

Kansas Ornithological Society

BULLETIN

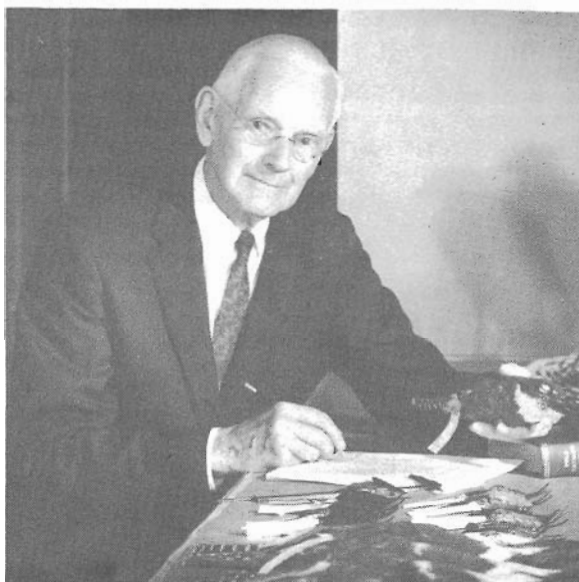
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IN MEMORIAM: ALEXANDER WETMORE



Alexander Wetmore, 92, a charter member of the Kansas Ornithological Society and a retired secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, died on 6 December 1978. He was voted an honorary life member of the KOS on April 29, 1978.

Dr. Wetmore was born in North Freedom, Wisconsin. He became interested in natural history when he was growing up and by the time he was 19, he was an assistant at the University of Kansas Museum. He earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Kansas in 1912 and then came to Washington as an assistant biologist in the U.S. Biological Survey, Department of Agriculture. He earned a master's degree from George Washington University in 1916 and a doctorate in 1920.

Dr. Wetmore was secretary of the Smithsonian from 1945 until 1952. His association with the institution began in 1924, when he was named superintendent of the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park, and continued until long after his retirement as secretary. He continued to do research on birds and avian fossils in a laboratory at the Smithsonian until about a year before his death.

On his 90th birthday, the Smithsonian published "The Collected Papers in Avian Paleontology Honoring the 90th Birthday of Alexander Wetmore." S. Dillon Ripley, the secretary of the Smithsonian, then wrote:

"Truly the incessant and intensive zeal which he has single-mindedly given to the study of birds over the years, often at very considerable personal expenditure in time and energy, will mark the career of Alexander Wetmore as one of the most memorable in the entire history of American ornithology."

He was the author of numerous articles and longer works. His "A Classification for the Birds of the World" is considered a classic. He had published three volumes of "The Birds of the Republic of Panama" by the time of his death. A fourth volume is scheduled for publication.

In addition to his work at the Smithsonian, Dr. Wetmore served on the committees of several international congresses on science and ornithology. He was a member of the board of trustees of the National Geographic Society and vice chairman and acting chairman of the society's committee for research and exploration from 1937 to 1974, when he became chairman emeritus. In 1975 he was awarded the society's Hubbard Medal for his work.

Dr. Wetmore also was a president of the Explorers Club and the Cosmos Club and a vice president of the Boone and Crockett Club. He was a trustee of George Washington University and member of the National Academy of Sciences.

For those of us who knew Alexander Wetmore, there is a deep sense of loss. He was indeed a gentleman and a scholar. His impact on ornithology will be felt for generations.

Max C. Thompson, Dept. of Biology, Southwestern College, Winfield, KS 67156.

TEN YEAR SUMMARY OF THE KANSAS BREEDING BIRD SURVEY: AN OVERVIEW John L. Zimmerman

In 1966 Chandler Robbins and Ted Van Velzen of the Migratory Bird Population Station of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service initiated the Breeding-bird Survey with 585 roadride counts in the states and provinces east of the Mississippi River. In 1967 coverage was extended westward to include Kansas. Thus with the compilation of the survey conducted in 1976, we can look back over the past decade to investigate the status of Kansas bird population during the breeding season.

