

KANSAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Southwestern College
Winfield, Kansas 67156

Number 47
April 1973

ANNUAL MEETING AT LAWRENCE

Don't forget the annual meeting to be held at Lawrence on April 28-29. Paper sessions on Saturday and the field trips on Sunday. Help celebrate our 25th anniversary.

last
This is the/issue of the Society's correspondence you will receive if you haven't paid your 1973 dues. We purge the files prior to mailing the June Bulletin. So if you haven't paid, please do so immediately.

Back Issues of the Newsletter

Since the information published in the newsletter is usually of current interest only, the Society does not print many more newsletters than are needed for the mailing. Consequently, if you are a new member that joined after a current issue, we may not be able to supply you a copy. Ruth Fahl is missing some back issues of the Newsletter for the Society files and can use back issues if you no longer want them. She is at the University of Kansas, Museum of Natural History, Lawrence, Kansas 66045. Ruth also retains the back issues of the Bulletins which are available at varied prices. Your Society also has the current Kansas Check-list available from the Newsletter editor or membership secretary.

A HODGE PODGE OF NOTEWORTHY ITEMS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESKS

Burroughs Audubon Society of Kansas City--The following were selected by Richard Dawson as the 10 best birds of 1972, within 25 miles of the Kaw-Missouri River confluence: 1. Virginis's Warbler, May 14, Camp Towanyak, Mary Louise Myers; 2. Brewster's Warbler, May 14, Camp Towanyak, Mary Louise Myers, Jim Myers, Kay Wahl, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kreese; 3. Clark's Nutcracker, October 19, Shawnee Mission Environmental Lab, Dick Dawson; 4. Bairds Sparrow, May 3, Shawnee, Mary Louise Myers; 5. Goshawk, October 17, Kansas City Museum, JoAnne Azarnoff; 6. Connecticut Warbler, May 11, Camp Towanyak, Mary Louise and Jim Myers; 7. Northern Phalarope, May 14, Trimble Wildlife Area, Sebastian Patti; 8. Red-breasted Merganser, June 25, Trimble Wildlife Area, Sebastian Patti and Jenanne McNitt; 9. Bay-breasted Warbler, November 11, Camp Towanyak, Mary Louise Myers; 10. Sprague's Pipit, April 14, Camp Towanyak, Mary Louise and Jim Myers.

[A very interesting bird that was left off the 10 best but was included as being recorded in previous 25 years was the Barrow's Goldeneye. Presumably seen on the Missouri side as no Kansas records are available. Editor].

Meade County--On June 11, 1972, my wife and I observed 3 Boat-tailed Grackles on Highway right of way at the junction of U. S. 54 and U. S. 160 at Plains, Ks. There were 2 males and 1 female. The males were demonstrating aggressive behavior towards each other and the female was feeding about 30 feet from them. This is the first observation for Meade County.--Byron Walker.

Shawnee County--Northern Shrike (Lanius excubitor). On 8 February I found a Northern Shrike at State Lake. The shrike was large and plump-looking and had a large head. Its general color was light slate gray, less bluish than most loggerheads show at this season. The bill was heavy and the lower mandible was pale (horn-colored) at the proximal half. The black face mask clearly did not extend above the bill; there was a narrow white line above the black mask. A narrow portion of the center of the breast was whitish; the sides of the breast and flanks were strongly washed with gray. I noted no vermiculations, but this

but this is not extremely unusual in adult Northern Shrikes. Judging from published material, I would say that the bird was an adult male, as the plumage was free of olive tinge; however my experience with specimens of both sexes causes me to doubt the reliability of this mark as a definitive sexual character. It is appropriate to point out that Northern Shrikes can be more difficult to distinguish from Loggerhead Shrikes than popular field guides suggest.

There are at least eight sight records for Shawnee County but some records were unaccompanied by careful descriptions and hence are subject to question. Acceptable records range from December to 5 April. Woods

Osage County--Scissor-tailed Flycatcher near Pomona Reservoir, 24 February 1973 seen by Gene Lockhart. Ross Goose, near Pomona Reservoir, February 25, Gene and Eulalia Lewis, Robert Glazier, Kenn Kaufman, Woods. Woods

Mitchell County--Three of our office staff spent the weekend conducting a Hunter Success Survey at the Glen Elder Reservoir (Lake Waconda). One of the three, Jerry Johnson, saw a Flamingo, Phoenicopterus ruber, in the upper end of Waconda Lake (just southwest of Cawker City) on Saturday, November 11, 1972. The local warden agreed that he had seen it previously also. Jerry got a real good look at it through a 20X spotting scope. Said he could even see it's eye. Larry S. Oborny. [A photograph was received via Bob LaShelle, taken by an Osborne County farmer. The bird is clearly an American Flamingo. This is the second authenticated record for the State. The picture of the bird showed it to be in high color, unusual for an escaped captive flamingo. Editor].

