

Prairie Wings

Spring 2001

Audubon of Kansas Receives Major Grant

--and needs your help

A big thank you to Harold and Marian Andersen of Omaha, Nebraska, for their gift of a three-year, \$30,000 CHALLENGE GRANT to help build AOK operations. We need YOUR financial support to help AOK meet its many goals, including expanded environmental education focusing on Kansas habitats; repeal of an antiquated law that punishes landowners who wish to protect prairie dogs on their own property; and establishing an Important Bird Areas program designed to identify and conserve crucial habitat for the birds we love.

Instead of Mowing, Growing?

Ron Klataske and several Audubon of Kansas Trustees have been working with Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) officials to design a pilot program to demonstrate how Integrated Roadside Vegetative Management (IRVM) practices can be used to beautify roadsides, and provide beneficial habitat for wildlife. Ten stretches of road in the eastern half of Kansas have been selected for the partnership project. An advisory committee is being assembled for each of these areas.

AOK and KDOT sponsored a workshop in Matfield Green on February 24 to broaden the network of organizations and individuals involved in the program. The expression of interest was impressive. In addition to Audubon leaders, participation included Quail Unlimited, Kansas Wildflower Society, Kansas Beekeepers Association, Monarch Watch, Grassland Heritage Foundation, Kansas Scenic Byways, Dyck Arboretum, the Land Institute and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

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Legislative Update - Prairie Dogs

Audubon of Kansas has been actively involved with the Kansas Prairie Dog Conservation Planning Workgroup organized a year ago by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The Workgroup was formed in response to federal listing of the Black-tailed Prairie Dog as a candidate for designation as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A diverse group of wildlife and agricultural agencies and organizations are involved in the Workgroup.

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The mission of Audubon of Kansas includes promoting the enjoyment, understanding, protection, and restoration of natural ecosystems. We seek to establish a culture of conservation and an environmental ethic through education and cooperation with a variety of interests across the Sunflower State.

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Committee Highlights

Executive Committee
Nominating Committee
Finance/Operations Committee
Audit Committee
*Stewardship/Conservation Committee
*Education Committee
*Chapter Enhancement Committee
*Development Committee

* Development Committee: 5,500 copies of the new Audubon of Kansas brochure have been mailed to members of Audubon across the state. Many thanks to Kansas City Power and Light and Ag Press, Inc., for help in designing the brochure.

* Education Committee: Members are working on ways to include information on Kansas wildlife and habitats with National Audubon Society's Audubon Adventures classroom kits sponsored by local Kansas Audubon chapters. Quarterly e-bulletins are being sent to Audubon Adventures teachers, with 120 teachers already in the database. Copies of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' educational newsletter On T.R.A.C.K.S. (Teaching Resource Activities and Conservation to Kansas Students) are being obtained for chapters to distribute to teachers. A project printing posters with children's drawings of birds is being planned. A grant proposal to establish a statewide Audubon of Kansas education program and hire a half-time education coordinator is being developed. Audubon education leaders in Topeka are working with KDWP to develop a statewide plan to be employed by chapters that want to sponsor birding events with school groups.

* Stewardship Committee: Members are leading the initiative to establish Audubon of Kansas as an organization dedicated to building bridges of understanding and support between farm and ranch landowners and other residents. Approximately half of AOK's Board of Trustees own rural, farm or ranch land devoted in part to wildlife conservation. Mark Smith, a leader in the Kansas Livestock Association, and a member of the Prairie Dog Workgroup, hosted the board at his home near Wallace last summer. Keith Yearout, manager of the Z-Bar Turner Ranch in Barber County met with the Board in October. Two Prairie Appreciation days are planned for June. The committee has been examining ways to support establishment of conservation easement programs to protect native prairies and rangelands. Likewise, incentive programs for enhancement of grassland bird habitat, and the impact of federal farm programs on wildlife habitat are subjects of special interest. Roadside management, Important Bird Areas, birding trails, and legislative issues are also on the committee's agenda.

