

Greenville County Bird Club Trip Report

Note: Check out the last pages to view some of Don Faulkner's spectacular **photos!!**

Date: December 7-8, 2013

Location: Santee NWR, Charleston's Pitt Street Causeway, and Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, SC

Leaders: Denise DuPon and Jeff Click

List Compilation: Denise DuPon and Jeff Click

Resources:

Santee National Wildlife Refuge: <http://www.fws.gov/santee/>
Pitt Street Causeway: <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/sites/SC/pittstreet.html>
Coastal Expeditions Tours: <http://www.coastalexpeditions.com/>
Cape Romain NWR: <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=42510>

Five GCBC members took an exciting weekend trip to the SC Coast, stopping in Santee on the way. We started at the Bluff Unit of Santee NWR, running into some old birding friends and making a few new ones as we made our way to Cantey Bay looking for waterfowl. The fog was thick and the birds were far out into the bay making identification somewhat difficult. However, we managed to find 10 species of waterfowl. Hundreds of Canada Geese were in the nearby fields, along with 22 Sandhill Cranes. After meticulously searching through the incredible number of geese, we found eight of the rare Greater White-fronted Geese gathered in a group. A couple of loud planes flew overhead, flushing most of the birds over to the water of Cantey Bay. Rushing back to the bay, we were able to see two Greater White-fronted Geese as they flew back towards the fields from which we had just left. It was worth the exercise to finally get good views of one of the target species of the trip. After lunch, the weather drastically turned colder. We headed over to the Cuddo Unit for a quick trip around the loop, managing to find among other things, a single Rusty Blackbird foraging in the woods.

In order to catch the end of the low tide, Sunday began with an early morning trip to Pitt Causeway where we had extended and close-up views of Marbled Godwits, Black-bellied Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Dowitchers, before heading north up the coast to catch the boat.

Departing from McClellanville heading towards the northern end of CRWR, with less than optimal weather, (a 50 degree day that felt like 25) our tour covered some of the best spots for wintering wildlife off the coast of SC. Due to the high tide, hundreds of American White Pelicans and American Oystercatchers huddled up on a sandbar. On several occasions, we were also able to take great looks at dolphins. We followed four Common Loons and one Red-throated Loon up the estuary, with multiple opportunities to compare the two species. While we weren't able to find the elusive Long-billed Curlew, we did manage to spot a Whimbrel along the way. The Captain of the boat knew the best sparrow spots and brought the boat up within feet of groups of Seaside, Saltmarsh, and Nelson's Sparrows. At one point, there was a Saltmarsh Sparrow within inches of the side of the boat. Coastal Expeditions did a great job leading and educating the participants, while also making the expedition fun. Don't pass up any opportunity to go on a trip with these guys. Even with the less-than-ideal weather, we are ready to go again!!

Species Total: 106

Greater White-fronted Goose	Black-bellied Plover	Brown Creeper
Canada Goose	American Oystercatcher	Winter Wren
Wood Duck	Spotted Sandpiper	Sedge Wren
Gadwall	Willet	Marsh Wren
American Wigeon	Lesser Yellowlegs	Carolina Wren
American Black Duck	Whimbrel	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Mallard	Marbled Godwit	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Northern Shoveler	Sanderling	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Northern Pintail	Western Sandpiper	Eastern Bluebird
Greater Scaup	Least Sandpiper	Hermit Thrush
Bufflehead	Dunlin	American Robin
Hooded Merganser	Short-billed Dowitcher	Northern Mockingbird
Red-breasted Merganser	Laughing Gull	Brown Thrasher
Red-throated Loon	Ring-billed Gull	European Starling
Common Loon	Herring Gull	Cedar Waxwing
Pied-billed Grebe	Great Black-backed Gull	Orange-crowned Warbler
Horned Grebe	Forster's Tern	Common Yellowthroat
Double-crested Cormorant	Royal Tern	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Anhinga	Rock Pigeon	Eastern Towhee
American White Pelican	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Field Sparrow
Brown Pelican	Mourning Dove	Savannah Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Belted Kingfisher	Nelson's Sparrow
Great Egret	Red-headed Woodpecker	Saltmarsh Sparrow
Snowy Egret	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Seaside Sparrow
Little Blue Heron	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Song Sparrow
Tricolored Heron	Downy Woodpecker	Swamp Sparrow
White Ibis	Northern Flicker	White-throated Sparrow
Black Vulture	Pileated Woodpecker	Northern Cardinal
Turkey Vulture	Eastern Phoebe	Red-winged Blackbird
Osprey	White-eyed Vireo	Rusty Blackbird
Bald Eagle	Blue-headed Vireo	Common Grackle
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Blue Jay	Boat-tailed Grackle
Cooper's Hawk	American Crow	House Finch
Red-tailed Hawk	Fish Crow	American Goldfinch
Clapper Rail	Carolina Chickadee	
Sandhill Crane	Tufted Titmouse	

Photographs:

All photos courtesy of GCBC member Don Faulkner.

To view more of Don's photographs visit: http://www.flickr.com/photos/faulkners_fowl_shots/

American Oystercatchers



Whimbrel

Marbled Godwit





Common Loon



Red-throated Loon



**Red-breasted
Mergansers**

American White Pelicans



**Note the size variations
among the Brown and
White Pelicans.**





Nelson's sharp-tailed Sparrow



Seaside Sparrow