

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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**ROSS' GOOSE (*CHEN ROSSII*) OBSERVED
ON EUFAULA NATIONAL WILDLIFE
REFUGE**

Daniel Drennen



Ross' Goose, Eufaula NWR

Photo by Bob Sargent

On 17 February 1989 Gussie Arnett and Helen Kittinger of the Birmingham Audubon Society reported to me that they had observed a Ross' Goose (*Chen rossii*) feeding with a flock of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) at the Lakepoint Marina State Park. The following day Dr. Greenberg of Columbus College verified the sighting and since then I, along with many individuals from various bird groups, have observed the goose throughout Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent areas. The sighting is only the third confirmed record for this species in Alabama.

On 23 February, I observed the bird at close range when it was within one meter of a Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*), so a good study of comparative size and morphological details could be made.

The Ross' goose seemed to feed in harmony with the Canada

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Geese since I observed only one instance of aggressive behavior (straightened, lowered neck with hissing) by the Canadas toward the Ross'. It was reported, however, that on 23 February some Canadas were actively pursuing and nipping the Ross'.

Bent (*Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl*) described the Ross' Goose as tamer than other species of geese that visited the California Region. The bird observed here also appeared to be less shy than the Canadas and Snows. Even after five days of being observed and harassed by birders it remained somewhat complacent. Daniel Drennen, *Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Route 2, Box 97-B, Eufaula, Alabama 36027-9294*.

ROSS' GOOSE (*CHEN ROSSII*) SIGHTED IN COLBERT COUNTY

Damien J. Simbeck

On 22 February 1988, at approximately 1500 CST, as I was driving along River Road east of the Shoals area I noticed two geese on a pond about eight km east of Highway 133. My initial impression was that both birds were Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens*), one white and one blue morph. I stopped and began studying them with a Baush and Lomb Discoverer at a distance of about 30 meters in good light. While looking at the white bird, I immediately noticed a small blue patch at the base of its bill and absence of a dark grin patch, the latter being characteristic of Snow Geese. These are distinct features of the Ross' Goose (*Chen Rossii*), a species with only one previously confirmed record in Alabama.

I continued to watch the birds for several minutes, and as the two moved side by side I could see that the white goose was distinctly smaller and shorter necked than the Blue Goose. I approached the birds, attempting to take photographs, until they flew, then watched as they circled the pond several times and finally settled on the opposite end of the lake.

I immediately called Paul Kittle who joined me on a return trip to the pond. We found both geese still there and swimming with a small group of Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*). We studied the birds until about 1545 and later notified other birders of the sighting. Throughout

the remainder of that afternoon and following day, about 15 people saw the bird. The Blue Goose was not seen after that first day. The Ross' Goose was observed both at the pond and in the surrounding green fields the following day, on the 22nd, but was not seen on the 23rd, although a number of birders searched for it all day in the surrounding countryside.

This sighting represents the second confirmed record for the Ross' Goose in Alabama, but careful checking of large Snow Geese flocks could possibly turn up other birds on a more regular basis. *Damien J. Simbeck, Dept. of Zoology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996, 30 November 1988.*

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (*BUTEO REGALIS*) RECORDED IN COLBERT COUNTY

Damien J. Simbeck

On 24 February 1988, while birding at the Hog Pond near Leighton in northwest Alabama, I noticed a large hawk soaring low overhead, at approximately 15-20 meters. The underside of the bird was white, with only a few small dark spots on its legs. The underside of the wings was also white, with distinct black wrist patches and a dark margin along the trailing edge. I was able to see the upperside as the bird banked and circled, revealing the pale reddish-brown back. The upper wing was mostly dark, but had very distinct white, rectangular patches at the base of the primaries. The tail was mostly white, with a faint reddish tinge near the end.

Using National Geographic's *Birds of North America*, I identified the bird as an immature Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). I have seen adults of this species previously in Oklahoma, and this bird was similar to these both in flight and in shape. The wing pattern was very similar to that of an adult. This individual, however, lacked the distinct reddish legs, and reddish color near the end of the tail.

I continued to watch the bird in good light with both 8X40 binoculars and a 10-60X spotting scope for about five minutes. On one occasion it flew low over my car, giving me an excellent view of its underside until it flew out of sight over a nearby woodland. The area in which the bird was found included many large fields, which is typical habitat for this species. *Damien J. Simbeck, Dept. of Zoology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996.*

**FULVOUS WHISTLING DUCK (*DENDROCYGNA BICOLOR*) AND CACKLING GOOSE (*BRANTA CANADENSIS MINIMA*)
SEEN AT LAKELAND FARMS**

Bill Summerour

In recent years Lakeland Farms, located a few miles south of Marion in the Blackbelt country of south-central Alabama, has become somewhat of a refuge for small numbers of wintering waterfowl.

Protection, a nucleus of stocked Canada Geese, numerous farm ponds, and a food supply of green winter wheat fields, has attracted a growing number of wild Canadas, a small population of Snow Geese and a scattering of ducks. Periodically, some of the lakes are drained to harvest catfish and the resultant mudflats can at times be productive for shorebirds.

Lane Merchant of Atlanta and I visited Lakeland Farms on 4 March, which was a gray, stormy day with low clouds and periods of rain. As we drove up to one of the lakes and stopped the truck, we noticed a long-necked duck standing at the edge of the lake with its head held high and eyeing us warily. It struck me immediately as a whistling duck which was confirmed seconds later when the bird sprang into the air, revealing its conspicuous white rump, long legs and outstretched neck held at a low angle to the body. The bird flew about 30 meters and splashed down among a raft of coots. This was a surprising find in this part of the state since Fulvous Whistling Ducks (*Dendrocyna bicolor*) are rare mostly in late summer or fall on the Gulf Coast of Alabama and even more unusual inland.

We observed the bird for about half an hour until our attention was drawn to a flock of Snow Geese that dropped in from low hanging clouds just ahead of a wall of rain and landed in a green field several hundred meters away. We decided to pull away from the whistling duck and check the geese for a while.

There was about 20 Snow Geese in the flock, about half of which were blue phase and half white birds. With them, but standing away from the group, was another surprise, a White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), also unusual for this area. After studying the White-fronted Goose and analyzing each white-phase Snow Goose in tiring detail to make sure there were no Ross' in the flock, we turned our attention to looking for other birds of interest.



Fulvous Whistling Duck, Lakeland Farms

Photo by Bob Sargent

We went back to check on the whistling duck, and I noticed among a flock of Canada Geese on the pond a goose that was conspicuous because of its diminutive size. I put the Questar on it and determined that it was a Cackling Goose (*Branta canadensis minima*) the smallest subspecies of the five to ten geographical races of the Canada Goose (depending on the taxonomist) and distinguished by its stubby bill, small, almost mallard size, and dark breast.

A follow-up check of the records on several refuges in Alabama and discussions with observers around the state revealed that no one knew for certain if this subspecies of Canada Goose had in fact ever been seen in the state.

Actually, the bird is so small that it stands out readily in a crowd and should be easy to spot. Most smallish geese are probably passed over or generalized as "*hutchinsii*" or the little Richardson's Goose (*B.c. hutchinsii*), which is also about the size of *minima*. But there is a noticeable difference in the two, in that *hutchinsii* has a light breast and *minina* a distinctly dark breast, so dark, in fact, that the black neck collar almost merges into the sooty brown breast, making the color of the breast about the same shade as that of the back and giving the bird an overall dark appearance.

The Crackling Goose and Richardson's Goose are so distinctive that it is worth the effort to look for them among the flocks of Canadas that winter on refuges and other protected areas scattered over Alabama. The call of *minima* is a high pitched cackle which gives the bird its name and stands out from the familiar resonant of honking of Canadas.

The Cackling Goose breeds in Western Alaska and this individual obviously had strayed far from its normal wintering grounds in California, just as Ross' Geese occasionally do. Bill Summerour, Biology Dept., Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265

BREEDING BIRD SURVEY REVEALS SIGNIFICANT DECLINES IN SOME POPULATIONS OF ALABAMA BIRDS

Robert R. Reid and Sam Droege

The Breeding Bird Survey, begun in 1966, now consists of approximately 3,000 randomly selected routes throughout the United States and Canada of which approximately 2000 are run each breeding season. It is roadside survey starting 1/2 hour before sunrise that uses a standardized technique consisting of recording all birds heard or seen in three minutes at 50 stops, each 1/2 mile apart. The survey is described in Robbins, C.S., D. Bystrak and P.H. Geissler, *The Breeding Bird Survey: Its First Fifteen Years, 1965-1979, USF&W Resource Publ. 157 (1986)*.

A "route regression" method is used to estimate the population trends in percent of change per year. Individual route estimates of slope are weighted as to the number of birds on the route, the area of the state, or other geographic region, and the sample size of routes within that region. Weighted estimates are then converted to percent change per year. The method is described in greater detail on pages 13 and 177 of the above publication.

