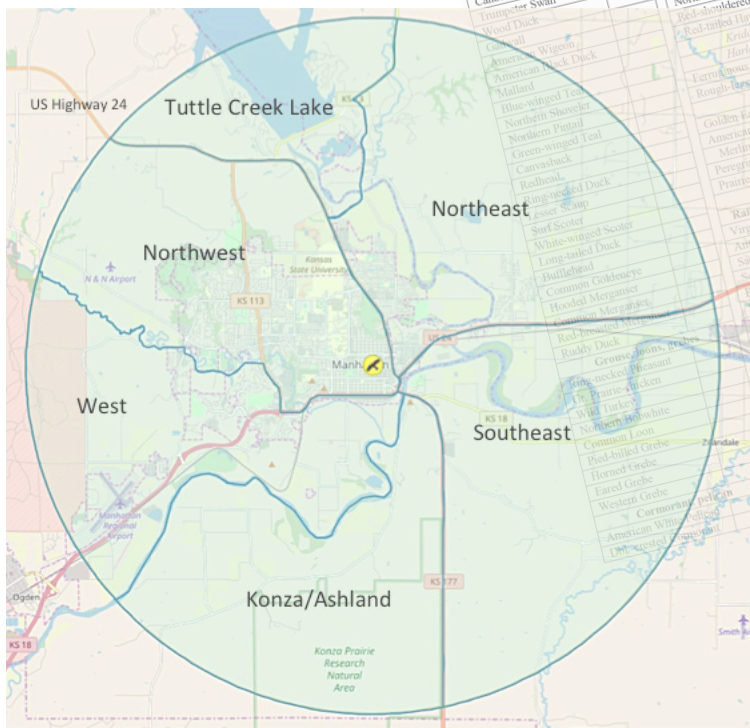


# It is that time of year – CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS!!!



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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 48, No. 4, December 2019

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### Upcoming Events

- Dec. 3 - Board Meeting  
Manhattan Public Library
- Dec. 14- Manhattan Christmas Bird Count  
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- Dec. 20- Olsburg Christmas Bird Count  
see page 5
- Jan. 4- Eagle Days, Tuttle Creek Corps of Engineers  
begins at the fire station located on the corner of Denison  
and Kimball Avenues i
- Jan. 7- Board Meeting- 6:30 pm,  
Manhattan Public Library



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Then coated out you're goin;  
There you take in all that's showin'  
And even if the moments doin' it are few,  
You return where warmth is waitin'  
And can sit without debatin'  
knowin' that to desire you've been true.

Earlier this year I put forth a book titled "Neighbors in the Sky" light-heartedly addressing, with info, verse, and interactive diagrams, the 66 constellations that can be seen from around the Earth, wholly or in part, from the latitudes of the continental U.S.

Now with the season changing, many folks who appreciate visiting with those neighbors are facing an annual dilemma: the extended nights of winter provide longer and more convenient hours of viewing that can be inconveniently chilly. In the book I sympathize and offer a solution. For those sufferers who have missed it, I repeat it here:

When Orion is a-flyin'  
And the Big Dog's hindleg-walking,  
And Lepus is a-leaping 'neath the two:  
The season is for freezin'  
If you go out starlight-stalking,  
so your armchair has a cushion made of glue.

With the Flying Horse departin'  
And Cetus is a-sinkin' as they do,  
The night is clear and sparking,  
You can hear the Big Dog barking,  
calling, "Are you one to shrink and miss the view?"

When the lone Ram goes nose-divin'  
While the Unicorn's arrivin'  
And there's a Lynx that's glinting out there, too,  
The clock toward late is tickin'  
While a thought inside keeps prickin'  
sayin', "Don't miss out on what you really want to do."

(Even for those less involved Orion the Hunter with the Big Dog {Canis Major} at his heels, and Lepus the Rabbit beneath his feet, likely need little introduction. The departing Flying Horse {Pegasus} is a large square of darkness bounded by four corner stars, and Cetus {the Whale} is essentially two irregularly shaped circles of stars connected below him, noticeable but not bright. The Ram {Aries} will have a bright star below the dim ones that follow Pegasus. The Unicorn {Monoceros} will be a faint array above the bright star Procyon which will be above Sirius' gleaming in the Big Dog. The Lynx is a hard to see undulating line of small stars extending at a forward angle ahead of the familiar Big Dipper.)

