



# Roundtable

... with Louis C. Fink

## Hot Spot for Birds in Halifax County, N.C.

I have lived in Halifax County, N.C., since 1978. One of the best birding spots is a pond just east of CR 1618 a mile north of NC 561, near Quentin Gregory's scuppernong vineyard. Except for Roanoke River and its lakes, Gregory's Pond is the best birding spot in Halifax County, especially in late summer and fall, mainly for herons and shorebirds.

The pond is perhaps 16 acres brim full, but usually the water covers less than 10 acres because Mr. Gregory irrigates from it. The pond is a dammed swamp with dead trees in the south side near the dam, and willow thickets on the north. If the water level stays low too long, the mud flats grow up in barnyard grass, smartweed, and sedges. There usually is a fine display of cracked mud by late summer.

A mile north is Marsh Swamp, an extensive river swamp system, and a mile northeast is Quankey Creek, which runs to the Roanoke River. These adjacent waterways and the fall line, which is within 2 miles west, may account for the attractiveness of this pond to fall birds.

On 16 October 1983 I stopped at Gregory's Pond to show a friend the Cattle Egret that had been there since 24 September, plus the Great Egrets. As I drove up, I thought I saw an early Ring-billed Gull at the southwest corner of the pond. I was surprised to realize it was an American Avocet.

The bird put on quite a show, swimming, wading, flying, calling. I went home and returned with my family, a telescope, and a neighbor. We watched the avocet "spin," saw many small dead fish and strained copepods where the avocet had been turning, and pushed the avocet into the east arm of the pond.

An immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron flushed from the stumps. I watched it through my hand-held 15-60X zoom scope. The avocet was on the water about 50 feet left and the Cattle Egret another 150 feet left. As the heron flew northeast, a large falcon came from the northwest and stooped on the avocet, which dived under the water. The avocet was noisy about its upset, and I was, too.

The immature Peregrine circled at 100 feet altitude, and then left to the southeast. It was a most upsetting experience for me, trying to look three ways at once—while trying to explain it all to neighbors and family. I have never seen such a concentration of local rarities, even at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in New York, where the urban situation

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helps to concentrate birds. I'm not sure I want to, or even can, stand such excitement as I grow older.

My neighbor thought he had seen this hawk a few days before over his house, and I may have seen it again a few days later at my home, 3 miles west. The avocet was not at the pond on 18 October, 2 days later.—FRANK ENDERS, Route 2, Box 67 A, Halifax, N.C. 27839

### 600 Club

Terry Moore writes from Atlanta that members are “folding the tent” on the 600 Club. It was felt that ABA and 600 Club were duplicating their efforts, and the Club's reason for existence had faded with the publication of the Sixth Edition of the AOU Checklist. Moore is now devoting his time and experience to editing *The Oriole*.

### The Mail

We had a most gracious letter from Claudia Wilds, author of *Finding Birds in the Capital Area*. She was badly misquoted in the *Washington Post*, and Claudia wants all friends in CBC to know that she is not a list-crazy birder. “I haven't chased a life-bird in America for years,” she adds. One of the best parts of conducting this column is meeting many nice people.—LCF

### Some Love Them, Some Do Not

In St. Louis, they are trying to route 300,000 blackbirds with kites having pictures of hawks.

In Fairfield, California, model airplanes are being used to chase 10,000 European Starlings.

In Chatsworth, New Jersey, cranberry farmers complain about birds the *New York Times* calls “white tundra swans.” (Tundra Swans were formerly called Whistling Swans.) Anyway, the birds like a weed called red root. To get it, the swans pull up cranberry vines. The growers want a hunting season on these protected birds.

### Raised Eyebrows Department

From *Virginia Wildlife* in an article on the American Kestrel: “this small bird is no larger than a sparrow.”