



The Horned Lark

Kansas Ornithological Society

December, 2024

Vol. 51, No. 4

Announcements

Spring KOS Meeting/Field Trips May 2 - 4, 2025 Ulysses, Kansas

The spring 2025 KOS Meeting/Field Trips is scheduled for May 2 - 4, 2025 and will be headquartered in Ulysses, Kansas (Grant County). From this central location you have many options in all directions to enjoy wonderful southwest Kansas birding. For you county listers, surrounding Grant county you have: Finney, Kearny, Hamilton, Haskell, Stevens, Stanton, Seward and Morton. It's unlikely you can bird all of those in one weekend, but being centrally located it'll be a great adventure! Details and registration will be in the March Horned Lark, and online. Mark the dates on your calendar now and let's plan on a great Spring Meeting!

It's Annual Dues Time

If you are a life member, just skip to page 2 now! For everyone else, take heed! It's time to pay your dues! The back page has a form you can clip out to send in, or you can go to: https://ksbirds.org/kos/kos_member.html and pay on line! (Just be sure to drop Max Thompson an email saying you've paid on line so he can be looking for it!) Dues are amazingly reasonable. An individual membership is only \$20, family is \$25 and students can belong for just \$5. Come to think of it, if you have young birders you are mentoring, why not give them a gift membership!?! Your annual dues and membership are important to the society so please rejoin for 2025!

Thank you!!!!

Thank you to Dr. Townsend Peterson, Dr. Lucas DeCicco, Dr. Robert Moyle and the University of Kansas for hosting the 75th Anniversary - 2024 KOS Fall Annual Meeting!

From the Keyboard

By the Editor

We had a wonderful time in Lawrence (thank you host committee!) with our 75th Anniversary Celebration for KOS. We met some new friends, had time to visit with long time friends, and listened to some awesome papers presented by a broad stroke of folks, but especially some amazing undergraduate and graduate students. As an undergraduate college student I don't know if I could have gotten up in front of a group and presented a paper, so kudos to all who did! The abstracts of those papers can be found on pages 8 to 11 of this edition of the Horned Lark.

KOS Business Manager, Malcolm Gold, pulled in some new KOS swag and merchandise (and 2025 KOS Calendars) for the occasion. If you weren't able to make the meeting you can view the items available on the KOS merchandise page: <https://www.ksbirds.org/kos/Merchandise.htm> Thank you Malcolm for doing such a great job with the merchandise and calendar!

In keeping with tradition the assembled group (well, most of them anyway), gathered for a group photo in front of Dyche Hall at the University of Kansas (page 3). I'm not sure if a photo exists of the very first annual meeting, but you can find a photo of the attendees of the 2nd KOS Annual Meeting at: <https://www.ksbirds.org/kos/bulletin/Vol1No2.pdf>. It took some doing to track down who everyone was in the photo, but we got it done. Please note under the list of names is the web address where you can go and see a larger version of the photo. Thanks to Bob Gress for arranging the photo (and snagging an unsuspecting KU student to press the shutter!) Also thanks to Bob for a wonderful post-banquet presentation on warblers. The photos and his stories of getting some of the shots were woven into a delightful event!

As I write this, passerine migration has wound done and we are all settling in to our winter birding routines which often involves time watching the feeders out of the windows. But before you get too settled in to your warm house, remember that from December 12 though January 11 there are Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) occurring all across the state. CBCs are a great time to get together with other birders, spend part or all day watching and tabulating your bird sightings and maybe meeting some new friends and learning new locations to go birding. A nearly complete list of the Kansas (and nearby) CBCs can be found at: <https://ksbirds.org/kos/2024CBC.htm>. For any of the counts, please contact the compiler ahead of time to make it easier for them to plan the day's areas and who is going to be assigned to what locations!

As I bring this issue of the Horned Lark to a close (my column is always the last thing written!) I realize that we are also bringing another year to a close. Thank you to everyone who has maintained their KOS membership (remember to renew) and the feedback that you have provided to me. I wish you all a very joyous holiday season and a Happy (and birdy) New Year!

