



Nov. 16, 7:00 p.m.
Manhattan Public
Library

Don't miss our screening
of **"Troubled Waters:
A Mississippi River
Story,"** produced by the Bell
Museum of Natural History at the
University of Minnesota.

An award-winning
documentary originally aired in 2010

on PBS, this film became highly controversial in rural Minnesota. Linking the contamination of the Mississippi River to the spread of dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico, 'Troubled Waters' examines the clear impact of nitrogen and phosphorous fertilizer on waterways and oceans.

This film does more than simply document the problem; it explores in depth measures that some farmers are taking to avoid using any, or a minimum, of fertilizers on their land. Concrete recommendations and creative ideas are offered to viewers to participate in sustainable agriculture. Also explored are methods of limiting soil erosion. The silting up of beautiful Lake Pepin and the loss of a critical wetlands for migratory birds forms the backdrop for the discussion of upriver erosion. Here in Kansas, we experience some similar problems with the silting up of reservoirs and algal blooms.

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 40, No. 3 ~ November 2011

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Upcoming Events

Nov 7 - Board Mtg. 6:00 p.m.
home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Nov 7- BIRD SEED ORDER deadline

Nov 12- Sat. Morning Birding 8 a.m.
Meet at Sojourner Truth Park

Nov 16 - Movie "Troubled Waters..."
7:00 p.m. Manhattan Public Library,
Auditorium

Nov 19 - BIRD SEED PICKUP UFM
Michel-Ross CLEAN-UP



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Fifty years ago there was published a book titled "Watchers at the Pond" (by Franklin Russell, published by Knopf, N.Y., with a paperback trade edition by David R. Godine, Boston) It is an informed and gracefully written narrative of what natural dynamics might occupy a year's time in that particular kind of environment. With many ponds in this area, and autumn upon us, it seems worthwhile to quote from the book's scenarios for this season.

"The aerial travelers passed on, throwing their shadows over other types of voyagers proceeding with identical resolution to winter refuges, but these other travelers humbly emerged with the earth and found it there.

"The underground migration had already begun (as air) chilled the waters...frogs...who had spent the summer foraging...for insects were about to burrow into the thick underwater mud...dragonfly and damselfly nymphs would seek heaps of vegetation or hide themselves under waterlogged branches...water beetles would become sluggish and drop to the bottom to begin a stuporous half-sleep..."

Another migration "moved in two directions at once. The adult red newts, who had lived on land for two years, began moving back...passed many young newts recently transformed from gilled larvae into lung breathing...(who) were leaving the water to begin their two years...which they would spend sleeping under leaf cover".

Countless beetles, etc., "headed down stalks, stems..." for the insulating cracks, humus, etc. of the soil "and a chance to create their own miniature climates...Torp clusters of flies, many of them females that were already fertilized for spring, clung together in deadwood and tree hollows...For some travel was involuntary...snails fastened to pondweeds fell with the dropping plants..."

"The first frost killed millions. It was a preordained death not a disaster." It included monarch caterpillars pupating too late to fly, and much vegetation, though many berries remained to sustain over-wintering birds and mammals. The carpenter bees "returned to the corridors (in a dry elm branch) where they were raised. They now lay asleep, end to end, but instead of facing up the tunnels, they now faced down toward the spring that would awaken them..."

"Bright Polaris, the north star, shone on the withdrawing life. Chained Andromeda in the east and Hercules in the west flanked the...creatures (responding to coming winter). The Northern Cross glistened remotely."

Remote, indeed. Those sparkles in the sky, their light having taken light-years to reach us, are nothing if not distant by human standards both in space and time. Yet we see them.

What clear skies should let us see ahead are Venus in sync with Mercury from the 1st-15th, about 6 degrees high about a half hour after sunset. On the 26th-27th Venus will seek the close company of the Moon at evening.

Jupiter continues to pull all-nighters: first, tete-a-tetes with the Moon the 8th-9th and Aldebaran in Taurus 11th-12th, then ignoring the idea that three's crowd to join Mars and Leo's Regulus 18th-19th, Spica and Saturn the 22nd, and the Moon and Venus the 26th-27th. Mars and Regulus will be rising about midnight with Mars double the brightness of the other. Look for Saturn and Spica low in SE at first light.

The Leonid meteor shower is due the 17th. Random meteors, bright and explosive to slim, dim, and furtive remain catch as catch can. The Moon however should be dependably full at 2p16 the 10th, new 12a10 the 25th.

