

The Breeding Season in Mitchell County

Eugene and Eulalia Lewis

Our annual bird safari took us this year to Mitchell County where we scouted the area from June 3 to June 6. Glen Elder Reservoir and the Solomon River are the main attractions for birds since much of the county is under cultivation.

The most spectacular of the bird finds were Great-tailed Grackles and large numbers of nesting Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants. The grackles were found in a small woods on the north side of the lake and numbered about 12. Their habit of flying back and forth on the tops of the trees made counting difficult. Only once did we observe any of them fly to the ground as Common Grackles were doing. In a revisit to the woods on July 16 the Great-tails could not be found. There was no evidence of nesting seen during the earlier visit even though both the magnificent males and the smaller brown females were present and making a lot of noise. This is probably the northernmost sighting of the Great-tail in Kansas and shows that it continues to extend its range.

The Great Blue Herons and Double Crested Cormorants were in four different rookeries located around the lake in groves of trees killed by inundation when the lake was new. A reasonably accurate count showed at least 100 heron and 220 cormorant nests. The largest rookery had about 240 nests of both species. The constant moving to and from nests, along with the lateness of the nesting season made an accurate count of the total number of birds impossible but it is probably safe to say the herons totalled more than 200 while there were at least 500 cormorants.

Of interest because of its puzzling presence in June was a flock of 200 Brewer's Blackbirds seen feeding each day in a mowed alfalfa field a few miles from the reservoir. Obviously these were non-breeding birds that should have gone west for the summer.

A canoe trip up the beautiful Solomon River above Beloit revealed a number of species not found elsewhere in the county. These were the Blue Grosbeak, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Black-billed Cuckoo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-crowned Night Heron and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

In the list to follow, evidence of nesting will be marked with "N" preceding the name. Two unusual nest sites deserve additional comment. A pair of Bell's Vireos was seen to go repeatedly to and from a dense stand of "wild carrot" at the edge of the same woods where the Great-tailed Grackles were found. The vireos always seemed to go into the wild carrot at the same place and once one of them broke off a bit of the foliage and carried it in toward the place where the nest appeared to be. We had no way of knowing whether the nesting was successful but there is considerable doubt since the wild carrot had completely dried up by our July 16 visit. Bell's Vireos usually pick a more substantial nesting site such as a sand plum or prairie dogwood thicket.

The second unusual nesting involved a pair of Eastern Kingbirds. The nest they were working on was in the crotch of a dead tree but less than two feet above the water at a point more than fifty feet from shore.

Following is a complete list of the birds (87 species) with their relative abundance given by the numbers listed.

Colonizing Birds

N Great Blue Heron 200+
 N Double-crested Cormorant 500+
 N Cliff Swallow 600
 N Barn Swallow

Very Numerous

N Mourning Dove 362
 House Sparrow 325
 Common Grackle 173
 Brown Headed Cowbird 288
 Dickcissel 165

Quite Numerous

Killdeer 42	Brown Thrasher 60
Rock Dove 65	American Robin 74
Chimney Swift 51	Loggerhead Shrike 25
Red-headed Woodpecker 47	Starling 41
N Eastern Kingbird 83	Western Meadowlark 43*
Western Kingbird 79	Orchard Oriole 32
Blue Jay 31	Baltimore Oriole 63
House Wren 61	

* does not include large number of unidentified meadowlarks

Less Numerous

N Mallard 13	Horned lark 10
N Wood Duck 10	N Rough-winged Swallow 19
Turkey Vulture 2	Purple Martin 11
Red-tailed Hawk 8	Black-billed Magpie 9
Marsh Hawk 1	Common Crow 3
American Kestrel 5	Black-capped Chickadee 21
Bob White Quail 17	White-breasted Nuthatch 1
N Ring-necked Pheasant 13	Northern Mockingbird 1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo 3	Gray Catbird 7
Black-billed Cuckoo 1	N Eastern Bluebird 2
Great Horned Owl 1	N Bell's Vireo 6
Poor Will 2	Warbling Vireo 19
Common Nighthawk 10	Yellow Warbler 2
Belted Kingfisher 1	Common Yellowthroat 7
Yellow shafted Flicker 21	Eastern Meadowlark 3
N Red-bellied Woodpecker 5	Cardinal 18
N Downy Woodpecker 6	Rose-breasted Grosbeak 4
Scissortailed Flycatcher 4	Blue Grosbeak 1
Great-crested Flycatcher 14	Indigo Bunting 1
Eastern Phoebe 1	American Goldfinch 16
Eastern Wood Pewee 1	Grasshopper Sparrow 7
	Lark Sparrow 4

