

MISSISSIPPI ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 68, No. 1

APRIL 2023



The Spring 2023 MOS Meeting will be held in Jackson May 5 - 7. The registration deadline is April 23!

This year's Spring Meeting will be based at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in Jackson. The meeting will be headlined by two different experts: Tom Moorman, former Chief Scientist for Ducks Unlimited, and Lillie Gibb, a licensed animal rehabilitation practitioner. Lillie will give a talk on Friday evening about *"Creatures of the Night"* (with the help of several species of live ambassador owls and snakes). The main field trip on Saturday will visit a private catfish farm in Yazoo County, which traditionally has some of the best shorebird habitat available in the Delta, along with many species of waterbirds. The Saturday evening banquet will take place in the beautiful Atrium of the Museum, and will include Tom Moorman's presentation about continental strategies for conservation.

• REGISTRATION

The registration fee for the Spring Meeting is \$65 per member, \$80 per non-member, or \$30 per student. Please register online (<https://missbird.org/meetings/>), or make check payable to MOS and mail to: Wayne Patterson, MOS Treasurer, 283A CR 501, Shannon, MS 38868. **Mail your registration to reach Wayne no later than Sunday, April 23.** Dues are payable in January of each year. Check your mailing label for your dues status. New members are welcome. Please consider joining (or re-joining) our society. You can find membership information here: <https://missbird.org/membership-2/>.



• ACCOMMODATIONS

We are not holding a block of rooms for attendees – rather, the hotel listed below is recommended for its convenient location relative to the Museum and for its strong reviews and reasonable prices. It will also be the meeting place for departure for the Saturday morning field trip. There are other options you can consider in the area, including AirBnB. Please make your lodging reservations as soon as possible. Recommended hotel: Best Western Plus Flowood Inn & Suites, 1004 Top St, Flowood, Mississippi, 39232. Phone: (601) 420-4944.

• FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 5

Event at Mississippi Museum of Natural Science

- 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. MOS meet & greet (light refreshments), in large classroom downstairs at Mississippi Museum of Natural Science (2148 Riverside Dr, Jackson, Mississippi 39202)
- 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Presentation by Lillie Gibb, *"Creatures of the Night"* (including live owls and snakes). Venue: Auditorium of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. Note: Our Friday night at the Museum is being held in conjunction with the Museum's very popular "Owl Prowl" event, to which MOS meeting attendees are being given free admission. Other Owl Prowl attendees will also be able to enjoy this talk.
- 7:30 - Optional: Guided night hikes & live nocturnal animal programs, led by Museum staff and volunteers as part of the "Owl Prowl" event. Dress warmly for this!

• SATURDAY, MAY 6

Field trips and banquet

- 7:30 a.m. Field trip: Departure from parking lot of the Best Western Plus Flowood Inn & Suites (1004 Top St, Flowood, Mississippi 39232).
- Lunch On your own. Field trip participants can bring their own lunch food, but will also have the option of eating at a restaurant, and continuing to bird together after lunch.
- 4:30 p.m. MOS Board Meeting, location to be announced.
- 6:30 p.m. Banquet: In the Atrium at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science. Dinner will be catered, and the cost of this meal is included in your meeting registration fee.
- 7:30 p.m. Business Meeting and Species Tally
Guest Speaker: Tom Moorman, *"Ducks Unlimited's Continental Approach to Conservation and Benefits Beyond Waterfowl."*

– Continued on Page 2

• SUNDAY, MAY 7

Informal field trips (leaving from the hotel lobby)

Informal, optional field trips: To be organized on Saturday evening. Arrange to meet others in the lobby or parking lot of the recommended hotel.

• SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

TOM MOORMAN retired in 2020 as Chief Scientist for Ducks Unlimited. Tom joined DU in 1991 as a regional biologist working on waterfowl habitat restoration in partnerships with state and federal wildlife agencies in DU's Southern Region. He was promoted to Director of Conservation Planning and served in that capacity from 1998-2008 with responsibility for planning and evaluation to strengthen the science underlying DU conservation programs in the Southern Region. In 2013, Tom was promoted to Director of Operations for the Southern Region to lead all aspects of DU's conservation work on behalf of wintering and migrating waterfowl across 13 states in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways. Effective March 1, 2017, Tom became the Chief Scientist for DU with responsibilities and oversight of development and integration of science-based information to guide DU's conservation work. He retired from DU in 2020 and is currently serving as United States Co-Chair of the 2024 Update of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Tom earned a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science, M.Sc. in Wildlife Science from Auburn University, and B.Sc. in Zoology from Ohio University.

LILLIE GIBB is a Mississippi naturalist who has been involved in the Mississippi birding and naturalist communities for the past seven years. She has been a board member and volunteer with Whisper of Hope Wildlife Rescue for five years and specializes in bat rehabilitation and public outreach including representing Whisper of Hope and Walter Anderson Museum at the Peter Anderson Festival. Her talk, entitled "*Creatures of the Night*," will focus on some of our nocturnal animal species, particularly owls and snakes, including live permitted education animals of several of these species, and how wildlife rehabilitation in Mississippi works. □

President's Corner

by JR Rigby, MOS President

Oxford, Mississippi – My daughters are both in elementary school here in Oxford and regularly have dress-up days for which the school encourages everyone to show up costumed according to a theme. Pajama Day, for example, is a perennial fixture on this sartorial circuit. My six-year-old is especially fond of Pajama Day because to her any day that can be navigated entirely within pajamas is a good one (though she is a little appalled that her mother still makes her put on fresh pajamas for school). There is also "Occupation Day" for which kids are encouraged to choose a profession to represent. They can approach it as a "What I want to be when I grow up" opportunity or just dress up like any distinctive occupation. Both of my daughters have now participated, and each one has chosen to go to school as an ornithologist. Wearing their best hiking clothes, with binoculars and notebook in tow, they've trundled off to school ready and willing to help their teachers pronounce "or-nith-ol-o-gist" for a day. This is with no coaxing from me. It's honestly a little mystifying since I am not an ornithologist. And bear in mind that neither child has spent more than a moment's thought in consideration of going to school as a hydrologist (which IS my profession). For some reason, ornithology strikes them both as worthy and interesting in ways that my other scientific pursuits (as well as hobbies) have not yet risen to compete.

Whatever they see in birds and ornithology, I hope it continues because my girls have such a fresh view of the world that continually surprises me. For example, on a recent family walk in the woods, we saw a critter on the trail that is variously known as a harvestman, daddy longlegs, and - as I knew them growing up - granddaddy longlegs (Order: *Opiliones*). My six-year-old saw one on the trail and asked, "Why are they called granddaddy longlegs," to which I replied that I supposed it was because they have really long legs. She continued with what seemed a curveball of a question, "Well, do the boys lay the eggs?" Puzzled, I responded, "No, I think the girls lay the eggs. Why?" And she again hit me with a question that I didn't anticipate, "Well why don't the girls get the credit?" I took a moment to replay the conversation in my head to see if I understood where she was coming from and where we might be going with this line of questioning, but I was stumped. "I'm not sure I understand. What do you mean about them getting credit?" And then she clarified everything, "Well...", she said exasperatedly, "if the girls lay the eggs, that's a lot of work and so why don't they call them 'grandmama longlegs' instead of 'granddaddy longlegs'? I mean, they didn't choose the names, right? So why don't the girls get credit." To this, I had no reply but, "That's a very good question. I see your point now." It wasn't really a question about natural history, I grant you. It wasn't a question about a particular fact about *Opiliones*. Instead it was fundamentally a question about how we see, interpret, and label things.

I think that as long as they keep dressing up like ornithologists, walking in the woods, and asking the hard questions that come to them, there's a lot of hope for the future.

