

The Horned Lark

613 Tamerisk, Junction City, KS 66441-3359

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This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

DO YOU ENJOY THE HOTLINE?

There's no doubt that a lot of us use the KOS Rare Bird Alert on a fairly regular basis. That's what makes it work! We go birding, we call in our good birds, Scott posts them on the Hotline, and we all go back out looking for more good birds, or the birds that someone else has seen.

But just like everything else it costs to keep this service going. There's phone line charges, plus the expense of keeping the occasionally temperamental answering machines answering and talking. So far donations to the Hotline Fund have been able to cover most of the costs associated with the Hotline. Oh, you didn't know there was a Hotline Fund? Well, it may not be called exactly that, but I'm an editor not a treasurer.

Anyway, if you are one of those who use it on a regular basis (like I do) then why not help support it. Go ahead and post reports about good birds you've seen while birding. More than likely not everything you post will make it onto the report, but it helps us know what's going on around the state. Secondly, show how much you appreciate the Hotline and pull out your checkbook and send a donation marked **KOS Hotline** to: *Rose Fritz, KOS Treasurer, 1816 Cypress Lane, Newton, KS 67114.*

By the way we're not the only state that has a Rare Bird Alert. In fact there are many Hotlines around the country. If you are interested in a particular location and what hotlines are available give me a call or drop me a line and I'll let you know what's available in that area.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN . . . ?

From time to time the KOS Board receives requests from other birdwatching and ornithology

associations and/or magazines asking for our membership list. The KOS Board has taken the position that KOS members should feel that they are "safe" from being bombarded by other groups looking for memberships or subscriptions and therefore do not supply our membership list to other groups. When possible we try to post a notice in the *Horned Lark* about some of these opportunities. But we can't possibly hope to cover all the bases.

If you are trying to find out how to contact a particular association or magazine please drop me a note and I will get you the information IF it exists. For example there is a newly forming group called the Backyard Birding Association from somewhere "back east". I'm still gathering information on that one and will pass it on when I get it. So if you're interested, remember that it never hurts to ask!

TIME TO START PLANNING FOR THOSE CHRISTMAS COUNTS!

Believe it or not it's time to start thinking about those Christmas Bird Counts. Especially if you happen to be a compiler! I know some of you compilers tend to wait until the last minute to set your date to see what the weather may be like, which may explain why you only have 4 people make it to your count. The next issue of the *Horned Lark* will be coming out in early December and, like last year, I would like to have as complete a listing as possible of the Kansas (and nearby) Christmas Bird Counts.

To get those included I need to have the information for your count by Thanksgiving. All I need is the name of your count, the date of your count, where to meet, and the name of the compiler/organizer and where they can be reached. Do your part and make the plans, and I'll get notice out to the members! Send those cards and letters to: *Chuck Otte, KOS Editor, 613 Tamerisk, Junction City, KS 66441, or FAX# 913-238-7166.*

Special Species . . .

Painted Bunting

by Chuck Otte

I can remember as a young boy of 4 or 5 riding out to the fields with my mother while she took lunch or a coffee break to my father. My mom always took her bird book and "field glasses" with her just in case something showed up while she was out there. I remember that the bird book was one of the earlier Peterson Western editions with the plates scattered throughout the book.

I would spend hours on end going through the book and looking at the pictures. I dearly loved the page of the hummingbirds, all lined up in rows, the bright males at the top of the page and the drabbish, but still fascinating, females at the bottom. That any bird could have such colors amazed me. (And people wonder why I became a bird watcher!)

I also remember the first time my mother and I saw an Indigo Bunting. A blue that was just incredible beyond belief and how could so much sound come out of such a little bird. Several years later my wife, Jaye, and I would have the fortune to come upon our first Lazuli Bunting in southern Idaho at a rest stop built among an old lava flow. We heard this incredible song that had a familiar ring to it. We eventually tracked down the source of that song to find it belonged to a sprightly male Lazuli Bunting.

As we checked our references and learned a little more about the Lazuli Bunting I realized how much I wanted to see a Painted Bunting. That combination of brilliant, nearly gaudy colors, reminded me in many ways of those hummingbirds I had spent hours observing as a youth.

Before that month was out Jaye and I would have the good fortune to discover Painted Buntings virtually out our back door, on Walla Walla Road just northwest of Junction City, where we have found them every year since.

A male Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*) is nearly impossible to miss or to mistake for anything else. The orangish-red of the belly and rump glows like a fireball when it catches the morning light. In fact, that first one we saw I tried to turn into an oriole from a distance. But the indigo-blue head and the green back quickly separate the Painted Bunting from any other Kansas species.

The female and young males seem drab in comparison, but the bright green that predominates their plumage is still quite distinctive. A first spring male in Oklahoma this spring gave us a go for a while, but most doubts were removed when he sang.

