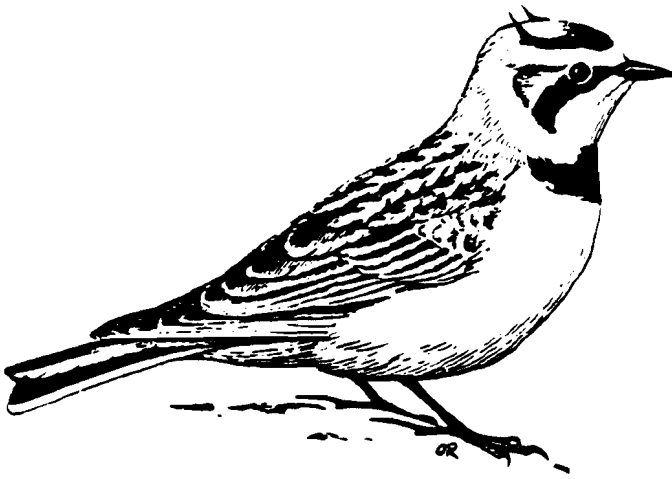

The Official Newsletter
of the
Kansas Ornithological Society



The Horned Lark

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KENN KAUFMAN TO SPEAK AT KOS BANQUET

Kenn Kaufman, nationally acclaimed writer, birder, tour leader and author of the newly published FIELD GUIDE TO ADVANCED BIRDING will be the guest speaker at the banquet scheduled for Saturday evening, October 6, held in conjunction with the Kansas Ornithological Society's annual fall meeting. He will also be making a presentation at a paper session during the day.

Kenn, who lived in Wichita during his youth, is currently an associate editor of the American Birds, a National Audubon Society publication. He also writes articles for American Birds, Birding, Birdwatcher's Digest and other magazines and occasionally leads birding trips for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

Needless to say, we are very excited about our guest speaker and hope you are too. Join us that first week-end in October - good food - good fellowship - good birding - and a great speaker! What more can we ask for?

1990 KOS Fall Meeting Committee
Rose Fritz, Chairperson

A NOTE FROM OUR GUEST SPEAKER

"Whether we look at birds for gentle enjoyment, for active birding pursuits, or for science, we want to be able to name the species we encounter. Learning to recognize the birds we see and hear is a haphazard process for most of us--and ideally it's an ongoing thing, as we continue to become more familiar with them. I'm going to talk about that learning process itself. I'll draw examples from my own experiences (I've made every mistake you can imagine, and then some!) to talk about pitfalls to watch out for, the best kinds of field marks to notice, ways to avoid being misled by books, the best approaches to studying different groups of birds, and strategies for dealing with the really confusing groups, without falling into utter despair! Finally, I'll say a little about the pleasures of getting to know the birds beyond merely knowing their names."

Kenn Kaufman

REGISTRATION FORMS FOR THE FALL MEETING ARE ELSEWHERE IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

KANSAS CHECKLIST COMMITTEE CHANGES LEADERSHIP

The KOS Checklist Committee is now headed by Charles A. Ely and Max C. Thompson. All information on new sightings and county records should be sent to: Charles A. Ely, Dept. of Biology, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas 67601-4099. Out of the ordinary records should be accompanied by substantiating evidence. This evidence will be sent to members of the checklist committee and, in due time, they will render their opinion.

The rules and regulations governing the actions of the committee are in the process of being written. Any comments by members of the society on this are welcome.

Max C. Thompson

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON COLOR MARKED SOUTHERN BALD EAGLES

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. has banded and color marked Bald Eagle nestlings for the sixth year along the Texas Gulf Coast. This study was initiated in 1985 to determine pre and post fledging survival, nest site use prior to migration and migration routes. The nesting Southern Bald Eagles arrive in Texas during late August and September and leave during May-July.

The birds being color marked are 6-9 weeks old at banding time. The right wing is marked with a yellow patagial tag with an alphanumeric (T-01 through T-114). The left wing is marked with blue (light) patagial tag with a yellow spot. These wing markers can usually be seen only in flight. In addition, all birds are banded with a #9 USFWS rivet band on one leg and a color rivet band on the opposite leg. The color leg bands used in previous years were plastic and retention was poor. Birds banded this year have a 3 cm green aluminum band with alphanumeric T-90 through T-114 in white. If you see or hear of an eagle with such markings, please notify the Bird Banding Laboratory, Laurel, MD, 20708 and David W. Mabie, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., 715 South Bronte, Rockport, Texas 78382 (Telephone 512-729-2315).

The date of observation, exact location and, if possible, the color of leg band, and which leg it is on, is of particular importance.

