

The Official Newsletter
of the
Kansas Ornithological Society

The Horned Lark

613 Tamerisk, Junction City, KS 66441-3359

June 1997

Vol. 24, No. 2

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper

From The Keyboard -

This has been a hectic, crazy spring! The weather has been crazy, my schedule has been hectic. When it was early spring, 1996, and John Zimmerman asked me to help with the local field trips for the KOS/WOS meeting, April 1997, seemed so far away..... Well, it's now over. I want to thank everyone who helped me with field trips and I know that Dr. Zimmerman is even more relieved that it is over and even more grateful for all the fine help that he received from so many people. Speaking from my little part - we had a lot of fun on the Sunday field trips!

Now let's all get fired up for the Fall Meeting in Wichita. I had the opportunity in May to attend a lecture by Kenn Kaufman at the Great Plains Nature Center. This is truly an exceptional facility and will be very conducive to another excellent fall meeting.

You'll notice a common threat running through several of the articles in this issue. **Get involved!** It wasn't planned.... it just happened. Having been involved in numerous organizations in my life I have observed that the output of an organization can only be equal to the net inputs of its members. If you have a few people trying to do everything the organization is doomed. We have many really good KOS members. And maybe they are just waiting for someone to ask them to get involved. Okay then, I welcome you to get involved! There is no reason why we shouldn't have over 1,000 KOS members. That would only take 10 members from each county in Kansas. Start looking around your town or county for that family that really started enjoying their backyard bird feeder this year. Buy them a gift membership the first year and just maybe they'll stay on.

Start leading local birdwalks in your community. "Oh, I'm not really qualified to do that!" you might say. Well, the best way to learn is to teach. Maybe you'll attract someone to your walk that is more qualified and they'll take it over. If that happens,

buy them a gift membership. If everyone just starts putting in a little more effort the outcome may surprise us all!

And finally I encourage all of you to be good stewards and good representatives of KOS and Birdwatchers in general. The public sometimes has a tainted view of "us". When you are out birding by yourself or with a group ALWAYS give the utmost respect to the wildlife you are watching and to the private property all around us here in Kansas. Don't set one foot on private land without first obtaining permission and if they do say "no" respect that landowner and thank them for their time. The horror stories coming out of other states are something we don't need in Kansas! Have a great summer and let's all get out and wrap up those Atlas Blocks!

chuck

Who's Who in KOS - 1997

President, Roy Beckemeyer, 957 Perry, Wichita, KS 67203

Vice-president, Greg Farley, FHSU, Dept of Biological Science, Albertson Hall, 600 Park St, Hays, KS 67601-4099

Corresponding Secretary, Karen Ganoung, Box 96, Hoisington, KS 67544

Membership Secretary, Margaret Wedge, 1645 Louisiana, Lawrence, KS 66044

Treasurer, Edwin J. Miller, 218 Bermuda Dr, Independence, KS

Board Members:

Bill Busby, 626 East 1900 Rd, Baldwin City, KS 66006

John Schukman, 14207 Robin Rd, Leavenworth, KS 66048

Pete Janzen, 3137 N Mascot, Wichita, KS 67204

Dr. Richard F. Johnston, 602 Dyche Hall, Univ of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2454

Business Manager, James Barnes, 1425 S Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213, 316-265-4059

Editor, The Bulletin, Max Thompson, 1729 East 11th St, Winfield, KS 67156

Editor, The Horned Lark, Chuck Otte, 613 Tamerisk, Junction City, KS 66441, 913-238-8800, OTTE@JC.NET

ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Correction!

Please note that the date on the *Horned Lark*, Volume 24, Number 1 should have read March, 1997 not February 1997. The Editor goofed!

Welcome New KOS Members!

We've had the proverbial bevy of new members this spring. As was started by the KOS Board a few years ago all students who give papers at a KOS meeting receive a one year KOS membership. At the spring KOS meeting, held in conjunction with the Wilson Ornithological Society, there were numerous papers presented. Additionally there were quite a few regular memberships sent in. We welcome all the new members and hope to see them at the fall meeting:

New members are: Caroline French - Prairie Village, Larry Nuss - Fort Scott, Don & Lori Weiss - Olathe, Prairie Raptor Project - Brookville, Don Kazmaier - Larned, Suzanne Fellows - Wichita, Hoogy & Carol Hoogheem - Ogden, Mary King - Ulysses, R.W. McCandless - Parsons, Susan Barnes - Wichita, Steve Winter, David Hoover, Timothy Parker - Manhattan, Lisa Ball, Kimberly Bostwick, Daniel Kluza, Nathan Rice, Dave Watson - Lawrence, Doug Robinson - Emporia, Catherine Bechtoldt, David Craig, Heather Ewell, Kerri Vierling - Boulder, CO, Sheldon Cooper - Logan, UT, Natalie Dubois - Albion, MI, Oliver Komar - Delaware, OH, Tim McCoy - Columbia, MO, Diann Prosser - University Park, PA, Christopher Pusateri - Williamsville, NY, Jeff Walk - Urbana, IL.

Remember - most of the 913 area code, outside of the Kansas City area, changes to the new 785 area code effective July 20, 1997. This will affect the KOS Rare Bird Alert, it becomes 785-372-5499 starting July 20!

KOS Board Membership Positions Available

Two KOS Board of Directors' positions become available this year as Bill Busby and John Schuckmann complete their two-year assignments. If you are interested in joining the Board and helping to make KOS a stronger, more vital organization, please call or write and put your name forward for nomination.

Also, other positions become available from time to time, so if you are willing to serve in any other role (e.g., as an officer), let me know, as it helps to have a list of folks who want to help. Margaret Wedge, Membership Chairperson, has indicated that she would like to "retire" from that position, so we are looking for candidates for her job as well. Please give me a call, drop an e-mail message, or a note to: Roy Beckemeyer, 957 Perry St., Wichita, KS 67203-3141; (316) 264-0049; royb@southwind.net

Kansas Nature Photographers Organization Forming

If you have any interest in nature photography mark November 22, 1997 on your calendar! Interested individuals are invited to Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas to meet with other interested nature photographers to form a state wide organization of nature photographers.

