



# *The Horned Lark*

*Kansas Ornithological Society*

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## **From the President's Pen**

**By Jenn Rader**

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Greetings from the Ozark Plateau region of Kansas! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jennifer (Jenn) Rader and I'm a lifelong birder.

For as long as I can remember, the Kansas Ornithological Society has been a part of my life. I can remember attending meetings and paper sessions with my parents as a little girl, my sisters and I trying to be quiet and coloring away as others talked about 'everything birds'. Fuzzy memories of looking for some rare bird through a spotting scope with KOS people, then using the experiences for my grade school show-and-tell. Checking out all the silent auction items at the Fall Meetings. The privilege of meeting many wonderful people at some KOS function or another over the past three decades. I have no doubt that my experiences with this organization have helped shape me into who I am today. I am humbled and honored to be able to speak to you now as President of this organization.

So, how are you all doing? The past two years have been...something! Stress, struggles, frustrations, worries, unimaginable losses and more. A huge pat on the back to Science and Technology (and the birds!) for keeping us connected during uncertain times. I know our virtual gatherings just weren't the same as an in-person KOS meeting, but I appreciate everyone's willingness to try something new, and it sure was good to still see familiar faces albeit through the tech screens.

As good as the technology is, I need regular breaks from it. Some of you may know this about me already, but I am a naturalist by trade and run a little nature center as a non-formal educator for our state's wildlife agency. As

such, part of my job involves learning about the benefits of spending time outdoors, how to provide outdoor opportunities for others and keeping up with natural history information on all the magnificent organisms that call our planet home so I can share that knowledge with others.

Nature is my life, but sometimes I still need a reminder to get outside and enjoy it. I'm preaching to the choir here, but studies repeatedly show that outdoor time greatly improves our physical and mental health. Recently, a German study found that Europeans were happiest if they could see or hear several different bird species on a regular basis. The study determined that seeing several bird species in a day gave the equivalent happiness one feels to receiving a \$150 raise. Another study in the U.S. found that hikers who hear more bird species while out on the trail have an overall better feeling about life than those who hear little to no nature sounds on an outdoor trek. The stresses of the pandemic further highlight our need for quality time in nature. Birds and biodiversity for the win!

In case you need it, here's your reminder to get outside and enjoy the birds. It's good for you!

Thank you all for your time, and for being a part of this meaningful organization. Goodbye for now, but let's enjoy the birds together sometime!

Until then, happy birding.

- Jenn

# From the Keyboard

By the Editor

As I sit at my keyboard on the last day of November, tucking this issue of the Horned Lark into bed, it is dark outside. It has been dark since 5:30 this evening. We are racing towards the winter solstice and all the mystery and history that have surrounded this occurrence for centuries. As winter is heralded into our worlds it is also a time that we birders spend those precious hours of daylight looking for and chasing some of those amazing winter time birds that cause us awe and wonder: owls and hawks.

We can't seem to get enough of these amazing creatures and find ourselves looking twice at every white plastic bag on the side of a road or across a field wondering if it isn't a Snowy Owl. We are blessed in Kansas with nearly every imaginable subspecies, morph or version of the Red-tailed Hawk. Driving down a road in the grasslands across the state it can almost sound like we are watching a 4th of July fireworks displays with all the oohs and ahhs!

But our yearning for ever better looks at these magnificent creatures or maybe trying to get a few feet closer for that "perfect shot" we can put these species at risk. Repeated flushing and unrelenting pursuit of these birds can disrupt their normal routines which includes resting and feeding. Birds that may already be pushed to the edge of their own existence may simply become too stressed to survive until tomorrow.

The importance of the survival of every one of these individuals can not be understated. We lose too many to other causes every winter. We don't need to add to those losses. To borrow an old phrase from more than one movie of many years past, we need to often just "back off pardner!" We need to be aware of when we are encroaching into their comfort space. We need to be examples to other birders. We need to politely remind other birders and even non-birders that they need to give that bird some space.

It's been another strange year and now we get to learn another letter of the Greek alphabet, this time omicron. There is no doubt that the entire world has been "knocked cattywampus". We've lost friends and family, we've seen friends impacted hard by this virus and no one knows where it will end up. But we just keep taking it one day at a time. Many newbies are "joining our flock" of birders. We need to be helpful, be positive, be instructive, and most importantly, be safe, whether that's keeping your distance, masking up or getting your vaccinations.

Yes, we all just want it to be over, but our lives have been forever changed. We may find it a struggle to know what to be thankful for but through this all I've been thankful for the birds. No matter what yesterday, last night, or today brought us, I still know that when I wake up tomorrow morning, the birds will be there! Let's all look forward to a new year, new birds and new friends.

