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**Cover:** Prothonotary Warbler, photograph by G. Harber

## INCREASED ABUNDANCE OF THE TROPICAL/COUCH'S KINGBIRD (*TYRANNUS*) COMPLEX IN ALABAMA AND THE WESTERN PANHANDLE OF FLORIDA

Robert A. Duncan

The AOU Checklist of 1983, based on Traylor's studies (Traylor 1979), split the Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) into two separate species, Tropical Kingbird and Couch's Kingbird (*Tyrannus couchii*), thus creating almost insurmountable identification problems for field observers. The two species are virtually identical and are separable only by call. Of about 40 reports of this complex in Florida and Alabama, only 11 were calling birds, or about one in four.

Couch's Kingbird ranges north to southern Texas and south to northern Guatemala from the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre Oriental to sea level, where it is a common to fairly common resident. On the Yucatan Peninsula it is common in scrubby woodland of the interior and uncommon in arid beach scrub. It is partly migratory with partial withdrawal from the northern part of its range in winter (Howell & Webb 1995).

The Tropical Kingbird is much more widespread in its distribution, ranging from both slopes of Mexico's Sierras, from Sonora and central Tamaulipas south to Peru and central Argentina. Like the Couch's, it is common to fairly common, found in open and semi-open areas with scattered trees, hedges, and forest clearings. In Yucatan, it is common in arid beach scrub and uncommon in the scrubby woodland interior. It also is partly migratory in northern Mexico (Howell & Webb 1995) and its southern population is migratory to Amazonia in the austral winter. To anyone who has birded the Neotropics, both species appear ubiquitous in the proper habitat. Both prefer open or semi-open areas with trees, residential areas, clearings in forests, river edges and agricultural areas (Howell & Webb 1995, Hilty & Brown 1986). They are common from sea level to 1000 m., less common up to 2500 m. (Ridgely & Tudor 1994).

Both species are migratory, but the Tropical is more so than Couch's. In Colombia, the local population of the Tropical Kingbird is greatly augmented by an influx of migrants from the southern portion of its breeding range in the austral winter, May through September (Hilty & Brown 1986). In Ecuador, populations of local birds are also augmented by an influx of winter visitors in April and May in the lowlands (Ridgely & Greenfield 2001). Ridgely and Tudor (1994) consider breeders in northern Middle America possibly migratory.



Florida had about 25 reports of this complex as of 1992 (Robertson & Woolfenden 1992). Since that time there have been about 12 additional reports, seven of which have been in the Western Panhandle (Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa counties). Six of these seven reports have been from Gulf Breeze where the author and others have observed birds at close range, always perched in the same dead tree. The Gulf Breeze sightings range from May to July. Only two of these were calling, a 7 July 98 bird seen and heard by multiple observers and identified as a Couch's Kingbird. The other observed on 16 May 00 was videotaped and heard calling. It was identified as a Tropical Kingbird (accepted by FOSRC 00-425). There are three other accepted records of Tropical Kingbird for Florida. Three reports of calling birds identified as Couch's were relegated to Appendix A (unverified stragglers) in Robertson and Woolfenden (1992).

In Alabama, there are five reports of this complex (Steve McConnell pers. comm.). The first was a bird seen by Fairly Chandler in Magnolia Springs, Baldwin Co. 20 October 69 (Imhof 1976). The second report was a silent bird seen by the author and Mary Floyd at Ft. Morgan on 27 September 87. A bird seen by many observers along the Ft. Morgan road, Baldwin Co., on 4 October 88 was identified as a Couch's based on the vocalization heard by James Pfeiffer. The fourth was a silent bird identified by S. W. McConnell, 22 May 98 at the Battleship Park, Mobile Co. The latest was a silent bird found by Phil Tetlow and seen by multiple observers at Dauphin I., Mobile Co., on 22 September 01.

The frequency of sightings of this complex in Florida and Alabama has escalated since 1980, exceeding all prior reports. There have been six observations in just the first two years of this century. Although Florida's first report was in 1942 (Stevenson & Anderson 1994), most of the observations have occurred since 1980 and most are from migrant traps frequently covered by observers since the 1970's. The author has covered the area in Gulf Breeze, where six sightings have occurred, for over 30 years, yet all six occurrences have been since 1998. It is highly unlikely this conspicuous flycatcher could have been overlooked in previous years either at Gulf Breeze or other migrant traps where they are now found. A summary of sightings in Alabama and the Western Panhandle is contained in Table 1.



TABLE 1. Reports of the Tropical /Couch's (*Tyrannus*) Kingbird complex in Alabama and the Western Panhandle of Florida.

Date	Location	Species
20 Oct 1969	Magnolia Springs, Baldwin Co., AL	Tropical/Couch's
7 Sept 1975	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Tropical/Couch's
27 Sept 1987	Ft. Morgan, Baldwin Co., AL	Tropical/Couch's
4 Oct 1988	Ft. Morgan, Baldwin Co., AL	Couch's
9 May 1992	Ft. Walton Beach, Okaloosa Co., FL	Tropical/Couch's
22 May 1998	Battleship Park, Mobile Co., AL	Tropical/Couch's
7 July 1998	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Couch's
14 July 1998	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Tropical/Couch's
14 June 1999	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Tropical/Couch's
16 May 2000	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Tropical
8 May 2001	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Tropical/Couch's
25 June 2001	Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa Co., FL	Tropical/Couch's
22 Sept 2001	Dauphin Island, Mobile Co., AL	Tropical/Couch's

Because Couch's Kingbird is considered partially migratory and the Tropical Kingbird's southern population is a regular migrant, it is not surprising that extralimital records occur. There are records of the complex from as far north as Massachusetts and Nova Scotia (AOU 1983). The Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*), a congener with a similar distribution pattern, is an austral migrant that frequently overshoots its normal range in migration. There are about ten records of this species for Florida alone, April to July and September to November (Robertson & Woolfenden 1992).

In Alabama and the Western Panhandle, the Tropical/Couch's complex has been recorded in the following months: May (4 reports), June (2 reports), July (2 reports), September (3 reports), and October (2 reports). This is a seasonal pattern similar to the Fork-tailed Flycatcher, and generally in conformance with the movements of austral migrant Tropical Kingbirds discussed above. The abundance of this complex, its migratory tendencies, and its ability to move into newly created habitat provide the impetus for its vagrancy.

All but two of the reports of the complex in Alabama and the Western Panhandle were from migrant traps, the exceptions being one sighted in the Ft. Walton Beach area about 5 mi. inland, and another at Battleship Park in the

Mobile Bay Delta. The author watched a bird of this complex fly in to the tip of the Gulf Breeze peninsula out of the SW on one occasion. These occurrences suggest that these birds, especially the Tropical Kingbirds since they are more migratory in their range, are making overwater crossings. If that is so, there should be observations from the West Indies. However, the Tropical Kingbird does not occur in the West Indies except as a vagrant in Cuba from which are three reports (Garrido & Kirkconnell 2000), and as a rare and irregular migrant on Grenada near the South American coast (Raffaele *et al.* 1998). However, the Fork-tailed Flycatcher is also considered a vagrant in the West Indies (Raffaele *et al.* 1998), yet there are numerous occurrences in North America.

Couch's Kingbird is very rare on the Upper Texas Coast, found in all months except July. There are no records of Tropical Kingbird from the same area (Richardson *et al.* 1998). If the source of Alabama and Florida Tropical Kingbirds were southern Texas and northern Mexico, there should be records from that area. There are several reports for Louisiana where both species have been confirmed (Dittman 2001). Weather can sometimes play a role in bringing vagrants from the south to our shores (Duncan 1994); however, an analysis of weather conditions the day of the sightings and the preceding day on the Alabama and Western Panhandle coasts did not show a correlation. Of eleven reports of the complex since 1987, eight were on light and variable winds, one report on light to moderate E & SE winds and two on moderate to fresh SW to NW winds.

