

LOUISIANA  
ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY



No. 47

Lafayette, Louisiana

March 25, 1968

**RESUME OF FALL MEETING**

Almost 25 members had already arrived in Cameron by supper time Friday for the LOS meeting that was held the weekend of December 2 - 3, 1967. On Saturday most of the birders were up and on their way checking the usual locations shortly before 7 AM. The sun rose into a partly cloudy sky and the weather appeared favorable for a good day of birding. However, the sky shortly became overcast and a heavy down-pour with lightning occurred before noon. Albeit damp in body but not in spirit, the LOS members continued to drive and tramp through the better areas during the cold, windy afternoon.

Saturday evening over fifty birders converged on Fred's Restaurant for supper and the evening program. Your President opened the meeting and Mrs. Cernicek presented information about the state of the treasury and related business. The following financial report was submitted:

On Hand - April 29, 1967	\$857.12
Receipts	62.83
	<u>Total \$919.95</u>
Disbursements	68.66
Balance (active account)	<u>\$851.29</u>
Special Fund in New Orleans Bank	976.92
Total LOS assets, December 2, 1967	<u>\$1828.21</u>

(Signed) Mrs. Helga Cernicek  
Secretary-Treasurer

It was learned that Miss Ava Tabor has been seriously ill. Mrs. Jean Lowery obtained a "get-well" card which was signed by Miss Tabor's many birding friends. We all hope for Ava, LOS patron, long-time member, and former functionary, a speedy recovery.

Mr. Laurie Binford once again compiled the bird list for the day which totaled 131 species. Although no great varieties were uncovered some of the more notable birds observed were Common Loon, Horned and Eared Grebes, Roseate Spoonbill, all three species of scoters, Short-eared Owl and Indigo Bunting. Many birds that one would have expected to have been seen were not recorded. However, the cold front that moved in on Saturday appeared to have brought in that night some species that were not obtained on the Saturday count. For example, your President, his son Kenneth and Clyde Aquillard found Robins in abundance Sunday morning. There were flocks of Slate-colored Juncos in the East Jetty Woods and on the Courthouse lawn. Myrtle Warblers were seen in both places. The East Jetty Woods also had flocks of White-crowned Sparrows. None of these species had been recorded by anyone on Saturday and more than likely had just arrived that night from some area a little farther north. This late arrival of birds down on the Gulf coast is one aspect in favor of having our fall meeting in Cameron fairly late in the year. Sunday morning our group

also observed a Yellow-throated Warbler flitting about in the large oak trees near the Courthouse. This bird was a particularly nice find for your President as it brought back memories of a previous observation of this species on his first Christmas in Lafayette in 1950. At the time that Dr. Lowery published the first edition of his Louisiana Birds in 1955, that Christmas sighting was the only winter record for this species in Louisiana. There have been a number of others since.

Following the compilation of the bird list, Mr. Horace Jeter, as Chairman, presented the slate of officers proposed by the Nominating Committee for 1968. The slate as presented contained the names of the incumbent officers except for those of the Directors. (Since the Directors are elected for staggered three year terms, only the tenure for Sidney Gauthreaux was expiring.) The slate was accepted by acclamation consequently your officers for 1968 are:

President and Editor: Marshall B. Eyster  
 Vice - President: Gayle T. Strickland  
 Sec. - Treas: Mrs. Helga Cernicek  
 Directors: Robert M. LaVal  
 (term expires 1968)  
 James Stewart  
 (term expires 1969)  
 Randolph Bazet  
 (term expires 1970)

The President then commented on the 20th Anniversary of the LOS and presented several door prizes in celebration of this event. The first recipient was Horace Jeter who received a box of scenic Louisiana stationary for having been the 20th person to sign the roster for the meeting. Since David Bray was the 47th person to sign the roster, the year the LOS was founded, he received an Audubon bird caller. Numerous persons had arrived from both New Orleans and Shreveport, so there was no one birder who had come the "farthest distance" consequently for the last two items a drawing was made. Mr. Raiford Holmes received an owl bank and a lady (sorry but your President has forgotten her name) received a bird pin.

Comments were made about the Probable Christmas Counts in the state, and those interested in participating in the various counts were asked to sign up. It was decided to hold the counts at Cameron and New Orleans on December 30 and counts at Lafayette, Natchitoches and Shreveport on December 23 or other suitable dates.

