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MOS NEWSLETTER

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Summary of Mississippi Christmas Bird Counts, 1978-1979

by Wayne C. Weber

In 1978-79, Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) were carried out in the same 10 Mississippi areas as the previous year. Three counts (Grenada, Jackson, and Hattiesburg) established record high species counts, and the Jackson total of 103 was a new high for an inland count. Jackson County, the traditional leader, slipped to 148 species this year, although 7 more were seen during count week.

The gem of this year's CBC was a Mountain Bluebird - a new bird for Mississippi - seen on the Grenada CBC. It was found by Richard Whittington of Memphis, and substantiating photos were taken 2 days later by Dr. Paul Lago of Ole Miss. Many other rare birds were seen, especially on the coastal CBCs, as the following summary attests.

Table 1 gives basic data for each count; the paragraphs below give details of unusual species and unusual numbers. Complete results of all counts will appear in the July 1979 issue of American Birds.

Sincere thanks to all CBC observers and especially to compilers, most of whom promptly submitted full details of their counts, including field notes on unusual species, in response to our request. Please note that next year's results should be sent to Dr. Jackson; I will be leaving Mississippi later this year. I hope that all of you will enjoy your best CBC ever next winter!

TABLE 1. Data for Mississippi Christmas Bird Counts, 1978-79.

Count Name	Date	Species	Individual	Observers	Parties
Sardis Lake	21 Dec.	80	9857	13	5-6
Moon Lake	19 Dec.	70	7107	3	1-2
Grenada	26 Dec.	90	7007	7	3-4
Noxubee NWR	17 Dec.	91	26933	22	6
Washington Co.	17 Dec.	86	39891	?	?
Jackson	30 Dec.	103	14562	21	8
Natchez	16 Dec.	74	3523	9	?
Hattiesburg	28 Dec.	101	7335	16	5-6
S. Hancock Co.	30 Dec.	125	10785	19	5-9
Jackson Co.	16 Dec.	148	8169	15	6

Sardis Lake (W. Marvin Davis, compiler)-- Noteworthy species were Common Merganser (1) and Bald Eagle (1 ad.); also seen for the first time was Red-shouldered Hawk (2). High counts were recorded for Killdeer (52), Red-bellied (80) and Red-headed (70) Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet (53), and Rusty Blackbird (482).

Moon Lake (Ben B. Coffey, Jr., compiler)-- Unusual species (although all have been seen in previous years) were House Wren (1), Solitary Vireo (1), and Western Meadowlark (1). A count of 24 Lapland Longspurs was high.

Grenada (W. Marvin Davis, compiler)-- This year's 90 species was the highest ever. The count highlight was a male Mountain Bluebird, the first Mississippi record; it was found by Richard Whittington and seen by 5 observers on the count, and photographed by Dr. Paul Lago 2 days later. Other unusual species were Great Egret (1), Bald Eagle (1 imm.), Least Sandpiper (2), Dunlin (20), Fish Crow (1), White-breasted Nuthatch (1) and Lincoln's Sparrow (1). High counts included 30 Red-tailed Hawks, 14 Marsh Hawks, 311 Field Sparrows, and 267 Song Sparrows.

Noxubee NWR (Jerome A. Jackson, compiler)-- The species total of 91 (plus 9 in count period) was the second highest ever. New to the count were Whistling Swan (1), Dunlin (1), Barn Owl (1), and Short-billed Marsh Wren (3); also unusual were a Golden Eagle (3rd year in a row!), a Least Sandpiper, and 3 Le Conte's Sparrows. Counts of 17 Red-shouldered Hawks and 20 Barred Owls were possibly the highest ever in Mississippi. All-time high counts for Noxubee were logged for several waterfowl species (375 Canada Geese, 202 Black Ducks, 1300 Gadwall, 2008 Pintail, 2550 Am. Wigeon, 2600 Ring-necked Ducks, 106 Bufflehead), and many other species including Great Blue Heron, Pileated, Red-bellied, and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Hermit Thrush, both kinglets, and Swamp Sparrows.

Washington County south (Edward Alexander, Jr., compiler)-- The species count was down 2 from last year, but the total of 39,891 individuals topped all other Miss. counts, despite declines in both waterfowl and blackbirds from 1976 and 1977 counts. The low waterfowl counts seem paradoxical; Noxubee NWR, which is at the same latitude and had its count the same day, had a record high count of ducks. Unusual species were Red-breasted Merganser (3), Merlin (1), and Red-breasted Nuthatch (1); as usual, this count was the only one in Miss. to have White-fronted Geese (8). Someone must have put in some time with owl tapes to log 6 Screech Owls!

Jackson (William H. Turcotte, compiler)-- The total of 103 species was a record for an inland count in the state. New to the count were Grasshopper Sparrow (2) and Lark Sparrow (1); also unusual or rarely seen were King Rail (1), Greater Yellowlegs (10), Least Sandpiper (10), White-breasted Nuthatch (1), House Wren (1), and Pine Siskin (1). The siskin was perhaps the only one seen in Miss. all winter. High counts were noted for Great Blue Heron (62), Wood Duck (406), Red-breasted Merganser (12), and Fish Crow (18). The high heron and shorebird counts resulted from low water on Barnett Reservoir.

