

Volume 56

No. 1

July 2010

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE



Journal of the Alabama Ornithological Society

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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

Vol. 56

No. 1

2010

Editor: Tom Haggerty, Department of Biology, University of North Alabama, Florence, AL 35632-0001

Assistant Editors: Paul Kittle, Department of Biology, University of North Alabama, Florence, AL, and Jeff Garner, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, 350 County Rd. 275, Florence, AL 35633.

ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 17 May 1952

OFFICERS

President:

Eric Soehren
1962 Old Federal Rd.
Shorter, AL 36075

Immediate Past President:

Linda Reynolds, 3909 Morrow St.,
Guntersville, AL 35976

Secretary:

Joan Siegwald
762 Kasserine Pass
Mobile, AL 36609

Treasurer:

Mary Frances Stayton, 952 Mockingbird Lane,
Leeds, AL 35094

Newsletter Editor:

COL (R) Robert E. Reed, 88838 Tallassee
Highway, Tallassee, AL 36078

A.O.S. MEMBERSHIPS

Alabama Birdlife is a publication of the Alabama Ornithological Society.
Membership in the society includes a subscription to Alabama Birdlife.

Individual	\$25.00
Student	\$10.00
Family	\$40.00
Sustaining	\$50.00
Life Individual	\$350.00
Life Family	\$500.00

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

Typeset by Tom Haggerty

COVER: Whooping Cranes, **Joe need date????**, Lauderdale County, AL; Joe Romans

**BACHMAN'S SPARROW (*AIMOPHILA AESTIVALIS*) USES
GOPHER TORTOISE (*GOPHERUS POLYPHEMUS*) BURROW AS
A MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM A PERCEIVED THREAT**

Eric C. Soehren and John A. Trent

The use of terrestrial burrows and other holes by ground-dwelling sparrows for escape refugia is a little known behavior that has been seldom documented in North America. The following account is a description of an adult Bachman's Sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*) using a Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) burrow in Alabama as a means of escape in response to a perceived threat by humans. A review of the literature summarizing previous observations is provided followed by a short discussion regarding the likely advantages and potential risks of this escape tactic.

On the morning of 19 February 2008, the authors and Jo Lewis, Natural Heritage Section Chief, visited the Splinter Hill Bog Forever Wild tract (31.036°N, 87.668°W; WGS 84) in northern Baldwin County, Alabama, to survey for wintering Henslow's Sparrows (*Ammodramus henslowii*). The survey was conducted by walking transect-lines side-by-side through a large open bog and counting flushed individuals. While completing one of the transect-lines, Soehren's attention was diverted to a Bachman's Sparrow scurrying intermittently between vegetation clumps within the ecotone of the bog and sandy uplands. Soehren turned toward the bird and began following it. Upon approach the sparrow flushed and flew approximately 100 meters (328 ft) to a dead scrubby oak near the top of a sandy ridge. Soehren notified the others about the encounter and together quickly approached the vegetation where the sparrow had retreated. The bird was perched within a dense tangle of limbs making it difficult to observe, so Soehren approached the oak very slowly to within an arms length of it. The sparrow remained motionless as Soehren snapped several full-frame photographs (Fig. 1). After a minute of photographing, Soehren then motioned to the others to approach for a better view. As they approached, the bird flushed to an adjacent scrub oak. We then immediately followed the bird to its new location. Upon approach it flushed again, this time flying directly past us at eye level and then dropping into a nearby Gopher Tortoise burrow about seven meters (21 ft) away. The burrow, which was active, was in a relatively open area, and the entrance was minimally covered with vegetation (Fig. 2). After witnessing this, we encircled the tortoise burrow from a distance and focused our attention on the entrance. The sparrow was not seen within any visible portion of the burrow floor (approximately 46 cm [18 in]). Thirteen minutes later,

the sparrow quickly flew from the burrow and flitted back to the same oak where we first photographed it. We repeated our approach, and without hesitation, the bird once again flew straight back to the tortoise burrow where it remained for another 13 minutes. This same scenario played out a third time before we departed the area.



Figure 1. Bachman's Sparrow, Splinter Hill Bog, Baldwin Co., Alabama, 19 February 2008, E. Soehren.

The use of burrows or other holes by Bachman's Sparrows as an escape tactic was first documented in central Florida in 1943 (Pittman 1960). Dean and Vickery (2003) later studied aspects of this behavior in Florida and reported that this species routinely flew to Gopher Tortoise and Nine-banded Armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*) burrows concealed within clumps of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) to escape pursuers. The authors observed that the birds use the same burrows repeatedly, and radio-marked individuals traveled greater than one meter (3 ft)

underground from the entrance. Moreover, extensive research of Bachman's Sparrow populations in southern Georgia has revealed that this species regularly uses Gopher Tortoise burrows as escape refugia during cool-season months (Jim Cox, personal communication, 17 Sept. 2009) although the associated ground cover differs significantly from the extensive saw palmetto patches in Florida. It is also worth noting that this same retreating behavior has also been witnessed in Black-throated (*Amphispiza bilineata*) and Cassin's sparrows (*Aimophila cassinii*), the latter a congener of Bachman's, in southeast Arizona. Both species have been observed fleeing into rodent burrows after escaping capture or being pursued by humans (Bowers and Dunning 1985). The authors suggest that the use of burrows may have been a last ditch effort to escape predation.

Although typically associated with open pine forests in the southeastern United States, Bachman's Sparrows are essentially grassland obligates that are dependent upon the structure of the herbaceous layer that best characterizes pine ecosystems (Dunning 2006). Most phases of their natural history occur low to the ground and are generally concealed among the grasses and small shrubs. Given this behavior, Bachman's Sparrows appear to exhibit an acute knowledge of the surrounding

landscape including cover objects such as fallen logs, dense shrubs and excavated holes or burrows (J. Cox, pers. comm.). When threatened, they tend to dash along inconspicuous pathways obscured by low vegetation or may occasionally flush short distances to known cover sites rather than deliberately flying away. We observed this same behavior in the bird we encountered. As we pursued it, the bird flushed to a spindly shrub for cover. In most cases, this action may normally suffice in eluding a potential predator. But as we continued to pressure the bird, it eventually resorted to a more drastic escape option by quickly retreating into

a nearby burrow. The advantage of this escape tactic likely discourages the most diligent of pursuers, but upon entering the subterranean realm of a dark burrow, Bachman's Sparrows may incur other unforeseen threats. Among the most apparent is the potential of encountering a predator within a burrow passage, particularly one of several species of predatory snakes [e.g. Indigo Snake (*Drymarchon couperi*), Eastern Coachwhip (*Masticophis f. flagellum*), Pinesnake (*Pituophis melanoleucus* ssp.), Cottonmouth



Figure 2. Active gopher tortoise burrow used by retreating Bachman's Sparrow, Splinter Hill Bog, Baldwin Co., Alabama, 19 February 2008, E. Soehren.

(*Agkistrodon piscivorus*) and Eastern Diamond-backed Rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*)] or mammals [e.g. Striped Skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), Spotted Skunk (*Spilogale putorius*), Long-tailed Weasel (*Mustela frenata*) and Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)] that are known to use burrows in the southeastern United States (Jackson and Milstrey 1989). However during the cool season months, when all observations of sparrows entering burrows have been documented, snakes are generally dormant or sluggish and may pose little or no threat if encountered. Alternatively, carnivorous mammals may be more of a threat if confronted because they are usually active throughout the year. But most mammalian predators utilize Gopher Tortoise or armadillo burrows much less regularly than do snakes, thereby reducing the likelihood of a chance encounter. Regardless of the circumstance, the advantage of using burrows as an escape probably outweighs the potential risk of encountering an inhabiting predator and seems to be a relatively safe tactic. Moreover, the repeated use of the same burrows in Florida (Dean and Vickery

2003) and Georgia (Jim Cox, pers. comm.) appears to support this hypothesis. But as the cool season shifts to warmer months and as pair bonds form and breeding activities commence, it becomes unclear whether or not Bachman's Sparrows will use burrows for escape or resort to other defense strategies when threatened.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Jim Cox of the Tall Timber Research Station for earlier conversations about burrow use by Bachman's Sparrows and Bill Summerour for providing helpful comments that improved an earlier draft of the manuscript. Thanks also to Paul Kittle, Jeff Garner and Tom Haggerty for their reviews.

LITERATURE CITED

- BOWERS, R. K., JR. AND J. B. DUNNING, JR. 1985. Predator avoidance through burrow use by Cassin's and Black-throated sparrows. *Western Birds* 16:51.
- DEAN, T. F. AND P. D. VICKERY. 2003. Bachman's Sparrows use burrows and palmetto clumps as escape refugia from predators. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 74(1):26–30.
- DUNNING, J. B. 2006. Bachman's Sparrow (*Aimophila aestivalis*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/038>
- JACKSON, D. R. AND E. G. MILSTREY. 1989. The fauna of gopher tortoise burrows. Pages 86–98, *In* J. E. Diemer, D. R. Jackson, J. L. Landers, J. N. Layne and D. A. Wood (Eds). Proceedings of the Gopher Tortoise Relocation Symposium. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Nongame Wildlife Program, Technical Report No. 5, Tallahassee, FL.
- PITTMAN, J. A., Jr. 1960. Bachman's Sparrow hiding in a burrow. *Auk* 77:80.
- Eric C. Soehren** and **John A. Trent**, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Natural Heritage Section, 64 North Union Street, Suite 464, Montgomery, AL 36104.

