



## C. Dwight Cooley

Global climate change continues to affect weather in the Region. The season could only be characterized as warm and dry, continuing the trend of recent years. Generally, mean monthly temperatures in December and January were 3° F above the 100-year mean, while February was near 3° F below. Precipitation deficit for the season approached 18 cm, contributing to a 106-cm deficit over the past three years.

**Abbreviations:** E.N.W.R. (Eufaula N.W.R., AL); N.N.W.R. (Noxubee N.W.R., MS); W.N.W.R. (Wheeler N.W.R., AL).

## WATERFOWL

The 50-year decline of Canada Goose populations in the Region has been well documented. Without the many thousands of Canada Geese to sort through, birders are now finding that other species of goose are regular winter inhabitants. In Alabama, Greater White-fronted Geese were noticeable throughout the season at W.N.W.R., *Limestone/Morgan*, where a maximum of 85 was recorded 14 Feb (CDC, DSM, SGS). Away from this Regional center of distribution, 2 were near Gulf Shores 22 Feb (RAD, LRD) and one was near Magnolia Springs 25 Feb (MJJ), both in Baldwin. Ross's Goose continues to be widely reported, with an Alabama state maximum of 18 at W.N.W.R., *Limestone* 16 Dec (SWM) and 27 near McLeod, *Noxubee*, MS 10 Feb (TLS). In Mississippi, up to 261 Cackling Geese were in *Sunflower* 9-10 Feb, while one was in *Humphreys* 9 Feb and 2 at Yazoo N.W.R., *Yazoo* 10 Feb (SJD, PB, KB). *Trumpeter Swans* found their way to Mississippi, where 3 ads. and a juv. were near Tunica, *Tunica* 18 Dec (PDu, GK, SK, DDW); one of the ads. had been collared as a juv. near Harpster, OH in

Aug 2005. An imm. Tundra Swan was at W.N.W.R., AL 11 Dec+ (JMB, FBI, CDC, m.ob.).

Determining the status of American Black Duck in coastal Alabama is challenging due to the presence of resident Mottled Ducks; one seen near Elberta, *Baldwin* 30 Dec (CDC, LBR, HD, AD, PD) during the Gulf Shores C.B.C. was of interest. Greater Scaup, once considered rare in the Region, have been recorded with increasing regularity over the past 10 years. Four males and a female were above Walter F. George Dam, *Henry*, AL 2 Dec (JFF, EH et al.), while 3 males and a female were near Morgan City, *Leflore*, MS 31 Dec (PB, DDW, NW, KS) on the Sidon C.B.C. Scoter reports are sporadic in some years, and this year was no exception. Sixteen Surf Scoters were recorded on Mobile Bay, *Baldwin*, AL 25 Jan (BS et al.), while a female was on Browning Creek L., *Oktibbeha*, MS 17 Dec+ (TLS, MS). Two White-winged Scoters, including an ad. female and a female-type at Fayette, *Fayette*, AL 13 Feb+ (JJ et al.), were the only ones reported. While the only Black Scoter reported was an imm. on Dauphin I., *Mobile*, AL 1 Jan (LBR, JFP), the 30+ unidentified scoters near Gulf Shores, *Baldwin*, AL 27 Jan (ALM) were likely this species. Single Long-tailed Ducks were reported on the Dauphin Island C.B.C. 16 Dec (*vide* JFP) and at L. Shelby, *Baldwin* 28 Dec+ (SWM, m.ob.), both in Alabama; another was near Eupora, *Webster*, MS 22 Feb (DDW). Two female Common Mergansers were at Bear Cr., *Colbert*, AL 19 Dec (DJS); and one was on Browning Creek L., MS 9-23 Feb (TLS, MS), the 8th area record.

## LOONS THROUGH CRANES

Single Red-throated Loons were at Bear Cr., AL 19 Dec (DJS) and Waveland, *Hancock*, MS 1 Dec (NB). Pacific Loons were widely reported. In Alabama, up to 2 were at Guntersville, *Marshall* 2 Dec+ (SWM, m.ob.); one was at Spring Cr., *Lawrence* 5 Jan (DJS); and one was at Gulf Shores 27 Jan (ALM). In Mississippi, one was at Bay St. Louis, *Hancock* 17 Jan (NB). Always rare in the Region, single ad. Red-necked Grebes were reported from Guntersville, AL 2 Dec (GDJ, DGJ) and Enid L., *Yalobusha*, MS 11-16 Feb (SJD, GK, SK). Alabama's 5th Western Grebe was at Walter F. George Dam 6 Dec-19 Feb (EB, m.ob.); in Mississippi, one was on Bay Springs L., *Tishomingo* 24 Dec-10 Jan (WRP, GK, SK).

