

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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MOS NEWSLETTER - Vol. 16, No. 3

Compiled by: W. H. TURCOTTE

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

A fall field trip is planned for the weekend of November 5 and 6. This will be at Grenada Lake. Plan now to attend - details will be sent out later.

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Your support is asked for the bill H. R. 5821 which will soon be coming before the U. S. House of Representatives. If passed, this bill will extend the protection now given to bald and golden eagles to all hawks and owls.

In recent years populations of all species of hawks and owls have declined - some to near the point of extinction. These birds are necessary components of our environment because they are natural controls for harmful rats and mice.

BILL 5821 would eliminate the use of pole traps and other predator control devices now used in game farms. Only by special permit from the Secretary of the Interior would persons be allowed use of lethal devices for purposes of predator control.

BILL 5821 would eliminate shooting by irresponsible sportsmen and ignorant property owners by increasing fines and penalties. Under current laws, individuals caught shooting a protected raptor can claim it was mistaken for a non-protected species.

BILL 5821 would eliminate harvesting of adult and fledgling hawks and owls by breeders, falconers, and pet seekers, and would thereby eliminate much of the nest disturbance that currently exists during the breeding season.

Falconers have a lobby in Washington and are trying to get this bill amended to allow the taking of birds for falconry. Such an amendment would greatly weaken the bill.

Write to your congressman and request that this bill be passed unamended. Your letters should be addressed to your congressman and sent to:

House Office Building,  
Washington, D. C. 20515

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The purposes of the MOS, as stated in our constitution are:

1. To encourage scientific research in the field of ornithology and to promote and encourage interest in greater appreciation and protection of native birds.
2. To cooperate with other organizations engaged in ornithological research and/or in the observation and study of birds.
3. To provide for the publication of a bulletin of ornithology to be known as "The Mississippi Kite."

As a means of fulfilling these goals of the society the executive committee has decided to continue the publication of the "Mississippi Kite" as a state bird journal. Only one issue of the "Kite" was issued; this was in 1965. Volume 1, number 1, will be reissued for the benefit of those new members who would like to have a complete set of the publication. We hope to have the first issue of Volume 2 published by September 1. If we have the support of the membership the "Kite" will be published quarterly, with issues appearing in March, June, September, and December.

Your support must include not only the probability of a dues increase to pay for the journal, but also your contribution of material to be published.

The NEWSLETTER will continue to be published under the editorship of Mr. Turcotte--this will contain the news of the society (i.e., information about meetings, field trips, conservation issues, and book reviews submitted by members). The "Kite" will be, at least initially, published under my contributing editorship. The journal will contain scholarly articles concerning birds in Mississippi. I intend to set the standards high for the quality of material to be published in the "Kite". As an editor, however, I will be more than happy to assist writers in every possible way in preparing their manuscripts for publication.

Hopefully, as a result of the publication of the "Kite", more people will be stimulated to initiate and complete research projects that will add to our knowledge of birds in Mississippi.

Persons with manuscripts they wish to have considered for publication in the "Mississippi Kite" should submit them to me: Dr. Jerome A. Jackson, Department of Zoology, P. O. Drawer Z, State College, Mississippi 39762

#### EDITORIAL

The 1971 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature passed Senate Bill No. 1665 which protects all birds with the exception of the house (English) Sparrow, crow and starling. This legislation in effect removed all hawks, all owls, and the peregrine falcon or duck hawk from the list of unprotected birds. The bill was proposed and supported by the Game and Fish Commission particularly through the efforts of Mr. B. E. Gandy, Director, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, The Fannye A. Cook Memorial, a division of the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission. Section 5849, Mississippi Code of 1942, Volume 5, Recompiled was amended by a 1970 law (Senate Bill 1985) as follows:

#### Power to capture or destroy animals injurious to property.

The Commission shall have power to issue permits to kill any species of animals or birds which may become injurious to agricultural or other interests in any

particular community. Provided, however, any hawk or owl while committing depredations upon poultry may be killed without a permit, and all species of blackbirds, cowbirds, and grackles may be killed without a permit when such birds are committing or about to commit depredations on shade or ornamental trees or agricultural crops.

