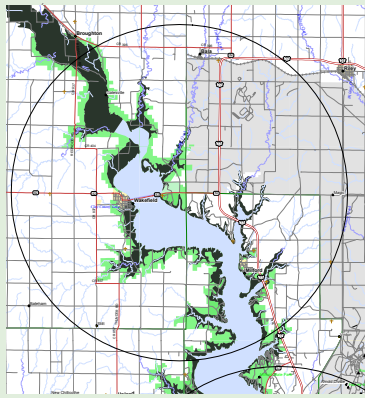
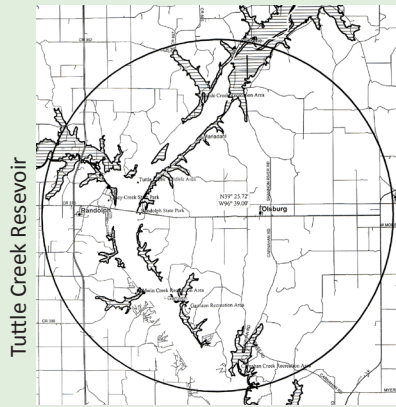
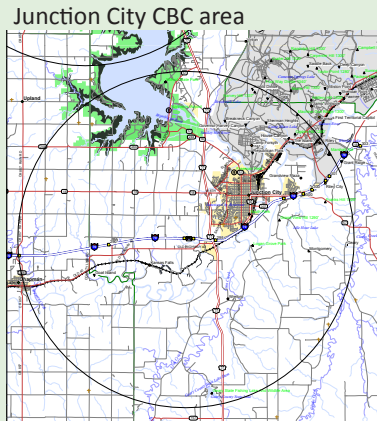




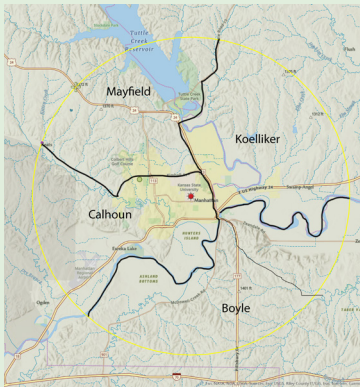
Wakefield CBC area



Olsburg CBC area



Junction City CBC area



Manhattan CBC area

Local area Christmas Bird Counts:

Saturday, December 14, Manhattan
Mark Mayfield markherb@ksu.edu
785.410.3073

Sunday, Dec. 15, Olsburg
Cindy Jeffrey cinraney@ksu.edu
785.565.3326

Sunday, Dec. 22, Wakefield
Chuck Otte cotte@ksu.edu
785.463.5485

Sunday, Dec. 29, Junction City
Chuck Otte cotte@ksu.edu
785.463.5485

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 53, No. 4, December 2024

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Upcoming Events

Dec. 3 - Board Meeting 5:30 pm,
Manhattan Public Librar Study room 2

SAVE THE DATES:

Dec. 14 - Manhattan CBC
Dec. 15 - Olsburg CBC
Dec. 22 - Wakefiled CBC
Dec. 29 - Junction City CBC

Jan. 7 - Board Meeting 5:30
Manhattan Public Library Study room

Jan. 26 - OPEN HOUSE at Patricia's house at Lake Elbo-
Birding 8:30-11:00 - Lunch 11:00
More info in January newsletter

76th Manhattan Christmas Bird Count 2024-2025

Chuck Otte maintains the list of all the Kansas Christmas Bird Counts. The list contains dates and contacts for each. You can find this list at <https://ksbirds.org/kos/2024CBC.htm>

