

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 66, No. 1

MARCH 2021



MOS (Hybrid) Spring Meeting to be held April 23-25

The Mississippi Ornithological Society will hold its Spring Meeting on the weekend of April 23-25, with a hybrid format due to coronavirus. On Saturday, participants can join in-person small-group field trips on the Gulf Coast, or keep in touch across the state during field trips via live group messaging (which worked really well during our fall 2020 meeting). Saturday evening events will be conducted via Zoom, including a species tally and a talk by a featured guest speaker, Jennie Duberstein. Jennie is a wildlife biologist and conservation social scientist who has spent her professional career working to build partnerships for bird and habitat conservation across the United States and northwest Mexico. She has directed environmental education programs, developed community-based conservation projects in the U.S.-Mexico border region, developed and taught courses and workshops on bird identification, ecotourism, and bird monitoring, and has studied species including Double-crested Cormorant and wading birds in Sonora and Yellow-billed Cuckoos in Arizona. Jennie has also worked with young birders for many years, directing field courses, summer camps, and conferences, and generally helping to connect young birders with opportunities and each other. Jennie received her B.S. in Wildlife Biology from Virginia Tech and her M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Arizona's School of Natural Resources and the Environment. Her current position is Coordinator of the Sonoran Joint Venture, for the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

REGISTRATION:

Registration is required in advance, but is FREE to MOS members. To join MOS, please visit: <https://missbird.org/membership-2/> To register for the meeting, please visit this page on our website: <https://missbird.org/meetings/>

ACCOMMODATIONS:

On your own. One option is to stay home, kick back, and take advantage of the pandemic to enjoy a Zoom presentation and local birding. To participate in field trips in person, find camping or hotel accommodations along the Gulf Coast. If you stay on the coast, you may wish to be near Gulfport or Biloxi, as a central location for access to field trip sites. One good option is to choose a hotel near Biloxi, along I-10 or I-110. For example, there are several good options near the Hwy 609 / Tucker Rd exit from I-10.

FIELD TRIPS:

Saturday field trip plans will be finalized on Friday evening, but options will potentially include: (1) taking the ferry to bird on Ship Island (departing from Gulfport Harbor at 9:00, returning in mid-afternoon; depends on repairs to island infrastructure; see <https://msshipisland.com/round-trip-ferry/>), followed by guided shorebirding (with shorebird ID instruction) along the mainland beaches in Harrison County, and (2) longleaf pine forest, seeking Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, and other pine specialties. The latter field trip will be led by Gerry Morgan of MS Coast Audubon, and will begin at Bethel Bike Trail at 7:30 (see the MCAS website for more details: <https://mscoastaudubon.org/field-trips-spring-2021/>). For those who choose to stay home, or to bird on their own on the Gulf Coast, we will use the GroupMe app to exchange messages about interesting sightings during the day.

FRIDAY, APRIL 23:

7:00 p.m. until: Zoom meet & greet and information exchange. Join us to finalize plans for Saturday field trips, and to exchange information about interesting birds present along the Gulf Coast. Zoom link will be provided to participants in advance. Field trip details will also be sent out by the GroupMe app.

SATURDAY, APRIL 24:

- **Morning & Afternoon:** Everyone will be welcome to join an organized outing on the Gulf Coast, or to bird on their own along the Gulf or elsewhere in the state. Let's see how many species we can find across the state! To facilitate communication, we'll utilize the group messaging app GroupMe, so please add it to your phone and provide your cell number(s) when you register. Field trip details will be finalized on Friday evening.
- **5:00-6:00 p.m.:** Welcome & Species Tally, via Zoom. Zoom link will be provided to participants in advance, and will the same link used on Friday evening.
- **6:00-7:30 p.m.:** Featured presentation (and Q&A) from Jennie Duberstein: "From Bird Camp To Bird Conservation: A TripTik to a Conservation Career." Jennie will talk about her fascinating career working to build partnerships for bird and habitat conservation across the United States and northwest Mexico, directing environmental education programs, studying Yellow-billed Cuckoos and other species, and working with young birders through summer camps and conferences. Her talk will be especially inspiring for efforts to guide young members of our community into careers in bird conservation. Please join us!

SUNDAY, APRIL 25:

We will not have formal, organized field trips, but participants may choose to seek some of the interesting birds found by others on Saturday, or to organize informal outings together. Plans can be made during the Zoom session on Saturday evening.



