

NEWSLETTER

KANSAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Department of Zoology

Number 28

Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 67602

January - February 1969

Grand Tour - 1968

Wilson and Eunice Dingus

When Wilson and I started our annual checklist of birds in Port Aransas, Texas, January 1, 1968, we were determined to total 500 for the first time in our birding career. Our previous record was in 1965 when we had identified 473.

We got off to a good start along the Central Texas Gulf coast, where Connie Hagar has made ornithological history. The spring migration was good around Rockport, and disappointing in the Santa Ana refuge in the Rio Grande valley.

Below the Falcon dam on the Rio Grande a pair of Green Kingfishers flew up and down stream where Wilson was fishing. Road "improvements" have ruined birding along the Sabinal and we saw the Black-capped Vireo but not the Golden-cheeked Warbler. For compensation Cave Swallows were flying between the Devil's Sinkhole and Del Rio. In Big Bend National Park we climbed a vertical trail to get the Colima Warbler. I got an even bigger thrill out of a Black-chinned Sparrow close beside me on the Lost Mine trail in the Chisos.

Southern Arizona is always a birder's paradise. We spent some time in a Cave Creek campground beside the Chiricahuas. Coppery-tailed Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, and Blue-throated, Rivoli and Lucifer's Hummingbirds were around the trailer; in the mountain peaks were Brown-throated Wren, Coue's Flycatcher, Mexican Junco and Olive Warbler, and at night we listened for Spotted and Whiskered Owls. Mexican Chickadees were in the Chiricahua National Monument's "Wonderland of Rocks."

From Douglas we drove over good desert roads to Guadalupe canyon for Thick-billed Kingbirds. A churlish rancher below Patagonia grudgingly permitted us to walk down Sonoita creek to find Rose-throated Becards, and both Black Hawks and Gray Hawks were nesting in the tall sycamores. Harlequin Quail exploded beneath my feet at Pena Blanca, west of Nogales. East of Tucson we flushed Rufous-winged Sparrows, and at Martinez Lake, north of Yuma, I found Abert's Towhees in the same small area they occupied when we were there the year before.

In California we combined visiting relatives with birding along the Seal Beach seas coast, at Tucker Sanctuary near Orange, in San Marino and downtown Los Angeles, and in the Sierra Nevadas east of Placerville. Perhaps the highlight of the summer was the sight of two California Condors soaring overhead in the Sespes.

The craggy Oregon coast yielded spectacular scenery, delightful July weather, and a view through binoculars of nesting sea birds. From Washington we stopped at Bear River Refuge in Utah, Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, Glacier National Park and the Bowdoin refuge in Montana, Theodore Roosevelt National Memorial Park in North Dakota, visited trailering friends in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and skirted all five of the Great Lakes on our way to Maine.

There in Acadia National Park I gleefully recorded No. 493 the morning of October 2, then fell off the stern and rockbound coast, breaking three ankle bones. For a month I looked only at hospital walls, and for the remainder of 1968 all birding had to be done from a car window. A heavy leg cast made even the use of crutches difficult.

But Florida graciously paraded some of her specialties past the car or in view of the trailer, to bring the year's total to a satisfying 514 species, of which 24 for Wilson and 28 for me were lifers. Mission accomplished, so who could complain?

Membership News

Amelia J. Betts

Initial response to dues-paying time has been a little better than usual this year, with 145 members paying by January 10th. Of this number, one is the second life member, four are life members by installments, 41 are sustaining members, 13 are students, 86 are regular member. Twenty-eight are new members, so KOS officers are hopeful that the 300 barrier can be broken decisively this year.

The officers are also hoping that more persons will give life-membership considerable thought. If you are in your 20's or 30's, a life membership would be a good gamble, for surely you'll live 20 or 30 more years and you would pay that much anyway. If you are in your 40's or 50's, you'll probably never be making much more money. Right now you'll miss \$100 the least. If you are in your 60's or 70's, you may be looking for worth-while institutions to endow. There is none better than KOS!

This year the cut-off date for slow dues-paying members will be that of the March Bulletin. The winter publication of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society made this appeal--"Please do not wait until Spring Meeting to pay dues--Our treasurer wants to enjoy the outing too." And in Kansas, the membership chairman would too!

- - -

Miss Edna L. Ruth

Amelia J. Betts

Miss Edna L. Ruth, a long-time member and former officer of K.O.S., died on November 12. Miss Ruth of Halstead, had been a member since the second year of the Society and served on the K.O.S. council for five years during the 1950's.

