

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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August 19, 1974

MOS NEWSLETTER - Vol. 19, No. 2

Compiled by: W. H. Turcotte
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ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the MOS was held on the Gulf Coast on April 19 - 20, 1974. The business meeting was at 7:30 PM, April 19 in the R. L. Caylor Building at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Mr. Louis P. Cashman, presiding. Dr. Gordon Gunter welcomed the group. About 46 members and guests attended. Mr. B. E. Gandy gave the Treasurer's annual report. He also presented a proposal, which was adopted with no dissenting vote, to increase the MOS membership dues, effective July 1, 1974 as follows:

Active	\$ 3.00	Junior	\$ 2.00
Corresponding	3.00	Life	50.00
Sustaining	10.00 or more	Honorary	
Associate	2.00		

The Nominating Committee, John H. Phares, Chairman, Mrs. W. G. Wills, Jr. and Miss Evelyn D. Tackett submitted the above slate of officers. No nominations for officers were made from the floor. Members voted and elected the slate of nominees.

The J. W. Tucker Award Committee and the membership selected W. H. Turcotte as recipient for the medalion for 1974 for work toward passage of a non-game and endangered species act by the 1974 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature.

The matter of payment to the Federal Land Bank for annual rental in the amount of \$75.00 toward maintenance of the Cliftonville heronry in Noxubee County was brought up as new business. The membership voted to authorize the Treasurer to pay this amount for 1974, the Starkville Audubon Chapter to pay an equal amount.

Mr. Richard A. Stokes, Park Manager, Gulf Islands National Seashore was introduced by the President, Mr. Cashman. Mr. Stokes given an excellent presentation illustrated with color slides on the progress and plans for development of the National Seashore.

An early morning bird walk was conducted Saturday, April 20 by Mr. William Westphal, Park Naturalist, along Davis Bayou at the Seashore headquarters area (formerly Magnolia State Park). Highlights of the bird walk were sightings of 5 least bitterns and long-billed marsh wrens.

The boat trip to Horn Island left the mainland in two National Park Service boats and the Hermes. Over 40 persons made the trip. One active osprey nest was seen and two pairs were active at the landing site. A late Old Squaw, a male in full breeding plumage, was seen at the landing site on Horn Island. Other species observed on the Horn Island boat trip were: Double crested cormorant, great blue heron, little blue heron, cattle egret, semi-palmated plover, snowy plover, solitary sandpiper, willet, least sandpiper, lesser scaup, red-breasted merganser, herring gull, laughing gull, least tern, royal tern, mourning dove, common nighthawk, eastern kingbird, great crested flycatcher, barn swallow, fish crow, mockingbird, catbird, yellowthroat, eastern meadowlark, redwinged blackbird, orchard oriole and boat-tailed grackle. (Species underlined were seen on Horn Island). Other species recorded on April 19 - 20 on the mainland at National Seashore headquarters were: green heron, clapper rail, sora rail, chuck-wills-widow, chimney swift, yellow-shafted flicker, pileated woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, red-headed woodpecker, purple martin, blue jay, fish crow, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, mockingbird, brown thrasher, wood thrush, ruby-crowned kinglet, cedar wax-wing, worm-eating warbler, parula warbler, myrtle warbler, Kentucky warbler, yellowthroat, hooded warbler, redwinged blackbird, orchard oriole, scarlet tanager, summer tanager, cardinal, rufous-sided towhee and white-throated sparrow.

A common loon was found dead on the beach at Horn Island. Reportedly, other loons had been found dead along the beach areas recently.

Special thanks are due Mr. Stokes and his associates for the excellent arrangements and the hard work of transporting and landing the MOS party on Horn Island. Thanks to Dr. Howse, Dr. Gunter and their associates for use of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory facilities and the Hermes for the boat trip.

WHITE PELICANS

"I recently was privileged to see a migration of White pelicans over our area (south edge of Washington County). When first observed from a distance, they were mistaken for blue and snow geese. Closer observation revealed no honking and little or no wing movement.

This big flock, that I estimated at 1000 to 1200 birds, went into a tight spinal formation from what seemed like a great height. The bottom of the column would come to within about three hundred feet of the ground, but they never did put down. Last seen -- they were headed northwest." Apr. 19, 1974, Elie J. Ganier, Jr.

SOME HATTIESBURG AND COAST VICINITY RECORDS

"Eared grebe -- 2 to 6 were at Hattiesburg sewage lagoons for most of the winter. They were seen at close range and compared carefully with nearby horned grebes on several occasions. I saw them a few days ago in full breeding plumage.

Anhinga -- Hattiesburg, Dec. 2, 1973 (Lake Serene).

Oldsquaw -- A female here 11-14-73, then another on 12-13-73. (Lagoons).