Larry Rosenkoetter, a professor at Bethany College is the driving force behind this meeting. As of late May over 50 individuals had indicated their intent to attend. A highlight of the meeting will be a series of 10-minute shows by various nature photographers around the state.

For more information contact Larry Rosenkoetter at: 204 W. Columbus, Lindsborg, KS 67456; (913) 227-3294; rosenkoel@bethany.bethanylb.edu

In this issue -

<i>Announcements</i>	2	<i>Fall Meeting Location Preview</i>	5	<i>Winter Birding Round-up</i>	10
<i>Pete's Perspective</i>	3	<i>Spring Board Meeting Highlights</i>	6	<i>Call For Papers - Fall Meeting</i>	15
<i>Proposed By-Laws Change</i>	4	<i>Straight From the 'Net</i>	7	<i>The Bird's Nest</i>	17
<i>KBAT Blockbuster Weekend</i>	4	<i>Poetry</i>	8		
		<i>KOS WWW Home Page Debuts</i>	9		

Birder Diversity

by Pete Janzen

If you were to ask each of our 400 members what aspect of birding they enjoy the most, or what they consider to be a working definition of the term “birding”, you would most likely get about 400 different answers. As those who are on the KSBIRD computer discussion group know well, sometimes these conflicting views can inspire animated, (but civil), differences of opinion. I thought I would use my column this month to discuss some of the diversity within our membership.

The scientists and wildlife management professionals who belong to our society make the most fundamental contribution to the study and understanding of birds. Members such as John Zimmerman, Marvin Schwillig, Max Thompson, Charles Ely, Roger Boyd, and others too numerous to name, have accomplished a great deal in their work. Without the careful record keeping, bird-banding, refuge management, and basic research which these members perform, we would certainly be much more ignorant about birds in Kansas than we currently are. Reading through a volume like “Birds of Konza”, I am humbled by how little I understand about the complex life history of even the commonest birds, such as the Dickcissel or Meadowlark.

Perhaps the most basic division among birders, is between those who pursue the hobby for strictly recreational purposes, and those whose pursuits are more purely scientific. Some recreational birders pursue “listing” to the exclusion of nearly all else. Once they have added a bird to their “life” or “years” list, they have essentially no further interest in the species. Most recreational birders, however, make valuable contributions to our understanding of rare species’ distributions in the state, and often have been among the most active participants in the Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas, Christmas Bird Counts, etc. Even so, some of the professional scientists within our ranks still shake their heads privately at the wild shenanigans that go on, such as traveling hundreds of miles to see a single vagrant warbler reported the previous day on the hotline. True, such pursuits of rarities are not going to contribute to the scientific database, but the sporting aspect of birding is what some birders find the most alluring, and that is not a bad thing. While such pursuits often consume a tank full of gas or two, which some consider wasteful, I think the total amount of fossil fuels consumed by birders in search of rarities in our state is dwarfed by the amount consumed by others in pursuit of some of their hobbies. I wonder how many gallons of fuel

are consumed by fans traveling to a single Big 12 football game? Probably about 1000% more than all of the birders in Kansas’ history have cumulatively consumed in all of the Twentieth Century!

Another common type of birder is the backyard birder. These birders are concerned primarily with birds found in their yard or immediate neighborhood. Backyard birders are often very knowledgeable about topics such as the most effective landscaping, bird houses, bird feeders, etc. Backyard birders do a lot to improve both urban and rural yards for birds. Many times birders in this category find unexpected rare birds right in their own yards, while others are out tearing up the countryside in pursuit of the same rarities. While they might go along on a field trip some distance from home on occasion, this type of birder does not hear the siren song of rarity chasing like dedicated listers do.

Some (but not enough) of our members are also politically active on issues that affect birds and the environment. I know that some of our members do not think KOS should be politically involved at all, and should leave those fights to others. I however, have the greatest respect for those who take the time to fight the good fight on behalf of birds. Certainly in Kansas we need all the activism we can get, with a legislature that wants to abrogate all clean water regulations, slaughter all the rattlesnakes in Wallace County for tourism reasons, and recently confirmed the appointment of a new director of KDHE who is on record as thinking that ducks and marshes are “stupid”, and is prone to lunging across conference tables to strangle those opposed to his views. This is not to mention the anti-environmental tone of many of our legislators at the national level.

The birders whom I admire the most are those who combine all of the best traits of these different birder types. Good examples of this all-around birder would be Newton-area birders Dwight Platt, Bob Dester, and Carol Schwab. Bob and Carol both own some adjacent tracts of nice land in eastern Harvey County, and over the past decade they have done a lot of things to improve the habitat there for birds, planting trees and shrubs, building bluebird trails, and clearing tallgrass prairies of invasive brushy plants. This is part of a trend of farmland being returned to prairie in this entire area, and of improving habitat in the riparian corridors along the streams. Dwight Platt has spent decades keeping careful records

- - *Pete's Perspective, continued*

of birds, herps, and plants in Harvey County, and has frequently spoken up on behalf of environmental issues, both locally and at the state and national level.

One of the greatest contributions they made to birding in the area, was the political effort they put forth to get a large area of county owned land at the upper end of Harvey County East Lake to be returned to a natural state, with nature trails, interpretive signs, etc. Despite some fairly stiff resistance on the part of some, they were able to persuade the local powers to pursue this course of action. These three people are among the most civil and unassuming people that I know, yet they took the time to act politically, and accomplished a great deal at the local level, which otherwise would not have happened at all.

Last week, I visited the this tract of land for the first time in ages. The big bird news there is a colony of Henslow's Sparrows, far from their nearest known regular haunts.

This prairie was an overgrazed eyesore only a few years ago. Now it is home to one of the most highly sought, enigmatic species of birds found in Kansas. Hard to find species, such as Sprague's Pipits and Smith's Longspurs, have been found in the prairies here in the past few years, and woodland species as Cooper's Hawk, Barred Owl, and Pileated Woodpecker are moving in as nesting species in the riparian woodland.

