

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

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July 25, 1960

MOS NEWSLETTER - Vol. 5, No. 4

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Fifth Annual Meeting

The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Ornithological Society met with the Mississippi Academy of Sciences in the Sullivan-Harrell Science Hall, Millsaps College, Jackson, Mississippi, April 29 and 30, 1960.

The business session was held Friday afternoon, April 29, with Mr. John Phares, President, presiding.

The treasurer's report was presented by Mrs. W. G. Wills, Jr., in the absence of the treasurer, Miss Christine Berry. The report was accepted. It was again voted that \$250.00 from the treasury be placed at interest since this amount had not been placed at interest as recommended in 1959.

Following a discussion as to the possible need for a Life Membership, the President reviewed the Constitution on Memberships. No specific recommendation was made for a change, though it was thought that a Life Membership might be advantageous.

Mr. B. E. Gandy, chairman of committee on bird sanctuaries, reported on contacts made with individuals and representatives of groups who are in position to encourage the establishment of sanctuaries in towns and cities. The material, which he had assembled, and a proposed letter of instructions designed to help those who may wish to know how to go about establishing municipal sanctuaries were discussed and it was recommended that his committee be authorized to prepare a kit of this material to be sent by the chairman to interested persons upon request. This recommendation was approved.

Miss Cook reported that her committee had not succeeded this year in finding a bird student sufficiently qualified to enter the essay contest sponsored by the Mississippi Academy of Sciences. She stated that she would continue efforts to interest students in this project and she hopes to have some one representing bird study at the next annual meeting.

Mr. W. H. Turcotte gave a resume of accomplishments in field studies by the membership during the year. He referred to the initiation of the Christmas count by Jackson members at which time the Say's phoebe was collected for a new state bird record, and the burrowing owl was observed on Lake Hico. Other examples of interesting, or unusual, field records of birds were cited as reported in the Newsletter as outstanding contributions by members of the Society to the ornithology of the state. He urged the membership to continue active reporting of field observations for publication in the Newsletter.

Letters of interest from Mrs. Ben Coffey and Mrs. Amy B. Tolman, expressing their disappointment at not being able to attend the meeting, were read.

Miss Cook read a news release on the recent death of Dr. Paul Bartsch of Lebanon, Virginia. Dr. Bartsch was a well-known scientist and an outstanding ornithologist.

The secretary was instructed to confer with the treasurer on the need and plans for a revised list of members of the MOS. This list to be furnished at an early date to the president and to the editor of the MOS NEWSLETTER.

The Nominating Committee; W. H. Turcotte, B. E. Gandy, and Miss Fannye Cook, was instructed to present the nominations for officers for 1960-61 to the membership by mail, since there was not a quorum present at the meeting.

Those attending the meeting were: Miss Fannye Cook, Mr. B. E. Gandy, Mrs. Alton Ellick, Dr. Carl DeForest, Mrs. Carl DeForest, Mr. John Phares, Mr. W. H. Turcotte, Mrs. W. G. Willis, Jr., and Miss Mary E. Hobson.

Respectfully submitted,
Vivian C. DeForest, Secretary

P. S. Saturday, April 30, the MOS group enjoyed a delightful field trip along the Nature Trail and the Natchez Trace. Eighty species of birds were observed on this early morning outing. The coffee and doughnuts, provided by Mrs. Willis and Miss Berry, were enjoyed at Roses' Bluff.

Annual Field Trip

The annual field trip of the MOS was made Saturday, April 30, 1960. Seven members met at the Jackson Nature Trail at 5:30 A. M. and proceeded along the Natchez Trace Parkway in Madison County northeast of Jackson. Coffee and doughnuts were enjoyed by all during a brief rest stop at Roses' Bluff picnic area on the Trace.

A number of male bobolinks arrayed in breeding plumage provided one of the highlights of the trip. Several of these were seen at close range on the Old Canton Road northeast of Jackson, and another large group was seen and heard in a field along Meek's Ferry Road in Madison County. An osprey, clutching something in its feet, was seen flying north along Pearl River at Roses' Bluff. A wood thrush nest, occupied by a sitting female, was found across the road from Roses' Bluff. The nest was only 3 or 4 feet from the ground and contained four eggs.

