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Front Cover: Ostriches. Some of the many exotic birds raised by
Larry Brazil, near Amory, Mississippi. (Photo by
J.A. Jackson)

A Ruff at Pascagoula -- First Mississippi Record

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On 1 August 1982, we observed a Ruff (Philomachus pugnax) at Pascagoula, Jackson County, Mississippi, in the south diked pond-mudflat of the area known as PRM. Because this is a first Mississippi record, all details are herewith submitted.

The Ruff was found at approximately 08:00 from a distance of about 200 m, during a routine scanning of shorebirds. It was almost immediately apparent that the subject was not a Lesser Yellowlegs (Tringa flavipes), although it bore a close resemblance to that species. There were, however, various differences in plumage, posture, behavior, feeding habits ... enough so that it stood out in the crowd of both Lesser and Greater (Tringa melanoleuca) yellowlegs with which it associated. At that time the Ruff was tentatively identified without reference to any field guide.

We moved to a position east of the bird and managed to get as close as 80 m (soft mudflats prevented getting any closer). The sky was overcast, there was an intermittent mist, but viewing conditions were generally good with no glare or shadow. We studied the Ruff for at least 1½ hours, through 7X35 binoculars and through 20-45-power zoom and 20 power spotting scopes.

There was ample opportunity for direct comparison with both species of yellowlegs, and for indirect comparison with numerous other shorebird species.

Because the Ruff was in close association at all times with Lesser Yellowlegs and because of its superficial resemblance, in size and shape, to that species, the following notes use Lesser Yellowlegs as a model for the relative differences which we observed.

Size: The Ruff was very nearly the same size, from bill tip to end of tail, as Lesser Yellowlegs. It did, however, present a stockier appearance, being obviously thicker in the neck and pectoral areas.

Plumage: The most obvious difference between the Ruff and Lesser Yellowlegs, and the "field mark" which first caught our attention, was its brown plumage. The head, nape, back, and wings were of a moderate brown, appearing at a distance of 80 m to be rather even in coloration or finely mottled with light tan against a medium brown. This brown of the Ruff was quite a contrast to the

dark, mostly gray and blackish plumage of Lesser Yellowlegs. In addition the Ruff had an area of white under the chin, and an area of light brown which extended from high on the throat, just under the white of the chin, to well down on the belly, below the area covered by the "bib" of a Pectoral Sandpiper for example. This area of light brown was uneven. It was not evenly patterned, either horizontally or vertically, by feather edgings one associates with species such as Least Sandpiper. This breast coloring was blotched but showing far less contrast than that shown in breeding plumaged Ruff or Reeve. At the time we suspected that the bird was either immature or in adult winter plumage.

There was a rather indistinct pale eyeline which was more prominent from the base of the bill up to the eye than it was from the eye to the side of the head.

In addition, the white of the undersides was not "clean" or "bright" as in Lesser Yellowlegs, but gave the appearance of being off-white or creamy white, and contrasted dramatically with the white of nearby yellowlegs.

The characteristic tail pattern of a Ruff was seen during wing stretching and preening. The tail was banded by fairly narrow stripes, pale against dark, and the base of the tail was white, extending to the banding. Enough was seen of the dark center of the tail to establish that the tail pattern was certainly in keeping with Ruff and at variance with that of Lesser Yellowlegs ... it was the definitive field mark.

The outstretched wing which we saw as the Ruff preened was darkish brown, with a light wing stripe which was not very prominent.

Bill: The bill length was just slightly shorter than that of Lesser Yellowlegs, but it was thicker throughout, tapering from base throughout its length. Bill color at 80 m appeared black with light area at base of bill.

Legs: Legs were yellow, not as bright as Lesser Yellowlegs. As noted above, legs were well-proportioned and by close attention to legs of both Ruff and Lesser Yellowlegs we determined that the legs of the Ruff were shorter, but not distinctly so.

Shape: The Ruff had the same general shape as Lesser Yellowlegs, but was very noticeably heavier, or stockier, in the neck and pectorals. In general contrast, the Ruff appeared more robust than the yellowlegs. The tail extended perhaps 0.5 cm beyond the wing tips as the bird was at rest.

Posture: Upright, head high, back horizontal.

