

SPECIAL EVENT: June 18th - 7p.m.

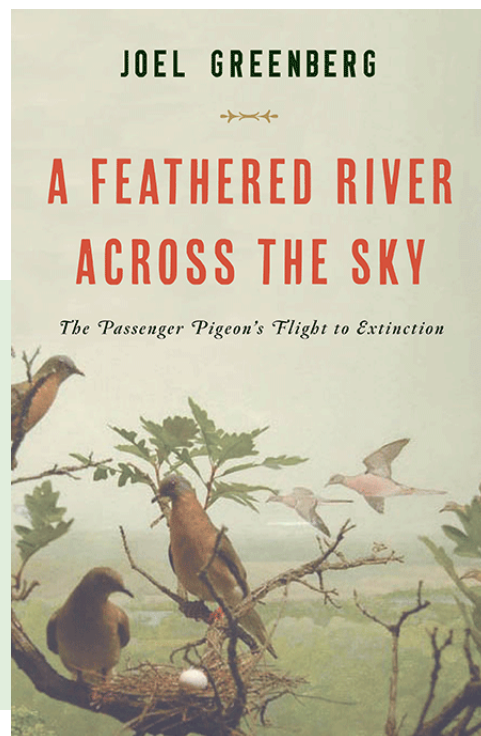
Author Joel Greenberg

Presentation & book signing.

Sunset Zoo Rotunda - right next to parking lot



The story of how the most abundant bird to ever exist on this planet disappeared in so little time is unique in the annals of human experience.



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 42, No. 10 ~June 2014

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Upcoming Events

Jun 2 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.

**Jun 18 - Author Joel Greenberg
Presentation & Book
signing 7 p.m.
SUNSET ZOO ROTUNDA**

**Jul 20- Annual Planning Mtg.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan
see page 6**



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

I wish I knew enough to be able to think in an informed way about all, or even at least some, of the reports of scientific break-throughs and potentials that keep appearing. For example a Reuters story in March said that with all the new sources of natural gas, referred to as a “glut,” a way has been devised for potentially turning natural gas into other usable fuels and chemicals than is now possible or economically feasible. The process would be less complex and require less heat – 400 degrees F. compared to 1650 degrees – and use less expensive thallium and lead compared to platinum, palladium, rhodium, and gold. The result would be to replace petroleum for producing gasoline, diesel fuel, alcohols, and olefins--key sources of industrial chemicals and plastics.

Along with that was an account from Brazil of the discovery of a diamond that contained a mineral called ringwoodite whose weight was 1.5 percent water. This seems a small figure, but ringwoodite, I read, is a form of peridot, thought to exist in large quantities under high pressures deep underground. Thus, that find “indicates” that there are “mammoth” amounts of water trapped 255-410 miles down. All that has to be done is get it. And then, I would guess, wait to see what the seismographs have to say. Meanwhile, I wonder how one contemplates piercing a hole and casing it hundreds of miles deep. Since the water is under high pressure likely no pump would be necessary, the question being how to keep a blast of scalding liquid and its continuing fountain from inundating South America east of the Andes. Luckily the spray would likely cool before it fell back to earth.

Then in April I found a report, I’d otherwise missed, that for the second time in three years Mazda6 sedans had been recalled because of a spider that is attracted to the smell of gasoline and weaves a web that can block a vent in the engines, thereby putting pressure on the metal of the fuel tanks. Then when the spiders foiled the mechanical efforts to keep the them out, the engineers figured a way to solve the problem by a change in the software. Which seems an interesting juxtapose of methods. I wonder if the Yellow Sac spider’s software could tell the difference between gasoline from petroleum and that from natural gas, and why its attraction at all, if it’s a newly acquired taste, and what other attractions such a creature has been finding inviting. I recently mentioned a tobacco-leaf-eating caterpillar that repels predators with its nicotine breath. I wonder if gasoline breath is equally uninviting.

For June, the Moon invites one to watch its neighbor, the bright but early-setting Jupiter on the 1st. Then it dances from below to the left of Regulus in Leo on the 3rd and 4th, before waltzing past the still distinctly red Mars the 6th and 7th. Spica, in Virgo, replaces Jupiter as its evening partner on the 8th. Then, there’ll be its *pas de deux* with Saturn, currently half as bright as Mars but still golden, and in Libra, the 9th and 10th. It’s just above Antares in Scorpio the 11th, and waits till the 23rd-25th to slide by Venus in the morning sky. Then, in a reprise with Jupiter, it is close, then not so near, as the big planet sinks early in the evenings of the 28th-29th.

