

# THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

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**Mississippi  
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Society**

# THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

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## Information for Authors

*The Mississippi Kite* publishes original articles that advance the study of birdlife in the state of Mississippi. Submission of articles describing species occurrence and distribution, descriptions of unusual birds or behaviors, notes on the identification of Mississippi birds, as well as scientific studies from all fields of ornithology are encouraged. Submit all manuscripts in either a paper copy or digital copy format to the Editor, Nick Winstead, at Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, 2148 Riverside Dr., Jackson, MS 39202 or through email at [nick.winstead@mmns.state.ms.us](mailto:nick.winstead@mmns.state.ms.us).

**COPY** – Paper copy manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced throughout. Digital copy manuscripts should be prepared using 12 pt. Times New Roman font. If possible, please submit digital files in Microsoft Word. Handwritten manuscripts may also be accepted, but please contact the editor prior to submission.

**STYLE** – For questions of style consult previous issues of *The Mississippi Kite*. Manuscripts should include a title, names and addresses of all authors, text, and where applicable, literature cited, tables, figures, and figure legends. Number all pages in the upper right-hand corner. Avoid footnotes.

**LITERATURE CITED** – List all references cited in the text alphabetically by the author's last name in the Literature Cited section. Citations should conform to the style of a recent issue of *The Mississippi Kite*.

**NOMENCLATURE** – Common names of bird species should be capitalized. Provide the scientific name, italicized and in parentheses, at the first mention of each species. Nomenclature should follow the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds*, 7th edition (1998) and the 42nd (2000) through 57th (2016) supplements.

**TABLES** – Tables should be formatted with the size of *The Mississippi Kite* in mind, and should be interpretable without reference to the text.

**FIGURES** – Figures should be appropriate for photoreproduction without retouching.

# THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

*The Mississippi Kite* is a biannual periodical published by the Mississippi Ornithological Society to record and further the study of Mississippi birdlife.

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COVER IMAGE: Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) pen and ink drawing by David A. Cimprich.

**BIRDS AROUND THE STATE:  
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2016**

Compiled by  
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The following is a summary of noteworthy bird sightings in Mississippi for the period 1 January through 31 December 2016. The sequence of information in each account is: species, number, date, place, observer(s), and significance. Numbers of birds sighted are underlined. The significance of sightings is indicated by letters in parentheses following a record. These letters are as follows: (Ac) = accidental, (Ca) = casual, (E) = early date, (L) = late date, (N) = unusually large number, (R) = species rare in area, (RS) = species rare in that season, (U) = species uncommon in area, (US) = species uncommon in that season. Other abbreviations used include the following: ad = adult, BBS = Breeding Bird Survey, Co. = County, cos. = counties, f = female/s, imm = immature/s, m = male/s, m.ob. = many observers, MSU = Mississippi State University, NWR = National Wildlife Refuge, Rd. = Road, rds. = roads, S.L. = Sewage Lagoon, and WMA = Wildlife Management Area. The list of sightings is followed by a key to observers' initials and a gazetteer of localities.

Contributions of records are welcome from anyone who makes observations of Mississippi birds. Only with the assistance of many individuals from throughout the state over a period of years can we come to understand the dynamics of the bird populations of Mississippi. Contributors should submit records on 3" x 5" cards or similar-sized slips of paper with one record per card including the following information: species, number seen,

date (including year), location (state, county, and specific location), observer(s), and details and significance of the observation. Very unusual records should be accompanied by full details including description of bird, details of observation, and explanation of how similar species were eliminated. While records are welcome at any time, those received by 15 March, 15 June, 15 August, and 15 December will be submitted with the seasonal report to *North American Birds* (formerly known as *Audubon Field Notes* and *American Birds*), and will also be considered for use in *The Mississippi Kite*. Please send all records to:

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Department of Entomology  
P.O. Box 9775  
Mississippi State, MS 39762-9775

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK -- 2 ad, 6 May, Bluff Lake, Noxubee Co., RS, HE, SRe, MM, SR (R); 12, 9 Jun., Plymouth Bluff, BR (R)

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE -- 1, 16 May, Starkville, TS (L)

ROSS'S GOOSE -- 5, 7 Jan., Prairie Waters, Lowndes Co., TS (U); 1, 17 Jan., Cooksville Rd., JH (U); 17, 17 Feb., Catalpa Creek Bottoms, TS (U); 1, 17 Feb., Starkville, MM (U); 1, 5 Mar., Catalpa Creek Bottoms, MS (U); 1, 16-17 Dec., Loakfoma Lake, JH, JL, JD, IB (U); 1 ad, 19-20 Dec., Oktoc Rd., JH, TS (U); 4-7, 29 Dec., Cooksville and Stan Tabor rds., JH (U)

BRANT -- 3 ad, 3 imm, 17 Dec., near Sidon, KB, SH, JLa, AH (Ac) [Review List Species; pending Mississippi Bird Records Committee decision]

GADWALL -- 1, 27 Jun.-18 Oct., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH, MS (RS); 1, 8 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK -- 1, 10 Dec., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS (U)

BLUE-WINGED TEAL -- up to 7, 12-28 Dec., Loakfoma Lake, TS, MS, JL, MCh (US)

LESSER SCAUP -- 2 m, 24 May-6 Sep., West Point S.L., TS (RS)

BLACK SCOTER -- 8 m, 18 f, 6 Nov., Bay Springs Lake, WP (R, N)

BUFFLEHEAD -- 1 f/imm, 19 May, Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (L)

RUDDY DUCK -- up to 4 m, 4 f, 16 Jun.-6 Oct., West Point S.L., TS, JH (RS); 1 f, 17 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD -- 1 imm m, 1 Aug., West Point, BR (R)

PURPLE GALLINULE -- 1-3, 27 Apr.-2 Oct., Bluff Lake, Noxubee Co., TS, MS, JH, WP, JO, JPe, LP, DP (R); 1-7, 6 May-5 Nov., Loakfoma Lake, TS, JH, JP, LP, TP, MS, DP, WP (R)

COMMON GALLINULE -- 1-5, 9 Apr.-2 Oct., Bluff Lake, Noxubee and Oktibbeha cos., TP, JO, JH, WP, TS, MS (R); 1-18, 10 May-1 Oct., Loakfoma Lake, TS, JH, MS, DP, WP, JHi (R)

SANDHILL CRANE -- 1, 11 Jan., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., JO (R); up to 15, 12-18 Jan., Cooksville Rd., DP, JP, TS, MS, JH (R); 7, 19 Nov., Loakfoma Lake, MM (R); up to 60, 9-31 Dec., Cooksville and Stan Tabor rds., MS, JH, TS (R); 3, 14 Dec., Loakfoma Lake, TS, MS (R)

BLACK-NECKED STILT -- 2-5, 23-28 Apr., Paulette Rd., TS, MS, JH, LG (R); 1, 4 May, Catalpa Creek Bottoms, MS, TS (R); 2, 1 Jul., 2, 10 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R)

AMERICAN AVOCET -- 1, 3 May, Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS, JH (R); 1, 27 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R); 1, 16-26 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH (R); 3, 11-18, 20 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH, MS (R); 7, 27 Oct.-3 Nov., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER -- 2, 17 May, Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS (RS); 1, 21 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, JH, TS (R)

AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER -- 2, 3 May, Paulette Rd., MS (L)

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER -- 2, 11 Apr., Paulette Rd., MS (E); 5, 14 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

PIPING PLOVER -- 2, 25-26 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, JH, TS, MS (R, E); 1, 28 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R)

UPLAND SANDPIPER -- 1, 3 May, MSU North Farm, Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS, JH (U)

STILT SANDPIPER -- 1-2, 1-4 May, Paulette Rd., JH, TS, MS (RS)

SANDERLING -- 3, 2 Sep., West Point S.L., TS (U); 1, 4-5 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS, JH (U)

