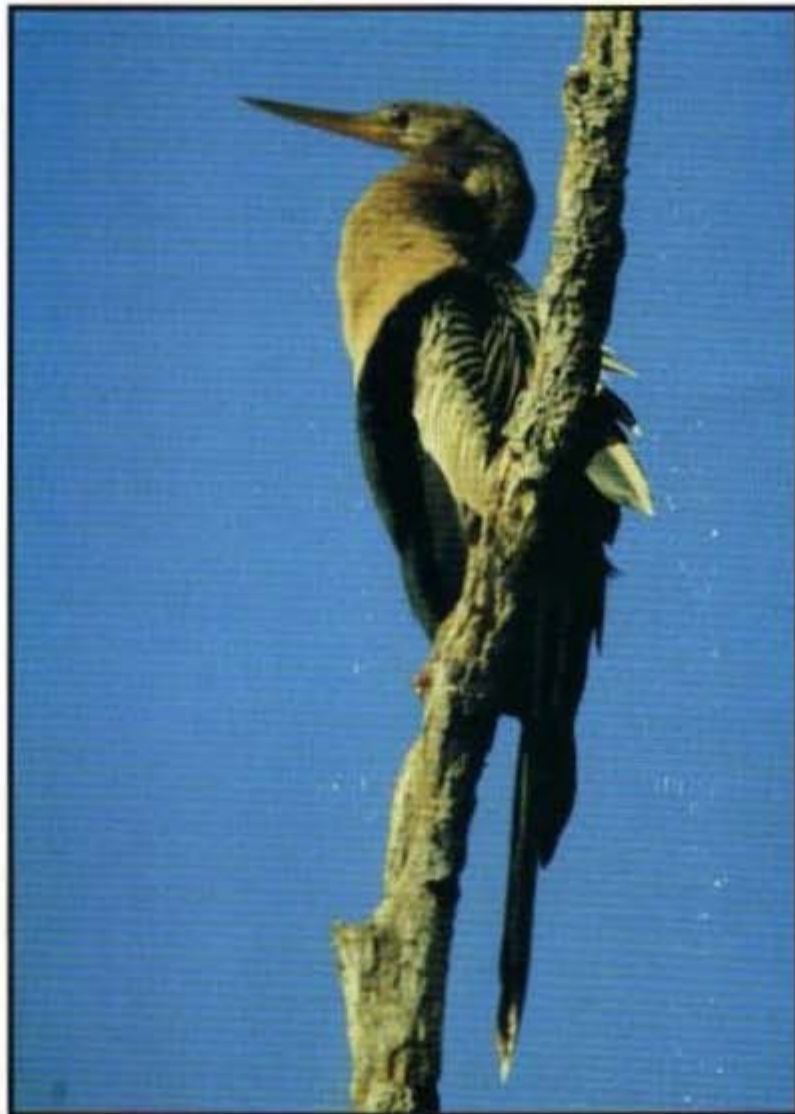




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# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE



*Journal of the Alabama Ornithological Society*

# ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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Cover: Anhinga; a species seen on Chilton County SBC, photograph by G. Harber.

## CHILTON COUNTY, ALABAMA - SUMMER BIRD COUNT

Greg D. Jackson

### INTRODUCTION

An investigation of Chilton County, Alabama, breeding birds was undertaken 16-18 June 2000 by Alabama Ornithological Society members and friends. Despite proximity to Birmingham and Montgomery, and countless transits by birders on Interstate Highway 65 running through the eastern part of the county, few observers have spent much time birding this interesting area. Many count participants voiced surprise at the range of habitats and enjoyed the experience.

This survey was the first of hopefully many future Summer Bird Counts (SBC). The SBC program will target one or more Alabama counties with limited recent breeding season data. By dividing a county into small parcels using teams of experienced observers, we expect to unearth important data on breeding species in little-worked areas. Different counties will be covered each year, usually in mid-June to reduce overlap with migration.

The SBC will supplement information generated by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). Comprising annually repeated routes of 50 roadside, three-minute point counts, the BBS is most valuable as a monitoring tool (Robbins, Bystrak, and Geissler 1986). Though range information is generated for many birds, the BBS has deficiencies as an investigatory tool, particularly for low-density species (Sauer, Pendleton, and Orsillo 1995). In contrast, the SBC program relies on experienced birders choosing birding sites within their assigned areas by habitat type and richness, and thus rare species may be better detected. For special birds of interest, observers can spend additional time and effort when suitable habitat is encountered, and when found locations of these birds are mapped. Each area is covered in a single morning by a party. Party-hours and party-miles are recorded, and numbers of all bird species are noted. Additionally, evidence of breeding activity (carrying food, nest construction, etc.) is recorded when observed for any species; this assessment is similar to that done in breeding bird atlas work.



Figure 1. County map of Alabama showing the location of Chilton County (darkened), the site of the first Alabama Summer Bird Count.

### STUDY AREA AND METHODS

Geographically, Chilton County is in a transition zone between the Appalachian Mountains, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain (Fig. 1). For bird reporting purposes, the county has been considered wholly in the Inland Coastal Plain. However, the Fall Line (northern boundary of the Coastal Plain) traverses the northern and east-central portions of the area, allowing for Mountain Region influence in the north and east. Additionally, parts of the county, particularly in the southwest, have upland habitats that could be considered "Coastal Plain hills," with elevations rising to about 700 feet (210 meters). The Coosa River is a dominant feature along the eastern boundary of the county, with parts of Lay, Mitchell, and Jordan lakes represented (Lineback 1973, DeLorme 1998).

