

## Next year is NFHAS 50th anniversary.

We know there are many members who have been around for a while, (maybe not 50 years!) and if any of you have a story or photo about NFHAS, please contact either Patricia or Cindy. We can record, scan, write, whatever you need.

Any ideas about how to celebrate are encouraged. Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd. Olsburg, KS 66520 or cin-raney@ksu.edu, Or Patricia Yeager, (see back page).

Whooping Cranes photo by Dave Rintoul



## AOK Celebration of Cranes 2020 A virtual event Nov. 4-7

Speakers (streamed) photos, videos, etc.

Watch AOK website for more details:

[audubonofkansas.org](http://audubonofkansas.org)

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 49, No. 2, October 2020

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### Upcoming Events

Oct. 6 - TUESDAY Board Meeting- 6:00 pm,  
At the Alsop sanctuary



**Nov. 5 - BIRDSEED ORDER Form DEADLINE**

**Nov. 15 - PICKUP** 12n-4 pm

**Nov. 16 - PICKUP** 9 am- 12n

(drive thru pickup at see page 4)



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

In the 17th century, even with growing agreement that the planets orbit the Sun and not vice versa, Mars drew the attention of mathematical geniuses of the time because none could explain the orbit of the planet nearest beyond us from the Sun. Then Johannes Kepler, working with twenty years worth of dedicated observations made available by Tycho Brahe, demonstrated that the orbit was an ellipse, with the Sun as one focus (and from that, other orbits became understandable).

This summer Mars has been drawing a wider attention because of its so-bright reddish sparkle, which will keep going through the first half of October before beginning to fade. It happens that the Earth's and Mars' orbits are closer than average during this time, and that Mars is now on that orbit at opposition—that is, in full view directly opposite Earth from the Sun (precisely so on the 13th). It was in opposition at a time in 2018, and will be again in 2022, but not this close. This time it will be brighter than Jupiter, which is usually the brightest spot in the night sky after Venus and the Moon, at a closeness not to be expected again until September 15, 2035.

The nearness of the orbits presents an optimum opportunity for launching spacecraft toward the red target, and they are on their way from NASA, China, and the United Arab Emirates. So descriptions of sending humans to Mars have passed out of the realm of science fiction into serious considerations.

Despite the difficulties. One of which being the load of radiation occupying the space between. On page 11 of its August 21st issue, The Week magazine wrote of others. Mars' atmosphere, being 100 times thinner than Earth's, would make it literally hard to sufficiently slow a sufficiently large craft aiming toward it at 13,000 mph. Smaller unmanned craft might add inflatables to the parachutes for some survivable bouncing, but

current technology, the issue reports, can't provide what would be needed for a manned vehicle. (The Moon has a certain atmosphere, while I suspect Mars' gravity is considerably stronger.)

Nonetheless, I'm told, NASA has plans to send an MAV (Mars Ascent Vehicle) ahead without any fuel so it will be light enough to land. Then it would "create its own fuel by squeezing oxygen from the carbon dioxide-heavy Martian atmosphere". Then humans who had reached Mars without the need of carrying the burden of return fuel, would plan on returning by riding the self-fueled MAV to dock with an orbiting craft that would carry them on the five to ten month journey home.

That is, after the problems of radiation, deleted gravity, and whatever else might appear, have been solved. Meanwhile, as Mars draws a new level of challenged attention, enjoy the rare and brilliant sparkle of the present.

Mars, its reflection coming from more than 38 million miles away, may be seen in the western portion of Pisces, under the Great (dark) Square of Pegasus, and it will have the company of the Moon the 1st through 3rd, with the Moon being full the 1st, so up that night at sundown. They will be together again the 28th and 29th as the Moon approaches another fullness.

And in the pre-dawn of the 1st through 4th, Venus and Regulus, the brightest star of Leo, will have their own pas de deus.

