

Mississippi  
Ornithological  
Society

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 43, No. 2

Spring (1 June) 1998



**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**Fall 1998 M.O.S. Meeting, 25-27 September 1998**

**MEETING PLACE:** Plymouth Bluff Environmental Center, which is located just west of Columbus on the west bank of one of the few remaining sections of the former Tombigbee River. Southwest of the Stennis Lock & Dam, the environmental center is on Old West Point Road, less than 10 minutes from the Highway 45 & 82 interchange in Columbus. The environmental center has 2 miles of paved, and in excess of 2 miles of unpaved, trails as well as a pavilion for our use.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** The Plymouth Bluff Environmental Center has available on-site lodging. Twenty-four cabins are available at \$40.00 per night single, \$50.00 double, and \$60.00 triple. These rooms are comparable to those found at any major hotel chain. All rooms have two beds, cable TV, coffee maker, and telephone wake-up service. Additional lodging is available at numerous hotels in Columbus, most within 10 minutes of the nature center.

**PLACES TO EAT:** Numerous restaurants and fast-food establishments are also available within 10 minutes of the nature center. Some of these include Ryan's Steakhouse, Barnhill's Country Buffet, the Old Hickory Steak House\* and La Fiesta Brava\* (\* highly recommended). A list and map will be available at the meeting.

**AGENDA OF EVENTS:**

*FRIDAY, SEPT 25:*

- 7:00 am Initial Bird Survey for the meeting
- 5:00 pm Registration
- 6:00 pm Social Hour (refreshments and snacks)
- 7:00 pm Welcome and Field Trip Itinerary
- 7:30 pm Members Slide Show

*SATURDAY, SEPT 26:*

- 6:30 am Breakfast (coffee, juice, danish, rolls)
- 7:00 am Local Bird Surveys
- 2:00 pm Hummingbird presentation by the Sargents

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4:00 pm MOS Board Meeting  
 6:30 pm Banquet and Compilation of Saturday's Surveys  
 7:30 pm Program--Sargents

*SUNDAY, SEPT 27:*

6:30 am Breakfast (coffee, juice, danish, rolls)  
 6:45 am Posting of the preliminary survey list  
 7:00 am Local Bird Surveys (Red-cockaded Woodpeckers at Noxubee NWR)

**BANQUET SPEAKERS:** **Bob & Martha Sargent**, Hummingbird Specialists from Birmingham Alabama, will speak on their pioneering work with hummingbirds in the southeastern United States. Widely recognized within their field as hummingbird experts, the Sargents travel over 20,000 miles each fall and winter to document such overwintering hummingbirds. Since 1987, the Sargents have captured, identified and banded more than 500 overwintering hummingbirds, representing 11 of the 16 North American hummingbird species found in the U.S. They have been responsible for the identification and documentation of some 25 first state records. Additionally, the Sargents are founders and directors of the "**Hummer/Bird Study Group, Inc.**" Each spring and fall the study group hosts a banding station at Fort Morgan Alabama, that annually bands over 5,000 Neotropical migrants, including 150 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Their banding operation is always open to the public. The Sargents' program is titled "*Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Hummingbirds, but Didn't Know Who to Ask*".

**BIRD SURVEYS:** Bird surveys for the meeting will be to several different locations within Lowndes and Oktibbeha County, including a Sunday morning trip to the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. MOS members who would like to help with bird surveys on Friday or before, in preparation for the meeting, should contact Keith Kimmerle prior to September 18th.

**REGISTRATION & RESERVATIONS:** The Registration/Reservation Form (**on page 7**) should be **completed and mailed no later than September 11th.**

**DIRECTIONS TO PLYMOUTH BLUFF:** Access to the environmental center is via either U.S. Highways 45 or 82. From the Meridian/Starkville highway interchange west of Columbus, proceed north on the two lane road that continues northward from the interchange. If arriving via Highway 82, this exit is prominently marked with signs for "Stennis Lock & Dam West Bank Access Area" next right. After turning/continuing north, take a left at the T-intersection onto Old West Point Road, and the environmental center is about 0.6 mi. on the right. Total distance from the Highway 45/82 interchange is 2.0 mi.

