

Volume 48 No. 1 June 2002

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Journal of the Alabama Ornithological Society



ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Published by the Alabama Ornithological Society to Record and
Further the Study of Birds in Alabama and Northwest Florida

Vol. 48

No. 1

2002

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Typeset by Tom Haggerty

Cover: Limpkin, Lewis Smith Lake, Cullman, Co., AL; 17 November 2000; photograph by
LaDonna Nichols

NORTHERN ALABAMA BREEDING BIRD ATLAS RESULTS 1994 - 1997

Robert P. Ford, Michael D. Roedel and M. Keith Hudson

INTRODUCTION

A Breeding Bird Atlas project was conducted in northern Alabama from 1994 through 1997 in order to determine relative abundance and distribution of breeding birds. Atlas results were used to provide consistent breeding bird data for interstate bird conservation planning and project development for the Interior Low Plateaus (ILP) physiographic area (see Ford and Roedel 2000). The objective of this paper is to provide a summary of the northern Alabama Breeding Bird Atlas results.

STUDY AREA AND METHODS

The atlas work was conducted in the Interior Low Plateaus (ILP) portion of northern Alabama, an area encompassing parts of six counties (Figure 1). The ILP physiographic area includes approximately 12,000,000 ha in southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, central Kentucky, central Tennessee, and northern Alabama. The rolling-to-flat topography was dominated historically by oak-hickory forests, but scattered throughout the region were rock outcrops, glades, prairies, and barrens (Martin et al. 1993). All habitats are presently highly fragmented. In Tennessee, about 95% of the land base consists of non-industrial forest lands, open lands for agriculture, and urban areas. Less than 5% of the total area is in public or forest industry ownership (Vissage and Duncan 1990). Geographic information systems (GIS) analysis of mid-1990's land use shows a similar pattern in northern Alabama (Tennessee Gap Analysis Program, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency). The Tennessee River represents the southern border of the physiographic province where row crop agriculture, bottomland hardwood forests, and open water were common.

Field protocols for the atlas were similar to the methods used in both Tennessee and Kentucky (see Nicholson 1997, Palmer-Ball 1996), both of which were similar to atlas protocols of other states. Each USGS 7.5 minute topographic map was divided into six equal-sized blocks of 5.71 by 4.64 km (25.5 sq km). Observers were asked to sample birds in the eastern central block area (i.e., priority block) of each topographic map. Each observer conducted searches for

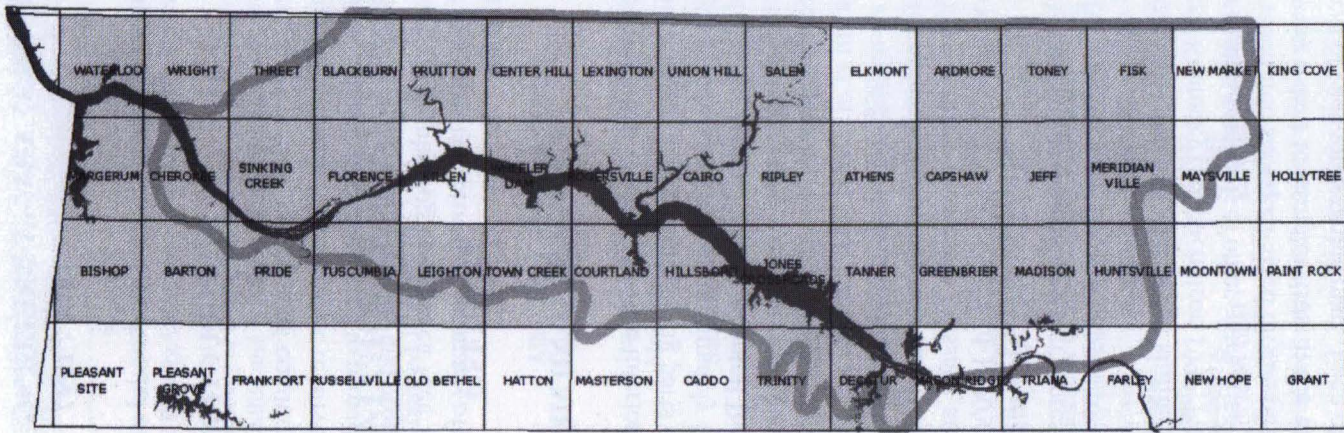
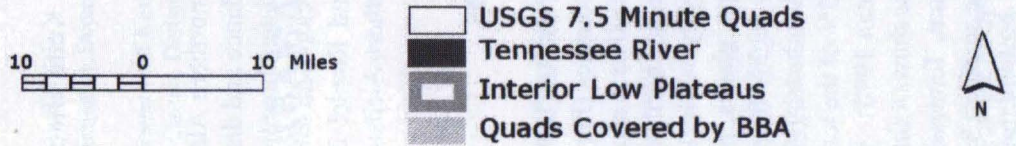


Figure 1. USGS 7.5 minute quad index for the ILP in northern Alabama with BBA coverage shaded.



breeding birds in the block and recorded the highest breeding evidence possible.

Observers also conducted roadside counts, or "miniroutes" in each priority block. Each miniroute consisted of 15 three-minute stops where observers recorded the presence of birds (not the number of individuals). Miniroutes were designed to sample as many habitats of the priority block as possible while remaining on public roads.

The Breeding Bird Atlas was conducted during the months of May, June, and July in each year from 1994 through 1997. About 600 hours were spent in the field by a number of volunteers (the exact number is no longer known). Criteria were developed to determine when a breeding bird atlas block may be considered complete. For this project, a completed block had 50 or more species recorded, a completed miniroute, and/or at least 25 observer hours. Using these criteria, 39 of the 42 atlas blocks were completed in northern Alabama. Miniroutes were conducted in 37 of those blocks with a total of 555 roadside stops. In many blocks, observers worked during more than one year and/or conducted more than one miniroute. In those cases where multiple miniroutes were conducted, the average number of stops per species from all miniroutes in that block is included in this report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the Breeding Bird Atlas project, 111 species were recorded (Table 1). Positive breeding evidence was recorded for 80 of those species. The average number of species per block was 59, while the species number per block ranged from 31 to 94. In the Western and Eastern Highland Rim of middle Tennessee, an average of 66 species was recorded per atlas block (Nicholson 1997). The cumulative number of species that were observed over all miniroutes was 92.

The most common species were representative of open lands and small, scattered woodlots; 29 species were detected in more than 90% of the blocks (>35 blocks). Species that were observed on more than 97% of the blocks (>37 blocks) and on more than 50% of miniroute stops (277) were Northern Cardinal, Indigo Bunting, Mourning Dove, Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Mockingbird, and Northern Bobwhite; this was consistent with the middle Tennessee atlas results (Nicholson 1997). Several species were widespread in northern Alabama, but much less abundant than those listed above, occurred on at least 90% of atlas blocks (>35 blocks), but occurred on fewer than 20% of miniroute stops (111 miniroute stops). These were Killdeer, Downy Woodpecker, Chimney Swift, Eastern Kingbird, American Goldfinch, and Barn Swallow. Loggerhead Shrike was more commonly encountered than expected, occurring on 20 atlas blocks.

Loggerhead Shrike fledglings were observed in the region from 31 May to 28 June.

For most species, the breeding dates followed expected patterns, although there was variation because of dates observers were in the field (most nesting records were in June) and the ability to detect nesting evidence. For example, positive nesting evidence for Eastern Bluebirds extended from 24 April through 9 July, while one nesting record for Cattle Egret was on 22 July.

Rare or unusual species.— A single record of an American Woodcock was noted. American Woodcock is an uncommon and local permanent resident that nests early in the season. Imhof (1976) reported downy young between 24 Feb to 12 April in Alabama. In Tennessee counties adjacent to Alabama, fewer than six records occurred during the Tennessee Breeding Bird Atlas (Nicholson 1997).