- Chuck

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https://ksbirds.org/kos/kos_officers.html

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Attendees at the KOS 75th Anniversary Meeting in Lawrence, September 28, 2024, in front of Dyche Hall, which hosts the Kansas Museum of Natural History. (Photo courtesy Bob Gress)

1 - Bob Gress, 2 - Pete Janzen, 3 - Galen Pittman, 4 - Roger Boyd, 5 - Jan Boyd, 6 - Lisa Weeks, 7 - Gregg Friesen, 8 - Diane Seltman, 9 - Linda Bryan, 10 - Chuck Otte, 11 - Max Thompson, 12 - Kurtis Meier, 13 - Gene Young, 14 - David Holmes, 15 - Jill Bell, 16 - Jackie Augustine, 17 - Jaye Otte, 18 - Cheryl Miller, 19 - Kristen Hobbs, 20 - Theo Michaels, 22 - Jennifer Delisle, 23 - Nikki Lemus, 24 - Joanna Corimanya, 25 - Jim Nickel, 26 - Jalynn Murray, 27 - Cal Cink, 28 - Alexis Powell, 30 - Matt Longabaugh, 31 - Kevin Groeneweg, 32 - Rob Moyle, 33 - Sarah Biesemier, 34 - Abby Perkins, 35 - Ryan Andrews, 36 - Scott Kimball, 37 - Nathan Neufeld, 38 - Frankie Beydler, 39 - Rodney Wedel, 40 - Bryan White, 41 - Mark Land, 42 - Mark Nolen, 43 - Town Peterson, 44 - Alice Boyle, 45 - Logan Anderson, 46 - Eileen Land, 47 - John Schukman, 48 - Sara Blunk, 49 - Mike Rader, 50 - Kylee Fillinger, 51 - Malcolm Gold, 52 - Wrenner Brown, 53 - Scott Kimball, 54 - Eugene A. Huryn, 55 - Gabe McClain, 56 - Bill Jensen, 57 - Andrew George, 58 - Heather K. Burrow

Photo can be viewed online at: https://ksbirds.org/kos/Fall2024/75th_Anniversary_Photo.htm



**Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS)
Annual Membership Meeting (DRAFT)
September 28, 2024
University of Kansas, Lawrence Kansas**

The Annual Meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society was held September 28, 2024. The meeting was held in the Jayhawk Welcome Center at University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. KOS President Kurtis Meier called the meeting to order at 11:38 a.m.

The 2023 Annual Meeting minutes had been previously printed in the Horned Lark newsletter. Malcolm Gold moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve them as they were printed in the newsletter. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Treasurer Max Thompson reported that the Society was very solvent and reported on totals that were currently in the endowment and the checking account. (*Those totals are available upon request to any current member.*) Kurtis accepted the report

The slate of officers and board members for the 2024-2025 year was reviewed:

President – Kurtis Meier
Vice President – Alice Boyle
Corresponding Secretary – Chuck Otte
Membership Secretary – Jeff Calhoun
Treasurer – Max Thompson
Business Manager – Malcolm Gold
Editor, KOS *Bulletin* – Eugene Young
Editor, Horned Lark –
Director – Lucas DeCicco
Director – Kevin Groeneweg

Kansas Bird Records Committee Chair and Secretary, Max Thompson and Chuck Otte respectively, gave a brief report. With a recent round of voting just concluded it was announced that Eurasian Tree-Sparrow had been added to the Kansas Check-list. Chuck also noted that based on the most recent American Ornithological Society Check-list Supplement, there would be some name changes for the common names of a few Kansas species. Those would be reflected with updated check-lists that would be posted on line later in the year.

Business Manager, Malcolm Gold, reported on KOS branded items that had recently been produced for the 75th KOS Anniversary. He also announced that the 2025 KOS calendar was printed and available at his table in the gathering area outside the meeting room.

Chuck requested that Christmas Bird Count compilers start planning their count dates and submit to him those dates so that he can once again have a web page listing the dates and compilers/contact person for the roughly 50 Christmas Bird Counts that are conducted each year in the state.

KOS *Bulletin* editor, Eugene Young, reminded everyone that there is always a need for articles for *The Bulletin*. He reminded paper presenters that many of their papers would make excellent articles and would be happy to work with them.

