

NEWSLETTER OF THE

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 66, No. 2

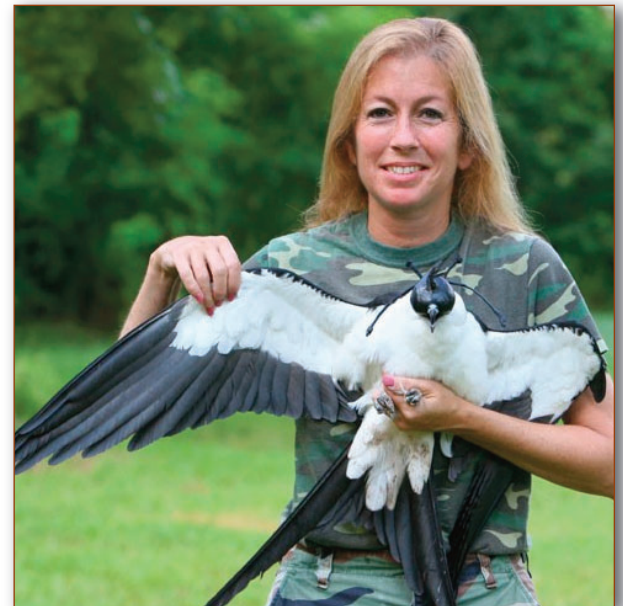
SEPTEMBER 2021



MOS (Hybrid) Fall 2021 Meeting: September 24-25 Friday-Saturday

The Mississippi Ornithological Society will hold its Fall Meeting on the weekend of September 24-25, with a hybrid format due to coronavirus. On Friday evening, we'll have a Zoom presentation from Swallow-tailed Kite researcher, Jennifer Coulson. On Saturday, participants can join in-person small-group birding field trips to public and private sites in the southern Mississippi Delta (such as Morgan Brake, Hillside, and Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuges), where we will seek wading birds such as egrets, herons, storks, and Roseate Spoonbills, as well as migratory shorebirds and songbirds. Registrants for the meeting can join these trips in person, or can bird on their own elsewhere, and all registrants will stay in touch across the state via live group messaging (which has worked really well during our fall 2020 and spring 2021 meetings).

Jennifer Coulson, PhD, our Friday night speaker, is a raptor researcher conducting a long-term, population ecology study on Swallow-tailed Kites nesting in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. She has also conducted studies on a variety of other raptor species, including Barn Owl and Harris's Hawk. She is a Raptor Propagator and Master Falconer. She serves as an adjunct Lecturer at Tulane University, Director-At-Large of the Raptor Research Foundation, and President of the Orleans Audubon Society. She received her Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Tulane University in 2006.



Jennifer Coulson

• Registration

Registration is required in advance, but is FREE to MOS members. Please consider joining MOS, if you are not already a member! Membership includes twice-yearly newsletters, our annual publication *The Mississippi Kite*, and meetings that will keep you in touch with Mississippi birders across the state.

To join MOS, please visit our website here:

<https://missbird.org/membership-2/>

To register for the meeting, please visit this page on our website:

<https://missbird.org/meetings/>

Please register in advance, so that you don't miss electronic communications about the meeting details.

• Accommodations

On your own. Field trips will begin within reasonable driving distance of Greenwood and Yazoo City, MS, with the latter likely being the most central location, although field trips sites will mostly be within 1.5 hours of Vicksburg and Jackson. Or, you can stay home, kick back, and take advantage of the pandemic to enjoy a Friday night Zoom presentation and local birding in your own patches on Saturday.

• Friday, September 24

6:00 p.m. – Zoom presentation by Dr. Jennifer Coulson. Zoom link will be provided to registrants in advance.

7:00 p.m. – Q&A with Dr. Coulson, and discussion of Saturday field trip plans, via Zoom. Field trip details will also be sent out by the GroupMe app, and by email, to all registrants.

