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TWO BIG SPRING MEETINGS IN APRIL

Here is further information about our two April get-togethers. Spring migration has begun for the birds and they will be showing up in greater numbers at Chicot and Cameron during April. Start flapping your wings and getting prepared to meet your friends, feathered and otherwise, at one or both of the meeting places.

The last time the LOS met at Chicot was in early April 1965. About 30 members plus their children had a most enjoyable weekend and they spotted a total of 115 species. Some of the highlights were a Swallow-tailed Kite circling low over the cabins, a flock of 400 or more Buff-breasted Sandpipers in one field near Miller's Lake and a tremendous flight of Broad-winged Hawks.

Birding at Chicot State Park can be relaxed birding. It should not be very difficult to start out the day with a dozen species even without getting out of bed. The Wood Thrush, Summer Tanager, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmice and others will gently awaken you with their melodious songs near your cabin doorstep. There are numerous scenic foot-trails, starting near

the Group Camp which beckon you to take a leisurely hike through the oak-hickory forest or along the shore of Lake Chicot, a 2400-acre lake. Row boats can be rented for the day for a nominal fee or you can bring your own small boat or canoe. It is rewarding to paddle around in the wooded coves among the cypress and tupelo trees. You might surprise a pair of Wood Ducks, grebes, or Anhingas or drift by a Prothonotary or Yellow-throated Warbler singing on a moss draped branch only a couple of feet away. You may come and go as you please but for those people that are new at birding or are not acquainted with the Chicot area there will be guided bird walks and conducted motorcades to the nearby rice fields for shore birds and Millers Lake for ducks and herons.

Chicot State Park is in Evangeline Parish about 7 miles north of Ville Platte. As stated in the February 1967 LOS NEWS we have reserved the Group Camp Area 1 from 2 PM Friday, April 14 until Sunday afternoon. This will be our base of operation. There is a large mess hall equipped with a large walk-in refrigerator, two gas stoves and ovens, a hot water heater, 4 large sinks,

large cooking pots and pans, dishes, cups, and silverware. There are about 20 picnic tables in the mess hall so you can eat inside without fear of rain or mosquitoes.

Since it will be impossible to determine ahead of time how many people will be eating at the Group Camp for any one meal, everyone should plan to bring his own food for as many meals as he and his family will need. If several families plan on coming together they of course may pool their food if they desire. Bring your food in a cardboard carton as there is ample space to store all perishables in the refrigerator.

There are 20 semi-rustic cabins with cots and double bunks and each will accommodate six to eight people. These cabins have electricity but are without water and heat. Each person must supply his own pillow, linens, blankets and towels. Separate rest-rooms with flush toilets, wash basins and hot showers are located in the cabin areas.

A large meeting hall adjacent to the mess hall will be used for our Saturday night program, which will include a book talk and an excellent new movie entitled, "Adelie Penguins of the Antarctic."

For all of this the charge is only \$1.00 per night for an adult and \$.60 per child under 18, payable before departure.

For members who require greater comfort there are also twelve vacation cabins elsewhere in the park. These have two bedrooms with double beds and are furnished and equipped with linens, refrigerator, cooking and sanitary facilities. The fee is about \$9.00 per cabin per night, but reservations should be made in advance by writing the Cabin Custodian, Chicot State Park, Route 3, Box 494, Ville Platte, La. or calling 363-2403. There is a tent camping and trailer area near the south boat dock that may be used for a nominal fee.

There are also several motels and restaurants in Ville Platte only seven

miles from the park. Bring your family and birding friends. See you at Chicot.

After you have warmed up at Chicot, head south in two weeks and really get hot on those birds at Cameron on the weekend of April 29-30. This will be our Big Spring Count.

The Cameron area is so well known by the members of the LOS that little needs to be said. For members who have not previously birded in the Cameron area we can almost guarantee that you will see more species there than anywhere else in the state. The birds are much more plentiful in Cameron than are sleeping accommodations for the birders. It is suggested that members make reservations at the Broussard Motel or the Gulf Motel well in advance since these accommodations tend to fill up rapidly. Other possibilities are renting a private camp in Hollybeach or tenting along the beach. Warning! Mosquitoes may be numerous. The Saturday night supper meeting and program will be as usual at Fred's Restaurant in Cameron.

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS COUNTS

The first count for Lafayette Parish was organized by your President and was taken on December 27, 1966. A total of 89 species and over 18,000 individual birds were observed. The seven LOS members who participated on this count felt that by recruiting a few more helpers we would be able to top 100 species next year, because we could more adequately cover the area. The Lafayette count was hindered somewhat by the fact that there are no large bodies of water in the area and this limits the number of aquatic and shore birds.

The LOS members making this count were Mrs. James Bing, Mr. Louis Debetaz, Dr. and Mrs. Marshall Eyster, Mr. Don Gooch, Rev. Andrew Harnack and Mr. Jacob Valentine.

Your Editor has not received reports on any other Christmas Counts taken in Louisiana.

