

## THE MISSISSIPPI KITE

Many unanswered questions have developed. For instance, how did the birds find this spot in the first place? How long have they been coming here? Although there was a Vermilion Flycatcher reported on a Christmas Count in the 1960's at the Yazoo Wildlife Refuge by the manager, Mr. Cunningham, there have been no subsequent reports. Such a vivid and cooperative bird should have been noticed even by amateurs in the past years. Do we see the same birds year after year, or offspring of the birds? The 2 birds we observed this year were brilliant male adults which probably means they are at least 2 years old. With no accompanying immatures this year, will we have any more birds next year if these die? Where do they breed? Ours must pass up numerous ideal wintering sites each year on their way to Lake Jackson, unless they breed closer to us than the southwestern U.S. where they normally breed.

There are many more questions, the answers to which can be obtained only through more thorough study. The task of answering these questions could prove challenging, intriguing, and enjoyable.

Scarlet Tanager Breeding in Lee County

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In a six-acre stand of mixed hardwoods owned by J. E. Wesson, one mile west of Guntown, Lee County, Mississippi, a pair of Scarlet Tanagers (Piranga olivacea) raised at least three young.

A male and female tanager were first seen by me on 14 April 1974. A male bird was seen again on 5 May. I do not know whether these were migrating birds or the breeding pair since these two sightings were made during brief visits to the area.

The possibility of the birds remaining in the area was brought to the attention of Mr. and Mrs. Wesson. On 8 June between 06:30 and 07:00, Mrs. Wesson was awakened by a thump on the bedroom window screen. A Scarlet Tanager fledgling was clinging to the screen. An adult male hovered nearby and called until the young bird left the screen. A few minutes later a second fledgling flew into the screen. Again the male bird came and coaxed the young bird away. This happened one more time.

At least the last two fledglings flew to the screen from the same direction and left in a different direction. Mrs. Wesson was certain that these were three different individuals.

After hearing the above account myself, I hoped for an easy-to-find nest nearby. Unfortunately, it was not until 14 July that I was able to get to the area and search for the nest. I was unable to find it.

The previously known breeding range of the Scarlet Tanager extends south to west-central Tennessee and northwestern and central Alabama

(Bent, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 203, 1965). This species is a well-known migrant in Mississippi and M.O.S. members should be on the lookout for breeding individuals in the northeastern part of the state.

### Nesting of the Mottled Duck in Mississippi

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The Mottled Duck (Anas fulvigula maculosa) is a resident species along the Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas coasts and nests only in remote marshes within this area. Twelve nesting records have been reported from 18 April to 20 August in Texas and four records, 23 April to 1 June from Louisiana. Little nesting data from Mississippi are available (Bent 1923, Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl, U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 126). Few data are available on the specific marsh habitat where nests have been found.

On 4 April 1975 we found the nest and 6 eggs of the Mottled Duck on a marsh island on the west side of Saint Louis Bay, Hancock Co., Mississippi. The marsh in this area was composed primarily of 2 m high Black Rush (Juncus roemerianus). The nest was located in an area of living Juncus that had been blown over by the wind and was approximately 100 m from the 2 nearest bodies of water. The nest was well concealed and could not be seen from above. An adult was flushed from the nest on that day and the following day. Bent (1923) reports that only the female incubates the eggs in the closely related Florida Duck (Anas fulvigula fulvigula). On 25 April 1975 we found only shell fragments in the nest.

The marshes of Saint Louis Bay are haphazardly managed by trappers for muskrat (Ondatra zibethica) and nutria (Myocastor coypus). The type of habitat mentioned above lasts only a year or 2. The blown-over Juncus dies and the marsh is burned by trappers during the winter. Two to 5 years are required before the marsh returns to the high Juncus state. The high Juncus stage of marsh succession is very dense, while other stages are more open and might render the nest vulnerable to the many raccoons (Procyon lotor) found on this marsh.

B. E. Gandy provided data from the Mississippi Museum of Natural Sciences on 2 previous Mississippi nest records of the Mottled Duck. S. G. Clawson and L. E. Williams collected 1 Mottled Duck egg found on the ground in a marsh near Claiborne in Hancock County. They also collected 6 eggs from a clutch of 7 near Lakeshore in Hancock County. The dates with these eggs are 22 April and 1 July 1962, respectively. Adults of the species are frequently reported in Hancock County (W. H. Turcotte 1960, MOS Newsletter 5(4):2; 1962 7(1):1). An adult female and four young were observed on August 16, 1971 and reported to W. H. Turcotte (1971, MOS Newsletter 16(3):5).