

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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GRENADA MEETING AND FIELD TRIP

A fall meeting and field trip was held at Grenada, Mississippi and Hugh L. White State Park and Grenada Reservoir, November 5 and 6. About thirty MOS members and guests attended the dinner meeting at the Monte Cristo restaurant in Grenada Friday evening. Dr. Jerome A. Jackson presented a summary report on the Cooperative Purple Martin Survey - 1971. Morning field trips by several parties were made around Grenada Reservoir and mist netting was demonstrated near the park headquarters. A box lunch was followed by showing of favorite slides by members present at the park lodge. Ben Coffey demanded equal time for recorded bird sounds and got it. He played a tape of chuck-wills-widow, whippoorwill and flycatcher calls. Following this, some members visited Grenada Waterfowl Refuge where several thousand mallards and other ducks were seen coming in to rest in late afternoon on artificially flooded millet ponds. About 71 species were recorded on the field trips Saturday morning, November 6, including several species of interest: Brewer's blackbird (2 females); Short-billed marsh wren; black-bellied plover (3); Sharp-shinned hawk and purple finch (12). At Grenada Waterfowl Refuge the group present added the following list making a total of 78 species observed during the day: redhead, shoveller, black duck, widgeon, gadwall, lesser scaup and pied-billed grebe.

A LARGE HAWK MIGRATION - occurred on September 30, 1971, and was observed and reported by a number of people fortunate enough to witness such an unusual phenomenon of nature. Mr. Bobby Joe Evans, Rte. 2, Vaiden, Miss. called the Game and Fish Commission office about 9:45 A.M. on September 30th and reported seeing "over 500 hawks" between 9:15 and 9:30 while working on a farm tractor. They were gathering in groups of fifty or more, some appearing to be coming in over the tree tops then soaring and moving in a westerly direction. This observation was made on the east side of Hy. 35 just east of Big Black River near the corners of Carroll, Montgomery and Attala Counties. Mervin Kelly, P.O. Box 203, Flora, Miss. observed "500 or more hawks in circling groups of 50 or more coming from the northeast and heading south-southwesterly fairly high". Mr. Kelly saw this movement between 9:30 and 10:00 A.M., one mile north of Hy. 49 east of Big Black River and telephoned the report in to me about 10:15 A.M. the same morning. Wendell Neal, biologist, and R. L. Steed, game warden, observed the hawk migration from a point 3 to 4 miles south of Hy. 12 in Attala County over Big Black River Swamp between 9:00 and 10:00 A.M. on September 30th.

Neal described the movement of birds, identified as broadwing hawks and one eagle, as "fairly high in groups of 25 to 50 or more". He made count-estimates by groups totaling 1,000 birds or more. F. W. Coleman, fisheries biologist, observed and reported "about October 1 at 2:00 P.M. two groups of an estimated 150 birds each circling and drifting northward "over Cleveland, Mississippi, Bolivar County, while he was stopped at a service station. G. W. Trotter, Brownsville, Miss., NW Hinds County observed "at least a thousand hawks" on September 30th over Brownsville and reported his observation to the writer by personal communication about October 30th.

Four of these sightings reported above are in a direct line of flight along the course of Big Black River.

Mr. Tom Gary of Money, Miss., Leflore County, reported a friend of his living in Greenwood, Mississippi, observed a hawk migration while painting the gutters on his house. He estimated "a thousand or more moving in a southerly direction about September 30th."

Weather conditions in this area on September 30th were generally fair and temperatures in the 80's. A large high pressure system prevailed through the central south with Hurricane Ginger off the Virginia Coast and a low pressure system over the Dakotas. - W. H. Turcotte

#### OSPREY NEST IN LEE COUNTY

An active osprey nest with at least three young feathered except for down patches on wings and head was found in the top of a large, live beech tree 75 - 80 ft. high on September 29, 1971 and on a ridge in a remote, timbered arm of 300-acre Lake Lamar Bruce near Saltillo, Lee County. The nest was at least 4 ft. across and appeared to have been used for the second year. A pair of ospreys had been observed frequently around the lake and surrounding areas. The nest was found and reported by Harold Kelly, state game warden in Lee County.