The song of the Painted Bunting is best summed up by saying that it is very "bunting like." I like to describe it as a languid warbling, with a very thin sweet quality, but without the paired phrases that I associate with the Indigo Bunting. It is often the song that we identify first and then follow to the find the singer sitting atop a fairly high perch from which he can defend his territory.

Painted Buntings prefer what I would call scrubby/brushy locations. The areas around Junction City where we find them have a good mix of dogwood and sumac bushes, medium sized junipers and scattered larger deciduous trees interspersed with open grassy areas. Painted Buntings are primarily seed eaters. Thompson and Ely indicate that they appear to be quite fond of foxtail seed (they should be doing well this year!).

The Painted Bunting is common to uncommon in southeastern Kansas, becoming less plentiful as you travel north and west in the state. Extreme western records in Kansas are from Stevens County in the south and Sherman County to the north. They have been conspicuously absent from the northernmost tier of counties all across the Nebraska border. There are breeding records for as far west as Clark County and as far north as Riley County. Based on behavior and activity, I am sure that they are a Geary County breeder though I have yet to find a nest.

I usually expect to see Painted Buntings by Mother's Day in May. In fact this year I had one in very late April, and there was a report from Russell County of a male Painted Bunting at a feeder on May 6. By mid-August I have very little luck in finding them, and Thompson and Ely report a late date of September 21st. There are also a couple of winter feeder records from Reno and Douglas Counties.

Painted Buntings are probably more abundant than we realize, but unless we happen to catch them singing from their perches in the morning they are easy to miss. Spend a little time learning their song, then take the time to start checking those scrubby hillsides in the southeastern half of the state. You will probably be surprised one day when a flash of hummingbird colors lands on top of a hedge tree and gives you that first breathtaking look at a rainbow on the wing—a Painted Bunting!

Sandhill Crane Season: KDWP Commission Actions

The following editorial is the sole opinion of the editor and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the KOS Board of Directors or its membership.

Recent actions by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Commission has caused a lot of heads to perk up followed by quizzical stares. First it was a "rattlesnake roundup" in Western Kansas, then a last minute change in the waterfowl hunting seasons, followed immediately by a Sandhill Crane season. Whether or not these activities are to your liking or not is not nearly as important as how the decisions were or weren't made.

In years gone by the Commission was composed of a thoughtful group of Kansas citizens who recognized that their responsibility was to protect the well being of the natural denizens of this state. If there was uncertainty over an issue they leaned towards erring on the side of caution.

The Commission is taking on a new look—a look that has a lot of people concerned that the well-being of the wildlife has given way to the well-being of the bottom line. I feel that while a hunting season on Sandhill Cranes in Kansas MAY not have any real significant impact on the overall population of Sandhill Cranes, the decision was made too quickly, and perhaps with insufficient information.

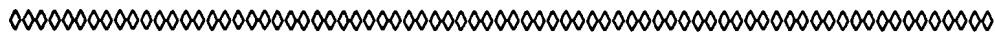
Postponing a new season for one year would have hurt nothing. At least the opponents to the Sandhill Crane season were given an opportunity to state their position. Pity the poor duck hunters who, having stated their position during the public comment

session, had the public session closed and then the Commission made substantial changes to the duck seasons without allowing further comment and then voted those changes in!

It's time we started letting the Commission know that they are being watched and that we expect them to be looking out for the good of the wildlife. The Commission members and their addresses are in the June issue of the *Horned Lark*. Write them and let them know how you feel about these issues. Then write your local representative and senator and let them know how you feel about these issues, as well as about what is happening with the Commission.

A lot of non-hunters have bought hunting licenses in years gone by to support wildlife and habitat even though it's not necessary to "buy a license" to go birdwatching. Perhaps it's time to write to the Department of Wildlife and Parks and ask where that money has gone and perhaps question whether you want to continue to monetarily support these activities given the direction that the Commission appears to be going.

Bottom line? You need to let the Commission know how you feel. If you say nothing then your silence will be interpreted as condoning what is happening. Make your voice heard. Let the Commission know that you do not like what has been going on!



Thank You, Dave Rintoul

As many of you are probably aware by now, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Commission decided in a 6-1 vote at their August 11 Commission meeting to have a Sandhill Crane season in Kansas this year. The season will run from November 6 through January 2 and will be limited to an area in south central/southwest Kansas that just happens to include Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira NWR.

What many of you may not know is that Dave Rintoul spent a lot of time and effort trying to convince the KDWP Commission that we don't need a Sandhill Crane season in Kansas. Although we weren't able to stop the proposal from becoming reality, we want to thank Dave for all the time and energy he spent on the effort and to encourage him and all of you to keep fighting for the rights of wildlife in Kansas!

You Saw A What?!?!?!?!?!?

DON'T FORGET TO CALL THE KOS RARE BIRD ALERT!