The biological strata, or regions, covered in the survey are described below and are adapted from J.W. Aldrich's, "Life Areas of North America," *Journal of Wildlife Management 27:530-31 (1963)*.

The **Coastal Plain**, in which there are approximately 200 routes, runs from Southwestern Kentucky, Western Tennessee and Mississippi around the base of the Appalachians and Piedmont north to Southern New Jersey. It is the largest biological stratum in Alabama, containing approximately 22 routes, and consists here of the commonly known Upper and Lower Coastal Plain, excluding the coastal strip along the Gulf of Mexico.

The **Piedmont** (the Southern Piedmont in the BBS biological strata), in which there are approximately 55 routes, runs from East Central Alabama through North Central Georgia and the Carolinas to Central Virginia. In Alabama, it is a small region at the extreme East Central portion of the state containing only 3 routes.

The **Mountain Region**, otherwise known as the Ridge and Valley Region, in which there are approximately 95 routes, runs from

North Alabama up the Appalachian chain into Central Pennsylvania and East Central New York. It is the second largest stratum in Alabama, containing approximately 12 routes.

The **Tennessee Valley Region** is actually a portion of the Highland Rim, in which there are approximately 50 routes, that extend north through Central Tennessee and Western Kentucky to Central South Indiana. In Alabama, it contains 4 routes.

Southeast Region – This region is the USF&W Region IV covering the states from Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina east and south.

Table 1 on page 9 lists Alabama species by region which have decreased between 1966 and 1987.

Suggested Causes of Declines

It will be noted that, of the 13 species presented, eight are tropical or subtropical migrants. Three (the Wood Pewee and Yellow and Cerulean Warblers — the latter now found with any regularity in Alabama only in the Bankhead Forest) winter in South America, two (the Blue-winged Warbler and Orchard Oriole) in Central America and Northwest South America, and the other three (the Wood Thrush, Prairie Warbler and Chat) in Central American and the West Indies. Five might be classed as edge or scrub species and three as birds of the forest. The major causes for their decline appear to be forest fragmentation on the breeding range and deforestation in the wintering range. The latter is considered the primary cause since, during the last 10 years of the Breeding Bird Survey (1978-87), which coincides with the greatest increase in tropical deforestation, (i) neotropical migrants have decreased more than species that winter north of Central American, and (ii) forest-wintering tropical migrants have decreased at a greater rate than migrants that winter in open habitats. For details see Robbins, C.S., J.R. Sauer, R.S. Greenberg and S. Droege, "Population Declines in North American Birds that Migrate to the Neotropics," USF&W Bulletin (1988).

The increase of Blue-winged Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chats in the Piedmont and, in the case of the latter, a significant increase in the Coastal Plain, plus the smaller decreases of the Prairie Warbler in those regions, are probably due to the increase in even-age forest management (clear-cutting); and it has been said that the Grasshopper Sparrow benefits from strip-mine reclamation, which may account for its increase in the Piedmont, although that cause would leave the decreases in other mountainous regions unexplained.

TABLE 1. POPULATIONS OF ALABAMA BIRDS SHOWING A SIGNIFICANT DECREASE IN NUMBERS (1966 - 1987).

	Alabama (state)	Coastal Plain	Piedmont	Mountain Region	Tenn. Valley	Southeast Region	Continental U.S.
Yellow-shafted Flicker	- 3.423 **	- 3.398 **	- 3.074 *	- 5.133 **	- 2.304 *	- 2.882 **	- 2.825 **
Eastern Wood Pewee	- 2.914 **	- 3.353 **	- .307	- 2.547 **	- .460	- 1.879 **	- 1.394 **
Wood Thrush	- 3.329 **	- 2.371 **	- 2.541 **	- 2.530 **	- 1.034	- 2.351 **	- 1.713 **
Loggerhead Shrike	- 6.706 **	- 4.273 **	-11.684 **	- 5.309 **	- 6.644 **	- 4.130 **	- 1.138 **
Blue-winged Warbler	- 3.786 **	- .144	+ .645 **	- 1.000	- .614	- 1.302	+ .465
Yellow Warbler	- 2.449 **	- .818	- .080	+ .551	+ .348	- 1.578	+ .567 *
Prairie Warbler	- 6.504 **	- 3.332 **	- .084	- 5.931 **	- 2.570 **	- 3.377 **	- 2.234 **
Cerulean Warbler	SS	SS	SS	+ .648	- 3.362 **	- 5.938 **	- 3.375 **
Yellow-breasted Chat	- .306	+ 1.183 *	+ .357	- 6.045 **	- 4.079 **	- 1.441 **	- 1.476 **
Rufous-sided Towhee	- 1.984 **	- 2.062 **	- 3.979 **	- 4.062 **	- 2.300 **	- 2.332 **	- 2.256 **
Field Sparrow	- 5.185 **	- 2.967 **	- 2.375 **	- 3.870 **	- 3.242 **	- 3.735 **	- 3.689 **
Grasshopper Sparrow	- 8.243	- 5.186 **	+ 8.126 *	- 6.375 **	- 6.627 **	-10.158 **	-3.246 **
Orchard Oriole	- 1.990	- 1.277 *	+ 2.122	- 4.927 **	- .198	- 1.234 **	- 1.781 **

Trends are expressed in percent of change per year. Significance of trends is indicated by asterisks: * = significant at P less than 0.05 level; ** = highly significant at P less than 0.01 level. SS indicates too small a sample to be statistically significant. The decrease in Grasshopper Sparrows in Alabama, although large, is not classed as highly significant because of the low number of routes (11), but the decreases in broader areas are highly significant. In addition, the decrease in Orchard Orioles in Alabama is significant at the P less than 0.10 level. The BBS compiles data separately for the various races of Northern Flicker; however, the Rufous-sided Towhee includes both the eastern and western spotted races.

The decrease in the Flicker population is attributed largely to competition for existing nest holes with Starlings and perhaps to pesticide residues and a reduction in the number of dead trees left standing in edge and woodlot areas. The Shrike appears to be suffering from a multiplicity of changes in land-use practices, including suburban sprawl, roadside spraying and loss of pastureland, as are all grassland species.

The Rufous-sided Towhee is thought to be suffering seriously from Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism and, in addition, that species and the Grasshopper Sparrow from a loss of pastureland.

Declines in Alabama Migrants

Highly significant continent-wide annual percentage declines have also been shown by the BBS over a 20-year period (1966-85) for the following species that winter in Alabama or migrate through it: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (-3.886), Olive-sided Flycatcher (-3.754), Golden-crowned Kinglet (-3.782), Golden-winged Warbler (-3.208), White-throated Sparrow (-2.032) and White-crowned Sparrow (-2.690).

The above information compiled by Robert R. Reid, Jr., with assistance from Sam Droege, BBS Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Requests for other information regarding North American breeding species might be made to Mr. Droege. Many thanks are extended to the numerous route observers who have made possible the collection of these data over these many years and without whose efforts such analyses of our breeding bird populations would not be possible. *Robert R. Reid, 2616 Mountain Brook Pkwy., Birmingham, AL. 35223 and Sam Droege, BBS Coordinator, Office of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Maryland 20708*



PROBLEMS IN FIELD IDENTIFICATION AND THE NEED FOR TAXONOMIC CONSERVATISM

Thomas A. Imhof

Pettingill (1970) defines a species as a "population, or populations of mutually fertile individuals reproductively isolated from individuals of other populations and possessing in common certain characters which distinguish them from any other similar population, or populations. If cross-breeding of two species occurs, the offspring are often sterile." Species are distinguished by taxonomic characters not shared with any other groups.

A subspecies, as defined by Pettingill, is "a geographically limited population whose members possess in common certain taxonomic characters which distinguish them from all other populations of the species. All the subspecies of a species are mutually fertile."

These definitions tell us that we should suspect the species status of forms that are difficult to distinguish in the field, even if they occupy different geographic areas and often different habitats. Evolution of new forms is a gradual and continuing process. At first the *vocal* and *visual* characteristics that evolve in response to the demands of natural selection are only a difference of degree, being so slight as to be identifiable only in the hand by measuring, weighing, or comparing with other specimens. These newly evolved geographical variations, or subspecies, sometime may interbreed where their ranges overlap resulting in fertile intergrades. These intergrades, however, may be difficult to distinguish in the field because they may look like either parent. Eventually the taxonomic characters become distinctive enough to allow the parent populations to occupy the same area without interbreeding.

