

Kansas Ornithological Society

NEWSLETTER

Box 36, Nekoma, Kansas 67559

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OFFICER'S CORNER

I have been involved with the Kansas Ornithological Society for a major portion of my life (since I was about eleven years old). I believe I would have joined the Society earlier if I had known about it and had known that kids could join. After nineteen-odd years of association with KOS I see little change in its public accessibility. The Society remains relatively obscure and uninviting -- perhaps even formidable in name -- to many people interested in birds but not intensely involved (or old) enough to actively seek and join any organization relating to birds.

I feel that KOS is a wonderful group of people and a potentially extremely valuable resource to birders at all levels of ability and interest. Yet at a time when birding is the second most popular "passive sport" in the country (behind gardening) membership in KOS is faltering and our dues revenues are not even sufficient to cover our costs for the few publications we produce.

The board of directors has been investigating reasons for these problems and is looking for solutions. I believe lack of publicity and lack of activity are the main culprits, and neither is a simple problem nor easy to overcome. We have made repeated attempts to remedy parts of these problems -- with a new membership flyer a few years back, the formation of an education committee, organization of local and regional field trips, etc. -- but without coordinated efforts in both publicity and activity, nothing has helped much. Following are several things that I think we need to do simultaneously and continually to boost the effectiveness and interest of our society: (Please note that while many of these views are shared by other board members, the ideas are collectively my own and do not necessarily represent the majority opinions of the board.)

- 1) Increase public awareness of KOS through frequent press releases distributed throughout Kansas (this can be done through a single press association in Topeka), detailing the involvement of KOS or its notable members in legislative issues, conservation, education, research, meetings, field trips, etc.
- 2) Prepare and distribute a professional, highly inviting brochure detailing the benefits of membership for everyone interested in birds, and dispelling the exclusively academic image created by the name "Ornithological."
- 3) Actively solicit personal recruitment of new members by individuals in the society and gift memberships.
- 4) Produce and publicize the availability of multi-age educational programs about birds -- slide programs for loan or rent, booklets and checklists as handouts -- to be distributed along with brochures and membership applications.
- 5) Increase the nontechnical and general interest content of the Newsletter.
- 6) Initiate and publicize local and regional field trips, identification and banding workshops, etc., perhaps in conjunction with local Audubon chapters and other conservation/wildlife-oriented organizations.

- 7) Offer more tangible membership benefits such as reduced prices on bird books and participation (again, in cooperation with other groups) in long-distance or specialty birding trips.

While any one of these steps would I believe, at least temporarily benefit the society, their collective impact would be far greater than the sum of their individual contributions. Further, I think that they are all necessary in order to sustain and increase the improvements they produce. For instance, as the public becomes more aware of the society, we need to offer obvious benefits to entice people to join and keep them involved; we need an ongoing educational program to provide a continuing supply of new interest and potential members; and the more people we have actively involved, the more talent and energy we will have among our members to maintain existing programs and start new ones.

None of these projects would be overly difficult or expensive to start, but they all need the ongoing support of volunteers if they are to have any lasting effect. I invite responses and additional ideas addressed either to me or the Newsletter. Together I believe we can make the Kansas Ornithological Society an even better vehicle for promoting a widespread appreciation and knowledge of birds.

David E. Seibel
KOS Vice-President
1446 Kentucky
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

FORMER OFFICER PASSES

Ruth Broderson, longtime member and former officer of KOS, died in Wichita on May 29 after a serious illness. Ruth served as KOS Membership Secretary from 1977 to 1979. She was preceded in death by her husband Walter in 1983. The Brodersons had a broad interest in the natural world, were active Audubon members, and founded the Wichita Gem and Mineral Society. Survivors include daughter Cristina Wilson of St. Louis and two grandchildren. Donations in Ruth's memory to the Chaplin Nature Center are being accepted by the Wichita Audubon Society.

KOS SPRING MEETING IN CHEROKEE COUNTY

KOS held its Spring Meeting in Cherokee County this year from May 1-3. Accommodations were at the Tri-County Baptist Camp just west of Weir. Birding trips were made to area hot-spots. About 50 people attended and about 144 species were tallied. Few unusual birds were seen. Notable misses included Bewick's Wren, which is normally fairly common in the area, and Pileated Woodpecker. Our thanks go out to Marvin Schwilling who organized the weekend and Floy Schwilling who made certain that we were the best fed campers in KOS history.

