

LOUISIANA  
ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY



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No. 45

Lafayette, Louisiana

June 15, 1967

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#### RESUME OF SPRING MEETINGS

The month of April was an active month for the LOS with two meetings, one at Chicot State Park and the other at Cameron. Mrs. Helga Cernicek reports that between these meetings she and about 15 other LOS members attended the Alabama Ornithological Society meeting at Dauphin Island.

Undeterred by torrential rains and flooded highways, a hardy group of LOS members were on hand at Chicot State Park for the Friday evening program on April 14. The program included a half-hour discussion by Grace Eyster on several recent books about birds and three short but interesting movies. These three films were on the California Condor, the Common Egret, and representative marsh birds of Europe. After the program, those present made a dash for the nearby cabins or drove through the deluge to Ville Platte to retire early, feeling somewhat dubious about the birding the next morning. However, Saturday turned out to be a beautiful day and the passing cold front had precipitated numerous migratory species. Guided bird walks were conducted along the forest trails during the morning for those that wanted help with their birds or just companionship. In the afternoon the President led a caravan of cars to nearby areas such as Miller's Lake and the Arboretum. More members arrived throughout the day to explore various areas

of the park. A detailed mimeographed map of the area along with a description of the better birding spots, provided by the President, were most helpful in making this a successful weekend. By the time of the Saturday evening program the ranks had increased to a total of 28 adults and 7 children. The compilation of the bird list for the day was conducted by the President with the final tabulation numbering exactly 100 species. This was followed by another informative talk on new bird books by Mrs. Eyster. Copies of an annotated bibliography was distributed, and members were able to examine the books reviewed during and after the meeting. Dr. Eyster then showed two excellent and absorbing half-hour color movies, one on the remarkable courtship displays of several species of grouse (Sage, Sharp-tailed and Prairie Chicken) and the other on the Adelle Penguin of the Antarctic. Refreshments were then served in the dining hall.

Sunday morning was spent either leisurely birding, rowing on the lake or tracking down some of the more elusive species such as the Swainson's Warbler, which some had missed the day before. Most members left for their respective homes shortly after lunch.

**Secretary-Treasurer's  
Financial Report**

Two weeks later on April 28-30 the LOS was meeting again, this time at Cameron. An "ideal" cold front with northerly winds had, alas! passed over Cameron Parish just prior to the weekend. By Friday, lively winds were blowing from the south and southeast, as usual. Nevertheless, the 70 some birders who converged at Fred's Saturday night felt that it had been a very successful day, birdwise. Laurie Binford did an admirable compilation of the species list for the day. The total list added up to 182 including some large pinkish birds seen near the Sabine River. This was 10 short of last spring's list. The pink birds had been seen but briefly as they dropped down into the marsh and there was some discussion as to whether they were spoonbills or flamingos. Jim Stewart and others checked them out the next morning and reported a flock of almost 100 Roseate Spoonbills. One of the best birds seen on the count was a Surf Scoter seen at very close range in the ship channel.

Various announcements were made by Dr. Eyster and he asked for further comments on his proposal to make some type of statewide breeding bird census in June. Dr. Land stated that the Cooperative Breeding Bird Survey conducted last year east of the Mississippi River was being expanded west to the 100th meridian and suggested that we help with it. It was so voted by the members present. (See details in following column). A special LOS contribution of \$50 to the National Audubon Society's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary Fund was approved.

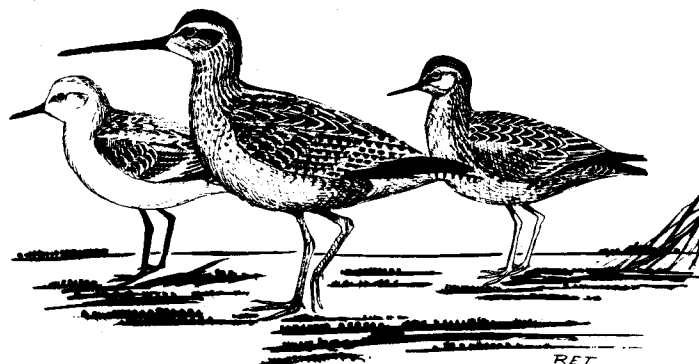
A new feature of the program was the awarding of several prizes. The surprised recipients of a bird pin, a bird necktie, and of an "original copy" of an Audubon print were, respectively, Miss Margaret Ferguson of Lake Charles, Mr. Roy Stutes of Scott and Mr. David White, who hails all the way from Brunswick, Maine.