**These committees are open to Audubon of
Kansas members, and participation is
welcomed.*

We Know Why We're Here

by Bill Browning, Audubon of Kansas Trustee

Several years ago I attended a Kansas Audubon Council (forerunner of AoK) meeting in Leavenworth. It wasn't my first such meeting, but I had only been to a few and really hadn't begun to size up the Council members. At one point, during an animated discussion of the goals for the then-hypothetical Audubon of Kansas, Martha, from Smoky Hills Audubon, seized the floor, declaring, "We know why we're here." She suggested that each of us in the room at one time or another had experienced a particular, overwhelming feeling of our place in nature, maybe just one, maybe repeatedly, and that such moments transform us all into advocates of wild beauty.

For most of us there that day, it was likely a birding experience had been the stimulus--perhaps one of those perfect early May days deep in a secret woods filled with dozens of migrating, singing warblers, orioles and rose-breasted grosbeaks.

Now we are a broader organization but I feel we still, all of us, know why we're here. The reasons, the experiences, are simply more varied and more inclusive. Some of us are here because of the beauty of a dawn cattle drive or the way a perfect quail hunt ended on a still, chill and golden November afternoon, perfect with the last hint of summer. Some of us are here because, on a private canoe float on a Flint Hills stream, we heard again the sound of cottonwoods rustling. Regardless, we share a purpose and a vision--and we are a growing team with shared goals. This newsletter reinforces our sense of community.

A mile from my house two small streams join in an oak woodland at the base of a steep, grassy ridge. My family placed a picnic table near this confluence more than 20 years ago and have enjoyed this spot with friends and family on hundreds of afternoons. Fifteen feet north of the table, a fallen burr oak has served as a seat for up to half-a-dozen picnickers, facing a rock circle surrounding the ashes and coals of many a hot-dog cookout.

Three years ago on a solitary walk I sat at the old table to rest a bit on a warm and humid June morning. The light breeze was up from the north and after about five minutes a whitetail blew upwind. A few minutes later, a movement in the same direction caught my eye and I held myself still on the table's bench. A bobcat stepped up onto the end of the fallen oak and walked along it until it was just opposite from me, stepped off the tree and into the center of the fire circle, just eight feet away. We shared eye contact for I don't know how long--20 seconds? Thirty? The cat's tail was flicking, its ears focused. I had some thought of how I could protect myself from all those teeth and claws with my only "weapon," a pair of binoculars.

But mostly I was consumed by the moment, the insolent curiosity of this very wild animal that finally turned back to the north and slowly walked away, never turning for another look at me.

We know why we're here.

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*We know why
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WingsN'Wetlands Weekend

An annual birding festival will help to build appreciation and support for our state's natural resources.



The first of what will be annual Kansas Birding Festivals was held April 27-29 in Great Bend. We are indebted to the leadership of Cris Collier of the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau for organizing this event and for inviting Audubon of Kansas to be a partner. Field trips focused on Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, two areas widely acclaimed for birding. They host the state's most impressive shorebird migration and attract a rich diversity of birds. The plan is to hold this event every other year in Great Bend, and move it around the state on alternate years.

An annual birding festival will help to build appreciation and support for our state's natural resources. We successfully employed the idea of an annual event when we started the Audubon Spring River Conference along the Platte River in central Nebraska thirty years ago. The travel and tourism potential associated with the annual concentration of sandhill cranes along the Platte has blossomed into a multi-million dollar attraction.



Most chapters listed this year's event in their newsletters. We thank all who participated in the festival for helping Cris Collier demonstrate that there is a growing interest in birds and this is a natural for enhancement of community tourism and visitation.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, The Kansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, Great Bend Chamber of Commerce, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Great Bend Parks and Recreation Department were all involved in planning and leadership, from the beginning, in partnership with the Visitors and Convention Bureau.

The Audubon Community: Family and Friends

Audubon of Kansas Board members **Joyce Wolf** and **Alison Reber** were honored with awards from the Kansas Wildlife Federation on February 17 in Salina. Joyce received the Wildlife Conservationist of the Year Award, and Alison was recognized with the Stream Monitor of the Year Award.

W.W. 'Woody' Holland of Erie was recently honored by the Southeast Kansas Audubon Society with a Distinguished Service Award. Mr. Holland, a retired veterinarian, has been a tireless advocate for conservation of prairies and has contributed immensely to documentation of plant distribution in southeast Kansas.