Habitats range from deciduous woodland through pine forest to low-lying fields and pastures. Water habitats are restricted primarily to the lakes of the Coosa River and small lakes and ponds scattered throughout the county; swamp and marsh habitats are very limited. Urban and suburban areas are found

primarily in a band along U.S. Highway 31 running north to south through the east-central part of the county, with the main towns of Jemison, Thorsby, Clanton, and Verbena in this corridor. Part of southwest Chilton County is within the Oakmulgee Unit of Talladega National Forest.

Twenty-eight parties comprising 33 observers covered Chilton County 16-18 June (one, 14, and 13 parties, respectively); many teams worked different areas two mornings. The official period for tallying numbers of birds each day was 0515 to 1100 hours. A total of 149.4 party-hours (60.6 auto, 77.3 foot, 11.5 boat) was spent, covering 1202 party-miles (1124 auto, 41 foot, 37 boat; total 1923 party-km). Additionally, five hours and 23 miles (36.8 km) were expended seeking nocturnal species; this count should not be considered representative of a full search for nocturnal birds.

Analysis of count results included parameters such as regions of the county, location above or below the Fall Line, day of counts, and both raw values and birds per party-hour (the last favored over raw values for comparisons). The Fall Line divided a few party areas; unless specific bird locations were known, a party area was labeled as above or below the line by which section predominated for that area. In most cases birds of interest were marked on the party area maps, and a computer-generated map was used to plot these occurrences.

Weather was constant through the weekend, with low wind speeds and temperatures ranging approximately 70-85° F (21-29.4° C). Only minimal dawn precipitation occurred 17 June, though some areas experienced fog early that morning that diminished bird activity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*The count.*— A total of 107 species was recorded (Table 1). One hundred and four species were counted during the official morning count hours and three species were encountered solely outside the morning period or during pre-count scouting. Because this was the first large-scale summer count in the Inland Coastal Plain, several single-day high counts were set (Table 1). Aside from party area maps and field lists, each party received a list of birds of special attention. Of 28 species on this list, 15 were found on the count (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Chilton County Summer Bird Count Totals, 16-18 June 2000.

Species	Total	Total per party-hour	Daily <sup>a</sup> max.	Area <sup>b</sup> max.	Frequency <sup>c</sup>	Mean <sup>d</sup>	Breeding status	Main Area <sup>e</sup>
COMMON LOON <sup>f</sup>	CP <sup>g</sup>							NE <sup>h</sup> , AFL
PIED-BILLED GREBE	1	0.07	1	1	1	0.04		NW, BFL
Anhinga <sup>h</sup>	1	0.07	1	1	1	0.04		SE, AFL
Great Blue Heron	61	4.08	29	21	16	2.18		SE, AFL
Great Egret	5	0.33	2	2	4	0.18		
Little Blue Heron	4	0.27	2	1	4	0.14		
Green Heron	41	2.74	21	7	14	1.46	CONF <sup>i</sup>	
WHITE IBIS	1	0.07	1	1	1	0.04		NW, AFL
WOOD STORK	10	0.67	10	7	2	0.36		
Black Vulture	79	5.29	52	13	15	2.82		
Turkey Vulture	133	8.90	72	18	26	4.75		SW
Canada Goose	17	1.14	17	9	2	0.61	CONF	
Wood Duck	52	3.48	40	17	9	1.86	CONF	SE, AFL
Mallard	12	0.80	8	6	3	0.43	CONF	NE, AFL
Mississippi Kite	4	0.27	2	2	3	0.14	PROB <sup>m</sup>	W, BFL
BALD EAGLE	2	0.13	2	2	1	0.07	PROB	SE, AFL
Cooper's Hawk	CP							NW, BFL
Red-shouldered Hawk	44	2.95	23 <sup>n</sup>	5	22	1.57	PROB	
Broad-winged Hawk	23	1.54	16	4	13	0.82	CONF	
Red-tailed Hawk	31	2.07	15	5	16	1.11	CONF	
American Kestrel	3	0.20	3	3	1	0.11	PROB	SW, BFL
Wild Turkey	27	1.81	20	13	9	0.96	CONF	NE, AFL
Northern Bobwhite	168	11.24	84	20	25	6.00	PROB	

TABLE 1. Continued

Species	Total	Total per party hour	Daily max.	Area max.	Frequency	Mean	Breeding status	Main Area
Killdeer	44	2.95	22	10	15	1.57	PROB	
LAUGHING GULL	1	0.07	1	1	1	0.04		SE, AFL
Rock Dove	219	14.66	178	92	6	7.82		SE, AFL
Eurasian Collared-Dove	16	1.07	10	10	4	0.57		NW, BFL
Mourning Dove	960	64.26	505	126	28	34.29	PROB	
Common Ground-Dove	5	0.33	3	3	2	0.18	CONF	NE, AFL
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	105	7.03	58	9	27	3.75		
Barn Owl	CP							
E. Screech-Owl	11	0.74	5	2	7	0.39		
Great Horned Owl	2	0.13	1	1	2	0.07		
Barred Owl	16	1.07	14	4	8	0.57	PROB	
Chuck-will's-widow	73	4.89	56	30	10	2.61		
Chimney Swift	217	14.52	116	28	25	7.75		NW
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	45	3.01	27	6	19	1.61	PROB	
Belted Kingfisher	44	2.95	26	19	13	1.57		
Red-headed Woodpecker	36	2.41	23	7	15	1.29		
Red-bellied Woodpecker	214	14.32	110	17	28	7.64	CONF	
Downy Woodpecker	102	6.83	56	8	26	3.64		
Hairy Woodpecker	7	0.47	4	2	5	0.25		
Northern Flicker	54	3.61	33	8	18	1.93	PROB	
Pileated Woodpecker	57	3.82	35	8	19	2.04	CONF	BFL
Eastern Wood-Pewee	96	6.43	58	17	22	3.43		NW, BFL
Acadian Flycatcher	71	4.75	46	12	18	2.54		SW, BFL

