

The Chat

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2019 Annual Report of the South Carolina Bird Record Committee

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In 2019, the South Carolina Bird Records Committee acted on 34 new reports, of which 27 were accepted, three were not accepted, and four will be re-reviewed.

The accepted records detailed below add one species to South Carolina's Main List: Trumpeter Swan. The Main List now includes 440 species. Rough-legged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, and Roseate Tern have been elevated from the Provisional I List to the Definitive List based on photographic evidence. Trumpeter Swan will be removed from the Provisional II List.

The East Coast from Florida to Maine experienced an "invasion" of Ash-throated Flycatchers during the fall and winter of 2019. Ash-throated Flycatcher was only added to the South Carolina's Main List in 2011 with a bird photographed in Beaufort County. Up until this report, only six records of Ash-throated Flycatcher have been accepted by the Committee. This year the Committee received and accepted six separate reports. Two additional reports were received by the Committee in early 2020.

The annual meeting of the SCBRC was held on 14 December 2019 at the Charleston County Parks Headquarters in Charleston. The meeting was attended in person by Jeff Click, Aaron Given, Keith McCullough, and Chris Hill. Lex Glover, Simon Harvey, and Steve Wagner joined by telephone conference. Aaron Given was re-elected as Chair. Lex Glover agreed to another term as Secretary. Jeff Click and Chris Hill were re-elected to the Nomination Committee. The Committee decided to not add or remove any species from the Review List. Much of the discussion during the meeting focused on revising the Committee's bylaws, for which a first draft was produced earlier in the year.

There were no changes to the membership in 2019.

ACCEPTED REPORTS

Brant (*Branta bernicla*). 2019-012. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report from Julian Donahue, who photographed a Brant in North Santee Bay (Georgetown Co.) on 25 October 2019. This is the state's fourth record.

Brant (*Branta bernicla*). 2019-033. Accept (9-0). Chris Hill submitted a written report along with two photos of a Brant that had been seen at the Tom Yawkey Center (Georgetown Co.) on 18 December 2019.

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*). 2019-032. Accept (9-0). Gary Harbour and Michael Robertson submitted separate reports of four Cackling Geese seen at Lake Robinson (Greenville Co.) on 19 December 2019. Several distant but diagnostic photos

were included with the report. The photos showed the Cackling Geese adjacent to Canada Geese, which allowed the Committee to make a judgement on their size.



*Cackling Geese (with Canada Geese),
19 Dec 19, Greenville Co, SC.*

*Photo by Gary Harbour and Michael
Robertson.*

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*). 2019-006. Accept (9-0). Irvin Pitts submitted a written report along with six photographs of an immature Trumpeter Swan seen at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area (Colleton Co.) on 8 March 2019. The bird was relocated on 11 March 2019 by other birders. This report represents the first record of Trumpeter Swan in South Carolina, which will move from the Provisional II list to the Definitive List.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*). 2019-001. Accept (9-0). David McLean submitted a

written report along with three photos of a Tufted Duck at Bulls Island (Charleston Co.) on 8 February 2019. This is the second record for South Carolina, with the first occurring last winter, also at Bulls Island.

Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*). 2019-019. Accept (9-0). Shawn Smolen-Morton submitted a written report along with one photo of a Harlequin Duck at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown Co.) on 5 December 2019. This bird was originally reported on 4 December 2019 with the last eBird report on 18 December 2019.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*). 2019-005. Accept (8-1). Robert Taylor submitted a written report of a Red-necked Grebe at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown Co.) on 28 January 2019. This is only the fourth record for the state.

Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*). 2019-002. Accept (9-0). David McLean submitted a written report along with four photographs of a Western Grebe seen at Bulls Island (Charleston Co.) on 7 February 2019.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides*). 2019-020. Accept (9-0). Chris Hill submitted a written report along with two photographs of an Iceland Gull at the Horry County Landfill (Horry Co.) on 17 January 2019.

Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*). 2019-007. Accept (9-0). The Committee received three separate written reports from Paul Laurent, Ritch Lilly, and Shawn Smolen-Morton of up to three individual Roseate Terns at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown Co.) from 30 June – 5 July 2019. Several photographs and one video were submitted. This is the state's second record.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*). 2019-016. Accept (9-0). Keith McCullough submitted a detailed written report of a Brown Booby at Folly Beach (Charleston Co.) on 8 November 2019.

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*). 2019-017. Accept (9-0). Lois Stacey submitted a written report of an inland Great Cormorant from Clark's Hill Dam on Strom Thurmond Lake (McCormick Co.) on 17 November 2019. The bird was seen and photographed by many birders into the winter.

Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*). 2019-014. Accept (9-0). Brad Sale submitted a written report along with five photos of a Snail Kite at Lake Marion (Clarendon Co.) that was seen from 31 October – 3 November 2019. This is South Carolina's fourth record of Snail Kite.



*Snail Kite, 31 Oct 19,
Clarendon Co, SC.
Photo by Brad Sale.*

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). 2019-015. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report from Tim Baerwald who photographed a Swainson's Hawk at the Avian Conservation Center (Charleston Co.) on 7 November 2019. This is the state's second record.

Rough-legged Hawk (*Buteo lagopus*). 2019-003. Accept (8-1). The Committee voted on an eBird report with from John Cox and Nathan Dias of a Rough-legged Hawk that was photographed at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (Charleston Co.) on 17 December 2011. This is the state's second record.

Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiacus*). 2019-022. Accept (9-0). Chris Hill submitted a written report along with one photograph on behalf of an anonymous reporter of a Snowy Owl at Myrtle Beach State Park (Horry Co.) on 7 December 2019.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*). 2019-023. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report from Mike Walker of a Long-eared Owl that was photographed at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown Co.) on 3 December 2019. This represents a third record for South Carolina.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2019-025. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report with three photos from Steven Guy of an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Port Royal Boardwalk (Beaufort Co.) on 22 October 2019.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2019-026. Accept (9-0). Aaron Given submitted a written report along with two photos of an Ash-throated Flycatcher that was captured and banded at Kiawah Island (Charleston Co.) on 13-14 November 2019.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2019-027. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report with four photos from Ritch Lilly of an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Huntington Beach State Park (Georgetown Co.) on 17 November 2019.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2019-028. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report from Matt Johnson, Cathy Miller, and Carl Miller with three photos of an Ash-throated Flycatcher on private property in Calhoun Co. on 15 December 2019.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2019-029. Accept (9-0). John Hutchens submitted a written report along with five photos of an Ash-throated Flycatcher that was seen during the Winyah Bay Christmas Bird Count at the Yawkey Wildlife Center (Georgetown Co.) on 19 December 2019.

Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 2019-030. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report with four photos from William Wise at Hilton Head (Beaufort Co.) on 23 December 2019.

Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*). 2019-004. Accept (9-0). Craig Watson submitted a very detailed report along with eight photos of a Tropical Kingbird at Ft. Moultrie National Monument (Charleston Co.) on 16 June 2019. This is the second record of Tropical Kingbird for South Carolina, with the first being seen in 2018.



*Tropical Kingbird, 16 Jun 19,
Charleston Co, SC.
Photo by Craig Watson.*

Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii*). 2019-011. Accept (9-0). Michael Adams submitted a written report along with five photos of a Bell's Vireo at Ft. Moultrie National Monument (Charleston Co.) on 23-24 October 2019.

Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*). 2019-010. Accept (8-1). Kevin Kubach submitted a written report of a Kirtland's Warbler at Fants Grove Wildlife Management Area (Charleston Co.) on 7 October 2019. This is South Carolina's third record.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). 2019-031. Accept (9-0). The Committee voted on an eBird report with four photos from Kevin Brady of a male Bullock's Oriole at Rose Hill Plantation (Beaufort Co.) on 20 December 2019.

