

MOS NEWSLETTER

Summer 1989

Volume 34, Number 3

Fall 1989 MOS Meeting

The MOS will meet on 22-24 September at Coleman State Park on Pickwick Lake in Tishomingo County, the northwestern corner of MS. Carolyn Jarnigan has arranged that the following accommodations be blocked for MOS use:

Three suites at the motel; each suite consists of 2 connecting bedrooms with 2 double beds each; the 2 rooms share a bathroom. Cost: \$59.36/night/suite.

Four large cabins which include 1 bedroom with 2 double beds, a sofa in the den which converts to a double bed, and a cot. Cost: \$50.88/night/cabin.

Four small cabins with a bedroom including 2 double beds and a cot. Cost: \$42.40/night/cabin.

Two cabins with a fireplace and 1 bedroom with a double bed, a single bed and a cot. Cost: \$50.88/night/cabin.

Tax is included in all prices. The rates quoted are flat rates, and are not based on number of persons in the suite or cabin.

Please make your reservations as soon as possible (within the next week or so) by sending a \$10 deposit to J. P. Coleman State Park, Rt. 5, Box 504, Iuka, MS 38852. You may call the park for further information at (601) 423-6515.

There are RV hookups at the park, as well as space for tent camping. All meetings and gatherings will take place at the park motel, and since the park is isolated, it would be inconvenient to stay anywhere else but in the accommodations mentioned here (i.e., there are no other motels for miles around!).

Further details on meeting times and places, on the banquet, and guest speaker will be forthcoming in the next newsletter.

Minutes of the Spring MOS Meeting, 6 May 1989
Natchez, Mississippi

President Marvin Davis called the meeting to order. He thanked the Southwest MS Chapter of the Wildlife Rehabilitation and Nature Preservation Society (WRANPS) for hosting the meeting. He also thanked the individuals who helped make local arrangements. Those members who were at their first MOS meeting were introduced.

(Minutes of the spring 1989 meeting cont.)

The minutes of the fall 1988 meeting were accepted as published in The MOS Newsletter. The Treasurer's report was read and accepted. Jerry Jackson reported on the progress of the MS Kite. Two issues were ready to go to the publisher. He also reported that the Louisiana Ornithological Society has a new journal, The Journal of Louisiana Ornithology. He thanked Malcolm Hodges for the fine job he has done with The MOS Newsletter.

Marvin Davis announced that MOS T-shirts, back issues of the MS Kite, Mid-south Bird Notes, and checklists would all be available for sale after the meeting. Steve Peterson informed the members that he has designed the new MOS patches and that they will probably be ready next fall. Carolyn Jarnigan stated she was checking out printers for printing an MOS membership card.

Marvin Davis distributed door prizes (contributed by WRANPS members) throughout the meeting. He announced that the WRANPS facility would have an open house the next day. Paul Franklin would have his optics on display there as well.

Terry Schiefer read the checklist of species seen during the meeting; 25 species were reported. Carolyn Jarnigan has arranged for the fall 1989 MOS meeting to be held at Coleman State Park.

Marvin Davis presented the Second Annual Honey Bun Award to Malcolm Hodges and Terry Schiefer for establishing a new MS Big Day record of 175 species. He also presented the (First Annual?) Ding Dong Award to Gene Knight and Vic Theobald for setting a new boating Big Day record with 122 species on Sardis Lake.

Janet Dubuisson asked the MOS if they would be willing to financially support the protection of the Least Tern colonies on the coast during the Fourth of July. Those present voted to contribute \$500 to hire one policeman to guard the colonies at Pass Christian and Long Beach.

Jerry Jackson spoke eloquently on the need of and problems with Red-cockaded Woodpecker conservation. Margaret Copeland proposed that Joe McGee be asked to write a resolution urging the U.S. Forest Service to manage MS national forests for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Genevieve Little was introduced, and presented an informative program on her rehabilitation work with the Southwest MS Chapter of WRANPS.

Respectfully submitted,
Terence Schiefer.

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Coasting to 100 Species---by Randy C. Stringer

Many think summer birdwatching is restricted to observing nesting species and filling birdbaths during the long heat-filled months. Those who seek to pursue birds during this time begin with the belief they will not see much if they do go or the time will be brief in the field due to temperatures outside the comfort zone.

Mississippi offers a splendid alternative that may have been overlooked in the past. With the publication of Birds and Birding on the Mississippi Coast by Toups and Jackson, the average birder with average skills can enjoy summer birdwatching and come away surprised by the ease of finding a variety and number of bird species.

My son, Joshua (age 11), and I spent two full days on the Mississippi Coast and were rewarded with great birding. For those in search of similar pleasure and rewards, please join me on a guided tour that demonstrates "coasting" to 100 species is a very definite reality.

Beginning from our home in southwest Jackson, we quickly tallied ten species in our yard and in the neighborhood, yet, these would be seen many times over during the course of the adventure. We headed for the Coast with great anticipation. Reaching Gulfport at 5:13 p.m. on July 21st, we had seen and identified 21 fairly common species---good finds included Cattle Egret, Eastern Kingbird, and both vultures.

Grabbing a bite of supper, we leisurely walked along the beach near our motel to see Laughing Gull, Forster's Tern, Spotted Sandpiper and Black Skimmer. Within just a few minutes we added Least Tern, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (an immature) and Great Blue Heron.

