another report (not accepted by the Maryland Records Committee) at S.P.S.P. Sept. 13, 1990; and an as yet unreviewed report from Alpha Ridge Landfill, *Howard*, Feb. 11, 1995 (†EJS).



**Observers (area compilers in boldface):** Phil Angle, Henry T. Armistead, Jim Bangma, John B. Bazuin Jr., Ed Boyd, David Bridge, Dave Brinker (DBr), Ned Brinkley, Danny Bystrak (DBy), Larry Cartwright, Paul Champlain (PCh), **Patty Craig** (*Saint Mary's*, P.O. Box 84, Lexington Park, MD 20653), Marty Cribb, Dave Czaplak, Lynn M. Davidson, Samuel H. Dyke, Darius Ecker, **Ethel Engle** (*Caroline*, MD, 20789 Dover Bridge Rd., Preston, MD 21655), Fred Fallon, Jane Fallon (JFa), Jane Farrell, **Sam Frieberg** (*Montgomery*, 8733 Susanna Lane, Chevy Chase, MD 20815-4713), **Gary Griffith** (*Cecil*, 55 Sarah Drive, Elkton, MD 21921), Bruce Hill, Jane Hill (Voice of the Naturalist), Mike Iwanik, **George M. Jett** (*Charles*, 9505 Bland Street, Waldorf MD 20603), Ann Johnson, Val Kitchens, T. Dennis Koskren, Larry Lynch, Don & Joyce McKelvey, Taylor McLean, Brian Patteson, Paul Pisano, **Elizabeth Pitney** (*Wicomico*, 7218 Walston Switch Rd., Parsonsburg, MD 21849), Kyle Rambo, Jan Reese, Sue Ricciardi, Beth Ritter, Gene Sankey, Norm Saunders, Eugene J. Scarpulla, Mike Schell, Joe Sebastiani (JSe), Steve W. Simon, Don Simonson, **Jo Solem** (*Howard* 10617 Graeoch Rd., Columbia, MD 20723), Paul R. Spitzer, Eva Sunnel, Brian Taber, John W. Taylor, Ted Unseth, John S. Weske, Hal L. Wierenga, Les Willis (*Virginia Birdline*).

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# southern atlantic coast region



## RICKY DAVIS

The summer of 1997 started out with abnormally cool temperatures in June, but July had a higher-than-normal number of 90°F or higher days. This meant that breeding was late in getting started, and ran a little later than normal. Also in early June, ample rainfall in many areas led to low breeding success among many groups of birds, especially some coastal waterbirds. The major meteorological event of the season was Tropical Storm/Hurricane *Danny*, which came up from the Gulf of Mexico July 19–24 and dropped record amounts of rain on several portions of the Region. There did not seem to be any real significant effects on birds, however.

**Abbreviations:** C. Hatt. (*Cape Hatteras, NC*); E.L.H. (*E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co., GA*); H.B.S.P. (*Huntington Beach S.P., SC*); K. Mt. (*Kennesaw Mt. National Battlefield Park, GA*); S.S.S. (*Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper Co., SC*); W.T.P. (*Wastewater Treatment Plant*).

## GREBS TO WOOD STORK

Pied-billed Grebes were confirmed as nesters at the Macon, GA, Brickyards when two were found June 8, and 2 groups of young were seen later into July (TI, v.o.). Eared Grebes returned to the usual Goldsboro, NC, W.T.P. site as early as July 16, when an alternate-plumaged individual was found (ED). Black-capped Petrel numbers were up during summer pelagic trips off North Carolina's Outer Banks. The best count was of 593 out of Hatteras July 27 (BP et al.), a record Regional one-day count! The rarer *Pterodroma* petrels were recorded once each out of Oregon Inlet: a **Fea's Petrel** July 28 and two dark-morph **Herald (Trinidad) Petrels** July 21 (BP et al.). Totally unexpected was the discovery of a Greater Shearwater inland at Sandersville, *Washington, GA*, July 14–15. The bird could not fly and later died, with the specimen going to the University of Georgia. This individual provided the 3rd inland record for the state, and, surprisingly, its occurrence was not storm related. Storm-petrel numbers offshore were about average except for **Band-rumped** counts, which were above average. The best total was an impressive 102

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