

# BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

HARRY E. LeGRAND JR.

(All dates Winter 1985-86 unless otherwise indicated; CBC= Christmas Bird Count)

- RED-THROATED LOON:** Rare inland were two seen by John Hay at Lake Hartwell, near Clemson, S.C., on 16 February. One remained until 2 March (Charlie Wooten, Sidney Gauthreaux).
- NORTHERN FULMAR:** A first for North Carolina in December was one seen on a pelagic trip off Oregon Inlet on the 22nd, as noted by Dave Lee and others.
- BLACK-CAPPED PETREL:** Dave Lee observed the species off Oregon Inlet on 5 and 22 December and 17 February. The species is regular all year in the Gulf Stream, particularly east of the Outer Banks.
- GREATER SHEARWATER:** Seldom seen in winter was one off Oregon Inlet on 22 December (Dave Lee and party).
- MANX SHEARWATER:** Apparently regular offshore in winter, though uncommon at best, several Manxes were observed by Dave Lee and party off Oregon Inlet on 22 December.
- AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER:** Not previously seen in midwinter in North Carolina were at least five off Oregon Inlet on 22 January (Dave Lee).
- GREAT CORMORANT:** Record numbers for the Carolinas were found by Bill Brokaw in the lower Cape Fear River, N.C. He saw 12, all adults, in comparison with Double-crested Cormorants, on 20 January. John Fussell saw nine there on 28 February, and six more (four adults) at Wrightsville Beach, N.C., on 1 March. Single individuals in that state were seen at Bodie Island on 23 December (Haven Wiley), at Cape Hatteras point on 26 and 27 December (Harry LeGrand), Hatteras village on 27 December (Ricky Davis), and Pea Island on 31 December (Mike Tove et al.). A few were again seen this winter at Huntington Beach State Park, S.C. (Heathy Walker et al.), where regular at that season.
- ANHINGA:** One was quite out of range in winter at Willow Springs in Wake County, N.C., where it was seen in late January by David Carroll.
- MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD:** Very late was an immature seen on 1 December at Folly Beach, S.C., by Connie and Reid Taylor.
- GREAT BLUE HERON:** A good winter count for the mountains was nine, along the French Broad River near Marshall, N.C., in mid-January (John Young).
- GREAT BLUE HERON (WHITE PHASE):** A first specimen of this subspecies—the “Great White Heron”—for South Carolina was one collected by Will Post on 22 February near the North Santee River. It was originally seen by Tommy Graham on 20 January.
- TRICOLORED HERON:** One was notable on 29 December at Middletown, in mainland Hyde County, N.C. (Harry LeGrand).
- GREATER FLAMINGO:** In mid-December one was seen in Long Bay, west of Cedar Island, N.C., by T. Tuttle (fide James Parnell).
- FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK:** Perry Nugent and others saw one at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, S.C., on 14 December, and two near McClellanville, S.C., on 22 December. Another was late—most have departed southward by late December—on 14 February at Magnolia Gardens near Charleston, S.C. (Sidney Gauthreaux, Will Post).
- TUNDRA SWAN:** A few were seen in winter in central North Carolina, near Louisburg (Ricky Davis), Raleigh (Harry LeGrand et al.), and Fayetteville (Philip Crutchfield, Jim Sipiora).
- GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:** Very rare was one seen near Townville, S.C., on 23 February by Sidney Gauthreaux and Charlie Wooten. Also in that state, as many as seven were

