

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Summer 2018, unless otherwise noted)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abbreviations: **BRC** – Bird Records Committee, **BRP** – Blue Ridge Parkway, **Co** – County, **et al.** – and others, **Ft** – Fort, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **St** – Street, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

Gadwall: A seemingly healthy drake summered in the Horsepen Creek arm of Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 9 Jun into Aug (Roberta Newton, Ann Van Sant, m. obs.).

American Wigeon: Two, a drake and a hen, on South Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 6 Jun (Audrey Whitlock) were late to depart.

Green-winged Teal: Two, a drake and a hen, near the Salt Pond at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 7 Jun (Karen Lebing, m. obs.) were unusual for June.

King Eider: The hen that was seen around Ft Moultrie and the Pitt St Causeway, Charleston Co, SC, in May remained through at least 29 Jun (Pam Ford, Craig Watson).

Common Eider: A hen photographed under Jennette's Pier, Dare Co, NC, 8 Jun (Alan MacEachren, Audrey Whitlock) was late. Interestingly, this individual appeared to be the Hudson Bay subspecies, rather than the Atlantic subspecies that is typical here.

White-winged Scoter: One on the ocean off Myrtle Beach SP, Horry Co, SC, 21 Jun (Scott Hartley) was late.

Bufflehead: A drake lingered at Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, through 15 Jun (Audrey Whitlock, m. obs.).

Common Merganser: Breeding was confirmed at two sites in the NC mountains—on Big Laurel Creek near Hot Springs, Madison Co, when a hen was seen with six juveniles 24 Jun, 5 Jul (Greer Karbowski) and 15 Jul (Johanna Preiszner) and on the South Toe River in Yancey Co, when a hen was seen with ten juveniles, 1 Jul (Clifton Avery).

Red-breasted Merganser: A drake photographed on Lake Keowee, Oconee Co, SC, 5 Jul (Don Lenahan) was unusual for an inland site in summer.

White-winged Dove: Individuals visited feeders in North Myrtle Beach, Horry Co, SC, 4 Jun (Deb Winter); in Williston, Carteret Co, NC, 7-8 Jun (Kathy Calvert); and in Nags Head, Dare Co, NC, 15-17 Jun (Audrey Whitlock).

Sora: One heard calling on the north end of Piney Island, Carteret Co, NC, 1 Jun (John Fussell) was probably a late migrant or a non-breeding lingerer. Fussell wonders, however, if the species may occasionally breed in eastern Carteret County. Evidence of breeding in the Carolinas by this species is yet to be obtained.

Limpkin: At least three were seen in the Carolinas this summer—individuals along the Black River on the border of Bladen Co and Pender Co, NC, 1 Jul (*fide* John Fussell) and 14 Jul (Jamie Adams); at Congaree National Park, Richland Co, SC, 12-21 Jul (John Grego, m. obs.); and at Savannah NWR, Jasper Co, SC, where photographed, 20 Jul (Allison Leigh).

American Avocet: Sightings at inland sites included one on the shore of Lake Hartwell in Clemson, Oconee Co, SC, 11 Jul (William Potter); two at the Mills River WTP, Henderson Co, SC, 14 Jul (Elizabeth Fitts, m. obs.); and eight at the Mills River WTP, 16 Jul (Wayne Forsythe, m. obs.). The latter sighting provided a new record high count for the mountain region.

American Golden-Plover: One seen and photographed at South Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 15 Jun (Bob Martz) and 16 Jun (Karen Lebing, Audrey Whitlock) was very unusual for the month of June.

Wilson's Plover: 22, including two juvenile birds, around the east side of Bogue Inlet, Carteret Co, NC, 17 Jul (Ed Phillips) was a noteworthy count for that area.

Upland Sandpiper: Two photographed at the Super Sod farm in Orangeburg Co, SC, 13 Jul (Elizabeth & Jonathan Anderegg) were the first southbound migrants reported this year. Five in the grass around the observation area at Wilmington International Airport, New Hanover Co, NC, 26 Jul (Sam Cooper) was a good count.

