



The Official Newsletter
of the
Kansas Ornithological Society

The Horned Lark

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RECYCLED PAPER

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

NOTICE TO NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

Because of the early date for the fall meeting, it is extremely important that information for the August edition of The Horned Lark be received by the editor no later than August 5, 1991. This includes all Fall Meeting information and registration information and seasonal bird reports. Any other information desired to be included in the August issue should also be received by that date.

KOS IS PLEASED TO WELCOME 42 NEW MEMBERS SINCE JANUARY 1, 1991:

Don Alley, Kansas City, KS; Philip Balch, Linn; Shelby Birch, Overland Park; Diane Bythell, Lawrence; Dan Baffa, Garden City; Scott Coleman, Manhattan; N.R. Emmert, Holton; Craig Fannes, Grand Island, NE; Luisa Fenton, Wichita; David Fischer, Olathe; Marilyn Hampson, Paola; Shanon Haraughty, Manhattan; George Hecht, Lawrence; Jane Koska, Kansas City, KS; Steve and Margaret Linderer, Larned; Beverly Maxey, Valley Center; Edwin Miller, Independence; Nancy Miller, Prairie Village; Dwight Moore, Emporia; Craig Olawsky, Emporia; Carol Olson, Eureka; W. David Pantle, Denver, CO; Tom Payne, Stilwell; Jack Revare, Shawnee Mission; Mike Reynolds, Shawnee; Karyn Baker Riney, Lawrence; Shannon Rothchild, Emporia; Robert Rucker, Las Vegas, NV; David Sampson, Marysville; Tim Schallberg, Kansas City, MO; Dawn Sharp, Lawrence; Kay Sims, Scott City; Barbara Slover, Wichita; Jerrod Soukup, Newton; Michael Speers, Larned; Gary Straley, Winfield; Don and Mary Trayer, Murdock; Maure Weigel, Brookville; Margaret Wedge, David Williams, Jeff Witters, all of Lawrence; Benjamin Young, Manhattan.

1991 KOS MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY:

By now, all KOS members should have in their hands a copy of the 1991 KOS Membership Directory. Of course, given the rate at which the average person changes address, this directory is already out of date! Please help the Membership Committee keep this information current by notifying either Diane Seltman or Galen Pittman with any changes or corrections. A special note to you Life Members out there, since we don't hear from you on a regular basis, i.e. annual renewal cards, we may have outdated information. Please let us know if you're still out there! Thank you for your help.

MY 1990 BIRDING BIG YEAR IN KANSAS - by Galen L. Pittman

This story actually starts sometime in 1989. I had often heard that the Kansas big year record was 300 exactly and had been set in 1985 by Scott Seltman. When I sent in my totals for the American Birding Association's (ABA) annual listing report, I noticed that my Kansas lifelist total of 303 (1988) was not very competitive, but I had at least broken the first major barrier, i. e. 300, yet that was just three more than the one year record! My best Kansas year list total, however, was not too impressive. So, 1989 was my chance to improve on my previous Kansas year lists. To make a long story short, I ended up 1989 with 282 and my Kansas lifelist was at 319. As it turned out, 282 was good enough for the highest (ABA reported) Kansas annual list in 1989. This success spurred me on to make a run for the elusive 300 plateau (only achieved once previously). Little did I know what I was getting in for, nor did I expect 1990 to be as good a birding year as it ultimately was.

I started out 1990 by birding at my home near Lawrence and within about a 15 mile radius of there. I added 27 species to my list the first day, most of which were typical winter birds. In the next several days I added four species and set out on the first of many extended weekend birding trips to western Kansas. I participated in the Scott County and Cedar Bluff Christmas Counts and, upon returning, had 60 year birds including some nice western species, such as Ferruginous Hawk, Merlin, Black-billed Magpie, Townsend's Solitaire, Bewick's Wren, Golden Eagle, Mountain Bluebird and Northern Shrike. The rest of January was fairly predictable and by the end of the month my year total was 78. The first two-thirds of February was again very typical for northeastern Kansas and I added seven species; however, a Turkey Vulture on 13 February was, perhaps, an omen of things to come. Between 25 February and 2 March, I made another western Kansas jaunt. I went to Clark County to visit my parents and, while visiting, found time to go birding and even made it all the way to Elkhart for a whistle stop. After returning to Lawrence my year list was at 99, and I had snagged a couple of very good year birds, Northern Saw-whet Owl at Clark State Fishing Lake and Steller's Jay at the Satanta city park.

Mid-March marked the beginning of the true year bird chasing. I had almost missed the Gyrfalcon at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area (CBWA) because, unbeknownst to me, my telephone was out of order! Many dozens of birders had gone to the Bottoms that weekend and several of my birding friends had tried to call me to see if I wanted to go try for it. I learned of the sighting almost by accident and managed to make a solo trip on Monday morning, the 12th, and was apparently one of the last people to see it! The end of March marked the close of the first winter season of 1990 and the beginning of the long awaited spring season with a year total of 121. My March 1989 total was 113 and that is where the similarity starts to fade.

