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Alabama Ornithological Society

Founded May 17, 1952

Officers

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 Treasurer: Mrs. James C. Robinson 1701 Oakwood Ave., N.E., Huntsville, Ala.
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WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new members:

Mrs. M. H. Goodwin, Mt. Willing Rt., Calhoun, Ala.
 Mrs. T. C. (Maxi) Swindell, Rt 7, Sullivan Rd., Knoxville 21, Tenn.

We are indebted to Blanche E. Dean for use of the picture on our cover. It is from a cut in her recent book, *Let's Learn the Birds in Alabama*.

PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

THIS number of our journal represents the first efforts of our new editor, Blanche H. Chapman. Your editor and president believe that Alabama Birdlife plays a big part in the vitality of the society. Except for an occasional newsletter, it is the only link with those who cannot attend our semi-annual meetings. It is my policy, therefore that the secretary report on every meeting and that the treasurer report once a year.

Three things make a good society periodical: good copy, money, and a good editor to put them together. The first requisite depends on you, but we hope through the regional correspondents that we have made it easier for you to contribute, especially for those who haven't the time, talent, or sufficient information for a full article. The possible establishment of certain regular features such as lists of birds seen at A. O. S. meetings or at Christmas counts will also ensure good copy. Proper copy for Alabama Bird Life consists of (1) original data on birds, and (2) the operation of the society.

The good editor is our responsibility. We shall do our best with the copy and the money we receive. I do ask that if you have any suggestions or criticisms of the journal, please exercise your membership privileges by letting us know about them.

Money is the final requisite, and this means, pay your dues. It is my aim at President to try to establish 4 good issues per year of Alabama Birdlife. Miss McTyeire's reports since 1954 show that in every year we have spent more money on printing Alabama Birdlife than we have received in dues!

So my plea is this: Send in your field notes, small items, full articles, anything you think will help make the bulletin more useful and interesting. Then, pay your dues so that we can afford to publish what you submit.

— Thomas A. Imhof

FALL MIGRATION MORTALITY, WAVERLY, ALABAMA

The Interstate Commerce Range Tower, Waverly, Alabama proved to be the site of mortality to a number of birds in fall migration. The days with drizzling rain and low hanging clouds seemed the worst for the migrating birds and the best days of tower mortality.

Following is a list of dates and specimens collected under the tower:

Oct. 17, 1959—Catbird-1, Wood Thrush-2, Olive-backed Thrush-1, Gray-checked Thrush-1, Red-eyed Vireo-2, Tennessee Warbler-3, Magnolia Warbler-3, Bay-breasted Warbler-1, Ovenbird-3, Yellow-breasted Chat-1, Redstart-1, Scarlet Tanager-1, Rose-breasted Grosbeak-1.

Oct. 18, 1959—Olive-backed Thrush-1.

The tower was checked thereafter when suitable conditions indicated that there might be mortality until migration slowed.

A number of other towers near Auburn were checked but only the one at Waverly seemed destructive to the birds. Its location on a high spot plus the fact that its guy wires were at the right angle to intercept migrating birds were probably the reason for its kills. — Julian L. Dusi

IN MEMORY OF SCOTT COBB BARCLIFF
DIED, BIRMINGHAM, SEPTEMBER 14, 1959

FALL A. O. S. MEETING

The Alabama Ornithological Society held its semi-annual meeting at Dauphin Island on November 6, 7, and 8, 1959. Nineteen members registered.

The business meeting was held after the dinner Saturday night at the Marina. Tom Imhof, the president, called the meeting to order and gave a report of the executive committee meeting held in September at Wheeler Wildlife Refuge. The committee decided to try to publish four issues of Alabama Birdlife, in January, March, September and December, with material reaching the editor not later than the 15th of the preceding month. It was also proposed to change the fiscal year to the calendar year. This was put to a motion by Blanche Dean with the addition that dues not be delinquent if paid by the spring meetig. This motion was seconded and passed by the membership.

