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# central southern



## Stephen J. Stedman

Department of English  
Box 5053  
Tennessee Technological University  
Cookeville, Tennessee 38505  
(stedman@tntech.edu)

This report is my tenth and last covering the winter season in the Region. During the decade that has elapsed since I began reporting, many changes in the Regional avifauna have transpired and it has been enjoyable to document many of them in the pages of this journal and its forerunners. I thank the subregional editors who simplified my task by timely submission of properly formatted and annotated bird records, and I thank all the regional observers who voluntarily provided records to the subregional editors. Louisiana observers especially deserve thanks for their collective and seemingly inexhaustible willingness to provide exemplary documentation for the many unusual avian events annually occurring in the Bayou State.

The weather throughout the Region for the last full winter of the second millennium was generally warm and dry, with only a short spate of cold and snow in mid-January disturbing this pattern.

## LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

Red-throated and Pacific Loons were reported from several widely scattered sites,

solidifying their status as rare but regular winter residents; at least one of the former probably wintered as far north as *Henry*, TN, where the species was reported in Dec and Feb (JRW). Also rare Regionally but not so regular, a Red-necked Grebe remained in *Henry*, TN, 12 Feb (JRW, m.ob.). An Alabama maximum for Eared Grebe was established 3 Jan when 22 were counted in *Baldwin* (AM†, AIM). A W. Grebe visited *Washington*, AR, 6 Feb (KN, LN), the only Regional report.

Fifty Sooty Shearwaters just offshore from *Escambia* 14 Jan (JF†) provided a Florida maximum. On the Green Canyon 18 oil platform, 110 mi s. of Morgan City, LA, an Audubon's Shearwater was seen briefly but well 20 Jan (RLK†); an Audubon's-type shearwater was also there 19 Feb (SJP†) as was a sub-adult Masked Booby 14 Jan (RLK†). Single imm. Brown Boobies were noted in *Mobile* and *Baldwin*, AL, 22 Dec (MVH†, RWH) and 28 Jan (SER†), respectively. Only the 14th for Alabama, a Great Cormorant was on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14–22 Dec (MVH†, RWH). A fifth local winter record, an Anhinga stayed briefly in *Noxubee*, MS, 7 Dec (TLS). American White Pelican counts numbering 122 and 129 were made in *Lake*, TN, 5 Dec (JRW) and *Lowndes/Clay*, MS, 19 Jan (TLS), respectively. An imm. Roseate Spoonbill was seen fairly far inland 29 Dec in *Evangeline*, LA (DLD, PC, JC, SWC).

Two adult Tundra Swans stayed in *Cleburne*, AR, 3 Dec (KN, LN), while one adult and two immatures were noted in *Newton* and *Lowndes*, MS, Dec–Jan (SA, MS) and 13 Feb (TLS†), respectively. Quite rare and irregular Regionally, a Brant was present in *Cameron*, LA, 17 Dec (DPM†, BMM†, JPS†). One hundred Ross's Geese in *Desha* 22 Feb (RHS, JP) constituted a high Arkansas count; a single in *Baldwin* 29 and 31 Jan (AM, AIM) was the 5th for coastal Alabama, and another in *Shelby* 5 & 7 Feb (AM†, AIM) represented the first for Alabama's Mountain Region; 2530 in