FALL SIGHTINGS (AUGUST-NOVEMBER 2009)

Paul D. Kittle, Greg D. Jackson, and Robert A. Duncan

This report covers the period from August through November 2009 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (west of the Apalachicola River). The appearance of observations in this article does not suggest verification or acceptance of records for very rare species; these must be considered by the appropriate state records committees. All submissions of birds that are rare, either in general or for a particular season or region, must be accompanied by adequate details of the observation. The extent of this documentation depends on the rarity of the species and the difficulty of identification. For guidance, observers are encouraged to consult the Alabama Ornithological Society checklist. Reports should note conditions of observation and the diagnostic characters observed. Your help in this matter is appreciated.

Abbreviations and italics: County names are in italics and, except for the Florida counties of *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, *Santa Rosa*, and *Walton* are in Alabama. “@” = under review by; “ABRC” = Alabama Bird Records Committee; “AOS” = Alabama Ornithological Society; “b” = banded; “BAS” = Birmingham Audubon Society; “FOSRC” = Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; “FWBSF” = Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields; “GINS” = Gulf Islands National Seashore; “m.ob.” = many observers; “NABS” = North Alabama Birdwatcher’s Society; “NWR” = National Wildlife Refuge; “ph.” = photographed; “SP” = State Park; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa* counties).

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK – A single at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 19-20 September (Don Ware, Carol Ware) provided the fifth record for the WP. This species continued from the spring and summer at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*. Various numbers of adults and juveniles were observed on five dates from 9 August – 28 November, with a maximum of 17 on 15 October (Powers McCleod, Chazz Hesselein, Eric Soehren *et al.*). These observations document the first nesting and maximum count for Alabama.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE – Larry Gardella found two at Hope Hull, *Montgomery*, 28 November, where the species is locally rare.

CANADA GOOSE – On the 26 September fall count by the BAS in *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 581 was a good number.

NORTHERN SHOVELER – Three birds were very early at Opal Beach, GINS, *Escambia*, 1 September (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan).

SURF SCOTER – A single was at Gulf SP, *Baldwin*, 12 November (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). At a nearby site in Gulf Shores, *Baldwin*, another single was observed 25 November (Karen Chiasson) (rare but regular on the Gulf Coast in fall).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER – An adult male was at Opal Beach, GINS, *Escambia*, 28 November (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Scot Duncan) (very rare in November). Two

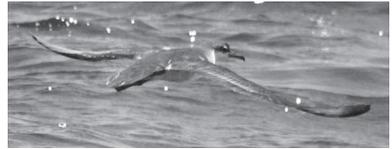
were noted at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 21 November+ (Helen Kittinger, Ronald Kittinger *et al.*) (rare, especially inland).

PIED-BILLED GREBE – Twenty was a good number for August at the Farquhar State Cattle Ranch, Cedarville, *Hale*, 12 August (John Trent) (likely breeding).

EARED GREBE – Four at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 21 November (Steve McConnell) established a maximum fall count for inland Alabama (rare inland).

CORY'S SHEARWATER – Rare but regular in fall offshore, six were observed between 68-89.3 km south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 20 September (Steve McConnell *et al.*; ph.).

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER – One was seen 105.6 km south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 20 September (Howard Horne, Jacob Walker *et al.*) (10th record for Alabama; @ ABRC; ph.).



Audubon's Shearwater, 20 September 2009, Baldwin Co., AL; K. Hicks

BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL – One was seen 120.9 km south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 20 September (Howard Horne, Jacob Walker *et al.*) (10th record for Alabama; @ ABRC).

MASKED BOOBY – The second November record for the WP was marked by an adult in *Okaloosa*, 9 November (associated with Hurricane Ida) (Don Ware).

BROWN BOOBY – The second November record for the WP was marked by two juveniles in *Okaloosa*, 9 November (associated with Hurricane Ida) (Don Ware, Lenny Fenimore).

NORTHERN GANNET – One immature was spotted on Mississippi Sound, *Mobile*, 6 August (Bill Summerour, Roger Clay; ph.) (rare and erratic in summer).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN – A maximum count (900) for inland Alabama was made at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 14 November (Ken Ward, NABS).

BROWN PELICAN – The seventh record for the Tennessee Valley was provided by one at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, 22 October (Jerry Bevis; ph.).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT – Two-hundred ninety were counted on Neely Henry Lake, *Etowah/Calhoun*, 8 November (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (maximum for Mountain Region away from Weiss Lake).

GREAT EGRET – A maximum count (279) for north Alabama was made near Leighton, *Colbert*, 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner).

SNOWY EGRET - This species has become uncommon in the Tennessee Valley in recent years, so counts of four at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 1 August (Steve McConnell), and four near Leighton, *Colbert*, 16 August (Steve McConnell) were good numbers.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON – Nine (maximum in fall for Mountain Region) were counted at each of two sites: Logan Martin Dam, *St. Clair/Talladega*, 17 August, and Neely Henry Dam, *St. Clair/Calhoun*, 8 November (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson).

WHITE IBIS – This species is rare but regular in both the Tennessee Valley and the

Mountain Region. Tennessee Valley records included a total of five immatures (good number) (two near Muscle Shoals and two near Leighton, *Colbert*, and a single at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*), 1 August (Steve McConnell); and 12 immatures (good number- second highest count for the Tennessee Valley) near Leighton, *Colbert*, 29 August (Ken Ward, NABS). Mountain Region records included a single immature at the Pell City sod farm, *St. Clair*, 12 August (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson, Mary Lou Miller); five immatures (good number) at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 1 September (Helen Kittinger, Maureen Shaffer, S. Hutchinson, Anne Miller) and two at the same site 26 September (Maureen Shaffer); and one at Auburn, *Lee*, 19 September (Jim Holmes).

PLEGADIS SP. – A single was observed near Leighton, *Colbert*, 25 October (Jimmy Wells, John Phillips; ph.; videotaped) (rare inland).

ROSEATE SPOONBILL – Rare but increasing in Alabama, reports were received from four sites: three were east of Daphne, *Baldwin*, 17 August – 1 September (Craig Litteken, m.ob.; ph.); a single was seen at the Farquhar State Cattle Ranch at Cedarville, *Hale*, 19-25 August (Bill Mason, *vide Eric Soehren*); four were counted at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 13 September (Chazz Hesselein) and again on 15 October (Eric Soehren, Bill Summerour *et al.*), and two were at nearby Pinto Pass 11 October (Kathy Hicks); and one was on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10 November (Jacob Walker, Don McKee).



Roseate Spoonbill, 18 August 2009, Baldwin Co. AL; B. Summerour.

WOOD STORK – The first November record for the WP was marked by one at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 4 November (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). Four were reported from Barnwell, *Baldwin*, 17 October (Kathy Hicks) (rare but increasing on the Gulf Coast).

MISSISSIPPI KITE – Ninety+ was a good number in the Gainesville/Aliceville area, *Sumter/Pickens*, 8 August (Greg Harber, BAS).

BROAD-WINGED HAWK – An estimated 275 birds (good number for the WP) were counted at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 18 October (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Scot Duncan).

SWAINSON'S HAWK – The 12th record for the WP was provided by a juvenile at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 18 October (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Scot Duncan). The highest one-day count for the WP was established by the tally of 10 light morph immatures at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 18 November (Alex Harper, Merilu Rose, Jan Osborne, Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Don Ware, m.ob.); three remained to 24 November. Observers at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, provided records as follows: one on 17 October (Chazz Hesselein *et al.*); two on 18 October (Steve McConnell *et al.*); one on 19 October (*vide Bob Sargent*), and one on 7 November (Steve McConnell, m.ob.) (rare but increasing in Alabama).

