

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Spring 2019, 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, **et al.** – and others, **Ln** – Lane, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **WMA** – Wildlife Management Area, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

All italicized place names are counties.

Note on 2019 Spring Migration: Many birders commented on the atypical nature of this year's spring songbird migration, noting delayed arrivals of returning breeding species, lack of pass-through migrants, and low overall numbers.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: Sightings made outside of the SC coastal plain, increasing in recent years, included seven at Salem Lake *Forsyth* NC 14 Apr (John Haire, m. obs.), eight at Lake Conestee Nature Park *Greenville* SC 7 May (Mark Harvell), 15 at Archie Elledge WTP *Forsyth* NC 13 May (Harvey Clodfelter, m. obs.), and two at Biltmore Estate *Buncombe* NC 16-17 May (John Koon, m. obs.). Four photographed just beyond the surf in Corolla *Currituck* NC 31 May (David & Jonathan Longo) were unusual for the ocean.

Brant: 25 off Shell Point on Harkers Island *Carteret* NC 6 Mar (John Fussell, et al.) was a notable count for a site south of the Pamlico Sound.

Trumpeter Swan: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report of an immature Trumpeter Swan seen and photographed amongst Tundra Swans at Bear Island WMA *Colleton* SC 8-12 Mar (Irvin Pitts, Mac Williams, m. obs.). If accepted, this report would provide SC with its first definitive record of this large swan.



*Immature swan reported
as Trumpeter Swan
12 Mar 2019, Colleton Co,
SC. Photo by David
Youngblood*

Tundra Swan: Individuals, or possibly the same individual, photographed at Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 26 May (Caleb Bronsink) and at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 26-27 May (Nathaniel Watkins) were quite late to be passing through.

Mottled Duck: Breeding may have occurred in southeast NC this spring, as a hen with three chicks was photographed at a country club lake in northeast Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 16 May (Sam Cooper). It is very possible that the chicks were hybrids, however,

as the only drakes seen in the area were Mallards.

Green-winged Teal: Two, a drake and a hen, at McAlpine WTP *Mecklenburg* NC 23 May (Ron Clark, Greg Hays, Dennis Kent) were late.

Common Eider: A first-winter drake in Charleston Harbor around the Pitt St Causeway *Charleston* SC 4-19 May (m. obs.) and a hen in the Bogue Sound off Morehead City *Carteret* NC 19 May (Marty Wall, et al.) were late.

Surf Scoter: Five, two drakes and three hens, on Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC 22 Mar (Aaron Steed, m. obs.) was a great count for a site in the mountain region.

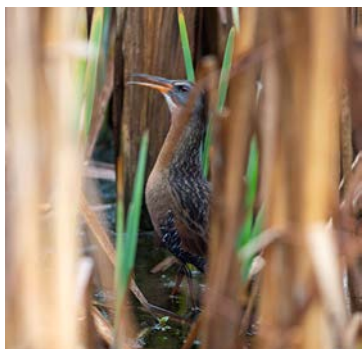
Black Scoter: 1437 in northbound flight off Oceanana Pier in Atlantic Beach *Carteret* NC 23 Mar (John Fussell, Martha Mayo) was a notable count.

Common Merganser: Breeding was confirmed at two sites in the NC mountains this spring—on the Tuckasegee River in *Jackson* NC where, after multiple sightings of two to five adults were made during the early spring, a hen was photographed with three chicks 20-22 May (Tom Quetchenbach), and on the Green River in *Polk* NC where a hen was photographed with six chicks 5 May (Vicky Burke) and again on adjacent Lake Adger, 20 May (Nora Murdock, Marilyn Westphal) and 27 May (Todd Arcos). Reports of breeding in the southern NC mountains have been regular since first documented in 2008.

White-winged Dove: Individuals were seen on Hilton Head Island *Beaufort* SC 31 Mar (Michael Smith, et al.), at a feeder in North Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 28-29 Apr (Deb Winter), and at a feeder in Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 30 Apr (Wanda King).

Black-billed Cuckoo: Individuals on territory at the Dare County Bombing Range *Dare* NC 26 May (Merrill Lynch), along Tyne Rd at Mayo River SP *Rockingham* NC 28 May (Marty Wall), and at Singletary Lake SP *Bladen* NC 30 May (Wayne Hoffman) were good finds for those sites outside the mountains.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Ten distinct individuals continued from fall in a yard with feeders in Buxton *Dare* NC 20 Apr (Ann Maddock).



