

SPRING BIRD COUNT—1979

JOHN O. FUSSELL III

Based on compilers' comments, I believe that the 1979 Spring Count will generally not be remembered with much enthusiasm. Of the 22 areas censused in both 1979 and 1978, 14 had lower species totals in 1979 (one was unchanged). Some compilers commented that their areas had noticeably poor migrations. However, in contrast to the poorer individual counts, the composite species and individual totals were similar to those of 1978. Total number of species found was 256 (257 in 1978), and the total number of individuals was 120,771 (117,697 in 1978). There were only 24 counts this year, but they had rather intensive coverage, a total of 506 field observers and 1771 field-hours.

On the coast, Morehead City had good coverage and turned up several uncommon migrants to tally a record 181 species. Inland, Raleigh managed a very respectable 152 species despite cool and windy weather.

Most counts had favorable weather. No count was hampered by rain and most counts had fairly light winds. However, several of the North Carolina piedmont counts held 5 May had rather windy conditions. In 1979, there were few frontal systems that created good birding, in contrast to 1978.

Five birds on the 1979 count are especially noteworthy. Wilmington's **Great Cormorant** (an immature) was near Carolina Beach. Could this be the same bird that wintered at Wrightsville Beach? Pamlico County's well-studied **Rough-legged Hawk** was unusual as well as very late, and the immature **Glaucous Gull** on the Pamlico River in Beaufort County was also unusual and late. The **Gray Kingbird** (Charleston) is seldom reported on the Spring Count; New Hope's **Western Tanager** (a female) was studied with a scope. Unfortunately, Raleigh's Class A bird, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, was unknown to Raleigh counters until after the count, although it was certainly present on count day.

Four Bald Eagles were reported: one immature in Cumberland County, an adult or subadult at Chapel Hill, and an immature and a subadult at New Hope. New Hope also had an **Olive-sided Flycatcher**, a species that is rare throughout the state. A total of 28 Bachman's Sparrows were reported at 6 localities; 15 of these were at Wilmington (Table 1). Most other

NOTICE TO COMPILERS OF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

As stated in the Summer 1977 *Chat* (41:57-58), Christmas bird counts taken in the Carolinas are no longer being published in this journal, and the Carolina Bird Club is not sending forms to compilers of these counts. In order that noteworthy records from the Christmas counts be mentioned in *Chat*, compilers are requested to send details of these sightings to Harry E. LeGrand Jr., Department of Zoology, Clemson University, Clemson, S.C. 29631. Reports of unusual Christmas bird count species will appear in "Briefs for the Files" in the Summer issue following the count.

Full details of noteworthy sightings are required on all counts submitted for publication in *American Birds*. Compilers may simply make an additional copy for Mr. LeGrand. Remember that details for each species should include date, location, name of observer(s), and number of individuals in addition to a description of the field marks.

This new procedure for reporting rare birds seen on Christmas counts will enable *Chat* to publish more details than will appear in *American Birds*. It will also place the highlights of the Christmas bird count in print along with the other interesting sightings from the Carolinas during the winter season. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.—EFP

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DATES
Saturday, 15 December 1979 through Tuesday, 1 January 1980

TABLE 1. Selected species from the 1979 Spring Bird Count in the Carolinas.

