

**PROGRAM: MARCH 17, 7:00
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**BIRD CALLS AND SONGS OF WICHITA
PAUL GRIFFIN**

I'm a semi-retired aircraft designer. I have lived in the Wichita area for about 40 years. I started "serious" bird watching in April 2002 in Oak Park, in Wichita, mainly because it is a 10 minute walk from where I live. I'm a little bit different as a bird watcher, as I use a video camera as my binoculars. I tape what I'm looking at for later reference. Since April 2002 I have videoed about 170 species of birds in Oak Park. My video camera also records sound.

The video I will be showing is "Bird Calls and Songs of Wichita." It is mostly taken in Oak Park and it has about 70 species in it. It includes: Owls, Warblers, Vireos, Tanagers, Hummingbirds, Ducks, Hawks, Woodpeckers, Thrushes, Kinglets, Wrens and others.

NORTHERN Flint Hills Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 1972, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1972



PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 38, No. 7 ~ MARCH 2010

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Upcoming Events:

MAR. 1 - BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m.
(TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME)

MAR. 13 - SAT. MORNING BIRDING

MAR. 17 - PROGRAM - PAUL GRIFFIN
w/VIDEO "Bird Calls & Songs of Wichita"

APR. 5 - BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m.
(TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME)



SKYLIGHT PLUS

PETE COHEN

This is the time of year, much more so than in January, when I tend to commune with Janus, the Roman god of gates, and thus of comings and goings, of beginnings and endings. He's perceived as a deity with two faces looking in opposite directions to each other. (From such is derived the so-called Janus masks of laughing and tragic appearance that appear often on theatrical programs.)

I understand that the month honoring him was conceived as part of a calendar reform instituted by Numa, Rome's second ruler, about 400 b.c.e., and has spent a lot of time off and on as the eleventh month until Julius Caesar became the last one to make it the first month — closer to the winter solstice than the spring equinox — in his reforms of 45 b.c.e. Just the same, while they usually have their own behaviors, December, January, and February are capable of imitating each other and providing a continuum of winter. But March, while it sometimes tries to be part of that group, it seems to me cannot avoid having a special feeling of ending/beginning. Maybe it's the lengthening daylight or some corresponding quality of the air — a quality that speaks of seasons changing — of time passing, of projects intended that had best be attended to sooner rather than later.

I perceive a great variety of human responses, depending upon a mix of circumstances and attitudes. I once discussed with a Winnipeg doctor our joint discovery that a certain Minnesota school pro forma cancelled classes if the temp went below a certain mark, I think it was -20 or -25 F, while just across the line in Manitoba things went on as usual. "We're no tougher," the doctor said, "we just think differently"

True, an attitude alone is no defense against winter's teeth, be they the fangs of prolonged

exposure, economic costs, or drivers too stupid to slow down. Yet an attitude fortunately clothed, with sufficient shelter — by castle or competent campcraft — can delight in the fresh, bright, be-tracked snow, the enlivening air, the transparent woods, and hopefully find a smile among the fangs--winter aspects that are more challenge than burden.

Right now as I write ahead of deadline, I've again become accustomed to the early darkness with the repeated chances to wake a companionable fire, but I know that when this issue appears things will be different. Twilight will come slower, the fire will not heat and dance with the same prominence. There will be those yelling at Janus to throw wide the gates of spring, while I'm asking him to "keep his cool" and take his time. Oh, I recognize that "the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la, breathe promise of merry sunshine," and I'll "welcome the hope that they bring, tra-la," and part of that hope will be to be around to enjoy the next winter that Janus lets in.

Meanwhile these coming nights Saturn will continue to arrive early and stay aloft, rising just upper left of the Moon on the first, becoming the brightest it can with its rings edgewise to us on the 21st, and on the 29th shifting from below it to above before dawn. Mars will be already well up at dark, blushing near the Gemini Twins and continuing to dim through the month while still sparking brighter than any star except Sirius. It'll play peek-a-boo with the Moon, shining to its east on the 24th, west on the 25th.

The Moon will visit with Spica in Virgo on the 2nd, with Antares in Scorpio on the 6th, and pass glide along between Alderbaran, Taurus' eye and the Pleiades on the 20th; actually it will be quite close beside that delicate cluster that marks the hefty Bull's shoulder. And —sound the trumpets! — Venus will reappear, lingering low in the west a little longer each night after sunset, notably close to the Moon on the 16th.

The Moon will be new the 15th at 4p01 and full the 29th at 9p25.

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HELP NEEDED

NFHAS is still on the lookout for a new treasurer. Carla Bishop is resigning as treasurer. She says that the position requires approximately one hour per week for bookkeeping the Society's accounts and one hour a month as a member of the board. Carla will work with the new treasurer for the next three months before they take over the duties in June, 2010.

NFHAS is also looking for someone to coordinate the care the Butterfly Garden. Susan Blackford must give up the position. You may contact her for more information on the time and work involved.

