

67th Manhattan Christmas Bird Census

Saturday, Dec. 19th, 2015

Area CBCs:

Olsburg - Dec. 20 - Contact Gary Jeffrey - gjeffrey@twinvalley.net, 785-468-3587

Wakefield - Dec. 20 - Chuck Otte - otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

Junction City - Dec. 27 - Chuck Otte - otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

For complete list go to:

<http://ksbirds.org/kos/2015CBC.htm>

More information on page 4

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

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Upcoming Events

Dec 3 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Dec 5 - BIRDSEED SALE PICKUP
UFM Parking Lot

Dec 12 - Saturday Birding
Sojourner Truth Park 8 a.m.

Dec 19 - Manhattan CBC

Dec 20 - Olsburg and Wakefield CBC



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

By one account the Anglo-Saxons referred to it with the softly flowing word, *mona*. Since then we've jettisoned a syllable to have an abrupt yet easily spoken word, *moon*. Which has made the labors of poets and songwriters much easier than it would've been otherwise. I wouldn't be surprised if there were more verse references to the Moon than there are stars visible to the naked eye when the Moon is absent.

It has also been a major time-keeper, advisor as to medicines, plantings, etc., plus being a major aid for locating one's position and predicting things to come. No longer nearly much in those roles, it continues nonetheless to combine with the Sun to move the tides, with the clouds to produce stirring skylscapes, and if it did not swell up fully periodically, werewolves, as I understand them, would never get outdoors.

This month when they emerge they'll have to contend with a guy on a sled, pulled by nine reindeer, or perhaps he'll have to contend with them. Either way the Moon will be full for Christmas eve. And because, to shine at full, it has to be opposite the Sun, and because the Sun at this time of year passes low through our sky, the Moon will be riding high.

Yet not everywhere will it be noticed. Rudolph will no doubt again be asked a "to guide my sleigh tonight" however superfluous his lighted nose. The Moon will get the directed attention of scientific observers and of those seeking a form of aesthetic recreation, but one of the trade-offs of the benefits of modern technology is that the nights are widely being washed away by industrially generated lighting, and the effects of the brightenings and dimmings of the Moon, as part of the experience of living, are widely lost.

We were driving eastward in Council Grove one evening when ahead of us a rising gibbous moon was glowing as if in the lead of, or confronting, a parade of domineering streetlamps. Though it was not allowed to contribute illumination in any noticeable way to the lit-up night about us, its accidentally timed presence made that passage of a few blocks memorable, as would not have been the case without it.



For the rest of the month, when and where neither the full Moon nor industrial lighting are claiming the sky, Jupiter, followed by Venus with the star Spica closeby, will start rising brightly in the southeast during the wee hours. Mars will be faintly between them while Saturn waits until the end of the month to start appearing in the SE just before dawn. The Moon begins the month by joining with Jupiter the 3rd and 4th and moves from the lower left to the upper left of Mars the 5th and 6th, to just above Venus the 7th. It's below Aldebaran on the 23

as it approaches full. It shifts from above to below Regulus as it deflates from full late in the evenings of the 28th and 29th, and by the 31st gets back with Jupiter in the early hours.

It becomes new at 4a29 the 11th, so is out of the way of the Gemini meteor shower due the 13th, and is actually technically full at 5:11 am the 25th. The winter solstice occurs at 10p48 the 21st.

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The Innermost House

Dru Clarke



“Touch the earth, love the earth, her plains, her valleys, her hills, and her seas; rest your spirit in her solitary places.”

Henry Beston, “The Outermost House”

“The Innermost House” is almost done: it is more a ‘house in the trees’ than a ‘tree house’ because one can enter it by climbing just four steps, but its north end, cantilevered over a steep bank and a meander in the creek, is fourteen feet above the ground. It is an unlikely but somehow pleasing structure.

