

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Organized April 30, 1955

MRS. W. G. WILLS, JR.
Vice-President
1521 Poplar
Jackson, Mississippi

DR. HENRY D. HABERYAN
President
13 Poplar Circle
Gulfport, Mississippi

ERSKINE GANDY
Treasurer
261 Woodie Drive
Jackson, Mississippi

STERLING G. CLAWSON
Secretary
203 Carroll Avenue
Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

WILLIAM H. TURCOTTE
Editor
Route 2, Box 139
Jackson, Mississippi

October 31, 1961

MOS NEWSLETTER - Vol. 6, No. 5

Compiled by: W. H. TURCOTTE

Sandhill Crane Colony in Jackson County May Be Threatened by Superhighway Routing

Preliminary routing plans in the State Highway Department for new Interstate Highway No. 10 in Jackson County would roughly parallel U. S. 90 but run approximately three to four miles north of it. The presently-proposed superhighway route will bisect the heart of the range of the Sandhill Crane colony of less than 50 birds which is located north of Highway 90, west of the Pascagoula River, south of Vancleave and Bluff Creek and west to Fort Bayou and across it in an area north of Ocean Springs. The Superhighway Route would pass just north of Escatawpa, Mississippi; bisect the most valuable and productive part of the Pascagoula River Marsh (from a recreation and fish and wildlife viewpoint) with a proposed dredge-fill; enter the crane range just below the mouth of Bluff Creek, where an interchange would be located just west of the West Pascagoula River; cross just north of the fire tower through the heart of the cranes' nesting territory to Highway 57 about 3 miles north of Fontainebleau where there would be another interchange; and then continue through the middle of the remaining crane territory north and west of Fort Bayou.

The total effect of the proposed superhighway routing through the sandhills' territory is not known. These birds have survived in this area of pine barrens and cypress ponds mainly because of the wilderness character of these lands. Some encroachment due to highway relocation and residential area development has already claimed part of the former crane territory. Further encroachment may ultimately exterminate this colony which contains the only survivors of the species in the Southeast outside of Florida and possibly southern Georgia.

The possible extermination of a resident species of bird in our State provokes serious consideration by authorities who may be responsible. Further deterioration of the Pascagoula River marsh also is bound to occur with another highway crossing it. A fill across the most productive part of this marsh will produce ecological and other changes of profound effect on fish and wildlife.

The proposed highway will not be opened for approximately 8 years but construction may begin on segments much earlier. Routing a few miles farther north would miss the cranes' territory and avoid the marsh crossing.

The Canadian Government has recently re-routed a proposed railroad to a remote mining area to avoid crossing the nesting territory of the Whooping Crane, although 100 miles of additional track will be required for the construction. No less serious consideration should be given this matter by Mississippians and other conservationists over the country who consider the possible extermination of a species in our state a serious proposition. -- WHT

A Revised Field Check List

A volunteer committee of several members has under preparation a revised field check list of Mississippi birds and printing cost estimates are being obtained by the MOS Treasurer with a view of making the revised list available for sale at a little more than printing costs. The original list, based on actual collection records, contained 297 birds, including several sub-species and some printing errors. The revised list at present contains 309 living species listed with family groups separated by heavy lines. The nomenclature is from the latest A. O. U. check list. Symbols will designate rare species on the list and those species usually confined to the Coast.

Work Progressing on Annotated Check List of Mississippi Birds

Erskine Gandy, Museum Director of the Game and Fish Commission's Wildlife Museum, has been working for some time and has made good progress in compiling tabular collection records by species on 10,000 or more Mississippi bird and bird-breeding records. The records are also being plotted to show distribution and breeding records on individual county-outline state maps for each species. A review of all published literature on Mississippi birds is contemplated which will include field observation (sight) records and later bird banding records may be incorporated. This work is being done in preparation for future publication of an annotated check list of Mississippi birds.

The work has progressed far enough to show that much more information is needed to substantiate records of seasonal occurrence and distribution of many species in the state. Records are especially short on waterfowl. Field observation records of reliable observers (numbers of individuals and dates of occurrence) will be very much needed to present the true status of all species. Field notes from reliable observers published in the Newsletter are proving to be a valuable source of information. Send your field observation notes to the editor for publication.