• Saturday, September 25

Morning & Afternoon – Everyone will be welcome to join organized outings in the south Delta, or to bird on their own elsewhere in the state. Let's see how many species we can find across the state! To facilitate communication about interesting sightings and field trip logistics, we'll utilize the group messaging app GroupMe, so please add it to your phone and provide your cell phone number(s) when you register. Field trip details will be finalized on Friday evening in the Zoom session and will also be sent out via email and GroupMe to all registrants.

President's Corner

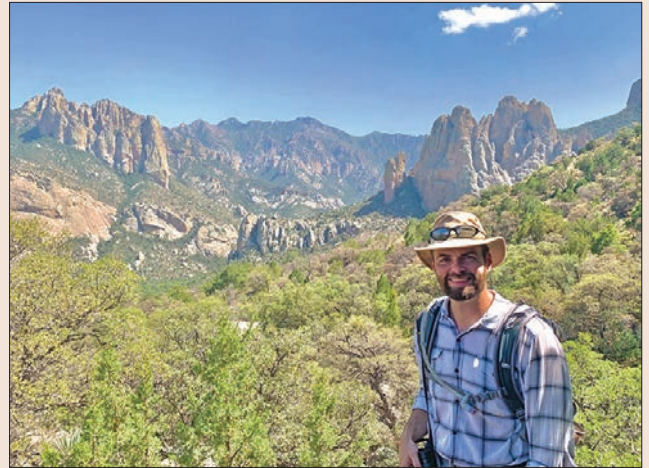
by JR Rigby, MOS President

Oxford, MS – I recently spent a couple of weeks with a group from The University of Mississippi in southeastern Arizona, one of the best places in the country to experience an impressive biodiversity of birds, reptiles, and plants. To walk out into a landscape of trogons and gila monsters, cacti and mesquite, inspires all manner of awe and inspiration. The landscapes of the West are wilder, more expansive, and rockier than those in Mississippi.

At some point, though, not so very long after arriving, I always find myself sitting on a rock in those mountains reflecting on the fact that, even after only a few days in that remarkable landscape, I can already take for granted the incredible views and the variety of unfamiliar and fascinating creatures that surround me. Not that it isn't all completely wonderful, but I can already feel a sense of normalcy creeping in after a very short time. I wonder if I lived there how long my sense of wonder would hold out against the routine? Maybe at some level it's a testament to our adaptability as humans that we can find comfort so quickly in new surroundings, but I am suspicious of the loss of wonder and the dulled awareness that accompanies the loss.

When I return to Mississippi, aside from the comfort of being home, I see the creeks and forests and swamps and grasslands that are my native stomping grounds anew once more. It's a wonderful but ephemeral effect of travel. My home landscapes are no less wonderful and filled with fascinating life and history, but familiarity is its own kind of veil. With imperceptible lightness, the gossamer gently and inevitably floats down over my vision, comfort and familiarity and a satisfied recognition taking the place of really seeing -- and the wonder that would come with it. Whatever you have to do, whether it's traveling to another place or just getting out of a routine that fixes the sightlines of your day, find a way to lift the veil and see your habitats as extraordinary and complex as they really are. Regaining that wonder is itself a skill to keep developing over time. Good birding.

JR Rigby



Submitting Articles and Photos for the Newsletter

The *MOS Newsletter* is published biannually to inform members of upcoming meetings and birding events. The editor invites you to participate by submitting articles and/or photographs for possible publication. Some suggestions for articles might be:

- Birding trips: in-state, out-of-state, or out-of-country
- Life bird experiences
- Bird locales or special birding events
- Any interesting story about birds or bird behavior.

Articles: Please submit neatly handwritten or typed articles, not to exceed two single-spaced typed pages. You may contribute as many articles as you would like. **Photos:** Please send images in jpeg format, at least 180 dpi, to the email address listed below.

