

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

ORGANIZED APRIL 30, 1955

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MOS NEWSLETTER

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MINUTES OF THE FALL MEETING OF THE MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. on October 29, 1983, at Tishomingo State Park by the President, Larry Gates. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer, G. Edward Alexander, reported a general fund of \$16,068.52, a \$2000.00 CD at First Magnolia Saving and Loan, and \$320.00 in the Starkville account.

It was announced that we have reached a break-even point on sales of MOS patches. Future sales will be all profit.

Larry requested that everyone pay for meals before leaving and issued a reminder to set clocks back from daylight savings time to standard time.

Ed Alexander asked that we pay our dues early to save postage on reminders.

It was reported that a good many old records have been returned in response to the recent request for records from previous officers.

The first item of new business was a motion by Vic Duvic that our organization go on record as favoring a "bottle bill" to reduce litter on our highways. The motion was seconded by Jerry Jackson. The motion passed.

Jan Dubuisson passed around an updated membership list so everyone could check to see that their mailing address was correct.

Minutes of MOS fall meeting, (cont'd):

Jerry Jackson announced that back issues of The Mississippi Kite are available at \$2.00 each, and also copies of Mid-South Bird Notes of Ben B. Coffey at \$8.00 each.

Jerry also announced dates, May 31-June 4, for the Wilson Ornithological Society annual meeting at Wilmington, N.C., including field trips to the outer banks and an art show. He encouraged MOS members to make plans to attend.

Ed Alexander moved that we offer family memberships for \$15.00. Motion was seconded by Steve Peterson. The motion passed.

Judith Toups requested funds for signs to protect the Least Tern nesting areas. A motion was made by Hal Moore, seconded by Jerry Jackson, to donate \$100.00. The motion was amended by Marita Smith and seconded by Cile Waite to donate \$200.00 for signs to protect Least Tern nesting areas. The motion passed.

Bill Turcotte suggest a historian be appointed, a 2nd Vice President in charge of history, to keep up with MOS records.

The Tucker Award committee for 1984 was named: Jerry Jackson, Chairman and Ed Alexander and Bill Turcotte serving as members.

The MOS spring meeting will be held in Greenville on Paril 28, 1984, with Ed. Alexander as host. The fall meeting has been tentatively scheduled for late October on the coast.

Jan Dubuisson was asked to have name tags for members at the next meeting.

A motion was made by Steve Peterson to order T-shirts displaying a Mississippi Kite. After much discussion the motion was defeated and a committee named to look into the costs involved.

The board reversed the decision to close the bank account in Starkville and voted to keep the account open to pay for printing, postage, labels, and other expenses to published the "Kite". Funds will be replaced by the treasurer as bills are paid to keep the account up to \$350.00.

Bette Schardien introduced the speaker, Dr. David Pitts, who presented a very informative program on Bluebird Ecology in the Mid-south.

Seventy-two people attended the meeting. Eighty-five species of birds were tabulated.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julia Broyles, Secretary

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REPORT FROM THE CHECKLIST COMMITTEE:

The MOS checklist committee met while at Tishomingo State Park on October 29, 1983, with Chairman Bill Turcotte and members Ed Alexander, Larry Gates, Jerome Jackson, and Judith Toups in attendance. Committee members B. Erskine Gandy and Marvin Davis were absent.

Prior to the publication of a new Mississippi checklist, status of a number of species came under discussion, as listed below:

Red-throated Loon: This species, for which a number of sight-records existed, was documented by photographs.

Great Cormorant: Photographs were submitted to the committee for examination; however, it was agreed that the photographs warranted further examination and were to be sent to ornithologists at the National Museum for opinion. For the present, Great Cormorant remains on the Mississippi checklist as a species for which there are multiple sight records and multiple observations but which has not yet been documented by specimen or photograph.

American Swallow-tailed Kite: Confirmation of breeding in Mississippi was established by photographs of nest and nestlings.

Black-shouldered Kite: Occurrence and breeding in Mississippi was documented by photographs.

Northern Goshawk: A detailed sight record of this species was deemed inconclusive and was put on file.

Crested Caracara: Photographs document this species as occurring in Mississippi.

