MOS NEWSLETTER

December 1991

Volume 36, Number 4

LOOKING AHEAD:

Christmas Bird Count Schedules: Saturday, 14 Dec., Jackson County--contact Larry Gates, 296-6411.

Thursday, 19 Dec., Grenada -- contact Marvin Davis, 234-1773.

Saturday, 21 Dec., Sardis Lake-- "

22 Dec., Noxubee NWR, contact Terry Schiefer, 3243748. 27 Dec., S.Hancock Co.--contact Judy Toups, 896-3153. Friday,

Saturday, 28 Dec., Sidon--contact Philip Barbour, 455-4166. 28 Dec., Vicksburg--contact Hal Moore, 638-2680.

Sunday, 29 Dec., S. Washington Co. -- contact Ed Alexander, 332-7895 [Sorry, no dates received for Jackson, Natchez, etc.]

MOS 1992 "Spring" Meeting -- Break Away From the Ordinary!! Leroy Percy State Park, February 7-9

Percy State Park, off State Highway #12 ca. 5 mi. W of Hollandale, in the south Delta area of Washington County. change from usual timing is to accommodate those who will be preoccupied later in the season by the April meeting of Am. Birding Assoc. at Mobile. Have you considering being one of those? Newsletter issue #2, 1991 for more detailed information.] Another reason is to try for a target species, the Ross' Goose, which was first seen in Miss. at the nearby Yazoo NWR, and has been seen

recently in the Delta with Snow Geese at this season and time.

Pres. Terence Schiefer announces that the next MOS meeting will be

FRIDAY 7:00-9:00 P.M. The meeting will begin with an Evening Social at the dining hall at the State Park Headquarters building; eat dinner before arrival; light snacks and beverages may be available, but there will not be restaurant service! Come prepared for a program consisting of "Show and Tell Time." The Show will be of slides volunteered by the members; please bring up to 20 of yours, but be prepared to Tell what bird it is in case the members can't recognize and identify!

SATURDAY 7:00 A.M. Breakfast at the Dining Hall; \$4.25 each.

SATURDAY 7:45 A.M. Field trips to various sites in Washington County. Final arrangements will be made on the spot Friday night. Local hotspots include the Yazoo NWR, Lake Washington, numerous catfish ponds and vast tracts of open farmland. We will concentrate on waterfowl, raptors and field birds such as the longspurs. If we are lucky some Ross' Geese may be mixed in with the Snow Geese.

SATURDAY 6:30 P.M. The evening meal, business meeting and evening program will again be at the Dining Hall. Our after-dinner speaker will be Tommy King, a wildlife biologist with the USDA Wildlife Research Center's Science and Technology Division. he will discuss his on farmir SUNDAY

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such a Are th often do Fox his ongoing research on Cormorants and their interactions with fish farming in the Mississippi Delta.

SUNDAY 7:00 A.M. "Coffee and donuts" will be available at the Dining Hall, provided by MOS; donations toward costs accepted.

<u>LODGING</u>: MOS has reserved the Group Camp Cabin for Friday and Saturday nights. It is a heated facility with dormitory-type beds, divided into two sections, one each gender, each of them accommodating up to 24 persons and having its own shower and restroom facilities. <u>Important!</u> You must supply your own soap, towels, pillow, linens and blankets (or sleeping bag), i.e., all personal-use items. The nominal cost for these accommodations is \$6.00 per night. A chance to save money for the next trip!

For those not wishing the fellowship of the group camp cabin, there are 4 smaller cabins providing family-size accommodations (4-6 people) at a cost of \$33-48 per night. These are available by making reservations directly with the State Park Office (827-5436) immediately. Nearest motels are 25-30 miles away at Greenville.

MEALS: Be forewarned: restaurants or even quick-food franchises are lacking in the Hollandale-S. Washington Co. area! Hollandale offers grocery and convenience stores. Some may wish to pick up in advance some food for the Saturday Lunch, when we will be "on our own." A few supplemental caloric sources might be preferred to surviving off the "fat of the land." The Saturday Dinner will be a buffet consisting of a chicken entree, three vegetables, salad and dessert for only \$8.00 per person. The State Park also caters a Sunday Noon all-you-can-eat buffet open to the general public, which may interest MOSers who do not depart earlier.

