The Horned Lark

Kansas Ornithological Society

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From the President's Pen

By Nic Allen

There are many distinctive styles of birding. Some people like to travel to different places frequently, to try to explore new habitats and pick up a variety of species. Others enjoy frequenting the same area, seeing what diversity seasonal changes can bring. While I enjoy a few big weekend trips around the state or occasional international travel, I also find great value in sticking close to home and building local species lists as well. It is exciting to get to not only track a variety of species, but also to study them enough to learn their distinctive behaviors and feeding habits.

One place I have been enjoying is Wyandotte County Lake. The colder temperatures have recently brought in tens of thousands of snow geese and other waterfowl including over 200 swans, which will make the lake their home for the next few weeks. It is amazing to see that many birds swirling in the air together when the eagles stir them up, trying to get them to collide so that the eagles can catch an easy meal. The sounds of that many geese honking at once is surreal. Even our daughter looks forward to this annual event, as it is one of nature's great spectacles. What an amazing opportunity to expose people who may not be avid nature enthusiasts to the natural world around them. This annual event is always special and something to take advantage of as quickly as possible. As we know, any day based on weather patterns, the birds can pick up and leave just as quickly as they arrived. Thankfully we know that even when some birds move on, another group will move in and offer more learning experiences.

- Nic Allen

It's a New Year and dues are due!

Please use the form on page 20 to renew your membership.

Or if you'd prefer, renew online at:

http://ksbirds.org/kos/kos_member.html

From the Keyboard

By the Editor

First of all, yes, this issue has arrived well past December. There's a very good reason for that. We're trying to save money! Two issues a year contain meeting registration information. Those need to be delivered in a timely manner. In fact, as soon as I finish writing this column, I'll be starting on the March 2018 issue. (This column is the very last thing that I write in each issue.)

We like to include the *Horned Lark* and *The Bulletin* in each mailing. The September issue of the *Horned Lark* contained the fall meeting registration information (and thank you to everyone who attended and especially those who presented papers!) The September *Horned Lark* had to be sent out even though we had no September *Bulletin*, which was because the Editor (Eugene Young) hadn't received any manuscripts to be published.

The September and December issues of *The Bulletin* are being finished as I write this. One of the real benefits of KOS is that it helps bring to light a wealth of information on birds of Kansas. Sure, we have that socialization aspect of any organization, which has in many ways been usurped by social media. If you wanted to get together with other birders previously, KOS was THE place to make that happen. But what I see of equal importance to that is the relevant information that KOS supplies.

I was recently reading the Birds of North America online account of Snowy Owls. If you haven't noticed, we've got a few Snowies back in Kansas this winter. I had last read this account during the last irruption (winter 2011-12) and was pleased to see that the Snowy Owl account had been recently updated. I was equally pleased to see referenced an article about Snowy Owls that had been published in the KOS *Bulletin*. I took a few minutes to count up the number of pages that has been printed in the *Bulletin.* Since Volume 1, Number 1, excluding the index issues, there have been over 2,300 pages of information about Kansas birds published in the *Bulletin.*

The first issue of the *Bulletin* was published in April, 1950, less than a year after KOS was formed. The *Horned Lark*, originally simply called the KOS Newsletter, was first published in October 1963. From the very first issue the newsletter contained not just information about KOS events, but also bird sighting information. Many of the reports were from an event, or an individual's notable records for the season, or Marvin Schwilling reporting on new county records that he had received in the preceding months. By 1989, then newsletter editor Scott Seltman had established the *Horned Lark* for the name of the newsletter and had also formalized what we now call The Birding Roundup. For nearly 30 years, bird sightings from all across Kansas have been summarized and printed here. Others can say that organization like KOS are no longer needed. But I counter that by saying we have things to offer birders that can not be found elsewhere! Have a good rest of the winter!

- Chuck

2017 KOS Avian Conservationist Award

Dr. Brett Sandercock

Nominated by Rob Penner and presented by Eugene Young

Dr. Brett Sandercock, at the time of this nomination, was a Professor of Wildlife Biology, at Kansas State University. Brett received his Ph.D. from Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia in 1997. He had a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of California- Berkeley, from 1997 to 1999, and one at the University of British Columbia in 2000. He taught and conducted research at Kansas State from 2002-2017; and recently became a Research Scientist at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research in Trondheim, Norway.

His research interests are in population biology, conservation biology and wildlife management, evolutionary ecology, and behavioral ecology. Recent field projects, particularly in Kansas, have examined the effects of wind power development on prairie-chickens, the effects of grazing and prescribed burning on grassland birds, and shorebird migration ecology.

Demographic and ecological information attained by his laboratory for Greater and Lesser Prairie-chickens, Upland Sandpipers, Buff-breasted Sandpipers, shorebirds in general, and grassland songbirds, have provided a multitude of species with protection either directly or indirectly. Many of his works, often with students, will continue to aid these species' conservation efforts for years to come based on the science, but also a result of his progeny obtaining positions within the conservation field and community.

Brett has had at least 40 peer-reviewed publications in high profile journals specifically focused on Kansas birds, a testament to his impact on and his dedication to Kansas ornithology. Overall, Brett has published over 137 articles in a wide range of professional journals: Condor, Wader Study, Ecology and Evolution, Oikos, Wilson Bulletin, Journal of Wildlife Management, Rangeland Ecology and Management, Nature, and Conservation Biology are just a few examples.

Dr. Sandercock has been a tremendous contributor to KOS. He was an alternate member of the KBRC from 2004-2007 and has been a member of KOS since —2001. He headed up the organization of the KOS fall meeting in 2007 in Riley County. Perhaps his greatest asset to KOS was his mentorship to both Undergraduate and Graduate students while at KSU. Many of these students, which we will certainly miss, presented their research at the annual KOS fall meeting, approximately three papers each year. Several of his graduate students were reviewers for the KOS Bulletin.

Lastly, though Brett's research will be sorely missed in Kansas, he will continue his work in conservation in another part of the world. He will no doubt be prolific, as always, and if you enjoyed his research, simply Google his name, and you can continue to follow.

It is a privilege and honor to announce, the recipient of this year's KOS Avian Conservationist of the Year Award, Dr. Brett Sandercock.

Have you considered including KOS in your estate? Contact Treasurer Max Thompson for details on how to make this happen.

Kansas Ornithological Society
General Membership Business Meeting
October 7, 2017
Junction City, Kansas

Morning Business Session

The meeting was called to order at 11:26 a.m. by President Nic Allen

Nomination Committee: Matt Gearheart, Nominating Committee chairman, presented the slate of officers and board members for 2017/2018: President – Nic Allen; Vice President – Cheryl Miller; Corresponding Secretary – Chuck Otte; Treasurer – Max Thompson; Membership Development Coordinator – Patty Marlett; Business Manager – Dan Larson; KOS Bulletin Editor – Eugene Young; Horned Lark Editor – Chuck Otte; Board Members – Henry Armknecht and Rodney Wright. Matt also announced that the Board Member positions of Kevin Groeneweg and Terry Mannell do not expire and that he would be staying on the board as Past-President. These last three positions are automatic and do not require a vote. President Allen announced that at the afternoon session the floor would be opened to nominations from the floor and a vote on the board members would be conducted at that time.

Research Committee: John Schukman reported that in the past year there had been no funding requests. John encouraged the students present to apply for research funds. They should contact John for information on how to apply. Funding requests are also open to the general membership.

Bulletin: Gene Young, *Bulletin* Editor, reported that he had no pending papers for publication and encouraged the paper presenters to consider submitting their presentation for publication as a paper.

Horned Lark: Chuck Otte, editor, encouraged anyone interested in being the Horned Lark editor to contact him for more details. He asked Christmas Bird Count compilers to please start sending in details for their upcoming counts so they can be posted on the web at KSBIRDS.ORG.

Bird Records Committee: Chairman of the KBRC, Gene Young, reported that the first round of voting on records submitted in 2017 had just wrapped up. He also indicated that the state had lost a species from its list as Thayer's Gull was recently lumped with Iceland Gull. There were however a couple of records pending that could add one or two new species to the state list.