One occurrence of Brown-headed Nuthatch was recorded during the atlas period. Brown-headed Nuthatch is a common, breeding, permanent resident in Alabama north to at least southern Lawrence, Marshall, and DeKalb counties (Imhof 1976). In Tennessee, most records occur around Chattanooga (Nicholson 1997), although fledgling young were observed at Pickwick Landing on the Tennessee River just north of the Alabama border in 1997 (Mike Roedel, pers. obs.).

Seven observations of Cedar Waxwings were recorded during the atlas period, although none documented positive breeding evidence. Breeding records are rare in Alabama, but wintering Cedar Waxwings may linger in Alabama as late as June (Imhof 1976). However, waxwings may be increasing their breeding range; many new county records occurred during the Tennessee Breeding Bird Atlas, but with seemingly sporadic distribution (Nicholson 1997).

Bachman's Sparrows were observed in three atlas blocks and on four miniroute stops during the atlas period, and positive breeding evidence was recorded. Bachman's Sparrow is an uncommon permanent resident in suitable habitat almost anywhere in Alabama, but in the Tennessee Valley it is rare and local and has been noted only in summer (Imhof 1976). In a Tennessee concentration just north of the Alabama – Mississippi state line, almost all birds were in young pine plantations less than five years old (Nicholson 1997).

Lark Sparrows occurred in four atlas blocks and on one miniroute stop during the atlas period, and positive breeding evidence was recorded. The Lark Sparrow is rare to uncommon and local as a breeder in the western parts of the Tennessee Valley and the Black Belt (Imhof 1976). Fewer than five records occur from the Tennessee counties adjacent to Alabama. In Tennessee it was

mostly in limestone cedar glades, but in Alabama (and south-central Tennessee) it occurred in large, dry, fallow fields or in young even-aged forestry or “clearcuts” (Nicholson 1997).

Species occurring in lower than expected numbers.— The Blue-winged Warbler occurred on two atlas blocks, although suitable habitat seemed common. A Tennessee center of abundance is just north of the Alabama-Tennessee state line in Hardin County (Nicholson 1997).

American Redstarts were observed on two atlas blocks, although suitable habitat occurred commonly in the bottomland hardwood forests near the Tennessee River. American Redstart is a common summer resident in Alabama south to within five miles of Mobile (Imhof 1976).

Because these routes were conducted primarily during daylight hours, nocturnal species were under-represented, resulting in low numbers for nightjars and owls.

Species not found.— Species likely to occur in northern Alabama as breeding species, but not detected by atlas observers, include Barn Owl, Yellow Warbler, Bank Swallow, and Cerulean Warbler. Other species that were not detected during this project, but which have been recorded as breeders in Alabama and are present in the Tennessee Valley during their breeding season, included Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern, Osprey, Mississippi Kite, Bald Eagle, King Rail, Common Moorhen, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Swainson’s Warbler (Jackson *in* Porter 2001). Further field work would likely reveal the presence of some of these. The atlas method, particularly as used here with a 17% sample, is not designed to find all breeding species. However, more work under the atlas protocol might include any of the following: additional field work in the sampled blocks, sampling an additional block in each quad to find additional species, or focused searching for additional species throughout the Alabama ILP (such as airplane searches for Osprey and eagle nests and heronries).

Species not expected.— Double-crested Cormorant and American Coot occurred on the atlas records, but do not typically breed in this region. American Black Duck was also observed during the atlas period, and although this species breeds regularly in small numbers in the Tennessee Valley (Greg Jackson, pers. comm.), no breeding evidence was recorded. These individuals may have been lingering migrants or were crippled during the hunting season and incapable of long flights.

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TABLE 1. Northern Alabama Breeding Bird atlas results, 1994 - 1997.

Species	No. BBA ^a	Miniroute ^b	Breeding ^c	Dates ^d
	Blocks	Stops	Evidence	
Double-crested Cormorant	1	-	-	-
Great Blue Heron	21	7	-	-
Great Egret	3	1	-	-
Cattle Egret	3	-	ON	7/22
Green Heron	22	8	CN, FL	5/09 - 6/23
Black-crowned Night-Heron	2	-	-	-
Black Vulture	8	1	-	-
Turkey Vulture	22	4	-	-
Canada Goose	6	7	FL	5/27 - 6/19
Wood Duck	7	1	FL	6/15 - 6/21
American Black Duck	1	-	-	-
Mallard	13	10	NE, FL	6/01 - 7/06
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	1	-	-
Cooper's Hawk	5	1	-	-
Red-shouldered Hawk	8	2	NY	6/01
Broad-winged Hawk	11	1	ON, FL	6/06 - 6/12
Red-tailed Hawk	28	22	NY, FL	6/05 - 7/11
American Kestrel	18	9	FL	7/10
Wild Turkey	6	4	FL	6/15
Northern Bobwhite	38	288	FL	6/15 - 7/28
American Coot	1	-	-	-
Killdeer	36	79	ON, DD, NE, FL	5/08 - 7/02
American Woodcock	1	-	-	-
Rock Dove	21	14	ON, NY, FL	6/01 - 6/29
Mourning Dove	39	380	CN, ON, NE, NY, FL	5/08 - 6/28
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	32	143	NE, FY	6/10 - 7/10
Eastern Screech-Owl	2	-	-	-
Great Horned Owl	4	-	-	-
Barred Owl	9	-	UN	-
Common Nighthawk	7	1	FL	6/13
Chuck-will's-widow	8	-	-	-
Whip-poor-will	6	-	-	-
Chimney Swift	36	110	ON, FL	6/08 - 6/29
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	26	18	ON, NE	6/10 - 6/15
Belted Kingfisher	22	12	ON, FL	6/02 - 7/06
Red-headed Woodpecker	16	10	ON, FY	6/10 - 7/02
Red-bellied Woodpecker	39	181	ON, FL	6/01 - 7/12
Downy Woodpecker	36	79	ON, FL	5/09 - 7/28
Hairy Woodpecker	17	10	NE, FL	5/31 - 6/29
Northern Flicker	25	26	UN	-
Pileated Woodpecker	26	17	NY	-
Eastern Wood-Pewee	36	112	ON, FY, NY, FL	6/01 - 7/08

TABLE 1. Continued

Species	No. BBA	Miniroute	Breeding	Dates
	Blocks	Stops	Evidence	
Acadian Flycatcher	17	21	NE	6/01
Eastern Phoebe	30	20	ON, NE, NY, FY, FL, UN	6/01 - 7/08
Great Crested Flycatcher	27	50	ON, FL	6/08 - 6/30
Eastern Kingbird	37	72	NB, ON, FY, NY, FL	6/10 - 7/09
Loggerhead Shrike	20	8	FL	5/31 - 6/28
White-eyed Vireo	33	79	FY, FL	6/18 - 6/19
Yellow-throated Vireo	11	8	-	-
Warbling Vireo	1	-	-	-
Red-eyed Vireo	24	45	-	-
Blue Jay	39	258	ON, FS, NY, FY, FL	6/01 - 7/08
American Crow	39	234	FY, FL	6/04 - 6/30
Horned Lark	9	8	-	-
Purple Martin	31	52	NB, ON, NE, NY, FL	6/01 - 7/08
N. Rough-winged Swallow	20	12	-	-
Cliff Swallow	16	17	CN, ON, NY, FL	5/16 - 6/29
Barn Swallow	38	102	NB, ON, NE, NY, FL	5/04 - 6/29
Carolina Chickadee	38	143	FY, FL	5/08 - 6/28
Tufted Titmouse	37	232	FY, FL	6/06 - 6/29
White-breasted Nuthatch	19	15	ON, FL	6/08 - 6/10
Brown-headed Nuthatch	1	-	-	-
Carolina Wren	39	215	ON, NY, FL	5/20 - 6/29
Bewick's Wren	1	-	-	-
House Wren	2	-	-	6/14
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	32	103	CN, ON, NY	5/04 - 6/25
Eastern Bluebird	37	122	NY, FL	4/24 - 7/09
Wood Thrush	28	50	ON	6/10
American Robin	38	216	NB, NE, NY, FY, FS ^m , FL	5/20 - 7/02
Gray Catbird	16	7	NE, FL	6/01 - 6/22
Northern Mockingbird	38	369	ON, NE, NY, FL	5/10 - 7/14
Brown Thrasher	35	93	NB, ON, NE, NY, FL	5/09 - 6/29
European Starling	34	134	ON, FY, FL	5/09 - 7/02
Cedar Waxwing	7	-	-	-
Blue-winged Warbler	2	-	FL	6/26
Northern Parula	14	4	-	-
Yellow-throated Warbler	13	7	-	-
Pine Warbler	17	20	FY, FL	6/19 - 6/21
Prairie Warbler	11	15	FL	6/11
Black-and-white Warbler	7	4	FY, FL	6/10 - 6/19
American Redstart	2	-	-	-
Prothonotary Warbler	15	9	ON	6/19
Worm-eating Warbler	6	2	-	-
Ovenbird	2	1	-	-