Long-billed Curlew: At Cape Romain NWR in Charleston Co, SC, one was seen on Bulls Island, 2 Jul (David McLean, Chris Snook) and two were seen around Sandy Point, 4 Jul (Jim Buxton, et al.). The species is almost year-round at that refuge now, only absent mid-May through mid-June.

Ruddy Turnstone: One at Buckhorn Reservoir, Wilson Co, NC, 28 Jul (Ricky Davis) was a good find for that inland site.



*Curlew Sandpiper, 27 July 2018, Dare Co, NC
Photo by Karen Lebing*

Curlew Sandpiper: An adult male, beginning to molt out of breeding plumage, was seen and photographed by many on North Pond, Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, 22-26 Jul (Audrey Whitlock, m. obs.) and on the flooded lawn in front of the nearby Bodie Island Lighthouse, 27-28 Jul (Martina Nordstrand, m. obs.). It has been almost a decade since the last sighting of this Eurasian vagrant in the Carolinas.

Short-billed Dowitcher: One in the Horsepen Creek arm of Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, NC, 7-8 Jul (Henry Link, m. obs.) was a good find for an inland site and somewhat early for a southbound migrant.

Wilson's Snipe: One photographed at the Super Sod farm in Orangeburg Co, SC, 21 Jul (Pam Ford, Craig Watson) was very early.

Willet: One at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, NC, 24 Jul (Eddie Owens) was a good find for that inland site.

Red Phalarope: A ragged-looking individual seen and photographed at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, 8-15 Jun (Marcia Lyons, m. obs.) and 28 Jun (Karen Lebing) was incredibly unusual, the first ever seen in NC during the summer.

Sooty Tern: The only one seen from shore this summer was an adult individual off Sullivan's Island, Charleston Co, SC, 26 Jul (Steve Barlow).

Roseate Tern: One of two continued from late May at Cape Point, Dare Co, NC, through at least 8 Jul (Megan Baker, et al.). A leg-banded individual photographed on the beach 14 miles north of Cape Point, 22 Jul (Michael Gosselin, et al.) was a different individual than the two seen at Cape Point, as those did not have leg bands.

Fea's Petrel: This rare tubenose was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras, Dare Co, NC, 7 Jul (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Great Shearwater: A individual photographed at Murrells Inlet, Georgetown Co, SC, 9 Jun (Shawn Smolen-Morton) was a good find from shore. A moribund individual was found on North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co, NC, 19 Jun (Gilbert Grant). Sick/injured individuals were found along the Pitt St Causeway, Charleston Co, SC, 23 Jun (Pam Ford, m. obs.) and on Bald Head Island, Brunswick Co, NC, 5 Jul (Jimmy Welch).

Audubon's Shearwater: A sick/injured individual was found on the beach in Emerald Isle, Carteret Co, NC, 24 Jul (Andrew Melnick).

Wood Stork: Locally unusual were individuals at Richardson Taylor Preserve, Guilford Co, NC, 2-3 Jun (Amy Hanson, m. obs.); in J. Morgan Futch Game Land, Tyrrell Co, NC, 4-13 Jun (Kimberly McCargo, m. obs.); and at Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 27 Jun (Jonathan Cantrell). One seen and photographed along the Little Tennessee River Greenway in Macon Co, NC, 21-22 Jul (Chayse Davis, m. obs.) was especially unusual for the mountain region. As expected, all of these individuals were immature birds, as immatures are more likely to wander than adults. 26 near the Tyger River in Union Co, SC, 31 Jul (Mark Carroll) and ten at a small pond in Rock Hill, York Co, SC, 31 Jul (Diane Gabanyic) were good counts for sites in the Piedmont.