NON-ACCEPTED REPORTS

Cassin's Kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*). 2019-013. Non-accept (1-8). The Committee considered an eBird report of a Cassin's Kingbird from Colleton County in

October 2019. Based on the photograph from the eBird report, the Committee felt that there was not enough evidence to positively identify this bird.

Tricolored Munia (*Lonchura malacca*). 2019-008. Non-accept (2-7). The Committee considered a written report along with several photos of a Tricolored Munia in Colleton County in July 2019. Although the identification was correct, the origin of this bird was

in question. Tricolored Munias are popular in the pet trade, and the Committee felt that an escapee was just as likely as a vagrant from a self-sustaining population.

Tricolored Munia (*Lonchura malacca*). 2019-034. Non-accept (2-7). The Committee considered an eBird report with photos of four individuals from Georgetown County in August 2019. Although the identification was correct, the origin of this bird was in question. Tricolored Munias are popular in the pet trade, and the Committee felt that an escapee was just as likely as a vagrant from a self-sustaining population.

UNRESOLVED REPORTS

The following reports received a majority of votes to accept but more than one vote to not accept. These reports will need to be reevaluated by the Committee.

Say's Phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). 2019-009. Re-review (7-2). The Committee reviewed a written report with a distant photo of a Say's Phoebe from Charleston County in September 2019.

Cave Swallow (*Petrochelidon fulva*). 2019-018. Re-review (6-3). The Committee reviewed an eBird report of a Cave Swallow photographed in Horry County in November of 2019. Some Committee Members felt that the photos were not conclusive enough to identify the bird as a Cave Swallow.

Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*). 2019-021. Re-review (5-4). The Committee reviewed a written report of a Monk Parakeet from Horry County in September of 2019. Based on the photos submitted, the identification was correct but the Committee disagreed with the stated origin of this bird.

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*). 2019-024. Re-review (5-4). The Committee reviewed a written report of a Bullock's Oriole from Beaufort County in October of 2016. The description provided left some Committee Members wanting additional documentation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee thanks all the observers who submitted reports and those who encouraged others to submit reports. Your actions increase our understanding of bird occurrence in South Carolina.

2019 Annual Report of the North Carolina Bird Record Committee

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The make-up of the 2019 North Carolina Bird Records Committee included additions of C. William Cook, Z. Taylor Piephoff, and Steven P. Shultz as voting members, and the retention of Richard J. Davis and Harry E. LeGrand, Jr. in advisory capacities. Samuel Cooper, W. Jefferson Lemons, and Joshua L. Southern rotated off the Committee for at least a one-year hiatus.

All italicized place names are counties.

ACCEPTED REPORTS

Trindade Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*) (19-01) An eBird report made by Alec Hopping and Logan Kahle containing a written description and a series of photos of a *Pterodroma* petrel at Buckhorn Reservoir (*Wilson*) in the wake of Hurricane Florence on 15 September 2018 was unanimously accepted by the North Carolina Bird Records Committee (NCBRC) in 2019. Photos by Hopping and Kahle confirmed the bird as a Trindade Petrel, the first inland record of this species in North Carolina.

Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) (18-03). The NCBRC reviewed excellent photos of a sub-adult Kirtland's Warbler taken by Pat Draisey and Joyce Edwards at Duck boardwalk (*Dare*). The bird was present from 3-5 October 2017. The report was unanimously accepted and represents the first coastal record of this Federally endangered warbler for North Carolina.

Tundra Swan (Bewick's) (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) (19-05). A thorough report with photographs submitted by Ricky Davis of a *bewickii* Tundra Swan among a large flock of the expected nominate subspecies in *Edgecombe* was accepted unanimously by the NCBRC. This individual was seen from 2-4 February 2019, and represents not only the first record of this Old World subspecies of our familiar wintering Tundra Swans in North Carolina, but a first for the eastern United States.

Limpkin (*Aramus guarana*). 2019 saw multiple noteworthy Limpkin records in North Carolina. The following reports were accepted by the NCBRC:

(19-07) The committee unanimously accepted the report of a Limpkin at Mountain Island Lake (*Mecklenburg*) with written description by Kent Fiala and

photos by Rob Van Epps, Dwayne Martin, and Bert Fisher. This bird was present from 22 May-9 June 2019 and represents the sixth record of this species in the state.

(19-08) Written description and photos of a Limpkin at Owen Park in Swannanoa (*Buncombe*) on 8 July 2019 submitted by Sam Pratt were accepted unanimously by the NCBRC. This represents the state's seventh record.

(19-15) Photos of a Limpkin at Lake Tillery (*Stanly*) submitted by Matt Wangerin were accepted unanimously. This bird was present from 21 November to 2 December 2019 and represents North Carolina's eighth record.

Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*) (19-09). An exciting record of a Pacific Golden-Plover present from 29 July-7 August 2019 at the Salt Pond, Cape Hatteras National Seashore (*Dare*), with written description and photographs from Michael Gosselin, was unanimously accepted by the NCBRC. This represents the first record for this species in North Carolina, and one of only a few records of this species on the east coast of North America. By virtue of the photos it is added to the Definitive List.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*) (19-10) A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper seen at the South Pond of Pea Island NWR (*Dare*) on 11-12 July 2019 was unanimously accepted by the NCBRC. With written description and photographs by Karen Lebing, this represents the third North Carolina record of this Old World shorebird.

Swainson's Thrush (*Catharus ustulatus*) (19-11) A very unusual winter record of Swainson's Thrush from Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary (*Buncombe*) was unanimously accepted by the NCBRC. Written description and photo were submitted by Jay Wherley from an observation on 6 January, but bird was present from 2-6 January 2019. This represents one of only a few winter records of this Neotropical migrant in the United States, and is the first such record for North Carolina.

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*) (19-12). The NCBRC unanimously accepted a written description and photo of a Trumpeter Swan at Jordan Lake (*Chatham*), 26 February 2019, submitted by Louise Belk. While Trumpeter Swan has been an uncommon, though expected, winter species among large Tundra Swan flocks in the Coastal Plain in recent years, this represents a second record for North Carolina's Piedmont region. Of note, the observer described two Trumpeter Swans in the written description, although the accompanying photo shows only one bird along with a Tundra Swan.

Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis*) (19-13). The committee considered and accepted (8-1) a photo of a sub--adult Snail Kite photographed at Oregon Inlet (*Dare*) by Nick Newberry on 4 December 2019. The committee lamented the fact that this report consisted of little more than a series of photos that, while definitive, offered little in the way of context. In any case, this represents the second record for this species in North Carolina and the first living record as the previous one was of an adult bird found dead.

NON-ACCEPTED REPORTS

Townsend's Warbler (*Setophaga townsendi*) (19-02) The committee considered a report consisting of written descriptions and field sketches of a possible Townsend's Warbler seen in *Mecklenburg* 22 September 2018 and voted not to accept (3-6). The committee commends the reporter for the field sketches, but ultimately found that the report did not eliminate species more expected for this part of the state and this time of year.

Sooty Shearwater (*Ardenna grisea*) (19-04) The NCBRC considered a written report of Sooty Shearwater in *Mecklenburg* following the passage of Hurricane Florence on 15 September 2018, ultimately voting not to accept (3-4, with 2 abstentions), due mainly to poor viewing conditions and the difficulty of ruling out similar species. The committee finds the observation compelling however, and has asked the observer to re-submit with additional details.

UNRESOLVED

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) (19-06). The NCBRC reviewed a written description and photos submitted by Patricia Finch of an apparent adult male Lazuli Bunting visiting a feeder in *Carteret* from 19-21 August 2019. The report received a majority of acceptance votes (7-2), with dissenting members noting the poor quality of the photos. Because the report received more than one non-acceptance votes, it requires review from outside the committee and subsequent re-voting on these outside reviews or any additional comments from the observers.

