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NOU Spring Field Days and Annual Meeting, Ft. Robinson, May 18-20, 2018

Janis Paseka

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Lazuli Bunting: As with Black-headed Grosbeak, reports in the east are expected nowadays albeit in low numbers. There were seven such reports as well as three of apparent white-bellied male hybrids (m. ob.).

Indigo Bunting: Although considered rare in the Panhandle, at least seven were reported by NOU birders in northern Sioux and Dawes Cos 17-21 May (m. ob.).

Dickcissel: Previous EEDs in the Panhandle were 23-25 May, but, no doubt assisted again by NOU birders, there were seven reports of at least nine birds in the period 17-20 May (m. ob.), as well as one report in Box Butte Co 11 May (SQ). Counts of 50 at PL 28 May (TG) and 49 at Conestoga Lake, Lancaster Co, where they were “rampant”, 26 May (TG) were near highs; high spring counts are 50-76.

NOU Spring Field Days and Annual Meeting Ft. Robinson, May 18-20, 2018

by Janis Paseka

The NOU Annual Meeting and Spring Field Days, organized by Robin Harding, Jan Johnson and Ruth Stearns, was held at Ft. Robinson State Park in Dawes and Sioux Counties on May 18-20, 2018, with 82 in attendance. Our lodgings and meeting room were in reconstructed buildings of the old Fort. The weather was perfect on Friday and Sunday but perfectly awful on Saturday, with rain all day and a high of 44°F. Finding birds and driving on unpaved roads was challenging on Friday, but the total species list for the meeting is 180. Field trips were led by Kathy DeLara, Bill Flack, Peter Hill, Wayne Mollhoff and Ross Silcock.

Among the highlights were the Eastern Screech-Owl and Cassin’s Kingbird found by birders in the campground within the park, a stunning Western Tanager male seen in sunlight among green pine boughs, a surprise Hooded Warbler viewed by many from the road through Gilbert-Baker WMA, and a Sharp-tailed Grouse on the lawn of the Fort. Also found were Cinnamon Teal, White-throated Swift, Virginia Rail, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Curlew, Whimbrel, Red-necked Phalarope, both White-faced and Glossy Ibis, Ferruginous Hawk, Golden Eagle, Burrowing Owl, Lewis’s Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker (unusual in the Panhandle), Prairie Falcon, Western Wood-Pewee, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Say’s Phoebe, Plumbeous Vireo, Violet-green Swallow, Pygmy Nuthatch, Rock Wren, Chestnut-collared and

McCown's Longspur, Brewer's Sparrow, Mountain Bluebird, Veery, and Bullock's Oriole.

Many attendees found new state birds and some tallied life birds as well. Those traveling from the eastern part of the state took the opportunity to bird their way out to the Panhandle, many accumulating impressive lists. One county lister reported 348 new "county ticks" for the 5-day trip out and back from eastern Nebraska.

Our Friday evening program was a presentation about Bird Conservancy of the Rockies banding at Chadron State Park and Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area and Nature Center by Amber Schiltz and Amanda Filipi. The banding programs were started about 10 years ago and provide valuable information about migrant and resident species. Both stations collect data on changes in habitat, such as extensive pine thinning at Wildcat Hills in 2010 and damage from the fire that went through the Pine Ridge in 2012, affecting the Chadron banding station. In addition, the stations both welcome students and teachers from the area; 8900 students and teachers have visited the stations since 2007.

At the brief business meeting on Saturday, the minutes of the last meeting were approved, a raffle of a Northern Pintail photo (donated by Ron & Ann Kruse) was held, and the location of the next meetings were announced: fall 2018 in Ainsworth and spring 2019 in Fairbury. The election of officers for the coming year was held: Joel Jorgensen, President; Robin Harding, Vice President; Ruth Stearns, Secretary; Jan Johnson, Treasurer; Don Paseka, Director; Anita Breckbill, Librarian; and Janis Paseka, Editor.

