

**L** LOUISIANA  
**S** ORNITHOLOGICAL  
**S**OCIETY



No. 24

Thibodaux, Louisiana

December 12, 1960

**ONE MAIN OBJECTIVE** of LOS newsletters around this time of year is to tell about the Fall Meeting. You will find an account of the meeting of December 2-3, appropriately enough, on pp. 2-3. The coverage isn't very complete, but we thought it best to get the report out to you while it is still news, without waiting for full details. You will note that for the first time all the major officers of the Society are from one city. Congratulations, New Orleans!

\* \* \* \* \*

A reader complained to us the other day that the November News did not contain enough items about the members themselves and what they are doing or have done right here in Louisiana. We agree but we have no magic that enables us simply to conjure up such items. The content of the News, its degree of newsmess, depends largely on the nature and volume of the material that members send in. But as another device to help personalize the News, we are beginning a new series--Who's Who in the L.O.S. The first story appears on p.4.

\* \* \* \* \*

A Yellow Rail is a little bird, hardly larger than a sparrow, that looks like a midget hen. Many longtime students of birds have never seen one and would trade their TV set to do so. In winter the species is not uncommon in Louisiana, but finding it requires a special procedure. In the seven years from 1953 to 1959 inclusive, no Yellow Rails at all were reported in the Baton Rouge area. This fall, how-

ever, a determined campaign produced records of no less than nine of the little birds. A partial history of one of them is recounted on p.5 under the heading ON THE TRAIL OF THE YELLOW RAIL.

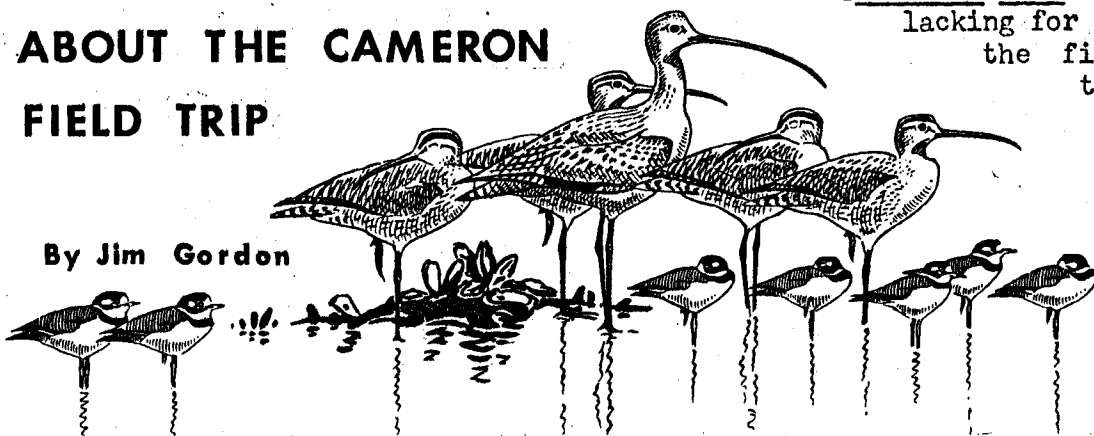
\* \* \* \* \*

Though some readers are unenthusiastic about narratives of bird adventure outside the state, we suspect that others may like to visit far places secondhand. Therefore we've included one Ornithological Travelogue (see p.7). It concerns the experiences of Pfc. Ronnie Stein of Reserve, La., in Europe, where he is continuing his tour of duty with the U. S. Army.



## ABOUT THE CAMERON FIELD TRIP

By Jim Gordon



There was frost on the ground on Saturday, December 3, and the weather remained cold till after dusk, when the temperature rose rather quickly. Sunday was much warmer, but a sprinkle of rain fell and winds were heavy. Dr. Lowery later complained that whenever he got out of his car he could hardly stand up. Because of the wind, of course.

Soon after the trip started, it became apparent that we were going to set a new record--for car trouble. I kept careful notes and counted 28 mishaps to the truck, including 5 flats! No one, not even Dr. Lowery with more stalling than he can count (and with the power-steering shutting off each time) could tie us for trouble. But Mr. H. A. Fontenot came close. They say he climbed a fence to retrieve a bird someone else had shot, was immediately arrested, and was whisked away to jail. Fortunately Member Fontenot is a lawyer and he must be pretty good because the arrest didn't take.