In summary, I suggest that we can expect to find with increasing frequency both Tropical and Couch's Kingbirds in Alabama and the Western Florida Panhandle. This supposition is based on the escalation of sightings in the past two decades and first two years of this century, and proposes that the driving force may be range expansions resulting from deforestation. In the case of the Tropical Kingbird, a rapid colonizer of cleared areas, its migratory tendency is a strong factor in bringing it to our shores. Observations from migrant traps indicate it is probably a trans-Gulf or partial trans-Gulf migrant.

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**AN UNUSUAL NEST SITE FOR PROTHONOTARY WARBLER  
(*PROTONOTARIA CITREA*) IN CENTRAL ALABAMA**

Eric C. Soehren

In Alabama the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) is a locally common to abundant breeder inhabiting seasonally flooded bottomland hardwood forests, wooded swamps, and riparian corridors along rivers and streams (Imhof 1976, Petit 1999). Prothonotary Warblers are unique in that they are the only eastern North American warblers that require cavities for nesting. Typical nest sites include natural cavities in dead snags, holes in branches of live trees, or abandoned nest holes of woodpeckers and chickadees (Bent 1953, Petit 1999). Many forms of artificial cavities (e.g., nest boxes, milk cartons, pails, jars, coat pockets, structures on active river ferries, etc.) are also readily used (Bent 1953, Lee and Clark 1985, Dunn and Garrett 1997, Petit 1999). Prothonotary Warblers have even been reported to use open cup nests of other bird species (Conway 1946, Petit and Petit 1988). Other than the typical use of woodpecker and chickadee nest holes, reports of interspecific nest use by Prothonotary Warblers are limited.

On 6 June 2001, an unusual Prothonotary Warbler nest was discovered by the author and Garth Crow, Natural Heritage Section's Aquatic Zoologist, while running a Breeding Bird Survey on the Cahaba River in Perry County. The nest was constructed in an abandoned Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) mud "gourd" which was plastered to the underside of one of the pilings supporting the Walter C. Givhan Bridge on Perry County Road 49 just east of Jericho, approximately 20 ft (6.1 m) above the river. The nest was discovered when a male carrying food was observed flying to the entrance of the swallow nest. Two other partially intact swallow nests were adjacent to the one occupied by the warblers. Other than the abandoned nests, there was no evidence of Cliff Swallows in the immediate area. The entrance to the Cliff Swallow nest was broken off so that some of the nesting material of the warbler nest was visible. While studying the nest, the female was observed carrying food to the nestlings. Immediately after feeding, she entered the nest and began brooding. Petit (1999) reports that on the third day following hatching, females brood in short periods immediately after feeding the young, with brooding ceasing after the fourth day. Based on the female's behavior, it is reasonable to assume that the young were no older than four days. The number of young in the nest could not be determined



due to the height of the bridge above the river. Although Prothonotary Warblers have been widely reported to nest in old woodpecker and chickadee holes and even open cup nests of other bird species, this is the first account of an abandoned Cliff Swallow nest being utilized as a nesting site.

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## INTERACTION BETWEEN VIRGINIA RAIL AND BLACK RAIL

Larry F. Gardella

On 14 October 2000, just after first light, a Black Rail was observed in a marsh near the Dauphin Island airport by Russell Bailey, Alice Christensen, Charles Duncan, Dana Hamilton, Stan Hamilton, Ralph Havard, John O'Neill, Dick Reynolds, Harriet Wright and me. A short time later, just before 0700 hr, plaintive, rapid peeping alerted the group to a Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola*) which had a flailing Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) in its bill. The Black Rail was identified by its small size, primary black coloration and fully-feathered wings, eliminating the slim possibility of a late chick of some other rail species. The Virginia Rail soon disappeared in the marsh with its apparent prey and neither was heard again. There were no subsequent reports of a Black Rail from that marsh on that day.

Thus, the Virginia Rail was either trying to drive the Black Rail from the area or consume it. Virginia Rails are tolerant of sharing habitat with at least some other rail species. Pospichal and Marshall (1954) and Horak (1970) reported Virginia Rails to be tolerant of Soras (*Porzana carolina*). The diets of Virginia Rails and Black Rails appear to be no more similar (Eddleman, Flores and Legare 1994, Conway 1996), so one might expect a similar tolerance. Of course, the size differential would make it easier for Virginia Rails to dominate Black Rails than for them to dominate Soras.

Virginia Rails primarily eat invertebrates, small fish and frogs and seeds of marsh plants. No accounts of Virginia Rails eating other birds could be found in the literature. However, Vincent Lucas (pers. comm.) offered an unpublished account of one eating a Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) on South Padre Island, Texas. Moreover, feeding experiments conducted on an exhausted Virginia Rail captured in the north on a bitterly cold day demonstrated its ability to subdue and consume large prey items ranging from large insects to some species of sunfish and a Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) (Cahn 1915). Interestingly, there are records of three Virginia Rail congeners preying on birds, often involving birds that were in some sense artificially easy prey. Water Rails (*Rallus aquaticus*) have been documented taking Winter Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Little Stints (*Calidris minuta*), a probable Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), a probable Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) and several birds in a single aviary:



Chinese Quail (*Excalfactoria chinensis*), Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*), Orange-cheeked Waxbill (*Estrilda melpoda*). King Rails (*Rallus elegans*) have been found with Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) feathers and vertebrae in their guts (Meanley 1956). Clapper Rails (*Rallus longirostris*) have been found to eat Willow Flycatchers (*Empidonax trailli*) and Savannah Sparrows (*Passerculus sanwicensis*) that had been caught in a bird net (Spendelow and Spendelow 1980, Jorgensen and Ferguson 1982).

Black Rails have also been documented to fall prey to Great Egrets (*Ardea alba*), Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*), Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*), Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*), Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and possibly Loggerhead Shrikes (*Lanius ludovicianus*) (Evans and Page 1986, Orr 1947, Eddleman et al. 1994). This observation suggests that Virginia Rails may also belong to this list of Black Rail predators.

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## REPORT OF THE ALABAMA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE 2000

Steve W. McConnell, Secretary 1999-2001

The Alabama Bird Records Committee (ABRC) was created to validate documentation of unusual birds in Alabama using a method that allows the records to be more universally accepted and scientifically valuable. A committee of seven experienced Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS) members reviews reports of species that generally have fewer than 20 accepted records for the state. Records for species on the ABRC review list, which currently includes around 90 species, are voted on once by all committee members and then sometimes twice if the first vote is indecisive. Vote totals with no more than one "not accepted" vote result in the record being accepted. Totals with four or more "not accepted" votes result in the record not being accepted. Records without decisions following one or two votes are reviewed and voted upon a final time at the annual meeting of the ABRC.

Forty-one records from 17 observers were evaluated in 2000 (Table 1). During this evaluation period, two species were added to the Alabama state list: Red-billed Tropicbird and Snow Bunting. Presently, the AOS recognized state bird list stands at 419 species. Of these, three are considered extinct (Passenger Pigeon, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and Carolina Parakeet) and two extirpated from Alabama (Common Raven and Bachman's Warbler). Also thirteen species are listed in the hypothetical category due to the absence of a photograph or specimen, or written documentation of visual observations by at least three experienced observers.

TABLE 1. Evaluations by the 2000 Alabama Bird Records Committee of 41 records from 17 observers.

Record No.	Species	Date	County	How Noted <sup>a</sup>	Decision <sup>b</sup>	AL Status <sup>c</sup>
99-14	Iceland Gull	4/16/99	Mobile	V	A	2
00-1	Brown Booby	12/20/99	Mobile	V	NI	—
00-2	Brown Booby	1/28/00	Baldwin	V	A	20
00-3	Great Cormorant	11/30/99	Baldwin	V	A	14
00-4	Great Cormorant	12/20/99	Mobile	V	A	15
00-5	Eurasian Wigeon	11/24/99	Morgan	V	A	8

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TABLE 1. Continued.

