

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE



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1976 CHRISTMAS COUNTS FEATURE
NORTHERN VISITORS AND MIGRANT WARBLERS

With a record-breaking count of 152 species at Bay County, the first AOS count to enter the magic circle of 150 or more since Dauphin Island's 156 in 1965, and with new counts inaugurated at Guntersville and Choctawhatchee Bay ("Choc. Bay"), there were a record 15 AOS Christmas Counts conducted during the 1976 Christmas Season. Reflecting the inconsistent weather, which began with an almost summer day on Dec. 18 and wound up with a cold front and tempest braved by participants in the Mobile count on Jan. 2, the most outstanding finds were northern visitors and migrant warblers. The effects of our harshest winter in recent years, which began during the count period, remain, however, to be seen. Particularly affected may be the more fragile passerines (fragile in the sense that they are much more abundant in the South than in the North), such as the Carolina Wren and Pine Warbler where reductions of over 40% have already been noted between the 1976 and 1977 Birmingham Spring Counts.

Northern Visitors--Waterfowl furnished the most exciting species in this category--2 Com. (or Am.) Mergansers at Wheeler Wildlife Refuge (a prelude to the largest invasion of the Tenn. Valley by this species since 1951), a flight of 25 White-winged Scoters at Gulf Shores (an AOS abundance record), and Surf Scoters at Ft. Morgan (8) and Gulf Shores (2) with an unidentified scoter at Bay County. Oldsquaws appeared in four coastal count areas, led by 4 at Choc. Bay with 1 each at Dauphin Island and Bay County and 1 within the count week at Mobile. Choc. Bay also featured a Great Black-backed Gull spending the winter for the third straight year at Destin. The Gannet from the northern seas did well this year, being reported on five coastal counts with a high of 70 at Gulf Shores (an AOS Christmas Count record by over twice the previous high). A Long-eared Owl appeared during the Birmingham count week for the first Mountain Region record and, as a follow-up to its large numbers the last two years, a Short-eared Owl was found at Eufaula Wildlife Refuge with another within the Wheeler count week at Pryor Field north of Decatur. Finally, a melanistic Rough-legged Hawk was recorded at Guntersville.

Migrant Warblers and Other Summer Species--The 1976 counts were noteworthy in sightings of several wood warblers that normally would be spending the winter in Central America or the West Indies. Probably the rarest of these was the female Wilson's at Marianna (first AOS Christmas Count record). Others were an Ovenbird on the same count (second recent AOS Christmas Count record), 2 Parulas at Bay County (its second Christmas Count record) and 2 Black-throated Green Warblers at Pensacola (its first Christmas Count record). (See also Imhof, Thomas A., "The Season, Winter," in this issue for reports of the 1 or 2 Cape May Warblers in Birmingham in Dec. and Jan. although not within the count week.)

Black-and-White Warblers remained inland with single birds noted at Marion (first Upper Coastal Plain winter record) and Eufaula Refuge (second Lower Coastal Plain winter record) and were also found on four coastal counts led by Marianna with 8 for an AOS winter record; and the Yellow-throated Warbler was also found on four coastal counts led by Marianna (5) and Choc. Bay (4). The White-eyed Vireo, another species that is rare to uncommon in winter on the Gulf Coast, did particularly well in this past winter, being reported on seven of eight coastal counts with an AOS winter record at Marianna (12) and good numbers at Gulf Shores (8) and Dauphin Island and Bay County (4 each). Members of the swallow tribe also stayed north into the winter with a Barn Swallow being found at Choc. Bay (third AOS Christmas Count record, all in NW Fla.) and a lingering Rough-winged Swallow at Eufaula Refuge (where 6 were found even later on Dec. 30). One of the latter

also appeared within the count week at Gulf Shores. In addition, although the Tree Swallow winters often abundantly on the Gulf Coast, one remained inland at Marion (second inland AOS Christmas Count record).

The male Summer Tanager at Marianna seems to have taken up winter residence at the feeder it frequents there, being found for the fourth consecutive year on or within the count week of that count. Marianna also reported a Baltimore Oriole (now considered a race of the new No. Oriole) within its count week; and, lastly, an Indigo Bunting was recorded at Pensacola for its second straight Christmas Count record, there having been one to six sightings there for at least the last five winters.

Western Visitors--Pensacola and Gulf Shores had the western visitors this past winter. A male and female Rufous Hummingbird frequented a feeder at Pensacola from Dec. 1 through Feb.; and another hummingbird, unidentified as to species, was found during the count week at Gulf Shores. Baldwin County furnished winter home for a pair of Vermilion Flycatchers at Marlow Pond with a male seen within the Gulf Shores count week for its first Christmas Count record since 1964. Pensacola also featured an adult male Bullock's Oriole (the other race of the new No. Oriole) for its third Christmas Count record in the last four years.

Endangered Species--It is hoped that with the bans on DDT and other persistent pesticides, species high on the food chain may be recovering from those pesticide residues. Two Bald Eagles (an adult and an immature) were found at Guntersville and another immature at Wheeler for the eighth straight year one has been seen there either on the counts or within the count periods. Wheeler Refuge also reported two Peregrine Falcons; but there was only one Osprey this year, it being found at Bay County. Although reasonably large numbers of Brown Pelicans have been reported on the Gulf Coast in late summer, there were only 11 found on the 1976 Christmas Counts (9 at Bay County and 2 at Dauphin Island). This compares with 8 birds on three counts in 1975 and is still much under the numbers on the 1972 and 1973 counts.

Hawks--As in past years, most hawks are included on the "Blue List" of species not yet considered endangered but whose numbers are reported on the decline (American Birds (1976), 30(6):1031). However, Sharp-shins were found on 13 counts with a total of 31 birds as compared with 6 counts and 10 birds in 1975. Bay County was high with 6 (an AOS Christmas Count record). On the other hand, the Cooper's Hawk was reported in its lowest numbers since 1970 with single birds on only three counts. The Red-shouldered Hawk is included on the "Blue List" primarily because of reports from other areas, and here it was reported on all 15 counts with an increase in total birds from last year of 52 to an even 100 for the 13 counts conducted in both years. An AOS Christmas Count record was set at Marianna (28) followed by Tuscaloosa (18--an inland coastal plain count record) and Birmingham (16--tying the Mountain Region record). The Red-tailed Hawk (not on the "Blue List") did exceptionally well on the 1976 counts, being reported in highest or next highest numbers on 10 of the 15 counts. Wheeler Refuge and Tuscaloosa each had 53 (the former a Tenn. Valley record and the latter second highest for the inland coastal plain) followed by Eufaula Refuge (47--third highest for the inland coastal plain) and Birmingham (39--a Mountain Region record). The Am. Kestrel (while also on the "Blue List") increased almost 100 for a total of 333 birds on the 13 counts conducted in both 1975 and 1976. Marion was high with 51 (an inland winter record) followed by Dauphin Island and Gulf Shores with 46 each and Wheeler Refuge with 30 for another Tenn. Valley record. Single adult Broad-winged Hawks were reported from Mobile and Bay County; and Merlins (or Pigeon Hawks) were found

at Eufaula Refuge (2), Bay County (1) and Gulf Shores (1), the last being its fourth Christmas Count record in the last five years.