Blanche Chapman gave a report on Alabama Birdlife and said that regional reports of observations would be included in each issue, as well as longer scientific articles. The minutes and treasurer's report are also to be published. Prices for printing were submitted from six printing companies. Regional correspondents have been named as follows, with several others to be appointed:

Montgomery area—Jim Keeler

Gadsden area—Edith Clark

Tenn. Valley area—Margaret Robinson and Tom Atkeson

Birmingham area—Harriett Wright

Mobile area—Dr. Wilson Gaillard

The treasurer's report was read, after which suggestions were made for an increasing our revenue by securing new members. Also Blanche Dean made the suggestion that advertising space be sold in Alabama Birdlife.

The speaker of the evening, Mr. S. Blake McNeeley, president of the Dauphin Island Property Owners' Association, gave a very interesting account of the Island's history and plans for further development.

The meeting was concluded by compiling a list of birds seen during the weekend. A total of 138 species was recorded, including the following of special interest: Reddish Egret, Green Heron, White Ibis, Blue Goose, Bufflehead, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Ground Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Burrowing Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Kingbird, Least Flycatcher, Barn Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Sage Thrush (specimen), Wood Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Bullock's ? Oriole (specimen), Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Pine Siskin, Vesper Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Clay-colored Sparrow, and White-crowned (gambelii) Sparrow (specimen).

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Idalene F. Snead, Secretary

WILD TURKEYS

On October 29, 1959 while driving a "short-cut" from Skagg's Crossroads to Brownville in the southwest corner of Clay County, I came suddenly upon the female turkey and five half-grown young, crossing the road. There were others in the old pea patch beside the road which did not venture to come out while I waited for them to cross. This is a little used road with no houses for a mile or two and the farm upon which they ranged had only a garden plot cultivated this season. Due north of this land about 3 or 4 miles, several male turkeys were collected last year. I feel sure the turkey population in Alabama is increasing. Read the article in November-December issue of ALABAMA CONSERVATION on the wild Turkey in Alabama.

— Blanche E. Dean

PLOVER RECORDS FROM THE MID-TENNESSEE VALLEY

THOMAS Z. ATKESON

Following their normal fluctuation schedule, the Alabama reservoirs of the Tennessee Valley Authority are filled in March and April. They remain bank-full, or nearly so, until late summer. Mudflat edge seldom occurs before early August. The dry weather of late summer and early fall, increased power use, and the beginning of the flood-control drawdown cause a steady drop in water levels throughout the remainder of fall and early winter. This schedule results in good conditions for shorebirds in late summer and early fall, but little available habitat in spring, and helps account for the fact that the majority of the shorebird records from this area are made during the fall period.

The most common member of the plover group is the ever-present Killdeer, (*Charadrius vociferus*) reasonably common at all seasons. It is the only plover nesting in the Valley. Nests with four eggs have been found as early as March 30, and downy young have been seen as late as April 25.

The second most common member of the group is the little Semi-palmated Plover, (*Charadrius semipalmatus*), a regular and common spring and fall migrant. It has been recorded in spring from April 24 through May 26 and in fall from August 5 through September 18.

Arthur H. Howell's "Birds of Alabama" lists Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodius*) records only for the coast, but on September 9, 1955 David C. Hulse noted a flock of five or six of these birds on mud flats north of Decatur. They were watched for some time at fairly close range and through good glasses and were heard calling. Hulse considers the identification positive.

Howell gives no records of the Black-bellied Plover (*squatarola squatarola*) north of Greensboro and most of those listed are coastal. However, these plovers have been recorded on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge once in the spring, a single bird seen on Buckeye Slough on May 15, 1952 by Henry H. Grammer, and occur regularly in small numbers during fall migration. Fall records range from August 21 through November 22 and have been made by a number of good observers, including Thomas A. Imhof and Hulse.