Some forms are judged by taxonomists to be separate species before it has been shown that the birds are in fact reproductively isolated. Often the birds in question are allopatric, thus their field marks have never been tested in nature. Below are some likely examples:

Common and Yellow-billed Loons	King and Clapper Rails
Western and Clark's Grebes	Am., Eur., and Carrib Coots
Glossy and White-faced Ibises	The Goldern Plovers
The White-fronted Geese	Ringed and Semipal Plovers
Am. Black and Mottled Ducks	The Dowitchers

Gt. Black-backed, Western, and Yellow-footed Gulls	Bl-capped and Carol Chickadees
Herring, Iceland, Thayer's Gulls	The Tufted Titmice
Groove and Smooth-billed Anis	Pygmy and Br-headed Nutatches
The Screech Owls	Northern and Loggerhd Shrikes
The Red-bellied Woodpeckers	The Parulas
Yellow-bel and Acadian Flycat	The Waterthrushes
Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds	Great and Boat-tailed Grackles
Purple, Gray-br, Carrib Martins	Eastern and Western Meadowlks
The Rough-winged Swallows	Common and Hoary Redpolls

The above forms cause many identification problems in the field where they cannot be examined in hand, so it is important that they not be called separate species until they actually are. True bird species have evolved prominent visual and vocal features which serve to identify them readily, and to keep them isolated from other closely related species, especially during the breeding season. Good species, therefore, should be easy to identify.

Listed below are some closely related species that share portions of their breeding ranges and have evolved field marks prominent enough to make them much easier to identify. These field marks have been tested in nature and found to be adequate in keeping the species separate. Some examples are:

Horned and Eared Grebes	Tenn and Nashville Warblers
Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teals	Bay-br and Blackpoll Warlers
Greater and Lesser Scaups	Western and Scarlet Tanagers
King and Common Eiders	Summer and Hepatic Tanagers
Com and Barrow's Goldeneyes	Rose-br and Bl-headed Grosbeaks
Com and Red-br Mergansers	Indigo and Lazuli Buntings
Cooper's and Sharp-sh Hawks	Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles
Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers	Red-winged and Yellow-headed
Gray-ch and Swainson's Thrushes	Blackbirds

Recent DNA-DNA hybridization studies by Sibley, Ahlquist and Monroe (1988) provide hope that we will have objective criteria for determining when two closely related forms have reached the separate species stage. Myers (1988), however, in applying mitochondrial tests to dowitchers, calls them distinct, and yet their breeding ranges are so separate that it is doubtful that their distinctness has been adequately tested in nature. If the dowitchers have achieved full species status (reproductive isolation), then they should be easy to identify. The fact

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that they show some distinctness on the mitochondrial tests is apparently only one step in proving that they are distinct species.

Too liberal a course of action in taxonomy tempts the field observer to add another species to his list, or make pronouncements based on obscure field marks, or on vocalizations outside the breeding season and without visual clues. Editors and compilers of distribution, migration, and abundance material such as State Bird Books, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, and Season Reports have a much tougher job judging rarities when the list is loaded with poorly delineated species. Even in 1988, almost identical South American forms were illustrated in color and described as new species, without any proof of sympatry or mention of having achieved reproductive isolation! Certainly there was no field mark, obvious or otherwise, by which these new "species" could keep themselves distinct. What we need is more taxonomic conservatism to help us keep our regional lists free of questionable entries. The bottom line is that no matter how sophisticated the procedure, if it does not meet the definition of a species, it cannot be called a species. Remember, the birds themselves are usually doing their best to tell you who they are!

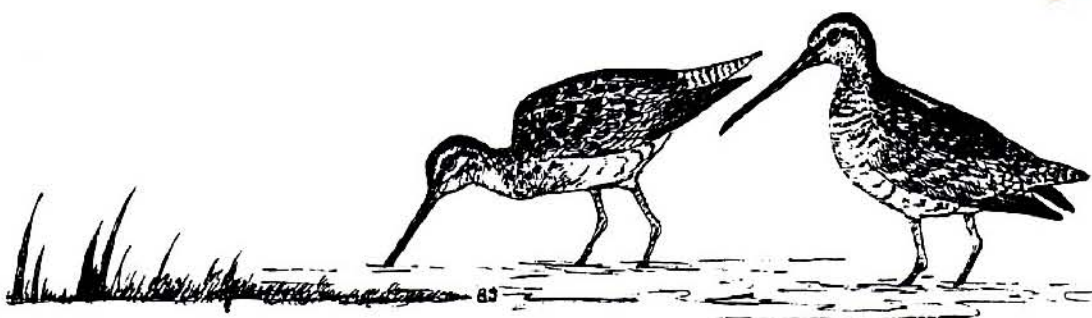
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1988 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS SUMMARY

SPECIES	Bhm	Dau	Euf	FtM	GSh	Guv	Mob	Mon	Tus	Wat	Whe
Red-t Loon						2					
Com Loon	3	20		25	99	388				8	2
P-b Grebe	18	4	6	7	28	1106	31	15	3	13	63
Horned Grebe		2		64	37	1207				30	31
Sm. Shearwater						2					
N Gannet		1		499	687						
Wh Pelican		16						396			
Brn. Pelican		161		266	249		10				
D-cCorm		95	86	9130	336	1000	312	312		5	2
Am Bittern			1	1	1						
Least Bitt						1					
G B Heron	16	29	79	51	127	112	84	23	19	213	411
Gt Egret		6	28	4	14	1	164	15		1	72
Snowy Egret		7		1	12		431				
L B Heron		1			4		42				
La. Heron		5			4		27				
Red Egret		3									
Cat Egret		35		4			2				
Grn Heron		1	1								
BCN Heron			12			4	28				
White Ibis							670				
Snow Goose			25					4			1275
Can Goose	16		550		1	33		19		14	17k
Wood Duck	8		30		23	10	6	15	14	2	182
Grnwg Teal			40			4	220				347
Black Duck			7			4	10			144	1493
Mott Duck					1						
Mallard	29	14	400		18	214	61	200	85	111	23k
N Pintail		2	20								381
Blwg Teal			4			2				2	
N Shoveler			19			1420	168	3			2076
Gadwall	1	7	17			12391	13	4		116	4582
Am Wigeon		1	140			803	60	27			4612
Canvasback	25		2		20	49	60	2			134
Redhead			3		12	15					
Ringnk Duck	66		100		48	2211	360	261	98	18	466
Gtr Scaup						33					
Lsr Scaup	4	87	2	314	1074	716	43	14	9	13	37
Scaup sp				80							3
C Goldeneye		2				225	2			44	434
Bufflehead			110	18	44	261	112		78	95	53
Hooded Merg		10	14	28	50	350	231	6	15	1148	268
Com Merg						1				27	
Red-br-Merg	1	24		100	218	24	22			52	1
Ruddy Duck	8	2	3	195		1644	105			1	4
duck sp.			2000	33	75		884				
Blk Vulture		2	17	9	8	25	153		39		
Tur Vulture	1	2	31	1	27	76	175	9	34	6	
Osprey		1			5		10				
Blk-sh Kite		1									
Bald Eagle		1				53			1	72	5
(Ad)			1			13			1	37	1
(Im)						40				28	4
(Un)										7	
N Harrier		2	7	5	26	2	11	11	2	8	7

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SPECIES	Bhm	Dau	Euf	FtM	GSh	Guv	Mob	Mon	Tus	Wat	Whe
Shp-ShHawk		1	4	1	8	2	4				4
Coop Hawk				3	2	1	2	1	2		3
accip sp										1	
Red-sh Hawk	17		3	1	14	1	12	4	10	8	
Red-tl Hawk	33	7	38	17	62	40	38	153	21	20	55
Rough-1g Hawk						1					
buteo sp.	3			3	1						
Am Kestrel	11	21	11	36	93	28	23	24	14	7	34
Merlin					1						
PrairFalcon											1
Peregrine hawk sp		3					5	2			
W Turkey			4					4	8		
Bobwhite		3	2	6	36	8	3			4	5
Clapper Rail		2		1	24		2				
King Rail			2		2						
Virginia Rail			1		1		1				
Sora			5	1							
Moorhen			2	8			1				
Am Coot	10	2	80	4	8	32352	4001	309	12	83	5910
Sand Crane			3								
Bl-b Plover		48	1	15	25		8				
Snowy Plover		9		10	6						
Semi Plover		6			3		56				
Piping Plover		76			3						
Killdeer	32	8	65	36	982	113	307	74	46	195	1371
plover		36									
Oystercatcher		15									
Bl-nk Stilt							5				
Avocet							176				
G Yellowlegs		1	1		5		103				15
L Yellowlegs			4	1	1		12				
yellowlegs							1				
Willet		69		59	16		1				
Spot Sandp		1		1	4						
R Trnstone		6		2	2						
Sanderling		14		219	109						
Wn Sandp		152			1		609				
Least Sandp		12		1	18		882				200
Dunlin		21	23	5	15		155				15
peep sand		2					923				
S-b Dowitcher		45	1								
dowitcher							165				
Com Snipe	2	1	46	4	75	5	5	5	11	48	54
A Woodcock			1		6		2				
Laugh Gull		292		439	1047		64				
Bonap Gull	1	30	3	226	441	328	26			742	46
Ring-b Gull		208	800	266	1024	1361	432	33	4	962	4214
Herring Gull		72	4	187	193	54	104			23	1
Glaucous Gull											1
GBlk-b Gull										1	
gull				415	100						
Casp Tern		24		9	1		73				
Royal Tern		104		201	139		9				
Sandw Tern				1			3				
Forsters Tern		36	16	287	327		270			8	16
tern		36					2				

