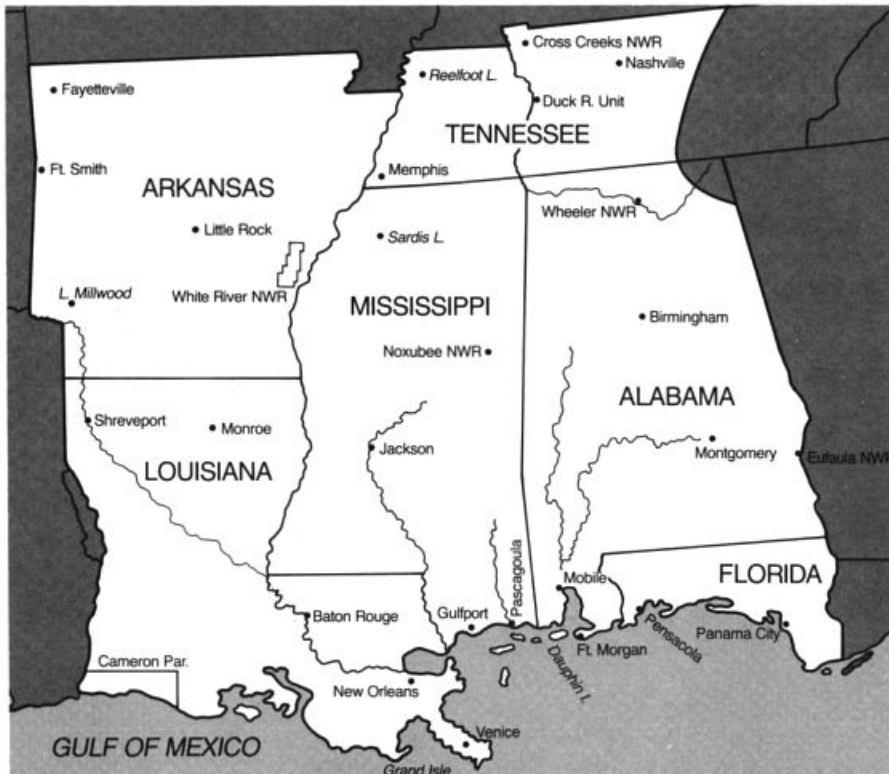


central southern region



ROBERT D. PURRINGTON

Generally speaking, the season was typical meteorologically, with June a bit cooler than usual on the coast and July about normal. The big climatic event of the season was Hurricane *Danny*. *Danny*, only a Category 1 storm, struck a glancing blow to the Louisiana and Mississippi coastlines in mid-July, and while few records were received which showed the influence of *Danny*, it is known that the islands off the Mississippi River delta were seriously eroded by the storm. One can surmise, from the date, that the tern colonies on the Chandeleurs may have been adversely affected. Yet the one account of a trip made after *Danny* did not comment upon damage due to storm tides. The real devastation from *Danny* resulted from its sitting over Mobile Bay for 24 hours and dropping more than 37 inches of rain. Apparently there was significant mortality in the Purple Martin roosts on the Dauphin Island causeway, and some pelagics were affected (see below).

Although only one organized pelagic trip is represented in these records, there are several other pelagic sightings, plus reports from the breeding colonies on Louisiana's Chandeleur Islands. Each produced interesting records, notably the Alabama pelagic trip June 28, which contributed importantly to the growing body of information on pelagic birds of the northern Gulf generated by recent trips out of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and, of course, Texas. I will refrain in these pages from taking sides on the issue of whether certain records should belong to Mississippi and Alabama, or to the state in which the nearest land resides, typically Louisiana (though the issue doesn't actually arise in the case of this season's records; see below). According to American Birding Association rules, the answer is obvious. But rather than face accusations of partiality, I will try to attribute the records to both states when such a question arises, and to assess their contribution to bird distribution in the two states. I have no mandate to pontificate upon the issue, but one might guess where my own thoughts lie.

