

MOS Newsletter

Winter 1990

Volume 35, Number 4

LOOKING AHEAD:

The Mississippi Ornithological Society will hold its Spring Meeting for 1991 at Starkville on the weekend of May 17-19. The major emphasis will be on breeding bird atlasing in the counties immediately surrounding and including Oktibbeha. Be planning to spend that weekend with the MOS! Details later.

LOOKING BACKWARD:

Recent Highlights from the Field--Mississippi and Surrounding States

In Mississippi, one major feature of winter 1990 seems to be the near-explosive increase in the numbers of House Finches coming to feeders. To help document that, please send to Terry Schiefer or Judith Toups, Mississippi American Birds subeditors. for the noncoastal and coastal portions of Mississippi, respectively, a report on your average and maximum numbers of that species for this winter vs. for last winter. (Please include other records of interest and mail those by March 1st.) These data will also be handled via Birds Around the State in the Mississippi Kite.

For Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama and Tennessee it has been a "gull winter." Rare species found in Miss. include Blk.-leg. Kittiwake, Little Gull, Com. Blk.-headed Gull, both Lesser and Great Black-backed Gull, and a possible Thayer's Gull. Arkansas had the 1st three species all at Lake Milwood in the SW corner in December. Tennessee in early January had 5 Glaucous Gulls (plus 2 more in N. Ala.), plus possible California and Thayer's.

Also noteworthy are several sightings of Red Crossbill; possibly this is only 3rd winter ever for that erratic species. Just in is a report of a Varied Thrush at Chattanooga, TN. for past month.

Minutes of the MOS Spring Meeting, 21 April 1990
Pascagoula, Mississippi

The Spring 1990 Meeting of the Mississippi Ornithological Society was held April 21st at the LaFont Inn in Pascagoula, MS. Pres. Marvin Davis presided. He thanked the local arrangements committee--Chita Cassibry, Alice Duckett, Marion Fahnestock and Joree Pennell--for organizing the meeting. He also introduced new members as well as the new Newsletter editor, Dave Ruple.

The minutes of the Fall 1989 Meeting were accepted as published in the Newsletter. The editor of the Mississippi Kite, Jerry Jackson, reported on the status of the journal; two issues were at the printers, but he needed articles and good black and white photographs for future issues. Steve Peterson announced that a

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brief meeting of the Records Committee would be held after the close of the evening session.

MOS patches were announced available for sale at \$5.00 each. These have been produced by Carolyn and Dale Jarnagin from a design by Steve Peterson. The patches as well as MOS T-shirts can be purchased from MOS sales representative, Marion Fahnestock. Terry Schiefer said that the new checklists would probably be available at the next fall meeting.

David Ruple reported that the Jackson County Port Authority planned to fill in the Gallinule Pond in Pascagoula. Members were asked to write letters to the Port Authority and the Mayor of Pascagoula opposing this action. Schiefer was asked to write letters to the Port Authority and the Mayor and the Pascagoula newspaper opposing this action on behalf of the MOS. Jerry Jackson and Bill Turcotte reported on the current status of the Forest Service/U.S. Army land swap plans for the Desoto National Forest and Leaf River Wildlife Management Area.

Marvin Davis distributed copies of the Sardis Lake Checklist to those who were interested. Gene Knight conducted the tally of species seen in Jackson County during the meeting to that point; 160 species were reported.

Marvin Davis presented Nona Herbert a trumpet signifying the Trumpeter Award for her work in informing the public as well as the birding community of Mississippi's first Trumpeter Swan. J.C. Herbert received a Honey Bun Award for his great tolerance of all Nona's time spent aiding and supervising the viewing of said Swan. Dollyann Meyers of Memphis was recognized for her recent outstanding accomplishment of having seen her 700th bird species in North America.

President Davis called on Chita Cassibry who introduced the after dinner speaker, Ms. Mini Nagendran, whose program dealt with her research activities regarding the Mississippi Sandhill Crane.