TABLE I. Continued

Species	Total	Total per party hour	Daily max.	Area max.	Frequency	Mean	Breeding status	Main Area
<b>Eastern Phoebe</b>	196	13.12	<b>100</b>	19	27	7.00	CONF	
Great Crested Flycatcher	221	14.79	<b>108</b>	21	27	7.89	CONF	
Eastern Kingbird	342	22.89	<b>172</b>	41	25	12.21	CONF	BFL
Loggerhead Shrike	27	1.81	<b>15</b>	7	10	0.96	CONF	
White-eyed Vireo	410	27.44	<b>210</b>	36	28	14.64	PROB	
Yellow-throated Vireo	64	4.28	<b>41</b>	9	21	2.29		
Red-eyed Vireo	364	24.36	<b>207</b>	38	27	13.00	PROB	SW
Blue Jay	445	29.79	<b>248</b>	45	28	15.89	CONF	
American Crow	1008	67.47	<b>597</b>	120	27	36.00		
Fish Crow	47	2.81	<b>24</b>	13	10	1.50		low in NW
Purple Martin	908	60.78	<b>542</b>	103	26	32.43	CONF	
N. Rough-w. Swallow	114	7.63	<b>69</b>	18	17	4.07		AFL
<b>Cliff Swallow</b>	254	17.00	<b>232</b>	150	4	9.07	CONF	SE, AFL
Barn Swallow	975	65.26	<b>673</b>	233	26	34.82	CONF	SE
Carolina Chickadee	338	22.62	<b>166</b>	42	28	12.07	CONF	NE, AFL
Tufted Titmouse	386	25.84	<b>225</b>	28	28	13.79	CONF	
<b>Wh.-breasted Nuthatch</b>	17	1.14	<b>13</b>	6	7	0.61	PROB	E, AFL
Brown-headed Nuthatch	141	9.44	<b>66</b>	20	22	5.04	CONF	
Carolina Wren	488	32.66	<b>231</b>	36	28	17.43	CONF	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	223	14.93	<b>123</b>	29	25	7.96	CONF	
Eastern Bluebird	480	32.13	<b>245</b>	40	27	17.14	CONF	NW, BFL
Wood Thrush	403	26.97	<b>211</b>	33	28	14.39		
American Robin	239	16.00	<b>122</b>	47	24	8.54	CONF	

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TABLE I. Continued

Species	Total	Total per party hour	Daily max.	Area max.	Frequency	Mean	Breeding status	Main Area
<b>Gray Catbird</b>	62	4.15	<b>37</b>	12	17	2.21	CONF	low in SE
Northern Mockingbird	741	49.60	<b>396</b>	94	25	26.46	CCNF	NW, BFL
Brown Thrasher	260	17.40	<b>147</b>	21	26	9.29	CCNF	
European Starling	328	21.95	<b>166</b>	74	19	11.71	CCNF	
Northern Parula	99	6.63	<b>53</b>	18	19	3.54		AFL
Yellow-throated Warbler	18	1.20	<b>14</b>	8	4	0.64		SE, AFL
Pine Warbler	246	16.47	<b>118</b>	43	27	8.79	CONF	
Prairie Warbler	199	13.32	<b>108</b>	24	24	7.11	CCNF	low in SE
<b>Black-and-white Warbler</b>	9	0.60	<b>6</b>	2	7	0.32	CONF	NW
American Redstart	6	0.40	<b>4</b>	2	5	0.21		
Prothonotary Warbler	12	0.80	<b>10</b>	8	3	0.43		
<b>Worm-eating Warbler</b>	1	0.07	<b>1</b>	1	1	0.04		SE, AFL
<b>Swainson's Warbler</b>	11	0.74	<b>6</b>	3	6	0.39	PROB	NW, BFL
OVENBIRD	2	0.13	<b>1</b>	1	2	0.07		
Louisiana Waterthrush	29	1.94	<b>22</b>	16	13	1.04	PROB	SE
Kentucky Warbler	101	6.76	<b>49</b>	15	23	3.61	PROB	NE, AFL
Common Yellowthroat	320	21.42	<b>183</b>	24	26	11.43	PROB	
Hooded Warbler	209	13.99	<b>111</b>	22	25	7.46	CONF	low in NW
Yellow-breasted Chat	776	51.94	<b>434</b>	71	28	27.71	CONF	
Summer Tanager	185	12.38	<b>88</b>	14	27	6.61	CONF	
<b>Scarlet Tanager</b>	4	0.27	<b>4</b>	2	2	0.14	PROB	W, BFL
Eastern Towhee	687	45.98	<b>367</b>	65	28	24.54	CONF	
<b>Bachman's Sparrow</b>	1	0.07	<b>1</b>	1	1	0.04		SE, AFL

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TABLE 1. Continued

Species	Total	Total per party hour	Daily max.	Area max.	Frequency	Mean	Breeding status	Main Area
Chipping Sparrow	278	18.61	<b>142</b>	53	23	9.93	CONF	BFL
Field Sparrow	151	10.11	<b>79</b>	32	22	5.39	CONF	BFL
Lark Sparrow	2	0.13	2	2	1	0.07		SW, BFL
Grasshopper Sparrow	1	0.07	1	1	1	0.04		SE, AFL
Northern Cardinal	827	55.35	<b>444</b>	83	28	29.54	CONF	
Blue Grosbeak	348	23.29	<b>193</b>	65	24	12.43	CONF	BFL, low NE
Indigo Bunting	1068	71.49	<b>564</b>	110	28	38.14	PROB	BFL
Red-winged Blackbird	215	14.39	111	40	22	7.68	PROB	low in NE
Eastern Meadowlark	260	17.40	<b>130</b>	60	19	9.29	CONF	BFL, low NE
Common Grackle	227	15.19	140	32	25	8.11	CONF	
Brown-headed Cowbird	196	13.12	106	18	24	7.00	PROB	
Orchard Oriole	133	8.90	<b>72</b>	21	23	4.75	CONF	BFL
House Finch	201	13.45	111	45	17	7.18	CONF	
American Goldfinch	46	3.08	25	9	14	1.64	PROB	NE, AFL
House Sparrow	195	13.05	96	61	15	6.96	CONF	NW, BFL