*Virginia Rail, 8 Apr 2019,
Rockingham Co, NC.
Photo by Marty Wall*

Virginia Rail: One in a wetland in Eden *Rockingham* NC 8-9 Apr (Marty Wall) was a first for that county.

Purple Gallinule: One at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 2 May (Emily Johnson, Nathaniel Watkins, et al.) was unusual for a site so far north.

Common Gallinule: One photographed along NC-8 in *Stokes* NC 12 May (Tony & Cara Woods) was a first for that county.

Limpkin: Sightings, increasing in our region the past two years, were made at four different sites towards the end of period. Individuals were photographed at Hidden Cypress Golf Club *Beaufort* SC 29 Apr (Cherry Underwood), at Mountain Island Lake *Mecklenburg* NC 21 May through 10 Jun (m. obs.),

and in flight over Riverfront Park *Richland* SC 24 May (Tracy Martin). Two were seen, one photographed, in the Sparkleberry Swamp at the north end of Lake Marion *Sumter* SC 28 May (Elizabeth Anderegg, et al.). Is this recent increase in sightings due to food (snail) scarcity inside its normal range, or some other reason?

Sandhill Crane: One photographed in an urban area of Apex *Wake* NC 14 Apr (Nikki Miller) was likely forced down by inclement weather. Two photographed at David Pond *Lexington* SC 2 May (Bailey Parker) and three seen in flight over Lake James SP *McDowell* NC 6 May (Brian Bockhahn) were also unusual for those areas.

Whimbrel: 3000 in flight off Edisto Beach SP *Colleton* SC 17 Apr (Judy Walker) was an amazing count.

Long-billed Curlew: One seen over Deveaux Bank *Charleston* SC 28 Mar (Janet Thibault) may have been the same individual photographed at nearby Botany Bay Plantation WMA 5 Apr (Nicole-Marie Pettinelli).

Curlew Sandpiper: One seen and photographed on North Pond at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 15 May (Alan MacEachren, m. obs.) was a great find. Sightings of this Eurasian species have been few and far between this past decade.

Sanderling: One photographed along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC after a period of heavy rain 19 Apr (Vicky Burke) was very unusual for the mountain region in spring.

Baird's Sandpiper: One seen in Mills River *Henderson* NC 16 May (Aaron Steed, Simon Thompson, et al.) was a great find for spring.

Short-billed Dowitcher: 30 along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 12 May (Timothy Carstens, m. obs.) was a remarkable count for an inland site.

Wilson's Phalarope: One seen at Lake Busbee in Conway *Horry* SC 15 May (Stephen Thomas) was, surprisingly, a first for that county.

Red-necked Phalarope: Two in a flooded field along Butler Bridge Rd in *Henderson* NC 19 Apr (Kevin Burke) and one at Lake Wheeler *Wake* NC 3 May (Marc Ribaud) were great finds away from the ocean.

Red Phalarope: One seen and photographed on a small pond along Wyatt Ln in *Alamance* NC 13 Apr (David Pennebaker, m. obs.) was very unusual for an inland site, especially in spring.

South Polar Skua: Skuas were seen on ten of fourteen nearly consecutive pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 18 May through 2 Jun, with high counts of three skuas on 25 May and 26 May (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Long-tailed Jaeger: An adult well-seen over the beach just west of Cape Point *Dare* NC 24 May (Michael Gosselin) was an excellent sighting, as this species is the least likely jaeger to be seen from shore in the Carolinas.

Glaucous Gull: First/second-year birds seen at three sites in *Dare* NC—at Pea Island NWR 18 Mar (W. Douglas Robinson), over the Roanoke Sound 9 Apr (Jeff Lewis), and near the Oregon Inlet Campground 19 Apr (Paul Doshkov)—may have been the same individual that was seen around Pea Island NWR during the winter.

Great Black-backed Gull: An immature bird photographed at Carolina Marina on Belews Lake *Rockingham* NC 13 May (Marty Wall) was a first for that county.



Great Black-backed Gull
13 May 2019, *Rockingham Co*, NC.
Photo by Marty Wall

Sooty Tern: One seen in a tern nesting colony on Deveaux Bank *Charleston* SC 15 May (Brad Wilkinson, et al.) was suggestive of attempted breeding there.

