

Com Gallinule, rather scarce north of the Fall Line, was seen at Lake Purdy on 17 & 18 May (JVP, RRR, EGR). The Am Coot continues to occur widely and regularly in summer with little evidence of breeding at many well-watched places; but this year young were detected near Mobile on 3 June (WTS).

Shorebirds — Although heavy July rains left little shorebird habitat at big lakes like Lake Purdy, the rain pools in grassy areas such as at the west end of the Birmingham Airport harbored some interesting birds. A Semiplumbeated Plover at the Airport on 31 July (RRR) tied the earliest locally. A Long-billed Dowitcher there the same day (RRR & JVP) is only the second inland in fall in Alabama; dowitchers are not too scarce inland in this state, but positively and properly identified ones are. At Eufaula Refuge on 2 July, 5 AM AVOCETS (JM) were the first in summer in the state. Two unusual BLACK-NECKED STILTS were reported late; 1 at Marion on 7 May (Argyles) is only the second inland for the state and 1 on Cat I. on 21 May (JRB & others) latest spring by 10 days.

Gulls, Terns — On Lake Oliver, the Chattahoochee R. between Phenix City and Columbus, Ga., the Laughing Gull has proven to be quite regular in recent years, especially in spring when it rains or willow flies emerge. This year 2 on 11 Aug when willow flies were abundant (LAW) are the earliest for fall. Following the report of 19 Gull-billed Terns (12 pair) nesting on west Dauphin I. in late May comes that of 10 more pairs nesting on Mobile Causeway (JLD) indeed encouraging for this species. In Pensacola on 2 Aug, Least Terns were seen carrying food into the roof of the Municipal Auditorium located on a pier (PFC) exactly as seen about a decade ago when breeding there was proven (FMW). A high of 300 Sandwich Terns at Fort Morgan on 18 Aug (TAI) is the second highest ever counted in Alabama.

Flycatchers, Swallows — Although late arriving this spring, Gray Kingbirds appeared in normal numbers on Dauphin I (LRT) and Fort Morgan (TAI), 4 each place in Aug and another on 19 Aug at Mary Ann Beach near Fairhope (TAI, VDH, PFC). An Acadian Flycatcher banded at Fort Morgan on 17 Aug (TAI) indicated the rarely-noted beginning of fall migration for the species. Two Tree Swallows were seen in Mobile on 2 & 3 Aug (FEB) 8 days earlier than any other coastal plain records. Breeding Barn Swallows are increasing at old sites and occupying new ones. Two new sites were under Marengo County bridges with young in the air at one on 20 June (RRR); another was at Shades Creek & Red Mt. Expressway where 2 young were flying on 11 July (RRR); even the coastal population is expanding, last year they first bred under a Mobile Causeway bridge—Pineda Area—this year a pair was seen feeding young at a nest under the Perdido Pass Bridge at Alabama Point on 27 June (LH). The Leeds colony had 14 active nests on 8 June—past year 13—and banding operations provided 5 returns (RRR & mob).

Wren, Thrush, Warblers — A HOUSE WREN, heard singing on 4 July in Homewood, Birmingham (HHK & others) is the first summer record for the state. Most of the 13 Breeding Survey Routes I have seen this year show an increase in numbers of E. Bluebirds over last year. On 18 Aug at Fort Morgan, 3 Tennessee Warblers are, except for a 2 Aug '64 record, earliest for state by 11 days. Following a strong easterly storm, a male BLACKPOLL WARBLER on 12 Aug in spring plumage, and a female on 13 Aug both in Magnolia Springs (PFC) are the 3rd & 4th fall records south of Birmingham. Palm Warblers on Dauphin I, 1 on 8 Aug & 2 on the 12th (LRT, LPA, AM), are almost a month earlier than any other state records. A Northern Waterthrush

in Birmingham on 4 Aug (TAI) is exceeded in fall only by 2, 30 July records near the coast.

Finches — A female or immature PAINTED BUNTING in a tall ragweed in Birmingham 1 Sept (TAI) is the only fall record north of the coast, the only Sept record for the state, is the first for the county, and is the northernmost in Alabama. A Grasshopper Sparrow at Eufaula Refuge on 2 July (JM) is the first summer record for the Lower Coastal Plain although less than 50 miles east of where the species summers regularly. Two far-apart Whitethroats were noted this summer; 1 in Magnolia Springs on 15 June (PFC). 1st summer record south of Montgomery; 1 in Birmingham on 31 July (H & PLT).

