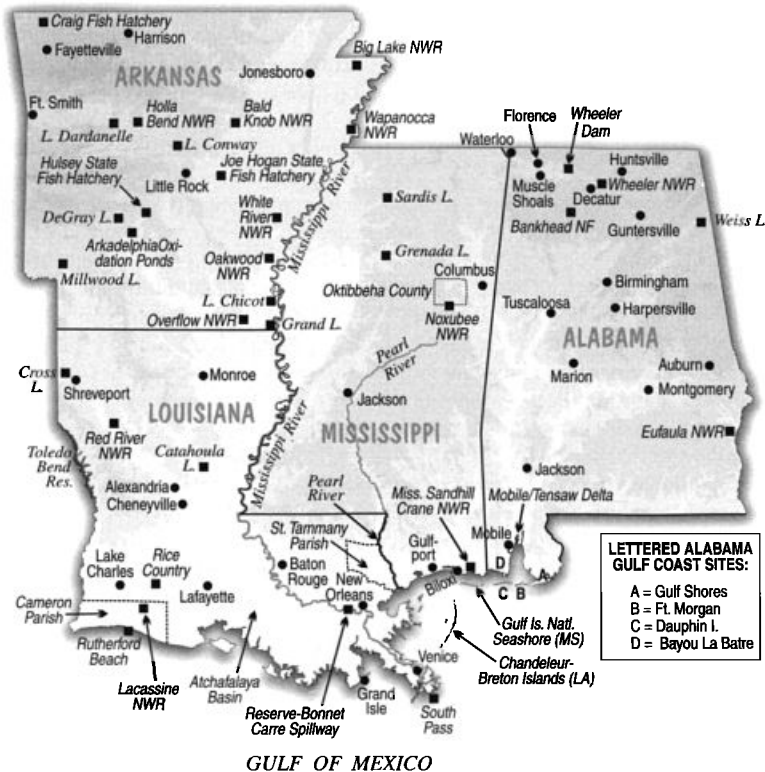


# Central Southern



## Robert D. Purrington

Department of Physics

Tulane University

New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

(danny@tulane.edu)

This report is being written in the wake of the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Virtually the entire coastline of Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as parts of Texas and Alabama, were damaged beyond anything seen since Hurricane Camille of 1969. Entire communities, even parishes, were wiped out or rendered uninhabitable, the city of New Orleans will take decades to rebuild, and the Chandeleur Islands, a major breeding area for colonial waterbirds, are essentially gone, reduced to mere shoals by Katrina. Inevitably, some observations in this report, or data presented here, may have been rendered moot by the later storms.

Tropical activity in the Gulf of Mexico began with Tropical Storm Arlene, which went ashore on the Florida panhandle on 11

June, the first of six tropical storms or hurricanes that made landfall in the Gulf states and Mexico in June and July. Three of the six were hurricanes. Hurricane Cindy, which made landfall in southeastern Louisiana on 5 July, caused significant tree damage and overwashed the Chandeleur Islands not long after the peak of breeding in the huge tern colonies there. Hurricane Dennis made landfall as a Category 3 storm near the Alabama-Florida line on 10 July, less than a week after Cindy, while Hurricane Emily and Tropical Storm Gert made landfall in Mexico. Cindy and especially Dennis produced interesting and important records along the coast and drove many birds well inland. The storms had a largely unknown impact on birds that nest in coastal areas or on barrier islands.

Lastly, some reorganization: this Region will henceforth include just the states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi. Florida's westernmost reaches will join the rest of that state in the new Florida Region, covering the entire state. Bob and Lucy Duncan will continue their work as editors of the Central Southern region, so autumn observations should be sent to them for inclusion in what will be a memorable Fall Migration seasonal report.

## LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

A Red-throated Loon in Tallapoosa, AL 3 Jun (TRP, CK) established the 2nd summer record for the state and the first inland. Records of Pied-billed Grebes, uncommon and erratic breeders in Alabama, came from Shelby 10 Jun (a pair; JG, BCG) and Mobile 8 Jul (one bird; DD, CD), both noteworthy. A Band-rumped Storm-Petrel was watched from shore for over three hours in the wake of onshore winds from Tropical Storm Cindy 6 Jul in Santa Rosa, FL (RAD, LD, m.ob.). An imm. Masked Booby, a species casual in the Florida panhandle, was picked up on the beach at Panama City 2 Jun (NE), rehabilitated, and eventually released. The first record of Northern Gannet for Arkansas (pending acceptance by the state's B.R.C.) was of one on Bull Shoals L., Marion 25 Jul (DN, ML, RL, DL). The bird, which was present for one hour, was seen successfully diving for fish in the lake. Sand I., MS had single gannets 30 Jun and 14 Jul (SJD). There were inland records of American White Pelicans from Marshall and Marengo, AL (HH, DS, JS) as well as in Lowndes, Oktibbeha, Leflore, and Humphreys, MS (RW, LW, TS, SJD) during the period. Also far inland at the height of the breeding season were ad. Brown Pelicans 3 Jun in St. Martin, LA (VR, BO, DA). Neotropical Cormorants were reported 17 Jul from Humphreys and Yazoo N.W.R., MS (SJD, GK, SK). One 22 Jul in Iberville, LA (JH) was at the extreme e. edge of the species' breeding range.

An American Bittern 7 Jun in Cameron, LA, was very late (JH). As a rare breeder in the Mountain region of Alabama, a Least Bittern 21 Jun in Shelby (HHK) was noteworthy; there were also records from Noxubee, Oktibbeha, and Washington, MS totaling 4 birds (TS, MS, MS), while over 20 were in Desha, AR 25 Jun (DB, SDV). Of a half-dozen records of White Ibis from extreme n. Alabama 26 Jun-23 Jul (DJS, PDK), at least three could reasonably be attributed to the effects of Hurricane Dennis; 40 were seen 30 Jul in Jefferson, AR (BE). Up to 45 Plegadis ibis in Mobile 15 Jul (BCG) represented a high count for Alabama, as did 28+ Glossy Ibis the previous day and 3-4 White-faced Ibis 15-17 Jul at the same spot (ph.; HEH, TH, TSi). Two White-faced Ibis 17 Jul at Yazoo N.W.R. (SJD) were also of interest. Two Roseate Spoonbills 21 Jun in Ft. Walton Beach, FL (RAD) established the 5th area record, and another 10 Jul in Oktibbeha, MS (MK) was the earliest ever in the area by two weeks. Another 15 Jul in Washington, LA (KS) was notable, and as many as 44 were seen 17 Jul in Sunflower, MS (SJD, GK, SK). Records of Wood Storks included up to 50 at Noxubee N.W.R., MS 16 Jun+ (TS, DR, m.ob.), 300+ in Iberville, LA 22 Jul (JH), and 500+ in Dallas/Perry, AL 19 Jul (TRP). One seen displaying 25 Jun in

*Coffee*, AL (DMW, CW) was thought likely to be nesting.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued to make news in the Region, highlighted by 11 on 15 Jun at Ft. Walton Beach (RAD) for the 3rd area record, plus two 17 Jul sightings by Dinsmore: 4 in *Leflore* and three pairs at Yazoo N.W.R., MS. They continue to nest on Bayou Sauvage N.W.R. in e. New Orleans. Single Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were seen 25 Jun and 23 Jul in *Desha*, AR (DB, SDV). There were several reports of summering waterfowl, most of which are difficult to evaluate without information on whether the birds were capable of flight. Of special interest, however, was a pair of Mottled Ducks with 9 young 1 Jun in *Desha*, AR (KN, LDN), the first nesting record for the state. As many as 38 were noted there in late Jul (KN, DB).