Least Tern: Audubon NC Coastal Biologist Lindsay Addison estimates that there were 2400 adult Least Terns in a nesting colony at the north end of Lea-Hutaff Island *Pender* NC this spring. This count is the highest made in NC since tri-annual surveys began in 1977, and possibly in modern times, which is encouraging news for a threatened species.

Roseate Tern: Individuals were photographed inside the bird protection area at Cape Point *Dare* NC 17 May (Michael Gosselin) and in flight northbound off Oceanana Pier in Atlantic Beach *Carteret* NC 22 May (Marty Wall).

Sandwich Tern: One seen on the beach in Atlantic Beach *Carteret* NC 16 Mar (Martha Mayo) was somewhat early to return.

White-tailed Tropicbird: An adult was photographed approximately 83 miles south-southeast of Cape Lookout *Carteret* NC 31 May (Hannes Leonard).

Red-throated Loon: Individuals on Lake Townsend *Guilford* NC 10-12 Mar (Matt Wangerin, m. obs.) and on Lake Hartwell *Anderson* SC 1 Apr (Steve Patterson) were notable for inland sites.

European Storm-Petrel: One was briefly seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 1 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Trindade Petrel: This rare gadfly was seen on four pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC this spring, with one intermediate-morph and one dark-morph 23 May, one light-morph 24 May, one dark-morph 25 May, and one dark-morph 29 May (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Bermuda Petrel: Individuals were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 8 May, 9 May, and 29 May (Brian Patteson, et al.).

Fea's Petrel: Individuals were seen on three pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC this spring, on 22 May, 2 Jun, and 8 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Sooty Shearwater: 19 in northbound flight off Jeannette's Pier *Dare* NC 22 May (Jelmer Poelstra, et al.) was a notable count from shore.

Magnificent Frigatebird: An immature bird was seen soaring over a golf course in Edisto Beach *Colleton* SC 27 May (Andrew Kratter).

Masked Booby: Individuals, sub-adults or near adults, were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC on 23 May, 1 Jun, and 8 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Brown Booby: An adult female was photographed on the beach just north of Oregon Inlet *Dare* NC 18 Mar (Paul Doshkov).

Great Cormorant: Three adults in Beaufort Inlet *Carteret* NC 5 Mar (John Fussell, et al.) was a good count for that site.

Anhinga: Individuals seen soaring with vultures near Pilot Mountain SP *Stokes* NC 23 Apr (Jesse Anderson) and in flight over Little Beavardam Creek in *Anderson* SC 27 Apr (Andy Norris, Steve Patterson) were unusual for sites so far inland, likely migrants that overshot their summering grounds. 21 at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC 5 May (John Fussell, Jack Fennell) was a record count for that county.

American White Pelican: The high count below the dam on High Rock Lake *Davidson* and *Rowan* NC this spring was 72 on 7 Mar (David & Susan Disher, Marbry Hopkins). Nine on Falls Lake in *Durham* NC 13-14 Mar (Ed Corey, m. obs.) and 17 on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 24 Mar (Jelmer Poelstra) were good counts for those sites. Six in flight over the Yadkin River in *Siloam* *Yadkin* NC 2 May (Brian Bockhahn) were a first for that county. 720 at Canal WMA *Berkeley* SC 16 Mar (Brad Sale) was an impressive count.

Least Bittern: One seen in the tall grass around the pond at Valle Crucis Community Park *Watauga* NC 19 May (Bruce Young, et al.) was a first for that county or for any site in the mountains north of Mount Mitchell.

Cattle Egret: An estimated 1200 inside a large heronry at a former quarry in west-central *Marlboro* SC 19 May (Mac Williams, et al.) was an amazing total.

White Ibis: 1460 counted flying towards an island roost south of Harkers Island *Carteret* NC during the evening of 18 May (Trevor Sleight) was a good count for NC, indicative of the species' growing numbers in the state. Still more numerous in SC, 5000 White

Ibises were counted going to roost in a swamp near Ruffin *Colleton* SC 24 Mar (Sidney Gauthreaux, et al.).

Swallow-tailed Kite: A pair photographed building a nest in a Tulip Poplar tree in *Onslow* NC 29 Apr (Hunter Phillips) provided the third documented report of nesting in the state. One photographed in flight over Gunter Rd *Greenville* SC 7 May (Joan Baker, Denise DuPon) was unusual for upstate SC in spring.

