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Ainsworth Fall Field Days

Janis Paseka

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Ainsworth Fall Field Days

by Janis Paseka

The 2018 NOU Fall Field Days took place in and around Ainsworth on Sep. 14 – 16, with 48 in attendance. It was a hot and windy weekend, but 137 species were located. Two Sandhill Cranes in the Niobrara River at the Carns Bridge attracted birders, especially since the two cooperatively moved from one side of the river to the other, allowing county listers to count them in both. The bird of the weekend, however, was the Red-naped Sapsucker at Plum Creek Valley WMA. It was a county bird for everyone, a state bird for many and a life bird for some. Nearly everyone in attendance was able to see it, either on Saturday or on Sunday. Unusual species for the location and time were American Golden-Plovers and Carolina Wrens.

Field trips were led by Bill Flack, Dave Heidt, and Clem Klaphake to Plum Creek Valley WMA, Willow Lake WMA, Twin Lakes WMA, Niobrara Valley Preserve, Keller Park SRA, Long Pine SRA, the Carns bridge area, Adams Lake and various small, temporary ponds. Water levels in the area lakes were high, so the small ponds were often more productive than the lakes.

Ross Silcock was our speaker on Friday evening, presenting an analysis of avian hybrid zones in Nebraska. He focused on five pairs of taxa: Indigo and Lazuli Buntings, Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles, Rose-breasted and Black-headed Grosbeaks, Eastern and Spotted Towhees, and yellow and red shafted Northern Flickers. Recent genetic studies of birds within the hybrid zones have yielded important information about the history of these interactions, including the degree to which members of each pair diverged during the Last Glacial Maximum prior to re-contact after the glacial ice retreated some 15,000 years ago, as well as the degree of introgression. A low level of introgression suggests the pair has developed mechanisms to avoid interbreeding; flickers have the highest level of introgression, are the least differentiated of the five pairs discussed, and are the only pair that has not differentiated at the species level. Hybrid birds tend to be fertile but less fit overall, and thus are less likely to persist in a hybrid zone.

On Saturday evening, UNL senior Luke Hamilton gave a presentation entitled "Three Undergrads, Three Metabolites in Three Years: A Story about Baltimore Oriole Physiology". Luke, along with Emma Keele and Marika Van Brocklin, collected blood samples from Baltimore Orioles on Gary Lingle's property in Buffalo County, looking in particular at lipid utilization as an indication of fitness for migration. Of the three years (2015 to 2017) they collected samples, they found that 2016 was a difficult season for the orioles, and they noticed that this correlates with the occurrence of an El Niño weather pattern that year. Birds that winter in South America are known to be stressed in El Niño years.

NOU Fall Meeting - Ainsworth

	Blaine	Brown	Cherry	Keya Paha	Rock
Canada Goose	x	x		x	x
Trumpeter Swan		x			x
Wood Duck	x	x	x	x	x
Blue-winged Teal	x	x			x
Northern Shoveler					x
Gadwall					x
American Wigeon					x
Mallard		x			x
Northern Pintail		x			
Green-winged Teal		x			
Canvasback					x
Redhead					x
Lesser Scaup					x
Ruddy Duck		x			x
Northern Bobwhite				x	
Ring-necked Pheasant		x			
Sharp-tailed Grouse				x	
Greater Prairie-Chicken		x			x
Wild Turkey	x				x
Pied-billed Grebe	x	x	x		x
Horned Grebe		x			x
Western Grebe		x			
Rock Pigeon		x	x	x	x
Eurasian Collared-Dove		x		x	x
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-billed Cuckoo		x			
Common Nighthawk		x			x
Chimney Swift		x			x
Ruby-throated Hummingbird		x	x		
Sora					x
American Coot	x	x			x
Sandhill Crane				x	x
American Golden-Plover					x
Killdeer	x	x	x	x	x
Least Sandpiper		x		x	

