



There is so much beauty in Kansas - no matter what time of year. Birding is great, but there is a lot more to see! Just get out and take a walk. Look up, look down, look around. We are lucky to live here.  
*(Trying to be positive in this heat!)*

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



# prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 46, No. 11 ~ JULY 2018

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## Upcoming Events

- July 14 - Saturday Morning Birding 8 am-11 am  
Departing from Sojourner Truth Park
- Aug. 11 - Saturday Morning Birding 8 am-11 am  
Departing from Sojourner Truth Park
- Sept. 4- Board Meeting- Manhattan Public Library
- Sept. 8- Saturday Morning Birding 8 am-11 am  
Departing from Sojourner Truth Park
- Sept. 9 - Ice Cream Social at the ALSOP BIRD SANCTUARY  
6 p.m. Check out our progress, 17th & Laramie



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

We left off last month with the report by Walter Jehne of Healthy Soils Australia, presented at a meeting at the Volland Store SW of Alma. He had said there that daily 342 watts of solar radiation per square meter arrive among the tiny droplets of moisture afloat in our atmosphere, but we send out only 339 watts. To stabilize our climate from overheating, he said, we need to radiate back those 3 watts more, and the soonest way for achieving that is by restoring the ability of our soils to be carbon sinks, part of which to be accomplished with globally more vegetative cover, aided by the restoration of a more productive water cycle.

Back a couple of millennia and more, people like Aristotle noticed that even when rivers flowed heavily into the sea, the sea never overflowed, therefore there had to be some kind of water cycle. What they envisioned, up through the thoughts of Leonardo da Vinci, was a basically subterranean affair with water sinking into the ground then rising by some means to the higher surfaces to flow back down. Sure, there was some evaporation, but it didn't seem possible that mere air could hold enough water to be significantly involved.

Since then research shows there are billions of tons of water vapor suspended over our heads, but those minuscule units singly or in lightly condensed hazes absorb solar heat. Getting that vapor to coalesce into actual drops that form reflective, cooling clouds and eventually grow heavy enough to fall, is the water cycle Walter Jehne addresses as no longer operating well. Not well enough to counteract atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels that have been increasing abnormally for over 200 years a result of our ongoing extensive clearing and oxidation of carbon from our soils, and from our increased combustion of fossil fuels largely over the past 70 years.

He sees there needs to be more vapor to cling to the suspended particles of salt, dirt, etc. that vapors attach to, including vapors containing living bacterial components that enhance coalescing. The more transpiring plants, the more such vapors. To stave off the desertification threatening our planet there needs to be less clearing, burning, fallowing and other practices that leave bare earth or organic detritus open to the sky, and thus the need of more active vegetative cover. This requires the restoration of soils that have been long ill-used and/or lost, and this is a topic central to researcher Judith Schwartz, who was also at the Volland Store meeting. Her book, *Cows Save the Planet*, informs how well soil can take in carbon, and "every percent increase in soil carbon holds an additional sixteen thousand gallons of water per acre". She emphasizes that in

a natural environment, above-surface plants become part of symbiotic subsurface communities whose interactions create more soil, with some organisms retrieving and compiling the nutrients that went into the above surface features, and some breaking down and making available subsurface mineral matter, as in stones, thus building soil from the bottom up. Artificial fertilizers interrupt this symbiosis, causing plants to stop providing feedback to, and thus starving to death, the subsurface community, thus becoming totally dependent fertilizer junkies (my phrase) as soil is used up, with less and less replaced.

The book argues that this process is reversible, that given help (i.e. moving away from artificial fertilizers and monocultures) nature can, in a rather short span of time, heal itself. Gail Fuller, the Emporia rancher present, testified that his place has results that back up what Mr. Jehne and Ms. Schwartz are advocating.

The cows' place is to transform forage into manure and to lacerate the ground, facilitating the entry of more air and water (though at the meeting it was pointed out, so to speak, that buffalo--a/k/a bison--hoofs are sharper). As to the methane they expel, the book quotes a UN finding that an increase in cattle numbers had little effect on the amount of methane in the atmosphere, at worst another case of the game being worth the candle. The cows are part of a conversation that needs to be held more widely.