Lazuli Bunting (*Passerina amoena*) (19-14) A report of a male Lazuli Bunting from Salvo Day Use Area (*Dare*) on 19 October 2019 consisting of a written description was considered by the committee to accept (5-4), though not overwhelmingly so. Because the report received more than one non-acceptance votes, it requires review from outside the committee and subsequent re-voting on these outside reviews or any additional comments from the observers.

Summary

With this round of voting, Pacific Golden-Plover is added to the Definitive List. The total number of accepted species from North Carolina is now 485 (plus one over the final 2018 list) of which 471 are Definitive (plus one over the final 2018 list), two are considered Not Established, and 12 are Provisional (no change from the final 2018 list).

Literature Cited

LeGrand, H., J. Haire, N. Swick, and T. Howard. 2016. Birds of North Carolina: their Distribution and Abundance. <http://ncbirds.carolinabirdclub.org/>

Nesting Northern Saw-whet Owls (*Aegolius acadicus*) in the Southern Appalachian Mountains

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Introduction

The Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) is a common breeding species in forests of southern Canada and the northern United States, as well as in mountainous areas of the western United States and Mexico. In the eastern United States the presence of adult owls during the breeding season has been known for more than 75 years as far south as Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the Appalachian range in North Carolina and Tennessee (Stupka 1946, 1963). In North Carolina early indications of potential breeding occurred when chocolate-brown juveniles were found in July 1965 in the Great Balsam Mountains, twice in September 1965 in the Black Mountains, and in September 1972 on the Pisgah Ridge (Simpson 1974). However, no actual nests were found that far south until 1989 and 1992. In North Carolina the first nest was discovered in the Black Mountains in a flying squirrel box by Allen Boynton in summer 1989 (LeGrand 1990). The first nest in Tennessee was discovered in June 1992 in a nest box that D. Rad Mayfield and Dr. Fred Alsop had set up at Unaka Mountain (Mayfield and Alsop 1992). In 1995, and again from 1999 through 2001, nest boxes were placed at Unaka Mountain, Roan Mountain, and Grandfather Mountain by master's degree students at East Tennessee State University and Appalachian State University. In 1995 four nest boxes were occupied, three on Roan Mountain and one on Unaka Mountain, and two of these boxes fledged chicks (Barb 1995). From 1999 through 2001 a total of six boxes were occupied over the three year period, two on Roan Mountain and four on Grandfather Mountain, and four of these fledged chicks (Williams 2003).

Methods

In 2011 we began regularly monitoring Northern Saw-whet Owl nesting boxes built and installed by Simpson from 2007 through 2017. These boxes were placed at elevations from 1486 to 1905 meters (4874 to 6249 feet) in areas of the Southern Appalachians along the Great Balsam, Pisgah Ridge, and Black Mountain Ranges. Areas selected consisted predominantly of mixed Red Spruce (*Picea rubens*), Fraser Fir (*Abies fraseri*), and deciduous forest generally in close proximity to forest openings created by fires, logging, and tree loss as a result of Balsam Woolly Adelgids (*Adelges piceae*). Box locations were based on Northern Saw-whet Owl calling surveys conducted periodically since the 1960's by Simpson (Simpson 1968, 1971, 1974a, 1974b; Simpson and Range 1974; Simpson and Ruiz 1975). By 2015 there were 25 boxes throughout the three ranges. Because of research permit limitations, specific box locations are not identified. Some of the earlier boxes were single placements, but Canadian biologist Jean Pierre

Savard studying Saw-whet Owl breeding suggested placing these boxes in pairs (pers. comm.), so several were added to existing sites between 2011 and 2015, and in subsequent years boxes were paired at all new locations. Thus, in 2015 there were 11 sites with at least two boxes within 23 meters (75 feet) of each other and two locations with three or four boxes in close proximity. From 2008 to 2015 the boxes were checked, usually twice, during the nesting season (March-June) mainly by tapping on the boxes to see if any owls appeared in the entrance. In 2015 John Gerwin from the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences loaned us a “tree peeper” camera, which is attached to a long pole and connected to a viewing monitor on the ground. This was a more effective method of checking boxes.

Results

Tapping on boxes, and later using the camera, we found no evidence of owls at any of the boxes until the last box checked during the 2015 season. On 26 April we found an adult owl in a box along the Pisgah Ridge.

As this was our first occupied box and we had no way to determine where it was in the nesting cycle, extensive precautions were taken to avoid disturbing it further since the risk of nest abandonment increases when an owl is disturbed early in the nesting process (Rasmussen et al. 2008). On 10 May we returned to check the box, and a well-feathered chick appeared in the box entrance. We returned on 13 May, and a chick once again popped into the box entrance. With greater experience we discovered that this is a common behavior for chicks about to fledge (Fig. 1).

With revived hope for the 2016 season, we began monitoring boxes in mid-March of that year, once again using the “tree peeper” camera. Unexpectedly, we found an occupied box our first day in a different location from the previous year along the Pisgah Ridge. No other occupied boxes were found that month,

Figure 1. Chick near fledging in box

but on 20 April, two were found in the Great Balsam Mountains, along with another occupied box along the Pisgah Ridge on 23 April. This last was the paired box of the one that was occupied in 2015. Boxes are rarely used by the same owl two successive years even when the box has been cleaned (Rasmussen et al. 2008). Finally, on 10 May a fifth occupied box was found in the Black Mountains. All of the occupied boxes were monitored regularly throughout the nesting season using the “tree peeper” camera and by placing motion activated wildlife cameras with night vision capability, borrowed from N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, on tree limbs near each box. The main object of



the night vision camera was to monitor the male bringing prey to the nest (Fig. 2), observe potential predator activity near the nest, and document fledging dates of chicks. As we repeatedly observed, the arriving adult typically landed on a branch near the box entrance and transferred the prey item from its talons to its bill before entering the box. Thus, abundant photos were obtained in areas where we correctly assumed the location of the landing branch. Four of the boxes monitored in 2016 fledged a total of 12 chicks. The fifth box was abandoned after the female incubated evidently infertile eggs for almost two months. Normal hatching occurs 27-29 days from egg-laying (Rasmussen et al. 2008).



Figure 2. Chick in box entrance watching adult with prey. Photo taken by motion-activated night vision camera.

Late in 2016 we installed eight additional boxes at four new locations, so during the 2017 season there were 33 boxes in 15 potential territories. Once again, in 2017 we found five occupied boxes, all in the same areas as the previous year. However, the box in the Black Mountains was found abandoned with two eggs in it on the day it was discovered. Another in the Balsam Mountains was found with a female sitting on three eggs on 20 April, but the nest was abandoned by 2 May. On 18 May we found the paired box at this location occupied with a female sitting on eggs. By 21 June this box was also abandoned. Interestingly, this was the same box that was abandoned the previous year.

The remaining three occupied boxes, two on the Pisgah Ridge and one in the Great Balsam Mountains, all fledged chicks, five from the Pisgah Ridge boxes and one from the Balsam Mountains box. Motion activated cameras were also set up during the nesting cycle at two of the three successful nest sites, and many additional photos were obtained.

Late in 2017 we installed a pair of boxes at another new location, so at the beginning of the 2018 season there were 35 boxes in 16 locations along the three ranges. The 2018 breeding season was quite unusual. April was a very cold month and precipitation in May was well above average. The atypical weather may have had an effect on nesting. We started checking boxes in February, but the first occupied box was not found until 1 April on the Pisgah Ridge in the same area that owls had successfully nested the previous three years. Five eggs hatched from this box, but about two weeks after the last chick had hatched out, on 21 May at 5:17a.m., a Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*) was caught on the wildlife camera raiding the box (Fig. 3). As no feathers were found in the box when it was later examined, it is possible that at least some of the chicks managed to escape, but also probable that at least the two youngest owlets were carried off. No photos were obtained of either the weasel or any owls coming out of the box because the reaction time of the wildlife camera is not fast enough to catch rapidly moving objects. This was not the first time a weasel had been caught entering a box. During the 2016 season a long-tailed weasel was caught on camera entering one of the owl boxes, but at the time the box was occupied by a Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*), which the weasel was seen carrying off. This is the only predator species caught on camera entering any of the owl boxes. Red Squirrels were frequently caught on camera near all of the boxes, but never near the box entrance while it was occupied by an owl, possibly because the female never leaves the box during the day and repeatedly snaps its bill when disturbed. By the time the female finally leaves the nest permanently about two weeks before the chicks fledge, the chicks are old enough to snap their bills when disturbed.



