

THE MANHATTAN CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS 2007 HIGHLIGHTS



Roma
Lenehan,
from
Wisconsin

Despite the fact that at least half of Manhattan has no electrical power, and despite the snow and wind, the Manhattan CBC turned out OK today. Winds out of the north all day, and snow that was pretty heavy in the morning, made it tough to be out all day. But we (about 45-50 counters) found 92 species (+ 3 count week species), including a new one for the count, a Laughing Gull. This bird was seen and described well by two excellent birders (Doris Burnett and Lowell Johnson); details will be submitted along with the CBC report when all of the numbers have been accumulated.

Other highlights: Snow Bunting - total of 15, seen by two different parties Icterids - Great-tailed Grackle (1), Rusty Blackbirds (32), Brewer's Blackbirds (4) as well as both species of Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds. Sparrows - Spotted Towhee, Eastern Towhee, Am. Tree Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow Swamp Sparrow, Wh-thrtd. Sparrow, Harris' Sparrow, Wh-crwnd. Sparrow Dk-eyed Junco, but NO Field Sparrows. Waterfowl (other than Snow Goose and Canada Goose) numbers were low, and several species were missing. But there was a Common Loon and 2 White Pelicans on Tuttle and at the River Pond, respectively. Falcons - 3 Merlins, 1 Peregrine, but no Prairie Falcon, despite higher than usual numbers of Horned Larks and Lapland Longspurs. No Loggerhead Shrikes, continuing a troubling trend on this (and other) Kansas CBCs, and no Red-headed Woodpeckers, reflecting the fact that the early April freeze had a significant effect on the acorn crop this fall. There was leftover chili, but that might be because we had at least 5 different batches to sample from. All the ones that I sampled (n=3) were delicious. There was no leftover peanut brittle.

Dave Rintoul

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY,
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PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 36, No. 5 ~ JANUARY 2008

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- JAN. 5 EAGLE DAYS, TUTTLE CORPS ENGR
- JAN. 10 BOARD MEETING 7 p.m. MANHATTAN
Public Library (2nd floor mtg room)
- JAN. 12 BEGINNING BIRDING
8 A.M. MEET AT SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK
- JAN. 18 BIRDSEED SALE ORDER DEADLINE
- FEB. 2 BIRDSEED SALE PICKUP 9-12N UFM
- FEB. 7 NFHAS BOARD MTG.
- FEB. 9 SAT. BIRDING
- FEB. 16 OR 23 - BRUNCH & BIRD FEEDER WATCH
(MORE INFO IN NEXT PRAIRIE FALCON & ONLINE)



SKYLIGHT PLUS PETE COHEN

January 2008 begins a leap year, another of those times when the ladies are permitted to pursue the men – openly, that is, and to claim any one they catch for marriage, under the banner of “Sadie Hawkins Day.” This “ancient” tradition began in November of 1937 in Al Capp’s cartoon, “L’il Abner” for the benefit of the “homeliest gal” in the mountains, who needed such an opportunity. It quickly became an annual nationwide event, particularly on college campuses. However, by the time I was on a campus in the early 1950s it had somehow shifted to being quadrennially applied to “Leap Day,” February 29th. Also, on such a day in the 1800s was born poor Frederic in Gilbert & Sullivan’s operetta *The Pirates of Penzance*. Pledged to serve the buccaneers until his twenty-first birthday, he seemed doomed to being a reluctant outlaw until the year 1940. But it being a musical comedy, fortuitous circumstance intervened. Meanwhile, the current changes of circumstances wrought by the times seem to be toning down Sadie Hawkins’ notoriety.

Nevertheless, it seems a good time to take note of ladies who have pursued the celestial stars, receiving, in general, less notice than their male counterparts. It takes but a moment on one website (www.distinguishedwomen.com/subject/astrono.html) to be presented with a list of 29 such persons. It starts with En Hedu’anna, from circa 2354 BCE. This was really a title bestowed upon her as a priestess of the moon goddess of Babylon. Astronomical observations had been in progress long before her date but she is listed as the “first of a long line of women who followed the stars whose names we know.” Some of her poems have apparently survived. Whether she wrote in a technical sense is unknown, though it would not be surprising considering the number of contributing siblings and spouses of male astronomers who have followed.