DUNLIN -- 30, 18 Jan., Paulette Rd., JH (RS); 1-20, 12 Mar.-7 May, Paulette Rd., TS, JH, MS, PM, JO (RS); 15, 31 Dec., Cooksville Rd., JH (RS)

LEAST SANDPIPER -- 217, 25 Nov., Tupelo Water Treatment Facility, WP (N)

PECTORAL SANDPIPER -- 1, 7 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER -- 4, 15 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

WESTERN SANDPIPER -- 4, 7 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER -- 1-60, 12 Mar.-1 May, Paulette Rd., TS, JH, MS (R, E)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER -- 1, 1 Jan.-19 Feb., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS (RS); 1, 9 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)

SOLITARY SANDPIPER -- 1, 9 Jul., Noxubee NWR, Winston Co., TS (E)

WILLET -- 1, 25 Apr., Chewalla Lake, Marshall Co., HM, KM (R); 1, 5 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R); 1, 22-23 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS, JH (R); 6, 14 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R)

LESSER YELLOWLEGS -- 25, 5 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (E)



WILSON'S PHALAROPE -- 1 f, 12-13 Mar., Paulette Rd., JH, TS, MS (R, E); 1 m, 4 May, Paulette Rd., TS (R); 1, 28 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH (R); 1, 9 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R)

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE -- 1 imm, 22-23 Sep., near Starkville, DD, MC, TS, MS, JH, m.ob. (R, L)

LAUGHING GULL -- 1, 29 Jul., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R); 1 ad, 9 Dec., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS (R)

FRANKLIN'S GULL -- 1 1<sup>st</sup> winter plumage, 31 Oct., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R)

CALIFORNIA GULL -- 1 1<sup>st</sup> winter plumage, 21-31 Dec., Enid Lake spillway, Yalobusha Co., JR, TS, JH, GK, SK, MS, JHo, m.ob. (Ac) [Review List Species]

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL -- 1 ad, 4-31 Dec., Lower Sardis Lake, Panola Co., JHo, JR (R)

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL -- 1 ad, 11 Aug., Biloxi beach, HC (Ca) [Review List Species]

LEAST TERN -- 1-2, 5-6 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH, MS, m.ob. (U); 1 imm, 13 Aug., West Point S.L., TS (U); 1, 13 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (U); 2, 17 Aug., West Point S.L., TS (U); 2, 17 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (U); 1-2 imm, 20-21 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH (U); 1 imm, 23 Aug., West Point S.L., TS (U)

CASPIAN TERN -- 1, 21 Mar., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS (E)

BLACK TERN -- 2, 19 Jun., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS (RS); 1 ad, 24 Jun., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (RS)

COMMON TERN -- 1, 13 May, Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS (U); 3, 22 Aug., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (U, E)

ARCTIC LOON -- 1, 6 Mar., Bay Springs Lake, WP (Ac) [Review List Species; pending Mississippi Bird Records Committee decision]

PACIFIC LOON -- 1, 13 Nov., Bay Springs Lake, WP (R)

COMMON LOON -- 1, 12-15 Jan., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (US)

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER -- 1, 3 Aug., Deer Island, Harrison Co., MF, LD (Ac) [Review List Species]

WOOD STORK -- up to 11, 2 Jul.-4 Oct., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, JH, MS, m.ob. (U); 3-50, 29 Jul.-5 Sep., Bluff Lake, Noxubee Co., JH, MS, DP, PM, m.ob. (U); 8-15, 21 Aug.-4 Sep., Greenbrier Rd., Noxubee Co., JH (U); up to 42, 21 Aug.-11 Sep., Lynn Creek Rd., Noxubee Co., JH (U); 9, 30 Aug., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., PD (U); up to 34, 29 Sep.-1 Oct., Plymouth Bluff, JO, NW, JHo, (U); 101, 30 Sep., Macon, HC, JL (U); 3, 1 Oct., White's Slough, NW, JHo, PM, ND, JHi (U); 5, 1 Oct., Catalpa Creek Bottoms, JHi (U); 1, 2 Oct., near Starkville, TS, MS, DB, BB (U)

BROWN BOOBY -- 1, 8 Mar., Gulfport, AS (Ac); 1 ad f, 2-16 Oct., Chewalla Lake, Marshall Co., WE, HM, JHo, JR, RB (Ac) [Review List Species]

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT -- 1, 4 May, Coldwater River NWR, HM, KM, JR (U)

ANHINGA -- up to 20, 30 Mar.-27 Aug., Bluff Lake, Noxubee Co., TS, JH, TP, PM, JO, m.ob. (U nesting species); 1, 14 May, near Adaton, Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS (U)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN -- 344, 14 Apr., near Starkville, MP (N); up to 75, 8 May-6 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS, JH, m.ob. (US)

AMERICAN BITTERN -- 1-2, 2 Apr., 4 May, Coldwater River NWR, HM, KM (U)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON -- up to 16, 16 Apr.-18 Jun., Bluff Lake, Noxubee and Oktibbeha cos., TP, TS, MS, JH (E, R); 1 ad, 3 imm, 27 Apr., Paulette Rd., TS, MS (R); 5-18, 29-30 Dec., Stan Tabor Rd., JH, TS, MS (R)

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON -- 3, 2 May, Columbus, PM, JO (U)

ROSEATE SPOONBILL -- 1-9 imm, 17 May-4 Oct., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS, MS, JH, m.ob. (R, E, N); 1 imm, 6-14 Aug., Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., MS, JH, PM, JO, JL, MSi, JPe, LP, WP (R); 1 imm, 21 Aug., Stan Tabor Rd., JH (R); 3 imm, 29 Aug., Oktoc Rd., LB, FB, TS (R); 1-2 imm, 4-11 Sep., Lynn Creek Rd., Noxubee Co., JH (R)

OSPREY -- 1, 1 Jan., Poor House Rd., Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS, JH (RS); 1-2 ad, 3 imm, 29 Feb.-19 Jul., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS, MS, JH (R nesting species); 2 ad, 24 May, near West Point, TS (R nesting species)

BALD EAGLE -- 1 imm, 29 Feb.-2 Apr., Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., LC, MC, MS, JM (R nesting species)

GOLDEN EAGLE -- 1 1<sup>st</sup> year, 31 Dec., near Crenshaw, HM (R)  
[Review List Species]

MERLIN -- 1 ad m, 18 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (R); 1 f/imm, 15 Dec., near Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., JH (R); 1 m, 17 Dec., near Brooksville, JH, JL, JD, IB (R); 1, 17 Dec., Browning Creek Lake, Oktibbeha Co., DP, JP (R)

PEREGRINE FALCON -- 1 ad, 27 Apr., Paulette Rd., TS, MS (R); 1 imm, 6 Aug., Bluff Lake, Noxubee Co., DP, JH (R, E); 1, 1 Oct., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., JL, KH, JH, NM, HC, CE (R)

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER -- 1, 11 May, near Walthall, TS (R, L)

YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER -- 1, 6 Sep., Tibbee Lake, Clay Co., TS (U); 1, 1 Oct., Bluff Lake, Noxubee Co., NW (U); 1, 2 Oct., Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., TS, MS (U)

ALDER FLYCATCHER -- 3, 17 May, Lake Cormorant, HM (R)

WILLOW FLYCATCHER -- 2, 17 May, Lake Cormorant, HM (R); 2, 10-22 Jul., Stan Tabor Rd., JH, TS, MS, MG, LIB (R)

LEAST FLYCATCHER -- 1, 4 May, Coldwater River NWR, HM, KM, JR (U); 1, 13 Sep., Prairie Wildlife, TS (U)

SAY'S PHOEBE -- 1, 13-14 Feb., 4 Mar., near Okolona, WP (Ac); 1, 4-6 Oct., West Ship Island, WM (Ac) [Review List Species]

