

Sept. Program:

Jackie Augustine,
(Executive Director AOK)

New data from old birds: The importance of natural history collections (science)

Even before Darwin, scientists were traveling the world and collecting specimens to preserve in museums. Those specimens are now being used to answer questions that the collectors did not even think to ask. Dr. Jackie Augustine will describe some of the new and exciting information that is being obtained from these specimens.



At Mt. Mitchell, photo by Jackie



Jackie Augustine joined Audubon of Kansas in January 2021 as Executive Director. Jackie received her degree at Kansas State University studying the mating behavior of Greater Prairie-Chickens. Audubon of Kansas (AOK) is a nonprofit environmental organization with more than 4,000 members concentrated in Kansas, Nebraska, and the central Great Plains. As Executive Director, Jackie works with public officials to advance environmental causes and manages AOK's three sanctuaries including a 5000 acre ranch in northern Nebraska.

Sept. 15, 2021

DINNER: 5:15 with Jackie at Nico's in Aggieville

PROGRAM: 6:30 Manhattan Public Library Auditorium (2nd floor)
(Masks recommended)

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 50, No. 1 September 2021



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Upcoming Events

- Sept 7 - Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
- Sept 11 - Monthly Bird Walk 8 a.m.
Bluemont Scenic Overlook and ending
at Goodnow Park (see page 6)
- Sept 15 - PROGRAM by Jackie Augustine 6:30 p.m**
Manhattan Public Library Auditorium
NOTE: MASK RECOMMENDED



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

The season is again scheduled to change, though how it will do so seems increasingly unpredictable. What seems certain is that it will carry forward the problems associated with climate change, and more suggestions about how to respond. I think still apropos will be a series of articles that appeared in the July 3rd issue of Science News focusing on the focus on trees. It indicates there have been growing numbers of people forming groups who see trees as significant warriors in the fight to stabilize the Earth's environment, and cautions that such a force would require many different brigades, each with its own possibilities and and limitations, and yet be in need of widespread holistic central planning.

Looking at the planet as a whole, the articles start by forwarding an estimate that it contains three trillion trees (from Internet figures, outnumbering people 400-1), then they report on a stir caused by a study coming from Switzerland's ETH Zurich university claiming that world-wide there are about 900 million hectares of land (about the size of the U.S.) available for planting another trillion trees that would absorb 206 billion tons of CO₂—given 100 years to do it. (A hectare = 2.47+ acres).

The study has met shaking heads. For one thing, some of the land listed as "available" are grasslands already absorbing a lot of carbon, so adding trees would not provide much gain. And the overall response, as the article collates them, is that the use of tree resources should fall into three categories, with two overall requirements.

First category: protect existing forests. (i.g., Compare the amount of carbon being absorbed by a forest of tall trees you can't get your arms around to the capacity of a young plantation of shorter saplings whose trunks you can encircle with your hands).

Second, re-forest where trees have been successful before. (i.g. China had a large scale debacle trying to establish a "green wall" to hold back the expanding Gobi desert, planting trees that could not survive the conditions).

Thirdly, develop agroforests, the mingling of site specific arrangements of trees that either provide shade and erosion protection while growing amid market crops (and perhaps eventually becoming a source of

income themselves), or else comprise buffer zones that can enhance animal habitat and be made up of diversified species.

Those components named, one of the overall, controlling requirements for them that the articles cite is the necessity that any tree-supporting activity must have the support of the whole human community involved. Political, economic, emotional, and regulatory inputs must come to a common understanding, else the project will not be maintained and thus not sustained. People actually involved must see a personal benefit, and the trees must be planted by competent hands.

Within the articles it's noted that soil microorganisms, upon which trees depend, plus decaying and harvested wood, give back to the air about half the CO₂ that trees absorb. So the second overreaching requirement the articles have for tree projects is that they be considered as part of a focus on protecting entire ecosystems, not smaller individual environments. The articles contain a number of various examples of actions toward the overall goal, but whether the whole prescription can be filled seems as uncertain as the upcoming weather.