Reports of Swallow-tailed Kites included a the first known hatching of eggs in Arkansas since the 1940s, 1 Jun at White River N.W.R. (KN, LDN, DB), though the nestlings were later found dead, probably the result of owl predation. The peak of 44 in *Autauga*, AL 30 Jul (GJH) was noteworthy, and Jennifer Coulson's ongoing studies in the Atchafalaya and Pearl River Basins yielded the following numbers: 59 individuals 19 Jul in the Atchafalaya (JOC, PS), 156 the next day in the Pearl River basin, LA/MS (JOC, PS, ICF), and 177 in the same basin 28 Jul (JOC, PS, ZL). An ad. Bald Eagle 9 & 11 Jul in *Oktibbeha*, AR (TS) was unexpected in view of their usual May–Sep absence. While a Sharp-shinned Hawk as late as 4 Jun in Mobile (MVH) established the first Jun record for the Gulf coast of Alabama, nine reports of summering Cooper's Hawks, including one definite breeding, added to evidence of the robust recovery of this species in n. and cen. Arkansas (KN, MML, JN, MW). A pair of Swainson's Hawks nesting in *Vermilion* fledged 2 young by 26 Jul (ph. CH, DP) for one of the first documented nestings in Louisiana. There were three Arkansas records of Swainson's Hawk, apparently involving 4 individuals, all from *Benton* 2–30 Jul (JN, MML). Three records of Red-tailed Hawks in *St. Martin*, *St. Mary*, and *Iberia* (JH), including one pair, suggested nesting near the Louisiana Gulf coast. Five reports of American Kestrels from Arkansas included at least 29 ads. in five counties in the nw. part of the state (JN, SJG, MML); the species is very scarce in the nesting season in the Mississippi Delta counties of Arkansas, despite what would appear to be extensive suitable habitat in which Loggerhead Shrikes, for instance, are numerous.

## SHOREBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

While 11 Black-bellied Plovers 30 Jun on

Horn I., MS (SJD) were probably "summering," Snowy Plovers 30 Jun (3) and 14 Jul (4) on Horn I. and on the latter date on E. Ship I., MS (11) were probably breeding birds (SJD). A Wilson's Plover survey carried out on Louisiana beaches found 759 pairs (fide R. Demay).

A group of 30 Semipalmated Plovers 19 Jun at Port Fourchon, LA (RDP) was unprecedented for the "hiatus" period between migrations. The only Piping Plovers reported were on Horn I. (one) and E. Ship I. (3) 14 Jul by Dinsmore, 2 far inland in *Red River*, LA 16 Jul (NM, JM, DB), and another 27 Jul in *Prairie*, AR (KN). American Oystercatchers nested this season on both Horn and E. Ship Is. (SJD). There were records of



Uncommon on the Alabama coast in summer, this Glossy Ibis was well documented at Mobile 16 July 2005. Photograph by Terry Hartley.

single Willets in inland *Wilcox* (GDJ, DGJ) and *Henry* (LW), AL on 11 Jul in the wake of Hurricane *Dennis*. Three were found 27 Jul in *Prairie*, AR (KN). Although some Marbled Godwits reach the coast by mid-Jul, one at Ft. Walton Beach, FL 5 Jul (RAD, CB) and 27 on E. Ship I., MS on 14 Jul (SJD) were a bit surprising. Another was in *Cameron*, LA 20 Jul (JH), and one was in *Prairie*, AR 29 Jun (RH). While a single Semipalmated Sandpiper 16 Jun in *Benton*, AR (MML) was a late northbound migrant, 20 in *Humphreys*, MS 14 Jul (SJD, GK, SK) were evidently southbound. Two Western Sandpipers 30 Jun on Horn I., MS (SJD) were either very early fall migrants or summering, and the same could be said of 2 Least Sandpipers 2 Jul in *Tallahatchie*, MS (SJD); 920 were counted 17 Jul in *Humphreys*, MS (SJD, GK, SK). A total of 174 northbound White-rumped Sandpipers 5 Jun at the Craig Fish Hatchery, *Benton*, AR (MML) was impressive, and a single Pectoral Sandpiper there 16 Jun (MML) was quite late; one a day earlier in Ft.

Walton Beach, FL (RAD, CB) was the first area record for Jun. Single basic-plumaged Dunlin 30 Jun at Horn I. and 14 Jul on E. Ship I., MS (SJD) were evidently summering a distinctly unusual occurrence. A Stilt Sandpiper 5 Jul at Ft. Walton Beach (RAD, CB) was the earliest ever by six days for nw Florida. A Wilson's Phalarope 5 Jun in *Benton*, AR (MML) was unusually late.

