

The Chat

Vol. 80

SPRING 2016

No. 2



The Quarterly Bulletin of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc.
The Ornithological Society of the Carolinas

THE CHAT

ISSN No. 0009-1987

Vol. 80

SPRING 2016

No. 2

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THE CHAT is published quarterly by the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., 1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh NC 27612. Individual subscription price \$25 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Pinehurst, NC and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE CHAT, Carolina Bird Club, Inc., 9 Quincy Place, Pinehurst NC 28374.

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General Field Notes

General Field Notes briefly report such items as rare sightings, unusual behaviors, significant nesting records, or summaries of such items.

First, second, or third sightings of species in either state must be submitted to the appropriate Bird Records Committee prior to publication in The Chat.

First Record of a Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) for South Carolina

Imtiaz Haque

114 Strode Circle, Clemson, South Carolina 29631

On December 16, 2015, Bunny Goree, an artist and a close friend, found an unusual looking oriole coming to her feeder in Six Mile, South Carolina. It was unlike either of the other orioles, Baltimore (*Icterus galbula*) or Orchard (*Icterus spurius*), she had previously seen. She tried to contact me on December 21, but due to the Christmas holidays was unable to get me until December 28. The bird had since left, but she had taken some fuzzy photos with her iPhone on December 21 that she shared with me. She suspected this was possibly a Scott's Oriole and wanted help confirming her identification.

Ms. Goree had also sent the photos to Phillip Unitt, Curator, Department of Birds and Mammals at San Diego Natural History Museum. Unitt thought that it could possibly be a Scott's Oriole (*Icterus parisorum*) but could not confirm due to the lack of clarity in the pictures. Ms. Goree and I discussed the possibility of this being a Baltimore, Orchard, or Audubon's Oriole (*Icterus graduacauda*) over the phone. However, based on her excellent and detailed descriptions/observations, consultations with the Sibley Guide (Sibley 2000), and discussions about size, shape, and field marks, I concurred with her assessment that this bird was probably a Scott's Oriole, a very unusual sighting in the Carolinas. However, a more definitive identification was needed. This was citizen science at work and Ms. Goree deserves great credit for her excellent observations and persistence.

The bird reappeared on her property on January 1, 2016, at which point Ms. Goree contacted me and I went to Six Mile to see the bird. The bird appeared at her suet feeder at 1:00 pm and remained for over 1.5 hrs. I was located at a distance of approximately 15 ft from the feeder for most of the time the bird was there. I had the opportunity to photograph it (Figures 1 and 2) and clearly identify markings that established it as an adult male Scott's Oriole. The three candidate birds (Audubon's, Baltimore, and Orchard) were firmly ruled out based on the following: It was medium sized, broad-necked bird, larger than an Orchard Oriole with a black beak finely pointed at the end, typical of the

Icterus genus. It had a black head, throat, and chest, with a mottled black and yellow back (a bit unusual) that Ms. Goree describes as a 'brocade'.



Figure 1. Scott's Oriole at feeder - Six Mile, South Carolina. Photograph by Imtiaz Haque.



Figure 2. Scott's Oriole at feeder - showing undertail markings. Photograph by Imtiaz Haque.

The rest of the body was lemon yellow including the under-tail coverts. The wings were black with a white wing bar and a yellow upper epaulet. The outer tail feathers were yellow at the base for half their length and black for the other half. A male Audubon's Oriole has a yellow back and a black tail. A male Baltimore Oriole has a flame orange chest. Females and immature male Baltimore Orioles have yellow-orange breasts, grayish on the head and back, and two bold white wing bars. Adult Orchard Oriole males are black above and reddish-chestnut below. They have a black head and throat. Females are greenish yellow with two white wing bars and no black. Immature males look like females, but have black around the bill and throat.

I contacted Dr. Christopher E. Hill, Biology Department, Coastal Carolina University and chair of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee on January 1, 2016 and submitted photographs of the bird. He concurred with our conclusions based on the photographs I submitted. I also spoke with Dr. Drew Lanham, Professor of Ornithology at Clemson University who was very enthusiastic about the sighting. A record of this sighting was submitted to *ebird.org* and accepted. A report was submitted to the South Carolina Bird Records Committee and was accepted (Record # 2016-001). News of the sighting was made available to the birding community through social media and email, with permission from the homeowner. Ms. Goree was very gracious about opening up her home to birders. Since that time, 55 birders from South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina have seen the bird. The bird was seen every day till January 7 and then sporadically until January 14 at which point it left. The bird was seen again on February 14 and 15 and was not seen since.

The Scott's Oriole is a fairly common and widespread breeding bird in arid lands. It breeds in scattered locations across the southern half of California, Nevada, Utah, western Colorado, southwest Wyoming, Arizona, western and southern New Mexico and trans-Pecos Texas, extending to central Texas and then south into Mexico. Almost all U.S. breeders winter in Mexico but a few are found in southern California (Dunne 2006). Records of Scott's Oriole sightings in the Eastern United States are very sparse. Records exist for Georgia (Boehm and Boehm 2002), Kentucky (Palmer-Ball 2007), Pennsylvania (Johnson 2007), New York (Wilson et al. 2009), and North Carolina (LeGrand et al. 2009). There is no prior record of this species in South Carolina.

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The Distribution, Persistence, and Habitat Associations of Bachman's Sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*) in North Carolina

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Abstract

The primary objective for this study was to develop a comprehensive, high-resolution map of the distribution of Bachman's Sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*) in North Carolina. We reviewed aerial photography within the species' range to identify potential habitat and selected 1,511 locations to survey for sparrows. In addition, we compiled all historical records (prior to 2007) available and resampled these locations ($n=80$) to determine sparrow persistence. Finally, we added an additional 252 locations where suitable habitat was identified in the field for a total of 1,843 potential survey locations. We were able to visit 1,503 of these locations in the field, but only 929 of them (62%) were determined to have habitat suitable to support sparrows. At these 929 points we conducted 8-minute point-count surveys during the breeding seasons of 2012-2014, with and without Bachman's Sparrow song playback. We detected Bachman's Sparrows at 196 of the 929 (21%) surveyed points. Our results indicate this species is largely restricted to several large, fire-maintained pine woodlands in the Sandhills and southern Coastal Plain. We did encounter some birds at sites far from these core areas and in sub-optimal habitat (e.g., young pine stands, fire suppressed stands), but these instances were rare. We detected sparrows at only 9 of the historic locations (11%), strongly suggesting this species' range has continued to contract in recent decades, and it is now absent from the eastern Piedmont outside of the Sandhills. As expected, we observed Bachman's Sparrows presence to be strongly correlated with both recent fire, and moderate to high herbaceous groundcover. However, unlike in other parts of their range, sparrow use of powerline corridors, recent clearcuts, and abandoned fields appears to be rare, despite apparently suitable vegetation conditions. Future restoration and management of Bachman's Sparrow habitat should be focused on augmenting extant populations by creating and maintaining open-canopy conditions in pine-dominated forests and promoting herbaceous cover through the use of prescribed fire.

Introduction

Bachman's Sparrow (*Peucaea aestivalis*), a ground-dwelling sparrow



Bachman's Sparrow, 28 April 2016. Photo by John Carpenter.

endemic to the southeastern United States (Dunning 2006), is closely associated with the dense, herbaceous groundcover typically found in fire-maintained longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) forest, as well as pine savannah and other early successional habitats (Dunning and Watts 1990, Jones et al. 2013). Because of these habitat associations, Bachman's Sparrow often serves as a focal species for studies evaluating management and restoration of longleaf pine ecosystems, along with the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*; Rutledge and Conner 2002, Tucker et al. 2004)

Like many other species associated with fire-maintained herbaceous cover, Bachman's Sparrows have consistently declined over the past several decades across their range, largely in response to habitat loss and degradation in the absence of fire (Dunning 2006). According to the United States Geological Survey Breeding Bird Survey, this species has experienced a range-wide annual decline of 3.1% (95%CI: -4.1, -2.1) since 1966 (Sauer et al. 2012). However, the species' status is classified as "category 2" under the Endangered Species Act, meaning federal protection may be warranted, but insufficient evidence exists for formal designation. Following the extirpation of this species from the state of Virginia in recent decades (Watts pers. comm.), North Carolina harbors the northernmost breeding population. As such, our state currently marks the front lines of the effort to reverse the continued decline and range contraction.

Bachman's Sparrows still can be readily found in North Carolina on large blocks of frequently burned longleaf pine forests such as those on Sandhills Game Lands, Fort Bragg Military Installation, Holly Shelter Game Land, Camp LeJeune Marine Corps Base, and Croatan National Forest (LeGrand 2013), but the species has been observed infrequently away from conservation lands in recent decades (pers. obs.). Virtually all research on this species has

focused on public lands, whereas the distribution on private lands is largely undocumented, (but see Taillie et al. 2015). Previous studies outside North Carolina describe the use of treeless dry prairie (Shriver et al. 1999), clearcuts (Haggerty 1988, Dunning et al. 1995, Watts et al. 1998, Cox pers. comm.), young pine plantations (Haggerty 1998, Watts et al. 1998, Cox pers. comm.), and utility rights-of-way (Dunning et al. 1995) by Bachman's Sparrows; however, but use of these habitats (hereafter referred to as "secondary habitats") in North Carolina have been rare in recent years (pers. obs.). Though Bachman's Sparrows have been observed using several of these secondary habitats in the past in North Carolina, including two singing males in a young longleaf pine clearcut and one singing male in the treeless Rhine-Luzon Drop Zone of Fort Bragg Military Installation (McNair, unpubl. data), the extent to which these habitats are used today remains unclear. In light of the continued conservation concern of longleaf pine forest (Oswalt et al. 2012), as well as a recent proposal to elevate the state-level conservation status of Bachman's Sparrow from "special concern species," to "threatened" (Gerwin et al. 2011), a more comprehensive understanding of this species' distribution and use of secondary habitats on private lands will complement current research on public lands and serve to guide management and restoration of longleaf pine ecosystems state-wide.

Currently, the North Carolina Gap Analysis Project (NCGAP) Vertebrate Predicted Distribution Map is the only source for a comprehensive state-wide distribution of Bachman's Sparrows at a resolution finer than the county level (<http://www.basinc.ncsu.edu/ncgap/sppreport/abpbx91050.html>). Though this map incorporates observations of Bachman's Sparrows to inform the model of predicted occurrence, these observations are both geographically limited and temporally variable (see Methods). This study attempts to refine the NCGAP predicted distribution of Bachman's Sparrows by conducting on-the-ground surveys of sparrows throughout the known range with a focus on privately owned and otherwise under-surveyed lands. Our objectives were to 1) develop a current map of Bachman's Sparrow breeding distribution in NC, 2) assess persistence of the species at sites where they were historically observed, 3) document habitat use, including use of secondary habitats, and 4) model the temporal variation in sparrow detection. To achieve these objectives, we systematically identified and surveyed Bachman's Sparrow habitat across its known range in NC. Our results greatly improve the ability to monitor and manage for Bachman's Sparrows in the future and will aid in the development of a state-wide conservation plan to mitigate, and ultimately reverse, its continued decline.

Field Site Description

We limited our study to the known range of Bachman's Sparrows in North

Carolina as approximated by the NCGAP Vertebrate Predicted Distribution Map. This range included southeastern North Carolina east of the Uwharrie Mountains and parts of northeastern North Carolina in the eastern Piedmont and inner Coastal Plain (Fig. 1). The forested areas of the Sandhills and the southern Coastal Plain are largely comprised of pine-dominated forest, whereas Northern Fall Line forests include pine, hardwood, and mixed-canopy forests. Outside of forested areas, these regions are largely comprised of varying levels of urban development and row crop agriculture.

