

WINTER SIGHTINGS (DECEMBER 2001 – FEBRUARY 2002)

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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.

Abbreviations and italics: County names are in italics and, except for the Florida counties of *Escambia*, *Gulf*, *Okaloosa*, *Santa Rosa*, and *Walton* are in Alabama. “ABRC” = Alabama Bird Records Committee; “CBC” = Christmas Bird Count; “FOSRC” = Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; “FWBSF” = Ft. Walton Beach Spray Fields; “m.ob.” = many observers; “NWR” = National Wildlife Refuge; “ph.” = photographed; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Gulf*, *Okaloosa*, *Santa Rosa*, and *Walton* counties); “WTF” = Woerner Turf Farm.

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. Culbertson, 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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