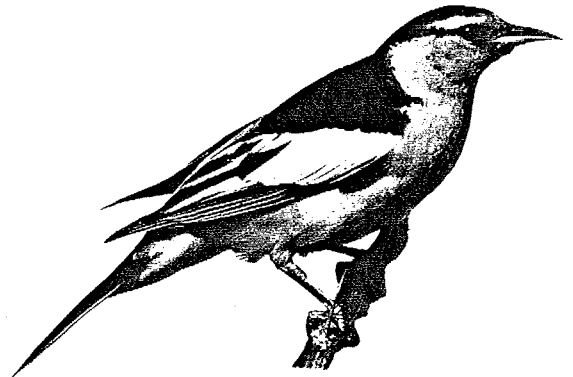

Mississippi
Ornithological
Society

MISS. MUSEUM OF
NATURAL SCIENCE
LIBRARY
111 N. JEFFERSON ST.
JACKSON, MISS. 39202

WANTED IN MISSISSIPPI:



NEWSLETTER

Vol. 42, No. 3

Fall (September) 1997

LOOKING AHEAD:

To the Fall MOS Meeting, September 12-14, 1997

MEETING PLACE: George Payne Cossar State Park is the site of our 1997 fall meeting. The park is situated on the shores of Enid Lake in North Mississippi. It is approximately 6 miles east of Oakland, MS, Yalobusha County, and about 5 miles east of I-55 off State Highway 32. Friday and Saturday evening gatherings will be held in the Visitor's Center overlooking Enid Lake.

ACCOMMODATIONS The Park has duplex-style cabins completely furnished with bed and bath linens and basic kitchen equipment. Campsites are also available. Call the Park Office at 601-623-7356 for reservations. Motels are also available just off I-55 in Grenada and Batesville. Both are about a 25-minute drive from the Park.

Grenada

Holiday Inn - 226-2851
Best Western - 226-7816
Days Inn - 226-5555
Hampton Inn - 226-6666
Comfort Inn - 226-1683
Ramada Ltd. - 229-0892

Batesville

Comfort Inn - 563-1188
Days Inn - 563-4999
Ramada Ltd. - 563-4528
Amerihost Inn - 563-6592 (new)
Hampton Inn - 578-5555 (new)

FRIDAY EVENING, SEPT. 12. The Park Restaurant does NOT serve breakfast or lunch, so you are on your own. If you choose to stay in a cabin at the Park, bring your own food. If you stay in Grenada or Batesville, fast food restaurants are available. An informal social gathering, registration and light meal of sandwiches, chips, and vegetables will be held at the Visitors Center from 6:00-8:30 p.m. Field trips and recent sightings will be discussed at this time. We invite photo-birders to share slides. Just let Shannon Knight know if you need a carousel projector. We hope to have a report on the program activities of the USFWS's Mississippi Wetland Management District headquartered at Grenada.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 13, BANQUET: The dinner will be at 6:30 p.m. in the Visitor's Center and will consist of a catfish plate, vegetables, and dessert. Make sure that you send in your registration form and fee (\$15) by August 20 so that the Park caterer can be notified. **FEATURED SPEAKERS:** Records Committee Secretary Terry Schiefer and Records Committee Member Gene Knight will conduct an informative "How To" Workshop on how to properly prepare the Rare Bird Documentation Form and the MOS Bird Record Card. Submitting these forms is very important and necessary to substantiating bird species in our state. Tim Nuttle will also devote some time to explaining procedures for the

Mississippi Bird Atlas project. List compilation will also be conducted at this time.

FIELD TRIPS, Sept. 13: Four area trips are being planned on Saturday around Sardis Lake, Grenada Lake, Enid Lake, and the Tallahatchie National Wildlife Refuge. Besides herons, egrets, ducks, hawks, flycatchers, nightjars, swallows, and tanagers, the area should turn up a good variety of migrating shorebirds and warblers. All trips will depart from the Visitors Center parking lot at 6:30 a.m. Sunday morning field trips will be planned on Saturday evening according to interest.