Swallow-tailed kite -- 2 on 4-6-74, then 3 on 4-8-74, both near Merrill, Miss.

Sandhill crane -- 4 near Pascagoula on 4-6-74.

Spotted sandpiper -- 2 wintered in Hattiesburg.

Avocet -- 19 at Pascagoula on 12-15-73.

Long-billed curlew -- 1 at Gulfport on 8-27-73.

Black-legged kittiwake -- Hattiesburg sewage lagoons 11-26-73 and 12-8-73. Seen at close range by 3 competent observers.

Caspian tern -- Hattiesburg 12-15-73 (lagoons).

Northern (Baltimore) oriole -- 2 on 12-15-73 at separate feeders (I didn't see them).

Marbled godwit -- 1 at Pascagoula on 1-27-74.

Reddish egret -- One on 9-29-73 at Biloxi and one 10-14-73 at Bellefontaine, Jackson County." April 10, 1974 -- Dr. Larry Gates, 100 North 32nd, Apt. 4, Hattiesburg, Miss. 39401.

WINTER NOTES -- LAWRENCE COUNTY AND VICINITY

"A dickcissel, several juncos, & nine Chipping sparrows were among the birds regularly feeding on grain scattered in our back yard. After 9 March they no longer visited the feeding stations but during the cold snap of the 26th they reappeared, flying in without hesitation. Only 7 Chipping sparrows & 2 Juncos were present on the 26th.

Other observations which may be of interest follow:

Nov. 30, 1973 -- 3 Woodcock. Hi-way #28 both sides of Pearl R. (near Georgetown). Dusk dark but the low, erratic flights placed them in sharp relief against the glowing western sky.

Dec. 9, 1973 -- 83 Scaup - Lake Mary Crawford.

Dec. 9, 1973 -- 4 Common egrets, Lake Mary Crawford, the latest seen there.
Also 16 Mallards 3 Horned Grebes.

Jan. 20, 1974 -- Lone Gull afloat & in flight at Lake Mary Crawford, the first gull we have seen there. Observed at distance through 7 X 35 mm glasses with doubler on one lens. Dark streaks on head, the dark bill and, in flight, the contrasty white wing borders and lack of white spots near wing tips strongly suggested a Laughing Gull.

Feb. 1, 1974 -- First Cedar Waxwings appeared.

Feb. 9, 1974 -- Purple Finch.

Feb. 10, 1974 -- Double Crested Cormorant, in flight and on water Lake Mary Crawford.
3 Horned Grebes (probably those first noted 9 Dec.)

Feb. 10, 12, 17, 1974 -- Old Squaw Female, Lake Mary Crawford, w/mixed flock scaup and Coot. Carefully studied through 15X scope. Light head with dark crown and cheek patch, dark back and light sides.

Feb. 25, 1974 -- Dickcissel seen at about 8' distance.

Mar. 7, 1974 -- First Purple Martin noted.

During the cold snap of 26 March, the Martins were flying about 3' above an open pasture. They would quarter into the north wind till they reached the boundary fence then zoom upward, fly to the south end of the 5 acre patch and repeat the process. This was during the warmer part of the day."

March 26, 1974, Florence and Carl
Bauer, PO Box 396, Monticello, Ms.
39654

WHIPPOORWILL

Mrs. Marshall Treppendahl, Rt. 4, Box 345, Woodville, Mississippi 39669, reports: "At 6:00 AM, Saturday, March 23, he (Marshall) heard a whippoorwill on our home place, Valhalla." (Wilkinson County, east of Woodville).

BUTEOS IN MIGRATION, WASHINGTON COUNTY

"Yesterday (April 1) at 9 AM in the South part of Greenville, I noticed six buteos soaring much like vultures do, and slowly moving North. I didn't have my binoculars and thus couldn't get an identification; but there was one straggler almost directly overhead that I could get an idea of size: it was definitely smaller than a Red-tailed so they must have been Broad-wings.

Later in the day (about 4 PM) my wife was with me in the car and as I was telling her about the morning birds, we noticed a group of sixteen buteos soaring in a similar manner about a mile North of the previous sighting. These too were buteos, but it was very dark (preceding severe thunderstorms) and we couldn't make an identification. They finally disappeared above the clouds."

April 2, 1974, G. E. Alexander, 1749 Azalea Drive, Greenville, Miss. 38701.

NOXUBEE REFUGE NOTES AND YAZOO REFUGE NOTES

"Since I was attending a seminar in Starkville on April 20, I made an early morning trip to the Noxubee Refuge. During a three hour period along one of the nature trails, I saw 41 different species, some of which were: Winter species still present: Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Am. Goldfinch, White-throated Sparrow. Summer species: Green Heron, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Chimney Swift, Ruby-Th. Hummingbird, Catbird, Wood Thrush, Blue-Gr. Gnatcatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Parula Warbler, Yellowthroat, Blue Grosbeak.

