

in 1976. These two sightings, plus the record of July 1975, suggest that the Virginia Rail is nesting in this marsh.

Some Noteworthy Fall Migration Records from Franklin County, N.C., Including an Inland Sighting of a Wilson's Plover

ELOISE F. POTTER
Route 3, Zebulon, N.C. 27597

18 September 1975

In May of 1975, I began a study of the birds of Franklin County, N.C., using a modified version of the roadside census method and concentrating on the Tar River basin, which cuts across the central part of the county. A preliminary survey of the region revealed no major natural or man-made lakes. Privately owned Lake Sagamore (310 acres) offers the only sizable expanse of open water in the county. All other ponds built for recreational or agricultural purposes appear to be less than 100 acres in area. During the summer of 1975, Moore's Pond (65 acres), located on Little River near the Wake County line, was partially drained for repairs on the dam. A fairly good grassy flat developed here, but throughout the rest of Franklin County fall migrant shorebirds were dependent primarily upon narrow margins of farm ponds, particularly those used for crop irrigation and the watering of cattle. Although scattered sightings of one to six shorebirds, mostly Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), Solitary Sandpipers (*Tringa solitaria*), and Spotted Sandpipers (*Actitis macularia*), were fairly common, no large flocks were found. Therefore, the occurrence of several noteworthy species during August and September of 1975 was quite surprising.

On 26 August I flushed three Upland Sandpipers (*Bartramia longicauda*) from a dry roadside pasture on the Mort Harris farm located on SR 1001 at Margaret, about 7 miles E of Louisburg. The brownish birds had yellow legs, but their rumps were not white. This immediately eliminated from consideration the several medium-sized yellow-legged shorebirds with which the Upland Sandpiper might be confused. In flight the birds uttered a melodious call consisting of four or five whistled notes. One individual perched briefly on a fence, displaying the typical Upland Sandpiper silhouette. Although the birds flew out of sight before I could study them through the telescope, I am familiar with the species and confident of the identification.

Elsewhere on the Harris farm, I found three American Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica*) on 14 September. The birds were feeding with Killdeer at the edge of a pond and in the adjacent pasture. When the six Killdeer took flight, I noted among them three slightly larger brownish shorebirds having no distinctive field mark such as a wing stripe, white rump, or black axillars. After the birds settled to the ground, I was able to study one of the American Golden Plovers at leisure in bright midday sunlight through a 30X Balscope at a distance of perhaps 100 yards. The bird had a pale golden-brown breast that faded to creamy white at the throat and chin. A creamy stripe separated the black bill and eye from the dark golden-brown crown. I have seen this species once previously in fall on the Outer Banks.

On 30 August I found a Wilson's Plover (*C. wilsonia*) feeding with three Killdeer on a mud bar extending into an irrigation pond on the Wall farm, which is located directly across SR 1106 from Moore's Pond. The site is about 120 miles NW of the nearest beachfront. Field guide in hand and with the late afternoon sun behind me, I was able to study the bird at a distance of about 150 feet through a 30X Balscope. In general appearance the plover was slender, long-legged, and long-billed—not at all like the plump, short-legged, and stubby-billed Semipalmated Plover (*C. semipalmatus*). Slightly smaller than the Killdeer, the plover was about the size of a Spotted Sandpiper, which is what I thought it was at the first distant glance. The plover's mud-brown mantle was a shade lighter than that of the Killdeer. The length and thick-

ness of the black bill were approximately the same as in the Killdeer. Legs, like those of the Killdeer, were a grayish flesh color rather than yellow. Across its breast the bird had a single wide sepia stripe just a little lighter shade of brown than the mantle. The breast stripe narrowed in the middle, suggesting that the bird was a hatching year Wilson's Plover rather than an adult female.

The Upland Sandpipers and Wilson's Plover were seen during a period of almost daily afternoon thundershowers, while the American Golden Plovers appeared the day after the passage of a cold front.

The Harris farm lies along the crest of a ridge between Tar River and one of its major tributaries, Cypress Creek, both of which flow in a southeasterly direction through eastern Franklin County. One pasture contains a water hole and a pond while the other has three ponds. This large expanse of grassland (approximately 2 square miles) seems to attract a wide variety of fall migrants that favor open country. Two immature Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*) were present on 16 August and four on 26 August. Two Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*) circled one of the ponds briefly on 24 August. An American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) was present on 11 August both here and at a farm on the other side of Cypress Creek. A Merlin (*F. columbarius*) was an early migrant at the Harris farm on 24 August. The brown-plumaged falcon, either a female or a hatching year bird, was on the ground where it appeared to be consuming prey. It flew first to a powerline, then to a fence, and finally into the woods. Light conditions were not good, and the Merlin never remained in one place long enough to permit careful study; but the dark brown mantle, indistinct facial pattern, heavily streaked underparts, and barred tail lacking rusty coloration clearly separated it from the smaller American Kestrel and the larger Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*).

Of the sightings mentioned above, that of the Wilson's Plover is the most noteworthy because this species rarely strays from the immediate coastal region. E. Milby Burton (*South Carolina Bird Life* 1970, p. 597) was surprised to find one feeding in a rice field several miles from the sea on 10 May 1952. This appears to be the only published inland record from South Carolina. Robert P. Holmes III (*Chat* 10:17) lists three Wilson's Plovers seen on 18 September 1945 among various shorebirds, including the Semipalmated Plover, recorded during an unspecified period of time at Mount Olive, Wayne County, N.C. Mount Olive lies about 120 miles W of Ocracoke Island and 60-65 miles NW of the nearest beachfront. Holmes is an excellent field observer who is thoroughly familiar with the shorebirds normally found in the Carolinas. I consider his record acceptable despite the unfortunate absence of details in the published account. The Wilson's Plover is not mentioned in R.J. Hader's "Species List of Birds of Wake County, North Carolina" (*Chat* 33:53-71), and the author informs me that he is not aware of any local sighting since publication of the county list in 1969. Thus, to the best of my knowledge, the Wilson's Plover seen in Franklin County on 30 August 1975 is the first record from piedmont North Carolina and the first inland sighting for the state to be reported with full details of field marks and viewing conditions.

Razorbill at Huntington Beach State Park and Pawleys Island, S.C.

FREDERICK M. PROBST
Route 2, Box 80-C2
Pawleys Island, S.C. 29585

On 9 January 1976, Mark Bara and I surveyed the ocean beaches at Huntington Beach State Park and Garden City, S.C., for oil-soaked loons and other species. Bara, a biologist with the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department,