It is hoped that the publication of an annotated check list of Mississippi birds will provide the stimulus for future publication of a State bird book.

New Officers Elected

The slate of officers appearing on the front of this Newsletter was elected, after some unavoidable delay, by mail ballot of the eligible voting membership. Outgoing President, John H. Phares, has notified the officers of their election and results of the election of officers was mailed to the voting membership.

Also, the proposal to provide for a life membership upon payment of \$25.00 dues was approved.

Membership Dues

A considerable number of persons on our mailing list are delinquent in their membership dues. At the time of a recent check with the Treasurer, only slightly over 30 of the 83 names on our current mailing list are current with their 1961 membership dues. This is a reminder to send your 1961 membership dues to the Treasurer, Erskine Gandy, 261 Woodie Drive, Jackson, Mississippi, if you are delinquent.

Letters to the Editor

Galveston, Texas
September 15, 1961
Editor, MOS Newsletter:

My recent transfer from New Orleans to the Coast Guard Cutter Gentian in Galveston has prevented my doing any birding in Mississippi since April. However, Newsletter readers may be interested in some of my sea-bird observations off Louisiana and Texas since it is likely that the same birds occur in Mississippi waters and should be looked for there.

The relative dearth of off-shore bird data for the Gulf of Mexico is responsible for what is, in my opinion, the erroneous conclusion that truly pelagic birds cannot be expected to occur with any regularity. This summer I recorded no less than 30 Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers within 20 miles of shore. Many of these birds could have been observed from land through telescopes, if anyone was looking for them. Both species may be expected at any season of the year, though I observed them more frequently in spring. Their abundance this fall remains to be seen. I saw a juvenile Parasitic as recently as yesterday at Galveston. Mississippi has no record for the Pomarine Jaeger and only one for the Parasitic.

Briefly, here are several species which I observed this summer in the northern Gulf and which may be expected to occur regularly in Mississippi waters: Wilson Petrel - 2 close ashore at the Texas-Louisiana line; Audubon's Shearwater - one off Freeport, Texas, and two further at sea during and after Hurricane Carla; Brown Booby - 3 at various positions and dates off Texas including one near the Louisiana line; and I have also seen several large shearwaters at distances too great for reliable identification. There is no Mississippi specimen for any of these species.

Of course, everyone expects a good hurricane to bring to shore interesting sea-birds. "Carla" may prove to have been exceptional in this respect when all the data are in. The Gentian rode "Carla" out at sea, thus I was not able to check on exotics driven ashore. However, several days after the storm's passage inland I picked up an exhausted Blue-faced Booby on Galveston Island. At sea 100 miles from shore and 100 miles from the hurricane's center I secured specimens of

the Bridled Tern and Noddy Tern and observed a Sooty Tern and several unidentified shearwaters. By all odds, the Bridled Tern was the most frequently observed species at sea during the hurricane. I will be surprised not to hear of an outbreak of Bridled Tern records for the northern Gulf following the hurricane. Upon returning to Galveston two days after "Carla" went inland, I saw a Bridled Tern in Galveston Bay.

Observers on Mississippi's coast would do well to keep a watchful eye seaward. The State list is nearly without pelagic species. A loaded shotgun would go well with a watchful eye, for the status of most pelagic species in the Gulf is so uncertain that additions to the State list could rest only upon preserved specimens. Lovett E. Williams, Jr.

Gulf Coast Observations

"The Sandhill crane nest mentioned in the MOS Newsletter of 8 June 1961 was revisited by a group of local and New Orleans' birders the morning of 7 May and we were most fortunate in arriving at the time of hatching. One young had hatched and was sitting unsteadily a few feet from the nest. The other egg was pipped and the young could be seen moving about in the egg. Unfortunately, no cameras were among the observers. The group remained in the vicinity for only a very short time so that the parent birds would not be too disturbed and absent at this critical time.

"White-throated sparrows were last seen on 28 May 1961.

"Two White-rumped sandpipers were seen together on the beach 11 April 1961. This is mentioned because this is one of the uncommon shorebirds occurring in this area.

"Another uncommon shorebird, the Knot, (a single bird) was noted 20 May 1961.

