

KANSAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Division of Biology, Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

I've been doing some thinking about the roles of the various ornithological-nature societies in the state, and how we might more effectively relate to one another. We have three God-given responsibilities regarding nature. We are to name the animals; we are to rule over nature; we are to restore and protect nature from destruction. It is worth noting that these responsibilities have been our primary responsibilities in this world since the beginning, so that our involvement in nature ought to have a high priority in our daily affairs. In any case, folks interested in birds have joined together into three different kinds of societies to, as we say, do the Lord's work. There are ornithological societies which bear the responsibility for the naming, and the knowing of the birds. KOS is our prime example of such a society. There are wildlife management societies for the ruling over our birdlife: The Wildlife Society and BPI are prime examples of societies dedicated to that end. And, there are societies that wage war against the destructive elements around us that would threaten our birdlife. The various Audubon Societies do this job.

It must be admitted that we are a people at war. These three roles are the three roles that people at war generally have. There are those who stay at-home, and rule over the home front, keeping alive that for which the nation is fighting. There are those who provide logistic support for the warriors, and there are those who fight. The first group of folks needs to sustain love, families, loyalty, and peace. The second needs to be diligent, thorough, and careful. The warriors need to be brave, and ready to sacrifice themselves. Thus the Wildlife Society and other management organizations need to preserve a love for birdwatching and a heart for the field. KOS and other scientific societies need to be thorough, objective, and diligent in gathering the facts about our birdlife. And our stalwart Audubon warriors need to be strong, brave, and self-sacrificing.

For a country to make war effectively, there should be many families, a solid core of workers, and a few warriors. Of course, the whole nation must have a war-time mentality, but respectable wars are fought to preserve peace, and there must be a peace at home to preserve. By analogy, all of the backyard bird feeders, and assorted birdwatchers, the folks who make up the membership of organizations like the BPI or the Griggsville Purple Martin Society, ought to be most numerous and, of course, they are. The research workers, in the KOS or other ornithological societies, ought to be second in abundance, for they provide the logistic support for the warriors. Finally Audubon, and other war-like societies, ought to have the fewest active members. A new birder would start in the bird-watching groups, graduate to KOS, and get drafted into Audubon.

The main thing which makes a nation at war effective is unity. Every birder ought to be a part of all three societies or efforts. Each needs to pay his or her support to all three levels of involvement. Warriors need to write home, homemakers need to pay the war tax, and workers need to work to supply both other groups with the things they need. But, more than anything else, they all need to stick together, to speak with one voice.

So what should we do? Presently, the nature appreciation community is divided and unorganized. We are top-heavy in terms of organization, with warriors who are frustrated in their effectiveness because of the disorganized support from below. All of us are rather unclear about our duty, our role, as we join several organizations. Maybe KOS needs a membership class for supporters and one for researchers, so that those who would not call themselves researchers would see more clearly the point of their joining and offering their support. Similarly, perhaps we ought to encourage our researching KOS members to support the Audubon Society or the Sierra Club, and the Wildlife Society or the ABA, so that these parts our effort know that they have the support of these who study the birds. One thing is clear -- we need each other, and we need all three tasks done well.

--- Steve Fretwell

A COMMENT GERMANE TO THE CONCERNS OF MANY

As birdwatchers, we have several kinds of concern for the birds of Cheyenne Bottoms. Based on his excellent work with Snowy Plovers, Roger Boyd has pointed out that nesting habitat for this species is limited and that the plovers are particularly susceptible to high water levels. There have been other concerns that water levels were too high this spring to attract migratory waders in general. However, Ed Martinez has pointed out that low water levels allow racoons access to nesting herons, which subsequently sustain high losses. The herons need rather extensive cattail stands for nesting, but the cattails grow at the expense of mud flats and open water -- themselves competing concerns which favor shorebirds and ducks respectively. The refuge would be taken over by cattails in the absence of management, benefitting herons but greatly speeding the succession of the marsh toward lowland prairie. The transition might then take only a few decades and the marsh would be lost. As birdwatchers, how do we weigh our interests? More importantly, in what spirit do we approach these questions when we include the interests of others (like hunters, who are currently the only ones paying)?

