

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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Briefs for the Files is a seasonal collection of uncommon-to-rare or unusual North and South Carolina bird sightings and events which do not necessarily require a more detailed Field Note or article. Reports of your sightings are due the 20th of the month after the end of the previous season.

<i>Winter</i>	<i>December 1–February 28</i>	<i>due March 20</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>March 1–May 31</i>	<i>due June 20</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>June 1–July 31</i>	<i>due August 20</i>
<i>Fall</i>	<i>August 1–November 30</i>	<i>due December 20</i>

Reports may be submitted in any format, but I prefer that you use email, list multiple sightings in taxonomic order (rather than by date or location), and type your report directly into the body of the email. If your sightings are in a file, please copy-and-paste the text into the body of the email, rather than sending an attachment.

Suitable reports for the Briefs include any sightings you feel are unusual, rare, noteworthy, or just plain interesting to you in any way! It is my responsibility to decide which reports merit inclusion in the Briefs.

Please be sure to include details of any rare or hard-to-identify birds.

I rely in part on sightings reported in Carolinabirds. Please don't, however, rely on me to pick up your sightings from Carolinabirds. Instead, please also send your sightings directly to me as described above.

If I feel that your sighting warrants a Field Note, I will contact either you or the appropriate state Field Notes editor. You may, of course, submit your Field Note directly to the editor without going through me.

Abbreviations: **BRC** – Bird Records Committee, **et al.** – and others, **Ft** – Fort, **Ln** – Lane, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park

All italicized place names are counties.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: This species continues its range expansion northward and inland. 18 on Lake Junaluska *Haywood* NC 11 Jun (Rose Johnson, Bob Olthoff, Connie & Stan Wulkowicz, et al.) was an amazing count for the mountain region. 24 at the pond adjacent to Ashley High School in Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 13 Jul (Tom Sanders, et al.) was a new record high count for NC. Also locally unusual were two in James City *Craven* NC 4 Jun (Ronnie Hewlette), five at a farm along Arabia Rd *Hoke*



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks
11 Jun 2019, Haywood Co, NC
Photo by Stan Wulkowicz

NC 19-20 Jun (Eric Johnson, m. obs.), three at Wateree Heritage Preserve *Richland* SC 21 Jun (Julie Mobley), one in the Lake Landing section of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 15 Jul (Michael Gosselin, Audrey Whitlock), two on a pond along Aurora Rd *Craven* NC 16 Jul (Lester Coble), and three at the Cheraw Fish Hatchery *Chesterfield* SC 25 Jul (Jacob Beam). Breeding in NC was documented for the first time when two chicks were found in an abandoned tree-cavity nest in Arapahoe *Pamlico* NC and collected by a wildlife rehabilitator 1 Aug (*vide* Ryan Bakelaar).

Redhead: Individuals lingered at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC until 4 Jun (Audrey Whitlock) and at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC until 11 Jun (Joe & Liz Dunkleman).

Ring-necked Duck: A drake lingered on a pond along US-1 in southern *Lee* NC into summer for a third year in a row 9 Jun (Jeff Beane, Stephanie Horton).

Greater Scaup: A drake lingered at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC until 4 Jun (Audrey Whitlock). A hen on Bass Lake in Blowing Rock *Watauga* NC 25 Jun (Margaret Dunson) into fall (m. obs.) was very unusual for the mountains in summer.

Lesser Scaup: A drake summered on a pond along Church Hollow Rd in Foscoe *Watauga* NC, seen 6 Mar into September (Steve Dowlan, m. obs.).

Common Eider: Single hens at Winyah Bay Inlet *Georgetown* SC 26 Jun (Wendy Allen), in Corolla *Currituck* NC 13 Jul (Manuel Morales), and in Southern Shores *Dare* NC 20 Jul (Jim Gould) were unusual for summer. It's likely that at least the latter two sightings involved the same individual.

Surf Scoter: A few lingered along the coast later into summer than usual, mostly alongside lingering Black Scoters, including two at Ft Fisher *New Hanover* NC 18 Jun (Keith Watson), a drake at Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC 19 Jun (Paul Laurent) through 22 Jul (Ritch Lilly), and three at Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC 3-5 Jul (Lisa Nasta, m. obs.) with a hen continuing there through 12 Aug (Karen Hogan).

