

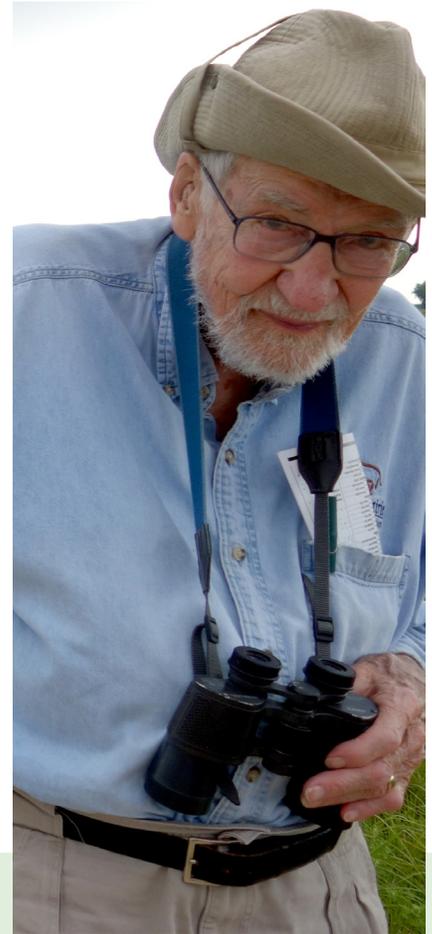
2017 BIRDATHON Apr. 29-30

Clyde Ferguson

If you love the outdoors, spring weather and enjoy nature, join us in our quest to count as many bird species as possible in one 24-hour period.

Funds raised will again be used to help with several local projects in Manhattan. A portion of the funds will go towards the Northeast Community Park (Northview), the butterfly garden at Sojourner Truth Park, Alsop bird sanctuary, and the Michel-Ross Preserve and educational activities. In the past, we (you, our sponsors) have donated Birdathon funds to the Washington Marlatt Park, the Rowe Sanctuary on the Platte River in Nebraska, and our El Salvador sister chapter.

Many of our ongoing projects and activities, such as wildlife preservation, publication of the Prairie Falcon, and bringing in special speakers for our monthly program meeting are also partly funded with Birdathon funds.



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

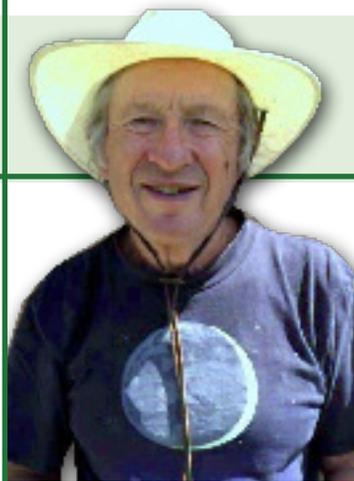
Vol. 45, No. 8 ~ April 2017

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Upcoming Events

- Apr. 3 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan
- Apr. 8 - Saturday Morning Birding
Sojourner Truth Park 8 a.m.
- Apr. 29-30 BIRDATHON
see pg. 4-5
- May 8- Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

A number of years ago, a Canadian study looked at the most efficient way of getting the rain that falls on a hillside down to

the stream below. There were three possibilities: a) each drop striking the ground and going directly to the bottom; b) the formation of a conga line of water that snaked about the hillside, trending ever downward, touching every drop where it fell and carrying it along; and c) the branching method long used by trees to deliver fluids about. The latter configuration, they verified, is the best.

Now I find trees leading the way in a recent study, reported in the third issue of a new journal, *Nature Ecology and Evolution*. According to John Myers of the Forum News Service covering the topic, people who are aware of such things have long been puzzled as to why forests made up of a variety of species produce more woody biomass than monoculture (single variety) forests. Obviously, the trees knew something not clearly defined, but scientists at the University of Minnesota and at the Université du Québec have deciphered the basis.

Monitoring over four years 37 different plots differing in their make-up from mono to 12 different species they've found that the secret is not chemical but geometrical. Different species branch in different ways and thus are able to intermingle their limbs and thus are able to intercept more of the sunlight beaming toward an area of ground than a growth all of one species who adhere to one general pattern.

With that to go on, one can in theory manage forests to achieve maximum yield and capture of CO₂, while providing diverse habitats for animal species. What's not addressed in the news story, though, is how that insight might be applied away from the special plots where climate and soil conditions might combine differently and limit the amount of differentiation possible. And how it might be received by commercial interests that might want a maximum number of a single species because of market availability and/or the cost of harvesting different species. Perhaps there will be more on the subject later.

This new journal, incidentally, is one of a quintet of new launches beginning with the word *Nature* and depending from a single source whose website warned me of cookies if I looked further. The other subjects are *Astronomy*, *Biomedical Engineering*, *Human Behavior*, and *Reviews (of) Chemistry*, and it's said they are open to submissions.