These include Sophia Brahe, who worked with her old brother Tycho in the 16th century, and the more noted Caroline Herschel, who lived to be 98 years

old, who from the mid-18th to the mid-19th centuries participated with and continued the work of her brother William, discover of the planet Uranus and other accomplishments.

One name oddly missing from the website list is that of Katherine (or Katherina) Hevelius, who in the 16th and 17th centuries assisted with and arranged for the posthumous publication of the work of her husband, Johannes, who was an expert on accurate naked-eyed observations and contributed notably to the nomenclature of the sky.

The list is more extensive and includes more details for another time.

There is a notable Victorian separation of the genders among the planets in this January’s evenings when it’ll be Mars, Mars, Mars, brighter than the stars as it arcs high through Gemini, trending westward till late in the month, when it will begin trending back eastward because of the way we travel our individual orbits. His Redness will be brighter than the brightest star, Sirius, blueish below him, at month’s start, but he will lose much of his glow by month’s end as he sets in the west being quite out-shown by Venus as she rises a discreet distance behind him in the east just before dawn. While he is high up, with therefore less atmosphere to dim his presence, he should be quite eye-catching.

Saturn will come up with Leo’s Regulus nearby at mid-evening for a modestly noticeable nightly crossing. Mercury can be found in the company of the rising crescent moon on Jan. 9th, and will remain hovering briefly about 10 degrees above the eastern horizon in the evening twilights from about Jan. 12th to the 28th.

Most noticeably peaking on the 4th a little known constellation, Triangulum, a thin geometric form between Aries and the end of Andromeda’s gown, is scheduled to send forth one of the strongest meteor showers of the year with a thin moon sinking from sight. *Astronomy* magazine suggests binoculars might be able to pick out the originating comet, Tuttle, progressing through Aries on Jan 1st, then through Cetus and southward by mid-month. Small Aries will be midway between the Milky Way and the west horizon. Moon is new the 8th, 6a37, full 22nd, 8a35.

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Birding Outing December 2007

The snow falls hard and don't you know

The winds of Thor are blowing cold

Led Zeppelin

The Shrike is a bird passerine

On field trips not commonly seen

It hunts through the day Impaling its prey

Among fence posts on the barbed wire in between

Kevin Fay

It was cold and quite windy as we met to consider our monthly birdwatching outing. The weather forecast was not favorable. It called for strong winds and rain changing to snow followed by the potential for an ice storm in two days. We decided that we could safely do our three-hour outing before the bad weather moved in, so we braved the elements and set out. We went to Northeast Park and hiked the Cecil Best trail. We then took Highway 18 towards Zeandale and turned off on Pleasant Valley Road and came back on the Deep Creek Road, birding by car. The temperature was near 30° F and the wind was blowing hard. The birds were lying low so we did not see much. I am going to skip the trip list (birding term) altogether and discuss the highlight of the trip.

On Pillsbury Crossing Road, not too far from the crossing itself, a large mixed group of sparrows came through and we watched them briefly before they got lost to the wind. Then a Loggerhead Shrike landed on the fence about 10 feet from us and we had a great good view of it. This was the highlight of the trip for me.

The shrike is a fascinating bird and my favorite that I will likely see in its natural environment. (I claim the Rockhopper Penguin to be my favorite bird and I hold true to that.) It is a member of the order that includes songbirds but has adapted to a predatory way of life. It hunts insects and small animals and because it lacks the strong feet to hold the prey while eating it impales them on thorns and then feeds.

BIRDING

KEVIN FAY



My dictionaries vary on the source of its name. One claims it come from the Old English “srik,” meaning thrush. Another claims it come from Middle English “shriken,” meaning to shriek. (Shriek if you see a shrike!) Loggerhead means to have a large head in relation to the body and that certainly applies here. Shrikes are not common. They are generally found in undisturbed open areas near woods where they perch to spot their prey. In the past I have spotted shrikes on a regular basis when I search in the proper habitat. I am told, anecdotally, that they are becoming rare and several shrike study websites I checked agreed. Just a week later, no Loggerhead Shrike was seen on the Manhattan Christmas bird count. The storm must have chased it out of the area.

The rain was coming down harder and ended our field trip, but it was a successful one because we spotted the Loggerhead Shrike and made it back safely.

The Monthly Birding Fieldtrip takes place on the second Saturday of the month. We meet at 8:00 a.m. at Sojourner Truth Park on Pottawatomie Avenue between 10th and 12th Streets (near Howie’s Recycling). Birders of all levels are welcome. We will go to some local birding hotspot. Wear appropriate clothing but no strenuous activity is involved, just some light hiking. We will return to Sojourner Truth Park by 11:00 a.m.