Methods

We followed a systematic process to generate the most current and comprehensive breeding distribution map of Bachman's Sparrow in NC by 1) resampling historic records to evaluate site persistence, 2) evaluating aerial photography throughout its range to identify potential breeding habitat, and 3) conducting on-the-ground field observations to verify conditions at potential habitat sites and presence of Bachman's Sparrows.

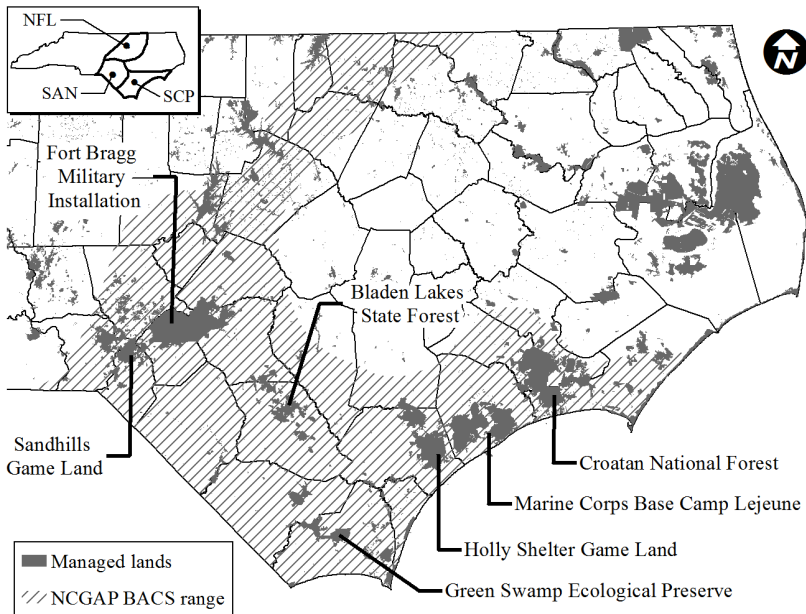


Figure 1. The North Carolina Gap Analysis (NCGAP) Project's estimate Bachman's Sparrow range is shown with the distribution of public lands across the region. The inset map shows the extent of the Northern Fall-line (NFL), Sandhills (SAN), and Southern Coastal Plain (SCP) sub-regions.

Site Selection

As a reference of historical distribution and to evaluate site persistence, we used all available existing breeding season (April – July) records of Bachman’s Sparrows from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and eBird (Sullivan et al. 2009). We resurveyed all observations ($n = 80$) collected prior to the 2007 breeding season, and hereafter refer to these as historical observations.

Because historical observations were limited and derived from localized bird surveys conducted primarily on public lands, we interpreted recent aerial photography and placed additional sampling locations in suitable habitat with an emphasis on private lands. We first divided the known range into a grid of 1,050 USGS quarter quadrangles (hereafter: “quarter-quads”), each with an area of 3,952 ha using ArcGIS™ v.10 (Environmental Systems Research Institute, Redlands, California, USA). At a scale of 1:10,000 to 1:16,000, we examined every quarter-quad in the Sandhills and Southern Coastal Plain regions (excluding Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and portions of Holly Shelter, Sandhills Game Lands, and Croatan National Forest, which were concurrently surveyed as part of other research projects; Fig. 1). We randomly selected 25% of the total quarter quads in the Northern Fall Line region to review because the likelihood of encountering a sparrow in this region is currently low (LeGrand 2013). For the purposes of this study, we focused our effort largely on identifying open pine woodlands; however, we did evaluate clearcuts and abandoned fields >50 acres, and powerline habitats >50 m wide if present within a matrix of apparent open pine habitat to determine if Bachman’s Sparrows were also using these habitat types in NC. We placed a maximum of 16 points per quarter-quad while ensuring a minimum distance of 500 m between points. To facilitate access, 27% of the total selected points were situated <50 m from a paved road. Using this approach, we generated a total of 1,511 points: 1,250 in open pine habitat, 202 in clearcuts/abandoned fields, and 59 in powerline corridors.

We obtained permission to survey all points on public lands and properties owned by private conservation organizations (e.g. The Nature Conservancy). Permission to access survey locations on private property was solicited from 298 landowners using a combination of letter requests, phone calls, and emails. We received permission from 146 landowners (49%), were denied permission by 30 landowners (10%), and received no response from 122 landowners (41%). We were unable to survey 28 points on private land for which we were granted permission (19%) because of logistical constraints.

We ground-truthed each of the 1,511 points to verify the existence of suitable Bachman’s Sparrow habitat, and to also locate additional habitat not identified

during investigation of aerial imagery. While conducting field surveys, we added survey points in the field if we encountered suitable Bachman's Sparrow habitat >500 m away from any existing survey point. We defined suitable as occurring within a minimum 2-ha patch of contiguous habitat comprised of >20% cover of native herbaceous vegetation (i.e. bunch grasses, forbs, etc.) with a sparse midstory. Points failing to meet these criteria were not surveyed for sparrows, and the reason for rejection was recorded, including closed canopy, dense midstory, conversion to other land use, or recent disturbance (e.g., controlled burn within the past 1-3 months). In summary, we generated a total of 1,843 survey points to potentially survey for Bachman's Sparrows: 1,511 via aerial imagery, 252 while in the field, and 80 based on historical observations.

Sparrow Surveys

Points were surveyed for sparrows using an infinite-radius point-count protocol during the months of April and May in 2012-2014, within 4.5 hr of sunrise on mornings without precipitation or excessive wind. At points that met the criteria for suitable habitat, the observer conducted a "passive" 4-min point-count survey, recording the estimated distance and direction to all detected Bachman's Sparrows, as well as the habitat type in which they were found: open longleaf pine forest, open forest of other pine species (*Pinus spp.*), fallow field, powerline corridor, clearcut and young (<10 years) pine plantations, or other. Immediately following the passive survey period, an additional 4-minute point-count (hereafter referred to as the "active survey period") was conducted while concurrently broadcasting a recorded Bachman's Sparrow vocalization. This recording consisted of short segments of a vocalizing sparrow interspersed by periods of silence to facilitate listening, and vocalizations included the traditional breeding song, aggressive chip notes, and a more excited song.

Distribution Mapping

For distribution mapping purposes, we included all available breeding season observations of Bachman's Sparrows not classified as historic (i.e., from 2007 and later; see Site Selection above), all sparrows detected during point counts, as well as all sparrows detected outside of the formal 8-min point-count period. Additionally, we included observations from concurrent investigations of Bachman's Sparrows on public lands, including parts of the Onslow Bight region (Walters 2009, Taillie et al. 2015), and portions of Holly Shelter and Sandhills Game Lands (NCWRC, unpublished data). To categorize our results according to ownership, we used the "managed areas" layer from the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program (<http://www.ncnhp>).

org/web/nhp/managed-areas), which includes properties owned by federal, state, and local governments, as well as private lands managed by conservation organizations (e.g., The Nature Conservancy) and properties associated with easements and other conservation programs, such as Safe Harbor. All points outside of the “managed areas” are privately owned and not associated with long-term conservation programs.

Detection Modeling

To investigate temporal variation in the detection of Bachman’s Sparrows, we modeled detection using only data collected during our point-count surveys in an occupancy model framework using the “Unmarked” package in R (Fiske and Chandler 2011, R Development Core Team 2014). Because we surveyed the vast majority of sites only once, we treated the entire 3-yr period as a closed “season.” We acknowledge that this method likely violates the closure assumption for single-season models, particularly for species associated with ephemeral vegetation conditions. However, given the effort required to survey such a large number of points and coordinate with hundreds of landowners, surveying all sites in one season was not possible. Nonetheless, we believe our results are informative at large spatial scales.

We treated the passive and active survey periods as 2 independent survey periods in order to estimate detection probability. Thus, we only included points that were surveyed for sparrows, and not those that were rejected due to insufficient habitat. We then added both linear and quadratic effects of date and time of survey as covariates on detection. Lastly, we included a binary categorical variable to distinguish between the active and passive survey periods.

Results

We investigated a total of 714 quarter-quads in the Sandhills and Southern Coastal Plain and 89 in the Northern Fall Line and visited 1,503 of the 1,843 (82%) total survey points. At the points we visited, we conducted point-counts at the 929 points that met our minimum suitability criteria (Fig. 2) and rejected the 574 points that did not. Of the points that were rejected for insufficient habitat, 28% had closed canopy, 59% had dense midstory, 6% had recent ground disturbance (e.g. tilling, recent fire), and 5% were converted to another land use.

Detection

According to our modeling results, a linear effect of date, a quadratic effect of time of survey, and the use of playback were significant predictors

of Bachman's Sparrow detection ($p < 0.05$; Table 1). In early to mid-April, when the majority of our surveys were conducted, the estimated probability of detecting a sparrow was close to 1 for both passive and active sampling periods. However, as the breeding season progressed, the probability of detecting a sparrow decreased in both sampling periods, though it decreased less during the active period (Fig. 3). As for time of day, we observed peak detection rates around 0800-0900 with detection decreasing towards the early and late morning; however, the window of peak detection was wider (0700-1000) during the active sampling period. Overall, an estimated detection probability of < 0.2 was observed later in the season and later in the morning for passive sampling, but detection was never < 0.4 for active sampling.

Distribution

Bachman's sparrows were detected at 196 of the 929 (21%) points we surveyed, or 196 of the 1,503 (13%) of the total number of points we visited.

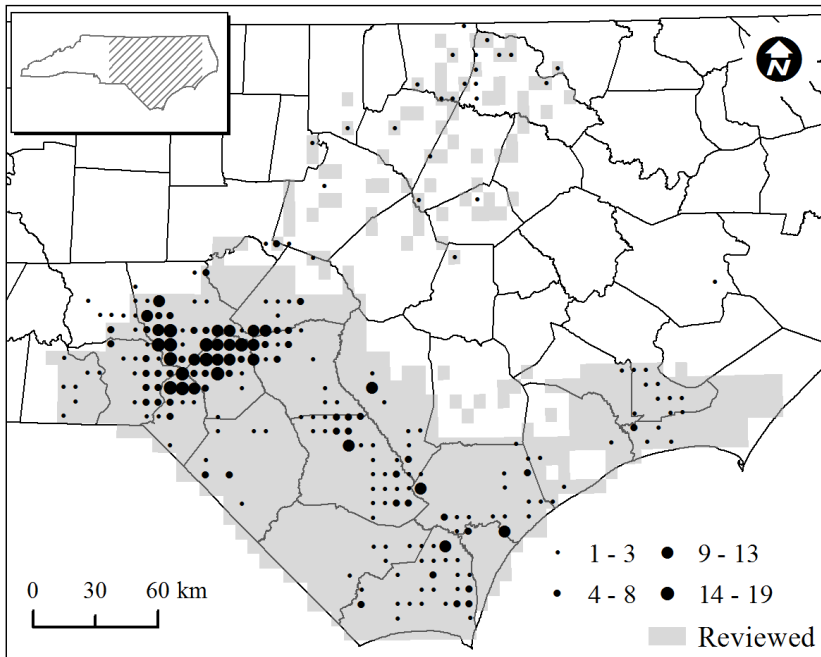


Figure 2. The shaded areas show the USGS quarter-quads for which the most recent aerial imagery was reviewed for potential habitat. If potential habitat was identified in the quarter-quad, a circle is shown in the middle of the quarter-quad to represent the number of points selected in that quarter-quad to survey for Bachman's Sparrows.

However, this naïve occupancy rate was adjusted to an estimated occupancy of 23% after accounting for imperfect detection using our model (Table 1). Only 36 of the 196 (18%) points where sparrows were detected were on private lands. Sparrows were detected mostly on and adjacent to publicly owned properties in the Sandhills and the Southern Coastal Plain that are managed for longleaf pine (Fig. 3). These two regions are separated by the Bladen Lakes area where fewer sparrows were detected despite the presence of small to moderate-sized patches of apparently suitable habitat. No sparrows were detected in the eastern Piedmont region north of the Fort Bragg Military Installation. We detected sparrows at only 9 of the 80 sites (11%) selected based on historic records. Of the 71 historic sites where sparrows were not detected, at least 24 (34%) no longer had suitable habitat (Fig. 4). At 27 of the 71 historic points, we detected a sparrow within 3 km of the historic record, but at the remaining 44 points (55%), no sparrows were detected within the estimated dispersal distance for Bachman’s Sparrow (3 km; Cox and Jones 2007, Taillie et al. 2015).

