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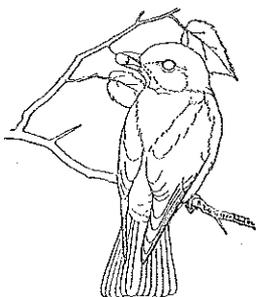
# BLUEBIRD



THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF MISSOURI

Vol. 32, No. 3

Fall 1965



# The Audubon Society of Missouri

Founded 1904

It is the purpose of the Audubon Society of Missouri to further conservation education in all its aspects with particular emphasis on wildlife. This purpose will be implemented by assisting in securing legislative controls, when necessary, the establishment of refuges and in the promotion of habitat improvement. The Audubon Society of Missouri is dedicated to the proposition that only through education can a total conservation consciousness be insured and will constantly try to further this education at all levels.

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# THE BLUEBIRD

Volume 32

Number 3

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## Editor's Comments

It is self evident that we Audubon members are avowed conservationists. And because conservation problems seem to multiply as fast as our exploding population, we are compelled to voice our wishes and our protests ever more often, ever louder. We insist on preservation of a unique natural area, we protest a big dam, we beg funds for endangered species, we criticize indiscriminate uses of insecticides — and so on *ad infinitum*. We dare not escape responsibility to our constantly threatened natural heritage, yet we *can* make ourselves heard more effectively. We can do so by expressing our opinions personally and non-collectively.

What I mean is this: that ten letters from individuals will sway a public servant more than one letter from an organization of a hundred members.

It is fairly easy for an organization to flex the muscles of its collective opinion by having the president write a letter for the membership. But it's not very effective. The legislator or other government official who receives such a letter often reads it as a "rubber-stamp" commitment from a "pressure group," regardless of that group's motivating force. But a letter from an individual — that means a very personal interest verified by the time and effort taken to write in one's own words. Multiply that letter by ten and I reiterate: you then have personal opinion more potent than that of the organization which sends one letter rubber-stamped by the voice of its members.

Come to think of it, there are letters I should write to congressmen of Florida about the Everglades National Park. Though I've never seen the fabulous Everglades and its wildlife, my chances are getting slimmer because it is all drying up in a most unnecessary and rapid way. Peter Farb, in Audubon Magazine (September-October of 1965), explains that we have never yet lost a national park; yet the threat is today growing imminent. Maybe personal letters *will* bend the ears of busy congressmen, even those way off in Florida.

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*Support the Audubon Society of Missouri and have a wonderful weekend — attend the Annual Meeting. Turn to the next page for details.*

# ANNUAL MEETING

The Audubon Society of Missouri

★ ★ ★

Camp Rising Sun

Lake of the Ozarks State Park

October 9 and 10, 1965

★ ★ ★

Lodging and Meals Furnished

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Costs will be \$7.25 per adult and \$3.25 per child. No meals will be served Friday but coffee will be available for those arriving after supper that evening. Reservations are not essential but if you do plan to attend, please submit your intentions to Emerson Finney, 1010 Moreau Drive, Jefferson City, Missouri.

THE BLUEBIRD is the official quarterly publication of the Audubon Society of Missouri. Articles, essays and reports on all phases of natural history and conservation are welcomed and will be printed within limits of space available. Manuscripts should be typed, double-space, on one side of 8½x11 paper. Illustrations should be in the form of glossy prints, 5x7 or larger, or as original drawings. Send articles and other correspondence to the editor: James P. Jackson, 105 Terry Lane, Washington, Mo. 63090.

# A Preliminary Study of A Purple Martin Roost

By Dick Anderson

The following is a preliminary study which will be written more thoroughly next year for possible publication in *The Wilson's Bulletin*.

My interest in martins was stirred two years ago by Mr. J. C. Finlay of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Mr. Finlay was doing a paper on martins and needed nesting information from all over the country. I sent him nesting information from four boxes, but failed to find a roost. However, in early August of 1964, Mitzi and I discovered a continuous line of martins flying along the Missouri River toward the City of St. Charles. We followed the birds into downtown St Charles, where they were gathering on wires by the thousands. I knew from previous experience that this was only a gathering place but assumed the roost was nearby since the sun had already set. Jim Comfort had reported over 10,000 martins gathering at Weldon Springs, but they flew off toward the river in the late afternoon.

I returned to St. Charles on August 8 to find the roost. It took until dark to find where the roost was located. By then I saw the fantastic sight of martins pouring into trees by the thousands. I returned to the roost site again on August 10 at 7:00 p.m. C.D.T. The actual roost was a large group of black willows (*salix nigra*) on the river bank at the end of the water intake for the City Water Works. By 7:15 p.m. a few martins drifted into the area. By 7:30 I counted only 300 birds in the air, but more may have been on the wires in town. I retreated some 400 yards from the roost to get a better idea of new arrivals. At 7:40 there was a continuous flight of martins arriving at the roost area. I then counted for one minute out of every five to get an idea of numbers and at that time there were 19 per minute. At 7:45 it was 30 per minute; at 7:50, 80 per minute; and at 7:55, 100 per minute. Sundown occurred about 7:55. At 8:00 the rate had increased to 130 per minute and by 8:05 at least 200 per minute. The rate increased so sharply that by 8:10 I could only estimate at 1,000 to 1,200 per minute. A few were now landing in the trees; it was getting dark. The birds filled the air as far as I could see through my 12X glasses. At 8:20 the birds were dropping into the trees like a huge black hail storm. New arrivals were estimated at more than 2,000 per minute. At 8:25 it was the same. By 8:30 it was very dark, but I could still see, against the western sky, that a few martins were still arriving. I estimated the total number at about 100,000 birds.

