

SPRING BIRD COUNT—1980

JOHN O. FUSSELL III

Participation in the 1980 Spring Count was down from recent counts. The number of areas censused, 22, was the lowest in several years, as was the number of field observers (451) and field-hours (1403.6). Unfortunately, only one mountain area census and three South Carolina censuses were received. One new area was covered, Cape Lookout, where there was an inshore movement of pelagic species rarely or never reported on previous counts.

Predictably, the total number of individuals (105,873) was down from recent censuses, the percentage decrease roughly equal to the percentage decrease in coverage. The composite species total, 246 (plus two hybrids), was also down (257 in 1978, 256 in 1979), but most individual counts had higher species totals than in 1979. Highest coastal and inland totals were at Wilmington and Raleigh, with 170 and 148 species, respectively.

In general, count days were partly cloudy to clear, were warm with light winds, and had no rain. This was especially true of the 12 counts held on 3 and 4 May. There was little frontal activity during the count period and no major frontal activity just before or during the individual counts. Thus, viewing conditions were generally very pleasant, but several compilers cited the absence of waves of migrants. Only one count, Cape Lookout, had a significant amount of rain, but in this rare instance, the rain was more of a help than a hindrance (see compilers' comments).

One positive aspect of the 1980 count was the large number of rare species that were found; in fact, almost all counts had at least one extraordinary species. Perhaps the most outstanding rarities were the **Alder** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** at Raleigh and the count period **Ruff** and **Bewick's Wrens** at Morehead City and New Hope River. For details on these and numerous other noteworthy species, see the compilers' comments.

Some of the population trends I've mentioned on earlier censuses were apparent again this year. Only 32 Glossy Ibises were reported, the fewest since the species' early "boom days." Likewise, only 28 (lowest ever?) Loggerhead Shrikes were tallied. Will this species soon be a "boldface bird"? A survey of past counts suggests that this year's count of 3 Horned Larks also reflects a steady decline. Only 2 Ground Doves were reported, but since this species is regularly reported from only two areas, it's hard to draw conclusions. The 7 Long-billed Marsh Wrens at the three coastal localities (more—9—were found inland!) may reflect mortality of the species in North Carolina from the snow storm in early March. Winter finches were down this year: 105 Evening Grosbeaks, 34 Purple Finches, and no Pine Siskins. One lone Red-breasted Nuthatch was found.

Of the species that were up in numbers this year, I noticed three that, trend-wise, stood out. The 109 Sandwich Terns are, by far, a record count. House Wrens (182) appear to be increasing after a population dip. And then there is the House Finch. For the past 5 years, this species has, on the average, doubled its count numbers of the previous year, and 1980 was no exception—40 in 1979, 92 in 1980. Will it happen again next year? Another question for compilers: Are these count birds breeding birds or tardy winter residents?

Once again, due to CBC's economic situation, there can only be a one-page table of selected species. I have included all raptorial species, all species considered endangered and threatened in North and South Carolina (of North Carolina threatened list, only those that are threatened statewide), and the winter finches.

Compilers are to be commended for tabulation of this year's count. Almost all individual totals were added correctly. For several counts, compilers are not to be commended for supplying supporting details about rarities. Unfortunately, I had to

TABLE 1. Selected species from the 1980 Spring Bird Count in the Carolinas.