Northeastern Kansas--On February 25, 1973 an injured female Red-bellied Woodpecker was brought to us by Dr. Robert Bidwell, who lives at Lake Quivira. It had suffered a freak accident whereby the toes of the right foot were caught behind the tongue, pulling it almost completely out, the tongue being severed on one side. There was nothing that could be done to save her and the bird had to be destroyed. She was wearing band #692-31104. The band was quite thin, and we knew at once it was an old band. But we were surprised to find she had been banded at Camp Towanyak, as an adult, on January 9, 1966....seven years, one month and sixteen days prior to her fatal accident. Mary Louise Myers

EARLY SPRING REFLECTIONS ON THE WINTER JUST PAST AT TOWANYAK 1972-73

December started out quite balmy, but by the 4th freezing rain, snow and very cold temperatures had set in and these conditions stayed with us through the 13th. It was to pretty well set the pattern for the months to follow. Our bluebirds returned to the fold and the currants with the storm of the 4th. All birds fed heavily on this date and we had our first large numbers of juncos and cardinals. During the nine days of bad weather that ensued we had a dozen or more goldfinch feeding, and they were joined occasionally by half a dozen Purple Finch. Several Tree Sparrows, a single Harris's, two Brown Creepers and two White-breasted Nuthatches were also among the regulars. A lone Bronzed Grackle and a single Mourning Dove joined them several times.

Our first Pine Siskins showed on the 19th (December), when they joined the goldfinch. By the 25th we had several dozen of the strange little streaked birds. A Cooper's Hawk terrorized all the birds on this same day, swooping in and sitting in the young pine tree near the feeders. We had ample time to observe her well as she sat, and also the opportunity to see the various songbirds "freeze" in their attempt to escape. Some had literally dived into the spreaders and brushpile, others remained motionless in place. One male Downy was on the suet feeder and clung there without even batting an eye for a full five minutes after we frightened the hawk away. During the harsh winter months that followed, this Cooper's Hawk returned several times, attracted by the hundreds of birds and the activity in the yard. Always the same scene was enacted--she would sit and

and search diligently, pivoting her head, looking for one fatal move. We never saw her catch a bird, but we never allowed her to remain for long. I am sure she made some visits that we were unaware of. After the hawk's departure, the birds soon returned to normal, feeding as usual. Not so when a Loggerhead Shrike tried the same tactics, on January 4. They remained extremely jittery for a day or two.

By the 28th December our Siskin flock had increased to near 100, and this number increased gradually until we had a conservative estimate of 200 by January 5. The pugnacity of these diminutive songsters drove the Goldfinch and Purple Finch elsewhere. On the 31st we made the exciting discovery that the Siskins would come to seeds in our hand, and thereby began a period in which we derived much pleasure from handfeeding these little northern visitors. It is a thrill that defies description to have a small wild bird alight on your hand, trustingly wrap his tiny toes around your finger and partake of the meal you have offered. Two or three on each hand was about as many as would feed together...they simply would not tolerate more crowded conditions. We became intimately acquainted with the, banded a great many, as they endeared themselves to us over and over again. Nothing spectacular about their plumage or size, but what they lacked here they more than made up for in courage. Their joyous singing filled the treetops and echoed from the woodland all around...odd combinations of goldfinch-like "sweet" notes, endless chattering and warbling plus the more typical ascending "zzzzrreeee" notes. They were delightful and charming and I do hope they will return another year.

January came in with a heavy ice storm lasting for a day and a half, followed by 6 inches of snow, creating one of the most exquisitely beautiful winter scenes I have ever seen. At the same time it was one of K.C.'s most devastating storms, playing havoc with trees, shrubs and power lines. Wendell and Carol Mohling captured some of Towanyak's white beauty with dozens of slides taken when Shawnee Mission schools were dismissed at noon. Temperatures dropped and up until the 13th remained near the zero and subzero marks much of the time. January 5th there were 85 juncos and 30 Cardinals in the yard at one time, and JoAnne Azarnoff reported a Clark's Nutcracker at 50th and Rainbow.

