

BIRD-WATCHERS ARISE!

by

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Bird-watchers arise! In this age of awakening awareness of the adverse effects of man's exploitation of the environment we are finally being recognized. The activists among us have been recognized in courts across the nation. They have captured public opinion that will make the environment an important issue in the 1972 elections. We are no longer the "little old ladies in tennis shoes", but rather, we are a sizable cross-section of American society. The following paragraph reveals something of the scope of our fellowship. It is excerpted from a preview of the 1970 National Survey of Hunting and Fishing and was presented last September by Daniel W. Slater of the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife at the American Fisheries Society Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City.

"We are particularly intrigued by the fact that the number of mandays of birdwatching, nature walking, and wildlife photography together totalled 847 million days in 1970, or nearly nine percent more than the total number of mandays of hunting and fishing. Further, the mandays of birdwatching were double those of hunting and were over three-fourths those of fishing. Nature walking days exceeded hunting by three-fourths and were two-thirds of fishing days. Although both birdwatching and nature walking are enjoyed by more women than men and by women more intensively, the contrasts are not great. These activities, then, are ones for fish and wildlife managers to conjure with!"

This surge of bird-watching interest is evidenced in Mississippi by the recent formation of Audubon chapters in Starkville and Jackson. If the interest is not new in Mississippi, it is at least newly surfaced to public attention. Allan Cruickshank, in summarizing the sixty-fifth Audubon Christmas bird count (1964-1965) reported: "As usual, the sad lack of interest in birding in Mississippi was reflected in only one report from Moon Lake (Lula), and this count was initiated by the ever-enthusiastic Ben Coffey of Memphis, Tenn." Such a state of affairs is no more. In 1970-1971 there were six Christmas bird

counts in the state - perhaps there were even more this year. On another interest front over 700 Mississippians completed questionnaires in the Purple Martin survey we initiated this year. There are people interested in birds in Mississippi - let's cultivate that interest. We have a tremendous natural resource in our wildlife and we have a population that is ready and eager to learn about and enjoy this resource. I challenge you to seize this opportunity to share your interest and your knowledge of Mississippi birds with your friends and community. Tell your friends about the MOS; take them birding with you; bring them to our spring meeting. Offer your services to a local boy scout, girl scout, 4-H or other civic group - believe me, you're wanted.