The Moon will be below Venus at first light on the 14th. The rest of the Moon's schedule includes a visit with Aldebaran in Taurus starting late on the night of the 6th, and then it slides from above Regulus on the 12th to in between Regulus and Venus on the 13th to below Venus on the 14th. It will be above Antares in Scorpio as daylight fades the 19th. The 21st-23rd it will join Jupiter and Saturn as those two continue their companionable presence in Sagittarius. They are a kind of Mutt and Jeff pair, considering the brightness of Jupiter to Saturn's weaker show.

Having been full at 4p05 the 1st, the Moon will be new at 2p31 the 16th.

© 2020 Peter Zachary Cohen

## Margins, Often Overlooked

Dru Clarke



After the 'big bloom' of daisy fleabane and ironweed in our meadow, I decided to give the grasses a later season chance to regrow and provide some forage for the cows who usually forayed into it in late afternoon. Initially annoyed that I couldn't get the tractor (it's a large meadow so I couldn't use the riding mower) all the way to creekside and under low hanging branches, I let it assume an 'environmental' ambience. But I was drawn to those unmown patches and edges where the scale was taller, more ragged (sculpted?), and, by closer inspection, more alive.

An immature skink, ebony black, scuttled through the stiff stems of ragweed. Its mature form, a glistening toffee bar, dark stitching lengthwise along its chunky body, ambled straddle-legged into the scrub by the culvert. The whole edge buzzed and hummed with vibrations the source of which remained indiscernible, invisible to the human eye.

Along the east fence, adjacent to the road, where I asked the county not to spray or mow, grew arresting bouquets of snow on the plains intermixed with an early goldenrod. Ripgut – prairie cord grass – grew menacingly in the wet ditch to the north. Its serrated blades can lacerate an ignorant finger, something I learned when showing – showing off, more like it – children the origin of its common name. Long roadside swathes of western ragweed and giant ragweed, now hung with droops of pollen-laden flowers, promise good forage for quail this winter. Now, the pollen lies on the creek surface like a pall of diaphanous yellow silk, rent by the breeze into tenuous windrows.

Wingstem, five feet tall and elegant on fluted stems, blooms with a riot – often one hundred or more – of acid yellow flowers, attended by an assortment of insects, all pollinators in their own right, despite not having baskets on their legs, like bumblebees, to carry it. Here an orange-bellied black and white wasp nectared as it sizzled from bloom to bloom. Wingstem creates a backdrop along shaded margins, especially where the soil is rich and wet. Nearby, a very tiny and slender monarch larva consumed

a drying gaura flower, this year the most common wildflower on our prairie. The blooms are so abundant that they plugged the radiator on our ATV.

Two edges on our land have become especially protected for what grows there. Both are on the margins of grazing ground, near deciduous shrubs and trees. The plant which grows there is wild senna, a graceful, pinnately compound-leaved forb, that, after blooming, grows a plume of falling pods filled with brownish-black seeds. Last year, I collected the pods and ground them up to make a coarse powder that I bagged and steeped for a tea. It had a slightly woody flavor and a mild laxative effect. It is perennial so the seeds can be harvested without removing the parent.

Another forb that has a propensity to grow on field edges, like the wild senna, is sweet everlasting. (I've written about it here before. It is known for its lasting maple syrup fragrance.) Last year my husband collected the florets and filled an empty whiskey bottle with them and a bottle of Everclear. It was a homegrown effort to produce a unique bitters, dense alcoholic distillates to flavor other beverages or drink in small quantities. One purchased in Vilnius (Lithuania) known as 999 or 'Saltalankiu' my hotel's doorman told me was good for digestion, especially after a night of revelry, he related with a wink. I poured a ml in a shot glass and just a sip blasted my sinuses and scalded my throat, but its vapor was a rich, sugary maple. We actively seek this delicacy every fall.

Some states, like Texas, have restraints on mowing public roadways' medians and verges and the drive is richer for it.

Aesthetics aside, the wild edges host all sorts of species, from the humblest bug, to soaring raptors on the hunt for prey. Supposedly edges are mowed to promote 'greater visibility'. I've yet to see a divided road where you can't see to the opposite lanes. And wildlife continues to be slaughtered crossing them even when medians are mowed.

