

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

JON E. DeVORE

Apt. A-5, 1510 Huntington Drive
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37130

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.

CARL W. CARLSON

5706 Lone Oak Drive, Bethesda, Md. 20014

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

the width of the iris visible. The eye-ring was a dull reddish brown, close in tone to the brown iris, and very different from the bright yellow eye-ring of the Herring Gulls.

The four birds stood in a line where the breaker-foam stopped, about 3 feet apart; all four faced into the wind, but did so at a slightly different angle so that absolutely exact comparisons were not possible. After careful comparisons, I found that the four were more or less identical in size and mantle-color. Little of the wing-tip pattern can be seen when a gull is resting, but I endeavored to compare that of the dark-eyed bird with the adjacent Herring Gull and found that the amount of black on the primary tips was distinctly more limited than that of the Herring Gull. This would agree closely with example six in Figure 45 of Smith's Monograph (*Evolution of Some Arctic Gulls*, A.O.U. Monograph No. 4, 1966) and therefore is quite acceptable for a Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*). Plate 32 of Godfrey's *Birds of Canada* (1966) also indicates such a wing tip pattern for Thayer's Gull.

I had no way of collecting the bird and, after some 15 minutes of observation, had to watch it fly off with its companions.

I can find no mention in any reference available to me of another species of gull having 1) a brown iris, 2) medium gray mantle, 3) flesh-pink legs, and 4) a black-white wing-tip pattern. Accordingly I submit that some years of inspecting Herring Gulls (a dull business) has finally yielded a Thayer's Gull.

[Dept. Ed. — Your editor is informed by personnel at the National Museum of Natural History that the dark eye color is diagnostic of Thayer's Gull in adult birds. No such separation is possible between immature Thayer's Gulls and Herring Gulls. On the basis of this careful study and with recognition by the American Ornithologists' Union (*Auk*, 90:411-419), Thayer's Gull can be placed on the hypothetical list for North Carolina. This is one of those species, however, which should be collected for final verification before being placed on the official list for North Carolina.]

Recovery of a Banded Eastern Bluebird: Confirmation of an Assumption

ELOISE F. POTTER
P.O. Box 277, Zebulon, N.C. 27597

9 July 1972

In a previous field note (*Chat*, 32:28-29) I expressed the opinion that Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) breeding in my wooded yard near Zebulon, Wake County, N.C., did not migrate in winter but merely dispersed along the roadsides. I based this assumption on the occasional sighting of a banded bluebird in my yard during December, January, and February, months when the species was rarely present around the nest boxes and more abundant than usual on wires along the road to town. Confirmation of my assumption comes from the recovery of an Eastern Bluebird banded at my station on 6 October 1970 as a hatching year male. The bird returned on 7 May 1971, and it was apparently one of several males using my boxes that spring. On 23 January 1972 a member of the David Pearce family found the bird dead in the yard of their home. The Pearces live in Franklin County 0.9 of a mile from my banding station, and Mr. Pearce reports that he leaves his tobacco burner doors open in winter to prevent loss of birds roosting in his barns.