

## SUMMER SIGHTINGS (JUNE - JULY 2004)

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This report covers the period from June through July 2004 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. “BBA” = Breeding Bird Atlas; “BBS” = Breeding Bird Survey; “CE” = central east; “CW” = central west; “m.ob.” = many observers; “NF” = National Forest; “NW” = northwest; “ph.” = photographed; “SP” = State Park; “SW” = southwest; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Santa Rosa*, *Okaloosa*, and *Walton* counties); “WTF” = Woerner Turf Farm.

**LESSER SCAUP** – A male was at Town Creek Marsh, *Lawrence*, 1 July (Tom Haggerty, m.ob.) (rare in summer).

**COMMON LOON** – Two were seen at Gulf SP, *Baldwin*, 21 June (Frank Farrell, Shirley Farrell), and one at Logan Martin Dam, *St. Clair*, 5 July (Peggy Baker; ph.) (rare in summer).

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** – This species is an erratic breeder in Alabama. One was found in the Scott Station CW BBA block, *Perry*, 3 June (Shawn Reed).

**NORTHERN GANNET** – Uncommon along the Gulf Coast of Alabama in summer, a first-year bird was found at Pelican Passage, *Mobile*, 22 June (David Dortch, Carrie Dortch, Howard Horne; ph.).

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – Rare but increasing in summer for inland Alabama (non-breeders), three reports were received: a bird with an injured wing at Town Creek Marsh, *Colbert*, 1 July (Tom Haggerty, m.ob.);

11 in the Casemore CE BBA block, *Hale*, 7 July (Judy Self, Don Self); and seven near Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 22 July (Damien Simbeck).

**AMERICAN BITTERN** – A single discovered at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 15 June (Morris Clark) established the first June record for the WP.

**SNOWY EGRET** – Three found along the Tallapoosa River, *Elmore*, 11 June (Tommy Pratt, Fred Bassett) were considered locally uncommon.

**CATTLE EGRET** – A rookery of about 1,000 birds with nests and downy young, present June through July, was discovered in central *Escambia* (Florida) (Morris Clark).

**GLOSSY IBIS** – Casual in the WP, Laura Catterton found a single in *Escambia*, 4 July. Eric Soehren identified 24 at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 13 July, a new maximum for Alabama.

**ROSEATE SPONBILL** – An immature bird on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 17 July (Jon Stovers, Mike Wilson) marked the 28<sup>th</sup> record for Alabama.

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** – Twenty-seven were counted along the Tallapoosa River, *Elmore*, 11 June (Tommy Pratt, Fred Bassett), a good number locally. One adult was noted in the West Blocton East CE BBA block, *Bibb*, 5 July (Greg Jackson) (rare in Mountain Region).

**BALD EAGLE** – This species continues to increase as a breeder in Alabama, as evidenced by the following records: two adults and one or more immatures at the Auburn University Fisheries Unit, *Lee*, May – August (Tyler Hicks) (locally rare, but probably nested at this site in 2003); one adult along the Cahaba River in the West Blocton East CW BBA block, *Bibb*, 3 June (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson); and one adult along the Coosa River, *Talladega*, 10 June (Eric Soehren).

**NORTHERN HARRIER** – A juvenile first seen 31 July at the WTF, *Lowndes* (Tommy Pratt, m.ob.) set a new early arrival date for Alabama.

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** – One exhibiting agitated behavior, indicative of probable nesting, was in the Suggsville CE BBA block, *Clarke*, 17 June (Rick West). This species is a rare breeder on the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama.

**AMERICAN KESTREL** – The following records come from areas of Alabama where this falcon is locally rare in summer: a single in the Pine Hill CE BBA block, *Wilcox*, 3 June (Rick West, Ron Christen), and one at Tombigbee Farms, *Pickens*, 31 July (Greg Harber, m.ob.).

**MERLIN** – The third June record for Alabama was marked by one seen north of Northport, *Tuscaloosa*, 27 June (Jud Johnston).

