

Kansas Master Naturalists

Ornithology

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1



2

Birds hold a natural fascination for people of all ages

- They can be strikingly beautiful.
- They have many varied songs.
- They can fly.
- Like many other marvels of nature we can enjoy them multi-sensually.
- They are nearly everywhere.

3



4

The Economics of Birding

- USFWS surveys of Birding and Wildlife Watching.
- Surveys have been done in 1996, 2001 and 2007.
- Additional surveys by other governmental groups, state and federal on birding.

5

The Economics of Birding

- Between 47.8 and 81.1 million Americans participate in birding.
- In 2006, Americans spent \$45 BILLION on observing, feeding or watching all wildlife, the big majority being birds.
- Surveys of visitors to 8 NWR in coastal VA and NC found that visitors spent over \$165 million in 2006.

6

Kansas Has A Rich Bird Life

- World wide - 10,403 species
- North America – 2,055 species
- ABA Area – 960 species (USA and Canada)
- Kansas – 483 species (480 active)
 - One species pending

7

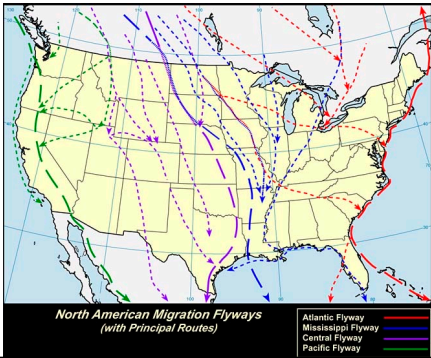


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9

Why is Kansas so blessed?



10

We're just in the middle of it all!



11

Ornithology Theorems

- I – Birds are inextricably connected to ecosystems and their vegetation. Some have very strict food/breeding requirements.
- II – Unlike humans, birds can't "adapt".
- III – Many of us go birdwatching not because of what we WILL see, but because of what we MIGHT see.
- IV – Birds have wings and use them!

12



13

Big Scale Kansas Ecosystems

- Forests
- Grasslands
- Wetlands/Aquatic
- Disturbed (cropland)/Urban

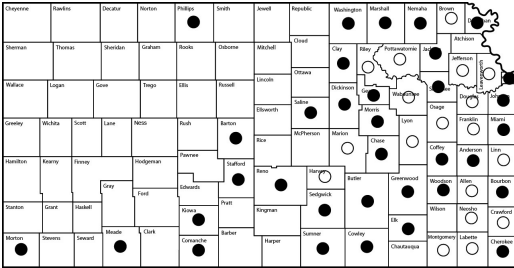
14

Forests

- Eastern Deciduous forest with fingers running west along the rivers and streams.
- Sporadic timber areas throughout the state in areas with adequate moisture, either natural or manmade.
- Known for warblers, tanagers, and vireos
- Forested areas have increased in last 100 yrs

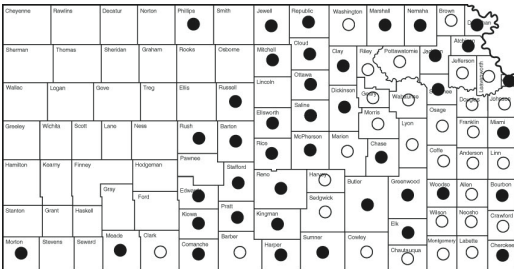
15

Barred Owl - 1989



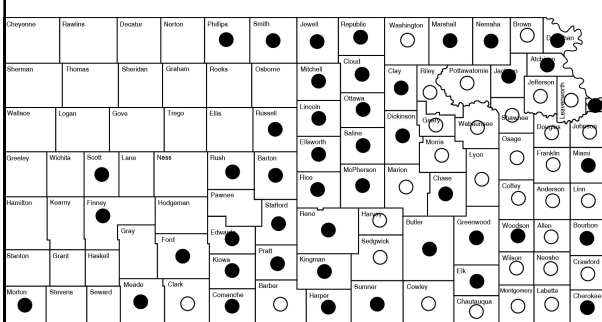
16

Barred Owl - 2010



17

Barred Owl - 2020



18

Grasslands

- Tall grass prairie (Flint Hills)
- Mid grass (mixed grass) prairies of central Kansas
- Short grass prairies of western Kansas
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Greater or Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Upland Sandpiper, Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow (Flint Hills) Cassin's Sparrow (sand sage prairies)

