

ISSN 0737-0393

# THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

Vol. 26(1)

July 1996



A Periodical Published by the Mississippi Ornithological Society to Record and  
Further the Study of Mississippi Birdlife.

Vol. 26, No. 1

July 1996

Contents

A SPECIMEN OF THE NORTHERN GOSHAWK FROM NORTH MISSISSIPPI	... W. Marvin Davis	2
SUMMER OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS IN DESOTO NATIONAL FOREST, MISSISSIPPI	... David Cimprich	6
GARAGE-NESTING CAROLINA WREN PARASITIZED BY BROWN- HEADED COWBIRD	... Jerome A. Jackson	10
MULTIPLE BIRD SPECIES EATING FRUIT OF ONE SUGARBERRY TREE	... W. Marvin Davis	13
MOS OFFICERS AND MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION		Back Cover

Cover: Nesting Willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*) on Horn Island,  
Mississippi. Photo by Jerome A. Jackson.

## A SPECIMEN OF THE NORTHERN GOSHAWK FROM NORTH MISSISSIPPI

W. Marvin Davis

308 Lewis Lane  
Oxford, MS 38655

The southern limit of the regular wintering range of the Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) in the Mississippi Valley has been recognized as including the northern half of Missouri and western Kentucky, but it "avoids the southeastern states" (Root, 1988). However, the species has been reported as a "rare winter visitor" to Arkansas (James and Neal 1986), a "rare migrant, very rare winter resident" in Tennessee (Robinson 1990) and "occasional in winter in north Alabama" (Imhof 1976). Whereas Robinson found only 5 records for west Tennessee before 1990, there have been an increasing number of records from that area, directly north of Mississippi, since 1989. Thus, it seemed inevitable that a confirmed occurrence in Mississippi should ensue to supplement a number of previously reported sightings.

Late on the afternoon of 10 March 1993, Judy Burkepile was returning to her home in Lafayette County, beyond the southwest city limits of Oxford, when a moderately large raptor crossed the road in front of her car. Its abnormal flight suggested a wing-injured bird. After stopping she was able to sight the bird a few meters into the woods and to identify it as an adult Northern Goshawk. That evening she reported this sighting to Marvin Davis and to Keith Meals.

Early the next morning, Burkepile, Davis, and Meals were at the scene and located the goshawk perched in a branch only one meter above the ground and four meters from the road. Meals proceeded to capture the bird, which flew about 10-15 meters at his approach, but was obviously unable to fly normally. Davis photographed the goshawk before and after its capture. Meals then took the bird to a local veterinarian for examination and treatment. Its obvious emaciation suggested that several days had passed since its injury.

An X-ray of the bird's wing confirmed a fractured humerus, which doubtless resulted from impact of a lead slug that was still imbedded in the tissues. Although reparative surgery was attempted, the goshawk did not recover from anesthesia.

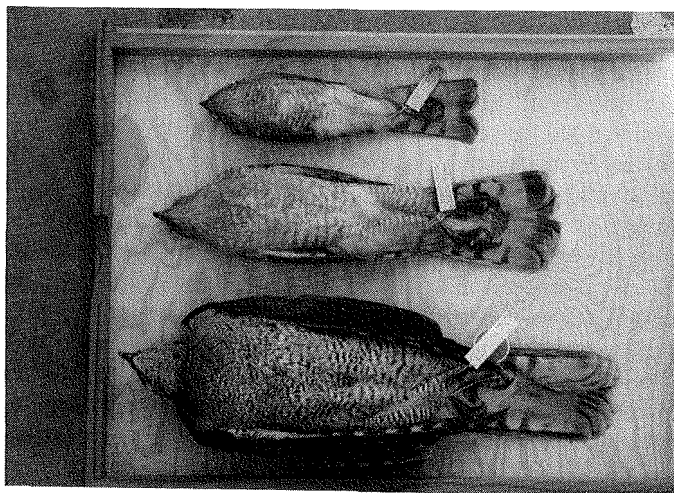
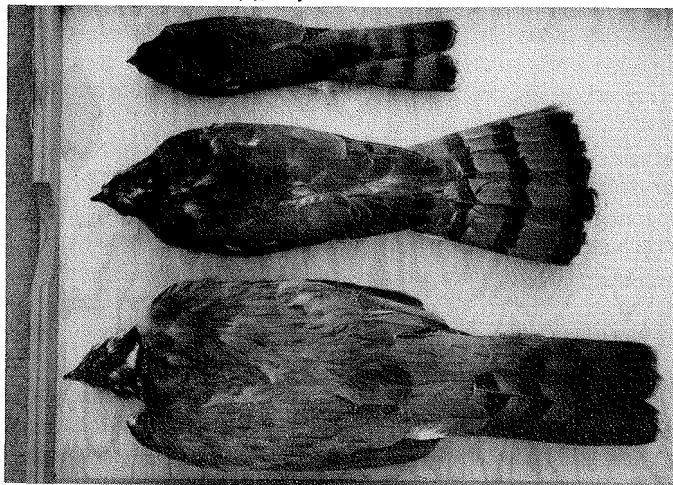
Meals conveyed the bird to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in Jackson to be deposited in the bird collection specimen # Ab-5372. It was identified by visual inspection of an ovary as a female. Photos were taken (Figures 1 and 2) to illustrate the specimen of Northern Goshawk, but also to contrast it with specimens of the related Sharp-shinned (*Accipiter striatus*) and Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*).

