

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Fannye A. Cook, President
827 North State Street
Jackson, Mississippi

Mrs. W. G. Wills, Secretary
828 North Congress Street
Jackson, Mississippi

John M. Frazier, Vicepresident
Mississippi Southern College
Station A
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Dr. Chas. L. Deevers, Treasurer
Mississippi College
Clinton, Mississippi

June 25, 1956

MOS NEWSLETTER -- Vol. 1, No. 2

Editor: William H. Turcotte
Rt. 2, Box 100, Jackson, Miss.

TRIP TO THE BROWN PELICAN ROOKERY ON NORTH ISLAND.-- All aboard at 4:30 a.m., June 2nd, we set out in the HERMES from the Ocean Springs harbor for North Island, off the Louisiana coast. The morning was clear and a cold wind from the east was invigorating. Chuck-will's-widows on shore a few yards away called out as if to bid us Godspeed.

After a round of greetings and introductions and partially settling down for the voyage our thoughts turned to food, or just coffee would do. Those who least expected to need reenforcement so early were either without or had cold coffee. The coast members had gotten up at 3 o'clock and were prepared for any emergency. They were generous in sharing with others their hot coffee and baskets of plenty.

An occasional Laughing Gull and a few Royal Terns were seen as we steered out across the Mississippi Sound. In the channel off Ship Island the already choppy water became suddenly rougher. Soon we ran into a large school of porpoises that put on quite a show as they rolled and sometimes leaped clear of the water. Several Brown Pelicans and Man-o'-war Birds appeared in full view and gave hope to those who had become seasick that we were nearing North Island. About 10 a.m. numbers of Pelicans and flocks of Man-o'-war Birds were seen in flight in the distance, and almost momentarily swarms of these could be seen over the Island. As the boat drew nearer and anchored, young on the nests and great numbers of adult birds shuffling to and fro loomed into view. Everyone was eager to get ashore with cameras. Three by three we were transferred in a motor boat from the HERMES to the Island. There we were immediately in the rookery among occupied nests placed in low mangrove bushes which extended to the water's edge. Rough bulky nests of sticks and stems of weeds and grasses were touching each other and contained two or three eggs, or young birds in different stages of development. The newly hatched were brown-skinned and naked. Slightly older ones were "sprouting" down, while others amazingly large for their age, were fully covered with white down, or beginning to acquire juvenile plumage. Many of the young, apparently too large for the nests, clung to the sides or stood on the ground nearby. They were extremely noisy while the adults were virtually quiet. The young feed by plunging their heads down the pouch of the parent. They are not able to forage for themselves until they are about ten weeks old. The Man-o'-war Birds were there to rob the Pelicans of food.

Among the Pelicans and farther inland were small colonies of American Egrets and several Reddish Egrets which seemed to be nesting. An Oyster-catcher was seen as it flew from the Island, and a few Laughing Gulls flew among the other birds off shore.

(continued)

Pelican Rookery (Con't.)

Time did not permit a survey of the whole island. We were reluctant to leave and went aboard with a resolve to return another day. Back aboard the HERMES we compared notes as we ate lunch. The Man-o'-war Birds followed the boat some distance and we had close-up views of adults and their young of the year. The compass broke and we were thrown slightly off course, but anchored in the harbor at twilight. As we went ashore several Chuck-will's-widows were there calling vociferously as if in celebration of our return.

We shall ever be grateful to Donald R. Moore and W. A. Demoran of the Gulf Coast Laboratory for steering us straight to North Island and back safely. To Dr. Gunter, Director of the Laboratory, we are indebted for the use of the Laboratory facilities and the boat. It was a fine trip that we shall long remember. Excellent pictures were taken at close range by several members of the party. Bill Turcotte showed some of the motion pictures taken by him on the Game and Fish Television program Friday night, June 15, and Mrs. Floyd has entertained friends in her home with the colored pictures which she took.

MOS members making the trip to North Island were: Mr. & Mrs. Ben Coffey, Jr., Fannye and Vivian Cook, Dr. & Mrs. Bedford Floyd, Mrs. Fred Moreton, John Phares, Dr. Hurst Shoemaker, Homer Tackett, Mrs. Mayo Tolman, Bill Turcotte.

Guests were: R. J. Newman, LSU, Baton Rouge, La.; Harris Eaton, Jackson; James M. Smiley, Jackson; Carl M. Shoemaker, Jr. and son, Bruce, Atlanta, Ga.; Ann Shoemaker, W. A. Demoran, Ted Ford, and Donald Moore, Gulf Coast Laboratory.