Many observers commented on the large or unusual numbers of Common Loons, White-faced Ibis (500 in 1 flock on Chenier Perdu alone), White-fronted Geese, deep-water ducks, Buteos (some of them looked like Harlan's Hawks and John Gee was reported to have seen a Ferruginous), and gulls.

Lovett Williams collected a Western Tanager and Sid Gauthreaux obtained a late-Magnolia Warbler. Bob Andrie flushed a gull from the beach near Johnsons Bayou that appeared to be Glaucous Gull in second winter plumage. The same bird was noted and similarly identified by Laurie Binford

[Editor's Note: Material is still lacking for a general report on the field experiences of those attending the Fall meeting. Here are the observations and impressions of one member of the party riding in the L. S. U. Museum truck.]

after it had flown over the chenier to the other side. There has as yet been no wholly satisfactory record for the Glaucous Gull in Louisiana; but this might be the winter when we secure a specimen.

Records noteworthy for this time of year included the observation of 2 Western Kingbirds (our party), a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, 3 American Redstarts (various people), a Wood Thrush and a Philadelphia Vireo (Gauthreaux), and a ♀ Indigo Bunting (Berrett and Warter). An Oldsquaw, first discovered by Miss Tabor, in a canal along the highway, just east of Holly Beach, remained there and permitted many of the LOS members to get a remarkably close view. A group of members from Texas reported a Violet-green Swallow, a bird never before recorded in Louisiana. In view of the close resemblance of this species to our wintering Tree Swallows, it can hardly be added to the state list until additional data on its occurrence have been obtained. The Violet-green is, however, a very logical western stray to expect, and future field parties at Cameron should be on the lookout for it.

Our party's list totalled 113 species. Word comes from John Gee that the grand total for all parties was 151.

[EDITOR'S NOTE #2: James E. (Jim) Gordon is one of 4-1/2 new graduate students who became associated with the L. S. U. Museum of Zoology at the beginning of the fall semester. Jim hails from Miami, Fla., and is especially interested in bird behavior.]

DINNER AT

**Fred's**

**Minutes of  
the  
Meeting from  
the notebook of Jean Lowery**

The 1960 Annual Fall Business and Dinner Meeting of the Louisiana Ornithological Society was held in Cameron on the evening of December 3. The place was Fred's Restaurant, now under new management but still using the old name and still serving excellent food. Sixty people--a large number and perhaps a record-breaking attendance for a Cameron meeting--were present, a high proportion of them guests from our neighbor states, Mississippi and Texas.

With Miss Ava R. Tabor presiding, the members voted to return to Cameron next April for the 1961 Spring Meeting. John P. Gee then took the floor to round up a list of the species seen by various parties. The total had not been counted up by the time the meeting ended. Johnny also called attention to the fact that last year's Cameron Christmas Count, with only 11. observers afield, was the third best in the whole nation. This coming New Year's Day was chosen as the date for the next Cameron Count.

Authorization was voted for the reprinting, under L.O.S. sponsorship, of 500 of the new Seasonal Occurrence Charts in the revised edition of LOUISIANA BIRDS (see p. 8). The slate of officers recommended by the nominating Committee was unanimously approved. It is as follows:

- President            Buford M. Myers
- Vice-President    Mary E. Lewis
- Sec.-Treas.        Mrs. H. A. J. Evans
- Directors           Ellen A. Taylor of Baton Rouge, Ethel Jones of Shreveport, and Charles L. Payne of Lake Charles

The Committee on Revision of the By-laws reported no progress; but the following Treasurer's summary was read and approved:

Balance on hand on November 26, 1959	865.69
Income	
Dues	282.15
Receipts from sale of "Check-list" & "Occurrence Charts"	6.25
Disbursements	
Expenses for printing and mailing 3 LOS letters	97.01
National Audubon Society dues	15.00
Bank charges	.30
Balance on hand November 23, 1960	\$1,041.78

Mary Lewis showed a brief movie clip of an immature American Brant recently photographed in color in City Park, New Orleans by Buford Myers. The bird had been discovered a few days earlier by Dr. William Graber. The pictures were small but in the opinion of most viewers furnished satisfactory evidence of the occurrence of this species in the state. The meeting closed with the presentation of another beautiful set of color slides by Mrs. Ethel Floyd. The series included not only photographs of familiar birds of southern gardens but also some unusual shots of bird life in Yucatán.