TABLE 1. Continued

Species	No. BBA Blocks	Miniroute Stops	Breeding Evidence	Dates
Louisiana Waterthrush	8	-	-	-
Kentucky Warbler	17	13	-	-
Common Yellowthroat	37	158	FY, FL	6/14 - 7/02
Hooded Warbler	3	1	-	-
Yellow-breasted Chat	33	158	FY, FL	6/27 - 7/02
Summer Tanager	32	56	ON, NE, NY, FL	6/08 - 6/29
Scarlet Tanager	9	5	-	-
Eastern Towhee	39	270	FL	5/20 - 6/30
Bachman's Sparrow	3	4	FY	7/02
Chipping Sparrow	28	48	NB, FY, FL	5/08 - 6/29
Field Sparrow	38	232	FL, FS, FL	6/06 - 7/02
Lark Sparrow	4	1	FL	6/19
Grasshopper Sparrow	13	16	FY, NY	6/01 - 6/30
Song Sparrow	9	8	NY	6/22
Northern Cardinal	39	502	CN, ON, NE, FY, FL, UN	5/08 - 7/08
Blue Grosbeak	28	34	CN, FY, FL	6/11 - 7/08
Indigo Bunting	39	401	CN, FY, NY, FL, UN	6/08 - 7/02
Dickcissel	17	31	ON, FY	5/30 - 6/19
Red-winged Blackbird	39	242	CN, ON, NE, FY, FL, UN	5/31 - 7/02
Eastern Meadowlark	38	332	ON, NE, FY, FL, UN	5/15 - 6/29
Common Grackle	39	211	FY, FS, FL	6/08 - 7/14
Brown-headed Cowbird	36	145	FL	6/10 - 7/13
Orchard Oriole	18	20	NY, FL	6/10 - 6/11
Baltimore Oriole	5	-	FL	6/19
House Finch	32	40	NB, ON, NE, NY, FL	6/01 - 7/08
American Goldfinch	36	79	CN	6/12
House Sparrow	36	119	NB, ON, NE, NY, FL	5/04 - 7/0

^a Number of Breeding Bird Atlas blocks in which the species was recorded (n = 39)

^b Number of miniroute stops on which the species was recorded (n = 555)

^c ON = Occupied nest, CN = Carrying nest material, FL = Recently fledged young
NE = Nest with eggs, NY = Nest with young, DD = Distraction display,
FY = Food for young, UN = Used nest, FS = Fecal sac being carried by adults

^d Range of dates for which breeding was recorded for species

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous volunteers contributed to fieldwork and our thanks goes to all of them. The atlas was sponsored by the Alabama Division of Wildlife and

Freshwater Fisheries and partially funded by the Partnerships for Wildlife program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The complete database can be requested from the Alabama Natural Heritage Program or the Alabama Ornithological Society. The Tennessee Conservation League assisted in the development of protocols and fieldwork coordination; that effort was assisted by funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Westvaco Corporation, Champion International, and Willamette Industries. This summary was improved by reviews from Rick West and Greg Jackson.

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SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*ACCIPITER STRIATUS*) NEST IN THE EAST GULF COASTAL PLAIN OF ALABAMA

Jeffrey A. Stratford and James W. Tucker, Jr.

A recent review (Bildstein and Meyer 2000) and other reports (Shackelford et al. 1996 and references therein) of the Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) suggest that East Gulf Coastal breeding records are rare and breeding biology data from the southeast U.S. are lacking. The breeding area on the range map in Bildstein and Meyer (2000) does not include Texas and Louisiana, and only the extreme northern portions of Alabama and Georgia are included. However, there are recent records of this species in Texas and Louisiana (Shackelford et al. 1996), and we report a very southern record of a nest from Alabama. The nest we report is the southernmost breeding record for Alabama (Imhof 1976).

On 20 July 2000, while surveying Bachman's Sparrows (*Aimophila aestivalis*), we found a Sharp-shinned Hawk nest in the Conecuh National Forest, Escambia County, Alabama (31°08' 7.5" N, 86°36' 00" W). The nest was located 40 ft (12 m) from the ground in a slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) of approximately 12 in (30 cm) dbh and 50 ft (15 m) in height. The surrounding forest was a flatwoods longleaf pine (*P. palustris*) community that had been frequently burned. The understory was open with wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) as the dominant cover. The fringe of a densely vegetated bayswamp dominated by sweet bay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*), bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) was only 30 ft (9 m) from the nest. Although the nest was next to the tree trunk, it was completely visible from below and appeared to be composed entirely of sticks. The nest diameter was approximately 16-20 in (40-50 cm). The nest and nest-site descriptions are consistent with other Sharp-shinned Hawk nests described in pine-dominated forests of the southeastern United States (Shackelford et al. 1996) and elsewhere (e.g., Wiggers and Kritz 1991).

The female would often land on the nest and vocalize when either one of us approached the nest tree. The female flew within a few yards when the first author mimicked the "kik kik kik" call. Three juveniles were seen flying in the canopy of the nearby bayswamp but never went near the nest; however, a male Sharp-shinned Hawk was never observed in the area. Directly under the nest were three Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) skulls along with several small (probably passerine) bones. Predation on Red-bellied Woodpeckers by Sharp-shinned Hawks has been documented elsewhere (Shackelford et al.

2000). No fresh remains were found although we searched an area of several meters around the base of the nest tree. No individuals were seen near the nest on 12 August 2000 or the following year. However, an apparently territorial male Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen on 17 May 2001 about 7 miles (11 km) away from the nest site on property of the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center (W. D. Robinson, pers. comm.). This male was circling overhead and calling, which is behavior indicative of breeding activity (Delannoy and Cruz 1988).

Across its North American range, Sharp-shinned Hawks prefer to nest in conifers (Brown and Amadon 1989, Bildstein and Meyer 2000). Longleaf pine once dominated the canopy of the Gulf Coastal Plain but deforestation and fire suppression resulted in the loss of approximately 95% of this ecosystem (Outcalt and Sheffield 1996). In areas where fire is suppressed, the naturally open understory dominated by herbaceous ground cover is replaced by a dense understory of shrubs probably making it a less-preferred habitat for nesting Sharp-shinned Hawks. Currently, longleaf pine communities on federal lands in the southeastern United States are being restored through frequent burning and planting of longleaf pine. The southern extension of breeding records of Sharp-shinned Hawks in recent years (Shackelford et al. 1996 and this record) may indicate a positive response of Sharp-shinned Hawk to the restoration of longleaf pine communities. We are not suggesting that southeastern pine forests should be managed specifically for Sharp-shinned Hawks, but it is interesting to speculate on whether this species is expanding its range or is reoccupying its historic range in response to restoration efforts. Also, it is particularly interesting that the remains we found beneath the nest were those of the Red-bellied Woodpecker, a documented competitor of nesting holes and nest predator of endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*)(Shackelford et al. 2000).