**LOCAL PROGRAM COMMITTEE INFORMATION**

Local coordinators:

Dianne Patterson  
 195 Autumn Trail  
 Columbus, MS 39701  
 (601) 327-4777

Keith Kimmerle  
 128 North Chestnut  
 Columbus, MS 39701  
 internet: <progne@ebicom.net>

Meeting reservations:

Mildred Stennis  
 2300 24th Avenue  
 Meridian, MS 39301

### INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY: VIEWING FALL SHOREBIRD

**MIGRATION, AUGUST 15, 1998** -- *St. Catherine National Wildlife Refuge, Natchez, MS.* Meet at Days Inn on Hwy 61 in Natchez on Saturday 15 August at 7:00 am. The group will proceed to the refuge, where in prior years there have been great opportunities to view 10,000 + shorebirds, and other waterbirds, at this highly-favored stopover site. For details, contact: Wilma Pickett, 956-7444 or Mary Stevens at 354-7303.

### L.O.S. SPONSORS SUMMER/FALL GULF PELAGIC BIRDING TRIPS

The Louisiana Ornithological Soc. for the 4th year is planning 4 trips from Venice, LA to "blue waters" of the Gulf of Mexico for pelagic species. This was the pattern for the M.O.S.-sponsored trip of June 1996, on which many of us added several "lifers"--terns, storm-petrels and, most notable, a **Red-billed Tropicbird**. Those were S of Mississippi, but were in "Louisiana waters" according to proper "controlling legal authority." [The L.O.S. trips don't travel in the eastward direction.] The dates are *June 13th, August 8th, September 19th and December 12th*. There were still plenty of spaces available at this writing. Departures are from Venice at 6 a.m.; returns are at 6 p.m. To reserve a spot, send a check for \$65 to the Louisiana Ornithological Society; mail it to Bill Hemeter, 1825 Audubon Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Reservations are by payment only, on a first-come, first-serve basis. There are 38 spots per trip; refunds are made only if a trip is canceled or if a replacement is available from a waiting list. For more information you can call Bill Hemeter, at home (504-861-3117) or at work (504-392-1618). With the June date so imminent, you would need quickly to contact Bill to confirm whether reservations are still available **before he heads for Alaska, June 7th**. ACCOMMODATIONS IN THE CAMERON AREA: Cameron Motel and Restaurant (1-800-609-5529); Town and Country Motel (775-2921); Gilbert's (775-7375), \$25/night; Gulf Motel (775-2880); Chateau Chenier (538-2389).

Consider the **Louisiana State List for Seabirds**: Cory's Shearwater, Audubon's Shearwater, Band-rumped Storm-petrel, Wilson's Storm-Petrel, Leach's Storm-Petrel, Magnificent Frigatebird, Red-billed Tropicbird, Masked Booby, Long-tailed Jaeger, Bridled Tern, Sooty Tern -- **LIFERS!!**

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## LOOKING BACK:

### FROM THE FIELD--REPORTS ON THE SPRING SEASON

*Trip Report from the Tombigbee N.F. (Choctaw Unit)* -- Chris Reynolds, Mike Taquino and I birded the area this morning, 8 May, and turned up several singing **Veerys**. Also found of interest were Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Baltimore Oriole, Louisiana Waterthrush, **Worm-eating Warbler** and various other warblers (Black-and-White, Hooded, etc). -- Doug Wood, Dept. Wildlife and Fisheries, MSU

*Anna's Bottom, Adams County*, 13-16 May: The flooded fields on the rising Mississippi River attracted a large number of herons, egrets, shorebirds, etc. Nine species of sandpipers plus two **Black-bellied Plover** were exciting. Wader species--herons and egrets--totalled seven, with lots of Great and Snowy Egrets. The number of Am. White Pelicans grew from 3 on the first day to a flotilla of 14. -- *Robert and Mary Dunnell*, 21 Pruett Road, Natchez MS 39120.

