

Annual Fundraiser: “the Birdathon”

April 25th (see page 4-5)

The Birdathon, not sure when it started but our loyal member, Clyde Ferguson, has been leading this event for years.

He is an amazing birder, and we are so grateful for all his work on this fundraiser.

The past several years, Jim Koelliker has helped and we are also very grateful for Jim!

Dynamic Duo:



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

- Apr. 6 - TUESDAY Board Meeting- 6:00 p.m., via Zoom. Contact a board member to attend.
- Apr. 13- Cleanup Trash at Michell-Ross, 10:00 a.m. Meet at parking lot of El Tapatio, 2605 Stagg Hill Rd and we will have lunch after cleanup.
- Apr. 25 Birdathon see page 4-5
- May 4- Board Meeting- 6 p.m.



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

It's unlikely these parts will see much snow this coming month but it's a good bet that a February will return and this past February's weather awoke a memory of a man I'd read about years ago. The memory, being vague, pressed for clarity, and in these modern times it took only computer moments to re-acquaint myself with Wilson A. Bentley, who had gained some headline notoriety as the "Snowflake Man", from the late 19th century through the early part of the 20th.

He was born in February 1865 to a family whose farm home near Jericho, Vt. is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Different sources give varying accounts of his progress for the next twenty years but it seems clear that he became a person fascinated by the intricacies and beauty of natural phenomena. His mother, a teacher, had an idled microscope that he put to use, examining flowers and butterflies and—what in sudden fashion would become his life-long passion—snowflakes.

He would catch them on a black-velvet-covered board, hurriedly tease them onto the scope's glass plate with a chicken feather, and look down at sights that struck in him the mission that the rest of the world should see such sparkling wonders. While his family and others disdained his wastes of time, he worked at trying to improvise a connection of the microscope with the cameras of his day.

Several artists of that time were acclaimed for their sketches of snowflakes. Then on January 15, 1885, Wil- lie Bentley produced the first known actual photograph of a snowflake. A following article in conjunction with a U. Of Vermont professor caught on. Other articles appeared in the likes of the National Geographic, and fast forward to November, 1931, when he and William J. Humphreys, of the U.S. Weather Bureau, published a monograph containing 2500 snowflake photographs (al- together he took over 5000). No two of which, Bentley claimed, were alike.

Then, on December 23, 1931, a couple weeks after walking the six miles from Jericho to the farm through a snowstorm, Wilson Bentley died of pneumonia. Corre- lation is not causation, but the irony persists.

Our Chamber's Encyclopedia, dating from the 1880s, concisely defines snow as "the crystalline form

into which the excess of vapour in the atmosphere is con- densed when the temperature is below freezing." Those crystals are colorless but multi-trillion numerous and so they redirect light in so many ways that the sum is white. (In some areas algae turns it reddish, and on clear days in shadow it can be blueish, reflecting the blue sky).

Of course not all snow comes down as flakes. The colder the temperature the more apt it is to fall as little bouncing balls. In fact falling snow has been classified into tens of different categories depending on the conditions in which its various particles come into existence, and then encounter while descending. And while commonly the flakes arrive in triangular or hexagonal form, {in some instances aggre- gated into compound flakes several inches wide) I read that because they develop in such varied circumstances, on close examination they are not always as precisely symmetrical as they may seem. And because they are 'born' so varyingly, the claim that each is unique seems plausible and I don't find that it's been disproven.

Once it has settled, snow develops into various other categorized forms, some entertaining, some serious. In a book titled "The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs" (The Experiment, New York, 2014) Tristan Gooley invites folks to use warm spells to seek out the coquettishly gleaming bright gems of snow keeping their cool in hidden pieces of shade, and to notice that compacted snow is slower at sublimating (changing from solid to gas without bothering to melt), thus it can remain in tact and reveal for some time the footprints where travelers have been through areas otherwise gone dry. He also notes that on sunny snow-covered slopes, little round balls of snow will begin to roll playfully downhill, but if they turn into cartwheel discs, he warns, that's an early warning of avalanche conditions.

Skyward, Orion, with Sirius (the Dog Star) brightly trail- ing faithfully behind, will be finishing the latest cold season performances setting through the coming April evenings. In the mornings Jupiter and Saturn will be continuing their companionable travel, rising through the dawn till daylight washes them out, Saturn about a half hour ahead. On the 7th Jupiter will be above the Moon with Saturn to their upper right. The Moon visits to the right of Aldebaran the 15th, then Mars will be left then right of the Moon the 16th- 17th. Venus will be missing.

But a special thing to watch for, without any guarantee, is the Lyrid meteor shower the night of the 21st-22nd. Its 1803 appearance seemed to set the sky afire. There've been sporadic outbursts of 100 meteors/hour. It could happen again some night.

