

What are your favorite winter birds?

White-crowned sparrow?

Fox sparrow?

Harris's sparrow?

Swans?

Franklin Gulls?

Lincoln's sparrow?

Others?



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 53, No. 3, Nov. 2025

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Upcoming Events

Oct. 24 - BIRDSEED ORDERS DUE

Nov. 1 - BIRDSEED Pickup

Nov. 4 - Board Meeting 5:30
Manhattan Public Library Study room #1

Nov. 7-8 Celebration of Cranes (see pg. 5)

Nov. 8 - Sat. Morning Birding
Meet at Sojourner Truth Park,
departs for birding at 8:00 am



Where There Once was a Road

Dru Clarke

*Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know,
There was once a road through the woods..."*

Rudyard Kipling, The Way through the Woods

A steep hill, covered with woods, rises south of our narrow lane that joins our house, barn, and corrals. Just across the lane from the granary, filled now with books, mementos from my teaching days, and assorted discards, but no grain, another lane abruptly ends. Its egress is obscured by a rough growth of buckbrush, wingstem, goosefoot, and, in the fall, goldenrod. Its path up the hill can be discerned by a lack of mature trees that flank either side of its route. As it rises, it swings southeast and emerges into a patch of open, sunlit meadow, a patch of ungrazed tall grass prairie. Covey of bob-white quail frequent this remnant. There its path disappears.

Exploring that hillside and that now abandoned road, one finds stone rubble from a dilapidated outbuilding, perhaps a spring house or loafing shelter for livestock that once lived on the farm. (I used the descriptor 'dilapidated' once to describe a falling down wood frame house and my father corrected me, saying that only stone edifices could be dilapidated as the word itself derives from 'stone'.) 'Spring house' seems likely as whenever we have heavy rain, a seep appears and rivulets run from that rubble down to our existing lane.

Beyond the patch of meadow where the lane seems to end lies a broad expanse of steeply sloping woodland where, yet another mass of chiseled stone blocks lies. Some settler from the past had use for a structure there. We imagine no motorized vehicle could navigate between these but see in our minds' eyes a wagon drawn by brawny horses, steady-hoofed, making their arduous way up hill and down on that once-upon-a-time road.

The barn was built in 1907 by John Nachtman, a Bohemian immigrant, who with his wife Rosa and several children, had dairy cows and grew some crops. (We discovered this in ag censuses from the 19th and 20th century.) At one time, an additional 80 acres to the south was in Rosa's name (this discovered in a 1905 Pottawatomie County Atlas in the Onaga Historical Society archives). We tried to find their grave sites using the Nachtman surname to no avail, but later discovered John had changed it to Nightman, perhaps in an effort to disguise their quasi-Germanic origins (it was during WW1). They are buried in the Flush cemetery, but there is no death date on John's stone. Mystery persists.

For a mild leg-stretching workout, one can walk the abandoned road and be shaded along the way by a canopy of (mostly) deciduous trees, although the earlier succession growth of eastern red cedars is still apparent, those having attained a sturdy girth through the years. The woods favor perching and nesting spots for yellow-billed cuckoos who return yearly in May, their raucous calls announcing their arrival. One year I found a cuckoo nestling flopping on our lane, apparently not having quite attained the ability to fly. Its chisel-like beak was formidable! Carrying it gingerly, I took it up the abandoned road and placed it on a limb, where it promptly plopped to the ground beneath. In replacing it, the bird flopped down again, and I left it as it seemed to prefer the cover there.

It is surprising that the bed of this century old road can still be navigated so easily as it has been decades since anyone used it purposely. While some plants do grow where wagons rolled, they seem reluctant to take over and erase it from history. Occasionally a bramble of wild raspberry will reach out to grab an ankle, but it retreats as quickly as it grabs. We like to think about what life was like when the road served a purpose, but even now it serves to fuel our imaginations and remind us that life here continues its journey, albeit by a different road.



© Nov. 2025 Dru Clarke

Thanksgiving

What are you thankful for?

The winter birds are arriving! Getting ready for the Christmas Bird Count?

Some of my favorites:

- Dark-eyed Juncos
- Northern harriers
- Rough-legged Hawk
- White-crowned sparrow
- Harris's sparrow
- White-throated sparrow
- Field sparrow
- Fox sparrow
- Snow geese

Dark-eyed Junco



Harris's sparrow

What are your favorite winter birds?