Please mail the enclosed reservation form ASAP, no later than 15 January!

From the President:

A Major New MOS Project -- The Mississippi Bird Sighting Summary

One of the purposes in life of MOS is to add to the knowledge of Mississippi's birdlife. Although all of us watch birds, rather few members actually contribute a record of their sightings. Those records that are submitted usually concentrate on the rarer species, neglecting those that are more common. We're gathering lots of information on unusual occurrences, but not on the routine (e.g., we're reporting extreme arrival dates but not the normal arrival dates). As a result , very basic information about Mississippi birds is either unknown or inaccessible. Questions such as: How often do Red-breasted Nuthatches invade the State? Are the Lapland Longspurs seen in Mississippi every year? How often do Blue-gray Gnatcatchers winter north of the Coast? or When do Fox Sparrows normally depart from Miss.? These are difficult to

answer from the presently available information.

The Mississippi Bird Sighting Summary Project is designed to correct that situation. Data forms for this winter season (Dec.-Feb.) were distributed at the MOS fall meeting. These forms allow you to record a summary of your bird sightings in any of three regions (North, Central, South). Each month is broken into three 10-day reporting periods. When your sighting summary is compiled with those of all other MOS members, the results will be a good picture of the birdlife in Mississippi during the winter of 1991-92.

As we continue to gather data month after month and year after year, we will be able to look at differences between years and see trends and patterns in the occurrence of Mississippi birds that were previously unknown.

We hope that the entire membership of the MOS will become involved with this project. No matter how little birding you do, your sightings are important! If you missed the fall meeting and did not receive your data form, you can obtain one simply by letting me know when you return your reservation form and/or the enclosed questionnaire. Good birding.

LOOKING BACK:

MINUTES OF MOS MEETING, NOVEMBER 2, 1991 GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

The Fall 1991 business meeting of the Mississippi Ornithological Society was held at the Holiday Inn, Gulfport, MS on November 2, 1991.

President Terry Schiefer welcomed all to the meeting and asked for introductions of new members and visitors. He thanked Gulf Coast Audubon members Lyle and Millie Page and J.N. and Cheryl Randall, and all who assisted, for the Friday evening hospitality and for the meeting arrangements.

A motion was made by Marion Fahnestock, seconded by J.N. Randall, and carried, that minutes of the Spring 1991 meeting be approved as printed In the Fall MOS Newsletter.

Jan Dubuisson gave the Treasurer's Report for the period from May 1991 to October 1991. [See copy of this report herein]

It was announced that Bob Sergeant from Trusco, Alabama, a hummingbird bander, will be attending the joint MS/AL Audubon Council Meeting on the coast the first weekend in December and would like to band any hummingbirds present in Mississippi at that time. Anyone having hummingbirds then should contact Lydia's Audubon Shop in Waveland.

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Presi Toups talk The President advised that word had been received from Greg Jackson to announce that Blakely Island had been reopened to birders under certain circumstances. A release must be signed and you must call ahead each time you visit. One must go in by foot and stay on the roads. Permits may be obtained by sending stamped, self-addressed legal envelopes to: Greg Jackson, 2220 Baneberry Dr., Birmingham, AL 35244.

Judy Toups reminded members of the ABA Convention to be held in Mobile in April and urged all to become members of ABA at \$30 per year.

Cile Waite advised that she had copies of environmental questions submitted to Gov. Mabus and Mr. Fordice by the Pine Woods Audubon Chapter, along with their replies, available for distribution.

The President stated that new Mississippi Checklists were available at 5 for \$1.00, or 0.25 each. He also advised that the last issue for 1989 of the MISSISSIPPI KITE is at the printers and should be distributed soon.

The Spring meeting is tentatively scheduled for late February at Leroy Percy State Park. More Information will be given in the next newsletter.

The President announced that James Kushlan of the Univ. of MS has suggested that MOS co-host the Colonial Water Bird Assoc. 1992 Meeting at Oxford in mid-October. This will be discussed with the Board, which will meet the first week of December on the coast. A membership directory is going to be prepared. A questionnaire will be distributed for all members to fill out and return, and responses will be published.

