



2021 Member Newsletter



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

With 2020 behind us, the Friends of Cheyenne Bottoms Board was ready to hit the ground running. Unfortunately, the pandemic continues to hinder our plans. Until we can safely gather, we have been forced to put our plans on hold or to significantly alter them.

Friends is proud to be a part of the Second Grade Wetlands Day at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center and this year, we were able to offer Second Grade Day to all Barton County Second Graders, albeit in a different format. All programs were presented virtually thanks to the amazing staff at KWEC. Approximately 400 Students did not miss out on this educational opportunity.

The Youth Outdoor Day is still being planned and a date will be announced as soon as possible. This event gives Kids, under the age of 17, the chance to safely be exposed to outdoor activities, shooting .22s, air rifles, bow & arrows, trap shooting, and test their fishing skill.

The Friends of Cheyenne Bottoms was established in 2009 as a non-profit organization with the mission of promoting Cheyenne Bottoms for education, tourism and conservation. We are always looking for volunteers to help with various events. Anyone willing to serve on the Board is asked to Contact FOCB President Steve Divis at 620-786-0826.

In this uncertain time, we Thank You for your continued support. Your \$25 membership enables us to continue the promote Cheyenne Bottoms as a valuable asset in our backyard.

Sincerely,

Steve Divis
FOCB President



Shorebirds in mowed area, notice the height of the unmowed vegetation in the background.

MANAGING FOR SHOREBIRDS ON THE CHEYENNE BOTTOMS PRESERVE

by Robert Penner, TNC Avian Conservation Manager

We are in the midst of global biodiversity crisis. So much so that many are calling the times we live in a new, unofficial geological epoch, the Anthropocene, an epoch that is characterized by the world being influenced by humans, so much so, that human activity is having a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystem. These changes are being seen in bird populations; last year, a study was published in "Science" showing some of the dramatic declines in bird populations in North America since 1970. They estimate that there are 2.9 billion fewer breeding birds today than there were in 1970.

Shorebirds are not immune to these declines; in fact, shorebirds have the highest proportion of native species in decline. An assessment of shorebirds in Canada found that while shorebirds species as a group have declined by 40% since 1970, shorebirds that migrate long distances have declined more steeply, by 52% compared to short-distance migrants that have declined by 23% over the same time period.

Several species of shorebirds that visit Cheyenne Bottoms migrate long distances between their arctic breeding grounds up north to their South American non-breeding grounds. The tremendous energy demands associated with these twice a year flights of several thousand miles require that birds be able to repeat the cycle of accumulating fat and then using these fat reserves. Because these long-distance migrants cannot make the journey without periodically replenishing fat reserves, stopover sites such as Cheyenne Bottoms become critical to the survival of many of these species. Shorebirds need a chain of stopover sites from the arctic to South America.

Ava: A Year of Adventure in the Life of an American Avocet

Thanks to funding from the Dorothy M. Morrison Foundation, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center is putting the final touches on a children's book to be ready in June 2021. The funding will provide a copy to every K-6 classroom in Barton County as well as every school and community/public library within 70 miles of the center.

Save-the-Date for a launch party where you can receive a free copy of the book to be autographed by the author and illustrator on Saturday June 19 at 10am!

Save the Date

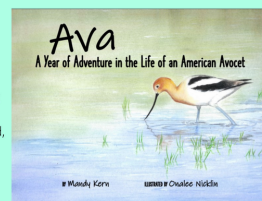
Children's Book Launch - June 19, 10am

Autographs with author and illustrator, activities for families based on story, recognition of Dorothy M. Morrison Foundation for funding.


Free copy of book for each family! Bring a lawn chair for an outdoor reading.

Kansas Wetlands Education Center
10 miles northeast of Great Bend along
Kansas Highway 156 at Cheyenne
Bottoms, 592 NE K-156 Hwy., Great Bend,
KS 67530.

wetlandscenter.fhsu.edu
1-877-243-9268



MANAGING FOR SHOREBIRDS CONT....



Spring migrating American Golden Plovers in pasture that was grazed in the fall to create short grass habitat

It is because of the long-term population declines and the wide range of threats to shorebirds, of which, habitat loss ranks at the top; is why the Nature Conservancy has made shorebirds their priority group to manage for and why the Shorebird Habitat Management Plan was written. One very important job we can do to ensure the future of shorebirds is to manage our preserve in order to provide ideal stop over habitat for migrating shorebirds

In general, shorebirds prefer to feed in areas in which the vegetation is less than half the height of the bird and most use occurs in sites in which there is less than 25% vegetation cover, it is this type of habitat that is lacking on the preserve; so we are trying to create this type of habitat through mowing, haying and grazing on a shifting pattern across the preserve.