By the end of April 1990 my year total had bulged to 216 (95 added in the month of April). I knew by late April that something extraordinary was in the making. My April 1989 split was 161, so by April 1990 my total of 175 was running nicely ahead of the 1989 pace. However, the 1990 Jayhawk Audubon Society Birdathon was scheduled for 28 April and a Big Day was planned to start at Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area (MCWA) and end at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (QNWA) in one 24 hour period. My birdathon weekend species total was over 160 and I added 41 year birds! Admittedly, April 1990 was padded by a Big Day in May, so of course, you would expect the April total to be greater in 1990. But, don't forget, I had surpassed the 1989 April split by 14 before the birdathon. Of course, what happened in May is the rest of the story.

May was the month of state birds for me. During May, I racked up 12 new state birds and on five occasions got doubles--two state birds on one day! I strategically planned to take two weeks of vacation from 30 April to 11 May and it really paid off.

On May 1st I found myself in Cherokee County near Galena and added 10 year birds and two state birds, Fish Crow and Yellow-throated Warbler. The Spring KOS meeting in Morton County was next on the agenda and a five day weekend trip was arranged. The weekend in Elkhart and stops coming and going at CBWA and QNWR produced five state and a total of 32 year birds. Highlights of that trip were Lesser Prairie Chicken, Mountain Plover, Piping Plover, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Barn Owl, Cassin's Sparrow, Scaled Quail, Scrub Jay, Mountain Chickadee, Curve-billed Thrasher, Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, McGillivray's Warbler, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting and Bobolink. Upon returning from southwest Kansas, I wasn't going to let up, so on 11 May I found a Veery and a Golden-winged Warbler right at home in the Lawrence Riverfront Park. On Mother's Day (13 May) I gathered in seven more year birds by birding Linn and Johnson Counties. Highlights of the Mother's Day expedition were Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Olivaceous Cormorant. The last two weeks of May netted a Willow Flycatcher at Fort Leavenworth, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Mill Creek Park in Johnson County, an Alder Flycatcher and Olive-sided Flycatcher at my own house, a Western Grebe at Lake Perry, and a Least Tern at the Kaw Valley Fish Farm north of Lawrence. All in all, quite the incredible spring migration in Kansas. It was so good, as a matter of fact, that I recorded 266 species during the months of April and May alone (95% of the year's total by then)! After the month of May had ended with only two species needed to crack my previous personal best of 282, I was, to say the least, optimistic.

The months of June and July proved to be long and arduous, though fruitful, for finding new year birds. The breeding season was filled with several long distance, as well as seven or eight local tries, for Cerulean Warbler to no avail, one of the year's biggest misses. I managed to add eight year birds, but no state birds for those two months. The highlight of this period was a trip to QNMR on 23 June, when I tallied four year birds, Common Moorhen, Common Tern, Black-billed Cuckoo and Least Bittern.

With the start of August, mercifully, the breeding season was drawing to a close and with the shorebird, hummingbird and flycatcher migration bearing down, I chose to keep going back to the well and head for Morton County again with, of course, the obligatory stopover at QNWR and CBWA. A four day weekend trip (4-6 August) produced four year birds, including one state bird, Brewer's Sparrow. Another weekend trip to Morton County from 24 to 26 August produced six year birds, including Ruff (at QNWR), Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Western Wood-Pewee and my only state triple of the year! On 25 August I recorded Rufous Hummingbird, Hammond's Flycatcher and Dusky Flycatcher, which brought my year total up to a tantalizing 299 with a full third of the year to go! This Big Year strategy was working so well, I pulled a move that even I don't believe. I managed back-to-back weekend trips to Morton County. The strategy was a good one, however, because on September 1 I recorded #300, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and #301, a Black-chinned Hummingbird, both at Liberal. And, just to ice the cake, the next day in Morton County brought me my sixth state double, Cordilleran Flycatcher and Cassin's Kingbird. The remainder of September netted three more year birds, all of which were state birds, a Red Phalarope at Elkhart on the 16th (yes, another trip), an Anna's Hummingbird at Oxford on the 22nd and a Black-throated Blue Warbler on the 28th in Jefferson County.

Since I was entering the final quarter of the year with my initial goal accomplished (my year list stood at 306), you might think I would just cruise on in to the finish. However, I wasn't the only Kansas birder having a good year! There were at least four other birders that I was aware of who had a good shot at also topping 300. My thoughts turned to---"let's see just how high we can push this new record!" My final Big Year tally depended on the remainder of the fall migration and the quality of early winter residents that may show up. Certainly, the strategy was clear, bird the large eastern reservoirs as often as I could, make it to Morton

County at least once or twice and participate in as many Christmas Counts (CBC) as I could stand! I was hoping for a good fall migration, and if I was lucky (as if I deserved any more) have a few gifts come my way. Well, I wasn't going to be disappointed!