The Manhattan CBC is Saturday Dec. 14th

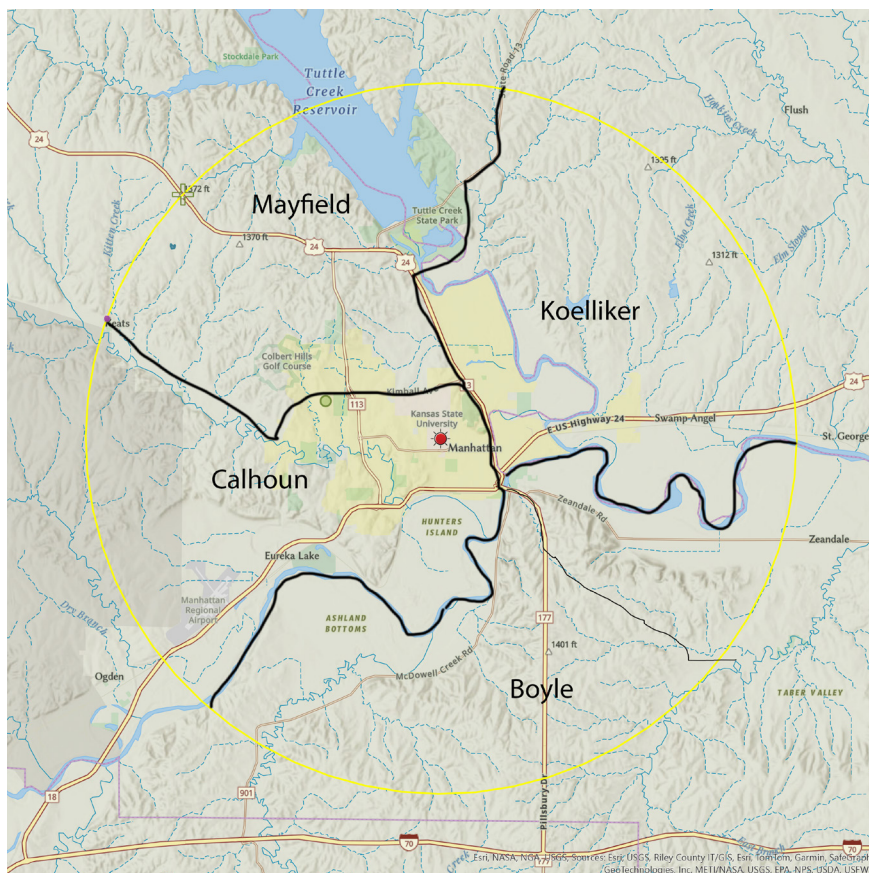
Compiler Mark Mayfield
markherb@ksu.edu 785-410-3073

Mark Mayfield - markherb@ksu.edu
785-410-3073

Alice Boyle - aboyle@ksu.edu
785-477-9064

Jeff Calhoun - jeffcalhoun11@gmail.com

Jim Koelliker - koellik@ksu.edu
785-323-7157



Manhattan Christmas Bird Count - Compilation and Chili Supper

Join the NFHAS and fellow birders after the day of birding for a potluck supper at 5:30 p.m. on December 14th, at the Seniors Service Center, 301 N 4th St, Manhattan, KS. A few volunteers will prepare soup but please feel free to bring a side dish to share. Free-will donations to NFHAS are also welcome. We encourage you to bring your own tableware to help us reduce the amount of trash. Enjoy good food, good companionship, and find out how this year's count compares to previous years! If you have any questions on what to bring for the supper or can help with setup, please contact **Patricia Yeager by phone 776-9593 or email pyeagerbirder@gmail.com.**



MARCESCENCE

Dru Clarke



Fall came early to our walnut trees, evidenced by shedding their toothed leaflets from their depleted compound leaves, and leaving stiff petioles strewn about in the duff. The mulch that ripens from fallen leaves offers cover and nutrients to a multitude of small life forms most of whom are unfamiliar to us but serve as repast to other lifeforms we do recognize: birds and small mammals. So, raking and removing this protective layer deprives a host of creatures of sustenance when they need it the most. You might save your energy for more fruitful pursuits.

Most of our deciduous trees lose their leaves in fall, but some, like our oaks, retain them well into the following spring. We have a lot of chinquapin and bur oaks on our place, and while their leaves have changed color from green to red and orange and russet brown, they are hanging on, twirling jauntily in the breeze. This phenomenon is known as marcescence, and its function remains a mystery although theories abound to explain it.

In the book “The Nature of Oaks” by Douglas W. Tallamy*, a naturalist from the East Coast, he muses about marcescence and, in so doing, whets our appetites to learn more about this remarkable suite of species of oaks. One advantage he shares is that browsers, like our native deer, like to nibble on the tips of woody shrubs and trees. But if these nutritious morsels are surrounded by a bunch of dead leaves – not so tasty – they will be left uneaten. This would account for marcescence to occur on those branches where a deer or moose or elk might be able to reach. But, then why would leaves be retained clear to the tippy top of an oak tree? Well, if we think about the browsers who *used* to live here – like giant sloths, mammoths – their reach was a great deal higher, hence, there would be an advantage to leaf retention on the upper branches. Another theory involves where oaks can grow: they (and beeches) can utilize nutrient-poor and drier soils better than other species of trees. Having marcescent leaves aids them in retaining snow and creating moister soil beneath the tree, enabling faster growth in springtime. And, when the leaves are finally shed in spring, a new layer of mulch can form, adding to soil nutrients.

