

# The Bluebird

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY OF MISSOURI



DAVID PLANK

Vol. 40, No. 3

August, 1973

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S ROOST

By James P. Jackson

As most of you should be aware, this year's Annual Meeting again will be at Camp Rising Sun, Lake of the Ozarks State Park, October 12, 13, and 14. Total fees -- including four wholesome meals -- will this year be \$13.00 per adult and \$7.00 per child under 12 years of age. If you choose to arrive on Friday evening, the 12th, as more people do each year, there will be an additional charge of \$1.00 for Saturday morning breakfast.

The Saturday evening program this year will be by none other than our own former president, Dr. David Easterla, of Northwest Missouri University. He will present an illustrated talk on one of America's outstanding wilderness national parks, entitled "The Flora and Fauna of Big Bend". Dave, as he's known to most of us, has spent the last seven summers in Big Bend National Park and is an authority of its wildlife; currently he is completing a book on the park's reptiles and amphibians.

The business meeting will be Saturday afternoon, as usual, thus releasing both Saturday and Sunday mornings for field trips. A most important -- indeed URGENT -- matter of business this year will be selecting a new editor for The BLUEBIRD; Dick Anderson, our able editor for several years, will not be easy to replace.

I'd like to urge all of our members (as I did in the last issue) to bring one or more guests 25 years young or younger; however, guests older will certainly not be questioned about their age. Reservations, though not required, will be appreciated; write to Lisle Jeffrey, 1846 Cliff Drive, Columbia, Missouri 65201.

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The NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY will once again conduct a West Central Regional Conference in 1974. Those of you who attended -- or heard about -- the last such conference at Grand Island, Nebraska in 1972 will certainly want to attend. Hosting the 1974 Conference will be the Wichita Audubon Society of

Kansas. The dates will be May 4 and 5; field trips into the Flint Hills prairie and along the Arkansas River are being planned -- also, some interesting and stimulating discussions on Corps of Engineers proposals to "manipulate" the Arkansas River for navigation. More information will be offered in the winter issue of The BLUEBIRD.

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#### HOW TO PROTECT BLUEBERRIES WITHOUT SHOOTING ROBINS

National Audubon has commended the Canadian Wildlife Service for calling off plans to permit blueberry growers to shoot robins threatening their crops during this fall's berry season. But the Society remains concerned about the success of alternative ways of protecting the berry crop; the robins are a genuine problem and if no good answer is found, pressure for shooting the birds might be renewed next year.

Consequently, the Society has provided Canadian authorities with detailed information (as recommended by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others) on use of nets to keep the birds away. Properly used, nets give complete protection -- on New Jersey blueberry farmer reports that netting doubled his harvest -- and the increased crop can more than cover the farmer's outlay for the nets and supporting framework, if the cost is amortized over the five-to-seven-year minimum life of the net under normal field use. In short, nets can aid the farmer and do no harm to the robins or other wildlife. -- Reprinted from The Audubon Leader

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#### COMPANIES INDICTED AND FINED FOR KILLING BIRDS

In late July two eastern firms were indicted by the federal government on charges of feeding poisonous grain to mourning doves, cardinals, purple grackles and mockingbirds. Employees allegedly killed 53 birds between January 15 and July 3 by illegally treating grain with strychnine.

Both companies were convicted in August. One was fined a total of \$7,000 and the other \$50,000 on 99 of the 115 count indictment.

According to the newspaper article, "the federal government is going for the birds".

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#### WHO WANTS THE MONK PARAKEET?

By James P. Jackson

It is often embarrassing for Audubonites to take any kind of action against a bird pest. Consider, for instance, what happens when we kill house sparrows or starlings because they drive away our native bluebirds and purple martins; some people are shocked when "bird lovers" act in this way. Yet we are no threat whatever to these alien species -- they are as inevitable and ubiquitous as taxes and inflation. This does not mean, however, that we have to resign ourselves to still another alien pest in the form of the monk parakeet.

Wherever in the United States this pigeon-sized parrot establishes itself, it is a threat to our native birds. At bird feeding stations it drives not

only the natives away, but house sparrows as well. This is not a fair trade; it is merely exchanging the tolerable for the really bad.

