



The Horned Lark

Kansas Ornithological Society

March 2026

Vol. 53, No. 1

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE AS REPORTED IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE

KOS Spring Meeting Registration Issue

May 1-3 2026 Chanute, KS, Neosho County

Surrounded by Allen, Crawford, Labette, and Wilson Counties.

Details and registration on pgs 3 & 4 and KOS Website: KSBirds.org

The Ford County “Big Year” As told & experienced by Jeff Calhoun

I was motivated to try for a Ford County “Big Year” in 2025. My target number was 215 species of birds. This mark would have been one species more than my previous best of 214 species in 2022, the year I left Dodge after incorrectly inferring that I could be happier anywhere else. It was not an all-out, guns blazing effort; a Ford County Big Year at the pace and intensity of a Kansas or ABA Big Year would be extremely dull, and even I, the biggest Ford County homer, can admit that. I am pleased to report that my personal best 215th species was a Rufous Hummingbird that appeared in my Dodge City yard on August 23. One day later, my county lifer Virginia Rail was found. It was one of the five county lifers of the year. My last year bird, a Townsend’s Solitaire on New Year’s Eve, was spotted while I was scouting for the 2026 Christmas Bird Count. It was bird species 224 for 2025! A big Ford County year, indeed!

There were many highlights over a span of 525,600 minutes of birding. Too many to list!! At the top of the list, if it were possible, would be the minutes spent with fellow bird-loving people. I had a great time on the Christmas Bird count in January with several former and current students, including current KSU students Morgan Mink and America Zarate. We were in awe watching a Great Horned Owl being dive-bombed by a Prairie Falcon, including a random cameo from a curious (terrified?) Cooper’s Hawk. The traditional CBC lunch at my home brought together many former students and local friends including Jon Rivera, Cassie Wells, Colton Farra, George Sanchez, Tom and Sara Shane, Kurt Meier, and Henry Armknecht. At that time (January 2), many of these folks had species I didn’t have (yet). I always love seeing those faces, but that

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From the Keyboard

By the Editor

Please note the KOS Spring Meeting dates to be held in Chanute, KS are May 1-3. Details and registration are on pgs 3 & 4 and the KOS Website: KSBirding.org.

I became aware early on in 2025 that Jeff Calhoun was conducting a Ford County 2025 Big Year (read his experience on pages 1 & 8). The idea of primarily birding only one out of 105 Kansas counties is intriguing. I realize birders have their regular “patches” that they frequent as my go to patch is our farm and have kept track of a species list for 30 years. I am still discovering so many wonderful spots to bird in Kansas, but am going to commit to birding all areas of Cloud County on a more regular basis. So far going a different way to town yielded 22 Greater-Prairie Chickens. A drive through Jamestown Wildlife Area saw three Yellow-headed Blackbirds earlier than normal. I imagine most KOS members already do this—so here’s to home county birding in 2026.

Chuck Otte has compiled the Spring 2025 KS Birding Roundup (pgs 5-8) with lots of detail & interesting commentary on trends and numbers. Kevin Groeneweg noted that the 2026 ABA (American Birding Association) bird of the year is our very own KS Ornithological Society mascot, the Horned Lark, *Eremophila alpestris*. The ABA will be celebrating this species through web articles, podcast episodes, & media posts. Check it out at aba.org.

Thank you to all who have taken the time to write of your own birding experiences or have sent in relevant KS birding tidbits. I would like to reiterate the invitation to please keep sending those Birding Blurbs, How I Got Started Birding, or any tidbits or idea suggestions (no specific invitation from me necessary!) I appreciate it. My email: grasslangardens@gmail.com

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.



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KOS Spring Meeting

Chanute, KS

May 1-3, 2026

Register and pay online at: https://ksbirds.org/kos/Spring2026/kos_2026_spring_meeting.htm

We hope that you can join KOS for our 2026 spring meeting. This year we are meeting in Chanute, Kansas, located in Neosho County. KOS has never met in Chanute! A number of popular and well-known birding hotspots are within an easy distance. These include Big Hill, Elk City, Fall River and Toronto Reservoir/Wildlife Areas; Caney and Neosho Wildlife Areas; Bourbon, Montgomery, Wilson and Woodson State Fishing Lakes; Lehigh Portland Trails State Park, Sedan City Lakes; and many other locations. The general area includes a significant portion of the scenic Cross-Timbers physiographic region, the substantial wetlands at Neosho Wildlife Area, a lot of good riparian habitat along the Caney, Elk, Fall River, Neosho and Verdigris Rivers and some good opportunities for grassland birds.