Though there are other activities above, Jupiter is flag-bearer this April. He 'flies' up and over through the night early on, but darkness finds him starting higher up each succeeding night, with Spica, the bright star of Virgo, as his traveling companion. Fully opposite the sun and on one of his nearest passages he's even brighter than usual, and the various markings on his surface, including the big reddish storm, will be especially visible to instrument viewing.

Eyes seeking a tougher challenge can wait for the new Moon darkness near month's end and look to the zenith (the highest point above) where one may be able to make out a blur that is the Andromeda galaxy which provides, the *Old Farmer's Almanac* points out, the most distant light visible to the naked eye: billions of stars two million light years away.

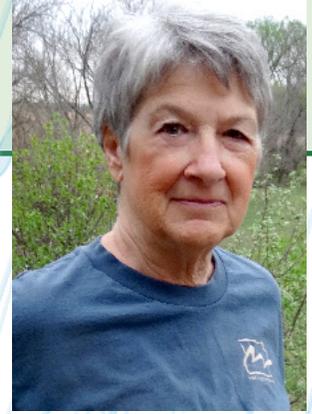
Venus, not to be left out, will be appearing in the east in the dawn and pre-dawn hours, rising ever higher each morn. Mercury will be briefly, in Aries, about 5° above the evening twilight horizon during the first week. And a weakly shining Mars, hosted by Taurus, will be sinking above it.

The Moon's schedule has him between Taurus's red eye, Aldebaran, and Orion reddish right shoulder, Betelgeuse, to start the month off. He moves close Leo main star, Regulus, on the 6th, then to glow nearly full to the left of Jupiter's companion, Spica, on the 9th and 10th, and next to take a position above Scorpius's reddish bright star, Antares, the 15th. At dawn, he will be waning just above Saturn before settling below Venus during the morning of the 23rd. He will reappear as new in the evening twilight of the 27th with Mars just above to the right, and Aldebaran to the left. Full the 11th at 1a08 and new New the 26th at 7a16.

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A Tenuous Essence

Dru Clarke



Misha, our shaggy yellow calf, got to his feet and licked his lips in anticipation as I approached him with his bottle of milk replacer. I sat on the edge of, and leaned into, the round bale feeder to steady myself against his insistent nursing. The melting snow on the hay distilled from it a fragrance reminiscent of bourbon-infused oak casks, or, for the more temperate, a heady tea deep and rich in organic complexity. Around the feeder, dry leaves shed in autumn ruffled in the breeze; wet leaves beneath them, preserved by tannic acid and winter cold, made a slick footing. Odors are damped down in frigid, dry air, so leaning into the warm, lee side of the bale I could breathe in last summer's harvest. The light snow had not been enough to dissolve the granules of fertilizer on our hay meadow: an 'ample rain', the directions say on the bags, is needed before animals can return. Anticipating that 'ample rain' I look forward to its accompanying smell. Named 'petrichor' (pronounced "petri-eye-core", alternatively "petri-koer"), by scientists Joy Bear and Richard Thomas in *Nature* (201, 993-995, March 7 1964) they described its elusive origin.

In dry weather, many plants excrete oils absorbed by soils rich in clays which inhibit seed germination during adverse conditions. When it rains, the oils form bubbly drops in the soil and become airborne through the 'fizzing' of the raindrops. (Too heavy a rain flattens the drops and inhibits the "fizzing.") An MIT study with a high-speed camera shows this happening. These oily aerosols, combined with geosmin, a by-product of a kind of soil bacteria (Actinomycetes for those of you who care), produce that familiar odor



associated with rain. This is the origin of the pleasant odor we smell in dogs' paws. (Before a rainstorm, we usually smell ozone, created by the splitting of oxygen molecules from O^2 to a spliced O^3 , whose sharp odor alerts us to approaching wet weather.) Our olfactory sense is so sensitive to geosmin that we can detect 5 parts in a trillion parts. It is the compound in the skin and dark muscle of catfish and carp that gives them the muddy flavor. The word geosmin derives from the Greek "γῆω(geo – earth)" and "ὄσμη (smin – smell)". In India, they have distilled *matti ka attar*, or "earth perfume," a yellowish oil that they say is the tenuous essence of the earth.

So, an ample rain will be good for the grass, but a light rain will yield that familiar smell that transports us back to when we were making the world our own, during middle childhood, when all things were new and wonderful. Just thinking about it takes me to our summer place, a mile or two from town, when, during a summer shower, we'd walk the macadam road, avoiding melted puddles of tar, to buy an ice cream cone at the drug store's soda fountain. And, a comic book, tucked under our shirts to keep it dry on the walk home. And that wonderful smell after the rain, that tenuous essence, that no matter how evanescent in time and space, is stored in our memories. And, all this time I thought it was the road.

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2017 BIRDATHON Apr. 29-30

Clyde Ferguson



It's time for our annual major fund-raising event, the NFHAS Birdathon. This year's event will be held on

Saturday, Apr. 29 - Sunday, Apr. 30, 2017

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

It's simple. Collect pledges from your friends, contacts, or enemies to pay so much for each bird species that you can count within the 24-hour period of April 29 - Sunday, April 30, 2017. The pledges do not have to be large; dimes, quarters and dollars add up quickly when many participate. Encourage your sponsors to pledge 20 or 25 cents per species spotted and you'll be surprised how much money you can raise with five or ten sponsors. If your sponsors want to pledge a set amount, that works great also.

