

ALABAMA BIRDLIFE



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CONTENTS

Western and Northern Celebrities Along With Numerous Lingerings Migrants Highlight 1974 AOS Christmas Counts Robert R. Reid, Jr.	3
Some Observations on the Feeding Habits of the Red-headed Woodpecker James V. Peavy, Jr.	8
Observations on a Captive Brown Thrasher Eugene B. Sledge, Ph. D.	9
Banders' Corner James V. Peavy, Jr.	13
The First Record of the Occurrence of Prairie Falcon in the State of Alabama Howard M. Einspahr and Edward J. Meehan	14
Banding on the Baldwin County Coast Thomas A. Imhof and James V. Peavy, Jr.	15
Owl Winter Robert R. Reid, Jr.	17
AOS Winter Meeting Helen Thigpen	19

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WESTERN AND NORTHERN CELEBRITIES
ALONG WITH NUMEROUS LINGERING MIGRANTS
HIGHLIGHT 1974 AOS CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Numerous outstanding finds were recorded on the 13 Christmas Counts reported to Alabama Birdlife for the 1974 Christmas Season (the same number as last year and again including two counts at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge--one on December 21 and the other on January 4). Western and northern visitors would have to compete with each other for greater significance and, if one had to choose, perhaps the scales should be tipped in favor of the westerns. They included a Black-throated Gray Warbler at Bay County, a Western Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Fort Morgan, 3 White-winged Doves and a brilliant male Yellow-headed Blackbird at Pensacola, and another Yellow-headed Blackbird at Dauphin Island (each of the blackbirds following up recent winter records at the same places). There are increasing records of Black-throated Grays wintering in the Florida Peninsula, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have been noted in good numbers on Western and Southern Florida Christmas Counts for over a decade, so AOS observers may look forward to possibilities of additional observations of those species in future years. The warbler was only the first on an AOS Christmas Count, the Western Kingbird a second, and the flycatcher a fourth. White-winged Doves are rare in the AOS area. There have been three previous count records in Alabama, but this was the first for Northwest Florida on a Christmas Count or during a Christmas Count week since 1967 although a few are seen in most winters.

A mystery lady at Pensacola attracted much attention and was later determined to have probably been a female King Eider, joined on Christmas Day (11 days after the count but still within the full count period) by another; the birds were observed and photographed by many. Their identification as King Eiders is based on one found on the beach later in the winter. It has always been considered difficult to distinguish the female eiders, and field observers report the most determinative characteristic is comparison of the bill length between the nostril and the base at the forehead and the length between the nostril and the tip; the first should be shorter in the King while both lengths should be very nearly equal in the Common. Further exciting northern visitors at Pensacola were 3 female or immature Black Scoters during the count week, which were joined by 2 more afterwards, one of which was an adult male. In addition, even though outside the count period, a female or immature Surf Scoter appeared on January 4 and 5 and later an immature male on February 19. It may be noted that the Blacks are a sequel to single birds observed last Christmas Season at Gulf Shores and Bay County. Other notable northern visitors were the Short-eared Owl at Marion, a prelude to the owl excitement to occur later in the winter (see "Owl Winter" in this issue), and the 2 Rough-legged Hawks at Wheeler Refuge.

The mild winter (second in a row) doubtless contributed to many migrants or summer residents found remaining on the Christmas Counts, all of which were on the coast except the Yellow-breasted Chat, which responded to a Screech Owl call at Marion. Among the others were a Yellow-throated Vireo, Black-throated Green Warbler, Purple Martin and Purple Gallinule at Bay County, a male Summer Tanager and Yellow-billed Cuckoo at Marianna (the former being a sequel to--and probably the same bird as--the male frequenting the same suet feeder within the count week there last year), and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at Pensacola and within the count week at Bay County (the latter a male and the former a female observed well at close range so that the green back and lack of rufous were noted). Baltimore Orioles (now classified by the AOU as the Baltimore race of a new Northern Oriole) have in recent years been appearing on many Christmas Counts in the Southeast. A lady at Pensacola is doing a good job of feeding them, for a male was found during the count week there at the same feeder as one seen on the count date last year. Other summer residents that are rare to uncommon on the coast in winter included the Gull-billed Tern

at Mobile, 2 Black-and-White Warblers at Bay County, Yellow-throated Warblers on or within the count week of five counts with a high of 6 at Bay County, and White-eyed Vireos on eight counts, six on the coast and, in addition, both counts at Eufaula Refuge.

The mild winter may also have accounted for the large number of counts on which certain wading birds appeared. The White Ibis was reported on four counts as opposed to five last year--12 for a Christmas Count record at Fort Morgan, 2 immatures inland on the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count, and 2 each at Mobile and Pensacola. Green Herons were reported on three counts, including one on the Jan. 4 Eufaula Refuge Count. Am. (now called Great) Egrets and Little Blue Herons were found inland on both Eufaula Counts, the 85 of the former on Jan. 4 being an inland winter record as were the 5 of the latter on Dec. 21. Eufaula also has a good colony of Black-crowned Night Herons, and 54 were noted on the Jan. 4 count. The Yellow-crowned Night Heron might be expected to be less likely in winter since it is the more southern of the two night herons, but it was recorded on three coastal counts--Mobile (4), Dauphin Island (1) and Pensacola (2), the latter its fifth straight Christmas Count record. Notable also were 3 Reddish Egrets (one a white-phased bird) at Dauphin Island and a Least Bittern at Gulf Shores for the second straight year that one was observed at Mary Lou Slough. The American Bittern, its more northern cousin, appeared on three counts--2 at Gulf Shores and 1 on the Jan. 4 Eufaula Refuge Count, each for their third straight year, and 1 at Fort Morgan. Strangely due to its continuing population explosion, however, the Cattle Egret was found this year on only two Christmas Counts with a high of 6 at Mobile as compared with five counts last year and a high of 26 at Dauphin Island.

In the category of species endangered from one cause or another, the Brown Pelican, apparently still suffering from persistent pesticide residues, was found in low numbers on only two counts--3 at Bay County and 1 at Fort Morgan--down from 42 and 20 on those same counts, respectively, in 1973. The Bald Eagle and Osprey are also still suffering from persistent pesticide residues. It is, therefore, encouraging to note an immature Bald Eagle at Wheeler Refuge for the sixth straight year one has been seen there either on the count or within the count periods and the 2 (one adult and one immature) within the count week of the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count; the same is true of the 2 Ospreys on the Jan. 4 count at that refuge and the 1 at Fort Morgan. The other North American eagle--an immature Golden--was found at Eufaula Refuge on its Dec. 21 count.

