



The Horned Lark

Kansas Ornithological Society

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From the President's Pen

By Cheryl Miller

Normally this time of year, we're planning which Christmas Bird Counts we'll participate in. We're imagining zooties we hope to find while driving endless backroads and traipsing through cemeteries with friends.

Except, this year, we might not do much of any of that in groups. Safety for participants comes first.

The National Audubon Society alerted count compilers in September that because of COVID-19, compilers may cancel their CBCs this season. If compilers decide to hold counts, participants must observe a list of guidelines that include social distancing and no in-person compilation.

It's another example of how we've all been asked to do things differently for the good of the community during the pandemic.

In this vein, Audubon of Kansas (AOK) moved its annual Celebration of Cranes to an online format. Six speakers, including longtime KOS members Rob Penner and Dave Rintoul, gave presentations about cranes, shorebirds and wetlands, spotlighting Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms, Kansas's premier wetland complexes. Each presentation has been archived on

AOK's YouTube channel. To find the videos, enter "Audubon of Kansas" in YouTube's search box, or visit AOK's webpage: <https://bit.ly/36o7Z1Z>.

Our fall KOS meeting was also held online. Many, many thanks go to Jenn Rader, Jeff Calhoun and Rachel Roth for creating an interactive, fun meeting. The bird trivia event on Friday night resulted in much laughter over questions and responses, and appearances by family members, pets and unsuspecting spouses. Many members tuned in Sunday for a non-traditional noon compilation. Eleven paper presentations were delivered via Zoom and archived on the KOS YouTube channel. You may find them by entering "Kansas Ornithological Society" in YouTube's search box or at <https://tinyurl.com/y3232pyk>.

It's been a difficult year, fraught with uncertainty about many things. Fortunately, 2020 is soon coming to a close and happier days are ahead. With that in mind, stay safe and follow COVID-19 recommendations given by the CDC and your local health authority. Normalcy will return, and I look forward to seeing you in person again.

- Cheryl

KOS Winter Trivia Night - Saturday, January 30 - Contact Jeff Calhoun or Jenn Rader for details.

From the Keyboard

By the Editor

Everyone has been talking about what a bizarre year this is due to the COVID pandemic. But this has been an unusual year in many other ways, in fact it has been a globally redefining year in so many different ways.

Cultural, racial, even religious sensitivity continues to be heightened as well it should be. Awareness of where our rights end and someone else's rights begin is at times difficult to detect. I hear people who are upset about going overboard and toppling statues and changing names of streets, military bases and even birds. If you are thinking that these actions are going way too far then perhaps you have been a recipient of privilege that you don't even recognize. Cultural/racial/religious sensitivity is often hard to understand and comprehend and I know that I will go to my grave trying to better understand it. We can't change the past, we shouldn't erase history, it is what it is. But we also shouldn't forget that what we accept as normal may be extremely offensive to someone else. So I'm trying to learn, I try to stay calm, I try to understand and I try to meet folks half way. Ultimately it comes down to taking an approach of "do no harm."

Our country has become very divided and it will take years to mend the damage done. No one person can do it by themselves. We can only change our self. So I know that I'll keep working on that. In the meantime, one of the universal unifiers is the natural world around us, of which birds are perhaps the most noticeable example. So we can use the birds that we all love as the first step. I can take people birdwatching (hopefully again soon) and it doesn't matter what race they are, what their religious beliefs are, or what their political beliefs are. We can enjoy the birds together. We don't have to waste time talking about how we may be different, we just talk about the birds and I try to help them understand the species better or what differentiates an Eastern Kingbird from an Eastern Phoebe. You build the first bridge and then look for other opportunities to build other bridges, without judging. Period.

As I write that I have to laugh because I have several friends who are seriously freaked out by birds. Thank you Alfred Hitchcock! I don't force them to go out birding with me and I don't tease them about their fear. But if I can get them to even enjoy a cardinal at their feeder, from the safety of their house, then progress has been made!

Every year is a little like the year before and just as it's alike it is different. A year ago nobody knew what was coming and it's just as well. Hopefully the world a year from now will be equally different. Much of what happens in the world is out of our control. What is in my control is what I do and how I react to it. My New Year's wish for you is that you'll be safe, healthy and well. There's lots more birds for us all to see and I want all of you still here to enjoy them with me! Be careful, be safe, be well! Happy New Year!

- Chuck



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Breeding of the Western Wood-Pewee at Scott Lake During the Summer of 2020.