The monk, or gray parakeet (Myiopsitta monachus) is a native of Brazil and has been a popular caged import in this country for years. In recent years it has been shipped in ever-increasing numbers (50,000 to date) into the United States. Some were bound to get loose, as they did at New York's Kennedy Airport in 1967. Reports of wild monk parakeets are now becoming widespread in the northeastern and northcentral states. Last June the Missouri Department of Conservation issued a news release stating that it had not received any reports of the parakeet in the state. Within a week it did, from a lady in Hannibal who had fed one all winter at her bird feeding station.

It is believed that the monk parakeet cannot survive northern winters without the help of bird feeding stations. But what will happen if and when the species is allowed to spread southward?

Wherever it is tolerated and allowed to nest, the monk parakeet becomes permanent. It is prolific. Needless to explain, only two are needed to start a colony, one which centers around a bulky, ever-expanding stick nest to bring up the progeny. This can soon expand to more nests and more colonies. The species can also become an agricultural pest. In parts of South America it has been known to ruin as much as 45 percent of the crops of corn, sunflowers, millet and fruit. The federal Fish & Wildlife Service is recommending a ban on further importation of monk parakeets and considers wiping them out wherever found.

Biologists are well aware of dangers inherent in releasing alien wildlife into any environment where nature, over thousands of years, has evolved a harmonious balance among the native species. Yet one does not have to be a trained biologist to know what rabbits did to Australia, or what mongooses did to native birds of the West Indies. The monk parakeet may not be that extreme a threat, but why take a chance on such an unknown? If it is allowed to spread southward in the United States, to areas where it can easily survive the winters unaided by feeding stations, we may learn too late.

Look for a pigeon-sized parrot, greenish gray above with a yellow belly and a high pitched voice. Also note the quaker gray breast and a forethroat whose feathers are darker edged. Look carefully, but don't look too long or there will be many, many to look at.

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#### CHANGES IN COMMON NAMES

By Dick Anderson

On page 9 of the last BLUEBIRD, Vol. 40, No. 2 we listed several changes in species status of some birds. On page 10 we listed two name changes. Through an oversight by your editor, several others should have been included. Please note the following A.O.U. name changes:

Common Egret becomes <u>Great Egret</u> (formerly American Egret)	
Wood Ibis becomes <u>Wood Stork</u>	Upland Plover becomes <u>Upland Sandpiper</u>
Widgeon is now spelled <u>Wigeon</u>	Knot becomes <u>Red Knot</u>
Shoveler becomes <u>Northern Shoveler</u>	Catbird becomes <u>Gray Catbird</u>
Common Scoter becomes <u>Black Scoter</u>	Robin becomes <u>American Robin</u>
Pigeon Hawk becomes <u>Merlin</u>	Yellowthroat becomes <u>Common Yellowthroat</u>
Sparrow Hawk becomes <u>Kestrel</u>	

The reasons for the name changes were "for clarity or to conform with international usage". As painful as all these changes may seem, future bird surveys will make an effort to conform with them. There have been many changes in the past and no doubt more to come.

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IN REGARD TO "CHICKADEES IN MISSOURI"  
BY REBECCA MATTHEWS

Mrs. Matthews; please don't say, "as we in southwest Missouri know the Carolina". I consider myself a "we" in southwest Missouri, but I can't say that the Carolina reigns dominant in my part of southwest Missouri, which is about 20 miles southwest of your southwest Missouri - Springfield. My town is Aurora, population about 5000. I have always been interested in the ranges of both species in Missouri and the Carolina is absent around Aurora to my knowledge, as I have yet to find one in the area. All of the chickadees are Black-capped. Now knowing how zig-zaggy that dividing line of their range is, I'm sure that your chickadees are Carolina.

As for your statement, "the territories of the species seem to be quite distinct, with the north-south dividing line being about the middle of the state", no such distinct line exists in Missouri, because the Burroughs-Audubon Society of Kansas City knows of two colonies near us; 6-10 Carolinas at Trimble Wildlife Refuge and 4-6 Carolinas at Squaw Creek, both to our north. And now you know of 100 Black-capped in your area...Aurora.

No malice intended, just a clarification of a rather broad statement.

Chris Hobbs -- Kansas City's  
Burroughs-Audubon Society

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New Hawk Charts - Two Audubon aids, Western Hawks and Eastern Hawks, have been revised with new art work by Charles Ripper. These 8½ by 11 inch charts are valuable for the flight silhouettes depicted and for their explanation of how the hawks' food habits are beneficial to farmers, ranchers and the land. They are available from our Educational Services Department for 10¢ each.

