



Topeka

February 2006 Volume 59, Number 2

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Audubon Society News

www.topekaaudubonsociety.org

“Biological Studies in Mongolia”

by Lee Boyd

February 14, 7pm

Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library

Please join us for a presentation by Lee Boyd for “Biological Studies in Mongolia”. Boyd is Chair of the Biology Department at Washburn University. She travels regularly to Mongolia to document the success of the reintroduction of takhi (Przewalski’s horse) in Mongolia. She will speak about her latest trip in the summer of 2005. In addition to her study of the horses, she will talk about her trip to the Gobi Desert.

“Fifty Fungi”

by Richard Kay

March 14, 7pm

Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library

Please join us for a slide show presentation by Richard Kay titled “Fifty Fungi.” The show will illustrate the difference between poisonous and edible mushrooms (the most common concern with fungi). It will also show how curious, various, and beautiful mushrooms can be.

Kay is a retired professor of history at the University of Kansas with a specialty in Dante. He is a skilled amateur mycologist and author of *A Checklist of Kansas Mushrooms*.

As usual there will be a no-host dinners at Annie’s Place at 5:30pm before each of these program meetings. All TAS members are welcome.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRDCOUNT

The popular GBBC is back! Put the dates of Feb. 17-20, 2006 on your calendar and participate in the 9th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count. Organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon, this is a great way to have fun, learn about birds and contribute to bird conservation.

Count the birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on any or all of the four count days. Watch your bird feeders or take a short walk in your neighborhood or park. For each species of bird that you see, records the highest number of individuals that you observe at any one time during your count. Don’t add a bird every time you see one at your feeder; you could be counting the same individual.

Watch the birds for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate. We recommend watching for a little longer, so you can get a good sense of what birds are in your area.

Enter your count online at the Great Backyard Bird Count website (www.birdsource.org/GBBC) and use your State Checklist to submit your highest counts for that day.

View your results after you’ve entered your count for the day. Visit the Maproom and see more results from across the continent.

National Statistics from 2005:

Total Checklists Submitted: 51,926

Total Species Observed: 613

Total Individual Birds Counted: 6,546,606

Coming in April:
Annual Dinner and Meeting.

Charles Vausbinder Announces Retirement as TAS Treasurer

Charles Vausbinder announced in January that he would retire as TAS Treasurer this year. Charles served in the position for 30 years and the Topeka Audubon Society has been honored to have such a dedicated officer. Charles will be sorely missed.

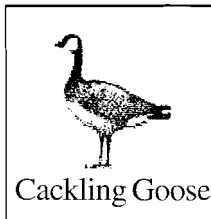
With his resignation, TAS has a special need for a member to step forward and serve as our new Treasurer. TAS needs volunteers to serve in other positions as well, as officers or on the Board of Directors. Please call or email President Joe Kun to become an active participant in the conservation, education and recreational efforts of the Topeka Audubon Society. Give back to your organization. We need YOU! Joe Kun can be reached at joe.kun@bcbsks.com or (785) 582-4662.

Not-So-Competitive Birding Contest: Awfully Darn Competitive This Year

Fifteen birders divided into four teams competed vigorously to see which team would be “top dog” in today’s birding contest (Jan. 7). Each team was given a list of species that had been seen at Lake Shawnee since January 1st and these birds were worth one point. Any species seen that was not on the list received a one point bonus.

The teams combined to tally 42 species. The team dubbed “Too Busy” won the bragging rights for this year’s event. “Too Busy” (Jim Malcom, Dan Larson, and Glen Caspers) saw 36 species including nine not on the list, giving them a total of 45 points. The “Oldsquaws” (Janeen Walters, Judy Billings, Diana Busey, Carol Morgan, and Rhonda Simpson) and “Paul’s Peepers” (Paul Willis, Bob McElroy, and Ralph Hoover) looked for species right down to the 10:30 a.m. deadline as they competed for the 2nd place finish. The “Oldsquaws” edged out “Paul’s Peepers” with a score of 30 species to 29 species and in adding in the bonus points, the total came to 37 points to 36 points. “The Old Coots” (Dan Gish, Richard Field, and Roy Maurer) came in dead last with 29 species and 34 points. Some of the more interesting species seen include Ross’s goose, cackling goose, merlin, redhead duck, ruddy duck, yellow-rumped warbler, cedar waxwing, common merganser, and Oregon race of dark-eyed junco.

