

SIGHTINGS

M I D - J U L Y T O E A R L Y A U G U S T 2 0 0 9

"Sightings" appears monthly, alternating between *Winging It* and *Birding*, with the latest news, reports, and rumors from the ABA Area and Mexico. Sightings are compiled from online discussion groups and RBAs, with valuable contributions from a growing network of informants continent-wide. Readers should note, however, that none of these reports has yet been vetted by a records committee. All birders are urged to submit documentation of rare sightings to the appropriate state or provincial committees. For full analysis of these and other bird observations, subscribe to *North American Birds*, the richly illustrated journal of ornithological record published by the ABA <aba.org/pubs/nab>. Italicized place names denote counties or parishes.

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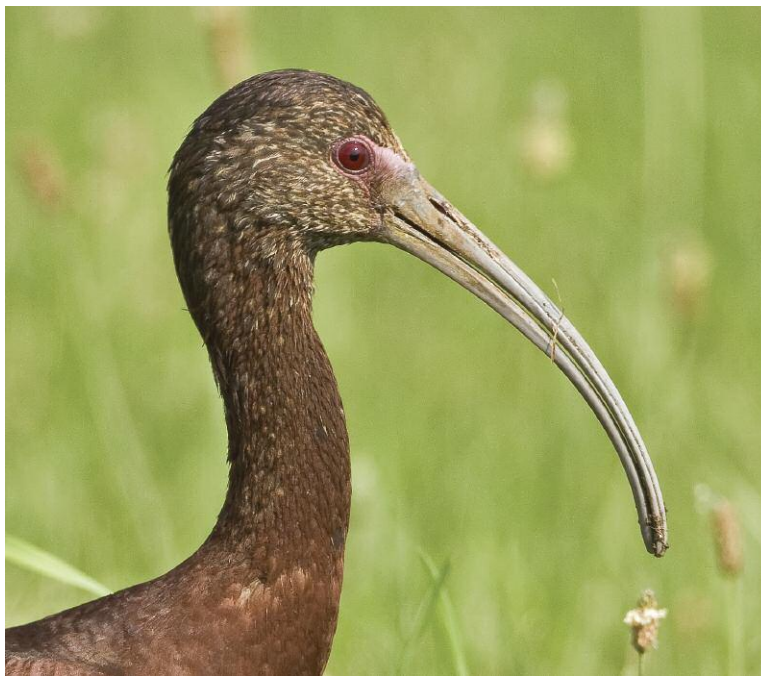
Summary: The potential new ABA Area records just keep coming! This month, it was a **Brown-backed Solitaire** discovered and called in by a camp of teenage birders with an iPhone in AZ's Huachuca Mts. The species has been seen a number of times in AZ and TX, but all previous reports have been rejected due to questions of origin, including a very suspicious bird from the border in *San Diego, CA*. Because of its incredibly beautiful song of cascading tinkles and gurgles, the species is commonly kept as a caged bird in Middle America. If you've never had the profound privilege of sharing time and space with a singing male, treat yourself by listening to a recording online <<http://tinyurl.com/l3yypg>>. The current individual appeared at a time and in a habitat suggestive of a genuine vagrant. Unprecedented numbers of **Cook's Petrels** were seen off CA. "Southern" waterbirds were still enthralling birders in the Midwest and along the Mid-Atlantic coast. Newly discovered potential 1st state/provincial records came from SD (Black-bellied Whistling-Duck), WI (Mottled Duck), ME (**Black-browed Albatross**), NM (Long-billed

Murrelet), IL (Green Violetear), NB (Thick-billed Kingbird), and Nuevo León (Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush). Species extending their breeding ranges into new states included American White Pelican (IL), Caspian Tern (IL), and White-eared Hummingbird (TX). In AZ, an **Aztec Thrush**, the persistent **Sinaloa Wren**, and a **Plain-capped Starthroat** were noteworthy.

Southeast: Seven Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued at *Blakeley I., AL*; *Baker, GA* hosted the species

Mid-Atlantic: A King Eider was found on a trip to *Poplar I., Talbot, MD* 7/21. A fishing boat well off *Montauk, NY* encountered 4 Audubon's Shearwaters 7/25. *Assateague I., MD* hosted a Brown Booby 7/22. Very rare in PA, a Brown Pelican was observed on the *Susquehanna R. in Lancaster* 8/2. The "Great White Egret" (of the Old World population) continued at *Chincoteague NWR, Accomack, VA*. **Roseate Spoonbills** continued to be seen in *New Castle, DE* and at *Forsythe NWR, NJ*. A Sandwich Tern appeared 8/2 in *Suffolk, NY*.

