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Review of *Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas* by William H. Busby and John L. Zimmerman

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Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas. William H. Busby and John L. Zimmerman. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001. xii + 466 pp. Tables, maps, illustrations, references, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Kansas has now joined the expanding group of Midwestern states for which breeding bird atlases have recently been published, including South Dakota (1995), Iowa (1996), Missouri (1997), and Nebraska (2001). Atlases are also in preparation or in press for Oklahoma and Texas, which will soon help fill out distributional knowledge of the Great Plains avifauna in a way unimaginable when I was assembling regional data for my *Birds of the Great Plains: The Breeding Species and Their Distribution* (1979).

The Kansas atlas project lasted from 1992 through 1997 and documented 203 confirmed breeding species. By comparison, Nebraska's atlas documented 191 species, Missouri's 167, Iowa's 188, and South Dakota's 212. Every confirmed species in the Kansas atlas has a descriptive text account, a map showing locations of confirmed, probable, and possible breedings, and statistics on relative geographic abundance and regional probabilities of breeding. The accounts are illustrated with drawings by Dan Kilby (112), Orville Rice (83), or the late Robert Mengel (10).

Like other state atlases, this one is organized by subdividing the state into a framework of geographic quadrangles. Within this overall grid, 746 priority study blocks are selected at random, and 36 additional special

blocks are also established to make certain that areas of particular biological interest are covered adequately. All but one of these priority and special blocks are actually surveyed.

The Kansas results offer interesting comparisons with adjacent states, such as Nebraska. In Kansas the ten most frequently confirmed breeders were, in descending frequency, the barn swallow, house sparrow, common grackle, red-winged blackbird, mourning dove, European starling, American robin, eastern phoebe, and eastern bluebird. The ten most frequently documented breeders in Nebraska were the mourning dove, barn swallow, eastern kingbird, western meadowlark, red-winged blackbird, common grackle, brown-headed cowbird, American robin, killdeer, and northern flicker. Probably no ornithologist from either state would have judged the barn swallow to be the most or second-most common breeding bird in his or her state, but the ease of finding and documenting the nests of this human-adapted species magnifies its apparent abundance considerably. Likewise, breedings of highly elusive species such as the common poorwill are probably significantly under-represented in all breeding bird atlases.

Biogeographically, five Kansas species were found to decrease in breeding frequency from west to east, whereas twenty-four decreased from east to west, a probably result of decreasing water availability as one proceeds westward. Only one species (great-tailed grackle) decreased from south to north, and none in the opposite direction. Immediate applications for these statewide databases might include the development of more detailed county lists of breeding birds and the identification of those biologically important areas or regions that support several rare or highly localized species, such as the Flint Hills, the Red Hills, and the sandsage grasslands.

All data-based books are outdated as soon as they appear, but well-documented breeding bird atlases such as this one provide wonderful "snapshots in time," against which future biological conditions might be readily measured. **Paul A. Johnsgard**, *School of Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.