

## General Field Notes

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**Will Cook**  
North Carolina Editor  
418 Sharon Road  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514  
cwcook@acpub.duke.edu

**Dennis M. Forsythe**  
South Carolina Editor  
Department of Biology  
The Citadel  
Charleston, SC 29409  
forsythed@citadel.edu  
Fax: (803)-953-7084

### First Record of Lazuli Bunting for North Carolina

Harry E. LeGrand, Jr.  
N.C. Natural Heritage Program  
P.O. Box 27687  
Raleigh, NC 27611

Anthony V. Ziccardi, Jr.  
1211 South Eads St. # 1704  
Arlington, VA 22202-4712

At approximately 9:30 am on 22 March 1996, Ziccardi observed a bird that he identified as a first spring male or adult female Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) at Fort Macon State Park. The bird was feeding with a mixed flock of White-throated Sparrows (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) and Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) on the ground adjacent to a greenbrier (*Smilax* sp.) hedge, between the fort and the parking lot. The bird was seen off and on until 11:10 am. It was also observed on that date by Ann Ziccardi and Randy Newman, a ranger at Fort Macon State Park.

Word of this first North Carolina report of Lazuli Bunting quickly spread. Bob Holmes observed the bunting the following day, and several dozen birders arrived at the state park on Saturday, 24 March, in hopes of observing and photographing the bird. The bunting was seen at close range, in excellent light, from 8:10 to at least 9:45 am. During this time, photos were taken by Derb Carter. Additional observers on 24 March included LeGrand, John Fussell, Ricky Davis, and John and Paula Wright. The bird remained at Fort Macon through 2 April, when last reported by Newman.

The bunting, almost certainly a first-winter male, was slightly smaller than the White-throated Sparrows. It had no streaking anywhere. Its head and back were olive-brown, with medium turquoise blue showing on the side of the head and on the throat. The breast was a light, soft orange or rust, similar to the color of a female American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) or female Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*). The belly was white, contrasting with the light orange-

rust breast. The wing had two distinct wingbars, which were dirty white or buff. The shoulder region was a bright turquoise blue. Some blue coloration was seen in most of the folded wing feathers, which were mainly dark brown. The lower back/rump was a bright turquoise, contrasting with the olive-brown back. The tail feathers were dark brownish with some blue coloration.

The bird had a pale eye-ring. Its bill was conical and finch-like; its color was flesh or pale pink.

The Lazuli Bunting breeds in the western half of North America and winters mainly from Mexico southward. It is of casual to accidental occurrence in the eastern United States. Virginia has at least two records: Newport News in 1966 and Norfolk in 1975 (Virginia Society of Ornithology 1987). South Carolina has a single record: Westminster in 1981 (LeGrand 1984). Thus, a record for North Carolina is not completely unexpected.

This is the first record of Lazuli Bunting for North Carolina. Photos taken by Carter and written descriptions by the authors have been deposited at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences for documentation. The N.C. Bird Records Committee accepted the photos and written descriptions and placed the species on the North Carolina Official List (North Carolina Bird Records Committee 1997).

#### **Literature Cited**

- LeGrand, HE, Jr. 1984. First South Carolina record of the Lazuli Bunting. *Chat* 48:49-50.
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- Virginia Society of Ornithology. 1987. Virginia's birdlife: an annotated checklist. Virginia Avifauna No. 3, The Virginia Society of Ornithology, Inc.