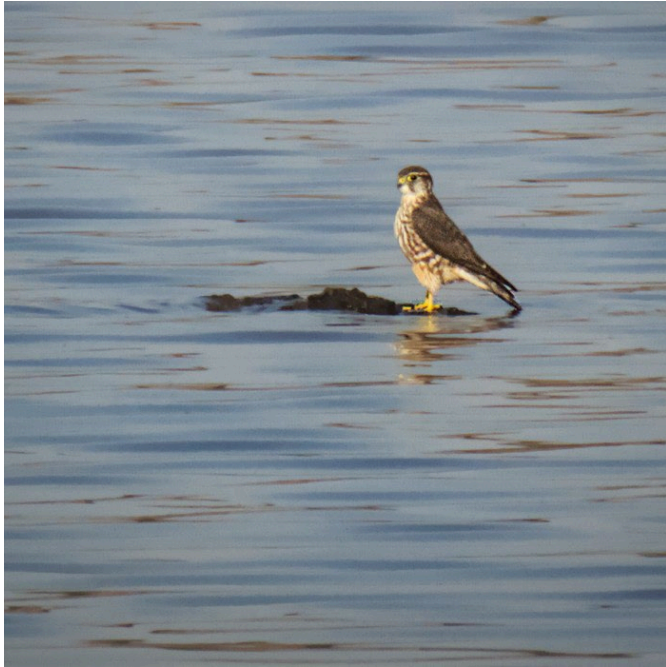


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Unusual Anthropogenic Nest Sites of Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) in the Central Business District of Rockingham, Richmond County, North Carolina

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The Carolina Chickadee is one of the most common and widespread species in most of southeastern North America (Mostrum et al. 2002), including North Carolina (Mason et al. 2007, Seriff 2018, LeGrand et al. 2021). They readily occupy a variety of wooded habitats, including residential areas and parks in suburbia where this secondary-cavity nesting species breeds in natural nest sites and anthropogenic nest sites such as nest boxes (e.g., Davidson, NC; Stanback et al. 2009). Most documented anthropogenic nest sites used by Carolina Chickadees such as nest boxes, nest posts or poles, or nest tubes (Pitts 1998) and artificial snags (Grubb and Bronson 1995) have been constructed for explicit use by birds. However, Carolina Chickadees may infrequently use anthropogenic nest sites not deliberately constructed for use as nest sites, such as an open vertical steel pipe with a mounted stop sign along a street in Texas (Sialis 2017), an open vertical pipe beside the front porch of a house in Henderson County, NC (eBird 2021a), or an open top horizontal bar of a swinging metal gate in Missouri (eBird 2021b) and in Richmond County, NC (McNair, unpubl. data). These observations were in rural or suburban, not urban areas. Unusual anthropogenic nest sites in urban areas have not been described from central business districts of a city or town in North Carolina, where Carolina Chickadees occur in much lower breeding densities compared to many suburban areas (e.g., 14.7 territories/40 ha in Bethabara Park, Winston-Salem, NC; Thorington and Brand 2014). This field note documents two unusual anthropogenic nest sites of Carolina Chickadees and the context in which they were used in the central business district of Rockingham, Richmond County, NC, where chickadee breeding densities were low and nest boxes, nest posts or poles, or nest tubes were not present.

Carolina Chickadees were absent from the central business district of Rockingham (25-block study area of 42.4 ha; see McNair 2021 for full description and location of blocks) during the breeding season of 1994 but did nest nearby. The breeding density of Carolina Chickadees within the study area 27 years later was 3.3 territories/40 ha in 2021, when nest boxes, bird feeders, and bird baths were absent.

The only natural cavities present within the study area in 2021 were in dead tops of ~5 trees. One unpaired male Carolina Chickadee examined the very fresh entrance of a north-facing cavity located 0.45 m below the dead top of an 8.5 m tall water oak (*Quercus nigra*) in poor condition in Block 17 in late April and early May 2021. In addition, one pair frequently foraged along the northern boundary of the study area, but nested off-site within an adjacent wooded residential area with many mature trees.

The other two pairs of Carolina Chickadees present within the central business district of Rockingham in 2021 nested at two unusual anthropogenic nest sites. One pair nested in an active electric service mast that protruded through the roof of a commercial building in Block 19 (Figure 1). The other pair nested near the top of a security lamp pole on an unoccupied but landscaped property in the center of downtown Rockingham in Block 25 (Figures 2 and 3). I observed adults at both nest sites feeding young in late April and early May and young successfully fledged from at least the electric service mast nest site. I did not measure the diameters of the two cavity entrances, but they could be described as small at the electric service mast and large at the security lamp pole.



Figure 1. This active electric service mast that protruded 3 m above the roof of a single-floor commercial building in Block 19 was used as a nest-site by a pair of Carolina Chickadees (*Poecile carolinensis*) in 2021. Nest material can be seen extending from the bottom of the lower right hole (and lower left hole, difficult to observe in the photo), where one of the three insulated service entrance conductors enters one of the three larger circular apertures. However, the chickadees always entered the nest-site through the top aperture. Photograph taken on 9 May 2021 © D.B. McNair.

