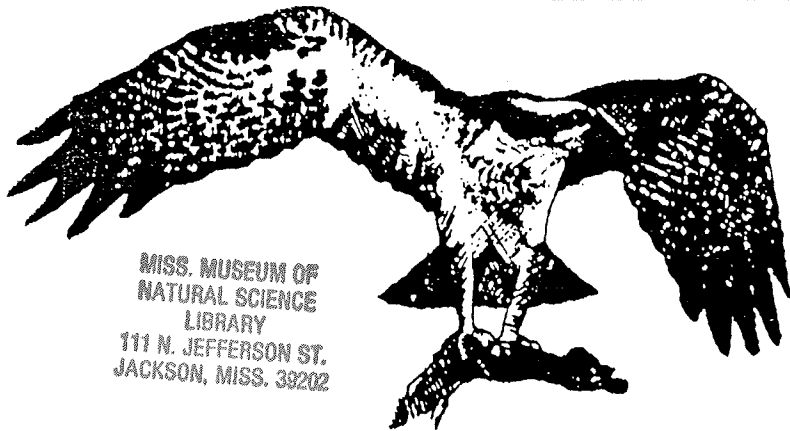

**MISSISSIPPI
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
Vol. 40, No. 2
SUMMER (JUNE) 1995**



LOOKING AHEAD:

Fall Meeting 1995

Location will be Leroy Percy State Park, the site of an MOS meeting of February 1992, which is conveniently near to Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge in southern Washington County. More info will be provided in the next Newsletter, but for now reserve the dates--the weekend of 22-24 September. You might also wish to reserve space at the State Park--for a cabin or for the Group Camp--at the Park Office, 827-5436. The after-dinner speaker Sat. night will be James Cummings of the Delta Wildlife Foundation describing that organization's programs. Arrangements are being made by Ed Alexander of Greenville (332-7895).

Spring Meeting 1996

Location will be at Forest, MS for its access to the nearby Bienville National Forest for a "Red-Cockaded Weekend," May 3-5, 1996. The after-dinner speaker on Saturday will be Robert McFarlane, biologist and author of A Stillness in the Pines. Margaret Copeland of Starkville, who is in charge of arrangements says, "Pass the word, reserve the dates, see YOU there!"

LOOKING BACK:

THE SPRING 1995 MEETING

The Vicksbirders hosted the spring 1995 meeting at Tara Wildlife Management, Inc., just north of Vicksburg. About 116 species were seen and a crew from Mississippi Outdoors filmed the events for possible airing in June. This was a great chance to get MOS and birding some publicity. Twenty-six members attended and enjoyed both the birding and the good food. Alert MOS birders discovered that the nearby Bald Eagle nest has three nestlings instead of two, as the Tara staff previously thought.

In addition to the birding, some important decisions were made in the business meeting. We adopted "Mississippi Birding

Trails" as a conservation/public relations project. The project will be roughly modeled on a coastal birding trail project that has been successful in Texas. Working with state and federal agencies we will publish a birding guide that identifies easily accessible good birding spots along a designated highway. The owners of each birding spot in the guide will have to agree to maintain the habitat quality of their site. The incentive for the landowner and local governments will be that the guide will also identify local restaurants and motels. We will need to make the link between ecotourism and the prosperity of local businesses.

The route or routes have not been selected, and many details remain to be resolved, but this project has the potential to benefit MOS and the state of Mississippi, while serving a genuine conservation purpose. Membership involvement will be essential for the success of this project. I may be calling you soon to serve on the Mississippi Birding Trails committee.

Several other actions were also taken at the business meeting. The membership voted to affiliate with Partners In Flight and I will be formalizing that soon. We also endorsed the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative, a plan to tax various outdoor equipment to fund state nongame programs. I will notify the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies of our position and also write several outdoor equipment companies asking for their support.

Ed Alexander agreed to host the fall 1995 meeting, possibly in Leroy Percy State Park. Details will be distributed soon. The spring 1996 meeting will be May 3-5 in Forest hosted by Margaret Copeland with an emphasis on Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. The fall 1996 meeting will be a joint meeting with the Tennessee Ornithological Society at the Crow's Neck Nature Center in Tishomingo County. The Alabama Ornithological Society was also invited, but they will be unable to participate because of previous commitments. In any case, we will invite their members to attend.

