

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

In this year, when we are so critically measuring the development of the many facets of our country with others, it is of special interest to us to critically look at the development of our Alabama Ornithological Society.

Look at this issue of "Alabama Birdlife!" No longer do one or two people write all of the articles. The editor doesn't have to rewrite most of the issue. Members are realizing that their field work is interesting to others and they are writing about it and sharing it with others. As this continues, "Alabama Birdlife" will expand and appear quarterly, as was our original intention.

Our membership list has decreased slightly. Now it consists of interested members whereas it once contained a number of charter joiners who quickly dropped out. The members we add now are interested in the organization.

Our members, who answered a recent questionnaire, indicated mostly that they were interested in more organized or cooperative study projects and that they were willing to help with the work of the organization. Because they so indicated, we are to have a nationally known speaker, Charles L. Broley, at our spring meeting. All of this shows a much more mature attitude, indicating that the A.O.S. has passed the bird club stage and is becoming more of an ornithological society.

A COMPARISON OF WATERBIRDS AT U. S. FISH HATCHERY AND LAKELAND FARM NEAR MARION, ALABAMA

By LOIS McCOLLOUGH

Since moving to Marion in August, 1954, I have found a wealth of waterbirds almost at my door at the Lakeland Farm and the Fish Hatchery. From September, 1954, to March, 1957, 52 field trips were made totalling 80 hours at the Fish Hatchery, and 49 field trips totalling 105 hours at Lakeland Farm. The populations at these two localities change frequently, every field trip revealing an unexpected find.

A comparison of the bird populations at the Fish Hatchery and Lakeland Farm and some of the factors which influence the population in the two areas is presented in this paper.

The U. S. Fish Cultural Station or Fish Hatchery is six miles north of Marion and lies in rolling foothills. The surrounding territory is heavily wooded with pine and deciduous trees. The area behind the Fish Hatchery is swampy bottom land. The Blue-gill ponds are drained in October, a slow process which lasts all winter. As the ponds are drained, mud flats are formed which provide excellent feeding grounds for waterbirds, mainly snipe and sandpipers. The Blue-gill ponds are filled beginning in February, leaving no mud flats to induce migrating sandpipers and plovers to stop over. The pond edges are burned in February, and thus cover for rails is lost. The bass ponds are full in winter and are drained in early summer, so they are dry in the fall. Thus some of the 55 ponds in use are full at any time of the year. The largest pond where most of the wintering ducks occur is usually left half full during January and February. Some herons, grebes, and Ospreys are shot at the Fish Hatchery.

Lakeland Farm lies four miles southeast of Marion in the upper part of the Black Belt and is privately owned. Ducks are shot during the hunting season and large numbers of fishermen are present over weekends. There are 20 lakes, the water level fluctuating with the amount of rainfall. The land is very open with small patches of woods and fence rows, the fields are planted in grain, alfalfa and clover. There is very little cover around the edges of most of the ponds.