Northern harrier - female

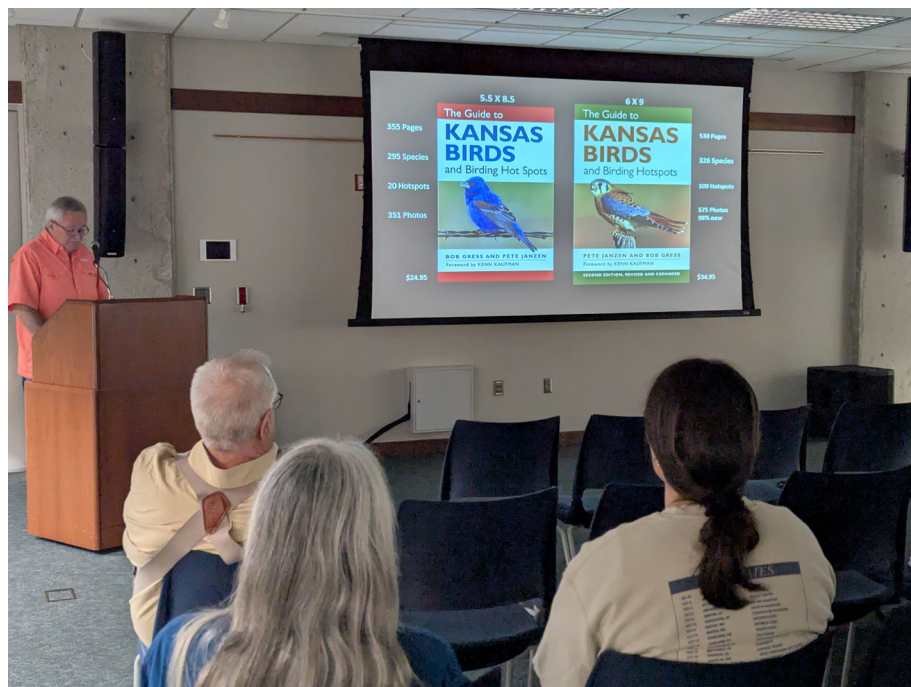


Northern harrier - male



All photos by Dave Rintoul

A Changing World for Kansas Birds

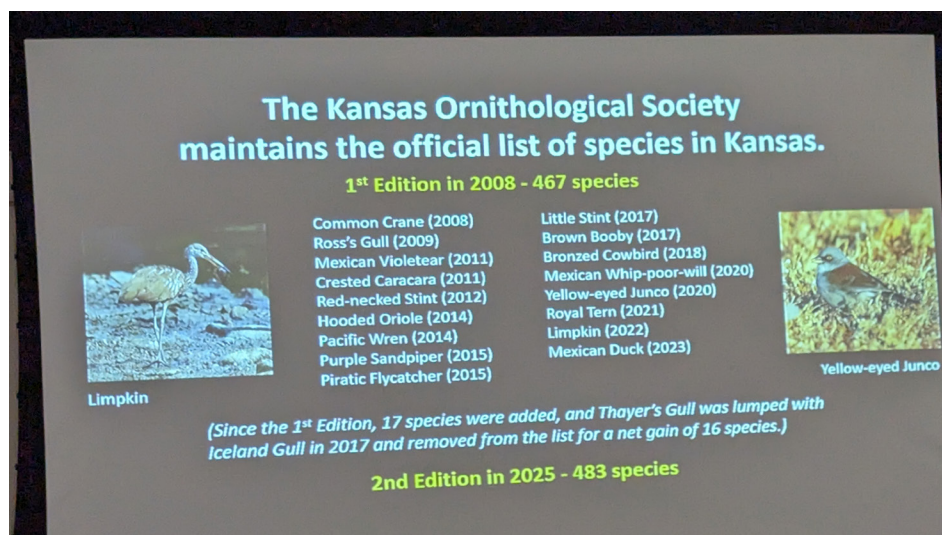


Bob Gress and Pete Janzen gave a very informative presentation about how the birds of Kansas are changing.

Some species are expanding their territories - barred owls once rare in the west are becoming more common, so are the red-shouldered hawk and the pileated woodpecker, mainly because of more wooded areas along rivers and streams.

And Fish crows are expanding north into southern Kansas, also black vultures.

Neotropical cormorants were once rare here, now are more common.



They also signed their new edition of A Guide to Kansas Birds and Birding Hotspots.

THANK YOU PETE AND BOB for the talk and the book!



There's still time to register for Celebration of Cranes!

This is your opportunity to witness crane migration and learn more about how Quivira National Wildlife Refuge provides a crucial inland salt marsh and stopover point for these birds.

Final registration closes November 2.

Event and registration details www.audubonofkansas.org/celebration-of-cranes.cfm



Celebration of Cranes
November 7-8, 2025
Sterling, Kansas
& Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

AK
AUDUBON OF KANSAS

Fri, Nov 7 - Nov 8
Celebration of Cranes

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Published monthly (except August) by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society.
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Also available online at nfhas.org

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WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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