

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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Compiled by: W. H. Turcotte.

Jackson MOS Members Meet: Jackson members of the MOS met at the Game and Fish Commission Museum on Friday evening, Nov. 14th, to enjoy a showing of bird pictures.

John Phares, Vice-President of MOS, presided and Miss Fannye Cook reviewed briefly the history and objectives of the Society.

Upon invitation, Mrs. Bedford Floyd, Pres. of MOS, came up from Gulfport and entertained the group with a series of magnificent pictures which she had recently taken in her garden and along the Gulf Coast.

Bill Turcotte showed pictures which he made on the official MOS trip to Chandeleur Islands last June. These included adults, the nests, eggs, and young of pelicans; laughing gulls; black skimmers; royal, caspian, and least terns; and several herons.

Press notice announced that the meeting would be open to the public. About 50 bird lovers were present, several of whom applied for membership in the MOS.

Mrs. W. G. Wills acted as chairman of arrangements for the meeting and after the program she invited local members to her home for coffee.

Miss Cook Honored: State Game and Fish Commission employees honored Miss Fannye A. Cook with an Appreciation Dinner on November 18 in the Arlington Room of the Robert E. Lee Hotel in Jackson, the occasion being her forthcoming retirement after over 26 years of service with the Commission. Governor J. P. Coleman and Judge W. E. McIntyre, Sr. were the principal speakers. All former directors of the Commission except one were present. Miss Cook was presented with an attractively bound book containing a tribute for services rendered as Research Assistant and Museum Director during her

Miss Cook Honored: (Continued) long tenure of employment. The employees also presented an honorarium, a pair of Bausch and Lomb binoculars.

White Pelicans: St. Clair Thompson, State Game and Fish Commission biologist, reported seeing over 500 white pelicans on November 5 at Lake Whittington, an old Mississippi River lake in Bolivar County. The pelicans reportedly remained on the lake for several weeks. Shad and other fish were dying in the lake in large numbers for unknown reasons and this condition probably attracted and held the unusually large number of birds.

A second flock of white pelicans was observed by Mr. Thompson and H. L. Tackett on Lake Mary in Wilkinson County during November. Mr. Thompson describes the actions of the birds as follows: "A low flying plane flushed about 200 white pelicans from the lake. These birds performed a curious, but spectacular, aerial show. The entire flock climbed a few hundred feet into the air and began to wheel about in great circles while they soared upward on a strong up-draft of air. I watched them through binoculars until they climbed out of sight. I did not detect a single wingbeat after they began their spiral upward. The pelicans rode the current of rising air. Whether they were gaining altitude for another migration flight or just soaring for the fun of it, I do not know."

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Hernando - Grenada Notes: On Nov. 23, 1958, Mrs. Coffey and I made 26 stops from the DeSoto County line to Sardis, at favorable spots along US 51 Highway, without hearing a Western Meadowlark. Results were also unsuccessful at ten other stops enroute to Grenada, then while afield near and on the Grenada dam and the airport. The Eastern Meadowlark was active and very common. Similar trips in other years have been without records, although the route is one of our oldest "pasture" areas. We believe, however, that the Western will be found wintering at more localities in the state, each winter. On the Grenada airport and adjacent pasture we found 7 Sprague's Pipits and a flock of 7 Smith's Longspurs. The lake level had been lowered but no shorebirds (except Killdeers) were found on the extensive mud flats. A flock of 36 Common Egrets were here and 12 elsewhere. We reached mixed pine and hardwoods too late in the day for finding many birds. A lone Pine Siskin was recorded. Based on other Mid-South trips, also, this doesn't appear to be a Red-breasted Nuthatch year. ---- On Nov. 15, just west of US 51 and 6 Miles south of the Tennessee line, I saw a total of 11 Tree Swallows; this is somewhat late for the Memphis area. This spot has been a regular Harris' Sparrow locality but I failed to find one, Nov. 15 and Nov. 23. ---- BEN B. COFFEY, JR.

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Wood Ibis: "On October 18, while fishing on Lake Whittington, I observed a large flock of whitish birds occasionally flying up from Caulk Island. Caulk Island is located between Lake Whittington and the Mississippi River.

"Upon investigation I discovered them to be Wood Ibis. They were feeding on Barr Lake, which is located on Caulk Island, in a small cove.

"By crawling on my hands and knees, I was able to get within about 50 yards of them. There were perhaps 700 to 1,000 of them and they were wading in the shallow water. They appeared to be feeding on small fish which were abundant in the water." -- BILLY SMITH-VANEZ.

Pearl River County Notes: "First robins came thru on November 29 and 30. Those on the 29th interested me because, rather than being in a flock, as usual, single birds flew southward (126); occasionally there would be four or possibly five in the air at one time but widely separated.