Following a discussion it was agreed that the spring meeting at Cameron would be held the weekend of April 26 - 28 and a spring outing at Chicot State Park would take place on the weekend of May 10-12. The Group Camp at Chicot State Park has been reserved for the LOS for that weekend, so mark both of these dates on your calendar and plan to bird in these two excellent areas come spring.

Among other business, attention was drawn to the National Geographic Society hour-long TV special December 11th entitled "Winged World." We know that those that saw it enjoyed it immensely. Your President discussed problems in getting out the NEWS, and appealed to members to send him news of interest to other LOS members. This news may concern birds or other LOS birders. Hugh Land was asked to make some remarks on the Cooperative Breeding Bird Survey taken in Louisiana last June. He pointed out that 26 out of the 28 routes laid out by the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife were covered by LOS members. Another coverage of these routes is planned for this June and Dr. Land has promised to write something concerning this endeavor for our next LOS NEWS. His motion that the LOS go on record as favoring efforts to preserve the Quetzal was approved, and the Secretary was directed to send a pertinent letter to the Norman, Oklahoma Bird Club, which together with other U.S. conservation organizations, is cooperating with the Guatemalan Government along these lines.

Mr. John Dennis, whom some of us had met last April at the LOS meeting at Chicot, attended the fall meeting at Cameron. At Chicot, he kept his well guarded secret of having recently seen an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Texas. But now that the general

public knew, he was able to talk to the LOS members about this discovery. He referred to his recent article, "The Ivory-bill Flies Still," in the November-December 1967 AUDUBON MAGAZINE. Mr. Dennis emphasized the great harm that too many curiosity seekers and even well meaning birdwatchers might cause this species by inundating its habitat in the Big Thicket area in eastern Texas. He also stressed that the probability of anyone seeing the bird during a short weekend trip was extremely slim. He mentioned that some supervised tours into the area may be organized in the future.

The meeting was concluded with a very interesting Kodachrome slide presentation by Yvonne and Charles Payne of Lake Charles. They featured the Regina, Saskatchewan area where they recently spent about 19 months. After learning about the "wind-chill factor," average temperatures, and that only seven individual birds, representing three species, were seen by the Paynes on the Regina Christmas Count, all those present felt newly appreciative of being able to pursue their birding in the semi-tropical and bird-rich state of Louisiana.

#### **Audubon Christmas Counts**

The weather and the flu took its toll during the Christmas count period. Your President knows of only two counts that were made but hopes that there were more. The Cameron count was called off at the last minute when it appeared that there would only be about three or four LOS members participating. It was felt that we could not do justice to the Cameron area with such poor coverage. Mrs. Cernicek reports that a count was made at New Orleans on December 30 but very few persons participated. A total of 103 species were seen which is down from their 124 count in 1966.

In Lafayette we had 15 participants ready to go before the crack of dawn on Wednesday, December 27. There was light

rain falling when the early counters started at 5:30 AM but by 8:30 the rain was so heavy it was impossible to drive, let alone count birds. Finally, by 10 o'clock, we decided to postpone the count until another day. Several of the more dedicated counters that we could not locate continued working until noon.

After our very wet "dry-run" on Wednesday our counters dwindled to eight for the Friday count largely because of the flu. With better weather we were able to tally 91 species, two more than last year.

As far as the whole country is concerned it appears that San Diego again was tops, recording 209 species, an all-time high. Last year they tied with Cocoa, Florida with an all-time high of 206. This year Cocoa sighted only 195.

Another Christmas count record was set by Charles H. Rogers, of Princeton, New Jersey who has not missed a count since the custom began back in 1900. He was only 12 at the time of his first count, but already a good birder. He is the curator of ornithology at the Princeton Museum of Zoology.

#### **Welcome New Members**

Mr. Clyde Aguillard, Box 1148  
University of Southwestern La.  
Lafayette, La. 70501

Mr. Eric J. Bienvenu, Box 3636  
Northwestern State College  
Natchitoches, La. 71457