**COMMON MOORHEN** – One found at Columbiana, *Shelby*, 11 June (Stan

Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) marked the first record for the Mountain Region in 21 years. Rick West recorded another single in the Warrior Dam NW BBA block, *Greene*, 13 July (locally rare).

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** – One in alternate plumage was at the WTF, *Lowndes*, 18 July (Lorna West, Barbara David) and established a new early arrival date for Alabama. A single at the same site 31 July (Tommy Pratt) was also early (if not the same bird as above).

**SNOWY PLOVER** – Twenty were counted on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 22 June (David Dortch, Carrie Dortch, Howard Horne), a maximum number for Alabama in recent decades.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** – Twelve was a good number for late June on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 22 June (David Dortch, Carrie Dortch, Howard Horne).

**PIPING PLOVER** – The first June record for Alabama was set by two discovered on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 22 June (David Dortch, Carrie Dortch, Howard Horne).

**WILLET** – A single was seen west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 28 June (Tom Haggerty) (third June record for inland Alabama).

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** – An early arrival record for the Gulf Coast of Alabama was set by two seen at Foley, *Baldwin*, 20 July (Laura Catterton).

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** – Twelve, a maximum number for June in Alabama, were counted on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 22 June (David Dortch, Carrie Dortch, Howard Horne).

**PARASITIC JAEGER** – A light morph immature bird was seen along the beach at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 14 June, and another light morph was at the same site 23 June (Bob Duncan) (second and third June records for the WP).

**LAUGHING GULL** – One in alternate plumage was on the Tennessee River at the mouth of Town Creek, *Colbert*, 1 July (Tom Haggerty, m.ob.) (rare inland).

**LEAST TERN** – A single was west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 10 June (Tom Haggerty, m.ob.) (occasional for inland Alabama in June).

**BLACK TERN** – Sixteen, many in alternate plumage, was a good number at Aliceville, *Pickens*, 31 July (Greg Harber, m.ob.) (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama).

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – Expanding as a breeder on the Gulf Coast, one was at a feeder in Mobile, *Mobile*, 17 June (Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald), and Howard Horne observed one carrying nest material at

Foley, *Baldwin*, 20 June.

- COMMON GROUND-DOVE** – One was in the Pletcher CE BBA block, *Chilton*, 6 July (Rick West) (rare so far north).
- WILLOW FLYCATCHER** – The first confirmed nesting for Alabama was documented along the White Springs Dike, Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 9 June+ (Dwight Cooley *et al.*; ph.; @ABRC). Three birds were recorded, two heard singing and one observed carrying food.
- LEAST FLYCATCHER** – One was heard singing and calling in the Trinity SW BBA block, *Morgan*, 5 July (Damien Simbeck). This established the second summer record for Alabama, but there is no confirmed breeding record for the state and this bird was not observed in nesting habitat.
- EASTERN PHOEBE** – This species is casual on the Gulf Coast of Alabama in summer and may be increasing. One was singing in the Vaughn CE BBA block, *Baldwin*, 17 July (Claire Krusko).
- SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – A pair, probably nesting, was at a previous nesting site in the Scott Station CW BBA block, *Perry*, 3 June (Shawn Reed) (rare but increasing breeder).
- BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** – Two birds were seen and heard singing at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 4-7 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Betsy Tetlow) (rare in the WP). A single was at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 10 and 22 June (Jan Lloyd).
- TREE SWALLOW** – Expanding as a breeder in Alabama, the following records document its spread: one adult at Ariton, *Dale*, 8 June (Larry Gardella) (first June record for the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama); two pairs building nests at Wood's Ferry along the Coosa River, *Talladega*, 10 June+ (Eric Soehren; ph.); and a pair, probably nesting, at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 4 July (Greg Harber, Jessica Germany).
- CLIFF SWALLOW** – A single, possible nesting, was in the Coy NW BBA block, *Wilcox*, 1 June (Rick West). This record comes from the southern edge of the breeding range for a species that continues to expand its breeding range in Alabama.
- WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** – Two were recorded from the Moundville East CE BBA block, *Tuscaloosa*, 4 June (Shawn Reed) (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama).
- HOUSE WREN** – One exhibited territorial behavior at a nest box in Tuskegee, *Macon*, 5 June (Tyler Hicks). This is the first possible breeding record for the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama, although the species has attempted nesting just to the north in the adjacent county.