TROPICAL KINGBIRD -- 1, 1 Jan.-28 Feb., Bay St. Louis, NB, AM, HW (Ac); 1, 31 Dec., Bay St. Louis, HW, JL, m.ob. (Ac)  
[Review List Species]

COUCH'S KINGBIRD -- 1, 13 Jan.-20 Apr., Singing River Island, Jackson Co., NB (Ac, 1<sup>st</sup> state record); 1, 30 Nov.-31 Dec., Money, JR, JHo, HM, TS, MS, m.ob. (Ac, 2<sup>nd</sup> state record) [Review List Species]

EASTERN KINGBIRD -- 1, 1 Oct., Plymouth Bluff, JHo (L)

GRAY KINGBIRD -- 2, 23-24 Apr., West Ship Island, AB, GO, NB (Ca) [Review List Species]

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER -- 1 ad m, 1 ad f, 2 imm, 29 May-28 Jun., near Prairie Point, TS, MS, JH, DP, JP (R nesting species); 2 ad, 3 imm, 1 Aug., Aberdeen, WP (R)

WHITE-EYED VIREO -- 1, 18 Dec., near Noxubee NWR, Oktibbeha Co., TS (RS)

BELL'S VIREO -- 1, 2 Oct., Old River WMA, Pearl River Co., NB (Ca) [Review List Species]

PHILADELPHIA VIREO -- 2, 2 May, Columbus, PM (US)

WARBLING VIREO -- 1, 13 May-20 Jul., Columbus Lake, Clay Co., TS, JH (R nesting species)

BEWICK'S WREN -- 1, 20 Feb., Sardis Waterfowl WMA, Lafayette Co., JR, (R) [Review List Species]

VEERY -- 2, 22 Apr., Plymouth Bluff, PM, JO (E)

SWAINSON'S THRUSH -- 1, 20 Apr., P.D. Fulgham Rd., MS (E); 1, 7-15 Nov., P.D. Fulgham Rd., MS, TS, JH (L)

GRAY CATBIRD -- 2, 7-11 Jan., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., JO (RS); 1, 17 Dec., Noxubee NWR, Winston Co., TS, MS (RS)

SPRAGUE'S PIPIT -- 1, 9-31 Dec., Holly Grove Rd., Panola Co., JR, JHo (Ca) [Review List Species]

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER -- 1, 28 Apr. and 5 May, Southaven, HM, KM (U); 1, 29, 30 Apr. and 6 May, Columbus, PM, JO (U); 1 m, 30 Apr., Wall Doxey State Park, Marshall Co., GK, HM (U); 1 m, 7 May, 1 f, 10 May, Oxford, GK (U); 1, 20 Sep., near Starkville, TS (U); 1 m, 29 Sep., Plymouth Bluff, JO (U); 1 f, 2 Oct., Plymouth Bluff, PM (U); 1 m, 2 Oct., Columbus, JR (U); 1, 2 Oct., Noxubee NWR, Oktibbeha Co., JH, KH, JL, NM, HC, CE (U); 1, 5 Oct., Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., TS (U)

SWAINSON'S WARBLER -- 2-8, 8 Apr.-4 Jun., Moore's Creek Rd., Lowndes Co., PM, JO, TS, MS, JH (U); 10, 18 Apr.-16 May, Plymouth Bluff, JO, PM, TS, MS (U); 1, 22 Apr.-4 Jun., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS, MS, JH (U); 1, 23-27 Apr., Oktoc Rd., TS, MS (U); 2, 23 Apr.-14 May, Bluff Lake Rd., Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS, JH, PM, JO (U); 1, 23 Apr.-2 Jul., Noxubee NWR, Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS, JH, PM, JO (U); 1, 26 Apr., Old West Point Rd., Lowndes Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 28 Apr., Natchez Trace Parkway, Choctaw Co., TS, MS (U); 3, 2-4 May, Section Line Rd., Lowndes Co., PM, JO (U); 1, 9 May, White's Slough, PM, JO (U); 1, 11 May-27 Jun., near Adaton, Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 14 May-30 Aug., Polly Bell Rd., Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 14 May, Harrell Rd., Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 14 May, Brown Rd., Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 4 Jun., Officer's Lake, Lowndes Co., JH (U); 1, 12 Jun., Embry BBS route, Webster Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 9 Jul., Noxubee NWR, Winston Co., TS (U)

TENNESSEE WARBLER -- 1, 15 May, Plymouth Bluff, PM, JO (L)

NASHVILLE WARBLER -- 3, 28 Apr., Southaven, HM (U); 2, 2 Oct., Noxubee NWR, Oktibbeha Co., JH, KH, JL, NM, HC (U)

MOURNING WARBLER -- 1 m, 4 May, Columbus, PM, JO (Ca); 1 m, 16 May, Plymouth Bluff, JO, PM (Ca, L) [Review List Species]

CERULEAN WARBLER -- 1-2 m, 13, 18-23 Apr., Oxford, GK (U); 1, 15-17 Apr., Columbus, JO, PM, DP, JP (U); 1-3, 17, 28 Apr., Plymouth Bluff, PM, JO (U); 2, 19 Apr., Jeff Busby Park, Choctaw Co., MS (U); 1 m, 21 Apr., Springdale WMA, Lafayette Co., GK (U); 1, 27 Apr., Noxubee NWR, Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 28 Apr., Columbus Lake, Lowndes Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 7 Sep., Noxubee NWR, Oktibbeha Co., TS (RS); 1, 2 Oct., Starkville, JH (RS, L)

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER -- 1, 18 Apr., Plymouth Bluff, JO (E)

PALM WARBLER -- 1, 6 Jan., Starkville, TS (RS); 1, 12 Jan., near Macon, DP, JP (RS); 2, 16 Jan., Paulette Rd., TS, MS (RS); 1, 24 Jan., near Artesia, DP, JP (RS); 1, 29 Jan., Starkville, MM (RS); 2, 6 Feb., near Artesia, JH, MS, LCa, JC (RS); 1, 30 Dec., Paulette Rd., TS, MS (RS)

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER -- 1, 1-18 Jan., Browning Creek, Oktibbeha Co., TS, MS, JH (RS); 1, 19 Nov., Hattiesburg S.L., AM (RS)

PRAIRIE WARBLER -- 1, 6 Oct., Prairie Wildlife, TS (L)

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER -- 1 ad m, 18 Feb., Browning Creek, Oktibbeha Co., TS (RS)

CANADA WARBLER -- 1, 20 Apr., P.D. Fulgham Rd., TS (E)

WILSON'S WARBLER -- 1 m, 8 Jan.-4 Mar., White's Slough, JO, PM, DP, JP, TS, MS, JH, m.ob. (RS); 1, 22 May, Lake Cormorant, HM (U); 1, 7, 14 Oct., Starkville, JH (U)

BACHMAN'S SPARROW -- 1-3, 1-16 Mar., Noxubee NWR, Winston Co., JH, JB (U)

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW -- 1, 3 Jan., Biloxi, HC (Ca) [Review List Species]

LARK SPARROW -- 2-6, 10 Apr.-14 Aug., MSU North Farm, Oktibbeha Co., JH, TS, TP, CW (U); 1-5, 23 Apr.-1 Jun., Paulette Rd., TS, MS, LG, JH, PM, JO (U); 1-4, 26 Apr.-1 Aug., Judge Thomas Rd., Clay Co., TS, MS (U); 4, 27 Apr., Black Belt Experiment Station, Noxubee Co., TS, MS (U); 1, 27 Apr., near Artesia, JH (U); 1, 7 May, Black Prairie WMA, Lowndes Co., JH, PM, JO (U); 1, 12 May, Redbud Rd., Lowndes Co., TS (U); 1, 12-25 May, Schlater Rd., Lowndes Co., TS (U); 1, 14 May-18 Jun., Harris Rd., Oktibbeha Co., JH, PM, JO, TS (U); 1, 15 May, West Bank Access Rd., Lowndes Co., JO (U); 1-6, 29 May-22 Jul., Macon BBS route, Noxubee Co., TS, MS (U); 1-20, 17 Jun.-4 Aug., near Prairie Point, TS, JH (U, N); 1, 19-20 Jun., Davis Rd., Noxubee Co., TS (U); 1, 14 Sep., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, MS, MC (U)

