

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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Total,147 -- Gerald Moske and Sue Moske, 702 Royce Circle, Huntsville AL, 35803.

Editor's Note: The following article was not subject to peer review and should not be cited. It is intended to inform the readership of all rare sightings regardless of authenticity. Questions should be addressed to the author.

1994 SPRING AND SUMMER SIGHTINGS

Greg D. Jackson

Spring migration this year was like a school reunion: there was a moderate turnout of old friends, and just enough surprises to keep things lively. Summer birding, the domain of the hardy and diligent, produced a smattering of engaging finds.

Temperatures in the spring were normal until May, which was cool. Precipitation was increased in March and mildly decreased in April and May.

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Bob Duncan reported the best birding days along the coast as 7, 13-14, and 21 April, and 2-3 May. Summer saw rain and more rain, particularly in the southeastern part of our area. Tropical Storm Alberto came ashore in the Florida Panhandle 3 July and lingered nearby as a low pressure area for several days. Massive flooding occurred, though we did not suffer as much as our neighbors in Georgia. Ponds throughout the area were full, and shorebirding generally was poor this summer at inland sites.

This report covers the period from March through July 1994 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (east to the Apalachicola River). The appearance of observations in this column does not suggest verification or acceptance of records for very rare species; these must be considered by the appropriate state records committees. All submissions of birds that are rare, either in general or for a particular season or region, must be accompanied by adequate details of the observation. The extent of this documentation depends on the rarity of the species and the difficulty of identification. Reports should note the conditions of observation and the diagnostic characters observed. Your help in this matter is appreciated.

County names are in *italics*. "GC" = Gulf Coast (Alabama); "ICP" = Inland Coastal Plain (Alabama); "MR" = Mountain Region; "TV" = Tennessee Valley; "WP" = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Santa Rosa*, and *Okaloosa*). Locations not specifying Florida are in Alabama. "*et al.*" = and others (small number); "m.ob." = many observers; "NWR" = National Wildlife Refuge; "p.a." = pending acceptance by the state bird records committee;

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"ph." = photographed; "v." = videotaped. Other abbreviations in parentheses correspond to observers listed at the end of this article.

LOONS - SHOREBIRDS: A rare **Pacific Loon** was seen 12-21 April at Fort Pickens, Escambia, FL (RAD, LG, AZ). Five lingering Common Loons were unusual 31 July in the same area (DPM); another late bird was in the Tennessee River, Colbert/Lauderdale, 27 May (SWM). Pied-billed Grebes are erratic breeders in Alabama, so the report of a pair with three young 29 May in n.e. Colbert (SWM) was notable. Two Eared Grebes, scarce inland, were discovered 8 April in n.e. Colbert (WJR, GNP et al.). Only causal in the WP, a **Greater Shearwater** was a surprise from shore at Ft. Pickens 30 July (DPM). A rare **Masked Booby** was well-described from Dauphin Island, Mobile, 18 April (JH, p.a.).

Tricolored Herons are unusual away from the coast; single birds were at Wheeler NWR, Limestone, 7-8 May (SRM, GDJ), and in n.e. Colbert 31 July (WJR, JG). The Cattle Egret, abundant in south Alabama, is only an occasional breeder in the TV. Seven nesting pairs were discovered 16 July in n.e. Colbert (GNP), at a site where the species bred in 1991. Good numbers of uncommon Plegadis ibis were present this summer on the Mobile Causeway, Mobile/-Baldwin. Up to seven were found 29 May-16 July (CK); all identifiable birds were Glossy Ibis. Wood Stork records were scarce this period, with only one bird reported 23 June from Montgomery/Pike (RLN).

A pair of late Ring-necked Ducks was spotted 27 May in n.e. Colbert (SWM); this species summers rarely. The Common Merganser 28 March at Lake

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Purdy, Shelby (ALM) was both rare for the MR and tardy. The "Harlan's" form of Red-tailed Hawk is scarce in our area, so an adult 6 March near Marion, Perry (GDJ,DGJ) was noteworthy. Unusual inland in spring were two Black-bellied Plovers 27 May in n.e. Colbert (SWM). Though one or two Long-billed Curlews are expected in winter on the Mobile Causeway, one arriving 2 July (CK) established a new early date for Alabama.

Baird's Sandpipers are rare in the spring. An individual 7 May near Harpersville, Shelby (ALM) set a new late MR record, and another was spotted 16 May in n.e. Colbert (SWM). **Red Phalarope** is an expected offshore bird in the winter, though it is rarely encountered by birders. Four were identified 25-30 miles south of Gulf Shores, Baldwin, 1 April (JH,JFH,JB,p.a.), providing a new late GC date.

LARIDS - WOOD-WARBLERS: Very scarce in the WP, a **Pomarine Jaeger** was found 27 June at Grayton Beach SP, Walton (SM,ph.RK). An immature **Glaucous Gull** was a rare treat 2 March-12 April at Pensacola Beach, Escambia, FL (RAD,m.ob.,ph.WWD). Also rare, though regular in small numbers, is the **Great Black-backed Gull**. A first-year bird was at Dauphin Island 20 March-16 April (CK,JH,RM); this likely was the same individual noted there in February. The Forster's Tern 19 June in w. Lauderdale (PDK) provided the first summer record for n.w. Alabama. At least six Eurasian Collared-Doves continued through the period at Dauphin Island, with the first documented coastal nesting in late March (JH,JP,JaP,m.ob.,ph.). Up to four collared-doves were at Fort Morgan, Baldwin, 16-29 April (GDJ,m.ob.).

