

Topeka

August 2006 Volume 59, Number 7

This newsletter is published monthly by Topeka Audubon Society

# Audubon Society News

[www.topekaaudubonsociety.org](http://www.topekaaudubonsociety.org)

## “Gardening With Native Plants”

by Jeff Hansen

September 12, 7:00pm

Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library

President of KNPS (Kansas Native Plant Society) Jeff has always loved gardening since his youth, first learning from his grandmother. Since 1997, Jeff began experimenting with growing many native wildflowers, collecting seed from the wilds of Kansas. Since then he has been identifying, propagating, landscaping with, and admiring native plants of Kansas. His yard is landscaped with native plants and includes a backyard pond and rock garden as well as native shrubs and trees.

As usual there will be a no-host dinner at Annie's Place at 5:30pm before the program meeting. All TAS members members are welcome.

## **Ivory-billed search area opened to public use**

The ivory-billed woodpecker search area in eastern Arkansas was reopened for public use in May. The manager of the Cache River National Wildlife Area, Dennis Widner, said there was no need to continue limiting public use of the area since searchers had found no new evidence of the bird since the announcement last year of its rediscovery. The search was led by the Cornell Lab with support from Audubon Arkansas and the Nature Conservancy and ran from November through April when ivory-bill activity would have been highest. Dr. John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Univ. Lab of Ornithology said searches will continue in Arkansas and in several other southern states where the ivory-billed woodpecker lived in the past.

## Field Trip Report:

### The Search for Painted Buntings!

I led a field trip to the Wakarusa Causeway and Bloomington Park on the west side of Clinton Reservoir on July 1 from 7:20am thru 10:15am. Eleven Topeka Audubon birders were able to tally sixty species including two adult male Painted buntings at the causeway and a mated pair at Bloomington. For at least four members of the party, the PABUs were life birds. Other nesting species include Yellow-billed cuckoo, Rose-breasted grosbeak (Pr), warbling vireo, Red-eyed vireo, orchard oriole, Baltimore oriole, Eastern wood pewee, Eastern phoebe, Great-crested flycatcher, Scissortailed-flycatcher, blue-gray gnatcatchers, indigo bunting, and field sparrow. We found a killdeer incubating two speckled eggs in one of the parking lots at Bloomington. I was surprised she didn't do her broken wing display. She just stood there and scolded us. We soon departed. There were dozens and dozens of tree swallows sitting in a line of trees that were adjacent to the parking lot. It was a beautiful morning to be birding.

### Field Trip Leader Dan Gish

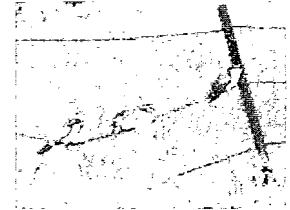
P.S. - **Bill Falk** notified me a few days ago that he saw a male Painted bunting at Clarion Park in southwest Topeka (Fairlawn and 37th street). I went over there this afternoon (1:00-2:15pm, July 9) and after 15 minutes I found him singing from a dead cedar tree just as Bill had reported. If you plan to go, just pull into the parking lot and sit on one of the boulders that mark the perimeter of the parking lot and wait for him to pop up to one of four dead cedars due west of the parking lot. Those of you with digiscopes should be able to full frame the little guy. The best time would probably be in the morning with the sun low to bring out the fullness of his colors. This sighting was my 246th Shawnee County species. Other species singing from prominent perches were Indigo bunting, Catbird, Brown thrasher, Cardinal, and Goldfinch. Flyovers include TV, Red-tailed hawk, Barn swallow, Purple martin, Chimney swift, and Robin. **Thanks Billy!**

# Birding the Kansas Prairie

Twelve Topeka Audubon members rolled out of their beds early on June 3, 2006 in anticipation of a day of birding the Kansas prairie in Wabaunsee and Morris counties. The weather was perfect with clear skies, mild temperature, and slight breeze when we began our journey at 6:30 at the Snokomo Road west of Topeka. After driving south from I-70 a few miles on Boot Hill Rd., we began to see and hear eastern meadowlarks, dickcissels, lark sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, bluebirds, and eastern kingbirds. . . all of which thrive in a prairie environment. Soon we encountered upland sandpipers balancing on telephone wires, sitting on fence posts and corrals, and fluttering about on stiff wings, and landing with wings held open in a vertical position before closing.

A special sighting was a pair of young yellow-billed cuckoos sitting on either side of a cock bobwhite quail that had jumped up to a barbed wire fence. A little later we were entertained by a barred owl flushed from a tall cottonwood near a narrow bridge. It flew a short distance and commenced to serenade us with his version of "Who Gives a Hoot" rhapsody! He even posed out in the open for several digital photos. Other birds seen at this stop include white-breasted nuthatch, great-crested flycatcher, and Baltimore oriole. About a mile east of K-177 we came to a pasture overgrown with dogwood bushes. We were hoping to coax out a Bell's vireo with an electronic call. We weren't disappointed. Soon two Bell's vireos were sitting out in the open singing and scolding the interloper. When we got to K-177, we headed south to Morris county to hook up with Gary Haden and his wife, Carolyn who own a little over 200 acres of woodlands and pasture. Our morning drive had netted 50+ species. Gary cooked up some hamburgers and hotdogs over an open fire to go along with covered dishes brought by the other members. Fine food. Fine friends. Fine birding.

