

# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

*Journal of the Alabama Ornithological Society*

---

Volume 36

No. 2

1989

---

## CONTENTS

THIRD RECORD FOR THE RUFF ( <i>PHILOMACHUS PUGNAX</i> ) IN ALABAMA. <i>Ann Miller</i> .....	1
SUMMARY OF BAND RECOVERIES FROM WADING BIRDS BANDED IN ALABAMA, 1953-1985. <i>Julian L. Dusi and Rosemary D. Dusi</i> .....	3
THE 1989 BREEDING SEASON ON THE ALABAMA GULF COAST. <i>John Dindo and Ken Marion</i> .....	7
AN UNUSUAL NORTHERN FLICKER ( <i>COLAPTES AURATUS</i> ) NEST IN BARBOUR COUNTY. <i>Daniel J. Drennen and Dana B. Drennen</i> .....	9
SORAS ( <i>PORZANA CAROLINA</i> ) VISIT BIRDFEEDER. <i>Ann Forster</i> .....	11
TREE SWALLOWS ( <i>TACHYCINETA BICOLOR</i> ) FOUND NESTING AT WEISS LAKE. <i>Bill Summerour</i> .....	12
SOUTHWESTERN SUBSPECIES OF CLIFF SWALLOW ( <i>PETROCHELIDON PYRRHONOTA</i> ) NESTING IN MOBILE COLONY. <i>Bill Summerour</i> .....	13
HELPING BRING BACK THE BLUEBIRD ( <i>SIALIA SIALIS</i> ) - 1988 BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT. <i>John Findlay, III</i> .....	14
NOTES OF INTEREST .....	16
1989 SPRING AND SUMMER SIGHTINGS. <i>Greg D. Jackson</i> .....	18

# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Published by the Alabama Ornithological Society  
to Record and Further the Study of Birds in Alabama

---

Vol. 36

No. 2

1989

---

*Editor:* Dr. Bill Summerour, Biology Dept., Jacksonville  
State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265

*Copy Editor:* Dr. George Richards, English Dept., Jacksonville  
State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265

*Seasons Editor:* Dr. Greg D. Jackson, 2220 Baneberry Drive,  
Birmingham, AL 35244

*Counts Editor:* Dr. Thomas A. Imhof, 1036 Pike Road,  
Birmingham, AL 35218

## ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 May, 1952

### OFFICERS

*President:* Mr. Robert R. Sargent, Rt. 1 Box 558G,  
Trussville, AL 35173

*Immediate Past President:* Dr. Greg D. Jackson, 2220 Baneberry  
Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244

*Secretary:* Ms. Jan Schultz, 3567 Mill Springs Road,  
Birmingham, AL 35223

*Treasurer:* Ms. Martha B. Sargent, Rt. 1 Box 558G,  
Trussville, AL 35173

*Newsletter Editor:* Mr. Michael J. Owens, 7586 Old Bradford Road,  
Pinson, AL 35126

### A.O.S. MEMBERSHIPS

*Alabama Birdlife* is a publication of the Alabama Ornithological Society.

Membership in the society includes a subscription to *Alabama Birdlife*.

Active .....	\$10.00
Associate (outside AL and NW FL) .....	\$6.00
Student .....	\$5.00
Family .....	\$15.00
Sustaining .....	\$20.00
Life .....	\$100.00

Dues are payable on 1 January of each year and should be mailed to the  
treasurer.

Produced by Laurel Design

**THIRD RECORD FOR THE RUFF  
(*PHILOMACHUS PUGNAX*) IN ALABAMA**

Ann Miller



**Figure 1. Ruff (second from left) feeding among Pectoral Sandpipers, yellowlegs and a Killdeer. (Photo by Ann Miller)**



**Figure 2. Ruff in flight (center right) with Pectoral Sandpipers and Starlings. (Photo by Ann Miller)**

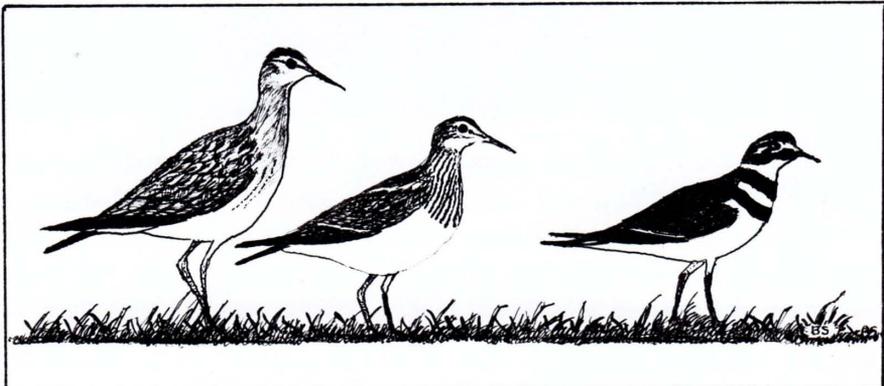
On 2 September 1989, during a routine birding trip to a sod farm about 50 km (30 mi) southeast of Birmingham, Alice Stevens, my companion, and I noticed a different looking bird among a small flock of Pectoral Sandpipers (*Calidris melanotos*) that were feeding on the open,

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

lawn-like turf (Fig. 1 and 2). Since our highest expectations were to find Buff-breasted Sandpipers (*Tryngites subruficollis*), Lesser Golden-Plovers (*Pluvialis dominica*), or other short-grass shorebirds, one can imagine our elation when we identified the bird as an immature male Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*).

We had excellent lighting for viewing both the Ruff and Pectoral Sandpipers which were about 45 m (135 ft) away. It was immediately obvious that the Ruff was larger by several centimeters than the Pectoral Sandpipers and heavier in appearance. The upper parts were dark brown with buffy, chestnut-fringed feathers, the breast and upper belly strongly washed with buff, and the sides of the breast faintly streaked. The bill was dark except for a pale area at the base, and relatively short, with a slight droop at the tip. The legs and feet were gray, and in flight the oval white patches on the rump and the white underwings were very noticeable. During the breeding season, adult males have spectacular rufous, black, or white ruffs about the neck, and thus the name Ruff. Females lack this conspicuous plumage and are smaller. Leg color varies and may be red, orange, or yellow.

Even though this Old World species is a regular migrant throughout North America and has nested in Alaska, it is considered rare and irregular in Alabama, this sighting being only the third record for the state. Previous sightings were in the fall of 1971 and spring of 1976, both at Eufaula Refuge. The 1989 record is by far the most thoroughly documented due to the fact that approximately 50 people observed it, some from as far away as Tennessee. It is probably safe to say that we can expect more records of this distinctive bird as the number of observers continues to increase. *Ann Miller, 520 Yorkshire Dr., Birmingham, AL 35209.*



**SUMMARY OF BAND RECOVERIES FROM WADING BIRDS  
BANDED IN ALABAMA, 1953-1985**

Julian L. Dusi and Rosemary D. Dusi

Birdbanding is one of the major methods of securing dispersal data. The relative ease of banding large numbers of colonial wading bird nestlings provides a large amount of dispersal data. We started banding nestling herons in 1953 and have records through 1985. Most herons have been banded at heron colonies whose status we also have monitored (Dusi and Dusi 1987).

**Methods**

Banding nestling herons first requires that the bander get to the nest. Wading or using boats in swamps, the use of small extension ladders in the boats to reach the higher nests, and the use of extension ladders in upland colonies were methods used in getting to the nests. Catching the nestling birds usually required the use of a bamboo pole with a wire hook on the end. This permitted hooking the nestling around the neck and bringing it to the bander. After banding, the nestling was perched on the pole and replaced in its nest.

Standard U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands were used on all nestlings. Some experimental marking with colored leg bands also was done. Radio-tagging was used on adults to follow their daily movements.

Band recoveries were reports from the Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, Md., made to banders and to the persons reporting the recoveries. All recoveries were of dead birds. Birds recovered in Central and South American were reported as "shot," while those recovered in the United States were described as birds "found dead," "killed by a dog," but never "shot," which was probably the cause.

**Results**

The banding reported here, from 1953 to 1985, resulted in a total of 3,706 birds banded and 58 returns, with a return percentage of 1.6 (Table 1).