The location of the starting point for each route was determined through a random sampling design by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Largely as a function of available personnel to conduct these censuses, there were two routes selected per degree block (1° lat. X 1° long.) in eastern Kansas, but only one route per degree block west of the hundredth meridian. The cardinal direction away from each starting point was also determined at random, but the actual route was dependent upon the available roads. The predetermined direction of the route was also modified if continually following that direction would take the route out of the degree block in which it had been selected. Thus the Kansas Breeding-bird Survey was conducted along roadsides that were not necessarily the best birding habitat or the worst habitat and were not strictly rural or urban, but rather were statistically representative of the state. Nevertheless, the randomly determined direction from the randomly selected starting point in Barton County carried that route through the middle of the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Management Area and resulted in a rich list of waterbirds.

Each census route is 25 miles long with the observer stopping every one-half mile to count all the individuals of all the species heard or seen within a quarter-mile radius of that point during a three minute period. Birds observed before or after the three minute counting period are not included nor are birds seen while travelling between stops. The first counting period begins exactly at one-half hour before sunrise, and the 50-stop route can usually be completed in four to four and a half hours. Counts are not taken during mornings of steady rain or when wind speeds exceed about 20 m.p.h. Kansas routes are all completed during the month of June.

In 1967, 35 routes were designated for Kansas. After three years the roads used on the Thrall count were no longer passable and this route was discontinued. It was replaced in 1976 with Longton. In 1971 Gove was added, while Missler was added in

TABLE 1. Breeding-bird Census Routes in Kansas

Name of Route (Co., Rt. No.)	Percent of Years Sampled	Observers
Albert (Barton, 20)	100	Schwilling (9) ¹ , Martinez (1)
Ashland (Clark, 11)	80	Davis (6), Classen (2)
Barclay (Osage, 15)	100	Schulenberg (3), Jackson (2), Fauhl (2), Harrison (1), Herbert (1), Rising (1)
Buckeye (Dickinson, 19)	80	Burr (3), Fretwell (3), Shane (2)
Chapman (Dickinson, 18)	100	Kruger (4), Zimmerman (3), Shane (2), Lashelle (1)
Coats (Pratt, 9)	70	Martinez (4), Coleman (1), Larson (1), Schwilling (1)
Coldwater (Comanche, 10)	70	Martinez (4), Classen (1), Larson (1), Sch- willing (1)
Covert (Osborne, 32)	100	Ely (6), Anthony (1), Lohofener (1), Mullhagen (1), Schukman (1)
Dalton (Sumner, 7)	90	Champeny (7), Holmes (1), Slaughter (1)
Dover (Shawnee, 14)	100	Lewis (10)
Ellinor (Chase, 17)	100	Platt (8), Harrison (1), Senner (1)
Galesburg (Neosho, 2)	100	Sperry (8), Johnson (2)
Gove (Gove, 36)	100 ²	Meier (4), Davis (1)
Grantville (Jefferson, 26)	100	Barker (7), Maus (2), Fisher (1)
Gray (Hodgeman, 22)	100	Challans (10)
Hanover (Washington, 28)	90	Hermann (8), Hunt (1)
Hays (Ellis, 23)	100	Ely (5), Schukman (2), Anthony (1), Mullhagen (1), Rolfs (1)
Hollenberg (Washington, 30)	90	Volger (7), Hermann (1), Hunt (1)
Humboldt (Allen, 3)	60	Fauhl (3), Edwards (1), Fox (1), Sublett (1)
Jewell (Jewell, 33)	80	Hesket (8)
Kanopolis (Ellsworth, 21)	100	Capel (4), Jahn (2), Stucky (2), Volkland (2)
Lakin (Kearney, 12)	90	O'Keefe (9)
Lapland (Greenwood, 4)	70	Comer (4), Sperry (3)
Leoville (Decatur, 25)	60	Meier (5), Bussjaeger (1)
Logan (Norton, 35)	100	Ely (6), Anthony (1), Mullhagen (1), Schukman (1), Rolfs (1)
Longton (Elk, 105)	100 ³	Sperry (1)
Melrose (Cherokee, 1)	100	Sperry (10)
Minneapolis (Ottawa, 31)	90	Moss (4), Zimmerman (3), Hetzke (1), Shane (1)
Missler (Meade, 37)	50 ⁴	Patti (1)
Olathe (Johnson, 13)	100	Fauhl (9), Saunders (1)
Phillipsburg (Phillips, 34)	100	Ely (7), Lohofener (1), Mullhagen (1), Schukman (1)
Rock Creek (Jefferson, 27)	60	Fauhl (5), Rice (1)
Seneca (Nemaha, 29)	100	Willis (5), Moss (4), Brannan (1)
St. John (Stafford, 8)	100	Schwilling (9), Martinez (1)
Thrall (Greenwood, 5)	100 ⁵	Classen (1), Comer (1), Harrison (1)
Wallace (Wallace, 24)	70	Schwilling (5), Shane (2)
Wellington (Sumner, 6)	90	Champeny (6), Slaughter (2), Holmes (1)
Wreford (Geary, 16)	90	Zimmerman (7), Shane (2)