- MERLIN** – Six was a good number on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 18 October (Carol Foil *et al.*).
- YELLOW RAIL** – One was reported from Leeds, *Jefferson*, 8 September (George Cusick; 19th record for Alabama, fifth for the Mountain Region; @ABRC).
- SANDHILL CRANE** – An immature at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 11 August+ (Dwight Cooley *et al.*) furnished the third summer record for Alabama since 1960. One was seen north of Uriah, *Monroe*, 2 October (Karen Chiasson *et al.*) (locally rare).
- AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** – Uncommon in fall in Alabama, records from three sites were received: three west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, and one near Leighton, *Colbert*, 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner); and two at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 1 September (Helen Kittinger, Maureen Shaffer *et al.*).
- AMERICAN AVOCET** – This species is rare for inland Alabama, so one at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 26 September (Neill Cowles, NABS) was noteworthy.
- UPLAND SANDPIPER** – Rare in the WP, a single was found in a vacant lot in a suburban area (unusual location) at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 22 August (Bob Duncan).
- LONG-BILLED CURLEW** – The 11th record for the WP was marked by a single at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 3 September (Don Ware).
- MARBLED GODWIT** – Steve McConnell found four (good number) of this uncommon species on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 22 August.
- RUDDY TURNSTONE** – Two were seen west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 16 August (Steve McConnell) (rare inland).
- WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** – The first November record for the WP was provided by four birds at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 9 November (Don Ware).
- BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** – The third October record for the WP was marked by a juvenile at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 12 October (Bob Duncan). Rare but regular in fall in the Tennessee Valley, sightings were made west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, as follows: two on 23 August (Steve McConnell), one on 27 August (Damien Simbeck), and one on 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner). Rare but regular in fall on the Gulf Coast, a single was reported from the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 11 October (Eric Soehren, John Trent *et al.*; ph.).
- PECTORAL SANDPIPER** – A late bird was at the Pell City sod farm, *St. Clair*, 11 November (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson, Maureen Shaffer).
- STILT SANDPIPER** – One at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 24 November (Bob Duncan) was the latest ever in the WP by five days. A single at the Farquhar State Cattle Ranch, Cedarville, *Hale*, 2-5 November (John Trent; ph.) tied the late departure record for inland Alabama.
- BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** – Rare in the WP, a single was at Opal Beach, *Escambia*, 26 August, and five were found there 8 September (Bob Duncan). One stopped at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 30 August – 1 September (Alex Harper, Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).
- RUFF** – The second record for the WP was established by a female (Reeve) at Navarre Beach, *Santa Rosa*, 12 September (Bob Duncan, Dana Timmons, Peggy Baker,

m.ob.).

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER – Larry Gardella observed a single at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 24 August (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER – Three calling birds were noted at the Farquhar State Cattle Ranch, Cedarville, *Hale*, 3-5 November (John Trent; ph.) (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain).

WILSON'S SNIPE – Steve McConnell found an early bird at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 16 August.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE – A single was found at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 21 August (Steve McConnell) (uncommon in fall on the Gulf Coast). Another single was seen west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 30 August (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner) (rare inland).

PHALAROPE SP. – Twenty-eight (good number) Red-necked/Red Phalaropes were counted on a pelagic trip south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 20 September (Steve McConnell *et al.*) (20 were 17.2 km south of Orange Beach and eight were 83.5 km south) (rare).

LAUGHING GULL – This species is rare but regular at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence*, where five were noted 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner), and eight were reported 25 September (Steve McConnell). Also rare but regular at the Walter F. George Dam, *Henry*, a single was noted 4 October (Steve McConnell).

FRANKLIN'S GULL – Very rare in the WP, one was at the landfill, *Santa Rosa*, 20-27 November (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). Numerous records were received for this species that is rare in Alabama: Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale*, four on 25 September (early) (Steve McConnell); mouth of Bear Creek Embayment, *Colbert*, one on 5 October (Damien Simbeck); Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, eight on 26 October (Steve McConnell), five on 29 October (Bill Summerour, Kathy Hicks), and eight on 31 October (Bill Summerour) (rare but regular at this site in fall); Coden, *Mobile*, one on 17 November (Steve McConnell); Guntersville, *Marshall*, three on 21 November (Steve McConnell) (rare but regular at this site in fall); Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, one on 21 November (Andrew Haffenden); and from the Dauphin Island – Fort Morgan ferry, *Mobile/Baldwin*, a single on 22 November (Howard Horne).

CALIFORNIA GULL – An adult was found at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 17 October (Steve McConnell; ph.; @ABRC) to mark the eighth record for Alabama.

THAYER'S GULL – A single was found at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 29 November (Steve McConnell; ph.) to mark the seventh record for Alabama (@ABRC).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL – Rare but regular and increasing in Alabama, several records (all adults) were received: Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence*, one on 30 August (early record for Alabama) (Damien



California Gull, 17 October 2009, Marshall Co., AL; Steve McConnell.

Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner) and 25 September (Steve McConnell); one on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 19 September (early) – 7 November (Steve McConnell *et al.*); mouth of Bear Creek Embayment, *Colbert*, one on 5 October (Damien Simbeck); Guntersville, *Marshall*, two on 17 October and one on 21 November (Steve McConnell, Sean McConnell); and Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, one on 29 October (Bill Summerour, Kathy Hicks) and two on 31 October (Bill Summerour).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL – The first September record for the WP was provided by an adult at Opal Beach, *Escambia*, 3 September (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). Several reports of one-two individuals of this rare but increasing species were received from the west end of Dauphin Island and from Pelican Island, *Mobile*, where it is becoming regular. The five reports ranged from 6 August (earliest for Alabama) – 7 November (Bill Summerour, Roger Clay, Jacob Walker, Steve McConnell *et al.*).

SOOTY TERN – Very rare in the WP, an emaciated adult was found on the beach at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 20 September (William Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan), and taken to Wildlife Rescue in Pensacola where it died (specimen to Florida State Museum). At four locations between 68-92 km south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, Steve McConnell *et al.* counted three adults and six juveniles (ph.; uncommon in Alabama, but expected offshore).

BRIDLED TERN – Uncommon but expected offshore in Alabama, a total of six birds was reported between 60.6-84.1 km south of Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 20 September (Steve McConnell *et al.*).

CASPIAN TERN – Forty was a good number at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale/Lawrence*, 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner).

BLACK TERN – Uncommon on the Inland Coastal Plain, 18 were counted east of Uniontown, *Perry*, 1 August (Greg Haber, Tommy Pratt, BAS).

PARASITIC JAEGER – A single was at the Dauphin Island pier, *Mobile*, 10 November (Jacob Walker, Don McKee) (rare).

JAEGER SP. – An unidentified single was on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 9 October (Steve McConnell) (rare).

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE – The Birmingham area count conducted by the BAS in *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 26 September, produced 23, a local maximum and a maximum fall count for the Mountain Region.

COMMON GROUND-DOVE – At Harpersville, *Shelby*, Maureen Shaffer *et al.* found two on 4 August, one on 1 September, and three on 26 September (rare in the Mountain Region, but now regular at this site).

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO – Late singles were on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10 November (Don McKee) and 15 November (Christine Kelley).

MANGROVE CUCKOO – The first record of this species for Alabama was provided by one at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 17



Mangrove Cuckoo, 17 September 2010, Baldwin Co., AL; J. Smolinsky

September (Jaclyn Smolinsky *et al.*; ph.; b.; @ABRC).

GROOVE-BILLED ANI – This species is a rare but fairly regular fall visitor to the WP. One was seen at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 30 September – 10 October (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Laura Catterton, Alex Harper, m.ob.).

BARN OWL – Very rare along the coast of the WP, one-two were observed at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 19 October – 4 November (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan).

SHORT-EARED OWL – Rare and erratic in Alabama, an injured bird was found by a prison guard at Speigner, *Elmore*, 18 November, and taken to Auburn University for rehabilitation (*vide* Tommy Pratt; ph.).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL – Bob and Martha Sargent banded and photographed 13 birds on nine dates between 1-28 November at Clay, *Jefferson*. While this species may be rare in Alabama, it is regular at this site.

LESSER NIGHTHAWK – One was on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10-11 November (Howard Horne *et al.*; ph.; @ABRC) to establish the sixth record for Alabama.

COMMON NIGHTHAWK – Six was a good number so late on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 16 November (David Dortch, Don McKee).

CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW – Eight at the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 2 September (Ben Garmon) marked a maximum fall count for Alabama.

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD – Rare but regular on the Gulf Coast, one was captured in Mobile, *Mobile*, 28 September, (Fred Bassett, Sandra Kerr) (return to this site for the fourth year). One was seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 29 October (David Dortch).

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD – An adult female was at Baileyton, *Morgan*, 29 October – 7 November (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent, Caila Lamont *et al.*; b.) (rare).

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER – A very early arrival for the WP was in *Walton*, 19 September (Joe Wyatt).

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER – A rare migrant in the WP, one was noted at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 23 September (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). Rare in Alabama, singles were seen at two different sites in Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 24 August (Damien Simbeck, m.ob.) and 30 August (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner). One was at the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 5 September (Karen Chiasson).

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE – A late bird was at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 7 November (Steve McConnell, Chazz Hesselein *et al.*).

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER – A juvenile at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 21 August (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) was the earliest ever for the WP by eight days. Rare but regular in fall in Alabama, numerous reports were received: one was seen at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 23 August (Steve McConnell), two were there 30 August (Steve McConnell *et al.*), and one was reported 21 September (Damien Simbeck *et al.*); two were calling at Lanark west of Millbrook, *Autauga*, 6 September (Larry Gardella); one was at Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Birmingham, *Jefferson*, 20 and 24 September

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

(Greg Jackson); a single was at Shorter, *Macon*, 30 September (Eric Soehren); a calling bird was reported from Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 5 October (Larry Gardella); two were at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, 1 October (Ben Garmon), and one was there 5 October (Greg Harber); and this species was reported from the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 4 October (Ben Garmon), 6 October (Karen Chiasson), 9 October (Steve McConnell), and 10 October (John Trent).

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER – Twelve birds (good number) were found at Fort Toulouse, *Elmore*, 26 September (Larry Gardella, Tommy Pratt *et al.*).

