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# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE



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# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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Typeset by Tom Haggerty

**COVER:** Willow Flycatcher, 15 June 2010, Hale Co., AL; Bill Summerour

**CONFIRMED NESTING OF WILLOW FLYCATCHER  
(*EMPIDONAX TRAILLII*) IN HALE COUNTY, ALABAMA**

**John A. Trent, Eric C. Soehren, and Bill Summerour**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) is a Neotropical migrant with the widest breeding distribution of all *Empidonax* flycatchers in North America, preferring thick shrubby habitats usually near standing or running water (Sedgwick 2000). In the southeastern United States, its known breeding range is restricted to Tennessee, northern Georgia, and western North Carolina (Sedgwick 2000). In Alabama, relatively few confirmed sightings have been reported. They have long been considered rare transients with most sightings occurring during spring and fall migration (Imhof 1976, Summerour 1986, Jackson 2001). Within recent years, however, records during late May through June have increased, including one confirmed breeding record (Haggerty 2009, G.D. Jackson pers. comm.).

To avoid potential confusion with the very similar Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*), official records of Willow Flycatchers in Alabama must be voice-confirmed by either song (“fitz-bew”) or call (“whit”) (G.D. Jackson pers. comm.) The first Willow Flycatcher record suggesting the possibility of breeding was a singing male reported on 2 June 2002 in Cherokee County (Kittle et al. 2002). The first confirmed breeding record for Alabama was at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Limestone County on 9 June 2004 (Kittle et al. 2004). Two individuals were observed carrying food multiple times to what were assumed to be either nestlings or dependent fledglings, but no nest was found. In Lawrence County, a singing male was observed on 28 May 2006 and 3 June 2006 (Kittle et al. 2006). On 27 June 2008 in Perry County, E. Soehren detected a singing male along the Cahaba River, but the bird was not relocated two days later (Kittle et al. 2008). Most recently, a site in Hartselle, Morgan County, has had Willow Flycatchers on territory for two successive years (Kittle et al. 2009). From 6 June to 27 June 2009, two males were present and singing. On 29 May 2010, four singing males had returned to the site (G.D. Jackson pers. comm.).

With the exception of the Perry County sighting, all of the above records are from the mountain and Tennessee Valley regions of north Alabama. Furthermore, no nest of this species has been found. In this article we report the first detailed nesting of Willow Flycatcher in Alabama and the first confirmed breeding record in the Coastal Plain of Alabama.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

Our Willow Flycatcher observation was at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract (SCR) in Hale County, Alabama (32.642°N, 87.663°W) approximately 7.5 miles (12 km) southwest of Greensboro (Fig. 1). The 4,328 acre (1,751 ha) tract consists of mixed hardwood-pine forests and pasture, which is currently being restored to native prairie. The SCR also contains numerous catfish ponds that are no longer in production. The SCR was purchased in 2008 by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division through the Forever Wild Program for use as a nature preserve and recreation area.

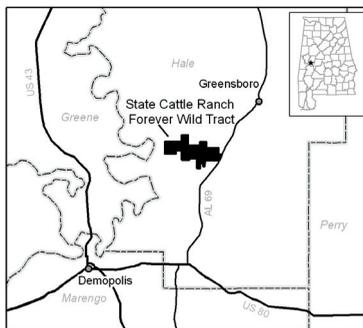


Figure 1. Location of the State Cattle Ranch, Hale Co., Alabama.

The nesting site was located in a 30 acre (12 ha) flooded catfish pond that has transitioned into a dense stand of Black Willow (*Salix nigra*) with scattered Box Elder (*Acer negundo*) and Eastern Cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*). Dense patches of goldenrod (*Solidago* sp.) were present along the edge of the flooded willow stand. The pond had been dry until recently when Beavers (*Castor canadensis*) blocked the drainpipe allowing the pond to fill with water naturally.

## FIELD OBSERVATIONS

On 12 May 2010, J. Trent observed a single Willow Flycatcher singing at the edge of the pond. The bird made several trips into the willows but no other individuals were detected. The male was mostly observed singing emphatically from a nearby powerline. On a follow-up visit on 9 June, two Willow Flycatchers were observed in the same area as the first observation on 12 May. While no nest was found, both birds were observed attacking a small flock of Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*) and Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) indicating the pair was on territory. The male was still singing but more softly than on 12 May, and stayed primarily near the female during the duration of the observation.

On 14 June, B. Summerour searched the area and found a nest containing three eggs, confirming breeding. The nest was located in an upright fork of a Black Willow at the edge of the willow stand (Fig. 2). The height of the nest

was 6.5 ft (2 m). When checked the next day on 15 June, the nest contained four eggs (Fig. 3). Eight days later on 23 June, E. Soehren and B. Summerour found the nest completely gone with the exception of a few fragments of plant fibers and spider silk in the fork where the nest had been. However, the pair was relocated, and the female was observed working on a replacement nest approximately 185 ft (56 m) from the first nest. The height of the second nest was 6.4 ft (1.96 m) and was also located in an upright fork of a Black Willow at the edge of the stand.

On 8 July, we revisited the second nest only to find it empty. There was no sign of disturbance to the nest. Both birds were present and emitting the “whit” call regularly; singing by the male had completely tapered off. A final visit was made on 23 July and no individuals were detected. In summary, we found no evidence that the pair nested successfully.



Figure 2. Nest of Willow Flycatcher in Hale Co., Alabama. Nest located in Black Willow at center (arrow). Photograph by B. Summerour on 14 June 2010.

## DISCUSSION

The two nests were relatively compact. The lining contained mostly grass culms with small pieces of plant downs. The outer cup was composed of grass culms, soft plant fibers, and Black Willow and milkweed (*Asclepias* sp.) down, bound together and to the supporting branches with spider webbing. The willow down gave the nests a cottony appearance, a diagnostic characteristic of the species' nest (Sedgwick 2000). These attributes are similar to the structure and composition of Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*) nests (Sedgwick 2000). Both nests were located at the upper end of the pond where the water was shallow.

It is unknown what caused the first nest to fail. We found no evidence of broken egg shells or pieces of the nest at the site. Willow Flycatchers are known to reuse material from failed nesting attempts when constructing a new attempt (Sedgwick 2000). However, we have no way of knowing if the pair disassembled the first nest or a predator removed it completely. The second nest was abandoned for unknown reasons.

