

Bonaparte's Gull when the latter was in the vicinity. On later occasions when seen, it was always alone, seemingly shunning the other gulls.

There is no listing of the Black-headed Gull in *South Carolina Bird Life*. The Charleston Museum has no records of prior sightings in its files. I can only conclude that it is an extremely rare visitor to this more southerly Atlantic coastal area. This description could very well be the only recorded sighting of *Larus ridibundus* in South Carolina.

[Dept. Ed.—Several color photographs were submitted with this note. While all were recognizable, they were not suitable for printing. These photographs were submitted to Chandler S. Robbins, Chief of Migratory Non-Game Bird Studies for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for confirmation. He concurs with the identification of the bird as a Black-headed Gull, as does Roxie Laybourne of the U.S. National Museum. Two of the photographs were retained for the National Photoduplicate File and were given accession numbers 55.1-1Ca and 55.1-1Cb. On the basis of this report and the availability of photographs, this species can now be placed on the official South Carolina bird list.]

Notes on the Gull Population At Roanoke Rapids Lake, N.C., Winter 1970-1971

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A very interesting gull population exists at Roanoke Rapids Lake, a man-made reservoir just north of Roanoke Rapids, N.C., extending westward about 9 miles to where Lake Gaston is formed, and situated only about 6 miles S of the North Carolina-Virginia state line. All the observations at the lake in this study were made in the winter of 1970-1971 at the V.E.P. C.O. dam forming Roanoke Rapids Lake near the northern city limits of Roanoke Rapids.

At Roanoke Rapids Lake I have found three species of gulls this winter season: Ring-billed (*Larus delawarensis*), Herring (*Larus argentatus*), and Bonaparte's (*Larus philadelphia*). Of these three, the Ring-billed Gull is by far the most abundant with the Herring Gull second in numbers. The Bonaparte's Gull was seen only occasionally in the winter.

At Roanoke Rapids there are two distinct Ring-billed Gull feeding populations: (1) a resident population that remains at the lake all day and obtains food directly from the lake, and (2) a population that commutes back and forth from the lake to other feeding areas. The second population of Ring-billed Gulls roosts on the lake at night, returning to feeding grounds in the morning. They remain at these feeding areas (plowed fields) all day and by late afternoon begin returning to the lake for the night.

On the afternoon of 14 January I counted 3,146 Ring-billed Gulls as they arrived at the lake in line and V formation between 4:00 and 5:30 P.M. The resident population of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls of between 150 to 200 individuals is not included in that remarkable total for an inland location. Only Ring-billed Gulls visit the fields. All the Herring Gulls (population average during January: 10 to 15 birds) remained at the lake or along a portion of the Roanoke River.

Gulls flying to the lake in late afternoon come from two different directions. Approximately 80% of the gulls approach the lake at the dam from the east-northeast. These birds are coming from somewhere in Northampton County and possibly from as far away as Virginia. The remaining 20% come from the south-southeast, from the direction of Roanoke Rapids.

On the afternoon of 16 January Bill Collier and I discovered a flock of about 100 Ring-billed Gulls feeding in a plowed field about .5 mile S of Roanoke Rapids Lake. We watched the birds from close range but were unable to determine what they were feeding

on. Later that day we found a second flock of 125 Ring-billed Gulls in a field with a group of pigs. The gulls apparently were benefitting from this relationship in much the same way as Cattle Egrets do from livestock. The gulls would feed where the pigs had uprooted the ground. I have never heard of such an ecological relationship existing between gulls and farm animals in this way before.

From these two observations, I have made an educated guess that all the gulls I have seen commuting to and from the lake have been feeding in fields surrounding Roanoke Rapids Lake; however, I do not know how far these gulls range in search for food.

In summary, there are two feeding populations of gulls at Roanoke Rapids Lake. The first group, numbering from 150 to 300 individuals are apparently able to obtain sufficient amounts of food from the lake and do not regularly leave it. The second group, the great majority of the gulls, resort to other feeding areas. These gulls use the lake not for food, but as a resting place at night.

High Altitude Occurrences Of the Belted Kingfisher In Haywood County, N.C.

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Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (1942) stated that the Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) is widely distributed throughout North Carolina during most of the year; but no mention was made concerning altitudinal limits in the mountain regions. Stupka (1963) reported that the species was rarely observed above 3,000 feet in the Great Smoky Mountains, and he mentioned a total of only five records above that elevation. Ganier (1926) also regarded 3,000 feet as the upper limit at which the species regularly occurred, and he noted that no nesting burrows had ever been found above that altitude. Stupka (1963) reported the sighting of a single bird at Black Camp Gap (4,522 feet) on 31 July 1934, and this appears to be the highest elevation at which the species has been recorded in the southern Appalachians.

Located high in the mountains of southeastern Haywood County, N.C., Yellowstone Prong of the East Fork Pigeon River flows through a massive, mile high hanging valley known as Graveyard Fields. This high, flat basin and the ranges which encircle it were once covered with a mantle of Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) and red spruce (*Picea rubens*); but a devastating forest fire in November 1925 destroyed over 25,000 acres of this virgin Canadian zone forest, leaving open grassy fields infiltrated by an open, mixed, early growth of Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), blueberry (*Vaccinium* sp.), winterberry (*Ilex montana*), yellow birch (*Betula lutea*), fire cherry (*Prunus pensylvanica*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*).

On 5 October 1969 I saw an adult male Belted Kingfisher at an elevation of 5,100 feet along Yellowstone Prong approximately 200 yards above Second Falls. The bird was flying upstream near the Graveyard Fields trail system maintained by the Blue Ridge Parkway. Although I have not seen the species in this area on any other occasion, Charles F. Hutchinson (pers. com.) noted a pair of kingfishers on Yellowstone Prong at Upper Falls (5,320 feet) on numerous occasions in June 1965. Although the behavior of the pair suggested the possibility of breeding, Hutchinson was unable to locate a burrow or any other positive evidence of nesting.

This appears to be the highest elevation at which the Belted Kingfisher has been recorded in the southern Appalachians. Furthermore, Hutchinson's observations suggest the possibility that the species may breed in this region. Observers should remain alert to