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First South Carolina Record of Sabine's Gull

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At 1130 EDT on 7 September 1985, we saw an adult winter-plumaged Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) approximately 0.8 km off the mouth of North Inlet, Georgetown County, S.C. This sighting was made by four observers, none of whom had previously seen Sabine's Gull, but all of whom agreed in the identification. Numerous photographs were taken with a 135-mm lens. Although there are about five records of Sabine's Gull for North Carolina, to our knowledge this is the first occurrence of the species in South Carolina.

The bird was watched for about one-half hour as it followed a pod of Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) that were feeding on large schools of menhaden (*Brevoortia* sp.). The bird circled over the surfacing dolphins as if waiting for feeding opportunities. At times it rested on the water and fell well behind the school. It then would fly to catch up to the school, and again circle the area of dolphin activity. The bird stayed with the dolphins the entire time it was under observation. It fed at times with a scattered flock of about 40 Royal Terns (*Sterna maxima*). The bird came from far off to circle our boat, at times as close as 6 m.

On 6 September 1985 in the same area, we saw a large dark tern, which was probably an immature Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*). The occurrence of these two birds in inshore waters was not related to a storm, and 7 September was bright and sunny, cloudless with no wind. The ocean surface was glassy. The preceding few days had moderate westerly winds. A cold front had passed on 2 September 1985, but there had been no tropical depressions or easterly winds that might have pushed either of these pelagic migrants to shore.

The Sabine's Gull was an adult in full winter plumage. The yellow-tipped bill, forked tail, and wing pattern, including the black leading edge (outer primaries) and white triangular wing patch, were all clearly and repeatedly seen. Of interest is that instead of the oft-discussed wing pattern, it was the bright yellow-tipped bill that first drew our attention

to the bird and enabled us to separate it from the numerous Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) in the area.

The Sabine's Gull is a rarely seen but regular migrant in the pelagic waters of the tropical Atlantic. It has been seen inshore sporadically during spring and fall migrations on most of the Atlantic seaboard.

Four photographs that we took of this bird have been placed in the state bird collection at the Charleston Museum (ChM 1986.7.1-1986.7.4).

First Sighting of Mountain Bluebird Reported from Western North Carolina

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On the morning of 15 June 1985, I saw a male Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*) perched on the top of my bluebird nestbox number 187 on the Dump Road at the Biltmore Estate, near Asheville, Buncombe County, N.C. The elevation of the site is approximately 2300 feet, and the habitat is rolling pasture land. Skies were clear, and the temperature was approximately 75°F. I studied the bird through binoculars at a distance of about 100 feet for 10 to 15 minutes. The bird once entered the empty box for 10 to 15 seconds and returned to the roof briefly before flying to distant trees. No singing was heard. Although I monitored Box 187 and others on the same trail frequently for the rest of the nesting season, I never saw the Mountain Bluebird again, did not find any aberrant young bluebirds, and have no reason to believe the species interbred with the resident Eastern Bluebirds (*S. sialis*).

The Mountain Bluebird was entirely sky blue, with the brightest and deepest color on the upperparts, wings, and tail. The bird was not banded. I am familiar with the species, having seen it in northwestern Canada and the western United States.

The Sixth Edition of the A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds* (1983) gives the eastern limit of the breeding range of the Mountain Bluebird as "northeastern North Dakota, western South Dakota, western Nebraska and central Oklahoma (Cleveland County)." The species winters, at least casually, eastward to eastern Kansas, western Oklahoma, and central Texas. It is also casual across Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri, and southern Ontario to New York (east to Long Island) and Pennsylvania. Along the Gulf of Mexico it occurs casually through eastern Texas to eastern Louisiana (Baton Rouge area) and Mississippi (Grenada Dam). In addition, *The Kentucky Warbler* (61:31) reports a single Mountain Bluebird seen on 22 December 1984 on the Otter Creek Park Christmas Bird Count and later observed by many people. A male and a female were present simultaneously on 26 December, and the male was last reported on 13 January 1985. The park is in central Kentucky, just west of Elizabethtown. To the best of my knowledge, there are no published reports of the Mountain Bluebird from Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, or the Carolinas. Thus the Biltmore bird appears to represent the first sighting of the species not only in North Carolina, but also in eastern North America north of the Gulf Coast and south of Pennsylvania and Kentucky.