October started with a trip to Newton for the Fall KOS meeting, where I got Winter Wren at Cheney Reservoir and a Sprague's Pipit on the way back to Lawrence at Lyon State Fishing Lake. A couple of days later on 10 October, I was rewarded by finding a Marsh Wren and a LeConte's Sparrow in the same prairie grass plot on KU's West Campus right in the center of Lawrence. Then I hit a dry spell, including a three day trip to CBWA/QNWR and to Kirwin Reservoir with no new year birds. Finally, Clinton Lake produced a White-winged Scoter on the 28th and a mad 12 hour dash (starting at 1 a. m. on Halloween morning) to QNWR and back netted two year birds, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Whooping Crane. Then one of the gifts arrived. While standing in the driveway of my house, just minutes after arriving home from Quivera, an adult Northern Goshawk flew just 50 feet over my head and disappeared over the horizon. I hadn't seen a Goshawk in Kansas for at least 10 or 12 years!

October had come and gone and my year list was now at 314. I didn't have long to wait for the next gift, however. On 3 November, I got an adult winter plumage Brown Pelican at Perry Lake and on the next weekend was off on one of my calculated trips to southwestern Kansas. The strategy definitely paid off. I got Bushtit at Liberal, Evening Grosbeak at Elkhart, Red Crossbill at Hays and Pacific Loon and Surf Scoter at Wilson Lake that weekend. A trip to Winfield City Lake the following weekend was salvaged by getting a Smith's Longspur in the same field that produced the Spragues's Pipit in early October. Upon returning from the Winfield trip, I learned that other birders had found a Red-throated Loon right in my own back yard at Clinton Lake the same day. By Thanksgiving Day, I had gotten the loon and another bonus bird, Thayer's Gull, both of which were state birds for me. A quick jaunt to MCWA the next day was rewarded with my last year bird in November, a Black Duck. The August through November period had produced 35 year birds and an unbelievable 16 state birds.

As of 1 December, my year list stood at 324 and I had plans to participate in at least six CBC before time ran out on New Year's Eve! But, before the first CBC weekend arrived, I was rewarded with two more year birds on 8 December at Clinton Lake. The first was a Glaucous Gull that had been reported some time before and had alluded me in spite of numerous tries for it. The second bird was my final state bird for the year and the last of the many gifts from above. The Red-necked Grebe that day was my 30th state bird for 1990 and put my Kansas lifelist at 349. This rather substantial increase in my Kansas lifelist was probably as gratifying to me, if not more so, as setting the new single year record. The rest of this story is actually rather anti-climatic because the last three weekends of CBC birding produced just one more year bird. On 16 December, at the Perry-Oskaloosa CBC, I recorded #327, a Hermit Thrush.

As a postscript, I would like to acknowledge that this record Big Year would not have been possible without the advice, counsel and camaraderie of at least 20 of my birding friends and, of course, the good fortune to have chosen a year that was, undoubtedly, one of the best overall birding years in Kansas in recent memory. I hope this Big Year effort will set a standard by which a good birding year in Kansas can be judged, but only time will tell.

1990: A RARE YEAR - by Steve Crawford

In my 15 years of birding, I have never had a year like 1990! I usually don't have enough time and/or money to do as much birding as I would like, but I have managed to get my life list to 582 with a large amount of fun along the way. My best year was 1984 with 401 species, but that included Arizona and California for two whole weeks. Yet only in my wildest dreams would I expect a year like 1990.

It started in March with a phone call about a Yellow-billed Loon at Table Rock Lake in Missouri. My friend, Richard Parker, and I jumped into his car and found it next morning, along with a Pacific Loon. A lifer along with a Missouri state bird for gravy. At one point, we had three loon species, great for size comparisons, in our scopes at the same time! I thought a Yellow-billed Loon would be my best bird for 1990, but I would be wrong.

The following week brought another telephone call. A Gyrfalcon was at Cheyenne Bottoms. Richard and I, along with Mike Whitehead and Dave Bryan, left at 4 a.m. When we arrived, we located other birders, which grew to 15 people. We were rewarded with quite a show. At one point, the large, gray falcon almost plucked a Mallard out of the air, with a few feathers flying. Fantastic looks at a fantastic bird, our second visitor from the far north that month.

Then came my vacation in March. My parents were playing snowbirds in southern Texas, so my children and I went to visit them. I had family things to do, but I did manage two days of birding. I was able to get seven lifers, including Lesser Black-backed Gull, Clay-colored Robin and Red-crowned Parrot. A good year already and it was only March.

