

Ecological Studies at the Audubon Sanctuary at Dauphin Island.

Dan Holliman and a group of students from Birmingham-Southern College visited the Sanctuary on Dauphin Island and made preliminary observations concerning the ecology of food-habitat plots. This wildlife preserve has unlimited possibilities and shows great promise for affording food and resting quarters for migrating birds. Let's all back this worthwhile endeavor and assist Dr. Gaillard in any way that we can. October should give us a full Fall migration and a wonderful place to bird watch with members of our growing Fraternity. Dan C. Holliman, Bham-Southern College, August 25, 1962

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Dauphin Island Sanctuary Status

The Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board is pleased to have an ecological study--relation of food to animal life--made of its Bird Sanctuary by Mr. Dan Holliman of the Birmingham-Southern faculty.

In his preliminary report, Mr. Holliman stated that attracting birdlife within the Sanctuary is "unlimited". That means the more food the more birds.

May we explain that while the Park & Beach Board is interested in the conservation possibilities, its first consideration, as Trustees of this valuable land, is making the Sanctuary area attractive and useful to humans. Fortunately, both wildlife conservation and human benefits can be attained at the same time; because the more colorful birdlife within the Sanctuary becomes, the more people will visit it. Since visitors to Dauphin Island add to the economy of the island - to the motels, restaurants, merchants, etc. - the Park and Beach Board felt justified in creating a bird sanctuary on a trial basis. How long this type use will continue depends on the degree of public interest shown in the Sanctuary. Therefore, we, who are interested in Audubon projects, should publicize its present abundant bird population and, by donating food producing shrubs, add to its phenomenal birdlife potential.

Those who know birds believe Dauphin Island can be made into a world famous Bird Sanctuary!

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Feeding Habits of the Mississippi Kite

During July 1961, 12 hours of a five-day period were spent on the observation of the actions of the Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) on a semi-prairie and meadow area in Montgomery County, Alabama. This area is partially surrounded by two rivers and comprises about 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres). The actual feeding area involved was completely bare of trees.

The study was conducted with three objectives in mind: (1) to determine the type of prey species taken, (2) methods of securing prey, and (3) the amount consumed in a given period of time.

With the aid of field glasses on a clear day, it was possible to attain all three of these objectives rather satisfactorily. The types of prey taken included a species of May Beetle (*Phyllophaga* sp.), Carolina Loquast (*Dissosterra carolina*) and undetermined grasshoppers and dragonflies. Two kites were collected, as well as examples of the prey species other than those contained in the stomachs of the kites. During this particular period, May Beetles were very common and made up a major portion of the diet. Dragonflies and grasshoppers were both common; however, more grasshoppers were taken, probably because of their ease of capture. Many passes made on dragonflies were unsuccessful. The grasshoppers were picked up from the ground and eaten aloft. The beetles and dragonflies were taken and consumed in the air.

The method of attack on dragonflies and beetles was the same. The bird circles in a leisurely way usually about 50 meters (150 feet) to 100 meters in altitude, then stooped in a falcon-like manner, which in all cases indicated prey had been sighted. The angle of the stoop was usually slight (less than 20 degrees) and extended in length from a few meters up to, in one case, over 100 meters. The stoop was occasionally accompanied by a few, quick, short wing strokes or a half barrel-roll, but was usually straight and unaided. In most cases it terminated in a quick, short turn upon contact with the insect. On occasion, a bird was noted to rise on a slight grade in a straight, headlong manner, accompanied by deep, steady wing beats until the prey was overtaken. Several times a beetle was struck and fell and the kite immediately wheeled and caught it in midair. Some of the beetles were flying in copulation when struck by the kite, in which case, one beetle would fly off, apparently unharmed, and less often fall to the earth. At no time was it determined that the kite took both insects on the same pass. Twice single beetles were struck and fell straight to the ground, no attempt being made by the bird to retrieve them. Immediately after the capture of prey, the birds would level off and commence circling and feeding, unless the strike was made low to the ground, in which case altitude

was gained quickly. All prey was eaten while the kites were in flight. Both of the bird's legs may or may not hang down while feeding; however, only one foot was used to hold the insect. The bird's wings are held steady and level, the tail generally half-spread. Slow, easy circles are performed with an occasional wing beat. There was a general tendency to gain altitude during the whole process.

The method of attack on grasshoppers was a straight, swift drop of approximately 90 degrees, terminating a couple of feet from the ground. The instant the prey was grasped, deep wing strokes carried the bird off 50 to 75 meters (50 to 75 yards) distant and 30 to 40 meters elevation, at which time feeding took place. On other areas, where grasshoppers frequented tall grass or wheat, they were captured by the kite in a sweeping, continuous stoop with a partial break in speed at the point of contact.

Several times individual kites were observed for periods of up to 40 minutes to determine the amount of prey taken and the time involved between each take. Forty minutes was the maximum time a kite was noted to feed before leaving the area or rising to an elevation too far to be observed. The soaring time between each strike was three to six minutes. The required time to consume each prey animal was 30 to 70 seconds. There was an average of 10 kites feeding at one time, which would indicate approximately 60 prey species taken in a 40-minute period or about six grasshoppers, beetles, or dragonflies taken by each kite.

There was a general tendency for all the kites on the area to feed during the same period of time and for all to disappear about the same time. Occasionally, one or two would stay within view of the feeding area but appeared not to be feeding or feeding only sporadically.

Robert W. Skinner, State Conservation Dept., Game & Fish Division, Montgomery, Ala.

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#### Duck Bag Limit Reduced

Because of adverse weather conditions in their northern breeding grounds, the hunting limit on ducks has been reduced to two per day. This means there is a severe shortage in breeding stock and therefore, we in the South, should do everything possible to return the survivors in good health next Spring. Well managed private ponds, such as our Dauphin Island Sanctuary, will help.

## ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY CONSTITUTION

### Article I. Name

This organization shall be called the Alabama Ornithological Society.

### Article II. Objectives

1. To foster a greater knowledge of the birds of Alabama through observation, education and publication.
2. To be a potent voice in Conservation of all of Alabama's natural resources, but especially in birds.

### Article III. Membership

The membership shall consist of Active, Associates, Sustaining, Student, Life and Honorary Members, who have a sincere interest in bird life.

### Article IV. Officers

The Officers shall consist of Elected, Appointed Officers and Directors.

Sec. 1. ELECTED OFFICERS. The Elected Officers shall be the President, Vice-President and Treasurer. They shall be elected by a majority vote of the members present at the Annual Meeting and shall serve for a period of one year. The Vice-President will succeed the President.

Sec. 2. APPOINTED OFFICERS. The President shall appoint Regional Directors, a Secretary, a Librarian, and Editors.

Sec. 3. THE DIRECTORS. The Regional Directors shall represent districts of the State of Alabama proportioned to cover the entire state for representation in the Society.

Sec. 4. THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. The Executive Council shall consist of the Elected and Appointed Officers, the Immediate Past President and the Directors.

### Article V. Meetings and Quorum

Sec. 1. TIME OF MEETINGS. The Society shall hold at least one business meeting a year, which is to be known as the Annual Meeting. Three meetings are recommended: One in the winter, one in the spring and one in the fall. Other special meetings may be called by the President at his discretion.

Sec. 2. QUORUM. No quorum is necessary to conduct business at any meeting, Regular, Council, or otherwise, provided written notice of one month of time and place is given to the membership.