ALDER FLYCATCHER – The 17th-20th records for Alabama were marked, respectively, by singles heard calling or singing at the following sites: west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 30 August (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner); Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 13 September and 7-8 October (fourth and fifth records for the Inland Coastal Plain) (Larry Gardella); and the Mobile Botanical Gardens, 10 October (seventh record for the Gulf Coast) (Chazz Hesselein).

LEAST FLYCATCHER – An early arrival was at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 23 August (Steve McConnell).

DUSKY FLYCATCHER – Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, hosted Alabama's third and fourth Dusky Flycatchers, 17 and 19 October (Bob Sargent *et al.*; b.; ph.; undergoing review by the ABRC).

SAY'S PHOEBE – One on the Mobile Causeway, *Baldwin*, 18 October (Jeff Bouton) marked the fifth record for Alabama (@ABRC).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – A casual fall visitor in the WP, an adult male was observed at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 1 October – 24 November (Don Ware, Bob Duncan, m.ob.).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER – A very rare fall migrant in the WP, singles were noted at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 29 October (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan), and at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 1 November (Bob Duncan, Peggy Baker). Rare in Alabama, singles were seen on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 24 October (Venetia Friend, Barbara Byrd, Sylvia Fullerton, m.ob.; ph.), and at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 24 October (Michael Jordan, Eva Barnett, John Dillon, Kay Dillon; ph.).

WESTERN KINGBIRD – Rare but regular in fall in the WP, Bob Duncan received numerous reports for the season.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER – An adult and an immature were at a regular site north of Bridgeport, *Jackson*, 27 August (David Chaffin, John Henderson) (rare breeder in the Tennessee Valley, especially this far east). Rare in the Mountain Region, Larry Barkey found one south of Houston, *Winston*, 24 October.

WHITE-EYED VIREO – Three late migrants were at Andalusia, *Covington*, 29 November (Tom Savage).

BELL'S VIREO – The first August and October (and seventh and eighth overall) records for the WP were established, respectively, by singles at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 24 August (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) and 6 October (Bob Duncan). Rare in Alabama, records of three singles were received: Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 9 October (Mark

Armstrong *et al.*; b.; ph.) and 19 October (Bob Sargent *et al.*; b.; ph.), and on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10 October (Steve McConnell, Bill Summerour, AOS; ph.).

WARBLING VIREO – Reports of singles came from the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 30 August (Howard Horne) and Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 26 September (Steve McConnell) (rare).

PHILADELPHIA VIREO – Eight+ was a good number at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, 4 October (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson).

FISH CROW – Rare but increasing in the Tennessee Valley, Craig Brown found four on 1 August and counted 26 (maximum for the Tennessee Valley) on 19 August at Decatur, *Morgan*. A single was at Wheeler Dam, *Lauderdale*, 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner).

HORNED LARK – This species has been occasional on the Inland Coastal Plain in recent years, with one known breeding site. Tommy Pratt counted 12 west of Autaugaville, *Autauga*, 6 September, at a new area where breeding may be occurring.

BANK SWALLOW – Three were at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 17 October (Steve McConnell), to set a late departure record for inland Alabama.

CLIFF SWALLOW – Large numbers were migrating eastward at Opal Beach, *Escambia*, 4 August (Bob Duncan) (very early).

CAVE SWALLOW – A rare fall migrant in the WP, singles were seen at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 2 November (Alex Harper) and 4 November (Lucy Duncan).

HOUSE WREN – Two were late at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 14 November (Greg Jackson).

SEDGE WREN – Rare but regular in the Mountain Region, records came from: Hoover, *Shelby/Jefferson*, three on 3 October (Greg Jackson; ph.); Hoover, *Shelby*, one on 1 November (Greg Jackson; ph.) and two on 7 November (Rick Kittinger); and Harpersville, *Shelby*, 15 (maximum for north Alabama) on 14 November (Greg Jackson; ph.).

MARSH WREN – A single was at Hoover, *Shelby/Jefferson*, 3 October, and two were noted at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 14 November (Greg Jackson; ph.) (rare in Mountain Region).

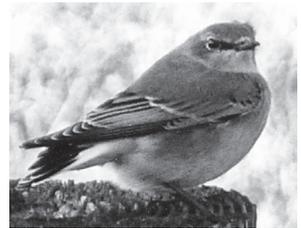
NORTHERN WHEATEAR – One was reported from Gulf SP, *Baldwin*, 18 October (Larry Mensi; ph.) to mark the fifth record for Alabama (@ABRC).

AMERICAN ROBIN – A juvenile was at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 10 August (Patrick James; ph.), an unusual location for a rare and local breeder.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER – Six (good number for fall) were reported from Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 24 August (Damien Simbeck, m.ob.).

TENNESSEE WARBLER – One was late at Fairhope, *Baldwin*, 23 November (Karen Chiasson).

NASHVILLE WARBLER – A rare fall migrant in the Mountain Region, two reports of



Northern Wheatear, 18 October 2009, Baldwin Co., AL; L. Mensi.

singles were received: south of Houston, *Winston*, 27 September (Larry Barkey), and Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Birmingham, *Jefferson*, 11 October (Greg Jackson). Larry Gardella found one at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 24 October (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain). One was late on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 16 November (Steve McConnell).

NORTHERN PARULA – A late bird was spotted at the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15 November (Steve McConnell).

MAGNOLIA WARBLER – Early arrivals (both singles) were seen at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 29 August (Steve McConnell), and at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 30 August (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner).

CAPE MAY WARBLER – The seventh fall record for the WP was provided by an adult male at Naval Live Oaks, *Santa Rosa*, 30 October (Patrick James; ph.).

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER – One was seen at Opelika, *Lee*, 13 September (Lorna West), and another was at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, 27 September (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) (rare inland).

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER – Three at Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 1 August (Steve McConnell), marked an early record for the Tennessee Valley.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER – Greg Harber reported an adult male from the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, *Jefferson*, 20 August (early record for the Mountain Region).

PALM WARBLER – Two were late at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 14 November (Greg Jackson).

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER – A single was late at Opelika, *Lee*, 13 November (Lorna West).

BLACKPOLL WARBLER – Greg Jackson found one at Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Birmingham, *Jefferson*, 13 October (occasional in fall in Alabama; seventh fall inland record for the state).

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER – Late singles were at the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14 November (Steve McConnell) and 15 November (Christine Kelley), and at Foley, *Baldwin*, 21 November (although this is a rare wintering species on the Gulf Coast). At Andalusia, *Covington*, two late birds were noted on 1 November and one on 27 November (Tom Savage) (although this is an occasional wintering species on the Inland Coastal Plain).

AMERICAN REDSTART – Late singles were reported from Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 11 November (Karen Chiasson), and the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15 November (Steve McConnell).

SWAINSON'S WARBLER – A singing bird was reported from Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 1 August (Steve McConnell) and 30 August (Steve McConnell *et al.*) (rare in Tennessee Valley).

OVENBIRD – One at the Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14 November (Steve McConnell), tied the latest departure record for Alabama (although occasional in winter on the Gulf Coast).

MOURNING WARBLER – Rare in Alabama, six records of singles were received: Clay, *Jefferson*, 5 September (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent); north of Auburn, *Lee*, 12-13 September (Jim Holmes *et al.*); Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 15 September (Damien Simbeck *et al.*); Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Birmingham, *Jefferson*, 20 September (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson); Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 27 September (Larry Gardella); and Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 4 October (Jacob Walker, Eric Pulis).

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT – Three was a good number so late at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 14 November (Greg Jackson).

WILSON'S WARBLER – A female, the earliest arrival ever for the WP by five days, was found in a garage at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 24 August (Merilu Rose, Rufus Rose; ph.). Rare but regular in fall in the Mountain Region, singles were seen at the Birmingham Zoo, *Jefferson*, 28 August (Ty Keith), and at Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Birmingham, *Jefferson*, 28 September (Debra Jackson, Greg Jackson).

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE – The first record for the WP, and the third for Florida, was provided by an adult at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 1-8 November (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, m.ob.; ph.; @FOSRC)

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW – Casual in the WP, one was seen at Henderson Beach, *Okaloosa*, 1 October (David Chaffin). Singles were noted at the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10 October (Bil Summerour, Steve McConnell, AOS), and 1 November (Jacob Walker). Singles were reported from Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 18 October and 7 November (Steve McConnell *et al.*) (rare but regular in fall on the Gulf Coast).

LARK SPARROW – Very rare in the WP, singles were seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 31 August (Larry Goodman), and at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 27 September – 2 November (Patrick James, Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, m.ob.). Twelve was a good number near Leighton, *Colbert*, 30 August (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner). One was seen at Bessemer, *Jefferson*, 26 September (David George, Sharon Hudgins) (rare in the Mountain Region).

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW – One was late at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 14 November (Greg Jackson; ph.).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW – A single was at Hoover, *Shelby*, 1 November (Greg Jackson; ph.) (occasional in north Alabama; 12th record for the Mountain Region). One was at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 2 November (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Betsy Tetlow) (regular in winter on the Gulf Coast, but rare at this site). Another single was seen north of Auburn, *Lee*, 2 November (Jim Holmes) (13th record for the Mountain Region). Four (good number) were counted at Grand Bay, *Mobile*, 18 November (Eric Soehren, John Trent) (regular in winter on the Gulf Coast).

