

# Audubon

Vol. 60 No.2

September 2020

**September 12**

Second Saturday Bird Walk in Chisholm Creek Park. Meet in the Great Plains Nature Center parking lot at 8 a.m. **Questions?** Tom Ewert, 670-3140, [trewert@yahoo.com](mailto:trewert@yahoo.com).

**September 13**

Quivira/Cheyenne Bottoms Field Trip. Meet at the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge headquarters and bring a lunch. **Leader:** Kevin Groeneweg, 316-706-9116, [kgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net)

**September 15**

Monthly program, "Cowbirds, villainous mobsters or falsely maligned native species? A biologist's perspective," by Sarah Winnicki

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Monarch Tagging and Fall Nature Day Celebration at Chaplin Nature Center. 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

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Chaplin Moon 2k Walk/Run, 8 - 10 p.m.

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## September Meeting

The pandemic has made planning for the next year difficult. We have decided to plan everything as though times were normal, and then adapt as necessary. We feel field trips can be accomplished safely if everyone drives their own vehicle, practices social distancing, and wears masks where appropriate.

Our monthly meetings and programs, however, are more problematic. **We are planning for all meetings through the end of this year to be online. The programs will be live-streamed on our Facebook page, and also on YouTube.**

Our first program will be "Cowbirds: villainous mobsters or falsely maligned native species? A biologist's perspective," by Sarah Winnicki. Brown-headed Cowbirds are notorious for their breeding system called "brood parasitism"-they lay their eggs in the nests of hundreds of other bird species, forcing those birds to feed their



Sarah Winnicki

ravenous young. In this program, Sarah will walk through the biology of cowbirds, including the ways they interact with their host species in Kansas and the current state of cowbird biology research.

Sarah Winnicki is a PhD student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a former Master's student at Kansas State University. Their MS project assessed the impact of Brown-headed Cowbird presence on the growth of grassland bird species. Now they study the hormones invested into bird eggs and the impacts those

hormones have on growth and development. Sarah is also an avid birder, bird photographer, and science communicator. You can follow Sarah's exploits on Twitter (@skwinnicki) or through their website [www.sarahwinnicki.com](http://www.sarahwinnicki.com).

The program will be live-streamed September 15, 7 p.m., and will also be saved so you can watch it at your convenience. The link for YouTube is [www.youtube.com/channel/UCBzA8JCBgw-5aUHVW1IM7jw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBzA8JCBgw-5aUHVW1IM7jw).

You can also find the link on [wichitaaudubon.org](http://wichitaaudubon.org)

## Extended Field Trip

We are planning a more modest trip this year, to western Kansas on March 27 - 29. This 3-day trip will include Lesser Prairie-chicken viewing at a ranch in Gove County. This will involve a fee, but we are eager to encourage and support ranchers who are opening their land up to Prairie-chicken viewing. We will also do some sightseeing, visiting Castle Rock, Monument Rocks and Little Jerusalem State Park.

We will be looking for high plains birds including raptors and longspurs. There is a 16 person limit. Signup is online - go to the [wichitaudubon.org](http://wichitaudubon.org) website for a link. Due to the pandemic we will not be renting vans, but will travel in personal vehicles.

Thanks to the pandemic the future is not very predictable, but we are hoping that this modest trip, carefully done, will be possible.



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## Renewal Reminder

If you are a chapter-only member of Wichita Member it may be time to renew. Check your address on this newsletter for your expiration date. If you don't see a date, that is because you are a member of National Audubon and automatically also a member of Wichita Audubon. You don't need to pay separate dues. National Audubon will send you renewal notices.

For your local membership you can save time and postage by renewing online. Just go to [www.wichitaudubon.org](http://www.wichitaudubon.org) and click on JOIN. To renew by mail send your check, payable to Wichita Audubon Society, to Wichita Audubon, PO Box 47607, Wichita, KS 67201.