I really felt excited seeing a singing Henslow's out there in the field. Truly the preservation and restoration of this area is a significant victory on the local level for those who love natural things. Without the concern, dedication, and hard work of a few, it would not have happened at all. Dwight, Carol, and Bob combined a love for birds with a willingness to become involved in the local political process, and won a few rounds with the forces of narrow-mindedness. They are also keen enough birders that they have been able to document a number of rare or uncommon birds in this area. These are birders we can all aspire to emulate. I'm sure gonna try to.

KOS Items Available

If you would like to purchase KOS T-shirts, sweatshirts, window stickers, etc. then you need to contact the KOS Business Manager, James Barnes, at 1425 S Wichita, Wichita, KS 67213, 316-265-4059, or via e-mail at barnowls@juno.com

If you are also having problems getting your newsletter or bulletin let James know. And if you want to purchase back issues he is your contact also.

Proposed By-Laws Change

The following by-laws change will be voted on at the annual meeting in Wichita, October 4, 1997:

"Article II. Section 4.C. Annual dues shall be payable to the treasurer by ~~January~~ **March 1.**"

This means that dues would be payable by March 1 rather than January 1.

KBBAT Blockbuster Weekend

The Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas Project (KBBAT) is about to wrap up. There aren't very many more of these Blockbuster Weekends coming up so you'd better grab this opportunity.

KBBAT Southwest Region Blockbuster Weekend

June 27 - 29, 1997

Contact John Zimmerman, Division of Biology, Ackert Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502-4901

Office 913-532-6659
Home 913-537-0238

**Deadline for submissions for the
September, 1997 Horned Lark is July 25,**

Remember KOS.... If you would like to help the Kansas Ornithological Society's future growth consider leaving a memorial trust for the Society or including the KOS in your will. If you would like more information feel free to contact any of the Board Members.

GPNC brings together federal, state and local efforts for wildlife education

by Susan Nicholson Barnes

*“In the end,
We will conserve only what we love,
We will love only what we understand,
We will understand only what we are taught.”*
- Baba Dioum, Conservationist

A love of nature usually is taught. Children learn from family and friends who take the time to share their appreciation of watching migrations in the fall, new life in the spring and sometimes just the changing of leaves or trickling of a stream.

It can be difficult for urban families to build this appreciation. But a recently formed partnership between federal, state and city government, one of the first of its kind, is working to help visitors learn to love the natural world.

The Great Plains Nature Center (GPNC) was initiated in a meeting in January 1988, when representatives from the Wichita Dept. of Park and Recreation and the Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks met to discuss the possibilities of an interpretation center at Chisholm Creek Park in Wichita. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was added to the team and with the support of former senator Bob Dole, former governor Mike Hayden and other Kansas politicians, development of the plan led to groundbreaking in July 1994. And while there are areas of the center yet to be completed, the GPNC already promises to be a valuable resource for educating the public about the resources, wildlife and habitats of the Great Plains region.

“This cooperative effort between the three agencies is unique in itself as it's the first of its kind in the country,” said Bob Gress, director of the GPNC. Planning and construction of the building was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which also owns the seven acres on which the building sits. The Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks provides the operations budget while the city of Wichita maintains the surrounding grounds as part of Chisholm Creek Park.

Each agency is represented in the GPNC staff, which includes Bob and naturalists Connie Elpers and Jim Mason from the city of Wichita, naturalist Jan Brock and GPNC manager Marc Murrell from the Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks and naturalist Suzanne Fellows from

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Wichita's school district is represented by teaching specialists Jean Gengler and Joyce Lent, who provide on-site programs for students.

Located at the intersection of 29th Street North and Woodlawn Street (Figure #1, next page), the GPNC faces the southeast corner of Chisholm Creek Park, to which it is linked by two miles of nature trails that travel through tallgrass prairie, wetlands and riparian woodlands. Currently, the facility offers two classrooms, a 200-seat auditorium, offices for the GPNC staff and the Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks regional office. Still under construction are a wildlife observatory, a 3400 square foot exhibit hall that will include a 2400 gallon aquarium, and a gift shop.

“We had hoped to host a grand opening for the entire facility in the spring of 1997,” Bob said, “but the loss of the exhibits has postponed the grand opening into 1998.” Exhibits were lost in December 1996, when ice and snow collapsed the roof of the Seattle, Wash., building where they were being built and stored.

In the mean time, the center is maintaining a full calendar of events with activities scheduled nearly every day, ranging from nature programming for children and adults to providing a regular meeting place for groups, including the Flatland Fly Fishers Club, Southwind Sierra Club, Prairiewind Storytellers and the Wichita Audubon Society. In the fall, the GPNC will host the fall meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society.

Day trips are scheduled through the GPNC for programming at other natural sites in Kansas, such as the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve.

“The goals of the GPNC include serving as a community resource for conservation and related informational materials, with an emphasis on the importance of habitats to wildlife and people,” Bob said, “and as an environmental education resource for school districts, youth organizations, colleges and universities, conservation organizations, and other groups and individuals interested in wildlife and the environment. We are confident that by providing a central location for

continued, next page

Fall KOS Meeting preview, continued...

groups, collaborative programming, and ultimately exhibits reflecting the Great Plains region, we will be teaching the understanding so necessary for the conservation of our wildlife and habitats.”

For more information about the GPNC or to receive the newsletter, call 316-683-5499 or write to the Great Plains Nature Center, 6232 E. 29th Street North, Wichita, KS 67220-2200.

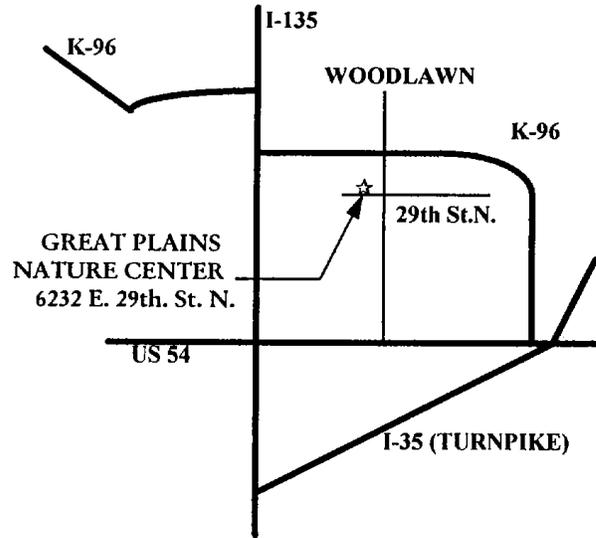


Figure #1 (left), location of Great Plains Nature Center

KOS Spring Board Meeting Excerpts

The KOS Board of Directors held a brief meeting during the KOS/Wilson Ornithological Society Meetings in Manhattan on Saturday, April 20, 1997. The complete minutes will not be printed here at this time, but significant excerpts follow.

