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LOUISIANA
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

The LOS, within a matter of days, will be celebrating its fifteenth birthday. During this time it has grown from a tiny group of thirty-four charter members, mostly from New Orleans and Baton Rouge, to a membership of over 300. The present group covers every part of Louisiana and includes interested birders from about 16 other states as well. A fair number of the original settlers are still with us and still active, but it is sad to recall the loss of such fine men as the late Stanley Arthur, John McBryde and Arthur Van Felt.

The organizational meeting was held on December 6, 1947 in the old cafeteria on the Tulane campus. Much advance work had been done, principally by Earle R. Greene who has always been considered the Founder of the LOS. Although long and far removed from this area, Earle has continued to maintain both his membership and his interest.

The necessary formalities were concluded on that first night to bring the new organization into existence, a constitution and by-laws were adopted and officers were elected. Earle Greene was named President, George H. Lowery, Jr., Vice-President and Dr. Gladys King, Secretary-Treasurer. These together with Col. Francis Eastman, Dr. Robert M. Lockwood and Buford M. Myers made up the first Board of Directors.

The roster of Presidents over the years is as follows:

1947-48 - Earle R. Greene, New Orleans

ANNUAL MEETING DEC. 1

The annual meeting of the LOS will be held at Fred's Restaurant in Cameron, La. on Saturday night, December 1. As usual, it will be preceded by a full day of field work in that fabulous area which has produced so many "big lists" and so many rarities. There will be a brief business meeting, the election of officers for the coming year and a program which promises to be outstanding.

Dr. Hugh C. Land of Northwestern State College will present a film of "Sights and Sounds of the Caribbean Lowlands" which he made in Guatamala. The film contains a tape recorded sound track that fills in with synchronized bird sounds and shows over 50 species of tropical birds. Dr. Land has shown this film before the Linnaean Society and the Explorers Club in New York, the Florida Audubon Society and many other groups. We feel very fortunate to be able to have Dr. Land with us for this occasion.

- 1948-49 - We need the name.
- 1949-50 - We need the name.
- 1950-51 - Rossiter D. Olmstead, New Orleans
- 1951-52 - Fr. J. L. Dorn, New Orleans
- 1952-53 - We need the name.
- 1953-54 - Bob Moore, Baton Rouge
- 1954-55 - Horace H. Jeter, Shreveport
- 1955-56 - Robert J. Newman, Baton Rouge
- 1956-57 - John P. Gee, Lafayette
- 1957-58 - J. Harvey Roberts, Baton Rouge
- 1958-59 - James R. Stewart, Shreveport
- 1959-60 - Miss Ava R. Tabor, Thibodaux
- 1960-61 - Buford M. Myers, New Orleans
- 1961-62 - Buford M. Myers, New Orleans

1963 - New Lewis
1964 - McFassell

A SUMMER VISIT TO THE CHANDELEURS

By Lovett E. Williams

Banding colonial waterbird nestlings along the Gulf coast and on the Mississippi and Louisiana islands has been interesting and enlightening. The enormous numbers of colonial ground-nesting birds is well documented for the Louisiana islands in Lowery's and Oberholser's books on Louisiana birds. Throughout time, the off shore islands have come and gone and changed their shapes and the birds have changed their islands. I cannot imagine that the terns were ever more abundant than this summer on the lower Chandeleurs. During a two month period, I visited all the islands within forty miles of Gulfport and banded nearly 4000 waterbirds. At the request of the Editor, here is a brief account of a visit to one of the Chandeleur Islands.

Before visiting the islands to band, special permission was granted by the Fish and Wildlife Service and by John Walther, the Gulf Islands Refuge Manager. John frequently surveys the bird colonies on the islands by airplane and was able to point out the areas of greatest nesting activity.

On June 6, Sterling Clawson and I set out from Gulfport for North Island where we were to camp for our Chandeleur excursion of the following two days. After the pines of Cat Island fell under the horizon we had only the nearly straight up sun to guide us as we ran roughly southeast for two hours out of sight of land. Having heard of the great flocks of Man-o'-war birds that roost on North Island during the summer, we were able to land precisely where we intended by steering for a huge flock of them which was visible circling high over the island long before the low lying land came into view.