- Chuck



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cotte@twinvalley.net

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# Our Non-Traditional Big Year of Birding

*by Tom and Sara Shane*

In 1922, Joseph Grinnell, a professor at University of California Berkeley and one of the eminent ornithologists of the period, published a paper in the *Auk* titled: The Role of the “Accidental.” He predicted, using the rate that species were being added to the California bird list from all 1250 species in North America, that eventually all would reach the state. He predicted it would take 410 years to record every bird by 2331. We added one of those low probability birds for Kansas in late 2020. They just don’t come along very often. Starting in November of 2020 and ending a year later we encountered eight interesting, noteworthy and exciting birds for west-central Kansas, which produced one of the best birding years of our lives. The following records are listed in the order they were encountered.

**Yellow-eyed Junco:** a first state record for Kansas. On 2 November 2020 Sara and I met back at the truck after hiking in two directions at Scott Park. She stated that she thought she had found a pretty good bird. I looked at the screen of her camera and all I could say was, “Oh my gosh.” The first thing I asked was why, then immediately thought about the horrific droughts going on in the southwest. C. Frick located the Junco about three weeks later after we had failed in the interim. We know about 60 people listed the bird because of eBird posts after that time. However, dozens more probably made the trip. The Junco was last seen on 31 March 2021.

**Eurasian Wigeon:** On 31 March 2021, while birding with the Zempels at Scott Park, Tom spotted an adult male in excellent plumage southeast of the spillway. Three other birders, C. Frick, K. Carroll, and D. Persons were in western Kansas and made it to the lake with plenty of light remaining. This will probably represent the second state Kansas record with physical evidence.

**Painted Bunting:** A green bird was observed feeding south of the Scott Lake boat ramp on 19 May 2021, a new Scott County record. A couple of decades ago we had a female and a young bunting feeding together in our Garden City yard and there was a striking difference in the greens between the two.

**Western Wood-Pewee:** The first state breeding record was reported last year when we found several fledglings. This year we found a nest with an adult incubating or brooding. Then on 7 July 2021 we observed a nestling being fed in the nest, located in Horsethief Canyon, Scott Lake State Park.

**White-tailed Kite:** While birding from lawn chairs with Marie, Karl and Rachel Osterbuhr at their Garden City home on 20 May 2021 we observed a number of kites soaring above us. We got a brief glimpse of a light-phased “Mississippi” Kite that I had never heard of. We got another brief glimpse, but no details. The third pass lasted much longer (10 seconds), but we rattled off a bunch of photos and confirmed a White-tailed Kite showing the two large black wrist spots. This is the second Finney County record.

**Sabine’s Gull:** we had planned to go to Scott Park on 14 September 2021, but had to cancel. Fortunately Christopher Frick made a drive through that day and located the adult Sabine’s Gull, a first county record. We went up the following day and had a most enjoyable day photographing the most beautiful gull I have ever seen. What made this bird “very rare” instead of just “rare” was that birds in adult plumage are not often seen in Kansas. The highlight of the afternoon was while Sara was sitting on the dam; the gull made a complete flight around the large body of water at the north end and came in and landed 20 feet in front of her next to the water.

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# Kansas Birding Roundup, Spring 2021

## March – May)

### Chuck Otte, compiler

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This is the report of the spring birding season in Kansas, March through May. After the extreme cold of February, many birders headed into the spring season wondering how many species would show declines due to those extremes.

I need to start this seasonal roundup with a quick note about waterfowl. We often expect certain waterfowl species to be present at certain times of year. Yet depending on the, at times, quirky nature of Kansas precipitation, we will have species linger well into the following season or even scattered individuals spend an entire winter or summer if the surface water conditions are just right. What we list in the Roundup are those that are truly out of season just due to their rare nature in the state, new county records or new breeding records. Cinnamon Teal are one of those that we often think of as a western Kansas specialty. Yet in recent springs, due to more birders out birding, we find scattered all over eastern Kansas any given spring.

Glossy Ibis are another species that is being found more and more regularly outside of their previously expected haunts of Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira. Baker Wetlands and Neosho Wildlife Area seem to be hosting them regularly in the spring season along with other wetlands. While out of the breeding season differentiating them from the more common White-faced Ibis can be frustrating, adults in breeding plumage in the spring can be identified with a fair amount of confidence. But with Glossy's being confirmed in more and more locations, we all need to probably spend a little more time studying the *Plegadis* species we see anywhere in the state.

Several years ago the Solitary Vireo complex was split into three distinct species, Blue-headed, Cassin's, and Plumbeous. When we call several closely related species a complex, it should give us a clue that at times identification of these species is complex! The Kansas Bird Records Committee has reviewed several challenging records from this complex and we encourage everyone to spend a great deal of time documenting any sightings of these three species especially in extreme western Kansas.

