

An Introduction and Review of Your Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society: “Places, Projects and People”

**JOIN US in the Grosbeck Room at the Manhattan Public Library
on Sunday, March 19th, 2:30-4:30 p.m. for our “OPEN HOUSE”**

We have put this event together especially for new members and members that have not been active for a while, but are wondering where they might comfortably fit in. Like an open house, come any time between 2:30 and 4:30 p.m. and explore our display of recent activities, programs and projects. We will have maps of NFHAS property and projects to help you discover our hidden treasures. And no doubt you will think of field trips, speakers and projects you would like us to bring to Manhattan and the surrounding region.

In two years, the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society will be celebrating it's 50 year anniversary! Your ideas are the reason this organization continues. So bring 'em on and we'll bring the cookies and coffee.

Come and bring a new member with you to introduce them to your Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society!

We will see you there. Patricia Yeager, President

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 45, No. 7 ~ March 2017

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PRESENTATION
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Upcoming Events

- Mar. 6 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan
- Mar. 11 - Saturday Morning Birding
Sojourner Truth Park 8 a.m.
- Mar. 19 - Groesbeck Rm. Manhattan Library
2:30-4:30 OUR NFHAS in review



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

March looms ahead again, a month known for madness as June is for weddings. “Mad as a March hare” the saying goes, that holds equal place with “mad as a hatter”, and Lewis Carroll’s Alice has the experience of meeting characters representing each phenomenon. Carroll did not invent their eccentricities; they have a basis in fact, and both date in our literature from the same general time, the 16th century. It was then noted that workers employed by hat makers of that time, when fur became a main ingredient, began to exhibit odd tremors and extreme social withdrawal. The result, it became known, from breathing the vapors of mercury used in the felting process. In the same century, it was first noted down--having had to await the invention and spread of Gutenberg’s press and literacy before appearing in print--that a certain species of European hare, *Lepus europaeus*, would in March put on frenetic displays of running, chasing, and leaping, to which they would add boxing with their front paws while balancing on their hind legs.

The hares actually mate from early spring into early autumn, but their activity apparently has more fresh exuberance early on, and is the more startling for being a sudden change from their winter indolence. The sexes are called ‘jacks’ and ‘jills’ and it seems it’s the jills who throw the most punches, doing so probably a) when a particular female is not ready to mate, or b) personally dislikes the pursuing male, or c) to test his stamina as a way of making surer that her young, called ‘leverets’, will not be born weaklings. And their racings, leapings, and combativeness do bear a resemblance to the behavior of certain humans in the modern sport of basketball in an array of events referred to as “March Madness”.

As an aside, hares are not rabbits, which are divided into ‘bucks’, ‘does’, and ‘kits’. Hares are faster, have longer ears and gestations; they do not burrow and their leverets are born ready to go (the cottontail rabbit is

the only one of its kind that doesn’t burrow, nonetheless giving birth to kits with eyes closed).

The American ‘jack-rabbit’ is a hare. We would see one occasionally when we came to Kansas years ago, but those terrestrial hares are no longer here. There is one hare in our sky. Contrary-wise he performs with the winter stars and so leaps from sight during the spring evenings and does not reappear until December. His six notable stars, below Orion’s feet, form a kind of rectangle bent in the middle, the leading western edge downward and a bit larger. As such he frolics through the winter, by the name of *Lepus*, Latin for ‘hare’.

As the month starts, Mars and brighter Venus appear to the right of the Moon as evening comes on the 1st and 2nd. Aldebaran, the red eye of the winter constellation, Taurus the Bull, goes eye-to-eye with the Moon, which blocks it out later in the night on the 4th. By the 9th and 10th, Regulus, the bright star at the bottom of spring’s Leo the Lion, moves from below to above the Moon, staying in view.

