

Wichita Audubon



Volume 35 No. 8 May 2001

CNC Upcoming Programs

Saturday, June 9

Butterfly Walk

11:00 am to 12 noon

Check out the butterflies that make Chaplin Nature Center their home. Question mark, Admirals, and an abundance of Hackberry butterflies will be on our top ten list. Butterfly nets will be available to get a closer look at these wonderful creatures.

Saturday, July 21

Water Exploration

1:00 to 2:30 pm

Cool off this summer and explore the life in a pond and creek. With the use of collecting equipment, participants can try to catch a variety of aquatic insects, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. Learn about these creatures and be ready to get wet and muddy.

For more information about any of these programs call Shawn Silliman at 316-442-4133, or e-mail cnc@wichitaaudubon.org.



May Meeting

Our own secretary Julia Hoppes will entertain us with pictures and tales of her trip last summer to the Galapagos Islands. "Dancing with Boobies in the Galapagos" will feature slides by Julia, assisted by Don and Fran Vannoy. They all went on a trip to eight of the Galapagos Islands last August with Victor Emanuel Tours.

It was a fabulous trip because the animals are not afraid of humans so it is very easy to get close to the animals and birds. The Galapagos have 95 percent of its original biodiversity intact but this is being threatened by oil spills, alien species such as dogs, cats, goats, pigs, etc., and terrorism by native fishermen.

The program will be on May 15, 7:30 pm at the Great Plains Nature Center. Join the speakers for dinner before the program at Jason's Deli, in Bradley Fair at 21st and Rock Road, at 5:45 pm.

Slate of Officers

The following slate was presented by the nominating committee:

Treasurer: Duane Delong

Secretary: Julia Hoppes

Director (3 yr term): Patty Marlett

Director (3 yr term): Barbara Millar

This is still incomplete, lacking President, Vice-President, and one Director (1 yr term). Suggestions or volunteers would be appreciated. Contact a member of the nominating committee: Cheryl Miller, 978-7900, Rick Goodrick, 722-3205, or Ruth Steinke.

Coming Events

May 12

North American Migration Count. An all day survey of bird numbers in Sedgwick County. To participate, call Harry Gregory, 263-7608, birdfan@infi.net

May 15

Regular meeting, "Dancing with Boobies in the Galapagos" by Julia Hoppes, Great Plains Nature Center, 7:30 pm.

May 20

Field trip to Quivira NWR and Cheyenne Bottoms Meet at the Quivira NWR headquarters at 9 am. Leader: Bob Dester, 316-283-7070.

June 9

Butterfly Walk at Chaplin Nature Center, 11 am to noon.

June 9

Walk With Wildlife at Chisholm Creek Park. This Wichita Wild event is supported by volunteers from WAS. View Kansas wildlife along a leisurely one mile hike. For more info call the Great Plains Nature Center, 683-5499.

June 19

Annual picnic 6:30 pm Chisholm Creek Park

July 21

Water Exploration at Chaplin Nature Center, 1 to 2:30 pm

Phone Line Discontinued

Because of the high cost (\$500 a year) and the increasing use of the internet for communication, the Wichita Audubon phone line is being discontinued the end of April. We will continue to publish phone numbers and e-mail addresses for all officers and committee chairs, and our webpage has all the latest info, including a copy of the latest newsletter and archives of all past newsletters. Be sure to keep up with what's happening at www.wichitaudubon.org.

The Kansas Ornithological Society also recently discontinued their telephone hot line because everyone is using the internet instead. If you want to keep up on all the bird sightings and news, you can subscribe to the Kansas Bird list by sending an email message to <listserv@listserv.ksu.edu>.

The body of the message should read "Subscribe KSBIRD-L", and that's all - no other information is necessary. The computer will read your e-mail address and add you to the list. You should get an acknowledging e-mail and instructions almost immediately.

Birdathon

Some Birdathon teams will have already gone out for their 24 hour birding marathon, but others are still to come, so if you haven't pledged, or you want to join a team there is still time. Pledges are taken for the number of species seen in a 24 hour period. The team then tries to find as many birds as possible. The money all goes to support Chaplin Nature Center. Call any officer or board member (listed below) for more information.

July Picnic Moves to June!

Wichita Audubon has had a picnic the third Tuesday in July since the dawn of time, but attendance has dwindled the last couple of years because the temperature has been over 100. So this year we're moving the picnic to June when it will hopefully be a little cooler.

Come one, come all, invite your family and friends. The annual picnic will be held on Tuesday, June 19th @ 6:30 p.m. at the large picnic shelter at Chisholm Creek Park (Oliver street entrance). Bring your own service and a covered dish or dessert to share. Iced Tea will be served to help cool off the summer evening, or bring your own beverage.