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

KOS Research Committee Chair, John Schukman, reported that the eight student presenters at the day's meeting would be given a one-year membership to KOS. He also reported that one research award had been made in the past year. The KOS Board had increased the amount of money that could be awarded which he felt would be helpful to researchers. Logan Anderson had received a \$1,000 award for work on Grasshopper Sparrows.

President Meier reviewed the slate of officers and board members and called for nominations from the floor. **Terry Mannell moved that nominations cease and a unanimous ballot be cast for the slate. The motion was seconded and passed by acclamation.**

With no further business to be conducted, the annual business meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

The Banquet was held on Saturday evening, September 28th at the Twisted Vine Winery, near Lawrence. Following the meal a few of the long time KOS members shared experiences and memories of their time in the society. The Avian Conservationist of the year award was presented to Mark Robbins. Outstanding Student Paper awards were presented to Logan Anderson, Kansas State University and Sarah Biesemier, Emporia State University. Gene Young then presented the ten best birds for the year.

Following these presentations, an excellent program was given by Bob Gress titled, "Chasing Warblers" which was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance.

Chuck Otte
Corresponding Secretary

**Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS)
Board Meeting (DRAFT)
September 28, 2024
Jayhawk Welcome Center, University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas**

The KOS Board Meeting was called to order at 12:33 by President Kurtis Meier.

Attendance: Alice Boyle, Andrew George, Malcom Gold, Kevin Groeneweg, Terry Mannell, Kurtis Meier, Mark Nolen, Max Thompson, Eugene Young, and Chuck Otte.

Gene Young moved to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2024 board meeting. The motion was seconded and it passed unanimously.

Max asked if there were any questions on the report he gave in the previous meeting, and there were none. Max went on to discuss that several of the funds in the investment account had been restricted either by the board or the donors of those funds. Chuck Ely and Max had established the Book Royalty fund following publication of their two volume set *Birds in Kansas*. They have now decided to release those funds so that money is no longer a restricted asset. The recently created Research Fund had been restricted by the board when it was established. Max further discussed the investment fund and earnings thereof. Since January 1, 2024, KOS has had income and expenses that basically matched (*exact numbers can be made available upon request by any current KOS member*).

Following discussions on the funds, **Max moved to remove the restriction on the Research Fund. Malcom seconded the motion and it passed.**

Malcom moved to provide one-year student membership for all paper presenters annually starting with 2024. Terry seconded the motion and it passed.

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There was extensive discussion on a number of topics.

It was suggested that for future fall meetings it might be more convenient to move the Friday evening social off campus. At one time on campus facilities could be used for no charge but that is seldom the case now and refreshments can be quite expensive through required catering vendors.

Discussion of printing costs (the largest single expense for the Society) focused on whether there is still a need for paper copies (probably at least some) or whether digital was the way to go in the future.

The *Bulletin* and the Newsletter are available digitally upon printing now already.

Future of the website was discussed. Future upgrades may well need to be paid for. Malcolm had looked in to what a redesign would take and found it to be overwhelming in part due to the volume of information currently on the website.

No action was taken on any of these items.

Future Meetings – Jeff Calhoun had indicated that he was willing to host the 2025 spring meeting in southwestern Kansas and had suggested Morton County. (*Following the meeting it was discovered that there was a likely conflict for the limited housing in Morton County and it was decided to headquarter the meeting in Ulysses, May 2 – 4.*)

Andrew George indicated that he was willing to host the Fall 2025 meeting at Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg which was accepted by acclamation by the board. The exact date will be determined after fall sporting events schedules are published.

John Schukman had presented a written report from the Research Committee. Report is attached to the official copy of these minutes.

Chuck noted that there had not been a newsletter editor elected in the business meeting. A few people had expressed some interest in possibly taking it over. Chuck said that he would make sure a Newsletter would continue to be published until a new editor is selected, but that the issues might be very bare bones.

Seeing no further business needing the board's attention, Kurtis adjourned the meeting at 1:23 p.m.

Chuck Otte
Corresponding Secretary

Mark Robbins KOS Avian Conservationist of the Year

Mark's contributions to bird conservation are numerous, and range in scope from global and international to local and regional, covering a lifetime of curiosity, discovery, and detailed study. Mark is a native of northwestern Missouri, where he grew up an avid birder. He did his undergraduate studies at the University of Arizona, and a masters at Louisiana State University (LSU), in each case with a significant focus on birds.

