



Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

Birding with a Screech Owl Tape

One of those rare days in mid-June, which make the heart leap, I joined a nature walk sponsored by Raleigh's Parks and Recreation Department at Durant Nature Park. Over 40 adults showed up, so Don Tarbert and John Connors divided the crowd in two. The morning began with a small exhibit of skins and delightful, informal comments by Don.

Both leaders carried tape recordings of a Screech Owl, and we stopped to play them in cleared spaces in the woods. The results were a fine collection of summer residents: catbirds, chickadees, both tanagers, several flycatchers, Indigo Bunting, Carolina Wren, a lingering Palm Warbler, and so on. A nesting box with young Tufted Titmice was available for close inspection.

Durant Nature Park is a former Boy Scout camp, and worth a visit at any time. It's on US 1 about 5 miles N of the Beltline. Turn left on Durant Road just beyond Cheviot Hills Golf Course.—LCF

Newspaper Gleanings

Siberian Crane eggs have been shipped from Wisconsin to Moscow, to be placed in nests of wild cranes in the Soviet Union. Scientists hope to save one of the world's rarest birds. Out in California, condor eggs taken from the wild have hatched, and scientists are delighted that one chick is a female. Alan Poole, a student of Ospreys, says these birds are coming back, 10 years after DDT was banned.

The Smithsonian Institution in Washington is selling for \$1 a bird silhouette designed to prevent birds from flying into large glass doors and windows.

Moses Ashley Curtis: Early Carolina Naturalist

"Moses Ashley Curtis (1808-1872): Contributions to Carolina Ornithology" is the title of a paper by Mark and Sallie Simpson in the April 1983 issue of *The North Carolina Historical Review*. An educator and Episcopal minister, Curtis is well known for his outstanding contributions to botany; however, his work on birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians has been, for the most part, forgotten. The Simpsons provide considerable evidence that Curtis was the first modern student of North Carolina animal life. Two appendices present Curtis's list of birds for North Carolina (including such intriguing entries as Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Whooping Crane, Purple Sand-

piper, and Esquimaux Curlew) and several species accounts that were written for a proposed state zoology. Although the North Carolina Geological and Agricultural survey had published Curtis's two volumes on the plants of the state, one before the Civil War and the other in 1867, the legislature refused to appropriate funds for the book on animals, which apparently never was completed. Bird students with a bent for history will find the Simpsons' paper fascinating.

Further Information on Tropicbirds in the Carolinas

In a recent paper David S. Lee and E. Wayne Irvin (*Chat* 47:1-13) summarized the tropicbird records for North and South Carolina and expressed concern about the accuracy of identifications made before bird students became aware that two very similar tropicbird species (White-tailed, *Phaethon lepturus*, and Red-billed, *P. aethereus*) occur in the region. The authors have received two written responses to their paper, both of which are excerpted below. The first is a letter from D. Archibald McCallum, one of the cited observers, providing further details of his experience with a storm-blown bird found alive at Dillon, S.C., in October 1954. The second is a summary of unpublished information regarding several sightings reported without details in "Briefs for the Files" during the years (1977 to present) that Harry E. LeGrand Jr. has been editor of this department in *Chat*. One report from more than 100 miles offshore is here mentioned in print for the first time. Lee has viewed John Bazuin's slides of this bird and concurs in its identification as a White-tailed Tropicbird.—EFP

Your paper in *The Chat* ... has inspired me to try to recall more details of the Dillon, S.C., record of October 1954. The bird was found by the Walters family (Mr. and Mrs. Graham Walters Sr. and Graham Jr.) in their chicken coop. They brought it to my family, because we were known to be interested in birds. I remember the bird lying on the ground, my father retrieving the Peterson eastern field guide and almost immediately finding the line drawing and identifying it as a "yellow-billed" tropicbird. I am certain that this bird had no tail streamers. It was assumed at the time that it had lost these in the storm. A wing was stretched out and all were impressed with its length. The Walterses took the bird back home, hoping to nurse it back to health and to release it. At that time we did not own a copy of *South Carolina Bird Life*, and were too unsophisticated about the ways of ornithology to think of preserving the specimen. Several years later I corresponded with E.B. Chamberlain about the record, and in the fall of 1958, on a CBC trip in Charleston, Rhett Chamberlain asked us to see if the skeleton could be exhumed. As I recall a house had been built over the place the bird was buried, and so exhumation was out of the question.

