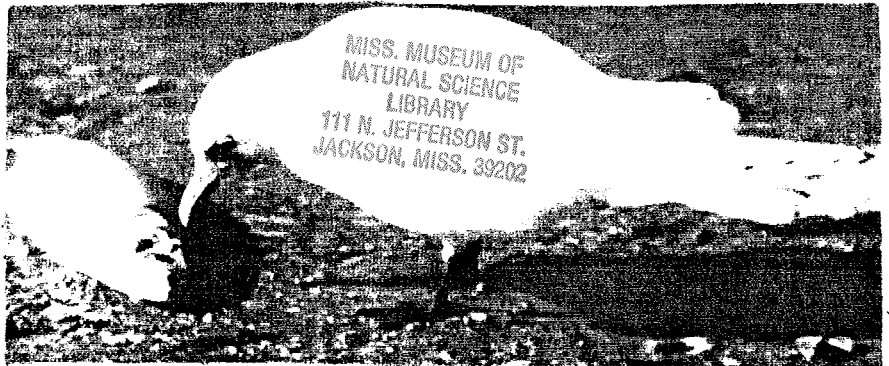


MISSISSIPPI
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

VOL. 41, No. 1
SPRING (MARCH) 1996



"Hey guy, gimme your eye!"

LOOKING AHEAD:
SPRING BIRDING--MOS SPRING MEETING, 1996

The Mississippi Ornithological Society is celebrating a "Red-cockaded Woodpecker Weekend" at its 1996 Spring Meeting May 3, 4 and 5 at Forest, MS, with noted featured speakers and field trips to study/survey/visit RCW clusters and other scenic areas of the Bienville National Forest.

Jerome Jackson, Mississippi State University ornithologist and woodpecker expert, will headline Friday night with his presentation: "The Red-cockaded Woodpecker: Its History, Habits and Habitat." Saturday following the noon buffet, the program will continue with Robert "Bob" McFarlane from Houston, Texas, a noted avian ecologist and author of A Stillness in the Pines. (Bring your copy of his book to be autographed!) His talk is entitled "Stepping Back from the Brink." Mississippi RCW conservation activity in our national forests and at Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge will be discussed by Bob Glasgow, U.S. Forest, and David Richardson, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Guided trips to RCW clusters will be combined with general birding field trips on Saturday morning. Evening RCW cluster surveys (about 1 hour before sundown) will give interested individuals an opportunity to return to selected clusters to participate in the MOS RCW Project at Bienville. Maps, forms, etc. will be provided at a registration table. Saturday night at 9:00 p.m. a business meeting and species tally will conclude the day's activities. Sunday morning field trips will be offered as requested.

Wear field clothes--long sleeves, heavy pants and boots. Poison ivy and briars can be tough in areas. There are some paths, many gravel roads, a few walking trails, and plenty of deep woods--pine and hardwood. Some will enjoy field experiences from the safety of the road; others may venture as far into the woods as they wish! Come prepared for your own degree of activity.

Registration fee is \$5, covering meeting costs, and the noon buffet is \$10 additional. Please use the form (page 12) and return your pre-registration by April 19. Headquarters will be the Best Western Motel at I-20 and Highway 35. A block of rooms will be held until April 15. Mention MOS for rates--\$39.60 for single; 2 persons \$45 (both plus 7% tax). Phone 601/468-1842 or 800/528-2640. Some, but not all,

motel rooms have a microwave, refrigerator and coffee pot. Other motels include the Comfort Inn (601/469-2100) and Days Inn (601/469-2500). Camping facilities are available 12 miles from Forest at Roosevelt State Park, Morton, MS (601/732-6316) at \$10/night. Reservations on 8 sites only; 109 sites on a first-come basis--suggested arrival May 2!

See page 12 for detailed schedule of the meeting activities. For further information/questions, contact Margaret Copeland (work, 601/323-3875; home 601/323-1445). Remember, birders from other regions make a special trip for many hundreds of miles to see this woodpecker; you can do it for 100-200 miles!

MOS' GULF OF MEXICO TRIP JUNE 8, 1996 IS HALF FULL!

This is the second announcement of the Mississippi Ornithological Society's first truly pelagic, off-shore "boating for birding" trip, for which non-members as well as members are invited. En route to and from Mississippi waters, the craft will take us out of the mouth of the Mississippi River through Louisiana waters for several hours, allowing progress on one's Louisiana List as well as that for Mississippi.

To reserve a place on the 38-passenger craft, send names of all people to be included, your phone number and a stamped self-addressed envelope to our trip organizer (see below). We strongly urge making early motel reservations at Venice or nearby Empire, LA.

Departure point: Venice, LA. Yes, you read that right! This point of departure is very advantageous over leaving from a MS port. (see last Newsletter for map showing the relevant geography)

Destination: The Continental Slope well off the Mississippi Coast for waters to 200 meters in depth.

Distance offshore: 60 miles *Trip length:* 12 hours, leaving early

Trip Organizer: Don McKee, 3512 Celeste Ave., Moss Point, MS 39563; phone 601/474-2521; fax 601/762-1409.

Cost: \$60 (This is in accord with costs for other pelagic trips, and is based on 38 people to split the charter costs; this is same boat and captain used by the Louisiana Ornithological Society for several similar trips in 1995-'96.) The trip was in a survey list in the Feb. newsletter of the Am. Birding Assoc.; reservations are in already from several states besides Mississippi.

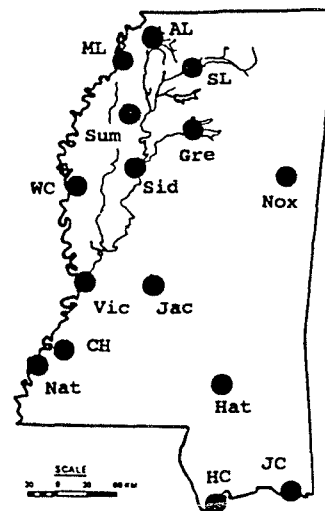
Species Expectations: Wilson's, Leach's & Band-rumped Storm-Petrels; Audubon's Shearwater and others; Masked Booby; Sooty and Bridled Terns. This is said to be an excellent area for mammals, e.g., Sperm Whale[!] & Pantropical Spotted Dolphin (species projections from Dwight Peake, Houston, TX, who is "offshore-experienced"!)