913/372-5499

From The Keyboard

This will be brief this month since I took up all that space for the editorial. I want to encourage everyone to plan to attend the Fall Meeting in Hays October 2nd and 3rd. If you've never attended a Fall Meeting, make this one your first. Besides being a lot of fun, you get a chance to meet birdwatchers from all over the state.

Thanks to John Rakestraw for accepting the challenge and submitting a *Birding Hotspot*, and thanks to Dave Rintoul for his efforts in trying to stop a Kansas Sandhill Crane season from becoming reality.

Christmas Bird Count compilers there's a special notice for you, and for all you "techies and cyber-birders" we've got the first of what will probably be periodic installments in how technology is changing this thing we call birding.

Lastly, let me just say that I really prefer not to write "true editorials" BUT because of recent events I felt that something had to be said. All too often anymore I notice fewer and fewer individuals getting involved in anything. We are on the verge of becoming a society of passive observers. Let's not let that happen to "us." Let's get involved, get active, get more KOS members, volunteer for events and projects, participate in KOS (and local) birding trips and Christmas Bird Counts, and attend KOS Meetings starting with Hays. I'll see you there!

Chuck

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PRAIRIE FALCON RUFFLES PRAIRIE CHICKENS
by Edwin Miller - Independence, KS

On a late winter morning Jerry Horak and Ed Miller were in a viewing blind early to witness the dance of the Greater Prairie-chicken. Located in an open prairie just north of Emporia, the blind offered an excellent seat to the chicken arena. The stomping feet, vertical jumps, raised neck tufts and tail, inflated orange throat sacs and sparring were the expected reward for the loss of sleep.

This year, however, another prairie bird tried to steal the show. While sitting in the blind, we noticed something had spooked the chickens. Some flew from the lek while others squatted low and froze. After a period of silence, the chickens returned and resumed their activities. Again it happened. The booming ground became silent as some birds scattered and some hunkered. This time we spied the culprit.

It was a Prairie Falcon. As the falcon flew over, the prairie chickens were like soldiers hitting the dirt to avoid enemy fire. They relied on their camouflage to blend in as they tried to disappear in the short grass and turned into brown lumps. But it wasn't enough to hide from the falcon, who dove down and knocked feathers into the air from three of the chickens. It all seemed to be a game to the falcon. None of the chickens appeared injured and the falcon flew away to park on a fence post.

Again, a memory was made by getting up early to go birding or to paraphrase Horak, "If you snooze you lose!"

Amendment to KOS Bylaws Sought

The following piece of business was brought up at the Spring KOS Board of directors meeting and will be voted on at the KOS Annual Business Meeting in October in Hays.

Amendment to the KOS Bylaws: The KOS Board of Directors has approved the following amendment to the KOS Bylaws and will be submitting it to a vote of the membership at the Annual Business Meeting.

Moved that Article II, Sec. 3C of the KOS Bylaws be amended to read: **C. Life members: a lump sum payment of \$300 (\$150 until January 1, 1995).**

Current reading of this section is: C. Life members: \$150 in a lump sum or \$37.50 in each of four consecutive years.

This amendment is being proposed because the current payment of \$150 does not earn sufficient interest to defray the expenses of membership. This is particularly true of those who have only made partial payment. Life members who have currently made partial payment would be allowed to complete their life membership payments on the present schedule although they will be encouraged to complete payment by January 1, 1995.

CBC Compilers...
Be sure to get your plans made and report your plans to Chuck Otte.
(See Page 1)

BIRDING HOTSPOT . . .

FRAZIER PARK, ULYSSES

by John Rakestraw

Situated on the south end of Ulysses, in Grant County, Frazier Park offers some fine birding to the visiting birder. Frazier Park is not what I would call a "hot spot," but it does offer migrating birds a small oasis of woods, scrub, and grassland among the vast surrounding area of crop land.

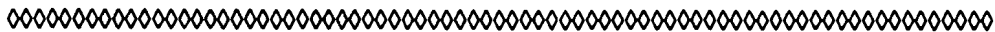
In the warm weather months, birding is restricted to the early mornings. Later in the day, softball games and beer parties make birding impossible. In winter, the birders often have the park to themselves throughout the day. The avifauna in Frazier Park has a distinctive eastern flavor with such birds as White-eyed Vireo, Bay-breasted Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Scarlet Tanager making appearances in migration. Some western species include the ever present Black-billed Magpie and occasional appearances by Black-headed Grosbeak and Ash-throated Flycatcher. The only western warbler I have found in the park is Audubon's Warbler (both forms of Yellow-rumped Warbler are common in migration), but the visiting birder should be alert for any western strays.