Corvids are a fascinating family of highly intelligent birds. But as common as they may be across the state, there is still much we don't understand about them. Fish Crows continue to slowly expand north and west in the state apparently following upstream along the riparian corridors and then venturing out from there. As such we are still learning more about the timing of their spring returns and their nesting habits. Ravens continue to be an enigma with birders reporting both species from the western part of the state. Pre-breeding season raven ID appears to be fairly straightforward if vocalizing or you are close to them but birders are urged to pay close attention to details and not make assumptions when reporting these two species.

The Yellow-eyed Junco that was first observed at Scott State Park in November continued to be seen into the spring season still keeping company with the local Scott Lake Dark-eyed Juncos. It was last recorded on March 31.

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](mailto:cotte@twinvalley.net) or mailed to 11319 Dundon Rd, Milford KS 66514.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Number and Location</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Observer(s)</b>
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	10 at CBWA, first of year	Barton	4/03	KC, DP
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	4 at Lewis WTP	<u>Edwards</u>	5/22	JC
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	2 in Scott City	<u>Scott</u>	5/24	HA
Trumpeter Swan	1 somewhat late at Neosho WA Still present, 5/09	Neosho	4/21	ABu
Trumpeter Swan	1 on small residential lake, Linn Valley Still present 4/27	Linn	4/21	JCs
Trumpeter Swan	1 at Marais des Cygnes Still present 5/09	Linn	5/07	JMD
Eurasian Wigeon	1 at Scott SP, KBRC	Scott	3/31	SSh, TSh, m.ob.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Number and Location</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Observer(s)</b>
Surf Scoter	2 at Perry Lake Still present 4/16	Jefferson	3/28	DMz
Surf Scoter	2 at Clark SFL Still present 5/04	Clark	4/08	CH, RY
Surf Scoter	2 at Scott SP Still present 4/23	Scott	4/22	CF
Long-tailed Duck	1 at Warnock Lake	<u>Atchison</u>	4/24	LS
Red-necked Grebe	1 at Lake Olathe Park Still present 4/17	Johnson	4/05	ABa
Black-chinned Hummingbird	1 male at Elkhart Cemetery area	Morton	5/02	BP, CKn
Virginia Rail	1 at old Herington City Lake	<u>Dickinson</u>	3/05	GC
Common Gallinule	1 at Cowskin Creek Water Reclamation	Sedgwick	5/09	JB
Sandhill Crane	4 easterly west of Detlor	Jefferson	3/01	STM
Whooping Crane	20 at QNWR	Stafford	3/25	fide MR
Black-necked Stilt	2 at Howard WTP	<u>Elk</u>	4/11	AN, CS
American Golden-Plover	1 at Talmo Marsh	<u>Republic</u>	4/28	HA
American Golden-Plover	1 at Navajo Rd playa	<u>Logan</u>	5/27	CF
Whimbrel	1 at 73 <sup>rd</sup> Rd Lake	<u>Kiowa</u>	5/12	TL
Hudsonian Godwit	22 in flight over Scott SP	<u>Scott</u>	4/23	DMK, MP
Hudsonian Godwit	1 at playas near Belpre	<u>Edwards</u>	5/22	HA
Marbled Godwit	5 at Tallgrass Prairie Natural Preserve	<u>Chase</u>	4/17	ID
Ruddy Turnstone	1 at Talmo Marsh	<u>Republic</u>	4/28	HA
Ruddy Turnstone	1 at watershed pond	<u>Ness</u>	5/09	KG, PJ
Sanderling	1 south of Harper	<u>Harper</u>	5/05	HA
Sanderling	1 at Lovewell WA, Pawnee Point	<u>Jewell</u>	5/08	HA, DL
Sanderling	1 near Ottawa	<u>Franklin</u>	5/28	MGo
Pectoral Sandpiper	2 early at Neosho WA	Neosho	3/04	ABu
Pectoral Sandpiper	1 early at Slate Creek Wetland WA	Sumner	3/04	MT
Pectoral Sandpiper	1 early at Perry Lake	Jefferson	3/05	KC
Short-billed Dowitcher	1 at watershed pond	<u>Rush</u>	5/09	KG, PJ
Long-billed Dowitcher	1 at County Rd 2 playa	<u>Wichita</u>	5/25	KC, DP
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at QNWR	Stafford	4/23	MR
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at CBWA Still present 4/29	Barton	4/24	DMK, MP
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Dighton WTP	Lane	5/04	HA
Laughing Gull	1 early at CBWA	Barton	3/14	DMK, MP
California Gull	1 in field north of Lawrence	Douglas	3/25	KC, DP
California Gull	1 at Elkhart WTP	Morton	5/03	BP
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1 at Elkhart WTP	Morton	4/11	MGd, DKb
Common Loon	1 at Sam's Pond	<u>Hamilton</u>	4/15	BBO, KSk
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at new Herington City Lake	Dickinson	3/28	DMK, MP
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at Kingman SFL	<u>Kingman</u>	5/06	SN
White-tailed Kite	1 southwest of Sawyer	Pratt	4/08	SqS
White-tailed Kite	1 in Garden City, KBRC	Finney	5/20	SSh, TSh
Mississippi Kite	1 slightly early in Pratt	Pratt	4/16	MR
Broad-winged Hawk	1 slightly early near Parsons	Neosho	3/21	DMK, MP
Ferruginous Hawk	1 easterly near Yardley	Linn	3/01	ML
Ferruginous Hawk	1 easterly at Melvern Lake	Osage	3/02	KMD