Further, under the provision of these and other laws, the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission has by regulation established the following policy:

No permits for the taking of peregrine falcons or other rare or endangered species shall be issued other than to persons representing state or federal agencies and engaged in work to insure their perpetuation for propagation purposes.

The population decline of some species of predatory birds (particularly the bird-eating raptors and fish-eating species) may be more directly traceable to environmental contaminants and habitat loss or deterioration through land use or changes wrought by man. New laws, state, federal or local, are no more effective than enforcement and/or prosecution at the local level. The introduction of and support for federal legislation to extend protection and control of traffic in raptors, whether passed or not, could encourage some states with inadequate laws to act positively in this direction. The State of Colorado has acted strongly to protect and regulate falconry but their Department of Natural Resources opposes elimination of the ancient sport of falconry by overly-restrictive laws. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife has not established an official position on H. R. 5821 (Federal protection to hawks and owls and for other purposes) referred to above (letter dated August 4, 1971).

As most of you are aware, there is much more to wildlife conservation than protection alone. A closely-studied and well-managed species will survive over one offered only complete protection. There are now areas of conflict between the states and the federal government in the management of wildlife resources and the control of any hawk and owl, not endangered, by a federal agency would directly appropriate the authority vested in a state.

This is not to suggest that better protection, management and control of raptor populations (law enforcement) is not needed. It is certain improvement is needed, especially in public understanding and cooperation on the part of landowners and citizens of the part predators play in the natural environment. W. H. Turcotte

#### VACATIONING BIRDERS

Lula and Ben Coffey, Jr. send a card (beautifully backed by a color photograph of columbine) with the following note postmarked June 9 from Estes Park, Colorado: "For the record, we listed 2 whip-poor-wills in Noxubee County, June 3. S.W. corner, one being .3 mile from Kemper County (actually a/c hwy. almost parallel and bird to the south, it was probably on county line), the second, 2 - 3 miles NE of Gholson. We also worked back to DeKalb and south and a circuit to Moscow. Will write this up later. Came here to tape an Empidonax for a friend, but it won't call, so far. Trying for a predawn in a.m. Taped a beautiful song of T. Solitaire but running mountain stream makes plenty of noise". Signed/ Lula and Ben Coffey

Editor's Note: See page 5 for further account on whip-poor-wills.

Thalia and Arnold Ritchie send a card (beautifully backed by an alpine

scene of Snowy Mountain Range Country in Medicine Bow National Forest, Wyoming) postmarked August 3: "As we hiked across these snow fields and glaciers the white crown sparrows and robins were our companions. We have seen many birds new to us. Exciting! In a high trail meadow covered with wild flowers and lovely plants, Arnold said "Wouldn't Bill Turcotte enjoy this?" Scaled quail came to our camp in western Oklahoma. We were camped on lovely rushing Libby Creek here in the Snowy Range. This is country of splendor. We will go back to Colorado in a few days."

