

DEC. 18TH

2010 MANHATTAN CBC, CHILI SUPPER 6 P.M.

SILENT AUCTION - SENIOR CENTER - 412 LEAVENWORTH

There will be a silent auction set up at the Senior Center from 1:00 - 6:30 p.m. on the day of the Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, Dec. 18th. The items up for auction are from the Inez Alsop House. Some examples are vases, pin, hand sewn quilt top (needs pad and backing to finish), frames, poetry book, small artificial Christmas tree, paper shredded, size petite 8 London Fog coat, 50s style pineapple salt and pepper shakers and other items for a total of about 30 items for auction. Drop by anytime after 1:00 p.m. to bid on items. Winning bids will be announced after the chili supper and before the bird tally. See you there! *Patricia Yeager*



Check out the Cornell Lab of Ornithology on FACEBOOK.
www.facebook.com/cornellbirds

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932



prairie falcon

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 39, No. 4 ~ DECEMBER 2010

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Upcoming Events:

DEC. 6 - BOARD MEETING, TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME

DEC. 11 - SAT. MORNING BIRDING

DEC. 18 - MANHATTAN CBC (SEE PG. 5)
Chili Supper/compilation - 5-9 p.m.
MANHATTAN SENIOR CTR.
Silent Auction 1-6:30p.m.

DEC. 24 - BIRDSEED ORDER deadline

JAN. 8 - EAGLE DAYS - TUTTLE CREEK CORPS of ENGI-
NEERS, STARTS AT MANHATTAN FIRE STATION - Kimball &
DENNISON 9-12N. CONTACT STEVE PROKISH 785-539-
7941 EXT 3167

JAN. 8 - BIRDSEED PICKUP, UFM, 8:30-11:30 A.M.
UFM, 1221 THURSTON, MANHATTAN



SKYLIGHT PLUS

PETE COHEN

The coverage I read/saw of the Chilean mine rescue shone like a bright Venus amid the stormy turmoil of intentional mayhem that fills so much of the news. I didn't read or watch an exceptional amount, so perhaps I missed some sidebar stories that I thought might appear.

One would have referred to a Chilean involvement in another noted rescue, for it was a lone Chilean tugboat that in 1916 braved Antarctic ice floes to retrieve the members of Britain's Shackleton Expedition, who had been marooned through the southern winter when their ship had become crushed in the ice.

The other would have referred to the 1925 efforts to free Floyd Collins, a spelunker who had found a great new cavern in a Kentucky cave, and whose arms and a foot had then been trapped by cave-in 100 wet and difficult feet from daylight.

Vibrations from drilling began to seem too likely to cause a complete collapse. Led by a diminutive reporter, a line of men crept head-to-foot into the shaft passing pick and chisels forward, chips of rock back out, and themselves having to crawl backwards out for respite.

There were no spectators to the Antarctic operation, but the Floyd Collins challenge occurred on dry land in a temperate climate and at a time when commercial radio was just gaining the ability to provide on-the-scene reporting, and what it did was to help day-to-day newspaper headlines stir up a spectacle that was less than edifying, considering the circumstances. There was no smartly organized encampment for those trying to save a life with what equipment they had at the time. Instead the rescuers had to work amid a suddenly put up carnival of people coming just to watch, or to offer incantations, and others to provide those with something more entertaining to do than look at than a hole in the

ground. It was a gawkers and hawkers gala sideshow to the desperate activities that in the end, ironically after 17 days, were to no avail. Floyd Collins died, and trying to reclaim his body was deemed too perilous.

These ordeals were dissimilar in certain ways. Floyd Collins was not long out of contact, but he could not move. The miners were trapped in black cavern out of contact for their first 17 days not knowing if their food and water would last, or perhaps if one of their country's relatively frequent earthquakes might crush them. The polar explorers, heating by burning blubber in their cramped shelter of tarpaulins and two overturned lifeboats, could see the sky when the fogs cleared, but could not know if the lifeboat that had sailed for help would survive the necessary 800 miles of rough seas, and if it didn't no one would know where to find them. Nor could they know how their families were faring (I understand the British government did provide for them).

One has to put one's own perspective on how these noted events relate to the people who spend lengthy times enduring painful debilitating illnesses, and the number of high tech rescues attempted in hospitals everyday, as well as actions at burning buildings and other emergencies.

In December, Venus reigns in the mornings rising shadow-throwing bright two to three hours before dawn, with Virgo's star Spica to upper right and Saturn a little further that way. Mercury might be seen far below and leftward the 30th-31st. Jupiter, the evenings' vice-roy, slides down the western sky to set before midnight. Amid these disjointed appearances the Gemini meteor show peaks the night of the 13th-14th and at half past midnight on the 21st will begin a lunar eclipse that will be total from about 1a40 till almost 3 o'clock.

