

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Abbreviations: **BRC** – Bird Records Committee, **et al.** – and others, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **WMA** – Wildlife Management Area

All italicized place names are counties.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: 20 just southwest of Engelhard *Hyde* NC 8-9 Jun (Kelly Davis, m. obs.) was a notable count for NC. It is possible the species nested in that area, as two adults were seen in and around a Wood Duck nesting box 23 Jun (Randy Hignite, fide Davis). Six at the former gravel quarry in Dyers Hill *Marlboro* SC 1 Jun (Mac Williams), four along the Saluda River just below the dam on Lake Greenwood *Greenwood* SC 9 Jun (Matthew Campbell), and ten in Madison *Rockingham* NC 19 Jun (Brian & Martha McDermott) were firsts for those counties.

Brant: Two on the Pamlico Sound near Hatteras *Dare* NC and one on the Pamlico Sound near Ocracoke *Hyde* NC 8 Jun (John Lynch) were unusual for summer.

Tundra Swan: Three in the Lake Landing area of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 28 Jun through 6 Jul (Ricky Davis, m. obs.) were unusual, as most summer sightings are of individuals, often injured and unable to migrate.

Redhead: Two, a drake, likely injured, and a hen, at the pond adjacent to the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal *Carteret* NC 17-30 Jun (Marty Wall, m. obs.), with the hen continuing through 16 Jul (Ronnie Hewlette), were unusual for summer.

Ring-necked Duck: For the fourth year in a row a seemingly healthy drake lingered on a pond along US-1 in southern *Lee* NC into summer. This year, two drakes were seen 7-12 Jun with one remaining into August (Jeff Beane, Stephanie Horton). Individual drakes were seen on Lake James *McDowell* NC 2 Jun (Art Webster), in northern *Greenville* SC 19 Jun (Mike Resch), at Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC 21 Jun (Mandy & Mark Johnson), and on Osceola Lake *Henderson* NC throughout the period (Kevin Burke).

Lesser Scaup: Four lingered on the Pamlico River in *Beaufort* NC this summer. After one was seen from Havens Garden Park in Washington 11 Jun (Adam & Gina Kent), two were seen there 17 Jun (Betsy Kane), and four were reported 3 Jul (Alexander Teodorescu). One seen downriver at the phosphate mine in Aurora 4-7 Jul (Casey Boswell) was likely one of those same individuals.

Bufflehead: Individual hens at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 3 Jun and 19 Jun (Emily Johnson) and on Lake James *Burke* NC 26 Jun (Art Webster) were unusual for summer.

Hooded Merganser: An injured drake at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC 21 Jun through 19 Jul (John Fussell, et al.), and a hen in its company 5 Jul (Fussell, et al.), were unusual for that area in summer.

Common Merganser: Breeding was confirmed along the Tuckasegee River in *Jackson* NC when a hen was seen with three juveniles 19 Jun (Melanie Vickers) and 3 Jul (Jeremey Hyman). Breeding also likely occurred along the Johns River in *Caldwell* NC where seven female/juvenile-types were photographed together 24 Jun (Caroline Martin).

Pied-billed Grebe: Breeding was confirmed at Silver Bluff Audubon Sanctuary *Aiken* SC when two juveniles were seen with adults 3 Jun (Matt Malin) and at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC when two juveniles were seen with adults 14 Jun and 21 Jun (John Fussell, et al.).

Horned Grebe: One seen and photographed on Lake Keowee *Oconee* SC 25 Jun through 14 Jul (Don Lenahan) was very unusual for summer.

White-winged Dove: Individuals were seen visiting a feeder in North Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 17-18 Jun (Deb Winter) and near the entrance to the Cape Point Campground *Dare* NC 25 Jul (Marcia Lyons).

Black-billed Cuckoo: Two in the Dan River Game Land *Rockingham* NC 11 Jul (Marty Wall) were unusual for a site outside of the mountains in mid-summer. Were these birds attempting to nest there or had they simply wandered from their breeding grounds?

Common Gallinule: Breeding was confirmed again this year at the former quarry in Dyers Hill *Marlboro* SC, somewhat inland of the species' typical breeding range, when a total of 16 including adults and juveniles were seen there 1 Jun (Mac Williams). Breeding was first confirmed at the site in 2016.