Stream channelization bumper stickers are now available from your NAS Regional Representative, in minimum orders of 100 at 10¢ per sticker. We urge chapters and other interested organization to help spread the word. Stream channelization folders are still available from National Audubon for \$5.00 per 100. The wording on the bumper sticker is "Channelization Destroys Fish and Wildlife".

The above articles are reprinted from the Audubon Leader

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SPRING SURVEY - APRIL-MAY, 1973

By Dick Anderson

This spring will probably be remembered more for weather than birds. Heavy rains and cool weather carried over from March, through April and into mid-May. Streams, rivers and even lakes in southwest Missouri were all above

flood stage. St. Louis, which took on the Missouri Mississippi and Illinois Rivers, all flooding at the same time, had 80 days of flooding with a record crest of 43.5 feet (13.5 feet over flood stage) on April 28. The Mark Twain Refuge (between the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers) was completely inundated and had a crest of 16 feet over flood stage on April 27. Corps of Engineer levees were mainly responsible for the extremely high crest.

The flood formed many mudflats all over the state, which attracted shore-birds and herons. However, high water eliminated much of the duck habitat and with a few exceptions, waterfowl passed through unnoticed. Land birds, especially warblers, seemed unaffected by the floods and in many cases were reported in above normal numbers.

Loons through Herons - In our memory this is the first spring when there were no loons reported for the entire state. On the other hand both Horned and Eared Grebes were much above normal in western Missouri (K.H.). One Horned and three Eared were found at the Maryville Sewerage Lagoon (hereafter M.S.L.) on April 28 (D.E.). A Western Grebe was found with an Eared at Squaw Creek May 9 by Edmund LeGrand and seen later by Sebastian Patti. Pied-billed Grebes stayed in good numbers in the floodwaters near St. Louis to the end of May and were apparently nesting.

Herons were low, but in about the same numbers as last year. Cattle Egrets continue to increase and are seen in more areas. One was at Schell-Osage April 21 (K.H.), one near the Missouri River near Columbia (I.C.Adams), one at M.S.L. April 21 (D.E.) and seven were at Jefferson City May 3 (R.Windsor). Large numbers were seen in the greater St. Louis area (D.A.). Green Herons were common at Springfield, while Great Blues were scarce (N.F.). A high number of 9 Black-crowned Nightheron were at Little Dixie Lake April 21 (B.G.). A White-faced Ibis was at Bigelow Marshes on May 11 (Hilsabeck).

Waterfowl - Waterfowl was virtually impossible to evaluate. Floodwaters had the birds widely dispersed and cool weather into mid-May caused late reporting of many species including diving ducks. A Greyleg Goose (escapee?) was with Canada Geese on April 23 at Squaw Creek (D.E.). Two late White-fronted Geese were also at Squaw Creek on May 23 (M.R.). Geese and ducks were rated as very late in the Kansas City area (K.H.). A Mallard with 10 young was noted at M.S.L. on May 25 (M.R.).

Hawks - After last fall's large flights, this spring was more near normal. All observers report Goshawks had left the state during March, except for an incredible number of 5 reported on a group trip to Taberville on April 21 (K.H.). Even more incredible was a report of one Goshawk at Van Meter Park May 12 (Gregory) and one May 19 at Swope Park by N. Johnson and Jo Garrett. Broadwings were normal - a flock of 24 at Springfield April 27 (N.F.). Swainson's were normal in western Missouri. One was over Ozark May 6 (N.F.). Flood conditions apparently are not good for Ospreys as only two were reported for the state. There were only two Peregrines this spring (both after shore-birds). One was near Columbia May 12 (B.G.) and the other at Bigelow Marshes May 5 (D.E.).

A Greater Prairie Chicken was found at the Bigelow Marshes on May 5. This is the first recent record for northwest Missouri (D.E.). Bobwhites seemed to have survived the winter ice storms, but were flooded out of much of their habitat in spring. Rails were about normal with no rarities reported.