The type of on the ground work that is conducted to create better habitat for shorebird stopover is wide ranging. From adaptive rotational grazing and haying and mowing to create large expanses of short grass habitat that shorebirds prefer. To disking to create mudflats. To building dikes and deepening basins to create more open water habitat.

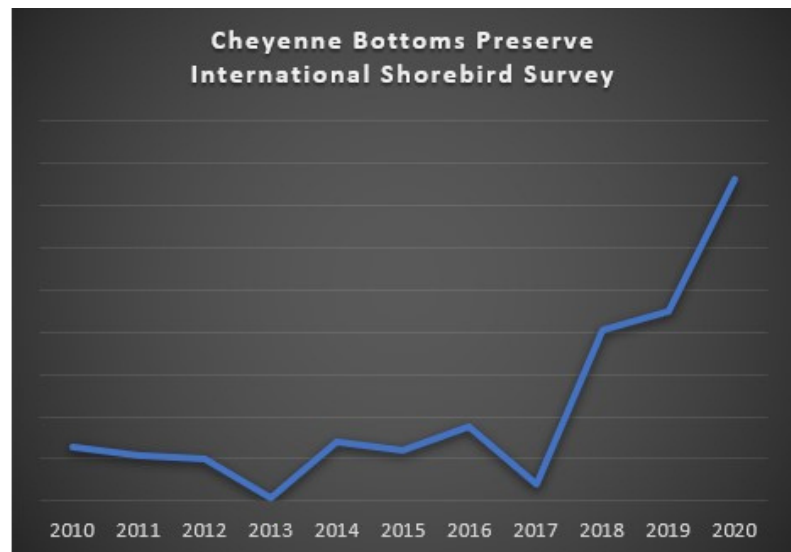
If you drive through the preserve in late fall, you will notice areas that have been mowed and within these mowed areas you might also notice shallow basins that have been disked. This type of management is designed to create the short vegetation that shorebird desire along with the mudflats that they also seek. Of course, this is all a roll of the dice. If we get rains at the right time in the spring, these areas will attract the species that prefer to feed in wet areas. If we don't get the rains these areas may still be attractive to a group of shorebirds that prefer to feed in upland sites, such as American Golden-Plovers and Upland Sandpipers.

In addition to mowing in late fall or early winter, we have also increased the amount of haying that is accomplished in late summer. This also produces the short grass that shorebirds prefer and is especially attractive to fall migrating shorebirds such as the Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

The biggest management technique we use to manipulate the vegetation is grazing, which can help create better shorebird habitat, especially if the site is grazed in the fall. Only three pastures are grazed for a longer period in the fall in order to produce shorebird habitat, yet it is important to allow these sites to rest the following spring in order to maintain the health of the grassland but also produce habitat for grassland nesting birds.

Along with habitat management another aspect of our work includes the restoration of some of the wetlands that have been negatively impacted by various forms of development. This past year we reconnected a large wetland basin and raised the road so that water will fill the reconnected basin when the water level of the main wetland basin comes up. The reconnected basin will be wet longer and sooner as the water moves under the road rather than over. It was great to see that if we build it and they will come.

So, is all of this work worth it? We sure think so, since the implementation of this plan in 2017 we have documented an increase in shorebird use during spring migration every year.





Construction on headquarters office has begun.

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS WILDLIFE AREA

by Jason Wagner, KDWPT CBWA Manager

Spring is always an exciting time at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. Bird diversity and numbers peak during the spring months. Ducks are in their breeding plumage, Canada geese are nesting, and huge numbers of shorebirds and grassland birds are showing up. Please make time to come out and enjoy the beauty of Cheyenne Bottoms, as summer is just around the corner, and the majority of the birds will be off to their nesting grounds.

With increased flexibility of peoples schedules due to Covid, visitation is up at Cheyenne Bottoms. What better place to socially distance than Cheyenne Bottoms? Students can attend classes virtually and people are working virtually. With a lot of events canceled, people have found themselves with a lot of free time. They have reconnected with nature, rather it be with a pair of binoculars, fishing pole, tent, or by hunting. This resurgence is nice to see from a natural resource aspect. People had lost touch with nature, and Covid has helped with the reconnection with the outdoors. Hopefully, this interest will continue for years to come. The more people connected to nature, the more support there is for conservation of wildlife and wild places.

