

General Field Notes

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Red-necked Grebe in Buncombe County, N.C.

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6 March 1976

On 21 February 1976 Price visited Lake Julian, south of Asheville, Buncombe County, N.C. There he found a female Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) accompanied by a grebe he had never seen before. The bird was observed with a 20X scope in good light at approximately 75 feet. The bill was yellow and was approximately as long as the head of the bird. The chin and throat were white and extended to the side neck and up to near the crown. The neck was a uniform gray with similar coloration on the rest of the body. From this and the general appearance it was concluded that it was a Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*) in winter plumage. Price then called Roland Sargent, president of the local Blue Ridge Bird Club, and both returned to the lake for further study. They were able to judge the size of the bird by comparing it with the merganser. It appeared to be almost the same size, which ruled out the smaller Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*). They returned to Sargent's home and after reviewing his bird books, called Robert Ruiz. Ruiz and Sargent then visited the lake in mid-afternoon and using a 20-45X scope were able to study the bird further and confirm the identification. Ruiz and Bill Duyck returned to the lake on the 22nd to find the grebe still present. After observing it on the water, they were fortunate also to see it in flight, which was decidedly loonlike. The white wing patches showed up in marked contrast to the dark upper parts as it flew to the left, directly toward them, and then veered to the right and disappeared from sight toward the northern end of the lake. Enroute to this area Ruiz and Duyck saw the Red-breasted Merganser again and an adult Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*), but because a fog had begun to rise from the lake they were not able to relocate the Red-necked Grebe. According to Ruiz' records, this is the first report of the Red-necked Grebe in western North Carolina. We can only surmise that it may have been blown in on the 18th by a violent storm that had produced the first tornado in Asheville's history.

Early Summer Seabird Migration at Cape Hatteras

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8 March 1976

The only published account of a seabird migration witnessed from shore in North Carolina is P.A. Buckley's study near Hatteras Inlet, Dare County, from late May through early June 1970. (*Am. Birds*, 1973, 27:8-10). During a 4-day period he

recorded an estimated 11,000 individuals of nine species, three of which were the first state observations.

We witnessed a seabird migration from shore on 11 June 1975, near Frisco, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Dare County, approximately 4 miles from the site of Buckley's work. Between 1445 and 1815 EDT, more than 262 individuals of five species were seen flying NE parallel to Hatteras Island at about 100 to 1000 yards from shore. Below is a tabulation of species and individual totals:

Cory's Shearwater (<i>Puffinus diomedea</i>)	100+
Greater Shearwater (<i>Puffinus gravis</i>)	8
Sooty Shearwater (<i>Puffinus griseus</i>)	1
Shearwater sp. (<i>Puffinus</i> sp.) (75-90% probable Cory's)	135+
Wilson's Storm-Petrel (<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>)	15
Pomarine Jaeger (<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>) (light-phase adults)	2
Jaeger sp. (<i>Stercorarius</i> sp.) (light-phase)	1
Total	262+

This occurrence of seabird migration was apparently not related to weather disturbances as there were no storm systems in the area prior to or during our observations. The weather was partly cloudy with no precipitation. A weak cold front passed through the Outer Banks area of about 1700, accompanied by winds from E-NE at 10-20 mph gradually shifting to SE after passage. Buckley (op. cit.) also mentioned the absence of storm systems during his observations.

The magnitude and late date of this seabird migration was surprising. Considered together, our observations and Buckley's sightings (op. cit.) suggest that inshore seabird migration, at least along the Outer Banks during late spring and early summer, may be a regular occurrence.

Harlequin Duck at Carolina Beach, N.C.

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12 June 1975

On 23 March 1975, while scanning a large group of ducks off Fort Fisher near the rock jetty, I spotted a small dark duck sitting on the jetty. Careful observation through the 30X scope showed much white on the head. The sun had just risen and was at my back, but because of the great distance from the bird, I decided to walk the jetty to get a better look to verify identification. By walking down the jetty, I was able to get much closer. This time all the white markings about the head and body were plainly visible and distinct. The bird left the jetty and began swimming near a group of Buffleheads. After 30 minutes of careful study I was positive that this was an adult male Harlequin Duck. After about 30 minutes it flew off toward the end of the jetty and out of viewing range. There were many species of ducks in this area, including Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ring-necks, both Scaup, Bufflehead, Baldpate, Ruddy Ducks, and Red-breasted Mergansers as well as scores of loons and Horned Grebes. This is the eighth published record of the Harlequin Duck in North Carolina and the first since a male and female were seen at Beaufort by Eugene Pond on 13 March 1969 (*Chat* 33:106).

Bar-tailed Godwit on North Carolina Outer Banks

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4 August 1975

On 31 August 1971, after passage of tropical storm Doria, I was told that a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) was sighted at the Pea Island National Wildlife Ref-