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A “Bit” of Botanical Etymology

Daron Blake



We can learn a lot about a plant from its common name. The suffix “-bit” appears in the names of several invasive plants in North America: henbit, sheep’s bit, hawkbit, frogbit, and devilsbit. “Bit” is derived from “beita,” the Old Norse word for “pasture”. These “-bit” plants were named in the Old World for the animals which commonly grazed on them or which were associated with the plant. These plants spread quickly and easily and have become invasive plants in the New World.

One such plant is henbit, a common Kansas weed. Henbit originated in Europe, where it was named for the chickens which commonly graze on it. This low-lying, invasive plant sprawls across lawns and gardens all over the United States. Each spring, fields of henbit bloom into a shade of lavender as its purple flowers open and attract the hummingbirds and insects which enjoy its nectar. Also known as henbit deadnettle, its Latin name is *Lamium amplexicaule*.

Ever heard of sheep’s bit? This biennial herb, *Jasione montana*, does well in sandy and rocky soil, and is naturally found all across Europe. Introduced to the United States as an ornamental, it has become invasive in several northeastern states. Hawkbit is another invader from Europe that is pervasive in the New World. In England, there was an ancient belief that hawks ate these plants to improve their eyesight.

Another quickly-spreading plant that was carried to the New World is frogbit. Surprisingly, frogs do not eat frogbit- the term originated with European Frogbit, which was so named for its small, heart-shaped leaves, considered to be the size of a frog’s bite. European Frogbit is an invasive, free-floating aquatic plant. In 1932, the Central Experimental Farm Arboretum of Ottawa accepted several frogbit samples from Zurich, Switzerland. The plant escaped into St. Lawrence waterways, spread quickly, and is now being battled by restoration efforts across New England. This small plant competes with native plant species for light, space, and nutrients, limiting natural biodiversity and threatening wetland habitats.

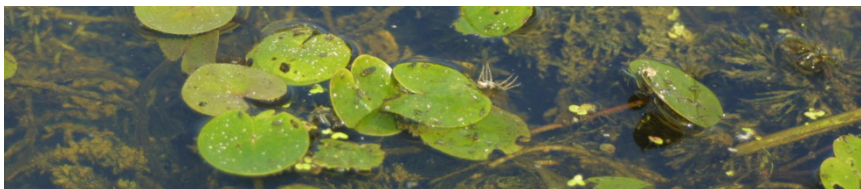
American Frog’s Bit is often confused with its European namesake. Both plants are free-floating and have small rounded leaves that are reminiscent of a miniature lilypads. The native and invasive can be distinguished from one another by differences between their small, white flowers. American

Frog’s Bit, *Limnobium spongia*, is a native plant that is especially prevalent in southeastern states and is frequently used in water gardens and aquariums. Its leaves are enjoyed by red-bellied turtles, and many water fowl eat the seeds of American Frog’s Bit.

After ascertaining that these plants are named for the animals associated with them, what can we expect from a plant named “devilsbit”? Several plants go by this common name. *Succisa pratensis*, a wildflower from Britain called devilsbit, is now found in eastern Canada. Like other “-bit” plants, devilsbit spreads easily and freely over land wherever conditions are favorable. The root of the plant was used to make ointments in medieval times which helped relieve skin afflictions, sore throats, and wounds, including sores from the Bubonic Plague. The name came from the belief that the devil, enraged with the curative powers of this wonderful plant, crept up from underground to bite off a chunk of the root. Even when part of devilsbit’s root is removed, the plant thrives—the devil’s bite was unable to harm this medicinal plant.

Chamaelirium luteum, also known as devil’s bit, is native to eastern North America. Unlike American Frog’s bit, this native plant does not resemble its European namesake. Also known as False Unicorn and Fairy Wand, American devil’s bit does not spread as rapidly as the other “-bit” plants. How did this native plant, which doesn’t fit into the pattern of rapidly-spreading and invasive “-bits”, earn the name of devilsbit? We know that European settlers often compared the New World flora and fauna to familiar species from home. *Chamaelirium luteum* has traditionally been used by North American Indians to prevent miscarriage and improve fertility in women. It has also been used as an anti-inflammatory and diuretic. Perhaps settlers from Britain, coming into the New World, discovered the myriad medical uses of this native North American plant and were reminded of their homeland cure-all, devilsbit.

Daron Blake is a new contributor to the Falcon. A second year graduate student in environmental history, Daron hopes to focus on both environmental and natural history writing after she completes her MA, spring, 2012. She spends her summers working on a frogbit removal project with the Lewis Creek Association on Lake Champlain in Vermont.