Above the water cycle it will be a social summer for the Moon, visiting Mercury in the early evening of the 14th, and making a party on the evening of the 15th by sailing as a crescent between Jupiter and Venus, and above Virgo's star, Spica. It continues to be the one above of Jupiter (and of Spica) the 20th, of Saturn the 24th, and on the 27th it will be above a Mars that will be shining brighter than Jupiter on through August (the brightest Mars will be until September 2035). The Moon will be to the left of Taurus' Aldebaran the 10th. Then in August it should be seen again above Venus the 14th, companioning about Jupiter (in Libra) the 16th and 17th, right of Saturn (in Sagittarius) the 20th, and hanging around above that glittering Mars the 22nd and 23rd. Meanwhile it will disappear on the 11th and 12th to make way for the Perseid meteor shower.

Besides being below the Moon July 14th, Mercury might also be glimpsed below Venus each evening during the month's first two weeks. And then particularly in the dawn light of August 24, far east of the sparkle of Sirius, about an extended fist high above the horizon.

Phase-wise, the Moon will be new in July at 9p48 the 12th, full 9p20 the 27th; in August new 4a68 the 11th, full 6a56 the 26th.

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# Rethinking “Vermin”

Dru Clarke



“They’re vermin, that’s what they are.” The scrawny, bewhiskered man with a cigarette dangling from his lips addressed me as I entered the welcome shade of a grove of trees at the Memorial Day picnic hosted by a former student. My initial impression was that he needed a good meal, Nicorette, and some TLC. He, by the way, was referring to coyotes as he overheard me mention that I hadn’t heard them howling at night as frequently as I used to. One reason, of course, is that our neighbor’s ranch hand had bragged that he’d killed seventeen since winter’s end. Seventeen in a few short months. I felt like whipping out Aldo Leopold’s “Sand County Almanac” and turning to the essay “Thinking Like a Mountain.” Eloquently, Leopold writes of a “successful” hunt (and subsequent epiphany) for wolves in the outback of Arizona. As he approaches a she wolf, he sees the green fire in her eyes dying as she succumbs to the lethal bullet. I can see in my mind’s eye the litter of pups anxiously awaiting her return to the den: Leopold didn’t have to write of that, but it was implicit. The man, whom I respected as the skilled preparer of the pig – from slaughter to roasting and pulling- went on to assert that a bullet between the eyes was more humane than dying from starvation when they became overpopulated. I couldn’t immediately argue with that, then I thought of the pups starving when their mother had been shot. But vermin? No, that goes against all ecological principles.



Not only on land but in the sea this concept applies. Sea otters are critical to the health of the kelp forests for

they forage on urchins that would otherwise decimate the fronds and loosen the holdfasts. (They tuck favored stones in their armpits which they reuse to smash the tests or shells of the urchins. I have one at home that I’m sure must have been one otter’s favorite!) Where otters are missing, so is the kelp off our Pacific coast. Sharks help protect littoral (coastal) environs and coral reefs and their denizens in one respect by consuming octopuses whose voracious appetites have wiped out populations of stone crabs. In some coastal areas of Florida, there are no stone crabs, lots of octopuses, but no sharks. Our (previous) voracious appetite for fur and our outsized fear of toothed beasts – fueled by markets and media- have clouded our judgment and our policies that fly in the face of sound ecological thinking. For an ecosystem to function in good health, all its inhabitants must exist in harmony.

While this observation is anecdotal, I’ve seen more rabbits, pack rat nests, squirrels, and assorted species of mice, beavers on our pond, even a woodchuck this year than ever before. Other than our well-fed cats, where are their natural predators? Humans can and do hunt – and I support sport hunting fully – but what man, woman or child hunts pack rats and meadow voles? Sport hunting cannot fill the niche of a coyote or a wolf.