Dan Gish, Contest Originator, Organizer, and Old Coot



Cackling Goose

Field Trip Report:

Bald Eagles and Glaucus Gull

The January 21st field trip to Lawrence and the Lecompton River Road drew fifteen participants despite fog, 30degree temperatures and a buffeting cold wind. The outlet below the dam over the Kansas River in Lawrence provided a ready supply of stunned fish for both gulls and eagles. We were able to identify two glaucous and one Thayer’s gulls out of the larger mix of ring-billed and herring gulls. Each time an eagle flew upstream to the outlet area, the gulls took to flight, apparently thinking they could become a meal for an eagle. We totaled ten eagle sightings while we watched the gulls for about a half hour before we scrambled back to our cars to warm up. Next we drove over to Lecompton to follow the river road for about two miles east and added eleven more eagles to our count. Other species seen were: Canada goose, mallard, red-tailed hawk, kestrel, wild turkey, rock pigeon, red-bellied woodpecker, downy, flicker, blue jay, crow, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, eastern bluebird, starling, cardinal, junco, and Harris’s sparrow.

Field Trip Leader Dan Gish

Kansas Birding Festival

April 28-30, 2006

(Wakefield, Kansas)--Take a birding and wildlife trip you will never forget. Plan **NOW** to attend the Kansas Birding Festival. Over 300 species of birds can be seen in the Milford Lake area. The organizers of the event say they have made arrangements for birds to attend from the Central and Mississippi Flyways. Surely some would be lifers for you!

There will be guided birding/wildlife trips to locations including Milford Wetlands, Konza Prairie & Flint Hills, KS Landscape Arboretum, Republican River, Milford Lake, Milford Nature Center and Fort Riley. See www.kansasbirdingfestival.org for trip schedules, cost, and registration and lodging information.

New Outreach Materials Available for Chapter Use

The National Audubon Society’s Chapter Services distribution center is pleased to announce there are new outreach materials available. An updated list of materials and an order form has been posted on Audubon’s website. Check out several new brochures now available to Chapters at www.audubon.org/local/cso/outreach/index.html. At the bottom of the web page is a downloadable order form.

National News:

Rare wild-hatched condor chick takes flight

VERMILION CLIFFS, Ariz., December 2, 2005

For only the fifth time in 20 years, a wild-hatched California condor is taking flight on its own. This week, an endangered condor chick, which hatched at the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument in Arizona this spring, successfully fledged and took its first flight toward independence.

"The chick was active and anxious all day on Wednesday, flapping its wings and hopping around its nest cave area," says Vince Frary, a biologist with The Peregrine Fund who watched the bird fledge. "That afternoon, the chick's mother landed at the cave and fed the chick. She stayed for a few minutes and flew away, but the chick got very excited. In just seconds, it hopped onto a narrow ledge just above the nest cave and tried to hop a short distance farther, before it realized it had gone too far and made a futile attempt to hop back. Instead, the chick began gliding down directly below the cave in a less-than-graceful fashion." All of this happened in strong winds of 10 to 20 miles per hour. The young condor landed on a small ledge halfway down the cliff face and slowly worked its way up 20 yards over the next few hours. Just before dark, the chick's father landed on a perch above the nest cave and roosted near its young.

"Compared to other members of the vulture family, condors continue to care for their young for a fairly long period of time," says Kathy Sullivan, a condor biologist with the Arizona Game and Fish Department. "Both parents will continue to feed the chick for several months until it gains complete independence at approximately 1 year of age. Because of this breeding pattern, condors typically produce only one offspring every other year."

