

Wichita Audubon



Volume 38 No. 8 May 2004

CNC Upcoming Programs

**June 19, Saturday
5 pm - ?**

Twilight Dinner

Join us at Chaplin Nature Center for a beach party, barbeque, scavenger hunt, birdwatching, and lots of fun. Mark your calendars now and watch the next newsletter for details and a registration form or check out our website at www.wichitaudubon.org.

Thank You

It was a great day for the CNC Spring Clean-up. Over 20 people showed up on Saturday, April 4 to help clean-up and get the trails in shape for the upcoming season. The trails have been trimmed, picnic area cleaned and the Visitor's Center whipped into shape. Thank you to Duane DeLong, Kevin Groeneweg, Rex Herndon, Dwight Shoup, Carol Cumberland, Kelsey & Shelly Richardson, F.O. Harper, Rose James, Jeff Silliman, Lenard Silliman, Mary & Meagan Poteete, Girl Scout Troop 819 from Mulvane and Girl Scout Troop 254.

For more information about any Chaplin Nature Center programs call Shawn Silliman at 620-442-4133, or e-mail cnc@wichitaudubon.org.



May Meeting

May brings another great video by our own Lowell Wilder, featuring Prairie Chickens. Entitled "Prairie Chickens: Greater, Lessers and Guessers," the film documents a hybrid Lesser/Greater Prairie Chicken discovered by Fort Hays State University student Matt Baine. The film explores the research on mixed leks found where the range of the Greater and Lesser Prairie Chickens overlap.

The program will begin at 7:30 pm in the auditorium at the Great Plains Nature Center, 29th and Woodlawn.

You can also join Dr. Wilder and other members for dinner at Jason's Deli, in Bradley Fair at 21st and Rock Road, at 5:45 pm before the meeting.

June Picnic

Mark your calendar for the annual picnic, to be held on Tuesday, June 15th 6:30 p.m. at the large picnic shelter at Pawnee Prairie Park west entrance. Bring your own service and a covered dish or dessert to pass. Iced Tea will be served to help cool off the summer evening, or bring your own beverage.

Directions: from Kellogg, go south on Maize Rd to 23rd St S and turn left (on the west side of Maize Rd the street sign says 23rd S, on the east side there is a sign for Pizza Villa.) Proceed east on 23rd street/Pawnee for 2/10 of a mile to the lot on the north side of the street. The sign says "Pawnee Prairie Park Picnic Area."

Laura Groeneweg - Hospitality Chair

Coming Events

May 8

Warbler Walk - Meet at 7 am at the north end of Oak Park for a look at spring migrants. Leader: Kevin Groeneweg, 687-4268, kgroeneweg@cox.net

May 8

North American Migration Bird Count. Similar to the Christmas bird count, this national event covers all of Sedgwick county. To join a team and help count migrants, call Harry Gregory, 263-7608, birdfan@infi.net

May 22-23

Quivira/Cheyenne Bottoms field trip. Meet at the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge headquarters at 8 pm on Saturday evening for a chance to find Black Rails. On Sunday, meet at the headquarters at 8 am for shorebirds, waterfowl, and other migrants.

Leader: Kevin Groeneweg, 687-4268, kgroeneweg@cox.net

June 1-5

Extended field trip to the Hutton/Niobrara Sanctuary Nebraska. Leader: Patty Marlett, 942-2164, pmarlett@mac.com

June 15

Annual picnic at 6:30 pm in Pawnee Prairie Park west entrance.

June 19

Twilight Dinner at Chaplin Nature Center, beginning at 5 pm. See page 3 for more details.

Birdathon

Birdathon is a fund-raising activity that is also a lot of fun, and open to any member that likes to bird and wants to help. A Birdathon team solicits pledges from friends, neighbors, coworkers, for the number of bird species they can find in a 24 hour period. The team picks a date between April 17 and May 29 and goes birding. Then the pledges roll in to help support WAS and Chaplin Nature Center. We really would like to have your help this year. To join a team talk to Carol Cumberland, Patty Marlett, or Shawn Silliman. If you don't want to go birding, consider soliciting pledges for one of the teams, or contribute yourself. Any and all assistance is appreciated.

Colorado Grouse Trip

Eleven tireless travelers banded together for the WAS extended field trip to see grouse in all their spring glory on the leks of Colorado. We rented vans, loaded up our gear, and took off on the morning of April 10, driving all day. The change of climate was dramatic, with considerable snow on the ground. Our first objective was the White-tailed Ptarmigan that winter on Guanella Pass, on a narrow, rocky dirt road outside of Georgetown. We quickly learned that the pass was closed. Overnight it snowed more, and conditions looked worse. By prior arrangement we met Eric and Lesley McCabe in Georgetown. Eric is a professional wildlife photographer from Perth,

Scotland, and he was also in search of Ptarmigan. They had a rental car with all wheel drive, and thought they could make it. The vans most definitely could not make it, so Carol and Julia went with the McCabes while the rest of us waited by the "Road Closed" sign. They made it to the top, but the pass was deep with snow, and nary a bird in sight. Despite the lack of ptarmigan, we did get good looks at Red Crossbills, and a good view of our first of many Golden Eagles. The weather looked like conditions might improve by the end of the week, so we decided to return to Georgetown on our last day, instead of going to Pueblo as originally planned.