The above give your editor excuse to report on vacation trip July 18 - 25 as follows: Bill and Annie Cook Turcotte - a week in southwest Texas visiting Welder Wildlife Research Station, Sinton, Texas, friends at Kingsville (a tour of wildlife areas on King Ranch), Santa Ana Refuge and other points in the valley between Mission, Texas and Falcon Dam. Saw all three kingfishers (green, ringed and belted) from one point and almost simultaneously below Falcon Dam Spillway. We scored the following new species: Santa Ana Refuge: Lichtenstein's Oriole, black-bellied tree duck, black-crested titmouse, bronzed cowbird, chachalaca (abundant at Santa Ana), Kiskadee, tropical kingbird, olive (Texas) sparrow, green jay, white-fronted dove; Falcon Dam: Ringed kingfisher, green kingfisher; Sarita, Texas: Hooded oriole; Mission, Texas; white-necked raven, N. of Falfurias, Texas; white-tailed hawk (also saw four caracaras). We enjoyed hearing many new bird voices to really know them firsthand: paraque, pyrrhuloxia (found nest with young), groove-billed ani (abundant at Santa Ana), chachalaca, green jay, white-winged dove, white-fronted dove and particularly the lovely song of male Lichtenstein's Oriole. A pair of the last species was nesting at Santa Ana Refuge headquarters (nest stocking nearly 2 ft. long). Missed: Red-billed pigeon, black-headed oriole (saw one nest at Santa Ana used this year), least grebe and others. Enjoyed seeing many other western species (and plants) new for us and found only in this area of South Texas.

W. H. Turcotte

#### WHIP-POOR-WILL COUNTS, 1971

Summer records of this species were obtained in four more counties: Kemper, Noxubee, Clay, and Itawamba. Field work was less than planned because of breeding bird counts and nine days absence to assist on a project in the Rockies. Whips are easier to find, now, and we were lucky. Chuck-will's-widow counts are included.

June 3, 1971. Kemper County. Miss. 397, SE from Winston County line to Junction Miss. 21: 3.5 miles, 4 stops, 9 CWWs. NE on Miss. 21 to Noxubee County line: 5.2 Miles, 8 stops, 28 CWWs. At .3 mile past the line a WPW was heard to the south at .4 to .5 miles. This would place the Whip .1 to .2 mile inside Kemper County. (See Preston quadrangle map.) From County line NE past Gholson to Junction Miss. 39: 10.0 miles, 18 stops, 63 CWWs and 1 WPW (at 3.0 miles ENE of Gholson). Elevations generally 500-600'. S on Miss. 39 to County Line: 3.4 miles, 6 stops, 23 CWWs.

Kemper County again. Continue S on Miss. 21, past Poorhouse Mtn., good area but only CWWs. To DeKalb, 12 miles, 23 stops, 74 CWWs. S from DeKalb, 5.3 miles, 9 stops, 36 CWWs. W on Miss. 16, from DeKalb to Miss. 493 (now a.m. June 4) 8.4 miles, 16 stops, 50 CWWs. S to Moscow and NE to DeKalb: 13 miles, 19 stops, 71 CWWs.

Itawamba County. WPWs probable summer residents for 10 to 15 years, but county by-passed when Tippah Hills and south proved better than Tishomingo area. Previous work - incidental stops along Miss. 25, enroute to or from Tishomingo. July 4, 1971 - S on Miss. 25 from Tishomingo County line: 4.2 miles, 6 CWWs

at 4 of 8 stops. Calling also poor, earlier, in Tishomingo S.P., then, better, 10 p.m. C.D.T. S, mostly on two old highway bends (gravel), 2.1 miles, 3 stops, 2 WPWs, 6 CWWs. W & S on back road to paved road: 2.5 miles, 5 stops, 1 WPW, 19 CWWs. Paved road NW & W past Saucer Creek Church, to crossroads near Sandy Springs: 4.2 miles, 7 stops, 3 WPWs, 19 CWWs. S to Fulton: 13.8 miles, 22 stops, 4 WPWs, 46 CWWs at 20 stops. County totals after 10 p.m.: 22.6 miles, 37 stops, 10 WPWs, 90 CWWs.