Howell gives no records of the Black-bellied Plover (*Squatarola Squatarola*) north State. There have been several from various parts of Alabama since his book was published, including those made on Wheeler Refuge and adjoining areas by a visiting group of Alabama Ornithological Society members. This group on November 14 and 15, 1953 counted 26 of these birds and the number of good observers included Harold S. Peters, Albert Ganier, Ben Coffey, Imhof, and others. Golden Plovers may possibly visit the Refuge and adjacent parts of the reservoir regularly in fall, at least in small numbers, but pass unnoticed due to a lack of good observers.

— P. O. Box 1643

Decatur, Ala.

TREASURER'S REPORT 1958 - 1959

INCOME	
Brought forward	\$207.84
Dues collected	146.00
Sales	13.55
Registration fees	6.50
	373.89
EXPENSES	
Dr. Julian Dusi	14.18
Postage, typing, etc.	
Post Publishing Co.	96.31
Post Publishing Co.	122.36
	232.85
Total	232.85
Balance	\$141.04
July, 1959	
Clustie McTyeire, Treasurer	

Editor's note: Since this report was made, another issue of Birdlife has been paid for. A few dues have come in, but the treasurer would appreciate your cooperation.

REGIONAL WINGBEATS

THE DECATUR LOCALITY—With the coming of fall, the Valley changed its colors and changed its birds. The early-arriving shorebird flight seemed normal, with numbers of yellowlegs and various members of the sandpiper group dropping in to the early-exposed mudflats along the edges of the Wheeler reservoir. David Hulse spotted a group of three Willets on September 4 and a Ruddy Turnstone on September 16. Bishop Gaines, who keeps several martin boxes in his yard in Decatur, set about establishing a late date for these birds and noted the last on September 19. Dove nesting dragged well into the early fall, with a nest and eggs reported on September 27.

Blue-winged Teal, the vanguard of the waterfowl flight, began arriving in late August and numbers seemed a bit higher than during the fall of 1958. Other waterfowl began dropping in during September. As predicted, the duck flight was short and Wheeler Refuge, by early December, had tallied a peak of only 30,000, a drop of 25 per cent below last fall's high count. Canada Goose numbers, though, were encouraging, and the Refuge racked up a high count of 62,000, a 15 per cent increase over this same time last year.

On October 18, 19, and 20, a spectacular mass migration of Blue Geese and Snow Geese passed over the Decatur locality. Flock after flock, at about 15-minute intervals, moved over flying so high that their shrill squealing was scarcely audible. Flocks were mainly Blues, with only a few Snows mixed in. The course was southwest, toward their ancestral winter home at the mouth of the Mississippi. While most of these birds passed through, a full thousand wavies stopped on Wheeler Refuge and have stayed throughout the remainder of the fall.

A trio of White Pelicans was seen on the Refuge on November 5, and a quartet of Horned Grebes on November 21. A few eagles have been sighted, but, so far, they're definitely less numerous than they were last fall. Numbers of cormorants and loons have been seen or reported. Vultures, rare here in recent years, seem a bit more numerous this fall.

Several interesting cases of albinism have been noted recently. A Canada Goose with almost pure white wings has been seen several times. A white duck, presumably a Mallard, was sighted flying with a flock of normal Mallards. A Decatur resident reported a pure white grackle feeding with a flock of normal grackles in his front yard.

The entire blackbird group has increased dramatically here. Swarms of these birds are making grain sorghum growing a near impossibility in this part of the Valley. A huge roost is located just west of Decatur's Lakeview Park, with tens of thousands of Starlings, Redwings, Grackles, Cowbirds, and Rusty Blackbirds forming a black blanket over trees and brush each late evening.

—Thomas Z. Atkeson
Hdg. Wheeler Wildlife Refuge
Decatur, Ala.

THE HUNTSVILLE AREA—EVENING GROSBEAKS—On November 21, 1959, a flock of 14 Evening Grosbeaks (3 adult males, 11 females or immatures) was seen feeding in Tulip trees in the picnic and playground areas of Monte Sano State Park near Huntsville. Though Evening Grosbeaks were assumed to winter here, none had been sighted despite searches made for them by the writers for the past three years.