Another threatening factor is, of course, destruction of habitat, and changes in the marsh area at the intracoastal waterway near Gulf Shores resulted in absence of the usual Sandhill Crane flock. Because of rapidly diminishing beach habitat, the Piping and Snowy Plovers are included on the "Blue List" of species not yet considered endangered but whose numbers are reported on the decline (American Birds (1974), 28(6): 972-74). On the 1974 AOS Counts, Pippings were found on four counts with a high, however, of 30 at Dauphin Island, and Snowys on three with highs of 10 at Pensacola for a Northwest Florida Christmas Count record and 9 at Dauphin Island. The Am. Oystercatcher (also on the "Blue List") was found at Dauphin Island (3) and Fort Morgan (2 within the count week). The Christmas Counts reflect that the Eastern Bluebird, which has suffered from harsh winter weather in past years, as well as a decline in available nesting locations, is still low in highly urbanized areas such as Birmingham and Mobile, although it is increasing in some rural and coastal areas.

Most hawks are also on the "Blue List." In the AOS area, Sharp-shins were found on six counts with highs of 5 at Bay County and 4 at Marion, while the Cooper's appeared on or within the count week of only four. Single Merlins (or Pigeon Hawks) were found on three counts--the Jan. 4 Eufaula Refuge Count, Fort Morgan and Gulf Shores.

Although the Am. Kestrel is on the decline in or around urban areas, the 35 at Marion set an inland winter record with good numbers also at Gulf Shores (46) and on the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count (21). The Marsh Hawks (39) on the same Eufaula count are a high number for that raptor.

Notable observations of hawks not on the "Blue List" included an AOS record for Red-tailed Hawks at Marion (85) with a high for Northwest Florida at Marianna (26). In addition, it is interesting to note that one of the light-phased Krider's race, more numerous on the plains, was found at Wheeler Refuge, Birmingham and on the Jan. 4 Eufaula Refuge Count, which also reported a melanistic Red-tail. Rounding out hawk observations were the large number of Black Vultures from a roost near Marion (134) and the Turkey Vultures at Mobile (52) for the second highest Alabama record.

Again this year, waterfowl were generally down in number, especially on the Gulf Coast. This appears to be due both to a general decline in numbers and to so-called "short-stopping" by feeding programs holding the birds for the winter in more northern areas. There were, however, a few scattered exceptions, including the Am. Wigeon (or Baldpate) at Jacksonville (178 for a Mountain Region record), Canvasback at Wheeler Refuge (108 for a Wheeler Christmas Count record), high numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers at Fort Morgan (565) and Pensacola (500), and reasonably high numbers of Ruddy Ducks at Bay County (119 for a Northwest Florida Christmas Count record) and Gulf Shores (100).

The most outstanding abundance records for the AOS area came, however, from species widely separated on the AOU list--the 206 Am. Avocets at Mobile (13th out of its last 14 Christmas Counts), attracted largely by the ponds on Blakeley Island (previous record of 147 in Dec., 1972) and the Savannah and White-crowned Sparrows at Marion and Wheeler Refuge (see below). As observers during migration periods will attest, the ponds at Blakeley Island also attract large numbers of Dunlins, and that species seems to be doing well since it was found on 9 of the 13 AOS counts this winter, including inland observations of 40 on the Eufaula Refuge Jan. 4 Count (an inland winter record), 13 at Wheeler Refuge (a Tenn. Valley winter record), and 2 at Marion, and also 134 at Bay County for a Northwest Florida Christmas Count record. The Spotted Sandpiper also had a good year, being recorded on six counts, including an inland observation of a single bird at Wheeler Refuge for the second straight year and a high count of 7 at Pensacola. Other high counts of shorebirds were Least Sandpipers at Marion (115 for a second inland winter record in abundance) and Willets at Bay County (79 for a Northwest Florida Christmas Count record).

Other notable coastal observations were Anhingas (rarely noted on AOS Christmas Counts) at Marianna (4), Bay County (2) and Gulf Shores (1), the Limpkins at Marianna (2), probably attracted by the good cypress swamp habitat in the count area, and single Whip-poor-wills there and at Pensacola.

Noteworthy inland observations were led by the White Pelican at Wheeler Refuge, the first recent inland winter record. Others included a Whistling Swan during the count week at Wheeler for its fifth straight count period record, a Blue-winged Teal at Birmingham that was attracted by the ducks at the Birmingham Zoo, a Greater Yellowlegs within the count week there for its first record of the Christmas Season, 7 Short-billed Dowitchers on the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count (second straight year for that shorebird at Eufaula), and 2 Palm Warblers at Wheeler Refuge for the third straight year (although previously that warbler had not been recorded there during recent winters).

All members of the Wren and the Gnatcatcher-Kinglet families did well this past Christmas Season. The House Wren made almost a "clean sweep" of the counts, being found on 12 of the 13, with highs at Gulf Shores (31 for a second highest AOS winter record), Fort Morgan (25), and Bay County (24 for a Northwest Florida winter record),

and 1 at Wheeler Refuge (where this wren is not usually found that far north in winter). Single Bewick's Wrens were found at all five inland count localities. The Carolina Wren is said to inhabit almost every brush pile in the Southeast and lived up to its reputation at Birmingham (277 for a near AOS record), Marion (128 for a Coastal Plain record), Gulf Shores (94, just one shy of a Gulf Coast record), and Pensacola (50 for a Northwest Florida record). The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher did well, being found on all counts from Eufaula Refuge south with 8 for an inland winter record on the Dec. 21 count there and high but not record numbers at Pensacola (28), Bay County (24), Gulf Shores (21) and Fort Morgan (18). Its northern relative, the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, had high numbers almost throughout the area, led by a high but not record 199 at Birmingham and regional records or near records at Marion (160), Pensacola (132), Fort Morgan and Bay County (130 each), Wheeler Refuge (126), the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count (123), and Marianna (101). The Golden-crowned Kinglet also set a Tennessee Valley record (78) at Wheeler Refuge.

