

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Spring 2012, unless otherwise noted)

Briefs for the Files is a seasonal collection of uncommon-to-rare or unusual North and South Carolina bird sightings and events which do not necessarily require a more detailed Field Note or article. Reports of your sightings are due the 20th of the month after the end of the previous season.

Winter	December 1–February 28	due March 20
Spring	March 1–May 31	due June 20
Summer	June 1–July 31	due August 20
Fall	August 1–November 30	due December 20

Reports may be submitted in any format, but I prefer that you use email, list multiple sightings in taxonomic order (rather than by date or location), and type your report directly into the body of the email. If your sightings are in a file, please copy-and-paste the text into the body of the email, rather than sending an attachment.

Suitable reports for the Briefs include any sightings you feel are unusual, rare, noteworthy, or just plain interesting to you in any way! It is my responsibility to decide which reports merit inclusion in the Briefs.

Please be sure to include details of any rare or hard-to-identify birds.

I rely in part on sightings reported in Carolinabirds. Please don't, however, rely on me to pick up your sightings from Carolinabirds. Instead, please also send your sightings directly to me as described above.

If I feel that your sighting warrants a Field Note, I will contact either you or the appropriate state Field Notes editor. You may, of course, submit your Field Note directly to the editor without going through me.

Greater White-fronted Goose: The individual seen on the campus of Charleston Southern University, North Charleston, SC, first noted 18 Jan (Matthew Campbell, John Kuykendall) remained until 23 May (Kuykendall).

Ross's Goose: The individual first seen in Cary, NC, in November, remained in the area until 21 Mar (Jennifer Schrand). One seen at Lake Conestee Nature Park in Greenville, SC, 14 May (Brad Dalton) through 25 May (*fide* Paul Serridge, m. obs.) was quite late.

Cackling Goose: One was seen with a flock of Canada Geese on the upper end of Lake Hickory, Catawba Co, NC, 8 Mar (Dwayne Martin, Lori Owenby, Andrea Bruns, Linda Gilbert) and 11 Mar (Caroline Eastman, Jeff Kline).

Lesser Scaup: 150 on Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 13 Mar (W. Forsythe, R. Selvey) was a good count for that location.

Common Eider: A female remained at Oregon Inlet, NC, throughout the spring and into summer (Audrey Whitlock, Jeff Lewis, m. obs.).

Surf Scoter: One was photographed on a gravel pit pond in Orange Co, NC, 1–8 Apr (Barb Brooks). Adult males on Kiawah Island, SC, 22 Apr (David Gardner, Cody Rossetti) and at Oregon Inlet, NC, 23 May (Jeff Lewis) were somewhat late.

Red-breasted Merganser: A female at Singletary Lake State Park (SP), Bladen Co, NC, 26 May (Jeff Beane, Ed Corey, Josh Zajdel) was locally unusual and somewhat late.

Pacific Loon: One was seen on Lake Hartwell, SC, on the border with Georgia, 11 Mar (Mark Freeman, Mark McShane, et al.) and near the dam on the GA side of the lake, 16 Mar (Lewis Burke, Irvin Pitts). This lake has hosted one or two wintering Pacific Loons for several years now.

Common Loon: Somewhat late were two on Falls Lake, NC, 4 May (Daniel Hueholt, et al.); one on Jordan Lake, NC, during the Spring Bird Count (SBC), 6 May (Josh Southern, Sterling Southern); and three at Oregon Inlet, NC, 23 May (Jeff Lewis).

Horned Grebe: 50+ birds on Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 9 Mar (Wayne Forsythe) provided a good count. Some of the later sightings included four on the Southern Pines, NC, SBC, 29 Apr (*fide* Susan Campbell); four on Lake Crabtree, NC, 29 Apr (Mike Turner); one on the N end of Falls Lake, during the Durham, NC, SBC, 29 Apr (Norm Budnitz, et al.); and on Jordan Lake, NC, during the SBC, 6 May (Doug Shadwick, Bob Rybczynski).

Red-necked Grebe: One was seen on Lake Hartwell, near Townville, SC, 10 Mar (Matt Johnson, et al.).

Eared Grebe: Three were found during the SBC in Southern Pines, NC, 29 Apr (*fide* Susan Campbell).

Albatross sp.: An albatross of undetermined species, in the company of gannets, was seen E of Cape Lookout Shoals, NC, no more than five miles offshore, 20 Mar (Eric Kershner). It's possible that this bird was the same Black-browed Albatross seen during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, 18 Feb.