KRIDER'S HAWK—A Krider's Hawk sighted at Huntsville on October 24, 1959, was the first seen in the Madison County area in three years of observation by the writers. This individual was first sighted at a considerable distance, and apparently was being annoyed by a small flock of Starling which would alternately wheel toward the hawk, then away. After having his fill of the game, the hawk alighted on a power

pole approximately 50 yards north of the Highway 72 cutoff near Highway 231. From the road the following observations were made: white forehead; white nape; dark line through the eye; mottled brown and white crown, wings, and back; white throat, breast, belly and undertail; snowy white rump and tail; brownish tips to tail feathers. In consideration of size, coloration and general appearance, the hawk was judged to be a Krider's.

TRICHOMONAS GALLINAE IN MOURNING DOVES—An adult Mourning Dove trapped and banded on April 20, 1959, was found clear of this disease. On September 22, 1959, the writers had their first return on this bird, and found in its throat two cheese-like growths smaller than the head of a pin. The dove was trapped several times daily until September 27, 1959. At this time the throat and bill were bulging with growths. The throat opening was so small that the bird could pick up only the smallest of the seeds in the trap and was unable to swallow these. The crop was empty. The writers were having so many repeats on doves that trapping was halted on September 27 because of the damage being done to the birds' wings. It is assumed that the dove could have lived only a few days after September 27. From these records it appears the bird would have died within about a week of the time the very small growths were first observed.

—James and Margaret Robinson
1701 Oakwood Ave., N. E.
Huntsville, Alabama

HIGHLIGHTS FROM A GADSDEN HILLTOP—I try to check first arrivals of winter residents in the same area every year. Rare visitors such as Evening Grosbeaks are an exception. This year I was in Kentucky until the last week of September, but starting in October I had:

- October 12—First winter residents, White-throated Sparrow and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (later than usual)
- October 18—Golden-crowned Kinglet (earlier than usual), Cedar Waxwings (earlier than usual), Myrtle Warbler (about average time).
- 18—Wilson's Plover at Ashley Lake
- 27—Red-breasted Nuthatch (now daily at feeder)
- November 3—Junco (latest date I've had for them)
- 3—Purple Finches (early by a few days)
- 17—Fox Sparrow and Song Sparrow (both later than usual)
- 30—Pine Siskin (also late)
- December 5—Brown Creeper (Very late, but daily visitor since arrival)
- 2—Katherine Bates called to report one female Evening Grosbeak.
- 10—Katherine Bates reported a flock of "about 20" Evening Grosbeaks

So far, I've had only a few Purple Finches. Doves are very scarce. I'm usually feeding 15-25 at this time. This week I've had only one each day. At no time this fall have I fed more than four.

After Christmas, I shall check the returned winter residents wearing bands. Thus far, I have noticed Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Junco with bands.

—Edith Clark (Mrs. Ben)
2736 Hilltop Circle
Gadsden, Alabama

BIRMINGHAM—October followed September with continued slightly above average temperature and rainfall. Although many species arrived "on time," migration was later this fall, possibly due to the continued warm weather. However, the first freeze occurred November 7 and November temperature and rainfall were both below normal.

On August 28, there was a group of water birds migrating on Lake Purdy: Green and Black-crowned Night Herons (immature), Little Blue Herons, Pied-billed Grebe, Black Terns, and Pectoral Sandpipers. The first Baltimore Oriole appeared August 29. A Canada Warbler was seen September 16. The first real migration wave the writer noted was on September 30 with a number of Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Black-throated Green, and Chestnut-sided Warblers. Except for the Bay-breasted, this was not the earliest arrival date for these warblers.

On November 1, a Stilt Sandpiper was feeding on Lake Purdy and was noted again on November 4 by Marge Ayres. On November 3, Idalene Snead and Lois McCullough observed a late Common Nighthawk. A Bay-breasted Warbler was seen on November 4. The Wrights and the Ayres saw four Common Snipe, one Common Loon, 400 Coot, and 15 Lesser Scaup at Lake Purdy. Gayle and Pat Riley had a female Evening Grosbeak visit their feeder on November 21.

