MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

- **©** CBC SUMMARIES
- **BACKYARD BIRDWATCHING: THE PROCESS**
- MONITORING NEOTROPICAL MIGRANTS
- DETAILS OF SPRING 2001 MEETING

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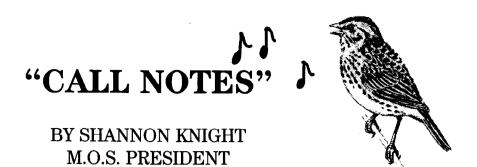
AMERICAN BIRDS: Terence Schiefer, State Editor

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAYS: Mary Stevens, MMNS

MISSISSIPPI BIRD INFORMATION

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With Punxsutawney Phil's prediction of more winter weather, we have stocked up on sunflower seeds, cracked corn, peanut butter, and grits, anticipating more heavy feeding. The harsh winter prevented several of our winter yard birds from showing up this time—our usual Hermit Thrush who sat on our deck feeder every morning waiting for his peanut butter/grits treat, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Red-breasted Nuthatches who enjoyed the same feast. We had no Ruby or Golden-crowned Kinglets or Brown Thrashers visiting our yard this winter. Our Winter Wren left in early december. The five to seven Fox Sparrows regularly visiting our feeders, along with Field and Song Sparrows from time to time were a bonus of the cold weather, as were Rusty Blackbirds.

For those attending the Sparrow Workshop on February 3, it was very evident that the low numbers of sparrows seen compared to previous years told the story of a dry summer and fall producing less food, along with the many days of extreme cold this winter, forcing birds to push farther south. Of course, this may be situational only for North Mississippi and not for other parts of the state.

Even as the sleet falls on this mid-February day, the Cardinals are singing and the Mourning Dove are cooing. We've recently seen Red-tailed Hawks paired up and American Crows carrying nesting material. The Red Maple and Elm trees have tiny buds and the daffodils' heads have popped up from the earth. We're all ready for Spring, but we'll have to be patient a little while longer it seems.

Speaking of Spring, we're all looking forward to our Spring Meeting on April 20-22 at Bay St. Louis on the Gulf Coast. Tish Galbraith has arranged for our Saturday evening banquet to be at the Depot, which was featured in the February issue of *Southern Living Magazine*. The highlight of the meeting will be the after-dinner speaker, our own Judy Toups! Let's all try to attend and have a great weekend of birding and camaraderie!

March 2001

2000-2001 Christmas Bird Counts Highlights

The following are highlights of CBC's across the state. Thanks to compilers for reporting on their counts. We did not receive highlights from Jackson Co., Sidon, Vicksburg, and Eagle Lake.

- ARKABUTLA LAKE (Rob Peeples, compiler) 23 Dec.; cloudy, 19-34 degrees; wind SE 5-10 mph; water mostly frozen; 11 observers; 100 species; 56,135 individuals.
 - Highlights: Ross's Goose (5-new to count), Greater Scaup (2-new to count), Peregrine Falcon (1-new to count), Spotted Sandpiper (1-new to count), Laughing Gull (7-new to count), American Tree Sparrow (1-2nd ever), Lapland Longspur (1,040), Canada Goose (2,548), Hooded Merganser (2,491).
- SUMNER (Genevieve Tharp, compiler) 5 Jan.; clear, 32-52 degrees; wind NW 0-10 mph; patchy snow on ground, all waters frozen; 2 observers in 1 party; 57 species; 72,220 individuals.

 Highlights: Turkey Vulture (1-new to count), American Black Duck (210), Western Meadowlark.
- CHURCH HILL (Genevieve Tharp, compiler) 18 Dec.; cloudy, rain all day, 27-46 degrees; wind NW 3-20 mph; ice on still waters; 4 observers in 2 parties; 48 species; 2,279 individuals. NO HIGHLIGHTS.
- MOON LAKE (Carolyn Bullock, compiler) 3 Jan.; most water frozen; 5 observers in 1 party; 79 species; 4,734 individuals.

 <u>Highlights:</u> Eurasian Collared-Dove (4), Blue-headed Vireo (1), and Painted Bunting (1 female).
- JACKSON (Mary Stevens, compiler) 30 Dec.; cloudy with a.m. snow flurries, 20-31 degrees; wind was brisk; most ponds were frozen; 30 observers in 9 parties; 107 species.

