

**OBSERVATIONS ON A PROMISCUOUS RED-BELLIED
WOODPECKER (*MELANERPES CAROLINUS*)**

Michael Owens and Suzanne Owens

In late May 1991, several pairs of woodpeckers visited our suet basket located on the front porch of our home in Pinson. Rather than feed rendered beef suet, my wife and I use a blend of peanut butter, cornmeal, and other ingredients that birds seem to enjoy. Three species of woodpeckers regularly visit this suet basket – Red-bellied (*Melanerpes carolinus*), Hairy (*Picoides villosus*), and Downy (*Picoides pubescens*).

On 28 May, a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers established a nesting site within approximately 100 ft. (30 meters) of our front porch. Though both birds fed regularly at the suet basket, the female became the most frequent visitor.

Several weeks later the parents began to visit the suet basket between 25 and 30 times a day. Each bird would carry large amounts of the peanut butter mixture to the young. The female tended to remain at the suet basket longer and worked harder to maximize the amount of peanut butter obtained with each visit.

Approximately five days after the parents began feeding the young, we noticed that the male would visit the suet basket, fill his beak with mixture, then fly in the **opposite** direction of the nest cavity. On this same day we discovered, as well, that we had two females visiting the suet basket.

After observing the male for several days and watching him fly with food in the opposite direction many times a day, we decided to follow him closely. We then discovered that he was tending not one nest of young, but another as well! This second nest cavity was approximately 215 ft. (65 meters) from our porch.

On several occasions we witnessed both females at the first nest sight. One bird remained several feet from the nest cavity at all times and only visited when the first female was in the cavity. Conflict was never noted between the two females and to the best of our knowledge both nests were successful. – **Michael Owens and Suzanne Owens**, Pinson, AL 35126

ALABAMA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT

Robert A. Duncan

This is the second report of the Alabama Bird Records Committee covering the years 1990 and 1991. A total of 57 records were appraised and finalized. Nine records are still in the process of review. There were no records to be reviewed at the formal meeting of the ABRC held at Dauphin Island in October 1991. However, a quorum was not present which resulted in the Secretary continuing as Acting Secretary until a new Secretary could be elected. A revised Review List will be considered by the ABRC at a future meeting with a proposal that some now regular species such as Clay-colored Sparrow and Great Black-backed Gull be “delisted”. The ABRC currently consists of the following members: Bill Bremser (Pensacola); Ben Garmon (Birmingham); Paul Kittle (Florence); Tom Haggerty (Florence); Ann Miller (Birmingham); Bob Reid (Birmingham); and Bill Summerour (Jacksonville).

The committee consists of a Secretary and six members, all of whom vote on each

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record. Members remain on the committee for three to four years, and at least two members are replaced each year. Records are submitted by birders to the Secretary, who then sends them by mail in a "round robin" fashion to each member. If a decision is not definitely reached during that circulation, the process is repeated. If there is still no unequivocal decision, then the record is considered at a formal meeting.

The initial evaluation of submitted reports is performed by each committee member without the knowledge of the opinions of the other members and is done as objectively and impartially as possible. A record is accepted by the committee if it finally receives no more than one negative vote. This helps ensure that only well documented records are accepted. However, it is possible that there will occasionally be a valid sighting that is not approved because at least six members are not convinced beyond a reasonable doubt. Observers who submit reports to the committee should understand this process; a "not accept" vote should not be construed as a personal insult or condemnation of their skills. We are attempting to establish a "clean" set of records for the state. In order to achieve this goal, reports of rarities must be fully documented and then evaluated in a critical manner. This process is required of sightings by all birders, regardless of experience and knowledge. The importance of proper documentation cannot be overemphasized, particularly when there are only a few records for the state. Birders should refer to first published records for the US that appear in *American Birds* as a guide. While most records that have passed through the committee have been well documented, others, including some ultimately accepted, would have fared much better had the observer taken time to document the bird's features.

Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the last two years of committee evaluations. The official list is now 388 species, with 13 in the "hypothetical" category (no acceptable photograph, specimen or not seen by at least three experienced observers). It is expected that the Eurasian Collared-Dove will be added in the future.

TABLE 1. 1990 RECORDS COMMITTEE EVALUATIONS

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo/ Spec.	Decision	Al. Status
90-1	Curllew Sandpiper	8/16/80	Baldwin		A	2
90-2	Painted Redstart	12/20/89	Baldwin		NI	
90-3	Long-tailed Jaeger	9/8/89	Mobile		A	2H
90-4	Audubon's Shearwater	12/31/89	Baldwin		A	3
90-5	Sooty Shearwater	12/30/89	Baldwin		A	6
90-6	Sooty Shearwater	12/31/89	Baldwin		A	7
90-7	Sooty Shearwater	12/30/89	Baldwin		A	6
90-8	Black-shouldered Kite	12/30/89	Baldwin		A	6
90-9	Harris' Sparrow	1/1/90-3/90	Baldwin		A	8
90-11	Ruff	9/2-6/89	Shelby	P	A	3
90-12	Ross' Goose	1/1-4/90	Baldwin		A	5
90-13	Pacific Loon	1/1/90	Baldwin		A	7
90-14	Glaucous Gull	1/15-28/90	Lauderdale		A	20+
90-15	Lesser Bl.-bk Gull	1/14-3/4/90	Lauderdale		A	3
90-16	Ross' Goose	11/18/89	Limestone		A	4
90-17	Black-ch. Hummingbird	8/28-9/4/89	Shelby	P	A	3