My wife Theresa and I lived at Cheyenne Bottoms headquarters for two months each of the last two springs, where I have been conducting my own research in cooperation with the managers. We witnessed management decisions made under heavy pressures from politics, hunters, and landowners, and under outright harrassment by the local riff-raff. The decisions seem to us to have been based on biology, and they were not apparently influenced by the various pressures. Under the rather extreme constraints of cattail encroachment, lack of water, existing laws, and funds which by all rights should be spent only on huntable species, the decisions appear well-formed. That the refuge is managed so well under these constraints I see mainly as a reflection on Stan Wood, the present manager, and on previous managers who established policy based on a holistic approach and a true love for nature. Now there is real hope that the existing constraints will be changed in favor of more practical concern for non-game species, a hope Stan Wood has maintained all along.

HOW ABOUT A BLUE-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD? . . . The Division of Biology at Kansas State is offering an ecological/ornithological excursion to southern Arizona, departing May 17 and returning May 31. For information, write J. L. Zimmerman, Div. Biol., KSU, Manhattan, KS 66506

In particular regard to the heron rookery, it is possible that cattail management to create more shorebird and duck habitat has reduced heron numbers (we need data to know this). Herons have shifted from pool 3 to pool 4 in the last several years, perhaps at least partly as a result of cattail burning in pool 3. The managers have closely watched the herons and this year pool 4 was kept as full as water availability allowed by continuous running of the diesel pumps this spring. Criticism of decisions related to the herons or other species must be informed and constructive. All banding records and other data should be shared with the managers, as I have shared my own data on redwings, yellowheads, and avocets. Any research done at Cheyenne Bottoms should be done in close cooperation with the manager of the refuge.

If non-game concern is to be officially instituted, it is dangerous for the right hand (birdwatchers) to be fighting the left hand (managers) even before the two are joined.

-- Frank S. Shipley
Bird Populations Institute
Kansas State University

SOME FLINT HILLS BIRD RECORDS FOR AUGUST 1 TO NOVEMBER 30, 1979

Common Loon	1 from 11/21 thru 11/27	Schulenbergs	Lyon
Horned Grebe	2 from 11/21 thru 11/27 1 on 11/25	Schulenbergs "	Lyon Coffey
Little Blue Heron	20 on 8/26	Schulenbergs	Coffey
Cattle Egret	4 in early August 38 on 8/26	Dwight Spencer Schulenbergs	Lyon Coffey
Swan sp.	11/19, one seen on aerial waterfowl survey	Carl Freeburg	Coffey
Hooded Merganser	5 on 11/25	Schulenbergs	Coffey
Bald Eagle	5 on 11/25 (1a and 4im)	Schulenbergs	Coffey
Merlin	1 on 11/14	Schulenbergs	Osage
Prairie Chicken Greater	Numbers up from last year	Schulenbergs	Lyon
Bonaparte's Gull	2 on 11/25	Schulenbergs	Osage
Least Tern	1 on 8/10	Schulenbergs	Osage
Long-eared Owl	1 on 10/20	Marvin Schwilling	Lyon
Cedar Waxwings	unusually numerous 11/21 thru 11/30, Abundant cedar berries in area	Schulenbergs	Lyon

Summer Tanager 1 on 10/23, 10/24 and 10/27 Winona and Curtis Rhoades Lyon

-- Jean H. Schulenberg
R.R. #1
Admire, Kansas 66830

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW IN WICHITA

I was birding alone in Maple Grove Cemetery in Wichita in the morning of October 27, 1979. The land used for burial purposes is heavily forested with evergreen trees. The back(east) part of the land is not used for burial purposes; it is a savannah consisting of grass, weeds and scattered deciduous and evergreen trees. While I was in the back part of the cemetery, I noticed some Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers and Dark-eyed Juncos. I "pished" to draw the birds into better view. When I did, the birds responded, but my attention was directed immediately to a bird that flew from my left and perched in the open on a low limb not more than ten yards away. The bird's black throat and white breast was noticed as it flew into the tree. Upon looking through my 10 power binoculars, I observed those features better, as well as the white lines over and under the eye and the plain, unstreaked back. I immediately identified the bird as a Black-throated Sparrow (Amphispiza bilineata).

The bird was very cooperative, remaining perched for a full five minutes, allowing me more than adequate time to refer to my field guide, double-check field marks and eliminate other possible species with black throats. All field marks were carefully compared with those of the field guide. After it finally flew, the bird was not to be found again. Searches in the afternoon, at dusk and the following morning were all futile.