The outstanding sparrow abundance records referred to above were the almost 1300 Savannahs at Marion and 111 White-crowns at Wheeler Refuge, each an AOS area record (previous highs being 548 for the Savannah at Eufaula Refuge last year and 50 for the White-crowns in 1953 also at Wheeler). The Savannah, in addition, had good numbers this year on the Jan. 4 Eufaula Count (470), its Dec. 21 Count (400) and the Gulf Shores Count (409). Other abundance records for the sparrow tribe included the Vespers at Gulf Shores (224 for an AOS area record), Chippings at Marianna (485 for a second highest Gulf Coast record), and White-throats at Birmingham (1501 for a second highest inland AOS record). A large number of Fox Sparrows (53) were seen at Marion, which is high for the AOS area outside of Birmingham; and, although the Fox does not normally winter as far south as the coast, it appeared on four counts there with a high of 3 at Marianna. Among the sizable count of Slate-colored (now Dark-eyed) Juncos at Birmingham (almost 1200) were 3 of the Pink-sided Oregon race, birds of that race having been found on three of its last four Christmas Counts. Those sparrows that, when found, are in low numbers included LeConte's (1 at Pensacola and another within the count week at Marianna) and Grasshopper Sparrows on or within the count week of four counts, including 2 each on the Jan. 4 Eufaula Refuge Count and at Marianna. In addition, single Lincoln's Sparrows (primarily a western species) were observed on three counts--Marion, Gulf Shores and Marianna.

Other abundance figures included: Great Blue Heron--the high number of 80 on the Jan. 4 Eufaula Refuge Count; Bob-white--125 at Gulf Shores for an AOS Christmas Count record; Killdeer--634 at Gulf Shores; Mourning Dove--566 for a Northwest Florida record at Pensacola (which also reported a good number of 612 Rock Doves); Com. Ground Dove--the high number of 39 on the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count with a good number of 28 at Marianna; Eastern Phoebe--five counts at or near Christmas Count records, led by 25 both on the Dec. 21 Eufaula Refuge Count and at Marianna; Belted Kingfisher--high numbers at Bay County (50) and Pensacola (43); Com. Crow--590 at Jacksonville for a Mountain Region record (in the absence of a roost); Carolina Chickadee--322 at Birmingham for an AOS area record and 48 at Marianna for a record at the Gulf Coast where it is found in much smaller numbers than inland; Brown Creeper--16 at Wheeler Refuge for a Tennessee Valley record; Water Pipit--267 also at Wheeler for a North Alabama record; Cedar Waxwing--the high number of almost 1600 at Birmingham; Loggerhead Shrike--77 at Marianna for an AOS Christmas Count record and 46 at Marion for an inland winter record; Solitary (or Blue-headed) Vireo--7 at Pensacola for an AOS Christmas Count record; Myrtle Warbler--almost 2700 at Gulf Shores for a second highest AOS record; Pine Warbler--143 at Bay County for an AOS Christmas Count record (a remarkable increase from the 10 and 13 reported there the previous two years) and 90 at Birmingham for a North Alabama Christmas Count record; Com. Yellowthroat--33 at Gulf Shores for an AOS Christmas Count record with also high numbers at Fort Morgan (24) and Bay County (23); Eastern Meadowlark--almost 600 at Marion for an inland record; Brewer's Blackbird--over 2500 at Marion for an AOS area record and 60 at Wheeler Refuge where they have been considered uncommon and local in winter; Com. Grackle--a relatively high number for the Gulf Coast of almost 6300 at Marianna; and Cardinal--727 at Birmingham for an AOS Christmas Count record and almost 400 at Marion for a Coastal Plain record. In addition,

very energetic nighttime observing resulted in record Christmas Count numbers of Screech Owls at Gulf Shores (55) and Birmingham (34), Great Horned Owls at Marion (6), and Barred Owls at Birmingham (8) and Marion (7).

This was the second year after the sizable invasion of Evening Grosbeaks in the winter of 1972-73, and the species was reported on only two counts--1 at Birmingham (with a flock of 30 seen within the count week) and 5 at Jacksonville. The Purple Finch was generally down in numbers but was recorded on 11 of the 13 counts. The Pine Siskin was substantially absent with, however, a few scattered verified reports ranging from 2 at Jacksonville and 1 to 3 at Eufaula Refuge, both on the eastern boundary of the state (near adjoining areas of the Appalachians where it is understood additional birds were found, although in small numbers) to another pair as far south as Mobile. Although another visitor from the northern forests, the Red-breasted Nuthatch, was virtually absent last winter, it was recorded, although not in large numbers, on 7 of the 13 counts this year with the highs being 14 and 11 at Bay County and Fort Morgan, respectively, and an apparent Tennessee Valley record of 6 at Wheeler Refuge.

On the 1974 counts, a record of an even 200 species was observed on the counts and during the count weeks with 198 on the counts themselves (the full count period being Dec. 14 through 31). Complete tabulations of all species on counts conducted during that period will appear in Vol. 29, No. 2 of American Birds, which will be received by all participants in those counts. Therefore, in order to avoid duplication, a complete tabulation of only counts not held during that period is set forth following this article. As a parting note from the editor, we urge all interested observers to communicate with the count compilers and other leaders and to participate in the 1975 Christmas Counts. It can be seen that many noteworthy birds may be found; in addition, one may also have an enjoyable winter's day in the out-of-doors.

A summary of the above 13 Christmas Counts is as follows:

Count, Date and Compiler	Species(a)		Total Individuals	Partici- pants	Parties	Party- Hours
	On Count	Within Count Week				
Wheeler Wildlife Refuge-- Dec. 14 (J. Milton Harris)	91	92	52,619	31	6	63
Birmingham--Dec.29 (Thomas A. Imhof)	90	92	17,760	40	12	121
Jacksonville--Dec. 14 (C. William Summerour)	74	74	22,024	24	5	41
Marion--Dec.22 (James V. Peavy, Jr.)	94	94	21,451	13	5	53
Eufaula Wildlife Refuge-- Dec. 21 (Michael Fuller)	114	117	11,225	11	7	62
Eufaula Wildlife Refuge-- Jan. 4 (Julian L. Dusi)	103	105	5,048	11	--	18.25
Mobile--Dec. 14 (Richard E. Hayward, Jr.)	139	139	14,897	17(b)	10	51
Dauphin Island--Dec. 28 (M. Wilson Gaillard)	110	110	9,215	16	5	38.5
Ft. Morgan--Dec. 28 (Mary Lou Mattis & Sherlie Gade)	110	112	6,837	14	6	58
Gulf Shores--Dec. 31 (P. Fairly Chandler)	119	122	21,468	28	8	76.5
Pensacola--Dec. 14 (Curtis L. Kingsbery)	119	123	13,835	40(b)	10	92.5
Marianna--Dec. 14 (Marion W. Gray)	92	95	13,933	19(b)	8	53
Bay County (Panama City)-- Dec. 28 (Donald P. Scott)	133	134	15,205	26	10	80

(a) Species combined in the 1973 revision of the AOU Check-List are treated separately in this article and the above table because reported separately on the Christmas Counts.

