

EAGLES DAY

January 16, 2016

Milford Nature Center



EVENTS SCHEDULE

9:15 a.m., 11:30 a.m. & 1:45 p.m. RAPTORS

10:00 a.m., 12:15 p.m. & 2:30 p.m. OWLS

10:45 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. NESTING EAGLES

3:15 p.m. BIRDS OF PREY

Starbird Classroom

10:00 a.m., 12:15 p.m. & 2:30 p.m.

LIVE Eagle Program

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

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THANKS

Upcoming Events

Jan 9 - Sat. morning birding - We will look for eagles! Meet at Sojourner Truth Park at 8 a.m.

Jan 11 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan
NOTE: Board meetings are now back on first Monday of the month

Jan 16 - EAGLES DAY- MILFORD LAKE
see above



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

I'm reminded, and it seems worthy of note, that we are just entering the second century into which we can carry a knowledge of General Relativity. Comparable, I would think,

to the times following Newton's revelations on gravity, and Copernicus's theory of a Sun-centered universe. And I use the word "we" in its broadest sense as I believe there are many of us, including myself, who in reference to Relativity, would be constrained to add, "Whatever that is." When I was in high school it was common to hear told the story of a scientist who was asked if it was true that only three people understood Einstein's equations, and he was said to have answered, "I wonder who the other person might be."

Nonetheless a number of people have been able to grasp and proceed upon the concepts Einstein was able to envision from scratch, and then to demonstrate them or have them demonstrated, with the result being a plethora of new knowledge, new devices, and new mysteries, and thus a world that we experience and respond to in ways that would've been very different otherwise.

Actually at least one aspect of his first approach, in his earlier theory of Special Relativity, seems, while surprising and amazing, within common reach: his prediction that gravity (whatever it is) could bend light. Arthur Eddington (the scientist of the anecdote mentioned above) proved that to be so in 1919, using a solar eclipse to show that some stars were not actually in the position they seemed to be, because light coming from them was bent as it passed the Sun so that it reached the eye on Earth from a false direction. This celestial sleight-of-hand that Einstein saw through does seem a rather straight-forward phenomenon, once demonstrated.

But then things described get less easily related to common experience. I've read he observed that objects falling from heights describe a forward trajectory instead of appearing to come straight down, as if they'd been given some hidden push. And he perceived that, in fact, they did fall straight down, but that the universe was composed of four dimensions, time being the fourth, and that space-time was curved. Gravity then is described as being not a force, but a distortion in space-time. This

does not seem as easily conceptualized, at least by me. It leaves me wondering what caused the distortion. And if my noting that a straight line drawn on a basketball or even a football would also be curved, has anything to do with it. Space-time also requires considerations of time dilation whereby, for example, those responsible for transmitting satellite data have to adjust to the fact that time on transmitting satellites will be passing differently than the time at different target locations on the Earth's surface, as per his theory.

Einstein's insights did not always go unimpeded. He didn't believe that the idea that developed that there would be such things as black holes would be possible, and apparently it was Robert Oppenheimer (before he became involved in the atomic bomb project) who proved him wrong on that. And eventually he had to concede that proponents of Quantum Mechanics, positing a world composed of probabilities--he preferred that there be a dependably set universe--had some points. There's some irony here in that Quantum Mechanics, as I understand, grew from work he did on photoelectricity and for which he received the Nobel Prize in 1921. Relativity apparently being too untested to qualify then.

It seems that reconciling all the concepts of Quantum Mechanics and of Relativity remains a will-o'-the-wisp, and clearly, as has oft been noted, that the ride ahead would be beginning and heading quite differently if Albert Einstein hadn't been heard from, and as importantly, heeded, a hundred years ago.

In the sky soon ahead, Mercury is the lead-off batter this month, showing up in the evening twilights and appearing just below a slender Moon on the 10th. Bright Jupiter comes up mid-evening and ever earlier through the month, at the tail end of the Lion, to meet with the Moon the 27th, while Mars waits until shortly after midnight to rise, below the Moon on the 3rd, and within Virgo. Saturn and Venus can be spied having a near rendezvous in the west just before dawn the 8th and 9th. Then on the evening of the 19th Jupiter may be seen noticeably shouldering in front of and blocking out Aldebaran, the red eye of Taurus.

A waning Moon should sink out of the way of the Quarantid meteor shower most likely to peak in the wee hours of the 4th, with the possibility of twenty-five shooting stars a minute, the remains of an unknown source located in the current area of Bootes. The Moon will be new the 9th at 7p31 and full the 23rd at 7p46.

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Field Trip

Dru Clarke



Early in December, we heard that three whooping cranes, accompanying a sandhill, were at Milford Lake, scouting in the shallows near the sweet town of Wakefield. With no pressing chores or errands, we drove the hills between here and there, skirting the boundary of Fort Riley where a herd of elk resided and a cougar, seen by a (sober) former student, had crossed the road coming out of Keats.