Abbreviations: B.R.C. (*Bird Record Committee*); L.O.S. (*Louisiana Ornithological Society*), p.a. (*pending acceptance by appropriate bird record committee/s*). Note: My references to the "Starkville area" refer to Shieffer's 7-county area in Upper East-Central Mississippi, consisting of *Clay, Choctaw, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster, and Winston*. "James and Neal, 1986" refers to *Arkansas Birds*, D.A. James and J.C.D. Neal, 1986; "Lowery, 1960" refers to *Louisiana Birds*, 2nd ed., G.H. Lowery, 1960.

BREEDING RECORDS, OR RECORDS SUGGESTIVE OF NESTING

CORMORANTS TO WATERFOWL

Double-crested Cormorants were found nesting in the Morganza Spillway in *Pr. Coupee*, LA, with 12 nests located June 20 (DWG). There was a lingering bird in *Lafourche* June 1 (DM, RDP), as well as two "summering" birds on the Red R. in *Caddo/Bossier* July 29–30, and one which spent July on the New Orleans lakefront (DM). A pair of **Tricolored Herons** in a *Dyer* heronry June 15–July 13 (JRW, JBG) fledged one young bird, establishing the first breeding record for Tennessee. Two others wandered to Tallahatchie N.W.R., MS, by July 20 (GK, SK).

A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was flushed from a Wood Duck nesting box July 25 in *Avoyelles*, LA, revealing 14 eggs which it presumably was incubating (AMA). Two were seen earlier—June 28—at Sabine N.W.R., LA (RS, JnT, JfT).

Canada Geese continue to nest in the Sardis Dam area of *Panola*, MS, as evidenced by at least 4 pairs with three–four downy young each (WMD). Mallards nested in *Natchitoches*, LA, where three adults and eight young were found July 16 (RS); other breeding season records from Louisiana included two June 1–30 on the Red R. at Elm Grove (PD) and another at Ft. Polk June 13 (MaP, GP). Ruddy Ducks were found in July in 4 separate s.c. Arkansas counties, notably in *Lonoke* July 4, near where a nest was reported by a hunter June 1; there were records of eight other individuals (LY, DnH, DIH, KN, LN).

DIURNAL RAPTORS

Two reports of nesting Ospreys were

received: June 7 in *Lincoln*, AR (DS, PS; one fledgling), and July 14 in *St. Martin*, LA, in the Atchafalaya Basin (BV, HB). Three exhibiting courtship behavior, including carrying nest material in *Orleans* July 18 (JC, TC), certainly suggested local nesting. Jennifer Coulson's studies of nesting Swallow-tailed Kites in s.e. Louisiana are far too extensive and important to be summarized in a few words, involving, as they do, rehabilitation, banding, radio tagging, and even re-introduction. She did, however, locate 16 nests in *Washington*, *St. Tammany*, and *Tangipahoa*, and at least 95 kites during June and July in generally the same area. Four other reports from *St. Mary*, *Rapides*, and *St. Martin* totaled nine individuals. Two young Bald Eagles each were fledged from nests in *Little River* (CM) and *Monroe*, AR (TS, RS), in mid-June, and four young were fledged in the first nesting of N. Harrier for Mississippi, based on observations June 25–30 (FB). There were 18 reports of Cooper's Hawks: three from Arkansas, six from Louisiana, two from Alabama, three from Mississippi, and one from w. Tennessee, all in July. These records, along with recent evidence from other parts of the Region, make it clear that there has been a significant recovery of breeding populations, which had dropped to very low levels (Lowery, 1960; James and Neal, 1986). An ad. Swainson's Hawk in Benton, AR, July 4 (MMI) was suggestive of nesting, but no more than that; one in *Calcasieu*, LA, June 5 (BV) was even more problematical.