Inland wintering American White Pelicans are now almost commonplace in Alabama: the flock at W.N.W.R. peaked at 281 on 19 Dec (CDC, FB, TA, m.ob.); 43 were at Gees Bend, *Wilcox* 3 Jan (RER); 2 were near Gads-

den, *Etowah* 10-15 Jan (WJM et al.); and 3 were at E. N.W.R., *Barbour* 16 Feb (LW). Anhingas, rare inland during winter, were found on the Montgomery C.B.C., *Montgomery*, AL 30 Dec (*vide* LFG) and on Bluff L. at N.N.W.R., *Noxubee* 16 Dec-20 Feb (LC, EC, TLS), where up to 2 were seen. An imm. *Magnificent Frigatebird* at Perdido Pass, *Baldwin*, AL on the Gulf Shores C.B.C. 30 Dec (SWM) was an unexpected find.

The 13 Reddish Egrets on the Dauphin Island C.B.C. 16 Dec (m.ob.) made an excellent number for coastal Alabama in winter, and one along the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile*, AL 17 Dec (TS, JS) was unusual so far n. in winter. A Green Heron on the Birmingham C.B.C., *Jefferson*, AL 23 Dec was unusual, as was an ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (SSH) found in the same area as on last year's count. In Alabama, White Ibis wintered far inland, with 5 near Camden, *Wilcox* 3 Jan (RER); the 80+ near Hacoda, *Geneva* 26 Feb (OJ) may have been early migrants. Six dark ibis were near Morgan City, MS 31 Dec (PB, DDW, NW) on the Sidon C.B.C. The apparently declining vulture populations in some areas may be slowing; the Alabama state maximum of 458 Black Vultures and winter maximum of 318 Turkey Vultures on the Guntersville C.B.C. 26 Dec were heartening.

The 32 Ospreys recorded on the Gulf Shores C.B.C., AL 30 Dec established a new state maximum. The largest number of Northern Harriers reported was 31 in *Leflore*, MS 10 Feb (SJD, PB, KB) at a roost. Ad. Golden Eagles were reported from near Camden, *Wilcox/Dallas*, AL 3 Jan (RER); N.N.W.R., *Winston*, MS 16 Dec (TLS, MA); and near Henleyfield, *Pearl River*, MS 20 Jan (NB). Single Merlins were reported near Smith L., *Winston*, AL 23 Dec (LB); near Montgomery, AL 1 Jan (CTS, PS, LFG et al.); from Shannon, *Lee*, MS 31 Dec (WRP); and in *Tunica*, MS 20 Jan (GK, SK). Peregrine Falcons wintered in good numbers inland. In Alabama, an ad. thrilled visitors with its aerial maneuvers at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Colbert* 6 Dec-20 Feb (DJS, m.ob.), 5 were recorded on the Christmas count at W.N.W.R. 16 Dec (m.ob.), and 2 were in Birmingham 21 Jan (PER, m.ob.). In Mississippi, an ad. female was in *Tunica* 18 Jan (GK, SK).

Up to 3 Virginia Rails and 2 Soras were at the Starkville Sewage Pond South, *Oktibbeha*, MS through 20 Dec (TLS). Two Purple Gallinules near Florala, *Covington* 23 Feb (OJ) provided Alabama's 3rd winter and first inland winter record. The number of Sandhill Cranes wintering in the Region continues to increase. In Alabama, 2130 were at W.N.W.R. 10 Jan (CDC), a new state maximum; 2000+ were

near Weiss L., *Cherokee* 22 Dec (LB, WB); 63 (57 in Alabama and 6 in Georgia) were at Eu-  
faula N.W.R. 15 Dec (BKF et al.); and 5 were  
at Key Cave N.W.R., *Lauderdale* 6-23 Feb  
(SGS, CDC, RJM), a first refuge record. In  
Mississippi, 80+ were in *Tunica* 20 Jan (GK,  
SK, JRW); and 74 near McLeod 10-12 Feb  
(TLS, MS, DP, JP) was an area maximum.  
**Whooping Cranes** from the Operation Migra-  
tion Project wintered at two locations in Ala-  
bama. A female, #508, was in *Baldwin* 9 Dec-2  
Jan (BS), after which it moved to *Tangipahoa*,  
LA. A mated pair (#213 and #218) was at  
WN.W.R. 9 Jan+ (TB, CDC, m.ob.).