Mark has also maintained intense interests in Great Plains birds, ever since his childhood. He is the author of the first edition of *Birds of Missouri*, as well as of an updated edition that is open-access so that all are able to consult it. Mark's work over the years has taken on numerous important aspects of Great Plains bird biology and conservation, including (these are just a few examples): migratory double-breeding in Sedge Wrens, species status of prairie populations of Common Nighthawk, hybrid zones and distributional dynamics in Baltimore-Bullock's orioles, Eastern and Western Wood-pewees, Eastern and Spotted Towhees, and population declines in Greater Prairie-Chickens. In each case, Mark's attention to the finest details and willingness to be out in the field under the most difficult of conditions has meant that he has brought important new insights into the biology of the species in question.

In summary, Mark Robbins has dedicated a lifetime to understanding bird diversity and natural history, always with an eye to conservation. Insight after insight, discovery after discovery, Mark approaches a study carefully and rigorously, and works tirelessly to assemble the necessary data and knowledge. Once the new understanding is in hand, Mark then works to "hand it off" to the institution, organization, or individual best suited to making the conservation steps a reality. With this rich legacy of advancing bird conservation, I am more than happy to nominate mark for the KOS Avian Conservationist of the Year Award. *Nominated by Town Peterson, University of Kansas*

Please read the full nomination at:

https://www.ksbirds.org/kos/Mark_Robbins_2024_KOS_Avian_Conservationist.htm

KOS Fall Meeting Species List September 27-29, 2024

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Mallard
Hooded Merganser
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Rock Pigeon
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
American Coot
American Avocet
Killdeer
Baird's Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Long-billed Dowitcher
Wilson's Snipe
Franklin's Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Caspian Tern
Forster's Tern
Double-crested Cormorant
American White Pelican
Little Blue Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
Green Heron
Great Egret
Great Blue Heron
White-faced Ibis
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Northern Harrier
Cooper's Hawk
Bald Eagle
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
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Horned Lark
Barn Swallow
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Cedar Waxwing
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
Northern House Wren
Sedge Wren
Marsh Wren
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
Hermit Thrush
American Robin
House Sparrow
American Pipit
House Finch
American Goldfinch
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Eastern Towhee
Eastern Meadowlark
Baltimore Oriole
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird
Common Grackle
Ovenbird
Black-and-white Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Orange-crowned Warbler
Nashville Warbler

Common Yellowthroat
Yellow Warbler
Palm Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Summer Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting

115 species reported in Kansas by meeting registrants from the time they left home Friday to the time they arrived home on Sunday for the Fall 2024 Kansas Ornithological Society Meeting. *(Thank you to Malcolm Gold for compiling the sightings list!)*

KOS Top 10 Birds of the Year: 9 October 2023 - 28 September 2024

Acknowledgment: Thanks to Debby McKee, Mark Land, and Malcolm Gold for sending in nominations.

Honorable Mention (no particular order): Anna's Hummingbird (McPherson Co.), Limpkin (Geary Co., and Flint Hills NWR), Inca Dove (Reno Co.), Sage Thrasher (Johnson Co.), Long-tailed Jaeger (QNWR) and Pomarine Jaeger (Riley and Pottawatomie Cos.)

TOP 10

10. Eurasian Wigeon: seen at Tuttle Creek SP, Riley County, 29 October 2023 by Nathan Senner, Debby McKee, and Mark Peasant. 12th record.

9. Common Ground-Dove: in Allen County, 24 November 2023 by Jayden Bowen, also Andrew Burnett. Though many records, hasn't been observed recently.