A few days later a sharp cold front passed and the roost was reduced to about 10,000 birds. That night, after dark, I heard martins calling as

some apparently left the roost and flew due south. By August 22 I counted only 900 martins in the air, and only 100 landed in the roost. By September 1 there were no martins using the roost.

This year my first visit was July 10. About 30,000 birds were using the roost, so I could see I started my observation much too late the year before. I visited the roost area at least once a week and was determined to have other birders see the sight. It is impossible to put this sight down on paper; it has to be seen to be believed. On August 3 I visited the roost with Bertha and Joel Massie and Kay Wahl. The number that evening was about 90,000. I returned to the area again on August 9 with 14 St. Louis birders. The number ran over 100,000 that evening. The arrivals stopped before it was completely dark. Kay Stewart returned from summer school on August 13 and we visited the roost that evening. This was apparently the peak of the year, as an estimated 130,000 birds were using the roost. Birds that night were still diving into the roost when it was quite dark.

We noticed this year that the martins gathered not only on wires, but in branches on large dead trees. On very warm days the birds seemed well fed and content to rest on wires and in trees. On cooler evenings more birds kept to the air feeding over the city and even more over the river. After sunset, most of the birds took to the air and started to circle the roost trees. A few at a time would then land. Then two patterns would develop. One large group would circle low over the trees. They would fly clockwise and then reverse and fly counter-clockwise. At each rotation a hundred or so would drop into the trees. A much larger group of birds milled high in the air. At every opportunity these birds would dive straight down into the trees. This, put together with a milling group of birds a mile in length, made quite a sight. After the birds were settled in the trees, there was a sound that could best be described as sounding like a waterfall.

There were evenings when various species of blackbirds settled in the willows. Later, when the martins increased in numbers, the blackbirds left. They seemed to leave of their own accord, as no squabbles were witnessed. It seems the sheer numbers were enough to convince them to seek other quarters.

On August 13 of this year approximately 200 barn swallows were circling the area, but it was not known if they used the same roost. On several occasions the Missouri River rose to where the trees were standing in six feet of water, but this had no apparent effect on the birds. Each year after the roost season was over, I walked into the roost area. Not a single fatality was found.

Next year I hope to make a study for the complete year, starting in March. I also hope somehow to visit the roost early enough in the morning to witness the birds' departure.

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Bring some guests with you to the ANNUAL MEETING. Let them find out for themselves how worthwhile it is to be a member of The Audubon Society of Missouri.

# TEXAS-SIZE BIRDING

By *John L. Hamilton*

*(Continued from the last issue)*

On Sunday the 26th, and for the following two days, Julie and I birded the deservedly famous coastal areas and wooded and grassy interior habitats around Rockport. As our daily lists swelled over 100, I will mention only the more interesting individual species and the general family groups that appeared most prominent. The chief among these, of course, was the shore birds. Abundantly represented from American Oystercatchers through Black-necked Stilts. New to us were the Oystercatchers and Long-billed Curlews which we found in groups of up to fifty. Altogether some twenty-seven species of this group were sighted, Dunlins and Willets being the most numerous. Close behind them came the Gulls, Terns, Ducks and Waders peculiar to the shore line and many scattered ponds just back from the coast. New species in these groups to us were Mottled Duck, Sandwich Tern, Olivaceous Cormorant, White-faced Ibis (which, incidentally, at this season of the year displayed no white at the base of the bill whatever), and Cinnamon Teal. The various land and perching birds were reported by the local people in short supply at the time of our visit, although it seemed ample to us. A sustained drouth of several years had dried up many of the small fresh water ponds scattered through the area and this had its bad effect on migration of such species. Still we were able to locate the following new birds: Canada Warbler, Seaside Sparrow, Cassin's Sparrow (seen sky-larking to lovely effect in desert country behind Rockport), Cactus Wren, Bullock's Oriole and Ladder-backed Woodpecker.

We left with regret the Rockport Cottages and recommend them heartily to all bird-watchers who will find themselves in good company here (mailing address, P. O. Box 844, Rockport, Texas). It might be mentioned that Rockport is a good base for exploring Aransas National Wildlife Refuge where we found our first Caracara and Black Vultures, but arrived a week too late to see the Whooping Cranes before their departure for their breeding grounds.

Starting south before noon on the 28th, we took the coastal road down Mustang Island. This sandy and forbidding desert area supports thorn brush, and very little else. Fresh water was scarce and outside of an interesting shore bird display along the beaches the only other birds to be seen were at the occasional concrete cattle watering troughs. At one of these we saw Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and a Baltimore Oriole, all drinking together.