Birds of the Shore and Marsh--Because of rapidly diminishing beach habitat, the Piping and Snowy Plovers are included on the "Blue List," the latter being also considered an endangered species in Alabama. Pippings were found on three counts as in 1975, but the total number was up with 44 being recorded at Bay County for a NW Fla. Christmas Count record. Snowys were found on four counts with 14 at Choc. Bay for another NW Fla. Christmas Count record followed by 12 at Bay County. The Am. Oystercatcher (also on the "Blue List") was reported at Dauphin Island (7) for the highest AOS Christmas Count since 1971. Although the Clapper Rail is not threatened in the AOS area as it is on the Pacific Coast, this year its 27 on seven coastal counts is down from 88 on six in 1975. Consequently, because of the rapid destruction of marsh habitat, this species probably bears close watching.

The most outstanding shorebird observations were those of the Marbled Godwit--two on Shell Island at Bay County for its first Christmas Count record and one together with a Whimbrel near Battleship Park within the Mobile count week, the Whimbrel being the third winter record for the Ala. Gulf Coast. The Red Knot was reported on two counts--Gulf Shores (12) and Bay County (9). Sandhill Cranes continued their return to Gulf Shores, setting a Christmas Count record there of 30, and Limpkins were recorded at both Bay County (2) and Marianna (1) for the fourth straight Christmas Count at the latter. A Least Bittern was found within the count week at Gulf Shores, third of the last four years that species has been found on or within the count week of that count; and notable were the Reddish Egrets at Bay County (3) and Dauphin Island (2), the former being sighted at the same place on Shell Island where 2 were found last year. The 3 Common Gallinules at Eufaula Refuge constituted one of the few inland winter records for that species.

On the abundance side of the marsh and shorebird ledger, the Am. Coot set a modern inland record in abundance with over 11,000 at Guntersville. The Spotted Sandpiper was found on a record nine counts led by Dauphin Island (5) with one as far inland as Birmingham for the third record in its last four Christmas Counts; and a Lesser Yellowlegs at Wheeler was the second winter record for North Alabama. The Dunlin did very well, again as in 1975 being reported on nine counts led by Bay County (727 for a NW Fla. Christmas Count record--double its previous high) and with birds found on three inland counts--Wheeler Refuge (6), Birmingham (2) and Marion (1). The Killdeer also did well, led as always by Gulf Shores (989 for the second highest AOS record in abundance, being exceeded only by the 1975 count there of 1087). Wheeler Refuge reported 548, which is 100 over the previous inland record, and Bay County had 356 (a high for NW Fla.). The Great Blue Heron set a Gulf Coast winter record at Gulf Shores (88); the White Ibis did rather well on three coastal counts led by Mobile (47) and Choc. Bay (28); and the roost of Black-crowned Night Herons at Eufaula Refuge was counted at near record numbers (56). Other abundance records were the Sanderling--261 at Bay County (a NW Fla. Christmas Count record) and 212 at Choc. Bay, and the Willet--88 at Bay County, only two less than the AOS Christmas Count record.

Waterfowl--Waterfowl reports were diverse with both high and low numbers for various species on various counts, the only consistent thread being that surface-feeding ducks were found in very low numbers on the coast. There was even one exception to that, the Green-winged Teal, which set a modern Christmas Count record of 360 at Mobile. It also set a similar record for the Tenn. Valley with 314 at Wheeler Refuge where Tenn. Valley Christmas Count records were also recorded

for the Am. Wigeon (8000), Black Duck (3000) and No. Shoveler (341). Blue-winged Teal were found on four inland counts led by Tuscaloosa (8) with others at Wheeler (2), Guntersville (1) and Marion (1); and the almost 500 Ring-necked Ducks at Tuscaloosa were a record for the Upper Coastal Plain. The Lesser Scaup did very well on the coast, particularly at Dauphin Island (3161 for an AOS winter record) and with count records at Bay County (652) and Gulf Shores (568). AOS Christmas Count records were also set for the Bufflehead at Choc. Bay (339) and Red-breasted Merganser at Gulf Shores (967).

Wintering Finches and Nuthatches--Southern invasions of boreal finches have generally followed a 4-year cycle--see report of the 1975 Christmas Counts in Alabama Birdlife (1976), 24(1-2):3,6, and Wright, Harriett H. (now Findlay), Alabama Birdlife (1967), 15(1):7. This cycle, dependent primarily on food supply in the northern forests, was reduced to a 2-year interval between 1966 and 1968 and to a 3-year interval between 1972 and 1975, the last being our largest invasion of Evening Grosbeaks. This year, the "echo" year, none reached the AOS area; and Pine Siskins were extremely scarce. On the Christmas Counts, siskins were found on only three--Eufaula Refuge (5), Birmingham (3) and Jacksonville (1)--and those were practically the only ones found all winter. The Red-breasted Nuthatch was also down from 13 to 9 counts with the highest being 16 birds at Ft. Morgan. The more common Purple Finch was, however, up from the previous "echo" year of 1973 by 200 or over 40%. It set highest or second highest Christmas Count records on 10 of the 15 counts, led by Birmingham's 344 (a second highest AOS Christmas Count record) and Bay County's 52 on the Gulf Coast where it is not so numerous. Numbers of the Am. Goldfinch varied with no consistent pattern, but the highest was 456 at Marion, an exact tie with last year's count for a Coastal Plain Christmas Count record.

Sparrows--Most sparrows did very well with the leader being the Song Sparrow. It was counted in record or near record numbers on nine counts, the highest being at Marion (433--an Upper Coastal Plain record) followed by second highest Christmas Count records at Birmingham (411) and Wheeler (318) and, on the coast where not as numerous, by Gulf Coast records at Marianna (178) and Choc. Bay (155). Its close cousin, the Swamp Sparrow, did particularly well at Wheeler (624--the second highest AOS record) followed by Birmingham (236--a Mountain Region record). Among the rarer grassland sparrows, the LeConte's had a very fine year. An AOS Christmas Count record of 7 was set at Eufaula Refuge where 14 (an Alabama record) were counted later on Dec. 30, Pensacola recorded four, and single birds were reported at both Wheeler Refuge and Bay County. The Grasshopper Sparrow was found on three counts--Marianna (3), Eufaula Refuge (2) and Bay County (1). Energetic observers at Bay County "tromped through lots of marsh" on Shell Island to turn up a modern AOS count record of 130 Sharp-tailed Sparrows (up from 45 last year).

A bird of the pink-sided race of the Oregon Junco (now considered a race of the all-inclusive Dark-eyed) was found at Marion, the most southern count record for that bird in the AOS area; and the Slate-colored race again did well at Birmingham (1352) and set records on the coast, where it is not as common, at Marianna (157--the Gulf Coast abundance record), Choc. Bay (120) and Mobile (111). Other high sparrow counts were: Savannah--1075 at Marion (a second highest AOS record), followed by 521 at Gulf Shores (a Gulf Coast record) and 173 at Wheeler (a Tenn. Valley record); Vesper--156 at Marianna (a NW Fla. record); Field--460 at Birmingham (highest since 1968) and 212 at Choc. Bay (a Gulf Coast record); White-crowned--124 at Marion (an AOS abundance record), followed by 92 at Tuscaloosa (third highest AOS record); and White-throats--1732 at Birmingham (another AOS abundance record) and 1500 at Wheeler (highest for the Tenn. Valley).