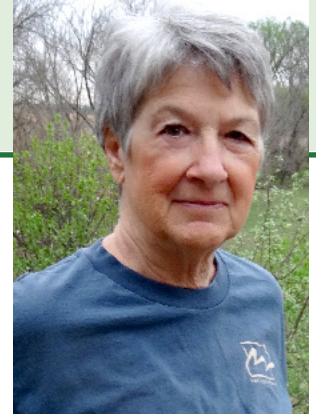
Meanwhile, Jupiter keeps rising in the early evening, forming a triangle with Virgo’s Spica and the Moon the 14th. In the pre-dawn of the 19th the Moon may seem braced up by Saturn to lower left, with Antares in Scorpius to the right, then the Moon moves to be to the upper left of Saturn as Spring arrives at 5a29 on the 20th. And Venus keeps setting earlier and earlier, becoming a no-show the 25th, transforming from the Evening Star to come back as the Morning Star in April.

Mercury makes its best show as daylight goes on the 29th, to the lower right of the Moon, which will be below the little red spark of Mars. On March 29th and 30th, 1897, reports of strange red lights broke out from Denver to over the plains of Kansas and Nebraska, though not necessarily in consecutive order. They were part of a wave of sightings spreading eastward from California of an unidentified airship floating through the sky, with some landings, and a few individuals complaining of having been briefly kidnapped by aliens from within. Sightings were reported then in Iowa and Illinois from there to a flashing crash in Texas where people rushed to and claimed to have seen the debris, though it seems none was ever produced. More verifiable is that Nebraska entered the Union 150 years ago, March 1st. Moon full the 12th at 9a54, new the 27th at 9p57.

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Waiting for Spring (In Cahoots)

Dru Clarke



It's February first, and the pussy willow's garnet buds are riven, with fuzzy cotton kitten toes popping out. It seems early, but the bush must be as anxious as we are for the arrival of spring. Under the stereoscope, the 'toes' are more a thatch of shiny, silken threads, combed from the bud's point of attachment to the twig toward the apex of the bud. Such a warm and comfortable bed it must be, but what might enjoy it is a mystery. Nearby, the catkins on Harry Lauter's walking stick dangle morosely in pairs or trios, commiserating, it seems, on the dreariness of the day. Each sausage-shaped catkin looks dimpled, but, on examining one closer with the same instrument, it is imbricated, with toast brown, fuzzy (again!) scales overlapping each other, like a coat of mail. A centimeter behind each hanging bunch is a fat, sunburned bud, just waiting for sustained warmth to burst open.

Outside, the birds have gathered at our feeders, some on them, others gleaning what falls from them to the ground. Every once in a while, an alarm call sends them flying like shrapnel in all directions. The type of call reveals what the danger may be: a soft, high-pitched 'seet' warns of an aerial predator, a hawk or an owl. If the predator is stationary or still, a loud, "chick – a-dee" attracts other, smaller birds to come in and mob the predator. (To imitate the mobbing call, make a sucking sound with your lips on the back of your hand.) A flock of small birds chasing a larger bird is usually prefaced by such a call. And, research shows, that the chick-a-dee call carries information about the size of the predator: the fewer 'dees' the larger the predator; many 'dees' mean a smaller one. For birds at our feeders, the smaller predators, like sharp shinned and Cooper's hawks, are the most to worry about as they are more maneuverable in flight than the brawnier buteos or big owls.

Most interesting is that squirrels – the bane of many in the bird feeding world – mimic the warning calls of birds, so we might not want to be so quick to deter them from our yards where feeders are. (Chipmunks also

mimic birds' alarm calls.) It seems that if there is 'acoustic similarity' between different species' calls, species other than the 'alarmer' will respond. In other words, species are in cahoots when it comes to security. There is inherent danger, however, to the 'alarmer' as it brings attention to itself. Whether this is altruism or not is a moot point, but it seems to operate as if it were.

Baby birds, research has found, respond to conspecific calls, e.g. those emitted by their parents and their kind, up to two weeks of age; three weeks later, they respond to all (heterospecific) calls: it appears this response is learned rather than simply innate.