The summer solstice will occur at 5a51 on the 21st.

The Moon will be full the 12th at 11p11, new the 27th at 3a08.

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Nesting Season

Dru Clarke



Tucked into the back of a nesting box in our hen house is a loose sphere of dusty, shed feathers and bits of straw and wood chips, and it appears to have no entrance or even a depression where a hen might lay. When I poked at it, a frantic squeaking began, then subsided, but lasted long enough to alert Pinx, our mouser, to sniff it. It belonged to a family of mice who scattered through the slats in the back of the box. I've found other mouse nests, one of tufts of cotton batting from an old quilt shelved in a bedroom closet, another of shredded love letters that had been tied with a ribbon kept in a drawer of a desk stored in the old granary. It seems that nests can be fashioned with a variety of suitable materials, some even papered with forgotten memories.

In the lofty reaches of a tall tree you may have noticed a dark mass of twigs and leaves, caught as if by a weir in a stream of air, lodged tightly in the boughs. This is a drey, or squirrel's nest, not a bird's. Pack rats – “glitter weavers” – create similar nests, usually on the ground, but adorn them with objects that are shiny, like beer cans, wire or lost jewelry. One in the corner of our “summer kitchen,” a shed earlier occupants used to cook in during hot weather, was decorated with paint brushes and shards of pottery.

There may be nothing so surprising in nature as to encounter a bird's nest tucked neatly in the branches of a tree, revealed only when leaves have dropped in fall and before the greening up of spring. You may have walked or driven by it dozens of times and never noticed it unless a rush of wings from a fleeing parent betrayed its location. Most birds' nests are shaped with a concave center, like a cup, to hold eggs and accommodate the adult brooding bird, but they can be as simple as a scrape, or as astounding as a bower.

Some don't incubate at all: the megapodes, or mound builders, lay eggs in a mound and let the sun and the heat generated by organic decay do the trick. A local marvel is the orioles' pendulous sac, often hanging on a bough, precariously close to, or even over, a road. The location of a nest may spell successful rearing of a brood or disaster. In April of this year a bald eagle nest at Quivira was blown out of its tree, and while the adult birds survived, a subsequent search found one dead eaglet: it was not known if this was the only one in the nest at the time of the blowdown.

The degree to which a nest is elaborately constructed, its intricacy or complexity, seems to be related to the extent of cerebellar foliation in a bird's brain: the more folds in the cerebellum, that section at the rear base of the brain resembling a huge walnut, the more complicated the nest.

Tom Waits, the beloved beat balladeer, described watching, he thought surreptitiously, a crow build its nest. Apparently the crow took umbrage at being “stalked” (as Waits called it), finished the nest and left it as a decoy. “This one is for you!” (I imagine it crowed). Then, it went off to build another for itself.

Birds are not always obvious in their nest-building but tend to be selective and opportunistic in their choice of materials: bits of baling twine, horse hair and dried grass blades made up one nest I recently found on an Osage orange twig. For those of you who keep an immaculate lawn, consider reserving an inconspicuous spot for the birds to select nesting materials you put out for them. Use your imagination: Lots of things we discard birds can find useful. (Avoid long or sharp wire ties that could ensnare a bird's leg.)

Although this verse insists on using the feminine, not entirely accurate as often the male also broods the eggs, it evokes a lovely image of grace and patience:

*“she blends into the dove gray
of a quiet march sky
brooding over her cache of soft blue treasures
in a nest of dry grass, threads from yesterday's
laundry
and the down of her own breast feathers
mother-love braves on when spring is but a memory”
— Kate Mullane Robertson*



photos by Dru Clarke

Note: It is illegal to collect feathers, nests and eggs from migratory birds and one risks a fine if caught. When I was teaching, I had a salvage permit from USFWS that allowed me to use these materials with educational purpose.