Business Manager: Dan Larson, Business Manager, informed the membership that he did have shirts and binocular harnesses available for sale at the meeting.

Membership: Patty Marlett was unable to be at the meeting but had submitted a written report. We currently have 308 members which is down four from this time a year ago. Nic encouraged members to promote KOS membership among birder friends who are not currently members.

Secretary/Webmaster: Chuck encouraged members to investigate the KSBIRDS.ORG website as there was a great deal of KOS history there as well as copies of our publications. He encouraged members that if they were looking for information on KOS or Kansas birds and couldn't find it on the website to contact him.

Treasurer: Max Thompson announced that KOS was in good financial position. The investments had been doing well in 2017.

Upcoming Meetings: Nic announced that the Spring KOS Meeting/Field Trips would be hosted by Jeff Calhoun in Dodge City May 4 – 6, 2018 with planned field trips to Ford, Hodgeman and Clark counties and possibly other surrounding counties. The Fall 2018 KOS Meeting will be the 70th of the Society. As our first meeting in 1949 was held at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, planning is underway to hold the 70th Annual Meeting in Lawrence as well.

With no further business to be conduction, President Allen adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Afternoon Business Session

President Nic Allen called the meeting to order at 4:52 p.m.

Election of the Board: Nic reviewed the slate from the nominating committee that was presented in the morning session and asked for any nominations from the floor.

Chuck Otte moved to cease nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for the presented slate. The motion was seconded by Terry Mannell and passed unanimously.

Fall Meeting Chair Chuck Otte made a few brief announcements about the evening's banquet and the Sunday morning field trips.

Seeing no further business, Nic declared the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Following the evening banquet, Dr. Alice Boyle Assistant Professor in the Division of Biology at Kansas State University, gave a fascinating presentation about the tropical rain forest and the amazing little colorful, dancing birds known as manakins.

Board Meeting

The KOS Board met over lunch on October 7, 2017 at the Geary County Fairgrounds in Junction City.

President Nic Allen called the meeting to order at 12:03 a.m. Attendance: Nic Allen, Matt Gearheart, Max Thompson, Eugene Young, Dan Larson, Terry Mannell, Alexis Powell, and Chuck Otte. Also in attendance was incoming board member Henry Armknecht.

Chuck had sent out the minutes from the winter board meeting held in January. **Eugene moved to approve the minutes as distributed. Max seconded the motion and it passed 8 – 0.**

Officer Reports: Dan discussed for sale items that he currently had in stock. There was discussion that we needed to order new KOS membership decals. It was felt that having these with actual adhesive instead of the static cling type would be preferable. There was additional discussion of for sale items and the need to have KOS branded "swag" available. It has long been noted that if items are available, the members will buy it.

It was noted that the membership brochure had not been updated for some time and needed to be looked at. Chuck said he would take the lead on that.

Nic appointed Dan and Henry to meet with Max and audit the finances for the past year.

Nic reappointed the following committee chairs: John Schukman – Research Fund; Bill Busby – Conservation Committee; Chuck Otte – KOS Representative to the Kansas Nongame Wildlife Advisory Council.

Treasurer's Report: Max presented a little more detailed information on the Society's finances. We currently had $9,478 in the checking account and the investment and the current value of the holdings was a little over $200,000.

Unfinished Business: The issue of the Silent Auction has been left unresolved. The proceeds from this had gone into the research fund which has had zero requests for the past two years. It was felt that there needed to be some additional promotion. Chuck will visit with John Schukman to develop articles for the *Horned Lark* as well as create some small posters that professors could print and put on college bulletin boards. It would probably be a good idea to have a committee appointed to work on this and perhaps come up with an idea for a raffle, a book swap, a small auction or just something that could raise some funds, and awareness that people could have fun at. **Max moved for the president to appoint a committee. Dan seconded the motion and it passed 8 – 0.**

New Business: Caleb Morse from Kansas Biological Survey was interested in doing additional study of the plants at the Dingus Reserve in Linn County. It was unanimously agreed that this was acceptable and a good thing to do as long as we ultimately have a report that could be published in *The Bulletin*. Caleb's group could possibly use some resources to assist with that. Max will talk with Caleb and try to get more details

KOS had been approached Rochelle Nelson, whose daughter had given a paper in the morning session about a technique to safely get used fishing line collected where it couldn't entangle wildlife, regarding collaboration on a grant. The grant would fund construction of simple containers in fishing locations where fishing line could be disposed. The line would then be collected and sent back to the line manufacturers for recycling. The board was interested but felt like the needed more details. Ms. Nelson will be instructed to visit with Nic and Max to see of it could be applied for in a timely manner.

Seeing no further business that needed to be addressed Nic adjourned the meeting at 1:01 p.m.

Chuck Otte
KOS Secretary

Kansas Birding Roundup, Summer 2017, (June – July)

Chuck Otte, compiler

This is the report of the summer birding season in Kansas. Birds are inextricably tied to plant ecosystems and plant ecosystems are inextricably tied to long term climate and short term weather patterns. There is a certain, albeit not perfect, predictability in what birds can be expected when weather conditions are abnormal. Long term climate patterns set the extreme parameters for plant species and plant growth, and short term weather patterns determine where, within those extremes, any annual or seasonal plant growth will fall. Not only can weather patterns create, or destroy, plant growth, favorable strong winds can cause vagrant dispersal, as was seen in the spring season.

Wet conditions caused by rains in April and May created a lot of bird friendly habitat which caused many to linger beyond normal departure dates. Playas in western Kansas were full of water which led to phenomenal, and at times excessive, plant growth. While traveling across western Kansas in mid-July I was stunned at how green the vegetation was. A stop at a couple of playas south of Goodland showed testament to what a wet spring season the area had experienced.

When such conditions occur, birds that are typically migrants through Kansas are tempted to migrate no further. Some will invariably give in to that temptation. Some will simply migrate no further and attempt to breed here, and some will just linger and wait for southbound migrants to return so they will have traveling companions. Waterfowl and shorebirds dominate this summer report. Many new confirmed breeding records were generated this summer, mainly in southwestern Kansas. As this report spans that period of late northbound shorebirds and early southbound shorebirds, it sometimes become confusing, or impossible, to differentiate between the two. While not all inclusive, a representative sample of this confusion is expressed in the table below.

The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck parade that started in mid-April continued on with more new county records and the first breeding records for the state. By the time things calmed down, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were seen in 11 Kansas counties, 5 of them being new county records. Three breeding records were confirmed in two counties (Barton and Pawnee). Whether this will be an annual occurrence or an anomaly for 2017 remains to be seen!

Another ongoing point of confusion regards Common Loons. It seems to have become an annual expectation that Common Loons will be found at several impoundments in the state clear through the summer. Whether this is a reflection of climate change, population change, or simply more birders reporting from the field will take some time to know.

Alder Flycatchers, a species that nests well north of Kansas, was reported from several locations in eastern Kansas during July. The closely related Willow Flycatcher occasionally (annually?) nests in extreme eastern Kansas or very close by in Missouri, so summer records of Willow Flycatcher in eastern Kansas are expected. Alder, however, nests from extreme northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, northward. Summer records are not as readily expected. As with shorebirds, it then becomes a challenge to know whether these were early returning birds or birds that just didn't go any further north.