Respectfully submitted,

Terence Lee Schiefer, MOS Secretary

**Minutes of the MOS Fall Meeting, 10 November 1990
Oxford, Mississippi**

The Fall meeting of the MOS was held on 10 November 1990 at the Best Western Oxford Inn. President Marvin Davis presided.

Davis acknowledged Judy Burkepile and Gene Knight for assisting him in making arrangements for the meeting. Judy Burkepile was accepting banquet fees from those not already paying, and was making refunds to those who had paid for the Sardis Lake boat trip that had to be cancelled.

Gene Knight conducted the tally of species seen during the meeting; 106 species were reported (6 more added on Sunday).

Terry Scheifer announced that the 1988 issues of the Mississippi Kite would be distributed to attending members after the evening session was closed, while others would receive their copies by mail. In the absence of Treasurer Janet Dubuisson, Joree Pennell was announced to be receiving membership fee payment after the meeting. Davis posed the question of whether/when the MOS Constitution and Bylaws had been updated from the original status as published in the first issue of the Kite. He suggested that there was probably a need for revision and updating during the term of the next president.

Judith Touns, serving as Chair of the Tucker Award Committee, announced the 1990 Awardee to be Malcolm F. Hodges, Jr. for his numerous contributions, which she recounted, to Mississippi ornithology over a number of years.

Davis announced that the 1990 Nominating Committee had consisted of Hal Moore (chair), Edward Alexander and Nona Herbert. Mrs. Herbert gave the committee's report, presenting the following slate of officers for the 1991/1992 term of office: President, Terence Schiefer; Vice President, Gerry Morgan; Secretary, Chita Cassibry; Treasurer, Janet Dubuisson. The slate of officers was elected by a unanimous vote. The resignation of Dave Ruple and the selection of Marvin Davis as Editor for the Newsletter also was announced by Mrs. Herbert.

Nona Herbert reported that the Mississippi River levee is now technically closed to traffic except for those who can show that they have used the levee for over 10 years.

Schiefer announced that the Spring 1991 MOS Meeting will be held at Starkville, MS. MOS Sales Representative Marion Fahnestock announced that large and extra large MOS T-shirts were available for \$10 (plus \$1.50 postage if by mail), as well as MOS patches at \$5.00. Chita Cassibry announced that the Mississippi Coast Audubon Society was selling raffle tickets. Carolyn Jarnagin suggested the need for an MOS membership directory.

Malcolm Hodges thanked Marvin Davis for the work done in the office of president for the past two years.

Davis introduced the speaker of the evening, James Kushlan, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of the Department of Biology of the University of Mississippi. A most informative and entertaining slide-lecture program was given by Dr. Kushlan on "Herons of the World."

Respectfully Submitted,

Terence Lee Schiefer, MOS Secretary

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List of Birds Reported at/near Sardis and Grenada Lakes
 9-11 November 1990 (species of more interest underlined):