On behalf of the Kansas City Power and Light Company, **Joe Werner** accepted the Corporation of the Year Award presented by the Burroughs Audubon Society at the chapter's annual dinner on March 31. Joe directs the company's conservation and environmental programs. The award recognized KCPL's notable efforts designated "For Species and Habitat Restoration in Missouri and Kansas." The keynote speaker at the Burrough's dinner was Wichita native **Kenn Kaufman**, author of *Kingbird Highway*, the *Peterson Field Guide to Advanced Birding*, and many other books.

Members of the Southeast Kansas Audubon Society in Parsons recently lost two dedicated leaders who gave decades of service. **Marge Gilpin** served in many leadership capacities and was an inspiration to others. She always reached out to invite others to be involved in a chapter that takes pride in fellowship. Current president Rick Tucker said that Marge's perseverance by sending the chapter's newsletter to him for free for fifteen years resulted in his return to active Audubon involvement. **Bill Brewer**, another outstanding leader, died in February. Bill orchestrated the campaign to make Parsons the official "Purple Martin Capital" of Kansas. He and other volunteers obtained sponsors for 30 purple martin houses throughout the downtown area, and inspired residents to install another 100. Bill also maintained bluebird trails and installed wood duck boxes at Neosho State Lake and Big Hill.

Audubon members throughout the state will miss the leadership and expertise of **Dr. Charles Marsh**, one of the founding leaders of the Smoky Hills Audubon Society serving the Salina area since 1974.

Dear Readers

We thank Patty Marlett for suggesting PRAIRIE WINGS for the name of the AOK Newsletter. Patty is coordinating design and layout for the newsletter, and Chris Cokinos served as editor for this edition.

In future issues of this newsletter, we hope to offer sketches and profiles of Audubon of Kansas Board members, as well as the many hard-working chapter leaders from across the state. We'd also welcome story ideas, chapter news, column ideas, and wildlife/natural history observations. Please send your suggestions to Audubon of Kansas, P.O. Box 156, Manhattan KS 66505-0156 or via e-mail to both Christopher Cokinos at cokinos@ksu.edu and Ron Klataske at rklataske@hotmail.com.



PLEASE CONSIDER AN AOK LEADERSHIP BIRDATHON

If you have never tried to see how many species of birds you can find in a day, you have missed something that can be a lot of fun. Birdathons are a unique fund-raising event that are fun for participants, and rewarding for the programs that are supported. We hope that Audubon of Kansas will be on your Birdathon focus!

There are two superb ways that you can participate. You can conduct your own birdathon and find sponsors who will pledge a certain amount for each species you find and identify by sight or sound in a 24 hour period. Friends and associates can be your sponsors and pledge 10 cents, a dollar or whatever they are comfortable with for each species you discover. Your obligation is to provide them with a report. That is part of the fun, and it is educational, especially when they realize that you have found birds in or around your community that they may have never seen.

Please consider sponsoring your own leadership Birdathon. However, if you can't devote the time this year, please consider a pledge to Audubon of Kansas to sponsor mine and I'll send a detailed report.

Let me know if you want to join me as we search forest, prairies and wetlands between northeastern and central Kansas. Thanks for considering this request, and for all you do for birds, wildlife and their habitats.

Sincerely, Ron Klataske

AOK Prairie Appreciation Day-- June 9

Every
day
is a good
day to
appreciate
the
natural
beauty
and
diversity of
native
prairie.

Members of the Audubon of Kansas Board of Trustees and Executive Director Ron Klataske are hosting Prairie Appreciation Day on Saturday, June 9 in Manhattan. Our objective is to show our appreciation to AOK supporters and members, and build appreciation for the natural character of this state. The day will include birding, plant identification and natural history walks and discussions, and a sack lunch with the opportunity to get together with members of the Board of Trustees. Participants will be welcome to spend any part of the day, or evening, birding, hiking and exploring, loafing and picnicking, star viewing and listening to the Whippoorwills and Chuck-wills-widows on property owned by Ron and Carol Klataske. The property includes 150 acres of prairie hills and a section of Kings Creek that is attractive for wading. It also has a great overlook for folks who want to stay for an evening picnic and sunset. The property is adjacent to the Konza Prairie Research Natural Area-- which has a six mile hiking trail available to the public. The Ashland Community Building near Manhattan will serve as headquarters for the day's activities, and will be used by the Board of Trustees for an afternoon meeting. Please write or send an e-mail to Ron Klataske for more details. We are looking toward the Madison/Matfield Green area of the Central Flint Hills in June 2002.

