

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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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.

<i>Winter</i>	<i>December 1 - February 28</i>	<i>due March 20</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>March 1 - May 31</i>	<i>due June 20</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>June 1 - July 31</i>	<i>due August 20</i>
<i>Fall</i>	<i>August 1 - November 30</i>	<i>due December 20</i>

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.

Reports published herein may include sightings that require review by the state bird record's committee. Such reports are not considered accepted records until, and unless, they are so ruled by the committee.

Abbreviations: **BRP** – Blue Ridge Parkway, **Co** – County, **et al.** – and others, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NF** – National Forest, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: Individuals, possibly the same individual, were found at two sites in Carteret Co, NC—at the brackish pond adjacent to the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, 20 Jun (Mark Kosiewski) and at the willow pond at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum, eastern end of Harkers Island, 17-18 Jul (Douglas Racine). The latter bird wore a leg band that revealed it was banded in Louisiana in Feb 2014 (fide Paul Link). Three were seen in flight over Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 16 Jun (fide Susan Campbell). Three birds stuck around Twin Lakes in Sunset Beach, Brunswick Co, NC, for four days, 19 Jul (Jamie Adams, Sherry Lane) through 22 Jul (Sam Cooper). Were the three whistling-ducks seen at Twin Lakes in July the same three whistling-ducks seen at Mattamuskeet NWR back in June?

Blue-winged Teal: Individuals on Winston Lake, Forsyth Co, NC, 13 Jun (Mike Conway) and at Riverbend Park, Catawba Co, NC, 26 Jun through 6 Jul (Dwayne Martin) were unusual for those inland sites during the summer period.

Northern Shoveler: A drake on Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 20 Jun (Henry Link) was unusual for summer.

Ring-necked Duck: A drake lingered on Boykin Millpond, Kershaw Co, SC, during the summer (fide Steve Patterson).



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, 19 July 2015, Sunset Beach, Brunswick, Co, NC.
Photo by Sherry Lane.

Surf Scoter: An immature drake on the Bogue Sound in Morehead City, Carteret Co, NC, 9 Jun (Craig Harms) was interesting because, as John Fussell notes, “most scoters that linger into the summer in Carteret County are Black Scoters.”

Ruddy Duck: A drake, possibly injured, was seen on Salem Lake, Forsyth Co, NC, 17 June through 27 Jul (Carol Cunningham, et al.).

Northern Bobwhite: A moribund male bobwhite collected by the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, after apparently colliding with the window of an office building in downtown Raleigh, Wake Co, NC, 5 Jun (Perry Sugg, fide Brian O’Shea), was unusual for such an urban area.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Seven on the Cape Lookout National Seashore, Carteret Co, NC, 18 July (Kyle Lee) was an encouraging count of the Core Banks population.

Common Loon: Lingering into summer were two off Jennette’s Pier in Nags Head, Dare Co, NC, 19 Jun (Jim Gould) and one off North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, until 30 Jun (Gilbert Grant).

Trindade Petrel: A dark-morph individual was well-seen and photographed during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 6 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Great Shearwater: A moribund individual was found on the beach in North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 8 Jun (Gilbert Grant).

Wilson’s Storm-Petrel: Three seen just beyond the breakers off Kill Devil Hills, Dare Co, NC, 3 Jun (Jim Gould) were unusual so close to shore.

White-tailed Tropicbird: On pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, an adult bird was seen 1 Jun, and two birds were seen 4 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).



Brown Booby, 25 July 2015, off Hatteras, Dare Co, NC.
Photo by Irvin Pitts.

Red-billed Tropicbird: An immature bird was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 1 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Magnificent Frigatebird: Two frigatebirds were seen off of Holden Beach, Brunswick Co, NC, 5 Jul (Chris Davenport). A juvenile frigatebird was photographed off of Crescent Beach, Horry Co, SC, 13 Jun (Rhett Quigley).