Any report marked as having been turned in to the Kansas Bird Records Committee (KBRC) should be considered tentative until review by the Committee is completed. Thank you to everyone who reports and contributes sightings for this report. Please forward any noteworthy sightings to me at otte2@cox.net or mailed to 613 Tamerisk Dr., Junction City, KS 66441

Species	Number and Location	County	Date	Observer(s)
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	Continuing birds at feedlot pond & sandpit	Pawnee	6/1	m.ob.
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	16 seen on playa NW of Minneola	Ford	6/10	JC
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	2 on farm pond north of Pratt	Pratt	6/11	SS
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	Pair on small creek near Nickerson	Rice	6/14	AM
Black-bellied Whistling Duck*	Adult with 3 young on Decepetion Creek	Barton	6/15	RP
	This is the first confirmed breeding record for Kansas			
Black-bellied Whistling Duck*	Adults with 9 young at feedlot	Pawnee	7/26	HA, JC, JVK
Northern Pintail*	Family group on playa SE of Zook	Pawnee	6/3	SS
Common Goldeneye	2 lingering at Melvern Lake outlet	Osage	6/4	CH
	At least one still present, 7/2			

Species	Number and Location	County	Date	Observer(s)
Red-breasted Merganser	1 female at QNWR	Stafford	6/1	TG
	This bird continued on through 6/4			
Western Grebe	1 on playa NW of Minneola	Ford	6/14	JC
	2 present at this location on 7/2			
Western Grebe	4 on Lake McKinney, 1 on nest platform	Kearny	6/24	JC
Inca Dove	1 calling in town of Wilson	Ellsworth	6/17	MR
White-winged Dove	1 on fence east of Princeton	Franklin	6/11	KC
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Pair in farm yard, westerly for mid-June	Russell	6/14	DK
Black Rail	1 at Yucca Rd Playas	Ford	7/5	JC
Common Gallinule	1 present at Baker Wetlands	Douglas	6/4	DL
	Continuing 7/30			
Common Gallinule	1 at riparian wetland east of Chanute	Neosho	6/8	ABu
	2 seen engaged in possible nest building, same location, 6/18			
Sandhill Crane	1 at CBWA, rare summer record	Barton	7/7	MR
Long-billed Curlew	2 at Yucca Rd playas	Ford	6/29	DLS, SSh, TS
Stilt Sandpiper	4 at SCWA, late migrants	Sumner	6/23	MT
Least Sandpiper	1 ongoing bird at Neosho WA	Neosho	7/4	ABu
White-rumped Sandpiper	35, large number late	Neosho	6/18	ABu
White-rumped Sandpiper	3, lingering (or failed?) migrants, QNWR	Stafford	7/4	BSa, JL
White-rumped Sandpiper	7 at Keith Sebelius Res	Norton	7/12	KC, DPe
Pectoral Sandpiper	2 at SCWA, late migrants	Sumner	6/12	MT
Willet	1 late, Neosho WA	Neosho	6/18	ABu
Short-billed Dowitcher	1 late, QNWR	Stafford	6/19	MR
Lesser Yellowlegs	3 at SCWA, still in breeding plumage	Sumner	6/23	MT
Lesser Yellowlegs	11 at Yucca Rd playas	Ford	6/29	DLS, SSh, TS
Lesser Yellowlegs	1 at John Redmond Res.	Coffey	7/1	ABu
Lesser Yellowlegs	4 ongoing birds, Neosho WA	Neosho	7/4	ABu
Red-necked Phalarope	Continuing bird, Zac Hudec Wetlands	Clay	6/1	JKe
Franklin's Gull	2 at SCWA, late migrants	Sumner	6/12	MT
Franklin's Gull	1 at Lakeview Playa	Meade	7/2	KG, JC, PJ
Common Tern	1 at Kinsley Sandpits	Edwards	7/26	HA, JC, JVK
Common Loon	1 late at Lake McKinney	Kearny	6/24	JC
	Still present, 7/3			
Common Loon	1 at Yucca Rd playas	Ford	6/29	DLS, SSh, TS
Common Loon	1 near the dam, John Redmond Res.	Coffey	7/3	JB
Common Loon	Jeffrey Energy Center WA	Pottawatomie	7/4	BrM
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at Harvey County East Lake	Harvey	6/16	EM
Reddish Egret	Continuing bird at QNWR , KBRC	Stafford	6/1	m.ob.
	This bird would continue to be seen through the entire reporting period.			
Broad-winged Hawk	2 seen on River Walk Trail, Junction City	Geary	6/17	m.ob.
	This species is being seen in breeding season further and further westerly.			
Peregrine Falcon	1 early migrant at Elkhart WTP	Morton	7/11	TL
Peregrine Falcon	1 at Baker Wetlands	Douglas	7/30	m.ob.
Alder Flycatcher	1 in rural yard, SE part of county	Leavenworth	7/2	JAM
Alder Flycatcher	1 calling individual, Walla Walla Rd	Geary	7/4	JO, CO
Willow Flycatcher	3 seen, 2 singing, Jamestown WA	Cloud	7/14	JC
Cave Swallow	1 sub-adult seen with Barn Swallows, SCWA	Sumner	7/3	MT
	1 adult with 2 young seen 7/23			
Sedge Wren	1 seen regularly near Baker Wetlands	Douglas	6/17	m.ob.
Sedge Wren	1 at CRP field. Lingering or early migrant?	Rice	7/1	JLe
Curve-billed Thrasher	1 along Arkansas River near Kendall	Hamilton	7/3	SN
Curve-billed Thrasher	1 along River Road west of Lakin	Kearny	7/3	KG, JC, PJ, TE
Spotted Towhee	1 at Lovewell Res	Jewell	7/13	JC
Spotted Towhee	Several in NE Smith County	Smith	7/31	HA, DL
White-crowned Sparrow	1, Cedar Lake – unusual summer record	Johnson	7/5	MB

Locations and notes: CBWA – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, KBRC – Kansas Bird Records Committee report filed, QNWR – Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, Res. – Reservoir, SCWA – Slate Creek Wetland Wildlife Area, WA – Wildlife Area, WTP – Water Treatment Ponds ***Underlined county name indicates new county record. Underlined number indicates an exceptionally high count. * indicates new confirmed county breeding record***

Observers: Henry Armknecht, Jayden Bowen, Melissa Bruce, Andrew Burnett (ABu), Jeff Calhoun, Kathy Carroll, Tom Ewert, Tom Gannon, Kevin Groeneweg, Charles Hall, Pete Janzen, Jeff Keating (JKe), Dave Klema, Dan Larson, Dan LaShelle (DLS), Jonathan Lautenbach, James Lee (JLe), Tony Leukering, Brandon Magette (BrM), Ethan Maynard, Andrew Miller, Jo-Ann Moore (JAM), Sue Newland, Chuck Otte, Jaye Otte, Rob Penner, Diane Persons (DPe), Mike Rader, Brett Sandercock (BSa), Scott Seltman, Sara Shane (SSh), Tom Shane, Max Thompson, Jonathan Vande Kopple (JVK), m.ob. – multiple observers

Fall KOS meeting paper abstracts

(Presenter indicated by * following name)

Construction and Use of a Recycling Bin for Monofilament Fishing Line - *Lynnea Nelson*, North Osage 4-H Club, Wildlife Project*

Birds face hazards when they encounter monofilament fishing line in their natural environment. Collection and recycling of monofilament line significantly reduces this hazard. With a few low-cost supplies, you too can join the battle reducing this hazard for our feathered friends. Berkley, a major line producer, accepts monofilament line for recycling to reduce hazards to wildlife. Join me and learn what you need, how to build and where to install these recycling bins. Let's work together to get them throughout Kansas!

The Role of Brood Parasitism in Shaping Nestling Growth and Development Strategies: Preliminary Results - *Sarah Winnicki*, Kansas State University; Edwin Harris, Beloit College; Braiam Rosado Ramos, Universidad del Turabo; Darrien Savage; and W. Alice Boyle, Kansas State University*

Patterns of animal growth and development vary widely, and drivers of variation are often unclear. Differences in altricial bird nestling development have been linked to differences in food availability and predation risk, but current models of development largely ignore the cost of brood parasitism. We hypothesize that avian brood parasitism likely plays a role in the generation of development strategies either directly or by mediating food availability and/or predation risk. We located and monitored the nests of three grassland-obligate songbirds that are known hosts for the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*): Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*), Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) and Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*). Using a series of observational studies, comparative analyses, and manipulative experiments we seek to decouple the effects of food intake, predation risk, and brood parasitism on the variation in nestling fledge age, fledge stage, and developmental prioritization. We will present some preliminary results from the 2017 breeding season, highlighting previously unknown relationships between habitat associations, parasitism, parental investment, and predation risk.