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW -- 1, 23 Apr., Robinsonville, HM, KM (R); 2, 20 Jun.-12 Jul., Prairie Wildlife, TS (R)



SONG SPARROW -- 1, 10 Oct., Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., TS (E)

LINCOLN'S SPARROW -- 1, 28 Apr., Southaven, HM (U); 1, 24-25 Oct., Starkville, JH (U); 1, 28 Oct., Oktibbeha Co. Lake, TS (U); 2, 1 Nov., Noxubee NWR, Noxubee Co., MM (U)

HARRIS'S SPARROW -- 1, 16-19 Jan., Pascagoula River Audubon Center, Moss Point, GM, SM, MPa, AHe (Ac) [Review List Species]

WESTERN TANAGER -- 1, 2 Nov., Pascagoula River Audubon Center, Moss Point, PB, BJ, m.ob. (Ac) [Review List Species]

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK -- 1, 10 Apr., Starkville, JH (E)

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK -- 1, 1 Mar., Picayune, RP (Ac) [Review List Species]

PAINTED BUNTING -- 3, 23 Apr.-7 May, Paulette Rd., TS, MS, JH, PM, JO, JPe, LP (U); 1 m, 1 f, 7 May, Black Prairie WMA, Lowndes Co., JH, PM, JO (U); 1, 12 May, near Artesia, TS (U); up to 5, 14 May-19 Jul., Harris Rd., Oktibbeha Co., JH, PM, JO, TS, DP, JP (U); up to 5, 24 May-30 Aug., Prairie Wildlife, TS, DP, JP (U); 1, 17 Jun., Prairie Point Rd., Noxubee Co., TS (U); 1 ad m, 19 Jun.-7 Jul., Davis Rd., Noxubee Co., TS (U); 1 ad m, 10-22 Jul., Stan Tabor Rd., TS, JH (U)

SHINY COWBIRD -- 2, 1 May, Singing River Island, Jackson Co., BJ (Ac); 1 ad m, 17-20 Dec., Bay St. Louis, HW (Ac) [Review List Species]

## Contributors

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## Key to Localities

Localities not listed are indexed on the “Official Highway Map of Mississippi” or the county is listed in the main text.

Bay Springs Lake = Tishomingo Co.; Catalpa Creek Bottoms = Lowndes Co.; Coldwater River NWR = Tallahatchie Co.; Cooksville Rd. = Noxubee Co.; Loakfoma Lake = Noxubee Co.; Oktoc Rd. = Oktibbeha Co.; P.D. Fulgham Rd. = Oktibbeha Co.; Paulette Rd. = Noxubee Co.; Plymouth Bluff = Lowndes Co.;

Prairie Wildlife = Clay Co.; Stan Tabor Rd. = Noxubee Co.;  
White's Slough = Lowndes Co.

**MISSISSIPPI BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE  
ANNUAL REPORT-2016**

Gene C. Knight  
79 Hwy. 9 W.  
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The Mississippi Bird Records Committee (MBRC) of the Mississippi Ornithological Society was created to produce and keep a field checklist of the bird species that occur in Mississippi. The MBRC requests and reviews documentation on any record of a MBRC Review List species which can be found at the end of this report or at the MOS website, [www.missbird.org](http://www.missbird.org). This is the tenth report of the MBRC, and it covers Committee activities for 2016. Gene Knight is the Committee Chair and Philip Barbour, Ned Boyajian, Jason Hoeksema, and Nick Winstead serve as MBRC Members.

The MBRC reached a final decision on 26 records in 2016. Twenty-three records of 15 species were accepted. Two records were sent to the 2<sup>nd</sup> circulation process. Four records were sent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> circulation process. Twenty-nine observers submitted documentation to the MBRC on these records that were reviewed by the Committee in 2016.

The information presented after each species is as follows (if known): species name, number of individuals, age and/or sex, date(s) of occurrence, location, county (in italics), and initials of the observer(s). When known, the initials of those who discovered the bird are in boldface but only if the discoverer(s) submitted supporting documentation. After each observer's initials, the type of documentation is given in parentheses. They are as follows: p = photograph; r = recording; rc = record card (includes only pertinent facts about the record); w = written documentation (includes full

details about the record with complete description). The MBRC record number and Class of the record are given in brackets.

Accepted records fall into three classes. Class 1 records are documented by an accepted specimen, diagnostic photograph, or recording; Class 2 records are documented by accepted written documentation by two or more independent observers; Class 3 records are documented by accepted written documentation by a single observer. Where multiple observers are listed as having submitted written documentation for Class 3 records, only documentation from one of the observers was deemed acceptable by the Committee. Similarly, where photographs are listed as having been submitted for Class 2 or 3 records, the photograph was not considered diagnostic by the Committee, although the written documentation was acceptable.

Other abbreviations used in this report are as follows: MSU = Mississippi State University; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge, and SL = Sewage Lagoon.

### Accepted Records, 1<sup>st</sup> Circulation

**Fulvous Whistling-Duck** (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) 2 on 9 May 2015 near Waveland, *Hancock*, **NB(w)** [015-10; Class 3]; 3 on 15 May 2015 at Seaman Road SL, *Jackson*, **NB(w)**, **SM(p)** [015-11; Class 1P]

**Eurasian Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*) 1 adult male on 25 April 2015 at Loakfoma Lake, Noxubee NWR, *Noxubee*, **HM(w,p)** [015-9; Class 1P]

**Cinnamon Teal** (*Anas cyanoptera*) 1 adult male on 31 January 2015 at Seaman Road SL, *Jackson*, **SM(p)**, **GK(rc)** [015-22; Class 1P]

**Ruff** (*Calidris pugnax*) 1 male on 25 April 2015 at Catalpa Creek Bottoms, *Lowndes*, **TS(w)**, **RL(p)** [015-8; Class 1P]

**Parasitic Jaeger** (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) 1 adult light morph on 24 October 2015 over the Mississippi Sound near West Ship Island, *Harrison*, **JR(w,p)**, **JH(w,p)**, **EE(w,p)**, **TS(w)** [015-19; Class 1P]

**Thayer's Gull** (*Larus thayeri*) 1 1<sup>st</sup> cycle on 8 January 2015 at Bayou Caddy, *Hancock*, **NB(w)** [015-4; Class 3]

**Brown Booby** (*Sula leucogaster*) 1 immature on 17 April 2015 at West Ship Island, *Harrison*, **WM(w,p)**, **GK(rc)** [015-6; Class 1P]; 1 adult female on 14 October-29 December 2015 at Grenada Lake, *Grenada*, **DT(w,p)**, **AM(p)**, **KH(w,p)**, **KR(w)**, **TS(w)**, **WP(w,p)**, **JH(w,p)**, **LP(p)**, **GK(w)**, **HC(w,p)**, **JR(w,p)**, **RB(p)**, **ER(w)**, **LT(w)**, **PB(w,p)** [015-18; Class 1P]

**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*) 1 on 21 April 2015 near Hattiesburg, *Forrest*, **LB(w,p)** [015-7; Class 1P]; 1 on 13 November 2015 at Ansley, *Hancock*, **NB(w)** [015-21; Class 3]

