

## White-winged Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

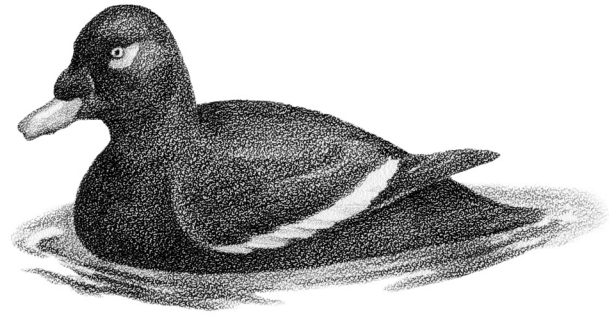


**Folk Name:** Conch-nosed Coot  
**Status:** Migrant, Winter Visitor  
**Abundance:** Rare  
**Habitat:** Large lakes

There were only four reports of White-winged Scoters in the Central Carolinas prior to the twenty-first century. The first was a bird Charles Moore sighted on a lake in Mecklenburg County on January 30, 1962. Bill Brokaw found a pair on Lake Wylie (Gaston–Mecklenburg county line) on November 3, 1979, for “a rare inland report.” The third bird was found by Bill and Pat Brokaw in Chester County on December 27, 1983, while they were helping out with the Chester Christmas Bird Count. This out-of-place sea duck was the highlight of the count. David Wright watched an immature female White-winged Scoter swimming on Lake Norman, just off the end of Torrence Chapel Road in the Town of Cornelius, on December 15, 1989.

Recently, there has been a spate of records in the region. Dwayne Martin found White-winged Scoters on Lake Hickory on December 25, 2004; November 19 to December 22, 2008; and November 4, 2011. White-winged Scoters were found on Lake Tillery in Stanly County from 23 February into early March 2008; on February 18, 2012; and were photographed there on February 22, 2015. Four were seen on Mountain Island Lake on December 26, 2010 and on Lake Norman in 2011. One was found on Lake James on October 23, 2012.

Unprecedented numbers of White-winged Scoters arrived on lakes throughout the Carolina Piedmont in early 2014. Our one-day peak count was 35 birds. In this region, two were found on Lake Oliphant in Chester County on 31 January. Fifteen were seen with one Surf Scoter at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve on Mountain Island Lake on 1 February; and five were seen on Lake Norman on 5 February. Ten were on Lookout Shoals Lake (Iredell–Catawba county line) on 2 February, and a flock of 28 birds was seen on Lake Hickory in Catawba



County on 8 February. Three were reported at McDowell Nature Preserve on 22 February “with their white wing patch visible on folded secondaries.” Jeff Robinson found four on the Kings Mountain Reservoir in Cleveland County that stayed for a couple weeks. One bird was photographed at Cane Creek Park in Union County on 5 April, and a flock of nine were still present on Lookout Shoals Lake as late as 19 April. There was speculation that extended freezing of northern lakes was responsible for these unusual numbers here in the South. White-winged Scoters showed up on Lake Hickory and around Charlotte in February 2015, but the numbers were significantly lower than in 2014.



*White-winged Scoters on Mountain Island Lake.*  
(Gary P. Carter)