Brown Booby: An immature bird was found amongst of a foraging flock of shearwaters during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 25 Jul (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Northern Gannet: An immature bird flying northbound off North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 5 Jun (Gilbert Grant) was late.

Great Cormorant: Rare summer sightings were made of individuals in North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, an immature bird, 5 Jun (Gilbert Grant) and on the northern jetty at Little River Inlet, Horry Co, SC, 20 Jul (Sam Cooper).

Anhinga: Individuals near Historic Bethabara Park, Forsyth Co, NC, 12 Jul (Jean Aldrich) and at Cane Creek Park, Union Co, NC, where photographed, 21 Jul (George Andrews) were noteworthy for sites so far outside the coastal plain.

American White Pelican: 65 in flight over the Combahee River near Nemours Plantation in northern Beaufort Co, SC, 16 Jun (Chris Hill) was an unusually high count for the summer period.

Least Bittern: Good numbers were seen at Cedar Island NWR, most along NC-12, Carteret Co, NC, from mid-June to early July, with a high one-day count of 24 bitterns made 28 Jun (John Fussell, et al).

Great Egret: 24 at Archie Elledge WTP (limited access), Forsyth Co, NC, 25 Jul (John Haire) was a good count for that area.



Great Egrets, 19 July 2015, Magnolia Plantation, Charleston Co, SC.
Photo by Ed Blich.

Snowy Egret: Rare inland sightings were made of individuals at Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 17 Jul (Martin Wall); in a cove at the upper end of Lake Norman in Catawba Co, NC, 23 Jul (Dwayne Martin); and in a small wetland along the Catawba River in Mecklenburg Co, NC, 25 Jul (Rob Van Epps).

Little Blue Heron: A few of the higher counts at inland sites were eight at Pee Dee NWR, Anson Co, NC, 8 Jul (Tom Ledford); 31, including one adult, at Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 17 Jul (Martin Wall); eight at Cane Creek Park, Union Co, NC, 21 Jul (George Andrews); and 14, including two adults, in a cove at the upper end of Lake Norman in Catawba Co, NC, 23 Jul into August (Dwayne Martin, Lori Owenby).

Reddish Egret: An immature bird on North Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 30 Jun (Audrey Whitlock) was a good find for that site during the mid-summer.

White Ibis: One at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville Co, SC, 22 Jun (Paul Serridge) was a first for that park.

White-faced Ibis: From the Spring 2015 period, an adult White-faced Ibis was photographed on Raccoon Island, Carteret Co, NC, 15 May (Greg Perry). Considering the date, was this individual attempting to breed in that area?

Roseate Spoonbill: 52 around Hog Island Pond at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area, Colleton Co, SC, 26 Jul (Lewis Burke, et al.) was a good count.

Swallow-tailed Kite: Individuals over farmland in southern Granville Co, NC, 3 Jun (Deck Stapleton) and over Howell Woods, Johnston Co, NC, 9 Jun (Ann Haverstock) were locally unusual. High counts in the area around NC's



Osprey, 17 July 2015, Trout Lake, Blowing Rock, Watauga Co, NC.
Photo by Phil Fowler.

only documented nesting site, along the Cape Fear River near the border of Bladen Co and Columbus Co, included eight on 6 Jun (Scott Winton) and four on 21 Jul (Sam Cooper). One in Yadkinville, Yadkin Co, NC, 27 Jul (Becky Clark, Jane Mahaley) provided the season's first sighting of a post-breeding wanderer in western NC. SC's high count was 70 over agricultural fields in Allendale, Allendale Co, SC, 21 Jul (Natalie Osborne Smith).