NOU Fall Meeting - Ainsworth

	Blaine	Brown	Cherry	Keya Paha	Rock
Pectoral Sandpiper		x		x	
Long-billed Dowitcher					x
Wilson's Snipe		x			x
Spotted Sandpiper	x				x
Solitary Sandpiper		x			x
Lesser Yellowlegs	x				x
Greater Yellowlegs					x
Franklin's Gull		x		x	x
Ring-billed Gull	x	x			x
Black Tern		x			x
Forster's Tern		x			
Double-crested Cormorant	x	x			x
American White Pelican	x	x		x	x
American Bittern		x		x	x
Great Blue Heron	x	x	x	x	x
Cattle Egret					x
Green Heron	x			x	
Black-crowned Night-Heron					x
White-faced Ibis		x			x
Turkey Vulture	x	x	x	x	x
Osprey	x	x		x	
Northern Harrier		x		x	x
Sharp-shinned Hawk		x		x	x
Cooper's Hawk	x	x		x	x
Bald Eagle		x		x	x
Broad-winged Hawk		x	x		
Swainson's Hawk		x			x
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Screech-Owl		x		x	x
Great Horned Owl		x			
Belted Kingfisher	x	x	x	x	x
Red-headed Woodpecker	x	x		x	x
Red-bellied Woodpecker		x		x	
Red-naped Sapsucker		x			
Downy Woodpecker		x			x

NOU Fall Meeting - Ainsworth

	Blaine	Brown	Cherry	Keya Paha	Rock
Hairy Woodpecker		x		x	x
Northern Flicker	x	x		x	x
American Kestrel	x	x	x	x	x
Merlin		x	x	x	x
Peregrine Falcon	x				
Olive-sided Flycatcher		x			
Western Wood-Pewee		x			
Eastern Wood-Pewee		x			
Eastern Phoebe					x
Say's Phoebe	x				
Great Crested Flycatcher		x			
Eastern Kingbird	x	x			x
Bell's Vireo	x				
Warbling Vireo					x
Blue Jay	x	x	x	x	x
American Crow	x	x		x	x
Horned Lark	x	x	x	x	x
Tree Swallow					x
Northern Rough-winged Swallow					x
Bank Swallow					x
Cliff Swallow					x
Barn Swallow	x	x		x	x
Black-capped Chickadee		x		x	x
Red-breasted Nuthatch		x		x	x
White-breasted Nuthatch		x		x	x
House Wren	x	x		x	x
Winter Wren			x		
Carolina Wren				x	
Sedge Wren					x
Marsh Wren				x	x
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		x			x
Eastern Bluebird		x		x	x
American Robin		x	x	x	x
Gray Catbird	x	x		x	

NOU Fall Meeting - Ainsworth

	Blaine	Brown	Cherry	Keya Paha	Rock	
Brown Thrasher		x	x			
European Starling		x	x	x	x	
Cedar Waxwing		x				
House Sparrow				x	x	
American Pipit	x	x			x	
House Finch		x				
American Goldfinch	x	x		x	x	
Spotted Towhee		x		x	x	
Chipping Sparrow	x	x		x	x	
Clay-colored Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x	
Field Sparrow		x				
Vesper Sparrow				x	x	
Lark Sparrow	x					
Lark Bunting					x	
Savannah Sparrow		x		x	x	
Song Sparrow	x	x		x	x	
Lincoln's Sparrow		x		x	x	
White-throated Sparrow		x				
Yellow-headed Blackbird				x	x	
Western Meadowlark		x		x	x	
Baltimore Oriole		x				
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x	
Brown-headed Cowbird	x	x			x	
Common Grackle		x			x	
Tennessee Warbler		x				
Orange-crowned Warbler		x			x	
Nashville Warbler		x			x	
Common Yellowthroat					x	
Yellow Warbler					x	
Wilson's Warbler					x	
Northern Cardinal	x	x			x	
Blue Grosbeak		x				
Dickcissel		x				
Total Species	160	42	93	23	58	93