

# General Field Notes

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## Green Heron Fishing with Mayflies

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At 1815 EDT on 16 August 1975 at Lake Murray near Chapin, S.C., I saw a Green Heron standing on a rock at the edge of the water about 120 feet from where I stood. Behind the heron and 2 yards back from the water, a swarm of mayflies was circling. While I watched through binoculars, the bird walked to the insects, caught one, and, holding it crosswise in its beak, returned to the water where it dropped the mayfly in the shallows. A small fish rose to the fly and was caught by the heron. Four of us watched as the bird repeated the process. After catching a third mayfly, the bird went to a different perch by the water and was hidden from our view by a large boulder. The heron flew away a few moments later.

[NOTE: At least three other instances of what appears to be "insight learning" in this species are known. These also involve the baiting of fishes. In one case (Wilson Bull. 70:280-281) the heron used pieces of bread; in the second (National Geographic 146:143-147), fish-food pellets were used; and in the third (Am. Birds 29:652-654), the lure was a feather.—JRH]

## Specimen Record of a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck from Carteret County, N.C.

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While reorganizing portions of the bird collection at the North Carolina State Museum, we uncovered a previously unreported specimen of a Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) collected in North Carolina. The bird (NCSM 2910) was shot by Eugene Pond in Cove Sound, near Stacy, Carteret County, on 15 February 1968. Mr. Pond, who has secured and reported other interesting first records from this region, recalls collecting the bird. The bird is in fresh adult plumage and is of the Northern subspecies, *D. a. autumnalis* (= *D. a. fulgens* in 1957 edition of A.O.U. Check-list). The belly is dark brown, suggesting a bird of south Texas/northeast Mexico origins (Condor 49:189-195). Unfortunately, its sex was not determined at the time the skin was prepared, and the species, unlike most waterfowl, does not have sexually dimorphic plumage.

This duck apparently does not regularly wander outside its normal range as does the Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*D. bicolor*). In the United States, the breeding range is

limited almost entirely to southern Texas and from here ranges southward along the tropical coasts of Mexico and central America. There are scattered nesting records in other parts of Texas and in Arizona (Southwestern Nat. 15:394-395) and Kansas (Am. Birds 34:908). Two nesting records from the Miami, Florida, area (Am. Birds 23:652) may represent escapes from a nearby zoo. Individuals from the northern portion of their range normally over-winter south of the United States/Mexican border. Because this duck is not typically a long-distance wanderer, it should be suspected that a February North Carolina record is that of an escaped bird. Nevertheless, the condition of the plumage and feet give no indication of recent captivity. This record, the first for North Carolina and one of the few from east of the Mississippi River, will qualify the Black-bellied Whistling-Duck as a Provisional II species on the state bird list. Most other waterfowl records of birds of possibly captive origin have received the same status (Chat 443:59-61).

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## Status of the Mississippi Kite in North Carolina

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The presence of Mississippi Kites (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) during the breeding season in North Carolina was first reported in June 1972 from the Occoneechee Neck area of Northampton County (Chat 36:112). Since that time, a number of sightings during the period of May through October have been reported from the coastal plain and piedmont provinces of the state. This field note is intended to clarify the present status of the species in North Carolina.

Mississippi Kites are presently undergoing a substantial range expansion and population increase throughout their range in the southern United States (Am. Birds, 33:119-129) and are apparently expanding their range northeastward through eastern North Carolina. Prior to 1972 there were only three records for the state: one killed in Cherokee County on 26 May 1893, another shot in that area soon afterward, and one at Southern Pines on 20 October 1949 (Birds of North Carolina, 1959). Since 1972 a number of verified sightings have been reported from the state. These are summarized in Figure 1 and below.

1. One at Occoneechee Neck, Northampton County, on 15 June 1972 (Chat 36:112).
2. One at Occoneechee Neck on 6-12 May 1973 (Chat 37:105-106).
3. One adult at Cutawhiskie Creek, SW Hertford County, on 4 July 1973 (Chat 37:105-106).
4. One along the Pee Dee River, SE Anson County, on 12 July 1975 (Chat 40:18).
5. Twenty-three counted along the Pee Dee River in SE Anson County and adjacent Chesterfield County, S.C., on 3 August 1975 (Chat 40:47).
6. One adult along the Eno River, Durham County, on 24 April 1976 (Chat 40:87).
7. One immature at Occoneechee Neck on 8 May 1976 (Chat 40:87).
8. Twenty-three (including two immatures) at Buzzard Neck, SE Halifax County, on 30 May 1976 (Am. Birds 30:827).
9. One at Cedar Mountain, Transylvania County, on 6 June 1976 (Chat 41:14).
10. Five adults at Buzzard Neck on 6 June 1977 and three adults there on 26 June 1977 (Chat 42:17).
11. Two immatures at Nash Farms in Franklin County on 14 September 1978 (Chat 43:38).