

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.

(All dates 1986 unless otherwise indicated)

COMMON LOON: Herb Hendrickson noted five on the late date of 15 May at Lake Townsend, near Greensboro, N.C.

WILSON'S STORM-PETREL: In mid-May, six were seen in Pamlico Sound just inside Ocracoke Inlet, N.C., by George Harris, who also noted two more at Silver Lake at Ocracoke. Rich Boyd saw another in Beaufort Inlet, N.C., on 12 May.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL: Two were observed off Charleston, S.C., on 16 May by Dennis Forsythe.

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD: By far the earliest record for North Carolina was an adult seen immediately after a storm on 19 April. Rich Boyd noted it in flight over Bear Island in Hammocks Beach State Park. He saw the long tail, plus "yellow bill, only a little black at the ends of the wings and black markings from mid-wing above (at the elbow) back to where the back of the wing joins the bird's body" [taken directly from Boyd's letter to the "Briefs" editor.—HEL].

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN: Quite rare inland was one seen at Lake Marion, S.C., on 30 April and 14 May by Carroll Belser and Will Post. One again spent the entire winter on the Ashley River at Charleston (Steve Compton).

GREAT CORMORANT: A cormorant lingered at Huntington Beach State Park, S.C., to at least 26 April, when it was seen by Robin Carter and other participants on a Big Day count.

ANHINGA: Records to the north of the breeding range, all in North Carolina, were one at Lake Benson near Raleigh on 28 April (Robert Hader, Tom Howard); one at a pond in central Halifax County on 7 May (J.B. Elder, fide Frank Enders); two at Horton's Pond near Jordan Lake in eastern Chatham County on 10 May (Grant MacNichols); and a pair again seen near Weldon on 28 May (Randy Yelverton).

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD: Two second-hand reports were received from the North Carolina coast. One was seen near Beaufort in May, according to John Fussell [observer not given—HEL], and Clarence and Ginny Diersing saw another on 31 May off of Hatteras (fide Bill Wagner).

AMERICAN BITTERN: One was rather rare in the mountains at Cashiers, N.C., where seen by Douglas McNair on 14 May.

GREAT EGRET: Douglas McNair noted a rare spring egret in the mountains at Cashiers, N.C., on 15 April. Perhaps the largest inland nesting colony in North Carolina is located on Conine Island near Williamston, where Merrill Lynch observed 200+ nests on 20 April, in addition to nesting Great Blue Herons.

SNOWY EGRET: Seldom seen far inland in spring, two each were noted at Fayetteville, N.C., on 15 April (Philip Crutchfield, Jim Sipiora) and at Thurlow's Lake near Vass, N.C., on 14 May (Jay Carter). One was also at Lake Townsend near Greensboro on 24 May (Herb Hendrickson).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON: One was seen on 9 May at Greensboro by Herb Hendrickson, and also in the piedmont was a possible pair seen regularly and perhaps nesting this spring in Charlotte, N.C., by Nicholas Kenney.

TUNDRA SWAN: Tom Howard reported an immature that wintered (early December to at least 28 March) on a farm pond east of Durham, N.C.

GREEN-WINGED (EURASIAN) TEAL: The first report of this subspecies in the Carolinas in several years involved single males seen in Dare County, N.C., by Ricky Davis and Harry LeGrand—on 1 March at Pea Island and on 2 March near the Cape Hatteras lighthouse.

