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PASSERINE BREEDING BIRDS OF KONZA PRAIRIE

John L. Zimmerman

I previously have described the habitat of the Konza Prairie Research Natural Area in Riley and Geary counties, and compiled an annotated list of the non-passerine breeding birds (1987. *Kans. Ornithol. Soc. Bull.* 38:29-33). This present paper is a continuation of the first publication and provides a current listing of passerine species with documented breeding records. Readers are referred to the earlier publication for a map giving locations names, scientific names of plant species previously mentioned, and acknowledgement of assistance and support.

In addition to the species listed below, the following passerines probably nest on Konza Prairie, but no direct evidence of breeding has been obtained: American Crow, Carolina Wren, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-and-white Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Lark Sparrow.

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE, *Contopus virens*

The pewee arrives in early May and remains as a common summer resident in the gallery forest until September. My only breeding record is a nest with young 15 m up in a hackberry along the north edge of the lower Kings Creek on 23 July 1983.

EASTERN PHOEBE, *Sayornis phoebe*

This flycatcher is an uncommon but regular summer resident, arriving in mid-March and departing after mid-October. The 14 nesting records (including Geary Co.) are all from sites in man-made structures (culverts, bridges, barns, cattle feeders).

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, *Myiarchus crinitus*

This species is an abundant migrant and common summer resident, arriving in late April and remaining until late September. Nest building activity has been observed in late May with birds using natural cavities as well as old woodpecker holes. One nest found by Steve Fretwell on 12 June 1981, 5 m up in the broken end of a dead snag, contained 4 young.

EASTERN KINGBIRD, *Tyrannus tyrannus*

This flycatcher is often abundant as a transient, especially in the fall when they are feeding on dogwood berries. During the summer it is a common resident. Of the 20 nest records (including Geary Co.), most are placed from 2 to 9 m high in elm (*Ulmus americana*) and honey locust (*Gleditsia tricanthos*) along the upper reaches of watercourses, often in isolated trees.

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER, *Tyrannus forficatus*

In 1987 and again in 1988 this species nested about 10-15 m up in a hackberry across from the weather station in the headquarters area. In 1988, the female was incubating on 7 June and feeding young on 5 July.

HORNED LARK, *Eremophila alpestris*

The only area where this species regularly occurs is on the highest ridges of White Pasture, which because of its history of overgrazing, has a sparse cover of shortgrass species. Here it is an occasional winter visitor and a few pairs remain to nest. On 8 April 1983 a nest was under construction in this habitat and fledged 1 young during the first week of May. Larks are scarce during the summer months on Konza Prairie when even the vegetation in White Pasture becomes too dense.

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

This swallow is a common summer resident along stream courses, both within the gallery forest as well as in the upper tributaries bordered by prairie. The birds arrive in early April and remain until the first week of August, nesting in holes in the clay banks of streams either singly or in small groups of two or three pairs (including Geary Co.).

BARN SWALLOW, *Hirundo rustica*

Although an abundant summer resident, this species is restricted to man-made structures in the headquarters area for nest sites. Birds are present from mid-April until mid-October, while all nest records are from May, June and July.

BLUE JAY, *Cyanocitta cristata*

This species is a common resident, becoming especially abundant during migration when transient flocks are passing through. Pairs form by the first week in May and nest building activity has been observed from mid-May to early June. Nests have been located in the gallery forest as well as in more isolated groves of trees in upper watersheds. Greg Farley observed an adult feeding fledglings on 16 June 1987.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, *Parus atricapillus*

This bird is a common permanent resident in the gallery forest and in woody, riparian habitats along upper tributaries. Nest building has been observed as early as 1 April (1981), and many birds are feeding nestlings by mid-May. Greg Farley observed an adult with fledglings on 13 June 1987.

TUFTED TITMOUSE, *Parus bicolor*

The titmouse is a common permanent resident, but unlike the chickadee, this species is more restricted to the gallery forest. Adults with nesting material have been observed as early as 27 March 1987, while adults feeding fledglings have been seen in June.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, *Sitta carolinensis*

This species is a common permanent resident, which like the chickadee, occurs from the gallery forest up to the more sparsely wooded tributaries of the various stream systems on Konza Prairie. Only one nesting record has been obtained, and this was of a female bringing nesting material to a hole, 6 m up in a bur oak along Shane Creek on 1 April 1981. On 13 May 1982 an adult was observed carrying food along Shane Creek, but the nest site was not located.