Clay County: Last year only CWWs down 4 miles of Miss. 47; calling stopped when we turned W on hilly back road. We parked and slept, to await predawn calling. A heavy predawn rain eliminated that. On a return trip, we reached Houston but drove back to Memphis because of alternator trouble. This year I tried on July 7. Three nights later than above Itawamba runs, the calling had diminished considerably, so, that, as negative information, results are valueless. Silence at many stops or a single CWW when there should have been 4 to 5 calling. Luckily, 2 single WPWs called well; one NE of Montpelier, one W of Abbot. Elevations, 270 to 400 feet. Route Miss. 389 to Montpelier, 3.5 miles; N & NE on gravel to Miss. 47, 10.4 miles; S on Miss. 47 to Miss. 50, 15.9 miles; W on Miss. 50 past Pheba to Webster County line, 16.8 miles; jaunt N of Pheba, 2.7 miles. Total 49.3 miles, 72 stops, 2 WPWs, 66 CWWs at 37 stops. Most of the stops without records were along Miss. 50 and at the start.

The Kemper County WPW, SW of Gholson, was about 143 miles S of the Tennessee line and is our farthest south record by 3 miles. (The SW Winston County WPW was heard, 1960-1964.) Summer records are from 27 counties in Mississippi. Routes and counts given in detail so that a comparison can be made by any one, 5, 10, or 15 years from now. Mr. & Mrs. Ben B. Coffey, Jr.

#### JUNE BREEDING BIRD SURVEYS

Your editor has served as State Coordinator for the June breeding bird surveys conducted since 1966. Some members have participated all along. Volunteers are solicited to extend route coverage not already taken or assigned. If interested, please contact your MOS NEWSLETTER editor for possible next year's route assignment(s) that might exist in your area. A tabulation of results showing the numerical ranking (total birds seen or heard all Mississippi routes run) for the last five years is included as an appendix and shows the relative position for the twenty most common species recorded for each year.

W. H. Turcotte

#### HANCOCK COUNTY - MOTTLED DUCK

W/4 young about 1/2 - 2/3 young with adult female on Bayou Campbell tributary about 1 mi. SW of Ansley, S of L & N R.R. Aug. 16, 1971. Spotlit on alligator survey by Geo. Chandler, Don Lewis, Johnny Collins, (Game and Fish Commission biologists) and Clarence Cameron, Hancock Co. Game warden. *Reported to W.H.T. by GEORGE CHANDLER.*

#### NEST RECORDS - 1971

WOODCOCK - Robert E. Noble, Asst. Professor of Forestry and Wildlife Management, Louisiana State University reports: You may be interested in an observation made by one of my students, David Hayden, on our trip to the Gulf Coast to help Jake Valentine search for Sandhill Crane nests. On Saturday, 1 May 1971, Hayden flushed 3 woodcock from a small bare opening (2' square) surrounded by knee-high grass and a few small pines. Two birds flushed together and the third bird flew about 40' and lit again. These observations were made in the savanna about 5 miles north of Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Signed/ Robert E. Noble

SWAINSON WARBLER - May 15, 1971 - Nest and 1 egg, birds near nest in cane thicket in ravine about 7 miles north of Bovina, Miss., Warren Co. Nest (May 22nd) deserted, egg gone. May 22, 1971 - 100 yds. distant near same location - New Nest in cane thicket. Female incubating 3 eggs on May 29, June 5 same nest deserted, eggs entirely gone. Probably same pair second nest attempt, both failed.

KENTUCKY WARBLER - May 15, 1971 - 5 young in nest on ground at base of spice bush in vegetation beside small stream bank. Both adults feeding young. All young had left nest on May 22. 7 mi. N. Bovina, Warren Co.

PURPLE MARTIN - 3 pr. in house and gourds 2 mi. w. Jackson on Hwy. 80: 4-15 nest building, 5-5 incubating, carrying green leaves to nest, 5-22 feeding nestlings, 6-8 three young in gourd about ready to fly, 6-8 a.m. flying young left nest 2, 6-8 p.m. Gray rat snake ate 3 young in gourd ready to leave nest, 6-13 last flying young left from box.