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Fall KOS meeting paper abstracts

Presenter denoted by *

Genetic patterns and biogeography in *Dicaeum* flowerpeckers in the Solomon Islands

Ryan Andrews*, Devon DeRaad, Lucas DeCicco, and Robert Moyle; Biodiversity Institute and Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Kansas

Determination of evolutionary relatedness among isolated bird populations in island systems is notoriously challenging due primarily to the lack of contact among populations such as occurs commonly in continental systems. Modern genomic approaches can be used to increase our understanding of phylogeography among allopatric populations across archipelagos. *Dicaeum* is a genus of small passerine birds in the family Dicaeidae, known as ‘flowerpeckers’ due to their nectarivory. Two allopatric species of *Dicaeum* flowerpeckers, *D. aeneum* and *D. tristrami*, occur in the Solomon Islands archipelago. *D. tristrami* is endemic to the isolated island of Makira and has previously proved difficult to place phylogenetically, while *D. aeneum* occurs more broadly across the rest of the archipelago in three described subspecies. Here, restriction enzyme associated DNA sequence (RADseq) data generated from specimen-vouchered tissue samples was used to assess the phylogeographic patterns of relatedness amongst *Dicaeum* flowerpecker populations across the Solomon Island archipelago. We used a combination of modern population genomic and phylogenomic approaches to investigate the evolutionary history of this group of *Dicaeum* flowerpeckers. Phylogenetic analyses provided backing for the three described subspecies of *D. aeneum* and clarified the placement of *D. tristrami* within the genus. These insights provide information about the biogeographic history of *Dicaeum* flowerpeckers in the Solomons and resolve *D. tristrami*'s phylogenetic ambiguity.

Seasonal use of abandoned mined lands by non-breeding birds: Preliminary findings

Heather K. Burrow* and Andrew D. George; Pittsburg State University

During winter and migration, birds rely on habitat that provides high-energy food and protection from predators and adverse weather. Abandoned mined lands (AMLs) are disturbed ecosystems that often include a mosaic of successional habitats, some of

which may support diverse bird communities. Our goal is to establish a long-term banding study to investigate bird use of AMLs during the non-breeding season. We established 4 study sites in 2023 in a formerly surface-mined landscape in Crawford County, in southeast Kansas. We used constant-effort mist-netting to survey birds each month, including biweekly during fall and spring migration. Thus far, we have captured 57 species on AMLs, including 12 residents and 45 migrants, of which 24 do not breed in the study region. Analysis of seasonal demographics and body condition is ongoing. Our project emphasizes the potential conservation value of AMLs for birds during the non-breeding portions of their full annual cycle.

Genetic patterns in *Collocalia* Swiftlets of the Philippines

Abigail C. Perkins*, Lucas H. DeCicco, A. Townsend Peterson, Robert G. Moyle; Biodiversity Institute and Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Kansas

The swiftlet species complex *Collocalia esculenta* has a wide geographic distribution from southeastern Asia through Indonesia and into the Pacific Ocean, with two recognized endemic species in the Philippines (*C. marginata* and *C. isonota*). These species have a long history of taxonomic instability due to their conserved phenotype and complex biogeographic pattern. Throughout the islands, the two species occur in either allopatry or sympatry with apparent elevational displacement and, due to the phenotypic similarities, these patterns are poorly understood. We will explore the genetic patterns of divergence within and between these two swiftlet species in the Philippines using reduced-representation genome-wide genetic data (RAD-seq). Our research uncovers genomic patterns of differentiation both among allopatric populations of each species and deeper differentiation between species. Key findings illuminate genetic differentiation, evolutionary history, and geographic divergence between *C. marginata* and *C. isonota*.

Use of temperature data loggers in assessing nest survival for a grassland-nesting bird

Sarah Biesemier*¹, William E. Jensen¹, Greg Houseman², and Evalynn Trumbo²; ¹Emporia State University, ²Wichita State University

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Temperature data loggers have the potential to reduce observer visits to nests when determining nest survival, which might provide logistical advantages for collecting nest data, increase precision of nest survival estimates, and lessen observer effects on nest survival, especially for birds nesting in grasslands. During the 2024 nesting season we installed temperature data loggers in nests of Dickcissels (*Spiza americana*) to monitor and estimate survival of offspring in Conservation Reserve Program grasslands in central Kansas. Data loggers (Thermochron iButtons®) were glued to 15-cm long galvanized nails and coated in Plasti Dip® for waterproofing. Nest contents were temporarily removed and data-logger nails were inserted through nest material with the data logger sitting flush with the center of nest floors. Data loggers in nests were paired with a second data logger placed within 5 m of each nest to contrast internal nest temperature with ambient temperature for determining timing of nest completion. Data loggers were collected after nests had completed (fledge or fail) and the timing of nest completion was determined by graphically comparing temperature/time profiles between the nest and ambient data loggers. Only 3 of 128 deployed data loggers were lost (predators, etc.). Daily survival estimates of Dickcissel nests (0.938 ± 0.010) were similar to previous estimates in the same study environment and region using twice-weekly nest checks. By using data loggers, ornithologists can make fewer and less intrusive visits to nests than conventional nest monitoring (e.g., twice weekly) allowing more time to find additional nests.