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

SPECIES	Bhm	Dau	Euf	FtM	GSh	Guv	Mob	Mon	Tus	Wat	Whe
B Skimmer		152		6	14						
Rock Dove	567	8	55		122	70	92	66	157	132	592
Wh-wg Dove					1						
M Dove	351	34	300	24	463	279	125	268	170	128	302
Ground Dove		5	3	6	17						
GR-bl Ani					2						
Barn Owl			2		1					1	
Screech Owl	4		9	4	18	2	3	1		23	10
Gt Horned Owl		1	2	5	6	7	1	3		2	4
Barred Owl			1	1	3	8	1	3	1	4	5
Short-e Owl							1				
Whip-p-wl					1						
Rufous Hum							1				
B Kingfishr	24	11	14	16	51	44	42	13	7	27	19
Red-hd Wpkr	24		1		1	1	1	13	2	10	20
Red-bl Wpkr	67	6	9	26	146	37	28	52	13	37	66
Y-b Sapsukr	29	6	3	2	20	12	12	25	7	26	26
Downy Wdpr	40	1	4	8	29	25	5	11	5	41	49
Hairy Wdpr	3	1		2	2	8		1	2	6	9
Rd-ck Wdpr	1				1						
N Flicker	35	3	12	10	83	28	12	36	36	61	73
Pileated W	20	3	7	3	26	5	7	1	9	18	10
Woodpr		3									
E Phoebe	9	8	12	16	46	15	23	11	8	3	4
Hrnd Lark						28				97	301
Tree Sw				2	2		63				
Blue Jay	200	15	54	34	316	126	71	231	156	227	252
Am Crow	365	7	300		137	187	25	53	217	192	6k
Fish Crow		9	15	3	55		20				
crow			400								
Chickadee	268	3	19	20	49	132	26	111	63	176	185
Titmouse	121	2	7	3	35	78	25	31	5	65	61
Red-br Nut				1						2	2
Wh-br Nut	50					22			3	10	4
Brd-hd Nut	71	17	13	31	107	41	2	4	3		
B Creeper	3		2		1	16		5	1	12	10
Caro Wren	74	7	18	32	124	45	17	92	27	27	55
House Wren	1	2	2	16	83	1	6	2	1		
Winter Wren	7	1	1		3	23		1		13	10
Sedge Wren		1	6	5	21					3	
Marsh Wren			2	12	45		5				
G Kinglet	60	2	31	3	40	192	21	55	7	46	86
R. Kinglet	60	16	40	114	251	112	103	57	20	65	86
Gtcatcher		8		18	51		18		1		
Bluebird	100	40	32	4	75	193	58	27	84	124	56
Hm Thrush	23	1	1	4	9	41	7		5	25	15
Am Robin	197	475	45	69	6105	294	87	149	69	1211	96
G Catbird		1	2	22	49		4	2		1	
Mockingbd	106	35	21	71	242	94	25	181	62	39	35
B Thrasher	14	3	4	17	44	11	7	48	17	10	53
W Pipit			16		92			10		1	250
C Waxwg	339	8	10		76	132	38	128	8	433	230
L Shrike	7	14	9	9	105	19	3	31	19	13	9
Starling	1718	92	80	145	2560	10512	175	2049	290	614	1615
W-e Vireo		2			3		4				
SolVireo	1		1	2	11		11	3			
O-cr Warb		1	1	1	7		7	1			

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

SPECIES	Bhm	Dau	Euf	FtM	GSh	Guv	Mob	Mon	Tus	Wat	Whe-
Myrtle W	80	441	452	2316	5376	68	1313	176	16	156	194
Yell-t W					1						
Pine Warb	33	3	18	43	134	64	84	53	15	20	8
Palm Warb	2		9	22	39		6	1			
Bl&wh Warb					1						
Yellow thr		2	7	5	34			2			1
warb sp		20		7			1				
Cardinal	209	12	27	28	195	119	51	225	69	167	305
Indigo B				1							
RS Towhee	85	13	8	69	146	55	23	152	20	36	42
Chip Sp	127	5	50	1	61	16	73	37	50	8	
Field Sp	98	12	140	3	37	34	18	36	85	182	88
Vesper Sp			23	8	65			12	14	1	
Savan Sp	24	5	40	49	608	12	3	138	23	66	39
Grasshop Sp			1								
Henslow's Sp				1							2
LeConte's Sp				1	1						
Sharp-tl Sp		1		2	4						
Seaside Sp				7	14						
Fox Sp	11		1		1	5		3	2	8	8
Song Sp	188	36	300	31	102	103	3	236	139	179	120
Lincolns					1				2	1	
SwampSp	33	5	250	48	426	38	39	116	120	47	56
Wh-th Sp	306	18	13	71	299	150		216	147	396	660
Wh-cr Sp			2							34	11
sparrow		7	500	18	12			10			
D-e Junco	352	7	29	4	7	92	12	59	73	583	32
Oregon J	1										
Red-wg Bb	629	100	200	1248	13791	34154	1625	26791	471	911	918
EMeadwlk	21	2	85	26	600	110	1	177	141	107	116
Rusty Bb	122					205		65	35	12	177
BrewrsBb					33		1	9		1	
B-tGrkl				1	37		340				
C Grackl	6216	47	5k	32	2733	10348	169	5901	3325	2635	662
Bh Cowbd	207	2	12	190	1507	504	20	104	30	106	67
Bkbd Sp	5000		4k	190	2259		5125	3432			
P Finch	25					13				2	1
H Finch	21		3			5		41	2	28	6
P Siskin	25									12	
A Gldfinch	237	11	25	5	71	98	52	35	82	281	89
House Sp	211		35	3	213	279	2	204	61	40	227
Date (J=Jan)	26	26	21	26	31	26	17	J 2	26	17	17
Species	77	109	118	111	148	105	124	100	76	103	103
Indivs	20k	4k	18k		49k	178k	24k			14k	
Party-hrs	96	20	32	56	157	58	65	45	36	66	76
Observers	34	6	10	21	42	14	19	17	11	20	30

Total species = 189; recorded on all eleven counts=43; on all but one=11; on all but two=13; all but three=10; on only one=26. The above summary tells us for instance that House Wrens were recorded on more counts than Winter Wrens and House Finches on more than the Purple Finches; the Hairy Woodpecker was noted on the same number of counts as the Red-headed.

