## 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.

The fall of 1954-55 was dry, so that the lakes and ponds were shallow. Much rain fell in the spring of 1955 making roads to Lakeland Farm almost impassable. The fall of 1955-56 was wet, and grass was high at the Fish Hatchery and Lakeland Farm. In the spring the lakes were quite full at Lakeland Farm. Ponds and lakes were very low in the fall of 1956-57, leaving large mud flats. Since January of 1957, the lakes have been at a very high level, due to the great amount of rain during the spring.

The effect of the conditions on the waterbird populations can be seen in the following table comparing the Fish Hatchery and Lakeland Farm.

In summary, I found that herons including egrets and bitterns are about equally common at both areas. No mass predation on fish at the hatchery was evident. Food studies furnish the answer; herons eat many other aquatic animals such as frogs, reptiles, crawfish, and insects.

As expected, dabbling ducks are most abundant on shallow hatchery ponds while diving ducks preferred the deeper Lakeland Farm ponds, in spite of hunting pressure.

Available mudflats definitely attracted more shorebirds to the hatchery although Lakeland Farm furnished a reasonable amount of observations.

Indications are that the hatchery is preferred by gulls and terns, but not enough records are available to make this a definite statement.

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TABLE 1 COMPARISON OF WATERBIRDS AT U. S. FISH HATCHERY AND LAKELAND FARM

| Species | Locality | Season | Fish Hatchery No. of Records | Fish Hatchery Most Seen | Fish Hatchery Date | Lakeland Farm No. of Records | Lakeland Farm Most Seen | Lakeland Farm Date | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Common Loon | F | FT | 1 | 1 | Nov. 18, 56 | | | | |
| Horned Grebe | L | WV | | | | 2 | 2 | Feb. 16, 57 | |
| Pied-billed Grebe | — | PR | 40 | 25 | Sept. 22, 55 | 35 | 56 | Oct. 27, 56 | Greatest number found in fall. |
| Double-crested Cormorant | — | S & FT | 3 | 3 | April 20, 56 | 4 | 1 | Oct. 23, 55 | One winter record for Fish Hatchery Dec. 22, 56. |
| Great Blue Heron | — | PR | 31 | 4 | Feb. 27, 55 | 32 | 8 | Dec. 12, 54 | Shot at Fish Hatchery. |
| American Egret | L | SFW | 12 | 10 | Oct. 13, 56 | 27 | 25 | Oct. 9, 54 | |
| Little Blue Heron | F | SF | 11 | 25<br>38 | May 20, 56<br>Sept. 15, 56 | 4 | 8 | Sept. 16, 56 | Probably breeds near by, number of immature seen in May. |
| Green Heron | F | Mar.-Oct. | 13 | 6 | May 5, 56 | 8 | 7 | May 24, 56 | Breeds. |
| Black-crowned Night Heron | F | WV | 2 | 2<br>1 | Dec. 27, 56<br>Dec. 31, 56 | | | | |
| Yellow-crowned Night Heron | L | FW | 1 | 1 | Nov. 1, 56 | 3 | 1 | Jan.-Sept.-Oct. | |
| American Bittern | L | F | 1 | 1 | Sept. 29, 55 | | | | |
| Least Bittern | F | S | 2 | 1 | May 1 & 5, 56 | | | | In same locality both times. |
| Wood Ibis | — | SuF | 3 | 19 | Oct. 3, 54 | 4 | 15 | Oct. 27, 56 | 2 Nov. 1, 56, at Fish Hatchery latest for state. |
| White Ibis | F | | | | | 1 | 4 | Sept. 22, 56 | Immature. |
| Canada Goose | F | F | 1 | 2 | Oct. 1954 | | | | |
| Blue Goose | L | F | | | | 1 | 2 | Nov. 10, 56 | 1 immature, 1 adult. |
| Mallard | F | SFWR | 23 | 350 | Nov. 30, 56 | 7 | 135 | Nov. 16, 56 | 1 late male at Fish Hatchery June 1, 56. |
| Black Duck | F | WR | 5 | 15 | Nov. 30, 56<br>Dec. 31, 57 | | | | |
| Gadwall | F | SFW | 12 | 34 | Jan. 26, 57 | 8 | 25 | Oct. 16, 54<br>Oct. 23, 55 | Winter resident. |
| Pintail | F | WR | 12 | 30 | Feb. 4, 56 | 1 | 1 | Feb. 16, 57 | |
| Green-winged Teal | F | Nov.-Feb. | 14 | 150 | Jan. 8, 56 | 4 | 15 | Nov. 16, 56 | Winter resident at Fish Hatchery. |
| Blue-winged Teal | F | Sept.-May | 24 | 75 | Sept. 25, 56 | 14 | 25 | Sept. 16, 56 | |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