Overall, we had a good meeting. Don't miss the next one. --Allan Mueller

NEWS from the MEMBERSHIP:

"Miz Nona" (Mrs. J.C. Herbert) came through with some news fit to print, as well as some not! The former was about the Caribbean Cruise by her and J.C.

in February. Here are some of her words about it: "Our cruise was a dream trip, something J.C. dreamed up. The trip coincided with Valentine's Day. There were 23 of us in the group, mostly from Sunflower County, plus a few from Jackson. We had no idea what we were getting into, but we fell in love with it, and some of us are planning on going to Australia in about 2 years, after we save up our money....Jerry Jackson told us someone to contact in the Cayman Islands, but she was on a trip at that time.

We did get in a trip to a bird sanctuary at Montego Bay, Jamaica that was so unique. We got off the boat and walked around the area looking at what birds we could find: Cattle Egrets, Turkey Vultures, Mockingbirds, Banana-quits and Black-throated Blue and Yellow-throated Warblers.

One among the many taxi drivers insisted that he knew where the Bird Sanctuary was up on the mountain...His name was Super, and he showed us around very nicely...The road up the mountain was through the poverty area, but the view of the bay was gorgeous from way up. The sanctuary was started in 1969 by a lady who is now 90 years old. That day she was too sick to see us, but an 18-year old native girl took care of us. She had us to sit down, then got a bottle of clear sugar water and handed it to me. The hummingbirds immediately came to perch on our fingers to use the feeder: a Red-billed Streamertail, whose tail seemed 2 to 3 times longer than its body, an orchid-colored hummer, and a deep green one that looked black until the light shone on it just right. Then she poured seed in our hands and the little birds ate out of our hands; we loved it! I'm ready to go again." [To ask Nona and J.C. about a Caribbean cruise, write them at 3155 Hwy. 450, Shaw, MS 38773-9519]

[Editor--The above sample will have to end my trial and trials in using columns format for the MOS Newsletter, until my skills improve!]

BACK-YARD BIRD BANDING

by G. Edward Alexander, Jr.

I have been engaged in a bird-banding project since 1983, operating with a sub-permit under a master permit of Dr. Jerome Jackson of Mississippi State University. This permit enables me to band only in the State of Mississippi, and to band only the birds that Dr. Jackson approves. In order to obtain a sub-permit, a definitive project must be identified and undertaken. My project is: "The Study of the Migration of Wood Warblers in Western Mississippi".

I band only in my back yard at 930 S. Washington Ave. in Greenville, MS. This is an old neighborhood with large mature hardwood trees, abundant shrubbery around the yard, as well as a stand of cane across the rear. With the exception of maintaining feeders near the house (mostly in the winter), no other attractions were placed in the yard.

I band using three mist nets, each of which is 12 meters long and 2.6 meters high. The nets are made of very thin black nylon material with 30 mm (1 1/4") mesh, very much like a badminton net. The nets have four heavier horizontal lines which create "shelves" in the netting so when the birds fly into the nets, they fall into the shelves (or folds).

I try to band from 1 March through 31 May in the spring, and generally from Labor Day through Thanksgiving in the fall. Due to business restraints I can only band on the weekends, but, depending on the time of the year, I sometimes can manage some banding during the week. Unfortunately, my fall banding has been curtailed due to family and personal conflicts. When the nets are up, it is important to check them at least every twenty minutes. This assures that the birds are removed fairly quickly, and guards against predation by neighborhood cats.

When a bird is caught, it is removed from the net and identified. It is then either banded or released. The cardinal rule of banding is: **Never band a bird that is not positively identified.** You would be surprised how it is some-times more difficult to identify a bird in the hand than a bird in the field. I receive my bands from Dr. Jackson, and he can, in effect, control my banding activities by the bands he sends me. I only band birds that require bands from "0" size to "1A" size. This means that I band all birds from a Cardinal (in size) down to, but not including, hummingbirds. After the bird is banded, the sex and age of the bird is determined if possible. Its sex is determined by certain physical characteristics, such as the presence of a brood patch, wing length, or, of course, plumage. Its age is usually listed as "HY" (hatching year), or "AHY" (after hatching year). Almost all birds banded in the spring are "after hatching year" birds because most were hatched before the current year, whereas some birds banded in the fall were hatched during the current year and are thus "hatching year" birds.

