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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*).

GREBES 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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out of Hatteras, NC, July 27 (BP et al.), possibly a record Regional count.

White-tailed Tropicbird numbers were down somewhat from past summers. This year, two adults out of Hatteras, NC, July 26 were the only ones reported (BP et al.). The rare Masked Booby was seen once; an immature spent an afternoon just off the beach at Figure Eight I., NC, June 21 (DC). Unusual were 2 reports of N. Gannets, with a 2nd-year bird at Caswell Beach, NC, June 22 (MP), and one picked up on the beach at Duck, NC, July 23 (*fide* JF), which later died. Continuing a recent trend, Magnificent Frigatebirds were reported multiple times, and from all 3 states. Singles were at Ft. Caswell, NC, June 14 (BC, WC, FP); C. Hatt., NC, in June (*fide* RD); Myrtle Beach, SC, June 25 (PT, *fide* JP); Litchfield Beach, SC, July 4 (BM); and *Haralson*, GA, July 22 (*fide* TM). Also, two were at Ft. Caswell, NC, in late July (DCu).

Least Bitterns made news in inland Georgia. Two were in *Wilkes* in early June (AW), three-four were at the Macon Brickyards June 8 (TI), two were in n. *Greene* June 28 and July 12 (PS, BD), and three were at Eufaula N.W.R. July 6 (JFI, SR). The inland dispersal of long-legged waders was not as pronounced this year. The most noteworthy reports included a Black-crowned Night-Heron at Eufaula N.W.R., GA, July 6 (JFI, SR); 55 Great Egrets at a sod farm in *Bulloch*, GA, July 9 (RC); two Snowy Egrets at the Silver Bluff Audubon Sanctuary, Jackson, SC, July 27–29 (CE); four imm. White Ibises in *Greene*, GA, July 19 (PB, JS); and an extremely rare inland Roseate Spoonbill at Valdosta, GA, July 4 (BPa, *fide* TM). As usual, Reddish Egrets appeared along the coast, although in lower numbers than in past years. The best counts involved two at Harbor I., SC, June 17 through July (JH) and three at the Altamaha R. Estuary, GA, in July (BW). Several interesting reports of inland Wood Storks in Georgia included 15 in *Greene* July 21 (*fide* TM) and an excellent count of 85 at a sod farm in *Bulloch* July 9 (RC).

WATERFOWL TO RAILS

Every summer season can find some waterfowl lingering as non-breeders. This year was no exception as two Ring-necked Ducks summered at the Goldsboro, NC, W.T.P. (v.o.), one Ring-necked was at Rocky Mount, NC (RD), and a Lesser Scaup was at S.S.S., SC (SC). Also, the pair of Greater Scaup lingering at E.L.H., GA, was last seen June 1 (*fide* TM), an amazing late record date for the species in the Region.

The most amazing reports of the season involved eiders! In Georgia, a pair of **Common Eiders** was located at Sapelo I. July 8 (BW). The female was gone after July 16, but the male remained through the period into the fall season! This is one of the rarest species in Georgia, with only a handful of records, and finding it in that state in summer is truly amazing. Not to be outdone, North Carolina produced a summer record of the even rarer **King Eider** when an imm. male was picked up alive on the beach at Kill Devil Hills July 21 (*fide* J.). This individual, which soon died, provided probably the first summer record of this species for the Region.

Swallow-tailed Kite reports seemed about average with the exception of 2 unusually large groups of feeding birds. In South Carolina, a flock of 29 was seen over a pasture along SC 125 s. of the Savannah R. Site July 22 (*fide* AW), and in Georgia a huge congregation of 52 was found feeding over a hayfield in *Tattnall* July 28 (RC). The latter count is possibly a state and Regional record total. Mississippi Kites also seem to be doing well, with numerous reports continuing the trend of the past several years of steady populations in all 3 states. Accipiter reports are always noteworthy during the summer. This year there were at least two Sharp-shinned Hawk reports each from North and South Carolina, with confirmed nesting at James I., SC, where a female was with fledglings July 11 (WP). Cooper's Hawks also were confirmed as nesters when one was on a nest in Edenton, NC, in June (PTr), and a pair fledged two young in Winston-Salem, NC, July 15 (RS). American Kestrels nest locally in our Region. This year there were the usual scattered sightings, with the best report being of a pair that nested near Statesboro, GA (RC), considerably outside the normal range in that state.