Alarm calls may be issued at times when there is no predator. Swallows may 'cry wolf!' to disrupt extra-pair copulation (no swallow likes to be cuckolded) or to avoid intraspecific competition (this is MY house!). And, alarms exist in the chemosensory realm, with minnows and catfish, lima beans and species of trees who 'sound' (emit?)

the alarm when being 'attacked'. Sometimes, communication is just simply benign, as when a grouper shakes its head at a moray dozing in its den, and the two go off hunting together!

So, waiting for bud burst during the waning days of winter, we look and listen to those backyard denizens of the day, teasing out what their voices and postures tell us. And after dusk, we hear other voices, the circling howls of song dogs, the coyotes, and wonder if they are casting into the air an alarming net of sound to the frightened rabbit

who darts back and forth within that acoustic ring, and if, indeed, it will survive.

Note: Check out the research of Erick Greene on chickadee calls <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/308/5730/1934>



Photo by Dave Rintoul

NFHAS HISTORY ---- STILL NEED HELP

We are attempting to compile a complete list of officers since Northern Flint Hill Society's beginning in 1971. Our PF records go back to 1983 and thanks to Carla Bishop's efforts we have found these names since 1983:

Presidents:

1983-84 Sil Pembleton
1985-88 Duane Kerr
1989 Randy and Sue Kidd
1990 Jan Garton & Mike Rhodes
1991-92 Steve and Jane Amy
1993 Carla Bishop
1994 John Wesley
1995-96 Leann Harrell
1996-97 Carla Bishop and Hoogy Hoogheem
1998-2002 Hoogy Hoogheem
2003-2004 Carla Bishop
2005 Judy Roe
2006-2017 Patricia Yeager

Vice Presidents:

1983 Mike Eubanks
1984 Jan Garton
1986-87 Paul Weidhaas
1988 Ruth Welti
1989 Jan Garton
1990 Jane Withee
1991 Leann Harrell
1992 Carla Bishop
1993-2004 Dave Rintoul
1995 Dave Rintoul and Chris Cokinos
2005-07 Cindy Jeffrey
2008-17 MJ Morgan

Treasurers:

1983 Di Ann Roberts
1984 Paul Weidhaas
1985-88 Marge Muenzenberger
1989-1991 Carla Bishop
1992 Jane Amy
1993-94 Mary Barth Kleinkauf
1995-06 Jan Garton
2007-09 Carla Bishop
2010-11 Susan Pusker
2012-17 Carla Bishop

Secretaries:

1983-85 Jan Garton
1986-87 Leann Harrell
1988 Marry Freel
1989-92 Buddy Gray
1993-99 Margy Stewart
2000 Dolly Gudder
2001-03 Eloise Thomas
2006-07 MJ Morgan
2009-10 Annie Baker
2010-15 Donna Roper

Newsletter – Praire Falcon

Not sure who started the newsletter or when?

1990?- 1999 Dave Rintoul
2000 – 2017 Cindy Jeffrey

1970s: NEED HELP with 70s and 80s

Perry Conway 1971
Ann Carter
Monty Henton
Dr. John Zimmerman
Dr. Steve Fretwell
Don Yoncky
Gary Ward
Mike Wood
Dru Clarke
Kent Foerster
Marilyn ?
Laura Herod

Let us know of any corrections (especially spelling). Also, names of anyone prior to this list (years are not as important but very helpful). Leave a note in the Northern Flint Hills Audubon website blog or leave a message on voice mail @ 785-776-9593 or send a letter to NFHAS History, [5614 Bayers Hill, Manhattan KS 66502](#).

Our best source of information is you, so please help us complete this list/history.

We want to thank George Frazier, author of “The Last Wild Places in Kansas,” and the Discovery Center for a most entertaining, lively, and informative presentation



Old growth forests, flying squirrels, red rocks, river otters, Cimarron National Grasslands, Badlands... we heard stories about all these and more... in Kansas!