Some arrival dates of interest —

September 21—Scarlet Tanager

24—Rose-breasted Grosbeak

October 15—White-throated Sparrow

20—Hermit Thrush.

— Harriett H. Wright (Mrs. D. O.)
2749 Millbrook Rd.
Birmingham 9, Ala

MONTGOMERY AREA AND CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

November and December were good months for observing uncommon birds in south Alabama. Worthy of mention were three short-eared Owls wintering on Prison farm No. 4, approximately five miles north of Montgomery. These owls were first seen during early November and have remained there throughout December. A tremendous number of Marsh Hawks and Buteo hawks (mostly Red-tailed Hawks) were also present during this period.

High populations of Rice and Cotton Rats were undoubtedly responsible for holding such a large number of hawks during the fall and winter months.

One Harlan's Hawk was observed on the prison farm by R. W. Skinner during the latter part of November and another Harlan's Hawk was seen in the black belt section of Marengo County, approximately six miles southeast of Thomaston, Alabama, December 15, 1959 by the reporter.

Seven Sandhill Cranes were seen flying toward Elberta, in Baldwin County, on December 16, 1959, by the reporter. These birds are known to range between Elberta and the inter-coastal canal east of Gulf Shores, Alabama. A resident of the area was contacted and he stated that there was a total of 14 Sandhill Cranes in that area this fall.

A total of 135 recent band recoveries was reported to the Alabama Department of Conservation during December. Most of these birds were recovered from September 1, to November 15, 1959. These recoveries were as follows: Mourning Dove—90; Mallard—21; Black Duck—13; Canada Goose—5; Baldpate—4; Little-blue Heron—1; White Ibis—1.

Of special interest was the White Ibis recovery. This bird was banded as a nestling in Baldwin County, Alabama, June 21, 1956 and caught August 30, 1959, near San Nicholas de Bari, Havana, Cuba.

— James E. Keeler
State Conservation Dept.
Montgomery, Ala.

THE AUBURN AREA—Notes from eastern Alabama are hard to separate from neighboring Georgia, especially when the events take place only several miles over the line. The Columbus, Georgia, L. A. Wells watched a pair of Mississippi Kites nest and rear one young right in Columbus. The nest was no more than 100 feet from a row of houses. They were first seen May 10 and left August 18. Read more about this in the Oriole, the G. O. S. publication. A second Georgia note was an announcement from Mrs. J. H. Whiteman at West Point. She reports that the noted resort Ida Cason Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, has added an ornithologist, Mr. Winslow M. Shaughnessy, to its staff and that Mr. Shaughnessy is to develop a program of bird study for the area. This should be of great interest to those in Eastern Alabama. We hope Mr. Shaughnessy will become an A. O. S. member.

This fall, being much more moist than usual and mild, has produced a much more interesting migration. With the moisture and more available food, migrants stopped and stayed awhile. As a result, it was actually worth while spending some time in the field netting, banding and collecting.

GOLDEN PLOVER NEAR AUBURN

This fall a number of the experimental ponds of the Agriculture Experiment Station at Auburn University were drained as experiments were completed. This provided an unusual increase in mud flats which are an attraction to migrating shore-birds. As a result the writer collected a female Golden Plover, *Pluvialis d. dominica*, on November 9, 1959. This was a lone individual associated with a number of Killdeers, several Greater Yellowlegs and several Least Sandpipers. There also were several Common Snipes present.

The collection was of interest to the writer because it is the only specimen to his knowledge to be seen or taken near Auburn.

— Julian L. Dusi
P. O. Box 742
Auburn, Ala.

GOLDEN PLOVER NEAR AUBURN

MOBILE AND THE GULF COAST—In any area, one of the prerequisites for abundant bird-life is an ample food supply. Reports and personal observation in Mobile, Baldwin, Washington, Clark and Monroe Counties indicate an unusually bad season for bird food. Our berry, seed, and mast crop, with scattered exceptions, is very poor. Pecan and acorn crops were the worst in many years. The same is true of cherry-laurel, chinaberry, holly, gum, and cedar.

