

General Field Notes

E. WAYNE IRVIN

North Carolina Editor
North Carolina State Museum
P.O. Box 27647
Raleigh, N.C. 27611

WILLIAM POST

South Carolina Editor
The Charleston Museum
360 Meeting Street
Charleston, S.C. 29403

Records of Seabirds from South Carolina Offshore Waters

J. CHRISTOPHER HANEY

Department of Zoology
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

The status of seabirds in Georgia and South Carolina is less well known than in adjacent states. During seabird surveys conducted from 1982 to 1985 in the Georgia Embayment, I made occasional observations in South Carolina offshore waters (here defined as that region between 32°03'N and 33°51'N out to a distance of 162 km). This note presents sightings or details for eight seabird species seen off South Carolina. All of these species have been considered rare in the state or are infrequently seen because of their pelagic habits.

BLACK-CAPPED PETREL (*Pterodroma hasitata*). Prior to 1982, this species was known from South Carolina only through an account by W.F.J. Morzer-Bruyns (1967, *Ardea* 55:270), who observed at least 12 on 6 September 1966. Observations I made of Black-capped Petrels are summarized in Table 1. Two or three different birds were photographed on 10 October 1983 (photograph to SCARC; ChM 1986.8). Virtually all Black-capped Petrels were seen at or beyond the continental shelf break (180 m/100 fathom isobath) near the Gulf Stream.

MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus puffinus*). Single Manx Shearwaters were observed on three occasions, once in spring and twice in fall. One bird was seen on 29 September 1983 at 33°22'N, 77°11'W about 160 km E of Murrel's Inlet in 37 m of water. Another was seen 10 October 1983 at 32°11'N, 78°59'W some 110 km SE of Charleston in water with a depth of 183 m. Both of these birds were separated from nearby Audubon's Shearwaters (*P. lherminieri*) by slightly larger size, proportionately longer wings, shorter tails, and more bounding, gliding flight. On 17 April 1985 I observed a Manx Shearwater within 30 m of the ship at 32°52'N, 78°47'W in 30 m of water 120 km E-NE of Charleston. In this individual, the white undertail coverts were clearly visible.

LEACH'S STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*). Records of this storm-petrel were limited to spring and fall seasons (Table 2). A high count of nine birds at one location was made on 10 June 1984. Single birds flew aboard ship on 17 October 1984 and 6 May 1985, the former photographed before release (photograph to SCARC). All were seen beyond the continental shelf edge.

TABLE 1. Records of Black-capped Petrels from South Carolina offshore waters, 1983-1985.

Date	Number Observed	Location	Depth (m)
10 October 1983	11*	32°09'N, 79°03'W	183
13 October 1983	5	33°37'N, 76°32'W	327
5 May 1984	4	32°07'N, 78°11'W	160
9 June 1984	21	32°08'N, 79°02'W	175
10 June 1984	19	32°28'N, 79°22'W	260
11 June 1984	4	32°37'N, 78°15'W	480
13 June 1984	50	32°05'N, 78°21'W	440
13 June 1984	9	32°15'N, 78°42'W	320
16 October 1984	4	32°09'N, 78°55'W	430
17 October 1984	1	32°20'N, 78°51'W	247
17 October 1984	4	32°16'N, 78°40'W	410
18 October 1984	24	32°08'N, 78°59'W	293
6 May 1985	2	32°12'N, 79°14'W	183

*Photographed

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma castro*). One bird was seen on 13 June 1984 with three Wilson's Storm-Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*) at 32°04'N, 78°18'W about 160 km SE of Charleston (water depth 440 m). This bird was noticeably larger than the Wilson's Storm-Petrels and lacked the erratic, twisting flight and prominently forked tail of the Leach's Storm-Petrel. Its flight was shearwater-like, and it fed with wings held in a horizontal plane.

WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD (*Phaethon lepturus*). An adult White-tailed Tropicbird (black upperwing pattern) was seen on 10 June 1984 160 km E-SE of Charleston (32°27'N, 78°23'W) in water 285 m deep.

MASKED BOOBY (*Sula dactylatra*). A subadult Masked Booby was photographed off Hilton Head on 14 July 1983 (Lee and Haney, 1984, Chat 48:29-45: Fig. 3). Although this photograph clearly shows only one diagnostic field mark (black secondaries on trailing edge of wing), the straw-colored bill, dark mask, and all-black tail were also observed.

SOUTH POLAR SKUA (*Catharacta maccormicki*). On 11 June 1984, I watched a dark-morph South Polar Skua with a flock of 200 to 300 Audubon's Shearwaters, Cory's Shearwaters (*Calonectris diomedea*), Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Black-capped Petrels, Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*), and Bridled Terns (*S. anaethetus*) feeding over schooling baitfish. This bird was compared directly to two Pomarine Jaegers (*Stercorarius pomarinus*); the large size, broad wings, and pale nape contrasting with blackish-brown body aided identification. This individual was photographed, but the distance to the bird was too great for capturing definitive field marks. The location of this sighting was

TABLE 2. Records of Leach's Storm-Petrels from South Carolina offshore waters.

Date	Number Observed	Location	Depth (m)
12 October 1983	1	33°40'N, 76°34'W	256
10 June 1984	1	32°35'N, 78°18'W	218
10 June 1984	3	32°24'N, 78°28'W	242
10 June 1984	9	32°33'N, 78°20'W	238
12 June 1984	1	32°41'N, 78°01'W	252
13 June 1984	6	32°14'N, 78°44'W	400
17 October 1984	1*	32°18'N, 79°25'W	-
6 May 1985	1	32°12'N, 79°14'W	183

*Photographed

approximately 110 km SE of Cape Romain (32°37'N, 78°15'W) in water with a depth of 223 m.

BROWN NODDY (*Anous stolidus*). I observed a Brown Noddy feeding with Cory's Shearwaters, Audubon's Shearwaters, and Common Terns on 11 October 1983 at 32°38'N, 79°12'W some 75 km E of Charleston (water depth 31 m). The bird's flight was very low over the water, and the white cap, contrasting with dark body, and heavy, wedge-shaped tail were apparent. This bird appeared noticeably larger than accompanying Common Terns, thus eliminating the smaller Black Noddy (*A. minutus*). Brown Noddies are rarely seen at sea off the southeastern United States in the absence of storms.

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Reddish Egret in Anderson County, S.C.: First Inland Record for State

CHARLIE W. WOOTEN
Department of Biological Sciences
Clemson University
Clemson, S.C. 29634

STEVE COX
123 Brookview Circle
Greenville, S.C. 29605

On 28 July 1985, Cox spotted an interesting heron foraging in shallow water at the edge of a mud flat at Little Beaverdam Creek, Lake Hartwell, 3.7 km SE of Townville, Anderson County, S.C. Wooten arrived in the area shortly thereafter and studied the bird through a 20X spotting scope at close range. Weather was overcast with occasional drizzle. After careful scrutiny, we decided the bird was an immature Reddish Egret