



eBird's list of bird sightings at Baker Wetlands (hotspot):
<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L208634>

Join us on a field trip to Baker Wetlands. We will carpool leaving from the south parking lot of the Mall by the Theater in Manhattan at 7:30 AM. After a morning of birding in the Wetlands we will lunch in Lawrence and return to Manhattan at about 3:00 PM.

Sunday, Sept. 10th, leave Mall parking lot (south end) by 7:30 AM.

RSVP - by Sept. 8th - email cinraney@ksu.edu, or call 785-565-3326

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

Vol. 52, No. 1, September 2023

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Upcoming Events

- Sept. 5 - Board meeting - 5:30 Public Library
- Sept. 10 - Baker Wetlands Field Trip
see above and pg. 4
- Oct. 3 - Board meeting - 5:30 Public Library
- Oct. 14 - Sat. Morning birding
depart Sojourner Truth Park at 8:00 AM
- Oct. 18 - Alice Boyle "Update on Motus"
Manhattan Public Library 7:00 PM



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Amid the news of the world are stories about those working to provide a sufficiently sustainable amount of the metals required to provide for the methods we have for hopefully providing an adequate non-polluting economy. (Batteries, 'tis said, don't need a dime, but a lot of nickel.) The best means for obtaining those essential metals would be by recycling, but there aren't now enough electronic vehicles and other gadgets large or small wearing out to provide enough sources for that. Which leaves alternatively the mining of the land and/or the sea.

Indonesia, I read, is busily deforesting to get at nickel especially. Meanwhile, between Hawaii and Mexico an area of the Pacific Ocean's floor, about the size of the U.S., is known as the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone. Strewn over that surface, as in certain other places, are small nodules rich in nickel and a variety of other metals, available for the grabbing. And the grabbing from there alone, it is claimed, would bring up such an abundance as to obviate the need for the ecologically destructive mining now in progress. But the "No Free Lunch" sign is hung on this prospect, too, and not just because there would remain the challenge of separating out the metals with a minimum of toxicity.

Disturbing the sea floor disturbs the creatures there as well. It raises plumes of CO₂-rich sediment, and keeping those plumes close to the bottom becomes no easy task. As I gather it, the deeper the water the colder, and stirred up plumes will just keep on being warmed and therefore rising. All to the detriment—not a strong enough word, some would say—of the ocean's ability as a carbon sink, besides the possibility of other side effects. At the same time, a study quoted in a Wikipedia article says that the rise just mentioned could take thousands of years.

So some say that on balance the downsides of ocean mining would be of far less magnitude than the damage from the terrestrial kind. I find in the same Wikipedia article that BMW, the Volvo Group, Samsung, and Google have foresworn sourcing deep-sea minerals, and also that the 8-square-mile Pacific

Ocean nation of Nauru (pop. 12,000) is planning to submit this year an application for extraction to the International Seabed Authority (created in 1994), which will have few established rules and little research to refer to.

I should note that another potential has at least been suggested, but while the International Seabed Authority has so far issued 27 permits for exploration on Earth, the idea of mining the Moon doesn't seem to have gathered much traction.

From way past the Moon Venus will be rising ever higher each September morning, reaching its brightest for this appearance on the 19th-20th. An apparently inspired Mercury will also be up in the mornings, at its highest the 6th (about two extended hands high), and can be located directly below Venus, in Leo, the 21st. The Moon will be close to Venus on the 11th-12th, having visited with Jupiter in the dawn light of the 4th-5th. Those two will get close together again on the 30th.

As to the stars on the Moon's dance card, Taurus' reddish Aldebaran will be nearby below it in the dawnlight on the 6th, and El Nath, the tip of one of the Bull's long horns (and also a part of Auriga the Charioteer) will be to the left on the 7th. The Gemini Twins will be above on the 10th, and another reddish star, Antares (the heart of Scorpius) will be to the left on the 20th.

All the while the nighttime parade of autumn constellations will be sliding up in the east replacing the departing summer crew. In that parade, there will be fewer bold drums and horns and more gentle flutes than during the other seasons. Pegasus is mostly dark sky, the widely separated four corners of its body's Great Square being marked by rather shy stars, while its head has to be imagined among a cluster of small stars that move just in front of it. (Its body rises as a diamond and then levels into a square.) The trailing arcs of Andromeda (once the Flying Horse's tail) are scarcely prominent, though they do nearly connect to the bright sparks of Perseus that liven up the glimmering Milky Way. And bridging those two, to the northward, will be the all-season Rocking Chair Throne of Cassiopeia, white stars shine as clearly as xylophone notes.