BARN SWALLOW - May 8, 1971 - 1 pr. completed nest in box culvert under Hwy. 80 2 mi. w. Jackson, Miss., Hinds Co. 5-23 adult incubating 3 eggs, 6-6 adults feeding 3 young, 6-18 nest cycle completed. Saw flying young. W. H. Turcotte

#### FLIERS FROM AFIELD

#### Ivory-bills?

Robert J. Newman, Museum of Zoology, Drawer MU, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803, comments in his memorandum of Aug. 2, 1971 to AFN contributors: In Louisiana, the present breeding season has been the most eventful I can remember. After a promising beginning in spring, the Loop Current and its expected pelagics have been a disappointment. But back on shore the procession of finds has been dazzling: an adult male Bronzed Cowbird in June; the first Common Tern nest for the state; conclusive proof of the breeding of the White-winged Dove; Black-whiskered Vireos singing on apparent territory in June and July; Groove-billed Anis with Smooth-billed Juvenals in the same months; a fledgling Horned Lark in a northern parish; and the second re-discovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, this time in habitat where, according to experts, the bird should not be. (Underscoring ours)

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#### Utica Heronry

On June 23, 1971 a new heron rookery (according to the landowner established the first time this spring) was visited near Carpenter, Miss. in Claiborne County on Bayou Pierre Creek by W. H. Turcotte and Mr. Echols with the Mississippi Forestry Commission. The rookery contained mostly cattle egrets with young of varying sizes, still in nests; a number of tree climbing and flying juvenile little blues; and three down-covered, barely flying anhingas. The rookery is situated in an easily accessible cypress-bordered slough with button bushes, willows and water privet supporting most nests. Access is restricted by the landowner, but a visit can probably be arranged by an organized group. An article appeared in the Clarion Ledger - Daily News concerning this rookery which had 4 - 500 nesting pairs in a very beautiful, rather restricted location.

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#### ANHINGA

Robert E. Noble (address cited above) reported to this writer about

June 23, 1971 a rookery in Jefferson County, Cole's Creek area containing 4 - 5 hundred anhinga nests with young. Location not fully identified but would require a guide to find location. W. H. Turcotte

A female anhinga was seen on July 8, 1971 at 11:35 A.M. Soaring, flying and landing on water at the Twin Harbors area, Barnett Reservoir, off Natchez Trace, Madison, County. Reported July 9 by Mr. Ken Morgan, Natchez Trace Parkway, U. S. Park Service. W. H. Turcotte

#### WHITE PELICANS

This is to report 55 to 58 white pelicans on Bluff Lake and Loakfoma Lake on June 5th. They left early June 6th when fisheries disturbed them. Jerome Jackson saw them and our Lee Fulton. I regret I did not get to see such a spectacular site. The baby vultures are growing primary feathers now and have left the old nest and are spending their time under a nearby wind fall. Signed/ Burt Webster

#### WOOD IBIS

This is to advise that Dr. D. C. Bain, saw 65 Wood Ibis on Loakfoma Lake in the late afternoon of 5/18/71 and that our Mr. Lee Fulton saw and counted them on the morning of 5/19/71. It is apparently a record for early arrival and I wonder if the drought in Florida prompted their early arrival. Normally they do not show up until the hot days of early or mid-June. Signed/ Burt Webster

#### WHITE IBIS

Sat., May 22, I-20 at Big Black River flock of 150 - 200 White Ibis flying upstream fairly low while driving west for organized field trip with Jackson group. All adult plumage (white). W. H. Turcotte

#### JACKSON GROUP

A party of MOS members from the Jackson, Miss. area enjoyed two Saturday field trips, one on May 22 to the Loess Hills area north of Bovina, a second in early June to the Eagle Lake - Tennessee Bar area. The group saw and heard Swainson and Kentucky warblers, observed nests and nesting habitat, spending most of the morning in oak-beech-magnolia habitat; also observing many interesting plants native to the Loess region. The second trip produced cattle egrets, many painted buntings, anhingas at Eagle Lake, Swainson, Yellow-throated warblers, pileated woodpecker, etc. on Eagle Lake Road. Active Baltimore and orchard oriole nests and an abandoned warbling vireo nest were found at Collins fishing camp on Chotard Lake. Warbling vireos were seen and heard along the main levee near Collins and an abandoned nest was found in a hackberry tree on School Section 15, Tennessee Bar area; also at same location nesting pair of Acadian flycatchers (female incubating on nest in honey locust). Tennessee Bar produced Mississippi kites and deer in red summer coats in sand meadows. A walk on Mississippi sandbar and turned homeward just as two tug barges passed each other at mid-channel.