Exploring geographic replacement between two populations of White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis* complex)

Eugene A. Huryan*¹, Jacob C. Cooper^{1,2}; ¹Department of Biology, University of Nebraska at Kearney, 2401 11th Ave, Kearney, NE 68849 ²Field Museum Negaunee Integrative Research Center, Division of Birds, 1400 S DuSable Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605

Population's ecological niches are generally conserved during diversification processes, with secondary contact being a primary driver of divergence. However, this divergence can operate on a local scale, with populations broadly overlapping in niche space at coarse scales and partitioning habitats at fine scales. This partitioning could be due to specific abiotic or biotic variables, creating clear trends across the landscape. Conversely, species may locally overlap, with replacement occurring at coarse scales and co-occurring locally, with partitions based more on habitat or specific combinations of environmental conditions. To study these dynamics, we are focusing on the White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*)

species complex in western Nebraska. Two members of this complex are undergoing secondary contact in this region, namely the western (*S. lagunae nelsoni*) and eastern (*S. carolinensis*), with each taxon largely replacing the other across a seemingly narrow contact zone. In this study, we aim to identify factors driving geographic replacement in these populations, be they abiotic or biotic. We will analyze climatic and habitat variables for each population to understand how *S. l. nelsoni* and *S. carolinensis* occupy niche space in sympatry and in allopatry. Different specific biotic and abiotic factors may be indicators of adaptive advantages in one of the populations for specific environmental conditions, whereas a combination of factors could be indicative of more complex niche partitioning in sympatry. Finding differences in niche preferences between *S. l. nelsoni* and *S. carolinensis* could add to the body of evidence supporting proposed taxonomic changes in this species complex from an ecological and behavioral perspective. Understanding these dynamics can also inform on the complex nature of secondary contact, and the ways in which distributions manifest in heterogeneous areas of local sympatry.

A sticky situation: Identifying drivers of woody avoidance in Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*)

Logan Anderson* and Alice Boyle; Division of Biology, Kansas State University

Woody encroachment has been well-documented in grassland systems worldwide. In the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas, woody plant colonization of rangelands and prairies is a major factor in local grassland bird declines. These declines have been largely attributed to increased nest depredation rates and predator presence around woody plants. Yet, it remains unclear why woody plant avoidance occurs in the first place and whether it is driven directly by shrub avoidance or indirectly via frequent contact with woody-associated predators. To distinguish between shrub and predator avoidance, we tagged and monitored the movement of a common grassland songbird, the Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), by triangulating their locations using small arrays of radio receivers. We experimentally increased Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginianus*) cover and perceived predation risk by placing a model shrike (*Lanius spp.*) on the territories of tracked sparrows. Using automated radio telemetry, we plotted sparrow movements before and after introducing cedars and model shrikes and used autocorrelated kernel density estimation to estimate home range size and shape during each treatment. Preliminary results of one sparrow show no change in the sparrow's home range

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after cedar introduction, but a shift away from the area the shrike was located. The results of this project may lend insight into why woody aversion is occurring in areas with pioneering woody plants. This would inform land managers and researchers how small increases in woody plants may affect grassland bird abundance regardless of patch size.