The name is a nod to Henry Beston’s year long journal of life at “The Outermost House,” a spare cottage squatting in the dunes of the maritime Atlantic coast of Cape Cod. Because one of my most formative moments occurred on the Cape – at ebb tide, I found a sand dollar at Race Point at Provincetown – I was drawn to Beston’s work and his rich, evocative prose. So, when I decided that I wanted to build a tree house, both to live out a childhood dream and to escape the predictable routine of life after a fulfilling career, it had to be one that could withstand all of the mid-continental seasons yet be as natural a growth in the landscape as we could manage, with little disturbance to it.

It was essential to use recycled materials as much as possible so I enlisted, of course, my husband and, fortuitously, the faithful aid of a former student – a consummate builder – who ferreted out old wood from decks and fallen down outbuildings, used bridge planks, and even translucent greenhouse panels (that eventually became the roof!), and figured out how to put it all together. The windows, three transoms and one arched sash, originally double-hung, I found in a craftsman’s shop in Florence: they originally hung in the old Florence school, built in 1870! The siding, the most problematic, is a mishmash of pallet boards – my shoulders still ache from prying them off- and corrugated tin from an old shed, and lap siding from an abandoned house whose bachelor brother owners gave me permission to take what was left (after someone else had cannibalized it). To pay homage to autumn leaves of Virginia creeper and poison ivy – two of our dominant vines – I chose Cherokee Red, a paprika shade of paint that Frank Lloyd Wright used in Taliesin West, for the door and window trim. Blue Ridge grey, echoing the color of the tree trunks, stains the deck and inside floor.

In quiet moments, when I was dog tired and aching from sawing and hammering, I sat on the deck and simply looked and listened to the busy workings of nature. First, were the cicadas who dominated the soundscape the first few months. Grey tree frogs occasionally upstaged them. The creek ran strong from all the early rains and its liquid song provided the melody for their – respectively – repetitive and raucous lyrics. A host of insects alighted on the patches sunlit through the canopy, and nuthatches worried the trunks and limbs of the hackberries and oaks. Now, in autumn, a deer “blows” an alarm, geese call and skim over the sky, and a woolly bear, the caterpillar of the Isabella moth, tucks itself into a comma under a loose board left on the ground. A white-footed mouse has discovered the insulation in the west wall and moved in.

Leaves from the oaks are shedding early and I sweep them away daily. A carpenter bee larva, exposed from a beam sliced to create a stop for a window, lies helpless in the litter. Its wooden chamber is now decorative art.

Today was warm in the afternoon and as I swept the deck, on the west wall, was a meadowhawk dragonfly basking in a shaft of sunlight. It may have been a saffron-winged, one of the last dragonflies of autumn: its abdomen was the color of the Cherokee Red trim. Could that be the reason it chose this warm spot, some distance from the closest pond?

Half a year has elapsed since we began work, and as late fall and winter approach, anticipation builds toward what changes will come and what we’ll encounter. They might not be as dramatic as those Beston experienced in his outermost house, but they will be ours to enjoy and, yes, touch and maybe even love.