**Golden Eagle** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) 1-2 on 17 December 2014-16 February 2015 at Bevils Hill Road, Noxubee NWR, *Winston*, **SR(p)**, **GK(w)** [015-13; Class 1P]; 1 on 11-21 January 2015 at Cedar Grove Road, Noxubee NWR, *Oktibbeha*, **SR(p)**, **GK(w)** [015-28; Class 1P]; 1 on 14-16 January 2015 at Triplett's Pasture Road, Noxubee NWR, *Winston*, **SR(p)**, **GK(w)** [015-29; Class 1P]

**Say's Phoebe** (*Sayornis saya*) 1 on 1 January-4 April 2015 at MSU South Farm, *Oktibbeha*, **TS(w,p)**, **JH(w,p)**, **JR(w,p)**, **NW(w)**, **MG(p)** [015-3; Class 1P]; 1 on 27 September 2015 at Coldwater

River NWR, *Quitman and Tallahatchie*, **JH**(w,p), **JR**(w,p), **RB**(p) [015-16; Class 1P]

**Ash-throated Flycatcher** (*Myiarchus cinerascens*) 2 on 24-28 October 2015 at Tillman Street, Pascagoula, *Jackson*, **JH**(w,p), **JR**(w,p,r), **TS**(w) [015-20; Class 1P]; 1 on 31 October-4 November 2015 at Old Broadwater Golf Course, Biloxi, *Harrison*, **HC**(w,p) [015-23; Class 1P]

**Clay-colored Sparrow** (*Spizella pallida*) 1-2 on 20 October 2015-3 January 2016 at the Old Broadwater Golf Course, Biloxi, *Harrison*, **HC**(w,p) [015-25; Class 1P]; 1 on 14 November 2015 at McLeod Park, *Hancock*, **HC**(w) [015-27; Class 3]

**Bullock's Oriole** (*Icterus bullockii*) 1 adult male on 18 January-28 March 2015 at Mark LaSalle residence, Ocean Springs, *Jackson*, **ML**(w,p) [015-5; Class 1P]

Records sent to 2<sup>nd</sup> Circulation from their 1<sup>st</sup> Circulation round have been voted on once and have received at least one “not accept” vote but not a unanimous “not accept” vote.

### **Records Sent to 2<sup>nd</sup> Circulation**

**Crested Caracara** (*Caracara cheriway*) 1 on 11 December 2014 at Seaman Road SL, *Jackson* [015-2]

**Bell's Vireo** (*Vireo bellii*) 1 on 12 September 2015 at St. Catherine Creek NWR, *Adams* [015-15]

## Accepted Records, 2<sup>nd</sup> Circulation

**Pomarine Jaeger** (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) 1 adult found injured on 4 June and died on 6 June 2014, at Courthouse Road Pier, *Harrison*, **BP(w)**, AS(w,p) [014-15]

**Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*) 1 1<sup>st</sup> cycle on 18 December 2013 at Tunica County Landfill, *Tunica*, **QG(w,p)** [014-1; Class 1P]

Records sent to 3<sup>rd</sup> Circulation are records that have gone through two circulations of voting procedure by the MBRC without being accepted or not accepted. These records were presented to the Members at the Annual Meeting with a quorum of Members present. The voting procedure followed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circulation voting criteria; that is, a record is accepted if it receives no more than one not accept vote and is not accepted if it receives more than one not accept vote.

## Records Sent to 3<sup>rd</sup> Circulation

**Crested Caracara** (*Caracara cheriway*) 1 on 11 December 2014 at Seaman Road SL, *Jackson* [015-2]

**Bell's Vireo** (*Vireo bellii*) 1 on 12 September 2015 at St. Catherine Creek NWR, *Adams* [015-15]

**Cave Swallow** (*Petrochelidon fulva*) 1 found dead on 25 March 1986 at Horn Island, *Jackson* [86-17]

**Bewick's Wren** (*Thryomanes bewickii*) 1 on 13 May 2014 at Oxford, *Lafayette* [014-13]



Not Accepted Records (Class 4) are either records not accepted based on questionable identification (Class 4-I) or records where identification is accepted but the origin is questionable (Class 4-O). Rarely is a record not accepted due to the bird being misidentified. Non-acceptance is usually due to poorly written documentation. Most of these reports are vague and incomplete, leaving out pertinent details and not properly eliminating similar species. These records may be valid, but the Committee has decided that the documentation submitted does not meet the standards required for inclusion in the historical database.

### Not Accepted Records

**Fulvous Whistling-Duck** (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) 1 on 24 December 2013 at Enid Lake, *Yalobusha* [014-11]

**Black Rail** (*Laterallus jamaicensis*) 1 on 29 November 2014 at Lakeshore, *Hancock* [014-24]

**Bewick's Wren** (*Thryomanes bewickii*) 1 on 20 September 2014 near Tackett Fish complex, Greenwood, *Leflore* [014-18]

### Contributors

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## **Acknowledgments**

The MBRC would like to thank the contributors listed above for their time in furnishing documentation for review. I would like to thank Committee Members for providing the MBRC with their expert opinion concerning records reviewed during 2016.

## **Review Species List**

The following species were removed from this list in December 2004, but records prior to 2005 will still be reviewed by the Committee: Tundra Swan, Common Merganser, Calliope Hummingbird, Glossy Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Red Crossbill, Western Meadowlark, and Bronzed Cowbird. These species were removed from this list in February 2009, but records prior to 2009 will still be reviewed by the Committee: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Neotropic Cormorant. Red-necked Phalarope was the only species removed from this list in February 2010, but records prior to 2010 will still be reviewed by the Committee. These species were removed from this list in February 2011, but records prior to 2011 will still be reviewed by the Committee: Inca Dove, Yellow Rail, and Cave Swallow. These species were removed from this list in February 2012, but records prior to 2012 will still be reviewed by the Committee: Sooty Tern and Pacific Loon. These species were removed from this list in January 2013, but records prior to 2013 will still be reviewed by the Committee: Alder Flycatcher and Willow Flycatcher.

The MBRC requests documentation, including details, descriptions, and photographs of all records of the following species: Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Brant, Trumpeter Swan, Eurasian Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, King Eider, Red-necked Grebe,

Western Grebe, White-crowned Pigeon, Band-tailed Pigeon, Ruddy Ground-Dove, Lesser Nighthawk, Mexican Violetear, Anna's Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Allen's Hummingbird, Broad-billed Hummingbird, White-eared Hummingbird, Black Rail, Limpkin, Mountain Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Ruff, Purple Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Razorbill, Black-legged Kittiwake, Sabine's Gull, Black-headed Gull, Little Gull, California Gull, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, Slaty-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Brown Noddy, Bridled Tern, Roseate Tern, Arctic Tern, Cory's Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Great Shearwater, Audubon's Shearwater, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Jabiru, Masked Booby, Brown Booby, Great Cormorant, White-tailed Kite, Northern Goshawk, Harris's Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Snowy Owl, Burrowing Owl, Long-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Crested Caracara, Prairie Falcon, Western Wood-Pewee, Say's Phoebe, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Tropical Kingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, Gray Kingbird, Black-capped Vireo, Bell's Vireo, Black-whiskered Vireo, Rock Wren, Bewick's Wren, Mountain Bluebird, Townsend's Solitaire, Sage Thrasher, Citrine Wagtail, Sprague's Pipit, Red Crossbill, Lesser Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeak, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Smith's Longspur, McCown's Longspur, Snow Bunting, Bachman's Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Tropical Parula, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Painted Redstart, Green-tailed Towhee, Spotted Towhee, American Tree Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lark Bunting, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Harris's Sparrow, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Great-tailed Grackle, Shiny Cowbird, Hooded Oriole, Bullock's Oriole, and any species new to Mississippi.

**GENETIC CONFIRMATION OF THE FIRST DOCUMENTED NESTING  
BY WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*STURNELLA NEGLECTA*)  
IN MISSISSIPPI**

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**Abstract**

We used molecular techniques to confirm the species identification of a meadowlark nestling (MISS 3167) in the University of Mississippi Vaiden bird collection, housed at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA; Cytochrome B) sequence data obtained from toe pad tissue of MISS 3167 confirms the nestling is a Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*). This specimen represents the first documented nesting of Western Meadowlark in Mississippi.

