



The Horned Lark

Kansas Ornithological Society

March 2012

Vol. 39, No. 1

President's message

Meteorologically speaking, at least in my part of Kansas, it hasn't been a snowy winter. But from an ornithological point of view, it has been a virtual blizzard. The first Snowy Owl was reported on November 15th. The next day I sadly found the remains of this owl in the ditch. In my posting to the Kansas Bird listserv I closed my message with, "perhaps this bird is a harbinger of other Snowy Owls yet to come in the weeks ahead." I don't think any of us were prepared for what followed.

As of early February, reports of Snowy Owls were still coming in and the count was past 100 individuals. An irruption of this scale may not be a once-in-a-lifetime event, but it may be close. The last time Kansas saw an irruption of this magnitude was the winter of 1974–1975, which produced more than 80 Snowy Owls.

Interestingly, the first Snowy Owl report that winter occurred on November 15th also. The last report was April 15th, so we'll see how this year ends.

It is hard to compare this irruption to that one. Think of our world that winter. Now think about all the communication resources available this winter. Today, most people have a cell phone, access to the internet and a digital camera. Reports of Snowy Owls can be made almost instantly and they can be documented with photos.

Reports from the 1974–1975 invasion indicated that two owls were found injured and only one was found dead. This is a major departure from many studies that report more than 75 percent of the Snowy Owls that come far south in an irruption year don't survive. Far more dead and

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From the field



Not to be outdone by their snowy cousins, Short-eared Owls put on nightly shows this winter in Saline County. © Kat Farres.

President's message, *cont.*

dying owls have been recovered and reported this year.

The press has also picked up on this incredible winter wonder and helped turn people who would never have considered themselves a birdwatcher into Snowy Owl reporters. A small cadre of Kansas birders have been busy collecting and gathering details on all these reports. It will take months, if not years, to sort through all these data to glean what we can from this event. Regardless of whether it's a fascination with big white owls from the north or the Harry Potter effect, this winter has given a lot of KOS members a chance to talk to non-birders, or at least non-KOS members, about owls. I hope we can follow up and cultivate this interest into an even greater

awareness of Kansas birds. While you are talking to those owl admirers, take a few minutes to promote KOS as well!

This winter's "blizzard" will soon be just a well-documented memory as migration starts to pick up steam. Bald Eagles and Great Horned Owls are already attending to their nesting duties and it won't be long until the calls of Eastern Phoebes and other returning birds fill our days.

Enjoy the last vestiges of winter. I hope to see many of you at the spring meeting.

Chuck Otte

President

Kansas Ornithological Society Balance Sheet Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2011

Assets	
Investment Fund	\$132,712.35
Checking	8,319.77
Sub Total	<u>141,032.12</u>
Dingus Land	56,000.00
Total	\$197,032.12
Liabilities and Fund Balances	
General Fund	\$7,547.16
Endowments	69,294.90
Life Membership Account	27,645.86
Book Royalty Fund	21,715.45
Dingus Nature Area Fund	8,042.00
Dingus Nature Area Land	56,000.00
Student Research Fund	6,786.75
Total	\$197,032.12

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<http://www.ksbirds.org/>

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KOS spring meeting: May 4–6, 2012

Allen, Anderson and Franklin counties

Join us in the Osage Cuestas May 4–6 for a weekend filled with birding. This physiographical region is known



for east facing slopes that give way to gently rolling hills and level fields. Registration for the event is \$10 per person.

Field trips

Field trips may include visits to the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, Cedar Creek Valley Reservoir, Richmond City Lake, Melvern Lake, Pomona Lake, John Redmond Reservoir, Welda Prairie and Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge.

Lodging

All lodging is in Garnett.

Economy Inn. (785) 448-6816, 604 N. Maple Street. Rooms rent for \$45–55 per night. The attached restaurant opens at 5 a.m. www.economyinnngarnettks.com

Garnett Inn Suites and RV Park. (785) 448-6800, or (877) 448-4200, 109 Prairie Plaza Parkway. Rooms rent for \$61–71 per and include a continental breakfast. RVs rent for \$18 per night with full hookup. www.garnettinnandrivpark.com

Meals and general itinerary

Friday, May 4, 7 p.m. Evening gathering at Garnett Inn, 109 Prairie Plaza Parkway. Mingle with friends and make new ones while enjoying light snacks.