<b>Species</b>	<b>Number and Location</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Observer(s)</b>
Snowy Owl	1 still present southwest of Holton	Jackson	3/08	CM
Long-eared Owl	1 at Atchison County Lake	Atchison	3/29	DMz
Long-eared Owl	1 at CNG, Recreation Area	Morton	5/13	ABY
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1 in Green Meadows Park, Lawrence	Douglas	3/03	KS
Williamson's Sapsucker	1 at Middle Spring, CNG	Morton	4/29	BP
Williamson's Sapsucker	1 near Country Club Still present 5/17	<u>Ford</u>	5/16	HA
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1 late in Elkhart shelterbelt	Morton	5/16	TC, MR
Say's Phoebe	1 easterly near Newton Still present 5/09	Harvey	4/21	CS
Say's Phoebe	1 on Nugget Rd northeast of Minneapolis	<u>Ottawa</u>	4/28	HA
Dusky Flycatcher	1 at CNG, West Bend	Morton	5/15	AwM
Dusky Flycatcher	1 at Elkhart WTP	Morton	5/17	TC, MR
Vermilion Flycatcher	1 male south of Cimarron River along K-27	Morton	4/29	BP
Yellow-throated Vireo	1 at Leoti Storm Drainage Pond	<u>Wichita</u>	5/25	HA
Cassin's Vireo	2 at Elkhart Cemetery area 1 still present on 5/06	Morton	4/28	BP, CKn
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at Point of Rocks, CNG	Morton	5/10	MN
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at Elkhart Cemetery area Still present 5/17	Morton	5/10	MN
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	1 in Garden City	Finney	3/31	KC, DP
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	1 in Ulysses	Grant	4/12	SG
Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay	1 at CNG Recreation Area 4 present, 5/15	Morton	4/17	StS, LgS
Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	2 at Elkhart Cemetery area Still present 5/13	Morton	4/28	BP
Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	2 at CNG, Turkey Trail 4 present 5/17	Morton	4/17	StS, LgS
Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	1 at Middle Spring, CNG 3 present on 5/09	Morton	5/01	CKn
Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	1 at Frazier Park	Grant	5/10	KG, PJ
Woodhouse's Scrub Jay	1 just north of Johnson City	Stanton	5/15	HA, JC, DL
Fish Crow	6 early in Arkansas City	Cowley	3/06	DS
Fish Crow	1 early at Marais des Cygnes WA	Linn	3/07	ML, MYB
Violet-green Swallow	1 at QNWR 2 present on 5/09	Stafford	4/23	MR
Violet-green Swallow	1 at Elkhart WTP area	Morton	5/11	MZ, m.ob.
N. Rough-winged Swallow	1 slightly early over Turkey Creek	Wyandotte	3/24	IG
Cave Swallow	1 at Colony WTP	<u>Anderson</u>	4/17	MGo
Cave Swallow	1 at Wilson WTP	<u>Ellsworth</u>	5/29	MR
Mountain Chickadee	1 in Grinnell, continuing Still present 4/01	Gove	3/04	CF
Mountain Chickadee	Sporadically being seen in Ulysses Seen again 4/06	Grant	3/26	SG
Mountain Chickadee	1 at Lee Richardson Zoo, Garden City Still present 4/18	Finney	3/28	QN
Mountain Chickadee	1 at Middle Spring, CNG Still present 5/12	Morton	5/10	MN
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 at Outlet Park, Melvern Lake	Osage	5/16	MGo
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 at Grass Park, La Crosse	Rush	5/16	HA
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 at Lawrence residence	Douglas	5/18	MRb
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 at Baker Wetlands	Douglas	5/20	PG, MZ
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1 at rural residence	Jackson	5/20	LZ