Chickadees through Kinglets and Others--Most of the small woodland passerines again had excellent years, their detection assisted by their good response to Screech Owl calls. Most noteworthy was the Solitary (or Blue-headed) Vireo, which had a banner year, being recorded on 13 counts with record or near record numbers on 10 and the first winter record for the Tenn. Valley of one at Wheeler Refuge. Highest was at Marianna (29--an AOS winter record) followed by Pensacola (15) and numbers of 7 to 9 at Choc. Bay, Ft. Morgan, Gulf Shores, Marion and Eufaula Refuge. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet tallied a record of almost 2900 birds, topping 1975's record total by over 200 more than those reported on the 13 counts conducted in both years. Highest or second highest numbers were reported on seven counts led by Marianna (390--a Gulf Coast record) followed by Marion (380) and totals ranging from 232 to 369 at Birmingham, Choc. Bay, Pensacola, Eufaula Refuge and Gulf Shores. Its relative, the Golden-crowned, did well at Tuscaloosa with an Upper Coastal Plain record of 106 but was low on many other counts.

As in 1975, both the Hermit Thrush and Orange-crowned Warbler also did well. The thrush set records or near records on 10 counts led by Birmingham's 53, an AOS abundance record by 40% over its previous high. Other high numbers were 47 at Marianna (only one less than the Coastal Plain record), 42 at Marion (an Upper Coastal Plain record), 37 at Gulf Shores and 29 at Wheeler, tying its Tenn. Valley record of last year. High for the Orange-crowned was 20 at Mobile, followed by Marianna (14), Gulf Shores (13) and Eufaula Refuge (6--an inland winter record). Led by its 462 at Birmingham (only one less than the AOS abundance record), the Carolina Chickadee continued to do well; also high were Tuscaloosa (146--a Coastal Plain record) and, on the coast where it is less abundant, Marianna (80) and Choc. Bay (55).

Short-billed Marsh Wrens were reported as common this year at Eufaula Refuge and, as a result of many more party-hours spent in wet grass areas, an inland record of 56 was reported there. Bewick's Wren (a representative from the wren family on the "Blue List") was reported on three counts--Wheeler Refuge and Marion (2 each) and Eufaula Refuge (1); and a House Wren was found at Guntersville where it is rare that far north. It is also difficult to find Brown-headed Nuthatches in the Tenn. Valley, but Guntersville recorded an abundance record for that region of 40.

Other Non-passerines--Bay County again had a record number of Ring-billed Gulls, but this year's 12,100 was an AOS abundance record by a fantastic 10,000; and its 1240 Herring Gulls set an AOS Christmas Count record. At Guntersville, inland Christmas Count records were set for the same species by 596 Herrings and 555 Ring-billeds. The Laughing Gull did extremely well at Dauphin Island with its 4635 being 3000 over the previous AOS winter record, and 6 birds were also found inland at Eufaula Refuge. Also doing well was the Bonaparte's at Bay County (770, exceeded only by its 1975 AOS Christmas Count record of over 1200). Two Sandwich Terns, which are rare on the coast in winter, were found within the count week at Gulf Shores for the fourth out of the last five years that tern has been reported on or within the count periods of that count. Locally significant was a Com. Loon inland at Lakeland Farm on the Marion count, notable because of the absence of large bodies of water in that count area.

Other non-passerine records in abundance included: Pied-billed Grebe--128 at Guntersville (a Tenn. Valley record); Mourning Dove--701 at Bay County (a Gulf Coast Christmas Count record); Belted Kingfisher--50 at Pensacola (tying the second highest NW Fla. record); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker--51 at Marion (second highest AOS winter record); and Downy Woodpecker--86 at Wheeler Refuge (a Tenn.

Valley record), 35 at Marion (a Coastal Plain record) and 24 at Marianna (a Gulf Coast record where it is not as numerous as inland). Turkeys were found on two counts--Wheeler Refuge (4) and Tuscaloosa (1), and Whip-poor-wills in four count areas--single birds on the counts or within the count weeks at Dauphin Island, Ft. Morgan, Gulf Shores and Pensacola. Lastly, energetic nighttime observing resulted in good numbers of Screech Owls at Gulf Shores (41) and Wheeler Refuge (33) and Barred Owls at Marion (7).

Other Passerines--Leading the other passerines was the Eastern Phoebe, which scored highest or second highest numbers on nine Christmas Counts led by Marianna's remarkable 70 for an AOS Christmas Count record. Other high counts were Pensacola (45), Choc. Bay (41) and Birmingham (33), the latter a Christmas Count record for the Mountain Region. Especially notable in numbers were the Fish Crows at Marianna--14,340, exceeding its AOS abundance record of last year by over 4000, and the Myrtle Warblers at Gulf Shores--almost 5600, exceeding the previous AOS abundance record set there in 1972 by over 2000 birds.

Other passerine records in abundance included: Blue Jay--628 at Birmingham (an AOS Christmas Count record); Com. Crow--750 at Jacksonville (an inland record away from roosts); Loggerhead Shrike--62 at Marianna (the second highest AOS Christmas Count record), but still very low around metropolitan areas such as Birmingham and Mobile; Pine Warbler--120 at Choc. Bay (second highest AOS Christmas Count record); Palm Warbler--18 at Eufaula Refuge (an inland winter record) and a single bird as far north as Guntersville where it is rare in winter; Com. Yellowthroat--72 at Bay County (an AOS winter record by almost 30 birds) followed by 19 at Eufaula (another inland winter record); and Eastern Meadowlark--651 at Marion (an AOS abundance record).

On the 1976 counts, a total of 202 species was observed on the counts and during the count weeks with 195 on the counts themselves. Complete tabulations of all Christmas Counts will appear in Vol. 31, No. 4 of American Birds. The AOS staff extends its thanks for their good efforts and cooperation to all participants and especially to the count compilers. A summary of the record 15 AOS counts is as follows:

Count, Date and Compiler	Species(a)		Total Individuals	Partici- pants	Parties	Party- Hours
	On Count	Within Count Week				
Wheeler Wildlife Refuge-- Dec. 18 (J. Milton Harris)	104	105	136,649	34	6	65
Guntersville--Dec. 23 (C. Dwight Cooley)	87	87	50,992	3	2	21.5
Birmingham--Dec. 26 (Thomas A. Inhof)	88	90	32,849	45	12	141
Jacksonville--Dec. 18 (C. William Summerour)	67	69	2,705	21	3	20
Tuscaloosa--Dec. 23 (Richard K. Crawford)	77	77	7,806	9	3	30.75
Marion--Dec. 19 (James V. Peavy, Jr.)	95	95	22,866	11	4	42
Eufaula Wildlife Refuge-- Dec. 18 (Sam Pate, Jr.)	125	127	43,302	30	13	81
Mobile--Jan. 2 (Richard E. Hayward, Jr.)	122	125	13,170	21	9	50
Dauphin Island--Dec. 18 (W. Wilson Galliard)	119	119	18,052	22	9	68
Ft. Morgan--Dec. 27 (Mary Lou Mattis & Sherlie E. Gade)	92	93	9,675	12	4	42
Gulf Shores--Jan. 1 (P. Fairly Chandler)	128	135	33,615	28	8	86
Pensacola--Dec. 18 (Curtis L. Kingsbery)	114	115	13,031	31(b)	9	89.5
Choctawhatchee Bay--Dec. 19 (Sandra Lefstad)	122	127	11,704	25	6	67
Marianna--Dec. 18 (Marion W. Gray)	100	106	30,380	25(b)	8	62
Bay County (Panama City)-- Jan. 1 (Stephen J. Stedman & Joe B. Harrison)	152	153	26,274	40	12	94

(a) Species combined in the 1973 revision of the AOU Check-List are treated separately in this article and the above table because reported separately on the Christmas Counts. This treatment affects geese, orioles and juncos.

(b) Additional observers at feeders.