STARGAZING AT MARGY'S

*For the stars of the heavens and the
constellations thereof shall not give their light.*

Isaiah (13:10)

I do not think our situation was of what the prophet wrote when we cancelled yet another viewing session because of cloudy skies. However, this time the weather was really bad and we cancelled the day before to discourage people from even considering travel. Because of the ice storm that followed just two days later many people lost electricity for nearly a week. The bent-over tress and broken limbs everywhere was a very eerie scene. For some it may have seemed apocalyptic.

As I wrote before, there can be long streaks of bad luck when planned stargazing sessions are weathered out. I would much rather be writing about the things we saw than describing cancellations. I am sure we will plan another session in the future. The winter constellations are so great and there can be nights that are not too unreasonable for stargazing. However conditions can be really harsh and this winter may be one that does not provide many opportunities for stargazing.

Watch for future announcements and keep your eyes on the skies.

Kevin Fay

BLACK-FOOTED FERRET REINTRODUCED IN KANSAS

Twenty-four Black-footed Ferret pups were released in the wild a week before Christmas. The Black-footed Ferret has been missing from Kansas for fifty years and is an endangered species.



Audubon of Kansas partnered with ranchers to bring about this historic event. Larry Haverfield and Gordon Barnhardt were at the forefront of this effort. The release occurred on the ranch of Gordon Barnhardt.



Larry Haverfield (center) with four U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists at the release site on Gordon Barnhardt's ranch. Biologists include Seth Willey, Scott Larson, Mike Lockhart and Dan Mulhern.



Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Bird Seed Sale

ORDERS must be received by Jan. 18, 2008

**PICK UP is Saturday, Feb. 2, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 n
UFM, 1221 Thurston, Manhattan**

**If interested in helping unload the truck, come at 8 a.m,
or volunteer to help during the morning of pickup -
contact Annie (below).**

**Annie Baker
116 Parkview Dr.
Junction City, KS 66441
Phone 785-375-4633**

Make checks payable to:
**Northern Flint Hills
Audubon Society**
or **NFHAS** for short

Bird Seed Sale Product Descriptions:

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS are attractive to more species of birds than are striped sunflower seeds. They also supply more energy per pound than striped sunflower seeds.

STRIPED SUNFLOWER SEEDS contain larger hearts than black oil sunflower seeds and are particularly suitable for larger songbirds.

SAFFLOWER is a favorite with Cardinals and squirrels really do not like it.

MILLET is liked by Mourning Doves, Song Sparrows, White Throated Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, White Crown Sparrows, Red Wing Blackbirds, House Finches, Pine Siskins, and Quail.

FLINT HILLS FEAST is our premium bird seed mix: 30 % black oil sunflower seed, 20 % striped sunflower seed, and 50 % white proso millet with no milo or fillers.

NIGER THISTLE is very attractive to gold finches and all other finches that are here over the winter. Niger is excellent for tube feeders.

SUNFLOWER SEED CHIPS are high in energy and can be used in tube feeders. These are especially liked by pine siskins.

CHEAP CHEEP MIX is less expensive but still attractive to many species. It is 40 % cracked corn, 40 % white proso millet, 20 % black oil sunflower and no milo or fillers.

SUPER FORMULA FINCH MIX is a less expensive option for tube feeders than 100% Niger thistle. It consists of 70% sunflower chips and 30% niger thistle. This is very popular with most tube feeding species.

SUET CAKES, in addition to having high calorie beef fat which helps birds maintain body heat in cold winter months as the main ingredient, have other nutritious ingredients.

PEANUT PICKOUTS are chunks of peanut hearts and are very attractive to woodpeckers.

MEDIUM CHOP is chopped corn kernels- especially good for ground-feeding birds.

Quality Seed, Easy Handling

The products we offer are high quality seeds. Our mixes were created to satisfy the needs of local bird populations at reasonable costs. We have tried to make it easy for you to purchase the amount of seed you want without having to handle heavy, awkward bags. Our seed comes in 10, 25, and 50 pound bags. We try to obtain the seed in paper bags whenever possible.

