Greenville County Bird Club Trip Report

Date: Saturday, February 22, 2014
Location: Santee National Wildlife Reserve’s Bluff Unit and Orangeburg Sod Farm
Resources: http://www.fws.gov/santee/
Leader: Denise DuPon, with Santee NWR volunteer Mary Lou Dickson
List Compilation: David Kirk
Narrative: Denise DuPon

Notable Highlights:

**Santee NWR:** Greater White-fronted, Snow, and Ross’s Geese, Sandhill Cranes, Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, Osprey, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, Wilson’s Snipes, and a singing Common Loon.

**Orangeburg Sod Farm:** Least Sandpipers and American Pipits

Duration: 8:00 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Species Total: 65

Two GCBC members were escorted by Mary Lou Dickson, a volunteer at Santee NWR, for a guided tour of the Bluff Unit at Santee NWR. The Bluff Unit was reopened after a week’s closure due to damages sustained in the recent winter storm. The remnants of the storm were still apparent as we walked the trails and roads looking for wintering waterfowl and other Santee specialties.

We started at the edge of the seasonally-closed agricultural fields, sifting through the Canada Geese looking for rarer species. Mary Lou's experienced eye quickly picked out a Greater White-fronted Goose, and with patience, we were able to identify both Snow and Ross's Geese. The same field gave us Sandhill Cranes, performing a dancing display, as well as good looks at our best raptors of the day, both an adult and an immature Bald Eagle, a Northern Harrier, an Osprey, and a Red-shouldered Hawk.

We were driven out into the fields and impoundments as Mary Lou described some of the different harvesting techniques used in wildlife management areas to support various species of birds—very interesting information! Although the far impoundments did not hold the diversity of waterfowl we have seen in previous years, we were able to get good views of American Wigeon, Gadwall, and Ruddy Ducks, until the ducks saw us and retreated farther out in the reeds. A group of six Wilson’s Snipes gave us a quick look before flying up, landing closer to us and immediately disappearing into the grass. How do they do that?!

We had a pleasant lunch on the deck at the Visitor Center, with the highlight being a singing Common Loon.

Stopping on the way home at the Orangeburg sod farm, we managed to find one more GCBC member waiting for us. His scope was on a large group of Least Sandpipers and American Pipits. Nearby was a tree with entangled white netting that almost had us convinced it was a Snowy Owl! Even though we missed on the "owl" it was a good day with a total of 65 species.
Species List:

- Ross's Goose
- Snow Goose
- Greater White-fronted Goose
- Canada Goose
- Wood Duck
- Gadwall
- American Wigeon
- Mallard
- Northern Shoveler
- Ruddy Duck
- Common Loon
- Pied-billed Grebe
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Harrier
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- American Kestrel
- American Coot
- Sandhill Crane
- Killdeer
- Least Sandpiper
- Wilson's Snipe
- Ring-billed Gull
- Rock Pigeon
- Mourning Dove
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Eastern Phoebe
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Fish Crow
- Horned Lark
- Carolina Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- Carolina Wren
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Eastern Bluebird
- Hermit Thrush
- American Robin
- Northern Mockingbird
- Brown Thrasher
- American Pipit
- Cedar Waxwing
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Palm Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Eastern Towhee
- Chipping Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow
- Northern Cardinal
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Common Grackle
- House Finch
- House Sparrow

Photos: These photos, taken on previous trips, are used with the generous permission of GCBC member Don Faulkner.