

## SUMMER SIGHTINGS (JUNE - JULY 2008)

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This report covers the period from June through July 2008 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*, *Franklin*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa*, are in Alabama. “@” = under review by; “ABRC” = Alabama Bird Records Committee; “b” = banded; “NF” = National Forest; “ph.” = photographed; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa* counties).

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK** – Observations of this species came from Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, on multiple dates: six+ on 1 June, 12 on 4 June, and still present 23+ June (Chazz Hesselein *et al.*; ph.; @ABRC), providing the sixth record for Alabama.



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, 8 June 2008, Blakeley Island, AL; C. Hesselein.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** – Three at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 1-4 June (Chazz Hesselein; ph.) were late if not rare breeders. Seven were at Cedarville, *Hale*, 7 July (Eric Soehren, John Trent; ph.) (rare breeder in Alabama).

**SURF SCOTER** – On Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, three were present 8 June (Chazz Hesselein, Martha Hesselein, Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald, Mike Rogers; ph.) to mark the second summer record for Alabama.



Surf Scoter, 8 June 2008, Dauphin Island, AL; T. Siegwald.

**COMMON LOON** – Rare in summer in the WP, five birds were at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 11 June (Bob Duncan).

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** – This species is an erratic breeder in Alabama, so an adult and five downy young at Cedarville, *Hale*,

7 July (Eric Soehren, John Trent; ph.) were noteworthy.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** – Rare in summer in the WP, one-four birds were on Pensacola Bay, *Santa Rosa*, 1-26 June (Bob Duncan).



Pied-billed Grebe, 7 July 2008, Cedarsville, AL; E. Soehren.

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – Rare in summer for inland Alabama, 20 were seen at Cedarville, *Hale*, 7 July (Eric Soehren, John Trent; ph.), and an estimated 50 were along Ala. Hwy. 25, *Hale*, 19 July (Greg Harber *et al.*).

**ANHINGA** – One male and two female-types (probably nesting) were seen at Saginaw, *Shelby*, 31 July (Greg Jackson) (rare in Mountain Region but becoming regular at this site).

**GREAT BLUE HERON (WHITE MORPH)** –

The 15<sup>th</sup> record for the WP was marked by one at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 19 July (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). Occasional in Alabama (and the first this decade), a single was at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, 4-8 July (Andy Nelson *et al.*; ph.) to mark the third Tennessee Valley record.



Great Blue Heron (white morph), 4 July 2008, Guntersville Dam, AL; A. Nelson.

**REDDISH EGRET** – Casual in summer in the WP, one dark morph was at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 23 June, and one white morph was at the same site 18-22 July (Bob Duncan).

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** – One was found in the Chesson quad, *Macon*, 7 June (Eric Soehren) (locally rare).

**WHITE IBIS** – Uncommon to erratic in the Mountain Region, an immature was spotted at Pell City, *St. Clair*, 13 July (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson).

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** – Two-three seen near Malvern, *Geneva*, 8 June (Dan Clark) were locally uncommon. The 36 seen along Little River, *Baldwin*, 15 June (Randy Butler *et al.*, *fide* Venetia Friend; ph.) established a maximum count for the Gulf Coast of Alabama.

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** – Rare in the Mountain Region, records came from an area where the species has been regular in recent years: four (good number) on 12 June, one on 13 June, and one on 1 July at Winfield, *Marion* (Jud Johnston), and two on 8 July and 16 July (copulating) near Guin, *Marion* (Michael Estill, Don Wooldridge).

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** – The first July record for the WP was marked by one at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 6 July (Bob Duncan).

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** – Two+ were seen on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 7 June (Chazz Hesselein) (uncommon in June).

**SNOWY PLOVER** – It was another banner year for breeding birds at Fort Pickens, Gulf Islands National Seashore, *Escambia*. There were 56 nests as of 17 June, not including numerous young fledglings (*fide* Monica Cain).

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** – Two+ were seen on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 7 June (Chazz Hesselein *et al.*) and one was there 8 June (John Dixon) (uncommon in June).