There were four inland reports of storm-driven Laughing Gulls 11–12 Jul in *Wilcox*, *Henry*, *Lee*, and *Colbert*, AL (EB, MB, PM, SJD, GDJ, DGJ, LFG), following landfall of *Dennis*; an earlier 22 Jun record in *Clarke* AL (HHK, TK) was not obviously storm-related. Another was seen in 27 Jul *Prairie*, AR (KN). A Ring-billed Gull 27 Jul in *Prairie*, AR (KN) was definitely out of season. Dinsmore noted a basic-plumaged ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull 14 Jul on E. Ship I., MS. Rooftop-nesting of Gull-billed Terns has been much reduced in the New Orleans area, whether through human interference (such as a change in roofing materials, as seen in Florida construction) or other causes; this summer, there was a small colony on a Metairie, LA shopping center. Dinsmore found 19 nests 30 Jun on Sand I., MS. Perhaps the most interesting bird of the season was a probable basic-plumaged ad. Sandwich Tern x Elegant Tern hybrid in a tern colony 30 Jun on Sand I., MS (SJD); also here were 30,000+ ad. Sandwich Terns and 18,246 nests, plus 5000+ ad. Royal Terns with 2927 nests. Royal Terns 11 Jul in *Wilcox* (GDJ, DGJ) and *Henry*, AL (EB, MB) were evidently fleeing *Dennis*. Single Common Terns were seen 12 Jul in *Tishomingo*, MS (SJD), following *Dennis*, and 27 Jul in *Prairie*, AR (KN). Forty-five Sooty Terns 6 Jul at Pensacola Beach (LC, RAD, LD), the largest number ever for the area, were evidently fleeing Hurricane *Cindy*, and there were four inland records from Alabama in the days immediately following *Dennis*: 17 birds on 11 Jul in *Henry* (EB, MB, LW) and one the same day in *Lee* (PM), 5 birds on 12 Jul in *Colbert* (SJD, DJS), and up to 5 birds in *Lauderdale/Lawrence* 13 Jul (DJS). Four more Sooty Terns were seen 12 Jul in *Tishomingo*, MS (SJD), and 2 were found dead 14 Jul in *Franklin*, FL (TEL). All were clearly storm waifs. One Sooty Tern was present at the Sand I., MS tern colony 20 Jun (SJD). Least Terns were in *Humphreys*, MS, where one was seen 25 Jul (MSt, JS, BS), and in *Desha*, AR, where 32 ads. and 3 imms. were counted 30 Jun (KN, LDN).

## DOVES THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

A pair of White-winged Doves 9 & 12 Jun in *Saline*, AR (Cma, MBa, MBo, CS, CMI, DS, ph. LY) may have been nesting, and the same is true for early-Jun birds in *Bossier*, *E. Baton Rouge*, and *St. Martin*, LA (JI, DL, JH),

plus 3 in Iberville, LA (VR, SWC, DLD). The total of 27 Whip-poor-wills recorded 4 Jun in *Coosa/Tallapoosa*, AL (LFG, GDJ) represented a very large number for the s. edge of the species' breeding range. Seven Willow Flycatchers, representing at least three territorial males, were found 4 Jun in *Boone* in extreme n. Arkansas (JS). A **Tropical Kingbird** on *Grand Isle*, LA 23 Jul (DM) was documented with videotape, including recordings of diagnostic vocalizations; there is one previous record for the state. Six reports of nesting Western Kingbirds received from *Crawford*, *Sebastian*, *Mississippi*, and *Miller*, AR (BB, TB, Zach Coulson, CM) involved at least 50 birds, highlighted by 35 in one block in downtown Ft. Smith (BB, TB). **Gray Kingbirds** nested for the 3rd consecutive year along the New Orleans lakefront (EW, ph. DM, m.ob.). Three nesting attempts involving two pairs, including two nests abandoned after Hurricane *Cindy*, finally produced 3 young in mid-Aug (DM). In Alabama, a pair that fledged one young bird 18 Jul in *Baldwin* (BM) represented the first nesting in the state since 1997. Four reports of actual or probable nesting of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in Jun-Jul (NC, BW, RSH, DH, JJ, SJ, TRP) substantiate the continued expansion of breeding in cen. Alabama, and there were six more reports from n. Arkansas, most involving single birds (GH, GH*i*, DB, SDV), but 10 were noted 17 Jul in *Randolph* (GH).