Record No.	Species	Date	County	How Noted <sup>a</sup>	Decision <sup>b</sup>	AL Status <sup>c</sup>
00-6	Northern Goshawk	12/31/99	Baldwin	V	NI	—
00-7	Black-legged Kittiwake	11/14/99	Colbert	V	A	13
00-8	Long-eared Owl	11/16/99	Pelagic <sup>d</sup>	VD	A	12
00-9	Snow Bunting	11/17/99	Dallas	V	A	1-H
00-10	Red-billed Tropicbird	8/30/99	Pelagic	P	A	1
00-11	Greater Shearwater	8/18/99	Pelagic	V	A	20
00-12	Greater Shearwater	9/2/99	Pelagic	V	A	22
00-13	Greater Shearwater	9/19/99	Pelagic	VD	A	21
00-14	Cory's Shearwater	8/19/99	Pelagic	V	A	6
00-15	Cory's Shearwater	9/29/99	Pelagic	VD	A	7
00-16	Cory's Shearwater	10/6/99	Pelagic	VD	A	8
00-17	Audubon's Shearwater	10/31/99	Pelagic	VD	A	7
00-18	White-faced Ibis	10/28/99	Mobile	V	NI	—
00-19	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	2/1/97	Mobile	B/P	A	4
00-20	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	12/16/97	Baldwin	B/P	A	5
00-21	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	2/21/98	Baldwin	B/P	A	6
00-22	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	12/9/98	Autauga	B/P	A	7
00-23	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	10/17/99	Baldwin	B/P	A	8
00-24	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	1/15/00	Escambia	B/P	A	9
00-25	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	1/14/00	Baldwin	V	A	10
00-26	Calliope Hummingbird	1/2/96	Elmore	B/P	A	4
00-27	Calliope Hummingbird	1/8/98	Mobile	B/P	A	7
00-28	Calliope Hummingbird	1/21/98	Etowah	B/P	A	5
00-29	Calliope Hummingbird	11/29/99	Marshall	B/P	A	8
00-30	Calliope Hummingbird	1/15/00	Mobile	B/P	A	6
00-31	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	2/15/96	Elmore	B/P	A	2
00-32	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	1/2/97	Mobile	B/P	A	4
00-33	Broad-tailed Hummingbird	2/14/00	Mobile	B/P	A	3
00-34	Allen's Hummingbird	1/1/97	Mobile	B/P	A	13
00-35	Allen's Hummingbird	1/1/97	Mobile	B/P	A	8
00-36	Allen's Hummingbird	8/14/98	Montgomery	B/P	A	9
00-37	Allen's Hummingbird	8/27/98	Cullman	P	A	14
00-38	Allen's Hummingbird	12/30/98	Houston	B/P	A	10
00-39	Allen's Hummingbird	11/7/99	Montgomery	B/P	A	11
00-40	Allen's Hummingbird	1/16/00	Mobile	B/P	A	12

<sup>a</sup>V = visual, P = photograph, B = banded, VD = video

<sup>b</sup>A = accepted, NI = not accepted due to identification questions, NO = not accepted due to origin questions, P = Pending and under review by committee

<sup>c</sup>Number of accepted Alabama records, H = hypothetical

<sup>d</sup>Pelagic = Gulf of Mexico waters out to 200 nautical miles from Mobile and/or Baldwin counties

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## SPRING SIGHTINGS (MARCH - MAY 2001)

Paul D. Kittle, Greg D. Jackson, and Robert A. Duncan

After wonderful fall and winter seasons marked by outstanding vagrants, the spring migration can only be described as one of the dullest in recent memory. Along the Alabama coast and in the WP, the drought of the past two years continued. March was beset by colder than usual weather, undoubtedly causing a delay in migration, then high pressure settled off the Atlantic Coast and gave us east or southeast winds all season. There were essentially no fallouts this season. The east winds treated us to species that normally migrate to the east of the area, such as Cape May, Blackpoll, and Black-throated Blue warblers, but this hardly made up for the near absence of all thrushes except Wood, Baltimore Orioles, and Chestnut-sided Warblers. Even the usually ubiquitous Indigo Bunting was an uncommon sight.

The first records of Crested Caracara and Ruff for the Western Panhandle were established, as well as the first well-documented record of Spotted Towhee for Alabama. The highest all-time count of Willets for the Western Panhandle came from Pensacola. A record late departure date for Winter Wren was set in Birmingham. Participants in the North American Migration Count on 12 May established many new high counts of several species for various regions of Alabama.

This report covers the period from March through May 2001 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (west of the Apalachicola River). The appearance of observations in this article 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. For guidance, observers are encouraged to consult the Alabama Ornithological Society checklist. Reports should note conditions of observation and the diagnostic characters observed. Your help in this matter is appreciated.

**Abbreviations and italics:** County names are in italics and, except for the

Florida counties of *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, *Santa Rosa*, and *Walton*, are in Alabama. “@” = subject to review by appropriate records committee; “ABRC” = Alabama Bird Records Committee; “FWBSF” = Ft. Walton Beach Sewerage Facility; “m.ob.” = many observers; “NAMC” = North American Migration Count; “NWR” = National Wildlife Refuge; “ph.” = photographed; “WMA” = Wildlife Management Area; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Santa Rosa*, *Okaloosa*, and *Walton* counties); “WTF” = Woerner Turf Farm.

**RED-THROATED LOON** – A record of a single, casual in the WP, came from Ft. Pickens, *Escambia*, 25 March (Phil Tetlow, Betsy Tetlow). The first record, and rare in the Mountain Region, was established by a single at Guin, *Marion*, 3 April (Jud Johnston). Two were seen on the Brown’s Creek area of Guntersville Reservoir, *Marshall*, 9 April, a site where this species is rare but regular (Bob Reid).

**COMMON LOON** – Linda Reynolds *et al.* (NAMC) recorded eight on Guntersville Reservoir, *Marshall*, 12 May, a good number for such a late date.

**HORNED GREBE** – A record of one bird in alternate plumage at Riverton, *Colbert*, 23 April, established a late spring departure date for northwest Alabama (Paul Kittle, Fran Menapace, Shirley Wayland).

**EARED GREBE** – At the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, the second WP March record was established by Don Ware and Bob Duncan with their observation of a basic-plumaged bird on 21-23 March.

**BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** – On 4 May a bird landed on the boat of Joe Mills off Pensacola, *Escambia*, and was taken to Wildlife Sanctuary, identified by Bob Duncan and Lucy Duncan, and successfully released. This species is casual in the WP, and five specimens have been secured since 1993 from fishermen bringing them to Wildlife Sanctuary.

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – This species is rare inland, so the following records are noteworthy. Several were seen at Pickensville, *Pickens*, in early April (*vide* Bob McCollum) for an unusual record from the Inland Coastal Plain, and eight were seen at Wilson Dam, *Colbert/Lauderdale* 30 April (Shirley Wayland).

**BROWN PELICAN** – An estimated 10,000+ were nesting on Gaillard Island, *Mobile*, 9 May, a maximum number for Alabama (Roger Clay, Eric Soehren, Bill Summerour).

**GREAT CORMORANT** – One first-year bird, seen 22 April on the Dauphin Island Causeway, *Mobile* (J. C. Hall *et al.*), was the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama record (@



ABRC).

**ANHINGA** – This species is rare in north Alabama, so a single at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 27 May (Barry Fleming) was notable.

**MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD** – An early bird was at Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 9 April (A. Stewart, m.ob.).

**AMERICAN BITTERN** – This species is very rare in winter in north Alabama, and the bird in Huntsville, *Madison*, 12 March may have been a wintering individual (M. Street). One bird was at Oakland Marsh, *Lauderdale*, 7 May (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner) (uncommon spring migrant).