Habitat

The great majority of the sparrows we detected were found in stands of open-canopy pine forest with evidence of recent fire on publicly owned properties.

Model	Variable Name	Variable Type	Mean	SE	P-value
Detection	Intercept		-0.41	0.31	0.18
	Date ^a	continuous	-0.85	0.18	<0.001
	Date ^b	continuous	0.16	0.17	0.33
	Time ^b	continuous	0.03	0.16	0.86
	Time ²	continuous	-0.34	0.15	0.02
	Type ^c	categorical	1.84	0.31	<0.001
Occupancy	Intercept		-1.18	.124	<0.001

Table 1. Parameter estimates (on logit scale), standard errors, and p-values for covariates included in our occupancy model.

^aDate of survey

^bTime of day

^cIndicator variable for passive vs. active survey (passive is reference level)

Of the 293 Bachman's Sparrow observations, 278 (95%) were in mature longleaf pine woodland, 12 (4%) were found in open canopy stands of other pine species, one was detected on the edge between a clearcut and a mature longleaf stand, and two were in recently burned, young pine plantations. No sparrows were observed in fallow agricultural fields or utility rights-of-way.

At 88% of the sites we surveyed where at least one Bachman's Sparrow was detected, we observed evidence that the site was recently burned, i.e. trees were scorched, shrubs were dead, or wiregrass was flowering. The exceptions included sparrows detected in recently thinned pine woodlands, including "residential thinnings" conducted in woodlands in preparation for new home construction. An additional 11 points with sparrows had evidence of fire but it was not considered to be recent (i.e. in the last 4 years or less). Finally, over 80% of the sites where sparrows were detected were found on properties identified by the NCNHP as managed for some degree of conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem function.

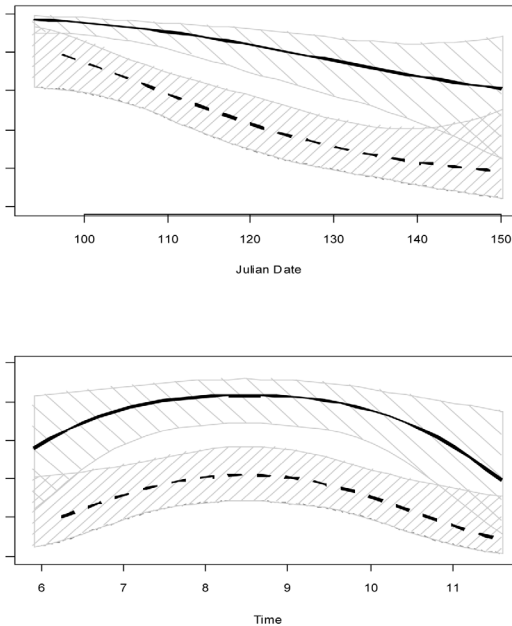


Figure 3. The predicted probability of detecting Bachman's Sparrow in North Carolina (2012-2014), shown as a function of date (a) and time of day (b), both before (dashed line) and after playback (solid line), with associated 95% CI (shaded regions)

Discussion

Bachman's Sparrows have a much narrower distribution than that suggested by the NCGAP predicted distribution, and more closely reflects the general pattern of many sensitive species associated with the longleaf pine community (Humphries and Sisson 2012, Beane et al. 2014). The Sandhills region contains the most contiguous habitat, specifically the frequently burned, open-canopy longleaf forests of Fort Bragg and Sandhills Game Land, and virtually all suitable habitat on and adjacent to these public properties was found to support sparrows. In addition, sparrows were found throughout the Southern Coastal Plain but were primarily concentrated on or near large, frequently burned properties such as Croatan National Forest, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Holly Shelter Game Land, and the Green Swamp Preserve. In these "core areas" continued efforts to maintain fire return intervals <4 yr, promote herbaceous ground cover, and restore fire-suppressed forests will help to maintain and expand extant Bachman's Sparrow populations. Similarly, more widespread use of prescribed fire as a forest management tool on

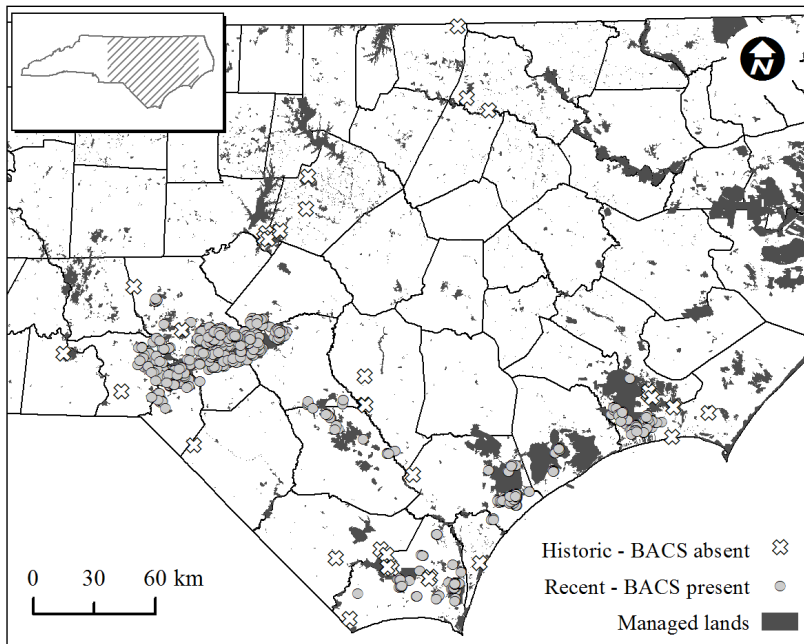


Figure 4. The distribution of recent Bachman's Sparrow observations from this study, Walters et al. (2009) and Taillie et al. (2015) as well as historical observations (prior to 2007) where sparrows were not found to persist.

adjacent private lands would likely benefit Bachman's Sparrow populations. Unfortunately, the logistics associated with burning continue to limit the extent of prescribed burning on private lands, despite various incentive programs that promote longleaf pine restoration (Alavalapti et al. 2002, Moorman et al. 2004).

Unlike in other parts of their range further south, use of secondary habitats such as clearcuts, fallow fields, and powerline rights-of-way is North Carolina. At this northeastern edge of their current range, Bachman's Sparrow productivity and survival may be more limited than at the core of their range farther south. North Carolina populations may therefore be at or below carrying capacity and without a surplus of individuals who are forced into less ideal, secondary habitats. Alternatively, timber management practices, such as site preparation, herbicide use, or tree spacing in NC may be affecting vegetation conditions in clearcuts and re-growing pine plantations. A more thorough quantification of regional differences in the vegetation conditions of clearcuts and re-growing pine plantations and their relationship to Bachman's Sparrow habitat use is needed in order to determine the mechanism behind this pattern. Though many of the recent clearcuts and fallow fields we surveyed had substantial herbaceous cover, both plant and bird species composition in these secondary habitats were different from the fire-maintained longleaf pine stands where Bachman's Sparrows were found, possibly resulting from management practices that disturb the soil such as disking and roller-chopping (Rutledge and Conner 2002). Finally, the duration of suitability of clearcuts and young pine plantations may be too short to support long-term persistence of sparrows (Watts et al. 1998). Given the extensive area of industrial timber operations across the study area, clearcuts and young pine plantations have tremendous potential to support populations of sparrows, if they are regularly thinned and managed with fire to promote abundant and diverse herbaceous vegetation (Tucker et al. 2004, Stober and Krementz 2006). Consideration of the mechanisms behind why these secondary habitats go unused is requisite to developing state-specific management goals for this species, and ultimately mitigating their decline.

The scarcity of sparrows outside the "core areas," despite the availability of apparently suitable habitat, suggests additional factors may be contributing to the decline of Bachman's Sparrows. For example, Bladen Lakes State Forest and surrounding areas supported fewer sparrows than expected, perhaps because the habitat patches in this area appear to be smaller, fragmented, and more isolated from each other relative to the "core areas." In addition to the historical sites we visited, a more recent study of Bachman's Sparrows using repeated visits confirmed our finding that few sparrows persist in the Bladen Lakes area (J. M. Winiarski, pers. comm.). Taillie et al. (2015) observed that the probability of sparrow occupancy decreased markedly when the amount of potential habitat within 3 km was less than ~500 ha. Thus, the landscape scale

distribution of habitat is likely a contributing factor to the observed patterns in habitat use.

In order to identify the mechanisms driving the observed patterns of habitat use by Bachman's Sparrows, future monitoring efforts should focus on investigating the temporal dynamics of sparrow populations in these occasionally-used, isolated sites. Ideally, these survey efforts would track individuals and occur over several consecutive years. However, for less intensive surveys, i.e. those not accounting for variable detection probability, focusing effort in the early breeding season (April – May), during the early to mid-morning, and incorporating the use of playback without a passive listening period will help to maximize detection of sparrows.

The private landowners involved with this study whose property supported Bachman's Sparrows had varying land management objectives, but many had an interest in managing their land for Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*). As such, partnering with quail restoration efforts could be an effective strategy to promote Bachman's Sparrow habitat on private lands. Many of the private properties supporting Bachman's Sparrows in the Sandhills region are enrolled in the Safe Harbor program for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, suggesting that this program provides benefits for multiples species associated with longleaf pine. Future longleaf pine restoration efforts on private lands will need to find ways to incorporate prescribed fire while considering the management objectives and financial concerns of private landowners and industrial timber operations if functioning longleaf pine ecosystems are to be conserved outside of public lands.

Acknowledgments

This study would not have been possible without volunteers, field technicians, and individuals who helped secure permission to access survey points and collect data, including B. Beck, R. Bollinger, K. Brust, G. Coll, K. Cook, R. Elting, L. Fogo, J. Goodson, E. Gruber, N. Handle, K. Johnson, A. Lawrence, B. Massa, S. Miller, M. Nicossia, J. Schillaci, M. Sisson, N. Shepherd, B. Strobe, and M. Wallgren. In addition, we would like to thank The Nature Conservancy, Fort Bragg Military Installation, and the many private landowners that granted us permission to conduct surveys on their land, A. Fish and J. Winiarski from North Carolina State University for providing supplementary observation data of Bachman's Sparrows, and J. A. Cox and D. B. McNair for providing additional expertise and historical context. Finally, we thank D. B. McNair for several reviews of the manuscript. This study was initiated and coordinated by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and funding was provided by State Wildlife Grants, Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration, and the North Carolina Non-Game and Endangered Species fund.

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BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Winter 2015-2016, 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.

<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: **BRC** – Bird Records Committee, **CBC** – Christmas Bird Count, **Co** – County, **Dr** – Drive, **et al.** – and others, **Ft** – Fort, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NF** – National Forest, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **WMA** – Wildlife Management Area, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

Greater White-fronted Goose: 18 in the Mulberry Fields along the Yadkin River Greenway in North Wilkesboro, Wilkes Co, NC, 16 Feb (Issac Kerns) through the end of the period (m. obs.) was a great count. Up to two were seen in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, 11 Dec (Steve McInnis) through 7 Feb (Irvin Pitts). Individuals were seen at South Cove County Park, Oconee Co, SC, 4 Dec through 5 Feb (Stephen Schutt, m. obs.); at Lake Hills, Forsyth Co, NC, 6-7 Dec (Cynthia Donaldson, m. obs.); at Buffalo Lake, Guilford Co, NC, 5 Jan (Lou Skrabec); at the Simpson Experiment Station, Anderson Co, SC, 23 Jan (Linda Montgomery); on the campus of Charleston Southern University, Charleston Co, SC, 23 Jan through 11 Feb (Pam Ford, m. obs.); at Cane Creek Reservoir, Orange Co, NC, 3-4 Feb (Jan Hansen, m. obs.); and at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 6 Feb (Allen Hurlbert, et al.).