**Field Trip Leader Dan Gish**



*Audubon*  
*Society*

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**

**Topeka Audubon Society**

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## Get Your TAS T-Shirt!

Topeka Audubon Society still has T-shirts for sale! Buy one for yourself or for that birdlover friend or family member of yours. Shirts cost \$12, which includes tax and shipping and handling. Make your check payable to Topeka Audubon Society. Sizes include S, M, L, XL, XXL.

*Audubon  
& Society*

This red cardinal on a gray T-shirt can be ordered from Melody Pollom. Contact her at her email address: pollomhome@hotmail.com or phone: 286-2033.



This TAS logo on a beige T-shirt can be ordered from Dan Gish. Contact him at his email address: gishbear@cox.net or phone: 232-3731.

## Henslow's Sparrows in Johnson and Shawnee Counties!

Have you heard the news that Henslow's sparrows have been sighted in Johnson County and Shawnee County?

The first exciting report of Henslow's sparrows was in Johnson County at Shawnee Mission Park in early June. Johnson County park officials have given the area below the dam where these birds are nesting a wide berth. Mowing has been postponed.

Several Henslow's sparrows have also been reported in Shawnee County by **Dan Gish**. The birds can be found by going south on Hwy 75 to University Blvd, turn right (west) and proceed about half a mile. Stop and park at a small white building where the road makes a curve to the south. Walk the mowed paths west and north from there.

The Henslow's sparrow is generally attracted to grassy fields that have been idle or unmanageable. They don't like grass that is heavily grazed or burned in the spring. Loss of habitat has led to a decline in the population of Henslow's sparrows, making them a "species in need of conservation." But in Missouri, the population has increased by 5 percent in the past 10 years," said Gene Fox, media specialist for the Missouri Department of Conservation. He said that is a direct result of the Conservation Reserve Program, which pays farmers to stop using fescue, a low-maintenance grass that "chokes out certain ground-loving varmints" such as the Henslow's sparrow.

## Environmentalists team with farmer to save rare birds

SAN JACINTO, Calif. - California's largest colony of rare Tricolored Blackbirds will be protected under an agreement between environmentalists and a farmer, officials said.

Audubon California will pay the farmer an undisclosed amount to delay harvesting 13 acres of wheat where thousands of the birds are nesting, the organization said in a statement released Tuesday. Delaying the harvest until June 12 will give the young birds time to mature and leave the nest, but also will cause the unidentified farmer to lose money because the nutritional value of his crop will be reduced.

"Audubon is grateful that the agricultural community is working with us to craft a solution that works both for the birds and the farmers," Graham Chisholm, Audubon California's conservation director, said in the statement.

The birds normally nest in restored wetlands in the 19,000 acre San Jacinto Wildlife Area, about 70 miles north of San Diego. This year, however, they set up their colony in a nearby wheat field. Officials estimate the colony is home to 4,000 of the 12,000 Tricolored Blackbirds that live in Southern California. They say each nest will produce an average of 1.5 chicks. The estimated global population of the birds is 250,000 to 300,000, with 99 percent living in California, according to Audubon. Their population has dwindled as native habitat has been destroyed.

*"It is not only fine feathers that make fine birds."*  
Aesop (620 BC-560 BC), The Jay and the Peacock

*"A bird does not sing because it has an answer.  
It sings because it has a song."* Chinese Proverb

## Calendar of Events

### August 2006

5 **Field Trip: Karlyle Woods and brunch. Zoo parking lot or meet at the woods, 7:00am.**

### September 2006

12 **Program Meeting: "Gardening With Native Plants" by Jeff Hansen, TSCPL, 7:00pm. See page 1.**

\* Contact Dan Gish at gishbear@cox.net or 232-3731 for more information regarding field trips. If you carpool on a field trip with a fellow TAS member, please chip in for the gasoline.

\*\*Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library

## Topeka Audubon Society

*An affiliate of the National Audubon Society*

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Newsletter Editor.....Carol Morgan  
Website.....Patsy Rush

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

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The American Birding Association (ABA) recently published the 2005 ABA Big Day Report & ABA List Report. ([www.americanbirding.org/bigday](http://www.americanbirding.org/bigday)) According to this publication, the total number of accepted species by the respective state records committees lists the top fifteen states as follows:

- |                   |                       |                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. California 628 | 6. Alaska 497         | 11. Nevada 477        |
| 2. Texas 627      | 7. Florida 497        | <b>12. Kansas 469</b> |
| 3. Arizona 535    | 8. Colorado 484       | 13. Oklahoma 469      |
| 4. New Mexico 518 | 9. Washington 484     | 14. New York 463      |
| 5. Oregon 498     | 10. Massachusetts 480 | 15. Louisiana 461     |

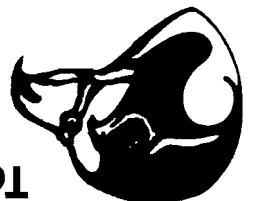
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