

The President's Page

I would like to take this opportunity to convey to you my sincere thanks for your assurance of continued support and participation in our fine organization during the coming year.

Our organization is kept viable only through the diligent efforts of all of our membership and not by just a select few. We are fortunate indeed to have among our membership people from all walks of life. Many professions and occupations are represented among us, with each being capable of contributing in his own special way.

We are firmly bound together by a common interest. This interest is two-fold: first, to foster a greater knowledge of the birds of Alabama through observation, education, and publication; and second, to be a potent voice in the conservation of all of Alabama's natural resources, but especially of birds. All of our energies are centered upon a focal point that relates either directly or indirectly to the conservation of a renewable natural resource. The entire functional structure of the Alabama Ornithological Society is geared for our dual objective and offers to the membership myriads of opportunities to make significant contributions in the field of ornithology. Within the sphere of our activities one can find many ecological niches where assistance can be given.

I invite you to join with me in making our organization strong and productive. I look forward to birding and working with each of you this year.

Dan C. Holliman, President
Alabama Ornithological Society

SOME INTERESTING RECORDS FROM BALDWIN COUNTY, ALABAMA

FAIRLY CHANDLER

The following report is a summary of some unusual records from intensive field observations by the writer mostly since August, 1960 and includes some new nesting areas and some dates earlier in the spring or later in the fall than those reported by Imhof (Alabama Birds). All records are of observations by the writer unless otherwise noted.

Eared Grebe (Podiceps caspicus)

December 19, 1963 (2 birds, Gulf Shores, H. M. Stevenson).
Jan. 3, 1964 (2 birds, Gulf Shores, H. M. Stevenson).
Jan. 4, 1964 (5 birds, Gulf Shores, H. M. Stevenson and P. F. Chandler. One collected and in Florida State University collection).

Green Heron (Butorides virescens)

Winter of 1957-58 (one bird seen regularly on Magnolia River, P. F. C.).
Winter of 1963-64 (one bird seen regularly on Magnolia River, P. F. C.).

Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis)

Winter and early Spring records.
Jan. 18 and 31, 1962 (one bird on shoulder of Highway 98 at Greeno Road, P. F. C.).
March 31 and April 2, 1962 (seven birds, Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
March 9, 27, 1964 (five birds and one bird, Mobile Causeway, P. F. C.).
April 4, 1964 (forty, eight and five birds, Gulf Shores-Alabama Point, H. M. S. and P. F. C.).

Least Bittern (Ixobrychus exilis)

Winter record. Jan. 16, 1964 (one bird with broken wing on Mobile Causeway, P. F. C.).

Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos)

Twenty days early. Sept. 30, 1963 (four at Corte Pond, P. F. C.).

Common Scoter (Oidemia nigra)

Early Fall. Nov. 2, 1963 (one female or immature bird on Magnolia River, P. F. C.).

Marsh Hawk (Circus cyaneus)

Late Spring. May 14, 1963 (one bird at Magnolia Springs, Ducie Barnard and P. F. C.).

Sandhill Crane (Grus canadensis)

Dec. 17, 19, 1963 (twenty-five birds south of Foley, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Smith, C. P. Bianco, P. F. C.).

