

Topeka

June 2007 Volume 60, Number 5

This newsletter is published monthly by Topeka Audubon Society

Audubon Society News

www.topekaudubonsociety.org

NAMC Results

Twenty-five observers tallied 136 accepted species on May 12 for the annual North America Migratory Count. Not too bad considering the count day was very warm and humid. Some of the highlights of the count included: the sighting of a male Ruby-throated hummingbird by Dan Larson and Richard Field that was sitting in the same dead tree where one was sighted the previous two years as well. Talk about territoriality! Glen Caspers was thrilled by a white-eyed vireo, and by a Barred Owl that answered to a tape before dawn in front of his house. Gary Haden recognized the songs of summer tanager and scarlet tanager within 50 feet of each other.

Area 3 (southwest county) led by Jim Malcom tallied 114 species, including a “drop dead” look at a Black-billed cuckoo and a Painted Bunting. Area 1 (northwest county) led by Carol Morgan tallied 74 species; Carol impressed her comrades with her vehicle backing skills as she ventured onto *very* rough country roads. Area 2 (northeast county) led by Janeen Walters, including a chuck-wills-widow on the ground doing an injured wing display to draw people away from its nest area. Area 4 (southeast county) divided and led by Dan Gish and Paul Willis; Paul said he saw a record 12 summer tanagers, but was disappointed that exciting migrants which had been appearing at backyard feeders only a few days prior to the count were absent.

Common grackles were the most reported species. Whoopee! Ten species of shorebirds were reported. A little rain before the count left lots of puddles to attract them. Fourteen warbler species were spotted, even though the peak of migration is past. Twelve sparrow species and ten flycatcher species were sighted. A complete species list is available on request (crxmorgan@aol.com).

Many thanks to the area leaders and the observers. **Your time and effort is greatly appreciated:** Judy Billings, Sandy Bohnsack, Joanne Brier, Diana Busey, Glen Caspers, Mike Davidson, Evelyn Davis, Richard Field, Dan Gish, Gary Haden, Ralph Hoover, Pat Howard, Debra McKee, Dan Larson, Jim Malcom, Andrea and Brad May, Carol Morgan, Marie Plinsky, Joyce Volmut, Janeen Walters, Paul Willis, John and Linda Zempel.

Air National Guard

Five Topeka Audubon Society members birded the Air National Guard (ANG) property south of Topeka on April 30. The 190th Squadron at Forbes Air Force Base has a requirement to identify 20 birds that deserve special management consideration for the base. These could be birds that present special threats to aircraft because of the potential for air strikes, or birds that deserve special management considerations because they are threatened, endangered or species in need of conservation, or because they are uncommon in the area. They are also looking at some other bird management issues, such as whether encouraging kestrels might discourage rock pigeons.

Gary Haden was contacted by Major Doug Chase, the environmental officer for the 190th, and Christine Tipton, the ANG's State Environmental Manager who needed volunteers to help them identify the birds that can be encountered on the land and in and around the buildings at the ANG.

The base is mostly grassland as one would expect. Tipton said the grass around the airstrips is mowed every 3-4 weeks. The perimeter of the base is surrounded by farmland, woodlands, and a few ponds and streams. Birds that could be heard and seen in the perimeter as well as birds on the base were tallied. All sound was drowned out occasionally by the thunder of jet engine noise overhead.

Security at the ANG is taken seriously and background checks were conducted on the TAS volunteers. Gates are locked and guarded at the ANG and the TAS teams were escorted by Christine Tipton and Major Doug Chase while on the property. Gary Haden, Carol Morgan and Rhonda Simpson made up one team of birders and listed 47 species. Dan Larson and Jim Malcom made a second team and listed 68 species! The total list was 74 species. Large birds such as Great Blue Herons and Canada Geese were listed as well as small birds such as Carolina wrens and Orange-crowned warblers. Birds as significant as Henslow's sparrow were also on the list. A complete list can be obtained by contacting Carol Morgan at crxmorgan@aol.com.

Field Trip Report: Lake Shawnee and Camp Hammond

I led a field trip of Topeka Auduboners to the west side of Lake Shawnee this morning (May 5) and we totaled over 50 species, including ten warblers, three vireos, and two tanagers. There were several novices in our group and they added big numbers to their life lists. Best bird candidates were Yellow-throated vireo, Scarlet tanager, and YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO. I don't recall anyone else posting a cuckoo yet, but I may have missed it. We concluded our outing with a brunch at Camp Hammond east of Topeka on Stubbs Road. Species list available on request.

Field Trip Leader Dan Gish

Some TAS members brought snacks to enjoy on the field trip.

Here is the recipe for Rhonda's Applesauce Muffins:

Applesauce Muffins, by Rhonda Simpson

1/2 Cup softened butter

1 Cup sugar

1 Cup applesauce

Whip butter & sugar together, add applesauce (it will curdle). Then add 1/2 tsp vanilla. Next, mix the following:

1 1/2 Cup flour

1/2 tsp cinnamon

1/2 tsp nutmeg

1/2 tsp mace

1 tsp baking soda

Add this mixture to the "wet"

ingredient mixture above. Add

Add 1 C walnuts and 1 C raisins.

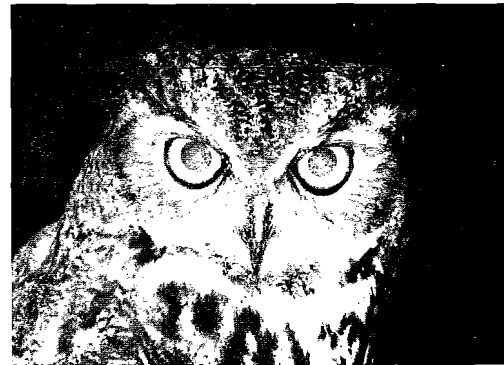
Bake at 400' for 25 minutes. Makes about 18 muffins.

