

AN UNUSUAL VISITOR

William S. Clark

Fink's Lake, located in Calhoun County, Alabama, about three miles north of Anniston, has a very good variety of birds. Naturally I do quite a bit of birding there.

November 11, 1963, early in the morning, found me there. While I was watching some blackbirds, a small sandpiper-like bird almost flew into me and disappeared around the lake. Checking a list I have for our area, I supposed that it was probably a Least Sandpiper, occurring at this time of year. But I went on to check.

Further around the lake, as I stopped to identify some gulls (Herring), I looked down into the water and saw a strange little bird. He was only 10 feet away! Pulling out my Peterson's Field Guide I frantically started the search for his identity. After ten hectic minutes I was no closer to identification than when I had first spotted him. And still he was swimming and feeding peacefully, directly in front of me. Then I noticed the introduction to the section in my field guide on "Phalaropes". It said they were equally at home swimming or wading. Quickly turning to the pictures, I narrowed my bird down to either a "Northern" or "Red".

Checking the texts in Peterson and "Guide to American Wildlife",* I at last recorded a Northern Phalarope.

That afternoon I returned and again found him in the same location.

Early the next morning, Dr. William Calvert of Jacksonville, Alabama, and I were at the spot, but, alas, no Phalarope. We watched other birds for about a half-hour when a small shore bird flew by and landed near. "It might be him", I told Dr. Calvert. I could see the excitement in his eyes as we walked (probably ran) over to check. Sure enough, there was our little friend, swimming nonchalantly around. With a quick check of Peterson, Dr. Calvert confirmed that our phalarope was indeed a Northern. It was a life first for us both.

* Collins, Henery Hill, Jr. 1959. Complete Field Guide to American Wildlife. Harper and Brothers, New York.

2208 Bolton Drive
Atlanta, Georgia

NOTES

Vermillion Flycatcher Collected Near Selma, Alabama on January 29, 1964. I saw a male Vermillion Flycatcher 10 miles west of Selma, Dallas County, Alabama, -- a first for me. He was perched on a fence post near a barn and occasionally flew down, apparently to catch an insect in flight. I watched him through the binocular about six minutes. During that time, he flew down several times, appeared to catch insects in the air, and returned to either the same post or one nearby.

On February 1, 1964, I returned to this spot and collected a male Vermillion Flycatcher within 150 yards of the above observation. (Probably the same one.) The wind was rather high at the time, and the bird was feeding over and near a farm pond. The pond was partially sheltered from the wind by cedar trees. Feeding was similar to that in note above. The bird was donated to Alabama Department of Conservation. Robert E. Waters, Selma, Alabama.

Notes from the Selma Area. I counted waterfowl on Dallas County Public Fishing Lake two times during January. Birds observed were:

1-18-64 - 109 Ruddy Ducks, 15 Buffleheads, 8 Canvasbacks, 4 Coots, and 1 Pied-billed Grebe;

1-25-64 - 121 Ruddy Ducks, 14 Buffleheads, 3 Mallards, 5 Gadwalls, about 200 Ring-necked Ducks, 4 Coots, and 1 Pied-billed Grebe.

1-22-64 - I stopped on the highway between Marion and Marion Junction (Perry County). While stopped, I heard a Western Meadowlark. I saw it fly up from a pasture into a sweetgum tree. I watched it through the binocular for several minutes, during which time it gave the Western Meadowlark song several times.

We had a good many Robins during early January, but most of them have moved on through.

I drove from Selma to Wedowee on February 3, 1964. I didn't count the Eastern Bluebirds, but there must have been at least 35 or 40 along the way. Robert E. Waters, Selma, Alabama

Livingston Field Notes. Since reporting last from this area I have added three more species to my Sumter County Bird List bringing it to a total of one hundred ninety-six species to date. At this time for a single county it has now become a matter of "scraping the bottom of the barrel" and any new bird is almost necessarily a rare discovery. My list for 1963 has been unusually exciting in number and in rarity. In the Spring I added the Painted Buntings and the Purple Gallinule (previously reported) and in the fall was added a male Wilson's Warbler, a male Common Goldeneye Duck, and Cooper's Hawk, all of which would be rare for this area, except the Cooper's Hawk.