By Thomas G. Shane and Sara J. Shane

The Western Wood-Pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*) was reported in *Birds in Kansas* (1992) as “Nesting has not yet been documented in Kansas, but singing males have been seen repeatedly on territories in suitable habitat.” *Birds of Kansas* (2011) makes no reference of relative abundance but states that “singing males on territories and in proper habitat are probably breeding.” The authors have encountered singing male Western Wood-Pewees in three different summers at Lake Scott State Park, Scott County, Kansas prior to 2020. During 1986 a male was singing at the northeast corner of Scott Lake. During the nesting season of 2016, one male was territorial at the Elm Grove at the south end of the park, and in 2018 one had a territory in the wooded area east of the West Lake Drive across from the cabins in the El Cuartelejo area. The above pewees were present from one to two weeks.

A chronological list follows of observations made of multiple Western Wood-Pewees for the summer of 2020 at Scott Lake State Park, Scott County, Kansas. A center point of the observations made was located at the bottom of the mouth of Horsethief Canyon area where it crosses West Scott Lake Drive. This spot is just southwest of the Circle Campground where the Beach House and the boat ramps are located.

21 May - One pewee: A singing male was observed 0.26 miles south of the paved road at the southern extent of the large timber in Horsethief Canyon.

26 May - One pewee: A singing male was observed in the same location as the 21 May bird.

11 June - Three pewees: Jeff Calhoun observed a silent Western Wood-Pewee through binoculars while a singing male was nearby at the south end of the big timber in Horsethief Canyon in the morning. The authors located a second singing male 0.46 miles NW of the road crossing at the Horsethief Canyon location on the very northwest corner of Scott Lake in a large cottonwood adjacent to the paved road that afternoon.

23 June - Four pewees: The first pewee of the day observed by Sara Shane was called in with a recording whereupon it started singing at the usual location at the south end of the timber in Horsethief Canyon. A second non-vocal pewee was observed at almost the same time at the north end of the canyon by Tom Shane, about one-quarter of a mile from the first bird. It was feeding low, then high in the crown of a large cottonwood with dead limbs next to the road crossing at the mouth of Horsethief Canyon. This bird had brown wing bars, a slight topknot and did not vocalize, so it would have been a fledgling or possibly a juvenile. A little later a third pewee was heard singing north of the road at the mouth of Horsethief Canyon. A fourth singing bird for the day was in the June 11th location at the northwest corner of Scott Lake in a large cottonwood with some dead limbs.

3 July - Five pewees: The first pewee of the day was located by Sara Shane at the south end of the big trees in Horsethief Canyon and answered taped calls and songs. The second bird north of the

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

Kansas Birding Roundup, Summer, (June 2020 – July 2020) Chuck Otte, compiler

This is the report of the summer birding season in Kansas, June and July. The heart of the breeding season is also a time for delayed departures, early returns and “naw, I don’t think I’m going any further this year” individuals. The time between the end of northbound migration and the beginning of southbound migration is never a clean break. It is muddled, it is messy and it is frequently without a definitive ending and beginning!

With the COVID pandemic still running full bore, the annual Breeding Bird Surveys were not conducted this year, the first time that this has happened since their inception in the 1960s. Many of the reports that may have come from these survey routes will be unfortunately, but understandably, missing. All those who routinely run these routes felt somewhat odd not running these routes and we all hope that they can be ran in 2021.

With the increasing number of birders reporting (primarily on eBird) we are likely starting to get a better definition of what constitutes extreme arrivals and departures. Waterfowl “appear” to be lingering longer in the spring, but in fact are we just now starting to better understand how late some stragglers stay. Because of their size, and likelihood to be seen at lakes and ponds, they are much harder to overlook than passerine species. Sometimes we can tell that these lingering individuals are injured, but at other times they appear to be fine. Are they sick, or just reluctant to leave for whatever reason? That, we will never likely know but it’s safe to say that our “common” waterfowl species may be seen at any month of the year. Without a doubt, good rainfall in May and July, in part of the state, created habitat that was encouraging to many waterfowl species to linger. We likely have more of these species breeding in the reeds and marshes than we ever discover.

Western or montane species, or merely normally irruptive species, were prominent in many locations around the state. Was this just part of their normal irruptive nature? I would accept this for Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches. But when multiple Lesser Goldfinches showed up in the western half of Kansas you may have to wonder if fires or drought in the western part of the US were involved.

Previously mentioned Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches lingered through the period in parts of the state. We know that there were Pine Siskins breeding again in the state and it wouldn’t surprise me if Red-breasted Nuthatches bred as well given their regular appearance through the period in a few locations. We attempted to record the late date in the table as the last day each species was reported during the period in that location. In many cases these birds were reported throughout most of the reporting period.