Dayton O. Hyde in his book “Don Coyote: The Good Times and the Bad Times of a Much Maligned American Original” writes of his personal experience of befriending a coyote on his Oregon ranch. It is a remarkable true story that illustrates how we can live in harmony with another creature who has been much maligned and misunderstood. Another compelling read is Hope Ryden’s “Song Dog,” a paean to an American original, *Canis latrans*, our native dog.

I’ve seen coyotes walk between the bodies of our horses and skirt the edge of a pasture where a cow has calved, waiting to clean up what remains of the placenta, never interfering with calf or cow. (Should a calf be preyed upon, there is probably something wrong with it or the mother.)

Yesterday I rescued a baby rabbit from the jaws of our three-legged cat. I kept it in a basket in the bathtub for a few hours, then after it had hopped out of the basket, released it back into the shrubs. In the morning it was gone. If it survived, good for the bunny. If it didn’t, I hope its life ended by sustaining one of the remaining coyotes that managed to elude the ranch hand’s bullet. And, maybe at night, I’ll again hear her ascending song.

© 2018 Dru Clarke, June



Innumerable studies demonstrate the vital importance of apex predators, often called keystone species, to our natural environment. In Leopold’s essay, removal of these predators – wolves (and cougars as well)- allow the deer population to skyrocket, leading to increased browsing of already sparse vegetation in arid lands and subsequent loss of soil through wind and water erosion, the mountain literally and figuratively being ‘pulled down.’ Sediments choke previously clear streams and the nourishing soil is lost to the sea.





## Leann Harrell

By Paul Weidhaas

A longtime supporter and stalwart member of NFHAS recently passed away. Leann Harrell's contributions to Manhattan's natural areas is a lasting legacy, one we can all hope to emulate.

Leann worked tirelessly to help restore and recreate tallgrass prairie on a large portion of Northeast Park, transforming it from farmed ground in just two short years. In 1998, she and Wayne Corn as co-chairs, with members, T. Morgan, K. Howell, C Pfaff-Eickhoff, P. Weidhaas, R. Janke, T. Branden and G. Weins and the Blue Earth Citizens presented the Prairie-Woodland Restoration Plan for Northeast Park to the Manhattan Parks and Recreation Advisory board, which was duly accepted. She devoted countless hours in 2000-2001 to the collecting and sowing of native grass and forb seeds, creating a meandering riffle system in a bioswale at the east side (affectionately known as "The Leander"), and dealing with a sometimes-difficult parks and recreation department.

She also coordinated volunteer efforts by a group of KSU students, who designed and erected interpretive signs and bulletin boards in this special spot.

Leann learned the rudiments of prairie restoration work first hand by reseeding a horse paddock and farmed ground where she resided near St. George for several years, before moving to the Missouri Ozarks. I recall with fondness canoeing-tobogganing down her steep hill there one snowy winter along with some other crazies from the chapter.

She was the designated Warm Brown Fuzzy, aka unofficial greeter, welcoming newcomers to the NFHAS fold. She and Jan Garton even created a WBF costume for the purpose. Speaking of costumes, Leann would go all out at Halloween. She showed up at my house one late October as a painted lady, the butterfly, not the other kind, complete with towering wings appropriately marked. Another year, she arrived in the guise of a Madagascar quadruped. "Guess what I am?" she asked. One glance gave me the answer. "You're a ring-tailed lemur!"

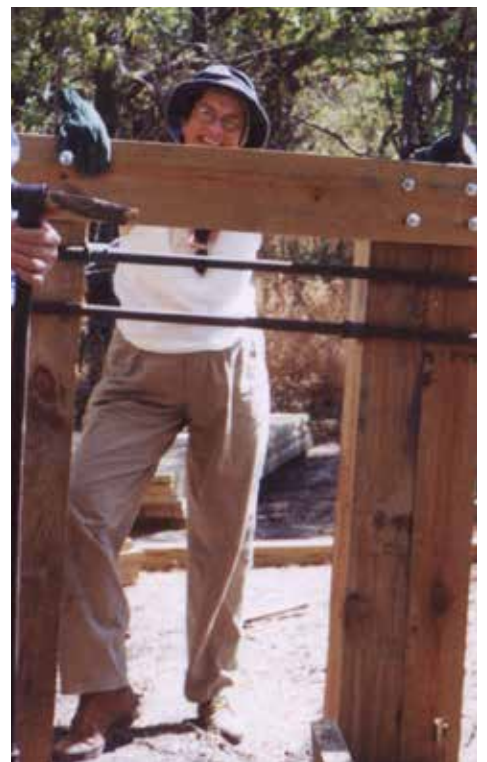
A wheat geneticist by vocation, Leann worked for years at KSU with Stan Cox. I recall her taking a day off from her work to travel to Topeka, so we could visit Rep. Ed Pugh regarding pending Rails to Trails legislation. She was an activist in many ways.

