

BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

Josh Southern
203 Hyannis Drive
Holly Springs, NC 27540
joshsouthern79@gmail.com

(All dates Summer 2021, 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, **BRP** – Blue Ridge Parkway, **et al.** – and others, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **SP** – State Park, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

All italicized place names are counties.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: There was a flurry of sightings in the northern half of NC in early June including five at a small pond in Apex *Wake* NC 4 Jun (Molly Lankford, m. obs.), four at Patterson Place *Durham* NC 9 Jun (Karen Hogan, m. obs.), six where US-64 crosses NC-1139 in *Washington* NC 10 Jun (Matt Janson), and 28, a remarkable count for NC, at a pond in Hertford *Perquimans* NC 15 Jun (Bo Leisenring). Multiple sightings were made in the area southeast of Lake Mattamuskeet *Hyde* NC again this year, including confirmation of breeding near Middletown when a pair of adults were photographed with three chicks 29 Jul (Jeff Lewis).



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, 29 July 2021. Photo by Jeff Lewis.

Snow Goose: One at Isothermal Community College *Rutherford* NC 9 Jun (Simon Thompson) was unusual for summer.

Tundra Swan: Unusual for summer were two in the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR *Hyde* NC 12 Jun (Kees de Mooy), one at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 11-18 Jul (Lucy Jacobson, m. obs.), and one on the western side of Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC 22-24 Jul (Tobias Gingerich, et al.).

Northern Shoveler: A drake summering at the Salt Pond at Cape Point *Dare* NC throughout the period (m. obs.) was unusual.

Ring-necked Duck: A pair, a drake and a hen, in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC 28 Jun through 5 Jul (Shawn Smolen-Morton, m. obs.) were unusual for mid-summer.

Lesser Scaup: Three drakes lingered on the Pamlico River in Washington *Beaufort* NC through 21 Jun (Betsy Kane, m. obs.) and, possibly the same three drakes, on the Neuse River in Bridgeton *Craven* NC through 3 Jul (Tom & Anna Leith). An individual drake lingered at the Hemingway WTP *Williamsburg* SC through 3 Jul (Jay Chandler, m. obs.).

Common Eider: One lingered at Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC through 21 Jun (Audrey Whitlock). Six continuing from spring at Beaufort Harbor *Carteret* NC 20 Jun (John Fussell, Curtiss Merrick) was a remarkable count for summer. Two continued at Beaufort Harbor through 16 Jul (Caleb Bronsink).

Surf Scoter: Individuals lingered into mid-June at a few sites along the coast. Five at Beaufort Inlet *Carteret* NC 2 Jun (John Fussell) was a good count for summer.

Black Scoter: A hen on the Pasquotank River *Pasquotank* NC 8 Jul and 19 Jul (Matt Janson) was especially late.

Bufflehead: Individual hens at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC through 11 Jun (Sarah Lindgren) and on Daniel Island *Berkeley* SC 14 Jun (Bob Dellinger) were late.

Common Merganser: Mergansers bred again at two previously documented breeding sites—on the Tuckasegee River in *Swain* NC where a hen was seen with 11 juveniles 4 Jun (Jason Corder) and on the Green River/Lake Adger in *Polk* NC where a hen was seen with seven juveniles 20-26 Jun (Cheryl Day, m. obs.).

Ruddy Duck: Three on the Pamlico River in Washington *Beaufort* NC 21 Jun (Betsy Kane, Steve Taylor) were rather late.

Horned Grebe: One summered on Lake Keowee *Oconee* SC (Don Lenahan) for a second year in a row.

Common Gallinule: One at Conestee Nature Preserve *Greenville* SC 13 Jul (Max Bolin, et al.) was unusual for the Piedmont in summer.

Limpkin: Breeding was confirmed at two sites this summer—at the Belfair Golf Club near Bluffton *Beaufort* SC where two adults were seen with three juveniles 1 Jun (Jim Massey) and at the upper end of Goose Creek Reservoir *Berkeley* SC, the same site where breeding was first documented last summer, where two adults were seen with two juveniles 27 Jun (Andy Harrison, Craig Watson). Eight, including six juveniles, continued at this spring's breeding site in southwestern *Horry* SC 7 Jun (Scott Hartley). Individuals were seen at the upper end of Lake Marion *Sumter* SC 14 Jun (Frank Farrell) and 27 Jun (Cathy Mathias), at Pickney Island NWR *Beaufort* SC 26-27 Jun (Matthew Valencic, m. obs.), and at Lake Norman SP *Iredell* NC 30 Jul (Caroline Martin).

