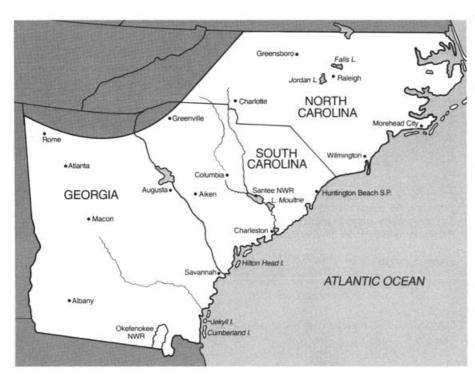
# southern atlantic coast region





Trips offshore from North Carolina produced multiple sightings of Herald Petrels in late May this year. This dark morph bird was seen on a trip off Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, May 23, 1998. Photograph/Alan Brady

# **RICKY DAVIS**

he spring weather presented great contrasts. The first half of March saw some of the coldest temperatures of the year, but by late month they averaged closer to normal. While April and early May had average to below-average temperatures, late May was quite warm. Precipitation over most of the Region produced much wetter than normal conditions, at least until mid-May. The exception was the extreme southern portions of Georgia, which were considerably drier than normal. Several observers commented on the lack of migrants in their areas, especially in some of the western and central portions of the Region. In general, the migration seemed about normal for most areas with, as usual, some early arrivals, lingering winter birds, and some interesting rarities.

**Abbreviations:** C. Hatt. (*Cape Hatteras, NC*); E.L.H. (E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton Co., GA); H.B.S.P. (Huntington Beach State Park, SC); K. Mt. (Kennesaw Mt. Nat'l Battlefield Park, GA); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper Co., SC); W.T.P. (Wastewater Treatment Plant).

# LOONS TO WOOD STORK

A Red-throated Loon in alternate plumage was at Oregon Inlet, NC, May 29 (RK). Common Loons migrated in normal numbers, but the inland count of 20 at L. Wildwood, Macon, GA, Apr. 14 (PJ) was noteworthy. Interesting grebe reports included a late Horned at the S.S.S. May 19 (SC), a Red-necked at Wassaw I., GA, Mar. 6 (*fide* TM), and four Eareds (two in alternate plumage) at the Goldsboro, NC, W.T.P. Apr. 18 (RD).

A pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, Mar. 14 produced a new one-day total for N. Fulmar when 540+ were counted (BP et al.). During the late May string of pelagic trips out of North Carolina, Black-capped Petrel numbers were about average. Much more exciting were the single Blackcappeds off of Murrell's Inlet, SC, in late April (TK) and May 30 (JP), and off the mid-Georgia coast May 27 (GB et al.). North Carblina's 4th (2nd ph. documentation) Bernhuda Petrel was found off Oregon Inlet May 29 (BP et al.). It is becoming apparent that some individuals of this highly endangered species regularly wander as far as the Gulf Stream waters off of the state. Not nearly as rare, but still exciting, Fea's Petrels were off Oregon Inlet, NC, May 24 (MT et al.) & 29 (BP et al.), and off Hatteras, NC, May 31 (BP et al.). The Herald Petrel is fast becoming regular off North Carolina. This spring two (one dark, one light morph) were off Hatteras May 23 (BP et al.), two (both dark) were off Oregon Inlet May 23 (MT et al.), and singles (all dark) were off Oregon Inlet May 25, 30, & 31 (MT et al.).

Shearwater numbers were slightly below average off North Carolina. An exception was 236 Audubon's off Hatteras May 30 (BP et al.). Also of note was the Sooty Shearwater found off the mid-Georgia coast May 27 (GB et al.), where the species is decidedly rarer than off the Carolinas. The only Manx Shearwaters found were the "several" off Hatteras Mar. 7 (SS, fide BP). Leach's Storm-Petrels were more common than usual with good numbers on most trips, and an impressive count of 136 off of Hatteras May 30 (BP et al.) beat the old record by three. Band-rumped Storm-Petrels were also in good numbers, with a peak of 38 off Oregon Inlet May 31 (MT et al.). Much rarer were the two found off the mid-Georgia coast May 27 (GB et al.). Whitetailed Tropicbirds were reported only twice, with singles off Hatteras May 31 (BP et al.) and, where much rarer, 20 mi e. of Sapelo I., GA, Apr. 16 (fide TM). Red-billed Tropicbird was found twice, with a sub-adult off Hatteras May 23 (BP et al.) and an immature off Oregon Inlet May 25 (MT et al.)