A second chick hatched in the wild is also active and likely to fledge in Grand Canyon National Park soon. In

1982, only 22 California condors were left in the world. Efforts to capture and breed those birds have been successful. Condors are now released throughout the year at the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument site. Sixty condors currently fly free in Arizona, and a total of 273 California condors are in existence, including free-flying birds in Arizona, California and Baja California, as well as captive birds in Idaho, California and Oregon.

California condors have been federally listed as endangered since 1967. As North America's largest flighted birds, they have a wingspan of 9 1/2 feet and can weigh between 18 and 22 pounds. The condor reintroduction project in Arizona is a joint program with many contributing partners, including The Peregrine Fund, Arizona Game and Fish Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Kaibab National Forest, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Southern Utah's Coalition of Resources and Economics, and numerous other partners. The California condors are being released as a "non-essential/experimental population" under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. Section 10(j) provides that the species can be released in an area without impacting current or future land use planning. This authority has been spelled out further in an innovative agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local governments. This "Implementation Agreement" outlines a positive working relationship between the federal government and the various local governments.



If you are a member of National Audubon, you are automatically a member of Topeka Audubon. However, you have the option to become a member of our chapter without belonging to National. If you plan to continue your National membership, DO NOT send the \$18 for a chapter-only membership.

A hearty thank you to all who watch the address label on the newsletter and renew your chapter-only membership as it becomes due. This is a big savings to the chapter as your label is the only renewal notice you will receive. Let us know of an address change, too, as it costs each time we mail a newsletter to the wrong address.

Chapter Only Membership

Mail checks/renewal to:

Topeka Audubon Society

Topeka Audubon Society

28 Peppertree Lane

Topeka, KS 66611

circle one: NEW RENEWAL

Membership Dues: Individual/Family \$18 Student \$10

Name (please print)

Address

City State Zip Phone#

This is a gift from

(Gift card enclosed)

Calendar of Events

February 2006

- 4 Field Trip: Tuttle Creek Reservoir and Pottowatomie State Lake. Meet at the zoo parking lot at 6:30am.*
- 14 Program Meeting: "Biological Studies in Mongolia" by Lee Boyd. See Page 1 for details.
- 17-20 Great Backyard Birdcount
- 18 Field Trip: Clinton Reservoir. Meet at Dillon's, 29th & California, 7:30am.
- 21 Board Meeting, 7pm, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.

March 2006

- 4 Field Trip: Topeka Audubon Sanctuary and Lake Perry. Meet at Dillon's 20th & California at 7:30am.*
- 14 Program Meeting: "Fifty Fungi" by Richard Kay. See Page 1 for details.
- 18 Field Trip: Felker Park. Meet at the softball diamonds at 7:30am.*
- 21 Board Meeting, 7pm, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.

April 2006

- 15 Field Trip: Alma Prairie Chicken Lek and Lake Wabaunsee. Meet at the zoo parking lot at 6:00am.*
- 11 Annual Meeting and Dinner. Special speaker is David Siebel who will make a presentation titled "Birds."
- 22 Field Trip: Felker Park. Meet at the east end of the parking lot for the softball diamonds at 7:30am.*

* Contact Dan Gish at gishbear@cox.net or 232-3731 for more information regarding field trips.

Note: Be kind to your driver. If you carpool on a field trip with a fellow TAS member, please chip in for the gasoline.

Topeka Audubon Society

An affiliate of the National Audubon Society

President.....Joe Kun
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 Executive Secretary.....Joanna Lacoursiere
 Newsletter Editor.....Carol Morgan
 Website.....Patsy Rush

Send address change to:
 Joanna Lacoursiere
 28 Peppertree Lane
 Topeka, KS 66611
 lacour2@mindspring.com

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Dust of Snow

*The way a crow shook down on me
 The dust of snow from a hemlock tree
 Has given my heart a change of mood
 And saved some part of a day I had rued.*

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Joanna Lacoursiere
 Executive Secretary
 28 Peppertree Lane
 Topeka, KS 66611

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