Black-necked Stilt: Four at the Horse Creek WTP in *Aiken* SC 7 Jun and 29 Jul (Mary Jo Dawson, m. obs.) were unusual for a site away from the coast in summer.

Pacific Golden-Plover: One was seen around the Salt Pond at Cape Point *Dare* NC during the late summer for a third year in a row. This year, it was seen 8 Jul (Daniel Irons) through 30 Jul (m. obs.).

Wilson's Plover: 112 at New River Inlet *Onslow* NC 21 Jul (John Lynch) was a good count for NC.

Semipalmated Plover: One at McKinney Lake Fish Hatchery *Richmond* NC 14 Jun (Lori Arent, Harry LeGrand) was rather late for a site away from the coast.

Long-billed Curlew: Curlews began showing back up at a few favored tidal estuary sites around the middle of the period. Sightings included one at Hunting Island SP *Beaufort* SC 26 Jun (Milton Hobbs), one at Ophelia Inlet *Carteret* NC 3 Jul (Morgan Barnes, et al.), one at Onslow Beach *Onslow* NC 14 Jun and 20 Jul (Alisa Getz, John Lynch, et al.), three on Deveaux Bank *Charleston* SC during a shorebird survey 25 Jul (Luke Wilde), and one at the Rachel Carson Reserve *Carteret* NC 31 Jul (Lisa Tucci).

Sanderling: One at Archie Elledge WTP *Forsyth* NC 20 Jul (John Haire) was a good find for an inland site during the summer.

Baird's Sandpiper: One at Prater Farm *Anderson* SC 20 Jul (Brian Barchus, Joe & Liz Dunkleman, m. obs.) was rather early.

Pectoral Sandpiper: One at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 21 Jun (Karen Lebing) was unusual for June.

Short-billed Dowitcher: Inland sightings, all made mid-to-late July, included one at a pond along Ballinger Rd in *Guilford* NC 17 Jul (Andrew Thornton, m. obs.), one at Sandhills Sod Farms *Montgomery* NC 19 Jul (Martina Nordstrand), two at Bishop Branch Turf *Oconee* SC 20 Jul (Scott Davis), four at Prater Farm *Anderson* SC 20 Jul (Joe & Liz Dunkleman, m. obs.), and one in Mills River *Henderson* NC 22 Jul (Marilyn Westphal).

Greater Yellowlegs: One at Howell Woods *Johnston* NC 17 Jun (Lori White, et al.) was somewhat unusual for an inland site in mid-June.

Wilson's Phalarope: Individuals were seen and photographed on the lawn at Oregon Inlet Fishing Center *Dare* NC 5-7 Jun (Pat Draisey, m. obs.) and at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 31 Jul through 2 Aug (Jeff Tell, m. obs.).

Heermann's Gull: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent adult Heermann's Gull at Hunting Island SP *Beaufort* SC 21 Jun (Tammy Hester). This bird was almost certainly the same individual seen at nearby Tybee Island

Georgia, near its border with SC, three days prior 18 Jun (Steve Calver, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide the first record of this west coast species anywhere in the Carolinas.

Sooty Tern: Not typically seen from shore when not following the passage of a tropical storm, individual Sooty Terns on Bird Key *Charleston* SC 12 Jul (Cacky Rivers) and on Deveau Bank *Charleston* SC 23 Jul (Maina Handmaker, et al.) may have been attempting to nest at those sites.

Bridled Tern: One photographed at Masonboro Inlet *New Hanover* NC 9 Jul (Scott Mullens) was very unusual from shore outside the passage of a tropical storm.