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THE RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER IN
HALE AND BIBB COUNTIES, ALABAMA

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The Red-cockaded Woodpecker (Dendrocopos borealis) is a resident of mature southern pine forests and is considered an endangered species because of its declining populations (U.S.D.I. 1968, Jackson 1971). The major factor contributing to this species' decline has been a loss of habitat, which has been attributed to modern forestry practices. Imhof (1976) includes records of this species from several counties in central Alabama but none from Hale or Bibb Counties. We here document the occurrence and will comment on the future of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in these counties.

Methods

In early 1976 Jackson, through the Red-cockaded Woodpecker Endangered Species Recovery Team of the U.S. Department of the Interior, initiated a survey of Red-cockaded Woodpecker populations. Federal and state agencies, industry, conservation groups and private individuals have cooperated by submitting reports of known colonies of this bird. Personnel from Talladega National Forest in Alabama submitted reports of 88 colonies located in Hale, Bibb, Perry, Chilton, Talladega, Cleburne and Clay Counties. Twenty-three of these colonies were reported in Hale County and 38 in Bibb County (Fig. 1). On September 17, 18 and 19, 1976, we searched for colonies reported in Hale and Bibb Counties in order to evaluate colony status and the general condition of the birds' habitat. In the time available, we were able to search for 20 of the colonies (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 43, 56, 80; see Fig. 1). We were successful in locating all of these colonies except numbers 13, 14, 23 and 36. In searching for colonies we began at an approximate colony location that was indicated on a map by the Forest Service. If a colony was not immediately located, we each went in a different direction and systematically searched the area. Our efforts were facilitated by using walkie-talkies to maintain contact with one another. Though we spent approximately four hours searching for colonies 13 and 14 and an hour each searching for colonies 23 and 36, our failure to locate these colonies does not necessarily indicate that they no longer exist. Indeed, we observed one Red-cockaded Woodpecker near the mapped location of colony 14.

Status of Reported Colonies

We observed one Red-cockaded Woodpecker each at colonies 14, 16, 20 and 31, and two Red-cockaded at colony 15. We judged colonies 19, 22, 33, 35, 43 and 80 to also be active on the basis of the presence of gum flowing from freshly worked (red-colored) resin wells; recent scaling of bark from the cavity trees, giving them a red, smooth appearance; and scaling of nearby trees, indicating recent foraging activity of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. As a result of a lack of these features, we concluded that colonies 21, 34 and 56 have been abandoned. In addition, we feel that colony pairs 16-17, 19-20 and 31-32 each represent only one colony. In each case, the cavity trees of reported colonies were less than about 300 meters apart, one or both of these members of a pair was comprised of only one cavity tree, and the intervening habitat was not such that it would likely constitute a barrier that would ecologically separate close colonies. At colony 31-32, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker we observed flew from the cavity tree at

reported colony 31 toward and apparently beyond reported colony 32. The cavity tree at reported colony 17 contained only a cavity start which did not appear fresh. Thus, for 17 reported colonies that we were able to evaluate, there were probably 11 (64.7% of those reported) that were active.

Status of Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat

We were impressed by the abundance of mature loblolly pines (Pinus taeda) in the Oakmulgee Game Management Area of the Talladega National Forest; we were also impressed by the lack of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in these pines. Of the 16 reported colonies that we located, only 3 were in loblolly pines (19, 31, 56), and the cavity trees in the two active colonies (19, 31) were in open areas adjacent to roads. Most of the old-growth loblolly pine areas that we saw included a very dense hardwood understory - a habitat characteristic which Red-cockaded Woodpeckers tend to avoid.

While 13 of 16 colonies were in longleaf pines (Pinus palustris), we were not impressed by an abundance of old-growth longleaf pine habitat. Most of the longleaf areas that we visited included only a few trees that could be considered old enough to be suitable for cavity excavation by Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. The understory of colonies in longleaf pine was open and included grasses, bracken ferns (Pteridium aquilinum), a few small oaks (Quercus sp.), gallberry (Ilex glabra), and persimmon (Diospyros virginiana). As would be expected by the characteristics of these pine species, the loblollies were more common in low areas and the longleaf pines were most common on the ridges. Most of the colonies were located on ridges.

Short rotations, extensive clear-cutting and conversion of forest lands to non-forest uses on private lands make the existence of colonies outside of the Talladega National Forest improbable. The concentration of Red-cockaded Woodpecker colonies on the Talladega National Forest represents an important segment of this species' gene pool, and we feel that management to benefit this population is very important. Such management should include: (1) a long-term goal of increasing the acreage of old-growth (80 years +) longleaf pine; (2) continued management of pines on rotations of 80 years or more; (3) increased use of prescribed burning in loblolly areas in order to control hardwoods; (4) selective removal of hardwoods which crowd the base of cavity trees and/or threaten to obscure cavity entrances; and (5) tailoring harvests so as not to isolate colonies from adequate foraging habitat or from trees which may be needed as replacement cavity trees.

Finally, in order to insure a future for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, the major populations of the species should be reunited. This does not mean that all forest lands need to be managed for pines on long-term rotations, but that we plan corridors between major Red-cockaded Woodpecker population centers and manage for the species in these areas rather than trying to manage isolated small populations. Jackson (1976) has suggested that interstate highway rights-of-way might serve as a foundation for such corridors and that forest industry, private individuals, conservation groups and federal and state agencies might best contribute to the species' future by protecting and managing colonies along the corridors and by helping to complete gaps in the corridor system. Interstates 59 and 65 could serve as major corridors linking this Talladega National Forest population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to populations in south Alabama and Mississippi.

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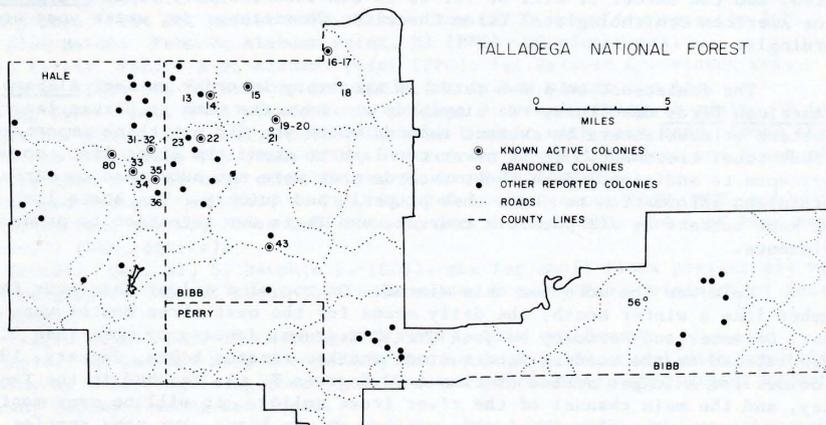


Figure 1. Map of a portion of Talladega National Forest showing the locations of reported Red-cockaded Woodpecker colonies.

THE SEASON, WINTER

December, 1976, January and February, 1977

Thomas A. Imhof

The purpose of this column is to keep A.O.S. members informed of the current status of Alabama's birds. Acceptable data consists of records on 3 x 5 cards to include species, age and sex (where possible - especially where critical to the identification), locality, date, number, observers, how identified, and significance, if known. These cards may be obtained from Dr. Robert J. Newman at L.S.U. (address in last issue of Alabama Birdlife). Other data for this column includes information as presented here other than records - weather, counts, lists, population figures, migration, breeding success, changes in ranges, all of which should be submitted in writing. Acceptable records include those which supersede Alabama Birds and those on endangered and special concern species. If you think your record will be doubted, please include details, especially critical field marks seen. The observer is responsible to know when to include details, for it is he who must also know when to use extra care in identifications in the field. Please avoid such statements as "seen by competent observer" - unnamed, "all field marks seen" - none listed, "we have x number of local records" - so we don't need to be as careful anymore, but do include the fact that you have or have not seen the species before.