LOOKING BACK: 1995-96 MISSISSIPPI CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

by David King

The table below gives the unedited data for the fifteen 1995-96 Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's) held in the state of Mississippi this past winter. Refer to the upcoming issue of Audubon Field Notes (Vol 50, #4) for the edited reports. The counts are arranged in the table from south to north (by latitude). This allows easy comparison of neighboring counts. The count name abbreviations in the table and the dates held are:

HC = Southern Hancock County CBC on 1 Jan 96,
 JC = Jackson County CBC on 16 Dec 95,
 Hat = Hattiesburg CBC on 30 Dec 95,
 Nat = Natchez CBC on 16 Dec 95,
 CH = Church Hill CBC on 21 Dec 95,
 Vic = Vicksburg CBC on 16 Dec 95,
 Jac = Jackson CBC on 30 Dec 95,
 WC = Washington Co. (So.) CBC on 31 Dec 95,
 Nox = Noxubee N.W.R. CBC on 16 Dec 95,
 Sid = Sidon CBC on 27 Dec 95,
 Gre = Grenada CBC on 22 Dec 95,
 Sum = Sumner CBC on 26 Dec 95,
 SL = Sardis Lake CBC on 19 Dec 95,
 ML = Moon Lake CBC on 23 Dec 95, and
 AL = Arkabutla Lake CBC on 30 Dec 95.



Sites of Mississippi
Christmas Bird Counts

A total of 188 species were found on all the counts. This is one fewer than last year. However, most counts had more species this year than last. As expected the two coastal counts had the biggest species totals with Southern Hancock County breaking the magic 150 mark by a wide margin (159) and Jackson County coming in at 146. Of the 13 inland counts, no fewer than seven broke the 100 mark for number of total species. That's all the inland counts with ten or more participants (and five or more parties) except for Jackson, which was close at 98. Only three inland counts managed to break 100 last year. The inland winner was again Grenada at 112. All the counts found at least a few species in greater numbers than any of the other Mississippi counts (see High # in State at the bottom of the table).

Several impressive species were found. The Tundra Swan at Sardis Lake was among a handful of reports later in the winter. All three mergansers at both Grenada Lake and Sardis Lake was unusual. A Golden Eagle at Noxubee and a count week bird at Washington County were good sightings, as were seven Merlins on five counts and two Peregrines along the coast. Sandhill Cranes were widely distributed in the northern part of the state with 28 being found on four counts. Grenada had the only Short-eared Owl. The coastal and near coastal counts reported 19 hummingbirds of at least four species. Many others are known to be wintering outside the count circles. The Black-throated Blue Warbler at Sardis and the Wilson's Warbler in S. Hancock County were both quite unusual.

In all it was a very good year. Congratulations to all who participated.

NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK
Common Loon	19	6	.	.	.	18	.	.	2	.	3	1	.	.	.
Pied-billed Grebe	120	71	31	8	1	27	132	23	80	7	43	198	25	32	.
Horned Grebe	116	19	2	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	41	79	8	2	.
Eared Grebe	.	2	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Northern Gannet	22	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Amer White Pelican	564	139	.	.	.	45	14	.	.	139	.	30	.	.	.
Brown Pelican	141	101	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Double-cr Cormorant	370	242	1	425	1425	85	57012998	476	.	15	32	38	129	2	.
Anhinga	2	2	.	.	2	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
American Bittern	5	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Great Blue Heron	69	80	23	33	6	89	56	91	40	200	199	68	155	10	745
Great Egret	56	156	7	41	27	123	53	333	1	3	3	.	.	.	.
Snowy Egret	307	78	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Little Blue Heron	40	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Tricolored Heron	23	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Reddish Egret	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Cattle Egret	.	CW	.	.	.	1	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Black-cr Night-Heron	21	19	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
White Ibis	156	83	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Plegadis sp.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Tundra swan	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
Gr White-front Goose	.	1	.	.	.	.	3251	.	.	.	.	24	.	230	.
Snow Goose (blue)	37	.	.	.	.	.	9858	5	.	.	325	105	.	71	.
Snow Goose	.	3	.	.	.	100	429575	.	.	1	325	205	.	65	.
Ross' Goose	.	.	.	.	.	.	17	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
Canada Goose	.	235	.	.	.	36	338	5372	547	.	100	12	3615	42	383
Can Goose (small)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.
Wood Duck	383	29	13	6	68	195	92	18	73	70	11	103	15	43	17
Green-winged Teal	411	33	2	.	.	9	37	627	205	1000	40	26	800	.	15
American Black Duck	.	.	2	.	.	.	.	1	2	.	12	.	83	.	19
Mottled Duck	57	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mallard	212	53	18	157	217	747	305	5905	2121	3805	325	1829	4378	601	9081
Mallard Hybrid	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northern Pintail	6	2	.	.	.	9	11	64	201	50	44	255	92	.	304
Blue-winged Teal	11	335	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	2	.	.	.
Northern Shoveler	83	159	900	.	.	10	107	207	69	1500	482	218	3	134	291
Gadwall	81	61	6	.	.	261	216	137	378	100	63	210	13	203	71
American Wigeon	91	.	.	.	4	23	6	36	339	2	12	15	220	3	538
Canvasback	2	10	.	.	.	2	250	.	CW	100	.	42	CW	.	83
Redhead	12	8	3	14	.	5	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	7
Ring-necked Duck	490	352	304	12	.	45	102	76	235	12	14	52	.	.	212
Greater Scaup	7	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lesser Scaup	1605	4	80	207	.	18	32	139	71	100	25	35	36	.	122
scaup sp.	10000	1	.	.	.	.	9	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Surf Scoter	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
scoter sp.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.
Common Goldeneye	7	10	.	.	.	2	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	33
Bufflehead	600	14	1	.	.	4	73	15	46	.	28	.	.	.	207
Hooded Merganser	20	36	200	100	.	94	1667	40	3833	110	194	67	707	10	873
Common Merganser	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.
Red-breast Merganser	65	61	.	.	.	.	.	.	CW	.	16	16	.	.	.
Ruddy Duck	305	189	500	265	.	1	32	182	1	200	100	380	12	1	328
duck sp.	.	40	.	.	.	45	.	.	.	500	.	1600	.	.	.
Black Vulture	14	1	151	2	57	98	75	.	87	.	1	.	CW	.	6
Turkey Vulture	117	10	42	1	10	42	37	.	69	.	.	11	.	.	2
Osprey	3	5	.	2	.	1	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.
Bald Eagle	4	.	.	CW	.	.	2	.	3	.	8	.	8	1	2
adult	3	.	.	CW	.	.	2	.	1	.	5	.	5	.	1
immature	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	3	.	3	1	1
Northern Harrier	22	7	1	3	1	17	9	5	5	4	10	11	15	5	53
Sharp-shinned Hawk	3	.	2	.	.	2	1	.	.	.	.	1	3	.	3
Cooper's Hawk	3	1	1	3	.	.	2	1	.	1	1	.	1	2	1
Accipiter sp.	.	1	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Red-shouldered Hawk	8	4	6	.	5	12	9	1	5	.	3	.	1	1	2
Red-tailed Hawk	26	15	12	24	13	79	38	29	22	26	29	30	26	44	56
Buteo sp.	.	.	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Golden Eagle	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	CW	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
immature	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
American Kestrel	25	23	10	25	3	39	9	41	10	13	11	22	12	12	19
Merlin	1	1	2	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	2	.	.
Peregrine Falcon	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Wild Turkey	.	.	18	.	.	3	.	CW	1	.	2	.	.	.	.
NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK

NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK
Northern Bobwhite	5	.	.	.	.	7	.	.	12	.	.	12	13	.	.
Clapper Rail	61	78	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
King Rail	1	5	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Virginia Rail	1	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.
Sora	2	37	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.	.
Common Moorhen	26	38	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
American Coot	580	337	411	22	.	17	746	616	671	85	1	42	.	1	56
Sandhill Crane	.	24	.	.	.	.	.	2	.	.	5	.	2	.	19
Black-bellied Plover	2	19	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Semipalmated Plover	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Piping Plover	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Killdeer	265	120	118	109	9	1124	135	185	29	40	96	75	92	50	68
Amer Oystercatcher	6	16	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Black-necked Stilt	.	28	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Greater Yellowlegs	18	8	.	.	.	17	.	1	.	4	.	.	.	.	.
Lesser Yellowlegs	1	10	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Willet	100	101	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Spotted Sandpiper	1	1	11	18	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.
Ruddy Turnstone	2	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Sanderling	300	165	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Western Sandpiper	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	.	.	.	.
Least Sandpiper	21	3	.	3	.	.	.	16	.	.	11	.	3	.	.
Dunlin	1015	66	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	CW	.	10	.	.
Short-bill Dowitcher	410	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Long-bill Dowitcher	1	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
dowitcher sp.	.	92	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Common Snipe	115	123	1	2	7	5	.	20	23	7	20	18	23	.	51
American Woodcock	1	3	1	2	.	1	3	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.
Laughing Gull	558	604	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Bonaparte's Gull	323	29	.	2	.	5	109	3	3	.	696	.	941	100	512
Ring-billed Gull	536	225	.	92	.	65	149	1048	3	.	1174	.	111	8	668
Herring Gull	71	28	.	6	.	.	5	6	.	.	7	.	4	.	3
gull sp.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	11	.	.	.	.	.	.
Caspian Tern	55	33	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Royal Tern	12	35	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Forster's Tern	379	23	.	81	.	2	102	.	CW	.	16	.	14	.	.
Black Skimmer	36	28	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Rock Dove	60	176	66	8	4	371	22	4	31	8	44	65	1	36	18
White-winged Dove	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Mourning Dove	173	221	158	133	11	306	116	498	105	100	61	113	194	268	245
Common Barn-Owl	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	CW	.	.	.	.
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	4	2	.	.	.	2	1	3	.	5	.	3	.	2
Great Horned Owl	3	2	2	1	.	.	1	2	2	CW	2	1	1	2	2
Barred Owl	2	1	1	3	.	7	3	6	11	1	2	3	.	.	1
Short-eared Owl	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	7
Buff-bel Hummingbird	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Black-ch Hummingbird	3	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Anna's Hummingbird	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Rufous Hummingbird	6	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Selasphorus sp.	.	.	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
hummingbird sp.	1	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Belted Kingfisher	32	42	17	6	2	23	14	12	19	12	14	1	11	8	15
Red-head Woodpecker	4	2	21	4	3	51	30	6	33	1	17	.	28	.	32
Red-bel Woodpecker	28	34	50	18	68	151	34	77	81	15	38	9	64	31	55
Yellow-bel Sapsucker	2	7	21	7	17	37	12	20	14	6	23	1	15	3	19
Downy Woodpecker	13	7	23	6	12	39	15	45	27	9	30	.	23	20	25
Hairy Woodpecker	3	1	2	4	5	17	.	12	4	2	6	2	5	2	6
Red-cockad Woodpeckr	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	9	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northern Flicker	15	21	23	7	7	77	9	24	41	10	46	1	68	16	61
Pileated Woodpecker	8	6	11	.	15	30	9	17	29	CW	16	.	13	2	5
Eastern Phoebe	29	20	21	9	9	51	32	25	32	12	15	.	5	1	8
Vermilion Flycatcher	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Horned Lark	.	.	.	9	260	25	.	86	.	250	36	228	.	436	397
Tree Swallow	356	238	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Blue Jay	95	106	131	40	64	324	151	194	155	60	139	16	226	50	146
American Crow	120	173	305	70	261	300	272	.	261	8	317	.	148	.	225
Fish Crow	132	18	5	13	.	1	4	.	7	.	26	.	.	.	.
crow sp.	5	86	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Carolina Chickadee	61	34	65	19	49	312	67	92	78	30	56	6	94	22	79
Tufted Titmouse	54	28	47	8	30	158	35	36	51	12	34	1	57	11	48
Red-breast Nuthatch	3	2	15	2	.	3	.	.	1	.	12	.	5	.	18
White-breast Nuthatch	.	.	.	.	1	2	.	.	3	.	2	.	11	.	6
NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK

NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK
Brown-head Nuthatch	30	67	40	.	.	.	21	.	21	.	1	.	.	.	.
Brown Creeper	1	.	4	.	.	2	7	1	5	1	6	.	14	1	10
Carolina Wren	74	21	69	46	24	163	31	77	86	15	71	3	99	13	80
House Wren	7	4	3	.	1	7	.	5	.	1	5	.	.	.	2
Winter Wren	.	.	3	.	.	2	5	3	10	.	8	.	15	8	12
Sedge Wren	11	13	.	.	.	.	2	1	4	.	3	.	.	.	1
Marsh Wren	18	82	.	.	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Golden-crown Kinglet	23	13	43	5	.	3	48	2	225	3	82	.	23	1	37
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	257	90	103	21	26	100	65	76	150	10	105	3	60	11	38
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	2	5	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Eastern Bluebird	35	112	250	26	27	114	91	50	42	32	54	.	157	3	125
Hermit Thrush	6	5	7	4	31	45	7	8	35	11	33	.	14	1	10
American Robin	439	132	721	17	346	5119	91	675	181	12	106	126	356	22	260
Gray Catbird	14	4	5	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northern Mockingbird	74	46	61	61	21	125	69	30	43	30	12	26	44	29	49
Brown Thrasher	12	10	28	4	8	39	11	4	34	10	17	.	7	1	4
American Pipit	6	1	34	156	.	156	.	5	14	15	7	.	40	41	4
Cedar Waxwing	.	.	91	141	712	300	249	122	201	CW	202	.	138	6	184
Loggerhead Shrike	39	12	24	18	2	47	20	39	7	12	3	18	7	16	11
European Starling	581	414	81	256	288	2784	102	799	381	1200	5041	325	267	402	383
White-eyed Vireo	.	.	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Solitary Vireo	4	12	7	.	.	7	3	.	13	.	3	.	1	.	.
Orange-crown Warbler	35	2	24	5	.	1	5	.	.	.	2	.	.	.	.
Black-th Blue Warbler	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	.	.
Yellow-rump Warbler	272	1225	469	144	85	683	166	242	60	15	165	15	212	35	83
Pine Warbler	47	126	179	12	11	21	114	38	55	.	56	.	21	14	28
Palm Warbler	22	25	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	1	.
Common Yellowthroat	10	13	3	.	2	2	2	3	2	.	1	.	.	.	.
Wilson's Warbler	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Northern Cardinal	77	52	188	90	97	630	110	434	211	50	125	62	259	184	254
Rufous-sided Towhee	22	31	50	5	9	66	41	14	95	10	44	.	9	.	17
Chipping Sparrow	20	63	152	11	9	277	131	51	48	.	.	2	84	.	46
Field Sparrow	15	1	27	2	1	77	35	43	8	16	69	.	75	3	70
Vesper Sparrow	15	1	1	3	.	.	17	3	.	.	6	.	2	.	1
Savannah Sparrow	94	46	8	70	24	183	59	63	77	.	62	6	133	16	71
Grasshopper Sparrow	1	1	.	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Leconte's Sparrow	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	.	2	.	6	.	.
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	.	8	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Seaside Sparrow	7	33	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Fox Sparrow	.	.	.	1	10	8	3	22	2	.	7	4	7	12	5
Song Sparrow	80	59	26	279	36	393	37	397	311	12	204	42	269	98	155
Lincoln's Sparrow	.	.	.	1	.	1	.	2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Swamp Sparrow	175	140	13	28	8	97	71	87	182	15	116	.	146	1	14
White-throat Sparrow	68	118	160	402	269	1440	293	422	342	20	321	8	720	139	354
White-crown Sparrow	.	CW	1	4	.	74	.	83	1	10	2	6	5	169	45
Dark-eyed Junco	40	4	23	7	160	390	82	117	56	15	274	8	566	46	369
Lapland Longspur	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	6	.	15	CW	.	.	605	192
Red-winged Blackbird	175	1256	41	220	457	254328363	9110	2670	30	391	4216	4140	61	3662	
Eastern Meadowlark	133	110	34	107	75	184	104	116	63	20	276	75	116	88	182
Western Meadowlark	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	.	.	.
Rusty Blackbird	37	.	.	.	87	107	3	CW	53	.	112	.	9	.	.
Brewer's Blackbird	30	.	.	.	.	.	18	1	7	1	2	5	.	10	.
Boat-tailed Grackle	118	205	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Common Grackle	46	253	171	1	495	3484	4119	5125	1622	10	870326000	971	16	828	
Brown-headed Cowbird	19	60	1	3025	.	327	44	1203	655	5000	260	.	10	.	22
blackbird sp.	.	1000	83	710	.	.	.	.	.	5000	5000	4000	.	.	.
Purple Finch	5	6	49	.	15	5	.	6	12	.	4	.	9	.	2
House Finch	12	10	253	189	54	251	27	11	40	15	4	5	214	395	164
Pine Siskin	12	.	44	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	21	.	4
American Goldfinch	229	118	657	61	50	1522	72	42	121	9	74	.	77	39	111
House Sparrow	7	10	39	96	12	425	20	233	45	25	2	125	34	206	13
NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK
TOTAL SPECIES	159	146	101	86	65	105	98	101	100	72	112	60	108	72	101
TOTAL BIRDS	26332		8156		6125		41148		18871		26999		22462		24574
		12264		8266		28008		91875		20118		41337		5035	
HIGH # IN STATE	51	34	11	6	2	32	5	13	9	4	9	2	15	4	9
NUMBER OBSERVERS	18	?	14	6	3	21	20	?	25	7	14	3	14	4	14
PARTIES	8	6	6	3	2	12	7	?	9	2	5	2	7	1	5
PARTY HOURS	89	41	52	52	16	75	77	?	66	16	46	14	61	9	40
DATE	0102	1216	1230	1216	1221	1216	1230	1231	1216	1227	1222	1226	1219	1223	1230
NAME	HAN	JC	HAT	NAT	CH	VIC	JAC	WAS	NOX	SID	GRE	SUM	SAR	ML	ARK

EXPEDITION REPORT

BIRDING AT THE "SOO"

by
SHANNON KNIGHT

Tuesday, November 21 -- As we pulled out of our driveway at 4:14 p.m., we ran through our list to make sure that we had packed everything. Oh well, so what if we didn't--we'd buy it on the way or do without! Needless to say, we were eager, excited and Sault Ste. Marie bound! (Sault Ste. Marie is strategically located on the St. Mary's River and is in the northern part of Michigan. It is one of the best winter birding places in the state.)