To reach Frazier Park from Hwy 160 in Ulysses, turn south at the Wagon Bed Inn, then turn east into the park entrance. Drive to the east end of the parking lot to start a walking tour of the park. East of the

parking area, through a thin line of trees, is the bed of the former Ulysses Lake. The lake bed is now covered with sunflowers and brush piles which are attractive to various sparrows and finches in winter and flycatchers in migration. There are Jeep trails across the lake bed which make walking easy. East of the lake bed there is a gravel road that curves around the south end of the park. Walking this road provides views of wooded areas and an adjacent alfalfa field which can hold as many as 50 wild turkeys.

The city sewage ponds are just southeast of this road, so be alert for waterfowl, terns, and Sandhill Cranes flying by. At the south end of the park, leave the road and walk along the dry creek bed, heading west. The trees and brush along the creek bed yield thrushes, warblers, woodpeckers and raptors. This path will lead to a wooded area behind the softball diamonds. This area is the most consistent producer of warblers and vireos. At this point, you can walk through the parking area or double back along the tree line to explore areas of grass and brush.

I would not travel a great distance to bird Frazier Park, but for the birder passing through the area, it is certainly worth a brief visit to sample the variety of bird life that makes use of this little oasis.



Festival Of The Cranes

November 18 - 21,

Bosque del Apache NWR, Socorro, New Mexico

The festival is a celebration of the return of tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese and other migratory waterfowl to their winter home on the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. This years event features popular birding authors Donald and Lillian Stokes, International Crane Foundation Director George Archibald, and veteran Southwest bird photographer Gary Froelich. Birding, archeological and historical tours, some to areas usually closed to the public, as well as almost 50 workshops, demonstrations and exhibits will be conducted by birding and wildlife experts and professional societies. There will also be photography opportunities, juried fine arts and arts and crafts shows.

The list of activities for this Thursday - Sunday event is quite impressive! If you have never been to Bosque del Apache, or even to New Mexico this is an

excellent opportunity to visit some beautiful country -- and do some great birding. Bosque is a great birding adventure and a well managed refuge as well as one of the neatest Visitors Centers I've seen at a National Wildlife Refuge! And in Socorro you're just a few hours away from SW New Mexico/SE Arizona and all those special birding opportunities to the south. Or plan a few extra days on the way back to Kansas to enjoy Santa Fe! New Mexico is fast becoming one of our favorite vacation/birding locations! If you want to know what to expect down there call either the *New Mexico RBA* (505-662-2101) or the *SE Arizona (Tucson) RBA* (602-798-1005) to hear what's being seen!

For more information on the Festival of the Cranes you can write to: *Festival of the Cranes, PO Box 743, Socorro, NM 87801* or call 505-835-1828.

Technology and Birding

by Chuck Otte

This interest of ours, birdwatching, is a fairly young one as activities go. Prior to Roger Tory Peterson's first field guide in the 1930's there were very few true "birdwatchers." In fact, a great deal of the "birding" was done with a dead bird in hand. With the advent of better optics and the first really useful field guide, this has really changed.

The past 50 years has shown major leaps in birding as in many other facets of life: better and better optics, improved field guides, more field guides, even "group specific" field guides with marvelous color plates. With all that has happened during the past 10 years with electronics, though, one really has to wonder what the next 50 years, or even the next 10 years have to offer!

MAXIMUM "CYBER-BIRDING"

Consider the following hypothetical situation. It's mid-September 1998 - I'm birdwatching south of Junction City when I notice a black bird dropping out of a brush pile into the grass, then back up into the brush pile. It doesn't move like a grackle or blackbird, and closer examination reveal it to be, yes, a Groove-billed Ani. The first one in Kansas in 6 years.

I spend a few more minutes observing the Ani and scribble a few notes on my digital notepad, which I then hook up to my laptop computer, which digests the information and stores it in my word processor. While this is happening I pull out my digital camera with zoom lens and shoot about 20 shots of the Ani. Wanting to make sure that others can find the location, I pull out my Global Positioning System unit and get my location to within 20 feet.

Next, I pick up my cellular phone and call the KOS Hotline to report the find and exact location so Scott can get it posted so others can find it. Then I pick up my computer, hook it into the cellular phone and fax the information to Scott along with a simple map. With that done, I can pull the diskette out of the camera, pop it in the computer and view the pictures I just took and select the one that looks the best. Finally, I dial up the Kansas Birders Computer Bulletin Board, via my laptop computer and cellular phone, and post this information in the recent findings category along with the picture that I just took. As word spreads of the sighting, others can dial up the bulletin board to find not only the details of the sighting, but to view a picture of the bird as well.

Back to 1993. As far fetched as this scenario may sound, all of the technology and gadgets that I described exist today! Some isn't inexpensive, and some still needs some improvement, but it exists (that is with the exception of the Kansas Birders Computer Bulletin Board, but I'm working on that!).

There's no doubt that technology has changed not only our lives, but our birdwatching as well. Technological improvements have allowed binoculars and spotting scopes to improve in power and clarity. The models available today are superior even to those we could purchase 10 to 15 years ago. The prices have maintained or, in many cases, decreased, allowing someone with even a modest budget to have quality optics.