-- Fannye A. Cook --

* * * * *

THE PASCAGOULA BRIDGE NESTING GROUNDS.-- On Sunday morning, June 3rd, several members of the Society drove to the west end of the Pascagoula Bridge on Highway 90 to survey the Black Skimmer and Tern nesting grounds which were first visited by MOS members in June 1955. The Skimmers and Least Terns were there in numbers and were apparently beginning to nest. A few nests of both species containing fresh eggs were seen. Red-winged Blackbirds and several Boat-tailed Grackles were in the marsh and a pair of large Terns, presumably Caspian, fed near the site of the old bridge.

The adult Gull-billed Terns seen there May 5th by Bill Turcotte and John Phares were not present. Several downy young, which scurried across the nesting grounds as the observers approached were thought to be of this species, as they appeared too large for the young of Least Terns, the only other Tern known to nest there. Mrs. B. F. Floyd who has visited that area several times this season reports, through Dr. Shoemaker, that she found the Skimmers nesting there early in May. This being true the immature seen on June 3rd could have been Skimmers.

Those making the trip, June 3rd, were: Mr. & Mrs. Ben Coffey, Jr.; Frances and Vivian Cook.

* * * * *

Roland Handley and Carl Harvard, of the State Game and Fish Commission, reported seeing 3 Swallow-tailed Kites on the Pascagoula River below Cumbest Bluff while making a boat trip down the river for the purpose of making Wood Duck brood counts.

BARN SWALLOWS.- Ben Coffey reported seeing Barn Swallows nesting in a warehouse on the Gulfport municipal pier. As far as we know this is the first record of a Barn Swallow nesting on the mainland on the coast. They are probably of the same species as have been known to nest for many years on Ship Island.

* * * * *

A JUNE STORM VICTIM.- During a heavy rain and wind storm on Wednesday, June 13, a young Yellow-crowned NightHeron came down with both legs broken in Mr. Wade Creekmore's yard in north Jackson and was brought to the Museum by Mr. Creekmore and Mr. T. M. Salisbury. These Herons nest commonly in Pearl River bottoms near Jackson. The skin of this specimen was preserved by Miss Fannye Cook, Curator of the Museum, for the permanent collection.

* * * * *

A CALIFORNIA-BANDED PINTAIL FOUND IN MISSISSIPPI.- Ben Coffey, Jr. writes that he received a report from the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service on a band,- No. 536-86221, which was taken from a male pintail killed by H. R. Thompson, Dec. 26, 1955 at Tunica Cut-off in Tunica County, Miss. The bird was banded as an immature male pintail on Aug. 15, 1954 by California Fish & Game Comm. at Mountain Meadow Reservoir, Westwood, Calif.

* * * * *

WOUNDED MIGRANT RECEIVES ATTENTION AT THE WILDLIFE MUSEUM.- A handsome Rose-breasted Grosbeak, found with a broken wing near Biloxi, April 20, and sent to the Museum by Miss Lessie Rowan of Seashore Camp Grounds, remains in good spirits and has given much pleasure to Museum visitors. It eats heartily of sunflower seeds and fruits,- berries and plums. After the second week of confinement it showed signs of great improvement and began chirping. Now it is able to fly a few yards when released in the room and sings throughout the day. Parts of its song resembles that of a Robin. The Grosbeak winters in the tropics and migrates from mid-April to mid-May through Mississippi to its northern nesting grounds.

* * * * *

On June 15 following a storm, Mr. & Mrs. Mayo Tolman drove along the Gulf Coast from Lakeshore in Hancock County to Biloxi and back. In the a.m. there was a stiff inshore breeze and not a bird was seen over the Gulf at South Beach above Bayou Caddy. Across the highway a goodly number of Terns were flying back and forth over the marshes and frequently plunging into the water: Least, Forster's, and an occasional Laughing Gull and one Frigate Bird (Man-o'-war Bird).

