

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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ANNUAL MEETING

The joint Mississippi Ornithological Society - Oktibbeha County Audubon Society Chapter meeting was held at Starkville, Mississippi on April 16-17, 1971. About seventy persons attended the business meeting and most made the Saturday field trip to Noxubee Refuge and the Cliftonville Heronry.

With MOS President Christine Berry presiding and following the dinner at the Holiday Inn, Burton S. Webster, President of the Oktibbeha Audubon Chapter, welcomed MOS members to the Starkville area with response by W. H. Turcotte. Announcements were made about plans for the field trip. Reports were given by the Secretary and Treasurer.

Burton S. Webster gave a report supporting continuance of the arrangement for maintaining the Cliftonville heronry. The members voted to sustain the arrangement with the landowner by payment of \$75.00 with the other one-half to be paid by the Birmingham, Alabama group.

The J. W. Tucker Medal was awarded for 1970 to Dr. Marvin Davis, Oxford, Mississippi for outstanding field work and adding the Black-legged Kittiwake and Little Gull to the State bird list.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Voting members elected the officers whose names are shown below:

Dr. Jerome A. Jackson, President

Mrs. Hugh S. Potts, Vice-President

Dr. Gordon Gunter, Secretary

Mr. B. E. Gandy, Treasurer

Congratulations are in order to the newly elected officers together with our appreciation for those who continue to serve.

The MOS membership roster now stands at 72, including 9 Life Members, 6 Sustaining Members and 57 active or corresponding members.

PROGRAM

Dr. Jackson introduced the program with a novel color-slide presentation describing the pet horned owl he raised from a downy owlet.

Bill Summerour made an interesting and excellent presentation on his study of the Cliftonville heronry, well illustrated by a self-narrated color movie and slides showing comparisons between the nesting and production success of Little Blue Herons and Cattle Egrets. A much higher mortality rate on nests, nestlings and pre-flying young of the Cattle Egret was attributed to predation by a family of mink located on the 8-acre area but which was apparently not active during the Little Blue Heron nesting cycle. Further investigation of mortality factors might be indicated by his study.

Our special thanks to the Oktibbeha County Audubon Chapter for making the excellent arrangements, to Burt Webster and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife for the refuge tour and transportation.

The field trip began Saturday from Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge headquarters with a short walk to the new elevated platform tower overlooking the Giant Canada Goose enclosure and a portion of Bluff Lake. Here we saw about a dozen incubating geese on the nest-platform structures. A pair of Brown-headed Nuthatches was active around their nest cavity in a dead stub over water inside the goose pen. Robins were nest-building in a pine tree beside the headquarters office. A bird walk down a power line right-of-way produced a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in full song, one Yellow Palm Warbler (completely yellow underparts) and at least four Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in the pine grove around Burt Webster's house.

(Burt is probably the only person in Mississippi with a buzzard nest in his yard.) A pair of Black Vultures had a nest with 2 eggs not over 50 yards from his house.

Dr. Jackson and students demonstrated mist-netting and banding techniques (on a wood thrush) and calling up a Pileated Woodpecker. One was observed by some of us deliberately feeding around on stumps and on the ground in a control-burned area near headquarters. A bus trip to Lokafoma Lake on the refuge produced about 12 Lesser Yellowlegs and a few Blue-winged Teal and Shovellers were seen on this and another small impoundment.

Wood ducks were actively nesting in boxes around the impoundments, one box also, according to refuge personnel, containing eggs of Hooded Merganser.

Following lunch at Brooksville, Mississippi, the group visited the Cliftonville heronry via bus and car. Little blue herons were actively flying about and nesting. All nests contained eggs and most of the birds appeared to be at the rookery. There were a few Common egrets present and probably nesting. Only a very few Cattle Egrets were sighted at the rookery.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Mr. Ken Morgan, Supervisory Park Ranger, Natchez Trace Parkway, contributed these following observations along the Parkway paralleling Ross Barnett Reservoir in Madison County:

OLDSQUAW - One male in breeding plumage at Lakeview Overlook on March 28, 1971. One pair at same location observed on March 17 and 18, 1971.

RUDDY DUCKS - A group of 11 or 12 and one other group of 5 or 6 off the Trace Parkway near a small embayment south of Highway 43, March 17 - 18, 1971.

Field Observations (continued)

WHITE PELICANS - On April 11 between 5:00 and 6:00 P.M. 75 to 100 observed flying around in vicinity of Reservoir dam. On April 14 about 6:30 P.M. a large raft of White Pelicans was seen on the reservoir off the Trace.

A WOODCOCK NESTING RECORD

LOCALITY: About five miles west of Flora, Mississippi on the west side of Bogue Chitto Creek, Madison County, Mississippi.

DATE: Found by Albert McMillan, Carthage, Mississippi while bird hunting on the last day of quail season, February 22, 1971.

NEST: Bird sitting on nest when found.

A slight depression lined with fine weed stems at base of 2 inch diameter black locust and among dead goldenrod stalks putting out green leaves. At edge of weedy, fallow field in edge of black locust thicket with a few small pines, sedgegrass and elderberry bordering a fencerow. About 100 yards from cypress swamp at edge of Bogue Chitto Creek bottom. Nest site bordering second bottom and open pasture across fence.

EGGS: Four (4), apparently fresh when found but broken by predator and shells scattered about when revisited and photographed on March 8, 1971 by W. H. Turcotte and Mr. McMillan.
- Reported by W. H. Turcotte.

YELLOW RAILS - Two sightings of the Yellow Rail were reported as follows by Jacob M. Valentine, Jr., Biologist, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Lafayette, Louisiana:

"One (1) seen in open savanna, 1 mile southwest of Fontainebleu, Mississippi, Jackson County, April 25, 1971 by Dr. Lawrence Walkinshaw and Jacob M. Valentine, Jr., located in Section 36, Range 8 West, Township 7 South. Bird flushed by and seen by Walkinshaw and also by Valentine".

"One (1) seen in open savanna, 4 miles northeast of Fontainebleau, Section 5, Range 7 West, Township 7 South, Jackson County, Mississippi on April 28, 1970 by Jacob M. Valentine, Jr."
signed, Jacob M. Valentine, Jr.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE - Observation reported by Bob Lilly, Biologist Assistant, Mississippi Game and Fish Commission, Belzoni, Mississippi:

"On Friday, March 26, 1971, one (1) White-fronted Goose was seen at 35 - 40 yards at pot hole in a soybean field, with a few blue-winged teal and shovellers, beside the Morgan City to Sidon (Leflore County), Mississippi road. The yellow legs and bill were distinctly seen."
signed, Bob Lilly.