

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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MOS Newsletter - Vol. 10, No. 1

Compiled by: W. H. TURCOTTE

The editor apologizes for the long period of time that has passed since the last newsletter. This has been due largely to the pressure of work and partially to the lack of contributions of field notes and other items of interest by the membership. Then, too, the death of our esteemed President, Miss Fannye A. Cook, on April 30, 1964, on the eve of our scheduled annual meeting at LeRoy Percy State Park, lowered our spirits and disrupted our interest in these affairs. This period of relative inactivity, we hope, has passed on and plans are in the making for a revival of activities and interest in the MOS. We need your help in contributing field notes that will continue to record bird observations and further stimulate interest in the study of Mississippi bird life. Plans need to be made now for Spring activities and field trips and the annual business meeting. We are now in the tenth year of organization. Further growth in membership, especially among younger people, is needed.

Your editor is planning to publish the first issue of a periodical, The Mississippi Kite. We are in the process of preparing a suitable cover with photograph of two Mississippi kites. It is planned to include in the first issue a memorial to Miss Cook. Articles of 500 - 750 words or more will be needed. Field notes and local group activities will be recorded. Please send in your contributions, preferably typed, in language acceptable for publication. Articles and notes contributed should be signed by the author for publication. The proposed publication will be multilithed with front and back cover. We can have up to twenty pages excluding cover. We plan, also, to include in the first issue our constitution and by-laws and a membership list.

Get Acquainted

Members of our organization need to meet and get together with other members, particularly in their own home town. In the hopes that we may become better acquainted, I will publish a list of members in one or two given localities in each of the next several issues of the MOS Newsletter. B. E. Gandy, Treasurer

Jackson Area: Mrs. E. L. Bailey, 4326 Old Canton Road; Miss Christine Berry, 3918 North State Street; Mrs. James T. Canizaro, 1204 Kenwood Place; Rev. James S. Conner, Brandon; Mrs. Elaine Cooper, 5609 Old Canton Road; Ross P. Dodds, Jr., 1249 Pinehurst; Mrs. Alton Ellick, 4326 Old Canton Road; Robert G. Forrest, 149 East Fulton, Canton; B. E. Gandy, 261 Woody Drive; John E. Hargrove, 1814 Bellewood Road; Alfred W. Johnson, 438 Pine Ridge Road; Mrs. Dorothy R. Johnson, 466 Cooper Road; Mrs. Homer L. McAdory, 3129 Bilgray Drive; Mr. and Mrs. S. E. Moreton, Jr., 706 South Jackson Street, Brookhaven; Don Wall Moss, 313 Woody Drive; John Phares, 4539 Meadow Ridge Road; Mrs. W. H. Pullen, 819 Pinehurst Street; Mrs. W. G. Wills, 1521 Poplar Boulevard.

Natchez Area: Mrs. Edna W. Campbell, 10 Oak Court; John C. Campbell, Sr., 10 Oak Court; Miss Clara Chamberlain, 306 High Street; Mrs. Earle Rowe Glenn, 23 North Circle Drive; Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Greer, Washington, Mississippi; Mr. and Mrs. Saul Habas, 610 Orleans; Ann Renee Lanneau, 565 Duncan Avenue; Bazil R. Lanneau, 565 Duncan Avenue; Albert W. Metcalfe, No. 1 Oak Court; Mr. and Mrs. Orrick Metcalfe, Sr., The Parsonage; Dr. Clifford Tillman, 492 Park Place.

Purple Martin Arrivals - 1965

The first martins arrived on February 9, 1965, at my house west of Jackson. At this writing, March 5, eleven birds have come. Two males came in on a strong wind from the South on the afternoon of February 9, the earliest date in the past 9 years of record keeping. WHT.

Brown Pelicans Extirpated on Gulf Coast?

Recent correspondence with Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission officials and interested and concerned persons in Texas indicate the population status of the Brown Pelican is in "a most distressing state." Louisiana has been making a survey of the status of the Brown Pelican and similar surveys are planned in Texas. The decline of Brown Pelican numbers has been noticed and recorded since the fall of 1958.

