

## Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—December 1957

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In an article *Keeping Fit with the Birds*, Thomas T. Jones, M.D. described his homemade hummingbird feeders, simple glass tubes to glass bottles of all kinds from a few ounces to quart size, with bent tubing and rubber stoppers. He attracted 12–15 hummingbirds daily through an unspecified number of summers in his Durham, NC yard. He used a formula of 1/3 sugar to 2/3 water. Hummingbirds came to syrup colored with red, green, yellow, pink or orange food coloring; he did not mention experimenting with no coloring. His usual spring arrival dates were surprisingly late, between 15–20 April; and his observed departure dates seem early—most left in early September, with the latest observation 24 September.

The 1957 fall meeting at Poinsett State Park, SC was briefly noted. The weekend species list had a surprisingly low 71 species, with only 5 warblers.

*General Field Notes* included two reports of Buff-breasted Sandpiper. E. Milby Burton, director of the Charleston Museum, observed a single individual at the upper end of Sullivan's Island, SC on 7 September 1957, and Paul Sykes and M. T. Griffin observed two at Ocracoke, NC on 17 September 1957. It was stated that there was only one previous SC record, from 1884, and that the last previous NC record was in 1911.

Alexander Sprunt, Jr. wrote that he had been told by Gaston Gage, Sr. that he watched a nestling Brown-headed Cowbird being fed in the nest of a Yellow-throated Vireo in Clemson, SC on 25 May 1957. Sprunt stated that as far as he knew, this was the first record of a cowbird being fed in a nest in South Carolina, although on 17 July 1934, Prof. Sherman of Clemson University had observed a fledgling being fed on the ground. Sprunt also stated that the “presence of several immature cowbirds near Charleston on July 8, 1957 suggests breeding even nearer the coast”.

A Western Tanager was observed in a churchyard in Fayetteville, NC from 12–25 March 1957. A Black-headed Grosbeak killed by “a young man” in Kingstree, SC on 26 February 1957 was the first state record. An unusually pale Grasshopper Sparrow collected at the Savannah River Plant near Aiken, SC was identified as being of the western subspecies *perpallidus*, the first state record of that subspecies.

*Briefs for the Files* included two summer reports of Red-throated Loon, one at Carolina Beach, NC in July and one at Wrightsville Beach, NC in August. Gray Kingbirds were observed in Southport, NC from 28 June–23 August, with up to four being observed at one time.