| Species | Cape Lookout, N.C. | Morehead City, N.C. | Wilmington, N.C. | Charleston, S.C. | Beaufort Co., N.C. | Dillon Co., S.C. | Cumberland Co., N.C. | Southern Pines, N.C. | Raleigh, N.C. | Durham, N.C. | Chapel Hill, N.C. | New Hope River, N.C. | Greensboro, N.C. | Winston-Salem, N.C. | Stanly Co., N.C. | Iredell Co., N.C. | Charlotte, N.C. | Greenville, S.C. | Pilot Mtn. State Park, N.C., 10 May | Elkin-Ronda, N.C. | Caldwell Co., N.C. | Brevard, N.C. |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| totals | 18 May | 27 April | 26 April | 4 May | 4 May | 1 May | 4 May | 3 May | 3 May | 27 April | 11 May | 4 May | 3 May | 3 May | 17 May | 3 May | 3 May | 29 April | | 10 May | 3 May | 3 May |
| Brown Pelican | 146 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Anhinga | 45 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Turkey Vulture | 309 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Black Vulture | 54 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Shallow-tailed Kite | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Mississippi Kite | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 26 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cooper's Hawk | 10 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Accipiter (sp.) | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 163 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 73 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Brood-winged Hawk | 32 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Bald Eagle | * | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Marsh Hawk | 14 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Osprey | 119 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Merlin | * | 1 | 13 | 63 | 18 | 6 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| American Kestrel | 27 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Least Tern | 400 | 35 | 144 | 207 | 6 | 8 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Barn Owl | 6 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Screech Owl | 39 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Great Horned Owl | 24 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Barred Owl | 97 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Red-cockaded Woodpecker | 30 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Evening Grosbeak | 105 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Purple Finch | 34 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| House Finch | 92 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Bachman's Sparrow | 15 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total no. species | 246 | 57 | 157 | 170 | 140 | 116 | 65 | 108 | 119 | 148 | 121 | 133 | 137 | 118 | 143 | 80 | 103 | 121 | 73 | 97 | 61 | 90 |
| Total no. individuals | 105,873 | 1,452 | 10,744 | 9,874 | 8,464 | 3,276 | 1,443 | 2,857 | 2,410 | 11,484 | 4,274 | 8,602 | 7,355 | 7,250 | 6,095 | 2,274 | 2,932 | 4,547 | 1,122 | 1,771 | 622 | 1,702 |
| Field observers | 451 | 2 | 21 | 21 | 16 | 17 | 3 | 11 | 9 | 44 | 19 | 60 | 28 | 30 | 46 | 12 | 9 | 33 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 11 |
| Yard observers | 106 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 21 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 8 |
| Field parties | 179 | 1 | 12 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 23 | 7 | 21 | 15 | 9 | 12 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Field-hours | 1403.6 | 12 | 69.5 | 88.5 | 54 | 62 | 18 | 29.8 | 55.5 | 140 | 57 | 139.5 | 122.3 | 98 | 128 | 29.5 | 27 | 68 | 27 | 68 | 8 | 32 |
| Field-miles by foot | 551.5 | 6 | 17.5 | 53.5 | 34 | 24 | 5 | 10.5 | 16 | 75 | 35 | 34 | 65 | 30 | 41 | 15 | 10 | 21 | 10 | 29 | 4 | 8 |
| Field-miles by car, boat | 3337.8 | 16 | 265 | 431 | 221 | 217 | 76 | 112.3 | 193 | 125 | 67 | 365 | 255 | 254 | 55 | 65.5 | 138 | 185 | 35 | 32 | 15 | 35 |

*Count period but not count day

delete a few very rare species that were not even mentioned as being unusual. There were some rare species I did not delete, that, although details were supplied, the details did not sufficiently rule out similar species. Again this year, it appeared that some compilers, perhaps not wanting to make enemies, passed the buck. To these compilers, I'll repeat an earlier suggestion: Make an extremely conservative list of species to be expected in your area on count day, supply it to count participants, and explain that any additions to the list must be thoroughly documented. This puts the burden of proof on the observer, where it belongs, and takes the burden of "disproof" off the compiler. **Please note again:** details supporting a rarity such as "seen by John Doe in a tree," "seen closely," "characteristic song was heard," and "all diagnostic characters were noted," say virtually nothing.

Thanks to Harry LeGrand for his comments on some troubling rarities.

COMPILERS' COMMENTS

COAST

CAPE LOOKOUT, N.C. (center: 4.5 miles NE of Cape Lookout Lighthouse).

18 May: Only areas covered were Cape Lookout, east end of Shackleford Banks, and Back Sound. Some of the islands in Back Sound were covered briefly or scanned from a long distance. During rain squalls from 1100 to 1300, both observers (Compiler, Bob Lewis) witnessed, from the shelter of abandoned WWII fortifications on the west beach of the Cape, many pelagic birds moving southeastward over the surf: 3 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 50 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels**, 2 **Northern Phalaropes**, and 5 **Parasitic Jaegers**. This nearshore movement stopped abruptly when the squalls ended and skies began to clear. (For 3 days prior to count, winds had blown steadily from an easterly direction.) Another 8 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** were present in Cape Lookout bight throughout the day. The total number of **Gannets**, 27, is noteworthy for the date. A grand total of 14(!) species of land birds were tallied.—JOHN O. FUSSELL III, 1412 Shepard Street, Morehead City, N.C. 28557.

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

27 April. Windy weather hurt species total, but probably contributed to the presence of 179 **Gannets** and the **Pomarine Jaeger**. Bob Hader watched the jaeger off Bogue Banks; several **Ring-billed Gulls** were nearby for size comparison. The 3 **Hooded Mergansers** (several observers) were slightly late. Uncommon migrants, all males, were **Black-throated Blue Warbler** (Compiler), **Scarlet Tanager** (Mike Alford, Laura Walters), and count period **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** (Laura Walters) on 26 April. A **Ruff** (tentatively identified as an immature **Reeve**) was found by the compiler at Brant Island 29 April. It remained until at least 5 May and was seen by numerous observers. [Because this species is rare in the Carolinas and because there is so much individual variation within the species, I'll list several prominent field marks and characters of this individual: associated with **Lesser Yellowlegs** and other species in shallow pool habitat; was very close to **Lesser Yellowlegs** in body size (thus identification as a **Reeve**); had erect posture; had bright orange legs and black, apparently slightly decurved bill; back and upper wing surface were brown with a noticeably scaly appearance; brown wash of breast contrasted greatly with very light belly. When the bird flushed, it never permitted a satisfactory look at the tail pattern.—JF]—JOHN O. FUSSELL III, 1412 Shepard Street, Morehead City, N.C. 28557.