Eighty species of birds were seen on the trip this year as compared with 78 species last year and 95 in 1958.

A comparison of the 1958, 1959, and 1960 records for these annual spring meetings along the same route shows:

13 species seen in 1958, NOT observed in 1959 or 1960:

Yellow-crowned night heron	Grey-cheeked thrush
Blue-winged teal	Magnolia warbler
Red-shouldered hawk	Black-throated green warbler
Turkey	Bay-breasted warbler
Solitary sandpiper	Painted bunting
Hairy woodpecker	Swamp sparrow
Tree swallow	

4 species seen in 1959 NOT observed in 1958 or 1960:

Blue goose
Wilson's snipe
Black-throated blue warbler
Pinewoods sparrow

7 species seen in 1960 NOT observed in 1958 or 1959:

Osprey	Bobolink
Chickadee	Baltimore oriole
Veery	Dickcissel
Worm-eating warbler	

Wilson Society Meeting at Gatlinburg

The annual convention of the Wilson Ornithological Society in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, May 5 - 8, was outstanding in several respects. The attractive setting for the meeting in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the unusually fine program drew a record crowd of approximately 335 registered members and guests.

Twenty-eight excellent papers were given during the three sessions. A symposium entitled "The Ecological Significance of Bird Weights" included five of these. Of all the papers presented, members of our party, Dr. and Mrs. DeForest, Miss Mae Brown, and I probably enjoyed most the following: "Bird Casualties at a Florida T. V. Station," by Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr., of Georgia; "Songs of the White-throated Sparrow," by Donald J. Borrow, Ohio State University, and William H. Gunn, Federation of Ontario Naturalists; "Swift Flocks South of the Border," by Ben B. Coffey of Memphis; and "Four Seasons at Hawk Mountain," a colored movie, by Mr. B. Broun, Superintendent of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania. Thomas A. Imhof of Alabama Department of Conservation gave a very enlightening report and discussion on "Distributional Information from Alabama."

We from Mississippi were delighted to see a number of out-of-state MOS members in attendance. We visited with Mr. Albert Ganier, a founder of the Tennessee Club, a past president of The Wilson Ornithological Society, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Coffey of Memphis, and Mrs. Blanche Dean of Birmingham, all charter members of MOS. There were also other MOS members whom we enjoyed seeing: Miss Ruth Castles of Nashville and Miss Ava A. Tabor of Thibodeaux, Louisiana. At the Annual Dinner Mrs. Dean thoughtfully and graciously introduced me as representing the Mississippi Ornithological Society. Much pleased,

I arose and took a bow among applause which made us pleased that our society was recognized.

Mr. Lawrence Walkinshaw, President of the Wilson Ornithological Society, who has for many years been interested in our sandhill cranes in Jackson County, Mississippi, told me that on a recent visit to the colony he sensed an unusual wildness on the part of these birds, and wondered if perhaps they might not be being fired into. His observation and concern made me wonder if we are currently giving this cherished colony of cranes the full attention we are due them.

As the Wilson Ornithological Society members are interested in learning birds primarily in the field, it was not surprising to see them taking every advantage to go afield, some alone, others in groups of from 2 to 5, and many lined up in groups of from 20 to 50 to go on the guided tours. We from Mississippi took advantage of several tours led by Tennessee and Kentucky members who are familiar with the trails and with the birds and wild plants in the Park. Our attention was called to many interesting things which we probably would have overlooked had we gone alone. In the vicinity of the Park Headquarters and along the Big Locust Nature Trail two miles beyond, we saw and heard a number of birds which we had seen in migration in Mississippi only a few days earlier. Among these were such warblers as: the Canada, the Chestnut-sided, the Redstart, the Blackburnian, the Ovenbird, the Kentucky, the Louisiana Water thrush, and the Hooded. We saw and heard the Blue-headed vireo, the most common of the vireos present, and observed its nest. We also saw a beautiful new nest of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and a Redstart's nest, both occupied. The Scarlet and Summer Tanagers were both in full view.