Black Scoter: Though a few traditionally linger into early June each year, Black Scoters were reported in greater numbers and later into the summer than is typical this year. Some of the higher counts were 25 at Ft Fisher *New Hanover NC* 4 Jun (Bruce Smithson), 68 at Winyah Bay Inlet *Georgetown SC* 26 Jun (Wendy Allen), and 70 at Cape Romain NWR *Charleston SC* 26 Jun (John Cox). Seven around Jennette's Pier *Dare NC* 13 Jul (Susan Campbell) was a notable count for July. One at Fish Haul Beach Park *Beaufort SC* until 20 Jun (Scott Northey) was the southernmost sighting.

Red-breasted Merganser: Late sightings included a hen at Murrells Inlet *Georgetown SC* 21 Jun through 29 Jul (m. obs.), three hens at Winyah Bay Inlet *Georgetown SC* 26 Jun (Wendy Allen), two hens at New River Inlet *Onslow NC* 26 Jul (Gilbert Grant), and a drake at High Falls County Park *Oconee SC* 27 Jul (Pat Herrick).

Pied-billed Grebe: Breeding was confirmed in the Sandhills region, at McIntosh Bay *Scotland NC*, where two family groups including adults, juveniles and hatchlings were seen and photographed 13 Jun (Rex Badgett).

White-winged Dove: Individuals were photographed at Pea Island NWR *Dare NC* 18 Jun (Karen Lebing) and at a feeder in North Myrtle Beach *Horry SC* 21-23 Jun (Deb Winter).



White-winged Dove
18 Jun 2019, Dare Co, NC
Photo by Karen Lebing

Black-billed Cuckoo: Pairs seen and heard vocalizing along the border of *Buncombe* and *Haywood NC* 10 Jun (Jamie Harrelson, Steve Semanchuk) and in northwest *Henderson NC* 26 Jun (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey) were suggestive of breeding at those sites.

Rufous Hummingbird: An adult male photographed at a feeder near Lenoir *Caldwell NC* 30 Jun (*vide* Dwayne Martin) was very unusual for summer.

Purple Gallinule: Breeding was confirmed at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck NC* when two adults and four chicks were photographed there 19 Jul (Karen & Tom Beatty, m. obs.), a first for NC in several decades and possibly the first ever for northeastern NC.

Limpkin: The Limpkin influx that began in late spring continued into summer. In SC, individuals were photographed at the Hidden Cypress Golf Club *Beaufort* 3 Jun (John Bloomfield, et al.) and at the Francis Beidler Forest Audubon Center *Dorchester* 5 Jun (Matt Johnson, m. obs.). Pending review by the NC BRC is the report of an apparent

Limpkin at Owen Park *Buncombe* NC 8 Jul (Sam Pratt). If accepted, the report would provide the first record for the mountain region. Two were seen at the north end of Goose Creek Reservoir *Berkeley* SC throughout August (m. obs.) where, according to residents, the birds had been present for about a month (*vide* Pam Ford).

Black-necked Stilt: Two pairs seen around the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal *Carteret* NC 14 Jul (John Fussell, Steve Howell, Jack Fennell) were likely nesting in that area.

American Avocet: Individuals photographed at Lake Crabtree *Wake* NC 12 Jul (Colleen Bockhahn, et al.) and at Yadkin Memorial Park *Yadkin* NC 13 Jul (Danna Cable) were good finds for those inland sites.

American Golden-Plover: One seen at the Salt Pond at Cape Point *Dare* NC 28 Jun (Jim & Susan Hengeveld) was unusual for mid-summer.

Pacific Golden-Plover: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report of a Pacific Golden-Plover around the Salt Pond at Cape Point *Dare* NC 29 Jul through 7 Aug (Michael Gosselin, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide the first record of this shorebird in the Carolinas.



