

Audubon

Vol. 64 No. 5

January/February 2025

January Meeting

Join us for "Botswana: an African Adventure," presented by our own Bob Gress. A trip to watch wild animals, especially in Africa is called a safari. In Swahili, safari means journey or expedition. Botswana is a landlocked country in southern Africa. The country lies mostly in the Kalahari Desert and contains the Okavango Delta, one of the world's largest, inland, river deltas. Our group of Kansas travelers found over 30 species of mammals, over 200 species of birds, luxurious camps, fabulous meals, endearing people and toasted evening sunsets in Botswana bush country. Come share the adventure!



Bob Gress is the former director of the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita and co-founder of www.BirdsInFocus.com. Bob has photographed wildlife in wild places throughout North America, Central America, South America, New Zealand and Africa. Over 4,900 of his wildlife photos have been published and are seen in a variety of magazines and in more than seventy books. Currently, Pete Janzen and Bob are finishing *The Guide to Kansas Birds and Birding Hot Spots, Expanded Edition*. Watch for the publication of this book in 2025.

The presentation will be on Tuesday, January 21, 7 pm at the Great Plains Nature Center. A recording of the program will be available on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) the next day.

There is a schedule of events that you can print or download [HERE](#).

Information about all our activities is available on our website at www.wichitaaudubon.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

**January 11, 8 am &
February 8, 8 am
Second Saturday bird walk in
Chisholm Creek Park.**

No birding experience needed. Expect 1-2 miles of walking on paved paths for about 90 minutes. Meet in the parking lot at 8 a.m. Questions?

Tom Ewert, 316-670-3140,
trewert@yahoo.com

**January 4, Saturday, 7:30 am
Red Hills Christmas Bird Count**

The last one for this season! Meet at the Casey's General Store, 314 S. Iliff St in Medicine Lodge. Groups will depart at 7:30 am. Let Pete know if you are coming so he can plan ahead.

Compiler: Pete Janzen, 316-519-1970,
pete.janzen@sbcglobal.net

February Meeting

Our February presentation will be “Cats and Windows: Two of the greatest threats to our declining bird populations,” by Scott Loss, PhD – Professor of Biology at Oklahoma State University

In addition to important human-caused threats like climate change and habitat loss, bird populations are affected by several direct sources of human-caused mortality, like predation by domestic cats, chemical poisoning, and collisions with vehicles and structures (e.g., power lines, wind turbines, communication towers, and building windows). Based on research led by Dr. Scott Loss, predation by free-roaming domestic cats and collisions with windows are the top two direct sources of bird mortality in the United States. In this talk, Dr. Loss will summarize the state of our knowledge about these two major threats to birds, including the research that he and his students have led at Oklahoma State University. He will also discuss controversial aspects of these issues before highlighting an optimistic path forward for reducing the impacts of cats and windows. This will include highlighting steps that all of us can take to make our yards, cities, and rural areas more bird-friendly, and showcasing grassroots initiatives that are addressing collisions and cat predation to help our declining bird populations.

Scott Loss is a Professor in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management at Oklahoma State University. He earned a B.S. degree from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, an M.S. degree from the University of Illinois, and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Minnesota. Prior to joining OSU, he also spent 2 years as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center at the National Zoo. At OSU, he and his students study various topics in global change ecology, including effects of climate change and invasive species on birds and other wildlife, the role of birds and changing landscapes in the ecology and transmission of tick- and mosquito-borne diseases, and the many human-caused sources of mortality affecting bird populations, such as predation by domestic cats and collisions with buildings and energy infrastructure. Scott and his students and collaborators have studied bird-window collisions and effects of cats on birds for 12 years, and OSU has become a global leader in research on these topics. In addition to 98 peer-reviewed journal publications, Scott’s research has been covered hundreds of times in the national and international media.

The presentation will be on Tuesday, February 18, 7 pm at the Great Plains Nature Center. A recording of the program will be available on [YouTube](#)



February 24, 1:30 pm El Dorado Lake and Short-eared Owls

Meet at the Great Plains Nature Center parking lot. Or if it is more convenient, meet us at 2:30 pm at the El Dorado State Park Walnut River area by the main restrooms. We’ll look for waterfowl on the lake and other winter birds in the surrounding areas, then hunt for Short-eared Owls at dusk. Finding a Short-eared Owl is always chancy, but there are good odds we will find a Barred Owl. Each vehicle must have a Kansas Parks permit.

Leader: *Patty Marlett*, 316-200-3419, pmarlett@cox.net

Chaplin Nature Center Director

The WAS board of directors is about to begin the search for a new director for Chaplin Nature Center. You can view the job description [HERE](#).

Membership

Remember that all local WAS memberships renew on January 1, so if you haven’t renewed or joined since August it is time to do so now.

New membership prices:

Individual - \$30

Family - \$40

Student (18 & under) - \$10

Life membership - \$300

You can renew online [HERE](#), or mail your check to WAS, PO Box 47607, Wichita, KS 67201.

If you are a member of National Audubon, you are automatically a member of WAS and don’t need to pay additional dues.

Wichita Christmas Bird Count

The Wichita Christmas Bird Count was held on Saturday, December 14. The day started out cold and breezy, but conditions improved in the afternoon. 22 observers tallied 98 species plus one count-week species (Marsh Wren). This is above our prior 10-year average of 93 species thanks to a number of uncommon species. The following species observed this year have been seen 5 or fewer times on prior counts: Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser (7 observed), Eared Grebe, Bonaparte's Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull (2 observed), and Common Loon (3 observed). However, the best bird of the day was the long-staying Rufous Hummingbird at Mark Nolen's house in Riverside, the first time a hummingbird of any kind has been seen on the count. Other notables include Great Egret, almost expected now, and an amazing 3,145 Double-crested Cormorants, far exceeding the prior 10-year average of 379. This species has gone from being fairly rare on the count decades ago to becoming a common winter resident. Cedar waxwings made a good showing with a new high count of 300, and a first for the count was an "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler. Misses included Northern Harrier, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Field Sparrow. While we struggle to find species commonly found in rural areas on our increasingly urban count, a covey of 8 Northern Bobwhite was a surprise, seen only one other time on count day since 2007. A big thanks to all who participated.



Annual Report

The 47th annual report of the Wichita Audubon Society and Chaplin Nature Center is available for download [HERE](#): or you can view it in your browser [HERE](#).

AOK Lek Treks

The Kansas Lek Treks Prairie-Chicken Festival is to be held in Hays, Kansas, April 10-13, 2025.



The highlight of this birding festival will include opportunities to view both Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens. No birdwatcher should miss seeing this yearly ritual unfold as males fight among themselves and display to females. The timing of the festival coincides with the peak of prairie-chicken breeding and female visitation to the lek.

There is so much to see besides prairie-chickens! Northwestern Kansas also hosts a multitude of bird watching, nature exploration, and other sights to see. Two wetlands of international importance are an hour or so away - Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. It is also home to Niobrara chalk formations which host fossils from the Cretaceous Period, 80 million years ago. Museums nearby document the natural history and human history of the area.

The 2025 Banquet Speaker: Jodie Provost, North American Grouse Partnership, shares her story of farm kid to prairie grouse conservationist. Learn what inspires her to action, how the North American Grouse Partnership is working to save grasslands and their charismatic grouse ambassadors, and how you can act too. Read all about it and register [HERE](#).