RESERVATIONS AND REGISTRATION -- Make your own motel/cabin reservations based on info above. If you haven't already pre-registered, please call in your intention to attend on Friday night plus reserving a plate for Saturday night (\$15) to **Shannon Knight at 601/236-2413** ASAP (NOW! while it is on your mind) not later than September 4th.

FALL 1997 NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT -- Marion Schiefer

The 3rd annual "run" of the N. Am. Migration Count in the fall season is slated for the third Saturday in September, the 20th. This event is a simultaneous census on the designated day in all parts of the USA, which is done on a county-wide basis. It can be lots of fun to get as many folks as possible to participate in a chosen locality so as to "plumb the depths" of our unawareness of "what's happening" among migrant species. Feeder, yard or neighborhood observations are helpful in addition to those parties traveling about the county to favored bird-finding sites. Marion will have the special report forms and instructions at the Fall Meeting. If you can't attend and wish to participate, call Marion evenings for info and forms at 601/324-3748.

A NEW CHALLENGE--WHERE WILL YOU BE SITTING ON 19 OCTOBER?

The 5th National BIG SIT! -- FROM John Himmelman, CT USA

"Choose a spot anywhere within CT, or the state/country you wish to represent. Draw an imaginary 17 foot diameter circle in that spot and count how many birds you, or you and your teammates, can see or hear within 24 hrs while you are within that circle. Last year 21 states, 158 individuals in 48 circles counted 296 species while competing for; the most birds seen within a single circle, the most birds seen from combined circles within a state, and the most seen within an INLAND circle in CT.

Do your backyard, do your favorite birding area, bring a lawn chair, have a barbeque, fall asleep, and watch the patterns of nature from your stationary vantage point. Call John Himmelman at (860) 663-3225 for more info and to register your spot (we don't want 2 people showing up in the same place!). Or, even better, send E-mail to me at-- jhimmel@connix.com."

LOOKING BACK

FROM THE FIELD--Summer Season Highlights

This was a better-than-average nesting season for interesting "finds." Besides the **N. Harrier** nest mentioned in the June issue, Fred Broerman spotted also in Quitman Co. in late June three **American Bittern** immatures-of-the-year indicating local nesting, which has never before been known in Mississippi. Fred and Philip Barbour also recorded a "new thing" in Leflore Co.--inland nesting of **Least Terns** other than on Mississippi River bars. **Cedar Waxwings** "went crazy" this year, with more flocks than usually seen into June, pairs seen in courtship behavior, Mark Goodman saw two copulating waxwings near Columbus, and a pair with a nest was spotted by Dennis Welch high in a pine tree on the west side

of Grenada. All of this when the species ordinarily has moved 5-600 miles northward for the nesting season. [Steve McConnell had more summer sightings than usual in Alabama, and Kimberley Smith reports that the species has been increasingly found in NW Arkansas in summer.] **Tree Swallow** nesting, 1st confirmed 2 years ago, was occurring from the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway on the east (Keith Kimmerle) to the north-Delta on the west side of the state in 1997 (F.B.).

The 1996 first-ever nesting of the **Willow Flycatcher** was at the Black Bayou Unit of Tallahatchie NWR on the Tallahatchie-Quitman County-line. There was a pair, and at times an extra male, at the same site again in June of this year according to Jeff Wilson. Nearby that spot, Jeff and I saw an adult **King Rail** being followed by a family of NINE half-grown younguns on 1 June. The nesting population of **Black-necked Stilts** in the Delta area of Mississippi continues to be noteworthy. Mary Anne Townes and Paul Fioranelli found a stilt nest with 4 eggs at the catfish ponds south of Schlater in Leflore Co. of the Delta while doing bird atlasing. Others were reported by P.B. and F.B. at the same *sand dunes habitat* (!) along the upper Yazoo R. where they found nesting **Least Terns**, south of Morgan City in Leflore Co. Paul Fioranelli and Tim Nuttle found more than 50 Black-necked Stilts showing agitated behavior on levees between several catfish ponds in the Sunflower area of the Delta on 25 June, while surveying for the Mississippi Ornithological Atlas. Suspicions of their breeding in the area were confirmed by flushing an adult off a nest that contained one egg. An apparent post-breeding assembly of 17 B-n. Stilts was at Black Bayou briefly in mid-July.