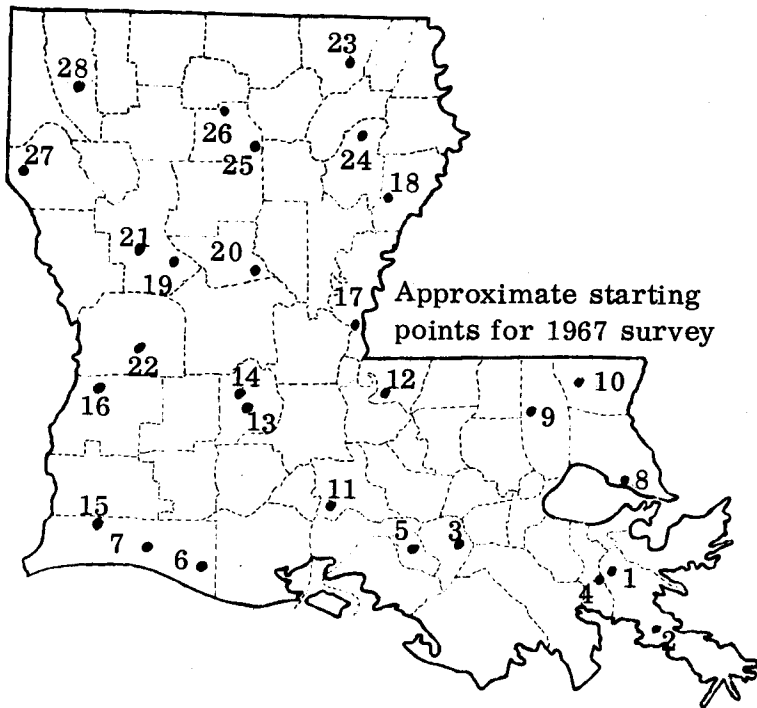
The highlight of the evening was, without a doubt, the showing of a series of Kodachrome slides of truly outstanding quality by Richard Ferren, a New England ornithologist who is now a graduate student at LSU.

Active Account on Hand	
November 19, 1966:	\$ 489.95
Receipts	557.00
Total	<u>1046.95</u>
Disbursements	189.83
Total Balance on Hand	<u>857.12</u>
Special Fund in New Orleans Bank	976.92
Total LOS Assets, April 29, 1967	<u>\$1834.04</u>
(Signed) Mrs. Helga Cernicek	

**Cooperative Breeding Bird Survey**

Last year the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife conducted a cooperative survey east of the Mississippi River. This year they are expanding it to include Louisiana. This survey was briefly discussed at the Cameron meeting where many members evinced an interest in it. Briefly, here is the procedure. By a random sampling technique 28 sampling areas have been designated in Louisiana. The starting points (see map) and compass directions have been predetermined at random but these can not now be changed. Starting at one of these 28 points, a 25-mile route is followed once during the breeding season. Beginning one-half hour before sunrise and following the route, 50 stops are made at one-half mile intervals. At each stop all birds seen or heard during a 3-minute period are recorded. One observer should do all of the actual observing on any given route. Allowing 3 minutes for each stop and 2 minutes driving time between stops, approximately 12 stops will be covered per hour or a total of 4 to 4-1/2 hours to cover the whole route.





The purpose of the survey is to obtain information on distribution and relative abundance of North American birds, and specifically to measure changes in abundance that result from such factors as changes in land use and widespread application of pesticides.

Dr. Hugh Land has the necessary forms, so if you are interested write to him at once and tell him what route you wish to cover. He will send you details on the exact route, with the forms and instructions. His address is Department of Biological Sciences, Northwestern State College, Natchitoches, La., 71457. Let's strive for a volunteer for each of the 28 routes.

#### Audubon Christmas Counts

In the last LOS NEWS we were able to report only on the bird count taken in Lafayette. Here is a brief résumé on the other three counts taken in Louisiana.

Hugh Land reports that "The third Audubon Christmas bird count at Natchitoches was more or less routine with 18 observers recording 85 species, intermediate between the 82 and 92 of previous years. As in the past we were aided by James Stewart and Bob LaVal, both directors of the LOS. Unusual birds included Yellowthroat, Sprague's Pipit, Water Pipit, Bewick's Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, Leconte's Sparrow, Harris Sparrow, Common Loon, and surprising numbers of Robins."

According to the April 1967 Audubon Field Notes, wherein these counts are published, there were two other counts, one at New Orleans and the other at Shreveport. At New Orleans a total of 124 species were spotted and 96 at Shreveport.

