

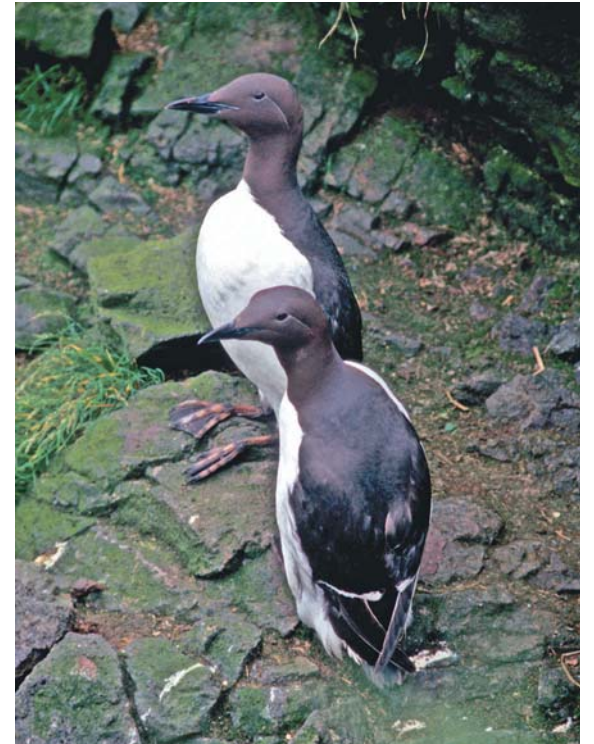
Hatched on a roof

Every year like clockwork the geese couple returns to their unlikely nesting spot: the roof of an outbuilding on my property. I witness the building of the nest and the laying of one egg each day. With camera ready, I patiently count the days until the babies peck themselves out of their shells and hide under the safety of their mother's wings until they are ready to face the world. Then, less than two days after their birth, a formidable challenge confronts them: Those babies must leap from the roof. Nestled together, the six goslings run up the roof, down the roof, over to the other side, then up the roof again. On the ground, Mother and Dad honk loudly for encouragement. Finally, one by one, the babies take the plunge, miraculously floating safely to the ground (see masthead photo). —Barbara Holiday

BIRDMAN

Spring fling

BY TED A. GLOVER



Near Great Bend, Kansas, are two very important bird areas and great places to visit in springtime. Just north of town is the largest marsh in the interior United States, now owned by the state of Kansas and managed by the Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks. The nearly 20,000 acre area is loaded with bird life, especially White Pelicans, ducks, grebes and numerous shorebirds. Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Cardinals and Eastern Meadowlarks are all there too.

At one wooded area we saw several Great Horned Owls, Franklin Gulls and Snow Geese were everywhere as were Blue-winged Teal.

A little south and east of town is another great area called Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, with 7,000 acres of marshlands. Both Bald and Golden Eagles winter on the refuge and over 800,000 ducks and geese visit until weather forces them to head south.

Another great birding area is in the southwest corner of Kansas, not far from Dodge City. It's the Cimarron National Grassland. One exciting bird to see in the spring (and a life bird for us!) was the Lesser Prairie Chicken, which is an endangered species. These guys put on quite a show during breeding season. The forest service operates two blinds for viewing the bird lek or arena for competitive mating display.

Our motor trip took us through eastern Oregon, northern Nevada, Utah, Colorado and

Kansas. Total bird species seen was 144!

Of course not everyone can take the spring motor trip we did. But you could head for the Oregon coast, home to six national wildlife refuges. The marsh at Bandon provides an important habitat for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. During spring thousands of birds stop to rest and feed along the Oregon coast on their way north to breeding areas in the arctic.

Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots, several varieties of cormorants and Tufted Puffins nest along the rocky shorelines, rocks and islands. Watch for Black Oystercatchers, Brown Pelicans and even Peregrine Falcons whose diving speed can reach over 200 miles per hour pursuing its prey.

The most common bird along the coastal waters is likely the Western Gull, a large gull that's over 30% larger than a Red-tailed Hawk. The Western Gull has a white head and under-parts, a dark gray back and distinctive pink legs. They love the coast and nearby towns, eating almost any type of live or fresh food including discards from humans.

Ted A. Glover • 541-846-0681

Photos clockwise from above left:
 Brown Pelican 2, Dr. Thomas G. Barnes, USFWS
 Common Murres, Anne Morkill, USFWS
 Black Oystercatchers, Dave Menke, USFWS
 Tufted Puffin-Mike Boylan, USFWS
 Pigeon Guillemots, USFWS



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