## SHOREBIRDS THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Winter shorebird diversity continues to be  
high in the Region. Fifty-eight American Oys-  
tercatchers on the Dauphin Island C.B.C. 16  
Dec (m.ob.) was encouraging. American Avo-  
cets wintered in *Leflore*, MS, where 24 were  
on the Sidon C.B.C. 31 Dec (SJD, BVM, PB,  
KB) and 37 were seen 10 Feb (SJD, PB, KB).  
Six Long-billed Curlews, rare in Mississippi,  
were at Moses Pier, *Harrison* 11 Feb (BB, AHe,  
m.ob.). The only report of Red Knot, a decid-  
edly declining species in the Region, was of 8  
on the Dauphin Island C.B.C. 16 Dec. A Pec-  
toral Sandpiper was found on the Christmas  
count at W.N.W.R. 16 Dec (SWM, SRM),  
where the species is only occasional in winter.  
Long-billed Dowitchers were reported in  
good numbers in Mississippi, where 196 were  
in *Sunflower* and 395 were in *Leflore*, both 10  
Feb (SJD, PB, KB).

Winter Laughing Gulls inland are always  
unusual in the Region. An ad. was at Grenada  
L., *Grenada*, MS 17 Feb (DDW). Franklin's  
Gulls have usually moved through the Region  
by early Nov, so an imm. at Perdido Pass, AL  
2 Dec (HEH, TS, JS) was noteworthy. Peak  
numbers of Bonaparte's and Ring-billed Gulls  
were 2900 on 11 Feb and 6500 on 12 Feb, re-  
spectively, at Sardis L., *Panola*, MS (SJD, GK).  
Alabama's 6th and 7th Iceland Gulls were  
imms. at Magnolia Springs 12 Jan (ALM,  
RAD, LRD, BS) and Mallard-Fox Creek  
W.M.A., *Morgan* 18 Feb (SER et al.). Lesser  
Black-backed Gulls continue to be widely re-  
ported. In Alabama, up to 4 were near Mag-  
nolia Springs through the period (BS, SWM,  
RAD, LRD); a second-year was at Wilson  
Dam 1 Jan-19 Feb (SWM, m.ob.); and an ad.  
was at Mallard-Fox Creek W.M.A. 20 Feb  
(SWM). In Mississippi, an imm. was at Bay St.  
Louis 15-17 Feb (NB). An imm. Glaucous  
Gull was at Guntersville, AL 2 Dec (DC,  
m.ob.).

The movement of White-winged Doves  
into the Region, chronicled previously in

these pages, has continued unabated. In  
coastal Alabama, where they occur year-  
round, a state maximum of 400+ was record-  
ed near Silverhill, *Baldwin* 4 Dec (BS); 4 were  
on the Dauphin Island C.B.C. 16 Dec; one  
was near Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 29 Dec (SWM);  
and 174 were on the Gulf Shores C.B.C. 30  
Dec (m.ob.). An amazing 14 Inca Doves were  
in Arcola, *Washington*, MS 10 Feb (SJD, PB,  
AB, AH). Increasingly rare away from the  
coast, the only Common Ground-Doves re-  
ported were singles in *Autauga*, AL 29 Dec  
(TRP) and near Marble Valley, *Coosa*, AL 23  
Jan (DJS). Short-eared Owl reports, all from  
Mississippi, were of 27 in *Tunica* 20 Jan (GK,  
SK, JRW), one in *Leflore* 9 Feb (SJD), and 2  
near Hillsdale, *Pearl River* 12 Feb (NB, LBo).  
A Chuck-will's-widow, rare in winter, was on  
Dauphin I., AL 26 Jan (DM).

Five hummingbird species were reported in  
the Region. The only Ruby-throated reported  
was a second-year male banded near  
Huntsville, *Madison*, AL 6 Jan (RRS, MBS). An  
ad. female Anna's was near Henleyfield, MS 8  
Dec-early Jan (NB). In Alabama, single ad.  
male and female Calliopes were captured in  
Lillian, *Baldwin*, AL 28 Dec (FB, JD, b.). The  
male had been banded the previous year at the  
site. A female was banded in Fairhope, *Baldwin*  
7 Jan (FB, DD, CD). Alabama's 12th Broad-  
tailed was banded in Mobile 27 Dec (FB, SNI).  
Rufous Hummingbirds were widely reported.  
An amazing 8, a state maximum, were on the  
Birmingham C.B.C., *Jefferson/Shelby*, AL. In  
Mississippi, an imm. male was in College Hill,  
*Lafayette* 21 Oct+ (TH, DHo, GK, SK); an ad.  
female probably spent the 5th consecutive  
winter in Starkville 25 Nov+ (RK, TK, TLS); 2  
were at Henleyfield 1 Dec-mid-Jan (NB,  
m.ob.); and an ad. female was in Columbus,  
*Lowndes* 24 Dec+ (MH et al.).