Be sure to keep up with the latest news on conservation issues, local issues, and events by visiting our website at www.wichitaudubon.org



After that initial disappointment we drove on to Walden, in the North Park area of Colorado. We checked out the main public viewing lek and discovered the road was far too muddy for our vans. Back to plan B, and the hope that the alternative lek described on the internet would be active. The next morning we arose at 5 a.m. to find the temperature was 1 degree below zero, it had once again snowed overnight, and the ground was covered with a dense, icy fog. We counted off the miles to the lek, and amazingly, as daylight grew the fog lifted and there were Greater Sage Grouse strutting and displaying on their lek. Flush with our first real success we returned to town for a big breakfast, then explored the nearby reservoir and

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2003-2004 WAS Officers

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Don Dewitt	722-0742	ddewitt@omnibizcenter.com

Committee Chairs

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www.wichitaudubon.org

email any officer: was@wichitaudubon.org

Send address changes to Sister Patricia Stanley, 6739 Perryton, Wichita, KS 67226
pstanley@csjwichita.org

Twilight dinner at Chaplin Nature Center

This special event, on Saturday June 19, is to honor our members and donors who make Chaplin Nature Center possible. Activities include

- Barbecue dinner by the beach (weather permitting - if it's raining we'll move inside). We'll have the tables back under the trees in the shade, but stay close enough to the sand for the kids to play
- Nature scavenger hunt for kids
- Sand castle building contest
- Bird watching
- A lively program by Cowboy Poet Russell Graves

Festivities begin with a social hour at 5:00 pm, dinner at 6:00 pm, and activities continuing until after dark. There will be transportation provided to the sandbar, so don't worry if you can't walk that far. We want this to be accessible to everyone.

Donors who have given one hundred dollars or more in the past year will be honored with a free dinner (you will receive a personal invitation in the mail.)

All others are invited to join in the fun for only \$6.50 for adults and \$3.25 for children 12 and under - and this is all you can eat!

Please return the reservation below by June 12.

Twilight Dinner Reservation June 19

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

phone: _____

email: _____

Fee enclosed for:

of adults: _____ (\$6.50 each)

of children under 12: _____ (\$3.25 each)

Mail to: Wichita Audubon Society, P.O. Box 47607,
Wichita, KS 67201

Colorado Grouse, continued

Arapahoe National Wildlife Refuge. The next morning we traveled east a few miles to the State Moose Visitor's Center. (Believe it or not, Walden is the moose capital of Colorado.) We didn't find moose, but their feeders showed us Brown and Gray-capped Rosy Finches, Pine Grosbeak, Red-naped Sapsucker, and others.



Then it was on to Hayden, and an appointment to see Sharp-tailed and Blue Grouse. Wednesday morning we met Jim Haskins, who works for the Colorado Department of Wildlife. He took us to the Sharp-tailed Grouse lek. The Sharp-tails were more like prairie chickens, strutting and clucking and charging each other right beside a busy road to a power plant. Jim was a wonderful source of information, and we all learned a lot from him. We then traveled a few miles north to a hillside with displaying Blue Grouse. There were only five or six of them, but they put on quite a show. Down the road from the Blue Grouse we also found Sandhill Cranes, pronghorn, elk, a nesting Great Horned Owl, and a lot of great scenery. From Hayden we traveled south to Grand Junction. At the Bookcliffs Wild Horse Preserve we found Chukar, a lifer for several of us. They were elusive, but we finally spotted them standing up on ridges high above us. We had to walk a ways, so not everyone got to see them, but we all heard their clucking.

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Colorado Grouse, Continued

With another target under our belts we headed for Gunnison. We had arranged to use the blind of the Siskadee organization, which is dedicated to conservation of the Gunnison Sage Grouse. They met us at 4:30 a.m. to take us to the lek. The light came up and we watched about 10 birds for about 15 or 20 minutes when a coyote came strolling by. The birds all flew off - one went right over us. We were told they wouldn't come back that day, so we loaded up and headed back to Georgetown.

Sandra had been calling a friend of



hers in Georgetown who is the expert on the ptarmigan. He assured us that conditions were good and that the birds had been seen during the week. We got there in time to check it out Friday afternoon, and found the road had been plowed. We made it to the pass easily, and fanned out to hunt the elusive white ptarmigan among the willows. The snow was still about knee deep, with some spots a lot deeper, so it was strenuous work. Laura spotted the first group, within about 10 feet of her, but she didn't have a radio and couldn't get our attention. The rest of us spotted another group of at least 6 feeding on the willows. Dan Kilby almost had a heart attack (the pass is at 11,669 feet), but he finally saw the White-tailed Ptarmigan. This was his fifth trip to find them. Flush with success, we returned to Wichita on Saturday, April 17, exhausted but triumphant. Participants: Sharon Bolin, Wallace

Champeny, Carol Cumberland, Bill & Letha Frye, Kevin & Laura Groeneweg, Julia Hoppes, Dan Kilby, Patty Marlett, and Sandra Tholen. The best birds we found were White-tailed Ptarmigan, Greater Sage-Grouse, Gunnison Sage Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Blue Grouse, Chukar, Pine Grosbeak, Brown and Gray-capped Rosy Finches, Red Crossbills, Mountain Chickadee, many Golden Eagles, and an American Dipper.



The food was good, too!