Note from the Dunnells, new members of M.O.S.: "We are novice birders recently moved to Natchez from the Seattle, WA area, which required us to begin learning all over again." [Editor-- the Dunnells have been seeing and reporting, electronically, plenty of birds, as per the following:]

Turkey Hunts Red-tailed Hawk! -- "While driving south on US 61 on 7 May, we were surprised to see a female Wild Turkey, neck extended, charging through the grass at a high rate of speed, then taking to the air to attack a Red-tailed Hawk that was intending to land. It was a spectacular confrontation, with the hawk lifting off quickly! We presume Mrs. Turkey had her kids hidden somewhere nearby in the grass. The scene was the unmowed median of US 61 in Wilkinson Co., north of Woodville, MS. At this point the southbound lanes are not finished, so both directions use what will be the northbound lanes. Thus, it is forested but a wide swath has been opened for the highway corridor. It was between 10:00 AM and 11:00 AM. Neither Mary nor I have ever seen anything quite like it. It was a shame that we could not pull off to watch the conclusion of the confrontation, but the hawk was initially taken by surprise and intimidated." *R. & M. Dunnell*

Clark Creek Wilderness Area near Pond, MS., Wilkinson Co -- "Trails are improved, and a new one leads to three previously inaccessible waterfalls. The one new waterfall I saw was as big as the three well known ones; folks told me the two I missed were even bigger. With a 200+ foot dropout, it offers both upland and bottomland deciduous birding: Red-eyed & White-eyed Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, Am. Redstart, N. Parula, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers, La. Waterthrush and Summer Tanager. Alas, with 100+ ft. trees and lots of brush, this is another place that would be good for a blind-birders field trip. So study up on your bird calls. For those of you who have never been there, this place is dizzyingly beautiful. Who'd a thunk there would be waterfalls in SW MS!" -- *Bill Hemeter, NOLA*

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Late May -- "I saw a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher down the block from my home in the Lake Forest subdivision NE of Vicksburg on 5/22. It was a really nice specimen flycatching on a lawn next to the community lake. What a start to a Memorial Day weekend! -- *K.C. Jensen, Waterways Exp. Sta., Vicksburg.*" [*Kent--check whether you might have a pair!*]

Black Bayou Unit of Tallahatchie N.W.R. (Quitman and Tallahatchie Counties) -- Spring highlights: Best shorebird of the 22 species observed there this spring was the pair of **Hudsonian Godwits** seen on 10 May. Remarkable nos. included 600 Semipalmated Sandpipers. The first major effort to manage water levels for migrant shorebirds at the former catfish farm ("Crowder Ponds") was made possible by newly-repaired high-volume pumps. [Supplemental non-federal funding is needed to maximize the potential of the program at Black Bayou for spring and fall shorebird migration. Do you know of likely sources?] Other unusual and very pleasing sightings were of several Purple Gallinules in mid-May, one lonely Com. Moorhen (yet on 26 May), several of both bitterns, 6+ Black-crowned Night-Herons versus (surprisingly), only a single Yellow-cr. Night-Heron. A flock of ca. 150 White Ibises was at the area in mid-May, and a flock of 170 non-breeding Am. White Pelicans still was about on 23 May. Peregrines visited in transit northward. -- *Fred Broerman & Gene and Shannon Knight*

**“LEAST TERN UPDATE”** -- by Jan Dubuisson (A Gulf Coast Audubon Society Project)  
[excerpted from Spring '98 GCAS's Audubon Newsletter]

There has been a lot going on with the Least Terns recently. At the February Audubon board meeting, we agreed to mark the tern nests as we did a number of years ago. At a called meeting in March, we agreed to ask the Harrison County Board of Supervisors to allow us to fence off the two sanctuaries down to the mean water line, and to declare a “No Wake Zone” for the waters of Mississippi Sound immediately adjacent to the colonies. I attended a Board of Supervisors meeting on April 6th, and not only did they agree, but thanks to Supervisor David LaRosa, they also agreed to pay for the fencing and the buoys.