Dr. Lois Boylan, 1606 Southlawn  
New Orleans, La. 70114

Mrs. James Brown, 811 Bayou Black Dr.  
Houma, La. 70360

Mr. Edward M. Butler, Rt.5, Box 434  
St. Francisville, La. 70773

Mr. Herbert Clarke, 2027 El Arbolita Dr.  
Glendale, California 91208

Mr. Vivian B. Deckert, 13 Forest Avenue  
Metairie, La. 70005

Mr. Carl R. Froitzheim, 1124 N. Avenue C  
Crowley, La. 70526

Mrs. Eugene Hackney, 2403 Kentucky Avenue  
Kenner, La. 70062

Mr. Jim Johnson, Box 159  
Glenmora, La. 71433

Mrs. Gerald Jordan, 2625 Francis  
Maplewood, La. 70663

Mrs. Frank Magers, 927 Washington St.  
Natchitoches, La. 71457

Mrs. H. H. Manner, Jr.  
6277 Jefferson Highway  
Baton Rouge, La. 70806

Mr. Louie McMullen, 2119 Illinois Avenue  
Kenner, La. 70062

Mrs. Joe N. Norris, 7511 Kirkman  
Lake Charles, La. 70601

Mr. And Mrs. Thomas D. Odom, 200 Barrios Ave.  
Houma, La. 70360

Mr. Anthony M.B. Rekas, Drawer MU  
Museum of Zoology, LSU  
Baton Rouge, La. 70803

### Life Membership

Have you thought about becoming a life member of the LOS? Mr. Rowland E. Caldwell of Thibodeaux, Louisiana did and he is now our 36th life member. Mr. Caldwell has been a member of the LOS since 1958. Congratulations. For the sum of \$25.00 a person may become a life member.

### Dues,, Dues,, Dues

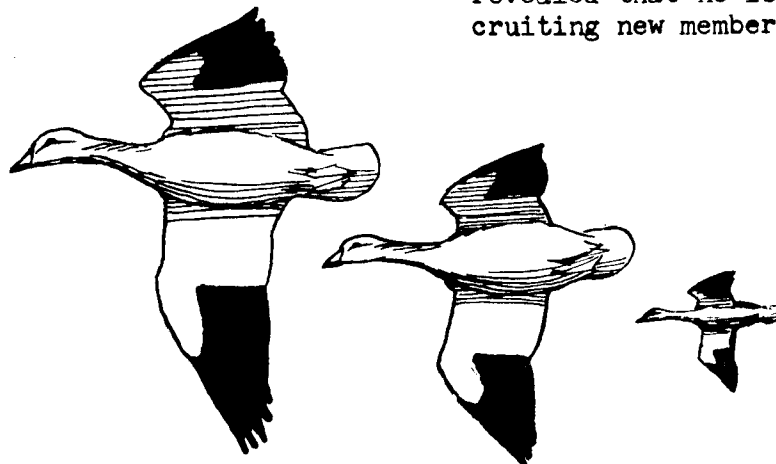
Have you paid your dues for 1968? Please be reminded that your annual LOS dues were payable in January!!! We still have all too many unpaid current memberships. DON'T DELAY -- SEND IN TODAY to our Secretary-Treasurer,

Mrs. Helga Cernicek  
Beauregard Jr. High School  
4621 Canal Street  
New Orleans, La. 70119

Remember that you can pay ahead for the next five years if you like. This simplifies the bookkeeping and insures the individual against any change in yearly dues.

### A Touch of Humor

At the December meeting your President stopped along the road to talk with a group of LOS members watching the geese at the Sabine Refuge. After asking if they had seen any Canada or White-fronted Geese, one of the group, seeing that I was interested in birds, informed me that the LOS was meeting in Cameron that evening and that I was welcome to come if I liked. To this day, it is not known who was the most embarrassed when I told him that I would be presiding at that meeting. It certainly revealed that he is doing his share of recruiting new members. Are You?



### What's New in New Orleans?

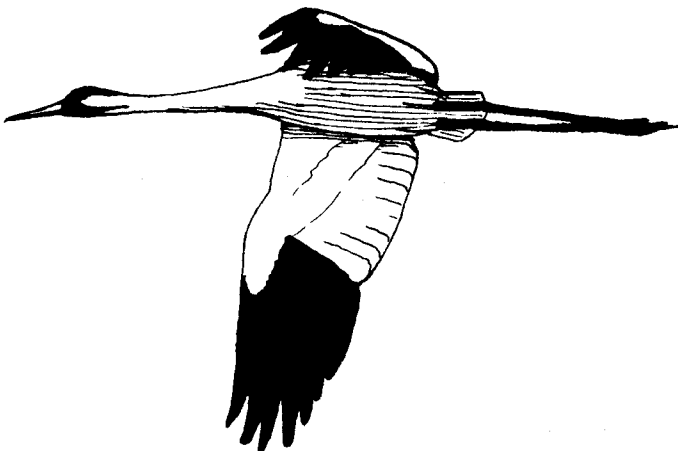
Well -- not exactly new, but were you aware that there is an active Crescent Bird Club there, soon to complete its 2nd year of activity? This association provides birders in the Greater New Orleans area with a varied, interesting program of outings and indoor meetings throughout the year, except for the summer months. Dues are only \$1.00 annually; most members also belong to the LOS. New members are sought! If you live in other parts of Louisiana, or in another state, but have potentially interested friends or relatives in or near New Orleans, why not suggest they contact the CBC Secretary-Treasurer,