Comparison of the three Accipiters of the same sex shows the remarkable difference in size among them. However, it must be emphasized that the considerable size differential between sexes reduces the value of this factor for field identification. The small male of a larger species is not so different in size from the large female of the next smaller species. However, the adult plumage of the Northern Goshawk is distinctive, whereas those of the other two species are rather similar.

Sight records attributed to the Northern Goshawk have occurred mainly, but not exclusively, in north Mississippi. A bird described as ill or injured was reported by a hunter and located along a roadside near Sardis Waterfowl Refuge on 31 January 1984 by refuge manager Vic Theobald. The bird was identified in the hand. After being kept caged and fed for some days, the bird seemed recovered and was released. It was identified by its blue-gray back and light gray underparts plus a dark head mark as an adult Northern Goshawk. Unfortunately, no photo was obtained before the bird was released.

On 3 January 1986 Gene Knight and David Elmendorf were viewing birds at the Sardis Waterfowl Refuge when a large hawk flew directly at and over them, allowing a clear close sighting. The two agreed that it was an immature Northern Goshawk because of its brown upper plumage, heavily streaked underparts and barred tail in addition to shape and size. Elmendorf had prior experience with the species in the northern United States.

Another recent record was of a Northern Goshawk seen, on 29 March 1992 by Gene and Shannon Knight over the Yocona River bottomlands south of Oxford in Lafayette County (Schiefer 1993).



Figures 1 and 2. Dorsal and ventral views of (from top) Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawk and Northern Goshawk females in the collection at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Jackson.

Preceding these three sightings from Lafayette County was a report of an adult Northern Goshawk from the 29 December 1983 Hattiesburg, MS Christmas Bird Count by Terri Gates and Robert Chapel (Gates 1984). Chapel had prior familiarity with the species by virtue of residing in northern Illinois. Details were submitted to CBC regional editor T. Imhof of Alabama.

### Acknowledgments

I thank several members of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks for their cooperation; Mark Woodry of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science and David Watts of *Mississippi Outdoors* for providing photographs shown herein; Keith Meals for his assistance in capturing and further attending to the bird; and Vic Theobald for the information cited above concerning an earlier record.

### Literature Cited

- Gates, T., compiler. 1984. 716. Hattiesburg, MS. *Am. Birds* 38:621.
- Imhof, T.A. 1976. *Alabama birds*. University of Alabama Press, University, Alabama.
- James, D.A., and J.C. Neal. 1986. *Arkansas birds: their distribution and abundance*. University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, Arkansas.
- Robinson, J.C. 1990. *An annotated checklist of Tennessee birds*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, Tennessee.
- Root, T. 1988. *Atlas of wintering North American birds: an analysis of Christmas Bird Count data*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois.
- Schiefer, T., compiler. 1993. *Birds around the state: January-December 1992*. *Mississippi Kite* 23:21-46.

## **SUMMER OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS IN DESOTO NATIONAL FOREST, MISSISSIPPI**

David Cimprich

Department of Biological Sciences  
University of Southern Mississippi  
Box 5018  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406-5018

The breeding distributions of many species within Mississippi are unclear. This is especially true in areas where a species becomes uncommon or rare. Without intensive effort, these less abundant birds can easily be overlooked. Yet, areas where a species is rare are of particular interest because they may define the edge of that species' breeding range.

