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NOU Spring Field Days and Annual Meeting, Valentine, May 15–17, 2015

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NOU Spring Field Days and Annual Meeting
Valentine, May 15-17, 2015

by Janis Paseka

The annual meeting of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union was held in Valentine on May 15 - 17, 2015, and ably organized by Dave Heidt and Betty Grenon. Although muddy roads from a Friday night storm prevented travel to several planned field trip destinations on Saturday and rain cut short field trips on Sunday morning, the 58 attendees were able to locate and identify 180 species. Most of the birding took place in Cherry County, and many birders commented happily on the good number of species they were able to add to their Cherry Co. lists.

On Friday evening Wayne Mollhoff told the group about the Northern Saw-whet Owl nest box project he has been working on since 2012. He now has 35 nest boxes out, and two of the boxes have been used so far, both by Saw-whets and by Eastern Screech-Owls. Screech-Owls feed their young almost exclusively on birds, but Saw-whet chicks are fed a variety of prey, including mice and voles. Wayne and Jerry Toll banded Saw-whet chicks at one of the boxes this past week.

On Saturday evening, Shelly Kelly from the non-profit Sandhills Task Force spoke to the group about their attempts to sustain ranching operations while at the same time supporting native plant and animal communities. The Nebraska Sandhills region is the largest contiguous grassland in North America, encompassing more than 19,000 square miles. The Task Force projects provide financial and technical assistance to establish rotational grazing systems, restore wetlands and eradicate invasive species for the benefit of both ranch operations and wildlife.

Field trips on Saturday and on Sunday morning were led by Clem Klaphake, Wayne Mollhoff, Dave Heidt and Don and Janis Paseka. Destinations included the Niobrara River, Merritt Reservoir, Ballards Marsh WMA, Valentine City Park, Valentine State Fish Hatchery, Valentine NWR, and Ft. Niobrara NWR.

Crowd-pleasing species included the Whimbrel (Merritt Res.), American Bittern (Valentine NWR), Violet-green Swallow (fish hatchery), Lazuli Bunting (Fort Falls trail in Ft. Niobrara NWR), Mourning Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Northern Waterthrush (city park), and Yellow-Breasted Chat (canoe launch near entrance to Ft. Niobrara NWR). In all, 15 warbler and 12 sparrow species were tallied.

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	Cherry	Brown	Keya Paha
Canada Goose	x	x	x
Trumpeter Swan	x		
Wood Duck	x		
Gadwall	x		
American Wigeon	x		
Mallard	x		
Blue-winged Teal	x	x	
Northern Shoveler	x		
Northern Pintail	x		
Green-winged Teal	x		
Canvasback	x		
Redhead	x		
Ring-necked Duck	x	x	
Lesser Scaup	x		
Bufflehead	x		
Ruddy Duck	x		
Northern Bobwhite	x		
Gray Partridge	x		
Ring-necked Pheasant	x		
Sharp-tailed Grouse	x	x	
Greater Prairie-Chicken	x		
Wild Turkey	x	x	x
Pied-billed Grebe	x		
Horned Grebe	x		
Eared Grebe	x		
Western Grebe	x		
Clark's Grebe	x		
Double-crested Cormorant	x		
American White Pelican	x		

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	Cherry	Brown	Keya Paha
American Bittern	x		
Great Blue Heron	x	x	
Great Egret	x		
Cattle Egret	x		
Glossy Ibis	x		
White-faced Ibis	x		
Turkey Vulture	x	x	x
Bald Eagle	x	x	
Northern Harrier	x		
Cooper's Hawk	x		
Swainson's Hawk	x		
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x
Virginia Rail	x		
Sora	x		
American Coot	x		
American Avocet	x		
Black-bellied Plover	x		
Killdeer	x	x	x
Spotted Sandpiper	x		
Greater Yellowlegs	x		
Willet	x	x	
Lesser Yellowlegs	x		
Upland Sandpiper	x		x
Whimbrel	x		
Long-billed Curlew	x	x	
Marbled Godwit	x		
Stilt Sandpiper	x		
Sanderling	x		
Baird's Sandpiper	x		
Least Sandpiper	x		