If the species is new to the state, we suggest that an article be submitted to this journal to include all pertinent facts including its status in nearby states. In this case, and for accidentals and hypotheticals, every effort should be made to substantiate the record and make it as convincing as possible. Alert other birders as soon as possible, so that they can verify your record and share in its fun and excitement, photograph or record it if possible, or, as a last resort, collect it. You must remember that the more unusual the record, the more likely it is to be doubted, and the harder it will be for us to convince the editors of American Birds or the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist Committee. So, write your article accordingly.

The insistence on 3 x 5 cards is necessary in order to meet Alabama Birdlife and American Birds deadlines. We simply do not have the time to peruse lengthy lists or letters or newsletters to extract records which you did not think important enough for individual treatment. It is never too late to amend the state list, so we are always open to additional data about records that were not submitted on cards or with insufficient information to judge them properly and quickly. The state list is still being kept current by all possible sources, and it is our intention to produce periodic supplements.

Cold was the word for this winter. On top of a colder-than-ever fall with November like a winter month, the daily means for the next three months were all colder, December and February by just over 3 degrees, January by more than 10! Although labeled as the coldest winter since weather records began, January, 1940, got colder for a longer period of time (-10 degrees F. was reached in the Tennessee Valley, and the main channel of the river froze solid). It will be many months before we see all the effects of this weather on the birds, but some species are scarce. Tom Atkeson notes that the cold killed off much of the green forage Wheeler Refuge plants for waterfowl; as a result, some ducks and geese left the region and others were close to starving. Ice conditions brought south many more gulls and diving ducks than usual.

On the Gulf Coast, it appears that away from feeders Whitethroats and Catbirds were scarcer and, in many places, replaced by lingering Juncos and Fox Sparrows, which normally move back inland after the cold front that brought them south has abated. Species notably in short supply since the severe cold may either have moved farther south or else suffered considerable mortality. Included are both kinglets, House Wren, and possibly Yellowthroat and Catbird. One would expect the Golden-crowned Kinglet to survive cold weather well, so perhaps there is a better explanation for their low numbers. It also appears that the Catbird might have been low before the severe cold. Strangely, some species which should have difficulty with cold weather appear to be doing fine at the end of the period. These include Am. Woodcock on the coast, Brown Creeper, Solitary Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Am. Goldfinch, Junco, Fox Sparrow, and possibly E. Bluebird.

Three interesting banding returns at Fort Morgan indicate something about winter survival. A female Cardinal banded February 27, 1975, with a brood patch (in breeding condition) weighed 38.7 grams and had no visible fat. She was recaptured March 7 with 1/3 capacity fat, no brood patch, and weight 39.4 grams. Two years ago, this bird was in breeding condition, but this year she was still fighting the cold weather. The other two - a Myrtle Warbler, immature female, banded November 10, 1976, recaptured March, 1977, and a Whitethroat banded February 10, 1974, recaptured March, 1977 - indicate that some birds held to their original wintering site at Fort Morgan in spite of the severe cold that seared brown the famous Oleanders (reputed to have been planted there by Isabel DeSoto while her husband was exploring over 450 years ago).

Noteworthy records appear below. Abbreviations are: TV - Tennessee Valley, MTr - Mountain Region, ICP - Inland Coastal Plain (replaces UCP, LPC and Lee County), GC - Gulf Coast, rec - record, ref - refuge, mob - many other birders, max - maximum, exc - except.

Red-necked Grebe: Jan. 14, 16 (2), & Feb. 2 (2), vicinity of Decatur (DCH), 7th rec for Ala., 3rd for TV.
Horned Grebe: Feb. 26, Miller's Fy, Wilcox Co. (PFC), very few recs for ICP.
Great Blue Heron: Feb. 7, Alabama Point, 83 (PFC), GC winter max.
Reddish Egret: Feb. 7 & 9, Alabama Point (PFC), 1st Baldwin Co. winter rec.
White Ibis: Dec. 30, 6, Eufaula Ref (GDJ) 1st inland winter rec Ala.
Whistling Swan: Dec. 14-17 (said to be present 3 weeks), Foley, 5 adults, 2 immatures (Walter Tatum, LPA, LRT, Photo-PFC, mob) 1 adult with neck band placed there in the Chesapeake Bay (fide PFC), 3rd rec for GC, all in Dec. and first of more than 1 bird; only other CP rec is for Eufaula Ref.
White-winged Scoter: mid-Jan. to Feb. 26, 2-5 birds Decatur (DCH, HHK, mob), latest inland rec; others, 25 at Gulf Shores, Jan. 1 (fide PFC) and 4 at Fort Morgan, Mar. 7 (MLM, others).
Black Scoter: Dec. 31, 5, Dauphin I. (GDJ), max for small flock present all winter.
Common Merganser: max of about 150 in late Jan. & early Feb., vicinity of Decatur (many).
Rough-legged Hawk: Dec. 15, Mobile (BAW, JTW), 10th rec for GC.
Bald Eagle: at Wheeler Ref, 2 regularly (an adult & an immature) with possibly as many as 5 fleeing icing conditions farther north (TZA). (Newspapers reported many eagles fleeing Reelfoot).
Golden Eagle: Jan. 27 to Feb. 5, Wheeler Ref (WCD, DCH, DoH), always noteworthy.
American Golden Plover: Dec. 18, Wheeler Ref (RJC, HME, CDu, ALM), latest Alabama.
American Woodcock: Jan-Feb, largest winter population in 30 years - PFC Baldwin Co. (also MAG, A&MN).
Greater Yellowlegs: Mar. 10, Blackely I., 500 (TAI, MN).