"Common loons were last seen this Spring 25 May 1961.

"An Oldsquaw was seen intermittently up until the unusually late date of 6 July 1961.

"Although it is usual to find a few Herring and Ringbilled gulls on the coast throughout the summer, this is the first year in my very limited experience here that Horned grebes (2) and Red-breasted mergansers (at least three) have summered here.

"A female Blue-winged teal was seen at very close range (almost Mist-netted) 17 August 1961. Whether this represents a summering bird or an arrival from the North is debatable, but I would tend toward the latter view since this particular area has been rather closely watched and has been devoid of this species previously this summer.

"Most of my 'birding' in recent months has been devoted to banding. It might be of interest to MOS Newsletter readers to see the results of this work. During the period, 25 April through 18 August 1961, 443 birds of 23 species were banded as follows:

<u>AOU No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>No. Banded</u>
51	Herring gull	1
199	Louisiana heron	2
203	Yellow-crowned night heron	3
242	Least sandpiper	3
246	Semipalmated sandpiper	2
289	Bob-white quail	1
316	Mourning dove	76
373	Screech owl	1
394	Downy woodpecker	1
406	Red-headed woodpecker	6
405	Pileated woodpecker	1
409	Red-bellied woodpecker	6
412	Yellow-shafted flicker	3
423	Chimney swift	6
452	Great crested flycatcher	1
477	Blue jay	78
495	Brown-headed cowbird	1
498	Red-winged blackbird	11
506	Orchard oriole	1
587	Rufous-sided towhee	24
593	Cardinal	162
613	Barn swallow	4
671	Pine warbler	1
703	Mockingbird	10
705	Brown thrasher	34
718	Carolina wren	2
729	Brown-headed nuthatch	1
731	Tufted titmouse	1

"The fact that most of these birds are year-round residents is due to the late start this year in the banding operation." Henry D. Haberyan, M. D., August 19, 1961

"Someone brought me a young albino mockingbird a couple of days ago, and I thought you might be interested to know of it. It is complete albino, just out of the nest, well feathered and very healthy but, unfortunately, has a rather bad skin tear from the neck down into the wing joint which may prevent my being able to raise it. We are giving antibiotics, codliver oil, miles of earthworms and other foods which he takes often and heartily. No other news from here. I did see two pelicans down at Belle Fontaine beach a few days ago."

Mrs. Ethel Floyd, Gulfport, June 29, 1961

"On June 28 Mr. B. M. Myers and I observed a female Red-breasted Merganser on St. Louis Bay. It did not appear to be injured as it was capable of flight.

"On July 7 I saw 40 or 45 Cabot Terns at Gulfport. Although this bird is not uncommon, I have never seen this many at one time in Mississippi.

"On July 1, I found 1 Yellow Warbler at Bay St. Louis. On July 25 I found another Yellow Warbler, this one at Clermont Harbor. On August 9, I observed several hundred Yellow Warblers flying ENE to WSW across St. Louis Bay.

On August 10 this was repeated on a lesser scale. Sidney Gauthreaux and I have seen this many times at New Orleans and in other sections of Louisiana, but this is the first I have heard or seen of it in Mississippi. Sidney and I are very interested in this, and I would greatly appreciate it if you would notify me if you have records of this." Mac Myers, 2104 General Pershing Street, New Orleans 15, Louisiana, August 18, 1961

Hawk Observations, Fall 1961, Memphis, Tennessee

Oliver F. Irwin, 1789 Glenview Avenue

Monday, 9-25-61 - 11:30 A. M. to 2:30 P. M:

Noon (5 $\frac{1}{2}$), 12:15 (8 $\frac{1}{2}$), 1:15 (1), overcast, clear hazy after 12:00

Tuesday, 9-26-61 - 10:00 A. M. to 3:30 P. M:

10:30 (2), 11:00 A. M. (4), 11:40 (7), 12:45 (3), 1:15 (4), 1:30 (25),
1:45 (3), 1:50 (14), 1:55 (6), 2:00 P. M. (1), 2:30 (1), 3:00 P. M. (3),
(1) Pos. Sharpshin 3:10 (2), 3:20 (1).

