

Please send reports to the compiler on the following schedule:

Fall Season (September-October-November) deadline for copy is 10 December

Winter Season (December-January-February) deadline for copy is 10 March

Spring Season (March-April-May) deadline for copy is 10 June

Summer Season (June-July-August) deadline for copy is 10 September

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THE SEASON SUMMER 1969

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This is the most important season of the year, the time of reproduction, of making up for the losses of the other three seasons. Nesting season success usually is difficult to assess in the short time required to make this report unless one has the sophisticated equipment (planes, helicopters, personnel, computers) that we now can afford to expend only on birds of special importance such as game and threatened species. In another year the Breeding Bird Survey should be able to provide us with timely information with the aid of computers, provided of course that the observers themselves report promptly and follow the rules. Even though it measures the breeding stock rather than the young produced the Breeding Bird Survey is a tremendous step forward in measuring our bird populations.

In general, temperatures were a bit below normal, a trend now of long duration. Precipitation was very erratic. For instance in Birmingham a record-breaking wet May was followed by 3 dry months, and little precipitation was received from Camille, so that by 1 Sept the area was very dry but showed an annual excess of about 3 inches. Mobile also had variable rainfall—a very wet July brought its deficiency close to normal only to fall behind by more than 5 inches by mid-August. Camille brought the rainfall to an excess.

Present-day hurricanes are difficult to compare with those of more than a decade ago. They are more accurately measured than in the past, property values are rising rapidly, and adequate warning usually saves all but a few lives. Camille, reported as the most powerful in history certainly is the most powerful of recent times—since hurricanes have been named. The death toll and the number of cities and towns wiped out and flooded attest its power; but a real sign of its power is that it travelled over 1000 miles inland and 3 days later emerged near Norfolk still a hurricane!

Most of Alabama was 150 to 350 miles east of the eye as it roared towards Memphis, and little rain resulted, but a few birds, notably gulls, terns, and shorebirds appeared inland the week of 17 Aug. (See below). At Mobile which barely missed the full brunt of the storm, Fr. Dorn on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay noted thousands of terns and Laughing Gulls over the Bay. Mostly, travel was restricted and people were occupied with the necessities of life and few bird observations were reported

from coastal Alabama. Although coastal Alabama experienced winds at about 100 mph, most of the damage was in lowlying areas such as Dauphin Island, Pleasure Island (Gulf Shores to Ft. Morgan) and the head of Mobile Bay. They were flooded with 4 foot or more of seawater which deposited lots of sand and debris.

Many species of birds appear at times to be more or less numerous than usual. Often this is not significant unless additional evidence is at hand. These birds will be reported here to alert observers to obtain corroborating evidence. If the species is reported by many observers in one period (Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin this winter) or repeatedly over several periods (Cattle Egret, Barn Swallow up, and Eastern Bluebird, Brown Pelican down) the trend then becomes more significant. Besides the examples above, the following species appear to be more numerous this summer: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Red-headed Woodpecker (Baldwin County), E. Phoebe, Mockingbird, Catbird (south Alabama), Robin, Starling, House Sparrow, Com. Grackle, Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak; less numerous: herons, hawks, Bachman's Sparrow.

Grebe, Pelicanlike Birds—Pied-billed Grebes remained for the summer at several places including Eufaula Refuge (AKB), Foley (PFC) and Magnolia Springs (PFC); and at the last named a female had 3 downy young with her on 3 July (PFC). On 20 Aug. a WHITE-TAILED TROPIC BIRD was off Cochrane Causeway (Battleship Parkway) (JLD), the location of the only other record for the state. On 4 Aug. 50 White Pelicans with more in the distance were off Cochrane Causeway (LRT) and on 19 Aug. some of them were seen on the Skyline Country Club Golf Course (vide JLD). A flock of 12 Brown Pelicans were seen weekly on Dauphin in June and July (JS & GS) and some were reported from Cochrane Causeway and the eastern shore of Mobile Bay (vide MAG). On 14 Aug. just before Camille "many, many" were reported from Dauphin (MAG). On Sand Island (3mi. so. of Dauphin) on 6 July another Brown Booby was seen (REH), third record for Alabama. After the first known Double-crested Cormorant for the Chattahoochee Valley in 10 years (see Spring Report), another, or possibly the same bird, spent the summer at Eufaula Refuge (AKB).

