

# Wichita Audubon



Volume 43 No. 8 May 2009

## **MAY MEETING**



Our May program will be presented by Eric Beck, a student at Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma. Despite the fact that he is still an undergraduate, Eric has been involved in and coordinated a number of projects impacting bird conservation in Oklahoma. He will tell us about his own independent research project examining the distribution of marsh birds in western Oklahoma. He has taken on the role of coordinator for the Oklahoma Important Bird Areas project and was recently awarded an Audubon/Toyota Forever Green Fellowship. Join us on Tuesday, May 19, 7:30 p.m. at the Great

Plains Nature Center for as he tells us about “Marsh Birds - Rails & Bitterns.” You can also join Eric and other members for dinner before the program at Doc Greens, 10096 E. 13th, in the Waterfront, at 5:45 p.m.

## **AMERICA'S BIRDIEST COUNTY**

Nathan Ofsthun and Jeff Calhoun have grown to believe that Sedgwick County, KS is one of the birdiest counties in the country. This May they are going to try to prove it by compiling a list of birds seen within the county borders between Friday, May 8 and Sunday, May 10 for the America's Birdiest City / County competition. They are asking for your help in scouring the county for those birds.

-What is the competition? It's a national event in which birders attempt to tick off as many different species of birds as possible in a selected 72 hour window in an outlined location. The official website can be found at [www.coastalbirding.org/ABC](http://www.coastalbirding.org/ABC).

-When and where is the competition? Midnight Friday, May 8, 2009 – 11:59 PM Sunday, May 10, 2009. Our legal competing grounds are every square inch within Sedgwick County borders.

*continued on page 4*

## **COMING EVENTS**

### **May 2**

Warbler Walk in Oak Park. Meet by the pond at the north end at 8 a.m. Leader: Paul Griffin, 263-1251, [pgriffin1@cox.net](mailto:pgriffin1@cox.net)

### **May 2**

Prairie Wetlands Conservation Project field trip. Meet at 1 p.m. at the OxyChem parking lot on the east side of south Ridge Road (south of 55th St. S.) Leaders: Bill & Nancy Beard, 722-3081, [w2bnn@cox.net](mailto:w2bnn@cox.net)

### **May 8 - May 10**

America's Birdiest County Competition. See article this page.

### **May 17**

Quivira NWR/Cheyenne Bottoms field trip. Meet at the Quivira Headquarters at 8 a.m. Leader: Patty Marlett, 942-2164, [pmarlett@mac.com](mailto:pmarlett@mac.com)

### **May 19**

Regular meeting. “Marsh Birds - Rails and Bitterns,” by Eric Beck, 7:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Nature Center.



For more information about any Chaplin Nature Center programs call Shawn Silliman at 620-442-4133, or e-mail [cnc@wichitaudubon.org](mailto:cnc@wichitaudubon.org). CNC is located 3 miles west of Arkansas City on Hwy 166, north 2 miles on 21st Rd, east 0.6 miles on 272nd Rd.

## **CNC SPRING CLEAN-UP HAS RECORD VOLUNTEERS**

Over 50 volunteers showed up for the Chaplin Nature Center's Annual Spring Clean-up on Saturday, April 4. Just a little over half of the volunteers came from Boeing of Wichita. Crews went to work on clearing the downed trees and branches around the nature center and trails from the recent ice storm. Other groups worked on cleaning up trash around the sandbar caused by past flooding while Pack 328 cleaned Rutter pond and spruced up the front flower beds. With all the volunteer help we were able to get all of projects done early and were completely finished by 1:00 p.m. A BIG THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING: Eddie & Savilla Stegall, Rex Herndon, Dwight Shoup, Leonard Silliman, Jeff Silliman, Evan, Chase & Logan Silliman, Austin Daray, Nick Skiles, Chris Hall, Isiah Lykes, Pack 328, Brad Gorsuch, Pam Reiz and all the Boeing Volunteers.