On the brighter side, however, grass seeds are locally abundant, as is insect life. Likewise, shore birds will have no food problem along the salt-water mud flats.

It will be interesting to see whether this food scarcity is reflected in our annual Christmas bird counts. It probably will not show in the Dauphin Island count as that particular area is not as badly affected.

Waterfowl:

The Fall flight of geese was greater than usual and they have remained in the Mobile area longer than usual. Most were Blue Geese, with a few Snow and Canada Geese seen.

Ducks are not as plentiful as last year. Canvasbacks, Redheads, and Ruddy Ducks had such a bad breeding season that the bag limit was wisely cut to one per day.

To cite the value of food supply to bird life, I recently flew to the Texas rice area for the opening of geese and duck hunting. In one protected area geese were so numerous that their calls when disturbed, sounded like the roar at the Alabama-Auburn football game. There were tens of thousands in sight. Let's keep trying to get Coffee Island made into a U. S. Wildlife Refuge. It would not only attract ducks and geese, but also the wonderful bird-life rapidly being crowded off Dauphin Island.

— M. W. Gaillard, DDS
1508 Merchants Nat. Bank Bldg.
Mobile, Ala.

BROAD-WINGED HAWKS CAUGHT IN CROSSWINDS

My husband and I observed about 400 Broad-winged Hawks (*Buteo Platypterus platypterus*) on September 16, 1959. At 10 AM on this date we were driving north on U.S. 31, and had gone perhaps a mile beyond the town of Castleberry. Then we saw them on both sides of the road.

They looked like great "whirlwinds" rather than flocks. We had noticed earlier in the morning that the wind from the Gulf had begun to meet the one from the north, causing sudden strong gusts. Here, they were eddyig in such a manner that the birds were being carried round and round like so many leaves in a whirlwind. It would have been impossible to make an accurate count. However, by counting a group of 20 several different times, and applying that sample we estimated conservatively the number in both groups.

The weather was partly cloudy to clearing, the temperature was in the high sixties, and once the Gulf wind was left completely behind us, the wind from the north was 13-17 miles per hour.

We saw other species of hawks and Turkey Vultures, numbering into the hundreds and moving southward, on the 16th and 17th as we drove toward Chattanooga, but we did not have the time to stop and count them.

— Maxi (Mrs. T. C.) SWINDELL
Knoxville, Tenn.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

WITH this first bulletin since the change of administrations, I urge each one of you to send to the editor or to the regional correspondent nearest you, any observation you think of unusual interest. We need a wide participation by the membership to watch unusual movements or trends, and to give everyone the benefit of all observations.

It will be our policy to adhere to the nonenclature of the A. O. U. checklist (1957) which will eliminate the need for inclusion of scientific names, except for longer, more scientific papers or study reports.

The second co-operation I urge upon you is the payment of dues. As stated elsewhere, the A. O. S. year has been changed to the calendar year, which should make it easier when the change-over has been completed. Many of you who have been unable to attend meetings recently have overlooked the payment of your dues, which are the means of publishing your *Birdlife*. This bulletin, in turn, tries to keep you in touch with other members and their activities.

It is our intention to have three more issues in 1960 — March, September and December, with deadlines for material on the 15th of the preceding month. Jot these dates on your calendar now, a reminder to contribute at least one item for each bulletin this year.

While you have your pen in hand, write your check to the treasurer, Margaret (Mrs. J. C.) Robinson, 1701 Oakwood Ave. N. E., Huntsville, Ala. If you have forgotten when you paid last, she will be glad to tell you. I understand that five dollars will reinstate anyone, so that you can be kept on the *Birdlife* mailing list. We might remind you, too, that life membership is only fifty (\$50.00). If you are young enough, this should prove an attractive bargain.

Be sure to make plans to attend the annual spring meeting at Monte Sano in April. More particulars will be given in our next issue.

— Blanche H. Chapman