Northern Fulmar: Two were seen on the ocean off Oregon Inlet, NC, at the edge of the continental shelf, 11 Mar (Johnny Wilson, et al.).

Herald (Trindade) Petrel: One was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, a dark-morph, 31 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Fea's Petrel: Singles were had on pelagic trips out of Hatteras, NC, 24, 29, and 31 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Sooty Shearwater: Three were seen in flight over the ocean, just off Fort Macon SP, Atlantic Beach, NC, 27 May (John Fussell, Jack Fennell, Lena Gallitano).

European Storm-Petrel: One was photographed on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, 31 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

White-tailed Tropicbird: One was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, 27 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Red-billed Tropicbird: This other tropicbird species was seen on the same pelagic trip, 27 May (Brian Patteson, et al.), a two-tropicbird trip!

Wood Stork: Outside of the species' typical range was one seen perched in a pine tree along NC-94, just S of Columbia, Tyrrell Co, NC, 3 Apr (John Stanton). Five in flight over the Black River in Pender Co, NC, 26 May (Gilbert Grant) were probably part of the breeding colony noted in that area last summer.

Masked Booby: One was photographed on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, 31 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

American White Pelican: Transients were found on several inland lakes—three on the N end of Falls Lake in Durham Co, NC, 4 Mar (Eddie Owens); two on Lookout Shoals Lake, Catawba Co, NC, 30–31 Mar (Dwayne Martin, et al.); and two photographed at Woodlake Country Club in Vass, Moore Co, NC, 23 Mar (Linda Jones, Wayne Irvin).

American Bittern: The bird seen at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville, SC, throughout the winter, remained until at least 2 May (Paul Serridge, et al.).

“Great White Heron”: One was seen at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), SC, in early April (Patricia Voelker, Doug Thigpen, m. obs.).

Snowy Egret: Two seen in flight over Prairie Ridge Ecostation in Raleigh, NC, at dawn on 30 Apr (Brian O’Shea) were locally unusual.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: One in flight and calling at Latta Nature Preserve, Charlotte, NC, 19 Apr (Taylor Piephoff) was locally unusual.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: Night-herons returned to several traditional inland breeding sites—three to Miller Park in Winston-Salem, NC, 16 Mar (Phil Dickinson); five around Charlotte, NC, 19 Mar (Tom Sanders); and six at the New Hope Creek waterfowl impoundment in Chapel Hill, NC, during the SBC, 12 May (Scott



Glossy Ibis, 10 May 2012, Henderson Co, NC. Photo by Wayne Forsythe.

Winton).

Glossy Ibis: An adult was photographed on private land in the French Broad River Valley of Henderson Co, NC, 10 May (Wayne Forsythe), providing a rare mountain record for this species. One found at Woodlake Country Club in Vass, NC, during the Southern Pines SBC, 29 Apr (*fide* Susan Campbell) was unusual for the inland location.

White-faced Ibis: Pending review by the SC bird record committee, as the species is not yet on the official state bird list, were two reports from adjacent sites just south of Charleston, SC—one photographed at Fresh Field Farm, Kiawah Island, 12 Apr (James Pope) and one on Seabrook Island, 9 May (Jim Edwards, Jane Chew).

Swallow-tailed Kite: Overshooting their breeding range were individuals in Nags Head, NC, 4 Apr (Fred Rimmel); in Frisco, NC, 30 Apr (Eric Frey); and just N of Beaufort, NC, 6 May (John Voigt, John Fussell). Four seen along Hallsboro Road S, SE of Whiteville, Columbus Co, NC, 15 May (Thierry Besançon), may indicate a breeding colony in that area.

Northern Harrier: Late individuals were found along Mid-Pines Rd in Raleigh, NC, 5 May (Erla Lynn Beegle); during the SBC in Chapel Hill, NC, 12 May (*fide* Will Cook); and in Halifax Co, NC, 19 May (Nick Flanders, Paul Taillie).

“Harlan’s Hawk” : A western sub-species of Red-tailed Hawk, a light-phase adult Harlan’s Hawk was observed at Alligator River NWR, NC, 2 Mar (Mike Tove, Eddie Owens).

Merlin: Locally unusual and somewhat late were Merlins on Ft Bragg, NC, during the Southern Pines SBC, 29 Apr (*fide* Susan Campbell); along Mid-Pines Rd in Raleigh, NC, 29 Apr (Mike Tove, Eddie Owens); and along nearby Inwood Rd, 13 May (Lynn Erla Beegle, Jeri Smart).

