

Greenville County Bird Club Trip Report

Date: November 30 - December 2, 2007

Location: Huntington Beach State Park and surrounding coastal area.

Comments: submitted by Paul Serridge, trip leader.

Ten GCBC members and guests took part in the weekend trip to the northern SC coastal area with the focal point being the Huntington Beach State Park, one of the premier birding sites in the state.

Six members were able to do some pre-trip birding in Litchfield on Friday morning and saw two species which were rather unexpected: American Avocet and Snow Goose (dark phase).

The Friday afternoon excursion to piers in Myrtle Beach to look for sea-ducks, loons etc. was unproductive. The sea was calm and there was an almost complete absence of target species apart from one small flock of Black Scoters seen far out over the ocean, a large flock of Northern Gannets almost on the horizon, and a solitary Common Loon.

A quick stop at the boardwalk in Murrell's Inlet yielded American Oystercatcher and Black-crowned Night Heron but light was fading and passing boats caused both birds to disappear soon after we spotted them. The afternoon resulted in a disappointingly low 29 species.

The Saturday trip to Huntington Beach State Park was successful and enjoyable. We were joined by two local area birders, Steve and Barbara Thomas from Conway. We started at the causeway bordering Mullet Pond where there were numerous duck species, herons, egrets and 6 Wood Storks. The feeders at the Education Center were fairly quiet but a walk on the boardwalk afforded great views of a Clapper Rail which was uncharacteristically swimming back and forth in a creek.

It was cool as we walked along the beach to the jetty (but fortunately not nearly as cold and windy as the February outing).

We observed 2 Piping Plovers on the beach and 3 Purple Sandpipers feeding with a flock of Ruddy Turnstones on the jetty. The sandy point to the west of the jetty had roosting terns (Forster's, Royal, Sandwich), shorebirds, gulls, and 8 American Oystercatchers. We also spotted a third Piping Plover.

After a picnic lunch in warm sunshine we visited Sandpiper Pool but there were not many birds (a lot different than February's trip when the pool turned up Sora and Least Bittern).

On a second stop at the Education Center feeders we added several common passerines to our list as well as Common Ground Dove.

We then birded the southern end of Mullet Pond and added Red-breasted Merganser, Little Blue Heron (immature) and Bald Eagle (adult) to the list. After a walk around Atalaya and the surrounding open areas we drove to a small boat launching area just north of the Park off US17.

We ended the day with a return trip to Murrell's Inlet and were able to observe roosting Black-crowned Night Herons (3 adults, 1 immature) in good light.

The day's total was a very satisfying 74 species.

On Sunday morning we walked about 1 mile on Litchfield Beach to the southern tip and the inlet between Litchfield and Pawleys Island where we observed a large flock of roosting Black Skimmers (estimated at up to 500 birds), Forster's Terns, gulls (including 4 Bonaparte's Gulls) and a few shorebirds. We ended the trip at the southern tip of Pawleys Island where we saw another flock (~ 100 birds) of Black Skimmers.

The complete trip list, which totaled 87 species, follows.

Snow Goose

Mallard

Green-winged Teal

Northern Shoveler

Redhead

Ring-necked Duck

Lesser Scaup

Black Scoter

Bufflehead

Hooded Merganser

Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Common Loon
Pied-billed Grebe
Horned Grebe
Northern Gannet
Brown Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
White Ibis
Wood Stork
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Clapper Rail
American Coot
Black-bellied Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
American Avocet
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Purple Sandpiper
Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Laughing Gull
Bonaparte's Gull

Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Forster's Tern
Black Skimmer
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared Dove
Mourning Dove
Common Ground Dove
Belted Kingfisher
Downy Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
Loggerhead Shrike
Blue Jay
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Carolina Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Savannah Sparrow
Song Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird
Boat-tailed Grackle
House Finch