

# AN AOK KEYSTONE EVENT: AOK's Celebration of Cranes 2021

*Cindy Jeffrey, Chair and Organizer of CofC 2021*



*Rex Buchanan, Director Emeritus, Kansas Geological Survey. "Water and Geology at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge" at the 2019 Celebration of Cranes. Buchanan and Jim McCauley co-authored the book "Roadside Kansas," a guide to geological landmarks across the state. After 37 years with the Kansas Geological Survey, interim director Rex Buchanan retired in June 2016.*

This is our fourth year for the Celebration of Cranes and each year has been different. The first, in 2018, was (as expected) a learning experience. It was very well received and attended, so much so, we were overwhelmed. The feedback was great – from “wonderful” to comments on how we could improve it—such as, guides should not be drivers. The guide needed to be able to concentrate on talking to the attendees in the van, and the driver needed to drive.

In 2019, we were more organized and started planning earlier. At the Quivira National Refuge Visitor's Center we had three expert speakers: Anne Lacy on Sandhill Cranes, Dr. Elizabeth Smith on Whooping Cranes, and Rex Buchanan on water. (See previous *Prairie Wings*). Because of the times of the tours, they each spoke both in the morning and the afternoon so that everyone had a chance to hear them no matter which tour they went on. And we had visitors just “drop in” as well.

In 2020, despite the Covid 19 restrictions, we still prevailed. While we could not take van tours on Quivira NWR and see the migration of the birds and meet for presentations, we could use technology to stream our speakers live and record their presentations and Q&A for posting on our website. If you missed 2020, go to our YouTube page to find the videos of each of last year's speakers. We greatly appreciate their willingness to do this. People are still finding them and watching them. Yet, we missed seeing the cranes; nothing is quite like being there.

In 2021, we were determined to have some kind of live event, the only way to fully appreciate the migration of the cranes (and all kinds of other birds). Precautions had to be taken due to the continued risk of Covid (Delta). We decided on a modified plan. Instead of vans we had “self-paced” tours, where participants checked in and picked up a passport, map, and information at our venue. They then proceeded through Quivira stopping at areas indicated on the map as most likely to have cranes. Some of our members “roamed” the areas to offer help and look for interesting birds.

Our venue was the Hudson Community Center (masks required). Here our five presenters gave a diverse view and broader understanding and appreciation of wetlands, as well as some practical tips. Presentations included:

- Dave Rintoul: KSU retired professor Biology, Tips for photographing birds,
- John Price, professor of English from UNO: “The Personal Prairie,”
- Dave Haukos, KSU, “The Beauty and Mystery of Wetlands”
- Irene Unger, from Baker University and Baker Wetlands: “Wetland Ecology: How plants cope with the unique conditions of Wetland soils.”
- Dennis Rogers, “A Native American Perspective.”
- And our Executive Director, Jackie Augustine, gave participants an orientation before beginning their self-paced tour.

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge is a Kansas treasure as well as an international one. We should never take it for granted. We will continue to have the Celebration of Cranes in whatever form is necessary, to encourage people to come, see, feel and appreciate the amazing experience of the crane migration in Kansas.



*Celebration of Cranes organizer, Cindy Jeffrey, poses next to a life-sized Whooping Crane and Dennis Rogers. Dennis, a native Navajo speaker, gave an interesting presentation linking nature, Native American beliefs and dance, and contemporary music.*



Point your smartphone's camera at this code or follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIvPE8-lyThxSqJx8USW6dA/> videos to see videos from the 2020 and 2021 Celebration of Cranes.