Meanwhile, sky-wise, September will start with Venus notably the Evening Star. On the first it will be joined by Mercury to its lower right. On the 2nd Virgo's star Spica will be to its lower left then for several days Venus will re-position over the star. On the 3rd the Moon gets in line with the Gemini Twins, Pollux the closer and Castor beyond. On the 9th the Moon, Venus, and Spica form a triangle with the Moon higher, Venus lower left, Spica still lower right. The Moon visits Scorpius' Antares the 12th and on the 16th passes by Saturn to the right of Jupiter, which it moves close to the 17th.

Then we can use a limber tongue the 22nd when, looking westward from Antares, the Moon will be directly below Zubenelgenubi with Zubeneshumali about ten degrees (roughly the width of an extended fist) above them. In Arabic those stars' names refer to "claws" for they once were those of Scorpius, but in Roman times they were transferred into being part of the newly formed constellation, Libra—Latin for "scales". These two represent the Scales' balance bar; two others represent the balancing pans. They are all dimly hard to find but were created because the Sun then was in their position during the time of the autumn equinox, and the point was to acknowledge that period of nearly equal night and day, and/or to acknowledge the founding of Rome, which was regarded as presaging a time of equal justice. Thus the Zodiac got its only non-zoological member.

Autumn comes officially the 22nd at 2p21 CDT. The Moon will be full the 20th at 8p55 after being new the 8th at 7p52.

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Windfall

Dru Clarke



During the night of August 9, the venerable old cottonwood, standing sentinel for years, toppled. It had been dead for perhaps years, yet kept its promise to stand watch creekside. Its upper limbs and branches often held a hawk or owl, mourning doves or small perching birds, the tallest lookout of all the trees in its neighborhood.

Prone, it lay pointing northeast, held in place by a muddy slope and several spindly elm saplings and pioneering dogwood, judiciously avoiding more mature and promising trees. At its base, only a circlet of truncated roots, like stubs of severely decayed teeth, remained. What had held it erect and in place for so long must have been a kind of rigor mortis, a stiffening of will and denial of dying, certainly nothing physical we could identify. No living vines clung to its body, not even using it as support, although it seemed an ideal ladder to reach sunlight. Its nakedness was startling.

Four and a half feet up the trunk from the base, foresters traditionally measure circumference (this one was 6.5 ft); from that, the diameter can be determined. Using a formula (circumference divided by 3.14) the found diameter was 2.07 feet. From this and other measurements, people who harvest trees for lumber can determine board feet. Further up, the circumference was greater, due perhaps to optimum environmental conditions or some mystifying circumstance. But most likely, the girth was necessary to support a heavy limb that branched from the trunk just beyond. Long slabs of wood, not bark, which had peeled off years ago (except for a bracelet of it tenaciously hugging the foot), loosened like shingles along the trunk, camouflaging small organisms. Rust-colored bracket fungi stair-stepped along one flank, and knobby boles jutted wart-like from where hopeful branches had sprouted, then died.

The foot of the tree, with its snaggle-toothed roots, left a six foot wide depression in the clayey soil.

In woodland and forest, one hiking will often come across these depressions, long ago filled in with rotting leaves, now filled with soft, herbaceous plants that effectively disguise the origin of the low spot they inhabit. The tree by then will be long gone, or only a mother log will persist as evidence of its once upright posture.

The term 'windfall' was created by early settlers to identify a tall, straight tree felled by a strong, windy storm that could be used as timbers, usually masts, for a ship. In that, it was unexpected good fortune, the meaning we give it today.

Another, even taller cottonwood stands near the fallen one. Its leaves twirl in a breeze, sounding like a rushing brook or a host of rustling taffeta gowns. It may be a daughter; the fallen one, a mother tree. We know now that

they do exist, providing nutrients by an underground network of microbes and fungi (mycorrhiza) and protection from danger by emitting chemical signals as warning. If they are truly sentient, how can we tell? It probably only matters to them.

The loss of any tree is sad, but even in death they continue to give. Shel Silverstein's "The Giving Tree" is an enduring, endearing book that holds consolation for its loss. As I examined the fallen cottonwood, I saw a scouting red ant exploring the crevices of the dead wood. Soon, I imagined a whole colony of them making it their home. And, others too will come and find the downed tree a windfall.

© 2021 Dru Clarke June



The one and only CLYDE FERGUSON

(Reprinted from 2017
July Prairie Falcon)

Back in the early 1980s, the National Audubon Society held a Birdathon. It only lasted a few years. But a couple of local members did get the NFHAS Birdathon established and it continues to this day.