House Sparrows can compete for and usurp nest boxes of the Great Tit (*Parus major*) if the diameter of the cavity entrance exceeds 2.8 cm in Israel (Charter et al. 2013) and of the Carolina Chickadee if the diameter of the cavity entrance exceeds 3.2 cm in Tennessee (Pitts 1998). House Sparrows were common in downtown Rockingham where they only nested in anthropogenic nest sites, including active and abandoned electric service masts in both years (1994, 2021; McNair, unpubl. data). In 2021, when Carolina Chickadees were present, House Sparrows would have the potential to usurp nest sites of

the much smaller Carolina Chickadee if the latter species selected unusual anthropogenic nest sites at cavities with large entrance diameters. House Sparrows used five different electric service masts within four blocks in 2021, although not in the two blocks where Carolina Chickadees nested. Furthermore, masts used by House Sparrows had cavity entrances with larger diameters than the mast used by Carolina Chickadees, reducing or eliminating the threat of nest site usurpation. Carolina Chickadees are uncommon at best within the central business district of Rockingham, but despite potential usurpation of nest sites by House Sparrows, two pairs did nest at two unusual anthropogenic nest sites in downtown Rockingham where nest boxes were absent and natural cavities were scarce in 2021.



Figure 2. Carolina Chickadees nested at this tall (6.25 m) active security lamp pole on unoccupied but landscaped property in Block 25. Photograph taken on 9 May 2021 © D.B. McNair.





Figure 3. The active security lamp pole contained one large circular entrance 5.5 m above ground level, used by Carolina Chickadees, in a cone-shaped sub-terminal structure that supported the large light cap. Photograph taken on 9 May 2021 © D.B. McNair.

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BRIEFS FOR THE FILES

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(All dates Winter 2021-2022, 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, **CBC** – Christmas Bird Count, **et al.** – and others, **Ft** – Fort, **m. obs.** – multiple observers, **NC** – North Carolina, **NWR** – National Wildlife Refuge, **Rd** – Road, **SC** – South Carolina, **WMA** – Wildlife Management Area, **WTP** – Water Treatment Plant

All italicized place names are counties.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck: Breeding was confirmed at another site southeast of Mattamuskeet NWR Hyde NC, just east of Gull Rock Game Land, where 11, three adults

and eight juveniles, were seen during its CBC 29 Dec (John Fussell) and into spring (m. obs.). According to the landowner, a pair of adults first arrived there in April 2021 and then successfully nested (*fide* Fussell). Twenty-four over an impoundment near Orton Pond *Brunswick* NC 13 Dec (Cole Tiemann) was a notable count for NC.

Ross's Goose: Eleven in flight over the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR *Washington* NC 11 Dec (Derb Carter) was this winter's high count. One in Bluffton *Beaufort* SC 6-10 Jan (Rose & Tony Johnson, m. obs.) was unusual for the southernmost part of our region. One in Ocracoke *Hyde* NC 26-28 Jan (Peter Vankevich, m. obs.) was unusual for that island.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Sightings were few and far between this winter with no sizable flocks reported. One in Meggett *Charleston* SC 27 Feb (Pam Ford, Craig Watson, m. obs.) was the southernmost report.

Cackling Goose: Individuals, possibly the same individual, photographed with Canada Geese near Poplar Branch *Currituck* NC 1-3 Dec (Matt Janson, m. obs.) and near Shiloh *Camden* NC 9 Jan (Will Burgoyne, et al.) were unusual for those counties in the northeastern corner of NC.

Wood Duck: 1570 at Orton Pond *Brunswick* NC 12 Jan (Cole Tiemann) was a notable concentration.

Cinnamon Teal: A drake was seen and photographed at Santee Coastal Reserve *Charleston* SC 14-17 Feb (Wendy Allen, m. obs.).

Eurasian Wigeon: Like most winters, one or two drakes were seen at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC and at Mattamuskeet NWR *Hyde* NC intermittently throughout the period (m. obs.). A drake at Alligator River *Dare* NC 15 Feb (Greg Hudson) was somewhat unusual for that site. Three drakes photographed at Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center *Georgetown* SC during the Winyah Bay CBC 16 Dec (Aaron Given) was a notable count.





Green-winged Teal (Eurasian) [with Green-winged Teal (American)], Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, Dare County NC, 8 Jan 2022. Photograph by Jeff Lewis.

Green-winged Teal (Eurasian): After one was found at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 8 Jan (Jeff Lewis), two were seen at that site 20 Jan (Megan Baker, Michael Gosselin) and 5 Feb (Lewis, Liling Warren), and one continued there into spring (m. obs.).

Common Eider: Sightings were down compared to last winter. Eight off Kitty Hawk *Dare* NC during its CBC 18 Dec (Ricky Davis) was this winter's high count.

Harlequin Duck: A hen photographed along a jetty at Murrells Inlet *Georgetown* SC 12 Dec (Jill & Ted Falasco, Andy Harrison, m. obs.) was the only one reported this winter.

Surf Scoter: Nine on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 15 Jan (Eddie Owens) was a notable count for an inland site. A hen on Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC 26 Jan (Tom Bush, Michael Plauché, et al.) was unusual for the mountain region in late winter.

White-winged Scoter: Individuals or pairs were reported on five lakes in the Piedmont region in the latter half of the period. Two on the southern end of Coddle Creek Reservoir *Cabarrus* NC 15 Jan (Mark McShane) were a first for that county.

Black Scoter: 5000 off Cape Point *Dare* NC 4 Dec (Jeff Lewis) was a notable count.

Long-tailed Duck: A hen on Lake Julian *Buncombe* NC 14-28 Feb (John Koon, m. obs.) was unusual for the mountain region. Three hens on Lake Wylie *York* SC 23 Dec (Cindy Stacy) were a first for that county. A hen on the May River in Palmetto Bluff *Beaufort* SC 24 Dec (Matt Spangler) was the southernmost report.

Eared Grebe: Two continued at the Goldsboro WTP *Wayne* NC from November through 21 Jan (Eric Dean) with one continuing through 19 Feb (Bob Butler, Simon Thompson).