Empirical tests of the Hygric Niche model: Unveiling tropical avian responses to rainfall through bioacoustic analyses

Kristen S. Hobbs, W. Alice Boyle; Division of Biology, Kansas State University*

Hygric niche theory predicts that in very wet areas, increased rainfall will constrain certain avian behaviors and result in elevated energetic costs for birds. Such responses are expected to be more pronounced when birds are exposed to cooler temperatures, such as those experienced at higher elevations. In wet tropical forest spanning lowlands and premontane forest in Costa Rica, I tested behavioral predictions of the hygric niche model. Working in leks of white-collared manakins (*Manacus candei*), I evaluated how the rate of display behavior varied in the presence of different rates of rainfall. I predicted a reduction in display activity in response to increased rainfall. I also expected similar rainfall conditions at higher elevations (cooler temperatures) to elicit a steeper reduction in display behavior than at lower elevations. I deployed rain gauges and audio recorders at a total of 15 display courts and analyzed ~700 hours of bioacoustics data using Raven Pro, quantifying each court's display rates based on calibrated amplitude levels coming from site-specific behavioral observations. Rain inhibited display behavior, and display rates dropped off more steeply at high elevations than at low elevations when comparing the same rainfall rates. Like other aspects of climate, rainfall is critically important to birds – but in ways that are poorly understood relative to effects of temperature. Understanding the mechanistic relationship between environment and rainfall can elucidate climate's influence on demography, ultimately informing mechanistic species distribution models.

What does grassland heterogeneity sound like? Or the efficacy of virtual fence technology for promoting grassland bird populations in privately owned landscapes

Theo Michaels, Walter Dodds, and Alice Boyle; Division of Biology, Kansas State University*

Grassland birds have seen precipitous declines in recent decades. While many factors are at play, this is due in part to the loss of vegetation structural diversity, or grassland heterogeneity. This heterogeneity at relatively small scales is crucial to meet needs

of grassland birds across all life stages. In privately-owned landscapes, such as tallgrass prairies, addressing this challenge relies on the cooperation of private landowners. We tested the efficacy of Virtual Fence (VF) technology as a tool for grassland bird conservation goals in tallgrass prairie located Flint Hills of Kansas. We excluded cattle from 11 4-ha patches, paired with 11 control areas, located in prime nesting locations for threatened species. During 2022, cattle wore collars but were allowed free movement. In 2023 and 2024, collars restricted access to treatment plots. Across all years, we surveyed vegetation characteristics, Greater Prairie-Chicken lek counts, and breeding bird diversity and abundance. Despite challenges with the VF collars, vegetation in treatment plots more closely resembled ideal conditions for prairie chickens and Henslow's Sparrows. Grassland bird richness and abundance were slower to respond to the treatment, but preliminary data indicate that abundances of a few species were altered by the experiment in beneficial and predicted ways. VF technology may be a promising management tool for grassland bird conservation, but imperfect exclusion and the high inter-annual variability in climate in this region mean that interventions must last for several years.

Genetic assessment of breeding contact between two Fox Sparrow subspecies groups in south-central Alaska

Lucas H. DeCicco, Jack J. Withrow, Kevin W. Winker, and Robert G. Moyle; Biodiversity Institute and Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Kansas*

Fox Sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*) show a remarkable level of geographic variation which has been organized by taxonomists into four groups, each of which contain many described subspecies. These four subspecies groups have often been considered species, but interaction among subspecies groups on the breeding grounds is poorly understood. Here, using genome-wide genetic data, we investigate a contact zone between the red-colored boreal forest *iliaca* group and the sooty-colored Pacific coast *unalaschcensis* group. This research is not based on transect-like sampling across a contact zone but rather comes from a single site where breeding contact between these groups occurs in south-central Alaska. Within lowland Boreal Forest in south-central Alaska we found a mix of nesting Fox Sparrows which phenotypically appeared to represent individuals of both the coastal and interior subspecies groups as well as some that appeared intermediate in plumage. The genomic data corroborated these phenotypic patterns and showed the presence of a highly variable genomic background within this population.

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These findings suggest that where these two subspecies groups come into breeding contact, some degree of assortative mating or selection against hybridization has maintained a heterogeneous population at this contact zone.

Water wars for wild wetlands

*Jackie Augustine**, *Audubon of Kansas*

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge are two marshes in west-central Kansas that are designated as wetlands of international importance. They abound with migrating ducks, shorebirds, and cranes during migration and host several endangered and threatened species including Whooping Cranes, Snowy Plovers, and Interior Least Terns. Audubon of Kansas Executive Director Jackie Augustine will discuss how Audubon of Kansas has worked and is working to ensure that these wetlands have the water they need to support wildlife.