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Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo/ Spec.	Decision	Al. Status
90-18	Pelagic Cormorant	3/24/90	Baldwin		NI	
90-19	Shiny Cowbird	4/25/90	Baldwin		A	1H
90-20	Eurasian Col.-Dove*	5/7/90	Baldwin		NI	
90-21	Shiny Cowbird	4/26-5/12/90	Baldwin	P	A	2
90-22	Lesser Bl.-bk Gull	5/3/90	Baldwin		NI	
90-23	Greater Bl.-bk. Gull	4/3/90- 5/3/90	Baldwin Mobile	P	A	20+
90-24	Shiny Cowbird	4/30-6/90	Mobile		A	3
90-25	Brown Booby	4/21/90	Mobile		NI	
90-27	Bronzed Cowbird	4/22/90	Baldwin		A	2
90-28	Ross' Goose	3/11/90	Perry		A	6
90-29	Iceland Gull	4/16/84	Mobile		A	1
90-30	Ruff	9/10/90	Shelby		NI	
90-31	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	9/10/90	Shelby		NI	
90-32	Yellow Rail	9/1/90	Baldwin		A	9
90-33	Swainson's Hawk	10/19-20/90	Baldwin	P	A	15+
90-34	Calliope Hummingbird	12/24/89	Mobile	S	A	1
90-35	Bronzed Cowbird	11/7-10/90	Baldwin	P	A	3
90-36	Clay-colored Sparrow	11/7-10/90	Baldwin		A	25+
90-38	Great Cormorant	10/7-14/90	Baldwin	P	A	9
90-39	Swainson's Hawk	11/10/90	Baldwin		A	15+
90-40	Yellow-bel. Flyctchr.	9/29/90	Baldwin		A	rare
90-41	Clay-colored Sparrow	9/29/90	Baldwin		A	25+
90-42	Clay-colored Sparrow	10/6-7/90	Baldwin		A	25+
90-43	Pacific Loon	11/23/90- 1/13/91	Marshall		A	8
90-44	Glaucous Gull	11/18/90- 2/91	Marshall		A	20+
90-45	Say's Phoebe	9/29/90	Jefferson		A	2

TABLE 2. 1991 RECORDS COMMITTEE EVALUATIONS

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo/ Spec	Decision	Al. Status
91-1	Greater Bl.-bk. Gull	1/26/91	Baldwin		A	20+
91-2	Calliope Hummingbird	2/26-3/29/91	Shelby	B	A	2
91-3	Roseate Spoonbill	9/19-26/87	Green		A	7+
91-4	Parasitic Jaeger	3/11/91	Baldwin		A	20+
91-6	Buff-bel. Hummingbird	4/8/91	Baldwin		A	1H
91-7	Black-ch. Hummingbird	9/29/90	Jefferson		A	11
91-9	Red-throated Loon	11/18- 12/9/90	Marshall		A	35+
91-11	Bl.-bel. Whistl. Duck	12/24/90- 1/1/91+	Morgan	S	A	1

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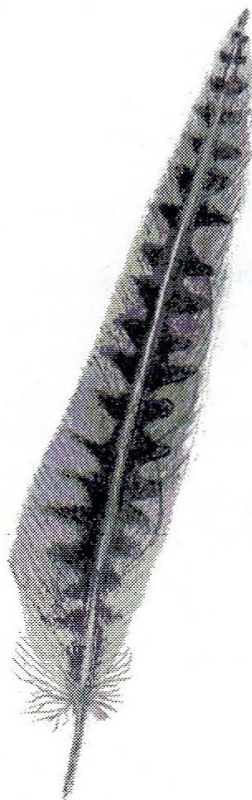
Record No.	Species	Date	County	Photo/ Spec	Decision	Al. Status
91-13	Eurasian Col.-Dove*	4/12/91- 5/7/91	Baldwin	P	A	1
91-14	Red-throated Loon	4/10-21/91	Mobile		A	35+
91-16	Greater Bl.-bk. Gull	3/21/91 4/7/91	Baldwin Mobile		A	20+
91-17	Western Tanager	4/24/91	Mobile		A	10+
91-18	Harris' Sparrow	3/19-5/4/91	Baldwin		A	9
91-19	Shiny Cowbird	4/12-5/7/91	Baldwin		A	4
91-20	Bronzed Cowbird	4/11/91	Baldwin		A	4

1. P-photograph, S-specimen, B-banded
2. A-accepted, NI-not accepted (identification), NO-not accepted (origin)
3. Number of sighting in the accepted records (1= first, 2=second, etc.)

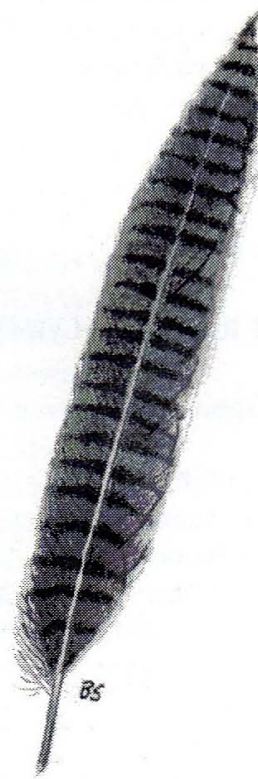
H- hypothetical list (as of this record)

* Pending acceptance by the American Ornithologists' Union

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Rectrix of E. Meadowlark



Rectrix of W. Meadowlark