

## ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded May 17, 1952

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### Alabama Birdlife

Published quarterly by the Alabama Ornithological Society in February, May, August and November, at Auburn, Alabama. It is sent to all of the membership, or may be obtained by subscription in the United States, for \$1.50 per year, or \$.50 per issue.

Entered as second class matter at Auburn, Alabama.

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SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

JAMES E. KEELER

The spring meeting of the Alabama Ornithological Society was held at Cheaha State Park on April 24, 25, and 26, 1959. A total of 26 persons registered for the meeting. A total of 84 species of birds were counted by members on the field trips during Saturday and Sunday.

The A.O.S. members moved that the Society go on record as opposing any further treatments with insecticides, and/or zoocides (hydrocarbon compounds) for fire ant control by Federal and/or State Government Agencies, either directly or indirectly, except for experimental purposes.

Mr. Charles Broley, nationally known authority on Bald Eagles, was made an honorary member of the Alabama Ornithological Society.

New officers for the A.O.S. were: Mr. Thomas A. Imhof, President; Mr. Thomas Z. Atkeson, Vice President; and Mrs. J. C. Robinson, Treasurer.

The group voted to hold all fall meetings on the Gulf Coast since this area is an unusually good study area during the fall months.

The program was held after the banquet Saturday night. Mrs. James Mason gave a colored slide lecture on wildflowers of Alabama and Jim Keeler presented a colored film on the Cottontail Rabbit.

Spring Meeting Bird Count, Mt. Cheaha

April 24, 25, and 26, 1959

Species		Species	
Blue-winged teal .....	2	Downy woodpecker .....	4
Turkey vulture .....	25	Eastern kingbird .....	8
Black vulture .....	16	Red-shouldered hawk .....	3
Cooper's hawk .....	2	Bobwhite .....	10
Red-tailed hawk .....	5	Turkey .....	1
Pileated woodpecker .....	5	American coot .....	4
Yellow-b. sapsucker .....	1	Common snipe .....	1
Hairy woodpecker .....	7	Solitary sandpiper .....	2

Species		Species	
Willet .....	2	La. waterthrush .....	2
Mourning dove .....	10	Ky. Warbler .....	3
Chuckwillswidow .....	1	Yellow-breasted chat .....	3
Chimney Swift .....	11	Hooded warbler .....	C
Ruby-throated hummingbird .....	2	Canada warbler .....	1
Yellow-s. flicker .....	10	House sparrow .....	15
Carolina wren .....	C	Bobolink .....	14
Mockingbird .....	8	Eastern meadowlark .....	20
Catbird (and nest) .....	1	Eastern redwing .....	50
Brown thrasher .....	5	Orchard oriole .....	3
American robin .....	3	Brown-headed cowbird .....	10
Wood thrush .....	6	Scarlet tanager .....	15
Eastern bluebird (and nest) .....	16	Summer tanager .....	3
Blue-gray gnatcatcher (and nest) .....	C	Red-eyed vireo .....	C
Ruby-crowned kinglet .....	3	Philadelphia vireo .....	1
Cedar waxwing .....	6	Warbling vireo .....	3
Loggerhead shrike .....	2	Black and white warbler .....	C
Starling .....	6	Worm-eating warbler .....	1
White-eyed vireo .....	8	Myrtle warbler .....	C
Yellow-throated vireo .....	4	Black-throated green warbler .....	C
Great crested flycatcher .....	C*	Black-Polled warbler .....	2
Eastern phoebe .....	3	Pine warbler .....	1
Least flycatcher .....	3	Prairie warbler .....	C
Bank swallow .....	1	Palm warbler .....	C
Rough-winged swallow (and nest) .....	8	Cardinal .....	C
Barn swallow .....	1	Rose-breasted grosbeak .....	20
Blue jay .....	C	Blue grosbeak .....	3
Common crow .....	C	Indigo bunting .....	C
Carolina chickadee .....	C	Eastern goldfinch .....	6
Tufted titmouse .....	C	Rufous-sided towhee .....	C
White-breasted nuthatch .....	4	Savannah sparrow .....	4
House wren .....	1	Chipping sparrow .....	12
Ovenbird .....	A	Field sparrow .....	10
		White-throated sparrow .....	C
		Song sparrow .....	1

\*C—Common, A—Abundant.