Ruff: A detailed sight record of this species was judged sufficient for Ruff to be included on the Mississippi checklist, but which lacks confirmation by photograph or specimen.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Photographs document this species as occurring in Mississippi.

Great Black-backed Gull: Photographs document this species as occurring in Mississippi.

Ash-throated Flycatcher: Detailed sight records of this species were deemed inconclusive and were put on file.

Yellow-throated Vireo: Confirmation of breeding was established by observation of adult and young in nest and later collection of nest.

## Checklist Committee report, cont'd:

Black-whiskered Vireo: This species was accepted to the Mississippi list on the basis of multiple sight records by multiple observers, but lacks confirmation by photograph or specimen.

Lark Bunting: This species, for which a prior sight record exists, was accepted to the Mississippi list through documenting photographs.

Bronzed Cowbird: As many as fifteen individuals of this species have been seen by multiple observers on several occasions. There was some discussion that such species deserve the "documented" status by reason of the number of occurrences and the number of observers; however, the committee agreed that to do so would "muddy the waters" and it remains a species for which documentation by photograph or specimen is needed.

This report prepared by Judith Toups, Secretary Pro-tem.

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## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS AROUND THE STATE: December 1983 &amp; January 1984.

HATTIESBURG, MS: Terrie Gates, compiler

29 December, 1983: Partly cloudy. 29°-38°

116 species; 14,157 individuals

19 species of duck (including Mottled Duck) and Blue Goose

Other highlights: 41 Eared Grebe, Northern Goshawk, Common Ground Dove, 130 Fish Crows, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Black and White Warbler, "Oregon" Junco, American Bittern.

JACKSON COUNTY, MS: Larry Gates, compiler

17 December, 1983: Partly cloudy. 48°-64°

144 species; 11,165 individuals

Highlights: Great Black-backed Gull, Black-throated Green Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Henslow's Sparrow, "Oregon" Junco.

NATCHEZ, MS: Ralph Shields, compiler

(Editor's note: No direct communication from the compiler of this CBC, and material given here has been culled from the Natchez Audubon Society Newsletter. Highlights were left to the imagination of this editor...I could only guess the species that should be mentioned.)

17 December, 1983: No weather details

87 species; 16,071 individuals

Highlights: Double-crested Cormorant (930), Merlin (2), Fish Crow (1), Barn Swallow (1), Swainson's Hawk (1), Krider's and Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk (1 of each) Lincoln's Sparrow (1).

CBC's. cont'd:

JACKSON, MS: Bill Turcotte, compiler  
31 December, 1983: Clear. 11<sup>o</sup>-30<sup>o</sup>  
Reservoir mostly frozen over.

24 Observers.

112 species (Total of individuals over 30,000) Ed.

Highlights: Double-crested Cormorant (456), WHISTLING SWAN (3), Canada Goose (245), CINNAMON TEAL (2), Bald Eagle (18)!!!, PEREGRINE FALCON (1), GREATER YELLOWLEGS (1), Ring-billed Gull (2579)!!!, SWIFT sp. (Vaux's? 1). BEWICK'S WREN (2), BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (1), EVENING GROSBEEK (20), LINCOLN'S SPARROW (1).

ARKABUTLA LAKE, MS: Rob Peebles, compiler

2 January, 1984 A.M. mostly cloudy, P.M. mostly clear. 39<sup>o</sup>-45<sup>o</sup>

Wind: West, 5-10 mph. Fresh water mostly frozen.

7 observers.

85 species, plus one additional form; 7818 individuals.

Highlights: ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (1), Bald Eagle (3), Killdeer (1, low), Horned Lark (28), Golden Crowned Kinglet (56), American Goldfinch (19, low), AMERICAN TREE SPARROW (1), White-crowned Sparrow (64).

MOON LAKE (LULA), MS: Ben and Lula Coffey, compilers

1 January, 1984: A.M. clear, P.M. overcast. 24<sup>o</sup>-49<sup>o</sup>

Catfish ponds frozen, Moon Lake frozen except for very small stretch (250 yards) kept open by about 1000 waterfowl. Standing water in most woods and icy trails in A.M..

Wind: South, 2 mph.

4 observers.

62 species, 5085 individuals.

Highlights (at editor's option) Horned Lark (55), Song Sparrow (110), White-crowned Sparrow (9), Lapland Longspur (7), Rusty Blackbird (104).