The only Am. White Pelicans found were singles at Edisto I., SC, Mar. 14 (JE) and Gould's Inlet, GA, May 4 & 6 (*fide* TM). The Anhinga found along the Broad R., Blacksburg, SC, May 9 (*fide* LC) provided an rare occurrence for that area of the state. Rare inland were an ad. Little Blue Heron in *Moore*, NC, Apr. 26 (JC); two Blackcrownded Night-Herons along Middle R., *Bertie*, NC, May 9 (ML); one Glossy Ibis at the Macon, GA, brickyards May 2–3 (TI et al ), and five Glossies in *Forsyth*, GA, May 5 (*fide* TM). A flock of 10 Wood Storks flying over Bogue Inlet, NC, May 17 (RR) was locally rare and unusual for spring.

# WATERFOWL TO SANDHILL CRANE

Rare were the two Greater White-fronted Geese at the Etowah Bottoms, Dawson, GA, Mar. 1&8 (JFl). Also of note was the imm. Ross's Goose found at Old Santee Canal S P., Charleston, SC. Originally found in late Feb. (STh, fide LG), the bird remained until at least Mar. 1 (LG). Cinnamon Teal continued their recent string of seasonal occurrences with ad. males at Sandy Beach W.M.A., Berkeley, SC, Mar. 22 (RC); Dobbins Cattle Farm, Townville, SC, Apr. 3 (B&BM); and Dews I., Currituck, NC, May 5 (ML). A rarely observed Cinnamon  $\times$ Blue-winged Teal was seen near Durham, NC, May 13-14 (MP, v.o.). Some of the more unusual lingering waterfowl included a male Eur. Wigeon at Pea I., NC, Mar. 15 (HL, RD); a Canvasback near Aurora, NC, May 27-28 (SCo); 19 Ring-necked Ducks at Roanoke Rapids L., NC, May 25 (RD); a Black Scoter inland on the Jordan L., NC, Spring Count May 3 (DS); four Bufflehead at Roanoke Rapids L., NC, May 25 (RD); and a female Red-breasted Merganser at Salem L., Forsythe, NC, May 31 (RS et al.). First local breeding records for Bluewinged Teal included a nest with 4 eggs in Forsythe during May (RS et al.), and a female with three young near Pauline, SC, May 8 (LC). Interesting waterfowl reports included an impressive count of 126 Redhead near Rome, GA, Mar. 8 (*fide* TM); five Com. Eiders at C. Lookout, NC, Mar. 22 (BH et al.) and one at Cumberland I., GA, Apr. 12–21 (SW, SE); and two Oldsquaw in the H.B.S.P., SC, area Mar. 7–23 (TK, ST, WFo DF et al.), and one at Folly Beach, SC, Apr. 12 (DK).

American Swallow-tailed Kites returned earlier than usual. One at Ft. Stewart Mar. 9 (fide TM) provided a record-early date for Georgia, and one at Edisto I., SC, Mar. 8 (SG, CB) was that state's 2nd-earliest ever. Away from coastal sites, where overshoots are expected, single Swallow-taileds were found near Southern Pines, NC, May 3 (JC) and Roanoke Rapids, NC, May 28 (RY, fide ML). Mississippi Kites continued to increase in the Region, with the best total being 80+ seen feeding over several fields near Rembert, Sumter, SC, May 25 (LG). Two rare Golden Eagles were found: one at the Gull Rock Game Land, Hyde, NC, Apr. 14 (fide TP) and one along the Sea I., GA, causeway Apr. 9 (fide TM). Inland Merlin and Peregrine Falcon reports were about average, with exceptional sightings being a Merlin near Jordan L., Chatham, NC, May 22 (RG) and a Peregrine at C. Hatt. May 27 (TP et al.).