Miss Louise Poillon  
The Georgian - Apt. 211  
2233 St. Charles Avenue  
New Orleans, La. 70140  
Telephone 523-6387

### Rare Bird Corner

#### Whooping Crane

The world population of Whooping Cranes is steadily increasing. A record high of 48 cranes arrived at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas to spend the winter. Of these, nine were birds of the year. However, four adult birds that went north last spring failed to return, so there was a gain of only five cranes. Forty-three had spent the winter at the refuge last year. In addition there are 12 whoopers in captivity in New Orleans, San Antonio and Laurel, Md. The four at Laurel



were hatched from eggs taken from nests in the wilds of Canada as reported in the LOS NEWS for November 1967. Unfortunately one of the 39 adults at the Aransas Refuge was killed by a goose hunter on January 4 so that the world population now stands at 59. These cranes wander off the refuge at times and this one that "had his goose cooked" was two miles from the Aransas Refuge at the time it was shot. This points out the fact that the refuge is not large enough to fully protect these wintering cranes. In November, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Tatton donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 7,000 acres to be added to the refuge. To further protect these birds the National Audubon Society leases and patrols 5,700 acres on nearby Matagorda Island.

The Sunray D X Oil Company brought in a gas well three miles offshore from the Aransas Refuge in San Antonio Bay. However, the rig has been closed down for the winter to avoid disturbing the cranes. They posted a sign on the wildcat wellhead which reads "Closed until May 15. This place is for the birds." The wellhead was installed just 24 hours before the first whooper returned to the refuge.

#### Brown Pelican

An oil field worker is reported to have seen a flock of 75-100 Brown Pelicans flying over the Fausse Point Oil Field, NE of Loreauville on October 11, 1967. If his identification was correct and it appears that it was, this is good news for this species and Louisiana.

#### California Condor

The California Condor appears to be holding its own. A count made in the LOS Padres National Forest in California this past fall indicated that there were at least 46 left. This is five less than the 51 observed in October 1966 but this does not mean that there has been a decline in their population. These counts are not a complete census such as is carried out with the Whooping Cranes. There may have been condors that did not leave their roost that day or did not fly near enough to an observer in that mountainous country to be counted.

**Tulane Bird Collection**

(Editor's note: The following review was lifted from an article by M. K. Rylander entitled "A Short History of Ornithology at Tulane University" published in The Proceedings of the Louisiana Academy of Sciences for December 1967. It was felt that it would be of interest to LOS members and not readily available to them in its original form.)

Apparently the collection of bird skins was initiated in 1884 when Paul Tulane (after whom the University obtained its name) donated a fund for that purpose. An unrecorded number of bird skins were purchased. Approximately 120 mounted birds were donated from displays from the World Industrial and Cotton Centennials held in New Orleans during the 1880's. Joseph Gustave Kohn donated his personal collection to Tulane in 1904. This consisted of about 400 species of birds and about 4000 specimens. Many he had personally collected but some were exchanges and for want of data had little scientific value. Dr. George E. Beyer, who became curator of the Tulane Museum in 1894, probably contributed several hundred bird skins, so that the bird collection in the first decade of this century contained well over 5,000 specimens, including several rare or extinct species. This probably represents the maximum size of the collection and after Dr. Beyer resigned from Tulane in 1918 there was much deterioration of the collection with the majority of the specimens being destroyed by insects. At the present time, fewer than 1,500 of these specimens remain and since Kohn's donation in 1904 fewer than 100 specimens have been added to the collection. Fortunately, some of the more valuable specimens, including an Eskimo Curlew and three Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, have in recent years been placed on permanent loan in the LSU Museum of Natural Science in Baton Rouge.

