

Photo and Story time

Oct. 19, 7 p.m. Groesbeck Room -
Manhattan Public Library

Bring your nature / bird photos to our October get-together. We will have a computer and projector for digital images, and a table for any hard copy photos.

The images can be from anywhere in the world, not just Kansas.

We will talk about birding experiences, share stories as well as images, and get to know our fellow birders better.

So.....

What have you seen? Where have you birded?

What was your most exciting birding adventure?

What was your most challenging birding adventure?



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

Oct. 3- Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Oct. 8 Sat. Morning Birding
8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

Oct. 19- PHOTO/Story share 7 p.m.
Groesbeck Rm. Manhattan Public
Library (see above)



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Herewith some follow-up to the solar eclipse discussion in the last issue, beginning with the fact that we have such events because we have a moon. According to current thought, as mentioned incidentally

in an August 6th Science News article, we have a moon because during its first half billion years of existence (4 1/2 to 4 billion years ago) the Earth was in a “shooting gallery” of unassociated agglomerates zooming about. One of which banged into the Earth and “spalled off enough debris” to form the Moon.

That coalesced debris, though caught in a constant orbit around the Earth, it seems has been moving further away ever since. It’s presently separating from us at the rate of about an inch and a half (about 4 cm.) yearly. Thus, there was a time when it was so close that every solar eclipse would’ve been a total blot-out, and there will come a time when it’s so far away that its shadow will be too small for any total eclipse.

For us in between, it happened that that spalled off debris came together at 1/390th the size of the Sun, and it happens that now its distance is 1/390th of that to the Sun, so the two now appear of equal size in the sky. Thus, the Moon can obscure just the main disk of the Sun, its photosphere, making possible in our time the surrounding coronal display that is the main draw of total eclipses, both for scientific and purely visual purposes.

One Greek astronomer, Hipparchus, after observing a total eclipse in the 2nd century b.c.e, and learning that only a 4/5ths eclipse had been visible in Alexandria, deduced that the eclipsing shadow was solely that of the Moon, and from that figured the distance to, and the size of, the Moon. A century earlier, another Greek, Aristarchus, had done the same starting from a lunar eclipse. Both results were accurate, though of course not precise.

As a side note, Aristarchus posited a solar-centered universe (long before Copernicus) while Hipparchus held to the geo-centric view that became dominant through the succeeding centuries. While, for centuries before and after those two, many people in different places saw and reported total eclipses. And it was by mining and collating those reports, in particular by Edmund Halley (he who predicted the return of what we call Halley’s

comet) around 1700, that it was discovered that things did not comport with straight forward calculations. That those reported eclipses had been observed well to the east of where they would be mathematically expected, that the Earth wasn’t bringing its topography around as fast as would be expected, that its rotation has been slowing. The current figure appears to put the length of each day (lod) as increasing by 1.7 milliseconds per century, a figure that can have cumulative effects, involving the gradual separation of the Moon, and is arrived at by factoring in the drag of tidal movements, the expansion of the Earth’s atmosphere during summer seasons, the conservation of angular momentum within a system, and other very technical applications. A concise description of which can be sought in a book titled *Eclipse*, by Duncan Steel (Headline Book Publishing, London, 1999).

Although it is gradually – one might say surreptitiously – gliding further away in the celestial dance hall, the Moon will still be joining the party through September, moving around the gather of Mars, Saturn, and Antares the 8th and 9th, while the Great Square of Pegasus, tilted more as a diamond, rises in the evening sky. It then has early morning affairs, appearing the 21st and 22nd below the star Aldebaran, as Taurus, a winter constellation, begins some advance peeking up.

The Moon will be above Leo’s Regulus just ahead of daylight the 27th, and below it the 28th, while Mercury, if given a low horizon shines below the Moon. Mercury will be doing its gliding just to the upper left of the Moon the 29th.

Usually this column is concerned with what can be viewed by the unaided eye, but since Neptune will be in a prime viewing position, it seems worth mentioning that those with a telescope or very strong binoculars may be able to find it in the SE evenings among the very dim stars of Aquarius; they outline what might be a skin water bag with its bent-down nozzle end to westward.

Neptune will be in Aquarius awhile, for it takes it 164 of our years to make one revolution around the Sun. Meanwhile quite visible Mars will be shifting position at a noticeable pace, separating from Saturn and Antares in Scorpius, and moving into Ophiuchus, the Snake-bearer, whose stars form a sizable kind of eastward tilted tower above the Scorpion.

Official autumn will arrive with the equinox at 9a21 the 22nd, after the Moon, new at 4a03 on the 1st swells to the full Harvest Moon at 2p05 on the 16th.

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Metes and Bounds

Dru Clarke



Pedestal Rock, lopsided and precariously positioned on a rugged Oregon beach, is no more. Surviving the repeated assault of wind and rain and tides, it could not survive the destructive force and stupidity of a group of humans, getting their “revenge” on the rock for “causing” a buddy’s leg to fracture. An icon for eons and a symbol of our world’s geodiversity, it is now rubble, a natural wonder akin to the built icons of, for example, historic Palmyra, recently destroyed by messianic fanatics, and even the World Trade Center’s Twin Towers and the unbearable loss of lives we remember with heavy hearts fifteen years after their destruction by similarly motivated individuals.