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LIMPKIN (*ARAMUS GUARAUNA*): A FIRST FOR ALABAMA**Steve McConnell and Jimmy Wells**

On 30 September 2000, Mike and Gay Voss were boating in the northeast corner of Lewis Smith Lake (Cullman County), near Trimble, Alabama. There they observed a large, brown wading bird they later identified as a Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*). Realizing the importance of their find, they quickly contacted a relative who is also a member in the Cullman Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Very soon word of this fantastic rarity spread throughout the state birding community. Over the next seven weeks, many birders traveled to view and enjoy the first documented occurrence of this species in Alabama.

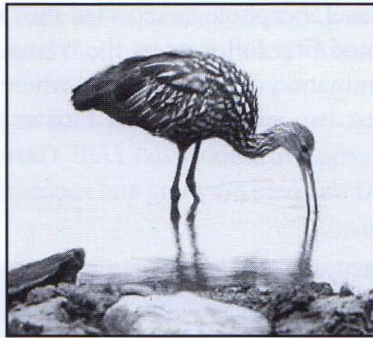


FIGURE 1. Limpkin probing for mussels at Smith Lake, Cullman Co., 6 October 2000 (photograph by Steve McConnell).

In the United States, the historical Limpkin range was considered by A.C. Bent (1927, *Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds*) to be entirely within Florida and southeastern Georgia (Okefenokee Swamp). In recent years several records and possible breeding evidence have been gathered from locations farther north on the Georgia coastal plain (Giff Beaton pers. comm.). Although generally considered non-migratory, over the years Limpkins have been found wandering far outside their normal range to appear in Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and even Nova Scotia (T. White, AVISYS PC Bird Listing Software, Perceptive Systems, 2001 Checklist Update).

A recent Limpkin population crash reported from the Wakulla Springs and River area (Wakulla County, FL), might help explain the appearance of this bird

in Alabama and a Tennessee record from 1999. The exact cause forcing the Wakulla birds to leave this former stronghold remains open to speculation, but possibilities include a reduction in water quality, invasion of choking water plants (*Hydrilla* sp.), or loss of their favored prey item, apple snails (Tom Kennedy pers. comm.).

Observations of the Smith Lake bird revealed its primary food source to be large (3-5") freshwater mussels. The preferred hunting technique was slow, deliberate wading in water a few inches deep while gently probing the submerged mud with a partially open bill (Figure 1). Once a mussel was located and excavated the Limpkin would carry it to a bare mud bar or sometimes onshore. Rather than trying to pry open the bivalve, the bird typically broke through the side using powerful jabs of its long bill. This technique created holes for access to the soft tissue or sometimes completely shattered the shell (Figure 2). One observer familiar with mussel morphology reported the "tender, membraneous mantle tissue" was consumed first followed by the "remaining foot muscle and visceral mass." Later examination of mussel shells where the Limpkin had fed showed evidence of at least two species: Giant Floater (*Pyganodon grandis*) and Paper Pondshell (*Utterbackia imbecillis*) (Jeff Garner pers. comm.). In addition to mussels, the bird was seen pursuing and successfully capturing several small fish on one occasion.

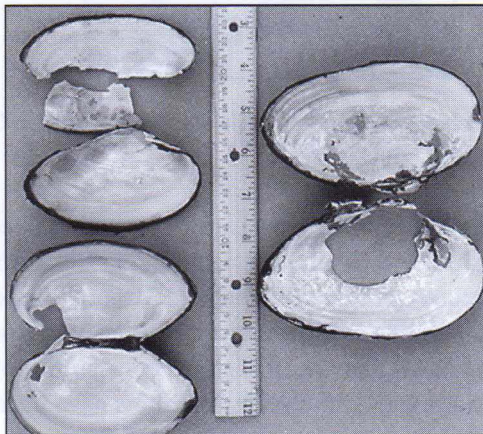


FIGURE 2. Shells of Giant Floater (*Pyganodon grandis*) opened by Limpkin at Smith Lake, November 2000 (photograph by Steve McConnell).

During its stay the bird was seen to fly or run from encounters with Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) on several occasions. On the other hand, it was

observed at least once chasing away several American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), which evidently came too close during a mussel hunting foray (Karen White pers. comm.). No reports were collected of this particular Limpkin uttering its famous, piercing ‘cry’ call; however, at least two birders heard the bird make low, grunting sounds upon close approach.

The Smith Lake Limpkin appeared at times to display little fear of humans. On more than one occasion birders reported approaching the bird (or having the bird approach them) within 10 feet (3 m). During several encounters the bird walked toward and even right past astonished observers with hardly a glance. Once, the bird even stretched toward a seated observer to apparently investigate his open soft drink can! This apparent fearlessness was also noted by Bent (1927) who reported the species to be “almost foolishly tame and unsuspecting”. He also reported that when Florida was first settled, Limpkins could be “frequently caught on their nests” and overhunting soon caused both an increase in the bird’s wariness and their disappearance “from regions within easy reach of civilization.”



Figure 3. Mouth of Ryan Creek (Smith Lake) frequented by Limpkin, November 2000 (photograph by Steve McConnell).

The section of Smith Lake where the Limpkin chose to spend most of its time was near the mouth of Ryan Creek adjacent to a boat dock, several lake houses, and a wide, rocky shoreline (Figure 3). When the bird was first discovered, the lake water level was unusually low following several months of

near drought conditions. The receding water uncovered several large mud bars and a wide, bare shoreline, both of which apparently harbored numerous mussels. By late November, the onset of winter rains had refilled Smith Lake back to an increased height covering most of the favored hunting areas. This food source loss, combined with a seasonal drop in temperature, probably contributed to the bird leaving the area. The Smith Lake Limpkin was last observed in the area on 22 November 2000.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the many members of the Cullman Audubon Society and the Alabama Ornithological Society who provided careful monitoring of the Limpkin during its stay and willingly reported their observations of this special bird.

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A stretch reveals the Limpkin's large feet, 11 November 2000
(photograph by Greg Harber).

FALL SIGHTINGS (AUGUST-NOVEMBER 2001)

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

This report covers the period from August through November 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 all counties are in Alabama except for the Florida counties of *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa*. "ABRC" = Alabama Bird Records Committee; "FOSRC" = Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; "FWBSF" = Ft. Walton Beach Spray Fields; "m.ob." = many observers; "NWR" = National Wildlife Refuge; "WP" = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Bay*, *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa* counties); "WTF" = Woerner Turf Farm.

COMMON LOON – A single of this species, rare in Alabama in summer, was seen on Lake Guntersville, *Marshall* 17 August (Linda Reynolds, Dick Reynolds).

EARED GREBE – Rare but regular in the WP, singles were seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 1-9 October (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan) and 27-29 November (Wes Biggs, Dave Godwin, Don Ware, Bob Duncan, m.ob.).

CORY'S SHEARWATER – Only the third occurrence in area Florida waters, an estimated 60 birds were seen 22 September 30-60 miles SE of Perdido Pass (Steve Pagliughi).

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER – Only the sixth occurrence in area Florida waters, an estimate of over 100 birds was made 22 September 30-60 miles SE of Perdido Pass (Steve Pagliughi).

