

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
Organized April 30, 1955

JOHN M. FRAZIER  
Vice-President  
Station A  
Hattiesburg, Miss.

Fannye A. Cook, President  
1119 Pinehurst, Jackson, Miss.

CHAS. L. DEEVERS  
Treasurer  
Clinton, Miss.

Mrs. H. G. Wills  
Secretary  
828 North Congress St.  
Jackson, Miss.

Wm. H. TURCOTTE  
Editor  
Route 2, Box 100  
Jackson, Miss.

March 14, 1957

MOS NEWSLETTER - Vol. 2, No. 1.

Compiled by: W. H. TURCOTTE

For the Record: Last fall's MOS field trip on November 3-4 began at Cleveland, Mississippi. We visited the Mississippi Power and Light steam generating plant expecting to see waterfowl in numbers on the mile-square reservoir. Only a small number of ducks had arrived with a few blue and snow geese. We were about a week too early as waterfowl began arriving in numbers about a week later.

We were Dr. R. L. Caylor's guests at Delta State observing the museum collections before going to Bolivar County Conservation League Clubhouse for lunch. At 1:30, we were guests of the League on a short Mississippi River Boat trip. Water birds were almost totally absent on the river.

From the boat trip we drove down to the Merigold Hunting Club woods and had a fine time observing deer. About 37 deer were counted as we rode through the big river bottom woods. Clouds of tree swallows were seen along the banks of the Mississippi.

Sunday we stopped by Lake Bolivar to look at shorebirds and a very few ducks.

Second Annual Meeting: The MOS will hold its second annual meeting in connection with the Mississippi Academy of Science in Columbus on April 26-27, 1957. It is hoped that as many members as possible will attend the meeting and participate in the program. Anyone wishing to present a paper should communicate with Mrs. W. G. Wills, Secretary, 828 North Congress, Jackson, Mississippi, at an early date giving a brief statement concerning subject to be discussed. Following the meeting, members will make a trip to Tishomingo State park to observe birds migrating through the upper Tombigbee and Tennessee River watersheds. - Fannye A. Cook

Natchez Christmas Count and Enroute - Mrs. Coffey and I were joined this year by Miss Alice Smith and R. Demett Smith, Jr. We were together (December 30) except for the first three (or best) hours when, divided into three parties for three good areas of last year's visit, we had hoped to make high counts of a few species found so common previously. But we listed only 8 Red-headed Woodpeckers against 106 last year, 481 White-throated Sparrows against 1451 before. Fox Sparrows were up, from 5 to 69, and Goldfinch, Swamp Sparrow, and Song Sparrow also increased greatly, but no Purple Finches were found. As last year, despite a special search, Chipping Sparrows were found only at the last minute, 7, compared with 2 previously. Flocks of Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and Rusty Blackbirds were missing. Myrtle Warblers increased from 160 to 414 and Pines from 4 to 19. While Demett was carefully looking over a group of Pine Warblers in the top of an oak at the country club, he spotted a male Black-throated Gray Warbler. We were able to examine it well during our ten minutes there, as it moved back and forth from one tree to another, feeding, and unafraid, came quite low. This "wanderer" from the West has been recorded as far as the Northeast, Florida, and on an Alabama coastal island; the present record appears to be the first for Mississippi. Four separate Orange-crowns and a male and a female Yellow-throat represented species unsuccessfully hunted last season but no Blue-gray Gnatcatcher could be found. The area covered was about as last season (Aud. Fld Notes 1956:154-155) plus a few miles out the Liberty Road and the Paper Mill Road. - Ben B. Coffey, Jr.

Enroute December 29, we found only one Sprague's Pipit and 100 Lapland Longspurs at Fletcher Field, Clarksdale. The blackbird roost, across US 61 from the field last year, was now about 4 miles farther south, nearer Clarksdale. Vesper Sparrows seen were: 7 in Sunflower County, S. of Moorhead and a flock of 80 in Humphreys County, E. of Belzoni (but at Natchez a full day we could find only 2). On the Yazoo City Airport we found 2 Sprague's Pipit 4, Leconte's Sparrow 15, and Smith's Longspur 11.

Columbus Count - The area covered was almost the same as on the only previous count, December 25, 1952 (Aud. Fld. Notes 1953:128), plus some fence rows and fields contiguous with the NE corner of the air base. On a field there I flushed 4 Sprague's Pipits, this and the Yazoo City strip are two locations newly visited and make a total of 11 localities in Mississippi where I have found this species. Meanwhile, southwest of town, I was unable to find any of the small flocks previously noted, in fact, not even a single of: Am. Pipit, Vesper Sparrow, and Lapland Longspur. Municipal airport, nearing completion in 1952, now had 10 Horned Larks, and, in grassy edges, at least 4 Leconte's. In trying to run up the latter, I was unable to fully keep track of blackbirds moving eastward to a roost, but saw an estimated 25,000. As before, appreciable time among pines yielded no "pine" species. A Lincoln's Sparrow was of interest. - Ben B. Coffey, Jr.