BEWICK'S WREN, *Thryomanes bewickii*

This wren is a common summer resident and occurs occasionally in winter. It characteristically nests in the *Cornus-Zanthoxylum* thickets along rock outcrops and in riparian thickets near the upper ends of stream systems. I have two nest records involving fledged birds. One was a group of 5 young captured in a mist nest on 1 June 1978, while the other was an adult observed feeding a fledgling on 31 May 1983. I have another record of an adult feeding nestlings on 19 June 1984. During 1986 Greg Farley found 7 nests. Initial nesting begins in early April with fledging in mid-May. Second broods are started in late May and fledge in late June, although Farley has a nest-building date as late as 14 June 1987.

HOUSE WREN, *Troglodytes aedon*

This species is an abundant summer resident, arriving in mid-April and present until the third week in October in most years. It uses both old woodpecker holes and natural cavities like the broken ends of limbs for nest sites, although one nest with 2 eggs was discovered by Martha Hall on 10 July 1981 in a hole in a silver-painted, metal corral post. House wrens are more abundant on Konza Prairie in the mid- to upper reaches of stream systems than in the gallery forest.

SEDGE WREN, *Cistothorus platensis*

Elmer Finck discovered an adult with food in its bill going down into thick vegetation on 27 August 1985, but a nest was not found. When approached, the adult gave a distraction display so this observation may have involved fledged young.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, *Poliophtilla caerulea*

This species is an uncommon but regular summer resident restricted in its distribution on Konza Prairie to the gallery forest. Birds arrive in early April and remain until mid-September. My only breeding records are two nests under construction in the gallery forest of lower Kings Creek; one was 14 m high in an elm (5 May 1982) and the other a week later, 12 m up in a hackberry.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD, *Sialis sialis*

Bluebirds are permanent residents, common in the breeding season but uncommon and irregular in winter. Nest building has been observed as early as 3 April 1985. John Briggs found a nest with 5 eggs on 24 June 1986 and another with 4 eggs on 26 May 1987 in the same nest site. Records involving adults bringing food to nest cavities span the period from mid-May to the third week in June. Fledgling birds accompanied by adults have been seen as early as 10 June.

AMERICAN ROBIN, *Turdus migratorius*

The robin is a common summer resident as well as an uncommon but regular winter visitor. Most nesting records are from riparian habitats (including Geary Co.), but robins also regularly use man-made structures around the headquarters area.

GRAY CATBIRD, *Dumetella carolinensis*

Catbirds are an uncommon, irregular summer resident in the more open riparian habitats of upper watersheds and the brushy thickets associated with rock outcrops. The species arrives in late April and remains until mid-October. I have two nesting records — 4 young on 26 June 1982 and 2 eggs on 23 June 1982 (Geary Co.).

BROWN THRASHER, *Toxostoma rufum*

This is an abundant summer resident occurring in both riparian and upland thickets from late March until mid-October. Most of the 45 nesting records (including Geary Co.) are in small trees (e.g. — *Ulmus*, *Maclura*, *Juniperus*) or shrubs (e.g. — *Cornus*, *Zanthoxylum*), but one nest with 5 eggs was on the ground (9 June 1983).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE, *Lanius ludovicianus*

This species is a regular but uncommon summer resident and an occasional winter resident. One nest found by Elmer Finck was 1.5 m up in the main crotch of a honey locust and contained 6 eggs on 10 May 1983 and fledged 4 young on 13 June 1983.

STARLING, *Sturnus vulgaris*

The Starling is a common permanent resident, but restricted by the availability of nest sites to the buildings around headquarters and riparian habitats with standing dead snags containing woodpecker holes or natural cavities.

BELL'S VIREO, *Vireo bellii*

This summer resident arrives during the first week in May and is common in the *Cornus-Zanthoxylum* thickets associated with rock outcrops. Nests are built within the interior of these thickets, about 1 m above the ground in a suitable fork in the branches. The 40 nests studied by Greg Farley ranged from 22 May (earliest egg date) to 15 August (latest fledging date).

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, *Seiurus motacilla*

This species is an uncommon, but regular summer resident in the lower portion of the gallery forests in both Kings Creek and Shane Creek. Birds arrive during the first week in April and remain until the first week in September. The only breeding record was obtained by Steve Fretwell on 18 June 1978 and was of a nest containing 5 waterthrush young, 2 cowbird nestlings, and 2 waterthrush eggs. Greg Farley observed an adult with food along Kings Creek on 1 June 1986.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, *Geothlypis trichas*

This common summer resident arrives during the first week in April and remains until the middle of September, occurring in unburned grassland sites and swales in the upper stream valleys. The only breeding record is the observation of both adults repeatedly carrying food to a spot in heavy buckbrush (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), but no nest or fledged young were found (6 June 1983, Geary Co.).

NORTHERN CARDINAL, *Cardinalis cardinalis*

The cardinal is a common permanent resident from the gallery forest to the upper limits of woody vegetation in drainage basins as well as the thickets along rock outcrops. Three breeding records have been obtained: 3 eggs, 16 July 1979; 2 eggs plus 1 cowbird egg, 28 May 1982; 1 young plus 1 egg in nest 3 feed up in a 6 foot elm on 31 July 1984.