It was fortuitous that the first nesting attempt was found during the laying

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Figure 3. Contents of Willow Flycatcher nest in Hale Co., Alabama. Photograph by B. Summerour on 15 June 2010.

process, allowing us to calculate when the first egg was laid. Willow Flycatchers typically have clutch sizes of three–four eggs, occasionally five (Sedgwick 2000). Eggs are laid one per day, with one day often skipped during the process (Sedgwick 2000). Based on our findings from 14 and 15 June when the nest had three and four eggs, respectively, the first egg was laid approximately on 11 June.

The breeding range of Willow Flycatchers has been expanding southward in the eastern and southeastern U.S. over the past several decades (Sedgwick 2000), so it is not completely

unexpected that the species has begun breeding in Alabama, albeit still a very rare occurrence. In Tennessee, Willow Flycatchers are uncommon summer residents with breeding evidence widely scattered throughout the state (Nicholson 1997). The first nesting record was in 1958 in the mountains of northeastern Tennessee, and during the 1970s and 1980s, Willow Flycatchers began expanding westward within the state (Nicholson 1997). In Georgia, breeding Willow Flycatchers are primarily restricted to the northern mountain regions, with the first nest record occurring in 1971 in Rabun County (Dobbs 2010). There have been reports of possible breeding in the Atlanta area, but none have been confirmed (Dobbs 2010, T. Schneider pers. comm.). In Mississippi, very few records have been reported in general, but there has been breeding confirmation. The first and only nest record was in Tallahatchie County on 21 July 1996 (Turcotte et al. 1999). More recently, a Willow Flycatcher has been documented on territory in Neshoba County at the Nanih Waiya Wildlife Management Area (N. Winstead pers. comm.). A vocalizing male was first documented in June 2005 (J. McGee) and again on 11 June and 18 June 2007 (not vocalizing). The last reported sighting at this location was on 21 May 2008 when the bird was observed extensively while vocalizing. We found no other breeding records that were further south of our record in Hale County. Therefore, we believe our record represents the southern-most breeding record of Willow Flycatcher in the Southeastern U.S.

The recent increase in Willow Flycatcher observations during the breeding season in Alabama is an indication that we are witnessing a possible breeding range expansion into the state. Based on these records, observers should make special note of Willow Flycatchers in favorable habitat from late May through June, as they could be breeding birds.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Bill Mason, State Cattle Ranch manager, for assistance in the field. Appreciation is also extended to Nick Winstead (Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks) and Todd Schneider (Georgia Department of Natural Resources) for providing recent information from Mississippi and Georgia, respectively. We also thank Greg Jackson for furnishing sighting records as well as providing helpful comments on the article. The Alabama State Lands Division provided equipment and funding to support our fieldwork.

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## SPRING SIGHTINGS (MARCH - MAY 2010)

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

This report covers the period from March through May 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 *Bay*, *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, *Santa Rosa*, and *Walton* are in Alabama. “BBS” = Breeding Bird Survey; “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).

- GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** – At Municipal Park in Mobile, *Mobile*, two were present 1 March and one was there 12 March (Christine Kelley) (locally rare).
- CANADA GOOSE** – The Birmingham area spring count, *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 1 May, recorded 303, a new spring maximum for the Mountain Region.
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL** – Two at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract, Cedarville, *Hale*, 12 May (John Trent) could have been late migrants or erratic breeders.
- NORTHERN SHOVELER** – Damien Simbeck counted 150 near Leighton, *Colbert*, 19 March (maximum spring count for inland Alabama).
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL** – Damien Simbeck counted 100 near Leighton, *Colbert*, 19 March (maximum spring count for Alabama).
- RING-NECKED DUCK** – Damien Simbeck counted 150 near Leighton, *Colbert*, 19 March (maximum spring count for north Alabama).
- LONG-TAILED DUCK** – One was on the Bon Secour River, *Baldwin*, 4-12 March (Frank Farrell *et al.*) (rare).
- RED-THROATED LOON** – Latest ever departure for the WP by seven days, one lingered until 18 April at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (James Pfeiffer).
- PACIFIC LOON** – A rare winter visitor in the WP, a single was at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 3 May (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan).
- COMMON LOON** – Two were in southern *Baldwin*, 28 May (Timothy Hutchings) (rare but regular lingering species on the Gulf Coast).
- PIED-BILLED GREBE** – This species is an erratic breeder in Alabama. At the State

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Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract, Cedarville, *Hale*, several nests (with eggs) as well as young were observed on multiple dates between 20 April – 12 May (John Trent, Bill Summerour; ph.). A single was observed at the Mobile Botanical Gardens, *Mobile*, 12 May (Jennifer Wang) and 26 May (Chazz Hesselein).

**HORNED GREBE** – Nineteen (maximum for the Mountain Region) were counted on Lake Purdy, *Jefferson/Shelby*, 23 March (Greg Jackson).

**AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER** – A single was seen off Okaloosa Island, *Okaloosa*, 1 March (Ed Kwater) (ninth record for the WP and the first in March). One was salvaged from the beaches of *Walton*, 24 April (identified by Don Ware) (10<sup>th</sup> record for northwest Florida).

**BAND-RUMPED STORM-PETREL** – Four birds were salvaged from the beaches of *Walton*, 24 April (identified by Don Ware) (rare pelagic species in northwest Florida waters).

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** – Larry Barkey observed 10 south of Houston, *Winston*, 30 April (rare in the Mountain Region).

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** – In the Logan Martin Dam area, *St. Clair/Talladega*, 150 were counted on 4 April (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) to tie the maximum spring number for the Mountain Region.

**ANHINGA** – Occasional in the Tennessee Valley, singles were seen at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 1 May (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, Rick Remy), and at Harding Bottoms, *Lauderdale*, 7 May (Damien Simbeck, Steve McConnell, Jeff Garner).

**AMERICAN BITTERN** – Rarely detected inland, singles were found at Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 27 March (Kim Upper), and during the Wheeler NWR area count, *Morgan*, 1 May (Duane Brown, Lynn Brown).

**SNOWY EGRET** – One was at the Pell City sod farm, *St. Clair*, 10 and 17 May (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (rare but regular in spring in the Mountain Region).

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** – The Birmingham area spring count, *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 1 May, recorded nine to mark a new spring maximum for the Mountain Region.

**OSPREY** – A pair was observed building a nest on a cell phone tower north of Guntersville, *Marshall*, on the early date of 9 March (David Dodd) (ties early spring arrival date for the Tennessee Valley). Other early arrivals in the Tennessee Valley included a pair at a nest 12+ March (George Ponder) and three-four (good number) on 17 March (Steve McConnell) at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*.

