

I made to this lake during 1977 and 1978.

The best observation point for birding is reached by driving north on Shore Road from SC 378 for about 6 miles until the road ends. One is then at the end of a long peninsula jutting into the lake. From here it is possible to scan over several square miles of water to the east and south. In dealing with such large distances, it is essential to have a powerful telescope and good viewing conditions (i.e. water temperature approximately equal to air temperature). Another good lookout is the dam forming the Lake on SC 6.

The most notable feature of the table is the enormous number of Horned Grebes that wintered on Lake Murray in 1977 and 1978. Such numbers are unprecedented at an inland location in the Carolinas, if not for the continent. The numbers recorded for Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, and scaup are also unusually high, at least by comparison with the accounts given by Sprunt and Chamberlain in *South Carolina Bird Life* (1970). Because of the great distances involved. I have listed all scaup under the heading "Scaup (sp. ?)." There is little or no doubt, however, that the vast majority of these birds were Lessers.

Not included in the table are two birds seen indistinctly at a great distance on 21 January 1978. They are thought to have been Western Grebes, but viewing conditions made a positive identification impossible.

It should be noted that the winters of 1977 and 1978 were unusually severe. I was accompanied on several of these trips by my wife Lisa, and once by Brian Cassie.

White-tailed Kite in South Carolina Piedmont

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9 January 1979

On 4 July 1978 I attended a picnic near the intersection of SC 72 and Coronaca Creek, in Greenwood County, S.C., about 6 miles NE of the city of Greenwood. The temperature was in the 90s that afternoon with little or no wind and a clear sky. I was in the backyard of a home surrounded by forested country broken occasionally by fields and the highway. Along with the expected species of passerines, I noted a number of Fish Crows in the area.

Around 1500 I was attracted by movement in the sky. From behind some trees in the distance I saw a large bird flying, pursued by three crows (apparently Fish Crows). Astonishingly, the bird looked pure white, and my first thought was of an egret. Many seconds passed before I was able to obtain a pair of binoculars from my car. I relocated the bird, which had been flying steadily, and observed it with binoculars for 2 to 3 seconds. It was about 70 to 100 m away.

The entire body and under surface of the tail were pure white. The bird was a little larger than the pursuing crows, especially in wingspread. In the brief time that I looked at it, two features attracted my attention: the whiteness of the body, head, and tail, and the head itself, which had a beautiful, well-defined, tear-shaped black mark around the eye. There was some black on the under surface of the wings, which were white otherwise. The bird flew by flapping two or three times and then gliding, in the style of an accipiter, but with slower wingbeats. The bird was undoubtedly a White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*).

This Western species, of Southern California and Texas, formerly occurred in South Carolina. In the 1830s, Audubon and his contemporaries recorded the bird several times in the Charleston area and located a nest there (*South Carolina Bird Life*, 1970, p. 152). In the last 50 years, however, there have been only two recorded observations in South Carolina, both made by Douglas Wade in the early 1950s within 10 miles of Clemson (Chat 17:70). In North Carolina, the most recent record of the bird is from the Wilmington area in January of 1957 (Chat 21:70).

Adding significance to the Greenwood observation is the fact that the White-tailed Kite has, in recent years, been undergoing a population explosion and may be extending its range (*American Birds* 32:972). The re-establishment of the species in South Carolina is, therefore, an exciting possibility.

[NOTE: In recent years an albinistic Red-tailed Hawk (Chat 43:31) has frequented the

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*