<sup>a</sup> = highest daily count<sup>b</sup> = highest count in a single party<sup>c</sup> = number of parties reporting species<sup>d</sup> = average party total<sup>e</sup> = predominant region of species<sup>f</sup> = uppercase denotes unexpected species<sup>g</sup> = count period only<sup>h</sup> = compass quadrant of county (e.g., NW = northwest)<sup>i</sup> = above Fall Line<sup>j</sup> = below Fall Line<sup>k</sup> = bold denotes species of special interest<sup>l</sup> = confirmed<sup>m</sup> = probable<sup>n</sup> = bold denotes noteworthy single-day counts



Recording observed breeding-related activities was an interesting feature of this count. Codes were placed on field sheets for the type of activity observed for each species. Using customary breeding bird atlas designations, of 104 species in the official count, 45 (43.3 %) were confirmed as nesting, and 22 (21.2%) were considered probable nesting species (Table 1). Most of the other species encountered should be considered possible breeders in the county, though this assessment is tenuous for large waders, certain raptors, and a few others discussed in the species accounts.

*Species Accounts.*— The following comments on selected species are based on personal experience, the Alabama bird records database, and Imhof (1976).

**Common Loon** – An individual was discovered on Lay Lake while scouting a few days before the count. Despite presence of alternate plumage, this was considered a non-breeding, summering bird. Alabama has no breeding records, but summering individuals are rare but regular.

**Pied-billed Grebe** – A rare and local breeder throughout the state, Pied-billeds are not expected in most areas. One calling bird was found in the southwest quadrant.

**Anhinga** – Uncommon and local as a breeding bird in the Coastal Plain, one bird was spotted in the southeast corner of the county.

**White Ibis** – This species breeds in numbers in certain Coastal Plain areas, but was not expected in Chilton County. The immature seen in flight above the Fall Line in the northwest quadrant probably ranged from a distant colony.

**Wood Stork** – Ten Wood Storks in two parties (above and below the Fall Line) were a surprise, particularly for mid June. However, this year witnessed an earlier-than-usual influx of storks into several Alabama areas, and these birds were part of that phenomenon. Breeding has not been proven in the state, and these likely were only visitors.

**Mississippi Kite** – Predominantly a Coastal Plain species, Chilton County is at the edge of the main breeding range. Four kites, including a pair seen on consecutive days, were found in three Coastal Plain areas, and another was noted before the count above the Fall Line on Lake Jordan.

**Bald Eagle** – A pair of this magnificent species on Lake Jordan suggested breeding. Eagles nest in scattered locations in the state and have been seen previously in nesting season on this section of the Coosa River.

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suitable habitat. Whip-poor-will was discovered last summer in the Coastal Plain portion of Bibb County; limited searching with recorded tapes in the Chilton County portion of Talladega National Forest did not yield positive results. That area has trees with evidence of Red-cockaded Woodpecker activity, but no birds were found on the count. The absence of Yellow Warbler on the count is surprising, as this bird has bred farther south in the state at several locations.

*Personal comment.* — This count not only generated interesting and important data — it was a lot of fun! Many birders almost cease activity during the breeding season, pausing between spring and fall migrations. Other than the Breeding Bird Surveys, information on our nesting birds is poor, at best, in many areas. The SBC program is a good excuse to explore new territories, listen to bird song, and observe our incredible birdlife in its most important season.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first Alabama Summer Bird Count was a success because of the help of the following observers: Fred Bassett, Topher Dudley, Ben C. Garmon, Paul & Karla Geir, David P. George, Stan & Dana Hamilton, Greg J. Harber, Geoff E. Hill, Greg D. & Debra G. Jackson, Pat Johnson, Jud Johnston, Charles Kennedy, Helen H. Kittinger, Steve W. McConnell, Douglas T. & Nancy McGinty, Ann L. & Al D. Miller, Fred Moore, Tommy A. Pratt, Shawn E. Reed, Pelham A. Rowan, Jayne Rushin, Robert R. & Martha B. Sargent, Eric C. Soehren, Russell Stork, Rick L. West, and Phillip & Karen White.

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**REPORT OF THE ALABAMA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE  
1998-99**

Steve McConnell, Secretary 1999-2001

The Alabama Bird Records Committee (ABRC) was created to validate documentation of unusual birds in Alabama using a method that allows the records to be more universally accepted and scientifically valuable. A committee of seven experienced Alabama Ornithological Society (AOS) members reviews reports of species that generally have fewer than 20 accepted records for the state. Records for species on the ABRC review list, which currently includes around 90 species, are voted on once by all committee members and then sometimes twice if the first vote is indecisive. Vote totals with no more than one "not accepted" vote result in the record being accepted. Totals with four or more "not accepted" votes result in the record not being accepted. Records without decisions following two votes are reviewed and voted upon a final time at the annual meeting of the ABRC.

*1998 Evaluations.*—Forty-four records from 16 observers were evaluated in 1998 (Table 1). Thirty-nine were accepted and five were not accepted.

TABLE 1. Evaluations by the 1998 Alabama Bird Records Committee of 44 records from 16 observers.