LE CONTE'S SPARROW – One at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 14 November (Greg Jackson; ph.) marked the 10th record



Henslow's Sparrow, 1 November 2009, Shelby Co., AL; G. Jackson.

for the Mountain Region.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW – A single was seen north of Auburn, *Lee*, 2 November (Jim Holmes) (rare in the Mountain Region). Another single was at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 8 November (Larry Gardella) (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain).

SUMMER TANAGER – Larry Gardella reported one from Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 6 November (a record late departure for the Inland Coastal Plain, and except for a few winter records, a late record for inland Alabama). Other late singles were at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 15 November (Michael Jordan), and in Cadillac Park on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 29 November (Joan Siegwald, Tom Siegwald).

WESTERN TANAGER – Occasional in Alabama, an adult male was at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 15 October (Fred Bassett *et al.*; b.; ph.).

BLUE GROSBEAK – Two late birds were on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 14 November (Steve McConnell).

DICKCISSEL – An immature at Grand Bay, *Mobile*, 18 November (Eric Soehren, John Trent) was late if not a rare wintering bird.

BOBOLINK – Rare but regular in fall on the Gulf Coast, singles were reported from Mobile, *Mobile*, 6 September (Rodney Cassidy); Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 18 October (Steve McConnell *et al.*); and Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10 November (Jacob Walker, Howard Horne, Don McKee *et al.*).

WESTERN MEADOWLARK – One was found at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 14 November (Bob Duncan) to mark the second record for Florida in over 30 years (@FOSRC).

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD – Rare in Alabama, four records of singles were received from the Gulf Coast: Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 10 October (Joan Siegwald, Tom Siegwald *et al.*) and 6 November (Eugenia Carey *et al.*; ph.); Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 2 November (Larry Goodman, Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Betsy Tetlow; ph.); and southeast of Foley, *Baldwin*, 7 November (Chazz Hesselein *et al.*).



Yellow-headed Blackbird, 2 November 2009, Baldwin Co., AL; L. Goodman.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD – Early birds arrived in the Mountain Region, with 12 at Auburn, *Lee*, 17 October (Jim Holmes) marking an early record for the region. A single was at Hoover, *Shelby*, 1 November (Greg Jackson; ph.).

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE – Very local and sporadic in the WP, the subspecific classification and provenance of birds along the coast is puzzling (found in the Escambia River delta but rarely on the coast). Two females were at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 6 October – 4 November, and 20 yellow-eyed males were at Floridatown, *Santa Rosa*, 20 November (Bob Duncan).

SHINY COWBIRD – The second August record for the WP was marked by a male at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 8 August (Ann Forster, Dan Forster).

BRONZED COWBIRD – The 16th and 17th records for Alabama were marked, respectively,

by one seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 25-26 October (Steve McConnell *et al.*; ph.), and two found at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 3-4 November (Bill Summerour; ph.).



Bronzed Cowbird, 3 November 2009, Baldwin Co., AL; B. Summerour.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE – Very rare in the WP in November, a male lingered at the feeder of Betsy Tetlow in Pensacola, *Escambia*, to 21 November. One at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 6 November (Larry Gardella) was a late migrant if not a rare wintering bird.

PURPLE FINCH – One was reported from Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 27 November (Eugenia Carey *et al.*; ph.) (locally rare).

YELLOW-FRONTED CANARY – The first report for the WP of this exotic species came from Milton, *Santa Rosa*, where Heidi Moore reported a male at her feeder 5-10 August (ph.).

NUTMEG MANNIKIN – Reports of this introduced species continue to be received from throughout the east Pensacola, *Escambia*, area (Bob Duncan). The species is increasing in south *Baldwin* as well, as witnessed by eight+ birds at Fort Morgan 7 November (Howard Horne, m.ob.).

PIN-TAILED WHYDAH – Bob Duncan received the first report of this escapee for the season from Melanie Luebeke, who saw a male in east Pensacola, *Escambia*, 6 August. Five additional reports were received through 1 September from east Pensacola, the last a report of two males and a female by Wes Tallyn. An additional report came from Milton, *Santa Rosa*, of a male that had been present for about a year (Peggy Baker).

Paul D. Kittle, Department of Biology, University of North Alabama, Florence, AL 35632 (Email: pdkittle@una.edu). **Greg D. Jackson** [Alabama compiler], 2220 Baneberry Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244 (Email: g_d_jackson@bellsouth.net). **Robert A. Duncan** [NW Florida compiler], 614 Fairpoint Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561 (Email: town_point@bellsouth.net).

WINTER SIGHTINGS (DECEMBER 2009 – FEBRUARY 2010)

Paul D. Kittle, Greg D. Jackson, and Robert A. Duncan

This report covers the period from December 2009 through February 2010 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (west of the Apalachicola River). The appearance of observations in this article does not suggest verification or acceptance of records for very rare species; these must be considered by the appropriate state records committees. All submissions of birds that are rare, either in general or for a particular season or region, must be accompanied by adequate details of the observation. The extent of this documentation depends on the rarity of the species and the difficulty of identification. For guidance, observers are encouraged to consult the Alabama Ornithological Society checklist. Reports should note conditions of observation and the diagnostic characters observed. Your help in this matter is appreciated.

Abbreviations and italics: County names are in italics and, except for the Florida counties of *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa*, are in Alabama. “@” = under review by; “ABRC” = Alabama Bird Records Committee; “b.” = banded; “CBC” = Christmas Bird Count; “FOSRC” = Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; “FWBSF” = Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields; “m.ob.” = many observers; “NABS” = North Alabama Birdwatcher’s Society; “NF” = National Forest; “NWR” = National Wildlife Refuge; “ph.” = photographed; “SP” = State Park; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa* counties).

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE – The catfish farms in northern *Escambia* hosted 18 (good number) on 8 February (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). Rare but regular on the Gulf Coast, singles were noted at both Lillian and Elberta, *Baldwin*, 16 January (Larry Gardella), and 15 were reported from Grand Bay, *Mobile*, 19 February (Christine Kelley). Also rare but regular on the Inland Coastal Plain, Larry Gardella observed two at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 14 February.

ROSS’S GOOSE – The 11th record for the WP was marked by one seen at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 14 December (Don Ware) during the Choctawhatchee CBC. Rare but regular in the Tennessee Valley, one was near Rogersville, *Lauderdale*, from mid-January through 27 January (Damien Simbeck *et al.*), and Wheeler NWR, *Limestone* (usual site), hosted three on 3 December and four on 19+ December (Steve McConnell *et al.*).

CAACKLING GOOSE – The 11th record for Alabama was marked by birds at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, as follows: five on 13 January, three on 16 January (Dwight Cooley *et al.*), one on 21 January (Jeff Garner), and two on 12 February (Larry Gardella).

TUNDRA SWAN – Two immatures were seen at Daphne, *Baldwin*, 11-12 January (Powers McLeod, Rosann McLeod; ph.) (rare).

BLUE-WINGED TEAL – Rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, 11 were counted west

of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 5 December (Steve McConnell, Paul Kittle *et al.*). Rare but regular in winter on the Inland Coastal Plain, records were received from three sites: five at Andalusia, *Covington*, 29 December (Tom Savage); one at Speigner, *Elmore*, 20 January (Greg Jackson) and 15 February (Larry Gardella); and two at Pintlala, *Montgomery*, 14 February (Larry Gardella).

CANVASBACK – A maximum count (122) for northwest Alabama was made on the Waterloo CBC, *Colbert/Lauderdale*, 19 December.

SURF SCOTER – Very rare in the WP, four were at Navarre Beach, *Santa Rosa*, 7 December (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). Rare but regular on the Gulf Coast of Alabama, Ben Garmon reported three sightings from Pelican Island, *Mobile*: three on 23 December, two on 14 January, and two on 2 February. Rare for inland Alabama, one was seen at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 13 January (Dwight Cooley, Scot Duncan, m.ob.).

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER – Rare in Alabama, records of singles came from Gulf Shores, *Baldwin*, 17 December (Karen Chiasson); Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December; and Spring Creek, *Lawrence*, 6 February (Dwight Cooley, NABS). One-three were reported from Guntersville, *Marshall*, 13-16 February (Linda Reynolds, m.ob.; ph.).



White-winged Scoter, 16 February 2010, Marshall Co., AL; B. Chennupati.

BUFFLEHEAD – A maximum count (289) for northwest Alabama was made on the Waterloo CBC, *Colbert/Lauderdale*, 19 December.

HOODED MERGANSER – An estimated 500 on Pickwick Reservoir at the mouth of Bear Creek, *Colbert*, 14 January (Damien Simbeck) was a good number for a single site.

COMMON MERGANSER – Occasional on the Gulf Coast, two were found at Bon Secour, *Baldwin*, during the 2 January Gulf Shores CBC (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan *et al.*). Two were reported from Guntersville, *Marshall*, 9 January (Mark Jackson, Ken Thomas *et al.*, *fide* Linda Reynolds) (rare, particularly in recent years).

