

The Horned Lark

Kansas Ornithological Society

December 2026 Vol. 53, No. 4

Mark Your Calendars:

KOS Spring Meeting
April 30-May 2, 2027 Topeka, KS, Shawnee County
Includes Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas Counties
Details and registration will be listed in the March 2027 Horned Lark and KOS Website: KSBirds.org

KOS Fall Meeting
October 1-3, 2027
Great Bend, KS, Barton County
Cheyenne Bottoms: Details will be published in September

2027 Kansas Ornithological Society Calendars Are Here!

The 2027 KOS calendars are available to order on the KOS website! Printed on 8.5x11" high quality glossy paper, each calendar is $17.50, which covers the $15 calendar price plus $2.50 for shipping. This year, you can choose between two editions or grab both!

* 2027 KOS Calendar: Features 47 photographs of 40 different bird species! The edition takes a fascinating look at the hybridization of closely related species observed in Kansas.

* 2027 KOS Phenology Calendar: This calendar explores the diverse ecological regions of Kansas alongside the seasonal changes in local plants, birds, and wildlife. This calendar features 25 photographs celebrating the natural beauty of Kansas.

A great gift for the birders and nature lovers on your gift list! Previews of both calendars as well as the ability to purchase each are available at:

https://ksbirds.org/kos/2027_kos_calendar.htm

From the Keyboard

By the Editor

Henry Armknect visited our place on September 21st to add Ruby-throated Hummingbird to his Cloud County list. Earlier this year, I asked Henry if he would answer some questions about county listing. He agreed, but suggested I contact Scott Seltman as well to get the complete story. Appreciative to both Henry & Scott for their knowledge, experience, and historical perspective on county listing. See pages 3&4.

The Fall Meeting was held at Southwestern College in Winfield. Many thanks to Max Thompson, Gene Young, and Andrew George for organizing. Thank you to the professors & graduate students for keeping us up to date on a cross-section of research projects & topics. Congratulations to Patty Marlett for being named the 2026 Avian Conservationist of the Year and to Robert Penner, the 2026 Dr. Ivan L. Boyd Award. The award presentations can be seen on the KOS Facebook Page. Fall meeting activity summaries: Sunday Field Trip Species List (p.4), Abstracts from Papers Presented (pp. 5-7), and the Top Ten Birds of the Year (pp. 8-9). Thank you to Mark Robbins for his presentation at the banquet on his recent trip to Antartica.



Patty Marlett
Avian Conservationist of the Year Award



Robert Penner
Dr. Ivan L. Boyd Award

Our Birding Blurb (p.7) comes from Debby McKee of Topeka. She and Mark Pheasant certainly live the "visit the nooks and crannies" of Kansas advice expressed by Henry & Scott. Fun! A very busy KS Birding Roundup from Chuck (pp. 9-12).

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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Henry Armknect and Scott Seltman Talk County Listing

Both Henry and Scott grew up in western Kansas on farms and have been birding awhile: Scott 50 years and Henry 25.

How They Got Involved in County Listing:
Scott grew up on his parent's farm NW of Larned, where he and his wife Diane live today. Scott remembers "My dad was an avid hunter, in fact one of my earliest memories was waiting in an old pickup with our spaniel while my dad and his friend set out duck decoys at Cheyenne Bottoms." Scott started keeping track of birds (date & location) in 1975 and started his life list in April of 1976 in California after attending college there with his #1 bird – the Anna's Hummingbird. Scott began actively looking for birds in 1979 at the urging of Dr. Charles Ely, professor at FHSU in Hays. Dr. Ely had a set of 105 county notebooks of which many counties had hardly been birded at all. Scott was county listing by default.

Growing up in Cheyenne County on the Colorado state line, Henry's parents remember the first string of words he put together was something to the effect of "See da bird". A neighbor called him Columbus because he was always out exploring and one of his earliest memories "was seeing a one-man helicopter over our pond. In retrospect, I probably saw a Great Blue Heron." Forward to May of 2001, Henry had 25 aquariums and was raising rare fish from the rift lakes of Africa which require very hard water. When his wife, Debby got a water softener, Henry needed a new hobby. With a change of jobs and location, Henry credits Scott and Mike Rader on getting him on the path to birding. A few Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) and several birding trips later, Henry, along with his lifetime desire to explore what is over the next hill and his love of statistics, discovered his hobby and officially became a county lister.

County Listing History:
Scott learned about competitive county listing while in California (mid 1970's). Because California is such a large state with huge checklists, birders started keeping lists of their home counties instead. The competition was on. "It also wasn't long before some Colorado friends started doing 'total ticky' (cumulative totals of an entire set of geographical lists) with their county lists and publishing their rankings on the COBIRDS listserv. This prompted a discussion between himself and Lisa Edwards which led to Lisa organizing and publishing the results for KS birders sometime in the late 1990's." In addition to states, there is a group of birders who apply total-ticky to all North America, i.e. lists from all US states and Canadian provinces combined. Imagine the travel budgets!

"The county listing movement has gradually filled in the maps to where one can easily study the expected ranges of resident birds. Early versions of the range maps mostly just showed where birders lived. There would often be a dot for Topeka, Wichita, Kansas City plus some college towns like Lawrence, Manhattan, Hays and Emporia and then a few perennial hot spots like Cheyenne Bottoms and Morton County, but very few records beyond that. During the last 30+ years, the human location bias has largely vanished."

