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NEWSLETTER

KANSAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Department of Zoology
Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, Kansas, 67602

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Late Winter and Early Spring Notes From Towanyak

Mary Louise and Jim Myers

We went from 1968 into 1969 with a snow cover that was to last for a month of severe cold and extreme hardship on all wildlife. A nine-inch snow on January 26th, followed by freezing rain and sleet in the next few days, made an impenetrable ice glaze that lasted up to February 4th. Birds flocked to the feeders and devoured an astonishing amount of sunflower seed, mixed grains and suet. January 2nd brought a strange grackle to our yard... on either side of his beak just below his eyes he had a round white patch, which produced a rather startling appearance when viewed head-on. He fed a short while, then moved right on and we did not see him again. On January 26th we had one lone male cowbird for a couple of days--a quite unusual winter guest. Our Purple Finch flock began building up during this cold period, along with the goldfinch until every feeder appeared overrun with the two. Our first robin of the winter appeared on January 19, and the next day 50 waxwings perched in the walnut tree watching the other birds feast. A pair of Carolina Wrens came in around 4:30 each evening, to roost for the night in the hanging flower basket outside the porch where they had raised their family a few months before. The 27th, along with the freezing rain, brought four Tree, four Harris's and two White-throated Sparrows, plus another grackle, this one without the white spots. Tree Sparrows increased to a dozen in the next few days.

February 6th brought our first Mourning Dove and on the 10th a Brown Creeper worked over all the trees in our yard. February 11th we discovered a Great Horned Owl sitting on her nest south of our house up on the hill. February 13 was cold and a heavy feeding day. We counted 47 cardinals at one time along with the other species in the yard. During the first week in March we trapped several robins that we had banded a year or two earlier. On the 6th we retrapped a male robin that we had banded in March 1963, six years previously! We had retrapped this same bird twice before--once in January 1964 and again in March 1966. March 15th we saw our first strings of geese--four large flocks of blues and snows. On the 16th we saw our first Fox Sparrow for the season; on the 19th a single Purple Martin scout and a male Rufous-sided Towhee. We saw string after string of geese at least 12 or 15 different flocks. Most of these were blues and snows, but one large group of about 70 canadas went over fairly low. A flock of 1000 or more White Pelicans added variety to the parade. We also watched a strange hawk, falcon-like in shape with dark wing tips, and an unusual flight pattern. He was quite high...would take two or three wing flaps, then soar in a lazy circle, continuing this pattern as the wind carried him directly northeast and on out of sight. I am inclined to call him a Mississippi Kite. On March 20th we had three Fox Sparrows and on the 22nd our first Field Sparrow. On the 25th a male Red Shafted Flicker visited our suet feeder, and after feeding joined a female Yellow-shaft in a courtship dance for about five minutes. He was back again the next day and on the 27th we had a female red-shafted on the feeder. The 26th brought two male cowbirds and the 27th the Phoebe returned.

Purple Finches for the past week have been singing continuously, and are turning very brilliant. Goldfinch are beginning to turn "gold" and can be seen in various stages of plumage. We have heard no quail since before the ice storm and fear that they perished. Severe illness and a bout with the Hong Kong flu prevented us from feeding at points away from the house as we usually do. On March 28th there was an increased number of juncos feeding, and we counted 12 or more Fox Sparrows in one brush pile; also a wave of Golden-crowned Kinglets--the first ones since late fall. There must have been at least 15 in the trees along the creek and one Ruby-crowned Kinglet among them was a surprise. The Great Horned Owl was not on her nest when we made the rounds and two downy white young could be seen above the rim. Eight bluebirds wintered with us this year, feeding on currents and on the special suet mix that contains no seeds, but is a mixture of melted kidney suet, peanut butter, chopped peanuts, bread crumbs, currents, and Brewer's Yeast. It is a favorite of nearly all the birds. As March comes to an end, we have banded a total of 143 Purple Finches, but there are many in the flock still unbanded. Our Carolina Wrens have a nest built over the motor in an old refrigerator that was set out to be hauled away, and have two eggs in it as of the 31st. The refrigerator has automatically become a part of our outdoor "decor" for the remainder of the nesting season.

Notes From Ross Natural History Reservation

C.W. Comer

The Reservation is located 4 miles west of Americus, Lyon Co., Kansas and is the property of Kansas State Teachers College. The following are some notes from my banding activities and observations on the Reservation during the winter season of 1968-69.