This past hunting season was one of the better seasons in recent times. The excellent habitat conditions brought strong numbers of waterfowl, and the hunters followed. We recorded the highest hunter numbers since 2014. On opening day of teal seasons, we estimated over 850 hunters. Hunters came from far and wide to hunt here this past fall, again at least partially due to Covid. In fact, for the first time ever, there were more nonresident hunters than resident hunters out here.



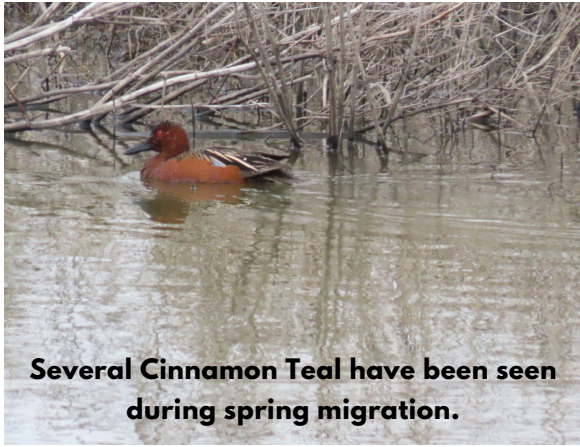
Primrose

It's Gardening Time

"Gardens are not made by sitting in the shade", states a plaque in the office. Truer words were never written. Gardens take a lot of work, but the rewards are infinite. Much of last year's plant growth has been removed from KWEC's pollinator garden, but volunteers are needed for planting and planting preparation. The Pizza and Pollinators work day had to be postponed due to cold, wet weather, but will be rescheduled soon. If you would like to volunteer, contact Pam Martin by emailing pam.martine@ks.gov.

Despite the cool weather, plants are emerging, with the golden Alexander ready to bloom - one of the first plants providing nectar and pollen for pollinators. Sedum, flax, penstemon, gaillardia, yarrow, are all up and growing, in addition to other species. There were some plant losses due to February's deep cold, but most of the hardy prairie natives survived.

On April 24, the Barton County Conservation District held a hands-on drip irrigation workshop, installing a system in the garden's center. Plans are to install drip irrigation throughout the garden, saving time and water. Many thanks to the BCCD for their partnership on this project.



WILDLIFE AREA CONT....

If you have been through the Bottoms lately, you may have noticed some changes. All of the electric pumps were replaced this past winter and have been put to work moving water on the property. The most predominant change is the new office being built at the headquarters. This much needed new building will improve the aesthetics of the property and help to improve the overall quality of experience to visitors. It will also be used to hold small meetings in. The office will hopefully be completed in June. Aside from the new office, a new shop will also be built at the headquarters. We are improving our water moving capabilities by removing silt from key parts of the wetland. Some of the water control structures and propane pumps will be repaired or replaced sometime this summer. We have began work on expanding the campground, and this project will hopefully be completed in the next couple months. We are also working on improving signs on the property. All of these projects are possible thanks to a \$6 million Pittman Robertson Act Grant. This money is from the excise tax on guns, ammo, and outdoor equipment, as well as money from hunting license and permits, and state waterfowl stamps. All of this work should result in a better functioning wetland and better Cheyenne Bottoms visitor experience.



CHRONOLOG TELLS STORIES ABOUT CHEYENNE BOTTOMS

by Curtis Wolf, KVEC Director

A new form of citizen science awaits visitors to Cheyenne Bottoms. Chronolog sites have been established across the U.S. to engage the general public to participate in documenting environmental change through time at specific sites through crowdsourcing landscape pictures. This past year, Friends of Cheyenne Bottoms placed two Chronolog sites at Cheyenne Bottoms, which are the first two sites in Kansas. One site is located at the observation tower near the southeast entrance to Cheyenne Bottoms off of K-156 Highway. The other site is located at the K-4 Overlook observation tower about 11 miles east of Hoisington. Sites include a plastic bracket to hold a person's phone-camera and an instructional sign to explain how to submit the photo to the appropriate Chronolog site. Visitors are encouraged to stop, take a photo, and submit their photo to our Chronolog sites during every trip through the wetlands. After submitting the photo, they are immediately added to the other photos from these sites to create time-lapse photo strings of each location. Over time, these photos can be used to document seasonal and long-term changes that occur to these ecosystems. Anyone can access the time-lapse photos from the Cheyenne Bottoms projects at www.chronolog.io.