Feeding behavior: This was an area of great difference between the Ruff and Lesser Yellowlegs. Although the Ruff was first seen "picking for food" on an exposed mudflat surrounded by fresh/brackish shallow water, at times it joined Lesser Yellowlegs to feed in the water (barely covering toes) along the edge. At those times, with both species feeding, differences in habits and feeding posture were most pronounced. The Lesser Yellowlegs was much more active while feeding, moving rapidly through the water in a fairly constant pecking motion, its body length angled downward. By contrast, the Ruff did not move as fast; its actions were slower and more deliberate. At all times its body was held horizontally. When picking at food, it bent forward from the shoulders, coming back up to its non-feeding position after almost every pick into the water. The Lesser Yellowleg's carriage was also marked by a bobbing head motion, while the Ruff's was not.

No vocalization by the Ruff was noted.

During the long period of observation, we moved our scopes and attention to other birds to obtain comparisons. The "gestalt" of the Ruff was great enough to enable us to relocate it without difficulty even though at least 500 other shorebirds, including at least 50 Lesser Yellowlegs in that one pond, were present.

Observations of A Black-whiskered Vireo on the Mississippi Coast

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On 9 April 1982 at about 09:00 Larry Gates observed at close range through 7 X 35 binoculars, a Black-whiskered Vireo (Vireo altiloquus) moving about in a leisurely manner through a yaupon (Ilex) thicket on a sand dune at Bellefontaine Beach, Jackson County, Mississippi. After about 2 minutes of observation, the bird flew into a nearby, rather small live oak (Quercus virginiana) where it was observed at eye level, with no obstructions, in excellent light, from a distance of no more than 5 m by Terrie and Larry Gates, Judith Toups, and Joe Magee. The bird closely resembled a Red-eyed Vireo (Vireo olivaceus) except that it had 2 thin, but quite distinct black streaks, one on each side of the chin. The bird also appeared to have a larger bill than a Red-eyed Vireo. After a minute or 2, the bird flew off and could not be relocated. At about 04:00 Judith Toups found what was probably the same bird in a nearby live oak. This time the bird was about 8 m up in the tree.

On the next day (10 April 1982) John Izral, having no knowledge of this first sighting, found another Black-whiskered Vireo in a patch of woods adjacent to the Mississippi Sound a little over a mile from the first sighting. Izral studied this bird for about 10 minutes, using 7 X 50 binoculars; he was often as close as 6 m from the bird. He also observed distinct lines on either side of the chin. This bird moved about the lower levels of the trees (mostly oaks) in a manner similar to that of nearby Red-eyed Vireos.

On 10 April, Peggy and Jack Smith, who did know about the first sighting by Gates et al., reported seeing a Black-whiskered Vireo very close to the first location.

On 11 April 1982, Margaret Halstead, who lives near the beach in Ocean Springs, Mississippi and had no knowledge of any of these sightings, observed a Black-whiskered Vireo in her yard.

These sightings are the first reports of Black-whiskered Vireo for the state of Mississippi. There are numerous other records of this subtropical species for the northern Gulf Coast, especially in Spring (Imhof 1976, Lowery 1974).

Literature Cited

- Imhof, T.A. 1976. Alabama Birds. 2nd ed. University of Alabama Press, University.
Lowery, G.H. Jr. 1974. Louisiana Birds. 3rd ed. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.

Use of Seed Tree Cuts as Colony Sites
by Red-cockaded Woodpeckers

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A "seed tree" cut is a forest management practice in which a forest is clearcut except for single large trees of the desired species left standing at widely spaced intervals such that seed from them will naturally "replant" the area. Once seedlings are established, the remaining large trees are removed. On 1-2 June 1979, we discovered two active Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) colonies, both with nestlings, in seed tree cuts on Bienville National Forest, Scott County, Mississippi. Both cuts had been made in the previous four years and Forest Service personnel (Tom Darden, pers. comm.) indicated that no Red-cockaded Woodpecker cavities had been present at the time of the harvest. Both cuts had left mature loblolly (*Pinus taeda*) and shortleaf (*P. echinata*) pines spaced 20-25 m apart.

Systematic search of the adjacent forests revealed recently abandoned cavity trees within 300 m of each of the nest trees in the seed tree cuts. Habitat at the abandoned cavity trees consisted of mature loblolly and shortleaf pines, mature hardwoods, and a dense hardwood understory. The tops of the hardwoods obscured many of the cavity entrances and were approaching the others. The colony in one seed tree cut included two active cavities and one active cavity start; the other colony included two active cavities and five cavity starts.

During approximately two hours of observation, the birds at one site repeatedly flew 300+ m across the open seed tree cut to forage in the tops of pines within the adjacent intact forest. Foraging sites of birds from the other colony were not observed, but were not within view of the nest tree.

