



The Official Newsletter
of the
Kansas Ornithological Society

The Horned Lark

Box 36, Nekoma, Kansas 67559

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Vol. 16, No. 2

WINTER FEEDERS / December 88 through February 89 / by Scott Seltman

For the second winter in a row the excitement level among Kansas birders was quite low. The horrible birding was probably a combination of several factors, not the least of which was the Drought of '88. Bird numbers seemed low across the board with some species being incredibly scarce. Even the most casual observers noticed the remarkable lack of finches. Not a single crossbill was reported in the state, suggesting that if they were present at all their numbers must have been very low. And at feeders where Pine Siskins had dined by the hundreds last winter, only one or two were seen all season long.

December and January were quite dull weather-wise across Kansas. Winters are often quite dry in Kansas but this winter was especially so. Some areas had virtually zero precipitation during the entire period. Temperatures were not particularly warm, but were never really cold either. An almost complete lack of snowfall anywhere in the state made early winter seem rather mild. The last few days of January saw temperatures in the 70's and 80's in western Kansas and it almost seemed as if winter were going to pass us by. But then came February! On February 1 a cold air mass that had been centered over Alaska for over a month broke loose and plunged southward across the plains. Some parts of the state saw temperatures fall over 100 degrees in just two days and many localities in the west reached -20 F degrees several days in a row. Had such an arctic weather system occurred early in the winter we might have seen a fascinating movement of northern birds into our state, but coming as it did near the edge of spring this weather event produced no birds of interest. Throughout the rest of February the weather in Kansas remained schizophrenic with very cold weather alternating with very warm. By the last weekend of the season shorebirds and waterfowl were moving north and daytime highs were over 90 in the west.

Where were the birds this winter? Well, apparently the finches were at higher latitudes. Drought patterns over the central U.S. in 1988 had actually created a very wet summer in Canada and an excellent cone crop, giving finches little reason to leave. And in Colorado most finches spent the winter high in the mountains. Waterfowl were scarce in the west where the lakes were low and mostly frozen, but in the east their numbers were high. Many observers agreed that John Redmond Reservoir was the one bright spot in this winter's birding picture and many of the following records come from there.

A few species were unusually common this winter. Mountain Bluebirds could be found all winter at several localities with a few making their way across Kansas into western Missouri. The Northern Shrike invasion that began in October out west continued until early January. Golden-crowned Kinglets were mentioned by many birders as being quite common in their area and were a daily sight all winter in Pawnee County.

The list of rarities begins with the Trumpeter Swan family that remained at Marais des Cygne for several weeks. This makes the fifth winter in a row that birds from Minnesota have stopped in Kansas. Let's hope the trend continues. Ten years ago anyone reporting a Franklin's Gull north of the Gulf Coast in January would have been laughed at, but the eleven individuals at John Redmond represent a growing trend for this species to winter inland. The same is true for Bonaparte's, a species that seems to become more abundant every fall in Kansas. The Varied Thrush reported from Wichita was the third in as many months in our state. Is this bird truly rare in Kansas or has it just gone unnoticed in backyards all these years? One interesting thing to note about Varied Thrushes is that knowing much about birds seems to be a handicap when attempting to find one; news of their whereabouts normally comes as second or third hand information from a friend or neighbor who makes an offhand remark about the "funny" Robin that they saw hopping beneath their lawn furniture.

The Golden-crowned Sparrow found by Tom Shane and Sara Norman at Scott Lake was definitely the find of the season. It was probably the same individual that had been seen by Dave Rintoul on the CBC a year earlier. The bird was not particularly tame but was eventually seen by all who pursued it and remained long enough to make it on this year's CBC as well. Considering this bird's ability to get lost in its host flock of Harris' and White-crowns it is easy to see why this sparrow has been reported only a handful of times in Kansas.

Only a few written reports were received by the editor for this season. If you notice that your own important sightings are missing please submit them for inclusion in the next seasonal summary. For a more complete look at the birding situation this winter refer to the March Bulletin which contains the annual CBC report. The next reporting period will cover the months of March through July 1989. Many reports are already in but I know of several great birds that have not yet been documented.

BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS / December 1988 through February 1989

Common Loon	1 at LaCygne L. Wintering?	LM	1-22-89	Linn
Horned Grebe	1 late bird at Perry	LM,MM	12-18-88	Jefferson
Eared Grebe	2 on Cedar Bluff	SS	12-10-88	Trego
White Pelican	15 at John Redmond	LM,MM	1-15-89	Coffey
			to 1-22-89	Coffey
Great Blue Heron	21 birds at John Redmond	LM,MM	1-15-89	Coffey
Tundra Swan	1 at MDC compared directly with family of Trumpeters. Yellow mark on bill.	SC,LM,RP	2-18-89	Linn
Trumpeter Swan	5 at MDC first found by Mike Blair. Part of reintroduced population at Hennepin Park, Minn. Present for several weeks and seen by multiple observers.		2-18-89	Linn
White-fronted Goose	1 bird creamy white overall but with normal belly markings, bill and feet, and with no Snow Goose markings. A case of leucism or schizochroism?	DS,SS	2-25-89	Stafford
Ross' Goose	1 with Snows at J. Redmond	LM,MM	12-11-88	Coffey
Ross' Goose	2 ad. 1 juv. near MDC	BF,LM,MM	2-18-89	Linn
Black Duck	1 at Wolf Creek	BF,LM,MM	1-15-89	Coffey

Cinnamon Teal	1 early male	DS,SS	2-25-89	Stafford
Greater Scaup	1 male, 3 females	LM,MM,SP,DS,SS	1-02-89	Trego
Bald Eagle	30	LM	12-11-88	Coffey
Bald Eagle	60	LM	1-15-89	Coffey
Bald Eagle	89	LM	2-24-89	Coffey
Golden Eagle	1 imm. in backyard!!	SS	12-01-88	Rush
Golden Eagle	3	SS	12-03-88	Morton
Golden Eagle	2	SS	12-03-88	Stanton
Golden Eagle	2	SS	12-03-88	Hamilton
Golden Eagle	1 imm. Rare in east.	LM	1-22-89	Linn
Merlin	1	SS	12-05-88	Rush
Killdeer	3 uncommon winter residents	BF,LM,MM	1-15-89	Coffey
Franklin's Gull	1 in breeding plumage	LM	12-18-89	Jefferson
Franklin's Gull	11 birds at John Redmond	LM	1-15-89	Coffey
Franklin's Gull	1	LM	1-15-89	Osage
Franklin's Gull	8	LM	1-22-89	Coffey
Franklin's Gull	1	LM	1-28-89	Douglas
Franklin's Gull	1	LM	2-11-89	Coffey
Bonaparte's Gull	125	LM	1-15-89	Coffey
Bonaparte's Gull	70	LM	1-22-89	Coffey
Thayer's Gull	1st winter bird	GG,LM	1-22-89	Coffey
Glaucous Gull	1 imm.	LM,MM	12-11-88	Coffey
Glaucous Gull	1	BF,LM,MM	1-15-89	Coffey
Glaucous Gull	1	GG,LM	1-22-89	Coffey
Glaucous Gull	1 adult at Perry	RR	1-31-89	Jefferson
			to	2-06-89
Glaucous Gull	1	DB,LM	2-04-89	Douglas
Eastern Screech-Owl	1 trapped in shed	SS	12-30-88	Pawnee
Ladder-backed Wood.	2 females Boy Scout area	SS	12-03-88	Morton
White-br. Nuthatch	1	SS	12-03-88	Morton
Carolina Wren	2	LM	1-15-89	Coffey
Carolina Wren	1	LM	1-22-89	Coffey
Carolina Wren	1	LM	2-10-89	Linn
Carolina Wren	1	LM	2-19-89	Linn
Carolina Wren	2	LM	2-24-89	Coffey
Bewick's Wren	2	LM	12-11-88	Coffey
Mountain Bluebird	75	SS	12-10-88	Trego
Mountain Bluebird	30+	LM,MM,SP,DS,SS	1-02-89	Trego
Mountain Bluebird	5	SS	1-15-89	Pawnee
Mountain Bluebird	2	SS	1-17-89	Pawnee
Varied Thrush	1 present for 2 weeks	BB	1- -89	Sedgwick
(Wichita apparently had one or two birds all winter. Reports continued into March, but no details were submitted to the editor.)				
Northern Shrike	1 imm.	SS	12-02-88	Rush
Northern Shrike	2 adults on river road	SS	12-03-88	Hamilton
Northern Shrike	1	SS	12-04-88	Pawnee
Northern Shrike	1 ad.	SS	12-10-88	Trego
Northern Shrike	1 ad.	SS	12-11-88	Rush
Northern Shrike	1 ad.	SS	12-12-88	Pawnee
Northern Shrike	1 imm.	SS	12-17-88	Rush
Northern Shrike	1	SS	12-20-88	Pawnee
Northern Shrike	1	SS	1-04-89	Pawnee
Northern Shrike	1	SS	1-14-89	Rush
Yellow-rumped Warb.	2 birds. Rare in winter.	LM	12-11-88	Wyandotte
Northern Cardinal	1	SS	12-03-88	Morton
Golden-crowned Sp.	1 winter adult seen at south end of Scott State Park. Several photos.	TS,SN	1-01-89	Scott
	Same bird seen by DB,TC,LM,MM,SP,DS,SS		1-02-89	Scott