The following letter was received by the Game and Fish Commission in regard to Brown Pelicans.

Mississippi Game and Fish Commission  
Woolfolk State Office Building  
Jackson, Mississippi

Gentlemen:

The population status of the brown pelican is in a "most distressing state." A coast-wide census this winter (conducted by the Flyway Biologist of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the State Parks and Wildlife Service), disclosed that not a single brown pelican was seen during the November waterfowl inventory in Texas and Louisiana. "Richard Yancey, Assistant Director of Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission, voiced fears that the brown pelican may now be virtually extirpated in Louisiana."

Captain W. B. Mullinax, Conservation Supervisor, said that he counted 20 dead adult and nestling brown pelicans at Second Chain of Islands two months prior to Hurricane Carla. No analysis was made of dead birds although he is now of the opinion they were poisoned. Just how, he could not say but he believes the birds ate fish that were somehow killed by poison.

Dr. Hildebrand (Marine Biologist at the University of Corpus Christi), and I hope to make a study of pelicans in Texas. If you have any information on the birds in Mississippi, it would be greatly appreciated. We would be particularly interested in knowing the numbers observed recently and in the past. Can you help us?

Sincerely,

/s/ Gene W. Blacklock  
Vice-President  
Corpus Christi Outdoor Club

This letter was directed to my attention for a reply which was made as follows:

Dear Mr. Blacklock:

In answer to your letter about brown pelicans, this bird has been extirpated along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. In June 1958, there was a thriving colony on North Island, as described in the enclosed article. "In March 1959, the complete absence of brown pelicans at Waveland, Mississippi, was noticeable," (MOS Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 1, Amy B. Tolman). "Only five were seen during the summer (of 1960) -- three at Gulfport, July 2, one at Cat Island, July 9, and one at Ship Island, August 26. On September 12, nine were seen between Biloxi and Pass Christian," (MOS Newsletter, Vol. 5, No. 5, Lovett E. Williams and Sterling Gene Clawson). "On September 16 (after Ethel), we were delighted to see two brown pelicans (at Biloxi), the first seen since October 27, 1958," (MOS Newsletter, Vol. 5, No. 5), Amy S. Tolman. "One bird (brown pelican) was seen flying low off the beach just east of Gulfport in Harrison County, Mississippi, on July 29, 1961." (MOS Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 5), Mac Myers and Sterling Gene Clawson. "On September 10, 1961, a brown pelican was seen at the port of Gulfport, Mississippi," (MOS Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 5), Sterling Gene Clawson. "Brown pelicans are more uncommon (along the coast) than the white pelican." (Spring and Summer Gulf Coast Notes - MOS Newsletter, Vol. 7, No. 4), Dr. Henry D. Haberyan.

The above notes indicate that the brown pelican decline began in 1958 and 1959. The thriving breeding colony on North Island (Louisiana) off the Mississippi Coast was down to about 150 birds by the summer of 1961 or 1962, and was practically non-existent after that time. Last observers report no nesting of pelicans on North Island. Brown pelicans are non-existent or rarely seen on the Mississippi Coast at this time.

As to the cause of decimation it would seem that epidemic disease or other causes of mortality occurred over a relatively short period of time after the summer of 1958 or during the summer of 1959. A decline was first noticed in the fall and winter of 1958-59 along the Mississippi Coast. Whether insecticide or other poisoning could have caused mortality would be difficult to substantiate. If so, poison residues were probably ingested through the bodies of menhaden, which seems to be the principal food of the brown pelican (observed at rookeries). It might be possible that slight insecticide residues accumulated in fatty tissues of these fish could cause mortality due to cumulative effects of these poisons when they reached a certain level or were stored in tissues of the pelicans and reabsorbed during periods of stress causing mortality. This is pure speculation, of course. Hurricane damage could cause some loss, of course, but we have not been able to associate the brown pelican decline with any hurricane or hurricanes.

