

Excerpt, From the Field August - November 2003

This season had some amazing highlights in the state of Georgia. Kennesaw Mountain was host to two incredible records this fall, when Pierre Howard discovered a Black-throated Gray Warbler and Giff Beaton found a very rare Bell's Vireo for only the second record in the state for both of these species. The fall migration period was also highlighted by many late reports of lingering birds due primarily to the mild weather that we enjoyed well into November. Another exciting birding location near Atlanta was discovered, as David Heyden provided us with daily reports from the Robinson Nature Preserve. David found some great birds there, like such as Mourning Warbler, Western Kingbird and Clay-colored Sparrow. Hopefully birders will continue to enjoy this wonderful location for years to come. Speaking of birding paradises, Brandon Noel's coverage of Little Saint Simons Island has kept all of us envious of his full-time position as the naturalist on this Georgia coastal gem. His reports dominated most of the shorebird, gull and tern reports for the state. If you ever have the chance to visit the island and enjoy the diverse habitats and bird life, jump at it! Russ Wigh's pelagic endeavors have also helped us better understand the status of birds off the Georgia shore, as was highlighted by another amazing record this fall of two Brown Noddies seen offshore on a pelagic trip out to the gulf stream in August. This was truly a wonderful fall for birding in Georgia. Enjoy the detailed sightings that follow!

Abbreviations used include: ACOGB - *Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003*, Beaton, G. et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AWEC - Arrowhead Wildlife Education Center in Floyd Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area in McIntosh Co.; CRNRA - the Cochran Shoals Unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area; ELHLAF - E.L. Huie Land Application Facility in Clayton Co.; ENWR - the Bradley Unit of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge in Stewart Co.; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Cobb Co.; m.ob. - many observers; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; v.ob. - various observers; SCSP - Sweetwater Creek State Park in Douglas Co.; WMA - Wildlife Management Area.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

SNOW GOOSE – We are continuing to see growing numbers of reports for this species each year. The first report received was on 12 November, when Chris Loudermilk located a single bird at SCSP. The next day, 13 November, Rusty Trump had a group of 26 birds in Suwanee. On 19 November, Judy Gaines reported a group of 12 birds in a small pond on her property in Bartow County. The birds remained at least until 19 November, but were moving around the many small farm ponds in that area and were sometimes difficult to find. Finally, Doris Cohrs reported a single bird from the observation tower at the AWMA on 16 November. Apparently, the week of the 12 November was a good week for migrating Snow Geese.

GADWALL – Steve Barlow recorded a very early date when he located two birds at Harris Neck NWR on 24 August. The ACOGB states that the extreme dates for arriving wintering birds to be 12 October on the coast. There was another August record for Glynn County, 18-20 August 1989 (*Oriole* 55:25) listed as accidental. It would be worth documenting this sighting for the *Oriole* as well. More in line with their normal status, Eric Beohm reported 28 birds at Lake Juliette on 20 November.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL – The earliest reported birds were from ~~ELHUIE~~ ELHLAF, where Carol Lambert found a group of 11 birds on 17 August. Later in the month, Jerry Amerson found this species at the Macon Brickyards and Bob Zaremba found four birds on 25 August and 30 birds on 30 August in Bartow County. Terry Johnson recorded the highest count on 20 September of 62 birds in Monroe County.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL – The earliest arriving birds were once again at ~~ELHUIE~~ ELHLAF, where Carol Lambert reported four birds on 20 September. The highest reported total was from Gene Keferl and Mark Freeman, who reported overmore than 200 birds at the AWMA on 2 November.

REDHEAD – Walt Chambers reported 15 birds at West Point Dam on 15 November. A week earlier, on 8 November, Eric Beohm reported seeing 19 birds at the J.W. Smith Reservoir in Clayton County.

RING-NECKED DUCK – The highest count for this species was an incredible 1500+ birds reported by Paul Champlin from Phinizy Swamp on 9 November.

SURF SCOTER – This species usually shows up in small numbers, scattered around the state in small lakes

and on the coast. The earliest report was from Bear Creek Reservoir, where Mike Freeman found two birds on 28 October. The next day, Malcolm Hodges located a single bird at ~~ELHUJE~~ ELHLAF in Clayton County. Chris Loudermilk found two birds at SCSP on 9 November. ~~F~~ followed the next week by Michael Beohm, who found two birds on Lake Horton on 14 November. Finally, Steve Barlow found four birds of Jekyll Island on 30 November.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER – The highest count was from Walt Chambers, who reported seeing 35 birds at West Point Dam on 14 November.