Possible Relationship Between Vocal Communication System and Fat Reserve in Wintering Birds: A Test of the Optimal Body Mass Theory - *Nuwanthika Perera* and Christopher M. Rogers, Department of Biological Sciences, Wichita State University*

Fat reserve is a key adaptation in wintering small birds for maximizing individual fitness in a variable environment. Optimal body mass models suggest that the winter fat reserve maximizes winter survival by balancing costs, such as greater predation risk, and benefits, such as ability to withstand food scarcity, of fat deposition. Flocking integration may be important in determining the fat reserve of birds. I am

testing the hypothesis that if bird species have a high vocal repertoire, then they will have high communication efficiency (which reduces predation risk) and this allows a high fat reserve. This hypothesis was tested by recording vocalizations of the Dark-eyed Junco (DEJC) and American Tree Sparrow (ATSP) in Kansas. The junco is typically fatter in winter than the tree sparrow and is predicted to have a larger vocal repertoire within its winter flocks. A Marantz digital recorder with a Sennheiser directional microphone was used to record vocalizations at winter feeding stations. Raven software was used to describe vocalizations within each species. In contrast with the hypothesis, ATSP has a mean call rate of 1.62 calls / bird / minute whereas DEJC has a mean call rate of 0.12 calls / bird / minute even though a significant difference is not detected. DEJC produced more than one call type in every observation period, while ATSP produced only one call type throughout the observations. These results support the hypothesis that communication ability plays a significant role in determining interspecific variation in fat levels of small wintering birds.

Mesocarnivore Occupancy Within Kansas Spring Cover Crops - *Adela C. Annis*, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Kansas State University; David Haukos, U.S. Geological Survey, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Kansas State University; and Jeff Prendergast, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism*

Cover crops have been suggested as a way to provide increased habitat for multiple wildlife species during the breeding season. Kansas State University, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism (KDWPT), and the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit are researching the benefits of spring cover crops to ring-necked pheasants (Phasianus colchicus)in western Kansas. The influence of spring cover crops on the occupancy of potential nest predators, specifically mesocarnivores, is important to consider and determine if cover crops create ecological traps. Three spring cover crop mixes (commercial, wildlife, and custom mixes) were planted in March and terminated in June and July before the planting of the cash crop, winter wheat. A chemical fallow control treatment was also applied. Three repetitions of each mix with field sizes ranging between 12 and 20 hectares were studied. We deployed 24 camera traps within the cover crop and chemical fallow treatments between April and August. Cameras took over 130,000 photos and mesocarnivores identified included bobcat (*Lynx rufous*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), opossum (Didelphis virginiana), raccoon (Procyon lotor), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), and long-tail weasel (*Mustela frenata*). In addition, cameras documented use of cover crops by nongame species including upland sandpipers (*Bartramia longicauda*), passerines such as the Yellow-headed Blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*), Western Meadowlark, Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), Red-wing Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), and Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). Information from this study will provide KDWPT with information on mesocarnivore occupancy within western Kansas and potential benefits of spring cover crops to wildlife.

Response of Bird Communities to Cattle Grazing and Plant Diversity in CRP Grasslands - *Benjamin S. Wilson* and William E. Jensen, Department of Biological Sciences, Emporia State University*

Grassland bird populations have been in decline, partially due to the loss of contiguous grassland habitat to row-crop agriculture. However, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is helping to restore grassland habitat in the United States. Conservation practices (CP) for CRP grassland include varying levels of plant diversity in seed mixes (e.g., higher in CP25 vs. CP2 options); however, there are disincentives for grazing by cattle in CRP. We hypothesize that conservative grazing by cattle and increased plant diversity will promote higher species richness and diversity of grassland birds in CRP. We are testing this hypothesis by using line-transect surveys of birds on 108 CRP fields, half of which were experimentally grazed by cattle in 2017, across the statewide, longitudinal precipitation gradient in Kansas. The preliminary results of our 3-year study show that species richness and diversity of birds in CRP are not substantially affected by cattle grazing or CP (CP2 vs. CP25). However, both species richness and diversity declined from west to east across the state. Even at smaller geographical scales (western, central, and eastern thirds of the state), cattle grazing and CP type were unimportant to bird species richness and diversity. Analyses from the next two years of data collection might reveal lag effects of cattle grazing in 2017 on grassland bird communities.

Nest Success and Brood Parasitism of Birds in Response to Grazing of CRP Grasslands -
Heather M. Kraus and William E. Jensen, Department of Biological Sciences, Emporia State University*

Grassland bird populations have experienced declines in recent decades that coincide with fragmentation and loss of prairie habitat. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), a federal, cropland idling program, has benefitted grassland birds through grassland restoration. Although the CRP provides better habitat than row crops, grazing by domestic cattle (Bos taurus), which is currently restricted in CRP, might improve habitat structure for some bird species. However, such changes in habitat structure, and the presence of cattle, might affect nest concealment from predators and attract brood parasitic Brown-headed Cowbirds (Molothrus ater). We investigated the response of daily nest survival of Mourning Doves (Zenaida macroura) and Dickcissels (Spiza americana), and brood parasitism of Dickcissel nests, to experimental grazing disturbance (in 2017 only) across 36 CRP fields in central Kansas. Daily nest survival rates were not strongly related to grazing disturbance. Brood parasitism rate (presence or absence of cowbird offspring) was similarly unaffected by grazing treatment but was negatively related to nest concealment. Brood parasitism intensity (number of cowbird offspring per parasitized nest) was higher in grazed CRP. Although daily nest survival and brood parasitism rate were unaffected by cattle grazing, there may be lag effects in future years due to changes in nest concealment from grazing in 2017. Brood parasitism intensity was affected by grazing, which suggests the presence of cattle might increase parasitism pressure by cowbirds, at least in years when cattle are present. Patterns of nest success and brood parasitism by cowbirds might change and will be investigated through 2019.

Determining the Influence of Vegetation on Bird Occupancy in Quivira National Wildlife Refuge -
Liz Tanner; Kyle Schumacher; Dr. Robert Channell; Dr. William Stark, Department of Biological Sciences, Fort Hays State University*

The National Wildlife Refuge System is charged with managing public lands in a highly fragmented landscape. However, many refuges lack a repeatable sampling protocol, particularly for non-game species. In 2014, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge developed a partnership with the Fort Hays State University. The goal of this partnership is to create an effective sampling protocol that gives insight into habitat use on the refuge. As part of this partnership, avian surveys were conducted from May to July 2016 and a vegetation survey was performed in July 2016. Over the course of the sampling season, 48 bird species were observed with a total of 13,932 individuals. Using occupancy models, we were able to determine which vegetative covariates (if any) have the greatest impact on each bird species observed. Understanding how the birds are responding to the vegetation on the refuge is important in determining habitat use and developing an effective sampling protocol.

Habitat Classifications are for the Birds: Breeding Bird Associations with Defined Habitat Classifications at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge -
Kyle W. Schumacher; Liz E. Tanner; Rob Channell; Mitchell J. Greer; and William J. Stark, Department of Biological Sciences, Fort Hays State University*

In 2014, Quivira National Wildlife refuge in south-central Kansas initiated a collaborative research project with Fort Hays State University to develop long-term monitoring protocols for assessment of native fauna response to habitat management practices performed across the refuge. As part of this monitoring effort, four breeding bird point-count survey transects were established across the refuge. Each transect contained 30 stop points arranged to investigate grassland bird community associations with habitat classifications as defined by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Vegetation Classification System (NVCS). Transects were sampled 10 times from 29 May to 07 July 2016, and vegetation measurements for each stop point were collected in late July 2016. Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) was used to assess accuracy of habitat classifications when compared to collected vegetation data. Stop points were reclassified into four groups based off vegetation data. Analysis of variance was conducted to compare bird community association with NVCS classifications and association with habitat classifications from collected vegetation data. Bird communities weakly but significantly associated with NVCS classifications ($F=3.216$, $df=3,11$, $p=.026$) and with habitat classifications based off collected vegetation data ($F=3.136$, $df=3,11$,

p=0.028).This suggests that breeding birds in this grassland ecosystem select habitat more broadly than the focus of current management practices under NVCS guidance. Grassland habitats classified by NVCS could be providing too fine of scope for management practices intended to delineate specific communities of grassland specialist birds.