Figure 3. Long-tailed Weasel entering owl box.
Photo taken by motion-activated night vision camera.

As it was already late in the nesting season, based on previous experience, we were not expecting further nesting activity in 2018, but on 24 May we found two occupied boxes in the Great Balsam Mountains. One of these was in the same area where owls had abandoned nests in 2016 and 2017. In this box we found a female sitting on four eggs, but as in previous years, by 20 June it had been abandoned once again. The eggs were collected from this box in July. The other occupied Balsam Mountains box, also in one of the same areas used the previous two years, was found with four eggs. Three of the eggs hatched, and two chicks successfully fledged from this box. A night vision camera placed at this site again took numerous photos of the male bringing in prey.

The 2019 season was somewhat disappointing. After checking the boxes in March, April, and early May, we had almost given up hope until we finally found an occupied box on 22 May. This was one of the boxes installed at a new location along the Pisgah Ridge in November 2016. As the female in this box refused to budge whenever we checked with the “tree peeper” camera, we were unable to determine the number of eggs, or even the number of eggs that hatched. Not until 19 June were we able to see the contents of the box when the banding crew came to band the female. Even then she refused to get off the nest, and the assistant banders had to open the top and physically remove her. At that time the nest held two chicks that were between one and two weeks old. Both chicks fledged by early July. This box was also the only other one where we observed attempted predation caught on the motion-activated camera, this time by a large Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*). The bear could reach the box entrance with its nose, but was unable to pull it down (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Black bear inspecting occupied box

The 2020 season started well with two occupied boxes found on 15 April, both along the Pisgah Ridge. One occupied box was in an area where boxes have been occupied almost every year, and the other was the paired box of the one that was occupied the previous year. Unfortunately, we were unable to check boxes again until 15 May because of road closures as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the day the road reopened we found another occupied box in the Balsam Mountains at another traditionally successful location. By then the first two boxes were well along. Three chicks fledged from one of them, but the other was raided by a predator about two weeks before probable fledge date, probably shortly after the female left the box. As there was no camera focused on this box, the identity of the predator raiding the nest is unknown. At the third box in the Balsam Mountains the female sat on six eggs, but once the eggs started hatching she would not leave the box under any circumstances, so we were unable to tell how many actually hatched, although we know that one egg definitely did not hatch and we could see at least two chicks under her. It was probably a week after the female left the box that we were able to check it again, and at that time there were two feathered chicks. These chicks fledged between 6 and 9 July.

Our goal in this study has not just been to obtain data on Saw-whet Owl nesting behavior, but to ensure that nesting owls are as successful as they might be if left undisturbed. Thus, to avoid potential nest abandonment, once we discovered an occupied box we did not return again for at least a week. We also never opened any boxes during the nesting period except when banding and measuring chicks and adults. We relied on the “tree peeper” camera, the night vision motion activated cameras, and observation from the ground for all data while owls were in the box. This often meant forfeiting obtaining exact data on egg numbers, and possibly even the exact numbers of chicks hatched. Information was missed in some cases because of the varying behavior of the female owl sitting on the nest. Females remain in the box constantly from the time the eggs are laid until all of the chicks in the box are sufficiently feathered to maintain body heat (Rasmussen et al. 2008). This typically occurs about two weeks after hatching. During the time there are eggs or young chicks in the nest, the male does all of the feeding of female and chicks. Females exhibited a wide variety of reactions to nest disturbance ranging from two birds that refused to leave the nest box under any circumstances, to those that would jump into the entrance when approached, but would back down into the box when the “tree peeper” camera was inserted, to those that would flee to a nearby tree at the mere sight of the “tree peeper” camera. Since some females would not leave the nest it was often difficult to see what they were covering, so the actual number of eggs or chicks was sometimes difficult to determine until she left the box permanently about two weeks after the last egg hatched (Figure 5). However, valuable data were obtained from use of the “tree peeper” cameras, night vision cameras, and from analyzing the remains left in the boxes after the chicks had fledged. Once females leave a nest they do not return to keep it clean, so pellets from the chicks remain in the box and can be analyzed for prey bones. Much of this data is still being analyzed. However, some initial findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1:

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
# boxes occupied	5	5	3	1	3
Approximate egg laying dates	Mid-March to late April	Early April to mid-May	Early April to late May	Mid-May	Mid-March to mid-May
Approximate # eggs per nest	3 - 5	3 - 4	4 - 5	?	3 - 6
Approximate hatch dates	Mid-April to late May	Early to mid-May*	Early May to mid-June	Early June	Mid-April to mid-June
Approximate # eggs hatched per nest	2 - 5	3 - 4	3 - 5	2?	At least 2
Approximate date female departs nest	Late April to mid-June	Mid to late May	Mid-May to early July	Mid to late June	Late June
Approximate fledge dates	Mid-May to late June	Early to mid-June	Late May to late July	Early July	Mid-May to 9 July
# chicks fledged per nest	2 - 4	1 - 3	2 - ?**	2	2
Total # of chicks fledged	12	6	2 - ?**	2	4
# nest failures	1	2	1	0	1

*later nests failed

**uncertain as some may have fledged from raided nest

Prey item analysis is incomplete, but thus far most common prey items found on camera and in box remains include:

- Deer Mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*)
- Southern Red-backed Vole (*Clethrionomys gapperi*)
- Woodland Jumping Mouse (*Napaeozapus insignis*)
- Northern Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*)
- Smoky Shrew (*Sorex fumeus*)
- Masked Shrew (*Sorex cinereus*)

A small number of probable Dark-eyed Juncos (*Junco hyemalis*) were also found. Prey items are being identified by Alan Smith, retired, Biology Department, Mars Hill University.



Figure 5. Female covering either eggs or very young chicks. Leftover prey item in box.
Photo taken with IBWO (new “tree peeper” type camera).

In the past three years John Gerwin from the N.C. State Museum of Natural Sciences and his assistants have also banded and/or measured five adult females and 15 chicks. Thus far none of the banded birds have been recaptured. As additional capturing and measuring occurs in coming years this data will also be made available.

This is a very preliminary summary of some of the information thus far obtained from this study. The analysis continues, and additional study of existing data and that from future years will provide critical information on the breeding activities of Saw-whet Owls in the Southern Appalachians. There are many unanswered questions including: causes of nest failure, potential nest predation, the relationship between prey items and prey abundance and the relationship between prey abundance and nest success, site fidelity, reasons for unhatched eggs or chick death and the fate of chicks when they die in the nest (are they removed by the parent or eaten by siblings), the effects of weather on nest success, what are the effects of climate change, and many others. For these reasons this study will hopefully continue for many more years. Also, to date, we are not aware

of any natural cavity nests having been found or reported in the Southern Appalachians, and this will continue to be another challenge.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to John Gerwin and his student assistants for banding adult owls and chicks, Alan Smith for analyzing the box remains, Chris Kelly and Clifton Avery from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission for the loan of wildlife cameras and assistance installing boxes, and retired Park Service ecologists Nora Murdock and Robert Emmott for their frequent assistance monitoring boxes.

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BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Spring 2020, 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.