Autumn begins officially at 1a50 CDT the 23rd, and the Moon will be new 8p40 the 14th, full the 20th, making it hard for Antares to be part of the scene

An Uneasy Truce

Dru Clarke



Nina, our biggest crossbred cow, black and scimitar-horned, trotted, calling urgently, toward the south pasture. She had come to feed but had not finished her ration, intent, instead, on some distant need.

I followed her to a slope, drained on this side by a shallow ravine, stitched in place by a tenacious yucca. She had her nose to the ground, a large patch of churned-up soil, a frantic dance having taken place in the last few hours. When I approached her, she wheeled around and tossed her head, fiery-eyed, threatening, legs spread, daring me to come nearer. Her udder was engorged, teats erect in readiness for a hungry calf's suckling. But, the calf was nowhere to be found. Nor was there shed placenta, blood, or any sign of a spent life. Nina traced a path through the pasture, down into the woods banking the north creek, calling the whole time. She – with me tagging behind – kept up the search throughout the morning.

Something big and strong had taken the newborn. This was not the work of coyotes who, curiously, had been quiet for the previous week or so. We usually hear them nightly, close to the corrals and house, but lately, they had been silent. Eerily so. We had seen a fully grown bobcat crossing the road by the south creek and wondered if it could have been the “something big and strong.” But we were thinking “bigger.”

Years ago, we found a big buck lying dead just north of our barn, adjacent to a horse corral. Its head was thrown back, its full rack of antlers having raked the soil. It appeared fat and healthy, except it was dead, apparently from a broken neck. Another time, our stallions had been nervous and anxious, pacing their enclosures, looking to the west. About two weeks later, at the edge of our west pond, I found a skeleton of a full-grown deer, its bones licked clean, not a tooth mark on them. I took what I could gather to our vet who examined it and he found a cervical (neck) vertebra had been fractured *within*. He said he didn't know of anything that could do that other than...what I was thinking.

Above my desk is a limited-edition print by Robert Bateman (an early anniversary gift to me from my husband who recognized my fascination with this cat) of a cougar lying on a mountain ledge. It is looking out, contemplating a distant landscape. It appears regal and elegant, surveying its domain. It's been my totem animal for decades. And, its cousin may have taken Nina's calf.



Robert Bateman print

Kansas Wildlife (Parks and Tourism) recognizes that the big cat is here, but is ‘transient’, usually young males moving out from their birthplace to new territories where competition is limited. But stories abound of the cat having been seen here:

napping in barns, cavorting on a Kansas River bank, another on a stone fence, pawing at some hapless creature it had cornered in the crevices. My husband saw one crossing the road one morning just south of our land. A worker laying fiber optic cable came to the door, eyes as big as saucers, and said, “You’ll never guess what I just saw!” I guessed it was the cat, which he excitedly described in great detail.

We’ve had a mother bobcat and her kits cull our cat and kitten population: three moms and thirteen kittens all taken except for three of the terrified kittens who scurried into the loose foundation stones of our granary. And, just this early spring, I heard a terrible mewling cry in our front meadow and saw a doe and her fawn hysterically trying to avoid a bright red dervish. After running in circles, they tore across the meadow and bounded across the creek to safety. I didn’t know that red foxes preyed on fawns. This one would have to settle for the resident rabbit.

