

## THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

### The President's Message

Nothing will re-inspire one ornithologically more than to go birding in another state or area. Your president has just returned from a sailing trip from Gulfport across the Gulf of Mexico to St. Petersburg, Florida, and on the Dry Tortugas.

Several trans-gulf migrants were visitors on the sailing sloop. A bob-o-link that was an overnight guest was so weak and exhausted that he expired the next day. Another bob-o-link landed on the stern of the boat calling to his mate to join him, and when she refused he remained only a few hours. Two female Cape May warblers flew in and enjoyed a light supper of raisins and potato chips. They became so friendly that they lit on our hats, heads, and shoulders and were our cabin mates until dawn's first rays.

Covering most of 16-acre Garden Key, one of seven islands that comprise the Dry Tortugas, is Fort Jefferson, an enormous structure begun in 1846, as part of a chain of sea-coast defenses. Inside and outside the fort, which is half a mile in perimeter, were many stragglers from a huge wave of migrants. The following species were observed at exceptionally close range: barn swallows, prairie warblers, grey-cheeked thrushes, Cape May warblers, black and white warblers, oven birds, black-throated blues, palm warblers, red starts, blackpolls, and yellow-throated warblers.

One of our great national wildlife spectacles occurs each year between May and September when the sooty terns assemble in numbers over 100,000 for their nesting season on Bush Key near Garden Key. Several hundred noddy terns, similar to the sooty in habit and size, nest with them in the low shrubbery. Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Floyd, members of our party, joined a group of Florida Audubon Society members and helped in their banding activities at Bush Key. As many as 200 frigate birds can be seen gliding endlessly on the thermal updrafts above the fort. These birds congregate during the tern season to enjoy an easy existence on fish pirated from the terns.

Mrs. Floyd and I returned to Gulfport by car from Key West via Sanibel Island, which is just south of Ft. Myers, Florida. We visited the "Ding" Darling Memorial Sanctuary where we had the unforgettable experience of seeing huge

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numbers of roseate spoonbills, white ibis, brown pelicans, reddish egrets, little blue herons, snowy egrets, Louisiana herons, black-necked stilts, black-crowned night herons, great blue herons, and common egrets. We can recommend unreservedly a trip to charming Sanibel Island as an outstanding avian pleasure.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you a happy summer and to ask that you help make your Society better and stronger by participating in our activities and being responsible for adding one new member to our rolls for the coming year.

Marjie Cleveland

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