



LET'S GO...

Day Trip to Great Plains Nature Center

(6232 E. 29th St. North in northeast Wichita, KS)



You are invited to enjoy the Great Plains Nature Center (<http://www.gpnc.org>) and adjacent Chisholm Creek Park with its wetlands on Sat., Oct. 20th. There may be opportunities for car pooling, although some people may prefer to travel independently and return to Manhattan the following day. (If we have enough people that want to carpool we may rent a van.)

RSVP by contacting Tom or MJ Morgan at tom.morgan@juno.com or 539-8106 and let us know if you would like to car pool or drive yourself.

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 41, No. 2 ~ October 2012

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Upcoming Events

Oct 1 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Oct 12 - Weeding Blitz 5:30-6:30
Butterfly Garden, Sojourner Truth Park

Oct 13 - Saturday Birding 8 a.m.
Meet Sojourner Truth Park

Oct 15 - Deadline for Prairie Falcon articles

Oct 20 - FIELD TRIP: Great Plains Nature Ctr.
See-above

Nov 4 CLEANUP day Michel-Ross
1-3 p.m.



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

This is the time of year, if autumn performs at least near to past experience, when innumerable numbers of our friendly and

not so friendly neighbors begin to fade some sight. Of course, some of the not so friendly insects and other tiny-nesses benefit us by providing food and/or services to processes and other creatures that we feel positive about. In any case the disappearance is apparently a massive operation, and we can talk about them while they're distracted at positioning themselves into various seasonal disguises, or finding shelter in myriad nooks, or simply dying, having produced replacements in various forms.

In a recently published book, *How Not to be Eaten - The Insects Fight Back*, (Univ. of California Press, 2012) Gilbert Waldbauer begins with a moose drawn of a size to represent all the birds, mammals, and other vertebrates in its ecosystem. Beside the moose is drawn a black beetle to represent in size all the insects in the same ecosystem. Comparing the two drawings by eye, the beetle is about four times the size of the moose. Given that the moose is a cold country native one might suspect that a beetle drawn in comparison to one of our warmer climate deer, would be considerably larger. But I wouldn't bet the ranch, for the book, as it goes further on, presents details on the adaptability of insects to exist in some form wherever.

That book also discusses insectivores, including reference to how birds are able to beat their wings with such amazing swiftness, but the focus is on insects. Of which two other items came to my notice during the summer. One that appeared in several sources describes the results of research on how mosquitoes survive the bombardment of raindrops, all so relatively more massive than they. It seems it's the difference in mass that protects them. A raindrop doesn't notice the contact, immediately following which the lithe mosquito, moving *with* the blow, glides along on the raindrop, and those mosquitoes with the instinct or perspicacity to bail off before hitting the ground will fly again.

Science News for July 14th also reported that there are people alive today who as part of their day's routine at Yale have spent time gluing shut the mouths of spiders (*Pisaurina mira*) which were caged with grasshoppers (*Melanoplus femurrubrum*). The grasshoppers, unaware that the spiders had been disarmed at the mandibles, got scared, and thus stressed consumed more of carbon-rich carbohydrates than grasshoppers in spider-free cages, thus their bodies at death contained more carbon and less nitrogen than their unstressed counterparts. This change, the study found, is a problem for microbes who need a source of nitrogen to decompose "dead grass and other debris important for fertilizing new plant growth".

So as the grasshopper presence thins into autumn, perhaps having eaten things you wish they hadn't, nonetheless your soil will be richer the less you have flailed at them. This research gives serious insight into the importance of a certain ecological balance. And perhaps will spawn a market for yard signs and bumper stickers asking that you "Please don't scare the grasshoppers".

By *StarDate's* memory, a Nigerian farmer might've been fairly scared on October 3, 1962, when an unscheduled 40-pound piece of Mars whopped down within ten feet of him (the source determined from gas bubbles trapped in the meteorite). Ahead, the meteors of the Orionid shower are expected to stay aloft the 21st-22nd.

Meanwhile Jupiter should be gleaming gradually brighter in Taurus from mid-evening on all month. Venus, while fading, will still be a bright morning star cuddling close to Regulus in Leo the 2nd-4th. Mars, even more faded, but still in the game, gets close to another reddish sparkle, Antares in Scorpio, joined by the Moon in the early evenings of the 17th-18th. The Moon could be a pain in the Bull's neck on Halloween, glowing between the Taurus's bright eye, Aldebaran, and the Pleiades on his shoulder. The Moon will be new 7a03 the 15th, full 2p49 the 29th.