© November, 2015
Dru Clarke

Christmas Bird Census

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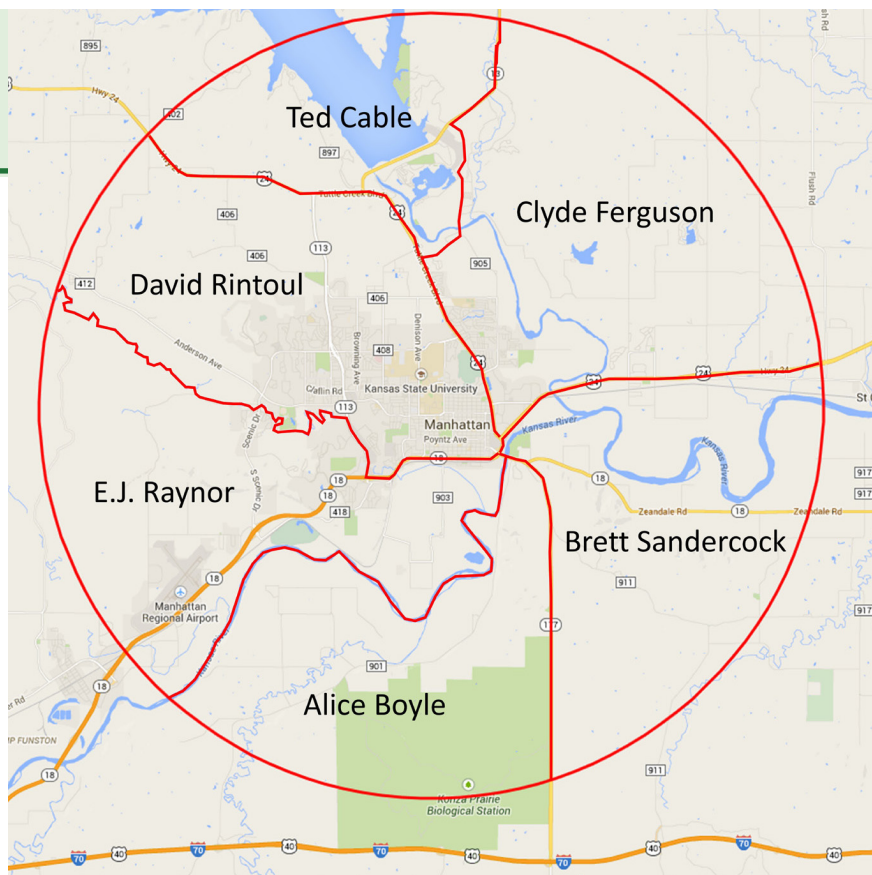
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Six teams of bird watchers will look for birds on December 19 in the Manhattan Christmas Bird Count circle (see map above, 7.5 miles in radius and centered at Anderson Hall). New participants are always welcome and expert birding skills are not required! If you would like to participate, please contact Brett Sandercock (see contact info above) he will assign you to a group that needs extra help. If you live in the area and wish to join a group in one of the six sections, you can also contact the group leaders by phone or email.

The count will start at dawn and end at dusk, unless you are part of a dedicated group looking for owls in the dark. The count will be held in sun, rain or snow, but arrangements can be made if you can only participate for part of the day. We would also like to invite folks who live within the count circle to count birds at their feeders on December 19 as part of the surveys. If you would like to help with feeder-watching, contact Brett for instructions and a checklist.

Count numbers and number of species will be compiled for all groups and participants at the end of the day at the chili supper. Please join us to hear reports of the day's sightings and stories from the day's adventures! If you are unable to attend the compilation, you will need to send your bird records to the compiler before Christmas so that the records can be added to the total counts for the Manhattan CBC. We encourage all participants to submit their bird records to eBird and can provide assistance if anybody wants to learn more about this important resource for birding in Kansas!

Manhattan Christmas Bird Count- Compilation and Chili Supper

Join the NFHAS and fellow birders for a potluck supper at 6 p.m. on December 19, at the Seniors Service Center, 412 Leavenworth, Manhattan, KS. A few volunteers will prepare chili but please feel free to bring a side dish to share. Free-will donations to NFHAS are also welcome. We encourage you to bring your own tableware to help us reduce the amount of trash. Enjoy good food, good companionship, and find out how this year's count compares to previous years! If you have any questions on what to bring for the supper or can help with setup, please contact Carla Bishop by phone (539-5129 or 532-1858) or email (cbishop@ksu.edu).

Take Note

Dec 5 - BIRDSEED SALE PICKUP
UFM Parking Lot 8-11:00

Plan to take a moment to browse a few other items for sale when you pick up your bird seed on Dec. 5th.

Dru Clarke's books will be available and there will also be a few used nature books and field guides from Donna Ropers estate.





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, 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 <list_serve@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions.

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