Large flocks of Horned Larks and American Goldfinches have been observed all season. Very few Harris' Sparrows and Song Sparrows have been seen since November. Slate-colored Juncos were abundant in November and early December, with wintering flocks seen from late December through early February. In late February there was an unexplained absence of juncos. The five-inch snowstorm we experienced on 7 March was followed by large movements of birds by the following weekend, although Tree Sparrows were already migrating on 9 February. Increases in Harris Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos were observed on 14 March.

A single Field Sparrow was seen with a flock of Tree Sparrows on 9 February. Noteworthy birds seen during March were: a Savannah Sparrow and 13 Smith's Longspurs on the 1st; a Killdeer and 37 Pintails on the 2nd; a Prairie Falcon on the 14th; a single White-fronted Goose flying over on the 15th. Greater Prairie Chickens were heard "booming" for the first time this spring south of the Reservation on 18 March and a Red-tailed Hawk nest with one egg was found on the 16th.

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Winter Notes From Lowell, Kansas

Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Qualls

Our winter has been cold, but very little snowfall so far. We have more Cardinals than before and we notice the absence of White-throated Sparrows and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The earliest Mourning Doves and Robins were seen 21 February. An Oregon Junco was seen almost daily between 28 February and 10 March. On 9 March a female Purple Finch appeared along with males. Regular visitors at our feeder include: Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch, male Purple Finches, Carolina Wren. Slate-colored Juncos, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and (of late) a Red-headed Woodpecker, Starlings, Blue Jays and one grackle. A Song and a Fox Sparrow were present 7-10 March. Large flocks of Common Grackle and Red-wings are in the fields; Robins are everywhere. A Carolina Wren is roosting in the heel of an old fleece-lined house shoe tacked under the eaves of our basement entrance.

A field trip in a wooded area on Shoal Creek, 25 February produced: Eastern Bluebird, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Slate-colored Junco, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpecker, Robin, Crow, Killdeer, White-crowned (1) Harris (5) and Song (4) Sparrows. A field trip on a farm near river, 5 March, produced: Killdeer, Marsh Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawks (2, screaming in flight), Red-tailed Hawk, a large concentration of Tree Sparrows and American Goldfinches, many Song Sparrows, a few White-throated Sparrows and many Fox Sparrows.

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Short Communications

Observations from scattered localities by Marvin E. Rolfs include: 2 Redpolls in southern Ellsworth County, 15 March; 7 small "peeps" and an Eastern Bluebird at Webster Reservoir, 1 April; a Broad-winged Hawk at Kirwin Reservoir, 4 April; a Least Flycatcher (singing!), Eastern Bluebirds, Vesper Sparrows and Lark Sparrows at Rooks County Lake on 5 April.

Winter bird populations have been rather high around Newton, at least the snow cover has brought them to feeding stations. Harris' Sparrows have been particularly numerous. On March 9, I trapped a Harris' Sparrow that I had banded on February 28, 1965, one of the first Harris' Sparrows that I banded. Gambel's White-crowned Sparrows have also been wintering in larger numbers than usually. We have had at least six at our feeding station for the past week. Also a number of persons have reported seeing Townsend's Solitaires and Purple Finches since early in January. Dwight R. Platt.

K.O.S. Business

By action taken by the Board of Directors at its January meeting, a proposal will be made to change Article VIII, Section 4, of the Constitution and By-laws to read as follows:

"Section 4. The annual membership dues for regular members shall be \$3.00 (all of which goes for subscription to the KOS Bulletin), for sustaining members \$6.00 (of which \$3.00 goes for subscription to the Bulletin), and for student member (grade and high school) \$1.00 (which represents a special discount price for the Bulletin)."

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If you have not yet paid your 1969 membership dues please send them to our treasurer at once--Orville O. Rice, 1663 W. 28th St. Terrace, Topeka, Kansas, 66611.

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Every member invite a non-member to the Annual Meeting!!! There are many people in Kansas who are interested in birds who are not familiar with KOS. Do them and KOS a favor by getting them to Newton in May for an exciting meeting.