Back at Gatlinburg we looked for the Evening Grosbeaks which were reported to be ranging in the vicinity of the Mountain View Hotel. They were there, about 10 of them, into and out of a tree near the side entrance to the hotel. Imagine our delight in seeing for the first time these handsome birds and in sharing such an experience with others. The Sunday A. M. trip from Indian Gap in the Canadian Zone forest type, elevation about 6,000 feet, was both fascinating and disappointing. The drive along the Newfound Gap-to-Clingman's Dome Road, gave breath-taking views of mountain sides bedecked with dogwood, silverbell, serviceberry and Frazier magnolia in the height of bloom. One hardly missed the Azalea and Mountain laurel which were expected but were not yet in bloom. As we approached the spruce-fir region, it became evident that the sharp cold, ice everywhere, accompanied by a stiff cutting wind, would make it disagreeable to follow the trail. Although we had been warned that we should bring along sweater or coat, few were prepared for such severe cold. I envied those who found it possible, and I hope in some degree of comfort, to follow through. Upon returning to the parking area I saw many delicate flowers and ferns limp and birds, especially the juncos, almost overcome by the cold. Other birds, such as the Raven, seemed to be welcoming spring even in the presence of ice.

On our way back down the mountain to the Park Headquarters we stopped to view one of the many crystal clear streams and to see a bird which flitted across it. By the roadside was a patch of dandelions in full bloom and one of the blossoms appeared to move to and fro among the others, a strange way we thought for a dandelion to behave. Presently, the gay little blossom raised its head a little above the others and by so doing revealed its identity. Obviously, a bird's head it was. Then the little fellow rose

from the dandelions and perched on a rock a few inches above the flowers and within 12 feet of our car, a Chestnut-sided warbler in his gorgeous new spring suit. In a flash two others arose from the patch of dandelions and a Blackburnian warbler and a Canada warbler joined them for a little frolic before taking off across the brook and into the brush.

Finding it difficult to draw ourselves away from the Park at the close of the meeting, we decided to remain over through Monday to follow some of the trails with the aid of self-guiding leaflets provided by Park Service. This we found very rewarding as the weather was warmer and the birds were in full song. To see and hear the Black-throated Blue, the Canada, and the Ovenbird close up in the cove hardwood forest as found on the Blueeye Trail, and many other species in the second growth forest of the Smokemont Nature Trail gave a lasting impression of the relation of birds to certain forest types as found in the Smokies.

After making a brief stop at the historical museum on our way out, we reluctantly left the Park for late lunch in Cherokee, and then drove toward home via Murphy, Cleveland, Dalton, Rome, Gadsden, Birmingham, and Meridian, enjoying along the way fields and waves of mountain flowers and such birds as we could see from the car.

One of our most interesting and pleasant experiences was a brief visit with Mr. and Mrs. Harry Collins, friends of Dr. DeForest, who live in a beautiful old colonial home on a large well-kept plantation, formerly owned by Mr. Collins's great grandfather, near Demopolis, Alabama. The house was designed and the premises landscaped by a French architect and landscape gardener in the 1830's. The large old trees and original hedge are giving shelter to species of birds which were doubtless there when the place was first settled by the Collins family.

Our whole trip was indeed a delightful one. We feel that MOS members are fortunate to have the opportunity of such fine trips as the recent Cameron Parish, Louisiana, trip and the Gatlinburg trip. We were so happy that we found it possible to make both. Fannye A. Cook

The Spring Season, Continued

First arrival dates of spring migrants this year were reported up to April 15, the date of the last issue of the Newsletter. Additional first arrival dates as recorded by W. H. Turcotte and Mrs. H. G. Wills are tabulated below for comparison with last year's first arrival dates.