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## VARIATION IN STAGES OF NESTING DEVELOPMENT AT SEVERAL HERON COLONIES IN 1971

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The variation in stages of initial and early nest development seen in several Heron colonies showed that great variation exists between the onset of breeding.

The colonies referred to here are located as follows:

1. Ft. Gaines colony, 6 miles north of Ft. Gaines, Clay Co., Ga.
2. Pintlala colony, 1 mile west of Pintlala, Montgomery Co., Ala.
3. McLemore colony, 1 mile west of Mount Meigs, Montgomery Co., Ala.

From a latitudinal standpoint, the colonies are no more than 50 miles apart. The Ft. Gaines colony is southernmost, at latitude  $31^{\circ} 40'$  and the McLemore colony northernmost, at latitude  $32^{\circ} 23'$

Physiographically, they are all located in the Upper Coastal Plain. The Ft. Gaines colony is about one-half mile from the impounded Chattahoochee River at Lake Eufaula. The Pintlala colony about 15 miles southeast of the Alabama River. The McLemore colony is about 2 miles south of the Tallapoosa River. This locates all of the colonies within 30 miles of the upper edge (fall line) of the coastal plain and near large rivers, which are major migration routes.

Chronologically, the Ft. Gaines colony is at least 5 years old, the Pintlala colony 2 years old and the McLemore colony in its first year.

Using the nesting of the major species, the Little Blue Heron and the Cattle Egret, as indices of initial nesting stages, the following developmental observations made in 1971 are pertinent.

At the Ft. Gaines colony, Little Blue Herons were first seen coming in on March 17. They had not nested by March 27. By May 9, there were about 300 Little Blue Heron nests and 100 Cattle Egret nests, with almost 100 of the Little Blue Heron nests containing young up to 2 weeks old. Cattle Egret nests had only eggs. On May 30, Little Blue Heron young ranged from 1 to 5 weeks in age; Cattle Egrets ranged from eggs to young 3 weeks old.

An aerial survey of the Pintlala colony on May 1, showed both Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets present. By May 20, Little Blue Heron nestlings were, at the oldest, 10 days. No Cattle Egret young were hatched.

The McLemore colony was found on May 21. Both Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets were present. On May 27, both species had eggs in nests but Little Blue Herons had mostly full clutches, while Cattle Egrets had 2 or 3 eggs.

As of May 30 the eldest Little Blue Heron nestlings at the Ft. Gaines colony were 5 weeks old; those at the Pintlala colony, 3 weeks old and those at McLemore colony not yet hatched. Cattle Egrets at Ft. Gaines had nestlings 3 weeks old, at Pintlala just hatched and at McLemore, in the egg. Therefore the nestling age ratio for Little Blue Herons (Ft. Gaines: Pintlala: McLemore) was 5 weeks: 3 weeks: 0 weeks (egg stage); and the Cattle Egret ratio, 3 weeks; Just hatched; 0 weeks (egg stage).

With the colonies located relatively close together and positioned near prominent rivers, which are their migratory pathways, the only other possible variable is the colony age. This does show a similar variation to the nest development dates. Until more data are available, it will be best to consider this coincidental.

The data do show that a large amount of variability is present and that the degree of nestling development in each colony is different enough that one cannot be used to estimate the nestling development in another colony.

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## THE SEASON, FALL (September—October—November) 1971

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In spite of many warm days this fall, we entered December with an average for the year of 3° below normal. The few cold spells were in Birmingham rather severe and concentrated around 8 Nov (24°) and 22 Nov (25°). As far as known, frost has not reached the coast. Mobile experienced its hottest and driest October since 1874, and Birmingham was shorted 1.75 inches in both October and November. By virtue of spring rains, the year's rainfall for Birmingham is still 5 inches in excess, but we suspect that with our present system of channelized streams, this precious water has long since been flushed out into the Gulf like so much sewage.