Photo Credit: *The Vulture Chronicles*

President's Corner

by JR Rigby, MOS President

Oxford, MS – Birders can be connoisseurs of rarity. Whether it's an ABA mega-rarity, a first state record, first county record, state bird (the first time you've seen it in the state), county bird, patch bird, year bird, or even if it's just not common in that habitat at that time of year on overcast business days... someone, somewhere will chase it! I think one way to look at birders' fascination with degrees of rarity is just a fascination with keeping things new and interesting. In fact, I think that is one of the aspects that keeps people engaged with birding for decades to lifetimes. There is always something new.

It's also an excuse to go birding more. And that's just fine.

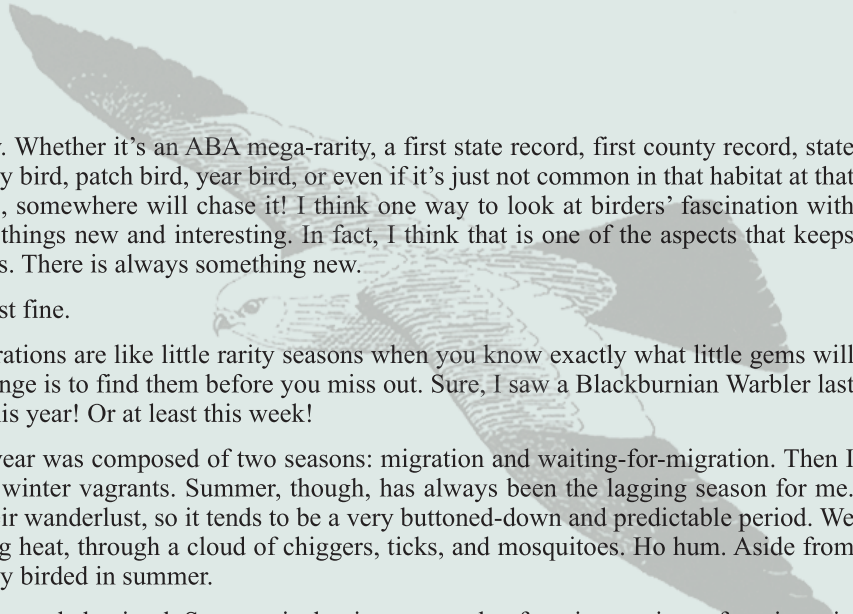
Migration feeds the mania too. Spring and fall migrations are like little rarity seasons when you know exactly what little gems will be flitting about in treetops near you, and the challenge is to find them before you miss out. Sure, I saw a Blackburnian Warbler last year. But wasn't it grand? And I haven't seen one this year! Or at least this week!

When I started birding, I quickly realized that my year was composed of two seasons: migration and waiting-for-migration. Then I discovered the diversity of winter birds, including winter vagrants. Summer, though, has always been the lagging season for me. Breeding season is not great for birds exercising their wanderlust, so it tends to be a very buttoned-down and predictable period. We see the same breeding birds every year in sweltering heat, through a cloud of chiggers, ticks, and mosquitoes. Ho hum. Aside from conducting Breeding Bird Surveys, for years I barely birded in summer.

The key to summer, the newness to uncover, was for me behavioral. Summer is the time to watch a favorite species, a favorite pair, a nest, or even a favorite individual. Watch and LISTEN. Too many birders still ignore sound. Count how many Tufted Titmice you can hear from one spot. From which directions? How often does one change the song it's singing? Watch a nest. Do both parents sit on the nest? What food do they bring? How often? For inspiration, I recommend something like the works of Bernd Heinrich. One Wild Bird at a Time is great inspiration for observing species around the yard. Though harder to find, Margaret Morse Nice's The Watcher at the Nest is another.

This summer, I encourage you to keep birding through the heat, and to keep things fresh and new by diving into the behaviors of your favorite birds. Good birding, folks.

JR Rigby



And yes, we're a little bit jealous!



Robert Briscoe of Oxford was blessed with a rare visitor when a female Evening Grosbeak arrived at his feeders on December 31, 2020. Word spread quickly on MissBird, and by the time she departed on January 8, 36 birders had visited Robert's property and 29 had viewed his very special guest.

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

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Banding Winter Hummingbirds Along the Mississippi Coast

by Emma Rhodes

As some of you might or might not already know, I am now covering parts of Mississippi for winter hummingbird banding research. If you are not familiar with winter hummingbird banding, it involves researching hummingbirds – particularly western species that instead of migrating south for the winter, migrate east where they overwinter, sometimes returning to the same locations every year.