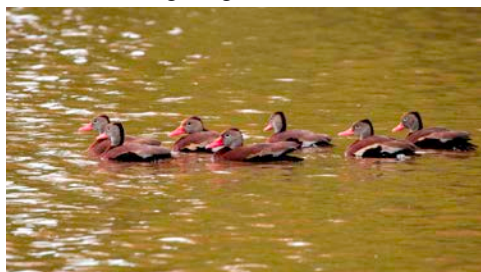
I rely in part on sightings reported in Carolinabirds. Please don't, however, rely on me to pick up your sightings from Carolinabirds. Instead, please also send your sightings directly to me as described above.

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.

Abbreviations: **BRC** – Bird Records Committee, **et al.** – and others, **Ft** – Fort, **Ln** – Lane, **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

All italicized place names are counties.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: This species continues to expand its range northward and inland. Sightings made at sites near the NC coast included nine on Oak Island



*Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks,
6 May 20, Orange Co, NC.
Photo by David Fischer.*

Brunswick 23 May (Mark Whitaker) three on a pond in the Wyndwater community in *Pender* 28 Apr (Carson Wood), seven just north of New Bern *Craven* 17 May (Suzy Jastram), eight at Alligator River NWR *Dare* 23 May (*fide* Ed Corey) and six there later that day (Al Hooks, m. obs.), six at North River Preserve *Carteret* 24 May (John Fussell, Steve Howell), two near Gull Rock Game Land *Hyde* 26 May (Corey), and two on a pond in Merritt *Pamlico* 28-30 May (Frank & Terry Elshaug, Christine Stoughton-Root). Far

inland in NC were 12 on Lookout Shoals Lake *Catawba* 26 Apr (Monroe Pannell), seven on the pond next to the Orange County Sportsplex *Orange* 6 May (Roy MacDonald, m. obs.), one on Ecusta Pond *Transylvania* 19 May (Michael Plauché, m. obs.), and one at McAlpine Creek Park *Mecklenburg* 31 May (Catherine Horton, m. obs.). A leg-banded individual seen at Lake Johnson *Wake* NC 8 Apr (Johnny Wilson, m. obs.) and, probably the same individual, at nearby Lake Wheeler 11 Apr (Steve Shultz) likely escaped from captivity.

Ross's Goose: One seen around a small pond along Buffalo Church Rd in *Cleveland* NC 16 Apr and 23 Apr (Bill Hooker) was late to depart.

Greater White-fronted Goose: One lingered with Canada Geese around a farm pond just west of Winston-Salem *Forsyth* NC until 8 May (Mike Conway).

Cackling Goose: One seen and photographed at Lake Junaluska *Haywood* NC 23 Apr and 26 Apr (Zachary Gavett) was very late.

Tundra Swan: Lingered into May were four in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR *Washington* NC 9 May (Heather Russell), two at Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 16 May (Ed Corey, et al.), one in the Campbell Creek Impoundment *Beaufort* NC 31 May (Caleb Bronsink), and one at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 31 May (Conor Farrell).

Garganey: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report of an adult female Garganey at Russell Burgess Coastal Preserve *Horry* SC 2 Mar (Steve Patterson). If accepted, the report would provide SC with its first record of this eurasian duck.

Mottled Duck: One photographed at a small pond along Old Georgetown Rd in *Brunswick* NC 20 Mar (David Wilson) was unusual for NC.

Greater Scaup: Individuals at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 13-15 May (Timothy Carstens, m. obs.) and on Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC 22 May (Vicky Burke) were late.

White-winged Scoter: One on Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC 1-16 Mar (Clifton Avery, m. obs.) was a good find for an inland site.

Bufflehead: One seen and photographed at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 21-30 May (April Childress, m. obs.) was late.

Common Merganser: Breeding was confirmed on the South Toe River in *Yancey* NC when a hen was seen with seven juveniles 16 May (Emma Little, et al.). Suggestive of attempted breeding at sites in the NC mountains were reports of pairs on the Watauga River just north of Valle Crucis *Watauga* 15 Mar through 5 Apr (Steve Dowlan, m. obs.), on the Tuckasegee River near Dillsboro *Jackson* 15 Mar through 19 Apr (Megan Eberly, m. obs.), on the Johns River in *Caldwell* 18 Apr (Caroline Martin), and on the Little River in *Alleghany* 19 May (Patsy Bailey). Breeding in the NC mountain region was first documented along the Green River *Polk* in June 2011 and has since been documented along several other rivers.

Ruddy Duck: Thirteen at the Goldsboro WTP *Wayne* NC 30 May (Eric Dean) was a notable count for such a late date.

Ruffed Grouse: A moribund individual found along SC-130 northeast of Seneca *Oconee* SC 8 Mar (Pam Ford, Craig Watson) was very unusual for a site outside of the mountains.

Horned Grebe: One seen at the mouth of Pembroke Creek in Edenton *Chowan* NC 24 May (Kathy Miller) was late.

Red-necked Grebe: Sightings involved one on Lake Townsend *Guilford* NC 8 Mar (Henry & Elizabeth Link) intermittently through 2 May (m. obs.), two on Lake Murray *Lexington* SC 21-25 Mar (Zach Steinhauser, m. obs.) with one remaining until 5 Apr (Steinhauser), one on the Pamlico Sound in Rodanthe *Dare* NC 9-19 May (Karen Lebing, m. obs.), and one at the Goldsboro WTP *Wayne* NC 20 May (Eric Dean). The latter two sightings were also rather late.

Western Grebe: One was seen on the Currituck Sound in Duck *Dare* NC 15 Mar (Erin & Tim Metcalf).

White-winged Dove: Individuals were seen in the Pamlico Plantation community in *Beaufort* NC 20-22 Apr (Frank Phelps, m. obs.) and in the Nantahala NF *Jackson* NC 16 May (William Kee).

Yellow Rail: One seen and photographed after being flushed from a flooded field along Ardrey Kell Rd in southern *Mecklenburg* NC 30 Apr (Matt Janson, Martina Nordstrand, m. obs.) was very unusual for a site in the Piedmont.

Virginia Rail: One seen along the Boone Greenway at Clawson-Burnley Park *Watauga* NC 30 Apr through 10 May (Mary Olson, Steve Dowlan, m. obs.) was very unusual for the NC High Country.

Sora: Individuals heard at the pond on top of Shortoff Mountain *Burke* NC 1 May (Clifton Avery, Noah Poulos) and photographed at Cane River Park *Yancey* NC 9-10 May (Grant Buckner, m. obs.) were unusual for those areas of the mountain region.

Purple Gallinule: One photographed along Lighthouse Rd in Buxton *Dare* NC 28 Apr (*fide* Michael Gosselin) was a great find for NC. Farthest north in SC were two at Lake Busbee *Horry* 22 Apr (Ritch Lilly).

Limpkin: Sightings, increasing the past few years, included two continuing at the north end of Goose Creek Reservoir *Berkeley* SC throughout the spring (m. obs.), one continuing in the Sun City Hilton Head community *Beaufort* SC 24 Mar (Tom Brim), two where the Congaree River empties into Lake Marion *Calhoun* SC, near its border with *Clarendon* and *Sumter*, 1 Apr (Cathy Mathias), one near Salley *Orangeburg* SC 30 Apr (Whit Gibbons), and one in the Combahee Unit of ACE Basin NWR *Beaufort* SC 3 May (Deborah & Jeff Kidd).

Sandhill Crane: Twelve in flight over southwestern *Clay* NC 7 Mar (Sandy Benson) was the highest count made this spring.

Black-necked Stilt: Five at Horse Creek WTP *Aiken* SC 2 May (Lois Stacey) were unusual for a site so far from the coast.

American Golden-Plover: Sightings involved one at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 31 Mar (Steve Calver), one along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 13 Apr (Mike Resch, et al.), up to three at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 18 Apr (Brad Dalton, m. obs.), one along Hooper Ln 23-24 Apr (Wayne Forsythe, m. obs.), one at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal *Carteret* NC 29 Apr (Steve Howell), one at the Simpson Research Station *Anderson* SC 13 May (Steve Patterson), and five at Dobbins Farm 13 May (George McHenry, m. obs.).