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** – In the WP, 15 was a good number at Milton, *Santa Rosa*, 11 March (Merilu Rose). Steve McConnell spotted one at Hartselle, *Morgan*, 25 April to mark the fourth record for the Tennessee Valley. Tommy Pratt *et al.* found two along the Cahaba River north of Sprott, *Perry*, 1 May (rare in spring this far north).

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** – This species is gradually increasing in the southern part of the Mountain Region, as evidenced by three records: one at Montevallo, *Shelby*, 29 April (Mac Braid; return to site); three on the Birmingham area spring count, *Jefferson/Shelby*, 1 May (Andrew Haffenden, David George *et al.*); and four+ at the Pell City

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sod farm, *St. Clair*, 5-17 May (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (new site; second county record). A single was at the mouth of the Little River, *Cherokee*, 16 May (John Imhof, Anne Miller, Edith Hunt, Brenda Suran, David Ezell *et al.*) to mark the first county record (rare this far north).

**BALD EAGLE** – Five was a good number for spring on the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May. Michael Elrod found a pair at a nest at Lake Purdy, *Shelby*, 8 May (rare breeder locally).

**NORTHERN HARRIER** – Don Self saw one south of Gallion, *Marengo*, 15 May (a new late date for the Inland Coastal Plain except for two summer records).

**RED-TAILED HAWK** – The Wheeler NWR area spring count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May, tallied 23 (ties the spring maximum for the Tennessee Valley).

**AMERICAN KESTREL** – Singles were at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 19 May (Paul Kittle, Donna Kittle) and at the Alabama A&M farms near Hazel Green, *Madison*, 20 May (Matt Morrow), while three were counted on the Brooksville BBS, *Marshall/Blount*, 31 May (Greg Harber, Jessica Germany) (erratic breeder in Alabama).

**KING RAIL** – Rare in the Tennessee Valley but regular at this site, one was seen at Oakland Marsh, *Lauderdale*, 23 April (Damien Simbeck, Jack Paul).

**SORA** – A late bird was heard at the Saginaw swamp, *Shelby*, 9 May (Greg Jackson).

**COMMON MOORHEN** – A pair was reported from the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract, *Hale*, 12 May (John Trent) (rare at the northern edge of its range in Alabama).

**SANDHILL CRANE** – Rare in the WP, a single was seen at Niceville, *Okaloosa*, 24 April (Gail Baker). A late bird was east of Summerdale, *Baldwin*, 25 April (Michael Jordan).

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** – A maximum count (470+) for Alabama was made at several fields south of Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, 24 March (David Plumb).

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** – Rare but slowly increasing in the Tennessee Valley, one was found at the “Sinks” northeast of Leighton, *Colbert*, 15 May (Ken Ward, NABS), and Damien Simbeck reported a pair from Gnat Pond near Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 20 and 25 May (occupied nest on the 25<sup>th</sup>; third inland nesting record; nest had failed by 4 June).

**WILLET** – Rare for inland Alabama, Milton Harris found nine on the Wheeler NWR area spring count, *Limestone*, 1 May, while 36 (good number) were counted in *Colbert*, 2 May (Paul Kittle, Floyd Sherrod, Shirley Wayland *et al.*) (10 at Gnat Pond near Muscle Shoals and 26 at the mouth of Town Creek).

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** – A rare migrant in the WP, one was reported from downtown Pensacola, *Escambia*, 4 May (James Pfeiffer).

**WHIMBREL** – Chazz Hesselein reported 345 (good number) from north of Grand Bay, *Mobile*, 1 May.

**RED KNOT** – A maximum number (65) for the WP was reported from Fort McRae, GINS, *Escambia*, 25 March (Daniel Greene, Ann Harvey, Jeff Gore). Nine were reported from Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 21 April (Christine Kelley) (good number for recent years).

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**LEAST SANDPIPER** – Five late birds were at Speigner, *Elmore*, 23 May (Larry Gardella).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** – Rare in spring, four were on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 17 April (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan); one was at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 24 April (Chazz Hesselein); and singles were reported from near Leighton, *Colbert*, 15 May (Ken Ward, NABS) and 20 May (Damien Simbeck).

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** – Rare but regular in spring in the Mountain Region, four were recorded 8 May at the Pell City sod farm, *St. Clair* (Greg Jackson).

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** – Milton Harris tallied two during the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone*, 1 May (rare but regular in the Tennessee Valley).

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** – A rare migrant in the WP, one was seen on Santa Rosa Island, *Escambia*, 10 May (Bob Duncan). Chazz Hesselein *et al.* reported one north of Grand Bay, *Mobile*, 1-5 May (rare but regular on the Gulf Coast). A single was at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract, Cedarville, *Hale*, 12 May (John Trent; ph.) (third spring record for the Inland Coastal Plain).

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** – At Logan Martin Dam, *St. Clair/Talladega*, 350 were counted 21 March (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (spring maximum for the Mountain Region).

**LAUGHING GULL** – A single was at Guntersville, *Marshall*, 4 May (Matt Morrow) (rare but regular in spring in the Tennessee Valley, especially at this site).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** – Jim Holmes found a late bird on Little Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 22 April (rare but increasing).

**HERRING X KELP (“CHANDELEUR”) GULL** – The first Alabama nesting of this hybrid was documented on Gaillard Island, *Mobile*, by the observation of two adults on 26 March (Roger Clay) and three adults (one on a nest) on 4 May (Bill Summerour, Roger Clay; ph.).

**SOOTY TERN** – Four birds were reported from Fort McRae, GINS, *Escambia*, 22 March (Daniel Greene, Ann Harvey, Jeff Gore) (rare spring record for the WP and the first for March).

**LEAST TERN** – Rare in spring for inland Alabama, one was sighted near Leighton, *Colbert*, 15 May (Ken Ward, NABS).

**GULL-BILLED TERN** – As of 24 May, there were eight nests of this species (most ever for the WP) among about 50 Black Skimmer nests at the GINS site on the Fort Pickens road, *Escambia* (Bob Duncan).

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** – Seventeen were tallied on the Birmingham area count, *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 1 May (maximum spring count for the Mountain Region).

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – Rare but increasing inland, a single at Montevallo, *Shelby*,



Herring x Kelp (“Chandeleur”) Gull, 26 March 2010, Mobile Co., AL.; R. Clay.