The banding process involves a federally permitted hummingbird bander going to a “host” house where a hummingbird has been feeding consistently on a feeder. A trap is set up over a feeder, the bird is captured, and it is banded with a small, lightweight band on its leg and released unharmed. This process allows us to track hummingbird movements, and it also provides data on things like longevity, site fidelity, and demographic information.



Calliope Hummingbird
© Emma Rhodes

So far, I have banded 14 hummingbirds in Mississippi this winter season. The winter hummingbird season in Mississippi began for me on December 23 in Lucedale, where I banded a Hatching-Year female Rufous Hummingbird. That same day, I also banded an After-Hatching-Year (adult) female Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Pascagoula. In late December, I began to receive lots of reports and on January 1, I banded eight hummingbirds in Mississippi all on the same day: a record-setting day for me. I started in Pascagoula and worked west to Diamondhead, making stops in most of the major coastal cities along the way. Before ending the day, I made one last stop in Lucedale before heading home to Alabama. A banding summary of the day is as follows: five male Second-Year Rufous, one Second-Year male Ruby-throated, one After-Hatching-Year male Ruby-throated, and one Second-Year male Calliope. The male Calliope was a special treat. I returned on January 10 and banded a Second-Year male Rufous in Madison and another in Hattiesburg. On January 30, I banded a Second-Year male Broad-tailed Hummingbird in Jackson: a winter species first for me. I also returned to the same house in Diamondhead where I had banded a Rufous previously. I banded another young male Rufous at this location.

I would like to thank all those who reported their hummingbirds to me this winter and who graciously invited me to their houses to band. Your reports are what makes this research possible, and I am looking forward to hearing from you next winter regarding your winter hummingbird visitors. The official winter hummingbird season is November 15 through March 15. If you ever have a winter visitor between these months, please reach out. You can also go to our website at hummingbirdresearch.net to learn more.

I cover winter hummingbirds in Mississippi with the help of an associate, Cyndi Routledge, who covers the northern half of the state. You can find our information below.

For southern Mississippi:
Emma Rhodes, emmarhodes09@gmail.com

For northern Mississippi:
Cyndi Routledge, routledges@bellsouth.net

Mississippi's Notable Birds This Fall & Winter

Aside from the hummers listed in Emma Rhodes's article, there were a plethora of notable sightings around the state this fall and winter. **Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon, and Long-tailed Duck** were reported at various locations across the state. **Red-necked Grebe** were also particularly abundant, with one well-documented bird wintering at Enid Lake in Yalobusha County and several reported at the Ross Barnett Reservoir in Madison County in February and March. Enid Lake also enjoyed a notable record of two **Peregrine Falcons** roosting near the dam for several days in January. A **Magnificent Frigatebird** also spent a few days soaring over Sardis Lower Lake, giving birders away from the coast a nice November sighting. A **Golden Eagle** lingered around Morgan Brake NWR in Holmes County for a couple of days in January. **Long-billed Curlews** made appearances both on the coast in January and inland in Panola County in late November. Fall and winter also saw a bevy of rare gull sightings, including **Lesser Black-backed Gull, Iceland Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull**. Additionally, a first-winter **Black-legged Kittiwake** in Rankin County and a second-winter **Little Gull** in Panola County dazzled birders from across the state and beyond. Lafayette County saw its first record of an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in November. These birds, along with **Vermilion Flycatchers**, were noted in more southern and coastal counties as well. Adams County saw a well-documented **Couch's Kingbird** that stuck around for a couple of days in early November. In January, the second state record of **Chestnut-Collared Longspur** was verified in Panola County. Moreover, a rare **Black-throated Gray Warbler** was reported in Jackson County in December for the first time in over 20 years. In Oktibbeha County, a **Harris's Sparrow** was sighted for two days at Marion and Terry Schiefer's private residence on the same day that an **Evening Grosbeak** first graced Robert Briscoe's backyard in Lafayette County. While Evening Grosbeaks did not irrupt to the coast in an otherwise record year for boreal finches, a **Lesser Goldfinch** spent several days at a private residence in Jackson County. In addition, a January record of **Bell's Vireo** was also recorded in Jackson County. Finally, A wintering adult male **Black-headed Grosbeak** was also sighted on a private residence in Grenada County. 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, Editor

YOU can participate in Delta Wind Birds' 2021 BIG DAY fundraiser!

by Jason Hoeksema

This spring, from April 21 to May 10, Delta Wind Birds will conduct its 6th annual "Big Day" fundraiser for bird conservation. This year, funds will not only support DWB's work with private landowners in the Delta to create migratory shorebird habitat, but will also support the construction of a new floating boardwalk at the DWB Sky Lake Nature Reserve in Humphreys County.