Birding Strategy & Changes in Birding Over Time:
Henry recommends spending as much time as possible birding with birders with more knowledge, experience, and expertise. "And if you are not doing it for fun, possibly take up a different hobby." Scott would encourage developing your own strategy and style. Scott likes to do watersheds. "I start by finding the place where a stream or river begins and then follow it downstream through all the counties until it leaves Kansas." This is how he has visited every road crossing of the Smoky Hill and Kansas Rivers from eastern Colorado to Kansas City. Both expressed county listing as a great incentive for visiting the nooks and crannies in all parts of the state and seeing things they might not have otherwise experienced.

Henry: "Technology has changed communication as well as how observation data is collected, stored, and disseminated. Scott: "Before the internet, Merlin, eBird, and cell phones, birding in KS was a lonely business. I still remember a moment along the Cimarron River in the mid-90's near the Wilburton Crossing when Ted Cable, Sebastian Patti, Max Thompson and I spread out and were finding unusual birds. Normally we would have just yelled, but we were too far apart, so we started calling each other on our cell phones. Afterwards I remember thinking, well that's how we do birding from now on!"

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Favorite Experiences & Statistics:
Scott was always excited to experience a first state record (in the vicinity of six)! A couple were group efforts including Flammulated Owl and Gray Vireo in Morton County. He has not updated his KS ranking for a while but has a minimum of 75 species in all counties and has more than 100 in almost all. For Henry, finding the 1st state record of Pacific Wren at Scott State Lake in Scott County with Jeff Calhoun was awesome and likely would not have made the ID by himself. Sometimes it takes a while to reach your goal as most all county listers can attest. Henry had Common Yellowthroat in all counties but Ford. Jeff Calhoun, resident of Dodge City, would have them in his yard! It took several tries over several years for success. Henry has approx. 20,500 ticks in KS, has three counties in the 170-174 species range with the rest 175 or higher, and 200 or more species in 32 counties. Six species are at 104 counties and counting. It was seven until just recently when he picked up the Ring-billed Gull in Marshal County. Tick!

KOS Fall Meeting Species List : 25-27 September 2026, Winfield, Kansas Sumner (SU) and Cowley (CL) Counties

If no county is listed the species was observed in both Sumner & Cowley Counties.

Canada Goose (CL)
Blue-winged Teal (SU)
Northern Bobwhite (SU)
Wild Turkey (CL)
Mourning Dove
Eurasian Collared-Dove
Rock Pigeon (CL)
Common Nighthawk (CL)
Chimney Swift (CL)
Ruby-throated Hummingbird (CL)
American Avocet (SU)
Killdeer
Lesser Yellowlegs (SU)
Greater Yellowlegs (SU)
Wilson's Phalarope (SU)
Black Tern (SU)
Double-crested Cormorant (CL)
White-faced Ibis (SU)
American White Pelican (CL)
Yellow-crowned Night Heron (CL)
Green Heron (CL)
Great Egret
Great Blue Heron
Black Vulture (CL)
Turkey Vulture
Osprey (CL)
Sharp-shinned Hawk (CL)
Cooper's Hawk (CL)
Northern Harrier (SU)
Bald Eagle (CL)
Mississippi Kite (CL)
Red-shouldered Hawk (SU)
Broad-winged Hawk (CL)
Swainson's Hawk (CL)
Red-tailed Hawk
American Barn Owl (CL)
Great Horned Owl (SU)
Barred Owl (CL)
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker (CL)
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker (CL)
Pileated Woodpecker (CL)
American Kestrel
Peregrine Falcon (CL)
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Red-eyed Vireo (CL)
Loggerhead Shrike (CL)
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow (CL)
Carolina Chickadee (CL)
Tufted Titmouse (CL)
Horned Lark
Tree Swallow (CL)
N. Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow (SU)
White-breasted Nuthatch (CL)
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (SU)
Carolina Wren
Northern House Wren (CL)
European Starling
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin (CL)
House Sparrow
House Finch (CL)
American Goldfinch
Chipping Sparrow (CL)
Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Junco (CL)
Savannah Sparrow (SU)
Eastern Meadowlark
Red-winged Blackbird
Brown-headed Cowbird (CL)
Common Grackle (CL)
Black-and-white Warbler (CL)
Mourning Warbler (CL)
Northern Parula (CL)
Magnolia Warbler (CL)
Black-throated Green Warbler (CL)
Wilson's Warbler (CL)
Summer Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Indigo Bunting

A total of 87 species were observed with 73 species in Cowley County and 42 in Sumner County.

Respectfully submitted,
Eugene A. Youing

Presented Paper Abstracts

*Presenter denoted by **

***Zosterops* in the Eastern Solomon Islands: Sympatry with No Evidence of Gene Flow** *Ryan M. Andrews*, Lucas H. DeCicco, Robert G. Moyle*
Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

Zosterops is a genus of small passerine birds, known colloquially as 'white-eyes' for their characteristic white eye rings. *Zosterops* is the most speciose avian genus in the world, with 111 species currently recognized distributed across Africa, southern Asia, the South Pacific, and Australia. *Zosterops* is especially diverse in the Indo-Pacific, with many species endemic to individual or groups of islands. In areas of sympatry, species often experience habitat or ecological niche shifts, where one species may retreat to higher elevations over evolutionary time while another remains in the lowlands. In several cases, sympatric species of *Zosterops* show evidence of gene flow, both ongoing and ancient. Here, we use restriction site-associated DNA sequence (RADseq) data generated from specimen-vouchered tissue samples to investigate two cases of sympatry on small islands with no elevational or habitat gradients in the eastern Solomon Islands. We performed both phylogenetic and population genetics analyses, including testing for gene flow. Phylogenetic analyses reinforced patterns of relatedness found in previous publications, whereas no evidence for gene flow was uncovered. Our results suggest barriers, either genomic or ecological, may inhibit gene flow, informing future research.