Roseate Tern: Individuals near New River Inlet *Onslow* NC 21 Jul (John Lynch) and on the eastern end of Kiawah Island *Charleston* SC 26 Jul (Aidan Rominger) were unusual for those areas. Counts at more traditional sites included four at Cape Point *Dare* NC 2 Jun (Daniel Irons, m. obs.) and up to three at the northern end of Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 27 Jul (Pat Draisey, m. obs.).

Common Tern: One on Lake Norman in *Mecklenburg* NC 19 Jun (Judy Walker, et al.) was unusual for the Piedmont region in June.

Arctic Tern: Individuals in eastbound flight off Cape Point *Dare* NC 1 Jun and 4 Jun (Daniel Irons) were good finds from shore.

White-tailed Tropicbird: One, possibly two, was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 6 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Wilson's Storm-Petrel: Multiple from-shore sightings were made in early June including a remarkable count of 520 off Cape Point *Dare* NC 2 Jun (Daniel Irons). Three around Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC 3 Jun (Zealon Wight-Maier) were notable for the SC coast.

White-faced Storm-Petrel: One was well-seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 31 Jul (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). This sighting was only the fifth made in Carolina waters over the past decade.



White-faced Storm-Petrel, 31 Jul 2021. Photo by Kate Sutherland.

Fea's Petrel: One was seen on a pelagic trip out of Hatteras *Dare* NC 6 Jun (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Cory's Shearwater: 1312 in eastbound flight off Cape Point *Dare* NC 5 Jun (Daniel Irons) was a notable from-shore count.

Wood Stork: Post-breeding dispersal resulted in multiple inland sightings beginning around mid-July. Farthest inland and a first for the county was one in central *Polk* NC 13 Jul (Melinda Champion, m. obs.).

Magnificent Frigatebird: Multiple sightings were made at sites along the coast from *Currituck* NC south to *Charleston* SC from 3 Jun through 12 Jun (m. obs.) including a count of three over North Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC and nearby Sunset Beach *Brunswick* NC 6 Jun (Ed Groneman, m. obs.).

Anhinga: Post-breeding dispersal resulted in sightings at multiple sites in the Piedmont region beginning in late June. 11 over Crabtree Creek Wetland *Wake* NC 14 Jul (Harry LeGrand) was a notable count for the Piedmont. Farthest inland was one over the upper end of Rhodhiss Lake *Burke* NC 16 Jul (Art Webster).

Least Bittern: Individuals at Conestee Nature Preserve *Greenville* NC 17 Jun through 5 Aug (Mark Harvell, Charles Rucinski, m. obs.) and along the Rocky River in western *Cabarrus* NC 11 Jul and 25 Jul (Taylor Piephoff, m. obs.) were unusual for the Piedmont region in summer, suggestive of attempted nesting at those sites.

Great Blue Heron (Great White): One around the Hemingway WTP *Williamsburg* SC 24 Jun through 3 Jul (Jay Chandler, m. obs.) was a good find.

Snowy Egret: Post-breeding dispersal resulted in sightings at multiple inland sites beginning in late June. Farthest inland was one at Lake Adger *Polk* NC 21 Jun (Mike Resch, m. obs.).

Tricolored Heron: Individuals were found at six sites in the Piedmont in the latter half of July. Individuals at the upper end of Lake Fisher *Rowan* NC 22-25 Jul (Stephen Schoon, m. obs.) and at Lake Norman SP *Iredell* NC 27 Jul (Ralph Erickson) were especially unusual for those areas.

Cattle Egret: One photographed in southern *Ashe* NC 17 Jul (Guy McGrane, m. obs.) was unusual for the NC High Country.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Immature individuals seen and photographed along Cane Creek in central *Mitchell* NC 16 Jun (Cathy & Thomas McNeil) and at Valle Crucis *Watauga* NC 25 Jul into August (Paul Laurent, m. obs.) were unusual for the northern mountains.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: Two immature birds at Beaver Lake *Buncombe* NC 14 Jul (Jay Wherley, m. obs.) were unusual for the mountain region.

White Ibis: One at New River SP *Ashe* NC 30-31 Jul (Joseph Johnson, m. obs.) was unusual for the northern mountains and a first for that county.