Clyde Ferguson and Cecil Best were fishing partners. About 1985, they were fishing out of a canoe up a stream that fed into Milford Lake (this was their first Birdathon) Clyde would point out some of the birds he saw. Cecil was learning (and eventually became a very good birder and the Cecil Best Trail is in his honor). It became their habit to bird as they fished.

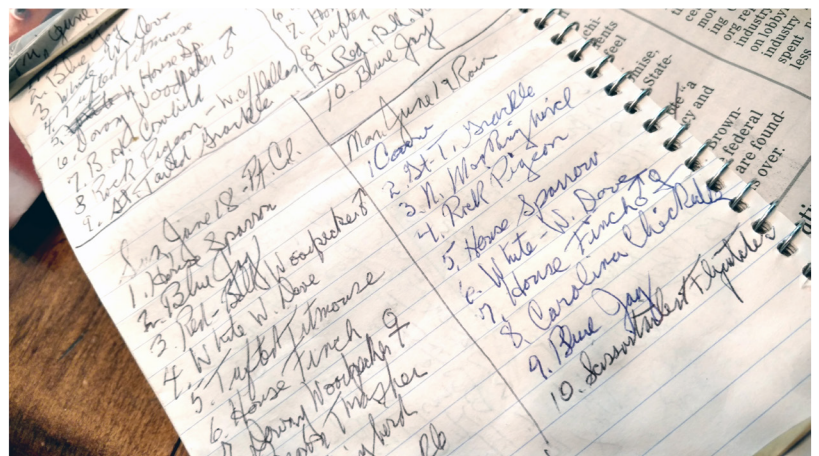
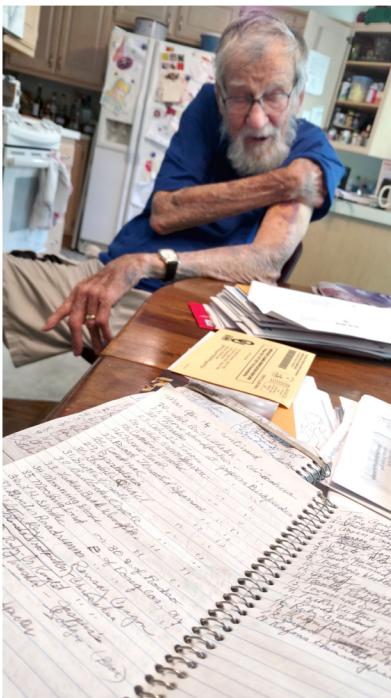
On one of those fishing trips they saw 4 species each – including a screech owl. According to Clyde, it was Cecil's idea to get organized and get some people to sponsor them and they could raise money for the NFHAS.

They recruited friends, colleagues and neighbors to be sponsors and/or to join in the "Birdathon." Many were from the University. The first "Birdathon" they "swept the swallows," said Clyde. The pledge was 10 cents a species. Unlike the Christmas Bird Count, once you saw a species you didn't have to keep counting that species, and you could cover a bigger area.

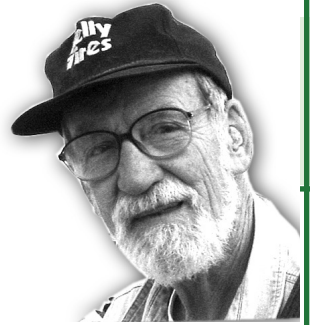
Over the years it has grown and they no longer bird by boat. Clyde said after that first couple of years, they have never counted less than 80 species! "We see birds today that we never used to, such as the white-winged dove and lots more Mississippi kites, but western meadowlarks are in decline. Of course there were the occasional vagrants, such as surf scooter, yellow legged loon, and a brown pelican.

These two fishing buddies started our annual Birdathon, and they kept it going, year after year, for over 30 years! Clyde gets help from Jim Koelliker now (Cecil died in 1990). There have been many who have been on the Birdathon, and still participate – but since Clyde couldn't remember all their names you will have to wait until we do a bit more research.

Clyde keeps a journal of all the birds he sees-everyday since the 70s, all of the birds seen from his back porch, on his travels, wherever he is.