**Introduction**

Relatively little is known about Western Meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*) in Mississippi. Western Meadowlark was formerly placed on the Mississippi Bird Records Committee's (MBRC) Review Species List due to its rarity within the state. An increase in reported observations led the MBRC to remove the species from that list in the early 2000s. However, the MBRC's most recent Checklist of Birds of Mississippi still labels Western Meadowlark as a rare winter species, meaning it is present singly or in small numbers annually.

Western Meadowlark is found throughout much of western North America, and its nonbreeding range extends into parts of eastern North America more typically occupied by the Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*). The two species are similar in appearance, and vocalizations are the best way to distinguish between them in the field. The typical eastern extent of the Western Meadowlark nonbreeding range is not well understood due to difficulty distinguishing between the two species, but the typical eastern extent of its breeding range is from northwest New York, northwest Ohio, north Indiana, central Illinois, northwest Missouri, southeast Kansas, central Oklahoma, west-central Texas, and into Mexico (Davis and Lanyon 2008).

No officially accepted breeding records for Western Meadowlark exist from Mississippi, and few are known from other states outside its typical breeding range (Smith 1951, Lowery 1974). This is in spite of the fact that M.G. Vaiden, arguably Mississippi's most prolific bird collector, reported finding a Western Meadowlark nest in Bolivar County in April 1961 from which he subsequently collected a nestling (MISS 3167, Figure 1; James and James 1961, Vaiden 1961). Vaiden's bird collection, including the meadowlark nestling, was transferred to the University of Mississippi as a teaching and research collection in the late 1960s, and is currently on long-term loan to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. It remains a mystery why this record was not accepted by the MBRC or its predecessor at the time, though it could be due to the implausibility of the record and the similarity in appearance of the two species, in addition to there being no good way at the time to distinguish between nestlings of the two species.

The MBRC Chair (GCK) came across the meadowlark nestling while perusing the Vaiden bird collection at the University of Mississippi in late 2015. After some discussion, it was agreed

that the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science should use molecular techniques to confirm the species identity.



**Figure 1.** MISS 3167, nestling Western Meadowlark, collected from 1961 from Bolivar County, Mississippi by M.G. Vaiden.

## Methods

A toe pad was removed from MISS 3167 using sterilized scalpel and tweezers. DNA extraction (using the toe pad) was completed in a clean lab never exposed to amplified DNA, in which the benchtop had been sterilized with 10% bleach. Before extraction began, the toe pad was rinsed in three stages to soften the tissue and remove potential inhibitors (specimen preservatives, e.g., arsenic): 1) 100  $\mu$ l 100% EtOH for 5 minutes, 2) 100  $\mu$ l Tris-EDTA buffer for 5 minutes, and 3) 100  $\mu$ l Polymerase Chain

Reaction (PCR)-grade H<sub>2</sub>O for 5 minutes. After rinsing, the toe pad was diced into small pieces with a sterile scalpel, then underwent extraction using Qiagen DNEasy Blood and Tissue Kit with the following modifications: 40 µl Proteinase K was added to the lysis step (instead of 20 µl) with incubation extended to 40 hours; an additional 10 µl Proteinase K was added at the end of incubation; AE buffer was heated to 70°C before use, with incubation extended to 5 minutes; final elution volume was 50 µl twice for a total of 100 µl. A negative extraction was included to detect potential contamination.

A primer set targeting a short but variable region of Cytochrome B (mtDNA) was designed in Primer 3 Plus (Untergasser et al. 2007; Table 1) using a representative sequence obtained from an alignment of multiple GenBank ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/); Clark et al. 2016) accessioned sequences for both Western Meadowlark (AF290164 and EF529952) and Eastern Meadowlark (AF089063 and FJ154607).

**Table 1.** Primer set designed to amplify approximately 151 bp of Cytochrome B in both Eastern Meadowlark and Western Meadowlark.

Primer name		Sequence (5' to 3')
LarkCytb151	Forward	TCCAATTTCTCCTCCCCTTT
	Reverse	CCGAGGATGTCTTTGATGGT

PCR reactions were set up in the clean lab in a UV-sterilized hood. PCR reactions were carried out in 25 µl total volumes, using DreamTaq (Thermo Scientific) chemistry and incorporating 10 µl extracted DNA. The PCR profile used a temperature gradient, and occurred in 40 cycles (Table 2). The extraction negative was included in the PCR reaction to test for contamination.

**Table 2.** Thermalcycler conditions used in conjunction with primer set LarkCytb151 to attempt PCR amplification of MISS 3167 DNA.

<b>Temperature</b>	<b>Duration</b>
95°C	3 minutes
40 cycles:	
95°C	30 seconds
60-54.5°C	30 seconds
72°C	1 minute
72°C	10 minutes

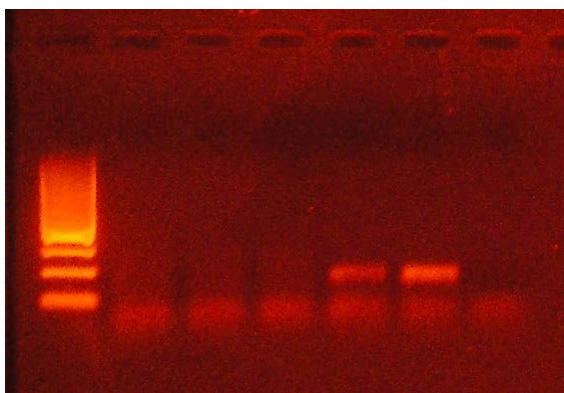
To confirm successful amplification of DNA, PCR products were observed in agarose gel stained with GelRed (Biotium) and illuminated in the presence of ultraviolet light. PCR products from annealing temperatures of 56.5°C and 54.5°C indicated amplification (Figure 2), and thus underwent FastAP (Thermo Scientific) clean-up before undergoing Sanger sequencing at the University of Missouri DNA Core Facility. Resulting chromatograms were visualized, edited, and aligned in Geneious v.7.1.7 (Kearse et al. 2012). Alignment showed that the resulting 151 base-pair sequences were identical at 56.5°C and 54.5°C. Using the Basic Local Alignment Search Tool (BLAST; <https://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi>) from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (National Center for Biotechnology Information 2016), the resulting consensus sequence was queried against highly similar sequences to obtain a species identification.

## Results

The obtained Cytochrome B sequence from MISS 3167 is a 100% match to Western Meadowlark, and only a 97% match to Eastern Meadowlark. As indicated in Table 3, five consistent



differences exist within the comparison of MISS 3167 and representative Eastern Meadowlark sequences; zero differences exist between MISS 3167 and representative Western Meadowlark sequences.



**Figure 2.** Illuminated agarose gel (stained with GelRed) showing PCR amplification of Cytochrome B at temperatures 56.5°C and 54.5°C for MISS 3167.

**Table 3.** Variable sites (along 151 base pairs of Cytochrome B) observed between MISS 3167 and representative Eastern (EAME) and Western (WEME) meadowlark sequences. Nucleotides are provided for MISS 3167. Nucleotides identical to MISS 3167 are indicated by •; differences are represented by the observed nucleotide variation.

Sequence	Nucleotide position				
	31	43	46	61	100
MISS 3167	C	C	C	C	T
EAME, Genbank: AF089063	T	T	T	T	C
EAME, Genbank: FJ154607	T	T	T	T	C
WEME, Genbank: AF290164	•	•	•	•	•
WEME, Genbank: EF529952	•	•	•	•	•

## **Discussion**

Our results confirm nesting by Western Meadowlark in Mississippi 56 years ago, and are an example of the importance of properly maintained natural history collections. Without an available specimen and associated tissue, the question of species identity of the nesting birds reported by Vaiden in 1961 might still remain.