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Winter Musings

Dru Clarke



Green water in a reflective lens shone beneath thick ice. The tank resisted giving up its shield, as if protecting the life within. How the cells of algae thrive under such challenging temperatures mystifies me. The same condition we find in the water from the seep on our south creek, the main source of water for pastured horses and itinerant cows. Somehow, they find the open water, now a bright scum green that you'd expect on a summer pond. At -20 F the plant (or however they are classified today) manages to bloom. Meanwhile, we try in quiet desperation to crack the inexorable ice to provide an additional, albeit puny, source for them.

In the Antarctic, the tongues of glaciers and massive ice sheets and bergs they calve are covered on their bottoms by lush growths of algae, grazed upon by fish and other creatures who eat such fare. The salt in seawater lowers the freezing temperature of the ocean, but still, it is amazing to recognize the resilience of life forms.

Our winter calves are doing well, though we worry each night as the temperature dips. The one I bottle-feed twice a day (her mother had 'bulbous teats' and she couldn't nurse), now part of the 'fold' (the Scottish term for a herd), runs to me when I call her name, "Saturn," after the conjunction December 21, when she was born in the bottoms near the creek. Her dam follows close behind, and watches silently and only a foot away as she feeds. This would be unnerving to most as her horns are a yard wide and the tip reaches close to my cheek, but she is a gentle, although protective, beast. I am careful to move slowly and talk quietly to the pair. Saturn is so strong now she nearly knocks me over, nudging me for more. (A gallon at one feeding is quite enough, I tell her.) Windless days are welcome, as is the brilliant sun. And, in our east meadow, dominated by brome and bovine grazers during the growing season, a flock of bobwhite quail spend mornings gleaning something from one wild patch that must have produced enough 'weed' seeds to attract and nourish them. A friend and neighbor has a field of harvested corn adjacent to her home and a flock of snow geese- about one hundred - gathers daily, awaiting the right moment to continue north to breeding grounds. Resident turkey have taken umbrage at their squatter status and crouch and run like small feathered tanks at them, the geese remaining unfazed. Deer, too, arrive at dusk and walk among the geese who are scattered among the remnant stalks like so many pillows.

The feeders have the usual array of wintering birds, with an occasional yellow shafted flicker. The cats share a window ledge to gaze at them as they bob and hop about. Lowell Johnson, a longtime birder and NFHAS member, posted (on FB) a lovely photo of a male eastern bluebird perched on the edge of his birdbath. (We have a heated water bowl on our west deck that the birds have availed themselves of.) The startling colors of this bird stir an indelible memory of mine: a visit to the Channel Islands off California's coast. There in the cobalt blue waters swims the Garibaldi, a chunky, citrusy orange fish, the ocean's counterpart of the land and air-bound bluebird.

Our daily walks are limited now as chores take more time and energy, and the joy we used to experience trekking along the north reach of the road by the big creek has diminished to the point of abject sadness: the big, long-lived and grand trees that graced the road's edges are gone, cut down for some misguided (in our eyes) purpose, ostensibly to widen the little used, rutted dirt track. The behemoths lie discarded in piles beneath the inner woods, like corpses, our own local holocaust, mourned by two and no others. History witnessed by the cells in that wood - they flanked the cutoff from Louisville to Juniata used in the 19th century - discarded like old and worn volumes. Habitat lost to tree-loving birds, solace lost to humans.

Life, though, is resilient, from algae to cattle to saplings, and we 'endeavor to persevere' (our favorite line from "Outlaw Josie Wales" uttered by the venerable old Indian) as we wait for the thaw and new beginnings.

© FEB. 2021 Dru Clarke

Birdathon 2021

Clyde Ferguson & Jim Koelliker

April is our Annual Fundraiser: “Birdathon”

If you are new to NFHAS, this is what it is all about.

A group of birders (or just one birder) goes out and counts the number of species they see with in a 24-hour period. This year that would be on **Sunday, April 25th**. Friends, family and anyone who would like to be a sponsor and contribute to NFHAS, pledges a certain amount for each species seen. From a dime to quarter or more, you would be surprised how much we can raise. Last year we raised \$3,600! Some sponsors just pledge a set amount. You can be a sponsor and a counter!

Since covid 19 is still around, groups going birding should do so safely – social distancing and masks when in close proximity. The 24 hour period can be is up to the counter, for example, from 10 a.m. on the 25th to 10 a.m. on the 26th. Whatever works best. Report your findings to your sponsor and collect your pledges. Please send the name and address of each sponsor and the money to **Clyde Ferguson, 2140 College Hts. Rd., Manhattan KS 66502**.

If you don't want to go out alone or don't think you are good enough to ID birds, contact **Jim Koelliker (785-776-4915)** and he will put you with someone or a group. If you don't know anyone going out, you can also contact Jim Koelliker or a board member, or drop a note to NFHAS, PO Box 1932, Manhattan 66502 and we will find someone to count for you. On average we see between 90-110 species this time of year.