**LEAST BITTERN** – This species is rare and local in the Tennessee Valley and was noted at Red Bank, *Lawrence*, 28 April (Paul Kittle, Fran Menapace, Shirley Wayland). On 7 May, Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, and Jeff Garner tallied this species at the Red Bank site and at Oakland Marsh, *Lauderdale*.

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** – Locally rare in spring in northwest Alabama, one was seen at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 7 May (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner).

**CATTLE EGRET** – This species is locally rare in *Marion*, but two were observed at Guin 15 April (Jud Johnston). A roost of 200 noted by airplane along the Coosa River, *St. Clair*, by J. Pittman 12 May set a new maximum for the Mountain Region.

**BLACK VULTURE** – Linda Reynolds *et al.* (NAMC) were busy counting vultures in the Guntersville area, *Marshall*, 12 May, and had a count of 158 for a new maximum for the Tennessee Valley.

**TURKEY VULTURE** – Linda Reynolds *et al.* (NAMC) counted 102 in the Guntersville area, *Marshall*, 12 May to set a new spring maximum for the Tennessee Valley.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** – This species is uncommon in north Alabama, and six were seen at Decatur, *Morgan*, 13 March; three were late at the same location 26 March (Steve McConnell). Rare in spring in the WP, one was at Big Sabine, *Escambia*, 14 March (Bob Duncan).

**ROSS'S GOOSE** – Rare but increasing in Alabama, a late bird was noted at Sawyerville, *Hale*, 27 March (D. Self, J. Self).

**GADWALL** – Eleven seen at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 12 May was a good number for so late in the spring (Linda Reynolds *et al.*, NAMC).

**CANVASBACK** – This diver is uncommon on the Inland Coastal Plain, so one seen at Safford, *Dallas*, 17 March was noteworthy (Barry Fleming).

- BLACK SCOTER** – One female-type bird was seen in the Brown's Creek area of Guntersville Reservoir, *Marshall*, 31 March (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds) (rare inland).
- LONG-TAILED DUCK** – Jud Johnston had two records of this species that is rare in the Mountain Region, a male 14 March and a female 2 April (ph.). Both records came from Guin, *Marion*. Five seen in the Brown's Creek area of Guntersville Reservoir, *Marshall*, 31 March - 9 April (Linda Reynolds, m.ob.) was a good number for this species that is rare but regular at this site.
- HOODED MERGANSER** – A female at Edsons, *Lowndes*, 29 April was late (Larry Gardella).
- RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** – Uncommon on the Inland Coastal Plain, one was seen at Safford, *Dallas*, 17 March (Barry Fleming).
- OSPREY** – This species rarely breeds in the Tennessee Valley, so the nest building by a pair, observed on Patton Island below Wilson Dam, *Lauderdale*, 17 April, was encouraging (Damien Simbeck).
- SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** – A flock of 13 observed migrating north on 23 March represented a good number at the Clearwater Tract, *Baldwin* (Scott Somershoe).
- MISSISSIPPI KITE** – This species is rare in the Tennessee Valley, so two seen at Colbert Ferry Park, *Colbert*, 7 May were noteworthy (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner).
- BALD EAGLE** – As a breeder in Alabama, this species is rare but increasing. A pair was seen feeding two young at Heiberger, *Perry*, on 11 March (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton), while another nesting pair and a first-year bird were observed at Safford, *Dallas*, 17 March (Barry Fleming). If not nesting, the adult seen at Shoal Creek, *St. Clair*, 12 May was late (Bob Reid *et al.*).
- SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** – Late birds were seen 12 May at Gulf Shores, *Baldwin* (J. Lloyd, P. Blevins) and at Coden, *Mobile* (R. E. Hayward).
- RED-TAILED HAWK** – Uncommon morphs were found in north Alabama 17 March (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten, Bill Summerour). A dark morph was at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, while a Krider's was in the Paint Rock River Valley, *Jackson*.
- CRESTED CARACARA** – The first record for the WP came from Destin, *Okaloosa*, 1 March (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). See article in *Alabama Birdlife* 47(1):15-17.
- MERLIN** – Rare on the Inland Coastal Plain, one was noted at Heiberger, *Perry*, 11 March (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton). Uncommon in north Alabama,



- a late bird was seen at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 12 May (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten). An even later bird at Killen, *Lauderdale*, 25 May, set a late record for the Tennessee Valley (Damien Simbeck).
- BLACK RAIL** – Rarely detected, Bob Sargent had one at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 9 April at the same site where one was found dead last year.
- KING RAIL** – This species is rare but regular at Oakland Marsh, *Lauderdale*, during spring migration. Tom Haggerty and Jeff Garner had two there 28 April while Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, and Jeff Garner had one 7 May.
- VIRGINIA RAIL** – One bird, probably wintering, was seen at WTF, *Lowndes*, 2 March (Barry Fleming), while another single was seen at Porter Lake, *Jefferson*, 12 May (Sharon Hudgins) (rare in Mountain Region).
- SORA** – Uncommon in the Mountain Region, one was recorded at Porter Lake, *Jefferson*, 12 May (Sharon Hudgins).
- BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** – Only occasional on the Inland Coastal Plain in spring, two were found at WTF, *Lowndes*, 17 March (Barry Fleming *et al.*) and 18 March (Larry Gardella, Fred Bassett).
- AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** – Approximately 100 were seen at Lake Land Farms near Marion, *Perry*, 17 March (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, m.ob.), a good number. Good numbers were also recorded at Harpersville, *Shelby*, with 99 on 18 March (Greg Harber *et al.*), a maximum for the Mountain Region, and 40 on 21 March (Bob Reid).
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** – Bob Duncan had one 7 May at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, where it is casual.
- SOLITARY SANDPIPER** – One was early at WTF, *Lowndes*, 18 March (Larry Gardella).
- WILLET** – This species is rare inland, and the 38 seen at Wilson Dam, *Colbert/Lauderdale*, 28 April set a new maximum for inland Alabama (Paul Kittle, m.ob.). The highest all-time count for the WP was established by the estimated 400 birds seen at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 23 April (Ann Forster, Dan Forster).
- UPLAND SANDPIPER** – The seven seen at WTF, *Lowndes*, 31 March represented a good number for spring migration (Pat Johnson).
- WHIMBREL** – The five seen in the Dauphin Island area, *Mobile*, 12 May was a good number (Roger Clay, T. Hartley, J. Hartley, NAMC).
- WESTERN SANDPIPER** – A new maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain was established by the 45 seen in *Montgomery* 12 May (Fred Bassett *et al.*, NAMC).

- WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** – The seven seen at Nesmith, *Winston*, 27 May was a good number for the Mountain Region (Barry Fleming).
- DUNLIN** – One seen 25 May west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, was late (Tom Haggerty).
- BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** – One was an early migrant at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 1 April (K. White, P. White).
- RUFF** – A first WP record came from the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 1 March when an adult female was observed by Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Don Ware, Ed Case, Alan Knothe, Jesse Knothe, Hud Huddleston, and Charles Parkel.
- PARASITIC JAEGER** – An adult was recorded 3 mi S of Pensacola Bay Pass, *Escambia*, by Ed Case and Lois Case 27 May.
- LAUGHING GULL** – This species has become rare but regular in the Tennessee Valley. One was at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 18 March (K. White, P. White), and another was at the mouth of Town Creek, *Colbert*, 7 May (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner).
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** – At Bayou LaBatre, *Mobile*, one was recorded 22 April (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Phil Tetlow, Betsy Tetlow). This species is rare but increasing in Alabama.
- GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** – Rare in Alabama, a third-year bird was seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 9 April (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, m.ob.).
- CASPIAN TERN** – Three birds were early at Town Creek Marsh, *Colbert*, 8 April (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten).
- LEAST TERN** – One seen west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 25 May established the first spring record for northwest Alabama (Tom Haggerty).
- EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** – This species continues to expand its range, and birds were reported from two new sites: two, south of Tuscaloosa, *Tuscaloosa*, 16 March (Paul Kittle, Jeff Garner), and one, Moulton, *Lawrence*, 19 April (Paul Kittle).
- WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – The eighth inland record for Alabama was established at Auburn, *Lee*, by a single observed 14-17 May (S. Ducharme).
- BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO** – This species is rarely seen inland, but one set an early Mountain Region record at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, 18 April (Larry Gardella).
- BURROWING OWL** – Five pairs were reported to be nesting on the Eglin Air Force Base bombing range, *Okaloosa*, where they have been nesting for several years (*vide* Lenny Fenimore).
- BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD** – Florida's second remained at the home of Beth Lucas in Pensacola, *Escambia*, until 4 April (*vide* Bob Duncan).



