

Thanksgiving with fellow birders

Whether you're by yourself this Thanksgiving or you have so many offspring you don't know what to do, NFHAS members and their families are invited to a Thanksgiving day feast and birding this year.

What: Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 23) celebration

It will be a joint effort by attendees. Please let me know what dish, if any, you would like to bring to the meal. If you do not like to cook or are unable to, that's OK, please join us anyway. Bring your own dishes to eat with because it is the environmentally friendly thing to do. The only requirement is that you **MUST RSVP by NOV. 21**. Call Patricia or Kent at 785-776-9593 or e-mail pyeagerbirder@gmail.com.

Time: We will eat at 1:00 p.m.

But you can bring your binoculars and scopes anytime. The club house will be opened at 8:00 a.m. There may be ducks on the lake even earlier and other birding can be good within walking distance of the club house. There is a play ground for children. Please do not bring watercraft of any kind. (Unless you own property here and your craft is registered, it is not welcome.) Fishing from the bank is welcome by guests (on Thanksgiving you will be my guest).

Where: Lake Elbo Club House.

Directions from Manhattan: Go east of Manhattan on 24, cross the railroad tracks, the river and pass the Dara's at Green Valley Road. Near mile marker 321 you will see a road sign indicating Lake Elbo Rd, turn left (North) onto Lake Elbo Rd. Continue north until the pavement ends and turns to gravel. Turn left into Lake Elbo. Ignore all right turns until you see the lake. Do not cross the dam. Instead turn right. Park near the flag poles or at the front of the clubhouse.

Wherever you find yourself on Thanksgiving, I wish for you that nature's wonder is a part of it.

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 46, No. 3 ~ November 2017

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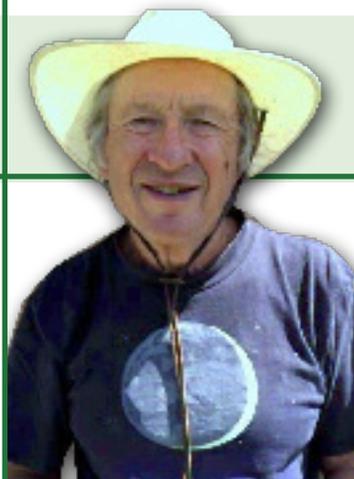
Nov. 6 - Board meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Nov. 11 - Saturday Morning Birding 8 a.m.-11 a.m.
Departing from Sojourner Truth Park

Nov. 22 - BIRDSEED ORDER FORMS **recieved** by NFHAS

Nov. 23 - Thanksgiving Celebration and Birding
See above

DEC. 2 - BIRDSEED PICKUP - 8-11 a.m.
UFM Parking Lot



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

With the change in the air that is autumn, some thoughts:

On November 24th fifty years ago, an article by Thomas D. Brock was published in the journal *Science* titled "Life at High Temperatures". It announced the discovery in Yellowstone Park of a bacterium that he named *Thermus aquaticus*, which became the first of the known "extremophiles" organisms, like the tube worms of the deep ocean, living in conditions previously thought unsupportive of any life. There's a leitmotif in the fact that Brock's colleague in the discovery of a torrid-heat-loving organism (a thermophile) was named Hudson Freeze, but it was a discovery that's had a significant ripple effect through a great deal of science.

In a way, the recent hurricanes, and other such disasters, create human extremophiles, people who must face surviving in environments extremely hostile at least to human life as we see it should be. They must face those new conditions without the benefit of eons of evolutionary adaptation. And unlike with the bacteria and other creatures who basically adapt, humans respond by exerting what seems as much or more energy combating the change as adapting to the new environment--with some coming out better than others.

These events gather wide notice and reaction because of the speed and immediate volume with which they occur. Yet it's impossible for us to survive without changing our environment. Even hunter-gatherers effect their surroundings by whatever they gather. The Flint Hills grasslands if left undisturbed will eventually be covered with climax forests that admit little other coincident beings, except perhaps for the beetles that likely would eventually destroy them if drought or fire didn't do so first.

Some of the results of past actions can be observed and felt. Some of the past exists only as neural impulses called memory. Separately or combined they indicate that our environments will change, and that what will count is how much say we have in the process. It seems unlikely that evolutionary processes will have time to give us a hand. We will have to find ways to use our neural impulses to find ways to read the signals, to choose the compromises that favor the best of our nature, and to work together.