Following are tabulated results of banding and returns:

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

TABLE 1. TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS OF EACH SPECIES BANDED, RETURNED, AND PERCENTAGE OF RETURNS, 1953-1985.

Species	Total Banded	Total Returns	Percent Returns
Anhinga	4	1	25
Great Blue Heron	8	1	12.5
Green-backed Heron	6	0	0
Little Blue Heron	2,519	42	1.7
Cattle Egret	821	12	1.5
Reddish Egret	2	0	0
Great Egret	42	1	2.4
Snowy Egret	11	1	9
Black-crowned Night-Heron	18	0	0
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	25	0	0
White Ibis	<u>250</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	3,706	58	1.6

### Discussion

As band returns of Little Blue Herons came in, we could see the pattern of dispersal appearing for those nestlings banded at the Hog Wallow Ponds, Macon Co. (Dusi 1958). The nestlings dispersed in all directions from the colony site and some dispersals, showing southward migration, indicated that the nestlings reached Puerto Rico, Trinidad, Inagua, Venezuela, Cuba, and Honduras. The returns of other Little Blue Heron banders, provided by the Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, Md., showed a similar pattern, except that the Little Blue Herons banded west of central Alabama apparently dispersed west and their migration was around the Gulf of Mexico to Central and South America (Dusi 1967). Later banding of Cattle Egret nestlings showed that all of the Alabama nestlings apparently migrated westward around the Gulf of Mexico to Central America (Dusi and Dusi 1967). The dispersal routes and locations of band recoveries are shown in Fig.1. Color banding of some of the nestlings showed that nestlings seldom returned to the colony site where they were hatched. One Little Blue Heron nestling did return to the colony site of its birth and nested while it was still in the white juvenal plumage (Dusi 1967). Of the 58 returns, 32, or 55%, were

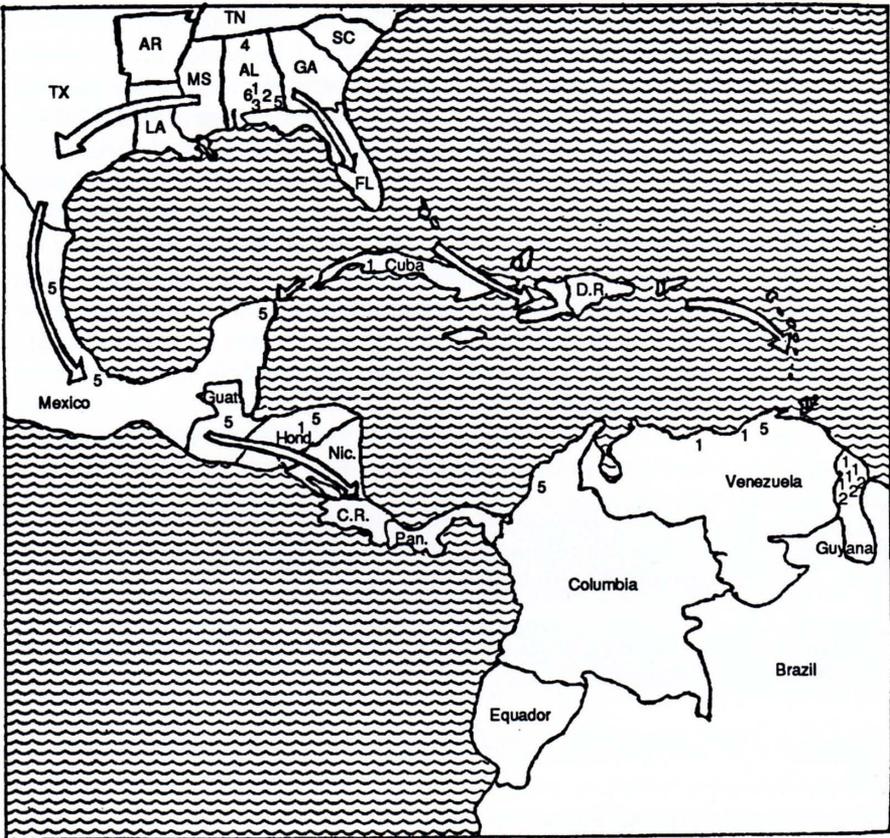


Figure 1. Map of colony locations in Alabama, where herons dispersed out of the United States, and the migration routes used.

Legend of colony numbers

- 1. Hog Wallow ponds, Macon County
- 2. Marvyn, Lee County
- 3. Opp, Covington County
- 4. Swan Creek, Limestone County
- 5. Pansey, Houston County
- 6. Pintlala, Montgomery County

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

first year birds, indicating a high mortality rate for the first year.

The radio-telemetry tagging was done by D.L. Bateman (1970) at the Pansey and Malone colony sites. He was able to show that the nesting Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets fed within a radius of about 32 km (20 mi) of the colony site. Until the nestlings were about two weeks old, one adult of each pair would stay near the nest for one day, while the other one hunted for food. The next day they would reverse the procedure. When the young were several weeks old, both adults hunted for food. They also made about four trips per day back to the nest to feed the young. Birds that were not nesting roosted around the colony or spent the day out, usually returning to the colony at night. After the major nesting was over, these non-breeding birds usually left the colony area (Bateman 1970, Dusi, et al. 1971).

### Literature Cited

Bateman, D. L. 1970. Movement-behavior in three species of colonial nesting wading birds: a radio-telemetric study. Unpubl. Ph.D. Dissertation, Auburn University, Alabama. 233 pp.

Dusi, J. L. 1958. Dispersion of Little Blue Herons from a pond in Macon Co., Alabama. *Alabama Birdlife* 6: 29-31.

Dusi, J. L. 1967. Migration in the Little Blue Heron. *Wilson Bull.* 79: 223-235.

Dusi, J. L. and R. T. Dusi. 1967. The status of the Cattle Egret in Alabama, 1966. *Alabama Birdlife* 15: 2-6.

Dusi, J. L. and R. D. Dusi. 1987. A thirty-four-year summary of the status of heron colony sites in the Coastal Plain of Alabama, USA. *Colonial Waterbirds* 10: 27-37.

Dusi, J. L., R. T. Dusi, D. L. Bateman, C. A. McDonald, J. J. Stuart, and J. F. Dismukes. 1971. *Water Resour. Res. Inst. Bull.* 5. Auburn University, Alabama. 117 pp.

*Julian L. Dusi, Department of Zoology and Wildlife Science, Auburn University, AL 36849, and Rosemary D. Dusi, 560 Sherwood Dr., Auburn, AL 36830.*

**THE 1989 BREEDING SEASON ON THE  
ALABAMA GULF COAST**

John Dindo and Ken Marion

The avifauna of coastal Alabama was exposed to a very mild spring and summer during 1989. Yet despite these seemingly favorable conditions, the numbers of early nesting herons and egrets on Cat Island in the Mississippi Sound were lower than in recent years. Counts of Tricolored Herons (*Hydranassa tricolor*), Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula*), and Little Blue Herons (*Florida caerulea*) were 15% below the average for the past two years. There were no major environmental changes on the island itself and no changes induced by man. In contrast, Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), which are late nesters (June-Aug), had a two-fold increase in breeding pairs as compared to the last two years. The average count per trip throughout the breeding season was 460.



**Figure 1. Banded White Ibis nestling on Cat Island. 1989 was the first year this species has nested on Cat Island. (Photo by John Dindo)**

Of particular interest was the first nesting record for the White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) on Cat Island (Fig.1). Five pairs produced 12 fledglings from the island this year. Although a common nester inland, this species is uncommon along the coastline, where only immature birds are normally observed (Gaston, 1976). The Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

has nested previously on Cat Island, as reported by Gaston and Johnson (1977) and in 1987 and 1988 (personal observation). These new breeding species on Cat Island, along with the continued success of the Reddish Egret (*Dichromanassa rufescens*), two pairs with two successful nests, reinforces the need to have Cat Island declared a state sanctuary or included in the Gulf Islands National Seashore.

In addition to the herons and egrets, approximately 50 pairs of Black Skimmers (*Rynchops niger*), three pairs of American Oystercatchers (*Haematopus palliatus*), 15 pairs of Least Terns (*Sterna antillarum*) and numerous Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) nested successfully on Cat Island this year.