Those donating \$15 or more may receive a year's subscription to the Prairie Falcon if requested.

Please join us and help us support and protect the wild things.

Clyde Ferguson	Jim Koelliker
Birdathon Chair	Co-Chair

SPARK BIRD

NEW feature: What bird (or event) led you to become a birder or appreciator of nature in general? Stories will also be on our website in the “Bird Blog” section. In fact, Margy Stewart kind of already started this with her story of how she got started in our Bird Blog.

<https://www.nfhas.org/bird-blog.cfm>

From Dru Clarke. “I remember the first birds I loved: two mourning doves who would come each year to nest in our pear tree. It may not have been the same pair year after year, but the tree always hosted a pair of mourning doves.”

Mourning dove (or colloquially turtle dove) Zenaida macroura, one of the most abundant and widespread of all North American birds.



Photo by Dave Rintoul

Birdathon form

Your name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Sponsor's Name & Address

Pledge/species

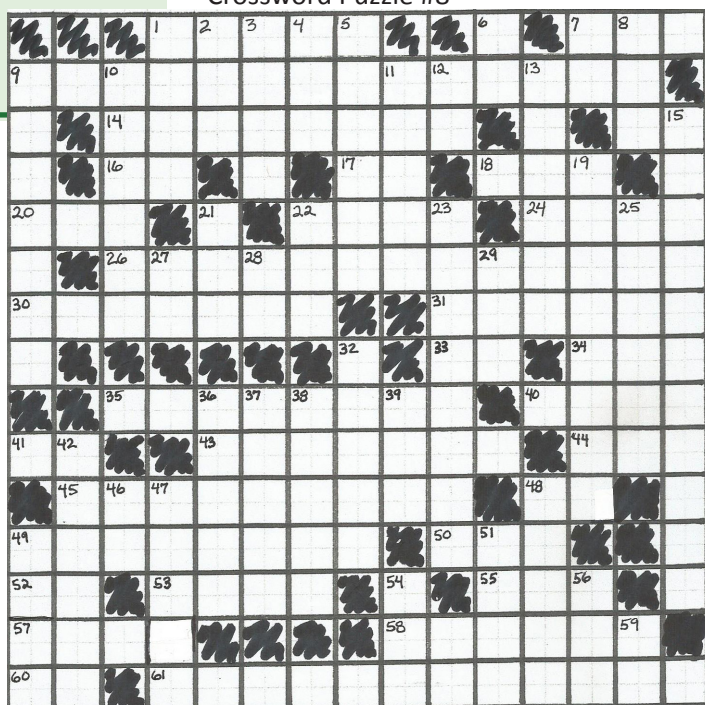
Total Pledge

Newsletter

Crossword Puzzle #8

Patricia Yeager

Crossword Puzzle #8



ACROSS:

1. Spicy condiment
7. Primitive shelter
9. Production of spring green
14. Coriander greens
16. Emergency room
17. Lithium
18. This country
20. Sick
22. Salty home for plants and creatures
24. Mountain in the Czech Republic
26. Brick colored bird arriving here in spring
30. Unwelcome entry
31. Trail found throughout Manhattan Ks
33. Kitchen patrol
34. Vacuum Tower Telescope (abbr)
35. Cranes that fly over KS in great numbers
40. One who is interested in pollinators might tend a _ _ _ _ ive.
41. Georgia
43. Soil loss
44. Survival video game (first word Red)
45. Common, Red-breasted, Hooded
48. Forth tone of scale
49. Tall tale (with a bird name in the middle) (Irish)
50. European Geosciences Union (abbr)
52. Where the wizard lives
53. Young kangaroo
55. Sad news bears
57. Louisiana water thrush
58. Jamaican musical rhythm
60. Tennessee
61. These birds can beat their wings up to 70 times per second!

DOWN:

1. Motion of a cook
2. Early online service
3. Lesser Sand-Plover (code)
4. Together with (prefix)
5. Seasonal head gear of a deer
6. Southeast
7. Hello
8. You and I
9. Tall grass, short grass, mixed grass
10. Wildcat with stripes and spots found along the southern U.S. Boarder
11. Gave an effort
12. Call for attention
13. Second part of name of a striped breasted bird that feeds with goldfinches at winter feeders
15. This bird is found by listening for it's song along forest stream edges.
19. Succulent plant known for it's healing juices
21. Room where one is closely watched
22. Real Academia Espanola (abbr)
23. Tales of previous times
25. Very happy
27. Rail road
28. High definition
29. Rest in peace

32. Feminine (derogatory)
36. Dark skinned race
37. Male duck
38. A reward of beekeeping
39. Fib
42. Both a river and a forest are named this
46. Elevation
47. Indian royal name
48. Mushrooms are in this plant family
49. What birds do once a year, some two times, some three
51. Greater Snow Goose Blue phase (code)
54. As needed
56. Sometimes its a high accomplishment sometimes it is low
59. Education

Crossword Puzzle #7 Answers



Self-guided Tour #2



This month's Birding Day trip is to the Bolton Wildlife area: There are two ways to the **Bolton Wildlife Area**. From Manhattan start by heading east on Hwy 24 towards Wamego.