19

Wetlands/Aquatic

- The two are quite different.
- Wetlands have emerged vegetation but can have large areas of mud flats.
- Puddle Ducks (Mallard, Teal, etc.) rails, shorebirds, herons & egrets
- Aquatic indicates open water. Diving Ducks, Grebes, Loons

20

Wetlands/Aquatic

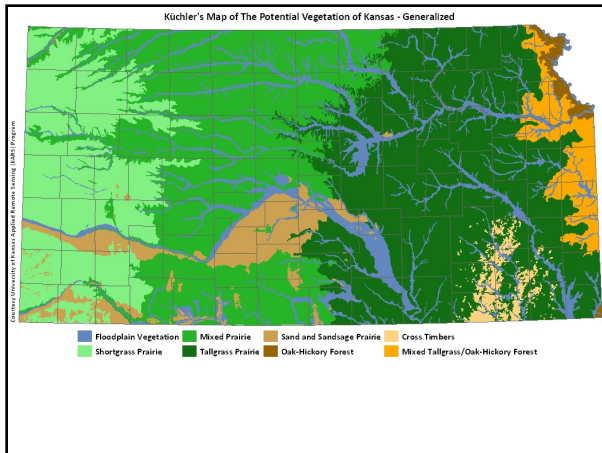
- Surprisingly to many folks, Kansas holds a vast resource of wetland/aquatic ecosystems
 - Cheyenne Bottoms
 - Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
 - Playa Lakes region of western Kansas
 - Local marshes
 - Corps of Engineers lakes

21

Disturbed (cropland)/Urban

- Can include fields, rural farmsteads, cities and parks.
- In western Kansas, towns and rural farmsteads often hold the only significant concentration of trees which can be a literal oasis for bird life, both breeding and migratory.

22



23



24

Basic Keys to Bird ID

- Use every resource available to you.
- Learn to listen – listen – listen – listen
- Spend as much time watching and observing the bird as possible.
- Take notes.
- The bird book isn't going anywhere – the bird may only stay in view for 30 seconds (or less)!

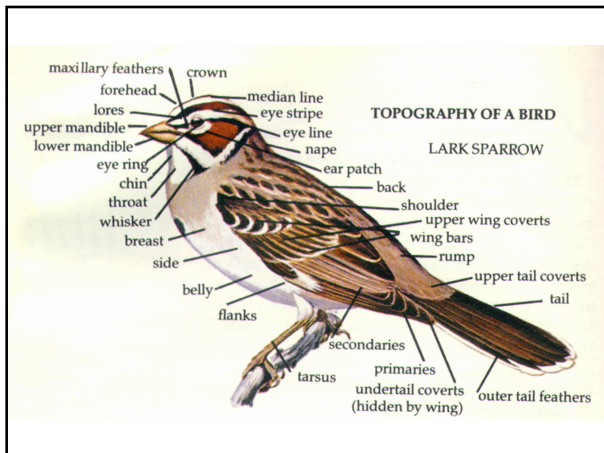
25

What wasn't on previous slide?