Wednesday, 9-27-61 - 11:00 A. M. to 3:00 P. M:

11:30 (1), 11:45 (1), 11:50 (1), 11:55 (39), 11:57 (1), Cooper's,
12:15 (3), 12:17 (1), 12:40 (36 $\frac{1}{2}$), 12:41 Cooper's, clearing 11:00 A. M.,
hazy, no wind

Thursday, 9-28-61 - 11:00 A. M. to 1:45 P. M:

11:05 (1), 11:15 (1) Cooper's, 11:20 (1) Cooper's, 11:25 (3), 11:45 (2),
Noon (5) Cooper's; cool front early A. M., NW gusty wind, heavy overcast

Friday, 9-29-61 - 10:30 A. M. to 2:00 P. M:

11:45 (1) Red-shouldered, 11:50 (1) Osprey (very low over town)
very cold night, followed by very warm clear day

Saturday, 9-30-61 - 10:00 A. M. to 3:00 P. M:

Occasional watches, no hawks, very warm, 10 - 20 MPH, SW wind

Sunday, 10-1-61 - 11:30 to 2:30 P. M:

11:35 (2), 11:40 (3), 11:50 (3), Noon (2), 12:05 (1) Cooper's, 12:15 (2),
12:40 (2) Cooper's, 12:45 (1), 12:50 (1), 1:25 Osprey
Heavy rain at night, followed by cold front early A. M., 20 MPH, NW wind,
heavy overcast, misty 9:30 P. M.

Monday, 10-2-61 - 10:30 A. M. to 1:30 P. M:

10:20 (1), 10:25 (1), 10:45 (1) Accipiter, 11:10 (1), 11:20 Sp. Hawk (1),
11:40 (2) (1) Cooper's, 11:50 (1), Noon (1), 12:10 (1) Sp. Hawk, 12:15 (1)
Cooper's, 12:20 (1), 12:30 (1) (from 11:00 A. M. to 1:00 P. M. Monarch
butterflies had increased until they covered the sky by the hundred
thousands).
Frontal system high 56° 1:00 P. M., 20 MPH, NW wind, dark overcast

9-3-61. 500 swallows, 1 Albino. 9-9-61. Black-and-White warbler, Bay-breasted warbler. 9-14-61. Heavy night migration 10 to 12 P. M. frontal system. 9-16-61. Record low temperature. 9-17-61. (4) Caspian terns. 9-25-61 to 10-1-61 - Hawks. (Tower casualties, light, at Nashville on 9-13, 15, 17, 1961, fair and chilly after 9-15-61. (Ceilometer casualties at Chicago Airport approx. 9-23-61.)

More Coastal Observations

During July two coastal trips were made by Mac Myers and Sterling Clawson. These (July 8 and 29) included visits to various beach and marsh areas between Bay St. Louis in Hancock County and Bayou Casotte in Jackson County. Noteworthy observations are listed below.

Stilt Sandpipers - These were seen at two different locations in Jackson County, Mississippi. On July 8 three birds were found feeding on the exposed mud of a small pond in the marshes at the mouths of the Pascagoula River. These were collected for the Museum of the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission. On July 29 at least four of these sandpipers could be counted among other shorebirds in the expanse of flats in which this pond is located south of the L & N Railroad. Also, on July 29 a single individual was found on the mud of a drying rain pool adjacent to the Porter Chemical Plant at Bayou Casotte in Jackson County, Mississippi. All of the birds seen still retained most of their breeding plumage.

Reddish Egret - An adult individual was seen on July 29 at a pond of the Porter Chemical Company at Bayou Casotte in Jackson County, Mississippi.

Blue-winged Teal - A female was seen on the same pond and at the same time as the Reddish Egret.

Brown Pelican - One bird was seen flying low off the beach just east of Gulfport in Harrison County, Mississippi, on July 29.

Spotted Sandpiper - One individual was found at a small pool in the flats at the mouth of the Pascagoula in Jackson County, Mississippi.