Comparison of Foraging Behavior and Energetics by Great Egrets (*Ardea alba*) and Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula*) Across Three Microhabitats - *Abigail C. Harper*, Zoo Science Program, Friends University, and Alan D. Maccarone, Biology Department, Friends University*

Wading birds forage across a variety of microhabitats, all of which have the potential to alter foraging behavior based upon the energetic value of the prey present. In order to measure the differences in foraging behavior across microhabitats, we observed Great Egret and Snowy Egret foraging behavior for a total of thirty-six hours between May and August 2017. For both species, we completed six hours of observations in each of three local microhabitats: rivers, ponds, and weirs. During each observation session, we recorded strike rates and capture rates per minute, and prey lengths relative to egret bill length. From this data, foraging efficiencies were calculated by comparing number of strikes made to number of prey captured. Actual prey lengths, weights, and energetic values were estimated for all fish. While Great Egrets (43%) and Snowy Egrets (42%) had similar foraging efficiencies overall, we found significant differences in foraging efficiencies, mean fish size, and therefore energetic value by microhabitat.

Phylogenetic Relationships of Weaverbirds: A First Molecular Phylogeny of the Bird Family Ploceidae - *Thilina N. De Silva*; A. Townsend Peterson, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas: John M. Bates, Field Museum of Natural History; Sumudu W. Fernando; Matthew G. Girard, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas*

Weaverbirds are small-to-medium-sized, majorly seed-eating songbirds that are distributed in largest part across Sub-Saharan Africa; a few species are also found in tropical Asia and on islands in the Indian Ocean. The group comprises 116 species in 17 genera. The family shows intriguing variation in behavior, nest structure, and plumage coloration, yet their relationships have seen no detailed phylogenetic study. We developed a first extensive phylogeny for the family Ploceidae covering ~70% of the species, based on a multilocus dataset of three mitochondrial loci and four nuclear markers. Analysis of these genes offered strong support for monophyly of the family, revealing seven distinct clades within Ploceidae. Results indicated broad polyphyly of *Ploceus*: Asian *Ploceus* species should retain the generic name, whereas African *Ploceus*, together with *Anaplectes*, should be placed in *Malimbus*. In light of deep divergence, we assign the Malagasy *Ploceus* species to their own genus, *Nelicurvius*. We place *Amblyospiza albifrons* in a reestablished monotypic subfamily Amblyospizinae based on our DNA data, and also considering behavior and morphology. Divergence time analysis based on DNA substitution rates suggests a mid-Miocene origin of the family. Our study also estimates that brood parasitic behavior originated 8–11 million years ago in African finches, considerably later than previously thought of. This study lays a foundation for an array of future studies of character evolution, biogeography, and evolutionary history of the family.

Notes on the Sympatric Nesting of two Fox Sparrow Subspecies Groups in South-central Alaska - *Lucas H. DeCicco*, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas*

Observations on how closely related sympatric taxa interact on breeding grounds are integral to lines of evidence for biologically informed taxonomy and systematics. Upon geographic contact, subspecies may form a zone of continual intergradation wherein a majority of individuals are phenotypically intermediate. Conversely, 'true' species should maintain reproductive isolation despite contact. Fox Sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*) are a highly polytypic species with four distinct and geographically parsed subspecies groups. In Alaska, two of these subspecies groups (the coastal *unalaschcensis* group and the interior *iliaca* group; subspecies *sinuosa* and *zaboria* respectively) come in contact with one another in a few locations. Over a four-year period, I opportunistically investigated (via multimedia documentation and specimen collection) one of these contact zones located in south-central Alaska around the city of Anchorage. The expectation, given that these taxa are considered conspecific, is that intergradation

would occur at this zone of contact resulting in a continuum across geographic space of phenotypes. Within this zone of contact I found largely equivalent numbers of phenotypically pure *sinuosa* and *zaboria* with a very limited number of intergrades, despite complete mixture and little to no habitat segregation. My observations and the specimens I collected suggest that, upon contact and despite substantial overlap, these two subspecies groups segregated themselves. I therefore conclude that, at this specific location, these two subspecies groups treat one another as biologically distinct species.

Patterns of Genomic Differentiation in 'Montane" Avifauna of Borneo: A Case Study Utilizing Three Independent Lineages - *Johnathan P. Hruska*, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas; Vivien Chua, Museum of Natural Science and Department of Biological Sciences, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA; Rob Moyle, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas; Fred Sheldon, Museum of Natural Science and Department of Biological Sciences, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA*

The principal objective of biogeography is to infer biological and geological processes responsible for observed patterns of biodiversity across time and space. By definition, biogeographical inquiries require a *priori* illustrations of how extant biodiversity is distributed across contemporary landscapes. Once established, these patterns inform hypotheses that seek to evaluate the potential contemporaneous and historical processes that produce them. Historically, the contemporaneous and historical distribution of biodiversity has been difficult to assess. Traditional methodological practices, relying heavily upon morphological markers, have been incapable of accurately assessing patterns of biodiversity. Broadly speaking, these markers have failed to: 1) Accurately demarcate patterns of biodiversity due to conserved morphological features. 2) Accurately reconstruct the genealogical history of populations and species. 3) Reject hypotheses invoking biological and geological process, such as: reproductive isolation, vicariance, environmental selection, and many others. The development of recent sequencing technologies that have facilitated the recovery of several thousand genomic markers has helped address these shortcomings. As a result, long-standing biogeographic hypotheses have been tested extensively in recent years. One region that has experienced a renaissance of biogeographic inquiry is the island of Borneo. As a result, several models assessing the evolution of biodiversity on Borneo have emerged. Here, we present patterns of genomic differentiation across three independent lineages of birds *Stachyris* (Timaliidae), *Yuhina* (Zosteropidae), and *Pellorneum* (Pellorneidae). We provide additional data to the assessment of how avian diversity is distributed across montane habitats on Borneo, and make inferences regarding what contemporary and historical processes have produced them.

Morphological Differences Between Sexes of the Gray-breasted Wood-Wren, a Monochromatic Passerine from the Neotropics - *Fernando Machado-Stredel * Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Kansas; Jorge Pérez-Emán, Universidad Central de Venezuela*

Sexual size dimorphism (SSD) is present in most avian taxa, particularly in species in which males and females have similar plumages. Traditionally, ornithologists have focused on sexing monochromatic temperate and migratory birds using mensural characters. Unfortunately, there is a lack of knowledge on the extent of SSD for tropical avifaunas. In this study we assess this phenotypic pattern in five Venezuelan subspecies of a widespread Neotropical bird, the Gray-breasted Wood-Wren (*Henicorhina leucophrys*, Troglodytidae), and generate models to discriminate sexes with classical morphometric characters (i.e., wing, tail and bill lengths). Two-tailed t-tests were used to evaluate mean differences between male and female specimens (N=137) using the mentioned variables, since their measurement error percentages were relatively low (< 10%). Additionally, univariate Logistic Regression Analyses were performed to classify individuals. These models were compared through correct classification percentages and their AICc values. We found that all taxa have significant mean sexual differences in all variables, and that some are more dimorphic than others. Our models correctly classified 80-93% of the males and 70-93% of the females. We stress the relevance of museum specimen analyses to tackle phenotypic variation questions, prior to conduct field studies. This research represents a straightforward approach to discriminate sex in monochromatic species, and to the best of our knowledge, it constitutes the first study that addresses intraspecific SSD in a Neotropical passerine.