At the end of April, Richard and I were on our annual spring trip to Taberville Prairie and Schell Osage Wildlife Areas in Missouri. We were doing our usual hike through the prairie, looking for Henslow's Sparrow, Short-eared Owl and Greater Prairie Chicken. After 45 minutes with no luck, we decided to return to the car. We quickly came to a low area, which was very wet and muddy. I took three or four steps in the muck when up came what I, at first, thought was a Meadowlark, but it smaller and it had very large dangling feet! The dark brown and alternate yellow streaks were much richer than a Meadowlark. The large white spots I was seeing were not on the tail, but on the trailing edge of the secondary wing feathers. "Richard, Yellow Rail, look, a Yellow Rail," I yelled! It flew weakly about thirty yards and came down to the prairie. After a few moments to catch our breath and allow our pulse rates to slow, we ran to the spot and tried to see or flush it again. After a couple of minutes, we remembered some of the rail horror stories we had heard (trampings, mid-air catches, etc.), we decided to go our way and leave the little bird alone.

The very next weekend, 5 May found Richard and me at Quivera National Wildlife Refuge. We have heard Black Rails here before. We came across Dave and Linda Hedges from Kansas City, who said they had just called one up using a tape recording of its song. Due to my past failures and the fact that it was 10 a.m., I was a little skeptical. But, as Black Rail was #1 on my want list, I asked them to show me how they did this miraculous deed. We all returned to the spot and Dave jumped over a ditch full of cattails to a marshy spot with many clumps of marsh grasses. He placed his tape recorder about fifteen yards from us with a clear view, right under a clump of marsh grass. He turned it on and came back to join us. In less than a minute, a Black Rail began to answer! The volume on the tape was perfect as we could not tell the difference between the rail and the tape except by location. There were four Black Rails calling within our hearing distance. One was getting closer and closer to the tape. Then, all of a sudden, there he was---standing on top of the tape recorder!! The hair stood up on the back of my neck and my pulse started pounding. He was gorgeous! Slightly larger than a Swamp Sparrow and solid black, except for a few white stripes and speckles. But most impressive was his red eye and the rusty nape of his neck. WOW---Yellow and Black Rails only a week apart! Can it get any better

than that?

I'm telling rail stories for two reasons. One, it can be done in daytime without trampling all over in the dark and without disturbing habitat and birds. The second is birding ethics, if some get to see these rails and count them as lifers, maybe they won't trample them to death the next time. From what I have read, it is next to impossible to find these rails once nesting has started. Things I learned from my success and from talking to others who had successful rail hunts are as follows: (1) to find Yellow Rails, look in wet meadows or prairies during migration, (2) Black Rails may be easiest to find when they first arrive on nesting territory in early to mid-May, (3) the tape should be about fifteen minutes long with various pauses between songs, between ten to forty seconds, the volume should not be too loud or soft, and do not use it after May, (4) you do not have to do this at night as we were successful in early morning.

The year was only half over. I had a family vacation planned for California in August. Again, there were a lot of family things to do, but I managed two days of birding. One day was used to go to the Salton Sea while the rest of my family stayed with relatives. I did have fun birding and found about seventy species, including a Brown Booby (only my second) and some escaped Flamingos. I did manage to find Clark's Grebe for a lifer. In Los Angeles I saw Spotted Dove, California Towhee, and California Gnatcatcher.

Then came September and a Green Violet-ear in Arkansas. Richard and I drove all day for that one, five hours each both ways, just to see one bird! But, he was worth it! Perhaps one of the prettiest birds I have ever seen!

Two weeks later an Anna's Hummingbird showed up in Oxford. Dave and I added him to our state lists. He put on a wonderful show, trying to intimidate a Ruby-throated Hummingbird coming to the same feeders. We got some great looks through Dave's Questar.

Even the Christmas Counts were interesting in 1990. Over the years I've been on close to forty counts and I found six birds which I had never seen on a Christmas count before, consisting of Glaucous and Thayer's Gulls, Oldsquaw, Winter Wren, Merlin and Golden Eagle. A great end to a great year. But it was only mid-December. The year still was not over.

On 27 December I got a telephone call from Lloyd Moore. An Ivory Gull was at Red Rock Lake southeast of Des Moines, Iowa! Lloyd went to Iowa and found it the next day (Friday, but I had to work). Friday night an ice storm hit the midwest. After some more telephone calls, I got out of bed at 3 a.m. Sunday and joined Richard, Mike and Dave (the Gyrfalcon group) plus Bob Fisher and headed north. The very first bird we saw below the dam on our arrival (five hours later) was the Ivory Gull! I was so excited, and were so crowded in Dave's Jeep, I had not gotten my camera ready. A shame because the best show he put on was just at that time. He was only about 100 yards to 150 yards away, doing plenty of banking and gliding and showing off his solid white plumage with small black spots. I was impressed with the alternate black spots at the base of the tail (like someone had painted them on, skipping every other feather) and his gray bill with a yellow tip. A truly beautiful bird! And if he wasn't enough, a juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake and a first or second winter Lesser Black-backed Gull also flew by! In Iowa, yet! A remarkable end to one of my most memorable years as a birder! I doubt that 1991 can possibly be half that good----can it?