Gene had previously talked to our northern birder friend, Tom Heatley, from Clinton Township, Michigan, as we began to make our plans. Tom has not only birded in each of the lower forty-eight states, but has reached the A.B.A. threshold (50% of the species in a state) in every state. We were truly grateful when Tom offered to rendezvous with us in Sault Ste. Marie and help us find some of our target birds -- Snowy Owl, Snow Bunting, Gyrfalcon and Great Gray Owl.

After reading about birds in Michigan, we knew the birds would be few and far between. Snow and sub-zero temperatures would make birding (and life) pretty difficult. But we were enthusiastic and determined to get at least one or two life birds!

Having spent our first night in Louisville, Kentucky, we reached the Michigan state line at 10:45 a.m. the morning of Wednesday, November 22. A light snow had dusted the trees the night before, but the roads were clear. As we crossed the beautiful Mackinac Bridge over the Straits of Mackinac, joining Lake Huron and Lake Michigan, our enthusiasm heightened.

Arriving in Sault Ste. Marie around 5:15 that evening, we were overwhelmed by the lovely holiday village atmosphere--rooftops blanketed in snow, Christmas lights everywhere, and smoke billowing from every chimney. We joined Tom at the King's Inn to make plans for the next few days.

Thursday, November 23 -- We awoke to falling snow, temperatures in the teens and 20 mph winds. Most of our birding for the day would be done from Tom's van. Our first stop was at the Sault Edison Power Plant in search of the Gyrfalcon. No luck! Next a fleeting glimpse of Bohemian Waxwing. We'd have to get a better look. By noon we had our first lifer--a Northern Shrike! This was even harder than we had anticipated!

As our eyes sifted through the powdery snow blowing about, we caught sight of a small flock of beautiful Snow Buntings at a feeder. Our second life bird! Things were really looking up! A jaunt through town looking for feeder birds brought us a real surprise, a Common Redpoll--lifer #3!

Mid-afternoon found us riding the farmland roads in search of owls. As Gene scanned the horizon, he called attention to four or five large clumps in tops of some bare trees a few hundred yards away. Tom immediately identified the clumps as Sharp-tailed Grouse, busily eating treetop shoots--lifer #4! We set up our scopes and got fantastic looks at these accommodating birds (eleven in all)! As we became more aware of the tree clumps, we saw thirty-seven more grouse that afternoon.

With darkness approaching early, we decided to end our day where we had begun, at the Sault Edison Power Plant, looking for the

Gyr Falcon. As we waited, a smaller gull appeared with the larger Herring Gulls feeding in St. Mary's River near the steam plant. It was a Thayer's Gull--lifer #5 for me! (Gene already had a Thayer's) Not bad for the first day!

As we drove back to our motel, Tom was consoling me because we had not seen the Gyr Falcon or a Snowy Owl. He was confident that we would get them tomorrow. As far as I was concerned, the Snowy Owl was Number One on my list for the trip. I had seen this beauty so many times in my mind's eye--sitting serenely on a small snow-covered knoll, white-on-white, feathers ruffled by the cold wind, and those enormous eyes looking for the slightest movement. Maybe tomorrow.

Friday, November 24 -- Daybreak came around 7:30 as we left the Big Boy Restaurant. Clear skies, 0 degree temperature, no wind blowing, no snow falling--what birds would this glorious day bring? The beauty of the evergreens and fields covered with snow, the crisp air, and the anticipation of life birds gave a "natural high." We knew it would be a great day!

We drove by Sault Edison again to look for the Gyr Falcon--no luck. Then on to Sugar Island by way of ferry to look for the Great Gray Owl and Hawk Owl. Gene saw a single bird cross the road in front of us. He suspected a Bohemian Waxwing. We stopped, jumped out and spotted the bird. Tom set up his Questar. "Bohemian!" Tom said. We viewed the "bohunk" perched in a tree with five Pine Grosbeaks. What a picture! Now we could really count it as a life bird--#6. Later in the day we saw and heard some 70+ Bohemians at Lake Superior State College. We got neither of the owls and headed back to the mainland.

We drove out on miles of roads in search of the Snowy Owl. Around 12:30 we heard "BINGO!"--Tom had spotted a Snowy atop a telephone pole about 100 yards away. I was so excited that I could hardly breathe! We got wonderful looks through Tom's Questar. It was an adult male, snowy white all over, except for the little black on his forehead, his tufts raised. Breathtaking! To top that, later that afternoon we were driving along when I saw a ghostlike figure fly across the snow near the fence by the road. It was another adult male Snowy Owl within 30 feet of the car! He lit on the snow, caught a rodent, turned his head and looked straight at us with those intense yellow eyes, swallowed his prey, and flew to a nearby telephone pole. We couldn't believe it! Two Snowy Owls in one afternoon! We raced down to the pole where we had seen our first Snowy. He was still there, so we knew that we had two different owls. It was incredible! My mind's eye picture became a reality with lifer #7!

We decided to make a run to Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. Whitefish Point is affiliated with the Michigan Audubon Society and is better known for its spring migration of owls, hawks and waterfowl. It extends into Lake Superior within a few miles of Canada. What a beautiful area! The cold wind made it almost impossible to bird outside the van. We did see a beautiful male Redpoll at the observatory feeder.

Back to Sault Edison to make a "last ditch" effort to see the Gyr Falcon. As we drove down to the parking lot, a car approached us slowly. We recognized the couple from Ohio that we had met there the day before. As we rolled down the windows, they excitedly whispered, "It's there!"--pointing to a large block of concrete in the vacant lot near the parking area. We looked, not breathing, almost not believing that we were finally seeing the "Gyr" at 4:35 p.m. on our last day at the "Soo."