The western end of Little Dauphin Island continues to serve as a nesting site for three pairs of Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) and a pair of Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*). Two breeding colonies of Least Terns utilize the western shell hash area and the high spoil bank on the eastern end. This is also the third year that a pair of Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) has occupied the same nest. We look forward to the continued success of this beautiful raptor along our shores.

Sand Island, located in the Gulf eight-tenths of a kilometer (one-half mi) south of Dauphin Island, is host to hundreds of coastal birds. One can find Am. Avocets (*Recurvirostra americana*), Reddish Egrets, and Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*) all feeding in the shallow tidal flats. In one observation over 250 Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) and 40 Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) were counted. Also noted feeding along the tide lines were numerous dowitchers (*Limnodromus sp.*), Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*), Black-bellied Plovers, (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Semipalmated Plovers, (*Charadrius seimpalmatus*), and Piping Plovers, (*Pluvialis squatarola*). Unfortunately, the breeding population of Black Skimmers, Least Terns, Forster's Tern (*Sterna forsteri*), and Gull-billed Terns (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) has declined every year for the past four years. Where once they nested throughout the open sand dunes, they are now confined to small grassy areas. Between 5 June and 14 Aug of this year the nests of only 20 skimmers, ten Least Terns, six Gull-billed Terns and ten Forster's Terns were located. This reduction in nesting birds resulted from the high weekend recreational use of Sand Island. In addition, many of these visitors bring their dogs with them. Although Dr. Meyers, Director of the Nongame Division of the Alabama Department of Conservation, and his staff have marked Sand Island well with posted signs to keep people away from nesting areas, the sheer numbers of people alone cause the birds to leave their nests for long periods of time, thereby exposing

the chicks to high temperatures and possible predation.

A pair of Great-horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) has nested on Dauphin Island for the past three years. The owls had a successful year with four of these large birds having been observed on the Island.

Dauphin Island's west-end beach is a 13 km (eight mi) long narrow dune field. It is used extensively by a large colony of Least Terns, Royal Terns (*Sterna maxima*) and Black Skimmers. Over the past three years, however, continued vehicular traffic in this area has drastically reduced nesting activity along this section of the island. Although the "No Vehicles On Alabama Dunes and Beaches" signs are everywhere, they are ignored and there is no enforcement.

During the breeding season of 1989, the avifauna of coastal Alabama has experienced some problems. On the other hand, the overall picture is still good, and some positive steps for the future have been taken. The inclusion of Little Dauphin Island into the Bon Secour National Wildlife Reserve has helped create a sanctuary for many of the species being displaced by man. Due to a mild climate and abundant food availability, coastal Alabama should continue to support a large assemblage of birds.

### Literature Cited

Gaston, G. R. 1976. Occurrence of four species of ibis near Dauphin Island, Alabama. *Alabama Birdlife* 24: 14.

Gaston, G. R. and P. G. Johnson. 1977. Nesting success and mortality of nestlings in a coastal Alabama heron/egret colony. *Northeast Gulf Science* 1: 14-22.

*John Dindo, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, P.O.Box 386, Dauphin Island, AL 36528, and Ken Marion, Biology Dept., UAB, Birmingham, AL 35294.*

### AN UNUSUAL NORTHERN FLICKER (*COLAPTES AURATUS*) NEST IN BARBOUR COUNTY

Daniel J. Drennen and Dana B. Drennen

On 31 May 1989 a Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) nest with five eggs was discovered in a vertical ground hole approximately 13 cm (5.25 in) wide by 43 cm (17.0 in) deep at Lake Point State Park in Barbour Co., Alabama. The nest was located about 20 m (66.6 ft) west of the bathhouse and about one m (3.33 ft) east of a power unit box on the

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Barbour Loop campground. The hole appeared to be the reworked entrance to an eastern chipmunk (*Tamia striatus*) burrow. The ground was level and covered by sod which was routinely mowed. Large loblolly pines (*Pinus taeda*) surrounded the area. On the day that my wife, Dana, and I discovered the nest, the bird flushed from the hole at 15:45 hrs and perched on an adjacent pine. After approximately five minutes it flew back and reentered the hole.

Subsequent visits revealed the bird sitting on the nest between 2 June and 9 June. By 13 June, however, the bird had not been seen for four days and there were only four eggs remaining in the nest. By 20 June, approximately 21 days after the initial observation and 11 days since the birds were last seen, it was apparent that the nest had been abandoned. The eggs were removed by the authors and analyzed. Three of the four eggs contained dead embryos approximately 0.63 cm (.025 in) long while the fourth appeared to be infertile. Rainfall between 31 May and 9 June was 4.06 cm (1.60 in) and may have contributed to the nest's failure.

Harrison (1975) reported Northern Flickers nesting mainly in tree cavities at a height between 0.6 - 18.3 m (2-60 ft), while Imhof (1976) reported flicker nests in snags 0.3 - 30 m (1-100 ft) above ground. No instance of flickers nesting in the ground was found in the literature.

Welty (1975) attributes abnormal nesting behavior to individual variation of an instinctive response, or by a dearth of normal nesting sites. Although snags have been removed from the campground, suitable nesting sites are available to Picidids. For this reason, the authors believe that this flicker may have been an inexperienced first time nester. The choice of an almost 90 degree vertical hole in the ground to lay her eggs appeared to be an extreme variation of an instinctive response to locate a nesting site.

### Literature Cited

Harrison, Hal H. 1975. *A Field Guide to Bird's Nests*. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

Imhof, Thomas A. 1976. *Alabama Birds*, 2nd ed. Univ. of Ala. Press.

Welty, Carl Joel. 1975. *The Life of Birds*, 2nd ed. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia.

Daniel J. and Dana B. Drennen, 601 Cherry St., Apt. 3-D, Eufaula, AL, 36027.

SORAS (*PORZANA CAROLINA*) VISIT BIRDFEEDER

Ann Forster

On 2 April 1988, during intermittent torrential rains, I observed a Sora (*Porzana carolina*) feeding at my bird feeding station. The station is approximately 15 m (49 ft) from a small salt marsh and is situated at the edge of a palmetto (*Serenoa repens*)/pine (*Pinus elliotti*) thicket. Millet and sunflower seeds had been broadcast directly on the ground and the feeding aggregation at the time was composed of one Sora, two Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), one Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), and three Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*). The Sora was quite aggressive, chasing one dove into and then out of the bird bath. The Sora appeared to be feeding exclusively on the millet. According to Bent (1925) the Sora feeds principally on molluscs and aquatic insects during the nesting season. At other times of the year, approximately 73% of the diet may be seeds (Terres, 1980).

The Sora continued to appear several times each day. His eating behavior seemed bizarre in that he always brought a leaf or pine straw from under a nearby palmetto, placed this vegetation on the millet, then ate a few seeds. He repeated this gesture several times during each visit. He became less aggressive but was still the dominant bird at the feeder. I placed an ear of shucked corn in the feeding area and the Sora immediately claimed the corn by standing on it, his long toes wrapped completely around the ear. He then vigorously pecked and pulled at the kernels until the cob was cleaned. On 11 April, a second Sora appeared and the two attended the feeder in harmony with each other and with the other birds. They were last observed on 14 April 1988.

## Literature Cited

Bent, A. C. 1925. *Life Histories of North American Marsh Birds*. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

Terres, J. K. 1980. *Encyclopedia of North American Birds*. Alfred A. Knopf, N. Y.

Ann Forster, P. O. Box 4246, Pensacola, FL 32507.



**TREE SWALLOWS (*TACHYGINETA BICOLOR*)  
FOUND NESTING AT WEISS LAKE**

Bill Summerour

On 10 June of this year, Ken Wills, a biology student at Jacksonville State University, called to say that he had seen a swallow "with a green back" sitting next to a bird box that was attached to a channel marker post in Weiss Lake in Cherokee County. He said he didn't get a real good look, but was almost certain the bird was a Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*).

On 12 June Ken and I went back to Weiss Lake to check the box and to verify the sighting. As we approached the channel marker, we could see a Tree Swallow sitting in the hole of the box which was nailed to the post about two m (six ft) above the water. The box was a dilapidated affair, cracked and weathered and dangling from the post by one nail. The swallow flushed upon our approach and a quick check revealed a partially completed nest of grasses and feathers, but no eggs or young.