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Decision	AL Status*
98-1	Curlew Sandpiper	10/10/80	Mobile	NI <sup>b</sup>	---
98-2	Red-necked Grebe	12/30/97	Mobile	NI	--
98-3	Ross's Goose	1/12/98	Mobile	A <sup>c</sup>	18
98-4	Ross's Goose	1/23/98	Lauderdale	A	19
98-5	Ross's Goose	1/31/98	Montgomery	A	20
98-6	Lesser Black-backed Gull	12/14/96	Colbert	A	12
98-7	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2/13/98	Baldwin	A	13
98-8	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2/21/98	Baldwin	A	14
98-9	Ash-throated Flycatcher	2/25/98	Perry	A	19
98-10	Sage Thrasher	12/27/97	Baldwin	A	4
98-11	Red-necked Phalarope	11/15/97	Jefferson	A	11
98-12	Bridled Tern	9/20/97	pelagic <sup>d</sup>	A	17
98-13	Dusky Flycatcher	9/26/97	Baldwin	A	1
98-14	Wilson's Storm-Petrel	6/28/97	pelagic	A	16

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TABLE 1. Continued.

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Decision	AL Status
98-15	Leach's Storm-Petrel	6/28/97	pelagic	A	4
98-16	Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	6/28/97	pelagic	A	3
98-17	Bridled Tern	6/28/97	pelagic	A	18
98-18	Red-necked Grebe	2/8/97	Marshall	A	12
98-19	Yellow Rail	4/1/97	Mobile	A	12
98-20	Buff-bellied Hummingbird	3/5/97	Mobile	NI	---
98-21	Black-ch. Hummingbird	4/25/85	Mobile	NI	---
98-22	Alder Flycatcher	5/17/97	Lauderdale	A	5
98-23	Harris's Sparrow	11/15/97	Perry	A	11
98-24	Cory's Shearwater	9/20/97	pelagic	A	4
98-25	Lesser Black-backed Gull	3/8/98	Marshall	A	15
98-26	Wilson's Storm-Petrel	5/23/98	pelagic	A	17
98-27	Wilson's Storm-Petrel	7/11/98	pelagic	A	18
98-28	Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	5/23/98	pelagic	A	4
98-29	Band-rumped Storm-Petrel	7/11/98	pelagic	A	5
98-30	Black-bellied W.-Duck	8/2/97	Perry	NO <sup>a</sup>	---
98-31	Ross's Goose	1/24/98	Barbour	A	20+
98-32	Hudsonian Godwit	5/10/98	Colbert	A	15
98-33	Ruff	5/17/98	Mobile	A	4
98-34	Red-necked Phalarope	5/22/98	Mobile	A	17
98-35	Red-necked Phalarope	5/23/98	pelagic	A	18
98-36	Pomarine Jaeger	3/28/98	pelagic	A	19
98-37	Pomarine Jaeger	5/23/98	pelagic	A	20
98-38	Lesser Black-backed Gull	3/25/98	Marshall	A	16
98-39	Bridled Tern	7/11/98	pelagic	A	19
98-40	Couch's/Tropical Kingbird	5/22/98	Mobile	A	---
98-41	Cave Swallow	4/11/98	Baldwin	A	11
98-42	Lark Bunting	7/18/98	Baldwin	A	6
98-43	Shiny Cowbird	4/27/98	Baldwin	A	16
98-44	Shiny Cowbird	4/28/98	Mobile	A	17

<sup>a</sup> number of accepted records<sup>b</sup> not accepted due to identification questions<sup>c</sup> accepted<sup>d</sup> Gulf of Mexico waters out to 200 nautical miles from Mobile and/or Baldwin counties<sup>e</sup> not accepted due to origin questions

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

*1999 Evaluations.*— In 1999, 33 records from 15 observers were reviewed (Table 2). Thirty-one were accepted, one was not accepted, and one remains pending.

TABLE 2. Evaluations by the 1999 Alabama Bird Records Committee of 33 records from 15 observers.

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Decision	AL Status <sup>a</sup>
99-1	Cory's Shearwater	10/4/98	pelagic <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>c</sup>	5
99-2	Sooty Shearwater	1/2/99	Baldwin	A	10
99-3	Roseate Spoonbill	9/16/98	Montgomery	A	13
99-4	Roseate Spoonbill	9/25/98	Mobile	A	14
99-5	Roseate Spoonbill	11/13/98	Mobile	A	15
99-6	Roseate Spoonbill	9/29/98	Baldwin	A	16
99-7	Roseate Spoonbill	10/4/98	Baldwin	A	17
99-8	Roseate Spoonbill	10/20/98	Mobile	A	18
99-9	Pomarine Jaeger	9/12/98	pelagic	A	21
99-10	White-faced Ibis	10/27/98	Mobile	A	10
99-11	Eurasian Wigeon	11/14/98	Morgan	A	7
99-12	Purple Sandpiper	1/2/99	Baldwin	A	1
99-13	California Gull	11/30/98	Marshall	A	3
99-14	Iceland Gull	4/16/99	Mobile	Pending <sup>d</sup>	---
99-15	Lesser Bl.-backed Gull	11/28/98	Lauderdale	A	17
99-16	Lesser Bl.-backed Gull	12/19/98	Colbert	A	20
99-17	Lesser Bl.-backed Gull	1/17/99	Colbert	A	18
99-18	Lesser Bl.-backed Gull	1/24/99	Marshall	A	19
99-19	record withdrawn				---
99-20	Black-legged Kittiwake	4/14/99	Baldwin	A	12
99-21	Bridled Tern	9/30/98	Henry	A	21
99-22	Bridled Tern	10/4/98	pelagic	A	20
99-23	Alder Flycatcher	9/22/98	Jefferson	A	6
99-24	Alder Flycatcher	9/23/98	Baldwin	A	7
99-25	Alder Flycatcher	4/22/99	Montgomery	NI	---
99-26	Willow Flycatcher	9/21/97	Jefferson	A	7
99-27	Willow Flycatcher	9/22/97	Jefferson	A	8
99-28	Willow Flycatcher	5/12/98	Jefferson	A	9
99-29	Willow Flycatcher	8/28/98	Baldwin	A	10
99-30	Willow Flycatcher	9/23/98	Baldwin	A	11
99-31	Bullock's Oriole	4/24/99	Jefferson	A	13
99-32	Willow Flycatcher	5/1/86	Baldwin	A	12