Leaving Mustang Island we traveled inland on Farm Road 70 to Kingsville, thence straight south across the vast expanse of the King Ranch to

Harlingen. On the way we observed both Vultures and Red-tailed, Swainsons, White-tailed and Harris' Hawks hunting high over the parched countryside. We also had the opportunity to watch an adult Harris' Hawk on a telephone pole at close range. This bird is unquestionably one of the handsomest members of its family with rich rufous shoulders and "trousers" and its contrastingly marked tail.

Actually, according to Dr. Kincaid, we should have timed our trip to spend the night at Kingsville and then travel south very early across the King Ranch area. This we would recommend as good advice, both to avoid the intense heat of mid-day and to increase the sighting possibilities.

As we approached Raymondville we began to see our first White-winged Doves and just east of there on a side-trip over Texas 186, we discovered Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, Tropical Kingbirds, Curve-billed Thrashers and Botteri's Sparrow. It should be mentioned that this area between Raymondville and Port Mansfield constitutes one of the three virgin scrub areas left in south Texas (the other two being Santa Ana Refuge and Bentsen State Park), which has otherwise been almost completely transformed by the truck and citrus gardening industry.

The following day, April 29th, we drove from Harlingen to McAllen by way of Laguna Atascosa and Brownsville. Despite our poor success in Brownsville I still would recommend checking the Brownsville Country Club and the Fish Hatchery. The gardens and trees surrounding the Sun Valley Tourist Court should also be checked for the Buff-bellied Hummingbird and Yellow-Green Vireo, although we unfortunately missed both birds there. Laguna Atascosa we found in poor season for birds, but it is a fascinating area, wild and desertlike, roamed by Brahma cattle which seldom see humans. Black-throated Sparrows abounded in the desert country, singing from the cactus and scrub. For unusual water birds we located a pair of Least Grebes in a small pond behind the manager's house, and a flock of four Black-bellied Tree Ducks that flew over us, lighting on one of the large lagoons. These incongruous birds, gangly and slow in the air, are strikingly beautiful on land with their rich body coloration and fluorescent pink bills and legs (much brighter than shown in the field guides).

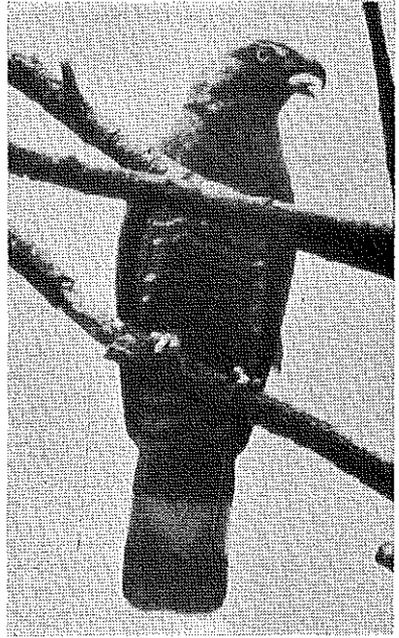
For the following two and half days then, which surely is the minimum amount of time that should be allowed, we explored the Santa Ana Refuge, staying in McAllen, a pleasant and modern city and the closest of any size to the Refuge. Santa Ana, which has the Rio Grande as its south border is one of the most incredible birding areas in the United States. With its fresh-water lakes and tropical forest areas, it acts as a haven for wildlife of all descriptions and here and at nearby Bentsen State Park, the greatest numbers of Mexican species from across the river occur.

We found, among many other birds, the following: Jacana, Chachalaca, Kiskadee Flycatcher, Weid's Crested Flycatcher, Green Jay, Hooded Oriole, Lichtenstein's Oriole, White-fronted Dove, Western Wood Pewee, Long-billed Thrasher, Black-headed Oriole, White-collared Seedeater and Olive Sparrow.

In addition to these interesting species, many of them confined almost entirely to these areas, as far as their United States range goes, we were fortunate enough to identify a nesting pair of HOOK-BILLED KITES, a species

never before seen in the United States, or even very close to its borders, so far as we have been able to determine! These Kites were first seen early the morning of May 1st by Raymond J. Fleetwood, manager of Santa Ana. Realizing their puzzling characteristics, he described the birds briefly to us and gave us directions to the area along the Rio Grande where he first observed them. We then found and photographed the birds by following his directions, obtaining a total of nine colored slides of both the male and female which, so far as we know, are the only photographs ever taken of this rare and local species.

The two birds were markedly different in their general body coloring as is so often the case in Hawks, with the male bird predominately a slate gray color and the female brownish-gray. Both birds shared an unusual head pattern which brought to mind the phrase "a parrot-headed hawk." Starting in front of the eye and tapering out over it in the shape of an eyebrow mark was an orange-yellow patch. The strongly hooked upper mandible from the nostril back was tinged with lemon-yellow, and the skin in front of the eye and between the yellow patches showed a faint chartreuse. Fortunately all this detail showed up perfectly in our photographs, which established this as a new United States species.