There was a strong possibility that Pine Siskins were present. On two separate occasions I observed the goldfinches. In each flock there were several heavily-streaked, sparrow-sized birds. They were feeding high in elms. Couldn't get good enough look to get field marks, but they must have been siskins.

The next day, April 21, my wife and I spent most of the day at the Yazoo Refuge. We identified 48 species, thirty of which I had not seen at Noxubee. Some interesting ones: Am. Bittern (in his camouflage pose), Purple Gallinule (first in 3 yrs.), Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs (both species at different locations, but studied closely and finally identified by bill and call), Pectoral Sandpiper (5), Least Sandpiper (5), Bobolinks." Apr. 29, 1974, G. E. Alexander, Jr.

PINE SISKINS

Burton S. Webster reported by letter dated 3-6-74 he had 4 pine siskins at his feeder during the week of February 25 - March 2 in Starkville, Mississippi. WHT

MOON LAKE (LULA), MISSISSIPPI

On December 31, 1973, Christmas count was called off at 9:00 AM, wind affecting results. Lake checked 9 - 10 AM, following seen:

Gadwall	13	Hooded merganser	3
Canvasback	14	Coot	10
Lesser scaup	38	Herring gull	7
Common goldeneye	8	Ringbilled gull	15

March 22, 1974, Ben and Lula Coffey, 672 N. Belvedere, Memphis, Th. 38107, George Hervey, 2103 Copperhill Cove, Memphis, Th. 38128.

On a field trip April 27, 1974 to an area on Bayou Pierre in Claiborne County, near Carpenter, Mississippi, bobolinks, dickcissels, blue grosbeaks, about a dozen or more rose-breasted grosbeaks, orchard orioles and numerous indigo buntings were observed feeding in an oatfield overgrown with hairy vetch, most of them alongside a fencerow adjoining a pasture and old house site. Orchard orioles, blue grosbeaks and indigo buntings were seen along roadsides at numerous other locations in western Hinds County. Dickcissels were also seen at another location in a rye grass pasture along Highway 18 west of Carpenter, Mississippi, Hinds County. W. H. Turcotte.

SPRING NOTES

"Believe we previously reported the female Old Squaw which was last seen with a flock of Coots at Lake Mary Crawford, 29 March, 1974.

Myrtle Warblers were abundant at Lake Mary Crawford in early April.

On 2 April a pair of wood ducks were still in the dead timber at the upper reaches of the Lake where the female was seen investigating holes in the tree stubs sticking from the water.

7 April. First Cattle Egrets and first E. Kingbird noted. Green Heron seen.

11 April. 1st Blue Grosbeak.

13 April. Cattle Egrets, dozens of them, lined along the edge of the rising backwaters of the Pearl R. where pastures were flooding. Apparently, the egrets were feeding on insects retreating from the rising water.

18 April. Swallow-Tailed Kite flying low over our house in Monticello heading NW. A couple of days before a fork tailed bird had been glimpsed but identification then was uncertain.

A brief note: For a couple of years we've been feeding the Cardinals (we still call them Red Birds) whole grain corn. If the corn is too hard for the birds to crack the kernels may be placed in a shallow dish with water added. This cuts down on the feeding of English Sparrows although they will attempt to poach portions of grain cracked by the Cardinals." Florence & Carl Bauer, PO Box 396, Monticello, Ms. 39564

Coastal Notes: White Pelicans and Nest Destruction of
Shore Birds on the Coast May 10-11, 1974.

The afternoon of May 10 was somewhat blustery on the Mississippi coast with wind from the southeast. About 4:30 PM Mr. Glenn Swapp of the Gulf National Seashores in Magnolia Park telephoned me and said that their boatman coming in from Horn Island saw about twenty-five White Pelicans at the end of Marsh Point, which separates Davis Bay from Mississippi Sound off Ocean Springs. I drove down East Beach opposite that area and tried to count the birds. They were about a mile away diagonally across the water on the bare sandy tip of the point and the atmosphere was turbid with spray. I counted seventeen birds but said nothing. Then having some faith in the better eye of my ten year old son, I turned the glasses over to him. He said, "I count seventeen", and so I think this is fairly close to the number of birds.

The next morning the tip of Marsh Point was covered by high water and the White Pelicans were gone. We believe this incident is worth reporting because these birds are not often seen in the spring on this coast, but are more likely to be late fall and winter visitors.

The night of May 10 was stormy with heavy rains during a large part of the night. The next morning the grassy margin of the Ocean Springs beach was covered with high water and the debris of dead grass and wood was whipped up into a strand line next to the sea wall.

