

General Field Notes

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A Record of the Great White Heron from Inland South Carolina

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12 February 1974

On 29 September 1973, several members of the Carolina Bird Club found a Great White Heron (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*) on upper Lake Marion in extreme southern Sumter County, S.C. The bird was in an open marsh near Pack's Landing. Its large size was apparent at a great distance. Carter observed the bright yellow legs of the all white bird at a distance of approximately 150 yards with nine-power binoculars. Shortly afterwards, Rial and Angerman saw a Great Blue Heron (*A.h. herodias*) land near the white bird. They felt that the Great White Heron was as large as, or larger than, the Great Blue. They also noted the yellow legs of the Great White Heron. All of these observations were made under excellent light conditions.

There are only two published records for this subspecies in South Carolina, both for coastal localities. Single individuals were seen at Yemassee on 24 May 1943 (*South Carolina Bird Life*, Sprunt and Chamberlain, 1949, p. 78) and at Hilton Head Island on 19 September 1961 (*South Carolina Bird Life*, revised 1970, p. 581). This new record appears to be the first for inland South Carolina.

A Rare Occurrence of the Swallow-tailed Kite in Western North Carolina

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19 June 1974

On 12 May 1974, while returning home from the Carolina Bird Club spring meeting in Hendersonville, N.C., I was driving along NC 191 in the area where the French Broad and Mill's River valleys meet. I was about 3 miles N of the Buncombe-Henderson County line when I saw two large birds I believed to be Swallow-tailed Kites (*Elanoides forficatus*), so I stopped my car.

The birds were sailing along on wind currents in a southwesterly direction at an elevation of approximately 150 to 200 feet. The solid white underbelly and head as

well as black on the outer primaries of the wings and black forked tail could be seen easily as the birds passed over me. I used 7x35 and 10x50 binoculars in my observation. I am familiar with the species, having seen Swallow-tailed Kites on several occasions in Florida.

The area in which the birds were seen is a wide expanse of open farmland, interspersed with tracts of woodland, on either side of the French Broad and Mill's River. Many streams flow through the area into the rivers.

The Swallow-tailed Kite was reported from Buncombe County, N.C., during the years of 1887 to 1894 by John S. Cairns, who found it during the fall and primarily in the month of October. This is the first spring record for the species in the area and the first record for the county since 1894 (Simpson, *Chat*, 36:69-72, 1972.)

Goshawks in Avery County, N.C.

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17 June 1974

This note is a brief summary of an exchange of correspondence between William Hamnett of the North Carolina Museum of Natural History and Dartha Frank of Cranberry (Avery County), N.C. The correspondence indicates sightings of several Goshawks present in Avery County during the summer of 1971. Though Miss Frank is not an experienced observer in the usual sense, her descriptions are most convincing and, it seems to me, worth including in the published record.

In early June of 1971 Mr. Hamnett received a letter from Miss Frank in which she described several huge "silver eagles." "One flew down off the mountain in back of this old company mining store and caught two blackbirds in the air and then another day we watched one fly around for about ten minutes and caught some pigeons."

Mr. Hamnett wrote back suggesting that the "silver eagles" might be Goshawks. In a second letter, apparently before mid-June, Miss Frank related that while she was hoeing in her garden "right over my head out of the mountains here came one large four foot bird (incredible speed) with two smaller ones a little under it. The smaller (about as a hawk) ones are lighter and almost white underneath. The large mature bird has a white streak right above its sharp yellowish eyes ... caught two pigeons in mid-air without lighting at all, one in each fast, swift claw." In the same letter she included an excellent pencil sketch with detailed description of the plumage. The sketch and description is unquestionably that of a Goshawk.

Following her second letter, Mr. Hamnett sent a circular with color pictures of the hawks of Eastern North America. Miss Frank showed the circular to some 30 people who had seen the birds and all identified them as Goshawks. "The area covered was from Cranberry to Crossnore to Banner Elk to Roan Mt., Tenn., and then to Erwin, Tenn., and back to Spruce Pine, N.C." She had again seen an adult and one young bird hunting pigeons. "The mature bird caught one instantly, the young one caught one on the second try. They don't dive, they have speed enough without."

Finally in mid-August Miss Frank reported that "there are now six of them in the area. They extend as far as Knoxville, Tenn., Bakersville, N.C., Mt. Airy, N.C. and as far again as Bristol, Tenn."

In June of 1972, I visited Cranberry and talked with Miss Frank for about an hour. She confirmed the details of her letters and reported that the birds had not been seen in 1972. I came away fully convinced that her report of Goshawk sightings the previous summer was genuine. Her account carried the suggestion of possible breeding in the area though, of course, is certainly not conclusive in this respect.

Of the three previous published records of Goshawks in North Carolina, one was seen in December 1972 near Chapel Hill (*Chat*, 37:106); one in March 1970 at Franklin (*Chat*, 34:79); and one or more in June 1970 in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (*Chat*, 35:1-4).