RAILS TO SHOREBIRDS

Seven reports of King Rails—from n. Mississippi, w. Tennessee, and c. Arkansas—included ample evidence of nesting (JRW, WMD, TS, MS, KN, LN). Wilson reported that Com. Moorhens, after peaking at

about 30 individuals at Reelfoot L. about 4 years ago, have declined to the point that a bird in *Shelby*, TN, July 4 (JRW) may have been the only one in the state this year, though another (?) was reported in *Shelby* June 1–29 (LCC, MaH).

A total of three Snowy Plovers July 30–31 at Destin Pass and Topsail S.P., FL (DM), were of interest. Five Am. Oystercatchers seen on Freemason I., LA (Chandeleur chain), June 17 included two chicks (DLD, DL, JL, RD). Judging by reports from such inland locations as n. Louisiana (RS, GP, PD, HH) and w. Tennessee (JRW), Black-necked Stilts seem to have had good reproductive success.

GULLS TO DOVES

A June 17 trip to Louisiana's Chandeleur Is. (DLD, DL, JL, RD) yielded only one "pure" Kelp Gull, a bird which was paired with a Herring × Kelp hybrid and had produced two chicks. There were also at least seven ad. Herring Gulls, including at least one pair with chicks; this species had not been known to nest in Louisiana prior to the "advent" of the Kelp phenomenon in 1989–1990. All told, Dittmann et al. recorded six Kelp × Herring hybrids and one hybrid backcross, all on Curlew I. Also June 17, a pair of Com. Terns with 2 eggs on nearby Freemason I. represented the 2nd nesting record for Louisiana, and the first since 1970 (DLD et al.). Three in *Panola*, MS, June 8 (WMD) were late northbound migrants. Migrating Least Terns were seen in early June in *Benton*, AR (MMI), in *Noxubee*, MS (TS, MS), and in Hope Hull in Alabama's Inland Coastal Plain (LG). Up to 10 adults at a time at Tallahatchie N.W.R., MS, between June 28 and July 27 (GK, SK, JRW) were in an area where Least Terns nest uncommonly. Two Least Tern nests in *Lefore*, MS (FB, ph.), were the first for the state

away from the coast or the Mississippi R. Eight Sooty Terns were recorded on the Gulf about 90 mi s. of Orange Beach, AL, June 27 (LFG, CD, m.ob.), and 25 were noted July 28 on Curlew I. in Louisiana's Chandeleurs (RSB, GW)—where they have apparently nested since at least the 1930s—only 10 days after Hurricane *Danny* passed over the area.

It is without much enthusiasm that I summarize 11 reports of Eur. Collared-Doves totaling 48 individuals. Three reports came from Louisiana, where the influx into the Region was first noted, but include the first records for northerly *Rapides* July 5 (RB, BB) & 19 (RS, RB, BB). More significant were 5 reports documenting the rapid spread of Eur. Collared-Doves into n. Mississippi (TS, MS, WMD, QBG, JRW), and two from Arkansas, AR (KN, LN; CY, LY), which represented the 8th and 9th locations where they have been seen in that state. White-winged Doves were seen June 28 and July 19 in *Cameron*, LA (RS, RB, JnT, JfT), where they have nested in recent years, and in *Pensacola*, FL, July 27 (PT, BT), the first July record. Although Inca Doves were reported in June and July in *Cameron*, *Jeff Davis*, *St. Landry*, *Evangeline*, and *Beauregard* parishes, only one fledgling was reported. The only report outside Louisiana was from *Lafayette*, AR, June 17 (BS).

FLYCATCHERS TO WAXWINGS

Willow Flycatcher reports consisted of a nesting pair found at Tallahatchie N.W.R. June 1 (JRW, WMD), the 2nd year of breeding at this spot; as many as three (two males, one female) were there between June 28 and July 27 (JRW, GK, SK). A pair was in *Newton*, AR, June 4 (JCN), with at least a singing male persisting until July 1. A W. Kingbird in *Fayette*, TN, June 1–11 (SMcW, MW) was noteworthy and the only one reported from the Region, though whether this suggested nesting is unknown. Gray Kingbirds were more numerous in the *Pensacola* area, breeding in urban and suburban areas rather than in their traditional nesting spots on Santa Rosa I. and at Ft. Pickens (RAD). Duncan speculated that this was due to vegetative loss associated with hurricanes in 1995. A pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, which nest sparingly in Alabama, fledged two young in *Montgomery*, AL, July 29 (LFG).

