

Kansas Ornithological Society

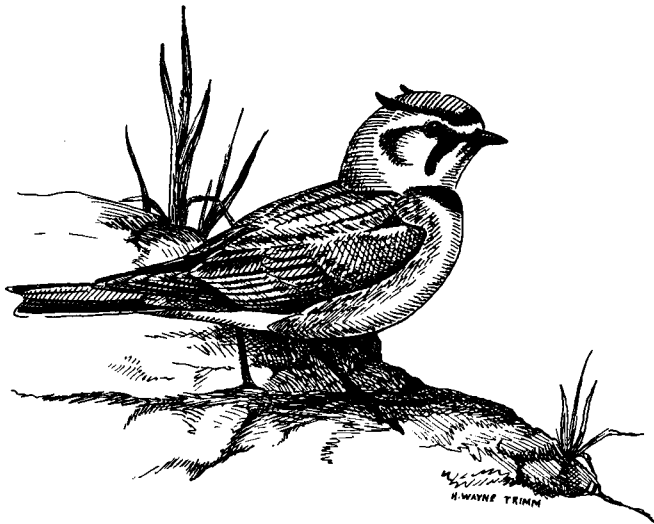
BULLETIN

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

Vol. 13

March, 1962

No. 1



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Published March 23, 1962.

MIDWINTER BIRD COUNT FOR 1961

BY ABBOT S. GAUNT AND JON C. BARLOW

Nineteen participating stations reported 86,580 individuals of 101 species of birds in the midwinter bird count of the Kansas Ornithological Society. Although the count represents an increase of 12,678 over 1960 in the total number of individuals seen, the number of species recorded constitutes the fourth lowest total in the history of the census. Numbers of waterfowl (17,845) were lower by approximately 10,000 individuals than the total of these kinds in 1960. Waterfowl represented 20.6% of all individuals seen and this is the second lowest percentage noted since the inception of the count. The lowest percentage was 14.7% in 1954. Reduction in numbers of waterfowl perhaps again reflects continuation of unfavorable environmental conditions in northern breeding areas; however, it should be noted that the continuous ice cover on the waterways that existed during the period of census in northern Kansas would limit duck numbers and heavy snow cover in fields during the same period probably affected the numbers of geese.

The most notable sightings were of the Pigmy Nuthatch (*Sitta pygmaea*), the Bohemian Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*), the Redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*), the White-winged Crossbill (*Loxia leucoptera*) and the Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphona vespertina*). The report of the Pigmy Nuthatch, substantiated by a specimen taken at Wichita by Max C. Thompson, constitutes the first record of this species for the state. The distribution (4 stations) and number (109) of Evening Grosbeaks suggest we are having one of the periodic grosbeak invasions.

For the first time we have included the Swainson Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) in our totals, owing to the report of a total of 10 individuals from three stations (Junction City, Linn County and Wichita). Traditionally, such reports are not honored because no winter specimen exists for the state. Members of this species typically displace, at a minimum, some 4,000 miles to the southward in winter (see A.O.U. Check-list, 1957:108).

Baldwin (same as previous years).—December 27; 9 hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 123, foot 8; observers: Amelia J. Betts (compiler), Jim Bond, Mr. and Mrs. I. L. Boyd, Roger Boyd, Mrs. Richard Garret, Lucille Knabe, Katherine Kelley, Marno McKaughan, R. F. Miller, Fred Purvis, Dean Richards and Tom Ruhlen.

Camp Naish (2 mi. E Bonner Springs, Wyandotte Co.; 5% grassland, 5% brushland, 45% woods, 45% lake or river).—December 29; 6 hours (8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.); miles; foot 7; observers: Roger Beers, Bill Kerfoot, Charles Metzler, Dan Michener (compiler), Mark Roberts and Richard Verhage.

Chase County (7½ mi. radius from a point in east-central Chase Co.; 54% grassland, 30% cultivated fields, 10% brushland, 5% woods, 1% lake or river).—ca. December 27; 3½ hours (1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.); miles: car 40, foot 2; observers: Marc Marcellus and Edward J. Ryan (compiler).

Clay Center (2 mi. wide strip, 1 mi. S to 11 mi. N of Clay Center on K-15, Republican River to the N Clay Co. line; 15% grassland, 20% cultivated fields, 35% brushland, 25% woods, 5% lake or river).—December 28; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 41, foot 6; observer: Ted R. Anderson (compiler).