(b) Additional observers at feeders.

Robert R. Reid, Jr.
Counts Editor

Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge (incl Chattahoochee R., sloughs managed for waterfowl, and Cowikee and Wylaunee Creeks--count limited to refuge area): Jan. 4; 6:00 AM to 4:45 PM. Participants: Neva Brunton, Julian L. Dusi (compiler); Rosemary T. Dusi, Thomas French, Michael Fuller, Susan Lancaster, Marjory D. Lyons, Jackie and Ron McKitrick, and Harriett and Tom Meadows.

Pied-billed Grebe-3; Great Blue Heron-80; Green Heron-1; Little Blue Heron-1; Great (or Am.) Egret-85; Black-crowned Night Heron-54; Am. Bittern-1; Canada Goose-25; Snow Goose (white phase)-4; Blue Goose (blue phase of Snow Goose)-15; Mallard-600; Black Duck-35; No. Pintail-87; Green-winged Teal-6; Am. Wigeon (or Baldpate)-10; No. Shoveler-61; Wood Duck-12; Redhead-15; Ring-necked Duck-3; Canvasback-7; Bufflehead-20; Ruddy Duck-3; Hooded Merganser-12; Turkey Vulture-1; Black Vulture-2; Cooper's Hawk-1; Red-tailed Hawk (1 Krider's)-15; Red-shouldered Hawk-2; Marsh Hawk-21; Osprey-2; Merlin (or Pigeon Hawk)-1; Am. Kestrel (or Sparrow Hawk)-4; Bob-white-75; Virginia Rail-2; Sora-2; Am. Coot-104; Killdeer-106; Com. Snipe-78; Greater Yellowlegs-3; Lesser Yellowlegs-1; Least Sandpiper-27; Dunlin (or Red-backed Sandpiper)-40; Herring Gull-2; Ring-billed Gull-98; Bonaparte's Gull-3; Rock Dove-6; Mourning Dove-104; Com. Ground Dove-11; Barn Owl-2; Screech Owl-1; Barred Owl-1; Belted Kingfisher-4; Yellow-shafted (Com.) Flicker-11; Pileated Woodpecker-4; Red-bellied Woodpecker-14; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker-3; Downy Woodpecker-5;

Eastern Phoebe-7; Blue Jay-22; Com. Crow-23; Fish Crow-2; Carolina Chickadee-30; Tufted Titmouse-9; Brown-headed Nuthatch-9; House Wren-3; Carolina Wren-47; Short-billed Marsh (or Sedge) Wren-2; Com. Mockingbird-30; Brown Thrasher-5; Am. Robin-259; Hermit Thrush-6; Eastern Bluebird-2; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher-2; Golden-crowned Kinglet-5; Ruby-crowned Kinglet-22; Water Pipit-14; Cedar Waxwing-15; Loggerhead Shrike-16; Com. Starling-5; White-eyed Vireo-1; Solitary (or Blue-headed) Vireo-1; Myrtle (Yellow-rumped) Warbler-121; Pine Warbler-7; Palm Warbler-4; Com. Yellowthroat-8; Eastern Meadowlark-478; Red-winged Blackbird-275; Com. Grackle-173; Cardinal-39; Purple Finch-3; Pine Siskin-1; Am. Goldfinch-56; Rufous-sided Towhee-27; Savannah Sparrow-470; Grasshopper Sparrow-2; Vesper Sparrow-132; Slate-colored (Dark-eyed) Junco-127; Chipping Sparrow-1; Field Sparrow-151; White-crowned Sparrow-2; White-throated Sparrow-159; Swamp Sparrow-150; and Song Sparrow-229. Within count week: Gadwall, and Lesser Scaup.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE FEEDING HABITS
OF THE RED-HEADED WOODPECKER
(Melanerpes erythrocephalus)

James V. Peavy, Jr.

It is a well-documented fact that Red-headed Woodpeckers will hawk for insects in a flycatcher-like fashion. For several years I have regularly observed them doing this at the Birmingham Zoo, which is where I work. In the late summer when insects hatch out in the zoo ponds, the Red-heads will congregate in several weeping willow trees and begin to forage in the typical manner; I have often seen eight or ten birds so engaged at one time. Another favorite pastime for these birds is to steal peanuts from the elephants. One or two birds will sit on a power pole near the elephants' lot, and, when a peanut is thrown to the elephants, a bird will swoop down, grab the nut and fly back to the top of the pole. The birds usually open the nut and eat it immediately; occasionally they carry it away.

The most unusual observation I have made at the zoo occurred on July 26, 1975, when I saw an adult Red-head fly down, catch a mouse by the tail and carry it to the top of a pole. The mouse was squeaking loudly, and this noise seemed to attract a young Red-head over. The adult bird moved to a tree limb, killed the mouse with a few pecks and flew off with the mouse; the young bird followed giving typical "feed-me" calls. This is the only instance of mammal predation by a Red-headed Woodpecker of which I have knowledge. A. C. Bent, in his Life Histories of North American Woodpeckers, quotes Mr. E. D. Nauman who relates an instance of a Red-head attacking a mouse, but the mouse escaped. It is interesting to note that, when carrying the mouse, the woodpecker used its beak rather than its feet; however, it did hold the mouse with one foot while killing it.

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OBSERVATIONS ON A CAPTIVE BROWN THRASHER
(Toxostoma rufum)

Eugene B. Sledge, Ph. D.

On July 18, 1972, a young fledged Brown Thrasher (Toxostoma rufum) was given to me by a University of Montevallo student, Mr. Jack Burgstresser. The previous day, when Mr. Burgstresser parked his car in front of his home on a residential street in Montevallo, the bird had flown from an oak tree and alighted on the top of the car. The bird then hopped onto Mr. Burgstresser's shoulder and remained there as he walked into his house. The complete tameness of this bird was its most singular characteristic. Neither Mr. Burgstresser nor I was able to locate anyone in the area who had reared a Brown Thrasher nestling.

A similar case of an individual of this species approaching man has been reported (Sidney E. Ekblaw, "A Tame Brown Thrasher," Wilson Bull. 30:92, 1918). Bachman (Audubon, The Birds of America, 3:11, Dover Reprint 1967 of 1844 edition) wrote that he raised many Brown Thrashers in his aviary and kept one specimen for 3 years until it was killed by a cat. He does not report any case of a Brown Thrasher reared in its normal environment approaching man.