#### North American Nest-Record Card Program

The spring Newsletter from the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University included the following information: "One of the functions of the North American Nest-Record Card Program is to provide a central clearing house for information on avian breeding biology. Eventually we hope to have all the information of this type stored at Cornell and available for use of research workers."

"A simple computer program has been developed using an IBM 1401 computer . . . . Using this program we have been able to make a preliminary analysis of 2300 Red-winged Blackbird and 800 Bluebird cards, and we were able to reconstruct the breeding season for these species."

"Besides the collection of data on all species we plan to initiate special surveys. The first of these is the Mourning Dove Survey, which is to be carried out in cooperation with a number of state fish and game departments. This species is a particularly interesting one for this type of study since it has a wide breeding distribution, is considered a game species in some states, and is not currently studied on a continent-wide basis as are waterfowl. It is hoped that many persons besides state biologists will

contribute by sending in cards on this species. We plan to maintain this survey for several years . . . ."

Last year 47 individuals in the U. S. contributed 50 or more cards to the program. Louisiana contributors sent about 25 cards. If you desire more information on this program or nest-record cards for the present season write to Hugh Land. Cornell is interested in obtaining more help and welcomes participants.

### WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Fred J. Campo  
833 St. Ann Street  
New Orleans, La. 70116

Mr. William G. Dolan  
1013 Kim Drive  
Lafayette, La. 70501

Mrs. W. H. Harrison  
Lazy Acres Ranch  
P. O. Box 355  
Pass Christian, Miss. 39571

Mr. E. R. Knobloch  
Box 121, Highway 39  
Braithwaite, La. 70040

Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Kokesh  
303 Lakeshore Drive  
Seabrook, Texas 77586

Mr. James C. Leak  
10377 Goodwood Blvd.  
Baton Rouge, La. 70815

Mr. and Mrs. George R. LeBlanc  
508 Julius Avenue, Apt. 28  
New Orleans, La. 70121

Mr. Eugene S. Naccari  
415 Bonnabel Blvd.  
Metairie, La. 70005

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Nanney  
1086 Woodhaven Drive  
Baton Rouge, La. 70815

Mrs. Osa U. Nelson  
2872 Ontario Street  
Baton Rouge, La. 70805

Mr. Alvin Schwenke  
2329 Seventeenth Street  
Lake Charles, La. 70601

Mr. and Mrs. C. Kivett Stuart  
2807 Hill Street  
Alexandria, La. 71301

Mr. David L. White  
2935 Main Street  
Baton Rouge, La. 70802

Dr. and Mrs. H. Garrison Wilkes  
6320 Magnolia Street  
New Orleans, La. 70118

Mr. B. D. Wilson  
5307 S. Common  
Lake Charles, La. 70601

Mr. F. M. Woody  
4955 Newcomb Drive  
Baton Rouge, La. 70808

### INFORMATION NEEDED

regarding Miss Dorothy K. Howerton, LOS Life Member, last known address 1121 Jefferson Avenue, New Orleans, La. Please advise our Secretary-Treasurer.

### We are missing some feathers in our nest!

While the response to our request for dues in the February LOS NEWS has been gratifying, there are still quite a few unpaid memberships for 1967. Please!! Don't delay -- send your dues in today. Remember that you can pay ahead for the next five years (\$5.00 for a regular membership, etc.), which simplifies the bookkeeping and insures the individual against any change in yearly dues. Send to Mrs. Helga Cernicek, St. Martin's School, 5309 Airline, Metairie, La. 70003.

### Changing Habitat? Friends Joining LOS?

Help us keep our records straight! Send your new address to the above-mentioned and advise your interested friends to do the same. Send correct Zip Code.

### A Word About The Lone Star State

Those of you living in or close to, or able to travel to, the Great State of Texas, are you aware of the fine monthly publication in color, TEXAS PARKS & WILD-LIFE? You can subscribe to it (\$2.00 for one year, \$3.00 for two, \$5.00 for three). Write to:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept.  
John H. Reagan Bldg.  
Austin, Texas 78701

### Christmas In The Lone Star State by Helga Cernicek

Inspired by many glowing accounts of birding in Texas, and never having birded in the West before, I decided on a birding-camping tour through the Lone Star State last Christmas. It proved to be a wonderful experience, which I would like to relate to you hoping that some of you may be encouraged to bird in heretofore unknown parts of the country.