The "hatching year" birds are separated from the mature birds by plumage and other physical characteristics, but the determination is sometimes difficult. If I am not sure, I classify the bird as "U" (unknown). The wing chord and tail length are then measured, and, finally, the bird is weighed. The bird is sometimes photo-graphed, if conditions permit, using a macro lens on my camera to permit a close up photograph while holding the bird in the hand. I use ISO/400 film (or faster) in my camera because the birds are oftentimes very nervous and flutter their wings frequently.

My banding results are reported quarterly through Dr. Jackson to the Bird Banding Laboratory of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. For the past ten years I have logged 8607 mist net-hours in the spring, and 2670 mist net-hours in the fall. Most banders band for longer hours, and, therefore, band a good many more birds than I do. The tables on the following pages are a result of my banding and/or netting activities of 1983-1992.

This has been an enjoyable and interesting project. As Jerry Jackson told me early on: "you never know what you will catch in your nets." I have caught birds that I have never seen before (lifers), and birds that I have never before seen in my back yard. For example, over the past ten years I have banded 54 Ovenbirds. Prior to that, I had never seen an Ovenbird in my back yard! I still seldom see them in the wild. I have never had any banding returns except for the birds that I have banded myself. Several of the birds return periodically (see Tables).

Many of us maintain bird feeders in our yards, and many of us are very aware of the birds that we see in our yards, but this project has taught me that you never, ever know all the birds that happen to move through your neighborhood

BIRDS NETTED/BANDED--1983 through 1992

<u>WARBLER SPECIES</u>	<u>NOS. BANDED</u>	
	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Fall</u>
Tennessee	12	1
Orange-Crowned	1	0
Parula	1	1
Magnolia	20	1
Yellow-rumped	187	1
Prairie	1	0
Bay-breasted	1	0
Black & White	1	1
Redstart	1	0
Worm-eating	4	0
Ovenbird	52	2
Louisiana Waterthrush	1	0
Kentucky	25	2
Mourning	1	0
Yellowthroat	20	0
Hooded	21	0
Wilson's	2	0
Canada	15	0
Yellow-breasted Chat	10	1

NON-WARBLER SPECIES

	NOS. BANDED	
	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Fall</u>
Whip-poor-will	1	0
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5	7
Downy Woodpecker	2	1
E. Wood-Pewee	1	0
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	0	3
Acadian Flycatcher	6	1
E. Phoebe	1	0
Crested Flycatcher	2	0
Carolina Chickadee	6	2
Tufted Titmouse	15	10
Carolina Wren	11	14
House Wren	5	0
Winter Wren	4	3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	0
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	29	12
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	0
Veery	28	2
Gray-cheeked Thrush	15	0
Swainson's Thrush	27	2
Hermit Thrush	7	1
Wood Thrush	37	1
Gray Catbird	19	4
Cedar Waxwing	10	0
White-eyed Vireo	19	1
Solitary Vireo	1	0
Red-eyed Vireo	1	3
Summer Tanager	1	0
Cardinal**	89	45
Indigo Bunting	1	0
Rufous-sided Towhee	5	0
Fox Sparrow	1	0
Lincoln's Sparrow	1	0
Swamp Sparrow	2	0
White-throated Sparrow**	323	59
Dark-eyed Junco	2	0
Brown-headed Cowbird	2	0
House Finch	3	0
Am. Goldfinch	25	0
House Sparrow	63	6

**** Returns:**

White-throated Sparrow: 4 different returns after one year or more.

Cardinal: 9 different returns after one year or more; 1 bird was at least 9 years old; 1 bird was at least 6 yrs. old, and has been re-netted each year for 5 years.

INTERESTING BIRDS NETTED BUT NOT BANDED:

Sharp-shinned Hawk	1
Cooper's Hawk	1
Screech Owl	2
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	15

FROM THE FIELD: Extreme "early birds" among neotropical migrants this Spring were a Blue-winged Warbler and Rough-winged Swallow seen before the end of February by Terry Schiefer in the Starkville area; also, the 1st pair of Barn Swallows near Shaw were quite early on 19 March by Nona Herbert. Observations at the MOS meeting weekend are listed on page 9. *An early report from the nestings season--*A partial count showed successful fledging of young from 22 "clusters" of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (4 still nesting) on the Noxubee NWR (Margaret Copeland). Good news also from Sardis Lake--at least 3 pairs of Ospreys with nests!