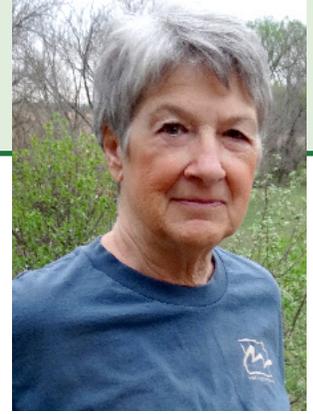
For planet watchers, marking other places in which survival would be required extremophile abilities, in November their times are early and late. Saturn will be sinking away in the west as the evenings come on, a little yellowish spot amid the dim widespread stars of Ophiuchus. On the 20th the waxing Moon will be to its left above an even lower Mercury that'll be sparkling if your horizon is still lower.

In the east Mars rises in the wee hours with Jupiter next and then Venus following in the pre-dawns. Venus will be near and noticeably brighter than the star Spica in Virgo the 12th-14th, and goes arm-in-arm with Jupiter close to the horizon the 13th. The then waning Moon makes it a five-some by lining up with Mars and Spica the 14th before taking time to nearly blot out Regulus on the 15th, then passes above then beyond Venus the 16th-17th. It will appear as a mere sliver on the 17th, having left the sky dark for the Leonid meteor shower that night. The Leonids, which sometimes produce extravaganzas 33 years apart, are midway between those times and are expected to produce perhaps 10-20 shooting stars a minute.

The Moon will be new the 18th at 5a42, having been full on the 4th at 12a23.

Native Patch

Dru Clarke



Our west fence was down: A massive chinquapin oak split in two and crashed onto the five-strand barbed wire, and our neighbors' cows were converging on the gap. Hours after the limbs were cleared and the stone post (a cylinder of loose rocks encircled by a catchment of more wire) was re-erected, our properties were discreet entities once again. We thought all the neighbor's cows had gone home. Wrong.

The next day, while checking our south mares, we spotted a bloom of white on black in the sumac-dogwood: there stood #58, a maverick cow, solo and frightened. We couldn't approach her without her bolting. We called our neighbor, left a message, and he didn't respond: maybe not his cow? For several days we didn't see her again, but we found fresh droppings near the pond. She was still here.

A week went by, then we saw her on the edge of the south woods, and just in front of her was a black calf. They melted into the undergrowth. Fortunately, there is a sliver of bottomland between the south creek and the rocky slope that rises up to a high meadow that our horses and rightfully owned cows seem to have forgotten about: a native patch of Big Bluestem, Indian grass, Switchgrass, and some Little Bluestem. Tall forbs – joe-pye weed, velvety gaura, wingstem, stiff sunflower – ornamented by butterflies and a host of other pollinators complement the slender grasses. The place is a tuck in the land, bordered by deciduous trees next to the creek on one edge and a cedar grove where we hunt morels on the other. Here #58 has made a home for herself and her calf.

Obscure niche environments – microhabitats – when discovered, are a delight. In climbing Mt. Ephraim just east of rte. 99 at Westmoreland (Kansas), where the limestone was quarried for the county's storied courthouse, we entered an ecotone where prairie meets woods and a seep moistened the soil and nourished a lone Carolina willow. Erupting from the earth was a covey of bobwhite quail. The rock I was carrying went flying as well. Further into the woods was a wide slough that skirted the summit, perhaps the route used by the stone boats that ferried the stone to the building site. Here, too, the Oregon Trail's swales can be traced.

Another unusual but truly relict environment is Hackberry Glen, off McDowell Creek Road. Accessed by permission on this private property, I used to take classes of Ecology students there to hike to the top and ID the various unusual plants living there: Paw paws with their velvety purplish black flowers, hop hornbeam trees (whom some thought were hackberry), and walking fern. A horsehair worm, newly emerged from a cricket, wriggled in the stream's cool water. Another find was a copperhead, coiled comfortably on a flat rock. The glen may be a relict microhabitat, isolated in its crease in the hills, from the end of the last Ice Age.

Friends told us of a bog introduced to them by the late Lloyd Hulbert on the south side of rte. 24, east of Manhattan (Kansas). A type of wetland, acidic bogs, with their peaty soil from Sphagnum moss get most of their water from precipitation: fens, which are similar in appearance, are less acidic and are fed by streams and groundwater. A visit to this site would establish its true identity.

Associated with all of these places are plants and animals adapted to those unique conditions. Our dried-up buffalo wallows on our highest pasture should host tadpole shrimp, order Notostraca, but we've never seen them. The vegetation in the wallows, not visited by bison in over 150 years, is different from the surrounding prairie: we think it is because of compaction cause by their once rolling bodies. Occasionally we see a horse standing in one, looking (wistfully?) off into the distance.

This morning we found #58 lying beneath the cedars, with her calf a few meters away, she, peacefully chewing her cud, the calf, appearing well nourished, alert, but calm. They remained where they were bedded down, even as we and our two dogs approached in the noisy ATV. The native patch had been grazed in select spots where the grass grew lush and bright. We saluted #58 for her finding a niche that others had forgotten about. She may not ever 'go home.'