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue their increase and spread with Q.B. (Sonny) Gray reporting a group of 9 at Batesville in early July where they'd not been known before. But it's hard to be excited about that species' doings in Mississippi anymore when it has been in E COLO for a year (M.D. saw one there in July) and the State of MONTANA had its first sighting in July! A male **Scarlet Tanager** singing in east-central MS by Tim Nuttle in June was another in a series of nesting season sightings. However, thus far, none of those males has been identified with a mate. Maybe next year!

Southbound shorebird migration was underway by 3rd week of July and before. One unusual species was two **Willetts** at Black Bayou on 10 August by Judy and Dick Burkepile. On 16 August the Migratory Bird Day birding trip to St. Catherine's Creek NWR near Natchez was well attended (est 35+) *fide* Philip B., whose list included 10 species of shorebirds and 8 of long-legged waders. Of the latter the stars were the 200+ Wood Storks, especially when they spiraled upward as a flock from their roost-site. Philip credits Mary Stevens, Wilma Pickett, and Allan Mueller with "a great job of managing" up to 12 or more vehicles in "a great birding caravan that wound it's way through the refuge."

Now for a report on hummingbird post-breeding activities from Bennett Carver at Gulfport: "The coast hummingbirds are just now starting to show up at my house. There are probably 10 in my yard now [12 Aug.]. Since June I have made 4 trips to Dot Burgee's house in Henleyfield, MS and have banded a total of 215(!). Fourteen were returns from last year. Last Saturday in Picayune, MS I banded an adult male **Rufous Hummingbird**. It was originally banded by Bob Sargent at that location in 1994 and I have caught it every year since then. Bob, Martha, Duanne, Donna and I will be leaving for AZ to attend a banding conference in a couple of weeks and will be eager to get back and chase those Mississippi "wintering" hummers. I, like Bob, believe that this will be the year for the **Broad-billed Hummingbird** to be reported in MS. *So keep a sharp eye out for hummers with RED bills.*"
[Which may be confidently discriminated from the Red-billed Tropicbirds by considering size and comparing habitat preference & selection--Ed.] :-^)

From Jon Maul at Oxford comes a report on an August trip: "Rebecca and I are back in Oxford. I just wanted to let you know that birding in the Northeast--Maine and Nova Scotia-- was very successful, 14 lifers including: **Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Common Eider, Greater Shearwater, N. Gannet, Spruce Grouse** (excellent up close view), **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** (very close to us), **N. Raven, Gray Jay** (landed on our picnic table only 1 m from me), **Red-breasted Nuthatch** (never got this one before in MS, neither the Brown-headed for that matter), **Solitary Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, Mourning Warbler** (excellent view, Rebecca spotted it), and **Veery**. We also got some good looks at other species such as **Blue-winged warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Am. Redstarts, and Red-eyed Vireos.**" Gene and Shannon Knight have promised an "Expedition Report" on their early-June foray to northern Minnesota, but we'll hope for that in a later issue.

MINUTES FOR SPRING MOS MEETING--APRIL 17-20, 1997

The spring meeting was held at the Best Western Beachview Hotel in Gulfport, MS jointly with the Gulf Coast Audubon Society.

Friday night everyone met and coordinated the activities for Saturday. Some went on field trips to Hancock County while others joined the Gulf Coast Audubon groups to bird with Pete Dunne. Due to the scheduling of the Pete Dunne banquet and reception-book signing on Saturday evening, the MOS business meeting was called for 3:30 PM Saturday afternoon.