Limpkin: Breeding in the Carolinas was confirmed for the first time when the two adults continuing at the northern end of Goose Creek Reservoir *Berkeley* SC since August 2019 were photographed alongside four juveniles 6 Jun (Pam Ford, Craig Watson). Other sightings, all from the SC coastal plain, included one along the Black River just northeast of Andrews *Georgetown* 10 Jun through 3 Jul (Robert Roll), one in the Sun City Hilton Head community *Beaufort* 21-25 Jun (m. obs.), one at Blacks Fish Camp *Berkeley* 22 Jun (Carl Bussells, Judson Riser), one in a subdivision northwest of West Ashley *Charleston* 27 Jun through 30 Jul (Marie Franklin, m. obs.), and two photographed together at a golf course in Bluffton *Beaufort* 21 Jul (Jim Massey).

Sandhill Crane: A seemingly healthy adult seen and photographed at a farm in western *Wayne* NC 8-14 Jun (Eric Dean, m. obs.) was unusual for summer. Sightings of an individual at sites along the NC coast from Bald Head Island *Brunswick* north to Corolla *Currituck* 26 Jun through 11 Jul (m. obs.) may represent the same wandering individual.

Black-necked Stilt: Notable counts were made around two expansive areas of marsh wrack along NC-12 at Cedar Island NWR *Carteret* NC —35 adults and one chick on 7 June (John Fussell, Steve Howell) and 38 adults on 14 Jun (Fussell, Howell, Marty Wall). Fussell notes that numbers declined there through the summer and none remained by late July. SC's high count was 149 including 20 juveniles at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* 3 Jul (Steve Calver).

American Golden-Plover: One photographed on the barrier strand near the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal *Carteret* NC 26 Jul (John Fussell, Steve Howell) was somewhat early.

Pacific Golden-Plover: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report of an apparent Pacific Golden-Plover at Cape Point *Dare* NC 6 Jul into August (Megan Baker, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would become the second record of this species in the Carolinas, the first made at this same site last summer.

Long-billed Curlew: Individuals were seen on East Shackleford Banks *Carteret* NC 20 Jun through 9 Aug (Steve Howell, m. obs.) and at Ophelia Inlet on the Core Banks *Carteret* NC 25 Jun (Jon Altman, *fide* John Fussell).

Sanderling: One photographed at Lamaster Dairy Center (restricted access) *Pickens* SC 21 Jul (Kevin Kubach) was unusual for an inland site in summer.

Pectoral Sandpiper: One at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 3 Jul (Steve Calver) was early.

Short-billed Dowitcher: One photographed at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 7 Jul (Debra & Steve Patterson) was somewhat early for an inland site.

Wilson's Snipe: One photographed in the Lake Landing area of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 28 Jun (Ricky Davis) was very early. Snipes don't typically begin to arrive in the Carolinas until late August.

Greater Yellowlegs: One seen and photographed at Brookshire Park *Watauga* NC 17 Jun (Richard Gray, Guy McGrane) was very unusual for the mountain region in June.

Wilson's Phalarope: Sightings involved five at Bear Island WMA *Colleton* SC 13 Jun (Matt Johnson, et al.), one at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 21-22 Jun (Alexander Teodorescu, m. obs.), one in the Lake Landing area of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 28 Jun (Ricky Davis), and five at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 3 Jul (Steve Calver).

Pomarine Jaeger: A seemingly healthy adult photographed on the beach in Carova Beach *Currituck* NC 1 Jun (Marissa Bijarro) was notable for a species rarely seen from shore.

Glaucous Gull: An immature bird lingered along the northern Outer Banks *Dare* NC until 18 Jun—seen on the beach in Kill Devil Hills 3-5 Jun (Mike & Peggy Eubank, m. obs.), in Southern Shores 14 Jun (Sage Church), and in Duck 18 Jun (Presley Riggs). There are only two previous records of this species in the Carolinas during the summer.

Roseate Tern: Sightings continued from spring at Cape Point *Dare* NC where an amazing count of 16 was made there 15 Jun (Megan Baker). Up to three were seen around Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC throughout the period (m. obs.). One on Ocracoke Island *Hyde* NC 8 Jul and 11 Jul (Daniel & Jonathan Irons) was unusual for that island. Two were photographed on the beach in Carova Beach *Currituck* NC 13 Jul (Max Nootbaar). Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent

Roseate Tern at Huntington Beach SP *Georgetown* SC 18 Jul (Michael Robertson).