Happy Birding, *JR Rigby*



Eastern Meadowlark © Larry Pace

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.**

Send your articles and/or photos to Cullen Brown, 2144 Lakeshore Drive, Apt 45 B Ridgeland, MS 39157 or brown2cu@gmail.com

MOS Officers and Board Members

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Secretary	Lillie Gibb
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<i>Mississippi Kite</i> Editor	Nick Winstead
<i>MOS Newsletter</i> Editor	Cullen Brown
<i>MOS Newsletter</i> Design	Tom Hoar

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Eastern Bluebird chicks
© Janet Schove

Notes from the Fall Meeting

By Cullen Brown, MOS Newsletter Editor



This past December, MOS members met in Cleveland Mississippi for our Fall Meeting. We convened on Friday, 12/9/2022, and ended our meeting on Sunday, 12/11/2022. What follows are some notes from that meeting.

Most of us arrived in the evening of December 9th, eager to hear our featured speaker, Debbie Crum, speak to us about bird rehabilitation in Mississippi. And we were not disappointed! Serenaded by Snow Geese coursing through the sky, Debbie talked us through the ins and outs of rehabbing various bird species and gave an in-depth talk on the status and trends of particular species throughout the state. It was especially interesting meeting their rehabilitation ambassadors—an American Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Eastern Screech Owl. All in all, I don't think a single one of us wasn't energized to do better by our avian neighbors or excited to begin searching the Mississippi Delta for raptors the following morning.

We convened the following morning for a group breakfast on the grounds of the Lyric Hotel. Members spent the morning sipping coffee and eagerly conversing about the outings that were to take place shortly thereafter. We began our morning looking for Short-eared Owls outside of the Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge. Although we found evidence of potential roosting sites, the owls proved elusive that morning. We did have luck spotting LeConte's Sparrow, and several members got excellent looks at this reclusive species as a handful of specimens moved mouselike through the grass.

Leaving Dahomey, we began searching for wintering Red-tailed Hawks and other raptors in the Mississippi Delta. Led by Bryce Robinson, our featured speaker that evening, members got to see rare subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk, including Harlan's, Krider's, and Abieticola in addition to our resident Borealis subspecies. Members also got an invaluable overview of how to differentiate these subspecies in the field. We also spotted other common raptor species such as Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, and Red-shouldered Hawk. In addition to these birds, we also saw numerous Delta specialties. Snow Geese, Greater White-fronted Geese, Ross's Geese, and Lapland Longspur were particularly abundant across the several sites we visited that morning.

We took a lunch break by visiting the Delta Meat Market in downtown Cleveland. We excitedly talked over our sightings over copious amounts of coffee and eagerly made plans for later in the afternoon. Assisted by Larry Pace, many members got to see the Say's Phoebe that has likely been overwintering in the state since 2021. As we viewed and photographed the Say's, Andy Bell got in touch with us about a pair of Cackling Geese he spotted mixed in with thousands of other geese on a field outside of Cleveland. Unfortunately, spotty GPS and, I confess, my lack of spatial awareness, caused many of us to dip out on seeing this bird before dusk set in.

We reconvened at the hotel for Bryce Robinson's talk on the Red-tailed Hawk Project. During his talk, Bryce walked members through the science of the project, showing distributions of the various Red-tailed Hawk subspecies and the process of capturing specimens and tracking their migrations. One of the many pertinent points to emerge from this talk was the importance of keeping our common species common. While this project reveals fascinating aspects of the lives of Red-tailed Hawks, it will hopefully help us conserve this magnificent raptor. Also, Bryce promised to return to Mississippi to hopefully capture some of the many Red-taileds that overwinter in the state, so stay tuned! □

Birding Colombia

By Dana Swan

We birded Colombia In November of 2022. We have birded in South America before, but this was our first time in Colombia. Colombia is a birders' paradise. It has more species than any other country in the world. Part of the reason is Colombia's varied birding habitat. If you name a good birding habitat, Colombia probably has it. We started in Medellin and birded in the Andes and valleys of the Andes. Elevations on the trip were between 5,000 and 10,000 feet.