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

TABLE 2. Continued

Record No.	Species	Date	County	Decision	AL Status
99-33	Willow Flycatcher	5/13/93	Madison	A	14
99-34	Willow Flycatcher	5/6/95	Colbert	A	13

<sup>a</sup>number of accepted records

<sup>b</sup>Gulf of Mexico waters out to 200 nautical miles from Mobile and/or Baldwin counties

<sup>c</sup>accepted

<sup>d</sup>under review by committee

*Alabama state list.*— During the 1998-1999 evaluation period, two species were added to the Alabama state list: Purple Sandpiper and Dusky Flycatcher. Presently, the AOS state bird list has 417 species. Of these, three are considered extinct (Passenger Pigeon, Carolina Parakeet, and Bachman's Warbler) and two extirpated from Alabama (Ivory-billed Woodpecker and Common Raven). Also, 12 of these species are listed in the hypothetical category due to the absence of a photograph or specimen, or written documentation of visual observations by at least three experienced observers.

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## SIGHTINGS: SPRING AND SUMMER 2000

Greg D. Jackson

Some seasons overwhelm us with abundance; spring 2000 did not burden us with that challenge. The decrease in *observed* migration was primarily due to dry conditions with little frontal activity, particularly on the coast. However, a great percipitation of transients occurred along the Gulf 24-25 April, and good birding was had there 18 and 22 April as well; at Birmingham, an excellent fall of migrants was experienced 28 April. Despite an overall slow period for regular migrants, several rarities added a flair of excitement. A special investigation of breeding birds in Chilton County 16-18 June uncovered many interesting finds.

March was warm with precipitation high in some areas (Birmingham) and low in others (Montgomery). April was cool throughout, with increased rainfall in the north and less than usual in the south. May, June, and July were warm and dry in most parts of our region.

This report covers the period from March through July 2000 in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle (east to the Apalachicola River). The appearance of observations in this column 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 recently revised AOS 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. Locations not indicating Florida are in Alabama. "b." = banded; "et al." = and others (small number); "FWBSF" = Ft. Walton Beach spray fields, Okaloosa County, FL; "GC" = Gulf Coast (Alabama); "ICP" = Inland Coastal Plain (Alabama); "m.ob." = many observers; "MR" = Mountain Region; "NF" = National Forest; "NWR" = National Wildlife Refuge; "p.a." = pending acceptance by the state bird records committee; "ph." = photographed; "SBC" = Summer Bird Count; "SP" = State Park;

Five early Blue-winged Teal were observed 12 March in *Lauderdale* (PDK); a pair with seven young in *Santa Rosa* 8 May (WM) furnished a scarce WP breeding record. Quite a find for the summer was a male Black Scoter 9 June at Ft. Morgan, *Baldwin* (BL, LF), providing only a second Alabama record for that season. The Long-tailed Duck 14 March in north *Shelby* (PAR) was unusual for the MR. Only occasional on the GC, a male Common Merganser was at Dauphin Island, *Mobile*, 7 April (GEH, m.ob.). Several Red-breasted Mergansers 11 March in *Perry* (DA, PJ) were noteworthy at that season for the ICP. Setting an Alabama maximum, 930 Ruddy Ducks were counted 7 March at Guntersville, *Marshall* (GDJ, DGJ).

#### RAPTORS TO TERNS

Rare as a breeder in the TV, a pair of Ospreys was observed constructing a nest 19 April on the Tennessee R. west of Florence, *Lauderdale* (DJS). An early Swallow-tailed Kite was spotted in south *Mobile* 8 March (JFP). Rarely-reported, a Swallow-tailed nest was found in north *Baldwin* 22 June (CP, BS, ECS); two large nestlings were present, and one had fledged three days later. Ten of these elegant birds were spotted as far north as south *Pickens* 29 July (GJH, m.ob.), and a single Swallow-tailed 30 July in Vestavia, *Jefferson* (ER) provided only the third MR record. An early Mississippi Kite was in *Elmore* 22 March (RR), and over 100 in the northwestern ICP 29 July (GJH, m.ob.) set a new state maximum. Our national bird continued a slow increase as a breeding bird in Alabama. A nest with two young eagles was located 25 April at Weiss L., *Cherokee* (GLH), and a pair was seen at L. Jordan in *Chilton* 18 June (DTM et al.).

Three American Kestrels, including one pair, in Talladega NF, *Chilton*, 17 June (GDJ, DGJ) were noteworthy; after years of decline, the species appears to be increasing in the state as a breeder. Unusual inland in winter, a Merlin was spotted 11 March in *Perry* (DA, PJ). Annually recorded at Dauphin I., the reclusive Black Rail was heard 26 April (RC et al.). A King Rail called 23 April at Oakland Marsh (JTG), known as a regular spot for this scarce TV species; eleven Kings, including one on a nest, furnished an inland maximum 8 June at WTF (TAP). The American Coot 29 May at East L., *Jefferson* (JL) was late.

Encouraging news for a declining coastal bird, 17 Wilson's Plovers were counted 24 July on the Navarre Flats, *Santa Rosa*, FL (RAD). Very rare in the WP, an



## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

American Oystercatcher was at Ft. Pickens, *Escambia*, 20 April (LRD). An excellent inland sighting, 12-14 American Avocets were at Wilson Dam near Florence 28 April (DL, GB). In nearby *Colbert* 17 April, 51 Lesser Yellowlegs represented a good inland gathering for spring (DJS); if not summering, three Lessers near Florence 25 June (TMH) probably were early migrants, and were earlier than previous "fall" inland records. The Upland Sandpiper 16 July at WTF (SER) was ahead of schedule. A Whimbrel 22 March at Ft. Pickens (TAP) set a new early WP record, and 42 birds in *Escambia* 20 April (A&DF) furnished a WP maximum. One Long-billed Curlew returned early to the Mobile Causeway 13 July (M&KW). An astounding 40 Marbled Godwits were recorded in *Escambia*, FL, 20 April (A&DF); two were unusual in that county at the early date of 30 July (RAD).

