

# MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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## Annual Meeting

The 5th annual meeting of the Mississippi Ornithological Society will be held in conjunction with the Mississippi Academy of Sciences meeting at Millsaps College in Jackson on Friday afternoon, April 29, 1960. Program plans are being completed by our officers. We also plan to have a Saturday morning, April 30, field trip up the Natchez Trace. Members are urged to attend and participate in the program and the field trip which will be interesting and enjoyable events.

## Cameron Parish Field Trip

A party of eleven MOS members and guests visited the southwest Louisiana area on Saturday, April 9. We made several stops along Highway 27 between Sulphur and Hackberry, Louisiana, before visiting the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge and Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge. Refuge Managers Kent Myers and Sam Barton met our party at the Sabine Refuge and accompanied us on a tour through this large marshland area which is a part of the wintering ground for blue, snow and white-fronted geese and other waterfowl.

Large numbers of waterfowl, water and shorebirds were seen along the route. White-faced glossy ibis, white ibis, approximately 200 avocets, black-necked stilts, mottled ducks, scaup, shovellers, a few pintails, blue winged teal, Florida gallinules, dowitchers, baldpate, gadwall, common egrets, snowy egrets, Louisiana, little blue and green herons were seen in numbers. Greater and lesser yellowlegs were common. Roseate spoonbills were nesting in an isolated part of the refuge, according to Refuge Manager Kent Myers, but none were seen by our party.

After lunch in Cameron, Louisiana, we visited the Rockefeller Refuge, an 85,000-acre marshland tract which lies mostly south and east from Grand Chenier, Louisiana. Through the courtesy of the Louisiana Wild Life and Fisheries Commission our party was conducted on a boat tour along the boat canals through the refuge by Ned Crain, refuge manager.

Both the Sabine and Rockefeller refuges have been developed for wintering waterfowl by diking off large sections of marshland. Water control structures allow the manipulation of water levels to favor growth of waterfowl food plants.

About 30 blue geese and a few snows were seen on Rockefeller refuge. Large numbers of coots and Mexican cormorants were seen in one impoundment.

Several long-billed curlews, several Hudsonian curlews (whimbrel), numerous yellowlegs, willets, herring, laughing, ring billed and Bonaparte's gulls, royal and Caspian terns, Forster's terns, one each of ruddy turnstone, sanderling and black-bellied plover were seen on the boat trip. Marsh raccoons and several Nutria were seen on this refuge; also several large alligators.

One upland plover was seen along the roadside in a grassy plot after leaving Rockefeller refuge. One scissor-tailed flycatcher was seen perched in a small tree near Grand Chenier, Louisiana. Land birds were very scarce. We saw one yellow warbler, a few savannah sparrows, cardinals, redwings, and boat-tailed grackles in numbers.

We searched for cattle egrets but were rewarded only by the sight of bleached cattle bones among the numerous cattle ranging in this interesting country. Our total list of birds for the day included 73 species.

Our sincere thanks are due to Kent Myers and Sam Barton on the Sabine Refuge for their courtesies and interest in accompanying our party; also to Ned Crain and the other Wild Life and Fisheries Commission personnel who conducted us on the boat tour of the Rockefeller refuge, we say thanks.

Members and guests making this trip were: John Phares, Erskine Gandy, Miss Fannye Cook, Miss Christine Berry, Mrs. W. G. Wills, Dr. and Mrs. Carl De Forest, Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Turcotte, Terry and Jim Turcotte.

#### Evening Grosbeaks

Barry O. Freeman, Chief of Fisheries, Game and Fish Commission, reported what may be a new state bird record for the evening grosbeak. He observed two, a male and female, in a maple tree on March 20 in his yard at Oxford, Lafayette County, Mississippi. Later in the day they were seen again at close range through a window at a frozen-over bird bath. They reappeared in the same tree on March 26. Barry identified these birds unmistakably by the large white bill, prominent white patch on back and by the size and yellow color. He also reported 3 purple finches (April 11) and 3 chimney swifts, April 2, at Oxford.

#### Ring-billed Gulls

A spectacular concentration of migrating ring-billed gulls occurred on Eagle Lake in Warren County on March 19. These gulls were all over the lake, probably several thousand. There was a high wind with high wave action on the lake. Some condition in the lake was causing shad or other fish to surface and the gulls were busily feeding over the entire lake. On March 15 a migrating ringbill flushed from the middle of a blacktop highway west of Louisville during a rainy night. WHT

## Lark Sparrows

Three lark sparrows were observed by WHT and St. Clair Thompson in a gravel road near Holly Bluff, Sharkey County, on April 6. This is my first record of the lark sparrow in the Delta region.

