



General Field Notes

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Bald Eagle at Raleigh, N.C.

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31 March 1971

An immature Bald Eagle was seen at Lake Benson, about 7 miles S of Raleigh, N.C., on several occasions in early February 1971. It was first observed on 6 February 1971 by T.L. Quay and R.J. Hader, who saw it in flight and then perched in a large pine. Mottled white feathers near the base of the tail were noted as it flew, though it was otherwise completely dark. On the following day, Harry and Edmund LeGrand saw it at the same location, and Mike Browne found it again on 10 February. However, a thorough search of the area by the N.C. State University ornithology class on 12 February and subsequently for several weeks failed to locate the bird.

The Bald Eagle has been recorded at Raleigh on numerous occasions in September and in late April or early May, though none have been seen in the last 5 years. There is a record for 11 December 1944 (*Chat*, 9:44), and Funderburg's Ph.D. thesis* (N.C. State University Library) indicates that one was seen 11 February 1945.

Lake Benson, the site of the current observation, is an approximately 500-acre reservoir surrounded by pine and mixed hardwoods and having an extensive swampy area at its head. The wintering waterfowl population includes 500 to 600 American Coots, several hundred Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks as well as smaller numbers of surface feeding ducks, and Pied-billed Grebes.

* Funderburg, John B. "The Populations, Habitat Relations and Ecological Changes in the Winter Birds of the Raleigh, N.C. Region 1880-1959", Ph.D. thesis, N.C. State University Library, 1959.

Breeding Record of a Piping Plover On Shackleford Banks in North Carolina

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15 March 1971

On 5 and 6 June 1970 Thomas L. Quay, Frank L. Chapman, and I conducted a population survey on bird nesting islands in Carteret County, N.C., by means of boat and airplane. One of our boat stops on 5 June was on Shackleford Banks, near Beaufort

Inlet. Immediately after landing we heard and then saw an adult Piping Plover that seemed disturbed by our presence. We began to search for eggs or young, and in a few minutes, Chapman found a single young bird nearby. It ran well as it and the adult made their way westward along the sound shore.

All three observers are familiar with Piping Plovers, and with the differences between Wilson's and Piping Plovers, e.g., voice, general coloration, size and color of bill.

This breeding record appears to be only the second published from North Carolina since 1902, when Piping Plovers were last known to breed at Pea Island (*Birds of North Carolina*, 1959). Henry A. Hespenheide found Piping Plovers nesting near Ocracoke, N.C., on 10 through 12 June 1960 (*Chat*, 25:17). The Shackleford Banks breeding site apparently is the southernmost for North Carolina and the eastern United States.

A First Record for South Carolina: Black-headed Gull Photographed

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16 December 1970

At about 1600 on 29 October 1970, I was birding at Huntington Beach State Park. The day was gray and rainy, and a strong northeasterly wind had been blowing for several days. The temperature was in the low 70s. I was watching gulls, terns, and wading and shore birds from the causeway that separates the fresh water lake from the tidal marsh area. At this time, I first saw what I subsequently identified as a Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*).

When the lake is high, as after the recent heavy rains, three culverts drain it into the tidal marsh. At the main culvert, during periods of low tide, fresh water keeps a pool filled and well attended by gulls, terns, and other birds that can secure a meal from the many fish forced to concentrate here. It was at this pool, with its huge outpouring of water from the lake, that I observed what, at first glance, appeared to be a Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphia*). In the rather poor light, the posture of the gull on the water and the black spot behind the ear gave it the appearance of a Bonaparte's. However, on closer observation this bird appeared different. It was noticeably larger than a Bonaparte's Gull, but more particularly, it had a larger bill which was yellow with a black tip. Since it was only 20 to 30 feet from me, I had an excellent opportunity to study it at close range. Swimming against the outpouring current, bobbing about in the water, its every action was like the more familiar Bonaparte's.

A quick trip home to get my camera and my wife, Renee, as a witness, and I returned to take some photographs. Although the day was dark and my equipment quite basic, several recognizable photographs were secured.

After consulting both Peterson's and Robbin's field guides and the National Geographic's *Water, Prey and Game Birds*, we are of the definite opinion that we saw a Black-headed Gull. On one occasion a readily identifiable Bonaparte's Gull was in the same area and afforded an excellent comparison as to size, bill color, and general appearance.

I saw the bird several times after the initial sighting. It was also seen by James S. Houghton of Montreal, Quebec. Mr. Houghton is a birder of about 40 years experience and it is his opinion that the bird is as described. The larger size, the bill size and coloration, the wide black band on the tail with a barely perceptible white margin terminally, the more white in the leading edge of the upper wing surface, pale reddish tinged legs and feet, all point conclusively to this bird being a *Larus ridibundus*. When in the company of the many Herring, Ring-billed, and Laughing Gulls, this one remained apart and independent from the others. It exhibited aggressive behavior toward the