## SOME OBSERVATIONS OF EARLY FALL MIGRATION ON THE GULF COAST OF ALABAMA, 1959

By JULIAN L. DUSI AND ROSEMARY T. DUSI

During the period from September 4 to 21, 1959, the writers studied vertebrate ecology on the Gulf Coast of Alabama. Among data collected was that relating to the migration and abundance of gulls, terns, wading and shorebirds. Most of the time was spent in the Gulf Shores vicinity, ranging from Alabama Point to Fort Morgan. The Mobile causeway was visited on September 18 and 19, with the morning of the 19th in the company of Dr. M. W. Gailliard of Mobile. Dauphin Island was studied September 19 (evening), 20 and 21 (morning).

The weather for this period was slightly variable. Winds were mostly easterly and afternoon thunderstorms occurred in the area. On September 10 to 13, there were strong winds from the northeast and over a 40 hour period about 20 inches of rain fell causing a considerable flooding of the lowlands.

Among the migrational observations it was noted that each morning a flight of gulls and terns came to the Gulf Shores coast from the west and each evening they would make their return flight. These birds flew fairly low over the beach and water. On September 6, 7 and 8, in the evenings with the wind blowing from the north and northeast, additional flights of gulls and/or terns were seen. These flights occurred late enough and high enough so that no indentifications, other than that they were gulls and terns, could be made. A group of these birds would suddenly appear from the east at a fairly high altitude, soaring and circling upward until they finally reached an altitude of about 2,000 feet. Then in a group they would fly directly south or southwest. On September 9, the wind shifted to the west and thereafter none of these migrational groups was seen.

Few shorebirds were seen at the beginning of the study. Actually, a few Sanderlings and one Ruddy Turnstone were the only ones seen the first several days. On September 8, the writers collected a male Buff-breasted Sandpiper that was in company with 4 Least Sandpipers, 3 Semipalmated Sandpipers and a Snowy Plover. A Dowitcher and 2 Willets were nearby. Interestingly enough, the Buff-breasted Sandpip-

er lacked subcutaneous fat, which is a good indication that it had just arrived in migration. On September 9, several Semipalmated Plovers appeared. These could have come from Dauphin Island since the wind was westerly and strong. After the period of heavy rain (Sept. 10-13) with strong northeasterly winds, the shorebirds increased in numbers and kinds. On September 14, a Knot was collected.

Following is given an annotated list of the birds to show not only their presence and approximate numerical status but also some implications of migration.

Brown Pelican. Seen most days at Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island in small numbers, 20 being the largest group seen.

White Pelican. Seen along the causeway at Mobile September 18 and 19. At least 200 were in the group. Dr. Gailliard indicated that they had been there some time.

Great Blue Heron. Several seen each day. On September 16 and 17, a group of 20 congregated at the pass from the Gulf Shores lagoon.

Common Egret. Less abundant than Great Blue Herons. Most common along the Mobile causeway.

Snowy Egret. Seen on all areas but uncommon.

Louisiana Heron. Seen at Gulf Shores and at Dauphin Island but less common than the Snowy Egret.

Little Blue Heron. Seen on all areas but most abundant at Mobile; 6 being seen.

Green Heron. Present but uncommon.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron. Seen on all areas; 2 being the most seen in one day.

Least Bittern. Two seen at Gulf Shores and one at Mobile.

Green-winged Teal. Eight seen at Mobile September 18; 6 the next day.

Blue-winged Teal. Three seen at Gulf Shores September 7 and for most of the following days until the 18th.

Clapper Rail. Present on all areas. Most abundantly heard on Dauphin Island.

Florida Gallinule. Fifteen seen along the causeway at Mobile.