Roseate Spoonbill: Spoonbills made a remarkable push inland and northward in July during post-breeding dispersal. County firsts included one at a pond in southern *York* SC 10-11 Jul (Marcus & Cheryl Morris, m. obs.), three at High Rock Lake *Rowan* NC 17 Jul (Kayla Smith), one at the upper end of Lake James *McDowell* NC 21 Jul (Art Webster),

one at a pond along Bowden Rd in *Orange* NC 31 Jul through 25 Aug (Fleeta Chauvigne, m. obs.), and one near Poston *Florence* SC 31 Jul (Jamey Eaddy). Sightings of two or more at sites in the Piedmont included two at Lake Lynn *Wake* NC 4-6 Jul (Susan Conder, m. obs.), likely the same two individuals at nearby Shelley Lake 6-8 Jul (Steven Vozzo, m. obs.), three at Cane Creek Park *Union* NC 10-15 Jul (Chris Huffstickler, m. obs.), five along the Catawba River in *Mecklenburg* NC 13-18 Jul (Greg Hays, m. obs.), two in the Horsepen Creek arm of Lake Brandt *Guilford* NC 20 Jul into August (Henry Link, Matt Wangerin, m. obs.), and four at Lake Twitty *Union* NC 26 Jul (Dennis Kent, m. obs.). Two on the northern Core Banks *Carteret* NC 29 Jul (Rebecca Jones, et al.) was the northernmost sighting made along the coast. 13 at Twin Lakes in Sunset Beach *Brunswick* NC 12 Jul (David Wilson) and eight at New River Inlet *Onslow* NC 21 Jul (John Lynch) were notable counts for NC. 85 on Dewees Island *Charleston* SC 26 Jun (Laura Caudill, et al.) was the high count for SC.

Swallow-tailed Kite: As usual, Swallow-tailed Kites began dispersing from their breeding grounds in mid-July. Unusual for the mountain region was one just south of Brevard *Transylvania* NC 15-17 Jul (Michael Plauché, m. obs.) and two over Lake Louise in Weaverville *Buncombe* NC 20 Jul (Tom Dudley). 20 near Belton *Anderson* SC 23 Jul (fide Ann Bailes) was a notable count for the Piedmont.

Northern Harrier: Individuals lingering around the Bodie Island Lighthouse *Dare* NC through 19 Jun (Larry Chen, Sarah Toner) and at Cedar Island NWR *Carteret* NC 20 Jun (John Fussell, et al.) were suggestive of attempted nesting in those areas. One over the Super Sod farm along Hooper Lane *Henderson* NC 15 Jul (Kevin Burke, Benjamin Whitlock) likely was an early fall arrival.

Mississippi Kite: 30+ over fields in southeastern *Montgomery* NC 31 Jul (Wayne Hoffman) was a good count for the Piedmont.

Broad-winged Hawk: Individuals photographed at Sewee Preserve *Charleston* SC 13 Jun (Pam Ford, et al.), in Sunset Beach *Brunswick* NC 3 Jul (David Wilson), and at Huntington Beach SP *Georgetown* SC 5 Jul (Ted Falasco) were unusual for sites along the coast in summer.

Red-headed Woodpecker: One seen excavating a nesting cavity at 3450 feet above sea level in northeastern *Watauga* NC 7 Jul (Adrianna Nelson) was unusual for such a high elevation.

Merlin: Four were seen at Land Harbor Lake *Avery* NC, a site where the species was suspected of breeding last year, 27 Jul (Barbara Stewman).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: Flycatchers successfully nested near the Rock Hill – York County Airport *York* SC for a third year in a row, as four juveniles were seen alongside an adult 28 Jun (Andrew Lewis, m. obs.). A pair attempting to nest just east of McConnells *York* SC 7 Jun through 16 Jul (Marcus & Cheryl Morris, m. obs.) were not

successful. The individual seen along Thompson Creek Rd in *Spartanburg* SC in late May remained through 17 Jun (Cherrie Sneed), probably departing due to the lack of a mate. One at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC 5 Jun (Jill & Ted Falasco, m. obs.) did not stick around that site.

Willow Flycatcher: A singing individual seen along the Rocky River in western *Cabarrus* NC 3 Jun through 11 Jul (Taylor Piephoff, m. obs.) was suggestive of attempted nesting at that site.