Lesser Yellowlegs: Mar. 10, Blakely I., 100 (TAI, MN).
Dunlin: Mar. 10, Blakely I., 3000 (TAI, MN).
Western Sandpiper: Mar. 10, Blakely I., 2000 (TAI, MN), good late winter shore-bird concentration speaks well for their survival.
Parasitic Jaeger: Mar. 8, Fort Morgan, an adult chasing Royal and Forster's Terns; Mar. 10, Fort Morgan, an immature worrying a tightly-packed flock of Bonaparte's Gulls like an accipiter with Starlings - identified by relative size and smallness of victims (TAI, SS, MN, SG, CS).
Glaucous Gull: Dec. 23 to Feb. 20, Decatur and vicinity, 1-6 birds (GDJ, DCH, mob) 6 seen on Jan. 16, 5 on Jan. 1, 1st inland rec for Alabama, 4 recs GC.
Great Black-backed Gull: Jan. 1 to Feb. 9, Decatur and vicinity, 1-2 birds (DCH), 2nd inland rec for Alabama, 7 recs GC.
Long-eared Owl: Dec. 24 to Jan. 2, Birmingham (L, P & CW, photo-EBr), heard, seen and pellet examined, 4th rec since 1909, 1st for MTR.
Eastern Kingbird: Mar. 7, Fort Morgan (TAI, MLM, A&MN), earliest Ala. by 5 days.
Vermilion Flycatcher: Oct. 30 to at least Jan. 19, male and female, Magnolia Springs (PFC, mob), lengthy stay is encouraging, birds were there last year. ✓
Tree Swallow: Feb. 28, Wheeler Ref, 2 (CDC) earliest TV, Feb. rec all regions now.
Rough-winged Swallow: Dec. 31, Gulf Shores (GDJ) 8th late Dec. rec GC.
Sprague's Pipit: Jan. 6, 1 and 31, 2, vicinity of Decatur (DCH), 2nd TV rec.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Aug. 4, 1976, Decatur, male picked up dead (DMB), 1st Aug. rec Alabama (previous early fall is Sept. 13).
Cape May Warbler: Dec. 1 & 3, Birmingham, Vestavia (HBT) and Jan. 1-9, Birmingham, Irondale (LMF, JVP), 10 miles apart along same ridge, could be the same bird, 1st winter rec Ala.
Wilson's Warbler: Dec. 2, male and female, Spring Hill, Mobile (JLD), other recs - male banded Ft. Morgan Nov. 11 and male in Birmingham Mar. 25-29 are all 3 1st recs for their respective months. A possible explanation is that the western race which is more often found in winter is involved.
Red Crossbill: Jan. 19-24, 1-8, and one badly-mashed specimen on Jan. 24, Decatur (DCH), only rec this winter.
HOUSE FINCH: Jan. 27 to at least Mar. 15 at feeder in Decatur (DMB, mob, photo-many), removes this bird from hypothetical list, 3rd rec for Ala., 1st for TV.
LeConte's Sparrow: Dec. 30, Eufaula Ref (GDJ), 14, a state max, seen there, date and observers unknown (fide SP).
Tree Sparrow: Feb. 12-28, 3 places near Decatur, 3-20 birds (DMB, CDC, mob), seen and heard, 5th Ala. rec. Jan. 20 to Feb. 8, 1 at a feeder in Jasper (DAR), 6 Ala. recs include 2 each for TV, MTR & ICP.
Lincoln's Sparrow: Feb. 28, Wheeler Ref (CDC), probably a migrant as there are no Dec., Jan. or earlier Feb. recs for TV, the only Ala. region where it does not winter.
Evening Grosbeaks were not recorded, Red-breasted Nuthatches were in fair numbers, and Pine Siskins were few and scattered, mostly near Birmingham. Christmas Bird Count records are adequately commented upon by R. R. Reid, Jr. in this issue of Alabama Birdlife.

Observers: Thomas Z. Atkeson, Lois P. Archer, D. Mark Brown, Ed Bruchac, P. Fairly Chandler, C. Dwight Cooley, Charles Duncan, W. Cecil Davis, J. L. Dorn, Howard M. Einspahr, Sherlie Gade, Mary A. Gaillard, David C. Hulse, Doug Hagan, Thomas A. Imhof, Greg D. Jackson, Helen H. Kittinger, Mary Lou Mattis, Ann L. Miller, Lloyd MacFadyen, Albert & Mini Nonkes, Sam Pate, David A. Rowland, Steve Stedman, Charles Saunders, Helen B. Thigpen, Lib R. Toenes, Leroy, Page & Chance Willingham, Beverly A. Winn, John T. Winn.

1036 Pike Road
Birmingham, Alabama 35218

THE SEASON, SPRING

March, April and May, 1977

Thomas A. Imhof

This is a happy season for the birder who welcomes back old friends who are easy to find, in bright colors and singing loudly. But this year some of this pleasure was dulled by some blank spaces on our lists, for some days afield and some counts revealed that some species were in real short supply, some abundant birds even were reduced to common or uncommon. The weather apparently was responsible for most of this - certainly it was severe enough! (See winter account above.) About March 7 the weather changed and we began to receive a lot of strong southerly winds so that March averaged over 4 degrees above the daily mean and April and May about 2 degrees. March and April had more than 2 inches above normal precipitation, but May was about normal. On the coast, there has been little measurable precipitation since late March, and at present (late June) it is close to drought conditions. Very few significant cold fronts have crossed the coast since early March.

The following species appear to be abnormally scarce and very likely took big losses this winter: Common Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, House and Carolina Wrens, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Myrtle Warbler, Yellowthroat, Chipping and White-throated Sparrows away from feeders. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker and American Goldfinch may also be in this group. Most of the waterbirds appear to have been little affected by the severe cold, and the following landbirds have increased at least on the Birmingham Spring Counts: Red-shouldered Hawk, Mourning Dove, Great Crested Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Brown Creeper, Veery, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and White-eyed Vireo. Note that only the first two and the creeper are common here in January.

On the coast, Fairly Chandler notes that "frontal systems ceased this year after the first week of April, and we saw few migrants on the coast." Lib Toenes reports that at Dauphin Island, "This is the worst late March and early April ever." Margaret Miller reports from there, "Banding and birding were slow again this year. However, I did get a few good species." Tuck Hayward elaborates that since the last of April, "birds have been scattered but more interesting." Mary Gaillard simplifies and consolidates it all, "a very disappointing migration." In Birmingham the arrival of some species appears to have been delayed in spite of the southerly winds and normal development of vegetation.

FLICKER: Our main concern is the Common Flicker which has dropped on the Birmingham Spring Counts from a 1966-1971 average of .675 bird per party hour to .242. (For an average 10-hour day, one party would see 6-3/4 birds, but now they see less than 2-1/2!) We feel that this champion eater of ants is probably getting a large dose of chlorine - Mirex is untra-persistent and contains far more chlorine than DDT, which is banned - and the weakened birds were in poor shape to survive the bitter cold. In any case, we are now counting flickers in lower numbers than ever before - verified on some early reported Breeding Bird Surveys - and perhaps Alabama may find itself in the same embarrassing position as Louisiana did with its Brown Pelicans two decades ago!

Noteworthy records appear below; abbreviations explained in winter season report in this issue.

White Pelican: June 1, 43 migrating easterly, Tuscaloosa (RKC); only spring rec between GC and TV.

Brown Pelican: May 12; Dauphin I., peak of only 36, 2 adults (LRT), indicates good reproduction but numbers do not compare with 1973 and 1975.

Blue-faced Booby: Apr. 9, ten (RWH); Apr. 15, many (RWH); June 5, 1 immature (CDD), all Dauphin; 7th consecutive year in coastal Alabama mostly Jan. & April.

Double-crested Cormorant: April 25, Decatur (DMB); Eufaula Ref., April 2, 6, since then a total of 15 daily, last seen May 19 (JBO).

Cattle Egret - Little Blue Heron: May 16, Gordo, a heronry containing 1500 birds, 5 Little Blues to each Cattle Egret, destroyed by local farmers with shotguns - State Conservation Dept. notified.

Glossy Ibis: Adults seen both sides of Bay in the vicinity of Cat I. since early March (LRT, TAI, others); 2 adults flying up Chattahoochee R. at Eufaula Ref. April 10 (JBO).

White-faced Ibis: June 4, Cat I., 6 adults (photo-PGJ, CDD); apparently both forms - species, subspecies, whatever - are breeding on the same island and perhaps this is the test that will tell us just what these forms are!

Mallard: April 26, 4 ducklings led by both parents, 1st brood of season, Eufaula Ref. (JBO).

Pintail: March 26, L. Purdy (HME), latest for Mtr; Apr. 15, Mobile (DMB, CDC, SG), latest for GC.

Canvasback: April 5, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), latest ICP.

Greater Scaup: Feb. 13, 12, L. Guntersville S.P. (CDC), inland max.

Lesser Scaup: April 5, 125 & April 23, 65, Eufaula Ref. (JBO).