Species	Total Individuals	Morehead City, N.C. 28 April	Wilmington, N.C. 21 April	Charleston, S.C. 22 April	Beaufort Co., N.C. 22 April	Pamlico Co., N.C. 6 May	Dillon Co., S.C. 30 April	Cumberland Co., N.C. 29 April	Raven Rock State Park, N.C.—5 May	Southern Pines, N.C. 29 April	Columbia, S.C. 28 April	Raleigh, N.C. 5 May	Durham, N.C. 22 April	Chapel Hill, N.C. 6 May	New Hope River, N.C. 29 April	Greensboro, N.C. 5 May	Winston-Salem, N.C. 5 May	Iredell Co., N.C. 5 May	Charlotte, N.C. 5 May	Greenville, S.C. 28 April	Pilot Mtn. State Park, N.C.—28 April	Elkin-Ronda, N.C. 2 May	Caldwell Co., N.C. 30 April	Brevard, N.C. 5 May	Avery Co., N.C. 11 May
Brown Pelican	115	19	50	46	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glossy Ibis	120	50	60	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White Ibis	468	227	25	216	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turkey Vulture	370	12	15	26	7	11	-	-	1	*	2	1	21	71	105	8	9	23	-	1	21	8	2	21	5
Black Vulture	122	3	7	57	1	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	6	7	21	-	-	2	-	-	7	-	-	1	-
Swallow-tailed Kite	4	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mississippi Kite	16	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sharp-shinned Hawk	29	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	1	2	1	2	4	7	1	*	3	-	1	1	1	1	1	*	-
Cooper's Hawk	11	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	*	-	2	-	2	-	1	1	1	-
Red-tailed Hawk	190	4	1	4	4	2	*	5	8	7	14	17	10	16	26	4	19	14	13	2	14	1	2	3	*
Red-shouldered Hawk	83	5	3	21	1	4	-	3	-	2	3	4	3	12	8	4	1	1	4	-	-	-	1	3	-
Broad-winged Hawk	92	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	7	11	12	-	4	1	1	2	42	-	-	5	4
Marsh Hawk	10	-	1	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-
Osprey	138	25	41	21	6	9	*	1	-	2	2	3	*	12	8	2	-	-	-	2	3	1	-	-	*
Merlin	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
American Kestrel	22	2	-	-	2	-	*	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	2	1	4	1	-	3	1	1	2	-
Barn Owl	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
Screech Owl	77	6	-	-	-	2	-	5	1	-	4	3	2	9	4	15	10	-	1	-	-	12	2	1	-
Great Horned Owl	24	-	4	1	-	2	-	* 1	-	-	2	-	4	2	2	-	1	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	-
Barred Owl	121	3	3	6	4	2	-	5	1	2	12	11	11	30	13	2	-	5	10	-	-	-	-	1	-
Red-cock. Woodpecker	23	*	5	9	1	-	1	1	-	2	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	21
Common Raven	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
Red-br. Nuthatch	15	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	2	5
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	72	1	2	1	2	-	*	-	2	9	6	14	5	6	4	5	2	1	2	3	-	-	3	4	-
Loggerhead Shrike	61	-	-	6	1	-	4	*	-	2	15	6	3	2	1	7	2	4	7	-	-	-	1	-	-
Blk.-thd. Gr. Warbler	52	7	1	27	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	2	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Evening Grosbeak	38	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	12	-	-
Purple Finch	28	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	3	5	8	1
House Finch	40	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	*	-	14	12	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pine Siskin	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	-
Bachman's Sparrow	28	1	15	8	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Total No. species	256	181	164	138	102	113	69	106	103	117	121	152	112	129	134	137	139	111	117	70	89	62	73	107	91
Total no. individuals	120,771	14645	9311	8478	3856	2294	1287	2197	2529	2686	5278	10823	4150	11771	6469	7517	7660	3066	4691	948	2254	978	2099	4075	1709
Field observers	506	27	23	15	21	9	3	7	11	13	16	33	22	78	44	28	44	13	19	10	10	12	11	35	2
Yard observers	83	5	0	0	4	0	2	2	0	0	1	5	1	18	0	0	2	1	2	6	0	3	16	15	0
Field parties	207	11	11	5	9	4	2	5	4	8	8	20	7	30	19	9	12	4	7	4	4	6	6	10	2
Field-hours	1771	98	97	46	67	71	17	36	35	69	60	160	61	217	156	91	118	36	66	36	82	45	18	58	31
Field-miles by foot	800	32	38	28	29	20	6	11	12	22	66	117	42	92	90	35	36	15	18	6	35	17	12	18	3
Field-miles by car, boat	4149	259	430	109	251	94	80	110	178	221	315	200	122	470	202	206	165	108	196	34	69	35	134	121	

* Seen in area during count period but not on count day.

noteworthy sightings were of birds that are only locally unusual; these are cited in the compilers' comments.

On the negative side of the ledger, a total of only 120 Glossy Ibises reflects the decrease of this species as a nesting bird (Table 1). Again this year, no Purple Gallinules were reported, and the low total of 61 Loggerhead Shrikes is indicative of that species' slow but steady decline (Table 1).

In the 1978 census report, I noted the general increase in diurnal raptor numbers, and this was the case again in 1979. However, a large number of these birds were found in the Chapel Hill and New Hope count circles. Apparently many of these birds are present because of the clear-cutting in preparation for the Jordan Reservoir, and their numbers will probably decrease (at least in the New Hope count circle) when the reservoir is filled.