 Highlights: Common Goldeneye (2), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Laughing Gull (1-new to count), Horned Lark (8), Bewick's Wren (1), Lincoln's Sparrow (1-2nd time ever). Some record high numbers: Double-crested Cormorant (2,808), Canada Goose (340), Forster's Tern (123), Eurasian Collared-Dove (23), Eastern Phoebe (60), Pine Warbler (196), Vesper Sparrow (157), and Red-winged Blackbird (146,328).
- WASHINGTON COUNTY (SOUTH) (Ed Alexander, compiler) 31 Dec.; skies were clear to cloudy; wind calm; 15 observers; 98 species; 118,541 individuals.

 Highlights: Ross's Goose (6), Eurasian Collared-Dove (20), and American Crow (27).
- LAUDERDALE COUNTY (Van McWhorter, compiler) 30 Dec.; clear, 17-32 degrees, a.m. wind NW 3 mph; p.m. wind N 10-15 mph; 23 observers; 87 species; 30,200 individuals.

 <u>Highlights:</u> Bald Eagle (4 adults), Red-breasted Nuthatch (2).

- HATTIESBURG (Larry Smith, compiler) 30 Dec.; partly cloudy, 26-45 degrees; 15 observers in 6 parties; 92 species; 6,939 individuals.
 - Highlights: Canada Goose (9), Blue-winged Teal (10), Canvasback (4), Black-chinned Hummingbird (1), Rufous Hummingbird (1), White-crowned Sparrow (8), and Rusty Blackbird (52).
- GRENADA (Marvin Davis, compiler) 22 Dec.; clear in a.m. to mostly clear in p.m.; 15-37 degrees; wind N-10 mph; 13 observers in 6 parties; 105 species; 16,770 individuals.
 - Highlights: Greater White-fronted Goose (16), Merlin (1), Sora (3), Sandhill Crane (14), Laughing Gull (14-new to count), White-eyed Vireo (1), Marsh Wren (1), Red Crossbill (7-new to count).
- SARDIS LAKE (Marvin Davis, compiler) 29 Dec.; cloudy in a.m. to partly cloudy in p.m., 27-37 degrees; wind NNW 10-20 mph with 30 mph gusts; 11 observers in 6 parties; lake level low with some ice; 106 species, 22,877 individuals.
 - Highlights: Common Merganser (7), Merlin (1), Spotted Sandpiper (1), Laughing Gull (15-new to count), Blue-headed Vireo (1). Some all-time highs: Bufflehead (84), Hooded Merganser (2,540), Wild Turkey (77), Bonaparte's Gull (1,399), Ring-billed Gull (5,611), Horned Lark (53), and Pine Warbler (36).
- SOUTHERN HANCOCK COUNTY (Jerry Bird, compiler) 28 Dec.; a.m. cold, overcast, light rain; rain ended by late a.m., wind picked up from NW, eventually quite gusty; 33 observers in 10 parties; average number of species; individuals below average.
 - <u>Highlights:</u> Greater White-fronted Goose, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Peregrine Falcon, Rufous Hummingbird, Magnolia Warbler (pr), Wilson's Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and Lincoln's Sparrow.
 - Notable misses: Little Blue Heron, Greater Scaup, Piping Plover, Spotted Sandpiper, Ruddy Turnstone, Brewer's Blackbird, Vermilion Flycatcher.
- NOXUBEE NWR (Terence Schiefer, compiler) 16 Dec.; light to heavy intermittent rain, 39-73 degrees; wind variable, 3-20 mph; 22 observers; 100 species; 10,561 individuals.
 - Highlights: American White Pelican (18), Great Egret (33-high count), Canvasback (1), Bufflehead (128-high count), Red-breasted Merganser (9), Merlin (1-new to count), Wild Turkey (71-high count), Lesser Yellowlegs (1-new to count), Least Sandpiper (4), Forster's Tern (2), Barn Owl (1), Horned Lark (1–2nd time on count).
 - <u>Count week birds:</u> Horned Grebe, Greater Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Sandhill Crane, Laughing Gull (1st time for count week), Bonaparte's Gull, Herring Gull (1st time for count week).
- TUPELO (Charlotte Icardi, compiler) 16 Dec.; rain and low visibility, a terrible day; 3 field observers and 2 feeder watchers.

