



Please welcome
Patty Kline
 our new treasurer!

Patty Kline is a native Nebraskan who has lived in Kansas for forty years. Her career history includes banking and various positions in financial services and advisory. She enjoys reading in all genres, RV travel and her two standard poodles. She and her husband, Mark, have one daughter and three grandchildren.

Although she has never officially been a birder, she has a wooded yard that is occupied by numerous birds and other wild creatures which offer great entertainment.

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 47, No. 10 ~ June 2019

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Upcoming Events

June 1 - BLUE BIRD TRAIL TREK - CARNAHAN CREEK PARK See page 7

June 2- Konza Wildflower Walk, 6:30 p.m.
 \$10/person, free for FOKP members
<https://keep.konza.k-state.edu/fokp/index.html>

June 3 - HAPPY BIRTHDAY CLYDE FERGUSON - come to party
 Little Apple Brewing Co., Angus Rm. 4 p.m.
 NO GIFTS ALLOWED

June 8- Birding- meet at Sojourner Truth park, 8 a.m.

June 12- Board Meeting- 6 p.m. Friend's Room, MPL

June 16- AOK/Juneteenth Cookout/Wildflower Walk 6 p.m.
 Bird Runner Wildlife Refuge, 11003 Lower
 McDowell Rd., 5 mi. S of I-70's Exit 307

July 27- Trip to Sternberg Museum, Hays - **SAVE THE DATE**
 more info in July newsletter



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Each spring, when it seemed summer was really arriving, my grandfather's country store would briefly resemble a sparse ant colony with a few individuals carrying the thick red-and-black aromatic Woolrich pants and jackets into the dark bulb-lit basement, passing on the stairs a few others bringing cotton goods up to the window-brightened display counters and shelves.

Had modern industrially made fibers been around, that experience would not have occurred, and memory would not have gotten me to wondering about the cotton part of it, particularly since on recent travels we were told that cotton was becoming increasingly grown in western Kansas.

An Economist article from December 20, 2001, tells me the wild cottons of the Americas are of a type called DD, while those from Asia are of a type called AA, and that some AA types were here to greet the Columbus-era explorers, raising some interesting questions about human migrations.

Its labor-intensive harvest once made it the material of wealth and royalty, but successive 18th century inventions changed that. The spinning jenny made the tedious business of carding the fibers into parallel alignments for forming into thread much faster, and the steam engine freed mills from dependence on waterfalls and thus the ability to locate nearer markets. Then in 1794, Eli Whitney, having witnessed a cat clawing feathers off a chicken through a wire fence, came up with the gin that could efficiently separate out the seeds.

The Economist article mentioned said that such devices did not lead to massive unemployment because the massive production unleashed was fortunately matched by an increase in population, (which provided a great deal of dismal child labor). But, Past and Present, a 19th century book by Thomas Carlyle, speaks of the "condition of England", that condition being a fact of shirts piling up in warehouses, without people able to buy them. And there was effect of the cotton trade upon the spread of slavery. Its history is varied.

Apparently cotton remains not choosy about where it will grow, provided there is water, (though it will vary by location: Sea Island cotton growing along the coast from Florida to North Carolina tends to produce long staples), which led to a Stalin-era project to get Russia into the trade that has turned the once vast and teeming inland Aral Sea into two woebegone lakes. And I read cotton growing in more developed countries has been subsidized to the point of impinging on the prices received by growers in less developed and unsubsidized areas. And lower cotton prices affect other fibers like silk. The ongoing details of which are beyond my scope.

Cotton's resemblance to wool once led to the myth of the Vegetable Lamb (the fruit of an amazing Asian plant) and my wondering about it hasn't led to much fine-line biology, but a visualization that it has been and is now much more than the root source of calicos and blue jeans.

I wonder if, in ancient times, some independent-thinking imaginer wondered if the stars were some kind of tufts of cotton, as glittery as the tops of mulberry leaves. And I wonder what such an imagination would have made of the similar but less sparkly wandering planets--celestial supervisors?

In these times, Venus, in conference with the Moon very low in the 1st's dawn, will abdicate her most recent role as the Morning Star. Jupiter will resume his position as the bright all night star, traveling in Ophiuchus (just above Scorpius), and sailing along with the Moon on the 16th.

Mercury, the shy and the low, goes about as far (up) as he goes this month, possibly glimpse-able to the right of the Moon in the 4th's early evening, with a better chance as he crowds close to Mars in the WNW just after sunset the 17th (across the sky from the rising full Moon). The stars Castor and Pollux of Gemini will be just a little higher to the right.