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH ORIOLES

Alabama's first winter record of **Least Fly-  
catcher** was of one near Foley, *Baldwin* 17 Feb  
(FS). An ad. male Vermilion Flycatcher was  
near Kiln, *Hancock*, MS 19 Dec-2 Feb (JB,  
NB). Western Kingbirds, as has been the case  
for the past few years, were widely reported in  
coastal areas of the Region. Fish Crows ap-  
pear to be expanding their range northward  
in Alabama. One was at Mallard-Fox Creek  
W.M.A. 20 Feb (SWM), and up to 4 were at  
W.N.W.R. 27 Feb+ (CDC), the first refuge  
record. Purple Martins arrived a bit early in  
the Region. In Alabama, 2 were near Fairhope  
13 Jan (DD, CD); one near Atmore, *Escambia*  
23 Jan (JY, DY) provided an early inland  
coastal plain record; and a male at W.N.W.R.  
12 Feb (CDC) was the earliest for the refuge.  
In Mississippi, the earliest reported arrival

was one at Waveland 29 Jan (NB). Two Tree  
Swallows at Livingston, *Sumter*, AL 16 Feb  
(JE) were early for the inland coastal plain. A  
lingering Barn Swallow was at Guntersville,  
AL 2 Dec (GDJ).

Always exciting in the Region, a Rock  
Wren, first seen in Oct, continued near Enid  
L., MS through 16 Feb (GK, SK). Given the  
decline of Bewick's Wren in e. North America,  
one near Shannon, *Lee*, MS 19 Jan (WRP)  
provided a bright spot. Two Sedge Wrens at  
Sardis Wildlife Refuge, *Lafayette*, MS 16 Dec  
(GK, VT) were late. A few Marsh Wrens win-  
ter in the Region every year. Four were on the  
C.B.C. at W.N.W.R. 16 Dec (RRS, MBS), and  
one was near Grenada L., MS 20 Dec (GK,  
SK). Without a doubt, the bird of the season  
was Alabama's 4th **Northern Wheatear** near  
Foley 3 Feb+ (JDi, KD, BS, m.ob., ph.). It re-  
mained in the area for an amazing 44 days  
and was seen by hundreds of birders.

Yellow-throated Warblers, all in Alabama,  
were one near Auburn, *Lee* 20 Dec (BKF) and  
up to 3 along the Ft. Morgan Pen., *Baldwin*  
16-19 Feb (SN). Occasional along the coast in  
winter, a Prairie Warbler was found on the  
Dauphin Island C.B.C. 16 Dec (JTW). Palm  
Warblers were reported from several areas. An  
Alabama maximum was established on the  
Gulf Shores C.B.C. 30 Dec when 378 were  
recorded. Inland, one was on the count at  
W.N.W.R. 16 Dec (SWM), and, in Mississippi,  
one was near Grenada L. 20 Dec (GK, SK). Up  
to 4 were near Macon, *Noxubee*, MS 6 Jan-10  
Feb (TLS, MS). Wilson's Warbler, occasional  
inland during winter, was near Opelika, *Lee*,  
AL 9 Dec, where a male was seen (QL). Re-  
ports of Yellow-breasted Chats came from the  
Ft. Morgan Pen., AL 1 Jan (MJJ) and Old Riv-  
er W.M.A., *Pearl River*, MS 10 Feb (NB). Sum-  
mer Tanagers, rare in winter in Alabama, were  
recorded on several occasions: an imm. and a  
female were near Bon Secour, *Baldwin* 1 Dec  
(JDi, KD), and singles were in Mobile 7  
Dec-16 Feb (DB) and Gulf S.P., *Baldwin* 20  
Jan (MJJ).

A Clay-colored Sparrow, rare in the Region  
in winter, was at Silverhill, AL 24 Jan+ (BS,  
m.ob.). Grasshopper Sparrows were reported  
throughout the Region. Two were on the  
count at W.N.W.R. 16 Dec (RRS, MBS); one  
was in *Montgomery*, AL 29 Dec (CTS, PS), 4  
were on the Ft. Morgan C.B.C. 30 Dec; and 2  
were in *Washington*, MS 10 Feb (SJD, PB, KB).  
The highest count of Le Conte's Sparrows was  
of up to 10 near Starkville, MS 23-26 Feb  
(TLS, MS). Lincoln's Sparrow is rarely report-  
ed during winter in the Region. In Alabama, 2  
were on the Montgomery C.B.C. 30 Dec  
(LFG, RB) and one near Opelika 16 Feb (RJ et  
al.). It was a good winter for Lapland

Longspur in the Region; 685 in *Leflore*, MS 9 Feb (SJD) and 90 in *Lawrence*, AL 29 Jan (GDJ, DGJ) were the top counts. Again this winter, a male Indigo Bunting frequented a feeder in Anniston, *Calhoun*, AL early-14 Dec (DMC). Rare in winter, a Dickcissel was in Foley, AL 23 Dec (MJJ et al.).