March 2001

BACKYARD BIRDWATCHING

"The Process"

BY GENE KNIGHT

In reviewing my article in the September 2000 issue of the M.O.S. Newsletter titled "Starting a Yard List," I described my system of learning the birds of my yard. This time I will take you through "The Process" in more detail. Using a piece of graph paper, write the month and year at the top. A few spaces down draw a **bold** line across the paper from left to right. On the left side (from top to bottom), a few spaces in from the left, make another **bold** line. In the 30+ spaces across the top write in the days (1-31) and down the left side, write in the names of the bird species you see. (See diagram). Personally I believe that by

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
GBH	1						***************************************		
Turkey		4			2		1		
Vulture							e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e e	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	
Blue Jay	X	X	X	16	Χ	10	Χ		
Cardinal	X	Pr	X	X	6M 4F	X	X		~~~~

taking a pen or pencil and writing each species' name in the blocks, the quicker you will learn the spelling and chronological order in which the birding field guides list the birds. After mastering names and order you can invent your own abbreviations for the species as I have done to save space and time. it may take two or three pieces of graph paper per month. Use a clipboard for holding the sheets. I keep a whole years record in mine. This allows you to carry it outside when you are working in the yard or simply sitting on your deck or patio. It also helps you not to forget to mark the species as you encounter them.

The hardest part in making your yard list will be in disciplining yourself to make daily entries, no matter how trivial it might seem. By doing this you establish a core of Resident birds which you should be able to see or hear every day of the year in your yard. It is a yard list bird as long as the species is seen or heard while you are in your yard, regardless of where the bird is. If the bird is flying overhead or is sitting in a tree in your neighbor's yard across the street and you are in your own yard then the bird goes on your yard list. The same applies to birds only heard. These species that you encounter all year round are the Permanent Residents of your yard. Depending on where you live in the State, this list may differ as much as 5-10 species. Learn everything you can about these species. Do the males and females look alike or are they different looking? Where do they nest (if they do)? What do they eat? How do they sound? The songs and calls are very important to begin learning because most of the time half of your entries on your card will

MONITORING NEOTROPICAL MIGRANTS

by Gene Knight

As you know, over the last several years there has been much concern about neotropical migrants. These species winter in Central and South America. Most of them have to fly across the Gulf of Mexico on their journey to and from their nesting grounds. Habitat destruction at both ends of their migratory journeys has scientists concerned. Situated on the Mississippi River in the middle of one of the main migratory flyways in North America, gathering data on these species will be easy. This project has been designed to **ignite interest** from the members of M.O.S. and everyone is encouraged to participate.

The first group listed as TRANSIENTS move through our state for a short period of time. For this group we are seeking arrival and departure dates. This means while you are out birdwatching this Spring write down the date that you **first** see these species as well as the **last** date. Most will arrive in April and depart in May. For example: Tennessee Warbler - arrival <u>14 April</u> departure <u>10 May</u>.

Don't worry what a friend may put for their dates. Everyone's dates are important. The second group listed as NESTERS also make the journey from afar south <u>stopping in our state to nest</u> and raise their young. Arrival dates **only** are needed for this group as they will remain in the state through Summer, not leaving until Fall, as the TRANSIENTS again move through our state. We will again be seeking more information this Fall. Please take time and participate in this M.O.S. project.

As many of you know some of these species winter in the state in small numbers. For example, Least Sandpiper and Dunlin to name a few shorebird species. Orange-crowned Warbler and Common Yellowthroat are some of the warblers. On these species you have to use your best judgement. If you see other species that I have not listed here, write them down and send dates along with the rest. If you do not have dates for all or even half of the species still send what you get, even if you only have ten dates. Please send this form to Gene and Shannon Knight, 79 Hwy. 9W, Oxford, MS 38655. Good luck and have fun birding!

