

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

CLARENCE E. MORGAN, JR.  
President  
Kosciusko, Mississippi  
39090

WALTER V. DAVIS  
Secretary  
104 Bell Street  
Kosciusko, Mississippi  
39090

BURTON S. WEBSTER  
Vice-President  
Noxubee National  
Wildlife Refuge  
Route 1  
Brooksville, Mississippi  
39739

WILLIAM H. TURCOTTE  
Editor  
Route 2, Box 43  
Jackson, Mississippi  
39209

B. E. GANDY  
Treasurer  
111 North Jefferson St.  
Jackson, Mississippi  
39202

June 14, 1968

MOS NEWSLETTER - Vol. 13, No. 3

Compiled by: W. H. TURCOTTE

ANNUAL MEETING

The MOS meeting was held at the Gulf Islands Refuge headquarters in Biloxi on Friday night, May 10th. About thirty members and guests attended. John H. Phares gave a talk on Wild Ferns of Mississippi illustrated by more than twenty color slides. Burton S. Webster gave a report on wood duck nest box utilization at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge illustrated with some color slides; also, slides showing occupancy of a box by a pair of screech owls of both the red and gray color phases. A series of forty slides of warblers, thrushes and vireos was shown by W. H. Turcotte with tape recordings of songs of twelve species of warblers recorded this Spring.

Business transactions, President Clarence E. Morgan, Jr. presiding, were as follows:

Secretary's report on minutes of last meeting and field trip by Mr. Walter V. Davis, Kosciusko.

Treasurer's report (read by Mr. Morgan, prepared by B. E. Gandy.)

The Bird Slides Committee reported that thirty-eight color slides of warblers, thrushes and vireos were purchased and these are available for loan to members upon request to W. H. Turcotte.

Burton Webster reported on the Noxubee County heron rookery project. The MOS and the Birmingham, Alabama, AOS Chapter each contributed \$50.00 toward a maintenance agreement with the owner to keep from clearing the rookery site for cultivation. Mr. Webster reported the rookery was still intact and very active. Post and firewood cuttings made by the owner have improved the area for nesting herons. The members present voted to continue the agreement through another year at \$50.00.

The Nominating Committee (consisting of John H. Phares, Burton S. Webster and S. E. Moreton, Jr. met and reported that a slate of officers would be selected and presented to the active membership for voting by mail ballot.

W. H. Turcotte gave a report on the AOS resolution against stream channelization and plans for water resource development projects and their impact on fish and wildlife habitat, whereby, particularly through stream channelization work, nearly every significant stream in Mississippi would be adversely affected as an aid to draining farm land or for other purposes. The President appointed a resolutions committee: Mrs. Howard N. Tait, Walter V. Davis and W. H. Turcotte. The resolutions committee met and recommended the adoption of a resolution substantially the same as the Alabama Ornithological Society resolution under discussion. The membership present voted unanimously for the resolution against channelization of streams.

The President appointed a committee to award the J. W. Tucker Trophy. The Committee recommended the annual award go to Mr. Earl Cunningham, Refuge Manager, Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge, for his outstanding work with predator proof wood duck nest boxes and establishing colonial-type nesting with extremely high production success; also, for making the results available in a form useable by others. This was approved by all members present.

The President expressed very special thanks and appreciation to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and to Bob Stevens, Gulf Islands Refuge Manager, for his help in making the new headquarters office building available for the meeting and especially for making the arrangements and providing the field trip to Horn Island.