1—number in parentheses is the number of times the observer conducted the census

2—The Gove count has only been censused for 5 years, beginning in 1971

3—The Longton count was added in 1976

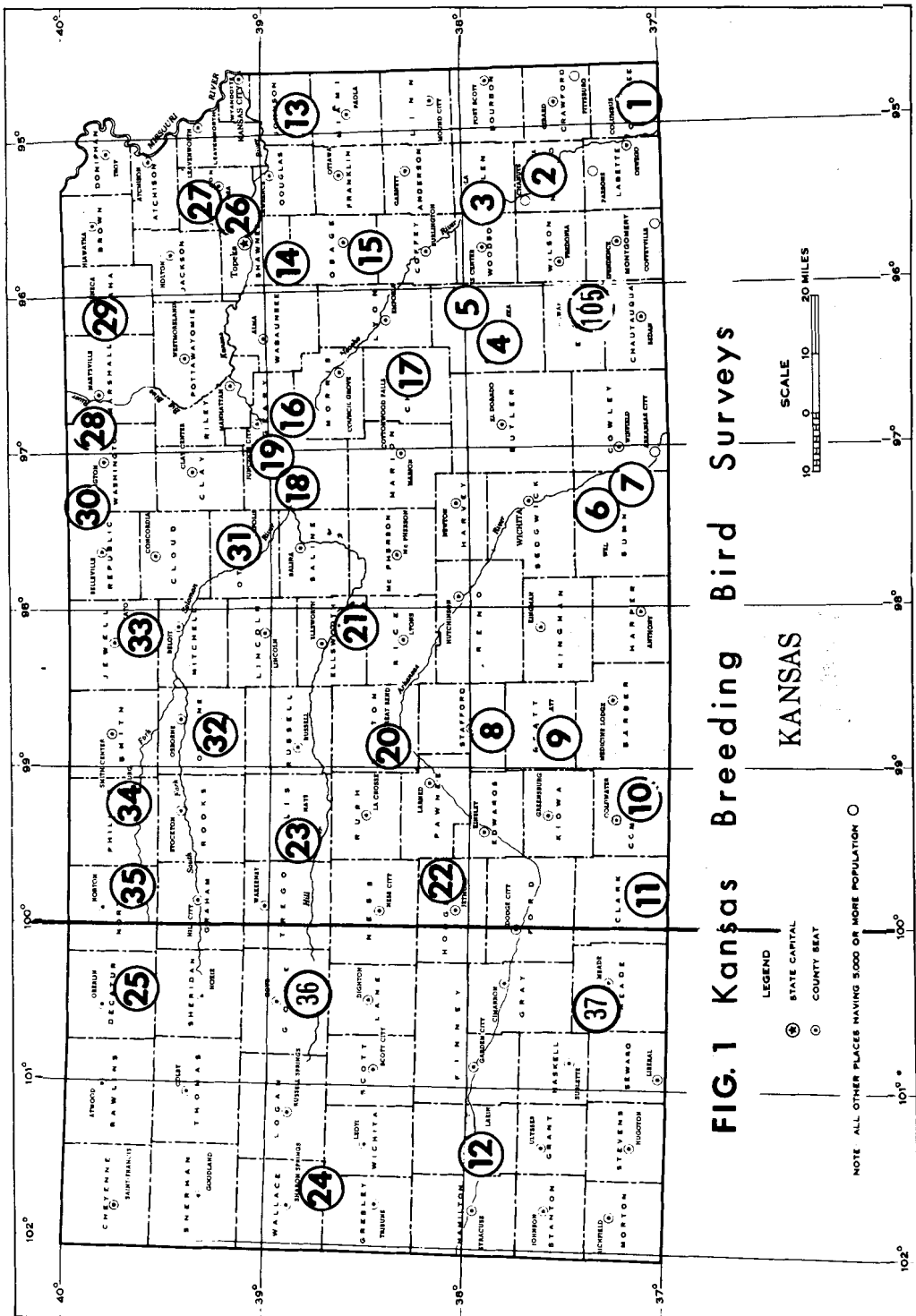
4—The Missler count was added in 1975

5—The Thrall count was discontinued after 3 years

TABLE 2. Frequency of Species Occurrence on Kansas Breeding-Bird Survey Routes. Percent of the Routes Species Was Recorded at Least Once during the Decade, 1967-1976.

100% of Routes	85% < 100% of Routes
Bobwhite (38.3) ¹	Red-tailed Hawk (1.8)
Killdeer (6.8)	Swainson's Hawk (1.4)
Mourning Dove (86.8)	American Kestrel (1.1)
Eastern Kingbird (14.0)	Yellow-billed Cuckoo (6.7)
Horned Lark (30.5)	Common Nighthawk (3.8)
Barn Swallow (27.1)	Chimney Swift (6.0)
Common Crow (14.3)	Common (Yellow-shafted) Flicker (5.6)
Mockingbird (11.7)	Red-headed Woodpecker (5.2)
Starling (22.1)	Western Kingbird (20.1)
House Sparrow (109.9)	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (3.1)
Red-winged Blackbird (80.3)	Great Crested Flycatcher (2.8)
Orchard Oriole (5.6)	Blue Jay (7.7)
Northern (Baltimore) Oriole (11.0)	House Wren (7.6)
Common Grackle (49.4)	Brown Thrasher (10.6)
Brown-headed Cowbird (46.2)	American Robin (13.7)
Dickcissel (68.9)	Loggerhead Shrike (5.5)
Lark Sparrow (4.2)	Eastern Meadowlark (51.9)
	Western Meadowlark (113.7)