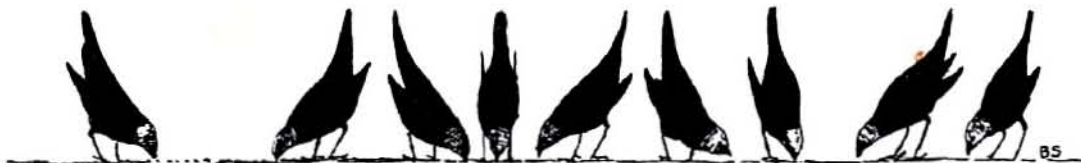
Participants

Names listed by count, compilers listed first—

Birmingham (Bhm): Thomas Imhof, J.R. Bailey, Michael Seng, Orris Seng, Raymond Bates, Dan Holliman, Dan Frederick, Linda Buzzard, Marilyn Huey, Joseph Imhof, Ari Rutkoff, Maureen Shaffer, Helen Kittinger, Gussie Arnett, Brian Makemson, Ann Lawrence, Linda Shuttlesworth, Ann Miller, Dick Crittenden, Vanessa Crittenden, Michael Russell, Robert Reid, Elberta Reid, Jeanette Hancock, Gene Ball, Idalene Snead, Beverly Petty, Wilma Lindberg, Ed Miller, MaryLou Miller, Therese Waldrop, Helen Thigpen, Percy Thigpen, Boots Nichols. *Dauphin Island (Dau):* John Winn, Bobbie Meade, Jim Meade, Penny Mindo, Mark Van Hoose, Beverly Winn. *Eufaula NWR (Euf):* Sam Pate, Bill Birkhead, Dan Drennan, Deck Major, Jack Randle, Dean Rundle, Jill Shirley, Chris Taylor, Bill West, Jerry Wilson. *Fort Morgan (FtM):* Wilhelmina Nonkes and John T. Fulton, Wylie Barrow, Paul Blevins, Bill Bremser, Greta Bremser, John Dawson (Idaho), Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, William Duncan, Gene Fleming, Ann Forster, Dan Forster, Curtis Kingsbery, Pete Pappas, James Pfeiffer, Ida Roose, Maud Skiba, Steven Ward, Mark Ward, Kenneth Wright. *Gulf Shores (GSh):* Greg Jackson, Gussie Arnett, Laurie Bailey, Dick Ballman, Paul Blevins, Bill Bremser, Gail Childs, John Dawson, Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Scott Duncan, William Duncan, Gene Fleming, Paul Franklin, Danner Friend, Venetia Friend, John Fulton, Ben Garmon, Nam Kim, Curtis Kingsbery, Helen Kittinger, Claire Krusko, Kenneth Krusko, Larry McDonald, Bill Milmore, Betty Morey, Daniel Morey, Minnie Nonkes, Buzz Peavy, James Pfeiffer, Elberta Reid, Robert Reid, Michael Russell, Carol Schultz, Maude Skiba, Andrew Tetlow, Gordon Tetlow, Phil Tetlow, Donald Ware, Ted Weems, Kenny Wright. *Guntersville (Guv):* Dwight Cooley, Joe Bryant, Debbie Cooley, John Ehinger, Paul Franklin, Janice Gravette, Scott Gravette, Milton Harris, Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds, Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent, Brenda Smith, Horton Smith. *Mobile Delta (Mob):* John Winn, Bob Andrews, Laurie Bailey, Laura Bounds, Jerome Carroll, Roger Clay, Betsy Eager, Mary Floyd, Venetia Friend, John Fulton, Gary Gray, Barbara Midkiff, Edwina Mullens, Minnie Nonkes, Mary Tiller, Ralph Tiller, Craig Trexler, Devaras Trexler, Stephen Ward. *Montgomery (Mon):* Lawrence Gardella, Joel Black, Tammy Black, Wayne Colin, Mark Dauber, Trip Etheridge, Dorothy Kampf, Jim Keeler, Charles Kennedy, Ira Kupferberg, Douglas McGinty, Andrea Menyhert, Howard Morris, Sue Morris, Gerald Stough, Wayne Tubberville, Penny Weaver. *Tuscaloosa (Tus):* Jim Thompson, Denton Albright, Kip Bossong, David Cole, Lucy Deason, Tim Deason, Paula Mills, Charley Owens, Paul Rogers, Tom Rogers. *Waterloo (Wat):* Paul Kittle and Ned Piper, Michael Beuerlein, Clifford Bott, Walt Burch, Tommy Davis, Ben Garmon, Greg Jackson, Larry Neill, Phyllis Nofzinger, Dee Patterson, Bill Rogers, Floyd Sherrod, Damien Simbeck, Don Simbeck, Michael Soroczak, Suzanne Wadsworth, Jim Wayland, Shirley Wayland, Mary Wakefield. *Wheeler NWR (Whe):* Milton Harris, Richard Alfiero, Russell Bailey, Tom Brindley, John Ehinger, Harriett Findlay, John Findlay, Randy Ford, Paul Franklin, Bill Friday, Ben Garmon, Carolyn Garrett, Howard Horne, Helen Kittinger, Carol Lemay, Jim Lemay, Sally Looney, Ann Miller, Michael Owens, Victor Petty, Elberta Reid, Robert Reid, Linda Reynolds, Ari Rutkoff, Madge Scharber, Brenda Smith, Horton Smith, Larry Watts, Kenneth Ward, Reaford Williams.

Thanks to all who submitted neat, prompt reports.

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1989 FALL AND WINTER SIGHTINGS

Greg D. Jackson

Some incredible birds passed through Alabama and northwest Florida during the fall and winter of 1988-89. Last autumn was the best in years, perhaps ever, in terms of "super rarities" on the Alabama coast. These included three first and one second Alabama records. Together with the birds seen last spring (i.e. Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Fork-tailed Flycatcher), 1988 should take the prize for "Year of the Rarities" in Alabama. I hope in the pages below I can convey some of the excitement rippling at times through our area because of these exotic wanderers. I'll try to not gloss over the less bizarre, though still quite important, records of the many other species recorded from August 1988 through February 1989.

If you turned in a really noteworthy sighting during this period that didn't make it to these pages, chances are that it just didn't get to me for evaluation. I am trying to provide data on significant sightings to you in this column, when this information is available to me. I appreciate the effort made by various local and regional editors in submitting records to me for this purpose. As in the last "Sightings" column, I must state that the appearance of a report on these pages does not constitute verification or acceptance of a record of a rare species. These reports still have to be formally evaluated in the appropriate forum.

The big drought of 1988 began to alleviate in August, which was hot and only mildly dry. September was cool, especially early, and due in part to storms from the tropics, the month was rather wet. On 10 September, Tropical Storm Florence crossed the shore west of our coast, and seven days later northeast Mexico was hit by the powerful Hurricane Gilbert. October was cool and had fairly normal precipitation, whereas November was warm and wet. The winter months had their debut with a cold snap in early December; there was a change to warmer than normal temperatures by late in the month which continued through January. February, in contrast, was cold. The winter was moderately dry, except for a wet spell in January.

County names are underscored. "WP" refers to the western Panhandle of Florida (Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa Counties). Records not specifying "FL" or "WP" are in Alabama. "CBC" = Christmas Bird Count, "WMA" = Wildlife Management Area, "NWR" = National Wildlife Refuge, "mob" = many observers.

Loons - Grebes: The fifth northwest Florida record of Pacific Loon was of a single bird on 12 December in Santa Rosa Sound, *Santa Rosa* (JP, DR, JB, CF, MS). Another of this rare species was seen in Bon Secour Bay, *Baldwin*, on 19 January (TAI). Late October seemed to be the peak of migration for Common Loons in north Alabama. Thirty-one birds on the 26th at Lake Purdy near Birmingham (GDJ, DGJ) represented a Mountain Region Maximum, and 75 were spotted on 30 October at Guntersville (GDJ). An incredible 1490 Pied-billed Grebes were on the Tennessee River in *Limestone* on 22 January for a state maximum (GDJ). Eared Grebes were well-represented in our area this period. Blakely Island (the regular site for this species) came through again, starting with an early record for the Gulf Coast of two birds on 28 August (GDJ), and reaching a peak of 10 birds on 19 November (RAD). Other coastal records of this species included: one on 5 November at Gulf Shores (MBC), three on 27 January near Navarre Beach, FL (*Okaloosa*) (BS,MS); and one to two on Santa Rosa Island, FL (*Escambia*) on 29 January (GDJ,mob) and 12 February (RAD). More unexpected were single birds on 24 December near Decatur (*Limestone*) (ML) on 21 February at Lake Porter, *Jefferson* (TAI,FD'A).

Shearwaters - Sulids: A Greater Shearwater was spotted from the Dauphin Island ferry in the mouth of Mobile Bay on 3 October (MVH). Two separate observations of small, unidentified shearwaters were made from shore during the Gulf Shores CBC on 31 December (GDJ,PT). It is likely that both of these birds were Audubon's Shearwaters, and amazingly this is the third consecutive year for such a sighting on that count! Two deepwater pelagic trips from *Baldwin* were attempted this year on 27 August and 22 October (AOS). Unfortunately, no tubenoses were found which may have been related to calm seas on both trips. High on the "you should have been here yesterday" scale were a pair of adult **WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRDS** seen from shore at Navarre Beach, FL, on 27 January (BS,MS)! This sighting was not associated with unusual storm activity, though the birds were near a large feeding flock of gannets, gulls, and terns. Such assemblages of birds should always be examined carefully, for rarities frequently have been found lurking in the vicinity. The tropicbird sighting was the first of northwest Florida and the third report for the AOS area. An adult **Masked Booby** was spotted on 21 February at Dauphin Island (ALM,ADM). A new Alabama maximum for Northern Gannet was set on 31 December on the Gulf Shores CBC when 687 were counted. On that date, 550 were seen in just two hours flying east by the Perdido Pass west jetty (GDJ). On 19 January, 258 of these high-diving specialists were noted at Ft. Morgan (TAI,GMI).

Pelicans - Frigatebirds: Inland reports of American White Pelican are always fun, and this year included single birds on 18 September at Guntersville (RRR,EGR,mob) and 29 October to 6 November at Town Creek, *Colbert* (GNP,TMH). Fourteen were noted at Eufaula NWR 18-25 February (BAS). The first Alabama record of **OLIVACEOUS CORMORANT** was of a bird seen for approximately 30 minutes with Double-crested Cormorants at Ft. Morgan on 23 October (BCG, HHK, GNP,AR). This bird could unfortunately not be relocated on subsequent days. Olivaceous Cormorant has been a species sought frequently in the past in our area, as it breeds in Louisiana and there are two records from the Mississippi coast. Anhinga is an uncommon bird in the winter in the Coastal Plain, so one to two individuals at Eufaula NWR on 19 January (CKe) and 18-19 February (BAS) were interesting discoveries. A late Magnificent Frigatebird was seen on Dauphin Island on 26 November (JH).