Long-eared Owl - The editor collected a long-eared owl while quail hunting in Hinds County near Brownsville on December 24, 1956. The bird was shot as it flew out of a cedar tree covered with honeysuckle vines and growing down in a deep ravine. This is my second Long-eared Owl record, both in the same vicinity. The specimen has been mounted and is now in the museum collection.

Horned Owl Nesting - While driving up the Mississippi River levee above Albemarle Lake in Issaquena County on February 8, 1957, the editor spotted a horned owl incubating on a nest in a large cottonwood standing beside a barrow pit. Looking further after the owl had flown, I observed a dozen or more nests in cottonwoods along the levee believed to be those of the Mississippi Kite. Last summer numbers of kites were seen at this location.

Coast Trip - The editor and family made a short trip to the coast on February 24th. We saw numbers of herring and ring billed gulls and about 200 black skimmers on the beach in front of the Gulfport VA Hospital. At the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor: two loons, several red breasted mergansers, about 40 western grebes feeding in a group, more gulls including one Bonaparte's in winter plumage, willets, several purple martins and numerous tree swallows.

Coturnix Quail - Missouri, Tennessee and Alabama are making experimental mass releases of the Japanese quail, Coturnix coturnix japonica. Birds being released are all banded. Band returns indicate that the species is migratory. Twelve bands have been reported from about 3600 released last fall. Bands from Missouri birds were returned from Schlater, Mississippi, and Beaumont, Texas. Tennessee-released birds were reported taken on the coasts of South Carolina and Alabama.

The Coturnix resembles a Meadowlark in general appearance and size without the white tail-markings, a very short tail and buff-colored instead of yellow on the breast. Large-scale releases are planned during spring, summer and fall by Missouri.

The editor observed a bird February 11th on Highway 49-W just south of Louise, Mississippi, believed to be a Coturnix. It flew across the highway just in front of me, flew in a semi-circle with a fluttery flight, appeared to be almost bob-tailed and had the general size and appearance of a Meadowlark except that its flight was much different.

Most Unusual: Ben Coffey reports on Memphis Christmas count, a Rock Wren collected by Demett Smith and Floy Burford and a Green-tailed Towhee by Floy Burford.

Blues and Snows: Mr. Frank Unkel, a successful rice farmer in Bolivar County and operator of a very fine duck club on his farm near Skene, reports about 1,200 blue and snow geese using flooded rice fields, bean and oat fields on his place and commuting between these feeding grounds and gravel bars on the Mississippi River each morning and afternoon. They are very tame, permit close observation and should stay around until April 1st. This should be worth seeing for anyone passing. (Reported March 13)

Mr. Tucker Honors Society - Mr. J. W. Tucker of Jackson, who on many occasions has encouraged efforts in Conservation and bird study, has given the Society a copper engraving of Audubon's falcon to be presented at the Annual Convention to the member judged as doing the most outstanding work. - Fanny Cook

Blackbirds - Many hundreds of dead blackbirds were noted January 18, on the ground under power lines along the north side of U. S. Highway 49-W just west of Yazoo City and near a large blackbird roost numbering countless thousands.

The birds roost in small trees and shrubby growth along both sides of Wolf Lake meandering in a more or less east-west direction between open fields on the north side of the highway. For a distance of one fourth to one half mile along both sides of the highway at this point the power lines constitute the only apparent hazard to flying birds. On the evening of January 17, Mr. Ed Carlson, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service was traveling to Jackson on Highway 49 and paused to watch the birds come in to roost. He noted huge flocks approaching from all directions, many coming in low from the south, their line of flight being at right angles to the highway and power lines. Mr. Carlson said the sky appeared to be black with birds. The following morning piles of birds were found under the wires for hundreds of yards along the highway and power line right-of-way. Several species including grackles, cowbirds and red wings were noted.

It is assumed the birds flew into the wires and were killed by the impact late the previous evening. The flocks apparently were so dense, many birds were unable to see the wires in time to avoid hitting them. Other instances of birds flying into objects have been noted from time to time particularly at night during adverse weather conditions. - John Phares

#### New Members

Since publication of the 1956 membership list in the last issue of the Newsletter, nine new members have been added:

Mr. Otis Allen, Superintendent of Education, Leflore Co., Greenwood, Miss.  
 Mr. Francis Elmore, Naturalist, Natchez Trace Parkway, Tupelo, Miss.  
 Mrs. G. Frederick Voght, 1240 Rose Hill Circle, Jackson, Miss.  
 Mr. T. M. Salisbury, 1815 St. Ann, Jackson, Miss.  
 Mr. George R. Smith, 1102 West Beach, Pass Christian, Miss.  
 Miss Jane Northrop, 275 West 2nd. Street, Pass Christian, Miss.  
 Dr. Doris Raymond, Box 75, University, Miss.  
 Mr. Billy Smith-Vanez, 902 South Court Street, Cleveland, Miss.  
 Mrs. Alton Ellick, Old Canton Rd., Jackson, Miss.