PACIFIC LOON – Michael Beohm reported seeing this species at Lake Horton on 9 November. ~~;~~ If submitted and accepted, this would be a very good record for Georgia.

GREAT EGRET – Carol Lambert had a good count of 34 birds at ~~ELHUJE~~ ELHLAF on 3 August, and one bird lingered later than normal at the same location through 30 November. A count by Bob Zaremba of 15 birds at a roost site in Bartow County on August 5 was a good count away from the coast. ~~by Bob Zaremba.~~

REDDISH EGRET – This species is not known to breed in the state. ~~;~~ However, reports are becoming more frequent and the number of individuals seems to be on the increase up and down the Georgia coast. Brandon Noel has had a lot of luck finding this species on Little Saint Simon Island, with ten on 20 August, 15 on 9 October and 1 on 15 November. Elsewhere on the coast, Gene Keferl found seven birds on Egg Island Bar ~~in [at?]~~ the mouth of the Altamaha River on 1 September. Jerry Amerson reported finding a single bird on Sapelo Island on 11 October. The latest report was of a single bird from Gould's Inlet on 29 November by Jeff Sewell and Carol Lambert.

TURKEY VULTURE – Several good reports of large kettles of migrating vultures were received during this period. Eran Tomer reported seeing over more than 120 on 29 October and over more than 100 on 10 November in midtown Atlanta. Vicki DeLoach has a nice group of 200 over Sweat Mountain in Cobb County on 10 November as well. The highest count came from Emily Jo Williams, who observed a mixed group of between 400 and 500 Black and Turkey Vultures west of Rock Eagle on 24 November.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE – This species congregates in the fall over fields in South Georgia, and many birders take the opportunity to observe this beautiful species. Several reports included 60 birds in Glennville found by Pete Moore on 10 August and another 60 birds seen along the Savannah River on 14 August by EJ Williams. Bill and Karla O'Grady found a single bird on 2 August north of Sanderville.

PEREGRINE FALCON – There were several birds reported from around the state this period. The earliest report away from any known nesting locations was a bird reported by Michael Bell at Ichauway Plantation on 18 September. Earl Horn reported seeing a bird in Marietta on 25 September, and another bird was report from Cobb County at KMT on 1 October. David Heyden also reported a bird from Robinson Nature Preserve in Cobb County on 23 October. In a more usual location, Patrick Leary found a juvenile female on the south end of Cumberland Island on 15 November.

BLACK RAIL – The only report for this elusive resident was a bird heard at AWMA on 26 October by Gene Keferl.

SANDHILL CRANE – This species moves through our state in good numbers beginning in late October and in to November. This year was no exception, as crane watchers reported their movement daily on the GABO-L ~~[?]~~. The earliest reports were both on 29 October, but from far-apart places in the state. David Heyden reported seeing 47 birds flying over Robinson Nature Preserve, while Hal Massie reported a nice flock of 85 birds in Crawford County that same day. The peak passages came later in November, when Larry Ross reported seeing over more than 500 birds over Houston County on 14 November. Vickie and Harry DeLoach had the high count, when they had over more than 1600 birds flying over Sweat Mountain in Cobb County on 29 November!

WILSON'S PLOVER – ~~Received~~ There were two good reports from the coast this period. Brandon Noel had over more than 50 birds on Little Saint Simon Island on 20 August. Later in the period, Patrick Leary had a nice count of 24 on Cumberland Island on 15 November.

AMERICAN AVOCET – Reports away from the coast are scarce, so six birds in Bartow on 2 August was an excellent find. The two birds found on 20 August at Oxbow Meadows near Columbus by Walt Chambers was a very good report, as were the two birds that showed up on 27 September at ~~ELHUJE~~ ELHLAF by Carol Lambert that remained through 10 October. as reported by Carol Lambert.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW – Little Saint Simon Island proved to be the only reliable location for this species. Brandon Noel had a single bird on 3 August, two birds on 20 August and three birds on 10 September, which remained on the island through the end of the period.

SANDERLING – This species is rarely reported away from the coast, so one bird at West Point Dam on 16 September, reported by Walt Chambers, was an excellent report.

LEAST SANDPIPER – Several good counts were received during the period. Patrick Brisse reported 82 birds at ~~ELHUJE ELHLAF~~ on 24 August, ~~and~~ Terry Johnson had 34 birds in Monroe County on 20 September.