<b>Species</b>	<b>Number and Location</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Observer(s)</b>
Brown Creeper	1 late at Shannon Valley Park	Johnson	5/10	MGo
Townsend's Solitaire	1 near Osawatomie Still present 4/11	<u>Miami</u>	4/04	MYB
Veery	1 at Lovewell WA	<u>Jewell</u>	5/09	DMK
Gray Catbird	1 on KU Campus, early or overwintering	Douglas	3/01	PW
Red Crossbill	1 in Wilson	Ellsworth	3/20	MR
Purple Finch	1 late at feeder, Baldwin City	Douglas	5/09	RB
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeder in Dodge City Present again 4/26	Ford	4/03	CMM
Lesser Goldfinch	1 male at feeder in Goodland Continuing 4/08	Sherman	4/06	CK
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders in Grinnell	Gove	4/08	CF
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeder in Fowler	Meade	4/18	LG, CH
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at Scott SP	Scott	4/24	AS
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at Elkhart Cemetery	Morton	5/18	MR, TC
Black-throated Sparrow	1 at Middle Spring, CNG	Morton	4/29	BP
Brewer's Sparrow	1 south of Haviland	<u>Kiowa</u>	5/05	TL
Yellow-eyed Junco	Last reported sighting	Scott	3/31	m.ob.
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1 at Scott State Lake Still present on 4/29	Scott	3/28	LDC
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1 along Thompson Creek Rd	<u>Kiowa</u>	4/19	DMK, MP
Green-tailed Towhee	1 at Point of Rocks, CNG Still present 5/15	Morton	5/12	MN, m.ob.
Green-tailed Towhee	1 at Elkhart cemetery, 2 at Tunerville	Morton	5/15	AwM
Baltimore Oriole	1 early at Atchison SFL	Atchison	4/09	DMz
Bronzed Cowbird	1 male at Arkalon Park	Seward	5/14	AwM, MM
Blue-winged Warbler	1 at Fitch Natural Heritage Reserve	Douglas	4/27	STM
Blue-winged Warbler	1 at Lawrence Nature Park	Douglas	4/28	RA
Blue-winged Warbler	1 along Crooked Creek south of Meade	<u>Meade</u>	5/08	JC
Blue-winged Warbler	1 at Melvern Lake, River Bottom Trail	Osage	5/16	DMK, MP
Virginia's Warbler	1 at Elkhart Cemetery area	Morton	5/02	BP, CKn
Connecticut Warbler	1 at Hitch Natural Heritage Reserve	Douglas	5/20	MRb, m.ob.
Connecticut Warbler	1 at York Road Swamp	<u>Labette</u>	5/21	CG
Hooded Warbler	1 male at Elkhart Cemetery area Male and female present on 5/03, female still present on 5/05	Morton	4/29	BP
Cape May Warbler	1 at Seger Ponds	<u>Stanton</u>	5/15	HA, JC, DL
Northern Parula	1 male early and westerly, Walnut Creek	<u>Lane</u>	4/03	JC, STM
Northern Parula	1 at Seger Ponds	<u>Stanton</u>	5/16	HA, JC, DL
Magnolia Warbler	1 at Clark SFL	<u>Clark</u>	5/14	AM, MM
Black-throated Blue Warbler	1 near Shawnee SFL	<u>Jackson</u>	5/05	MP
Palm Warbler	1 at Lutgen's Property	<u>Mitchell</u>	4/25	NN
Prairie Warbler	1 at Prairie Center	Johnson	4/30	KC
Black-throated Gray Warbler	1 in Elkhart Cemetery area	Morton	5/04	BP
Summer Tanager	1 at Hugoton Storm Water Runoff Ponds	<u>Stevens</u>	5/14	HA, JC, DL
Western Tanager	1 north of El Dorado	<u>Butler</u>	4/30	AN
Western Tanager	1 near Country Club	<u>Ford</u>	5/13	HA, JC, DL
Western Tanager	1 at Crawford SP Still present 5/16	<u>Crawford</u>	5/14	KSp
Painted Bunting	1 at Scott SP	<u>Scott</u>	5/19	SSh

## *Birding Roundup Locations, Notes and Observer Codes*

**Locations and notes:** CBWA – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, CNG – Cimarron National Grasslands, KBRC – Kansas Bird Records Committee report filed, QNWR – Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, SFL – State Fishing Lake, SP – State Park, WA – Wildlife Area, WTP - Water Treatment Plant.