Setting early local records, a Pectoral Sandpiper was in *Shelby* 4 March (MW&JR), and two were at WTF 16 July (SER). First for the WP, a **Curlew Sandpiper** was a shock at FWBSF 12-15 April (RAD, m.ob., v.t. PB, p.a.). Furnishing an early north Alabama date, a Stilt Sandpiper was at Town Creek Marsh, *Colbert*, 23 March (GDJ, DGJ). Also setting an early local record, a Wilson's Phalarope appeared 14 July at FWBSF (DMW). The Red Phalarope 17 March at Vandiver, *Shelby* (DH, HHK, v.t. GDJ, DGJ, p.a.) was only the 19<sup>th</sup> recorded for the state, and one of few for the MR. Rare inland, single Laughing Gulls were in *Morgan* 13 May (CDC, MSG) and in *Chilton* 17 June (ECS). A flock of 25 Caspian Terns 24 April at Wilson Dam (TMH) was impressive. Early Caspians included a lone bird 2 July in west *Lauderdale* (TMH), setting an early arrival date for inland Alabama, and another 17 July in *Choctaw* (SWM). The Black Tern 8 June near Florence (TMH) was behind schedule.

## DOVES TO SWALLOWS

At the northern edge of the breeding range, two pairs of Common Ground-Doves, one with a fledgling, were a surprise 17-18 June in northeast *Chilton* (RRS, MBS). Not often detected inland in migration, a Black-billed Cuckoo was a treat in *Shelby* 5 May (HHW, S&DH). The Yellow-billed Cuckoo 5 April in *Elmore* (PR) furnished an early arrival record for the ICP. Early Chuck-will's-widows included calling birds 27 March at Ft. Morgan (PBI) and 5 April in *Elmore* (RR). Two calling **Vaux's Swifts** were identified 18 April at Ft. Pickens (RAD, p.a.), providing a first WP record. Now regular in the WP, a Buff-bellied Hummingbird was in Pensacola 8 April (JW). Ahead of the pack, a Ruby-throated

Hummingbird furnished an ICP arrival date in *Butler* 7 March (CK). A very rare **Calliope Hummingbird** was banded in Pensacola 2 March (FB, IR et al.).

An outstanding find, a **Tropical Kingbird**, first for the WP, was identified by voice 16 May at Gulf Breeze, *Santa Rosa* (RAD). Rare in spring, a Western Kingbird was spotted 29 April at FWBSF (RAD, PC&BT). Gray Kingbird apparently is still absent as a breeder from the Alabama coast and from Ft. Pickens, FL. The species nested at a few spots this summer on the WP mainland and at Gulf Breeze, FL (*vide* RAD). One Gray Kingbird seen over 100 km inland in north *Baldwin* 3 June (BE, BS, VBF, m.ob.) was quite a surprise, and only the second inland for the state. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher continued a slow but steady increase as a breeder in Alabama, particularly in the TV. This spring and summer, at least 13 birds were discovered in the TV in *Lauderdale* (PDK), *Colbert* (DJS), *Morgan* (SWM, S&DH), *Madison* (KW, HD, DRC, RC et al.) and *Jackson* (JH, D&KJ). The only ICP report this year was of a pair in *Hale* 20 May (DPG). A Scissor-tailed 20 May in southwest *Mobile* (KSF et al.) furnished a new late GC date.

Only the fourth in spring for the GC, a Bell's Vireo was a nice find 28 April at Ft. Morgan (HH, MC). Though Blue-headed Vireo breeds at upper elevations in the Talladega Mountains, two at lower sites in *Randolph* 4 June (RRR) were unusual. Two Warbling Vireos returned early 22 April to the nesting site at Waterloo, *Lauderdale* (JTG). Rare spring coastal records included Warblings 24-25 April at Ft. Morgan (RAD, LRD, BS et al.) and 25 April at Ft. Pickens, FL (RAD, LRD et al.). Black-whiskered Vireo is regular in small numbers on the coast in spring. Three banded at Ft. Morgan 3 April (RRS, MBS, m.ob.) established a new early date for Alabama. Latest of several Ft. Morgan records this year was a singing Black-whiskered 15 May (BS). Fish Crow is rare in most of north Alabama; one was calling in east *Jefferson* 2 April (SWM), four were noted in southeast *Jefferson* 16 April (GDJ, DGJ), and another vocalized in north *Shelby* 2 May (GDJ, DGJ). Three Horned Larks continued at the sole ICP nesting site at WTF 18 May (TAP).