Miss Ruth was not only an active birder, but also a contributor to several magazines (often on bird topics) including Nature Magazine (now Natural History), Audubon Magazine, and the K.O.S. Bulletin. She was an avid birder and visited most parts of the United States. Until her health failed, she actively supported the K.O.S., Wichita Audubon Society and the Sand Prairies Nature Conservancy. She is survived by the other two members of the "Halstead Birding Trio"--her sister, Miss Alma Ruth, and her niece, Mrs. Ruth Rose.

- - -

Kansas Check-lists

Amelia J. Betts

The KANSAS TEACHER magazine carried a short article on page 50 of the October 1968 issue stating that KOS had published a pocket-size check list of Kansas birds that could be obtained for the asking and a stamped, self-addressed envelop. Requests started coming immediately and are still coming--over 75 to the middle of January. Several teachers accepted the accompanying invitation to join KOS.

Since many members of KOS have not had an opportunity to see or use these new check lists, the membership chairman makes the same offer to them--with this added proviso, please make it a business size envelop. The list fits that larger size better. The lists will also be on sale at the spring meeting in Newton. If you want to see a copy before that, write to Miss Amelia J. Betts, Box 43, Baldwin City, Kansas.

Winter Bird Notes

Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Qualls

We have more species of birds at our feeder than usual. Between January 1 and February 16 we had the following activity: Slate-colored Junco (numerous), American Goldfinch (20), Black-capped Chickadee (4), Tufted titmouse (4), Bewick Wren (1) and Carolina Wrens are regular. The latter turns over all the cracked walnuts looking for goodies and one day turned over the whole walnuts put out for squirrels. The number of Cardinals (feeding on sunflower seeds) varies from 10 to 40 depending on weather conditions. A Loggerhead Shrike fed on suet near the house on a number of occasions. Robins are in the yard but not at the feeder.

White-breasted Nuthatches (1 pair), a Yellow-shafted Flicker, and pairs of Red-bellied, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers also fed on the suet. Red-headed Woodpeckers and sapsuckers are absent this year. From 2 to 4 Purple Finches are at the feeder daily - this year is the first time. Other visitors include a Mockingbird, Blue Jays, Starlings, House Sparrows and one (occasionally 2) Brown Creepers. These feed on suet and Black Walnut meats - the latter preferred food of all the birds.

A Pileated Woodpecker is still (1 January) in the area down along the river and a Red-shouldered Hawk is wintering with sightings on 26 December, 5 January and 1 February. A field trip on 1 January yielded very few birds: Turkey Vulture (3), Red-tailed Hawk (3), Marsh Hawk (1), Yellow-shafted Flicker (8), Pileated Woodpecker (1), Blue Jay (3), Eastern Bluebird (2), Cardinal (3), Slate-colored Junco (2 flocks), Fox Sparrow (2), Song Sparrow (3). A field trip in this area will yield very few hawks.

- - -

New Members of K.O.S.

- Corinne Armstrong, P.O. Box 12, Louisburg, Kans. 66053
 **Robert G. Barnhart, RFD 4, Winfield, Kan. 67156
 Mrs. W.S. Barr, 1421 E. First, Winfield, Kan. 67156
 Fordie H. Brown, Box 67, Gove City, Kan. 67736
 Mrs. W.H. Cannon, P.O. Box 182, Humboldt, Kan. 66748
 Thomas Cannon, P.O. Box 182, Humboldt, Kan. 66748
 Stephen W. Capel, 1314 Eastmoor, McPherson, Kan. 67460
 Carnegie Museum Library, 4400 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, Penna. 15213
 Clemson University, Director of Library, Clemson, S.C. 28631
 Jeff Cox, 1203 Marlboro, Wichita, Kan. 67217
 *Rev. Eugene W. Dehner, O.S.B., St. Benedict's College, Atchison, Kan. 66002
 L.K. Edmunds, Dickens Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kan. 66502
 **Erma Ellis, Box 125, Bushton, Kan. 67427
 James B. Fisher, 3244 E. Douglas, Wichita, Kan. 67207
 G. Lawrence Forman, #37399, 1655 Univ. Drive, Lawrence, Kan. 66044
 Mrs. Dollie Green, 6123 E. 11th St., Wichita, Kan. 67203
 Miss Eva B. Johnson, 17 S. Larson, Chanute Kan. 66720
 Ken Kaufman, 2713 Martinson, Wichita, Kan. 67217
 Mrs. Alfred B. Koch, RFD 3, Burlington, Kan. 66839
 Mike Latschar, RFD 4, Purcell Road, Manhattan, Kan. 66502
 Miss Janis Miller, 635 Horne, Topeka, Kan. 66606
 Mrs. James A. Peoples, 903 W. 20th Terrace, Lawrence, Kan. 66044
 **Mrs. W.H. Qualls, RFD 1, Box 304, Baxter Springs, Kan. 66713
 **Mrs. Judson Robertson, 312 W. Eighth, Topeka, Kan. 66612
 *Mrs. Ruth Rose, 302 W. Second, Halstead, Kan. 67056
 Edward C. Scott, 711½ Grand Ave., Lyons, Kan. 67554
 Mrs. B.L. Trillich, Jr., 1312 W. 22nd St., Lawrence, Kan. 66044
 Mrs. C.G.K. Warner, 1654 University Drive, Lawrence, Kan. 66044
 N.H. White, Jr., P.O. Box 475, Arkansas City, Kan. 67005
 Mrs. William J. White, 3930 Aylesbury Road, Topeka, Kan. 66614
 Mrs. Ross O. Williams, 1428 E. Third, Winfield, Kan. 67156
 Robert B. Wimmer, Southwestern College, Winfield, Kan. 67156
 Gary L. Worthen, Museum of Nat. Hist., U. of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan. 66044