## Thick-billed Longspur

In 2018, Robert Driver made a formal proposal that the English name of McCown's Longspur should be changed. Driver's rationale was that the bird's name honored John P. McCown, who was not only a general of the Confederacy but also took part in genocidal campaigns against Native Americans. At the time, the committee of the American Ornithological Society that deals with official names declined to make the change. But this year, in light of the growing awareness of the need for inclusiveness and diversity in the community of ornithologists, the committee took up the question again - the committee has unanimously adopted the new English name of Thick-billed Longspur.

Compared to other longspurs, the large bill of this species is its most consistent field mark in all plumages. It's breeding range is in the ancestral lands of the Sioux and other native peoples, so naming the bird after a military man who participated in the "Indian Wars" was adding insult to injury. The scientific name is still *Rhynchophanes mccownii*, but the English name has been improved. So, goodbye McCown, and welcome, Thick-billed Longspur!

*By Kenn Kaufman*



# Chaplin Nature Center Chimney Swift Tower Update

In 2009, Russell Swanson, a Boy Scout from Troop 341, chose the Chaplin Nature Center for his Eagle Scout project. His project—to build a Chimney Swift Tower. Russell carefully followed the Chimney Swift construction guide written by Paul & Georgean Kyle and completed his project in May, 2009.

Over the next decade, Russell or one of his family members would stop by the Nature Center and ask, “Are Chimney Swifts in the Tower?” Every time the answer was the same, “No, not yet.” But in June 2020 the answer changed— “Yes! Chimney Swifts are in the Tower.” Finally, after 11 years, the tower has a nesting pair with three young and an additional non-breeding adult.

Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) are often referred to as “flying cigars” because of their short, stout bodies and long, pointed wings. Although they are only about five inches long and weigh less than one ounce, they have a wingspan of up to 12 inches. These swifts breed across much of eastern North America and winter in the Amazon basin.

Chimney Swifts have long claw-like feet and stiff bristles on their tails that are used to cling to rough vertical surfaces making chimneys ideal for nesting



and roosting. Only one pair of swifts nests in a single chimney, although they allow non-nesting swifts to roost in their chimney. Hundreds, or even thousands, of swifts may roost in a single structure during the non-breeding season and especially during migration.

Chimney Swifts historically nested and roosted in hollow trees. Originally called American Swifts, they became known as Chimney Swifts as they readily adapted to the masonry chimneys erected by the settlers moving into their areas. Because chimneys were not used during the

nesting season, they proved to be excellent substitutes for dead trees. In fact, Chimney Swifts probably were able to expand their range and numbers as they adapted to chimneys in areas not previously wooded.

Chimney Swifts have declined by about 50 percent over the last fifty years, and the decrease is accelerating. Changes in chimney construction and development of modern heating methods have greatly reduced nesting and roosting sites. Decreased availability of insects may also be contributing to this decline. Towers, such as the one built for us by Russell Swanson, are an attempt to provide new nesting locations for these delightful birds.

## The New Gator Has Arrived!

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the V. J. Wilkins Foundation we have our new Gator at Chaplin Nature Center!



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## Chaplin Nature Center Programs

*Saturday, September 28 , 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.*

*Monarch Tagging - Nature Day Celebration*



This family program celebrates nature and the amazing monarch butterfly migration. Participants can learn about the migration and how to properly capture and tag monarchs. Guided nature hikes to the Arkansas River, live reptiles and a seldom seen bird egg collection are all part of the celebration. Free admission. Due to Covid 19 precautions, no lunch will be available for purchase this year.

*October 2, Friday, 8 -10 p.m. Chaplin Moon 2k Walk/Run*

October is a great time to take an evening stroll under the light of the moon. This 2k + walk or run will take place along the edge of the Center's tall grass prairie trail. Along the trail, stations will award glow sticks to those who stop and answer moon or nature questions. Runners should bring a head lamp. The trail will have a variety of surfaces, so be sure to wear appropriate footwear. Check in starts at 7:30 pm. Advance registration is required - see the link on the website at [www.wichitaaudubon.org](http://www.wichitaaudubon.org)



For more information about any Chaplin Nature Center programs call Shawn Silliman at 620-442-4133, or e-mail [cnc@wichitaaudubon.org](mailto:cnc@wichitaaudubon.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.