Several sites in Georgia are currently providing some of the best inland rail reports. The marsh in n. *Greene* hosted an impressive seven Black Rails (5 different territories) and two King Rails June 28, and five Virginia Rails July 12 (PS, BD). The marsh at K. Mt. hosted five Virginia Rails June 22 (GB), and the Macon Brickyards also had several Virginias (PJ).

PLOVERS TO TERNS

Inland shorebirding was limited due to high water levels throughout most of the Region. Nevertheless, some areas did produce interesting occurrences. A Black-bellied Plover at E.L.H., GA, June 9 (JS) was most likely a very late spring migrant. Some

peak counts at S.S.S., SC, included 146 Am Avocets and an impressive 539 Black-necked Stilts July 12 (SC). When conditions are right, this location is undoubtedly one of the premier shorebird spots in the Region. Other noteworthy reports included one Semipalmated Sandpiper late at E.L.H., GA, June 9 (JS); six W. Sandpipers at the Silver Bluff Audubon Sanctuary, Jackson, SC, July 17 (CE); 26 White-rumped Sandpipers still present at S.S.S., SC, June 13 (SC); one Stilt Sandpiper at E.L.H., GA, July 19 (*fide* TM); and a Long-billed Dowitcher seen and heard at the Silver Bluff Sanctuary, Jackson, SC, July 17 (CE). A Ruff was located inland at the Goldsboro, NC, W.T.P. July 16–18 (ED, v.o.). The bird, a white-morph male with some breeding plumes still present, provided only about the 3rd inland record for the state. Wilson's Phalaropes were found only at S.S.S., SC, with three June 13 and six June 23 (SC) Very rare inland, a Red-necked Phalarope was present at a small borrow pit in e. *Edgecombe*, NC, July 20 (RD), providing a first county record.

An ad. Franklin's Gull was seen flying N along the beach at Figure Eight I., NC, July 19 (DC). This report is quite unusual for the time of year; one wonders why an adult would be on our coast during the breeding season? Also inexplicable were the three Caspian Terns along the Little Tallapoosa R., *Carroll*, GA, June 21 (GB), and the two Black Terns at the S.S.S., SC, June 13 (SC)

DOVES TO VIREOS

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their expansion, with four in Atlanta, GA, June 4 (JC) providing the farthest inland report. This species continues at several sites in South Carolina, but the spread of the species is at a slower pace than in Georgia. The Com. Ground-Dove provided another inland sighting when two were found on a *Dooly*, GA, BBS route June 1 (D&PG). One at Ft. Caswell, NC, June 14 (BC) was noteworthy, since the species has just about disappeared from that state.

The story of the Black-billed Cuckoo invasion in *Dare*, NC, during the spring migration continued this summer. From mid-May until early July, Fussell had calling birds at 26 different sites! Even in July several responded to tapes, and there were at least 8 different sites that seemed to be occupied all summer. The presence of this species in the Region during summer is always noteworthy and the magnitude of this year's invasion is quite impressive. Fussell did note that there was an outbreak "of some insect

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species (caterpillar?), which was having an obvious impact on several species of broadleaf trees and shrubs in the area."