As in 2020, we will have multiple birding teams across the state of Mississippi, each conducting their own, localized "Big Day." A Big Day happens when a team of birders attempts to find (by sight or sound) as many bird species as possible in a defined area, within a 24-hour calendar day (typically on very little sleep). This is not how we want to go birding every day, but it is a really fun thing to do once or twice a year. AND, the best thing is, planning a Big Day really forces you to learn a lot about the birds that live in, and pass through your area – to find as many species as possible, you must think about migration timing, patterns of behavior during the day, and required habitats. We encourage you to try it!



Big Day

noun

1. a birding event in which an individual or team tries to identify by sight or sound as many species of birds as possible within a calendar day in a defined geographic area

Each team can set its own geographic boundaries, and birding goals. For example, JR Rigby and I are considering this year to try a non-motorized Big Day in Lafayette County. Last year, we had a blast driving all over our home county, and found 131 species. But we wondered: How many species could we find if we only walked and paddled (canoe or kayak), birding constantly? Would the constant birding (with no time driving) make up for the potential loss of some unique habitats across the county? Our goal in 2021 is to beat last year's motorized species total of 131. If you want some further ideas for fun ways to conduct a Big Day, we encourage watching the documentary "Opposable Chums", about the World Series of Birding in New Jersey (available for streaming on Amazon Prime).

We had 7 teams who conducted local Big Days last year, mostly restricted to a single county – we had teams in DeSoto, Forrest, Lafayette, Madison, Noxubee, and Rankin Counties, and we found 182 species altogether. How much higher could we go, especially if we had at least one team on the coast???

We need more teams! The Delta Wind Birds team also still has its eye on trying to break our own statewide Big Day record of 179 species, set on April 29, 2018. If conditions look good this spring, we may try again for a new record – stay tuned.

We would love for YOU to participate in 2021. There are several ways for you to do so:

(1) Pledge per species. After the event is over, we will calculate the aggregate species total across all Big Day teams, multiply it by your pledge, and then notify you of the amount of your donation. To pledge, please visit this web page:

<https://forms.gle/MVeL9BGoLZ1WDFCA>

(2) Donate directly. If you prefer to just make an up-front donation, please visit our website here: <https://www.deltawindbirds.org/take-action> or mail a check to Delta Wind Birds, P.O. Box 1536, Oxford, MS 38655

(3) Conduct your own Big Day. Solo or with a team, choose a geographic area and plan your Big Day for sometime between April 21 and May 10. You can pick any day you like, based on predicted weather and migration conditions. Use social media, email, phone calls, etc. to rally family and friends to support your Big Day by pledging or donating through options (1) and (2) above. To sign up your team, please send an email to dwindbirds@gmail.com. We will help you by providing some optional graphics you can use to advertise your Big Day.



What Birding Means to Me

By Norah Bruce

I'm standing on Cypress Point at the Sardis Reservoir in a deluge. My raincoat isn't keeping me dry but I keep my binoculars aimed at a group of Forster's Terns. I've been searching for awhile and am about to give up when suddenly I see it swoop across the cove. At first, I only notice the dark underwing and the black dot behind its eye. Then I see the pale gray upper wing with the white edge described in my Sibley Guide. Thanks to the local birders who spotted and spread the word about this rare visitor to our area, I see my first Little Gull. I do a little celebratory dance and run to the car to dry off.

A year ago, I didn't stand in downpours for a look at a bird or routinely stick my head into abandoned silos in search of Barn Owls. I didn't wait at the edge of the woods at dusk to hear Woodcocks or eagerly muck through wet fields to glimpse a LeConte's Sparrow. I've always loved hiking, camping, kayaking, and creek wading; and I've always been curious about the things I see. For me, birding is another way to experience the outdoors and learn about nature.