Lastly, the Kingman County apparent juvenile Pine Warbler. This bird was photographed in pines near Cheney Lake. Photos have been confirmed as a juvenile Pine Warbler. Though not photographed, birds were observed and described that certainly seem to have been adult Pine Warblers. A report was submitted to the KBRC and it is up to them to decide if we had the first breeding record for Pine Warbler in Kansas. Pine Warblers breed not far from southeast Kansas. A breeding record, in say Cherokee County, would not be a surprise. But a breeding record half way across the state may well show just how amazing these creatures called birds truly are!

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 cotte@twinvalley.net or mailed to 11319 Dundon Rd, Milford KS 66514.

Species	Number and Location	County	Date	Observer(s)
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	Photos of adults with young from Meade	Meade*	7/20	TF
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	2 adults with 11 young, Wolf Pond Park	Barton	7/03	DMK, MP
Greater White-fronted Goose	1 lingering at Wyandotte County Lake	Wyandotte	6/01	KC, DP
Wood Duck	female with young near Orion	Gove*	7/20	CF
Gadwall	1 at Kirwin NWR	Phillips	6/20	HA
Lesser Scaup	1 lingering at Warnock Lake Continuing 7/29	Atchison	6/11	SN
Greater Scaup	1 at QNWR, rare summer record	Stafford	7/29	KC, DP
Common Goldeneye	1 female Hillsdale Lake Lingering? Early?	Miami	7/13	APM

Species	Number and Location	County	Date	Observer(s)
Hooded Merganser	1 lingering at Buffalo Park	Sedgwick	6/07	JBi
Clark's Grebe	2 at CBWA Still present 7/03	Barton	6/20	DMK, MP
White-winged Dove	Adults with recently fledged young	Ellsworth	7/02	MR
White-winged Dove	1 in Kingman	<u>Kingman</u>	6/22	VS
Chuck-will's-widow	1 westerly at Lovewell SP	Jewell	6/10	KC, DP
Ruby-throated Hummingbird Nest with hatchling, Pratt Hatchery		Pratt*	7/02	fide MR
King Rail	Adults with young near Dexter	Cowley	7/07	SN
Common Gallinule	2 at Mined Lands WA	Cherokee	6/04	AG
Black-necked Stilt	3 easterly at Mined Lands WA	Cherokee	6/05	AG
American Golden-Plover	1 lingering at QNWR	Stafford	6/15	MN
American Golden-Plover	1 lingering or early at QNWR Still present 7/24 – above two records could be the same bird	Stafford	7/10	MR
Long-billed Curlew	1 at CNG, uncommon summer record Given that they have bred in Morton County, this could be a breeding bird.	Morton	6/25	WJW
Ruddy Turnstone	1 lingering at QNWR	Stafford	6/15	MN
Willet	1 in west Wichita	Sedgwick	7/03	PM
Willet	1 at Great Plains Industrial Park Lake	Labette	7/15	CG
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1 at CBWA, uncommon summer record Continuing 7/26	Barton	7/22	KC
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at Woodson St. Fishing Lake	<u>Woodson</u>	6/14	CS
Neotropic Cormorant	Veterans Memorial Lake	Cowley	7/11	FSQ
Osprey	1 early at Ft. Leavenworth	Leavenworth	7/12	JS
Red-shouldered Hawk	1 westerly at Scott SP	Scott	6/11	SSh
Red-shouldered Hawk	1 westerly at Dodge City	Ford	7/07	CMM
Lewis's Woodpecker	1 continuing near Elkhart	Morton	6/28	WB
Merlin	1 quite late near Phillipsburg	Phillips	6/12	DTs
Western Wood-Pewee	1 seen and heard in Scott SP 5 present and calling on 7/04	Scott	6/11	JC, SSh
Western Wood-Pewee	Fledglings seen with adults	Scott*	7/31	TSh, SSh
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1 early at Perry Lake SP	Jefferson	7/16	MMH
Least Flycatcher	2 at Dodge City, early and westerly	Ford	7/20	JC
Eastern Phoebe	1 westerly at Lakin	Kearny	6/13	JOs
White-eyed Vireo	1 singing on Konza Prairie	Riley	6/06	DR, DSm
Fish Crow	Adult feeding fledgling, Arkansas City	Cowley*	7/24	KS, DS
Cave Swallow	1 at Slate Creek Wetlands WA Continuing 7/28	Sumner	6/25	MT, KGm
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 at McMillen home, Dodge City Continuing 6/27, returning or a different bird on 7/29	Ford	6/03	CMM
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 in Shane backyard Continuing 6/27	Finney	6/06	SSh
Sedge Wren	1 slightly early at Konza Prairie	Riley	7/05	DSm
Marsh Wren	1 early at Warnock Lake	Atchison	7/11	DMK, MP
Marsh Wren	1 at Neosho WA	Neosho	7/16	ABu
Pine Siskin	1 at residence near Derby	Sedgwick	6/08	CMK
Pine Siskin	1 at feeders in Dodge City	Ford	6/10	JC