VICKSBURG, MS: Louis Cashman, Hal Moore, compilers

17 December, 1983: Clear.

75 species; 11,368 individuals.

Communication from Louis Cashman: "Vicksburg's fourth annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count was not as productive as the one in 1982, 75 species compared to 85 last year. We had a beautiful clear day and it was a lot of fun. Nothing really spectacular although Hal Moore reported a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. We had one reported last year also. Others which we did not have last year included Grasshopper Sparrow, Double-crested Cormorant, and Redhead.

NOXUBEE NWR, MS: Bill Cross, compiler

18 December, 1983: Weather (ideal).

34 observers

102 species. Total of individuals not included.

CBC's. cont'd:

Lifted from Oktibbeha Audubon Newsletter, January, 1984....

"A record 34 participants in 10 parties counted a record 102 species of birds in ideal weather south of Starkville on December 18. This is 8 more than the highest number seen in 13 previous counts. Double-crested Cormorants and Anhingas were conspicuous on Bluff and Loakafoma lakes. They have nested successfully on Bluff during a couple of years of non-fishing. Numbers of Black Duck followed the national trend; only 3 were seen along with 470 Mallards. Over 500 Turkey and Black vultures kettled over Prisock Field in late afternoon before roosting on Pete's slough, and above them circled 3 Ring-billed Gulls. Only 1 Bald Eagle on the count is down from 4 and 5 the last two years. We had to rely on the refuge personnel to get the Wild Turkey, and a fresh roadside kill supplied the American Woodcock. Highest counts for Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Winter and Carolina wren, Brown Thrasher, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned kinglet, and Pine Warbler was partly due to several parties playing the Screech Owl record for a total of almost four hours. Special finds were 3 Cattle Egret, 4 Great Egret, 1 White-breasted Nuthatch, 1 Sedge Wren, 1 Orange-crowned Warbler, and a Solitary and 2 White-eyed vireo. Flocks of Evening Grosbeak totaled 174 birds which were seen cracking open cones in tall pines"....Bill Cross.

GRENADA, MS: Marvin Davis, compiler.

31 December, 1983: Clear. 50-37°

Wind clam to SE, 5 mph.

Ponds frozen, reservoir 70% open and very high.

88 species; 48,988 individuals

Highlights and other notations: Hooded Merganser (193), COMMON MERGANSER (4), Bald Eagle (6), Killdeer (6, low), Common Snipe (1, low), Brown Creeper (1, low), Carolina Wren (18, low), Eastern Bluebird (59), Northern Mockingbird (15, low), Solitary Vireo (1), Yellow-rumped Warbler (11, low), Rufous-sided Towhee (16, low), Field Sparrow (43, low), Song Sparrow (32, low), Swamp Sparrow (18, low), White-throated Sparrow (68, low), Brewer's Blackbird (148), American Goldfinch (26, low). Count week: Turkey Vulture.

Marvin includes this comment: "Here are our COLD WEATHER counts! Pretty satisfying despite reduced participation".

SARDIS LAKE, MS: Marvin Davis, compiler

26 December, 1983. Clear to partly cloudy. 60-25°

Wind clam to SW, 10 mph.

Ponds frozen, reservoir 80% open and very high.

5 observers

86 species, about 51,320 individuals

Highlights and other notations: Hooded Merganser (555), COMMON MERGANSER (15), Bald Eagle (7), Red-tailed Hawk (10, low), American Kestrel (1, low), Killdeer (1, low), Bonaparte's Gull (860), Ring-billed Gull (655), Belted

CBC's, cont'd:

Kingfisher (5, low), Downy Woodpecker (6, low), Hairy Woodpecker (2, low), Pileated Woodpecker (5, low), Blue Jay (127, low), American Crow (51, low), Carolina Chickadee (18, low), Tufted Titmouse (21, low), Brown Creeper (2, low), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (8, low), Eastern Bluebird (23, low), American Robin (11, low), Northern Mockingbird, (16, low), COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (1), White-throated Sparrow (194, low), Dark-eyed Junco (692), Purple Finch (6, low), American Goldfinch (38, low). Count week: Common Loon, White-fronted Goose, Water Pipit, Brown-headed Nuthatch. Seen during count period: American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup FRANKLIN'S GULL, LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, Forster's Tern.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, MS: G. Edward Alexander, compiler

1 January, 1984. Clear/mostly clear. 20°-48°

Wind: calm. Fresh water mostly frozen.