Nesting Ecology of Prothonotary Warblers on Abandoned Mined Lands
Gabe McClain, Andrew George, Department of Biology, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS*

The Prothonotary Warbler is a Neotropical migrant songbird that nests in tree cavities in forested wetlands. Despite declines in coastal regions due to habitat loss, Prothonotary Warbler populations may be increasing along the western edge of their geographic range, where disturbance from past strip mining has resulted in extensive secondary nesting habitat. In this study, we compare population demographics and migration patterns of Prothonotary Warblers between mined and unmined habitats in a region where they have not been previously studied. We placed 210 nest boxes on 6 mined and 6 unmined sites in the region and monitored their nest success and spatial movements across two breeding seasons. We also color banded adult birds on each site to monitor site fidelity between breeding seasons. Additionally, we are collaborating with local Audubon chapters to monitor nests outside of our study sites and attach light-level geolocators to a subset of Prothonotary Warblers to monitor migratory routes and wintering grounds. Results from our study will 1) help determine the conservation value of abandoned mined lands for migratory songbirds, and 2) describe the dispersal and migration routes of western Prothonotary Warblers.

One Hundred Fifty Years of Avian Community Change: Analyzing Kansas Bird Communities Using Historical and Modern Records
Nikki Lemus[1,2], Ryan Andrews[1,2], Jacob Cooper[3], Joanna Corimanya[1,2], Katherine Crawford[1,2], Lucas DeCicco[1,2], Abigail Perkins[1,2], Chase Perkins[1,2], A. Townsend Peterson[1,2]*
[1]University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS, [2]KU Biodiversity Institute, Lawrence, KS, [3]University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kearney, NE

Land usage and climate have changed radically over the last 150 years, owing in great part to human activity; how those changes affect bird communities is not well understood. Although effects of various factors on different species are complex, historical specimen series allow comparisons over decades or centuries. The University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute (BI) holds the specimens and field journals of Charles D. Bunker and his colleagues, who characterized the biodiversity of the state of Kansas in the early 1900s and created a detailed record of bird communities across the state. Since 2020, BI personnel launched the Bunker Resurvey Project to revisit Bunker's collection sites for repeat surveys, enabling exciting comparisons across a century of change. Using historical and modern records of species presences at sites across Kansas, we analyze the community composition and distributional changes over the last hundred fifty years. Results will show broad patterns at the level of order and family and species-specific patterns that reveal that avian communities do not respond to environmental changes as a monolith. Rather, individual species have expanded or contracted their distributions: forest-associated species are now far more broadly spread across the state, and prairie-associated species are generally more restricted and fragmented. Additionally, range shifts have introduced new species to Kansas avian communities by way of non-native introductions and climate change-driven northern expansions. More generally, this study illustrates the timely and invaluable worth of historical collections, and the broad temporal perspective that they can offer to biological studies.

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Conservation Reserve Program Grasslands Influence Breeding Season Survival in Greater Prairie-Chickens in Kansas and Nebraska

Ryan C. Giordanelli[1], Dan Sullins[2], Dave Haukos[2], Sarah Sonsthagen[3]*
[1]Division of Biology, Kansas State University, [2]U.S. Geological Survey Kansas Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Unit, [3]U.S. Geological Survey Nebraska Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Unit

The breeding season is the most vulnerable and stressful time for adult female Greater PrairieChickens. Understanding their survival during this period (March 16th-September 15th) across their distribution in Kansas and Nebraska and influence of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands at landscape scales is essential for informing species management and sustainable populations. In 2025 and 2026, we tracked 327 female Greater Prairie-Chickens with GPS transmitters among seven study sites in Kansas and Nebraska that differ in CRP practice (general vs. grassland) and CRP composition. We used Kaplan-Meier survival curves and Cox proportional hazard models to evaluate survival in the context of CRP. Over the 2025 and 2026 breeding season the most important factor of survival was if a female ever used any CRP enrolled property during the season (HR = -0.71, SE 0.2253, p value = 0.002). Both the use of general and grassland CRP decreased mortality risk and were informative at 85% confidence intervals. Our results underscore the survival benefits of CRP in fragmented landscapes for female Greater Prairie-Chickens during a key life-stage and the importance of CRP for continued population persistence.

Genomics of Chickadee Hybridization in Southeastern Kansas

Abigail Perkins, Mark Robbins, A. Townsend Peterson*
University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute, Lawrence, KS

Hybrid zones offer critical insights into speciation, gene flow, and species' response to climatic change. geographic distributions. Black-capped Chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*) and Carolina Chickadees (*P. carolinensis*) form a hybrid zone that stretches across the eastern United States, starting in southern Kansas and crossing eastward to the mid-Atlantic coast. While the central (Ohio) and eastern (Pennsylvania) regions of this hybrid zone have been extensively studied both genetically and ecologically, the western extreme remains understudied despite unique geographic and climatic differences. Notably, studies of the easternmost section suggest the contact area is rapidly shifting northward, and a recent study of the contact area in Missouri showed a much less dramatic shift over time. Here, I will briefly review current scientific knowledge of the secondary contact of Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees. I will also present preliminary results from the first whole-genome data of this *Poecile* hybrid zone, representing the westernmost extent of the contact zone centered on Neosho Falls, Kansas.

