

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Christmas Bird Count

Participating in this 60th CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT on January 2, 1960 were the following: Miss Christine Berry, Miss Frances Cook, B. E. Gandy, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Gill, Dr. & Mrs. Ernest Goodpasture, W. H. Turcotte, and Mrs. W. G. Wills.

The count was taken within a fifteen-mile diameter circle centering at the intersection of Berry and Gault Streets in Jackson, Miss. The area of observation was approximately 10% deciduous bottomland, 10% hardwood upland, 4% pine forest, 18% conifers and hardwoods, 5% parks and cemeteries, and 40% open land, pasture, and weedy fields, 3% wooded lakes, 4% open lakes, 1% marsh, and 5% residential area.

The nine observers on this count were divided into three parties, starting at 6:30 A. M. and concluding at 5 P. M. They totalled 28 party hours - 19½ on foot and 8½ by car - and traveled 110 party miles - 10 on foot and 100 by car.

The total of 35,195 plus 500,000 \*\*\* individuals of 78 species included: 20 Pied-billed Grebe, 2 Great Blue Herons, 2 Common Egrets, 8 Mallards, 2 Wood Ducks, 10 Ring-necked Ducks, 50 Lesser Scaups, 3 Buffleheads, 4 Ruddy Ducks, 5 Turkey Vultures, 5 Black Vultures, 7 Red-tailed Hawks, 3 Red-shouldered Hawks, 5 Marsh Hawks, 7 Sparrow Hawks, 42 Bobwhites, 1 American Coot, 46 Killdeer, 2 Common Snipes, 107 Mourning Doves, 1 Great Horned Owl, 1 Burrowing Owl, \*\* 4 Barred Owl, 10 Belted Kingfishers, 50 Yellow-shafted Flickers, 3 Pileated Woodpeckers, 24 Red-bellied Woodpeckers,

1 Red-headed Woodpecker, 14 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, 11 Downy Woodpeckers, 2 Eastern Phoebes, 1 Say's Phoebe \*, 91 Blue Jays, 35 Common Crows, 24 Carolina Chickadees, 21 Tufted Titmice, 3 White-breasted Nuthatches, 1 Brown-headed Nuthatch, 1 Brown Creeper, 3 Winter Wrens, 1 Bewick's Wren, 31 Carolina Wrens, 55 Mockingbirds, 24 Brown Thrashers, 29 Robins, 5 Hermit Thrushes, 25 Eastern Bluebirds, 48 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 21 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 3 Water Pipits, 19 Cedar Waxwings, 18 Loggerhead Shrikes, 306 Starlings, 15 Myrtle Warblers, 12 Pine Warblers, 2 Yellowthroats, 92 House Sparrows, 195 Eastern Meadowlarks, 31,032 Redwinged Blackbirds, 2 Rusty Blackbirds, 954 Common Grackles, 885 Brown-headed Cowbird, 175 Cardinals 10 Purple Finches, 81 Am. Goldfinches, 60 Rufous-sided Towhees, 165 Savannah Sparrows, 1 LeConte Sparrow, 12 Vesper Sparrows, 40 Slate-colored Juncos, 6 Chipping Sparrows, 76 Field Sparrows, 115 White-throated Sparrows, 6 Fox Sparrows, 19 Swamp Sparrows, 18 Song Sparrows.

\* The outstanding observation of the day was a Say's Phoebe, which was collected by Turcotte and Gandy at the William's Airport, two miles NE of Raymond, and placed in the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission Museum. This is a new state record for Mississippi. When first seen, the bird was sitting on a low guard rail near the office of this little-used airport. The airport manager said he was fairly certain that this was the same bird he had been seeing in and around the hangar for about a month. The specimen has all the identifying marks of this western species, and its habits as observed in the field by the collectors also correspond.

\*\* A Burrowing Owl, carefully identified by Ernest and Katherine Goodpasture, and party, was another unusual observation. It was sitting on a pile of concrete rubble at Lake HiCo, a 400-acre reservoir within the city limits of Jackson. The bird was observed at close range and was seen bobbing up and down which is characteristic of this species.

\*\*\* Turcotte and Gandy concluded an enjoyable day afield at dusk as they watched an estimated 500,000 Starlings and Blackbirds go to roost just west of Robinson Road near the WJTV television tower. Of this number approximately 10% were Starlings, 40% Red-winged Blackbirds, 20% Common Grackles, and 30% Brown-headed Cowbirds.