Saturday, May 5, 6:30 p.m. Knights of Columbus Hall, 1210 NE Golf Course Road, located behind the country club. The cost is \$15 per person.

Sunday, May 6, noon. Lake Garnett and North Lake Park, 500 N. Lake Road. Compilation with boxed lunches. The cost is \$7 per person.

Participants will need to bring their own lunch for field trips on Saturday. Each person is also responsible for his or her own snacks and water.

Check the KOS website for more details: www.ksbirds.org.

Snowy Owl data provides glimpse of irruption

With the dizzying number of Snowy Owl reports across the state, Chuck Otte and Mark Robbins began data collection on the birds early in the winter season. Based on preliminary and incomplete data, it is estimated that more than 90 percent will be first-year birds.

“A few of those may be second-year males or third-year females, but aging Snowy Owls beyond first-year birds is tricky due to an extended molt cycle,” said Otte. “Early on it was easily 80 percent first-year females. Of late, we’ve been seeing more males show up. If food sources to the north are being depleted, more birds are continuing to move into the state.”

According to the data Otte and Robbins have

collected, females appear to set up feeding territories in December and as food supplies tighten, push males out. In one recent tally of 96 birds, 29 were females, nine were males and the rest were unknown. Of those same 96, Otte said, 33 have been identified as hatch-year birds, four as after-second-year and the rest unknown.

“Based on those numbers and interpolating across the entire Kansas population, we could estimate that roughly, up to now, 75 percent are females and 90 percent are first-year birds,” Otte said. “We’ll see how those numbers shift once we start sifting through all the data.”

In reviewing Snowy Owl records from 1885

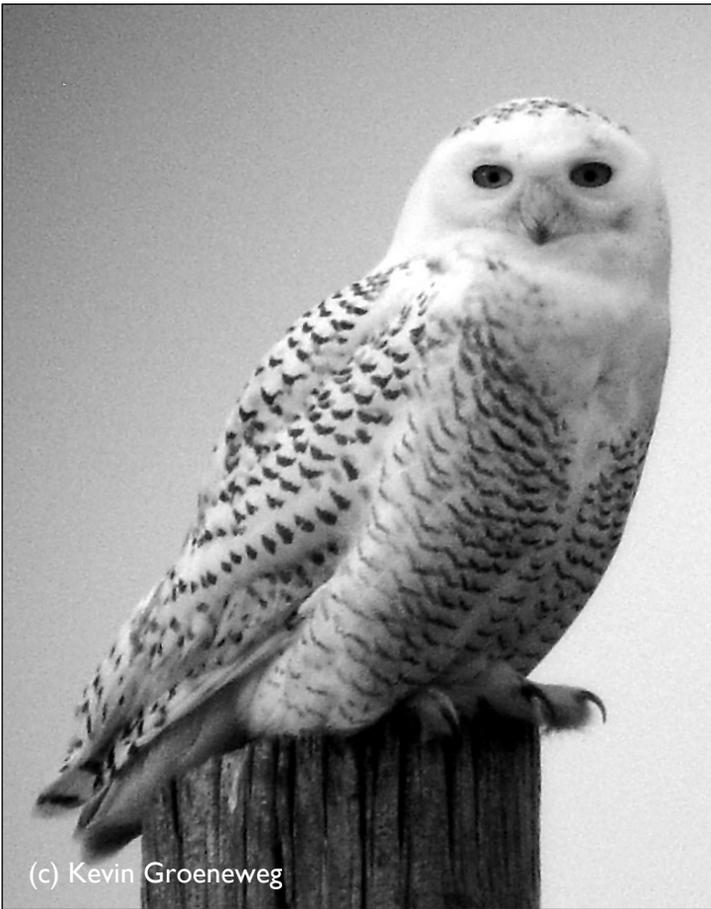
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S N O W Y O W L S