Our county has marked a row of mature trees along the edge of our largely forgotten road to be removed so they can harvest a deposit of gravel thirty feet in to use on the road surface. How it is even a sensible, economic decision is a mystery as the labor to cut and remove these behemoths, retrieve the gravel and redeposit it would be costly. The trees provide welcome shade and soil stabilization as well as habitat for birds, especially the resident woodpeckers and foraging opportunities for migratory warblers and other songbirds. People are drawn to that reach of road for what it offers: quiet and solace, now more important than ever to hearten our spirits and soothe our anxious minds. Rather than benign neglect, benign attention to our overlooked margins can bring unintended good. Like a sweet everlasting bitters.



*Wild senna  
photo by  
Dru Clarke*

© 2020 Dru Clarke, Sept 2020



Audubon Society  
Manhattan, Kansas

## 2020 NFHAS "Covid19" Birdseed Sale



### ORDER by Nov. 5, 2020

Return payment to:

NFHAS  
P.O. Box 1932  
Manhattan, KS 66505

Checks payable to: NFHAS



### PICKUP dates

Nov. 15 12n-4 pm

Nov. 16 9-12n



**2041 Pillsbury Dr. (across the Highway 177  
from the Piano Store. Stone house**

**Drive through and we will load your car  
Masks are required**

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

**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.

**FINCH MIX** consists of 50% sunflower chips and 50% thistle seed.

**FLINT HILLS FEAST** is the premium seed mix: 30% black oil sunflower seed, 20% striped sunflower seed, and 50% white proso millet (with no milo or fillers).

**MEDIUM CHOP** is chopped corn, a little finer and cleaned.

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

**AUDUBON PREMIUM BLEND** is a premium blend of 40% blacks, 40% striped and 20% millet.

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

**SUET CAKES**, in addition to having other nutritious ingredients, the main ingredient is high calorie beef fat. It 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.

**BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS** are the preferred seed of many small feeder birds and attractive to more species than are striped sunflower seeds. Black oil supplies more energy per pound than striped.

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

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

**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.

*(Taken from Audubon At Home Bird Feeding Basics, <http://www.allaboutbirds.org>)*

## 2020 Order Form

TYPE OF SEED	Unit (lb bags)	price/unit	# of units (bags)	TOTAL COST
Black Oil Sunflower	10	\$8.17		
	25	\$18.07		
	50	\$32.92		
Striped Sunflower	10	\$9.82		
	25	\$21.37		
	50	\$41.17		
Flint Hills Feast	10	\$6.52		
	25	\$14.85		
	50	\$27.97		
Cheap Cheap Blend	10	\$4.95		
	25	\$13.12		
	50	\$21.37		
Sunflower chips	10	\$16.42		
	25	\$36.22		
Thistle	10	\$24.67		
	25	\$54.37		
Finch Mix	10	\$20.54		
	25	\$42.82		
Safflower	10	\$13.12		
	25	\$31.27		
White Millet	10	\$5.76		
	25	\$12.29		
	50	\$21.37		
Red Millet	10	\$8.99		
	25	\$19.72		
	50	\$36.22		
Peanut Pickouts (shelled peanuts)	10	\$16.43		
	25	\$36.22		
Medium Corn Chop	25	\$13.12		
	50	\$21.37		
Suet Cake	ea	\$1.49		

Delivery service available – Manhattan city limits – Please include addt'l \$5.

