

**GHOST BIRD COMING WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 15
LITTLE THEATER, KSU STUDENT UNION,
AT 7 P.M.**



see page 4 for more information

NORTHERN Flint Hills Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932



prairie falcon

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 39, No. 1 ~ SEPTEMBER 2010

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Upcoming Events:

SEPT. 6 - BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m.
CARLA Bishop HOME

SEPT. 11 - SATURday Birding,
MEET AT Sojourner TRUTH Park, 8 A.M.

SEPT. 15 - GHOST Bird documentary
7 p.m. LITTLE THEATRE, KSU Union

SEPT. 17 - BirdSeed ORDER deadline
OCT. 2 - BirdSeed PICKUP

OCT. 4 - BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m.
TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME

OCT. 9 - SATURday Birding,
MEET AT Sojourner TRUTH Park, 8 A.M.



SKYLIGHT PLUS

PETE COHEN

About three miles south of Wamego on highway K-99, the floodplain borders the Flint Hills and to the east a notably protrusive mound shows a small dark nipple near its crest. By turning on the nearby, newly improved Mt. Mitchell Rd. one can be in position for some very pleasant, moderately inclined, prairie hiking, where a trail leads to the dark object that becomes a monument to William Mitchell.

The view overlooking the Kansas River valley and its accompanying hills can be a delight to the eyes and spirit, and I've found it to be one of those places where the arrow of time can be especially easily sensed flying backward – to when there was no K-99, no vehicles carrying great varieties of foods and goods, no electric conveniences, no immediate contact with anyone further away than the reach of a shout.

And the arrow concept reminds me of the movie "Stagecoach" in which the Indians at full gallop were confined to aiming theirs at the narrow figure of the coach's armed guard. And when it was suggested that more likely they would've shot to more effect at the coach's much larger galloping team, director John Ford is said to have responded that his version was how it should've been.

Well, the Missouri Compromise, limiting the northern extension of slavery, should never have been necessary, nor should it have been scuttled to allow the question of slavery in Kansas and Nebraska Territories to be settled by whomever could by force get the most votes counted. William Mitchell, and the many others like him, should never have had to feel it necessary, with astounding

dedication, to leave their eastern lives to defend Kansas from slavery. They weren't exiling themselves to barren ground, but the dangers were high, as the term describing that era as "bleeding Kansas" reflects.

Mitchell was chosen Captain of a company of Prairie Guards that formed and used this mount as a sentinel post against the approach of pro-slavery raiders. Currently another group has been formed, reviving the name Mt. Mitchell Guards, to preserve the area's beauty and its historical significance in the long, continuing struggle against narrow minded viciousness. The modern group is planning a cheerful get-together in October while a visit there any time would be a rewarding way of giving added value to what those first Guards and their families gave of themselves in their time. Contact: mountmitchellprairie.org; info@mountmitchellprairie.org; or at 23320 Rockton Rd., Eskridge, Kansas 66428

The same recognizable stars and planets that passed over them, pass over us. What we can expect to see of them in the month ahead is Venus brightening even more but appearing ever lower and therefore briefer in the western twilight. Mars, Saturn, and Virgo's Spica, all bow out with it, while resplendent Jupiter rises at dark and commands attention all night.

The Moon, after sinking with the quartet on the 10th and 11th shines to the right of Scorpio's Antares on the 13th, and then performs lengthily as the big Harvest Moon a couple nights either side of its full phase on the 23rd. At that time Jupiter will sidle up and try to rival it, and the Moon's response will be slightly limited by its being at a far arc of its orbit.

The autumnal equinox will occur at 10p09 on the 23rd, just a few hours after the Moon's technical full at 4a17. It will be new at 5a30 on the 8th.

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A CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE WILD KIND DRU CLARKE



Close to 8 a.m. and I hadn't let the chickens out yet. Stendahl, our black Australorpe rooster, was responding loudly to this affront. Normally he lets his imposing stature – glossy emerald-black plumage and erect, regal posture – speak for himself and his hens, but not this morning: it was late and he wanted “out.”