Friday evening, we will have a come-and-go social hour at the Union Works Brewing Co. in Humbolt from 7 PM to 8 PM. Some appetizers will be provided. This is a full-service restaurant with salads, sandwiches, and pizza.

Saturday field trips will visit many of the areas listed above. The number of field trips will be determined by how many people register for the meeting. Please meet in the parking lot of the Chanute Sports Complex, 315 W. 35 Parkway, across the street from the Holiday Inn (3401 Blue Comet Drive) at 6 am. There will be multiple field trip options, and of course you are welcome to strike out on your own. Some beverages and snacks will be provided for the field trips.

There will be a banquet on Saturday night at the SEK Impact Center, (1500 W. 7th St), in Chanute. The menu will be fried chicken with side dishes and will be served buffet style. The speaker after dinner will be Brian Obermeyer, Great Plains Grasslands Strategy Director for The Nature Conservancy.

Sunday we will have half-day trips with destinations closer to Chanute than the Saturday trips. There will be a noon compilation at the playground picnic shelter at Santa Fe Lake in Chanute. Please bring your own lunch. (There is a Subway across the street from the park entrance). Beverages will be provided. The park is at the corner of S. Santa Fe Ave. and Chanute 35 Parkway. The park entrance is along S. Santa Fe Ave just north of 26th St."

Lodging: Please make your own lodging arrangements. Options in Chanute include:

Holiday Inn Express	(620) 431-0817
Super 8	(620) 431-7788
Americas's Best Value Inn	(620) 431-9460

Hope to see you there!

Registration for the KOS Spring Meeting. May 1-3, 2026. Chanute, Kansas.

I (we) plan to attend the 2026 KOS spring meeting

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration fee	\$10.00 person _____	\$ _____

(Please note that student registration fee is free, but you still have to pay for the banquet.)

Saturday banquet	\$20.00/person _____	\$ _____
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Late registration surcharge (Registrations received after April 20th)	\$10.00/person _____	\$ _____
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Total amount due (checks payable to KOS)		\$ _____
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Or register & pay online via PayPal

https://ksbirds.org/kos/Spring2026/kos_2026_spring_meeting.htm

Number of persons in party _____

Special needs or requests: _____

Registrations received after April 20th will have a surcharge of \$10.00 per person
No registration refunds for cancellations after April 24.

Please mail/email completed registrations with payment (even if paying online) to:

Max Thompson
1729 E. 11th Ave.
Winfield, KS 67156
Email maxt@cox.net

In submitting this registration form, I (we) understand that KOS is not responsible or liable for any accidents or injury that might be associated with the 2026 KOS spring meeting. Registering online or submission of this form electronically indicates your acceptance of these conditions.

Signatures

Date

Kansas Birding Roundup

Spring 2025 (March - May 2025)

Chuck Otte, compiler

This is the report of the spring birding season (March-May 2025) in Kansas. A concerted effort was made to scour all reports from eBird, KSBIRD-L and private messages, for new county records and to reflect them in this report. The spring season often brings many new county records and this year was no exception. It was also helpful for KOS to hold their spring meeting in southwest Kansas where an excellent turnout put many feet on the ground and eyes to binoculars which brought many new county records!

Early March had several days with strong southerly winds. Eastern Phoebes and Purple Martins took advantage of this and showed up across much of the southern part of the state in the first few days of the month. Many other species arrived somewhat early through early during the first two weeks of March. This seemed to set the tone for the rest of the season. March and April brought above average temperatures across the entire state. May, however, cooled things off a bit and was below average for the entire state. Statewide, March was significantly drier than normal but April and May brought us a mixed bag with some parts of the state having below average precipitation and others above. I mention all of this because we know that birds are strongly impacted by weather, especially in the spring season.

The winter of 2024-2025 brought better Purple Finch numbers than the past several winters. Therefore, it should be no surprise that birders notice a big movement of Purple Finches in early April headed back to their nesting regions. Interesting patterns and trends seem to show up every year making these reports interesting to follow.