Improved tape recorders, digital recorders and better microphones have allowed us to obtain better and better reproduction of bird songs. Improvements in printing and color plate reproduction have allowed us to have many reasonably priced field guides of a quality we could only dream of several years ago.

BIRDER BEEPERS

Common telephone answering machines are employed all over the country for rare bird alerts, allowing birders in an area the chance to find out very rapidly of rare sightings. In Finland and other parts of Europe, birders have employed advances in communication technology allowing birders (or twitchers as they are called in Europe) to literally stay up to the minute with rare sightings.

Around 200 people participate in a pager system that utilizes text pagers. Most of Finland can be reached by this system. When someone finds a good bird it is called-in and immediately put out on the pager. Messages can be up to 400 characters long and the pager holds approximately 40 of the most recent messages for retrieval. So if Rader and Seltman were birding at Quivira and found a Tricolored Heron they could call it in immediately and within 5 minutes all "subscribing" birders in the state would know what bird was seen when and where.

Birders subscribing to this system pay an annual fee of around \$37 plus the price of the pager, which runs approximately \$340. Britain and Holland have similar systems and Sweden has one in the works.

COMPUTERS

When all said and done it seems that it's the computer that produces the most changes. Many of the advances in other areas such as optics and publishing are the result of computing advances. For those of us who are compulsive organizers, listers, compilers, etc., computers have been a god-send. It is interesting how so many have found so many different ways to utilize these electronic tools.

Dan LaShelle, who like myself goes back to when computing was mainframes and punchcards, uses the computer to process his extensive bird observation data. Dan has developed his own set of codes for species, location, etc. and has entered his records into a machine readable database for further processing. Dan hopes that over time he will be able to analyze his data to detect and prove trends in populations and species.

Along with the individual observations Dan has collected a lot of species accounts detailing behavior, nesting, plumages, etc. He uses a word processor to organize all of this additional information.

Dave Rintoul uses a more conventional database program to keep track of his sightings. Many database programs are available, ranging from the very rudimentary to the highly sophisticated. Virtually any of these will allow you to keep track of what was seen when and where and how many of them were there. Dave is also an active "Bird-Chatter" which I will explain later.

SOFTWARE WITH THE BIRDER IN MIND

It didn't take long for programmers to realize that there was a market out there for database programs specifically designed for birders. Pick up any of the popular birding magazines and you will find numerous advertisements for these products, including programs such as Plover, BirdBase 3, BirdBrain, AviSys, DataHawk, BirdCount+, and Aves. There's even a birding program for kids called Snipe Hunt, and computer programs to help you learn bird songs or analyze recorded bird songs and produce Sonagrams.

Each of these programs have pluses and minuses. I use Aves because it was one of the first I came across, it was easy to use, and it was fairly inexpensive. I supplement my records with a simple database program to help keep track of my life list, my year list and my state list. Aves does allow me, as do most of the programs, to generate all sorts of different lists. And while listing fever has gotten out of hand for some birders, even us every day type birdwatchers like to know what we've seen and

when. There are new and improved programs continually coming out. If you are considering purchasing one, check back issues of most any birding magazine for reviews of any or all of these programs.

YOU'VE GOT CONNECTIONS

One of the more rapidly growing areas of computer use is in the area of communications. While it is sometimes hard to consider the computer as a communication tool, it is the coming thing.

I'm sure most of you have heard of computer bulletin boards. These are simply a single computer set up so that anyone can call in and exchange messages, information or computer files/programs. These have often been fairly simple, localized and organized with a specific interest. There are several birding bulletin boards out there which I have phoned in to, but unless you are on one of the big commercial systems like CompuServe or America-On-Line, etc. these bulletin boards are fairly localized.

Enter Internet. The Internet system was originated several years ago by the National Science Foundation as a high-speed computer communications system spanning across the United States and then around the world. Member colleges, universities and commercial institutions could then gain access to Internet which would then give these members access to the "super-computers" to execute large and complex problem solving programs.

Almost as an offshoot of this came the capability for people at different institutions to send electronic messages back and forth to each other. These messages are what we now refer to as E-mail. Member institutions have the computers in different groups (departments, buildings, etc.) networked together. These local area networks (LAN's) are then connected to Internet. What you wind up with is networks-connected to networks-connected to networks and so on and so on.

As the E-mail capability continued to spread, individuals at different institutions started to send messages back and forth about bird watching interests. One enterprising fellow from Arizona by the name of Chuck Williamson got together with another birdwatcher from the Washington, D.C. area and decided that there should be a way to utilize this fantastic network and connect hundreds of birdwatchers at the same time. Thus was born the National Birding Hotline Cooperative (NBHC), or BirdChat.