*The Hook-billed Kite, a species never before seen in the United States.* (Photo by the author)

Two days later downy young were found in a nest close to the sighting area by Raymond Fleetwood, establishing this exciting find as a nesting record also. (Full details of the sighting will be published shortly, along with photographs of both birds, in a forthcoming issue of *The Auk*.)

Surprisingly enough, since this species shows such marked individual variations in color and markings, the study skins we observed on our return in the Museum of Natural History at Lawrence, Kansas, were almost identical to the Santa Ana birds. To give an indication of the rarity of this species, Edgar Kincaid, whom we called the evening of the first to report this sighting, stated that he had undoubtedly set some sort of a record in Mexico by the identification of 500 species in that country within a period of fifty days, and yet had never seen a Hook-billed Kite, on this or any other of his Mexican trips. Coming, as this does, from the leading authority on Mexican birds in the state of Texas, it indicates the sense of delighted disbelief we felt over our marvelous fortune.

Bursting with our good news, but determined to keep it secret in the interest of not further disturbing these birds, we travelled the following day

to Bentsen State Park near Mission, Texas. Here we were permitted to stay on the area by the manager, Lube McCannell, and made arrangements to go with him in the morning on his Area Spring Birdcount. At sunset that first evening, followed by Manager McConnell's instructions, we found a tiny Elf Owl which had made its home in a Woodpecker hole in a telephone pole near our cabin. This diminutive creature popped its head from the hole just as we were ready to abandon our watch, swivelled it rapidly from side to side in the manner of more normally sized owls, and then abruptly flew off into the night. This was the biggest surprise of all, for the head, small as it was, still seemed the biggest part of the bird, which was over-all no larger than a tree sparrow.

On spring count morning (May 3rd) with Lube McConnell, the species of particular interest to us were Scaled Quail, Groove-billed Ani, Pauraque, Cassin's Kingbird, Pyrrhuloxia and Lark Bunting. Many of these birds were found in sandy desert areas immediately outside of the park. Since this same desert habitat also supports a dense rattlesnake population, extreme care is advised.

The following day, May 4th, marked the end of active birding on this fruitful and exciting trip and the beginning of the long drive home. Plans for Big Bend and South Central Texas had to be abandoned, but remain for future exploration in seasons to come. Thoughts of Hook-billed Kites and our other less exceptional sightings occupied our return, along with the genuine agony of suspense over whether our pictures would develop. To our immense relief they did, bringing all our efforts to fruition and overcoming any feelings of disappointment we might have had over species we missed and areas which we lacked the time to visit.

As a possible aid to our readers we would like to mention the publications that we found most helpful in this area: Pettingill's *A Guide to Bird Finding West of the Mississippi*, Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*, Peterson's *A Field Guide to Western Birds* and Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds of Texas*. This last is an excellent book, originally commissioned by the Texas Fish and Game Commission but no longer available through them. It can now be obtained by writing direct to the publishers, Houghton-Mifflin Company, Cambridge, Boston, Massachusetts.

Also of great help were the bird listings published by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the three national wildlife refuges visited. Listings for Laguna Atascosa and Santa Ana may be obtained by writing to the joint headquarters at P. O. Box 739, San Benito, Texas. The Aransas listing may be obtained from Refuge Headquarters, P. O. Box 68, Austwell, Texas.

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PLEASE, *please* notify our able secretary, Alberta Bolinger, 5079 Waterman Avenue, St. Louis, when you have a change of address. It will save us a few cents but more important, it will assure that you will receive THE BLUEBIRD.

# IMPRESSIONS OF REELFOOT LAKE

*By James P. Jackson*

During June of this year I spent four days exploring and learning about Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee, located just across the Mississippi River from Portageville, Missouri. Though it wasn't my first visit, it was far more satisfying than several earlier and rather hurried trips. In those four days I visited with Tennessee game management agents, Fish and Wildlife Service personnel and a number of old-time residents. Better yet, I devoted many hours to hiking the swamp woodlands and exploring the lake in my small canoe. One day I paddled over 15 miles.

Reelfoot Lake was formed by earthquakes which rocked northwestern Tennessee and surrounding regions some 150 years ago. As a swampland it is not nearly as large as some, say Okefenokee of Georgia, but it has similar somber groves of cypress (though without Spanish moss), large acreages of cutgrass and is surrounded by a substantial buffer of bottomland forest. It may not be attractive to some people, especially in the heat of summer, but it is ideally suited for a large variety of wildlife.

The earthquakes occurred throughout the winter of 1811 and 1812 and there are many accounts written of them. Of significance to us were their permanent effects on the land. They caused some twenty-thousand acres to settle ten to twenty feet below the level of surrounding forests. Thus a large, uniformly shallow lake was born.

None of this, of course, explains how Reelfoot Lake got its name. Actually it originated from a nebulous Indian legend which, as usual, is subject to some variations. "Reelfoot," the son of a Chickasaw Chief, was clubfooted and somehow reeled a little when he walked. He supposedly stirred up the wrath of jealous gods by kidnapping the lovely daughter of a neighboring Choctaw chieftain. The outcome of all this was a series of cataclysms which caused collapse of the Chickasaw homeland and swallowed "Reelfoot" in a vast, swampy lake.