Snow Goose: Sightings of Snow Geese in the western half of our region have increased in recent years. This winter, those sightings included one on Osceola Lake, Henderson Co, NC, 5 Dec (Jennifer Donsky) intermittently through 23 Feb (Aaron Steed); one on Rankin Lake, Gaston Co, NC, 8-10 Dec (John Woodward, m. obs.); two at Silver Creek Plantation, Burke Co, NC, 10-16 Dec (Joy Lanier, m. obs.); one in Devotion, Surry Co, NC, 13 Dec (*fide* Royce Hough); four along Foster Estate Dr in Buncombe Co, NC, 20 Dec (Doug Johnston); one around Charles D. Owen Park in Buncombe Co, NC, 29 Dec through 3 Jan (Jay Wherley, m. obs.); two in Brevard, Transylvania Co, NC, 1 Jan (Jerry Griggs); one at the Clemson Aquaculture Facility, Pickens Co, SC, 8 Jan (Tom Austin); one amongst Canada Geese along Hanes Mill Rd in Forsyth Co, NC, 19-25 Jan (Rob Rogers, m. obs.); one at Swann WTP, Forsyth Co, NC, 24 Jan (John Haire, et al.) and 20 Feb (Shelley Rutkin); two along the Yadkin River Greenway in Wilkes Co, NC, 3-16 Feb (Issac Kerns, m. obs.); one at Dobbins Farm, Anderson Co, SC, 13 Feb (Drew Lanham); one in Eden, Rockingham Co, NC, 20-28 Feb (Marty Wall); and one photographed along Beech Mountain Rd in Avery Co, NC, 20 Feb (Chloe Burdick). Also noteworthy was the flock of up to 48 were seen in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, December through mid-February (m. obs.).

Ross's Goose: Sightings of this small goose continue to increase in our region. This winter, sightings included five on a pond in eastern Alexander Co, NC, 6 Dec (Dwayne Martin); one around the campus of Guilford College, Guilford Co, NC, 10-12 Dec (Ron Morris, m. obs.); one on Stroud Lake, Transylvania Co, NC, 11 Dec (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey); one at The Coves Golf Club in Caldwell Co, NC, 11 Dec (Walt Kent, Martin); one in Elkin, Surry Co, NC, 13 Dec (Brian Ratledge) and 14 Dec (Derek Hudgins); one at the pond where US-64 crosses Beasley Rd in Washington Co, NC, 27-28 Dec (Jeff Beane, Ryan Justice, m. obs.); one in the area around Charles D. Owen Park, Buncombe Co, NC, 29 Dec (Jay Wherley) through 3 Jan (Clifton Avery); four at the eastern end of Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 29 Dec (Derb Carter, Harry LeGrand); on at Swann WTP, Forsyth Co, NC, 30

Dec (Teresa Edwards); two at the pond on Beasley Rd, 30 Dec through 2 Jan (m. obs.); six in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR, border of Hyde Co and Washington Co, NC, 30 Dec (Lucas Bobay); one around Brevard, Transylvania Co, NC, 1 Jan (Jerry Griggs) though 8 Feb (William Byler); one on Lake Junaluska, Haywood Co, NC, 21 Jan (Connie & Stan Wulkowicz, Bob Olthoff) through 25 Jan (Kirk Gardner); one on Crowfield Plantation Lake, Berkley Co, SC, 24 Jan (Kristen Oliver) through 30 Jan (Caroline Eastman); one on Rankin Lake, Gaston Co, NC, 11 Feb (Lee Weber) through 15 Feb (Steve Tracy); one on Bridge Pond, Georgetown Co, SC, 12 Feb (Bill Clary); one near Green Pond, Colleton Co, SC, 8 Feb (Darryl Wilcox) through 18 Feb (Cherrie Sneed); two at the Simpson Research Station, Anderson Co, SC, 14 Feb (Linda Montgomery); two between Kure Beach and Fort Fisher, New Hanover Co, NC, 14-15 Feb (Bruce Smithson, m. obs.); two on Ecusta Pond, Transylvania Co, NC, 20-21 Feb (Griggs); one along River Ridge Rd in Guilford Co, NC, 28-29 Feb (Matt Wangerin, m. obs.); and one at the Biltmore Estate, Buncombe Co, NC, 28-29 Feb (Denise Hargrove, m. obs.).

Brant: One in Georgetown Co, SC, during the Winyah Bay CBC, 17 Dec (*vide* Lex Glover) was a great find for that area. Four at the northern end of Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 20 Feb (Andrew Thornton) were somewhat unusual. 565 on the Pamlico Sound near Hatteras Inlet, Dare Co, NC, 27 Dec (Ned Brinkley) was our region's high count.

Cackling Goose: Up to five were seen around Wilkesboro, Wilkes Co, NC, during the latter half of the period—one in the Woodfield neighborhood, 9



Trumpeter Swan, 02 Jan 2016, Hyde Co, NC. Photo by Jeff Beane.

Jan (Dwayne Martin); three along the Yadkin River Greenway, 16 Feb (Issac Kerns); and five at Wilkes Community College and other nearby sites, 17 Feb (Martin, Guy McGrane) through 22 Feb (m. obs.). Other sightings, all made in NC, included one at Lake Hills, Forsyth Co, 7 Dec (David & Susan Disher, Cynthia Donaldson, John Haire, Derek Hudgins); one at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, 13 Dec (Lynn Erla Beegle, Harry LeGrand, Jan Mouro); one near the pond where US-64 crosses Beasley Rd in Washington Co, 28 Dec (Derb Carter, LeGrand, m. obs.); and four at the same site, 19 Feb (Lucas Bobay, Ed Corey, et al.).

Trumpeter Swan: Two were seen at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 20 Dec (Karen Lebing, Keith Ramos) into early January (m. obs.), with one remaining until 9 Jan (Mandy & Phil Cumming).

Tundra Swan: Farther inland than typical for the species was one along Howerton Rd in Guilford Co, NC, 6-18 Jan (Lou Skrabec, m. obs.); one at Beaver Lake, Buncombe Co, NC, 12 Jan (Simon Thompson, et al.) through 18 Feb (Diane Lombardi); seven in the Sullivan Impoundment at Pee Dee NWR, Anson Co, NC, 19-20 Jan (Will Stuart); three at Lake Wheeler, Wake Co, NC, 8 Feb (Lucas Bobay, m. obs.); three at Pee Dee NWR, 20 Feb (Cara & Tony Woods, et al.); and five on Lake Hickory, Catawba Co, NC, 29 Feb (Dwayne Martin, Lori Owenby). Tundra Swans were found in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, 19 Dec (Jessica Porter) through 4 Feb (Diane Lombardi), with a high count of 16 there 29 Jan (Kevin DeBoer). 134 at Bear Island NWR, Colleton Co, SC, 17 Feb (David McLean, David Youngblood) was an impressive count for the southern portion of our coast. 38798 on the Pettigrew SP CBC, 30 Dec (*fide* Charlotte Davis) was, by far, the highest count on any Audubon CBC this year.

Eurasian Wigeon: Individual drakes were seen on South Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 4 Dec (Jeff Phippen) through 12 Dec (Harry LeGrand); at Yawkey Wildlife Center (restricted access), Georgetown Co, SC, during the Winyah Bay CBC, 17 Dec (Lewis Burke, et al.); at Tibwin Plantation, Charleston Co, SC, during the McClellanville CBC, 20 Dec (Craig Watson, et al.); at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 29 Dec (Mike McCloy) through 28 Feb (David Howell); on Bulls Island, Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, 30 Jan through 12 Feb (David McLean, et al.); and at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 1 Feb (Ron Clark).

Northern Pintail: Eight at the WTP along NC-191 in Henderson Co, NC, 2 Dec (Wayne Forsythe) was a good count for the mountains.

Redhead: 18000 at Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, during the Bodie-Pea Island CBC, 28 Dec (Jeff Lewis) was a remarkable count and the fourth highest on any Audubon CBC this year. Some of the higher counts from the western portion of our region were 62 along Stamey Valley Rd in Greenville Co, SC, 14 Feb (Simon Harvey); 68 on Lake Hartwell off Clemson, Pickens Co, SC, 19 Feb (Kevin Kubach); 30 on Lake Junaluska, Haywood Co, NC, 22

Feb (Kirk Gardner); and 35 at the WTP along NC-191 in Henderson Co, NC, 29 Feb (Marilyn Westphal).

Ring-necked Duck: 5,500 at Singletary Lake SP, Bladen Co, NC, 27 Dec (Sam Cooper) was a noteworthy count.

Greater Scaup: 75 on Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 27 Feb (Harry LeGrand) was a remarkable number for the Piedmont region.

Common Eider: Individuals were seen off Jennette's Pier, Dare Co, NC, a hen, 19 Dec (Jamie Adams) through 27 Dec (m. obs.); off Carolina Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, a hen, 19 Dec (Sam Cooper); and at Murrells Inlet, Georgetown Co, SC, a first-year drake, 27 Feb (Stefan Martin) into March (m. obs.).

Black Scoter: Individual hens photographed on Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 3 Dec (Henry Link, m. obs.) and Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 4 Dec (Mark Anthony) were good finds for those inland lakes.

Long-tailed Duck: Inland sightings included a first-winter hen photographed on Falls Lake in Durham Co, NC, 20 Dec (Brian Bockhahn, Kyle Kittelberger, Paul Scharf); two, a drake and a hen, in the Ledge Creek arm of Falls Lake, Wake Co, NC, 4 Jan (Brian Bockhahn); and a hen on Lake Hickory, Caldwell Co, NC, 13 Jan (Dwayne Martin). An adult hen seen and photographed off Kiawah Island, Charleston Co, SC, 27 Jan (Juliana Smith) through 16 Feb (m. obs.) was the southern-most sighting made in our region.

Common Goldeneye: Sightings included a hen on South Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 28 Dec through 8 Jan (m. obs.); a drake on Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 3-19 Jan (Wayne Forsythe, Ron Selvey, m. obs.); a hen on Mullet Pond at Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 17 Jan (Ron Morris) through 17 Feb (m. obs.); a hen on Ray's Mill Pond, Moore Co, NC, 30 Jan into March (Alicia Jackson); a hen at the WTP along NC-191 in Henderson Co, NC, 1-9 Feb (Forsythe); two hens at Riverbend Park, Catawba Co, NC, 2-18 Feb (Dwayne Martin, m. obs.); a drake on the north campus of Wake Tech, Wake Co, NC, 3-13 Feb (Lucas Bobay, Mailiis Law, m. obs.); two hens along Woodfield Way in Wilkes Co, NC, 6-26 Feb (Issac Kerns, m. obs.); a hen on Grogan Lake, Rockingham Co, NC, 14 Feb (Marty Wall); and a hen at Patriot's Point, Charleston Co, SC, 16-28 Feb (Carl Miller, m. obs.).

Common Merganser: As usual, our region's high count was made at Lake Phelps, Washington Co, NC, with 300 on 7 Jan (Audrey Whitlock). Locally unusual were individuals on South Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, a hen, 4 Dec (Lucas Bobay, et al.) through 7 Jan (Peggy Eubank); on the south end of Pawleys Island, Georgetown Co, SC, a hen, 11 Jan (Mayn Hipp) into March (m. obs.); and at Swann WTP, Forsyth Co, NC, a drake, 23 Feb (John Haire, et al.).