---

**DATES FOR  
1960 CHRISTMAS COUNTS**

---

In addition to the Counts listed below, another again will be taken in the Buras-Venice area. The exact date has not yet been set with finality but will be one of the week days in the week following Christmas, probably Friday. Those desiring details should get in touch with Sid Gauthreaux, 5934 Peoples Ave., New Orleans.

- Shreveport - - - - - December 26
- St. Francisville - - - - - December 26
- Sabine-Cameron - - - - - January 1
- New Orleans - - - - - December 26

## Who's Who in the L.O.S.

# ALL ABOUT AVA

Her given name was a happy choice and, with respect to its later appropriateness, quite an accidental one. A-V-A suggests the Latin avis, meaning "bird," and is itself one of the names of the Topaz Hummingbird. But Ava Rogers Tabor, our retiring President, was actually named after her maternal grandmother, Ava Rogers Stansbury. The first Ava was a young lady during the Civil War, in the days when it took three months to drive by horse and buggy from Franklin, La., to Galveston and back. Like our Ava, she was keenly interested in birds. She purchased a copy of Audubon's great elephant folio for \$75.00. When she later sold this now priceless work for \$150, she fancied she had made a great coup!

Our Ava's paternal grandmother was French--the daughter of Jean Baptiste Bernard, aide to Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. Ava's father was the only one of six brothers and sisters that married. He brought his bride to Thibodaux, to the same house where Ava now lives. A great hunter himself, he taught little Ava how to fire a 12-gauge shotgun when she was only five or six years old. She recalls that her first victim was a little yellow bird in a tree, but she soon graduated to larger game--ducks and doves and quail--and became an expert wing shot in the process.

In 1936 Ava's outdoor activities took a new turn as, with the aid of a Reed Bird Guide, she began to identify the various birds she saw and send her data to the U.S. Biological Survey. In the next year she became a member of the American Ornithologists' Union. A Bullock's Oriole collected by her in February 1939 was the first ever recorded in Louisiana. It furnished the basis of a note she published in THE AUK, the official organ of the Union and the leading bird journal in the United States. Since then most of her bird work has been done with binoculars.

Ava has been Executive Secretary of the

Lafourche Parish Chapter of the American Red Cross since 1936. The position is now a full-time job. Fifteen years ago she was willed a 758-acre tract of tax-ridden land. This turned out to be a marvelous stroke of fortune when oil companies began to explore the area and pay for oil-shooting privileges--first at the rate of a dollar an acre, then \$5, and finally \$25. But Ava has continued her work as Executive Secretary.

One of the Charter Members of the L.O.S., Ava has served the Society in various capacities, and her unflinching jollity and good nature has made her immensely popular with all the members. She was elected President of the organization for the 1960 term now ending.

### L.O.S. AT A.O.U.



Nine L.O.S. members attended the meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union at Ann Arbor, Michigan, August 23 to 27--Jean and George Lowery, Bob Newman, Laurence Binford, Earl Greene, Mrs. Douglas James, Doug Lancaster, Burt L. Monroe, Jr., and Steve Russell. George, who is A.O.U. president, had plenty to do. He turned in an especially fine performance at the Annual Banquet. Wearing a Confederate tie, he opened his remarks by telling members that he did not propose to render the customary address on the state of the UNION. Later a hired entertainer, masquerading as a serious speaker, borrowed a dollar bill from George for a demonstration. Before handing it back, he peered intently at the signature, "Who iss this man Jefferson Davis?" he asked.

Bob Newman avoided his usual fate of losing his hat by the simple method of not taking any along. Doug Lancaster made up for this by losing all his trousers--except one pair. (He locked them up in a tourist cabin and had to leave them behind.) The misadventures of Doug and Fran James were even more fantastic--too complicated really to explain, except to say that they managed to maneuver themselves into the seeming necessity of insuring their Volkswagen for some impossible sum like a million dollars or walking home!