From late April through June 1994, I was involved in a project describing habitat use of birds in DeSoto National Forest. As part of this effort, three observers (myself, Mike Guilfoyle, and Fred Amidon) conducted over 1200 point counts, mostly within the Black Creek Ranger District. This relatively intensive effort yielded detections of several species not previously reported as breeding within DeSoto National Forest. The purpose of this report is to describe these observations from Greene, Forrest, Perry, and Stone counties, Mississippi. Because our records merely indicate the presence of these species, I hope this report stimulates further effort to confirm breeding in DeSoto National Forest.

The observations detailed here were made both while conducting point counts and while traveling from point to point. For each of the records, observers confirmed identification visually. I consider a species to be rare if it is not listed as occurring during summer in "*Birding Check List for the DeSoto National Forest*" (Anonymous, undated).

### Species Accounts

**American Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*).** In southern Mississippi, American Redstarts appear to be associated with bottomlands along large rivers. For example, Toups and Jackson (1987) list several records of this species from along the Pearl River near the coast. Also, records exist of singing males and a female with dependent young along the Pascagoula River (Jackson 1984, Toups and Jackson 1987). In DeSoto National Forest, the only such habitat is found in the Leaf River Wilderness Area. Mike Guilfoyle observed two singing males there on 5 June (Table 1). I observed another singing male along the Leaf River just outside of the national forest on 18 June (about 9.6 km SE of Hattiesburg; Table 1), so it may be that American Redstarts occur throughout the Leaf River bottomlands.

**Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*).** Toups and Jackson (1987) list one breeding season record of Worm-eating Warbler in the coastal counties. We observed this species on six occasions during May and June. In each case, the birds occurred on sites with steep hillsides covered in deciduous trees. There the ground was covered by a thick layer of leaf litter rather than pine straw. These conditions characterize the nesting habitat of Worm-eating Warblers throughout their range (Griscom and Sprunt 1979, DeGraaf and Rappole 1995, Harrison 1984).

On 15 and 20 June, we observed two Worm-eating Warblers together, apparently as a pair. During the 20 June observation, both birds remained within 7 m of me chipping constantly throughout a 10-minute count. Such behavior is consistent with individuals that have a nest or recently-fledged young nearby.

**Louisiana Waterthrush (*Seiurus motacilla*).** We observed Louisiana Waterthrushes at four sites from late April through June (Table 1). These birds were along small to intermediate size streams ranging from 3-8 m in width. Along smaller and larger streams (e.g. Black Creek), we did not find this species. We observed Louisiana Waterthrushes along the following streams in the area: Hickory Flat Branch, Beaverdam Creek, Cypress Creek, Garraway Creek, and Milky Creek.

**Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*).** Toups and Jackson (1987) report several records of Chipping Sparrows in DeSoto National Forest in late May 1982. We observed this species twice, once in early May and again in mid-June (Table 1). The May observation was of a singing male at the Frambert Seed Orchard. At this site,



large pines grow in well-spaced rows adjacent to open meadow. Because the entire site is regularly mowed, the ground cover is grass throughout. Such habitat is particularly well suited for Chipping Sparrows (DeGraaf and Rappole 1995).

Table 1. Observations, during April-June 1994, of birds previously considered rare or unusual in the vicinity of the Black Creek Ranger District, DeSoto National Forest, Mississippi. All observations are of a single bird unless indicated otherwise within the text.

Species	Date	County	Township/Range/Section	Observer <sup>a</sup>
American Redstart	5 Jun.	Greene	T1N, R8W, Sec. 34	MG
	18 Jun.	Forrest	T4N, R12W, Sec. 32	DC
Worm-eating Warbler	12 May	Perry	T2N, R9W, Sec. 34	MG
	15 May	Perry	T1S, R11W, Sec. 12	DC
	9 Jun.	Perry	T3N, R11W, Sec. 36	DC
	15 Jun.	Perry	T1N, R9W, Sec. 31	MG
	17 Jun.	Perry	T2N, R10W, Sec. 2	DC
	20 Jun.	Perry	T3N, R11W, Sec. 21	DC
Louisiana Waterthrush	29 Apr.	Perry	T1N, R10W, Sec. 36	DC
	15 May	Perry	T1S, R11W, Sec. 12	DC
	1 Jun.	Perry	T1N, R10W, Sec. 8	DC
	21 Jun.	Perry	T3N, R11W, Sec. 20	DC
	27 Jun.	Perry	T3N, R11W, Sec. 36	DC
Chipping Sparrow	8 May	Stone	T2S, R10W, Sec. 28	MG
	17 Jun.	Perry	T 1N, R10W, Sec. 27	DC

<sup>a</sup> MG = Mike Guilfoyle; DC = David Cimprich.

