

Status of the Golden-crowned Kinglet on the Highlands Plateau

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The American Ornithologists' Union (1957) lists the Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) as breeding "southward in the mountains to eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina," but no specific locale is given as the most southern point of nesting in the eastern United States. Sprunt and Chamberlain (1948) regard the bird as only a winter resident in South Carolina, while Burleigh (1958) lists no summer records from Georgia. Although Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (1959) make no mention of the bird from the Highlands area, a growing body of evidence suggests that this high plateau region in southeastern Macon County, N.C., is the most southern breeding site for this species in the eastern United States.

Curiously, the Golden-crowned Kinglet was not found at Highlands by Brewster (1886) during his visit in May 1885, nor were any individuals noted by Torrey (1898) although he thoroughly explored the area from 6 to 27 May 1896. Apparently the first records of the bird during the breeding season came when A.H. Howell reported individuals on 23 June 1930 in the great virgin tract of eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) known as the Primeval Forest. Subsequently, Henry Stevenson noted the species in the Primeval Forest on 9 August 1937; but the species was largely extirpated from this vast tract by the heavy cutting of timber during World War II. Individuals have been noted in Highlands on 8 June 1944 by Lydia Sargent; on 26 March 1950 and 1953 and throughout June 1956 by Toliver Crunkleton; from 22 through 29 June 1965 by D.T. Rogers Jr.; and on 27 August 1965 by D.W. Johnston (unpublished records from the Highlands Biological Laboratory). I noted singing males on 15 July 1968, two pairs on every day from 3 through 25 June 1969, and a singing male on 16 June 1970, all records coming from the mature stands of white pine (*Pinus strobus*) adjacent to the Highlands Biological Station buildings.

In spite of the frequent summer observations, there appears to be only one verified nesting record from the region. On 11 June 1951 a Golden-crowned Kinglet nest was discovered 15 feet up in a Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) on the Rebecca Harris property next to the Highlands Biological Station (elevation 3,800 feet). Identification of the nesting pair was confirmed by Mrs. Allan Brown, J. M. Valentine, and Toliver Crunkleton; and Brown reported that three young birds were successfully fledged (pers. com.).

Although this species is commonly thought of as confined to the Canadian zone forests of Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) and red spruce (*Picea rubens*), in the Highlands region the bird is associated with mature stands of eastern hemlock and white pine. Johnston (1964) suggested that the destruction of the Primeval Forest in the 1940s probably had an adverse impact on the Golden-crowned Kinglet population of the Highlands Plateau; but the species has apparently remained established as a summer resident in the region, although its numbers may have been significantly reduced. Observers in the Highlands region should remain alert to document additional breeding records of this locally common summer resident for which Macon County, N.C., appears to be the most southern breeding site in eastern North America.

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BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates 1972)

- COMMON LOON:** Three inland migrants were noted as early as 23 March at North Wilkesboro, N. C., by Wendell Smith. Good inland counts of 24 were recorded elsewhere at Roanoke Rapids, N. C., on 8 April by Merrill Lynch and 7 at Raleigh, N. C., on 22 April by Robert Hader. Three late transients were also seen at Roanoke Rapids on 31 May, Merrill Lynch.
- RED-NECKED GREBE:** Two unexpected occurrences were recorded at Roanoke Rapids, N. C., where an individual in breeding plumage was seen on 1 April and another in winter plumage on 11 April by Merrill Lynch.
- HORNED GREBE:** At Raleigh, N. C., a late transient appeared on 16 May, Robert Hader.
- SOOTY SHEARWATER:** Migrants were observed just off shore at Bodie Island, N. C., on 27 May moving northward in a steady stream throughout the day at a rate of 5 to 18 per minute past Coquina Beach, yielding an impressive count of some 8,000 birds, Robert Ake and W. W. Fogelman. Elsewhere along the coast, between the dates of 13 May and 4 June, Sooties were seen singly or in small numbers by other observers off Cape Hatteras, Cape Lookout, Atlantic Beach, Carolina Beach, and Charleston.
- WILSON'S PETREL:** Three were seen off Cape Lookout, N. C., on 13 May by Henry Haberyan; and 6 to 10 were seen at Carolina Beach, N. C., on 31 May by Jay Carter and James Parnell.
- GANNET:** Lingerers were still present in late May along the North Carolina coast where four were seen off the Bodie-Pea Island beaches on 27 May by Robert Ake and W. W. Fogelman, two on the same date off Atlantic Beach by Robert and Elizabeth Teulings, and one off Carolina Beach on 31 May by James Parnell and Jay Carter.
- COMMON EGRET:** At Raleigh, N. C., two individuals were uncommon spring visitors on 22 April and 27 May, Robert Hader.
- SNOWY EGRET:** Several spring visitors were recorded inland, with single birds noted at Roanoke Rapids, N. C., on 16 April by Merrill Lynch; at Raleigh, N. C., on 22 and 23 April by Harry LeGrand, Edmund LeGrand, and Robert Hader; and at Chapel Hill, N. C., on 13 May by James Pullman.
- AMERICAN BITTERN:** Six were found by Merrill Lynch at Oconechee Neck in Northampton County, N. C., on 15 April.
- BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON:** Locally unusual inland occurrences were recorded at Westerly Lake on the Biltmore Estate, Asheville, N. C., on 10 May by the John Hall family and at Raleigh, N. C., on 15 May by Harry and Edmund LeGrand.