



Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

Winter Observations on the Inland Lakes of South Carolina

Probably no habitat in the Carolinas is so little explored by birders as the inland lakes, especially those in South Carolina. The reason is twofold: Ignorance of where to go and ignorance of what may be seen. Also a deterrent is the fact that either a boat or a good telescope is often required. The following observations were made by me through an 80X Questar in January of 1979. Only the most noteworthy sightings at each lake are reported. Unlike the previous two years, the winter of 1978-1979 was not unusually cold in the Carolinas.

Lake Greenwood, 6 January: Double-crested Cormorant 2, Ring-billed Gull 230, Bonaparte's Gull 160.

Wateree Lake, 7 January: Ring-billed Gull 50, Bonaparte's Gull 130.

Lake Murray: Horned Grebe, 30 on 6 January and 580 on 26 January.

Fishing Creek Reservoir, 26 January: Ring-billed Gull 400, Bonaparte's Gull 50.

Lake Marion, 26 January: Double-crested Cormorant 9, Bonaparte's Gull 50, Forster's Tern 8.

Lake Moultrie, 26 January: Common Loon 20, Red-throated Loon 2, Horned Grebe 1000, White Ibis 2, immature Bald Eagle 1, Ring-billed Gull 900, Bonaparte's Gull 120, Forster's Tern 20.

Lake Moultrie, 28 January: Herring Gull 40, Forster's Tern 150.

All of the lakes contained many of the commonly occurring waterfowl and shorebirds, frequently in impressive numbers. The water level on all of them seemed quite low.

I believe that the lakes in the upper piedmont of South Carolina are, on the average, far less productive than the ones listed above. The three most productive and accessible lakes are Greenwood, Murray, and Moultrie. Murray and Moultrie have the advantage of being quite close to large population centers.

There are three good observation points on Lake Murray. First of these is the dam and park on SC 6 a few miles N of Lexington. To reach the other two, drive about 10 miles W of Lexington on US 378 to Shore Road; turn right at the "Lake Murray park and ramp" sign and go about 4 miles to the boat landing and small park. The third and most productive lookout is reached by driving about 2 miles farther down Shore Road, to the very end of the peninsula. Stop right before you get to the "private road" sign.

I know of three good spots on Lake Moultrie. The first of these is the Pinopolis Dam, easily reached off US 52 about 6 miles NE of Moncks Corner. To reach the second, drive about 2 miles NW of Moncks Corner on SC 6 to the road leading to the village of Pinopolis. Turn right and go about 3 miles to the end of the road. Walk to the end of the peninsula. The third and most interesting site is reached by driving about 7.5 miles NW of Moncks Corner on SC 6 to a small road on the right that leads immediately

to a large asphalt parking lot and a boat ramp. Park as far from Route 6 as you can and look for an old dirt road leading into the woods. Walk about a half mile down to the lake overview. If the water level is low you will find a lovely beach and many acres of mudflats.

Of all the lakes in South Carolina, the most accessible, compact, and yet consistently productive is Lake Greenwood, although you will not find here the great flocks of Horned Grebes or waterfowl sometimes found on the bigger lakes. Greenwood State Park, on the southwestern side of the lake just off SC 34 and 702, has several excellent and easily found observation points.

The birder's bane on all of the inland lakes is poor visibility, i.e., heat distortion or "shimmer," caused by a significant difference between the water and air temperatures. It is worst during sudden warm spells in winter or cold spells in spring and fall. The best time to visit the lakes is late afternoon on an overcast day after a long period of uniform temperatures. On the bigger lakes, if you can see any distortion at all in binoculars, then visibility is poor and only a small fraction of the lake's surface will be visible to you. Because it is relatively narrow, Lake Greenwood is less susceptible to this problem.—BOB LEWIS, 503 N. Greensboro, No. 2, Carrboro, NC 27510.

CBC Members in Print

The December 1979 *Wilson Bulletin* (91:495-511) features an article by PAUL W. SYKES JR. on the "Status of the Everglade Kite in Florida—1968-1978." A color plate of young birds in the nest adds much interest to the encouraging statistics. Sykes found that the Florida population has risen from a low of 65 birds censused in 1972 to a high of 267 in 1978. This represents the greatest number of kites in the state since the 1920s or 1930s. Although the kite population appears to have adjusted to the loss of habitat since the completion of the first major drainage works in the Everglades, there is a need for the development of managed habitat units that will provide sufficient resources to support the population through critical periods of low water.

In recent years a number of reports on pelagic birds have appeared in *Chat*. These ranged from one-sentence Briefs for the Files to major papers. This rapidly expanding body of data has been summarized by DAVID S. LEE and JOHN BOOTH JR. in "Seasonal distribution of offshore and pelagic birds in North Carolina waters" (*Am. Birds* 33:715-721). The paper contains a very helpful bar graph that shows when 30 species can be expected in our offshore waters and gives some idea of their relative abundance.

The Ultimate List

Do you keep a life list of the birds you have seen? A state list? A county list? A yard list? An annual list? James A. Tucker, editor of *Birding*, offers us the ultimate list, a "Combination List and Checklist for Birds of North America." Now you can keep all your lists in one sturdy white plastic seven-ring binder: the life list, including space for date and place species was first seen; seasonal status data; 24 columns for year lists; columns for the Canadian provinces, the 48 contiguous United States, and Alaska; and nine columns without printed headings for your own areas of special interest. The binder is large enough to permit insertion of additional sheets for birds seen on other continents, nesting records, or miscellaneous notes. The North American species are listed in phylogenetic order according to the common names given in the 1975 *ABA Checklist*. There is a handy index. The type is easy to read; every fourth horizontal rule is bold, and, where appropriate, vertical columns are alternately shaded and unshaded. Copies are available from ABA Sales, Box 4335, Austin, Texas 78765. The price is \$13.50 for American Birding Association members, \$15.00 for nonmembers.—EFP