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	Cherry	Brown	Keya Paha
White-rumped Sandpiper	x		
Pectoral Sandpiper	x		
Semipalmated Sandpiper	x		
Long-billed Dowitcher	x		
Wilson's Snipe	x		
American Woodcock	x		
Wilson's Phalarope	x	x	
Bonaparte's Gull	x		
Franklin's Gull	x		
Ring-billed Gull	x	x	
Black Tern	x	x	
Forster's Tern	x	x	
Rock Pigeon	x		
Eurasian Collared-Dove	x	x	
Mourning Dove	x	x	x
Eastern Screech-Owl	x		
Great Horned Owl	x		
Common Nighthawk			x
Chimney Swift	x		
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	x		
Belted Kingfisher	x		
Red-headed Woodpecker	x	x	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	x		
Downy Woodpecker	x		
Hairy Woodpecker	x		
Northern Flicker	x	x	x
American Kestrel	x	x	
Western Wood-Pewee	x		
Eastern Wood-Pewee	x		
Alder Flycatcher	x		

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	Cherry	Brown	Keya Paha
Willow Flycatcher	x		
Least Flycatcher	x		
Eastern Phoebe	x	x	
Great Crested Flycatcher	x	x	x
Western Kingbird	x	x	x
Eastern Kingbird	x	x	x
Loggerhead Shrike	x		
Bell's Vireo	x		
Warbling Vireo	x		
Red-eyed Vireo	x	x	
Blue Jay	x		x
American Crow	x	x	x
Horned Lark	x	x	x
Purple Martin	x		
Tree Swallow	x	x	x
Violet-Green Swallow	x		
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	x	x	x
Bank Swallow	x		
Cliff Swallow	x	x	x
Barn Swallow	x	x	x
Black-capped Chickadee	x		x
Red-breasted Nuthatch	x		x
White-breasted Nuthatch	x	x	
Brown Creeper	x		
Rock Wren	x		
House Wren	x	x	x
Marsh Wren	x		
Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher	x		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	x		
Eastern Bluebird	x		

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	Cherry	Brown	Keya Paha
Swainson's Thrush	x		
American Robin	x	x	x
Gray Catbird	x	x	
Northern Mockingbird	x		
Brown Thrasher	x	x	x
European Starling	x		
Sprague's Pipit	x		
Cedar Waxwing	x	x	x
Chestnut-collared Longspur			x
Ovenbird	x	x	x
Northern Waterthrush	x		
Black-and-white Warbler	x		x
Tennessee Warbler	x	x	
Orange-crowned Warbler	x		
Nashville Warbler	x		
Mourning Warbler	x		
Common Yellowthroat	x	x	x
American Redstart	x	x	x
Yellow Warbler	x	x	x
Chestnut-sided Warbler	x		
Blackpoll Warbler	x		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	x	x	
Wilson's Warbler	x		
Yellow-breasted Chat	x	x	x
Spotted Towhee	x	x	x
Chipping Sparrow	x	x	x
Clay-colored Sparrow	x	x	
Field Sparrow	x	x	x
Vesper Sparrow	x		
Lark Sparrow	x	x	x

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	Cherry	Brown	Keya Paha
Lark Bunting	x		x
Savannah Sparrow		x	
Grasshopper Sparrow	x		
Song Sparrow	x		
Lincoln's Sparrow	x		
Swamp Sparrow	x		
White-throated Sparrow	x		
White-crowned Sparrow	x		
Scarlet Tanager	x		
Northern Cardinal	x	x	x
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	x		
Black-headed Grosbeak	x		
Blue Grosbeak	x		
Lazuli Bunting	x		
Indigo Bunting	x	x	
Dickcissel	x		
Bobolink	x	x	
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x
Eastern Meadowlark	x		
Western Meadowlark	x	x	x
Yellow-headed Blackbird	x	x	
Common Grackle	x	x	x
Great-tailed Grackle	x		
Brown-headed Cowbird	x	x	x
Orchard Oriole	x	x	
Baltimore Oriole	x	x	
House Finch	x		
Red Crossbill	x		
Pine Siskin	x		
American Goldfinch	x	x	x
House Sparrow	x	x	
Total species:	180	177	63