I remember one of the first times I saw a bird and thought, "I really want to know what that is!" It was skittering around an agricultural field. I inched closer and saw its unique black "necklace" and long legs. It definitely wasn't like the robins, cardinals and bluebirds I already knew. The bird ran away and stopped. Then ran away and stopped again. All of a sudden, it got low to the ground, thrashed about, and flashed some reddish-orange. "It's hurt!", I thought. I ran back to my parents to tell them what I had found. We did some online research and learned it was a Killdeer. The behavior I had seen was a display to draw predators away from its nest. It took a few years to get truly "hooked" on birding but Killdeer are still a favorite of mine.

My mom and I usually work as a team when we bird. We travel as a pair, learn together, challenge each other, and talk about the birding books we read. We love outings with others — especially more experienced birders like Jason Hoeksema, Cullen Brown, Christina Mitchell and Hal Mitchell — who share their expertise and enthusiasm.

In October, we visited Four Winds Refuge as part of Delta Wind

Birds' fall field trip. I saw my first Roseate Spoonbills, White Ibises, American Avocets, and — a personal favorite from that day — Black-necked Stilts. Delta Wind Birds helps Four Winds Refuge create shorebird habitat and expects to offer more field trips, and I'm already looking forward to going back!

This is one of my favorite parts of birding: there is always more to learn! I can't wait for spring migration! I'm really looking forward to learning my warblers and seeing the Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks again on the feeders later this year.

Norah Bruce is a sophomore at Oxford High School. She hopes to be a wildlife biologist some day and, in the meantime, enjoys reading, writing and spending as much time as possible outside.



Norah Bruce

Statewide Species Tally: Fall 2020 MOS Meeting

Black-bellied Whistling Duck
 Greater White-fronted Goose
 Canada Goose
 Wood Duck
 Gadwall
 American Wigeon
 Mallard
 Mottled Duck
 Blue Winged Teal
 Northern Shoveler
 Northern Pintail
 Green-winged Teal
 Redhead
 Ring-necked Duck
 Lesser Scaup
 Ruddy Duck
 Wild Turkey
 Pied-billed Grebe
 Eared Grebe
 Neotropic Cormorant
 Double-crested Cormorant
 Anhinga
 American White Pelican
 Brown Pelican
 Great Blue Heron
 Great Egret
 Snowy Egret
 Little Blue Heron
 Tricolored Heron
 Reddish Egret
 Cattle Egret
 White Ibis
 Glossy/White-faced Ibis
 Roseate Spoonbill
 Black Vulture
 Turkey Vulture
 Osprey
 Bald Eagle
 Northern Harrier
 Sharp-shinned Hawk
 Cooper's Hawk
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Clapper Rail
 Virginia Rail
 Sora
 Common Gallinule
 American Coot
 Black-necked Stilt
 American Oystercatcher
 Black-bellied Plover
 Semipalmated Plover
 Piping Plover
 Killdeer
 Spotted Sandpiper
 Greater Yellowlegs
 Willet



American Woodcock
 © Larry Pace

Lesser Yellowlegs
 Marbled Godwit
 Ruddy Turnstone
 Sanderling
 Dunlin
 Least Sandpiper
 Pectoral Sandpiper
 Western Sandpiper
 Long-billed Dowitcher
 Wilson's Snipe
 Laughing Gull
 Franklin's Gull
 Ring-billed Gull
 Herring Gull
 Caspian Tern
 Common Tern
 Forster's Tern
 Royal Tern
 Sandwich Tern
 Black Skimmer
 Rock Pigeon
 Eurasian Collared-Dove
 White-Winged Dove
 Mourning Dove
 Inca Dove
 Yellow-Billed Cuckoo
 Eastern Screech Owl
 Great Horned Owl
 Barred Owl
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird
 Belted Kingfisher
 Red-headed Woodpecker
 Red-bellied Woodpecker

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
 Downy Woodpecker
 Hairy Woodpecker
 Red-cockaded Woodpecker
 Northern Flicker
 Pileated Woodpecker
 American Kestrel
 Merlin
 Peregrine Falcon
 Eastern Wood-Pewee
 Eastern Phoebe
 Vermillion Flycatcher
 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
 Loggerhead Shrike
 White-eyed Vireo
 Yellow-throated Vireo
 Blue-headed Vireo
 Philadelphia Vireo
 Red-eyed Vireo
 Blue Jay
 American Crow
 Fish Crow
 Horned Lark
 Tree Swallow
 Northern Rough-winged Swallow
 Barn Swallow
 Carolina Chickadee
 Tufted Titmouse
 Red-breasted Nuthatch
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 Brown-headed Nuthatch
 House Wren
 Winter Wren