Alison Henry and I presented a program at her children's school, Westminster Academy for a contest to guess the arrival date for the first Least Tern. The arrival date was March. 26, and the class of the winning child was treated to a field trip on 11 May when Dr. Jerry Jackson/s class from MSU came down to band chicks. TV station WLOX was on hand to record the activities.

Allison and I put on a program for the Sand Beach Maintenance Department in March and received pledges of complete cooperation from them regarding protection of the nesting areas. They will be erecting the fencing and signs (“*Nest in Peace*”). Millie Page and I presented the same information to the Harrison County Beach Patrol in April. Attending were Captain Roy Leslie, head of the beach patrol, and Sheriff Joe Price, both of whom offered any assistance possible in enforcing the original ordinance regarding the sanctuaries. We will be presenting a program also to the Gulfport Police Department soon.

This has been a positive experience for me, and I am thankful for the cooperation from our appointed and elected officials. They seem to be genuinely concerned about the fate of our “little guys.”

*KUDOS TO THE LADIES AND MEN OF GCAS FOR THEIR FINE LEAST TERN PROGRAM!!*

### **SWALLOW-TAILED KITE PROJECT REPORT**

As part of the Museum of Natural Science's current effort to determine the status and distribution of Swallow-tailed Kites (*Elanoides forficatus*) throughout Mississippi, Mark Woodrey and other Museum staff have begun bi-weekly boat surveys for kites along the Pascagoula River from the confluence of the Leaf and Chichasawhay Rivers to the I-10 bridge. To date only one survey has been completed, but the numbers are very encouraging. Mark and others conducted their first survey on 13-14 May 1998 and over the two-day period counted 22 Swallow-tailed Kites.

These data will provide information regarding potential 'hot spots' where kites may be nesting. Mark and the museum staff will also be flying over the Pascagoula river on several mornings looking for roost sites and will also be conducting ground surveys looking for nests in the river basin. Mark reports that in addition to seeing the kites soaring at various locations along the river, he and his crew were treated to observing kites drinking from the river, eating small insects from the tops of trees, one kite was observed eating a green snake, and another was observed soaring above the river with Spanish moss in its talons. Mark further reports that 22 kites are

more than he had ever previously observed before.

Also, MOS members have been sending sightings of kites which are currently being used to help determine areas that need to be checked more closely. Mark would like to thank those who have reported their sightings and encourages everyone to continue their efforts. Lastly, Mark will provide a more detailed summary in the fall newsletter. Meanwhile, remember to send any observations you may have of this species to Mark, marked -- Attention: Swallow-tailed Kite Survey, MMNS, 111 North Jefferson Street; Jackson, MS 39202.

*DATA NEEDED FOR EACH SWALLOW-TAILED KITE OBSERVATION:*

1. date sighted;
2. time of day;
3. number of kites seen;
4. location (as specific as possible; for example - ½ mile north of I-10 bridge over the west channel of the Pascagoula River);
5. bird seen soaring or perched;
6. bird seen carrying nesting material (stick, Spanish moss);
7. bird seen carrying food (large insects, snakes);
8. any relevant comments;
9. your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address (if you have e-mail).