Canyon Towhee is a large ground dwelling sparrow of northern Mexico and parts of the southwest. It is only known from Morton County in Kansas and was first reported in the early 1970s. The occurrence of this species was extremely sporadic until the middle of the “20-teens”. Now they can be found nearly anytime “in season” at Point of Rocks in Cimarron National Grasslands. They have become so expected there that in 2024 the Kansas Bird Records Committee (KBRC) removed Canyon Towhees in Morton County from the review list. Interestingly all but two of the KBRC records are from Point of Rocks. If you need Canyon Towhee for your Kansas List (or life list) go to Point of Rocks in May or September. While you are there be on the lookout for evidence of nesting. It has been proposed, based on some photos submitted to the KBRC, that some late summer sightings are immatures. It would be nice to obtain confirmation of breeding.

As was mentioned earlier, many migrant and nesting passerine species were noted arriving earlier than recent average return dates. Many flycatcher, vireo and warbler species were in this group of early arrivals and even Dickcissels, which are notorious late arrivers especially in western Kansas. Not surprisingly, with May being cooler than average, numerous migrant species also lingered later.

One species of note that deserves further attention is Yellow-throated Warbler. In the 1980s it was considered a rare transient in the easternmost tier of counties in the state and a rare breeding species in Cherokee County. Since then it appears to be moving north and west using maturing riparian timber corridors as avian highways. It is now confirmed breeding in four Kansas counties and summer records much further west (as far west as Milford Lake along the Kansas/Republican Rivers) are intriguing. I would expect additional new county sight records along these riparian areas and additional breeding records in the next few years.

Lastly, we must mention the Lawrence’s Goldfinch seen in early April by the Shanes at their feeders in Garden City and the Tropical Parula that was located in Hutchinson in May by Mark Nolen. I doubt that anyone had either of these species on their 2025 Kansas Bird Bingo Card. But it once again just proves that birds have wings and will use them, defying everyone’s best guesses as to what birds you will see next time you go birding!

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	15 at a pond near Milford Lake	<u>Geary</u>	4/17	CO-fide
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	5 in Backyard pond near Ft Scott	<u>Bourbon</u>	5/24	DKr
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	4 flying over downtown Emporia	<u>Lyon</u>	5/24	LA
Cinnamon Teal	1 male along Prairie Dog Creek	<u>Jewell</u>	4/11	MA
American Black Duck	1 at runoff pond in Olathe	<u>Johnson</u>	5/26	
White-winged Scoter	1 at Perry Lake, a little late	<u>Jefferson</u>	4/03	GC, DMz, m.ob.
	Still present 4/19			