The Hybridization of Eastern and Spotted Towhees in Nebraska

Katherine J. Crawford[1], Ryan M. Andrews[1], Lucas H. DeCicco[1], Devon A. DeRaad[1,2], Lukas B. Klicka[3], Robert G. Moyle[1]*
[1]University of Kansas, Biodiversity Institute,[2]University of California Los Angeles,[3]Peru State University

The Spotted Towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) and Eastern Towhee (*P. erythrophthalmus*) hybridize commonly where they meet along riparian corridors in the Great Plains. In the 1950s, researchers collected research specimens of towhees along the Niobrara River in Nebraska to study this hybrid zone. Previously considered one species, the Rufous-sided Towhee, they were split in 1995 due to a higher mitochondrial divergence than other subspecies comparisons. There has been no research published on the nuclear genetic relationship between these two species. Since 2022, researchers at the University of Kansas and other collaborators have returned to the Niobrara River corridor, collecting research specimens at the historical sites and expanding sampling to more sites. We have now produced whole genome DNA sequencing data from specimen vouchered tissue samples from along this transect and have performed population genetic and phylogenetic analyses to determine the extent of hybridization. We found widespread, late-generation hybridization in the nuclear genome and confirmed the presence of distinct mitochondrial haplotypes, occurring in a gradient along the hybrid zone. These results support the hypothesis of an ancient, Pleistocene-mediated separation of populations, followed by continuous gene flow. This system gives us a window into the process of speciation, and what it can look like when species fail to maintain reproductive isolation.

Wheat Fields in the Wheat State: Good, Bad, or Ugly for Grassland Birds?

William E. Jensen, School of Science and Mathematics, Emporia State University

Grassland birds are exhibiting the steepest population declines of any avian habitat guild and have lost great expanses habitat, chiefly to cropland agriculture. Crop fields are ecologically sterile and potentially dangerous environments for most wildlife. But do these areas of intensive agriculture offer some underestimated alternate habitat for some species? Crop fields might simply be uninhabitable displacements of native prairie habitats for many grassland birds ("bad"). At worst ("ugly"), these alternate cropland habitats might constitute ecological traps where, if used, survival and reproduction are compromised. But perhaps for some species, ecologically simple croplands might offer—at least temporarily—places to

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survive and successfully breed. Given the tremendous expanse of cropland in the Great Plains, nesting successes in these fields might translate to considerable recruitment at population scales (some "good"?). These possibilities are discussed with particular focus on observations of Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) during their breeding season, but there is possible relevance to other grassland birds. Increased attention to grassland bird nesting activity in crop fields, especially wheat stubble, might be warranted.

Status of the Greater Prairie-Chicken in Kansas
Mark B. Robbins and A. Townsend Peterson,*
University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute, Lawrence, KS

Greater Prairie-Chickens have undergone a massive population decline and range contraction. Through the 1990s, the Flint Hills were considered the core area in Kansas, and perhaps the most significant population center for the entire species. Since that period, however, the species has gone through dramatic declines at many sites across its range. We recently (2022-2026) resurveyed two sites in the Flint Hills, in Greenwood and Chase counties, Kansas, that had been the subjects of intensive studies 25-40 years ago. We documented major declines, 70% and 80%, respectively, in the number of leks at both sites. To broaden the scope of our geographic monitoring of the species, in 2026, we initiated resurveys of Kansas Parks and Wildlife routes across the entire distribution of the species in Kansas—we present a progress report and preliminary results of that statewide study.

KDWP Ecological Services Bird Conservation and Research Update
Jordan Hofmeier, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

The Ecological Services Division of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is charged with conserving nongame and imperiled species across Kansas. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the Division, ongoing conservation efforts, and upcoming bird research projects. *After the presentation, KDWP is interested to hear the group's thoughts on data gaps and research needs for nongame bird species in Kansas.*

Birding Blurb: Debby McKee, Topeka, KS

In July 2026, Mark Pheasant & I decided to head west to see if we could add Red Crossbills to our year list. On the way out we talked about missing seeing 'Big Boy', while it was in Topeka. It's a large steam engine moving through Kansas on a cross country trek for the United States 250th anniversary. We found its schedule & figured out we might be able to catch up to it. Success!!! We got ahead of it at Hays and got a few pics. Then back to Wilson where the Crossbills were accommodating and showed up for us. Double success!!! While in Wilson, we found a selfie mural & took a selfie.

Mark & I also look for stone bridges while bird watching. We always do a bird list at each bridge we find. Our two most recent were in Admire (Lyon County) & Lincoln County. These two were found while researching my family. The one in Lincoln County was built in 1913 and it is called the Burkepile Crossing - which is my ancestors name.

We never know what our birding days are going to turn out to be. But we always have a good time.

* Check out the listing of Christmas Bird counts (CBC) around the state at:
https://ksbirds.org/kos/2026CBC.htm

* Have you considered including KOS in your estate?
Contact Treasurer Max Thompson for details.

KOS Top 10 Birds of the Year: 28 September 2025 – 25 September 2026

Acknowledgments: Thanks to everyone for sending nominations this year, and to Max Thompson for helping in the selection process.

Preface: All records are subject to review by the KBRC. Some in the Top 10 were already accepted by KBRC and those appear as printed in the KOS Bulletin.

