

MOS NEWSLETTER

March 1988

Volume 33, No. 2

MOS Spring 1988 Meeting: Vicksburg

Following are details of the MOS spring meeting to be held in Vicksburg on 22-24 April 1988:

1. Friday night, 7:30 P.M. Anna and Howard Moore will host a dessert, wine, and coffee gathering at their home on Lakeside Drive in Lake Park Estates, Vicksburg (see map). Saturday birding trips will be finalized.
2. Saturday morning, 7:00 A.M. The following field trips depart:
  - a. Bill Turcotte will lead a group to the Bovina-Clear Creek area, good for warblers, thrushes, and other migrants. Meet at the store on the south side of the Bovina exit, I-20, about 6 miles east of Vicksburg.
  - b. Hal Moore will lead a group to the Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge, Louisiana. This is a good area for warblers and woodpeckers, and we will also view the two Ivory-bill specimens mounted in a diorama at the headquarters. The group will return to Tallulah or Vicksburg for lunch, and probably go to Long Lake, along the Yazoo River north of Vicksburg, in the afternoon. Leave from the A & P parking lot on Halls Ferry Road south of I-20.
3. Saturday night, 7:00 P.M. Banquet and meeting will be held at the Vicksburg Country Club, behind the Gulf station, Indiana Avenue (exit 3), off I-20 (see map). Please make reservations by 15 April on the form provided. Cash bar opens at 7:00 P.M., and dinner will be served at 7:30 P.M.

The banquet speaker will be Chuck Feerick of Baton Rouge, who will talk on hawk migration in Mississippi and Louisiana. Chuck is the Regional Coordinator for the South Central Region of the Hawk Migration Association of North America.

4. Sunday morning. Field trips (to be finalized at the banquet on Saturday night), and MOS Records Committee meeting.
5. Motels:

Holiday Inn, I-20 at Clay St.

636-4551

\$40 single, \$47 double, mention MOS for corporate rate

(Spring meeting continued)

Ramada Inn, I-20 at Clay St. near Military Park	638-5811
\$35 s, \$37 d, includes breakfast, ask for MOS rate	
Days Inn, I-20 at Halls Ferry Rd. (exit 1-C)	634-1622
\$35 s, \$40 d	
Comfort Inn, I-20 at Indiana Ave. (exit 3)	634-8607
\$30 s, \$35 d, ask for MOS rate	
Comfort Inn East, off I-20 on Old U.S. 80	
\$30 s, \$35 d, ask for MOS rate	

6. Reservations: Please fill out the enclosed form indicating how many in your party plan to attend the Friday night gathering at the Moore's, and how many will attend the banquet, and send it to Hal Moore as soon as possible.

#### Summaries of 1987-88 Christmas Bird Counts

Although many of you are probably still struggling with the format changes in the newly-arrived 86-87 CBC issue of American Birds (finally!), here are some summaries of the past season's counts. Details were not received for the following counts: Hattiesburg, Jackson, Jackson County, Natchez, and Southern Hancock County. If I receive details for these counts, summaries will appear in the next Newsletter.

Arkabutla Lake (Bob Peeples, compiler)---27 Dec.; 29 party-hours; 147 party-miles (7 on foot, 140 by car); 6 observers in 3 parties; 84 species; 17,538 individuals.

Once again, this count was cursed with bad weather; this time, it rained all day. However, 11 more species were recorded than last year, and an all-time high for individuals was recorded for this count. Contributing to this total were high numbers of flicker (90), Carolina Wren (60), junco (536!), and cowbird (982). Interesting species seen include an adult Bald Eagle, a Merlin, and 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches. Yellow-rumped Warbler numbers were low, with only 12 recorded.

Church Hill (Genevieve Little, compiler)---31 Dec.; 21 party-hours; 161.5 party-miles (4 on foot, 157.5 by car); 4 observers in 3 parties; 58 species; 4,647 individuals.

After mysteriously balking last year, National Audubon has

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decided this year to accept Genevieve's Church Hill count. With a little help this year, she upped last year's species total by over 60%! Numbers of several species were considered high: 274 Am. Crows, 695 robins, 604 white-throats, and 500 Brewer's Blackbirds. Biggest miss: Swamp Sparrow. This count suffers from lack of extensive bodies of water or wetland habitats, as seen by only 2 duck species recorded, and Killdeer being the only shorebird on the count.

Grenada (Marvin Davis, compiler)---17 Dec.; 40 party-hours; 168 party-miles (19 on foot, 149 by car); 9 observers in 5-6 parties; 107 species; 17,524 individuals.