*Jefferson Davis* 17 Dec (SWC, DLD) were by far a record count for one Louisiana parish. The Cinnamon Teal present in *Orleans*, LA, the last two winters returned for a third year 2 Dec–13 Feb (GO, DPM), while another was ably described and sketched from *Cameron* 17 Dec (MAS†, JPK, MGu). A flock of 2500+ Canvasbacks in *Henry*, TN, 1 Jan (JRW) was present at a site where large flocks have been noted in the past. A flock of 1000+ Greater Scaups 9 Feb in *Colbert/Lauderdale*, AL (DJS), provided a maximum state count. Scarce in Arkansas, single Black Scoters were noted in *Prairie*, *Yell/Pope*, and *Yell* 5 Dec (KN, LN), 11–18 Dec (KN, LN, HP, MP), and 30 Dec (KN, LN), respectively; at least 12 were noted in *Baldwin*, AL, during Jan (BS, AM, AIM); a single was noted 1–3 Dec in *Oktibbeha*, MS (TLS); and another single appeared sporadically in *Cameron*, LA, 11 & 20 Dec (PW, PC, Bve). Single female Long-tailed Ducks were identified in *Chicot* and *Yell/Pope*, AR, 22 Dec (LA) and 16 Jan (KN, LN), respectively; another female visited *St. Tammany*, LA, 17 Jan (BMM, PW, CK).

## RAPTORS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Lone White-tailed Kites in *Evangeline* and *Vernon*, LA, 29 Dec (RJB) and 24 Feb (CM), respectively, were unusual at those inland sites, the latter record also being a parish first. Continuing a fall record, a White-tailed Hawk, presumably the same bird present during the winters of 1996–1997 and 1997–1998; was in *Jefferson Davis*, LA, until at least 31 Jan (BF†, PC, RLK). Two ad. and two imm. Golden Eagles were counted in Arkansas during December but none thereafter; three of varying ages were in *Henry*, TN, 5 Dec (ph. JRW), with one adult still present 1 Jan (JRW). At least two were in *Noxubee*, MS, during the season, one on 23 Feb tying the late departure date (MCo, DP, JP), while others were noted in *Bolivar* and *Lafayette*, MS; the only Louisiana sighting took place 17 Dec in *Jefferson Davis* (DLD et al.). The *Yalobusha*, MS, Prairie Falcon returned for its ninth consecutive winter (GK†, SK).

Seldom observed, Yellow Rails were viewed in *Cameron*, LA, 18 Dec (PW) and *Jackson*, MS, 12 Feb (DCi). Eighteen Sandhill Cranes noted considerably w. of their usual migration corridor in *Desha*, AR, 21 Feb (RHD, JP) were probably migrating, and 25 others were present 26 Feb in *Marion*, AR (BJ, PI). Three in *Elmore*, AL, 23 Jan (LG) were locally rare, but somewhat larger groups at Wheeler and Eufaula N.W.R.s were regular at those sites; 211 in *Tunica* 20 Feb (JRW ph.) pro-

vided a modern maximum for Mississippi, while 158 in *Quitman* 2 Jan (*fide* FB) were also notable. Another 1000+ spent the period in *Obion*, TN (RG, TDP), up considerably from last year's then-high wintering numbers; somewhat early migration, perhaps triggered by depletion of food resources at se. Tennessee wintering sites, was noted in *Putnam* and *Pickett*, TN, where 3500 and 5500 flew north 15 (RH, WB) & 16 Feb (WHG), respectively. Winter Sandhill numbers continued to increase in Louisiana, where 300 were present in *Calcasieu* 15 Jan (JPK, DR).

Snowy Plovers have hung on in coastal Mississippi, four being identified in *Harrison* 7 Feb (DB, JB). Alabama's second winter record of Solitary Sandpiper took place 1–2 Jan in *Baldwin* (HHK et al.); four Louisiana parishes also hosted solitary Solitaries. Earliest ever in Alabama's Tennessee Valley, a Pectoral Sandpiper showed up in *Limestone* 13 Feb (DRC†, RC). A late Sanderling visited *Henry*, TN, 12 Dec (JRW). Fifth locally, a Purple Sandpiper in *Santa Rosa*, FL, 27–29 Feb (PCT, BT) was the first to be identified there in 21 years.

#### JAEGERS THROUGH OWLS

Pomarine Jaegers in small to moderate numbers (up to 21) were daily visitors to the Green Canyon 18 oil platform, LA, from mid-Jan until late Feb (RLK, BMM, SJP).