Western Grebe: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Western Grebe on Lake Norman *Mecklenburg* NC 27 Dec (Gretchen Locy, et al.) and, likely the same individual, on the southern end of Coddle Creek Reservoir *Cabarrus* NC 28 Dec through 7 Mar (Taylor Piephoff, m. obs.). Another individual was seen and photographed on the ocean in Buxton *Dare* NC 9-10 Feb (Frank Marengi, m. obs.).

White-winged Dove: One photographed in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC 11 Jan (Irvin Pitts) was a great find for a site away from the coast and a first for that county.

Lesser Nighthawk: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report of a Lesser Nighthawk seen in flight over Figure Eight Island *New Hanover* NC 25 Nov and 16 Dec (Derb Carter). If accepted, the report would provide the second record of this species in NC. Any nighthawk sighting in the Carolinas between mid-November and April is incredibly rare.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird: An adult female visiting a feeder in southern *Durham* NC 15 Dec through at least 20 Feb (Julia Storm) was unusual for the Piedmont region in winter.

Black-chinned Hummingbird: An immature male visited a feeder near Lake Wheeler *Wake* NC 10 Jan through 21 Feb (Cindy Ramsey) and was banded 12 Jan (Susan Campbell).

Rufous Hummingbird: Individuals were reported at about eight sites this winter. An immature female visiting a feeder near Weaverville *Buncombe* NC 12 Oct through 8 Mar (Krista Kelly, m. obs.) was unusual—Rufous Hummingbirds do not typically make it through the entire winter at sites in the mountain region.

Allen's Hummingbird: A female visited a feeder in southern *Mecklenburg* NC for a second winter in a row, recaptured 16 Feb (Susan Campbell). Regrettably for birders, there is no public access to this site.

Clapper Rail: A moribund individual photographed after a presumed building-strike in *Greenwood* SC 5 Jan (Chris Contakos) was a first for the Piedmont region in winter.

Though migrant Clapper Rails are occasionally found at inland sites, all previous records are from spring or fall. 83 in *Beaufort* SC during the Hilton Head Island CBC 15 Dec (*fide* Susan Murphy) was a record number for that count and the highest total on any Audubon CBC this year.

Virginia Rail: Individuals at Jackson Park *Henderson* NC 5 Jan (Kevin Burke) and at Enka Lake *Buncombe* NC 21-25 Jan (Clayton Gibb, m. obs.) were unusual for the mountain region in winter.

Common Gallinule: One continuing at a pond in Indian Trail *Union* NC from 28 Nov through 12 Dec (Dennis Kent, m. obs.) was unusual for a site outside of the coastal plain in winter.

Sandhill Crane: 28 photographed in flight over Boone *Watauga* NC 18 Feb (Guy McGrane) was a notable count for the northern mountain region, likely the same flock of 28 photographed in northern *Greenville* SC the following day 19 Feb (Shelby Birch, Donnie Coody). 14 in flight over central *Cumberland* NC during its CBC 16 Dec (Kim Brand, et al.) were unusual for that area. The high count in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC this winter was 67 on 17 Jan (Andrew Lydeard).

Bar-tailed Godwit: The individual discovered in a tidal lagoon at The Ocean Course (restricted access) on Kiawah Island *Charleston* SC 25 Oct (Josh Lefever, Nathaniel Watkins, et al.) continued at that site throughout the winter and into spring (m. obs.).

Hudsonian Godwit: Individuals at Pea Island NWR *Dare* NC 3-20 Dec (Mary & Ralph Erickson, m. obs.) and in Litchfield Beach *Georgetown* SC 16 Nov through 7 Jan (Byron Swift, m. obs.) were late.

Stilt Sandpiper: One on Eagle Island (restricted access) *Brunswick* NC during the Wilmington CBC 1 Jan (Derb Carter, Ricky Davis) was unusual for NC in winter.

Dunlin: One at McAlpine WTP *Mecklenburg* NC 9 Feb (Jeff Lemons, et al.) was unusual for the Piedmont region in late winter.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 16 at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 10 Dec (Steve Calver) were a great find for winter.

Short-billed/Long-billed Dowitcher: A dowitcher, likely a Long-billed Dowitcher, photographed in the Ellerbe Creek arm of Falls Lake *Durham* NC 4 Dec (Noah Rokoske) was somewhat late for either species at a site away from the coast.

Spotted Sandpiper: Farthest inland this winter were individuals at Lyman Lake *Spartanburg* SC 18 Dec (Francis Brady, et al.), at High Rock Dam *Rowan* NC, where photographed, 27 Dec (Louisa Arendt), and at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC throughout the period (m. obs.).

Wilson's Phalarope: One at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 30 Dec (Steve Calver) was a great find for winter.

Great Skua: On winter pelagic trips out of Wanchese *Dare* NC, two were seen 19 Feb and 21 Feb, and one was seen 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Common Murre: Excellent counts were made on winter pelagic trips out of Wanchese *Dare* NC in February, with five seen on 7 Feb, 12 seen on 21 Feb, and 25, a new record high count for NC, seen on 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). From shore in *Dare* NC, two from the southern end of Bodie Island 13 Feb (Michael Gosselin) and one from Jennette's Pier 13 Feb (Jeff Lewis) were great finds.



*Common Murre, off Oregon Inlet, Dare County NC, 27 Feb 2022.
Photograph by Kate Sutherland.*

Thick-billed Murre: On winter pelagic trips out of Wanchese *Dare* NC, two were seen 19 Feb, one was seen NC 21 Feb, and five, a new record high count for NC, were seen 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). From shore, individuals were photographed at Bogue Inlet *Carteret* NC 17 Feb (Ed Phillips), from Jennette's Pier *Dare* NC 18 Feb (Richard Hall, Paul Beerman, m. obs.), and from Cape Point *Dare* NC 20 Feb (Trevor Sleight, m. obs.).