***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:** Ryan Andrews, Henry Armknecht, Aaron Batterbee (ABa), Jeremy Birket, Roger Boyd, Alice Boyle (ABy), Andrew Burnett (ABu), Ted Cable, Jeff Calhoun, Kathy Carroll, J Cashman (JCs), Glenn Caspers, JJ and Mark Davis (JMD), Lucas DeCicco (LDC), Ian Doughty, Christopher Frick, Chad Gardner, Ian Gardner, Lindsey Gedacht, Malcolm Gold (MGo), Mackenzie Goldthwait (MGd), Kevin Groeneweg, Peter Grund, Sam Guy, Curtis Hart, Pete Janzen, Doug Kibbe (DKb), Chad Killian, Chris Knight (CKn), Dan Larson, Tony Leukering, Micky Louis, Sam & Terry Mannell (STM), Kathy McDowell (KMD), Debra McKee (DMK), Christi McMillen (CMM), Don Merz (DMz), Andrew Miller (AwM), Anthony Miller, Michael Miller, Carol Morgan, Sue Newland, Nicholas Niewald, Atcha Nolan, Quentin Nolan, Mark Nolen, BB Oros (BBO), Brandon Percival, Diane Persons, Mark Pheasant, Mike Rader, Mark Robbins (MRb), Shurooq Saryoul (SqS), Luke Schawe, Kathie Schroeck (KSk), Carolyn Schwab, David Seibel, Steve Seltman (StS), Sara Shane (SSh), Tom Shane (TSh), Aaron Shipe, Kylee Sharp, Logan Smith (LgS), Katharine Spigarelli (KSp), Max Thompson, Phil Wedge, Melissa Yates-Bruce (MYB), Rachel Yurchisin, Molly Zahn, Linda Zempel **Groups:** Many observers (m.ob.)

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**Golden-crowned Sparrow:** On 4 October 2021 during the second trip to the back gate of our Garden City yard I flushed two sparrows that I had flushed earlier, and was able to get photos of the second bird, a Golden-crowned Sparrow. This was the third record for the species in Finney County. The first record included two birds.

**Brown-headed Nuthatch:** On 14 October 21 we spotted an unusual nuthatch in our Garden City front yard just out from our bay window. It was cloudy and the light was poor. We saw nothing special and called it a Pygmy Nuthatch. After we posted it to Kansas Birding and at least 265 people looked at the bird, Brandon Percival came forward with the idea that our bird was not like their Colorado nuthatches and believed the cap was far browner and must be a Brown-headed Nuthatch. As we continued to post better quality pictures many others were certain that we had a Brown-headed Nuthatch. This is the second record for Kansas and the farthest western record for the United States. Over 60 birders once again made the trip to western Kansas for the fabulous show that it put on for the traveling birders.

Well, that was our “Big Year!” In my 59 years of bird watching and Sara’s 36, we had never had that many great bird encounters in a single year here in Kansas.

*Tom and Sara have a long history of welcoming birders from all over Kansas and the country to their home and yard to enjoy some of the wonderful birds that they have hosted. I have enjoyed their hospitality myself and want to thank them on behalf of birders everywhere for sharing their birds with us!*

- Chuck

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

# Fall KOS meeting paper abstracts

(Presenter indicated by \* following name)

**Assessing spatial and temporal patterns in abundances of wintering and migrating birds on the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve.** *Denise Cameron\** and *William E. Jensen*, Department of Biological Sciences, Emporia State University.

The stopover and wintering habitat needs of migrating grassland birds have been understudied in comparison to habitat use during the breeding season. Substantial declines in grassland bird populations may be attributed to widespread loss of grasslands as well as management strategies that have led to a less variable grassland habitat mosaic. The Flint Hills, an ecoregion of the Great Plains, is one of the largest unfragmented remnants of the remaining 4% of the original extent of tallgrass prairie in North America. Our research explores occurrence, abundance, and habitat use patterns of migrating and wintering birds in this region, with focus on an assemblage of nine target species. Data are being collected over two years (fall, winter, and spring; 2020-2021 and 2021-2022) in the upland habitats of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (TAPR), and another property within the core of the Flint Hills, where managers use patch-burn grazing to maintain a more intrinsic mosaic of grassland habitat structure. Two survey methods are being utilized—transect counts followed by point counts—which are novel in application to surveys of wintering and migratory birds in grasslands. This presentation will focus on temporal findings from the first year of data collection and community science surveys. Our survey methods are intended to serve as templates for future bird surveys on TAPR. Our research will also increase understanding of how patch-burn grazing effects spatial habitat use of wintering and migrating grassland birds in the Flint Hills.

**Behavioral Tendencies of Dickcissels Affect Parasitism of Their Nests by Cowbirds.** *Jeanne A. Thompson\** and *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 conspicuous behavioral tendencies such as boldness and activity might af-

fect multiple sources of variation in reproductive success. During the breeding season from mid-May to early August of 2020 and 2021, we located and monitored 182 Dickcissel nests at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Here we compared the behavioral tendencies of individual females and males to the rate and intensity with which their nests were parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*), which might be attracted by aspects of host behavior. Of the nests that reached the incubation stage, 45% were parasitized. Nests of females who exhibited bolder / riskier behaviors were less likely to be parasitized, or if they resided in the territory of males who chipped more frequently. Future analyses will explore the effects of behavioral tendencies on daily survival rate and nestling condition. The observed patterns will give us a better understanding of how selection might act on certain behavioral tendencies and explain apparently maladaptive behaviors.