Honorable Mention (HM, no particular order): Yellow-throated Warbler in Graham County; **Clarks Nutcracker** in Sherman County; **Varied Thrush** in Finney and Scott Counties; **Brown Pelican** at Pott State Fishing Lake #2 and at River Pond below Tuttle Creek Reservoir; **White Ibis** in McPherson County; **Fulvous Whistling-Duck** in Barton County; and **Roseate Spoonbill** in Linn County.

Following notable HM due to seasonal dates: **Limpkin,** 16 November 2025, Lyon County and 22 October to 2 November 2025, Barton County; **Snowy Plover,** 12 Dec 2025, Ellsworth County; **Whooping Crane (6),** 16 Dec 2025, Stafford County, at least 2 yrs in a row on CBCs in KS; and **Painted Bunting,** during CW of Lawrence 2025-2026 CBC, count was on 20 Dec 2025.

TOP 10: the original presentation had an Elegant Tern as the number one species for 2025-2026. However, the observers subsequently changed the record to a Common Tern. Thus, since there needs to be no confusion for future reference, and this record is on eBird, I (EAY), acting as the Top 10 Compiler removed the Elegant Tern record from the number one spot, and the other species move up by one. Therefore, the new number 10 is listed below (Black-throated Sparrow) and the King Eider becomes number one.

10. Black-throated Sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), 2025-57, adult, 20 December 2025, along South Emma Creek Road, Harvey County, by Carolyn Schwab. Documented with photographs. Fourteenth state record.

9. Purple Gallinule: 23 June 2026, Pracht Wetlands, Wichita, Sedgwick County, by Andrea Sisson; also a juv. at Baker Wetlands, early September 2026. These were 2nd and 3rd records since 2003.

8. Anhinga: 9-10 April 2026, Scott Lake, Scott County, by Phillip Henson.

7. Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*), 2025-42 and 2025-43, adult, 31 October to 27 November 2025, Carnahan Creek Park and Stockdale Park Areas of Tuttle Creek Reservoir, Pottawatomie and Riley Counties, respectively, by Lynette Muller and Jim Patten, respectively and seen by many other observers. Both records documented with photographs. Given the close proximity between the two locations, and similarities in plumage, these are being considered to be the same bird. Fifth state record.

Reddish Egret, 24 June – 8 July 2026, Phillips County, Meryl Sudeith. 6th state record. Interestingly this is a white morph immature. Photos.

6. Scott's Oriole, 11 May 2026, urban residence in Johnson County, Dan Naden, been present for several winters.

5. Curlew Sandpiper, 18 April 2026, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, Little Salt Marsh, Stafford County, Isoo O'Brien, 8th State record.

4. Crested Caracara, 17 January 2026, East of Winfield along US160, Cowley County, Kendal VanZaten; 28 January 2026 southwest of Independence, Montgomery County, Evan Gordon; 4-7 March 2026, North of Lawrence on 13th St, Jefferson County, Mark Grantz and Chris Stringer; 18 April 2026, between Beaumont and Eureka, Greenwood County, Brady Koch; 30 April 2026, HWY K-57 near Geary/Morris County Line, Geary County, Aubrey Evans; and 21 May 2026, along K-27 in southern Stanton County, Kraig Schultz.

3. Eurasian Tree Sparrow, 5-8 February 2026, outlet area of Tuttle Creek Reservoir, Riley County, first found by Ryan Giordanelli around the 5th, subsequently by Jennifer Jones.

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2. Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), 2025-46, adult, 9-17 December 2025, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Headquarters Park, Pratt, Pratt County, by Mike Rader, seen by many other observers. Documented with photographs (Figure 8). Third state record, first since 2013.

1. King Eider (*Somateria spectabilis*), 2025-45, adult female, 11 November 2025 to 21 January 2026, at the Rock Creek Public Use Area of Perry Lake, Jefferson County, first found by Chad and Trish Remley and seen by many other observers. Documented with photographs (Figure 3). The eider may have been present for several days prior to this, but not confirmed until 11 November. This is the second state record, the first was shot by a hunter in nearby Douglas County in 1947 and preserved as a specimen at The University of Kansas Museum of Natural History.

Respectfully submitted,

Eugene A. Young
26 September 2026
KOS Banquet
Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas

Kansas Birding Roundup
Spring 2026 (March - May 2026)
Chuck Otte, compiler

This is the report of the spring birding season (March to May 2026) in Kansas. A concerted effort is made to scour all reports from eBird, KSBIRD-L and private messages, for new county records and to reflect them in this report. As winter slowly wanes, birder's thoughts turn to spring migration and what interesting finds the season may bring?

Statewide, March and April were both one of the five warmest on record. While May moderated somewhat, it still came in just slightly above normal. On the other hand, most of the state experienced below normal precipitation through the entire period. The warmer than normal temperatures, especially in March and April, resulted in the rapid northern movement of many passerine species. Resultingly, many of those species were arriving in the state 10 to 14 days ahead of when we would normally expect.

Many waterfowl species were hesitant to leave the state both in the preceding winter season as well as at the end of the spring season. With more and more birders across the state filing eBird reports it is causing us to "adjust" what we once thought were normal arrival and departure dates. For waterfowl especially, if water conditions are good, some individuals will be hesitant to leave for northern climes, lingering through the spring season and into the summer season. The same appears to be happening with shorebirds as well. Is all of this an aberration, or the new norm?