Mississippi Kite: Nesting was confirmed in a longleaf pine savannah on Camp Lejeune, Onslow Co, NC, when three adults, one carrying nesting material, were seen in mid-June (John DeLuca). Nesting took place for a second year in a row in a neighborhood in Morehead City, Carteret Co, NC, this summer (Bud Cross, John Fussell, et al.). Three active nests were found around Greensboro, Guilford Co, NC, along with 23 kites, 5 Jul (Elizabeth & Henry Link, Scott DePue). Since an active nest was first documented in 2004, Greensboro continues to be the northern-most breeding site of Mississippi Kites in our region. Charlotte (Mecklenburg County), is currently North Carolina's westernmost breeding site.

Northern Harrier: Harriers evidently bred in the northern part of Carteret Co, NC, this summer. After two, one an adult male, were first seen in the marshes at Cedar Island NWR, 14 Jun, the adult male was seen carrying prey to one of two other birds at that site, 5 Jul (John Fussell, et al.). A first-year bird seen over Raccoon Island, Carteret Co, NC, 10 Jul (Fussell, et al.) was probably raised in that area as well.

Cooper's Hawk: Nesting was confirmed just south of Nags Head Woods, Dare Co, NC, in July. After a juvenile was first heard calling 13 Jul, two juveniles were photographed 31 Jul (Jeff Lewis). This sighting may be the



Northern Harrier, 5 July 2015, Carteret Co, NC.
Photo by Steve Howell.



Limpkin, 28 July 2015, Lake Norman, Catawba Co, NC. Photo by Lori Owenby.

first time breeding by this species has been documented along the NC coast.

Northern Goshawk: From the Winter 2014-2015 period, a first-year goshawk was photographed attempting to prey on Northern Pintails at the Bodie Island Lighthouse Pond, Dare Co, NC, 3 Feb (John Haig). Most remarkable was the fact that this bird was well-photographed, as almost all previous goshawk sightings in the Carolinas have come without photographs.

Limpkin: One seen in a cove at the upper end of Lake Norman in Catawba Co, NC, 28 Jul (Dwayne Martin, et al.) and continuing in a nearby cove in Iredell Co, NC, through 16 Aug (Mike McCloy) provided NC with its fifth record of this tropical vagrant.

Black-necked Stilt: Locally unusual were two at Ft Fisher, New Hanover Co, NC, 6 Jun (Sam Cooper); five on Raccoon Island, Carteret Co, NC, 10 Jul (John Fussell, et al.); and five, including one juvenile, near the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, Carteret Co, NC, 26 Jul (Fussell, et al.).

American Avocet: Two on mudflats at the upper end of Lake Norman in Catawba Co, near its border with Iredell Co, NC, 20 Jul (Monroe Pannell) were good finds inland.

Snowy Plover: One seen at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 1 Jun (Sam Cooper) through 7 Jun (Derb Carter, Ricky Davis) was probably the same individual seen at nearby Rich Inlet, border of New Hanover Co and Pender Co, NC, 27 Jun (Carter).

Wilson's Plover: Suggestive of breeding on the barrier strand southeast of the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, Carteret Co, NC, was an adult making



Snowy Plover, 1 June 2015, New Hanover Co, NC. Photo by Sam Cooper.

distraction displays, 5 Jul (John Fussell, Steve Howell) and an adult seen with a juvenile bird, 17 Jul (Fussell, Howell).

Spotted Sandpiper: Three at Cedar Island NWR, Carteret Co, NC, 28 Jun (John Fussell, et al.) were somewhat early. 21 at Cedar Island NWR, 12 Jul (Fussell, et al.) and 16 at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 14 Jul (Sam Cooper) were good counts for mid-July.

Upland Sandpiper: In the grassy fields around the Wilmington International Airport, New Hanover Co, NC, one was seen 11 Jul, and three were seen 12 Jul (Sam Cooper).

Stilt Sandpiper: One at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, Carteret Co, NC, 5 Jul (John Fussell, et al.) was somewhat early.

Pectoral Sandpiper: One at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal, Carteret Co, NC, 5 Jul (John Fussell, et al.) was somewhat early.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Five at Archie Elledge WTP (limited access), Forsyth Co, NC, 6 Jun (John Haire) were somewhat late.