Common Loon	E. Screech Owl	Red-winged Blkbrd.
pied-billed Grebe	Barred Owl	E. Meadowlark
Horned Grebe	Belted Kingfisher	Brewer's Blackbird
<u>Am. White Pelican</u>	Red-hd. Woodpecker	Common Grackle
D.-cr. Cormorant	Red-bel. Woodpecker	Brn.-hd. Cowbird
Great Blue Heron	Yel.-b. Sapsucker	Purple Finch
<u>Gr. Wht.-fr. Goose</u>	Downy woodpecker	House Finch
Snow Goose	Hairy Woodpeckewr	Pine Siskin
Canada Goose	N. Flicker	Am. Goldfinch
Wood Duck	Pileated Wdpkr.	House Sparrow
Grn.-winged Teal	E. Phoebe	
Am. Black Duck	Horned Lark	
Mallard	<u>Barn Swallow</u>	
N. Pintail	Blue Jay	
Blue-winged Teal	Am. Crow	
N. Shoveler	Fish Crow	
Gadwall	Carolina Chickadee	
Am. Wigeon	Tufted Titmouse	
Canvasback	Red-br. Nuthatch	
Redhead	Wht.-br. Nuthatch	
Ring-necked Duck	Brn.-hd. Nuthatch	
Lesser Scaup	Brown Creeper	
<u>Surf Scoter</u>	Carolina Wren	
Bufflehead	Winter Wren	
Hooded Merganser	Gold.-crn. Kinglet	
Red-br. Merganser	Ruby-crn. Kinglet	
Ruddy Duck	E. Bluebird	
Black Vulture	Hermit Thrush	
Turkey Vulture	Am. Robin	
Bald Eagle	N. Mockingbird	
N. Harrier	Brown Thrasher	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Am. Pipit	
Cooper's Hawk	Cedar Waxwing	
Red-should. Hawk	Loggerhead Shrike	
Red-tailed Hawk	Eur. Starling	
Am. Kestrel	Solitary Vireo	
N. Bobwhite	Yel.-rump. Warbler	
Am. Coot	Pine Warbler	
Killdeer	N. Cardinal	
Greater Yellowlegs	Ruf.-sided Towhee	
Spotted Sandpiper	Chipping Sparrow	
Western Sandpiper	Field Sparrow	
Least Sandpiper	Vesper Sparrow	
Dunlin	Savannah Sparrow	
Common Snipe	Fox Sparrow	
Bonaparte's Gull	Song Sparrow	
Ring-billed Gull	Swamp Sparrow	
Herring Gull	Wht.-thr. Sparrow	
Forster' Tern	Wht.-crn. Sparrow	
Rock Dove	Dark-eyed Junco	
Mourning Dove	<u>Lapland Longspur</u>	

MOSers Seen in Print Elsewhere

[A proposed new feature to highlight MOS members* being published outside of Mississippi in journals that some of us may not routinely see; the Editor will appreciate your comments re. usefulness of this. The scientific journals cited are available at libraries on the campuses of UM, MSU and USM, should you wish to see more; or the authors might be able to supply a copy.]

IN THE 1990 VOLUME OF JOURNAL OF FIELD ORNITHOLOGY:

1. Jerome A. Jackson,* "Intercolony movements of Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers in South Carolina." A marked population was monitored from 1977 through 1984 so that dispersal and intercolony movements could be detected. Movements were believed associated with a scarcity of roost cavities and in part to the sudden, drastic removal of a hardwood understory in a poorly planned "management" effort of the U.S. Forest Service. Some behaviors described.

2. Frank R. Moore,* Univ. of Southern Mississippi, "Prothonotary Warblers Cross the Gulf of Mexico Together." Mist-net trapping and banding on East Ship Island in March '87 and April '88 led to observations of single-species "group catches" that consisted of 7 and 4 Prothonotary Warblers, respectively. This is suggested to represent not merely a flock forming during the stopover, but rather that the birds had "traveled together." This was inferred from an indication that the birds of each group had been feeding together shortly before their departure to cross the Gulf. The evidence for this was that in each group the foreheads of all birds were covered with a crusty red-orange material, which was identified as residue from oranges. This species has been observed to become so marked by their feeding on sliced-open oranges in orange groves of Central America.

IN THE SEPTEMBER 1990 ISSUE OF THE WILSON BULLETIN:

1. Frank R. Moore*, Paul Kerlinger and Ted R. Simons, "Stopover on a Gulf Coast Barrier Island by Spring Trans-Gulf Migrants." More findings from netting and associated observations, this time on Horn Island, 21 March to 9 May 1987. Four points addressed were: (1) pattern of arrival of passerine migrants stopping on the island; (2) habitat use by such migrants; (3) flocking behavior of migrants; (4) sources of mortality (predation, starvation, adverse weather preventing their reaching the island alive). The importance of the barrier islands as haven to migrants in respect to their surviving the two yearly trans-Gulf crossings is also emphasized. (Especially good reading for "Coasters"!)