Evidence of the lake's true origin is still present in the form of thousands of submerged stumps, all of them from ancient baldcypress trees. Lake formation no doubt killed most trees within a year or two after the earthquakes. But cypress, which grows quite well in shallow water, continued to thrive for many years. When finally they did die, their peculiarly rot-resistant stumps remained as a shelter for fishes and a hazard to fishermen and their boats. Contrary to some opinions, the many picturesque cypress trees which now grow in Reelfoot Lake do not antedate its origin; they had their start during drought years when water levels dropped enough to permit growth of seedlings on mudflats.

Reelfoot Lake has always attracted naturalists, especially for its large variety of plant and bird life. A research biological station once operated near its upper end; its one large frame building is now dilapidated but occasionally, in summer, it still harbors a few students of the swampland.

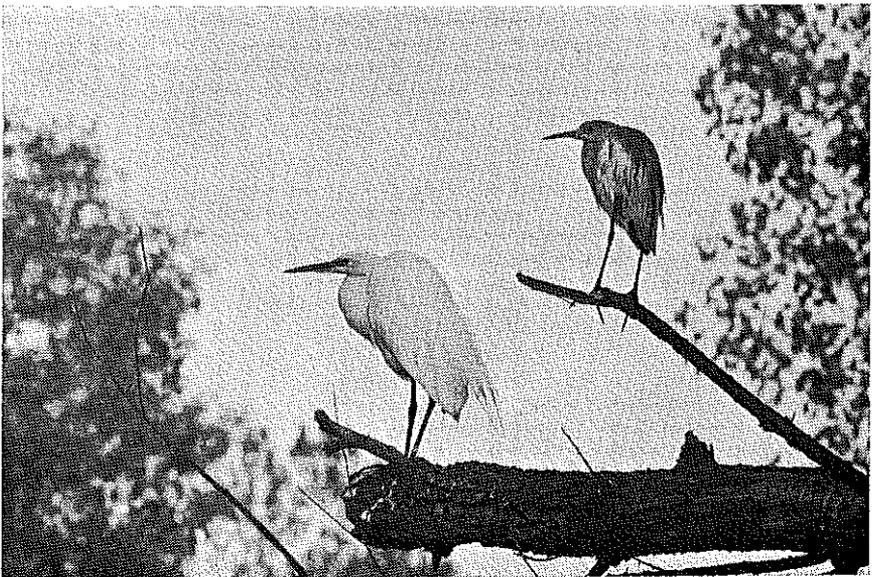
Perhaps the most famous attraction of the lake in years past was "crane-town." It was a rookery of great blue herons, common egrets, cormorants, anhingas — they nested there by the thousands. Its location was such that it could be reached only by boat, winding along a tortuous bayou through dense forest. A stranger to the area would get lost seeking it alone. However,

guides were available and for a fee would take interested sightseers to the secluded spot. This grew to be quite a business among Reelfoot Lake guides until the rookery was completely abandoned by the birds several years ago.

Human beings were undoubtedly responsible for the abandonment. Local people speculated for some years that too many rookery watchers might disturb the birds which, after all, must have had good reason to set up housekeeping in a remote place. Gradually the nesters began to decrease in number. A final blow to their privacy occurred when a Hollywood motion picture company moved into the rookery area to work on a film spectacular. In order to get their heavy equipment on location, the company secured large boats and, in places, had to blast out stumps and logs from the tortuous bayou. "Cranetown" became deserted soon after.

Though all of Reelfoot Lake is state-owned, some 9,000 acres of it is under 75 year lease to the federal government as the Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge manager, John L. DeLime, informed me that a small heron rookery is now building up in a densely wooded part of the refuge proper. When I inquired about the possibility of my visiting the site alone, he answered no. Not only is it difficult to reach, he explained, but he vowed to keep it inviolate from any possible disturbances.

Reelfoot Lake, until recently, always harbored a large nesting population of cormorants. Long-time residents tell how years ago hundreds of the birds (known locally as water turkeys) would swim along a united front into a cove, arousing countless fishes into roiling the water in frenzied efforts to escape the trap. Only one pair of cormorants has been seen about the lake during the last two summers; it is believed to be nesting in the small, new rookery. Incidentally, cormorants have noticeably decreased throughout



*A common egret and little blue heron (immature) share a willow snag near Reelfoot Lake*

J. P. Jackson photo



*The Osprey is a regular nester at Reelfoot Lake*

J. P. Jackson photo

the Mississippi valley in migration and Dr. Joseph J. Hickey, of the University of Wisconsin, is now heading a study on cormorant-pesticide relations.

Though I observed two active nests of osprey on Reelfoot Lake during my recent visit, no bald eagles did I see. A minimum of four pairs of eagles had traditionally nested about the lake; but now, refuge manager DeLime states, they are seen only during winter. Whether the influx of fishermen, or pesticides — or both — influenced their demise, no one will ever know.