Articles and photos may be sent any time of the year, but if you would like for it to appear in a specific issue then it must be received by the following deadlines: **Spring Issue – March 1, Fall Issue – September 1.**

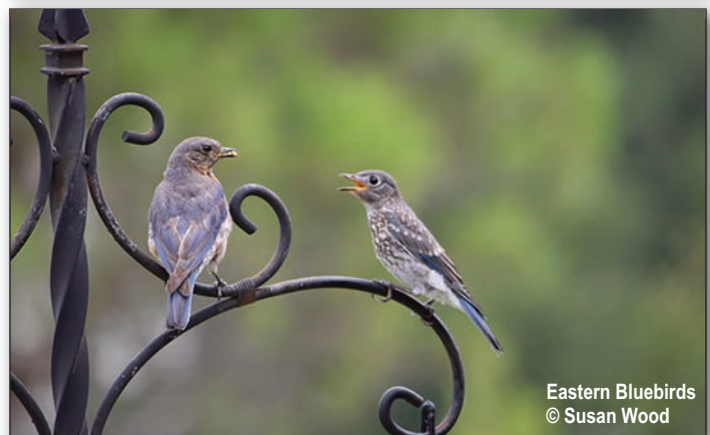
Please send your articles and/or photos to Cullen Brown, 160 Eagle Point Loop, Oxford MS 38655 or brown2cu@gmail.com

MOS Officers and Board Members

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<i>MOS Newsletter</i> Design	Tom Hoar



Prothonotary Warbler at Delta Wind Birds Sky Lake Nature Reserve
© Jason Hoeksema



Eastern Bluebirds
© Susan Wood

✓ Mississippi Adds Two New Birds To State Checklist!

Between 9/16/2020 and 7/21/2021, Mississippi added two new birds to the state checklist: the Red-footed Booby and Curlew Sandpiper. What follows are brief write-ups from the birders who found them!

Finding the Red-Footed Booby

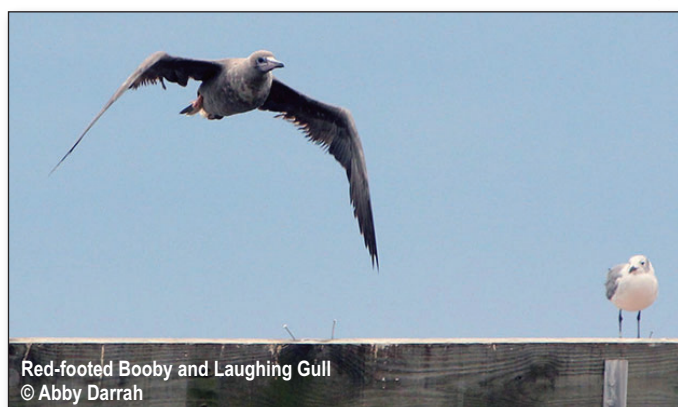
by Abby Darrah

September 16, 2020 at 8:00 am

After Hurricane Sally made an early-morning landfall along the Florida Panhandle, I decided to visit the Lake Mars pier just down the street from my house in order to watch for storm birds. Given the time of year, and our position to the west of the storm's center, I wasn't really expecting much, but I figured it was worth a look anyway. The wind was coming from the north to northwest at about 20 mph, and many birds were moving by from east to west – mostly Laughing Gulls and Forster's Terns, with a smattering of Black and Common terns. I looked around for bit, and just as I was thinking I wasn't likely



Red-footed Booby
© Abby Darrah



Red-footed Booby and Laughing Gull
© Abby Darrah

to see much of note, I spotted a large brown bird flying right over the jetty. A booby! I followed it briefly in my bins and then texted some friends to say I had a booby, presumably an immature Brown Booby but I'd have to check. The bird circled around a few times and then landed on the broken pier. I got a better look at it, and then noted the red feet. Red feet! A Red-footed Booby, really?! I quickly snapped some photos and then consulted my Sibley app to confirm and to rule out more likely (but still unexpected) sulid species. The red feet were the real clincher, but all other features I was able to observe also fit – pale brown all over without any white patches, relatively short blue-gray beak, and all-dark underwings. I spread the word to local birders as quickly as I could, and I was hopeful that the bird would remain for a bit, as it kept circling and then landing back onto the pier. Unfortunately

for others though, it took off barely five minutes before the first person arrived, and the bird did not return after an hour of watching. How lucky that I was there to see it for its brief visit to the Mississippi coast!