Early in the afternoon of December 21, 1966, I left New Orleans heading towards Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. I hurried as I had just received a note from the manager, informing me of their Christmas Count the next day. Napped in the car a few times, and though hampered by fog in the coastal area, managed to cover the almost 600 miles in time to pull into the refuge shortly after 7 a.m. on a lovely, sunny morning...just as the counters were ready to leave. I was assigned to the party headed by the refuge foreman, who led us along roads usually closed to the public. Highlights of the morning were a Pyrrhuloxia, the western counterpart of our Cardinal, previously recorded as an accidental visitor, a Curve-billed Thrasher, first occurrence, and a pair of nesting (!) Red-tailed Hawks.

In the afternoon we went out in the official patrol-boat. I can't begin to detail the species seen; suffice it to say there were all kinds of ducks, grebes, countless Double-crested Cormorants and Great Blue Herons; also one Caracara, and the handsome Black Skimmers. Last but not

least, knowing exactly where to go, our skipper directed the boat past 35 of the only 43 Whooping Cranes existing in the free state in the world today, including all five young. It is an awesome sight indeed to see the last of a species, realizing, that nothing in this world could ever cause to reproduce their kind once they are gone, what with all the flying to the moon, etc. we do these days. At one point, with the motor cut, we drifted slowly within some 100 ft. of a Whooping Crane family. The young one stalked onto the shore, and the mature birds--presumably his parents--followed with infinite majesty. The waters sparkled; the entire scene was like the last frame of a movie entitled "The End of Mankind." Philosophy aside, on our return by truck to headquarters we passed innumerable geese, Canada especially, many Sandhill Cranes, six wild Turkeys, and scared up a pair of whoopers. Flying by at close range, they showed off their fantastic wing span and uttered their primeval call.

It may be of interest to note the refuge foreman who has lived and worked at Aransas for 29 years had some reservations about the recent book, THE WHOOPING CRANE, by Faith McNulty. He related that he had been asked by NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE to write about his experiences with the whoopers, but added that he would not follow up until he retired, as he might be treading on too many toes. I for one will certainly be eager to read his report. As he knows these rare birds so well, I was pleased to hear that he considered their future with some optimism. After all their tribulations of the past, he is hopeful that young ones to be bred in captivity in the San Antonio and New Orleans zoos (now staffed by competent persons) can be successfully released in due time in the wild.

By nightfall a strong "norther" moved into the area, and a freeze (unusual in these parts) was predicted. Spent a snug night in my double sleeping bag at nearby Goose Island State Park, in spite of the bitterly cold and piercing winds. Getting up before 5 a.m. was another matter! By prior arrangement, I called the warden of the Second Chair Islands Audubon Sanctuary,

but the weather being as unfavorable as it was, he said he could not take his boat out on his usual rounds on which I had hoped to accompany him. I poked about Rockport, so famous in birding circles, until noon but saw only a few hardy terns. The winds did not abate and I thought it best to head southwards.

It was dark by the time I entered Laguna Atascosa Refuge. Wandered about the seemingly deserted headquarters area. The wind howled, barn doors creaked, a huge black dog almost jumped at me, a voice crackled from above (apparently from a turned-on radio in a nearby tower) and no one responded to my yoo-hooing in front of a small house though the lights were on. The situation was a little eerie! I was freezing, and decided to call it a day and car-camp when I saw some motion in the house. In a moment a little tyke ran up to me at the fence, exclaiming: "Well! Don't just stand there--come in!" His mother turned up, saying she was the assistant refuge manager's wife, who would be in shortly. While I thawed out in the living room, my new four-year old friend earnestly related he had seen "lots of Buffleheads" and the younger children ran to show off their boots "just like yours"! Afterwards, the young couple and I talked late into the night about all kinds of things, including birding, conservation, interpreting nature to the public. They were from Colorado, happy about their forthcoming return to their beloved western mountains as their transfer to Yosemite National Park had been approved. They would not hear of my staying outside, and I must confess I enjoyed "camping" in the warm house.

After a substantial breakfast the next morning we all bundled up and drove to outlying parts of the refuge, surprising some would-be poachers who, I was told, were quite a problem. We saw a tremendous number and variety of ducks, many long-legged waders, some shore birds, terns, and gulls. Memorable for me was my first Roadrunner, a comical bird who true to his name ran across the road. After lunch I birded on my own in another part of the refuge; highlights were a pair of White-tailed Kites and several

Harris' Hawks. I parted with my friendly hosts early in the evening.

