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# Southern Atlantic Coast



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The weather this summer included relatively average temperatures with no prolonged hot spells. Precipitation was below average in most places, at least until late July. This meant a generally successful season for the breeding birds in the Region. Many observers reported that numbers of young and family groups seen were “up.” Coinciding with this nesting success, the number of real rarities was down. Is there any correlation between mild breeding season weather and fewer wandering, nonbreeding birds?

**Abbreviations:** C. Hatt. (Cape Hatteras, NC); E.L.H. (E. L. Huie Land Application Facility, Clayton, GA); S.S.S. (Savannah Spoil Site, Jasper, SC).

## LOONS TO WOOD STORK

Summer reports of loons are not too unusual, but a Common Loon in full alternate plumage at North R., *Carteret*, NC 8 Jul (R&SB) was a surprise, as most summer loons are not in definitive alternate plumage. Pelagic trips off North Carolina once again found rare *Pterodromas*. On a trip out of Oregon Inlet 10 Jun, one **Bermuda Petrel** and one **Fea's Petrel** were observed (PG et al.). The more often-recorded Herald Petrel was located twice, with singles off Hatteras 8 & 28 Jul (BP et al.). Numbers of Black-capped Petrels, shearwaters, and storm-petrels were uneventful, with one exception. For some reason, **Manx Shearwaters** were present off Hatteras over most of the summer. One was found 7 Jul, an amazing count of 7–8 was made 8 Jul, and one was seen as late as 29 Jul (BP et al.). One wonders if the species had trouble at its breeding

locations in the North Atlantic? As usual, several seabirds were found on beaches this summer. Several Greater Shearwaters were found dead or dying in the C. Lookout, NC area in late Jun (JF, v. o.), and an Audubon's Shearwater was picked up at Blackbeard I. N.W.R., GA 17 Jul (MR).

Most unusual inland was the flock of 6 American White Pelicans in flight over the Etowah R., *Bartow*, GA 9 Jun (JS, BD). Where were these birds headed? The best count of this species was an impressive 136 at the S.S.S. 30 Jul (SC). Another rare inland pelican was the imm Brown at Lake Park, *Lowndes*, GA 3 Jun (KA). Magnificent Frigatebirds graced all three states, with singles at Folly Beach, SC 1 Jun (TN), C Lookout, NC 2 Jun (JK et al., *fide* JF), and Gould's Inlet, GA 6 Jun (*fide* LT). As is usual with this species, all individuals were present briefly and gone the next day.

Long-legged waders were present at inland sites as usual. The more interesting reports included an unexplainable American Bittern near Laurinburg, NC 22–26 Jul (BG), an ad Little Blue Heron in *Greene*, GA 24 Jun (PS), and 14 Cattle Egrets at Rome, GA 7 Jun (MD). Reddish Egrets were reported less frequently this year, with only singles from North and South Carolina, and the best Georgia counts involving just 3 individuals. Wood Storks apparently did well in the Region this summer. The rookery (now two years running) at the Amphitheater Pond area of Jekyll I., GA included at least 62 nests during Jun (LT). Also, a wandering stork was unusual inland near Douglas, *Coffee*, GA 7 Jul (BZ).

## WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was a surprise at the S.S.S. 19 Jul (SC). This individual was possibly from the nearby ACE Basin flock, although reports of these birds have been lacking of late. It would be nice to know the origin of these and other Black-bellieds in our Region. Several noteworthy summering ducks included an American Wigeon at Emory Univ., Atlanta, GA 14–31 Jul+ (JB et al.), a Blue-winged Teal in *Bartow*, GA 9

Jun (JS, BD), 2 Ring-necked Ducks at E.L.H. all season (no breeding reported; CL et al.), and a Red-breasted Merganser on the Shallotte R., Brunswick, NC 16 Jun (BPe).

Kites continue to be reported frequently across the Region. Very unusual for mid-summer were the 2–3 Swallow-tailed Kites in the Buxton, NC area 2–3 Jul (ML). The best count of Mississippi Kites was of 40 seen in one flock in the Ventosa area of Halifax, NC 9 Jun (RD). The few known North Carolina breeding locations were successful, according to those who monitored them. Northern Harriers were present at Alligator R. N.W.R., NC with 2–3 being found as late as 12 Jul (JL). Breeding most likely occurred, although no evidence was found. Noteworthy summer sightings of Sharp-shinned Hawks included singles in Jasper, SC 11 Jun (WC) and at E.L.H. 28 Jul (CL). Also locally unusual in summer near the coast was a Broad-winged Hawk at Conway, SC 21 Jul (GP). Breeding season reports of American Kestrel are always worth noting. One was in Bartow, GA 9 Jun (JS, BD), and 2 ads. and one imm. were at the Cherry Hospital area of Wayne, NC 1 Jul (RD).

## PLOVERS THROUGH TERNS

The fall migration of shorebirds started as usual in Jul. Some of the more interesting inland reports included 2 Black-bellied Plovers near Rome, GA 28 Jul (JS, BD), a Sanderling at Jordan Lake, NC 21 Jul (JP), 29 Stilt Sandpipers at E.L.H. 25 Jul (CL), and 4 Short-billed Dowitchers at E.L.H. 28 Jul (CL). The Upland Sandpiper migration produced just a few: 2 at the New Hanover County Airport, NC 28 Jul (SCo) and one at the Bucksport Sod Farm, SC 29 Jul (ST). A Whimbrel at Jekyll I., GA 8 Jul (IT) was early for that s. location. There was another Ruff found at the S.S.S. 10 Jul (PS). This site has become one of the more dependable for finding Ruffs. Wilson's Phalarope reports included one at Pea I. N.W.R., NC 21 Jul (R&PT) and a peak of 13 at the usual S.S.S. location 30 Jul (SC).