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks--This is a call for any additional reports on an unusual occurrence of this species in the first third of May. In Oxford and Starkville areas, at least, there were multiple cases of sunflower-seed feeders being frequented for several days by multiple grosbeaks--males and females together. A very few prior records of this species' feeder use in these parts involved singles only. I've had some suggestion that this behavior may not be strange to coastal birders; is that true? If you had such experience in your yard this year (or before), or if you've been told about such by others, would you please send a note recounting such events with as much detail as possible--numbers, sexes and dates, and with name and location of the observer (as soon as possible)? Address to: Marvin Davis, 308 Lewis Lane, Oxford, MS 38655. Flicker Attacks, Stumps NASA--Doubtless many readers saw television news on the NASA headache of a Northern Flicker doing damage to the surface insulation on a propulsion rocket for the space shuttle. Didn't that fellow make the chips fly!! Our own Dr. Jerry Jackson was one of the woodpecker experts NASA called for help on the problem. Maybe one of these times he will give us the "inside story" on his consultation visit to the Kennedy Space Center.

MINI-EXPEDITION REPORT

May-June 1995 Trip to Colorado -- Marvin Davis

Memorial Day was the delayed day of departure for a parental visit (Mom lives in Arvada, CO [Denver metro]) in early June. To make a bit more of a vacation trip, I spent five days en route instead of the usual 2.5-3 days. This enabled a side-trip from the ordinary route across the Oklahoma Panhandle into Morton County, Kansas, which is the southwest-most corner of KS. The attraction was a Rare Bird Alert report that a **Great Kiskadee** [Flycatcher] had been seen there by ca. 20 birders from 18 to 25 May on the Comanche National Grassland. So, I spent the evening and night of 30th May at Elkhart, KS, just north of the OK-KS state line. Before sunset my search for the local waste-water treatment lagoons succeeded and enabled an unusual experience of viewing 17 Black-crowned Night Herons setting about their night's feeding. My first visit to the Comanche N.G. area went well as the next a.m. I found my way to riparian habitat of Middle Springs on the Grasslands, and after ca. 45 minutes had a fly-by identification of the distinctive Kiskadee, with its fully bright-yellow underparts and a striking, distinctive black-and-white barred pattern of the face. It should, of course, have been busy nesting down in the Rio Grande valley of Texas, and was sure to go mate-less in Kansas! But I suppose that is how species sometimes extend their range.

My thought of trying for a June 1st Century Day in the two middle and western counties of the Oklahoma Panhandle started all right. While bedded down in a tent in the campground below the Corps of Engineer's

Optima* Dam, I was awakened by probable Com. Barn-Owl calls at 1:30, after which a pair of Great Horned Owls began duetting in the night (1:40 until entirely too late!). Things improved with a "wake-up call" from a nearby [uncommon] Common Poor-will at the break of dawn, 5:30 a.m. So-so land birding, including skylarking male Cassin's Sparrows, a pair of Scaled Quail and a family of young Loggerhead Shrikes, was followed by a better waterbird selection above the dam--late stragglers of 10 duck species (including a colorful male Cinnamon Teal), GBHs, some sandpipers and Am. Avocets, a single White Pelican, etc. However, that was followed by the second in 2 days starter dysfunction--my car not me! After breakfast and a rest, I broke camp and headed for Guymon, a thriving city in the middle of the Panhandle, where I found the General Motors dealership and repair shop. The 3rd refusal to start occurred there, but after the ole Olds was manually pushed into the garage, its balkiness was remedied in due (2.5 hours) time by a new starter.

The delay pretty well killed a Big Day strategy, but I proceeded onward to Boise City, hoping its WWTP ponds would yield more shorebirds, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and added swallow species. But it was not so. Only a single Black-crowned Night Heron gave some encouragement. West and north I sped to the Black Mesa State Park, where Cassin's Kingbird and Say's Phoebe were welcome finds. But because of my bad night's sleep (I didn't tell all of the earlier humanoid disturbances) my energy level was sapped. I couldn't face the earlier plan of tenting at the state park, so headed to Springfield, CO for a motel with only 66 species toward my 100 goal.