1990 KANSAS WINTER BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

The 1990 Kansas Winter Bird Feeder Survey (KWBFS) held from Jan. 19-22 resulted in 774 returned survey forms. The average total count for two days of feeder watching was nearly 50,000 birds. The total **numbers** were down from the previous year when 875 people participated in the count. Most of Kansas was represented with 83 counties reporting at least one count. Johnson County again had the most survey forms submitted at 175. As before, sunflowers and mixed seeds were the bird food of choice. Unsurprisingly, House Sparrows were the most common species coming to feeders, with Goldfinches coming in second and Starlings a close third. The next most numerous species encountered included Dark-eyed Juncos, Pine Siskins, and Cardinals in that order. During the four day count period, 83 species were seen.

Ken Brunson and John Briggs

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is my first issue as editor. Please let me have any comments you may have, especially use of a checklist for the KOS Spring Field Trip sightings, instead of a typed listing of species.

Don Vannoy

WINTER BIRD SUMMARY/ December 1989 through February 1990/ by Scott Seltman

One of the harder things to accept about living and birding in the middle of a continent is that we often get to experience weather from far-off exotic places but seldom get to experience the attendant birdlife. For example, Kansas weather had an absolutely arctic feel last December but few birds from the arctic visited our state. How cold was it? Well, for about 10 days beginning on December 14 the mercury stayed below freezing virtually statewide and for about half of that time stayed below zero. Here at Nekoma the coldest day was December 22 with a morning low of -30F and an afternoon high of -5F. With temperatures in the Dakotas falling to -60F and pushing -80F in southern Canada one would think that boreal birds would stream southward, but only a sprinkling of northern birds ever reached Kansas. The following scorecard from the winter months shows how minimal the northern invasion really was: Northern Goshawk (0), Snowy Owl (0), Bohemian Waxwing (6), Snow Bunting (1), Pine Grosbeak (0), Red Crossbill (<10), White-winged Crossbill (0), Common Redpoll (<20). All of these species wandered south with the cold weather but still remained to the north of Kansas. A few birds of northern origin were more common than normal this winter; Merlin, Short-eared Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Northern Shrike and Purple Finch were all locally abundant but these invasions began long before the arrival of cold weather.

Following the December chill January and February were relatively mild and seasonal across Kansas. Heavy snowfall occurred in western Kansas several times beginning in January with depths in excess of a foot covering some areas (especially Garden City) more than once. But none of these storms approached blizzard status and the snow seemed to have little effect on birds or their movements. Several species began moving north in unusually large numbers in late February even though the weather was not particularly warm. In eastern Kansas several birds arrived on record early dates.

The autumn invasion of montane birds into southwest Kansas that was discussed at length in the last issue of The Horned Lark continued through the winter. Scrub Jays wintered in several southwestern towns and Mountain Chickadees wandered as far northeast as Dodge City and Scott Lake. One Steller's Jay wintered in Satanta while others remained along the Cimarron in Morton County. Evening Grosbeaks were quite abundant in the southwest with up to 30 at a time visiting Shanes' feeder in Garden City. Common Redpolls wintered in Garden City and visited feeders there on snowy days, but were inexplicably shy whenever strangers were in town.

Of the following list of bird sightings one record was especially exciting for this writer. The Gyrfalcon which I found in Pawnee County was certainly a high point in my personal birding experience and created quite a stir (as in hornet's nest) among my birding friends. This pale gray immature was perched on a utility pole north of Sanford late in the day on Sunday, February 4. Despite immediate phone calls to other birders no one else saw this rare falcon, not even Diane who was on the scene within a half hour. Fieldmarks on this bird included: gray bill and legs, large black eye with dark feathering both fore and aft, a noticeable whisker mark separating the gray face and white throat, tear-shaped gray breast spots, light gray back with feathers edged in white creating a "scalloped" look, and a long tail extending well beyond wingtips with a prominent black subterminal band. In flight the falcon was massive with wingbeats much slower than Peregrine or Prairie Falcon. The wings were angular but rounded at the tip with the first primary feather shorter than the second and third. This Gyrfalcon probably had been brought south by the December cold wave and may have spent January well south of our state. With only one specimen and just a handful of undocumented sight records Gyrfalcon is certainly our state's rarest raptor. The chances of seeing one in Kansas are very slim, in fact it might be a once-in-a-lifetime thing. For this reason

many of the state's avid birders spent the balance of the winter brooding over their loss. Fortunately, this story has a happy ending which will be told in the next issue of this newsletter.

