



Spirit Bear Presentation by Glenn Phelps
Feb. 18, 2:00 pm
Manhattan Public Library Collaboration Space (1st floor)

I am pleased to introduce Cranberry, one of 100 or so Kermode bears, a black bear with a genetic modification that produces white fur. Her home is the Great Bear Rainforest on British Columbia's West coast.

She and her environment are sacred to the Gitga'ata people and they serve as stewards to this part of the Great Bear Rainforest



Please join us for a photographic trip through the GBR and a look at the life of Cranberry.

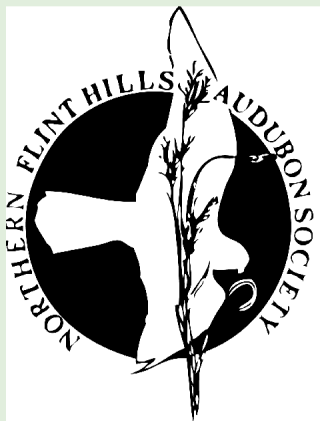
Here are a few references if you would like some background material:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dD78QFDHWSc>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hartley_Bay

<https://www.gitgaatnation.ca/>

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 52, No. 6, February 2024

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Upcoming Events

Feb. 6 - Board Meeting 5:30 via Zoom

Feb. 10 - Sat Morning Birding, weather permitting
leaves Sojourner Park at 8 am

Feb. 10 - Michel-Ross Preserve - Cleanup, weather permitting
Meet at end of Ridgeway Dr. by 9:30 am

PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES CONCERNING WEATHER
nffas.org

Feb. 18 - Spirit Bear - 2:00 pm Manhattan Public Library

Feb. 24 - Blueville Nursery - Owl Seminar - 10:00 am



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November; all the rest have thirty-one, except February, which happens to be arbitrary, as methods for marking the passage of time can vary.

I feel sure I've looked into February's story before, but I couldn't remember what I'd found. And since it's probably not common knowledge I've let curiosity lead me to being this time via internet variously informed. It comes out that about 3000 years ago the early Romans had years of 10 months, beginning with March, with six of 30 days and four of 31. That totaled 304 days and so they had a number of nameless and undifferentiated days of winter. I read that they particularly used that period for events and rituals aimed at purifying their souls and honoring the dead.

I then read that about 713 b.c.e. Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome (after Romulus), for reasons unstated, divided that period into two separate months. The first was Januarius, named for the god of beginnings and endings, whose pictures show a head with a face looking to the past and a face looking to the future. It was given 31 days to be the equal of the biggest others. The second was Februarius, its name derived from the Latin word februa, meaning cleanliness, which got 28 days. But those numbers total only 363. So I thought maybe some fingers went astray somewhere and there were actually six 31-day months and four thirty day ones, which would sum to 365.

Then I read that because of a then common distrust of whole numbers, Numa actually reduced the 30-day ones to 29. That again meant that one of his two new months had to have an even number in order for the whole number of days to be an odd number. So he apparently held his breath and gave Januarius 29 and next door Februarius 28, which would then have given him a total of 347 days, evidently close enough to the 354 days in a lunar year of 12 full moons. (By comparison several millennia earlier the Sumerians and Babylonians felt it was close enough and more convenient to put 360 degrees in a circle even though their model, the Earth's annual cycle, had 365 units.)

Furthermore I encountered an aside on one site saying vaguely that in the 500s b.c.e. February went from being the last month of the year to the second, as January instead of March became the first. Another

site said specifically that due to some internal turmoil that change happened in 154 b.c.e.

Whatever, I'm told that the Republic went on through the years with various officials finding various ways of tinkering with the calendar to extend their terms of office until affairs became so unsavory that Julius Caesar was able to grab the reins, turn the Republic into an imperial entity, and among other things ordain the long year of 445 days that brought the calendar days back in synch with the seasons and church holidays they originally hosted. February then had basically a steady 28 days a year until on February 24, 1582 Pope Gregory XIII initiated the gradually adopted reforms (England didn't adopt until 1763) that give us now the leap days we deal with every four years, except for those years that are also divisible by 400, with an exception for years that begin a millennia.

The Earth's movements are difficult to categorize, thus the numerous other calendars, modern and ancient. The oldest one I found now referred to involves some holes and an arc drilled or carved into a piece of mesolithic rock in Scotland about 8000 years ago. My curiosity about all that could go on ad infinitum but pauses content for now.

Overhead during the month ahead the bright array of winter stars should be on display again when nights begin with clear skies. Mars might be notably seen traveling close beside Taurus' eye, Aldebaran and winning a match of rednesses. Then as times move on constellations of warmer times will begin to intrude from the east. And I see two different sources that separately have Jupiter hopping up and down, setting, according to one, at nightfall, and by the other late in the evening. Have to stay tuned for that one. Fortunately it will be bright enough to be observed wherever. Meanwhile Saturn, low in the west, will be by general agreement setting in the early evening, while Venus and Mercury will be part of the early morning sky, Venus being much more there.

The Moon begins the month climbing arm-in-arm with Virgo's Spica after midnight of the 1st. It's from right to left of Scorpius' Antares the 5th-6th, while being above and right of Venus the 6th, then below to the right on the 7th. It will be very low beneath settling Saturn the 10th, with its glow nearly obscuring the Pleiades the 16th. It will be above the Gemini Twins the 20th, left of Leo's Regulus the 23rd, then climbing again with Spica the 27th, this time a little before midnight. New at 4p59 the 9th, full 6a30 the 24th.

