

Oklahoma's Important Bird Areas



April/May 2007 Update



"Focus on a species" Lesser Prairie Chicken

Lesser Prairie-Chicken photos (c) Joel Sartore/www.joelsartore.com

Oklahoma Range: Roger Mills, Ellis, Harper, Woodward, Woods, Beaver, and Texas Counties

Preferred Habitat: Large tracts (40,000 acres or more) of Sandsage and Shinnery Oak Habitats in the short and mixed grass prairie regions

Estimated Total Population: Estimates for 1999 were between **10-25,000**, the largest population occurring in Kansas (IUCN, Redlist).

Estimated Oklahoma Population: **3000** (Birder's World, June 2007)

Reasons for Decline : **Habitat fragmentation and loss, largely due to cedar invasion. Fencing contributes to habitat fragmentation as well and has been found to be the cause for as much as 40% of the mortality in some populations of prairie chickens, particularly in Oklahoma.**

Current Research in the State: G.M. Sutton Avian Research Center has a long term study (now in it's 9th year) on movement patterns, habitat use, nest success, survivorship and mortality causes on Lesser Prairie-Chickens in Beaver, Ellis, and Harper Counties, as well as disease, nutrition, and genetics surveys. Also, are removing unnecessary fences in occupied prairie-chicken range and developing ways to reduce collisions through marking fences in high bird use areas.

More information at <http://www.suttoncenter.org/LPCH.html>

What's Going On?

- **IBA Presentation at the Annual Spring meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society at Black Mesa State Park, in Cimarron County Oklahoma. May 18th-20th, 2007.**
- **Technical Committee meeting being held in Stroud, Oklahoma on July 6th.**
- **Site descriptions and data still being compiled for Oklahoma's first potential Global IBA's.**
- **Funding opportunities being pursued in order to hire a full-time IBA coordinator for Oklahoma.**
- **Support and enthusiasm continues for the Oklahoma Important Bird Areas Program!**



Coordinator's Statement:

We continue to take small steps, but over time these steps will accumulate, and from them large accomplishments will be made. Currently the Technical Committee is hard at work developing site descriptions for some of our proposed Global IBA's. Martin Brown, the Steering Committee chairman and myself, are busy pursuing funding opportunities for the program; for any and most of you involved in research or any kind of grant pursuit you realize just what kind of task lies ahead!

The Spring meeting of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society is being held at the Black Mesa in the far western reaches of the Oklahoma Panhandle, on the weekend of May 19th. I will be presenting a program on the Oklahoma IBA project that Saturday evening at 7:30 pm. Everyone interested should attend. I plan to provide a short overview of where the program has gone, the species we are currently working with and why, as well as a short description of some of the proposed Global IBA's for Oklahoma.

Cheers,
Eric Beck