*Pending BRC review, this would be
North Carolina's first record of Pacific
Golden-Plover
29 Jul 2019, Dare Co, NC
Photo by Michael Gosselin*

Upland Sandpiper: One photographed at Huntington Beach SP Georgetown SC 7 Jun (Jerry Kerschner) was quite late. One heard and then seen in flight over the Lake Landing section of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 28 Jul (Ricky Davis) was locally unusual. The first sighting of fall at Wilmington International Airport *New Hanover* NC was made 30 Jul when three were seen there (Sam Cooper).

Marbled Godwit: One seen and photographed along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 23-24 Jul (Bob Butler, m. obs.) was a great find for the mountain region.

Ruff: Remarkably, two distinct individuals were found in the Lake Landing section of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC in early July—an orange-faced adult male still retaining breeding plumage ruff feathers 7 Jul (Ricky Davis, m. obs.) and 11 Jul (Greg Moyers) and a white-necked adult molting into non-breeding plumage 9 Jul (Karen Lebing) and 12 Jul (Jesse Anderson, Ed Corey).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on South Pond at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 11-12 Jul (Karen Lebing, m. obs.). If accepted, the sighting would become the third official record of this Eurasian vagrant in NC.



*Pending BRC review, this would be NC's 3rd record of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 11 Jul 2019, Dare Co, NC
Photo by Karen Lebing*

Wilson's Phalarope: An adult male was seen and photographed on North Pond at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 26 Jun (Audrey Whitlock) through 1 Jul (Scott Stafford).

Red-necked Phalarope: An adult female photographed on the beach in Salvo *Dare* NC 2 Jun (Karen Lebing) may have been sick or injured.

Brown Noddy: One was briefly seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 27 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Least Tern: 68 chicks at a rooftop nest-site in Morehead City *Carteret* NC 10 Jun (*vide* John Fussell) was an encouraging count. In general, building practices have moved away from flat, gravel-covered roofs in recent decades, reducing nesting opportunities.

Roseate Tern: In *Dare* NC, individuals were photographed at Cape Point 13 Jun (Michael Gosselin) and on the beach in Nags Head 2 Jul (Scott Stafford). Pending review by the SC BRC are several reports of one on the south side of Murrells Inlet at Huntington Beach SP *Georgetown* SC 30 Jun through 4 Jul (Paul Laurent, m. obs.) and a report of two, possibly three, at that site 5 Jul (Ritch Lilly, Shawn Smolen-Morton).

Royal Tern: 6000 estimated on a spoil island in the Pamlico Sound west of Oregon Inlet *Dare* NC during a banding operation 1 Jul (Peggy Eubank, et al.) was a notable count.

Red-billed Tropicbird: An immature was seen during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 6 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Common Loon: 12 beyond the surf in Duck *Dare* NC 26 Jun (Stephanie & Virginia Smith) and three on Belews Lake *Rockingham* NC 1 Jul (Marty Wall) were notable counts for summer.

White-faced Storm-Petrel: Individuals were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC on two consecutive days, 26 Jul and 27 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Trindade Petrel: A dark-morph individual was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 29 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Bermuda Petrel: One was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 27 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Fea's Petrel: One was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 26 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Cory's Shearwater: A sick/injured individual found at Ft Fisher *New Hanover* NC 5 Jul (Erik Thomas) was collected by a wildlife rehabilitator. Two were seen in flight over the ocean from the beach in Salvo *Dare* NC 10 Jul (Karen Lebing).

Great Shearwater: A moribund individual found on a street in Morehead City *Carteret* NC 18 Jun (John Fussell) and one seen in flight over the Roanoke Sound near Nags Head *Dare* NC 21 Jun (Brian Patteson) were unusual away from the ocean. From shore, individuals were seen on/over the ocean from Kiawah Island *Charleston* SC 19 Jun (Mary Barritt), from the Core Banks *Carteret* NC 25 Jun (Steven Freed), from Nags Head *Dare* NC 1 Jul (Audrey Whitlock), from Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 10 Jul (Greg Hudson), and from Holden Beach *Brunswick* NC 10 Jul (Marty Wall).

Audubon's Shearwater: One seen in flight over the surf at Cape Point *Dare* NC 20 Jul (Michael Gosselin) was a good find from shore.

