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NOU Spring Field Days and Annual Meeting, Fairbury, May 17-19, 2019

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from their core breeding ranges, subspecies identification in the field in most cases should not be attempted. This section includes useful comments about “confusion species”, those that most resemble the subject species, and strongly emphasizes the “shape, habitat and habits, plumage/field marks” sequence for accurate field identification.

Overall, I highly recommend this book, even if only for its readable and entertaining historical account of North American sparrows. However, it is much more: it is a complete and wide-ranging compendium of the latest knowledge on distribution, identification, and taxonomy to the subspecies levels that will serve as an icon of its genre, an icon attainable only by the few writers able to delve into the eclectic combination of subject areas expounded upon by Wright.

NOU Spring Field Days and Annual Meeting

Fairbury, May 17-19, 2019

by Janis Paseka

The NOU Annual Meeting and Spring Field Days, organized by Jan Johnson, was held in Fairbury on May 17-19, 2019, with 64 in attendance. Our meetings and meals took place in the 4-H building at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Despite the forecast for rain, the weather was perfect on Saturday morning, with rain arriving only in the late afternoon. Wind made listening for nightjars difficult on both evenings and it continued to be a problem on Sunday, but the total species list for the meeting was 165. Field trips were led by Shari Schwartz, John Carlini, Bill Flack, and Ross Silcock, and destinations included Rock Creek Station WMA and SRA, Rock Glen WMA, Flathead WMA, Rose Creek WMA, Crystal Springs Lakes, Buckley Creek Reservoir, Alexandria SRA and WMA, Little Blue WMA, and Father Hupp WMA. Evening trips to listen for nightjars were led by Joe Gubanyi.

Among the highlights were Mississippi Kite, Snowy Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Chuck-will's-widow, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Pileated Woodpecker, Philadelphia Vireo, Louisiana and Northern Waterthrush, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Lazuli Bunting.

On Friday evening, we heard from Jeff Bargar, Superintendent of Rock Creek SRA. In the 1850s and 1860s, Rock Creek Station, which was on the Oregon and California trails and was a Pony Express station for a time, had a toll bridge over Rock Creek, and served as a supply center and campground for emigrants. The park, along

with Rock Creek Station State Historical Park and the adjacent Rock Glen Wildlife Management Area, is part of the Sandstone Prairies Biologically Unique Landscape, more than 1,000 acres that are identified as a demonstration site for the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project Wildlife Action Plan. Bargar has begun to reinvigorate the native landscape by maintaining healthy bur oak woodlands and tallgrass prairie through extensive cedar clearing, prescribed burns and controlling invasive weeds.

At the brief business meeting on Saturday, the minutes of the last meeting were approved, a raffle of a watercolor of a Blackburnian Warbler by Jan Johnson was held, and the location of the next meetings were announced: fall 2019 in Imperial and spring 2020 in Gering. The election of officers for the coming year was held: Joel Jorgensen, President; Robin Harding, Vice President; Ruth Stearns, Secretary; Jan Johnson, Treasurer; T. J. Walker, Director; Anita Breckbill, Librarian; Mark Brogie, NOU Records Committee Chairperson; and Janis Paseka, Editor.

On Saturday evening, Joe Gubanyi spoke to us about the four species of nightjars (Common Nighthawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Chuck-will's-widow and Common Poorwill) found in Nebraska. Very little is known about their population status, but there is a general decline in nightjar populations across the country, based on Breeding Bird Survey and Breeding Bird Atlas data. This is thought to be due to habitat reduction and changes in food sources. In an effort to learn more about these "cryptically nocturnal" species, the Nightjar Survey Network (www.nightjars.org) coordinates citizen science volunteer nightjar routes across the country to gather data on the species. This survey program was created to gain a better understanding of population status by implementing a standardized approach across the nation that will help determine the magnitude and scale of population changes so that a course for conservation may be plotted. The Nightjar Survey Network relies entirely on volunteer participation. Volunteers drive along a predetermined 9-mile route, stopping at 10 points. At each point, the observer counts all nightjars seen or heard during a 6-minute period. Nocturnal behaviors of nightjars are influenced strongly by moonlight. Activities such as calling and foraging increase under bright moonlight conditions and it is thought that breeding may actually be timed with the lunar schedule. Joe runs two nightjar routes: Whiskey Creek, north of Fairbury, and Oak Glen in Seward Co. Since the full moon coincided with our meeting weekend, Joe took volunteers on his Whiskey Creek route to learn about the data collection. Unfortunately, the wind reduced the number of birds calling and made hearing those that were calling difficult, although numerous Whip-poor-wills and Chuck-will's-widows were counted during the course of the meeting. In addition to the nationwide surveys, there is a two-year nightjar project begun in 2019 by Joel Jorgensen and Steven Brenner of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. The primary objective is to define and clarify the current distribution of Eastern Whip-poor-will and Chuck-will's-widow in eastern Nebraska and provide a baseline for future monitoring.