This individual was present during the preceding winter and was banded by Fred Bassett of the Hummer/Bird Study Group.

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** – A late bird was seen 12 May on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* (C. Hinds, G. Hinds), and three on the same date in *St. Clair* set a late departure date for the Mountain Region (Bob Reid *et al.*).

**OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER** – Rare in Alabama, one was observed at Broken Arrow Creek, *St. Clair*, 12 May (Bob Reid *et al.*).

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** – One was at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 3 May (Paul Kittle) (rare in spring). This species is occasional on the Gulf Coast in spring. One was seen in west Mobile, *Mobile*, 12 May (M. Wilson).

**“TRAILL’S” FLYCATCHER** – One immature was at Upper Delta WMA on 20 April (Scott Somershoe) (rare in spring on Gulf Coast).

**LEAST FLYCATCHER** – Rare in spring in northwest Alabama, one was seen at Rock Spring, *Lauderdale*, 7 May (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner).

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** – An adult female, present on and off since November at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, was seen 1 March by Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, and David Weidner.

**ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** – A single observed 1-30 March (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Don Ware, David Weidner, Ed Case, m.ob.) was thought to be the same bird that was present through December and also seen 12 May (Don Ware). It was seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, along the same path where most of the 11 sightings from the past 15 years have been made. This species is now rare but regular in winter in the WP, but is considered very rare in the rest of Florida.

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** – An early arrival date was established for northwest Alabama by an individual seen at Red Bay, *Franklin*, 13 April (Damien Simbeck).

**TROPICAL/COUCH’S KINGBIRD** – A silent bird was studied at close range 8 May at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (Bob Duncan). This is the sixth WP record of Tropical/Couch’s Kingbird, all between May and July, with five of the six records occurring since 1992. See article in this issue.

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** – Casual in the WP in spring, one was sighted at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia*, 8 May (Bob Duncan).

**GRAY KINGBIRD** – This species is now rare on the Gulf Coast. Records of singles came from Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14 April (Steve Haas), and Fort

Morgan, *Baldwin*, 23-24 April (Bill Summerour, Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten), and 13 May (Bill Summerour).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – This species appears to be increasing as a breeder, and several of the following records were of birds that returned to known breeding sites: one, Hazel Green, *Madison*, 18 April (Tom Brindley); mile 29 on AL Highway 183, *Perry*, 23 April (Duane Berger); nesting pair, Priceville, *Morgan*, 30 April+ (C. Lamont); nesting pair, Madison, *Madison*, 12 May (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten); one carrying nest material at a new site, Nesmith, *Winston*, 27 May (Barry Fleming); one male, Suttle, *Perry*, 31 May (K. Daniel).

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** – A maximum spring count for the Inland Coastal Plain was set with a tally of 33 on 12 May by Larry Gardella, *et al.* (NAMC) in *Montgomery*.

**BELL'S VIREO** – The first record for the Inland Coastal Plain, and the eighth for inland Alabama, was of a singing bird at Rome, *Covington*, on 12 May (W. Douglas Robinson).

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** – One was late at the Upper Delta WMA, *Baldwin*, on 27 April (Scott Somershoe), and one at Georgiana, *Butler*, on 8 May (W. Douglas Robinson) set a new late date for the Inland Coastal Plain.

**HORNED LARK** – This species continued at WTF, *Lowndes*, until 18 March (Larry Gardella, Fred Bassett), a site where it successfully nested in 1999.

**TREE SWALLOW** – A very rare breeder in Alabama that may be increasing. Nesting was confirmed at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 15 April+ (Paul Kittle); at Riverside, *St. Clair*, 12 May (Bob Reid *et al.*); at Henson Springs, *Lamar*, 20 May+ (Jud Johnston); and at the 3M plant in west Decatur, *Morgan*, 27 May (Barry Fleming). One was late at Guntersville, *Marshall*, on 12 May (Linda Reynolds *et al.*).

**CLIFF SWALLOW** – Tom Brindley *et al.* (NAMC) counted 350 in *Limestone* 12 May, a new spring maximum for the Tennessee Valley. The southernmost inland nesting in Alabama was documented at the AL 84 bridge over the Conecuh River, *Covington*, by W. Douglas Robinson 18-19 May (eight pairs and young observed).

**CAVE SWALLOW** – One seen 22 April on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile* (Bob Reid) was the 15<sup>th</sup> Alabama record (@ ABRC).

**CAROLINA CHICKADEE** – Larry Gardella *et al.* (NAMC) counted 114 in *Montgomery* 12 May, a new spring maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain.

**TUFTED TITMOUSE** – Another new spring maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain was set by Larry Gardella, *et al.* (NAMC) in *Montgomery* on 12 May,



with a count of 151.

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** – This species is rare on the Inland Coastal Plain, so one seen in Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 6 April was noteworthy (Larry Gardella).

**HOUSE WREN** – A late bird was at Hurricane, *Baldwin*, 12 May (K. Carter).

**WINTER WREN** – A late departure date for Alabama was established 30 May at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, when Bob Reid observed a singing individual.

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** – A single, late for the Gulf Coast, was seen at Upper Delta WMA, *Baldwin*, 30 April (Scott Somershoe).

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** – Larry Gardella *et al.* (NAMC) counted 489 in *Montgomery* 12 May, a new maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain.

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** – An early bird was at Guin, *Marion*, 6 April (Jud Johnston).

**TENNESSEE WARBLER** – At Perry Lake near Marion, *Perry*, a single 7 April was early (Greg Harber *et al.*).

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** – A single, late for the Gulf Coast, was seen at Upper Delta WMA, *Baldwin*, 14 April (Scott Somershoe).

**NORTHERN PARULA** – Larry Gardella *et al.* (NAMC) counted 113 in *Montgomery* on 12 May, a new maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain.

**MAGNOLIA WARBLER** – Two individuals were seen at different locations in Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 9 May and 10 May (Larry Gardella) (rare on Inland Coastal Plain in spring). A single at Swan Creek WMA, *Limestone*, 27 May was late (Barry Fleming).

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** – This species is a rare migrant on the Inland Coastal Plain, so one seen in Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 24 April was noteworthy (Larry Gardella).

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** – Several participants on the NAMC 12 May found late singles: Guntersville area, *Marshall* (Linda Reynolds *et al.*); Trussville, *Jefferson* (Greg Harber); Wheeler NWR, *Morgan* (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten); west *Jefferson* (Sharon Hudgins).

**PALM WARBLER** – The 10-12 seen in Montgomery, *Montgomery*, on 5 April was a good number for the Inland Coastal Plain in spring (Carolyn Snow, Phil Snow). Bob Reid had a single late bird at Coal City, *St. Clair*, 12 May.

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** – Early migrants appeared at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, 11 April (Bob Sargent *et al.*), and at Guin, *Marion*, 14 April (Jud Johnston).