My next stop was nearby Santa Ana, right on the Mexican border. Compared with the others, this is a small refuge, yet famous especially for its south-of-the-border birds. I arrived shortly before 8 a. m., noting for future reference a sign stating birders were allowed on foot prior to this officially advertised opening hour. As though a welcoming sentinel, my first Green Jay flew into view. I was to see many of these noisy, gaudy fellows throughout the day, unmistakable in their bright green, blue, black, and yellow garb. The refuge manager came to open the gate. I had been told that he was an experienced birder, and he gave me good advice as to where to see what. The entire area is bisected by gravel roads and numerous foot trails. Followed the manager for a while; he stopped his truck several times to put out feed for the Chachalacas, "Santa Ana chickens," as he called them affectionately; and, as on command, big flocks of these homely creatures appeared at once. Spent most of the day driving and mainly walking around this birding paradise, which also features several small lakes. Here again space forbids remarking on all observations, but I should at least mention the Kiskadee Flycatcher, visible at a distance with its striking head pattern and bright yellow underparts; both the more modestly colored Ladder-backed, and the aptly named Golden-fronted Woodpeckers; the Black-crested Titmouse, as appealing as our tufted; and the Hooded Oriole, a marvel of flashy orange and black.

Reached the Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park the same evening, and camped on a pleasant bluff overlooking the river by the light of an almost full moon. The following morning was chilly and overcast again. Talked at length with the park superintendent. He belongs to the Texas Ornithological Society, and considers birding his chief interest though his many other duties prevent him from indulging in it as often as he would like. A warm-hearted man, he also takes a personal interest in his campers. He was just "recuperating" from the previous day's Christmas dinner for well over 100

campers. This was, as he related, an annual event organized by him, with every camper who happens to be present chipping in and helping with the preparations.

Following his suggestions I spent the day birding along some of the many trails. Especially appealing was a wooded area considered a sanctuary, with an artificially-fed small pool in a ravine. Countless birds cavorted about: feeding, bathing, hopping, flying. There were Myrtle and Orange-crowned Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Cardinals, Mockingbirds, Green Jays, even a Swainson's Thrush. It was like a "National Wildlife" greeting card come to life; I could not tear myself away. Memorable too was a Screech Owl; I found the right tree as described, and as I made a small noise the little creature emerged dutifully. It looked so sleepy, I felt like a heel for waking it up! Being of the grey phase, it blended perfectly with the bark of its tree. --Most Santa Ana species also occur at Bentsen, as well as some which have not been found at the refuge. There seems to be a friendly rivalry, birdwise, between both areas!

Spent most of the next morning in and around Del Rio, searching for the tiny rare Green Kingfisher. According to recent and last year's reports, several had been seen in specific locations. I combed through the recommended places, but had no luck. The sun finally broke through at noon and made the long drive to Big Bend National Park more cheerful. Arrived there late in the evening; stayed the first two nights at the Rio Grande campground, the remaining two at the Chisos Mountains Basin campground (elev. 5300 ft.). Because of cold air settling in the river valley, this lower site registered a lower temperature (22°) at night than the high camp, where despite strong winds the low was only 35°. I must summarize my four days in this remote, most interesting and scenic park. The mountains, canyons, and vistas are breathtakingly beautiful. It is my understanding that summers are unbearably hot in the lower desert, while it is somewhat better in the mountains. However, the other three seasons appear to be more suitable for visits. For those who do not care

for camping, there are various types of cabins as well as a modern lodge.

Following the advice of the park naturalist, who once again turned out to be an enthusiastic birder, I checked many areas all over the park, by car and especially on foot. Though my aching muscles each night demonstrated that I was in no condition to call myself a hiker, I indeed enjoyed these walks. Among the birding highlights of Big Bend I should mention the Scaled Quail, Red-shafted Flicker, Acorn Woodpecker, Say's Phoebe, Mexican Jay, Common Raven, Common Bushtit; the Cactus, Canyon, and Rock Wrens; Sage Thrasher, Western Bluebird; the Brown and Green-tailed Towhees; the Oregon and Gray-headed Juncos; and the Rufous-crowned, Black-throated, and Cassin's Sparrows.

On a sunny New Year's morning I was on my way back to New Orleans. Strictly on a hunch, I stopped by a roadside park at the Nueces River, a few miles west of Uvalde. There was some water in the river bed, a state of affairs not always to be expected in Texas, and crouching half-concealed behind a wire fence and some weeds I watched some fifteen more common bird species for about half an hour. Just as I told myself I better be on my way, something alighted on a boulder 20 feet away; a female Green Kingfisher! I could not believe my luck, but there she was big (or rather small) as life! Her rich green back and head glistened in the sunlight. She flew to a mudbank a little further away, and fished for quite a while. When she disappeared, a male Green Kingfisher came into view, fished briefly and left the scene. The female came out again, alternately perching and diving just like our familiar Belted Kingfisher. A while later she left and did not reappear, though I observed the area till noon. What a beautiful conclusion to a beautiful trip!