23 observers

91 species, plus one additional form, 69,141 individuals

Highlights and other notations: Great Blue Heron (102), Mallard (34,496), Ruddy Duck (70, low), Bald Eagle (6), GOLDEN EAGLE (1), BURROWING OWL (1), BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER (1), GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (1). Count week: Common Moorhen, American Crow.

SOUTHERN HANCOCK COUNTY, MS: Judith Toups, compiler

19 December, 1983 Cloudy. 25°

Wind: NW 10-25 mph. Shallow fresh water frozen.

19 observers

145 species, 21,000 individuals

Highlights and notations: Eared Grebe (5, coastal high), Pied-billed Grebe (50, coastal high), White Pelican (25), White Ibis (47, mostly immature), Redhead (81, count high), Ring-necked Duck (305, count high), Ruddy Duck (730), COMMON MERGANSER (1, count first), BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE (7), Turkey Vulture (267, coastal high), Black Vulture (308, coastal high), Red-tailed Hawk (46, coastal high), Northern Harrier (40, coastal high), Killdeer (1006, four times coastal high), FRANKLIN'S GULL (1), GROOVE-BILLED ANI (4), Common Flicker (53), Wood Pewee sp. (1), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (15, a count high), YELLOW WARBLER (1),.

Note: Access to Waveland sewage pond increased species and individual count. A shame-faced admission: this count missed House Sparrow!

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Thanks to all compilers for your cooperation in getting CBC results to me in record time. Those who are unsure of what the editor wants in the way of CBC information should consult the synopses above for prime examples, such as Sardis Lake and Grenada CBC's, or better yet, forward a COPY of your CBC form!

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From the treasurer: The following are dues categories for MOS:  
 Life \$100.00, Sustaining \$20.00 or more, Individual \$10.00, Family  
 (husband and wife) \$15.00, Library \$9.50, Junior (17 or under) and  
 Senior (65 or older), \$4.00.

Treasurer Ed Alexander wishes to remind all members that 1984 dues were due on January 1st. Please, if you have not yet paid for 1984, do so now and save Ed the time and trouble of mailing reminders, and MOS the costs of mailing!

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MOS SPRING MEETING: Below is a TENTATIVE schedule for the MOS spring meeting, in Greenville, Mississippi, April 27, 28, and 29, 1984. Our host, Ed Alexander is making plans for a strictly social event on Friday night at his and Ginger's house for early arrivals. Wine and cheese (reason enough to arrive early), will be served.

Saturday, the 28th, will be devoted to birding trips. The Washington County area is very productive of birds in late April, and many birders from other parts of Mississippi will find the various habitats most interesting.

The business meeting and program are tentatively scheduled for Saturday night. Ed hopes to have Dan Guravich as our speaker. Dan has been leading polar bear expeditions in the Arctic for Victor Emmanuel Tours for five years. (The February issue of Life magazine features a pictorial essay on the bears, with fine photography by Dan). Dan's appearance is not definite at this time, but we can trust Ed to come up with a special guest in any case.

Ed plans Sunday birding to cap things off!

Each MOS member will, of course, receive finalized details of the MOS spring weekend in time to make plans. For now, Ed asks that the dates be circled in red, and that each person who intends to join MOS members in Greenville, especially for the Friday night social, indicate that on the clip-off reply slip on the last page of this newsletter. This will not obligate you, but it WILL give Ed and Ginger an idea of how many wine and cheesers to plan on.

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THIS NEWS FROM LOUIS CASHMAN IN VICKSBURG: Since the Christmas Bird Count in Washington County on January 1, when Hal Moore and I saw one Golden and four Bald eagles, I have seen eagles in Warren County, about 20 miles northwest of Vicksburg. The eagles were first reported in the vicinity of Eagle Lake (quite appropriate) around Christmas time. I have made two trips to the area, on January 5 and 11. On the first trip my son and I saw 12 Bald Eagles, including two mature birds with pure white heads and tails. On my second trip we saw 16. A friend of mine has reported seeing 20 and since she saw only one mature eagle and we have seen two, there must be at least 21 in the area.