**COMPLETE this portion and return with payment.**

Name

Address

Phone

e-mail

SUBTOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

DELIVERY: \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

**Checks payable to:  
Northern Flint Hills Audubon  
Society or (NFHAS)**



# Birding Crossword Puzzle #2

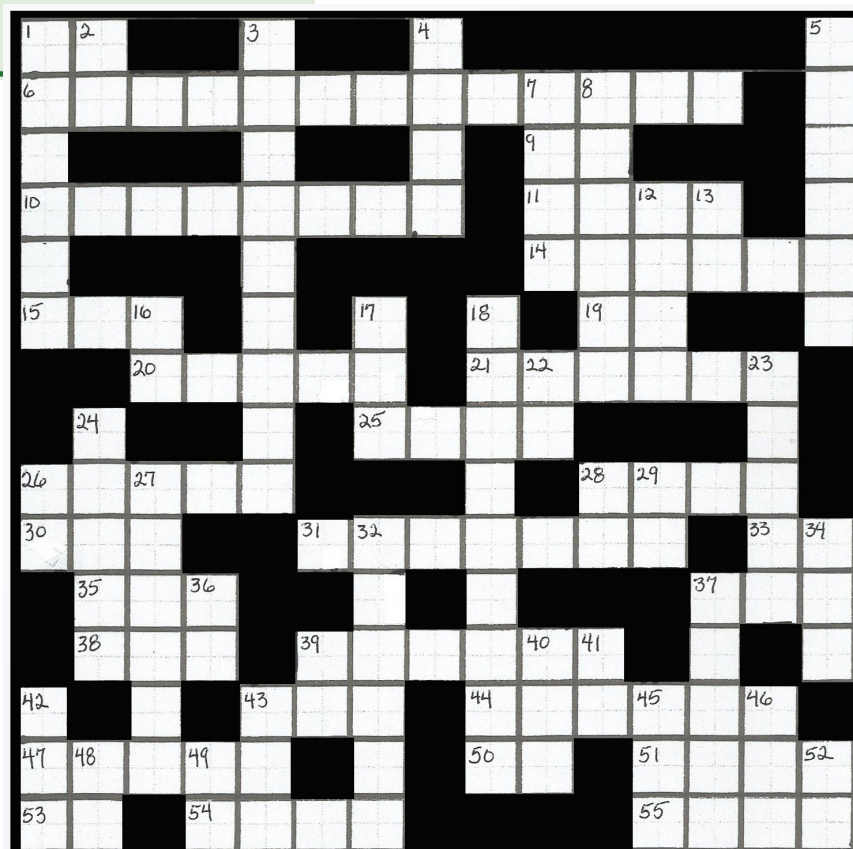
Patricia Yeager

## ACROSS

1. Opposite of off
6. Name of the location of NFHAS butterfly garden
9. Where to look to find most warblers
10. Male fowl
11. Close loudly
14. A northern Midwest sparrow
15. An evergreen
19. Nighthawk in alpha code
20. In 2021 NFHAS will be \_\_\_\_.
21. You may encounter this when birding after a rain shower.
25. Show up here at 6:30am to join a Christmas Bird Count group.
- 26 This duck has a blue beak and most often the tail is held upright
- 28 Gifted with power of divine vision
- 30.Chinese statesman
- 31.This shrieking predator is usually found inside
33. Location for immediate help for injury
35. News channel
37. Address abbreviation
38. Local river, local legend
39. Holy
43. Supporter for women
- 44.Tri-colored passerine that is named for its dominate color
47. Tree nesting terns found over warm ocean waters
50. Album
51. To cause to depart
53. Opposite of out
54. Count on
55. Popular talking bird pet in the 1960s. Now some established wild U.S. populations exists.

## DOWN

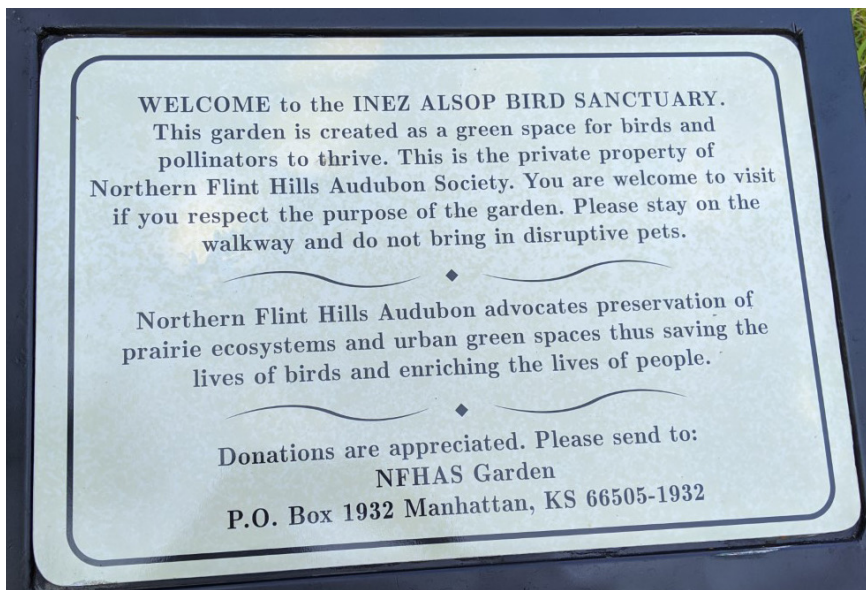
1. Diving bird of prey
2. North
3. NFHAS gardens attract these
4. A virtual assistant spelled backwards and a hardy spring flower
5. Uses wings for mating "song"
7. To hurry
8. This sandpiper nests on the prairie and can often be seen on fence posts
- 16 Editor's abbr. indicating font change
- p. 6 Prairie Falcon Oct. 2020