| Species | Locality | Season | Fish Hatchery No. of Records | Fish Hatchery Most Seen | Fish Hatchery Date | Lakeland Farm No. of Records | Lakeland Farm Most Seen | Lakeland Farm Date | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| American Widgeon | — | Oct.-Mar. | 12 | 60 | Nov. 30, 56 | 14 | 125 | Feb. 11, 56<br>Feb. 17, 56 | Winter resident at Fish Hatchery. |
| Shoveller | — | WV | 6 | 10 | Mar. 4, 56 | 5 | 11 | Feb. 16, 57 | |
| Wood Duck | F | SF | 7 | 16 | Oct. 20, 56 | | | | Breeds. 3 ducklings May 20, 56 |
| Redhead | F | FWV | 5 | 10 | Jan. 2, 55 | 2 | 2 | Nov. 5, 55 | |
| Ring-necked Duck | — | Sept.-April | 20 | 150 | Dec. 12, 54 | 20 | 250 | Jan. 2, 55 | |
| Canvas-back | L | FWV | 1 | 5 | Jan. 26, 57 | 5 | 6 | Nov. 12, 54 | Nov.-Jan. at Lakeland Farm. |
| Lesser Scaup | L | Nov.-April | 5 | 12 | Nov. 13, 55 | 14 | 67 | Mar. 2, 56 | |
| American Goldeneye | L | Nov.-April | 3 | 8 | Dec. 10, 55 | 6 | 4 | Feb. 12, 55 | A single female spent winter of '54-'55 at Lakeland Farm. |
| Bufflehead | L | Dec.-Mar. | | | | 8 | 8 | Mar. 12, 55 | |
| Old Squaw | L | Jan.-Mar. | | | | 2 | 1<br>2 | Jan. 26, 57<br>Mar. 1, 57 | Rare this far south. |
| Ruddy Duck | L | Sept.-May | 1 | 1 | Dec. 10, 55 | 26 | 5 | Dec. 1, 56 | Male spent summer at Lakeland Farm in 1956. |
| Hooded Merganser | — | Oct.-April | 8 | 32 | Dec. 31, 55 | 6 | 3 | Oct. 23, 54 | Found on largest pond at Fish Hatchery. Winter resident at Hatchery. |
| Common Merganser | L | WV | | | | 1 | 1 | Dec. 21, 56 | Rare this far south. |
| Red-breasted Merganser | L | WV | | | | 1 | 5 | Dec. 4, 54 | Rare inland. |
| King Rail | L | Sept.-May | 2 | 1 | Jan. 29, 55<br>Sept. 27, 56 | 3 | 3 | May 24, 56 | Probably permanent resident |
| Virginia Rail | F | Jan.<br>Feb.<br>Sept.<br>Nov. | 5 | 2 | Nov. 1, 56 | 2 | 1<br>1 | Feb. 22, 57<br>Mar. 3, 57 | Rare winter resident. |
| Florida Gallinule | — | FV | 2 | 2 | Oct. 15, 55<br>Nov. 13, 55 | 1 | 1 | Sept. 29, 55 | Rare visitor |
| Coot | F | Sept.-May | 40 | 105 | April 20, 56 | 30 | 82 | Oct. 27, 56 | |
| Semipalmated Plover | F | SFT | 3 | 10 | May 17, 56<br>May 20, 56 | | | | |
| Killdeer | — | PR | 43 | 200 | Nov. 1, 56 | 37 | 330 | Feb. 22, 57 | Abundant winter resident. Breeds. |
| Black-bellied Plover | F | FT | 1 | 1 | Oct. 3, 54 | | | | Uncommon inland. |
| Wilson's Snipe | F | Sept.-April | 20 | 275 | Nov. 18, 56 | 17 | 35 | Feb. 8, 57 | Mainly in late fall. |
| Spotted Sandpiper | F | SFT | 4 | 2 | May 5, 56 | 2 | 4 | May 1, 56 | |
| Solitary Sandpiper | F | SFT | 6 | 2 | Feb. 27, 55<br>Oct. 15, 55 | 3 | 10 | Oct. 9, 54 | |
| Greater Yellowlegs | — | SFT | 11 | 7 | Oct. 27, 56 | 9 | 7 | Nov. 10, 56 | |
| Lesser Yellowlegs | L | SFT | 4 | 26 | April 30, 55 | 7 | 12 | Oct. 23, 54 | |
| Willet | F | ST | 1 | 19 | April 30, 55 | | | | Uncommon inland in spring. |
| Pectoral Sandpiper | F | Sept.-Nov., April-May | 12 | 15 | Oct. 15, 56 | 7 | 30 | Sept. 29, 56 | |
| White-rumped Sandpiper | — | SFT | 1 | 2 | May 17, 56 | 2 | 9 | Oct. 16, 54<br>Oct. 23, 54 | Rare |
| Least Sandpiper | F | Sept.-May | 29 | 110 | Feb. 23, 57 | 11 | 42 | Oct. 14, 56 | Winter resident |
| Long-Billed Dowitcher | — | Oct., Feb. | 1 | 2 | Feb. 23, 57 | 1 | 1 | Oct. 14, 56 | |
| Semipalmated Sandpiper | — | SFT | 7 | 30 | Nov. 1, 56 | 7 | 25 | Oct. 9, 54<br>Oct. 27, 56 | |
| Northern Phalarope | L | FT | | | | 1 | 1 | Oct. 9, 54 | Only two other Alabama records. |
| Herring Gull | F | SFT | 2 | 1 | April 5, 56<br>Oct. 27, 56 | | | | Observed only during rain. |
| Ring-billed Gull | F | WV | 3 | 9 | March 26, 55 | 2 | 1 | Feb. 11, 56<br>Dec. 22, 56 | Observed only during rain. |
| Bonapartes Gull | F | WV | 1 | 1 | Dec. 22, 56 | | | | Rare away from Gulf and Tennessee River. |
| Black Tern | — | SFT | 2 | 5 | June 1, 56 | 1 | 1 | Sept. 2, 55 | |

(1) F Fish Hatchery—majority of records.
L Lakeland Farm—majority of records.
— No clear majority of records.

(2) F Fall.
S Spring.
W Winter.

PR Permanent resident.
T Transient.
V Visitor.
Su Summer.