When you live at 400 feet, you immediately can tell the difference. There were eleven in our group, along with a tour leader, a local guide, and an excellent driver. Unlike other Central and South American Countries, such as Costa Rica and Ecuador, Colombia doesn't quite have the birding infrastructure, but they are working on it. Still, it was very pleasant. We stayed in two locations. Los Colores Ecoparque outside of Puerto Triunfo and the Hotel Hacienda Balandu outside of the village of Jardin. Much of the birding was done while walking down roads through rainforests and open fields. There, we saw such birds as a pair of Black-capped Donacobius, a Band-backed Wren, a White-whiskered Puffbird, several Acorn Woodpeckers, as well as several other birds.

One highlight of the trip at Los Calores involved Martha and me avoiding a night hike to see Oilbirds. The hike was planned one afternoon while staying at the Los Colores Ecoparque. The guides advised that it would be a strenuous hike to a cave where the Oilbirds were roosting. Since Martha and I had seen Oilbirds in Trinidad, we decided to stay at the hotel. While the other nine members of the group, along with both guides, set out for the Oil Birds, we decided to explore the grounds of Los Colores. While leisurely strolling around the vast grounds, we came upon a rail-like bird that we had never seen before. I got several pictures of it, but it wasn't a rail according to the bird guide book. We decided maybe it was a crane of some kind. We quickly identified it as a White-throated Crane. When the guides and the rest of the group returned, we showed them the photo of the White-throated Crane. The guides were astonished and asked where we saw it. They told us that the Crane was very difficult to see and one of the guides had only seen two or three in his lifetime! There were no reports that the Crane had ever been seen at Los Colores. The next afternoon, the guides asked us to take the group to the site where we saw the Crane. We hoped it would still be there. When we got there, there was not just one Crane, but two with several downy chicks. The guides referred to it as the highlight of the trip. Martha's and my laziness has its rewards.

The best birding for me was at two private residences run by two very pleasant ladies. These two residences catered to birders, had lots of feeders, and also prepared delicious home-cooked lunches. Here, one could relax and quietly observe and photograph the birds. We were able to see numerous birds, including some wonderful Hummingbirds. There we saw a Masked Flowerpiercer, a Sparkling Violetear Hummingbird, a Speckled Hummingbird, Colombian Chachalaca, a White-bellied Woodstar Hummingbird, a Blue-gray Tanager, Thick-billed Euphonia, Bay-headed Tanager, Green Honeycreeper, and Red-headed Tanager, to name just a few.

At another location, we were able to see another highlight of the trip: the Andean Cock-of-the-rock. We saw several at a lek near the village of Jardin. The Cock-of-the-rock is a very difficult bird to photograph. Not because it is hard to find, but because cameras have difficulty focusing on it due to a lack of contrast. The Cock-

of-the-rock is basically a no contrast reddish blob! However, when the bird was in the open, my Nikon Z9 had no problem with it. Other photographers complained that their cameras would not auto focus on the bird and they had to resort to manual focusing. But all of us went away with some good photos of the Andean Cock-of-the-rock. All photos were taken with my Nikon Z9 with a 100-400 mm telephoto lens.

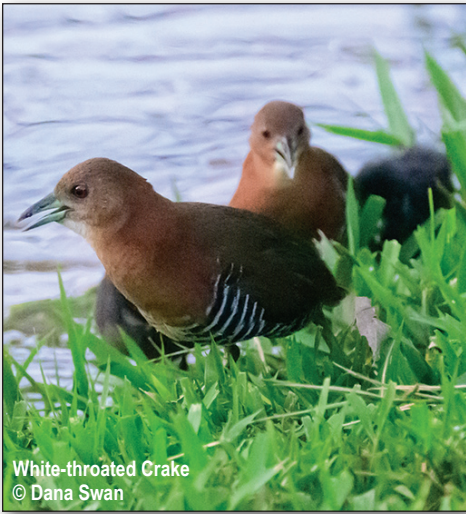
We are actually planning a return to Colombia in April of 2023. This time we will focus on the Amazon basin at a much lower altitude. However, we do fly into Bogota at about 8600 feet and plan to do some birding in that area. □