#### FIELD TRIP

About thirty people, members and guests, left from the refuge headquarters at 7:00 A.M., Saturday, May 11 aboard the landing craft for Horn Island. Weather was excellent, the trip pleasant for all. We landed at the headquarters, walked across the sand island to the open beaches. The youngsters enjoyed playing in the surf while others enjoyed the birds, breezes and beach-combing. Portuguese man-o-war were washing in along the beach. Least terns were just beginning to nest---three with eggs were located on dunes back from the open Gulf. Nighthawks were nesting among the sparsely vegetated, open, slash pine-covered sand ridges at the center of the Island. Four brown pelicans and a frigate bird were sighted flying just offshore. A pair of ospreys and nest were seen at the Island headquarters. Few land birds were seen. These included:---orchard oriole, nighthawk, redwing, blue jay, purple martin, Louisiana waterthrush. We ate lunch on the landing craft during a warm rain shower and put in again at the western tip of the Island. The group returned to the mainland (with a laughing gull escort) and went to a point just west of Fontainebleu south of Highway 90, where we visited a Sandhill Crane nest in an open savannah. Everyone saw and heard the pair of cranes as they flushed from the nest.

#### CATTLE EGRETS NESTING

Earl Cunningham, Manager, Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge, comes up with a report as follows:---"I have read your M.O.S. Newsletter dated April 29, 1968 with considerable interest, and particularly with regard to the report of Cattle egrets in the lower delta area. You will be interested to know that last year we had a rookery established on the refuge. In late April we discovered about 800 colonial birds - primarily little blues and yellow crowned night herons - in Big Lake, about one mile northwest of our headquarters. In late May some cattle

egrets appeared among them and began nesting. Before the summer was over we had an estimated 4,000 cattle egrets (including young produced). I feel sure that many of the birds observed in the area between here and Vicksburg made daily forages from the Refuge. This year they are back and as of now we have about 700 birds, total (including all species). But I feel sure that the numbers will increase sharply as the summer comes on.

I know that you and the M.O.S. will be interested in this information and I hope you will have an opportunity to come and see our rookery".

Burton S. Webster, Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge Manager, came up with another report of observing numerous cattle egret nests in May at the prairie rookery in Noxubee County near Brooksville and an actual photograph of a cattle egret at nest containing eggs, taken in May, 1968 to establish the first known breeding record for this species in Mississippi to be substantiated by a photograph or collection record.

THROUGH THE SPRING SEASON:-----Red-shouldered hawks were calling on February 24 on the Natchez Trace above Jackson at the Cockaded woodpecker grove where I watched about six of these birds giving nice "chorus songs" before going to roost. Crows were seen carrying nest material. In late evening two male woodcocks were "beeping" and making aerial flight songs on the north side of Pearl River Waterfowl Refuge. On February 25 - Shovellers, four blue-winged teal and lesser scaup were seen on the Refuge. Pine warblers were singing on this area. February 29 brought snow flurries and several persons in the Jackson area have reported Purple martin arrivals to B. E. Gandy at the Wildlife Museum.

On March 2 - a woodcock made four aerial flight songs while wood ducks went to roost in a slough near Byram Swinging Bridge on Rankin County side of Pearl River, followed by barred owl choruses. March 5 - noted numerous myrtle warblers and a ruby-crowned kinglet catching flying insects in my yard. A pair of chickadees was busy inspecting a gourd house. Mockingbirds and cardinals begin to sing and wild plum trees beginning to bloom. March 7 - Towhee and Carolina wrens are active and singing. March 8 - Two purple martins arrived at my house. There are numerous robins along the Highway rights-of-way in their northward movement. March 13 - My youngest son found a crow nest with five eggs in a nearby pasture.

March 16 - Fair, warmer weather and the first Spring warbler, a parula, was in the wild plum tree in my yard. Song sparrows, brown thrashers, and redwings, cardinals and even bobwhites were singing and calling in areas between Bolton and Brownsville. March 17 - a ruby-crowned kinglet sang beautifully and chickadees were gathering cedar bark for nest material from a tree in my yard. Eight purple martins have arrived. March 19 - Yellowthroats were singing at several points on the north side of Pearl River reservoir, Madison County. A pair of pine warblers building nest on pine limb. Two blue gray gnatcatchers (first seen) and two immature white fronted geese were on Pearl River Waterfowl Refuge. In late evening woodcock were not singing. Heard and saw three yellow crowned night herons in flight. March 20 - Jim's crow nest has five newly hatched young. March 22 - We had a heavy wet snowfall of six to eight inches piling up on everything. A male hooded warbler was in the shrubbery at my house.