Turning in early we were ready for the next day. Heading east on U.S. 90 after a doughnut or two, we found new birds easily by looking over Harrison County beach. Within minutes we saw Reddish Egrets feeding in the surf and Snowy Egrets standing like sentinels on guard.

Our first real stop was Gulf Park Estates three miles south of the highway. A walk along the pier revealed Royal and Common terns patrolling the inlet. A Brown Thrasher darted out of the brush while a Rufous-sided Towhee perched on a small tree and delivered its distinctive song. Green-backed Herons cruised the slough while Caspian Terns joined the tern extravaganza. We were delighted with the cooperation of both a Painted Bunting in full song perched in the open and Seaside Sparrows that came to the tops of marsh grass with a little "pishing". Not to be outdone by this chorus line of stars, a feisty Clapper Rail darted along

(Stringer: Coasting cont.)

the mud like a tame pet. Our tern list grew by the addition of a Sandwich, then a Common Yellowthroat sang, and a rattling Belted Kingfisher zoomed right over heads. Leaving for other environs a Carlina Wren said, "I'm here, too, I'm here, too, (etc.)." Can you believe 45 species already?

Driving to Graveline Marsh our thoughts were beginning to drift in the direction of: This is too easy, the mid-morning slump is about to hit. From the marsh we grabbed views of feeding Tricolored Herons tearing up the shallow water with their "hot potato" dance. A few miles further the area opened up to the residential drive along Bellefontaine Beach. With the morning slipping away, what would await us here? My son found, to his delight, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-headed and Red-bellied woodpeckers, and an air-borne Lesser Yellowlegs. A "one-legged" Willet graced the beachfront and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher pair fussed in a thickly-foliaged tree.

Though the temperature was rising, so was the bird list--- 53 species!

Passing Graveline Marsh, we noted new arrivals to the list: a Great Egret perched high atop a leafless tree and a solitary American Coot darted among the marsh grass. Then, it happened--- the unexpected! As if on cue, a Least Bittern picked up out of the marsh and flew right in front of us to the other side. We were speechless; our timing couldn't have been more perfect. This secretive rascal is too unpredictable to do that often. For 30 seconds we honed in on the bird--- a great, long look.

The adrenalin was pumping as we headed for Pascagoula River marsh. Knowing it was too early for sizable shorebird numbers to accumulate, we circled the various dikes by foot while thunderheads boomed over the horizon. Instantly Black-necked Stilts scurried everywhere. Have mercy--- a Gull-billed Tern swooped right over our heads. Before the rain chased us carward, we managed the following species: Least and Semipalmated sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitcher, Greater Yellowlegs, and a beautiful American Avocet. Sixty-five species? Is this possible? So this is summer birding.

Before heading back west to Gulfport we found a Boat-tailed Grackle and Little Blue Heron. For the next several hours the rain chased us inside. Our only consolations for this part of the day came near Edgewater Mall, Gulfport: a Brown Pelican was a mere dot on a post; a few Purple Martins cruised the mall; a Ring-billed Gull tried to hide among Laughings; and Common Nighthawks filled the parking lot with their cries.

(Stringer)

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(Stringer: Coasting cont.)

Well, 71 species and on to bed. Saturday, the 23rd and make it or break it. Actually, we could have returned home content, but we knew there were more hotspots to be perused. Scouring the beach and heading west, we quickly added Sanderling and Herring Gull (an unexpected find), and saw an Osprey diving in the surf.

At Bay St. Louis we turned south along the bay to be greeted by tidal shallows revealing Western and Pectoral sandpipers. Semipalmated Plovers were also garnering muddy tidbits there. At the end of the road soaring over the fish houses was an exquisite Magnificent Frigatebird---we were elated!

The Lakeshore area provided several Common Moorhens and Jackson Marsh contributed Purple Gallinule, Wood Duck, and a screaming Pileated Woodpecker. At Lucky's Corner we listed Cliff and Rough-winged swallows. Quickly, Port Bienville gave us Red-tailed Hawk while Pearlington Woods disclosed Indigo Bunting, Bachman's Sparrow, and Blue Gosbeak.

Like lightning we struck out towards Logtown where we added Hooded and Yellow-throated warblers. With, literally, seconds remaining before we had to head home, we chanced upon a dead-end road near the Pearl River. Amazingly, at 4:17 p.m. a glorious Mississippi Kite sailed high. Jumping out of the car, we gasped---it was being pursued by a Swallow-tailed Kite! Unbelievable! Only one species away from 100 and two White Ibis circled right over our heads. What more can I say? We smiled all the way home knowing we had "coasted" to 100 species!

From the Editor:

MS now has its own Nature Conservancy office. Their address is: The Mississippi Nature Conservancy, P.O. Box 1028, Jackson, MS 39215-1028. Please give what you can to this very worthy conservation organization. This new office now works to preserve important wild habitat in MS.

Since it is still possible that I may find work here in MS, I will not yet make a plea for a new editor to volunteer for this job.

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All those interested in Mississippi bird life are invited to join the MOS. MOS dues: Life, \$100; Sustaining, \$20; Individual, \$10; Family, \$15; Junior/Golden Age, individual \$4, family \$8; Subscribing (institutions) \$10. Send dues to the Treasurer.

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