The next a.m., after a refreshing sleep, I visited the nearby Two Buttes Recreational area at Two Buttes Dam on Two Buttes Creek near the TWO BUTTES responsible for all these names! Despite there being less exciting birds than usual, it was a glorious morning--with mild to cool air, blue skies, blue water in the lake, yuccas covered with blooms and a Greater Roadrunner posing on the dirt track almost long enough for a good photographic opportunity! Hopefully my one exposure with a brand new 500 mm. lens will be of some success when the slides come back. A Say's Phoebe was spotted looking as sleepy and frazzled as I had the prior a.m. And not far from there, four mule deer crossed the county road before me, at the same spot where another year I had Pronghorns.

Later that day I enjoyed "shooting" some Clark's Grebes on a high plains lake, where the also-present Western Grebes eluded my lens. There were more ducks, yellowlegs, avocets and Black-necked Stilts to soak up. Only a single Ferruginous Hawk for this trip, in contrast to ones in March, suggests that they may have been busy with nesting duties. This mere sampling hints at the fine nature viewing that one can enjoy before ever reaching the Foothills of the Front Range in Colorado and the High Rockies themselves. Hopefully, there may be an opportunity via a slide show for a further sharing some time.

 *Although named for a nearby community, perhaps it should have been called "Optimist" Dam--being a Corps of Engineers' prize "boondoggle." At least some local folks find it embarrassing that a lake has never formed behind the dam after ca. 15 years of waiting--only minor shallow ponds! Concrete boat-launching ramps wait vainly for use, high and dry, many feet of elevation above where the paltry water rises. The dam was built on the driest drainage around, and what rainfall may enter the Beaver River and Coldwater Creek tends to disappear into their sandy beds before any can accrue to the fictitious, hoped-for "Optima Lake!"

Late Sight Record of Mississippi Kite by William H. Turcotte, Richland

On 13 October 1994, a Mississippi Kite was seen soaring over the Pearl River near the junction of Interstates I-20 and I-55 at the Hinds-Rankin county line. The first sighting was about 1:30 p.m. while driving on I-55. A second sighting occurred about 2:00 p.m. while I was on the Pearl Street exit from I-55. In my experience, Mississippi Kites are seldom seen after August. The latest record on the Gulf Coast in Toups and Jackson (1987) was on 18 September.

The Grass is Always Greener 'Round the Martin Pole by William H. Turcotte

I once read a book of humor by Irma Bombeck entitled "The Grass is Always Greener Over the Septic Tank." I have discovered that this axiom is true also of the grass around my Purple Martin nest colonies. After I began regular mowing of our vacant lot and began erecting a martin house with nesting gourds, I noticed that the grass grew taller and thicker in the direction of natural drainage away from the poles. After several years, when the grass was not mowed regularly enough, the mower would sometimes choke down because of the thickness of the higher grass.

In the summer of 1992 I parked my antique Mercury Comet in the "drop-zone" about 100 feet south of the martin poles. After several days the beige-colored antique car was so completely covered with fecal droppings that I had to wash it and begin to keep it in a barn shed. The "flight path" of adults carrying fecal sacs was always toward the prevailing southerly winds. The grass in the "drop-zone" also grew greener and greener. This summer (1994) the grass is thicker and greener than before, probably because of good rainfall, and broods fledging earlier than usual. All young had fledged from 10 occupied gourds by June 15.

Anyone who has ever watched a martin nesting colony knows that the adults do a lot of sitting around their nests, and that their droppings accumulate around the poles. Every time the young are fed, the adult carries off a fecal pellet, which is dropped about 100 feet distant in the direction of the prevailing wind. Fecal matter from the young may also filter through holes in the bottom of the gourds to add nutrient to the soil. Mrs. Bombeck didn't tell the whole story, for she didn't know that "The Grass is Always Greener 'Round the Martin Poles!"

Mockingbird Aggression by William H. Turcotte, Richland, MS 39218-9723

Mockingbirds are a highly territorial species, particularly during the nesting season. The same pair made four nestings on one of our adjacent lots in 1994. The first nest in honeysuckle vine on the fenceline was robbed of three eggs by an avian predator, evidenced by a punctured egg carried about 30 meters and dropped. The second nest held three eggs and produced three young, two of which survived and were being fed by the adults until after a third nesting was begun.

While incubating the third set of eggs, one or both adults began chasing away the earlier brood. The chasing was continuing until 18 June when my brother-in-law, Robert, and I were under a crepe myrtle tree by the garden gate. We had just been watching a chase when two of the birds collided with the back of Robert's head, just beneath the branches.