Another Prairie Appreciation Day--June 23

Because of our interest in fostering conservation partnerships, it is only natural that Audubon of Kansas is involved in the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition. We are pleased to be a part of this partnership with ranchers and range management personnel. In this capacity we are cosponsoring a special Prairie Appreciation field day with ranchers in the Barber and Comanche county area. They have formed the Comanche Pool Prairie Resource Foundation to assist in sharing of information, research and public outreach. In addition to prairie ecology, plant and bird identification, we will have the opportunity to learn more about management and the perspectives of ranchers and range managers. Grazing and burning practices will be a part of the discussion designed to build rapport between ranchers and others who enjoy native grasslands. Our hosts will include Ted Alexander, Rodney Einsel and other ranchers, and Harold Kline, District Conservationist for NRCS.

Medicine Lodge will be the morning staging area for the field trip. The Red Hills are one of the most scenic areas of Kansas. One can occasionally see a Roadrunner in this area, and Lesser Prairie Chickens inhabit the open grasslands.

Registration will be limited by the space available in vans. Costs for participants will be minimal. If interested, please write or e-mail for more details, and for information on lodging in Medicine Lodge.

Future Kansas Birding Trails

Good ideas and community support make an inspiring combination. The concept of "Birding Trails" has been implemented in Texas and several other states. Texas has established "The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail" as a way of drawing attention to a series of attractions. Three separate birding trails direct visitors to major nature destinations and special places that might otherwise be bypassed. The birding trails follow designated highways, with additional loops to natural and historic sites and other points of interest. Because of the success of the coastal trails, inland trails are also being planned.

Audubon of Kansas started promoting this concept a couple of years ago and is now spearheading an initiative for a series of Birding Trails in Kansas. Currently, two trails are being recommended: a "Tallgrass Prairie Birding Trail" in the Flint Hills and a "Central Flyway Wetlands and Mixed Prairie Birding Trail" in central Kansas, with others to be developed later. We have initiated outreach to secure funding and our hope is that we can launch formal planning by next January.

Audubon of Kansas and partners will develop a list of attractions and evaluate them for inclusion. Establishing partnerships in every community involved will be vital to success and an integral part of the design. Partnerships would include chambers of commerce, visitors and convention staff, operators of lodging facilities, educational outreach personnel, managers of campgrounds and wildlife management areas, staff at historic sites and museums, natural history organizations, and interested landowners.

Audubon of Kansas will develop descriptive materials and highlight the species that are most likely to be found. Opportunities to see rare or special sought-after species would be listed, along with the best season and places to see prairie wildflowers. All of this information would be made available in a map-based "field guide" that would give visitors the opportunity to enjoy the birds, prairie plants, natural beauty, pastoral landscapes, geology, outdoor recreation, and intriguing communities.

Our vision is that other routes across the state would include a "Sandsage and Shortgrass Prairie Birding Trail" taking in special attractions in western Kansas from the Cimarron National Grassland north, and a "Forest and Grassland Birding Trail" along the eastern border of the state including sites like the Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge. The pursuit of birds opens up lots of other opportunities, especially when one takes time along the way to enjoy all of the natural and cultural attractions. Consider the possibilities from the Little House on the Prairie to the Pony Express Station, and from St. Jacobs Well to the Higley Cabin where Home on the Range was written.

As my good friend and former Audubon colleague Ed Pembleton used to say, "Learning to identify and becoming aware of nature comes first, appreciation follows, and commitment to conservation is the final stage." Nature-based tourism and conservation can go hand in hand.