Finding the Curlew Sandpiper

by Cullen Brown

July 21, 2021

From the beginning of July to the beginning of August, Gene Knight and I monitored locations in Quitman County to track shorebird migration. Our efforts paid off at several places, with good numbers of migrating shorebirds. After each trip, Gene and I would speculate on what we would see on our next outing, always dreaming that we might check one of the usual sites to find a Ruff among the staggering numbers of Pectoral Sandpiper amassed on the muddy fields.

Late in July, my fiancée Susan Wood and I decided to make an evening trip to one of the best shorebird spots in Quitman: a large flooded field just off of Chism Rd. It was here that Gene and I really



Curlew Sandpiper
© Cullen Brown



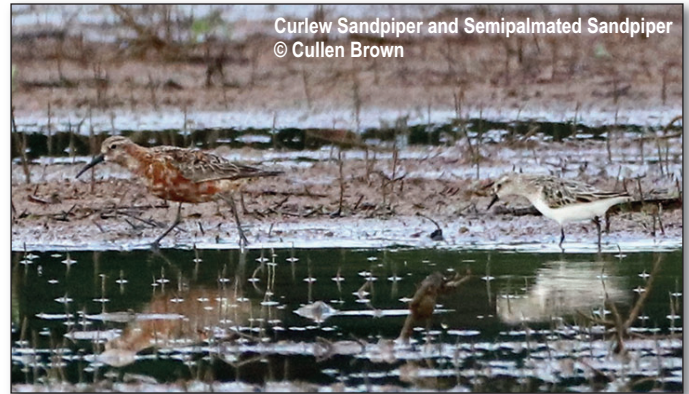
Curlew Sandpiper
© Jason Hoeksema

started to reap the rewards of our efforts. Starting out as more of a lake than anything you would expect shorebirds to light on, this flooded field slowly dried, leaving good amounts of mudflat and pools of water that provided much needed stopover habitat for a plethora of migrants. As Susan and I scanned the field, we noticed an odd-looking bird foraging with Semipalmated Sandpipers, but it was too distant to identify. As we picked through the other birds out there, we would occasionally relocate the bird, willing it to come closer. After an hour, and thanks to a fortuitous Red-shouldered Hawk flyover, the bird spooked and came close enough to identify. At first, we thought it might be a Red Knot but then noticed the long, decurved bill and more attenuated profile. It was then that we knew that we had found Mississippi's first state record of a Curlew Sandpiper!

(continued on page 4)

Finding the Curlew Sandpiper (continued)

The American Birding Association designates the Curlew Sandpiper as a code-3 bird, meaning that it appears in the ABA area in small numbers every year, usually in coastal areas. Despite being a rarity, this shorebird faces the same problems that plague our more common species. The IUCN lists the Curlew Sandpiper as “near threatened.” According to the Curlew Sandpiper’s entry in Cornell’s Birds of the World database, ornithologists believe population declines can be traced to the loss of stopover habitat that assists these birds in their annual migrations. This same problem faces many of our regular shorebirds, such as Red Knot, which the IUCN has also listed as “near threatened.”



Seeing this bird and learning of the challenges it faces made me think of both the global and local. Globally speaking, this bird is a mesmerizing migrant, breeding in the Russian tundra and wintering in Asia, Africa, and Australia. Yet the ability for these birds to perform their near-global migrations depends on local conservation efforts to protect vital stopover habitat. Believing this bird’s arrival in Quitman County to be more of a serendipitous coincidence than anything, I nevertheless entertained the superstition that its gracing our state had something to do with the efforts of organizations in Mississippi like Delta Wind Birds that prioritize protecting and creating stopover habitats.