Piping Plover. Ten seen at Gulf Shores September 11. Twenty were seen in a group at Dauphin Island.

Snowy Plover. A few individuals seen at Gulf Shores and at Dauphin Island.

Semipalmated Plover. Three seen at Gulf Shores September 9. On Dauphin Island they equalled the Piping Plovers.

Black-bellied Plover. One to several seen at Gulf Shores each day after September 11. About twice that number was seen each day on Dauphin Island.

Ruddy Turnstone. Several seen daily at Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island.

Spotted Sandpiper. Several seen in the Gulf Shores area.

Solitary Sandpiper. Uncommon. One collected at Gulf Shores, September 12.

Willet. Uncommon. Several seen on each area.

Greater Yellow-legs. Six seen and one collected on Dauphin Island, September 21.

Lesser Yellow-legs. One seen along the Mobile causeway, September 19, and several seen on Dauphin Island on the 20th.

Knot. One collected at Gulf Shores, September 14.

Least Sandpiper. Four to 6 commonly at Gulf Shores after September 8; 20 or more were seen at Dauphin Island.

Dowitcher. One seen at Gulf Shores, September 8 and 11; 4-6 present on Dauphin Island.

Semipalmated Sandpiper. Three or 4 present at Gulf Shores starting September 8. About 40 were present on Dauphin Island.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper. A male collected, September 8, at Gulf Shores.

Sanderling. Common at Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island. The largest group was seen on September 17, at dawn, when a group of about 25 was seen at the lagoon pass at Gulf Shores.

Herring Gull. A few at Gulf Shores and about 15 at Dauphin Island.

Ring-billed Gull. About 10 at Dauphin Island.

Laughing Gull. The most common gull at Gulf Shores and equal to the Ring-billed at Dauphin Island.

Forster's Tern. Several on all areas.

Common Tern. Ten seen at Gulf Shores, September 16. Several were collected.

Least Tern. Several were seen at Gulf Shores; one

collected. Several were also present on Dauphin Island.

Royal Tern. Seen but not common at Gulf Shores. A group of 200-400 was present at Dauphin Island.

Cabot's Tern. Fairly common at Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island. One hundred could be seen at either area in a day.

Caspian Tern. About 20 were present at Dauphin Island.

Black Tern. The abundant tern at Gulf Shores where more than 1,000 were seen each day. There were a few at Mobile and Dauphin Island.

Black Skimmer. Most abundant at Dauphin Island where 100 or more were seen. There were a few seen at Gulf Shores and a group of about 20 seen at Fort Morgan.

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# KRIDERS HAWK IN THE BLACK BELT OF ALABAMA

By ROBERT W. SKINNER

The collection of an immature Kriders hawk **Buteo jamaicensis kriderii** Hoopes on November 19, 1957, by the writer was the first specimen for the State of Alabama. The specimen was collected four miles south of Montgomery in Montgomery County, and identified by Dr. John W. Aldrich of the U.S.N.M. Since that time numerous **kriderii** have been observed in the State from November to as late as April 25, 1959.

In some areas, such as No. 4 Prison Farm in north Montgomery County, the ratio of **kriderii** to **B.j. borealis** was determined to be as high as 2-1 on specific counts. The ratio for the entire season (1958-59) was approximately 5-7. The highest one-day count on **kriderii** was eight (March 19, 1959). The immature birds outnumbered the adult plumaged **kriderii** by a ratio of 12-1. Adults possess an almost immaculate white tail and extremely light head; whereas immatures closely resemble the immature **borealis** with an excess amount of white in the plumage. Numerous degrees of variation occur.

The above mentioned study area comprises about 3300 acres of prairie type farm land, of which 2000 acres is under cultivation—wheat, corn, cotton, and various row crops being the main crops. Several species of rats and mice occur in abundance. The cotton-tail population is also very high.