Black Skimmer - During the trip on July 29 a sizeable nesting colony of Skimmers was found on the dunes of the flats at the mouths of the Pascagoula River. Previously Least Terns, Gull-billed Terns, and Wilson Plovers have been found nesting on these flats in Jackson County, Mississippi. Approximately 200 adult Skimmers were present along with their downy young and incubating eggs. On bare sand the nests contained from one to four unhatched eggs or a combination of downy young and eggs. Some of the larger sized chicks were very active and skittered freely around the dune. -- Sterling G. Clawson, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

Some Coastal Bird Observations for September and October, 1961

Sterling G. Clawson

Migration appeared slow in the three Gulf counties during September, and observation revealed little of special interest. Cattle Egrets which could be found with regularity at this time last year in both Hancock and Jackson Counties were encountered only once on October 18 south of Old Highway 90 between the East and West Pascagoula River, Jackson County.

Three observations of some interest are:

On September 10 a Brown Pelican and a Reddish Egret were seen at separate locations of the port facilities of Gulfport, Harrison County, Mississippi.

On September 16, a single American Avocet was observed on a mud flat in the marsh along the L & N Railroad bed between the mouths of the East and West Pascagoula Rivers. This is in the same general area in Jackson County where the author observed four of these birds last winter. On October 19, another American Avocet was seen on a mud flat along the seawall at Lakeshore in Hancock County.

Mac Myers and Sterling Clawson

On October 1, the above observers made visits to several areas in Harrison and Jackson Counties. At Bayou Casotte in Jackson County two Ospreys, a Duck Hawk, twenty (20) immature White Ibises, and 3 Stilt Sandpipers were seen in the marshes adjacent to the H. K. Porter Chemical Company plant. The Stilt Sandpipers were feeding with an extensive assortment of Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Dowitchers, Willetts, and "peeps" on a pond near the plant.

On the same date another Osprey, three Shovellers, a female pintail and approximately 15 Blue-winged Teal were observed in the marshes at the mouth of the Pascagoula River in Jackson County.

Nighthawk Concentration

On 9/27/1961, around 6:00 P. M. just north of Vaiden, on Highway 51, I saw 50 - 60 nighthawks in one field. This is the first time I had ever noticed this many. Barry O. Freeman, Oxford, Mississippi

Night-feeding Behavior of Chimney Swifts

"On October 3, 1961, at Clinton, Mississippi, I saw several hundred chimney swifts circling and feeding on insects throughout a night football game at the High School field. This was during a cold frontal movement when the temperature was in the 40's. Swifts congregated for roosting in the chimneys of nearby buildings on Mississippi College and Clinton High School campuses." W. H. Turcotte

Further Extension of Barn Swallow Breeding Range

"In the last issue (June 8, 1961), of the Newsletter a barn swallow nest was reported at Louise, Mississippi, in the Lower Delta Region that contained 4 young capable of flight on May 30, 1961.

"On June 6, 1961, John H. Phares and I found another pair nesting in a box culvert under the Natchez Trace southeast of Kosciusko and one mile east of the Highway 35 overpass. Two nests in the culvert were close together, one empty and the other containing 5 young in pinfeathers.

"On June 15, 1961, three active barnswallow nests were found in a large box culvert under Highway 468 in Rankin County at Whitfield. One nest contained 5 fresh eggs, one 6 incubated eggs and one an unknown number of young in pinfeathers. There were 5 adults in the vicinity of these nests and two other empty nests. The nest containing 6 eggs was lined with mourning dove and wild turkey hen breast feathers.

"Approximately one week later another nesting pair of barn swallows was found about one mile farther east under the same highway. The nest which was in a box culvert could not be reached for examination.

"The June 6 record at Kosciusko was about the same latitude as the May 30 record at Louise. The Rankin County breeding records extend this swallow's known breeding range about 50 miles farther south not considering the coastal race which has been established as a breeding bird on Ship Island and several areas along the Coast on the mainland." W. H. Turcotte

Late Note -- Noddy Found at Gulfport

Following Hurricane Carla a dead Noddy was found lying in Highway No. 90 at Gulfport by Dr. Maurice F. Baker of Auburn University. Dr. Henry Haberyan, president of M. O. S., picked the bird up on September 20, 1961, after being informed of its location by Dr. Baker. The bird was flattened due to having been hit by traffic either before or after its death, but most of the plumage was intact. It has been deposited in the Museum of the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission in Jackson. Sterling G. Clawson