## VIREOS THROUGH WAXWINGS

At least 5 singing male Bell's Vireos were heard at *Stuttgart*, AR 20 & 22 Jun (WS, LY). A pair of Warbling Vireos 3 Jun in *St. Martin* (VR, BO) suggested breeding, as did a pair of Blue-headed Vireos 25 Jun in *Clay*, AL (GJH), at the s. edge of the species' breeding range. There was at least one report of nesting Tree Swallows from Alabama, a rare but increasing breeder there, 10 Jun in *Etowah* (RRS, MBS), involving over 30 individuals, including many fledglings. Five Northern Rough-winged and 5 Bank Swallows 10 Jul in e. New Orleans seen riding northerly winds from *Dennis* were extraordinary (PY, DM); another Bank Swallow was seen 19 Jul in *Lee*, MS (WP). Cliff Swallows were found nesting for the first time in *Attala* and *Winston*, MS (JS, FH, DW, VW, TS), and Arkansas obtained its first record of Cave Swallow at L. Millwood 29–30 May and 2 Jun (CM, KN, LDN). Bewick's Wrens, which have declined significantly in Arkansas since the 1950s, were seen in *Benton*, AR 4 & 18 Jun (JN). House Wrens, rare breeders in Alabama, were found at two locations in *Randolph* 23–24 Jun (RLW). A singing Sedge Wren 23 Jul in *Benton* (JN) was unexpected away from the rice-growing areas of Arkansas; one was also seen 21–22 Jul in

*Coahoma*, MS (RC, ph. SJD). The first Jun record of Ruby-crowned Kinglet for Alabama was of one 16 Jun in *Tuscaloosa* (JTG). Nesting Cedar Waxwings noted 19 Jun in *Tallapoosa*, AL represented the southernmost confirmed breeding in the state, and 2 each in *Benton* and *Washington*, AR 2 & 17 Jun (MMI; JN), respectively, were also unexpected. Ten in *West Carroll*, LA 1 Jun (RO) were late migrants, while one in *Calhoun*, MS 4 Jun (TS) could have been either a late migrant or a local nester.

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

There were three reports of Blue-winged Warblers from the s. edge of their range, including a pair 7 Jun in *Tallapoosa*, AL (BKF); 3 territorial males 12 Jun in *Saline* (LY, DS) and a silent ad. 3 Jul in *Faulkner* (HR) were even out of their Arkansas breeding range. Two singing male Chestnut-sided Warblers 9 Jun in *Jackson*, AL (ECS) might have been attempting to nest there. A singing male Black-throated Green Warbler heard on a B.B.S. route in *Perry*, AR 9 Jun (HP) was unexpected, and a fledgling 25 Jun in *Clay*, AL was quite far s. for breeding in that state. Also quite far s. for Alabama if nesting were a Worm-eating Warbler in *Conecuh* 25 Jun (DMW, CW), 5 Ovenbirds in *Coosa/Tallapoosa* 4 Jun (GJH, MH), and single Louisiana Waterthrushes 6 Jun in *Baldwin* (CK) and 5 Jul in *Mobile* (RLW).

The total of 28 Scarlet Tanagers recorded 4 Jun in *Coosa/Tallapoosa*, AL represented a very high number so far s., and a singing male 18 Jun in *Choctaw*, MS (LT, ST) was also unusual. Up to 7 Bachman's Sparrows were recorded by Schiefer at *Noxubee N.W.R.*, MS during the season. There were four reports of likely breeding Lark Sparrows in new sites in Alabama—in *Greene*, *Tallapoosa*, *Elmore*, and *Jackson* (RR, JJ, LFG, SWM)—and 6 were recorded in *Noxubee*, MS 5 Jun (TS, MS). Neal recorded 27 individuals 24 Jul in *Benton* and *Washington*, AR. Grasshopper Sparrows were found nesting in at least three sites in the *Starkville*, MS area, including 24 Jun in *Lowndes* (PB), a new nesting locality. At least 25 pairs and six nests were found on a single farm in *Coahoma*, MS (RC). There were three reports from *Benton*, AR totaling 7 birds (JN). Up to 7 Henslow's Sparrows were seen and/or heard 9 & 23 Jul in *Benton*, AR (JN, MML) at the s. edge of their breeding range.