Thirty-five miles southeast of Mntgomery on Sagefield Plantation at Union Springs, Alabama, **kriderii** was present in large numbers (March 7, 1959). This plantation contains several thousand acres of excellent quail habitat. The population of buteos was above average. The "burning off" of land in this section attracts hovering hawks from miles around, at which time a reasonably accurate count can be taken. The number of **kriderii** in this area was not as high as in the previously mentioned; the maximum number encountered being six on March 9, 1959.

**Kriderii** have been observed at various points throughout Alabama, usually a single bird. The southern-most record occurred at Coden, Alabama, on the Christmas Bird Count, 1958, (T. A. Imhof and R. W. Skinner). Coden is approximately one-half mile in-

land from the Gulf of Mexico. An adult bird was observed at Coffeetown on February 20, 1959 (Lovett E. Williams, Jr.).

The subspecies **is** identifiable in the field; however due to variations, some individuals present difficult field problems. The observer should be thoroughly familiar with museum specimens and acquire some familiarity with the race in the field before attempting to identify this race.

The Black Belt, so far as can be determined, has the most substantial population of **kriderii** in Alabama, and in local areas is a well represented raptor in the winter months.

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State Conservation Department  
Game and Fish Division  
Montgomery, Alabama

## GODWIT AND CURLEW RECORDS FROM WHEELER REFUGE

By THOMAS Z. ATKESON

Of the many shorebird species pausing on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge during their migrations, the "snooty-billed" godwits and the "droopy-billed" curlews are among the rarest. Refuge records covering the past 20 years include only a single marbled godwit observation and only three sightings of Hudsonian curlews, now called whimbrels.

The godwit record came on April 16, 1950, when David C. Hulse spotted a single marbled godwit along the edge of Crabtree slough, near the refuge headquarters. Henry H. Grammer, Ernest A. Byford, and William Jernigan joined Hulse later in examining this bird. It remained in the vicinity through April 17 and was seen on land and in flight, and was heard calling. It was examined carefully at reasonably close range, through good binoculars and checked against several references. The identification is considered positive.

Whimbrels were first noted on the refuge on August 26, 1940, when John Steenis saw and heard a small flick near the north bank of the Tennessee River a short distance east of the U. S. Highway 31 causeway. Steenis, a research biologist of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, had worked in the Aleutians and in other localities where these birds are fairly common.

On August 18, 1947, Lawrence S. Givens, then Wheeler Refuge manager, saw another whimbrel. From his long stay on the St. Marks Refuge of coastal Florida, Givens is familiar with these birds, but the bird noted was in flight and at some distance, and the identification is considered tentative only.

The most recent whimbrel record came on February 13, 1959, when David Hulse found a lone bird near the White Springs dike. It remained in this vicinity through March 5 and was seen several times by Hulse and by State Conservation Officer J. B. Tanner, who tried to photograph it. This bird was seen both on land and in flight and was frequently heard calling.

No effort was made to collect either the godwit or a whimbrel, for both had been previously taken in the State. The godwit was seen in Morgan County, but all whimbrel sightings were in Limestone County. Comparing the above records with Howell's BIRDS OF

ALABAMA, we find that this book contains only two old marbled godwit records, a bird shot at Dauphin Island and another shot at Greensboro and only a single whimbrel record, a bird shot at Dauphin Island.

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Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge  
Decatur, Alabama  
May 13, 1959

## STATUS OF THE BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER IN ALABAMA

By JULIAN L. DUSI

To the best of our knowledge, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper, *Tryngites subruficollis* (Vieillot), is a rare fall visitor.

Prior to 1955, its presence was not known for the State of Alabama. On September 12 of that year the writer (Dusi, 1955) observed a specimen among a group of sandpipers near Gulf Shores. Two days later, Ernest Byford collected the first specimen of the state at Wheeler Wildlife Refuge, Decatur, Alabama (Imhof, 1956). This year the writer was again observing the early migrations on the Gulf Coast and collected a male Buff-breasted Sandpiper near Gulf Shores on September 8, 1959.