© 2017 Dru Clarke,

FRANKLIN'S GULL "GULL OF THE PRAIRIES"

The typical nesting gull of the northern Great Plains, sometimes called "Prairie Dove." Rare on either coast but familiar in the interior, with flocks often seen following plows in farm fields.



Photo by Dave Rintoul



To see Dave's video: <http://www.davidrintoul.com/frgu.mp4>

The Franklin's Gull is unique among gulls in having two complete molts each year rather than one. The floating nest of the Franklin's Gull gradually sinks as the material below the water surface decays, and it requires continual maintenance. Both parents add new nest material daily until one or two weeks before departing the colony. Older chicks also add nest material from the immediate vicinity of the nest.

The Franklin's Gull depends on extensive prairie marshes for breeding, and entire colonies may shift sites from year to year depending on water levels. Once threatened by habitat loss due to large-scale drainage projects and the Dust Bowl years, this species has regained numbers with the creation of large wetlands, mainly on protected national wildlife refuges. Colony shifts continue to occur, however, influenced by drought and fluctuating water levels.

This species was first collected by Dr. John Richardson, on the first Sir John Franklin expedition to northwestern Canada in 1823, probably from the Saskatchewan River. Sabine described the bird, noted its unique characteristics, but mistakenly called it a Laughing Gull (*L. atricilla*). After the second Franklin expedition, Richardson named it Franklin's Rosy Gull (*L. franklinii*), a name widely used for 90 years. Although written in 1830, Richardson's publication was not released until 1832 (Swainson and Richardson 1832), so that Wagler's description of *L. pipixcan* from Mexico published in 1831 has priority (Houston and Street 1959). Audubon apparently never encountered this species and did not illustrate it (Job 1910).

Franklin's Gull
Leucophaeus pipixcan



Take Note

Introducing **Mark H. Mayfield,**

(who will be taking over the Manhattan Christmas Bird Count Coordinator/Compiler duties.)

I am a lifelong birdwatcher and I have also banded birds since I was in my teens with my Father, mostly in Tennessee. I teach Biology and work as a plant taxonomist in the herbarium in the Division of Biology at KSU. Most of the latter involves identifying plants for the KSU Extension Service but I do scientific research geared towards understanding plant diversity. I've lived in Manhattan for 17 years and participated in nearly every Manhattan CBC since I've been here. I also run 2 USFWS Breeding Bird Survey routes in the early summers.

I grew up in Tennessee, did my undergraduate work at Vanderbilt where I learned about plant taxonomy, and did my graduate work at the University of Texas in Austin, Texas. I then spent my first 4 years out of school as an herbarium collections manager at LSU in Baton Rouge (where CBCs rock!). I have continued to observe the birds wherever I have lived and although I would not say I'm an avid "lister"-- I enjoy the activity when I do it and try to keep up with what I see all the time. Most of my daily birding is by ear and so I look forward to winter bird study as a time to refresh the eyes with lots of difficult to distinguish birds from a distance.

My spouse is Carolyn Ferguson, a Professor of Biology at KSU, and we have two teenage girls, Clara and Helen. Finally, I remember when the crowds at the Manhattan CBC chili event and compilation were much larger--hoping for that again this year!

(More information about the CBC in the Dec. issue of the Prairie Falcon)

Michel-Ross PRESERVE

It was a small group that explored Northern Flint Hills Audubon's Michel-Ross Oct. 15th. The temperature was cool and the poison ivy was beautiful in its fall colors. This was helpful as we could avoid it when we clipped the invasive honeysuckle branches that were blocking the trail. It was a pleasant surprise that the poison ivy was scarce and the birds were plentiful. Nothing unusual was seen but a curious ruby-crowned kinglet landed close by as if to say, "Hello". I usually see a kinglet on the Michel-Ross preserve. Soon the golden-crowns will be more likely.

We decided that it would be helpful to have way finding markers at this location. However, I confess that I kind of like that "lost in the forest" feeling while still in town. The area is about 26 acres. If you get "lost" there enjoy it. When you are ready to leave, just walk in a straight line and you will be on a Manhattan street in no more than 10 minutes.

To communicate science and celebrate big ideas, Kansas State University and community partners have organized the first Science Communication Week from Nov. 6 to 11.

"Seeing science (and telling the tale)" with National Geographic photographer Jim Richardson

Monday, Nov. 6, 7 p.m., Flint Hills Discovery Center, 515 S. Third St., Manhattan,
Presenting images and their stories, Richardson will share his National Geographic career covering science stories ranging from neolithic archeology, soil, agriculture and feeding the planet, geology in the Scottish islands, genetically modified foods, prairie ecology, light pollution, dark skies and more.