The one and only CLYDE FERGUSON



The Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society owes a great debt to Clyde Ferguson. Not only a great supporter (Christmas Bird Counts, Birdathon - this year over \$3500 raised, field trips...) and birder, but someone who touched us with his humor, knowledge and friendship. He was also a docent at Konza Prairie Biological Station.

His granddaughter wrote a lovely poem in his memory and his whole family participated in celebrating his life at All Faiths Chapel on the campus of Kansas State University, where he taught History for 33 years. It was his joy and-honor to give the History of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society each year at the induction ceremony of new members.



The last two verses of
"Flying at Night"
by Phoebe Ferguson

"Rest now, with your love
And overlook the prairie
Watch the birds sing and fly
With your bird books handy

We'll meet again, somewhere in the
wind
But for now it's time to go
Rest now, the sun is rising
On adventures far and new"

June 3, 1930 - July 15, 2021



Monthly Bird Walk: City Parks

Patricia Yeager

Saturday morning birding - a different park for each month. The leader will commit to being at the designated location from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. for teaching and sharing. Of course, you can come earlier and stay later as the birding and your time schedule warrants. If you need a ride to the park, call Patricia 785-776-9593. Check the Prairie Falcon (or our website) each month for meeting location details.

2021-2022 Project - Birds of Manhattan City Parks

We plan to **develop a checklist of birds in the Manhattan city parks** and it will take all of us to make the list complete. This will be a worthwhile contribution of Northern Flint Hill Audubon to the city and spread the joy of birding. It will also add value to parks in our city and help persuade city commissioners to keep and consider preserving green spaces as the city grows.

To Participate

Pick a city park or trail in Manhattan. Bird it a minimum of once a month and keep a list of the species that you see or hear. Please let me (pyeagerbirder@gmail.com) know that you have taken on this project and which park(s) is your choice. If you are unable to make this large of commitment, please submit your bird list any time you are in a city park. All lists are helpful.

Label the list thus: Your name, the park name, date. Send your list to my e-mail, please, and I will submit it to the blog on our website nfhas.org.