During the first few days I had this specimen in my possession, I allowed it the free run of my office and of my laboratory and made notes of its behavior. This bird was extremely curious. It ran and/or flew about the room investigating any and all objects within its reach. When first investigating any object, a pencil for instance, the bird approached slowly turning the head from side to side, viewing the pencil with first one eye and then the other. Next, he would begin tactile examination of the pencil by slowly picking it up in its beak and turning it over and over, releasing it and repeating this several times. If the pencil bounced upon release or made a loud noise, the bird would jump rapidly to one side partially extending its wings. On occasions he would jump into the air and fly several meters away from the object. The most interesting activity was displayed when the bird came upon a stack of letters or other loose papers on my desk. Beginning with the top-most papers, he would methodically grasp each sheet in his beak, and walking sideways or backwards, drag it off the stack onto the desk top. This would continue until the stack was spread out. If I replaced a few sheets on the stack after he had dragged them off, the bird would speed up his activity. If I persisted, he would stand next to the stack and feverishly scatter sheets to the right and left by sliding his closed beak beneath them and flipping them with a rapid jerk of the head after the fashion of the species in moving leaves in search of insects. This procedure sometimes continued for approximately one minute after which time the bird either lost interest or, more frequently, began to beg for food by opening its beak and crouching and shaking its partially extended wings when my hand came near to replace papers on the stack. The thrasher's overall behavior pattern in response to man, certain domestic animals and wild birds, gave strong indication that imprinting had occurred on this specimen by some human subject, or certainly that its behavior was atypical of its species. During the 27 days that I had this bird under careful observation, it indicated on numerous occasions that it preferred a condition of close proximity to humans to either solitude or the company of certain other animals. As I moved about the laboratory the bird flew to me or ran to me if I moved more than 3M. away from it. If I left the room, the bird followed me immediately; or, if I shut the door it would begin to make the typical alarm note of the species. This note is described by Bent (U.S. National Museum Bulletin, 195:369 II, 1948) as resembling a loud kiss. He states, "The kiss note is a loud smack, or sucking kiss, something like the sound made by the clicking of a heavy pair of pruning shears, a most startling sound for a bird to make. . ." The thrasher continued to emit this call at approximately 2-sec. intervals until I reappeared, at which time it flew directly to

me, or for about 2 min. if I did not return within that time. On occasions when the bird was left in a room that was strange to it, the alarm call was made at more rapid intervals and for longer duration. If I made any sound outside the door before opening it, the bird would begin giving the alarm note and continued even after I entered the room and was in full view of it, stopping only after it had flown to me or had been released from its cage. At this time, the alarm note changed to a call like "chuck." This call did not have the rather metallic and urgent quality that characterizes the alarm note of this species. The "chuck" was the most common sound emitted by this bird as long as it was in my possession.

Indoors, the thrasher spent the night in a cage. In the morning when I approached, the bird would commence the alarm call and struggle to escape from the cage. When released, it would fly immediately to my shoulder and begin the "chuck" sound. When food was placed in the small cage in the morning, the bird usually began feeding, but on several occasions it fluttered about the cage and would not eat until released. For the first 7 days, it voluntarily entered the small cage each night. However, it became increasingly reluctant to do so and had to be placed in the cage by hand each night. Under no conditions could I coax it to fly to me if I was standing in or near the utility room where the cage was kept.

Every morning, I placed the thrasher in an outdoor wire enclosure $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ M. where 2 chickens and 2 pigeons were kept. When released into this cage, the thrasher usually flew from one end perch to the other and then fluttered against the wire nearest to me and began the distress call. It would remain thus occupied for approximately 15 min. before it would fly to a perch. As soon as I moved or attracted its attention, it would again fly toward me. If the bird was hungry when placed in the outdoor enclosure, it would feed briefly and then fly toward me. When I entered the enclosure, the thrasher flew to my shoulder and began the "chuck" call. There was a definite direct correlation between the frequency of the call on these occasions and the amount of time that had elapsed since I had last been seen by the bird. I stopped placing the thrasher in the large outdoor enclosure after it escaped one day through an opening in the wire. On this occasion my next-door neighbor called me, and I found the thrasher perched on her head. The bird had escaped from the cage and flown to the people it saw approximately 30 M. away. When I arrived it flew to my hand, then to the ground where it fed briefly on some insects.

When the thrasher was released in the house, it spent a great deal of time running about in various rooms exploring under and behind the furniture. It rarely flew in the house but remained on the floor most of the time. If I left the room, the bird would fly in search of me, using first the "chuck" and then the distress call if it did not find me immediately. Of all the objects in the house, rug fringes proved to be the most interesting to the thrasher. If left undisturbed, or not distracted, it would spend as much as 15 min. moving back and forth along the end of a rug, pulling and tugging at the fringes with its beak. It would also shake the individual fringes and manipulate them in its beak after the manner of this species in softening and breaking up insects while feeding. After about an hour of exploring about the house, the bird would fly or run directly to me perching on my head or shoulder. It would routinely fluff its feathers, shake itself and preen for about one minute. The primaries and secondaries were preened first and then certain breast feathers. On such occasions the rectrices and other feathers were rarely preened. After the brief preening activity, the bird would settle itself on my shoulder, completely flex its legs, partially erect the contour feathers of the body and those on the crown, flex the neck and rest the head on the body, close its eyes and sleep for 5 to 15 min.

The reactions of the thrasher to other birds and animals were varied and interesting. On the day the bird was brought to me, I was feeding it some small bits of ground beef on a laboratory table, and it took no apparent notice of the several students around watching it feed. Suddenly, it noticed a House Sparrow (Passer domesticus) fledgling being held on the table about one meter away. The thrasher immediately

assumed its threat display. Very little of the sparrow was visible because a student had both hands cupped about it resting on the table. However, upon noticing the sparrow, the thrasher erected all its contour feathers as well as those on the head, partially extended the wings, spread the rectrices with the lateral ones forward so as to form a scoop of the tail, partially flexed the legs, lowered the head with the beak pointing anteriorly and parallel to the table top and ran rapidly toward the sparrow. Before the thrasher reached the sparrow, the student moved it, and the thrasher dropped all manifestations of threat, turned about and returned to its feeding. According to the student holding the sparrow, it reacted to the thrasher's threat display by quivering noticeably. Subsequently, when the sparrow was held close to the thrasher, the latter completely ignored it.

The threat display was observed on two other occasions. In both cases the thrasher was in the house and saw a member of its own species fly into a tree just outside a window. The threat display was very brief, and normal activity was resumed in both cases while the bird toward which the display was directed was still in view.