Virginia Rail: A vocalizing male was heard around Salem Lake, Winston-Salem, NC, 7 Apr through the end of the period (John Haire). Haire notes that dam construction had lowered the water level of the lake during the period.

Purple Gallinule: One was seen in a wetland along Green Ridge Drive in Mecklenburg Co, NC, 30 Apr (Tom Sanders, Rob Gilson) through 22 May (m. obs.). Remarkably, this sighting was the county’s second in less than a year. An adult was photographed in Nags Head, NC, 20 May (Chip Masterson).

Common Gallinule: One was seen on Bridges Lake, off the Neuse River Greenway Trail, Wake Co, NC, 31 Mar (Nick Flanders) through 10 Apr



Purple Gallinule, 20 May 2012, Nags Head, NC. Photo by Chip Masterson.

(Thierry Besançon).

Sandhill Crane: Sightings included two in flight over Beaufort, NC, 7 Mar (Rich & Susan Boyd); one on Kiawah Island, SC, 23 Mar (Aaron Given); and one in Jackson Co, NC, 24 Mar (James Poling).

Semipalmated Plover: Inland, individuals were found at Falls Lake, NC, 5 May (Brian Bockhahn, et al.); and at the armory wetlands in Lenoir, NC, where photographed 22 May (Walt Kent).

Piping Plover: Some of the better counts were 15 at the Rachel Carson Reserve in Beaufort, NC, 11 Mar (Scott Winton); 10–15 at Sunset Beach, NC, 26 May (Daniel Hueholt); and eight on Kiawah Island, SC, 5 Apr (Cherrie Sneed) and 22 Apr (David Gardner).

Willet: Seven were found at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) on NC-191 in Henderson Co, NC, after heavy rains, 26 April (Wayne Forsythe). Though lone transients are sometimes found at sites away from the coast, finding seven at one location is remarkable.

Upland Sandpiper: Sightings included one at the sod farm in Orangeburg, SC, 8 Apr (Jeff Kline); three on the lawn of Cherry Hospital, Goldsboro, NC, 14 Apr (Eric Dean, Gene Howe); and three photographed at the sod farm off Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 1 May (Wayne Forsythe).

Red Knot: A flock of 51 knots on the beach adjacent to the ferry terminal at Cedar Island, NC, 25 Mar (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) was a good count for a site away from the ocean.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Two seen and heard at the pond adjacent to the Cedar Island, NC, ferry terminal, 15 Apr (John Fussell, Jack Fennell, Carol Reigle) were considered early for Carteret County.



Purple Sandpiper, 15 Apr 2012, Oregon Inlet, NC. Photo by Jeff Lewis.

Purple Sandpiper: Two on the jetty at Oregon Inlet, NC, 19 Apr (Jeff Lewis) were somewhat late.

Stilt Sandpiper: Four, one almost in breeding plumage, found in brackish pools near the Cedar Island, NC, ferry terminal, 25 Mar (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) were quite early.

Red-necked Phalarope: 87+ were had on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, 22 May (Brian Patteson, et al.). A female in breeding plumage at North Pond, Pea Island NWR, NC, 30 May (Audrey Whitlock, et al.) was the only onshore sighting made this spring.

Little Gull: One was seen amongst a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls off the beach of Emerald Isle, NC, 10 Mar (Scott Winton). A first-winter bird was seen amongst Bonaparte's Gulls at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 9 Mar (Ali Iyob), providing the first inland report of this species in several years.

Laughing Gull: Inland, individuals were found at Falls Lake, NC, 1–4 May (Kyle Kittelberger, Daniel Hueholt); at Jordan Lake, NC, 6 May (Rick Payne); and at Lake Benson, Raleigh, NC, 12 May (Kittelberger, et al.).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: One at the upper end of Falls Lake, NC, 5 Mar (Scott Winton) was much farther inland than is typical.

Glaucous Gull: A juvenile bird was photographed in North Topsail Beach, NC, 5 Apr (Gilbert Grant).

Arctic Tern: Four were had on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, NC, 20 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Dovekie: Three were seen off of Johnnie Mercer's Pier in Wrightsville Beach, NC, 25 Mar (Ali Iyob).