Common Goldeneye: April 8, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), only spring rec ICP.

Oldsquaw: April 26, St. Andrew's Bay, male, (ALM, PFC), latest Alabama.

White-winged Scoter: Feb. 26, Decatur (DCH), latest inland Ala.

Surf Scoter: April 24, male and female, Gulf Shores (ALM), latest Alabama.

Ruddy Duck: May 28, female, Wheeler Ref. (DMB), may summer again.

Common Merganser: Mar. 28, 3, Decatur (DCH), latest for TV but we have April recs for MTR and GC.

Red-breasted Merganser: Apr. 19, 125 (JBO).

Swallow-tailed Kite: Mar. 12-Apr. 22, 7 recs of 13 birds on GC (MAG, mob).

Bald Eagle: Apr. 23, adult, Eufaula Ref. (JBO).

Eagle sp.: Mar. 16, two, Point Clear (PFC).

Osprey: Eufaula Ref., first, April 8, two; nine noted flying n. from ref. this spring, two remain - may breed? (JBO).

Peregrine: March 27, Blakely I., Mobile, flushed thousands of shorebirds and even White Pelicans (TAI, HNW); April 29, Wheeler Ref. (DMB, ALM, MMCD), latest TV; May 8, Dauphin I (REH), latest Alabama.

Sora: March 5, 12 & 15, Wheeler Ref. (DMB), earliest n. of winter range.

Piping Plover: May 8, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), 3rd inland spring Alabama.

American Golden Plover: March 15, Decatur, 275 birds (DMB, mob), state max.

Ruddy Turnstone: Decatur, May 14 (DMB) & May 31, 3 (DCH), 3rd & 4th inland spring recs.

Upland Sandpiper: reports of 7 recs of 43 birds are indeed encouraging; two May 28 at Eufaula Ref. (JBO) are latest for Alabama exc 3 summer recs.

Lesser Yellowlegs: March 5, 25, Decatur (DMB, CDC, SG) earliest n. of ICP.

Pectoral Sandpiper: March 12, Belle Mina, Limestone Co., (DMB, CDC), earliest rec TV.

White-rumped Sandpiper: April 26, two, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), earliest inland Ala. exc TV.

Baird's Sandpiper: May 14, two, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), carefully identified, inland spring Alabama total now 4 recs of 12 birds.

Least Sandpiper: May 28, 23 birds, Wheeler Ref. (DMB), latest TV.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: March 5, 3, seen and heard, Decatur (DMB, CDC, SG), earliest inland Ala.

Western Sandpiper: March 5, Decatur (DMB, CDC, SG), earliest TV.
 Sanderling: May 14, 2, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), 1st spring ICP.
 Short-billed Dowitcher: March 15, 15, Decatur (DMB, ALM, HHK, HHF), earliest TV.
 Marbled Godwit: April 9, Dauphin I. (CDD, HME), earliest GC exc winter.
 Hudsonian Godwit: June 7, summer plumage, Cochrane Causeway, Mobile (CDD), 6th Ala. rec, latest of 4 spring recs GC.
 American Avocet: June 3, 14 & June 7, 3, Blakely I., Mobile (both CDD); second successive summer may lead to local breeding.
 Black-necked Stilt: birds first noted Blakely I., March 10 (TAI, MN) have produced young by early June (CDD).
 Northern Phalarope: April 29, Blakely I. (CDD, HME), 2nd spring rec Alabama.
 Glaucous Gull: April 13 (RWH) & May 7 (REH), both Dauphin, 4th year on GC.
 Franklin's Gull: April 24 & 25, adult in summer plumage, Decatur (TAI, GMI, DMB), 7th Ala. rec, 4th for TV, 1st in April, all recs are of adults.
 Laughing Gull: March 30, Wheeler Ref. (DMB, ALM), 8th TV rec, 1st in March; April 12 - May 17, 17 birds at Eufaula Ref. (JBO), helps to verify that species is a regular migrant in Chattahoochee Valley. It is not known to breed on the Great Lakes, although a few summer, so one might ask where the birds are going. We have two banding recoveries from the Atlantic coast. At Barnegat Bay, N.J., this summer young Laughing Gulls are being marked by Joanna Burger of Rutgers U. with 5-cm. orange or orange and green wing tags besides the usual federal aluminum leg bands. Look sharply at Alabama Laughing Gulls this summer and fall and you may be able to help to establish that the birds migrate overland from the Atlantic coast. Shorebirds are also being marked with colored tags. Please record all details such as color and position of tags and place, time and associates of bird to the Bird Banding Laboratory, USF&WS, Laurel, Md. 20811.
 Bonaparte's Gull: April 2, Gunter'sville, 50, nearly all black-headed (CDC, TAI, ALM); black-headed birds are rare on the coast and this seems to indicate that the development of the black head and the urge to migrate are concurrent.
 Forster's Tern: April 12, 2 & May 8, 1, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), earliest inland spring rec Ala.; April 24, Decatur (TAI, GMI), earliest TV.
 Common Tern: April 12, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), 1st spring rec ICP.
 Gaspian Tern: April 1, 2; April 12, 2; May 8, 1; all Eufaula Ref. (JBO), earliest inland Ala.; April 25, 2, Decatur (DMB), ties earliest TV.
 Black Tern: April 16, 8, Gulf Shores (DMB, CDC, SG), earliest Ala., May 8, 2, Birmingham (JVP, RWL), 2nd spring rec Mtr.
 Chimney Swift: March 28, 6, Scottsboro (BGW); March 29, 6, Wheeler Ref (DMB, ALM), 1st & 2nd earliest TV.
 Gray Kingbird: Apr. 2, Dauphin (RWH), earliest Ala. by 9 days.
 Barn Swallow: March 13, Decatur (DMB), earliest TV, ties earliest inland.
 Cliff Swallow: March 22, 5, Decatur (DCH), earliest TV.
 House Wren: May 28, Wheeler Ref. (DMB), may indicate local breeding.
 Wood Thrush: Normal arrival in Birmingham is about March 25, earliest March 11 - this year the first reported was April 15 (HHK) and April 18 on Ruffner Mt. 100 were seen (JVP).
 Veery: March 28, Dauphin (REH), earliest Ala.; April 18, Birmingham (JVP), earliest Mtr.
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: March 19, 2, Wheeler Ref. (DMB), earliest TV.
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Scarcity of species illustrated by this contrast: May 1, 1976, 104 birds in 163 party hours (Birmingham Spring Count), April 30 - May 1, 1977, no birds in 30 party hours - a similar story repeated since January.
 Red-eyed Vireo: March 20, Fairhope (MN) & Spring Hill (MAG), first reported same date from opposite sides of Mobile Bay.
 Black-whiskered Vireo: April 6, Dauphin I., 1 banded (MEM), earliest of 11 Alabama recs.
 Warbling Vireo: April 8, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), earliest ICP.