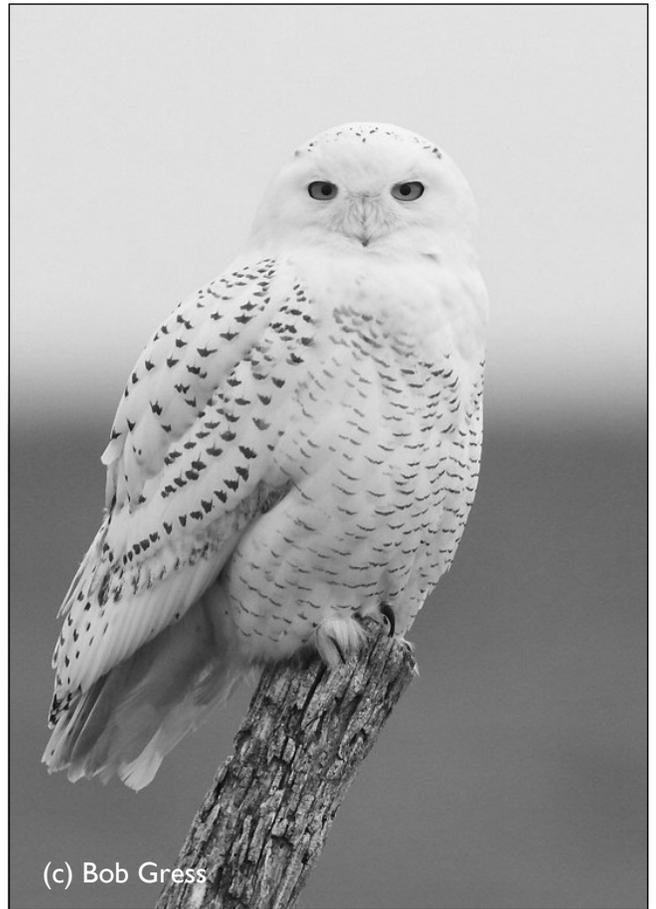


More than 100 Snowy Owl reports were documented in Kansas during the 2011–2012 winter season. Birders were encouraged to photograph owls so that age and sex determinations could be made. Three owls are featured in this spread. Above, one of three owls found at Cheney Reservoir; right, a view of the face, back and tail of the Butler/Harvey County bird; next page, top left, a digiscope of an owl found on the Marion CBC; top right, a front view of the Butler/Harvey County owl. For an updated map of the irruption, go to ksbirds.org/KS_SNOW_11_12.htm.