Completeness of Digital Accessible Knowledge of the Birds of West Africa and Priorities for Survey and Inventory - *Benedictus Freeman* and A. Townsend Peterson, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas*

Primary biodiversity data provides baseline information widely used to assess the status of global biodiversity and inform conservation decisions. However, these datasets are not always available for all taxa or evenly distributed across regions and landscapes. This study aims to identify current survey gaps in the knowledge of West African birds that can be used to guide future avian surveys and inventories across the region, and inform biodiversity conservation decisions. We used Digital Accessible Knowledge (DAK) of the birds of West Africa, available online from Global Information Facility (GBIF) and eBird. Bird records were subjected to extensive cleaning in ArcGIS, and completeness indices for each site at 0.5o, 0.3o and 0.1o pixel were calculated for the entire region. Well-known sites were those with completeness indices above 80% and >200 associated DAK records. We identified 81 well-known pixels at 0.1o, 73 at 0.3o and 63 at 0.5o. Well-known sites were notably clustered around accessible areas (e.g., cities). Countries with more pixels of well-known sites were Ghana, Cameroon, The Gambia, and Ivory Coast. Our results show the biases and gaps in West African bird's data, and identify areas to be prioritized in future avian surveys and inventories.

Hybridization and Parental Interaction of Great-tailed Grackle and Common Grackle *(Quiscalus)* - *Alexis F. L. A. Powell*, Department of Biological Sciences, Emporia State University; and Jack Kirkley, Biology Department, University of Montana – Western*

Great-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) and Common Grackle (*Q. quiscula*) are phylogenetically distant among grackles and were historically allopatric. Range expansions brought these species into increasing contact in the past century, but have not led to notable interactions. We report a brood of two hybrid offspring of a male Great-tailed Grackle and female Common Grackle at the periphery of these species' ranges, in Dillon, MT, in 2015. Both parents fed the fledglings at the nest tree—an extraordinary behavior for male Great-tailed Grackle. Moreover, after the young left the tree and moved ~2 km across town, the male alone fed them for at least six more weeks. During that time, the young began prebasic molt and grew blue-black secondary coverts as expected for male Great-tailed Grackle but not for Common Grackle or female Great-tailed Grackle. Analysis of DNA from one offspring confirmed that it had hybrid nuclear DNA, had Common Grackle mitochondrial DNA, and was male. Hybridization of Great-tailed Grackle with other blackbirds has been reported, but Common Grackle hybridization has not been documented previously with any species. In 2016, the male Great-tailed Grackle again courted a female Common Grackle that nested in his tree, but she was also attended by a male Common Grackle. She produced five young, but none were hybrids. Also in 2016, another male Great-tailed Grackle in the vicinity was observed feeding the nestling(s) in one of three nests that he defended, suggesting that male parental care is more common in that species than has been appreciated.

Effects of Patch-burn Grazing on Density and Space Use of Dickcissels - *Bram H. F. Verheijen*, Division of Biology, Kansas State University; Hannah L. Clipp, School of Natural Resources, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV: Alessandro J. Bartolo, Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts; William E. Jensen, Department of Biological Sciences, Emporia State University; and Brett K. Sandercock, formerly Division of Biology, Kansas State University*

Territorial behavior has important consequences for the fitness of an individual, as it could have large effects on reproductive success and survival. Understanding the distribution of territories across the landscape is therefore essential for assessing the population dynamics of a species, especially when of conservation concern. Over the past decades, habitat loss and intensification of the management of remaining grasslands have led to large population declines in grassland songbirds in North America. An alternative rangeland management regime, patch-burn grazing, creates heterogeneity in vegetative structure on the landscape by restoring the historical interaction of fire and grazing. Patch-burn grazing can increase the diversity and abundance of grassland songbirds, but effects on space use remain unknown. During a two-year field study, we tested how the density and territory size of Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) varied among burning and grazing treatments in managed tallgrass prairie in

northeast Kansas. We found that management regime affected densities, but not territory size, of male Dickcissels, where densities were highest on the patch-burn grazing patch that was burned in the previous year. Patch-burn grazing management might therefore benefit Dickcissel populations by providing higher quality breeding habitat in some patches. Our project is one of the first to test the effects of rangeland management on the territorial behavior of grassland birds. Combining management-specific estimates of territory size with estimates of reproductive success for grassland songbirds is essential for conservation of declining populations, since territory size could limit the number of breeding birds that benefit from high quality breeding habitat.

Characterizing Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) Behavior and Estimating Energy Expenditure Using Accelerometry Data - *Alan D. Maccarone*, Biology Department, Friends University, and John N. Brzorad, Reese Institute for Conservation of Natural Resources, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC*

In addition to providing unprecedented details regarding movements of free-ranging animals, state-of-the-art satellite GPS transmitters (48-g Bird Solar; e-obs) also measure overall body position and acceleration along x-y-z axes. From 2015-2017, Great Egrets were captured in the field in Kansas and along the East Coast and outfitted with harness-mounted GPS transmitters. Tags were programmed to collect 4-sec pulses of continuous accelerometry data every 4 minutes. Teachable algorithms are presented that scan very large data sets and classify accelerometry traces into the most common behaviors: resting/alert (vertical and horizontal), flying, and walking. Over 80% of the traces fall into identifiable patterns and are consistent with bird location, such as walking on foraging grounds, flying between colony or roost site and foraging grounds, and resting horizontally (as during incubation) and vertically at colonies or roosts. Less common behaviors (striking at prey, preening) were matched with field observations made on several birds. By summing behavior categories, an estimation was made of both activity budgets and energy expenditure. We present overall dynamic body acceleration (ODBA) as a unitless index of energy expenditure, which was derived from accelerometry data, and compares well with actual energy expenditure (measured in Joules).

Breeding Bird Response to Experimental Forest Management in the Missouri Ozarks - *Andrew George*, Department of Biology, Pittsburg State University; Paul Porneluzi, Division of Science and Mathematics, Central Methodist University, Fayette, MO; Janet Haslerig, Missouri Department of Conservation, Jefferson City, MO; John Faaborg, Division of Biological Sciences, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO*

The Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project (MOFEP) is a landscape-scale manipulative study designed to evaluate ecosystem responses to silvicultural practices over broad time scales. Nine experimental plots (mean area = 400 ha) were established in southeastern Missouri in 1991 and assigned to even-aged, uneven-aged, or no-harvest management cycles within a randomized-complete block design. We spot-mapped birds and monitored nests on each plot for five years pre-harvest, 14 years following the first harvest, and three years following the second harvest. Densities of four of five mature-forest species decreased on all sites following harvests and have not returned to pre-harvest levels, including on no-harvest sites. Densities of early successional species were low on all sites prior to the first harvest, but increased on even-aged and uneven-aged sites following harvests. After peaking within six years of harvest, densities of early-successional species gradually decreased to near pre-harvest levels. Nest-survival was similar among management types for both mature-forest and early-successional species, although nest-parasitism rates were generally higher for early successional species. More frequent even-aged reentry intervals (< 10 years) may be sufficient to maintain early-successional species on the landscape, but understanding effects of management practices on mature forest species will require closer examination of the spatial and temporal sensitivity of individual species.

Best Student Papers

Annually John Schukman assembles a committee of judges to evaluate the papers presented by students at the Fall KOS Meeting. This year the best papers were presented by Benjamin Wilson from Emporia State in the MS category, and Thilina de Silva from the University of Kansas in the PhD category. They both will receive a one year membership in KOS and a cash award.

Kansas Ornithological Society - Top 10 Birds

October 2016 - September 2017

Compiled by Eugene Young

1. Brown Booby - Garrett Smith, Gray County, 31 July 2017 - photographed perched atop a wind turbine. (1st State Record if accepted by KBRC). Few inland records, NE/IA, rest are from mostly southeastern US inland states, associated with hurricane paths.

2. Little Stint - Gene Young, Stafford County – QNWR, Staford County, 30 April 2017. Bird observed in poor weather, though up close with Least/ Semi and host of other shorebirds for comparison (1st State Record if accepted by KBRC). Very rare in western AK in spring and fall, casual on E and W Coasts, accidental elsewhere.

3. Reddish Egret - QNWR, Stafford County, first reported 31 May 2017 by Jay Miller - still present as of 3 October (4th State record).