- NORTHERN SHOVELER:** An excellent mountain total of 15 was observed by Douglas McNair at Cashiers Pond in Cashiers, N.C., on 15 April.
- EURASIAN WIGEON:** Jim Parnell and Sam Cooper noted a male from 4 to 8 March at Davis, Carteret County, N.C.
- GREATER SCAUP:** A very late record was a female seen at rest and in flight at Cashiers, N.C., on 14 May (Douglas McNair).
- LESSER SCAUP:** A male, possibly injured, was seen by Herb Hendrickson at Lake Jeanette near Greensboro from 4 May to 4 June.
- WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:** Surprisingly rare in Pamlico Sound, N.C., one was seen at Swanquarter on 9 March by John Fussell. Another was somewhat late at Folly Beach, S.C., on 27 April (Dana Beach).
- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:** Frank Enders saw a female in central Halifax County, N.C., on the rather late date of 14 May.
- BLACK VULTURE:** Scarce in the northern mountains was one in extreme northeastern Ashe County, N.C., on 18 May (Harry LeGrand, Ricky Davis).
- MISSISSIPPI KITE:** A pair nested high over the deck of a house in Sumter, S.C., adjacent to a swamp (fide Evelyn Dabbs), a first breeding record for that city.
- GOLDEN EAGLE:** Douglas McNair observed an immature at the Brevard Fish Hatchery in Transylvania County, N.C., on 28 March.
- MERLIN:** Rare in the mountains was one seen on 16 April near Fairview, N.C., by Ruth Young. Merlins in the piedmont were at Clemson, S.C., on 7 April (Charlie Wooten) and at Falls Lake, N.C., on 23 April (Ricky Davis).
- BLACK RAIL:** Sam Cooper heard as many as six birds calling at dawn in May at the Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary on Currituck Banks, N.C.
- PURPLE GALLINULE:** A vagrant was found alive on the side of a road in western Forsyth County, N.C., on 29 May by Lynn Shaffner and Ramona Snavelly.
- LIMPKIN:** Seldom seen in the Carolinas was one observed by Bob Tucker on 4 March at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, S.C.
- BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER:** An excellent spring count inland was 10 at Fayetteville, with some in breeding plumage (Philip Crutchfield). Also inland in North Carolina were one at Jordan Lake on 10 May (Grant MacNichols et al.), three there on 24 May (Ross Jervis), and one near Vass on 4 May (Tom Howard).
- LESSER GOLDEN-PLOVER:** Spring records, all from South Carolina, were singles along the North Santee River on 22 March and at Folly Beach on 28 March (Perry Nugent party), at Clemson from 5 to 12 April (Charlie Wooten), and near Pendleton on 15 April (Steve Wagner); two were near Townville on 30 March (Wooten, Sidney Gauthreaux).
- BLACK-NECKED STILT:** Robin Carter noted one at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area in Colleton County, S.C., on 18 May. [Carter reported a number of notable birds from this site, calling it "a fantastic area of freshwater marsh and mud flats." This wildlife area has apparently been overlooked by birders.—HEL]
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS:** Notable counts for the mountains were 15 Lessers, along with seven Greater Yellowlegs, seen by Douglas McNair at Cashiers, N.C., on 15 April.
- LONG-BILLED CURLEW:** One seen by Greg Massey near Fort Fisher, N.C., on 22 March was very likely the same bird found there in January by other birders.
- RED KNOT:** An excellent count for North Carolina was 1200 birds seen by Philip Crutchfield and others at Sunset Beach on 12 April.
- WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER:** A notable inland total of 12 birds was seen on 25 May at Lake Hartwell, S.C., by Charlie Wooten. Three were also noted at Jordan Lake, N.C., on 19 May by Ricky Davis.
- PECTORAL SANDPIPER:** Several weeks late was one on 19 May near Pendleton, S.C. (Charlie Wooten).

PURPLE SANDPIPER: A late individual was seen by Rich Boyd on 12 May at Fort Macon State Park, N.C.

STILT SANDPIPER: The only inland report for the spring was of one on 4 May at Winston-Salem, N.C., as noted by Jim and Pat Culbertson.

RUFF: Sam Cooper observed a female at a small pond at Cape Hatteras point, N.C., on 4 May.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER: At a spoil pond on Eagle Island near Wilmington, N.C., four were seen and heard on 31 March (Greg Massey); at least one remained until 16 April (Kitty Kosh). John Fussell had an excellent spring count of 125 at Bodie Island, N.C., on 11 March.

PHALAROPE (sp.?): A phalarope was seen swimming and feeding on the water at Jordan Lake, N.C., on 4 June by Kathy Kuyper. [The bird was most likely a Red-necked, based on timing of migration and likelihood to occur inland, but the details did not rule out Red Phalarope.—HEL]

RED PHALAROPE: A good count of 700+ was reported by Dennis Forsythe off Charleston, S.C., on 16 March.

LONG-TAILED JAAGER: Always notable, two were seen from shore at Cape Lookout, N.C., on 25 May by Skip Prange.

LAUGHING GULL: Barbara Roth noted two birds on 17 May at Jordan Lake, N.C.

COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL: An immature was observed by Ricky Davis and Harry LeGrand on 2 March at the tidal pond at Cape Hatteras point, N.C.

ICELAND GULL: One of the few reports for the last two winters was a first-winter bird at Beaufort, N.C., on 14 March (John Fussell).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: Though this species is no longer a great rarity along the North Carolina coast, records are still noteworthy. Sightings in that state were three at Cape Hatteras point on 9 March (Sam Cooper, Jim Parnell), one at Atlantic Beach on 16 March (John Fussell), one at Carolina Beach on 22 March (David Wright), and two at a landfill near Newport on 22 March (Fussell).

FORSTER'S TERN: Herb Hendrickson saw three at Lake Brandt near Greensboro, N.C., on 3 May.

CASPIAN TERN: Surprisingly just the second record for Forsyth County, N.C., was two at Salem Lake on 26 April (Hop Hopkins, Bert Hollifield, and others).

COMMON TERN: The only inland report for the spring was one noted by Herb Hendrickson on 24 April near Greensboro, N.C.

SOOTY TERN: One was seen in April and early May on a dredge island in the lower Cape Fear River, N.C., by Bill Brokaw, Jim Parnell, and others; however, no evidence of nesting was seen. Two Sooties were observed off Charleston, S.C., on 2 May by Dennis Forsythe.

THICK-BILLED MURRE: Several were seen in the surf at Wrightsville Beach, N.C., by David Wright on the late date of 22 March.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE: Pete Laurie saw one in flight at Fort Johnson near Charleston, S.C., on 12 May. The large white patches on the upper surface of the wings were noted.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE: Unusually far inland was one seen on 6 February at Silver Bluff Sanctuary, S.C., not far from Augusta, Ga. (Dan Connelly). Gail Whitehurst reported that a man in Topsail Beach, N.C., saw "lots" of this species at his feeder during the winter and she observed three at that site in June. [This species has declined along the coast of the Carolinas in the past 5 years.—HEL]

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO: The only spring reports, all during the first half of May, came from Fairview (Jerry Young) and Brevard (Robin Carter et al.) in North Carolina and York (Bill Hilton Jr.) in South Carolina.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: One was seen drumming on territory on 18 May at Trout Lake near Blowing Rock, N.C. (Ricky Davis, Harry LeGrand, Ken Knapp). Davis and LeGrand heard one calling at the same site on 19 May 1985, also apparently on territory and perhaps the same bird.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER: Tom Howard saw one near Long Branch Creek in north-central Ashe County, N.C., on 10 May. Extremely rare near the coast in spring was one noted singing