**KILLDEER** – At Pell City, *St. Clair*, 120 on 13 July was a good number for summer in the Mountain Region (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson).

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** – A single that was probably an early migrant marked a rare June record at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 28 June (Chazz Hesselein).

**WHIMBREL** – Rare in July, one was on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 26 July (Howard Horne, Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald).

**MARBLED GODWIT** – Casual in July in the WP, a single was at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 17-18 July (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). Rare in July in Alabama, one was on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 26 July (Eugenia Carey *et al.*) and 27 July (Mike Rogers; ph.).



Marbled Godwit, 27 July 2008, Dauphin Island, AL; M. Rogers.

**RED KNOT** – and 5 June (15 birds; Bill Summerour) (rare in June).

**SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** – Casual in summer in the WP, 15-23 birds in basic plumage were counted on the mud flats at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 4-17 June (Bob Duncan).

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** – Casual in summer in the WP, 1-3 birds were on the mud flats at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 4-17 June (Bob Duncan).

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** – Chazz Hesselein found one lingering at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 1 June (rare in June).

**DUNLIN** – A single was on the mud flats at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 4 June (Bob Duncan) (second June record for the WP).

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** – One-seven birds were on the mud flats at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 4-17 June (Bob Duncan) (only three previous June records for the WP).

**DOWITCHER SP.** – Uncommon to rare in June, two+ were on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 7 June (Chazz Hesselein).

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** – Uncommon in July, one-two were on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 26-28 July (Howard Horne, Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald *et al.*; ph.).



Wilson's Phalarope, 28 July 2008, Dauphin Island, AL; M. Rogers

**LAUGHING GULL** – Seven along I-65 north-west of Atmore, *Escambia*, 6 July (L. Ellis) marked a rare record for inland Alabama.

**SOOTY TERN** – Breeding birds were reported from St. George Island, *Franklin*, 2 June (Alan Knothe).

**LEAST TERN** – It was another banner year for breeding birds at Fort Pickens, Gulf

Islands National Seashore, *Escambia*, where an estimated 200 chicks successfully fledged as of 17 June (*vide* Monica Cain).

**ROSEATE TERN** – The first record in 50 years for the WP was marked by an alternate-plumaged bird watched at leisure at Fort Pickens, Gulf Islands National Seashore, *Escambia*, 4 June (Bob Duncan, Monica Cain, Sally Shultz).

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – Increasing as a breeder on the Gulf Coast, a pair was observed at Mobile, *Mobile*, from mid-June to early July (Ruth White). Rare but increasing in inland Alabama, one was noted at Greenville, *Butler*, 30 June (Annabel Markel).

**BARN OWL** – A juvenile was found injured and taken to rehabilitation at Ft. Payne, *DeKalb*, 7 July (Gary Wayner; ph.) (uncommon breeder).

**BURROWING OWL** – A count at site B-70, Eglin Air Force Base, *Okaloosa*, 7 June revealed 11 birds (Lenny Fenimore, Bob Duncan *et al.*).

**RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD** – An early arrival for the Inland Coastal Plain was marked by an adult male at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 30 July (Carolyn Snow, Phil Snow, Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent; b.).

**HAIRY WOODPECKER** – Very rare in the WP, one was noted at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 15 June (Betsy Tetlow).

**WILLOW FLYCATCHER** – A singing bird was found along the Cahaba River near Jericho, *Perry*, 27 June (but not relocated 29 June) (Eric Soehren, Chris Smith), to mark the third record for the Inland Coastal Plain and the fifth June record for Alabama.

**TROPICAL/COUCH'S KINGBIRD** – The eighth record for the WP was marked by a single at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 10 July (Bob Duncan).

**GRAY KINGBIRD** – One at Gulf Shores, *Baldwin*, 27 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) was evidence of a continued and gradual recovery for this species in Alabama.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – This species is a rare but increasing breeder in Alabama, and a pair was found at a regular site along Ala. Hwy. 183 north of Uniontown, *Hale*, 19 July (Greg Harber *et al.*).

