

# 68th Manhattan Christmas Bird Count - Dec. 17

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Area CBCs:

Wakefield - Dec. 18 - Chuck Otte - otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

Junction City - Dec. 26 - Chuck Otte - otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

Olsburg - Dec 30 - Contact Gary Jeffrey - gjeffrey@twinvalley.net, 785.468.3587

For complete list go to:

<http://ksbirds.org/kos/2015CBC.htm>

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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### Upcoming Events

Dec. 3 - PICKUP SEEDS

8 a.m - UFM Parking Lot

Dec. 5 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.

Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Dec. 10 - Sat. Morning Birding

8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

Dec. 17 - Manhattan CBC

Dec. 18 - Wakefield CBC

Dec. 26 - Junction City CBC

Dec. 30 - Olsburg CBC



Skylight plus  
Pete Cohen

*"Woe onto him who has read only one book."*

So wrote an Anglican priest, George Herbert, in the early 1600s when books were a relatively new item. And so began a letter of mine that appeared in the August 7th Manhattan Mercury. I think it wouldn't hurt to repeat and enlarge a bit about it here.

For Herbert's warning can apply equally to newspaper articles, and on August 1st the Mercury contained a page-wide piece taken from the Philadelphia Inquirer, written with all the ask-no-questions exuberance of an ad for a movie, and headlined "Shale fulfills promise on jobs, energy, environment". Shale oil, the article exclaims was making "unthinkable progress" in promoting the economy and protecting the environment, with no need to choose between the two.

That article does acknowledge that no single policy can address the complicated challenges of maintaining good jobs and clean air. It gave as an example of shale's input, a once idle Marcus Hook complex in Pennsylvania that's become a "bustling petrochemical refining, storage, and export facility that supports thousands of local jobs."

But an example not given appeared in the July 23rd issue of the long-standing magazine, The Economist. This referred to 100,000 tons of invisible methane escaping a natural gas system near Los Angeles, over 112 days, and forcing "the evacuation of thousands of homes" with "a plume detectable from space" in the infra-red. The methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, it reports, now exceeds that from belching cows.

Methane, it adds, is "the predominant constituent of natural gas" a fuel that is looked to as a "bridge" to a carbon-free future, emitting when burned half the CO<sub>2</sub> as coal, and far less sulfur and other pollutants. And methane remains in the atmosphere for 12 years, compared to CO<sub>2</sub>'s 500 plus--but it "is 25 times more potent" as an insulator. Thus if its emissions are not restrained, its short range negatives could out-weigh its possible long term benefits "especially if it gets to rival petrol as a transport fuel".

The Economist states that the industry is aware of this and working toward solutions, while the EPA is

looking toward regulations that might be needed in situations where the leaks can be stopped by the twist of a wrench, or require something more. The article reports a large part of the industry recognizes the situation, that British Petroleum, Italy, Saudi Aramco and Mexico's Pemex have joined global efforts to reduce methane emissions. They have a dual incentive: fewer leaks means more gas to sell, and less stain upon their reputation. But it adds there is no reliable data from Russia, Angola, Libya, and Nigeria, and without such data "it will be impossible to get the situation in hand".

So whether the Inquirer writer is correct or not in urging for policies that encourage, not discourage, development of the Marcellus, etc., with its concomitant fracking, pipelines, etc., it seems clear all policies should be adopted with another caution in mind, though its initial source be lost in history: that "There is no free lunch".

Shining for free, Venus can be an attractive distraction in the evenings ahead, glittering through the twilights, starting ever higher, and seeming to draw another planet toward it, with Mars to its upper left, shifting hesitatingly from Capricorn into Aquarius to get closer. (The apparent hesitations will be due to our angle of view of Mars as the Earth moves past it on our separate orbit.) Both of the constellations involved are dim, and Mars will be only a tenth as bright as in June, so Venus will be the starring "star", even though the actually brighter waxing Moon moves from below to above the pair on the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> the Moon will approach and cover one of the bright stars of winter, Aldebaran, the red eye of Taurus the Bull who backs away from Orion throughout each winter night.

Late in the evenings the Moon will be above then below Leo's bright star Regulus the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, and for wee hour viewers Jupiter will rise to be above the Moon which will be above Virgo's Spica the 22<sup>nd</sup>. On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Moon will be to the left of Spica with Jupiter higher above.

The winter solstice will occur at 4a44 CST the 21<sup>st</sup>. The Moon will wax to full at 6p06 the 13<sup>th</sup>, making it hard to see the Gemini meteor shower the nights just before then, and be new at 12a53 the 29<sup>th</sup>.

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## The “Evil Eye” Dru Clarke



On a recent trip to my end destination of Croatia, I knew flights might be long, and train and bus rides tedious, so I grabbed a recently acquired book by Peter Wohlleben, “The Hidden Life of Trees,” not knowing how it would alter the way I perceived the environment I encountered in a foreign land.