Parasitic Jaegers are normally hard to come by in summer; thus of note were singles at C. Hatt. 22 Jun (SCa) and off Hatteras 29 Jul (BP et al.). Very rare and unprecedented for mid-summer was a Long-tailed Jaeger off Hatteras 7 Jul (BP et al.). Less unusual were migrant Long-tailed off Hatteras later in the month, 28 & 29 Jul (BP et al.). A gull photographed on the beach at the Cedar I., NC Ferry Terminal 8 Jul (R&SB) looked like an imm. Iceland at first, but was later thought to be some kind of hybrid due to several structural characters. Whatever it was, it was a most unusual sighting for mid-summer. Georgia had several summer Lesser



This Manx Shearwater was one of several spotted off Hatteras Island, North Carolina this summer; it is normally quite rare in summer in the Gulf Stream. Photograph by James Cameron.

Black-backed Gulls again, with the best count being 2 at St. Simons I. 6 Jul (GK, DD). Noteworthy inland terns included a Caspian at L. Wheeler, Wake, NC 9 Jun (SS) and a Least at E.L.H. 16 Jun (JS et al.). The latter, very rare that far inland, represented about the 3rd sighting for that location. Sooty Terns are found onshore almost annually. This year's reports included one in the lower Cape Fear R., NC in Jun (*vide* JO), one on New Dump I., Core Sound, NC 24 Jun (MB et al.), and one found dead at St. Simons I., GA 1 Jul (DD). And finally, a count of 250 Black Terns at Wolf I., GA 14 Jun (BW) was excellent for the summer.

## DOVES THROUGH WAXWING

The Beaufort, NC area still hosted White-winged Doves, with a pair present all season (SB, JF et al.). There have been White-wingeds here since about 1998. The only other report of this species was of one at a feeder in Douglas, GA 5 Jul (AB). Unprecedented in the Region, **Short-eared Owls** remained at Alligator R. N.W.R., NC throughout the summer, with at least 4 being seen several times (*vide* JL, v. o.) Although no definite breeding evidence was noted, nesting was certainly possible. The hummingbird migration started in Jul as usual, and at least one *Selasphorus* was noted, an imm. male at Simpsonville, SC 31 Jul (PW).

Providing a very rare summer report, an Olive-sided Flycatcher was observed at Pine Log W.M.A, Bartow, GA 29 Jul (GS), most likely a very early migrant. Several Willow Flycatchers were out of place with one in Forsyth, GA 15 Jun (JFl) and one in Cabarrus, NC 19 Jun (DS). The Region's two known Scissor-tailed Flycatcher nest sites were successful again this year: the

Monroe, NC birds raised 4 young (AO), and the McDonough, GA pair raised 3 in the first and one in the 2nd nesting (GM, v. o.). Of interest, an *additional* ad. male showed up at the Monroe site 5–9 Jul (AO)!

North Carolina's 5th **Black-whiskered Vireo** was at Baldhead I. 6–22 Jun (GMO, SCo, v. o.) There may have been 2 birds, as several observers heard 2 different birds singing at the same time. One of the birds was seen in company with a Red-eyed Vireo most of the time. The Anilorac Farm, Orange, NC Warbling Vireos successfully raised young as of 3 Jun (STh) for the 2nd year in a row.

House Wrens were found far to the e. on the Outer Banks this summer, with one at Southern Shores, NC 9 Jun (JL) and a pair on Collington I., NC in Jun (*vide* JL). A Gray-cheeked Thrush singing on Roanoke I., NC 19 Jun (JL) was very late, even for this notoriously late migrant. Rare summer reports away from the usual breeding range of American Robin included one at Blackbeard N.W.R., GA 5 Jun (PS) and one at Bainbridge, GA 21–31 Jul (MBe). Cedar Waxwings often linger to the e. of the normal breeding range. This season's reports included 5–6 in mainland Dare, NC 18 Jun and 3 in Manteo, NC 13 Jul (JL).

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Reports concerning warblers were mostly about late-spring or early-fall migrants. One or 2 Black-throated Blue Warblers were late at the Savannah River Site, SC in early Jun (*vide* PC). Early migrants included a Black-and-white Warbler at Hofwyl Plantation, Darien, GA 6 Jul (DD) and a Northern Waterthrush at the S.S.S. 10 Jul (PS). The known breeding range of

Black-throated Green Warbler was extended southward in Georgia when up to 8 singing males and recently fledged juvs. were found at Pine Log W.M.A. 21 Jun (GB). There were also some lingering sparrows this summer, with a Savannah Sparrow being well described at the Aiken, SC Airport 28 Jun (*fide* AW) and a White-throated Sparrow at a feeder in Southern Shores, NC 17 Jun (*fide* JL). Breeding Dickcissels are always noteworthy in the Region. The pair from the spring season at Anilorac Farm, Orange, NC had eggs by 24 Jun and later fledged 3 young (KF, STh). Other Dickcissels this summer included 2 singing males near Cartersville, Bartow, GA 9 Jun (JS, BD) and one to 2 near Pettigrew St. Pk., NC 17 Jun (HL et al.). Very rare in mid-summer, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was at a feeder on St. Simons I., GA 8-9 Jul (EY). Another early migrant, especially that far s., was the Baltimore Oriole at Bear I., SC 14 Jul (DB). Red Crossbills are notoriously erratic in their wanderings and nestings. This summer, nesting was confirmed at Pine Log W.M.A., GA when 2 ads. with one juv. were seen 20 Jun (GB). There were also at least 5 others noted in the immedi-

ate area, so additional nesting could have taken place. And finally, a Pine Siskin at a feeder in Hopkins, Richland, SC 7 Jun (*fide* TK) was quite late, especially for that area of the state.

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