Rails were again present at several inland Georgia sites, but the numbers were down somewhat from previous seasons. The best report was three Black Rails at the usual n. Greene, GA, site May 2 (PS). Purple Gallinules made news in inland Georgia with one at the Arrowhead Fish Hatchery, Floyd, Apr. 22-May 8 (GH, MD) and one photographed at Rum Creek W.M.A., Monroe, during mid-May (fide TM). In the unusual department, a flock of 20 Am. Coots and two Com. Moorhens showed up in the bight at C. Lookout, NC, May 14 (fide JF), obviously out-of-place migrants. Two coots were found in the trees on K. Mt. Apr. 26 (JS), the 2nd time in a couple of years that they have showed up there in migration. Sandhill Cranes found outside of their normal Georgia migration route included two on Cumberland I., GA, Apr. 13 (SW); one at Pawley's I., SC, Apr. 25 (TH, fide LG); and two at Richlands, Onslow, NC, May 9 (NM).

> Immature Red-billed Tropicbird, well offshore from Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, May 25, 1998. Photograph/ Alan Brady

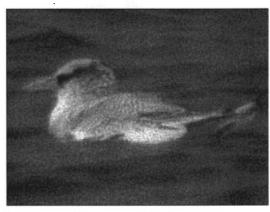
### **PLOVERS TO RAZORBILL**

Due to a wet winter and early spring, inland water levels ran high, thus shorebirds were not as easily found. Nevertheless, some interesting inland sightings included two American Oystercatchers at Roanoke Rapids L., Northampton, NC, May 25 (RD), only the 4th or 5th inland occurrence of this salt water species in North Carolina. Also of note were 10 Willets at the Arrowhead Fish Hatchery Apr. 30 (GH); two W. Sandpipers at Aiken, SC, May 9 (AW); 16 White-rumped Sandpipers in Bibb, GA, May 9 (J&MA); a Stilt Sandpiper at E.L.H. May 2 (fide TM); four vocal Long-billed **Dowitchers** at E.L.H. May 4 (JS), providing a rare inland spring record; and one Wilson's Phalarope in Laurens, GA, May 9 (TPa). The rare-in-spring Am. Golden-Plover was in each state

Upland Sandpipers migrated through the Region at usual numbers and sites. The best count was seven in Laurens, GA, Apr. 5 (AS, TPa). The earliest was one at the Cherry Hospital grounds, Wayne, NC, Mar. 28 (ED); the latest was at a turf farm near Tryon, NC, May 4 (ST). A Hudsonian Godwit in alternate plumage was found at the S.S.S. May 13 (SC), providing about the 3rd spring report for that state. There was only one Curlew Sandpiper found, an adult at the C. Hatt. campground May 16 (PM). Nesting evidence of Am. Woodcocks near the coast is rarely observed. This year a nest with four young Mar. 15 and another with three young Mar. 21 were found near Trenton, Jones, NC, (CBa). An adult with two young were seen in the Croatan N.F., Carteret, NC, Apr. 12 (JF).

Onshore reports of Red Phalarope are extremely rare; singles were found at the C. Hatt. Visitor Center pond May 13 (JAl) and at the Bodie I., NC, Lighthouse pond May 14 (JB).

Jaeger numbers seemed down somewhat on the pelagic trips. The best Pomarine count was nine off Oregon Inlet May



24 (MT et al.). One was a good find off the mid-Georgia coast May 27 (GB et al.). The less common Parasitic was seen just off Hatteras with two May 24 (BP et al.). Single Parasitics were at Hunting I., SC, Apr. 25 (JBa et al.) and at C. Hatt May 9 (JR). Only two Long-taileds were seen, one off Oregon Inlet May 31 (MT et al.) and another off Hatteras May 31 (BP et al.). Great Skua sightings included singles off Hatteras Mar. 7 (SS, fide BP) & 14 (BP et al.).