Gray Kingbird: One was seen and photographed on a powerline in Edisto Beach *Colleton* SC 12 May (Pam Ford, Craig Watson, et al.) but not thereafter.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One seen along Middleton Loop Rd in southeast *Stokes* NC 15-16 Apr (Jesse Anderson, m. obs.) was a first for that county. A pair nested in a maple tree near the Rock Hill-York County Airport *York* SC 25 Apr into summer (Andy Lazenby, m. obs.). One was seen along Mid-Pines Rd in *Wake* NC 23 May (Alan Avakian) but not thereafter.

Philadelphia Vireo: One seen and recorded singing in north *Watauga* NC 1 May (Merrill Lynch) was a great find for spring.

Barn Swallow: One seen in flight off Shell Point on Harkers Island *Carteret* NC 6 Mar (John Fussell, et al.) was early.

American Pipit: One photographed at Archie Elledge WTP *Forsyth* NC 17 May (John Haire) was somewhat late.

Evening Grosbeak: Likely migrating back north after the mini-irruption this winter were two to three photographed at a feeder in Black Mountain *Buncombe* NC 25-28 Apr (Jay Wherley) and two photographed at a feeder in Wake Forest *Wake* NC in early May (Mark Joyner).

Red Crossbill: Two at Pilot Mountain SP *Surry* NC 26 Mar (Jesse Anderson) were unusual for the Foothills region outside of an irruption year.

Pine Siskin: This finch may have bred in *Orange* NC this spring, as an adult was seen feeding a juvenile in a yard in Chapel Hill 13 May (Dave Hart).

Lark Sparrow: Individuals continued from winter in *Camden* NC through 11 Apr (James Harrison) and at Myrtle Beach SP *Horry* SC through 22 Apr (Scott Hartley).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Individuals near the Moore County Airport *Moore* NC 9 Apr (Susan Campbell) and at Price Park *Guilford* NC 23 Apr (Andrew Thornton, m. obs.) were unusual for those areas, and for spring.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Individuals were photographed with grackles under a feeder in Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 16 Mar (Jordan Matejcek), with a flock of cowbirds near Summerton *Clarendon* SC 5 Apr (Rebecca Jordan), and at a feeder in Leland *Brunswick* NC 12 Apr (Diane Preble).

Brewer's Blackbird: This species was seen at Dobbins Farm in Townville *Anderson* SC throughout March with a high count of 35 there 23 Mar (Linda Montgomery, et al.). Up to three were seen along Hooper Ln in *Henderson* NC 24 Mar to 3 Apr (Wayne Forsythe, m. obs.).

Louisiana Waterthrush: Two singing males at creeks along NC-171 in Jamesville *Martin* NC 30 Apr with one continuing 2 May (Jeff Lewis) were unusual for that area of the coastal plain.

Brewster's Warbler (hybrid): A singing male was on territory in southwest *Macon* NC 30 Apr through 4 Jun (Samuel Merker, m. obs.).

Connecticut Warbler: A definite migratory movement through our southern mountains took place 12-13 May, with individual migrants photographed at Table Rock SP *Pickens* SC 12 May (Jerry & Brenda Callaway), seen and heard singing along the Oconaluftee River in *Swain* NC 13 May (Angus Pritchard, et al.), and heard singing in the Hospital Fields in Brevard *Transylvania* NC 13-15 May (Michael Plauché, et al.). One recorded singing just northwest of Weaverville *Buncombe* NC 29 May (Steve Semanchuk) was also rather late.

Hooded Warbler: One seen and recorded singing along the French Broad River near Brevard *Transylvania* NC 14 Mar (Nathaniel Axtell, et al.) was quite early.

Cerulean Warbler: Ten singing males along a ten mile stretch of the Roanoke River in *Bertie* NC 8 May (John Carpenter, Alexander Worm) was a notable count of that disjunct breeding population.

Western Tanager: Individual males were photographed in yards in Trent Woods *Craven* NC 20-29 Mar (Lee Rouse) and in Southern Shores *Dare* NC 17 Apr (Jim Gould).

Indigo Bunting: A first-winter male that visited a feeder in Straits *Carteret* NC 17-20 Mar (Carolyn & Don Hoss) was early to arrive.

Dickcissel: Dickcissels began showing up at traditional breeding/summering sites in late April and early May, with one in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC 24 Apr (Julie Mobley, et al.) being the earliest. Numbers peaked at many sites by mid-to-late May, with eight at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 27 May (Charlie Quattlebaum) and six at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC 1 Jun (Ronnie Hewlette, et al.) being the high counts.