Wilson's Phalarope: One at Ft Fisher, New Hanover Co, NC, 15 Jun (Greg Massey) was a later spring migrant, while three at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 22 Jul (Steve Calver) were somewhat early fall migrants.

South Polar Skua: On pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, three were seen 4 Jun, and one was seen 13 Jun (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Parasitic Jaeger: From-shore sightings included two, including a dark-morph individual, off of Kill Devil Hills, Dare Co, NC, 3 Jun (Jim Gould)

and one harassing an Osprey off North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 7 Jun (Jamie Adams).

Black-headed Gull: The departure date for the first-summer individual seen at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, in late May and early June, was 7 Jun (Ricky Davis), not 6 Jun as previously reported.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Two at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 14 Jul (Sam Cooper) were unusual for the summer period.

Sooty Tern: One was seen on Bulls Island, Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, 5 Jun (Kathy Greider, David McLean, Jack Rogers). A moribund individual was photographed on the Core Banks in Carteret Co, NC, 26 Jun (Forrest Kraus).

Least Tern: NC and SC high counts were, respectively, 680 at Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, 4 Jul (Mary Austin Smith) and 694 at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, 10 Jul (Steve Calver).

Black-billed Cuckoo: Possibly breeding in the northwestern corner of NC were individuals heard calling along Three Top Rd between Toliver and Woodford, Ashe Co, 29 Jun (Merrill Lynch) and along NC-88 in northern Watauga Co, 3 Jul (Lynch).

Red-cockaded Woodpecker: Two were seen at the same site along Texas Rd in southern Camden Co, NC, 8 Jun (Nick Flanders) where two were seen in July 2013. This area is near the northeastern limit of the species' range.

Peregrine Falcon: One seen over the Elkin & Allegheny Rail-Trail in Surry Co, NC, 14 Jun (Ron Storey) may have attempting to breed in that area.

Alder Flycatcher: Four to six were seen on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, NC, throughout the season (Rick Knight). At least three were seen around Black Balsam Knob, Haywood Co, NC, 15 Jun (Ryan Justice).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One, either a female or immature male, was seen near the upper pond at Dobbins Farm, Anderson Co, SC, 27 Jun (Paul Serridge, et al.).

Tree Swallow: Tree Swallows successfully nested at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, this summer, near the eastern limit of the species' breeding range (Susan Campbell).

Cliff Swallow: Cliff Swallows were not able to build nests on the side of the Hampton Inn, a traditional nesting site, in Havelock, Craven Co, NC, this year, due to daily power-washing of the walls by the staff (John Fussell).

House Wren: Up to two were heard singing in a heavily-wooded yard in Greenville, Pitt Co, NC, somewhat east of the species' traditional breeding range, again this summer (Nick & Veronica Pantelidis).

Marsh Wren: 26, most of which were singing, along NC-12 at Cedar Island NWR, Carteret Co, NC, 19 Jul (John Fussell, et al.) was a good count.

Veery: One at the Archie Elledge WTP (limited access), Forsyth Co, NC, 3 Jun (Carol Cunningham) was somewhat late.

Swainson's Thrush: One heard singing along the BRP just south of Balsam Gap, Buncombe Co, NC, in June (Marilyn Westphal) and 22 Jun (Luke Cannon) may have been attempting to breed in that area.

Hermit Thrush: Possibly breeding in the NC mountains were two around Black Balsam Knob, Haywood Co, 4 Jun (Henry Link); two along the BRP near Balsam Gap, Buncombe Co, 22 Jun (Luke Cannon); and up to four on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, throughout the period (Rick Knight).

Cedar Waxwing: Sightings near the coast included three at North River Game Land, Camden Co, NC, 8 Jun (Nick Flanders); a pair on the campus of UNC-Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, 23-30 Jun (Sam Cooper); and three at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 10 Jul (Jeff Lewis).