**AMERICAN REDSTART** – An immature male was early at Upper Delta WMA, *Baldwin*, 2 April (Scott Somershoe).

- WORM-EATING WARBLER** – A singing individual was at the Solon Dixon Forestry Center, *Covington*, 12 May – 20 June, an indication of possible nesting that is unexpected so far south (W. Douglas Robinson).
- NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** – At the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, one was early 6 April (Bob Reid), while another individual at the Upper Delta WMA, *Baldwin*, was late 17 May (Scott Somershoe).
- LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** – One seen at Opelika, *Lee*, 13 March was locally early (Barry Fleming).
- CONNECTICUT WARBLER** – Always a rare migrant in Alabama, one male was found in Madison, *Madison*, 14 May (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten).
- MOURNING WARBLER** – Rare but regular during spring migration in the Tennessee Valley, a singing male was recorded in Madison, *Madison*, 16 May (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten).
- WILSON'S WARBLER** – Uncommonly seen in spring migration, one very early male was seen at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 11 April (Damien Simbeck).
- SUMMER TANAGER** – The single male found 3 April in Montgomery, *Montgomery*, was early (Larry Gardella).
- EASTERN TOWHEE** – Larry Gardella *et al.* (NAMC) had a new maximum spring count of this species for the Inland Coastal Plain 12 May when 95 were recorded in *Montgomery*.
- SPOTTED TOWHEE** – A female seen on two dates, 19 April (Larry Gardella) and 23 April (Greg Jackson), at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, was the first individual of this species well documented from Alabama (@ ABRC).
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** – One was found on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 25 April (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten). This species is occasional in spring in Alabama and possibly increasing.
- LARK SPARROW** – Uncommon to rare in spring on the Gulf Coast, notable records of this species came from Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, 23 March – 21 April (J. Lloyd, m.ob.; ph. Greg Jackson), and the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 30 March (K. White, P. White). Two adults were seen at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 28 April, but were not relocated subsequently (Ann Miller); this sparrow is rarely found in the Mountain Region.
- GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** – Nineteen singing birds were recorded at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, with an additional 10 individuals heard in the vicinity 3 May (Paul Kittle), to set a new high count for northwest Alabama.
- SONG SPARROW** – Bob Reid *et al.* (NAMC) counted six on 12 May at Riverside, *St. Clair*, at a site where this species has nested for several years.



- WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** – Several were at Eufaula NWR, *Barbour*, 18 March (Geoff Hill), and one was late at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 29 April (Howard Horne).
- LAPLAND LONGSPUR** – Six seen at WTF, *Lowndes*, 2 March were rare for the Inland Coastal Plain and established a late record for the same region (Barry Fleming).
- NORTHERN CARDINAL** – Larry Gardella *et al.* (NAMC) had a new maximum count of this species for the Inland Coastal Plain 12 May when 494 were recorded in *Montgomery*.
- ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** – Early for northwest Alabama, singles were seen 15 April at Florence, *Lauderdale* (Paul Kittle), and at Winfield, *Marion* (Jud Johnston). Late birds lingered until 17 May at Grayson Valley, *Jefferson* (S. Farrell), and at Winfield, *Marion* (Jud Johnston).
- INDIGO BUNTING** – The NAMC on 12 May produced a good number of 191 in *Morgan* (Dwight Cooley), and a new maximum spring count for the Inland Coastal Plain of 228 in *Montgomery* (Larry Gardella *et al.*)
- PAINTED BUNTING** – Two singing males and one female indicated probable nesting in western *Montgomery*, 12-30 May (Shawn Reed); this species is a casual breeder in inland Alabama. Records of singles came from Auburn, *Lee*, on 26 April (S. Ducharme), and from Guin, *Marion*, 15 May (Jud Johnston), the latter establishing the first record of this species for northwest Alabama.
- DICKCISSEL** – The estimated 50 at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 15 April (Bob Sargent *et al.*) was a good number for this early date.
- BOBOLINK** – Two at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, 10 April (Bob Sargent *et al.*) tied the early spring arrival date for Alabama, while an estimated 150 at the same site 15 April was a good number so early. One at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 12 April (Bob Duncan, Ed Case) set the earliest local record (by one day). A female was locally late at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, 19 May (Howard Horne).
- EASTERN MEADOWLARK** – Larry Gardella, *et al.* (NAMC) had a new maximum spring count of this species for the Inland Coastal Plain on 12 May when 203 were recorded in *Montgomery*.
- YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** – The eighth and ninth records for inland Alabama and the third and fourth records for the Inland Coastal Plain, were established, respectively, by an adult male seen at Lakepoint SP, *Barbour*, 18 March (Geoff Hill) and a male photographed at *Montgomery*, *Montgomery*, on 24 April (D. Sellers).
- BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** – Two birds seen on 12 May in *Walton* established

the first local May record (Lee McDaniel, Jaque McDaniel).

**SHINY COWBIRD** – One male, the 19<sup>th</sup> record for Alabama, was seen at the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 22 April (L. Bailey, B. Eager, Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten) (@ ABRC).

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** – A male was early at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 12 April (Larry Gardella).

**RED CROSSBILL** – A maximum of nine (three adults, three juveniles, and three nestlings) was observed in the Coleman Lake area of Talladega National Forest, *Cleburne*, 16 March - 19 April (Bill Summerour).

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## SUMMER SIGHTINGS (JUNE - JULY 2001)

Paul D. Kittle, Greg D. Jackson, and Robert A. Duncan

A first Alabama breeding record of the endangered Wood Stork was established. The first summer records of Red-throated Loon and Bell's Vireo in Alabama came from Mobile and Monroe counties, respectively. A record high summer count of Killdeer in Alabama was made in Colbert County, and a record early arrival date for Baird's Sandpiper came from the same county. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak lingered in Lauderdale County until June 1 to set a late departure date for Alabama. Summer Bird Count efforts in Fayette and Monroe counties produced many interesting records.

This report covers the period from June through July 2001 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (west of the Apalachicola River). The appearance of observations in this article 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. For guidance, observers are encouraged to consult the Alabama Ornithological Society checklist. Reports should note conditions of observation and the diagnostic characters observed. Your help in this matter is appreciated.

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**RED-THROATED LOON** – The first summer record for Alabama was established by a single seen on Bayou Heron, Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 11 June (John Porter, L. Bailey, B. Eager).

- PIED-BILLED GREBE** – This species is a rare breeder in Alabama. Summer records came from the Uriah CE block, *Monroe*, 16 June (Howard Horne), and from Florala, *Covington*, 29 June (Don Ware).
- CORY'S SHEARWATER** – Larry Gardella, Steve McConnell *et al.* observed a single 36 mi S of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 30 June (rare but regular in the Gulf).
- STORM-PETREL SP.** – Storm-Petrels are regular offshore in Alabama, and unidentified birds were seen 44 mi S and 57 mi S of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 30 June (Larry Gardella, Steve McConnell *et al.*).
- NORTHERN GANNET** – Rare but regular in summer along the Alabama coast, one was 65 mi S of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 30 June (Larry Gardella, Steve McConnell *et al.*) and another was at Gulf Shores, *Baldwin*, 13 July (Damien Simbeck).
- AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – Steve McConnell saw two at Coffeetown Lock and Dam, *Choctaw*, 15 June (casual in summer on the Inland Coastal Plain), and B. Eager and S. Whitfield saw 80+, a moderate summer number for the Gulf Coast, at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 4 July.
- BROWN PELICAN** – One was seen at Walter F. George Dam, *Henry*, 7 July (W. Douglas Robinson). This species is occasional for inland Alabama, but is becoming regular at this site.
- ANHINGA** – An adult and one immature, seen at Frank Jackson Lake, *Opp*, *Covington*, 10 July (Carolyn Snow), were locally uncommon.
- LEAST BITTERN** – One was heard and seen at Triana, *Madison*, 1 July (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten) (uncommon and local in the Tennessee Valley).
- GREAT EGRET** – Good counts for the Tennessee Valley came from west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, with 100+ on 14 July (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, Harriet Wright *et al.*) and 80 on 20 July (Paul Kittle), and 200+ from Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 28 July (Betty Garmon *et al.*).
- SNOWY EGRET** – This wader is uncommon to rare on the Inland Coastal Plain in early summer, so one seen in the Chrysler CE block, *Monroe*, 24 June (Larry Gardella) was noteworthy.
- TRICOLORED HERON** – Rare in inland Alabama, single birds were seen at Greenville, *Butler*, 3-20 July (A. Markle), S of Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 22 July (Carolyn Snow), and at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 24 July (Linda Reynolds) (very rare in the Tennessee Valley).
- REDDISH EGRET** – A white morph individual, rare in Alabama, was seen at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 29 June (Larry Gardella, Steve McConnell, Shawn Reed *et al.*) and 4 July (Keith Kamper).