4. Black-bellied Whistling Duck - 2 breeding records – Rob Penner on 15 June 2017 had an adult with young at Cheyenne Bottoms, Barton County. Second nesting record was at Ward Feeders in Pawnee County by Scott Seltman. Numbers exploded this year, reported from three counties last summer and early fall, than in 11 counties this spring/ summer. At one point, 16 were reported in Ford County, 14 in Panwee County, and 12 in Clark County...the most BBWD's reported in KS.

5. Williamson´s Sapsucker – at Wilson Lake, Russell County, 18 March 2017, observed by Malcolm Gold, John Mallery, Rodney Wright and Trenton Reed. (5th State Record if accepted by KBRC).

6. White-tailed Kite – observed on 1 April 2017 near Haviland in Kiowa County by Richard Hall (5th State Record if accepted by KBRC). Did nest once in the state.

7. Painted Redstart - Observed in western Hodgeman County on 9 April 2017 by Graham Montgomery (6th State Record, accepted by KBRC).

8. Roseate Spoonbill - 2 reports - McPherson Valley Wetlands, 25 August 2017, Malcolm Gold et al. seen by hundreds, remained into September; and three in Stevens County, 28 August 2017 by Chuck Carlson. About a dozen records now.

9. Black-headed Gull - two records, 15 October 2016 by Tom Ewert at Marion Reservoir, Marion County (9th State Record) and on 11 November 2016 by Will Chatfield-Taylor at Pomona Reservoir, Osage County (10th State Record).

10. Black Vulture – observed on 29 October 2017 by Dave Klema, near Smoky Hill River south of Wilson, Russell County... the second confirmed record (photos) from that region of state since an Ellis County specimen from 1885. Scott Seltman documented one from Larned in April 2012.

Honorable Mention: No particular order.

Little Gull: 22nd Record, 4 Nov 2016 by Mark Land and Malcolm Gold at Cheyenne Bottoms.

Vermilion Flycatcher: On Miami/Johnson county line on 29 March 2017 reported by Kelli Egbert and Rodney Wright.

Lewis´s Woodpecker: One at Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #2 reported by Lynette Mueller on 1 December 2017 seen for several weeks. (A second report was received from southern Geary County about the same time.)

Swallow-tailed Kite: Seen by Carolyn Schwab on 20 August 2017 East of Toronto on US 54 in Greenwood County.

Frigatebird species: observed by Scott Thomasson, Luke Seitz, and Willis Ohl on 18 September 2017 at Cheyenne Bottoms. It was thought the bird might be an adult female Magnificent Frigatebird. But records for both Lesser and Great Frigatebird within the U.S. requires scrutiny of records to ascertain correct species.

This is an annual, mainly for fun, listing. Some of these are records are yet to be acted on by the Kansas Bird Records Committee and this list should not be construed to indicate confirmed records. In the meantime, enjoy!

Fifty years of Kansas Christmas Bird Counts on the Colorado Border

by Tom Shane, Garden City, KS

By 1967 I had participated in the Junction City Christmas Bird Count (CBC) six times and the Manhattan count four times. Charles Jackson, a classmate of mine at K-State, invited me out to his place north of Sharon Springs along the south fork of the Smoky Hill River. His mother, Ruth Jackson, was a well-known historian of the region and a newspaper columnist. Having spent my initial years learning birds in Eastern Kansas with only a spring and a summer trip to Morton County, this was my first winter visit to the High Plains. Not only was there the possibility of finding some exciting western birds, but the short-grass prairie has a unique lure that must be related to the solitude of vast treeless stretches.

I ran the Wallace County CBC on 27 December 1967, which was my first opportunity to run a count on the High Plains of western Kansas. The morning started at 3 degrees Fahrenheit, with complete snow cover. The four Black-capped Chickadees were a little surprising, however at that time they were found in all parts of the state. The two Short-eared Owls are nice on any count in Kansas.

We ventured north to run a Cheyenne County CBC on 28 December 1967. The 41 Black-billed Magpies were certainly the highlight of the day. The compilers of CBCs for the KOS Bulletin, Jerome Jackson and Jim Rising, included some range maps of certain species for that CBC season including a Blue Jay and Black-billed Magpie map. My Cheyenne County count turned out to be the high count of only three counts reporting the species for the state. I ran the count again on 30 December 1987 with Sara Norman of Garden City, John Palmquist of Goodland and Betsy Johnson of Oakley. The center of the circle was moved a little to the southwest that year and renamed the St Francis CBC as to alert researchers. The move west allowed coverage of the first bridge east of Colorado, crossing the Republican River. With excellent timber, clear running water and some cattail stands we were able to locate a Virginia Rail and two Marsh Wrens. Elsewhere in the circle, we ended up with 33 Black-billed Magpies and a single Chestnut-collared Longspur.

I first participated in the Goodland CBC (Sherman County) on 20 December 1975 and again in the years of 1977, ‘79 and ‘80 at the invitation of John Palmquist and Ron Barkley. Besides a single Evening Grosbeak on one of the years, I got to see my first winter flock of House Finches in Kansas. It was a flock of about 20 birds in a sunflower patch near the edge of Lake Urine, a name adopted by most of the locals. It is actually an amazing stretch of habitat on the northwest side of town making up Goodland’s waste water ponds.

I first helped with the Syracuse CBC (Hamilton County) 20 December 1987, which was originated by Scott Seltman, and then compiled by Art Nonhof most of the following years. I have participated in a total of 18 of the Syracuse counts over the years. Each border CBC has some unique habitats and landscapes. Until recently the vast expanses of prairie dog towns was very impressive, often times with a dozen or more Ferruginous Hawks scattered over the expanses. In addition, a Golden Eagle or two was to be expected. A number of exciting birds were counted over the years including: a Sora at the state lake low water bridge, and one Common Redpoll picked out of a large flock of American Goldfinches by the glowing ruby on its crown at the northeast edge of Coolidge. A Red Crossbill was found at a feeder one year and a Pyrrhuloxia in some open timber along the Arkansas River was one of the best birds ever found on the count. The coveys of Scaled Quail, occasionally as large as 80 birds, were always a treat. We stopped east of Coolidge one year and counted 67 Black-billed Magpies at a cow carcass. For some odd reason, one of my best memories was a pure flock of 50 Pink-sided Juncos in the afternoon sun along a thin strip of cottonwoods east of Coolidge.

Cimarron National Grasslands (Morton County) indeed has been the go-to count for most Kansas birders over the years. I helped on the 1987, ‘88 and ‘93 counts. My best birds were a Burrowing Owl, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and a Rufous-crowned Sparrow. However, most enjoyable to me was the

large flock of Lark Buntings loafing and sunning themselves on the rails of the train tracks northeast of Elkhart. The great adventure occurred one evening following Sebastian Patti in the total darkness of night, to the Colorado line in hopes of a Western Screech-Owl that did not cooperate.

I decided for the 1993 count period that I would drive up and help Luverne Keith and others with the Tribune CBC (Greeley County), on 13 January 1994. Cheyenne County has the Republican River, Hamilton County the Arkansas River, Morton County the Cimarron River, Wallace and Sherman each have a Branch of the Smoky Hill River. But Greeley County is near the headwaters of White Woman Creek in a shallow little valley in an area of low rainfall. Fortunately, you can make out a creek valley due to some remaining native prairie. The 10 Blue Jays were a surprise, and an unlikely Curve-billed Thrasher present for a few days showed up for the count. With the lack of habitat diversity in the Tribune count circle the low total of 24 species was actually a relief. It could have been much worse. It has been mentioned by a number of Kansas birders that Greeley County is one of the toughest places in the state to find birds.

Since we have lived in Western Kansas the last 28 years the subject of a Stanton County CBC has been tossed around a few times. In recent years we started getting serious about making the trek to Johnson City. Dan LaShelle had even made us one of his lavish four page count circle maps with Walk In Hunting Areas and shelterbelts highlighted. Small maps of towns and hotspots were included on the back pages. On New Year's Eve 2016 we checked the weather and it all looked perfect. That and because January first was a holiday, a Sunday and there were football games to keep people home. Indeed we did not encounter another rural vehicle until around 3 pm. Lunch on the banks of Bear Creek was very pleasant. The 13 Scaled Quail, one White-winged Dove, one Hairy Woodpecker, (but no Downy Woodpeckers), one McCown's Longspur and one Audubon's Warbler completed a nice day of bird counting with a total of 38 species.