We are encouraged by the support expressed by staff of the state Division of Travel & Tourism in KDC&H. Ken Brunson with Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and George Potts, coordinator for the Nature-based Tourism Alliance, are also advocates of the concept. Establishment of birding trails will be a team effort extending across Kansas. If you are interested in being involved in any way in this project, please let us know. --Ron Klataske

*"The objective
is to teach
the student
to see the land,
to understand
what he sees,
and enjoy
what he
understands."*

Aldo Leopold



*Did you know
that black wing
tips are
"an evolutionary
adaptation which
makes them
stronger. The
dark pigment in
feathers offers
resistance to
wear and
abrasion, and is
fairly common
in birds."
--from Dr. Joanna
Burger's
forthcoming
book,
The Parrot Who
Owns Me*

View from the Prairie

*by Bob McElroy,
Audubon of Kansas Trustee*

When discussing this newsletter, I casually mentioned to Ron Klataske that it should include a column that was drawn from history, literature, personal experience, etc., about the prairie and the people who lived here.

"Good idea," Ron said. "Why don't you do it?"

My first thought was to go to some of the classics of the subject, such as *The Great Plains* by Walter Prescott Webb or *West of Wichita* by Craig Miner—which are full of quotable material. And I will turn to them if this column continues beyond this first issue. These books are full of the struggle of the early pioneers with vast distances, weather, wind, loneliness, drought, grasshoppers and dust.

But every story must begin at the beginning and, for me, a fourth-generation Kansan, the beginning does not start with a book but with my 90-year-old Aunt Ella, who grew up in Gove County 50 miles west of Hays, near Quinter. She knew many of the early or original settlers of that country. I recently spent several hours talking to her about her early life, which included my father, and from her account, many of the struggles listed above began to appear.

She began:

Joe and Mary, my grandparents, first moved about 1890 to Gove County, north of Quinter from Jewel County, where Joe's father had homesteaded after leaving Iowa. Their first winter was spent in a dugout--literally a hole in the ground covered by timbers, straw and dirt. The next spring Joe built a sod house that was a step-up. The sod was cut by plow to about four-inches thick, cut in length and stacked for walls then laid on top of timbers for the roof. In the spring, the roof would bloom with flowers.

Water was hauled in barrels from the river, although later a well was dug. Fuel was supplied initially by buffalo chips and later by cow dung.



Mary lost her first child in the sod house, then a second child, but raised a total of six. Ella quoted an older relative who remembered Mary as a pretty woman. But later pictures and my own memory recall her as much-worn by the toil and childbearing. Tragedy never seemed far away. Ella reminded me of a family incident, also told to me by my grandfather when he was 85 and I

was in eighth grade. An older brother fell on a corn knife, suffering a deep penetrating abdominal wound. This must have been about 1870 and there was no doctor nearby. The family watched in agony during the three days it took for the boy to die. I could tell that even 70 years later, my grandfather Joe still felt the pain of that event.

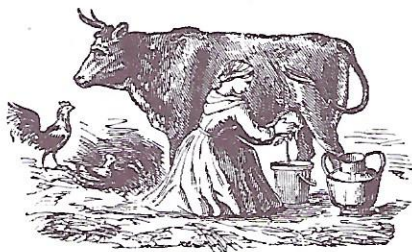
Crops included wheat, corn and cane (sorghum). Wheat frequently averaged no more than 10 bushels an acre. Corn was no more than head-high and so required stooping to pick. Lloyd, Ella's husband, could pick, shuck and throw into a horse-drawn wagon a hundred bushels per day when 50 was considered a day's work.

During drought, feed and hay was very scarce and many had to sell their stock or move them to less drought-stricken areas. Some farmers cut and stacked Russian thistle to feed cattle. Salt was frequently added to entice the cattle to eat it. Prickly pear was also fed to livestock--after burning off the thorns. Lloyd had alfalfa (which has deep roots) and was less affected by droughts. Alfalfa provided feed for horses.



Prairie dogs were in many of the pastures and were viewed as pests because of what they did to the grass. Many farmers tried to exterminate them with mixed results. It was difficult for Ella to see any value in the prairie dog.

If the winter and spring were wet, the Saline River north of Quinter and especially the Smoky Hill River south of town would flood to over a mile wide and be as clear as any mountain stream. Later as the plow broke more and more of the prairie, the color became darker. A wet spring also produced a vast quilt of wildflowers stretching to the horizon, which invited walking and talking.