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

26 April. Most unusual observation was of a **Least Flycatcher**, found by Greg Massey at Orton Plantation. Its song was compared to that of **Acadian Flycatchers** that

were singing in an adjacent bottomland area. Somewhat unusual migrants were 2 **Scarlet Tanagers** and 2 **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**; both species were seen by several observers. [Unfortunately there were no details supporting the Blackburnian Warbler.—JF]—KITTE KOSH, 188 Lake Forest Parkway, Wilmington, N.C. 28401.

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

4 May. Caper's and Deewee's Islands and the mudflats, marshes, and tidal creeks of Seewee Bay were not covered this year. **Willow Flycatcher** was observed closely at Fairlawn Plantation by David Chamberlain and Dennis Forsythe. Bird was singing "fitz-bew" song; its lower mandible was noted to be light yellow.—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).

4 May. **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (Compiler), although new to count, is regular at this season. Slightly late were **Marsh Hawk**, **American Kestrel**, **Hermit Thrush**, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**; the **Hermit Thrush** was carefully identified. Most unusual was a singing **Dickcissel** (Connie, Emily, and James Albers). It was approached to within 25 feet, and the black bib and yellow breast were seen well.—GERALDINE COX, P.O. Box 162, Washington, N.C. 27889.

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

1 May. The locally unusual **American Bittern** was observed by the compiler.—JOHN H. WILSON, Box 535, Dillon, S.C. 29536.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, N.C. (Note: Center has been moved to a point on I-95 that is approximately 1 mile N of I-95 Middle Road overpass.)

4 May. Rare were the count period **Short-billed Marsh Wrens** (2), and very rare was the count period **Nashville Warbler**, all found by the compiler. The marsh wrens were seen 9 May; the streaked crown, lack of eye stripe, and short tail were observed at close range in marsh habitat. The **Nashville Warbler** was found 30 April; gray head, white eye ring, and yellow throat were seen closely. The compiler also saw 2 **Semi-palmated Plovers** 5 May.—PHILIP J. CRUTCHFIELD, 901 Montclair Road, Fayetteville, N.C. 28304.

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

3 May. Two **Canada Geese** (Dick Repasky) over **Whispering Pines** were late. Notable finds at Lake Surf were a **Snow Goose** and 4 **Caspian Terns**, all seen by Tom Howard. The adult **Snow Goose** (white morph) had been present for several months. Howard also found a male **Bay-breasted Warbler**, a first spring record for the area.—J.H. CARTER III, P.O. Box 891, Southern Pines, N.C. 28387.

PIEDMONT

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

3 May. Most warblers were scarce except for **Black-throated Blues**, **Cape Mays**, and **Blue-wingeds**. Several unusual species were turned up, the rarest being **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**, **Alder Flycatcher**, and **Warbling Vireo**. Eric, Jack, and Ron Johnson noted the "fee-bee-o" song of the **Alder Flycatcher** and compared it to **Acadian Flycatchers** in the same area; this is only the second local record. The same observers

also found the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in an edge area of young pines and rose vines; identification was based on song and yellow throat. [Ron Johnson is from Wisconsin and is familiar with the northern *Empidonaces*.—JF] Warbling Vireo (Mary Weber) was singing and identification was based primarily on the song. Many somewhat unusual water birds were found: 2 **Double-crested Cormorants** (Merrill Lynch), **Little Blue Heron** (Compiler, Ken Knapp, Clyde Smith), 2 **Red-breasted Mergansers** (Lynch et al.), **King Rail** (Wayne and Fran Irvin et al.), 2 **Bonaparte's Gulls** (Lynch et al.), **Forster's Tern** (Lynch et al.), and 2 **Caspian Terns** (Compiler).—R.J. HADER, 3313 Cheswick Drive, Raleigh, N.C. 27609.

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

27 April. The species total is a record for Durham, undoubtedly because it was one of the latest of our counts (!). A good migration year helped. Most unusual find was the singing **Golden-winged Warbler**, observed by Steve Graves and Charlie Saunders. **Common Loon** (Ann Chester, Compiler, et al.) is locally noteworthy.—JOHN HORN, Department of Botany, Duke University, Durham, N.C. 27706.

