

General Field Notes

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Bird Observations at Lake Surf, Moore County, N.C.

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Lake Surf is a new development in east-central Moore County, N.C. It is centered around a 1,130-acre lake, near the small rural community of Lobelia. The lake was constructed in a natural basin containing Crain's Creek. The lake basin was ready to begin filling in September 1973, but a drought during the fall allowed little filling to take place. The lake did not fill completely until early in 1974.

Two large dikes extend toward the center of the lake, and part of a golf course has been constructed at the rear of the lake. The fairways and greens are virtually surrounded by water contained in channels and coves. During the fall of 1973, the lake bed and channels contained extensive mudflats, pools, and brush thickets as well as large areas covered with grasses and sedges. The golf course area was open except for some small cultivated trees and shrubs.

In late August 1973, my father played golf at Lake Surf, and reported seeing a large number of shorebirds. I visited the area on 30 August, and found six species of shorebirds. I continued to check the area regularly through December. Several other observers also visited Lake Surf, and some of their records will be cited below. The very large expanse of mud and water made accurate counts of some species difficult or impossible to obtain. It should be noted that the shorebird migration begins in this area in mid-July, so the early migrants were missed.

Following is a list of the shorebirds and unusual land birds found at Lake Surf during the fall and early winter of 1973. Records are those of the author (JHC) unless otherwise indicated. Other observers were Dana Carter (DC), John Fussell (JF), Robert Hader (RH), Edmund LeGrand (EL), Harry LeGrand (HL), Merrill Lynch (ML), Chris Marsh (CM), Darryl Moffett (DM), Ted Nixon (TN), Barbara Roth (BR), Elizabeth Teulings (ET), Robert Teulings (RT), and John Wright (JW). Several noteworthy records obtained at Lake Surf on the Southern Pines Christmas Count (SPCC) on 21 December are included in the list.

American Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*): One was recorded on 17 and 21 November, and 21 December (JF, CM; SPCC). This species is rare in the Sandhills in fall, and the December record is the first winter record for the area (Carter, 1971).

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*): Four were seen on 2 December, and 14 were seen on 21 December (JF; SPCC). This species is rare in the Sandhills area in winter (Ibid.).

Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*): One was recorded on 21 December (CM; SPCC). This is the only winter record I know of since Skinner (1928) stated that this species is found in the Sandhills all winter.

Northern Shoveler (*Anas chrypeata*): One was recorded on 21 December (CM; SPCC). This species is considered a rare winter visitor in this area (Carter, 1971).

Sora (*Porzana carolina*): One was flushed at close range on 21 December (JF; SPCC). First winter record for area.

- Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*): Present 30 August (3 individuals) through 15 September (1 individual). Peak number: 3 on 30 August. This species is a very uncommon fall transient in this area (Ibid.).
- Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*): Present 30 August (approx. 27) through 23 December (3). Peak number: approx. 27 on 30 August.
- American Golden Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*): Three were seen on 30 September (TN, BR), 6 on 3 October, and 7 on 10 October. These birds usually were found on the golf course. First fall records for area.
- Black-bellied Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*): Present 15 September (1) through 24 October (2). Peak number: 2 on 17 and 24 October. This species also frequented the golf course. First records for area.
- Common Snipe (*Capella gallinago*): Present 11 September (1) through 2 December (1-2) and probably later. Peak number: 4 on 14 September. This species was much scarcer than expected, but probably was overlooked.
- Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*): Present 9 September (2) through 24 September (1, HL). Peak number: 4-5 on 22 September. This species was also surprisingly scarce, but since it does not travel in large flocks, it was probably overlooked.
- Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*): Present 9 September (1) through 22 September (1). Peak number: 3 on 11 and 15 September. See comment under preceding species.
- Greater Yellowlegs (*Totanus melanoleucus*): One was recorded on 30 August, 10 October, and 24 October.
- Lesser Yellowlegs (*Totanus flavipes*): Present 30 August (1) through 3 October (1). Peak number: 2 on 14 and 15 September.
- Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*): Present 30 August (3) through 2 December (1). Peak number: approx. 65 on 19 September. The December record is very late. The high numbers present from mid- to late September (30 to 65 individuals) are unprecedented in this area in fall (Ibid.). These birds usually were found feeding on the golf course.
- Baird's Sandpiper (*Calidris bairdii*): Present 9 September (2) through 19 September (3). Peak number: 3 on 11, 14, 15, and 19 September (DC, JHC, JF, RH, ML, CM). First records for area. This species is very rare in North Carolina, and there is only one published record from the inland portion of the state. One was collected at Swannanoa on 1 September 1930 (Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley, 1959).
- Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*): Present 30 August (1) through 21 November (2, HL). Peak number: 10+ on 11 September. The two birds on 21 November were quite late.
- Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusillus*): One was recorded on 9 and 10 September and 10 October, and 2 were seen on 11 September.
- Stilt Sandpiper (*Micropalama himantopus*): One was recorded on 9, 10, and 15 September, and 2 were seen on 11 September. Only previous record for area is one at Thurlow's Lake on 9 October 1961 (Carter, 1971).
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*): Present 10 September (6) through 24 September (4, HL). Peak number: 11 on 14 and 15 September. This species was formerly considered very rare in North Carolina, but in recent years it has been found regularly along the Outer Banks in fall (*American Birds* and *Chat*). Inland records are still very rare, and numbers as high as those listed above are unprecedented in inland North Carolina. These birds represent the first records for this area. They usually were found feeding on the golf course.
- Flicker hybrid (*Colaptes a. auratus* x *a. cafer*): One was recorded on 21 November (EL, CM, JW). It had reddish wing linings and the head markings of a Yellow-shafted Flicker.
- Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*): A high count of 32 was recorded on 21 December (JF, CM; SPCC).
- Bewick's Wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*): One was seen on 21 September and 2 December. This species is rare in this area (Carter, 1971).
- Sage Thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*): One was collected in the golf course area on 19 September (DC, JHC). First specimen taken in state (details to be published else-

- where). One previous, but unpublished, sight record for North Carolina.
- Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta*): A high count of 125 was recorded on 21 December (JF, CM; SPCC).
- Bachman's Sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*): One was flushed from a weed patch along the golf course on 21 September. This species is very uncommon in the Sandhills area. (Carter, 1971)
- Lapland Longspur (*Calcarius lapponicus*): One was seen on 17 November (JHC, JF, CM, DM), and 5 were seen on 21 December (JF, CM; SPCC). First records for area.

LITERATURE CITED

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Sandhill Crane at Charleston, S.C.

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On the morning of 2 February 1974, while standing on the lawn of 8 Huguenot Avenue, St. Andrew's Parish, Charleston, S.C., I watched a single Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) for about 30 seconds as it flew in a southwesterly direction over Huguenot Avenue, disappearing over a stand of pines beyond the intersection of Huguenot Avenue and Farmfield Road. When first noted, the bird was passing over the western end of Farmfield Pond, a diked saltmarsh area of about 2 acres. Now brackish, this pond contains good stands of cattail and *Juncus*. At the time of observation (09:15), the sky was overcast and the temperature 64 F. When first seen, the crane appeared to be at a height of about 100 feet, and a distance of approximately 250 feet. It showed the extended neck and characteristic crane flight, but did not soar or call when within sight.

[Several records of this unmistakable bird are summarized by Sprunt and Chamberlain (*South Carolina Bird Life*, 1970, p. 191-192 and 595-596). More recently, one adult was observed 4 March 1973 near Chester (*Chat*, 37:53) and another 19 September 1973 on Sullivan's Island (*Chat*, 37:30). The present sighting is the only one known from South Carolina in early February.—JRH]

Saw-whet Owls Found in Carteret County, N.C.

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7 February 1974

On 18 December 1973, I found a dead Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) on Ft. Macon Road, 1 mile E of Atlantic Beach, N.C. The bird, although badly mutilated, appeared to have been killed recently, possibly the night before. On 6 January 1974, before dawn, I observed a Saw-whet Owl at a distance of about 10 feet with the aid of a 6-volt flashlight. This sighting also occurred on Bogue Banks east of Atlantic Beach at a location about 1/4 mile from the road kill. The bird was not calling, and it may have been attracted by a Screech Owl tape recording that was being played. These are the first records of the Saw-whet Owl from Carteret County.

[It is likely that this small owl is more common in eastern North Carolina in winter than is realized. Observers should be on the lookout for this bird throughout the eastern part of the