Elkhart, and Morton County, again proved to be excellent migrant traps with an impressive list of warblers, flycatchers and vireos. If you are in the western half of Kansas in late April or May, find a good stand of trees (city parks and old cemeteries come to mind) and spend some quality time at dawn. The birds are moving through if someone is just there to see and report them.

Speaking of reporting, we had an excellent crop of new county records through the spring season (note underlined county names in the table below.) The Kansas Bird Records Committee (KBRC) was also busy reviewing records and accepted records are so noted below. I would encourage birders to familiarize themselves with the KBRC Review List at https://tinyurl.com/53zt7h5j and be sure to provide plenty of plumage details in their eBird reports on those species. And please, if you write that "photos will be added later", PLEASE be sure to do so! As KBRC secretary and eBird reviewer, lack of plumage details and no photos attached is a never-ending source of frustration!

Lastly, what is going on with Crested Caracaras? Between the winter and spring season there were SIX Crested Caracara sightings reported and all six were accepted by the KBRC. Prior to 2026, Kansas had a total of three Crested Caracara records. Ever. As has been stated many times, "birds have wings and they use them!" Assume nothing and document everything!

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. Records that have been accepted by the time this report is written will include the KBRC record number. 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.

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Species	Number and Location	County	Date	Observer(s)
Black-bellied Whistling Duck	8 at Cedar Bluff Res.	Trego	4/16	PG, DMz
Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	3 in Elkhart	Morton	5/06	TCR
Clark's Grebe	1 at Antelope Lake	Graham	4/19	CF, DSf
Greater Roadrunner	1 at Milford SP	Geary	4/18	GE
Greater Roadrunner	1 videoed near Clay Center	Clay	5/03	LSy
Greater Roadrunner	1 at Smoky Hills Audubon Sanctuary	Saline	5/04	KRb
Eastern Whip-poor-will	1 well west, along Smoky Hill River	Russell	4/07	DK
Eastern Whip-poor-will	1 northwest of Florence	Marion	4/29	TwP
Chimney Swift	15 early in Lawrence	Douglas	3/31	BGd
Black-chinned Hummingbird	1 at feeders in Grinnell KBRC #2026-15	Gove	5/15	CF
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	1 at rural residence near Ellsworth	Russell	5/13	DK
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	1 at residence in Garden City	Finney	5/14	SSh
Sandhill Crane	1 late and far east at Baker Wetlands	Douglas	5/27	EW
Sora	1 at Cedar Vale WTP	Chautauqua	5/13	FS, KG, PJ
Common Gallinule	1 in Tuttle Creek WA Still present 5/22	Pottawatomie	5/03	JPn
Black-necked Stilt	1 at Oberlin WTP	Decatur	5/31	CSc, TMH
American Golden-Plover	2 at Hamilton SFL	Hamilton	5/04	SSh, TSh
Piping Plover	1 east of Rush Center on K-96	Rush	4/26	AEg
Snowy Plover	1 east of expected range at Clinton Lake	Douglas	4/18	KKl, m.ob.
Snowy Plover	1 at Cross Timbers SP	Woodson	5/10	CD
Hudsonian Whimbrel	1 east of Rush Center on K-96	Rush	4/26	AEg
Curlew Sandpiper	1 adult at QNWR Little Salt Marsh KBRC #2026-16	Stafford	4/18	IOB, m.ob.
Sanderling	1 at Atwood WTP	Rawlins	5/20	HA
Dunlin	1 at Webster Res.	Rooks	5/07	RyG
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	2 along Skyline Road	Wabaunsee	4/09	DMK, MP
Short-billed Dowitcher	3 at Woodson SFL	Woodson	5/02	KOS
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Slate Creek Wetlands	Sumner	4/26	MT, EY
Red-necked Phalarope	1 at Clinton Lake	Douglas	5/02	KMD
Least Tern	1 at Keith Sebelius Lake	Norton	5/21	HA
Caspian Tern	1 at Cedar Creek Lake	Anderson	5/04	TCn
Bonaparte's Gull	1 at Oakley WTP	Logan	4/10	HA
Bonaparte's Gull	9 at Brewster WTP	Thomas	4/27	GK
California Gull	1 at Atwood WTP	Rawlins	5/09	MPv
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1 at Hillsdale Lake	Miami	4/01	CKf
Great Black-backed Gull	1 late at CBWMA	Barton	3/19	RP
Anhinga	1 at Scott Lake, KRBC #2026-05	Scott	4/09	PH, m.ob.
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at McPherson Valley Wetlands	McPherson	4/09	SpS, RyG
Neotropic Cormorant	1 at Clinton Lake	Douglas	4/26	EW
White Ibis	1 at QNWR	Stafford	4/18	IOB, JN, m.ob.
Glossy Ibis	1 at Webster Res.	Rooks	5/04	SpS, RyG
Glossy Ibis	1 at KDWP Headquarters	Pratt	5/03	DTh
Glossy Ibis	1 at Hanson Ranch	Logan	5/06	DSf
Roseate Spoonbill	1 at MDCWR KBRC #2026-12	Linn	5/15	KLi
Snowy Egret	1 at Tribune WTP	Greeley	5/12	CM
Black Vulture	1 at Winfield Gun Club KBRC #2026-17	Sumner	4/26	EY
Black Vulture	1 at Okun Fieldhouse KBRC #2026-18	Johnson	4/25	ABb
White-tailed Kite	1 at QNWR KBRC #2026-19	Stafford	4/25	FMi, m.ob.
Mississippi Kite	1 early in Overland Park	Johnson	4/03	TSw
Red-shouldered Hawk	1 vocalizing east of Meade	Meade	4/25	JC
Red-shouldered Hawk	1 southeast of Atwood	Rawlins	5/10	AR
Broad-winged Hawk	1 on Bethel College Campus, early	Harvey	3/07	RW
Broad-winged Hawk	1 early in Manhattan	Riley	3/08	DMu
Western Screech-Owl	1 at CNG – Boy Scout Area Still present 5/07	Morton	3/18	LDC
Barred Owl	1 along Wild Horse Creek	Graham	4/18	SpS, RyG
Short-eared Owl	1 along US 160 near Attica	Harper	5/08	FS