A social gathering of the Jackson party and friends on June 29 had Jake Valentine, Lafayette, La. for slide program on Sandhill crane research and biology of Jackson County flock; also movies on endangered species center at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Laurel, Md.

Mississippi Game and Fish, July - Aug. 1971, magazine will have cover and illustrated feature article on Mississippi crane flock. If you want individual copy, write W. H. Turcotte, Mississippi Game and Fish Commission, Box 451, Jackson, Mississippi 39205.

JUNE BREEDING BIRD SURVEY (MISSISSIPPI)

<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	
1. COMMON GRACKLE	BOBWHITE	COMMON GRACKLE	BOBWHITE	REDWINGED BLACKBIRD	1
2. MOCKINGBIRD	MOCKINGBIRD	REDWINGED BLACKBIRD	COMMON GRACKLE	COMMON GRACKLE	2
3. BOBWHITE	COMMON GRACKLE	BOBWHITE	REDWINGED BLACKBIRD	BOBWHITE	3
4. REDWINGED BLACKBIRD	CARDINAL	CARDINAL	MOCKINGBIRD	HOUSE SPARROW	4
5. MEADOWLARK	E. MEADOWLARK	MEADOWLARK	CARDINAL	MEADOWLARK	5
6. CARDINAL	REDWINGED BLACKBIRD	MOCKINGBIRD	E. MEADOWLARK	MOURNING DOVE	6
7. BLUE JAY	HOUSE SPARROW	HOUSE SPARROW	HOUSE SPARROW	CARDINAL	7
8. MOURNING DOVE	BLUE JAY	BLUE JAY	MOURNING DOVE	MOCKINGBIRD	8
9. HOUSE SPARROW	COMMON CROW	MOURNING DOVE	BLUE JAY	BLUE JAY	9
10. COMMON CROW	MOURNING DOVE	COMMON CROW	COMMON CROW	STARLING	10
11. STARLING	STARLING	INDIGO BUNTING	INDIGO BUNTING	INDIGO BUNTING	11
12. KINGBIRD	CHIMNEY SWIFT	TOWHEE	TOWHEE	COMMON CROW	12
13. PURPLE MARTIN	PURPLE MARTIN	YELLOWBREASTED CHAT	STARLING	YELLOW BILLED CUCKOO	13
14. CHIMNEY SWIFT	INDIGO BUNTING	COWBIRD	YELLOWBREASTED CHAT	DICKCISSELL	14
15. ORCHARD ORIOLE	E. KINGBIRD	STARLING	KINGBIRD	ORCHARD ORIOLE	15
16. INDIGO BUNTING	O. ORIOLE	WOOD THRUSH	CHIMNEY SWIFT	CHIMNEY SWIFT	16
17. BROWN THRASHER	YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT	YELLOWTHROAT	YELLOWTHROAT	E. KINGBIRD	17
18. YELLOWTHROAT	WOOD THRUSH	CHIMNEY SWIFT	WHITE-EYED VIREO	YELLOWBREASTED CHAT	18
19. RUFOUS SIDED TOWHEE	WHITE-EYED VIREO	WHITE EYED VIREO	T. TITMOUSE	PURPLE MARTIN	19
20. YELLOWBREASTED CHAT	YELLOWTHROAT	E. KINGBIRD	WOOD THRUSH	YELLOWTHROAT	20