KANSAS RARE-BIRD-ALERT 913-329-4499

The Kansas Rare-Bird-Alert received 249 calls in December 1990, 257 in January, 164 in February, 195 in March, 132 in April and 240 in May 1991. In this six month period the tape was updated 47 times with the typewritten text filling 26 pages. The Kansas City Regional Bird Report operated by Lloyd Moore and financed by Burroughs Audubon (913-342-2473) went on line in November 1990. Because information from the KOS hotline is also featured on the K.C. hotline the number of calls to our tape has diminished slightly with the Kansas City crowd wisely avoiding toll calls. The tape machine failed in late April while I was birding in Texas and remained out of commission for about eight days. Sorry if you called and nobody answered.

It is my policy to put all reports on the tape as long as the information is timely and plausible. Information over one week old seldom is mention on the tape but is still entered into the computer record and eventually is delivered to Dr. Ely who records many of the sightings in the county record books. Beginning June 1, 1991 anyone who reports a very rare bird (generally those with fewer than 10 accepted records for the state) will be mailed an official report form by either Lloyd or myself. The Kansas Bird Records Committee needs documentation for these birds if they are to become a part of the permanent record.

Very few "crank" calls have been received during my tenure as operator, probably because the number is unlisted. The dozen or so bogus bird reports I have received usually involve people with heavy regional or foreign accents (but with a very familiar ring) reporting birds normally found on other continents. Messages of this nature are labeled and saved and may surface again someday at a KOS Fall Meeting. Occasionally, REAL strangers with funny accents call the tape and request information on Kansas birds. This I am happy to provide either in written form or through phone conversations. Many travelers have discovered that Kansas is a great place to bird. Keep those calls coming!

Scott Seltman
Nekoma, KS 67559

FALL ROUNDUP/ August through November 1990/ by Scott Seltman

Considering that through much of the fall migration the most common refrain among Kansas birders was "Where are the birds?", the following list of bird sightings is fairly impressive. Except for a few good days of birding early in the season, the passerine migration was very poor. In the west it could best be described as horrible with an almost complete absence of flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, warblers, and an amazing scarcity of sparrows and finches. (Did I leave anything out? Well, I guess blackbirds were common.) In the east the passerine migration was somewhat better but still below par. This trend was apparently true all across the U.S. as birders to our west such as Dan Bridges described eastern Colorado as "absolutely dead; the worst ever!" while Bill Evans of western N.Y. described the thrush migration as "the best ever!" (pers. comm.). A possible explanation involves the freak storm pattern that battered the Pacific Northwest beginning in early September. As strong fronts barreled across the Gulf of Alaska and slammed into the Washington and British Columbia coast the result was not only rainfall of almost epic proportions, but also storm pulses that continually swept west to east across the northern U.S. along the Canadian border. This storm track apparently shunted many migrants that usually cross the central plains further to the east.

Here in Kansas the weather in August and September was relatively normal with the exception of the last week of August when a strong heat wave pushed temperatures above the century mark each day. October and November were very mild and dry, in fact they were nearly the driest on record for Kansas. Most weather stations had little or no rain during either month. Normally when the autumn weather is mild and dry we see many late dates for migratory birds but last fall produced only a few lingerers.

Just when the fall migration seemed doomed, rare waterbirds began showing up at Kansas lakes and during the entire month of November birders were treated to an amazing parade of rarities all across the state. Birding was loony in more than one sense with four loon species being reported in the state and with no fewer than 7 Pacific Loons being reported (one in December). Two Red-throated Loons, both juveniles, were seen with good photographs taken of the one at Scott Lake. A Yellow-billed Loon was reported from Winfield City Lake on November 17 by Don Vannoy's birding party who were part of a Wichita Audubon fieldtrip. Fieldmarks on this bird included, among other things, a big yellow bill. This species cannot be added to the Kansas Checklist in the absence of a photograph or specimen, but it is clear that this bird occurs on the central plains and it is just a matter of time until a more cooperative individual is found. Both Colorado and Missouri have had wintering Yellow-billed Loons for several years and Oklahomans had their first state record last year. It's our turn next!

Other good waterbirds include an adult Brown Pelican seen at Perry Lake on November 3. This pelican was seen diving into the water after fish, a behavior that would on its own tend to rule out White Pelican. This Brown Pelican was only seen briefly by birders, but had apparently been present the day before according to people in the area. Good photographs were taken by Lloyd Moore. Western Grebes were seen at many lakes during November and two Clark's were seen by Dave Bryan and myself at Kirwin on November 23. These two species are relatively easy to separate in the field if seen well. (Bill color is the first thing to look at with bright yellow bills suggesting Clark's and dull greenish yellow bills suggesting Western.) Clark's Grebes are so abundant in eastern Colorado that they should be a regular migrant in western Kansas. Unfortunately we have no lakes along the Colorado border and most of the western reservoirs are currently so shallow that diving birds have little room to maneuver.