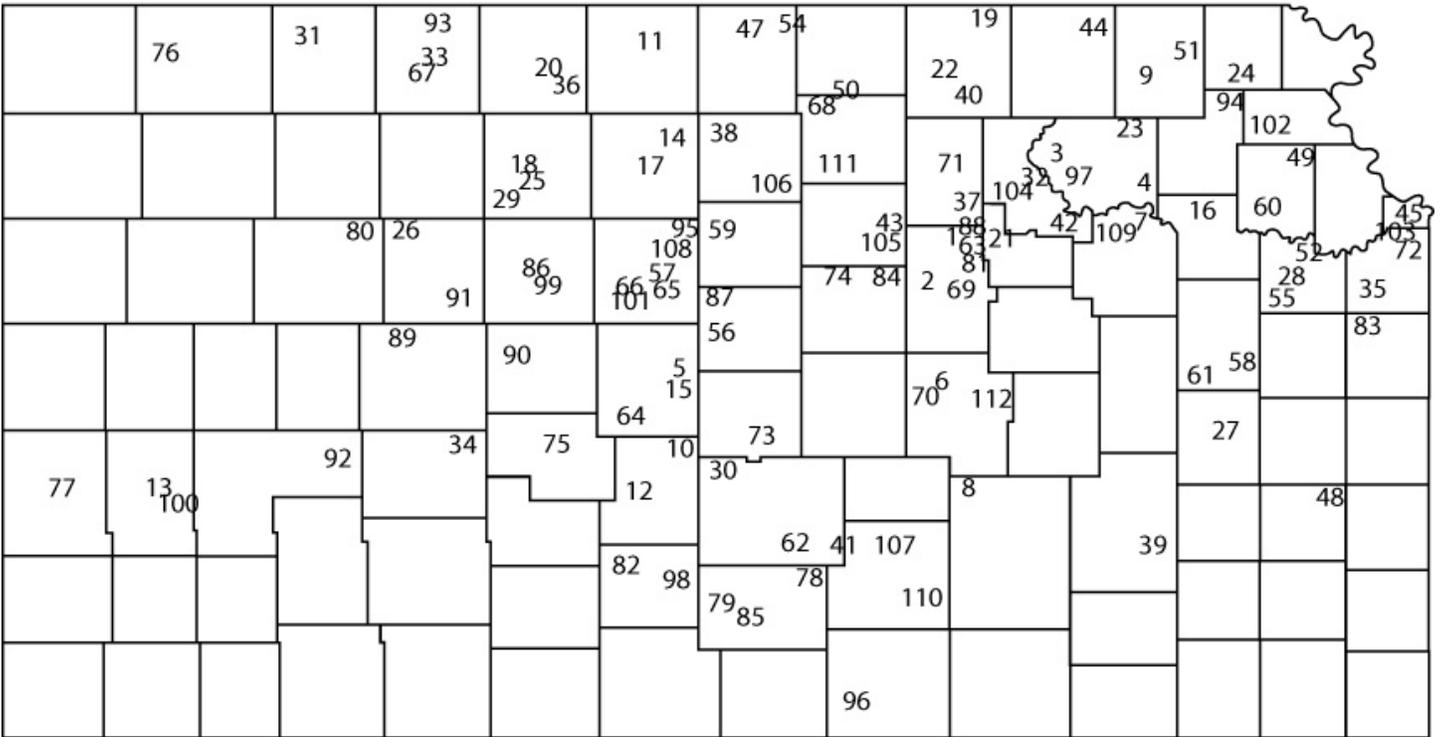




(c) Kevin Groeneweg



(c) Bob Gress



The economic impact of the 2011 spring KOS meeting

By Ted T. Cable and John Leatherman

Most birders understand that birding, like other outdoor activities, contributes to local and state economies. This study attempted to quantify those impacts at the 2011 Kansas Ornithological Society spring meeting in Elkhart. Participants may recall that expense diaries were distributed to measure the economic impact of this meeting on the local economy in Morton County. Because Hugoton is a popular jumping off point for the Grasslands and many of us buy gas or food there we also included Stevens County in the analysis. John Leatherman, Ph.D., Office of Local Government, Department of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University, analyzed those data collected from the KOS attendees using the IMPLAN modeling system, a commercially-available software and data set that is widely used to understand the structure of the economy and to assess impacts associated with economic events and policies. We found the following about the KOS contribution to the economy of Morton and Stevens counties that weekend.

Thirty-seven completed travel diaries were collected. They reported the following expenditures:

- Lodging - \$4,180
- Food Purchase - \$1,908
- Fuel Purchase - \$1,501

In addition, KOS group expenditures for food and drink totaled \$1,081.

If we project total visitor expenditures to the 70 conference registrants, we assume the following expenditure pattern:

- Lodging - \$7,908
- Food Purchase - \$4,873
- Fuel Purchase - \$2,840

KOS group expenditures for food service totaled (same as above) \$1,081.

The total direct local expenditures equaled \$15,763.

We then distributed the food purchases between eating and drinking establishments (\$3,518) and retail grocery food and beverage sales (\$1,356). Applying these total direct expenditures to the appropriate trade categories, and accounting for non-local imported items we estimated the combined direct and indirect economic impacts to the local economy, i.e. that which "sticks" in Morton and Stevens counties. The KOS conference generated \$15,033 in total local economic activity, \$3,780 in local wages, and \$7,712 in total local income.

The sales associated with this single conference were sufficient to support two-tenths (0.2) of a local job. The total economic impact is slightly less than the total direct spending because of non-local imports. For example, Morton County does not have a petroleum refinery to produce the gas we used nor does it produce all of the food and beverages locally that we consumed. If it

did, we would have had a bigger impact, but then again if it had oil refineries and food processing plants we might not have held our spring meeting there! The KOS meeting and the associated spending also contributed \$1,295 in total state and local tax revenue, and \$959 in total federal tax revenue. We are sure our public servants in Topeka and Washington, D.C. appreciate our support.

This small study documented that birding can have positive impacts in small rural communities in Kansas. This was the first phase of a larger project estimating the economic impacts of all outdoor recreation associated with the Cimarron National Grassland. Over the next year, if you travel to Morton County, we invite you to fill out an expenditure diary. They are available at both motels and both Bed and Breakfasts in Elkhart, as well as at hunting lodges and other establishments throughout Morton County. They may be returned where you got them or mailed to Ted Cable at the address on the diary. Thanks to all who participated in making these analyses possible by keeping track of expenditures.