PURPLE SANDPIPER – Two reports were received on 29 November; one bird on Tybee Island reported by Bob Zaremba and two birds ~~were~~ seen by Gene Keferl at Sea Island.

DUNLIN – This species is seldom seen away from the coast. Marion Dobbs had two birds in Bartow County on 23 November. Carol Lambert found two birds at ~~ELHUJE ELHLAF~~ that remained through 30 November. Steve Barlow had a high count of six birds on 9 November.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER – There were a few reports around the state, the earliest was two birds found ~~by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn~~ at ~~ELHUJE ELHLAF~~ on 17 August ~~by Earl Horn and Jim Flynn~~ that remained until 19 August (Carol Lambert). Jerry Amerson found this species in Emanuel County on 24 August. Several reports were received from Bartow County sod farms; Bob and Deb Zaremba found two birds on 30 August, and Jeff Sewell and Dan Vickers reported a high count of nine birds on 1 September.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE – This species is rarely found inland, so pelagic trips are sometimes the only way to see this species in Georgia. Two trips in August had success finding good numbers off the coast. The 23 August trip found 18 birds, and 23 birds were seen on the 29 August trip (Bob Zaremba, Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh).

POMARINE JAEGER – The only report was a bird seen on the 29 August pelagic trip (Chuck Saleeby, Russ Wigh).

GULL-BILLED TERN – This species is accidental in winter on the coast, so a bird seen on Cumberland Island on 15 November by Patrick Leary was either a late departing bird or was possibly wintering on the island.

CASPIAN TERN – Any report away from the coast is good, so a single bird at SCSP on 6 September seen by Chris Loudermilk is worth noting.

COMMON TERN – Walt Chambers reported seeing over more than 100 birds at the West Point Dam on 16 September, and 25 birds were seen offshore on a pelagic trip out of Savannah on 23 August (Russ Wigh, Bob Zaremba).

FORSTER'S TERN – There were several birds seen away from the coast. Patrick Brisse had two birds at Lake Spivey on 24 August, and Carol Lambert had a single bird at ~~ELHUJE ELHLAF~~ on 29 August.

LEAST TERN – The best count was 300 birds on Little Saint Simon Island on 20 August by Brandon Noel.

BRIDLED TERN – An offshore species, ~~the best way to see~~ this species is best seen ~~is~~ aboard a pelagic trip out of Savannah. There were two trips scheduled in August. The high count was 79 birds on the 23 August trip, and the 29 August trip produced 8 birds (Russ Wigh, Chuck Saleeby, Bob Zaremba).

BLACK TERN – This species is a fairly common fall migrant offshore and on the coast. The two pelagic trips turned up a good count of 40 birds on 23 August and 126 birds on 29 August. The highest count from the coast was between 700 and 1000 birds on Little Saint Simon Island on 20 August by Brandon Noel. Away from the coast, two birds at ~~ELHUJE ELHLAF~~ were reported by Carol Lambert on 21 August and later in the fall, 14 birds were seen on 4 September. Karen Theodorou had a good count of six birds at Lake Lanier on 30 August. The latest report was from Russ Wigh, who had a single bird at Gray's Reef on 18 October.

BROWN NODDY [fix dash to be consistent]—An excellent discovery offshore on 29 August was two birds seen and photographed on the pelagic trip out of Savannah. This species is rarely encountered anywhere in Georgia, and this was only the third report of the species offshore. Interestingly, the other two reports were also in August, on 30 August 1992 and on 22 August 1993. Several reports of this species inland have been associated with severe weather events, either severe storms or hurricanes (Russ Wigh, Chuck Saleeby).

COMMON GROUND-DOVE – This species appears to be declining in many areas of the state below the Fall Line, so reports from around the state are interesting and show some possible expansion. Terry Johnson found four birds in Monroe County on 20 September. Michael Beohm has been noticing an increase in Upson County and reported seeing three birds on 4 November. ~~The furthest out of range,~~ Tim Keyes found two birds at Charlie Elliott WMA, the furthest out of range, on 3 November.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER – A bird found in Sumter County by Phil Hardy and Clive Rainey on 1 November was in the exact same location as a bird found in previous year. Perhaps it is possible that this may ~~in-deed~~ be the same bird returning to this area. [indeed]

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER – Two reports of lingering birds were received, the first was being a

bird seen by Marion Dobbs in Ben Hill County on 12 November and the second being a bird seen by Jim Flynn and Earl Horn in Candler County on 23 November. There is no doubt that the mild weather in November contributed to these late [dates sightings](#).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER – A great report from the coast [was](#); Shelia Willis' [reported of](#) a bird on 24 November in the St. Mary's [\[Marys\]](#) area of Camden County.

