

Why K. O. S. Needs to Increase Membership Dues

By Amelia J. Betts
(Membership Secretary)

If K. O. S. had a hundred more members, there would be no need for the proposed increase in membership dues. We already pay for 500 BULLETINS. Any less would cost the society as much. And with 400 members, instead of the 285 we had in 1965, we could save money by mailing under a special postal permit. Treasurer Carson's report for 1965 showed average expenses of \$2.70 per member and average receipts of only \$2.40. This shows that the many regular members are not paying their share. The 30-plus sustainers barely offset the special dollar rate given to students.

Some members have said, "Put out a cheaper BULLETIN." But a study of the membership list shows that we would lose 30 or more members (including libraries) if the Kansas Ornithological Society printed nothing but a bird-gossip sheet. Many sustaining members would drop. The Oklahoma Ornithological Society (with 650 members, incidentally) has been asked to consider a "printed publication" which would "receive more recognition" than the multilith type of newsletter that they now publish (albeit a good one). Members of the K. O. S. Board have hoped that the publication of the six-times-a-year NEWSLETTER would widen the appeal of our publications. But the response has been a double disappointment. First, very few members have contributed any news—despite appeals in each issue. Second, the membership has increased only thirty in the two years since NEWSLETTERS have been appearing.

K. O. S. membership, in our 15 years of existence, has increased only from 140 to 285, or an average of about 10 new members a year. We probably need more publicity such as in newspapers, in periodicals, and in meetings of kindred organizations. Members in all areas of the state can help by encouraging interested people to join K. O. S. The names of two prospective members were obtained at the Burroughs Club booth at the recent Flower Show in Kansas City through the efforts of a K. O. S. member, Miss Esther O'Connor. K. O. S. has a write-up in the current issue of the Kansas School Naturalist, a publication of the K. S. T. C., of Emporia. (This issue is entitled "What Good are Insects?", written by another K. O. S. member Dr. John Breukelman. Every K. O. S. school teacher should have a copy.) But most of all, we need personal invitations and introductory gift memberships. I'll gladly send out membership invitations to any names you submit to me. We'll send extra copies of BULLETINS and NEWSLETTERS to prospective new members.

Overwintering Red-winged Blackbirds in Jewell Co., Kansas

By Geo. A. Montgomery

During recent weeks I have been receiving reports from Mankato, Jewell Co., Kansas, of an unusual concentration of birds, most of which are reported to be male Red-winged Blackbirds. I have not been in that area, so what I relate here is based on letters I have received. Here are some of the things related:

1. This concentration has remained throughout the winter (at least as late as 15 March); when zero readings continued for several days, the flock didn't diminish.

(cont.)

2. The birds come from all points of the compass from just before sunset to just afterward. They blacken trees in the vicinity, and wait until deep dusk. They fly low at slow speed over a 320-acre field of 3-foot high switchgrass, and drop straight down into the grass. They are described as being nervous after dropping into the grass, and may rise with a roar that blackens the whole one by one-half mile area. It has not been determined whether they roost on the ground or whether they cling to the stiff grass stalks as do redwings that cling to cattails, reeds, and partially submerged woody bushes when they roost just above water. None of the birds may be seen from the edge of the field.

3. It has been carefully estimated that several hundred thousand redwings may be in this concentration.

4. There has been little snow or rain in that vicinity during the winter. One person says that this has "been the most open winter we ever had here." So, where are the birds drinking? I have a pretty fair knowledge of the area since I was reared in Jewell County, and I know that there are few running springs, or none. Lovewell Reservoir is 10 to 15 miles northeast of the roost (which is 2 to 3 miles east or northeast of Mankato). Jewell County State Lake is 10 to 15 miles southwest. The Republican River is within 25 to 30 miles of the roost. There are numerous ponds and livestock watering tanks in the area. Residents believe that all ponds, lakes, and streams froze solid in the zero weather, however, and they feel that had the birds obtained water at places kept open for cattle, they would have created wide interest as "thirsty birds."

5. No one seems to know of such a concentration of birds in that area previously. Switchgrass has a hard seed, a bit smaller than that of German millet. These redwings may have been attracted to the 1/2-square-mile field for two reasons: A possible food supply, and a suitable roosting area. However, as no one has seen the birds eating the switchgrass, they may be gleaning in harvested grain-sorgo fields in the area for food. Redwings, and other species of birds, often find food in feedlots.

6. Wint Smith, who has seen the birds, estimates that no more than 2 of 10 of these birds are females. In the area, mature redwing males usually stake out their summer nesting territory by late February or early March. But I do not know where a male roosts after he elects to defend a territory.

7. For years I have traveled widely to obtain material for magazine articles. South of Kansas, in the winter, it is not uncommon to see flocks of redwings of a hundred or more at any time. But I have observed that most of those I see are wintering from the 35th parallel southward. Perhaps the redwing chooses his wintering area where food and suitable roosts are available, much as do some Canada Geese and Robins.

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For a couple of years I have been studying the biology of Baltimore and Bullock orioles in Kansas. I would be most appreciative if K. O. S. members throughout the state would help me in this study by sending me their records of the first spring date of arrival of either or both of these birds.

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Locality _____
Baltimore Oriole _____ Male _____ Female _____; or Bullock Oriole _____ Male _____ Female _____
(date) (date)

Send to: J. D. Rising
The University of Kansas
Museum of Natural History
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

Please send spring migration notes for the May NEWSLETTER.—J. D. Rising, Assoc. Ed.