INDIGO BUNTING, *Passerina cyanea*

This uncommon summer resident of the gallery forest and more heavily vegetated riparian habitats arrives during the first week of May and stays until the end of September. Only one nesting record has been obtained. This was a nest just within the northern edge of the gallery forest of lower Kings Creek, 0.6 m off the ground in a hackberry sapling, that was under construction on 1 June 1983, contained 3 eggs on 13 June, but was empty a week later.

DICKCISSEL, *Spiza americana*

This is the most abundant breeding species in tallgrass prairie habitats. The Dickcissel arrives on the prairie during the first week of May and remains through September with migrants still present until mid-October. There are 116 nest records from Konza Prairie (including Geary Co.), spanning the period 24 May to 19 August.

RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

This species occurs all year long on Konza Prairie, but *P. erythrophthalmus erythrophthalmus*, the breeding population, does not arrive until mid-April and typically departs by mid-August. I have one nest record: 2 eggs, in a small elm, 0.2 m off the ground in a buckbrush thicket on 14 July 1982.

FIELD SPARROW, *Spizella pusilla*

This common summer resident is regular, but uncommon, in the winter. The species nests in shrubby thickets in the upper stream courses and along rock outcrops. My earliest nesting record is a nest with 3 eggs, 0.3 m up in a 2.5 m elm sapling on 21 May 1986 found by Chris Smith while adults have been observed still feeding fledglings as late as 2 September (1981).

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW, *Ammodramus savannarum*

The Grasshopper Sparrow is an abundant summer resident in grassland habitats, especially in unburned sites. Birds are present from early April until the second week in October. Twenty-six nest records (including Geary Co.) have been obtained. Nests with eggs found from 19 May 1981 (5 eggs) to 17 July 1985 (3 eggs).

HENSLOW'S SPARROW, *Ammocramus henslowii*

The Henslow's Sparrow is an uncommon but regular summer resident restricted, however, to unburned prairie. During the summer of 1974, Scott Hatch discovered three nests on the original Konza Prairie (Geary Co.): one with 5 eggs on 22 June, another with 1 sparrow egg and 1 cowbird young on 24 June, and a third with 1 sparrow egg, 1 cowbird egg, 1 sparrow young, and 2 cowbird young on 27 June. There is also a Riley Co. record for a nest under construction on 22 June 1983.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, *Agelaius phoeniceus*

This species is an uncommon but regular summer resident in marshy vegetation around ponds and seeps as well as along upland stream drainages. Nest building has been seen as early as 13 May (including Geary Co.). By late August birds are gone, but by the third week in September, flocks return and occur occasionally throughout the winter, becoming common then in the spring.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK, *Sturnella magna*

This abundant summer resident is also an uncommon winter resident although seldom in upland prairie at that time of year. Nest records (including Geary Co.) span the period from late April (2 eggs plus 2 cowbird eggs, 22 April 1981) to early August (5 eggs, 6 August 1979).

COMMON GRACKLE, *Quiscalus quisula*

This species is a common summer resident, but all nesting records are from the trees in the headquarters area during late May and early June.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, *Molothrus ater*

This is an abundant summer resident, but becomes uncommon in the fall and winter. The following species are known to be parasitized by the cowbird on Konza Prairie (including Geary Co.): Bewick's Wren, Brown Thrasher, Bell's Vireo, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Cardinal, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Eastern Meadowlark.

ORCHARD ORIOLE, *Icterus spurius*

This species is an uncommon summer resident in riparian habitats from the first week in May until late July. One breeding record has been obtained by Elmer Finck of a female building in the cottonwoods (*Populus deltoides*) around the small pond at the west end of the original Konza Prairie (Geary Co.) on 9 June 1982.

NORTHERN ORIOLE, *Icterus galbula*

This summer resident is common in the gallery forest, more open tree habitats along upper watercourses, and even isolated trees. It is present from the last week in April until mid-September, but I have only a few breeding records: incubating females on 19 May 1987 and 9 June 1981, and an observation by Greg Farley of an adult bringing food to a nest on 13 June 1987.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, *Carduelis tristis*

This permanent resident is uncommon during the breeding season but becomes a common visitor during the fall. I have just two breeding records for nests under construction, one in a *Cornus* thicket on 30 June 1981 and another observed by Elmer Finck on 10 June 1986.

HOUSE SPARROW, *Passer domesticus*

This species is a common permanent resident but restricted to the headquarters area where it nests inside barns, sheds and garages. First nest-building activity has been observed during the second week of May.

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

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