Calendar of Events this fall at Mississippi’s Audubon Centers

Strawberry Plains Audubon Center
285 Plains Rd, Holly Springs, MS 38635
662-252-1155

Fall Native Plant Sale
September 17-18, 2021



Pascagoula River Audubon Center
5107 Arthur St, Moss Point, MS 39563
228-475-0825

Hummingbird Festival
September 23-25, 2021
Tickers: Adult \$10, Children \$5,
Adult 3-day Pass \$30

Audubon Native Plant Sale
September 23-25, 2021

Mississippi’s Notable Birds: Spring & Summer 2021

This spring and summer, Mississippi enjoyed a number of notable sightings. In mid March, a **Western Grebe** lingered around Ross Barnett Reservoir in Madison County for two weeks. Early spring also saw some notable migrants along the coast, including a **Bronzed Cowbird** in Jackson County and a **Cave Swallow** in Harrison. April and May also brought a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** to Clower Thornton Nature Trail in Harrison County and a **Mourning Warbler** to Lafayette County. A late May storm brought some pelagic birds to the coast, with a **Brown Booby** in Biloxi and **Brown Noddy** near Pass Christian Harbor in Harrison giving birders at those locations excellent views. **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** and **Western Kingbirds** returned to their usual locations in Lowndes and Washington counties. June brought with it a **Shiny Cowbird** (an ABA code-3 bird) to Cat Island off the coast of Jackson County. Tropical Storm Claudette in June also brought **Sooty Tern** inland, with one being spotted at the Lake Mars Avenue Boat Ramp in Jackson County. In July, small numbers of **Great Shearwater** appeared in the Gulf of Mexico off of Harrison County. In August, **Gray Kingbirds** were once again sighted at Bellefontaine Beach. These birds were spotted here as well in April and early May, with other sightings near Pascagoula. **Red Knots** were also spotted on Ship Island in August. These birds were also present at the Harrison County Courthouse Road Pier in April as well.

For more notable bird records, consider joining Missbird’s listserv or Facebook page. If you have a notable sighting that you would like to include in the next Newsletter, please send them my way! For more notable and rare bird sightings, please refer to the Missbird listserv, for which you can sign up at... <https://www.freelists.org/list/missbird>, and the Mississippi Birding page on Facebook. – Cullen Brown, Newsletter Editor

Visit MOS on the web!
www.missbird.org

Jason Hoeksema Receives J.W. Tucker Award

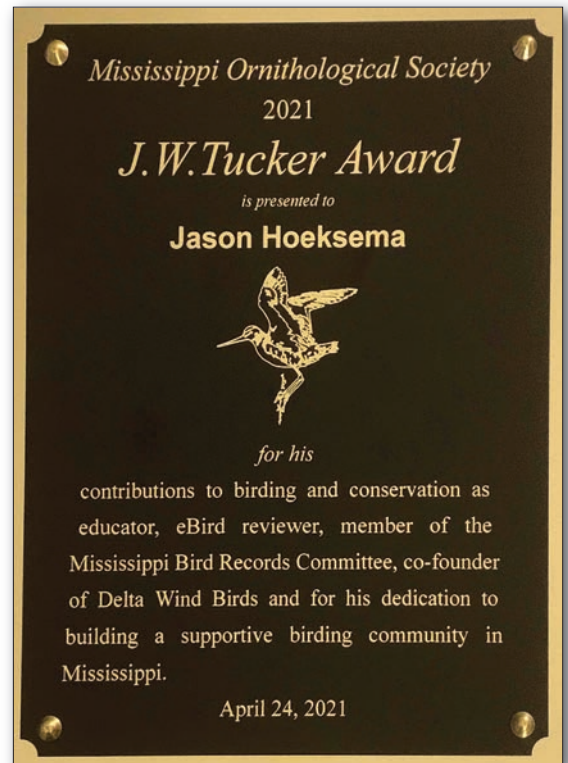
The Mississippi Ornithological Society hosted its spring meeting on the Gulf Coast April 23-25. The bulk of the meeting was conducted virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the meeting, we recognized Professor Jason Hoeksema for his contributions to the Mississippi birding community by awarding him MOS's J.W. Tucker Award (much to Jason's surprise).

The citation on the plaque reads "for his contributions to birding and conservation as educator, eBird reviewer, member of the Mississippi Bird Records Committee, co-founder of Delta Wind Birds, and for his dedication to building a supportive birding community in Mississippi."

Jason joins a distinguished list of past recipients including Ned Boyajian, Bob and Martha Sargent, and Gene and Shannon Knight. For background on the J.W. Tucker award including a full list of past recipients, visit this page: <https://missbird.org/j-w-tucker-award/>

When the opportunity arises, please congratulate Jason on this award and thank him for all he does for birds and birding around the state.