The precise directions – GPS coordinates included – our friend had sent to locate the magnificent birds I neglected to copy, and, of course, I had been unable to find his email again: never mind, we'd find them. How could anyone not discover the whereabouts of several five-foot tall, white cranes?

In Wakefield, I drove slowly south, past a park where fishers had parked and, emboldened by the clear warm weather and ice-free water, had launched their craft. Looking skyward, we spotted a very large bird – white with black primaries, outstretched neck – winging lazily in a northwest direction. It was gone before we could train our binoculars on it! To me, it appeared to be a crane, but I had only seen them – actually, 23 of them! – from the deck of an unlikely tour boat, *The Whooping Crane*, feeding in the wetlands of Aransas Wildlife Refuge (in Texas) many years ago while on a trip with a group of my high school Oceanology students. Watching them there, feathers still stained from the soil of their Canadian summering grounds, was a moment in time that could have been eons ago, when the continent held sloths and camels and saber-toothed cats. And, then, as we watched, they did not fly: they calmly foraged, unruffled by our quiet presence. Imagine students on spring break, being awestruck and silent.

Spying several large, tall white objects along the shore, we trained our binoculars on them and found, to our disappointment, markers for a buried natural gas pipeline. Some large, light-colored birds, floated lazily southward with a longshore current, then disappeared behind a row of trees. Pelicans? Snow geese? Someone with a spotting

'scope set up at the edge of the lake was packing up as we trundled down a rutted dirt lane, too late to ask him if he had seen the rare birds. If he saw the one overhead we didn't know.

We passed the entrance to the landscape arboretum, and drove a few more miles until the margin of the lake was too far east to be accessible. Turning back, we decided to drive into the arboretum, past a grove of many kinds of oaks where I picked some bright leaves. Along the back road, a young man had launched a drone – we could hear its mechanical whining overhead – and was watching a monitor he had set up in a pull-out. He hadn't seen the birds either.

Several nature trails were marked, so we took two. The trails were natural, paved only by native soil and fallen leaves, and they were soft and inviting underfoot. Primitive bridges made of repurposed bridge planks and limbs, deformed interestingly by twining vines, crossed ephemeral streams. One trail wound through what had been designated as a 'bird sanctuary': we weren't sure where its boundaries were, but soon, there were no sounds save nut-hatches, chickadees, and red-bellied woodpeckers and the 'blow' of a deer. Someone knew where the birds resided.

Back at the truck an Osage orange tree had shed its fruit, so we gathered a few to take home to our cows. We left most for the squirrels who seem to relish the piquant taste.

We didn't get close up and personal with the migrating cranes, but our adventure was rewarded with new finds. The arboretum is replete with trees memorialized to beloved folks who cared for nature and the need to connect with the natural world. I'd like to be remembered that way. And, maybe if a west wind blows next year, the whooping cranes with their brother, sandhill, will be back at Milford. DC



Photo courtesy of Ken Stafford

Whooping Cranes (and one Sandhill)

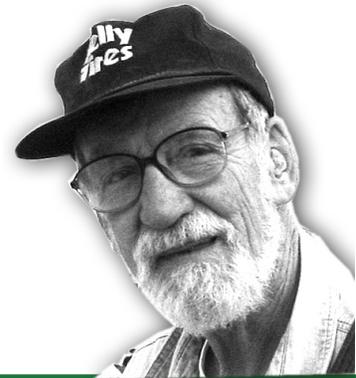


Thank you, Ken Stafford, for the great photos



Take Note

THANKS to Clyde Ferguson for another successful Birdathon! Clyde and his cadre of loyal birdathoners raised over \$2000!!



Birdathon 2015
Clyde Ferguson

THANKS to all who bought seeds at our BirdSeed Sale. We only have one a year now and really appreciate the response.

Special thanks to Jacque Staats who made deliveries (and hefted some 50# bags!) Thanks also to Carla Bishop, Kevin Fay, Dru Clarke, and Jim Crawford for their work unloading the truck and making sure everyone got the right order.

SAVE THE DATE

Kansas Birding Festival April, 2016

Plan now to attend the Kansas Birding festival in 2016. Over 300 species of birds can be seen in the Milford Lake area. This area is rich in birding opportunities during the latter part of April. Not only are there native birds who inhabit the area year round, but it is the prime season for birds that migrate. Combine this with Milford Lake, the wetlands, and the native prairie; and you have the best locations in America for bird sightings.

For more information go to:

<http://www.kansasbirdingfestival.org/>





Northern Flint Hills
Audubon Society
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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
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Subscription Information: If you do not want to receive the national magazine, but still want to be involved in NFHAS local activities, you may subscribe to the Prairie Falcon newsletter for \$15/yr. Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, and mail to: Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS, 66505-1932

RARE BIRD HOTLINE: For information on Kansas Birds, subscribe to the Kansas Bird Listserve. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to <list_serve@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions.

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