**Lesser Prairie-Chicken Response to Translocation to Southwestern Kansas and Southeastern Colorado.** *Elisabeth C. Teige\** and *David A. Haukos*, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Division of Biology, Kansas State University.

Ongoing declines of lesser prairie-chickens (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) throughout its range has generated conservation concern and sparked the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to propose listing the species under the Endangered Species Act. To document how lesser prairie-chickens respond to translocation as a conservation tool for the species, 411 lesser prairie-chickens were translocated from west-central Kansas to the U.S. Forest Service Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands in southwestern Kansas and southeastern Colorado, respectively, from 2016-2019. Birds had either GPS or VHF transmitters and were monitored continually until August 2020. Within two weeks of release, 22.8% of birds either died or were never located. Overall, I estimated breeding season survival to be  $0.44 \pm 0.02$  (SE) and nest success as  $0.37 \pm 0.04$  (SE) but with a declining trend from 2017-2020. Vital rates were average to low compared to native populations. Male high counts on established leks started to decline in 2021, two years following active translocation. Translocated birds selected for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land more than other cover types within their

- continued next page

home ranges. Lastly, on a local scale (300 m), I found lesser prairie-chickens used thicker and taller cover primarily in CRP for nest sites. My results highlight the importance of land management conservation and its role in the conservation of lesser prairie-chicken populations. The translocation effort appears to have been a short-term success but current vital rates may not be enough to overcome inherent limiting factors for the population and for the translocation to be deemed a long-term success.

#### **Lesser Prairie-Chicken Survival and Space Use After Megafire in the Mixed-Grass Prairie.**

*\*Nicholas Parker, Kansas State University; Daniel Sullins, Kansas State University; David Haukos, US Geological Survey, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit; Kent Fricke, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks; and Christian Hagen, Oregon State University.*

The Starbuck fire was the largest fire in recorded Kansas history, burning approximately 254,000 ha in Kansas and Oklahoma in March 2017. The Starbuck fire was one wildfire in a growing trend of wildfires that have increased in size and severity worldwide and in the Great Plains due to climate change and decades of fire suppression. Within the mixed-grass prairie of Kansas, fire historically helped maintain diverse grasslands and prevent woody encroachment, providing habitat for many wildlife species, including the imperiled lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*). While small scale fire can be beneficial for lesser prairie-chickens, the effects of such large fires on lesser prairie-chickens are unknown. We used data collected on lesser prairie-chicken survival and space use before (2014–2016) and after (2018–2020) the 2017 Starbuck fire to evaluate lesser prairie-chicken response to megafire. Male lek attendance fell 67% post-fire, and lek activity shifted to areas surrounded by more cropland. Survival rates and home range sizes of lesser prairie-chickens did not differ before and after the fire. However, home ranges did contain 5 times more percent cover of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields after the fire. Along with lek attendance results, this suggests CRP/cropland landscapes with disjointed fire fuel availability can provide refuge for lesser prairie-chickens during extreme events.

#### **Evaluating the Avian and Vegetative Communities on Strip Mined Land: Year One Update.**

*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 ecosys-

tems 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 for bird communities. We continued with our second year of data collection this summer during which we conducted fixed radius point counts and vegetation sampling at 84 locations in SE Kansas and SW Missouri. A total of 75 species were detected, including 14 species of greatest conservation need, as identified in the Kansas Wildlife Action Plan. We also located and monitored 71 nests from three shrub-nesting species, 14% of which fledged young. 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 plant species are negatively affecting individual species' presence or nesting success. Ongoing work will continue to evaluate the relationships between mined land vegetation and bird communities to inform habitat restoration on the MLWAs.

#### **Evaluating the Role of Vegetation Phenology Metrics in the Nest-site Selection of a Declining Prairie Grouse.**

*Ashley A. Messier\*, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Kansas State University; Daniel S. Sullins, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Kansas State University; David A. Haukos U.S. Geological Survey, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Department of Biology, Kansas State University; Christopher M. O'Meilia. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) is a remotely sensed index often used to monitor the health, productivity, and phenology of living vegetation based on the absorption and reflectance of red and near infrared light, respectively. This metric has been used for decades in ecological studies and may yield insight into the quality and availability of reproductive habitat for at-risk grassland species. The lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) is one example of a declining grassland obligate in need of conservation. Given this species' dependence on grasslands and concerns about future population viability, an understanding of reproductive habitat availability at relevant spatial scales within remaining grasslands is needed, yet difficult to attain using ground-based measurements alone. We sought to evaluate the role of remotely sensed phenology metrics (amplitude, duration, etc.) on lesser prairie-chicken nest-site selection. Using cloud-free Landsat 8 and yearly AQUA MODIS RSP (remote sensing phenology) satellite scenes, snapshot NDVI values and yearly phenology values were extracted at 69 lesser prairie-chicken nest sites and at two paired

Random locations per nest at two study sites in Kansas. Preliminary results suggest that phenology metrics alone are not reliable predictors of lesser prairie-chicken nest-site selection, as no candidate model outperformed the null model. This may be due to potential interactions between phenology and climatic and disturbance variables not yet assessed or to the resolution of the satellite scenes used. Hereafter we plan to incorporate additional nests from across the lesser prairie-chicken range as well as evaluate these same phenology metrics at brood locations.