Encouraging reports of Rusty Blackbird were of 40 at Blakeley S.P., *Baldwin*, AL 17 Dec (MJJ) and 600+ at Sardis Dam, MS 1 Jan (GK, SK). Good numbers of Brewer's Blackbirds were reported near Leighton, *Colbert*, AL 17 Jan, where 100 were seen (DJS), and in *Leflore*, MS 9 Feb, where 143 were recorded (SJD). Baltimore Orioles were widely reported in Alabama. Ad. males were in Greenville, *Bulter* 5 Dec (AM), Montgomery 31 Dec (CHA), and at E.N.W.R. 26-31 Jan (LW). Two males were at a feeder in Montgomery 16 Feb (GM et al.). An imm. male was near Shorter, *Macon* 23 Jan (ECS), another was on the Ft. Morgan Pen. 17 Feb (SN), and 2 were near Peterman, *Monroe* 18 Feb (CHE).

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## Arkansas & Louisiana



### Steven W. Cardiff

**D**ominating the winter scene in Arkansas was the continued diligent coverage of various reservoirs, which produced a nice variety of unusual waterfowl,

loons, gulls, and other rarities. In Louisiana, records submissions more than rebounded from last winter's post-hurricane slump, thanks to restored coastal access and the return of hurricane-displaced birders, combined with increased statewide coverage associated with the inaugural season of the Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas (10 January–20 February).

**Abbreviations:** \* = specimen deposited at Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science. County/parish names are *italicized* and indicated only for the initial mention of a specific locality; state is indicated only for the initial mention of counties/parishes, except to avoid confusion. For records of "review list" species, documentation has been received and records have either been accepted by, or acceptance is pending by, the respective state bird records committee.

### WATERFOWL

A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck at Pine Bluff, *Jefferson*, AR 27 Dec (ph. RD, WS, DS) was an unexpected far inland winter visitor. Twenty-five Ross's Geese among 200 Snow Geese s. of Jonesboro, *Poinsett* 26 Feb (NA) made a good Arkansas total. Reports of Cackling Geese, also noteworthy in Arkansas, included 23 at L. Fayetteville, *Washington* 18 Jan, 5 at Bentonville, *Benton* 26 Jan (both MAM), and 3

near Brinkley, *Monroe* 27 Jan and 18-19 Feb (LA). Arkansas hosted Trumpeter Swans for the 3rd consecutive winter, with 2 ads. at Carden Bottoms, *Yell* 20 Dec (ph. DS, WS), 3 (ad., 2 juvs.) at Boxley Mill Pond, *Newton* 24 Dec (Joyce & Harlan Shedell), and a possible record high of 126 at Magness L., *Cleburne* 9 Feb (DB). Tundra Swan reports included an imm. at Magness L. 5 Dec (ph. Robert Heron) and an ad. at Carden Bottoms 20 Dec (ph. DS, WS; red neck collar with white code "5H7") later relocated with 4 others at nearby Petit Jean W.M.A., *Yell* 6 Feb (Terry Gentry).

Eighteen Mottled Ducks nw. of Arkansas City, *Desha* 25 Dec (D&SB) indicates a growing resident population. A flyby male Cinnamon Teal was spared but still nicely documented by hunters s. of White L., near Pecan I., *Vermilion* 13 Jan (ph. Jeff Hepperman, Craig Landry, *fide* Toddy Guidry). A male **Tufted Duck** remained through the period for its 2nd consecutive winter on L. Dardanelle, *Yell/Pope* (K&LN, m.ob.). Lake Dardanelle also hosted a Surf Scoter in *Yell/Pope* 15 Dec, 2 White-winged Scoters in *Yell* 16-17 Feb (both K&LN), and a Long-tailed Duck in *Yell/Pope* 16 Dec (KN), with another Surf Scoter on L. Maumelle, *Pulaski* 8 Jan (DB). In Louisiana, the sea duck hotbed was L. Pontchartrain, where various Surf Scoters were seen off the New Orleans lakefront, *Orleans* 9 Jan–23 Feb (DPM, PAW, EW et al.), including