

General Field Notes

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NOTICE

Publication of any unusual sightings of birds in the Field Notes or Briefs for the Files does not imply that these reports have been accepted into the official Checklist of Birds records for either North or South Carolina. Decisions regarding the official Checklists are made by the respective State Records Committees and will be reported upon periodically in THE CHAT.

Observations of a Northern Wheatear on the North Carolina Outer Banks

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Early in the afternoon of 2 October 1987, while driving northward along NC 12, just south of Avon, N.C., on the Outer Banks, I spotted an unfamiliar bird perched on a large power line. I made a quick U-turn, and, using my binoculars, got within good viewing distance. After consulting the National Geographic field guide, I was certain I was looking at a Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*).

After studying the bird at close range for about 15 minutes, I called Marcia Lyons, interpreter at Cape Hatteras National Seashore, who soon arrived and also studied the bird. Later that day, Allen Bryan, Derb Carter, Ricky Davis, Harry LeGrand, Merrill Lynch, and Wayne Irvin also studied the bird, still in the same general area. Bryan saw the bird just before dark. Several people searched the area thoroughly the next morning, beginning at daybreak, but, apparently, the bird had departed.

Collectively, the bird was studied for over an hour. It was seen as close as 30 feet, and was studied both with 9x and 10x binoculars, and 25x telescopes, usually with excellent lighting conditions. The bird appeared to be roughly of the same length and bulk as an Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), but held its body more horizontally than that species. The crown, nape, and back were

brown. The wings were a darker brown. The underparts were a warm cinnamon-buff, except for the undertail coverts, which were slightly more whitish. Seen well was the very distinctive rump-tail pattern (white rump, white upper tail coverts, and white on proximal portions of the outer rectrices, contrasting with the brown back, brown middle rectrices, and brown distal portions of the outer rectrices). The tips of the rectrices were buffy. There was a light superciliary stripe. The bird had the dark face patch shown in the National Geographic field guide, but the patch was quite subdued. The bill and legs were dark.

The bird, which was quite tame, fed on insects on and near the ground, often by pouncing onto its prey from elevated perches—flat-topped cottages, and the wide upper surface of a large sign.

Ricky Davis took several color photographs of the bird. The North Carolina Bird Records Committee has reviewed these photographs and determined that they are definitive. With publication of this record, Northern Wheatear can be added to the official North Carolina list (Chat 54:57). Duplicate slides have been deposited at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, and with VIREO (the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia).

This is only the second North Carolina record for this primarily Eurasian species. The first record was a sighting by Stephen Murphy at Franklin, Macon County, on 11 October 1981 (Chat 46:82-83). In Virginia, there are three fall records and one spring record (Virginia Society of Ornithology 1987). There is also a fall record for South Carolina (Chat 24:102).

LITERATURE CITED

Virginia Society of Ornithology, Rarities Committee. 1987. Virginia's birdlife, an annotated checklist. (Second edition). Virginia Avifauna No. 3. 127 pp.

Praying Mantis Kills Hummingbird

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On 28 August 1990, my wife, June R. Conway, noticed a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) drop to the ground from one of our hummingbird feeders. Upon examining the bird, a first year male, she found that it had been eviscerated. Still on the feeder was the culprit, a praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*).

Despite their agility in flight, hummingbirds do fall victims to a variety of predators and environmental hazards such as spider webs and thistles. Winsor Marrett Tyler (in Bent) cites reports of hummingbirds being caught by a dragonfly (Insecta: Odonata), Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), and a bass (*Micropterus* sp.?) which leaped out of the water to catch a low-flying individual. Terres (1980) cites reports of predators which captured hummingbirds: tropical Bat Falcon (*F. ruficularis*), Merlin, American Kestrel (*F. sparverius*), Sharp-