Interesting *Empidonax* reports included three Willows at the usual n. *Greene*, GA, marsh June 15 (JS, JFI); one Willow at a new site in Dawson Forest, GA, June 8 (*fide* TM); one Willow quite late at Umpstead S.P., *Wake*, NC, June 5 (SCa); and a "Traill's" type was banded at Charleston, SC, on the amazingly early date of July 16 (WP). The E. Phoebe continues to push farther south in Georgia as a nester. One was found along a BBS route near Vienna, *Dooly*, June 1 (D&PG). The Gray Kingbirds at Ft. Caswell, NC, were seen until at least June 22 (MP), but no obvious successful nesting occurred.

The Tree Swallow is a very local nester in our Region, thus any breeding report is of significance. This summer nesting occurred at L. Russell, SC (D&SCo), and E.L.H., GA (CL); and probable nesting occurred at Santee N.W.R., SC (LG, DD), and in n. *Greene*, GA (PS). Cedar Waxwings were found quite frequently as lingerers and uncommon nesters in the e. and s. portions of the Region. The best reports included a late flock of 30 at Pendleton, SC, June 1 (SG, CB); six at L. Wildwood, Macon, GA, June 1 (PJ); two-three all summer at Stumpy Pt., *Dare*, NC (JF); and two adults feeding young at Zebulon, NC, July 9 (RD). The disjunct population of Blue-headed Vireo at Piedmont N.W.R., *Jones*, GA, seems to be increasing, with a report of 11-12 there June 8 (J&MA). Another was found to the west in *Heard*, GA, June 17 (JG). And the disjunct group of Warbling Vireos at the Bluff Unit, Santee N.W.R., SC, is still holding on. This year two separate singing birds were located June 15 (LG et al.).

WARBLERS TO SHINY COWBIRD

Some late warblers included a Blue-winged at Athens, GA, June 19 (*fide* TM); a Black-poll in *Union*, SC, June 8 (RC&CE); and a N. Waterthrush at Leland, *Brunswick*, NC, June 28-29 (GM). Some noteworthy breeding season reports included eight Black-and-whites in one area of n. *Greene*, GA, June 28 (PS); one Black-and-white at Piedmont N.W.R., *Jones*, GA, during June (J&MA, AS, MB); 2 pairs of Am. Redstarts at the Waccamaw R. dam at L. Waccamaw, *Columbus*, NC, June 14 (RD); one singing Am. Redstart in *Tattnall*, GA, June 16 (*fide* JS); and a Kentucky Warbler near Valdosta, GA, June 4 (BB). Cerulean Warblers started south during July, as usual, with two at K. Mt., GA, July 26 (GB, BDr).

Scarlet Tanagers pushed S in Georgia, with singles noted in *Meriwether* June 3 and *Wilkes* June 13 (JG), and another at Piedmont N.W.R., *Jones*, June 8 & 27 (J&MA, AS, MB). Is this going to develop into a trend as it did in other places, such as the e. North Carolina piedmont and inner coastal plain? Painted Buntings continue to do well in the Augusta, GA, area, with at least 8 pairs noted (AW). Two pairs in *Burke*, GA, June 24 (AK, AW) provided first county records, and a pair was found in *Bulloch*, GA (RC). This summer's Dickcissel reports included a singing male n. of Chester, SC, June 3 (GBI); one in *Jefferson*, GA, June 8 (JG); three in *Laurens*, SC, June 21 (LG); several near Shelby, NC, until June 26 (JM); and four males at the VOA-B site, *Pitt*, NC, July 2 (J&PW). The breeding Song Sparrows in *Bibb*, GA, reported from the spring, continued to be seen, with fledglings into July (PJ). In the extraordinarily out-of-place department was the ad. Dark-eyed Junco at a feeder in Hemingway, *Williamsburg*, SC, July 7 (DDo, B&CLa). One wonders what happened to this bird, which was present for only one day. And there were several Shiny Cowbirds found this season. Two males were at Harbor I., SC, June 5-July 12 (JH, m.ob.) and two males were at Stumpy Pt., *Dare*, NC, July 9 (JF, JL).

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