- seen in December at Santee National Wildlife Refuge, where reported most every winter in recent years (Robin Carter, Heathy Walker, et al.).
- SNOW GOOSE:** One white-phase goose was well inland at Winston-Salem, N.C., as noted from 7 to 28 January by Bob Witherington, Ramona Snavelly, and Charles Frost. An excellent total away from the North Carolina Outer Banks was 8000 at Pungo National Wildlife Refuge, N.C., on 24 and 25 January; only a few dozen were “Blue Geese” (Harry LeGrand, Ricky Davis).
- ROSS' x SNOW GOOSE HYBRID:** The first Carolina report of a hybrid of these two species was noted at Pea Island, N.C., from 23 to 31 December. Haven Wiley made the original observation, and the bird was later studied closely by Claudia Wilds and others. It was seen with a large number of Snow Geese; it did not have the stubby bill or the bluish-gray base of the bill of the Ross' Goose. A slight “grinning patch” between the mandibles seemed intermediate between that of the two parent species. The bird's size was noticeably smaller than that of the Snow Geese. There were no reports of Ross' Geese this winter.
- NORTHERN SHOVELER:** Dick Brown saw a male near Harrisburg, N.C., in late December.
- GADWALL:** Rare in the mountains was a male at Lake Osceola in Hendersonville, N.C., on 11 February (Ron Warner).
- EURASIAN WIGEON:** A male was seen at an impoundment east of Beaufort, N.C., on the Morehead City CBC on 22 December by Bob Holmes and Bill Bell.
- RING-NECKED DUCK:** A good count for South Carolina was 1400 near Bennettsville on 7 February (Douglas McNair).
- GREATER SCAUP:** Rarely reported from the North Carolina mountains, four males were seen by Douglas McNair at Cashiers on 17 December, and two males were noted by Robert Ruiz at Swannanoa on 21 December.
- KING EIDER:** Single birds were seen at a small pond at Pea Island, N.C., on 28 December (Bob Lewis) and in the surf at Fort Macon State Park, N.C., from 15 December to 9 January (John Fussell et al.).
- COMMON EIDER:** Presumably a record count for the Carolinas was a flock of seven (five females and two immature males) observed in the surf at Bodie Island, N.C., on 28 December by David Hughes and Ned Brinkley. An immature male was also noted at Folly Beach, S.C., from 15 to 20 February by Perry Nugent and others.
- WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:** Seldom seen on an inland CBC was one (a male) observed by Ricky Davis and Mike Tove on 5 January at Jordan Lake, N.C. A rather good total for South Carolina was 13, at Huntington Beach State Park on 1 February (Charlie Wooten et al.).
- COMMON MERGANSER:** Very small numbers occurred in the Carolinas during the winter. Reports were made at Lake Wallace near Bennettsville in South Carolina (Douglas McNair) and in North Carolina on Lake Julian near Asheville (Ron Warner), Roanoke Rapids Lake (Merrill Lynch), Pamlico Point (Philip Crutchfield, Morris Whitfield), and Fort Fisher (Ricky Davis, John Fussell).
- BLACK VULTURE:** An excellent mountain count was eight or nine just south of Asheville on 20 December (Simon Thompson).
- BALD EAGLE:** The best inland counts for the winter were 10 seen by Dick Brown on an aerial survey from High Rock Reservoir to Blewett Falls Lake, N.C., in early January, and nine seen at Jordan Lake on 1 February by Bill and Margaret Wagner and party.
- RED-TAILED HAWK:** Mike Cooper observed a dark-phase bird in the Hilton Head Island-Savannah area of South Carolina from 30 January to 15 February. Such color phases are very rare in the eastern United States, and the bird might have been a visitor from the western part of the country.
- GOLDEN EAGLE:** A subadult apparently wintered at Pungo Lake, N.C., where it was seen from 1 January into early February by Bob Lewis, Mike Dunn, and others.
- MERLIN:** In northwestern South Carolina, individuals were rare at Townville on 20 December and

at Clemson on 21 January (Sidney Gauthreaux, Charlie Wooten). Also inland was one seen by Ricky Davis and Mike Tove on the Jordan Lake CBC on 5 January.

**PEREGRINE FALCON:** In addition to a few winter sightings along the coast, one was unusual on 6 February at Shelby, N.C. (Barton Rope).

**YELLOW RAIL:** One was flushed by Sue Moske at North Pond on Pea Island on 1 December; the white wing stripe was seen.

**AMERICAN COOT:** A good inland count of 2300 was noted by Douglas McNair at Bennettsville, S.C., on 7 February.

**SANDHILL CRANE:** Robert Ruiz saw one flying due west over Swannanoa, N.C., 500+ feet above the town, on 20 July 1984. He noted that the bird's head and feet extended straight out from the body. Also seen overhead in flight, in South Carolina, were two about 5 miles N of Conway on 22 January (Steve Thomas) and one near Gray Court in Laurens County on 4 February (Douglas McNair).