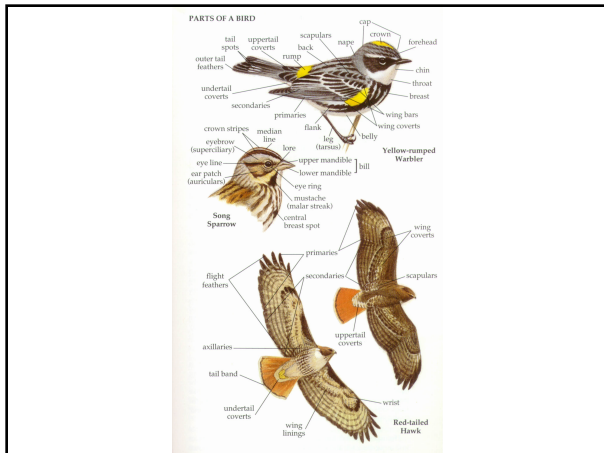
26



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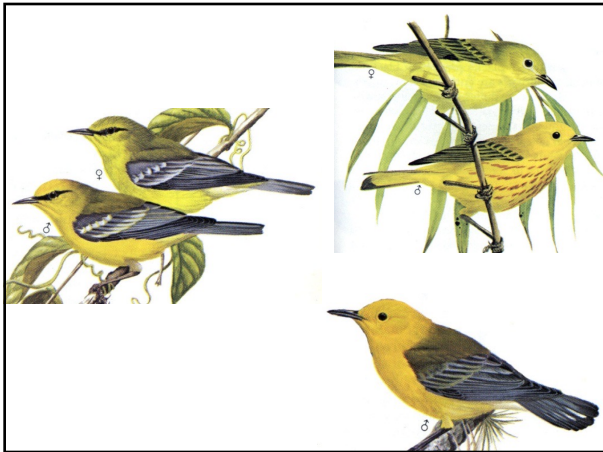


29

Work on the fine points

- Work on the basics of bird ID.
 - Attention to detail
 - Shape, location, habits
 - Bill type and color, leg color, eye stripes, wing bars, color patterns
 - Don't get hung up on matching color of the bird to colors in the bird book. Look at light and dark patterns. How far does the light or dark area extend.

30



31

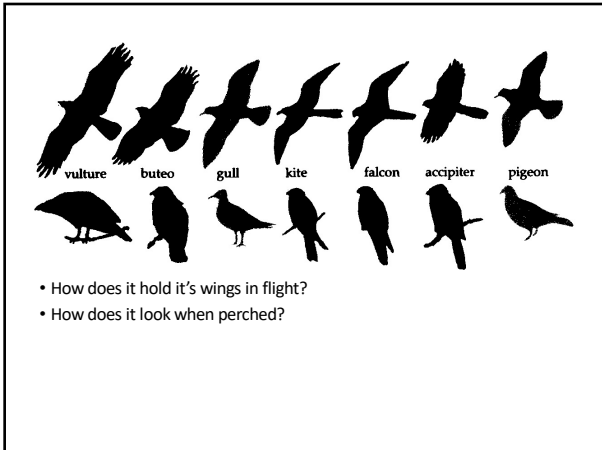
Key Points

- What distinguishes this bird from a similar species?
- What characteristics does it have with other species in the same order or family?
- What habits does it have?
- Instead of casual bird watching, intently watch the bird!

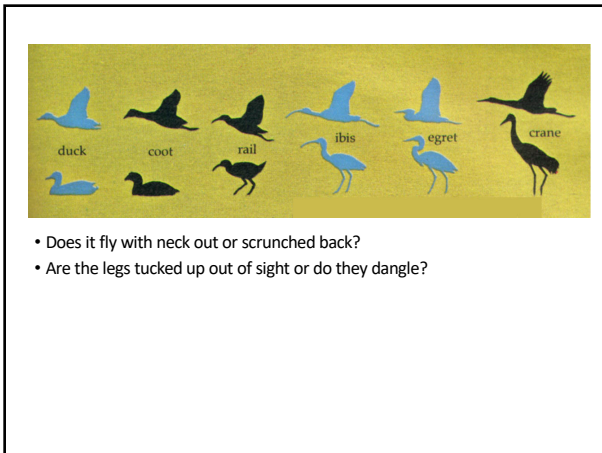
32

- Form
- Silhouette
- How does it fly?
- How does it walk?
- How does it hold or move its tail?
- General impression of shape and size

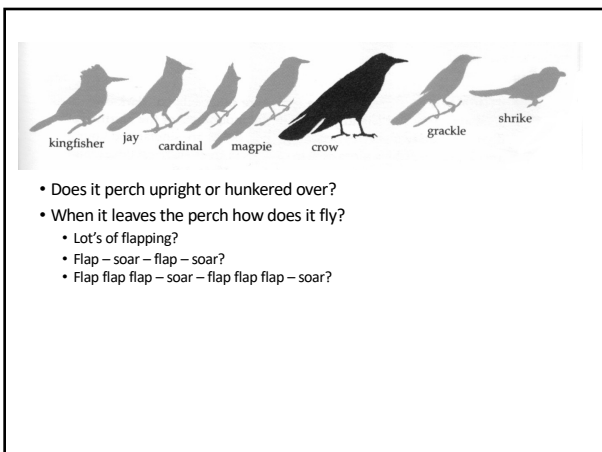
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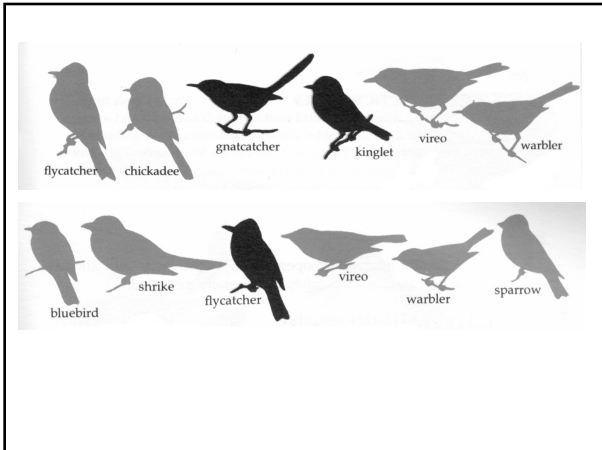
34