Where was Louisiana at Christmas? Florida, California and Texas took top honors. Here is the list of the top eleven as released by the National Audubon Society. Cocoa, Florida and San Diego, California compiled an all-time high of 206 species. They were followed by Freeport, Texas with 190; Tomales Bay, California with 185; Santa Barbara, California 178; Morro Bay, California 173; Houston, Texas 170; Coot Bay, Florida 169; Palos Verdes, California 168; Welder Refuge, Texas and Oakland, California tied for tenth at 166.

FURTHER WORD FROM DOWNUNDER

by John P. Gee

(Editor's note: This is part of a letter John wrote to Dr. George Lowery from Brisbane, Queensland on November 1, 1966.)

"Last week (Oct. 24-26) I had to make a quick business trip to Port Moresby, the capital of Papua, which is part of New Guinea. Since this is in an exotic, far-off corner of the world, I thought members of the LOS might like to hear about my first impressions.

Port Moresby was rather disappointing in a surprising way, for it is situated in a 'rain shadow'—one of the few rather arid areas of the island. The town is built on a series of hills and the views of the coast from these hills were magnificent as were the high forested peaks of the mountains to the north. Some of the well-watered residential areas were full of every flowering plant imaginable, but for the most part the town was not only dry and dusty, but also dirty. Most Australian cities and roadways are very clean—cleaner than ours—so it was rather shocking to see all the litter in Port Moresby. The most interesting thing was the people. Among the natives there are so many variations of size and shape and features—some are light-skinned and gentle-looking like Polynesians. Many are very dark and fierce in appearance. There are tiny negritos with small heads and child-like features. There are some that resemble East Asian

Indians, others that remind one of Arabs or Egyptians and others who are tall and craggy like the Australian aboriginals of the Northern Territory. Even in the airport you see people with tatooing or necklaces made of teeth. The dandies are the Mekeos with real fuzzy-wuzzy hairdos and earrings. Many of the men look quite intelligent and interested in life. The women look and act like beasts of burden.

I was told there are over 700 languages in New Guinea—not dialects, but separate languages. Many of the semi-civilized natives speak Pidgin English or the Port Moresby language called Motu, but—perhaps because of my American accent—it was practically impossible to converse with all but a few.

The birds in and around Port Moresby are mostly the same as those we find here in Queensland. This doesn't mean much to you, but perhaps it will help to say it is more or less like going to Mexico for the first time. Many of the species are identical and most of the remainder are recognizable as to family and type. However, I did see a number of birds which are confined to the northern tropics of Australia and rare or missing elsewhere—sort of like the birds of south Texas or Arizona are with respect to those of the remainder of the United States.

There are few seabirds around Port Moresby. I was told this paucity is because the reef is far out, making it necessary to take a boat in order to get beyond the reef and into pelagic bird areas. I did see frigate-birds, which I believe were Fregata ariel, the Lesser Frigate-bird. Also one lone Crested Tern, the commonest coastal tern in Australia. It is reminiscent of our Royal Tern.

The nicest find near town was the Sunbird, with dark blue throat (iridescent) and bright yellow underparts. It reminded me of our wood warblers, although it is a member of a family that was new to me. Others included the White-winged Triller, New Guinea Friarbird, Yellow-

tinted, Rufous-banded and Modest Honey-eaters, Fig-bird, Fawn-breasted Bower Bird, Peaceful Dove, Shining Starling, Burdekin Duck, Royal Spoonbill, Channel-billed Cuckoo and Brahminy Kite. I toss these common names in merely to intrigue you and try to get a few of you to come see for yourself. Most of them are common in Australia, and there are many others.

The most exciting part of my trip occurred when I was able to take a day off and drive 24 miles north of the city to the rain forest areas near the Brown River. I was surprised to find that birds-of-paradise are relatively plentiful even that close to the capital of Papua. I didn't see any, but this was because I was on my own and rain forest birding is always difficult for the newcomer. I did see wonderful kingfishers, parrots, pigeons, flycatchers, swifts and cuckoos. There was a kingfisher not much larger than a hummingbird and just as colorful. There was the Edible Nest Swiftlet, the nest of which the Chinese use for soup. Rollers, bee-eaters, and a drongo were among the commonest birds—just as they are here in Brisbane.

Everything was so new that I naturally stopped the car many times en route and many of the best birds were along the roadside. By the time I reached the forest proper it was hot and the birds were hidden high in the canopy overhead. The trees were magnificent and many were very new and strange. I saw no snakes or crocodiles, but there were plenty of mosquitoes and I ripped my arms and legs trying to get through wicked barbed palm-like plants in pursuit of what I thought was a singing bird-of-paradise.

Before concluding, I should mention the "grackles." They are not at all like ours. One species is gaily patterned in yellow, black, and white. Another is mostly golden and black. They are mynas and it still bothers me to hear them called grackles.