Fishing for bass, crappie and bluegill has long been a source of recreation revenue to local people. Some of them might secretly welcome a decrease in fish-eating birds; after all, they would whisper, the rascals do eat lots of fish. Yet research teaches us that the checks and balances which nature imposes invariably benefit *all* wildlife. Reelfoot Lake might be a case in point.

During recent years fishermen have complained that, though their luck continues good, the sizes of their quarry have decreased. The average size of crappie caught have indeed, according to creel censuses, dropped from nine to four ounces in about eight years. The Tennessee Fish and Game Commission, which studies such things, blames this on the only factor for which they have evidence: that by putting an end to commercial netting of crappie back in 1955, they permitted the species to overpopulate. Yet their biologists consider that the disappearance of cormorants and the decrease of other fish-eating birds must surely have played a part in this drama. One thing seems clear: the subtle warnings of imbalance, with overtones from agricultural pesticides, seem now to invade all realms of wildlife.

One large bird has nevertheless increased its use of Reelfoot Lake. That is the Canada goose which, many years ago, rested in migration on the lake until market hunters put themselves out of business. Flocks of Canadas now

move south to Reelfoot Lake every autumn, in ever-increasing numbers, to remain until northern nesting grounds beckon again in the spring.

The state-owned portion of Reelfoot Lake is a popular waterfowl hunting grounds and the annual harvest of Canada geese is increasing. This in itself is not bad, although at other places, notably Missouri's Swan Lake area, the hunting methods are considered by many to be artificial and quite unsporting. The wintering population of Canadas has increased from 12,500 ten years ago to 30,000 during the winter of 1964-65. The projected goal, a few years hence, is to have 50,000 of the noble honkers finding winter refuge on or about the lake.

Seeking out the smaller birds of Reelfoot Lake can be a richly rewarding experience. Some species are difficult to observe, to be sure. In three days of paddling its pools and channels, I saw one purple gallinule, though both types (the purple and the Florida) are regular nesters. They inhabit extensive patches of pickerelweed, a showy emergent which is a nuisance to fishermen for the way it chokes up the boat channels. Least bitterns were often visible as they made short, labored flights over clumps of cattails or dense growths of giant cutgrass. Incidentally, for days after my wanderings, I had scars on my hands from having learned how cutgrass got its name.

Other interesting birds I saw about the lake were Mississippi Kite, Swainson's warbler and yellow-crowned herons. Anhingas were not to be seen; refuge manager DeLime told me that they have not nested there in the four years since he moved up from a refuge in Louisiana.

To me a gratifying experience was seeing large numbers of wood ducks. Though it was a little early in the season to see many ducklings, the adult pairs were quite evident. My canoe must have glided past many old tree snags with occupied woody nest. In 1964 the federal refuge personnel banded some 2000 wood ducks; 80 percent were juveniles, a most encouraging sign of nesting success.

The dense swamp woodlands of cypress, gum, oak and sycamore around Reelfoot Lake have all been logged off in the past. Yet a few narrow, low ridges within the lake still contain massive old growth cypress trees. In the top of one I spotted the sadly neglected aerie of a former resident bald eagle.

The state and federal managers of Reelfoot Lake are presently doing some selective cutting of trees, on contract to a local sawmill. They are not cutting oaks, for the acorns are a good source of food for ducks, deer, and also a few wild turkeys which have been planted in the area. Of interest here is that local people have developed such pride in their swampland oasis that some are quite bitter about the logging. Another thorn of local discontent is the fact that the eastern portion of the lake is subject to considerable siltation; this results from decades of badly erosive farming on a range of hills which drain directly into the lake. There is at present a belated plan to institute a comprehensive soil conservation project in those long-abused hills.

Thus, like all wildlife oases, Reelfoot Lake is subject to encroachments from civilization. Even the fishermen who harmlessly putt-putt about the waters are prone to leave their marks on the scenery -- beer can glinting in the sunlight. Yet the swampland, in spite of subtle changes, continues to be a fascinating wildlife environment. Of one thing I am sure, my recent visit to Reelfoot Lake will not be my last one if I can help it.

# Summer Survey -- June 1 to August 15

Compiled by Richard Anderson

1147 Grenshaw Dr., St. Louis, Mo. 63137

In contrast to a hot May, June and most of July were below normal in temperature. Late July and the first half of August were mostly above normal in temperature. Precipitation varied considerably. Record rains occurred in northwestern Missouri during early July. These formed many potholes and filled ponds, thus returning shorebirds were scattered with no concentrations. At St. Louis scattered showers held off an actual drought. The result here was mud flats dried up and not only were there no shorebird concentrations but hardly any shorebirds at all.

Highlights of this report include a study of a heronry at Bertrand by Paul Heye, a poor-will in eastern Missouri, a specimen fish crow from southeastern Missouri and an evening grosbeak.