Species	Number and Location	County	Date	Observer(s)
Pine Siskin	At least 2 at feeders in Topeka	Shawnee	6/16	RC
Pine Siskin	2 at feeders in Overland Park	Johnson	6/19	DSg
Pine Siskin	Up to 7 at feeders in Garden City	Finney	7/06	TSh, SSh
Pine Siskin	1 fledgling in Garden City	Finney	7/06	TSh, SSh
Pine Siskin	1 at feeders in Dodge City	Ford	7/26	JC
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders south of Ellsworth	Russell	6/10	DK
	Continued through 6/11			
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders, residence east of CBWA	Barton	6/13	RP
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at Sandsage Bison Range WA	Finney	6/21	QN
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at Calhoun yard, Dodge city	Ford	7/25	JC
Clay-colored Sparrow	1 at Baker Wetlands, rare summer record	Douglas	7/17	MW
White-crowned Sparrow	1 lingering in Lakin	Kearny	6/13	JOs
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1 at Scott SP	Scott	7/04	DKh, WKh
Spotted Towhee	1 late at Lovewell WA	Jewell	6/10	KC
Bronzed Cowbird	1 at Samson Bridge and Rest Area	Seward	6/03	KC
	Still present 6/10			
Worm-eating Warbler	1 at Lake Lenexa	Johnson	6/21	MG
	Still present 7/03			
Louisiana Waterthrush	1 at Byron Walker WA, westerly	Kingman	7/18	AG
Northern Parula	1 well west for mid-June in Shane's yard	Finney	6/20	SSh, TSh
Pine Warbler	1 at Calhoun residence, Dodge city	Ford	6/29	JC
Pine Warbler	1 apparent fledgling in pines near Cheney, KBRC Kingman	Kingman	7/10	SSI

Locations and notes: CBWA – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, CNG – Cimarron National Grasslands, KBRC – Kansas Bird Records Committee report filed, QNWR – Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, SP – State Park, WA – Wildlife Area.

Underlined county name indicates new county record. Underlined number indicates an exceptionally high count. County name followed by an asterisk (*) indicates a new confirmed breeding record.

Observers - Individuals: Henry Armknecht, Jeremy Birket (JBi), Will Britton, Andrew Burnett (ABu), Jeff Calhoun, Randy Carman, Kathy Carroll, Tom Flowers, Christopher Frick, Chad Gardner, Matt Gearheart, Andrew George, Kurt Grimm (KGm), Will Jaremko-Wright (WJW), David Kirsch (DKh), William Kirsch (WKh), Dave Klema, Patty Marlett, Mick McHugh (MMH), Caralynn McKee (CMK), Debra McKee (DMK), Christi McMillen (CMM), Sue Newland, Quentin Nolan, Mark Nolen, Jamie Osterbuhr (JOs), Rob Penner, Diane Persons, Audrey Percy-Muenz (APM), Mark Pheasant, Dave Rintoul, Kim Sain, John Schukman, Carolyn Schwab, Sarah Sales (SSI), David Seibel, Sara Shane (SSh), Tom Shane (TSh), Faith Shapley-Queen (FSQ), David Skidgel (DSg), Dylan Smith (DSm), Victor Stoll, Diane Thomas (DTs), Max Thompson, Mary Wilcox

Assume Nothing!

The source of sightings listed above, as well as updates to the county check-lists, is gleaned from a number of locations including emails, Facebook, eBird, phone calls and occasionally other unusual reporting methods. I try to include new county species above even “common species” to provide a record of those additions. Unfortunately there are now several thousand birders in Kansas and only one of me! I periodically receive a little assistance (thank you Dan Larson) in scouring eBird and other sources for new potential records, but your help would be greatly appreciated. Don't assume that we will get your record gleaned out of wherever you report it IF you do report it. If you have a significant sighting or a potentially new county record, email it to me. The best email address would be my home address: cotte@twinvalley.net. Other methods of communicating with me can be cumbersome to keep track of or may be overlooked. If you are uncertain if a particular record is a new county record it's easy to check at the county check-list website: https://www.ksbirds.org/checklist/checklist_index.htm. The check-lists were all recently updated. If the check-list you are looking at doesn't carry a date of December 1, 2020, it isn't the most current. I greatly appreciate your help in trying to track the constantly changing face of Kansas ornithology!