Remarkably, there were two separate Jul records of **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in Louisiana: an ad. male in *Lafayette* 14 Jul (ph. RM) and another in *Cameron* 20 Jul (JH). A Dickcissel 9 Jun in *St. Bernard*, LA (GO) was noteworthy; its breeding status in se. Louisiana is obscure. An ad. male Yellow-headed Blackbird in *Miller*, AR 26 Jun established the first summer record for that area

(CM). From the spring season, an ad. male Shiny Cowbird was in *Franklin*, FL 21 May (BS). There were two records of Red Crossbills from *Yell*, AR: an ad. male 9 Jul (JD) and a juv. 18 Jul (JD, NB). Two Pine Siskins in *Macon* 3 Jun (TH) tied the latest ever in spring for Alabama, but as many as 3 were visiting a feeder in *Benton*, AR regularly 12 Jun–21 Jul (CR, ET). If 2 female American Goldfinches 5–6 Jun in *Rapides*, LA (JH) were late, then 2 in *West Feliciana*, LA 20 Jun and 3–5 Jul (DPB, TPB) were thoroughly out of season.

**Observers** (subregional editors in bold-face): David Anderson, Maury Baker (MBA), David P. Banowitz, Tracey P. Banowitz, Phillip Barbour, Dick Baxter, Bill Beall, Toka Beall, E. Boehm, M. Boehm, Nelva Bohannan, Denise Bonck, Morris Boyd (MBo), Steven W. Cardiff, Laura Catterton, Ross Conover, Jennifer Coulson, Zack Coulson, Neil Cowles, Jack David, Sarah DeViney, Stephen J. Dinsmore, Donna Dittmann, Doug Dortch, Carrie Dortch, **Robert Duncan** (nw. Florida), **Lucy Duncan** (nw. Florida), Bill Ellis, Nancy Evou, Inga C. Falterman, Barry K. Fleming, Lawrence F. Gardella, Ben C. Garmon, Jeff T. Garner, Jessica Germany, Sally Jo Gibson, R. Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, G. J. Harber, T. Hartley, Frances Henne, Robert Herron, Tyler Hicks, Gary Higgins (GH*i*), Henry Hill, M. Hodges, Charlie Hohorst, George Hoover, H. E. Horne, Jay Huner, Jim Ingold, Debra Jackson, **Greg Jackson** (Alabama), Jud Johnston, Silvia Johnston, Matt Kaminski, Ty Keith, Charles Kennedy, Helen H. Kittinger, Paul D. Kittle, **Joe Kleiman** (Louisiana) Gene Knight, Sharon Knight, Dan Lane, Matt Larson, Ryan Larson, Danny Larson, Zack Lehmann, Thomas Lewis, John McBride, Steve W. McConnell, Bailey McKay, Nancy Menasco, Ruby Michel, Charles Mills, Paul Milotis, Carolyn Minson (CM*i*), Mike Mlodinow, David Muth, Joe Neal, Kenny Nichols, LaDonna Nichols, Dennis Novoy, Brian O'Shea, Glen Ousett, Rosalie Overby, **Helen Parker** (Arkansas), Wayne Patterson, Dave Patton, Tommy R. Pratt, R. D. Purrington, Herschel Raney, Robert Reed, Van Remsen, Dave Richardson, Cathy Ross, Perry Samrow, James Sanders, Robert R. Sargent, Martha B. Sargent, **Terry Schiefer** (Mississippi), Marion Schiefer, Don Self, Judy Self, Jody Shearer, William Shepherd, Dan Shuman, T. Siegwald, D. J. Simbeck, Katie Simmons, Clint Sowards, Barbara Stedman, Mary Stevens (MSt), Jack Stewart, Bill Stripling, Lauren Thead, Sheila Thead, Ellen Turner, Mark Van Hoose, Ed Wallace, Don M. Ware, Carol Ware, Ray Watson, Louise Watson, L. West, Rick L. West, Mel White, Danny Williams, Viki Williams. 🐦