Registered Attendees At 1987 Spring Meeting

<u>Baxter Springs</u> Robert Meyers	<u>Newton</u> Jane Hershberger Rose Fritz Dwight Platt	<u>Lawrence</u> Ruth Fauhl Roseanne Smith Richard Rucker David Seibel	<u>Nekoma</u> Scott Seltman Diane Seltman
<u>McCune</u> Phil McKenna	<u>McPherson</u> Allen Jahn	<u>Overland Park</u> Dave Bryan Linda Bryan	<u>Hays</u> Charles Ely Mike Dwyer Laura Villaseñor
<u>Pittsburg</u> Steve Ford J.C. Johnson, Jr.	<u>Emporia</u> Marvin Kuehn Brian Kuehn Marvin Schwilling Mark Crane	<u>Shawnee Mission</u> Mick McHugh	<u>Kensington</u> Mike Rader
<u>Parsons</u> Marge Gilpin Bill Brewer		<u>Topeka</u> Eulalia Lewis Gene Lewis Sarah Merrill Mae Ahlstrom	
<u>Arkansas City</u> Steven Hobis? Steve Young Clay Penenth	<u>Ottawa</u> Martin Brockway Johnnie Brockway John Brockway Eleanor Brockway Orville Flagler Jo Flagler	<u>Manhattan</u> Elmer Finck John Zimmerman Dave Rintoul	
<u>Winfield</u> Max Thompson Mike Fell	<u>Baldwin City</u> Margaret Boyd Katharine Kelley		
<u>Wichita</u> Don Vannoy Fran Vannoy			

Birds Seen At 1987 Spring Meeting - Cherokee County

Pied-billed Grebe	Sora	Eastern Screech-Owl
D-C Cormorant	Common Moorhen	Great Horned Owl
Great Blue Heron	American Coot	Barred Owl
Little Blue Heron	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Common Nighthawk
Cattle Egret	Killdeer	Chuck-will's- widow
Green-backed Heron	Greater Yellowlegs	Whip-poor-will
Night-Heron, sp.	Lesser Yellowlegs	Chimney Swift
Canada Goose	Solitary Sandpiper	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Wood Duck	Spotted Sandpiper	Belted Kingfisher
Mallard	Upland Sandpiper	Red-headed Woodpecker
Blue-winged Teal	White-rumped Sandpiper	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Ring-necked Duck	Pectoral Sandpiper	Downy Woodpecker
Turkey Vulture	L-B Dowitcher	Hairy Woodpecker
Mississippi Kite	Common Snipe	Northern Flicker
Northern Harrier	American Woodcock	Eastern Wood-Pewee
Cooper's Hawk	Wilson's Phalarope	Willow Flycatcher
Red-shouldered Hawk	Forster's Tern	Least Flycatcher
Swainson's Hawk	Rock Dove	Eastern Phoebe
Red-tailed Hawk	Mourning Dove	Great-crested Flycatcher
American Kestrel	Black-billed Cuckoo	Western Kingbird
Northern Bobwhite	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Eastern Kingbird

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	White-eyed Vireo	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Horned Lark	Bell's Vireo	Blue Grosbeak
Purple Martin	Solitary Vireo	Indigo Bunting
N. Rough-winged Swallow	Yellow-throated Vireo	Dickcissel
Barn Swallow	Warbling Vireo	Rufous-sided Towhee
Blue Jay	Philadelphia Vireo	Chipping Sparrow
American Crow	Red-eyed Vireo	Clay-colored Sparrow
Carolina Chickadee	Tennessee Warbler	Field Sparrow
Tufted Titmouse	Orange-crowned Warbler	Vesper Sparrow
White-breasted Nuthatch	Nashville Warbler	Lark Sparrow
Carolina Wren	Northern Parula Warbler	Savannah Sparrow
House Wren	Yellow Warbler	Grasshopper Sparrow
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Blackburnian Warbler	White-throated Sparrow
Eastern Bluebird	Yellow-throated Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow
Veery	Blackpoll Warbler	Harris' Sparrow
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Black-and-White Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Swainson's Thrush	American Redstart	Eastern Meadowlark
Hermit Thrush	Prothonotary Warbler	Great-tailed Grackle
Wood Thrush	Ovenbird	Common Grackle
American Robin	Northern Waterthrush	Brown-headed Cowbird
Gray Catbird	Louisiana Waterthrush	Orchard Oriole
Northern Mockingbird	Kentucky Warbler	Northern Oriole
Brown Thrasher	Common Yellowthroat	Pine Siskin
Cedar Waxwing	Yellow-breasted Chat	American Goldfinch
Loggerhead Shrike	Summer Tanager	House Sparrow
European Starling	Northern Cardinal	

KOS SPRING BOARD MEETING
Tri-County Baptist Camp, Weir
May 2, 1987 7:00 PM

Members present: Elmer Finck, David Seibel, Gene Lewis, Jane Hershberger, Dwight Platt.
Non-voting: John Zimmerman, Ruth Faulh, Marvin Schwilling, Scott Seltman, Margaret Boyd.

