

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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Spring Field Trip Plans

John Phares, MOS President, announces the following arrangements for the MOS field trip to the Southwest Louisiana marshes:

Members making the tour of the Southwest Louisiana marshes will meet at 6:30 A. M., Saturday, April 9, at the Chateau Charles Motel restaurant on Highway 90 four miles west of Lake Charles, Louisiana. Departure time is 6:45. We will proceed to Sulphur, Louisiana, on Highway 90 and take Highway 27 to Hackberry, making short stops enroute to the Sabine Refuge headquarters on Highway 27 just south of Hackberry. We will tour areas on the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge and then proceed to Cameron, Louisiana, via Highway 27 for lunch about 12:30. The tour will continue on Highway 27 from Cameron to Grand Chenier, Louisiana, to contact Mr. Ned Crain, manager of the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge, who will conduct a guided boat tour of the refuge beginning at 2:00 P. M.

Members making the trip will make their own arrangements for food and lodging. Information on motel accommodations at Lake Charles is enclosed.

The field trip will end with the boat tour and members of the party will be free to return home or stay over Sunday for sightseeing in the Evangeline country around Abbeville and Lafayette.

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The 8½ inch snowfall in the Jackson Area on February 12 and 13 left some of our wintering birds in poor condition but apparently most species will come through without serious loss. A 10° temperature early morning of February 14 was the low during this unusual weather.

The editor observed savannah and vesper sparrows along roadsides between Jackson and Raymond on February 14. They were apparently in weakened condition and were attempting to find food where snow was melting on the road shoulders. On February 20, near Holly Bluff in Yazoo County, one each of the savannah, vesper and water pipit were found dead in open fields, apparent victims of the cold. A mourning dove near death was found in the same area, probably also a victim of the unusual weather.

Jackson radio and television stations broadcast appeals to feed songbirds while snow was on the ground in response to numerous requests from local people.

#### Blue-headed Vireo and American Mergansers

Mrs. Katharine Goodpasture reported seeing American mergansers on Lake Hico in Jackson on January 15. She also observed a blue-headed vireo on the Natchez Trace north of Jackson on Saturday, January 16.

#### Wilson Snipe

Mr. Clarence Morgan, Jr., Kosciusko, observed a flock of 18 Wilson snipe in a marshy area in Attala County on February 8 and makes the following comment: "I have not seen so large a number of snipe together in many years. They circled me and I was able to count them several times."

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#### White-crowned Sparrows

John Phares and W. H. Turcotte observed about 50 white-crowned sparrows north of Holly Bluff in Yazoo County on February 25. The birds were congregated in a thicket bordering a ditch bank and near a hog lot where there was a considerable amount of waste from hog feeders. Birds in both immature and adult plumages were seen. Again on Sunday, March 6, an even larger number of white-crowns was seen at the same location by WHT. Approximately 100 were observed at close range as they flew to the ground from the thicket to feed in the edge of an oatfield. "This is the largest concentration of white crowns, I have ever seen at one place." WHT.

Numerous vesper and savannah sparrows were seen in open fields and pastures in the same vicinity on February 25, along with 1 song sparrow, white-throats and 1 Bewicks' wren.

#### Water Pipits

On February 27, 50 or more water pipits were observed feeding in a large oat field about 2 miles south of Clinton, Hinds County. "This is about the largest single flock I have seen." WHT

#### First Purple Martin Arrival

One male purple martin arrived on February 26 at my martin house. This bird was seen only once thereafter as it came back to the house in late afternoon. On the morning of March 4, apparently the same bird was found dead on the ground under the martin house, a victim of the cold weather.

First martin arrival date at my house west of Jackson last year was February 26; 1958 - March 1; and 1957 - March 9. No other arrivals to date, March 8, 1960. WHT

#### Purple Finches and Cedar Waxwings

Barry O. Freeman reports four cedar waxwings observed at Moon Lake, Coahoma County, January 18, 1960, also, 9 purple finches and two cedar waxwings in his yard at Oxford, Lafayette County, feeding on hedge berries, March 8, 1960.

Large flocks of waxwings have been in the Jackson area since late February. John Phares and W. H. Turcotte observed a flock numbering at least one thousand on Northside Drive, Thursday, February 25. The birds have been feeding on pyracantha berries, especially in the northeast Jackson area.

#### Early Blue-winged Teal

John Phares and WHT observed a pair of blue-winged teal on Friday, March 4, along the Natchez Trace, south of Kosciusko in Attala County. The teal and several pairs of mallards were in backwater from the Yokanookany River covering fields along the Trace.

#### Solitary Sandpiper

Mrs. W. G. Wills, Jr., observed 1 solitary sandpiper on Culley's pond in Madison County near the Natchez Trace, Sunday, March 7, another early arrival date.