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Proprietary Rights

Dru Clarke



I smile whenever I hear someone talk about the place they ‘own,’ having shelled out cash, or mortgaged their future, for a piece of land (and its associated infrastructure) that makes it ‘theirs’ and theirs alone. Trespassers prohibited. Don’t even ask. I maintain that this idea of ownership is a delusion and I am disabused of the notion whenever I am arrogant enough to entertain the thought by paying close attention to ‘our place.’

It is more clear to me that I am a temporary caretaker each time I cross a pasture fringed by thick woods and drag my little boat to the plant-choked pond to row a bit and waste time (or, preferably, mess about). Early morning caught a satin-coated big-eyed doe drinking from the west edge where she could easily melt into the brush and disappear. A pair of Killdeer skittered along the muddy shore, windup birds that startle upward, shrieking like children at play. No wonder they were once called the Chattering or Noisy Plover (thus, the Latin name (*Charadrius vociferous*)). A Green Heron, strikingly colored with chestnut neck and breast and green-black back, let out a startled ‘squawk’ as it sprung up into the air from its perch on the barbed wire fence stretched across the south end of the pond.

Most mornings, a Great Blue Heron, looking for all the world like a relic from the prehistoric past, stood still in the shallows, then moving in a stately manner, surprised an unsuspecting frog with a stabbing thrust. It was not always successful, and one morning, I found a flotilla of its feathers near where it usually stood: evidently, something was stalking it as well. One large blue-grey feather floated for days, caught in the shallows, bejeweled with droplets of dew that sparkled in the sunlight. The bird has probably taken to hunting at night, as it has not appeared since (unless, of course, the stalker was successful, its hunting days are finished).

Most spectacular was the dive, like a javelin, of a Belted Kingfisher; I hoped it was the same one that had perched on our electric wire after what must have been a derecho earlier this summer. Then, it was far from water; now it was in its element. Whenever I see one, I am in the throes of an adrenaline rush: with their compact blue and white bodies, forbidding bills, top heavy heads with their jaunty crests, they are unlikely hydrodynamic bodies. Go figure: the combination works for them. I usually hear them rattling before I see them, then there is the plunge, and they are gone.

Bullfrogs, like green hyperthyroid gargoyles, position themselves at discrete intervals on the pond’s periphery. They should be renamed bully frogs as they have essentially displaced the northern green frogs that were more delicate and, well, cute. As the boat slides past, they are unperturbed, though occasionally something untoward happens, and they jump at the boat, and once, in the boat. One smacked into the side of the boat so hard that the thump was heard by my husband across the pond. (I wondered about the pounds of thrust involved, and whether the hit had a concussive effect) While I am not crazy about snakes, I wish our resident Northern Water Snakes would cull the bullfrog numbers.

And we do host several of these snakes. One, a juvenile, lighter and brighter than an adult, glided along the shore, emerging from a crevice in the limestone on the edge. An adult, patterned a lot like a copperhead but with a darker back and paprika coloring on its sides, looked well-fed and very grown up at three feet. It oozed into the water, but left the tip of its tail – about four inches – on a dry dip in the bank: I wondered what it was doing with the front end under water. On the next lap by, it was gone. A slender beribboned Plains Garter Snake on another day slipped under the indigo bushes, away from the pond, probably having sated itself on juvenile bluegill. I wish I had seen it in the water: they are elegant swimmers.

A downed cedar tree caught on the pond’s edge is a dry hauling out place for a Red-eared Slider who plops resoundingly into the water when we disturb the surface. The Snapping Turtle is seldom seen on top, although we discern a platter-sized shadow often in the deep water.

Raccoon prints in the mud attend crayfish burrows: night must bring a whole different kingdom to this water, but I am home, tucked in bed, oblivious to their visits except for the night sounds that occasionally invade.

The pieces of Earth we call our own belong to all of these natives and we would do well to take good care of what we so cavalierly dominate. Proprietary rights extend beyond our deed (and deeds) to our fellow travelers, and we should welcome them. And, we do, for the most part; but I do have reservations about the bully frogs. May the herons thrive.