- WHITE IBIS** – Betty Garmon *et al.* observed two immatures at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 28 July (rare in the Tennessee Valley).
- GLOSSY IBIS** – Twenty-two were seen along the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile*, 26 July (Keith Kamper, Howard Horne) (good number for Alabama).
- WHITE-FACED IBIS** – One seen at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, by Keith Kamper 14-20 July established the 11<sup>th</sup> Alabama record (@ ABRC).
- WOOD STORK** – An unusual number of early records came from various parts of Alabama, including evidence of breeding. Seven were seen 1 June in the Mobile Delta near the junction of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers, *Baldwin* (Bill Summerour). This wader is rare in this vast, largely inaccessible part of the state, but the first documented nesting of this species in Alabama was established 2 June at Brickyard Lake, *Baldwin*, when L. Stork (!) saw one carrying nesting material. Bill Summerour observed seven at the Clearwater Tract, *Baldwin*, 2 June. One was seen at Marl, *Geneva*, 3 June (D. Harder *et al.*) and 7 June (Rick West). Several were observed N of Uniontown, *Perry*, 12 June (Duane Berger). Rare in the Mountain Region, two were noteworthy at Pell City, *St. Clair*, 19-21 June (T. Collier-Cline; ph.). Doug McGinty saw one along the Alabama River near Chance, *Monroe*, 23 June.
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL** – Three were seen on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile*, 29 June (Steve McConnell) (rare in summer).
- RING-NECKED DUCK** – One in *Walton* 8 June (Bob Reid, Betsy Clark) established the second WP area summer record.
- RUDDY DUCK** – A record of a rare summering pair came from Speigner, *Elmore*, 22-23 June (Tommy Pratt *et al.*).
- MISSISSIPPI KITE** – This species is rare in the Mountain Region, so two seen along the Sipsey River SE of Fayette, *Fayette*, 23 June were noteworthy (Steve McConnell). One adult was seen 12 July on Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, at the same site E of Limestone Bay as seen in previous years (Dwight Cooley).
- BALD EAGLE** – An adult was seen at an usual nest site at Heiberger, *Perry*, 28 July (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton).
- NORTHERN HARRIER** – The first and second June records in Alabama in over 50 years were set, respectively, by single females seen at Homewood, *Jefferson*, 19 June (Greg Jackson), and N of Joseph Springs, *Cleburne*, 20 June (Harriet Wright, A. S. Christenson).
- AMERICAN KESTREL** – In Alabama, this species is a rare but increasing breeder. One was in the Natchez NW block, *Monroe*, 17 June (Larry

Gardella), while another was nesting (two young observed) at Goat Rock Landing, *Lee*, 23 June (Geoff Hill). This falcon is a very rare breeder in the WP, so one seen in *Okaloosa* 19 July (Don Ware) was noteworthy.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** – The first summer record for the Gulf Coast was established by a single immature seen at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, by Howard Horne and W. Lilly 20 July.

**PURPLE GALLINULE** – Rare and local in inland Alabama, adults and downy young were noted at Leroy, *Washington*, 29 June (Larry Gardella *et al.*) and 7 July (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton).

**SNOWY PLOVER** – Now rare and erratic at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, one was seen 29 June (Larry Gardella *et al.*) and 4 July (Keith Kamper).

**KILLDEER** – A maximum summer count for Alabama was made 31 July when 675 were noted at multiple sites near Leighton, *Colbert* (Damien Simbeck).

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** – Several at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, 3 July were early fall migrants (W. Douglas Robinson).

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** – Several at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, on 3 July were early fall migrants (W. Douglas Robinson). Shirley Wayland had a good number of 80+ near Leighton, *Colbert*, 31 July.

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** – Five at WTF, *Lowndes*, 29 July represented a moderate number for inland Alabama in July (Larry Gardella).

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** – One was early on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile*, 7 July (S. Whitfield, B. Eager)

**MARbled GODWIT** – The second June record for Alabama was established by four at Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 27 June (Bill Summerour, Roger Clay). An early record came from Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, 4 July when Keith Kamper observed two.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** – This shorebird is rare in inland Alabama, so one seen 30 July at WTF, *Lowndes*, was noteworthy (Shawn Reed).

**SANDERLING** – Rare but regular in inland Alabama, one was near Leighton, *Colbert*, 29 July (Shirley Wayland).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** – A new early arrival date for Alabama was set by a single seen 29 July east of Leighton, *Colbert* (Shirley Wayland), while two were seen west of Leighton 31 July (Damien Simbeck). This shorebird is rare but regular at these sites.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** – A maximum count for the Tennessee Valley was established by the 360+ seen near Leighton, *Colbert*, 31 July (Damien Simbeck).

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** – One was early 24 July near Leighton,



*Colbert* (Damien Simbeck).

- SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** – Four were early at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, 3 July (W. Douglas Robinson).
- WILSON'S PHALAROPE** – One was early on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile/Baldwin*, 19 July (Keith Kamper), while another single at WTF, *Lowndes*, 29 July was also early and rare for the Inland Coastal Plain (Larry Gardella).
- CASPIAN TERN** – This species is casual inland in June. Two were at Coffeeville Lock and Dam, *Choctaw*, 15 June (Steve McConnell), and five were along the Alabama River at Mt. Pleasant Landing, *Monroe*, 24 June (Larry Gardella).
- COMMON TERN** – A maximum Alabama summer count of 275+ was made at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 6 June (Bill Summerour). The 50-75 pairs recorded nesting on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 27 June and 2 July (Bill Summerour, Roger Clay) also were a new maximum.
- SOOTY TERN** – Along the Gulf Coast, this species is only occasional on land in the absence of storms. Roger Clay and Bill Summerour observed this species on five dates between 21 June and 18 July (maximum of four birds) at Pelican Island, *Mobile*. A pair was observed in courtship display 21 June, but no nest was found. The record of a single from the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 1 July (Keith Kamper) was also unusual.
- WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – Very rare in summer in Alabama, two were found at Foley, *Baldwin*, 1 July (*vide* Howard Horne) and 25 July (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent). The third and fourth local June WP records came from Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 10 July and 15 July (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).
- "TRAILL'S" FLYCATCHER** – Two seen at Triana, *Madison*, 1-21 July (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten) were the first true summering individuals in Alabama. These were probably Willow Flycatchers, but no vocalizations were heard and nesting was not confirmed.
- TROPICAL/COUCH'S KINGBIRD** – The eighth WP area record of this complex came from Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 25 June (Bob Duncan). See article in this issue.
- GRAY KINGBIRD** – Birds were breeding in two WP locales this summer, downtown Pensacola, *Escambia*, and downtown Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (m.ob.), but still have not returned to their traditional stronghold at Ft. Pickens since Hurricane Opal in 1995.
- SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – A rare but increasing breeder in Alabama, one male was seen at a regular site S of Montgomery, *Montgomery*,

13 July (Damien Simbeck).

**BELL'S VIREO** – The first June record for Alabama came from Claiborne, *Monroe*, 18 June when a pair was seen (Carolyn Snow, L. C. Bailey).