The Finance Committee (Max Thompson, Roy Beckemeyer and Ed Miller) have not met yet but will in the near future. They will at that time also discuss how to handle the proceeds from the Madge Hilbish estate. KOS is still waiting to hear what that final amount will be. One possibility is to add it to the endowment fund.

It has been suggested that the membership exchange list (for KOS publications - you send us a copy of your publication and we'll send you a copy of ours) become known as the complimentary membership list to clarify its use.

There was discussion of use of the KOS World Wide Web page (see article elsewhere in *The Horned Lark*.) The general consensus was that this was a valuable informational tool and portions or excerpts of *The Horned Lark* be placed there.

KOS Board member, Dr. Richard Johnston, has started writing a "Bird of the Month" column for use by newspapers. It is currently being sent to the Lawrence Journal-World and the Hays-Daily News. Dr. Johnston welcomes comments and if other newspapers would be interested in using this monthly feature please contact Dr. Johnston.

There was discussion of the KOS Library and accessibility of KOS materials now being stored in the KU libraries. It is probable that KOS members can obtain this literature through the inter-library loan procedure. Please contact your library for information on how this works.

The upcoming KOS Fall Meeting was discussed as well as ways to improve and add to those meetings. Suggestions for additions included: offering of additional seminars or workshops, more local field trips whenever possible, offer alternatives to the regular paper sessions or offering introductory, child-level or entry-level sessions. Additional ideas and suggestions can be sent to Roy Beckemeyer, Richard Johnston or Greg Farley.

It was brought to the Board's attention that there was an omission in the published minutes of the Winter Board meeting. The Kansas Bird Records Committee member nominations were received by the board and approved.

KOS Fall Meeting - October 3 - 5, 1997, Great Plains Nature Center - Wichita, Kansas.

- - *Straight from the 'Net*

Sandpiper Identification

*About a year ago Gerald Reeck and myself (Chuck Otte) decided to start, what is known on the Internet, a discussion list. A discussion list is a big electronic bulletin board or old fashioned telephone party line. You "subscribe" to this (at no charge) and your name and e-mail address are added to the list. Then when you post a message to **KSBIRD-L** the message is automatically re-sent to the 100+ subscribers on the discussion list.*

*The stated purpose of **KSBIRD-L** is to create a forum dedicated to the sharing and discussion of Kansas birds and the many issues surrounding them, such as habitat, conservation, identification, feeding, housing, KBBAT and other projects..... well, you get the picture. One subscriber may ask a question that triggers several responses from various other list members. If you have an e-mail address and would like to join the list just send me a message at otte@jc.net*

One of the list members suggested the idea of taking an excerpts) from these discussions for each issue of the Horned Lark. Following is the first of these "Straight from the 'Net" features. Linda Mallonee raised the question that many of us have had, "How do you tell some of the peeps apart?" Chris Hobbs and David Seibel responded with some excellent and insightful comments. Following are those messages in virtually un-edited format. The messages are re-produced with the permission of all three of the original authors.

Linda's original question:

I appreciated Guy Smith's observations about pectoral and semipalmated sandpipers. Does anyone have a behavior clue for the difference between western and semi-palmated peeps? I was at the Bottoms one day when Ed Martinez was banding. He held one in each hand and I still could not see differences in plumage. If I can't tell the birds in hand, I'm not going to tell them in the water without some other kind of clue. That experience made me almost stop looking at them!

Thanks, Linda Mallonee, Wichita

Chris Hobb's response:

It's refreshing to see a thread relating to shorebird identification! Although separating Pectoral vs. Semipalmated Sandpiper is straight forward, and generally not a concern, the differences between 'Semi-P' and Western can be a little trickier!

Both these stints actually have toe-webbing, as previously mentioned of the semi-p. Under 99.9% of most field conditions, don't expect to see (in the field) this feature in either species!

Behavior is an excellent starting point in separating these two stints. Semipalmated Sandpipers have shorter, blunter bills than Western, and therefore feed by 'surface-picking' their prey in a hurried manner, abruptly stopping, then continuing with this full-speed-ahead foraging style. Westerns have longer bills used for probing. Probing generally requires a slower pace, thus a different style from the more frenetic Semi-p. Because of their differences in bill-length, Westerns tend to wade more into the mudflat than Semi-p, which tends to stay more shoreward.

Foraging behavior is not 'diagnostic' by any means. During migration they may stop at a farm pond with habitat limitations, so many species are forced to forage in the same manner. However, places like Quivira and Cheyenne Bottoms afford most shorebirds a preferred habitat choice.

Most field guides point to the bill shape and length in differentiating Western from Semi-p, and generally speaking, this is a necessary feature to determine the correct identification of most individuals. Semi-p typically has a short, blunt, very straight bill, and Western has a proportionately longer, deeper-based bill that often droops at the tip. The dreaded word - 'variability' - also comes into play, however. Male Western bills are decidedly shorter than female Western bills, so much so that individuals can be sexed within a mixed group of male and female Westerns. (In the Fall, juveniles have shorter bills yet, so a juv male Western easily overlaps with Semi-p!) Another variable exists within geographic differences between Semi-p. West coast birds are slightly smaller than east coast birds. An eastern female Semi's slightly longer bill could look less blunt and more pointed, thus appearing more Western-like. In Kansas, I suppose we could get both eastern and western birds (?).

continued next page

-- *Straight from the 'Net, continued*

Overall plumage differences between Western and Semi-p is somewhat more straightforward in the Spring. Westerns typically show warm upperparts with rufous fringed scapulars, tertials, ear coverts, and crown. Semi-p has more subdued upperparts - mostly just brownish-gray. Some will have a hint of rufous similar to Western, but not equalling a 'typical' alternate-plumaged Western.