My recollection is that the bill of the bird was yellow and that there was no thin black barring on the back, but my mental image of the bird is undoubtedly influenced by the many illustrations I have seen since, especially the Peterson drawing, which I must have looked at hundreds of times as a boy. Moreover, I was only nine years old at the time.—D. ARCHIBALD McCALLUM, Route 2, Box 3, Thoreau, New Mexico 87323

Because there have been a moderately large number of previous records for the White-tailed Tropicbird in Carolina waters, I have not published descriptions of them

in Briefs. However, the Lee and Irvin paper has stimulated me to go through my correspondence. . . . The following is a list of sightings of tropicbirds, *all* reported as White-tailed, that I have received since 1977. All have been published in *Chat*. For each record, I mention whether or not a description was provided; if so, excerpts have been included in quotes.

1. 2 September 1979; Mike Tove et al. (*Chat* 44:45). Tove's photo of a White-tailed was published in Lee and Irvin (*Chat* 47:8).
2. 3 September 1979; John Fussell (*Chat* 44:45). No description was provided. However, Fussell says: "Due to swell coming in from side, I didn't see it well through binoculars, and I didn't identify it as a White-tailed until I'd looked at White-tailed and Red-billed specimens in Raleigh."
3. 6 September 1979; Bill and Margaret Wagner, Johnnie Payne (*Chat* 44:92). Bill Wagner submitted a half-page description. In addition to noting the long, streamer tail, he stated: "we saw yellow bill and noticed the head was all white except eye line which showed to extend back of eye (not long as in Red-billed). The wings [when raised by bird sitting on water] were black-tipped with black open V formed by pattern extending from bend of one wing down to rump and back up to bend of other wing."
4. 5 September 1979; Richard Rowlett (*Chat* 44:69). No description.
5. 27 September 1979; Rowlett (*Chat* 44:69). No description.
6. 23 May 1980; Vernon Waters (*Chat* 44:113). Mentioned as an adult, but no description provided.
7. June 1980; Duncan Dawkins (*Chat* 45:19). John Fussell submitted the report, mentioning that Dawkins "saw one circle around over the boat he was on. . . . He described it well." However, Fussell's letter did not actually include a description.
8. 5 September 1981; John Bazuin (*Chat* 46:47). He provided a half-page description, including: "fairly large, all-yellow bill; . . . black bar extending diagonally forward across the upper wing surface from the scapulary [sic] area to the wrist." [NOTE: Another adult White-tailed was seen by Bazuin 176 miles E of Jarvisburg, N.C., on 13 September 1981. However, the sighting was not published because it occurred over 100 miles from shore, the unofficial limit of North Carolina waters (from an ornithological standpoint). He submitted two slides of this bird to me. The yellow bill and black diagonal bar on the wing clearly identify it as a White-tailed.]

Of the sight records above, [only the first and third were included in] the table of occurrences of tropicbirds in Lee and Irvin (*Chat* 47:6-8). I assume that records three and eight can now be added to their list of positively identified White-tailed Tropicbirds in the Carolinas.—HARRY E. LeGRAND JR., 331 Yadkin Drive, Raleigh, N.C. 27609

The 6 September 1979 and 5 September 1981 records do not alter the known period of occurrence for the White-tailed Tropicbird in the Carolinas. Addition of Bazuin's far-offshore photo record moves the latest date in our region from 11 September (as reported by Lee and Irvin) to 13 September. The additional information

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lines of reasoning could argue against the authenticity of this nesting record. The value of specimen documentation is once again demonstrated.

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supplied by McCallum and LeGrand, while welcome and helpful, does not change the basic premise of the Lee and Irvin paper, which is that full details of tropicbird sightings from the Carolinas need to be published until the seasonal occurrence and relative abundance for the two species have been established.—EFP

Piping Plover Records Needed

Piping Plovers are a shorebird species threatened throughout their North American range. Increased development of their specialized, unvegetated beach habitat may cause more populations to disappear, unnoticed. In an effort to determine the current status and distribution of Piping Plovers, the World Wildlife Fund (Canada), Delta Waterfowl Research Station, and Manitoba Department of Natural Resources are soliciting help in locating birds on breeding, migration, or wintering areas. Please support this project by reporting past or present sightings of Piping Plovers (include date, location, number of birds and color bands, if any). Send information to: **Susan Haig, Delta Waterfowl Research Station, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba R1N 3A1, Canada.**