BELL'S VIREO – Giff Beaton was lucky to be in the right place at the right time when he found this species at KMT on 5 October. The birds [\[bird\]](#) was seen well and described in a rare bird report submitted to the records committee and subsequently accepted for only the second accepted state record for this species. This is an excellent report of a species probably overlooked during migration since it rarely vocalizes. The only other accepted record was of a bird found by Walt Chambers in Columbus in April of 2000.

RED-EYED VIREO – The high count was a total of 25 birds at KMT on 14 September (Giff Beaton).

AMERICAN PIPIT – Marion Dobbs reported an excellent count of [over more than](#) -300 birds at the Turfgrass Atlanta in Floyd County on 18 November.

CEDAR WAXWING – This species began showing up at KMT on 1 September. The numbers increased over the month, and Jenny Michaels reported 50 birds in Paulding County on 8 November. Eran Tomer reported seeing [100's hundreds](#) in November in Northeast Atlanta.

NASHVILLE WARBLER – We had multiple reports of single birds of this seldom-seen migrant from KMT on 15 and 24 September and on 14 October (Giff Beaton). Bob and Deb Zaremba had a bird visiting their yard on 19 October. The latest reports came from the east side of Atlanta, where Lisa Hart had a bird at SPCNP on 16 November and Earl Horn had a bird in his Gwinnett County yard on 21 and 22 November.

CERULEAN WARBLER – ~~†~~ The many observers at KMT track the species fairly closely. Giff Beaton reported that this season's total of 204 birds was the highest total count since 1997. The highest single-day counts were on 3 August and 4 September, when 13 birds were found.

WILSON'S WARBLER – This species is seldom seen in the state during migration, so this season's multiple reports were very interesting. Most reports were from September, the first being a bird reported on 6 September seen by Jenny Michaels at SPCNP. ~~→~~ [Possibly](#) the same bird was seen again on 13 September in the same location (Jerry Brunner and Jenny Michaels). Bob and Deb Zaremba reported a bird seen in their Marietta yard; the bird remained from 8 September though 11 September. Russ Wigh also reported this species from the coast on 10 September, where he found a bird on Skidaway Island. Also away from Atlanta, ~~;~~ was a bird found at the Ocmulgee National Monument in Macon on 27 September by Steve Barlow. There were two reports of late birds; one bird was seen at KMT on 8 October (Bob Zaremba). The most exciting report was a bird found by Karen Theodorou in her Gwinnett County yard. The bird was first seen on 27 October and remained through the end of November, perhaps deciding to winter in her yard.

SCARLET TANAGER – Giff Beaton reported an [\[an\]](#) excellent count of 37 birds seen at KMT on 15 September. Walt Chambers had a good count of 13 birds near Columbus on 4 October.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW – There were several reports of this hard-to-find species. The highest count came from the AWMA on 12 October, where Bob Zaremba and Pierre Howard found three birds while leading a Coastal Birding Festival field trip. This site is proving to be the most reliable location to find this species in the state. Other reports from the coast where [\[were\]](#) received, Brandon Noel found a single bird on Little Saint Simon Island on 11 October and Gene Keferl found a bird at Andrews Island on 25 October. Reports away from the coast are much more rare, so a bird found at Robinson Nature Preserve by David Heyden on 19 October and a bird found in Upson County by Michael Beohm on 15 October were excellent reports.

SWAMP SPARROW – Perhaps setting a new early date in the Piedmont, an AAS field trip reported finding this species at the Newman Wetland Center of the ~~ELHULAF ELHLAF~~ on a trip there on 20 September. Hopefully this report will be written up and submitted to the *Oriole* in the near future.

BLUE GROSBEAK – Several late birds were reported this period. Paul Champlin had a bird at Phinizy Swamp on 9 November. Earl Horn and Jim Flynn found a late bird in Candler County on 23 November. An interesting sighting [was received from Eran Tomer](#) of a female apparently carrying food on 1 September at Morgan Falls near Atlanta. ~~→~~ [was received from Eran Tomer](#).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD – David Heyden found a male and female at the Robinson Nature Preserve on 13 October and the birds remained until 15 October.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE – The highest count of this species was 12 at KMT on 5 September. David Heyden had two late birds in the DeKalb [\[DeKalb\]](#) area on 23 November.

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