- American Golden Plover (Pluvialis dominica)
 Fall and late Spring records.
 Nov. 23, 1963 (one bird with two Black-bellied Plovers
 at Fort Morgan, H. M. S. and P. F. C.).
 March 30, 1964 (37 in pasture, Magnolia Springs, winter
 plumage, P. F. C.).
 April 4, 1964 (59 + 1 same pasture, H. M. S. and P. F. C.).
 April 7, 1964 (45 same pasture, P. F. C.).
 April 9, 1964 (51 same pasture, P. F. C.).
 April 10, 1964 (68 in same pasture, one bird spotted breast,
 P. F. C.).
 April 16, 1964 (43 in same pasture, several spotted, P. F. C.).
 April 17, 1964 (21 in same pasture, one nearly black, P. F. C.).
 April 18, 1964 (18 in same pasture and adjoining corn field,
 several quite black breasted, P. F. C.).
 April 20, 1964 (10 in same two fields, P. F. C.).
 April 22, 1964 (2 in pasture, P. F. C.).
 April 24, 1964 (1 in pasture, winter plumage, P. F. C.).
- Spotted Sandpiper (Actitis macularia)
 Winter records. Dec. 7, 1963 and March 5, 1964 (one bird at
 Sunset Shores, P. F. C.).
- Knot (Calidris canutus)
 Late Fall record. Nov. 23, 1963 (one bird at Fort Morgan,
 H. M. S. and P. F. C.).
- American Avocet (Recurvirostra americana)
 Late Fall and Winter records. All on Mobile Causeway.
 Jan. 18, 1963 (six birds, P. F. C.).
 Nov. 21, 1963 (seven birds, P. F. C.).
 Dec. 5, 1963 (six birds, P. F. C.).
- Great Black-backed Gull (Larus marinus)
 Fall record. Nov. 21, 1963 (one adult bird on Mobile
 Causeway, P. F. C.).
- Chimney Swift (Chaetura pelagica)
 Three days early. March 18, 1964 (ten birds at Magnolia
 Springs, P. F. C.).
- Eastern Kingbird (Tyrannus tyrannus)
 Six days early. March 12, 1964 (one bird at Magnolia
 Springs, P. F. C.).
- Gray Kingbird (Tyrannus dominicensis)
 Early, late and inland records.
 April 12, 1961 (one bird at Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
 May 3, 1961 (one bird at Magnolia Grove, P. F. C.).
 Oct. 26, 1962 (one bird five miles N.W. of Foley, P. F. C.).
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (Muscivora forficata)
 Winter record. Christmas Count.
 Dec. 19, 1963 (one bird Magnolia Springs, Father Matt
 Turk).

- Olive-sided Flycatcher (Nuttallornis borealis)
 Second week of Oct. and second week of Nov., 1960 (one
 bird each time between Magnolia Springs and
 Foley, P. F. C.).
- Barn Swallow (Hirundo rustica)
 New nesting area. July 10, 1963 (under bridge on Mobile
 Causeway, P. F. C.).
- Red-breasted Nuthatch (Sitta canadensis)
 Common from Nov. 3, 1963 - April 20, 1964. P. F. C.).
- Brown Creeper (Certhia familiaris)
 Seven days late. March 27, 1963 (one bird at Gulf Shores,
 J. F. Rothermel and P. F. C.).
- Swainson's Thrush (Hylocichla ustulata)
 Twenty-three days early. March 12, 1964 Magnolia Springs,
 P. F. C.).
- Cedar Waxwing (Bombycilla cedrorum)
 Unusual abundance Winter of 1963-64.
 Three - five hundred seen often in Jan., Feb., and March.
- Yellow-throated Vireo (Vireo flavifrons)
 Nests commonly in Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.
- Swainson's Warbler (Limnothlypis swainsonii)
 April 10, 1961 (two birds at Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
- Yellow Warbler (Dendroica petechia)
 Early migrant. July 10, 1963 (one bird on Mobile Causeway).
 Late migrant (?) Nov. 28, 1961 (South Baldwin Co., P. F. C.).
- Black-throated Gray Warbler (Dendroica nigrescens)
 Aug. 28, 1961 (two birds, Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
 Oct. 19, 1961 (one bird, Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
- Black-throated Green Warbler (Dendroica virens)
 Wintering records. P. F. C.
 Last week of Feb., 1961 (four birds, Magnolia Springs)
 First week of March, 1961 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
 Dec. 11, 1962 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
 Dec. 15, 1962 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
 Dec. 17, 1962 (three birds, Magnolia Springs)
 Jan. 6, 1963 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
 Jan. 9, 1963 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
 Dec. 6, 1963 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
 March 7, 1964 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
- Orchard Oriole (Icterus spurius)
 Six days early. March 23, 1964 (one bird, Foley, P. F. C.).

Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*)

Nov. 30, 1961 (One Female or Immature., Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)

Out of season Aug. 5, 1961 (one bird, Magnolia Springs)
Five days late Nov. 6, 1961 (one bird, Foley, P. F. C.).

Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)

New for Baldwin Co. and first Alabama specimen.
Jan. 8, 1964 - Feb. 25, 1964 (seen almost daily at feeder in Magnolia Springs until collected Feb. 25. Bird in collection of Florida State University. Imm. M., P. F. C.).

Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*)

May 31, 1961 (one bird Magnolia Grove, P. F. C.). (Male)
March 22, 1964 (one M changing plumage, Foley, P. F. C.).
April 21, 1964 (one M, Foley, P. F. C.).

Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*)

Common from Dec. 19, 1963 - April 7, 1964. P. F. C.

Pine Siskin (*Spinus pinus*)

Common from Dec. 10, 1963 - April 16, 1964, P. F. C.
April 16, 1964 about 10% of flock of 300-400 Goldfinch and Siskin. P. F. C.

Vesper Sparrow (*Poocetes gramineus*)

Ten days early Oct. 29, 1963 (ten birds Magnolia Springs)

Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*)

Nov. 13, 1962 (one bird Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
Sept. 9, 1963 (two birds Bon Secour and Foley, P. F. C.).
Sept. 15, 1963 (two birds Foley and Summerdale, P. F. C.).

White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)

Common Oct. 10, 1963 - April 24, 1964. P. F. C.
Birds singing April 4, 1964 (H. M. S. and P. F. C.) -
April 24 (P. F. C.).

Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*)

Early, late and more numerous.
Dec. 10, 1963 (one bird Foley, P. F. C.). March 11, 1964
(two birds Magnolia Springs, P. F. C.).
Most seen: eight on Dec. 19, Feb. 18 and March 3. P. F. C.

Magnolia Springs
Alabama

READING BIRD BANDS WITH BINOCULARS

Julian L. Dusi

Many studies of resident birds require frequent checks of the continued presence of the birds. The usual means for making these determinations is trapping or netting the birds and banding them with numbered bands. They are then released and periodically retrapped or netted in order to read their band numbers. An alternative has been a color banding system, in addition to the numbered bands. The color banding system is excellent for visual identification, if only a few individuals are concerned. Any elaborate banding system adds sufficient weight to small birds to require a much greater expenditure of energy in flight. This is not desirable because of possible increased mortality among banded birds.

The use of nets and traps is excellent, except that it sometimes is not possible to have nets and traps in operation during the periods of arrival and departure, and it sometimes is several days after arrival that a bird is captured.

An alternative method for reading the bands of birds that will come to feeding stations is to use binoculars to read the band numbers while the birds feed. The writer found that a number of birds would use a window ledge feeder or large pine cones loaded with peanut butter and suspended near the window from the rain gutter. The bird list includes: most of the woodpeckers, Blue Jay, chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, nuthatches, wrens, Mockingbird, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Robin, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Starling, Orange-crowned Warbler, Myrtle Warbler, Pine Warbler, House Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Baltimore Oriole, Common Grackle, Cowbird, Summer Tanager, Cardinal, Purple Finch, Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow.

Under conditions described above, large bands, size 2 or greater, can be read with the unaided eye. Smaller bands require some visual assistance. Ordinarily, binoculars will not focus at less than 10 to 15 feet. Experimentation showed that by attaching a plus 1 portra lens (in a camera accessory lens and filter holder) with masking tape in front of the objective lens of a binocular, it could be focused to between two and three feet. This provided monocular vision only, but by its use bands of the smallest size could be easily read. Usually, only two or three numbers would be in view at any given time, but as the bird fed, the band would revolve and the entire number sequence was quickly obtained.

The portra lenses are usually obtainable at camera stores for a relatively small amount. They are usually stocked in several sizes and strengths from plus 1 to plus 3. In the writer's experience, only the plus 1 is suitable for use with binoculars. The others provide too short of a working distance from lens to object.

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