Arctic Tern: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Arctic Tern at Lake Norman *Mecklenburg* NC 20 Jun (Greg Hays, Jeff Lemons). If accepted, the report would provide the seventh inland record for NC.

Black Skimmer: A first-summer individual photographed on Lake Hickory *Catawba* NC 13 Jun (Dwayne Martin, et al.) was very unusual for an inland site, especially away from the passage of a tropical storm. The bird was reportedly first seen there three days prior.

White-tailed Tropicbird: Possibly the most surprising find this summer was that of a juvenile White-tailed Tropicbird in Mebane *Alamance* NC 15 Jul (*vide* Matt Wangerin). The bird was collected by a wildlife rehabilitator and later transported to SkyWatch Bird Rescue in Castle Hayne *New Hanover* NC 16 Jul. This report provided the sixth inland record in NC, and the first not following the passage of a hurricane. A tropical weather system originating from the Gulf of Mexico did pass over the Carolinas a week prior, 8 Jul, before becoming Tropical Storm Fay in the Atlantic, and was possibly related.



White-tailed Tropicbird
16 Jul 2020, in transit from
Alamance Co, NC. Photo by
Matt Wangerin.

Sooty Shearwater: 82 in flight off Cape Point *Dare* NC 2 Jun (Jonathan Heller) was a notable count.

Great Shearwater: 89 moribund birds were found along the Core Banks *Carteret* NC during a period of easterly winds 12-21 Jun (Jon Altman). Mortality events involving this species are fairly regular along the banks in summer. Multiple sightings were made from shore at scattered sites along the coast from late June through early July including a notable count of 35 at Cape Point *Dare* NC 9 Jul (Kate Sutherland).

Audubon's Shearwater: One photographed in flight off the east end of Kiawah Island *Charleston* SC 25 Jul (Pam Ford, Craig Watson) was notable from shore in SC.

Wood Stork: Sightings outside of the species' typical range included two to three along Lassiter Rd in *Wayne* NC 8-15 Jul (Eric Dean), an immature bird along Rich Gap Rd in *Macon* NC 14 Jul (Canty Worley), and an immature bird, possibly the same individual seen in *Macon*, near Brevard *Transylvania* NC 26 Jul (Frank Porter, Michael Plauché).

Magnificent Frigatebird: Ten reports of individuals were made this summer, likely some of the same individuals, at scattered sites along the coast from Nags Head *Dare* NC south to Daufuskie Island *Beaufort* SC.

Brown Booby: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent juvenile Brown Booby at Lake Norman *Mecklenburg* and *Iredell* NC 27-28 Jun (Phillip Covington, Jeff Lemons, David Schroder, Judy Walker, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide the second record of this species at an inland site in NC.

Anhinga: Anhingas were reported at sites as far inland as the northern end of Lake Norman *Catawba* NC 23 Jun (Monroe Pannell), at Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge *Mecklenburg* NC 14-20 Jul (Patty Masten, m. obs.), at Lake Conestee Nature Park *Greenville* SC 22-26 Jul (Michael Oliver, m. obs.), and at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 27 Jul (Scott Davis).

American White Pelican: 12 in flight over I-85 in *Anderson* SC 23 Jun (James Flynn) and one in flight over Buckhorn Game Land *Orange* NC 12 Jul (Kent Fiala, Karen Hogan) were unusual for the Piedmont region in summer.

Brown Pelican: Individuals at Lake Hartwell *Oconee* and *Pickens* SC, a juvenile bird, 5 Jun (Kevin Kubach) and at Lake James *Burke* NC 27 Jul (Matt Eldridge) were unusual for sites away from the coast.

American Bittern: One photographed along a creek in western *Yancey* NC 30 Jun (Grant Buckner) was a first for that county and very unusual for the mountain region during the summer.

Great Blue Heron (white morph): "Great White Herons" were seen and photographed at Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary *Buncombe* NC 9 Jun (Simon Thompson, m. obs.) and along the Watauga River northwest of Valle Crucis *Watauga* NC 8 Jun into August (Maxwell Ramey, m. obs.).

Tricolored Heron: Individual juveniles at Cane Creek Reservoir *Union* NC 17-23 Jul (Martina Nordstrand) and at Grogan Lake *Rockingham* NC 25 Jul though 3 Aug (Marty Wall, m. obs.) were good finds for sites in the Piedmont.



