

SUMMER SIGHTINGS (JUNE - JULY 2002)

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

This report covers the period from June through July 2002 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; “CW” = central western; “m.ob.” = many observers; “NF” = National Forest; “ph.” = photographed; “v.” = videotaped’ “WMA” = Wildlife Management Area; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Santa Rosa*, *Okaloosa*, and *Walton* counties); “WTF” = Woerner Turf Farm.

COMMON LOON – Singles in basic and alternate plumage were seen 23 and 25 June, respectively, at Guntersville, *Marshall* (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds) (rare in summer).

PIED-BILLED GREBE – This species is an erratic breeder in Alabama. Two broods were observed near Leighton, *Colbert*, 5 June (Damien Simbeck).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN – Occasional for inland Alabama and rare in the Mountain Region, an exceptional 100+ were seen on Lay Lake, *Shelby*, 28 June (Archie Trimm, Charlotte Trimm; v.). Twenty-three that may have been part of the previous group were seen at Riverside, *St. Clair*, 30 June – 2 July (Edward Tracy *et al.*). Uncommon – rare in the Tennessee Valley, one was spotted at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence*, 21 July (Damien Simbeck).

- BROWN PELICAN** – One immature was seen at Walter F. George Dam, *Henry*, 24 June and 20 July (Walt Chambers). This species is rare but regular at this inland site.
- SNOWY EGRET** – Dean Cutten and Raelene Cutten sighted one of these waders, uncommon in the Tennessee Valley, at Swan Creek WMA, *Limestone*, 14 July.
- WHITE IBIS** – One immature was noted at Murphy Hill Reservoir, *Marshall*, 8 June (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds) (rare in the Tennessee Valley). This wader is unexpected in June in the Mountain Region, but one adult was seen flying west over the main mountain ridge in the CW block of the Hollis Crossroads quad, Talladega NF, *Cleburne*, 9 June (Greg Jackson, Debi Jackson). An immature at Alexander City, *Tallapoosa*, 30 June (Linda Baker) was rare and early for the Mountain Region.
- ROSEATE SPOONBILL** – The 20th record for Alabama was set 26 June by the sighting of a single along AL 106 west of Brantley, *Crenshaw*, 26 June (R. White, M. Cox; @ABRC). Another single was observed on Little Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14-17 July (John Dindo, Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds, John Porter; ph.) to establish the 21st record for Alabama (@ABRC).
- SNOW GOOSE** – Occasional in summer in Alabama, one was seen on Weiss Lake, *Cherokee*, 1 June (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn).
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL** – An adult with 10 young near Leighton, *Colbert*, 5 June (Damien Simbeck) documented a rare breeding of this species in Alabama. An injured bird was at Sardis, *Dallas*, 8 June (Shawn Reed).
- RING-NECKED DUCK** – Occasional in summer in Alabama, the 20 seen at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 8 June (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds) set a new summer maximum for the state.
- HOODED MERGANSER** – This duck is a rare breeder in Alabama, so the following records are noteworthy: one at Sardis, *Dallas*, 6 June (Shawn Reed) and three at Swan Creek WMA, *Limestone*, 24 June (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten).
- RUDDY DUCK** – A male in alternate plumage at Hoover, *Jefferson*, 25 June furnished a rare summer record (*fide* Rick West).
- SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** – Sixteen was a good number for this species at the northern locale of Prattville, *Autauga*, 13 July (Shawn Reed). Four seen at Springville, *St. Clair*, 31 July – 14 August (M. Walker, m.ob.) established the fifth record for the Mountain Region.
- MISSISSIPPI KITE** – A report of “several” came from Springville, *St. Clair*,

31 July – 28 August (Mary Jane Wells, m.ob.) (rare in Mountain Region).

GOLDEN EAGLE – An adult was photographed in the Indian Mountain quad, *Cherokee*, 2 June (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn) (second June record for Alabama). Could this sighting be the result of the Georgia hacking program?

AMERICAN COOT – Seven at Swan Creek WMA, *Limestone*, 24 June (Dean Cutten, Raelene Cutten) was a good number for this species that is rare in summer in Alabama.

SNOWY PLOVER – A total of 18 nests was found in surveys on the barrier islands in the three westernmost WP counties (*vide* Don Ware, Lenny Fenimore, Mark Nicholas).

AMERICAN AVOCET – A single on Sand Island, *Mobile*, 1 June (Sarah Whitfield) was late.

WILLET – Two were noted at Walter F. George Dam, *Henry*, 20 July (Walt Chambers) (rare inland).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER – A single in alternate plumage was very late at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 9 June (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds).

WHIMBREL – Seen only occasionally in inland Alabama, the individual found at the WTF, *Lowndes*, 14 July (Larry Gardella) established the third record for the Inland Coastal Plain.

RED KNOT – Twelve counted on Sand Island, *Mobile*, 1 June (Howard Horne *et al.*) were late.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER – Damien Simbeck recorded one near Leighton, *Colbert*, 5 June. This set a new late departure date for the Tennessee Valley and is the latest for Alabama except for one June 18 record.

COMMON SNIPE – Larry Gardella found one at the WTF, *Lowndes*, 21 July to establish a new early arrival date for the Inland Coastal Plain.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE – One at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, 15 July (Dick Reynolds, Linda Reynolds) was an early migrant.