The NBHC works like a round table discussion of sorts. Anyone who has access to Internet (or Bitnet - another wide area network similar to Internet and connected to Internet) can send a "subscription message" to a certain computer at a certain location. Your electronic address is then added to the list. Then whenever someone sends a message to BirdChat the serving computer turns right around and very quickly passes the message on to everyone that is on the list. One needs to be careful though with what one sends to BirdChat as everyone will see it. Consider it a giant party line telephone system. You can, however, also respond privately to individuals as well on particular subjects.

The NBHC is made up of several separate parts. First of all is BirdChat itself, which is where discussions are passed, bantered and a little friendly kidding from time to time, that deal with bird related topics. We may have discussions of squirrel proof feeders, biodiversity, notes on migration, requests for information on equipment or birding locales and even reports of birding trips. When the first ever North American sighting of a Whiskered Tern occurred this summer on the East Coast, there were numerous reports posted regarding "Whisker's" movements and latest locations.

When Dave Rintoul was gathering information to work against the Sandhill Crane season as well as on the Great Blue Herons vs. speed boats discussion at Tuttle Creek Dam back in May, he was able to put out a request for information across BirdChat and receive input from all over the US as well as overseas.

The other major component of the NBHC is the transcription of various rare bird alert hotlines from across the country. Individuals transcribe the hotlines from their area and post these in BirdEast, BirdCntr (BirdCenter), or BirdWest. One can subscribe to these just like to BirdChat. I regularly transcribe the KOS Rare Bird Alert and post this to BirdCntr. When I was getting ready to go to New

Mexico and Arizona this year for vacation I was made copies of those respective rare bird alerts daily until I left so I would know if there were any rarities to look for.

Of course nothing stays static in technology. Chuck Williamson has recently created a computer program that will extract and archive the information from the various hotline transcriptions. All I have to do is use a standardized format that Chuck established and then each RBA update that I post is entered into a database. The potential long-run impact of a system like this is incredible. Someone interested in the apparent expansion of the Inca Dove range could tap into a database like this and very quickly document where, when and how many Inca Doves are showing up outside of their traditional range.

HEADED FOR THE FUTURE

So where is all of this headed? Just recently some of the larger private bulletin board systems like CompuServe and America-On-Line have arranged access to Internet, allowing more individuals access to this wealth of information. There are also plans in the works to take the Internet itself up to faster, more powerful and more widespread areas. As these changes occur, we very quickly start to approach true global interconnectivity. And as more and more people obtain computers at home and at work, and thus gain access to some of these wide area networks, the potential is limited only by ones' imagination.

The beauty of all this technology is that you don't have to be a techno-wizard to enjoy birdwatching. You will probably still benefit from many of the advances whether you are an active user or not. We plan to keep *Horned Lark* readers up to date on new advances of interest. But we also plan to keep things interesting for those of you who don't really care about computers, LAN's and modems! Isn't birding wonderful!

Be watching for more installments of

*Technology and Birding
by Chuck Otte*

KOS Fall Meeting at Hays, October 2-3. Are you registered? There may still be time. Call Chuck for details if you didn't receive your registration forms in the mail last week.

SUMMER ROUNDUP/June 1993 - August 1993/ by Chuck Otte

To say that birding was slow during the summer of 1993 would probably be an understatement! It will be hard to say whether it was the monsoonal rains that kept birds out of sight and birders indoors, or whether it was because most of the active Kansas birders were trying to work Breeding Bird Atlas Blocks in between downpours rather than birding the standard hotspots, but reports to the hotline were s-l-o-w. It is a pretty general opinion, though, that the weather and subsequent flooding really messed up a lot of activities.

Reservoirs throughout Kansas, especially in the northern half of Kansas saw record or near record levels. As one Corps of Engineer official said in late July, "it's not that one or two of the lakes in the Republican/Kansas River drainage area is full, it's that the whole system is utterly saturated!" Many Kansas birders will find fall birding at their favorite reservoir to be an all new experience. Flood levels 20, 30 and even 40+ feet high washed away vegetation, landmarks, and entire stands of trees at many lakes, forcing birds and birders to find new locations. Several reservoirs will be plagued(?) with high water for months to come. It may take Wilson another 6 months to return to normal levels. Even the ever suffering Cedar Bluffs saw inflows good enough to raise the level over 25 feet by late August, and possibly more increases with fall rains. So if this issues highlights seem slim, it's because a lot of the summer birding season was basically a "rain-out."

Common Loons are summering in Kansas in increasing numbers every year, although mid-summer flooding disrupted some of the increases of past years. Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira NWR received their fair share of heavy rains and high water. Cheyenne Bottoms was good habitat but darn tough birding due to high waters and incredible vegetation growth. Outstanding numbers of wading birds could be found around the perimeters though, roads allowing. Quivira suffered through several floods in July and experienced severe road damage, but birding was still good. Herons and egrets were in abundance with evidence of a good breeding season for many species. Cattle Egrets took over the southeast corner of the wildlife loop with Scott Seltman counting (actually counting!) over 1,250 in mid-August with somewhere in the vicinity of 500 nests! There was good evidence at Cheyenne Bottoms that Franklin's Gulls nested in 1993. Adult birds carrying nesting material in mid-June followed by juveniles begging food from adults in early August is pretty convincing.

