

BIRDS OF KANSAS

*A "Texas bird"
joins the ranks.*

Photo ©Warren Buss, Washington County, Kansas

One of the many exciting things about birding is the fact that birds sometimes travel far and wide from where they are expected. The ink was barely dry on the fabulous new book, "Birds of Kansas," detailing the 473 species of birds that had been documented in the state when another notable avian traveler arrived. An impressive Crested Caracara in adult plumage was discovered by a farmer on the evening of August 1. The next morning, Warren Buss, who farms nearby and doubles with Dan Thalmann, publisher of the Washington County News, as one of the county's two most active birders made an outstanding photo. The bird was perched in a tree above a hay meadow, then swirled down to the ground and proceeded to walk hunt—as they often do when searching for snakes, lizards, insects and other small prey.

The Crested Caracara, AKA Mexican Eagle, is a member of the falcon family and has been described as a "tropical falcon version of a vulture," that "reaches the United States only in Arizona, Texas, and Florida."

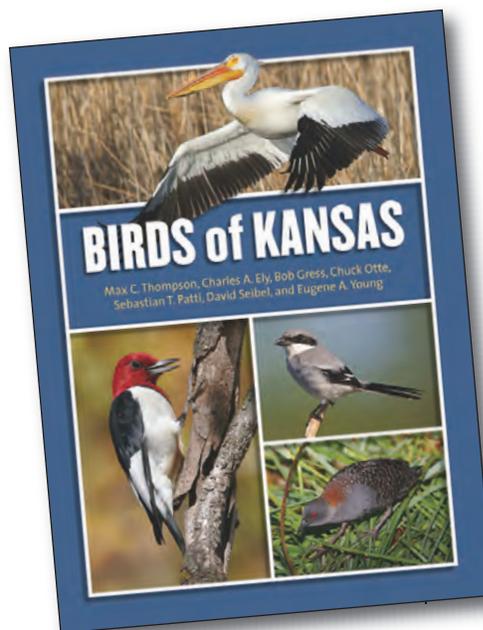
Three weeks after the Kansas sighting, Greg Neuman of Seward, Nebraska observed and identified a Caracara feeding on a roadkill in Nebraska about 15 miles west of Lincoln--80 miles north of its Kansas discovery.

There had been one previous credible report of a Crested Caracara in Kansas. A KDWP employee observed it several times in July 2008, once feeding on a road-killed rabbit near the Woodson State Fishing Lake west of Yates Center.

Warren Buss, like the bird he photographed, is a world traveler and visited Europe for the fifth time this past summer.

Unknown to most birders, a Green Violet-ear Hummingbird spent some time visiting a feeder in a yard in Keats, Kansas in June 2011. This tropical hummingbird is normally found in south-central Mexico south into Panama and the Andes of South America. Occasional wanderers have been recorded in other states and north to Canada.

This summer an additional rare vagrant arrived. A Red-necked Stint was observed at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge on July 1. This small wader breeds in northeastern Siberia and western Alaska. It normally migrates to southeast Asia or Australia in late summer and fall, and is common there during the northern hemisphere's winter--and Austrian summer. However, this bird apparently took a south-bound flight with American "peeps" (small sandpipers) with central Kansas wetlands programed on their DNA guidance systems.



"Birds of Kansas" was published last year by University Press of Kansas. Authors include Max C. Thompson, Charles A. Ely, Bob Gress, Chuck Otte, Sebastian T. Patti, David Seibel, and Eugene A. Young.

The 473 species accounts detailed includes 47 more than the last similar book, "Birds in Kansas," co-written by Max Thompson and Charles Ely in two volumes published in 1989 and 1992.