FEDERAL NON-GAME: Elmer Finck circulated a letter and other material from Stan Senner, chairman of the U.S. Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation, asking for support for the appropriation of federal funds to implement a plan for research and management of migratory non-game birds. Zimmerman moved that President Finck write a letter the Kansas congressional delegation asking their support of this program. Seibel seconded the motion. The motion passed.

BIRD FEEDER SURVEY: Cornell University is sponsering a nationwide bird feeder survey. We will take action to organize the Kansas portion in October.

WILDLIFE AND PARKS COMMISSION: Governor Hayden has asked 40 organizations to send him nominations of persons to be considered for appointment to the newly formed commission. Zimmerman moved that KOS nominate Roger Boyd for the Governor's consideration. Seibel seconded the motion. The motion passed.

SPRING 1988 MEETING: Max Thompson has invited KOS to Camp Horizon for next year's spring meeting. Hershberger moved that KOS accept. Zimmerman seconded. Motion passed.

FALL 1988 MEETING: Bob Gress has invited KOS to meet at Botanica in Wichita from Sept. 30- Oct. 2 in 1988. The Board approved this meeting place and Dwight Platt will send annual meeting instructions to Bob Gress.

SLIDE SET: David Seibel has the slides that were made for the AOU meeting. The Board asked him to try to get permission to use these slides to make an educational slide set with script that could be loaned to groups.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dwight Platt
KOS Corresponding Secretary

SPRING ROUNDUP/ March 87 to May 87 / by Scott Seltman

The spring of 87 was a time when some of the decade's most remarkable weather produced some of the decade's most unremarkable birding. Yes, there were some good birds seen with one new candidate for the state checklist being reported. But overall birders across the state expressed frustration as bad weather that prevented birding alternated with good weather that prevented migrant fallout. The warbler migration, the yardstick with which we tend to measure all spring migration, was rather poor statewide except at Marais de Cygne where a respectable list was accumulated after frequent visits.

The season began with much promise as warmer than normal temperatures in early March brought many birds north quite early with some species challenging record dates for spring arrival. But a dramatic change occurred in the weather in late March as heavy rains turned to snow across western Kansas. What followed was the worst spring blizzard to hit the western half of Kansas in 30 years. On the 23rd and 24th one to two feet of snow fell across a broad area, mostly north and west of a line from Belleville to Great Bend to Greensburg to Ulysses. Incredible drifts occurred as 70 MPH winds howled across the landscape. On the 25th the wind died down somewhat and the storm seemed to be over. But on Friday the 27th snow began falling again, this time hitting northwest Kansas the hardest. After more wind and more drifting the weather system finally ran out of energy. On the morning of the 30th clear skies allowed temperatures to drop to 0° F over much of the snow blanketed areas while causing a killing frost over the remainder of the state. How deep was the snow? Very deep indeed. A Gove rancher showed where snowdrifts 15-20 feet deep had buried highline wires along the main road west of town. Near Lenora your editor helped fix fence wires broken by the weight of the snow 40 feet in the air above a deep ravine. Many snowfields could still be seen across western Kansas in late April.

While the effect of this storm on humans and their livestock was well covered in the press, little mention was given of the carnage that occurred in the bird world. During the twin storms the relentless snowfall and wind placed birds under incredible stress. Normally in spring storms patches of bare dirt here and there give birds at least a limited access to available food. But in this storm almost all food was buried for days. As a result many birds of many species perished. Farmers and ranchers began noticing the extent of the damage as soon as the snow began to melt with some reporting that they had found hundreds of dead birds in waterways and shelterbelts. Meadowlarks and Robins were mentioned most often but other early migrants such as Mourning Doves, Common Grackles, and Killdeer were also virtually wiped out. Casualties certainly numbered in the millions.