Razorbill: Noticeably absent in December and January, Razorbills began showing up in numbers along our northern coast in February. 2838 on a winter pelagic trip out of Wanchese *Dare* NC 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.) was this winter's high count.

Atlantic Puffin: Puffins were seen on all five winter pelagic trips out of Wanchese *Dare* NC this February, including counts of 166 on 7 Feb, 118 on 19 Feb, and 302, a new record high count for NC, on 21 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.). 83 in eastbound flight off Cape Point *Dare* NC 16 Feb (Daniel Irons) was a remarkable count from shore. A moribund bird was found in Atlantic Beach *Carteret* NC 23 Feb (John Fussell).

Black-legged Kittiwake: Seven on a winter pelagic trip out of Wanchese *Dare* NC 7 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.) was a good count. From shore, individuals were seen in Hatteras *Dare* NC 16-17 Jan (Sutherland) and from Cape Point *Dare* NC 2 Feb and 6 Feb (Daniel Irons, et al.).

Black-headed Gull: Sightings included an adult at Mason Inlet *New Hanover* NC 26 Dec through 6 Mar (Gilbert Grant, m. obs.), a first-winter bird at Cape Point *Dare* NC 9 Feb, 13 Feb, and 24 Feb (Daniel Irons), and a first-winter bird photographed at Oregon Inlet *Dare* NC 11 Feb (Jason Denesevich).

Little Gull: All reports this winter were made in *Dare* NC during the latter half of the period. Multiple sightings were made from Cape Point in February including a notable count of nine adults in eastbound flight 22 Feb (Daniel Irons). Little Gulls were seen on four of the five winter pelagic trips out of Wanchese in February, with a high count of four on 19 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).



Apparent Heermann's Gull, Mason Inlet, Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover County NC, 12 Feb 2022. Photograph by Sam Cooper.

Heermann's Gull: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent adult Heermann's Gull at Mason Inlet *New Hanover* NC 12 Feb (Peggy Eubank, Matt Janson, et al.). If accepted, the report would provide NC with its first record of this Pacific-coast gull. Reports of an adult in Litchfield Beach *Georgetown* SC 30 Dec (Peter Stangel) and at Cape Point *Dare* NC 15 Feb (Daniel Irons, Mike Resch) were likely that same individual.

California Gull: An adult bird, likely the same individual first reported 29 Nov (Brian Patteson), was seen at Cape Point *Dare* NC during the Cape Hatteras CBC 27 Dec (Brian Bockhahn, Kyle Kittelberger), on the beach just north of Cape Point 1 Jan (Michael Gosselin) and again at Cape Point 6-7 Feb (Daniel Irons, m. obs.).

Iceland Gull: Multiple sightings were made in *Dare* NC this winter including a count of three at Cape Point 5 Jan (Will Burgoyne, et al.). An individual on Masonboro Island *New Hanover* NC 1 Dec (Matthew Withrow) was one of only three sightings made south of Cape Point this winter.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: The Cape Hatteras CBC reported the highest total on any Audubon CBC again this year, with 1463 in southern *Dare* NC 27 Dec (*fide* Karen Lebing). A few of the higher counts at inland sites included a total of 75 at two sites just north of Greenville *Pitt* NC 21 Dec (Howard Vainright), 24 at a pond along US-64 southeast of Tarboro *Edgecombe* NC 13 Jan (Derb Carter), ten at a landfill in southeastern *Person* NC 22 Jan (David Pennebaker), four on Lake Norman *Mecklenburg* NC 5 Feb (Jeff Lemons, et al.), 127 at Buckhorn Reservoir *Wilson* NC 20 Feb (Ricky Davis), and 31 on Jordan Lake *Chatham* NC 27 Feb (Eddie Owens). Individuals at the southern end of Coddle Creek Reservoir *Cabarrus* NC 24-25 Dec (Taylor Piephoff, m. obs.) and at Salem Lake *Forsyth* NC 27 Feb (Ron Morris, m. obs.) were first for those counties.

Slaty-backed Gull: Pending review by the SC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent adult Slaty-backed Gull at the Horry County Landfill *Horry* SC 3-8 Jan (Chris Hill, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide SC with its first record of this gull native to northeast Asia, and the first photographic documentation of this species anywhere in the Carolinas.

Glaucous Gull: Individuals were seen at a few sites on Hatteras Island *Dare* NC, from Waves south to Cape Point, intermittently through the winter (m. obs.).

Great Black-backed Gull: 26 at a pond along US-64 southeast of Tarboro *Edgecombe* NC 13 Jan (Derb Carter) was a notable count for a site away from the coast.

Gull-billed Tern: One photographed at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 10 Dec and 20 Dec (Steve Calver) was quite late, possibly the latest ever photographed in the Carolinas.

Caspian Tern: One at Cape Point *Dare* NC 8 Jan into spring (Will Burgoyne, m. obs.) was unusual for our northern coast in late winter.

Red-throated Loon: Inland sightings involved juvenile individuals on Lake Norman *Mecklenburg* NC 10-19 Dec (Patty Masten, et al.), on Lake Hartwell *Anderson* SC 9 Jan (Joe & Liz Dunkleman), on Lake Keowee *Oconee* SC 19 Jan (Jeff Tell), and on Lake Crabtree *Wake* NC 22 Jan (Susan Campbell, Steve Shultz). It's possible that some or all of these sightings involved the same wandering juvenile.

Pacific Loon: One was seen along the coast of *New Hanover* NC, from Figure Eight Island south to Carolina Beach intermittently throughout the winter (m. obs.).