Trekking through drifts of melting snow to a motion sensing camera we'd hung on a tree trunk near our west pond, I was startled by an explosion of bobwhite that scattered like shot. They had been hidden in the cover of shrubs in front of me. We hadn't seen them in a while in the worst of the recent weather and wondered if the frigid temperatures had wasted their numbers. So, my temporary jolt from their rapid fire wing beats was a welcome one.

Bobwhite quail are notoriously hard to see unless they are fleeing, but despite that, people are naturally attracted to them because they are so...so adorable: their rounded, five ounce bodies enveloped by cocoa red and buffy-grey feathers so perfect they seem to be drawn on; their speedy but toddling run; their perky call that gives them their common name (although the Massachusetts Indians thought it sounded like "Waquoit," hence the town of that name). Bobwhite and other quail are ground feeders (although I've seen pictures of Gambel's quail online clustered together on an off-the-ground feeder), consuming small seeds, bits of green leafy material and small invertebrates as they can catch them. They line shallow hollows on the ground with grass, then bend taller grasses over it to form a camouflaging canopy, which may be why I have never identified a nest. Turkey and other "varmints" are often blamed for raiding the nests, contributing to high egg destruction and low productivity. But research of some species – specifically the Gambel's quail – links low reproductive rates to an elevated concentration of phytoestrogens in plants that they consume. Evidently in dry years phytoestrogen levels in certain plants rise and inhibit reproduction. In wet years, the levels drop

and the quail population bounces back. So, blaming bad weather and predation doesn't tell the whole story.

Quail have a more subtle courtship than their relatives, the grouse and prairie chickens. The bobwhite male does a little side pass dance and flashes his comely profile which does the trick if the female is paying attention. Back east, we had ruffed grouse living in our deciduous woods and hemlock grove, and their courtship was a lot more raucous: the males would start a drum beat that accelerated until each beat was indistinguishable from the next. The thrumming was loud enough to make your organs vibrate. On our walks we'd find the soft tips of hemlock twigs scattered on the forest floor (I'm not sure if it was from their feeding or from the sonic drumming). And, of course, here on the prairie, if you get up early enough and into a blind before daybreak, you can witness the spectacle of the prairie chickens booming on their leks.

This renewed interest in quail led me to finally read 'That Quail Robert' during commercial breaks of the football playoffs this Sunday afternoon. It is an endearing memoir of a bobwhite who hatched from an 'abandoned' egg in the home of a retired couple on Cape Cod. Her gender became evident after she laid an egg, just one, but her name stuck. Her antics and affectionate nature were endearing and remarkable, and her life brought joy to many folks. The book is only 126 pages long and a delightful look into the life of a very sweet bird. So, may quail prevail over the long odds nature throws their way. Listen this spring for their call, and see if you don't hear "Waquoit."

©Dru Clarke 1/10

THANKS

The Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society (NFHAS) delivered the first bags of bird seed to each of Clay Center's care homes in memory of Charles Black, who passed away on May 30, 2009, at the age of 77.

We wish to thank the family for the **Charles Black Memorial Fund**. It is with funds from this memorial that the NFHAS will provide Black Oil Sunflower seed annually to - Country Place, Medicalodge, and Presbyterian Manor, in Clay Center.

We hope the care home residents and their families will enjoy feeding and watching birds in honor of Mr. Black.

(Thanks to Annie Baker for ordering and delivering the bird seed)

VIEW FROM THE BACK SEAT

BY VICKY JONES

Saturday morning my dear husband and I planned a trip to Topeka, Kansas – he was going to the Topeka Harley Davidson Shop for his Saturday morning conference at “Table 29” with the old-timers and I was going to do some shopping. As we pulled around by the lake, we saw an immature bald eagle sitting on the ice near the shoreline.

After I got my camera, I walked down to the shoreline and counted four eagles standing on the ice. Disturbed by my presence, the eagles flew across the lake to the opposite shore. Later, we counted three adult eagles in the trees at the shoreline, one immature eagle on the ground and three immature eagles on the ice. I was able to take a few pictures, but did not wish to disturb them further and we left for our appointed rounds in Topeka.

That afternoon when we returned, the eagles were still present in that area of the lake, flying over the open water or sitting on the ice. We took a few more pictures from the car and continued to watch the spectacular activity of the majestic birds. My dear husband and I saw more eagles on Saturday than we saw at Eagle Days last year at Milford Lake near Junction City! And we were closer, too!

Bald eagles are opportunists; that is, they watch for other birds that hunt and will steal their catch. They will sit for hours on the ice watching for a prospective free meal or will roost in a tree near a body of water and watch for prey – fish and other water fowl – as they have “eagle eyes”! Bald eagles are a regular winter occurrence at the lake since the weather has been extremely cold in the northern parts of the state. I also understand that last year a pair of bald eagles raised their young somewhere near Lake Wabaunsee area.