## The Spring Season Thus Far

In spite of the sub-normal temperatures of February and March, the phenomenon of bird migration was about on the same schedule experienced last year. First arrival dates reported this season by Mrs. W. G. Wills, John Phares, Barry O. Freeman, Erskine Gandy, and W. H. Turcotte are tabulated below for comparison against last year's first arrival dates.

The first purple martin arrived in the Jackson area on February 26. He pushed his luck, however, and was found dead a few days later under the martin house and a probable victim of the cold weather. Next martin arrivals were around mid-March.

Blue winged teal (March 4), Solitary sandpiper (March 7), and spotted sandpiper (March 7), were earlier than usual first arrivals among the early migrants. Early arriving warblers and vireos, the sycamore, black and white, parula and black-throated green warblers and the yellow throated and white eyed vireos were about on last year's schedule.

The first hummingbird observed in the Jackson area, March 26, was 2 weeks earlier than last year's first. Chimney swifts arrived on the same day, March 29, and were here in numbers on March 30.

Mid-season migrants such as the wood thrush, prothonotary warbler, hooded warbler, orchard oriole and summer tanager were about on schedule compared to last year.

The first chuck-wills-widow heard singing in the Jackson area was 11 days earlier than last year. An early kingbird (March 30) was a week ahead of last year's first arrival. Three indigo buntings observed on the Natchez Trace at Rose's Bluff on a Saturday morning field trip, April 2, were unusually early arrivals for this species.

First arrival dates for the season thus far are tabulated below:

	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>
Purple martin	Feb. 26	Feb. 26
Green heron	---	March 27
Little Blue Heron	April 4	April 7
Yellow-crowned night heron	March 24	---
Blue-winged teal	March 20	March 4
Spotted sandpiper	April 6	March 7
Chuck-wills-widow	April 23	April 12
Whippoorwill	March 31	April 6 (Sharkey County)
Chimney swift	March 29	March 29
Hummingbird	April 4	March 26
Crested Flycatcher	---	April 11 (Amite County)
Wood peewee	April 11	April 16

	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>
Kingbird	April 6	March 30
Rough-winged swallow	March 14	March 15
Tree swallow	March 14	March 12
Barn swallow	April 4	April 8 (Lafayette Co.)
Wood thrush	April 7	April 4
White-eyed vireo	March 28	March 31
Red-eyed vireo	April 18	April 11
Yellow-throated vireo	March 28	March 24 (Perry County)
Black and white warbler	March 28	March 21
Prothonotary warbler	April 4	April 2
Blue-winged warbler	April 4	April 7
Parula	March 22 (Forrest Co.)	March 29 (Hinds Co.)
Black-throated green warbler	March 25	March 24
Maryland yellowthroat	March 14	March 25
Sycamore warbler	March 22	March 24 (Perry Co.)
Prairie warbler	April 17 (Perry Co.)	April 3 (Greene Co.)
Waterthrush	April 25	March 24
Hooded warbler	March 28	April 2
Orchard oriole	April 11	April 2 (Wayne County)
Summer tanager	April 4	April 3 (Greene Co.)
Indigo bunting	April 19 (Greene Co.)	April 2 (Hinds County)
Blue gray gnatcatcher	---	March 24 (Perry Co.)

### Whippoorwills

Four whippoorwills were heard singing at daylight April 6, and several others were heard at the same site April 7 in Sharkey County. My experience over the past several years indicates that the whippoorwills sing at daylight during migration and they can be detected by getting into the woods at that time. WHT

### Marsh Hawk Roost

A marsh hawk roost in sedge fields 10 miles west of Terry was visited by St. Clair Thompson, John Phares, and WHT on March 11. Twenty or more hawks were seen to come in to their roosting places in the sedge grass after sundown. Numerous pellets containing fur and bones of rats and mice were examined. A few contained feathers of non-game birds.

### Banded Purple Finch

A banded purple finch found dead in her yard by Mrs. A. N. Gipson, 4403 Wainwright, Jackson, on February 16, 1960, was banded March 19, 1959, by Mr. Franklin McCassey, Storrs, Connecticut.