**KILLDEER:** One was seen in flight over Grassy Ridge, at a very high elevation of 6100 feet, on 30 December by Rick Knight.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS:** Unusual well inland in midwinter were single birds seen near Cary, N.C., on 2 February (Ricky Davis) and on 24 February near Fayetteville (Philip Crutchfield).

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER:** One observed by John Fussell was rather rare in midwinter near Beaufort, N.C., on 19 February.

**WHIMBREL:** Notable in winter for North Carolina were one at Oregon Inlet on 31 December (Harry LeGrand, Bob Lewis, Mike Tove), one at Sunset Beach on 16 February (Philip and Jim Crutchfield), and two at New Inlet in Brunswick County on 27 February (John Fussell).

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW:** Kitty Kosh discovered one at Zeke's Island near Fort Fisher, N.C., on 12 January, and it was seen by other birders later in the month.

**DUNLIN:** One was late in Bennettsville on 29 December (Douglas McNair).

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER:** Infrequently seen in southeastern North Carolina in winter were eight seen and heard on the Wilmington, N.C., CBC on 28 December by Maurice Barnhill and Greg Massey, and two noted by Ricky Davis on 4 January at Fort Fisher.

**RED-NECKED PHALAROPE:** Seldom reported in the winter were 46 observed by Dennis Forsythe off Charleston on 5 February.

**RED PHALAROPE:** Dave Lee and Dennis Forsythe recorded the species on several winter pelagic trips off Oregon Inlet and Charleston, respectively.

**POMARINE JAEGER:** Perry Nugent and party saw one chasing gulls near a jetty in Charleston harbor on 25 January. A jaeger of unknown species was noted by Sidney Gauthreaux and others at Huntington Beach State Park on 1 February.

**COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL:** The only winter report was one seen on the beach at Pea Island on 28 December (Allen Bryan, Bob Lewis).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** In South Carolina, where rather rare, were single birds at Huntington Beach State Park on 7 February (Robin Carter) and at Litchfield Beach on 26 March (Mary Ann Sunderland).

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:** In addition to reports off Oregon Inlet, where regular, one was seen 5 miles off Caswell Beach, N.C., on 4 January (Greg Massey) and 30 were noted by Dennis Forsythe off Charleston on 18 February.

**DOVEKIE:** Dave Lee had a good count of five in Roanoke Sound near Manteo, N.C., on 22 January.

**THICK-BILLED MURRE:** Perry Nugent, Steve Compton, and others carefully watched one in the surf at Huntington Beach State Park on 4 January, for one of just a few South Carolina records.

**RAZORBILL:** One was seen in the surf at Pea Island on 28 and 30 December by Allen Bryan and many other birders.

**YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO:** Most unusual was a dead cuckoo found by Robert Ruiz at Swannanoa, N.C., on 5 December.

- CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW:** One road-killed bird was found by Darryl Moffett near Shallotte, N.C., on 15 January. There have now been three winter records for this species along that state's coast in the past few years.
- RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD:** An immature was present all winter (3 December into March) at Kitty Kosh's feeder in Wilmington. Its specific identity was uncertain until she observed it molting into breeding plumage (male) in March. Other *Archilochus* hummingbirds during the winter, of unknown identity, were two in Sumter, S.C., from late fall into January (fide Evelyn Dabbs) and one on Bogue Banks, N.C., on 21 December (Mary Roberts). [The Black-chinned Hummingbird, almost identical in plumage to the Ruby-throated (except for the adult males) is a possibility in winter. Birders should not report a winter *Archilochus* hummingbird as a Ruby-throated unless the bird is an adult male (bright red throat). There has been too much confusion about winter hummingbird records because of careless reports with few or no details on plumage. Observers with hummingbird feeders should carefully note whether a winter hummingbird has been present almost daily since summer and early fall (whereby it is likely a lingering Ruby-throated) or whether it appeared in late fall or winter after a gap of one to several months since the departure of the last Ruby-throated at the feeder (whereby the unknown hummingbird might be a Black-chinned).—HEL]
- RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD:** A female or immature was noted at a feeder in Greenville, S.C., from late November to late December. It was captured and measured in the hand by Greg Cornwell; measurements of the outer tail feathers ruled out the very similar Allen's Hummingbird, which has not been reported for certain east of Louisiana. Another female or immature was carefully studied at the feeder of Mr. and Mrs. William Kitch in Whispering Pines, N.C., from mid-October to mid-January by Roberta Davis, Jay Carter, and Jeff Walters. It was likely a Rufous, according to Carter, who also noted that an observer near Whispering Pines had seen two "orange" hummingbirds at one time in October about 2 years ago, most likely Rufous Hummingbirds. [It is certain that this species is not as rare in the Carolinas as the very few conclusive records indicate. Thousands of people maintain hummingbird feeders into late fall, and there are numerous unpublished reports, often in newspapers or local newsletters, from this time period; many birds might be Rufous.—HEL]
- RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:** At a high elevation was one seen at Glen Ayre, N.C., at 3300 feet elevation on 30 December (Rick Knight).
- TREE SWALLOW:** The first winter records for Cumberland County, N.C., were two near Fayetteville on 8 February and one there on 14 February (Philip Crutchfield).
- PURPLE MARTIN:** Two males were seen on the early date of 7 February at Bennettsville by Douglas McNair.
- COMMON RAVEN:** Douglas McNair observed a pair apparently on territory, though no evidence of breeding was found, at Table Rock mountain in northern Pickens County, S.C., on 3 February. He saw a single raven at nearby Caesar's Head, S.C., on 31 January.
- BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH:** Robert Ruiz reported that Roland Sargent saw a pair feeding two young out of the nest from 9 to 11 June 1972 at Lake Julian, in southern Buncombe County, N.C. Several were also seen on the Blue Ridge Parkway northeast of Asheville, N.C., on 21 December by Andrew Brown; and Ruiz saw the species at nearby Swannanoa in February.
- BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER:** North of the winter range in midwinter were individuals noted near Townville on 5 January (Sidney Gauthreaux) and at Morehead City on 21 January (John Fussell).
- NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD:** A winter visitor was at a rather high elevation at Cashiers, N.C. (3400+ feet), where seen by Douglas McNair from 27 December to 4 January.
- WHITE-EYED VIREO:** Notable in winter was one at a feeder in Oconee County, S.C., from 20 November to 4 December (E.L. Shuler). Others were observed, away from feeders, at nearby

- Townville on 9 February (Charlie Wooten) and near Harlowe, Carteret County, N.C., on 12 January (John Fussell).
- SOLITARY VIREO:** This species has been increasingly seen on piedmont CBC's but there are few piedmont reports after 5 January. Paul Hart saw one at Crowders Mountain State Park, N.C., on 12 January; Bill and Pat Brokaw saw one at a suet feeder on 30 January near Charlotte, N.C.; and Harry LeGrand observed another at Umstead State Park, N.C., on 23 February.
- ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER:** Slightly outside the regular winter range were singles noted near Liberty, S.C., on 27 January (Charlie Wooten), and at Charlotte on 3 February (Heathy Walker). At Fayetteville, where this warbler is somewhat regular in winter, one was present at a feeder from 17 January until the end of February (Philip Crutchfield, Ruth Chesnut).
- NASHVILLE WARBLER:** Apparently the second and third winter records for North Carolina were individuals carefully studied on CBC's. John Fussell saw one near the North River near Beaufort on 22 December, and Harry LeGrand and others saw another at Wanchese on 28 December, and again 3 days later.
- CAPE MAY WARBLER:** Paul Hart observed one, apparently a male, at Crowders Mountain State Park, N.C., on 25 December.
- PRAIRIE WARBLER:** Individuals were observed near the North Carolina coast in central Carteret County on 25 December (John Fussell), in the Green Swamp in Brunswick County on 27 December (Mark Oberle), at Pea Island on 28 December (Paul Sykes Jr., Virginia Valpey), and at Fort Fisher on 4 January (Ricky Davis).
- BAY-BREASTED WARBLER:** Charlie Wooten noted one on 5 January near Anderson, S.C.; the species is seldom seen in the United States in winter. He observed the "greenish back with streaks, wingbars, and a buffy patch below the wing on the side"; and he also noted "black legs and was not yellow underneath."
- WILSON'S WARBLER:** An adult male was seen at Greenfield Lake in Wilmington, N.C., from 10 to 17 January by Kitty Kosh and other birders.
- YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT:** Early-winter records were of individuals noted near Pineville, N.C., on 7 December (David Wright) and near Townville on 8 December (Charlie Wooten).
- WESTERN Tanager:** Westerns were observed in two coastal North Carolina towns. Kitty Kosh noted one at her feeder in Wilmington from 24 December to 3 January, and Greg and Ann Lovelace had another at their feeder in Beaufort from 23 February to 11 March.
- DICKCISSEL:** Another feeder visitor was a Dickcissel—an adult male—seen by Vaughn Morrison at Raleigh from 28 to 30 March. Away from a feeder was one seen near Duck, N.C., on 21 December by Dave Lee, Wayne Irvin, and Benton Basham.
- VESPER SPARROW:** Good winter counts for the North Carolina piedmont were 40 to 50 in Cleveland County on 2 February (Heathy Walker, Harriet Whitsett) and nine south of Charlotte on 28 December (David Wright).
- AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:** Charlie Wooten carefully observed one near Greenville, S.C., on 28 December. He has previous experience with the species in western Arkansas.
- LARK SPARROW:** Seldom seen inland in winter was one south of Charlotte from 28 December to 11 January (David Wright).
- HENSLOW'S SPARROW:** A good find was two seen by Robin Carter in a powerline clearing near Santee Dam of Lake Marion, S.C., on 12 February.
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW:** The only winter report for South Carolina was as many as five birds in the Townville area all season (Charlie Wooten). Lincoln's were observed at many sites in the North Carolina coastal plain; all were in recent clear-cuts where grasses and forbs have vegetated the ground and where brush piles were present. Individuals were seen near Lake Mattamuskeet on 29 December (Harry LeGrand), at Wards Corner in Pender County on 11 and 17 January (LeGrand, Wayne Irvin, and others), at Pungo National Wildlife Refuge on 24 January (LeGrand, Ricky Davis), at Wilson Municipal Airport on 16 February (Davis), and at First Colony Farms near

