



# General Field Notes

James F. Parnell

## An Undescribed Heronry at Swansboro, N.C.

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21 May 1970

The Swansboro heronry was first discovered in 1969 by scanning the islands in the White Oak River near Swansboro, N.C. It is located about 300 yards S of the point where NC Hwy 24 crosses the White Oak River at the boundary between Onslow and Carteret Counties. The island appears to lie just inside Onslow County and is about 21 miles W of the Starvation Island heronry at Morehead City. It is accessible only by boat, which can be launched nearby.

The island is about 3 acres in size with the periphery consisting almost entirely of cord grass (*Spartina alterniflora*). Trees, mostly waxmyrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), and willow (*Salix* sp.), cover the higher ground which is less than an acre in size. This colony appears to have been active for only two or three years prior to its discovery in 1969.

I counted 30 Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) nests, 25 Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*) nests, 40 Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) nests, 25 Snowy Egret (*Leucophoyx thula*) nests, and 60 Louisiana Heron (*Hydranassa tricolor*) nests there on 23 June 1969. No Common Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) or Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) nests were found here although Common Egrets fed in the immediate vicinity.

## White-fronted Goose near Raleigh, N.C.

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12 April 1970

On the morning of 1 March 1970 while observing Canada Geese and ducks on Lake Wheeler near Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina, we saw a full-plumaged

White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*). It was alone and perched on a low stump just above the water. Although the bird was about ½ mile away, it was easily identified with a 20X spotting scope. Its pink bill and vertical stripe behind it were easily visible. Also noted were the orange legs, the white flank stripe, and the gray-brown color of the head, neck and back. The black breast blotches were not seen well because of the distance, and the goose seemed darker around the belly than the birds pictured in the field guides. The goose was also seen on the afternoons of 1 through 3 March by Robert J. Hader, Mike Browne, Gilbert Grant, and others.

We have no knowledge of captive or domestic White-fronted Geese in the Raleigh area. Several pinioned White-fronted Geese were kept in the Wendell-Zebulon area a few years ago. However, they had been moved to Wilson, N.C., well prior to this sighting. This, coupled with the short stay of the goose in the area, makes it appear that the observation was of a wild bird. The first published record of the White-fronted Goose in Wake County, this is one of few inland records for North Carolina.

[Since waterfowl are so commonly kept in captivity, extralimital records must always be suspect. However, the group is also very mobile and apparently authentic records of strays are relatively common. Thus while records such as the above are always very exciting, it must be recognized that there is always the possibility that the bird represents an escape from a captive flock.—DEPT. ED.]

## **An Unrecorded Specimen Of the King Eider from North Carolina**

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20 May 1970

Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (*Birds of North Carolina*, 1959) list but four occasions when the King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*) has been reported in North Carolina; and a check through volumes 21-33 of the *Chat* reveals no subsequent observations. In addition to the 6 specimens taken during the flight of December 1908, individuals were collected along the coast on 1 December 1921, 14 December 1924, and in November 1936.

During July 1969, while examining the Anatidae collection of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, I located an adult female King Eider taken on 3 January 1925 at Manteo, N. C. The specimen, which was collected by J. H. Hickson, is catalogued as AMNH No. 750003; and so far as I am aware, has not been previously reported in the literature.

I also examined the specimen which Pearson and the Brimleys stated was collected on 14 December 1924, and the date appears to be in error. The bird was actually collected on 10 December 1924, but it was received at the Museum on 14 December. The date was erroneously reported to the Brimleys and subsequently included in the 1942 edition of *Birds of North Carolina*.

## **Sooty Tern and Audubon's Shearwaters Off North Carolina in September**

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We departed from Morehead City, N.C., aboard the *Captain Stacy* for the Gulf Stream on 7 September 1969 to study pelagic birds. We traveled parallel to Shackleford Island