The buff-breasted Sandpiper is known to migrate from its arctic breeding ground through the prairies west of the Mississippi River. From the records of this bird in Alabama, it must migrate only in the western portion of the state. Likewise, the records indicate that it is an early migrant. It is the opinion of the writer that many appearances of this sandpiper have been overlooked in Alabama because it is not looked for early enough in the fall migration. It would seem that a concentrated effort in late August and early September, studying the prairie-like fields and mud plots in Western Alabama, should reveal that the Buff-breasted Sandpiper appears in Alabama more often than we have heretofore thought. It is a challenge and opportunity for observation that should not be overlooked.

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## RECENT RECORD FOR LINCOLN'S SPARROW IN ALABAMA

By MARGARET ROBINSON

The Lincoln's sparrow breeds from Newfoundland and N. Quebec south to Maine, N. New York, N. Michigan and Minnesota. It is known to winter from N. Mississippi and S. Oklahoma south to the Gulf, and it appears on the Alabama State Bird List as it was presumed to occur here in winter, also. There is no specimen for the State. Howell, in *Birds of Alabama*, states that he observed a Lincoln's sparrow near Florence, May 4, 1912.

I have been trapping and banding birds on Chapman Mt., here in Huntsville. I have maintained four traps—two in an open abandoned barnyard, and two in open but heavily shaded areas near a small stream, surrounded by dense undergrowth. Since I have not wished to keep any adult birds from their nests or young, I have been trapping from 5:30 P. M. to 7:00 P. M., D.S.T., only, so I consider it a great stroke of luck that during that short time on May 2, 1959, I caught a Lincoln's sparrow. When I checked one of the traps along the creek, I found an adult white-throated sparrow and a smaller sparrow, which at first glance, resembled an immature swamp sparrow.

On April 2, 1959, I banded an immature swamp sparrow at another location, and in identifying it read much about similar species.

When I removed the bird from the trap, I noticed immediately the nearly rust colored head stripes and the very narrow eyering, and when I turned the bird over and saw the white throat with its very fine black streaks, the bright creamy breast and sides with their only slightly heavier streaks, and the clean white belly, I knew I had no swamp sparrow. The bird was clearly an adult. It measured  $5\frac{1}{4}$  inches and had a long, unnotched tail.

My first thought was of its being a Lincoln's sparrow, but I am chagrined to have to admit that the importance of this bird's being found in Alabama did not enter my mind. With field guides (Peterson, 1956 and Pough, 1953) I eliminated any species with which the Lincoln's sparrow could possibly be confused. Had this not been a mature bird with such striking markings and had I not had the memory of the swamp sparrow



still fresh in mind, I might have had some difficulty in identification.

When I knew beyond doubt that the bird was a Lincoln's sparrow, I placed a band on its leg and let it go. Only when I arrived home and checked the State Bird List, did I realize what I had let fly away without my getting even a photograph.

#### Literature Cited

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Peterson, R. T., 1956. A field guide to the birds. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, p. 238.

Pough, R. N. All the birds of eastern and central North America. Doubleday and Co., New York, pp. 269-270.

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Huntsville, Alabama

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.—As part of a study of the shorebird population on the Florida Gulf coast, a large number of short-billed dowitchers, semipalmated plovers, dunlins, and lesser numbers of other waders were trapped, banded and color-dyed in spring, 1959. Birds caught in May were dyed a vivid golden color which is known to have remained unaltered after at least one month on a dowitcher. Birds trapped in June were dyed scarlet, though dyed birds seen two weeks later were only pinkish in hue. All birds dyed were presumed to be in northward migration. Other colors will be used in the fall, 1959.

It is earnestly requested that anyone observing such colored shorebirds please communicate promptly with the undersigned, stating color, species, and date and location of observation. Horace Loftin, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.

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## OBITUARY

### Charles L. Broley

Charles L. Broley, well known by ornithologists and bird lovers for his work on eagles, died on May 4, 1959, at Delta, Ontario. His age was about 79. Many A.O.S. members will remember Mr. Broley's lecture at the Auburn meeting last year. Mr. Broley was an honorary member of A.O.S.