*Pelicans and Anhinga*—A surprising number of 35 white pelicans were at Squaw Creek June 13 with four staying until June 27 (F.L.). Jim Haw sent a report of a small anhinga colony at Big Lake National Refuge near Manila, Arkansas. Since this is just across the state line, it gives hope of future Missouri sightings.

*Hérons*—Most herons were listed as scarce by many observers. The most interesting news comes from the Bertrand heronry in southeast Missouri. A census by Paul Heye revealed 4,115 nests of five species. The most numerous species is the little blue, but also includes snowy and cattle egrets. With help from Jim Haw, Paul banded 80 young little blues, two common and two snowy egrets. Great blues were uncommon in southeastern Missouri (J.H.), at Kansas City (T.A.) and at St. Joseph (F.L.). Nineteen immature little blues first appeared at Squaw Creek on July 25 (F.L.). Little blues were fairly common on the St. Louis levees until a drying condition sent them elsewhere. The flamingo at Squaw Creek stayed four weeks from May 13 to June 11.

*Waterfowl*—A few geese stayed at Squaw Creek until July rains moved them on. One hundred fifty mallards were noted at Squaw Creek on August 15. Late non-breeders in June included pintail, gadwall, American widgeon, blue-winged teal, shoveller and scaup (F.L.). Wood ducks nested at Lake Quivera and Camp Towanyak (Myers). Nesting success was unsure and banding operations at Swan Lake, Illinois, were curtailed due to spring floods (S.V.). Both teals had returned to Swan Lake, Illinois, by early August, well ahead of the September hunting season (S.V.). John Hamilton reports a male scaup was present near St. Joseph until July 11. An early ruddy was seen at Squaw Creek on July 25 (F.L.).

*Hawks*—Strangely, the only hawks mentioned in reports were Mississippi kites. A pair was apparently successful nesting on the Illinois levees just south of St. Louis and two young were noted in early August. One kite was seen north of Charleston at Big Lake in July (J.H.). Another kite was noted in June near Big Oak Tree State Park (D.E.).

*Shorebirds*—Late shorebirds in early June were noted in St. Charles County by John Willetts. They included 30 white rumped sandpipers, Baird's, pectorals and 100 semi-palmated sandpipers. Late birds at Squaw Creek included golden plover, 75 white-rumped sandpipers and two sanderlings on June 6 (F.L.). A very late white-rumped sandpiper and a northern phalarope in breeding plumage were seen on June 27. By early August most common species had returned to Squaw Creek (F.L.). After spring flooding in the St. Louis area, August shorebirding was a huge disappointment. Mud flats dried quickly and habitat disappeared. Of note were three sanderlings, five stilt sandpipers and a Wilson's phalarope on July 25 at Grand Marais State Park in East St. Louis, Illinois, by Kathryn Arhos. Stilt sandpipers were above normal in late July at St. Louis. A lone buff-breasted sandpiper found by Earl Comfort's group on August 13 on the levees was enjoyed by more birders on August 14.

*Terns through Woodpeckers*—A few least terns were noted during the summer at St. Louis and near Charleston on August 8 (J.H.), but high water evidently lowered the nesting success. Thirteen Caspian terns wandered into Squaw Creek on June 27 (F.L.) and one Franklin's gull lingered until July 18 (F.L.). After a late start, black-billed cuckoos were up at St. Joseph (F.L.). A roadrunner was seen in Barry County near Eagle Rock on July 5 by the Devers. Irving Fay reports more roadrunners in the Springfield area. A new record for the St. Louis area was a poor-will heard near Pevely, Missouri, by the Hath and Miller families. Nighthawks were down in the Charleston area (J.H.). Red-headed woodpeckers were holding their own and continued to increase in southeastern Missouri (J.H.).

*Passeriformes*—Western kingbirds continue to increase at St. Joseph. Lawhon reports as many as 25 adults were seen in one day. Scissor-tailed flycatchers should apparently be watched for on golf courses, at least in southwestern Missouri. Irving Fay reports golfers at Springfield frequently see them and a group was seen at the Joplin Golf course (Mrs. Devers). Irving Fay also had them at his home at Ozark, Missouri. Traill's flycatchers again nested at Honey Creek (F.L.) and near Kansas City (T.A.). Swallow concentrations were noted earlier than usual and in greater numbers at Squaw Creek (F.L.). A swallow flock of over 10,000 birds was noted at Big Lake in southeastern Missouri on July 11 (J.H.). The purple martin roost at St. Charles was observed by many birders this year. A group of 30,000 birds was noted on July 10 and increased to a minimum of 130,000 on August 14 (D.A. et al).