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Northern Saw-Whet Owl	1 at Hamilton County SFL	Hamilton	3/19	TwP, JCy
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1 late north of El Dorado	Butler	5/24	BC
Ladder-backed Woodpecker	1 at Manter Dam RA KBRC #2026-20	Stanton	3/26	CKf, JSp
Pileated Woodpecker	1 southwest of Ellsworth	Russell	5/09	DK
Crested Caracara	1 north of Lawrence, KBRC #2026-04 Was present through 3/07 and seen by hundreds of observers	Jefferson	3/04	MGz, CSg, m.ob.
Crested Caracara	1 between Beaumont and Eureka KBRC #2026-21	Greenwood	4/15	BKc
Crested Caracara	1 along K-57, Geary/Morris County Line	Geary	4/30	AuE
Crested Caracara	1 along K-27, southern Stanton County	Stanton	5/21	KSz
Western Kingbird	1 early along Smoky Hill River	Logan	3/31	ZSc, MSc
Alder Flycatcher	1 at CNG, Middle Spring KBRC #2026-23	Morton	5/28	MN
Willow Flycatcher	1 at CNG, Middle Spring KBRC #2026-24	Morton	5/28	MN
Least Flycatcher	1 at County Rd 220 & Smoky Hill River KBRC 2026-61	Logan	5/01	DSf
Least Flycatcher	1 at CNG – West Bend KBRC #2026-62	Morton	5/02	SpS, RyG
Gray Flycatcher	1 at K-27 Park KBRC #2026-26	Hamilton	4/27	BP
Vermilion Flycatcher	1 west of Russell Springs KBRC #2026-27	Logan	4/24	DSf
Vermilion Flycatcher	1 at Wilburton Pond Still present 5/04	Morton	5/02	JC
White-eyed Vireo	1 at KDWP Headquarters	Pratt	5/04	MR
Cassin's Vireo	1 at Elkhart Cemetery/Shelterbelt KBRC #2026-28	Morton	5/02	SpS, RyG
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at Ford SFL KBRC #2026-29	Ford	4/18	JC
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at CNG – Middle Spring KBRC #2026-30	Morton	5/03	BP
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at Elkhart Cemetery/Shelterbelt KBRC #2026-31	Morton	4/25	AdM
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at Elkhart Cemetery/Shelterbelt KBRC #2026-32	Morton	5/08	MR
Plumbeous Vireo	1 at El Rancho Motel Parking Lot KBRC #2026-33	Morton	5/05	BP
Fish Crow	1 on KSU Campus, early	Riley	3/07	CBk
Fish Crow	1 at KDWP Headquarters	Pratt	3/20	MR
Fish Crow	3 at CBWMA	Barton	5/03	JPW
Common Raven	1 along Road 9, Elkhart KBRC #2026-36	Morton	4/25	AdM
Common Raven	1 west of Road 12, Manter KBRC #2026-37	Stanton	4/23	JN, AaB
Common Raven	1 on US 160 near state line KBRC #2026-38	Stanton	4/23	JN, AaB
Cave Swallow	1 at CBWMA KBRC #2026-64	Barton	5/31	TCn
Winter Wren	1 at Scott SP KBRC #2026-48	Scott	4/11	JC, CM
Sage Thrasher	1 at Manter Dam RA KBRC #2026-50	Stanton	3/25	JSp
Sage Thrasher	1 SW of Kendall KBRC #2026-51	Hamilton	3/29	KE
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	1 Still present in Tuttle Creek Outlet Park	Riley	3/07	KKr, HS
Red Crossbill	3 in El Dorado SP	Butler	4/19	TCn
Lesser Goldfinch	1 in Shane Yard, Garden City Still present 3/29	Finney	3/21	SSh
Lesser Goldfinch	1 in Saint Francis	Cheyenne	3/30	JK
Lesser Goldfinch	1 at Arkalon Park	Seward	5/07	MR
Lesser Goldfinch	1 in Frick Yard, Grinnell	Gove	5/18	CF
Lesser Goldfinch	1 in Shane Yard, Garden City	Finney	5/18	SSh, TSh
Lapland Longspur	1 late at Herron Playa WA	Ford	4/12	JC
Cassin's Sparrow	3 vocalizing north of Webster Reservoir	Rooks	5/12	MSu
Baird's Sparrow	1 Southeast of Oakley	Gove	5/01	RWa
Canyon Towhee	1 at usual location, CNG – Point of Rocks Still present 5/29	Morton	3/26	JSp
Eastern Meadowlark	1 at CNG KBRC #2026-54	Morton	5/09	AdM
Baltimore Oriole	1 early at TPNP	Chase	4/01	DC
Worm-eating Warbler	1 at Jack Kriss Natural Area	Thomas	5/09	RyG
Northern Waterthrush	1 singing in El Dorado	Butler	5/01	TSa, CD
Golden-winged Warbler	1 near Coyville	Wilson	5/02	KOS
Blue-winged Warbler	1 at Cedar Creek Cemetery KBRC #2026-55	Pottawatomie	5/10	SSc