Ken checked the box again on 8 July and the nest contained "three or four" nestlings in the pinfeather stage, probably about ten days old. He was not able to get back again until 26 Aug, at which time he was disappointed to find three dead, mummified nestlings. He brought them back for me to see, and it is puzzling as to why the birds failed to leave the nest. They were fully feathered and appeared old enough to have been capable of flying.

Ken's discovery is only the second nesting record for the Tree Swallow in Alabama. The first was reported by Franklin (1987), who described a nest containing young that he and his wife, Rose Marie, and Ann Miller of Birmingham found on 18 July 1987 on the Swan Creek Management Area in north Alabama. These records now extend the southern limits of the breeding range of the Tree Swallow in the east from North Carolina to North Alabama, west-central Mississippi and northwestern Louisiana.

Reid (1975) has documented the invasion of Barn Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) into Alabama, which took place in the 60's and 70's, and has recently updated (1988) the current range expansion of Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) into the state. Now it appears Tree Swallows may be the next to move in. This spring when the swallows return to Weiss Lake, they will find a lot more boxes to provide them with places to nest.

## Literature Cited

Franklin, Paul 1987. Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) found nesting in North Alabama near Decatur. *Alabama Birdlife* 34: 1-2.

Reid, Robert R. 1975. Range expansion and habits of the Barn Swallow in Alabama. *Alabama Birdlife* 23: 1-2.

Reid, Robert R. 1988. Cliff Swallows expand range in Alabama. *Alabama Birdlife* 35: 15-16.

Bill Summerour, Biology Dept., Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265.

**SOUTHWESTERN SUBSPECIES OF CLIFF SWALLOW  
(*PETROCHELIDON PYRRHONOTA*) NESTING IN  
MOBILE COLONY**

Bill Summerour

This past spring I had an opportunity to observe <sup>several dozen</sup> some of the Mobile colony Cliff Swallows (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) as they concentrated around a mudhole near Hwy. 98 just east of the tunnel and a short distance from their colony site under I-10. Since the birds made frequent trips to the mudhole, and remained relatively still for a few seconds as they gathered mud pellets for their nests, it was possible to set up a Questar spotting scope and study them in some detail.

I was surprised to find that most of the birds had dark chestnut rather than white foreheads. These chestnut-fronted birds belong to one of the southwestern subspecies, probably *P.p. minima* or *P.p. tachina*. Both races have chestnut or cinnamon foreheads with *minima* having the darkest, a deep chestnut to cinnamon-rufous, rather than pale cinnamon or fawn colored as in *trachina* (Oberholser, 1974). Based on field observations and an interpretation of the forehead color only, most of the birds appeared to be *minima*, which breeds in southeastern Arizona, eastern Sonora and Western Chihuahua (AOU 1957). But *tachina* breeds in southern Texas (AOU 1957) and cannot be ruled out. Obviously, more detailed observations are needed. No Cave Swallows (*Petrochelidon fulva*) were found. All of the birds with chestnut foreheads also had dark throats; none of them had pale or buffy throats.

The predominance of chestnut-fronted birds is convincing evidence

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

that the Mobile colony was established by western birds expanding their range eastward along the coast. Colonies in the Tennessee Valley and other areas in the northern part of the state, however, are more likely to be composed of the northern white-fronted race, *P.p. pyrrhonota*, expanding their range southward. The invasion of Cliff Swallows into Alabama, therefore, appears to be progressing from west to east along the coast and from north to south inland.

### Literature Cited

Oberholser, Harry C. 1974. *The Bird Life of Texas*, Vol 2. Univ. of Texas Press, Austin.

American Ornithologists' Union. 1957. *Checklist of North American Birds*, 5th ed. Port City Press, Inc., Baltimore.

*Bill Summerour, Biology Dept., Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL 36265.*

### HELPING BRING BACK THE BLUEBIRD (*SIALIA SIALIS*) – 1988 BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT

John Findlay, III

In spite of a severe drought, natural predation, and increasing encroachment by man, the Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) using my boxes had their best year yet in 1988. The trail, maintained for the past 11 years in Shelby and Jefferson Counties, with most nest boxes located in Oak Mountain State Park, produced 463 fledgings, bringing the all time 11 year total of successfully fledged young close to 3000 birds.

Of a total of 148 boxes, 119 were occupied by bluebirds. One hundred of the 119 produced nestlings, and of these, 98 fledged young. Counting all nesting attempts, usually two, sometimes three per season, there were 225 nests containing a total of 898 eggs (average of four per nest) from which 483 nestlings hatched (54%). Of these, 463 fledged successfully.

A total of ten boxes was used by Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches. House Sparrows occupied five boxes and flying squirrels 37. Flying squirrels have no difficulty getting into the one-and-a-half inch openings. They not only

take over the nest of the bluebird, but destroy the eggs and young, and may even kill the adult bird in the box. Predation from flying squirrels has reached an unacceptable level in many locations, especially in the state park.

The House Sparrow is less of a problem at present, but as man extends his residential and commercial developments into Shelby County at an alarming rate (more than a dozen new shopping malls in my trail area in recent years!) this alien species will probably expand its range into suburban areas.

With the assistance of Tom Imhof and Harriett Findlay, a total of 364 nestlings and three adult bluebirds were banded this year, bringing the total banded to over 1500 bluebirds, or roughly 50% of all nestlings. Several recoveries indicate that some of the birds stay close to home. This proved to be the case with one adult male and two adult females which I hand-captured in late fall this year from three boxes in Oak Mountain State Park. The band numbers differed by only one digit, indicating that all three had been banded as siblings from the same nest. A check of the records revealed that indeed all were banded as nestlings by Tom Imhof in May 1984, and the box from which they were fledged was less than one-half mile from the three boxes in which they were found nesting as adults.

There is considerable work and travel involved in building, monitoring, and maintaining an extensive bluebird trail. The rewards and the satisfaction of "Helping to Bring Back the Bluebird," however, make it a worthwhile project. Try it, you'll like it. *John Findlay, III, 2749 Millbrook Rd., Birmingham, AL 33243.*

### NOTES OF INTEREST

**Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) use box in Montrose.** Last year it was reported in *Alabama Birdlife* that Howard and Larry Smith, two brothers who have a log cabin on Guntersville Lake, designed and put up a box on their property for Barred Owls (*Strix varia*). A few weeks later the owls were using the box, but it was never known for sure if they used it for nesting or only for roosting. Mrs. John H. Friend of Montrose read about the owl box in *Alabama Birdlife* and asked Larry and Howard if they could make a similar box for her. Howard made the box and sent it to the Friends who modified it slightly by putting drainage holes in the bottom and extending the overhang further out over the hole. Last spring the owls adopted the box and successfully fledged one owlet. The owls left the box last April but the Friends still see them in the area.

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Howard has also made two other boxes, one for Mrs. Ruth Monk of Birmingham, and another for Linda Reynolds, Guntersville State Park Naturalist. Anyone interested in providing boxes for Barred Owls should contact *Howard Smith, Rt. 2, Box 180, Crossville, AL 35962.*

**Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) attempt nesting near Florence.** During the 1989 breeding season, bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) nested in Alabama for the first time in nearly 30 years. The nest was discovered in Lauderdale county near Florence in February. The adults began incubating the eggs in March. Biologists and volunteers monitored the nest from the ground and by air at a considerable distance to avoid disturbing the birds. The unhatched eggs were finally abandoned in early May. No bands were sighted. It is thought that this pair may have moved into the area from breeding populations in Tennessee. Previous bald eagle nesting activity in the state has turned out to be "housekeeping" activities by wintering birds that eventually migrated north. *Doreen Miller, 2025 Joe Quick Rd., New Market, AL 35761.*

**Alabama Eagle released on 6 July flies 1,120 km (700 mi) to Iowa in nine days.** Bald eagle T-08 was released from the shores of Lake Guntersville on 6 July as part of the eagle restoration efforts of the Alabama Conservation Department's Nongame Wildlife Program. Within nine days the bird had flown northwest to Iowa, where it was recovered north of Dubuque, almost 1,120 km (700 mi) from its starting point.

The bird was the 34th eagle to be released by the Nongame Wildlife Program since 1985. Nestling bald eagles acquired from various sources are placed atop nesting towers at Alabama sites and are released when they are old enough to fly. Almost all such eagles fly north within five to six weeks of their release, but since eagles return to the area in which they first learned to fly when the time comes for them to raise their young, the released birds will provide an ever-increasing population of Alabama eagles.