Sales Support Local Chapter Activities

As with all of our fund-raising activities, proceeds from our seed and store sales go toward supporting the educational and conservation projects of the local chapter. All of our labor is voluntary. Taxes are included in the price of our seed. Even though we are a not-for-profit organization, we are required to pay tax on any retail sales. Any additional donation you may wish to include with your order is appreciated.

PICK UP - Saturday, FEB.2, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 n at UFM, 1221 Thurston, Manhattan

| DESCRIPTION | SIZE | COST EACH | QTY | TOTAL COST |
|--|------|-----------|-----|------------|
| Sunflower chips | 10lb | \$11.50 | | |
| Sunflower chips | 25lb | \$26.25 | | |
| Sunflower chips | 50lb | \$50.75 | | |
| Corn on the cob | 10lb | \$6.50 | | |
| Corn on the cob | 25lb | \$12.25 | | |
| Finch Mix | 10lb | \$13.00 | | |
| Finch Mix | 25lb | \$29.50 | | |
| Finch Mix | 50lb | \$55.75 | | |
| Med. corn chop | 25lb | \$8.25 | | |
| Med. corn chop | 50lb | \$14.50 | | |
| Peanut pick-outs | 10lb | \$14.75 | | |
| Peanut pick-outs | 25lb | \$33.00 | | |
| Red Millet | 10lb | \$8.25 | | |
| Red Millet | 25lb | \$16.50 | | |
| Red Millet | 50lb | \$29.25 | | |
| Safflower seed | 10lb | \$9.75 | | |
| Safflower seed | 25lb | \$20.50 | | |
| Safflower seed | 50lb | \$41.50 | | |
| Suet cakes <small>peanut butter, berry, or regular</small> | 11oz | \$1.50 | | |
| Suet cakes <small>peanut butter, berry, or regular</small> | 11oz | \$1.50 | | |
| Sunflower (black) | 10lb | \$6.50 | | |
| Sunflower (black) | 25lb | \$13.50 | | |
| Sunflower (black) | 50lb | \$25.00 | | |
| Sunflower (striped) | 10lb | \$6.50 | | |
| Sunflower (striped) | 25lb | \$13.50 | | |
| Sunflower (striped) | 50lb | \$25.00 | | |
| Thistle seed | 10lb | \$14.75 | | |
| Thistle seed | 25lb | \$30.50 | | |
| White millet | 10lb | \$4.75 | | |
| White millet | 25lb | \$9.75 | | |
| White millet | 50lb | \$17.75 | | |
| Cheap cheep mix | 10lb | \$4.75 | | |
| Cheap cheep mix | 25lb | \$10.75 | | |
| Cheap cheep mix | 50lb | \$19.50 | | |
| Flint Hills feast | 10lb | \$5.50 | | |
| Flint Hills feast | 25lb | \$12.25 | | |
| Flint Hills feast | 50lb | \$22.75 | | |
| Super Finch mix | 10lb | \$14.75 | | |
| Super Finch mix | 25lb | \$29.50 | | |

For our customers in Manhattan (IN-TOWN only) we offer a local delivery service — please check the box below and include \$5.00 with your order. Thank you for your order and your support. **We need volunteers to help the day of pickup - if interested - contact Annie Baker - (address & phone on front of form).**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE # _____

Email _____

DELIVERY (in-town) \$5.00

SUBTOTAL _____

DONATION _____

TOTAL _____



THE ICE STORM OF DECEMBER 2007



A big THANK YOU to all who participated in the 59th Manhattan CBC and to all who made chili and helped with the supper. Next year will be Manhattan's 60th CBC!!

We also want to note that Brock Dale, at age 89, made this year's count! "Applause please!" The ice and snow didn't stop this long-time birder.



February's event will be a **"Progressive Brunch & Bird Feeder Watch"**

More information will be in the next issue of the Prairie Falcon, but at this time, the plan is to begin at Marge Muenzenberger's house, travel to another house in the neighborhood, and end up at Doris Burnett's house. This is on the east side of Tuttle Creek. The date is yet to be finalized (either Sat. Feb. 16th or the 23rd).

THANKS to ACE Hardware for supplying us with the stir sticks we used to mount and display owl photos at our booth at the Zoo Spooktacular!

Got a good birding story/encounter? Please share it with us - in "Bird Tales" **WAITING TO HEAR FROM YOU!** Send me your "tales" photos welcome! e-mail cinraney@ksu.edu, or mail them to me at 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520



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If you do not want to receive the national magazine, but still want to be involved in our 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, 66502-1932.

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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