LEAST TERN – A survey 1 June by Gulf Islands National Seashore personnel found 135 nests on Santa Rosa Island, *Escambia*. Nests were abandoned by 17 June, probably due to human disturbance. Least Terns resumed nesting on roofs in Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, after 17 June (*vide* Bob Duncan).

SOOTY TERN – This species is rare onshore in Alabama, but there are records from the Dauphin Island area for the past two summers. Sightings this summer include one on the east end of Dauphin Island, 1 June (Paul Miliotis) and one on Pelican Island, 8 July (Keith Kamper), both *Mobile*.

- BLACK SKIMMER** – A survey 1 June by Bob Duncan revealed about 25 nests on Santa Rosa Island, *Escambia*, but nests were abandoned by 17 June, probably due to human disturbance.
- EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** – Two seen near Weiss Lake, *Cherokee*, 1 June (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn) were at a new site, representative of continued expansion by the species in Alabama.
- WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – This species is occasional in Alabama, but has occurred at a site in Foley, *Baldwin*, for the past two years. Two adults with a fledgling on 16 May and a maximum of six on 14 July document the first nesting of the species in Alabama (*vide* Howard Horne).
- COMMON GROUND-DOVE** – Two seen at Fruithurst, *Cleburne*, 14 June (Jim Flynn) were unexpected this far north.
- WILLOW FLYCATCHER** – One singing at Forney, *Cherokee*, 2 June (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn) indicated possible nesting (voice recorded; ph.; @ABRC). There are no prior nesting records for Alabama, and this species is rarely identified by voice in Alabama.
- GRAY KINGBIRD** – This species was reported from five different locations in the westernmost three counties of the WP in May and June (m.ob., *vide* Bob Duncan).
- SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – A rare but increasing breeder in Alabama, a pair was seen at a new site at Melton, *Hale*, 22 June (Shawn Reed).
- BLUE-HEADED VIREO** – The first summer record for the Inland Coastal Plain was set by a single seen 19 June at Leon, *Crenshaw* (Don Ware).
- WARBLING VIREO** – Johnny Parks found a singing bird at Long Island Cove, *Jackson*, 1 June. This is the first summer record in decades for northeast Alabama. A single and a pair were noted (and singing) at Brantley, *Crenshaw*, 19 June (Don Ware) to establish the first summer record for south Alabama. In Alabama, the species has been known as a rare breeder only in the Tennessee Valley.
- TREE SWALLOW** – A rare but increasing breeder in Alabama, the following records document its spread: at Gurley, *Madison*, a pair with eggs in a nest 4 June was later seen feeding five young (Jerry Carter, Jim Williams) (nested at this site in 1996); an adult was feeding fledglings at Weiss Lake, *Cherokee*, 7 June (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn) (nested at this site in 1989); adults were feeding fledglings near Black Pond, *Winston*, 23 June+ (Jud Johnston *et al.*) (new site); and three adults and four juveniles at Ballplay, *Etowah*, 26 June (Marion Dobbs) indicated probable nesting at a new site.

- CLIFF SWALLOW** – Still expanding its breeding range in Alabama, this species was observed nesting at a new site on Little Creek, *Russell*, 26-27 June (Don Ware, Carol Ware). Impressive counts came from Weiss Lake, *Cherokee*, 1 June (two colonies of 300 and 500 birds) (Jim Flynn, Earl Horn), and from Harpersville, *Shelby*, 16 July (500 birds) (Helen Kittinger).
- HOUSE WREN** – Four records, all *Jefferson*, were received for this rare breeder in Alabama: a previously banded pair at Center Point, in June (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent), a site where it has nested for the past 16 years; a pair with young at Mountain Brook, during June (Jim Shepherd, Katherine Shepherd); one singing in Birmingham, 14 June (Helen Kittinger, Mary Hines); and one singing at Mountain Brook, 4 July (Pelham Rowan).
- GRAY CATBIRD** – A pair nested at a site in Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, for the third consecutive year (Bob Duncan).
- CEDAR WAXWING** – One was seen along the Tennessee River at the Natchez Trace Parkway, *Lauderdale*, 26 June (Paul Kittle) (rare breeder in Alabama).
- GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER** – A single at Clay, *Jefferson*, 28 July (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent) was an early migrant.
- CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** – This species is an occasional breeder in Alabama. A singing male was in the CW block of the Jamestown quad, *DeKalb*, 25 June (Barbara Stedman).
- BACHMAN'S SPARROW** – A new maximum for Alabama was set by Scott Gravette on 30 June when he counted 18 in Conecuh NF, *Covington/Escambia*.
- LARK SPARROW** – This sparrow is rare but increasing in Alabama. A drive through rural western *Lauderdale*, 28 June produced a count of 34, a new maximum for Alabama (Paul Kittle). One immature was spotted at Demopolis, *Marengo*, 21 July (Judy Self, Don Self).
- WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** – One lingered at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 31 May-2 June (Larry Gardella, Andrea Menyherth) (occasional in summer for Inland Coastal Plain). Another was singing at Woodland, *Lauderdale*, 28 June (Paul Kittle) (first summer record for Tennessee Valley).
- PAINTED BUNTING** – Possibly increasing as a breeder in Alabama, several reports of birds from three new inland areas were unusual. A pair was seen copulating at Orrville, *Dallas*, 7 June (Shawn Reed). At Demopolis,

(Jim Flynn), a new site that is 10 miles southeast of the only currently known breeding area.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH – The third June record for the WP was established by a female at a feeder in Milton, *Santa Rosa*, 2 June (Mike Scheller).

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