Red-breasted Merganser: A few of the higher counts made on inland lakes were 28 on Lake Hickory in Alexander Co, NC, 1 Dec (Dwayne Martin, Lori Owenby); 17 on Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 2 Dec (Mike Stewart, et

al.); 15 at Arcadia Farms in Orangeburg Co, SC, 8 Dec (Julie Mobley); and 20 on Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 23 Dec (Kirk Gardner).

Ruddy Duck: 1000 at the Goldsboro WTP, Wayne Co, NC, 21 Jan (Sam Cooper) was a noteworthy count.

Red-throated Loon: 3751 in Dare Co, NC, during the Kitty Hawk CBC, 19 Dec (*fide* Jeff Lewis) was the second highest count on any Audubon CBC this year. An individual on Monticello Reservoir in Fairfield Co, SC, 23 Dec (Bob Wood, et al.) was the only one found on an inland lake in the Carolinas this winter.

Pacific Loon: Three amongst Common Loons off Figure Eight Island, New Hanover Co, NC, 12 Dec (Derb Carter) was a nice concentration. Also in New Hanover Co were individuals off Oceanic Pier, 2 Jan (Carter, Ricky Davis, Harry LeGrand, Jeff Phippen) and Johnnie Mercer's Pier, 2 Jan (Jan Hansen) through 15 Jan (David Weesner). One was well-photographed off the rock groin at the north end of Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 31 Dec (Alan MacEachren, Jeff Lewis).

Horned Grebe: A few of the higher counts at sites away from the coast were 25 on Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 1 Dec (Wayne Forsythe); 62 on Lake Hartwell, Pickens Co, SC, 10 Dec (Kevin Kubach); 100 on Falls Lake in Durham Co, NC, 20 Dec (Kyle Kittelberger); 150 on Monticello Reservoir, Fairfield Co, SC, 23 Dec (Bob Wood, et al.); and 47 on Oak Hollow Lake, Guilford Co, NC, 27 Jan (Andrew Thornton).

Red-necked Grebe: Sightings, down from the past couple of winters, included one on Falls Lake in Durham Co, NC, 3 Dec (Kyle Kittelberger) through 9 Dec (Harry LeGrand); two in flight off Jennette's Pier, Dare Co, NC,



Common Merganser, 16 Jan 2016, Pawley's Island, SC. Photo by Pam Ford.

4 Dec (Jeff Phippen); one on Lake Benson, Wake Co, NC, during the Raleigh CBC, 19 Dec (Brian Bockhahn, Kittelberger); one on the Harbor River in Beaufort Co, SC, 12 Feb (Chris Marsh, et al.); and one at Diamond Shoals off Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, during a pelagic trip, 14 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Eared Grebe: Individuals were seen on South Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 4 Dec (Jeff Phippen) through 6 Dec (Ricky Davis) and on the Salt Pond at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 24 Dec (Frederic Hareau).

Western Grebe: Sightings, all made in SC, included one off Pawleys Island, Georgetown Co, 30 Dec (Wendy Allen) though 3 Jan (m. obs.); one off Bulls Island, Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, 3 Jan (Starr Hazard, William Christenson, David McLean, et al.); two at Botany Bay Plantation WMA, Charleston Co, 27 Jan (David Youngblood); and one continuing at Botany Bay Plantation WMA, 30 Jan (Andy Harrison) through 1 Feb (m. obs.).

Northern Fulmar: This cold-water tubenose was found on all four pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, this winter, with 66 on 6 Feb; eight on 14 Feb; 32 on 20 Feb; and four on 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Black-capped Petrel: One seen near Diamond Shoals during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 6 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.) was unusual away from the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream.

Sooty Shearwater: One seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co,



Western Grebe, 27 Jan 2016, Botany Bay Plantation WMA, SC.
Photo by David Youngblood.

NC, 6 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.) was unusual for the winter season.

Manx Shearwater: This species was found on three of the four pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, this winter, with two on 6 Feb, and individuals 20 Feb and 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Wood Stork: One seen along River North Dr in Aiken Co, SC, 13-21 Feb (Bill Grigsby, Eric Haskell, m. obs.) was unusual for a site away from the coast in winter. 136 in Beaufort Co, SC, during the Lowcountry CBC, 20 Dec (*fide* Buddy Campbell) was a record number for that count.

Great Cormorant: Sightings included up to six at Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, from late December into March (m. obs.); one off Folly Beach, Charleston Co, SC, 19 Jan (Chris Snook); at least one at Oregon Inlet, Dare Co, NC, in early February (m. obs.); three on the jetty at Cape Lookout, Carteret Co, NC, 27 Feb (Keith Rittmaster, Josh Summers); and two at Hatteras Inlet, Dare Co, NC, 27 Feb (Ned Brinkley).

Anhinga: Sightings away from the coast included up to eight at Brick Pond Park, Aiken Co, SC, throughout the period (Kathy Steele); 18 in Clarendon Co, SC, during the Santee NWR CBC, 22 Dec (*fide* Irvin Pitts); and three in Pitt Co, NC, during the Greenville CBC, 2 Jan (*fide* Veronica Pantelidis).

American White Pelican: 250 at the St Stephen dam in Berkeley Co, SC, 24 Feb (Kevin Kubach) was our region's high count. High counts at traditional wintering sites along the coast included 125 at Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 28 Dec (Phi Doerr, et al.); 77 at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 31 Dec (Steve Calver); 58 at Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 29 Jan (Irvin Pitts); 83 at Donnelley WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 31 Jan (Buddy Campbell); 200 at Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, 6 Feb (Matthew Janson, Martina Nordstrand); and 155 at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 15 Feb (Chris Marsh). Locally unusual were 30 at the Rachel Carson Reserve, Carteret Co, NC, 1 Dec (John Fussell); 25 at the catfish ponds along US-64 in Creswell, Washington Co, NC, 1 Feb (Matthew King); 23 at Glenburnie Quarry (restricted access) Craven Co, NC, 2 Feb (Al Gamache); seven at Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 20 Feb (*fide* Bob Rybczynski); and four on Lake Benson, Wake Co, NC, where photographed, 28 Feb (Brenda Jones) through 4 Mar (Alicia Jackson).

American Bittern: One, presumably the same individual seen in past years, wintered at Prairie Ridge Ecostation, Wake Co, NC, for a third straight year, seen 18 Dec through 20 Feb (Brian O'Shea, m. obs.).

Least Bittern: Individuals photographed at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 20 Jan (Jon Smith) and 14 Feb (Keith Ramos) were unusual for the winter season.

Little Blue Heron: A juvenile Little Blue Heron seen and photographed in southern Wake Co, NC, 13-14 Feb (John Cox) was unusual so far inland during the winter.

Reddish Egret: Rare winter sightings were made of individuals in Pawleys



American Bittern, 18 Dec 2015, Wake Co, NC. Photo by Jeff Beane.

Island, Georgetown Co, SC, 11 Dec (Mayn Hipp); on Bulls Island, Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, 31 Dec (William Christenson, David McLean); and at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 31 Dec (Steve Calver).

Cattle Egret: 58 in Fairfield, Hyde Co, NC, 1 Jan (Steve Howell) was a noteworthy count for the winter period.

Green Heron: Individuals found along the Haw River in Saxapahaw, Alamance Co, NC, 20 Dec (Bradley Saul) and along Windygap Rd in Mecklenburg Co, NC, during the Charlotte CBC, 26 Dec (Alan Kneidel, Ken Kneidel) were great finds for those sites outside of the coastal plain during the winter. The high count along the SC coast was seven in Beaufort Co, during the Hilton Head Island CBC, 14 Dec (*vide* Susan Murphy).

Roseate Spoonbill: The highest totals from CBCs along the SC coast were eight at Yawkey Wildlife Center (restricted access), Georgetown Co, during the Winyah Bay CBC, 17 Dec (Matt Johnson); 48 at the Savannah River Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, during the Savannah CBC, 2 Jan (Lewis Burke, Lauren Morgens, Matthew Sarver, Roger Smith); and nine in Charleston Co, during the Sea Islands CBC, 4 Jan (*vide* Aaron Given).

Bald Eagle: Locally unusual was a nest-site in the Newport River estuary



Swainson's Hawk, 03 Jan 2016, Dare Co, NC. Photo by Jeff Beane.

in Carteret Co, NC, in December (John Fussell).

Swainson's Hawk: An immature light-morph individual was seen and photographed at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 27 Dec (David Howell) through 9 Jan (Elisa Flanders).

Golden Eagle: This winter's sightings included an immature bird at Congaree National Park, Richland Co, SC, during its CBC, 20 Dec (John Grego); a second-year bird photographed over NC-113 in Alleghany Co, NC, 16 Jan (Eric Harrold, et al.); an adult photographed at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 1 Feb (David & Susan Disher); an adult just north of Lake Phelps, Washington Co, NC, 6 Feb (Derb Carter); and an adult at the Savannah River Site (restricted access), Barnwell Co, SC, 14 Feb (Mark Vukovich).

Black Rail: John Fussell notes that he used audio playback to find Black Rails in the upper North River Marshes in Carteret Co, NC, on two occasions in December, without success. This species was regular in winter at that site until about the turn of the century.

King Rail: Nine at the Air Force bombing range (restricted access) adjacent to Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, during its CBC, 30 Dec (John Fussell) was a record number for that count. Fussell believes the high count was "almost certainly related to the mild weather this winter."

Common Gallinule: North of the species' typical winter range was one on a small pond in Waves, Dare Co, NC, throughout the period (m. obs.); one at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 13 Dec (Harry LeGrand, et al.) through 21 Feb (Brad Wood); nine in Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (*vide* John Fussell); one on Lilliput Pond in New Bern, Craven Co, 6 Feb (Al Gamache); and two on the freshwater pond along the Buxton Woods Nature Trail, Dare Co, NC, 19 Feb (Keith Camburn). One that responded to audio playback at the WTP in St Matthews, Calhoun Co, SC, during the Congaree Swamp CBC, 20 Dec (Dennis Forsythe) was a first for that count.

Sandhill Crane: Good numbers of Sandhill Cranes were present in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, throughout the winter, with a high count of 52 made 27 Jan (Jay Chandler). Elsewhere, sightings included three near where US-64 crosses Beasley Rd in Washington Co, NC, 5 Dec (Karen Hogan, Jesse Pope, Steve Shultz); five at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, 2 Jan (Steve Holzman); two around the airport in Beaufort, Carteret Co, NC, for yet another winter, 14 Jan (Paula Gillikin) through 1 Mar (Greg Massey); a juvenile crane at two nearby sites north of Winston-Salem, Forsyth Co, NC, 25 Jan through 14 Feb (Cynthia Donaldson, m. obs.); five along Hooper Lane, Henderson Co, NC, 26 Jan (Wayne Forsythe); one in northern Edgecombe Co, NC, 14 Feb (Ricky Davis); seven photographed in a field along Brices Store Rd in Duplin Co, NC, 19 Feb (John Carpenter); 13 in a field along NC-481 west of Enfield, Halifax Co, NC, 19 Feb (Steve Howell); and two in flight over Riverbend Park, Catawba Co, NC, 27 Feb (Dwayne Martin).

Black-necked Stilt: One photographed at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 31 Dec (Steve Calver) was a great find for our region in winter.

American Avocet: A few of the higher counts were 342 in Dare Co, NC, during the Bodie-Pea Island CBC, 28 Dec (*vide* Steve Holzman); 329 at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 2 Jan (Dennis Forsythe, Irvin Pitts); 120 at Yawkey Wildlife Center (restricted access), Georgetown Co, SC, 5-6 Feb (m. obs.); and 368 at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 21 Feb (Christopher Perry).

American Oystercatcher: 1042 along the Intercoastal Waterway near Awendaw, Charleston Co, SC, 26 Jan (Mary-Catherine Martin) was a remarkable count.