Direction 1: When you get to Hwy 24 and Hwy 99 intersection in Wamego continue east on Hwy 24 about 8 miles toward (and through) Belvue to Schoeman Road (there is a two-story red house on the right just before the intersection). Turn South (right) on Schoeman Road and you'll be headed toward Paxico on a paved road. You will travel about 8 miles to the next turn. At some point Schoeman Road becomes Paxico Road. At about 2.6 miles from the intersection with Hwy 24 the road will make a couple of curves where there will be several intersections and confusing street signs. STAY ON THE PAVED ROAD (Paxico Road). Continue south on Paxico Road about 4.5 miles to Mulberry Creek Road (look for the brown Wildlife Area sign) and turn West (right) onto Mulberry Creek Road. Continue about 1.5 miles to the Bolton Wildlife Area parking lot on the left.

Direction 2: Please note that these directions will take you south on Hwy 99 which south of Wamego is currently and for the next 2 years (according to KDOT) under construction. At the intersection of Hwy 24 and Hwy 99 turn South (right). Proceed south on Hwy 99 through Wamego. From the south end of the bridge over the Kansas River continue another 5.5 miles to Homestead Road. Turn east (left) onto Homestead Road (a gravel road). The Homestead Cabinet Shop is on the SE corner of the intersection. Stay on Homestead Road for about 5 miles to a Y intersection with Mulberry Creek Road which curves south (right). Take Mulberry Creek Road and the Bolton Wildlife Area parking lot will be on the right in less than one-half mile.

The Bolton Wildlife Area has a very small parking lot and an information kiosk. It has no facilities (outhouse, picnic tables, etc.) and no trails. It has a variety of habitats including a perennial stream with riparian woodlands, small springs, a pond, a small marsh and tallgrass prairie.

However, the prairie is grazed so it is fairly easy to walk through. Most of these habitats are across the stream and there is no bridge to cross it so plan on getting your feet wet if you want to get to the other side.

Most birds will probably be seen in the riparian woodlands along the stream. Please be aware that hunting is allowed so wear hunter orange as appropriate. Also be aware that the wildlife area is grazed by cows in the summer but they are taken off before hunting season starts. If you decide to walk the area you might take note of the power lines above you as a direction source back to your vehicle. Prairies can be disorienting.

Looking for extensions to your day trip? Pick up some snacks or lunch in Wamego and head for the Kansas (Kaw) River Access/Boat Ramp in Wamego. At the intersection of Hwy 24 and Hwy 99 turn South (right) and go through downtown Wamego. After the stop light at 4th Street, you will cross the Railroad tracks and after about one block (at the south end of the brick Bowling Alley Building) turn West (right) onto Valley St. Continue to Elm Street and turn left. The Kaw is about a block south on Elm. There is a picnic table and restrooms but the restrooms are only open on special occasions.

Or get your lunch/snacks in Belvue and take it to the Belvue Kansas River Access/Boat Ramp. There are a couple of restaurants near Belvue; the Kansas Premium Meats (just west of Belvue near the east end of the overpass on Hwy 24) and Loretta's at the west edge of Belvue housed in a blue and pink building on the south side of the street. Loretta's has limited hours, closing early afternoon. To get to the Kansas River Access/Boat Ramp: On the east edge of Belvue at the east corner of the Onyx Plant turn south onto Mill Road. It is easy to miss this intersection as the road looks like it is just a road for the Onyx Plant and is a pitted dirt road. Continue on this road about one mile to the boat ramp where you will find a lovely view and a picnic table. There are no restrooms.



POLLINATOR POCKETS UPDATE

The **Manhattan Pollinator Pockets initiative** was approved and has been implemented. The first phase of the project identified 13 existing areas and 9 potential sites that will be protected from practices such as mowing and applying herbicides and pesticides to establish and maintain native habitat to benefit pollinators. Included in the 13 areas are two NFHAS sponsored areas, the **Prairie restoration area at Northeast Park** and the **Sojourner Truth Butterfly Garden**.



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The purpose of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is to teach people to enjoy and respect birds and their habitats. NFHAS advocates preservation of prairie ecosystems and urban green spaces thus saving the lives of birds and enriching the lives of people.

Also available online at nfhas.org

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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 to the Kansas Bird Listserve. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to <list_serve@ksu.edu> and join in the

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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