This count posted the highest species total ever for any Mississippi CBC north of Jackson. Four species were new to the count: turkey (3), Virginia Rail, Yellow-throated Warbler (an adult seen by Randy Roberts), and House Finch. Notable waders were 3 Great Egrets and a Sacred Ibis (not countable; rumor has it Marvin is trying to establish this exotic at the Lake). Numbers of 8 species were underlined, including 134 Great Blue Herons, 10 Forster's Terns, and 124 E. Bluebirds. The key to successful Mississippi counts (besides luck with the weather) seems to be making the most of a handful of observers.

Moon Lake (Ben B. Coffey, Jr., compiler)---30 Dec.; 14 party-hours; 55 party-miles (5 on foot, 50 by car); 3 observers; 71 species; 16,690 individuals.

Although the species total is little changed from last year's 72, this year's individual count is almost 7 times last year's, due mostly to great numbers of blackbirds (as in 8,162 grackles). Eleven Great Egrets were notable. What may have been the only Rough-legged Hawk seen this season in the state was found by the Coffeys along the Miss. River levee. Also recorded were 15 Brewer's Blackbirds, seen by Ben Coffey.

Noxubee NWR (Ray Weeks and Faye Swan, compilers)---2 Jan.; 107 party-hours; 332 party-miles (36 on foot, 296 by car); 28 in 7 parties; 96 species; 28,564 individuals.

This species total is the third highest for this count, and well over the 18-year average of 89. Notable birds included: 10 Great Egrets, 2 Bald Eagles, 11 Bonaparte's Gulls, 2 Sedge Wrens, catbird, Solitary Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler, and 4 Le Conte's Sparrows. No doubt the good number of observers and plenty of

(CBC summaries continued)

hard birding benefited this count. However, some dubious species made their way onto the list: an undocumented Anhinga, and 24 undocumented Grasshopper Sparrows (near previous national high counts!).

Sardis Lake (Marvin Davis, compiler)---22 Dec.; 51 party-hours; 223 party-miles (21 on foot, 202 by car); 11 observers in 5-6 parties; 97 species; 36,206 individuals.

The most exciting find of the day was an Osprey, new for this CBC. Other raptor highlights include 7 Bald Eagles and 7 accipiters, both healthy totals. Several high tallies were recorded, such as 60 Pied-billed and 350 Horned grebes, 205 Great Blue Herons, 65 Least Sandpipers, 18 White-breasted Nuthatches, and 132 Swamp Sparrows.

Sumner (Genevieve Little)---22 Dec.; 10.25 party-hours; 78 party-miles (3 on foot, 75 by truck and jeep); 2 observers in 1 party; 79 species; 21,565 individuals.

Increased coverage, observers, and familiarity with the territory helped this new count to more than double its previous species total. Best birds of the day: 3 Blue-winged Teal (1 m, 2 f); 45 Ring-billed Gulls; and 2 Western Meadowlarks, seen well by the compiler and myself. Equally enjoyable were several Vesper Sparrows in full song, a first for both of us. With plenty of hot birding areas waiting to be discovered within this interesting count circle, the Sumner CBC has the potential to reach the high 80's or low 90's. What it needs most is more manpower---if you live in northwest Mississippi, plan to bird this count!

Vicksburg (Hal Moore, compiler)---2 Jan.; 64.5 party-hours; 21 observers; 101 species; 46,530 individuals.

Congratulations to the Vicksbirders for finally reaching the century mark! Good (but cold) weather helped push the total to an all-time high. New species for the count were 183 White Pelicans, 100 Bonaparte's Gulls, 3 ground-doves, rough-winged swallow, and 2 Black-and-white Warblers, bringing the 7-year total to 125 species. Several unusually high species totals include 102 Hooded Mergansers (previous average 27!), 261 Ring-billed Gulls, 63 thrashers, 620 cardinals, 250 Field Sparrows, 179 white-throats, and 309 juncos. On the down side was the lowest count of Pileated Woodpeckers in 5 years. Talk

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about consistency---kingfishers have totaled 19 on this count for the last 4 years!

Washington County (south) (Edward Alexander, Jr., compiler)---  
3 Jan.; 104 species; 69,334 individuals.

This count provides stiff competition for Grenada as the premier north Mississippi CBC, by topping last year's species total by 3 species. Relatively good coverage certainly boosted this count's totals. Good birds were 103 White Pelicans, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers, 2 ground-doves, 2 Bewick's Wrens (2 parties), and 2 Rufous-sided "spotted" Towhees, seen by Marvin Davis. All this despite snow, sleet, and freezing rain (and that was just the morning!).

I predict I will only receive details of 2 CBC's out of the 5 not seen here. Prove me wrong, Hattiesburg, Jackson County, and Natchez!