**NATIONAL NEWS: NEW JERSEY AUDUBON SOCIETY'S FIFTEENTH ANNUAL "WORLD SERIES OF BIRDING"**

This 24-hour event was conducted in rainy weather on the traditional 2nd Saturday, May 9 1998; the Official Standings presented on BirdChat (WWW) showed that the top team listed exactly **200** species. The top 5 finishers, and a few selected others, were (sponsor/team name)--

- 200 Phillipsburg Riverview Assn; "Pohatcong Grasslanders"
- 198 Nikon/Delaware Valley Ornithological Club
- 196 Birders World Magazine; "Butcherbirds"
- 190 Swarovski/Cornell; "The Sapsuckers" (Non-residents team)
- 181 Bushnell/Smithsonian Institution; "Woodpeckers" (ditto)

#10--171 Carl Zeiss Optical

#14--145 Vermont Inst. of Natural Science; "Green Mtn. Goatsuckers"

#20--138 Valley Forge Audubon Society; "Rough Grouse"

#25--131 Wildbird Centers; "Re-tailed Hawks"

#30--126 Wetlands Institute; "The Marshketeers"

#36--116 The Nature Conservancy Pennsylvania; "Four Loons from Pa."

#40--100 PSE&G; "NBU Nighthawks"

Other vital statistics include:

**1998 Cumulative Total Species** seen by all teams, **258** (1997 and 1996, Cum. Totals, 270)

Only 8 out-of-state teams participated, which seems lower than in early years, when intrepid Mississippi teams twice participated--once an all-female team ("The Mississippi Mudders").

Unfortunately, some teams of yesteryear have joined the "Over the Hill Gang," along with many "never-were/wanna-be-competitors." The World Series is for the **READY & TOUGH!** Will a



new team of YOUNG (relatively) and VIGOROUS (necessarily) MISSbirders rise to the challenge in 1999??

**MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
FINANCIAL REPORTS--SEPTEMBER 1997-MARCH 1998  
INCOME & EXPENSE STATEMENT**

**INCOME**

Dues	\$1075.00
Interest	\$ 638.50
Sales	
T shirts	\$45.00
Patches	\$00.00
Kites	\$24.00
Checklists	\$ 7.75
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,790.25</b>

Kites--No Issues	\$ 0.00
Checklists	\$ 0.00
Meetings	[121.97]
Supplies & Postage	\$ 52.58
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 535.69</b>
<b>NET PROFIT</b>	<b>\$1,254.56</b>

**EXPENSES**

Bank Charges	\$ 10.00
Donations	\$100.00
Newsletters--Two Issues	
Printing	\$290.68
Postage	\$204.40

**BALANCE SHEET**

**ASSETS**

Checking Account	\$ 1,505.07
Savings Account	\$ 3,503.28
Certificates of Deposit	\$17,235.28
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$22,343.63</b>

<b>NET WORTH</b>	<b>\$22,343.63</b>
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**REGISTRATION FORM**

**Registration Form - MOS Fall Meeting, 25-27 September 1998**

Please mail your reservations early, as lodging at the environmental center is limited. Make the check payable to Mississippi Ornithological Society and mail with this form to:

**Mildred Stennis, 2300 24th Avenue, Meridian, MS 39301.**

NOTE: Lodging reservations can be made for the environmental center by contacting:  
Sandra Spencer (601) 241-6214.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: < \_\_\_\_\_ >

Friday Social                      No Charge

Sat/Sun Breakfast                \$ 2.50 \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Banquet                \$12.50 \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-registration                \$ 5.00 \_\_\_\_\_ (Registration, \$10.00 at the meeting)

**TOTAL**                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**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)

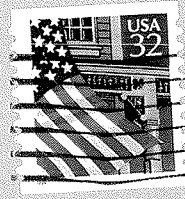
JEROME A. JACKSON  
Editor: Mississippi Kite  
Dept. of Biological Sciences  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
(E-mail: picus@ra.MSSTATE.edu)

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All persons interested in Mississippi bird life are invited to join the **MOS**. **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 on seasonal basis. Please send dues OR address changes to: Janet Dubuisson, 22410 Glad Acres, Pass Christian, MS 39571.

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



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**FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:**  
Plans for September 1998 Fall Meeting