On Saturday evening, our speaker was Rick Wright, a native of Nebraska and a UNL graduate, where he worked in the bird collections of the State Museum and served as teaching assistant to Paul Johnsgard. Rick has an M.A. and Ph.D. in German from Princeton University, and was an associate professor of medieval studies at Fordham University. Among his publications are field guides to birds of New Jersey and Arizona and the Peterson Reference Guide to North American Sparrows. Rick and his wife Alison Beringer, who also attended the meeting, live in New Jersey, where he is a prolific contributor to the birding literature, lecturer and tour leader for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

We take it for granted that when we see a sparrow we can't identify, we can look it up in a field guide and find out what it is. But it wasn't always so. Rick's presentation was about where all the facts we now have about sparrows in North American come from. Early ornithologists started from scratch and made numerous mistakes, describing and naming a new species, for instance, when what they had was a female or basic plumage individual of a previously described species. There was much confusion and competition among the early ornithologists and we may be amazed or amused by their writings, but the knowledge we have today is all based on the work they did.

NOU Annual Meeting - Fort Robinson

	Box Butte	Dawes	Scotts Bluff	Sheridan	Sioux
Cackling Goose					x
Canada Goose		x	x	x	x
Wood Duck		x		x	x
Blue-winged Teal	x	x	x	x	x
Cinnamon Teal			x		
Northern Shoveler		x	x	x	x
Gadwall		x		x	x
American Wigeon		x	x	x	
Mallard	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Pintail	x	x		x	x
Green-winged Teal		x	x		x
Canvasback				x	
Redhead		x	x	x	
Lesser Scaup				x	x
Bufflehead				x	
Red-breasted Merganser		x			
Ruddy Duck		x		x	x
Ring-necked Pheasant	x	x	x	x	x
Sharp-tailed Grouse		x			
Greater Prairie-Chicken				x	
Wild Turkey		x			x
Pied-billed Grebe		x		x	
Eared Grebe		x	x	x	x
Western Grebe		x	x	x	
Clark's Grebe			x		
Rock Pigeon	x	x	x	x	x
Eurasian Collared-Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Common Nighthawk		x		x	x
Chimney Swift	x	x			x
White-throated Swift					x
Virginia Rail		x			x
Sora		x		x	x
American Coot		x	x	x	x
Black-necked Stilt				x	
American Avocet	x	x	x	x	x

NOU Annual Meeting - Fort Robinson

	Box Butte	Dawes	Scotts Bluff	Sheridan	Sioux
Black-bellied Plover		x			x
Killdeer	x	x	x	x	x
Upland Sandpiper		x		x	x
Whimbrel		x			
Long-billed Curlew				x	x
Marbled Godwit			x		
Stilt Sandpiper	x	x		x	
Sanderling		x			
Baird's Sandpiper		x			
Semipalmated Sandpiper		x			
Short-billed Dowitcher				x	
Long-billed Dowitcher					x
Spotted Sandpiper		x			x
Solitary Sandpiper				x	
Willet				x	x
Greater Yellowlegs				x	
Wilson's Phalarope		x	x	x	x
Red-necked Phalarope				x	x
Franklin's Gull		x			
Ring-billed Gull		x		x	
Herring Gull	x				
Black Tern		x	x	x	x
Common Loon		x			
Double-crested Cormorant		x	x	x	
American White Pelican		x	x	x	x
American Bittern				x	
Great Blue Heron		x	x	x	x
Great Egret			x		
Black-crowned Night-Heron				x	
Glossy Ibis				x	
White-faced Ibis		x	x	x	
Turkey Vulture		x	x	x	x
Osprey					x
Golden Eagle		x			x
Northern Harrier	x			x	
Cooper's Hawk		x			