Tim Nuttle, who is working on the Breeding Bird Atlas of MS was a guest at the meeting and presented his plans for compiling the information collected. Volunteers were requested. Allan Mueller made a motion (and Marion Schiefer seconded) that we endorse this effort toward an Atlas and that MOS support it. Tim will work with anyone who is interested in the project.

Teaming with Wildlife legislation is back again. Allan asked that everyone write to their senators and representatives and ask them to support this legislation. It is an excise tax placed on bird supplies, cameras, binoculars and other outdoor recreational supplies. The money goes to Wildlife, Fish and Parks. The states will match 30% of the tax. The tax is placed at the manufacturing level and is not charged to consumers at the time of purchase.

Carolyn Jarnagin is chair person of the Important Birding Area of Ms. One meeting has been held and the next meeting will be June 14 in Oxford.

Mary Stevens announced her brochures on the Migratory Bird Day. MOS has printed t-shirts for the activities that are planned for sales to raise money for MOS.

Marvin Davis informed those present of the new MISSBIRD e-mail bulletin board. As of April 11, there were 50 subscribers.

Marion Schiefer told of the North American Spring Migration Count and had forms for those who wished to work on the counts.

New State Bird Checklists of species approved by the Bird Records Committee are now printed; supplies were made available at the meeting by, and may be purchased later from, Gene Knight.

New MOS recruitment brochures are also ready. They have the new membership prices, so throw your old ones away and begin using the new ones. MOS now has 165 members and new ones are being added regularly. Most are stemming from the membership information brochures.

Allan Mueller asked that he be informed of colonial waterbird nesting colonies that are not already known so they can be added to the MS Colonial Waterbird Count.

Shannon Knight said the fall meeting will be at Enid Lake and that details would appear in the next Newsletter.

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Carolyn Jarnagin, Secretary

MISSISSIPPI KITE INQUIRIES

Treasurer Janet Dubuisson requested an explanation stemming from inquiries by new members. She wants you to know that the issues of the *MS Kite* that you are due WILL be received by you, whether in the year of cover date or later--even if your membership should have terminated in the interim. The Kites are typically published irregularly, usually during the following year from the cover date so that they can include compilations of bird records (Birds Around the State) of note during the year of the cover date. The latest issue published was for July 1996.

NEWS FROM "MR. BILL"--

FLICKER DUST

by William H. (Bill) Turcotte
Richland, MS

In early 1994 I put up two Northern Flicker nest boxes back-to-back on an 8-foot post in our back meadow. In one I put a 2-inch layer of wood shavings. In the other I put a gourd shaped like the flicker's nest cavity after cutting off the neck of the gourd at the same level of the 3-inch entrance hole. Then I filled around the gourd with an aerosol foam used for sealing openings around windows of buildings, then added a plastic, removable plug above the top level of the entrance hole.

In late March flickers removed all the wood shavings and used that box for roosting only. A pair of starlings took over the gourd-nest box, built a nest, laid one egg, and I removed the nest. The flickers then occupied the gourd-box, laid five eggs and fledged five young in late May.

In 1995 neither box was occupied although one flicker used the empty box for roosting during the winter months.

In April 1996, flickers again occupied the gourd-nest box, and after removing all the gourd and plastic foam, laid five eggs that hatched and fledged five more young.

In February 1997, a flicker enlarged the entrance hole to a bird box used the previous year by Great Crested Flycatchers. I erected two more flicker boxes on separate posts at opposite ends of our meadow after seeing the flicker roosting regularly in the flycatcher box. Only wood shavings and sawdust layers were added to the new boxes.