Swainson's Warbler: April 20, Scottsboro (BGW), earliest TV.
 Cape May Warbler: April 10, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), 2nd spring rec ICP.
 Black-throated Blue Warbler: Dauphin I., 11 banded late April and early May (MEM, REH); May 11, Birmingham Zoo (HME), latest spring Ala.
 Black-throated Green Warbler: March 19, Perry Mtn. (HHK, B.A.S.) a male, earliest ICP may indicate the farthest south breeding in Ala.; May 27, Decatur (DMB), latest spring rec away from breeding range.
 Yellow-throated Warbler: March 26, Wheeler Ref. (DMB), earliest TV.
 Palm Warbler: May 14, Wheeler Ref. (DMB, JMH, TAB), latest TV.
 Ovenbird: April 10, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), 1st spring rec ICP.
 Northern Waterthrush: April 12, Eufaula Ref. (JBO), earliest ICP.
 Connecticut Warbler: April 30, Dauphin I., banded (MEM), second consecutive year there, second April rec Ala.
 Yellowthroat: March 5, Wheeler Ref. (DMB, CDC, SG), earliest TV exc winter.
 Bobolink: April 14, 4 males, Ft. Morgan (DMB), ties earliest GC.
 Rusty Blackbird: April 27, Decatur, female (DMB), ties latest Ala.
 Brewer's Blackbird: March 26, 6, Belle Mina (DMB, CDC), latest TV.
 Yellow-headed Blackbird: March 24 (BVM) & April 1 (MN), both Belforest, e. of Daphne; of 12 Ala. recs this is 4th in spring.
 Boat-tailed Grackle: late February into June, 4 miles e. of Daphne, Baldwin Co., 20+ males and females, habitat, pecan orchards, open cultivated fields, cemetery, small pond with a big willow (A&MN, TAI, PFC, others), apparently the birds are breeding in a non-marine habitat for the first time in Alabama.
 Indigo Bunting: March 10, Ft. Morgan (TAI, MN), first noted; March 28, Dauphin (REH), next noted; April 24, Sipsey Forest, none in 9 hours!(TAI, GMI); no first noted reported in SOSO of B.A.S. (JVP); com. May 1 in n. Alabama.
 House Finch: March 16, female, Decatur (DMB), last date for 3rd state rec.

Observers: Alabama Ornithological Society, Birmingham Audubon Society, Thomas Z. Atkeson, Thomas A. Brindley, D. Mark Brown, P. Fairly Chandler, C. Dwight Cooley, Richard K. Crawford, Charles D. Duncan, Howard M. Einspahr, Harriett H. Findlay, Mary A. Gaillard, Scott Gravette, J. Milton Harris, Ralph W. Havard, Richard E. (Tuck) Hayward, David C. Hulse, Thomas A. Imhof, Gina Marie Imhof, Paul G. Johnson, Helen H. Kittinger, Ronny W. Lewis, Mabel McDonald, Ann L. Miller, Margaret E. Miller, Betsy V. Minor, Albert & Mini Nonkes, J. Brent Ortego, James V. Peavy, Lib R. Toenes, Herbert N. Willis, Betty G. Worley, SOSO-Sight On Sound Off in Flicker Flashes.

1036 Pike Road
 Birmingham, Alabama 35218

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STATUS OF THE RED-SHOULDERED HAWK IN ALABAMA

David T. Rogers, Jr. and Mark A. Dauber

During the period of June 7 to September 15, 1976, we undertook a study of the distribution and relative abundance of hawks in west-central Alabama. Part of the impetus for conducting this study was concern over the Red-shouldered Hawk expressed by its appearance under "special concern" status in Endangered and Threatened Plants and Animals of Alabama (1976).

During this project we used several search methods which might be characterized as follows:

1. Hiking through swamps and river flood plains with or without use of a hawk call.
2. Visitation to lookout towers.
3. Periodic stops while driving. These were of two types:
 - a. stopping every $\frac{1}{2}$ mile
 - b. stopping at selected spots

Initial work was done without the benefit of a hawk call which was purchased later in the project. The call was an Olt G-7 which is easily obtainable and mimics the Red-shouldered Hawk quite well. Approximately one and one-half hours were spent on each visitation to a lookout tower. Care was taken to visit coastal plain, Appalachian plateau, and ridge and valley physiographic provinces.

Using the method of stopping every $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and using a call, we found 33 Red-shouldered Hawks in 39 stops (coastal plain), and 40 Red-shouldered Hawks in 123 stops (Appalachian plateau). Hiking without use of a call produced 16 Red-shouldered Hawks in 15 miles of river bottom forest and no hawks in 3 miles of Appalachian plateau. Retracing 4 miles of the bottomland with a call produced 11 Red-shouldered Hawks in 4 miles. Observation at lookout towers produced 13 Red-shouldered Hawks at 11 coastal plain sites, 2 at 2 ridge and valley towers and 3 at 2 Appalachian plateau towers. Not included in the above was one visit to a plateau tower with the hawk call which produced 4 Red-shouldered Hawks.

Other miscellaneous observations pushed the total count of Red-shouldered Hawks to 150. Using the hawk call, one can easily locate 15-20 Red-shouldered Hawks in a morning. Why was this bird placed in "special concern" status by the Symposium on Endangered and Threatened Plants and Animals of Alabama? We believe that there are two problems involved. First, the Red-shouldered Hawk is a forest bird and most abundant in swamps. Thus, they are not obvious to most people. The second problem is that there is a lack of quantitative data on hawks in Alabama. We believe that use of a hawk call is extremely helpful in locating hawks. Red-tailed Hawks and Broad-winged Hawks responded to the call during our study period. The observation period produced 14 Broad-winged Hawks, 9 Red-tailed Hawks and 3 Cooper's Hawks. These three species were not numerous enough to include quantitatively. We believe that the Red-shouldered Hawk is doing well in Alabama and should be removed from special concern.

This research was supported by the University of Alabama Research Grant Committee, Project 890.

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A.O.S. FALL MEETING - DESTIN, FLORIDA - WEEK-END OF SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1977

Plan to attend the Fall Meeting of the Alabama Ornithological Society and to enjoy the Gulf Coast with field trips, banquet, programs and good fellowship.

On Saturday night, Mr. Curtis L. Kingsbery will give a lecture/color slide program which will be most entertaining. On Friday night, Dr. Charles W. Summerour will present "Some Observations on the Swainson's Warbler and Song Sparrows in Northeast Alabama."

Make your reservations now with The Best Western Seascape Inn, P.O. Box 337, Destin, Florida 32541. Phone 904-837-6137 (Toll Free 1-800-874-9141). Inform the Inn that your reservation is an A.O.S. reservation to obtain special convention rates of \$13.00 per room per day, double occupancy (children under 17 free if in same room with parents). Include with your reservation a \$13 deposit, payable to The Best Western Seascape Inn.

Headquarters - The Best Western Seascape Inn - All activities will be held, or will begin, at the Seascape Inn.

Friday	10/7/77	6:00 p.m.	Registration
		7:00 p.m.	Program - <u>Dr. Charles W. Summerour</u>
Saturday	10/8/77	7:00 a.m.	Field Trips
		7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon - Registration
		12:00 noon	Directors' Meeting - Dining Room
		2:00 p.m.	Field Trips
		6:30 p.m.	Dinner
		7:00 p.m.	Business Meeting
		7:30 p.m.	Program - <u>Mr. Curtis L. Kingsbery</u>
Sunday	10/9/77	7:00 a.m.	Field Trips
		11:00 a.m.	Compilation

Pre-Registration Form

Please pre-register! We particularly need to know how many will attend the Seafood Dinner.

NAME _____

Registration \$2.00 per person, \$4.00 maximum per family \$ _____

Seafood Dinner: _____ at \$8.00 _____

_____ at \$4.00 _____

(\$8.00 per person, except \$4.00 per child under 12 yrs)

TOTAL - \$ _____

Make check payable to Alabama Ornithological Society and mail check and pre-registration form to:

Ms. Martha Rogers
 Treasurer, A.O.S.
 2708 43rd Avenue East
 Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401