Fostoria (same as previous years).—December 29; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 60, foot 2½; observers: Mrs. Geneva Walsh, Mrs. Eunice Webster and Mrs. Mabel Willis (compilers).

Halstead (all points within a 15-mile diameter circle, center 3½ mi. NE Halstead, chiefly along the Little Arkansas River and Emma Creeks; 43% cultivated fields, 11% brushland, 46% woods).—December 30; 10 hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 167, foot 11½; observers: Joan Challans, Roy W. Henry, Ruth Rose, Alma K. Ruth, Edna L. Ruth (compiler), Milly Stein, Mr. and Mrs. Ivan D. Sutton and Katie Yoder.

Hays (7½ mi. radius centered 2 mi. S Hays; 45% grassland, 35% cultivated fields,

10% brushland, woods 10%).—January 1; 9 hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; miles: car 59, foot 5; observers: Donald Darnell, Charles Ely (compiler), Willard Ferguson, Steve Glassman, Philip Heuser, Bill Kennedy, Rex Kerstetter, Tom Knulton, John Launchbaugh, Marvin Rolfs, Max Schroeder, Ward Sims, Gerald Tomanek and Paul Ward.

Holton (7 mi. radius from the Courthouse Square; 20% grassland, 15% cultivated fields, 25% brushland, 25% woods, 15% lake or river).—December 29; 8 hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.); miles: car 59, foot 6½; observers: D. Eugene Enos (compiler), Roy McKinsey, Allan Tollefson and Gary Tollefson.

Iola (11 sq. mi. NE and S of Iola; 30% grassland, 40% cultivated fields, 10% brushland, 20% woods, 1% lake or river).—December 27; 6 hours (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.); miles: car 10, foot 4; observer: C. Ora Smith (compiler).

Junction City (7½ mi. radius from KJCK radio tower; 20% grassland, 5% cultivated fields, 30% brushland, 40% woods, 5% lake or river).—December 31; 10¼ hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.); miles: car 80, foot 2; observers: Betty La Shelle, Bob La Shelle, Jock La Shelle (compiler) and Celia White.

Lawrence (7½ mi. radius from Brackett School; 20% grassland, 25% cultivated fields, 20% brushland, 30% woods, 5% lake or river).—December 31; 8 hours (6:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 160, foot 21; observers: Mrs. Ethan Allen, Jon C. Barlow, Roger Beers, Bert Chewning (compiler), Mrs. Bert Chewning, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Faulh, Martha Faulh, Henry Fitch, John Fitch, Lenore French, Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Hall, Roy Johnson, Richard F. Johnston, Bill Kerfoot, Ethel Martin, Robert M. Mengel, Dan Michener, Mrs. John H. Nelson, Stanley Roth and Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Sherman.

Linn County (15 mi. diameter centered NW of Mound City; 45% grassland, 55% woods or lake or river).—December 24; 11½ hours (5:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; miles: car 161, foot 9½; observers: John S. Carr, Mr. and Mrs. Wilson J. Dingus (compiler), Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Faulh, Ivan D. Sutton and Frank Wood.

Manhattan (within a radius of 5 mi. of Manhattan; 40% grassland, 15% cultivated fields, 15% brushland, 15% woods, 15% lake or river).—January 1; 8 hours (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.); miles: car 25, foot 5; observers: H. T. Gier (compiler), Danny Hull, Burke Jabelt, Eugene Lewis, Eulalie Lewis, Paul Lewis and Philip Marvin.

Olathe (15 mi. circle around Gardner Lake; 23% grassland, 10% cultivated fields, 32% brushland, 25% woods, 10% lake or river).—January 1; 8½ hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 149, foot 11; observers: Amelia J. Betts, Barbara Boyd, Mr. and Mrs. I. D. Boyd, Roger Boyd, Dean Crane, Gary Crane, Jack Crane, Ethel Haur, Katherine Kelley, Mrs. Francis McKaughan and Ray Wackly (compiler).

Pittsburg (7½ mi. radius, centered at K. S. T. College; 5% grassland, 50% cultivated fields, 45% woods).—December 27; 9 hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 18, foot 8; observers: Bessie Boso, Gladys C. Galligar and Theodore M. Sperry (compiler).