Magnificent Frigatebird: There was a small flurry of sightings in early June, but none thereafter. Individuals were seen in flight over Isle of Palms, Charleston Co, SC, a juvenile, 2 Jun (Pam Ford, Craig Watson); over Kure Beach, New Hanover Co, NC, 2 Jun (Mark Galizio); near Lockwood Folly Inlet, Brunswick Co, NC, a male, 3 Jun (Robert Hunnings); over Ft Macon SP, Carteret Co, NC, 10 Jun (Randy Newman); and over Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, NC, a juvenile, 13 Jun (Karen Lebing, et al.).

Brown Booby: A sub-adult female found at the Apache Pier in Myrtle Beach, Horry Co, SC, 29 May, was collected by the Avian Conservation Center for rehabilitation and expected to recover (Emily Davis).

Great Cormorant: An immature bird photographed on a jetty at Masonboro Inlet, New Hanover Co, NC, 16 Jun (Sam Cooper) was unusual for summer.

American Bittern: One seen at North River Preserve, Carteret Co, NC, 24 Jun and 22 Jul (John Fussell, et al.) was unusual for summer.



*Great Blue Heron [White-morph]
17 July 2018, Henderson Co, NC
Photo by Wayne Forsythe*

“Great White Heron”: A white-morph Great Blue Heron was seen and photographed in the French Broad River Valley of Henderson Co, NC, 17-25 Jul (Wayne Forsythe).

Tricolored Heron: On schedule with post-breeding dispersal, immature birds started showing up at lakes in the NC Piedmont in late July, with individuals seen at Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, 19 Jul (Paul Taillie); on Shattalon Lake, Forsyth Co, 24 Jul (David & Susan Disher, et al.); on Lake Brandt, Guilford Co, 25 Jul (Matt Wangerin); and at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, 25 Jul (Lynn Erla Beegle, et al.).

Reddish Egret: Sightings made along the NC coast included one at Pea Island NWR, Dare Co, 3 Jun intermittently through July (Alan MacEachren, m. obs.); two at New River Inlet, Onslow Co, 5 Jun (Gilbert Grant); one at Cape Point, Dare Co, 6-14 Jun (Michael Gosselin, m. obs.); and one at the Rachel Carson Reserve, Carteret Co, 26 Jul (Jeannie Kraus).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: It's possible this species bred in the New Hope Creek arm of Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, as a group of four, including at least two juveniles, were flushed by kayak, 8 Jul (Matt Spangler).

Glossy Ibis: One in the New Hope Creek arm of Jordan Lake, Chatham Co, NC, 24-29 Jul (Jelmer Poelstra, m. obs.) was a great find for a site so far from the coast.

Roseate Spoonbill: There was an unprecedented northward irruption of this conspicuous wading bird this summer, with dozens of sightings made north and inland of the species' typical range. Individuals were county firsts in Davidson, Mecklenburg Co, NC, 27-28 May (m. obs.); on the French Broad River in Henderson Co, NC, 3 Jun (LeNorah Allen); at J. Morgan Futch Game Land, Tyrrell Co, NC, 6-13 Jun (Jeff Lewis, m. obs.); at Hap Simpson Park, Transylvania Co, NC, 7 Jun (Lindsay Rutland); at a subdivision pond in Simpsonville, Greenville Co, SC, 23 Jun (Len Kopka); and on Lake Tillery, Stanly Co, NC, 8 Jul (Jennifer Archambault, Bill Mullin). Sightings made along the NC coast



*Roseate Spoonbill, 27 May 2018
Mecklenburg Co, NC
Photo by Rob Van Epps*

included three at Cape Point, Dare Co, 14 Jun through 17 Jul (m. obs.); three at Ft Fisher, New Hanover Co, 5 Jul (Amy McLane); and three near Cape Lookout, Carteret Co, 11 Jul (Jess Hawkins). Sightings made in the NC Piedmont included two in the Crabtree Creek wetland along N Raleigh Blvd in Wake Co, 15 Jun through 8 Jul (Alysia Richard, m. obs.); three in the New Hope Creek arm of Jordan Lake, Durham Co and Chatham Co, 8-31 Jul (Matt Spangler, m. obs.); one around Lake Townsend, Guilford Co, 24-25 Jul (Tom Baker, m. obs.); and two at Lake Crabtree, Wake Co, 24-25 Jul (Eddie Owens). Up to three in the wetlands along N Rugby Rd in Henderson Co, 15-31 Jul (m. obs.) were especially remarkable for the mountain region. As expected, the majority of these sightings involved immature birds, as they are more likely to wander than adults.