© 2014 Dru Clarke

SPRING is Here

Tom & MJ Morgan

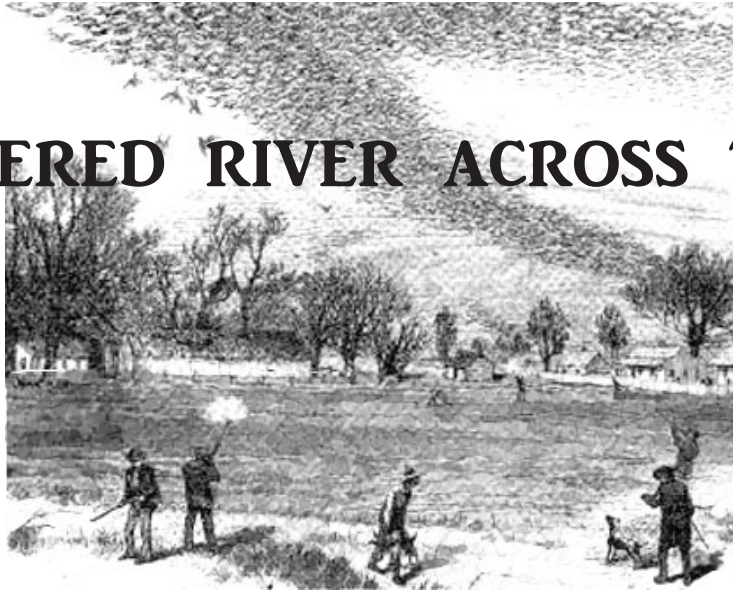
Tom & MJ Morgan took these photos of a heron rookery along a creek near the Republican River in Clay County, April 26.



Swainson's Thrush perched on a bench on Tom & MJ's patio.

Photo taken May 12 by Tom Morgan

A FEATHERED RIVER ACROSS THE SKY

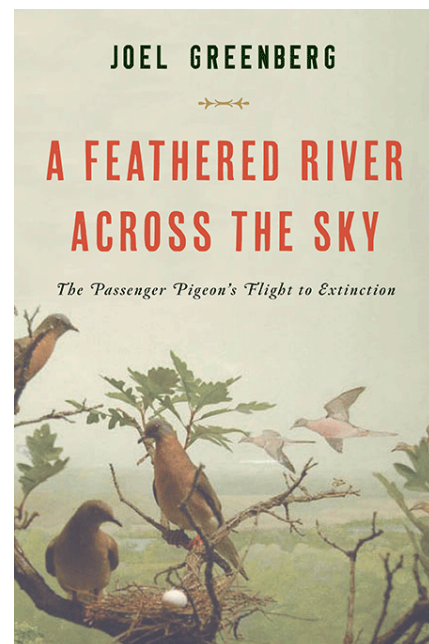


AUTHOR JOEL GREENBERG
JUNE 18, 7-9 PM
SUNSET ZOO ROTUNDA

THE NORTHERN FLINT HILLS
AUDUBON SOCIETY PRESENTS THIS SPECIAL FREE
PROGRAM ABOUT
"THE PASSENGER PIGEON'S
FLIGHT TO EXTINCTION"

PUBLIC WELCOME

MEET THE AUTHOR
OF THIS COMPREHENSIVE
AND FASCINATING BOOK
BOOK SIGNING FOLLOWING PROGRAM
EASY PARKING AND ACCESS
(NO ENTRANCE FEE)



Take Note

Annual Planning Meeting

July 20th, 4:00 p.m.

at the home of Tom & MJ Morgan
1440 Beechwood Terrace, 539-8106

Potluck to follow meeting

WE NEED IDEAS FOR THE COMING YEAR!



WE NEED YOUR IDEAS!!!



ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!!!

We would like to THANK Claflin Books & Copies for years of service! They have been a wonderful partner to the NFHAS (and many others). Sadly, the end of May will be the last time they print the Prairie Falcon, as they discontinue the printing part of the business and move the bookstore. We wish them the best in their future endeavors.

So, to Stormy and Kevin and all the others who worked on the Prairie Falcon, THANKS! We will miss you.

KUDOS TO...



THANKS!

to Jacque Staats, Susan Blackford & Patricia Yeager for cleaning up and getting the Butterfly Garden ready.

to Jacque Staats & Dick Oberst for managing and watching over the Northeast Park "Prairie."

to Patricia Yeager for mowing and keeping an eye on the progress at the Alsop Property.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP ON ANY OF THESE PROJECTS - AND WE CAN USE THE **HELP!**

- CONTACT PATRICIA YEAGER 776-9593 or email:
pyky@flinthills.com



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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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