March 23 - was cold and windy - temperature dropped to 22° last night. March 24 - Black and white warbler and white-eyed vireo in yard. Saw first chimney swift and two house wrens north of Bolton. March 26 - my daughter, Terry, found dead male hooded warbler on pond dam near my yard, a victim of the cold. A Louisiana waterthrush was around pond today. March 28 - I heard plovers (golden?) flying over and calling tonight. March 29 - Pine warblers and parula warblers were heard singing commonly in Perry and Forrest Counties. Chimney swifts were seen commonly today. March 31 - Louisiana waterthrush, worm-eating and black and white warblers were singing north of Bovina, Warren County.

April 1 - Cedar waxwings stripping privet hedge berries. Bluebirds were singing nicely in pasture west of Clinton at twilight. April 2 - Recorded a whippoorwill singing at daylight at Camp Kickapoo, north of Clinton. April 3 - woodthrush, prothonotary warbler. Tufted titmouse was seen carrying nest material. Field sparrows are singing in my yard. April 6 - 7 - Near Bovina, Warren County, recorded worm-eating warblers, black and white warbler, wood thrush, red-eyed vireo, kingbird, orchard oriole, prothonotary warbler, and yellow-throated vireo. Broad-winged hawks very evident and migrating in small groups. Barn swallows at culverts under Highway 80 near Bolton. Late evening (April 6) recorded whippoorwill song at Camp Kickapoo. Worm-eating warblers and one ovenbird which sang for most of two mornings around pond near my yard. April 9 - Kentucky warbler in yard. Ruby crowned kinglet was feeding on numerous aphids on woodbine and ovenbird heard singing again. April 11 - Ovenbird and Kentucky warbler singing again in woods around pond. Heard whippoorwill and chuck-will's-widow singing late evening in Kickapoo hills north of Clinton. April 13 - Recorded Swainson's warbler, scarlet tanager and Baltimore oriole near Bovina, Warren County.

April 17 - Painted bunting singing near house. Wood pewee is back in yard-- it has crippled leg--of same pair that nested at home last year. April 20 - recorded wild turkey gobbling in eastern Claiborne County near Covich County line. Also yellow-breasted chat, crested flycatcher, Acadian flycatcher, indigo buntings and blue grosbeak. April 26 - In western Covich County recorded prairie warblers and Baltimore oriole. April 28 - found Carolina chickadee nest with young in fence post south of Bolton, Mississippi. Indigo buntings numerous in this area in migration. Recorded first nighthawk this season. April 29 - Redstarts north of Bovina, Warren County, and observed and recorded on tape evening song of the Acadian flycatcher, part of it while bird was in flight.

May 4 - There were two frontal systems with heavy showers that moved through from the north today. After heavy rain showers in early morning, in the hills north of Bovina, in Warren County, there was a precipitation of Tennessee warblers, rose-breasted grosbeaks, chestnut-sided warblers and scarlet tanagers. The Tennessee and chestnut-sided warblers and grosbeaks were singing. Found Kingbirds building a nest. May 7 - Meadowlark nest located with four naked young in field near Clinton.

May 19 - Baltimore oriole nest with female sitting on nest in pecan tree on Cleveland's farm west of Clinton. May 20 - Little blue and yellow crown night herons were flying into and out of old rookery site in Horseshoe Brake near Highway 49 E at Good Hope, Mississippi. Also, cattle egrets seen leaving from this location late afternoon. May 21 - A pair of fish crows was carrying sticks for nest material and building a nest in a tall pine tree in grove in our yard. May 25 - Found Kentucky warbler nest with four small young in the bottom of a ravine in wooded hills north of Bovina, Warren County. Female flushed from nest and ran fast ahead in the ground cover of Virginia creeper with wings trailing.