In this book Tallamy takes us on an annual journey with oaks, devoting a chapter to each month, linking the time of year to other natural phenomena. For example, in cold January he observed a golden-crowned kinglet carefully picking its way along the oak’s twigs and branches and occasionally pausing to eat something it discovered. The bird was eating caterpillars, inchworms of a species of moth (the common lytrosis), who had fattened on the green growth, then stopped, half-grown, overwintering until spring when they would complete their life cycle. He shared, too, that many of the birds who attend our seed feeders during the winter months supplement that food source with insects, like these caterpillars during that challenging season. Oak trees are keystone species that we have overlooked in terms of their critical role in sustaining life all year long.

We have a sycamore in our yard that is showing marcescence as well as our oaks. A struggling sugar maple, too, shyly trying to grow in the shade of our taller hackberries and walnuts, has not shed its leaves yet. Good for it, to persevere! The sycamore, I think is just showing off.

I’m not sure if when my parents picked out a given name for me that they knew what it meant: “Drusilla” means “little oak tree” (as well as a few other things). I always rolled my eyes at my name when I was younger (and shortened it to Dru), but now, especially after learning about these magnificent trees, I feel honored to share the eponym with them.



*Thanks to Sil Pembleton for lending me this book!

© 2024 Dru Clarke

Cecil Best Trail Cleanup

Patricia Yeager



Jesse Myers, Jared Johnson, Colby Karnei, Jasmine Baldwin, Rachel Teska, Jacob Riggs

The K-State Bird Club crew helped work on the Cecil Best Trail. Our stalwart members, Kevin Fay, Merry Bower, Steve Kramer, Scott Taylor, Jim Koeliker and Patricia Yeager did various tasks along the trail, checking nest boxes, painting a kiosk and the forever task of digging out bush honeysuckle.

They all did a wonderful job!

THANKS TO EVERYONE!

The KSU student bird club is still in need of binoculars, so if you have a pair you are no longer using, please consider donating to the Club.

Contact Jacob Riggs jacobrigged@ksu.edu or Jared Johnson jaredj19@ksu.edu to donate.



Volunteers needed

MICHEL-ROSS PRESERVE

- Walk through preserve and haul out trash.
- Inspect signage and paint posts.
- Volunteers will be needed to put up a goat fence for 2 hours or so next year. This will need to happen when the bush honeysuckle is just getting its first leaves. It will be scheduled in late winter before other plants start sprouting and before the ticks and chiggers are present. The focus here is to make a long term plan to remove as much bush honeysuckle as possible over the next 5 years or so. Then it will need to be managed every year thereafter. This will eventually keep natural walking paths open and help maintain plant diversity in the 26 acre forested preserve.

As you can see, there is much to do to maintain our green spaces. We will feature a task every month in the Prairie Falcon. Generally, we will work for two hours and do whatever we can. The more hands the more we can get done. Contact Patricia Yeager for more information.



Franklin's gull

Photos by
Dave Rintoul



Harris sparrow

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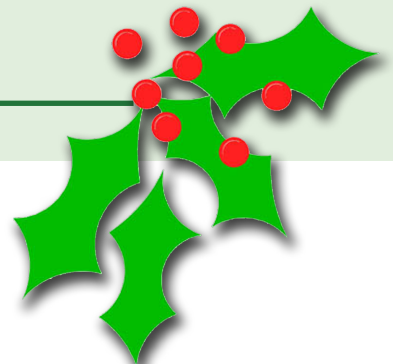
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The purpose of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is to teach people to enjoy and respect birds and their habitats. NFHAS advocates preservation of prairie ecosystems and urban green spaces thus saving the lives of birds and enriching the lives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

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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
Also available online at nfhas.org

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become a member of NFHAS.

NFHAS Subscription Information: If you do not wish to join
the National Audubon Society, but still want to be involved in
NFHAS local activities, ***you may subscribe to the Prairie Falcon
newsletter for \$20/yr.***

Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon
Society and mail to: **Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932,
Manhattan, KS 66505-1932**

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

NFHAS Board

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Treasurer: Jared Johnson

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Bird Seed Sales:

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Fieldtrips: Patricia Yeager, and Board

AOK Representative: [Cindy Jeffrey](mailto:cinraney@ksu.edu) - cinraney@ksu.edu 565-3326

At-large: Susan Blackford, Kevin Fay

Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime). Write, call or email: Governor Laura Kelly: 2nd Floor, State Capitol Bldg., Topeka, KS 66612. KS Senator or Representative: State Capitol Bldg., Topeka, KS 66612. Ph# (during session only) Senate - 785-296-7300. House - 785-296-7500. U.S. Senator Jerry Moran, U.S. Senator Roger Marshall U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510. Representative Tracey Mann, Derek Schmidt, Sharice Davids and Ron Estes: U.S. Capital Switchboard 202-224-3121.