Sedge Wren
 Marsh Wren
 Carolina Wren
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Golden-crowned Kinglet
 Eastern Bluebird
 Hermit Thrush
 American Robin
 Gray Catbird
 Brown Thrasher
 Northern Mockingbird
 European Starling
 Cedar Waxwing
 Black-and-white Warbler
 Tennessee Warbler
 Orange-crowned Warbler
 Common Yellowthroat
 American Redstart
 Northern Parula
 Magnolia Warbler
 Bay-breasted Warbler
 Blackburnian Warbler
 Yellow Warbler
 Blackpoll Warbler
 Palm Warbler
 Pine Warbler
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Black-throated Green Warbler
 Eastern Towhee
 Chipping Sparrow
 Field Sparrow
 Savannah Sparrow
 Henslow's Sparrow
 Nelson's Sparrow
 Seaside Sparrow
 Song Sparrow
 Lincoln's Sparrow
 Swamp Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 White-crowned Sparrow
 Summer Tanager
 Northern Cardinal
 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
 Indigo Bunting
 Dickcissel
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Eastern Meadowlark
 Common Grackle
 Boat-tailed Grackle
 Brown-headed Cowbird
 House Finch
 Pine Siskin
 American Goldfinch
 House Sparrow
 Scaly-breasted Munia

GRAND TOTAL: 178 Species

MOS Member Photos

MOS members are invited to submit photos for publication.
Send to brown2cu@gmail.com. See page 2 for details!

Long-tailed Duck
© Cullen Brown



Fork-tailed Flycatcher
© Nicole Lewis

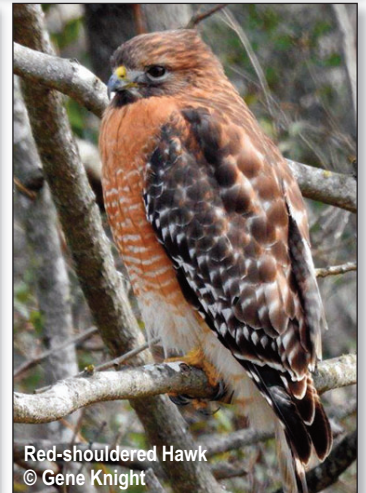
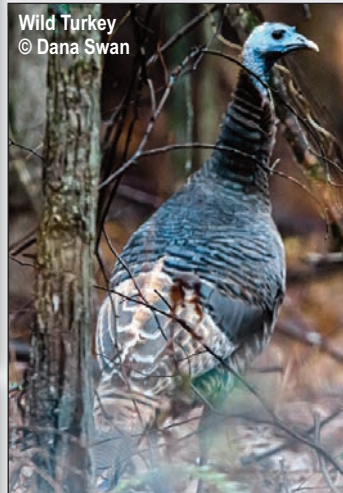


Fox Sparrow
© Robert Briscoe



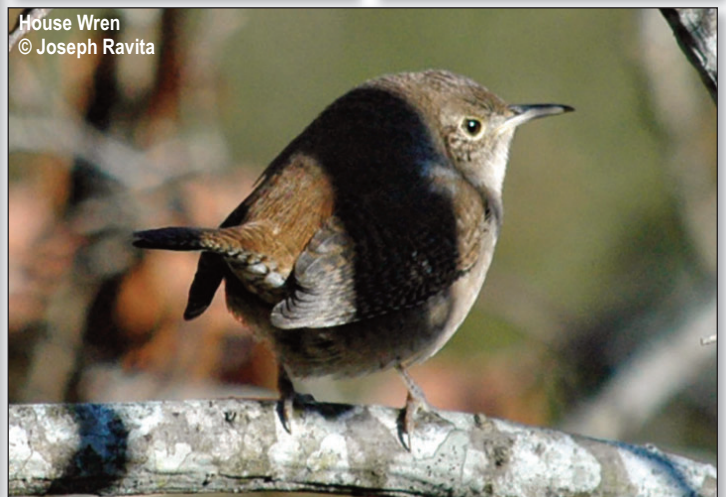
Great Egret
© Gene Knight

Wild Turkey
© Dana Swan



Red-shouldered Hawk
© Gene Knight

House Wren
© Joseph Ravita



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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 |

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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

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