Louisiana Waterthrush: One in Asheville, Buncombe Co, NC, 1 Jul (Simon Thompson) was thought to have been an early migrant.

Prothonotary Warbler: 105 at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 1 Jun (Audrey Whitlock) was an impressive concentration.

Swainson's Warbler: Nine on the Dismal Swamp Breeding Bird Survey route in Gates Co, NC, 19 Jun (Nick Flanders, David Hughes) was a good count.

Mourning Warbler: An adult male, presumably the same individual seen at the site last summer, was seen and heard singing along the Art Loeb Trail at Black Balsam Knob, Haywood Co, NC, 4 Jun (Henry Link) through 26 Jun (Mark Vukovich).

Magnolia Warbler: Possibly breeding in the NC mountains were four males on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, 8-23 Jun (Rick Knight) and one seen and heard singing along the BRP in the northwestern corner of Caldwell Co, 18 Jun (Monroe Pannell).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: One seen and heard singing along Black Balsam Rd, Haywood Co, NC, 5 Jun (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal) was suggestive of attempted breeding in that area.

Bachman's Sparrow: One singing individual along Little Rd in the Croatan NF in Craven Co, NC, 1 Jul and 17 Jul (John Fussell) was unusual for that northern portion of the Croatan NF.

Vesper Sparrow: Counts from the northwestern mountains of NC included one or two on Round Bald, Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, 8 Jun through July (Rick Knight); three to five at the bald along Rich Mountain Rd in Watauga Co, 14 Jun (Ryan Justice); and three singing birds at Pond Mountain Game Land, Ashe Co, 18 Jun (Merrill Lynch).

Grasshopper Sparrow: A singing individual at North River Farms (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, 26 Jul (John Fussell, Matthew King, et al.) was unusual for that site during the breeding season.

Seaside Sparrow: Counts of 70, including many juveniles, at two stops along NC-12, Cedar Island NWR, Carteret Co, NC, during the morning of 28

Jun (John Fussell, et al.) and 105 at Cedar Island NWR, 5 Jul (Fussell) were “representative of the abundance of the species in the Cedar Island Marshes.”

Black-headed Grosbeak: From the Spring 2007 period, an apparent adult male Black-headed Grosbeak was photographed at a feeder in Boone, Watauga Co, NC, 11 May 2007 (Steven Bullock). The bird was seen for only a four-hour stretch during the afternoon. Pending approval by the NC Bird Records Committee, this sighting will become the first of this vagrant from the western United States in the mountain region of NC.

Painted Bunting: The territorial male continued at Wilson Educational Forest, Wilson Co, NC, throughout the summer (Ann Brice, m. obs.). Of interest, Ricky Davis notes “the bird was singing an Indigo Bunting song almost exclusively.”

Dickcissel: In the field along Baldwin Rd in northeastern Guilford Co, NC, where the species was found last summer, four birds were counted 11 Jun (Martin Wall). At another site where the species was found last summer, near the intersection of Battleground Rd and Mt Olive Rd, just north of Cowpens, Spartanburg Co, SC, at least two birds were seen 4 Jul (Pam Ford).

Yellow-headed Blackbird: One, either a female or a first-year male, visited a yard in Hobucken, Pamlico Co, NC, where photographed, 14-15 Jun (Teal Sadler).

Red Crossbill: Good numbers were had in the Black Mountains near the border of Buncombe Co and Yancey Co, NC, during the period, with high counts of 55 on 11 Jun and at least 40 on 16 Jul (Marilyn Westphal).

Pine Siskin: One visiting a feeder in Gastonia, Gaston Co, NC, 7 Jun (Steve Tracy) was late for a site outside the mountains.



Painted Bunting, 12 July 2015, Huntington Beach State Park, Georgetown Co, SC.
Photo by Lee Weber.