Thank you,
Laura Groeneweg - Hospitality

2000-2001 WAS Officers

President	Carol Cumberland	685-4867	ccumb@swbell.net
Vice-president	Kevin Groeneweg	687-4268	kgroeneweg@kscable.com
Secretary	Julia Hoppes	682-2623	jhoppes@kscable.com
Treasurer	Sandra Tholen	634-0049	stholen@kscable.com

Directors

Duane Delong	684-7456	dwdelong@earthlink.net
Harry Gregory	263-7608	birdfan@infi.net
Patty Marlett	942-2164	jmarlett@kscable.com
Cheryl Miller	978-7900 (wk)	cheryl.miller@wichita.edu
Jay Newton	316-322-9090	
Gary Straley	316-221-3664	garrob@hit.net

Committee Chairs

Newsletter	Patty Marlett	942-2164	jmarlett@kscable.com
CNC	Gary Straley	316-221-3664	garrob@hit.net
Programs	Kevin Groeneweg	687-4268	kgroeneweg@kscable.com
Conservation	Patty Marlett	942-2164	jmarlett@kscable.com
Development	Carol Cumberland	685-4867	ccumb@swbell.net
Membership	Sherry Brewer	778-1648	lpbrewer@earthlink.net
Hospitality	Laura Groeneweg	687-4268	lauranng@kscable.com
Education	Marsha Ebaugh	682-4782	43042@prodigy.net
Field Trips	Harry Gregory	263-7608	birdfan@infi.net
Finance	Duane Delong	684-7456	dwdelong@earthlink.net
Naturalist	Shawn Silliman	316-442-4133	cnc@wichitaudubon.org

www.wichitaudubon.org

email any officer: was@wichitaudubon.org

Send address changes to Sherry Brewer, 3231 SW Farmstead Rd, Benton, KS 67017 (316)778-1648 or e-mail lpbrewer@earthlink.net

Ethelyn Lonnberg

Ethelyn Lonnberg, a long time member and generous supporter of the Wichita Audubon Society, passed away April 17.

In 1999, she donated the funds for the purchase of the "Gator", a John Deere utility vehicle, for Chaplin Nature Center. It was given in memory of her husband Lonnie.

She was a lively and active person, despite her 89 years. Last May she attended the Twilight Dinner on the sandbar at CNC, and got to see the Gator in action.

Her family has established a memorial with the Wichita Audubon Society. Contributions may be sent to PO Box 47607, Wichita, KS 67201.

Birding In Kansas

"On the horizon I can see the village of Wilburton hull-down three miles south and the grain elevator at Rolla to the east. But the attention invariably snaps back to the chickens - that weirdly orchestrated and organized gathering. Something rooted in the grasslands and the sage, yet social, floating just above the earth as well. An electrical current in the zany meat-life zone. A parallel, a reminder, and even a model. Dance and strut and feather bustle. The Lakota word for flute (an important courtship instrument) means, literally, great (as in powerful) prairie chicken. I sit there for an hour, letting the pores open, the music register, and the trees fall and rot where they may. I was basking in a High Plains constant, a sound as elemental as dripping water."

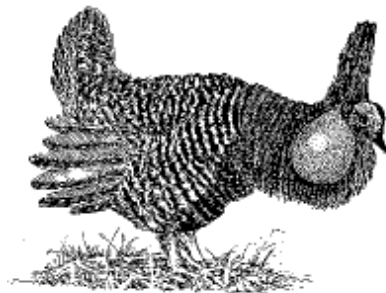
Merrill Gilfillan, "Magpie Rising - Sketches from the Great Plains," 1988, Pruett Press, Boulder CO

As elemental as dripping water. An interesting simile, since lesser prairie chickens and dripping water are both getting more and more scarce on the High Plains of Kansas. But enough birds remain to make a pilgrimage to Elkhart a useful adventure, this month, where the Forest Service (in Kansas?) maintains a blind near a busy lek.

After hearing, absorbing and watching this elemental show, you can walk out to accompaniment of the sky song of the Cassin's sparrow. Take this opportunity to look for this sage/grassland sparrow, because unless he is singing he is nearly impossible to see. If there is only a single bird in the territory, he will usually sing from the top of a sagebrush or other low bush. But the presence of another singing male nearby will trigger the sky song in both birds, a beautiful reminder of the infinitely subtle qualities that make the Great Plains a special place indeed.

Closer to home in the Flint Hills, you can find another equally invisible sparrow, the Henslow's sparrow, singing his mincing song from the dead understory of the tallgrass prairie. If the prairie fires don't consume all of the standing dead grasses, look (or listen) for this big-billed sparrow in unburned pastures. But don't bother if the wind is blowing hard (in Kansas?), because these birds hate the wind, and their feeble song won't compete with more than a light breeze.