On all possible occasions, the thrasher was closely observed to determine its reactions to members of its own species. I was never able to determine even the slightest manifestation of species recognition on the part of the tame bird when other Brown Thrashers were within view. A family group of wild Brown Thrashers consisting of 2 adults and 2 juveniles passed the outdoor cage several times daily during their foraging. One or more members of this group continuously gave the "chuck" call as they moved about. I never noticed the tame bird reacting to these birds in any way, nor did they seem to take any notice of it.

The first time the thrasher saw my dog, a Dachshund, in the house it sounded the distress call and flew directly to me. For about 2 days the bird seemed to be afraid of the dog but gradually became used to it. When I placed the bird on the dog's back, it would remain there apparently unafraid. However, if the dog walked toward the thrasher, the bird would move away.

The thrasher never lost its fear of the 2 chickens and 2 pigeons in the outdoor cage. If any of these larger birds approached within approximately one meter, the thrasher either flew or ran from them.

On several occasions I released the thrasher in my yard to observe its reactions. The bird seemed to prefer the areas of the yard covered with leaves to the grassy areas and lawn. It would run a few meters, stop and quickly scatter leaves and plant litter with its beak to uncover insects. The bird would rapidly pursue low-flying insects by running after them and was quite successful in the number it captured in this manner. Although wild thrashers frequently came through the yard calling to each other while it was outside, the tame bird took no apparent notice of them.

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN A.O.S.

DIET AND FEEDING BEHAVIOR: While it was in my possession, the thrasher's diet consisted of the following:

<u>Fruit</u>	<u>Insects</u>	<u>Meat</u>	<u>Grain</u>	<u>Nuts</u>
*Tomato	*Beetles	**Ground Beef	***Cracked Corn	*Dry-roasted peanuts
*Plum	*Slugs		*Wheat	*Cashew nuts
**Apple	*Earthworms		**Millet	*Pecan
*Grapes	*House Fly			
***Raisin				

*High level of preference. Consumed by the bird daily or every time available.

**Medium level of preference. Usually but not always consumed by the bird when available.

***Rarely or only occasionally consumed by the bird when available.

Although no measured quantitative data were obtained as to amounts of various food items consumed by the bird, the items could be ranked as is shown in the accompanying table. By far the most preferred food item was dry-roasted peanuts. Peanuts were followed closely by cashew nuts. Of the fruits, tomato was most preferred followed by plum. Most of the insects eaten were caught by the bird itself. Grain was in the form of mixed scratch feed, containing cracked corn, whole millet and whole wheat. The wheat was usually eaten early in the day, the millet next, and cracked corn last. Usually the skin of tomato and plum were not eaten.

When a whole peanut was presented to the thrasher, the bird grasped it between the mandibles and placed it in a corner of its cage, or on the floor, and hammered upon it with the tip of the beak. Small chips that were broken were eaten immediately. If the peanut was knocked aside, it was sometimes replaced in the original position before being struck again by the beak. If the peanut skidded along the floor, the bird followed it hammering off and eating small chips. When a peanut or cashew nut was broken into pieces for the bird, it tended to eat larger pieces than it would when it broke them off itself. For example, pieces in excess of approximately 2mm x 2mm were rarely eaten when broken with the beak but were further reduced in size before eating. However, when hand-fed, the bird readily ate pieces approximately 5mm x 5mm with apparent ease.

Insects, whether soft-bodied or hard, were subjected to considerable macerating action with the beak. This seemed obviously necessary in the case of beetles; however, annelid worms and soft-bodied larval insects were subjected to softening action which did not seem necessary to render the insect soft enough for the bird to eat. Hard insects were hammered with the beak in a manner similar to that of nuts, and soft insects were "chewed" between the mandibles and frequently knocked against the ground or floor by the bird with a quick lateral movement of the head. If an insect or piece of nut was lost by the bird in grass or leaves during this activity, no attempt was made to retrieve it; another morsel was sought immediately.

After the thrasher escaped from the large outdoor cage, I began placing it in a smaller outdoor exercise cage measuring 1 x 1 x 1 meter. The bird was placed in this cage with food and water each morning and brought into the house before dark.

On July 9, it was first apparent that the bird was showing symptoms of what was apparently some sort of respiratory malady. When an attempt was made to vocalize softly, the only sound the bird made was "pff, pff." However, the bird's appetite remained good. The symptoms continued and were similar to those described by De La Ponde, Gordon G. and

Yvonne A. Greichus ("Care and Behavior of Penned Double-crested Cormorants," Auk 89: 644-650, 1972) for birds suffering from aspergillous infections of the lungs. Therefore, on the morning of July 13, I treated the thrasher with a subcutaneous injection of 0.50 cc terramycin (oxytetracycline HCL) diluted with 3 parts water and placed it in its exercise cage. Unfortunately, I was not able to bring the bird in until 11:00 p.m., and, at this time, I found that the bird had been killed by a predator of some sort. The head was protruding through the one cm square wire mesh. The occipital region of the skull was crushed and the skin on the neck was torn. A domestic cat was seen in the area on several successive days.

Consequently, a planned series of experiments to obtain quantitative data on the food habits of this species and further information on the interesting behavior of a specimen completely lacking in fear of man had to be abandoned.

Biology Department
University of Montevallo
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BANDERS' CORNER

James V. Peavy, Jr.

One of the highlights of my winter's banding occurred when a flock of Lapland Longspurs appeared at the Old Courtland Airfield. Records show that, in the past, very large flocks (up to 1000 birds) have been seen at Courtland, but in recent years, various observers have not been able to locate them. However, this year Bob Reid and Greg Jackson visited the airfield and found a "few" birds. When I learned of the birds' presence, I decided to go up and look for them, as I had seen only one in my life. So, on the morning of February 24, 1975, accompanied by Ted Weems, I set out for North Alabama.

To a person who lives in the densely-wooded, hilly Jefferson County, the vastness of open, flat Courtland Airfield is staggering. To look out over hundreds of acres of short grass, concrete and plowed cotton fields and think of looking for a ground-dwelling bird that looks like grass seems hopeless. Add to this the fact that it was snowing and the wind was blowing at 25 to 35 mph, and you will understand our lack of enthusiasm. To shorten this tale of woe, suffice to say we found the birds, at least 150, in a burned-over grass patch between runways. I would like to say it was our great skill and intimate understanding of bird behavior which made it possible, but that just isn't so. We found them quite by accident when a Horned Lark I was watching ran off the runway and stood in a patch of grass; he was surrounded by longspurs. Finding the birds, however, was only the beginning.