White-crowned Sp.	extremely scarce	LM	Winter E. Kansas
Longspurs	Hundreds of longspurs seen along K-27 n. of St. Francis including McCown's, Chestnut-collareds, and Laplands.	RR	1-14-89 Cheyenne
Great-tailed Grackle	50+ birds wintering	BF,LM,MM	12-11-88 Coffey to 2-25-89 Coffey
Pine Siskin	1 lone bird	LM	12-11-88 Coffey
House Finch	1 bird at feeder	LM	2-20-89 Johnson

LIST OF OBSERVERS: Bob Braden (BB), Dave Bryan (DB), Ted Cable (TC), Steve Crawford (SC), Bob Fisher (BF), Greg Griffith (GG), Mick McHugh (MM), Lloyd Moore (LM), Sara Norman (SN), Richard Parker (RP), Sebastian Patti (SP), Richard Rucker (RR), Diane Seltman (DS), Scott Seltman (SS), Tom Shane (TS),

CORRECTIONS TO SEASONAL SUMMARY IN VOL. 16, NO. 1.

Add:

Common Loon	max. of 28 at Perry Res.	RR	11-03-88 Jefferson
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Delete:

Little Blue Heron	nesting with Great Blues	RR	1988	Jefferson
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(This line in the previous Horned Lark was the result of a misunderstanding. Little Blues are suspected of breeding in the Perry Lake area but have never been confirmed as breeders in Jefferson County.)

KOS SPRING MEETING REPORT

The Spring Meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society was held at Camp Aldrich in eastern Barton County on May 6 and 7, 1989. Attendance was somewhat low, no doubt affected by reports that Cheyenne Bottoms was dry. But the 40 or so members who did attend all seemed to have a wonderful time.

Cheyenne Bottoms was almost dry with only a few putrid pools remaining, but this proved to be an excellent cure for "dikeitis*" and the resulting change in birding strategy proved very successful. A remarkable 169 species were recorded on Saturday and Sunday which was quite near the all-time record for a KOS field trip. Quivira National Wildlife Refuge was the destination of all birding parties with stops in Barton, Rice, and Stafford Counties. Quivira was nearly dry as well, but most observers still saw many shorebirds and waterfowl.

The best birds recorded included at least two Peregrine Falcons, Greater Prairie Chicken, King Rail, Sandhill Crane, several Piping Plovers, Whimbrel, singing Alder Flycatchers, Hooded Warbler, and a LeConte's Sparrow. The birds NOT seen were even more astonishing. Who could have imagined that 40 observers visiting Barton and Stafford Counties in mid-May could miss the following: Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret (!!!), Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Lesser Scaup, Golden Plover, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Willow Flycatcher, Indigo Bunting (!), and Brewer's Blackbird. Amazing! Had these birds been seen, along with a few common warblers, the weekend list could have been nearer 185 species.

dikeitis* A common disease afflicting visiting birders in central Kansas.