Lone Franklin's Gulls in *Lauderdale* 5 Dec (GNP, MA†) and *Baldwin* 1 Jan (RRR) bracketed Alabama latitudinally; another visited *Shelby*, TN, 19 Dec (MGW†, RP†, LZ), while two were noted in *Lake*, TN, 27 Feb (JRW). An *alternate-plumaged adult* in *Cameron*, LA, 18 Dec (CW, DCh, DLD, SWC) was a show-stopper, while an imm. lingered in *Plaquemines*, LA, 3 Jan (DPM, JPS, KR); finally, one was found in *Okaloosa*, FL, 23 Dec (DMW†). A Laughing Gull in *Yell*, AR, 11 Dec (KN, LN, m.ob.) was rare, as was another in *Pulaski*, AR, 6–8 Jan (KN, LN). A first-year Thayer's Gull in *Henry*, TN, 5 Feb (JRW†) was also rare. One Tennessee county, at least two Louisiana parishes, and three Alabama counties hosted Lesser Black-backed Gulls, more evidence of this species' slow but continuing Regional increase. Great Black-backed Gulls in *Lafourche* and *Jefferson*, LA, 5 Feb (PW†, JPS†) and 22 Feb (PY†) were rarities. Seventh in Arkansas, a Black-legged Kittiwake appeared 12–13 Dec in *Yell* (KN, LN et al.); an imm. visited *Cameron*, LA, 20 Dec (DLD, SWC\*). Its black shoulder bar well-described, a Com. Tern was in *Franklin*, FL, 28 Dec (BHS); at least one showed up in *St. Tammany*, LA, 11 (KF) & 30 (MW) Dec, and four ventured into *Cameron* 11 Dec (PW).

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to make inroads inland, with birds sighted in

at least nine Arkansas counties (*fide* MP, HP), many being first local records; in Alabama, a Tennessee Valley maximum was achieved 22 Dec when 96 were tallied in *Limestone* (SWM), while 265 in *Baldwin* 1 Jan (*fide* GDJ) established a state maximum. In Tennessee records came from *Obion* and *Lake* (JRW); two adults with one young were reported in *Iberia*, LA, in Dec (MJM ph., JJ). White-winged Doves, also rare inland just a few years ago, appeared in *Little River* (DA, CM, MD) and *Columbia*, AR (SL, DD); White-wingeds continued to increase in Louisiana (*fide* SWC). A locally rare Inca Dove was in *Ashley*, AR, 11 Feb (RHD, JP).

Long-eared Owls were reported more frequently than usual: a road-killed bird was found in *Sevier*, AR, 17 Dec (DA), while a live one appeared in *Pope*, AR, 20 Dec (LA); at least four were in *Obion*, TN, throughout the period (TDP, ph. JRW), and another stayed 19 Dec through season's end in *Lake*, TN (JRW); in Louisiana a road-killed bird was found 12 Feb in *DeSoto* (JLI\*). In *Tunica*, MS, 38 Short-eared Owls 28 Dec (JRW, GK, SK) were noteworthy; the largest daily total elsewhere involved 20+ in *Jefferson Davis*, LA, 24 Dec (JPK, DR). A malnourished N. Saw whet Owl was captured in *Crittendon*, AR, 30 Dec (OKM), rehabilitated in nearby *Shelby*, TN, and released 3 Jan (*fide* HP, MP), providing the only evidence of the species during an irruption year.

#### CAPRIMULGIDS THROUGH PIPITS

Rare Regionally during winter, three Com. Nighthawks foraged 29 Dec in *Gulf*, FL (BHS); singles stayed late in Tennessee, one flying north 17 Dec in *Lake* (CGD) and another occurring 26 Jan in *Shelby* (OKM). Unidentified nighthawks in *Mobile*, AL (MC), and *St. Tammany*, LA (MW, BW), both 30 Dec, were also of interest. Chuck-will's-widows wintered along the Louisiana coast more abundantly than usual, including 9 in *Plaquemines* 3 Jan ((DPM et al.). Arkansas' third **White-throated Swift** was at Dardanelle Dam in *Pope/Yell* 11–12 Dec (KN†, LN, HP, MP, m.ob.).

