

25 June 1972, 18:00 to 19:30. Moderate seas, wind 20 knots, clear. Location at 18:45 was 33°56' N, 76°08' W, and about 40 miles offshore.

- 8 Wilson's Storm Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*)
- 5 Leach's Storm Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*)
- 2 Audubon's Shearwaters (*Puffinus lherminieri*)

26 June 1972, 18:15 to 19:45. Calm seas, wind 5 knots, clear. Location at 19:00 was 34°19' N, 75°54.5' W, and 25 miles offshore.

- 20 Wilson's Storm Petrels
- 1 Greater Shearwater (*P. gravis*)
- 2 Cory's Shearwaters (*P. diomedea*)

27 June 1972, 18:30 to 19:45. Calm seas, wind 1 to 2 knots, clear. Location at 19:00 was 35°49' N, 74°43.5' W and 30 miles offshore.

- 45 Wilson's Storm Petrels
- 3 Greater Shearwaters
- 1 Cory's Shearwater

Of special interest in the above list was the observation of Leach's Storm Petrels on 25 June. Some individuals were seen as close as 30 yards from my vantage point, the boatdeck of the stern of the *Eastward*. The Leach's were contrasted with the Wilson's Storm Petrels by the appearance of a forked tail and the absence of feet extending beyond the tail. At some angles, when viewed from the lateral aspect, the feet of Wilson's extending beyond the tail may produce an illusion of a forked tail. Therefore, only those birds were identified as Leach's Storm Petrels which showed a forked tail from a full dorsal or ventral view. Because of the moderate winds which caused all petrels to fly close to the water between crests of waves, I did not find the erratic flight of Leach's Storm Petrel (Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, and Alexander, *Birds of the Ocean*) to be a particularly significant distinguishing characteristic. I feel confident of my ability to recognize the Leach's Storm Petrel, having held and studied one in hand only 3 days before the sighting (McCrimmon et al., see above).

In 1967 Williams and Williams (*Chat*, 32:45) reported the first sighting of Leach's Storm Petrel in North Carolina waters during late May and early June. The present records thus provide confirmation of the occurrence of this species in June.

These observations were conducted during a period when support, in part, was furnished to McCrimmon by a Grant from the Chapman Memorial Fund of the American Museum of Natural History.

[Dept. Ed. — The separation of Leach's Storm Petrel from Wilson's Storm Petrel under field conditions is extremely difficult. In view of the recent collections of two Leach's Storm Petrels from the North Carolina coast, it appears that this species may be more common than realized. Well documented visual records thus may help to add to our knowledge of this species. However, all such records even when well documented by careful experienced observers are open to some question. Therefore all identifications should be made with extreme caution, and acceptance and publication will always be tentative with this species.]

Disorientation of Migrating Shorebirds at Beaufort, N.C.

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Received 5 November 1972

I have birded in the Beaufort, N.C., region for several years and am well aware that this is not a good area to observe flocks of shorebirds that are unquestionably in migratory flight. There are several reasons for this, including: an east-west beach that tends to disorient southward moving shorebirds, a wide expanse of estuaries that

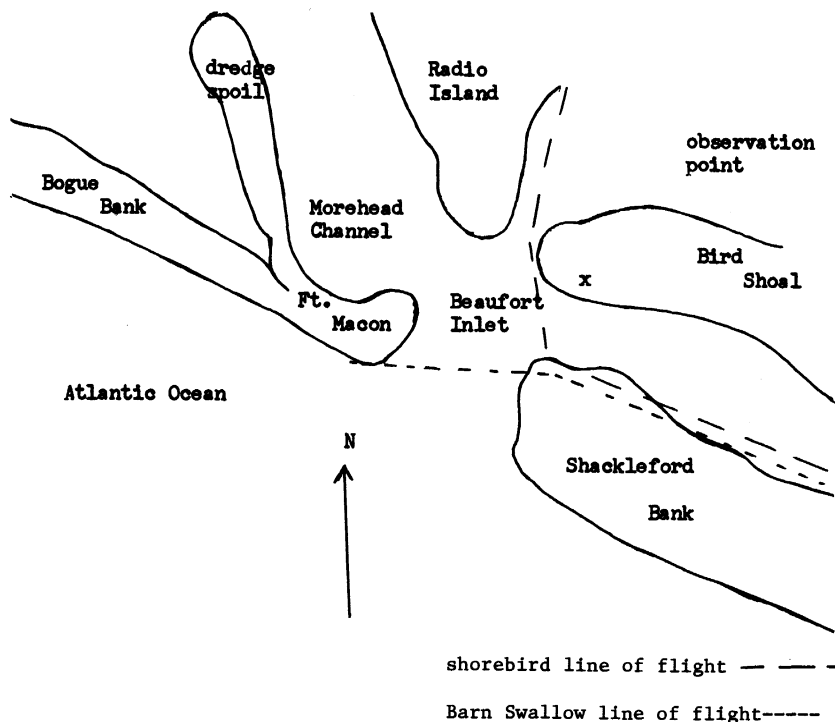


Figure 1. Flight path of disoriented shorebirds and normally moving Barn Swallows.

disperses flights of shorebirds, and regular local movements of shorebirds to and from Bird Shoal in Beaufort Inlet, which are regulated by both time and tide.