It is never easy to catch birds in an open field on a windy day. As Ted and I were putting up my mist nets, they began to freeze; they were damp because my previous banding effort had been terminated by a rainstorm. When the moisture froze, it turned white, making the nets highly visible, but my fears about the birds seeing the nets were eased because the wind was so strong that it quickly evaporated the ice. The wind, however, was our biggest obstacle. As birds hit the net, they would simply bounce out again. In spite of this, as the sun set, Ted and I had succeeded in catching, banding and photographing fifteen Lapland Longspurs.

While banding new birds is always fun, it is particularly exciting to hear about a bird banded earlier. This summer I received a notice from the banding office informing me that one of the Purple Finches banded at Collirene on February 3, 1974, (see Alabama Birdlife, Vol. 22, p. 9), had been recovered by another bander in Schenectady, New York. So far, this is the only bird recovered of the 443 banded on that date.

THE FIRST RECORD OF THE OCCURRENCE OF PRAIRIE FALCON
IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Howard M. Einspahr and Edward J. Meehan

On February 6, 1975, at approximately 3:15 p.m., we were returning from a handball game, walking east on Seventh Avenue South, Birmingham. As we approached the crest of a knoll between 13th and 14th Streets, we observed a small brown raptor flying northwest and steadily gaining altitude. When first noticed, the bird was about 15 feet above an asphalt-surfaced parking area that lay some 100 yards east of and 20 feet below us. The bird leveled off and turned west after crossing Seventh Avenue, flying by us at an altitude of less than 60 feet (1½ to 2 telephone poles). At closest approach, it passed north of us just across Seventh Avenue.

The bird's flight was not particularly swift and repeated a cycle of between three and five wing beats followed by a short glide. The flight pattern was agreed to be peculiar, though not unambiguously characteristic as to genus, and was thought to be partly the result of the bird's effort to gain altitude. The bird appeared to gain speed going west as it approached the building complex between 12th and 13th Streets that houses the gym of the University of Alabama in Birmingham (U.A.B.). We lost sight of the bird in a flock of about 20 Rock Dove (Columbia livia) that rose from a roof of the complex as the bird approached.

At 3 p.m. February 6, 1975, the National Weather Service recorded skies at the Birmingham airport overcast at 1700 feet, visibility of 6 miles, wind out of the west (280°) at 11 knots and a temperature of 41°F. These data are consistent with our recollection of atmospheric conditions at the time the bird was sighted. The bird was observed with the sun at our backs until it passed us, whereupon its image was reduced to a silhouette. Observations were made without the aid of binoculars or any other telescopic device. No camera was available to record the sighting.

The size of the bird was between one and one-and-a-half times that of a Rock Dove, an interval which brackets our slightly differing estimates. The bird showed a longish tail, held closed in flight, and wings with prominent wrists and narrow, pointed tips. The appearance of wing "windows" is accounted for by the observation of the absence of a primary flight feather (possibly the fourth or fifth) from each wing. A hooked raptor-bill was noted. The overall color was light brown. No prominent light or dark markings were noted on the head or elsewhere except for a clearly visible black axillar under the left wing. The axillary area under the right wing was withheld from view for the duration of the sighting. On the basis of these observations, we conclude that the bird we observed was a Prairie Falcon (Falco mexicanus).

The only other species mentioned in the standard field guides as having black axillars is the Black-bellied Plover (Squatarola squatarola), a species which can be ruled out as inconsistent with other observed characteristics of the bird. It is perhaps not commonly recognized that some individuals of Red-tailed Hawk (Buteo jamaicensis) may exhibit dark axillary regions. However, in the admittedly few observations of such birds by one of us (HME), it has been noted that dark axillary regions are accompanied by prominent, dark belly bands and appear, in fact, to be extensions thereof rather than separated in coloration from the surrounding plumage. In any case, the bird in question lacked the characteristic Buteo form and no hint of a belly band was noted.

Both of us had seen Prairie Falcon individuals prior to this sighting. EJM observed one in Wyoming in the summer of 1974. HME had seen the species several times, most recently in January, 1975, at Cheyenne Bottoms National Wildlife Refuge, Kansas.

News of the sighting was spread by word of mouth. Although several parties, including one of us (HME), intensively searched for the bird during the weekend, it was not seen again.

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The area in which the bird was sighted is the campus of U.A.B. and is part of an urban renewal scheme. It may be characterized as containing blocks of classroom buildings interspersed with sparsely wooded vacant lots that have been cleared of shrubbery and are mowed regularly in the summer. It is bordered by small businesses and light industry to the north and west, a residential area to the south and the massive U.A.B. Medical Center complex to the east. This area, some 12-15 square blocks, supports sizable populations of Rock Dove and Mourning Dove (Zenaidara macroura). Killdeer (Charadrius vociferus) are often seen as well as may breed on the gravel roofs of some of the buildings. Birds of prey of several species have been seen there from time to time.

While this area is not unfrequented by raptors, it is decidedly unusual that a Prairie Falcon should be sighted there. This sighting is the first record for the state of Alabama and, to the best of our knowledge, the first record of the species for the southeastern region of the United States. There are very few records east of the Mississippi River. A. C. Bent (Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey, Dover Publications, New York (1961)) acknowledges several records for Minnesota, one record for Wisconsin, and three for Illinois, all in early winter and all prior to 1931. The fifth edition of The A.O.U. Checklist of North American Birds (1957) lists the species as casual in Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana.

The weather in the weeks prior to this sighting, according to National Weather Service records, included the passage of two cold fronts through Birmingham. A strong front arrived on the afternoon of January 19 with winds out of the northwest gusting to 28 mph and considerable precipitation, including a very light snow fall with no accumulation. The second and somewhat weaker front arrived February 1 from a westerly direction with winds gusting to 25 mph.

The unusual nature of this sighting now seasons with anxiety any periods we spend out-of-doors without binoculars (though they really weren't necessary in this case) or camera. We feel that the details of this observation are sufficient grounds for addition of Prairie Falcon to the Alabama state list with hypothetical status. We agree, however, that it should remain on the hypothetical list either until additional sightings are made in the state or until photographic evidence of its occurrence in this region is available. It should be noted that the Prairie Falcon is considered an endangered species and taking of specimens is prohibited by Federal law.

1500 33rd Street So. Apt. 1
Birmingham 35205

BANDING ON THE BALDWIN COUNTY COAST

Thomas A. Imhof and James V. Peavy, Jr.