Three records of Tree Swallows from Arkansas and Mississippi suggested nesting: in *Washington* (MMI) and *Lincoln*, AR (DS, PS), where the species is a rare and local nester, and June 19 and 14 in *Oktibbeha*, MS (TS). Nesting was documented in



One of two Least Tern nests found south of Morgan City in Lefore County, Mississippi, on July 11, 1997. This was the first known nesting location for the state away from the coast or the Mississippi River. Photograph/Fred Broerman

Quitman, MS, June 25 (FB), and there was a second-hand report of nesting in *Bolivar* and *Monroe*, MS (*fide* TS). Finally, a nest in *Union*, LA, observed from April 9–June 5 (TD, MMH) fledged four young by June 4.

Two colonies of Bank Swallows were reported from Arkansas, by the Nichols July 4 in *Arkansas*, where 40–50 were seen, and in *Chicot* July 12, where 25 were counted. Myers' visits to 5 Cliff Swallow colonies in *e. Orleans* and *St. Tammany* between June 15 and July 6 yielded about 430 adults and 379 nests. The proportion of dark-forehead birds ranged from about 70% at the Middle Pearl R. bridge on US 90 to 10% or less at the other colonies. The nesting of a pair of Brown-headed Nuthatches at Pickwick S.P., *Hardin*, TN, was confirmed July 12 (SMcB, BC); the species is rare in w. Tennessee.

It is not entirely clear what the 17 reports of Cedar Waxwings between June 5–July 26 tell us, with six each from Mississippi and Alabama, four from Arkansas, and one from n.w. Florida. But several strongly suggested nesting, e.g., two birds exhibiting courtship behavior at L. Fayetteville, AR, June 7 (MMI); a pair similarly engaged in Yalobusha, MS, June 21 (TJ); three adults and a juvenile at L. Elmdale, AR, July 12 (MMI); and another displaying pair at Fayetteville July 26 (MMI). There were at least 2 nests in Alabama (PDK, BS) and one in Grenada, MS, June 8 (FB, DWe).

VIREOS TO SPARROWS

Two pairs of Warbling Vireos nested at Waterloo, AL, with at least one bird fledged by June 14 (SWM, HHK, JH), and copulation and construction on a 2nd nest beginning around June 24 (BSu); nestlings were being brooded as late as July 18 (BS). The species is a rare nester in Alabama, but regular recently at this site. Complementing the record of territorial Black-whiskered Vireos in Harahan, LA, from May 27 to at least June 12 (PY, m.ob.) was a singing male in the Bonnet Carré Spillway July 7 & 8 (RJS, ToS, JS). Although there are nearly 30 records for s.e. Louisiana, this represents the first hint of nesting away from the coast (and there is still no confirmed breeding for the state). A silent bird on Fourchon Rd, *Lafourche*, LA, June 1 (RDP, DM; ph) may have been a displaced migrant, or part of what might be a nascent breeding range expansion.

A male Blue-winged Warbler seen carrying food in *Van Buren*, AR, June 1 (MW) could have been nesting, or merely a late migrant. Arkansas is at the s.w. edge of the species' breeding range (James and Neal). While

a Yellow Warbler at Tallahatchie N.W.R., MS, June 1 (WMD, JRW) was probably a late migrant, a singing male in *Newton*, AR, June 4 (JCN) was possibly breeding.