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	Fillmore	Saline	Thayer	Jefferson	Gage
Snow Goose				x	
Canada Goose	x	x	x	x	x
Wood Duck			x	x	x
Blue-winged Teal	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Shoveler	x		x		
Gadwall	x		x		
American Wigeon	x		x		
Mallard	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Pintail	x		x		
Green-winged Teal	x		x	x	
Redhead	x		x	x	
Ring-necked Duck	x		x		
Lesser Scaup	x				
Hooded Merganser			x		
Ruddy Duck	x		x	x	
Northern Bobwhite	x	x	x		x
Ring-necked Pheasant	x		x	x	x
Wild Turkey			x	x	x
Pied-billed Grebe	x		x	x	
Eared Grebe	x				
Rock Pigeon		x	x	x	x
Eurasian Collared-Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Mourning Dove	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-billed Cuckoo			x	x	x
Common Nighthawk				x	
Chuck-will's-widow				x	
Eastern Whip-poor-will				x	
Chimney Swift	x	x	x	x	x
Ruby-throated Hummingbird			x	x	
Sora	x		x		
American Coot	x				x
American Avocet	x				
Black-bellied Plover	x				
American Golden-Plover			x		
Killdeer	x	x	x	x	x
Semipalmated Plover	x				
Snowy Plover	x				
Upland Sandpiper				x	
Hudsonian Godwit	x		x		
Ruddy Turnstone	x				
Stilt Sandpiper	x		x		
Sanderling	x				
Dunlin	x				

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	Fillmore	Saline	Thayer	Jefferson	Gage
Baird's Sandpiper		x			
Least Sandpiper	x		x		
White-rumped Sandpiper	x		x		
Buff-breasted Sandpiper			x		
Pectoral Sandpiper	x				
Semipalmated Sandpiper	x	x	x		
Short-billed Dowitcher	x				
Long-billed Dowitcher			x		
Spotted Sandpiper	x		x	x	x
Lesser Yellowlegs	x		x		
Willet			x		
Wilson's Phalarope	x		x		
Franklin's Gull				x	
Least Tern				x	
Black Tern	x	x	x	x	
Forster's Tern					x
Double-crested Cormorant	x	x		x	x
American White Pelican				x	
American Bittern	x				
Great Blue Heron	x	x	x	x	x
Cattle Egret	x				
Green Heron			x	x	x
Black-crowned Night-Heron	x		x		
White-faced Ibis	x		x		
Turkey Vulture	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Harrier				x	
Cooper's Hawk				x	
Bald Eagle				x	x
Mississippi Kite				x	x
Swainson's Hawk	x		x	x	
Red-tailed Hawk	x	x	x	x	x
Great Horned Owl				x	
Barred Owl		x	x	x	
Belted Kingfisher			x	x	
Red-headed Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	x
Red-bellied Woodpecker	x	x	x	x	x
Downy Woodpecker		x	x	x	
Hairy Woodpecker			x	x	
Northern Flicker	x	x	x	x	
Pileated Woodpecker				x	
Peregrine Falcon			x	x	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	x		x	x	
Eastern Wood-Pewee		x	x	x	x

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	Fillmore	Saline	Thayer	Jefferson	Gage
Least Flycatcher			x	x	x
Eastern Phoebe	x	x	x	x	x
Great Crested Flycatcher	x	x	x	x	x
Western Kingbird		x		x	x
Eastern Kingbird	x	x	x	x	x
Loggerhead Shrike				x	
Bell's Vireo	x	x	x	x	x
Yellow-throated Vireo				x	x
Philadelphia Vireo				x	
Warbling Vireo		x	x	x	x
Red-eyed Vireo		x	x	x	x
Blue Jay	x	x	x	x	x
American Crow		x	x	x	x
Horned Lark				x	x
Bank Swallow				x	
Tree Swallow	x	x	x	x	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	x		x	x	x
Purple Martin		x		x	
Barn Swallow	x	x	x	x	x
Cliff Swallow	x	x	x	x	x
Black-capped Chickadee			x	x	x
Tufted Titmouse					x
White-breasted Nuthatch		x	x	x	
House Wren	x	x	x	x	x
Carolina Wren		x	x	x	x
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher			x	x	x
Eastern Bluebird	x		x	x	x
Gray-cheeked Thrush				x	
Swainson's Thrush		x	x	x	x
Wood Thrush				x	
American Robin	x	x	x	x	x
Gray Catbird	x	x	x	x	x
Brown Thrasher	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Mockingbird		x		x	x
European Starling	x	x	x	x	x
Cedar Waxwing	x	x	x	x	x
House Sparrow		x	x	x	x
House Finch			x	x	x
Pine Siskin				x	
American Goldfinch	x	x	x	x	x
Grasshopper Sparrow			x	x	x
Lark Sparrow		x	x	x	x
Chipping Sparrow	x	x	x	x	x

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	Fillmore	Saline	Thayer	Jefferson	Gage
Clay-colored Sparrow	x				
Field Sparrow		x	x	x	x
Savannah Sparrow	x				x
Song Sparrow			x	x	x
Spotted Towhee	x		x	x	
Eastern Towhee			x	x	x
Yellow-breasted Chat			x		
Yellow-headed Blackbird	x		x		
Bobolink	x	x	x	x	x
Eastern Meadowlark	x	x		x	x
Western Meadowlark	x		x	x	x
Orchard Oriole	x	x	x	x	x
Baltimore Oriole	x	x	x	x	x
Red-winged Blackbird	x	x	x	x	x
Brown-headed Cowbird	x	x	x	x	x
Common Grackle	x	x	x	x	x
Great-tailed Grackle	x			x	
Louisiana Waterthrush				x	
Northern Waterthrush				x	
Tennessee Warbler			x	x	x
Orange-crowned Warbler				x	
Mourning Warbler				x	
Common Yellowthroat	x	x	x	x	x
American Redstart		x		x	
Northern Parula				x	
Bay-breasted Warbler			x		
Yellow Warbler	x	x	x	x	x
Blackpoll Warbler				x	
Summer Tanager			x	x	
Scarlet Tanager			x		
Northern Cardinal	x	x	x	x	x
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	x	x	x	x	x
Blue Grosbeak				x	
Lazuli Bunting				x	
Indigo Bunting			x	x	x
Dickcissel	x	x	x	x	x
Total Species	165				