In late March and April a pair of flickers occupied a natural or excavated cavity in a sycamore tree in a backyard of the neighbor across our street. This nest was unsuccessful. Later in May and June a pair of flickers was seen regularly at a neighbor's place about a block away on our street. This nest was unsuccessful. Late in May and June a pair of flickers was seen regularly at a neighbor's place about a block away from our street. Around mid-June I noticed a pair of flickers dusting nearly every day in a layer of wood ashes where I regularly burn dead limbs and yard and garden trash. This is the first time that I've seen any kind of woodpecker dusting. It was not more than 30 meters from a new flicker box.

While working in the garden on 11 July, I saw a flicker dusting and watched it fly to the nearby nest box. To my surprise, there were gray bird tracks on the box below the entrance hole. I went and got my garden stool and looked in the box to see an adult and two newly hatched young and one egg. On the next inspection there were three naked young and the remainder of egg shells not removed, a little sawdust on the bottom excavated from sides of the box, and nothing more.

I continued to watch the adults dusting and flying to the box. As the young developed, a layer of fecal matter mixed with the ash dust accumulated in the bottom of the box. There was no odor, only a musky smell, and no evidence of mites, fly larvae or other insects.

As the nestlings developed adult feather patterns, I removed and examined all three. One was active, noisy and in good condition, bright-eyed and observant while in the nest. The other two were docile, cowed down and in poor condition. On July 31, I removed one emaciated dead nestling from the box. It was almost dehydrated and the breast muscle was nearly atrophied. The dominant nestling was still in fine condition, the remaining one near exhaustion and docile. On 2 August the second nestling was dead in the nest. Temperatures were high in the 90s F., and still there was no odor from dead birds and fecal matter that was one-half inch thick in the box.

Why did the adult flickers choose ashes for dusting when there was plenty of garden dust that I kept stirring? The only other birds observed using the "flicker-dust" were Brown Thrashers. Wood ashes are high in content of potash and other minerals. Did flickers carry the ash dust to the nest box for a purpose? If so, what for--to counteract the nest filth like spreading lime in a chicken house? To repel fly larvae from the fecal matter in high heat and humidity, and to hasten drying of excrement? If anyone else has observed flickers using ashes for dusting, please report it.

The remaining nestling was seen looking out of the nest box every day until dark on 5 August. On the morning of 6 August it had fledged from the nest.

ONLINE BIRDING TIPS

"*Online Bird Identification Guide*" 405 photos of 232 species (Pat Scott); URL:

<http://www.uidaho.edu/~scott931/projects/guide.html>

"*North American Breeding Bird Survey*" maps of most species areas of **common** occurrence in nesting season (except tundra-breeders): <http://www.im.nbs.gov/bbs/bbs.html>

BAD NEWS FROM THE FAR NORTHLAND.

Success threatens to overcome the Snow Goose population of North America. Reports heard in 1996 were recently reiterated to the effect that Snow Geese overpopulation is so severe that they are "literally consuming their own habitat." Long-lasting damage to the fragile tundra environment has already been inflicted on the nesting grounds of the geese, which are also nesting habitat for many other species that will also suffer the consequences. As an example, at Churchill, Manitoba on Hudson Bay, the number of nesting pairs of Snow Geese have gone from 1200 to 40,000 since studies began there in 1969. The delta area of Mississippi and eastern Arkansas have both become important winter habitat for Snow Geese, supplementing more traditional areas of the Louisiana and Texas coastal plains. Well-nourished geese are surviving through the winter and migrating to their breeding grounds in superior breeding condition--thus reproduction rate is so high that the population is expanding by about 5% per year. The difficult conclusion is that the numbers of Snow Geese must be lowered drastically via facilitated hunting, not only for the good of that species, but also for the others with which they share the tundra. [After this was written, the front page of the 20th August Washington Post featured an article on the Snow Goose, entitled "Geese May Be Sacrificed To Restore Ecosystem: Massive Slaughter Of Wild Birds Proposed," which described the damage being done to arctic habitats by the overabundance of the geese.]