On North Island the extensive growth of mangrove had been killed by the cold spell last winter save for a five-foot border around the northwestern rim where the relatively warm sea had washed during the northern. A number of Black-crowned Night Herons, Louisiana Herons and Common, Snowy and Reddish Egrets were about through nesting in the mangrove still standing leafless on the island. Most of the young were out of the nests and difficult to catch among the stiff skeletons of mangrove, but with some

effort I did manage to band two young Reddish Egrets. On a sandbar across the pass from the herons we chased down and banded a few Caspian Terns which were nesting in a mixed colony with Royal and Sandwich Terns. The downy Caspians with wing quills barely showing were able swimmers and the larger of them set out to sea rather than stay and be banded. Luckily, the Caspians were nesting to themselves and the Royals had not begun to hatch. Otherwise, distinguishing Caspians from Royals would have been impossible for us. Near the tern colony 6 or 7 Brown Pelicans were standing on a bar - they proved to be the only pelicans we saw during the trip. The next morning a local fisherman we met called the Brown Pelican "a thing of the past".

Because of constant shifting of the sandy Chandeleurs, inspection of charts is useless in locating the islands by name; and without navigational equipment, it is impossible to pin-point the various colonies we visited. John Walther had suggested that few terns nested on the islands north of North Island, so we confined our activity to the lower end of the chain. Among the islands due southeast of North Island, we found several colonies composed variously of Royal, Sandwich, Caspian, Gull-billed and the omnipresent Least Terns, usually with a few Laughing Gulls and Black Skimmers nearby. The first morning we were busily banding skimmers and examining nests of several species of terns in the northern-most of the colonies when a surf fisherman happened by and laughed, explaining that we were wasting our time in such a puny colony. He went on to describe an island two miles below us which was literally covered with tern eggs. I finished banding a small skimmer I held before we left.

The small island was all the fisherman had claimed--more than an acre of Sandwich and Royal Tern nests. The density of nests in this and other colonies of these two species seems to be effected through some territory concept in the nesters. The distance between nests is such as to suggest that it is determined be the length of the birds' necks. However, upon close examination of the nests, the sand around them was found to be thoroughly encrusted with guano. I have known for a long time which end of a tern was to be feared. I wonder if the

length of the neck (or anything else about the anterior end) has anything to do with nest spacing. Whatever controls it, the distance between nests is so nearly constant that a striking geometric pattern results, which enables accurate estimation of the number of nests by simply pacing the perimeter, calculating the area, and multiplying by the number of nests per unit of area. We determined that Sandwich Terns (making up about 80% of the colony) nest about 14 to the square yard, the group covering over 700 square yards and containing about 10,000 nests. Royals, of course, nested fewer to the square yard and accounted for 2000 nests. They nested mostly around the periphery and in smaller bunches.

The eggs and chicks of Sandwich and Royal Terns are bewilderingly variable in color. Of about 6000 eggs in the large colony (less than 50% had hatched by June 7 and few nests contained more than one egg) several were pure white, some were solid light green, and the remainder varied in degrees of marking between unmarked buff and nearly solid black. Though we noted some consistent color differences between the eggs of the two species, the variability was about the same for both. Whether or not it is of any value to the colony, the variability of egg coloring makes a group of unattended eggs less conspicuous. No matter how well camouflaged individual eggs may be, a geometric pattern of similarly colored objects would stand out to the eye. The chicks of both species are white, grey, yellow and variously marked; with black, grey, yellow, orange and flesh colored legs and bills. We could find no consistent color differences between the young of the two species. For banding, we could distinguish them only by size.

Judging by size and feather development, both Royal and Sandwich Terns remain in their nests for several days (over a week?) after hatching. Upon revisiting the colony, it seemed that some, but not all, of the older chicks had returned to their nests after we had frightened them out. When disturbance visited the colony, the young tended to run away and herd together. We used this habit to advantage by driving them into a driftwood corral and easily banding several hundred in a few minutes time.

Further down the chain, we visited sever-

al smaller tern and gull colonies. None were hatching to the extent of the large colony. We had to head back to the mainland on June 8. It had been even more interesting than we had expected. Summer is not the season for a variety of birds on the coast so we considered several observations to be bonus excitement: two adult Sooty Terns in the large Royal-Sandwich colony (June 7); a white phase Reddish Egret (June 7); 3 Marbled Godwits (June 8).

It has puzzled me the way the wonderful offshore islands have received so little ornithological attention. On second thought, maybe that is why they are so wonderful.

Ed. Note: Sterling Clawson, who worked with Lovett Williams on this and many other trips, was with the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission. He was stationed in Bay St. Louis and was well known to many members of the LOS. During August of this past summer, while on a solitary field trip in the marshes near Pascagoula, he was struck by a bolt of lightning and killed.