Vocally, the difference is night and day. A Western has a high-pitched 'jeet' or 'cheep' call, while Semipalmated has a harsh 'chert' or 'chut'.

Finally, Western numbers peak in mid-April and most are gone by the first week of May. Semipalmated numbers peak in mid-May and many are seen until early June. Chris Hobbs, Bonner Springs

David Seibel's response

Linda Mallonee commented that she had difficulty distinguishing Western from Semipalmated sandpipers in the hand, and Chris Hobbs posted some very helpful identification hints in response. (Thanks, Chris!)

I just wanted to add a few general comments for Linda and other aspiring but not overly confident shorebird identifiers (a group that should probably include all of us at least occasionally): First, birds often look quite different in the hand from in the field, and different sets of characters may be needed to identify a bird under these very different viewing conditions. Although the bird can be inspected closely in the hand, virtually all "normal" behavioral and vocal clues are missing, and birds that can be easily distinguished in the field can be pretty tricky in the hand until you learn the "in-hand" characteristics.

Further, while there is no substitute for the careful analysis of detail that is possible in the hand, there is also no substitute for experience with the species in the field. Frequently, field experience will allow seemingly impossible identifications by "gestalt" or "jizz," that is, by overall impression, potentially taking into account almost indescribably subtle features, shapes, postures, and actions. This ability isn't too surprising if you consider that we all have the innate ability to distinguish one human face from another; in birding, we are typically only concerned with differentiating entire species, which ought to be much easier.

In reality, not only can individual, racial, and sexual variation confound the identification process, but lighting conditions, plumage and molt conditions, presence or absence of other species for size comparison, quality of

habitat (as Chris pointed out), observer bias, and innumerable other factors can make it virtually impossible to identify some birds on any given day. This is another point where experience helps: Sometimes it's best to state a bird's identity merely as a probability, no matter how unsatisfying that is. Knowing when to stop short of a definite identification is probably one of the hardest learned lessons in birding, and perhaps the most rarely mastered.

As a rule of thumb, I try to evaluate all evidence I have about a bird's identity (especially for a difficult identification or extralimital sighting), to determine two things: (1) Do I have enough information to eliminate all other species from consideration; and (2) is **every** observed detail consistent with my tentative identification? If the answer to either question is no, or even if there is a slight possibility that the answer is no, then the identification must, for the sake of accuracy, be viewed with doubt. How much doubt is a matter of personal discretion and - again - experience.

Fortunately, gaining field experience is, for most of us, one of the really rewarding parts of birding. Be patient, look - and listen - carefully, and analyze every bird you see (especially ones you see well enough to identify with certainty, as these give you the basis for helpful comparisons later). With perseverance, you will gradually develop the detailed mental picture of each species that will allow you to separate it from similar ones - if conditions are favorable - with the same confidence that you distinguish the faces of two friends.

David E. Seibel, Chairman
Kansas Bird Records Committee

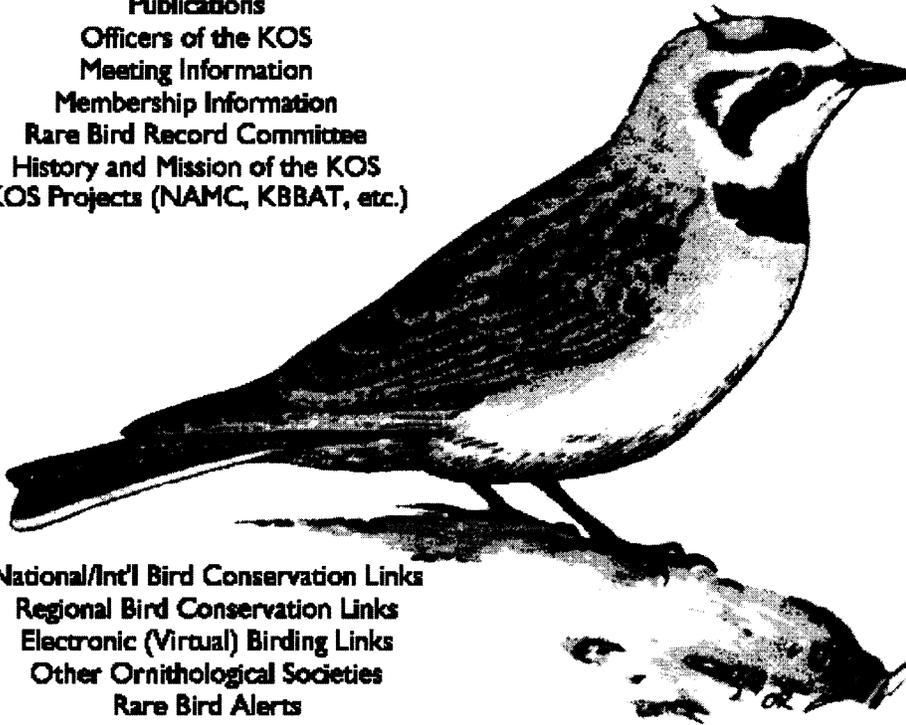
When You Watch a Marriage Between Owl and Mouse

A hollow pulse of wing
through dark air, sliding
around woven vines,
and folded limbs. She has
a warm beat flickering
in her eye. Tiny feet
scrape, nose under tumbled
leaves. His naked tail
flicks and stops. Wind
crushes in his ears pushing
him to run. Crackling,
his feet flash, in flames
of leaves he gives in
to the hot grip
of talons and a swift kiss.

Chet Gresham

Kansas Ornithological Society

Publications
Officers of the KOS
Meeting Information
Membership Information
Rare Bird Record Committee
History and Mission of the KOS
KOS Projects (NAMC, KBBAT, etc.)