White-winged Dove: One was seen in the company of Mourning Doves in Wrightsville Beach, NC, 25 Mar (Ali Iyob). Individuals visited feeders in Goldsboro, NC, 29 Apr through 14 May (Mary Bridges) and in Morehead City, NC, 17–21 May (Carol Reigle).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: One was noted at Buxton Woods, Buxton, NC, 4 Apr (Sarah Clark, Nathan Gatto). Three were heard calling along the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) in the Balsam Mountains, NC, 29 Mar (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal). Also in the NC mountains were individuals heard calling in the Big Ivy area, downslope of the BRP, 2 Apr; at Cherry Log Ridge on the BRP, 7 May; at Beetree Gap in the Craggy Mountains, 16 May; at Devil's Courthouse, 19 May; and at Stepp's Gap, Mt Mitchell SP, 26 May (Simpson, Westphal, et al.).



Rufous Hummingbird, 11 March 2012, Hanahan, NC. Photo by Michael Bernard.

Rufous Hummingbird: Wintering "Rufouses" continued to visit feeders in Hanahan, SC, a juvenile male, through 16 Mar (Jack Eckstine); in Conway, SC, a female, until 4 Apr (Jay Chandler); and in Moore Co, NC, a female, mid-March through 9 May (Susan Campbell).

Olive-sided Flycatcher: One was seen, and heard calling, on private property along White Oak Road in Polk Co, NC, 23 May (Chris Kelly).

Eastern Wood-Pewee: One heard singing at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville, SC, 3 Apr (Brad Dalton)

was somewhat early.

Alder Flycatcher: 29 were counted in the Black Balsam, Shining Rock Wilderness, and Graveyard Fields areas of the Balsam Mountains, NC, during the SBC, 19 May (*fide* Marilyn Westphal).

Gray Kingbird: One found at the ferry landing at Ft Fisher, NC, 30 Apr (Greg Massey), was seen and photographed through 3 May (James Parnell, Bruce Smithson, Ron Clark, Tom Sanders). Though the bird's plumage was similar to that of a Thick-billed Kingbird, vocalizations confirmed its identity as a Gray Kingbird.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: A pair returned to last year's breeding site along Gunter Road in Piedmont, SC, 28 Apr (Brad Dalton, Jane Kramer). An adult male returned to Simpson Research Station in Pendleton, SC, 3 May (Ed Pivorun).



Yellow-throated Vireo: Somewhat early were individuals found along Fishing Creek in Halifax Co, NC, 26 Mar (Ricky Davis); and at the Duke Wetland Center, Durham, NC, 30 Mar (Scott Winton).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 29 May 2012, Piedmont, SC. Photo by Pam Ford.

Warbling Vireo: A pair nested in a Sycamore tree along the edge of Shelley Lake, Raleigh, NC, in late May (m. obs.) after a singing male was first noted there, 4 May (Erla Lynn Beegle, Randy Whittington, et al.).

Red-eyed Vireo: Early individuals were found along Fishing Creek in Halifax Co, NC, 26 Mar (Ricky Davis) and along the Black River, Bladen and Pender Co, NC, 26 Mar (Merrill Lynch).

Common Raven: Sightings outside of the mountains included one at Umstead SP, Raleigh, NC, 4 Mar (Brian Bockhahn); one on Duke campus in Durham, NC, 25 Mar (Dave Snyder); one in Uwharrie National Forest (NF), 8 Apr (Andrew Thornton); and four, including fledglings, at Mayo River SP, Rockingham Co, NC, 10 May (Martin Wall).

Horned Lark: Providing further evidence for breeding in the county were three singing males and a juvenile at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, 20 May (John Fussell, Jack Fennell). Two seen at Renaissance Golf Course in Mecklenburg Co, NC, during the Charlotte SBC, 28 Apr (*fide* Taylor Piephoff) were thought to be breeding there.

Tree Swallow: A pair was found nesting in a bluebird box in Halifax Co, NC, 8 May (*fide* Frank Enders) for a second year in a row.

Cliff Swallow: Two over the ferry terminal at Cedar Island, NC, 15 Apr (John Fussell, Jack Fennell, Carol Reigle) were locally unusual.

Cedar Waxwing: Two of the higher counts in May were 409 at Jordan Lake, NC, during the SBC, 6 May (Norm Budnitz); and 620 at Prairie Ridge Ecostation, Raleigh, NC, 11 May (Brian O'Shea). 21 were counted on a Breeding Bird Survey route in Currituck and Camden Co, NC, 27 Apr (Jeff Lewis).

