

## SUMMER SIGHTINGS (JUNE - JULY 2001)

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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.

**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; "BBS" = Breeding Bird Survey; "CE" = central eastern; "FOSRC" = Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; "m.ob." = many observers; "NF" = National Forest; "NWR" = National Wildlife Refuge; "ph." = photographed; "WP" = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Santa Rosa*, *Okaloosa*, and *Walton* counties); "WTF" = Woerner Turf Farm.

**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 Coffeerville 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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