14 May (Mac Braid *et al.*; ph.) marked the sixth record for the Mountain Region.

**BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO** – The WP experienced an unprecedented influx of this species this spring, with records as follows: singles at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 21 April (Bob Duncan), 25 April (Lucy Duncan), and 28 April and 7 May (Bob Duncan); singles at the Live Oak Section of GINS, *Santa Rosa*, 22 and 24 April (Patrick James) and 26 April (Wes Tallyn); singles at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 24 April (Lucy Duncan), 25 April (Alan Sheppard), and two birds there 4 May (Lucy Duncan, Alan Sheppard, Carol Ascherfeld *et al.*).



White-winged Dove, 16 May 2010, Shelby Co., AL; M. Braid.

**WHIP-POOR-WILL** – Two heard calling at Old Cahawba, *Dallas*, 19 May (John Trent) provided the most southwest breeding-season record of this species in Alabama.

**CHIMNEY SWIFT** – Two early birds were at Auburn, *Lee*, 19 March (Andy Bankert).

**BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD** – One banded during the 2009-2010 winter season by Fred Bassett continued to 23 March at a residence in Fort Walton Beach, *Okaloosa* (seventh record for the WP).

**EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE** – The 50 counted on the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May, established a new spring maximum for the Tennessee Valley.

**YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER** – A very rare spring migrant in the WP, one was seen at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 4 May (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).

**WILLOW FLYCATCHER** – The second confirmed nesting for Alabama was documented at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract, Cedarville, *Hale*, by observations of a singing bird, a pair, and a nest with eggs (ultimately failed) on several dates between 12 May and 23 June (John Trent, Bill Summerour; ph.). This record was the fourth for the Inland Coastal Plain and was unexpectedly far south. Four singing males were heard along Flint Creek at Hartselle, *Morgan*, 29 May (Scot Gravette) (return to site; rare; casual breeder in Alabama in recent years; maximum for Alabama).

**SAY'S PHOEBE** – A bird that wintered at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, continued to 23 March (Neal Cronin; ph.) (second record for the WP).

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** – The male present at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, all winter continued to 4 March (Bob Duncan, John Grossa).

**WESTERN KINGBIRD** – A rare spring migrant in the WP, one was at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 26 April (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). This species was sighted at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, as follows: five birds on 27 April (Bob Duncan); a single on 2 May (Bob Duncan); three birds on 4 May (Alan Sheppard, Lucy Duncan); and

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a single on 15 May (Bob Duncan). Rare but regular in spring on the Gulf Coast of Alabama, three reports (all of singles) were received: east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 27 April (Howard Horne, m.ob.); Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 28 April (Karen Chiasson *et al.*); and Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 29 April (Chazz Hesselein) (rare away from outer coast).

**GRAY KINGBIRD** – This species is gradually returning to the Alabama coast as a breeder after its elimination as such in 1997. Three were seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15 May (Howard Horne, Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald, Eugenia Carey).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – Rare in spring in the WP, singles were reported from three sites: Pensacola, *Escambia*, 24-31 March (James Pfeiffer, Powers McLeod); FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 26-27 March (Lenny Fenimore); and Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 1 May (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). Early singles were found on the Gulf Coast of Alabama, where this species is rare but regular in spring: east of Daphne, *Baldwin*, 23 March (Craig Litteken), and Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 23-27 March (JoRee Pease, Warren Pease, m.ob.; ph.). Two adults were seen north of Safford, *Dallas*, 19 May (John Trent) (return to site; rare breeder on the Inland Coastal Plain). Two were seen at the Alabama A&M farms near Hazel Green, *Madison*, 20 May (Matt Morrow) (return to site; rare breeder in the Tennessee Valley).

**WHITE-EYED VIREO** – A new spring maximum for inland Alabama was set by the 185 recorded on the Birmingham area count, *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 1 May.

**WARBLING VIREO** – A very rare spring migrant in the WP, one was seen at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 28 April (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). One was reported from Waterloo, *Lauderdale*, 7 May (Steve McConnell, Damien Simbeck, Jeff Garner), a regular site where the species is a rare breeder. Another single was noted at Monte Sano SP, *Madison*, 9 May (Andrew Haffenden) (rare).

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO** – Rare but regular in spring, records of singles came from two sites: Monte Sano SP, *Madison*, 28 April (Matt Morrow *et al.*), and Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone*, 1 May (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton, Rick Remy).

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** – A rare spring migrant in the WP, singles of the nominate race *Vireo a. altiloquus* were seen at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 4-9 May (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Laura Catterton *et al.*) and at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 5 May (Lucy Duncan) and 27 May (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan). An individual of the *V. a. barbatulus* race was seen at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 8 May (Patrick James). Two were seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 17 May (Eugenia Carey) (ties latest spring departure date for Alabama).

**FISH CROW** – Rare but increasing in the Tennessee Valley, records were received from three sites: three at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 12 March (*vide* refuge staff); two at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, 31+ March (Matt Morrow) (regular site); and a single at Wright, *Lauderdale*, 23 April (Damien Simbeck, Jack Paul). Rare in the northern part of the Mountain Region, Larry Barkey reported a single from south of Houston, *Winston*, on 29 March, 25 April, and 19-20 May.

**TREE SWALLOW** – This species is rare but increasing as a breeder in Alabama. One

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was at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale*, 18 May (Paul Kittle, Donna Kittle) (regular site). At the Pell City sod Farm, *St. Clair*, two were seen on 8 May and one on 22 May (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson). At the southern margin of its range in Alabama, two were reported from Opelika, *Lee*, 13 and 25 May (Stewart White).

**CLIFF SWALLOW** – A maximum spring count (1,304) for Alabama was made on the Wheeler NWR area spring count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May. On the 1 May Birmingham area count, *Jefferson/Shelby/St. Clair*, 674 were tallied to mark a maximum spring number for the Mountain Region.

**CAVE SWALLOW** – A rare but regular spring visitor on the Gulf Coast, one was found at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 22 April (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan, Cecil Brown, Pam Brown).

**BARN SWALLOW** – An early arrival was at the Mobile Botanical Gardens, *Mobile*, 4 March (Kathy Hicks).

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** – A late bird was at Chatom, *Washington*, 13 April (Matthew Rouse).

**BROWN CREEPER** – A very late bird was in south *Santa Rosa*, 11 April (Thomas Barbig).

**HOUSE WREN** – A pair was at Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, *Jefferson*, to 10 May (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (probably nesting; rare breeder).

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** – A maximum count for the Tennessee Valley was marked by the 198 reported from the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May.