Woody plant encroachment, afforestation, and the future of Kansas grassland birds

*A. Townsend Peterson**, *Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas*

Most ecological studies are cast on rather short time scales, which limits their ability to consider ecological phenomena that occur slowly or episodically. Kansas, which bridges the transition between eastern hardwood forests and the Great Plains, appears to be still a land of broad open spaces, but those open spaces are filling with forest. This afforestation process, a joint consequence of fire suppression, urbanization, changing grazing practices, and other factors, is reorganizing Kansas avifaunas on very broad scales, but slowly enough that most ecological studies cannot capture those changes. In this talk, based on a combination of information from remote sensing, repeated biodiversity surveys, and rephotography, I review the dimensions of the changes that are occurring, and speculate on both the future of the grasslands of the state, and the future of the birds that inhabit those grasslands.

Kansas Ornithological Society Bulletin: 75-yr History (1950-2024)

*Eugene A. Young**, *Agriculture and Biological Sciences Department, Northern Oklahoma College*

The 75-yr History of the Bulletin is discussed as it relates to editors, types of publications, CBC issues, topics, authorship, and the future.

8. Pine Grosbeak: 4 were present at Cedar Bluff Res., Trego County, 19 November 2023, seen by Franklin Miller; and 3 to 17 individuals were observed from 15 November 2023 through 21 February 2024 at Scott State Park, Scott County, observed by Sara and Tom Shane, and many others.

7. Scott's Oriole: a male observed from December 2023 through 8 April 2024 in Johnson County (at a residence in Overland Park, and yes, #4 on the list last year) by Steven Case. This was the second winter the bird was observed. (NOTE: post KOS Fall Meeting, the presumably same male showed up for a 3rd consecutive winter.)

6. Sagebrush Sparrow: observed in Richfield, Morton County on 6 March 2024 by Franklin Miller. This is the 4th Record.

5. American Flamingo: Chase County SFL, first observed by Joanie Flanagan and Ingrid (German visiting friend), and although it was on the list last year at #3, it did remain until 9 October 2023, therefore making it eligible for this year.

4. Mexican Duck: if accepted, will be the 2nd record (last year's #1 was the State's first record), observed on a Playa in Finney County by Mark Peterson on 1 May 2024.

3. Fork-tailed Flycatcher: an individual was observed and photographed 9 - 10 November 2023 in Reno County, first by Steve Seibel, later by Mike Rader and Bryan White. This record was the second for the State and removed the species from hypothetical standing.

2. Eurasian Tree Sparrow: an adult male has been at a residence in Shawnee County since 23 November 2024, discovered by Dallas Alexander. It is the first State record.

1. Gray-crowned Rosy Finch: observed and photographed in Sedgwick County, on 11 March 2024 by Phyllis Reichert. This was the second record for the State and removed the species from hypothetical standing.

Compiled and presented by:
Gene Young
28 September 2024
KOS Banquet
University of Kansas, Lawrence

(Editor's Note: All records are tentative until accepted by the Kansas Bird Records Committee)

KOS Membership

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Help Wanted!!

We are still looking for someone to take over as Horned Lark Editor. Chuck will be continuing to serve as an interim editor at the start of 2025, but he would really like to have someone come forward to take this over. He's more than happy to provide content for the newsletter, but would prefer to hand off the editor position.

The ksbirds.org web site is massive, it's cumbersome and it needs a make over. Chuck is NOT the person to do that. If you're interested, email him at: cotte@twinvalley.net.

Non-discrimination Statement

KOS is a non-profit organization committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and free from discrimination in our membership community and associated KOS activities because of race, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age.

Future Meetings

As nice as it would be to have a long list of future locations for Spring and Fall KOS meetings, they are more prone to just sort of evolve over time and the board is always looking for volunteers to lead the charge!

Fall Meetings need to be held where we can have a paper session on Saturday, as well as our annual business meeting. While often held at a college/university, they haven't always been, as long as there is a large room for presentations and a good location for a nice evening meal.

At this time we know that spring 2025 we will be in Ulysses May 2 - 4, and fall of 2025 we are scheduled to be in Pittsburg (date to be determined!)

If you are interested, please contact myself (Chuck) or any board members. We're here to help but need local boots on the ground to make things work smoothly!