	Cardinal (17.2)
	Blue Grosbeak (1.3)
	Grasshopper Sparrow (16.4)
< 10% of Routes	
Eared Grebe (0.6)	Snowy Plover (3.2)
Pied-billed Grebe (0.3)	Long-billed Curlew (0.5)
White Pelican (109.0)	American Avocet (18.2)
Double-crested Cormorant (0.4)	Forster's Tern (8.5)
Little Blue Heron (0.5)	Least Tern (0.8)
Cattle Egret (0.3)	Black Tern (3.3)
Great Egret (0.2)	Roadrunner (0.2)
Snowy Egret (2.3)	Short-eared Owl (0.2)
Black-crowned Night Heron (9.4)	Common (Red-shafted) Flicker (0.2)
Least Bittern (0.1)	Willow Flycatcher (0.1)
American Bittern (0.1)	Tree Swallow (0.2)
White-faced Ibis (2.2)	White-necked Raven (0.7)
Canada Goose (21.4)	White-eyed Vireo (0.2)
Gadwall (5.2)	Black and White Warbler (0.2)
Green-winged Teal (0.7)	Parula Warbler (0.3)
Cinnamon Teal (1.3)	Yellow-throated Warbler (0.2)
American Widgeon (0.9)	Ovenbird (0.2)
Northern Shoveler (7.3)	Louisiana Waterthrush (0.2)
Redhead (11.6)	Kentucky Warbler (0.2)
Lesser Scaup (0.2)	Great-tailed Grackle (0.5)
Ruddy Duck (12.4)	Scarlet Tanager (0.1)
Hooded Merganser (0.3)	Lazuli Bunting (0.1)
Cooper's Hawk (0.2)	Painted Bunting (0.7)
King Rail (0.4)	Henslow's Sparrow (1.0)
Virginia Rail (0.2)	Song Sparrow (0.5)
American Coot (21.5)	

¹—Number in parentheses is the average number of individuals per route over the routes on which the species has been seen in the decade, 1967-1976.