*Reddish Egret, 15 Jun 2020,
Mecklenburg Co, NC. Photo by
Martina Nordstrand.*

Reddish Egret: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent juvenile Reddish Egret at McAlpine Creek Park *Mecklenburg* NC 15-25 Jun (Peggy Sanders, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide the first official record of the species outside of the coastal plain in NC. 12 on Portsmouth Island *Carteret* NC 10 Jul (Daniel Irons) provided a new record high count for NC. Two white-morph

birds at that site 7 Jul (Jonathan Irons) were also notable.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: A juvenile individual at Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC 30 Jul (John Koon, m. obs.) was unusual for the mountain region.

Roseate Spoonbill: Sightings made outside of the coastal plain involved immature individuals at Lake Hickory *Alexander* NC 15 Jun (Bob Lindsey, *fide* Dwayne Martin), at the upper end of Lake Norman *Catawba* NC 29 Jun (Caroline Martin), at Lake Edwin Johnson *Spartanburg* SC 4 Jul (Teresa Kopec), and at McAlpine Creek Park *Mecklenburg* NC 16-19 Jul (m. obs.). An immature bird in the Lake Landing area of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 28 Jun into August (Ricky Davis, m. obs.) was a first for that refuge. Four seen along the Waccamaw River in *Columbus* NC 20 Jul (Byron Levan) were a first for that county, possibly the same four birds seen in adjacent *Brunswick* NC on Oak Island 20 Jul (Katherine Bartlett) and along the Rivers Edge Nature Trail 23 Jul (David Wilson). Farthest north along the coast was one at the Rachel Carson Reserve *Carteret* NC 6 Jun (*fide* Paula Gillikin).

Swallow-tailed Kite: One over Irma's Produce Fields along Parker Padgett Rd in *McDowell* NC 11 Jul (Lori Owenby) was somewhat early for that traditional post-breeding gathering site. 12 over a field along Armenia Rd in *Chester* SC 15 Jul (Marvin Bouknight) was a notable count for that area.

Mississippi Kite: Nesting was confirmed in the Mordecai neighborhood just north of downtown Raleigh *Wake* NC when an adult was seen bringing food to a nestling 27 Jul (Jean Ells, John Connors). Nesting likely occurred in northwestern *McCormick* SC where two adults and three juveniles were seen together 1 Jun (Matthew Campbell) and in northwestern Winston-Salem *Forsyth* NC where up to five birds including a juvenile were seen together in mid-July (m. obs.). 24+ in southeastern *Moore* NC 20 Jun (Ann Robertson) was a notable count for that area.

Merlin: Three were seen, two appearing to beg for food from the third, near Land Harbor Lake *Avery* NC 1 Aug (Barbara Stewman) suggesting that a pair may have bred in that area this year.

Cassin's Kingbird: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Cassin's Kingbird near the dam on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 30 Jun (Michelle Kent Forte). If accepted, the report would provide the first record of this western flycatcher in the Carolinas.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Breeding was confirmed near the Rock Hill-York County Airport *York* SC again this year when two adults were seen feeding three nestlings in early July (m. obs.). The nest near the intersection of Farm Camp Rd and Weber Rd in western *Cherokee* SC likely failed this year, as no juveniles were seen at the site and the adults were not seen after 20 Jun (Matt Malin). The pair seen along Thompson Creek Rd near Boiling Springs *Spartanburg* SC in May continued through 29 Jun (Steve Compton)

with one remaining through 9 Jul (Richard Hayes) though no nest was ever found at that site. An adult seen along Beaver Dam Church Rd in *Cleveland* NC 15-23 Jun (Tina Thomas, m. obs.) was without a mate. One photographed on Hilton Head Island *Beaufort* SC 30 Jun (Mary Blankenship) was unusual for a site along the coast during the summer.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Fork-tailed Flycatcher on the southern end of Ocracoke Island *Hyde* NC 29 Jun (Camron Robertson, Chelsea Weithman). If accepted, the report would provide the fourth record for NC.

Warbling Vireo: Three, including two singing males, in the Crabtree Creek Wetland *Wake* NC 20-30 Jun (Jin Bai, Harry LeGrand, m. obs.) was suggestive of attempted breeding at that site, though no evidence of nesting was found there.