Several gulls of interest were seen. A first-winter California Gull was identified as such at a distance of about a mile using a Questar scope on November 24. Fieldmarks were a little clearer on November 28 when it was observed at a distance of about 50 feet. The Thayer's Gulls at Webster and Clinton were seen by a good number of observers who were all in agreement as to their identities. The Black-legged Kittiwake at Webster was watched at length and was in classic juvenile plumage with the distinctive wing pattern, a slightly forked tail tipped in black and a dark gray neck collar. A fact not mentioned in the

following list of birds is the incredible numbers of gulls at lakes and reservoirs across the state. The massive numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls continue to climb each year in Kansas, much to our amazement and delight.

The same weather pattern that may have ruined our passerine migration may have been responsible for many of these rare birds that arrived in Kansas. Note that several of these species nest to our north but winter primarily along the Pacific Coast. No doubt some of the individuals were either blown inland from the Pacific by high winds, or they may have been trapped inland while attempting to migrate overland from the Arctic to the central Pacific Coast. This theory has a few holes in that Brant, scoters and other northern nesters were apparently not blown off course in any numbers. Perhaps the sudden upsurge in records of certain species has less to do with the habits and movements of birds than with the habits and movements of birders. Prior to 1980 only a few hardy souls ventured out to the big lakes and reservoirs in late fall. But in the last ten years reservoir watching has become a very popular pasttime with many bodies of water now being visited at least every weekend if not more often. This upsurge in interest coincided with the publication of a whole series of new and improved field guides that make identification of distant birds considerably easier. Another important factor has been the major improvements made in spotting scopes; that bird on the opposite shore that looked like an amorphic blob in 1950 and became an intriguing speck in 1970 can now have feathers and fieldmarks thanks to a new generation of scopes developed in the late 1980's. If you are still using a scope that looks as if it might have been left behind by retreating German soldiers, its time for a new model. A good scope and a good pair of binoculars will not automatically improve your field skills overnight, but I guarantee that you will immediately begin to see feathers and fieldmarks that you have never noticed before. It is probably no coincidence that the sudden jump in reports of difficult-to-observe birds has followed a sudden jump in scope purchases by many Kansas birders.

As exciting as the November waterbirds were, they could not erase the earlier excitement provided by Kansas hummingbirds. It is common knowledge that Kansas birders are just scratching the surface when it comes to hummingbirds; each year many rare hummers probably travel across our state unseen or unidentified. Two large hummers were seen in the state in August. Mark Corder saw a large dark bird north of Cedar Vale in Chautauqua County which he felt could have been a female Magnificent or Blue-throated. And while Ted Cable was out of the house his family saw a hummer "about twice as large as the Ruby-throats" at their backyard feeder in Manhattan. Unfortunately, neither of these birds can even be assigned to a particular genus and are not mentioned in the list of sightings. The Third Annual Southwest Kansas Hummingbird Search led by Sebastian Patti over Labor Day Weekend produced the state's second definitive Black-chinned Hummingbird in Liberal. Our hosts in Liberal, Gary and Ruth Rahmlow and family, graciously allowed eight birders to sit in their backyard for several hours on September 1 as we waited for a regularly feeding bird to arrive. When it did arrive it was instantly identified as a male Black-chinned, a fact that was later documented by photos taken by Ruth Rahmlow. Although they nest within fifty miles of Kansas and almost certainly migrate across southwest Kansas in numbers, Black-chinned Hummingbird has been an elusive target species for Kansas birders. Because females and immatures of this species so closely resemble Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, most 'archilochus' sightings such as those in Satanta cannot be firmly assigned to either category. Normally, a second state record such as the Liberal sighting would have been a good candidate for best bird of the season. But just three weeks later this bird was unseated by news from Oxford.

The male Anna's Hummingbird that arrived in Oxford sometime in late August or early September and stayed until November 23 had everything that one could hope for in a first state record. It allowed itself to be seen by almost 200 observers including one fourth of all KOS members, it allowed itself to be photographed with close-up lenses at minimum focus, and it was extremely cooperative for those birders that traveled long distances to see it. There were even chills and spills as the fierce little bird chased away all intruders from its territory. It was observed chasing robins, was seen pinning a Ruby-throated Hummingbird to the side of the house in an attempt to drive it away (It worked!), and was even seen dive-bombing cats! In between these escapades it would often sit on a

perch and sing. Oh, that all rare birds were so cooperative. Although she sought help to identify the bird, full credit for its discovery goes to Norma Dennett of Oxford. Norma knew she had an unusual hummingbird in the area as early as September 16 but it was not until September 20 when Wallace Champeny first saw the bird that its identity was known. The next day birders from Wichita confirmed the sighting and the frenzy among Kansas birders began. The Anna's Hummingbird was the lead story on the front page of The Wichita Eagle on September 29 so some curiosity seekers traveled to Oxford to see it as well. Norma Dennett and her husband Jack were excellent hosts during this entire period and allowed birders free access to their yard to see the bird. KOS members and all the other birders from around the state offer our collective thanks.