Many of the normal southbound migrants started showing up in mid-July and once flood waters started to recede in August there was plenty of good habitat for southbound shorebirds. Buff-breasted Sandpipers made a good showing around Kansas this year with sightings from Marais des Cygnes, Milford, and Sedgwick county. Common Moorhens were more apparent this year than in past years, but sightings had to be worked for. In the northern Flint Hills Painted Buntings may be returning to better numbers with sightings and possible breeding locations increasing.

Other species that are oft times rarer than birders would like were showing up in uncommon numbers. Several Tree Swallow and Cedar Waxwing nests can probably be attributed to increased activity due to the KBBAT project (do you have your blocks lined up for 1994?). On the Konza Prairie (and elsewhere) Henslow's Sparrows were abundant in June and Sedge Wrens showed up in good numbers in August.

As August drew to a close bird activity was starting to pick up but rarities were just that-rare. However, sightings of Mississippi Kites and a Connecticut Warbler in Topeka at the very end of August brings hope that the fall will certainly pick up and lead into a great winter!

Remember to call the *Hotline* (913-372-5499) with your sightings, and be sure to fill out a Bird Records Committee Report Form for appropriate sightings. And of course, all of the following entries are subject to consideration by the Kansas Bird Records Committee.

BIRDING HIGHLIGHTS / June 1993 through August 1993

Species	Location and number	Observers	Date	County
Common Loon	1 at Webster Res, calling	SS	6-03-93	Rooks
Brown Pelican	1 juv at Wilson Res	KP	6-12-93	Russell
	Last seen	TB,LH	6-24-93	
Olivaceous Cormorant	1 at QNWR	MR	7-12-93	Stafford
Tri-colored Heron	1 at QNWR	PJ,JN	7-17-93	Stafford
Little-blue Heron	300 at QNWR	SS	8-14-93	Stafford

10 (Birding Highlights, contd)

Cattle Egret	2000 at QNWR	MR	7-12-93	Stafford
The Cattle Egret heronry at the SE corner of the wildlife drive at Quivira's Big Salt Marsh was quite active in 1993. Even in late August there were well over 1,000 birds still present and actively feeding young.				
White Ibis	1 imm at MDC	??	8-08-93	Linn
Mottled Duck	1 at QNWR, Big Salt Marsh	SS	8-14-93	Stafford
Mississippi Kite	1, n of St Francis	SR	6-09-93	Cheyenne
Bald Eagle	Clinton Res nest fledged 3 young		6-20-93	Douglas
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1 at Wilson Res	MR	6-11-93	Russell
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1 south of Quinter	SS	6-12-93	Gove
Broad-winged Hawk	1 early at MDC along Oxbow Rd	BF	8-29-93	Linn
Ferruginous Hawk	Nesting near Elkhart	MR		Morton
	storm destroyed nest, 2 young found dead	TC,SS	7-14-93	
Golden Eagle	2 adults & 2 nestlings	SR	6-08-93	Cheyenne
Peregrine Falcon	1 imm along south edge of CB	SS	8-11-93	Barton
Common Moorhens	1 at Lassiter Marsh	DLS	7-17-93	Jefferson
Moorhens had been present in this area since May				
Common Moorhens	several off Wildlife Drive	SS	8-07-93	Stafford
Seen fairly regularly during August				
Black Rail	QNWR nw of Big Salt Marsh	PJ	6-26-93	Stafford
Piping Plover	1 at Milford Lake	CO,JO	7-17-93	Geary
Mountain Plover	In Point Rock Pasture	LRS	6-08-93	Morton
	pair with 2 downy chicks			
Mountain Plover	30 south of 51 Hiway near Colo	SS	8-29-93	Morton
Lesser Yellowlegs	40 at QNWR	PJ	6-26-93	Stafford
Pectoral Sandpiper	65 at QNWR Big Salt Marsh	JN,DK	8-22-93	Stafford
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	20 near Goddard 13 near Colwich	DV	7-31-93	Sedgwick
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1 near Mt Hope	PJ	8-02-93	Sedgwick
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	1 below Milford Res	CO,JO	8-09-93	Geary
Long-billed Curlew	20 in flight near Monument Rocks	SR	7-02-93	Gove
Short-billed Dowitcher	50+ at QNWR	??	8-02-93	Stafford
Laughing Gull	1 at QNWR	PJ	6-26-93	Stafford
Laughing Gull	1 juv at QNWR	MR	7-12-93	Stafford
Franklin's Gull	Carrying nesting material at CB	TSh,SSh	6-12-93	Barton
Juveniles were seen in the CB area by Seltman in early August begging food from adults.				
This would probably confirm that nesting did take place.				
Common Tern	1 at Quivira	JN,DK	8-08-93	Stafford
Common Tern	1 at MDC	MI,GK	8-14-93	Linn
Inca Dove	3 being seen sporadically	LBR	7-17-93	Finney
Inca Dove	1 nw of Nickerson	JN,DK	8-08-93	Reno
Rufous Hummingbird	A male and female 2 days apart	LBR	7-17-93	Finney
Least Flycatcher	1 in Wilson State Park	MR	7-13-93	Russell
Dusky Flycatcher	1 n of Elkhart Cemetery	SS	8-28-93	Morton
Dusky Flycatcher	1 near the Boy Scout area	SS	8-28-93	Morton
Ash-throated Flycatcher	2 pair using nest boxes along the Cimarron River.	MS	6-07-93	Morton
	With chicks		6-22-93	
Tree Swallow	nesting in NE Harvey County	PJ	6-01-93	Harvey
Tree Swallow	nesting near Maize	BG	6-21-93	Sedgwick
Chihuahuan Raven	several near Rolla	TC,SS	7-14-93	Morton
Cedar Waxwing	nesting near Melvern Res	LM	6-26-93	Osage
Cedar Waxwing	nesting in NE Harvey County	??	6-26-93	Harvey
Black-billed Magpie	nesting in NE Harvey County	PJ	6-01-93	Harvey
Connecticut Warbler	1 at Warren Park, Topeka	GK	8-31-93	Shawnee
Yellow-breasted Chat	nesting along Cimarron River	MS	6-22-93	Morton