#### The Wilson Ornithological Society Meets at Gatlinburg, Tennessee

At invitation of the Tennessee Ornithological Society, the 41st annual meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society will be held at Gatlinburg, Tennessee, May 5 - 8, 1960. Members of the Knoxville Chapter of T. O. S. will act as hosts. Registration begins at 1:30 P. M., May 5; registration fee \$2.00. Headquarters is the Mountain View Hotel and all regular sessions will be held in the Huff House adjoining the hotel.

Field trips will start at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park headquarters. In early May wildflowers will be at their peak. In traveling the 15 miles from Park Headquarters, ascending to Newfound Gap (5,000 feet) one can see changes in plant and bird life one might expect to see in journeying from Tennessee to Canada. At higher levels, winter wrens and veeries can be heard and an occasional raven completes the wild character of the scenery.

Ben Coffey extends a cordial welcome to all MOS members who may wish to attend this meeting in a beautiful place. Anyone desiring to attend can obtain program announcements from: Mrs. Robert A. Monroe, 1424 Tugaloo Drive, Knoxville 19 Tennessee.

#### Pearl River County Notes

Winter birds have been about normal: Cardinals (27), White-throated Sparrows (30), English Sparrows (6), Mockingbirds (3), Blue Jays (7), seen daily. Seen regularly but not always daily: Towhee (2), Brown Thrasher (2), and Chipping Sparrows (2). Since mid-February: Red-winged Blackbirds - at first 6-8, but since March 1 their numbers have noticeably increased, at least 100 now. They are very

tame and come in these large numbers and feed close by the house. But six females have been noted and those since March 1. Towhees (2), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (2)

Cedar Waxwings (35 to well over 200 in one flock) were here February 18 - 28 feeding on holly and yaupon berries. Apparently the food supply was not short for not all bushes were stripped, merely those nearest the house. Seen occasionally and irregularly: Meadowlarks (up to 25), Phoebe (2), Red-bellied, Pileated and Downy Woodpecker, Killdeer (2), Ruby-crowned Kinglets (2), Golden-crowned Kinglet (1), Myrtle Warbler (2-4), Purple Finches (11) February 17 - March 6; Goldfinches (2-5) Song Sparrow (1) 2/28; American Pipit (7) 2/14; Bobwhites (10) 2/14; Hermit Thrush (1) 3/1 on; Robins (2-5), Chickadees and Tufted Titmice only rarely.

First Purple Martin appeared 2/17, seen again 2/23 and 2/27; 2/28 - 3, 2/29 - and seen daily since with the number increasing to 8 March 3; each morning they are snuggled onto the sunny side of the birdhouse platform (except one or two are sometimes in the house), apparently trying to keep warm. They are absent during midday but are only occasionally seen in the air about here. Where are they finding food during this weather?

On January 27 as we were coming north on route No. 43, at the point where the road to Gainesville leads off, we saw 68 Black Vultures on the ground so close together that many were touching. They were just standing there; about half of them wheeled into the sky as we drove past but there was no sign of any food there. After we passed those which had flown away returned to the ground, and, as long as we watched them, they just stood there. This particularly interested us as never before had we seen vultures standing around on the ground where there was no apparent sign of food.

Tree Swallows have been absent with the exception of February 14 when I counted 78 flying in a southerly direction over here. February 2 (100) and February 19 (100) were seen at Henleyfield but on later dates none were seen around the ponds and puddles which they often frequent.

Red-winged Blackbirds spend much time in the tops of the pine trees (I have noted this for several years) and seem to be feeding on the seeds which they gather from the cones. I never have read that these birds feed on pine seeds and would be interested to learn if others have noted this.

On February 3 and March 3, I have enjoyed watching birds at the home of a friend in Waveland. Her home is a normally settled area, and the following birds came to her feeders close by the window or were seen on the lawn or in the trees near the house: White-throated Sparrows (5), 4 Chickadees, 3 Tufted Titmice, 2 Pin Warblers, 14 Purple Finches, 1 Brown Thrasher, 1 White-bellied Nuthatch, 1 Carolina Wren, 1 Song Sparrow, 1 Flicker, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1 Downy Woodpecker, 1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2 Blue Jays, 2 Towhees, 4 Cardinals, 1 Mockingbird, 23 Red-winged Blackbirds and 5 Cowbirds (first appearance 3/3). She reports Robins on the grass plot between the highway and the lawn but never inside the fence on the lawn; Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were regular visitors in the azaleas during early February and Bobwhites are seen at the back gate (open territory beyond). Pine Warblers fed freely on suet-peanut butter mixture.

Amy B. Tolman, Picayune, Mississippi