Piping Plover: One seen and photographed along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 15 Apr (Vicky Burke, m. obs.) was only the fourth ever documented in the mountain region.

Upland Sandpiper: Sightings involved three at sod farms along Wilson Rd in *Transylvania* NC 12 Apr (Michael Plauché, m. obs.), two to three along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 14 Apr (Tim Novak, m. obs.), one along Mid-Pines Rd *Wake* NC 22 Apr (Rob Rybczynski, m. obs.), two at Anderson Regional Airport *Anderson* SC 22 (Steve Patterson, m. obs.) with one remaining until 28 Apr (Matthew Campbell, et al.), one at Beaver Lake *Buncombe* NC 26 Apr (Aaron Steed, m. obs.), and two at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 4-7 May (Patterson, m. obs.).

Whimbrel: Thirteen at Lake Crabtree *Wake* NC 19 May (Harry LeGrand, Marc Ribaud, m. obs.) was a remarkable count for a site away from the coast. Individuals photographed at turf farms along Wilson Rd in *Transylvania* NC 20 May (Nathaniel Axtell, Michael Plauché) and along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 21 May (Kevin Burke, m. obs.) were great finds for the mountain region. All three sightings followed the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur.

Long-billed Curlew: One was photographed along Taylor Creek at the Rachel Carson Reserve *Carteret* NC 22 Apr and 1 May (Lisa Tucci).

Ruddy Turnstone: Twenty-seven along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC following the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur 20 May (Todd Arcos, m. obs.) was an amazing count for a site away from the coast. One at the Goldsboro WTP *Wayne* NC 24 May (Ricky Davis) was the only other inland sighting made this spring.

Ruff: One seen and photographed at Santee Coastal Reserve *Charleston* SC 19 Mar (Ritch Lilly) was a great find.

Sanderling: Sightings at inland sites following the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur included eight at Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 20 May (Jonathan Cantrell), one at Falls Lake *Durham* NC 21 May (Ed Corey, m. obs.), and one along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 22 May (Kevin Burke).

Dunlin: Sightings were made at multiple inland sites following the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur. A few of the higher counts were 22 along Moores Mill Rd in northern *Durham* NC 19 May (Matt Lawing), up to 66 at Lake Crabtree *Wake* NC 19 May (m. obs.), 18 in a plowed field in southwestern *Orange* NC 20 May (Jan Hansen), and 14 along Middleton Loop in *Stokes* NC 21 May (Jesse Anderson).

Pectoral Sandpiper: Two seen along Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 4 Mar (Mike Resch, m. obs.) were somewhat early while one photographed at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 30 May (Will Bennett) was somewhat late.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: Two at Lake Junaluska *Haywood* NC 11 May (Stan & Connie Wulkowicz, Vince Kloster, et al.), two at Brookshire Park *Watauga* NC 21 May (Sheryl McNair, m. obs.), and eight at Brookshire Park 23 May (Richard Gray, m. obs.) were unusual for those areas of the mountain region.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Sightings made in the NC mountain region included two along Hooper Ln *Henderson* 23 Apr (Wayne Forsythe, m. obs.), one at Bass Lake *Watauga* 11 May (Guy McGrane), eight at Lake Junaluska *Haywood* 11 May (Stan & Connie Wulkowicz, Vince Kloster, et al.), two at Owen Park *Buncombe* 11 May (Clifton Avery, m. obs.), and up to nine along Hooper Ln 20 May (Todd Arcos, m. obs.).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Individuals seen and photographed along W Clemmonsville Rd in *Forsyth* NC 26-27 Apr (John Haire, m. obs.) and in Brevard *Transylvania* NC 30 Apr (Nathaniel Axtell, et al.) were good finds for those inland sites.

Willet: There was an appreciable fallout of migrants in the western half of our region in late April, with 30 at Lake Junaluska *Haywood* NC 23 Apr (Vince Kloster), eight at Jackson Park *Henderson* NC 26 Apr (Bill Hooker, m. obs.), five along the Watauga River northwest of Valle Crucis *Watauga* NC 26 Apr (Max Ramey, m. obs.), two at W Kerr Scott Reservoir *Wilkes* NC 26 Apr (Guy McGrane), two at Riverbend Park *Catawba* NC 27 Apr (Dwayne Martin, Lori Owenby), and four at Richard B Russell Lake *Abbeville* SC 30 Apr (Steve Patterson, m. obs.). Eight at Lake Junaluska 11 May (Stan & Connie Wulkowicz, et al.) were also notable.

Wilson's Phalarope: Individuals were seen at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 9-17 Mar (George McHenry, m. obs.), where NC-191 crosses the French Broad River in *Henderson* NC 8-10 May (Mike Resch, m. obs.), and at Masonboro Inlet *New Hanover* NC 12-21 May (Dave Hart, m. obs.).

Red-necked Phalarope: One at the Hemingway WTP *Williamsburg* SC 15 May (Jay Chandler, m. obs.) was a good find. The passage of two tropical weather systems in late May resulted in sightings of wayward migrants at multiple sites. Those sightings included four at Lake Crabtree *Wake* NC 19-23 May (m. obs.), eight at Lake Crabtree 20 May (Ed



Red-necked Phalaropes, 22 May 20, Wake Co, NC. Photo by David Fischer.

Corey), one where Lindsey Bridge Rd crosses the Dan River in *Rockingham* NC 20-21 May (Marty Wall, m. obs.), one at Cape Point Campground *Dare* NC 20-22 May (Camron Robertson, m. obs.), one where Mebane Bridge Rd crosses the Dan River in *Rockingham* NC 21 May (Wall, m. obs.), one at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 21 May (Steve Patterson, m. obs.), one along

Mid-Pines Rd *Wake* NC 21 May (Ann Stinely), one at the Goldsboro WTP *Wayne* NC 24 May (Ricky Davis), one at the Mills River WTP *Henderson* NC

26 May (Kevin Burke), one at Huntington Beach SP *Georgetown* SC 27 May (Frank Lawkins, m. obs.), two on Oak Hollow Lake *Guilford* NC 27 May (Henry Link, et al.), and four on Oak Hollow Lake 28 May (Andrew Thornton, m. obs.).

South Polar Skua: One was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 27 May (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Parasitic Jaeger: Four off Johnnie Mercer's Pier *New Hanover* NC 5 Apr (Sam Cooper) was a good count.

Long-tailed Jaeger: Individuals were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 2 Jun and 6 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Black-headed Gull: One at Lake Crabtree *Wake* NC 18 Apr (Susan Campbell, Steve Shultz) was very unusual for a site so far from the coast.

Laughing Gull: Sightings were made at six sites in the western half of our region following the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur 18-21 May including seven on Oak Hollow Lake *Guilford* NC 21 May (Andrew Thornton, et al.).

Herring Gull: Individuals were seen as far west as Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC and Hooper Ln *Henderson* NC 20-22 May, following the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Buckhorn Reservoir in *Wilson* NC 8 Mar provided an amazing inland count of 310 (Ricky Davis), while 36 at Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 4 Apr (Robert Rybczynski) was a notable count for that inland site. Three at Jordan Lake 21 May (Matt Spangler) were quite late for a site away from the coast.

Glaucous Gull: Immature individuals were photographed on the beach in North Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 15 Mar (Lauren Vaughn, et al.), at Ft Fisher *New Hanover* NC 9 May (Will Taber, et al.), and in Nags Head *Dare* NC 13 May (Marissa Bijarro).

Caspian Tern: One photographed at Lake Wylie *Mecklenburg* NC 22 Mar (Jeffrey Turner) was somewhat early for an inland site.