HUMAN-RELATED BIRD MORTALITY

In an Internet discussion on collecting and banding, the following item was presented to help to place the impacts of banding and scientific collecting into their proper perspective. This assessment found that human activity was responsible for only about 1.9% of the wild bird deaths each year; furthermore, "all propagation and research" (which presumably includes banding and collecting) accounted for less than 0.5% of the total human-related mortality:

Banks, R.C. 1979. Human related mortality of birds in the United States. *U.S. Fish Wildl. Serv. Spec. Sci. Rep.--Wildl.* 215, 16 pp. In early 1970s, human activity was responsible for death of ca. 196 million birds/yr, or ca. 1.9% of wild birds of continental U.S. that died each year. Hunting was largest direct mortality factor, accounting for ca. 61% of human-related bird deaths. Control or prevention of avian depredations took ca. 1% of total, and all research and propagation ca. 0.5%. Collision with man-made objects was greatest indirect human cause of avian deaths, accounting for ca. 32% of human related deaths. Pollution and poisoning caused death of ca. 2% of the total. Numbers of most bird species are essentially unaffected by the human activities discussed. Other activities of man that do not necessary result in death of birds but rather reduce reproductive potential are more likely to have long-term effects on avian populations. [Annotation by J. L. Trapp]

John L. Trapp, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Migratory Bird Management, Arlington, VA

MOS ITEMS FOR SALE--ORDER FORM--PRICES INCLUDE POSTAGE

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| MOS T-SHIRTS (with flying Miss. Kite), SIZES S, M, L & XL | \$17.00 | Send Me--
_____ \$ _____ |
| MOS PATCHES " " " " | \$5.00 EA. | # _____ \$ _____ |
| BEN COFFEY'S MIDSOUTH BIRD NOTES: | \$10.00 | # _____ \$ _____ |
| BACK ISSUES OF THE MISSISSIPPI KITE | @2.50 EACH (inquire re. Years/Nos. Available) | |

Mail Form To: Jan Dubuisson, 22410 Glad Acres, Pass Christian, MS 39571

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized 30 April 1955

ALLAN J. MUELLER
President
4308 Shenandoah Road
Vicksburg, MS 39180

CAROLYN JARNAGIN
Secretary
1012 Washington Street
Corinth, MS 38834-4739

SHANNON KNIGHT
Vice-President
79 Highway 9W
Oxford, MS 38677

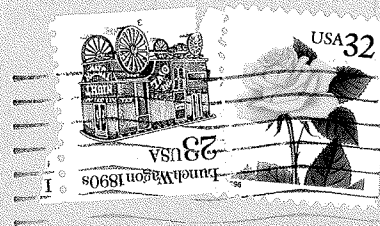
JANET DUBUISSON
Treasurer
22410 Glad Acres
Pass Christian, MS 39571

W. MARVIN DAVIS
Editor: MOS Newsletter
308 Lewis Lane, Oxford 38655
FAX: 232-5148; E-mail:
marvdavs@olemiss.edu

JEROME A. JACKSON
Editor: Mississippi Kite
Dept. of Biological Sciences
Mississippi State, MS 39762
E-mail: picus@ra.MSSTATE.edu

All persons interested in Mississippi bird life are invited to join MOS. **PLEASE NOTE CHANGES in Annual Dues:** Sustaining, \$30; Family, \$25; Individual/Regular, \$15; Student/Senior, \$10; Subscribing (libraries only), \$10; Life Membership, \$300. All membership classes receive the MISSISSIPPI KITE semi-annually, and the quarterly MOS NEWSLETTER seasonally. **Please send dues OR address changes to: Janet Dubuisson, 22410 Glad Acres, Pass Christian, MS 39571.**

RETURN ADDRESS:
Miss. Ornithol. Society
P.O. Box 515
University, MS 38677



MARY P STEVENS
5120 REDDOCH
JACKSON MS 39211

FEATURES IN THIS ISSUE:

Plans for Sept. '97 Fall Meeting
Bird Reports from the Summer Season
The mystery of "Flicker Dust"!