

# General Field Notes

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## Osprey Migration at Wrightsville Beach, N.C.

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20 November 1973

On 4 October 1971, while conducting a shorebird census at the south end of Wrightsville Beach, N.C., I observed a heavy migratory movement of Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*). In 2 hours and 10 minutes (16:00 to 18:10), I counted 90 Ospreys moving southward. Most were in small flocks and were soaring very high. The wind was from the north, and the sky was mostly overcast. On 1 October, Hurricane Ginger had moved past Wrightsville Beach and made landfall near Morehead City. The first day with northerly winds following the storm was 4 October, the day the Ospreys were seen.

Robert Needham (pers. com.) reported seeing several Ospreys over the Cape Fear River near Smith Island on the morning of 4 October, and it is possible that the Ospreys were moving south in large numbers throughout the day.

## Sandhill Cranes in Onslow County, N.C.

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20 August 1973

On 25 November 1970, three Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis*) were seen in a harvested Soybean field near Stella in Onslow County, N.C. The three cranes were feeding in a field owned by Percy Morton and located about 200 to 300 yards from the White Oak River Waterfowl Impoundment. Two of the cranes remained in the vicinity for about 2 weeks while the third disappeared earlier.

[This appears to be the second record of Sandhill Cranes in North Carolina, the first being a record of two birds taken in Robeson County in 1957 (*Chat*, 22:45, 1958). — Dept. Ed.]

## Spring Shorebirds at a Drained Farm Pond Near Chapel Hill, N.C.

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30 August 1971

Several small farm ponds near my home, just SE of Chapel Hill, N.C., customarily attract a few Spotted Sandpipers during the spring migration, but no other transient

shorebirds have been noted on these ponds in 6 years of study although Solitary Sandpipers are fairly common in the vicinity.

In late April 1971, one of these ponds, roughly an oval measuring 100 by 300 feet was partially drained for cleaning and restocking. Within a week, it was clear that something unusual was happening. My observations are summarized in the following table:

Species	Extreme Date	Maximum No. Individuals
Spotted Sandpiper	20 April - 1 June	7
Solitary Sandpiper	23 April - 23 May	13
Greater Yellowlegs	21 April - 5 May	2
Lesser Yellowlegs	23 April - 7 May	9
Least Sandpiper	26 April - 16 May	5

Other records included several visits by an Osprey, and a rather late Blue-winged Teal on 10 May.

None of these species is truly rare in this area, but it is interesting to compare the above figures with the maximum total individuals which have been recorded during the 14 previous Chapel Hill Spring Bird Counts (averages in parentheses): Spotted Sandpiper 26 (8), Solitary Sandpiper 8 (4), Greater Yellowlegs 1 (0), Lesser Yellowlegs 0, and Least Sandpiper 0.

Shorebird habitat is scarce around Chapel Hill, especially in spring when ponds and lakes are well filled. It is significant that these birds so quickly availed themselves of a fortuitous occurrence, and a student of inland shorebirds would do well to search for similar circumstances.

[The irregular but sometimes spectacular occurrence of shorebirds at inland sites is most interesting and certainly indicates a more general passage than usually recognized. See reports of similar occurrences by Carter (*Chat*, 32:102) and Mattocks (*Chat*, 33:24-25). -Dept. Ed.]

## Little Gulls at Cape Hatteras, N.C.

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On 10 March 1973, the authors observed three Little Gulls (*Larus minutus*) at the tip of Cape Hatteras, near Buxton, N.C. The birds were feeding over the ocean with a large flock of Bonaparte's Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*). The Little Gulls appeared slightly smaller than the Bonaparte's Gulls in flight. Two of the Little Gulls were immatures, and the third was an adult in winter plumage. The distinctive field marks of the immatures (dark crown patch, tail band, and dark wing-stripe) were repeatedly noted at close range by both authors. The adult was easily distinguished in flight by the very dark underwing. Although the weather was foggy, Parnell obtained recognizable photographs of an immature Little Gull.

This rare European gull has been recorded regularly at several locations in the northeastern states for several years, and it is becoming increasingly regular along the mid-Atlantic coast in winter. There are four previously published records for North Carolina. Single individuals were seen at Roanoke Rapids on 29 August 1971 (*Chat*, 36:30), offshore of Pea Island on 30 December 1971 (*Chat*, 36:22), at Bodie Island on 1 October 1972 (*Chat*, 37:31), and again at Bodie Island in December 1972 (*Chat*, 37:16).