Inland Laughing Gull reports included one at Salem L., *Forsythe*, NC, Mar. 31 (RS et al.); one at L. Norman, NC, Apr. 4 & 26 (*fide* TP); and two at L. Lanier, GA, May 5 (JFl). The only Little Gulls reported were three on the pelagic trip out of Hatteras Mar. 14 (BP et al.). California, Thayer's, and Iceland gulls present at C. Hatt. from the winter were last seen Mar. 15 & 17 (BP, NB, MI, PM et al.). A first-winter Iceland Gull was seen at Pawley's I., SC, on the amazing record-late date of May 16 (B&BM). Also very late was the imm. Lesser Black-backed Gull found at C. Hatt. May 26 (NB).

Three Caspian Terns in Thomas, GA, May 3 (fide JS) provided a rare inland report for that state, and a county first. The peak inland Caspian count in North Carolina was 45 at Jordan L., NC, Apr. 26 (RD). North Carolina once again had a monopoly on Roseate Terns, with two at Cape Lookout May 16 (JF, SA); two on Bear I., Onslow, May 23 (NM); and one at C. Hatt. May 26-31 (NB, RD). The best offshore Arctic Tern count in North Carolina was six off Oregon Inlet May 29 (BP et al.). In Georgia, one was offshore May 28 (GB et al.) and two found at Gould's Inlet May 13 (LT, fide JS) provided an amazing onshore report. Peak counts of Bridled Tern included 14 off Hatteras May 30 (BP et al.) and five off the mid-Georgia coast May 27 (GB et al.). Only three Sooty Terns were found, one off of Hatteras May 23 (BP et al.), one at C. Hatt. May 27-31 (TP et al., RD), and one at the Southport, NC, ferry terminal May 30 (fide JCo). The only inland report of Black Tern was of one at Jordan L., NC, May 17 (RD). Razorbills included three off Hatteras, NC, Mar. 14 (BP et al.) and one fly-by at C. Hatt Mar. 15 (RD).

#### **DOVES TO VIREOS**

Eurasian Collared-Doves are now present throughout Georgia, with new locations in Athens Apr. 15 (PS) and Rome May 22 (MD). In North Carolina, established groups are in Holden Beach, where 3–4 pairs were present in May (RSI); Sneads Ferry, where up to three are present (NM); and at Beaufort, where up to six have been seen (JF, m.o.). White-winged Doves made news in North Carolina. One was seen near Pantego, Beaufort, Apr. 17 (GHo), and up to three were found in Beaufort May 3 onward (JF et al.). The Beaufort White-wingeds seemed to show territorial behavior; there are no breeding records for the state. Blackbilled Cuckoos did not match last spring's invasion, but singles were at Winston-Salem, NC, May 2 (fide RS); Pea I., NC, May 25 (JL); and at K. Mt. May 10, 12, & 16 (AK, PH). Also of note was a very early Yellowbilled Cuckoo in Jones, NC, Mar. 27 (NM), providing one of the earliest dates ever for that state.