For star-locating, the Moon will be up-left of Taurus' Aldebaran the 19th; up-right of Leo's Regulus the 24th. The winter solstice occurs at 5p38 the 21st. The Moon is new the 5th at 11a36, full but ecliptically dim at 2a13 that 21st.

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FAIR'S STAND IN AUTUMN

MJ MORGAN

The stretch of Manhattan's Linear Trail between South Manhattan and Pecan Circle contains Fair's Stand, an old pecan grove of over 70 trees. This beautiful, arching corridor came as a gift included in the lands obtained to build the Linear Trail in 1988. The city acquired 37 acres total to construct the trail; in 1994, five landowners south of Wildcat Creek provided easements and/or property for the trail. Mr. and Mrs. Jim Fair's easement and property held a mature, producing pecan grove. Today the Linear Trail there winds between these trees and Wildcat Creek, and in autumn, pecans rain down. The masting process and its bounty for birds and squirrels is actually spread over months, as crows begin to watch for ripening nuts in early September.

The species of hickory known as pecan, *Carya illinoensis*, has a native range that covers most of the main valley of the Mississippi. It occurs as far north as Davenport, Iowa, and is found in southeastern Kansas before its range widens to include most of eastern Texas and Oklahoma. Pecans love alluvial soil, hugging the banks and stream margins of major rivers and tributaries. Pecan giants of the Ohio River Valley have rarely been equaled elsewhere. The natural spread of pecans has depended for eons on caching and carrying activities of birds and rodents. The cultural spread of pecans – planted for commercial use in Manhattan and other areas of Kansas – cast bird species in pest roles.

Fair's Stand, no longer producing nuts for sale, reinstates the natural, evolved relationships between pecans and birds. Walkers on the Linear Trail in autumn may softly come upon large crow flocks -- 20 to 25 birds -- harvesting on the ground or jostling in branches, spotting. Scout crows fly alone over the grove, watching for blue jay competitors and reporting nut falls. Resident crow populations nest in pecan groves and are joined by flocks of migrant crows for the winter. Local birds have been described as "hosts," teaching migrants where the best-producing pecan trees are and instructing young crows how to test a pecan for ripeness or find shells with long, vertical cracks. A mature crow can

eat or break a pound of nuts a day from September through completion of masting. A flock of hungry crows can strip a tree quickly. Crows disperse pecans when they drop nuts in flight; researchers have found long, wavering lines of young pecan seedlings marching over fields and through woodlands, following the flight paths of crows and jays. Crows prefer large, thin-shelled pecans and jays like smaller nuts with pointed ends. Each species is selective and chooses carefully. The pecan tree, only recently modified by artificial selection of desirable cultivars, was most likely already a "cultivar" selected by birds.

Other birds known to break open pecan nuts are the rose-breasted grosbeak, white-breasted nuthatch, yellow-bellied sapsucker and red-bellied sapsucker. But crows and jays, with their larger sizes and powerful beaks, are the two species most responsible for pecan harvesting and dispersal. A blue jay, in fact, can hold three small-size pecan nuts inside its mouth and esophagus! Signs of crow and jay activity in old fields near pecan groves are the unmistakable fringes

of tiny pecan sprouts coming up along fence lines; birds perch on fences to grasp nuts and peck at them, often dropping the opened shells.

While pecan growers have learned to hear threats in the myriad tones and raucous calls of crows and jays, these birds, in their native relationship to nut trees, are critical. Restoration of fragmented landscapes in the central forested hardwood regions of America depends on dispersers who can

cross forest gaps. The spread of pecan, acorn, and beech mast by jays and crows contributes to biodiversity and longevity of wooded landscapes. If you are lucky enough to catch the crows at breakfast in Fair's Stand, remember that you are privileged to witness an ecological process as old as the Flint Hills.



Wildcat Creek winds to the north of Fair's Stand.



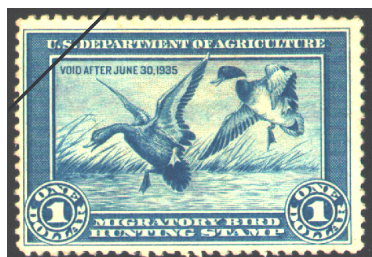
Linear Trail approaching Fair's Stand.



The long corridor of pecan trees and shadows in October.

THE MAN BEHIND THE DUCK STAMP

Twice awarded the Pulitzer Prize for syndicated editorial cartoons he drew almost daily between 1900 and 1949, in 1934-1935 he headed what is now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, created the Federal Duck Stamp Program which has since restored thousands of acres of wet lands, and in 1936 founded the National Wildlife Federation.



The first Duck Stamp: in 1934: Brush and ink drawings of Mallards by Jay N. “Ding” Darling, a famous cartoonist and noted conservationist. The artist was chief of the Biological Survey, a precursor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, from 1934 to 1936. “Ding” conceived the idea of using duck stamps to raise money for the purchase of wetlands.