Northeast: An Eared Grebe continued intermittently in *Sanford, ME*; a Purple Gallinule was photographed at the same location 8/6. A 7/18 pelagic off MA produced a Black-capped Petrel and record numbers of Audubon's Shearwaters. A **Black-browed Albatross**, ME's 1st, was photographed in waters off *Seal I. and Matinicus Rock*; a **Red-billed Tropicbird** in the same area has been present off and on for 3 summers. One of only a handful of CT records, a White-faced



White-faced Ibis. *Milford, Connecticut; 3 August 2009.* © Mark Szantyr.

in late July; and the *Shelby, TN* nest produced young. WV's 2nd Tricolored Heron was present in *Berkeley* 7/26–8/2. A Roseate Spoonbill was in *Chattanooga, TN* 7/6. A Swallow-tailed Kite flew over *Cocke, TN* 8/8.

Ibis was in *Milford, New Haven* 7/30+. A Sabine's Gull frequented the NH coast through much of July. Mississippi Kites again nested in *Hartford, CT* and *Rockingham, NH*. White-winged Doves turned up in NL and MA. Black-



Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks. Lincoln County, South Dakota; 21 July 2009. © Douglas Chapman.

billed Cuckoos were found (dead) in Ferryland 7/11 and (alive) in Glovertown, NL 7/29. A **Thick-billed Kingbird** was reported from Grand Manan I. 8/8; if confirmed, it would be NB's 1st record. Two male Sedge Wrens set up territory near South Windsor, Hartford, CT. A Western Tanager was photographed 7/14 in Branford, New Haven, CT.

North-Central: SD's 1st **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks**, a pair, were observed in Lincoln 7/17–22. A possible imm. **Mottled Duck** was photographed in Dane, WI 7/31; if accepted, it will be the state's 1st. Less equivocal records came from Monroe, IL and Polk, IA. At least 25 American White Pelican chicks hatched at Upper Mississippi R. NWR in Carroll, providing a 1st breeding record for IL. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, a **Roseate Spoonbill**, and at least 13 White Ibises continued at Greene, IN's Goose Pond. Additional White Ibis reports came from KS, IL, IN, and OH. A Roseate

Spoonbill flew over Carlyle Lake, Clinton, IL 7/30. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was found near Minneapolis, MN 7/23. A Brown Pelican was along the Clark, IN–Oldham, KY line 7/24. An Anhinga was reported from Four Rivers Conservation Area, MO 7/26. A Purple Gallinule was found dead in a parking lot in Dane, WI 7/30. Piping Plovers attempted to nest in IL for the first time in decades. Thirteen Red Knots were in West

Fargo, ND 8/1. Longridge Pt., ON (on James Bay) hosted a male Curlew Sandpiper 7/17. A Ruff was found in Nemaha, KS 7/11. An impressive 40+ Little Gulls frequented Point Pelee, ON; a Black-headed Gull appeared there 7/23. An adult Laughing Gull was in Houston, MN 7/27. A California Gull, long present in Lake, IL (where the species is now seemingly regular), made its way just across the state line 7/10 into WI, where there were only 7 prior records. A colony of 200 Caspian Terns was found breeding in northeastern IL, a 1st for the state. An adult Black Guillemot was found at Long-

ridge Pt., ON 7/18. IL's 1st **Green Violetear** appeared briefly at a St. Clair residence 8/10. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was discovered 7/25 in Dodge, MN. KS's 6th record of Cave Swallow involved 3 individuals in Barton 7/29.



Brown-backed Solitaire. Ramsey Canyon, Arizona; 30 July 2009. © Christopher H. Taylor.

First discovered 5/29, NE's 1st **Fish Crow** was still being observed along the lower Platte R. in Cass, NE; MI's was still in Berrien. It was a great summer for Kirtland's Warbler in WI: 6 nests produced at least 23 young in Adams, where the 1st confirmed breeding in WI occurred only 2 years ago. A Lazuli Bunting was discovered paired up with an Indigo Bunting 7/18 in Sibley, MN. A new northernmost record for the species, a **Henslow's Sparrow** seemed to be on territory along the shores of James Bay at Paskwachi Pt., ON 7/27–29. An unprecedented IL record for July, a Lincoln's Sparrow was photographed in Sangamon 7/20. Montrose Point, Chicago, IL hosted a Lark Bunting 8/10.



Sinaloa Wren. Patagonia, Arizona; 16 June 2009. © Monte M. Taylor.

South-Central: A 1st-cycle "Atlantic" Brant was found



Cook's Petrel. 33.437907° N, 120.784910° W (Patton Escarpment northeast of San Juan Seamount), Santa Barbara County; 25 July 2009. © Bill Schmoker.

along the TX coast at Brazoria NWR 7/27. An imm. Brown Noddy was reported from Port Aransas, TX 7/9. An impressive 5 **White-eared Hummingbirds** were banded near Fort Davis, including a local juvenile, confirming the species as a new breeder in TX. The *Cameron*, LA Great Kiskadees were observed constructing a new nest 7/26. A **Green-breasted Mango** was seen 8/2 south of Austin in *Hayes*, TX.