For members who cannot see personally the scenes described in this article, the LSU Museum of Zoology can offer a very acceptable substitute. Their beautiful habitat group of a beach on the Chandeleur Islands portrays just such a nesting area.

MORE LIFE MEMBERS

We're proud and happy to announce that the Society has three new Life Members, bringing the total to 24. We welcome Mrs. Babette Odom and Mr. Rucie Odom, both of Orange, Texas and Mrs. Louise Jones of St. Joseph, La.

Have you ever considered becoming a Life Member? For only \$25.00, you'll be in good standing for the rest of your life with no further payment of dues ever. Incidentally, life membership dues go into a special endowment fund, the interest from which may be used to promote worthwhile ornithological endeavors. How about signing up?

Please note the change of address for the Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. H.A.J. Evans. Any correspondence, dues, etc. should be sent to her at 2020 Myrtle Ave., Baton Rouge, La.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS**-LIFE MEMBERS-**

- Mrs. Louise Jones
P.O.Box 258,
St. Joseph, La.
- Mrs. Babette M. Odom
P.O.Box 458,
Orange, Texas
- Mr. Rucie E. Odom
P.O. Box 458,
Orange, Texas

-REGULAR MEMBERS-

- Mr. Andy Andreyk
569 Brady St.,
Sulphur, La.
- Mrs. Grace M. Barlow
408 Merry Ave.,
Hammond, La.
- Mr. Robert M. Bateman
915 Terry Lane,
Lake Charles, La.
- Mr. Walter J. Derthing, Jr.
Box 5440-B, Univ. Stn.,
Baton Rouge, La.
- Bro. Michael Dotson
Christian Bros. School, City Park,
New Orleans 24, La.
- Mrs. Margaret G. Harris
1030 Margaret Place,
Shreveport, La.
- Dr. Hugh C. Land,
Dept. of Biological Sciences,
Northwestern State College,
Natchitoches, La.
- Mrs. Olivier J. Laurent
1231 Chartres St.,
New Orleans 16, La.
- Capt. L.M. Levingston, Jr.
1404 West Cherry St.,
Orange, Texas
- Mr. Roe J. Lobue
222 West Thomas St.,
Hammond, La.
- Mr. Joe Melancon
Children's Nature Museum, 1658 Sterling Rd.,
Charlotte 9, N.C.
- Mr. Tom Thomas,
Roanoke, La.
- CHANGE OF ADDRESS-**
- Mr. and Mrs. H.A.J. Evans
2020 Myrtle Ave.,
Baton Rouge, La.
- Mr. Lovett E. Williams
Fla. Game Comm., Box 908,
Lake City, Fla.

NOTES FROM THE LSUMZ

Double congratulations to Dr. Robert J. Newman, Curator of the Museum and former LOS president. At the recent annual meeting of the A.O.U., he was not only elected a Fellow but was also named Treasurer.

An interesting letter has been received from a former LSUMZ protege of Bob Newman and Ambrose Daigre. Joe Melancon, who is incidentally a new LOS member, was recently appointed Exhibits Curator at the Children's Nature Museum of Charlotte, N.C. His duties include building exhibits, caring for the collections, teaching taxidermy, conducting field trips and making frequent television appearances. The Museum, he says, gets a tremendous amount of publicity and is extremely popular. Equipment and materials are very fine, the climate is perfect and the city of Charlotte beautiful. From here, it sounds like he's got it made.

Burt Monroe writes from Honduras that he and Alan Feduccia are continuing to have a very successful expedition despite minor difficulties of transportation, weather, etc. As of the middle of October they had collected 467 skins, representing 270 species, of which 26 were new records for Honduras. One of their finest experiences was a hawk migration which Burt describes as "incredible - for days huge flocks of Turkey Vultures and Broad-winged and Swainson's Hawks passed up the Choluteca Valley and, upon encountering the mountains, would form huge circling flocks rising on air currents until they reached 3500 ft. and poured over the ridges near San Marcos de Colon onto the Atlantic slopes".

The Museum has recently received from John O'Neal a collection of about 600 specimens from Peru.

Another University expedition is collecting birds and bats in Costa Rica and Douglas Lay has been for several months in Iran with a group from the Chicago Natural History Museum collecting mammals. He was only about 50 miles from the recent terrible earthquake but knew less about it than we did at home.