I certainly did not start out in 1967 with the goal of participating in a CBC in every county of Kansas along the Colorado border. It has been only in the last half dozen years that Sara and I have considered it a goal. The 30 counts that I have participated in over the last 50 years in the seven counties were rewarding. During the drought years they weren't quite as pleasant and in some of those years birds were scarce. Most years were very pleasant with some great birds. The vistas were often fabulous, such as the time we were able to see Two Buttes in very southern Prowers County Colorado, 65 miles away from the north rim of the Arkansas River Valley in western Hamilton County. Because of these views, I will keep going back as long as I can.

Farewell Thayer's Gull…

A brief review of the latest taxonomic changes

Every year, during the summer, the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithological Society (formerly the American Ornithologists' Union) issues their supplement to the Check-list of North American Birds. For North America, this is THE committee that determines what birds are on the checklist and what order they are on the checklist. (For additional explanation about taxonomic checklists see the article on page 19.) One of the biggest changes for 2017 came from moving Thayer's Gull from a full species back to a subspecies of Iceland Gull. This has been expected for some time. So the Kansas Checklist lost one species in that move. All Thayer's Gulls now become Iceland Gulls on the checklist and the ten counties that had Iceland Gull records previously, lost a species from their county checklist count, since they also had Thayer's Gull records. Other changes, less earth shattering: Magnificent Hummingbird goes back to it's previous name, Rivoli's Hummingbird. Geese, Ducks, Shorebirds, Finches and Blackbirds have a slight shuffling of the species within those families. The entire Sparrow family and Blackbirds/Orioles family move ahead of the Warblers. LeConte's Sparrow finally loses that ridiculous space that used to exist between Le and Conte's. Finally, Yellow-breasted Chat, which most birders knew wasn't a warbler, has been moved to it's own family and placed immediately following Sparrows. All of the county and state checklists on the ksbirds.org webpage reflect this new taxonomy. The checklists can be accessed online at http://www.ksbirds.org/checklist/checklist_index.htm.

KOS 2017 Fall Meeting

Compiled Checklist from the weekend of October 6 to October 8 (noon to noon)
Clay, Dickinson, Geary, Morris, Pottawatomie, and Riley Counties
For a county by county listing go to:
http://ksbirds.org/kos/KOS_Fall_2017_Bird_List.htm

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Gadwall
Mallard
Red-breasted Merganser
Northern Bobwhite
Ring-necked Pheasant
Greater Prairie-Chicken
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Common Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
American Coot
Killdeer
Long-billed Dowitcher
Greater Yellowlegs
Sabine's Gull
Franklin's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Forster's Tern
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
White-faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Swainson's Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Eastern Screech-Owl
Great Horned Owl
Barred Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Phoebe
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Bell's Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Horned Lark
Tree Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Carolina Wren
Bewick's Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
House Sparrow
American Pipit
House Finch
Pine Siskin
American Goldfinch
Spotted Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
LeConte's Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Eastern Meadowlark
Western Meadowlark
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Grackle
Great-tailed Grackle
Black-and-white Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Palm Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Summer Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Dickcissel

What's a Taxonomic Checklist?

or

Why is the eBird checklist in a different order than the KOS Checklist?

By Chuck Otte, Secretary, Kansas Bird Records Committee

If you use eBird, and compare one of their checklists against the KOS Checklist, you've probably noticed that the bird species often are not in the same order. This can be a little frustrating if you happen to be trying to transfer data or make comparisons. The reasons for this are simple: taxonomy and phylogeny.

Taxonomy is the scientific field that studies the defining and naming of species. Much of this is thanks to Carl Linnaeus who, in the 18th century, developed a systematic way of naming organisms that we continue to use today using a binomial nomenclature, or what many of us call, the scientific name. Each species is assigned a genus name and a species name. The species are then organized into families and orders and increasingly larger collections of "evolutionary groups" (= phylogeny.)

The organization was traditionally done on the basis of shared physical or morphological characteristics. In recent years scientists have turned more and more to genetic studies, going down to the molecular level to find degrees of relatedness, or the phylogenic relationships. Taxonomy and phylogeny helps us decide where species are placed within a checklist. The more closely related species are, the closer to each other they are in the checklist. The earlier that groups of birds separated from their common ancestor, the earlier they occur in our bird checklists. Birds later in the checklist evolved "more" recently (66 million years ago compared to 116 million years ago!).

Here is where it gets complicated. You can find checklists of species organized in any number of ways. Most of the ornithological organizations around the world list birds in phylogenic order based on evolutionary relationships. That is why your bird book probably has ducks early in the book and warblers or sparrows later in the book. Some organizations, those working with species other than birds, may organize alphabetically since the order in the list has nothing to do with evolution, like distance, relatedness, from a common ancestor. These alphabetical lists drive me crazy since I'm used to the way that ornithologists list species. If the Kansas Checklist were organized like this, hawks would be first on the list followed by ducks, which would likely be called waterfowl (all arranged alphabetically by their scientific name after that). One of the things I hear from beginning birders is that they can't determine why birds are in the order they occur within field guides. With many of the smart phone apps available now days, you have the choice of seeing a list sorted taxonomically or alphabetically. Not so easy to do with a printed book. (That's also why books have indexes!)

Taxonomy and phylogeny are sciences and like all scientific fields of study, new information comes along and helps us better understand, in this case degrees of relatedness among species. It also sometimes creates disagreements among scientists, which is both healthy and confusing. Most ornithologists recognize certain authorities (organizations). For the western hemisphere, the recognized authority in bird taxonomy is the American Ornithological Society (AOS). They have separate committees for North and South America. These committees meet regularly to look at proposals for recognizing new species based upon the scientific literature as it relates to those species. The result at times are a new distribution of species or lumping/splitting of species as we just saw with Thayer's/Iceland Gull. There is also the International Ornithologists Union who looks at taxonomy at the international level.

The AOS taxonomy works fine for bird species in North America but doesn't include global species for obvious reasons. eBird is a global system so they have chosen to use the taxonomy of James Clements known as the Clements Checklist of Birds of the World. When it comes to birds in North America, the Clements checklist arranges species differently. While eBird claims to try to follow the taxonomy of the AOS committees, I find that there are numerous departures between AOS and the eBird lists.

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KOS Membership

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Please clearly mark your choice of membership category below.

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Max C. Thompson
1729 E. 11th Ave.
Winfield, KS 67156

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So who's right? Neither is right, and neither is wrong. KOS and the Kansas Bird Records Committee choose to follow the AOS taxonomy because we recognize it as THE authority for North America. eBird is working at a global level. They want to maintain consistency with their lists around the globe.

Over time these different taxonomic lists may move in and out of various stages of synchronicity. There is a great deal of research currently being done, much of it at the molecular level, that needs to be analyzed and then applied to our taxonomic lists. We've seen many changes in the past decade and can likely expect more in the years ahead. Don't expect the reorganization of taxonomic lists to end anytime soon, if ever.

In the meantime don't let the occasional differences in taxonomic order confuse or upset you. Just remember which taxonomy you are working with, and why, and go from there.

Upcoming KOS Meetings!

Spring Meeting, 2018

The Spring KOS Meeting (field trips!!!) has been set so get it on your calendar now! Jeff Calhoun will be hosting us in Dodge City May 4 - 6, 2018. Jeff promises us that there will be field trips to Ford, Hodgeman and Clark Counties. Given the proximity to neighboring counties, I wouldn't rule out possible excursions to Gray, Pawnee, or Kiowa counties, or ??? Mark your calendars now and details will be in the March *Horned Lark!*

Fall Meeting, 2018

KOS was formed in 1949 with a meeting in Lawrence. Therefore fall of 2018 will be our 70th Annual Meeting. The KOS Board is planning to hold its 70th Annual Meeting back in Lawrence. Details and dates are still very nebulous but stay tuned and we'll keep you posted as we prepare to celebrate 70 years of Kansas birds, birders and birding!