Minutes of the MOS Records Committee Meeting  
Biloxi, Mississippi  
7 November 1987

Present: Ed Alexander, Marvin Davis, Mal Hodges, Joe McGee, Steve Peterson, Terry Schiefer, Judy Toups, Bill Turcotte

Absent: Jerry Jackson

The following species were discussed:

1. Western Grebe Discussion: There is still no photograph of this species. Marvin Davis noted that, since the Clark's Grebe is now a separate species, it may be impossible to use past records as verification of Western Grebes in Mississippi. It was suggested that a note be placed in the MOS Newsletter advising members to photograph any occurrence of Western or Clark's grebes. Also, members should be asked to examine field notes to see if any positive identifications can be made.  
Motion: Reconsider the manner of listing of this species.

2. Sooty Shearwater Discussion: Malcolm Hodges saw this species on the coast. Judy Toups pointed out that many other species are on the checklist by virtue of sight records only; consequently, this species should be added also. Ed Alexander

(MOSRC minutes continued)

commented that the committee should decide the number of observers needed. Judy Toups added that, since there are not many MS birders, the committee should not always expect to have 2 or more observers.  
Motion: Add as hypothetical.

3. Great Cormorant Discussion: Jerry Jackson has now photographed this species. Judy Toups added that there are now 10 records by 14 observers.  
Motions: a. Remove brackets. b. Change status from accidental to casual.

4. Roseate Spoonbill Discussion: Steve Peterson noted that there are now more than 5 records of occurrence. Several photographs are also in existence.  
Motion: Change listing from accidental to casual.

5. Black-bellied Whistling-Duck Discussion: Ed Alexander reported that John Fulton photographed the species at the Yazoo NWA, but the photo may not be satisfactory for positive identification. Malcolm Hodges asked if the individuals might not be escapees. It was mentioned that the species had not been stocked there. Ed Alexander note there were two individuals seen. Written documentation on the sightings has not as yet been submitted to Jerry Jackson.  
Motion: None made.

6. Ross' Goose Discussion: The photograph of this sighting was not satisfactory. Members expressed the need to see the write up of John Fulton's sighting.  
Motion: None made.

7. Northern Goshawk Discussion: Marvin Davis submitted information he had obtained from sightings by 5 observers. Judy Toups offered to resubmit her record for reconsideration. It was noted that there are now 3 sight records plus a bird in the hand at Sardis Refuge.  
Motion: Add as a bracketed (hypothetical) record.

8. Crested Caracara Discussion: Judy Toups stated that photographs have been submitted to Jerry Jackson.  
Motion: Brackets should be removed.

9. Purple Sandpiper Discussion: The manuscript on the sighting of this species is ready for the MS Kite. Judy Toups stated the information was sent to Jerry Jackson a year and a half ago. She added that the January record of 2 years ago was submitted by a reliable Louisiana birder as a result of a Pass

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Motion: Add as a sight record.

10. Common Black-headed Gull Discussion: Marvin Davis stated there are still only sight records, and no photographs.

Motion: None made.

11. Lesser Black-backed Gull Discussion: Ed Alexander asked if the status should still be accidental. Judy Toups believes that, since apparently the same individual continues to return each year, the listing should remain accidental.

Motion: None made.

12. Cave Swallow Discussion: A specimen found at Horn Island is now preserved at Mississippi State. An article on the species will be in the next MS Kite.

Motion: Should be added to listing.

13. Townsend's Solitaire Discussion: A record of the sighting of this species by Joe McGee had already appeared in the MS Kite.

Motion: Should be listed in brackets.

14. Grace's Warbler Discussion: Marvin Davis submitted a sight record of this species at Oxford, Mississippi, on 11 September 1987 by Sandra Davis. Judy Toups suggested the committee investigate the occurrence of the species outside Arizona. She suggested that DeSante and Pyle's Distributional checklist of North American birds could be useful for this purpose. She added that Ms. Davis' record was intriguing and well written.

Motion: Include as a sight record.

15. Painted Redstart Discussion: Judy Toups submitted written records of this species, which was seen by 4 other observers.

Bill Turcotte and Ed Alexander believe the written records acceptable.

Motion: Add as a sight record.

16. Bronzed Cowbird Discussion: Judy Toups stated that photos were obtained for this species.

Motion: Brackets should be removed.

17. House Finch Discussion: The breeding status of this species needs to be discussed. Present evidence of breeding is of an adult feeding flying young; however, the sighting was made 30 mi from the border.

Motion: None made.

(MOSRC minutes continued)

18. Eastern Phoebe & Mallard Discussion: Terry Shiefer noted that the checklist indicates no nesting records for these two species. Judy Toups stated that when the checklist is updated, the committee must examine the list species by species to correct such errors.

Motion: None made.

Other business: Judy Toups and Ed Alexander suggested the committee make decisions on the obvious records and defer others until the next meeting. The committee consensus, however, was to defer all decisions until the next Records Committee meeting. It was felt that the committee would be in a better position to make decisions if each member would receive all reports of sightings prior to the meeting.