Eagle T-08 was originally received from Louisiana, where a severe storm had blown down its nest. The nestling eagle was cared for at the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans until it was transferred to Alabama's eagle restoration program site near Scottsboro on the shores of Lake Guntersville. *J. Michael Meyers, Nongame Wildlife Program, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 64 N. Union St., Montgomery, AL 36130.*

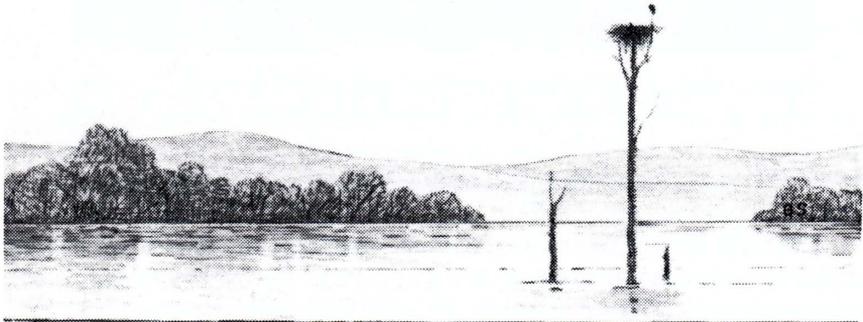
**Plastic causes death of Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).** Everyone associated with the 65 Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) released in Alabama since 1983 was elated to hear that E-10, the first observed Osprey returning in the spring, was constructing a nest near Decatur.

A few days after the good news of E-10's return came bad news. The Osprey was found dead on the Tennessee River east of its nest. E-10 had become entangled in monofilament fishing line and died of exhaustion or starvation, since it could no longer use its entangled feet to capture prey for food.

"We released a large number of Ospreys in our restoration efforts," said Meyers, "because we realized that only about one in four birds would live to the breeding age of three to four years old. We're not discouraged, but this particular cause of death is needless, and can be eliminated with help from Alabama fisherman and boaters." *J. Michael Meyers, Nongame Wildlife Program, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 64 N. Union St., Montgomery, AL 36130.*

**Survey reveals increase in state Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) population.** Statewide aerial surveys for Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) nests indicated that this species has more than doubled its nesting attempts in five years. Twenty-one nests were discovered in Alabama in 1989. Four of these were destroyed by storms. Of the remaining 17 nests, four Ospreys were known to have fledged from an undetermined number of eggs and nestlings. Approximately 4,155 km (2,493 mi) of river, bayside, and lake shoreline were surveyed.

Ospreys successfully nested in the Eufaula area and along the Gulf Coast. Biologists anticipate that successful nesting will occur in north and central Alabama in 1990. *J. Michael Meyers, Nongame Wildlife Program, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 64 N. Union St., Montgomery, AL 36130.*



1989 SPRING AND SUMMER SIGHTINGS

Greg D. Jackson

The spring of 1989 was productive for birders in the AOS area, not necessarily in terms of extreme rarities, but more in the way of good numbers of regular migrants. The coastal passerine migration in particular was better than in several recent springs. This was undoubtedly due to the occurrence of several wet fronts which delayed migrants, especially on the outer coast. Best birding days were 22-25 March, and 10, 20, and 29 April. The 10 April "fallout" was particularly impressive, with R. Duncan and Fang describing a massive movement of birds at Ft. Morgan, principally Scarlet Tanagers, Orchard Orioles, Red-eyed Vireos, Indigo Buntings, and Blue Grosbeaks. Duncan writes: "The movement continued all day, wave after wave, until about 3 PM. For those of us distressed about tropical deforestation and its effect on North American migrants, it was heartening to see so many Scarlet Tanagers and Orchard Orioles making it back again."

Temperatures were fairly normal throughout the period, with the exception of cold snaps in the early parts of March, April, and May. It was the rainfall that was unusual, or at least it **seemed** unusual to those of us accustomed to the drought conditions of recent years. Actually, the rainfall in the spring months was back in the normal range. It was extremely wet in June and early July. In June, Birmingham had five inches of rain above expected amounts, and we were three inches above normal for the first half of July.

The reports that follow are from the period March through July of 1989, and cover Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (east to the Apalachicola River). The appearance of an observation in this column does not indicate verification or acceptance of a record for a very rare species. That task is in the hands of the appropriate state Bird Records Committees. In submitting records of unusual species, please remember to include descriptions of the bird as well as the conditions of observation.

County names are in italics. "WP" refers to the western Panhandle of Florida (Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa Counties). Records not specifying "FL" or "WP" are in Alabama. "mob" = many observers, "NWR" = National Wildlife Refuge, "WMA" = Wildlife Management Area.

**LOONS - GREBES:** *Red-throated Loons* are quite rare inland, so the two birds seen 8-9 March at Town Creek, *Colbert* (ALM, GNP), were surprising. Common Loons are rare throughout our region in the

summer. Three to four birds were seen in the Pensacola, FL, area in June; more unusual were three birds at Guntersville on 6 June (TAI,JCR) and a single individual at Porter Lake in west *Jefferson* on 6 July (TAI). From one to three Eared Grebes were unusual at Porter Lake from 21 February to 25 March (TAI,GMI,mob). This species is regular now at Blakely Island (*Mobile*); four birds were still present on 17 April (GDJ,DGJ).

**TUBENOSES:** Two **Greater Shearwaters** were discovered 50-80 miles south of Pensacola, FL, on 27 May, and two more were noted 80-100 miles south of Pensacola on 30 June (all KW). This is the most frequently seen tubenose in our area, but it is still unusual. One bird was located only 1/2 mile from shore near the mouth of Perdido Bay in *Baldwin* on 22 July (AOS). Much rarer was the single **Sooty Shearwater** observed from Mobile Point at Ft. Morgan on 4 March (RAD,OEf). This bird was picked out of a large feeding assembly of gulls and cormorants; any time this type of activity is seen, we should work over the flocks very carefully for rarities. Several unidentified shearwaters were noted at Ft. Pickens, FL, on 5 March (RAD,LD). Rounding out the tubenose reports, Wright observed 30 **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** 27-28 May while on a fishing boat 50-80 miles south of Pensacola, FL. At night, he reported these birds flying around in the lights of the boat, with one landing on a fishing rod! Wright also saw 10 individuals while fishing 80-100 miles south of Pensacola 30 June to 1 July.

**SULIDS - FRIGATEBIRDS:** Northern Gannet is a common species in the Gulf in the colder months, but in recent years it has also been found to be present in small numbers in the summer. This year, 30-50 of these spectacular plunge-divers were seen at Gulf Shores 18-24 June (PT,FT). Six were noted just south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, on 22 July (AOS), with another on the same date at Ft. Morgan (GDJ,BCG,JH). American White Pelican occurs regularly in large numbers in Mobile Bay, but 16 at Pensacola, FL, on 8 March (JP) were less expected. Much more unusual were the sightings of 20 birds at Eufaula NWR on 10 March (mob), and of a single pelican in *Colbert* on 5 April (GNP). Double-crested Cormorant numbers still seem to be going up in inland areas, a welcome change from their scarcity several years ago. On 14 March there were 140 birds present in *Greene* (GDJ,RRS,MGS). Anhingas are uncommon in the coastal plain, with only a few scattered breeding locations known. Fledged young were discovered in a *Walton*, FL, heronry on 28 June (RSD), providing a rare nesting record for the Panhandle. A few Anhingas were noted in *Clarke*, *Greene*, *Perry*, and *Washington* in June and July. Magnificent Frigatebirds are regular in the warmer months on the coast, but seemed

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

more numerous than usual this June in the Gulf Breeze, FL, area (LD,RSD).

