

## General Field Notes

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*General Field Notes* briefly report such items as rare sightings, unusual behaviors, or significant nesting records; or summaries of such items. Submit manuscripts to the appropriate state editor.

*First, second, or third sightings of species in either state must be submitted to the appropriate Bird Records Committee prior to publication in The Chat.*

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## Recent Limpkin Records from South Carolina

**John Cely,<sup>1</sup> Giff Beaton,<sup>2</sup> Jerry Bright,<sup>3</sup> Andy Day,<sup>4</sup> and Perry Nugent<sup>5</sup>**

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Post and Gauthreaux (Status and Distribution of South Carolina Birds. Contrib. XVIII, Charleston Museum, 1989:19) classify the Limpkin (*Aramus guarauna*) in South Carolina as “casual” with documentation consisting of three specimens, two from Aiken County in October 1890, and one from Charleston County in July 1904. Several Limpkin sight records for South Carolina also exist but no details have been published (Post and Gauthreaux 1989). We reviewed back issues of *The Chat* from 1988 through No. 1, 2002, and found no Limpkin reports from South Carolina during that period. We report here six South Carolina Limpkin records from 2001 and 2002, five of which are photo-documented.

On 1 March 2001, Beaton photographed a Limpkin in an impounded marsh off the Laurel Hill Drive at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Jasper County. This bird apparently stayed in the area until early May.

On 13 May 2001, Nugent photographed a Limpkin at Magnolia Gardens in Charleston County, while on 31 May 2001, Day photographed two Limpkins perched together on a limb on the Horry County side of Bull Creek (the dividing line between Georgetown and Horry Counties) near Port Harrelson Landing.

The last Limpkin record for 2001 was by Bright who took the accompanying photograph near Riser's Old River in the Upper Santee Swamp, Sumter County, on 2 September.



**Limpkin in the Upper Santee Swamp, Sumter County, South Carolina, 2 September 2001; photographed by Jerry Bright**

In 2002, Nugent saw a Limpkin at Caw Caw Park in Charleston County on 28 August but was not able to photograph it.

What could account for the unprecedented number of Limpkin records in South Carolina during such a short span? The state of Florida, where the entire United States Limpkin breeding population resides, has been undergoing a prolonged drought accompanied by severe wildfires during the past several years. Robert Bennett, an aquatic resource specialist for the United States Geological Survey at Gainesville, reported that the 2001 drought was widespread in Florida, with the central part of the state being especially hard hit (Bennett, pers. comm.). It is possible that dry wetlands

and lack of rain contributed to the northern dispersal of Limpkins into South Carolina.

Limpkins were also seen in Georgia during this same time period with several published reports in the Oriole: one photographed at Harris Neck NWR on 29 April 2001 (Oriole 66:61); one at the Altamaha River, McIntosh County on 8 October 2001 (Oriole 67:17); and two seen there 28 October–3 November 2001 (Oriole 67:17). A Georgia sighting from 2000 was also reported from Tatnall County on 4 August (Oriole 66:24). The only recent North Carolina record was in June 1998 (Chat 63:83-84).

We thank Donna Slyce and Lex Glover of the South Carolina Bird Records Committee for providing assistance. The photographs by Beaton, Day, and Bright are on file with the South Carolina Bird Records Committee. Beaton provided the Limpkin records that were published in the Oriole.

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