The appointment of Genevieve Little to be the MOS representative to the Mississippi Wildlife Federation was approved by the members.

It was agreed to reduce the price on remaining MOS T-shirts to \$5.00 and Marion Fahnestock advised they would be on sale after the meeting. She also advised that raffle tickets were available for \$1.00 for a John Sill original painting of a Skimmer, which he had donated to the Coast Audubon Society.

A tally was made by Gene Knight of birds seen on the Coast by MOS members (results in this <u>Newsletter</u>; see last page)

President Schiefer introduced the speaker of the evening, Judy Toups, who gave a most interesting and informative slide show and talk on her recent "Alaskan Adventure."

Respectfully submitted,

Chita Cassibry, Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT, MAY to OCTOBER, 1991

Income and Expense Statement

Income:

Expenses:

Balance Sheet

Assets:

Dues \$912.00 Interest 159.20 167.88

Sales -- Kites

Balance in Checking,

Gulfport

Balance in Savings,

161.39

Postage Printing 116.72 Meetings

Starkville (est.)

Certificate of Deposit

455-4166 or Rt. 1, Box 7, Sidon, MS 38954.

Sims, Ellisville; and David Watts, Jackson.

Dues Checklists

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special Message: From MOSer Philip J. Barbour of Sidon, MS comes

word that he and wife Katherine will be attending the Am. Birding

Assoc. Regional Conference on 14-18 1992 at McAllen, TX [a Lower

birding on the 16th and would welcome others to join him for that

day; he will have transportation available. If any non-ABA member

Rio Grande Valley birding Hot Spot]. He would like to know if

should wish to know more about that meeting, contact Philip at

WELCOME TO MOS, 1991 NEW MEMBERS: John R. Bradley, Robert E.

Briscoe, Susan Gaston, Oxford; Andrea Dinep, Starkville; Jewel

Carlton, Greenville; Bob Ford, Whiteville, TN; Allan J. Mueller, Vicksburg; Millie Page and Emily Shope, Biloxi; J.N. & Cheryl Randall, Gulfport; Kathleen E. Scwartz, Ocean Springs; Richard

Let's enroll more new members in '92!!

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any other MS birders will be attending. He's planning to be

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'WORKING' IN MONTERREY by Mal Hodges

"And I get paid for doin' this!" --- Steve Martin

Work, work, work! That's all I've been doing. Last week, my employer, Law Environmental, sent me and four coworkers to the mountains south of Monterrey, Mexico to perform an environmental assessment of a tract of land. We stayed at a hotel amidst the tract in a pine-oak forest at 5,000 feet above sea-level. I really felt like I was cheating the system last week!

Essentially, I spent the entire time birding. The birds of the area are similar to those of the mountains of southeast Arizona, southwest New Mexico, or the Texas Big Bend Country--Elegant Trogons, Acorn Woodpeckers, Bridled Titmice, Gray-breasted Jays, Painted Redstarts and Hepatic Tanagers were all common. Monterrey is not very far south of the border, being on about the same latitude as Brownsville, Texas.

Despite its being so far north, there are several very "Mexican" species to be found there. Rufous-capped Warblers and Rufous-capped Finches were both common birds characteristic of the pines and oaks of these mountains. I also saw my first Crescent-chested Warbler, Gray-collared Becard, and a pair of Bronze-winged Woodpeckers, all amid the very active bird flocks led by two species of titmice ("Black-crested" were common also).

There was a very strong North American migrant component to these flocks. In fact, the most common species in the mountains were Ruby-crowned Kinglets and the eastern race of the Solitary Vireo, these two species making up one-half to two-thirds of every bird flock. Eastern and western migrants mixed, making the birding more interesting; Black-throated Green, Golden-cheeked, Townsend's and Hermit warblers all were present.

One afternoon's birding along the lowland stream in the foothills of those mountains reminded me of how close we were to the Rio Grande Valley. Green Jays and White-tipped Doves were Common, and I saw my first Tropical Parula there.

I recommend the Motel Chipinque where we stayed. The rooms are a bit seedy, but the food in the restaurant is tasty, and the setting can't be beat. Miles and miles of scenic mountain trails, with high limestone cliffs towering overhead and the blinking lights of Monterrey in the valley far below. And there aren't many places where you can step out of your door and see an Elegant Trogon!