Headed out, I noticed a cat under the pickup parked next to the shed where the chickens roosted at night. Ready to call it in for breakfast, I hesitated, then realized it was not one of our house cats. A bobcat was waiting for the chickens to be let out as well. A large animal, twice the size of our largest domestic feline, it was grey like a winter deer, its face softly haloed by longer fur, with long legs and large paws. If it had spots, they were not noticeable, although its belly fur was lighter than its back. It stood and looked at me, showing no fear or even mild curiosity: it appeared completely indifferent to my presence. Languidly it turned and began walking slowly up the slope next to the drive.

Not pleased about its obvious intention to knock off one (or more) of our chickens, I yelled to my husband, “Get the GUN!” He was slow to respond, but finally I heard him say, “What do you want the gun for?” “There is a bobcat out here! After the chickens! Let it eat rabbits!” The rabbits had nipped off the tips of my newly planted black gum, hawthorn, and pecan trees- nice, clean clips, characteristic of lagomorph incisors. I wouldn't mind if they served up dinner for this latest visitor to our yard. “It's in the closet.” I ran to get the gun and searched the top shelf for the BBs: it was already loaded, but I thought I'd need more.

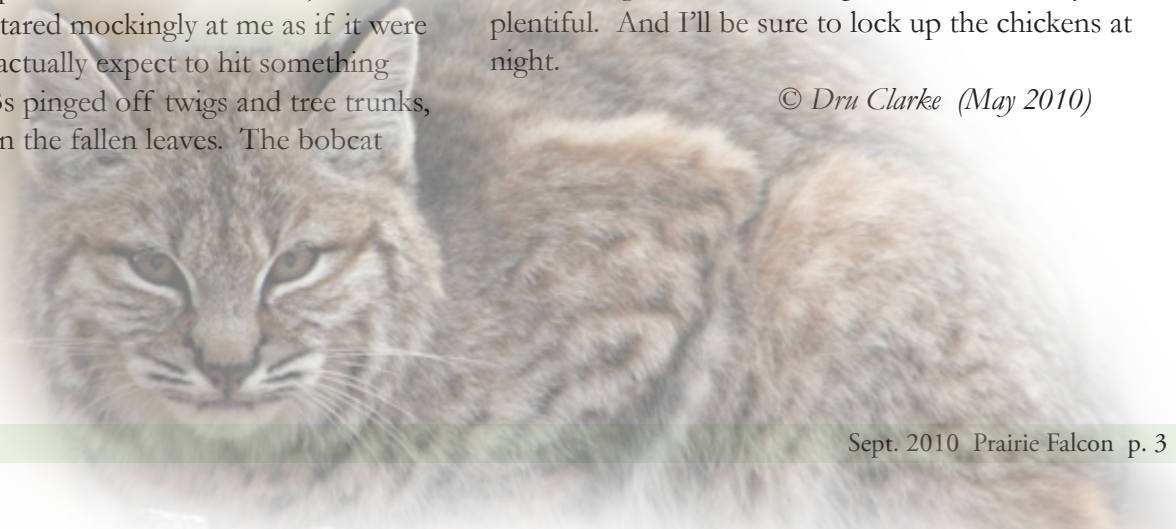
I ran to the porch and shot at the cat, who merely turned and stared mockingly at me as if it were thinking, “Do you actually expect to hit something with that?” The BBs pinged off twigs and tree trunks, landing harmlessly in the fallen leaves. The bobcat

kept its steady pace up the slope and melted into the underbrush. I managed to scare only the dogs.