Yellow-nosed Albatross: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report of a Yellow-nosed Albatross seen in flight over the ocean from Cape Point *Dare* NC 13 Feb (Daniel Irons). There are only four previously accepted reports of this species in the Carolinas, all from *Dare* NC.

Northern Fulmar: Five on a winter pelagic trip out of Wanchese *Dare* NC 27 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.) was the only report this winter.

Manx Shearwater: This winter's high count was 30 on a winter pelagic trip out of Wanchese *Dare* NC 12 Feb (Brian Patteson, Kate Sutherland, et al.).

Wood Stork: One in flight over Latta Nature Preserve *Mecklenburg* NC 5 Jan (Kevin Metcalf) was very unusual for the Piedmont region in winter.

Brown Booby: An adult photographed in flight 53 miles south-southeast of the southern tip of Ocracoke Island *Hyde* NC 30 Dec (Tim Mallon, Lilian Saul) was a great find for winter.

Great Cormorant: The individual found at Lake Townsend *Guilford* NC 28 Nov (Ann Van Sant, Roberta Newton, Henry Link, m. obs.) continued at that site throughout the winter and into spring (m. obs.).

American White Pelican: 30 photographed in flight over River Park North *Pitt* NC 19 Feb (Caleb Bronsink) were a first for that county.

American Bittern: One photographed at Enka Lake *Buncombe* NC 23 Jan (Blake Cloninger) was unusual for the mountain region in mid-winter.

Least Bittern: One heard and then photographed at Mackay Island NWR *Currituck* NC 29-30 Jan (Michelle Payne, Amy & Steve Myers) was unusual for a site so far north in mid-winter.

Great Blue Heron (Great White): One was seen along the Watauga River around Valle Crucis *Watauga* NC 17 Dec (Richard Gray, Judi Sawyer) intermittently into spring (m. obs.). Interestingly, one was seen in this same area for a few months in mid-2020.

Reddish Egret: Two photographed together on the east end of Sunset Beach *Brunswick* NC 17 Dec and 27 Dec (David Wilson) were unusual for the NC coast in winter.



*Reddish Egrets, Sunset Beach, Brunswick County NC, 27 Dec 2021.
Photograph by David Wilson.*

Green Heron: Individuals in southwestern *Durham* NC for a second year in a row 8 Dec (Nan Dewire) through 10 Feb (Maria de Bruyn) and at Heritage Lake *York* SC 14-30 Jan (Gretchen Locy, m. obs.) were unusual for the Piedmont in winter. Individuals photographed at Owen Park *Buncombe* NC 7 Dec (Casey Girard) through 8 Jan (John Britt) and at the Biltmore Estate *Buncombe* NC 24 Feb (Jim Tolbert) were especially unusual for the mountain region in winter.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 250 on South Island at Tom Yawkey Wildlife Center *Georgetown* SC 16 Dec (Aaron Given) was a notable concentration of that species.

White Ibis: One seen in flight with Canada Geese near Weaverville *Buncombe* NC 7 Feb (Kristin Hillegas) was extremely unusual for the mountain region in mid-winter.

Roseate Spoonbill: Two photographed near the Weyerhaeuser plant in northeastern *Martin* NC 1 Dec (Mary & Ralph Erickson) were very unusual for NC in winter, especially for a site north of *Brunswick* NC, and a first for that county.

Golden Eagle: Individuals were reported at four sites in the mountain region from *Watauga* NC south to *Madison* NC, and at four sites in the coastal plain from Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC south to Donnelley WMA *Colleton* SC.

Northern Goshawk: An immature bird briefly seen at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC 6 Jan (Matt Janson) was likely the same individual seen at that site 11 Nov (Jeff Lewis).

Red-tailed Hawk (Krider's): Individual Krider's Hawks were photographed at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC 30 Dec (Steve Calver), at Bear Island WMA *Colleton* SC 12 Feb (Andrew Lydeard, Peter Stangel), and in *Allendale* SC 19 Feb (Lydeard).

Rough-legged Hawk: Individuals were seen and photographed at North River Preserve *Carteret* NC 11 Dec and 24 Dec (Douglas Racine) and at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC 29 Dec through 6 Mar (Bob Lewis, m. obs.).



*Snowy Owl, near Cape Point, Dare County NC,
23 Jan 2022. Photograph by Brian Patteson.*

Snowy Owl: An immature Snowy Owl was seen and photographed at multiple sites along our coast this winter. It was seen around Oregon Inlet *Dare* NC 21-25 Dec (Paul Doshkov, m. obs.), in Kitty Hawk *Dare* NC 19 Jan (Connie Marcy), again around Oregon Inlet 20 Jan (Mary Hoffman, m.

obs.), between Cape Point and Hatteras *Dare* NC 23-26 Jan (Megan Baker, Michael

Gosselin, m. obs.), again around Oregon Inlet 31 Jan through 3 Feb (Doshkov, m. obs.), in Pine Knoll Shores *Carteret* NC 3 Feb (*vide* John Fussell), again around Oregon Inlet 6-12 Feb (m. obs.), near Hobcaw Barony *Georgetown* SC 17-18 Feb (Jack Volker), in southern Topsail Beach *Pender* NC 23-24 Feb (Caroline Little, m. obs.), and at Ft Macon *Carteret* NC 6-7 Mar (Jen Merlo). Because of the overlap in reports between sites on 3

Feb, at Oregon Inlet and in Pine Knoll Shores, it is likely there were at least two Snowy Owls in the Carolinas this winter.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: Individuals were seen at Alligator River NWR *Dare* NC 6 Jan (Alan MacEachren), along the Duck Park Boardwalk *Dare* NC 22 Jan (Mary Alice Hayward, m. obs.), and again at Alligator River NWR 6 Feb (m. obs.) through 7 Mar (Greg Hudson).