A Calliope Hummingbird stayed in *Davidson*, TN, for the 3rd consecutive winter (*fide* CAS), and a *Selasphorus* was in *Shelby*, TN, 3–5 Jan (VBR, WRP). Banded during its stay, an imm. male Rufous Hummingbird wintered in *Yell*, AR (HP, MP), while an imm. female was banded 1 Dec in *Pulaski*, AR (LW, HP, MP). Both Calliope and Buff-bellied Hummingbirds were banded in nw. Florida by Fred Bassett, whose separate efforts in Alabama resulted



Scarce in the United States in winter, this Least Flycatcher at Plaquemines, Louisiana, 20 Feb obliged observers with calls. Photograph by B. Wallace.



**This lovely Lark Sparrow was photographed during the first day of its two-day visit to LeFlore, Mississippi, 28–29 Jan 2000. Photograph by Terence Schiefer.**

in the following fine banding totals: Ruby-throated (8), Black-chinned (14), Calliope (2), Broad-tailed (1), Rufous (15), and Allen's (1). Mississippi hosted two Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, one each in *Harrison* and *Hancock*, both banded (BC); at least two Rufous Hummingbirds were also noted in the Magnolia State. Excellent Louisiana banding totals by Nancy Newfield and Dave Patton follow: Broad-billed (1), Buff-bellied (21), Ruby-throated (15), Black-chinned (17), Anna's (2), Calliope (9), Broad-tailed (7), Rufous (87), and Allen's (7). At least one other Broad-billed Hummingbird was present in *Ascension*, LA, but not banded (MLD†, LCB†). A Buff-bellied Hummingbird returning to Louisiana set a longevity record of nearly nine years (NN).

In *Plaquemines*, LA, a **Great Kiskadee**, probably the same one found there in April 1999, was reported 3 (DPM†) & 22 Jan (DCI†). An *Empidonax* believed to be a Least was seen and heard in *Plaquemines*, LA, 20 Feb (DPM, PW); another probable Least ventured to *Jefferson*, LA, 5 & 12 Feb (PY). Occasional inland, a Vermilion Flycatcher visited *Barbour*, AL, 14 Dec–6 Feb (BF, CN†, m.ob.); at least two others were closer to the coast in *Hancock*, MS, until 11 Jan (JB, SJP, m.ob.). Casual in the Region, a Say's Phoebe was noted in *Jefferson Davis*, LA, 17 Dec (CW\*, DCh). Five Ash-throated and at least two Brown-crested Flycatchers were found in Louisiana, the former mostly in Dec on CBCs and the latter in late Feb. An E. Kingbird in *Okaloosa*, FL, 20 Dec (HH†, GS) provided a first local winter record.

**Seventeen** Scissor-tailed Flycatchers festooned the fields 20 Feb in *Plaquemines*, LA (PW, DPM).

One Bell's Vireo, a rare Louisiana winterer, was noted 18 Dec on the Sabine CBC (BMM†, RDP†); not to be outdone, two showed up 19 Dec on the Johnson's Bayou CBC (BF†, SWC\*). Earliest ever locally by four days, a Purple Martin was in *Lowndes*, MS, 7 Feb (KK). Evidence of a substantial irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches was provided by results of many Regional CBCs; 38 clocked in 18 Dec (*vide* GDJ) on the Waterloo CBC, establishing a Tennessee Valley maximum for Alabama. Three Brown-headed Nuthatches at Pickwick Dam, *Hardin*, 30 Dec (JRW) provided evidence of the species' continuing presence in the western sector of the Volunteer State.