- Chuck Otte, Kansas Bird Records Committee Secretary and Check-list coordinator

Fall KOS meeting paper abstracts

(Presenter indicated by * following name)

Breeding provenance of non-harlani dark morph Red-tailed Hawks wintering in Kansas. *Lucas H. DeCicco**, *Bryce W. Robinson*, and *Mark B. Robbins*. *University of Kansas*.

Wintering Red-tailed Hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*) in Kansas exhibit a large amount of plumage variation, leading ornithologists to believe that five subspecies winter in the state. Due to our incomplete knowledge of both breeding distribution and plumage variation in certain subspecies, assigning wintering birds to subspecies can be problematic. Two phenotypes of dark morph Red-tailed Hawks regularly winter in Kansas, one has been assigned to subspecies harlani and the other to the western subspecies calurus. However, some authorities suggest that instead of calurus, this phenotype represents an undescribed dark morph of the abieticola subspecies breeding in northern Canada. In late winter 2020 we deployed GPS-GSM transmitters on two dark morph (non-harlani) Red-tailed Hawks in northeastern Kansas to determine their breeding provenance. We tracked both birds to northern British Columbia in May, where they last passed through cell coverage. Once these birds return south this fall, data on breeding localities should be available via cell towers.

Window-bird Strikes at a Nature Center: An Unfortunate (and Ironic) Case Study. *Curtis Wolf**, *Kansas Wetlands Education Center*, *Fort Hays State University*

Window strikes by birds have been well documented as a significant source of mortality. With more than 50 floor-to-ceiling exterior window panels, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center (KWEC), in Barton County, KS, has first-hand experience of the deleterious effects of windows on birds. Starting in December 2009, KWEC staff began tracking bird-window strikes. Date, species, and location of strikes for each incident were recorded. In 10 years, 142 total window strikes were documented (48% of the strikes were observably fatal), including strikes by 27 species of birds. This dataset will provide baseline data for evaluating future mitigation efforts at KWEC.

Closing a Major Biogeographic Barrier: The Great Plains of North America. *A. Townsend Peterson** and *Fernando Machado-Stredel*, *Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas*.

The Great Plains has been considered as one of the major biogeographic barriers of North America, dividing the temperate forests of eastern and western North America with broad grassland areas. However, the Great Plains has seen massive change, with small and large cities and other settlements providing forest islands, and fire suppression causing broad afforestation across major portions of the region. Here, we analyze temporal dimensions of range expansion by eastern forest-associated bird species into the Great Plains and attempt to separate effects of changing land cover patterns, changing climates, and latitude, in enabling or braking these range expansions.

Climatic Variability Explains Interannual Variation in Breeding Distributions of Grasshopper Sparrows. *Dylan J. Smith**, *Hefley*, *Trevor J. Boyle*, *W. Alice*. *Kansas State University*.

Grassland bird populations are declining rapidly and understanding the causes of population declines is critical to help conserve them. However, understanding causes of declines is made more difficult as grassland birds have low site fidelity relative to birds in other systems. Low site fidelity complicates measures of population size, as smaller local abundance does not necessarily mean lower population sizes, and birds may simply have dispersed elsewhere. Because of the difficulty teasing out the effects of site fidelity and population declines, understanding the causes of grassland birds' low site fidelity is critical. We used citizen science data from eBird to compare the distributions of central Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus*) across the Great Plains of the central United States, as well as weather and phenology data from PRISM and MODIS, respectively. We predict that (a) lower temperatures on the wintering grounds in winter will result in a greater degree of change in local abundance, due to a higher rate of winter mortality. We also predict that (b) lower temperatures on the breeding grounds during spring migration (April) will result in a decrease in local abundance, as it may be more efficient for birds to leave than weather the cold. Third,

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we predict that (c) the larger the difference in precipitation in the preceding year, the larger the difference in vegetation, and therefore the larger the difference in local abundance. Finally, the earlier the start of the growing season, we predict (d) a larger difference in local abundance, as birds will be able to make more informed decisions about what conditions will be like later in the year. Understanding which local weather or phenological variables have the greatest effect on Grasshopper Sparrow local abundance will give us a better prediction of where sparrows will go in a given year and can allow us to allocate management efforts accordingly.

Apparent Survival is Correlated with Lagged Precipitation in a Mobile Grassland Songbird.