She established the Alsop Memorial Butterfly Garden in Sojourner Truth Park in 1996, another testament to Leann's enduring love of prairie and butterflies. She was also fond of reading and basking in the sun. But her devotion to cats was her passion in later years, adopting strays in her vicinity, attending to their needs, making sure they were spayed or neutered, and finding homes for them.

She served as president of the chapter in 1995-96 and held the positions of vice president and secretary too.

Her husband, Norm Elledge, survives at their home nestled in the Ozark woodlands.

(Cards maybe sent to Norm at 5312 Big Creek Rd., Yukon, Missouri, 65589)



# BIRDATHON 2018 REPORT AND REQUEST FOR YOUR SUPPORT

May 2018

Dear NFHAS Birders,

Clyde Ferguson and I were privileged again to be a part of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society's 2018 Birdathon on the last Saturday-Sunday of April. This year four parties with a total of eight dedicated birders scoured the area to identify as many different species as we could in a 24-hour period. Our group was able to identify 89 species by 9 p.m. Saturday and to find 17 more species on Sunday morning. Clyde is one of our two original founders. I compiled this report for you, our supporters or potential supporters. This was Clyde's 34th year and my 26th year to have a part! The 106 species our group found are shown in **green** in the '18 column marked by an **8** on the that follows. The bottom of the second page of the Report shows the other observers who contributed additional species, how to identify those 17 additional species each party found, and where they searched. Too, the weather conditions we encountered are described. Our grand total of 123 species is a bit above our 5-year average.

Images of the **Best Birds of 2018** that we found this year are shown on that separate page. The cool conditions in April resulted in several species – Dark-eyed Junco (5th time in 32 years of records), Pine Siskin (12th), Brown Creeper (**1st**), and Smith's Longspur (**1st**) – that usually move north earlier to remain in the area. The Yellow-billed cuckoo (**1st**), White-faced Ibis (2nd), and Palm Warbler (3rd) were also very exciting finds during this event.

I always enjoy working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge myself and reporting on it helps make you aware of our local birds. I hope you, too, find our report interesting and informative.

**Yes, this report is our request for your financial support** for our NORTHERN FLINT HILLS Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our chapter uses the contributions to the BIRDATHON as its primary fund-raising activity. Last year our nearly 100 contributors gave our team very generous support. We received over \$2,700 that was put to good use to support our environmental and natural heritage locally and through outreach efforts.

We have appreciated greatly the support you and others have contributed to our past efforts and for the work of our chapter can do with your support. Our supporters of record have usually backed our efforts at a rate of at least 15 cents per specie identified, but if you contribute \$15.00 or more we will send you our newsletter, *The Prairie Falcon*, for a year. Please use the enclosed contribution sheet to fill out and send it along with your check. Please indicate your preference for receiving the newsletter in the mail or with an e-mail. We are not able to take credit cards. Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt for your donation unless you can contribute \$250 or more. And thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,



Jim Koelliker for all our Birdathon searchers.

## Best Birds of 2018



White-faced  
Ibis



Brown  
Creeper



Pine Siskin



Dark-eyed  
Junco



Yellow-billed Cuckoo



Palm Warbler



Smith's Longspur

### Return With Your Contribution

#### BIRDATHON 2018

#### Please print your information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ 0.15 (\$18.45); \_\_\_\_ 0.20 (\$24.60);

\_\_\_\_ 0.50 (\$61.50); \_\_\_\_ other (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I/we qualify to receive

*The Prairie Falcon.*

\_\_\_\_ Yes, please send a message to view each full-color issue to my E-mail address below:

**Remember: A contribution of \$15.00 or more provides you a year's access to *The Prairie Falcon!***

Make your **check** payable to the **NFHAS** and mail it to me, along with this page:

Jim Koelliker

3500 Minton's Landing, Manhattan, KS 66503

Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.