A Bewick's Wren in *Madison*, MS, 29 Dec (DW) was the only one reported away from Louisiana, where diligent searching by CBC participants turned up singles in *Acadia*, *Caddo*, *Catahoula*, and *Evangeline*. Very rare in Arkansas, a Rock Wren was in *Cleburne* 4 Dec–1 Jan (BV, KN, LN). American Robin numbers were excellent last winter in southern Louisiana, but numbers this winter were the lowest Muth could recollect in the New Orleans area. Rare and elusive, Sprague's Pipits were noted inland at several sites: singles in *Jefferson* and *Prairie*, AR, 19 (RHD†) & 23 Dec (GL†), respectively; and one-two in Shelby, TN, 21 & 26 Jan (JRW†).

#### **PARULIDS THROUGH TANAGERS**

Considered early, two N. Parulas were in *Hancock*, MS, 29 Feb (SJP, m.ob.), while one

19 Feb on the Green Canyon 18 oil platform tied the early date for "Louisiana" (SJP). Extending a fall record, the **Tropical Parula** in *Caddo*, LA, remained to at least 20 Dec and was recorded on the Shreveport CBC (CL†, CMO, KF, SM†). A Cape May Warbler in *Washington* 19 Dec (MM†, DC) provided Arkansas's second winter record, while Alabama's 4th winter record came 1 Jan in *Baldwin* (RRR†). The second winter record of Black-throated Blue Warbler in Arkansas was provided by a male in *Washington* 9–20 Dec (MMu, JN†, MM, DC).

A total of 357 Pine Warblers on the Gulf Shores CBC 1 Jan (*vide* GDJ) established an Alabama coastal maximum. Single Prairie Warblers at two separate sites in *Baldwin* 1 Jan (JVP, PCT) provided the 7th and 8th Alabama winter records; many were reported in Louisiana. Migrating early or overwintering, an adult male Am. Redstart brought a splash of color to *Plaquemines*, LA, 27 Feb (BMM, RDP, PW). Possibly the same bird present in *Prairie*, AR, last winter, an Ovenbird stayed there 1 Dec–13 Feb (RS, TS), continuing a late fall report. First locally in winter, a Com. Yellowthroat was in *Putnam*, TN, 18 Dec (SJS). Extremely rare in winter, a male Hooded Warbler brightened the *Lafourche*, LA, woods 2 Jan (MR, LD). Eighth in Alabama during winter, a Wilson's Warbler was in *Baldwin* 1 Jan (PCT, BT); another was in *Harrison*, MS, 21 Jan (SJP et al.); coastal Louisiana enjoyed a veritable cornucopia of wintering Wilson's, including 37 on the Venice CBC. The only report of W. Tanager came from *Jefferson*, LA, 19 Dec (PY†).


## TOWHEES THROUGH CROSSBILLS

An adult male Spotted Towhee skulked in *Henry*, TN, 2 Jan (JRW et al.). Small groups of four and two Lark Sparrows were noted in *Yell* and *Little River*, AR, 20 Dec (KN, LN) and 23 Jan (DA, CM, MD), respectively; another appeared in *Leflore*, MS, 28–29 Jan (ph. PB, KB); and still another was well-described in *St. Charles*, LA, 31 Dec (KS, AM). Casual inland in Alabama, a Clay-colored Sparrow was noted in *Barbour* 11 Feb (DMW†, LF). Small assemblages (<10) of Le Conte's Sparrows were noted in *Tallahatchie* and *Quitman*, MS, throughout the season (FB). Only one report of Henslow's Sparrow emanated from Arkansas, a single 8 Jan in *Calhoun* (JC); a few more reports came from Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Lone Harris's Sparrows frequented *Shelby*, TN, 19 Dec–20 Jan (DB, VH, ph. JRW, MG) and *Cameron*, LA, 18–19 Dec (DPM, PY, KR, m.ob.). Also seen in *Cameron* 18 Dec (PY†, DPM†, KR) was a Golden-crowned Sparrow, the third or fourth for Louisiana. Heard only, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak was noted in *Orleans*, LA, 23 Jan (DPM). A male Painted Bunting in *Baldwin* 3 & 20 Jan (JD) was considered rare; at least four Louisiana parishes contributed additional records.