[EDITOR: For those who hadn't realized, Mal has been "in exile" in Georgia for ca. 1 year now. Perhaps some of you hadn't even heard that the revolution chased him from Liberia. Then, after taking temporary refuge at Oxford, along with the Peace Corps contract, he got a better offer and peregrinated off to GA. He now resides at 724 Greenhouse Patio Drive, Kennesaw, GA 30144.

News from the Field:

Heading the "hot list" is an item from Lafayette Co .-- Vic Theobald, mgr. of the state waterfowl refuge on Sardis Lake, spotted a single ad. Brant, 2nd ever for Miss., on p.m. 26 Nov. Also seeing it that day were Gene and Shannon Knight; next a.m. V.T. showed 4 species of geese to T. Schiefer, Margaret Copeland, Jeff Wilson and M. Davis. Photos of Brant by J.W. may provide the 1st documentation of the species for the State of Miss. It has been invited to remain for, and be star of, the Sardis Lake CBC; most of the geese have been off the refuge subsequently, but G.K. had a fly-by look on 12/3. On a rainy-day ramble, 20th Nov., G.K. had single Bewick's Wrens at 3 spots around Grenada Lake, plus an unusual 9 Palm Warblers; in Calhoun Co, 10 late Lb. Dowitchers. At N. side of Grenada again on 29 Nov., G. and S. Knight had 1 or 2 rare (lifer) Tree Sparrows; same day, ca. 2000 D-c. Cormorants at upper Enid L. were highest count for Tri-Lakes area. In early Nov., T. Schiefer had both a lt.-phase and darkphase Rough-legged Hawk (over the same field on consecutive days, and later, on the same day!) in Noxubee County; also, 2 Golden Eagles in the area. On 17 Nov. and 1 Dec. J.W. and G.K. had a flock of 2-3000 Lapland Longspurs in fields ca. 6-7 mi SE of Tunica, giving great views in fall-worked bean or rice fields; at least one Smith's Longspur also. At end of Nov., Hal Moore reported ca. 100 Wht. Pelicans yet in Vicksburg area. Philip Barbour had 3 Ground Doves on 11 Nov. + after; he's hoping they'll From the reports on raptors, longspurs and stay for Sidon CBC. sparrow, plus weather reports from the Midwest, it appears that we should be on the outlook for an exceptional winter for bird species that don't regularly winter this far South; e.g., there already are two Snowy Owl reports from Kentucky and Yellow-billed and Pacific Loons from Arkansas! However, several comments indicate that the Goldfinch/Purple Finch/Pine Siskin visitors have been nearly lacking at feeders, despite weather up North.

Please note: The above feature is intended to stimulate folks to "get out and get looking." Appearance of a "news" report here does not comprise a definitive publication, i.e., is not equal to being recorded in Am. Birds or in the Miss. Kite. This is because items reported here typically are based on "word of mouth" and thus are more subject to error. Also, space doesn't permit substantiating details. Therefore, be sure to submit a written report of all sightings of potential interest at the end of each season to the appropriate area sub-editor (Judy Toups or Terry Schiefer) for American Birds, and automatically also for the Mississippi Kite, as per prior practice. Fall report is due now!

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EXPEDITION REPORT: Arizona '91

ARIZONA ADVENTURES

by

JoRee Pennell, Ocean Springs

When four MOSers set out in June for southeastern Arizona, it was a long dreamed about first-time visit for Gerry Morgan, Lydia Schultz and Mickey Baker and a greatly anticipated return for me.

Despite resolutions not "waste time" birding along the way, we couldn't resist stopping for Anhinga and Mississippi Kites in Louisiana, and for Scrub Jays at Kerrville State Park and Golden-cheeked Warbler and Black-capped Vireo at Lost Maples Natural Area, both in Texas. Lydia spotted the warbler for us, but the vireo was absent. Texas also yielded our first Roadrunner and only Wild Turkey for the trip, as well as Canyon Wren and Swainson's Hawk.

Between Las Cruces and Road Forks, N.M., where we turned south toward Portal, AZ, we found Bendire's Thrasher, Chihuahuan Raven, Am. Avocet and Cinnamon Teal. Our first Arizona species was a Golden Eagle! (Perhaps the same one that I saw in 1987 perched on the same pole?)