Miscellaneous Birds Probably Not Nesting

White Pelican 7	White-rumped Sandpiper 1
Black-crowned Night Heron 1	Dunlin 1
Gadwall 2	Ring-billed Gull 2
Blue-winged Teal 2	Franklin's Gull 17
American Wigeon 2	Forster's Tern 2
Northern Shoveler 2	Black Tern 2
Ruddy Duck 3	Cedar Waxwing 1
Common Merganser 1 (female)	Brewer's Blackbird 200
American Coot 10	Great-tailed Grackle 12
Lesser Yellowlegs 2	

Only a few of the 105 counties in Kansas have reasonably good records of breeding season birds. Indeed, most counties do not have good records of birds present throughout the year.

These studies we have been doing are our small attempt at filling the void. We have heard from several birdwatchers around the state who have indicated an interest in keeping lists around their own home county and in some cases nearby counties also. But, don't make a list and keep it a secret. A new book on Kansas Birds, edited by Max Thompson (Southwestern College) and Charles Ely (Fort Hays Kansas State College), will be published in the near future. They will need all the help they can get on bird distribution so send them your lists.

Tower KANU Bird Kills

The following is a list of tower kills which took place on 25 and 28 September and 5 and 6 October of this year. The location was the tower KANU, Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas. Most of the finds were deposited at the Museum of Natural History, the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

Pied-billed Grebe (1)	Bay-breasted Warbler (1)
Coot (1)	Palm Warbler (1)
Sora (2)	Ovenbird (1)
Mourning Dove (5)	Northern Waterthrush (1)
Yellow-billed Cuckoo (2)	Yellowthroat (3)
Flicker (1)	Wilson's Warbler (1)
Red-headed Woodpecker (1)	Rusty Blackbird (1)
Trail's Flycatcher (1)	Scarlet Tanager (1)
Short - billed Marsh Wren (1)	Dickcissel (2)
Solitary Vireo (1)	Savannah Sparrow (2)
Black & White Warbler (2)	Clay-colored Sparrow (2)
Orange-crowned Warbler (2)	Lincoln's Sparrow (3)
Nashville Warbler (6)	
Magnolia Warbler (1)	

Also, the following announcement may be of interest to the K.O.S. membership: The Morton County, Kansas Christmas Bird Count and the Kenton (Black Mesa) County, Oklahoma Christmas Bird Count will be the weekend of 31 December to 2 January 1977. All Kansas CBC'ers are encouraged to participate. For information contact: S.T. Patti, 6528 Wenonga Terrace, Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66208. Phone 913-362-4887.

S.T. Patti

KOS Field Trip

Oct. 2-3, 1976 Linn Co.

Pied-billed Grebe	Mourning Dove	Robin
White Pelican	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Eastern Bluebird
Great Blue Heron	Black-billed Cuckoo	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Canada Goose	Screech Owl	Water Pipit
White-fronted Goose	Great Horned Owl	Loggerhead Shrike
Snow Goose	Barred Owl	Starling
Mallard	Common Nighthawk	Solitary Vireo
Gadwall	Chimney Swift	Tennessee Warbler
Pintail	Ruby-thro. Hummingbird	Orange-crowned Warbler
Green-winged Teal	Belted Kingfisher	Nashville Warbler
Blue-winged Teal	Yellow-shafted Flicker	Parula Warbler
American Wigeon	Red-shafted Flicker	Myrtle Warbler
Shoveler	Pileated Woodpecker	Black-throated Green Warbler
Wood Duck	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Yellowthroat
Lesser Scaup	Red-headed Woodpecker	House Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Eastern Meadowlark
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Hairy Woodpecker	Red-wing
Red-tailed Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	Common Grackle
Red-shouldered Hawk	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Brown-headed Cowbird
Swainson's Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Summer Tanager
Marsh Hawk	Eastern Wood Pewee	Cardinal
Osprey	Empidonax sp.	Blue Grosbeak
American Kestrel	Horned Lark	Indigo Bunting
Bobwhite	Tree Swallow	Dickcissel
American Coot	Bank Swallow	American Goldfinch
Killdeer	Rough-winged Swallow	Rufous-sided Towhee
Common Snipe	Barn Swallow	Savannah Sparrow
Solitary Sandpiper	Blue Jay	LeConte's Sparrow
Lesser Yellow-legs	Common Crow	Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Pectoral Sandpiper	Black-capped Chickadee	Slate-colored Junco
Baird's Sandpiper	Tufted Titmouse	Chipping Sparrow
Least Sandpiper	White-breasted Nuthatch	Field Sparrow
Short-billed Dowitcher	House Wren	Harris' Sparrow
Ring-billed Gull	Carolina Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Franklin's Gull	Long-billed Marsh Wren	Lincoln's Sparrow
Caspian Tern	Mockingbird	Swamp Sparrow
Black Tern	Catbird	Song Sparrow
Rock Dove	Brown Thrasher	Double-crested Cormorant