1975, completing two of the vacant degree blocks in the western third of the state; but the far northwestern corner is still lacking a census route (see Figure 1). Thus there are 37 routes available for sampling in Kansas. Table 1 lists the name of each route, generally identified according to the town nearest the starting point, the

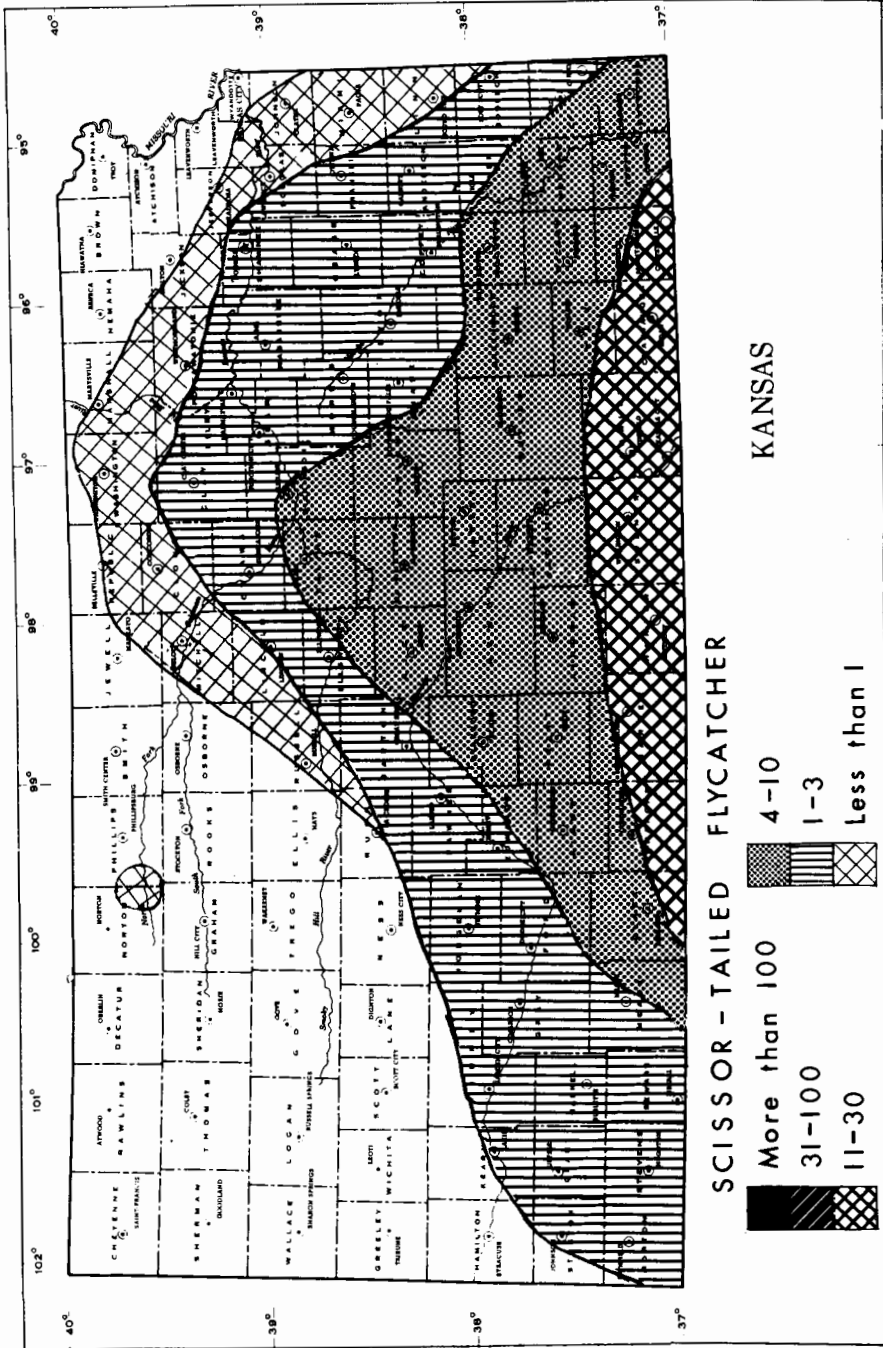


FIGURE 2. Density distribution (birds/route) of the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher based on the first five years of breeding-bird surveys in Kansas. (Prepared by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, courtesy of C. Robbins).

proportion of the years in the decade 1967-1976 the route was successfully completed, and the names of the observers who participated. While a whole carload can run a route, the rules that result in comparability between routes require that only one person can listen, look, and count the birds; and it is this person who is listed in Table 1. Others going along have very necessary roles such as driving, keeping time, recording data, and pouring coffee. Of the total routes, 53 per cent have been completed every year, while 71 per cent have been completed nine or ten times during this decade.