KDWPT Educator Pam Martin presenting a virtual program

A NEW WAY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

by Curtis Wolf, KVEC Director

After closing to the public on March 17, 2020 due to the pandemic, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center staff quickly started transferring programs to virtual platforms. From April 27-December 31, KVEC staff delivered 47 Zoom programs to schools, libraries, recreation commissions, and other groups. While KVEC was able to open to the public in June 2020, virtual programs continued to be the predominant delivery method through the first half of 2021.

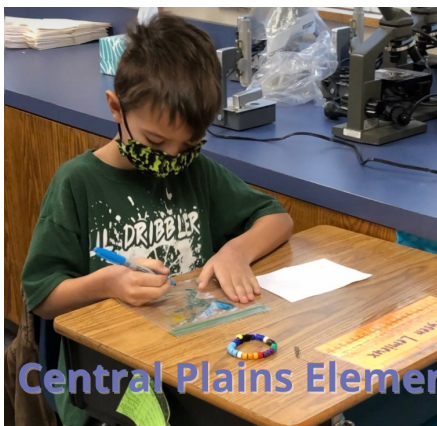
The 2nd Grade Wetlands Day also went virtual in February, with two video programs created by KVEC Educators, in-class activity packets, and goodie bags.

Check out the 2nd Grade Wetlands Day videos and other online educational programming at <https://wetlandscenter.fhsu.edu/education/online-programs/index.html>

The Wings and Wetlands Festival also went virtual in 2021. 264 people registered from 30 states and Canada! Speakers included Kenn Kaufman, Sharon Stiteler AKA "The Bird Chick", and Alvaro Jaramillo, plus many other presentations helping participants explore birds, wetlands, and conservation.



FHSU Educator Mandy Kern



Central Plains Elementary Students participating in 2nd Grade Wetlands Day!

FRIENDS OF CHEYENNE BOTTOMS

The mission of The Friends of
Cheyenne Bottoms is:

To promote and interpret Cheyenne Bottoms,
thereby enhancing a significant resource for
the people of Kansas.

To assist in developing and implementing im-
provements and educational programs at
Cheyenne Bottoms.

To promote and develop nature-based tour-
ism.



FRIENDS OF CHEYENNE BOTTOMS ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:

Individual or Family \$25.00
Additional Donations Accepted.

Membership Year -April 1 to April 1.



Mail this membership form along with
your tax deductible donation to the
address below.

Name _____

Address _____

City, St. Zip _____

Phone No. _____

Email _____

Make checks payable to:
Friends of Cheyenne Bottoms
592 NE K-156 Hwy
Great Bend, Ks. 67530
1-877-243-9268

Please check the events at which you would be willing to volunteer.

Ava: A Year of Adventure Book Launch – June 19 10am (refreshments, activities)	
Youth Outdoor Day – TBD in August (registration, stations, setup/cleanup)	
Butterfly Festival – September 18 (cookies, tagging leader, crafts)	
KWEC Garden Help (weeding, planting, clean-off)	
Contact me for any volunteer opportunities	

KWEC Events

- June 19 - Ava: A Year of Adventure in the Life of an American Avocet - children's book launch
- June/July/August - Gifts of the Garden - Art series using materials from the KWEC garden
- July 13 and 15 - Discovery Day camp for 1st-3rd Graders
- July 20 and 22 - Discovery Day camp for 4th-6th Graders
- July 26 - Drop-in STEM - Water themed activities for families
- TBD August - Youth Outdoor Day - firearms, archery, and fishing exploration for youth
- August 13 - Perseid Meteor Shower Watch Party - Space activities for families
- September 18 - Butterfly Festival - Monarch tagging, insect activities and crafts
- September 22 - 2nd Grade Wetlands Day - all Barton County 2nd graders learn about wetlands!
- December TBD - Holiday Open House - Gingerbread birdhouse construction and crafts

More activities will be scheduled as we continue to work through Covid restrictions. Please check out the following resources to stay informed of programs offered at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center!

www.wetlandscenter.fhsu.edu

Facebook @wetlandscenter

Instagram @kwecpics

Call 1-877-243-9268 to add your email to the KWEC newsletter



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY'S
**KANSAS WETLANDS
EDUCATION CENTER**



592 NE K-156 HWY
Great Bend, KS 67530

Return Service Requested