In Villach, Austria, the near slopes and vales I walked were much like West Virginia (but here, a backdrop of high early snow-covered peaks), and the trees were changing their leafy garb into russet and amber shades. The beeches, with their yellow cloud of leaves and elephant skin bark scarred by large, penetrating ‘eyes’, were prominent, and are a favorite of my chosen author.

Peter Wohlleben, a German forester with years of experience with trees, has discovered what many of us who love them have intuited: that they ‘feel’, evidenced by sounds they make, scents they release, and heightened electrical activity, and that they have individual characters. Not only that, but that ‘mother’ trees nourish and care for their offspring and extended family (this, of course, happening in symbiotic relationship with soil microorganisms, especially the mycorrhizae of fungi)!

Behind our hotel, on a nature trail, I noticed three huge and ancient beeches, and, even though in close proximity to each other, all had entered the fall season as if by a different cadence: one was dropping its leaves at a prolific pace, another was just turning yellow, and the third was still green as if it were early summer. In his book, he tells of a tree stump that, by all outward appearances, is dead but, upon closer inspection, reveals living tissue: other trees had kept it alive by offering nourishment through their intermingling roots. Some other trees I met on the trail had gnarled roots and tortuously twisted trunks – not unlike the oaks clinging to a steep bank on our country road – evidence that they had survived assaults by weather, as well as stiff competition from other plants, like strangling wild honeysuckle, and human (and other animal) meddling. While one might think that a tall, perfectly straight tree is the most desirable, the old, gnarly ones might be the keystones to the forest.

In Zagreb (Croatia), there is a wonderful botanical garden with hundreds of specimens of shrubs and trees. Among them were several redwoods, normally found on the California coast. These displaced trees will never reach the heights of those found along the Pacific Rim because of a variety of factors: they are near pavement and heavily trafficked zones where soil is compacted and will never be able to grow the extensive root system they need to support their potentially great frames. Nor is there the life-giving moisture of coastal fogs. Wohlleben predicts they, and others planted in various parks in Europe, will never exceed 160 feet, about half the mature height of our redwoods.



Plitvice UNESCO site

*continued on page 4*





Young Beech



Beech roots

Harvesting trees can have a similar negative effect if done by mechanically rough methods: clear cutting too ignores the 'connectedness' – the integrated community- of trees. Cutting trees judiciously and selectively and removing them by draft horse (or mule) and chains– a practice adopted in some of our U.S. woodlands - leaves the remaining trees the opportunity to thrive. It seems there must be a 'critical minimum' of brethren to sustain a healthy stand.

I finished the book on the island of Hvar, known for its lavender fields and visits by sum-mering celebrities (think U2 or Beyoncé), and gave it to a woman who is a docent at a nature center in Los Angeles. Later, on the mainland, she stopped me as we were walking toward the harbor in Split and, with wonder in her bright eyes, said, "I will never look at a tree in the same way again!"

Home now, I wonder at our stands of walnut and oak, and understand better why the hickories are clustered in the east woods. Why the prickly ash forms its own 'islands' under the canopy. I look for the 'mother' trees who nourish and shade their young, and I think I have found some. Close by, a rancher, who in an attempt to increase pasture for cattle, cut willy-nilly most of the mature trees in a dense woodland. Those left standing look bedraggled and weak, and several have died, although they were left plenty of room to spread their limbs, leaf out and capture sunlight. The red-headed woodpeckers have hung on, but they have moved to the opposite side of the road, to the woodland unmolested by the hand of humans.

The European beech trees were much like those I remember from my childhood in the northeastern U.S.; there are none here, on our land. But I always see their 'eyes,' peering out from the smooth trunks, ever watchful and alert. They bring to mind the legend of the 'evil eye' in Eastern Europe. Perhaps it is not evil at all, but a warning to us to tread lightly, to look with a generous eye on all of nature, to stop, touch, and maybe even embrace (read, hug) a tree. It's not as crazy as it sounds.