I merely touched the surface, but did identify about 90 species during that short trip. I also made the acquaintance of a fine birdman who is the curator of the local museum. Next time--and I hope there will be a next time--he promises to accompany me and I think we'll find those birds-of-paradise."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fire Ant Control

In the November 1966 issue of the L.O.S. NEWS there appeared a letter on fire ant control written by Caroline Dorman which I feel should be answered by someone who knows something about the present fire ant control projects. I am a Forester employed by the U.S. Forest Service in Claiborne Parish as District Ranger for the Caney Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest. As a naturalist, I make it a practice to keep up to date on recent developments in the insecticide field as to possible effects on wildlife. Before I discuss the new fire ant projects I would like to discuss what has happened in the past.

As Mrs. Dorman stated in her letter, an article appeared in the "Saturday Evening Post" for September 1961 which attacked the fire ant control projects as being a great threat to wildlife. At that time the project was composed of the wholesale spreading of the insecticide "Heptachlor" which has since been found to be a deadly poison to most species of wildlife. There is no doubt that many animals were killed in Louisiana by this control project. As a result of many complaints by scientists and other groups, the amount of heptachlor was reduced in later sprayings during 1961 and 1962. This did not, however, eliminate the danger to wildlife, because of the poison's long life and cumulative affects. The insecticide industry instituted a crash research program to try to find a poison which would control fire ants but would not

harm wildlife. In late 1964 a poison was developed which could be used with no hazard to wildlife when it was mixed with a carrier to make a granular bait. The poison, known as "Mirex" is mixed with soybean oil and corn cob grits. The soybean oil acts as an attractant to the fire ants. They gather it up from the ground and carry it to the ant hill where it is consumed by the ants thus causing their death. The granular pellets are about the size of a grain of rice. Birds and mammals apparently have no interest in the bait. The poison by itself is toxic to mammals when taken internally in concentrated amounts, but when in the granular form the animal would have to eat many times the amount recommended for fire ant control to be affected. The poison has a short life and is non-cumulative.

A fire ant control project has just been completed in Caddo, Bossier, and Red River Parishes. Vast acres of all three parishes were sprayed with "Mirex" from airplanes including Bossier City and Shreveport. I have heard no reports of dead wildlife or absences of bird life. The manufacturers are finally heeding the warnings sounded in "Silent Spring" and are apparently having some success in producing an ant poison which is not detrimental to wildlife.

Mrs. Dorman said in her L.O.S. letter: "Organizations such as yours can have a lot of influence in combatting this outrageous menace to our wildlife." I agree wholeheartedly with her on this point but lest we lose our effectiveness we should not criticize a program which has been developed with wildlife in mind.

(signed) Robert M. Laval

BOOK REVIEW

by Jacob M. Wallentine

"Birds in Our Lives" is not an ordinary book of birds but tells a unique

story of how birds affect man and how man affects birds. The book was newly published by the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

What's the smallest bird in the world? Few of us know that the Cuban Bee Hummingbird measures about two inches from bill tip to the tip of his tail. It takes 14 to weigh an ounce. The largest? That's easy! The African Ostrich stands 8 feet tall and weighs more than 300 pounds. How can we attract birds to our yard? What are pesticides doing to the birds? Did you know that starlings were introduced into the United States because they were mentioned in Shakespeare's plays? An ornithophilist is not a newly-discovered disease but a stamp collector who collects stamps that picture birds. The book is filled with interesting facts. The main theme is an ecological one, that man needs birds. Do birds need man? Some do and others are stuck with him.

The authors, and there are 61, write with authority, interest, and love of subject. There are nine major sections dealing with literature and arts, sports and recreation, science and husbandry, man versus birds, conflicts, and bird protection. Each of these sections has three to ten chapters relating to the topic. Roger Tory Peterson asks, "What are birds for?" and proceeds to tell. Ernst Mayr writes of "Birds and Science." The section "Literature and Arts" covers birds and the fine arts; stories of birds; birds in the Bible; birds, words, and names; birds on stamps; birds on coins; commercial art; and birds as national and state symbols.

The section "Sports and Recreation" tells of the various ways of enjoying birds, from hunting with gun, camera and falcon, to attracting, counting, and just plain looking at birds.

Birds can be a nuisance. They destroy fruit and grain, they dirty buildings and

statues, they wreck airplanes, and they carry diseases. A section of the book presents these unpleasant features of birds and tells how science studies and combats the problem birds.

A most delightful feature of "Birds in Our Lives" are the 80 wash drawings by Bob Hines. The 4-color frontispiece of the Bald Eagle is a marvel. Hundreds of wonderful photographs tell an effective story. This 576-page book is for everyone interested in birds, from the expert to the grade-school child.

"Birds in Our Lives" can be purchased from your bookstore or from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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BREEDING BIRDS COUNTS

Your President would like to hear further comments on the idea of a statewide Bird Count in June. (See the LOS News for February 1967, page 3). Time is getting short so please send your comments soon.

Paynes Come Home to Roost, or is it Roast!

Charles and Yvonne Payne decided to fly south to Lake Charles to resume their birding. They arrived back in Lake Charles in February after having spent almost two years in the bitter cold of Regina, Saskatchewan.