TRANSIENTS	Semipalmated Sandpiper		
	Western Sandpiper		
American Bittern	Least Sandpiper		
Blue-winged Teal	White-rumped Sandpiper		
American Golden Plover	Baird's Sandpiper		
Piping Plover	Pectoral Sandpiper		
Semipalmated Plover	Dunlin		
Greater Yellowlegs	Stilt Sandpiper		
Lesser Yellowlegs	Buff-breasted Sandpiper		
Solitary Sandpiper	Short-billed Dowitcher		
Willet	Long-billed Dowitcher		
Spotted Sandpiper	Wilson's Phalarope		
Upland Sandpiper	Franklin's Gull		
Whimbrel	Caspian Tern		
Marbled Godwit	Forster's Tern		
Red Knot	Black Tern		
Sanderling	Black-billed Cuckoo		
	Olive-sided Flycatcher		

Least Flycatcher	Common Nighthawk
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Chuck-wills-widow
Alder Flycatcher	Whip-poor-will
Willow Flycatcher	Chimney Swift
Philadelphia Vireo	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Warbling Vireo	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Bank Swallow	Acadian Flycatcher
Veery	Great Crested Flycatcher
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Eastern Kingbird
Swainson's Thrush	White-eyed Vireo
Blue-winged Warbler	Yellow-throated Vireo
Golden-winged Warbler	Red-eyed Vireo
Tennessee Warbler	Purple Martin
Orange-crowed Warbler	Tree Swallow
Nashville Warbler	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Yellow Warbler	Cliff Swallow
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Barn Swallow
Magnolia Warbler	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Black-throated Green Warbler	Wood Thrush
Blackburnian Warbler	Gray Catbird
Palm Warbler	Northern Parula
Bay-breasted Warbler	Yellow-throated Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler	Prairie Warbler
Cerulean Warbler	Black-and-white Warbler
Ovenbird	American Redstart
Northern Waterthrush	Prothonotary Warbler
Mourning Warbler	Worm-eating Warbler
Wilson's Warbler	Swainson's Warbler
Scarlet Tanager	Louisiana Waterthrush
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Kentucky Warbler
Lincoln's Sparrow	Common Yellowthroat
	Hooded Warbler
	Yellow-breasted Chat
NESTERS	Summer Tanager
Anhinga	Blue Grosbeak
Least Bittern	Indigo Bunting
Cattle Egret	Painted Bunting
Green Heron	Dickcissel
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Bachman's Sparrow
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Lark Sparrow
White Ibis	Grasshopper Sparrow
Osprey	Orchard Oriole
Swallow-tailed Kite	Baltimore Oriole
Mississippi Kite	
Broad-winged Hawk	
Least Tern	
LCCO LCIII	

Yellow-billed Cuckoo _____

be a species you heard and never saw. Whenever possible, try to <u>see</u> through <u>binocs</u> what bird is singing or calling. Know what the immature birds look like and how they differ from Ma and Pa birds.

Bird feeders and water baths are essential in attracting bird life to your yard. They have both boosted our Permanent Residents from 15 species to 20 species within just 2 years! Pine Warbler and White-breasted Nuthatch are 2 such species.

By marking a species <u>every day it is present</u> you find out the length of stay. This is important to know. How else are you going to determine whether a species is <u>using your yard</u> for winter, summer, or even both. It might be a transient neotropical migrant pausing in your yard for food and water. If you are consistent with maintaining food and water for the birds, they will depend on it and you will see a pattern develop.

Summer residents will add another 25-30 species to your list depending on habitat and where in the State you live. Most of the nesting species in your yard will be neotropical migrants. They have been missing from your yard since Fall of the previous year and have spent the Winter in Central and South America. They arrive in your yard in Spring just to nest in the Summer and to depart once again in the Fall. Adding them to your yard list will be a welcome event because you will be able to enjoy their songs as well as search for their nest sites to see their young.

April and May in the Spring and September and October in the Fall are the seasons when you can add the most species to your yard list. With your binocs around your neck and your favorite field guide in hand the warblers will captivate you in their Spring brilliance and yes, challenge your wits in their Fall drabness. As birds fly over your property use binocs to view them. I spotted a black dot in the sky one day and after retrieving my binocs and looking at the dot, it turned out to be an adult Bald Eagle. Use your binocs to look at everything that moves in the trees and sky and check field guides when needed for positive identification. If you aren't positive of ID then simply put a ? in the box. By accumulating all this data over the years you can check to see when migration starts. This will allow you to be prepared to watch for new migratory species for your yard list.