- WILSON'S STORM-PETREL** – Two were seen 18 August 60 miles south of Perdido Pass, *Baldwin* (Keith Kamper, Greg Jackson, m.ob.) for the 19th Alabama record (@ABRC).
- BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** – Two were seen 18 August 63 miles south of Perdido Pass, *Baldwin* (Greg Jackson, Larry Gardella, m.ob.) for the sixth date of occurrence in Alabama (@ABRC).
- RED-BILLED TROPICBIRD** – The second Alabama record was set by a single immature seen 18 August 45 miles south of Perdido Pass, *Baldwin* (Greg Jackson, Larry Gardella, m.ob.; @ABRC).
- AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – A maximum one-day count for the WP≠ came from *Santa Rosa* and *Okaloosa* 12 October when an estimated 1000 were counted (Lucy Duncan *et al.*). This species is locally rare in inland Alabama, so the following records were notable: two on Cedar Creek Reservoir, *Franklin* 1-14 November (*fide* Damien Simbeck); 19 in *Cherokee* 7 November (Winston Baker, Linda Baker); 150 (a maximum for inland Alabama) at Pickensville, *Pickens* 12 November (*fide* Tommy Pratt); and several records from Wheeler NWR, *Limestone/Morgan*, where this species is rare but regular (15 observed by Bob Reid 17 November; 12 observed by Dean Cutten 22 November; 18 observed by Barry Fleming 23 November).
- ANHINGA** – This species is rare in the Mountain Region; two were seen north of Waverly, *Chambers* 11 November (Bob Mount).
- SNOWY EGRET** – One was seen at Guntersville, *Marshall* 15 August (Linda Reynolds, Dick Reynolds); this species is rare in the Tennessee Valley, especially in the eastern portion.
- TRICOLORED HERON** – Rare in the Tennessee Valley, two were noted at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan* 11 August (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten).
- REDDISH EGRET** – An immature was at the WTF, *Lowndes* 2-3 September (Fred Bassett, Peggy Baker, J. Crittenden *et al.*), establishing the third inland Alabama record.
- CATTLE EGRET** – A new maximum (365) for the Mountain Region was counted 6 August at Harpersville, *Shelby* (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson).
- WHITE IBIS** – Rare in the Tennessee Valley, two immatures were observed at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan* 11 August (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten), and one immature was seen west of Florence, *Lauderdale* 15 September (Kenley Austin). Rare but regular in the Mountain Region, one immature was seen at Harpersville, *Shelby* 7 September (Ann Miller).
- WHITE-FACED IBIS** – The 12th Alabama record was established by one seen on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 11-12 October (Steve McConnell;

@ABRC).

ROSEATE SPOONBILL – Steve McConnell *et al.* saw three on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 21 September (19th Alabama record; @ABRC).

WOOD STORK – Large numbers were seen at two sites: 194 at Sledge, *Hale* 11 August (Steve McConnell *et al.*) and 350+ north of Uniontown, *Perry* 13 August (Bob Sargent). Four were late at Sledge, *Hale* 12 October (Jud Johnston).

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE – Singles of this locally rare goose were noted at three sites in the WP: FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 29 October – 28 November (Don Ware, Bob Duncan *et al.*); Niceville, *Okaloosa*, 31 October (Don Ware); and Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 1 November (Merilu Rose, Rufus Rose). The latter bird died 2 November, and the specimen was sent to the Florida State Museum. Rare in the Mountain Region of Alabama, one was at East Lake, Birmingham, *Jefferson* 3 November (Greg Harber *et al.*). Seven were at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone* 3 November (Carolyn Snow, Phil Snow), where this species is uncommon but regular.

SNOW GOOSE – One adult and three immatures were noted at Frank Jackson Lake, *Covington* 29 October (Carolyn Snow, Phil Snow); this species is uncommon to rare in much of the Inland Coastal Plain.

ROSS'S GOOSE – A single was seen at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone* 17 November (Bob Reid); the species is rare but expected at this site.

BALD EAGLE – An adult was spotted at Lee County Public Lake, *Lee* 4 November (Geoff Hill), in an area of Alabama where the species is locally rare.

SWAINSON'S HAWK – The 10th WP record was established by a single light morph seen 6-16 November at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* (Will Duncan, Bob Duncan, Lenny Fenimore, Charley Parkel).

MERLIN – Casual in summer in Alabama, one was spotted at Colbert Ferry Park, *Colbert* 5 August (Ned Piper, Moez Ali).

SANDHILL CRANE – Terrie Howard saw one at Navarre, *Santa Rosa*, 1 October to mark the second October WP record. This species was also recorded from the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 11 November (Phil Tetlow, Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan) and 28 November (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan *et al.*) (casual in fall in the WP). The 91 counted at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone/Morgan* 22 November (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten) represented a good number.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER – The six seen north of Uniontown, *Perry* 13 August (Bob Sargent) tied the maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain, where

- the species is uncommon. One was at the WTF, *Lowndes* 2 September (Larry Gardella).
- AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** – Early singles were at Foley, *Baldwin* 11 August (Bill Summerour, Howard Horne, m.ob.) and Harpersville, *Shelby* 24 August (Steve McConnell).
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** – The first October record for the WP was marked by a single 30 October at the mouth of Bayou Grande, Pensacola, *Escambia* (Lucy Duncan *et al.*).
- WILLET** – Rare for inland Alabama, one was spotted at Harpersville, *Shelby* 31 August – 1 September (Ann Miller, Al Miller).
- UPLAND SANDPIPER** – Early birds were in the Tennessee Valley 5 August: one at Leighton, *Colbert* (Moez Ali, Ned Piper) and 10 at Guntersville, *Marshall* (Linda Reynolds, Dick Reynolds; good number for this site). Bob Sargent recorded 16 at Lake Land Farms, *Perry* 13 August, a good number for the Inland Coastal Plain.
- MARbled GODWIT** – An early single was on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 8 August (Keith Kamper).
- SANDERLING** – This shorebird is uncommon for inland Alabama. Two were at Muscle Shoals 8 August and one at Leighton 15 August, both *Colbert* (Damien Simbeck).
- WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** – Rarely seen in fall, one was noted at Leighton, *Colbert* 15 August (Damien Simbeck).
- BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** – One was noted at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert* 8 August (rare but expected in this area; Damien Simbeck). Another was seen at Harpersville, *Shelby* 14 August – 16 September (rare in the Mountain Region; Ann Miller, Al Miller, Steve McConnell, Bob Reid). Rare for the Inland Coast Plain, one juvenile was seen at the WTF, *Lowndes* 2 September, and two were at the same site 8 September (R. Moore, James Tucker). Two were noted at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin* 3 September (Keith Kamper), where the species is rare but expected. An individual of this species, casual in the WP, was studied at close range at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 6 October (Phil Tetlow, Bob Duncan, Morris Clark *et al.*) for the third local October record.
- PECTORAL SANDPIPER** – Large numbers were counted at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*: 300 on 8 August and 446 on 10 August, the latter a maximum count for Alabama (Damien Simbeck).
- BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** – An estimated 60 were in three flocks at Lake Land Farms, *Perry* 13 August (Bob Sargent), a maximum for inland Alabama.