©Oct. 2012 Dru Clarke

Alsop Property

Jim Koelliker

Alsop Bird Sanctuary Project
1646 Laramie Street.

Inez Alsop was a professor in the history department at Kansas State University and lived in the original house on this lot for many years. She was encouraged to sell the property when the remainder of the area was developed into a hotel and restaurant, but she refused to do so.

Inez subsequently donated a small sum of money to the Northern Flint Hills Chapter of the Audubon Society many years ago and she left the property to the Chapter in her trust with the condition that it be maintained as a green space and bird sanctuary. The trust also stipulated that her caretaker could remain in the home. At the time of her caretaker's death, the NFHAS became the sole trustee.

In 2010, the Chapter evaluated the condition of the house and property. The dilapidated house was removed and the property cleaned up. Soon after this, we were notified by the City of Manhattan that 17th Street on the west side of the property would be widened to reduce traffic stacking at the intersection of 17th and Anderson Avenue. A 10-foot wide strip along the entire west side of the property will be taken for widening. A new 5-foot wide sidewalk will be constructed beside a 5-foot strip of grass and curb next to the new street. Essentially, the equivalent of the existing curb, lawn and sidewalk will be moved 10 feet onto the property. During the construction phase, a 5-foot wide strip also will be used as a construction easement. Construction work is scheduled to be done by the summer of 2013. Now, the Chapter is negotiating with the City about the amount of compensation for the land being taken.

Also, at the current time, the Chapter is in the process of developing a plan for the site to provide both green space and make it hospitable for birds and for people to enjoy the birds. We do not plan to do major work on the lot until the construction work on the street is completed. So we are actively seeking help with these plans to make it the best bird sanctuary and green space possible.

Some Ideas:

- Isolation from traffic – possibly a stone wall, substantial/durable fence
- Trees and shrubs
- Memorial signs for Ms. Alsop and Jan Garton
- Handicapped accessible parking
- Paths
- Some kind of buffer between property and air conditioning units of hotel

To help or for more information contact:

Jim Koelliker, koellik@sbsglobal.net, 785-323-7157

Patricia Yeager, pyky@flinthills.com, 785-776-9593

My Introduction to Birding

Patricia Yeager

My college roommate, Betsy Stevenson, first introduced me to birds. Betsy was a local Manhattan girl so she knew the surrounding area and I had a car so a group of us would go to Tuttle Creek Lake, Pott. County Lake No. 2 or Hackberry Glen. Anywhere away from the town seemed like a vacation then. Occasionally Betsy would point out a bird on these outings and I became aware that birds had always been around me but I never noticed them. When a brown thrasher came near to where I was sitting one day, I was totally amazed with its large size, yellow eye and speckled breast. **How could I have overlooked such a large and noisy bird all my life until now?**

My father lent me the WWII German Army binoculars he brought home from the war before I was born (no fast focus but excellent optics), and with my Golden Birds of North America field guide (copyright 1966) I started birding everywhere I went. I became able to identify more birds than Betsy but if she had not learned some birds from her high school biology teacher I would never have taken an interest. She talked of her excellent high school biology teacher often. Her teacher was Dru Clarke. Thank you, Dru.

In the spring of 1975, I took field ornithology from Dr. Steve Fretwell. My best estimate is that it was in the fall of 1975 that I searched out the room in Ackert where the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society was meeting. About 25 people were in the small lecture room and they were chatting about birds they had seen since the last meeting and where they had seen them. This is what I wanted to know and I was hooked.

I met Marge Muenzenberger whom I had the good fortune to sit next to, and she made me feel welcome. Clyde Ferguson was talking of bird sightings and **Clyde's friendly laugh filled the room** intermittently between bird stories. I remember a woman named Phoebe had a more serious approach. (*Phoebe Samelson*). There were three young men around my age (approx. 20 yrs.) and no women my age in the room. Monty (?) was one of the young men and he presented his drawing of a falcon's head for a logo. I do not remember the speaker. It was more a business meeting with lots of conversations about local birds.