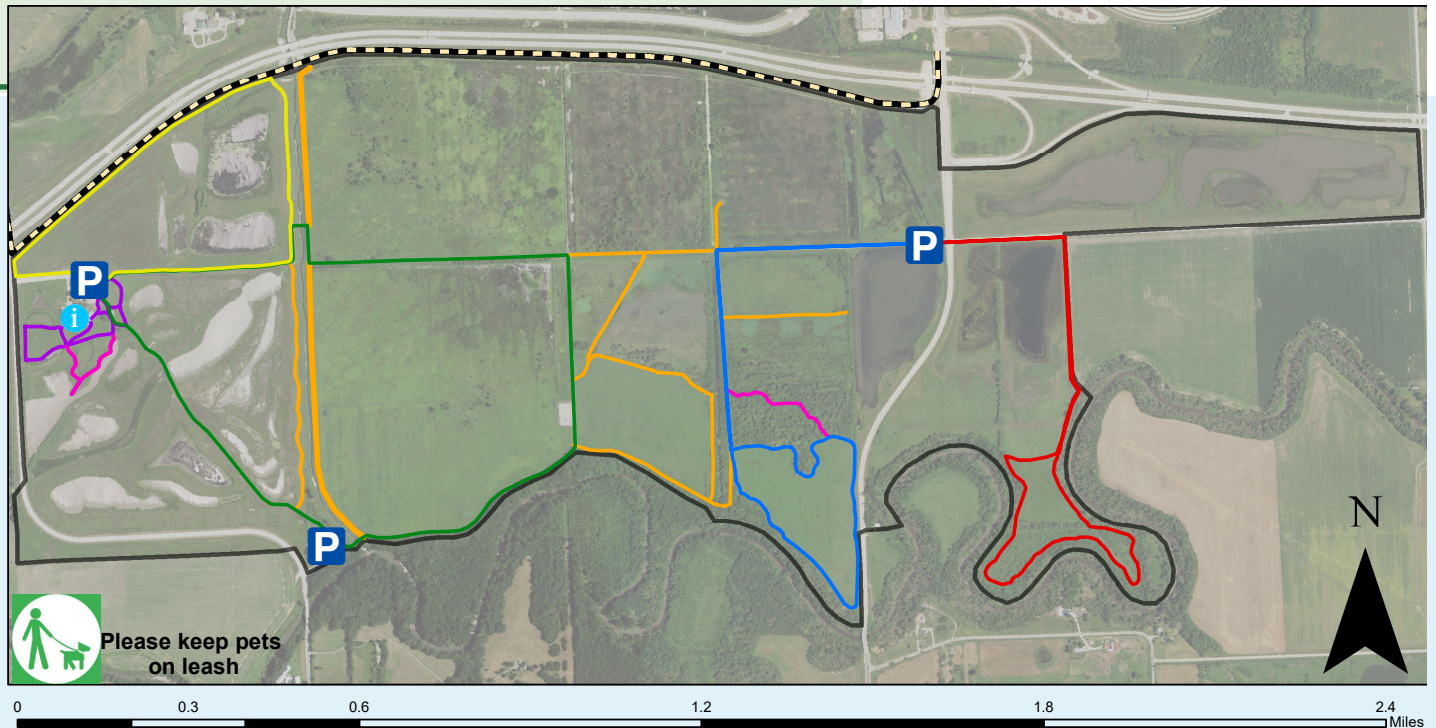
Checking fence in our ATV with Charley, our lab, we ventured to our northwest corner, a safe haven bordered by a grove of mature cedar trees where our cows rest to avoid heat and flies on hot summer days. Charley ran off exploring and soon scared up nine grown deer that jumped the fence from the north, running south to an oak woodland. Deer are the preferred and normal prey of cougars, and there are plenty who reside in our neighborhood. But, perhaps being opportunists, one may have been fortunate to have witnessed the open pasture birth of a domestic calf. Not so fortunate for the newborn or its frantic mother.

We have ten healthy and frisky calves today, sired by our sweet bull Prince Harry (one of his ‘get’, a heifer, is named Lilibet). They are thriving alongside their dams, enjoying new grass and napping in the spring sun. They are blissfully unaware of the fate that their sibling met and that each of them has avoided to date. It was, I suppose, inevitable that this would happen one day, but we will have forged an uneasy truce with our wild brethren in order to sustain our embrace of all of life. Sometimes that is a hard thing to do.