Taking the measure of land usually means delineating its perimeter for purposes of ownership or right-of-way, and, before modern techniques, it was done by metes and bounds, in which a natural “monument” served as the starting point. The problem with this system is in natural structures’ fragility or evanescence: a large boulder, a bend in a stream, the base of a cliff, a grand tree – all may erode, change course, erode, or die, leaving the point of origin up to question. And, sometimes, as we know well, these natural landmarks are “attractive nuisances,” like a backyard swimming pool without a fence surrounding it, and they invite thrill seekers, vandals, and the heedless to alter, even attack, their natural value. The Louis Vieux Elm – once designated the largest American Elm in the United States – stood on the banks of the Vermilion River east of Louisville and suffered numerous assaults until it finally succumbed to fire and is now a memory recognized by a signpost at the site where it stood. Some wood was salvaged and repurposed; it’s been said, as bookends and doorstops.

Other instances of narcissistic behavior come to mind: the “artist” who drew “tings” on rocky outcroppings (she was finally caught); the Boy Scout leaders who toppled a 25-million-year old hoodoo in Goblin Valley State Park to “protect” the scouts from its potential collapse; the Finnish tourist who lopped off an earlobe of a moai on Easter Island “so he could have it.” All I have to say is, “DUH...”

In 1962 the National Natural Landmarks Program was initiated to provide recognition and protection for such natural monuments which have unique biological and/or geological features. Its purpose is NOT land acquisition as the designated sites are owned or managed by a variety of stewards (individuals, groups, and government bodies). The United Kingdom has a similar program, the

Sites of Special and Scientific Interest. An agreement is made with the owner, and, if the values for which the site has been designated are lost or destroyed, the designation is removed.

Kansas is home to five national natural landmarks: Baker University Wetlands (Douglas Cty.); Baldwin Woods (Douglas Cty.); Monument Rocks (Gove Cty.); Rock City (Ottawa Cty.); and Big Basin Prairie Preserve (Clark Cty.). All are privately owned except Big Basin, which is run by the state. NNL status does not transfer with change in ownership, so if places such as these are to have continued protection, application by the new owner needs to occur.

Today, consult a county plat map and find that geographic meridians are used as baselines from which to measure township, range, section, and parcels of acres. Sophisticated survey equipment can eliminate the guess of boundaries so ownership can be set. But measure of the land is more than boundaries. It is the biological and geological features and historical landmarks inherent in each piece that give the land value. We recently discovered the swales of a cutoff of the Louisville-Juniata trail that runs northwest of our property. An old stone foundation on a bluff above the nearby creek was probably a waystation for weary travelers. It has since been bulldozed into oblivion, the insignificant piece of land it sat on “reclaimed” for pasture.

Metes and bounds may be an outdated system of land measurement, but at least it gave value to some of those features we can, if we will, protect as inherent wonders of nature.

It is a shame that the Louis Vieux Elm didn’t survive long enough to enjoy the recognition that the National Natural Landmarks Program provides.

© Dru Clarke September 2016

THANK YOU!

Alsop Bird Sanctuary
It's time to plant!

DONE!

Thank you to those who helped to get the fall planting done at the Alsop Bird Sanctuary!

Thank you to **Susan Blackford** who drove to Hesston to Dyck Arboretum's fall plant sale and picked up all 63 plants on this fall's plant list, then turned up Monday to help out again.

Thank you to **Dru and Mike Clarke** who managed to plant the majority of the plants in short order.

Thank you to **Kevin Fay** who helped to prepare the ground for planting on Saturday and returned Sunday to plant.

Thank you to **Jim Koelliker** who efficiently weeded and mulched. We got it all done just in time for the rain.

Thank you to **Patricia Yeager** for keeping this project on track!



October's Bright Blue Weather

O suns and skies and clouds of June,
And flowers of June together,
Ye cannot rival for one hour
October's bright blue weather.

When loud the humblebee makes haste,
Belated, thriftless vagrant,
And Golden Rod is dying fast,
And lanes with grapes are fragrant;

When Gentians roll their fringes tight,
To save them for the morning,
And chestnuts fall from satin burrs
Without a sound or warning;

When on the ground red apples lie,
In piles like jewels shinning,
And redder still on old stone walls
Are leaves of woodbine twining;

When all the lovely wayside things
Their white-winged seeds are sowing,
And in the fields, still green and fair,
Late aftermaths are growing;

When springs run low, and on the brooks,
In idle golden freighting
Bright leaves sink noiseless in the hush
Of woods, for winter waiting;

When comrades seek sweet country
haunts,
By twos and twos together,
And count like misers, hour by hour,
October's bright blue weather.

O suns and skies and flowers of June,
Count all your boasts together,
Love loveth best of all the year
October's bright blue weather.

~ Helen Hunt Jackson

NHFAS BOARD
needs you

We are still without a secretary.

Please consider being a board member and helping our chapter. We meet once a month. Duties are very light, just record the minutes and distribute them before the next meeting. Now that isn't hard! Of course you will also be able to vote and have input on all matters of the NFHAS.



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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 discussions.

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