The Moon's other scheduled visitors include Mars on the 8th, Virgo's Spica the 11th-12th, Antares in Scorpius the 15th, and Saturn the 18th. It be will be new the 3rd at 5a02 and full the 17th at 3a31. Official summer arrives at 10a54 CDT the 21st.

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Benign Neglect

Dru Clarke



A great birding morning, begun by seeing a pair of rose-breasted grosbeaks on our suet feeder. A spotted sandpiper had found our overflowing pond and navigated its shoreline with dips and bobs and teeters and nods, hopping up occasionally onto a large log we use as a bench. North to Hopkins Creek, a summer tanager gifted us with its startlingly rosy red plumage, and pewees called from the deep woods.

On a wooded hill south of that creek are several old graves, now lost but once accessed by an arching arbor of trumpet vine. These vines struggle still to mark the path. Slumped on the road bank was a marker with an “H” incised crudely on its pitted surface. Unable to find the grave sites we “rescued” it from the road grader and propped it up near our back walk. A few years ago, a car with out-of-state plates dislodged several older folks who carried bundles of cut flowers into that wood, but we haven’t seen them recently.

Many cemeteries with settler or pioneer graves are meticulously cared for by counties and private citizens, and have been manicured so precisely that many of the native plants that existed in these burial sites have been obliterated by too close attention. Some states and municipalities are revisiting that “neatness” paradigm and are nurturing the growth of heritage plants, especially those of the prairie. They are creating multiple use places by making them nature preserves and heritage landmarks, and making them accessible by paths that allow wandering and musing, encouraging visitors to feel connections to the past and appreciate the lives (and deaths) of those who came before us.

In one cemetery in Oregon, school children are encouraged to do drawings (I had mine do rubbings with chalk and paper) of their favorite gravestones and research causes of death. While that may sound a bit morbid, it is relevant to understanding how diseases that once ravaged our predecessors are now rare (at least in our nation), and how vaccinations have thwarted other common childhood diseases that killed so many.

Biographies of those buried can also reveal the pathos and struggle of their lives: one example is of a doctor who was caring for his friend, a lawyer, with typhoid fever. The friend died and the doctor a few days later, and they are buried side by side. Many graves are those of infants or very young children: in Louis Vieux cemetery I counted five in one row, most of whom were under two years old. Yet in another row is the grave of Toussaint

Tremble who lived to be 97 years of age! In the cholera cemetery on the banks of the Vermillion River is the marker (and a biographical sign) for Steven Prather whose quest to strike it rich during the California Gold Rush was cut short by succumbing to cholera. The Oregon Trail and others are flanked along the swales by graves that, for the most part, are unmarked, taken over by native grasses and forbs, their roots entwining the bones of those who were hurriedly buried as the wagons pressed westward.

In some heritage prairie sites where cemeteries have been abandoned, botanists have wept with delight at finding relict stands of native plants. In Louis Vieux’s, I found only yellow sorrel and a thistle, and in the cholera cemetery, the mound inside the chain

link fence is a carpet of emerald moss, reminiscent of the lining of an elegant casket. All but two markers are gone.

In a cemetery near Konza Prairie a friend told us that several native orchids still grow. One, ladies’ tresses, we’ve seen bloom as late as November, its waxy ivory flowers looking like satin.

Conserving and restoring the past - be it history or nature – can be compatible goals. Trimming growth from around gravestones seems reasonable and maintaining narrow, permeable paths that wind through a graveyard a pleasant way to traverse the past. Melding the historical with the natural might be an even more satisfying experience.



BIRDATHON 2019 REPORT AND REQUEST FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Jim Koelliker

May 2019

Dear NFHAS Birders,

Clyde Ferguson, one of our two founders, and I were privileged again to be a part of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society's 2019 Birdathon on the last Saturday-Sunday of April. This year four parties with a total of 8 dedicated birders scour the area to identify as many different species as we could in a 24-hour period. Personally, I was able to help Clyde's group of five to identify 78 species by 9 p.m. Saturday and to help find 13 more species on Sunday morning. I compiled our report for you, our supporters or potential supporters. This was Clyde's 35th year and my 27th year to have a part! This year our 91 species are shown with **green 9s** in the **'19** column on the **Report** that follows. At the bottom of the back of the report you can see the other four birders and where they searched to identify the 9 additional species found to swell our total to 100. The weather conditions this year were very difficult because of persistent high winds. As a result, our grand total this year of 100 is 13 less than our 5-year average. Warblers and ducks were especially hard to find.