**GRAY CATBIRD** – A pair was reported from Mobile, *Mobile*, 27 April – 25 May (Chazz Hesselein) (rare breeder on the Gulf Coast).

**SPRAGUE'S PIPIT** – Four birds were reported from Site B-70, Eglin Air Force Base, *Okaloosa*, 14 March (Lenny Fenimore) (rare but regular at this location).

**CEDAR WAXWING** – This species is an erratic breeder in Alabama. On Chandler Mountain, *St. Clair*, a pair was building a nest 20-27 May, incubating 30+ May, with the nest abandoned 5 June (Jody Gilliland, Bill Gilliland). South of Section on the Lakeview BBS, *Jackson*, Eric Soehren observed a pair nest building 28 May.

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** – One at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, 8 March (Harold Peterson) was likely a rare winter resident rather than an early migrant. Another single at Anniston, *Calhoun*, 12-22 March (Debbie McKenzie; ph.) could have been an early migrant or a rare but regular winter resident for the Mountain Region. A late bird was northwest of Waterloo, *Lauderdale*, 7 May (Damien Simbeck).

**NASHVILLE WARBLER** – Rare but regular in spring in the Tennessee Valley, singles were seen at Monte Sano SP, *Madison*, 25, 26, and 28 April (Matt Morrow *et al.*).

**BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER** – Rare but regular in spring in the Tennessee Valley, especially at the following site, singles were reported from Monte Sano SP, *Madison*, 26 April (Matt Morrow *et al.*) and 4 May (Ken Ward, Ruffina Ward).

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S)** – This form is occasional in Alabama, and one was seen at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 16 April (Greg Jackson, Stan Hamilton).

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- PINE WARBLER** – A maximum spring count for the Tennessee Valley was marked by the 57 reported from the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May.
- CERULEAN WARBLER** – An early arrival was on Monte Sano Mountain, *Madison*, 7 April (John Ehinger).
- PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** – Early arrivals were at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, 6 April (Matt Morrow), and at Huntsville, *Madison*, 10 April (Matt Morrow).
- WORM-EATING WARBLER** – A maximum count for the Tennessee Valley was marked by the seven reported from the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May.
- MOURNING WARBLER** – Very rare in the WP, Thomas Barbig observed one at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 9 April.
- COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** – A maximum count for the Tennessee Valley was marked by the 103 reported from the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May.
- GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** – The bird that wintered at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, lingered until 12 March (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan) (third record for Florida).
- LARK SPARROW** – Rare in the WP, records came from three sites: three birds at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 1-10 March (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan); two birds at Perdido Key, *Escambia*, 28 March (Lloyd Davis); and a single at Pensacola, *Escambia*, 16 April (James Pfeiffer). Rare but increasing as a breeder, seven on the Wheeler NWR area count, *Limestone/Morgan*, 1 May was a good number at a known site. Three were along County Road 135 near Autaugaville, *Autauga*, 16 May (John Trent) (return to site). Three were at the Alabama A&M farms near Hazel Green, *Madison*, 20 May (Matt Morrow) (return to site).
- SAVANNAH SPARROW** – A late bird was south of Magnolia Springs, *Baldwin*, 10 May (Bill Summerour).
- LINCOLN'S SPARROW** – Casual in the WP, one occurred at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 26-28 April (Lucy Duncan, Bob Duncan).
- WESTERN Tanager** – An adult male was seen in Mobile, *Mobile*, 28 and 30 March (Stephen Bru) (rare in Alabama, although this marks the seventh record in the last year and a half).
- PAINTED BUNTING** – One was early at Foley, *Baldwin*, 20 March (Michael Jordan). An adult male was singing along County Road 135 near Autaugaville, *Autauga*, 16 May (John Trent) (rare breeder inland; return to site).
- DICKCISSEL** – A bird that wintered at a feeder in Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (Bill Bremser, Greta Bremser) lingered until 9 March (very rare winter resident). Three were at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 27 April (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). A male seen at Auburn, *Lee*, 22 March (Stewart White) could have been an early migrant or a rare wintering individual. At Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 200 was a good number on 27 April (Carolyn Henning, Jan Osborn).
- RUSTY BLACKBIRD** – One at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, 21 April (Matt Morrow) was late.
- SHINY COWBIRD** – Casual in spring in the WP, a male was at Fort Pickens, GINS,

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*Escambia*, 4 May (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan *et al.*), and two were at St. Andrews SP, *Bay*, 18 May (Tom Striker). Occasional in Alabama in recent years, three were seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15-16 May (Howard Horne, Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald, Eugenia Carey *et al.*).

**BRONZED COWBIRD** – One was seen on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15-16 May (Howard Horne, Tom Siegwald, Joan Siegwald, Eugenia Carey *et al.*) (18<sup>th</sup> record for Alabama; increasing).

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### SUMMER SIGHTINGS (JUNE - JULY 2010)

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

This report covers the period from June through July 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 *Bay*, *Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa*, are in Alabama. “@” = under review by; “ABRC” = Alabama Bird Records Committee; “FWBSF” = Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields; “GINS” = Gulf Islands National Seashore; “m.ob.” = many observers; “ph.” = photographed; “SBC” = Summer Bird Count; “SP” = State Park; “WP” = Western Panhandle of Florida (*Escambia*, *Okaloosa*, and *Santa Rosa* counties).

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK** – In *Mobile*, two were seen at Pinto Pass 1 June (Jennifer Wang), and Chazz Hesselein saw two on 5 June and five on 24 July at Blakeley Island (12<sup>th</sup> record for Alabama). John Trent reported six from Terrapin Island, *Mobile*, 24 June (13<sup>th</sup> record for Alabama).

**CANADA GOOSE** – Christine Kelley tallied 163 at Municipal Park, *Mobile*, 25 June to mark a new maximum summer count for the Gulf Coast.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** – A single was at Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 5 June (Chazz Hesselein) (rare in summer). Three birds at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract near Cedarville, *Hale*, 23 July, may have been summering or early migrants (John Trent).

**HOODED MERGANSER** – This species is a rare breeder in the Mountain Region, so two juveniles (indicative of a local nesting) seen from early June to June 19 at Winfield, *Marion* (Jud Johnston) were noteworthy.

**WILD TURKEY** – At Oak Mountain SP, *Shelby*, Andrew Core counted 22 on 29 June to mark a summer maximum for the Mountain Region.