Although it is a rare, but regular, nesting species in the 7-county area around Starkville, MS, sightings of three Scarlet Tanagers in *Choctaw* July 7 & 9 (TN) were notable as the first July records. More surprising was a Scarlet Tanager (presumably a male) at a feeder in Haynesville, LA, July 26 (EW). In view of their status as rare nesters in n. Mississippi, four ad. male Painted Buntings, plus a pair, in *Tallahatchie* between June 28–July 27 (GK, SK, JW) were of interest, and reflected recent increases in numbers. There were also two singing males in *Hinds*, MS, June 28 & 30 (TJ). A singing Rufous-crowned Sparrow at Mt. Nebo S.P., *Yell*, AR, July 5 (KN, LN) documented the continued presence of a small population there (and perhaps in *Logan* as well?). Breeding Lark Sparrows were reported from *Noxubee* (TS, MS) and *Tate* (WRP, FP) in n. Mississippi, at Red Bank (HHK, SWM) and *Florence* (SWM) in n.w. Alabama, and in *Vernon*, LA (GP, MaT).

ICTERIDS TO FINCHES

Although Great-tailed Grackles have been expanding into n.w. Arkansas, they are still rare in summer, hence the interest in at least two in *Benton* June 10 and July 18 (MMI, RF, BW). Three Baltimore Orioles seen between May 1–Aug. 8 in Kentwood, LA (FS, KF), suggested what would be the first nesting in *Tangipahoa*. House Finches nested at new locations in New Orleans and suburbs, often in hanging baskets, etc., frequently making use of hummingbird feeders. There were other breeding reports from *Calcasieu*, LA (JS, TeS), and *Hot Spring*, AR (HP, MP), and doubtless many others not reported.

RECORDS PRESUMED TO BE OF NON-BREEDING, POST-BREEDING, OR MIGRANT BIRDS

LOONS TO WATERFOWL

Apparently at least two **Pacific Loons** were present in Pensacola Bay from May 31 to July 18 (JF, JAF, DF, LD, RAD), and lingering Com. Loons were noted in *Lowndes*, MS, June 1 (DP, JP, TS); *Plaquemines*, LA, June 5 & 6 (CF); *Lake*, TN, June 8 (JRW); and *Walton*, FL, Aug. 1 (DM). In the aftermath of Hurricane *Danny*, a small shearwater, identified as a **Manx Shearwater** (p.a.), was brought to Wildlife Rescue in Pensa-

cola, FL, July 19 (DS, *fide* RAD; ph.) and subsequently released. The identification by Lucy and Bob Duncan was based on white undertail coverts, amount of white on the underwing, blackish upperparts, etc. The known variability in this complex will require careful scrutiny of the photographs.

A pelagic trip out of Orange Beach, Baldwin, AL, June 28 found four Wilson's Storm-Petrels 69–86 mi s. of Orange Beach (LFG, CD, m.ob.), and also located one **Leach's Storm-Petrel** (4th Alabama record, p.a.) 86 mi s. of Orange Beach (LFG, CD, m.ob.), and seven **Band-rumped Storm-Petrels** (3rd state record, p.a.) 68–94 mi offshore (LFG, CD, m.ob.). The last 2 records (subject to ratification by the Alabama bird records committee), coupled with information gathered on trips in May 1996 and 1997 and 6 trips into Louisiana waters, make it clear that Leach's Storm-Petrel is regular in small numbers off the n. Gulf Coast in early summer, and that Band-rumped may be as common as Wilson's in sufficiently deep water, perhaps more common. The Alabama records came from waters over the continental slope and just beyond, at depths from about 300–1500 meters, and the location seems to have been carefully chosen NOT to be in Louisiana waters! A Leach's Storm-Petrel, brought to Wildlife Rescue in Pensacola June 19 (*fide* RAD), was released that day. Unfortunately, it was forced down by Purple Martins and retrieved by a jet-skier, never to be seen again! This was the first n.w. Florida record. A Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, brought to Wildlife Rescue July 19, after *Danny*, established the 3rd area record. In stark contrast was an unidentified sulid 60 mi inland in Bridge City, LA, June 25 (JB, PY), near the Mississippi R.!