Winter finches were generally scarce this year; however, 40 House Finches were recorded (Table 1), and based on what I've heard, I'll predict more next year.

The quality of the 1979 reports was an improvement over 1978. (Nevertheless, many counts still have incorrectly added individual totals.) No birds were deleted from any count, and all truly rare reports had good to excellent details, although I had to write and request them in a few instances. Actually, I believe that the reports of the rarest birds are usually valid. However, I'm skeptical of many reports of late birds, birds that are common one day but have become rare two weeks later. It is easy at midday to "remember" seeing a bird earlier in the morning that one actually saw a few days previously (another good reason to record as you go). I was surprised to find out that some compilers do not know when certain species normally leave their areas.

Appreciation is extended to Harry LeGrand for his comments on rarities.

COMPILERS' COMMENTS

COAST

MOREHEAD CITY, N.C. (center: 0.7 mile NW of Crab Point in Newport River).

28 April. Good coverage turned up several slightly uncommon migrants and the result was a record total of 181 species. **Anhinga** (Compiler, Dwight Lee) was recorded for fourth straight year. Eight of the 9 adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were found during a census of Newport River heronries. The 3 drake Redheads and the drake Hooded Merganser were late. Commendable was the finding of 5 species of rails (including 3 Black Rails) and 29 species of shorebirds. The latter included an **Upland Sandpiper** (Alex and Sue Meadows), 14 White-rumped Sandpipers, and 9 Stilt Sandpipers. The Short-eared Owl (Alex and Sue Meadows) was slightly late. Notable migrants were 2 **Bank Swallows** (Allen Bryan, Kevin Hintsa, Dwight Lee), **Veery** (Rocky Tucker), 2 Water Pipits (late — Ricky Davis), 2 Blackpoll Warblers (early—Compiler, Ricky Davis, Jeannie Wilson), **Northern Waterthrush** (Skip Prange), and male **Scarlet Tanager** (Ricky Davis). **Bachman's Sparrow** (Compiler, Jeannie Wilson) is rare in count circle, but fairly common a few miles west.—JOHN O. FUSSELL III, 1412 Shepard Street, Morehead City, N.C. 28557.

WILMINGTON, N.C. (center: Monkey Junction).

21 April. Immature **Great Cormorant** was seen perched and in flight at 100 yards in good light by Jay Carter and Doug Nunnally. It was compared to nearby Double-crested. Carter is familiar with the species. Greg Massey observed the distinct white eye stripe of the singing **Tennessee Warbler** as close as 35 feet.—FRANCES NEEDHAM, Box 8207, Wrightsville Beach, N.C. 28480.

CHARLESTON, S.C. (center: 14 miles NE of Mt. Pleasant and 0.5 mile E of US 17).

29 April. Caper's and Deewee's Islands as well as the mudflats, estuaries, and marshes of Seewee Bay were not covered. Adequate coverage was also lacking for some mainland areas. Pete Laurie, Gardner Miller, and Perry Nugent observed all field marks of the **Gray Kingbird** as it fed in a pecan grove. An Eastern Kingbird was present for comparison. During the count

week, another, or possibly the same, **Gray Kingbird** was seen by Jay Shuler near McClellanville, 7 miles from the count sighting.—JULIAN HARRISON, Biology Department, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C. 29401.

COASTAL PLAIN

BEAUFORT COUNTY, N.C. (center: entrance of Upper Goose Creek into Pamlico River).

22 April. John Fussell and Alex Meadows observed the all-whitish plumage and heavy bicolored bill of the immature **Glaucous Gull** in excellent light at 100 yards. It was feeding next to Great Black-backed Gulls and Herring Gulls in the Pamlico River. The Seaside Sparrow (John Fussell) was on the river shore in an area devoid of marshes; probably a migrant, it appeared to be exhausted.—GERALDINE COX, P.O. Box 162, Washington, N.C. 27889.

PAMLICO COUNTY, N.C. (center: in Florence at intersection of 1324 and 1329).