Common Raven: One seen soaring over US-1 near Hoffman *Richmond* NC 8 Jun (Kyle Kittelberger) was extremely unusual for the Sandhills region.

Cliff Swallow: Active nest sites were found at four sites in *Carteret* NC this year, including 125 active nests under the NC-101 bridge over Core Creek 21 Jun (John Fussell, Steve Howell). Fussell notes that these numbers are “in strong contrast with a few years ago, when the species was virtually absent as a breeder in the county.”

Winter Wren: 39 along the Wilson Boundary Trail between Stepps Gap and Balsam Gap *Yancey* NC 10 Jun (Simon Thompson, Marilyn Westphal) was a notable count.

Hermit Thrush: Nesting was confirmed along the Buncombe Horse Range Trail near Mount Mitchell *Yancey* NC when a female was seen on a nest 3 Jul (Chris Kelly). One recorded singing on Hooper Bald in the Nantahala National Forest *Graham* NC 13 Jun (Bill & Mary Kay Sullivan) was unusual for that area of the mountains.

Red Crossbill: Three at Caesars Head SP *Greenville* SC 30 Jun (Mike Resch, Michael Robertson) were notable for SC.

Pine Siskin: One photographed at a feeder in northern *Greenville* SC 29 Jun (Sue Erickson) was notable for SC in summer.

Lark Sparrow: Six in the Luzon Drop Zone *Scotland* NC 13 Jun (David Fischer) was a good count. The birds were paired up and likely breeding there.

White-throated Sparrow: One photographed at Waccamaw NWR *Horry* SC 2 Jun (John Hutchens) was late to depart.

Henslow's Sparrow: This species was only found at one site this summer, the Bear Grass Voice of America site in *Beaufort* NC, where 41 on 27 May (Alexander Worm) was the highest count.

Savannah Sparrow: Three singing males along Wilson Rd near Brevard *Transylvania* NC 9 Jun (Frank Porter, Michael Plauché, Martine Stolk) were suggestive of attempted breeding at that site.

Bobolink: Bobolinks likely attempted nesting at three sites in the NC mountains this summer—along Bamboo Rd in *Watauga* where eight were seen 6 Jun (Guy McGrane), along Island Ford Rd in *Transylvania* where 18 were seen 19 Jun (Nathaniel Axtell), and along Shawnee Rd in *Watauga* where six were seen 23 Jun (Steve Dowlan). Individuals photographed at Santee Coastal Reserve *Charleston* SC 12 Jul (Charles Donnelly) and in the Lake Landing area of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 16 Jul (Sally Siko) were early for sites in the coastal plain.

Baltimore Oriole: Outside of the mountains, breeding was confirmed along Buffalo Church Rd in *Cleveland* NC where a pair was seen tending to a nest 6-20 Jun (Bill Hooker) and at Tygerberry Landing *Spartanburg* SC where an adult male was seen feeding a juvenile 18 Jun (Neil Owens).

Magnolia Warbler: Breeding was confirmed along the Beacon Heights Overlook Trail *Avery* NC where a pair was seen feeding a fledgling 11 Jul (Will Johnson). Suggestive of attempted breeding were the one to five seen around Roan Mountain *Mitchell* NC throughout the summer (m. obs.).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: A male and a female at Richland Balsam *Haywood* NC 3 Jul (Vicky Burke) was suggestive of attempted nesting at that site.

Black-throated Green Warbler: Up to nine birds at South Mountains SP *Burke* NC throughout the summer (Brian O'Shea, m. obs.) and two singing males at Hanging Rock SP *Stokes* NC 2 Jun through 12 Jul (Jesse Anderson, m. obs.) were unusual for sites in the western Piedmont during the summer.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: An adult male photographed in a yard in southern *Horry* SC 18 Jun (Jordan Matejcek) was very unusual for a site outside of the mountains during the summer.

Dickcissel: Up to two singing males along Hurdle Mills Rd in northwestern *Orange* NC 1-26 Jun (Brian Bockhahn, m. obs.) and also along Pulley Town Rd in northeastern *Wake* NC 13-22 Jun (Marc Ribaud, m. obs.) were new for those sites. The summer's high count was 12 at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC 14 Jun (Marty Wall, John Fussell, Steve Howell).