Western Kingbird: Individuals were seen at multiple sites in the SC coastal plain this winter—at Widgeon Point Preserve *Beaufort* 16-26 Dec (m. obs.), in West Ashley *Charleston* 25-26 Dec (Keith Miller), at ACE Basin NWR *Charleston* 26 Dec (Pam Ford, Craig Watson), along Bucksville Drive in *Horry* 26 Dec through 7 Jan (Allen Hill, m. obs.), at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* 31 Dec through 2 Jan (Steve Calver, m. obs.), in Edisto Beach *Charleston* 5 Jan (Alison Huff), at Ft Moultrie *Charleston* 5-20 Jan (John Cox, m. obs.), and on Bulls Island at Cape Romain NWR *Charleston* SC 8 Jan and 5 Feb (Andrew Lydeard, Peter Stangel, m. obs.).

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher: One photographed in Swansboro *Onslow* NC 1 Jan (David Lovett, Barbara Russell Hoffman) was unusual for the winter period.

Least Flycatcher: One seen, photographed, and audio recorded along the Duck Park Boardwalk *Dare* NC 13-24 Jan (Jeff Lewis) was a great find for winter.

***Empidonax* sp.:** The *Empidonax* flycatcher, most likely a Least Flycatcher, found at Lake Busbee in Conway *Horry* SC 17 Nov (Steve & Barb Thomas, Paul Serridge, m. obs.) continued at that site throughout the winter and into spring (m. obs.).

Say's Phoebe: The individual found along Howerton Rd in *Guilford* NC 16 Oct (Jon Randolph, m. obs.) continued intermittently throughout the winter and into spring (m. obs.).

Blue-headed Vireo: 51 tallied southeast of Columbia *Richland* SC during the Congaree Swamp CBC 19 Dec (*fide* John Grego) was a record number for that count and the third highest total on any Audubon CBC this year.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow: One at Ecusta Pond *Transylvania* NC 9 Dec (Nathaniel Axtell) was quite late, while one at Lake Ed Johnson *Spartanburg* SC 26 Feb (Teresa Kopeck) was somewhat early.

Barn Swallow: Three at the eastern end of Sunset Beach *Brunswick* NC 13 Jan (Taylor Piephoff) was a remarkable count for mid-winter.

Sedge Wren: 51 in *Georgetown* SC during the Winyah Bay CBC 16 Dec (*fide* Lex Glover) was a notable count.

Brown Thrasher: Interestingly, a female originally banded as an adult at Hilton Pond York SC 10 Feb 2014, was recaptured 26 Jan 2022, making that bird at least nine years old now if not older (Bill Hilton). The longest lifespan for a Brown Thrasher on record at the Bird Banding Laboratory is 10 years and eleven months.

Mountain Bluebird: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent male Mountain Bluebird in Wrightsville Beach *New Hanover* NC 11 Feb into spring (Ken Hackney, m. obs.). The bird was quite accommodating, remaining in the same small area for over a month, allowing multitudes of birders great looks and photographs. If accepted, the report would provide NC with its second record and its first with photographic documentation.

Veery: One photographed just north of Murphy *Cherokee* NC 7 Dec (Clayton Gibb) was extremely late for a site in the mountain region.

Varied Thrush: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent Varied Thrush visiting a yard in Hickory *Catawba* NC 12-18 Dec (Gerry Feddy, Dwayne Martin, m. obs.). If accepted, the report would provide the sixth record of this species in NC.



*Apparent White Wagtail, Eagle Island (restricted access), Brunswick County NC, 1 Jan 2022.
Photograph by Jesse Anderson.*

White Wagtail: Pending review by the NC BRC is the report with photographs of an apparent White Wagtail on Eagle Island (restricted access) *Brunswick* NC during the Wilmington CBC 1 Jan (Steve Pollock, Ron Clark, Taylor Piephoff, m. obs.). Unfortunately access to the site was limited to the day of the CBC, so it is unknown if, or for how long, the bird continued there. If accepted, the report would provide NC with its third record of this vagrant from Eurasia.

Red Crossbill: A pair observed copulating and building a nest at Carver's Gap *Mitchell* NC 12 Feb (Jimena Golcher-Benavides, Cody Porter) was unusual for the winter season.

Lapland Longspur: Sightings involved one along Silver Bluff Rd in *Aiken* SC 5-9 Jan (Andrew Lydeard, m. obs.) and two along Hooper Lane *Henderson* NC 22 Jan (Todd Arcos). At both sites the longspurs were found with flocks of American Pipits in corn-stubble fields.

Snow Bunting: One photographed in a yard in western *Lee* SC 12-13 Jan (Gus Messinides) was very unusual for a site away from the coast. Three at Cape Point *Dare* NC 3 Dec (Michael Gosselin) was this winter's high count.

Lark Sparrow: Individuals were seen in Hemingway *Williamsburg* SC for a second year in a row, 7 Dec through 7 Feb (Jay Chandler, m. obs.), and in *Camden* NC for a fifth year in a row, 9 Nov through 28 Jan (James Harrison).

Clay-colored Sparrow: Individuals were seen and photographed at Blue Clay Bike Park *New Hanover* NC 15-25 Jan (Sam Cooper, m. obs.) and in northeastern *Washington* NC 3 Feb (Matt Janson).

Yellow-breasted Chat: Individuals at Coker Arboretum *Orange* NC 18-26 Dec (Lucretia Kinney, m. obs.) and along the South Ellerbe Creek Trail *Durham* NC 22 Dec (Robert Meehan) were rather late for sites in the Piedmont region. Individuals were found at about nine sites along or near the coast this winter.