These observations provide further insight into the complex relationships between this endangered species and its environment. Hooper et al. (1980) note that the Red-cockaded Woodpecker requires mature open pine forest in which to nest. The observations reported here provide further evidence that suggests the birds will abandon cavity trees (or colony sites) with hardwood understory that reaches cavity height. They also suggest that elimination of the dense hardwood understory around mature pines might "lure" birds from a less open site that is nearby. The management implications here are twofold: (1) as suggested by Hooper et al. (1980) and by the

Red-cockaded Woodpecker endangered species recovery plan (Jackson et al. 1979), opening up the forest understory may help sustain a colony at a given site, and (2) if movement of a colony from one site to another is desired, it might be effected by selective management of the desired site while allowing a hardwood understory to develop at the other site.

I do not, however, feel that seed tree cuts are a good management practice for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. While the birds did move into the two seed tree cuts described here (and into other seed tree cuts elsewhere on Bienville National Forest; Tom Darden, pers. comm.), the young pines will, within a few years, grow to obscure cavity entrances. Furthermore, the widely spaced large trees in a seed tree cut do not allow cavity trees to be clustered as is typical of healthy, natural colonies. Jackson (1978) has noted that such widely spaced cavity trees are subject to greater competition from cavity competitors than are clustered cavity trees. Each competing species would be limited to one pair per cluster of cavity trees by the species' territorial behavior, but with scattered cavity trees, each tree might be competed for by a different pair of each competing species. Very open sites, such as seed tree cuts, might also (1) expose the birds to greater risk from predators as they fly across open areas, and (2) reduce the birds' ability to raise young as a result of the increased distances they have to fly to find food.

These observations were made incidental to work completed by Eco-Inventary Studies, Inc., under a contract from the U.S. Forest Service.

Literature Cited

- Hooper, R.G., A.F. Robinson, and J.A. Jackson. 1980. The Red-cockaded Woodpecker: notes on life history and management. U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Southeastern Area, State and Private Forestry. General Report SA-GR 9:1-8.
- Jackson, J.A. 1978. Competition for cavities and Red-cockaded Woodpecker management. Pp. 103-112, in Stanley A. Temple (ed.), *Endangered Birds. Management Techniques for Preserving Threatened Species*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- Jackson, J.A., W.W. Baker, V. Carter, T. Cherry, and M.L. Hopkins. 1979. Recovery plan for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta, Georgia.

First Mississippi Nesting Record for the Swallow-tailed Kite

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On 20 June 1982 Leron Vickrey discovered an American Swallow-tailed Kite (Elanoides forficatus) nest on the east bank of Bluff Creek, a half mile south of Vancleave, Mississippi, in Jackson County. That afternoon Leron, Bridget Russell, and I visited the nest site and Bridget photographed the nest, the young, and the parent birds who came to the nest site at approximately 20 minute intervals. A photograph is on file in the ornithological collections of Mississippi State University.

The nest was in the floodplain of Bluff Creek, with slash pine (Pinus elliottii) and southern magnolia (Magnolia grandiflora) the predominant trees with an almost impenetrable understory of titi (Cyrilla racemiflora) and inkberry (Ilex glabra). The nest was well hidden in the top of an 85 foot slash pine about 100 feet from Bluff Creek. It was built of sticks tied together liberally with Spanish moss (Tillandsia usneoides) and looked to be about 18 inches in diameter. The two young were exercising their wings and peered at us over the nest rim. They seemed to be about a week from fledging.

Mrs. Patricia Vickrey called me on 26 June to tell me that the young had left the nest and were now foraging along Bluff Creek with their parents.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first confirmed nesting record of the Swallow-tailed Kite in Mississippi.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in Amite County,

Mississippi in July

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Just before and for about 30 minutes after sunrise on 2 July 1982 about 6 miles north of Liberty in Amite County Mississippi, I observed at close range two Scissor-tailed Flycatchers (Tyrannus forficatus) perched on an electric power line over open pasture. They were about 50 yards from a pond and about the same distance from a small barn. They occasionally left the wire briefly to fly to a sweet gum tree near the barn or, to judge by their flight, to feed on flying insects. The weather was clear and hot; the wind was calm. Identification presented no difficulty as the birds are unmistakable and were viewed through 7 X 35 binoculars.

I looked for them again that afternoon and on the following two mornings, but I did not see them again.

REVIEWS

Jungles. Edited by Edward S. Ayensu. Crown Publishers, Inc., New York, 1980: 200 pp., 400+ color and black-and-white illustrations. \$35.00.