White-winged Tern: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report of an apparent adult White-winged Tern seen and photographed around the Salt Pond at Cape Point *Dare* NC 26 May (David Fischer, Steve Howell) and 28 May (Jasmin Beachy, Ruben & Victor Stoll) through 2 Jun (m. obs.). If accepted, the report would become the second official record for NC and the first with photographs.



*Apparent White-winged Tern, 28 Apr 20,
Dare Co, NC. Photo by David Fischer*

into summer (Michael Gosselin, m. obs.). One photographed at Mason Inlet *New Hanover* NC 12 May (Dave Hart) was very unusual for that area of the coast.

Roseate Tern: One to two were seen at sites around Cape Point *Dare* NC 6 May

Arctic Tern: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Arctic Tern on Oak Hollow Lake *Guilford* NC 21 May, following the passage of Tropical Storm Arthur (Andrew Thornton, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide the sixth record for the Piedmont and first for that county.

White-tailed Tropicbird: Two adults were seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 29 May (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Red-billed Tropicbird: One was briefly seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 2 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Pacific Loon: Two continued off Johnnie Mercer's Pier *New Hanover* NC from February through 8 Apr (Jim Holcomb). The individual first reported on Lake Jocassee at Devil's Fork SP *Oconee* SC 28 Feb (Jay Mager, Nina Schoch, et al.) remained through 8 Mar (Simon Harvey, Shawn Smolen-Morton). Individuals photographed on Lake Hartwell from Sadler's Creek SP *Anderson* SC 10 Mar (Andy Norris, Steve Patterson) and on Lake Murray *Richland* SC 15 Mar (Irvin Pitts, et al.) may have been the same individual seen on Lake Jocassee. All reports of this species in SC require review by the BRC.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: Eighty-one around Cape Point *Dare* NC 28 May (Ed Corey, Kyle Kittelberger) was a notable count from shore.

Trindade Petrel: This rare tubenose was seen on five of the eight pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC this spring, with three on 27 May, one on 31 May, four on 1 Jun, two on 2 Jun, and one on 6 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Fea's Petrel: Individuals were seen on pelagic trips out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 1 Jun and 6 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Cory's Shearwater: One hundred fifty-five around Cape Point *Dare* NC 28 May (Ed Corey, Kyle Kittelberger) was a notable count from shore.

Audubon's Shearwater: A pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* on NC 30 May (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.) tallied 307, a notable count for spring.

Magnificent Frigatebird: Individuals were seen over five sites along the coast from Hilton Head Island *Beaufort* SC north to Ocean Isle Beach *Brunswick* NC 22-30 May.

Masked Booby: A sub-adult was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 5 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Neotropic Cormorant: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent adult Neotropic Cormorant at Crosswinds Marina on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 9-10 Apr (Jelmer Poelstra, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would become the first record of the species anywhere in the Carolinas.

Great Cormorant: Interestingly, two distinct individuals were seen on the Savannah River this period—the first-winter bird at the dam on J. Strom Thurmond Lake *McCormick* SC continuing from late fall through 15 Mar (Jerry Griggs) and an adult at the dam on Richard B Russell Lake *Abbeville* SC 10 Mar through 3 Apr (Mark McShane, m. obs.). Both reports are pending review by the SC BRC.

Anhinga: Individuals at Chester SP *Chester* SC 27 Mar (Steve Patterson), on Lake Brandt *Guilford* NC 20 May (Elizabeth Link, m. obs.), and in the Little River Swamp along SC-201 *Abbeville* SC 29 May (Patterson, m. obs.) were the farthest inland reported this spring.

American White Pelican: Sightings continued around High Rock Dam *Davidson* and *Rowan* NC from late winter until 3 Apr (Steve Coggin). Other inland sightings included six on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 24 Mar (Matt Spangler), nine at Belews Lake *Rockingham* NC 6 Apr (Marty Wall), seven at South Cove County Park *Oconee* SC 25 Apr (Stephen Schutt), 19 over Riverbend Park *Catawba* NC 2 May (Dwayne Martin), one at the dam on Lake Hartwell *Anderson* SC 11 May (George McHenry), and one at Lake Brandt *Guilford* NC 20-22 May (Andrew Thornton, Matt Wangerin, m. obs.).

Least Bittern: Inland sightings included one seen at Beaver Lake *Buncombe* NC 11 May (Aaron Steed, m. obs.), one seen at the former quarry site in Dyers Hill *Marlboro* SC 12-15 May (Mac Williams, m. obs.), and one to two heard at Flat River Waterfowl Impoundment *Durham* NC 18 May through 3 Jun (Matt Lawing, m. obs.), one seen in a flooded field along Ardrey Kell Rd in southern *Mecklenburg* NC 19 May (Greg Hays, et al.), and one heard at Chantilly Park in Charlotte *Mecklenburg* NC 30 May through 2 Jun (Larry King, m. obs.).

Little Blue Heron: A first-spring bird at Berkeley Ball Park in Hendersonville *Henderson* NC 3-8 May (Nolan Wright, m. obs.) was unusual for the mountain region in spring.

Tricolored Heron: One photographed at Macedonia Lake *Wake* NC 15 May (Karla Schmidt) was a good find for an inland site in spring.

White Ibis: Twenty-eight in flight over Lake Twitty *Union* NC following the passage of Tropical Storm Bertha 28 May (Dennis Kent) was a notable count for the Piedmont in spring.

Glossy Ibis: Sightings were made at seven sites in the Greater Triangle area between 24 Apr and 10 May, including six over Mason Farm Biological Reserve *Orange* NC 5 May (Jan Hansen).

Roseate Spoonbill: One seen at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 31 May (Daniel Cribb) was very unusual for a site so far inland in spring. While inland sightings have increased in recent years, almost all have been made in the summer or early fall.

Tropical Kingbird: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Tropical Kingbird on the southern Core Banks *Carteret* NC 4 May (Sean Leahy, Dawn Lloyd). If accepted, the report would provide the fifth record for NC and the first from the spring period.

Gray Kingbird: One was photographed on a powerline near the entrance to the Sullivan's Island Nature Trail *Charleston* SC 6 May (Elizabeth Anderegg, et al.).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One seen along Jenkins Farm Rd on Johns Island *Charleston* SC 15-21 Mar (Mike Harhold, m. obs.) was likely the same individual seen at that site 19 Jan. Pairs returned to traditional nesting sites near the intersection of Farm Camp Rd and Webber Rd in western *Cherokee* SC 10 May (Christy Hill) and near the Rock Hill-York County Airport *York* SC 24 May (Allen Wolford). A pair seen along Thompson Creek Rd near Boiling Springs *Spartanburg* SC 2 May into June (*fide* Matthew Campbell, m. obs.) may have been attempting to nest there.

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Individuals were reported at eight sites in NC, three in the Piedmont and five in the mountains, between 5 May and 24 May.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: One photographed and audio-recorded calling at Brumley Nature Preserve *Orange* NC 12 May (Jelmer Poelstra) was a good find for spring.

White-eyed Vireo: One photographed along the Little Tennessee River Greenway *Macon* NC 18 Mar (Timothy Carstens) was somewhat early for the mountain region.

Warbling Vireo: East of the species' typical breeding range was one singing as if on territory in the Crabtree Creek Wetland *Wake* NC 1 May (Gerry Luginbuhl) and two singing there 15 May into June (Karla Schmidt, m. obs.).

Black-whiskered Vireo: One was photographed along the Duck Park Boardwalk *Dare* NC 1 May (Jeff Lewis).

Cliff Swallow: Eight hundred twenty along the Broad River in northern *Cherokee* SC 9 May (David & Timothy Campbell) was a notable count.

Cave Swallow: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of a Cave Swallow at Ecusta Pond *Transylvania* NC 26 Mar (Nathaniel Axtell, Bob Butler, Michael Plauché, Martine Stolk). This sighting was quite atypical because most are made at sites along or near the coast in the late fall or early winter. If accepted, the report would provide the first record of this species in the mountain region.