Yellow-headed Blackbird: Two were reported this winter, both found among large mixed blackbird flocks in agricultural areas—an adult male near Engelhard *Hyde* NC 1 Jan (Jennifer Maher, Noah Rokoske) and a female along Mid-Pines Rd in *Wake* NC 17-21 Feb (Sanjay Karanth, m. obs.).

Orchard Oriole: One seen in a yard in Morehead City *Carteret* NC 3-4 Dec (John Fussell) was very late to depart.

Bullock's Oriole: Individual adult males visited feeders near Huntersville *Mecklenburg* NC, for a second year in a row, throughout the period (Jeanie McCoy, m. obs.), and in northwestern *Duplin* NC 2 Feb intermittently into spring (Deanne Flock, m. obs.).

Brewer's Blackbird: The high count at Dobbins Farm *Anderson* SC this winter was 23 on 7 Dec (Steve Patterson). 27 in a livestock pasture on Goat Island *Clarendon* SC 26 Dec (Harold Donnelly), and 30 there 15 Jan (Carl Miller, et al.), were notable counts. Three at Mills River Park *Henderson* NC 2 Dec (Wayne Forsythe) was the only report from NC.

Ovenbird: Individuals lingered at multiple sites along or near the coast in December, though, oddly, none were found on CBCs this year. One spent the late winter in a yard in Manteo *Dare* NC 22 Jan into spring (Pat Draisley). 12 in Buxton Woods *Dare* NC 8 Feb (Daniel Irons) was an excellent count for late winter.

Tennessee Warbler: One photographed along the boardwalk trail at Congaree National Park *Richland* SC 12 Feb (James Moore) was a great find for winter.

Nashville Warbler: Individuals were seen in *Pasquotank* NC 15 Jan (Larry Chen, Sarah Toner) and visiting a birdbath in Mount Pleasant *Charleston* SC, where photographed, 15-18 Feb (Connie Fowler).

Common Yellowthroat: One at Valle Crucis Community Park *Watauga* NC 5-21 Dec (Maxwell Ramey) was rather late for the mountain region.

American Redstart: One photographed in the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR *Clarendon* SC 22 Dec (Jeff Click, Brad Dalton, Roger Smith) was a good find for winter, especially for a site away from the coast.

Cape May Warbler: One was photographed visiting a suet feeder in North Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 17 Jan through 6 Feb (Deb Winter).

Northern Parula: Farthest inland this winter was an adult male in Charlotte *Mecklenburg* NC during its CBC 26 Dec (Greg Hays, Taylor Piephoff).

Yellow Warbler: One photographed at a suet feeder in Black Mountain *Buncombe* NC 18 Jan (James Poling) was very unusual for the mountain region in mid-winter.

Blackpoll Warbler: One photographed at Pullen Park *Wake* NC during the Raleigh CBC 18 Dec (John Gerwin) was extremely late.

Yellow-throated Warbler: Farthest inland this winter were individuals visiting feeders in southern *Wilkes* NC, for a third winter in a row, from mid-fall through at least 17 Jan (Sue Crowell) and just east of Tryon *Polk* NC 26 Nov through 16 Jan (Barbara Hughes).

Prairie Warbler: One was seen at Apex Community Park *Wake* NC for the second winter in a row, this year through 18 Jan (m. obs.). As usual, multiple sightings were made along or near the SC coast this winter including a total of five at the Savannah Spoil Site (restricted access) *Jasper* SC during the Savannah CBC 2 Jan (Steve Calver, m. obs.).

Wilson's Warbler: One at Kitty Hawk Woods *Dare* NC 14 Feb (Andrew Thornton) was a great find for winter.

Summer Tanager: Two, a male and a female, visited feeders in West Columbia *Lexington* SC, for a second winter in a row, intermittently throughout the winter (Allison Smith, m. obs.). Individuals, most visiting feeders, were photographed in Burlington *Alamance* NC 9 Dec (Joe Donahue), in northeastern *Brunswick* NC, for an eighth winter in a row, 20 Dec into spring (Greg Massey), at the upper end of Oak Hollow Lake *Guilford* NC 28 Dec (Kara Barco), at Catawba College *Rowan* NC 17 Jan (Jennifer & Michael Board), in West Ashley *Charleston* SC 20-25 Jan (Keith McCullough), and near James City *Craven* NC 21 Jan (Christine Stoughton-Root).

Western Tanager: This species was reported at 18 sites this winter, mostly at feeders in the coastal plain. Two visiting a feeder in Charleston *Charleston* SC 20 Feb into spring (Truman Smith, m. obs.) was the high count. Individuals visited feeders in Kitty Hawk *Dare* NC 18 Dec (Jonathan Cooley), in northern Charlotte *Mecklenburg* NC 25-26 Dec

(Jeff Lemons, m. obs.), on Seabrook Island *Charleston* SC 27 Dec into spring (Joleen Ardaiole, m. obs.), in Apex *Wake* NC, for a second year in a row, from December through 29 Mar (Steve Shultz, m. obs.), in North Augusta *Aiken* SC 11 Jan (Melissa Bemiller), in North Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC, for a second year in a row, 13 Jan into spring (Deb Winter, m. obs.), in Aiken *Aiken* SC 18-31 Jan (Theresa Randall, m. obs.), near Greenville *Pitt* NC 19 Jan through 5 Feb (Chandra & Elizabeth Biggerstaff), near Irmo *Lexington* SC 20-28 Jan (Caroline Eastman, m. obs.), in Florence *Florence* SC 21 Jan through 18 Feb (Roger Hux, m. obs.), on Bell Island *Currituck* NC from late January through 20 Feb (Mary Simmons), in Greensboro *Guilford* NC 13 Feb (Cara Michele), in Isle of Palms *Charleston* SC, for a second year in a row, 18 Feb (Laura Judson), in Cayce *Lexington* SC 20 Feb into spring (Katie Idzik), and in Rocky Mount *Nash* NC 23 Feb into spring (Ricky Davis, m. obs.). A male individual photographed along the Port Royal Boardwalk *Beaufort* SC 19 Jan (Steven Guy) was unusual for a site away from feeders.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Individual males photographed at a feeder near Max Patch *Madison* NC, at 4200 feet above sea level, 1-4 Feb (Kathryn Gunther, m. obs.) and in a yard near New Ellenton *Aiken* SC 2-3 Feb (Julie Mobley) were very unusual for winter, the former especially so for that high elevation.

