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Wood Storks Observed in Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell Counties, South Carolina

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The Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*) breeds in the southeastern United States, primarily in Florida, south through the Caribbean and Central America, and in much of South America (A.O.U. 1983). In the United States the species formerly bred along the Gulf of Mexico from Texas through Florida, with scattered small colonies along the coasts of Georgia and the Carolinas (Hamel 1977, Palmer 1962). Since the mid-1960s, the Florida colonies have had poor reproductive success, and that population has declined (Ogden and Nesbitt 1979). In 1984 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the U.S. breeding population as endangered (Bentzen 1984).

Despite the overall decline in numbers, the Wood Stork has been reoccupying the northern parts of its range, along the eastern coast, where a few small colonies have been found recently (Ogden 1978). In 1980 a colony of about 100 breeding pairs was discovered at the crossroads known as Birdsville, in Millen township, Jenkins County, Georgia (Tate and Humphries 1980). The Savannah River Ecology Laboratory of the University of Georgia's Institute of Ecology has been studying the birds at this colony since 1982. The authors have been involved in this work since May 1984 and, in addition, have observed storks foraging in South Carolina. We report here on sightings of Wood Storks in Aiken, Allendale, and Barnwell Counties.

Storks have been reported in this area during the 50 years before the colony in Birdsville was discovered (Murphey 1937). Murphey noted that the birds probably did not breed locally, but that flocks of more than 30 birds were seen regularly in August and September. In June 1956 and July 1957 storks were recorded on the Savannah River Plant in Aiken and Barnwell Counties (Norris 1963). In September 1977 about 24 storks were seen at Kathwood Lake on Silver Bluff Plantation, Beech Island, Aiken County (D. Connelly, Sanctuary Manager, Silver Bluff Plantation, pers. comm.).

In 1984 the birds were first observed at the Birdsville rookery on 15 March, and the first eggs were reported on 4 April (J. Meyers, Alabama Department of Conservation and

TABLE 1. Wood Stork sightings on the Savannah River Plant (Aiken and Barnwell Counties, South Carolina) in 1984 and 1985.

YEAR	MONTH								
	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
1984	ns*	ns	1	5	5	7	14	8	1
1985	0	0	2	2	20	8	1	2	0

*ns = no survey

Natural Resources, pers. comm.). We did not begin regular colony observations until 1 May, by which time 50% of the nests under observation already contained chicks. The last egg that we recorded was laid on 14 May, and the last hatching occurred on 10 June. The young began to leave the colony in mid-July, but returned to be fed by their parents. The last observation of a bird in the rookery was on 14 September. The birds remained in the vicinity until 23 December.

Meyers (1984) reported Wood Storks on the Savannah River Plant, Barnwell County, in 1983. He located birds twice in June, seven times in July, and once in August. In addition, he noted storks in Allendale County three times in August.

In 1984 and 1985 we observed Wood Storks on the Savannah River Plant (Table 1). On 6 June 1984, we used a fixed-wing aircraft to follow a bird from the Birdsville colony to the Savannah River Plant, a distance of 47 km. Storks were first observed in 1985 on the Savannah River Plant on 22 February (Docimo and Kondratiaff, biologists of Environmental and Chemical Sciences, Inc., New Ellenton, S.C.). In addition, in 1984 we found storks once in September at Kathwood Lake. In 1985 we saw storks in Aiken County five times in September and once in October, and they were recorded for 2 to 3 weeks in September and October at two sites in Barnwell County.

We have recorded Wood Storks in Aiken and Barnwell Counties, and Meyers (1984) has observed storks in Allendale County. We have records of birds in these areas from late February through early November, and in nearby east-central Georgia from late February through mid-December (Coulter, unpubl. obs.). Some that we saw may have been nonbreeding birds from Florida colonies. Other storks were from the Birdsville colony as evidenced by the bird that we followed from the colony to South Carolina.

Acknowledgments. We thank the many staff members of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory who offered support and encouragement during this work. I.L. Brisbin Jr., W.D. McCort, and M.H. Smith made helpful comments on the manuscript. This work was supported by contract number DE-AC09-76SR00819 between the Institute of Ecology of the University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Energy.

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Piping Plovers Nesting at Cape Hatteras, N.C., in 1985

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The status of Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) in North America has been a subject of increasing concern in recent years. Piping Plovers were Blue Listed in *American Birds* in 1982 (Tate and Tate 1983) and are a proposed candidate for the Endangered Species List (Sidle 1984). Piping Plovers are primarily winter residents in North Carolina, though they nest sparingly along barrier beaches from Pea Island to Morehead City (Potter et al. 1980). An isolated breeding site was discovered at Sunset Beach, N.C., in 1983 (LeGrand 1984), which is apparently the southernmost nesting site in North America. Early nesting records indicated Piping Plovers were nesting at Pea Island in 1901 and 1902 (Pearson et al. 1959). In recent years nesting sites have been discovered at Ocracoke Island (Hespenheide 1961), Shackleford Banks (Quay et al. 1970), Core Banks (LeGrand 1977), Portsmouth Island (LeGrand 1983), Sunset Beach (LeGrand 1984), and Cape Hatteras (Golder 1985). Nineteen pairs were located at Portsmouth Island during the 1983 breeding season (LeGrand 1983). This would be the largest concentration of breeding Piping Plovers ever reported in North Carolina.