**Literature Cited**

- Anonymous. Undated. Birding check list for the DeSoto National Forest. U.S. Forest Service and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, Jackson, Mississippi.
- DeGraaf, R.M., and J.H. Rappole. 1995. Neotropical migratory birds: natural history, distribution, and population change. Comstock Publishing Associates, Ithaca, New York.
- Griscom, L., and A. Sprunt, Jr. 1979. The warblers of America. Doubleday, Garden City, New York.
- Harrison, H.H. 1984. Wood warblers' world. Simon and Schuster, New York.
- Jackson, J.A. 1984. Central southern region. *Am. Birds*. 38:1028-1031.
- Toups, J.A., and J.A. Jackson. 1987. Birds and birding on the Mississippi coast. University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, Mississippi.

## GARAGE-NESTING CAROLINA WREN PARASITIZED BY BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD

Jerome A. Jackson

Department of Biological Sciences  
Mississippi State University  
Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762

On 24 June 1993, I found a Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) nest in a rattan basket on a shelf 1.8 m above the floor of a residential garage in Starkville, Mississippi. The nest was constructed mostly of loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) needles, with a few straws of grass, and lined with mosses. It was not domed as is often the case with Carolina Wren nests (Bent 1948), although any dome might have been pushed aside by the comparatively large cowbird chick (Figure 1). The nest was approximately 2.5 m from the open garage door. While such "garage nests" are rather typical of Carolina Wrens, this one was unusual in that it contained three Carolina Wren chicks and one Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) chick, all at or very near fledging age. There were no unhatched eggs in the nest. As I approached the nest to examine it, all four chicks fledged, but their flight capabilities were limited and I was able to capture them for banding. All four chicks seemed in good health and were attended by their parents following fledging.

Friedmann (1963) considered the Carolina Wren an uncommon victim of the Brown-headed Cowbird except perhaps in Oklahoma, where 4 of 16 nests were parasitized. He describes some of the nest sites, and none mentioned were in buildings. Luther (1974) considered reported cases of Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism of Carolina Wrens rare because of their well-concealed nests. He detailed a case in which a pair of Carolina Wrens fledged three cowbirds from a nest in a basket under the eaves of a building. The only other case I have noted where cowbirds parasitized nesting wrens within a building was reported by Cain and McCuiston (1977) in College Station, Texas. They observed a Carolina Wren nest located in a hibachi grill that was 1.8 m above the floor of a garage. Although two cowbird eggs and three wren eggs were laid, the wrens hatched one cowbird and two wren chicks, but fledged only one cowbird.

In the case I observed, it was not only unusual that a nest within a garage would be parasitized by a cowbird, but also that the wrens were successful in raising both their own three young and the cowbird.

I thank Ruth Kohers who informed me of the nest in her garage and invited me to band the nestlings.



Figure 1. Brown-headed Cowbird chick on the edge of its Carolina Wren nest. The smaller Carolina Wren chicks are still within the nest.

**Literature Cited**

- Bent, A.C. 1948. Life histories of North American nuthatches, wrens, thrashers, and their allies. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 195.
- Cain, B.W., and R.D. McCuiston. 1977. Incubation temperature of a parasitized Carolina Wren nest. Bull. Texas Ornithol. Soc. 10:8-10.
- Friedmann, H. 1963. Host relations of the parasitic cowbirds. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 233.
- Luther, D.H. 1974. Observations at a Carolina Wren nest from which Brown-headed Cowbirds fledged. Wilson Bull. 86:51-57.

## MULTIPLE BIRD SPECIES EATING FRUIT OF ONE SUGARBERRY TREE

W. Marvin Davis

308 Lewis Lane  
Oxford, MS 38655

In the Tropical Zone of the Americas, various bird species have such dietary specialization toward eating fruit that they are described as "frugivores" or fruit-eaters. In the Temperate Zone of North America, only a few summer residents are primarily frugivores, but numerous species will feed on fruit according to its seasonal and local availability.