The next morning, as my husband was feeding the north mares, he saw two bobcats sitting side by side on a ridge above the creek. We know they live upstream on this creek's watershed and have heard their spine-tingling mating calls in late winter. We've found their tracks in dried mud, claw marks on tree trunks, and skeletal remains of turkey and tufts of rabbit fur, but we never had seen them so close to the house. They can and DO bring down full-sized deer: their unusual dentition allows a vise-like grip that can disarticulate the vertebrae in the neck. (There is a picture of this in Leonard Lee Rue's book *Deer of North America*, as well as a series of images of a deer being killed by a bobcat online.) The most widespread native cat, the bobcat (and its larger relative, the lynx) was once a highly regarded furbearer when fur was fashionable. It enjoys protective status in some states (notably New Jersey), but seems to be holding its own throughout its range. An occasional melanistic (black) animal has been observed, and they are quite startling to see (there are some images on the internet of one in Florida).

As Eugenie Clark, the shark lady, once said when a hammerhead shark approached and circled her while she was diving in shallow water, “It was a gift! Why should I be afraid?” My encounter, too, was a kind of gift, and I admit to feeling a rush, even a wild thrill, as it gazed at me. I hope the rabbits this year are plentiful. And I'll be sure to lock up the chickens at night.

© Dru Clarke (May 2010)



"GHOST BIRD" A DOCUMENTARY
SEPT. 15, LITTLE THEATER, KSU STUDENT
UNION, 7 P.M.

Don't miss this!

*Free event,
Public invited.*

GHOST BIRD COMING
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15
See It in Little Theater, KSU Student
Union, at 7 p.m.



NFHAS invites you to a free screening of the nationally recognized documentary, "Ghost Bird." Produced by Scott Crocker, this 90-minute film explores the sighting of the **Ivory Billed Woodpecker** in eastern Arkansas in April 2004. The brief video footage of this magnificent bird, thought extinct since the 1920s, created a furor in amateur and scientific circles that is ongoing today. Within one month of Cornell Lab's confirmation of the bird as a surviving Ivory Billed Woodpecker, British Airways had enough ornithologists traveling to Arkansas to charter 40 jets.

The town of Brinkley, Arkansas, near the Cache River Wildlife Refuge where the bird was sighted, experienced an economic revitalization as thousands of people poured in needing food and accommodations. A single flying woodpecker, turning in a typical wheeling motion with a flash of white underwing, produced an unprecedented reaction. Western nations needed to believe in the rebirth of a species once exterminated by man. "Giant Woodpecker Returns from the Grave" and "A Spiritual Experience" are phrases from 2004 capturing what many people felt.

"Ghost Bird" examines ethical questions surrounding the phenomenon of the Ivory Bill sighting and subsequent events. Allocation of monies, natural resource conservation priorities, the nature of scientific truth, and what people need to believe are important themes. Interviews with David Sibley provide some of the most poignant evidence of the film, as he describes his efforts, walking miles in the Arkansas swamplands, to find and document the **"Lord God Bird."** The film also highlights other extinct bird species, showing specimen trays of bright green Carolina Parakeets (parrakeets) and dove-like Passenger Pigeons. The loss is vividly communicated.

Please join Audubon board members on September 15 for this one-time-only screening. We also invite KSU students, faculty, environmental organizations, the Manhattan community, the Milford community of birders -- all who want to see with their own eyes that startled liftoff, that single, tantalizing glimpse of ... the Ghost Bird.

Sponsored by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society.

TAKE NOTE

For the past two months Audubon of Kansas has been featuring a **“KS Roadside Wildflower of the Week,”** which highlights the importance of keeping Kansas’ roadsides native, and hopes to inspire a more responsible roadside mowing program across the state.



compass plant

Check out these two links to the Roadside Wildflower of the Week feature, as well as an article about responsible roadside mowing.

<http://www.audubonofkansas.org/RoadsideManagement/rsfloweroftheweek/rsfloweroftheweek.html>

<http://www.audubonofkansas.org/RoadsideManagement/budgetcut52010.html>

Mike Hudson, Audubon of Kansas

WHAT ARE YOU SEEING?

Members are invited - encouraged! - to share their birding experiences: favorite bird, what you're seeing now, what did you see on a trip? Please contact Cindy Jeffrey - cinraney@k-state.edu, or call after 5 p.m. 785-468-3587 (home).



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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, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are also handled by the National Audubon Society. 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, 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.

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