Herons, Ibises—A Great Blue Heron at Lake Purdy on 13 July (JRB), one of the few midsummer records near Birmingham, leads one to wonder if the species breeds nearer the city than we think. About 7 July at Eufaula Refuge the numbers of Great Blue and Little Blue Herons and Com Egrets increased (AKB) probably the time of peak production of young. Cattle Egrets were not noted there, but elsewhere in the state this species appears to be supplanting the Little Blue. For instance

in Baldwin County one colony contained about 600 pairs of Cattle Egrets and only 15-20 of Little Blues (CLK). Another colony in Mobile County held 600 pairs of Cattle Egrets and Little Blues with egrets in the clear majority (ELR). At Marion 2 Cattle Egrets on 2 June and 5 of them on 7 June are the farthest north the species has been noted in the breeding season, except for the Tennessee Valley (RRR & EGR). It is a pleasure to see the Reddish Egret still persisting on Dauphin Island in mid-summer, one immature on 27 July (LRT). The Louisiana Heron was present at Eufaula Refuge from at least 23 July to 3 August (AKB) with 3 present on 28 July (JLDu). A Least Bittern, a bird that always has difficulty finding proper habitat inland, was present 14 July at Eufaula Refuge (AKB). Four Glossy Ibises near Cedar Point on 27 July (AGT) are very close to where the species bred for the first time in Alabama last year. An immature White Ibis at Lake Purdy (near Birmingham) on 23 & 24 Aug. (JRB et al) is the latest of 5 summer records for that locality.

Waterfowl—At Eufaula Refuge 60 captive Canada Geese have attracted a wild or semi-wild flock of 40; some of the latter bred this year, but the nests were destroyed inadvertently by rising water (DFH, AKB). This is farther south than most Canadas come even in midwinter! Blue-winged Teal were noted early in 2 regions, 15 on 17 Aug. at Lake Purdy (RRR et. al.) earliest by 2 days for the Mountain Region; and 4 birds on 13 Aug. at Eufaula Refuge (AKB), earliest for the Lower Coastal Plain. (This latter region has had very few resident ornithologists, yet its birdlife is as rich as any other inland region. This summer Andy Bates spent June, July, and August at Eufaula Refuge as a Conservation Aid, and among other things made a substantial contribution to our knowledge of shorebird distribution inland in Alabama, as will be seen below.) Four male Ring-necked Ducks again spent the summer at East Lake in Birmingham (RRR et. al.); this is the 6th successive summer and the largest number of birds. A female Lesser Scaup, also at East Lake, on June 10 & 11 (RRR) ties the latest Alabama spring date.

Hawks—Apparently insect and lizard-eating hawks (kites, Broad-wing, possibly Kestrel) are exceptions to the general decline in hawks including vultures. On 7 June near Stockton 12 Mississippi Kites and at least 4 Swallow-tailed Kites were seen (LPA & LRT). Mississippi Kites are still regular in summer in Spring Hill (MAG); and a Swallow-tailed seen on 19 July 10 miles west of Demopolis in Tombigbee R. bottoms (JJH) is as far inland and almost as late as any other record. An Osprey, seen at Lake Oliver (Chattahoochee R. just north of Phenix City) on 14 June (LAW), was possibly the same bird that summered at Eufaula Refuge (AKB). This bird probably

was unable to breed and its presence there may mean that formerly it nested somewhere along the Chattahoochee R.

Rails—At Eufaula Refuge 2 adult King Rails were seen on 9 July with 4 or 5 young (AKB). 4 or 5 pairs of Purple Gallinules and 2 pairs of Com Gallinules were also present on the refuge throughout the summer (AKB). Summering Coots were reported from East Lake (RRR) and Eufaula Refuge (AKB).