Both birds fell to the ground at his feet in the garden row and fought on the ground until one broke free and the chase continued. The second brood of 3 young was taken from the muscadine vine by a predator about a week after hatching. A fourth nest was begun, which also was unsuccessful, but I did not see any chases during that nesting attempt.

BIRD LIST, APRIL 28-30, 1995 MOS MEETING, TARA AREA, ISSAQUENA CO.

Pied-billed Grebe
 Am. White Pelican
 D.-crest. Cormorant
 Anhinga
 Great Blue Heron
 Great Egret
 Snowy Egret
 Little Blue Heron
 Cattle Egret
 Green Heron
 Blk-crn Nt. Heron
 Canada Goose
 Wood Duck
 Mallard
 Blue-winged Teal
 Lesser Scaup
 Ruddy Duck
 Black Vulture
 Turkey Vulture
 Mississippi Kite
 Bald Eagle--2a, 3i
 unident. *Accipiter*
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Broad-winged Hawk
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Wild Turkey
 Northern Bobwhite
 Am. Coot
 Killdeer
 Solitary Sandpiper
 Spotted Sandpiper
 Forster's Tern
 Rock Dove
 Mourning Dove
 Yel.-billed Cuckoo
 Barn Owl
 Barred Owl
 Chimney Swift
 Ruby-thr. Hummingb.
 Belted Kingfisher
 Red-hd. Woodpecker
 Red-bellied "
 Downy Woodpecker

Hairy Woodpecker
 N. Flicker
 Pileated Woodpecker
 E. Wood-Pewee
 Acadian Flycatcher
 Grt.Cr. Flycatcher
 E. Kingbird
 Horned Lark
 Purple Martin
 R-wing. Swallow
 Cliff Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Blue Jay
 Am. Crow
 Fish Crow
 Carolina Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 Carolina Wren
 Ruby-crn. Kinglet
 Bl.-gr. Gnatcatcher
 E. Bluebird
 Swainson's Thrush
 Veery
 Gray-cheeked Thrush
 Wood Thrush
 Am. Robin
 Gray Catbird
 N. Mockingbird
 Brown Thrasher
 Cedar Waxwing
 Loggerhead Shrike
 Eur. Starling
 White-eyed Vireo
 Yellow-thr. Vireo
 Warbling Vireo
 Red-eyed Vireo
 Tenn. Warbler
 Northern Parula
 Magnolia Warbler
 Chestnut-sided W.
 Yellow-rumped W.
 Blk-thr. Green W.
 Yel-thr. Warbler

Blackburnian War.
 Pine Warbler
 Blackpoll Warbler
 Cerulean Warbler
 Prothonotary W.
 Ovenbird
 North. Waterthrush
 La. Waterthrush
 Kentucky Warbler
 Com. Yellowthroat
 Hooded Warbler
 Canada Warbler
 Yellow-breast. Chat
 Summer Tanager
 Scarlet Tanager
 N. Cardinal
 Rose-br. Grosbeak
 Blue Grosbeak
 Indigo Bunting
 Painted Bunting
 Dickcissel
 Rufous-sided Towhee
 Savannah Sparrow
 Grasshopper Sparrow
 Swamp Sparrow
 White-thr. Sparrow
 White-crn. Sparrow
 Bobolink
 Red-wing. Blackbird
 E. Meadowlark
 Common Grackle
 Brown-head. Cowbird
 Orchard Oriole
 Northern Oriole
 House Sparrow
Total: 121 species
 [Compilation by Hal Moore; Sunday ++'s by Terry Schiefer; Hal says, "5 eagles at the nest with a large catfish was my mtg. highlight"]

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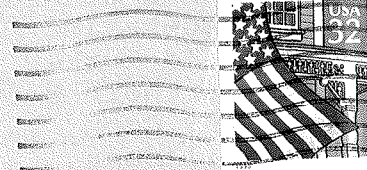
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All persons interested in Mississippi bird life are invited to join the MOS. Annual dues: Sustaining, \$20; Individual (regular), \$10; Family, \$15; Student, \$5; Senior, \$5; Subscribing, \$10. Life Membership, \$200. All classes of members receive the Mississippi Kite semi-annually, and the MOS Newsletter on a quarterly schedule each season. Please send unpaid 1995 dues or new address, to: Janet Dubuisson, 22410 Glad Acres, Pass Christian, MS 39571.

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Reports on Spring '95 Meeting
Notice: Ominous dues reminder
may be on your mailing label!