Black-bellied Plover: Birders visiting at Ophelia Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, in search of the Mountain Plover observed up to 600 Black-bellied Plovers there in late January into February (Sherry Lane, Jeff Lewis, m. obs.).

Wilson's Plover: A few of the better winter counts along the southern SC coast were six on Kiawah Island, Charleston Co, 4 Jan and 1 Feb (Aaron Given); six on Deveaux Bank, Charleston Co, 4-13 Jan (Janet Thibault); and six on Harbor Island, Beaufort Co, 26 Feb (Buddy Campbell, et al.). Two at

the Rachel Carson Reserve, Carteret Co, NC, 26 Dec (Stan Rule) were the only ones noted in NC during the winter.

Piping Plover: Some of the higher counts were 27 in Beaufort Co, SC, during the Lowcountry CBC, 20 Dec (*fide* Buddy Campbell); 12 around Beaufort Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (*fide* John Fussell); 24 in Charleston Co, SC, during the Sea Islands CBC, 4 Jan (*fide* Aaron Given); and 15 at Ophelia Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, 2 Feb (Sam Cooper, et al.) and 13 Feb (Nathan Goldberg, et al.).

Mountain Plover: One of the more exciting finds during the winter was that of a Mountain Plover on the Core Banks at the south side of Ophelia Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, 29 Jan (Robert Gilson). Many birders visited the site to see this rare vagrant until it was last seen 27 Feb (m. obs.). If accepted by the NC BRC, this sighting will provide NC with its first record of this species from the western United States.

Spotted Sandpiper: Sightings made away from the coast included one at Lake Surf (restricted access), Moore Co, NC, during the Southern Pines CBC, 20 Dec (David Williamson); two at McAlpine WTP, Mecklenburg Co, NC, during the Charlotte CBC, 26 Dec (Matthew Janson, et al.); one in Chatham Co, NC, during the Jordan Lake CBC, 3 Jan (Patrick Coin, Peggy Maslow); and one at Dobbins Farm in Townville, Anderson Co, SC, 30 Jan (Kent Bedenbaugh) through 6 Feb (Michael Robertson). Our region's winter high count was 15 in Beaufort Co, SC, during the Lowcountry CBC, 20 Dec (*fide* Buddy Campbell).

Solitary Sandpiper: One seen near Sewee Bay, Charleston Co, SC, during the Charleston CBC, 3 Jan (Ed Blich, et al.) was a great find for winter.

Greater Yellowlegs: One found at Mountain Island Lake in Gaston Co, NC, during the Southern Lake Norman CBC, 20 Dec (Steve Tracey, Judy Walker) was unusual for a site so far from the coast during the winter.

Lesser Yellowlegs: 150 along River Rd at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 30 Dec (Derb Carter, Harry LeGrand) was a large number for winter.

Whimbrel: Winter sightings included one at multiple sites at Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, throughout the period (m. obs.); two where US-70 crosses the North River in Carteret Co, NC, 19 Dec (Chandra Biggerstaff); four in Beaufort Co, SC, during the Lowcountry CBC, 20 Dec (*fide* Buddy Campbell); and two photographed at Edisto Beach SP, Colleton Co, SC, 7 Jan (Doris Ratchford).

Long-billed Curlew: One continued from the fall season near the campground at Edisto Beach SP, Colleton Co, SC, where photographed, 7 Jan (Doris Ratchford). Up to two were seen at Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, throughout the winter (m. obs.). Birders visiting Ophelia Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, in search of the Mountain Plover, also saw a Long-billed Curlew there, 28 Jan (Derb Carter, et al.) through 21 Feb (m. obs.).

Marbled Godwit: A few of the higher counts this winter were 300 in



Long-billed Curlew, 06 Dec 2015, Cape Romain NWR, SC.
Photo by Phil Fowler.

Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (*vide* John Fussell); 113 in Beaufort Co, SC, during the Lowcountry CBC, 20 Dec (*vide* Buddy Campbell); and 364 on Marsh Island, Cape Romain NWR, Charleston Co, SC, 25 Jan (Mary-Catherine Martin).

Ruff: An immature female found in a flooded field along River Rd at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 11 Dec (Harry LeGrand, et al.) was seen and photographed by many through 1 Jan (Mike Stewart).

Stilt Sandpiper: 46 were counted at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 2 Jan (*vide* Steve Calver). Up to four were seen at Bear Island WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 15-19 Feb (Chris Marsh, m. obs.).

Purple Sandpiper: NC's and SC's respective high counts were 56 at Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, 24 Dec (Sam Cooper) and 65 on Sullivan's Island, Charleston Co, 15 Jan (Kevin DeBoer).

Wilson's Snipe: 225 at Pee Dee NWR, Anson Co, NC, during its CBC, 28 Dec (Ron Clark, Tom Ledford) and 85 at the Goldsboro WTP, Wayne Co, NC, 21 Jan (Sam Cooper) were noteworthy concentrations.

Red Phalarope: A moribund individual was found on the beach in North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 15 Dec (Gilbert Grant). Red Phalaropes were seen on all four pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, this winter, with a

high count of 50 on 20 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Great Skua: An individual was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 14 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Pomarine Jaeger: Sightings of this jaeger species, less likely to be seen from shore than Parasitic Jaegers and thus noteworthy, were individuals at Hatteras Inlet, border of Dare Co and Hyde Co, NC, 29 Dec (Jeff Beane, et al.); off Johnnie Mercer's Pier, New Hanover Co, NC, 1 Jan (Ricky Davis); and off Bald Head Island, Brunswick Co, NC, 3 Jan (Steve Howell).

Parasitic Jaeger: Nine tallied on the Southport-Bald Head-Oak Islands CBC, 3 Jan (*vide* Ron Clark) was the highest total, by far, on any Audubon CBC this year. Other sightings made from shore included three at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 6 Dec (Sam Cooper); two off Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 5 Dec (Cullen Hanks, Brian O'Shea) and 7 Dec (Brian Patteson); two off Pawleys Island, Georgetown Co, SC, 7 Jan (Mayn Hipp); and two off Sullivan's Island, Charleston Co, SC, 23 Jan (Kevin DeBoer).

Dovekie: Only four were found this winter—counts of two on pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 14 Feb and 20 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Razorbill: Though there was a definite movement of Razorbills off our coast during the late winter, numbers weren't close to those during strong irruption years. A few of the higher counts made from shore were 26 off Jennette's Pier, Dare Co, NC, 7 Feb (Erik Thomas); seven off Johnnie Mercer's Pier, New Hanover Co, NC, 13 Feb (Sam Cooper); and 11 off Ft Fisher, New Hanover Co, NC, 29 Feb (Greg Massey). Five moribund birds were found on the beach in Atlantic Beach, Carteret Co, NC, 22 Feb (John Fussell). Counts made on the four pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, in February were 211 on 6 Feb, 450 on 14 Feb, 179 on 20 Feb, and only 13 on 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Atlantic Puffin: Not seen every year in the Carolinas, ten puffins on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 6 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.) were good finds.

Black-legged Kittiwake: Sightings, all of first-winter birds, were made of one at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 7 Dec (Brian Patteson); one, possibly injured, photographed on the beach in Nags Head, Dare Co, NC, 30 Jan (David & Susan Disher); and three on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 6 Feb (Patteson, et al.).

Little Gull: Only one was reported this winter—a first-winter individual seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 14 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Franklin's Gull: A first-year individual seen and photographed at Lake Julian, Buncombe Co, NC, 2 Dec (Doug Johnston) was a great find. Most sightings of this species in the Carolinas are made in fall, and there are only a handful of winter records.

Ring-billed Gull: Of interest, a leg-banded Ring-billed Gull seen on the

campus of Charleston Southern University, Charleston Co, SC, 20 Jan (Dennis Forsythe) was originally banded as an adult on an island in the St Lawrence River, east of Montreal, Canada, on 21 Jun 2013 (*vide* Matthew Campbell).

Thayer's Gull: An adult Thayer's Gull was seen and photographed at the Horry County Landfill, Horry Co, SC, 11 Jan (Chris Hill). Already accepted by the SC BRC, this sighting provided the first accepted record of this hard-to-identify gull in SC.

Iceland Gull: Numbers were down compared to previous winters with only three reported—a second-winter bird in Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 17 Jan (Lucas Bobay) and 23 Jan (Kate Sutherland) and two seen during a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 14 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: As usual, the highest count on any Audubon CBC was made on the Cape Hatteras CBC, with 282 in Dare Co, NC, 27 Dec (*vide* Pat Moore). Inland sightings included one on Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, during its CBC, 3 Jan (Brian Bockhahn); one at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 13 Jan (Jacob Farmer) through 27 Feb (Harry LeGrand); and 16 at the South Wake County Landfill, Wake Co, NC, 6 Feb (Lucas Bobay, et al.).

Glaucous Gull: Individuals were seen on the Pamlico Sound in Hyde Co, NC, 5 Dec (Cullen Hanks, Brian O'Shea); on a spoil island near Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 3 Jan (Jeff Beane, et al.); at the Horry County Landfill, Horry Co, SC, in early January (Chris Hill); at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 16 Jan (Lucas Bobay); on the beach in Carova Beach, Currituck Co, NC, 18 Jan through 11 Feb (Michael Gosselin); at the Southern Wake County Landfill, Wake Co, NC, 6 Feb (Edward Landi, et al.); and on pelagic trips out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 6 Feb, 14 Feb, 20 Feb, and 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Great Black-backed Gull: Farther inland than is typical were two at the Goldsboro WTP, Wayne Co, NC, 24 Jan (Sam Cooper); one at the South Wake County Landfill, Wake Co, NC, 6 Feb (Lucas Bobay, et al.); and one at Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 20 Feb (Bruce Young, et al.).

Sandwich Tern: Late to depart were individuals at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 6 Dec (Sam Cooper) and off the Oceanana Pier, Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (Chandra Biggerstaff).

Black Skimmer: A couple of the higher winter counts were 640 at Mason Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 6 Dec (Sam Cooper) and 586 in Georgetown Co, SC, during the Litchfield-Pawleys Island CBC, 30 Dec (*vide* Chris Hill).

Eurasian Collared-Dove: 152 in Hyde Co, NC, during the Ocracoke Island CBC, 31 Dec (John Finnegan, et al.) was a remarkable count.

White-winged Dove: After one first visited a feeder in New Bern, Craven Co, NC, 7 Jan, two were seen 23 Jan through 12 Feb, and one remained until 15 Feb (Dan Kendrick). After one was found at Bennetts Point, Colleton Co, SC, 30 Nov (David Youngblood, et al.), up to four were seen in that area in late January and early February (m. obs.). Individuals were seen in Kitty Hawk, Dare Co, NC, during its CBC, 19 Dec (Audrey Whitlock); at a feeder in



Burrowing Owl, 27 Feb 2016, New Hanover Co, NC. Photo by Sam Cooper.

Whispering Pines, Moore Co, NC, 8 Feb (John Formmeyer); and photographed in Southern Shores, Dare Co, NC, 28 Feb and 3 Mar (Jeff Lewis).

Barn Owl: Four in Georgetown Co, SC, during the Winyah Bay CBC, 17 Dec (*fide* Lex Glover) was a record number for that count. One at Fort Macon SP, Carteret Co, NC, 1 Jan (Randy Newman) was locally unusual, though the species was relatively common there until about 1990. Remains of a Barn Owl were found near Reedy Creek Nature Preserve, Mecklenburg Co, 7 Dec (Leigh Anne Carter). Carter theorizes the owl may have been predated upon by a Great Horned Owl seen in that area.

Burrowing Owl: One seen on a jetty at Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 27 Feb (Jamie Adams) was most likely the same individual seen at that site last November. It was seen by many birders through 11 Mar (Chandra Biggerstaff).