In either the fall of 1977 or spring of 1978, I was visiting my grandmother's high school friend, Inez Alsop, at her home. Inez showed me her screened porch/aviary, where she rehabilitated injured birds and fed young birds until they were able to fledge. She demonstrated poking a soaked raisin down a young bird's throat and it surprised me that the bird did not choke. A few of her successes were flying around the porch. I remember a Starling and an Oriole. She loved them all the same, although her pet parakeets enjoyed the run of the house. If you are having the same thought I did, she told me that parakeets nearly always messed where they perched and she simply put a newspaper in those places and changed them regularly.

On one of my visits she indicated that she would like to go with me to an Audubon meeting. She did and shared how she melted bacon fat in water to remove salt before putting it out for birds. I thought the practice sounded a bit dangerous but certainly thrifty. She was welcomed and had an enjoyable time.

Patricia Yeager

How did you start? Please send me your story! cinraney@k-state.edu or 15850 Galilee Rd. Olsburg, KS 66520

National Audubon Society changes CBC policy

News for the Christmas Bird Count program. After nearly two years of internal discussions, budget modeling, head-scratching, and intense decision-making, two major changes will come to the Christmas Bird Count program effective with the upcoming 113th Count in December, 2012.

First, the CBC is now a free program. Audubon will no longer charge the \$5.00 fee of field participants.

Second, to minimize the effects of the loss of fee income, American Birds will no longer be printed on paper and mailed to participants, and Audubon will move to an online delivery of the summary results of the CBC.

To help Audubon make these important decisions regarding the Christmas Bird Count program, we invited people involved with the count to participate in an online survey earlier this year. The results of the online survey last spring were very enlightening, and are summarized in the upcoming 112th CBC summary issue of *American Birds*—the last one to appear in print. The 130 pages of written comments were the most telling aspects of the survey feedback. Some people understand the fee and don't mind paying it, but the main thrust of written comments was that the fee is a major obstacle to the program, and the strong message was that more people would be involved, more counts would be included in the CBC database, and more accurate effort data would be collected if the fee was dropped.

Also highly informative were peoples' comments regarding *American Birds*. While a few folks commented that they enjoyed the information it contains and enjoy reading at least parts of it each year, the primary sentiment expressed was that recipients do not value *American Birds* in its current format, that they do not read most of it. Many survey respondents felt that an interactive, online version of the magazine would better suit their needs—especially if the participation fee was dropped.

In order to continue to fund the Christmas Bird Count program in the long term, Audubon will be moving to a voluntary donation model for the CBC.

With the online delivery of *American Birds* via a new interactive web presence including photos, summaries, and features, content can now be presented online as they are completed. Most critically, a new Citizen Science gateway will enable Audubon to be in touch directly with those participants who elect to take part and directly service the needs of participants as well as compilers.

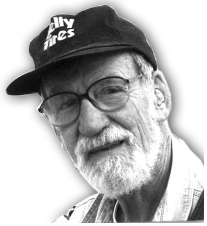
While the integrity of the CBC is crucial to maintain for its bird trend data, it has become equally important for the ability to engage people in other citizen science projects. Toward that end Audubon will be expanding its Citizen Science projects, and the CBC will, of course, be a cornerstone program.

The Audubon Science team looks forward to working with chapters to increase participation both by including more participants on existing Christmas Bird Counts and by creating new counts in areas where coverage is lacking. We also look forward to further engaging CBC participants and other chapter members in the other seasonal citizen science programs that will be available in the future.

The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do. ~Galileo



Big **THANKS** to Ruth Douglas Miller, Keith and Ian for mowing the lawn at the Alsop property.



Clyde Ferguson broke his ankle “being a good docent at the Konza.” We wish him a **speedy recovery!!!**
(2140 College Heights Rd. Manhattan Ks 66502)

Annual Michel-Ross Cleanup Nov 4th, 1-3 p.m.
Meet at the sign on Stagg Hill Rd.
We need your help.



We did not have much of a turnout for our Sept. Ice Cream Social, but did have a new member show!
Welcome Liz Russ!

There will be no birdseed sale this year due to lack of a volunteer to coordinate.

I sure hope we have some response to our field trip to Wichita.

Cindy Jeffrey

Visit us online
nfhas.org

E-Newsletter: If you wish to opt out of the “paper” Prairie Falcon newsletter and get it on-line as a pdf - send your name and email address to Jacques Staats - staats@wildblue.net





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FIELD TRIP

Oct. 20th
Great Plains Nature
Center, Wichita



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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, 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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