## ON THE TRAIL OF THE YELLOW RAIL

### Ed Armstrong and Laurie Binford

A certain amount of friendly banter usually can be expected by a newcomer to an area. And this is precisely what I thought was being directed toward me when, in late September, Bob Newman casually mentioned that several Yellow Rails had been seen in local hay fields in past years. It seemed like pushing the story too far when he said the rails could be captured in the hand!

Immediately I planned to call his bluff and, peculiarly enough, he agreed to go through with the plan! When he mentioned details such as following a mowing machine to wait for rails to flush, following only those birds which flew to the cut portion of the field, holding a constant focus on the spot where the rail lands, then I began to believe in the possibility of seeing these birds. Still, being a skeptical northerner, I doubted that the rails could be caught alive. The birds began flushing and the characteristic white wing patch, combined with a very feeble flight of short duration was quite evident. In disbelief I ran together with Bob and Mrs. Barbara Bodman who also was anxious to see the rails, toward a "fixed" spot and after several moments of grasping blindly at tufts of grass, I came up with a Yellow Rail in my hand!

[The foregoing was written by Ed Armstrong. Laurie Binford now tells what happened after the rail was placed in a cage at the L.S.U. Museum of Zoology.]

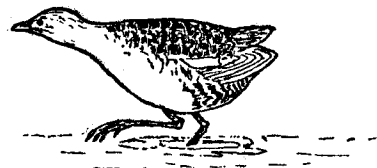
That very night the bird gave an undescribed call. After several hours we managed to record the sound on tape. Next day I volunteered for the mammoth job of feeding and caring for "Butterball," as we named our captive. It soon became apparent "he" was a glutton though rather particular in his eating habits. He spurned easily obtained foods, and raw hamburger made him sick for several days. I was reduced to feeding him grasshoppers--many, many grass-

hoppers! He will consume some 80 one-inch grasshoppers in a day; and while in my care he has consumed a total of more than 3500! So every day I must spend an hour trudging the cane fields armed with net and bottle [ED. NOTE: Mr. Binford means an insect-collecting bottle.] Recently I have been feeding him hard-boiled egg yolk. He doesn't like this food very much but will eat it if hungry enough.

During his stay in my apartment, to which we moved him while the Museum was being fumigated, Butterball has called several times a day. The sound is a loud, guttural, descending rattle. He has also given the better-known "tic-tic, tic-tic" call and a wide variety of heart-rending "peeps," the latter when he is hungry, thirsty, or just generally unhappy. I am still attempting to make tape recordings of all this, but so far results have been meager. He has the uncooperative habit of being most vocal between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m.

Butterball is quite dependent on water--both for drinking and for bathing. Usually he takes a bath every time his water dish is replenished. One day I changed the water five times and he took five baths! After bathing several minutes, he emerges all wet and bedraggled. Then he preens for as much as half an hour. At night the little rail becomes very nervous. He paces the cage and flies up and hits his head on the wooden lid. Not only does this performance unnerve the sleeping occupants of the apartment, but it also has a rather bad effect on the top of Butterball's head. Despite the problems involved, Butterball is a delight. Occasionally he is let out of his cage and allowed to roam around the room. The sight of a Yellow Rail running over the living room rug is indeed worth the "price of admission."

Butterball



## BIRDS WILL APPEAR ON NEW BRITISH HONDURAN STAMPS

The following item from the Belize, (British Honduras) Daily Clarion of May 26 should be interesting to members since it involves a well-known LOSer:

"It is officially announced that a new definitive set of postage stamps will be issued next year to replace the current issue which was brought out in 1953 to coincide with Coronation year.

"The Secretary of State has given his approval for the new issue and the Governor in Council has approved that the design for it shall consist of a series devoted to the birds of British Honduras in full colour.

"The twelve birds chosen for the twelve stamps in the series have been selected on the advice of Dr. D. A. Lancaster of the Louisiana State University and the colour paintings from which the stamps will be produced are the work of a noted American bird artist, Mr. Don R. Eckelberry of Babylon, New York.

"The twelve birds in the series include the Great Curassow for the one cent stamp; the Scarlet Macaw for the ten cents; and the Red-footed Booby for the twenty-five cent stamp.

"It is expected that the new stamps will be brought out during the second half of next year and Government hopes to make this series the most striking and the most successful series of stamps ever issued in British Honduras."