Total - 118 species.

Of the 108 species seen on the fall K.O.S. count (centered around the Dingus Natural Area and the Marais des Cygnes Waterfowl Refuge) on October 2 and 3, three were new to the all-time record. They were the Black-billed Cuckoo, Parula Warbler, and the Summer Tanager. All three had been seen on spring counts, but not on any of the 27 fall outings.

This count covered a larger area than the two previous ones, so it exceeded the 75 species seen at Marais des Cygnes in 1964 and the 79 at Mound City, Kansas in 1956. Both of those October counts also had clear and warm weather.

Amelia J. Betts

Dues

Seven members caused the K.O.S. over three dollars in needless postage on the last mailing just because they failed to tell me they had moved. Mailings like ours are not forwarded, even in the same city, and the post office charges 25 cents to tell us where the person has moved to. So please notify me -- Amelia J. Betts, Baldwin City, Kansas 66006 as soon as you know you are going to move.

Several members have sent their dues to Baldwin instead of to E. R. Lewis, 1285 MacVicar Ave., Topeka, 66604. I don't spend 13 cents postage on each one to send them on. I wait until I have 13 cents worth. So if your checks are not cashed promptly that may be the reason why. Your dues envelope was enclosed with the September Bulletin. Please return it to the TREASURER as soon as possible.

Area Notes

Dodge City: Birds have been unusually scarce this fall. The most unusual is a pair of Scrub Jays that has been present since October 1. They come to the feeder daily. A Crissal Thrasher (?Ed) was seen for several days in September. House Finches are here. Oregon Juncos were here on October 10. This summer we had a family of seven young Screech Owls. On May 9 we saw a White-faced Ibis in a roadside pool north of Bucklin. Warblers were scarce -- only a few Wilson's and Orange-crowns and 2 Yellows. We have had a number of Cedar Waxwings, mostly immatures. Joan Challans.

Cowley County: The spring of 1976 held several surprises for birders in the Arkansas City and Winfield areas, bringing both unusual species and unusual abundance of certain species, as well as some extreme arrival and departure dates. Following are some of the more interesting:

Red-breasted Nuthatch: At least 1 was present on the Southwestern College campus until 11 May, a full 17 days past the usual departure date.

Wood Thrush: Much more common than usual this year. Several were netted at Max Thompson's banding station on the Arkansas River (7 mi. N, 3 mi. W. Ark. City) and at least 2 were singing on territory there throughout May; 1 was also heard for several weeks at the Chaplin Nature Center (2 mi. N, 3 mi. W. of Ark. City).

Gray-cheeked Thrush: Numbers were considerably above average. A total of 13 was netted at the banding station between 2 and 16 May.

Bobolink: Several flocks were seen in alfalfa fields just north and west of Arkansas City during the week of 9-15 May. The species is an irregular transient in Cowley Co. and has not been seen in any numbers for several years.

Lazuli Bunting: One female was banded at the netting station on 27 May and was possibly sighted in the same area on the 28th.

Pine Siskin: Present in Cowley Co. to 22 May, 9 days after the previous latest departure date. David E. Seibel.

News Needed

Please send your news for the November Newsletter to Renne Lohofener, Fort Hays Kansas State College, Hays, 67601 before November 10.