NFHAS 50 years COUNT DOWN 3 months till Dec. 5, 2021

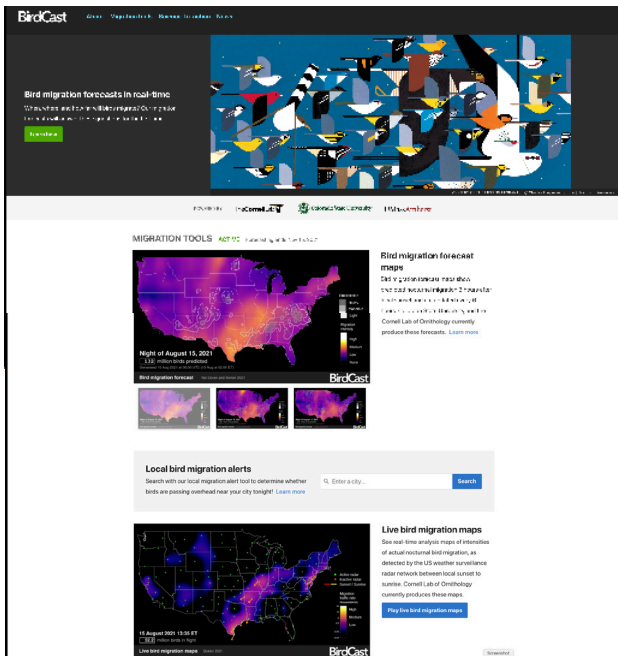
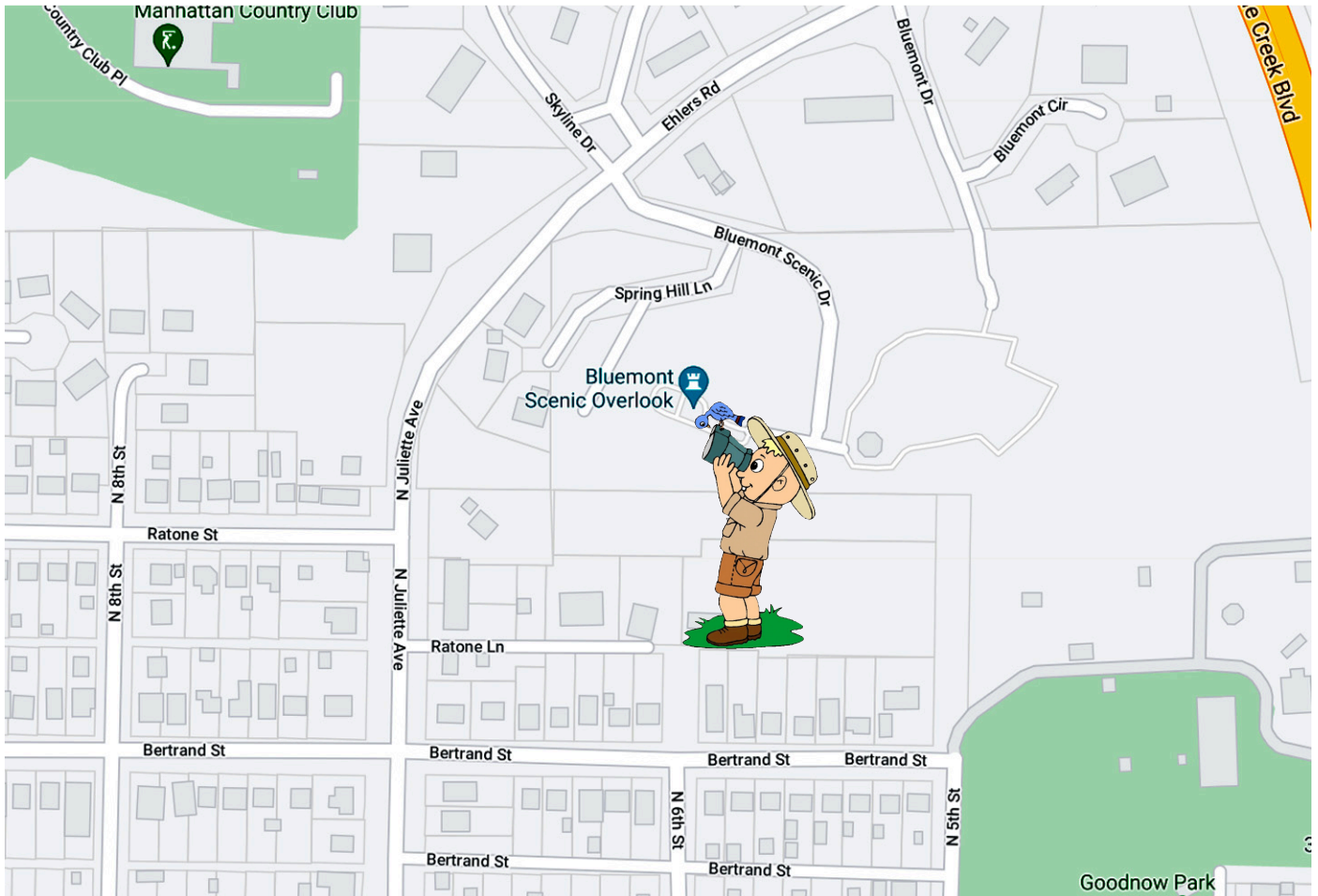
1. Presentation by Perry Conway, the first President of NFHAS
2. Lake Elbo Club House for the day
3. COFFEE - EARLY MORNING Birding, breakfast, socializing, photos, old newsletters, stories, midafternoon PRESENTATION and stories, early DINNER, late afternoon birding, or meet at local pub for those interested,.
4. **Still need to hear from anyone that is / was a member in the past 50 years! Photos, old newsletters, memories of field trips, photos, programs, are all welcomed! Any history you have we will treasure.**

Don't delay, do it now. December will be here before you know it, contact Cindy Jeffrey (cinraney@ksu.edu) or mail to P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES: nfhas.org



"Bluemont Scenic Overlook and Goodnow Park Sept. 11, 8 a.m.



Migration is starting
Checkout this website

<https://birdcast.info/>



Northern Flint Hills
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Manhattan, KS
66505-1932

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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.

Also available online at nfhas.org

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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, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society and include the code C4ZJ040Z. 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, 66505-1932

RARE BIRD HOTLINE: For information on Kansas Birds, subscribe to the Kansas Bird Listserve. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to <listserve@ksu.edu> and join in the

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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