This powerful Red-tailed Hawk sized falcon lifted into the air, flew effortlessly out over the windy bay, and came back to land majestically on a high ledge at the steam plant. The dark phase coloration blends perfectly with the old brick and stone of the building, making the bird almost invisible. Lifer #8!

Finally exhaling, we took Tom's suggestion and went to "The Antlers" to celebrate. Tom was right. The food was delicious and the atmosphere was certainly unique! What a day!

Saturday, November 25 -- Happy Birthday, Gene! As we left town heading south, we reviewed the birds and events of the past few days. Approaching the Mackinac Bridge we saw some 30 beautiful Mute Swans west of the bridge. Awed by the memorable birds we had seen and added to our life lists, we also enjoyed a list of fifty Michigan birds including Rough-legged Hawk, Common Merganser, Common Goldeneye, Black-capped Chickadee, White-winged Scoter, Great Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Common Loon and Red Crossbill.

Five feet of snow fell in the Sault Ste. Marie area the day after we left. We couldn't think of a better place to be stranded! The birding, the scenery, and the town were fantastic! We're ready to go again--minus a few feet of snow!

FROM THE FIELD--Winter Season (1 Dec. to 1 March; see also CBC report)

BEST BIRDS IN THE REGION --I. IVORY GULL!

Highlight of the winter in the Mid-South (w. TN, e. AR & n. MS) was unquestionably a "hundred-year bird," or "bird of the century" for Pickwick Lake, TN: one first-winter Ivory Gull, wanderer from frozen Arctic climes. Spotted by the inimitable Jeff Wilson at 9:30 a.m. on 10 Feb. near Pickwick Dam, it had been seen by ca. 50 viewers from as far as Dayton, Ohio (John Dunne) and Bloomington, Indiana (and rumor has it Kenn Kaufman from Arizona) before that time the next morning. By the afternoon shift, the viewer total reached ca. 85. For the 12 day stay the tally exceeded 400 from near and far! On the a.m. of Feb. 20, there was a birder from Mass. stopping on his way to the southern Rio Grande valley, while ironically, a renowned pair of birders--Red and Louise Gambill--had arrived from that very area for lifer #781!

Sadly, the bird was noted to appear sick the next day, and was not found again after the last reporting viewer left at 1:00 p.m. It has been speculated that the gull was suffering heat stress from a milder climate than its genes prepared it for. It also has been hypothesized that microbes indigenous to a diet of dead fish on the Tennessee River might have overcome a bird not adapted to such Southern fare.

It was great while it lasted. Some of us were fortunate to make two successful visits. Of course, Jeff practically *lived* there, showing the bird to many visitors who arrived to find Jeff's two scopes trained upon the bird (*love that Questar view!*). A 5-member party of MS Gulf Coasters, led by Charley Delmas and Judy Touns, viewed the Ivory Gull's flight performance on Feb. 12, but another Coast group arriving in mid-afternoon of the fateful last day was badly frustrated.

MORAL: "Nuthin' good comes from bird-chasin' or courtin' too slow!"

II. WHITE-EARED HUMMINGBIRD!

Outstanding "chasing-bait" in late December & early January was this amazing, displaced Mexican hummer at Gulfport. Previously, the

species was recorded in the USA only in SE Arizona, New Mexico and W Texas. Thus, it was tremendously exciting to realize that one had been in central Gulfport for weeks before it was identified, trapped, banded and photographed by Bennett Carver on 29 Dec. The bird departed about one week after its "debut," perhaps because of the pressures of performing before an audience of many visiting admirers from N MS, TN, AL, LA as well as Coasters. The Gulf Coast may have a spectacular number of species of western hummers in fall and winter, but that phenomenon is no longer theirs exclusively. Evidences of that change this season were the ♀ Anna's & Rufous H's. at Margaret Coleman's feeders in Starkville in early December. Furthermore, Carolyn Jarnagin reports being shown a probable ♀ Rufous at a friend's feeder in Corinth on 24 January. Bob Sargent, hummer-bander *extraordinaire* of Alabama, had hundreds of calls about wintering hummers from a 4+-state area.

"Ordinary" Rarities

At the outset, on or around Dec. 1 there were several reports of **Evening Grosbeaks** in the north half of Mississippi (e.g., 1♂ at Earl Fuller's place on the north shore of Sardis Lake and a dozen at Connie Norris' feeder on the south shore--both one-day visits). However, they were not harbingers of a real invasion winter. Only the Red-breasted Nuthatches made a superior, widespread showing in contrast to several recent years. Curiously, one of the better out-of-place birds was another grosbeak--an ad. male **Black-headed Grosbeak** in Oktibbeha Co. south of Starkville in Jan-Feb. (plus late word of an imm. male at Noxubee Refuge). Also seen in that vicinity sporadically was a Golden Eagle at Noxubee NWR. The only rare gull at the N MS lakes this winter was an imm. **Glaucous Gull** found at Enid Lake by the Knights on Feb. 18; a few days later, one was also reported on the Gulf Coast.

Boidz N the 'Hood [Oxford/University neighborhood, that is] --- A Nuthatch hat-trick at two Oxford neighborhoods: all 3 nuthatch species were found this January at the Oxford feeders of Dr. and Mrs. Gary Gaston (who also hosted a male N. (Baltimore) Oriole) and the Davises. In the latter case, the Brown-headed Nut hasn't been as regular as the other two, but showed up on 7 January within an hour of the others. That was a really cold day when the birds were hitting feeders hard, acting much as were the humans flocking to the grocery super-markets in response to the day's winter storm warning.

On 22 January an overly optimistic male House Finch was rushing the season--singing exuberantly at Farley Hall, the former Law School, on the Ole Miss Campus. Despite the sunshine, temps were only in the 40s, but the finch was moved regardless to advertise his parental availability in a fine warbling song. In mid-Feb. the Fish Crows returned to the Ole Miss Campus, insistently making their strange calls, and by the 3rd-4th week of February, the M. Doves, Cardinals Tufted Titmice and Carolina Wrens were all going strong at spring songs.

