

A. O. S. FALL MEETING—DAUPHIN ISLAND

The Alabama Ornithological Society held its semi-annual meeting at Dauphin Island on October 14, 15 and 16, 1960. Twenty-four members registered, in addition to a few visitors and members who were present for a portion of the time but did not register. Of six new members enlisted, four were from out of the state.

The business meeting was held Saturday night, after a wonderful dinner at Jacob's Marina. The president, Tom Imhof, presided. A check list of birds was compiled, with a total of 119 species recorded. Several others seen Sunday brought the total to 125.

Following the business meeting, the program was conducted by Jim Keeler, who brought us up-to-date on the book of Alabama Birds being compiled by Tom Imhof. Paintings by two artists who have submitted work for the book were discussed, and sample plates to be included were passed among the group for discussion, comments or criticism. All present were favorably impressed with them. We look forward to the day the book will roll off the press.

After the program, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

CLUSTIE McTYEIRE, Acting Secretary

Ed. Note—Although not a part of the business meeting, one of the highlights of the meeting was the showing of two films on Saturday afternoon by Father Dorn and Dr. Gaillard. One of these, "The Gooney Bird," was largely for amusement, but the other, on the need for providing wildlife with food, points up our responsibility in trying to back the idea for a refuge in the southern part of our state as outlined by Dr. Gaillard in his following article, "A Needed Project."

NEW MEMBERSHIP STATUS

Sincere thanks to our good friend and loyal member from Nashville, Mrs. Amelia Laskey, 1521 Graybar Lane. She has recently become a Life Member of our society.

Others who have raised their membership status from Active to Sustaining are Dr. M. Wilson Gaillard, Mobile; Mr. Paul Robinson, Decatur, and Mr. W. U. Harris, Jackson. We appreciate their fine support of our organization, and we urge that others may follow their example.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Mrs. Ben P. Clark, who has been our regional correspondent for the Gadsden area, has joined her husband in Whitesburg, Kentucky. We miss you, Edith. Let us hear from you.

Our continuing thanks to Blanche E. Dean for use of the cover cut.

SPRING MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual spring meeting of the A. O. S. will be held on April 21, 22 and 23, at DeSoto State Park. Preliminary plans include taking a dietitian who will prepare meals. This weekend should be excellent for migratory birds, so make a special effort to attend.

CONCENTRATION OF CHIMNEY SWIFTS

At the northern edge of Phenix City, Ala., a small creek flows into the turbulent waters of the Chattahoochee River just below the Bibb Dam. On either side of the creek is a park-like growth of mixed trees which attracts warblers following the feedway in the fall.

Approaching by car in the late afternoon of September 26, 1960, we noted a heavy concentration of Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) catching insects that were thick enough to be seen as they churned the air. Several swifts were dead in the road where they had apparently collided with vehicles. Seeing one lying prone but with head up and wings outstretched, we stopped, examined him and, finding no injury, placed him under some protective shrubbery nearby. After parking we noted that the birds now were even more numerous. They would fly between us as we walked. Beneath the trees in the park, however, was the densest gathering of all. Pressed into a layer between the overstory and the ground, a moving mass of swifts darkened the air.

No basis of an estimate could be arrived at, but it would have to be in the thousands.

SUE CHAMBLISS AND L. A. WELLS, Members G.O.S.

A NEEDED PROJECT

Our fall report to this column is usually a check list of birds we have recently seen in this Gulf Coast area. Our purpose in writing these reports has been to give our A. O. S. members a clearer picture of the great southward migration of non-game birds to their winter feeding grounds, chiefly Central America.

In like manner, our spring reports have been an attempt to alert you who live north of Mobile, to the happy return of feathered friends; to report the safe landing after their perilous flight across the Gulf of Mexico. However, this report will be somewhat different. This is indeed about birds we have seen—but will never see again. It is an ugly account of what happens every fall. It is a death notice of those who ran out of "gas" before reaching Central and South America and were lost at sea.

In this particular coastal region we are temporarily host to a vast number of song birds each fall. They come from the entire eastern half of North America and converge on this area before crossing the Gulf of Mexico on their journey south. Before leaving their nesting areas each bird builds up an excess of fat which is their migration fuel supply. On arriving in Alabama most of this fat has already been burned, so they must pause here long enough to refuel. Each bird must again store up enough fat sufficient for the trans-gulf flight.

Their flyway is from Mobile to Yuccan, Mexico—a distance of six hundred forty miles. Therefore, each bird must eat far more than its large daily requirement if it is to accumulate excess fat. Now when you multiply each bird's need by hundreds of thousands, it means this area must furnish an enormous food supply.

In the past, this region adequately furnished such needed food. Lately, as our human population increased, we began a reckless clearance of forest lands, undergrowth, and swamps. The result has been a dangerous reduction in food for many bird species, and consequently, an increase in mortality during their trans-gulf migration. What can we do about this? This question brings us to the "Needed Project."

Dauphin Island is approximately the geographic center of this community and greatly flyway. It happens to be both the take-off and the landing area for cross-gulf flights. Therefore, we who are interested in Nature should band together in an effort to establish in this area a Wild Life Refuge.

Coffee Island, which lies between Bayou la Batre, Alabama, and Dauphin Island, is ideally suited as such a sanctuary. Here we could supply food and protection, not only for geese and ducks, but also for non-game birds. In addition, it would afford nesting areas for local shore birds, driven away from our beaches by jeeps and encroaching humanity.

We are happy to report that local hunters, through our Mobile Wildlife and Conservation Society, have already started such a move. But we need your help. Please write your U. S. senators and congressman, urging their support for the Coffee Island Refuge.

Establishment of a Federal Refuge takes time as well as effort. In the meantime, migrating birds must eat. Therefore, we must start a supplementary program for feeding and protecting birdlife until the Coffee Island venture reaches fruition. You can help by scattering in your yard, small grain such as millet, milo or cracked corn. Feeding platforms placed outside your favorite window can be supplied with cracked pecans, bread crumbs and suet. Suet is especially relished by birds, and will be given you free by most butchers. You will be amazed at the pleasure your own feeding station will afford you and your family.

For longer range feeding, you should plant berries and fruit-bearing trees, such as mulberry, cherry-laurel, dogwood, tallow, cedar, and many others. These trees add beauty to your property, while furnishing shelter and food for birds. In conclusion, it is a way you can meet your obligation in restoring Nature's balance as the Great Creator designed this earth. Will you do your part in your neighborhood?

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