**HERONS - STORKS:** Up to 10,000 birds were estimated at the regular site of the rookery near Prairieville in *Hale* on 20 July (TAI). Most of these nesters were Cattle Egrets, with a smattering of Great Egrets, Little Blue Herons, and White Ibis. Least Bitterns are uncommon in the coastal plain, and in June were observed in *Washington* (AOS) and *Greene* (MO,SO). A Tricolored Heron was an odd find on 28 May in Swan Creek WMA (JTP). Unidentified dark ibis are uncommon birds, seen mostly on the coast in fall and winter. A single individual was located on Dauphin Island on 10 April (mob). A **Roseate Spoonbill** was a great discovery on the Tennessee River in *Jackson* 29 July to 3 August (DRJ,mob). This was the first substantiated inland report of this vagrant in Alabama in over 30 years; several adjacent states also had a few spoonbills located this summer. There has been a flurry of reports from our coast and in other areas in the Southeast in the last two years. Continuing a recent trend, Wood Storks were again noted in good numbers in the western half of the coastal plain this summer. The first report was of a single stork on 24 June in *Hale* (DM). Seven other reports were received through the end of July from *Hale*, *Perry*, and *Washington*, with a high of 27 storks in *Hale* on 28 June (DM). A lone bird was noted on 19 July at Auburn (JH).

**WATERFOWL: Fulvous Whistling-Duck** is rare but regular on the coast, but is only occasional inland. One bird was seen near Marion in *Perry* 4-18 March (BS,LM,mob) [see Summerour (1988)]. Two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were noted at Gulf Shores on 30 April and 7 May (PB), and one was seen on Blakely Island on 4 June (BCG). Greater White-fronted Geese are uncommon visitors to our area. One bird was in *Perry* 4-18 March (BS,LM,mob). A Snow Goose on 18 April at Bon Secour NWR in *Baldwin* (TAI) set a late record for the Gulf Coast. The obliging **Ross' Goose** first discovered 17 February at Eufaula (HHK,GA) [see Drennen (1988)] was last noted on 2 April (GDJ,DGJ). Another interesting goose sighting was of a Canada Goose of the *minima* (Cackling) race seen with the Greater White-fronted Goose at Marion on 4 March (BS,LM,mob) [see Summerour (1988)].

Thirty Mottled Ducks were counted at the regular breeding spot on Blakely Island on 23 July. On the same date at that location there was a summering Lesser Scaup (both GDJ,DGJ). A lingering scaup sp. was at Gulf Shores on 3 June (PB). The White-winged Scoter first seen at Porter Lake in *Jefferson* in February remained until 10 March (LNT,TAI). Any scoter is rare in the Mountain Region of Alabama. Black Scoters are rare in the WP; five were located at Ft. Pickens on 19 March

(RAD). Hooded Merganser is an uncommon breeder in Alabama, so it was nice to hear about the female with six young in *Greene* on 3 June (MO,SO). Five Common Mergansers remained near Waterloo in *Lauderdale* until 12 March (GDJ). To round out the waterfowl, there were two Red-breasted Mergansers on 4 June at Destin, FL (DW,CW); this species is occasional in the WP in summer.

**RAPTORS:** A pair of Ospreys was noted engaged in nest construction on a platform at Eufaula NWR on 2 April (GDJ,DGJ). Another bird was seen 3-4 June in *Greene* (MO,SO), which would raise the question of local nesting. Swallow-tailed Kites were noted in normal numbers on the outer coast in April. Three of these magnificent raptors were located in *Clarke* on 11 June (AOS), and an impressive 13 were seen on 24 July at Century, *Escambia* (GF), for a WP maximum. For the first time since 1962, a pair of Bald Eagles attempted to nest in Alabama. They were discovered in *Lauderdale* on 12 February (GNP,JoP, JiP) and were monitored until departing the nest in late April or early May. A bird was first seen sitting on the nest on 8 March, and incubation continued until 27 April. A flyover by state personnel on 10 May showed at least one egg. An immature Bald Eagle was seen on 10 March at Ft. Walton Beach (RAD); the species is occasional in the WP. Two inland Merlins were noted this spring, one on 18 March in *Perry* (BAS), and another on 7 April in *Lauderdale* (PK,DK). Several Merlins were spotted at Ft. Morgan in mid-April. Three Peregrine Falcons were reported at Ft. Morgan, Dauphin Island, and Blakely Island 20-22 April. One seen on 1 May at Ft. Morgan (ALM,ADM,MLM, OEF) was late. The only other Peregrine Falcon reported was a first WP July record on the 24th at Gulf Breeze (LD).

**RAILS - SHOREBIRDS:** The 25 American Coots found at Swan Creek WMA on 28 May (JTP) were unusual for that season. The first WP nesting of this species was documented at Holiday Isle, *Okaloosa*, with three nesting pairs (one with young) seen 28 June to 8 July (DW,CW). The highest count of Lesser Golden-Plovers that I received was of 27 at Ft. Morgan on 25 March (PB,GF). A new early record for Alabama for Wilson's Plover was set on 21 February, with one bird sighted at Dauphin Island (ALM,ADM). Twelve Wilson's Plovers were found at Big Sabine in *Santa Rosa*, FL, on 18 March (RAD,PT). The highest number of Piping Plovers turned in this spring was four seen at Gulf Shores on 19 April (GDJ,DGJ). The second April WP record of American Oystercatcher was of a single bird at Pensacola noted from the 24th to the 27th (PJ,RAD). This species is very localized in its distribution along our coast. Black-necked Stilt is only occasional in the WP in the spring, so three birds seen at Pensacola Beach on 4 April (RAD) were unusual.

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

American Avocets have spent several recent summers in small numbers at Blakely Island; five birds located there on 23 July (GDJ,DGJ) probably were summering though they could have been early migrants.

On 23 July there were approximately 1100 Lesser Yellowlegs at Blakely Island (GDJ,DGJ). The Willet found on 1 July near Mooresville in *Limestone* (PF,mob) was unusual inland. Upland Sandpiper records inland included three on 29 March near Harpersville (*Shelby*) (ALM), six on 8 April in *Dekalb* (HHK), and one in *Perry* on 22 July (PF). The two Long-billed Curlews on the Mobile Causeway were last seen on the battleship lawn on 28 March (MFF,RT,MT,MW). One bird returned early on 23 July (GDJ,DGJ). A single Marbled Godwit was discovered on 16 April at Ft. Pickens, FL (CT); the six found at Gulf Shores on 19 April (GDJ,DGJ) were an unusual number for our area. This season's maximum for Western Sandpiper was 1700 at Blakely Island on 22 April (AOS). An early Pectoral Sandpiper was observed in *Lauderdale* on 4 March (GNP). Blakely Island had 1250 Dunlin on 22 April (AOS).

Buff-breasted Sandpipers are more difficult to find in the spring than in fall. This year one was on the Mobile Causeway on 15 March (MFF,MW), establishing a new state arrival record. Four birds were sighted at a sod farm in south *Baldwin* on 8 April (PB,GF). Long-billed Dowitchers were present in good numbers, with 100 calling birds seen on Blakely Island on 17 April (GDJ,DGJ). The Common Snipe at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, on 13 May (GDJ) was rather late. Wilson's Phalaropes are regular at Blakely Island in the spring, though in much smaller numbers than in the autumn. Three birds were found on 17 April (GDJ,DGJ), one on 22 April (AOS), and one 5-6 May (BS). This species is much harder to find in other spots, so one at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, on 7 May (GDJ,DGJ) was interesting. Four Wilson's Phalaropes were noted on the return trip south at Blakely Island on 23 July (GDJ,DGJ). Much harder to find anywhere in our region is the **Red-necked Phalarope**. One was noted at Blakely Island 5-6 May (BS).

**GULLS - TERNS:** Two alternate-plumaged Laughing Gulls were discovered at Town Creek in *Colbert* on 7 May (GDJ,DGJ); this species is rare inland, but is more likely to be found in the summer or early fall than in spring. The subadult **Franklin's Gull** seen on 27 April at Ft. Walton Beach (PL) was a first record for the WP for that month. A first-year **Great Black-backed Gull** was seen with a Herring Gull at Dauphin Island on the record late date of 2 May (JH). Speaking of black-backed gulls, "ole one foot" reappeared at Pensacola, FL, on 16 May (RAD). Is this bird immortal? Very rare in our region, the first-year **Black-legged Kittiwake** seen at Dauphin Island on 30 March (RAD) was also the latest ever for Alabama. Common Terns are *uncommon* in

spring; one bird was at Gulf Shores on 19 April (GDJ). Late summer and fall are the seasons for this species on our coast, and on 22 July 75 birds were seen at Ft. Morgan (GDJ,BCG,JH). Three **Sooty Terns** were found on 1 July 80-100 miles south of Pensacola, FL (KW).