**Shedding “Light” on Migration Mortalities: New Research Underway at New Mexico State University.** *Dylan M. Osterhaus\**, *New Mexico State University Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Ecology.*

During migration, birds are exposed to various stressors including starvation, predation, extreme weather, and human alterations to the landscape. As a result of these stressors, many birds will die during their migratory journey. In recent years, multiple mass-mortality events have been documented during migration, with hundreds and even thousands of deceased birds documented during each event. Early in September 2020, a mass-mortality event occurred within south-central New Mexico and across the desert southwest in correlation with extreme weather. At the White Sands Missile Range (WSMR) in south-central New Mexico, hundreds of deceased birds were found near buildings which are illuminated by floodlights at night. The attraction to, and entrapment of nocturnally migrating birds in beams of light during periods of bad weather has been documented in various instances historically. However, there have been no large-scale quantitative studies conducted which have documented the potential impacts of point source light pollution on migrating birds. Therefore, my research will focus on examining the potential impacts of point source light pollution on nocturnally migrating birds in south-central New Mexico. Over the next four years I will be monitoring 55 sites (some with light at night, some without) throughout a 250 square-mile area of south-central New Mexico during fall migration using nocturnal acoustic monitors as well as next generation weather radar (NEXRAD).

**Update on Red-tailed Hawks Wintering in Northeastern Kansas.** *Lucas H. DeCicco\**, *Bryce W. Robinson*, *Mark B. Robbins*, *Brian L. Sullivan*, *University of Kansas.*

Over the past three years we have deployed 12 GPS-GSM tracking units on wintering Red-tailed Hawks in northeastern Kansas. The focus of this research is to identify breeding provenance of certain phenotypes

or subspecies and in doing so, understand the breeding distributions of subspecies occurring in remote areas of northern Canada. In doing so, we have now deployed transmitters on individuals of subspecies *abieticola* and *harlani* and have recovered breeding locations for seven of these individuals so far. Highlights include the following. Two birds have provided us with two annual cycles of data and showed very high fidelity to winter and breeding territories and migration route. All 12 birds tracked during spring 2021 showed very consistent migration direction, independent of phenotype, with all birds departing northeastern Kansas in a northwestern direction and all migrated through central Alberta. We have found notable overlap in distribution of breeding *harlani* and *abieticola*, highlighted by a phenotypic *harlani* nesting within 150km of an *abieticola* in northern Alberta. Finally, we have shown notably early returning date of two dark-morph *harlani*, both of which returned to their wintering range in the Great Plains by 22 September. The information we present here provides new information on migratory connectivity and breeding distributions of multiple phenotypes of Red-tailed Hawks and begins to provide information for a better understanding of this complex species.

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KOS would like to thank all of the above presenters for taking the time to participate in our virtual paper presentations. All of their presentations were recorded and can be viewed online. The link for these presented paper videos is at: [https://ksbirds.org/kos/Fall2021/kos\\_2021\\_fall\\_meeting.htm](https://ksbirds.org/kos/Fall2021/kos_2021_fall_meeting.htm)

This year, we had enough Master's Student presentations to award a winner in that category. Our Student Presentation judging committee awarded Jeane A. Thompson with this year's best student presentation award. She is a master's student under Dr. William Jensen at Emporia State University and her presentation was "Behavioral Tendencies of Dickcissels Affect Parasitism of Their Nests by Cowbirds." Congratulations to Jeane on her award!

As 2021 starts to fade in the rearview mirror and we look forward to 2022, I know we all want to be able to get back to spring and fall meetings that are in person! Know that the KOS Board continues to monitor the COVID pandemic and while we want to have normal meetings again, we want everyone to be safe. The board will be meeting in early 2022 to decide a safe course of action and as soon as we know, we will let you know! In the meantime, be safe and enjoy the birds!

- the KOS Board of Directors

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## It's Time for Dues!

It's the end of the year and you know what that means! Well, sure, taxes but more than just that. It's time for those who are not life members to pay their annual dues. If you don't renew your membership the March Horned Lark and *Bulletin* will be the last mailing you will receive from KOS!

We don't want that to happen, so take time now to get out your checkbook, your debit card or credit card and renew. There is a form above you can fill out and mail to Max Thompson with your check or go to [https://ksbirds.org/kos/kos\\_member.html](https://ksbirds.org/kos/kos_member.html) and do it all online.

Thank you!!