6 May. Gannets are common winter residents in the eastern part of Pamlico Sound, but the appearance of two near Oriental was a surprise. John Fussell observed the birds flying east from the Neuse early in the morning. Wade Fuller and Alex Meadows studied the **Rough-legged Hawk** over a field near Merritt. They commented on the dark-banded white tail, frequent hovering, and the fact that, although the bird was obviously a buteo, its shape and manner suggested a Marsh Hawk. The **Stilt Sandpiper** (Wade Fuller, John Fussell, Alex Meadows) was at a brackish impoundment. [Count was a record species total.—JF]—GERALDINE COX, address as above.

DILLON COUNTY, S.C. (center: Dillon).

30 April. [An additional 19 species were observed during the count period.—JF]—JOHN H. WILSON, Box 535, Dillon, S.C. 29536.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, N.C. (center: Market Square in Fayetteville).

29 April. An immature **Bald Eagle** (Compiler) was well studied and well described. Two **Short-billed Marsh Wrens** (Compiler) were studied closely at the gravel pits; one was singing. The **Blue-winged Warbler** (Kevin Mason) was a male. A **Grasshopper Sparrow** (Compiler) near the gravel pits was in song. On 4 May, the compiler observed a male Lesser Scaup at the gravel pits.—PHILIP J. CRUTCHFIELD, 901 Montclair Road, Fayetteville, N.C. 28304.

RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK, N.C. (center: 1.5 miles NW of Lillington, N.C.).

5 May. In terms of individuals, the count would have undoubtedly been higher if the morning weather had been better.—ROBERT F. SOOTS JR., P.O. Box 216, Buies Creek, N.C. 27506.

SOUTHERN PINES, N.C. (center: 1 mile NE of Skyline).

29 April. A **Black-bellied Plover** and 4 **Willetts** were at Lake Surf (Steve Davis, Bill Lazar). This is the second spring record for the Willet. Swainson's Warbler was missed, which is very unusual. Night-heron (sp.) (Tom Howard) was seen at Johnson's Millpond at dusk.—J.H. CARTER III, P.O. Box 891, Southern Pines, N.C. 28387.

COLUMBIA, S.C. (center: intersection of Gill's Creek and Bluff Road).

28 April.—GILBERT BRISTOW, 2921 Blossom Street, Columbia, S.C. 29205

PIEDMONT

RALEIGH, N.C. (center: Norfolk and Southern RR crossing on Lake Wheeler Road).

5 May. Count was handicapped somewhat by cool, windy weather. The **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (Mary Weber) was at Shelley Lake. Two **King Rails** (several observers) were at the Greenview Marsh where a pair was present in 1978. Tom Howard found a **Red-cockaded Woodpecker**, first ever for the Raleigh count, at Schenck Forest. The nonsinging Warbling

Vireo was studied leisurely and very closely by a very competent observer (Bob Lewis). Carl Leibrandt saw a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** the day before and the day after count. Unfortunately, count participants did not find out about the bird until 2 days after the count.—R.J. HADER, 3313 Cheswick Drive, Raleigh, N.C. 27609.

DURHAM, N.C. (center: 1 mile N and 1 mile E of junction of Eno River and US 501).

22 April. Several water birds frequently seen in the area but rarely on the Durham spring count included 2 Canada Geese (Brian Danforth, Jim McConnell), and American Bittern in a marsh near US 501 (McConnell party), and 2 Double-crested Cormorants (Wagner party). Interesting but not unexpected warblers were a Blue-winged (Jim Weigand, Charlie Saunders) and a Cape May (Wagner party).—JOHN HORN, Department of Botany, Duke University, Durham, N.C. 27706.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (center: intersection of Columbia and Franklin Streets in Chapel Hill).

6 May. An adult **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (Norm Budnitz, Eric Garner, Daniel Kaplan) was at the location where a pair nested in 1977. Dennis Alwon and Mark Crotteau saw the adult or subadult **Bald Eagle** in good light at 500 yards. Bob Lewis heard the **Chuck-will's-widow** in Carrboro.—W.H. and MARGARET WAGNER, Route 2, Falls of New Hope, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.

NEW HOPE RIVER, N.C. (center: the point where SR 1700 crosses New Hope River).