Brown-headed Nuthatch: One photographed at a feeder in Boone *Watauga* NC 26-27 May (Pat Geiger, m. obs.) was extremely unusual for the NC High Country.

Bicknell's Thrush: A "probable" Bicknell's Thrush was well-studied at close range along the Black River in *Bladen* NC 28 Apr (Derb Carter). This thrush is extremely

difficult, if not impossible, to definitively distinguish from the closely-related Gray-cheeked Thrush in the field without one in-hand to make measurements.

Bachman's Sparrow: One seen at Landsford Canal SP *Chester* SC 19 Mar (Matt Janson) was unusual for that area.

Lark Sparrow: Individuals continued from winter at Ezell Farm Community Park *Mecklenburg* NC until 14 Apr (Steven Fasciana) and at feeders along Alder Branch Rd in *Camden* NC until 22 Apr (James Harrison). One photographed at a feeder in Burlington *Alamance* NC 6 Mar (Marisa Shelton) was a possible first for that county. This species likely nested in drop zones on Ft Bragg in northern *Hoke* NC in late May, as a female was seen carrying food 25 May and a pair was seen together 31 May (Sam Simon).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Individuals photographed along the Little Tennessee River Greenway *Macon* NC 18 Apr (Timothy Carstens) and in the Thornburg Tract of Uwharrie NF *Randolph* NC 21-22 Apr (Ben Nickley, m. obs.) were good finds for spring. This species was seen at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC on three dates in April, with a high count of three there 19 Apr (John Fussell, Steve Howell).

LeConte's Sparrow: One photographed at the Voice of America site in *Beaufort* NC 28 Apr (Trevor Sleight, m. obs.) was the only one reported this spring.

Nelson's Sparrow: Individual migrants in Fletcher *Henderson* NC 30 Mar (Vicky Burke) and 26 Apr (Kevin Burke) were good finds away from the coast.

Henslow's Sparrow: Twenty-six at the Voice of America site in *Beaufort* NC 17 Apr (Trevor Sleight) was a notable count.

Lincoln's Sparrow: About a dozen were reported this spring, all in NC, most at sites in the Piedmont and mountains, and most between 27 Apr and 13 May.

Yellow-breasted Chat: One photographed at Martin Marietta Park *Craven* NC 1 Mar (Caleb Bronsink) must have over-wintered in the area as it was still too early for a returning spring migrant.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: An adult male that visited a yard in Waves *Dare* NC 9-10 May (Karen Lebing, m. obs.) was the only one reported this spring.

Orchard Oriole: An immature male seen in a yard in Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 17 Feb (Maria Bernwinkler) and photographed 12 Mar (Jamie Adams) was extremely unusual so early in the year.

Bronzed Cowbird: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent male Bronzed Cowbird under a feeder in James City *Craven* NC 4 May and 9 May (Ronnie Hewlette). This report is the second made of this species in NC this year.

Brewer's Blackbird: Sightings involved three in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR *Washington* NC 1 Mar (Haven Wiley), four in Fletcher *Henderson* NC 14 Mar (Mike Resch), and 31 at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 3 Apr (Steve Patterson).

Golden-winged Warbler x Blue-winged Warbler (Brewster's Warbler): Individuals were photographed and heard singing the typical Blue-winged Warbler song near Rainbow Springs *Macon* NC 25 Apr through 14 May (Chayse Davis, m. obs.) and near Long Branch Environmental Education Center *Buncombe* NC 16 May through 2 Jun (Clifton Avery, m. obs.). One seen in western *Avery* NC 14 May was heard singing both species' songs (Avery).

Golden-winged Warbler x Blue-winged Warbler (Lawrence's Warbler): One was photographed and heard singing the typical Golden-winged Warbler song at Rich Mountain Gap in northern *Watauga* NC 24 May (Garrett Rhyne) and 31 May (Paul Beerman).

Nashville Warbler: One photographed in a yard in Greensboro *Guilford* NC 5 Apr (Caroline Wolfe-Merritt) was rather early.

Connecticut Warbler: Three were reported this spring—one seen and heard singing in the Hospital Fields in Brevard *Transylvania* NC 11 May (Logan Parr), one seen and heard singing in Maudlin *Greenville* SC 11 May and 21-22 May (Kevin Kubach), and one photographed and heard singing at Rosman Community Park *Transylvania* NC 14 May (Nathaniel Axtell).

Mourning Warbler: One seen at Historic Bethabara Park *Forsyth* NC 11-12 May (John Haire, m. obs.) was the only one reported this spring.

American Redstart: One at Savannah NWR *Jasper* SC 21 Feb (James Lee) through 10 Mar (Sara Meissner) likely over-wintered in the area.

Kirtland's Warbler: A singing adult male was seen at Meat Camp Creek Environmental Studies Area *Watauga* NC 13 May (Katie Griffith, m. obs.) through the early morning of 14 May (Steve Howell).

Cape May Warbler: One seen and photographed at the Old Bynum Bridge *Chatham* NC 25-29 Mar (Mark Goodwin, m. obs.) was quite early.

Bay-breasted Warbler: Individuals at the former quarry in Dyers Hill *Marlboro* SC 24 Apr (Shawn Smolen-Morton, Mac Williams) and at Donnelley WMA *Colleton* SC 3 May (Marc Regnier) were unusual for sites in the coastal plain during spring.

Chestnut-sided Warbler: One seen and photographed along the Duck Park Boardwalk *Dare* NC 5-7 May (Jeff Lewis, m. obs.) was unusual for the Outer Banks in spring.

Western Tanager: One visited a yard in Southern Shores *Dare* NC 16 Mar through 20 Apr (Jim Gould).

Indigo Bunting: A first-spring male photographed in a yard in West Ashley *Charleston* SC 10 Mar (John Graham) was extremely early.

Painted Bunting: North and inland of the species' typical range was an adult male in a yard in Greenville *Pitt* NC 2 Apr (Emily Johnson), an adult male at a feeder near Lake Tillery *Stanly* NC 2 Apr (Kimberly Swift), an adult female at a feeder in western *Johnston* NC 4 May (Kathy Jones), and an adult female in a yard in Indian Trail *Union* NC 14 May (Martina Nordstrand).

Dickcissel: An adult male visiting a feeder just east of Lewisville *Forsyth* NC 25 Feb through 31 Mar (G. Baliga, m. obs.) was unusual for the Piedmont in late winter / early spring. Dickcissels began returning to traditional summering sites in late April, with six at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC by 2 May (George & Jean Askew), six along Brent Haigler Rd *Union* NC by 8 May (Martina Nordstrand), four along Snow Mill Drive *Spartanburg* SC by 16 May (Simon Harvey), three at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC by 17 May (Ricky Davis), three along Howerton Rd *Guilford* NC by 22 May (Andrew Thornton), nine at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC by 24 May (John Fussell, Steve Howell), and three along Mount Olive Rd in *Spartanburg* SC near its border with *Cherokee* by 31 May (Irvin Pitts). Up to four singing males along West Horse Branch Trail in *Darlington* SC 15 May into June (Steve Patterson, Mac Williams, m. obs.) and one along Young Rd in *Florence* SC 20-21 May (Shawn Smolen-Morton) were unusual for that part of the state.

Addendum

The following report was omitted from the Winter 2019-2020 Briefs for the Files:

Northern Goshawk: An immature bird was seen at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC during its CBC 30 Dec (Bob Lewis).

The following report is amended to read as follows:

Yellow Rail: Three were reported in *Dare* NC during the Bodie-Pea Islands CBC 28 Dec—two flushed at the north end of Pea Island NWR (Al Hooks, Guy McGrane) and another heard responding to playback in the Roanoke Island Marsh (Kyle Kittelberger).

The previously published report did not include Al Hooks as an observer of the Pea Island birds. The amended report specifies the location and observer for the bird responding to playback.

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.
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