17. To call attention to
18. A pink wader that is not a flamingo
23. Great, snowy, cattle
24. Noise a duck makes
26. Room, ream
27. Cartoon
28. Southwest
- 29 Elevation
32. Large bird cage
34. Color of new lending in library at the Alsop Bird Sanctuary
- 36.Northwest
37. County where Manhattan, KS is located
39. Physician
40. If you have been birding all day you may want to take a \_\_\_\_ or at least...
41. ... take it \_\_\_\_.
42. Smooth and groovy with big bills
43. One of a youngsters first words
40. United States Mail
45. A stop on your birding travels
48. Opposite of off
49. Another address abbr.
52. Attorney

## ALSOP UPDATE

### New Sign at Alsop

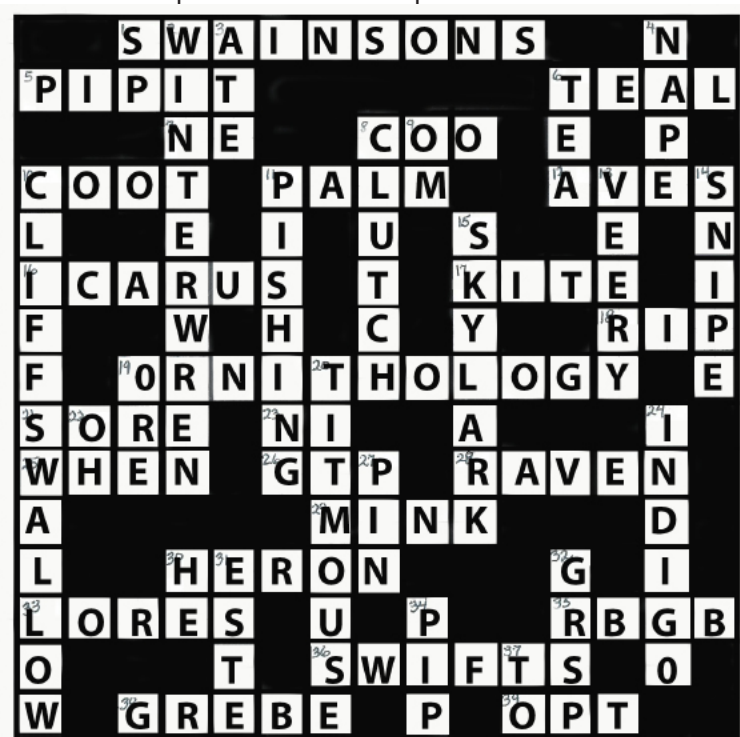


### Little Library at the Alsop

in process of being built by  
Patricia & Kent Yeager



Answers to September crossword puzzle #1





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

Return Service Requested

Non-profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit No. 662  
Manhattan, KS 66502

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)

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](mailto:join@audubon.org). Website is [www.audubon.org](http://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](mailto:list_serve@ksu.edu)> and join in the discussions.

#### NFHAS Board

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Bird Seed Sales:

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AOK Representative: Cindy Jeffrey

At-large: Susan Blackford

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