Cytochrome B is within the mitochondrial genome which is inherited matrilineally; therefore, our genetic data can be used to draw conclusions about only the maternal lineage of MISS 3167. However, Vaiden's species determination was based on vocalizations of the birds which he, Mrs. Vaiden, and several protégés observed for over 100 hours between 23 March and mid-May, 1961 (James and James 1961, Vaiden 1961). Vaiden had many years' worth of experience distinguishing between the two meadowlark species, and made multiple collections of both. He verified Western Meadowlarks by their vocalizations prior to collecting them and his specimens were verified by trained ornithologists such as Alexander Wetmore. Eastern and Western meadowlarks are known to hybridize infrequently, but Vaiden's observations combined with the genetic evidence presented here rule out hybridization in this case.

The Vaidens discovered the pair of Western Meadowlarks on 23 March 1961. They observed them for many days before the nest was found with five eggs on 24 April about 3 m from a highway 1.5 km east of Rosedale (James and James 1961, Vaiden 1961). During the second visit on 4 May, the Vaidens found five "very young birds" in the nest. The Vaidens and two protégés visited the nest again on 10 May, when MISS 3167 was collected from the nest, then again on 11 May. The remaining nestlings fledged 12 May.

Interestingly, the Vaidens found at least two additional pairs of Western Meadowlarks near Rosedale on 21 April, and 10 June 1961, respectively (James and James 1961). These observations are suggestive of additional nesting efforts, although there was no indication given of how long into the nesting season each pair was observed and no other nests were discovered. One of the localities where the three pairs were found was regularly used by Western Meadowlarks during the winter, suggesting the nesting birds resided near Rosedale year-round.

### **Acknowledgments**

We thank Dr. Paul Lago for his dedication in maintaining the Vaiden bird collection, and for allowing us access to MISS 3167 while housed at the University of Mississippi. This project was supported by funding through a United States Fish and Wildlife Service State Wildlife Grant.

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**AMERICAN ROBIN NEST USE BY MOURNING DOVE IN  
SOUTHAVEN, MISSISSIPPI**

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In April 2017, an American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) constructed a nest on top of a lighting fixture in a suburban backyard in Southaven, Mississippi (Figure 1). Robins have built nests atop this lighting fixture for three consecutive years. This year, the nest construction began in mid-April, and two eggs were subsequently laid. The robins proceeded as usual with their nesting, and reared one nestling (Figure 1) that fledged on 29 April.

The nest remained unoccupied until 5 May, when we observed a Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) sitting on the nest. The dove laid two eggs on consecutive days (Figure 1) and began incubation on 7 May. The male was also observed incubating. On 27 May, we observed nestlings (Figure 1), estimated to be 4-5 days old (Hanson and Kossack 1957). Both nestling doves fledged, with the last fledging on 5 June (Figure 1).

It was not unusual that the doves used the robin nest, but what was unusual was that there did not appear to be any renovation of the nest from its previous condition. McClure (1941) noted that in almost every circumstance the male dove brings sticks to the other species host nest. We removed the nest several days after the last fledging, and heavy use and wear were evident.



Figure 1. American Robin nest used by American Robin then Mourning Dove. (A) American Robin brooding nestlings, 23 April 2017. (B) American Robin nestling, age 11-12 days, 28 April 2017. (C) Mourning Dove incubating eggs on former American Robin nest, 9 May 2017. (D) Mourning Dove eggs in former American Robin nest, 9 May 2017. (E) Mourning Dove nestlings, age 4-5 days, 27 May 2017. (F) Mourning Dove nestling, preparing to fledge at 13-14 days, 4 June 2017.

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**TURKEY VULTURE NEST IN A UNION COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI CAVE**

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While surveying a dry cave (Figure 1) for bats on 22 March 2017, I came across a Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) nest (Figure 2). The dry cave is in Union County about 10 km east of New Albany on private land. There were two eggs, and adults were not present. The nest was located ~3 m from the closest entrance where the ceiling was no more than 60 cm tall. After ~1 hour of surveying the cave, my colleague who opted to not crawl into the cave spotted the adult Turkey Vultures coming back. They stayed perched on a tree until we left, but we did not stay to watch to see if they went into the cave after we left. Turkey Vultures nest in a variety of dark recesses, including caves, hollow trees, brush piles, old buildings, rocky crevices, and tangles of low vegetation (Jackson 1983). At least one other occurrence of Turkey Vulture nesting in a cave from Mississippi has been reported from Tishomingo County in 1941 (Turcotte and Watts 1999).



Figure 1. Cave in Union County, Mississippi with a Turkey Vulture nest.





Figure 2. Turkey Vulture eggs and nest inside a Union County, Mississippi cave.

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**ABERRANTLY-COLORED YELLOW NORTHERN CARDINALS**

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Larry Coleman contacted the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science during early January 2017 to report a yellow male Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) that was visiting his backyard feeder and his neighbor's yard at Raymond for a few days. The bird was photographed on 4 and 6 January (Figure 1). Coleman has not seen the bird since then.

This mutation is evidently rare, and appears to occur only in males. Additional observations have been reported from Louisiana (McGraw et al. 2003), Ohio (McCormac 2013), Illinois (cbbohl 2010, Young 2014), Kentucky (Scott 2011), Iowa (Watrous 2013, ragdoll9786 2013), and Missouri (Magee 2014). At least one other yellow Northern Cardinal has been found from Mississippi at Louisville, Winston County (Figure 2; Laurie Arnold, personal communication). The Louisville, Mississippi bird was seen over a period of about six years during the early 2000s, but has not been seen in recent years. Arnold once observed the bird feeding young that appeared normally-colored.

Normal Northern Cardinals obtain their red plumage by metabolizing four yellow or orange carotenoid pigments from their diet, and depositing these more oxidized red forms into growing feathers (McGraw et al. 2001). Results from a yellow Northern Cardinal from Baton Rouge, Louisiana indicated it incorporated into its feathers the yellow carotenoid pigments directly from its diet and other yellow pigments that oxidized via a different pathway than the pathway in normal cardinals that produces red pigments (McGraw et al. 2003). McGraw et al. (2003) assumed

this suggested a genetic mutation that prevented the aberrant cardinal from creating the red pigments and instead either shifted metabolism of some dietary carotenoids to other yellow pigments, or allowed those to be more evident due to a lack of red pigments.



Figure 1. Yellow male Northern Cardinal at Raymond, Mississippi from 4 and 6 January 2017. Photographs by Larry Coleman.



Figure 2. Yellow male Northern Cardinal at Louisville, Mississippi from around 2009. Photograph by Laurie Arnold.

Recent work (Lopes et al. 2016) has discovered a gene responsible for producing an enzyme that converts yellow carotenoids into red pigments in normal birds; although found in many bird species, it is turned on in different body parts for different species. The mechanism responsible for turning on the enzyme in the skin of red species but not yellow ones needs further study. Finding another yellow Northern Cardinal may help solve this question.

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**FIRST AND SECOND MISSISSIPPI RECORDS OF COUCH'S  
KINGBIRD (*TYRANNUS COUCHII*)**

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In 2016, two Couch's Kingbirds (*Tyrannus couchii*) were sighted and positively identified by voice in Mississippi, one at Singing River Island (Jackson County) from the Gulf Coast and another near the town of Money (Leflore County) from the Delta.

Couch's Kingbird is a medium to large flycatcher resembling the more often encountered Western Kingbird (*T. verticalis*) with gray head, dark lores and auriculars, whitish throat, yellow underparts transitioning to a dusky upper breast, and brownish-black wings and tail (lacking the white veins on the outer rectrices of Western Kingbird). It is most similar in appearance to Tropical Kingbird (*T. melancholicus*), and indeed was once considered a subspecies of Tropical Kingbird. Where the ranges of Tropical and Couch's kingbirds overlap, and particularly outside of either's normal range, voice is the most reliable discriminator between the two. The range of Couch's Kingbird extends from southern Texas south along the Atlantic slope of eastern Mexico as far south as Belize. Over much of its southern range the species is year-round resident, but populations in Texas and northern Mexico are known to migrate in small flocks (Brush 1999).

