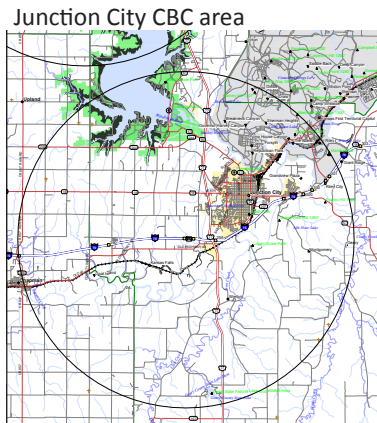


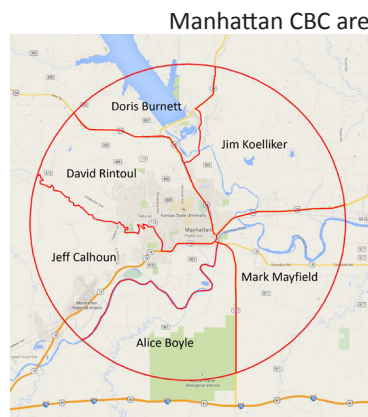
Wakefield CBC area



Olsburg CBC area



Junction City CBC area



Manhattan CBC area

## Local area Christmas Bird Counts:

SAVE THE DATES!

Tuesday, Dec. 12, Olsburg  
Cindy Jeffrey cinraney@ksu.edu  
785.565.3326

Saturday, December 16, Manhattan  
Mark Mayfield markherb@ksu.edu  
785.410.3073

Sunday, Dec. 17, Wakefield  
Chuck Otte cotte@ksu.edu  
785.238.4161

Monday, Dec. 26, Junction City  
Chuck Otte cotte@ksu.edu  
785.238.4161

For a list of all the CBC in Kansas go to Kansas Ornithological Society website:  
<https://ksbirds.org/kos/2023CBC.htm>

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 52, No. 4, December 2023

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### Upcoming Events

Dec.5 - Board meeting - 5:30 Public Library

Dec. 12 - Olsburg Christmas Bird Count

Dec. 16 - Manhattan CBC - see page 4

Dec. 17 - Wakefield Christmas Bird Count

Dec. 26 - Junction City Christmas Bird Count

Jan. 21 - Program: Using Goats for sustainable  
vegetation management



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

In a kind of quid pro quo, the longer winter nights are enlivened by a greater display of constellations, plus variously some planets. It occurs to me to attempt a one-page gather of as many as I can.

The wanderers are of course in positions specific to now, winter or not. Mars will be a brief, dim reddish spot in the dawn lights, and Mercury might best be spotted low in the SW during evening twilights, while Saturn will appear due south amid the fainter winter stars of Aquarius and will set by early evening. Jupiter continues to ride up and over the sky from dusk to dawn, and Venus, now a Morning Star, rises in the wee hours. Sparkling Spica, Virgo's brightest star, will be companionably close to the right for a couple hours.

The Moon will be to the left of the Gemini Twins on the 1st, and has Leo's Regulus moving upward from left to right below it the 3rd-4th. Spica will be closer to the Moon than Venus the 8th, and the Moon will be up close beneath Saturn early on the evening of the 17th, then it will be above Jupiter from left to right the 21st-22nd. It will be above and to the right of Taurus's Aldebaran the 24th and to the right of the Gemini Twins the 27th, with the Twin star Castor above Pollux. Regulus gets another visitation, being first to the lower right then upper right of the Moon, the 30th-31st.

All this occurs amid the other bright arrangements that the winter sky provides. Easterly in the evening the Big Dog (Canis Major) springs up after Orion, who'll be facing off with Taurus the Bull, with Lepus the Rabbit's six main stars forming a bent box underfoot. Amid the Big Dog, Sirius, the brightest of stars that we see, will be due south again at midnight New Year's Eve. Meanwhile the Milky Way will pass between Sirius and Procyon, the bright star of The Little Dog, while also extending northwestward through part of the large pentagon named Auriga the Charioteer. Then further westward it encompasses the strong sparkles of Perseus the Hero, and next includes nearly all of Cassiopeia the Queen, one of the six constellations that are visible circling the North Pole through every night (and outshone by the Sun during the days) through all the seasons.

Of course, one can see and name the star arrangements anyway one wants, while the International Astronomical Union has a current list of 88 constellations, including the ones already mentioned. SW of the Milky Way other winter constellations will be glittering, not prominently but the naked eye can discover them. As a sampling, one would find the River, Eridanus, as a sequence of stars extending westward from Rigel, Orion's west foot, into a bulging, then v-shaped, zigzag that then dips out of sight. Two particular stars, 'caught' within in the sharp lower zag, represent Fornax, called the Furnace, though it was named to honor the development of the Bunsen burner in the 1850s.