Wood Stork: North of the species' typical range were eight photographed at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 3 Jul (Nathaniel Wilkins) and two seen in flight over Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 7 Jul (Ricky Davis).

Magnificent Frigatebird: Eight sightings were reported this summer, all of individuals and most of juvenile/subadult birds, at scattered sites along the coast between Cape Point *Dare* NC and *Charleston* SC.

Masked Booby: Two adults were seen together during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 6 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). One wonders if those two birds were a mated pair. A subadult, possibly injured, was photographed resting on the beach in Southern Shores *Dare* NC 20 Jul (Susan Carney).

Brown Booby: A juvenile was photographed resting inside the bird protection area at Cape Point *Dare* NC 13 Jun (Megan Baker).

Northern Gannet: Possibly the most unusual sighting of the summer was that of an adult gannet resting in a residential driveway in East Bend *Yadkin* NC where photographed 17 Jun (*vide* Nathan Gatto). The bird was collected by a wildlife rehabilitator and taken to the NC Zoological Park (Cindy Pirson). If accepted by the BRC, the report would provide only the second official record of this oceanic species at an inland site in NC. Closer to the ocean, a juvenile gannet photographed over the Pamlico Sound in Waves *Dare* NC 21 Jul (Karen Lebing) was unusual for summer.

Anhinga: Farthest inland were two at Lake Conestee Nature Park *Greenville* SC 14 Jun (Michael Oliver), two soaring over southwest Winston-Salem *Forsyth* NC 29 Jun (Carol Cunningham), and ten at Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge *Mecklenburg* NC 2 Jul (Garrett Little) with at least one remaining through 19 Jul (Greg Hays).

Brown Pelican: An immature pelican at Lake Reidsville *Rockingham* NC 24 Jun through 6 Jul (Marty Wall, m. obs.) was unusual inland.

Reddish Egret: One on South Pond Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 13 Jul (m. obs.) was the northernmost sighting made this summer.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: A juvenile photographed along N Rugby Rd *Henderson* NC 20-22 Jul (Kevin Burke, m. obs.) was a good find for the mountain region.

Roseate Spoonbill: This conspicuous wading bird was well-reported along the SC coast this summer, but did not irrupt northward or inland as it did last year. An individual at the Rachel Carson Reserve *Carteret* NC 9 Jun through the end of the period (John Fussell, m. obs.) was the only one reported in NC.

Swallow-tailed Kite: As usual, kites began dispersing from their breeding grounds in late July. Eight just northeast of Six Mile *Pickens* SC 27 Jul (Kate & Richard Byrd) was a notable count for upstate SC. At Irma's Produce Fields, a traditional late-summer kite gathering spot in recent years, near exit 75 on I-40 *McDowell* NC, one was first seen 21 Jul (Steve Shultz), two were seen 31 Jul (Dwayne Martin), three were seen 3-4 Aug (David Schroder, m. obs.), and one remained until 15 Aug (James Polling).

Northern Harrier: One lingered around the south end of Bodie Island *Dare* NC from spring (Linda Ward, m. obs.) through 3 Jul (Audrey Whitlock). Harriers likely nested at Cedar Island NWR *Carteret* NC again this year, as four harriers were seen together there 14 Jul (John Fussell, Steve Howell, Jack Fennell).

Mississippi Kite: Kites apparently nested in Pittsboro *Chatham* NC this summer, as two adults were seen tending to a juvenile 11 Jul into August (Carole Stroupe, m. obs.).

Merlin: Individuals over Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 21 Jul (Steve Shultz) and the Lake Landing section of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 28 Jul (Ricky Davis) were early.

Tropical Kingbird: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Tropical Kingbird at Ft Moultrie *Charleston* SC 16 Jun (Pam Ford, Craig Watson). If accepted, the report would provide SC its second definitive record.