National/Int'l Bird Conservation Links
Regional Bird Conservation Links
Electronic (Virtual) Birding Links
Other Ornithological Societies
Rare Bird Alerts

[History and Mission of the KOS](#) | [Membership Information - How to Join](#) | [Officers of the KOS](#)
[Kansas Bird Record Committee](#) | [Publications \(Checklist, newsletter etc.\)](#) | [Meeting information](#)
[Regional Bird Conservation Links](#) | [National & International Bird Conservation Links](#) |
[Electronic Ornithological Information](#) |
[KOS Projects \(KBBAT, NAMC etc.\)](#) | [Regional Rare Bird Alert \(RBA\) transcripts](#)
[Links to other ornithological societies and bird record committees](#)

KOS World Wide Web Home Page Debuts

By now just about everyone has at least heard about the World Wide Web sometimes referred to as the WWW or simply, "The Web". (Look for a feature article in the September *Horned Lark* that goes into much more detail on the Internet, The Web, and what it takes and what it costs to get "hooked up".) Several KOS members decided that the Kansas Ornithological Society needed there own Web page or, as they say, a presence on the web.

The graphic at the top of this page is the KOS home page on the World Wide Web (it looks much better in color when it is viewed on your computer!) Each of the subtitles are what's called a link. They connect your computer to another electronic document. The possibilities are nearly endless and it is available to the millions of computer users connected to the Internet!

Some of the information you can find at this Web site include: membership information on the KOS, the most recent Kansas and Kansas City Rare Bird Alerts, the Kansas Bird Record Committee report form - what birds should be reported and who to report them to, what the Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas project is and how to get involved, plus additional "links" to take you to other bird related Web pages.

How do you get to the KOS home page? In your web browser type in:

<http://www-personal.ksu.edu/~drintoul/kos/>

See you on the Web!

WINTER ROUND-UP

December 1996 through February 1997

by Chris Hobbs

The weather during the winter of '96 could be summed up in a word - Brutal. Sure it was cold and windy - but it made up for it by snowing a lot! Birders are opportunists, and this winter presented a bounty. Large gulls were forced south when lakes and rivers to the west, north, and east were choked with ice. Kansas birders took advantage, recording two ICELAND (Kumleini) GULLS and two LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS, all well documented, including photos/video of three! GLAUCOUS GULLS made an especially early showing, with the majority reported during December. Kansas birders wishing to see the elusive GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL in the state should simply bird with Pete Janzen in late December to late January! For the second year in a row, Pete has discovered a GBBG in Wichita, and unlike some individuals that return each year, these were different individuals.

Remember those nomadic Red Crossbills that started trickling into the state last July? They continued their movement into every corner of Kansas and remained at various locations throughout the period. From the Rocky Mountains came Evening Grosbeaks, whose presence

caused many Kansas birders to keep watchful eyes on the western border for other montane strays. Those expectations were realized with the arrival of several CLARK'S NUTCRACKERS in the southwest corner. A particularly cooperative individual remained in Ulysses through the end of this reporting period, and was seen by all who made the trek. Other related strays included the 'White-winged' Juncos found in the northwest by Seltman; the Cassin's Finch at Morton County by Janzen and Nickel; Bohemian Waxwings at Scott Lake seen by the Shane's; and Mountain Chickadees at Elkhart and Ulysses. There was even a Rosy Finch scare in Hugoton, but the birds were later believed to have been Red Crossbills.

As birders, we may take to the field in groups or singly. As observers, we may be tentative or sure. Regardless of our style, habits, or beliefs, we rely on each other to learn and to enjoy birds and birding. If you've read a field guide, called a hotline, or perused the KSBird-List, you've taken something that someone else has given you. Don't forget to return the favor with your hotline reports, rarity documentations for the Kansas Bird Records Committee, and observations for publication in articles like this! It's a responsibility we must assume if we call ourselves 'birders'. Thanks to all who contributed their data and documentations!

<u>Speices</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Observer(s)</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>County</u>
Pacific Loon	Wilson Reservoir	Rader, et al	12-06/14-96	Russell
Common Loon	2 at Wilson Reservoir	Rader	12-06-96	Russell
	5 at Wilson Reservoir	Rader, et al	12-08/14-96	Russell
	1 at Wilson Reservoir	Rader	12-21-96	Russell
	1 at Wolf Creek Reservoir	McHugh, et al	01-25/02-01	Coffey
Horned Grebe	1 at Wolf Creek Reservoir	McHugh, et al	01-25-97	Coffey
Western Grebe	2 at Wilson Reservoir	Rader	12-13-96	Russell
Tundra Swan	4 Quivira NWR (since 11-23)	Patti, Rader	12-01-96	Stafford
	8, 2mi. south of Peabody	Jim Nickel	02-25-97	Marion
Trumpeter Swan	2 Quivira NWR (since 11-23)	Patti, Rader	12-01-96	Stafford
	2 behind Aloha Motel, Wichita	CBC counters	12-21/22-96	Sedgwick
	3, Lake Shawnee in Topeka	Moore	01-02-97	Shawnee
	3, sand pits in Garden City	T. & S. Shane	01-02/02-06-97	Finney
Ross' Goose	2 at Glen Elder Reservoir	Rader	12-08-96	Mitchell
	1, John Redmond Reservoir	McHugh, et al	01-25-97	Coffey