You won't be able to debate long, because Venus will be shining in the every evenings ahead, though briefly, setting at first in the early twilight and gradually lingering into the early dark. Saturn will be going to bed early as well, passing from the upper to the lower right of Venus the 11th to 13th. Mars will do a reverse pass (from lower right to upper right) of the Moon the 22nd to 24th.

Another pass is to be performed by Taurus' red eye, Aldebaran, which will move from the lower left to upper right of the Moon the 10th to the 11th. Spica, lonely and bright in Virgo, will glide from below to the right of the Moon the 20th to 21st. Then the Moon will shift from close by to the upper left of Venus in the evenings of the 28th and 29th.

Meanwhile the previously long-performing Jupiter will be out of sight behind the Sun. And the Moon, at full at 11p12 on the 11th, will blur away the Gemini meteor shower that night. The Moon will be new the 25th at 11p13. The winter solstice will occur at 10p19 the 21st.

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## Dawn's Early Light

(with apologies to our national anthem)

Dru Clarke



In our bedroom is an east facing window where we can get a broad view of dawn and sunrise. Each morning it is different and although sometimes obscured by a curtain of cloud or fog, it is a time for reverie, a slow awakening that allows for considering the day ahead, but mostly to appreciate the color changes and draw analogies to other familiar things.

This morning (Nov. 1) it - dawn-was the colors of a split red cedar log, the 'wood' striped with maroon like ox blood, ivory and blonde like well worn piano keys, and, topping these, simulating the rent bark, all the hues – cochineal, archil, and woad\*-of a bruise blooming on tender flesh. The horizontal fade took minutes, melting into rippling strata of molten gold and silver and lead. Then, as the sun crept closer to the eastern horizon, teasing just below it before making a grand entrance, a burst of psychedelic orange-pink+ flame up-staged everything, announcing with visible applause, the sun's arrival. What a show!

The vultures have finally left and only one of the pair of red-tailed hawks sits in the dead cottonwood on the edge of our neighbor's ephemeral stream. We can only speculate where its mate has gone: had it fallen for a bird of grander plumage or greater hunting prowess or was it dead of advanced age? Or, maybe sleeping in.

A redheaded woodpecker claims its territory above our favorite creek, but other than these, the morning, even the wind, was still. Inky crows, soundless as if hushed by the early light, drew a loose scrawl toward the northwest, perhaps seeking a suitable roost or gleaning roadkill abandoned by the vultures. The fox squirrel, not alert or fleet enough to avoid a speeding truck, will be just a memory in a day or two.

The snapping turtle we released from its entrapment in a cattle panel that spanned the creek has gone to its winter burial in the silty reaches of the creek, but slim chubs and young bluegills hung motionless in the chill pools below the concrete apron of the low water crossing. Pansy-shaped ice blooms clung to a layer of fallen leaves caught on a piece of rebar jutting from the apron. Icicles on a twig interlacing the trapped leaves sprouted like tiny antlers on an unseen creature. The narrow waterfall bisected by the rebar spilled its glittering, foaming flow into the downstream pool, its gleam dulled by submergence beneath its deeper water and floating fallen leaves. On the dry road, these leaves scurried like tiny animals running for cover as the wind found them.

Afternoon and early evening brought blue skies, milder temperatures, and soft breezes, and sundown with its attendant colors eluded us as we live in a hollow. Morning, however, will bring a new scene to open the day and we'll lie in bed, anticipating dawn and its many colors.

*Dru Clarke – November 2019*

\*St. Clair, Kassia. *The Secret Lives of Color*. © 1916. Penguin Books: NY. *Woad* is a blue derived from a member of the mustard tribe; *archil*, from a lichen also called 'cudbear' after its discoverer; cochineal, a dark red obtained from an insect.

+The color is *minium*, derived from lead tetroxide, used to illuminate medieval manuscripts. The color was so bright that however it was used made that item leap off the page!



I was sad to learn that our member, Corinne Anderson, died Saturday Nov. 9th. She had recently returned from a visit to her home state of Pennsylvania, where she celebrated her 90th birthday with her friends and family.