**ANIS - TYRANT FLYCATCHERS:** Quite unusual for the spring was a **Groove-billed Ani** on 4 April at Ft. Pickens, FL (CT,RR). The first confirmed Panhandle nesting of Barn Owl was of fledged young in Walton on 22 June (RSD). An adult bird on 17 June at Lillian in Baldwin (BCG) is suspicious for nesting at that locale. A female-plumaged Rufous/Allen's-type hummingbird was seen at the Sargents' "hummingbird farm" at Clay in east *Jefferson* 16-20 July (RRS,MGS); this was an early record for Alabama for this probable Rufous Hummingbird. The Least Flycatcher at Gulf Breeze on 27 April (PL) was the first WP record for that month. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** made a rare spring appearance at Dauphin Island on 22 April (RRS,MGS,TAI). The only Western Kingbird report that I received was of a single bird on 2 May at Dauphin Island (JH). There were two separate June Scissor-tailed Flycatcher reports. One bird was noted 12-13 June in *Lauderdale* (DP,PN,SW); another individual was seen in *Okaloosa* on 24 June (DW,BG,BM) for a second WP record for that month. There were several reports of this species from surrounding states this June, suggesting a broad dispersal.

**SWALLOWS:** Several early swallows were noted this spring. One of these was a Tree Swallow at Lake Aliceville (*Pickens*) on 5 March (GDJ). Another Tree Swallow at Swan Creek WMA on 1 July (PF,mob) could be related to nesting, as this has been a proven breeding site in recent years. Two N. Rough-winged Swallows were observed at Waterloo in *Lauderdale* on 12 March (GDJ,DGJ), for a new Tennessee Valley record. On the same date at Gulf Shores, one individual of this species was noted (PB). The Cliff Swallows nesting under bridges at the head of Mobile Bay returned again this year, with many birds and nests located on 3 June (PB,GF). Two **Cave Swallows** were observed at close range near Ft. Morgan on 22 April (PB,GF). We have had several April records on the outer coast since 1984, including a bird found dead in 1988 that was determined to be most likely of the Caribbean race. This species breeds now in southern Florida, and we will probably see a few more of these birds on occasion. The final notable swallow was the Barn Swallow sighted at Wilson Dam in *Colbert* on 12 March (GDJ) for a new early Tennessee Valley date.

**CROWS - VIREOS:** The Fish Crow reaches the edge of its range just south and west of Birmingham. This July, it was noted regularly in small numbers at Bayview and Porter Lakes, both in *Jefferson* (TAI).

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

White-breasted Nuthatch is very rare in the WP, so one seen on 25 July at Century in *Escambia* (GF) was noteworthy. Ten Golden-crowned Kinglets were noted as late as 19 March at Ft. Pickens, FL (RAD,OEF). A late Ruby-crowned Kinglet was at Birmingham on 3 May (GDJ). Another late departure was the American Robin at Ft. Morgan on 27 April (PB,GF). Cedar Waxwings are rare breeders in northern Alabama, so the pair building a nest in Guntersville on 6 June (TAI) was interesting. On Dauphin Island on 20 April there was a late Solitary Vireo (GDJ). At the other end of the spectrum, a Philadelphia Vireo, uncommon in spring, was seen at Dauphin Island on the early date of 6 April (MFF). I only received one **Black-whiskered Vireo** report, of a bird of the Jamaican race banded at Ft. Morgan on 18 April (RRS,MGS,TAI). This species is a rare but regular vagrant to the outer coast in April and early May.

**WOOD WARBLERS:** As I noted in the introduction, this was a good season for passerine migrants on the coast, and this included numerous warblers. Several early records were set, and Blevins and Fleming saw 30 species of warblers in south *Baldwin* this spring. A Blue-winged Warbler at Ft. Pickens on 23 March (RAD) was an early WP record. Also early were a Tennessee Warbler on 23 March at Dauphin Island (JH), and a Nashville Warbler at Montrose (*Baldwin*) on 9 April (VBF). Another Nashville Warbler, hard to find in the spring, was seen at Ft. Morgan on 15 April (PB). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was spotted on 3 June at Hackleburg in *Marion* (PK,BR); there are at least seven June or July Mountain Region records for this possible breeder. A Magnolia Warbler reported from Clay, *Jefferson*, on 22 July (RRS,MGS) was earlier than any previous Alabama fall records.

Two Cape May Warblers on 29 March at Ft. Pickens (OEF,JP), and a Worm-eating Warbler on 24 March at the same site (OEF), were both early WP records. A Swainson's Warbler, which is an uncommon and local breeder in Alabama, was found singing from 3 April to 24 July at Bayview Lake in *Jefferson* (TAI). A cooperative singing male **Mourning Warbler** was present near Dancy Bottoms in Wheeler NWR (*Morgan*) 13-17 May (PF,HHK,mob). This species and the Connecticut Warbler are rather elusive, but we would probably find more of these birds if concerted birding activity continued into the middle of May. Dancy Bottoms may be the best locality to search at that time. Single Wilson's Warblers, uncommon in the spring, were seen on 11 April at Ft. Pickens, FL (ST), and at Ft. Morgan on 15 April (PB,GF).

**TANAGERS - FINCHES:** An early Scarlet Tanager was noted on 30 March at Ft. Morgan (RAD). A male **Western Tanager** was described from *Cullman* on 30 April (BB,AB). This was one of the few

spring; one bird was at Gulf Shores on 19 April (GDJ). Late summer and fall are the seasons for this species on our coast, and on 22 July 75 birds were seen at Ft. Morgan (GDJ,BCG,JH). Three **Sooty Terns** were found on 1 July 80-100 miles south of Pensacola, FL (KW).

**ANIS - TYRANT FLYCATCHERS:** Quite unusual for the spring was a **Groove-billed Ani** on 4 April at Ft. Pickens, FL (CT,RR). The first confirmed Panhandle nesting of Barn Owl was of fledged young in Walton on 22 June (RSD). An adult bird on 17 June at Lillian in Baldwin (BCG) is suspicious for nesting at that locale. A female-plumaged Rufous/Allen's-type hummingbird was seen at the Sargents' "hummingbird farm" at Clay in east *Jefferson* 16-20 July (RRS,MGS); this was an early record for Alabama for this probable Rufous Hummingbird. The Least Flycatcher at Gulf Breeze on 27 April (PL) was the first WP record for that month. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** made a rare spring appearance at Dauphin Island on 22 April (RRS,MGS,TAI). The only Western Kingbird report that I received was of a single bird on 2 May at Dauphin Island (JH). There were two separate June Scissor-tailed Flycatcher reports. One bird was noted 12-13 June in *Lauderdale* (DP,PN,SW); another individual was seen in *Okaloosa* on 24 June (DW,BG,BM) for a second WP record for that month. There were several reports of this species from surrounding states this June, suggesting a broad dispersal.

**SWALLOWS:** Several early swallows were noted this spring. One of these was a Tree Swallow at Lake Aliceville (*Pickens*) on 5 March (GDJ). Another Tree Swallow at Swan Creek WMA on 1 July (PF,mob) could be related to nesting, as this has been a proven breeding site in recent years. Two N. Rough-winged Swallows were observed at Waterloo in *Lauderdale* on 12 March (GDJ,DGJ), for a new Tennessee Valley record. On the same date at Gulf Shores, one individual of this species was noted (PB). The Cliff Swallows nesting under bridges at the head of Mobile Bay returned again this year, with many birds and nests located on 3 June (PB,GF). Two **Cave Swallows** were observed at close range near Ft. Morgan on 22 April (PB,GF). We have had several April records on the outer coast since 1984, including a bird found dead in 1988 that was determined to be most likely of the Caribbean race. This species breeds now in southern Florida, and we will probably see a few more of these birds on occasion. The final notable swallow was the Barn Swallow sighted at Wilson Dam in *Colbert* on 12 March (GDJ) for a new early Tennessee Valley date.

**CROWS - VIREOS:** The Fish Crow reaches the edge of its range just south and west of Birmingham. This July, it was noted regularly in small numbers at Bayview and Porter Lakes, both in *Jefferson* (TAI).