Hérons - Storks: Least Bitterns are uncommon in winter, so one on the Gulf Shores CBC on 31 December (PF) was interesting. Tricolored Herons were reported at two inland locations this year. One bird was seen on 10 August at Marion (HHK,GA), with perhaps the same bird noted at that location on 12 September (BS, MS). Another sighting of this usually coastal species was at Montevallo in *Shelby* on 18 August (ALM, HHF, MMc, AS). Reddish Egrets are not difficult to find on the outer coast in the warmer months, but the white phased bird reported on 18 August from Dauphin Island (G&AB) was unusual. A strange buffy-gray individual was on Blakely Island on 24 September (GDJ). The three birds seen on the Dauphin Island CBC on 26 December were good for that season. Green-backed Heron is uncommon in winter, so six in *Okaloosa*, FL, 14-20 December were nice (CAS). Seventeen Yellow-crowned Night-Herons at Eufaula NWR on 19 January (CKe, GS) were surprising for the winter. Dark ibis (most often unidentified) are uncommon in the AOS area. Autumn is usually the best time to find them, and this year singles were spotted at Ft. Morgan on 4 October and on the Mobile Causeway on 12 November. One of the big ticket items from the summer of 1988 was the presence of three **Roseate Spoonbills** on the Mobile Causeway. An immature bird was seen in nearby Polecat Bay on 24 September and 13 October (GDJ); was this a lingerer from the original group, or a new bird? To round out the large waders, the Wood Stork flocks that invaded Alabama's Black Belt last summer increased in numbers in the early autumn. Lake Land Farms near Marion held the largest population, beginning with 16 birds on 3 August (GDJ) and increasing to 80+ birds on 15 September (RRR,EGR).

Whistling-Ducks - Surface-feeding Ducks: Waterfowl numbers were rather low at most locations this winter, with decreased species diversity as well. However, several species arrived earlier than usual this fall. Three **Fulvous Whistling-Ducks** certainly spiced up the day's birding for RAD at the Moma Rosa ponds at Ft. Walton Beach, FL, on 11 September. This species is usually found at least once in our area each year, usually in the late summer or fall on the coast. This was a good year for the uncommon Greater White-fronted Goose. An early Tennessee Valley record was set with a bird at Wheeler NWR on 25 October (ALM). The first January WP record was a lone goose on 5 January at the Ft. Walton Beach sewage ponds (RAD). Four of these birds were in south Baldwin on 14 January (CF, RAD, mob); two were at Wheeler NWR 28 January to 4 February (HHK, GDJ, GDJ, A&BJ). A bright star of the winter was the third confirmed Alabama record of ROSS'S GOOSE at Eufaula from 17 January to 2 April (HHK, GA, mob). There were several records of this petite goose in the Southeast this winter. Three Green-winged Teal on 5 September at Marion (GDJ, DGJ) established an early record for the Coastal Plain. An early Gulf Coast record was of three American Black Ducks on Blakely Island on 13 October (GDJ). Care must be taken on the coast to separate this bird from the more common Mottled Duck. Mottled Ducks are hard to find on the outer coast in winter, so a bird on the Gulf Shores CBC on 31 December (RRR, EGR) and two on the Dauphin Island Causeway on 21 February (ALM, ADM) were nice.. An early Northern Pintail was at Wheeler NWR on 15 August (GDJ, DGJ). The six Northern Shovelers found in *Hale* and *Perry* on 5 September tied the previous early record for the Coastal Plain (GDJ, DGJ). An early record for Alabama was set by the observation of a Gadwall on Blakely Island on 28 August (GDJ).

Diving Ducks: Moving to the diving, ducks, an early Mountain Region date for Greater Scaup was established by two birds at Lake Purdy near Birmingham on 26 October (GDJ, DGJ). Ten of this species were found at Brown's Creek in Guntersville on 2 January (GDJ, DGJ). The east shore of this arm of Lake Guntersville (near the Rotary Cabin) is usually reliable in the winter for good looks at this species, which can be difficult to find at inland locations. I received only one Oldsquaw report: one female in the Tennessee River near Decatur on 27 December (MSG). An injured Black Scoter was an early record for the Tennessee Valley on 6 November at Town Creek (*Colbert*) (TMH). Four of this species were located in Bon Secour Bay (*Baldwin*) on 19 January (TAI). Surf Scoter is usually our most common scoter, and there were two reports this season: one on 29 November at Ft. Morgan (RAD), and four

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on 26 February in Bon Secour Bay (GDJ, DGJ). A solitary White-winged Scoter record was submitted, of a bird remaining at Lake Porter in *Jefferson* 2-28 February (LNT, TAI, FD'A). The 250 Common Goldeneyes at Guntersville on 2 January (GDJ, DGJ) were impressive, but this was topped on 22 January by 370 birds at Wade's Landing in *Limestone* (GDJ, DGJ). The first Common Mergansers of the season were at Lake Purdy near Birmingham on 30-31 October (ALM). One was discovered at Guntersville on 18 December (PF, LR), and five were near Waterloo (*Lauderdale*) on February (GDJ, DGJ). The latter birds were with 175 Red-breasted Mergansers in the Tennessee River.

Osprey - Harriers: Osprey is a regular wintering bird on the coast, but ten "fish hawks" on the Mobile Delta CBC on 17 December were impressive for that season. Wintering Ospreys are much less usual inland; a single bird was feeding at Swan Creek WMA, *Limestone*, on 22 January (GDJ). The fifth and sixth Alabama records for **Black-shouldered Kite** were set this winter. One was near Bellingrath Gardens on the Dauphin Island CBC on 26 December (JTW). The second inland Alabama record was established by an individual feeding near I-65 in *Escambia* on 15 January (BS,MS). This species is still found regularly in coastal Mississippi, and we should be on the lookout for further records in the AOS area. Bald Eagles were well represented in the region this fall and winter. Several were reported away from the main concentrations on the Tennessee River, with one to two birds seen from early October to late February in *Baldwin*, *Jefferson*, and *Shelby* in Alabama, and in *Okaloosa* in Florida. An early Northern Harrier was at Ft. Morgan on 28 August (BCG, RRR, PB), and 20 were noted there on 13 October (GDJ).

Accipiters - Falcons: The best hawkwatching spot in the area may turn out to be the eastern shore of Mobile Bay. Large numbers of raptors, including three immature Bald Eagles, were noted flying north this fall at Montrose in *Baldwin*. These birds were probably traveling west along the Gulf Coast and were following the shore of the bay. The peaks for Sharp-shinned Hawks at this site were on 30 September (103 birds) and 5 October (93 birds). On the latter date there were 250 Broad-winged Hawks, and an additional 106 Broad-wingeds were spotted on 8 October. The peak for Red-tailed Hawks was much latter, with 72 seen at Montrose on 12 November, rising to an impressive 199 on 18 November (all VBF). An early Tennessee Valley record for Rough-legged Hawk was obtained at the dependable "hawk farm" near the Guntersville Dam on 5 November (ALM). An adult **Golden Eagle** was a surprise as it flew over Ft. Morgan on 21 November (RAD). I received three reports of six

Merlins in later September and early October from Ft. Morgan. Three wintering Merlins were noted in the Mobile Bay area. Four coastal Alabama Peregrine Falcons were identified; inland reports were of a surprising three birds on the Birmingham area fall count on 1 October, and a bird in Lauderdale on 30 October (PK). Finally, the **Prairie Falcon** returned again this year to the Guntersville "hawk farm" on 15 November (ALM).

Cranes - Plovers: An early Sandhill Crane was noticed at Ft. Morgan on 21 September (PB0). One to three birds were reported wintering at Wheeler NWR (ML, TS, TAB, mob); this species is quite rare inland in Alabama, especially when not in passage. The regular wintering flock at Gulf Shores comprised 16 birds on 6 January (PB). There was a good movement of shorebirds through our area last fall. Black-bellied Plover is always a nice find at an inland locality, and one was seen at Decatur on 2 August (CB), tying the previous early record for the Tennessee Valley. An early Mountain Region date was set for Lesser Golden-plover on 7 September at Harpersville (*Shelby*) (GDJ, DGJ); five were seen there on 1 October (GDJ, DGJ). Numbers of Snowy Plovers from northwest Florida this winter were encouraging. Twenty-two were at Big Sabine on Santa Rosa Island, FL, on 19 December (RSD); 27 birds were found on the same island on 28 January (AOS); and 36 individuals were discovered on the Perdido Bay CBC on 28 December (RSD, JIF). From 2 January through February two Wilson's Plovers were at Big Sabine, *Escambia*, FL (RAD, mob); this species is rare at this time of year. Two Piping Plovers, rare inland, were located at Guntersville on 13 September (TAI, FD'A). Eight Piping Plovers were found on the Perdido Bay CBC on 28 December (RSD, JIF).

Oystercatchers - Calidrids: An impressive 15 American Oystercatchers were a first WP January record on the 24th at Shalimar (*Okaloosa*) (JFI). The high for the year for Black-necked Stilts at Blakely Island was 600 on 28 August (GDJ). A few birds remained at that site into the winter, with five on the Mobile Delta CBC on 17 December, and one bird on 21 January for the first Alabama record for that month (TAI, GMI). This bird is harder to find in northwest Florida, and one seen on 1 September at the Okaloosa County sewage plant (RAD) was only a second WP record for that month. The graceful cousin of the stilt, the American Avocet, made a strong showing this year on the Alabama coast. A new state maximum was set at, of course, Blakely Island, with 281 birds on 24 September (GDJ). A lone bird was seen at Eufaula NWR on 18-19 November (TAI, JD, mob). Eight Spotted Sandpipers wintering at Greenville (CKe) represented an inland maximum for that season.

