

General Field Notes

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Red-footed Booby Added to South Carolina State List

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A moribund Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) was picked up on 27 July 1986 on the beach at Edisto Island State Park, Charleston County, S.C. The bird was kept alive for 2 days, and was then brought to the Charleston Museum. The specimen (ChM 1987.3.011) is a male of the brown color phase. It weighed 516.8 g when received. The specimen was prepared as a standard study skin with detached, flattened wing, and is accompanied by color photographs of the soft parts. Identification was confirmed by comparison with the series of specimens in the U.S. National Museum.

On the Atlantic coast, the Red-footed Booby has been recorded only as far north as southern Florida (AOU Check-list, 1983). This individual was therefore far beyond its normal range. The nearest breeding colony is on Mona Island, west of Puerto Rico. During the period of its appearance, we know of no unusual weather conditions that would explain this accidental occurrence.

We thank David Stergus, who salvaged the bird; Diane Howell, who prepared the specimen; and Roxie C. Laybourne, who helped confirm the identification.

Anhinga, a Breeding Confirmation from Cumberland County, N.C.

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Although the finding of Anhingas (*Anhinga anhinga*) in Cumberland County is noteworthy, such sightings are not unexpected as this area is situated well inside the reported range of the species in North Carolina (Potter et al. 1980). Although the Anhinga was listed in the county as hypothetical during the late 1950s (Hauser 1957), the first positive identifications were not made until the spring and summer



Fig. 1. The first Anhinga nest found at Jessup's Mill Pond, Cumberland County, N.C., on 21 July 1985, was about 12 feet above the water in a 25-foot Pond Cypress. The nest contained two young and provided the first proof of local breeding.

of 1980 (Chat 44:113, 45:19). From the spring of 1981 (Chat 45:104) through the summer of 1985, Anhingas have been observed regularly during the warm months of the year at Jessup's Mill Pond in the Beaver Dam Section of Cumberland County. This site is at the approximate latitude of the northernmost North Carolina breeding area at Lake Ellis (Potter et al. 1980). The possibility of breeding at Jessup's Mill Pond was noted as early as the summer of 1981 (Chat 46:21). However, nesting was not confirmed until the summer of 1985.

Jessup's Mill Pond, which is approximately 75 miles (118 km) from the Atlantic Ocean, is situated in an area known as White Pond Bay. It is a complex of 6 square miles containing streamheads, drainages and seepages, pocosins, and "Carolina bays." This pond is typical and representative of impoundments that drain the swamp-pocosin environments of the coastal plain of North Carolina. Cypress trees grow in the shallows of the darkly stained but clear water. Although the area generally given for this impoundment is 50 to 60 acres, this accounts only for the open water generally visible from the dam. Considerably more acreage in the swamp is inundated, to include some 200 to 300 acres.

A history of logging of this area commences with a general timber removal at a time just prior to the building of the first dam during the 1880s. The region was logged again during the 1940s (World War II). A selective cutting of trees in this area to include some of the swamp occurred during the early 1970s. A few trees were cored at this time from a grove of inaccessible large Swamp Gum (*Nyssa*



Fig. 2. A second Anhinga nest was found at Jessup's Mill Pond on 21 July 1985. This somewhat larger nest contained four young, two of which had flight feathers emerging from the down.

sylvatica var. *biflora*). These trees were estimated to be about 75 to 80 feet tall and had measured diameters of 10 to 12 inches (dbh). They were determined to be about 90 years old from ring counts.

There are three vegetative cover types recognized for the area of Jessup's Mill Pond and adjacent swamps: evergreen bay forest, pocosin, and swamp forest (Kologiski 1977). However, the area in which the Anhingas are nesting involves only the swamp forest.

Structurally, this stand shows a well-stocked and dense shrub zone of 4 to 6 feet in height. The young trees form a taller zone at 8 to 12 feet. The tallest cypress trees form, at 25 to 30 feet, a rather open overstory.

We arrived on the dam shortly after sun-up (0700) on 21 July 1985, and almost immediately saw a single male Anhinga fairly close by, drying its wings. A female was subsequently located at some distance, on the edge of the swamp. Sometime later, we found a second female in a cypress by a nest that housed two downy, snake-necked young. Later we discovered a second male Anhinga and a second nest.

The first nest (Fig. 1) was on a trunk-branch fork about 12 feet above the water in a Pond Cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) with a diameter of 6 inches (dbh). The tree, about 25 feet tall, was on the edge of a small, open grove of cypress standing in water about 18 to 25 inches deep. The nest was constructed of coarse sticks forming a shallow basket approximately 20 inches in diameter and 8 to 9 inches deep. It was

lined with wilted green leaves. The young birds, with buffy-tan down, black beaks, and an eye-line, appeared about one-quarter to one-third grown. One was noticeably larger than the other.

The second nest (Fig. 2) was similarly positioned, but in a larger cypress. The nest appeared larger, and the leaf lining consisted of cypress leaves. There were four nestlings in this one. Two of the occupants were larger than their nestmates and were developing black primaries and stubby black tail feathers. The other two birds were of the size and level of development of the two birds in the first nest. Irregular egg-laying is suggested in Harrison (1975).

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Tricolored Herons and Snowy Egrets Breeding in the Interior of South Carolina

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In South Carolina, Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula*) and Tricolored Herons (*Hydranassa tricolor*) inhabit coastal areas and often wander into the interior after the breeding season. However, no confirmed nestings have been reported away from immediate coastal (tidewater) areas.

During the 1986 nesting season (March-July) we marked and monitored nests in the mixed-species heronry on Green ("Bird") Island on Lake Marion, near Eadytown, Berkeley County (33° 26' N, 80° 10' W). The colony site is 77 km from the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 1). The most common species in the colony are Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*), Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), and White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*). Other nesting species are Anhingas (*Anhinga anhinga*) and Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*).

From 30 May 1986, about the time that small herons and White Ibis started nesting and Great Egrets had completed nesting, we usually saw five or more Tricolored Herons in the heronry. They frequented the central, low-shrub area of the island that was used most heavily by other nesting herons. The main tree in this section were Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and willow (*Salix* sp.). The White Ibis built nests in taller trees on the edge of the island. These were mainly Hackberry (*Celtis* sp.) and Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*).