Our quarters at Cave Creek Ranch in Portal were rustic--the air conditioner never worked--but the birds made it worthwhile. Atop the light just outside our door, undisturbed by noise and traffic, was a female Blue-throated Hummingbird on her nest. As quickly as possible, we unloaded the car and headed for Cave Creek Canyon to look for the Elegant Trogon. Soon a Trogon appeared, but there was no white breast band, and the tail wasn't right. We had found the much more rare Eared Trogon first!

On July 3 we headed out early for Rustler's Park in the higher part of the Chiricahua Mts. We missed Mexican Chickadee, but enjoyed many Olive Warblers, Grace's Warbler, Hepatic Tanager, Greater Pewee, Western Tanager and a never-to-beforgotten Zone-tailed Hawk that soared directly overhead.

We celebrated Independence Day by hiking up and down Cave Creek Canyon, and were rewarded by both Eared and Elegant Trogons, Rock Wren, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Hutton's Vireo and Black-headed Grosbeak. We had a peep at a Whiskered Screech Owl in its nesthole, but the N. Pygmy-Owl was more elusive, being heard but not seen. Also added to our lists were Violet-green Swallow, Strickland's Woodpecker and nine (1) Tyrannid flycatchers: N. Beardless Tyrannulet, W. Wood-Pewee, Say's and Black Phoebes and the Dusky, Dusky-capped, Ash-throated, Brown-crested and Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers.

On the next day at Mile High Ranch at Sierra Vista, we enjoyed the many hummers that included Berylline, Anna's and White-eared; Lydia was ecstatic! At Patagonia, we met Chita and Hugh Cassibry, Alice Duckett and Marion Fahnestock, who had left Mississippi a week later than us. We had many exciting tales to tell, but we broke a way to visit the famous Patagonia Rest Area for Thick-billed Kingbird. However, the Rose-throated Becard had failed to appear there this year.

One of the trip highlights was the Patton's backyard in Patagonia. There were more hummers there than at Mile High, including a close look at a Violet-crowned. A late afternoon walking the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary failed to yield a Gray Hawk, but we enjoyed a Cooper's Hawk nest with barely fledged young fussing at us.

By 6:30 a.m. next day we were at the gate of Fort Huachuca in Sierra Vista to visit Robert Smith, who would lead us to a Spotted Owl and Buff-breasted Flycatcher. Much searching and hiking in Sawmill Canyon was rewarded by a look at the colorful flycatcher. Backtracking to the entrance to Scheelite Canyon, we were led up the canyon 5/8 mi., where Smitty directed us to wait without moving or talking while he located the owls, but with no luck. After walking up another half-mile, we repeated with the same lack of results, so Smitty decided to take a young couple from Texas (Tony and Alice) and head to the top, sending back for the rest of us if successful.

Fortunately, only a few yards farther, where the trail became very narrow, steep and rocky, Tony spotted one baby owl and then another! Alice found the female. We were torn between wanting to observe more and not wanting to disturb; so, as we should have, we left as quickly and quietly as possible. The trip down was a happy one despite wet hair, aching knees and hunger pangs.

Being determined to find the Gray Hawk, we returned to the Sonoita Creek Sanctuary early the next a.m. This stretch of riparian woodland, with a perennial stream and its large cottonwoods, is a property of the Nature Conservancy, and one of my favorite birding spots. We finally located the hawk and also many Phainopepla, which we had missed before.

After somehow missing the Guevavi Ranch, we continued on to the Santa Rita Lodge in Madera Canyon. Here the Elf Owl popped out of its hole in a power pole to greet us. The lodges's picture windows overlook feeders frequented by Broad-tailed, Broad-billed, Rufous, Blue-throated and Magnificent Hummingbirds! Black-headed Grosbeaks and House Finches shared the seed feeders, and families of deer appeared early each morning. A late afternoon walk up the mountain failed to produce the Flammulated Owl, but was fun anyway.