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** – Very rare in summer in the WP, a single was noted at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 16 June (Bob Duncan).

**FISH CROW** – Rare but increasing in the Tennessee Valley, two were found in the Wheeler Dam quad, *Lawrence*, 22 June (Tom Haggerty), and a single was heard at Decatur, *Morgan*, 30 July (Steve McConnell).

**TREE SWALLOW** – Increasing as a breeder in Alabama but still rare, one-two were at a nest cavity at White Hall, *Lowndes*, 24 May and 14 June (Larry Gardella) (southernmost nesting in Alabama). Singles were in the Little Texas quad, *Macon*, 18 June (Lorna West), in the Town Creek quad, *Lawrence*, 21 June (Damien Simbeck), and in the Wheeler Dam quad, *Lawrence*, 22 June (Tom Haggerty).

**CLIFF SWALLOW** – Four were noted along I-65 at the Perdido Creek Bridge,

*Escambia*, 3 July (L. Ellis) (if nesting, the southernmost record for inland Alabama).

**HOUSE WREN** – A pair feeding young in a nest was observed at Florence, *Lauderdale*, 21 July (Jennifer Moses, Frank Moses, Ann Moses) (rare breeder, especially in northwest Alabama).

**CEDAR WAXWING** – Four were seen at the mouth of Spring Creek, *Lawrence*, 15 June (Paul Kittle) (rare breeder).

**YELLOW WARBLER** – Now a rare breeder in Alabama, one was found in the Landersville quad, *Lawrence*, 19 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton).

**CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** – In Bankhead NF near Youngtown, *Lawrence*, one was recorded 19 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) (occasional breeder in Alabama).

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** – The second June record for the WP was marked by a male that lingered at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 1 June (Bob Duncan).

**CERULEAN WARBLER** – This species is a rare breeder in Alabama; reports from three sites were received. Singles were at two separate sites in the Bee Branch quad, Bankhead NF, *Lawrence*, 9 June (Greg Jackson) (regular in this area); one was seen near Moulton, *Lawrence*, 13 June (Steve McConnell) (probably a wandering non-breeder); and a pair feeding two young were along Larkin Fork, *Jackson*, 5 July (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, Greg Harber) (regular in this area).

**SWAINSON'S WARBLER** – Rare in the Tennessee Valley, one was found in the Moulton quad, *Lawrence*, 22 June (Andrew Haffenden).

**SCARLET TANAGER** – This species is a rare breeder on the Inland Coastal Plain, so a male along County Road 65 south of Uniontown, *Perry*, 16 June (Judy Self, Don Self) was notable and southwest of known locations. One in the Tuskegee quad, *Macon*, 22 June (Larry Gardella) was at the southern edge of the breeding range. A single along the Tallapoosa River north of Tallassee, *Tallapoosa*, 26 June (John Trent) was at the margin of the breeding range and uncommon this far south.

**LARK SPARROW** – A rare but increasing breeder in Alabama, the summer bird count in *Lawrence* 6-22 June produced 35, an excellent number: 16 in the Courtland quad (Paul Kittle), 10 in the Town Creek quad (Damien Simbeck), and five in the Caddo quad (Steve McConnell) (regular in this part of Alabama). Tommy Pratt *et al.* had four+ along County Road 145 east of Autaugaville, *Autauga*, 16 July.

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** – Twenty-six was a good number in the Oakville quad, *Lawrence*, 6 June (Steve McConnell).

**PAINTED BUNTING** – This species is a rare breeder on the Inland Coastal Plain. A single was at a regular site along River Road in Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 5 July (Larry Gardella), and one was noted along County Road 145 east of Autaugaville, *Autauga*, 16 July (Tommy Pratt *et al.*).

**DICKCISSEL** – Twenty-eight was a good number in the Oakville quad, *Lawrence*, 6 June (Steve McConnell). This species is a rare and local breeder in the Mountain Region, so two singing at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 2 July (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson) were notable.

**ORCHARD ORIOLE** – One was singing on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 9 June (Eugenia Carey) (locally rare in June).

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