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (15 mi. diameter circle, center Refuge headquarters; observations in grassland, marsh, lakes and streams and woods).—January 1; 11½ hours (6:45 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.); miles: car 100, foot 5; observers: Wayne E. Dale and Joshua J. Harman (compiler).

Topeka (Topeka and surrounding areas; 25% grassland, 25% cultivated fields, 10% brushland, 15% woods, 25% lake or river).—December 30; 9 hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.); miles: car 220, foot 9; observers: John Pat Atkinson, Charlie Billings, L. B. Carson (compiler), R. England, Elizabeth Fisher, Roberta Foote, George Kitzmiller, Kay Kitzmiller, Marvin Kuehn, T. W. Nelson, Orville O. Rice, Charlene Talbot, Mrs. L. G. Thorpe and Eugene Willet.

Udall (15 mi. circle centered on water tower in Udall; 10% grassland, 30% cultivated fields, 60% woods).—December 31; 9½ hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.); miles: car 100, foot 6; observers: Sheldon Bergstrom, Pearlanna Briggs, Clifford Conway, Carl S. Holmes, Horace W. Johnson, Geneva Kingkade, Nathan H. McDonald, Max C. Thompson (compiler) and Robert B. Wimmer.

Wichita (15 mi. diameter circle centering on confluence of the Little and Big Arkansas Rivers; 10% grassland, 20% cultivated fields, 10% brushland, 10% woods, 50% lake or river).—December 30; 9 hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.); miles: car 153, foot 16; observers: Mr. and Mrs. Albert W. Briggs, J. Walker Butin, Don E. Ferguson, A. L. Hickman, Carl S. Holmes (compiler), Mrs. Carl S. Holmes, David Holmes, Horace W. Johnson, Daniel S. Kilby, Geneva Kingkade, Danny Larson, N. H. McDonald, Helen Putman, Sandra Ritter, Max C. Thompson, Jennibelle Watson, Louise A. Watson and Ralph Wiley.

Museum of Natural History, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, February 10, 1962.

Notes on Nesting of the Loggerhead Shrike.—On April 7, 1961, at 3:10 p.m., I found a nest of a Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) 2½ miles north and ½ mile east of Emporia, Lyon County, Kansas. The nest was approximately five feet above ground in one of a row of small Osage Orange trees. There were four eggs on this date.

On April 8, at 8:00 a.m., there were five eggs in the nest. On April 8, at 5:00 p.m., there were six eggs in the nest. The sixth egg was marked then and used for timing the incubation period. No change had occurred by 9:30 a.m. the following day, but on April 10 there was an additional egg in the nest. This, the seventh egg, did not hatch. It did not contain an embryo.

The eggs were checked daily from April 11 through May 2. No visible changes were noted, but each time the female was more hesitant about leaving the nest.

On April 24, at 5:50 p.m., there were two newly-hatched young. These were completely helpless and without down. The mouth parts were a distinctive yellow, but no definite markings were noted which might indicate a directive feeding mechanism.

At 7:05 a.m., on April 26, five young were in the nest. The sixth egg (marked April 8 at 5:00 p.m.) was just hatching. The eggshell was still attached to the young bird. The incubation period for the sixth egg was 17 days, 14 hours (or 422 hours), with a possible error of only 9 hours.

Several other shrike nests were observed for shorter periods of time. It appeared that incubation started after the laying of the fourth egg, for the female was constantly on the nest after that. The female became restless whenever the nest was approached by humans. It called loudly and clapped its bill, seemingly summoning the male. The male, also, fed the female on the nest. Both sexes fed the young, and both shared in guarding the young.—MYRON SCHWINN, *Everest Rural High School, Everest, Kansas, November 15, 1961.*

Incubation Period of the Mourning Dove.—From April 27 to May 24, 1961, I studied a Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*) nest in Wilson Park, Emporia, Lyon County, Kansas. The nest was at the north end of the park, which is unkept and in a more nearly natural state than the park proper. The nest was about two meters up in a medium-sized hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), and was a fairly solid pile of twigs about 180 mm. in diameter and 70 mm. high, lined with old newspaper, and built on a side branch next to the trunk.