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Upland Sandpiper is a species that we should watch closely due to a decline in recent years. A reliable spot on the Alabama coast is the Baldwin County #4 sod farms, where "many" were seen on 14 August (MFF, MN), and 15 were spotted on 27 August (GDJ, MFF, MSK). The regular Mobile Causeway Long-billed Curlews were seen again this year, with one to two birds through at least 1 January (GDJ, DGJ). Red Knot is a tough bird to find inland, and thus one picked out on 13 September at Guntersville was of interest (TAI, FD'A). Western Sandpipers were present in good numbers at Blakely Island on 28 August, with 2420 birds counted (GDJ). White-rumped Sandpipers are rare throughout our area in the fall. Two were seen at Decatur on 13 September (CB), and one was at Blakely Island on 24 September (GDJ). A Pectoral Sandpiper 16-23 December at the Ft. Walton Beach sewage ponds (RAD, DMW, JP) was the first WP record for that month.

Stilt Sandpiper - Phalaropes: The 12 Stilt Sandpipers on 19 November at Blakely Island (RAD) were rather late, but they were overshadowed by the 91 birds seen there on 15 January (RAD, RDS, PT). This was both Alabama's first January record and a new maximum for the winter. Only a few Buff-breasted Sandpipers were reported. Four were in south Baldwin on 27 August (GDJ, MFF, MSK). One Buff-breasted was seen in Shelby on 31 August (GDJ, DGJ), and another bird was present on 11 September at Decatur (HHK, BCG). The first WP December and January records for Short-billed Dowitcher were of three in Pensacola 15 December to 4 January (RAD, PT). Another WP report of this species was of 11 birds found 16-23 December at the Ft. Walton Beach sewage ponds (Okaloosa). The first WP record of Long-billed Dowitcher for September was on the 15th, when a calling bird was discovered at the Okaloosa County sewage ponds (RAD). In autumn, the Long-billed Dowitcher reaches a migratory peak later than its Short-billed cousin. There were 250 birds, many calling, at Blakely Island on 13 October (GDJ). The first Wilson's Phalaropes of the season were three on the Mobile Causeway on 9 August (MFF, MN). One to two birds were seen at Decatur 15-21 August (HHK, GDJ). The usual Blakely Island contingent of this sleek bird included 48 seen on 28 August (GDJ).

Jaegers - Skimmers: An immature, light-phased Pomarine Jaeger was studied with gulls on Lake Shelby at Gulf Shores on 30 December (PT, BT, RAD, LD RSD). This is a rare species in our area, though if we made frequent pelagic trips we would probably have more records. The first inland record for Alabama of a Parasitic Jaeger was of an immature bird seen at close range at Guntersville on 5 September (MH). Also at Guntersville, a Laughing Gull, rare inland, was seen on

18 September (RRR,EGR). The two adult Franklin's Gulls seen at Guntersville in mid-summer stayed to at least 27 September, when they were joined by two additional birds (ALM). One bird was seen at that site on 6 and 11 November (ALM). A first-winter plumaged bird was spotted at the Moma Rosa ponds at Ft. Walton Beach, FL, on 2 December (DB); another winter report was of an adult at Ft Morgan 19 January (TAI,GMI). The 1200 Bonaparte's Gulls at Wilson Dam on the Tennessee River on 19 February (GDJ, DGJ) were quite a sight, especially since they were with 5000 Ring-billed Gulls. The rare but regular **Glaucous Gull** was found again this year in our area, this time at Guntersville on 26 December on the CBC (MSG, JG). This was a good winter for **Great Black-backed Gulls** in and near north Alabama. An immature was on the Waterloo CBC in *Lauderdale* on 17 December (DJS party), and two to three first-winter plumaged birds were at Guntersville from 12 January to 4 February (ALM, AS, BSu, mob). Common Tern, a species not usually living up to its name in our region, was plentiful at Ft. Morgan this fall. On 25 September, 180 birds were found, and there were 75 there on 13 October (both GDJ, DGJ). Ten Forster's Terns were nice at Swan Creek WMA (*Limestone*) on 7 January (GDJ). The AOS pelagic trip participants, who ventured into the Gulf from *Baldwin* on 27 August, had fantastic views of nine **Bridled Terns** of varying ages. The birds were associated with tidelines from 45 to 60 miles offshore. The second WP January record of Black Tern was on the 28th at Navarre Beach (LG, JTP, CBl). To finish the waterbirds with an oddly placed individual, there was a Black Skimmer in Decatur on 13 September (CB) for a first Tennessee Valley record. This occurrence was likely related to Tropical Storm Florence.

Doves - Nightjars: This was good year for **White-winged Doves** along the coast. An individual seen on 1 August at Ft. Morgan (PB) may have been the same bird seen earlier in July. One to three birds were regular at that location throughout the fall. A single bird was at Gulf Breeze, FL, on 27 October (LD). Wintering White-winged Doves are uncommon, so the lone birds on the Gulf Shores CBC on 31 December (DMW party), and at Perdido Pass, *Baldwin*, on 26 February (GDJ), were interesting. **Groove-billed Anis**, with their prehistoric appearance, are always a treat. Two were located on 31 December on the Gulf Shores CBC and were seen again the following day (CLK, mob). The comical **Burrowing Owl** was good find at Ft. Morgan on 26 September, where it was noted again on 8 October (both PB). On the latter date, and early Short-eared Owl was also discovered at Ft. Morgan (BCG). The last Common Nighthawks reported were six birds on 4 December in Birming-

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ham (BTa). The Chuck-will's-widow on 21 January at Ft. Morgan was unusual (GF).

Hummingbirds: A subadult male **Black-chinned Hummingbird** was at a Pensacola feeder 17-18 December (JP, CLK), for a sixth WP record. The species undoubtedly occurs annually in our region, though there are few positively identified records. Any *Archilochus* hummingbird in the winter should be examined carefully, for Black-chinned is more likely than Ruby-throated at this season. Any winter hummingbird should be reported to Bob and Martha Sargent (205-681-2888); they are the hummingbird banders in our area, and make frequent trips to safely capture and identify unusual birds. This was a banner year for Rufous Hummingbirds throughout the Southeast, and the AOS area was certainly included. The Sargent's banding log in our area this season included the following Rufous Hummingbirds:

- adult male in Birmingham July-November;
- adult female in Mobile 12 October-4 April;
- adult female in Decatur November-December;
- immature female in Birmingham 6 November-14 April;
- adult female in Destin, FL, November-January
(also and unbanded *Selasphorus* sp.);
- immature male near Mobile in December;
- immature female in Mobile 21 December-27 February;
- immature male in Pensacola, FL, 26 January.

Tyrant Flycatchers: The flycatchers put on an exciting show this fall on the coast. A **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** was closely studied at Ft. Morgan on 25 September (GDJ, DGJ); caution is urged with identification of this species, as Acadian Flycatchers can have yellow throats in the autumn. Eastern Phoebes arrived in good numbers in mid-October, with 20 found on the 13th at Ft. Morgan (GDJ). An immature male **Vermilion Flycatcher** was a good find at Ft. Morgan on 5 October and again three days later (PB). Also on 5 October, a male of this species was discovered at Ft. Pickens, FL (JTP). Alabama's second record of **SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** really got the adrenalin flowing. This bird was found at Ft. Morgan on 27 September (HHF, JF) and remained for many observers to study until 3 October. On 4 October, a calling **COUCH'S KINGBIRD** was another big surprise at Ft. Morgan (KW, RAD,JP,mob). This was the third record for the Tropical/Couch's Kingbird complex in the state, but was the first assigned to species. Oddly, in view of the other Western vagrants this fall, there weren't many Western Kingbirds around. The only reports that I have are of two birds at Ft. Morgan on 28 August (BCG, RRR, PB), and one bird at the

same locale on 2 October (GDJ, DGJ, mob). A few more Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were located than Western Kingbirds, but it was still not a prominent year for this species. Reports ranged from early October to early November, all at Dauphin Island, Ft. Morgan, or Pensacola, FL (BS, MS BT, GDJ, DGJ, MFF, FF).

Swallows - Kinglets: Four thousand Tree Swallow were at Blakely Island on 13 October (GDJ). One bird found on 17 February near Birmingham at Lake Purdy was an early record for the Mountain Region (ALM). Barn Swallows are rare on the coast in winter; this year one was seen on 23 December at Ft. Walton Beach, FL sewage ponds (JP), and another birds was on Blakely Island on 15 January (PT, RAD). I had only one record of coastal Red-breasted Nuthatches this season: a single bird was at Ft. Morgan on 15 October (GDJ). Even inland, records of this species were sparse. Brown Creepers are generally uncommon on the outer coast, so three on 15 October at Ft. Morgan (GDJ), and six banded at the same locality on 25 October (BS, MS), were interesting. The difficult to find Bewick's Wren was spotted at Ft. Morgan on 8 October (BCG). Nine Winter Wrens were a good number for the coast 14-20 December in *Okaloosa*, FL (CAS). Two Golden-crowned Kinglets on Blakely Island on 13 October (GDJ) were early.