Just west of the River's (upper) bulging bend is the main bulk of Cetus the Whale, rather like a half-inflated football, with single line of stars that rises back eastward over the River to form a head, a kind of squashed cube. Midway along that neck is a star whose shine comes and goes; it's called Miró, because to earlier eyes such behavior seemed miraculous.

Just west of the Whale will be Saturn's host, Aquarius, the water-bag an irregular roundabout of stars with a single line of stars reaching westward quite a ways in a shallow sine wave. Below the bag a lone shining point will be Fomalhaut, the mouth of the Southern Fish. The wide-spread down-pointing three-star triangle beneath that wave is designated as Capricornis the Goat-with-a-fish's-tail, perhaps the oldest named of these constellations, and one whose explanatory tales, involving godly behaviors, were told as early as Babylonian times, 4000 years ago, and are too many for mention here.

Above the characters named so far, and below the western reach of the Milky Way, autumn constellations linger through the evenings, notably the dark area defined by the four corner stars of the Great Square of Pegasus. A row of stars running up the Square's west side and another row beneath it, comprise the V of Pisces the (two) Fish. Showing between the west top of Pegasus and the Milky Way an array of stars will contain, as best as one can perceive them, the dual arcs of Andromeda the Princess. Down between them and Cetus's head, a notable star will be Hamal, representing Aries the Ram. More groupings exist, but there is more space up there than here.

Possibly on the 13th the scene may be further enlivened by a spraying of the Gemini meteor shower. The Old Farmer's Almanac expects one streaking glow a minute. Then Winter officially arrives at 9p27 the 21st.

## Any Given Time

Dru Clarke



Given the time of year, instead of lilac or cherry blossoms, the honey tasted of the essence of a thousand apple trees, growing along a grassy riverbank in Nizhny Novgorod, the men's home, 100 miles from the hive on the roof of the Metropol Hotel in Moscow. Abram said to the Count, "They (the bees) have been listening to us." (from *A Gentleman in Moscow*, by Amor Towles)

Our first planted lilac bloomed again this year in early November, tricked by a certain length of day (or night). The others were quiescent and were content to wait until spring. Did this one think it was spring, or, could it simply be announcing the end, rather than the beginning, of a given time. A season that, too, will pass, as summer did, after their awakened blooms in spring.

In searching for a tub that would hold water for a new mother cow and her calf, I flipped over a likely one and found, hunkered on the bottom, a woolly bear. Woolly bears (or as some say woolly worms, a less cuddly sobriquet) are the larva of the Isabella tiger moth, a beauty that will grace the air and enrich our environment with its burning bright orange wings. (This stirs a memory of my brother reciting Blake's poem, "Tiger, tiger, burning bright". The tiger in the poem was a metaphor for the devil, and the moth herself, more heavenly.)

This woolly bear was seeking shelter to overwinter, as they do not metamorphose into the pupa stage until spring. It is a charming creature, in its tiny bottle brush bristly state, its black and orange banded body glistening in the sudden light. Purportedly able to predict the degree of harshness of the coming winter by the amount of black and orange displayed on its body segments (there are 13), an experiment done in the 1940's on Bear Mountain (NY) seemed to establish this as fact. The sample, however, was quite small. A later, more extensive set of observations seemed to establish a different interpretation: that the more brownish-orange bands develop (those in the middle of the body, while the head and tail segments are black), *they signal that the previous winter was a harsh one*. So rather than predict the coming winter, they testify to the degree of mildness or harshness of the *previous* one. I put the tub down and found another, more suitable one. I hope the woolly bear has a good sleep.



A friend has recently reunited with a band (a family?) of crows he has come to feed unsalted peanuts he places on a neighborhood stump. In spring he stops feeding them, but in November, they reappear to remind him rather boldly (flying close to his head, cawing/calling to him) to fill the larder. He is convinced that they 'know' him and recognize his good intentions, and he prefers them to any domestic pet as he doesn't have to take them for a walk, house them, or clean their litter box.

Is it the changing circadian rhythm of light and dark or temperature or something else that triggers these behaviors? Could it be something they hear, that they are listening to that we can't discern, like Abram's bees?