#### Shelby State Park and Gulf Coast Notes

Your editor, on Jan. 7, 1960, made a trip to Pass Christian, Miss. with stops at Lake Geiger, Shelby State Park and around Gulfport harbor and beach areas to check birds. Sixty-two species were listed. Observations of principal interest to the writer were: 2 Yellowthroats in gallberry bushes observed at close range and large numbers (200 or more) in mixed flock of chipping and field sparrows at Lake Geiger. At Gulfport, off a concrete pier extending from the small craft harbor, about 50 horned grebes were feeding in a group with about 25 Bonaparte's gulls intermingling with them and trying to take food from grebes as they surfaced. About 10 redbreasted mergansers (inc. 1 adult male), 1 old-squaw, 50 or more lesser scaup and 4 loons were noted in or around the small craft harbor. Along the beach road between Gulfport and Pass Christian, several large flocks of robins and cedar waxwings were feeding on mistletoe berries in liveoaks and on berries of other trees and shrubs. Six tree swallows were seen along the beach area. WHT

Horned larks (Approx. 200) - Nov. 20. Observed by St. Clair Thompson and W. H. Turcotte near intersection of Hwy. 16 and Hwy. 49-W in Yazoo County in planted oat fields and bean field. Approximately 20 were observed 4 Mi. N. of Holly Bluff in Yazoo County on same date.

Willetts & Sandpipers: Dec. 3 with Henry Bobbs, Jr. on Chotard Lake - Issaquena Co. - 2 Willetts, probably Western, at shallow end and 2 spotted sandpipers on floating log fish mats in front of Laney's boat camp. Although common on the coast, during winter the willet is not frequently seen on inland waters.

Golden Eagle - A mature Golden Eagle was observed several times by Quinton Breland, Manager of the Leaf River WMA in Perry Co. during late December in the 1300-acre deer enclosure. This eagle was seen harassing flocks of wild turkeys in and around several large clearings planted to winter game food plots. On one occasion this bird was seen feeding on the ground on what Mr. Breland thought to be deer droppings. Around December 20, 1959, the bird was caught in a steel trap baited with a raccoon carcass. It was donated alive to the Livingston Park Zoo on December 30, 1959.

Mr. Breland has observed during the past 10 years, that one or more golden eagles are regular winter visitors to the Leaf River Area, probably attracted by the concentration of deer and turkeys feeding in large food plots.

Pine Warbler - A single warbler was observed in deep bottomland hardwood timberlands of the DeSoto National Forest in Sharkey County on January 3, 1960 by WHT and H. L. Tackett. The bird was feeding in trees over the water in a 700-acre waterfowl reservoir. This is my first observation of a pine warbler in an exclusively hardwood habitat in the Delta region. WHT

Bald Eagles Nesting at Bluff Lake - According to a newspaper article dated January 5, 1960 from Maben, Miss., a pair of bald eagles are nesting in a tall cypress on an arm of Bluff Lake near the corners of Noxubee and Oktibbeha Counties. The nest is visible from a public road through the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge within which Bluff Lake lies.

Wintering Yellowthroat - A wintering Yellowthroat on Mayes' Lake near Jackson has been observed November 22, December 12 and again on the Christmas count January 2, 1960 by Mrs. Wm. G. Wills, Jr. Also, Orange-colored warblers were observed December 12 at same location.

White-crowned Sparrows - On January 10 near Flora, Hinds County, a flock of 6 or 8 White-crowned sparrows was observed by Mrs. Katherine Goodpasture. Mrs. Wills and Mrs. Goodpasture checked about 20 again at the same location on January 12th.

Blues and Snow Geese - October 25 and early part of November and on Dec. 27, Snow and Blue geese were observed on Lake Hico, the new 400-acre reservoir in Jackson. Mrs. Wm. G. Wills, Jr. made the observations in Oct.-Nov. Mrs. Katherine Goodpasture observed 3 Snows and 4 Blue geese on Dec. 27, 1959.

Canvasbacks - Eight canvasbacks, 7 males and 1 female, were seen Jan. 10 on Dennery's Lake just north of Jackson by Mrs. Katherine Goodpasture.

Horned Larks - About 50 Horned larks were reported at the same location as above on Jan. 9 in Yazoo County near Louise. The birds were seen by Mrs. Wills, Mrs. Goodpasture, Miss Christine Berry and Miss Fannye A. Cook.

#### EARLY SPRING FIELD TRIP

John Phares, MOS President, is tentatively planning an early spring (Probably around April 10) field trip for MOS members to the Southwest Louisiana marshes. A number of members have indicated a desire to tour the Cameron and Vermillion parish areas which abound with waterfowl, shorebirds and other spring migrants when favorable conditions prevail. The proposed tour would start probably early on a Saturday morning from a meeting place at or near Lake Charles, La., and via Hackberry, and Cameron to Sabine and Rockefeller refuges and along Route 27 back via Abbeville. Saturday would be spent on the bird tour with the following Sunday free for sightseeing, etc. on the return trip. Members who are interested in making such a week-end trip are requested to write John Phares, Box 451, Jackson. If enough interest is shown, further plans will be made and announced and arrangements made to visit the best spots.

Your bird notes are needed for the next newsletter. Send them in before March 15 when another issue should be forthcoming. Then send in your observations on spring migrants in time for another issue around June 15.