The reason, of course, that the advice of Fellow LOS member Lancaster was sought by the government of British Honduras in this matter is the familiarity with the birds of that colony which Doug gained during his doctoral research on the habits of Boucard's Tinamou. Having received his degree last summer, Doug is now an Assistant Professor at Northwestern State College, Natchitoches, La. He says he is enjoying his work there immensely.



THE L.S.U. Museum of Natural Science has recently added another habitat group, bringing the total completed to date to seven. The newest exhibit is the Virgin Hardwood Bottomland Swamp alcove, the second of a series of three depicting "Louisiana Long Ago." Presented in this display is a scene among the majestic stands of hardwoods that once spread over large areas in northeastern and south-central Louisiana. Among the wildlife exhibited are two Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, now considered extirpated in the state, two White-tailed Deer, and an American Woodcock. The scene is dominated by the buttress of a giant Nuttall's Oak. Soon to be added are a Fox Squirrel (melanistic phase) and a Carolina Wren. More than 7000 artificial leaves were produced by museum technicians in the preparation of the display. The exhibit is sponsored by L. O. S. member Erle Barham as a memorial to his father, the late Dr. Ben Edward Barham, a well-known north Louisiana physician.

Planned for the near future is a canebrake habitat group, which spotlights a disappearing feature of the southern scene. Stretching for miles and miles across much of Louisiana, switch cane provided haunt and haven for the now rare Black Bear, two of which, an adult and a cub, will be presented. The cane, a bamboolike monocotyledon, averaged 25-30 feet in height but unfortunately is now much less common than in former times. This scene, portrayed in winter, closely resembles certain areas of Tensas and Madison Parishes. A museum expedition has already visited this area to make molds of vegetation and to collect additional materials. Another animal to be included in the exhibit will be a snarling Timber Wolf.

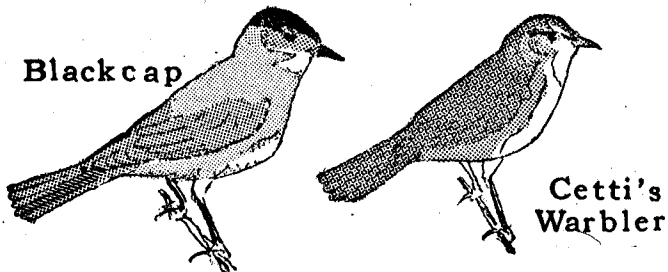
## TRAVELOGUE

By Ronnie Stein

## THE CAMARGUE

**AFTER SERVING** eight months of my two year tour in France, I decided to take a few days leave at the beginning of June and do some birding. The best area is near the mouth of the Rhone, which empties into the Mediterranean. The Camargue, as it is called, is unlike any region I had ever seen before--basically flat although at a distance one can see huge mountains. Some sections are quite marshy although others are very dry. There are clusters of trees here and there and vast areas of rice fields.

My journey to the Camargue covered some 530 miles and produced some rather interesting birds en route including four lifers--TURTLE DOVES, PIED FLYCATCHER, HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGE and RAVEN. I found the entire countryside swarming with CARRION CROWS, ROOKS, and MAGPIES. A GREAT-SPOTTED WOODPECKER that flew across the road and landed on a nearby tree was my only one for the trip.

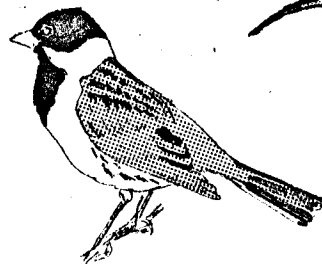


In the Camargue itself I found even more interesting species. On June 2 I did very well getting three more lifers. The beautiful song of the BLACK-CAP led me to its discovery although I later found these Old-World warblers quite numerous. A rather buffy heron, feeding in a rice field, was none other than a SQUACCO HERON, one of the rarer species. By forcing the bird to take wing I clinched its identity by seeing its white wings. At this same moment I noticed a pair of BLACK KITES soaring overhead. They also were new to me. Some of the other birds I saw that day were: CRESTED LARK, BLACK-HEADED GULL, SKYLARK, GREAT TIT, HOUSE MARTIN, KESTREL, COMMON HERON, TREE

SPARROW, and GREAT WHITE HERON (Common Egret).

