

KOS Spring Meeting

Spring 2026, Berea, KY

The KOS spring meeting got underway on Friday afternoon with some field trips. Participants found several good birds, although the leaf cover made spotting difficult. Despite that, everyone enjoyed the challenge of birding by ear. David Bailey led a trip to Owsley Ford Reservoir and Rebecca Bates and Rob Foster took a group to the Berea College Forest.

The Friday evening program got underway at 7:00, with Libby Megna, KOS Vice-president, making announcements about upcoming events. The fall KOS meeting will take place in the Land-Between-the-Lakes area, in partnership with the Tennessee Ornithological Society, September 18-20, 2026.

Steve Kistler presented his ever-popular bird quiz, which is always fun, before our main event.

Pam Spaulding, the evening's featured speaker, gave a photography/video presentation entitled "Chickens, Grouse, and Cranes...Oh My!" She is a former photographer for the Louisville Courier-Journal and has a passion for filming birds and other critters. She has traveled to the prairie states several times to get good photos and improve her video skills, targeting prairie chickens and grouse. Meeting attendees were treated to some magnificent photography and learned a lot about 2 species of Prairie Chicken and 3 grouse species displaying at their leks. Still photos and videos provided different insights into their behaviors. What a treat!

She also went to the Platte River area to film Sandhill Cranes as they journey north. She pointed out that 80% of the world's sandhill cranes rely on the river as a stop on their migration. She captured the dancing and leaping of the birds as well as the incredible numbers of these glorious creatures. She provided contact info about the blinds for each type of bird, since many birders will want to see the spectacles for themselves after this presentation.

Saturday's field trips were announced as Friday evening's program was drawn to a close.

David Bailey, KOS President, got the **Saturday evening program** started. He gave more info about the fall meeting, to be held jointly with the TOS. The guest speakers for both Friday and Saturday nights will be Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch who co-authored two books: [*Field Guide to North American Flycatchers: Empidonax and Pewees*](#) and [*Field Guide to North American Flycatchers: Kingbirds and Myiarchus*](#).

David provided details about two upcoming events: The 2nd KOS Breeding Bird Blitz, which will take place June 12 – 15 and the KOS T-shirt Contest. More information will be available soon. He asked trip leaders to recount the highlights of their Saturday trips.

- Kyle Bixler took a group to the Lily Mountain Preserve, where they did a lot of birding-by-ear. Ruffed grouse was a nice surprise.
- Michael Patton reported on the Brushy Fork Trail hike, where they identified 53 species, including many warblers and a Bald Eagle.
- Ronan O’Carra explored the Berea College Forest finding a total of 54 species. They had good looks at Cape May Warblers and Scarlet Tanagers, with a total of 13 warbler species.
- Rebecca Bates and Rob Foster took a group to the Owsley Fork Reservoir where highlights included Blue-winged Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrush, among many other birds.

On Saturday afternoon, there were more trips:

- Rebecca and Rob took a small group to Anglin Falls Preserve, which is not currently open to the public. The preserve is known for its spectacular spring wildflowers. The season was early this year, so some of the flowers were done blooming, but it was still pretty special.
- Ronan, David, and Joyce Bender offered a workshop about using iNaturalist. The group had fun identifying any living thing using the app (and learning how to use it more effectively.) They were excited to hear a Barred Owl.
- Brad Everhart led a trip to Whitehall Park for grassland species. They saw many Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows and several warblers.

David led the tally of the birds sighted so far, with a total of 118 different species. (More were added with Sunday’s trips.)

Ronan introduced the keynote speaker, Greg Abernathy. Greg is the Executive Director of Kentucky Natural Lands Trust (KNLT), a conservation nonprofit working to safeguard biodiversity and stabilize and support natural communities, with a primary focus in Central Appalachia.

Greg’s talk focused on the Wildlands of Central Appalachia. He pointed out that biodiversity has 3 levels: genetic diversity, species diversity, and ecosystem diversity. These sustain all life on the planet. He showed the 3 primary geologic features in Kentucky which account for incredible biological richness. Our mixed mesophytic forests and waterways are among the most biodiverse on the planet. Migration flyways intersect over the state, adding to the diversity.

The work of KNLT is science-based and community-minded, with the knowledge that their local actions have global impacts. They work with landowners and other organizations/stakeholders to safeguard the region and protect biodiversity. Over 64,000 acres have been directly purchased or protected in cooperation with other organizations. Their newest preserve is Raven's Roost at Pine Mountain.

After the talk, Sunday's field trips were announced. Brad will lead a trip to Lake Linville for lingering waterfowl and shorebirds. Rebecca and Rob will host a Porch Sit at their home in Berea to see birds foraging in their yard and visiting their water feature.

The KOS thanks everyone who made the meeting a success. It was a great weekend!