We encourage you to make this a family outing. Go out and bird for 24 hours beginning sometime on April 29th. It's OK, for example, to bird from 10:00 a.m. on April 29th until 10:00 a.m. on April 30th. Report your findings to your sponsor and collect your pledges (often the difficult part). Send the money, names and addresses to Clyde Ferguson, 2140 College Hts. Rd., Manhattan, KS 66502. You just might surprise yourself with how many species you can identify. If you do not want to go out alone, or don't feel you can ID birds well enough, call me (Clyde) and I will put you with a group.

If you cannot join in the fun of going out yourself, you can still collect names and pledges and one of the members who will be going out can be your "designated counter." We call this a super-sponsor (not that any of our sponsors aren't super in our eyes). If you have a friend that is going out to count, ask him or her to be your eyes.

If you do not know anyone going out, contact Clyde Ferguson (539-4856), or any NFHAS board member (see the back page of your newsletter for contact information), or just send a note to: Birdathon NFHAS, PO Box 1932, Manhattan KS 66505, and we will find someone to count for you. We'll provide a list of the species counted and you can collect the pledges based on that list. On average, we see between 90 and 110 species on a good trip.

Don't forget you can be a sponsor yourself. Make your pledge to a friend or relative who is going to be a counter or super-sponsor. If none of our counters or super-sponsors contacts you, send a note or this form with your pledge and we will add you to our list of sponsors. If you prefer, send a lump sum donation c/o of the Birdathon to the address above. We're easy, we accept donations in almost any form.

Those donating \$15 or more may receive a one year's subscription to the Prairie Falcon (if requested on the form). Our normal subscription price is \$15 and the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise additional funds. Your donations and the donations of your sponsors are a tax-deductible contribution.

Please join us if you can and if you can't, please help us support and protect the wild things.

Clyde Ferguson,
Birdathon Chair

NHFAS BOARD

WELCOME Debbie Marshall
our new Secretary!



I started really watching birds when I met my future mother-in-law in 1972. After I was married, my husband and I always had bird feeders and baths in our yard to watch birds and squirrels. We lived in Arizona for 5 years watching hummingbirds mostly. They are really fun to watch, unfortunately, there are not that many hummers up here in Kansas. The American Goldfinch is my favorite bird, because it is so pretty. The past few years I have also enjoyed watching butterflies. I have planted butterfly bushes and flowers to draw them to my yard. All nature is great to have in your yard!



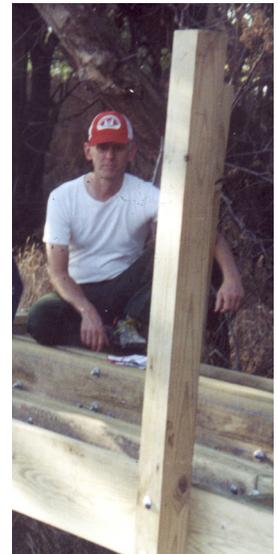
This is what a sapsucker does to my crab apple tree. cj

Bon Voyage!



We are sorry to say goodbye to Paul Weidhaas and Madonna Stahlman, but wish them all the best in their new home in Spencer New York. I know they will see many birds there too.

Paul has done many things in our Chapter- from Christmas Bird Counts to building a bridge. He and Madonna worked on reestablishing the Northeast Park Prairie. Madonna was the person responsible for establishing our Butterfly Garden.



“Paul, at our house and land, pointed out several places that may have been quarried for the limestone that was used to build our house. He also gave us insight into what the 'little red shed' on our property was used for; a summer kitchen! We had no clue. He panicked at finding a large barred feather in our woods, thinking initially it was from a hawk. It was a turkey feather. All of us learned from our friendship. We were humbled (and pleased) that they would have a blessing ceremony for the opening of a well at their home: as a couple, they revered the environment and its gifts.”

Dru and Mike

“I first met Madonna as the hospitality chair of our club. She welcomed new members and brought the coffee and snacks. She was very good at this task as she welcomed the new with easy charm and could remember most member’s names. This is when we had 50-100 at the meetings!

Of course, she took on the butterfly garden in Sojourner-Truth Park for many years. I think it may have been her idea originally. Digging in the dirt, cleaning up trash, watching birds, learning something new... she does it all with an infectious enthusiasm that will be missed.

Paul guided memorable hikes to Tuttle Creek’s lesser known places. He was active in preserving and cleaning up habitats. He organized some concert fund raisers for land preservation causes. NFHAS hates to lose this natural, organized leader and a reliable volunteer.

I think it is noteworthy to mention, though their identities are distinct, they are an inspiring example of a couple working together. More often than not, when they are mentioned in conversation, it is as two. Paul and Madonna or Madonna and Paul. A cohesive unit that works together and plays together and a unit that makes many lives enriched for knowing them.

Patricia Yeager



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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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