One of the rarest birds in Georgia this spring, a Long-eared Owl was present for one day at the Fernbank Center, Atlanta, Mar. 28 (GS, JFl). The photographed bird represented the first documented Longeared in the state since the 1960s! Another unusual owl event was the presence of up to two Short-eareds through the first half of May near Moore, SC (fide LC). This species normally migrates out of the Region by mid-April! The ad. male Rufous Hummingbird that wintered near Ocean Isle Beach, NC, was last seen Apr. 1 (fide MM). An Olive-sided Flycatcher was below the L. Murray Dam, Lexington, SC May 9 (RSm, TH, JG); one was near Jordan L., NC, May 12-13 (DS, v.o.); and one was at Mason Farm, Chapel Hill, NC, May 13 (JHy). Empidonax flycatcher reports included a rare-in-spring Yellow-bellied at K. Mt. May 12 (PH); and Leasts at Pine Log W.M.A., Bartow, GA, May 9 (GB, JFl), Raven Rock S.P., NC, May 16 (HB), and Pea I., NC, May 25 (JL). Western Kingbirds, normally fall visitors, appeared at several locations. Single birds were in Carroll, GA, Apr. 12 and Ossabaw I., GA, May 24 (MB), and near Cleveland, Rowan, NC, May 30 (fide TP). The only Gray Kingbird reported was at Cape Lookout, NC, May 9-16 (HB, JF, SA). It seems not a season goes by without at least one Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; one was near McClellanville, SC, May 18-21 (DH, DD). Tree Swallows continue to increase as nesters. A pair returned to L. Russell, SC, during May (SCx) for the 3rd year; and in Georgia, up to three nests were found at Carter's L., Murray Apr. 25 (JFl).

Common Ravens extended their presence a little farther east. Up to four have been in downtown Greensboro, NC, since March (HH), and on Apr. 24 a pair was observed exhibiting courtship behavior (HLi). This species is apparently moving eastward by using urban, downtown settings! Unusual was an absurdly late Golden-crowned Kinglet observed in s.w. *Wake*, NC, May 16 (WC, JPi). Thrush reports and numbers were way down. The most unusual sighting was a Gray-cheeked on the coast at Myrtle Beach St. Pk., SC, May 11 (AWi et al.).

Late Water Pipits included singles near Moore, SC, May 9 (*fide* LC) and near Raleigh, NC, May 17 (RD). Noteworthy vireo reports included a record-early Yellowthroated at Beaufort, NC, Mar. 10 (RB); single Warblings at Pea I., NC, May 10 (JR), K. Mt. May 14 (SR, PH), and Vultare, Northampton, NC, May 23 (RD); and single Philadelphias at Raven Rock S.P., NC, May 17 (KF) and Rocky Mount, NC, May 28 (RD).

**SA** Clearly the best bird of the sea-son (and recent memory!) was the White Wagtail at H.B.S.P., SC, Apr. 16-21. The bird, first found by Kenneth Behrens from Pennsylvania, was photographed and seen by many observers during its stay. The bird was actively feeding on the tidal flats and provided a rare opportunity to see the unique behavior of individuals of the Motacilla genus. Photos clearly show the gray back, black under the chin, and white areas of the wing of an ad. bird; and seem to point to the "ocularis" form from e. Asia and Alaska. This sighting rivals (and maybe surpasses) the Blackbacked Wagtail found at Cedar I., NC, during spring 1982, long considered to be the most unbelievable, out-of-place bird ever found in the Carolinas!

#### WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Very rare in spring on the coast, a Goldenwinged Warbler was found on Wassaw I., GA, May 9 (SC). Rare-in-spring Nashville Warblers were reported from K. Mt. Apr. 23 (PH) & 26 (SR); from Bartow, GA, May 4 (JFI); and from Winston-Salem, NC, May 28 (RH, fide RS). Some peak warbler counts at K. Mt. included 17 Chestnut-sideds, 17 Magnolias, and 14 Black-throated Greens May 11 (GB); 14 Blackburnians May 17 (GB); and nine Ceruleans Apr. 18 (GB et al.), Other notable reports involved 35 Cape Mays at Fernbank Forest, Atlanta, GA, May 9 (GS); an early Cape May at H.B.S.P., SC, Mar. 22 (ST, WF), which could have overwintered; a late Black-throated Blue in Glascock, GA, May 31 (GB); 40 Blackpolls at Fernbank Forest, Atlanta, GA, May 9 (GS); four Am. Redstarts in Glascock, GA, May 31

(GB), and one in Darien, GA, May 25 (DC); and a very early Louisiana Waterthrush in w. *Bibb*, GA, Mar. 8 (*fide* PJ).