Ella was born on the high plains and clearly enjoyed her life there despite the difficulties. She never experienced the loss of trees that so unnerved those who arrived from places like Ohio, Pennsylvania or Tennessee. The mostly treeless prairie was her home and life.

Next letter we hear of dust storms, grasshoppers and foreclosure.

How much is biodiversity really worth? On average less than 32 cents of your taxes go to endangered species conservation in the U.S. each year. Each year we spend less than \$300 million on conservation for more than 1,100 endangered and threatened species.

And yet, according to U.S. News and World Report, nature provides us with a staggering \$33 TRILLION in services each year, including crop pollination from insects, bats and birds; recreational fishing, wildlife and bird-watching; commercial uses of plants and animals; animals and insects controlling crop pests; medicines; and wetland filtration, purifying water.
--Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund

Ecologists consider prairie dogs to be a "keystone" species in the prairie ecosystem, meaning that their presence and activities are vital to the existence of numerous other species, both animal and plant. More than 140 species of wildlife are attracted to the unique patches of habitat in prairie dog towns.



Prairie Dogs, cont from page 1

One of the most compelling policy issues for Kansas is a series of state statutes established a century ago that give township boards and county commissions authority to mandate that landowners eradicate prairie dogs. If landowners fail to kill all of the prairie dogs on their land, agents can be sent to poison the animals without landowner permission, and the cost is placed as a tax lien against their property.

In February of 2000 Audubon of Kansas asked the Kansas House Agriculture Committee to introduce legislation we drafted that would have simply repealed statutes 80-1201 thru 80-1208. Committee Chair Dan Johnson of Hays was very supportive and all who testified at the hearing endorsed the proposal. However, as is normal for legislation, it was not advanced for passage on its maiden flight!

In the 2001 legislative session, rather than ask for repeal of the statute, we offered a bill to replace the statutes in a variety of positive ways. Audubon of Kansas Executive Director Ron Klataske presented the bill to the House Environment Committee chaired by Rep. Joann Freeborn of Concordia, and it was introduced as House Bill 2470.

The language of the bill was endorsed by the Workgroup and conceptually by the Kansas Farm Bureau and Kansas Livestock Association. They asked that the bill be held over to allow time for them to conduct meetings this summer with western Kansas landowners. Although we would have preferred expedient passage, we appreciate their commitment to building support and consensus.

House Bill 2470 proposes to replace eradication mandates with voluntary

programs. Complete elimination of prairie dogs on one's own land would remain a prerogative of the landowner. If House Bill 2470 is advanced and approved during the next twelve months it will reflect progressive legislative leadership, and help to project a positive image of conservation and agricultural leaders working together.

Some landowners have elected to accommodate prairie dog colonies on their land and that alone may help to keep the species from being imperiled. Many landowners enjoy having a diversity of wildlife on their land and many use practices to provide habitat. A few with large holdings are interested in the possibility of having large colonies to accommodate Burrowing Owls, Black-footed Ferrets, Swift Foxes, Golden Eagles, Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Plovers and other species that are associated with prairie dogs.

Eleven states and several federal agencies have been working for the past two years in an effort to develop a Conservation Strategy to keep this species from becoming threatened--both biologically and legally. Removing statutes that mandate that landowners must eradicate prairie dogs will be an important part of our state's plan.

Copies of this and other bills can be obtained on the web at <http://www.accesskansas.org/legislative/> or by calling 800-432-3924. The copy you receive will have a printing error. The printer failed to line out the previously existing language contained in lines 30 thru 41 on page 2. Our intent is to repeal that portion of K.S.A. 80-1202.

Board of Directors Biography: Joyce Wolf

In order to introduce you to members of the board of directors of Audubon of Kansas, we will feature biographies in each newsletter. The first is Joyce Wolf:

Joyce and her husband Ron moved to Lawrence in 1982. The family had previously lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, Indianapolis, IN and Burnsville, MN. They both had a lifetime interest in wildlife and conservation. In fact, a singing cardinal outside the library at the University of Cincinnati lead to their introduction and a life together enjoying birds! Joyce received a Bachelor of Science in Bacteriology and Ron a degree in Geology.