For more winter bird sightings see the March 1990 issue of the KOS Bulletin. Most of the following records were taken from the KOS Hotline. Written bird reports covering the period from March through July 1990 should be mailed to Scott Seltman, RR1 Box 36, Nekoma, KS 67559 as soon as possible.

BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS/ December 1989 through January 1990

| | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------|----------|------------|
| Horned Grebe | 2 early arrivals at Q | SS | 2-25-90 | Stafford |
| Tundra Swan | 2 at Elkhart sewer ponds | LS,RS | 12-13-89 | Morton |
| Trumpeter Swan | 6 on Havana Lake | AH | 2-07-90 | Montgomery |

(These birds arrived at Havana Lake on Wednesday morning and stayed until dark. They spent the previous day at Sunset Lake near Bartelsville, Oklahoma. Collar numbers 59, 60 and 61 confirmed these birds as being from Hennepin County, Minnesota.)

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|
| Ross' Goose | 1 at ElDorado Res. | PJ,DK,DV | 2-06-90 | Butler |
| American Black Duck | 2 at MDC | CH | 2-25-90 | Linn |
| Northern Pintail | <u>6000</u> at Wilson Res. | MR | 2-20-90 | Russell |
| Canvasback | 14 at Wilson Res. | MR | 2-06-90 | Russell |
| Canvasback | <u>500+</u> at Quivira | SS | 2-10-90 | Stafford |
| Oldsquaw | 1 on sewer ponds Clinton | BW | 2-25-90 | Douglas |
| Surf Scoter | 1 on Wilson Res. | MR | 12-05-89 | Russell |
| Common Merganser | 5000 at ElDorado Res. | PJ,DK,DV | 2-06-90 | Butler |
| Common Merganser | 6000 at Wilson Res. | MR | 2-06-90 | Russell |
| Common Merganser | <u>12,000</u> at Wilson Res. | MR | 2-20-90 | Russell |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 1 male with 2000 Commons | MR | 1-23-90 | Russell |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 1 male at ElDorado Res. | PJ,DK,DV | 2-06-90 | Butler |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 2 on John Redmond | MI | 2-24-90 | Coffey |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 1 on Melvern | DB,MM,DvS,JS | 2-24-90 | Osage |
| Turkey Vulture | 1 very early arrival | GP | <u>2-13-90</u> | Jefferson |
| Bald Eagle | <u>100+</u> upper end Milford | JM | 2-10-90 | Clay |

(These eagles were all in view at one time, perhaps the largest concentrations ever reported in Kansas. Ted Cable saw about 100 Bald Eagles at Tuttle Creek about this same date but they were scattered all around the reservoir.)

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Bald Eagle | 1 at nest Clinton Res. | DG | 2-24-90 | Douglas |
| Merlin | 1 s. of Timken | SS | 12-21-89 | Rush |
| Merlin | 1 in Garden City | SS | 1-01-90 | Finney |
| Merlin | 1 | SS | 1-31-90 | Pawnee |
| Merlin | 6 sightings | SS | February | Pawnee |
| Merlin | 1 | GP | 2-12-90 | Douglas |
| Peregrine Falcon | 1 at Cheyenne Bottoms | MS | 2-04-90 | Barton |
| Peregrine Falcon | adult e. LaCrosse | DLS | 1-08-90 | Rush |
| Peregrine Falcon | adult downtown Topeka | DLS | 1-10-90 | Shawnee |
| <u>Gyr Falcon</u> | 1 gray-phase immature | SS | 2-04-90 | Pawnee |
| Prairie Falcon | 1 at reclaimed mine | CH | 2-18-90 | <u>Linn</u> |
| Sandhill Crane | 1 in northwest corner | TG | <u>1-28-90</u> | <u>Crawford</u> |
| Sandhill Crane | 120 over town of Wilson | MR | 2-08-90 | Ellsworth |
| Least Sandpiper | 2 at Wilson Res. | MR | <u>12-01-89</u> | Russell |
| Baird's Sandpiper | 1 record early? | DB,MM,DvS,JS | <u>2-24-90</u> | Osage |
| American Woodcock | 1 displaying Otter Creek | MI | 2-28-90 | Coffey |
| Franklin's Gull | 1 at Clinton Res. | GP | <u>2-10-90</u> | Douglas |
| Thayer's Gull | 1 adult on John Redmond | BF,LM,MM | 1-21-90 | Coffey |
| Thayer's Gull | 1 adult below Tuttle | TC | 2-25-90 | Pott. |

(This individual was studied with a Questar at close range. Fieldmarks included a brown iris and very pale wingtips. Seen at the River Ponds.)