When they crossed the Bay Bridge at noon the wind had abated. From Henderson Point to Pass Christian they saw 7 flocks of Frigate Birds, numbering 30, 31, 9, 36, 14, 18, 35; and just east of Pass Christian was a flock of 24; at Edgewater 1, and at Biloxi 6. All of these birds were soaring in an easterly direction. On the return trip about two hours later they saw altogether in 6 different places 19 Frigate Birds. Land birds were almost entirely absent.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS, MAY 4 and 5, along U. S. Highway 49, south of Jackson, Mississippi, principally in Jackson and Harrison Counties. *

Birds observed: Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Green Heron, Louisiana Heron, White Ibis, Turkey Vulture, Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, Bob-white, Sandhill Crane, Coot, Wilson Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Black-bellied Plover, Turnstone, Lesser Yellow-legs, Knot, Red-backed Sandpiper, Sanderling, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Laughing Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Common Tern, Least Tern, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Black Skimmer, Mourning Dove, Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Kingbird, Crested Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Wood Pewee, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, Blue Jay, Crow, Fish Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Wood Thrush, Bluebird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Shrike, Starling, White-eyed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Parula Warbler, Pine Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Maryland Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Hooded Warbler, English Sparrow, Bobolink, Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Orchard Oriole, Boat-tailed Grackle, Purple Grackle, Cowbird, Summer Tanager, Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak, Towhee, Sea-side Sparrow.

Comments: Louisiana Heron - Not usually seen in any numbers until after first week in June.

Osprey - Burleigh did not find this bird nesting on the mainland, however they nest in Jackson County and to some extent in Hancock. Jim Hipper, of the Game Commission, reports 2 active nests in Hancock County and 2 active nests atop power poles on Big Biloxi River just north of Loraine Bridge, 6 miles north of Biloxi in Harrison County.

Purple Martin - Reported by John Frazier as being seen in decreasing numbers in Hattiesburg area. Seen in great abundance in coastal region.

American Knot - Observed in detail at fairly close range on west side of Gulfport municipal pier on afternoon of May 4. Considered by Burleigh as one of the scarcest of the shore birds on the Mississippi coast.

Common Tern - Maybe Forster's, as Burleigh states that it is difficult to distinguish these in immature or winter plumage.

Sandhill Crane - Nest with 2 young observed and photographed, north of Fontainebleau with Dr. Hurst Shoemaker.

Gull-billed Tern - Not collected by Burleigh who reported it not present to his knowledge on the mainland. Said to be of limited occurrence in migration on the outer islands.

* Basis for many of the remarks following the species listed is taken from Burleigh's book entitled "The Bird Life of The Gulf Coast Region in Mississippi", 1945.

-- John Phares and Bill Turcotte

* * * * *

NOTICE

Each member of the MOS is invited to send to the Editor bird notes or other items of interest for publication in future Newsletters.

BIRDS SEEN ON CROSS COUNTRY TRIP.- These notes begin shortly before 7 a.m. May 23, on the Natchez Trace. For miles the turtles on each side of the road seemed to have decided that they had rather be on the other side. It took some maneuvering to manage to miss all of them.

On a cross country trip tourist courts are recommended for they are often located near a woods. Early in the morning from a court north of Chattanooga the songs and call notes of the Wood Thrush, Robin, Thrasher, Jay, Towhee, Orchard Oriole, Carolina Wren, Starling, and Dove could be heard. Then at dusk on a hillside near our court in Roanoke were Chipping Sparrows. Up Highway 11 from Roanoke to New Market, Va., through the picturesque Blue Ridge country, the most abundant bird was the Starling. Several times on the telephone lines were small flocks of Goldfinches. Upon taking the Skyline Drive between New Market and Front Royal, Va., the Starling was left behind and Juncos, Red-eyed Vireos, and more Goldfinches appeared.

May 25 to June 2 was spent eight miles from Annapolis, Md., in Sherwood Forest. This beautiful forest of giant tulip trees (in full bloom), locust, oak, hickory, dogwood with an undergrowth of sassafras and mountain laurel, is on a bluff overlooking the Severn River. Wood Thrushes could be seen running about in any cleared spot and singing constantly. On a rainy day they were especially musical and seemed to pour forth their double notes more often. Catbirds were everywhere, singing loudly, as well as calling. Red-eyed Vireos, Wood Pewees, Summer Tanagers, Towhees, and Crested Flycatchers were abundant. Of particular interest were the Scarlet Tanagers, and the Bewick Wrens were heard many times during that week. On the parade grounds at the Naval Academy, Barn Swallows flew around and around, dipping up and down, completely indifferent to the precise patterns executed by the midshipmen.

June 2 was a day for seeing Lt. Vernon. Traipsing around the grounds of an estate in the pouring rain is not very appealing, nevertheless it proved to be most rewarding. There in the formal flower garden, perched in a small tree and singing clearly, was my first Song Sparrow.

On June 3, back of our tourist court in South Hill, Va., we discovered a flock of Chickadees. Late that afternoon near another court in Waynesville, N. C., we again saw Song Sparrows. They were evident next morning also, sounding so like cool clear mountain air.