Very truly yours,

/s/ W. H. Turcotte  
Chief, Game and Fisheries

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On July 6, 1964, Mr. Charles R. Shaw, Supervisor, Game Section, Louisiana, reported to me in a letter:

"I flew the Chandeleurs, starting with North Island and then along the Louisiana coastline to the vicinity of Pecan Island, last Tuesday without

seeing a sign of a Brown Pelican. Lots of Man-o'-War birds present though. We saw one flock of 40 - 50 White Pelicans on Raccoon Point in the Isles Dernieres. I have another flight scheduled for tomorrow but do not have much hope of seeing anything.

"Ralph Andrews with the USFW reported that they saw one (1) lonesome Brown Pelican while spending 3 days on the Chandeleurs during the first part of June."

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Mr. Clarence E. Morgan, Jr., Kosciusko, Mississippi, also reported in a letter, dated June 6, 1964:

"About three weeks ago, I was on a fishing trip at North Island. I never saw as many Man-o'-War Birds in one place. There were a lot of Egrets and Terns nesting. I saw a few Skimmers but no Pelicans."

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#### Tern Nestling Band Returns

Dr. Henry D. Haberyan reported in a letter to B. E. Gandy, dated August 19, 1964, the following interesting band returns from tern nestlings banded by Dr. Haberyan on the Mississippi Coast:

1. Gull-billed tern nestling, banded Pascagoula River flats on 22 June 1963; shot "on the Albion Sea Shore near Amsterdam, Berbice, British Guiana on 27 October 1963."
2. Royal tern nestling, banded on Petit Bois Island on 23 June 1963, caught in trap at Veradero, Cuba, on 3 January 1964.

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#### Banding Work on the Coast and Gulf Coast Notes

Lovett Williams, P. O. Box 908, Lake City, Florida, now working for the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, reports by letter dated July 21, 1964, as follows on his Gulf Coast observations and banding work with terns this past summer.

"On July 14 Bob Skinner, Mac Myers, the Refuge Manager Mr. Blackard, and I saw an immature Sabine's Gull in Mississippi Sound about 3 miles, 300 degrees true bearing from Ship Island Light House.

"On July 16, Bob, Mac, and I saw two immature Pomarine Jaegers in Mississippi Sound approximately 5 miles, 020 degrees true bearing from Ship Island Light House.

"We found a Common Tern nest with two eggs on the Pascagoula Ship Channel spoil banks about 3 miles out from Spanish Point, on July 13.

"In Chandeleur Sound we saw a Brown Booby and two shearwaters (one of which was a Greater, the other unidentified), and on the lower Islands we saw the Sooty Terns, as we have on just about every trip out. These were all in Louisiana.

"The Petit Bois Tern colony has moved to one of the spoil banks (Walnut Island) along the Pascagoula Ship Channel and it looks a little larger to me. The colony is now now in the refuge and I doubt that it will return

to Petit Bois as long as the spoil banks are suitable. We discussed the fact that the birds were unprotected there by the Gulf Islands Refuge Manager but he thought that there was no way for him to post the colony. Something should be done about it -- next thing you hear about the colony may be about a big egg fight or something.

"We banded over 3,000 Royals and Sandwicks and colored a few adults red and juveniles blue. I hope you will let me know if you hear about any of them."

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#### Avocet and Peregrine Falcon on Pearl River Reservoir

Mrs. W. G. Wills, Jr., and Miss Christine Berry watched a single Avocet near the Pearl River Reservoir dam, near Jackson, Mississippi, on October 30, 1964, the first known record for this section of the state. On September 30, 1964, they observed a Peregrine Falcon perched on the concrete city water supply outlet in the Reservoir dam. The falcon was eating a small bird. Both of these birds were carefully studied and identified at good range. On September 30, 1964, six to eight Caspian Terns and Forsters Terns were observed on the reservoir. Water pipits were seen several times on the stone rip-rap along the dam. On October 21, three (3) Cormorants were seen on the Reservoir. Reported by Mrs. W. G. Wills, Jr., 1521 Poplar Boulevard, Jackson, Mississippi, to WHT.