You will also find upland sandpipers, grasshopper sparrows, eastern meadowlarks, dickcissels, eastern kingbirds and the ubiquitous brown-headed cowbird (buffalo bird) in these same haunts; most of these are much more cooperative and visible than the rodent-like Henslow's sparrow. Be on the lookout for hawks as well,



you should see red-tailed hawks, Swainson's hawks, and perhaps even a lingering northern harrier.

After a visit to the upland prairies to find (or miss) the Henslow's sparrow, you might want to wander down into the gallery forests of a prairie creek to look for warbler migrants. On the way down listen and look in the dogwood thickets for Bell's vireos and Bewick's wrens, which are much more common here than most anywhere else. Listen for the bouncing song of the field sparrow, and see if you can find this tiny songster with the bright orange-pink bill. Once you get to the gallery woods, these birds will be unlikely.

In woods further east in Kansas (e.g. Marais des Cygnes) May will bring avian jewels such as cerulean warbler, yellow-throated warbler, black throated green warbler, Blackburnian warbler, or even the occasional blue winged or golden-winged warbler. Alas, in the Flint Hills you will be very lucky to find one of these every decade or so. But you can expect yellow warblers, Nashville warblers, Northern parulas, Tennessee warblers, yellow-rumped warblers, and the ubiquitous orange-crowned warblers. You can also find Louisiana waterthrushes warbling along streams and common yellowthroats witchetywitching anywhere near water in the, Flint Hills.

The gallery forests are home to year-round residents such as tufted titmouse and red-headed woodpecker, as well as summer residents such as great crested flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, warbling vireo, red-eyed vireo, blue-gray gnatcatcher, and indigo bunting. All of these breeding birds will be hustling to make nests, lay eggs, and raise the next generation who hopefully will grace the Flint Hills with their presence next year.

If you can stay on the Konza prairie until evening, you might get lucky enough to hear and/or see four of the nine North American species of goatsuckers (nightjars). Common nightjars arrive in early May, and their booming courtship flights are common sounds during prairie hikes this month. Common poorwills frequent the upland sites, and often congregate on ridge-top trails in the evenings. The chuck-will's-widow and the whippoor-will can be heard calling from the gallery forests, giving you a goatsucker grand slam, a feat that is not likely to occur anywhere else in North America.

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Elkhart Field Trip

Fourteen members made the trek to Elkhart April 5 and 6 to view Lesser Prairie Chickens booming. The field trip was very successful thanks to the leadership of Lawrence and Ruth Smith, residents of Elkhart and members of WAS, who always know the right place to find the best birds. The highlight was finding a Vermilion Flycatcher in Elkhart. It was a beautiful male who was very cooperative about staying in the same yard and posing nicely every time we came around (which was frequently).

The better birds of the trip included Ross's Goose, Swainson's Hawk (the first of the year for most of us), Merlin, Lesser Prairie Chicken, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Eurasian Collared Dove, Barn Owl, Burrowing Owl, Say's Phoebe, VERMILION FLYCATCHER, Rock Wren, Mountain Bluebird, and Townsend's Solitaire.

Don Vannoy and Patty Marlett

Blackbird Control at Feedlots

The US Department of Agriculture's Animal Damage Control program, now called Wildlife Services, has begun a campaign to reduce the number of blackbirds that roost at Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Permits were granted by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. This is in response to complaints from feedlot owners that the birds consume and defecate on cattle feed.

A poison called DRC-1339 will be used at up to 10 feed lots in the area. According to the USDA, this chemical is slightly toxic to most birds, and most toxic to starlings, blackbirds, crows and magpies. It is only slightly toxic to mammals and raptors, and birds that have consumed DRC-1339 are not toxic to scavengers. The poisoned birds die slowly, and most die around their roosts. Wildlife Services plans to apply poison annually, killing a total of 4 million birds a year, including 3 million starlings, 1 million red-winged blackbirds,

50,000 each of common grackles, brown-headed cowbirds, great-tailed grackles, and Brewer's blackbirds. According to the environmental assessment they did, killing that many birds will have no effect on the populations of those species in Kansas.

So if you go to Cheyenne Bottoms or Quivira next winter, expect to see a lot of dead birds.

If you would like to comment on this program, or have questions, contact Tom Halstead of Wildlife Services at Kansas State University, address Wildlife Services, Division of Biology, 232 Ackert Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506-4901; phone 785-532-1549.

Adapted from The Horned Lark, Vol. 28, no. 1; by Helen Hands, Wildlife Biologist for the KS Dept of Wildlife and Parks