Silber, K.* (1), N.M. Mohankumar (2), T.J. Hefley (2), W.A. Boyle (1) 1: Kansas State University, Department of Biology, Manhattan, KS 66506 2: Kansas State University, Department of Statistics, Manhattan, KS 66506

In mobile species, population growth rates are determined by birth, death, immigration, and emigration. Many factors may influence demographic rates, particularly for migratory birds that face pressures on different vital rates throughout their range. In mid-continental grasslands, disturbance (e.g. fire and grazing) and precipitation drive variation in grassland structure and function, but mechanistic links between precipitation and demographic rates remain inconclusive. Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*) are a highly mobile, migratory songbird that exhibit within-season dispersal rates of over 50% and interannual return rates of anywhere between 0-80%. Over a 7 year period, we collected capture histories for 1505 individually-marked Grasshopper Sparrows at Konza Prairie, Kansas. We related estimates of detection and apparent survival to a priori sets of precipitation metrics to 1) determine the times and locations throughout the annual cycle most strongly influencing demographic rates, and 2) evaluate putative alternative drivers of movement and mortality. We found precipitation from two years prior to be most strongly associated with apparent survival estimates, suggesting habitat structure mediated by multi-year climatic histories is among the strongest drivers of local demography. Given the relative importance of movement to mortality in this system, these environmental factors likely influence immigration and emigration. Our study elucidates the lasting effects of climatic variability, providing insights for avian community responses as weather becomes increasingly unpredictable.

Do Behavioral Tendencies Present Reproductive Tradeoffs in Dickcissels? Jeane Thompson*, William E. Jensen, Emporia State University

Intraspecific variation in behavior can have important evolutionary and ecological consequences. Such variation might involve tradeoffs, potentially affecting some, but not all demographic parameters (e.g., components of reproductive success or survival). Using the Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) as a model organism, we are investigating how behavioral tendencies might affect multiple sources of variation in reproductive success. Specifically, we are exploring how variation in two behavioral types (boldness and activity) relate to three components of Dickcissel reproductive success: nest predation, brood parasitism, and nestling condition. Boldness and activity might be positively or negatively correlated with one another, which may affect the degree with which each behavioral type affects each component of reproductive success. The observed patterns will give us a better understanding of how selection might act on certain behavioral tendencies. Data collection is taking place on the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve during the breeding seasons of 2020 and 2021 from mid-May to early August each year. During the 2020 field season, we located 82 nests. Each nest was visited twice a week where multiple metrics of boldness and activity, as well as nest contents were recorded. Preliminary results have shown that females who tend to be more bold or active in one metric are also more bold or active in another metric, respectively. Additionally, females who tend to be bolder also tend to be more active. Our future analyses will use multi-factor analysis to develop composite scores of boldness and activity, which in turn will be compared to reproductive indices.

Great Horned Owl Diversity in the Americas and in Kansas. Emily Ostrow*, Lucas H. DeCicco, Mark B. Robbins, Robert G. Moyle, University of Kansas.

Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) are known for considerable geographic variation in both plumage and size. This variation has led to the recognition of 15 subspecies, but little is known about genetic diversity and how close these differences are associated with described morphology. I used thousands of genetic markers to examine genetic diversity across this wide-ranging species, from Canada to southern Argentina. These markers confirmed suspicions that the Magellanic Horned Owl is both behaviorally and genetically distinct enough to be considered a separate species. These results also

indicated that there is little genetic differentiation throughout much of North America despite considerable plumage and size differentiation. The genetic similarity across these populations begs several evolutionary questions. Two different-looking populations of *B. virginianus* meet in Kansas and form a contact zone. I plan to examine this contact zone to look at whether plumage patterns match genetic patterns and whether the parasites associated with this species are more closely associated with the genetics of their hosts or the plumage patterns. Preliminary quantitative photography data on Kansas *B. virginianus* show an observable difference in plumage characteristics across the state that will be used in conjunction with future genetic data of owls and their feather lice to address these questions.

Evaluating the Avian and Vegetative Communities of Mined Land Wildlife Areas in Cherokee and Crawford Counties. *Luke Headings**, *Andrew George*, *Christine Brodsky*, (Department of Biology, Pittsburg State University).

The Mined Land Wildlife Areas (MLWAs) of Southeast Kansas represent a diverse patchwork of ecosystems in varying stage of succession, including grasslands, shrublands, and forests. The goal of our study is to assess the conservation value of strip-mined land vegetation for bird communities. During this 2020 pilot season, we conducted point counts and vegetation sampling at 67 locations in Crawford and Cherokee counties that were previously mined. A total of 74 species were detected, including fourteen species of greatest conservation need, as identified in the Kansas Wildlife Action Plan. We also located and monitored 48 nests from 8 species 11 of which fledged young. In the future, we will focus our nest searching efforts on Bell's vireos (*Vireo bellii*) because of its scarcity in the state of Kansas and its presence on the species of greatest conservation need list. Preliminary analyses indicate that reclaimed mined land may support similar bird communities to those adjacent unmined areas. However, it remains unclear if sites dominated by invasive species are negatively affecting individual species. Ongoing work will continue to evaluate the relationships between mined land vegetation and avifauna communities to inform habitat restoration on the MLWAs.