IN THE DECEMBER 1989 ISSUE OF BIRDING:

1. Malcolm F. Hodges, Jr.*, "Aqua Incognita: Birding Catfish

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Farms in Northwest Mississippi." Text, maps and photos describe and illustrate the area of the Delta between Jackson and Greenville where Malcolm studied avian predation on farm catfish several years ago. This article emphasizes the birding opportunities afforded by the catfish farms and their environs, as Malcolm did also in a presentation to MOS members several meetings ago.

A SHARP-SHINNED HAWK ATTACK

by
William H. Turcotte

On 6 January 1991 at 8:30 a.m., I was watching Am. Goldfinches and House Finches at a feeder outside the den window at my residence in Richland, MS. Suddenly, all the birds flew and simultaneously I glimpsed, mostly in silhouette, an Accipiter that was so small that it must have been a Sharp-shin. It approached from below my line of vision, then veered upward and over the roof top and was not seen again.

Looking for it out a window on the opposite side of the house, I noted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker clinging motionless to a nearby Pecan tree. I could see or hear no sign of any other birds. The same was true several minutes later when I went outside. About 10 minutes later, I again went out with my binocular and approached the still-frozen sapsucker for a closer view, which it tolerated without any slightest movement.

No feeder bird activity was seen yet at 8:50 a.m., and the sapsucker was still immobile. Again I went outside, and this time saw and heard a Blue Jay that appeared from the leafy lower limbs of a Red Oak tree in the front yard. It ascended to the bare upper limbs of that tree, calling as it moved, while seeming to look in all directions. Another Blue Jay appeared from below and also began calling. As both jays were calling, a flock of goldfinches flew into the tree and the jays flew away. Going to the back yard, I found that Tufted Titmice, Carolina Chickadees and six Cardinals were in view at the garden fencerow, and that the sapsucker had left.

From these observations, it appeared to me that the two Blue Jays had sounded an "all clear" signal, after which the smaller birds had resumed their normal activities. The period of the sapsucker's freezing and the other birds' hiding lasted 22 minutes until the two Blue Jays made their calls, which seemed to signal safety, and then flew away.

[Editor: No doubt many other feeder-watchers have witnessed their patrons freezing at the approach of an Accipiter. Have any of you observed a similar sounding of the "all clear" signal?]

LATE BULLETINS!

MOS president Terry Schiefer wishes to announce to all members that an open meeting of the Board of Directors will be held at 6:30 p.m. on March 2, 1991 in Biloxi. Location will be the residence of vice president Gerry Morgan at 412 Walda Drive. The purpose will be to consider future programs and activities of MOS. The thoughts and suggestions of the membership are solicited. What would you wish to be happening that isn't?? You are invited to bring those ideas with you to that session, or to send a letter to Pres. Schiefer in advance of the meeting, whether or not you are able to come. However, if you plan to attend, please notify Gerry so that she can plan accordingly. Y'all Come!

A spectacular rarity-chasing opportunity is available in southwestern Missouri, 344 miles (crow-flight) NW of Jackson, MS. On Saturday 26 January, Jeff Wilson had in sight four (count them, 4!) species of loons--Common, Red-throated, Pacific and Yellow-billed Loon--within three swings of his scope at a single spot! That was near the dam of Table Rock Reservoir, just N of the Arkansas stateline. Add to that a "not bad" Western Grebe nearby and you have a wild and far out assembly from the top of the checklist! The Yellow-bill is a happy repeat from 1989-90.

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Organized 30 April 1955

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All persons interested in Mississippi bird life are invited to join the MOS. Annual dues: Life, \$100; Sustaining, \$20; Family, \$8; Individual, \$4; Subscribing (institutional) \$10. Send dues now payable for 1991 to the Treasurer (see above).

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