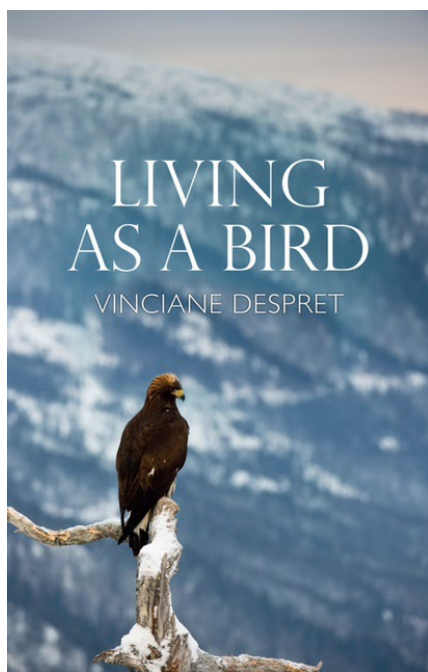
Blue Grosbeak: One photographed in Cayce *Lexington* SC 19 Dec (Katie Idzik) was quite late. One photographed at Meggett County Park *Charleston* SC 19 Feb (Jordan Juzdowski) was extremely unusual for late winter. Had this individual wintered in the area, or was it a very early returning spring migrant?

Indigo Bunting: Individuals lingered into early winter at three sites—at Pickney Island NWR *Beaufort* SC 5-9 Dec (William Brown, m. obs.), along the Neuse River Trail *Wake* NC 7 Dec (Patty McQuillan), and along the Cross City Trail in Wilmington *New Hanover* NC 15 Dec (Jim Holcomb).

Painted Bunting: Farthest inland this winter was an adult male visiting a feeder in Winston-Salem *Forsyth* NC for a second winter in a row, 25-31 Jan (Paul Beerman, m. obs.).

Dickcissel: Individuals were photographed visiting feeders in Durham *Durham* NC 30 Nov through 18 Dec (Erin & Philip Zoutendam), in Rockyhock *Chowan* NC 24 Dec (Jerry Messinger), in Myrtle Beach *Horry* SC 10 Jan (Steve Hooks), and near Southern Pines *Moore* NC 15 Jan through 14 Feb (John Bird).

Birder's Book Review *Steve Shultz*



The book opens, “It all began with a blackbird. My bedroom window had remained open for the first time in months, a symbol of victory over winter. The blackbird’s song woke me at dawn. He was singing with all his heart, with all his strength, with all his blackbird talent... This blackbird was singing, as the philosopher Étienne Souriau would say, with all the *enthusiasm* of his body...”

What was this blackbird thinking at the time? Short answer: We don’t know. But much of what we know, or believe we know, about birds results from making observations, and then, necessarily, filtering those observations through the lens of the human mind. Does a bird exhibit aggression toward an intruder because it is defending territory or do we imagine that this is the case because a human would react in this way? We are inherently handicapped in our understanding by our very nature.

Despret looks to examine bird behavior by expertly blending current science with a philosophical view of avian life, challenging long-held beliefs on behavior, especially as it relates to territorial considerations. Often birds are thought of as the epitome of freedom, with the ability, on gliding wing, to travel wherever the winds blow, or, alternatively, to simply respond to stimuli in rote patterns. Despret demonstrates that birds occupy highly complex social structures that lead to rich and nuanced behaviors. For example, is the defense of a territory aggression, or rather might it be better defined as expression, and how can we interpret that expression? Is the goal many male birds’ colorful plumage to attract females, or instead is it to signal other males?

A popular theory on the carrying capacity of a particular parcel of land is that the quantity of young that can successfully be raised is capped by food availability. Despret questions the veracity of this line of thought: “The fact that territories are the site of far more complex social activities than these models could allow us to envisage, activities where the art of distance could also, as we shall see, be the art of finding an arrangement with others, of being attuned to them. And undoubtedly this negligence also indicates stubborn habits of thinking which shape the way in which any territory is perceived.”

Intrigued? *Living as a Bird*, with English translation by Helen Morrison, can be purchased from your favorite bookseller in electronic or hardcopy format. Published by Polity Press (Cambridge UK), the ISBN-13 is 978-1509547272.

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.
- To support research on birds of the Carolinas and their habitats.

Membership is open to all persons interested in the conservation, natural history, and study of wildlife with particular emphasis on birds. Dues, contributions, and bequests to the Club may be deductible from state and federal income and estate taxes to the extent allowable. Pay dues or make donations at <https://carolinabirdclub.org/dues>. Make change of address at <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/profile>. Send correspondence regarding membership matters to the Headquarters Secretary. Answers to questions about the club might be found at <https://carolinabirdclub.org/about.html>.

ANNUAL DUES

Individual or non-profit.....	\$30.00
Family.....	\$35.00
Student.....	\$15.00
Sustaining and businesses.....	\$30.00
Patron.....	\$50.00 and up
Life Membership (payable in four consecutive \$100 installments)	\$500.00
Associate Life Membership (in same household as life member).....	\$100.00

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