2017 Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society **BIRDSEED SALE/FUNDRAISER**



ORDER by: Nov. 22, 2017 PICKUP Date: Dec. 2, 2017
return with payment to: UFM Parking Lot
NFHAS 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
P.O. Box 1932
Manhattan, KS 66505 Checks payable to: NFHAS

CHEAP CHEEP MIX is less expensive but still attractive to many species. It is 40 % cracked corn, 40 % white proso millet, and 20 % black oil sunflower (with no milo or fillers).

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED CHIPS are high in energy and can be used in tube feeders. It is especially liked by pine Siskins. Hulled sunflower seed is consumed by a variety of birds, large- and small-beaked.

FINCH MIX consists of 50% sunflower chips and 50% thistle seed.

FLINT HILLS FEAST is the premium seed mix: 30% black oil sunflower seed, 20% striped sunflower seed, and 50% white proso millet (with no milo or fillers).

MEDIUM CHOP is chopped corn, a little finer and cleaned.

PEANUT PICKOUTS are chunks of peanut hearts and are very attractive to woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, titmice, jays, wrens, and more.

AUDUBON PREMIUM BLEND is a premium blend of 40% blacks, 40% striped and 20% millet.

SAFFLOWER is a favorite with Cardinals, and squirrels really do not like it.

SUET CAKES, in addition to having other nutritious ingredients, the main ingredient is high calorie beef fat. It helps birds maintain body heat in cold winter months. Bird seed, berries and peanut butter are mixed in with suet. Enjoy woodpeckers, wrens, nuthatches, and chickadees.

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS are the preferred seed of many small feeder birds and attractive to more species than are striped sunflower seeds. Black oil supplies more energy per pound than striped.

STRIPED SUNFLOWER SEEDS contain larger hearts than black oil sunflower seeds and are particularly suitable for larger songbirds.

THISTLE SEED is very attractive to Gold Finches and all other finches that are here over winter. It is excellent or tube feeders.

WHITE MILLET is a favorite of most small-beaked ground-feeding birds; Red millet is also readily eaten. Quail, doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, cowbirds, and red-winged blackbirds are attracted to millet.

(Taken from Audubon At Home Bird Feeding Basics, <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/>)

Sales Support Local Chapter Activities

As with all of our fund-raising activities, proceeds from our seed sales go toward supporting the educational and conservation projects of the local chapter. All of our labor is voluntary. Taxes are included in the price of our seed. Even though we are a not-for-profit organization, we are required to pay tax on any retail sales. Any additional donation you may wish to include with your order is appreciated.

Quality Seed, Easy Handling

The products we offer are high quality seeds. Our mixes were created to satisfy the needs of local bird populations at reasonable costs. We have tried to make it easy for you to purchase the amount of seed you want without having to handle heavy, awkward bags. Our seed comes in 10, 25, and 50 pound bags. We try to obtain the seed in paper bags whenever possible.

Volunteers welcome! Help unload the delivery truck at 7:45 a.m. and/ or volunteer throughout the morning. Pickup Dec. 2, 2017 8-11 a.m.

TYPE	Unit (lb bags)	Price/unit	number	TOTAL COST
Black oil sunflower	10	\$7.28		
	25	\$15.45		
	50	\$28.12		
Striped sunflower	10	\$8.09		
	25	\$17.17		
	50	\$30.98		
Flint hills feast	10	\$4.82		
	25	\$11.04		
	50	\$20.85		
Cheap-cheap blend	10	\$4.09		
	25	\$10.22		
	50	\$17.99		
Sunflower chips	10	\$12.85		
	25	\$27.71		
Thistle	10	\$20.03		
	25	\$44.96		
Finch mix	10	\$15.94		
	25	\$35.97		
Safflower	10	\$8.99		
	25	\$20.44		
White millet	10	\$4.82		
	25	\$8.99		
	50	\$15.45		
Red millet	10	\$5.31		
	25	\$11.55		
	50	\$19.90		
Peanut pickouts (shelled peanuts)	10	\$15.45		
	25	\$34.25		
Medium corn chop	25	\$8.91		
	50	\$15.12		
suet cake	ea	\$1.47		

Delivery service available – Manhattan city limits – Please include addt'l \$5.

COMPLETE this portion and return with payment.

Name _____

Address _____

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e-mail _____

SUBTOTAL: _____

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Membership Information: Introductory memberships- \$20/yr., then basic, renewal membership is \$35/yr. When you join the National Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society. You will receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine in addition to the Prairie Falcon newsletter. New membership applications should be sent to **National Audubon Society, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250**. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society and include the **code C4ZJ040Z**. Questions about membership? Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org. Website is www.audubon.org.

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

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