Spring migration is about over and a vast variety of birds were seen. Written reports from the spring months, March through May, should be sent to R.R. Box 36, Nekoma, Kansas 67559 as soon as possible. As always, all of the following sightings are subject to review by the Kansas Bird Records Committee.

BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS/ August through November 1990

<u>Red-throated Loon</u>	juv. at Scott Lake. Good photos.	T&SSh	10-30-90	Scott
<u>Red-throated Loon</u>	juv. at Clinton	BF,MM	11-18-90	Douglas
			to 11-22-90	Douglas
Pacific Loon	1 on Wilson Lake. Perhaps not the same individual.	MR	11-06-90	Russell
			through 11-29-90	Russell
Pacific Loon	1 molting adult on Cedar Bluff	SS	11-06-90	Trego
Pacific Loon	1 on La Cygne Power Lake	CH,LW,LM	11-17-90	Linn
Pacific Loon	1 on Winfield City Lake	SS	11-18-90	Cowley
Pacific Loon	1 on Wyandotte Co. Lake	LM	11-27-90	Wyandotte
Pacific Loon	1 on Cheney Res.	DV,FV	11-29-90	???
<u>YELLOW-BILLED LOON</u>	first report in Kansas	DV,m.ob.	11-17-90	Cowley
Eared Grebe	<u>parent with young</u> at CB	GP,PW	8-24-90	Barton
Western Grebe	3 on Cedar Bluff	SS	10-31-90	Trego
Western Grebe	2 on Tuttle	DR	11-03-90	???
Western Grebe	1 at Lake Wabaunsee	DLS,m.ob.	11-04-90	Wabaunsee
	still present	DLS	11-11-90	Wabaunsee
Western Grebe	2 on Wilson Lake	MR	11-09-90	Russell
Western Grebe	1 on Clinton	LM	11-10-90	Douglas
Western Grebe	1 on Winfield Lake	PJ,m.ob.	11-17-90	Cowley
Western Grebe	1 on Tuttle	TC	11-17-90	???
Western Grebe	1 on Clinton	BF,MM	11-18-90	Douglas
Western Grebe	1 on Melvern	LM,GP	11-18-90	Osage
Western Grebe	1 on Hillsdale Lake	MM	11-25-90	Miami
Western Grebe	3 on Cheney Res.	DV,FV	11-29-90	???
<u>Clark's Grebe</u>	3 on Kirwin. White above eye and bright yellow bills well seen.	DB,SS	11-23-90	Phillips
White Pelican	1 at Perry WMA banded as a juv. at Chase Lake NWR, N. Dakota in '74, '75 or '76.	DLS	8-19-90	Jefferson
<u>Brown Pelican</u>	1 adult at Perry swimming beach	LM,MM,GP,RR	11-03-90	Jefferson
Olivaceous Cormorant	5 at CB	SS	8-25-90	Barton
Olivaceous Cormorant	2 still at CB in breeding plumage	LM,m.ob.	9-03-90	Barton
American Bittern	1 late bird in Big Ditch	PJ,DK,JN	10-28-90	Sedgwick
Ross' Goose	1 <u>summered</u> at sewer lake	m.ob.	9-01-90	Seward
Ross' Goose	2 on Lake Concannon	T&SSh	11-04-90	Finney
Ross' Goose	9 below Perry Dam	MI,BE	11-05-90	Jefferson
Ross' Goose	2 at Perry	LM	11-10-90	Douglas
Black Duck	1 on Winfield Lake	PJ,m.ob.	11-17-90	Cowley
Black Duck	1 at Quivira	GY	11-17-90	Stafford
Black Duck	2 at MDC	CH,LW,LM	11-17-90	Linn
Greater Scaup	6 at Kaw Valley Fish Farm	LM	11-10-90	Douglas
Greater Scaup	10 on Paola sewer ponds	CH,LW,LM	11-17-90	Miami