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** – At two sites along U.S. Highway 29 south of Andalusia, *Covington*, three pairs with downy young were noted 12 June (Geoff Hill) and 16 June (Larry Gardella) (uncommon breeder). At the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract near Cedarville, *Hale*, observations of various numbers of pairs, nests, eggs, and young were made on five dates from 14 June through 23 July (Bill Summerour, Eric Soehren; ph.). A high of 32 birds was noted 23 July, a maximum summer number in

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Alabama for this uncommon breeder.

**GREATER SHEARWATER** – One was found 30 June on Okaloosa Island, *Okaloosa*, and taken to a rehabilitation center (*vide* Don Ware) (casual in summer in the WP).

**MASKED BOOBY** – Casual in summer in the WP, a juvenile was found at GINS, *Escambia*, 12 June and sent to the Wildlife Sanctuary of Northwest Florida. A specimen of a juvenile from *Bay* was sent to the Florida State Museum 28 June.

**NORTHERN GANNET** – Rare but regular in summer in Alabama, four records were received: an immature at Perdido Pass, *Baldwin*, 3 June (Jan Lloyd); an adult at Orange Beach, *Baldwin*, 28 June (Homer Singleton); a single on the Fort Morgan Peninsula, *Baldwin*, 29 June (Kathy Hicks); and another single at Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15 July (Jake Walker).

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** – Rare on the Inland Coastal Plain in summer, birds were seen at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract near Cedarville, *Hale*, as follows: nine on 9 June, seven on 23 June, and 14 on 8 July (John Trent, Bill Summerour). A single was in the Florida quad, *Covington SBC*, 12 June (Carol Ware).

**BROWN PELICAN** – An adult was in the Waxahatchee Creek area of Lay Lake, *Shelby*, 20 June (Bo Crawford; ph.) (rare but increasing inland; third record for the Mountain Region).

**GREAT BLUE HERON** – A count of 100 at Wilson Dam, *Lauderdale/Colbert*, 17 June (Paul Kittle) set a summer maximum for Alabama.

**WHITE IBIS** – Rare but regular in the Tennessee Valley, records from two sites were received: one immature near Leighton, *Colbert*, 25 June, and three immatures near Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 21 July (Damien Simbeck). Also rare but regular in the Mountain Region, Maureen Shaffer *et al.* found immatures in *Shelby* on 13 July as follows: one at Ebenezer Swamp north of Montevallo and two at Saginaw.

**WOOD STORK** – A single was in the Century area, *Escambia*, 3 July (Eva Barnett, Michael Jordan) (very rare in summer in the WP).

**SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** – Greg Harber found one at Perry Lakes, *Perry*, 4 July (regular summer wanderer north of breeding areas farther south).

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** – The 66 counted at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 28 July (Ed Kwater) was the second highest count for Florida. Rare but increasing in the Mountain Region, a single was noted at Alabaster, *Shelby*, 4 July (Donna Kittle, Paul Kittle), and two were seen at Guin, *Marion* (regular site), 27 July (Don Wooldridge).

**AMERICAN KESTREL** – This falcon is an uncommon breeder in Alabama, and reports from four sites were received: 10 in the Lexington quad, *Lauderdale SBC*, 16 June (Damien Simbeck, Jack Paul) (maximum summer count for Alabama); four at Guntersville Dam, *Marshall*, 26 June (Matt Morrow); one at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 30 June (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson); and one at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract near Cedarville, *Hale*, 23 July (John Trent).

**PURPLE GALLINULE** – This species has become very rare in the WP in recent years, so Don Ware's sighting of one at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 1 June was noteworthy.

**AMERICAN COOT** – Two pairs with downy young were reported from along U.S.

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- Highway 29 south of Andalusia, *Covington*, 12 June (Geoff Hill) and 16 June (Larry Gardella) (rare breeder). Two were at Bayou La Batre, *Mobile*, 29 June (John Trent) (rare summering vs. breeding?). Two first seen 7 May at Clay, *Jefferson* (Bob Sargent, Martha Sargent) continued through June, with one last seen 15 July (rare summering).
- SNOWY PLOVER** – In the Florida Division of GINS, *Santa Rosa/Okaloosa*, 69 nests were counted in April (*fide* John Himes).
- WILSON'S PLOVER** – Good nesting success was reported for the fourth consecutive year for this species that had not nested in the WP for decades. At Opal Beach, GINS, *Escambia*, 12 adults and five juveniles were observed 17 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).
- SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** – Five were seen 27 June (Susan Lindsey) and three on 3 July (Brian Naylor, Charlotte Naylor) on Pelican Island, *Mobile* (rare in late June/early July, but unknown if summering or early migrant).
- AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** – One at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, *Escambia*, 9 June (Deborah Barber) provided the third June record for the WP.
- AMERICAN AVOCET** – Geoff Hill found one at Point A Lake north of River Falls, *Covington*, 11 June to provide a first June record for inland Alabama (rare on the Inland Coastal Plain).
- GREATER YELLOWLEGS** – One was at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 28 June (Don Ware) (very rare in the WP in June).
- WILLET** – Two pairs were observed nesting at Opal Beach, GINS, *Escambia*, 2-8 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan). This was the first nesting of this species in the extreme WP in decades. A single was seen at the fish hatchery, Marion, *Perry*, 4 July (Greg Harber) (rare for inland Alabama).
- LESSER YELLOWLEGS** – Rare in June in the WP, Don Ware sighted one at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 28 June.
- LONG-BILLED CURLEW** – Patty Kelly reported one from Tyndall Air Force Base, *Bay*, 19 and 21 July (first July record for the WP).
- RUDDY TURNSTONE** – Singles seen 6 June at Perdido Pass, *Baldwin* (John Trent) and on the east end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile* (Jennifer Wang), were either rare but regular summering birds or late spring migrants. Two on the west end of Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 24 June (Tom Bancroft) were likely summering birds (rare but regular). Three seen on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 3 July (Brian Naylor, Charlotte Naylor), were either rare but regular summering birds or early fall migrants.
- RED KNOT** – Bob Duncan found a single at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 1 June (very rare in the WP in summer).
- SANDERLING** – Uncommon in summer in Alabama, six at Fort Morgan, *Baldwin*, 7 June (John Trent), and five at Gulf SP, *Baldwin*, 1 July (Carey Cooper) were good numbers.
- SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** – Twelve were early fall arrivals at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract near Cedarville, *Hale*, 23 July (John Trent).
- LEAST SANDPIPER** – Bob Duncan found a single at Opal Beach, GINS, *Escambia*, 2 and 29 June (very rare in the WP in June).