On May 9, at 7:00 p.m., the nest contained one egg, and on May 10, at 12:00 p.m., two eggs. On May 12, at 1:00 p.m., the eggs were candled against the sun. The blastodisc in egg No. 1 was about 15 mm. in diameter and the embryo was about 5 mm. long. The blastodisc in egg No. 2 was about 5 mm. in diameter, with no visible embryo. On May 15, at 2:30 p.m., the embryo in egg No. 2 was about 3 mm. long. Egg No. 1 was pipped at 12:00 p.m. on May 23; it hatched by 10:30 a.m. the following day. The helpless young bird was covered with cream-colored down. On May 24, at 8:00 p.m., egg No. 2 was pipped; the bird hatched at 8:30 a.m. the following day.

Egg No. 2, the last to hatch, was laid between 7:00 p.m. on May 9 and 12:00 p.m. on May 10. The midpoint, 3:30 a.m., May 10, will be considered the time of laying

with an error no greater than 8.5 hours. The egg hatched between 8:00 p.m. on May 24 and 8:30 a.m. on May 25. The hatching time, similarly figured, was 2:15 a.m. on May 25, with an error no greater than 6.25 hours. Thus, the incubation period was ascertained to be 14 days, 22 hours, 45 minutes (possible error 14.75 hours).

Sprunt and Chamberlain (*South Carolina Bird Life*; Univ. S. Carolina Press, 1949) state that the incubation period for *Z. m. carolinensis* is 12 to 14 days. Burleigh (*Georgia Birds*; Univ. Okla. Press, 1958) states that it is 14 days. It is to be noted that the incubation period found in the present study is one day longer than that given by Burleigh, and also one day more than the longest period given by Sprunt and Chamberlain.—HAROLD WILLIS, *Emporia, Kansas, December 18, 1961.*

Age and Plumage of the Black Tern.—Parmelee, in his description of the colony of Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*) nesting at Cheyenne Bottoms, Barton County, Kansas, in 1961 (Bull. Kansas Ornith. Soc., 12, 1961:25–27), states that the presence of “white feathers on the forehead and throat [of otherwise black, nesting birds] . . . is a character of first-year birds.” The white feathers are, in fact, the first outward indication of the onset of the postnuptial molt, which may start in June and which culminates in the mostly white non-nuptial (winter) plumage of the Black Tern.

It follows, then, that Parmelee’s deduction that half of the terns nesting at Cheyenne Bottoms were one year old and breeding for the first time is based on erroneous evidence, as are his further speculations on the history and future of this colony.

The plumages of the Black Tern—and especially the first “nuptial” (spring) plumage—are described thoroughly by van Rossem (Condor, 25, 1923:208–213). Briefly, the sequence is as follows: The birds lose the natal down through replacement by the juvenal plumage, which closely resembles adult non-nuptial (winter) plumage but is browner. The first “nuptial” plumage resembles non-nuptial plumage more closely than it does the adult nuptial plumage, but is variable, some individuals showing no black ventrally, others being liberally spotted with black on the underparts. However, even the darkest one-year-olds are immediately distinguishable from adults in early stages of postnuptial molt. In these adults, wholly white feathers appear among the black feathers of the nuptial plumage. In the one-year-olds, the black mottling is produced by black tips on feathers which are otherwise white. The pair of terns in Figure 1 of Parmelee’s paper are clearly adults (two or more years old); their stage of postnuptial molt is normal for mid-July. Other adults on the same date might be expected to show more white feathers; some would show fewer or none.

The second non-nuptial plumage is identical with that of older birds. The black nuptial plumage is attained for the first time by the second prenuptial molt in late winter and early spring. The birds thus first gain black nuptial plumage when nearly two years old. Presumably they breed then for the first time.

Nesting in the first “nuptial” plumage, if it occurs at all, must be very rare. Spring migration of the one-year-old birds is much later (van Rossem says six weeks later!) than in adults. Some one-year-old birds spend their first full summer on the wintering grounds (van Rossem, 1923:211; A.O.U. Check-list, 1957:243; specimens in UMMZ); this could account for the apparent scarcity of young birds in or near nesting colonies of adults.