Perhaps no natural communities are so important, so awe-inspiring, so forbidding, and so endangered as are the jungles of the world. Professor Ayensu has drawn together a wonderful primer for understanding jungle ecosystems. When we refer to "jungle," we are usually speaking of tropical rain forest. About 1/12 of the earth's surface is covered by jungle, yet over half of the earth's plants and animals live there. Nowhere does bird diversity approach that found in the jungle. This volume carefully identifies the extent and character of the jungles of Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Australasia. It then dissects the plant diversity which creates jungle habitats, exposing the myriad of niches available to animal life. One chapter describes some of the "gee whiz" mammals, reptiles, and amphibians of jungles. Another looks at insects and other invertebrates. But birds rate a 28-page chapter of their own. Beautiful color illustrations reveal ecological parallels in jungles of different hemispheres: toucans and hummingbirds in the New World, hornbills and sunbirds in the Old. Eagles are top predators in all major jungle areas. Final chapters deal with "Jungle Partnerships," "Man and the Jungle," and the bounty of "Products of the Jungle." The products, such as timber, spices, fibers, oils, and medicines, have made our life the quality that it is. And we have only begun to identify the plants and animals that may serve man. Yet even before the extent of our natural treasure is known, plunderers are destroying it at an appalling rate. The loss of tropical rain forests is now estimated at 150,000 square kilometers per year.

This book is not an impassioned plea to "save the jungles." It is a fascinating factual account of the what, where, how, and why of jungles. In the end, however, the reader cannot help but feel an urgency to become involved, to help save the jungles. The future of human life may depend on it. I highly recommend this book to anyone - it is a must for libraries - large and small. -- J.A. Jackson

Ravens, Crows, Magpies, and Jays. By Tony Angell. University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1978: 112 pp., 84 black-and-white drawings. \$14.95 (hardcover)

This is a beautiful book about a fascinating group of birds. Tony Angell has exquisitely drawn crows, jays, magpies, and their relatives performing antics for which they are known. The drawings are accompanied by brief sketches of the natural history and folklore of each North American species, along with a few anecdotes concerning Old World species, glimpses from the author's personal experiences, and a good bibliography that will allow the reader to explore this group more thoroughly. This is a non-technical, very readable book. -- J.A. Jackson.

The Japanese Crane, Bird of Happiness. By Dorothy Britton. Kodansha International/USA, New York. 1982: 64 pp., 75 color plates, 5 black-and-white plates. \$15.50 (hardbound)

This is a very attractive, popular book about a species that is similar to our own Whooping Crane. Britton discusses the role of the Japanese Crane in mythology and Japanese culture, its life history, and the problems it faces in coping with man's world. While the text is very informative and well-written, the book is well worth purchasing for the beautiful photographs by Tsuneo Hayashida. These depict the crane throughout the year, illustrate Japanese art using a crane motif, and even illustrate how to make a paper crane through the ancient art of Origami. -- J.A. Jackson.

The Falcons of the World. By Tom J. Cade. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1982: 192 pp., 44 color plates, 30 maps. \$38.50 (hardcover)

Tom Cade is one of the world's foremost authorities on falcons, having been intimately involved with the restoration of the Peregrine Falcon to eastern North America as well as being associated with falcon research the world over. It is thus no surprise that this book thoroughly and accurately describes the habits, status, and current

research efforts related to the 25-40 species (depending on who categorizes them!). This book includes range maps, a good bibliography, chapters on classification, behavior, reproduction, migration, and the relationships between man and falcons. The 44 color plates by British artist R. David Digby (most a generous 9 X 12 inches) are all of "frameable" quality. If they are not already available for framing in a print series, I'm sure there will be a demand that they be made available. Each is of a perched bird (or birds) within a vignette of its natural habitat. Whether you are just interested in falcons - or just interested in fine bird art, this volume is a winner. -- J.A. Jackson.

Endangered Birds of the World. The ICBP Bird Red Data Book.
Compiled by Warren B. King. Smithsonian Institution Press,
Washington, D.C., 1981. 624 pp. \$8.95 (paper), \$19.95 (cloth)

This is a compilation of basic information about all of the known endangered birds of the world. An introduction defines the various status categories used (e.g., endangered, rare, vulnerable...), lists the species included by family, and lists the 160+ species known or believed to have become extinct since 1600. Most of the volume is a compendium of information on troubled species. Each account includes a brief statement of status, distribution, population, habitat requirements, conservation measures taken, conservation measures proposed, and a bibliography of major works on the species. This is not a picture book. It is not a really readable book (although I found it fascinating to go through). This is a volume to aid governments, researchers, and conservationists. It is extremely informative and will be an invaluable tool. It should certainly be in any major library. -- J.A. Jackson.

THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

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