Andean Cock-of-the-rock
© Dana Swan



White-bellied Woodstar
© Dana Swan



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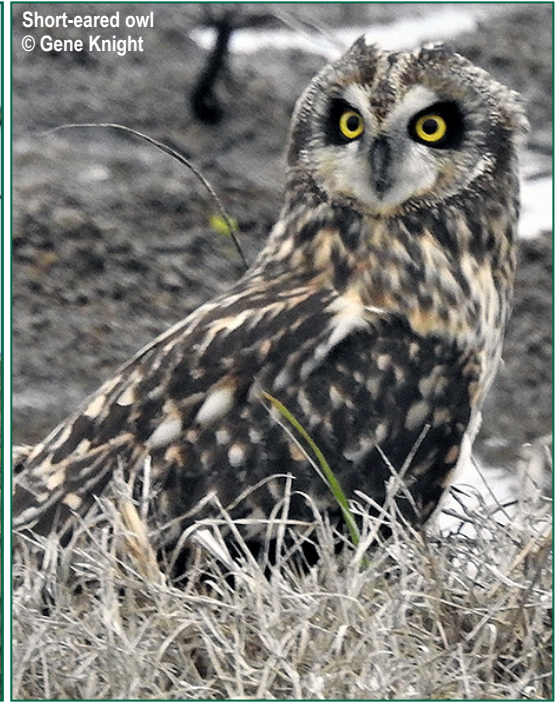
By J

MOS Member Photos

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



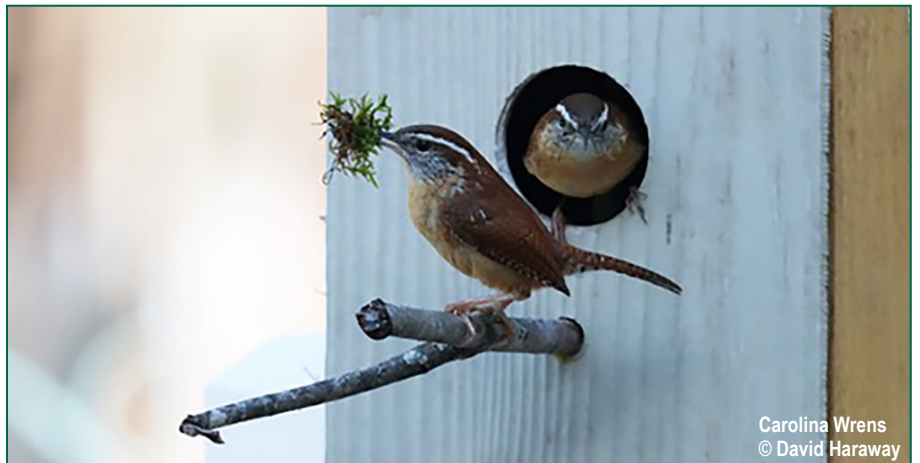
Bald Eagles
© Robert Briscoe



Short-eared owl
© Gene Knight



Leucistic Ruby-throated Hummingbird
© Andy Bell



Carolina Wrens
© David Haraway



Marsh Wren
© Larry Pace



Ruddy Turnstone and Sanderling
© Gene Knight

Carolina Wren fledgling
© Tom Hoar

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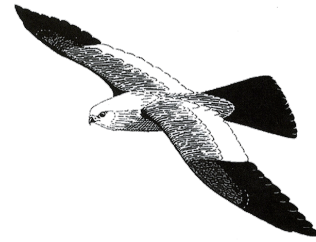
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Shannon, MS 38868

Dues may be paid online (with credit card or PayPal) at:
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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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