This rise in the water was caused by the winds and also by flooding from the land, which has a well known effect upon enclosed bays. It had a devastating effect upon some of the life of the area. On the beach little boys were running around catching bedraggled mice that live in large numbers in the marsh grass that borders to these estuarine waters. So far as we know this is the Eastern Harvest Mouse, previously listed as a hurricane victim (Gunter, G. and L. N. Eleuterius 1973. Some effects of hurricanes on the terrestrial biota, with special reference to Camille. Gulf Research Reports, 4(2): 174-185). Strangely enough, large numbers of earthworms were also caused to crawl out of the soil next to the beach and they were also collected by little boys and a small bucket-full ended up at my house. These worms were quite lively and active and they seemed to be damaged in no way. They had merely abandoned their usual habitat.

The saddest thing of all was the numbers of wet baby birds still clothed in down that were running about the beach and peeping piteously. They were obviously separated from their parents and from their nesting area, which essentially had disappeared. These were sandpipers but I do not know the species. A young coal black Clapper Rail was caught by my son. It was a little larger than a baby chick. After being kept at my home most of the day and refusing the earthworms even when semi-forced, it was returned to the beach in the forlorn hope that one of the parents would find it.

The next day's newspaper had many scenes of high water up and down the Mississippi coast. The phenomena was certainly not local, and it probably affected Alabama and Louisiana as well. On May 21-22, another spell of bad weather and high water came from a "depression SSE of New Orleans". The water got up to the sea-wall again. It destroyed nests of hundreds of Least Terns on the Biloxi-Gulfport beach, which are nesting there in spite of its human use, and on Horn Island, as reported to me by Miss Katherine McGraw of the Gulf Islands National Seashore staff. Nevertheless, the birds were back at their nesting activities on May 23.

Fortunately, these spells of bad weather in the spring do not occur every year but they occur often enough on the Gulf coast to cause great damage to shore nesting birds. It is a recognized problem on the Chandeleurs and as far south as the Audubon refuges in Texas and in fact along most of the northern Gulf coast where birds nest on low shores.

S/ Gordon Gunter, Corresponding Secretary, Mississippi Ornithological Society
Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Ocean Springs, Mississippi 39564

SOUTHERN BALD EAGLE NESTING ON COAST

In January, 1974, a State Highway Department Engineer and others noted a pair of Bald Eagles nest-building at a location in Harrison County on Big Biloxi River just north of I-10 Highway, which is under construction. The pair of birds was seen regularly about the nest carrying and adding material.

On February 19th I observed the completed nest with telescope and both adults were on or about the nest at this time. The nest and birds on the nest were photographed. No evidence of young could be observed during this time or until the birds apparently abandoned the nesting effort about mid-April. The nest was in a living slash pine tree well out into a marsh bordering the east bank of the Biloxi River.

The nest tree was climbed on June 21 by a local person under the direction of Bobby Tramel, State Supervisor, Wildlife Services, Alabama-Mississippi District, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, under federal and state permit. A close examination of the nest revealed no evidence of egg remains or food fragments.

Although some publicity was given in local newspapers about the presence of an eagle nest on the coast, no information was given as to the exact location. The nest location was known by some local residents and was closely watched by local and federal conservation officers to prevent human disturbance and none was known to occur. Highway construction prevented most access to the site and the birds showed no disturbance by the highway construction traffic or by observers on the highway. This is the only known nesting attempt by bald eagles in Mississippi since the early 1950's. Reasons for the nesting failure remain unknown for this endangered species.

W. H. Turcotte

MOS MEMBERSHIP - JUNE 1974

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Sstng - Pullen, Mrs W H (Catherine C)

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EXCHANGE AND GIFT MAILING LIST

1. Dr Maurice F Baker, Wildlife Bldg, Auburn University, Auburn Ala 36830
2. Exchange and Gift Division
The Library of Congress, Washington DC 20025
3. Dr Robert Newman - Zoology Department, Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge Louisiana 70821
4. Smithsonian Institution, US National Museum
Attention: Curator, Division of Birds, Washington DC 20013
5. Dr Julian Dusi, Dept of Zoology, Auburn University, Auburn Ala 36830
(Exchange - A.O.S.)
6. Texas Ornithological Society, %Dr Michael K Rylander, Dept of Biology
Texas Tech University, Lubbock Tex 79409
7. Acquisitions Department, Mitchell Memorial Library
Mississippi State University, Mississippi State Ms 39762
8. Serials Section, Colorado State University Libraries
Fort Collins Colo 80521 (Colorado Field Ornithologist)

NEW MEMBERS

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Daniel Dalton Everett Jr	369 Bobwhite Dr, Canton Ms 39046
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