

within 20 feet of it, and I noticed that it seemed shyer than Purple Sandpipers I have observed on rock jetties. I watched it for at least 15 minutes.

At the time of the sighting, the wind was from the SW at approximately 10 mph. When the bird was first sighted, visibility was restricted to about 100 feet due to heavy fog. After 15 minutes, the fog was dissipating rapidly, and visibility was over 1 mile. The tide was falling very rapidly.

In winter, Purple Sandpipers are largely restricted to rocky seashores and rock jetties (Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, 1947). In North Carolina, I know of only one instance when this species has been seen away from a rock jetty or similar structure. On 31 December 1967, Micou Browne (pers. com.) observed a Purple Sandpiper at Oregon Inlet.

During this winter (1972-1973), I occasionally found a Purple Sandpiper at the Ft. Macon jetties or at the Radio Island jetty. However, it was often absent from these localities for several days at a time. It is likely that the Purple Sandpiper found at Bird Shoal was this same bird, and it is possible that it had been feeding on Bird Shoal regularly during the winter. (There are no other major jetties at the inlet or on the nearby ocean front).

The Purple Sandpiper at Ft. Macon was often seen feeding in close association with Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) and/or Sanderlings (*Crocethia alba*), both of which feed and roost at Bird Shoal. It was probably the close association with these species that led to the Purple Sandpiper's "learning" to use Bird Shoal. It is notable that on 28 January 1973, I saw "the" Purple Sandpiper feeding on a concrete ramp at Radio Island (next to the rock jetty) with Ruddy Turnstones.

A Black-headed Gull at Pea Island N.W.R.

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At approximately 10:30 on 23 April 1973 while returning to Raleigh from Hatteras, N.C., I stopped at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge to scan some flocks of shorebirds. The refuge manager, John Williamson, who was parked nearby, approached me and asked my assistance in identifying a gull that was feeding alone on a nearby mudflat. He indicated that a Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) had been reported to him earlier in the day and he was attempting to verify the report. I studied the bird at a range of approximately 25 yards through a 15-40X scope and noted immature plumage, with the small black spot behind the eye. However, adult (red) coloration was noted on legs and bill with the bill appearing entirely red except for a dark tip. I flushed the bird at close range (15 yards) and observed the wing pattern with 7X binoculars as it flew a short distance. The upper wing surface and back coloration matched the description shown in *Birds of North America* (Robbins et al., 1966), which was in hand. The black edging of the primaries was a thin line, unlike the more conspicuous black edging of the Bonaparte's Gull. Furthermore, there was very little contrast between the front white wing patches and the grayer area of wing and back, also unlike Bonaparte's Gull. At this point the identification of the bird as a Black-headed Gull was assured by the combination of distinct wing pattern and red bill. The similar Bonaparte's Gull has a black bill. No Bonaparte's Gulls had been seen in the area on the day in question or for the two previous days.

Of further interest was the feeding behavior of this gull, which I observed and would describe as a regular splashing with the feet in a small pool of water, followed by probing with the bill. Upon later referring to *Handbook of British Birds*, (Witherby et al., 1941) I found that "Trampling on wet mud or sand or in shallow water to bring up worms is a regular habit" of the Black-headed Gull. This feeding behavior, which I had never seen before, further assured the identification.

The Black-headed Gull at Pea Island is apparently the second record of the species in North Carolina, the first sighting having occurred at Fort Macon on 10 August 1967 (Cox, 1968).

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Observations of the Barn Owl in the Southern Appalachian Mountains

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As pointed out by Van Tyne and Berger (1959), the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) is one of the most widely distributed of all birds, occurring throughout the western hemisphere, Eurasia, Australia, and many island groups. In light of this extensive distribution, it is interesting that the first two editions of *Birds of North Carolina* (Pearson et al., 1919, 1942) list no records of the owl from the Appalachian Mountain region of western North Carolina. Furthermore, the rather thorough field work in the region by Brewster (1886), Cairns (1887, 1889, 1891, 1894), Oberholser (1905), and T.D. Burleigh (pers. com.) contain no records of the owl from the area. To date, there are only three published records of the bird from western North Carolina. Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (1959) mention a report from "Lake Summit" but give no supporting details; and Johnston (1964) mentions a bird reported at Highlands, Macon County, N.C., in the summer of 1962, but again no details are given. The only observation with substantiating data is Stupka's (1963) report of a single bird collected at Fontana Village, Graham County, N.C., on 24 September 1947 and brought to him for identification.

In light of the paucity of records, the authors sent inquiries to a number of ornithologists and conducted field work in much of the region in search for Barn Owls. The following records have come to light as a result of the investigation.

In Buncombe County, N.C., John Young (pers. com.) found two dead Barn Owls in an abandoned administration building at the old Asheville-Henderson Airport in August and October 1971. Young also reports seeing Barn Owls on several occasions along the French Broad River south of Asheville, but the exact dates and localities are not available. Subsequently, Ruiz found a dead Barn Owl on 17 August 1972 along Rt. 191 approximately 100 yards S of the Haywood Road Overpass.

In Henderson County, J. Lee and Barbara Brittain (pers. com.) informed us that a pair of Barn Owls nested for two consecutive years in an out building on the Old Turnpike Road near Mills River, with two young being successfully fledged in June of 1971. The owls abandoned the site in October 1971 and have not been reported there since that time.

At Highlands, Toliver Cumkleton (pers. com.) informed us that the Barn Owl is a "summer resident and probably a permanent resident" with specific records coming during the summers of 1965, 1966, and 1967. Thelma Howell (pers. com.) reported that