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** – This species is an uncommon and local breeder in Alabama. Bob Reid had two on the Wedowee BBS, *Randolph*, 3 June, the second year for this route that is at low to moderate elevation. Eleven was a good number in the Kilgoe Mountain area of Talladega NF, *Calhoun/Cleburne*, 11 June (W. Douglas Robinson), as was 14 on the Borden Springs BBS, Talladega NF, *Cleburne*, 15 June (Dwight Cooley).

**WARBLING VIREO** – This vireo is a very rare breeder in northwest Alabama, and one was seen at Wright, *Lauderdale*, 2 July (Tom Haggerty). One adult and two young were seen 14 July at Waterloo, *Lauderdale*, at a regular nesting site (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, Harriet Wright).

**FISH CROW** – One calling at Hoover, *Jefferson*, 2 July was rare at the north edge of this species' range in Alabama (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson).

**TREE SWALLOW** – A very rare breeder in Alabama, but 18 fledged from four nests at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 15 April – 14 July (Paul Kittle); 22 were seen at the same site 9 June. Nesting was also documented at Henson Springs, *Lamar*, 20 May – 11 June (Jud Johnston).

**CLIFF SWALLOW** – Still expanding its breeding range in Alabama, several were seen at a bridge over Halawakee Creek on County Road 279, *Lee*, 23 June (Geoff Hill).

**BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH** – Several were seen at Deibert Park in Florence, *Lauderdale*, 15 July (Dee Patterson), at a new site for this species that is locally expanding its range.

**GRAY CATBIRD** – Rare singing individuals were seen far south in Alabama, indicative of possible breeding. One was at Red Level, *Covington*, 25 June (Rick West, R. Christen), and another was at Floral, *Covington*, 29 June (Don Ware).

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** – This species was documented at the southern edge of its range by Steve McConnell's observation of one in the Howard SE block, *Fayette*, 10 June.

**YELLOW WARBLER** – Documentation of this species at the southern edge of its range in Alabama was established by one singing in the Fayette CE block, *Fayette*, 16 June and in the Oakman CE block, *Walker*, 23 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton). The first WP June record and the second Florida June record were set by a single at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 18 June (Bob



Duncan).

**CAPE MAY WARBLER** – An immature female was observed in *Walton* 16 July by Don Ware and Bob Reid to establish the first WP July record and the third Florida July record (@ FOSRC).

**BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** – One seen 24 June E of Glen Allen, *Fayette*, was at an odd site and in atypical bottomland hardwood habitat (Paul Kittle). A pair, probably nesting, was at the southern edge of this species' range at Oak Mountain SP, *Shelby*, 6 July (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson).

**CERULEAN WARBLER** – One was singing at a new breeding season site, Fowler's Crossroads, *Fayette*, 16 June (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten). This is only the second recent breeding season record outside of Bankhead NF in Alabama.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** – One was at Dozier, *Covington*, 27 June (Rick West, R. Christen). This species is rare this far south in Alabama in summer.

**WORM-EATING WARBLER** – A bird heard singing in the Cotton Lake area, *Escambia*, 2 June was possibly breeding (Bob Duncan) (fourth WP summer record). Rare so far south in Alabama in summer, four sightings were reported: one at Nymph, *Conecuh*, 6 June (Rick West); one in the Natchez CE block, *Monroe*, 9 June (Bob Reed); one adult feeding young at Red Level, *Covington*, 25 June (Rick West, R. Christen); and one at Dozier, *Covington*, on June (Rick West, R. Christen).

**LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** – The following records of this species are from the southern edge of its range in Alabama: three at two sites, with breeding documented, at Red Level 25 June, and one at Dozier 27 June, both *Covington* (Rick West, R. Christen).

**BACHMAN'S SPARROW** – One singing bird was detected in the Kennedy CE block, *Fayette*, 13 June (W. Douglas Robinson), documenting this species from an area of Alabama that has received little birding attention.

**FIELD SPARROW** – Several were heard singing at Red Level 25 June and another was seen at Dozier 27 June, both *Covington* (Rick West, R. Christen), birds that are at the southern edge of their range in Alabama.

**LARK SPARROW** – More and more records of this rare Alabama breeder are being received, possibly indicating an increase in breeding activity. Up to 10 were seen at a site just south of Courtland, *Lawrence*, 19 June, 14 July, and 24 July (Dwight Cooley, Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten), with breeding documented. Bob Reed had one at Wheeler

NWR, *Morgan*, 30 June. Paul Kittle had two at Key Cave NWR 1 July and one west of Florence 20 July, both *Lauderdale*.

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** – One lingered at Underwood, *Lauderdale*, on 1 June to set a late departure date for Alabama (Paul Kittle, Donna Kittle).

**PAINTED BUNTING** – Possibly increasing as a breeder in Alabama, several reports of birds from inland areas were unusual. Two males and one female were noted at Wing, *Covington*, 1 June (Don Ware). Territorial behavior at this new site indicated probable breeding. Two singing at two sites in NE *Monroe* 10 June (Larry Gardella) indicated possible nesting. Larry Gardella also had one singing in western *Butler* 10 June. On the Gulf Coast, Painted Bunting is an uncommon and local breeder. W. Douglas Robinson had one at a new site, Justins Bay, *Baldwin*, 15 June, and four singing males at a regular nesting site, Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 16 June. Larry Gardella *et al.* observed adults with three young 29 July, Rabbit Road, *Montgomery*.

**BOBOLINK** – One singing male and three females were late on the Odenville BBS, *St. Clair*, 2 June (Steve McConnell).

**SHINY COWBIRD** – One male was seen at Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15 June to establish the 20<sup>th</sup> Alabama (and second June) record (W. Douglas Robinson; @ ABRC)

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** – This species is an uncommon breeder in Alabama, and singles were seen at regular nesting sites at Wright and Waterloo, *Lauderdale*, 2 July (Tom Haggerty).

**RED CROSSBILL** – Seven were seen at the only known breeding site for this species in Alabama, the Coleman Lake area of Talladega NF, *Cleburne*, 15 June (Dwight Cooley).

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## GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Manuscripts submitted for publication in *Alabama Birdlife* should conform to the guidelines listed below. Articles should include some facet of bird ecology, natural history, behavior, management/conservation, identification or other related topics. Refer to this issue or to recent past issues for examples. *Alabama Birdlife* is published twice a year. If you have access to an IBM compatible or Macintosh computer, it saves time and money if you submit your manuscript on a 3 1/2 inch floppy disk along with a hard copy (Word or WordPerfect preferred). A manuscript may also be submitted over the Internet as a file attached to an e-mail addressed to: thaggert@unanov.una.edu.

Manuscripts should be typed and double spaced. A 8 1/2 x 11 inch page format should be used.

Digital images submitted over the Internet, black and white prints, color prints, and slides are acceptable.

The title should be in CAPS. If the name of a species is used in the title, it should be followed by the scientific name in parentheses, e.g. CONNECTICUT WARBLER (*OPORORNIS AGILIS*).

The author's full name should be in lower case and centered under the title.

If the article is coauthored by a married couple bearing the same last name, the names should be kept separate, e.g. John B. Brown and Sarah D. Brown.

Whenever a species name is used for the first time in the body of an article, it should be followed by the scientific name in parentheses, e.g. Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*).

When using dates, the day should be placed before the month, e.g. 13 April 1992.

Spell out numbers ten and under and use numerals for numbers 11 and above.

Distances should be expressed in English units followed by the metric equivalent in parentheses, e.g. 6.2 miles (10 km). Use only the metric system for scientific measurements, e.g. wing 10.3 cm; tail 15.6 cm.

Table titles should be in CAPS and placed above the tables.

Figure legends should be in lower case and placed beneath the figure.

Refer to the Literature Cited in past issues for the correct format.

Three or fewer references should be incorporated into the text of the article rather than listed separately at the end, e.g. Imhof (1976, *Alabama Birds*).

The author's name and full address should be line typed at the end of the article. The name used should match the name given under the title.

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