She was a regular attendee on our Saturday morning birding outings. Also, she joined us on our overnight bed and breakfast trip to Quivira in 2016. She led a prairie restoration area in PA when she was in her sixties as I am now and was an important moral supporter of my early efforts to establish plantings at the Alsop Bird Sanctuary. She was a fun, joyful person that I'm so glad I got to spend time with.

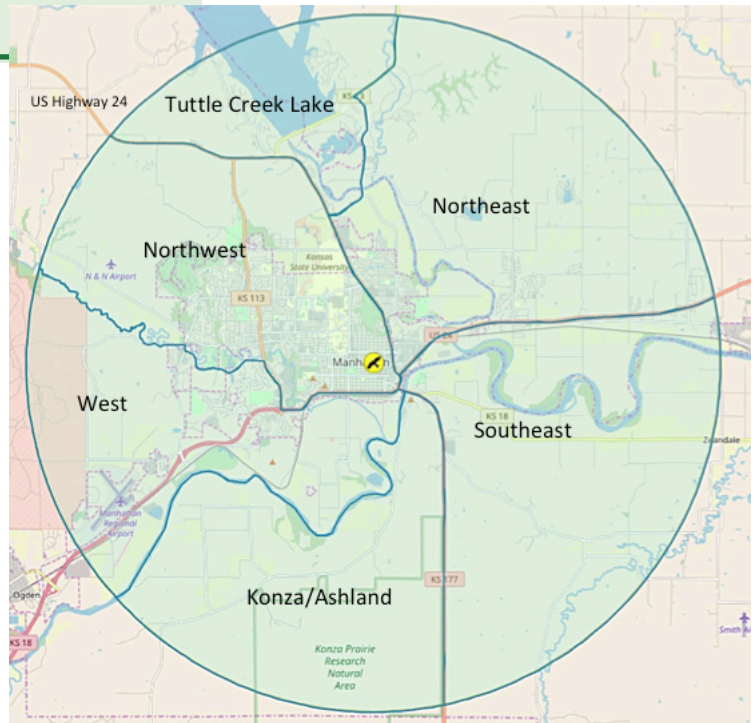
Patricia Yeager



## 71st annual Manhattan Christmas Bird Count (CBC) Dec. 14, 2019

Mark Mayfield, Compiler 785-410-3073  
markherb@ksu.edu

On December 14th, bird enthusiasts are invited to participate in the 71st annual Manhattan Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The Christmas Bird Count has been an ongoing effort by the National Audubon Society to census winter birds for the last 120 years. The Manhattan CBC, like all count circles (see map above), is 15 miles in diameter and we will count all birds seen within a 24 hour period on the day of the count. New participants are always welcomed and expert birding skills are not required! If you would like to participate in the count, please contact Mark Mayfield (markherb@ksu.edu, or 785-410-3073) so that he can get your name in the participants contact list and put you in touch with a sector leader.



The count will be held in sun, rain or snow, but arrangements can be made if you can only participate for part of the day. If you would like to count birds at your feeders on December 14th as part of the surveys, contact Mark for instructions and a checklist. Please note that counting birds at feeders by field parties is not considered as feeder counting unless it is a separate effort.

Count numbers and number of species will be compiled at the end of the day after the chili supper (see below for details). Please join us to hear reports of the day's sightings and stories from the day's adventures! If you have count data to contribute and cannot attend the compilation, please arrange to give these to the sector coordinator for the area prior to the compilation if at all possible. In order to contribute your data, each birding party is required (by National Audubon Society) to report their field effort in addition to the species totals. This means that, in addition to the birds your party sees and hears from your route, one person in each party will also need to keep track of the start and end times (to the nearest 1/4 hour) and the distance you travelled (separated by the distance on foot and by car, or other method--boat, for example). If you have questions about how to submit data, please contact me, Mark Mayfield, ahead of time. Also note that all parties must be in contact with a sector leader in order to participate.