RED-THROATED LOON – During the Gulf Shores CBC, Greg Jackson found one at Perdido Pass, *Baldwin*, 2 January (rare but regular on the Gulf Coast). Another single was at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 18 January (Kevin Calhoun, m.ob.) and 30 January (Andrew Haffenden, m.ob.) (rare but regular in this area).

PACIFIC LOON – Rare in winter in the WP, one was seen at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 7-23 January (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Alex Harper, Alicia Gerrety *et al.*). Rare but regular in winter at Guntersville, *Marshall*, one was observed 20+ December (Steve McConnell *et al.*). Rare but regular on the Gulf Coast, singles were noted at Perdido Pass, *Baldwin*, 2 January (Greg Jackson) and 17 January (Larry Gardella).

COMMON LOON – The 26 December Guntersville CBC, *Marshall*, tallied 498 (good number).

EARED GREBE – This species is rare inland in Alabama. Several reports of good

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

numbers came from Guntersville, *Marshall*, (Steve McConnell, m.ob.; ph.): four on 21 November, four+ on 21 December, and seven on 26 December.

WESTERN GREBE – Two birds were seen at Mulat Bayou, *Santa Rosa*, 19 December (Tom Barbig) during the Pensacola CBC (details sent to CBC compiler, not reviewed by Bob Duncan).

NORTHERN GANNET – The 2 January Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin*, tallied 853 (good number).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT – A maximum count for the Inland Coastal Plain was established by the 6,555 tallied on the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery/Autauga*, 2 January.

ANHINGA – One was found on the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery*, 2 January (Robert Reed) (rare in winter this far north).

MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD – Very rare in December in the WP, a single was at Pensacola Beach, *Escambia*, 9 December (Carol Ascherfeld).

GREAT EGRET – A count in the Big Prairie Creek area, *Hale*, 15 February (Don Self, Judy Self) yielded 390, a maximum winter number for the Inland Coastal Plain.

LITTLE BLUE HERON – Rare in winter on the Inland Coastal Plain, two were found in the Houston Unit of Eufaula NWR, *Barbour*, 24 January (John Trent), and one was spotted along Chewacla Creek southeast of Auburn, *Lee*, 23 February (Hugh Wright).

REDDISH EGRET – A maximum count for Alabama was established by the 17 tallied on the Dauphin Island CBC, *Mobile*, 19 December.

CATTLE EGRET – Rare in winter in the WP, records were received from three sites: FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, two-five birds 4-7 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Don Ware) and two birds 27 January (Bob Duncan); four birds at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 27 December – 7 January (Powers McLeod); and one bird at Cantonment, *Escambia*, 8 February (Laura Catterton). Rare in winter for inland Alabama, four were at Hope Hull, *Montgomery*, during the Montgomery CBC on 2 January (Annabel Markle, Carol Alford, Randy Alford), and 20+ were near Camden, *Wilcox*, 5 January (Leo Hollinger, *fide* Tommy Pratt).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON – The 27 December Birmingham CBC, *Jefferson/Shelby*, tallied eight, a maximum winter count for the Mountain Region.

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON – An injured bird was found for the fourth year in Midfield during the Birmingham CBC, *Jefferson*, 27 December (Sharon Hudgins *et al.*) (occasional in winter in north Alabama).

BLACK VULTURE – Eighty-four was a good number for the Gulf Coast on the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin*, 2 January.

OSPREY – Rare inland in winter but increasing, three were counted on the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery/Autauga*, 2 January. On the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin*, 2 January, 51 were recorded to set a new maximum for Alabama.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE – Two early birds were south of Theodore, *Mobile*, 23 February (Matthew Stowe, Josh Everett).

BALD EAGLE – A new maximum for the Gulf Coast was marked by the 10 counted on

the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin*, 2 January.

NORTHERN HARRIER – The Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, tallied 31 (good number) on 19 December.

COOPER'S HAWK – A maximum count (18) for the Tennessee Valley was provided by the Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK – One was recorded on the Dauphin Island CBC, *Mobile*, 19 December (lingered into January) (David Dortch *et al.*; ph.) (rare in winter).

SWAINSON'S HAWK – Casual in the WP, two birds were at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 4-14 December (present since November) (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Don Ware, Carol Ware, Lenny Fenimore, m.ob.).

RED-TAILED HAWK – A dark morph western bird (rare in Alabama) was seen throughout the winter season at Cedar Point, *Mobile* (Ben Garmon).

AMERICAN KESTREL – A maximum count (21) for northwest Alabama was made on the Waterloo CBC, *Colbert/Lauderdale*, 19 December.

MERLIN – Rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, a single was observed north of Gravelly Springs, *Lauderdale*, 19 December (Paul Kittle *et al.*; Waterloo CBC), and another single was found during the Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December. Three were tallied on the Dauphin Island CBC, *Mobile*, 19 December (good number for winter on the Gulf Coast).

PEREGRINE FALCON – Rare in winter for inland Alabama, records came from four sites: three (good number) on the Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December; one on the Guntersville CBC, *Marshall*, 26 December; one at Lake Guntersville SP, *Marshall*, 9 January (Mark Jackson, m.ob.; ph.); and one in *Wilcox*, 30 January (Rodney Cassidy).

KING RAIL – Rare in winter for inland Alabama, but regular in this area, one was found in the Houston Unit of Eufaula NWR, *Barbour*, 23 January (John Trent).

SANDHILL CRANE – Very rare in winter in the WP, six were in north *Escambia*, 15 January – 8 February (Max Griggs, Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). Thirty were at Big Wills Creek west of Gadsden, *Etowah*, 13 December (Chris Bailey, H.T. Bailey, Bruce Bailey, James Clanton; ph.) (locally rare). The Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 20 December, produced a total of 3,199 (good number). Nine were seen west of Florence, *Lauderdale*, 10 January (Paul Kittle, Donna Kittle) (locally rare). Four were south of Fairhope, *Baldwin*, 9 February (Ben Garmon) (unusual in this area).

WHOOPING CRANE – Two captive-reared birds returned to Wheeler NWR, *Limestone/Morgan*, for the winter season (Dwight Cooley *et al.*), and two similarly reared but different birds were in *Lauderdale* 13 February, *Colbert* 18 February, and back in *Lauderdale* 20-21 February (Operation Migration *et al.*) (first birds from this program recorded in northwest Alabama).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER – Rare in winter for inland Alabama, singles were at Speigner, *Elmore*, 20 January (Greg Jackson), and at Wilson Dam, *Colbert*, 23 January (Paul Kittle).

WESTERN SANDPIPER – A maximum count for inland Alabama was provided by the

49 recorded on the Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December.

STILT SANDPIPER – One was on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 22 January (Lucy Duncan, m.ob.) (rare in winter).

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER – Very rare in winter in the WP, 7-14 birds (maximum ever for the WP) were at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 4-14 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Don Ware, Choctawhatchee CBC).

DOWITCHER SP. – Four birds (probably Long-billed) were reported from Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 14 February (Larry Gardella) (rare inland in winter).

IVORY GULL – The first Alabama record for this species was provided by an individual that first visited the Georgia portion of West Point Lake, 25-29 January (Walt Chambers, m.ob.), and then was found ill on shore in *Chambers*, Alabama, 29 January (Lorna West, m.ob.). The bird subsequently died, with the specimen to be deposited at the University of Georgia (ph; @ABRC).

FRANKLIN'S GULL – Very rare in the WP, one was at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 6 December (Bob Duncan), and one-two birds were at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 7-14 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Don Ware, Lenny Fenimore). Rare in winter in Alabama, reports of singles came from Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, 31 December – 16 January (Steve McConnell *et al.*), and Guntersville, *Marshall*, 30 January (Bala Chennupati; ph.).



Franklin's Gull, 31 December 2009, Baldwin Co., AL; S. McConnell.

HERRING GULL – An actual count of 705 on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 23 January (Allen Burrows) was a good number for a single site.

THAYER'S/ICELAND GULL – An immature was at Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, 31 December – 1 January (Steve McConnell *et al.*; ph.; @ABRC) (either of the complex is rare in Alabama; 22nd Alabama record for member of the complex).

ICELAND GULL – A first-cycle bird was at the Santa Rosa Landfill, *Santa Rosa*, 19 January (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) (only two previous WP records, both in January; @FOSRC).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL – Casual in the WP, one was at Fort Walton Beach, *Okaloosa*, 14 December (Kelly Jones) during the Choctawhatchee CBC. This species is rare but expected at Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, and increasing. Four were there 31 December and three+ on 1 January (Steve McConnell *et al.*).



Glaucous Gull, 27 March 2010, Baldwin Co., AL; B. Summerour.

GLAUCOUS GULL – A first cycle bird at the Santa Rosa Landfill, *Santa Rosa*, 18 February (Bob Duncan) marked the 16th record for the

WP. Rare in Alabama, three reports were received: one immature at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 16 December – 30 January (Scott Gravette, m.ob.; ph.); a first-cycle bird at Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, 4 January – 1+ February (Ben Garmon *et al.*; ph.); and another first-cycle bird at Trinity, *Morgan*, 6 February (Dwight Cooley, NABS).