Shorebirds - This is another family hard to analyze. Squaw Creek had its usual good numbers and good species. The Kansas City area had flooded fields with shorebirds scattered in many areas. Columbia also had flooded fields

with good concentrations in some and no birds in others. In St. Louis it was a matter of just too much water. As mentioned, the Mark Twain Refuge was completely under water, which eliminated all shorebirds (S.V.). St. Charles County may have had madflats, but all roads were flooded out. The Illinois levees south of St. Louis had the best habitat, which attracted the most birds including Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Hudsonian Godwite and one Avocet. Some of the better Squaw Creek sightings were Piping Plover on April 23, 230 Golden Plovers April 28, 23 Willets May 5 (all by D.E.). Records for M.S.L. include four Baird's Sandpipers May 25 (late), 10 Sanderlings May 25, an Avocet May 23 and four Northern Phalaropes May 25 (M.R., D.E.). Wilson's Phalaropes were generally below normal in western Missouri as were Hudsonian Godwits. Apparently the Godwits migrated more in central Missouri, or at least near Columbia. They were first seen May 10 (Adams) and on May 15 over 200 were recorded by John and Linda Falch. The Columbia Missouri River mudflats attracted many shorebirds, which may be considered common in some areas, but are rare in that area. Some of the better sightings were Black-bellied Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, 25 Dunlins and four Wilson's Phalaropes.

Franklin's and Bonaparte's Gulls were very few or completely missing. Most unusual was 6 Laughing Gulls on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River on May 27. Good details were supplied by Kurt Wesseling and son. The birds were in breeding plumage.

Cuckoos were about normal, except for five Black-billed at Maryville on May 23 (M.R.). Hummingbirds and Kingfishers continue their downward trend according to most observers.

Flycatchers through Pipit - Six Western Kingbirds were at Lake Contrary May 9 (D.E.) and one at Bigelow Marshes May 11 (Hilsabeck). Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were reported slightly out of range. One was at Squaw Creek April 23 and two near St. Joseph May 9 (D.E.). One was seen on Highway 50 near Lee's Summit on April 22 by Tom Sappington. Another scissor-tailed was near Columbia on the Missouri River May 17 (B.G.). Unusual were four yellow-bellied Flycatchers at Trimble Wildlife Management Area May 27 (S.P.). The first Purple Martin report was one at Dexter March 13 (Gaede). Late Red-breasted Nuthatches were two at Kansas May 12 (K.H.) and one at Columbia on May 16 (B.G.). All wrens were down or missing at Kansas City (K.H.), while 3 separate Carolinas were in the Maryville area, which is rare (D.E.).

Robins came back in good numbers. Unusual were good numbers of Grey-cheeked Thrushes at Kansas City, which at time outnumbered Swainson's during the second week of May (S.P.). 25 Water Pipits were at Mark Twain Refuge April 4 and April 12 (S.V.).

Warblers through Tanagers - Most observers report good numbers of warblers. Springfield had waves on May 2 and May 9. Of 22 species, Hooded was rarest. Kansas City reports no waves, but a good steady stream, which included at least 26 species (K.H.). Black-throated Greens were more common than usual (S.P.). St. Louis had similar conditions with many days in May where over 20 species could be seen in a few hours (D.A.). A total of 37 species of warblers was reported with two Swainson's being the rarest. A very early Northern Waterthrush was at Dexter March 25 (Gaede). A bad effect of the flood was that the breeding grounds for the Swainson's Warbler was under water at Big Oak and no birds were found (Mike Southard). For the Maryville area four Palm and one Canada Warblers were unusual (Hilsabeck).

Icteridae and Tanagers were reported in normal numbers, except Yellow-headed Blackbirds were up at Squaw Creek and one was seen near Columbia

April 30 (Adams). Orchard Orioles were scarce in several areas.

Finches - The rarest find this spring was a male Black-headed Grosbeak found at St. Joseph on May 6. The bird was closely studied by Floyd Lawhon and Si Rositsky near Floyd's home. Evening Grosbeaks were at Columbia until April 15 (B.G.). Returning Pine Siskins were last seen in Kansas City May 6 (K.H.), in Maryville May 13 (D.E.), in Columbia May 13 (B.G.), but a pair was still at Rolla at the end of May (Jim Pogue). Late Red-crossbills were at Maryville April 13 (D.E.), April 25 at Columbia (B.G.) and May 4 at Kansas City (K.H.). A late Savannah Sparrow was at Springfield May 17 (N.F.).

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This is the last issue of The BLUEBIRD for this editor. I would like to thank the many members who contributed over the last two years. Obviously, without them, there would have been no BLUEBIRD. I would like to give special thanks to our president, Jim Jackson, for all his help and co-operation.

Now for the bad news. There is literally no back-log of material to pass on to the next editor. Why not bring an article to the State Meeting and give our new editor something to start with?

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