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We Desert I tired, o we shall better I Next morning we hiked up Vault Mine Trail with Painted edstarts, Bewick's Wrens and several flycatchers keeping us ompany. Mickey and I had to stop after 2 miles, but the alwart and intrepid Gerry and Lydia continued upward to the eward of Red-faced Warblers. Late afternoon found us admiring a inging Botteri's Sparrow. Florida Wash yielded thorns, lizards a bedraggled Costa's Hummingbird. While Gerry looked for an usive songster, Mickey spotted a soaring raptor that turned out of be a N. Goshawk. Darkness found us on the edge of the wash istening for a Buff-collared Nightjar. He never called, but we do hear Common Poorwills.

We stole an extra day to visit the wonderful Arizona-Sonora esert Museum at Tucson. Then we reluctantly headed for home--ired, excited fulfilled--but knowing that at first opportunity shall return to Arizona and its delightful birds. You'd etter make plans for your trip there soon!



BIRD LIST FOR FALL MOS MEETING, 2-3 NOVEMBER, 1991 Common Loon Pied-billed Grebe Eared Grebe Brown Pelican D.-cr.Cormorant Great Blue Heron Great Egret Snowy Egret Little Blue Heron Tricolored Heron Cattle Egret Blk-cr. Nt. Heron White Ibis Glossy Ibis Snow Goose Ross' Goose Wood Duck Green-winged Teal Mottled Duck Mallard N. Pintail N. Shoveler Gadwall Am. Wigeon Redhead Ring-necked Duck Lesser Scaup Surf Scoter Wht.-winged Scoter Bufflehead Hooded Merganser Red-br. Merganser Black Vulture Turkey Vulture Osprey N. Harrier Sharp-shinned Hawk Cooper's Hawk Red-shouldered Hk. Swainson's Hawk Red-tailed Hawk Am. Kestrel Clapper Rail Sora Common Moorhen Am. Coot Sandhill Crane Blk.-bel. Plover Wilson's Plover Semipalm. Plover

Piping Plover

Killdeer Am. Oystercatcher Blk.-n. Stilt Am. Avocet Greater Yellowlegs Lesser Yellowlegs Willet Spotted Sandpiper Whimbrel Ruddy Turnstone Sanderling Western Sandpiper Least Sandpiper Pectoral Sandpiper Dunlin Stilt Sandpiper Long-b. Dowitcher Short-b. Dowitcher Common Snipe Laughing Gull Franklin's Gull Bonaparte's Gull Ring-billed Gull Herring Gull Caspian Tern Royal Tern Common Tern Forster's Tern Black Skimmer Rock Dove Mourning Dove Grt. Horned Owl Belted Kingfisher Red-hd. Woodpecker Red-bellied Yel.-bel.Sapsucker Downy Woodpecker Hairy Woodpecker N. Flicker Pileated E. Wood-Pewee E. Phoebe Tree Swallow N. Rough-w. Swallow Barn Swallow Blue Jay Am. Crow Fish Crow Carolina Chickadee Tufted Titmouse Brn.-hd. Nuthatch

Carolina Wren House Wren Winter Wren Sedge Wren Marsh Wren Ruby-cr. Kinglet Bl.-gr.Gnatcatcher E. Bluebird Hermit Thrush Gray Catbird N. Mockingbird Brown Thrasher Loggerhead Shrike Eur. Starling White-eyed Vireo Tennessee Warbler Orange-cr. Warbler Yel.-rump. Warbler Blk-thr.Gr.Warbler Pine Warbler Palm Warbler Prothonotary Com. Yellowthroat N. Cardinal Indigo Bunting Ruf .- sided Towhee Field Sparrow Vesper ** Lark Song Lincoln's Wht-thr. Sparrow Red-w. Blackbird E. Meadowlark Boat-tail. Grackle Common Grackle Brn.-head. Cowbird Am. Goldfinch House Sparrow Total on 11-2= 145 ADDED ON Nov. 3: White Pelican Yel.-cr. Nt. Heron Com. Goldeneye White-winged Dove Am. Robin Bronzed Cowbird grosbeak<u>Pheucticus</u> BARLYBIRDER ON NOV 1 SAW: Canvasback 3-Day Total: 153

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY 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; Individual, \$10; Family, \$15; (Junior/Golden Age: Individual, \$4, Family, \$8); Subscribing (Institutional) \$10. Please send 1991 dues not yet paid to the Treasurer.

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