

Fifty Years Ago in *The Chat*—June 1959

Articles in the June 1959 issue of *The Chat* included an open letter to Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson by Irston R. Barnes, with the editorial comment “It is disturbing to realize, in this day when the forces of law and order need all the respect they can command, that the statements of government departments are not wholly trustworthy.” The letter protested release by the Agriculture Department of a film titled *Fire Ant on Trial* which “wrongly creates the impression that where proper precautions are taken, wildlife is unharmed by the [fire ant] control program.”

The Spring CBC meeting in 1959 was held in Chapel Hill 8–10 May. The total number of species observed was 107, of which 22 were warblers, including Tennessee, Worm-eating and Cape May.

General Field Notes included a number of good records. A White-tailed Tropicbird was seen off Cape Hatteras 25 July 1958, and another one was reported captured 16 Oct 1954, the day after Hurricane Hazel, in a chicken pen in Dillon, SC. A group of birders from Virginia reported that during a visit to Cape Hatteras on 1 Feb 1959, they observed an immature Razorbill on the sand, an immature male Common Eider on the water, and two immature and one adult Black-legged Kittiwakes on the sand. All of these birds except for the adult kittiwake were observed to be oiled, the Razorbill to the extent that it could not fly, and the eider to the extent that it apparently could not fly. The kittiwakes could fly but were noted to be “tame” and allowed close approach. Remarkably, there is no speculation on how the birds came to be oiled, or any hint that this was considered either unusual or regrettable. Independently, Paul Sykes reported four immature Black-legged Kittiwakes at Hatteras on 14 Feb 1959, also observed at close range. John Funderburg and Robert F. Soots reported a Rough-legged Hawk in Wake County, NC on two occasions in the winter of 1959, described as the first piedmont record. John R. Gatewood reported a White-winged Dove along the south dike of North Pond at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge on 9 Nov 1958. This was apparently the second record from the refuge, the first having been on 23 June 1943. Ivan R. Tomkins reported an adult male Vermilion Flycatcher at the Savannah River Refuge on 10 January 1959, continuing until 20 March. This was thought to be the second record for South Carolina. John B. Hatcher reported two Warbling Vireos in his yard in Aiken County, SC, on 1–7 September 1958. This was apparently the second state record for the species.

In Briefs for the Files, which were truly brief in this era, Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge's first Swallow-tailed Kite was noted 20 May 1958. Three Warbling Vireos were reported heard and seen at Wilmington, NC, on the remarkable date of 25 March 1959 by Mrs. Appleberry (CBC President).