<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>
Nighthawk - April 18 (Greene Co.)	April 16 (Hinds Co.)
Balt. Oriole - April 18 (Greene Co.)	" 14 (Hinds Co.)
Tenn. Warbler - April 18 (Greene Co.)	" 20 (Sharkey Co.)
Yellow br. Chat. - April 25 (Hinds Co.)	" 19 (Hinds Co.)
Ky. warbler - April 11 (Hinds Co.)	" 16 (Hinds Co.)
Dickcissel ---	" 23 (Yazoo Co.)
Rose br. grosbeak - April 26 (Hinds Co.)"	23 (Yazoo Co.)
Blue grosbeak - April 19 (Greene Co.)	" 16 (Hinds Co.)
Painted bunting ---	" 20 (Yazoo Co.)
Bobolink ---	" 30 (Hinds Co.)

1959

1960

Yellow Warbler ---	April 11 (Hinds Co.)
Kentucky Warbler - April 11 (Hinds Co.)	April 16 (Hinds Co.)
Broadwinged Hawk - April 5 (Hinds Co.)	April 16 (Hinds Co.)
Blackburnian Warbler ---	April 17 (Hinds Co.)
Scarlet Tanager ---	April 23 (Hinds Co.)
Bay br. warbler ---	April 28
Yellow-billed Cuckoo - April 18 (Hinds Co.)	April 23 (Hinds Co.)
Black-billed Cuckoo ---	April 23 (Hinds Co.)

Hooded Merganser Breeding Record

On Sunday morning, May 8, 1960, Mr. Thomas B. Kennedy, 126 East Santa Clair Street, Jackson, was driving down this street to a service station. He spotted 5 young duck-like birds walking down this street. Thinking they were someone's pets he drove around them and to a service station on the Terry Road. While stopped at the station the same birds were seen walking down the Terry Road. Mr. Kennedy and the attendant at the station herded them into the station and caught them. They proved to be better than half-grown hooded mergansers still with natal down on head and neck, identified by Erskine Gandy and W. H. Turcotte. Mr. Kennedy kept them confined overnight and one died. He turned them over to WHT. The dead bird was given to the museum for a study skin to substantiate a breeding record. The four remaining were released on a small minnow pond. They began feeding immediately on crayfish and tadpoles. All attained flight on May 24 and left the pond.

These young mergansers probably were hatched and raised on a small creek subject to backwater flooding near where they were first observed. This probably constitutes the first breeding record for the species substantiated by a specimen, WHT.

Cattle Egret Specimen Collected

Lovett E. Williams, Jr., U. S. Coast Guard, New Orleans, Louisiana, reports collecting a specimen of an adult female cattle egret on May 29, 1960, in a cattle pasture east of Pascagoula in Jackson County. Two were seen at this locality at the same time. The specimen has been deposited in the state museum, constituting the first collection record and the second observation record for this exotic species in the state.

Mr. Williams also found a gull-billed tern nest in a colony of Least tern nests near a chemical plant in the same locality and date near Pascagoula. There were approximately 500 pairs of Least terns nesting.

Red-throated Loon

Mr. B. M. Myers, 2104 General Pershing Street, New Orleans, Louisiana, observed a red-throated loon at Biloxi, Mississippi, on February 6, 1960. He noted differences between this bird and common loons nearby: size, coloration, slender upturned bill. This is the first known record for this species. Observation reported to Mrs. D. A. James, Gayeta, Route 3, Fayetteville, Arkansas, for Audubon Field Notes.

Gannets

J. M. Valentine and J. Walther, New Orleans, Louisiana, observed 54 Gannets on March 15, 1960, from Biloxi, Mississippi, around west side of Ship Island (Mississippi) to north end of Chandeleur Islands in Louisiana waters. This observation constitutes the second Louisiana record (the other was in 1886) and the first record for this species on Mississippi waters. Observation reported to Mrs. D. A. James, Route 3, Fayetteville, Arkansas, for Audubon Field Notes.

White Crowned Sparrows

About 10 white-crowned sparrows were observed 4 miles north of Holly Bluff, Yazoo County, on April 19 and 20 at the same location near a hog lot as reported in the last Newsletter. Some were in full song. WHT.