Natchez (Ralph B. Shields, III, compiler)-- Greater Scaup (6), Osprey (1), and Black-bellied Plover (22) were seen for the first time ever. This count and Hattiesburg were the only counts in Mississippi or Alabama to find Evening Grosbeaks (8) this year. A Merlin was seen in count period.

Hattiesburg (Larry Gates, compiler)-- The count of 101 species was a local record. Species new to the count were Green-winged Teal (1), Anhinga (2), Greater Scaup (4), Least Sandpiper (2), and Evening Grosbeak (5), as well as 2 very unusual Black-headed Grosbeaks. Also unusual were Merlin (2) and White-breasted Nuthatch (1). High counts included N. Shoveler (50), Hooded Merganser (34), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (108), and Fox Sparrow (19).

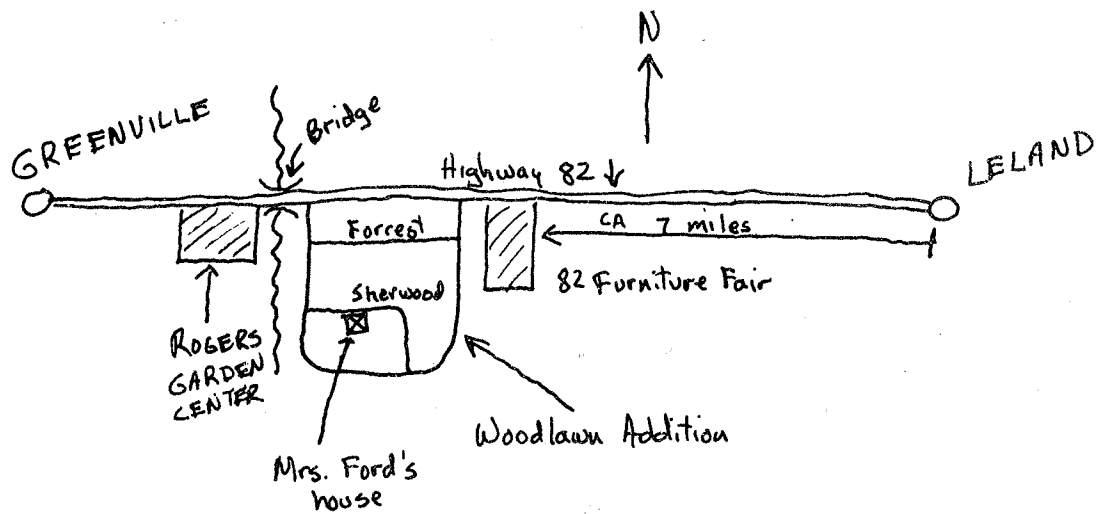
Southern Hancock County (Judith Toups, compiler)-- Cool, windy weather, plus a near-absence of dabbling ducks, resulted in a total of only 125 species, the lowest yet. However, these included a Red-throated Loon (8th Miss. record) and 4 Whistling Swans (first record for coastal Miss.). Also noteworthy were an Oldsquaw, a Sandwich Tern, and a Ground Dove.

Jackson County (Larry Gates, compiler)-- Despite an all-out effort, the species total dropped to 148 from last year's 152. A bird seen by Judy Toups and Annette Duchain was either a European Wigeon or possibly a hybrid European X American; European would be new to the state list. Other unusual species were Eared Grebe (1), Surf Scoter (1), Am. Golden Plover (4), White-winged Dove (1), Ground Dove (3), Burrowing Owl (1), Northern Oriole (1), Henslow's Sparrow (1), and Harris's Sparrow (2). Seven extra species were seen in count period, including a Groove-billed Ani on Dec. 17 and 6 Black-necked Stilts on Dec. 18.

Annual Spring Meeting

The annual spring meeting of the Mississippi Ornithological Society will be held in Greenville, Mississippi on 11-13 May 1979. The schedule for the meeting is as follows:

- 11 May: 6:00 PM Informal light supper hosted by Ed and Ginger Alexander and Mrs. Virginia Ford. The supper will be at Mrs. Ford's home in Woodlawn Addition on Sherwood Drive south off Highway 82 between Greenville and Leland. A location map is shown on the attached clip-off sheet. Please clip and mail the reply form to Ed Alexander by 27 April so that they can know how many guests to expect.
- 7:30 PM The annual business meeting and a special program will be held at the William Alexander Percy Library in downtown Greenville.
- 12 May: Field trips will be conducted to Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge and other good birding areas near Greenville. Details will be announced at the meeting Friday night, but those unable to attend the Friday session can meet the group near Yazoo Refuge headquarters at 8:00 Saturday morning.
- 13 May: Jerry Jackson will hold a special workshop for Mississippi bird banders and prospective bird banders at Leroy Percy State Park. The workshop will start at 8:00 AM and should be over by noon. If you have a serious interest in banding, please plan to attend.



I plan to attend the supper at Mrs. Ford's home that will be held in conjunction with the MOS spring meeting. There will be _____ persons in my party.

signature

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