Images of the **Best Birds & Pics of 2019** we found this year are shown on page 5. The first 4 – American Golden-Plover (**1st** time in 33 years of records), Peregrine Falcon (4th), Black & White Warbler (2nd), and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (10th) were unusual. The other three were excellent pics shot by Susan Slapnick of our team – Least Sandpiper (10th), Upland Sandpiper (29th), and Northern Parula (17th). Susan and Roma Lenehan, Clyde's cousin, came all the way from Madison, WI to help my team again this year!

I always enjoy working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge myself and reporting on it helps make you aware of local birds. I hope you, too, find our report interesting and informative.

Yes, this report is our request for your financial support for the NORTHERN FLINT HILLS Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our chapter uses the contributions to the BIRDATHON as its primary fund-raising activity. Last year our over 60 contributors gave our team very generous support. We received almost \$3,200 that was put to good use to support our environmental and natural heritage locally and through outreach efforts.

I have greatly appreciated the support from all who have contributed to our past efforts and for the work of our chapter can do with the support. Our supporters of record have usually backed our efforts at a rate of at least 15 cents per species identified, but if you contribute \$15.00 or more our local chapter will send you our newsletter, *The Prairie Falcon*, for a year. If you can help, please use the contribution sheet that follows to fill out and send to us along with your check. Please indicate your preference for receiving the newsletter in the mail or with an e-mail. We are not able to take credit cards. Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt, unless your donation is more than \$250.

Sincerely,



Jim Koelliker, 785-776-4915

Best Birds & Pics of 2019

Least Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper
and Northern Parula taken by Susan
Slapnick during the Birdathon.

Others from the internet.



**American
Golden-Plover**



**Peregrine
Falcon**



**Black & White
Warbler**



**Scissor-
tailed
Flycatcher**



Least Sandpiper



**Upland
Sandpiper**



Northern Parula

..... Return This Portion With Your Contribution

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY BIRDATHON 2019

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THANK YOU Rotarians!!

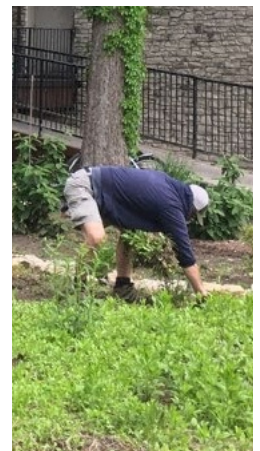
Thank you to these members of Konza Rotary who worked hard 5/11/19 to weed and establish new beds at the Alsop Bird Sanctuary.



Several are planning to help us throughout the season! Join us any 1st,3rd, or 4th Saturday morning or stop by and get instructions for a task you can help with anytime the following week.



Kevin Bryant
Josh Kyle & two teens
Rich Sell
Michelle Sink
Joan Pierce
Rod Harms
Chrystal Bryant-Kerns & husband, Ben & daughter, Charlie
Jon Willson



Bluebird Trail Trek June 1st

Greg Wurst will lead a Saturday early evening Bluebird trail trek June 1st at 4:30 p.m.

Learn about bluebird nest box care and take a peek at a bluebird nest on this evening walk.

Date is **Saturday, June 1st at 4:30 p.m. at Carnahan Creek park, off of Carnahan Rd.**

If it rains Saturday, rain date is Sunday, June 2nd at 4:30.

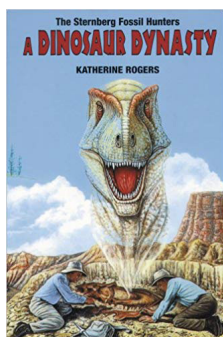
Meet at the bathroom on top of the hill (the only structure that is not flooded at this writing). Our bluebird trail is high and dry.

If you are unfamiliar with this location or want to carpool meet at Sojourner Truth park (south of Howie's recycling) at the shelter parking area at 4:00 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE! SAT. JULY 27

Look forward to a Trip to
Sternberg Museum in Hays – July 27th.

Some of the things you will see



Check out this fascinating book before going on our field trip to the Sternberg Museum

A Dinosaur Dynasty, by Katherine Rogers

Science meets the great outdoors in this personal perspective of the Sternbergs, father and sons who traveled the New World in search of fossilized flora and fauna. This engaging and fascinating story includes tons of photographs and a chapter on the Sternberg Museum of Natural History.



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

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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.

Also available online at nfhas.org

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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
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WE NEED YOU!

PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

The Board meets on the first Monday of each month. The meetings usually last about an hour.

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Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email: Governor: 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.