Ground Dove

Ground doves were observed (1 at each location) on April 19 and June 3 five miles south and 4 miles north of Holly Bluff, Yazoo County. No evidence of nesting was observed. Both were seen in flight crossing the road while driving. WHT.

Prairie Horned Lark

Prairie horned larks were observed on June 3, one four miles north of Holly Bluff, Yazoo County, and one on June 8, south of Benoit in Bolivar County. These may have been breeding birds although no evidence of nesting was found.

Your editor and his family enjoyed a June vacation trip to south and west Texas as far as Big Bend National Park. We made many interesting bird observations en route: Great-tailed grackles in south Texas, many scissor-tail flycatchers nesting - some on crossarms of telegraph poles, wild turkeys on the King Ranch, Bullock's oriole and ash-throated flycatchers nesting on King Ranch near Kingsville, white winged doves numerous and nesting in thickets near Rio Grande at McAllen, Texas, Say's phoebe and Arkansas Kingbird nesting at Marathon, Texas, and another Say's phoebe nest with young at Park headquarters at Big Bend, Bell's vireo building a nest on the Rio Grande River banks, Scott's oriole feeding on century plant (agave) blooms in Big Bend Park, Canon Towhee, Arizona jay, black-headed grosbeak, Audubon's warbler, ravens and scaled quail with young in the park, Arkansas goldfinches at Marathon, Texas, desert and lark sparrows at many locations west of San Antonio, vermilion flycatchers at Big Bend and Brackettville, Texas, Black phoebe, hooded oriole and house finches at Fort Clark, Brackettville. Also plenty of jackrabbits, antelope and other birds and wildlife along the way. South and west Texas affords excellent opportunities for getting acquainted with western species.

New Officers

Newly-elected officers (by letter poll of the membership) appear on the title page. Also, a reminder that membership dues are payable to the treasurer, Mrs. Alton Ellick. If you have not paid your annual dues, please attend to this right away. Another reminder, please send in notes for the next Newsletter by October 15.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher

A scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen at Clermont Harbor, Mississippi, May 9, in mid-afternoon, perched on a telephone wire. He would descend for an insect and fly up either onto the wire again or onto a bush. After watching the bird for about 20 minutes we drove up to Waveland, and about an hour later returned with a friend and found him at the same spot. I telephoned Ethel Floyd that night; she went over the next morning, picked up our Waveland friend and they went to Clermont Harbor and found the bird in the same spot. He flew across the meadow when he was startled but returned in a few minutes. Ethel secured three pictures of the bird. The following morning, May 11, the Floyds (Dr. and Ethel) drove over but the bird was not to be found.

I judge the bird to be unusual in Mississippi; it is listed on the Mississippi check list but Burleigh makes no mention of having seen it during his years on the Gulf Coast. Amy B. Tolman

Mississippi Kite Nesting Record

An active nest of the Mississippi kite containing one large young, nearly completely feathered but with some down still on the head, was found in a limb crotch of a cottonwood tree immediately alongside the main levee of the Mississippi River about 2 miles south of Fitler, Issaquena County, July 24, 1960. WHT

Wood Ibis

A large congregation of wood ibis numbering several hundred or more was observed July 24 along barrow pits west of the main levee of the Mississippi River south of Mayersville in Issaquena County. Also seen on the same date were numerous common egrets, little blue herons, five Louisiana herons, one black crowned night heron and two immature white ibis. These birds are concentrating in this area to feed in the drying up barrow pits and are roosting at a lake north and west of the upper end of Albemarle Lake. WHT

Unusual Location for a Carolina Wren Nest

A Carolina wren nest containing 3 eggs found on July 21, 1960, in deep woods in Sharkey County northwest of Holly Bluff, Mississippi, was situated among leaves and vines in a low bush beside a cleared survey line. Besides being a late nesting record, this observation by WHT, John Phares, and Henry Bobbs, Jr., is unusual in that none of us had ever seen a wren nest built in vegetation above ground.

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