Gene Knight was on the S side of Oxford in mid-Jan. when he heard a not-quite-familiar warbler voice. Upon investigation, he found that



Boid watching

he had a *yellow-throated* Yellow-rumped Warbler; i.e., it was one of the type formerly known as "Audubon's Warbler," the western counterpart of the eastern "Myrtle W." of pre-lumping years--a rarity in Mississippi. Their voices are similar but separable for the careful, practiced ear.

Then, in early February came the "ICE STORM OF '96." While being confined by the 2-3" sleet accumulation turned to sheet ice, birds came in big numbers to those making a heavy outlay of seeds. Some species were seen that don't appear in normal weather, e.g., 2 Fox Sparrows and 1 Song Sparrow at the Davises. The Knights had loads of the four winter finches, but couldn't match a dozen Evening Grosbeaks since Dec. at a Lafayette County feeder of John & Janet Matthews, who are strictly feeder-birders and did not share news of the grosbeaks 'til Post-Ice.

CALLING ATTENTION TO -- ITEMS FROM THE NEWS MEDIA:

Help for the Golden-cheeked Warbler--In November '95 the National Wildlife Federation announced a joint project, with local environmental groups, landowners, developers and government representatives, the Balcones Canyonland Conservation Plan for western Travis County, Texas (west of Austin). This will serve to set aside 30,000 acres to preserve essential breeding habitat in that area of the Edwards Plateau of not only the **Golden-cheeked Warbler**, but also the **Black-capped Vireo**--both endangered species. [*International Wildlife*, Nov-Dec 1995]

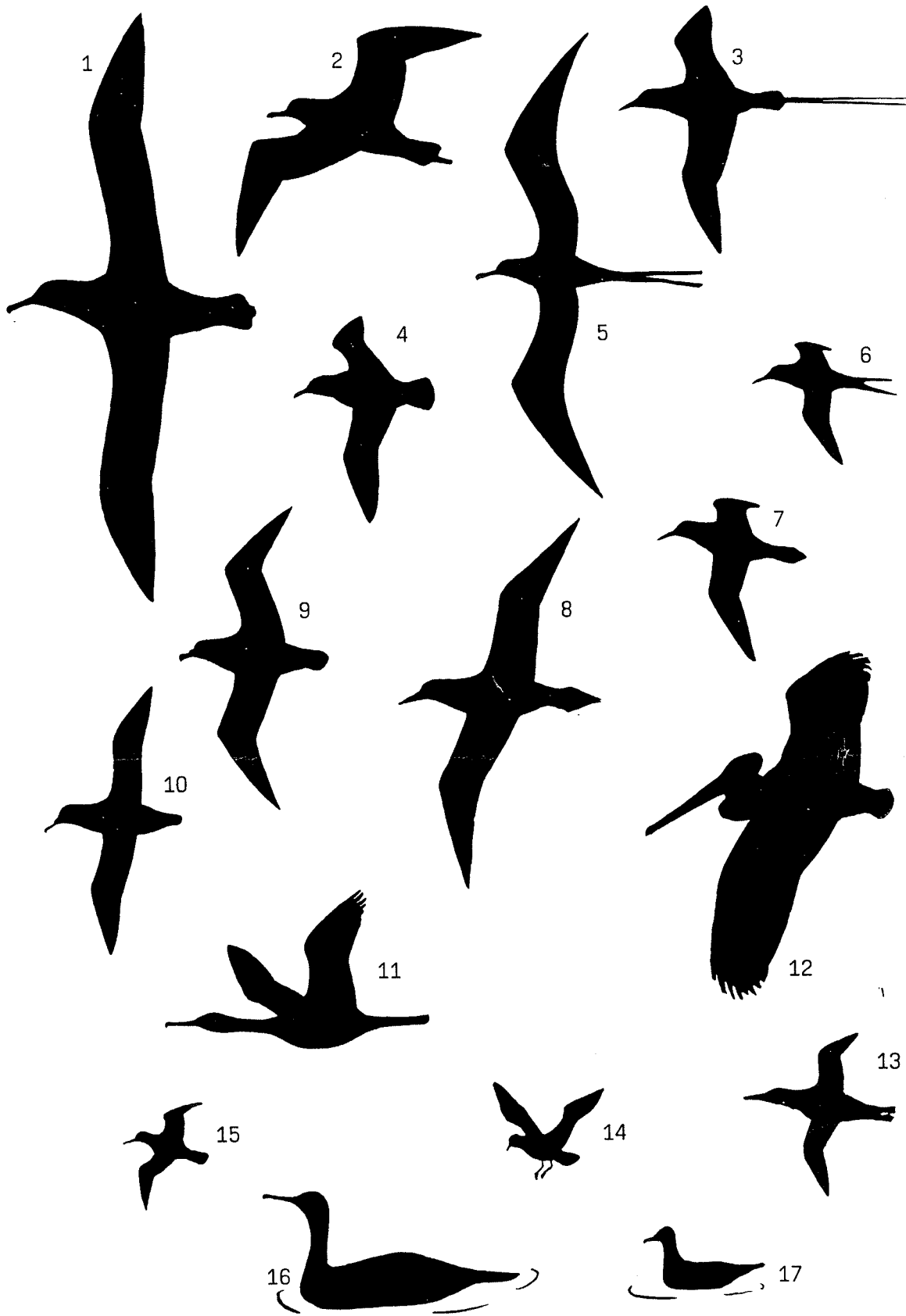
Help for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker--The U.S. Forest Service has developed a plan to establish a 155,010 acre management area in the Ouachita National Forest of western Arkansas and southeastern Oklahoma that would aid the endangered **Red-cockaded Woodpecker**. The plan would provide for delaying harvests of pine trees long enough to provide for needs of the woodpecker-- pine trees of 80+ years. The proposal would apply to about 9% of the total area of that national forest. [AP via *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, 12/7/95]

Bald Eagles' Fall/Winter Return to DeGray L., ARK Brings Concern--Eagles were beginning to be seen again at DeGray Lake, Ark. in November. That is the lake in the Ouachita mountains southwest of Little Rock where **29 dead eagles** were found last winter. The cause for such a distressing mortality remains mysterious yet--neither an infectious disease nor chemical poisoning could be confirmed. Thus, it is unclear whether the '95-'96 population may be in danger from the factor responsible for the die-off in the '94-'95 winter. [No more deaths reported.] [*Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, 11/8/95]

Good News/Bad News--The 1995 status of the **Whooping Crane** is more encouraging, with 47 pairs nesting in Canada, up from 28 in 1994; 42 chicks had been hatched in the wild by June. However, the bad news from **Attwater's Prairie-Chicken** is that only 68 birds were noted in 1995 spring counting on their federal refuge in S Texas. [*Ornithological Newsletter*, December 1995]

What are they?