Is Grassland Always Grassland? Spatial Variation in the Selection of Grassland Patches by Lesser Prairie-Chickens During the Breeding Season.

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Chris K. J. Gulick, *Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Kansas State University.*
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United States grasslands have experienced large-scale declines since European settlement, which have led to habitat loss and fragmentation for many wildlife species. Lesser Prairie-Chickens (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) have been especially affected, as their occupied range and population abundance have declined by ~90%. Informing management strategies to ensure the long-term persistence of Lesser Prairie-Chickens requires unbiased estimates of resource selection. Lesser Prairie-Chickens generally select for grasslands, but vegetation cover and structure of grassland patches depend on many factors, including grazing and burning regime, soil type and elevation. Moreover, grasslands experience large spatiotemporal variation in precipitation and temperature. The structure and composition of available grassland patches will therefore likely vary throughout the Lesser Prairie-Chicken range. We assessed spatial variation in breeding season resource selection by Lesser Prairie-Chickens at 4 sites in Kansas and Colorado, representing 3 of the 4 currently occupied ecoregions. During 2013–2018, we equipped Lesser Prairie-Chickens with VHF or GPS transmitters and used selection ratios to test within-home-range selection of grassland patches. We found that Lesser Prairie-Chickens selected ungrazed rangeland, CRP fields, and grasslands containing >10% shrub cover at sites in eastern Colorado and northwestern Kansas, where annual precipitation and resulting vegetation height were low. In contrast, Lesser Prairie-Chicken at more eastern sites in south-central Kansas selected for forb-rich grasslands and against shrubby grasslands in most years. Differences in resource selection among populations complicates the conservation of Lesser Prairie-Chickens. However, our estimates of resource selection could help to find suitable management strategies for local grasslands for current populations to persist.

Supporting Grassland Birds Using Spring Cover Crops. *Alixandra Godar- Kansas State University/ Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit**, *Adela Piernicky- Pheasants Forever*, *David Haukos- U.S. Geological Survey, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit*, *Jeff Prendergast- Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism*

Conflicts between agricultural producers and wildlife are spreading and intensifying. Managers must search for compromises between these competing interests so both can flourish through land sharing within a limited landscape. Cover crops offer potential common ground. Cover crop benefits for farmers are widely documented and varied while benefits for wildlife are widely assumed but have little evidential support. We worked with landowners from 2017 – 2019 in western Kansas to gather evidence on the influence of spring cover crops on local wildlife. Planted in March and terminated in June, spring cover crops transform a barren, chemical fallow field into a potential source of cover and food for wildlife species. Study fields were divided into 4 treatments consisting of 3 cover crop seed mixes and a chemical fallow control plot. Our cover crop mixes included Chick Magnet (a warm-season, broad-leafed forb mix designed for precocial chicks), GreenSpring (an agricultural forage mix with cool-seasoned peas and oats), and a Custom Mix (designed to be adaptive with ten species). We monitored vegetation structure, vegetation composition, and insect abundance weekly. Resources in cover crop fields differed from chemical fallow and Conservation Reserve Program fields, offering a different set of resources to wildlife.

Greater Prairie-Chicken Habitat Selection Within a Mosaic Burning Regime on Fort Riley Military Reservation. *Jacquelyn M. Gehrt**, *Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502*, *Derek A. Moon, Fort Riley Environmental Division, Fort Riley Military Reservation, Fort Riley, KS 66442*, *David A. Haukos, US Geological Survey, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66502*

Greater Prairie-Chickens (*Tympanuchus cupido*) face large-scale disturbances in the form of habitat loss and conversion of the prairies in which they reside. Even large tracts of remaining grasslands, such as the Flint Hills ecoregion, are not free from disturbances caused by contemporary land management practices such as ranching. Some ranching practices implement annual burning or intensive grazing regimes that may decrease habitat availability for Greater Prairie-Chickens. Fort Riley Military Reservation in Riley

and Geary counties, KS may prove to be a refuge for Greater Prairie-Chickens as grazing is not allowed and burn regimes are characterized as a mosaic style, leaving a heterogeneous matrix of vegetation on the landscape. This heterogeneous landscape prompted us to assess relative use of available habitat types by Greater Prairie-Chickens on the reservation. We tracked the movements and space use of 38 females from April-August 2019 and 2020. Females predominantly selected for frequently burned areas (every 1 to 2 years). We also found used and nest locations to be in similar areas on the landscape in 2019 and 2020 despite annual shifts in burn frequencies in those areas. This shift in burn frequencies led to a significant difference in nest success between frequently and moderately burned areas (9% and 21% respectively). Information on the influence of the mosaic burning regime on habitat selection by Greater-Prairie Chickens will aid in the development of specific management recommendations for the conservation of Greater Prairie-Chickens on Fort Riley Military Reservation.