Seventeen species of Kansas breeding birds are so widely spread over the state that they have been present at least once during the decade 1967-1976 on all 38 routes. Thirty-eight species have been recorded at least once on at least 85 per cent of the 38 routes in Kansas (Table 2). Among this group are the most abundant species in Kansas: Mourning Dove, House Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Dickcissel. The most abundant and widespread Kansas birds recorded on these censuses are the roadside species characteristic of the primary land use over much of the state, pasture and grain crops. With an annual average of 114 birds per route based on its presence on 87 per cent of the routes, the Western Meadowlark is indeed the state bird of Kansas.

Some of these widely dispersed breeding birds, on the other hand, are not especially abundant. This may reflect their trophic position as predators in the food chain such as the Red-tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, American Kestrel, and Loggerhead Shrike. For others it is the local density of the required habitat even though the habitat might be represented throughout the state. This is probably the case for the Killdeer, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common (Yellow-shafted) Flicker, Redheaded Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Orchard Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, and Lark Sparrow. While the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher has been observed at least once on 33 routes (86.8%) over the ten year period, the low average number of individuals of the species reflects a rapid decrease in the density of the species northward across the state since Kansas lies on the periphery of the species' range (see Figure 2). The low values for the Common Nighthawk and Chimney Swift are certainly due to the lack of coincidence between the time of the census and the species' optimum foraging period during the day.

Kansas species with a restricted distribution as shown by their presence at least once on less than 10 per cent of the census routes results from the localization of suitable habitat as in the case of the waterbirds or from the continental distribution of the species (e.g. Roadrunner, White-necked Raven, the parulids, Scarlet Tanager, Painted Bunting, Henslow's Sparrow, and Song Sparrow). In a few cases these values reflect the general density level throughout the species' whole range (e.g. Cooper's Hawk, Long-billed Curlew, Short-eared Owl). Although quite restricted in distribution, the abundance of some of the waterbirds on the routes where they do occur is quite high (e.g. White Pelican, Canada Goose, American Coot, American Avocet).

Aside from providing a systematic method by which the distribution and relative densities of breeding species can be determined, the breeding-bird survey is valuable in its annual assessment of bird populations across the whole continent and the identification of trends in the numbers of birds from year to year. In a subsequent paper I will provide an analysis of the stability and changes in Kansas breeding bird populations as illustrated by the decade of census data that are now available.

Division of Biology, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506.

White-throated Swift at Manhattan, Kansas.—On 2 November 1978, while walking across the KSU campus at about 4:30 p.m., my attention was drawn to a swift or swallow feeding high above the biology building, Ackert Hall. Because of

the lateness of the season, I stopped to watch the bird, and quickly noted that it was a swift, not a swallow, from the way it beat its wings. The bird wheeled low on two occasions and although I did not have binoculars, it was clearly too big for a Chimney Swift, and a white, incomplete rump band could be seen on steep banks. The bird then disappeared, but I was fairly certain that I had seen a white-throated swift, a bird with which I had become familiar in Arizona during 1976-77. After completing an errand, I returned to Ackert Hall and noted that there were many starlings and gulls wheeling high above the campus, apparently feeding on an insect swarm. I looked again hopefully for the swift, and found it among the other birds. This time the swift was trying to roost in a cranny high (60') on the side of Ackert Hall, but finding insufficient footholds. It would fly into a place where an overhang covered a ground-to-rooftop recess in the east wall, hover there briefly, and then wheel away. It was after five o'clock so I called John Zimmerman and Elmer Finck at home and found Bob Kingswood and Marty Stapanian, all of whom came to the scene with binoculars where we all made a leisurely study of the bird until dark, about 20 minutes. The white and dark pattern on the throat and belly was clearly visible through binoculars, as was the white rump band. The size, plus the characteristic behavior confirmed our identification of the bird as a white-throated swift. Sutton (1967. *The Birds of Oklahoma*, Univ. Okl. Press, Norman, OK) reports several Oklahoma and Arkansas records of this species, all in spring. I have been unable to find any previous Kansas sightings.

Steve Fretwell, Div. of Biol., KSU, Manhattan, KS 66506.

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