Now we all want to go find more wild places.

But if you can't, this book will give you an idiosyncratic look at Kansas.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Sphyrapicus varius

As I walked the woods around Pott. County Lake #1, I spotted several trees with small holes drilled into them. I thought they might be those “sapwells” of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. But they weren’t in a nice row like the Sapsucker usually makes. So perhaps not made by the Sapsucker.

Although they don’t visit birdfeeders regularly, we have been getting the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at our suet feeder this winter.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers perch upright on trees, leaning on their tails like other woodpeckers. They feed at sapwells—neat rows of shallow holes they drill in tree bark. They lap up the sugary sap along with any insects that may get caught there.

In spring, listen for their mewing calls and their distinctive irregular drumming (a distinctive rhythm of a short roll of several beats, a pause, then 2 to several brief rolls of 2–3 beats each). They cling motionless to trees while calling, so if you hear a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, look closely at the trees around you for their sharply contrasting black-and-white face stripes and the bright-red patches on their heads.

NHFAS BOARD

Everyone is welcome to attend our board meetings. Please note the time and place in the “Upcoming Events” on page 1 of the newsletter. Or check our website: nfhas.org

Mar. 6, 2017

April 3, 2017

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Sphyrapicus varius

Photo by Dave Rintoul

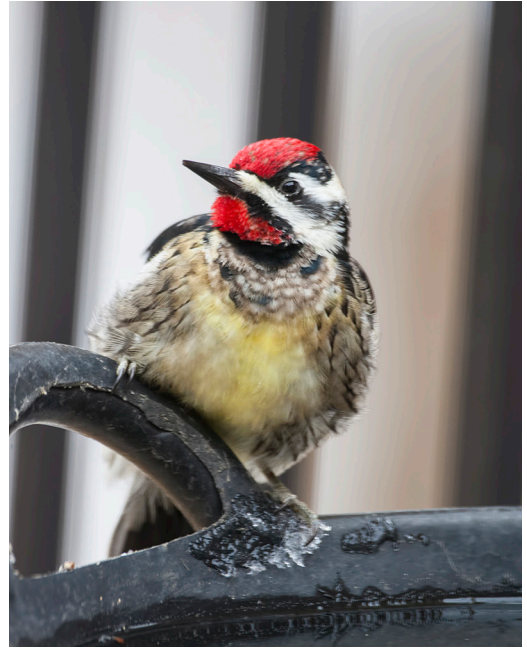


Photo by Dave Rintoul



Photo by Cindy Jeffrey



Northern Flint Hills
Audubon Society
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66505-1932

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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
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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, 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. 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 <listserve@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions.

NFHAS Board

President: Patricia Yeager - pyeagerbirder@gmail.com 776-9593
Vice Pres. MJ Morgan - morganmjt2@gmail.com
Secretary:
Treasurer: Carla Bishop - carla.kay.bishop@gmail.com

COMMITTEE Chairs:

Membership: Jacque Staats 537-3664
Programs: Kevin Fay
Conservation:
Butterfly Garden: Jaccque Staats 537-3664
Alsop Property: Patricia Yeager - pyeagerbirder@gmail.com 776-9593
Education:
Land Preservation:
Bird Seed Sales:
Newsletter: Cindy Jeffrey - cinraney@ksu.edu 565-3326
Fieldtrips: Patricia Yeager, Kevin Fay 776-9593
At-large: Tom Morgan

Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email: Governor Sam Brownback: 2nd Floor, State Capital Bldg., Topeka , KS 66612. KS Senator or Representative: State Capital Bldg., Topeka, KS 66612. Ph# (during session only) Senate - 785-296-7300. House - 785-296-7500. U.S. Senator Roberts <Roberts@senate.gov> U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510. Jerry Moran U.S. Capital Switchboard 202-224-3121.