Shorebirds—These birds are frequently recorded in midsummer thousands of miles south of the breeding range, even in the Tropics. In Alabama on the coast or in the Tennessee Valley, many of them seen in June apparently are there for the summer, perhaps because most of them may require 2 years or more to mature. Where indications are that the length of stay is brief, the question may still be asked, "Are they going or coming?" Investigations here are difficult, and some of our records of late spring departure or early fall arrival may prove to be in the wrong category. Possibly, numbers of non-breeders remain on the coast for the summer but make occasional flights inland as if practising for next year's long flight to the tundra. More than usual birding activity this summer at Lake Purdy, Eufaula Refuge, and Marion Fish Hatchery considerably improved our knowledge of summer inland shore-bird distribution.

Oystercatcher, Plovers—On 17 July near Dauphin Island 2 adult Oystercatchers were seen with 3 young (LRT & LPA), a needed piece of dated breeding evidence on this species. One Semipalmated Plover was still at Marion on 2 June (RRR & EGR), latest inland spring date by 5 days; after frequent checks, the next one was there on 21 July (JRB & HHK), and 5 were at Eufaula Refuge on 24 July (AKB), 8 and 5 days earlier than prior inland records. Also at Eufaula on 24 July was a Piping Plover (AKB), the earliest by 10 days of only 4 inland records. A Black-bellied Plover at Eufaula Refuge on 19 Aug. (AKB) is by 2 days the earliest inland record. Most of the shorebird, gull, and tern records for 17 to 23 Aug. are probably attributable to Camille. A Ruddy Turnstone at Lake Purdy on 23 Aug. (HHK, JRB, *et al.*) is 7 days earlier than Tennessee Valley records and excluding the Tennessee Valley only the 3rd inland record.

Sandpipers—A Com Snipe on 5 Aug. at Eufaula Refuge (AKB) is by one day the earliest for the state; 5 more were seen there on 23 Aug. (AKB) and on 24 Aug. one at Lake Purdy (TAI) is earliest for the Mountain Region. Seven Spotted Sandpipers at Eufaula Refuge on 28 July (AKB) is more than a month earlier than prior records for the Lower Coastal Plain. The same is true of 10 Solitary Sandpipers logged at that refuge on 21 July (AKB). An even earlier one was at Marion on 5 July (JNC & HHK). With

only one prior inland fall record for the Willet away from the Tennessee Valley, one was at Lake Purdy on 10 Aug. (JRB) and at Eufaula Refuge on 3 Aug. (AKB) and 2 on 19 Aug. (AKB). Thirty is a very large number of Greater Yellowlegs at Eufaula Refuge on 15 July (AKB) to be the earliest inland record by 6 days. Two Lesser Yellowlegs were at Marion on 5 July (HHK) earliest ever for the state by 5 days and 8 of them were at Eufaula Refuge on 24 July (AKB). Pectoral Sandpipers were first noted at Eufaula Refuge on 3 Aug. (AKB) and a peak of 100 birds, independently estimated at Lake Purdy on 24 Aug. (TAI, JMI, JRB), double the most ever recorded inland, is a good indication that conditions for shorebirds were good this summer and the observers were there to capitalize on them. Fifty Least Sandpipers were already at Eufaula Refuge by 15 July (AKB). A Short-billed Dowitcher at Marion on 6 July (JNC & HHK) is exceeded inland only by a 3 July date (1936) for Birmingham; the species was first noted at Eufaula Refuge on 24 July (AKB). Six Stilt Sandpipers were noted at Eufaula Refuge on 3 Aug. (AKB), and one was at Mobile 29 Aug. and 8 Sep. (REH). Ten Semipalmated Sandpipers were still at Marion on 2 June (RRR & EGR) and one was at Montevallo on 6 July (JNC & HHK); the first one was noted at Eufaula Refuge on 21 July (AKB) but on 24 July over 75 were recorded (AKB). On 19 Aug., 10 Western Sandpipers were counted at Eufaula Refuge and on 23 Aug., 7 (AKB); at Lake Purdy at least 2 were identified on 23 Aug. (JRB, HHK) and 10 on 24 Aug. (TAI & JMI). The only inland record of Black-necked Stilt in Alabama, present 19 to 23 Aug. at Eufaula Refuge (AKB), is undoubtedly attributable to Camille. Two Wilson's Phalaropes, carefully identified and photographed in color at Lake Purdy near Birmingham on 17 Aug. (RRR, HHK, *et al.*) were probably also affected by Camille.