**Martins and Mosquitoes**

by Marshall B. Eyster

The Purple Martins returned to Louisiana during the latter days of January and concurrent with them a series of articles about them appeared in the Lafayette Advertiser, in the Louisiana Conservationist for January and no doubt in many other news papers and magazines throughout the state. Several of these articles that came to my attention contained the statement that "an adult martin eats 2,000 mosquitoes per day."

This reminded me of a scientific paper presented at the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Toronto, Canada last August by Herbert W. Kale entitled "The Relationship of Purple Martins to Mosquito Control." The popular literature is full of references to martins eating large numbers of mosquitoes. Mr. Kale in his paper presented evidence that this is an erroneous belief and is not based upon scientific data. In fact, he states that the published scientific literature contains only one reference where a martin was proven to have eaten a mosquito. In his correspondence with other workers he found evidence for one other case. It appears that the mosquito-eating ability of martins has crept into our popular literature through default and is based upon the assumption that since martins do eat large numbers of flying insects they must necessarily eat mosquitoes. The diet of the Purple Martin is almost entirely insects and stomach analyses have shown that some of the favorite forms are flies, bugs, beetles, butterflies, dragonflies, flying ants and other hymenopterans. Most of the insects that are captured by martins are relatively large in size. As Mr. Kale points out Purple Martins fly during the daylight hours and usually at heights of 100 to 200 feet above the ground. Mosquitoes on the other hand are crepuscular and nocturnal and are rarely found above the tree tops. Thus, except for a short period before sun-

rise and another period after sunset, the martins and mosquitoes are not flying at the same time. Also at dawn and dusk the martins are usually flying high in the sky while the mosquitoes are near to the ground, thus the two species do not occupy the same space at the same time.

Many people state that they have fewer mosquitoes or none at all since martins have come to nest in their yard. Of course it would be hard to convince such people that other factors, other than martins, may have accounted for this reduction, if a reduction really has occurred. However, mosquito populations will vary from year to year and from season to season, due to many factors but in particular rainfall. To illustrate this point let me quote some statements by Dr. E. S. Hathaway as presented in Kale's paper. By the way Dr. Hathaway is a professor emeritus from Tulane University and is now the Executive Director of the Louisiana Mosquito Control Association. Dr. Hathaway states that "During 1958 and '59, no mosquito control work was going on in the New Orleans area, but if such a program had been in progress in those years, it would have been hailed as a great success. Many educated people congratulated me on the splendid results I was getting; and I had to assure them that I had done nothing to cause the scarcity of mosquitoes. All that we had done was to conduct an educational campaign, telling the people of South Louisiana what ought to be done."

"If a control program had been launched in 1961, it would have been cursed as absolutely useless in 1962 and 1963. Those were terrible plague years, and the citizens would have felt outraged even if the workers in the new program had succeeded in killing 75 per cent of the mosquitoes which invaded the city."

To reiterate, the original statement, which compelled me to compose this article, was "Martins eat 2,000 mosquitoes per day." The origin and source of this oft-quoted

figure was a mystery to biologists for several years. A 1966 publication (probably available at your public library) by J.L. Wade entitled "What you should know about the Purple Martin" has put an end to this mystery. By the way, Mr. Wade's main interest in Purple Martins is in selling martin houses that his company in Illinois manufactures. On page 38 of his book Mr. Wade explains how he came to originate this figure. He surmised that since martins have a high metabolic rate a martin must consume its own weight in insects each day. (This is his assumption since no bioenergetic studies have been published on this species). Since the average weight of a martin is four ounces, this would be equal to 14,000 mosquitoes. From his calculations he "felt it reasonable to assume that martins often consume 10,000 - 12,000 mosquitoes per day where mosquitoes are plentiful." He "felt the estimate of 2,000 mosquitoes per day was conservative." This masterpiece of rationalization is unsubstantiated by any factual data. Wade thus came up with a figure without being able to present any scientific evidence that mosquitoes are even eaten by martins.

The purpose of this article is to disentangle fiction from fact and to correct the apparent erroneous belief that martins eat enough mosquitoes to be important in controlling mosquito populations. I am certainly not trying to discourage people from putting up martin boxes, but in fact would like to see many more such houses installed in order to encourage these beneficial birds to summer in Louisiana. Being insectivorous, martins do consume large numbers of insects, many of which are probably harmful species (Author's assumption, and not based on any personal data). Purple Martins are graceful and friendly birds and their esthetic qualities alone makes putting up a martin house well worth the expense and effort. ¡ Que vivan los aviones púrpura!