Roberts (*The Birds of Minnesota*; Univ. Minn. Press, 1932, vol. 2:595) states that most Black Terns acquire wholly black body plumage when one year old. This seems doubtful to me. However, if the prenuptial molt producing this plumage were complete even to replacement of all juvenal primaries (which it is not, in at least some cases) then such one-year-old black birds would be indistinguishable from older adults. On the other hand, evidence for the occurrence of a group of one-year-old non-black birds is conclusive; comparable evidence of the existence of black one-year-olds is lacking. In any case, the possibility that some year-old birds might be black is beside the point, since there is proof that the white feathers in white-faced black birds of late June through July are new feathers of the next non-nuptial plumage. Such feathers can be seen under a low power microscope to be new and unworn, in contrast to the neighboring black feathers. It is clear that these white feathers are neither a holdover

from some previous plumage nor of the same generation as the black feathers. They cannot be used as indicators of age.—HARRISON B. TORDOFF, *The University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan, December 20, 1961.*

Note: Dr. Parmelee included the speculations on plumages and history of the colony at the request of the editor; responsibility for the error discussed above is thus to be shared equally. We are happy that Dr. Tordoff has been able to set the matter right.—Ed.

NOTES AND NEWS

The Annual Meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society for 1962 will be held on Saturday, May 5, 1962, in Wichita, Kansas. Full particulars concerning paper sessions, field trips on Sunday, May 6, the banquet, and hotel accommodations in Wichita will be sent to members next month.

The XIII International Ornithological Congress will be held in Ithaca, New York, June 17 to 24, 1962. Members of the K.O.S. who are in that area next June should plan to visit the meetings. Several of us from the Museum of Natural History will be there and will be happy to assist you to participate in the activities of the Congress. Please contact the undersigned for further particulars.

Members of the Society will be interested to learn that the City Commission of Lawrence, Kansas, decided last December to discontinue the program designed to control Dutch elm disease by spraying City elms with DDT to kill bark beetles. Evidence bearing on the basic inadequacy of the program, in which only 27 per cent of the City's elms were sprayed, to effectively control the disease was perhaps most important in the Commission's thinking. Evidence of occasionally severe hazard by DDT to wildlife, including birds, was also of significance, as was doubt that persistent exposure of humans to DDT is wholly consistent with maintenance of the health of the public. Lawrence will henceforth rely on "sanitation," a program requiring immediate detection, removal, and burning of infected trees.

The Fall Field Trip of the Kansas Ornithological Society was held on November 12, 1961, at Wyandotte County Lake, Wyandotte County, Kansas. Observations were made from 8 to 12 a.m., under cloudy skies with temperatures ranging from 50° to 60° F. The following 72 species were seen or heard at least once: Common Loon, 1; Pied-billed Grebe, 2; Great Blue Heron, 1; Canada Goose, 5; Mallard, 2500; Gadwall, 2; Pintail, 2; Green-winged Teal, 10; American Widgeon, 2; Shoveler, 5; Ring-necked Duck, 2; Lesser Scaup, 10; Ruddy Duck, 1; Hooded Merganser, 3; Red-tailed Hawk, 2; Swainson Hawk, 1; Rough-legged Hawk, 1; Marsh Hawk, 2; Sparrow Hawk, 5; Greater Prairie Chicken, 1; Bobwhite, 15; American Coot, 5; Killdeer, 5; Herring Gull, 1; Franklin Gull, 1; Rock Dove, 20; Mourning Dove, 2; Great Horned Owl, 1; Barred Owl, 1; Belted Kingfisher, 1; Yellow-shafted Flicker, 3; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 2; Red-headed Woodpecker, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 6; Horned Lark, 10; Blue Jay, 5; Common Crow, 10; Black-capped Chickadee, 20; Tufted Titmouse, 2; White-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 6; Brown Creeper, 10; Winter Wren, 1; Carolina Wren, 2; Mockingbird, 1; Robin, 3; Eastern Bluebird, 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet, 8; Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 1; Cedar Waxwing, 10; Loggerhead Shrike, 2; Starling, 30; Myrtle Warbler, 6; Palm Warbler, 1; House Sparrow, 10; Eastern Meadowlark, 8; Western Meadowlark, 4; Red-winged Blackbird, 10; Common Grackle, 4; Brown-headed Cowbird, 1; Cardinal, 15; Slate-colored Junco, 30; Oregon Junco, 2; Tree Sparrow, 6; Field Sparrow, 1; Harris Sparrow, 1; White-throated Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 1.—R.F.J.