An imm. Masked Booby was seen from shore in Walton, FL, July 27 (DM), and perhaps as many as nine N. Gannets were seen in the vicinity (Santa Rosa I., Destin Pass, Topsail S.P.) July 28–31 (DM), confirming rather regular summering offshore. A Neotropical Cormorant was at Mud L., *Lake*, TN, July 5–7 (JRW et al.), where there have been 3 previous records. More than 240 seen over *St. Tammany* and *Orleans*, LA, July 18 (JC, TC) were driven inland by Hurricane *Danny*. Unexpected in July was an Am. Bittern in *Cameron* July 5 (RB, BB). Most of the reports of ciconiiform birds were of Wood Storks. These records—which ranged from very early sightings on June 3 & 4 in *Iberville* and *St. Martin*, LA (BV, BF, LyF), to *Perry* and *Hale*, AL, July 30 (LFG)—totaled 200 birds.



Worn, frayed, and in serious need of molt, over-summering jaegers at southerly latitudes can pose some serious challenges for birders. This one was at Rutherford Beach, Louisiana, on July 5, 1997.

Photograph/Joe Kleiman

There were at least 18 reports of apparently healthy lingering waterfowl, including 7 reports of Blue-winged Teal between June 2 and July 24 in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. None of the records showed evidence of nesting, and the July 24 record was considered an early southbound migrant.

GALLINULES TO TERNS

Although a few Am. Coots linger near the coast in summer and occasionally breed, 2 records for the Starkville, MS, area were the first summer occurrences there (TS); there were 2 records in *Benton*, AR (MMI, RF, DW), where they are also rare in summer.

The usual yearly "shorebird hiatus" trip to the Grand Isle-Fourchon, LA, area—focusing on shorebirds which by conventional wisdom should be absent between about June 10–July 10—produced 13 species, including 8 that are migratory, June 21 (DM, PW). Most notable were six Semipalmated Plovers and 12 Dunlin. Another "hiatus" sighting was of 11 Short-billed Dowitchers on South Breton I., LA, June 22 (CF). Late shorebird migrants included an alternate-plumaged Black-bellied Plover in *Shelby* June 6 (AnM, ALM), the latest in spring for the Alabama's mountain region; Am. Golden-Plovers on the Red R. in *Caddo*, LA, June 4 (PD, HJ, HH) and in *Benton*, AR, June 7 (MMI); a Solitary Sandpiper in *Benton*, AR, June 10 (MMI); and single White-rumped Sandpipers on the Red R. on the *Caddo-Bossier* border June 13 (PD) and at Tallahatchie N.W.R. the next day (JRW).

A total of 160 at Lefore, AL, June 2 (FB) must have been impressive. Two other White-rumped records—June 27 in the same *Caddo-Bossier* site (PD) and in *Acadia*, LA, July 4 (GP)—were presumably late northbound migrants.

A **Wilson's Plover** in *Prairie*, AR, July 26–31 (KN, LN, DnH, DIH), furnished the 2nd record for the state. Early southbound migrants included four Lesser Yellowlegs in *Caddo-Bossier* June 30 (PD); Upland Sandpipers in *Cameron*, LA (RB, BB), and *Dyer*, TN (JRW) July 5; small numbers of Semipalmated and Western sandpipers June 27 & 30 in *Caddo-Bossier* (PD); and a Com. Snipe in *Nachitoches* July 16 (RS). In addition, Semipalmated Plovers were seen on N. Breton I., LA, June 7 (CF; four) and in *Cameron* June 28 (RS, JnT, JfT; one). Other interesting records included 28 Piping Plovers on Grand Gosier I. July 28 (RSB, GW); 2 reports of Am. Avocets in rice fields in *Acadia* June 28 & 29, totaling at least 50 individuals; very "early" Whimbrels at Pensacola, FL, July 19 (DT, CT) and in *Walton*, FL, July 28 (DM); one–two Sanderlings inland on the Red R. in *Caddo-Bossier* July 29 & 30 (RS, PD, JnT, JfT, PH); very early Com. Snipe in *Lefore*, AL, June 2 & 4 (FB); and a Red-necked Phalarope at Tallahatchie N.W.R. July 26 (JRW).