According to <http://nationalzoo.si.edu> fact sheet, when the bald eagle was adopted as our national symbol in 1782, there were between 25,000 and 75,000 birds nesting in the lower 48 states. Illegal shooting, habitat destruction, lead poisoning, and the catastrophic effects of DDT contamination in their prey base reduced eagle numbers to a mere 417 pairs by 1963. Legal protection began with the bald eagle Protection Act of 1940 and continued with the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 and the 1978 listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The single-most important regulation affecting bald eagle recovery may have been the banning of DDT for most uses in the United States in 1972. In 1995 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service down-listed bald eagles from endangered to threatened in most of the United States. Though the recovery has been spectacular, bald eagles remain threatened by illegal shooting and loss of habitat due to wetland drainage and human occupation of waterfront areas.

My grandmother always said to take time to smell the roses. There is time to “smell the roses” even in winter, but in the form of bird watching. Until next time, look for the little things that brings joy to your life! Take care and God bless you! Vicky Jones

Update:

MJ Morgan has learned from Wabaunsee county residents that apparently no nests are in sight, which may be a good thing, if people start driving down there.



*published with permission of
Vicky Jones and Mission Valley Herald*



E-NEWSLETTER: If you wish to opt out of the “paper” Prairie Falcon newsletter and get it online as a pdf - send your name and email address to Jacque Staats - staats@wildblue.net



MARCH 18-21 - SANDHILL CRANE MIGRATION FOCUS OF 40TH ANNUAL RIVERS & WILDLIFE CELEBRATION KEARNEY, NEBRASKA. WWW.NEBRASKA.AUDUBON.ORG

MARCH 17- NFHAS PROGRAM - "BIRD CALLS & SONGS OF WICHITA" BY PAUL GRIFFIN

APRIL 23 - WAKEFIELD BIRDING FESTIVAL
WWW.KANSASBIRDINGFESTIVAL.ORG/

WELOVEBIRDS.ORG

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology announced the launch of WeLoveBirds.org, an interactive online community for bird enthusiasts. WeLoveBirds.org offers a free and open social network of people who are passionate about birds; access to information on birds and birding from a leading ornithology lab; and an opportunity to make a positive difference for birds and their habitats.

"Given the many threats to birds, they need all the help they can get," said Susan Casey-Lefkowitz, NRDC senior attorney. "WeLoveBirds.org gives bird-lovers a place to share information and make a difference."

WeLoveBirds.org will feature information on more than 500 species of birds, bird news, notes on scientific discoveries, and an open platform for bird enthusiasts of all levels to contribute their own stories, photos, birding observations, questions, and more.

The site represents a first partnership between NRDC and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, nationally recognized conservation organizations that will offer NRDC's expertise in policy and advocacy and the Cornell Lab's authoritative bird research, online birding resources, and citizen-science programs.

"WeLoveBirds.org is a place where birders can connect with one another around the issues that they care about," said Miyoko Chu, director of Communications at the Cornell Lab. "It's a place where they can also easily tap into a wealth of resources to enhance their enjoyment of birds and take their love of bird watching to the next level by helping birds through citizen-science projects or other actions." The WeLoveBirds.org launch coincides with the Great Backyard Bird Count, an annual event that runs from February 12–15, 2010, and tallies more than 11 million birds during the 4-day count. It is hosted by the

CHICKADEE CHECKOFF

While comparatively small, the Chickadee Checkoff pot is very important in supplying some state match cost share for the State Wildlife Grant program. We still have great need for the checkoff contributions. This money has helped us fund numerous bird projects in the past including the Kansas Breeding Bird Atlas and the most recent "Birds of Cheyenne Bottoms" book.

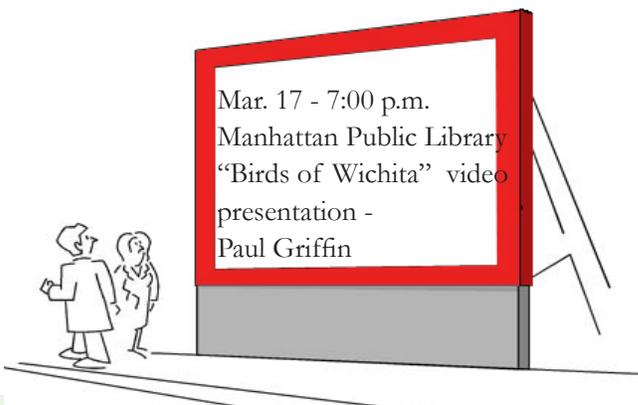


NORTHERN FLINT HILLS
Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1932
MANHATTAN, KS
66505-1932

PRINTED ON 100% POST-CONSUMER
RECYCLED PAPER

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT No. 662
MANHATTAN, KS 66502

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Published monthly (except August) by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society.
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Also available on-line at www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html

Subscription Information: Introductory memberships - \$20/yr., then basic membership is \$35/yr. When you join the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the National Audubon Society and receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine in addition to the Prairie Falcon newsletter. New membership applications may be sent to Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are handled by the National Audubon Society and should not be sent to the NFHAS. Questions about membership? Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org.

If you do not want to receive the national magazine, but still want to be involved in our 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, 66502-1932.

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.

Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email:

Governor Mark Parkinson: 2nd Floor, State Capital Bldg., Topeka , KS 66612.

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