- CEDAR WAXWING** – A single at Wadley, *Randolph*, 5 June (Greg Harber, Jessica Germany) may have been a rare breeder this far south or a late migrant.
- CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** – A singing male was in the Tsinia area of Tuskegee NF, *Macon*, 3-4 June (Tyler Hicks). This bird was more likely to be a late migrant rather than a breeder (late departure date for southern Alabama).
- BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** – An adult male was in the West Blocton CW BBA block, *Bibb*, 29 June (Greg Jackson). This record of a possible breeder is the farthest southwest in Alabama.
- CERULEAN WARBLER** – One at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 31 July (Laura Catterton) was rare for the WP. One was in the Sylacauga West CE BBA block, *Talladega*, 11 July (Greg Harber, Jessica Germany). This bird may have been an early migrant rather than a local breeder (no breeding population is now known for this part of the state). A single was an early migrant at Opelika, *Lee*, 23 July (Lorna West).
- BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** – Two reports were received from the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama, where this species is a rare and local breeder: several pairs in the Tuskegee NF, *Macon*, 1 June (Tyler Hicks), and a singing male in the Bullock CE BBA block, *Crenshaw*, 21 June (Don Ware).
- WORM-EATING WARBLER** – This species is a rare and local breeder in southeast Alabama, from which there were two reports: a pair at the Uphappe Creek Plantation east of Tuskegee, *Macon*, 25 June (Tyler Hicks), and one at Loachapoka, *Lee*, 20 July (Tyler Hicks).
- SWAINSON'S WARBLER** – Eric Soehren counted six (a good number for the Mountain Region) on a BBS route along the Coosa River, *Talladega*, 10 June.
- SCARLET TANAGER** – Two pairs south of Tuskegee NF, *Macon*, 25 June (Tyler Hicks) established the southernmost probable breeding record in Alabama. A total of six birds (including four males, two females, and one pair) was found in the West Blocton East CW BBA block, *Bibb*, 29 June (Greg Jackson) (good number this far south).
- BACHMAN'S SPARROW** – Two were found singing at a new site near Pogo, *Franklin*, 18 June (Damien Simbeck) (rare and local in the Tennessee Valley).
- LARK SPARROW** – Several reports of this species, a rare but increasing breeder in Alabama, were received: six to eight at Prattville, *Autauga*, 2-

5 June (Tommy Pratt, Shawn Reed) (a good number, probably nesting); one singing and one carrying nest material at separate and new sites in the Marbury CE BBA block, *Elmore*, 12 June (Larry Gardella); a single at a new site near Priceville, *Morgan*, 13 June (Bob Reid); three in the Epes CW BBA block, *Sumter*, 23 June (Terrence Schiefer, Malcolm Hodges); one at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 30 June (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson) (rare in the Mountain Region at any season and not expected as a breeder).

**PAINTED BUNTING** – This species is rare away from the Mobile Bay area, but is increasing as a breeder in Alabama. Two singing males in the Epes CW BBA block, *Sumter*, 23 June (Terrence Schiefer, Malcolm Hodges) were at a new site and indicated possible nesting. One female-type in the Millport Northwest CE BBA block, *Lamar*, 26 June (Bob Reid, Elberta Reid) was the farthest north possible breeder. A maximum of four was observed 29 May – 4 July at Elberta, *Baldwin* (Claire Krusko); observation of a fledgling on 4 July confirmed nesting at a new site for this species.

**SHINY COWBIRD** – Casual in spring in the WP, a male was observed 2-25 June at Fort Pickens, *Escambia* (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Laura Catterton), and a female was at the feeder of Jere French, Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 23 June (*vide* Bob Duncan).

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** – Because this species is a rare and erratic breeder on the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama, a single seen in the Moundville East CE BBA block, *Tuscaloosa*, 4 June (Shawn Reed) was noteworthy.

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