

Smith, R. L. 1968. In A. C. Bent. Life histories of North American cardinals, grosbeaks, buntings, towhees, finches, sparrows and allies. U. S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 237.

Douglas Branch McNair  
College of Sciences  
Department of Zoology  
Clemson University  
Clemson, SC 29631

SHOREBIRDS AT LAKE OKTIBBEHA, MISSISSIPPI  
IN THE FALL OF 1980

Douglas Branch McNair

I visited Lake Oktibbeha, Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, nineteen times from 22 August-7 November 1980 and recorded 20 species. Visits were usually spaced 3-4 days apart, in accord with International Shorebird Survey guidelines and constraints on my time. Counts were exact; "peep" numbers were rounded off on several dates because of their feeding movements. Birds were aged/sexed where possible or convenient.

Lake Oktibbeha is public and is easily accessible. The dam burst during the winter of 1979-1980, followed by a summer drought. By August of 1980 more than half the lake had drained. Flats one-half mile long by 100-200 feet wide existed on the west and north sides and almost all shorebirds were recorded here. Disturbance was light to moderate, usually by fishermen. Normally, when the lake is full, powerboats are the most common cause of disturbance, but shallow water prohibited water skiing. There are few prior records of migrating shorebirds at this site, perhaps because normal water levels preclude stopover. Migration during the fall of 1980 indicates that shorebirds may be numerous. Stopover appears to be opportunistic, but this is speculating without weight, molt, and banding/markings data. Almost all species were observed feeding;

few rested though several isolated areas were available. Data are biased toward high numbers because visits were timed to follow northerly fronts as much as possible. Peaks of passage were early September with a smaller peak in mid-October. The last two dates had biased results because flats were covered by the effects of recent heavy rains and coverage was discontinued.

Species list and abbreviated remarks follow:

Semipalmated Plover	11 dates: 22 August - 27 September; maximum of 9 on 7 September.
Killdeer	18 dates: 22 August - 7 November; maximum of 20 on 22 August.
Lesser Golden Plover	1 adult in molt on 15 September. Some gold spangling left on mantle and half of black on belly gone. Tame and feeding.
Black-bellied Plover	1 adult in molt on 29 August. Retained most breeding plumage. Bird called and circled lake, eventually flying out.
Common Snipe	8 dates: 11 September - 22 October; maximum of 27 on 11 October.
Spotted Sandpiper	16 dates: 22 August - 22 October; maximum of 4 on 7 September.
Greater Yellowlegs	3 dates: 17 September - 29 October; maximum of 5 on 17 September.
Lesser Yellowlegs	8 dates: 22 August - 22 October; maximum of 10 on 17 September;
Red Knot	Flock of 6 adults on 29 August; one had almost completed molt into winter plumage. This bird separated from flock and was also seen on 3, 7 September. It rested as well as fed. Second inland MS record.

Pectoral Sandpiper	12 dates: 22 August - 11 October; maximum of 8 on 23 September.
Least Sandpiper	18 dates: 22 August - 29 October; maximum of 80 on 22 October. However, major passage occurred the second week of September.
Dunlin	6 on 22 October.
Short-billed Dowitcher	9 dates: 22 August - 19 September; maximum of 7 adults on 25 August.
Long-billed Dowitcher	5 on 11 October. Fed with Stilt Sandpipers.
Stilt Sandpiper	8 dates: 22 August - 11 October; maximum of 4.
Semipalmated Sandpiper	3 dates: 22-29 August; maximum of 10.
Western Sandpiper	12 dates: 22 August - 11 October; maximum of 40 on 3 September. There are few previous inland records for MS and prior inland maximum was 11 on 25 October 1977 at Greenville (GEA).
"peep", spp.	17 dates: 22 August - 22 October; maximum of 60 on 3 September. Most were probably Western Sandpipers.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	4 juveniles on 15 September and 1 on 30 September, the latter flying over and calling. The former were feeding on baked lake beds, picking and probing on the surface and cake crevices and above ground on grasses, sedges, and <u>Polygonum</u> .
Sanderling	7 adults in flock in 3 September; 3 adults in flock on 17 September.



Northern Phalarope

1 on 7 September. Unsure of age or sex. Feeding near shore with other shorebirds. Called several times. Sixth MS record.

Douglas Branch McNair  
College of Sciences  
Department of Zoology  
Clemson University  
Clemson, SC 29631

The Walter F. Coxe Research Fund of the Birmingham Audubon Society, honoring a much-loved, and still active, founding member of the Society, provides small grants to persons conducting scientific research, in any area of endeavor, which has clear applicability to environmental issues, particularly as they affect Alabama. The projects themselves need not necessarily be carried out in Alabama, however. The grants so far have been less than \$500 each, and are intended as "seed" money to initiate projects. We are especially interested in hearing from graduate students, or others outside the mainstream of normal funding. A full description of the Fund, including details of the application, is available from Chairman, Walter F. Coxe Research Fund, Birmingham Audubon Society, P. O. Box 314, Birmingham, Alabama 35294.