Western Meadowlarks in flocks numbering up to 44 were present throughout the season in *Tunica*, MS (JRW, m.ob.). Single imm. Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a rare winter species in Louisiana, appeared in *Cameron* and *St. John* 18 (DLD, SWC) & 31 Dec (MW), respectively. Five hundred Great-tailed Grackles in *Benton*, AR, 5 Feb (KN, LN) represented a state maximum; this species is certainly increasing its population level and possibly expanding its range. Baltimore Orioles were present in five Louisiana parishes and Bullock's in two. Eight Red Crossbills were counted in *Pope*, AR, 19 Dec (LA).

**Contributors (subregional editors in bold-face):** Moez Ali, Leif Anderson, David Arbour, Laurie C. Binford, Debbie Bird, Jerry Bird, Roger J. Breedlove, Wally Brines, Fred Broerman, Joe Cambre, **Steven W. Cardiff** (Louisiana; scardif@unix1.sncc.lsu.edu), Bennett Carver, David Chapman, Dan Christian (DCh), David Cimprich (DCi), Mick Coker, J. Conover, Paul Conover, Margaret Copeland (MCo), Dean R. Cutten, Raelene Cutten, Leslie Daigle, Miriam L. Davey, Mike Dillon, Jim Dickerson, Donna L. Dittmann, Debra Domeresse, Robert H. Doster, C. Gerald Drewry, Karen Fay, Lenny Fenimore, Barry Fleming, Bill Fontenot, Larry Gardella, Ralph Gray, Mark Greene, W. Howard Groce, Marty Guidry (MGU), Van Harris, Robbie Hassler, Ralph W. Havard, Harold Huddleston, James L. Ingold,

Greg D. Jackson (Alabama; GREG-DEBI.JACKSON@prodigy.net), Bill Jones, Janice Jones, Phyllis Jones, Cecil Kersting, Keith Kimberle, Helen H. Kittinger, Joseph P. Kleiman, Gene Knight, Richard L. Knight, Shannon Knight, Sterling Lacy, Guy Luneau, Charles Lyon, O. Knox Martin, Steve W. McConnell, Allen McLean, Chris Melder, Ann Miller, Al Miller (AIM), Charles Mills, Mike Mlodinow, Chuck Moffett (CMo), Sally Moffett, Mike Mullane (MMu), M. J. Musumeche, David P. Muth, B. Mac Myers, Joe Neal, Carlton Nell, Nancy Newfield, Kenny Nichols, LaDonna Nichols, Glenn Ousset, **Helen Parker** (Arkansas; HLPARKER@cswnet.com), **Max Parker** (Arkansas), Dianne Patterson, Jim Patterson, James V. Peavy, Rob Peebles, William R. Peebles,

Stacey J. Peterson, T. David Pitts, Dick Preston, R. Dan Purrington, John Puschock, Shawn E. Reed, Robert R. Reid, Virginia B. Reynolds, Mike Rhodes, Dave Roark, Ken Rosenberg, **Terence L. Schiefer** (Mississippi; tschiefer@entomology.msstate.edu), John P. Severnair, Michael A. Seymour, Katherine Siebel, Damien J. Simbeck, Gini Simpson, Ruth Singletery, Terry Singletery, Chris A. Sloan, Barbara H. Stedman, Stephen J. Stedman, Bill Summerour, Betsy Tetlow, Phil C. Tetlow, Mark Van Hoose, Bill Vermillion (BVe), Bo Verser, **Martha G. Waldron** (w. Tennessee; waldronm@ten-nash.ten.k12.tn.us), Phillip Wallace, Donald M. Ware, Melvin Weber, Dennis Welch, Bill Wimley, Larry Witherspoon, Chris Witt, Peter Yaukey, Linda Zempel. 

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