Mary Gaillard pointed out that the coast had more western birds than usual, except no Vermilion Flycatchers; and this is exactly what the prevailing winds favored. The few eastern birds, Blackpoll Warbler, Bobolink, and Painted Bunting, were recorded near Hurricanes Edith about 17 Sep and Ginger about 1—6 Oct. Best days for migrants on Dauphin I. were reported by Lib Toenes as

23 Oct and 4 & 22 Nov. During the very hot weather of early fall, Mary Gaillard noted many birds sunning themselves, apparently because the mites were "mitey" bad. One hummingbird was noted "lying flat on the brick walk with its wings widespread" (MAG).

REVERSE MIGRATION — Much more of this goes on than is suspected. Note in "Alabama Birds" the Morning Dove that went in fall from Dauphin I. northeast to Jay, Fla.; and the Chimney Swift that flew from Rome, Ga. to Birmingham and back to Rome the same fall. On Dauphin I. swallows fly into the wind no matter which way it is blowing. One frequent occurrence is for birds to be blown too far south in fall, and they are seen beating their way back north from Dauphin I. On 4 Nov 1500-2000 Robins spent the morning on Dauphin I. then disappeared (D); later a large flock was seen on the mainland flying north into the wind (D). Hundreds of Myrtle Warblers were also involved in this movement (D). Each fall hundreds of Blue Jays, Juncos, Whitethroats, other sparrows briefly mass on our Gulf Coast near their southern winter limits. If these birds crossed the Gulf in any abundance like their Alabama concentrations, they would have long since been detected in places like Yucatan and Cuba.

EARED GREBE, BROWN PELICAN — The first 2 October EARED GREBES were 1 on the 15th at Magnolia Springs, photographed (C) and 1 on the 28-29 in Birmingham, photographed, banded, measured (LC, WC, I, HW, R); the latter is the 3rd inland record. About 35-50 Brown Pelicans spent most of the season near the mouth of Mobile Bay (T, C, mob) but most were gone by 26 Oct (P).

HERONS, IBISES, STORK — A GREAT WHITE HERON injured on 8 Aug, which could have been the bird present since 28 Jun, lingered on Dauphin I. 2 months later than previous records and was hit by a car during a storm on 29 Nov and too badly mashed for preservation (T & mob). At Lakeland Farm on 6 Sep, 450-500 Cattle Egrets were estimated (JRB & mob). The Reddish Egret used to occur all season, now we are lucky that it occurs every season; this time at Alabama Point, latest 23 Oct (MLM & SG) and Dauphin I. on 17 Sep (T). A Wood Stork was at Payne L. on 8 Sep (P & RM). Two adult White Ibises were on the Magnolia R. on 2 Dec (C); both these occurrences are not unusual but indicate a successful breeding season. On Cochrane Causeway, Mobile, 2 ROSEATE SPOONBILLS were present 10-25 Oct (ATM, GB, mob) the 2nd Alabama record in 41 years!

HAWKS — Almost unknown on Dauphin I., a Black Vulture appeared there on 8 Nov (T). Cooper's Hawk was noted migrating at Ft. Morgan 23 & 24 Sep (I) and 25 Oct (P), at Cochrane Causeway 26 Oct (P); also Birmingham on 16 Oct (HW). Broad-winged Hawks were noted in flocks twice; 60 on the south slope of Red Mt. Birmingham on 25 Sep (RM & P); and 75 at Dauphin I. on 7 Oct (T, WTS). Peregrine Falcons, undoubtedly tundra-breeders, still migrate along our coast; birds noted 24 Sep at Ft. Morgan (I); 25 Sep at Alabama Point (MLM & SG); and Dauphin I. on 9 Oct (E & JF). A Pigeon Hawk at Ft. Morgan on 23 Sep stooped at a dragonfly (I); another was at Fairhope on 29 Nov (P).

RAILS — A Com Gallinule, rare in the Mt Region, was at L. Purdy on 27 Sep & 2 Oct (HK, AM, JL). With Hurricane Edith 200 miles west, a Black Rail was flushed from salt marsh at Gulf Shores on 17 Sep (C), 3rd Alabama record.

SHOREBIRDS — Careful counting of Oystercatchers near Dauphin I. reveals a max of 7 on 8 & 19 Nov (T); apparently the bird at Alabama Point about 25 Oct (RH) comes from Florida. The Snowy Plover, another species like the Reddish