Jay N. “Ding” Darling



A Journalist and tireless advocate for preservation of the environment Jay N. “Ding” Darling (1876-1962).

DUCK STAMPS – CONSERVATION OF HABITAT - Paul Baicich

As you surely know, since the mid-1930s, waterfowl hunters (with significant support from others) have secured more than 5.3 million acres of Refuge System habitat using over \$750 million of collected through “Duck Stamp” dollars. Since the late-1950s close to 98% of each Stamp (today costing \$15 each) has been spent on securing Refuge System habitat, held for the birds but “owned” by the citizens of the United States.

The Stamp functions as a federal license to hunt waterfowl, but it is much more than that. It is a kind of “mitigation fund” for hunters, but it is also a “conservation fund” for everyone else who buys a stamp. Indeed, since 1977, the Stamp has by law officially been titled “The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp.” (Most people seem to use the old nickname, “Duck Stamp.”) One nifty thing about the Stamp is that major portions of the funds have gone to acquire Refuge System grasslands, not simply wetlands. Lots of valuable smaller Waterfowl Production Areas (federal WpAs) are part of the whole mix. (Another grand thing about the \$\$\$ is that the fund can’t be “raided” by Congress, used for any other purposes.)

Some of my favorite NWRs for birding have been acquired mainly by Stamp dollars (and mostly, we need to remind ourselves, by waterfowl hunters). Here are just 10 of those favorite refuges and the percentage of the property that has been acquired through Stamp investments:

Bosque del Apache in New Mexico	99.2%
Pea Island in North Carolina	99.2%
Bombay Hook in Delaware	95.1%
Santa Ana in Texas	94.9%
Okefenokee in Georgia	88.2%
Anahuac in Texas	87.5%
Ottawa in Ohio	86.4%
Laguna Atascosa in Texas	86.0%
Edwin B. Forsythe in New Jersey	84.3%
Blackwater in Maryland	77.6%



The point is that the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp is appropriate for everyone who values wetland and grassland habitat, not just waterfowl hunters. It’s a way for birders, hunters, and general conservationists to support a mutual effort, regardless of any other minor differences. (By the way, while I am not a hunter, I am a member of three hunting-oriented organizations; Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, and Pheasants Forever. Hey, it’s about the habitat!)

<http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/federal/stamps/fedimages.htm>

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

The origins of this event trace back to 1900, when Frank Chapman instituted a bird census to try to convince people that the Christmas side-hunt, another traditional Christmas-season activity, should be replaced. The side-hunt consisted of convening men and boys, armed with rifles and shotguns, who then chose sides and proceeded to shoot every living thing that crossed their path that day. The two sides would then pile up the carcasses, count them, and declare a winner based on who achieved maximum carnage. Since this was prior to the days when native birds were protected, non-game species (e.g., chickadees, woodpeckers, hawks) were considered fair game for the side-hunters. Chapman's tradition eventually replaced this barbaric activity, and thousands of people participate in CBCs every year, in all 50 U.S. states, all Canadian provinces, and many Central and South American countries. The CBC is the longest-running ornithological citizen-science data collection effort, and the value of the data collected increases every year.



Dave Rintoul	532-0104 or 537-0781
Clyde Ferguson	539-4856
Jack Cully	532-6534
Hoogy Hoogheem	539-7080
Doris Burnett	537-2502
Brett Sandercock	532-0120

There are six quasi-independent groups covering our CBC circle (centered at Anderson Hall); if you wish to join one of these groups, please call one of the group leader listed. If you can't make up your mind, call Dave Rintoul at 532-0104 (or drintoul@ksu.edu) and he will try to get you hooked up with a group. The count commences at dawn and ends at dusk (unless you are part of a group counting owls). The count numbers are compiled and stories are swapped at a chili dinner later that evening.

Manhattan CBC Compilation Dinner -- Chili Supper

Join the NFHAS and fellow birders for a potluck supper at 6 p.m., Dec. 18, at the Seniors Service Center, 412 Leavenworth, Manhattan. Feel free to bring a dish to share. Free-will donations to NFHAS are 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 want to help setup, please call Carla Bishop, 539-5129 or 532-1858 or email: cbishop@ksu.edu

Other Area Christmas Bird Census:

Dec. 19, 2010 Wakefield CBC - Chuck Otte, 785-238-8800, otte2@COX.NET
Dec. 20, 2010 Olsburg CBC - Gary Jeffrey, 785-468-3587, GJEFFREY@TWINVALLEY.NET
Dec. 27, 2010 Junction City CBC - Chuck Otte, 785-238-8800 otte2@COX.NET
Jan. 8, 2011 Blue Rapids CBC - Tom Parker, 785-363-7228 tlparker1@sbcglobal.net



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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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