American Black Duck	2, Lawrence sand pits 1, Wyandotte Lake 1, Wolf Creek Reservoir 7 at Harvey Co. East Lake 2 at Melvern Rsvr.	Moore Moore McHugh, et al not known Gish	01-02/02-22-97 01-05-97 01-25-97 02-09-97 02-15-97	Douglas Wyandotte Coffey Harvey Osage
Greater Scaup	8 at Clinton Lake 1 at El Dorado State Park	McHugh, et al Hicks	02-22-97 02-23-97	Douglas Butler
Oldsquaw	Wilson Reservoir Tuttle Creek 29th Street sand pit, Wichita near Topeka 2 near John Redmond	Rader Cable Janzen Cable Brier	12-01/21-96 12-26/01-12 01-01-97 02-22-97 02-28-97	Russell Riley Sedgwick Pottawatomie Coffey
Barrow's Goldeneye	Female in Wichita	Janzen	01-01-97	Sedgwick
C. Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser hybrid at Wilson		Rader	12-06-96	Russell
C. Goldeneye X Barrow's Goldeneye at Wyandotte Lake		Moore	12-27-96	Wyandotte
Red-breasted Merganser	2 at Wilson Reservoir 2 at 29th St. sand pit, Wichita 2 at El Dorado State Park	Seltman Janzen Hicks	12-14-96 01-01-97 02-23-97	Russell Sedgwick Butler
Northern Goshawk	1 on Lansing CBC 1 ad. 10 mi. n. of Wichita	Wedge Northrup	01-05-97 02-14-97	Leavenworth Cowley
Merlin	sw of Wakefield sw of Wichita Wolf Creek Rsvr.	CBC counters not known McHugh, et al	12-22-96 01-23-97 02-01-97	Clay Sedgwick Coffey
Prairie Falcon	1, John Redmond Reservoir	McHugh, et al	01-25-97	Coffey
Peregrine Falcon	3, Wichita CBC total sw of Wakefield 1, downtown Wichita	CBC counters CBC counters Hicks	12-21-96 12-22-96 12-29-96	Sedgwick Clay Sedgwick
Killdeer	1 in Pawnee Co.	Seltman	02-17-97	Pawnee
California Gull	Basic I, Glen Elder Rsvr Basic I, Wilson Reservoir adult, K-96 & Ark. River Basic III, Wolf Creek Rsvr.	Rader Rader Janzen McHugh, et al	12-08-96 12-21-96 01-23-97 02-01-97	Mitchell Russell Sedgwick Coffey
Thayer's Gull	2 at Glen Elder Reservoir Basic I, Wilson Reservoir Basic I, sand pit in Wichita 1, adult at Tuttle Creek 2, Basic I at Tuttle Creek 1, Basic II at Clinton Lake	Rader Rader Janzen not known Cable Seibel, et al	12-08-96 12-21-96 01-01-97 01-05-97 01-12-97 02-23-97	Mitchell Russell Sedgwick Riley Riley Douglas
ICELAND GULL	Basic II at Clinton Lake Basic I at Melvern Rsvr.	McHugh, et al Swalwell, et al	02-22-97 02-28-97	Douglas Osage

LSR. BL.-BACK GULL	1 ad. at Wilson Reservoir Basic I at Clinton Lake	Rader McHugh, et al	12-21-96 12-21-96	Russell Douglas
Glaucous Gull	1, Basic I at Tuttle Creek 2 Basic I at Wilson Reservoir 4 at Tuttle Creek Rsvr. 1, Basic I at Glen Elder Rsvr. 1, Ark River in Wichita 1, Basic II at Milford Rsvr. 1, Cedar Bluff Reservoir 2, John Redmond Reservoir 1, Melvern Reservoir 1, Basic I at Melvern Rsvr.	Rader Rader Cable CBC counters Barnes Otte CBC counters McHugh, et al McHugh, et al Swalwell	12-14-96 12-21-96 12-21-96 12-22-96 12-22-96 12-24-96 12-27-96 01-25-97 01-25-97 02-28-97	Riley Russell Riley Mitchell Sedgwick Geary Ness Coffey Osage Osage
GR. BL.-BACK GULL	1, Basic I at Brooke's Landfill	Janzen, Piori	12-21-96	Sedgwick
Black-legged Kittiwake	2 Tuttle Creek Reservoir (1 since 11-29, L. Johnson) 1 at Perry Lake	Otte & Cable Moore	12-06/15-96 12-22/01-05	Riley Jefferson
Bonaparte's Gull	350 at Perry Lake 1 at Perry Lake	Moore Moore	12-09-96 01-05-97	Jefferson Jefferson
Inca Dove	2, Hugoton 1, Garden City	Britbuller Seltman, Cable	12-27-96 01-04-97	Stevens Finney
W. SCREECH-OWL	1 along Cimmaron R.	Patti, et al	01-18-97	Morton
SNOWY OWL	Meade/ Seward Co. line 7mi sw of St. John 1 south of Scott City 1 near Larned 1 imm. sw of Wichita 1 in Garden City	not known S. Lewis not known not known not known T. & S. Shane	early Dec. 12-21-96 12-10/01-04 early Dec. 01-22/26-97 01-28-97	Meade/Seward Stafford Scott Pawnee Sedgwick Finney
Burrowing Owl	1 at north fork of Cimarron R.	Janzen, Nickel	12-08-96	Morton
Long-eared Owl	1 Ag Station, 2 at north fork 12, Milford Lake 3, south shore of Milford Lake 10+ at Scott Lake	Janzen, Nickel Otte CBC counters not known	12-08-96 12-28-96 12-29-96 01-01-97	Morton Geary Geary Scott
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1 at Scott Lake 1 calling at Wilson Lake	not known Rader	01-01-97 01-21-97	Scott Russell
Pileated Woodpecker	1 at Wolf Creek	Bill Trelc	02-01-97	Coffey
CLARK's NUTCRACKER	in Elkhart 1 in Ulysses 1 Dodge City	T. Giddens M. McGlowan Doug Stain	01-01/05-97 01-31/period 02-01/02-28-97	Morton Grant Ford
Mountain Chickadee	1 in Elkhart 1 in Ulysses	CBC counters M. McGlowan	12-28/01-19 01-31/period	Morton Grant
Rock Wren	1 at Point of Rocks	Janzen, Nickel	12-08-96	Morton

