

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

JOHN B. ANDRE

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge
Route 1, Box 191, Awendaw, S.C. 29429

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

T.E. HOWARD

Weymouth Woods-Sandhills Nature Preserve
P.O. Box 1386, Southern Pines, N.C. 28387

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

Street in Raleigh, N.C. The bird flew with an acorn in its bill to a nearby telephone pole. In a matter of seconds it had worked its way nearly to the top of the pole. The bird stopped, pushed the acorn into a hole, and then returned to the base of the oak for another acorn. The same procedure was repeated, except that when the second acorn was thrust into the hole, an acorn popped out the other side. Immediately, the ludicrousness of the situation was apparent. The woodpecker was attempting to fill a hole bored completely through the diameter of the pole.

The Red-headed Woodpecker is known to wedge acorns into cracks and chinks, and its near relative, the Acorn Woodpecker (*M. formicivorus*), has a propensity for storing acorns in holes drilled for that purpose. But that knowledge in no way lessened this comedy. Because an acorn popped out on the second trip observed, the bird obviously had been engaged in the activity for some time prior to my arrival. Comparing the size of the acorn (maximum of 1 cm) to the diameter of the pole (minimum of 20 cm at the height of the hole) indicates approximately 20 previous trips.

However, the most intriguing aspect of this activity was the woodpecker's apparent "agitation" at not being able to fill the hole. After pushing an acorn in, the bird would often hitch around the pole just in time to see an acorn hit the ground. It would then move to the exit hole and chatter loudly. On occasion the bird would pick up a "processed" acorn and reinsert it.

The number of acorns pushed out at each visit varied from none to two, with one being the usual number. The bird always inserted the acorn on the same side of the pole, thereby creating distinct "in" and "out" holes. Because each acorn could be used more than once and the starting time for the activity is unknown, no estimate of the total attempts at filling the hole can be made. However, the approximate number of attempts needed before acorns were pushed out the other side (20) plus the number of observed attempts (14) yields a minimum of 34.

I watched the activity about 10 minutes. When a pedestrian passed close to the pole, the bird flew and did not return within the next 10 minutes. No further activity was seen on subsequent visits.

This is not the only report of Sisyphean behavior in the Red-headed Woodpecker. A.C. Bent (Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 174, p. 202-203) records an almost identical observation reported by George A. Dorsey in 1926.

Warblers in Southwestern North Carolina, Including Cerulean Warblers in Clay County

MICHAEL P. SCHULTZ
3008 Glendale Avenue
Durham, N.C. 27704

11 June 1979

On 9 and 10 May 1979 my tour schedule with the North Carolina Symphony allowed me considerable time to search for warblers in southwestern North Carolina. The areas covered on 9 May were in Graham County: NC 28 from US 19 to Fontana Village (0730-1030) and SR 1246 and SR 1247 west of Fontana Village (1100-1400). Areas on 10 May were in Clay, Macon, Jackson, and Haywood Counties: US 64 and US 23 to the Blue Ridge Parkway northbound to Richland Balsam (1100-1800). The method of locating birds was to drive slowly, listening for songs. Stops were made for visual confirmations and at apparently favorable habitats. Notes on nesting behavior and information supplemental to Harry E. LeGrand's 1973 warbler distribution and abundance study (Chat 39:45-54) follow. Terms of abundance correspond to those used by LeGrand.

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*): common along US 64 between Hayesville and Franklin at elevations over 3000 feet. Blue-winged Warbler (*V. pinus*): an individual was singing the typical "beebuzz" song in Graham County. Northern Parula