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Black Scoter	1 at Council Grove Lake	<u>Morris</u>	3/07	LA, CB
White-winged Dove	1 at feeder in Ottawa	<u>Franklin</u>	5/13	SDP
Chuck-will's-widow	1 calling near Sylvan Grove	<u>Lincoln</u>	5/17	DK, MR
Chuck-will's-widow	1 calling at Arkalon/Cimarron Valley	<u>Seward</u>	5/21	EDF
Eastern Whip-poor-will	1 Calling southwest of Wilson	Russell	4/25	MR, DK
Heard again on 5/03 and 5/09				
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	1 at feeders near Russel Springs	<u>Logan</u>	5/22	DSf
Sandhill Crane	2 near Reading, unusually east	Osage	3/12	JM
Whooping Crane	3 very late at QNWR	Stafford	5/04	JCy
Black-necked Stilt	1 at Hoxie WTP	<u>Sheridan</u>	4/13	KG
Black-necked Stilt	5 at Dighton WTP	<u>Lane</u>	4/19	HA, JC
Black-necked Stilt	1 at Atwood WTP	<u>Rawlins</u>	4/25	SMG
Black-bellied Plover	1 at Plover Ponds near Elmdale	<u>Chase</u>	5/24	LA
Piping Plover	2 at Hoxie WTP	<u>Sheridan</u>	4/18	CF, DSf
Piping Plover	2 at Sublette WTP	<u>Haskell</u>	5/02	KOS
Snowy Plover	2 at Sheridan SFL	<u>Sheridan</u>	5/05	HA
Whimbrel	1 at Johnson City WTP	<u>Stanton</u>	5/04	KOS
Whimbrel	7 at Neosho WA	Neosho	5/20	ABu, JB
Long-billed Curlew	11, on a Greater Prairie-Chicken lek	<u>Norton</u>	4/09	HC
Hudsonian Godwit	4 at Atwood WTP	<u>Rawlins</u>	4/22	HA
Hudsonian Godwit	1 at Dighton WTP	<u>Lane</u>	5/08	KG
Ruddy Turnstone	20 at Webster Res	Rooks	5/17	HC, RyG
Red Knot	4 in upper end of Wilson Res	Russell	5/31	MR
Short-billed Dowitcher	6 at Frazier Park	<u>Grant</u>	5/02	JJ
Willet	1 along Arkansas River NE of Kinsley	<u>Edwards</u>	5/01	HA
Red-necked Phalarope	2 at Ulysses WTP	Grant	5/03	KOS
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Clinton Lake, Bloomington Beach	Douglas	5/20	CM
Laughing Gull	1 at Sublette WTP	<u>Haskell</u>	5/04	KOS
Pacific Loon	1 at CBWMA, late	Barton	4/24	KGk
Neotropic Cormorant	1 on Yocemento Ave Pond	<u>Ellis</u>	4/12	GAGE
Neotropic Cormorant	1 Sam's Pond, south of Syracuse	<u>Hamilton</u>	4/14	BP
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at Webster Reservoir	<u>Rawlins</u>	4/30	RyG
American White Pelican	8 at Hugoton WTP	Stevens	5/04	PJ, JJ, KG
Glossy Ibis	1 at McPherson Valley Wetlands	<u>McPherson</u>	4/19	DMK, MP
Black Vulture	1 at Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, KBRC	<u>Franklin</u>	4/18	MGo
Black Vulture	1 at Clear Creek Lake, KBRC	<u>Atchison</u>	4/22	DMz
Black Vulture	1 soaring northwest of Emporia	<u>Lyon</u>	5/09	JSc
Broad-winged Hawk	1 slightly early near Black Hoof Park	Johnson	3/14	MTy
Ferruginous Hawk	1 at Melvern Lake, unusually east	Osage	3/16	KMD
Burrowing Owl	1 at Tuttle Creek WA, unusually east	Riley	4/12	GB, HP
Burrowing Owl	1 at Washington Marlatt Park, Manhattan	Riley	5/19	MM
Pileated Woodpecker	1 along K-156 near Hanston	<u>Hodgeman</u>	5/04	KKr, HS
Prairie Falcon	1 late at Jacob's Well	Clark	5/31	CP
Ash-throated Flycatcher	1 at Manter Dam RA, constructing nest	Stanton	5/03	KOS
Cassin's Kingbird	1 along Reservoir Road, Bunker Hill	<u>Russell</u>	5/16	MR
Western Kingbird	1 early just east of QNWR, early	Reno	4/03	PSR
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	1 slightly early, Clinton Lake	Douglas	3/15	BSv
Western Wood-Pewee	1 at Lakewood Park, unusually east KBRC	<u>Saline</u>	5/17	KKr
Western Wood-Pewee	1 along Spring Creek	Russell	5/31	MR
Eastern Wood-Pewee	1 at Shawnee Mission Park, early	Johnson	4/21	BAFT
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	1 in McPherson	<u>McPherson</u>	5/23	LH
Gray Flycatcher	1 at CNG, West Bend	Morton	4/20	AdM
Dusky Flycatcher	1 at CNG, West Bend	Morton	4/19	AdM
Dusky Flycatcher	1 north of Leoti	Wichita	5/11	SSh
Eastern Phoebe	1 slightly early at Harvey Co. West Park	Reno	3/03	DZ
Eastern Phoebe	1 slightly early at Schermerhorn Park	Cherokee	3/03	CKf
Eastern Phoebe	12 slightly early at Scott SP	Scott	3/03	CF
White-eyed Vireo	1 at McPherson State Lake	<u>McPherson</u>	4/27	SL
White-eyed Vireo	1 at Scott SP, unusually west	Scott	4/28	SSh
White-eyed Vireo	1 at Pratt Co. Lake	Pratt	4/30	JC
White-eyed Vireo	1 at Manter Dam RA	Stanton	5-03	KOS
Fish Crow	2 early arrivals, Lawrence	Douglas	3/08	KS
Fish Crow	1 at Washington SFL	<u>Washington</u>	4/11	CJ