# 2018 Birdathon

JULY 2018 Prairie Falcon p. 7

# 2018 Birdathon

BIRDS OF THE NORTHERN FLINT HILLS																					Spring 2018 Birdathon Report																					From Clyde Ferguson Page 2/2																				
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LOCATIONS: RILEY, POTTAWATOMIE & GEARY COUNTIES - Clyde's Area -- Manhattan, KSU Farms, River Pond, Rocky Ford, Pott #																					House Sparrow 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0																																									
State Lake, Hunters' Island, Konza Prairie Biological Station, Grandview Plaza, and Milford Dam & Reservoir Outlet Park																																																														
OBSERVERS: Clyde Ferguson's Party: Clyde, Roma Lenehan, Susan Slapnick, and Jim Koelliker.																																																														
Also, 11 additional species from other participants in the area added are from Patricia Yeager, Lake Elbo & prairie																																																														
above Elbo; Lowell Johnson & Ruth Lynn Hooper, Fancy Creek arm of Tuttle Creek Reservoir & Oldsburg area; Jacques																																																														
Staats, her home area near Kaats; and Jim Dickson, western Wabunsee & northeast Morris Counties.																																										TOTAL SPECIES 123																				
WEATHER: April 28th - Pleasant with light winds and sun; 29th - Clear to cloudy, cool, and a light shower late. Overall, cooler than																																																														
normal weather prior to the event kept some species from leaving and others late to arrive.																																																														
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# Solor Power Today



**Thank you Robert Rosenberg** for a very interesting and enlightening program- so much information. I could hear it all again and learn more.

For those who missed this program on the advancement in Solor Panels, go to [www.fhreec.org](http://www.fhreec.org), or write Flint Hills Renewable Energy and Efficiency Co-op, Inc. 1212 Thurston St. Manhattan, KS 66502

## ***A Message from Margy Stewart, Board Chair, (AOK)Audubon of Kansas, June 13, 2018***

Dear Fellow Audubon Member:

May we invite you to join our email list? We are a grassroots Kansas organization advocating on behalf of birds, wildlife, and habitat in Kansas. If you would like to receive information from us, kindly send me an email at [margystewart785@gmail.com](mailto:margystewart785@gmail.com).

Audubon of Kansas\* plays a unique role in our state. It does what no other environmental organization does, including:

--Advocating for water rights for Quivira National Wildlife Refuge;

--Defending prairie dogs from compulsory eradication;

--Reintroducing black-footed ferrets into the shortgrass prairie ecosystem;

--Creating a network of sanctuaries that are people-friendly as well as wildlife-friendly (already established: Hutton-Niobrara Ranch and Wildlife Sanctuary, Connie Achterberg Wildlife-Friendly Demonstration Farm, Mt. Mitchell Heritage Prairie Sanctuary—three other properties in the pipeline. The goal: an archipelago of sanctuaries across the state so that every Kansas kid can play in a creek!)

In addition, while many organizations lobby on behalf of environmental causes, AOK is often the only one advocating uncompromisingly on behalf of Kansas wildlife wherever policy is being made. By adding your name to AOK's email list, you will stay up-to-date on all of these unfolding stories. And--when collective action can make a difference--you will be invited to join in.

The AOK family welcomes you! To join the list, email me at [margystewart785@gmail.com](mailto:margystewart785@gmail.com).

Thank you, and best wishes,

Margy Stewart, Chair, Board of Trustees, Audubon of Kansas, "A Voice for Wildlife"

\*Audubon of Kansas is an independent state-wide organization (not affiliated with National Audubon Society). All local Audubon chapters in Kansas have representation on the Board of Trustees.



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