- WILSON'S PHALAROPE** – A single, rare for inland Alabama, was spotted at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert* 10 August (Damien Simbeck). Rare in the WP, two birds were seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* 27 September (David Simpson).
- JAEGER SP.** – Rare but regular offshore, a probable Pomarine was noted 13.5 miles south of Perdido Pass, *Baldwin* 18 August (Greg Jackson, m.ob.).
- LAUGHING GULL** – At Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence*, this species is rare but regular. Twenty-two (21 immatures) were noted 12 August (Moez Ali, Ned Piper), and a single was seen 3 September (Damien Simbeck, Dwight Cooley *et al.*). Another single was seen at Guntersville, *Marshall* 29 October (Scott Gravette), another site where the species is rare but regular.
- FRANKLIN'S GULL** – The species is very rare in October in the WP. One was seen at Destin, *Okaloosa* 27 October (Don Ware). A first winter bird, compared to nearby Laughing Gulls, was recorded at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 30 October (Bob Duncan, David Simpson, Ed Case).
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** – Rare but increasing in the state, one adult was recorded from Guntersville, *Marshall* 29 October (Scott Gravette *et al.*).
- GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** – Still rare in Alabama, first-year birds were early on the coast: a single was on the Dauphin Island Causeway, *Mobile* 14 October (Larry Gardella) and 25 October (Howard Horne), and another single on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 19 October (Keith Kamper). Still another first-year individual was recorded from Guntersville, *Marshall* 30 November (Steve McConnell).
- ARCTIC TERN** – The first WP area record was set 3 August when Ed Case, Bob Duncan, and Barry Martin observed a first year bird at leisure at Navarre Flats, *Santa Rosa*.
- BRIDLED TERN** – Uncommon offshore in Alabama, two were recorded 66 miles south of Perdido Pass, *Baldwin* 18 August (Greg Jackson, m.ob.). One was seen 22 September in Florida waters 45 miles SE of Perdido Pass (Steve Pagliughi) (accidental in the WP).
- SOOTY TERN** – Casual in the WP, and rare when not associated with tropical storms, one adult was seen loafing with Black Terns and Black Skimmers 12 August at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia* (Rosann McLeod, Powers McLeod).
- WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – Annabelle Markle spotted a single at Greenville, *Butler* 6 August to establish the ninth record for inland Alabama.
- GROOVE-BILLED ANI** – Birders at the Alabama Ornithological Society fall meeting found and photographed a calling single on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 14 October (rare in Alabama). Also rare in the WP, one was seen in *Bay* 20

October (Powers McLeod).

FLAMMULATED OWL – A second state record was found on the balcony of a high-rise condominium at Navarre Beach, *Santa Rosa* 9 November (Nicole Wirth). It was taken to Wildlife Sanctuary, identified by the staff, Lucy Duncan, and Bob Duncan, photographed by Lucy Duncan and Ed Case, and then released in central *Escambia* 12 November (@ FOSRC).

COMMON NIGHTHAWK – An estimated 300 were counted during the last week of August at Cullman, *Cullman* (Jimmy Wells).

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD – One was banded by Fred Bassett at the home of James Pfeiffer, Pensacola, *Escambia* 19 September.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER – A rare but regular fall migrant at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, one was noted 15 August (Bob Reid). Also rare but regular in fall at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, a single was seen 3 September (Keith Kamper) and 9 September (Bill Summerour).

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER – This *Empidonax* is uncommon-rare but regular on the Gulf Coast and rare but regular in the Mountain Region. The following reports were received: Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, total of eight banded between 15 September and 15 October (J. Farrington *et al.*); singles on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 16 September (Howard Horne) and 13-14 October (Steve McConnell, m.ob.); and two observations from the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, a single 16 September and two calling birds 6 October (both Steve McConnell).

ALDER FLYCATCHER – A calling *Empidonax* at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* 24 August was reported as this species (David Simpson).

WILLOW FLYCATCHER – A calling individual at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, established the 14th Alabama record (Steve McConnell; @ABRC).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – The first September record for the WP was marked by a male seen 10 September at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* (Don Ware, Lydia Daugherty). An adult male was at the same site 9 October (Bob Duncan) and 10 October (Don Ware), while a first year male was there 6 November (Will Duncan, Bob Duncan). Always rare in Alabama, one immature male was seen on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 17 October (L. Glover).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER – Rare in Alabama, two different birds were observed on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14 October (Dwight Cooley, Eric Soehren, m.ob.). One was observed at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 10 November (Lenny Fenimore *et al.*) and again 11 November (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Phil Tetlow, Betsy Tetlow). This species has been rare but

regular at this site since 1991.

SULPHUR-BELLIED FLYCATCHER – One bird was banded and photographed at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 15 September, to establish the third Alabama record (J. Farrington, C. Varian, G. Bieber; @ABRC).

MYIODYNASTES SP. – A probable Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, a second WP area record was established by a bird at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* 10 September (Bob Duncan).

TROPICAL/COUCH'S KINGBIRD – A single was noted on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 22-25 September (Phil Tetlow, Betsy Tetlow, m.ob.; @ABRC). This is the fifth Alabama record for the complex.

WESTERN KINGBIRD – A single spotted north of Uniontown, *Perry* 13 August (Bob Sargent) and 19 August (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) was early and rare for inland Alabama.

EASTERN KINGBIRD – An estimated 250 birds at Lake Land Farms, *Perry* 13 August (Bob Sargent) was a good number for this species.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER – An adult and an immature were seen on Rabbit Road, Montgomery, *Montgomery* 4 August (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) at a new site for this increasingly common breeder in Alabama. Rare in the WP, singles were seen at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia* 7 October (Phil Tetlow, Betsy Tetlow), 15 October (Bob Duncan), and 27 November (Bob Duncan, Will Duncan), with another record coming from Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* 8 October (Merilu Rose).

BELL'S VIREO – Two were banded at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 15 October (J. Farrington *et al.*), where the species is rare but regular.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO – A locally early bird was at Cahaba Heights, *Jefferson* 1 September (Harriet Wright).

WARBLING VIREO – Rare in Alabama, one was noted on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 11 September (Howard Horne), and two were banded at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 14 and 15 October (J. Farrington *et al.*).

FISH CROW – One was heard calling repeatedly at Hoover, *Jefferson* 27 October (Greg Jackson) where the species is rare and at the northern edge of its range in Alabama.

BEWICK'S WREN – David Simpson, Lucy Duncan, and Bob Duncan reported an individual of this species, rare in the WP, from Ft. Pickens, *Escambia* 29 October.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET – Locally early, 3-4 were seen at Hoover, *Jefferson* 7 October (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson).

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT – First spotted 11 November and seen until 9 February, a

single established the 18th Alabama record (and the first documented record since 1988). This bird was found near Foley, *Baldwin* (Bill Summerour, m.ob.; photographed; @ABRC).

TENNESSEE WARBLER – One at Birmingham, *Jefferson* 7 November (Greg Harber) was locally late.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER – One at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson* 16 September (Steve McConnell) was early.

NASHVILLE WARBLER – Uncommon-rare but regular during fall migration in Alabama, the following records were received: one tied the early Tennessee Valley record at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert* 3 September (Damien Simbeck, Dwight Cooley); singles were seen at Montgomery, *Montgomery* 14 and 24 September (Larry Gardella); one was at Hoover, *Jefferson* 7 October (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson); a single was on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 14 October (Greg Jackson, m.ob.); and a late individual was at the same site 4 November (Howard Horne).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – A late male was at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 28 October (Howard Horne).

CERULEAN WARBLER – Uncommon on the Inland Coastal Plain, Larry Gardella and Carolyn Snow had one at Montgomery, *Montgomery* 8 September.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER – A single seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 7 October (R. Moore) tied the late date for the Gulf Coast.

MOURNING WARBLER – Rare but regular during fall migration at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin*, one was banded 7 September (J. Farrington *et al.*).

WILSON'S WARBLER – Early migrants were noted at Auburn, *Lee* 3 September (Shelly Ducharme) and Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 5-6 September (Howard Horne, Keith Kamper). The 13 banded at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 26 September – 16 October (J. Farrington *et al.*) was a moderate number for the season.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW – This sparrow is only casual in the WP in fall, so reports of singles from the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* 6 September (Don Ware) and Ft. Pickens, *Escambia*, 3 October (Lucy Duncan, Pam Beasley *et al.*) were noteworthy. The sixth inland Alabama record was established when Damien Simbeck had a single near Moulton, *Lawrence* 20 September. Another single was spotted on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 14 October (Don Ware, m.ob.) where the species is uncommon-rare but expected.

LARK SPARROW – Casual in the WP, singles were noted at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* 30 August (Bob Duncan) and 21 September (Bob Duncan, Lucy

Duncan), and at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia* 13 September (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).