There was only one report of Connecticut Warbler: a single bird at K. Mt. May 18 (GB et al.). Mourning Warblers were more obvious, with one seen and heard in the Alligator River N.W.R., *Dare*, NC, May 22 (KC, v.o.); one heard only at H.B.S.P., SC, May 25 (TK et al.); and one circling a boat offshore of Hatteras, NC, May 24 (BP et al.).Wilson's Warblers were reported more than usual with the best count being three on the Chapel Hill, NC, Spring Count May 10 (*fide* WC). One was rare on the coast at Myrtle Beach S.P., SC, May 10 (AWi et al.).

The male W. Tanager that wintered at Long Beach, NC, was last seen about Apr. 1 (fide MM). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks once again came through in good numbers. One was late on the coast at Wassaw I., GA, May 23 (SC). An Indigo Bunting near Hilton Head, SC, Mar. 14 (fide JH) possibly overwintered. Painted Buntings seemed more numerous. Inland reports included two males below the L. Murray Dam, Lexington, SC, May 9 (RSm, JG); one at a feeder at Merchant's Millpond S.P., NC, May 11-12 (FW); and one singing near Aurora, NC, May 21 (SCo). Dickcissels were found at scattered Regional locations. The best reports were four in Monroe, GA, May 9 (TI); three in Henry, GA, May 23 (IS); four near Lattimore, Cleveland, NC, May 20 (ST), and two (one fledged juvenile) at the N. Pacolet, SC, sod farm May 9 (LC), one of the earliest dates for a young bird in the Region.

Unexpected was the ad. Lark Sparrow in Charlotte, NC, Apr. 24 (TP). Grasshopper Sparrows seemed to be doing well with 12 singing on territory at the *Moore*, NC, airport May 18 (SCa). A lingering Henslow's Sparrow was found near Catherine's L., *Onslow*, NC, in early April (JO), and up to two were at Paulk's Pasture, *Glynn*, GA, Mar. 23 & 30 (MC, GB et al.). The breeding populations at the VOA sites in North Carolina again contained many singing males: 144 counted at VOA-A, *Beaufort*, and 54 at VOA-B, *Pitt*, May 24 & 25 (J&PW). These populations are probably the largest for the species anywhere and should be protected.

Very rare in spring, two Le Conte's Sparrows were found at the S.S.S. Apr. 7 (SC). A Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow was late on Skidaway I., GA, May 23 (GB, BHa). Lincoln's Sparrows were found more than usual, with singles at Goldsboro, NC, Apr. 4 (ED); K. Mt. marsh Apr. 11 (GB); Mason's Farm, Chapel Hill, NC, Apr. 14 (JHy); Charlotte, NC, Apr. 15 (TP); and n. Greene, GA, Apr. 25 (PS). Interesting was a "gambelii" White-crowned Sparrow at Wassaw I., GA, May 16 (SC, CW).

Yellow-headed Blackbirds staged an invasion into Georgia. Single males were found in *Cobb* May 25–26 (GB, BHa, JFl) and on Skidaway I. May 10 (*fide* TM). And an amazing flock of 14 (including 11 males) was at the Athens airport May 10 (*fide* TM)! Georgia had the only Shiny Cowbirds with males in *Pulaski* Mar. 27 (*fide* TM) and on Little St. Simon's I. May 5 (*fide* JS). House Finches rarely make news anymore, but of interest was a nest with 4 eggs in W. Columbia, SC, on the early date of Mar. 17 (*fide* BW).

Another good bird for Georgia was the **Common Redpoli** at a feeder in Winder, *Barrow*, Mar. 11–16 (JD, v.o.). The bird was photographed and represented the first record for Georgia in many years. The winter Evening Grosbeak flight ended with two late birds in Winston-Salem, NC, May 26 (*fide* RS).

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Male Yellow-headed Blackbird at Marietta, Georgia, May 25, 1998. One of several found in Georgia during the month. Photograph/ Bruce Hallett



An outlier from a winter invasion farther north, this Common Redpoll in Winder, Georgia, March 12, 1998, furnished the state's first record in many years. Photograph/ Giff Beaton

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