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Virginia's Warbler	1 at Battin Park KBRC #2026-65	Stanton	5/10	AdM
Connecticut Warbler	1 at Fitch NHR KBRC #2026-09	Douglas	5/23	MRb
Connecticut Warbler	1 At Felker Park, Topeka KBRC 2026-10	Shawnee	5/19	JnM, JMl
Connecticut Warbler	1 at Wyandotte County Lake KBRC #2026-11	Wyandotte	5/26	MGo
Hooded Warbler	1 male in Oak Park	Sedgwick	5/19	MN
	This bird was ultimately seen with a female and the pair successfully nested.			
Cape May Warbler	1 at Scott SP KBRC #2026-56	Scott	5/01	SSh
Cape May Warbler	1 at CNG Cottonwood Picnic Area KBRC #2026-57	Morton	5/03	BP
Cape May Warbler	1 at Elkhart Cemetery/Shelterbelt/WTP	Morton	5/07	BP, FS
Cerulean Warbler	1 at Lenexa residence KBRC #2026-59	Johnson	5/02	MGh
Northern Parula	1 early at LaCygne WA	Miami	3/31	MMC
Palm Warbler	1 along St. Francis River Walk	Cheyenne	5/08	BPd
Yellow-throated Warbler	1 at Frazier Park	Grant	4/28	JCs
Yellow-throated Warbler	1 near old Frisco Bridge, Ellsworth	Ellsworth	5/01	RSz
Canada Warbler	1 at KDWP Headquarters	Pratt	5/04	MR
Summer Tanager	1 at Clark SFL	Clark	5/16	HA, JC
Scarlet Tanager	1 at Hugoton Storm Water Runoff Ponds Still present 5/05	Stevens	5/02	FMi
Western Tanager	1 in suburban yard, Overland Park	Johnson	4/23	GwM, RJ
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1 at feeder in Pittsburg, early	Crawford	3/16	RMg
Black-headed Grosbeak	1 at Neosho WA	Neosho	5/10	ABu
Black-headed Grosbeak	1 at Melvern Lake, Sun Dance Park	Osage	5/15	DMK, MP

Locations and notes: CBWMA – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Management Area, CNG – Cimarron National Grasslands, KBRC – Kansas Bird Records Committee report filed or report number if sighting accepted, KDWP – Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, KSU – Kansas State University, NHR – Natural History Reservation, QNWR – Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, RA – Recreation Area, Res. – Reservoir, SFL – State Fishing Lake, SP – State Park, SW – southwest, TPNP – Tall-grass Prairie National Preserve, 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: Henry Armknecht, Aaron Batterbee (ABb), Andrew Burnett (ABu),Clayton Bickley (CBk), Aaron Boone (AaB), Jeff Calhoun, Denise Cameron, Tom Cannon (TCn), Joe Cesolini (JCs), Joanna Corimanya (JCy), Ben Cotter, Colin Danch, Lucas DeCicco (LDC), Kelli Egbert, Andrew Engilis (AEg), Gabe Entriken, Aubrey Evans (AuE), Christopher Frick, Mark Gantz (MGz), Matt Gearheart (MGh), Ben Gerrard (BGd), Ryan Giordanelli (RyG), Malcolm Gold (MGo), Paul Gordy, Kevin Groeneweg, Phillip Henson, Pete Janzen, Rylan Joseph, John Keller, Kevin Keltner (KKl), Gail King, Dave Klema, Brady Koch (BKc), Chris Krafft (CKf), Kaleb Kroeker (KKr), Kalsie Lindsey (KLi), Jen Malcolm (JnM), Jim Malcom (JMl), Robert Mangile (RMg), Michael McCorguodale (MMC), Kathy McDowell (KMD), Tyler McHugh (TMH), Debra McKee (DMK), Gwynn Merriman (GwM), Andrew Miller (AdM), Franklin Miller (FMi), Carol Morgan, Dan Mulhern (DMu), Dilka Murtazina (DMz), Jason Newton, Mark Nolen, Isso O'Brien (IOB), Jim Patton (JPn), Robert Penner, Brandon Percival, Town Peterson (TwP), Mark Pheasant, Bonnie Prado (BPd), Michelle Puplava (MPv), Mike Rader, Faith Shapley (FS), Art Reismen, Trish and Chad Remley (TCR), Kelsey Robb (KRb), Mark Robbins (MRb), Spencer Santi (SpS), Caty Saucer (CSc), Sam Schermerhorn (SSc), Miles Scheuering (MSc), Zack Schlanger (ZSc), Kraig Schultz (KSz), Roger Schultz (RSz), Lisa Seley (LSy), Sara Shane (SSh), Tom Shane (TSh), Doug Shoffner (DSf), Jonas Staples (JSp), Chris Stringer (CSg), Meryl Sudeith (MSu), Tim Swain (TSa), Hezekiah Swihart, Terry Swope (TSw), Diane Thomas (DTh), Max Thompson, Rodney Wallace (RWa), Rodney Wedel, Evan Whited, Jeff & Phoebe Witters (JPW), Eugene Young ***Groups:*** m.ob. – many observers; KOS – KOS Spring Field Trips

Annual Dues Renewal
Online at: https://ksbirds.org/kos/kos_member.html