SAVANNAH SPARROW – One was early at Harpersville, *Shelby* 16 September (Steve McConnell).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW – An early record for the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama was established by a single at the WTF, *Lowndes* 27 October (Barry Fleming).

LE CONTE'S SPARROW – One at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 6 October (R. Moore) was early. Another bird at the WTF, *Lowndes* 27 October (Barry Fleming) set an early fall date for the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama.

LAPLAND LONGSPUR – Up to nine birds were seen near Foley, *Baldwin* 28 October – 27 January (Bill Summerour, m.ob.), with the earliest birds establishing a record early date for Alabama.

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR – The first Alabama record was established by a single bird observed, photographed, and videotaped near Foley, *Baldwin* 16-18 November (Steve McConnell, Bill Summerour, m.ob.; @ABRC).

DICKCISSEL – Very rare in August in the WP, two birds were seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* 23 August (David Simpson).

BOBOLINK – Also very rare in August in the WP, three birds were seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* 22 August (David Simpson, Alan Knothe).

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD – The earliest fall record (by nine days) for the WP was set by an adult female at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia* 1 August (Bob Duncan). Other singles were seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* 27 September (Bob Duncan, David Simpson) and Pensacola, *Escambia* 25 October (Danny Harmon).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD – Good details were submitted for two birds seen 16 August at Guntersville, *Marshall* (Linda Reynolds). This is an early record by two months for Alabama.

BRONZED COWBIRD – An adult male at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* 5 and 7 November (Stephen Dinsmore and Bob Duncan, respectively), and a male and female at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia* 18 November (David Simpson, Alan Knothe), established the fifth and sixth WP records.

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WINTER SIGHTINGS (DECEMBER 2001 – FEBRUARY 2002)

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

This report covers the period from December 2001 through February 2002 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (east 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 – Casual in the WP, one was found on Bayou Grande, *Escambia* 22 December (Peggy Baker *et al.*). Rare but regular at the following Alabama sites: one on the Perdido Bay CBC, *Baldwin* 22 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan); two on the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin* 29 December (Don Ware, Bob Reid); one immature at Guntersville, *Marshall* 5 January and 12 February (Steve McConnell).

PACIFIC LOON – Rare but regular at Guntersville, *Marshall*, one was noted as early as 2 December (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten); 1-3 were seen between 17 January and 23 February (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson, Dick Reynolds, m.ob.); the three seen 19 January (Bill Summerour) tied the maximum for Alabama. Rare on the Gulf Coast, one was noted at Ft. Walton Beach, *Okaloosa* 17 December (Will Duncan, Lydia Daugherty), and another

single was recorded on the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin* 29 December (Bob Reid).

COMMON LOON – The 32 seen at Lake Purdy, *Jefferson/Shelby* 11 December (Harriet Wright) was a good number for the Mountain Region.

EARED GREBE – A bird present for many weeks at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, was last seen 17 December (Bill Bremser). Rare for inland Alabama, 1-2 were seen at Guntersville, *Marshall* 1-5 January (Linda Reynolds, Dick Reynolds).

AECHMOPHORUS SP. – The fifth record of this complex for Alabama was established by a single seen at Guntersville, *Marshall* 24 February (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten; @ABRC).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN – Uncommon-rare for inland Alabama, the 22 recorded from Wheeler NWR, *Limestone* 2 December (J. Williams), and the 35 seen on Weiss Lake, *Cherokee* 2 December (S. Cooper) were good numbers.

BROWN PELICAN – One seen 26 January at Gulf Shores, *Baldwin* (Martha Sargent, Bob Sargent) was probably of the Pacific subspecies. If correct, this would be the first Alabama report of this subspecies.

REDDISH EGRET – Rare in winter, one immature was at Little Lagoon Pass, Gulf Shores, *Baldwin* 28 and 30 January (Helen Kittinger, Gussie Arnett).

PLEGADIS SP. – Rare for inland Alabama, singles were noted at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan* 30 January (Dick Reynolds) and Eufaula NWR, *Barbour* 23-24 February (Linda Reynolds, Dick Reynolds).

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK – One bird was at Guntersville, *Marshall* 1-20 January (Dick Reynolds *et al.*). This species is rare for inland Alabama, and this record was the fourth for the Tennessee Valley.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE – A small flock spent the winter at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, where the species is uncommon but expected; a maximum of 19 was counted 28 December (Jud Johnston, m.ob.). This goose is also uncommon but expected at Eufaula NWR, *Barbour*, and 21 were counted 22 February (Barry Fleming). Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast, one was noted NW of Foley, *Baldwin* 27 January (Larry Gardella).

SNOW GOOSE – This goose is uncommon on much of the Inland Coastal Plain in Alabama; 3 were seen at Hope Hull, *Montgomery* 9 December (Larry Gardella).

ROSS'S GOOSE – Rare but increasing in Alabama, the following records were received: one immature 10 and 20-23 December, Fairhope, *Baldwin* (Bill Summerour); one at Calera, *Shelby* 13-14 December (J. Averett, B. Averett, Ann Miller, Al Miller; ph.), was the second Mountain Region record; one at

Auburn, *Lee* 20 December (Barry Fleming), was the third Mountain Region record; Wheeler NWR, *Limestone* 4 January (four birds) and 18 January (nine birds- a maximum for Alabama) (Steve McConnell *et al.*).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL – A late individual was at East Lake, Birmingham, *Jefferson* 8 December (Greg Harber).

GREATER SCAUP – Fifty-two at Guntersville, *Marshall* 23 February (S. Dinsmore, J. Bailey) was a good number for this site. Likewise, six was a good number for Guin, *Marion* 8 December (Jud Johnston).

SURF SCOTER – Rare for inland Alabama, two were recorded at Guntersville, *Marshall* 20 January (Steve McConnell), and a single was noted at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence* 23 February (S. Dinsmore).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER – Another scoter that is rare for inland Alabama, one wintered at Guntersville, *Marshall* 1 January – 23 February (Linda Reynolds, Dick Reynolds, m.ob.). Two were found on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 7-15 December (Keith Kamper, *et al.*), where the species is rare.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER – An estimated 100 were found at Lake Purdy, *Jefferson/Shelby* 11 December (Harriet Wright), a maximum for the Mountain Region.

OSPREY – A maximum for Alabama was set by the 23 recorded on the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin* 29 December.

MERLIN – Rare for inland Alabama in winter, one was spotted at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence* 26 December (Damien Simbeck), and another was at Speigner, *Elmore* 13 January (Larry Gardella).

PEREGRINE FALCON – Two were seen at Eufaula NWR, *Barbour* 28 January (E. Beohm, M. Beohm) (rare for inland Alabama in winter).

SANDHILL CRANE – Casual in the WP, one was recorded from *Escambia* 22 December (Morris Clark), while seven were seen in *Walton* 22 January (Carolyn Snow). One was noted in northwest *Lawrence* 26 December (Damien Simbeck), where the species is locally rare. Excellent numbers were recorded at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*: 90 on 4 January (Steve McConnell), 106 on 6 January (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten), and 142 on 18 January (Steve McConnell).

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER – Two seen on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 10 December (Keith Kamper) were locally rare.

MARBLED GODWIT – This species is rare in winter, so one found on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 10 December (Keith Kamper) was notable.

WESTERN SANDPIPER – Uncommon-rare in winter on the Inland Coastal the ninth record for inland Alabama.

Plain, one was seen at Hope Hull, *Montgomery* 12 January (Larry Gardella).

DOWITCHER SP. – Dowitchers are rare in winter for inland Alabama, so five probable Long-billed recorded from Hope Hull, *Montgomery* 10 February (Larry Gardella) were noteworthy.

LAUGHING GULL – One was found at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence* 23 February (S. Dinsmore), a site where the species is rare but regular.