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**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** – A single was at the FWBSF, *Okaloosa*, 21 June (Don Ware) (very rare in the WP in June).

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** – The second June record for the WP was provided by two birds found at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 1 June (Bob Duncan). Five were seen near Muscle Shoals, *Colbert*, 4 June (Damien Simbeck) (rare in spring and late).

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** – Two were found at Pell City, *St. Clair*, 11 July (Greg Jackson, Debra Jackson) (rare but regular in the Mountain Region and early). Forty-five was a good number so early on Pelican Island, *Mobile*, 15 July (Jake Walker).

**AMERICAN WOODCOCK** – Very rare in summer in the WP, one lingered 16 June – 16 July in a suburban yard in Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (Johnny Green, James Pfeiffer, Bob Duncan). A pair and a nest with four eggs were found near Threet, *Lauderdale*, 1 June (Steve Hacker, Damien Simbeck; ph.) (nest rarely found).



American Woodcock, 1 June 2010, Lauderdale Co., AL; D. Simbeck.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** – The first July record for Alabama was provided by a third-year single on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 21 July (Lisa Hug; ph.) (rare but now regular along the Gulf Coast, especially at this site).

**LEAST TERN** – In spite of abandonment of the large colony at the entrance to Fort Pickens, many chicks and juveniles were seen throughout the GINS, *Escambia*, as of mid-July (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).

**GULL-BILLED TERN** – One-four nests were seen among a Black Skimmer colony at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, 2-8 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan), and one fledgling was seen among the abandoned colony at Fort Pickens.



Great Black-backed Gull, 21 July 2010, Mobile Co., AL; Lisa Hug.

**BLACK SKIMMER** – A colony of approximately 50 nests at Fort Pickens, GINS, *Escambia*, was abandoned by 7 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan).

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** – This species is rare but increasing on the Inland Coastal Plain, and three records from this region were received. Two were at a feeder east of Leroy, *Washington*, 10 July (Matthew Rouse; ph.). The observation of seven+ birds at Montgomery, *Montgomery*, from early July to 14 July+ (Larry Gardella), and the observation by local residents that the birds had probably been present for a year, indicate likely breeding (although there are no known inland breeding records). Jon Yoder reported a single from Atmore, *Escambia* (AL), 26 July.

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**MOURNING DOVE** – On Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, Jake Walker counted 350 on 15 July, a maximum summer count for the Gulf Coast.

**INCA DOVE** – A single at a feeder at Silverhill, *Baldwin*, 7 July (Lisa Comer; ph.; @ ABRC) provided only the second record for Alabama.

**COMMON GROUND-DOVE** – One was observed at Harpersville, *Shelby*, 30 June (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson) (rare in the Mountain Region, but now regular at this site).



Inca Dove, 7 July 2010, Baldwin Co., AL; Lisa Comer.

**BARN OWL** – This owl is a rare but regular breeder in Alabama, and four records were received: two roosting in two silos in the Wing quad, *Covington* SBC, 9 June (*fide* Don Ware); two+ at Center Star, *Lauderdale*, 14 June (Jack Paul, *fide* Damien Simbeck); a single in the Gantt quad, *Covington* SBC, 16 June (Larry Gardella); and a nesting pair at Prattville, *Autauga*, 25 July (Tommy Pratt, m.ob.).

**CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW** – Nests of this species are rarely discovered, but Bill Summerour found six in Gulf SP, *Baldwin*, 3-10 June.



Chuck-will's-widow, 9 June 2010, Baldwin Co., AL; B. Summerour

**RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER** – Geoff Hill tallied seven in Conecuh National Forest, *Covington/Escambia*, 12 June to set a maximum for the Inland Coastal Plain.

**NORTHERN FLICKER** – James Pfeiffer reported two pairs with young in Pensacola, *Escambia*, in late June (rare in the WP, especially near the coast).

**WILLOW FLYCATCHER** – A pair continued from 12 May at the State Cattle Ranch Forever Wild Tract near Cedarville, *Hale* (Bill Summerour, Eric Soehren, John Trent). Construction of a second nest was observed 23 June, with the nest empty on 8 July (second confirmed breeding record for Alabama).



Willow Flycatcher, 15 June 2010, Hale Co., AL; B. Summerour.

**EASTERN PHOEBE** – Very rare in the WP in summer, one was observed in Fort Walton Beach, *Okaloosa*, 2 June (Sandra Lefstad).

**GRAY KINGBIRD** – Jake Walker reported a pair feeding two young on Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 15 July (gradually repopulating the Gulf Coast as a breeder).

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** – This species is a rare but

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increasing breeder in Alabama, and was reported from Sledge, *Hale*, 5 July (a single), 25 July (pair with young in a nest), and 30 July (fledged young) (Greg Harber, Harriett Wright, Pelham Rowan, m.ob.).

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** – Eight was a good number for recent years in northwest Alabama in the Lexington quad, *Lauderdale* SBC, 16 June (Damien Simbeck, Jack Paul).

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** – The first confirmed breeding for *Marshall* was established by the observation of a pair and an occupied nest at Lake Guntersville SP, 4 June (Chazz Hesselein).

**BLACK-WHISKERED VIREO** – A single was seen in Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa*, 5-8 June (Bob Duncan, Lucy Duncan) (rare summer visitor to the WP).

**FISH CROW** – Larry Barkey reported one from south of Houston, *Winston*, 7 June (increasing in north Alabama and becoming regular in this area). Rare but increasing in the Tennessee Valley, a single was reported from the Wheeler Dam quad, *Lauderdale* SBC, 19 June (Damien Simbeck).

**PURPLE MARTIN** – An estimated 100,000 at a roost in Auburn, *Lee*, 16-19+ July (Charles Branch; videotaped; ph.) ties the maximum count for the Mountain Region.

**TREE SWALLOW** – This species is a rare but increasing breeder in Alabama. Singles were reported from south of Houston, *Winston*, 7 June (Larry Barkey), and in the Blackburn quad, *Lauderdale* SBC, 11 June (Jeff Garner).

**CLIFF SWALLOW** – An estimated 500 in the Wheeler Dam quad, *Lauderdale* SBC, 19 June (Damien Simbeck) ties the maximum summer count for the Tennessee Valley. A maximum count for the Inland Coastal Plain was provided by the 525 tallied in the Fosters quad, *Tuscaloosa* SBC, 19 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton).