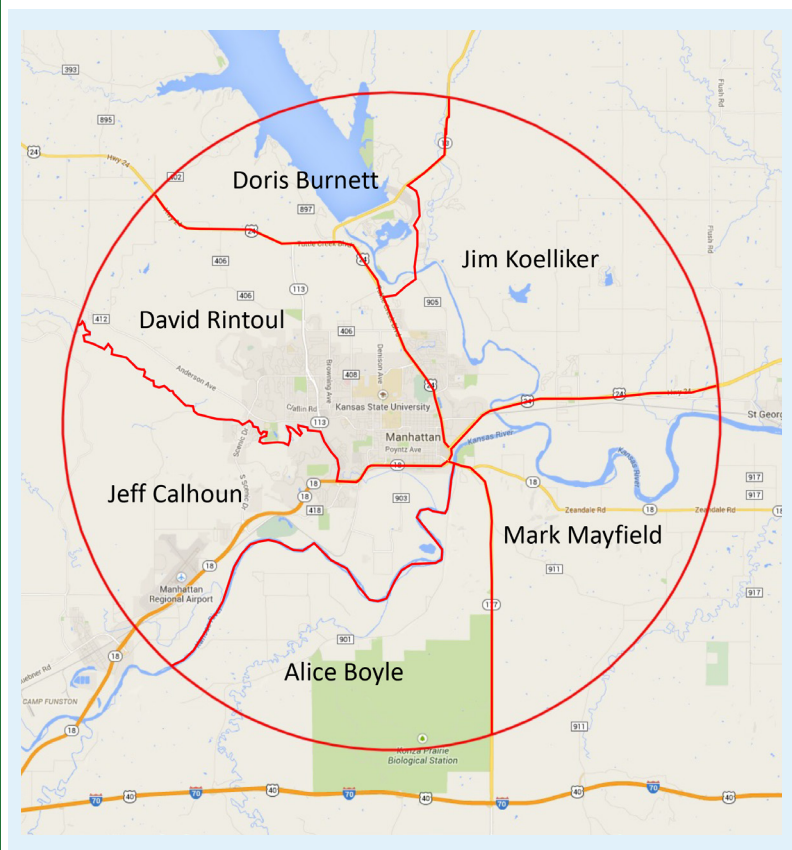
Switching to Daylight Savings Time has certainly disturbed our daily routines, our biorhythms, and I am still waking up at the hour my body had grown accustomed to. And, our animals are confused about feeding time. We will grouse about it for a while, then settle in and perhaps watch more telly, read more books, sleep more hours. And look forward to seeing the first Isabella next spring.

*Isabella-Tiger-Moth*





# Manhattan Christmas Bird Count



## Manhattan CBC

Saturday, December 16, 2023

Contact Mark Mayfield  
[markherb@ksu.edu](mailto:markherb@ksu.edu) 785.410.3073

## Manhattan CBC Contact information

Mark Mayfield	<a href="mailto:markherb@ksu.edu">markherb@ksu.edu</a>	785-410-3073
Alice Boyle	<a href="mailto:aboyle@ksu.edu">aboyle@ksu.edu</a>	785-477-9064
Jeff Calhoun	<a href="mailto:jeffcalhoun11@gmail.com">jeffcalhoun11@gmail.com</a>	
Dave Rintoul	<a href="mailto:drintoul@ksu.edu">drintoul@ksu.edu</a>	785-537-4143
Doris Burnett	<a href="mailto:dburnett7750@gmail.com">dburnett7750@gmail.com</a>	785-532-9411
Jim Koelliker	<a href="mailto:koellik@ksu.edu">koellik@ksu.edu</a>	785-323-7157

## Manhattan Christmas Bird Count - Compilation and Chili Supper

Join the NFHAS and fellow birders after the day of birding for a potluck supper at 5:30 p.m. on December 16<sup>th</sup>, at the Seniors Service Center, 301 N 4th St, 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 **Patricia Yeager by phone 776-9593 or email [pyeagerbirder@gmail.com](mailto:pyeagerbirder@gmail.com).**



## Look for these Sparrows

		
House sparrow	White-crowned sparrow	White-throated sparrow
		
Chipping sparrow	Song sparrow	American tree sparrow
		
Lark sparrow	Field sparrow	Harris's sparrow
		
Savannah sparrow	Swamp sparrow	Lincoln's sparrow
		
Henslow's sparrow	Grasshopper sparrow	Fox sparrow
		
Vesper sparrow	LeConte's sparrow	Clay-colored sparrow

### Sparrows in Kansas all year:

House Sparrow  
Field Sparrow  
Rufous-crowned Sparrow

### Sparrows in Kansas in winter:

Harris's Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
American Tree Sparrow  
White-crowned Sparrow  
Fox Sparrow  
Spotted Towhee  
Swamp Sparrow



Northern Flint Hills  
Audubon Society  
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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.

Published monthly (except August) by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society.  
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Also available online at [nfhas.org](http://nfhas.org)

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Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon  
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**WE NEED YOU!** PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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