Whether a storm such as this has long-term effects on bird populations is doubtful. Many of the migratory birds that perished were merely replaced by later arrivals. And many of the resident species will likely rebound in numbers to fill the available habitat.

Ironically, the same snow that killed so many birds later produced lush spring plant growth, which in turn probably improved nesting success among the survivors.

The unseasonably cool weather of late March and early April was short-lived. Strong southerly winds persisted from mid-April to mid-May, giving migrating birds a free ride across the state and leaving many birders on the ground staring at empty trees and bushes. By the time stormy weather returned in late May migration had almost ended. Poor April birding may have been partly related to cold weather in late March; following the severe temperatures insect numbers seemed very low and probably gave little reason for resting birds to linger.

Although this report is already overlong, three major events involving important improvements in bird habitat occurred this spring and should not go unrecognized. The first is the refilling of Cheyenne Bottoms. Following the 1981 Great Bend Flood, in which Cheyenne Bottoms received an enormous amount of water, birders watched with dismay as the water gradually receded and disappeared. In 1985 The Bottoms was a virtual dust bowl and some people wondered if it would ever have water again. Last year heavy spring and autumn rains improved water levels somewhat but the prospects for 1987 weren't good. But beginning in March torrential rains and melting snow created a radical change at The Bottoms. This change was a result of heavy stream flows throughout the area but especially near Great Bend and Hoisington. Because of excessive natural runoff into the refuge a great deal of water was actually discharged through the outlet canal in April and May. This is not to say that the water crisis on the High Plains is over or that Cheyenne Bottoms will not once again be dry someday. But it does seem that the cycle of drought and flood that ruled the basin before the 1950's is very much alive.

Early May marked an even rarer event as for the first time since the late 70's the Arkansas was flowing bank full through cities like Garden City and Dodge City. The heavy flow was largely a result of massive releases of water from John Martin Reservoir in eastern Colorado. The releases were not a result of benevolence from our western neighbor, just a matter of all Colorado dams in the Arkansas watershed being too full to hold any more water. If such streamflows were to occur annually it would do much to improve riparian habitat along the currently decimated stretch of the river from Kearny to Ford County.

The spring of 1987 also marked a dramatic change in Kansas agriculture as large tracts of farmland were planted back to grass under the government's new Conservation Reserve Program. Over 400,000 acres were seeded to native grasses in the state this year with 500,000 acres scheduled to follow in 1988. Though these newly planted grasslands are decades away from having the rich mixture of grasses and forbs we associate with virgin prairie, they should still provide excellent habitat for many birds. Signup is especially heavy in the sandy soils of southwest Kansas and may eventually prove beneficial to birds such as the Lesser Prairie Chicken whose ranges were severely diminished by uncontrolled sodbusting in the 70's. KOS members living near CRP land might find it interesting to chose a particular field and document the changes in birdlife that occur during the next decade.

Unusual Birds of the Season

Western Grebe	2 at Quivira	Dave Bryan, Scott and 4-18-87 Stafford Diane Seltman
Olivaceous Cormorant	1 well seen at CB	Norm & Carol Reigle 5-23-87 Barton Ruth Scott, S.S.