### Manhattan Christmas Bird Count- Compilation and Chili Supper

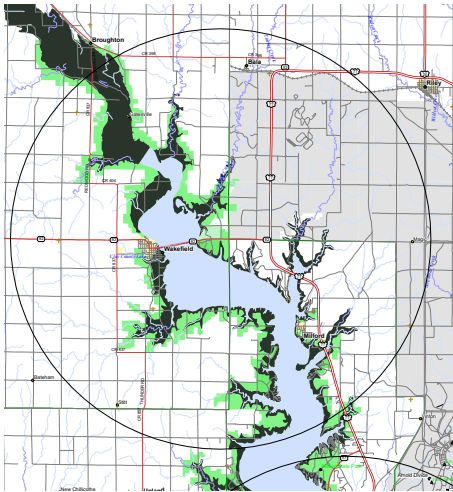
Join the NFHAS and fellow birders after the day of birding for a potluck supper at 6 p.m. on December 14<sup>th</sup>, at the Seniors Service Center, 412 Leavenworth, Manhattan, KS. A few volunteers will prepare chili but please feel free to bring a side dish to share. Free-will donations to NFHAS are 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 Kevin Fay by phone 785-776-4765 or email ktf90@hotmail.com

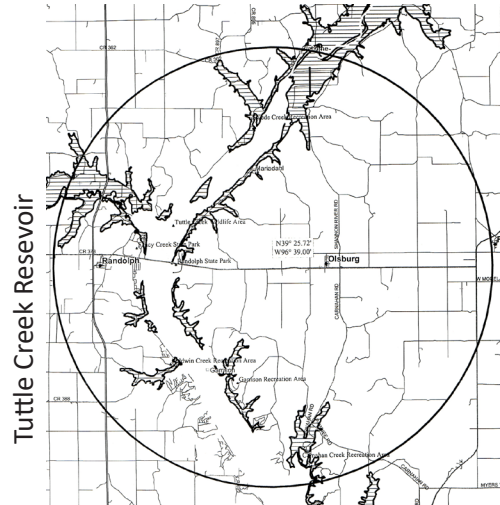
The Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) on Kansas Ornithology Society Website are now posted at <http://ksbirds.org/kos/2019CBC.htm>

Here are three nearest the Manhattan birding community:

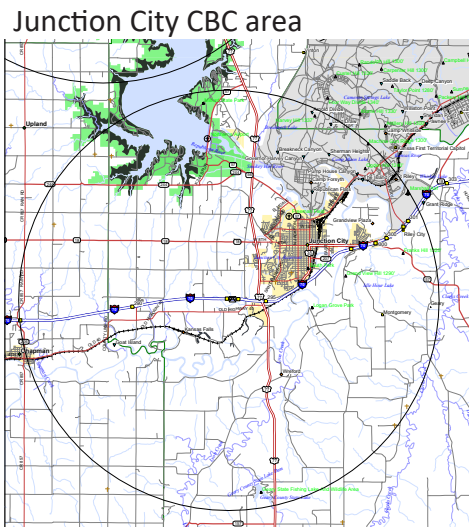
Friday, December 20, 2019	Olsburg	Cindy Jeffrey	cinraney@ksu.edu	785.565.3326
Sunday, December 22, 2019	Wakefield	Chuck Otte	cotte@ksu.edu	785.238.4161
Sunday, December 29, 2019	Junction City	Chuck Otte	cotte@ksu.edu	785.238.4161



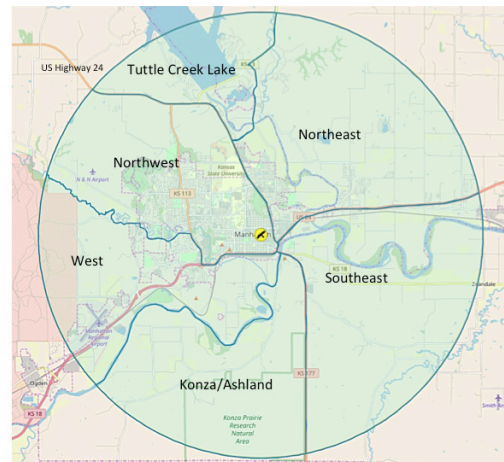
Wakefield CBC area



Olsburg CBC area



Junction City CBC area



Manhattan CBC area

**“The presence of a single bird can change everything for one who appreciates them.”**  
— Julie Zickefoose, *Saving Jemima: Life and Love with a Hard-Luck Jay*



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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](http://nfhas.org)

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Also available online at [nfhas.org](http://nfhas.org)

## WE NEED YOU!

PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

Contact Patricia Yeager if interested, and watch our website and newsletter for time and day of meeting.

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