The primary symptom is an overwhelming belief that all birds of interest can be seen from the dike roads at Cheyenne Bottoms. Sufferers have been known to spend three-day weekends driving the dikes from dawn to dusk. Treatment is readily available in the surrounding countryside.

BIRD LIST FROM THE 1989 KOS SPRING MEETING / May 6 to May 7 (1 PM)

Pied-billed Grebe	Willet	House Wren
Eared Grebe	Spotted Sandpiper	Marsh Wren
White Pelican	Upland Sandpiper	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Double-crested Cormorant	Whimbrel	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
American Bittern	Hudsonian Godwit	Eastern Bluebird
Great Blue Heron	Marbled Godwit	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Great Egret	Sanderling	Swainson's Thrush
Snowy Egret	Semipalmated Sandpiper	American Robin
Green-backed Heron	Western Sandpiper	Gray Catbird
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Least Sandpiper	Northern Mockingbird
White-faced Ibis	White-rumped Sandpiper	Brown Thrasher
Snow (Blue) Goose	Baird's Sandpiper	Cedar Waxwing
Canada Goose	Pectoral Sandpiper	Loggerhead Shrike
Wood Duck	Stilt Sandpiper	Starling
Green-winged Teal	Long-billed Dowitcher	Bell's Vireo
Mallard	Common Snipe	Warbling Vireo
Northern Pintail	Wilson's Phalarope	Red-eyed Vireo
Blue-winged Teal	Franklin's Gull	Orange-crowned Warbler
Cinnamon Teal	Ring-billed Gull	Yellow Warbler
Northern Shoveler	Forster's Tern	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Gadwall	Least Tern	American Redstart
American Widgeon	Black Tern	Northern Waterthrush
Redhead	Rock Dove	Common Yellowthroat
Ring-necked Duck	Mourning Dove	Hooded Warbler
Bufflehead	Barn Owl	Wilson's Warbler
Ruddy Duck	Eastern Screech-Owl	Northern Cardinal
Turkey Vulture	Great Horned Owl	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Mississippi Kite	Burrowing Owl	Black-headed Grosbeak
Osprey	Common Nighthawk	Lazuli Bunting
Northern Harrier	Chuck-will's-widow	Dickcissel
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Chimney Swift	Rufous-sided Towhee
Cooper's Hawk	Belted Kingfisher	Chipping Sparrow
Swainson's Hawk	Red-headed Woodpecker	Clay-colored Sparrow
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Field Sparrow
American Kestrel	Downy Woodpecker	Vesper Sparrow
Peregrine Falcon	Hairy Woodpecker	Lark Sparrow
Ring-necked Pheasant	Northern Flicker	Savannah Sparrow
Greater Prairie Chicken	Alder Flycatcher	Grasshopper Sparrow
Turkey	Least Flycatcher	LeConte's Sparrow
Northern Bobwhite	Eastern Phoebe	Song Sparrow
King Rail	Great-Crested Flycatcher	Lincoln's Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Western Kingbird	Swamp Sparrow
Sora	Eastern Kingbird	White-crowned Sparrow
Common Moorhen	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Harris' Sparrow
American Coot	Horned Lark	Bobolink
Sandhill Crane	Purple Martin	Red-winged Blackbird
Black-bellied Plover	Tree Swallow	Eastern Meadowlark
Snowy Plover	Rough-winged Swallow	Western Meadowlark
Semipalmated Plover	Bank Swallow	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Piping Plover	Cliff Swallow	Great-tailed Grackle
Killdeer	Barn Swallow	Common Grackle
Black-necked Stilt	Blue Jay	Brown-headed Cowbird
American Avocet	Black-billed Magpie	Orchard Oriole
Greater Yellowlegs	American Crow	Northern Oriole
Lesser Yellowlegs	Black-capped Chickadee	House Finch
Solitary Sandpiper	White-breasted Nuthatch	American Goldfinch
TOTAL SPECIES: 169		House Sparrow