"The first white-throated sparrow appeared October 21 (about normal) but to date have never numbered over 8." - MRS. MAYO TOLMAN.

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White-throated Sparrow Arrival Dates: Nelson W. Taylor, Raleigh, Miss. sends the following:

"My observation time has been meager this fall. I did make a note of the first white-throated sparrow heard - this on Nov. 1st.

"This compares with the first heard here in 1955 on Nov. 6th and the first of the fall in 1953 in Jackson on October 24th.

"Have seen more pileated's than usual this fall - observed three at one time in Oakahay bottom N. of Hwy. 18." - NELSON W. TAYLOR.

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Notes of a Duck Hunter: Your editor has engaged in a little duck hunting on several occasions and made notes as follows: On November 29 and 30, while duck hunting in a flooded overcup oak-button willow swamp in Yazoo County near 12-Mile Lake, I saw the following species: Mallard (several hundred), Wood Duck (several hundred), Pintail (1), Green-winged Teal (12), Black Duck (50), Great Blue Heron (4), Pileated Woodpecker (4 together), Flicker (Common), Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Anhinga(1), Phoebe. On December 6-8 on Sardis Reservoir Waterfowl Refuge Area: 500 Canada geese, 20,000 Mallards, 500 Pintails, Green-winged teal, Black ducks. On December 18 observed over 100 Jacksnipe on a 10-acre pond in Western Copiah County and again on December 20 observed 20 or more Jacksnipe along Lower Auxiliary Channel in Yazoo County in wet swags between levee and channel. Jacksnipe, Wood ducks and Pileated Woodpeckers appear more numerous than any time in recent years. - W. H. TURCOTTE.

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Vermillion Flycatcher: One male Vermillion flycatcher observed at poster Lake, Wilkinson County, Miss. 10:00 A. M., Dec. 9, 1958. First observed by W. H. Turcotte as party composed of Turcotte, J. T. Steiner, Henry Bobbs, Jr., Lester Smith and John Phares progressed by boat in the brake area. Attempted to collect for museum but missed the bird and could not find again. -- JOHN H. PHARES.

MRS. AMY B. TOLMAN adds the following notes on this species upon learning about the above observation: "On February 15, 1953 I saw a male and a female Vermilion Flycatcher over the easterly side of Picayune (towards Caesar). We had gone over to see some friends of ours in mid-morning. They were out checking up their cattle and while waiting for them to come back I wandered across the yard and noted two birds which careful checking proved to be Vermilion Flycatchers. We watched them for fully half an hour. Of course, the natives came in and told me 'it's a redbird.' I gave the man my field glasses and asked him to look carefully and he said it was different from anything he ever had seen.

Vermillion Flycatcher (Continued): "This is the only time I ever have seen these birds in Mississippi.

"A Mrs. Taylor, who lives down on the Texas flat road (or I should say she is a New Orleanian and they have a ranch on the Texas flat road) told me that she had seen a male that same winter.

"The only other one I have seen was in Louisiana."

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Winter Wrens and Hermit Thrushes: On December 30 the editor observed 2 winter wrens and heard and saw hermit thrushes in very delightful, full song at dusk in deep woods in Sharkey County.

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Long-eared Owls: St. Clair Thompson and Mr. Hazel Strong observed five long-eared owls in one tree in a thicket of pines near 16th section lake west of Copiah Game Area, Copiah County, Mississippi morning of Dec. 10, 1958. Turcotte, Thompson and Phares looked for these owls again in the afternoon but did not find them. -- JOHN H. PHARES.

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Loons and Albino Grackle: Barry O. Freeman, Oxford, Miss. reported four (4) loons on Lake Monroe, Monroe Co., Miss. Nov. 14, 1958. Area visited again on 21st and no loons seen.

Mr. Freeman also reported seeing a White (Albino?) Grackle in a flock of about 200 Grackles two miles northwest of Oxford, Lafayette Co., 9:45 A. M. on Nov. 27, 1958.

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Ground Doves: John Phares and Ed Givens observed two ground doves within a mile of the 16th section lake (see above) where owls were reported. 12-10-58. JOHN H. PHARES.

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NEXT NEWSLETTER: Please send in your field notes and other contributions for the next newsletter by March 1, 1959. The Editor.

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Wintering Dickcissel: Just before going to the mimeograph with this issue of the Newsletter, Mrs. W. G. Wills, Jr., 1521 Poplar Blvd., Jackson, called and reported observing on Dec. 31, 1958 and on several occasions on following days a wintering dickcissel. The bird, an immature or female, was observed at a feeding tray in her back yard, feeding with House sparrows, White throats and cardinals. John Phares and W. H. Turcotte confirmed her identification on Jan. 5, 1959, observing the bird through binoculars at close range on two visits to the tray.

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