

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

The capture and banding of a Green violet-ear hummingbird in Alabama was not surprising. However, what was surprising was when it was noted (November) and where (Alabama Gulf Coast). We had expected to document it in the more mountainous regions such as Mentone (DeKalb County) or the Cheaha range (east-central Alabama). Similarly to Paul Johnsgard's description of its breeding area in *The Hummingbirds of North America*, 1983, Smithsonian Institution Press, we believe that this adult female was moving from a higher elevation. Also, the molt pattern in the wings indicated her approaching nesting cycle. **Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent**, 7570 Mack Hicks Road, Trussville, AL 35173. **Duane J. Berger and Donna G. Berger**, 81 High Ridge Drive, Wetumpka, AL 36092.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*MYIARCHUS CRINITUS*)

FEEDING AT ROAD KILLS

Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent

On two separate occasions, the authors had witnessed two Great Crested flycatchers attending road kills. On 12 June 1993 near Allgood in Blount County, two birds, sex unknown, were observed on the road-pavement near a dead Gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*). The fox had apparently been dead for several days, and our assumption was that they were removing its hair with which to line their nest. On 10 May 1994 near Aliceville in Pickens County, we observed the same scenario, except this time it was a road-killed

Eastern cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*). It also appeared to have been dead for several days. We found the flycatchers' behavior interesting, but again not all that rare.

However, on 22 May 1995, near Springville in St. Clair County, we were able to view the activities for a third time. We quickly noticed that the two birds appeared not only to be alternating their trips to a long deceased Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) but they appeared to be taking something other than hair from the carcass with them. After a period of observation, we were able to get closer and discovered that they were removing Diptera larvae. On each trip one of the birds would gather several of the maggots in it's bill and immediately retreat into the woods, presumably to feed nestlings in a cavity tree. It was the first time that we had observed this feeding behavior in flycatchers.

Great Crested flycatchers are opportunists and have been documented by Bent (1942, *Life Histories of North American Flycatchers, Larks, Swallows, and Their Allies*, Dover Publ., New York) eating caterpillars and larvae of moths and butterflies . Flycatchers, like all animals, will expend the least amount of effort for the most return on their energy investment. Capturing prey on the ground is far more energy efficient than chasing prey on the wing. If this pair of flycatchers had a normal clutch of 5-7 chicks to feed, the presence of a reliable food source for the rapidly growing young would be a nutrition windfall. In addition, for a while, this food would probably replenish itself with the constant hatching of invertebrates feeding on the carcass. We suggest that

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this nutrient rich abundance of food would greatly enhance the survival rate of young. The easy availability of invertebrate food might well make for a successful second nesting before fall migration. **Robert R. Sargent and Martha B. Sargent**, 7570 Mack Hicks Road, Trussville, AL 35173.

FIRST ALABAMA RECORD OF CALIFORNIA GULL (*LARUS CALIFORNICUS*)

Robert A. Duncan

The California Gull breeds from southern Mackenzie Mountains, Canada, east to the Dakotas, south to northern Utah and west to northeastern California. Wintering birds occur from southern Washington and eastern Idaho south, primarily along the Pacific coast to southern Baja California and Colima, Mexico. There are records of vagrants throughout the eastern United States including the Texas Gulf Coast (American Ornithologists' Union 1983. Checklist of North American Birds. 6th ed. Washington, D.C., Am. Ornithol. Union). There are about 10 reports for Florida where it is still considered unverified due to lack of a specimen or acceptable photographs (Robertson, W.B. and Woolfenden, G.E., Florida Bird Species. 1992. An Annotated List. Fl. Ornithol. Soc. Special Pub. #6. Gainesville).

On 15 April 1996, at about 10:30 a.m., while scanning numerous gulls and terns loafing on the outer beach at Mobile Point, Fort Morgan, Baldwin Co., Al., I noted an adult gull loafing among adult Herring Gulls (*Laurus argentatus*) which was noticeably different from them. Its wings were obviously darker