Carolina Wren	105 on Manhattan CBC 1 in Garden City	CBC total Osterbuhr	12-14-96 12-25/02-06-97	Riley Finney
Bewick's Wren	5 singing at Milford Rsvr.	Otte	02-22-97	Geary
Mountain Bluebird	150 at Wilson Lake 485 in Gypsum Hills ca. 20, University Golf Course 125 at Wilson Lake	Rader Janzen, Nickel Cable Rader	12-06-96 12-06-96 12-15-96 02-11-97	Russell Barber Riley Russell
Townsend's Solitaire	1 at Lyon Co. State Lake	Gish, Frey	02-01/15-97	Lyon
Hermit Thrush	Hugoton nw. of Larned	not known Seltman	12-28-96 01-27-97	Stevens Pawnee
Brown Thrasher	nw. of Larned	Seltman	01-27-97	Pawnee
BOHEM. WAXWING	3 at Scott Lake 7 at Scott Lake	T. and S. Shane not known	12-29-96 01-01-97	Scott Scott
Cedar Waxwing	500-600 at Milford Rsvr.	Otte	01-03-97	Geary
Northern Shrike	Wilson Reservoir 1 at Jetmore Cemetary 1 near St. Francis	Seltman Seltman, Cable Seltman	12-14-96 01-04-97 01-18-97	Russell Hodgeman Cheyenne
Dickcissel	Wichita CBC	CBC counters	12-21-96	Sedgwick
Vesper Sparrow	Junction City CBC	CBC counters	12-29-96	Geary
D-E (Wh.-winged) Junco	10 near St. Francis	Seltman	01-18-97	Cheyenne
Smith's Longspur	'many' - Lyon Co. State Lake	Gish, Frey	02-01/15-97	Lyon
Snow Bunting	6 at Glen Elder Reservoir 1 at Wolf Creek Rsvr.	CBC counters McHugh, et al	12-22-96 02-01-97	Mitchell Coffey
Rusty Blackbird	30 in North Wichita	Northrup	02-14-97	Sedgwick
Great-tailed Grackle	7500 near Basehor	Corder	01-05-97	Leavenworth
Purple Finch	Wilson Reservoir 1 in Gypsum Hills 5 at Elkhart 2 at Dodge City 1 at Pawnee Prairie Park	Rader Janzen, Nickel CBC counters Joyce Davis Janzen	12-06-96 12-06-96 12-28-96 01-19-97 01-23-97	Russell Barber Morton Ford Sedgwick
Cassin's Finch	8 at Wilberton Crossing	Janzen, Nickel	12-08-96	Morton
Red Crossbill	5 at Ag Station feeder in Ulysses 1 at Tuttle Creek Reservoir 30 in Garden City 15 at Sim Park, Wichita 1 in Bushton	Janzen, Nickel McGlowan Cable Shane CBC counters A. Finckle	12-08-96 12-13-96 12-15-96 12-15-96 12-21/01-19 12-22-96	Morton Grant Riley Finney Sedgwick Rice

Red Crossbill, con't	25 in Hugoton	Patti	12-28-96	Stevens
	45 on Cimarron Grasslands CBC	CBC counters	12-28-96	Morton
	'several' at Scott Lake	CBC counters	01-01-97	Scott
	14 at Jetmore Cemetery	Seltman, Cable	01-04-97	Hodgeman
	20 in Atwood	Seltman	01-18-97	Rawlins
	small flock in Elkhart	Patti, et al	01-19-97	Morton
	small flock in Dodge City	Joyce Davis	01-19/02-02	Ford
	small flock in Liberal	Patti, et al	01-19-97	Seward
	30 in Ulysses	M. McGlowan	01-31-97	Grant
	14 on Ft. Hays campus, Hays	Greg Farley	02-01-97	Hays
	3 in Newton	Bob Regehr	02-08-97	Harvey
	3 at Perry Lake	Rucker	02-14-97	Jefferson
	3 at Sim Park, Wichita	Janzen	02-14-97	Sedgwick
	17 in Ulysses	M. McGlowan	02-20-97	Grant
	Evening Grosbeak	18 at Wilson Reservoir	Rader	12-01-96
several in McCracken		C. Thompson	12-04/23-96	Rush
1 in Gypsum Hills		Janzen, Nickel	12-06-96	Barber
2 at Milford State Park office		Otte	12-24/01-03	Geary
'several' at Scott Lake		CBC counters	01-01-97	Scott
5 at Milford Lake		Cable	01-12-97	Geary
2 in St. Francis		Patti, et al	01-18-97	Cheyenne
8 at Wilson Lake		Rader	01-21-97	Russell
several in Hays		not known	02-09-97	Hays
18 at Wilson Lake		Rader	02-11-97	Russell
1 female in Junction City		Otte	02-13-97	Geary
15 at Ulysses		M. McGlowan	02-20-97	Grant

Key to Abbreviations

AG	= Agricultural	Ark.	= Arkansas
ad.	= adult	CBC	= Christmas Bird Count
Basic	= winter plumage	Co.	= County
I	= 1st	ca.	= circa (approximately)
II	= 2nd	NWR	= National Wildlife Refuge
III	= 3rd	Rsvr.	= Reservoir
		R.	= River

OBSERVERS:

James Barnes, Joanne Brier, Ted Cable, Mark Corder, Elaine Corder, Joyce Davis, Greg Farley, A. Finckle, John Frey, Terrell Giddens, Dan Gish, Tyler Hicks, Chris Hobbs, Pete Janzen, S. Lewis, M. McGlowan, Mick McHugh, Lloyd Moore, Dan Mulhern, James Nickel, John Northrup, Marie Osterbuhr, Chuck Otte, Jaye Otte, Sebastian Patti, Galen Pittman, Eric Preston, Mike Rader, David Rintoul, Richard Rucker, Diane Seltman, Scott Seltman, Tom Shane, Sara Shane, Guy Smith, Doug Stain, Art Swalwell, Bill Trelc, Max Thompson, Phil Wedge,

KOS Fall Meeting

October 3 - 5, 1997

Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita, Kansas

See September Newsletter for details and registration form

CALL FOR PAPERS
KANSAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING, 1997

The KOS will meet October 4 and 5, 1997 at Wichita, KS. The contributed papers will be presented on Saturday, October 4. The only requirement is that the papers deal with birds in some way. We especially encourage graduate and undergraduate students to present the results of their studies. Interesting papers are also often given by people who consider themselves amateurs, but who nevertheless have considerable expertise to share. We encourage you to share your experiences with the members and guests who will be attending. Both long and short presentations are welcome.

We are again requesting that all contributors submit an abstract or short summary (approximately 150 words) of their presentations.

COMPLETE THIS FORM AND MAIL BY SEPTEMBER 19, 1997, TO:

Prof. Greg Farley
Vice President, KOS
Fort Hays State University
Dept. of Biological Sciences
Albertson Hall
600 Park St.
Hays, KS 67601-4099
Phone: (913) 628-5965
E-Mail: BIGF@FHSUVM.FHSU.EDU

Contributed Paper for KOS Annual Meeting, Oct. 4, 1997

AUTHOR(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

PAPER TITLE: _____

ABSTRACT: _____

Time for presentation and questions (circle one): 10 min. 15 min. 20 min.

Audio-Visual equipment required: _____