Swainson's Warbler: Two singing males found along US-17 near Verona, Onslow Co, NC, 1 Apr (John Fussell) were quite early. 31 along a 35 mile stretch of the Roanoke River, downstream of Halifax, NC, 3-4 May (Eddie Owens) made a good count. One found singing on territory at Hanging Rock SP, Stokes Co, NC, 13 May (Ron Morris, Jeff Turner) was a first for that county.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Three at Jackson Park, Hendersonville, NC, 5 Apr (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey) made a good count for the mountain region.

Connecticut Warbler: One was heard singing in the Pisgah NF, Transylvania Co, NC, 21 Apr (Kendrick Weeks). One was reported from Reynolda Gardens, Winston-Salem, NC, 4 May (Sarah Clark, Nathan Gatto).

Cerulean Warbler: Surveys of the Roanoke River breeding population found four along a five mile stretch downriver of Weldon, NC, 6 May (Frank Enders); and six along a 15 mile stretch downriver of Weldon, NC, 19 May (Nick Flanders, Scott Winton, Paul Taillie, Mark Kosiewski, Natalia Ocampo Penuela). Migrants at Battle Park, Rocky Mount, NC, 28 Apr (Ricky Davis) and at Caesar's Head SP, Greenville Co, 30 Apr (Irvin Pitts) were locally unusual.

Magnolia Warbler: One seen and heard singing along the Bald Knob Ridge Trail, near the entrance to Mt Mitchell SP, Yancey Co, NC, 24 May into June (Marilyn Westphal, Mark Simpson, Ron Clark, Debra Segal) was suggestive of breeding in that area.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: An adult male that visited a birdbath in Longtown, Fairfield Co, SC, 8 Mar (*fide* Donna Slyce) must have overwintered in the area, as it was way too early for a migrant.

Prairie Warbler: 26 singing males within a one and a half mile stretch of Navy Shell Rd, Alligator River NWR, NC, 31 Mar (Jeff Lewis) provided a good count for that date.

Clay-colored Sparrow: Two were seen at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, 11 Mar (John Fussell, Jack Fennell).

Vesper Sparrow: One was photographed at Lake Betz, Research Triangle Park, NC, 8 Apr (Jennifer Schrand).

Lark Sparrow: One was photographed in the Sandhills Game Land, Scotland Co, NC, 23 Apr (Jeff Beane). Another individual was seen at nearby Ft Bragg, NC, during the Southern Pines, NC, SBC, 29 Apr (*fide* Susan Campbell).

Grasshopper Sparrow: One was found at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, 18 Mar (John Fussell, et al.).

Henslow's Sparrow: The bird that wintered at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, was relocated 11 Mar and 18 Mar (John Fussell, Jack Fennell, et al.).

Le Conte's Sparrow: Continuing from winter were two at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, 11 Mar (John Fussell, Jack Fennell); and four or five at the same location, 18 Mar (Fussell, et al.).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Individuals were found along Four Mile Creek Greenway in S Charlotte, NC, 16 Apr (Taylor Piephoff); at Renaissance Golf Course during the Charlotte, NC, SBC, 28 Apr (Piephoff); and during the Durham, NC, SBC, 29 Apr (Tom Driscoll, et al.).

Western Tanager: One visited a yard on Hilton Head Island, SC, where photographed, 4–7 Mar (Stanton Allaben). An adult male that visited a feeder in N Durham, NC, 26 Mar (Della Zimmerman, *vide* Scott Winton) was probably the same bird that visited the feeder in February.

Dickcissel: Counts of the breeding population at North River Farms, Carteret Co, NC, included three singing males 29 Apr (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) and ten singing males 20 May (Fussell, Fennell). Lone females were found in SE Catawba Co, NC, 30 Apr (Monroe Pannell); and at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville, SC, 18 May (Paul Serridge).

Brewer's Blackbird: The individual seen at the WTP along NC-191 in Henderson Co, NC, originally found 2 Jan, remained through 8 Mar (Wayne Forsythe). A “handful” were seen during a field trip to Dobbins Cattle Farm in Townville, SC, 10 Mar (Matt Johnson, et al.).

Red Crossbill: The best count from the NC mountains was ten at Balsam Gap, along the BRP, border of Buncombe and Yancey Co, NC, 30 May (Marilyn Westphal, Mark Simpson).



Lincoln's Sparrow, 16 Apr 2012, Charlotte, NC. Photo by Phil Fowler.