-- Donald Vannoy, 2011 Porter, Apt. 240,
Wichita, Kansas 67203

A NEW PUBLICATION OF GREAT INTEREST TO YOU

The University of Nebraska Press will soon publish Paul A. Johnsgard's Birds of the Great Plains: Breeding Species and Their Distribution (ISBN 0-8032-2550-4). The area of coverage includes all or part of the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas. Individual species accounts discuss breeding status by states and general information on the species' natural history on the breeding range. There is an appendix that lists public-access bird-finding areas. There are thirty color photographs as well as line drawings of representative species of each of the 53 families covered in the book. The price after 15 January 1980 is \$25.00. Copies may be order from your bookstore or the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE 68588.

INFORMATION WANTED ON THE BREEDING SITES OF SORA AND VIRGINIA RAILS

If you know of suitable habitat or have actual sightings of either sora or Virginia rails during the period March through June in eastern Kansas, please contact John L. Zimmerman, Division of Biology, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas 66506. A study is being undertaken to assess the breeding distribution and relative densities of these two species east of U.S. Highway 81 during the breeding season.

DR. EDWARD J. RYAN JR. DIES

KOS has lost a good friend and a past member of the board with the death of Dr. Edward J. Ryan Jr. of Emporia on December 14, 1979. Dr. Ryan practiced medicine in Emporia for about 30 years before retiring last April. He was an active bird watcher and served as compiler for the Redmond Reservoir Christmas Bird Count. From 1955 through 1958 he served as a Director of the Kansas Ornithological Society.

GROOVE-BILLED ANI RETURNS TO EASTERN KANSAS

In December of 1973 a Groove-billed Ani was present in the Topeka area, and many local bird watchers had a chance to see this errant cuckoo. This past December it was the turn of the Baldwin Bird Club members to add this species to their lists when a Groove-billed Ani was reported by Mr. Boytt Impson, owner of the farm where the bird first appeared on November 28th. The bird remained at this farm six miles northeast of Baldwin, feeding on frozen grasshoppers picked up off the lawn. But by December 8th it was quite weak, and Mr. Impson easily captured it, bringing it in to Roger Boyd at Baker University. The bird died the next day and is now in the collection of the university at Baldwin.

The Bluebird, published by the Audubon Society of Missouri, reported a fall record for this species from Fulton, Missouri, about 175 miles from Baldwin.

The Baldwin bird had an infected leg, and the other leg had been broken earlier and healed almost as askew as its tail and wings seemed to be when it walked.

--- Amelia J. Betts
Baldwin Bird Club

SOME LATE SUMMER AND FALL RECORDS

Common Loon - 2 on November 25th on Winfield City Lake (Cowley Co.) by Jean and Miriam Roark

Horned Grebe - 1 on November 24 at Lake Cheney and 2 on November 25 on Winfield City Lake (Cowley Co.) by Jean and Miriam Roark

Black-crowned Night Heron - 1 immature bird November 12 in Sedgwick Co.

White-faced Ibis - 4 on August 16 at Cheyenne Bottoms (Barton Co.)

Whistling Swan - 1 immature bird on Winfield City Lake (Cowley Co.) on November 25 by Jean and Miriam Roark

Canada Goose - 1 partial albino: body pure white but head and neck were normally colored, November 25 in Sedgwick Co.

Piping Plover - 6 on August 16, Cheyenne Bottoms (Barton Co.)

Ruddy Turnstone - 4 on August 16, Cheyenne Bottoms (Barton Co.)

Western Kingbird - 1 on October 6 in Sedgwick Co. by Jean and Miriam Roark

Eastern Phoebe - 1 on November 1 in Sedgwick Co.

Swallow sp. - 1 albino bird on August 16 at Cheyenne Bottoms (Barton Co.); completely white except for pinkish-orange ventral surface; notched, not forked, tail.

Believed to be a tree or bank swallow as these were the only swallow species in the immediate area

Purple Martin - 3000 to 5000 birds feeding at dusk on August 11 in Sedgwick Co.

Hermit Thrush - 6 on October 12 in Cowley Co. by Jean and Miriam Roark

--- Steve Kingswood
Wichita, KS