I could not at first distinguish it as a bird and I thought it was a chipmunk until it flew, then back-tracked and found the nest built up between the base of two small ironwood seedlings. Saw a worm-eating warbler feeding a flying juvenile. Located Ruby-throated hummingbird completing a nest built on red oak limb overhanging gravel road about fifteen feet above ground.

June 1 - Recorded songs of warbling vireo on tape at Eagle Lake in Warren County. June 5 - On Utica breeding bird survey route found two pairs of barn swallows nesting under Highway 27 in road culverts. Pair of lark sparrows observed in open pasture feeding young out of nest and able to fly. W. H. TURCOTTE

\*\*\*\*\*

Mrs. Marion Bragg, Route 3, Box 50-W, Vicksburg, Mississippi has been notified that her article on unusual behavior of the Eastern Kingbird helping feed some Baltimore oriole nestlings on her place has been accepted for publication under General Notes in next quarterly issue of "The Auk".

\*\*\*\*\*

Participation in the 1968 Breeding Bird Survey appears to be good and route coverage should be complete again this year. Mr. and Mrs. Howard Tait of Moss Point are participating and one or more of the other established routes are being covered by new cooperators.

\*\*\*\*\*

We have these interesting observations on hummingbirds nesting, as follows: "Year before last I found a hummingbird's nest--that proved successful. Last year, the mother bird abandoned her first nest--it was about forty feet up. Her second nest was about sixty feet from the first one and it was successful. (I'm assuming it was the same bird).

This year, the first nest was abandoned again and dismantled by the builder for her second effort. I'm not sure that I've found her second nest, but in looking for it I've located two others--one that was just started yesterday.

All of these nests are within thirty feet of the drive in the front yard--most of them about fifteen feet high and directly over it--about ten feet above the passing cars."----May 16, 1968, Elie Ganier, Hollandale, Mississippi.

\*\*\*\*\*

Editor's Note: Blue-gray gnatcatchers also sometimes dismantle old nests for the materials. I have personally observed this being done. Bent's Life Histories records numerous reports of this practice for gnatcatchers but not for hummingbirds.

\*\*\*\*\*

SPRING SEASON REPORT - 1968

Cattle egret - 29 were observed in fields with cattle about a mile west of the Grenada Reservoir Dam near Grenada, Mississippi on April 27; this is my first encounter with the species in Mississippi.

Willet - 7 were resting at water's edge on the rock facing of Grenada Dam on April 27. High water level left no suitable sandy or muddy edges for shorebirds. I suspect the species is seldom seen in Mississippi in migration away from the coast.

Laughing gull - similarly to last May, a single adult was seen in north Mississippi; this time on April 27 at Enid Reservoir.

Passerines - After the cold wave and heavy snow of March 22-23, on March 24 I found a single White-eyed vireo and Louisiana waterthrush in the snow at Oxford, which must have arrived no later than March 21, or perhaps in the preceding several days of warm southerly winds. Thrushes, warblers, vireos, flycatchers, etc. in April and May appeared in my neighborhood in good variety, but numbers were less than last year. I did not get out to check other areas as well as last year, so this impression is based on a narrow view. No really outstanding waves can be cited, but best days seemed to be the following:--  
April 21, 24, 25, 27, May 6, 8, 11 and 14.

First migrant Common nighthawk sighted April 21 (1), four chimney swift - March 30, Eastern wood pewee (1) on April 27, one catbird on April 23, three red-eyed vireo - April 22, three Tennessee warblers on April 22 with eight for the peak day of April 30 and the last noted (1) on May 8, fifty myrtle warblers sighted April 24 and ten on April 30, a single blackpoll warbler first seen on April 28 and one only, last seen May 14, two Baltimore oriole - April 25, two rosebreasted grosbeak on April 27, one indigo bunting seen April 22, on April 6 - one slate-colored junco, two chipping sparrows first seen April 6, and on May 8 three white-throated sparrow last noted. Dr. W. Marvin Davis, Box 515, University, Mississippi.

\*\*\*\*\*