Short-eared Owl: The high count at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, was only three, 5 Dec (Steve Shultz), which was very low compared to previous years. Elsewhere, individuals were noted in the fields north of Lake Phelps, Washington Co, NC, 5 Dec (Ed Corey, et al.); on Bald Head Island, Brunswick Co, NC, 3 Jan (Corey, David Howell); and in dunes at Ophelia Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, 27 Feb (Doug Pratt, Josh Southern).

Eastern Whip-poor-will: One flushed from a roadside at North River Preserve (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, 20 Dec (Chandra Biggerstaff, John Fussell) was a good find for December. Fussell theorizes the bird lingered due to the mild weather at the time.



Calliope Hummingbird, 19 Feb 2016, Graham, NC. Photo by Susan Campbell.

***Chaetura* species:** A swift, either a Chimney Swift or a Vaux's Swift, was seen at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, during the Savannah CBC, 2 Jan (George Owen, James Fleullan, et al.). Though never before documented in the Carolinas, Vaux's Swift would be just as likely in winter, if not more so, than the Chimney Swift.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Up to 19 wintered in a yard with feeders in Buxton, Dare Co, NC, this winter (Ann Maddock). 33 in Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (*vide* John Fussell) was a record number for that count.

Black-chinned Hummingbird: An adult male visited feeders in the Lighthouse Point subdivision on James Island, Charleston Co, SC, for a second year in a row, 25 Dec through 7 Mar (Jennifer Tyrrell, m. obs.).

Rufous Hummingbird: Two visited feeders in Seneca, Pickens Co, SC, 13 Dec into March (Kaye Fenlon). An adult female and an adult male mist-netted in a yard in Iredell Co, NC, 6 Jan, had both previously been banded in the same yard, three years ago and two years ago, respectively (Dwayne Martin).

Calliope Hummingbird: An immature male visited a feeder in Swepsonville, Alamance Co, NC, where it was banded, 19 Feb into March (Susan Campbell, m. obs.).

Buff-bellied Hummingbird: The individual that visited feeders along Royall Dr in Winston-Salem, Forsyth Co, NC, during the fall, continued through the winter (m. obs.).

Peregrine Falcon: Two wintered in downtown Winston-Salem, Forsyth Co, NC (Ron Morris, m. obs.) this year. One was suspected of wintering in



Monk Parakeets at nest, 21 Feb 2016, Newland, NC. Photo by Richard Gray.

downtown Durham, Durham Co, NC, seen on multiple dates in February (Jesse Pope, m. obs.),

Monk Parakeet: Two seen around a nest at an electrical substation in Newland, Avery Co, NC, 16 Feb (Jesse Pope, Mickey Shortt) had, according to residents in the area, been seen around that site since April 2015.

***Empidonax* species:** A flycatcher belonging to the genus *Empidonax*, most likely a Least Flycatcher, was seen and photographed at Oleander Memorial Gardens in Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, during its CBC, 2 Jan (Derb Carter, Jeff Pippen).

Ash-throated Flycatcher: Five were found in the Carolinas this winter—individuals seen and photographed at Hunting Island SP, Beaufort Co, SC, 8 Dec (Carl Berube); at Mackay Island NWR, Currituck Co, NC, 11 Dec (Karen & Tom Beatty); next to the “sparrow field” on the west side of Lake Phelps, Washington Co, NC, 16 Dec (Lucas Bobay, Ed Corey); in Kitty Hawk, Dare Co, NC, during its CBC, 19 Dec (Lee Adams, Peggy Eubank); and at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, during its CBC, 30 Dec (Matthew King, Mike McCloy) and through 16 Jan (m. obs.).

Western Kingbird: Sightings included one photographed at Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 6 Dec (Wendy Allen); up to three seen and photographed along Weston Rd near Cherry, Washington Co, NC, 2 Dec (Connie Toops) through 18 Jan (m. obs.); one near the Frisco Campground in Dare Co, NC, 29 Dec (Chuck Saleeby); and two at the Frisco Campground, 30 Dec (Alain Goulet, Frederic Hareau).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One seen at Ft Moultrie National Monument,

Charleston Co, SC, 16 Dec (C.J. Jaworski) was especially unusual for the winter period.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: One seen over a pond near where I-20 crosses the Saluda River in Lexington Co, SC, 11 Jan (Kent Bedenbaugh) was noteworthy for mid-winter.

Cliff Swallow: A juvenile Cliff Swallow photographed at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 4 Jan (Michael Gosselin) provided NC with its first winter record of this species.

Cave Swallow: A juvenile seen and photographed at Cane Creek Reservoir, Orange Co, NC, 2 Dec (Jan Hansen, et al.) was very unusual for a site away from the coast, providing the third record for the NC Piedmont. Along the coast, sightings included one over Mullet Pond, Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 6 Dec (Jan & Phil Fowler); two near the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, Dare Co, NC, during the Bodie-Pea Island CBC, 28 Dec (John Fussell, Marcia Lyons); one over an impoundment near White Plains, Hyde Co, NC, during the Mattamuskeet NWR CBC, 29 Dec (Fussell); five over Eagle Island in Brunswick Co, NC, during the Wilmington CBC, 2 Jan (Ron Clark, m. obs.); one photographed over the south end of Pawleys Island, Georgetown Co, SC, 3 Jan (Jay Chandler); and one over a campground near Shallotte Inlet, Brunswick Co, NC, 4 Jan (Taylor Piephoff).

Barn Swallow: Individuals lingered at the Brant Island spoil site, Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (Garrett Newman, Randy Newman); at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 1 Jan (Jeff Lewis); at Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, Brunswick Co, NC, during the Southport-Bald Head-Oak Islands CBC, 3 Jan (Sam Cooper, et al.); on the mainland near Sewee Bay, Charleston Co, SC, during the Charleston CBC, 3 Jan (*vide* Paul Nolan); on Edisto Island, Charleston Co, SC, 3 Jan (Sidney Gauthreaux); and at Magnolia Gardens, Charleston Co, SC, 21-24 Jan (Matt Johnson).

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Eight at one spot along the NC-94 causeway at Mattamuskeet NWR, Hyde Co, NC, 16 Jan (Jeff Lewis) was a noteworthy concentration for winter. Individuals were found at sites as far west as the wetland at Concord Mills, Cabarrus Co, NC, 5 Dec through 2 Jan (m. obs.); Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville Co, SC, 12 Dec (Denise DuPon, et al.); Lake Cunningham, Greenville Co, SC, 19 Dec and 10 Jan (Joan Baker, et al.); and Salem, Oconee Co, SC, 3 Jan (Linda Montgomery, et al.).

Lapland Longspur: Individuals were found at Prater Farm in Anderson Co, SC, 3 Jan (Simon Harvey) and amongst a flock of pipits in a field adjacent to the KOA Campground along NC-481 in Halifax Co, NC, 14 Feb (Ricky Davis).

Snow Bunting: Individuals were seen and photographed around the jetty at the north end of Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 5 Dec (Ricky Davis, Greg Hudson, Mike McCloy, et al.) and in the dunes on the southern Core Banks, Carteret Co, NC, 15 Dec (Jon Altman).



Snow Bunting, 05 Dec 2015, Oregon Inlet, NC. Photo by Greg Hudson.

Ovenbird: Nine in Buxton, Dare Co, NC, during the Cape Hatteras CBC, 27 Dec (*vide* Pat Moore) was a notable count. Individuals were seen in a yard in Carrboro, Orange Co, NC, 1-15 Dec (Jan Hansen); in a yard on Roanoke Island, Dare Co, NC, 12-13 Dec and 14 Feb (Jeff Lewis); at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, Charleston Co, SC, 21 Feb (Matt Johnson); and at Donnelley WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 26 Feb (Todd Arcos).

Louisiana Waterthrush: One video-recorded on Seabrook Island, Charleston Co, SC, 26 Feb (Tom Austin) was quite early to arrive.

Northern Waterthrush: Wintering individuals were noted at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, 31 Dec (Steve Calver); at Donnelley WMA, Colleton Co, SC, 1-2 Jan (Roger Smith, m. obs.); and at Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 9 Jan (Mayn Hipp) and 14 Jan (Frank Lawkins).

Golden-winged Warbler: Extremely surprising was the female Golden-winged Warbler seen and photographed at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, Charleston Co, SC, 6 Feb (Keith McCullough, et al.) through 4 Mar (m. obs.). There are no previous winter records of this species in the Carolinas.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Two in Macon Co, NC, during the Franklin CBC, 2 Jan (*vide* Karen Lawrence) were very unusual for the mountain region.

Nashville Warbler: Rare wintering individuals were found near Historic Bethabara Park, Forsyth Co, NC, where photographed, during the Winston-Salem CBC, 19 Dec (Rob Rogers, Katherine Thorington, Cara & Tony Woods); in Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, during its CBC, 2 Jan (Jeff Phippen); near the southeastern corner of Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 13 Jan through 3 Feb (Lucas Bobay, m. obs.); and at Airlie Gardens, New Hanover

Co, NC, 14-21 Feb (Matt Spangler, m. obs.).

Common Yellowthroat: An immature male photographed at Fletcher Park, Henderson Co, NC, 16 Jan (Simon Thompson) was a great find for the mountain region in winter.

American Redstart: An immature redstart at the north end of Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 5 Dec (Ricky Davis) was quite late to depart. Individuals at Riverbanks Zoo, Richland Co, SC, an adult female, photographed 8 Jan (Katie Henthorn) and along Laurel Hill Wildlife Dr at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, 11 Feb (Peter Stangel) may have been over-wintering at those sites.

Cape May Warbler: Two were seen in NC this winter—an adult male photographed in Davidson, Mecklenburg Co, during the Southern Lake Norman CBC, 20 Dec (Taylor Piephoff, et al.) and an adult male photographed at a feeder in Apex, Wake Co, NC, 10 Feb (G. P.).

Northern Parula: An adult photographed in Bynum, Chatham Co, NC, 18 Dec (Mary Sonis) was either very late or attempting to over-winter, while one seen at Hunting Island SP, Beaufort Co, SC, 26 Feb (Roger Smith) was either very early or over-wintering.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: An adult male lingered in a yard in Hillsborough, Orange Co, NC, where photographed, until 9 Dec (Carol Tuskey).

“Audubon’s” Warbler: An Audubon’s Warbler, the western sub-species of Yellow-rumped Warbler, was found along the Carriage Trail at Huntington Beach SP, Georgetown Co, SC, 6 Feb (Jack Rogers).

Yellow-throated Warbler: One photographed on a suet feeder in Raleigh, Wake Co, NC, 15 Feb (Tess Panfil) was unusually far from the coast for the winter season. One heard singing at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, Charleston Co, SC, 22 Feb (David McLean) was considered an early spring arrival.

Prairie Warbler: Notable counts for winter were three at North River Preserve (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, 13 Dec (John Fussell, et al.); four at different sites in Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (*vide* Fussell); three in Dare Co, NC, during the Cape Hatteras CBC, 27 Dec (Lee Adams, Jeff Lewis, et al.); and five at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access), Jasper Co, SC, 31 Dec (Steve Calver).

Wilson’s Warbler: Rare winter sightings were made of individuals in a yard in Greensboro, Guilford Co, NC, 3 Dec (Scott DePue); at Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary, Buncombe Co, NC, through 5 Dec (Simon Thompson); and at The Bog Garden, Guilford Co, NC, 1 Jan (Henry Link, et al.) through 8 Jan (Carol Bowman).

Yellow-breasted Chat: Winter sightings included one in Georgetown Co, SC, during the Winyah Bay CBC, 17 Dec (*vide* Lex Glover); one on Figure Eight Island, New Hanover Co, NC, 20 Dec (Derb Carter); one at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 3 Jan (Dwayne Martin, et al.) through 6 Jan (Alan MacEachren); one photographed in Pasquotank Co, NC, 18 Jan (Greg

Hudson); and one at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, 30 Jan (Ed Blitch, et al.).