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL – Very rare in the WP, a third-winter bird was at Destin, *Okaloosa*, 14 December – 4 February (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Ed Kwater). A single was seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 22 January (Scot Duncan *et al.*). A first-cycle bird was counted on the Gulf Shores CBC, *Baldwin*, 2 January (Dwight Cooley) (rare but increasing in Alabama).

BLACK TERN – One was at Pensacola Beach, *Escambia*, 17 January (John Grossa) (third January record for the WP).

FORSTER'S TERN – Seven were tallied at Lake Purdy, *Jefferson/Shelby*, during the Birmingham CBC, 27 December (Harriett Wright, Pelham Rowan, Frank Farrell) (good number in winter for the Mountain Region). A maximum winter count (106) for inland Alabama was made on the Waterloo CBC, *Lauderdale/Colbert*, 19 December.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE – Rare but increasing inland, one was seen at Greenville, *Butler*, 8 January (Annabel Markle).

BARN OWL – Three were counted at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 12 January (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (maximum in winter in north Alabama).

FLAMMULATED OWL – The second record for Alabama was established by one found dead on a porch at Opelika, *Lee*, 10 December (Scott Peek, Barry Fleming; ph.; @ABRC; specimen to Auburn University).

BURROWING OWL – The 18th record for Alabama, and the first since 1991, was marked by one seen at the country club on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 12 December – 22 January (Howard Horne, m.ob.; ph.; @ABRC).

SHORT-EARED OWL – One was found during the Guntersville CBC, *Marshall*, 26 December, and a single was at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 6 February (Dwight Cooley, NABS) (rare but regular at these sites).

NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL – One was at Hollins, *Clay*, 6 Dec. (Mary Wilson, Don Wilson; b.) (rare). Bob and Martha Sargent banded and photographed singles at Clay, *Jefferson*, on 17 December and 19 January (rare; at a regular site).

BUFF-BELLIED HUMMINGBIRD – Very rare in the WP, one was at a feeder at the Jane Hutchison residence in west Pensacola, *Escambia*, 13 December (b. by Fred



Flammulated Owl, 10 December 2009, Lee Co., AL; B. Fleming.



Burrowing Owl, 12 December 2009, Mobile Co., AL; D.W. Dortch.

Bassett). This species is rare but regular in winter in Alabama. One that was captured in Mobile, *Mobile*, 3 December (Fred Bassett, Barbara Sleeman) had been banded at Hamlin's Landing, *Baldwin*, 9 January 2008. A banded bird returned for the second year to Montrose, *Baldwin*, where it was recaptured 16 December (Fred Bassett, Nancy Moore).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD – Occasional in winter for inland Alabama, singles were banded south of Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 4 January (Fred Bassett), and in Vestavia Hills, *Jefferson*, 10 January (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent).

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD – An adult male was found at Madison, *Madison*, 18+ January (approx.) (Melissa Kirkindall, Sandy Kirkindall, Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent; b.; ph.; @ABRC) to mark the fifth record for Alabama.

CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD – Rare but regular in Alabama in winter, three records of singles were received: Lillian, *Baldwin*, 16 December – 13+ January (Fred Bassett *et al.*; ph.; b.); Pelham, *Shelby*, 6 January (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent, Virginia Lusk; b.; ph.); and Lillian, *Baldwin*, 21 January (Fred Bassett, Jim Dickerson; b.; ph.).

BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD – One was at the residence of Beau Bochansky in Fort Walton Beach, *Okaloosa*, 19 December – 15 January (b. by Fred Bassett) (seventh record for the WP).

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD – Eight (ties maximum for Alabama) were tallied during the Birmingham CBC, *Jefferson/Shelby*, 27 December (*vide* Bob Sargent; b.).

SAPSUCKER SP. – A possible hybrid individual (Red-naped Sapsucker X Yellow-bellied Sapsucker) was at Huntsville, *Madison*, 5 January (Scott Rose; ph.) (return of the first Alabama individual of this form).

HAIRY WOODPECKER – Gene Estes found one at Niceville, *Okaloosa*, during the Choctawhatchee CBC on 14 December (very rare in the WP).

SAY'S PHOEBE – The second record for the WP was provided by one at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 4-15 January (Chris Costers, m.ob.; photos to FOSRC).

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – An adult male was at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 7 December – 19 February (present since October) (Bob Duncan, Don Ware, m.ob.) (rare but fairly regular in the WP). Rare and irregular for inland Alabama, one was found at Wadsworth, *Autauga*, during the Montgomery CBC on 2 January (Tommy Pratt, Rod Douglass; ph.).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER – Rare but fairly regular in the WP, one was at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 13-15 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).

WESTERN KINGBIRD – Rare but fairly regular in winter in the WP, one was at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 1-11 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). One was at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 4-14 December (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Carol Ware, Don Ware). Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast of Alabama, three reports were received: one on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 5 December (Ben Garmon), 19 December (Venetia Friend *et al.*), and 22 January (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Scot Duncan, m.ob.); two at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 1 January (Steve McConnell); and one west of Foley, *Baldwin*, 2 January (Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald, ph.).

- WHITE-EYED VIREO** – This species is rare in winter on the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama. Three reports of singles were received: Andalusia, *Covington*, 6 December and 2 January (Thomas Savage); Kennedy Unit of Eufaula NWR, *Barbour*, 22 January (Lorna West); and *Wilcox*, 23 January (Rodney Cassidy).
- BLUE-HEADED VIREO** – Rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, one was recorded on the Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December. Rare but regular in the Mountain Region, four were tallied on the Birmingham CBC, *Jefferson/Shelby*, 27 December.
- NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** – The second December record for the WP was marked by two birds at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 7 December (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast, singles were found on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 19-20 December (Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald *et al.*), and on the Mobile Causeway, *Baldwin*, 14 February (Rodney Cassidy).
- CAVE SWALLOW** – Very rare in the WP, Bob Duncan observed one at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 13 December.
- BARN SWALLOW** – Occasional in winter in Alabama, singles were spotted at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 6 and 20 December (Steve McConnell), and at the Dauphin Island Airport, *Mobile*, 21 January (Scot Duncan, m.ob.).
- WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** – A single was observed on multiple dates through the season at Opelika, *Lee* (Lorna West) (rare at the southern edge of its Alabama range). Seventy-two was a good number on the Guntersville CBC, *Marshall*, 26 December. Rare on the Inland Coastal Plain of Alabama, four records (all singles) were received: Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery*, 2 January (Larry Gardella); *Wilcox*, 23 January (Rodney Cassidy); Chickasaw SP, *Marengo*, 15 February (Don Self, Judy Self); Shorter, *Macon*, 28 February (Eric Soehren).
- BROWN CREEPER** – Rare in winter in the WP, a single was seen on the Choctawhatchee CBC, *Okaloosa*, 14 December.
- HOUSE WREN** – Rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley, one was noted at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 5 December (Steve McConnell), and two were found on the Guntersville CBC, *Marshall*, 26 December. Rare but regular in winter in the Mountain Region, three were tallied on the Birmingham CBC, *Jefferson/Shelby*, 27 December.
- SEDGE WREN** – One was reported from Pelham, *Shelby*, 27 December (Helen Kittinger *et al.*) (rare in winter in north Alabama).
- MARSH WREN** – Rare in winter in north Alabama, one was found during the Wheeler NWR CBC, *Limestone/Morgan*, 19 December.
- BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** – A single was recorded during the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery/Elmore*, 2 January (John Trent *et al.*) (rare in winter for inland Alabama).
- GRAY CATBIRD** – One was noted at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 5 December (Steve McConnell) (rare in winter in the Tennessee Valley).
- ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** – Rare but regular in winter in the Mountain Region, one was noted at Alabaster, *Shelby*, mid-February+ (Andrew Haffenden).

- YELLOW WARBLER** – The first January record for the WP was provided by one at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 11 January (Bob Duncan).
- BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** – Occasional in winter on the Gulf Coast, a single was spotted southeast of Foley, *Baldwin*, 2 January (Steve McConnell, Andrew Haffenden).
- PRAIRIE WARBLER** – Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast, one was found at Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 2 January (Don Ware, Carol Ware).
- PALM WARBLER** – Five were tallied on the Guntersville CBC, *Marshall*, 26 December (good number for winter in the Tennessee Valley).
- BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** – Rare in winter for inland Alabama, three reports were received: one on the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery*, 2 January (Robert Reed); two at Andalusia, *Covington*, 2 January (Thomas Savage); and one at a different site in Andalusia, *Covington*, 15 January (Annie Crary).
- YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT** – Very rare in winter in the WP, a single was found during the Pensacola CBC, *Escambia*, 19 December (James Pfeiffer, Patrick James). Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast of Alabama, one was observed 29 November – 3 December in Mobile, *Mobile* (Joan Siegwald, Tom Siegwald; ph.).
- GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** – One that was first seen 1 November continued through 27 February at Fort Pickens, *Escambia* (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, m.ob.; ph.; @ FOSRC), (third record for Florida).
- CLAY-COLORED SPARROW** – The first February record for the WP was marked by one at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 4 February (Ed Kwater).
- LARK SPARROW** – Very rare in winter in the WP, one-three were at Fort Pickens, *Escambia*, 11 December – 26 February (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, m.ob.), and a single was at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 18 February (James Pfeiffer).
- GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** – Two were found at the Birmingham Airport during the Birmingham CBC, *Jefferson*, 27 December (John Imhof) (rare in winter in the Mountain Region).
- SEASIDE SPARROW** – Very rare in the WP, seven were seen at Garcon Point, *Santa Rosa*, 19 December (James Pfeiffer).
- WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** – Thirteen spent the winter east of Oneonta, *Blount* (Duane Brown, Lynn Brown) (good number for a single site in the Mountain Region).
- SUMMER TANAGER** – Very rare in winter in the WP, three reports of singles were received: Niceville, *Okaloosa*, Choctawhatchee CBC, 14 December (Gene Estes); Milton, *Santa Rosa*, 9 January (Mike Scheller); and Pensacola, *Escambia*, 1-18 January (Morris Clark). Occasional in winter for inland Alabama, a single was noted on the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery*, 2 January (Robert Reed). Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast, one was at Lillian, *Baldwin*, 31 December (Steve McConnell, Jim Dickerson), and another single was on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 28 February (Ben Garmon, Joan Siegwald).
- WESTERN TANAGER** – Very rare in winter in the WP, records of singles from four sites