Photos from Wings N Wetlands, April 27-29, 2007

Photos by Carol Morgan, except as noted.



L-R: Rhonda Simpson, unknown, Judy Billings, Janeen Walters & Diane Llamas observing Lesser Prairie Chickens



Thurston Owl the Third



American Bitterns



Photo by Diana Busey



Judy Billings & Janeen Walters scoping the chickens

Next Wings N Wetlands: ~April 24-26, 2009

Wings N Wetlands Birding Festival

At least twelve Topekans attended the Wings N Wetlands Birding Festival at Great Bend on April 27-29. What a terrific weekend! Janeen Walters and Dan Larson volunteered as van drivers and guides during the weekend, while Judy Billings, Diana Busey, Kay Kelly, Joanna LaCoursiere, Diane Llamas, Debbie McKee, Sarah Merrill, Carol Morgan, Paul Post and Rhonda Simpson enjoyed the rides. The festival was attended by about 150 participants. The event organizers reported that 185 species of birds were sighted during the weekend, a new record for the Wings N Wetlands Festival.

Field trips to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge occurred on Friday night, Saturday morning and evening, and Sunday morning. Additionally, field trips to a lesser prairie chicken lek were taken on Saturday and Sunday mornings. There was no rain during the weekend; mornings started with cool temperatures, but warmed up to the 80s during the day. It was windy enough on Sunday to cause whitecaps on the water at Cheyenne Bottoms.

Educational seminars by Eugene Young and Bob Gress helped participants with shorebird and waterfowl identification, although the seminars were also satisfying from the standpoint of pure enjoyment of beautiful slides of various birds.

Friday evening there was a presentation by Mike Cargill of the Kansas Raptor Rehab Center, who brought some live birds to talk about. The favorite had to be the Great Horned Owl named "Thurston Owl the Third."

The guest speaker on Saturday night was Bob McCready of the Nature Conservancy whose topic was "Migratory Bird Conservation - Thinking Continentally, Acting Locally." He discussed habitat loss not only in North America, but also in Central and South America and the activities and challenges that the Nature Conservancy faces to protect habitat throughout the western hemisphere.

Perhaps the best bird of the weekend was the American Bittern. Although most birders have seen the American Bittern, what was remarkable was the large number of these birds. They popped up everywhere! What fun it was to see them freeze alongside the roads in easy viewing range, or to take off in graceful flight. One of the rarest birds seen was Sprague's Pipit, an endangered species and a lifer for most participants lucky enough to have them spotted by the experts. Other significant species included numerous Burrowing Owls in the prairie dog towns, soras, whooping cranes and black rails.

Honorable mention must go to Janeen Walters and Judy Billings for snake spotting and preservation. The Massasauga rattlesnake can be found at Cheyenne Bottoms and Janeen spotted three dead and two live snakes on the road as she was driving. Janeen brakes for snakes, and Judy Billings was anxious for photographs. After snapping some pictures of these 20 inch long specimens, Judy would find a piece of brush to gently sweep the rattler off the road to protect it from being run over. Judy, the Snake Wrangler! Judy displayed considerable courage to do this, but Janeen uttered the comforting fact that "no one in Kansas has died of snakebite in over 100 years."



Massasauga Rattlesnake



Judy, the Snake Wrangler!

Field Trip Report: Felker Park

It was a beautiful day for birding on the morning of June 19th, 2007 at Felker Park with clear skies and slight breeze. Unfortunately, someone forgot to tell the birds of these wonderful conditions! Birding was slow, at best. The 12 observers tallied 37 species in a two hour walk and several of those species were identified by their call notes only (thanks to the wonderful hearing of Jim Malcom who I-D'd Bell's vireo, Canada warbler, Common yellowthroat, Blackpoll, and Warbling vireo who were singing their hearts out but wouldn't show themselves). One species that wasn't shy was Indigo buntings that were singing from several exposed perches. The rich blue hue of their feathers was really quite dazzling. Some other lingering migrants were American Redstart, Rose-breasted grosbeak, Nashville warbler, and Summer tanager. Some nesting species were already feeding young (e.g. Baltimore oriole female feeding an out of nest juvenile).

Mark your calendar for our trip west to the Skyline Drive through the Flint Hills in Wabaunsee county which will occur on June 2nd. Meet at the Zoo parking lot at 6:30 for CAR POOLING. Bring snack and beverage along with something with DEET in it. I'll try to get you home before noon.

Field Trip Leader Dan Gish

Westar Energy Peregrine Falcons

Good news as of May 18! One peregrine falcon chick hatched in the nest box at the top of the Westar Energy building in downtown Topeka. Check out the article in the Topeka Capital-Journal May 19 issue, page 2. Also check out the streaming video on the website: westarenergy.com. Absolutely terrific! Cross your fingers that the chick is raised successfully.

Calendar of Events

June 2007

- 2 **Field Trip*: Skyline Drive through Wabaunsee County. Meet at zoo parking lot at 6:30am.**
- 16 **Field Trip*: Konza Prairie. Meet at zoo parking lot at 6:00am.**

July 2007

- 7 **Clinton's Beautiful Passerines: Painted Buntings. Meet at Dillon's at 29th & California at 7:00am.**

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Society News

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