Cherry on 23 February (Davis). Another was in that state's piedmont on 7 December near Pineville (David Wright).

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:** This species is rarely seen in the southern coastal plain of North Carolina. Thus, notable were two adults and an immature at the Laurinburg-Maxton Airfield on 8 February (Douglas McNair) and records of single birds at three places in Cumberland County in January (Philip Crutchfield).

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR:** By far, a record count for the Carolinas was a remarkable flock of 68 tallied by Ricky Davis at First Colony Farms near Cherry on 23 February. There were just two Horned Larks with the longspurs, the reverse ratio usually found in the Carolinas. As many as seven were present at the Charlotte Motor Speedway near Harrisburg from 17 December to 26 February (David Wright et al.). Vaughn Morrison saw two at Cape Hatteras point on 4 January. In South Carolina, the only report was one far south in Orangeburg County on 4 February (Douglas McNair).

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD:** Ken Knapp saw one at Pea Island on the CBC on 28 December.  
**NORTHERN (BULLOCK'S) ORIOLE:** As many as two immature males were seen at Charles Lincoln's feeder in Morehead City by John Fussell from mid-March to 28 April.

**HOUSE FINCH:** Notable counts near the southern end of the winter range were as many as 52 at Kitty Kosh's feeders in Wilmington during the winter, 164+ in Bennettsville on 27 and 28 February (Douglas McNair), and 200+ in a flock near Monticello, S.C., on 24 January (Robin Carter).

**RED CROSSBILL:** Gail Whitehurst saw a flock of approximately 12 at Asheville on 6 January.



## *Roundtable*

... with Louis C. Fink

### **New Address**

This columnist has moved to Florida, but is continuing the column at the request of the Editor. Contributions are welcome, so send in your questions, comments, and observations. Yes, I miss my friends in Carolina—but consider this: Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets feed on the front lawn, and a Killdeer skitters through the standing water next to my car in the parking lot.—LOUIS C. FINK, 100 Clyde Morris Blvd., #155, Ormond Beach, Florida 32074.

### **Clothes Make the Man?**

Scientists have studied chickadees and sparrows to learn whether feather patterns make a difference in social standing. It appears that when markings are bleached out or enlarged artificially, the bird going back to his own flock must fight for dominance. But in a new environment, the bird with strong, artificial marking may be accepted as a leader.

(MORE ITEMS ON PAGE 4)