On September 19 and 20, 1958, and at least twice each winter, spring and fall since August, 1971, the writers have banded at Fort Morgan. This produced a total of 2269 new banded birds of 96 species on 64 days or 35 birds per day. At Fort Morgan, the birds are netted on the north (bay) side just under one mile from the west end of the 21-mile-long peninsula. This site, known as the "Wall," is near the east boundary of Fort Morgan State Park, where a 5-foot-high wall bisects the peninsula. Birds cross this wall in huge numbers during migration, but it is somewhat exposed to the west, and catches are sometimes poor in the afternoon or when the wind is westerly. But, the funneling effect of the terrain and the use of alternate nearby sites make up for any disadvantages.

OWL WINTER

Robert R. Reid, Jr.

For those interested in the occurrence of rare birds in Alabama, the past winter of 1974-75 might appropriately be called "Owl Winter," as a sequel to "Red Crossbill Winter" of 1973-74 (see the article under that title in Vol. 22, No. 1-2 of Alabama Birdlife).

The premiere attraction was the Snowy Owl that appeared on Christmas Eve on the antenna atop Waites Appliance and Furniture Company in Opelika, Alabama. It was first viewed by Mr. and Mrs. Waites who generously directed visitors to the various places in town it frequented over the following month and next by Dr. Edward P. Hill, Director of the Alabama Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at Auburn University, who alerted many out-of-town observers. Immediately photographed by Jimmy Todd of the Opelika-Auburn News, it made front-page headlines in the newspaper. The owl was last sighted on January 18 by John B. Edscorn and party from Lakeland, Florida, and on January 19 by Dr. Howard Einspahr and party. In the interim, it attracted a number of observers from all parts of Alabama and Northwest Florida, Columbus and Atlanta, Georgia, and, as mentioned, Lakeland, Florida, most of whom were fortunate to find the rare bird even though some had to make a second trip. It was also seen by many friendly and gracious citizens of Opelika who told visitors about its activities.

Since there are no trees in the Arctic tundra where it lives, the bird searched out pinnacles such as the Waites' antenna and church domes on which to perch. It, thus, acquired a somewhat religious bent, first frequenting the First Baptist Church steeple and later moving to the dome of the First Methodist Church. It was also seen on water towers in the general area but most often on the Methodist Church dome, which, however, it abandoned for the roofs of some nearby buildings on a Sunday when the church carillon was played through the loud speakers, between two of which it had been spending most of its time. The music was lovely, but it was too much to take at a range of 6 inches!

The Opelika visitor stayed in the downtown area most of the time and did not move around too much, sometimes perching between the loud speakers for an entire day. Then, as evening approached, it apparently got fidgety or hungry and sallied out to catch a rat or two, which some reported to have seen it eating. With an available food supply, so visitors were advised by the local citizens, we are somewhat surprised that it left as early as January; but it was not seen after the above dates.

The bird had a large amount of dark flecking or spotting, so it was definitely an immature and probably a female. Snowys are erratic in their invasions of the United States, the precipitating cause being reduction in the rodent population in Canada. However, it is extremely rare for one to come as far south as the Gulf States. This is only the second record for a Snowy Owl in Alabama, the previous having been on March 17, 1964, at Dauphin Island when Mrs. Jimmie Brown and Mrs. K. L. Shugart from Arkansas found one perched on a rowboat; and one can imagine that their surprise probably even exceeded those of the first observers of the more recent owl in Opelika.

The other activity in the owl family, Strygiformes, to attract attention this past winter was the influx of Short-eared Owls. The first one spotted was on the Marion Christmas Count on December 22. It was observed carefully and very leisurely by the Greg Jackson field party, consisting of himself, Bruce Crider and Bob and Elberta Reid, as it perched on furrows in a field very near the road where the observers were parked. This observation was not altogether unexpected because another had been found dead on the same Christmas Count on December 23, 1973, by Tom Imhof.

The height of the invasion of Short-eareds occurred at Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge where AOS held its winter meeting on January 24-26. On one of the field trips on January 25, Reid Freeman walked through a grassy area near the duck ponds at the southern end of the refuge and stirred up an estimated ten. Lesser numbers were seen throughout the meeting. The highest count over the time the owls were at Eufaula was by Sam Pate of Columbus, Georgia, who saw 23 during January in the same general area with his latest observation being on April 1.

The Short-eared is abroad often during daylight hours, doing much of its hunting at dusk when its flitting moth-like flight is seen over grasslands and marshes. Thus, the habitat at Eufaula Refuge presented a most attractive area for it. The number there this winter exceeds the previous high in abundance for Alabama, which was eight recorded by Bob Skinner and Jim Keeler on January 15, 1960, near Montgomery (see Imhof, Thomas A., Alabama Birds (1961):312-13).

This past winter was indeed a good year for owls, the presence of both species being substantiated by pictures taken by many photographers. All observers, thus, hope that they will return soon.

2616 Mountain Brook Parkway
Birmingham 35223



Snowy Owl, Second Alabama Record
(photo by Helen Kittinger)

AOS WINTER MEETING

Helen Thigpen

About 70 registrants attended the winter meeting of AOS on January 24-26, 1975, in Eufaula. Friday's heavy fog seemed to have grounded the hawks, for members traveling that afternoon reported them in unusual frequency on fence posts, snags and other low perches. Red-tails were by far the predominant species.

Louise McKinstry's interesting slide talk on her trip to Churchill, Canada, got the meeting off to a good start Friday evening. Tornado warnings proved no deterrent to Saturday's early birders, who were not disappointed in their search for the Short-eared Owl. Nine were flushed from a marshy area and observed cruising about briefly before dipping down again to hide in the tall grass. Seeing about 30 Black-crowned Night Herons roosting in the trees nearby was an unusual treat for most of us. Ducks were there in abundance in the company of Canada and Snow Geese. Although flooding prevented the scheduled trip to the Georgia side of Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, a total of nearly 90 species was reported including Osprey, Cattle Egret, Greater Yellowlegs, Bonaparte's Gull, White-crowned Sparrow, in addition to the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Solitary Vireo called up by a Screech Owl recording.

The highlight of the weekend was the buffet dinner meeting at the Holiday Inn, where Dr. Dan Holliman gave a report on his study of the Clapper Rail in Alabama and the ecology of salt marshes. His slide presentation added to the absorbing interest of this report.

A resolution opposing channelization of the Tombigbee River tributaries presented by Bob Reid was unanimously adopted.

1609 Stonewall Drive
Birmingham 35226

! ! NOTICE ! !

ANNOUNCING THE 1975 FALL MEETING
OF THE ALABAMA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PLACE - DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA
DATE - OCTOBER 10, 11, AND 12
HEADQUARTERS - ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
CONSERVATION
MARINE SCIENCES LAB.