

**JUDY TOUPS, A LEADER EXTRAORDINAIRE**

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MOS lost part of its foundation on February 27, 2007, with the death of Judith Toups in Decatur, Alabama. She was an active member for many years, a past president and a member of the records committee. She was instrumental in recruiting many others to the ranks of active birding. There surely are few, if any, birders on the coast who were not taught by Judy, and her influence is felt throughout the state.

Judy was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, on November 30, 1930, and grew up in that area on the Cape Ann peninsula northeast of Boston. In 1955 she married Jay Toups of Gulfport. Jay was in the Navy and Judy had six children while moving frequently as his career required. When Jay retired from the Navy in 1965 they settled in Gulfport.

Judy's interest in birds began when her parents gave her a bird feeder and she acquired a field guide. With nobody to teach her she studied on her own and became a nationally recognized expert. She wrote a column on birds for the Biloxi *Sun Herald* for thirty-five years. In the early 1980's Judy taught a series of bird identification classes in which she demonstrated her talent as a teacher. She led birding Elderhostels on the coast for several years. She was a director of the American Birding Association.

While probably best known to MOS members for her knowledge of birds, Judy was a multitalented person – seamstress, painter, writer, decorator, gourmet cook, tour leader extraordinaire, master teacher. Whatever was needed, whatever she was interested in, she mastered.

Judy was a founder of the Mississippi Coast Audubon Society and led the establishment of the Nest in Peace project for the protection of Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) colonies on the coastal beaches, which still continues.

After Hurricane Katrina, Judy led Operation Backyard Recovery, which focused on helping people and wildlife recover from damage to trees and habitat. She was instrumental in getting hundreds of donated bird books to people who lost theirs in the storm.

Many tributes have been written about Judy since her death. One was by Mark LaSalle, Director, Pascagoula River Audubon Center: “Judy was a wonderful person, a great advocate for conservation, a friend, and inspired many from all walks of life to watch the birds. . . . . Please do what Judy wanted all of us to do... look outside and enjoy nature.”