were received: FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 21 December (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan *et al.*); Fort Walton Beach, *Okaloosa*, 17 January (Kelly Jones); Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 25-28 January (Bill Bremser, Greta Bremser); and Pensacola, *Escambia*, 10-15 February (Ann Forster, David Forster, Chris Forster). Rare in Alabama, four records (all singles) were received: Shell Mounds on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 5 December (Tom Siegwald, Howard Horne); near Dauphin Island Airport, *Mobile*, 19 December (David Dortch); Prattville, *Autauga*, 2-4 January (Fred Carney, Eric Soehren *et al.*; ph.) (seventh record for inland Alabama); and Auburn, *Lee*, 7+ February (Terry Hicks *et al.*; ph.) (eighth record for inland Alabama).



Western Tanager,
7 February 2010,
Lee Co., AL; T.
Hicks.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK – Rare in winter on the Gulf Coast, records of singles from three sites were received: Mobile, *Mobile*, 17 December (Brian Naylor); Fairhope, *Baldwin*, winter season (Jim Dunn *et al.*); and Mobile, *Mobile*, 16-31 January (Chazz Hesselein).

LAZULI BUNTING – The first record for Alabama was provided by an immature male at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 31 January (Carolyn Pomarius, Fred Bevis *et al.*; ph.; @ ABRC).

INDIGO BUNTING – Very rare in winter in the WP, singles were seen at Destin, *Okaloosa*, during the Choctawhatchee CBC on 14 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan); on the Pensacola CBC, *Escambia*, 19 December (Lucy Duncan *et al.*); and at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 28 January (Bill Bremser, Greta Bremser). Rare in winter in Alabama, two were found on the Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery*, 2 January (Bill Campbell), and one was at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, *Mobile*, 22 January (Scot Duncan *et al.*).

DICKCISSEL – Very rare in winter in the WP, one was noted at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 11 December – 17 February (Bill Bremser, Greta Bremser).

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD – The Montgomery CBC, *Montgomery/Autauga*, tallied 505,886 (good number) on 2 January.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD – Rare in Alabama, an immature male was noted at Bon Secour, *Baldwin*, 26 December (Will Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan).

RUSTY BLACKBIRD – Rare in the WP, four were reported from Blackwater River State Forest, *Santa Rosa*, 1 December (Peggy Baker, Les Kelly, Larry Goodman), and six were found in at the catfish ponds in northern *Escambia*, 8 February (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). An estimated 400+ in the Montgomery area, *Montgomery/Elmore*, 10 February (Eric Soehren, John Trent) was a good number for recent years.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD – In the WP, one was at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 7 December (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) (rare and in an unusual location); 143 were counted in northern *Escambia*, 14 January (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan); and 21 were seen at the catfish ponds in northern *Escambia*, 8 February (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE – Rare in the WP, 5-24 birds were reported from Floridatown, *Santa Rosa*, 19 January – 25 February (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan, Larry Goodman).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE – Rare in winter in the WP, a male was at a feeder in Pensacola, *Escambia*, 7 December – 14 February (Betsy Tetlow), and another bird occurred at Tiger Point, *Santa Rosa*, 2 January (Bill Bremser). Rare but regular and increasing in winter in Alabama, numerous records (all singles unless otherwise noted) were received this season. Annabel Markle reported three different birds at Greenville, *Butler*: an immature male 17 December, an immature female 8-11 January, and an adult male 10 January. Other records included an immature male at Prattville, *Autauga*, 2-4 January (Fred Carney, Eric Soehren *et al.*); three birds at Bon Secour, *Baldwin*, 2 January (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Rodney Styron *et al.*); an adult male at Andalusia, *Covington*, 16 January (Keith Kipp; ph.); a female-type at Cooter's Pond Park, Prattville, *Autauga*, 20 January (Greg Jackson); an adult male in the Kennedy Unit of Eufaula NWR, *Barbour*, 22 January (Lorna West); a male and a female-type in late January, two males 13 February, and one male 20+ February at Enterprise, *Coffee* (Fran Chesser, Con Chesser; ph.); and an adult male at Mobile, *Mobile*, 21 February (Brian Naylor).

RED CROSSBILL – John Trent observed 13+ in the Coleman Lake area of Talladega NF, *Cleburne*, 18 January (continuation at this site and maximum number for recent years).

CROSSBILL SP. – Any crossbill is unexpected in Alabama away from Talladega NF, so Bob Sargent's observation of a wing-barred male (possibly a White-winged Crossbill) at Clay, *Jefferson*, 9 February was notable.

NUTMEG MANNIKIN – This exotic continues to proliferate and is spreading along the Alabama coast, and south from mainland Pensacola to Gulf Breeze in the WP. The first county record for *Mobile* was established by the 12 observed on Dauphin Island 19 December (Venetia Friend, Betsy Eager, Laurie Bailey, m.ob.) and 22 January (Scot Duncan, m.ob.). Twenty were noted at Lillian, *Baldwin*, 31 December (Steve McConnell, Jim Dickerson) (continuation at this site).

Paul D. Kittle, Department of Biology, University of North Alabama, Florence, AL 35632 (e-mail: pdkittle@una.edu). **Greg D. Jackson** [Alabama compiler], 2220 Baneberry Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244 (e-mail: g_d_jackson@bellsouth.net). **Robert A. Duncan** [NW Florida compiler], 614 Fairpoint Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561 (e-mail: town_point@bellsouth.net).

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Manuscripts submitted for publication in Alabama Birdlife should conform to the guidelines listed below. Articles should include some facet of bird ecology, natural history, behavior, management/conservation, identification or other related topics. Refer to this issue or to recent past issues for examples. Alabama Birdlife is published twice a year. If you have access to an IBM compatible or Macintosh computer, it saves time and money if you submit your manuscript on a 3 1/2 inch floppy disk along with a hard copy (Word or WordPerfect preferred). A manuscript may also be submitted over the Internet as a file attached to an e-mail addressed to: tmhaggerty@una.edu.

Manuscripts should be typed and double spaced. A 8 1/2 x 11 inch page format should be used.

Digital images submitted over the Internet, black and white prints, color prints, and slides are acceptable.

The title should be in CAPS. If the name of a species is used in the title, it should be followed by the scientific name in parentheses, e.g. CONNECTICUT WARBLER (*OPORORNIS AGILIS*).

The author's full name should be in lower case and centered under the title.

If the article is coauthored by a married couple bearing the same last name, the names should be kept separate, e.g. John B. Brown and Sarah D. Brown.

Whenever a species name is used for the first time in the body of an article, it should be followed by the scientific name in parentheses, e.g. Connecticut Warbler (*Oporornis agilis*).

When using dates, the day should be placed before the month, e.g. 13 April 1992.

Spell out numbers ten and under and use numerals for numbers 11 and above.

Distances should be expressed in English units followed by the metric equivalent in parentheses, e.g. 6.2 miles (10 km). Use only the metric system for scientific measurements, e.g. wing 10.3 cm; tail 15.6 cm.

Table titles should be in CAPS and placed above the tables.

Figure legends should be in lower case and placed beneath the figure.

Refer to the Literature Cited in past issues for the correct format.

Three or fewer references should be incorporated into the text of the article rather than listed separately at the end, e.g. Imhof (1976, Alabama Birds).

The author's name and full address should be line typed at the end of the article. The name used should match the name given under the title.

CONTENTS

BACHMAN'S SPARROW (*AIMOPHILA AESTIVALIS*) USES GOPHER TORTOISE (*GOPHERUS POLYPHEMUS*) BURROW AS A MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM A PERCEIVED THREAT

Eric C. Soehren and John A. Trent.....1

FALL SIGHTINGS (AUGUST – NOVEMBER 2009)

Paul D. Kittle, Greg D. Jackson, and Robert A. Duncan.....5

WINTER SIGHTINGS (DECEMBER 2009 – FEBRUARY 2010)

Paul D. Kittle, Greg D. Jackson, and Robert A. Duncan.....18

Tom Haggerty, Editor
Alabama Birdlife
Department of Biology
University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama 35632-0001