Terry Schiefer offered to submit suggestions for standard procedures for acceptance of and changes to the checklist. Bill Turcotte noted that Larry Gates had already submitted similar guidelines/updates as a result of the previous meeting and asked if everyone had a copy. No other committee member responded.

Ed Alexander motioned: 1. that the committee accept Terry's offer to submit procedural guidelines; 2. that members receive copies (in advance) of the reports to be reviewed at the next meeting; and 3. that members receive an agenda with a list of species to be considered. The motion was seconded by Terry Schiefer and passed unanimously.

It was noted that each committee member's address should be made available to implement part two of the motion.

Hal Moore was added as an additional committee member.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Battalio, Secretary

#### Announcements

---in this newsletter is a Louisiana Ornithological Society membership application. LOS is finally starting its own state journal this year, which makes it very worthwhile to join now.

---Once again, MS Coast Audubon is sending a group of intrepid birders to the New Jersey Birdathon; this time, an all-woman team led by Judy Toups calling themselves the "Pischerettes."

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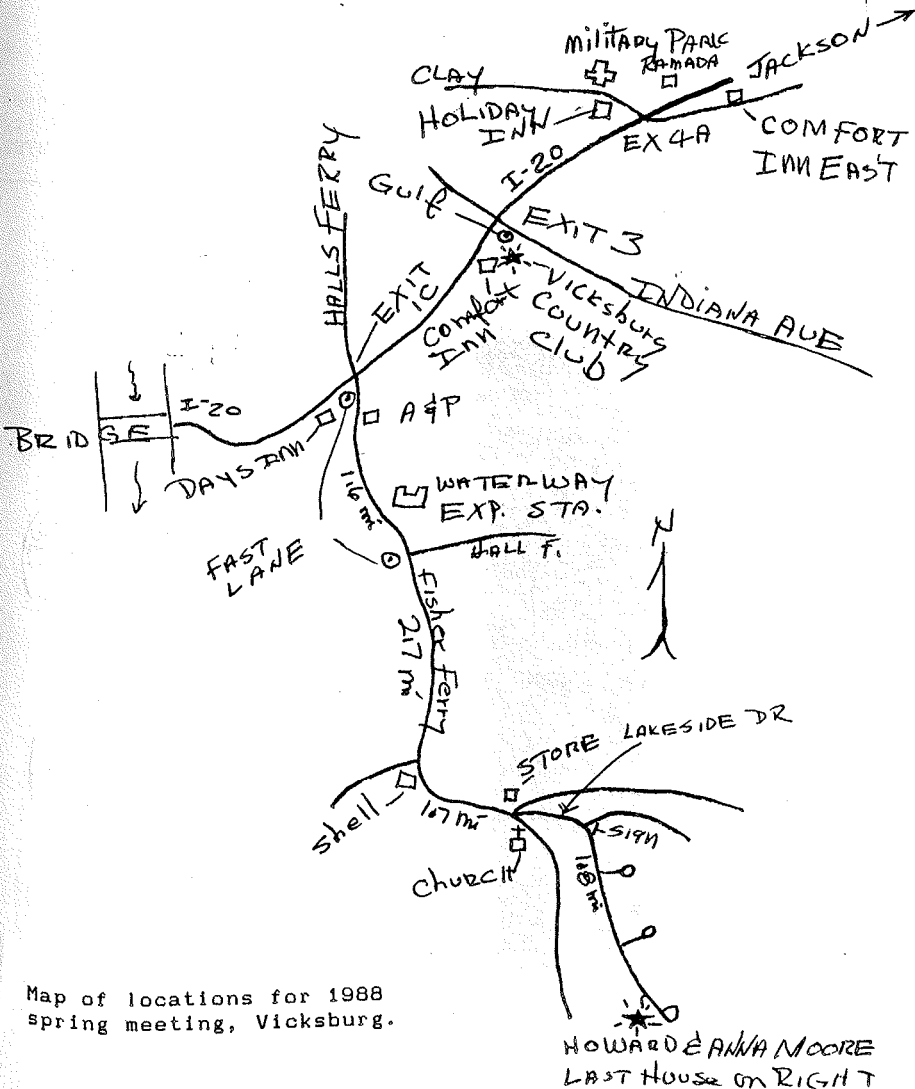
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(Announcements continued)

Please use the enclosed pledge form to help these folks in their efforts to raise money for the MCAS, which does so much good work on the Coast.



Map of locations for 1988 spring meeting, Vicksburg.

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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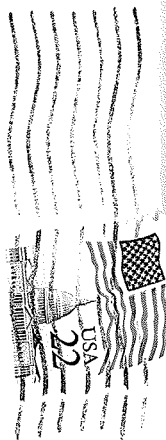
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