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

White-breasted Nuthatch is very rare in the WP, so one seen on 25 July at Century in *Escambia* (GF) was noteworthy. Ten Golden-crowned Kinglets were noted as late as 19 March at Ft. Pickens, FL (RAD,OEF). A late Ruby-crowned Kinglet was at Birmingham on 3 May (GDJ). Another late departure was the American Robin at Ft. Morgan on 27 April (PB,GF). Cedar Waxwings are rare breeders in northern Alabama, so the pair building a nest in Guntersville on 6 June (TAI) was interesting. On Dauphin Island on 20 April there was a late Solitary Vireo (GDJ). At the other end of the spectrum, a Philadelphia Vireo, uncommon in spring, was seen at Dauphin Island on the early date of 6 April (MFF). I only received one **Black-whiskered Vireo** report, of a bird of the Jamaican race banded at Ft. Morgan on 18 April (RRS,MGS,TAI). This species is a rare but regular vagrant to the outer coast in April and early May.

**WOOD WARBLERS:** As I noted in the introduction, this was a good season for passerine migrants on the coast, and this included numerous warblers. Several early records were set, and Blevins and Fleming saw 30 species of warblers in south *Baldwin* this spring. A Blue-winged Warbler at Ft. Pickens on 23 March (RAD) was an early WP record. Also early were a Tennessee Warbler on 23 March at Dauphin Island (JH), and a Nashville Warbler at Montrose (*Baldwin*) on 9 April (VBF). Another Nashville Warbler, hard to find in the spring, was seen at Ft. Morgan on 15 April (PB). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was spotted on 3 June at Hackleburg in *Marion* (PK,BR); there are at least seven June or July Mountain Region records for this possible breeder. A Magnolia Warbler reported from Clay, *Jefferson*, on 22 July (RRS,MGS) was earlier than any previous Alabama fall records.

Two Cape May Warblers on 29 March at Ft. Pickens (OEF,JP), and a Worm-eating Warbler on 24 March at the same site (OEF), were both early WP records. A Swainson's Warbler, which is an uncommon and local breeder in Alabama, was found singing from 3 April to 24 July at Bayview Lake in *Jefferson* (TAI). A cooperative singing male **Mourning Warbler** was present near Dancy Bottoms in Wheeler NWR (*Morgan*) 13-17 May (PF,HHK,mob). This species and the Connecticut Warbler are rather elusive, but we would probably find more of these birds if concerted birding activity continued into the middle of May. Dancy Bottoms may be the best locality to search at that time. Single Wilson's Warblers, uncommon in the spring, were seen on 11 April at Ft. Pickens, FL (ST), and at Ft. Morgan on 15 April (PB,GF).

**TANAGERS - FINCHES:** An early Scarlet Tanager was noted on 30 March at Ft. Morgan (RAD). A male **Western Tanager** was described from *Cullman* on 30 April (BB,AB). This was one of the few

inland records for this vagrant. Fifteen to twenty Bachman's Sparrows were discovered in Stimpson Wildlife Sanctuary (*Clarke*) on 11 June (AOS). "The singing Lincoln's Sparrow at Wheeler NWR (*Morgan*) on 13 May (BS) was interesting, as this species is difficult to locate in the spring." Four Brewer's Blackbirds set a late Gulf Coast record on 15 April at Hurricane in *Baldwin* (RAD,LD,PT,JP). House Finches have spread to both Pensacola, FL, and Mobile in the last few years. In Pensacola, there were reports from 27 April (PT), 22 May (RAD), and 4 July (JP) of 1-2 birds. As many as 12 birds continued to frequent a Mobile residential area and probably were breeding (AD). Imhof banded 78 House Finches, mostly hatching-year birds, this season in Birmingham. No Purple Finches or Pine Siskins were reported this spring.

**OBSERVERS:** Alabama Ornithological Society, Gussie Arnett, Birmingham Audubon Society, Paul Blevins, Anna Bowden, Bill Bowden, Anne Delchamps, Lucy Duncan, Robert A. Duncan, R. Scot Duncan, Owen E. Fang, Gene Fleming, Mary F. Floyd, Paul Franklin, Venetia B. Friend, Ben C. Garmon, Bill Gericke, Jim Holmes, Gina M. Imhof, Thomas A. Imhof, Debra G. Jackson, Greg D. Jackson, Daniel R. Jacobson, Paul Johnson, Helen H. Kittinger, Donna Kittle, Paul Kittle, Paul Lehman, Mary Lou Mattis, Bob McKinney, Lane Merchant, Al D. Miller, Ann L. Miller, Dottie Miller, Phyllis Nofzinger, Michael Owens, Suzanne Owens, Johnny T. Parks, Dee Patterson, James Pfeiffer, G. Ned Piper, Jim Piper (JiP), John Piper (JoP), Bill Rogers, John C. Rolan, Rufus Rose, Martha G. Sargent, Robert R. Sargent, Bill Summerour, Sam Tagatz, Charlie Teagle, Fred Tetlow, Phil Tetlow, Lynnes N. Thompson, Mary Tiller, Ralph Tiller, Carol Ware, Donald Ware, Shirley Wayland, Marge Williams, Kenny Wright.

**CORRIGENDUM:** In the 1988 spring and summer column I indicated that the *Colbert* Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was the "sixth record in the spring south of Alaska." This should read the "fourth spring migration record south of Alaska."

### Literature Cited

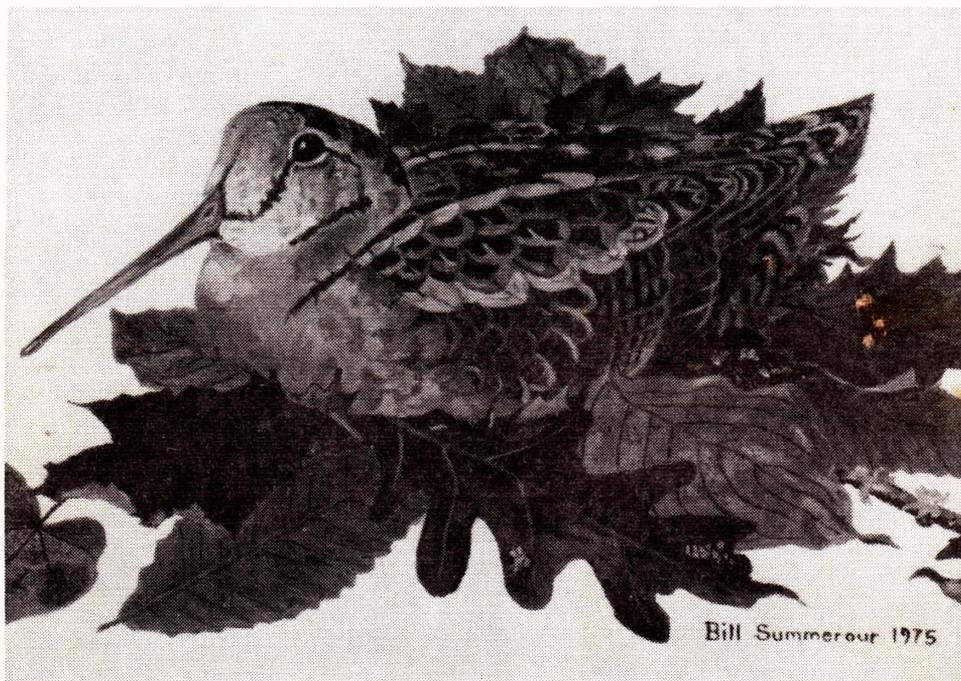
Drennen, Daniel. 1988. Ross' Goose (*Chen rossii*) observed on Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge. *Alabama Birdlife* 36: 1-2.

Summerour, Bill. 1988. Fulvous Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) and Cackling Goose (*Branta canadensis minima*) seen at Lake Land Farms. *Alabama Birdlife* 36: 4-5.

Greg D. Jackson, 2220 Baneberry Dr., Birmingham, AL 35244

Bill Summerour, Editor  
Alabama Birdlife  
Biology Department  
Jacksonville State University  
Jacksonville, AL 36265

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Jacksonville, AL  
Bulk Rate  
Permit No. 2



Dr. Charles Summerour  
517 North Pelham Rd, Apt. B  
Jacksonville AL 36265  
ACT 88