Great Egret	early arrival at Q	D. Bryan, S.& D. S.	4-18-87	Stafford
Little Blue Heron	early arrival at CB	D. Bryan, S.& D. S.	4-18-87	Barton
Tricolored Heron	2 at CB	Tom Shane, Mike Rader	4-25-87	Barton
		m. ob.		
Oldsquaw	1 at CB	Tom Shane	3-22-87	Barton
Ruddy Duck	albinistic female	D. Bryan, S.&D. S.	4-18-87	Barton
Yellow Rail	One bird seen briefly but quite well at a		3-08-87	Linn
	grassy meadow at Marais de Cygne. Mel Cooksey			
	(Tower kills suggest that Yellow Rails are common, even abundant migrants			
	above Kansas but they are seldom reported alive and well on the ground.)			
Piping Plover	1 at Q	D. Bryan, S&D Selt.	4-18-87	Stafford
	1 at CB	Ted Cable	5-13-87	Barton
Greater Yellowlegs	early arrival at Q	Scott Seltman	3-07-87	Stafford
Whimbrel	1 at CB	Ted Cable	5-13-87	Barton
Laughing Gull	1 at MDC	Lloyd Moore	5-02-87	Linn
California Gull	-Slides of 1st year gull taken at Rocky Ford		3-05-87	Riley
	strongly suggest California Gull but are not			
	diagnostic.	Ted Cable, Duane Kerr		
Black-billed Cuckoo	2	Scott Seltman	5-30-87	Gove
<u>Black-chinned Hummingbird</u>	1 in Elkhart seen	Sebastian Patti	5-08-87	Morton
	very well. 1st record! Mark Reidel			
	(Until recently Kansas birders assumed all archilochus hummers had to be Ruby-			
	throateds and all Colorado birders assumed that they must be Black-chinned.			
	In fact either species is possible in border towns such as Elkhart. Black-			
	chinneds nest about 60 miles west of Morton County in Colorado. Birds of			
	this genus should be identified very carefully in southwest Kansas with			
	females and immatures left as archilochus sp.)			
Red-headed Woodpecker	very early for nw. Kan.	Scott Seltman	4-27-87	Norton
Purple Martin	30+ early arrivals	Max Thompson	3-04-87	Cowley
Sedge Wren	2 or 3 at Gun Club	Scott Seltman	5-08-87	Barton
Mountain Bluebird	1 male at Cedar Bluff	Scott Seltman	3-14-87	Trego
	male wing and breast	Scott Seltman	4-10-87	Rush
	found after snowstorm			
Veery	1 in Elkhart	Scott & Diane Seltman	5-15-87	Morton
Curve-billed Thrasher	1 banded & released	Guy Ernsting	Spring 87	Barton
Golden-winged Warbler	male seen near John Redmond Res.		5-02-87	Coffey
	John Zimmerman, Elmer Finck, et. al.			
Blackburnian Warbler	2 at Sim Park	Pete Janzen	5-06-87	Sedgwick
Prairie Warbler	Singing male seen for 20 minutes at Scott		5-10-87	Scott
	County Lake.	Tom Shane & Sara Norman		
	(This is the westernmost report for our state but vagrants have reached			
	the Denver area several times.)			
Lazuli Bunting	unexpected at MDC	Lloyd Moore	5-02-87	Linn
'White-winged' Junco	1 in Junction City Cem.	Ted Cable	3-01-87	Geary
McCown's Longspur	20+	Scott Seltman	3-03-87	Pawnee
Common Redpoll	1 at feeder	Mick McHugh, et. al.	3-01-87	Johnson
Red Crossbill		Tom Shane	3-20-87	Saline
	12 on WSU campus	Pete Janzen	4-16-87	Sedgwick

Observations for the summer months of June and July will be summarized in the November newsletter. Also in the next newsletter I would like to publish a list of Christmas Bird Counts with dates and the names of count leaders. Those wishing to be included in the list should send information by mid-November. - Ed.

KOS ANNUAL FALL MEETING, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, MANHATTAN, KS2 - 4 OCTOBER 1987

The annual fall meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society will be hosted by the Division of Biology, Kansas State University and the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society. Saturday papers sessions and business meetings will be held in Ackert Hall on the K-State campus, and the annual banquet will take place in the Cottonwood Room of the K-State Union. Highlights of the banquet this year will be The Best Birds of the Year, the award for best student paper, and an illustrated presentation by Ron Klataske, Vice-president, National Audubon Society. Early morning field trips on Sunday will leave at various times and take you to the best fall birding sites in the Manhattan area, ending with a box lunch at the Konza Prairie Research Natural Area. For people arriving on Friday evening, there will be a get-together and open-house at the Zimmerman's, 1820 Virginia Drive beginning at 8 p.m. and lasting until the last person leaves.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday, 2 October

8 p.m. Social, at the Zimmerman's, 1820 Virginia Dr.

Saturday, 3 October

8:00 - 9:00 Registration, lobby, Ackert Hall

9:00 - 12:00 Opening session, papers presentation, first business meeting, AK120

12:00 - 1:00 lunch on your own (board meeting)

1:00 - 2:00 Bird-watchers' hour

2:00 - 5:00 Papers presentation, second business meeting, AK 120

6:30 - 8:30 Banquet, Cottonwood Room, K-State Union

Sunday, 4 October

6:00 - 12:00 Field trip to Fancy Creek and upper Tuttle Creek Lake

6:30 - 12:00 Field trip to State Lake, River Ponds, Konza Prairie (separate sections starting at different places)

7:00 - 12:00 Field trip to State Lake, River Ponds, Konza Prairie

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch and compilation, Headquarters, Konza Prairie Research Natural Area