## **SLATE OF OFFICERS**

The nominating committee for 2008-2009 is being chaired by Catherine Lewis, with help from Cheryl Miller and Art Weigand. They are presenting the following slate of officers:  
President: Sandra Tholen  
Secretary: Patty Marlett  
Treasurer: Carol Cumberland  
Director: Jeff Calhoun  
Director: Kevin Groeneweg  
They are still seeking a candidate for vice-president. The election will be held at the meeting on May 19.

### **2008-2009 WAS Officers**

President	Kevin Groeneweg	687-4268	kgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net
Vice-president	Jay Newton	733-2486	jmnewtonus@yahoo.com
Secretary	Patty Marlett	942-2164	pmarlett@mac.com
Treasurer	Carol Cumberland	685-4867	carol.cumberland@swbell.net
Directors	Bob Gress	838-4130	bobgress@cox.net
	Mike Heaney	733-6458	jeager@southwind.net
	Dan Kilby	943-5136	ddkilby@cox.net
	Curt VanBoening	644-1986	curtvb@earthlink.net
	Duane DeLong	684-7456	dwdelong@earthlink.net
	Catherine Lewis	681-3362	thexchange@cox.net

### **Committee Chairs**

Newsletter	Patty Marlett	942-2164	pmarlett@mac.com
CNC	Kevin Groeneweg	687-4268	kgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net
Conservation	Curt VanBoening	776-0993	curtvb@earthlink.net
Development	Mike Heaney	733-6458	jeager@southwind.net
Programs	Jay Newton	733-2486	jmnewtonus@yahoo.com
Membership	Sister Patricia Stanley	613-7059	pstanley@csjwichita.org
Hospitality	Laura Groeneweg	687-4268	lgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net
Field Trips	Pete Janzen	832-0182	pete.janzen@sbcglobal.net
Finance	Duane DeLong	684-7456	dwdelong@earthlink.net
Naturalist	Shawn Silliman	620-442-4133	cnc@wichitaudubon.org

### **WWW.WICHITAAUDUBON.ORG**

E-mail any officer: was@wichitaudubon.org

Send address changes to Sister Patricia Stanley, 3700 E Lincoln Apt 233, Wichita 67218  
pstanley@csjwichita.org

## **SPRING APPEAL**

You should have recently received a letter asking you to support Wichita Audubon and Chaplin Nature Center. If you have already responded - Thank You! If you haven't, please consider a gift to support our work. We are very proud of CNC - the beautiful land we are preserving, the excellent facilities we have built, and the programs we provide for thousands of children and adults. We accomplish a great deal on a shoe-string budget, but we still have to raise the money to support that budget! You can also help by supporting the Birdathon teams that will be raising funds this month. For more information contact Mike Heaney, 733-6458, jeager@southwind.net.

## **IN MEMORY OF DON VANNOY**

The Wichita Audubon Society lost one of its most influential members and powerful personalities when Don Vannoy passed away on March 19, 2009 after a long and brave struggle with pulmonary fibrosis. He was born Jan. 29, 1935 in Arkansas City, KS. Don graduated from the University of Wichita in 1957. When he took the CPA exam in 1957 he had the highest score for that year in the entire state of Kansas. He was a retired partner with Grant Thornton. He is survived by his remarkable wife, Fran. He out-lived the doctor's diagnosis by over five years and faced his terminal illness with great courage and dignity.

Don's contributions to the Wichita Audubon Society were crucial in shaping its direction and growth. He served as president from 1973-75 and 78-79. During his first term in office he handled the negotiations for the purchase of the Chaplain Nature Center property. He served as treasurer from 89-94, and sat on the WAS board of directors for many years before that. He was a member of the field trip committee for many years and led innumerable field trips. Even when he was not the official treasurer he still acted as the accountant and kept all the records for about 20 years. He did not serve as an officer or board member after 1994, but he continued to faithfully attend all the field trip planning meetings and continued to lead field trips until his illness stopped him. He went on every Wichita Christmas Bird Count until this past December when he finally was simply unable to attend. He was also the compiler

for the Ark City CBC for many years as well as participating in several other CBCs each year. He represented WAS in the Kansas Audubon Council in the 80's and served as an officer for that organization. Additionally he served as newsletter editor for the Kansas Ornithological Society for two years and did a great deal of field work for the Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas. His records and comments were invaluable to me as I worked on the "Birds of Sedgwick County and Cheney Reservoir" book which was published in 2007.