This is "The Process," so be patient and within a few years you will be well on the way to learning the birds of your yard. In the next article I will share with you "The Results" of going through this "Process" in keeping your yard list.

March 2001 7

Looking Ahead...

SPRING MIGRATION COUNT – The 2001 North American Migration Count is to be held all across the USA on Saturday, May 12. There is a format for collecting and submitting the results. If you are interested in making a county-based census on that date and are not already on the list, call Marion Schiefer, State Coordinator and Compiler at 662-324-3748.

REMINDER: The winter seasonal records (Dec., Jan., Feb.) are due March 15 to Terry Schiefer, MOS Records Committee Secretary, P. O. Box 9775, Mississippi State, MS 39762-9775. Everyone is encouraged to submit their documentation on 3 by 5 cards with proper information: species name, state, county, locality, date (day, month, year), number seen, observers, documentation (sight record or photo, or specimen or heard only), significance and details.

REMINDER: For those participating in the Yard List Contest (January 1, 2001-December 31, 2001) we hope that you are continuing to tally your list. Remember to record on a checklist the date you first see or hear a bird in your yard. The person/persons with the most species gets free family or individual M.O.S. dues for one year. Robert and Mary Dunnell of Natchez won last year for listing 142 species!

F.Y.I.: At our Fall Meeting the Board of Directors discussed how to distribute or dispose of the numerous back issues of the Mississippi Kite. It was decided that copies will be brought to the Spring Meeting to give away to members who would like them. The Museum of Natural Science also will keep a small supply on hand.

MISSISSIPPI BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE VACANCY

Two positions on the Mississippi Bird Records Committee have become vacant with the expiration of the terms of two of the committee's current members. The committee is looking for two new members to fill these vacancies. Prospective members should have a demonstrated expertise in field identification and be knowledgeable about the birds of Mississippi and the surrounding region. Responsibilities of members include reviewing records of birds that are on the Mississippi Review List and attending the committee's annual meeting. Committee members serve a three year term. Most business will be conducted by mail.

If you are interested in serving on the committee or have questions about the responsibilities involved, please contact Terry Schiefer (P.O. Box 9775, Mississippi State, MS 39762; 662-324-3748; tschiefer@entomology.msstate.edu).

SPRING MEETING APRIL 20-22,2001 BAY ST. LOUIS, HANCOCK CO.

LOCATIONS:

Bay St. Louis, Hancock Co., the Gulf Coast, just west of Gulfport. From I-10 take the Waveland, Bay St. Louis exit #43. Turn south onto Hwy. 603. The Holiday Inn is on Hwy. 90 west at the corner of Hwy. 603 and Hwy. 90. The Key West Inn is a little over 1.3 miles east on Hwy. 90 on the right just past Washington Ave. There is an Amoco station at the corner of Washington and Hwy. 90. Nicholson Ave. is an extension of Hwy. 603 on the south side of Hwy. 90. To come to the Church Friday evening, take Nicholson across the tracks, turn right onto Central. Continue along Central about one mile going through the stop sign at Coleman to Vacation Street. The Church will be on the left. To reach the Depot Saturday evening, go down Washington Ave. across the tracks to the stop sign. Turn left and continue along Blaize Street. The red and green Depot will be to your left across from the little block of restaurants (see map).

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Waveland Holiday Inn	228-467-9261
Key West Inn (Bay St. Louis)	228-467-3822
Baytown Inn B & B (Bay St. Louis)	228-466-5870
Heritage House B & B (Bay St. Louis)	228-467-1649
Ramada Inn (Diamondhead)	228-255-1300
Camping Available:	
Buccaneer State Park (Waveland)	228-467-3822
McLeod Water Park (Kiln)	228-467-1894

FRIDAY EVENING - APRIL 20

6:00 pm – Mississippi Coast Audubon Society will provide a potluck dinner at the Waveland Methodist Church at the corner of Central and Vacation Streets (see map).

7:00 pm – Stacy Peterson will give a summary of the results of the oil platform survey as it effects migration patterns in Mississippi.

8:00 pm – Board Meeting

SATURDAY – APRIL 21

7:30 am – Field Trips—All field trips will meet at the south side of the Sav-a-Center parking lot behind the Holiday Inn at the corner of Hwy. 603 and Hwy. 90.