As soon as the family was settled in Kansas they immediately joined and became active in the Jayhawk Audubon Society. Joyce served in several leadership capacities within the chapter and as president from 1985 to 1988.

She served as a delegate to the Kansas Audubon Council, and then worked part-time as the council's statewide legislative and governmental liaison from 1988 to 1993. The focus of her efforts was on wildlife, wildlife habitat and water issues. Foremost among those, she lead efforts to secure funding for Cheyenne Bottoms Waterfowl Management Area restoration efforts and acquisition of McPherson Wetlands. One of her proudest achievements was winning reinstatement of the special funds for these purposes in the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks'

budget after it had been vetoed by Governor Finney.

Joyce was elected by Audubon chapters to serve from 1994 to 2000 as a member of the National Board of Directors of the National Audubon Society, representing the eight states that made up the West Central Region. In 1999 she and other Kansas chapter leaders founded Audubon of Kansas, Inc. Joyce was also one of the founding board members of the Kansas Land Trust. From 1993 to 1997 she served as part-time Executive Director of the Land Trust. She worked with landowners who were interested in permanent protection of their property through the use of conservation easements. For her, visiting with landowners was one of the most pleasant parts of the position. She played a key role in establishment of the first conservation easement on a prairie in Kansas - a spectacular forty acre prairie just southeast of Lawrence. It was dedicated to conservation as a remembrance and tribute to the late Dorothy Aikin by her husband Tom Aikin.

Since 1995 Joyce has served as Executive Director of the Kaw Valley Heritage Alliance, Inc. KVHA is a broad coalition of organizations working cooperatively to promote greater awareness, appreciation and stewardship of the cultural and natural resources of the Kansas (Kaw) River Valley.

Joyce and Ron have four children and four granddaughters living in Kansas City, Chicago and Columbus, Ohio. She enjoys nature photography, birding, music and is a wannabe quilter!

The Special Appeal of Audubon of Kansas Apparel

Audubon of Kansas recently produced a selection of shirts, cap and jacket with the full color Audubon of Kansas Prairie Chicken logo, and t-shirts featuring two young burrowing owls and a "Pride in the Prairies" message. They can be ordered by writing to **AOK Merchandise**
6244 SW 21 Terr.

Topeka, KS 66614

Inquiries can also be sent e-mail to Joe and Natalie McElroy at jmmcelroyks@yahoo.com or fatbuzzard@aol.com. (If you are wondering about the unusual e-mail address, Joe is a hang gliding enthusiast who enjoys watching turkey vultures soar, and is a bit envious!) Prices do not include sales tax.

*Prairie Pride Burrowing
Owl T-Shirt* **\$16**

*AOK Logo Baseball and
Birding Cap* **\$15**

*AOK Logo Natural 50/50
Golf Shirt* **\$27**

*AOK Logo Clubhouse
Golf Shirt* **\$40**

*AOK Logo Denim
Outdoor Shirt* **\$40**

AOK Logo Light Jacket
\$60

*We abuse land
because we
regard it as a
commodity
belonging to us.
When we see
land as a
community to
which we belong
we may begin to
use it with love
and respect.*

Aldo Leopold

Legislative Update continued

AOK Supports Natural Resource Legacy Alliance

House bill 2471 was introduced in the 2001 Kansas Legislature to start a planning process to explore funding needs for conservation programs. It would establish a thirteen member Natural Resource Legacy Alliance and enlist the active support of six state agencies. The idea is to consider strategies that have been successful in other states--such as the "Design for Conservation and Soil and Parks Program" in Missouri, and the Environmental Trust Fund in Nebraska.

The bill was well written by a coalition leaders including John Strickler of Manhattan, Richard Jones with the Association of Conservation Districts, Bill Fuller of the Kansas Farm Bureau, Steve Williams, Secretary of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and others. AOK is supportive. However, we offered one important addition at the House Environment Committee hearing in February. We suggested the addition of the phrase "prairie and grassland resources." Although the bill called for development of goals and priorities for fish and wildlife resources, forest resources, parks and lakes, wetlands and riparian areas, soil and water conservation and air quality, it made no mention of "prairie and grassland resources!"