#### MARSH HAWKS - An Editorial

While the Golden Triangle Regional Airport near Columbus, Miss. was in the acquisition and construction stages a large number of marsh hawks used the area for roosting. On more than one occasion birds were wantonly killed at this location by thoughtless shooters for no apparent reason while they were coming there to roost. Part of the airport area has now been planted in soybeans to be disced under following harvesting. Other portions of the area are being mowed or burned to discourage roosting near runways where the birds could cause a hazard to aircraft.

The airport Director, Mr. Thomas E. Greer, West Point, Mississippi, in a letter dated October 1, 1971 assures that the "Golden Triangle Regional Airport Commission will do everything possible to protect our natural environment while maintaining a safe, efficient airport".

All hawks and owls are now protected under state law except while committing actual depredation upon poultry. MOS members should help inform the public by discouraging shooting of hawks and owls. This has been too common a practice in the past.

#### FIELD NOTES

"Here are some interesting sightings that may be of interest".

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT--Harrison Co., Landon, 24 Feb., 1971, 1 ind. caught in a mist net in tall brush. Very bright plumage. This seemed to me to be a very early arrival.

PEREGRINE FALCON--Jackson Co., Belle Fontaine Beach, 3 Oct., 1971, 1 im. (brown plumage) seen twice very close, perched in dead trees watching marsh.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER--Jackson Co., Belle Fontaine Beach, 1 adult seen on power line. Bright rosy sides. I returned to the beach on 6 Oct., and saw 3 ind. which I photographed. Two were seen with a WESTERN KINGBIRD, which I also photographed. All were actively catching insects, especially grasshoppers.

This film has not yet been processed, but if you wish to see the photos, please let me know. I hope these notes might have some value for the ornithological record of Mississippi. S/Jacob H. Miller, Rte. 1, Box 193, Gulfport, Miss. 39501, Oct. 8, 1971

#### ALBINO MOURNING DOVE:

Mr. Frank Stewart, City Hall, Jackson, Mississippi reported he shot a completely white mourning dove about six miles south of Canton, Miss. Madison County on September 25, 1971.

#### FALL ARRIVALS--1971

October 20: A Hermit thrush found dead on Griffith St. in Jackson, apparently by collision with a wire.

October 27: First White-throated Sparrows heard singing on Davis Island, Warren County. Also, seen and heard on Delta National Forest, Sharkey County on October 30.

October 30: Delta National Forest, Sharkey County: two golden-crowned knights, winter wren, yellow-bellied sapsucker (4 or 5).

October 31: Delta Forestry and Wildlife, Issaquena County, 3 wild turkeys, yellow-bellied sapsucker, white-throated sparrows.

On October 9, 1971 a small party of Jackson MOS members made a field trip starting from Rocky Springs Camp ground on the Natchez Trace Parkway. We saw two large groups of 100 or more Cattle egrets in pastures along the Trace apparently "staging" during or before migration. At Grand Gulf Park we carefully observed and identified at least four Philadelphia vireos feeding on swamp dogwood berries in the old cemetery. Ten or more rose-breasted grosbeaks were seen at one stop on the Trace and several others were seen and heard in the Port Gibson cemetery. All of these observations were in Claiborne County. Birding was otherwise rather slow on this outing. WHT

#### JACKSON AUDUBON CHAPTER

An organizational meeting for a Jackson Chapter of the National Audubon Society has been set for 7:30 P.M., November 16 at Belhaven College in the Heidelberg Room. Richard Stokes with the Gulf Coast Seashore Park will give a slide program. Audubon Society members are invited to attend and to help recruit new members. There are over 200 Audubon Chapters across America. Chapter membership dues include subscription to Audubon Magazine.

Watch ABC Network TV Friday evening, Nov. 26 Audubon Society program: EAGLE AND THE HAWK. Check local newspaper listing for exact time.