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Fish Crow	1 at Horseshoe Bend, Wilson Res	<u>Russell</u>	5/11	MR JnR
Fish Crow	1 at Lakewood Park	<u>Saline</u>	5/28	KKr
Chihuahuan Raven	2 at Seger Ponds	Stanton	5/03	KOS
Chihuahuan Raven	2 at Manter Dam RA	Stanton	5/23	KG
Common Raven	1 southwest of Johnson City	Stanton	4/23	TD
Common Raven	2 at nesting platform near Manter	Stanton	5/03	KOS
Common Raven	1 south of Hamilton County SFL	Hamilton	5/03	KOS
Common Raven	1 in the town of Manter	Stanton	5/21	DCb
Common Raven	1 between Weskan and Colorado	Wallace	5/29	FMi
Tufted Titmouse	1 calling below Dam at Wilson Lake	Russell	5/03	MR
N. Rough-winged Swallow	2 early at Craig Crossing Park	Johnson	3/15	ByW
Purple Martin	2 slightly early returning near St. Paul	Neosho	3/02	ABu
Purple Martin	1 slightly early returning near Partridge	Reno	3/02	DwM
Purple Martin	1 slightly early returning in Wichita	Sedgwick	3/02	KG
Cliff Swallow	1 early, CBWMA	Barton	3/27	KKr, HS
Sage Thrasher	1 southwest of Russell Springs	Logan	3/28	DSf
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1 at Sappa Park	<u>Decatur</u>	5/05	FMi
Gray-cheeked Thrush	Harry Street Nature Trail	<u>Butler</u>	5/13	MN
Wood Thrush	1 at Manter Dam RA	<u>Stanton</u>	5/03	KOS
Red Crossbill	7 in Dodge City	Ford	3/26	JC
Red Crossbill	2 at Chilton Park, Dodge City	Ford	5/24	EDF
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders in Manhattan	Riley	3/01	CKr, JRg
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders in Manhattan	Riley	3/04	MM
	Still present 4/03			
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders in Garden City	Finney	3/25	SSh
	Still present 4/04			
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at feeders in Manhattan	Riley	4/24	LA
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at Battin Park, Johnson City	<u>Stanton</u>	5/03	KOS
Lawrence's Goldfinch	1 male at feeders	<u>Finney</u>	3/25	SSh, TSh, m.ob.
	Still present 4/02, First state record, added to the Kansas Check-list, KBRC #2025-13			
Lapland Longspur	1 at CBWMA, late	Barton	4/20	ABHH
	Still present 5/01			
Chestnut-collared Longspur	1 late near Garden City	Finney	4/28	KM
Black-throated Sparrow	1 at Manter Dam RA	<u>Stanton</u>	5/04	KOS
Fox Sparrow	1 late near Lawrence	Douglas	4/26	GP
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1 at feeders in Hill City	<u>Graham</u>	5/03	RyG, HC, SCw
Harris's Sparrow	1 late at Rocky Ford area	Pottawatomie	5/30	JJT
Henslow's Sparrow	3 slightly early, Tallgrass Prairie NPRES	Chase	4/02	DC
Canyon Towhee	1 at Point of Rocks, CNG	Morton	5/03	KOS
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	1 at Manter Dam RA	<u>Stanton</u>	5/04	KOS
Green-tailed Towhee	1 at Manter Dam RA	Stanton	5/03	KOS
Green-tailed Towhee	1 at Manter Dam RA	Stanton	5/04	KOS
	Given location, likely a different bird from the one on 5/03. Still present 5/17			
Eastern Towhee	1 slightly early, Shawnee SFL	Shawnee	3/11	DMK, MP
Eastern Meadowlark	1 at Rexford WTP	<u>Thomas</u>	4/11	HA
Orchard Oriole	1 somewhat early at Heritage Park, Olathe	Johnson	4/18	CFy
Scott's Oriole	1 continuing at feeders in Overland Park	Johnson	3/01	SC
	Still present 3/16			
Ovenbird	1 at Cheney SP, West Shore area	<u>Kingman</u>	5/08	BPn
Blue-winged Warbler	1 at Wichita's Oak Park, KBRC	Sedgwick	4/28	KG
Prothonotary Warbler	1 at St Francis River Walk	<u>Cheyenne</u>	5/05	FMi
Connecticut Warbler	1 at Oak Park	Sedgwick	5/21	AdM
Mourning Warbler	1 at Seger Ponds	<u>Stanton</u>	5/17	JC
Hooded Warbler	1 at Cedar View B & B	<u>Grant</u>	5/04	KOS
American Redstart	1 female, Lawrence, early	Douglas	4/09	JMg
Cerulean Warbler	1 at Heritage Park, Olathe	Johnson	5/27	GCh
Northern Parula	1 on Spring Creek Rd south of Nicodemus	<u>Graham</u>	5/06	RyG
Tropical Parula	1 at Dillon Nature Center	Reno	5/06	MN
	First state record, added to the Kansas Check-list, KBRC #2025-21			
Bay-breasted Warbler	1 north of Hesston	<u>McPherson</u>	5/10	LHH
Bay-breasted Warbler	1 at Lakewood Park	<u>Saline</u>	5/18	KKr
Black-throated Blue Warbler	1 in alley Johnson City	Stanton	5/04	KOS
Scarlet Tanager	1 north of Hesston	<u>McPherson</u>	5/10	LHH