REGISTERED ATTENDEES / KOS SPRING MEETING 1989

NEKOMA
Scott Seltman
Diane Seltman

LARNED
Al Seltman
Jean Seltman

HAYS
Earl Carlson
Charles Ely
Donna Cooper
Annie Laurie Steele

WILSON
Mike Rader

MCPHERSON
Allen Jahn

NEWTON
Rose Fritz
Jane Hershberger
Dwight Platt
Bob Regier
Richard Schmidt

WICHITA
Pete Janzen
Debbie Janzen
Dennis Zehr

EMPORIA
Marvin Schwilling

OTTAWA
Martin Brockway
Johnnie Brockway

BALDWIN CITY
Roger Boyd
Jan Boyd
Jon Boyd
Margaret Boyd
Katharine Kelley

TOPEKA
Eugene Lewis
Eulalia Lewis
Sarah Merrill
Mae Ahlstrom

LAWRENCE
David Seibel

KANSAS CITY METRO
Dave Bryan
Linda Bryan
Mike Whited
Mick McHugh
Lloyd Moore
Steve Crawford
Richard Parker

LEAVENWORTH
John Schukman

DENVER, COLORADO
Bob Righter

KOS RARE-BIRD-ALERT HOTLINE

Call (316)-343-7061 for birding information and the location of state rarities.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 7-8, 1989 KOS Fall Meeting, Baker University, Baldwin City, KS.

May 5-6, 1990 KOS Spring Meeting, Cimarron Grasslands, Elkhart, KS.
(The dates for this meeting are still tentative. Suggestions concerning
the nature of field trips will be welcome at the Fall Meeting.)

Sept. , 1990 KOS Fall Meeting, Newton, KS.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The next issue of the Horned Lark will contain the long-awaited publication of new county records. Also, several items that have not been published because of space limitations may possibly make it into print. Birders who have records of interest from this year's spring and summer months should mail them promptly as the Seasonal Summary is already written.

Members who miss an issue of the Horned Lark should contact the Business Manager, NOT the editor. The editor has no additional copies for mailing.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION

An issue to be discussed at the Fall Meeting this October involves the ICBP and its role in conservation matters here in Kansas. The ICBP has categorized Cheyenne Bottoms as critical habitat for migratory birds in North America and is committed to helping save this vital refuge. It will be up to the members as to whether KOS becomes affiliated with this organization. We also must decide the membership level that we would be willing to maintain in the long-term. The American branch of the ICBP is chaired by Stan Senner, Kansas native and longtime KOS member. The following excerpts were taken from a letter addressed to David Seibel this winter:

30 November, 1988

Dear Mr. Seibel:

As you well know, every day there are decisions made in our Nation's capital that affect bird populations throughout the country, if not the hemisphere and the world. Many conservation organizations are represented in Washington. But bird-related issues important to us all are not being adequately addressed due to broad agendas, limited budgets, and competition for staff time.

The United States Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) is trying to create a new national focus on the conservation of birds and their habitats. The purpose of this letter is to invite your help.

Founded in 1922, ICBP today has a small professional staff based in Cambridge, England and national sections or volunteer representatives in about 100 nations. This worldwide network supports the exchange of information and urgently-needed research, provides technical assistance, and advocates scientifically-based policies for bird preservation.

We are proud of ICBP'S achievements, but we could do much more. The reality of today's conservation agenda in the United States is that many bird problems--and opportunities--are simply not being tackled. We believe that ICBP can make a difference by concentrating exclusively on bird conservation.

We are inviting state, regional, and local ornithological organizations and bird clubs to make contributions to help ICBP-US build a professional presence in our Nation's capital. ICBP-US is a tax-deductible organization, and your contribution at any level with help.

Will you take advantage of the opportunities that ICBP-US can provide? You can help by taking up--and supporting--this request at the next meeting of your organization's council or board. We well know that funds are scarce. But we also know that birds are terribly important to us all, and we believe that ICBP-US is poised to make a difference when and where it counts.

Sincerely,

Stanley E. Senner
Chairman

P.S. As a long-time KOS member (since 8th Grade), I hope my many Kansas friends will share my belief that ICBP is worthy of support!

Bring your thoughts on this matter before the annual business meeting where membership in the ICBP will be voted upon. A long and growing list of state organizations have become members.