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** – Lorna West reported a single from Opelika, *Lee*, 6 July (rare at the southern edge of its range in Alabama).

**HOUSE WREN** – This species is a rare breeder in north Alabama, so two records were noteworthy. One was heard singing on multiple dates 13 June – 24 July in Florence, *Lauderdale* (Tom Haggerty, Paul Kittle), and another single was reported from Wheeler NWR, *Limestone*, 4 July (Kim Upper).

**GRAY CATBIRD** – This species is a rare breeder at the southern end of its range, from which two observations were made during the *Covington* SBC: three in the Gantt quad, 6 June (Larry Gardella), and two in the Florala quad, 12 June (Don Ware). Rare in summer on the Gulf Coast, singles were reported from Mobile, *Mobile*, 11 July (Brian Naylor, Charlotte Naylor), and Blakeley Island, *Mobile*, 24 July (Chazz Hesselein).

**CEDAR WAXWING** – Rare breeding season reports from the *Lauderdale* SBC included a single in the Threet quad, 17 June (Jeff Garner), and three in the Wright quad, 20 June (Tom Haggerty).

**YELLOW WARBLER** – Two singing birds were detected in the Romulus quad, *Tuscaloosa* SBC, 13 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) (rare; declining breeder in Alabama; occasional in summer on the Inland Coastal Plain). A single was found

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at Oakland Marsh, *Lauderdale*, 17 June (Shirley Wayland, Dee Patterson, Phyllis Nofzinger) (rare; declining breeder in north Alabama).

**CERULEAN WARBLER** – Two were at Perry Lakes in Marion, *Perry*, 25 July (Greg Harber *et al.*) (early record for the Inland Coastal Plain).

**SWAINSON'S WARBLER** – This species is a rare breeder in the Tennessee Valley, but records of singles were received from two different sites along Cypress Creek northwest of Florence, *Lauderdale*: 16 June (Paul Kittle) and 9 July (Eric Soehren, Bill Summerour, Daniel Spurgeon).

**LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** – One in northern *Okaloosa*, 12 June (Don Ware) was possibly breeding (breeds sparingly in the WP).

**LARK SPARROW** – Two records from the *Lauderdale* SBC were received for this species, a rare but increasing breeder in the Tennessee Valley: four in the Lexington quad, 16 June (Damien Simbeck, Jack Paul), and a pair in the Threet quad, 17 June (Jeff Garner).

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** – Three, including one pair, were counted in the Romulus quad during the *Tuscaloosa* SBC, 13 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) (rare breeder in the northwest portion of the Inland Coastal Plain).

**SEASIDE SPARROW** – This species usually breeds only on the outer coast, so the sightings of two on McDuffie Island, *Mobile*, 20 July and 11 August (Howard Horne) were noteworthy (second local summer record).

**SONG SPARROW** – This species is a rare but slowly increasing breeder in north Alabama. Two were reported from the Blackburn quad, *Lauderdale* SBC, 11 June (Jeff Garner), and a single was singing in Cahaba Heights, *Jefferson*, 22 June (Harriett Wright).

**SCARLET TANAGER** – A single was reported from the Romulus quad during the *Tuscaloosa* SBC, 13 June (Stan Hamilton, Dana Hamilton) (rare breeder in the northwest portion of the Inland Coastal Plain).

**BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK** – An adult male was at a feeder in Navarre, *Santa Rosa*, 4-5 June (Norene Gideon, Warren Gideon) (first June record for the WP and possible first June record for Florida).

**PAINTED BUNTING** – This species is a rare but increasing breeder on the Inland Coastal Plain. An adult male was singing along County Road 135 near Autaugaville, *Autauga*, 16 May, with two singing males and a female there 20 June (John Trent *et al.*) (return to site). Larry Gardella found a singing bird at a new site southwest of Montgomery, *Montgomery*, 26 June.

**DICKCISSEL** – Two records from *Shelby* were received: a singing male at Inverness, 26 June (Rick Remy), and three birds at Harpersville, 30 June (Harriett Wright, Alice Christenson) (rare breeder in the Mountain Region).

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** – Tom Haggerty found two at Wright, *Lauderdale*, 13 June (rare but regular breeder in the Tennessee Valley).

**PURPLE FINCH** – An injured bird lingered at a feeder in Opelika, *Lee*, to 22 June (Lorna West) (late record for Alabama and second June record).

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** – Sandra Lefstad reported one in Fort Walton Beach,

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

*Okaloosa*, 2 June (very rare in the WP in June).

**NUTMEG MANNIKIN** – This introduced species continued to be reported from east Pensacola, *Escambia*, with as many as 30 at a feeder (Wes Tallyn).

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Chuck-will's-widow nest with two nestlings discovered by Bill Summerour, 7 June 2010, Gulf State Park, Baldwin Co., Alabama.

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

**Interspecific variation in habitat preferences of grassland birds wintering in southern pine savannas.** M. E. Brooks and P. C. Stouffer. 2011. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* 123:65-75.

Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) savannas are often managed to improve the habitat requirements for the federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*). Management practices, along with the natural variation that is often present in pine savannas due to local topography, can create habitat types that vary in plant composition and structure. These habitat types can provide important wintering sites for non-target species and research is needed to better understand the effects of management practices on these species. This study dealt with grassland bird communities in longleaf pine savannas and focused on three species (Bachman's Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, and Sedge Wren) in three grassland habitat types (upland pine stands, upland pine stands managed for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, and bogs) in De Soto National Forest, Mississippi. The objectives of the study were to compare grassland bird communities among the three habitat types and to identify habitat features that can be used to predict the occurrence of Henslow's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens.

This study found that Bachman's Sparrows were present only in upland pine stands and managed pine stands. Henslow's Sparrows occurred only in the bogs and the managed pine stands, whereas Sedge Wrens were found in all three habitat types. Although the greatest grassland bird densities occurred in the bog stands, the difference among sites was not significant. Henslow's Sparrows preferred areas that had a uniform herbaceous cover and contained the sedge *Scleria muhlenbergii*, a winter food source in the bog stands. Sedge Wrens preferred areas with increased woody vegetation and decreased tree density. Management recommendations included the restoration of the herbaceous ground-layer in bogs for Henslow's Sparrows and the thinning of dense upland stands for Bachman's Sparrows. Both the Bachman's Sparrow and the Sedge Wren appear to benefit from the management of upland pine stands for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. It is suggested that grassland birds would benefit from restoring the herbaceous component of the longleaf pine savannas to a continuous layer. — TMH

## 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.

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