Warbling Vireo: Southeast of the species' typical breeding range, one or more singing individuals were seen and heard at Crabtree Creek Wetland *Wake* NC throughout the period with a high count of three 27 Jun (Kent Fiala, Karen Hogan). Despite the presence of up to three singing birds at that site for two years in a row now, evidence of nesting there is yet to be obtained.

Fish Crow: Nine, possibly including juveniles, in Boone *Watauga* NC 15 Jul (Guy McGrane) were suggestive of breeding in that area. Though this species' range has expanded into the mountains in recent decades, documented evidence of breeding in that region is still lacking.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Individuals at Bass Lake *Wake* NC 7 Jun (Mike Maier, Lawrence Zoller) and at Grandfather Mountain *Avery* NC 28 Jul (David Schlabach, et al.) were very unusual for summer.

Sedge Wren: Five singing individuals at the Voice of America Site in *Washington* NC 28 Jul (Elsa Chen, Matt Janson) was a notable count for summer. One wonders if these birds nested at that site.

Swainson's Thrush: One heard singing at Mount Mitchell SP *Yancey* NC 30 Jun (Dwayne Martin, et al.) was suggestive of attempted nesting there.

Purple Finch: A female lingered at a feeder in western Winston-Salem *Forsyth* NC until 16 Jun (David & Susan Disher).

Red Crossbill: 70 around the Richland Balsam Overlook along the BRP in *Jackson* NC 17 Jun (Ryan Bakelaar) was a good count.

Pine Siskin: Individuals lingered at feeders in *Lexington* SC until 13 Jun (David Dobson) and in Raleigh *Wake* until 22 Jun (Lynn Erla Beegle). One photographed at a feeder in Nags Head *Dare* NC 4 Jul (Audrey Whitlock) was especially unusual for July.

Lark Sparrow: One photographed at Gull Rock Game Land *Hyde* NC 27 Jul (Martin Stoner, et al.) was somewhat early, unusual for a site away from the Sandhills in summer.

White-throated Sparrow: One photographed in western Winston-Salem *Forsyth* NC 29 Jul (David & Susan Disher) was very unusual for July.

Savannah Sparrow: Breeding was confirmed in eastern *Wilkes* NC when a juvenile was seen in the company of two adults 8 Jul (Max Nootbaar). Three singing males and a female along White Plains Rd near Lomax *Wilkes* NC 9-10 Jun (Nootbaar) were suggestive of attempted breeding at that site as well.

Bobolink: 30 at a traditional breeding site near Beech Mountain in western *Watauga* NC 6 Jul (Paul Laurent) was a notable count for summer.

Northern Waterthrush: One at Catawba College Ecological Preserve *Rowan* NC 5 Jun (Vicky Burke, Bill Hooker) must have been a late spring migrant.

Magnolia Warbler: Individual singing males on Mount Pisgah *Haywood* NC 26 Jun (Jeremy Nance, William Huber), on Grandfather Mountain *Avery* NC 10 Jul (Clifton Avery, et al.), and on Roan Mountain *Mitchell* NC throughout the summer (m. obs.) were suggestive of attempted nesting at those sites.

Blackpoll Warbler: A singing male photographed at Wagon Rd Gap along the BRP in *Haywood* NC 13 Jun (Todd Arcos) was extremely late.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: One in southern *Union* NC 6 Jul (Martina Nordstrand) was extremely unusual for a site away from our highest mountains in mid-summer. Individuals seen at Clingmans Dome *Swain* NC (m. obs.) and at Roan Mountain *Mitchell* NC (m. obs.) intermittently throughout the period were more expected.

Canada Warbler: One photographed at Oconee SP *Oconee* SC 28 Jul (Marc Regnier) was unusual for SC in summer, likely an early downslope wanderer.

Dickcissel: Individual singing males at the Rowan County Landfill *Rowan* NC 17 Jun (Martina Nordstrand, m. obs.) and in Delta *Union* SC 1-5 Jul (Greg Berner, m. obs.) were firsts for those counties. A singing male in *Pasquotank* NC 5 Jun through 29 Jul (Greg Hudson, m. obs.) was a first for that county during the breeding season.