Single imm. jaegers were seen and photographed in *Cameron* June 1 (BG; ph.) and July 5 (JK, DR; ph.). Laughing Gulls were at unexpected inland locations June 1 at Clark's Landing, *Caddo-Bossier*, LA; June

13–14 in *Panola*, MS (WMD, JRW), the first immature in 30 years in n. Mississippi; and June 29 in *Colbert* and *Lawrence*, AL (SWM). Latest by 35 days for the Starkville area was a first-winter Bonaparte's Gull in *Webster*, MS, June 1, while 26 Ring-billed Gulls in *Colbert-Lawrence* June 29 (SWM) represented an unprecedented summer concentration for an inland location. There was a report of a Glaucous Gull still in first-basic plumage in *Cameron*, LA, June 1 (BG).

Caspian Terns had reached *Panola*, MS, by June 8 (WMD) and the Red R. in the *Caddo-Bossier*, LA, area by June 15 (PD), and birds at Tallahatchie N.W.R., MS, June 28 (JRW; 6) and on the Red R. July 30 (RS, PD, JI, BW, HH, PHI) were far inland. Also unusual for that area were four Forster's Terns June 27 (PD), the first June record for either parish. A total of 38 Bridled Terns were seen on the Gulf between 86–100 mi s. of Orange Beach, AL, June 28 (LFG, CD). One at Gulf Breeze, FL, July 19–20 (WD, LD, RAD), as Hurricane *Danny* roared by, represented the 5th n.w. Florida record.

CUCKOOS TO GOLDFINCH

A surprising concentration of 15 late migrating Yellow-billed Cuckoos was seen in coastal brush in *Lafourche*, LA, June 1 (DM, RDP). An Olive-sided Flycatcher at L. Fayetteville June 7 (MMI) was also a late migrant, as was a wood-pewee in coastal *Lafourche* June 1, and three Traill's-type empids in *Lafourche* and *Jefferson* on the same trip (DM, RDP). Latest ever in spring for *Shelby*, TN, were three Swainson's Thrushes (LCC, MaH) June 1. A House Wren in Memphis June 9 (SMcW) was the latest ever for w. Tennessee.

The June 1 Grand Isle/Fourchon (*Lafourche/Jefferson*) trip produced a very late Red-eyed Vireo (Fourchon) and two other late coastal migrants: Am. Redstart (Fourchon) and Ovenbird (Grand Isle) (DM, RDP). A Worm-eating Warbler, which apparently encountered the tallest building in

downtown Little Rock, AR, July 3 (HG, *fide* WMS), could have been an early southbound migrant but for the fact that it was picked up on the south side of the building. Very late coastal migrants were a male Summer Tanager in *Lafourche* and six Indigo Buntings in *Jefferson* June 1 (DM, RDP). Clearly northbound was a male Bobolink in *Lowndes*, MS, June 10 (KK), late for the Starkville (7-county) area by 27 days. Late records for s.e. Louisiana included one June 1 at Grand Isle (RDP, DM) and June 5 in *St. Bernard* (DM).

Unprecedentedly late for Alabama by 3

weeks were seven Purple Finches (two males, five females) in Decatur June 1 (DC, RC). There were 4 records of Red Crossbills, all from Arkansas: June 1 in *Van Buren* (MW; seven), June 2 in *Scott* (JCN, 20?), and June 3 & 28 in *Howard* (HP, MP; five and one, respectively). Single Am. Goldfinches were late in *Lafourche* June 1 (RDP, DM), New Orleans June 16 (DM), and in Lake Charles, LA, June 25 (JS, Tsa).

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