Hollywood Making Birding Cool

David Yarnold, National Audubon Society

The story of “The Big Year,” lifts off when three rental cars screech to a halt in south Texas. Owen Wilson steps out, lifts his binoculars - and gasps. Ditto Jack Black. And Steve Martin. Then we see what they see: a sky boiling with birds. Hundreds of thousands of birds. I know that look because it washes over me regularly. When a Golden Eagle swoops down in front of our 4x4 in California’s Tejon Ranch; when a hundred thousand hawks and turkey vultures soar over Veracruz, Mexico; when I’m on the bayous of Louisiana, surrounded by Great Blue Herons, prehistoric looking White Ibis and Audubon’s symbol, Great Egrets - I’m filled with wonder and humility. Unlike most of my predecessors, I didn’t come to Audubon as an experienced birder. But from the moment I arrived a year ago, I’ve looked at the sky with different eyes. “The Big Year” is about three guys competing to see the most bird species in one year. To be sure, they’re to birding what ultra-marathoners are to jogging. But from start to finish, the movie is about birds and the people who love to look at them.

One of the joys of “The Big Year” - for birders and non-birders alike - is watching Wilson, Martin and Black riff on birds. Even if this isn’t a true send-up like “Best in Show” was for dogs, the idea of “competitive birding” is a built-in punch line. But the actors don’t just play it for laughs. They - and director David Frankel, who gave us “Marley and me” - seem genuinely interested in capturing the connection birds make between people and nature. In the film, no character does it better than Rashida Jones’ Ellie, who follows the birds because she is so taken by their songs.



The first trailers for the movie were bird-free zones, instead highlighting the bucket list story line in the film. But even that captures something important about birds. One of the joys of birding is the people you meet, the relationships you build with fellow birders. The best relationship moment in “The Big Year” is a scene where Black and his father spot a great gray owl in the fading light of a snowy forest near their home. I won’t give it all away, but the presence of the spectacular bird highlights what’s happening between Black’s character and his father.

Hyper-critical birders, the keepers of birding’s flame, will no doubt find flaws in this film (some of the details around an elusive pink-footed goose will likely fill blogs for years). But I’d like to offer a little advice for these people: Lighten up. The last time Hollywood released a non-animated movie about birders, it

was set on Alcatraz and it was in black and white. While Burt Lancaster earned an Oscar for it, things didn’t end so well for his birds or for the bird guy. This one does.

ABOUT THE WRITER: David Yarnold is president and CEO of the National Audubon Society. Readers may write to him at: National Audubon Society, 225 Varick Street, New York, N.Y. 10014; email: president@audubon.org. 2011, National Audubon Society

More reviews:

Ebert gives the movie 3 out of 4 stars, which is pretty good. Here’s his full review:

<http://www.rogerebert.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20111012/REVIEWS/111019997/-1/RSS>

Fred Collins: There are a lot of “mistakes” in the movie, actually regarding the birds very little was “right” but the idea of birding and the big year came through well I thought. It’s all about the people and what they personally derive from birds and birding. It addressed well, how difficult it is to explain to non-birders why we bird. It gave a good treatment at how people who love us cope with our obsession. I laughed many times during the movie and noticed that my non-birder wife laughed at other times! We both enjoyed it and I have to confess it does make me appreciate my wife even more. She has put up with me, my birds and my birding for 40 years now. I am very blessed. I recommend this movie to everyone that birds or has a loved one that does.

Fred Collins, Fred_Collins@HCTX.NET, Director: Kleb Woods Nature Center, Cypress Top Historical Park

**Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society
2011-2012 Bird Seed Fundraiser**

Orders Due:

October 7

November 7

December 26

Return with payment to:

NFHAS % Annie Baker

P.O. Box 1932

Manhattan, KS 66505-1932

(785) 375-4633

<bunny@k-state.edu>

Checks payable to:

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society or (NFHAS)

Bird Seed Descriptions:

STRIPED SUNFLOWER SEEDS contain larger hearts than black oil sunflower seeds and are particularly suitable for larger songbirds.

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED CHIPS are high in energy and can be used in tube feeders. It is especially liked by Pine Siskins. Hulled sunflower seed is consumed by a variety of birds, large- and small-beaked.

MILLET White millet is a favorite of most small-beaked ground-feeding birds; Red millet is also readily eaten. Quail, doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, cowbirds, and red-winged blackbirds are attracted to millet.

CORN CHOP, or cracked corn kernels, like millet, is attractive to a variety of birds, especially ground-feeders. It also attracts crows, starlings, doves and squirrels.

THISTLE SEED is very attractive to Gold Finches and all other finches that are here over winter. It is excellent for tube feeders.

SAFFLOWER is a favorite with Cardinals, and squirrels really do not like it.