Minutes of the MOS Board of Directors Meeting: April 24, 2021

The Board of Directors for the Mississippi Ornithological Society met Saturday, April 24, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. via Zoom. Those present were JR Rigby, President; Jason Hoeksema, Vice President; Wayne Patterson, Treasurer; and Lillie Gibb, Secretary.

The meeting was called to order by JR and Wayne began by presenting the Treasurer's report with a total balance of \$28,955.67 (as of 4/30/2021 via email, this meeting was conducted via Zoom). Approximately \$18,700 of this fund is from the Coffey Endowment CDs and intended for use for the publication of the *Mississippi Kite* for which publishing costs have declined significantly. A discussion was initiated for placing these funds in a mutual fund to earn interest to potentially fund the honorarium for future MOS speakers, printing of the *Mississippi Kite*, and perhaps a stipend for the *Kite* editor. Further assistance from an attorney who is versed in the rules for net income for a Scientific Social Organization will be needed before pursuing this fully. Jason moved to move the Coffey Endowment funds into a Vanguard Mutual Fund with Wayne providing a second and all agreeing.

Jason provided an update on an eBird search tool specific to Mississippi records, which has been created by a University of Mississippi student for the sum of \$400 and is functional, but is expected to be completed within the next month.

JR discussed planning for the MOS 2021 Fall Meeting, with discussion of a mid to late September date and all agreeing that an in-person meeting will be the preferred platform for this event. Discussion included a Jackson/mid-state venue with birding to include the LeFleur's Bluff SP and the lower Delta areas, including Panther Swamp NWR. Both Jason and JR discussed the need for new MOS t-shirts for this meeting.

JR motioned that an honorary lifetime MOS membership be given to Gene Knight for his contributions to birding and the bird records of Mississippi. Jason seconded and the motion carried with all in agreement.

Minutes of the MOS Membership Meeting: April 24, 2021

MOS members met Saturday, April 24, 2021 via zoom for the Spring meeting at 5:30 p.m., JR Rigby called the meeting to order and provided a brief review of the previous business meeting. A species tally was conducted with birds from whichever locale the member was participating allowed. JR Rigby discussed the history of the J.W. Tucker Award including previous recipients and presented the 2021 award to Dr. Jason Hoeksema. Jason's many contributions to birding and the birds of Mississippi were highlighted in the presentation as well as the design of the unique plaque presented to this year's recipient. Jason provided brief remarks on his surprise and gratitude at receiving this honor.

Jason introduced our speaker for the evening, Jennie Duberstein from the Sonoran Joint Venture. She provided a presentation of her journey in conservation "From Bird Camp to Bird Conservation." Her presentation was recorded and will be posted on the MOS website with special thanks to Jennie for giving her permission to do so. At the conclusion of the presentation, a Q&A was allowed and the meeting was dismissed by JR Rigby.

Delta Wind Birds to host Nature Tour at Sky Lake!

The event will take place on Saturday, October 2, 2021 between 10:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m. at Sky Lake Boardwalk, 1090 Simmons Road, Belzoni, Mississippi, 39038. Please see the itinerary and registration information below...

Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m., we will offer a nature walk at the Sky Lake WMA Boardwalk (directions, 1090 Simmons Rd, Belzoni, Mississippi 39038), among the ancient Bald Cypress trees of the Sky Lake swamp, many of which are more than 1000 years old. While marveling at the giant trees, we will also ID birds by sight and sound, and will highlight dominant plants of the swamp besides the Bald Cypress. Birds will likely include both permanent residents and fall migrants.

If water levels are high enough, we may also offer a simultaneous alternative option: a paddle tour of the swamp, with canoes provided (free) by Todd Davis and his excellent team of students from Delta State University (if interested, please email us at dwindbirds@gmail.com). Alternatively, you can bring your own kayak/canoe, and follow the paddle trail through the swamp, if water levels are high enough. Restrooms are available at the boardwalk area entrance.

