

November, 1969

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ALABAMA BIRDLIFE

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year of 1969 has been an exciting year for all those who find pleasure in the waters, the waysides and the green of summer. And there are more unbought and unpaid for pleasures to come in the changing kaleidoscopic panorama that flows across our Appalachian hills every fall. (Few pause to think that this great arresting and exhilarating phenomena occurs in only a small part of the world, and no where with the vim and vigor of our Southern Highlands.) The utter nourishment of contentment and thrills of pleasure from this annual arborization lifts the spirit within us from bare trees to green trees to red, yellow, orange and brown trees. The joys of living such days leaves man in debt!

Not all of the year has it been possible to relish nature's joys. The continuing inroads of civilization and men who do not see and hear, has sent many of our people to the State Capitol this year, and sent many a letter to anxious and worried politicians. (There are really many called by this appellation who want to know how and what to do about preserving nature, but who are confused and lack information and knowledge.) And some good things have been accomplished with the aid of those who wish to practice conservation.

Everyone from Governor Brewer to Conservation Directors Graham and Carr have assured us the Nature Center will be built in Oak Mountain State Park. The Education Department of the State has helped immensely by assurances of competent folks to operate such a center. This is surely the best thing that has happened for nature lovers in many, many long years. Our fall meeting, planned for November 21, 22, 23 in Birmingham will feature some fine birding and netting in the preferred area for the Nature Center, with (hopefully) a miniature or mock up of how the building and area may look on completion. Dan Holliman and Bob Reid, both past AOS Presidents have done yeoman work on selling the need of the Nature Center.

There are many things to do and so many encroachments to resist that it is desirous for all to keep alert and voice our thoughts to responsible legislators on such matters as channelization of our streams, needless destruction of habitat, green borders that should be built, air to be cleaned and waters to be washed and scrubbed, and so many things that effect our future!

But there too, thankfully, are canoes to be paddled and trails to be walked, and birds to be sought and seen and wonders to behold, such as three common (so beautiful) terns resting on a stump jutting from the waters of Smith Lake, oblivious of the softly gliding canoe and its occupants. . . . or your own special thrill in your own yard!

See you in Birmingham November 21,

For a Better Land

Walter F. Coxe

BELL'S VIREO IN ALABAMA

Thomas A. Imhof

Bell's Vireo (Vireo bellii Audubon) is known to breed east to Madison, Wisc., Joliet (suburban Chicago) and Mt. Carmel (Wabash valley) Ill., Memphis, Tenn., El Dorado and Stuttgart, Ark., Shreveport, La., and Houston, Tex. Thus Alabama is at least 250 miles east and 500 miles south of the breeding range. The species is known here as a casual spring and fall transient.

Spring records are: 26 April (1965, Dauphin Island, Edith Halberg); 28 April (1937, Irondale, Birmingham, H. M. Stevenson); and 28 April (1961, a pair, male singing, Brownsboro, J. C. and Margaret Robinson). Fall records are: 19 to 31 August (1932, Elmwood Cemetery, Birmingham, H. M. Stevenson and H. E. Wheeler); 30 August (1969, one bird, banded and photographed in color, Thomas Creek, Birmingham, T. A. Imhof, Helen Kittinger, and others); and 2 September (1959, Dauphin Island, O. B. Miles); and 15 October (1969 Dauphin Island, banded, Margaret E. Miller).

The 2 x 2 Kodachrome transparency of the August 1969 bird is recognizable and is considered by this writer sufficient material evidence of the occurrence of the species in Alabama. It is now in the slide collection of the Alabama Ornithological Society. The bird, an immature (skull ossification incomplete) had no fat and was not moulting. The following measurements in millimeters were taken: wing 51, wing tip (tip of longest primary to tip of nearest secondary) 6, exposed culmen 11, tarsus, 17, tail, 41, weight 8.2 grams at 10:37 hours. Both 1969 birds were separated from the White-eyed Vireo by the dark eye and white instead of yellow spectacles; further, both measurements verify that Bell's Vireo is a much smaller bird.

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THE SEASON SPRING 1969

Compiler and Editor—Thomas A. Imhof

For more than two years now, most of Alabama has had colder weather than usual. Although last summer and fall were very dry, December 1968 started a wetter than usual trend. This spring continued wet and cold, particularly inland where Birmingham had its wettest May ever—11.10 inches (7.68 in excess). March here had a 7.9⁰ deficiency. This cool, rainy weather meant that development of vegetation was about 2 weeks late and many times the birds had poor flying conditions. As a result, many trans-Gulf migrants were recorded almost daily from 5 April to 21 May around Birmingham and included some species rarely noted here in spring. Little specific weather data are available from other parts of the state. In general though, temperatures were cool throughout and the coast had several stormy periods, rains were heavier 100 or more miles inland.

Little comment was made about the weather on the coast except that certain rarities and concentrations of migrants followed storms (MAG). Tuck Hayward was disappointed in warbler numbers but amazed at the numbers of Hoodeds, e.g. 75 of 148 he banded on Dauphin Island on 4 April. Totals banded by Tuck Hayward and Margaret Miller on Dauphin Island this spring were: March 21st, 15; 26th, 38; April 5th, 70; 6th, 70; 7th, 37; 11th & 12th (with MLB and TAI), over 100; 17th, 70; and 23rd, 70.

The 5th annual spring count at Birmingham, although scheduled a little early on 19 April, produced 134 species and 89 birds per party-hour, average in both respects. The species list included 5 species of ducks, 9 of hawks, 11 shorebirds, 22 warblers, and 17 finches, but only 5 flycatchers, 2 wrens, 4 thrushes, and 3 vireos. Evening Grosbeak was seen by 7 of 12 parties, and Pine Siskin by 5.

The reader must always remember that what we record here is but a small fraction of what is going on, for much of bird migration is beyond our ken. Thus often, when bad weather forces a migrant to alight and we record him as an early or late bird, the species may really occur annually there on that date, but we are just beginning to find it out.

Pelicanlike Birds—On 29 May, 57 White Pelicans were still present in Mobile (REH & LRT). Brown Pelicans were down again from the 50 of last spring and noted only 3 times: Dauphin Island, 3 on 6 April (LPA & LRT) and 2 on 12-13 April (AOS);