*re-instatements

**sustaining members

Short Communications

A news release (3 March) from the Cornell University, Office of Public Information, will be of interest to readers. Dr. Tom. J. Cade, research director at Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology states that the sale of Gyrfalcons to wealthy Middle Easterners (at up to \$5000 each) for falconry is threatening the existence of this species in North America. The Gyrfalcon is the largest species of falcon (pheasant size) and most favored for falconry. Cade estimates that only 1,000 pairs remain in the world, most of them in Greenland where they are protected by the Danish Government. Regrettably, Gyrfalcons are not protected by federal law in either the United States or Canada.

A second news release (4 Mar) concerns the use of bird populations as barometers to indicate pollution of the environment. Dr. Olin S. Pettingill, Jr. notes that birds are adjusted closely to the natural environment and consequently are sensitive to any change in the status quo. He states "Birds give us a very quick reading on environmental changes because they are conspicuous and readily noticed. When an excessive number of birds are killed in an area somebody had better find out why. Chances are that whatever is killing off the birds isn't doing humans any good." The North American Nest-Record Card Program at Cornell gathers and analyzes hundreds of readings on bird populations. "When a breeding population is declining somewhere," Pettingill said, "we want to know it and share the information with those persons who can determine the cause and take remedial action." The laboratory has already received more than 75,000 cards from some 950 persons throughout North America.

A letter from Mrs. Lovie M. Whitaker of the Cleveland County Bird Club, Norman, Oklahoma, concerns the latest developments in their efforts to preserve cloud-forest habitat in Central America for the preservation of the Quetzal, Horned Guan and other species. The Guatemalan National Association of Writers and Friends of Books has recently announced that the literary award for 1969 will go to the best anthology on the Quetzal. Also there is a possibility that the U.S. Post Office might issue a Quetzal stamp in full color, for Pan American Week, April 1969. These developments are encouraging and Mrs. Whitaker feels that the educating of the U.S. public in appreciating the rare birds of Middle America and their cultural symbolism is more important than the funds raised to date for the cloud forest preserves.

Birding in the Hays area has been very poor. Bird numbers are the lowest in my six years at Hays and few exciting birds have been seen. By far the most outstanding event was the capture of four Bush-tits in a mist net on 16 November (the first Kansas specimens). A single Red Crossbill was seen on 6 December. Two Redpolls were netted on 5 December and 10 more were seen on 18 February. The Bohemian Waxwings which arrived on 19 November are still present and the birds (about 10) stay pretty much by themselves but occasionally are with Cedar Waxwings. Purple Finches have been present all winter and House Finches are seen occasionally. Tree and Harris Sparrows are in very low numbers and banding has been poor. For a time juncos were quite common. Longspur numbers are very low but Horned Larks seem to be more numerous. A few Red-breasted Nuthatches and Townsend Solitaires have also wintered. Waterfowl started returning during the last few days of February so perhaps a better season is approaching. C. A. Ely

I just received a questionnaire from Dr. Ronald A. Ryder who is making a survey of the Snowy Egret. He is interested in information from our area so if you would like to contribute information you might drop him a note for the questionnaire or send him information directly. He is interested in past status, present status (including size of breeding colonies), migration dates and any trends in numbers. Dr. Ryder is with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Biology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, 80521.

All K.O.S. members are invited to contribute news to the Newsletter. If enough news is submitted we can send out at least one more issue before the May Meeting - but at the moment, the file is nearly bare. The more news I get, the more Newsletters you will receive. Editor.