Although one or two eagles have been reported in the Eagle Lake area for the



## CASHMAN NEWS, cont'd:

past three or four years, this is the biggest concentration of Bald Eagles in memory. My only sighting of an eagle in that general area was at least 45 years ago.

There is a huge nest in a tall cypress tree in the area where we saw the eagles but whether it is an eagle nest is unknown. We will keep a watch on it this spring....Louis Cashman.

Editor's note: Six Mississippi CBC's recorded a total of 41 Bald Eagles during the count period. With the 21 present in the Eagle Lake area, and another two or three (exclusive of our known breeding pair) on the coast, it certainly seems that this is a record winter for eagles!

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Dear MOS Member,

I believe almost all of you are familiar with the area on the coast which we call the Pascagoula River Marsh (see the Mississippi Kite, Vol. 11, (2).) That area is one of the most productive birding areas in the entire state, with a species list of over 200, including a number of first state records.

PRM, as we call it, is currently undergoing changes which, for now, have rendered it unproductive for birding. The area, which the Corps of Engineers refers to as the Double-barrel, includes two large diked areas which are meant to receive dredge material from the Pascagoula River. Another large impoundment is being created to double the capacity of the present Double-barrel. What this means is that the area known as PRM will not, for the next fifty years or more, become developed or industrialized, but will be used only to receive dredged material from the river.

Once the present work operation has ended, and the impoundment area "settles" a little, birding should once again be excellent.

Recently, the Mississippi Coast Audubon Society was invited to present its concerns for PRM at a task force meeting of a number of agencies which are concerned with PRM as part of a special management area.

The bottom line is that we had the opportunity for input BEFORE any hard and fast decisions were made regarding PRM. Our presentation was well received, with a number of representatives of various state and federal agencies indicating that they saw the merit of our ideas and were generally in favor of PRM being "managed" in a way which would preclude hunting and off-road vehicles.

There was further suggestion that certain "enhancements" for the area may take form, such as trails and observation towers. The message I received was that much can be done to preserve the sanctity of PRM for birds and birders...IF those who are interested in seeing that happen let the right people know!

PRM, cont'd:

Before the meeting referred to above, we had very little time to involve others. I did, however, undertake to contact certain birders in key areas of Mississippi, and made a request that they write letters stating their concern for PRM and asking that full consideration be given to enhancing the areas for birders and maintaining it for birds and other wildlife.

At the meeting, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that a number of such letters had been received by the Jackson County Port Authority...they had been copied and distributed to each member of the Special Management Area task force.

It became clear to me that those who had read the letters were impressed with the statewide concern for this prime birding area.

It will be some time before final plans are made for PRM as part of the Special Management Area of Pascagoula. And so I ask all of you who have ever birded PRM and know its value, as well as those who only know of it through reading Birds Around the State or the article entitled A Birder's Guide to the Pascagoula River Marsh in the Mississippi Kite, to join the Mississippi Coast Audubon Society and all other birders, in making your wishes known.

Please take the time to write a letter in which you stress the value of PRM as a nesting, resting, feeding, and staging area for many species, foremost among them virtually all of our shorebird and heron species. It would not hurt to mention some of the species that breed in that area.... Pied-billed Grebe, Green-backed Heron, Least Bittern, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Wood Duck, King and Clapper Rail, Common Moorhen, Wilson's Plover, Willet, Black-necked Stilt, Gull-billed, Common, and Least Tern, Black Skimmer, etc..

Address your letters to Paul Pella, Director, Jackson County Port Authority, Pascagoula, Mississippi 39567, and, if possible, mail a copy to the Bureau of Marine Resources, Mississippi Department of Wildlife Conservation, Long Beach, Mississippi, 39560, directed to Terese Collins.

The concerted voice of Mississippi's birders may have an impressive impact on those who make decisions regarding the Pascagoula Special Management area. Please add yours.

Judith Toups

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To G. Edward Alexander  
900 S. Washington  
Greenville, MS 39701

I/We \_\_\_\_\_ plan on attending the spring meeting of MOS in Greenville on April 27, 28, 29, 1984. We plan to be present at the Friday night social.

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