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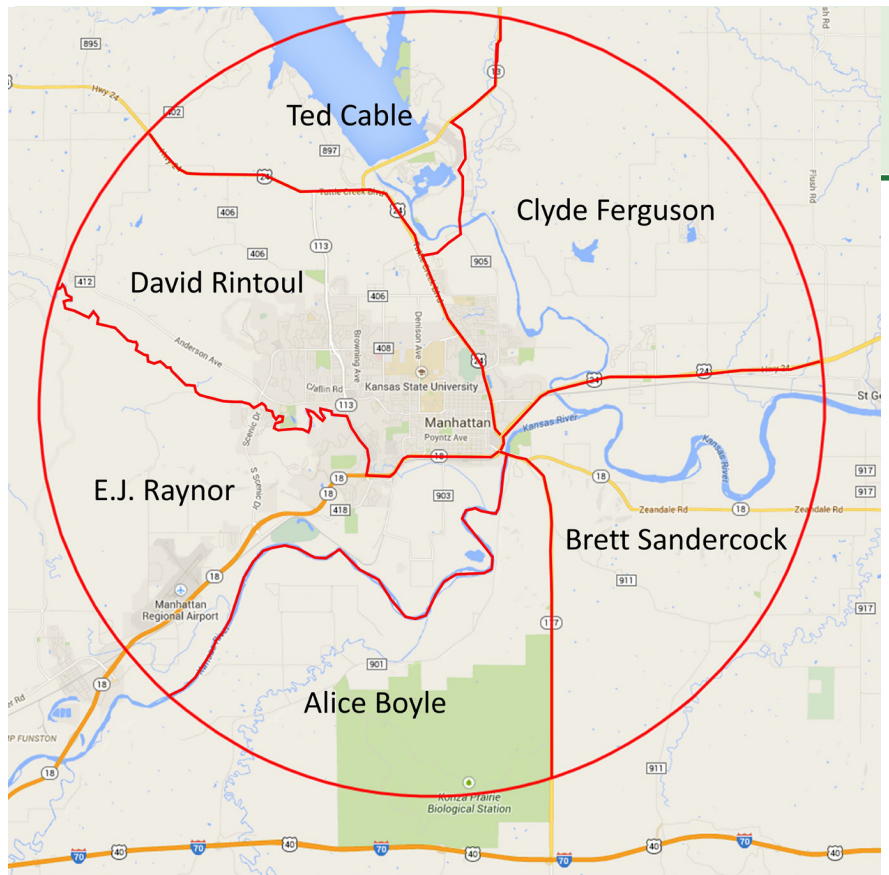
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Six teams of bird watchers will look for birds on December 17<sup>th</sup> in the Manhattan Christmas Bird Count circle (see map above, 7.5 miles in radius and centered at Anderson Hall). New participants are always welcome and expert birding skills are not required! If you would like to participate, please contact Brett Sandercock (see contact info above) he will assign you to a group that needs extra help. If you live in the area and wish to join a group in one of the six sections, you can also contact the group leaders by phone or email.

The count will start at dawn and end at dusk, unless you are part of a dedicated group looking for owls in the dark. The count will be held in sun, rain or snow, but arrangements can be made if you can only participate for part of the day. We would also like to invite folks who live within the count circle to count birds at their feeders on December 17<sup>th</sup> as part of the surveys. If you would like to help with feeder-watching, contact Brett for instructions and a checklist.

Count numbers and number of species will be compiled for all groups and participants at the end of the day at the chili supper. Please join us to hear reports of the day's sightings and stories from the day's adventures! If you are unable to attend the compilation, you will need to send your bird records to the compiler before Christmas so that the records can be added to the total counts for the Manhattan CBC. We encourage all participants to submit their bird records to eBird and can provide assistance if anybody wants to learn more about this important resource for birding in Kansas!

## Manhattan Christmas Bird Count - Compilation and Chili Supper

Join the NFHAS and fellow birders for a potluck supper at 6 p.m. on December 17, at the Seniors Service Center, 301 Leavenworth, Manhattan, KS. A few volunteers will prepare chili but please feel free to bring a side dish to share. Free-will donations to NFHAS are also welcome. We encourage you to bring your own tableware to help us reduce the amount of trash. Enjoy good food, good companionship, and find out how this year's count compares to previous years! If you have any questions on what to bring for the supper or can help with setup, please contact MJ Morgan by phone (539-8106) or email (morganmjt@gmail.com).



## UPDATES



This past month,  
**Patricia Yeager, Kevin Fay,**  
**and Susan Blackford**  
planted bulbs on the Alsop property.

They also cleared/cleaned up the Michel-  
Ross trails, and **Ken Yeager** helped  
by cutting up the larger logs on the trail.  
**THANKS TO ALL!!!**



And an end of the  
season

**THANK YOU to  
Jacque Staats,**

for doing a  
tremendous job on the  
Butterfly Garden this  
year, it was beautiful.

## NHFAS BOARD

### **We are still without a secretary.**

Please consider being a board member and helping our chapter. We meet once a month. Duties are very light, just record the minutes and distribute them before the next meeting. Now that isn't hard! Of course you will also be able to vote and have input on all matters of the NFHAS.



## SHOW AND TELL



Lowell Johnson shared his photos, and stories and Patricia Yeager

Owl is photo by Donna Roper, we were able to share several of her photos.



Carol Hogheem and Gary Jeffrey



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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](mailto:join@audubon.org). Website is [www.audubon.org](http://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  
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