Gulls, Terns—A Herring Gull was at Eufaula Refuge on 14 June (AKB). Laughing Gulls were present at Lake Oliver near Phenix City, 3 on 8 June and one on 9 June (LAW). They were also present at Lake Purdy right after Camille, 4 on 21 Aug., 3 on 23 Aug., and 2 on 24 Aug. (JRB, TAI, *et al.*) (Adults present on both these occasions made elimination of Franklin's Gull easy, for some of the immatures were in the same plumage as younger Franklin's Gulls.) On 18 Aug. the day after passage of Camille, "thousands of birds circled Mobile Bay, flying low to high over the coast line both on east and west side." These included "500 Black Terns, many many Sandwich Terns, 4 Sooty Terns, many Royal and Caspian, a few Least and Forster's, Black Skimmers, Laughing Gulls." (JLD *vide* MAG). Later on, thousands of birds were seen constantly moving over the bay (JLD). On Dauphin Island, 2 Sooty Terns were picked up dead shortly after Camille (WTS). Four Least Terns were at Lake Oliver on 9 Aug. (LAW) and one at Eufaula Refuge on 19 Aug. (AKB) are the only ones ever recorded inland. A Caspian

Tern was seen there on 24 July (AKB). Another Camille refugee was the Black Skimmer there on 24 & 25 Aug. (AKB).

Flycatchers—E. Phoebe had nests under about half (11 of 24) the bridges examined on I-59 between Fort Payne and the Jefferson County line in early June (TAI & JMI). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher banded in Birmingham on 16 Aug. (RJK & MLB) is exceeded as early fall only by one banded 12 Aug. '64 at Brownsboro. A Traill's Flycatcher banded in Birmingham on 15 Aug. (TAI & JMI) is 4 days earlier than any prior fall records; and a Least Flycatcher that 'che-bec'-ed all day on 22 Aug. (RJK) ties the earliest date for Alabama.

Swallows—Tree Swallows on 15 Aug. at Eufaula Refuge (AKB) are the earliest for that region. The Barn Swallow continues to increase by leaps and bounds as evidenced by the following: (1) All but one of the available Breeding Bird Survey Routes that recorded the species last year showed an increase; (2) The nearest colony at Leeds had 4 nests in '67, 9 in '68, and 14 this year, 8 nestlings and 15 adults banded from this colony this year, more details later (RRR, RJK, HHW, AKB, *et al.*); (3) Of 24 bridges examined on I-59 between Fort Payne and the Jefferson County line in early June, 21 had Barn Swallow nests (TAI & JMI); (4) Nests have been found in three new counties this year, Tuscaloosa, Sumter, and Lowndes.

Catbird, Vireos—No less than 6 Catbirds were recorded on the Riderwood Breeding Survey (Choctaw & Sumter Counties) on 8 June (RRR & EGR). A Bell's Vireo in Birmingham on 30 Aug. (TAI, HHK, *et al.*) banded, measured, weighed, and photographed in color, is the 6th record for Alabama, 3rd in fall. A pair of singing Solitary Vireos on the Sunny Eve (Cheaha) Breeding Survey Route in early June (REA) is the first summer record or breeding evidence for Alabama.

Warblers, Baltimore Oriole—A Worm-eating Warbler singing almost on the Monroe-Wilcox County line on 15 June (RRR & EGR) is the southernmost breeding season record. The Louisiana Waterthrush was recorded on both the Riderwood (18 June) and Beatrice (15 June) Breeding Surveys (RRR & EGR). On the Latham (Baldwin Co.) Breeding Survey this June were seen one young, one adult female, and two adult male Baltimore Orioles (ELR, MWG, REH) the southernmost breeding season record.

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