35



36



37



38

Practice

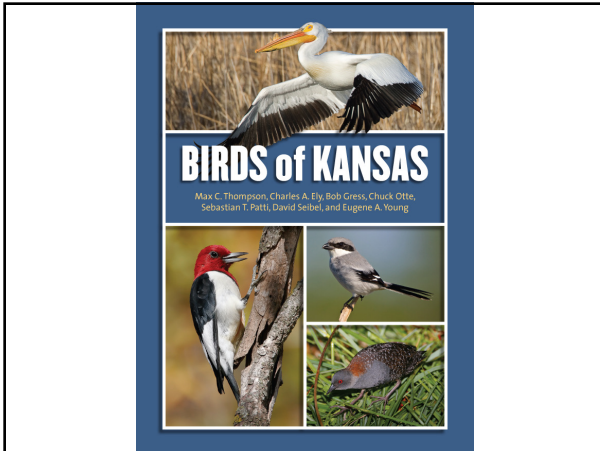
- Start with the birds in your own yard.
- Spend time watching common species.
- Keep a list.
- Put up a bird feeder(s).
- Take a walk and listen to the bird songs – then start trying to match songs/calls to a bird.
- Beware of the uncommon presentation of the common species

39

Resources

- Janzen & Gress – Guide to Kansas Birds
- Kaufman – Birds of North America
- Sibley – Sibley Guide to Birds
- National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America
- Peterson Field Guide Series

40



41

Audio References

- Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs
- Peterson Field Guide to Bird Songs
 - Both of these come in eastern/central and western versions
- Sibley eGuide
- Many of the smart phone apps

42

e-References

- Sibley eGuide to Birds of North America
 - iBird
 - Peterson Birds of North America
 - National Geographic
 - Audubon Birds
 - The Warbler Guide
- These are reasonably priced and include calls, maps, illustrations, text

43

Web sites worth visiting

- <http://ksbirds.org/>
- <http://gearycountyextension.com/NRMW.htm>
- <http://www.sibleyguides.com/>
- <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>

44

Optics

- You don't have to have binoculars – but you'll wish you did.
- Many past "bad experiences" stem from cheap binoculars/out of alignment optics.
- 7 to 10 power. 35 to 50 mm objective lens.
- AVOID ZOOM BINOCULARS.
- AVOID FIXED FOCUS BINOCULARS.

45

Optics

- Common "sizes", 7 x 35, 8 x 42 and 10 x 42
- If they are seal packed in stiff plastic, avoid them!
- If they have a built in digital camera, avoid them!
- Avoid compact binoculars (anything with an objective lens smaller than 35 mm).

46

Optics

- For a decent starter pair, figure on around \$100 - \$225 and go with well known names
 - Nikon
 - Bushnell
 - Pentax
 - Swift
 - Vortex

47

Optics - advanced

- Vortex Diamondback 8 or 10 x 42 (\$225 - \$300)
- Pentax SD 8 or 10 x 42 (\$250 - \$350)
- Nikon Monarch 5 or 7, 8 or 10 x 42 (\$275 - \$500)
- Bushnell Engage 8 or 10 x 42 (\$375 - \$400)
- Swarovski SLC or NL Pure 8 or 10 x 42 (\$3,000 - \$3,500)

48

Optics - advanced

- Academy Sports
- Dick's Sporting Goods
- Cabela's/Bass Pro

- Optics4birding.com

49



50

Questions?

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51