Casual breeders, a pair of Tree Swallows with four young nested this summer at Key Cave NWR, *Lauderdale* (CDC, PDK). It was a banner year for the expanding inland population of Cliff Swallows. Forty were seen as early as 23 March at a normal breeding site in *Lauderdale* (GDJ, DGJ). Many reports were submitted of Cliffs nesting in previously unknown areas. These included birds at Jones

## ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

Bluff Dam, *Lowndes/Autauga*, 11 May (TAP), at L. Wedowee Dam, *Randolph*, 4 June (RRR), over 80 on the Chattahoochee R. in *Russell* 10 June (WFC), a pair in southeast *Chilton* 7 June (GDJ), 254 Cliffs in eastern *Chilton* 17-18 June (AOS), 84 birds on the Black Warrior R., *Hale*, 24 June (SWM), and over 200 at West Point L., *Chambers*, 16 July (GEH). The Cliff Swallows in *Russell* mark the southernmost inland population in Alabama; observers should check farther south on the Chattahoochee, Alabama, and Tombigbee Rivers in coming seasons. Amazing numbers of Cave Swallows were recorded this spring on the coast. Representing the 12<sup>th</sup> Alabama record, an astounding five birds were at Ft. Morgan 4-12 April (GDJ, DGJ, LRD, m.ob., v.t., p.a.); at least one other was seen 4 April on the Mobile Causeway, *Mobile* (GDJ), for a state maximum of six that day. One Cave Swallow appeared at FWBSF 14-15 April (MR, RRo, RAD, LRD, m.ob.) for a third WP sighting, and another, perhaps one of the Ft. Morgan birds, was spotted at Dauphin I. 16 April (SRM, p.a.). An early Barn Swallow was in Montgomery 9 March (LFG).

## NUTHATCHES TO FINCHES

Running behind schedule, a Red-breasted Nuthatch was in the Bankhead NF 6 May (TMH, MA, JTG). Only the eighth in the WP since 1965, a Bewick's Wren was unexpected 9 March at FWBSF (LRD). The pair of Gray Catbirds fledging young this June in Gulf Breeze (RAD, LRD) provided a first WP breeding record. A late American Pipit was observed 24 April in *Lauderdale* (JTG). The flock of Cedar Waxwings 15 May at Dauphin I. (SJP, LP) was tardy; tying a late GC date, a Tennessee Warbler was also seen that day (LP). Rare but regular in spring in north Alabama, a Nashville Warbler was in Birmingham 28 April (LFG), and two were in *Madison* 30 April (GDJ, DGJ). A Northern Parula 23 March in Birmingham (RRR) was early, and a Cape May Warbler 30 April in *Montgomery* (LFG, FB, LM et al.) was unusual for the ICP. Rare inland in spring, a singing Black-throated Blue Warbler was in Birmingham 28 April (LFG). The Blackburnian Warbler 7 April in *Madison* (HD) was ahead of schedule, as were several Yellow-throated Warblers 11 March in *Hale* (DA, PJ). Setting an early ICP date, a singing Blackpoll Warbler was in *Monroe* 13 April (MR, BH).

Unexpected on the Chilton County SBC, and the first in summer for the ICP, singing Ovenbirds were documented 16-17 June in both the northeast and southwest portions of the county (SWM, S&DH). Earliest ever for the ICP, a Swainson's Warbler appeared in *Butler* 31 March (CK); rare in the TV, the regular

bird at Wheeler NWR, *Morgan*, returned 1 May (CDC). A Louisiana Waterthrush furnished an early state record 2 March in *Butler* (CK). Always a treat, two rare Connecticut Warblers were in *Madison* 16 May (MSG, CDC, DRC, RC). Earliest for inland Alabama, an adult male Mourning Warbler was discovered 25 April in *Florence* (TMH); rare but regular, especially in the TV, singing Mournings were in *Madison* 14 May (MSG) and 25 May (MS). Also in *Madison*, a Wilson's Warbler 16 May (CDC, MSG, DRC, RC) set a TV departure date.

Like the Ovenbirds, four Scarlet Tanagers, including a pair, in west *Chilton* 17 June (PAR, S&DH) were surprising and represented the southernmost June records for Alabama. With only four previous spring records for the state, single Clay-colored Sparrows appeared 22-23 April at *Dauphin I.* (WJB, m.ob.) and 29 April at *Ft. Morgan* (BS). Lark Sparrow continued a steady increase as a breeder in the TV and ICP. New sites were discovered in *Lauderdale* (JTG, CDC, PDK, TMH, m.ob.), *Autauga* (SER, LFG, m.ob.), and *Chilton* (GEH). Rare in the WP, a Lincoln's Sparrow was at *Ft. Pickens* 20-23 March (TAP, MR, SN et al.). An inland surprise, a Painted Bunting was in *Auburn* 29-30 April (SD).

Latest on record for the TV, a Bobolink was spotted in *Lauderdale* 6 June (CDC). The male Yellow-headed Blackbird at *Dauphin I.* 29-30 April (JFP, JP) was a rare pleasure. Also on *Dauphin*, a male Shiny Cowbird 21-22 April (KN, JRW, ph., p.a.) furnished the 18<sup>th</sup> Alabama record. Possibly breeding in a new area of the state, a Baltimore Oriole was singing 4 June in *Randolph* (RRR). Eight Red Crossbills continued into the spring in *Cleburne* (BS). Two tarrying Pine Siskins were in east *Jefferson* to 25 May (RRS).

**Cited Observers (area compilers in boldface):** Alabama Ornithological Society, Moez Ali, David Arnold, Fred Bassett, Paul Blackburn, Paul Blevins (PBl), Gary Breece, William J. Bremser, Walt F. Chambers, Michael Collins, C. Dwight Cooley, Dean R. Cutten, Raelene Cutten, Harry Dean, Lucy R. Duncan, **Robert A. Duncan (northwest Florida)**, William W. Duncan, Betsy Eager, Ann and Dan Forster, Kathy S. Freeland, Laureen Fregeau, Venetia B. Friend, Larry F. Gardella, Jeff T. Garner, M. Scott Gravette, Thomas M. Haggerty, Stan and Dana Hamilton, Debra Handley, Greg J. Harber, Barry Hart, John Henderson, Gordon L. Hight, Geoff E. Hill, Howard Home, Debra G. Jackson, **Greg D. Jackson (Alabama)**, Daniel and Kathy Jacobson, Philip Johnson, Jud Johnston, Charles Kennedy, Helen H. Kittinger, Paul D. Kittle, Bob Leier, Jenny Loggins, Donnie

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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## 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; thaggert@unanov.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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