29 April. The massive clear-cutting of our count circle in preparation for the B. Everett Jordan Lake significantly reduced the bottomland habitat in our count area while increasing the open country habitat and allowing the formation of a grassy, muddy, shallow-water area in the northern part of the count circle, which has been very productive of shorebirds. Again the New Hope area attracted several notable waterbirds: Common Loon, 5 Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egret, American Bittern (Barbara Roth), and Common Gallinule (Norm Budnitz and Eric Gardner). At least two **Bald Eagles** (a subadult and an immature) were seen by several people. A Turkey was closely observed by Barbara Roth. Unfortunately, the **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was not seen. Its song was heard by Annie Broughton, who is familiar with the species in the Adirondacks. Good descriptions were given for Worm-eating Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Cerulean Warbler. Steve Graves and Dan Kaplan observed the tanager bill and distinct wing bars of the female **Western Tanager** through a 20X scope. Kaplan is very familiar with the species. [Count is a record species total.—JF]—ANGELO CAPPARELLA, 400 West Main Street, Carrboro, N.C. 27510.

GREENSBORO, N.C. (center: transmitter tower of Radio Station WBIG).

5 May.—DONALD ALLEN, 2611 David Caldwell Drive, Greensboro, N.C. 27408.

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (center: intersection of I-40 and Silas Creek Parkway).

5 May. Warbler migration was rather poor, sparse, and late this year. Wilson's and Bay-breasted Warblers were not reported during migration this year, which is very unusual for the Winston-Salem area. Jim and Pat Culbertson and Marbry Hopkins saw the adult **Double-crested Cormorant** on Salem Lake. Ramona Snavely and Rocky Tucker found the **Swainson's Warbler** at Reynolda Gardens 7 May.—RAMONA R. SNAVELY, 115 Plymouth Avenue, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104.

IREDELL COUNTY, N.C. (center: South Yadkin River Bridge on Chipley Ford Road).

5 May.—SAM CATHEY, 130 Park Street, Statesville, N.C. 28677.

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (center: intersection of South Boulevard and Woodlawn Road).

5 May. Flo Cobey, Laurie Gates, and Gayle Shields saw the Semipalmated Sandpiper. Gregg Cornwell and Louise and Randy Cross identified 2 Blue-winged Warblers at Latta Park.—W.A. BROKAW, 3611 Quail Ridge Lane, Matthews, N.C. 28105.

GREENVILLE, S.C. (center: intersection of highways 291 and 29).

28 April.—ROSA LEE HARDIN, Star Route Box 60, Cleveland, S.C. 29635.

PILOT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK, N.C. (center: intersection of US 52 at Pinnacle exit from US 52).

28 April.—E. WAYNE IRVIN, 3600 Penny Court, Raleigh, N.C. 27606.

ELKIN-RONDA, N.C. (center: intersection of US 21 and US 21-A, 3 miles N of Elkin).

2 May. [Count of 12 Screech Owls includes 8 young in nests.—JF]—LIN HENDREN, P.O. Box 148, Elkin, N.C. 28621.

CALDWELL COUNTY, N.C. (center: Lenoir).

30 April.—HELEN E. MYERS, 310 Beall NW, Lenoir, N.C. 28645.

MOUNTAINS

BREVARD, N.C. (center: 5 miles SE of Brevard at Rich Mountain Lookout Tower).

5 May. Best find was pair of **Philadelphia Vireos** observed by Gladys Reese and Hazel and Hervey Roberts. The birds were studied leisurely at close range; the male was singing.—WALTER C. HOLLAND JR., 290 Maple Street, Brevard, N.C. 28712.

EVERY COUNTY, N.C. (center: where SR 1514 crosses Wilson Creek).

11 May. [This is the same count circle that was previously named Grandfather Mountain. The total of 91 species is quite good, especially for only two observers.—JF]—MARGERIE PLYMIRE, Box 306, Linville, N.C. 28646.



Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

Harmony in Nature

"Harmony in Nature," a slide-illustrated science lesson for grades 4 through 6, is available free on 1-week loan to teachers and youth group leaders. The purpose of the lesson is to develop students' awareness of certain hawks and owls. The program introduces basic natural science concepts and vocabulary. For further information write: Society for the Preservation of Birds of Prey, Box 891, Pacific Palisades, Calif. 90272.

Cowbird Records Needed

Gail Whitehurst and Eloise Potter are gathering data on the breeding habits of the Brown-headed Cowbird in the Carolinas. They would appreciate unpublished records of nests with eggs or young and of foster parents feeding young out of the nest. Comments on behavior and population trends are also welcome. Please send information to Route 3, Box 114 AA, Zebulon, N.C. 27597.