Painted Bunting	S of Junction City on Red Road	LM	6-26-93	Geary
These birds were first found on Memorial Day weekend by Dan LaShelle and were seen regularly through July. This is the second reliable Painted Bunting location in Geary County showing up in the past several years. Could this indicate an increase in the Kansas breeding population?				
Henslow's Sparrow	7 singing n of Melvern Res	LM	6-26-93	Osage
Harris Sparrow	1 singing in Chisholm Creek Park	JN	6-17-93	Sedgwick

ADDENDUM TO SPRING ROUNDUP

Lazuli Bunting	1 at Geary State Fishing Lake	CN	5-16-93	Geary
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CB = Cheyenne Bottoms
MDC = Marais des Cygnes
m.ob. = many observers
QNWR = Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
Res = Reservoir
WMA = Wildlife Management Area

LIST OF OBSERVERS: Tracy Beech (TB), Ted Cable (TC), Bob Fisher (BF), Pete Janzen (PJ), Bob Gress (BG), Leroy Holt (LH), Dan Kilby (DK), Maxie Irwin (MI), Glen Koontz (GK), Dan LaShelle, Lloyd Moore (LM), Cliff Nickle (CN), John Northrup (JN), Chuck Otte (CO), Jaye Otte (JO), Kevin Patterson (KP), Mike Rader (MR), Leonard & Betty Rich (LBR), Stan Roth (SR), Marvin Schwilling (MS), Scott Seltman (SS), Tom Shane (TSh), Sara Shane (SSh), Lawrence & Ruth Smith (LRS), Don Vannoy (DV)

Attention All Potential Contributors!

We encourage any and all KOS members to contribute articles, topics, bits and pieces for consideration and use. (The more you contribute, the less I have to write!!) Special Species and Birding Hotspot are just a couple of suggestions and are really just the tip of the iceberg, so let your imagination run wild! Send your material to: *Chuck Otte, KOS Editor, 613 Tamerisk, Junction City, KS 66441. Deadlines for the next 4 issues are: November 15, February 15, May 15 and August 15.*

Fall Field Trips?!?!

Because of the crazy weather this summer, there are a lot of schedules that are all messed up. Included in this are the Fall KOS Field Trips. I know a lot of our regular field trip leaders just haven't had the opportunity to line anything up yet. If you decide that you want to lead a field trip, call and leave it on the Hotline so Scott can announce it. If you can get it planned by Fall Meeting time we can announce it in Hays as well. *Mike Rader (913-658-2595)* has indicated that he will be making some trips to southwest Kansas this fall. Give him a call if you are interested in doing some birding in that area. Chuck Otte will be leading a tour of the "newly renovated" Milford Lake area on Saturday, October 30. Meet at the Junction City Shoney's Restaurant around 7:30 a.m., *call Chuck for more details (913-238-8800).*

Good birding this fall! Go out and enjoy yourself, but don't forget to call the

KOS Rare Bird Hotline
913/372-5499

*(Donations to support the hotline will always be gladly accepted by Treasurer Rose Fritz--
1816 Cypress Lane, Newton, KS 67114)*