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Lazuli Bunting	1 along creek north of Howard	Elk	5/09	HA
Indigo Bunting	1 quite early southwest of Erie	Neosho	3/30	DWd

Locations and notes: CBWMA – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Management Area, CNG – Cimarron National Grasslands, KBRC – Kansas Bird Records Committee report filed, NPRES – National Preserve, QNWR – Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, RA – Recreation Area, SFL – State Fishing Lake, SP – State Park, WTP - Water Treatment Plant, 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: Logan Anderson, Henry Armknecht, Marilyn Aurand, Clayton Bickley, Jayden Bowman, Gus Brunette, Andrew Burnett (ABu), Jeff Calhoun, Denise Cameron, Susie Cantonwine (SCw), Darren Carbone (DCb), Steven Case, Glenn Caspers, George Chiu (GCh), Henry Coddington, Jeff Conley (JCy), Eric DeFonso (EDF), Todd Deininger, Saige Dixon-Peters (SDP), Chris Fagyal (CFy), Christopher Frick, Kurt Gaskill (KGk), Ryan Giordanelli (RyG), Malcolm Gold (MGo), Kevin Groeneweg, Lorna Habegger Harder (LHH), Lisa Hoffman, Pete Janzen, Carson Jones, Jennifer Jones, Colby Karnei (CKr), Daniel Kerr (DKr), Dave Klema, Chris Krafft (CKf), Kaleb Kroeker (KKr), Stephen Lansaw, Joey Magerl (JMg), Mark Mayfield, Jay Mason, Kathy McDowell, (KMD), Sandy McGregor (SMG), Debra McKee (DMK), Kurtis Meier, Don Merz (DMz), Andrew Miller (AdM), Dwight Miller (DwM), Franklin Miller (FMi), Carol Morgan, Mark Nolen, Chuck Otte, Cheryl Peachy, Brandon Percival, Barbara Peterson (BPn), Mark Pheasant, Galen Pittman, Heather Poyner, Jenn Rader (JnR), Mike Rader, Jacob Riggs (JRg), Kim Sain, Phil St. Romain (PSR), Brian Sevy (BSv), Jordan Schmidt (JSc), Sara Shane (SSh), Tom Shane (TSh), Doug Shoffner (DSf), Hezekiah Swihart, Mark Tarry (MTy), Janet and James Throne (JJT), Donald Weidemann (DWd), Bryan White (ByW), Dick Zerger **Groups:** ABHH – Cornelius Alwood, Jeffrey Blunt, Dave Haenni, Doug Hommert; BAFT – Burroughs Audubon Field Trip; m.ob. – many observers; KOS – Kansas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting; GAGE – Rick Gedney, Henry Armknecht, Kevin Groeneweg, Tom Ewert;

-continued from front page, The Ford County “Big Year”

count was extra special. The many bird walks with Dodge City birders Dave Linsenmeyer, Bill Turner, and Fritz Kruse were always a hoot, especially when students from DCHS’s Biology Club came along for the adventures. I cherished multiple moments with Chad and Trish Remley and I am especially fond of the day we cruised some Thick-billed Longspurs, a species I would have otherwise missed. It is crazy to get this far in my Ford County birding accolades without mentioning Stan and Christi McMillen, the finders of a Ross’s Gull that delighted many in January 2025. These two amazing humans were responsible for MANY great birding memories over the years. They packed their bags and moved to Iowa in May to be closer to family, and although I miss my best Ford County birding friends, it makes my heart happy to see them living life to the fullest and I just cannot wrap up a Ford County birding ramble without mentioning how much I love and appreciate them.

Speaking of making my heart happy, I think that is the greatest lesson of my 2025 Ford County “Big Year”. I learned that I don’t need to travel far to be happy; there are exciting things to upload to eBird or iNaturalist around every corner! I think I now know birds better because I got so much better at appreciating everything else about my home, from the people to the ants. I am glad this stupid idea inspired me and evolved throughout the year. And, as of February 2026, I am actually ahead of my 2025 pace. Who knows what will unfold next? But isn’t that the point?

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