

bills that had not yet begun to turn bright orange, and none of the three had prominent black knobs at the base of the bill.

When I left Lake Sagamore, I asked the security guard if anyone had stocked the lake with swans. He was unaware of their presence. The next day the birds could not be found on the lake. I assume they departed with the other transient waterfowl that had been present on 2 December.

There are several published records of free-flying and apparently wild Mute Swans in North Carolina. Eugene Pond reported three in the bight of Cape Lookout on 16 November 1966 (Chat 31:27). Robert Ruiz and party found one on Lake Julian in Buncombe County on 14 April 1973 (Chat 37:108). Louis Fink noted single fall transients at Rocky Mount in October of 1974 and 1975 (Am. Birds 30:52).

I suggest that the Mute Swan be given hypothetical status on the state bird list until additional records make clear the origin of the birds found in North Carolina.

### **Goshawk at Shining Rock Wilderness Area, N.C.**

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5 April 1976

At approximately 0915 on 3 April 1976 I observed an adult Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) at shining rocks in the Shining Rock Wilderness Area. The bird, first seen rising out of the trees below, flew up along the ridge for some distance before dropping down, out of sight. From above, the bird was slaty blue on its back, wings, and tail. The long tail had several wide bands across its upper side. As the bird rose, several times it flashed a very pale silver or white under surface. The alternating flap and soar combination coupled with long tail and short wings identified the bird as an Accipiter. The silver breast plus very large size eliminates the smaller Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Having spent much time taking hawk counts at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, I am quite familiar with this species. Other field marks aiding in identification include the bird's general behavior. The bird soared more than it flapped, holding the wings flat across the shoulders and dropping the wing tips. The flapping of this bird was powerful and not hurried, and the wings had a tapered appearance. These characteristics are all considered classic for the species. It is also interesting to note that the bird came out of a heavy spruce and hemlock forested area, the Goshawk's traditional breeding habitat.

### **Franklin's Gull at Huntington Beach State Park, S.C.**

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20 April 1977

On the afternoon of 26 September 1976, we were birding at Huntington Beach State Park, Georgetown County, S.C. Near Murrell's Inlet at the northern end of the park, we found a flock of at least 300 birds resting on the beach. The majority of these were Laughing Gulls and Royal Terns, but also present were American Oystercatchers; Black Skimmers; Forster's, Common, and Sandwich Terns; and Herring and Ring-billed Gulls. While scanning the flock with a 30X Balscope from a distance of about 150 feet, we noticed in the midst of some Laughing Gulls one bird that immediately stood out from the rest and appeared to be a Franklin's Gull (*Larus pipixcan*).

The bird was noticeably smaller than the Laughing Gulls, and its head pattern was strikingly different. The remnant of the black hood was more extensive, especially around the eye and on the nape; a distinct eye ring was also noted. The bill was black and roughly of the same proportions as that of the Laughing Gulls, but heavier than that of a Bonaparte's. A row of small diamond-shaped marks was present in the distal portion of the folded wing, contrasting with the black background of the wingtips except for their very ends which were white. There was not as much white, however, as we have seen in some illustrations of Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage. The mantle was at least as dark a gray

as that of a Laughing Gull. A low-flying helicopter flushed the entire flock, and when the birds settled we were unable to relocate the Franklin's Gull.

At the time of the observation, the sky had recently become overcast, but sufficient light was available during the entire period. Because we did not observe the bird in flight, its identification as a Franklin's Gull rests on the plumage characteristics noted above, the bill, and the obviously smaller size as compared to the Laughing Gulls.

There is but one other record of the Franklin's Gull in South Carolina, a bird observed by Harry LeGrand near Townville, Anderson County, on 8 May 1975 (Chat 39:92). An earlier record claimed for the state (South Carolina Bird Life, 1970, p. 605) is based on a young female shot at the Catawba River near the N.C.-S.C. border, but in North Carolina (Chat 39:92).

## **Sabine's Gull in Forsyth County, N.C.**

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12 November 1976

On Saturday, 2 October 1976, my husband Jim and I went to Salem Lake, a 365-acre Winston-Salem water reservoir, to check for fall migrants. The sky was completely overcast, winds were from the north, and it appeared that rain might begin falling at any moment.

While scanning the lake from the end of a 300-foot fishing pier, we saw a small dark-headed gull sitting in the water about 900 feet distant. In the poor light we could not see any detail with our 7 x 35 binoculars, so we waited for the gull to fly. The first flight was short, and the wing pattern was not well seen. When the gull landed on the water it raised its wings and the large black wedges on the wing tips provided the first field mark. The gull made several flights before the light improved enough for us to observe the black wing tips, white triangles, and gray back pattern. After referring to *A Field Guide to the Birds* (Peterson 1947) and to *Birds of North America* (Robbins et al. 1966), we identified the bird as an adult Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*).

Immediately Ramona Snavely and Fran Baldwin were called. With the aid of Snavely's Questar 50X scope we were able to see the yellow tip on the beak and the black outer primaries tipped in white. After photographs had been taken from the pier, we decided to try to approach the bird closer with a boat. The gull allowed the boat to approach very close, and it was then that the head took on a grayer appearance and the black collar became evident. Molt into winter plumage had begun on the forehead. In flight the pure white tail appeared only slightly forked.

Many bird students saw the Sabine's Gull and confirmed our identification. The bird was photographed by several people, including E. Wayne Irvin who took the picture that appears on the front cover of this magazine.

The water reservoir on which the bird appeared is equipped with strategically located aeration systems that tend to attract forage fish, especially thread-fin shad (*Dorosoma pretenense*). The gull seemed to show a preference for these locations and appeared to rely heavily on these fish as a source of food.

The Sabine's Gull remained at the lake for 5 days, being seen last on 6 October 1976.

According to R.M. Lockley (*Ocean Wanderers: The Migratory Sea Birds of the World*, 1974, p. 66, 142, and 143), the Sabine's Gull breeds circumpolarly in the high Arctic and migrates in fall to spend the winter at sea generally south of the equator. Large numbers of these gulls move southward offshore along the Pacific Coast of North America to reach the food-rich waters of the Humbolt Current off Chile and Peru. Because relatively few Sabine's Gulls winter in the western part of the south Atlantic Ocean, the species is only a casual spring and fall transient on the East Coast. It rarely occurs inland.

A Sabine's Gull was reported on 27 May 1972 offshore at Coquina Beach, N.C., by Robert Ake (*Am. Birds* 26:750). The Forsyth County sighting is the first inland occurrence for North Carolina and the first record for the state to be supported by a photograph.