Swallow-tailed Kite: Nesting was confirmed along the Black River in Pender Co, NC, when a nest with two nearly-fledged juveniles was photographed 17 Jun (Derb Carter). This nest site is only the second ever documented in North Carolina.

Mississippi Kite: One photographed in flight over Frisco, Dare Co, NC, 5 Jun (Maili Waters, et al.) was very unusual for the Outer Banks.

Broad-winged Hawk: Individuals seen in Wilmington, New Hanover Co, NC, 3 Jul (Sam Cooper) and photographed along the I'On Swamp Trail, Charelston Co, SC, 5 Jul (Tony Masso) were unusual for sites so near the coast during the mid-summer.

Burrowing Owl: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Burrowing Owl on Harbor Island, Beaufort Co, SC, 30 Jul through 5 Aug (Tammy Hester, m. obs.).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One, either a female or an immature bird, photographed perched on a powerline just west of Gaffney, Cherokee Co, SC, 15 Jul (Michael Robertson, et al.) was the only one reported this summer.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: One photographed at Long Creek Park, Forsyth Co, NC, 2 Jun (Jesse Anderson, et al.) was a good find.

Willow Flycatcher: A singing male behaved as if on territory at the Chuck Hollow Lane Wetland in Mecklenburg Co, NC, 29 May through 10 Jun (Dennis Kent, John Scavetto, m. obs.).

Cliff Swallow: Nesting was discovered at three nearby sites around Harlowe, Carteret Co, NC, in June—where NC-101 crosses Core Creek, with 200 birds around 140 active nests, 4 Jun (John Fussell); at a farm shed near Harlowe, with 12 birds gathering mud, 4 Jun (Fussell); and where NC-101 crosses Harlowe Creek, with 80 birds around 48 active nests, 28 Jun (Fussell, Martha Mayo). Fussell notes that “although the species nests regularly in adjacent Craven County . . . the numbers found this year at two sites in Carteret County are completely unprecedented.” Active nests found under several bridges over the Tar River in Greenville, Pitt Co, NC, with 75+ birds in total at those sites in mid-June (Patricia & Russ Tyndall) were also locally unusual.

Hermit Thrush: A few of the higher counts at sites in the NC mountains included five at Clingmans Dome, Swain Co, 7 Jun (Michael Harvey); 11 along the Profile Trail at Grandfather Mountain SP, Avery Co, 8 Jul (Guy McGrane); five, including a juvenile bird, along the Bald Knob Ridge Trail, Yancey Co, 19 Jul (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal); and up to four on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, throughout the summer (Rick Knight, m. obs.).

Red Crossbill: 33 around the Beacon Heights Overlook on the BRP in Avery Co, NC, 4 Jul (Jeff Lewis, et al.) was a good count.

Vesper Sparrow: Breeding was confirmed at Pond Mountain Game Land, Ashe Co, NC, when two juveniles were seen there alongside adults, 18 Jun (Chris Kelly).

Lark Sparrow: One photographed at Alligator River NWR, Dare Co, NC, 4 Jun (Maili Waters, et al.) was very unusual for a site outside of the Sandhills in summer.

Savannah Sparrow: Possibly nesting in the NC mountains were two, one singing, in a grassy field in western Watauga Co, 5 Jun (Guy McGrane) and two, one of which was seen carrying food, along Hannah Ford Rd in Transylvania Co, 24 Jul (Simon Thompson, et al.). An individual seen along Hooper Lane in Henderson Co, NC, 1-11 Jun (Michael Plauché, m. obs.) and 25-31 Jul (Wayne Forsythe, m. obs.) was unusual for summer. One photographed at the Voice of America site in northwest Beaufort Co, NC, 5 Jun (Karen Lebing, et al.) probably was a late migrant.