(All of these papers were presented virtually for the fall KOS meeting. You may find them by entering “Kansas Ornithological Society” in YouTube’s search box or at <https://tinyurl.com/y3232pyk>)

Best Student Paper Awards From KOS Fall Meeting

Every year at the fall KOS Meeting many of the presented papers are from college students both undergraduate and graduate. A team of judges, led by John Schukman, evaluate the presentations and select the best presented paper. If there are enough student papers presented awards will be given in both the undergraduate and graduate divisions. This year the winner in the Ph.D. category was Katy Silber from Kansas State University and in the M.S. category Jeane Thompson from Emporia State University. Katy and Jeane each will receive \$50 and a one year membership to KOS. We encourage all of the presenters to consider taking their presentations and writing them up for publication in the KOS *Bulletin*. Please contact the *Bulletin* editor, Gene Young, for more information on how to prepare and submit a manuscript for consideration.

- continued from page 3

first about 80 yards south of the road did not vocalize. A third pewee, north of the second near the paved road sang in response to the tape recordings. A fourth singing pewee was located by Tom Shane an additional 0.19 miles north of the road crossing at the mouth of Horsethief Canyon at the boat ramp. Both authors heard the fifth pewee singing 0.69 miles west in the KDWP&T hunting area. It was in some old timber 130 yards SE of the end of the pavement. The bird at this location was only heard the onetime, however we checked this stop during our normal routine of birdwatching. This spot is normally checked on birdwatching trips to Scott Lake by the authors. It is surrounded by cottonwoods which would decrease the probability of hearing a pewee due to the racket made by blowing cottonwood leaves on a windy day.

4 July - Two pewees: David and William Kirsch observed two birds in Horsethief Canyon.

6 July - One pewee: The authors heard one pewee make one call, late morning at the mouth of Horsethief Canyon. Later in the day a bird was heard singing at the same location.

23 July - Three pewees: One bird was heard singing and the second silent at the south end of the timber in Horsethief Canyon near the big cottonwoods by Sara Shane & Pam Ramsey. The birds were not seen interacting, A male at the north end of the canyon was heard singing a few hours later.

31 July - Three pewees: Sara Shane observed one adult pewee following another in the central part of the woods in Horsethief Canyon almost every time the second bird changed locations. Tom Shane observed a juvenile bird about 50 yards from the two adults.

31 August - Two pewees: Two juvenile Western Wood-Pewees were observed at a picnic area, 0.44 miles WNW of the Horsethief Canyon road crossing. They were primarily in several cottonwoods and high in some of the dead limbs. They were doing some brief nonaggressive chasing that most likely could be categorized as play. It was with these two pewees that Tom Shane was able to make his best observations of the contrast between the two medium brown wing bars and the white edges of the trailing secondaries.

Numerous observations of territorial Western Wood-Pewees have been made in western Kansas for over 100 years with no positive evidence of breeding. Our 2020 records of multiple birds over a 103 day period during the breeding season, along with the observations of young, point to the long suspected idea that nesting of the species had occasionally occurred in western Kansas. We will leave that ultimate decision to any future students of the Western Wood-Pewee.

The species formerly known as McCown's Longspur...

Names of birds change periodically for various reasons. Species may be split into two or more separate species or two species lumped into one species. Other times names, especially common names, are changed to avoid duplication around the world where two different species are called by the same name. Marsh Hawk being renamed Northern Harrier is one example of this. In late summer 2020, the North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithological Society renamed McCown's Longspur, Thick-billed Longspur. As stated in the proposal, "...because recent events have reinforced the social imperative to be attentive to issues of racial justice, including the impact of some bird names." KOS follows AOS in both naming and taxonomy so future editions of Kansas Check-lists will reflect this name change.

— Chuck Otte, Kansas Bird Records Committee Secretary

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Upcoming KOS Meetings!

Spring Meeting, 2021??

The KOS Board tries to move the spring meeting around to different parts of the state. Spring of 2017 we were in Pittsburg in southeast Kansas. Spring of 2018 we were in Dodge City in southwest Kansas. Spring of 2019 we were in Ft. Scott in east central Kansas. Spring 2020 we were scheduled to be in Concordia in north-central Kansas and of course that plan was scuttled by COVID-19. We hope that we will be able to try that again next spring. But beyond that, the plate is open as is the likelihood of having a meeting in the pandemic era. Feel free to make a suggestion to the KOS Board but be ready to help out on a local committee when you do!