© 2023 April Dru Clarke



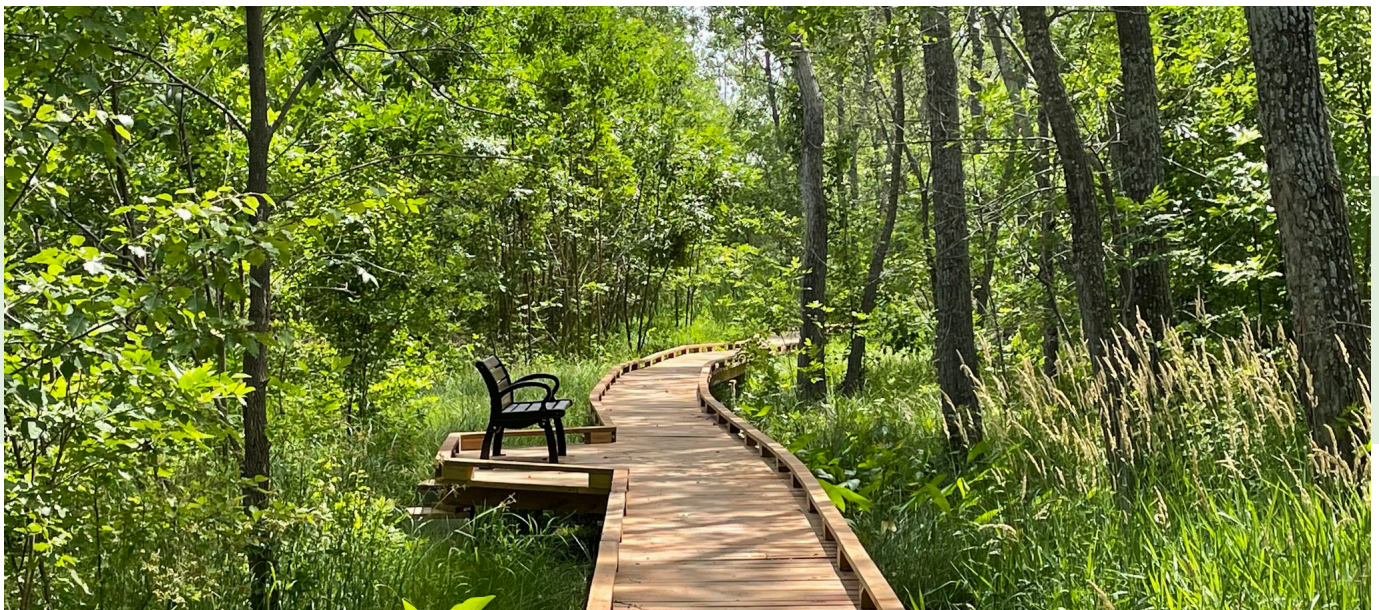
Baker University Wetlands loops and trails map (Fall 2022)



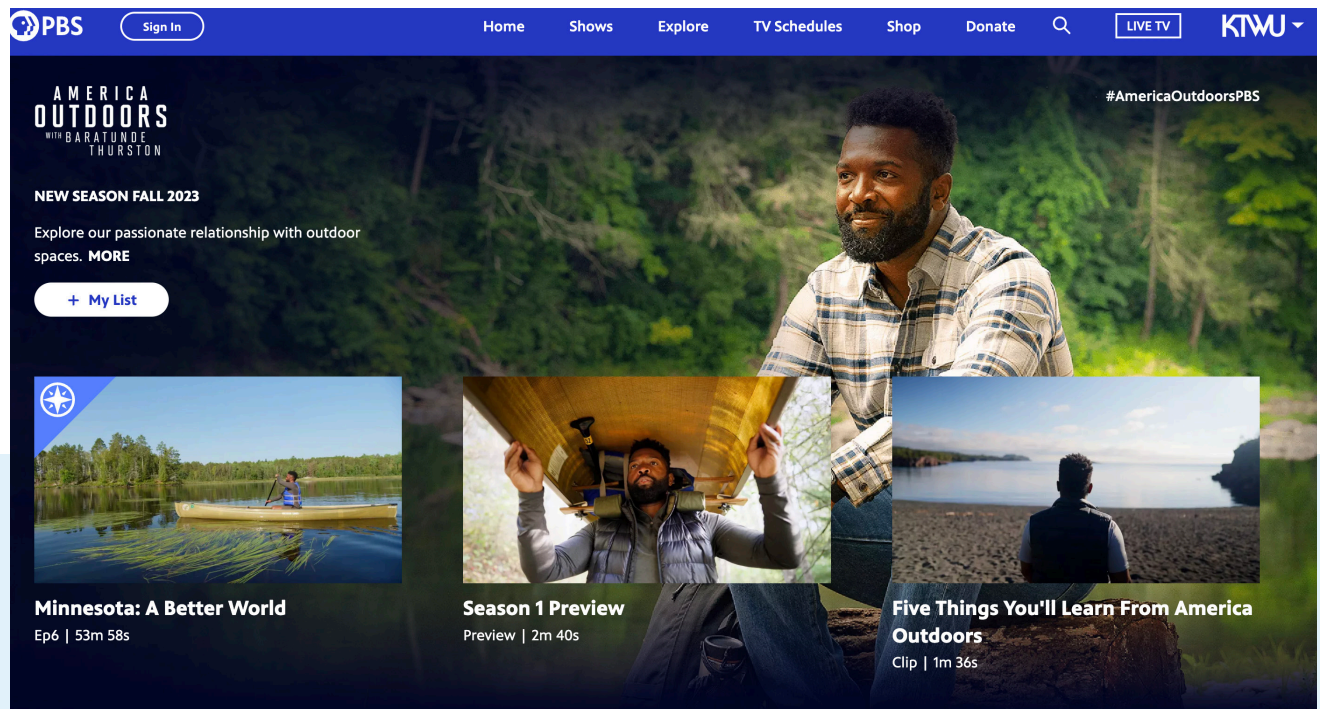
Leave no trace

- Plan ahead & prepare
- Travel on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors

Bring a snack, water, good shoes, and insect repellent. We might have one group at one location and another at a second location. The lower left Parking area is near the woodland trail. The Parking lot near the Visitor Center (closed on Sunday) is near the Boardwalk trail and the Green loop trail. The third Parking lot is in upper right so there are choices depending on how long a walk you would like.



Take Note - Two TV series about birds and nature

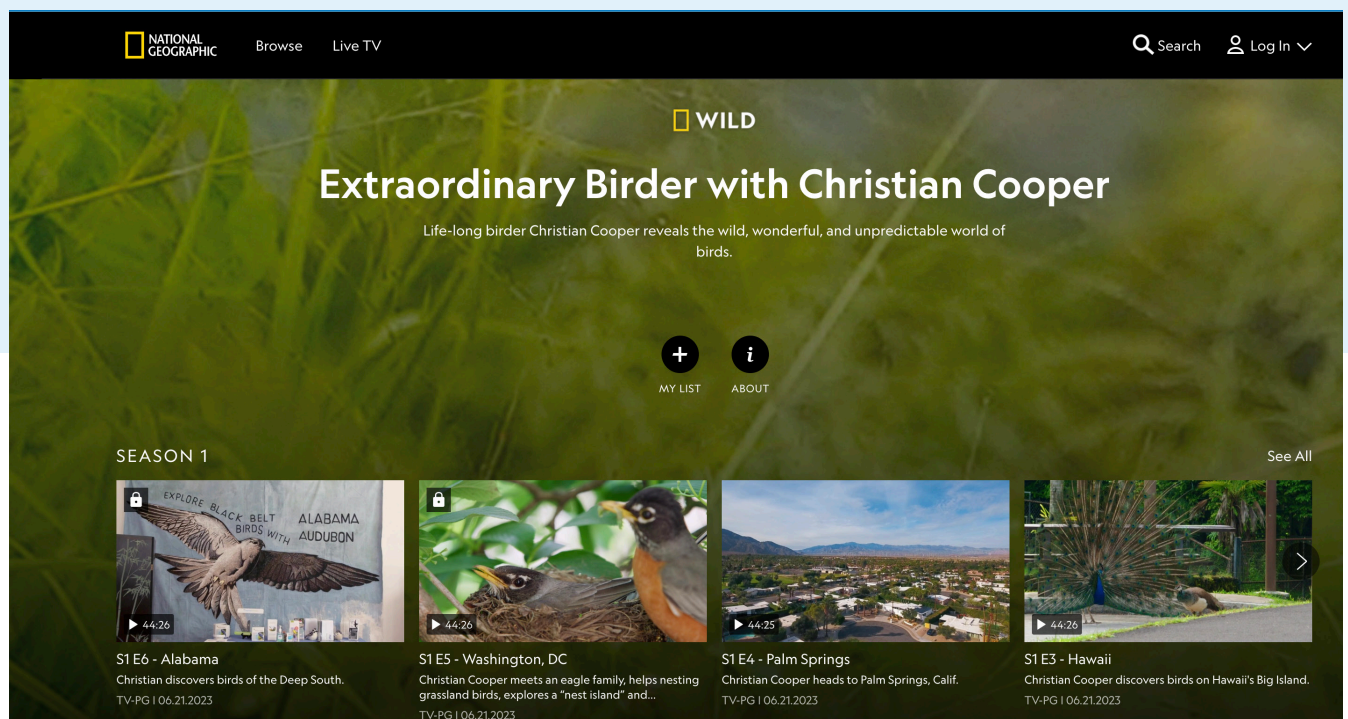


This series has been airing on KTWU. You can find all episodes of this series on streaming services:

PBS Passport, Apple TV+, PBS.org

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=american+outdoors+with+baratunde+thurston

MDb: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt17543552/>



This series has been airing on National Geographic channel.

You can find episodes of this series on streaming services: Disney+



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The purpose of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is to teach people to enjoy and respect birds and their habitats. NFHAS advocates preservation of prairie ecosystems and urban green spaces thus saving the lives of birds and enriching the lives of people.

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WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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