Your readiness for the MOS Gulf of Mexico pelagic trip in June may be tested via an Identification Exercise based on silhouettes shown on **page 12**. See how many you can call correctly to *family or sub-family* group, not to species. Answers will be on page 14--don't look until you test your skills!



WELCOME TO BRAND NEW (OR RETURNING) MEMBERS OF MOS!

Dean & Elizabeth Armstrong, Tupelo

Carolyn Bullock, Memphis, TN

Charles Calloway, Starkville

Olivia Cobb, Blue Mountain

Gordon & Philomena Cox, Collierville, TN

Lowell & Sybil Evans, Corinth

Brendix Glasgow, Tishomingo

Bill Hemeter, New Orleans, LA

Allen Jolley, Shannon

John McDonald, Elliott

Dora Morris, Iuka

Connie Norris, Batesville

Irene Pierce, Biloxi

DETAILED AGENDA FOR THE MAY '96 MOS SPRING MEETING

Note: All inside activities will be conducted at the Best Western Motel Banquet Room

May 3, Friday	4 to 7 p.m.	Registration--maps, field trip info followed by Supper On Your Own
	6 to 7 p.m.	Reception
	7 p.m.	Jerry Jackson, "The Red-cockaded Woodpecker: Its Habits and Habitat"
May 4, Saturday	7 a.m.	Guided field trips to RCW clusters & general birding
	11:45 a.m.	Noon buffet, followed by-- Bob Glasgow, "RCW Restoration Progress in National Forests of Mississippi" David Richardson, "RCW Status and Research at Noxubee NWR" Robert "Bob" McFarlane, "Stepping Back from the Brink"
	3 p.m.	Guided field trips to Harrell Prairie and Scenic Pines areas
	5 to 7:30 p.m.	RCW cluster visits, continued birding and Supper on your own
	9 p.m.	MOS Business Meeting and Bird List Count
May 5, Sunday	7 a.m.	Dutch breakfast meeting; discussion of volunteer efforts for RCWs--organization, coordination, etc.
	8 a.m.	Field trips as requested or needed!

*******RESERVATION FORM*******

PLEASE fill out, cut and mail by APRIL 9 to: Ms. Mary Hollis, P.O. Box 444, Meridian, MS 39301

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Registration @ \$5 per person	# _____	\$ _____
Saturday Buffet lunches @ \$10/person	# _____	\$ _____

Check(s), to MOS, Enclosed Total \$ _____

Circle preferences:

Participate in RCW cluster survey yes no (guides and maps provided!)
 Number in car/party _____
 Cluster request: by a road short-distance walk longer walk

Seabird Silhouettes

1. Albatross Huge, long narrow wings, conspicuous bill, soars and glides (p.2, pl.2)
2. Jaeger Pointed wings bent at wrists, elongated central tail feathers, deliberate wingbeat (p.41, pl.10)
3. Tropicbird Elongated central tail streamers, long wings, pelagic (p.22, pl.8)
4. Gull Long wings, stocky body, powerful buoyant flight, follows ships (p.45, pls.6, 7)
5. Frigatebird Long angled wings, deeply forked tail, graceful wingbeat, soars and glides (p.36, pl.4)
6. Tern Slim body, long wings, forked tail, pointed bill, graceful buoyant flight (p.57, pls.8, 9)
7. Noddy Slim body, long wings, wedge-shaped tail, pointed bill, graceful buoyant flight (p.73, pl.9)
8. Booby Pointed bill, large head, long pointed wings and tail, flaps and glides (p.27, pl.2)
9. Gadfly Petrel Long wings bent at wrists, heavy hooked bill, erratic flight (p.6, pl.3)
10. Shearwater Long narrow wings fully extended, slim hooked bill, flaps rapidly and glides (p.6, pl.3)
11. Cormorant Long hooked bill, long neck and tail, rounded wings, flaps rapidly and glides (p.32, pl.5)
12. Pelican Huge heavy body, broad wings, head folded on breast, flaps slowly (p.24, pl.4)
13. Alcid Short narrow wings, heavy body, large head, conspicuous feet, flaps rapidly (p.39, pl.5)
14. Storm Petrel Very small, long rounded wings, flits over waves, erratic butterfly-like flight (p.18, pl.10)
15. Phalarope Small, slim bill, pointed wings, rapid direct flight (p.75, pl.10)
16. Cormorant Long thin neck, floats low on water
17. Gull Erect neck, floats high on water, tail held high

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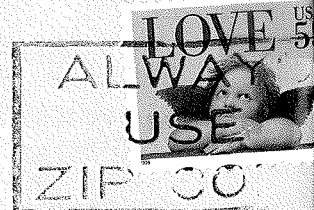
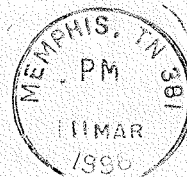
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All persons interested in Mississippi bird life are invited to join the MOS. **Annual dues:** Sustaining, \$20; Individual (regular), \$10; Family, \$15; Student, \$5; Senior, \$5; Subscribing, \$10; Life Membership, \$200. All classes of members receive the Mississippi Kite semi-annually, and the MOS Newsletter on a quarterly schedule each season. **Please send 1996 dues or new address, to: Janet Dubuisson, 22410 Glad Acres, Pass Christian, MS 39571.**

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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

Plans for MOS Spring Meeting;
Plans for June Pelagic Trip;
Summary of Christmas Bird Counts;
Winter Birding--Sault Ste. Marie;
News of Winter **Birds Spectacular!**
(Reminder: Have you paid '96 Member Dues?
Not if you have a red 96 on address label!)