- on 30 May by Sam Cooper in Nags Head Woods, N.C.
- WILLOW FLYCATCHER:** Sam Cooper saw singing migrants at the Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary on Currituck Banks, N.C., on 26 May, 29 May (three birds), and on 8 June. The species is seldom noted in spring in the coastal plain, much less along the coast.
- GRAY KINGBIRD:** Nearly annual in recent years along the North Carolina coast, one visitor was seen on 19 May by John Fussell at the Coast Guard Station on Pea Island.
- TREE SWALLOW:** Early for a very high elevation were two noted by Rick Knight at Carvers Gap on Roan Mountain, N.C., on 16 March.
- FISH CROW:** Several spent the winter near Rock Hill, S.C., as noted by Bill Hilton Jr.
- RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:** Charlie Wooten saw two on 26 May at the Walhalla Fish Hatchery in northern Oconee County, S.C. One bird was inspecting a cavity. This is indirect evidence of a nesting attempt; the species has never been found breeding in that state.
- HOUSE WREN:** Two pairs, presumably on territory, were seen along Millis Road in Croatan National Forest, west of Newport, N.C., on 12 May by Rich Boyd. The species has previously been reported from this general area in June, and thus nesting is probably occurring.
- SEDGE WREN:** A good inland count, presumably of migrants, was three singing in a marsh in eastern Richland County, S.C., on 22 and 24 April (Robin Carter).
- SOLITARY VIREO:** Harry LeGrand noted four birds singing at Umstead State Park, Wake County, N.C., on 15 March. These birds might have been overwintering individuals rather than early-arriving breeders.
- WARBLING VIREO:** The species was again noted at Camp Rockmont near Swannanoa, N.C., as Ron Warner saw one on 14 May. This is the southernmost site where this vireo apparently nests in that state.
- GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER:** Very rare near the coast in spring was one, a male, 27 April by Greg Massey near the Brunswick River in Brunswick County, N.C.
- BREWSTER'S WARBLER:** One individual of this hybrid was seen in western Forsyth County, N.C., on 1 May by Pat Culbertson.
- LAWRENCE'S WARBLER:** Rare and early was a male of this hybrid seen by Pat Brokaw at Long Beach, N.C., on 17 April.
- NASHVILLE WARBLER:** Always of interest in spring was one singing at Crowders Mountain State Park, N.C., on 2 May (Paul Hart).
- YELLOW-RUMPED (AUDUBON'S) WARBLER:** Kitty Kosh noted a male in partial breeding plumage at Wilmington on 11 April. Among the marks she observed were "yellow throat above black breast; more black on head than other Yellow-rumps in flock; bright yellow rump."
- BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER:** Individuals seen by Mike Cooper on 13 May at Hilton Head Island, S.C., and by Sam Cooper on 29 May at the Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary on Currituck Banks, N.C., were very rare for the coast in spring.
- BAY-BREASTED WARBLER:** Sam Cooper noted a rare spring migrant on the coast at Nags Head, N.C., on 14 May.
- NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH:** A singing migrant was late on 28 May at Cashiers, N.C., as reported by Douglas McNair.
- CONNECTICUT WARBLER:** Paul Hart observed a singing male on 13 May at Crowders Mountain State Park, N.C.
- INDIGO BUNTING:** One was at Kitty Kosh's feeder in Wilmington, N.C., from 14 to 17 March, about a month before spring migrants begin to appear in the Carolinas.
- LARK SPARROW:** Often not reported as spring migrants in the Carolinas were three records for North Carolina: one near Raleigh on 26 April (George Hervey), one in Craven County near Harlowe on 8 May (Janet Lembke), and one at Cedar Island on 15 May (John Fussell).
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW:** The only report for the spring season was one banded by Bill Hilton Jr. at York, S.C., on 12 April.

COMMON REDPOLL: Truly remarkable, and presumably the latest ever for the Carolinas, was one seen at a feeder in Long Beach, N.C., on 21 May by Chris Marsh.

BACKYARD BIRDING

(Continued from Page 36)

chances of getting a fish were, we saw him begin to dance around. He hopped a few inches from the sand, simultaneously raising his enormous wings and fanning the air with them. He created a considerable space with this activity and quickly grabbed a fish with his long beak. Moving slightly away from the crowd of gulls, he worked the sandy fish around in his bill, getting it into a head-first position, and proceeded to swallow the prize—in the same way all herons do with a live fish they have snatched from the water. This heron had been hanging around the pier for several days—a fact that had surprised us, as we usually see herons only in the marshes. Apparently this bird preferred a relatively easy hand-out to his normal fishing patterns.

A New Kind of Watering Hole

Near the Topsail fishing pier is a motel. It has a boardwalk leading down to the beach. At the point where the boardwalk meets the stairs leading to the motel, there is an outside shower for the use of guests wishing to rinse off salt and sand. The shower leaks a little when turned off. We noted a number of times that a small flock of Boat-tailed Grackles had discovered that by perching on top of the shower-head and leaning downward, they could get drinks of water. Only one bird could drink at a time, and there was always a queue of grackles awaiting a turn whenever “people traffic” was light.

We were reminded of a similar way that we saw many species of birds getting water from a leaking faucet some years ago. We were camping in a Ponderosa Pine forest in central Oregon. There was a large water-storage tank, and a steady drip came from the faucet. Just at dusk, we noted Purple and Cassin’s Finches and a Mountain Bluebird, among others, drinking here. In habitats where water is scarce, birds discover any and all sources of fresh water, whether they be natural or placed by the hand of man. We are all familiar with our backyard birds’ dependence on a birdbath or two. While we probably do not think much about it, we humans have made our impact (in a good sort of way) on the environment by making it possible for birds to find water. Offering water, as well as food, gives us many more birds to watch and enjoy. It often permits us to see birds we might otherwise miss.