

to be primarily cavity nesters, using both natural cavities and nest boxes (James and Thompson 2001). Harrigal has seen no evidence to date of their using Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) boxes in South Carolina. However, it appears that the numerous coastal waterfowl impoundments and managed wetlands, along with thousands of Wood Duck boxes, could provide abundant habitat for the species to flourish in South Carolina.

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## Nesting Evidence of Ovenbirds in the Coastal Plain of South Carolina

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From 2001 to 2004 I heard 4–6 Ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) singing every year on Weymouth Plantation, 8 miles NE of Georgetown in Georgetown County, South Carolina. On 4 June 2003, I searched for breeding activity on a pine/oak ridge next to a cypress swamp. A pair of Ovenbirds was feeding fledglings that were at least 20–30 days old (see Van Horn and Donovan 1994 for aging criteria). On this same day about 400 m away a male was singing and its mate was foraging in leaf litter. The female fed a 7–10 day old fledgling that was too young to fly more than 1 meter.

At Weymouth on 11 April 2004 I observed a female Ovenbird building a nest. Two weeks later I returned and photographed the nest. Although the

nest was complete, it was empty. The nest was a grass and pine needle dome under an arching Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) branch.



Figure 1. Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) nest, Georgetown County, South Carolina, 25 April 2004.

The overstory at Weymouth where nesting was observed is predominantly mature Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Laurel Oak (*Quercus laurifolia*), Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) and Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*). The midstory contains Blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.), Sweetgum, Waxmyrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) and other hardwood species. The ground is open with a thick cover of dead leaves.

Van Horn and Donovan (1994) report the breeding range extending only into the western part of South Carolina (mountains and western piedmont) but not into the coastal plain. Ovenbirds nest in the coastal plain on the Atlantic coast from northeast North Carolina north into Canada (Van Horn and Donovan 1994). Cely (1979) reported a singing male, “showing concern” and apparently on territory, in Georgetown County in 1977 and again at the same location in 1978, but did not find evidence of breeding.

This is one of the southernmost confirmed Ovenbird breeding records for the outer coastal plain of South Carolina (Cely 2003) and further evidence that they are localized breeders in the South Carolina coastal plain. Ovenbird nesting was observed near Ravenel, in Charleston County, SC during the late 1990s (John Gerwin, pers. comm.). Ovenbirds may be expanding their range into South Carolina’s coastal plain. This may explain the increased number of Ovenbirds on breeding bird surveys from 1966–2003 in South Carolina

(8.4, 13.8,  $n = 14$ ,  $P = 0.04$ ) ((trend (%/year), variance, number of routes and P value)) (Sauer et al. 2004).

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## The Cackling Goose in South Carolina and Neighboring Regions

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The Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) has recently been classified as a distinct species (American Ornithologists' Union [AOU] 2003). Formerly (AOU 1998), it was considered a subspecies of the Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*), and was known as Hutchins's Goose (Forbush 1929), Richardson's Canada Goose (Delacour 1954) or Tundra Goose (Mowbray et al. 2002). The Cackling Goose is about half the size of the nominate race of the Canada Goose (*B. c. canadensis*; Fig. 1). Ninety years ago, Brooks (1914) suggested that the "Canada Goose" was composed of more than one species. Recent work with mitochondrial DNA (van Wagner and Baker 1986, Shields and Wilson 1987) and others confirmed Brooks's hypothesis.

The purpose of this paper is to review records of the Cackling Goose for South Carolina and adjacent areas, to clarify the distribution of the species on the southern Atlantic coast.

The small-bodied form of the Canada Goose (AOU 1998), now called the Cackling Goose (*B. hutchinsii*), includes four (Mowbray et al. 2002) or five subspecies (AOU 2003, following Delacour 1954). The Cackling Goose may be more closely related to other members of the genus *Branta*, such as the Brant (*B. bernicla*) and the Barnacle Goose (*B. leucopsis*), than it is to the large-bodied Canada Goose (*B. canadensis*), which is now thought to be composed of seven subspecies (Delacour 1954, AOU 2003).