NOU Annual Meeting - Fort Robinson

	Box Butte	Dawes	Scotts Bluff	Sheridan	Sioux
Swainson's Hawk			x	x	x
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x	x	x
Rough-legged Hawk				x	x
Ferruginous Hawk					x
Eastern Screech-Owl		x			
Great Horned Owl	x	x		x	
Burrowing Owl			x	x	x
Belted Kingfisher		x			x
Lewis's Woodpecker					x
Red-headed Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	x
Red-bellied Woodpecker		x			
Downy Woodpecker		x			x
Hairy Woodpecker		x			x
Northern Flicker		x	x	x	x
American Kestrel		x			x
Prairie Falcon		x			x
Western Wood-Pewee		x			x
Least Flycatcher		x		x	x
Cordilleran Flycatcher					x
Eastern Phoebe		x	x	x	x
Say's Phoebe					x
Great Crested Flycatcher		x	x		x
Cassin's Kingbird		x			x
Western Kingbird	x	x		x	x
Eastern Kingbird	x	x		x	x
Loggerhead Shrike	x	x		x	x
Bell's Vireo		x			
Plumbeous Vireo					x
Warbling Vireo		x		x	x
Red-eyed Vireo		x			x
Blue Jay	x	x	x		x
Black-billed Magpie			x		x
American Crow		x	x	x	x
Horned Lark	x	x	x	x	x
Tree Swallow		x	x	x	x
Violet-green Swallow		x	x		x

NOU Annual Meeting - Fort Robinson

	Box Butte	Dawes	Scotts Bluff	Sheridan	Sioux
Northern Rough-winged Swallow		x	x	x	x
Bank Swallow		x			x
Cliff Swallow		x	x	x	x
Barn Swallow	x	x	x	x	x
Black-capped Chickadee		x	x		x
Red-breasted Nuthatch		x			x
White-breasted Nuthatch		x			x
Pygmy Nuthatch		x			x
Rock Wren					x
House Wren		x	x	x	x
Sedge Wren				x	
Marsh Wren		x		x	x
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher					x
Ruby-crowned Kinglet					x
Eastern Bluebird		x			x
Mountain Bluebird		x			x
Veery					x
Swainson's Thrush		x		x	x
American Robin	x	x	x	x	x
Gray Catbird		x	x	x	x
Brown Thrasher		x		x	x
European Starling	x	x	x	x	x
Cedar Waxwing		x	x	x	x
House Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x
House Finch	x	x	x	x	x
Red Crossbill	x	x	x		x
Pine Siskin	x	x	x		x
Lesser Goldfinch		x			
American Goldfinch		x	x	x	x
Chestnut-collared Longspur					x
McCown's Longspur					x
Spotted Towhee		x	x		x
Chipping Sparrow		x	x	x	x
Clay-colored Sparrow	x	x			x
Brewer's Sparrow					x
Field Sparrow		x		x	
Lark Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x

NOU Annual Meeting - Fort Robinson

	Box Butte	Dawes	Scotts Bluff	Sheridan	Sioux
Lark Bunting		x	x	x	x
Grasshopper Sparrow					x
Song Sparrow		x			
Lincoln's Sparrow		x	x		
White-crowned Sparrow		x			x
Dark-eyed Junco		x			
**Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed)					(x)
Yellow-breasted Chat		x			x
Yellow-headed Blackbird	x	x		x	
Bobolink		x			x
Eastern Meadowlark			x	x	
Western Meadowlark	x	x	x	x	x
Orchard Oriole		x	x	x	x
Bullock's Oriole		x			x
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x
Brown-headed Cowbird	x	x	x	x	x
Brewer's Blackbird		x			x
Common Grackle	x	x	x	x	x
Great-tailed Grackle		x			x
Ovenbird		x			x
Northern Waterthrush		x			
Black-and-white Warbler		x			x
Orange-crowned Warbler		x			
Common Yellowthroat		x	x	x	x
Hooded Warbler					x
American Redstart		x			x
Yellow Warbler		x	x	x	x
Blackpoll Warbler		x			
Yellow-rumped Warbler		x			x
Wilson's Warbler					x
Western Tanager		x			x
Northern Cardinal		x	x		
Black-headed Grosbeak		x	x		x
Lazuli Bunting		x			x
Indigo Bunting		x			
Dickcissel		x		x	
Total species: 180	39	139	73	96	133