The fruit of mulberry trees (*Morus* spp.) is commonly recognized to be very attractive to birds such as American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) and other thrushes, but also other families such as mimids. Being unaware of such a favored use of fruits of sugarberry trees (*Celtis laevigata*) by birds, it seems appropriate to record observations of multiple species from several families feeding at a lone sugarberry tree on a single day.

On 18 October 1987 I visited the headquarters area of the Pascagoula Wildlife Management area at Parker Lake, Jackson County, off MS 614 near the eastern edge of the flood plain of the Pascagoula River. Weather conditions were mild, with the temperature about 80° F, low humidity, and very light breezes. The sky was mostly clear after a recent cool front passage.

Between 14:00 and 16:30 I observed bird activity at one sugarberry tree. This tree (since removed) was about 6-8 meters tall and stood 8-10 meters south of an equipment shed located ca. 250 meters south from the paved roadway. There was no other tree within 20 meters. Very few leaves remained on the tree at that time.

The bird species and number of individuals seen to use the ripe fruit of this sugarberry over 2.5 hours were as follows:

Red-bellied Woodpecker ( <i>Melanerpes carolinus</i> )	1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker ( <i>Sphyrapicus varius</i> )	3
Northern Flicker ( <i>Colaptes auratus</i> )	2
Pileated Woodpecker ( <i>Dryocopus pileatus</i> )	2
Eastern Phoebe ( <i>Sayornis phoebe</i> )	1
Swainson's Thrush ( <i>Catharus ustulatus</i> )	2
Wood Thrush ( <i>Hylocichla mustelina</i> )	3
Gray Catbird ( <i>Dumetella carolinensis</i> )	3
Northern Mockingbird ( <i>Mimus polyglottos</i> )	1
Scarlet Tanager ( <i>Piranga olivacea</i> )	3
Northern Cardinal ( <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> )	3
Rose-breasted Grosbeak ( <i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i> )	7

The avidity of the various bird species toward the fruits of the sugarberry tree was surprising to me considering the small size, merely ca. 5 mm diameter, of the fruit. This seemed particularly remarkable and incongruous in the case of the largest species, the Pileated Woodpecker. It may be noteworthy that for only one of the twelve species--the Northern Flicker--is fruit *not* shown as a recognized dietary component by the compendium of Ehrlich et al. (1988). The fruits of the several species of the genus *Celtis* (hackberries, sugarberries) were described as "popular with many winter birds" (Martin et al. 1951). Martin et al. listed numerous bird species as feeding on fruits of the hackberries, among which were six included in the present list: Yellow-shafted (= Northern) Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, Olive-backed (= Swainson's) Thrush and Northern Cardinal. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, which was listed only for using sap from hackberry trees, and the five additional species from the present report comprise additions to the list of Martin et al., 1951).

These species did not all visit the tree simultaneously, but most of the time there were two or more species present concurrently. Very little agonistic interaction was evident among the visitors; all seemed intent on the harvesting of their share of the berries. One apparent exception was a "flipping" of the wings by Wood Thrushes, seemingly a warning behavior or a sign of agitation directed at or evoked by the birds nearest to them.

**Literature Cited**

Ehrlich, P.R., D.S. Dobkins, and D. Wheye. 1988. *The birder's handbook: A field guide to the natural history of North American birds*. Simon and Schuster, Fireside, New York.

Martin, A.C., H.S. Zim and A.L. Nelson. 1951. *American Wildlife & Plants*. McGraw-Hill, New York.



## THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

Mississippi Ornithological Society  
Organized 30 April 1955

### Officers

President	Allan J. Mueller 4308 Shenandoah Road Vicksburg, MS 39180
Vice President	Marion Hutto Schiefer 1394 P.D. Fulgham Road Starkville, MS 39759
Secretary	Carolyn Jarnigan Rt. 3, Box 217 Corinth, MS 38834
Treasurer	Janet Dubuisson 22410 Glad Acres Pass Christian, MS 39571
Editor: The Mississippi Kite	Jerome A. Jackson Dept. of Biological Sciences Mississippi State University Mississippi State, MS 39762
Editor: MOS Newsletter	W. Marvin Davis 308 Lewis Lane Oxford, MS 38655

### MOS Memberships

Honorary	No dues
Life	\$100
Sustaining	20 (or more)
Active	10
Family	15
Library Subscriptions	10
Junior (under 17) and Golden Age (over 65)	4
Junior/Golden Age Family	8

Membership and subscription dues should be sent to the Treasurer. The Mississippi Kite is currently published twice a year and is sent to all classes of membership.