Wheatears - Vireos: I realize that there is a little bias in this statement, but the "Bird of the Season" had to be the **NORTHERN WHEATEAR** at Ft. Morgan on 2 October (GDJ, DGJ, mob)! I'm still not quite back to earth from that one. Who needs drugs?! This immature bird was believed to be of the eastern Canada/Greenland race. This was a first Alabama record and one of only a handful of occurrences in the lower Southeast. Many people from surrounding states enjoyed the bird on 3 October, but I fear that its sudden disappearance following that date may have had something to do with a not too savvy habit of sitting in the open on posts during a raptor flight. A Veery was early at Montrose on 5 September (VBF). On the other end of the spectrum, a Swainson's Thrush was late on 29 November at Ft. Morgan (RAD). Two flocks of Cedar Waxwings were early on 8 October in south *Okaloosa*, FL (JP, KW, RAD). Four White-eyed Vireos were noteworthy on 17 December on the Mobile Delta CBC. The inland Alabama maximum, for Solitary Vireo was broken with the sighting of 12 birds on 19 January at Eufaula NWR (CKe, GS). The **Warbling Vireo** located at Ft. Pickens on 3 October (RAD) was the sixth fall WP record.

Wood Warblers - Lark Sparrow: The hybrid "Brewster's" Warbler (Blue-winged X Golden-winged) is always fun to observe, and two separate birds were in Birmingham on 23 and 25 September (HHF,

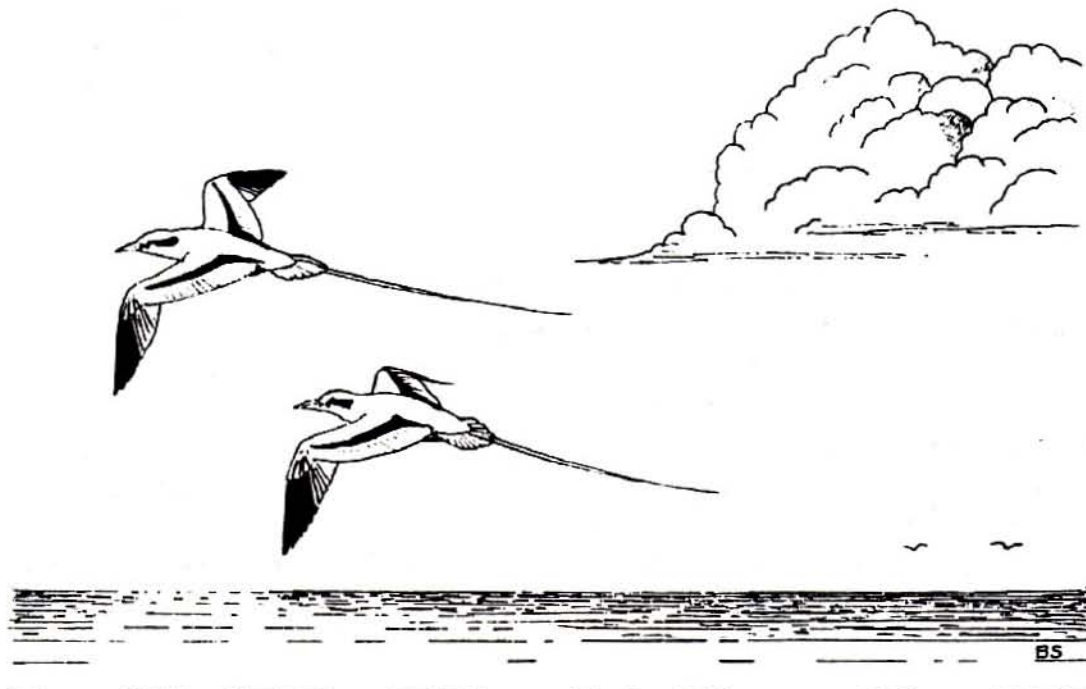
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JF, BCG). Magnolia Warblers arrived earlier than usual this year, with three birds on 5 September in *Greene* (GDJ, DGJ), and one on 6 September at Dauphin Island (MFF). Over 200 Palm Warblers were at Eufaula NWR on 19 January (Cke, GS) for an inland Alabama maximum. The Northern Waterthrush seen on 3 August at Dauphin Island (G&AB) was earlier than usual. Wilson's Warbler had been recorded only twice previously on the Alabama coast in winter, so the bird at Ft. Morgan on 21 January (TAI, GF) was quite unusual. Also good for the winter was a young male Rose-breasted Grosbeak on 27 February in Fairhope (MN). **Clay-colored Sparrow** is rare but regular on the coast in mid-autumn. This season, two birds were found at Ft. Morgan 24-25 September, and one bird was seen at that site on 13 October (both GDJ, DGJ). Lark Sparrow is usually easier to find; one was at Ft. Morgan 24-25 September, and another was seen on Dauphin Island on 14 October (both GDJ, DGJ).

Henslow's Sparrow - Cardueline Finches: Henslow's Sparrow is rare inland, and the two that were discovered at Waterloo on the CBC on 17 December (DJS party) were of interest. The same party found a Le Conte's Sparrow and a Lincoln's Sparrow at that same locale on the count. On 1 January, a Henslow's Sparrow was located in south *Baldwin* (BCG). An early Le Conte's Sparrow was at Ft. Morgan on 8 October (BCG). A Lincoln's Sparrow at Scottsboro on 25 February (JPT) was a nice find. Six White-crowned Sparrows were noted at Ft. Morgan on 23 October (GDJ, DGJ, BS, MS). Both the "Oregon" and the "Pink-sided" forms of Dark-eyed Junco were present from 9 January to 4 February at a Birmingham feeder (LA, mob). I received three reports of **Yellow headed Blackbirds** this fall. The first was an unusual inland record of an immature male in *Calhoun* from 30 August to 5 September (RR, BSu, mob). A female was located at Ft. Morgan on 6 September (RAD), and a male was seen there on 17 September (PB). Winter finches were few and far between this season. The low number of Purple Finches and Pine Siskins contrasted significantly with the hordes of birds, particularly siskins, that we hosted at our feeders during the winter of 1987-88. House Finch has spread to the Florida and Alabama coasts in the past few years, and five were seen in *Okaloosa*, FL 14-20 December (CAS). A great bird was a **Common Redpoll** studied in a large flock of American Goldfinches at Clay in east *Jefferson* on 7 February (BS). American Goldfinch numbers were above average in some localities, particularly in *Jefferson*. I received no details on sightings of Evening Grosbeaks this winter.

Observers: Alabama Ornithological Society, Lois Albright, Gussie Arnett, Dick Ballman, Jane Ballman, George & Awilda Bennett, Birmingham Audubon Society, Paul Blevins, Clyd Blum (CBl), Thomas A. Brindley, Craig Brown, Choctawhatchee Audubon Society, Frank D'Allessandro, Lucy Duncan, Robert A. Duncan, R. Scot Duncan, Julian Dusi, Harriett H. Findlay, John Findlay, Gene Fleming, Carolyn Fleury, Fred Floyd, Jinny Floyd (JF1), Mary F. Floyd, Paul Franklin, Venetia B. Friend, John T. Fulton, Lawrence Gardella, Ben C. Garmon, Janice Gravette, M. Scott Gravette, Thomas M. Haggerty, Milton Harris, Gina M. Imhof, Thomas A. Imhof, Debra G. Jackson, Greg D. Jackson, Albert & Betty Johnson, Charles Kennedy (CKe), Curtis L. Kingsbery, Helen H. Kittinger, Paul Kittle, Merrill Lynch, Mabel McDonald, Al D. Miller, Ann L. Miller, Mobile Bird Club, Minnie Nonkes, Johnny T. Parks, James Pfeiffer, G. Ned Piper, Elberta G. Reid, Robert R. Reid, Linda Reynolds, Renee Roper, Ari Rutkoff, Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent, Damien J. Simbeck, Maud Skiba (MSk), Mary Star, Alice Stevens, Tuck Stone, Gerald Stough, Bill Summerour (BSu), Bob Taylor (BTa), Betsy Tetlow, Phil Tetlow, Lynne N. Thompson, Mark VanHoose, Donald M. Ware, John T. Winn, Kenny Wright.

Corrigenda: Double-crested Cormorant 14 (not four), 4/11/89, Birmingham (ALM, MMc). Pectoral Sandpiper six, 3/1/88, Wade's Landing (not Weiss Lake) (ALM, MMc), thus not a new early record for the Mountain Region. *Greg D. Jackson, 2220 Baneberry Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244*





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Swainson's Warbler
(*Limnothlypis swainsonii*)
Bottlebrush Buckeye
(*Aesculus parviflora*)

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