On the 7th we got another five inches of snow and a single Swamp Sparrow found sanctuary and spent four days with us. By now twelve Bluebirds were regular and frequent visitors and eleven Harris's Sparrows fed on the ground beneath the feeders. January 14, Wm. Hickok reported a flock of 100 Red Crossbills plus 20 White-winged Crossbills in his neighbors yard (Bill Siemens). One crossbill sat in a treetop in our yard that same day, but came no closer. On the 19th I began a banding blitz on chickadees, and in one and a half hours had banded 18. Our first chipmunk of the winter put in an appearance and on the 21st we had a Purple Finch and a few goldfinch for the first time since the siskins took over. Four inches of snow arrived and a week later we got another four. February 12 we had a flock of 50 or more Cedar Waxwings in the trees. Rain fell most of that day, followed by more snow on the 17th.

Kay Wahl held down the fort for us from the 16th to the 24th while we were on Whidbey Island in NW Washington, seeing the sights and adding lifers to our list. We kept detailed records, but nothing new showed up in our absence. February 28th we saw an immature Bald Eagle in the air between Metcalf and Antioch on 95th st. Rain fell almost continuously from the 28th through the 6th of March when we got one brief day of sun, followed by three more days of rain. By March 7, the bluebirds had paired off, the males were fighting each other, and only two pairs were coming alternately to the feeder. Our first White-throats and a few grackles showed up on the 9th. Siskins were still quite numerous, but we estimated the flock had decreased by one-half, leaving around 100 birds. A large flock of 500 or more Snow and Blue Geese passed over on the 9th. On the 13th we discovered the Carolina Wrens building under the eaves of the house, in the same hanging, canvas-covered bird cage they had used last year. It does seem

alittle early. We spent an uneasy evening that date as the TV alerted and the sirens blasted, warning of the first tornado alert for the season. On the 14th, Dr. McHugh came out on his lunch hour. We were eating lunch so he walked along the creek by himself and made the discovery that the Phoebe had returned, blown in no doubt, on the tailwind of that storm. The next day (15) our first Cowbird appeared, a banded male, and the next day brought us a male sapsucker in striking plumage. On the 16th, I accompanied Sandra Yeskie, Arite Kester, Isabel Rohrer and Ruth Michaels to Trimble. Roads were bad, the bridge was impassable due to high water damage, there were few birds, but we did get an immature Goshawk. The first Fox Sparrows at Towanyak appeared on the 19th, along with MORE RAIN! Jim got a surprise bonus when he went for the mail on the 23rd, as four deer ran across the drive and down the trail into the woods. The first time we have seen deer for many years at Towanyak, although we do on occassion see tracks. The 26th brought our first White-crowned Sparrow, and on the 31st, four Wood Ducks flew low over the treetops along the creek. Perhaps this year they will find a suitable nesting site and remain. As March comes to an end, it would appear that Towanyak is still headquarters for Pine Siskins.

OKLAHOMA NEEDS YOUR HELP!!!!

The Oklahoma Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit under the direction of John A. Morrison has put colored plastic wing markers on Mourning Doves. The colors are green, yellow, and silver. Over 500 doves were banded and color-marked during the past winter in southwestern Oklahoma. Any sightings of these birds in the coming spring or summer will reveal places where these wintering birds nest. Notify Dr. Morrison at Oklahoma State University, 404 Life Sciences West, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074.

OUTDOOR WRITERS OF KANSAS WILL HOLD 11TH ANNUAL CONVENTION AT PITTSBURG.

The convention meets May 4-6. The featured speaker at the indoor sessions of the convention will be Ed Zern, associate editor of Field and Stream magazine and author of the widely known humour column, "Exit/Laughing." Non-members are welcome to attend, and they should make arrangements with him at WIBW-TV (John King) in Topeka. Headquarters for the convention will be at the Townsman Motel.

Project Sasnak (Kansas spelled backwards) passed the legislature and has been signed into law by Governor Docking. The Society has been trying to get the State to release funds to the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission for several years. The package includes provisions for 95 new employees. Unfortunately, no provision has been made in the new organization for any studies on non-game animals and it appears that none will be made in the near future. Funding is from hunting and fishing licenses so little emphasis could be expected in other areas. The State does have an organization called the State Biological Survey located at the University of Kansas. This group is funded from the State and gets a new administrator on July 1, Dr. Ronald McGregor, Dept. of Botany, University of Kansas. I believe the Society ought to try and get more money for the Survey, and remove jurisdiction of non-game animals from the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission to the Survey. Give this some thought before the Spring Meeting in Lawrence and let us have some discussion on it. Kansas was the only state from the midwest and one of the few from the United States that did not have a representative (to our knowledge) at the Raptor meetings in Colorado last month. Maybe the Commission would like to express their views on non-game biology for us in the Newsletter. Max C. Thompson
President

APRIL 28-29 AT LAWRENCE PROMISE TO BE GOOD ONES.