CALIFORNIA GULL – The first WP report of this species came from Pensacola Beach, *Escambia* 5 February (Bob Duncan) with the sighting of an adult bird (@FOSRC).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL – A first-year bird occurred at Guntersville, *Marshall* 20-31 January (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds *et al.*) where it is rare.

ROSEATE TERN – A single of this rarely seen species (third WP record and first in winter for Florida) was in downtown Pensacola, *Escambia* 15 December (Will Duncan, Ed Case, James Pfeiffer).

WHITE-WINGED DOVE – Eleven recorded in the vicinity of Foley, *Baldwin* 29 December (Gulf Shores CBC; Howard Horne, Keith Kamper) was a good number for this species whose numbers seem to be increasing.

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW – Rare in winter in Alabama, one was found at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 26 January (Stan Hamilton, Harriet Wright *et al.*).

BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD – The first record of this species for Alabama was established by a bird in Mobile, *Mobile* that was first spotted in early November, banded 7 January, and seen until at least 20 February (Fred Bassett, R. Coker, m.ob.; photographed, videotaped; @ABRC).

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD – Immatures banded 6 January in Fairhope, *Baldwin* (Fred Bassett, Judy Thompson) and 23 January in Lillian, *Baldwin* (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Fred Bassett, Jim Dickerson) were the 13th and 14th state records, respectively (@ ABRC).

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD – Immatures banded 24 November in Mobile, *Mobile* (Fred Bassett, Ginny Benton) and 5 January in Lillian, *Baldwin* (Fred Bassett, Jim Dickerson) were the 6th and 7th state records, respectively (@ ABRC).

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD – Accidental in Florida, the second WP record of this species came from Pensacola, *Escambia* 5 January when an adult male was banded (Fred Bassett).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – WP reports of single adult males came from Tiger Point, *Santa Rosa* 15 December (Bill Bremser) and *Gulf* 9 January (Lucy Duncan).

- MYIARCHUS SP.** – Any species of this genus is rare in winter in Alabama, so a probable Ash-throated at Bon Secour, *Baldwin* 29 December (Will Duncan, Ed Case) was notable.
- ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER** – Rare but regular in the WP, a calling bird was recorded off and on between 27 December and 23 January at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa* (Alan Knothe, Bob Duncan, Don Ware).
- SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – Rare in winter in Alabama, a single was late on Dauphin Island, *Mobile* 2-3 December (John Porter).
- BLUE-HEADED VIREO** – Rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, one was found at Madison, *Madison* 25 December (Dean Cutten).
- TREE SWALLOW** – Two early migrants were noted at Auburn, *Lee* 26 February (S. Somershoe).
- HOUSE WREN** – Rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, one was found at Guntersville, *Marshall* 12 February (Steve McConnell).
- SEDGE WREN** – Also rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, a single at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale* 2 December (Paul Kittle) was probably a late migrant.
- SPRAGUE'S PIPIT** – The fifth record for the WP was established during a survey for Burrowing Owls on Eglin Air Force Base, *Okaloosa* 9 February (Lenny Fenimore) when four birds were located in the same vicinity as a previous winter.
- NASHVILLE WARBLER** – At Bon Secour, *Baldwin*, an individual was recorded 29 December (Will Duncan, Ed Case) to establish the third winter record for Alabama.
- NORTHERN PARULA** – The sixth winter record for Alabama was one 26 January at Mullet Point, *Baldwin* (Ann Miller).
- BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** – A single, seen off and on from 5 December – 2 March at Montrose, *Baldwin* (Venetia Friend *et al.*) marked the 11th record for Alabama (@ABRC).
- PRAIRIE WARBLER** – The third winter record for inland Alabama was established by an adult male seen at Eufaula NWR, *Barbour* 22 February (Barry Fleming).
- SUMMER TANAGER** – One female seen on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* 23 January (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Betsy Tetlow) established the 12th winter record for Alabama.
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** – Occasional in winter on the Gulf Coast, one was noted at Foley, *Baldwin* 29 December (Howard Horne, Keith Kamper). Another single seen at the WTF, *Lowndes* 3 February (Larry Gardella) set

- LARK SPARROW** – Larry Gardella recorded one at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 26 January (rare in winter in Alabama).
- HENSLOW'S SPARROW** – Pat Johnson *et al.* observed one at Northport, *Tuscaloosa* 2 December (locally rare).
- SALTMARSH SHARP-TAILED SPARROW** – The first report of this species for the WP came from Navarre Flats, *Santa Rosa* 25 January with the sighting of one bird (Will Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Andy Kratter, Bob Duncan).
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW** – One was recorded on the Waterloo CBC, *Lauderdale* 15 December (rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley). Also rare in winter on the Inland Coastal Plain, a single was noted at the WTF, *Lowndes* 3 February (Larry Gardella).
- LAPLAND LONGSPUR** – Near Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, Paul Kittle had 92 on 4 December, a good number for this area. The species is very rare on the Inland Coastal Plain in Alabama, but 40 were noted at the WTF, *Lowndes* (Larry Gardella), a site where it is regular.
- BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK** – An adult female occurred at a feeder in Mobile, *Mobile*, from 1 December through the winter at a site where the species has occurred in winter for several years (V. Culberson, m.ob.). Another feeder in Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, hosted an individual on 4 January (Bob Duncan, Will Duncan, Lucy Duncan) (casual in the WP).
- PAINTED BUNTING** – A male occurred at a feeder in Lillian, *Baldwin* from early December – 10 January (Jim Dickerson, *fide* Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) (rare in winter on Gulf Coast).
- DICKCISSEL** – Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast, one was noted at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* 30 January (Eric Soehren).
- BRONZED COWBIRD** – The seventh WP area record was established by the sighting of one male at Pensacola Beach, *Escambia* 10-15 December (Bob Duncan, Merilu Rose, Rufus Rose, Ann Forster, Dan Forster). The eighth WP area record was marked by a single at Ft. Walton Beach, *Okaloosa* 17 December (Will Duncan, Lydia Daugherty).
- RED CROSSBILL** – Continued presence of this species in the Coleman Lake area of Talladega National Forest, *Cleburne*, was documented 16 February when seven were seen (Bob Reid, m.ob.).

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ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

Below is a brief summary of a recent publication from the scientific literature. This summary is intended to bring the findings of ornithological research conducted in Alabama and in northwest Florida to a larger audience.

Site fidelity of wintering Henslow's Sparrows. S. M. Plentovich, N. R. Holler, G. E. Hill. 1998. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 69:486-490.

Little information is known about winter site fidelity (i.e., staying and/or returning to the same site) in any of North America's grassland sparrow species. This paper reports on winter site fidelity in the Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*) in Baldwin County, Alabama. The study sites were on loblolly and longleaf pine forested lands that were harvested in 25-30 year rotations. The highest densities of Henslow's Sparrows were found at sites that had been cut and/or burned the previous year and had been left undisturbed for one growing season. In February and March of 1995, 22 Henslow's Sparrows were trapped at ten sites with mist nets over a period of 21.5 hours. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service aluminum band was placed on each bird's leg. No individuals were recaptured in 1995. In January and March of 1996, 30 individuals were captured and banded during 46.75 trapping hours on five of the sites used in 1995 (other sites had been altered and no longer provided habitat for Henslow's Sparrows), as well as an additional four sites. No individuals that were banded in 1995 were recaptured in 1996. In 1996, thirteen individuals were recaptured a total of 20 times. All recaptures occurred at the original banding site and no movement among sites was noted. A decrease in the recapture rates, as well as an increase in unbanded birds were observed and suggests that Henslow's Sparrow migration may begin at this time. The authors conclude that Henslow's Sparrows are site faithful within the same season, but found no evidence that they were site faithful among years. [Department of Biology, 331 Funchess Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5414.] — TMH

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.

Journal of the Alabama Ornithological Society

Volume 48

No. 1

2002

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