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Udall-Winfield-Arkansas City News

Max C. Thompson

Spring seems to have arrived in South-Central Kansas, at least for the time being. Purple Martins made their first appearance on March 19 in Winfield, and as of April 4 quite a few were around. Ducks and geese appeared in good numbers in early March; ducks are still present but very few geese remain. The ducks were common species except for one Black Duck seen on the salt marsh area south of Oxford. A few other interesting arrivals are: Vesper Sparrow (March 22), Grasshopper Sparrow (April 1), Pectoral Sandpiper (April 2), Baird's Sandpiper (March 22), Snowy Plover (March 28), Lesser Yellow-legs (March 28), Greater Yellow-legs (April 2). Wally Champncy saw an Avocet on March 30 on the Arkansas River at Oxford. Twenty-five Long-billed Curlews were seen at Johnson in southwestern Kansas, on April 5 by Gordon Barnhardt.

Some Southwestern College students and I made a trip to Kenton, Oklahoma over the Easter break. We were a little early for anything unusual but did see a few Curve-billed Thrashers, Brown Towhees and Desert Sparrows (Black-throated). The latter was seen on April 4, one day later than the earliest arrival date listed by Sutton.

The Winfield Natural History Society continues to meet on the first Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be on April 27-28 when a field trip will be taken in the immediate area on each day. The trips leave Southwestern College at 0630 and anyone that wants to join us is welcome.

The Ornithology Club of Arkansas City, Kansas meets the first Monday of every month and will continue having meetings once a month throughout the year. If you are interested in attending these meetings, contact Mrs. N.H. White, 1030 North C St., Arkansas City.

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Conservation News

The Black-tailed Prairie Dog has once again come under fire in the State. A bill has been passed by the State Senate permitting the extermination of the prairie dog in Trego County. As I understand this bill, it would allow the County to move in on a persons property and exterminate the dogs without the owner's permission. Many of us have protested to our Representatives to kill it in the House. It is now before the Agriculture and Livestock Committee which is chaired by Mr. Vogel. The fate of this bill will probably be decided before you receive this issue.

Conservation News (cont.)

Now that the Sand Prairie Natural History Reservation has been completed, the Nature Conservancy group that was in charge of it are wondering whether to disband or organize a chapter in the State. Dwight Platt would be delighted to hear from you about this. If you are interested, let him know, otherwise, we will probably lose this organization in the State. There are plenty of worthwhile projects left.

Some of the favorite birding areas in the southern part of the State have fallen to the axe. The area on the east side of the Arkansas River 4.5 miles West of Udall, has been cleared for pasture land. The big trees in that patch of land contained the few Pileated Woodpeckers that I know of in the area. I also had an Operation Recovery Station there which will now have to be moved to a different location. The area that was cleared last year turned mostly into weeds which was wonderful habitat for Goldfinches and a few Mourning Warblers. Max C. Thompson.

A Cornell University News release (dated March 10) states that Dr. Olin S. Pettingill, Jr. has just returned from a six weeks study of the Bobolink in Argentina. Vast numbers of Bobolinks wintering in Argentina are said to be endangering the rice crops and are much despised by the rice growers who use guns and aerial bombs to harass them. The winter issue of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology Newsletter provides some added details. Male Bobolinks are among the favorites taken for the thriving cage-bird market. Males are caged until the nuptial plumage is complete and the birds are in full song and then sold for \$3.50 apiece. Although most species are protected by federal law, enforcement is scattered. Large numbers of wintering shorebirds, especially the Golden Plover and Hudsonian Godwit, are shot. Ed.

Notes from Hays

Charles A. Ely

Bird migration continues to be nonspectacular and spring is slowly arriving. Wintering sparrows were in low numbers but a brief increase in the numbers of juncos and Song Sparrows was noted on 28-30 March. No Tree Sparrows have been seen since 1 April. Canada Geese were sighted more regularly than in recent years and the Sandhill Crane migration was late and more concentrated than usual. Pine Siskins were noted singing and looking over various conifers in mid March but few have been present since the last cold period and no nesting has been observed. For a few days (29 March - 1 April) Chestnut-collared Longspurs were numerous and greatly outnumbered Laplands.

PREREGISTRATION FORM, KOS SPRING MEETING, MAY 3-4, 1969, BETHEL COLLEGE

Names

Address

Registration fees @ \$0.50 - - - - -
Saturday lunch @ \$0.90 - - - - -
Annual banquet @ \$2.50 - - - - -
Sunday box lunch @ \$1.25 - - - - -

TOTAL _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

TO BE PAID AT MEETING

I wish to register for a "Birding with the Pros" instructional group as:

a beginner

a birder wanting general help

a birder wanting specific help with the following group of birds _____