In the southeastern U.S. east of Texas, confirmed sightings of the species have been recorded in Louisiana and Alabama (J.V. Remsen, personal communication; Duncan 2001). Based on currently published state checklists, there have been no confirmed sightings from Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia, or Florida. As of

2000, Alabama had five reports of the Tropical/Couch's kingbird complex with one confirmed as Couch's Kingbird from Fort Morgan from October 1988 (Duncan 2001). As the closest eastern state to the south Texas limits of its normal range, Louisiana has had a larger share of sightings through around 2008 with ~16 confirmed Couch's Kingbird records (J.V. Remsen, personal communication). The only previous records of the Tropical/Couch's kingbird complex in Mississippi are from December 2014 with a confirmed Tropical Kingbird overwintering in Bay St. Louis (Knight 2016) and again the following two winters (2015-2016 and 2016-2017, likely the same bird). Records were positively identified as Tropical Kingbird, and documented with audio recordings (<http://www.xeno-canto.org/287873>).

During an Audubon Coastal Bird Survey on Singing River Island on 13 January 2016, Brian Johnston, Janet Wright, Charley Delmas, and Thomas Butera encountered three apparent Western Kingbirds. Later examination of the photographs of one of the kingbirds called the identification into question, suggesting instead a Tropical or Couch's kingbird. The photographs were shared with members of the Mississippi Bird Records Committee who agreed that the bird was a Tropical or Couch's kingbird. On 18 January BJ and JRR returned to Singing River Island around 1100 to retrace the standard survey route. We soon encountered a kingbird that appeared to be the bird in question along the high access road basically where BJ encountered the bird on 13 January. Notable field marks on this first viewing included the large bill, bright yellow belly that extended upward beyond the mid-breast, greenish-brown back, and brownish tail, although the sun was overhead and the light harsh. The bird sallied several times, but flew out of sight before we could get decent photographs.

We continued on the survey route down to the jetty where we had another encounter with a kingbird. This one appeared to have field marks typical of a Western Kingbird, and JRR heard one

faint vocalization that seemed to confirm this. We tracked back and forth along the water's edge over about 100 m three times as the bird landed on the jetty, allowed us to approach to within 50 m, and then flew behind us over the mudflat. We continued in this repetitive endeavor, unsure whether this might be the same bird seen earlier. Later examination of the photographs confirmed the smaller bill, grayer upper breast, and white outer veins on the outer tail feathers of a Western Kingbird. But it was hard to be certain in the field with an unknown number of kingbirds in the area.

We hiked back up to the access road and there again encountered the original kingbird (Figure 1) that now seemed all but certainly a separate bird both by geography and plumage. Viewing the bird through a spotting scope, the features supported Couch's or Tropical kingbird, and we realized a vocalization would be required to refine the identification to species. JRR heard the bird vocalize once while it was out of sight, but did not recognize the vocalization as that of Western Kingbird or Tropical Kingbird (having just the day before spent time collecting audio recordings of a Tropical Kingbird at Bay St. Louis).

We continued to work our way up and down the road for about an hour trying to get additional photographs and hopefully some audio recordings to obtain a definitive identification. After a few encounters with the bird, JRR began trying playback from an iPhone to elicit a vocalization, focusing at first on Tropical Kingbird vocalizations. Playback of Tropical Kingbird seemed to drive the bird away. It was perched within about 20 m, and then flew east toward the water farther from us when JRR played the recording. Trials with playback of Western Kingbird vocalizations seemed to have no effect.

JRR tried Couch's Kingbird last. When playback of the Couch's Kingbird vocalization began, the bird was out of JRR's sight behind a tall stand of grass, but visible to BJ as he was farther east behind the tall stand of grass. As the Couch's recording played,



the bird left its perch and flew nearer, to a perch 2 m above the ground and only 15 m northwest of JRR along the road. At this point JRR suspended playback and began recording with a handheld recorder (Olympus LS-10). Over several minutes, the bird issued several “kip” calls followed by a single trill that rose slightly in pitch before falling again (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Couch's Kingbird, 18 January 2016, Singing River Island. Photograph by Brian Johnston.

We were mindful of badgering the bird, so having obtained recordings of two vocalizations we decided we had what we needed and left the bird. The recordings have been submitted to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science bioacoustics collection and may be accessed at [www.xeno-canto.org/358192](http://www.xeno-canto.org/358192). Photographs, audio recordings and a sighting report were subsequently submitted to the Mississippi Bird Records Committee and accepted as a first

state record (MBRC Record 016-5). The bird remained at Singing River Island through at least April 20, 2017.

JRR was the only person in the party doing either playback or recording during the outing. BJ had no audio equipment. Playback and recording done together can be problematic. If any playback is recorded, it makes everything suspect. JRR was therefore careful, after issuing the playback audio, to close the application on the iPhone and then lock the screen on the phone before resuming recording with the handheld recorder. Similarly, JRR paused the handheld recorder before using playback, and watched the display for at least 2 seconds after hitting "pause" to note the recorded time and be sure that it had indeed stopped recording before then starting playback. JRR then checked the recorded time again before resuming the recording.

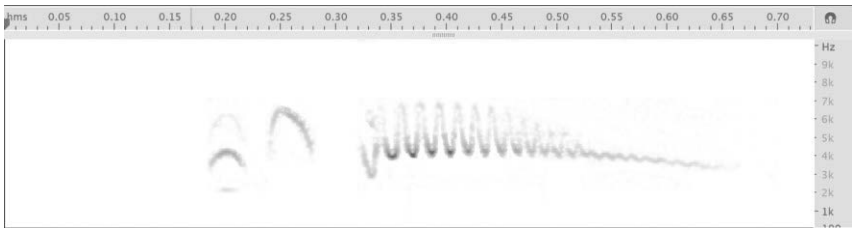


Figure 2. Spectrogram of audio recording collected from the Couch's Kingbird at Singing River Island, showing "kip" call and trill.

In a separate encounter on 30 November 2016 JRR arrived at a field site near Money, Mississippi at 0730 and immediately noticed an intriguing bird perched on a transmission line parallel to Sunny Side Rd. 150 meters west of the bridge over the Tallahatchie River. Lacking binoculars at the time, JRR recognized the bird as a flycatcher in the genus *Tyrannus*, identified it as a probable Western Kingbird, and reported the bird to the MISSBIRD email listserv. On 1 December, JRR returned to the field site and

attempted to get photographs of the bird, and the bird became very vocal as it was approached. JRR recognized the trilled vocalizations as that of Couch's Kingbird from the previous encounter with the species on Singing River Island, and was able to get recordings with a handheld recorder for documentation ([www.xeno-canto.org/358180](http://www.xeno-canto.org/358180)). Additional sightings of the bird were made by JRR on 8 and 14 December and by others as late as 3 January 2017. Hal Mitchell collected excellent audio recordings using a parabolic reflector on 3 December 2016 (Macauley Library Catalog Number 41665561). This record is awaiting a final decision by the Mississippi Bird Records Committee.

Finally, it is notable that Mississippi's first state records for Couch's and Tropical kingbirds were just over one year apart and both the first and second records for Couch's Kingbird occurred in the same calendar year. Another Couch's Kingbird was identified from extreme southeastern Louisiana (St. Tammany Parish) during December 2016 near Lake Pontchartrain at Fontainebleau State Park, one of five accepted records on eBird from Louisiana during the 2016 calendar year. In light of these recent sightings, additional records of the Tropical/Couch's kingbird complex from Mississippi may be likely in the near future.

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