The next day I found nests of both the MAGPIE and the NIGHTINGALE. I also discovered that EUROPEAN GOLDFINCHES were quite numerous, almost always being found in grape vineyards or fields containing thistles.

Reed Bunting



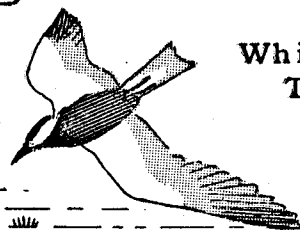
Hoopoe



The fourth of June, a Saturday, was a very beautiful day. I added some very interesting birds including the rarely seen ROLLER. Some of my other more interesting birds were the REED BUNTING, HOOPOE, PURPLE HERON, YELLOW WAGTAIL, MARSH HARRIER and CORN BUNTING.

During the next two days the only new birds that went on my list were GREAT REED and CETTI'S WARBLERS but I did somewhat better the following day when I met Dr. Hoffmann and his assistants. Dr. Hoffmann is director of the refuge and is responsible for the large number of birds that are banded there each year--an average of 26,000 individuals, mainly ducks. That same afternoon he helped me locate three more lifers--GOLDEN ORIOLE, CUCKOO, and WHISKERED TERN, all of which were nesting in the area.

Whiskered Tern



## Dr. Paul M. Elliott

In the Baton Rouge papers last week appeared this unhappy news:

"Dr. Paul M. Elliott, senior research associate for Naugatuck Chemical Division, Naugatuck, Conn., died suddenly yesterday.

"Dr. Elliott was on temporary assignment with the Baton Rouge Operations of U. S. Rubber Co. from March, 1957, to June, 1959. During that time he and his family lived at 10135 S. Riveroaks Drive.

"Dr. Elliott was 52 years of age, had been employed by U. S. Rubber Co. for almost 25 years and was a graduate of the University of Maine and Cornell University."

Members of the LOS of a few years ago will remember Dr. Elliott as an enthusiastic attendant at state meetings and a most congenial companion in the field. He lapsed his membership when he returned to Connecticut, but all those who knew him here will feel a deep sense of loss.

The President of the LOS sent Mrs. Elliott condolences on behalf of the Society. While doing so, she invited Mrs. Elliott to tell the LOS NEWS a little more about Dr. Elliott's career as a bird enthusiast. If an answer is received, it will appear in an early issue.



## MORE BOOK NOTES

The new edition of Dr. Lowery's LOUISIANA BIRDS appears in the book stores this week, just in time to help you fill out your Christmas gift list. The price is \$7.50. The basic text remains the same; but at least half the accounts have been

revised at least in some degree, the popular names have been changed to conform with the 1957 A.O.U. Check-list of North American birds (except that in the case of birds named after people the "s" has not been added), and 10 new species are treated. In all, 387 species are listed as definitely having occurred in Louisiana, compared with 378 in the first edition. No, the arithmetic isn't wrong, even though 378 plus 10 is not 387. The discrepancy is caused by the merging of the Spotted and "Red-eyed" Towhees into one species, the Rufous-sided Towhee, to conform with the A.O.U. Check-list decision.

A big feature of the new LOUISIANA BIRDS is the thorough revision of the seasonal occurrence charts in the back of the book. These have been brought completely up to date as of March 1, 1960 and have been enlarged to include all the species of birds officially recorded in Louisiana. Doctor Lowery has again generously granted the L.O.S. reprint rights on this section of the book. The occurrence charts will soon be available in separate form at a price of 25 cents. Order your copy, or copies now from the Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. H. A. J. Evans, 1444 Calhoun Street, New Orleans, to insure rapid delivery.

## Dr. Fred J. Buchmann

### Seriously Ill

On November 29, while on a fishing trip near the mouth of the Mississippi River, Dr. Fred J. Buchmann suffered a hemorrhage near the brain. He was rushed to the Baton Rouge General Hospital and has been there ever since. Freddy's condition seems to be slowly improving, but no visitors are yet allowed to see him and anxious friends have been requested not to send flowers.

Five weeks in the hospital must be very difficult and boring for an outdoorsman like Fred, particularly around this time of year, the season when he used to be all a-bustle lining up things to make the St. Francisville-False River Christmas Count a big success. So members are urged to drop Fred a line or send him a get-well card.