I will always remember Don the most for his tireless intensity in pursuit of uncommon and rare birds. Few could match his ardent zeal in this area. His life list of birds seen in the ABA area was 736, which as far as I know is the highest total ever achieved by a birder from Kansas. He and I always had a mostly unspoken competition for who would have the best life list of birds seen in Kansas. A couple of years ago I think I managed to tie his total for a year or so but he was one ahead of me when he died and he still is. I'm glad I never caught the old warhorse in that competition. He was able to travel to Attu in 2000 shortly before he contracted his illness and this was a highlight of his life, although he and Fran traveled the nation and the globe on many, many birding trips. I've been privileged to receive his vast collection of field notes and

as I go through the material I've recalled many great trips he and I took together. I remember in particular stumbling onto a Sage Thrasher with him in the town of Pratt completely by chance one day in February, driving all night to see a Clark's Nutcracker in Ulysses and the legendary Long-billed Murrelet chase to Wilson Reservoir, but there were many, many other great times we shared. He and I had our differences on occasion but whenever I found a good bird in town he was always the first guy I'd call and vice-versa. Despite his reputation for being a rather humorless sort of guy he truly had a heart of gold. I vividly recall a bird walk at Oak Park back in the early 90's, on which he went well out of his way to accommodate a neurologically handicapped young man who was having trouble getting onto the birds with his binoculars. Another vivid memory is of a day in April when he and I were birding together and he heard the first Brown Thrasher of the spring singing in Oak Park. He shouted out "welcome back old buddy". I looked at him to see if he was being serious and he was actually a bit moist around the eyes. As I sit and write this tonight I'm hoping I'll hear the first Brown Thrasher of the season. If I do, don't worry Don, I'll welcome him back for you and you can bet I'll get a little moist-eyed too. I'll really miss you old friend.

*by Pete Janzen*

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Printed on recycled paper

**America's Birdiest County Competition, continued**

-What are some rules? Birders can be either in teams or can participate as individuals. The teams can be as large as desired. Exceptionally rare birds, must be written up as in a CBC. We can have an infinite amount of participants and teams can be different from day to day, so please feel free to invite your friends! All bird species must be identified to a species by sound or sight within the borders of Sedgwick County.

-How is it going to work? Birders can go out and find birds wherever they want, for however long they want, and whenever they want within SG County over this time period and can send their compiled list of species to either me, Jeff,

([jecalhoun@wsu.edu](mailto:jecalhoun@wsu.edu)) or Nathan ([nxofsthun@wichita.edu](mailto:nxofsthun@wichita.edu)). Reports should include who participated, location birds, and a list of all species. The compilers will total the lists and will keep an up-to-date list available through email to interested persons.

-What is this crazy kid asking birders to do??? I AM NOT asking for people to give up their lives for 72 hours straight so that they can tick off species until their fingers fall off. Sedgwick County will have the most success by getting as many people as possible out in the field and allowing people to bird at their convenience and leisure in their own little corners of the county.

I encourage you to think about if/how you might be interested in participating. All efforts, ranging from a ten minute jog through Wichita to a 72 hour county-wide tour, are welcomed. I encourage you to mark your calendars and think about participating as much as you are willing and able to!

Any further questions or comments can be sent to me or Nathan. We'll take as much constructive criticism as needed to help make Sedgwick County, our home, the birdiest county in 2009, so don't hesitate to call or email. Thanks a lot everyone!

by Jeff Calhoun  
[jecalhoun@wsu.edu](mailto:jecalhoun@wsu.edu)  
(316)737-1307