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

11 May. The late census date resulted in a relatively low individual total; migration peak for most species was prior to count. **Seven** species of herons and bitterns were seen, including **Black-crowned Night-Heron** (Norman Budnitz, Jim McConnell, et al.) and **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** (Steve Graves, Dan Kaplan). Two **Semipalmated Plovers** (McConnell) were well described [...] and well drawn. McConnell's excellent drawings, on this and the New Hope count, made verbal descriptions almost redundant.—JF]. The 13.5 "owling hours" resulted in a total of **131** Whip-poor-wills. Linda and Phil Drew and Bill and Margaret Wagner had a close, leisurely study of a singing **Wilson's Warbler** 9 May; they noted well the black cap, yellow forehead and face, and solid yellow underparts. [Aren't the 2 Brown Creepers a little late?—JF]—BILL 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).

4 May. This is a record species total. Most unusual were the count day **Whimbrel** (Bruce and Linda Lord) and count period **Bewick's Wrens** (Barbara Roth). The Whimbrel was described as being mottled brown, having a long decurved bill, outstretched neck, and being about 15 inches long. [These details would seem to rule out other species. On the other hand, especially considering the degree of rarity of the Whimbrel away from the coast in North Carolina, they were very brief and raised many questions. Was this bird flying over a wooded area at an altitude of only 20 feet?—JF] Roth found the two Bewick's Wrens 11 May; from 20 feet, she observed their white underparts and white-spotted outer tail feathers. Jordan "Reservoir's" mudflat and marsh habitats continue to attract many wetland species: 3 **Black-crowned Night-Herons** (Jim McConnell, Mike Schultz, Matt Spencer), 3 **American Bitterns**, 6 **Semipalmated Plovers** (Ken Knapp), 11 **Ring-billed Gulls**, 7 **Long-billed Marsh Wrens** (several observers), 2 **Short-billed Marsh Wrens** (several observers), and 86 **Swamp Sparrows**. Eleven species of shorebirds were seen count day, and four additional ones were found during count period, including **White-rumped Sandpiper**, **Dunlin**, and **Western Sandpiper**. Singing **Nashville Warbler** (Lance Peacock) was identified by sound only; however, Peacock is familiar with its song.—ANGELO CAPPARELLA, 400 West Main Street, Carrboro, N.C. 27510.

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

3 May. Margaret Bushnell and Michelle Irvin observed the **Lawrence's Warbler** closely for several minutes, noting the presence of black throat, yellow underparts, and wing bars.—DONALD ALLEN, 2611 David Caldwell Drive, Greensboro, N.C. 27408.

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

3 May. The **22 Common Loons** and **9 Double-crested Cormorants** were observed by Harry and Ramona Snavely at Salem Lake 27 April. Kevin Hintsa found a **Brewster's Warbler** along Silas Creek on 28 and 30 April and 1 May, and observed all field marks from as close as 15 feet.—RAMONA R. SNAVELY, 115 Plymouth Avenue, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104.

STANLY COUNTY, N.C. (center: in Morrow Mountain State Park).

17 May.—TONI B. PHILLIPS. Morrow Mountain State Park, Route 2, Box 204, Albemarle, N.C. 28001.

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

3 May. A wave of Yellow-rumped Warblers was noted. The total of **300** is especially high considering the relatively low number of observers.—SAMUEL A. CATHEY, P.O. Box 671, Statesville, N.C. 28677.

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

3 May. **Great Egret** was studied by Ed Reed et al. **Least Flycatcher** (Randy Cross) was singing. Jack Hamilton studied the **Golden-winged Warbler** closely.—W.A. BROKAW, 3611 Quail Ridge Lane, Matthews, N.C. 28105.

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

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

PILOT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK, N.C. (center: intersection of US 52 and Perch Road).

10 May. [I'm delighted to say, especially since the count date was late, that the 5 Rusty Blackbirds, seen by Jim Mattocks, were convincingly described. I tend to be skeptical of many late reports of this species. I also appreciate the description of the Red-breasted Nuthatch, since the species was so rare this past winter.—JF]—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).

10 May.—JERRY TYSINGER, 128 Bon Air Drive, Elkin, N.C. 28621.

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

3 May.—HELEN E. MYERS, 310 Beall N.W., Lenoir, N.C. 28645.

MOUNTAINS

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

3 May. **Cattle Egret** (Lynn Hiller, Ed and Ruth Hathaway) was in pasture with cattle. Several observers found the **Sora** at a golf-course pond and approached it closely enough to see the yellow bill and other field marks. Patrick Bohan studied the 2 **Swainson's Warblers** closely for several minutes.—WALTER C. HOLLAND JR., 290 Maple Street, Brevard, N.C. 28712.