

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area

Newsletter

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Issue 74

July 2014

FINALLY, A WET SPRING!!

We have finally had a wet spring here at the Bottoms. Our water levels were slowly dropping since the last inflow into the basin last July. Things were starting to look a little bleak. We were pumping some of the perimeter pools into the storage pools in an effort to 'stack' the water there to reduce evaporative loss. From

January through May of this year we received a bit less than two inches of snow/rain. While every little bit helps in terms of increasing water levels, we were still losing more to seepage and evaporation than we were receiving. Then we hit the month of June. So far this month we have received more than eight inches

of rain at the Area office. These rains were scattered over several weeks so not much runoff was generated, but the sub-soil moisture was greatly increased as the water had a chance to soak in. We did receive some runoff into Pool 5 and also some water entered the basin into Pool 2 from Blood and De-

(Continued on Page 3)

Inside this issue:

Yellow-headed black-bird	2
Camp Hope-2014	3
Info Night Scheduled	3
KDWPT Web Site	4
	6



Recently completed scrape north of the Area office filled with June rain water. Photo by Kim Schneweis.



Cheyenne Bottoms is a Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project funded by your purchase of hunting equipment. Some of the best wildlife hunting and viewing opportunities in the United States can be had on land purchased and maintained by these hunter generated dollars.

Yellow-Headed Blackbird

The following information is taken from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology web site All About Birds

The yellow-headed blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) is a common transient and local summer resident in the western portions of Kansas, but less common in the east. They are a medium distance migrant, with Canadian nesters wintering in the southwest United States and into Mexico. Males tend to winter farther north, while the females migrate all the way to the species' southern limits.

They breed in wetlands in prairies, mountain meadows, quaking aspen parklands and shallow areas of marshes, ponds and rivers. They typically arrive later than red-winged blackbirds at the nesting marshes, displacing the red winged blackbird into the margins of the marsh and establish their territories in what can be thought of as the 'heart of the marsh'. The male defends a small territory of prime nesting reeds. He may attract up to eight females to nest within his area. The male helps feed nestlings, but usually only in the first nest established in his territory. The other females have to feed



Photo by Dan Witt

their young by themselves.

The female utilizes cattails, bulrushes or reeds as a nesting habitat. She weaves long strands of wet vegetation, collected from the surface of the water, around 4 to 5 upright stems. She adds more strands and more supports, and then an outer wall and an inner cup of the same materials.

At the Bottoms, the earliest recorded spring arrival date is 17 March, the latest 2 May and the median spring arrival date is 12 April.

Clutch size varies between 2 and 5 eggs, with one brood raised a year. Incubation period is from 12 to 13 days with another 7 to 14 days

needed to get to fledging. Because they build their nests over water, nestlings sometimes fall in and have to swim short distances to vegetation.

Nest predators include gulls, common grackles, American bitterns, American coot, marsh wren, rails, snakes, mink, red fox, raccoons, mice and skunks.

The yellow-headed blackbird eats mostly insects in summer and seeds the rest of the year. They catch aquatic insects at the water's surface, including beetles, grasshoppers, dragonflies, caterpillars, flies, ants and spiders. They may visit feeders to eat seeds and grains, including sunflower seeds.

(Wet Spring-Continued from Page 1)

ception Creeks. The Wet Walnut did not flow very much and the Arkansas River remains dry at our diversion dam. In spite of the minimal runoff, we are still in fairly good shape for water going into the hot part of the year.

Not only is the rain improving the prospects for good habitat this fall, it has provided some excellent benefits to the birds nesting on the Area. With deeper water, the odds are much better that the ducks, herons, egrets, coots and other water birds will successfully bring off a brood. In addition, the rains have made the Bottoms more attractive for birds in the area. This has greatly increased the observation opportunities for visitors to the

basin. One of the more notable birds that was seen this June is a brown pelican. This is a very rare visitor to the Wildlife Area and provided lucky birdwatchers a chance to add this species to their life list without having to travel to the coast.

The increased water depths has also forced the staff at the Bottoms to alter their summer work plans. The opportunity to plant Japanese millet in the pools as a supplemental food source for waterfowl will likely not get done this summer. The good news is that natural food production in the pools has been stimulated with the rains. Bulrushes, smartweed and millet are doing very well. In addition, Phragmites control efforts will be hampered severely. But on the whole, things are looking very good for this falls' migration.

CAMP HOPE 2014

Camp Hope is a week long event, held in June each year. It is held at Camp Aldrich, near Claflin, Kansas. It is an opportunity for youth, ages 7 to 17, dealing with cancer, to try and forget their problems by having enjoyable activities to participate in. One of the activities is a morning of fishing at the Camp's fishing pond. Many Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism employees from Law Enforcement, Fish and Wildlife, and Public Lands Divisions help with this activity. The fisheries biologists stock the pond and the Law Enforcement staff prepares a fish fry that evening.

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS WILDLIFE AREA INFORMATION NIGHT

The 2014 installment of the annual Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area Information Night has been scheduled for Monday, August 25. It will begin at 7 PM at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center in the southeast portion of the Wildlife Area on Kansas Highway 156.

Topics covered will include: current conditions at the Wildlife Area; the fall waterfowl flight forecast; season dates for fall 2014; the new electronic Daily Hunt Check-in System; and general information on the forecast for the upland game season.

The meeting is free and open to the public.



The brown pelican seen at Cheyenne Bottoms in June 2014. Photo by Jason Black.



Some happy anglers at Camp Hope, 2014. Photo by Kim Schneweis.

WILDLIFE, PARKS AND TOURISM WEB SITE

The Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism web site provides a host of valuable services. Examples include: weekly waterfowl reports; WIHA and FISH Atlas; Hunter Ed Class schedule; license and permit sales; hunting and fishing regulations; legislative updates; and the Outdoor Store with books and DVD's related to all outdoor interests. Don't forget that each Department property has it's own page. Check it out at:

www.kdwpt.state.ks.us



Cheyenne Bottoms was designated as a 'Wetland of International Importance' by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1988. Only 35 sites in the U.S. are recog-



nized as such. In addition, it is recognized as an 'Important Bird Area' by the American Bird Conservancy and is listed as a 'Hemispheric Reserve' by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area
56 NE 40 Road
Great Bend, KS 67530

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, sexual preference, religion, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 1020 So. Kansas Ave., Suite 200, Topeka, KS 66612.