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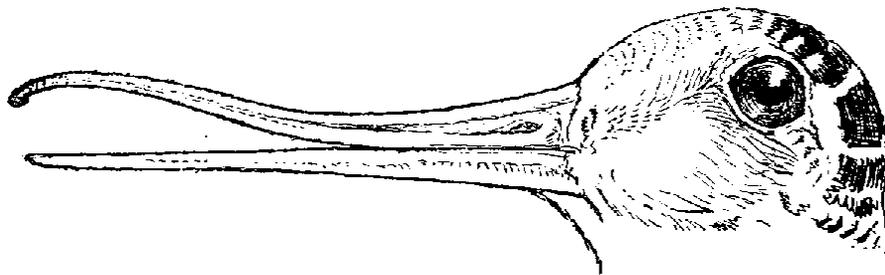
Avian Conservationist of the Year nominations sought

The Kansas Ornithological Society's Avian Conservationist of the Year Award is given to an individual for making significant contributions to bird conservation and/or education. Nominations should be made for outstanding work in bird conservation through the management or preservation of habitats, education or research. A nominee may be any professional, volunteer, educator or other person who has accomplished significant

contributions in any of the areas listed. The nominee does not have to be a member of KOS, but the nominator must be a current member of KOS. The accomplishment should reflect a long-time commitment to bird conservation and/or education within the state of Kansas. This award will be presented during the fall annual meeting. Nominations will be accepted until July 1.

To make a nomination, send a typed description of no more

than two pages and give a detailed account of specific work the nominee has accomplished. Past and current achievements, organization membership or any other information the nominator feels pertinent will be considered. Nominators must include their name, address, phone number and e-mail address. Send the nominations to Robert L. Penner, 593 NE 130 Avenue, Ellinwood, KS 67526, or to rpenner@tnc.org.



Boyd Recognition Award nominations requested

Founding member Ivan L. Boyd was the first president of the Kansas Ornithological Society and the first editor of the Bulletin. A professor at Baker University, he was active in KOS from 1949 until his death in 1982.

In honor of Dr. Boyd, the Kansas Ornithological Society recognizes one of its members for outstanding contributions and service to the Society. The Board may choose to recognize more than one recipient per year, or may choose not to name a recipient in a given year.

Winners receive a plaque.

KOS members must nominate individuals for the Dr. Ivan L. Boyd Recognition Award. Nominations should be submitted to the president and include a list of the nominee's contributions to KOS. This could entail number of years of offices held, committee involvement, papers presented at KOS, papers published in the Bulletin or Horned Lark, number of CBCs compiled and years of membership.

This is not an exclusive list and other contributions to the

Society may be provided. Current KOS Board members are not eligible to receive this award.

The nomination deadline is August 1. Provide a typed description of no more than two pages and give specific examples of contributions to KOS the nominee has made. Include your name, address, phone number and e-mail address. Send nominations to Chuck Otte, 613 Tamerisk, Junction City, KS 66441 or e-mail to otte2@cox.net

Registration Form

KOS spring meeting, May 4–6, 2012
Allen, Anderson and Franklin counties

I (we) plan to attend the 2012 KOS spring meeting.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Registration Number ___ @ \$10.00 each \$ _____

Saturday dinner Number ___ @ \$15.00 each \$ _____

Sunday lunch Number ___ @ \$7.00 each \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

In submitting this registration I (we) understand that KOS is not responsible or liable for any accidents or injury that might be associated with the 2012 spring meeting.



Please send check or money order, payable to KOS, by April 15 to:

Terry Mannell
218 Northridge Dr.
Hays, KS 67601

Signatures

Date

Snowy irruption, *cont.*

until this winter, there were about a dozen Snowy Owls in the University of Kansas collection. Otte has transported a few of this winter's specimens to Lawrence and believes that the collection has probably doubled in size because of this winter's irruption. The newly cataloged specimens range from wing and tissue remains of vehicle impacts to whole bodies that are in good shape, but incredibly light.

"An adult male in good condition should weigh 1,800 grams; a female, 2,000 grams," said Otte. "The two birds I took over were both females and they weighed 855 and 1,100 grams. It just shows how emaciated some of these poor owls are."

Odds and ends

Roundup The June issue will include the fall and winter season roundups.

Fall meeting KOS members will convene September 28–30 for paper sessions, the silent auction and field trips at Southwestern College in Winfield. Look for more information in the September issue.

Errata In the December 2011 issue, EJ Raynor is credited with finding a Eurasian Wigeon on December 13, 2010 at Cheyenne Bottoms. This record is incorrect because of a coding error. No Eurasian Wigeon was observed or reported at Cheyenne Bottoms that day.