6:30 pm – Banquet - Bay St. Louis Depot (see map)

7:30 pm – Business Meeting

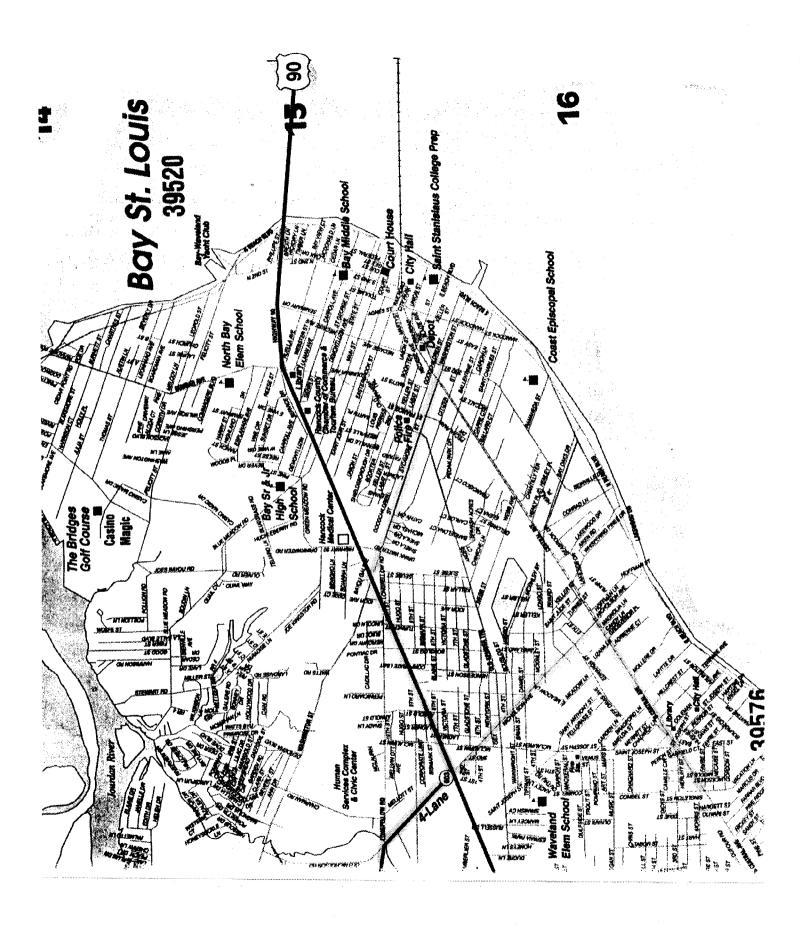
Tucker Award Presentation

Species Tally

Speaker – Judy Toups, birder extraordinaire, teacher and coauthor of the classic *Birds and Birding on the Mississippi Coast*.

SUNDAY - APRIL 22

7:30 am - Ansley Field Trip



SPRING 2001 MEETING – REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s):			
			,
E-Mail:			
	\$5.00 per person \$		
Banquet:	\$10.00 per person \$		
Vegetarian Dinner:	\$10.00 per person \$		
	Total Enclosed \$		
	Christian, MS 39571		
		Send Me	
MOS T-SHIRTS (with flying Mis	s. Kite), SIZES S, M, L, XL, \$17.00 ea.	#	_ \$
MOS MS KITE LOGO PATCHES (for your cap or jacket), \$5.00 ea.			\$
MOS FIELD CHECKLISTS OF BIRDS OF MISSISSIPPI, \$0.50 ea. #			
DEN COMPRIS AND COMPRIS TO SERVICE TO SERVIC			\$
	IPPI KITE JOURNAL, @ \$2.50 ea., inquir	e	

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO M.O.S. MAIL CHECK AND ORDER FORM TO:

Jan Dubuisson, MOS Treasurer 22410 Glad Acres Pass Christian, MS 39571

Membership Form			
New Member:			
Subscribing (libraries), \$10 yr.			
Sustaining, \$30 yr.			
Life, \$300			

Dues are payable in January of each year. Check mailing label for your dues status.

Mississippi Ornithological Society 79 Highway 9 W Oxford, MS 38655

Check your expiration date >>>>>