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Alabama's fourth **Lesser Nighthawk** was discovered at Fort Morgan 10-14 April (RRS,MBS,m.ob.,ph.,p.a.); this bird was captured and banded while feeding on the old airstrip. A rare **Vermilion Flycatcher** provided a late record for the WP 2 May at Fort Pickens (PCT,RAD,DEF,m.ob.). Western Kingbird is harder to locate in spring than autumn; an individual 17 May at Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa (RAD) set a new late WP date.

Warbling Vireos are always difficult to find in our area, and breeding records in the TV are scarce and erratic. This season one was spotted 15 May on the Tennessee River in w. Colbert (SWM); singing birds were found on the river in Lauderdale 18 June at Waterloo (PDK) and 19 July at Wright (PDK). Large numbers of Red-eyed Vireos were seen at Fort Morgan 26 April (RAD). A major influx also was noted 3 May along the coast from Fort Morgan to Gulf Breeze, FL (RAD,LRD,PCT), with over 150 Red-eyeds estimated at the latter site. A few Black-whiskered Vireos usually appear each spring on the outer coast; this year three were reported from Fort Morgan and Dauphin Island 16 April-4 May (SWM,ASC,JH et al.).

Large numbers of Yellow Warblers were at Fort Morgan 3 May (RAD). Black-throated Blue Warblers are uncommon spring migrants on the coast, with increased numbers noted with persistent east winds. I only had one report this year, a male at Dauphin Island 16 April (AOS). The male Blackburnian Warbler 18 March at Shalimar, Okaloosa (BL) provided a new WP early date.

BUNTINGS - FINCHES: One to two male Painted Buntings were unexpected inland in Montgomery 22-23 July (FB,MBW,LFG). There is only one

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previous summer record for the ICP. Bachman's Sparrow is a rare breeder in the TV; a singing bird was in w. Lauderdale 27 May (SWM). The **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Fort Morgan 28 April (RAD,GDJ,DGJ) was only the third recorded in spring for Alabama. Rare in the nesting season in the TV, Lark Sparrows returned to two sites in n.w. Lawrence where they bred last year (GNP,SWM). Grasshopper Sparrows are unusual in spring in the WP; one was observed 30 March at Fort Pickens (RAD).

An uncommon LeConte's Sparrow was a late find 17 April on Dauphin Island (DMW). Two Lincoln's Sparrows, often difficult to locate in the spring, delighted many observers 15-17 April at Dauphin Island (AOS). Seven White-crowned Sparrows were noteworthy as late as 9 April in Okaloosa, FL (DMW). A lingering Bobolink was discovered 29 May in n.w. Lawrence (SWM). **Shiny Cowbirds** are now rare-but-regular in spring on the outer coast. One to two males were at Fort Morgan 26-28 April (GDJ,DGJ,m.ob.), and two males were on Dauphin Island 29 April (GDJ,DGJ).

The "find-of-the-season" was an amazing **Common Redpoll** at Dauphin Island 27 April-3 May (MM,GF,MH,m.ob.,v.GDJ,p.a.). This wayward individual provided the first GC record and a late date for the state; the species is only occasional even in n. Alabama. Redpolls were particularly abundant the previous winter in areas north of our region. This bird may have undertaken a 180-degree reverse migration earlier in the spring, bringing it to rest at the Gulf instead of returning north. Six Pine Siskins 3 June in Clay, Jefferson (RRS) established a late Alabama date. The American Goldfinch 30 May in Gulf

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Breeze, FL (RAD) was late at a coastal site. With only a few Evening Grosbeaks in the state the previous winter, a male 21 April in Lauderdale (PDK,DEK) was noteworthy.

CITED OBSERVERS: Alabama Ornithological Society, Fred Basset, William J. Bremser, Julie Boone, Alice S. Christenson, Lucy R. Duncan, Robert A. Duncan, William W. Duncan, Owen E. Fang, Gene Fleming, Larry F. Gardella, Ben C. Garmon, Jeff Garner, Lyn Gould, James F. Holmes, Jim Holmes, Mike Hudson, Debra G. Jackson, Greg D. Jackson, Ray King, Donna E. Kittle, Paul D. Kittle, Clive Knee, Bob Larson, Robert Manns, Sharon Maxwell, Steve W. McConnell, Mike McMillian, Ann L. Miller, Sue R. Moske, David P. Muth, Robert L. Norton, G. Ned Piper, Jackie Porter (JaP), John Porter, William J. Rogers, Martha B. Sargent, Robert R. Sargent, Phil C. Tetlow, Donald M. Ware, Mary B. Weidler, Ann Ziccardi. -- **Greg D. Jackson**, 2220 Baneberry Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244.

CORRIGENDUM: In the last issue (*Alabama Birdlife* 41(1)), the Black-throated Sparrows in Escambia should have been described as the first for the WP, not for Florida.



Immature Ruby-throated hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*), August 1994, Jacksonville, Al. (Calhoun Co.) Bill Summerour, photographer.