On 6 August 1972, following the passage of a cold front on the previous night, I observed migrating shorebirds apparently becoming disoriented by the local topography. Between 08:00 and 10:00 EDT I watched as several flocks of shorebirds, primarily Sanderlings (*Crocethia alba*), plus several Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) crossed Beaufort Inlet while moving in a W-NW to NW direction. My observation point was on Bird Shoal just N of the inlet. From there, I could see that the birds were leaving the north side of Shackleford Bank and had probably been flying westward and parallel to the bank keeping it to their left (S-SW). From previous experience I knew the ocean front and sound shore of Bogue Bank to be regular migratory pathways. Therefore, when the birds reached a point just NE of Ft. Macon, I expected to see them turn toward the ocean front or continue across the dredge spoil islands NW of Ft. Macon to the south shore of Bogue Sound. Much to my surprise, the shorebirds made a slight turn to their right and headed in a north-northwesterly direction crossing the Morehead channel and keeping Radio Island on their left (Figure 1). When I last saw the shorebirds E of Radio Island, they were beginning to gain altitude as if attempting to reorient themselves. This behavior was repeated by over 50 flocks which averaged about 10 birds per flock. The flocks were spaced widely enough that the behavior of each was independent of the others.

It is interesting to speculate on the environmental cues the shorebirds were using which led to their apparent "mistake," i.e. moving directly N as well as directly away

from the ocean beach and barrier islands, both of which migrating shorebirds regularly follow. The high, immense, and largely unvegetated dredge spoil islands NW of Ft. Macon and on Radio Island to the N of Ft. Macon would probably seem little different from the barrier islands the birds had been following for several miles and of which the birds had been staying to the mainland side. The Morehead channel could appear to be just another inlet. Also, the angle negotiated by the shorebirds would have been relatively slight (about 50°) and less than the angle of change they almost certainly made further E on Shackleford Bank a short time earlier.

It is very interesting that at the point where the shorebirds made their change in direction, Barn Swallows gained altitude and then turned sharply to the SW, crossing Ft. Macon and probably moving W along the ocean front.

Golden Eagle in the Unicoi Mountains

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14 October 1972

On 14 August 1972 my wife and I observed an adult Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) on the Tennessee-North Carolina state line at the junction of the Tellico Wildlife Management Area (Tennessee) and the Nantahala National Forest (North Carolina) in the Unicoi Mountains. When first seen the bird was gliding out of North Carolina. After traveling a short distance it turned diagonally along the crests of the mountains that mark the state line. Again, after flying a short distance the bird dropped downward into Tennessee and flew directly toward our location at Whigg Meadows, a clearing approximately 30 acres in size and located at an elevation of 4,800 feet. We did not move and the bird made several passes over the opposite side of the meadow at a height of approximately 50 yards before turning and gliding NE along the state line crests and then back into North Carolina. Atmospheric conditions were good for observations, with a partly cloudy sky and an easterly (out of North Carolina) breeze ranging in velocity from 5 to 10 mph. This is the writer's second sighting of this species in the same general area during the summer months. In early August of 1968 I observed another adult Golden Eagle approximately 10 miles W of Whigg Meadows in a small Tennessee mountain valley.

Thayer's Gull at Kill Devil Hills, N.C.

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January 1972

On 26 October 1971 I was on the porch of the Cavalier Motel at Kill Devil Hills, N.C., scoping the ocean for seabirds when four gulls landed at the water's edge directly in front of me. They were about 100 feet from me and had the mid-afternoon sun directly on them; they stood quietly, facing into the wind and resting, but with their heads out and eyes open. As I have for several years, I checked the eye and leg color somewhat automatically. Three were pink-legged, yellow-eyed orthodox adult Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*). The fourth — otherwise seemingly identical — had a definitely dark eye.

Because the light was perfect and the birds quiet, I was able to use the 60X Balscope lens and could see the dark iris plainly. The color, I would say, was a light walnut brown; the iris looked very like brown glass and thus the color had a somewhat transparent quality. Although the iris did not contrast strongly in color with the black pupil, I could clearly distinguish the two parts with the 60X lens. The pupils of all four birds were much contracted as they were standing in full sunlight, and this made all, or nearly all, of