

same area reported above. However, the hawk is not pure white but light cream-colored and apparently does not have a black oval around the eye (John E. Cely in letter to Lewis, 11 June 1979). Lewis has affirmed (letter, 14 June 1979) that the bird he saw was not a Red-tailed Hawk.—JRH]

Red-tailed Hawk Capturing Fish

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9 May 1979

The Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) is a widely distributed and successful predator, taking prey ranging through mice, snakes, squirrels, and rabbits to birds virtually as large as itself. Nonetheless, we were quite startled to observe one taking fish from the surface of a lake.

At 0930 on 2 May 1979, William Brown and I were boating across Lake Wheeler near Raleigh, Wake County, N.C. The weather was fair with a southeasterly wind of about 5 knots. A Red-tailed Hawk appeared over the lake gliding approximately 40 m above the surface. As we watched, the bird stooped suddenly and snatched an object from the lake. The hawk then turned and flew directly over our boat at not more than 20 m altitude. The prey item was clearly a fish.

The actions of the hawk suggested that it was an experienced fisher. Its manner of flight indicated a posture of searching, and its capture technique was similar to that of a fishing eagle. Both feet were thrust downward and forward in synchrony, and, as far as we could determine, no part of the bird other than the talons was wetted. Dead and moribund Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculata*) and Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*) are a fairly common sight at Lake Wheeler in midspring and seem to represent a largely unexploited food resource. At least one Red-tailed Hawk had learned to use this abundant and easily taken source of prey.

Spring Record of the Hudsonian Godwit in Inland South Carolina

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While jogging late in the afternoon of 26 April 1979, Valega noticed three shorebirds on the athletic fields at Clemson University, Clemson, S.C. He approached within 20 or 30 yards of the birds and noticed their upturned bills and a black-and-white tail pattern when they flew, even though he did not have binoculars with him. After returning to his hotel room, he checked his field guides and was convinced that the birds were Hudsonian Godwits (*Limosa haemastica*). He then called LeGrand, and both observed two remaining birds with binoculars and telescope late the next afternoon. Sidney Gauthreaux and LeGrand observed the two godwits on 28 April in extreme detail, and the birds were last seen on 30 April.

Throughout their stay at Clemson, the godwits remained in a very limited area of the field, a closely mowed lawn, and returned to it when flushed. They probed deep into the damp, spongy ground with their bills, and they were surprisingly tame for such large birds. Frequently feeding in association with the godwits were several Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus*

delawarensis), a Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), and varying numbers of Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) and Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*).

The long, upturned bills that were dark distally and pinkish-orange proximally were easily noted on the two birds studied well. Their backs were plain grayish-brown. One individual had a rusty color on half of its breast, indicating a partial change to breeding plumage. The second bird, which had a light gray breast, was still mainly in winter plumage. Both birds had considerable spotting and barring on the underparts. In flight, the dark wings with a white wing stripe, black axillars and wing linings, white rump, and black tail were observed.

The Hudsonian Godwit normally migrates in the spring northward through the Great Plains and is extremely rare at this season along the Eastern Seaboard. A slow-moving cold front that brought heavy flooding to the Gulf States, as well as heavy rain to the Carolinas, was clearly responsible for bringing the birds to South Carolina. This appears to be the fifth record for South Carolina (see Lewis, 1978, *Chat* 42:82-83), though a February sighting not published in full might have been a Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*), based on the latitudes of the winter ranges of the two species. The Clemson record is significant because it is only the second spring record for the Carolinas [the other being one seen by E. von S. Dingle near Charleston, S.C., on 8 or 10 May 1941 (*South Carolina Bird Life*, 1970, p. 251)] and only the second inland record for these states [the other being two seen at Lake Mattamuskeet, N.C., on 23 October 1977 by Geraldine Cox, Elizabeth Ball, et al. (*Chat* 43:39)].

Status of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Coastal South Carolina

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25 September 1978

On 13 September 1978 Dick Munoz and I conducted a tour of Cape Romain NWR, S.C., for two visiting scientists/ornithologists from the Netherlands. While observing various common birds on the seaward side of Bird Island, our attention was drawn to an isolated bird not associated with the others.

The bird, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*), was on the higher sand dunes of the island in an area used in spring by nesting Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). Using 7X binoculars, all observers identified the sandpiper from 25 feet. About 6 to 7 inches long, the bird had pale legs, a white eye-ring, and uniform buff or tan color on the throat, breast, and abdomen.

After 4 minutes of observation, the bird was flushed. It flew a short distance and landed in a similar area. The bird seemed fatigued and emaciated, with the sternal keel appearing to protrude from the breast. This may explain the absence of an energetic, snipe-like flight when it was flushed.

The present sighting plus about a dozen others reported in *Chat* and *South Carolina Bird Life* form the basis for proposing a change in the seasonal status of the Buff-breasted Sandpiper from accidental (Sprunt and Chamberlain, *South Carolina Bird Life*, p. 249) to a regular but uncommonly seen fall migrant on the South Carolina coast. Except for a May specimen collected by Hoxie, the South Carolina records of this species fall during the period from late August to early October.

Sisyphian Behavior in a Red-headed Woodpecker

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17 June 1979

On the morning of 17 September 1977, a Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) was flushed from the base of a Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*) on St. Mary's