Time to Read Dru Clarke



Friends and relatives (chiefly, my husband) give me books to read, and most are welcome and well chosen. Mostly, the themes reflect the personality of the giver or their 'station in life.' Take 'The Species Seekers' (by Richard Conniff), a weighty tome about field naturalists who pursued previously unknown (to western eyes) species, exploring the raw wildernesses of Earth and suffering incredible hardships and deprivations and facing death at every turn. I read the necrology first: it lists, alphabetically, those seekers who died in their search and the known causes of their demise. (The friend who gave me this book worked in a necropsy lab at K-State – see what I mean?) Dysentery, cholera, malaria were tops, with murder, accidents, drowning, and arsenic (and mercury) poisoning ranking about even. Arsenic poisoning was due to the practice of using the chemical in the preservation of the skins of captured, and dead, specimens. Taxidermy can be lethal even when the animals are harmless. One fellow was suffocated by a collapsed riverbank from which he was trying to extract Belted Kingfisher eggs – he was found with just his feet protruding. (Sweet avian revenge).

As to the naturalists while alive, some are to be admired for their tenacity, humility, and selfless nature, while others seem churlish and self-absorbed. Linnaeus, creator of *Systema Naturae*, or binomial nomenclature which simplified the naming of species using the then universal language of Latin, appears to have had a morbid preoccupa-

pation with sex and a keen disgust for how we arrive in this world by luridly describing the orifices of the female body and their functions: shades of misogyny revealed.

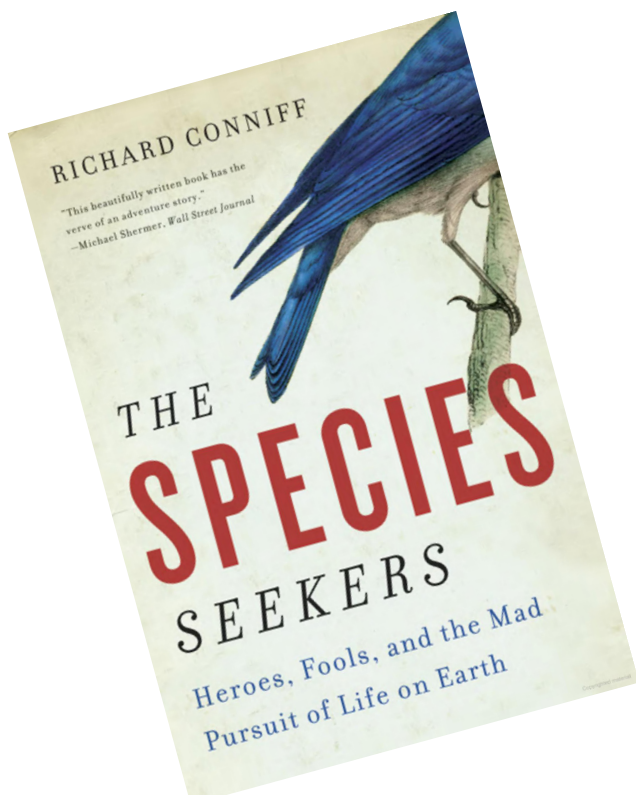
We would have liked others, like Henry Walter Bates, who shared his finds gleefully with the tribal children in the Amazon rainforest, and William Bartram whose southeastern United States travels yielded specimens for which he never earned credit (or had named after himself). He named *Franklinia*, a lovely flowering tree that grew along the banks of a southern river, now extinct in the wild. (Named after a man he admired (and knew), this is a tree whose name should certainly be maintained.) Bartram, ironically, before his wanderings, was set up by his family to run a plantation, but when the slaves rebelled, he returned to Philadelphia. As a Quaker, he viewed all persons as equal and deserving of dignity and independence. Others, like Rafinesque, cut eccentric figures and were regarded with some skepticism as to their abilities as naturalists. (The 'closet' naturalists who did most of the critiquing of the field naturalists seldom got their hands or boots dirty, preferring to sit at their desks ruminating over a bug impaled on a pin.)

Whole chapters are devoted to the emergence of evolutionary thinking, Darwin and Wallace sharing the limelight (although others before them had similar thoughts, not well articulated or based on copious data that Charles and Alfred had amassed to buttress their theory of natural selection). All in all, the book is a wealth of natural history, written with well-documented references and primary sources and, unexpectedly, with a droll sense of humor throughout.

A stack of other books await: Non-fiction 'Beaverland' (we had a colony of beavers for years until heavy spring rains flooded them out); 'Under the Henfluence' (a homage to my chickens); 'Great Plains' (Forsberg photos); 'The Complete Cow' (readable about their features, behavior and the origin of many highly regarded breeds); and fiction, 'North Woods' (Daniel Mason). The latter sounds like the two century old stone house I spent every summer of my childhood at, and may have an equally intriguing history. (Mason's 'The Piano Tuner' was a wholly unexpected treat, offering a revealing look at what was then Burma under British rule.)

So, take time to read and thank your friends and relatives for their personal choices in gift giving. All my childhood books I imprinted with a sticker of a bookworm saying, "As for me, give me a book."

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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.

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WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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