Unfortunately, as evidenced by the initial omission in this bill, the unique prairie and grassland resources that we enjoy are often overlooked. In fact, in observance of this often missed opportunity, Audubon of Kansas highlighted our state's prairies under the heading of "TAKING PRIDE IN PRAIRIES" in the organizational brochure published last fall. This is a Prairie State, and the hearing offered an opportunity to highlight our state's prairie and grassland resources.

We have the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve and the Cimarron National Grassland. All who enjoy improved water quality, pheasant hunting and seeing our state bird, the Meadowlark, benefit from the hundreds of thousands of acres of cropland enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that have been planted back to native grass.

House Bill 2471 was overwhelmingly passed by the Kansas House of Representatives, however the Senate Natural Resources Committee did not work or advance the bill out of committee. We hope they will when they return in January 2002.

Become a Prairie Wings Underwriter!

Audubon of Kansas is seeking underwriters for our newsletter. Underwriters promote the Audubon cause with their tax deductible donation while receiving the benefit of recognition in the newsletter. Published twice a year, the newsletter goes to 5500 members and friends in Kansas. To find out more, call Ron Klataske at 785-537-4385.



Instead of Mowing, Growing?

Continued from page 1

The Kansas Department of Transportation manages nearly 130,000 acres of right-of-way along more than 10,000 miles of state highways. These acres have the potential to provide nesting cover for the state bird and a number of other species. Consider for example Bobwhite Quail. They have been dramatically declining in recent decades because of changes in agricultural practices. Roadsides provide potential nesting habitat, winter cover, and serve as potential travel lanes parallel to the traffic. From a water quality standpoint, with reduced mowing the same 20,000 miles of roadside vegetation can serve as "filter strips" that help cleanse runoff from the highways, conceal and keep litter from washing into waterways.

Reduced mowing practices that limit frequently mowed areas to 15 feet beyond the shoulder in rural areas are saving some states millions of tax dollars. Iowa has led the way by establishing a Living Roadway Trust and in implementation of Integrated Roadside Vegetative Management.

Some of the ten areas selected for pilot projects are part of or tie in closely with the Kansas portion of the "Prairie Passage" highway corridor. The Passage is a cooperative six state initiative extending 2,100 miles from Canada to Mexico that is designed to draw attention to ecological and historical features associated with prairie.

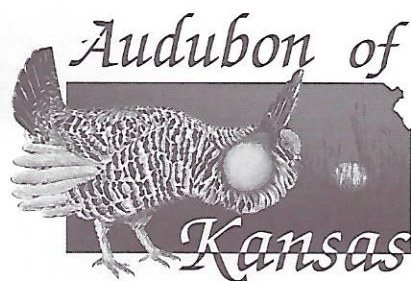
Audubon of Kansas is working with landscape architect Fred Markham and others in KDOT to develop a slide presentation, brochures and other educational materials to build public awareness and support for the program. We hope you will increasingly see roadsides signs that feature "Wildflowers," "Prairie Roadsides" or "Roadsides for Wildlife." A list of the areas selected will be posted on the Audubon of Kansas website. Please let us know if you are interested in being involved in any way in the expanding "roadside network."



Audubon of Kansas



"Reduced mowing practices that limit frequently mowed areas to 15 feet beyond the shoulder in rural areas are saving some states millions of tax dollars."



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Important Bird Areas On Planning Horizon

As we build support for the value of birds and wildlife and their habitats, Audubon of Kansas plans to work with a diversity of partners to identify the state's most "Important Bird Areas." We are laying some of the groundwork now. This will be an important citizen science project that will require special funding and a couple of years of work once it is launched. The knowledge gained may help agencies, landowners and others in many ways. Special conservation incentives will be most appropriate in areas with the greatest potential. For example, Greater Prairie Chicken populations appear to have plummeted by as much as 80 percent since the 1980s in the Flint Hills. They would benefit from incentive programs designed to provide nesting habitat that is not burned or intensively grazed every year. The population status and regional dependence of many other less prominent species is frequently overlooked.