Bobolink: Seven males were behaving as if on territory in a grassy field in western Watauga Co, NC, 5 Jun (Guy McGrane). Two, a male and a female, seen in a grassy field along the French Broad River in central Transylvania Co, NC, 21 Jun (Michael Plauché) was suggestive of attempted breeding there. One seen and heard calling in flight over the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR in Washington Co, NC, 15 Jul (Ricky Davis) almost certainly was an early fall migrant.

Golden-winged Warbler: A singing male on territory in Pond Mountain Game Land, Ashe Co, NC, 6-19 Jun (Clifton Avery, Chris Kelly) was a first for that site. Kelly mentions that “Christmas Tree production has been phased out (at that site) over the past 15 years” and this bird was found in one of those former tree fields. Breeding was confirmed in western Macon Co, NC, when two adults were seen with two recently fledged juveniles, 24 Jun (Alex Merritt).

“Brewster’s Warbler”: A singing male “Brewster’s Warbler” was also on territory in Pond Mountain Game Land, Ashe Co, NC, 6-19 Jun (Clifton Avery, Chris Kelly).

Kentucky Warbler: Breeding was confirmed along the BRP near Bull Gap, Buncombe Co, NC, when an adult male was seen feeding two fledged juveniles, 15 Jul (Simon Thompson). Though the elevation of the nesting site, 3200 feet above sea level, is not unusual, Thompson notes that “this species has barely a toe-hold in the county anymore and the numbers keep declining.”

Magnolia Warbler: Suggestive of attempted breeding in the NC mountains was a singing male near the trailhead of the Bald Knob Ridge Trail, Yancey Co, 20 May through 6 Jun (John Gerwin, m. obs.); a singing male along the BRP near the Beacon Heights Overlook, Avery Co, 3-8 Jul (Jeff Lewis, m. obs.); and up to two birds on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, throughout the summer (Rick Knight).



*Blackpoll Warbler,
11 Jun 18, Dare Co, NC Photo by
Karen Lebing*

Blackpoll Warbler: An adult male well-photographed in Waves, Dare Co, NC, 11 Jun (Karen Lebing) was quite late. It may have been quite lost as well, as Lebing notes it was headed south down Hatteras Island.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: On territory in the NC mountains were six singing males at Clingmans Dome, Swain Co, 7 Jun (Michael Harvey); four singing males along Black Balsam Rd in Haywood Co, throughout the summer (Mark Simpson, Marilyn Westphal, m. obs.); and one singing male on Roan Mountain, Mitchell Co, throughout the summer (Rick Knight, m. obs.). Nesting was not reported at any site this year.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: A female photographed at a feeder in New Bern, Craven Co, NC, 21 Jun (Lester Coble) was extremely unusual for a site outside the mountains in mid-summer, possibly the latest spring migrant ever documented in the Coastal Plain.

Dickcissel: Dickcissels continued from late spring at multiple suspected breeding sites in the Piedmont and coastal plain. Numbers grew at North River Preserve, Carteret Co, NC, to 14 singing males on 10 Jun (John Fussell, Jack Fennell). Dickcissels continued along Benaja Rd in southern Rockingham Co, NC, until the wheat was harvested in late June and none were seen thereafter (Martin Wall). Four singing males were seen along a stretch of Barrier Store Rd on the border of Cabarrus Co and Stanly Co, NC, 16 Jun (Greg Hays, Taylor Piephoff). Two singing males were seen and heard in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, Clarendon Co, SC, throughout the period (m. obs.). Up to six were seen at the traditional breeding site just north of Cowpens, Spartanburg Co, SC, this summer (m. obs.).



Marbled Godwit, courtesy of Mary Sonis