Oldsquaw	1 on Clinton	LM	11-10-90	Douglas
Oldsquaw	1 on Paola sewer ponds	CH,LW,LM	11-17-90	Miami
Oldsquaw	1 on Clinton	BF,MM	11-18-90	Douglas
Oldsquaw	2 on Clinton	TimS	11-22-90	Douglas
Surf Scoter	5 on Wilson	MR,SP,MM,GP	11-11-90	Russell
Surf Scoter	1 on Winfield Lake	PJ,m.ob.	11-17-90	Cowley
White-winged Scoter	2 on Clinton	LM,GP	10-28-90	Douglas
White-winged Scoter	1 on Glen Elder Res.	PW	11-23-90	Mitchell
Northern Goshawk	1 adult near Lawrence	GP,m.ob.	10-31-90	Douglas
Northern Goshawk	1 imm. w. of Kansas City	JL	11-03-90	Wyandotte
Red-shouldered Hawk	1-3 at Perry WMA from 8-19-90 to 10-13-90. Maximum of three on 9-16-90	DLS	Fall 90	Jefferson
Swainson's Hawk	350 migrants over Marion Res.	KOS	10-07-90	Marion
Swainson's Hawk	600+ roosting ne. of Lawrence	GP	10-05-90	Douglas
Golden Eagle	1 imm. at Milford Lake	DLS	10-20-90	Geary
Golden Eagle	1 adult at Perry Lake	RF,RR,DSei	11-18-90	Jefferson
Golden Eagle	1 imm. near Bonner Springs	MM	11-22-90	Leavenworth
Golden Eagle	1 imm. at Clinton Res.	NJ,JG	11-24-90	Douglas
Merlin	1 at Q	Burr. Aud.	9-22-90	Stafford
Merlin	1 at Clinton Res.	LM,MM	9-30-90	Douglas
Merlin	1	LM,MM	9-30-90	Osage
Merlin	1 very dark melanistic bird	MR,SS	10-27-90	Morton
Peregrine Falcon	1 at Big Salt Marsh	CH,LW	8-06-90	Stafford
Peregrine Falcon	1 attacking young night-heron	DS,SS	8-11-90	Stafford
Peregrine Falcon	1 at Perry WMA	DLS	8-19-90	Jefferson
Peregrine Falcon	1 at Ft. Leavenworth	JJ	9-13-90	Leavenworth
Peregrine Falcon	1 at Big Salt Marsh	Burr.Aud.	9-22-90	Stafford
Peregrine Falcon	1 e. of Q	PJ	10-24-90	Reno
Prairie Falcon	1 sw. of Junction City	DLS	11-17-90	Geary
Prairie Falcon	1 seen 6 mi. e. Overbrook	LM,GP	11-18-90	Douglas
Ruffed Grouse	2 flushed and seen at state lake	JS,DB,TM	10-22-90	Atchison
Gr. Prairie Chicken	1 at 10th & Broadway, Great Bend	TC	11-10-90	Barton
Whooping Crane	10 at CB	Staff	10-23-90	Barton
Whooping Crane	11 at Q	Staff	10-23-90	Stafford
Whooping Crane	6 at Q	PJ	10-24-90	Stafford
Whooping Crane	1 near Q	JM,m.ob.	10-31-90	Stafford
Whooping Crane	3 s. of Q	TC	11-10-90	Stafford
Sanderling	1 very late bird at Kirwin	MR	11-21-90	Phillips
Dunlin	1 at sewer lake	m.ob.	9-01-90	Seward
Dunlin	sev. at Q	Burr. Aud.	9-22-90	Stafford
Buff-br. Sandpiper	2 n. of Lake Afton	PJ,JN	8-19-90	Sedgwick
Buff-br. Sandpiper	4 at sewer lake	m. ob.	9-01-90	Seward
Buff-br. Sandpiper	1 in Unit A at MDC	BF,MM	9-08-90	Linn
Buff-br. Sandpiper	50 at n. end of Tuttle	DR	9-09-90	Riley?
Buff-br. Sandpiper	2 at Q	DM,DH	9-10-90	Stafford
Ruff	2 females in Pool 4 at CB	CH,LW	8-05-90	Barton
Ruff	1 at Big Salt Marsh	GP,PW	8-24-90	Stafford
Short-billed Dowitcher	1000 seen at CB and Q. Largest wave recorded in Kansas?	CH,LW	8-05-90	Barton
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Q	DS,SS	8-11-90	Stafford
Red-necked Phalarope	2 on sewer ponds	GP,PW	8-25-90	Morton
Red-necked Phalarope	4 at Q	SP,LM,GP	9-03-90	Stafford
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Q	DM,DH	9-10-90	Stafford
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Q	Burr.Aud.	9-22-90	Stafford
Red Phalarope	2 at sewer ponds	SP,MM,GP	9-16-90	Morton
Red Phalarope	1 on sewer lake	SP,MM,GP	11-09-90	Seward
'jaeger', sp.	1 dark bird chasing terns at CB	JG	9-10-90	Barton
California Gull	1 first-winter at Cedar Bluff	DB,SS	11-24-90	Trego
			to 11-28-90	Trego
Thayer's Gull	1 first-winter at Clinton	CH,LW,SC,LM	11-19-90	Douglas