June 4 was spent winding in the Smokies to Fontana Dam. Indigo Buntings, Red-eyed Vireos, and Warblers we could not identify were heard all along the way. The Vireos seemed to predominate. In Fontana Village we saw Yellow Warblers for the first time since May 3 on North Congress Street in Jackson, Miss. In vain we looked for Painted Buntings.

The only trouble about a trip of this kind is that there is not time to investigate all the interesting sounds and glimpses one gets from a car window.

- Mrs. W. G. Wills

The vote recently taken by mail resulted in the election of the following officers of the Mississippi Ornithological Society for the ensuing year:

President - Fanny A. Cook
Vicepresident - John H. Frazier
Secretary - Mrs. W. G. Wills
Treasurer - Dr. C. S. L. Deevers
Editor - William H. Turcotte

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1956 Membership List

Allison, Andrew, Ellisville, Mississippi
Almon, Dr. Lois, Box 235, State College, Mississippi
Blumenfield, Mrs. Amelia, Box 28, Starkville, Mississippi
Breckenridge, Miss Rena, 2408 - 9th Street, Meridian, Miss.
Castles, Miss Ruth, Forest Hills Apt., Hillsboro Road, Nashville 12, Tenn.
Caylor, Dr. R. L., Delta State Teachers College, Cleveland, Miss.
Coffey, Ben B. Jr., 672 North Belvedere, Memphis 7, Tenn.
Coffey, Mrs. Ben B. Jr., 672 North Belvedere, Memphis 7, Tenn.
Cook, Miss Fannye A., Apt. 4 B, 827 North State St., Jackson, Miss.
Cook, Miss Vivian, Crystal Springs, Miss.
Davidson, Miss Sue, 425 East Hamilton St., Jackson, Miss.
Dean, Mrs. Blanche E., 1503 Ridgeroad, Homewood, Birmingham 9, Alabama
Deevers, Dr. Charles L., Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss.
Dorn, Rev. J. L., Jesuit High School, Carrollton Ave. & Banks St., New Orleans, La.
Ellis, Dr. L. L., Mississippi State College, State College, Miss.
Evans, Dr. Clytee, M. S. C. W., Columbus, Miss.
Feduccia, Alan, Memorial Drive, Cleveland, Miss.
Fleming, Rose Ellen, (Mrs. Robt. E.), 462 Stillwood Drive, Jackson, Miss.
Floyd, Dr. Buford F., 4818 Kendall Ave., Gulfport, Miss.
Floyd, Ethel D. (Mrs. Buford F.), 4818 Kendall Ave., Gulfport, Miss.
Frazier, John M., Mississippi Southern College, Sta. A, Hattiesburg, Miss.
Ganier, Albert F., 2112 Woodlawn Drive, Nashville 12, Tenn.
Hanson, Newton F., Bruce, Miss.
Harper, Mrs. Dorothy R., 4203 West Capitol St., Jackson, Miss.
Hatrell, Rev. T. J., Jesuit High School, Carrollton Ave. & Banks St., New Orleans, La.
Hobson, Miss May, Northeast Junior College, Booneville, Miss.
Laskey, Amelia R. (Mrs. F. C.), 1521 Graybar Lane, Nashville 12, Tenn.
Moreton, Fred, 120 Gill Ave., Biloxi, Miss.
Moreton, Mrs. Fred, 120 Gill Avenue, Biloxi, Miss.
Phares, John B., 4539 Meadowridge Drive, Jackson, Miss.
Polk, Virginia (Mrs. James K.), Macon Plantation, Inverness, Miss.
Pullen, Mrs. W. H., Jr., 819 Pinehurst St., Jackson, Miss.
Riggs, Miss Jennie, 3313 Fairmont Drive, Nashville, Tenn.
Sehon, Miss George Louise, M.S.C.W., Columbus, Miss.
Shoemaker, Dr. Hurst, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, Miss.
Tackett, Homer L., 338 Segura Avenue, Jackson, Miss.
Thompson, St. Clair, Crystal Springs, Miss.
Tolman, Mayo, Aiokpanchi, Rt. 1, Picayune, Miss.
Tolman, Amy B. (Mrs. Mayo), Aiokpanchi, Rt. 1, Picayune, Miss.
Turcotte, William H., Rt. 2, Box 100, Jackson, Miss.
Webb, Miss Carol H., Wood Junior College, Mathiston, Miss.
Wills, Frances (Mrs. Wm. G.), 828 North Congress St., Jackson, Miss.
Yancey, Mrs. Cleo, Hickory Flat, Miss.