

Fifty Years Ago in The Chat

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The year was 1973. Richard M. Nixon began his second term as President; Foreman beat Frazier; *The Godfather* reigned at the Oscars; the world's first handheld mobile phone call was made in New York City; an oil embargo created long lines at the gas station (and harkened the end of the "Muscle Car Era"); and a dozen eggs cost 78 cents.

In birding news, the March 1973 issue of *The Chat* featured a photograph of an immature Bonaparte's Gull on the cover and contained articles on dowitcher identification, overly ambitious Rufous-sided Towhees, notes on North Carolina's second record of Bridled Tern, and more.

Harry E. LeGrand Jr. wrote on the status and identification of Long-billed Dowitcher in North Carolina. LeGrand notes that records of this species were scarce for the state and suggested that the bird was likely more common than reported due to the difficulty in separating the species from Short-billed Dowitcher. Long-billed Dowitcher is now recorded as a regular wintering species at Pea Island NWR and other favored sites and may be found along the coast and in the Piedmont as an uncommon to rare passage migrant.

Edmund K. LeGrand and Harry E. LeGrand Jr. wrote of "a small population of Traill's Flycatchers near Lake Raleigh in Wake County, NC" initially discovered in 1971. While no evidence of nesting was found that year, the LeGrand's discovered two nests the following summer. This was noted as the second record of breeding Traill's Flycatcher in the state, the other being at North Wilkesboro. This species has subsequently been split into Willow and Alder Flycatchers, with the Wake County report pertaining to Willow Flycatcher. Willow Flycatcher is now an uncommon to fairly common breeder in appropriate habitat in the western part of the state.

In other hatching news, Eloise F. Potter located a Rufous-sided Towhee nest containing "three unusually large eggs" and noted that the largest "was somewhat constricted in the middle much like a peanut shell with two seeds". The largest egg was 35 x 16 mm. Potter reports that the average egg size for this species is 23 x 17 mm. Unfortunately for the towhees, "tiny red ants" ended the nesting attempt.

And finally, Gilbert S. Grant reports on finding North Carolina's second record of Bridled Tern on January 8, 1972. The bird was "badly decomposed" and found on the shoulder of NC State Highway 12 just south of Nags Head. Grant notes that the state's first record was from the same area on December 3, 1971, and that it is possible both records stemmed from the passage of Hurricane Ginger (which was the second longest lasting Atlantic hurricane on record, spending 27.25 days as a named tropical system). Bridled Tern is now regularly seen on late summer pelagic trips visiting Gulf Stream waters.