Mexico: Amazingly, without any unusual weather to explain its presence, an emaciated adult **Sooty Tern** was photographed in the interior of the Yucatán Peninsula on the road into Calakmul Biosphere Reserve, Campeche 7/7. A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was found 7/8 at Celestún, Yucatán where the species' status remains unclear. With regular coverage now, Nuevo León has routinely been producing new state records, like a territorial **Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush** at Cumbres de Monterrey NP. Seldom seen on migration, a **Golden-cheeked Warbler** was also found in Nuevo León.

Interior West: A **Hooded Merganser** was photographed in *Cochise*, AZ 8/6.

A juv. **Reddish Egret** visited *Custer*, CO. A small movement of **Tricolored Herons** was noted in NM 7/29–8/1. Birders discovered a 1st-cycle **Mississippi Kite** 6/12 near Caliente, *Lincoln*, NV. A **Red Knot** was in *Maricopa*, AZ 8/7. Two pairs of **Least Terns** nested—one pair successfully—in *Maricopa*, AZ. NM's 1st **Long-billed Murrelet** was salvaged near Carlsbad mid-July. A **Black Swift** was reported from the Chiricahua Mts. 8/5; AZ has only sight records of this species. A **Plain-capped**

Starthroat appeared at a *Santa Cruz*, AZ feeder 8/10. The *Santa Cruz*, AZ **Sinaloa Wren** continued, alone, in the vicinity of a dummy nest. A **Black-capped Gnatcatcher** was found 7/18 in *Hidalgo*, NM's Guadalupe Mts. A **Brown-backed Solitaire** was discovered in Miller Canyon, *Cochise*, AZ 7/16; what was likely the same bird then appeared in nearby Ramsey Canyon 7/18 and was last reported there 8/1. The same location produced a female **Aztec Thrush** 7/31, and it was reported again 8/10. *Roosevelt*, NM hosted a male **Prairie Warbler** at one of its famous migrant traps 8/9. **Rufous-capped Warblers** continued at Patagonia Sonoita Creek Preserve and in Florida Canyon, AZ. *Madera Canyon*, AZ's **Flame-colored Tanager** was last seen 7/30; there was no indication of breeding this year at that site, but a pair fledged young in the Chiricahuas. A **Five-striped Sparrow** continued to be seen erratically in *Pima*, well northeast of its usual range.

Pacific Coast: An amazing show of the usually hard-to-see **Cook's Petrel** occurred off the CA coast 7/25–8/6; *Ventura*, *Santa Barbara*, *San Luis Obispo*,

Monterey, *Santa Cruz*, and *San Mateo* all picked up records, with high counts of 136 off Santa Barbara 7/25 and 138 off Monterey 8/2. A **Stejneger's Petrel** was 30 miles off Monterey 7/31. Three "Dark-rumped" (probably Hawaiian) **Petrels** were found off the central CA coast 8/2. *Santa Cruz*, CA's 1st **Short-tailed Albatross**, a banded imm., was found offshore 7/30. A juv. **Red-billed Tropicbird** in coastal *Orange*, CA 8/2 was out of place. **Little Blue Herons** were in *Lincoln*, OR, and *Alameda* and *San Mateo*, CA. OR's 9th **Common Moorhen** appeared at Borax Lake, *Harney* 7/4. A **Red-necked Stint** was photographed at Ocean Shores, WA 7/24. A **Hudsonian Godwit** was in *Arcata*, *Humboldt*, CA 8/4. A **Sooty Tern** was seen at Bolsa Chica, *Orange*, CA 7/27 and 8/1. Two **Long-billed Murrelets** were in *Del Norte*, CA the first week of August; another was in *Humboldt*. **Xantus's Murrelets** seemed to be pushing quite far north; 2 were seen offshore in *Coos*, OR 8/7. A **Willow Flycatcher** was reported in July from AK's *Kenai* area. **Eastern Kingbirds** successfully nested in *Lassen* and *Modoc*, CA; additional birds were found in *Los Angeles* and *Humboldt*. **Red-eyed Vireos** were noted in *Yolo*, *Modoc*, and *San Diego*, CA. CA's 1st summer record of **Yellow-green Vireo** occurred in *San Diego* 7/22–7/27. A **Western Scrub-Jay** continued near Vancouver, BC. **Northern Parulas** attempted to raise a clutch in *Los Angeles*, CA. **Hooded Warblers** summered in *Humboldt* and *Mono*, CA. *Metochosin*, Vancouver I., BC hosted a **Green-tailed Towhee** 7/28. The *DeChambeau* ponds in *Mono*, CA hosted a **Lark Bunting** 8/4. An **Indigo Bunting** frequented *Surrey*, BC 7/22+. Birders visiting the *Waikamoi* preserve on Maui, HI 7/27 found several 'Akohekohe and at least 3 **Maui Parrotbills**.