Bachman's Sparrow: Winter sightings included one at the Savannah River Site (restricted access), Barnwell Co, SC, during its CBC, 18 Dec (Lois Stacey, Mark Vukovich); one on Ft Bragg (restricted access) in Hoke Co, NC, 20 Dec (Rex Badgett, et al.); three at Cheeha-Combahee Plantation (restricted access), Colleton Co, SC, 28 Dec (Lauren Morgens, Matthew Sarver); one along Funston Rd in Brunswick Co, NC, 2 Jan (Ricky Davis); six in recently-burned wiregrass habitat along Sam Hatcher Rd in Croatan NF, Carteret Co, NC, 24 Jan (John Fussell, et al.); two in Francis Marion NF, Charleston Co, SC, 13 Feb (Kevin DeBoer); and three at Webb Wildlife Center, Hampton Co, SC, 29 Feb (Simon Thompson, et al.).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Interestingly, after counts of 17 birds there last winter and spring, this species was found at North River Preserve (limited access), Carteret Co, NC, on only one occasion this winter—two birds on 14 Feb (Jamie Adams, John Fussell, Jack Fennell). Individuals were also found where Rocky Ford Rd crosses the South Fork Catawba River in Catawba Co, NC, 30 Dec (Monroe Pannell) and in Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, during its CBC, 2 Jan (Daniel Hueholt).

Vesper Sparrow: 46 around Harleyville, Dorchester Co, SC, during the Four Holes Swamp CBC, 14 Dec (*fide* Matthew Johnson) was a record number for that count. Eight at Prater Farm in Anderson Co, SC, 3 Jan (Simon Harvey) and 20 at the Super Sod farm in Orangeburg Co, SC, 20 Feb (Ed Blitch) were also notable counts.

Lark Sparrow: A total of six adult birds were seen at two nearby sites along Newland Rd in Washington Co, NC, 5 Dec (Lucas Bobay, et al.). Individuals were seen near Coastal Carolina University, Horry Co, SC, 24 Dec through 14 Feb (Chris Hill); on Roanoke Island, Dare Co, NC, 31 Dec and 1 Jan (Jeff Lewis, m. obs.); and around the NC Coastal Federation building in Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, 2 Jan (Jeff Pippen) into spring (m. obs.).

Grasshopper Sparrow: Individuals were seen at the Savannah River Site (restricted access), Barnwell Co, SC, 18 Dec (Mark Vukovich, Lois Stacey); in the northeast corner of Calhoun Co, SC, during the Congaree Swamp CBC, 20 Dec (Cathy Miller); at Carolina Sandhills NWR, Chesterfield Co, SC, 28 Dec (Susan Mac, Steve McInnis); at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, 30 Jan (Ron Furnish, Marie Mullins) and 28 Feb (Steve Collins); and at Dobbins Farm, Anderson Co, SC, 19 Feb (Kevin Kubach).

Henslow's Sparrow: Six at the Savannah River Site (restricted access), Barnwell Co, SC, 18 Dec (Mark Vukovich, Lois Stacey) was a good count. One found in a powerline corridor in the Southwest Prong Flatwoods Natural Area, part of the Croatan NF, near Havelock, Craven Co, NC, 4 Dec (John Fussell) was the only report from NC.

Le Conte's Sparrow: Five at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access),



Indigo Bunting, 11 Jan 2016, Randolph Co, NC. Photo by Valerie Abbott.

Jasper Co, SC, during its CBC, 2 Jan (Lauren Morgens, Matthew Sarver) was a nice concentration.

Lincoln's Sparrow: Four in a clear-cut area near Mill Creek, Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (John Fussell) was a great count. Fussell notes that “newly clearcut areas with a dense growth of fine grasses on hydric soils are obviously the best habitat for this species.” Individuals were seen at the Bodie Island Lighthouse, Dare Co, NC, 6 Dec (David Howell); in a clear-cut area along County Line Rd in Craven Co, NC, during the New Bern CBC, 14 Dec (Chandra Biggerstaff, Fussell); at the “sparrow field” on the western side of Lake Phelps, Washington Co, NC, 16 Dec (John Haire) and 28 Dec (Derb Carter, Harry LeGrand); near Gadsden, Richland Co, SC, 20 Dec (Caroline Eastman); at Renaissance Park Golf Course, Mecklenburg Co, NC, 26 Dec (Taylor Piephoff) through 18 Jan (Dennis Kent); at a private farm near Southport, Brunswick Co, NC, 3 Jan (Sherry Lane, Bruce Smithson); and at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, 28 Feb (Steve Collins).

White-crowned Sparrow: 24 at Dobbins Farm in Townville, Anderson Co, SC, 13 Feb (Drew Lanham) was our region's high count.

Summer Tanager: Two visited feeders in the NC coastal plain this winter—a male in New Bern, Craven Co, early January through 12 Feb (Olwen Jarvis) and a female, possibly the same individual that wintered there last year, in Jackeys Creek Estates, Brunswick Co, 3 Dec into spring (Greg Massey). A dull-plumaged female was seen at Cheeha-Combahee Plantation (restricted access), Colleton Co, SC, 28 Dec (Lauren Morgens, Matthew Sarver).

Western Tanager: Sightings included a female visiting a feeder in Greenville, Pitt Co, NC, where photographed, 16 Jan through 13 Feb (Rick Trone); an adult male visiting a feeder in Rockville, Charleston Co, SC, where photographed, 25 Jan (Cherrie Sneed); and an immature male on Figure Eight Island, New Hanover Co, NC, 15 Feb (Derb Carter).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: One photographed at Hunting Island SP, Beaufort Co, SC, 8 Dec (Joe Jungers) and 16 Dec (Victor Fazio) was quite late to depart. One seen at Charleston Southern University, Charleston Co, SC, 26 Jan (Chris Snook) may have been over-wintering in the area.

Indigo Bunting: Three were found in NC this winter—a female seen and photographed at Tanglewood Park, Forsyth Co, 4 Jan (John Haire) and 13 Jan (David & Susan Disher, Marbry Hopkins); a male photographed at the NC Zoological Park, Randolph Co, 11 Jan (Valerie Abbott); and a male photographed at a feeder in Apex, Wake Co, 15 Feb into spring (John Amoroso).

Painted Bunting: Farther inland than typical were individuals visiting feeders in Charlotte, Mecklenburg Co, NC, an adult male, 20 Jan (Mary & Paul Buckle) through 26 Jan (Kevin Burrell) and near Duncan Park, Spartanburg Co, SC, an adult male, from late January into spring (Lyle Campbell, et al.). Interestingly, the yard in Charlotte is only 1.3 miles from where a green-colored bird visited a feeder 6 Feb 2015. Was that green-colored bird a first-year male and are both sightings of that same individual? A few of the higher counts at coastal sites were eight, seven of which were banded, visiting a feeder in Manteo, Dare Co, NC, throughout the winter (*vide* Jeff Lewis); four visiting a feeder in Myrtle Beach, Horry Co, SC, 9 Dec into early January (Dick & Dorothy Rosche); four in Carteret Co, NC, during the Morehead City CBC, 20 Dec (*vide* John Fussell); and five at Botany Bay WMA, Charleston Co, SC, 31 Jan (Pam Ford, Chris Snook).

Dickcissel: An adult female photographed in Nags Head, Dare Co, NC, 25 Dec (Alan MacEachren) was unusual for the winter season.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: One was found amongst a large blackbird flock in southeast Florence Co, SC, 7 Feb (Jay Chandler). An adult male was photographed inside a mixed blackbird flock on Hilton Head Island, Beaufort Co, SC, 22 Feb (Carl Freeman).

Rusty Blackbird: A few of the higher counts were 180 at Lake Conestee Nature Park, Greenville Co, SC, 4 Dec (Kevin Kubach); 1350 at Pee Dee NWR, Anson Co, NC, 8 Dec (Mike McCloy); 500 near Moore, Spartanburg Co, SC, during the Spartanburg CBC, 31 Dec (Lyle Campbell, Steve Compton); 325 at Lake Sutton, New Hanover Co, NC, 1 Jan (Ricky Davis); 200 at the Battleship Memorial in New Hanover Co, NC, 1 Jan (Susan Blackford, Jan Hansen); and 125 in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, 15 Jan (Royce Hough, Ron Morris, et al.).

Brewer's Blackbird: Five were found in a muddy horse enclosure along

Gum Swamp Rd in Lake Landing, Hyde Co, NC, during the Mattamuskeet NWR CBC, 29 Dec (John Fussell). Many birders visited the site in the following months with a high count of seven made there 17 Jan (Ed Corey, et al.), and one remaining through 12 Mar (Mandy Cumming). In SC, six were seen in southern Orangeburg Co, 13 Feb (Dennis Forsythe).

Baltimore Oriole: As many as 25 visited grape jelly feeders in Orangeburg, Orangeburg Co, SC, in January and February (Lex Glover, et al.). 18 at feeders in Wilson, Wilson Co, NC, 15 Feb (Ann Brice) was also a notable count.

Scott's Oriole: Already accepted by the SC BRC was the state's first record of Scott's Oriole—a male seen and photographed visiting a suet feeder in Six Mile, Pickens Co, SC, 1 Jan (Imtiaz Haque) through 7 Jan (Paul Serridge).

CORRIGENDA

2014 South Carolina Spring Bird Counts:

The report for the 2014 South Carolina Spring Bird Counts (Chat 79: 1-11) contained two errors. In the checklist, the number of Surf Scoter observed should be 3, not 43 (p. 6). In the first sentence of the third paragraph of the compilers' comments for the Charleston / Berkeley Counties count (p. 4), the text should read "reported 3 Surf Scoters", not White-winged Scoters.

2015 Report of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee:

Due to oversights by the committee chair, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee omitted from its annual report (Chat 80: 18-25) the dates of 12 of the sightings. The missing dates are as follows:

accepted reports:

2015-054 Fulvous Whistling Duck 28 August 2015

2015-033 Trindade Petrel 28 June 2011

2015-036 Fea's Petrel 9 November 1984

2015-040 Roseate Spoonbill 29 August 2015

2015-035 Black-chinned Hummingbird 6 February to 5 April 2015

2015-020 Gray Kingbird 6 September 2004

2015-051 Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warbler 30 March 2014

2016-001 Scott's Oriole 1 January 2016

non-accepted reports:

2014-024 Red-necked Grebe 5 March 2014

2015-042 Calliope Hummingbird 2 October 2015

2015-019 Gray Kingbird 1 September 2007

2015-030 Bullock's Oriole 31 January 2012

In addition, one date was reported incorrectly. The correct date for the Ruff #2015-041 at Santee Coastal Preserve is 15 March 2015.

CAROLINA BIRD CLUB

www.carolinabirdclub.org

The Carolina Bird Club is a non-profit organization which represents and supports the birding community in the Carolinas through its official website, publications, meetings, workshops, trips, and partnerships, whose mission is

- To promote the observation, enjoyment, and study of birds.
- To provide opportunities for birders to become acquainted, and to share information and experience.
- To maintain well-documented records of birds in the Carolinas.
- To support the protection and conservation of birds and their habitats and foster an appreciation and respect of natural resources.
- To promote educational opportunities in bird and nature study.
- To support research on birds of the Carolinas and their habitats.

Membership is open to all persons interested in the conservation, natural history, and study of wildlife with particular emphasis on birds. Dues, contributions, and bequests to the Club may be deductible from state and federal income and estate taxes. Pay dues or make donations at <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/dues/>. Make change of address at <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/profile/>. Send correspondence regarding membership matters to Headquarters Secretary. Answers to questions about the club might be found at <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/about.html>. Dues include \$6 for subscription to the *CBC Newsletter* and \$7 for subscription to *The Chat*.

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Quarterly Bulletin of Carolina Bird Club, Inc.
1809 Lakepark Drive, Raleigh NC 27612



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Periodicals Postage Paid
at Pinehurst, NC 28374 and
additional mailing offices