Gray Kingbird: One was briefly seen at Ft Moultrie *Charleston* SC 9 Jun (Pam Ford, Craig Watson) but not again thereafter.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: At least four juveniles fledged from the nest site discovered in late April near the Rock Hill-York County Airport York SC in early July (m. obs.). Breeding was also confirmed at another site in upstate SC, atop a utility pole along Webber Rd in western *Cherokee* SC, where up to two adults and three juveniles were



Scissor-tailed Flycatchers
6 Jul 2019, Greenville Co, SC
Photo by Jerry Griggs

seen 27 Jul into September (Christy Hill, m. obs.). Two, probably a mated pair, were seen and photographed at athletic fields along Bryant Rd *Spartanburg* SC 19-20 Jun (Kade Lockhart, m. obs.). An adult male seen at the marina along Eaton Ferry Rd on Lake Gaston *Warren* NC 1-14 Jul (m. obs.) may have been nesting with an Eastern Kingbird.

Black-whiskered Vireo: One heard singing and later seen on Sugarloaf Island, just off the Morehead City waterfront *Carteret* NC 17-20 Jun (John Fussell, m. obs.) provided NC with its first report in a decade.

Tree Swallow: A pair seen building a nest in a Wood Duck box along South Creek near *Aurora Beaufort* NC 5 Jun (Sam Cooper) was unusual for that area.

Cedar Waxwing: Waxwings may have bred at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC this summer, as juveniles were photographed there 19 Jul (Karen & Tom Beatty).

Lark Sparrow: One was photographed along Howerton Rd *Guilford* NC 2 Jun (Dawn Lloyd). One was seen and heard singing in the Sandhills Game Land *Scotland* NC 27 Jul (Jeff Beane, Stephanie Horton).

White-throated Sparrow: One photographed in a yard in western *Cabarrus* NC 13 Jun (Patty Masten) was quite late.

Bobolink: Bobolinks were suspected of nesting in tall grass fields at three sites in the NC mountains—in western *Watauga* where six were seen 17 Jun (Steve Dowlan), in Bamboo *Watauga* where four were seen in June (m. obs.), and at Island Ford Landing *Transylvania* where adults were seen carrying food in early July (m. obs.). Individual adult males in the Dan River Game Land *Rockingham* NC 11 Jun (Marbry Hopkins), along Baldwin Rd *Guilford* NC 12-17 Jun (m. obs.), along Buffalo Church Rd *Cleveland* NC 15 Jun (Bill Hooker), and along Mid-Pines Rd *Wake* NC 7 Jul (John Connors) were unusual for those sites during the summer.

Shiny Cowbird: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Shiny Cowbird visiting a feeder in West Ashley Charleston SC 11-14 Jul (Joy Brown, m. obs.).



*Apparent Shiny Cowbird
12 Jul 2019, Charleston Co, SC
Photo by Craig Watson*

Blue-winged

Warbler: One at Harris Lake County Park Wake NC 23 Jul (Mike Maier, Lawrence Zoller) was early passing through.

Magnolia Warbler:

Breeding was confirmed on Roan Mountain Mitchell NC when an adult male and two recently-fledged juveniles were seen and photographed 12 Jul (Will Johnson). Also in the NC mountains were two singing males along the Gunter Fork Trail Haywood 17 Jun (Miles & Seth Buddy)

and one adult male along the Beacon Heights Overlook Trail Avery 19 Jun (Gordon Warburton) and 8 Jul (Johnson).

Chestnut-sided Warbler: A singing adult male seen and photographed in Nags Head Dare NC 4-5 Jun (Audrey Whitlock) was quite late.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Individual migrants at Ft Fisher New Hanover NC 4 Jun (Bruce Smithson) and at Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary Currituck NC 4 Jun (Jonathan Cooley, et al.) were late passing through. Five singing males were counted along Black Balsam Rd in the Pisgah National Forest Haywood NC 3 Jun (Marilyn Westphal) though no evidence of nesting was found. Individual adult males were found at Clingman's Dome Swain NC 16 Jun (Steve Patterson) and on Roan Mountain Mitchell NC 18 Jul (Charles Crawford). Two adult males were seen at Clingman's Dome 19 Jul (Vicky Burke, Keith Watson).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: One photographed at a feeder in Huntersville Mecklenburg NC 5 Jun (Geoff White) was late for a site outside the mountains.