PEANUT PICKOUTS are chunks of peanut hearts and are very attractive to woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, titmice, jays, wrens, and more.

FLINT HILLS FEAST is the premium seed mix: 50% striped sunflower seed, and 50% white proso millet (with no milo or fillers).

CHEAP CHEEP MIX is less expensive but still attractive to many species. It is 40 % cracked corn, 40 % white proso millet, and 20 % striped sunflower (with no milo or fillers).

REGULAR FORMULA FINCH MIX consists of 50% sunflower chips and 50% thistle seed. This is very popular with most tube feeding species.

SUET CAKES, in addition to having other nutritious ingredients, the main ingredient, high calorie beef fat, helps birds maintain body heat in cold winter months. Bird seed, berries and peanut butter are mixed in with suet. Enjoy woodpeckers, wrens, nuthatches, and chickadees.

(Taken from Audubon At Home Bird Feeding Basics, http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/bird_feeding/index.html)

Sales Support Local Chapter Activities	Quality Seed, Easy Handling
As with all of our fund-raising activities, proceeds from our seed sales go toward supporting the educational and conservation projects of the local chapter. All of our labor is voluntary. Taxes are included in the price of our seed. Even though we are a not-for-profit organization, we are required to pay tax on any retail sales. Any additional donation you may wish to include with your order is appreciated.	The products we offer are high quality seeds. Our mixes were created to satisfy the needs of local bird populations at reasonable costs. We have tried to make it easy for you to purchase the amount of seed you want without having to handle heavy, awkward bags. Our seed comes in 10, 25, and 50 pound bags. We try to obtain the seed in paper bags whenever possible.

2011-2012 Bird Seed Fundraiser

Pick Up:

October 15

November 19

January 7

Location:

Saturdays, **8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

UFM, 1221 Thurston, Manhattan

Thank you for your order & support!

Volunteers welcome! Help unload the delivery truck at 7:45 a.m., or volunteer throughout the morning. Contact Annie Baker.

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society

Description	Size	Cost	Quantity	Total Cost
Flint Hills Feast mix	10 lb	\$9.20		
	25 lb	\$20.00		
	50 lb	\$34.00		
Cheap Cheep mix	10 lb	\$8.20		
	25 lb	\$16.50		
	50 lb	\$29.60		
Sunflower (Striped)	10 lb	\$12.90		
	25 lb	\$26.20		
	50 lb	\$44.90		
Sunflower Chips	10 lb	\$22.10		
	25 lb	\$40.20		
Regular Finch Mix	10 lb	\$19.30		
	25 lb	\$35.60		
Niger Thistle	10 lb	\$17.50		
	25 lb	\$32.50		
Safflower	10 lb	\$13.80		
	25 lb	\$30.50		
Peanut Pick-outs	10 lb	\$20.30		
	25 lb	\$31.00		
Corn on the Cob	10 lb	\$7.30		
	25 lb	\$13.00		
Medium Corn Chop	25 lb	\$16.50		
White Millet	10 lb	\$6.40		
	25 lb	\$12.20		
Red Millet	10 lb	\$7.30		
	25 lb	\$15.70		
Suet Cakes	High Energy	\$1.00		
	Peanut Butter	\$1.00		
	Berry	\$1.00		

(COMPLETE this portion and return with payment.)	<i>Delivery service available – Manhattan city limits – Please include addt'l \$5.</i>	SUBTOTAL:	
Name:		DELIVERY:	
Address:		DONATION:	
Phone:	Email:	TOTAL:	



TAKE NOTE

CALL for Volunteers Fall CLEAN-UP - NOV. 19th

After you pick up your bird seed from the bird seed sale, come on by the **Michel-Ross** preserve and help us clean up the trash that collects there. All you need is gloves and a spirit of goodwill as there will be trash bags at the scene. Should you be able to help clear

trails of limbs and overgrowth, please bring tools to help with this task. I will start at 9:00 a.m. and take the trash collected to the transfer station at 1:00 p.m.

Whether you can help out for just a little while or a few hours, your effort will be appreciated. We are keeping a bird list for the preserve so bring your binoculars and report what you see. When you see a blue Ford truck parked on the preserve along Stagg Hill road you will know that you are at the correct location.

The Michel-Ross preserve is located between Stage Hill Road and Canyon Drive continuing to the west end of Ridgewood Drive. Hope to see you there.

Patricia Yeager

nfhas.org

Don't forget our website Blog - add your sightings, book reviews, suggestions.

AND if you see the movie "The Big Year" add your review.



Bird Seed Deadlines

Orders Due:

November 7
December 26

Pick Up:

November 19
January 7



Northern Flint Hills
Audubon Society
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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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