At last, thanks to Dave Easterla, Missouri has a specimen of a fish crow. An adult male (testes 16x12 mm) was collected at Big Oak Tree State Park on June 9. Sight records continue at St. Joseph, but a specimen is needed. Carolina wrens were scarce at St. Joseph, but up at Charleston. Short-billed marsh wrens began singing in the Salem area on July 29. One was seen biting off blades of dead grass and carrying them into a thick grassy area. Fifty of them were found near Squaw Creek on August 15 (F.L.). A cedar waxwing apparently nested at St. Joseph this year (F.L.). Nine species of warblers bred at Honey Creek Wildlife Area and at least 11 species at Big Oak. The Big Oak group included Swainson's warbler. A pine warbler was noted breeding at Roaring River State Park. The only warbler movement was reported by David Plank. Following the cold front of August 19, Dave heard warblers overhead from midnight until after day-

light; this was the night of August 19-20. Western meadowlarks were common breeders at Trimble and the bottom lands at St. Joseph. Yellow-headed blackbirds nested at Lake Contrary, but were down in numbers. Blue grosbeaks were more numerous to most observers. Probably the most unusual sighting of the summer was that of an evening grosbeak. A male was found four miles east of Independence, Missouri, on June 13. The sighting was made by Jim Mitchell, a graduate student at the University of Missouri, at Kansas City. Painted buntings were found near Big M Dock on Table Rock Lake by Mr. and Mrs. Louis Crowder. Elizabeth Cole had the pleasure of seeing painted buntings in her yard at Shawnee, Kansas, on two occasions this summer. The first breeding record of the song sparrow was made by Ted Anderson at Wolcott, Kansas.

D. A. — Dick Anderson  
T. A. — Ted Anderson  
E. C. — Earl Comfort  
D. E. — David Easterla

J. H. — Jim Haw  
F. L. — Floyd Lawhon  
D. P. — David Plank  
S. V. — Sally Vasse

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## “WARBLER-ITIS”

I meant to do my work today,  
But a little bird sang across the way.

I grabbed my binoculars and went out to see  
And I found a warbler in the big oak tree.

Now ONE warbler means there just HAS to be more  
So I spend the whole day adding to my score.

The next day I vowed I wouldn't listen at all . . .  
Then suddenly I heard a Blackburnian call.

That was all that it took! I didn't argue with myself,  
The birds would soon be gone, and THEN I'd clean that shelf!

Day after day, all through the month of May  
Housework piled up and the dust was here to stay!

The meals were sketchy; I'd forget to buy bread  
As visions of warblers danced through my head!

The woodland now is silent, the warblers all gone.  
STILL my ears are tuned for just one last song.

Well, it's all over now, and I'm feeling rather sad,  
But my house and my family are feeling mighty glad!

Mary Louise Myers

# THE LOST BIRDS OF FALL, 1964

A long time ago, almost a year ago in fact, Dick Anderson submitted his Fall Survey, 1964, to THE BLUEBIRD for publication. Somehow, in the usual shuffle of papers, an important page of that survey was misplaced. Your present editor wouldn't dare blame anyone for this goof, mainly because he also misplaced the elusive page in his own shuffling of papers. Now it has been found. The missing loons, herons and ibises hereby migrate back from oblivion.

*Loons through Cormorants*—Fall common loons were more commonly reported than last year. Dates included one at Little Dixie near Columbia on Nov. 6 by Dr. Goodge, one at Busch Wildlife on Nov. 19 (Laffey), two at Fellows Lake at Springfield on Nov. 14 and Nov. 28 (I.F.), three at Lake of the Ozarks on Nov. 27-28 (D.E.) and two at Wyandotte Lake on Nov. 8 (D.E.).

The big loon news, of course, is the ARCTIC LOONS. *Eight* were first found on Lake of the Ozarks on Nov. 27 by David Easterla. Dave studied the birds for several hours at close range and was fortunate enough to have three common loons at the same time for comparison. All eight Arctic loon apparently were first-year birds as the scaly appearance of the back was obvious. At least five stayed over to Nov. 28 and two were still present on Nov. 29. The two birds of Nov. 29 were also seen by Kay Wahl, Joel and Bertha Massie and Mitzi and Dick Anderson. This observation was made at close range through a 60x Bausch and Lomb zoom scope. The shape of the bill as well as the light-tipped back feathers were clearly seen. This represents a new Missouri record.

Horned grebes were about normal except for the very high count of 25 at Lake of the Ozarks on Nov. 27-28 (D.E.). The only eared grebe was one at Wyco Lake on Oct. 17 (Bart). While pelicans were normal at Squaw Creek. Up to three were present at Gilbert Lake, Illinois, from Oct. 1 to Oct. 24 (S.V.). Cormorants increased again this fall at St. Louis with as many as 75 seen on Oct. 31 (S.H.).

*Herons and Ibises*—Lack of moisture probably held down large heron counts. Great blues were about normal, but were up considerably from last year at Washington, Missouri. Green herons were seen in unusually high numbers at Gilbert Lake (S.V. et al) and about 25 juveniles were reported from Washington, Missouri (D.H.). Most common egrets were pushed south by early cold fronts. None stayed into November as they did last year. A glossy ibis was found near Swan Lake, Illinois, on Oct. 1 by Sally Vasse. Not only is this a very rare bird, but an extremely late date and represents our only fall record. Another ibis rarity was the sighting of two first-year white ibises at Duck Creek on Aug. 29 (S.H. et al).

D. E. — David Easterla  
I. F. — Irving Fay  
D. H. — Don Hays

S. H. — Steve Hanselmann  
S. V. — Sally Vasse