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#### Redwing Behavior

"During two days in November I noticed an unusual number of pecans on the ground under our pecan tree. Upon investigation I saw that a single male Red-winged Blackbird was systematically working over the pecans in the tree. Apparently, it was feeding upon the small white worms found in the husk of the pecans and in so doing was knocking the opened pecans down. I have not seen this particular feeding habit mentioned in the literature."-- B. E. Gandy

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#### White-fronted Goose Near Tupelo, Mississippi

"On the morning of December 21, 1964, Dean Crabbs, one of our Rangers, took me about a mile down the road to see a goose that was feeding in a low field, and drinking at a little wet place in the field. We had our binoculars, and watched for quite some time. Though neither of us knows geese very well, he has had a college course in ornithology, and we took several books with us. We are almost certain that the bird was an immature White-fronted Goose. It stayed most of the day. At that time the weather was very cold, with a strong north-west wind, and near freezing mist, and we supposed that the goose might have been blown off course by adverse weather." Laura J. Bowers, Box 949, Tupelo, Mississippi

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#### Annual Meeting

Plans are underway for the annual meeting. No arrangements are definite at this time but it may be held either in late April or early May. Make your plans now to attend. There will be business to attend to needing good representation. Proposals may be made for provision to organize local chapters. There is sure to be an interesting field trip and opportunity for socializing and sightseeing. The annual meeting needs your attendance and support. Your officers will carry on the work necessary until new elections are held. WHT.

### Natchez Spring Field Trip

Last Spring's field trip to Natchez and downriver below Vidalia on the Louisiana side of the river was well attended. On the evening of April 10, Mr. and Mrs. Orrick Metcalfe, Sr. delightfully entertained the group, serving a delicious meal in their home, The Parsonage. An exceptionally good film obtained by the Natchez members on the life history of some European woodpeckers was shown. Very excellent photography depicted the excavation work, egg laying, raising of the young, etc., inside the nest cavity. On Saturday morning, April 11, a field trip downriver from Vidalia along the main levee was highlighted by observations of about twenty cattle egrets, numerous golden plovers, one upland plover and opportunity to observe feeding and other activity of white-crowned and savannah sparrows. Some visiting members toured points of historical interest. Others returned via the completed portion of the Natchez Trace and Emerald Mound. The Natchez members certainly made the trip memorable for those who could make the trip and we say, "Thank you." WHT.

### Summer Chandeleurs Field Trip

Last June 20, Dr. and Mrs. C. Hal Cleveland arranged and conducted a boat trip to the Chandeleur Island Chain. The following members and guests attended:

Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Clark, 225 Wright Avenue, Gretna, Louisiana; Mr. and Mrs. H. N. Tait, 221 Beardslee Street, Moss Point, Mississippi; Mrs. Electa D. Levi, 1217 Canal Blvd., Thibodaux, Louisiana; Miss Ava R. Tabor, 305 Canal Blvd., Thibodaux, Louisiana; Mrs. Elaine Cooper, 5609 Old Canton Road, Jackson, Mississippi; Mr. and Mrs. Raiford Holmes, 5042 DeBore Circle, New Orleans, Louisiana; Dr. C. B. DeForest, West Beach, Biloxi, Mississippi; Mr. Wayne Blank, 526 Madison Street, New Orleans, Louisiana; Boots Evans, Houston, Texas; Mr. and Mrs. Orrick Metcalfe, "The Parsonage," Natchez, Mississippi; Mr. Bazile R. Lanneau, "Fair Oaks," RFD, Natchez, Mississippi; Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Floyd, 130 Southern Circle, Mississippi City, Mississippi; Mrs. Hal Cleveland, 1916 Beach Drive, Mississippi City; Mr. Craig Cleveland, 1916 Beach Drive, Mississippi City, Mississippi

"The party of nineteen left Biloxi on the Ron-Jon. The captain was unusually cooperative and wanted to take us anywhere we chose to go.

"We went to the lower end of Chandeleur to a place called Errol Island. We saw multitudes of laughing gulls nesting and even pecking their way out of the shell. A seaside sparrow was observed feeding her young, and a long billed marsh wren was seen with her young.

"On the way back from the Chandeleur we stopped by North Island and saw the thousands of man-o'-war birds, herons, and an oyster catcher." Mrs. C. Hal Cleveland