

FIRST MISSISSIPPI RECORD OF THE MOUNTAIN PLOVER

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On 17 December 1988, shortly after 4:00 p.m., we drove from the north abutment area at Grenada dam onto the exposed bottom of Grenada Lake, Grenada Co., Mississippi, via a low-water road heading southeastward. About 0.5 mi. along this drive, on the east side of the road, we found a winter-plumaged adult Mountain Plover (*Charadrius montanus*). As is typical of the species, besides having an unmarked, completely brown topside, except for a whitish forehead, it had conspicuous buffy patches at each side of the breast and creamy white throat and underparts. The bird lacked the black lores and frontal bar of the breeding plumage. The distal third of the tail was dark brown to blackish. When seen in flight, the bird showed a faint thin white wingstripe and lighter brown upper tail. The feet and its longish legs appeared to be dull yellow. The bird gave no calls. As others have described the species, it was rather tame and approachable, allowing 30 photographs to be taken from distances of 12-30 feet (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Mountain Plover, photographed near Grenada dam, 17 December 1988.

The Mountain Plover was seen by about 20 more birders through its last sighting on 10 January 1989. Additional photographs were taken during this period. Some observers noted that the plover fed in areas of wet mud where rain water collected or flowed. It was often close to one or more Killdeer (*C. vociferus*). We observed several aggressive interactions between these species. On days after the last sighting there were heavy rains which caused the waters of Grenada Lake to rise, covering the exposed mudflats before 16 January. Presumably it was this loss of the mudflats which precipitated departure of the Mountain Plover.

While the Mountain Plover has not previously been reported in Mississippi, there are records from two adjacent states. A reliable observer saw two Mountain Plovers in a lespedeza field on 16 December 1951, in Arkansas Co., Arkansas (James and Neal 1986), a site 80-120 miles northwest of Grenada Co., Mississippi. A single bird was photographed during a stay from 6 to 15 January 1973, near Mobile Bay and the Gulf Coast at Magnolia Springs, Alabama (Imhof 1976). These dates are very similar to those of the present record. The species has also been reported in other southeastern states (Virginia, Georgia, Florida; DeSante and Pyle 1986). Thus, the Mountain Plover is a species which we might have expected to find eventually in Mississippi.

Photographs of the Mountain Plover at Grenada Lake are on file in the collections at the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science and at Mississippi State University.

Literature Cited

- DeSante, D., and P. Pyle. 1986. Distributional checklist of North American birds. Volume 1, U.S. and Canada. Artemesia Press, Lee Vining, California.
- Imhof, T.A. 1976. Alabama birds. 2nd edition. University of Alabama Press, University, Alabama.
- James, D.A., and J.C. Neal. 1986. Birds of Arkansas -- their distribution and abundance. University of Arkansas Press, Fayetteville, Arkansas.