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Probable Breeding of the Red Crossbill in the North Carolina Sandhills

J.H. CARTER III
P.O. Box 891
Southern Pines, N.C.

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The Red Crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) is an erratic wanderer, and evidence of its breeding in North Carolina is mostly restricted to higher elevations in the mountains (Johnston 1963, Stupka 1963, Simpson 1974). Sykes (1974) reported probable breeding in Wake County in the spring of 1967.

On 1 September 1974, I saw an adult female and a juvenile Red Crossbill near Southern Pines, Moore County, N.C. The birds were watched for several minutes in a large loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) bordering a small lake in a residential area. The female was observed feeding the juvenile on several occasions. The juvenile was heavily streaked with dark brown and had brown wings. Its bill was not noticeably crossed. It was capable of sustained flight. The young bird spent most of its time loudly begging for food from the female; however, it was seen trying to obtain seeds from cones by itself on at least one occasion.

Red Crossbills were first recorded in the North Carolina Sandhills on 15 November 1969, and lingered until 2 June 1970 (Carter 1971). They were also present from 18 December 1972 to 7 June 1973 and from 13 November 1973 to 19 May 1974. None were recorded from June through August 1974. Following the 1 September 1974 sighting, a single Red Crossbill in green plumage was seen in the same area on 9 September 1974 and 6 and 7 January 1975. At least one Red Crossbill was heard on 8 July 1975 in the nearby Fort Bragg Military Reservation (2 miles NE of the juvenile's location).

The Red Crossbill is now a visitor throughout the year in the North Carolina Sandhills, and most are seen from November through May. During the summer of 1974, it is highly probable that Red Crossbills bred in the Sandhills region.

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[For additional evidence of breeding by Red Crossbills in North Carolina outside the mountains, see Briefs for the Files, page 105 in this issue of *The Chat*.—ED.]