From 12:00 until 1:00 p.m., we will have lunch at the Sky Lake WMA Boardwalk covered picnic area. You can bring your own lunch, or optionally sign up for a hot family-style lunch catered by Jerri's Bakery & Southern Kitchen of Belzoni (price of \$20 per person includes tax and tip). Please bring your own beverage. We will have some disposable plates, forks, etc. available, but please consider bringing your own re-usables to reduce waste, as well as some Tupperware and a cooler to take home some leftovers (which may be abundant).

At 1:00 p.m., we will depart the Sky Lake WMA Boardwalk to caravan over to the Delta Wind Birds Sky Lake Nature Reserve,

which is located on the other side of Sky Lake, approximately a 15-20 minute drive from the boardwalk. At the DWB Reserve, we will enjoy views of Sky Lake itself, and will conduct a walking nature tour focusing on unique plants and mushrooms of the forested wetland (likely to include numerous species of wildflowers), as well as birds of the forest and adjacent Sky Lake. We will park along Sky Lake Road, at the north end of the DWB Reserve. If you have your own kayak/canoe, you can put in here for a leisurely and beautiful tour around the south end of Sky Lake (if water levels are high enough). No restrooms are available at this stop.

At approximately 3:00 p.m., we will depart the DWB Sky Lake Nature Reserve to head down the road to the nearby Four Winds Refuge, a private duck camp where former catfish ponds are now being managed by the owners for diverse wildlife including shorebirds and wading birds. We'll tour the site by vehicle, stopping periodically to enjoy the birds and other diverse nature. This time of year, diverse wading birds are likely to be present, including herons, egrets, and Roseate Spoonbills. We will also likely see several species of migratory shorebirds, as well as waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds. You will be welcome to stay until sunset (~6:40 p.m.), and indeed the level of bird activity is likely to intensify at dusk. Restrooms are available at this site.

The trip is free (except for the optional catered lunch), but registration is requested. You can register at: <https://www.deltawindbirds.org/events/nature-tour-at-sky-lake>. If you have difficulty with the registration process, please send us an e-mail (dwindbirds@gmail.com).

To learn more about the Sky Lake Boardwalk, please visit: <http://skylakemississippi.org>.

Donations are still being accepted to fund construction of a floating boardwalk at the Delta Wind Birds Sky Lake Nature Reserve. If you would like to help, please contact Jason Hoeksema at jason.hoeksema@gmail.com.



Osprey
© Dana Swan



Alder Flycatcher
© Andrew Bell

MOS Member Photos

MOS members are invited to submit photos for publication in the Newsletter. Send yours to the editor at brown2cu@gmail.com.

Juvenile Horned Lark
© Larry Pace



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
© Dana Swan



Juvenile Cooper's Hawk at nest
© Gene Knight

Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron "thermoregulating"
© Larry Pace



Great Blue Heron "thermoregulating"
© Robert Briscoe



Red Knot
© Andrew Bell

MOS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

RENEWAL _____ NEW MEMBER _____

(Select One):

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior (14 and under) | \$5 per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (15 and older) | \$10 per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25 per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$35 per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Subscribing (Libraries) | \$15 per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining | \$50 per year |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life | \$350 |

DUES:

Annual dues are payable in January each year. Send check to:
Wayne Patterson, MOS Treasurer
283A CR 501

Shannon, MS 38868

Dues may be paid online (with credit card or PayPal) at:
<https://missbird.org/membership-2/>

ATTENTION ALL MOS MEMBERS!

Digital Delivery of *MOS Newsletter* and *Mississippi Kite*

In order to cut down on printing and mailing costs of the *MOS Newsletter* and the *Mississippi Kite*, we are asking any of you who would be willing to receive your copy by email to please contact us at brown2cu@gmail.com. Members who receive issues by email (PDF) will receive a FULL-COLOR version. Due to high printing costs, there can be only limited color in mailed copies. Thanks for your help!



Mississippi Ornithological Society

Cullen Brown, Newsletter Editor
160 Eagle Point Loop
Oxford, MS 38655



Dues are payable in January of each year. Check your mailing label for dues status.