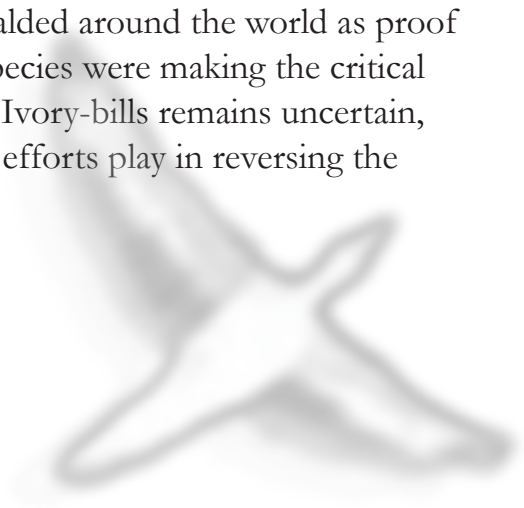


September Event: Ghost Bird video screening
More information coming!!

Ghost Bird tells the timely story of the Ivory-billed woodpecker's miraculous rediscovery in 2005. The bird's resurrection was heralded around the world as proof that conservation efforts on behalf of threatened species were making the critical difference between life and death. While the fate of Ivory-bills remains uncertain, there is no question the vital role local conservation efforts play in reversing the planet's extinction crisis.

Preview the trailer and clips of **Ghost Bird** at
<http://www.vimeo.com/ghostbird/videos>



NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY,
P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932



PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 38, No. 11 ~ JULY/AUGUST 2010

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(NOTE: There will be no newsletter in August, and the Bird seed order form will be in the September issue)

UPCOMING EVENTS:

July 5 - BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m.
(CARLA BISHOP'S HOME -
1822 Rockhill Road)
COME AT 5:30 TO SEE HER DAY LILIES

July 10 - SATURDAY BIRDING,
MEET AT SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK, 8 A.M.

AUG 2 - BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m.
TOM & MJ MORGON HOME

AUG 14 - SATURDAY BIRDING,
MEET AT SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK, 8 A.M.



SKYLIGHT PLUS

PETE COHEN

Summertime, and above the aptly named Scorpio (creeping along the southern horizon till mid-August) will be Ophiuchus, whose stars outline a shapeless

sort of tall and broad isosceles triangle with convex edges and a blunt apex that tilts slightly back to the east, all representing the head and torso of a Snake-Handler who is about three-fourths as tall as Scorpio is long. Stretched across his waist (base) is Serpens, the Snake whose head (S-Caput) is formed by a zigzag of a half dozen stars rising up ahead (west) of the Handler, and whose tail (S-Cauda) consists of about three notable stars slanting upward and eastward. And pleasant as it may be to watch that inter-species couple soaring and modestly sparkling, the experience pales compared to being one half of such a combo oneself.

Once in a hurried effort to get a hefty bullsnake, that was lazing on the warm gravel of our township road, out of the way of an approaching dump truck, I had only my bike as a prod and the snake wrapped around my rear wheel, amongst the spokes, so that I was able to carry it aside, and then spent ten to fifteen minutes convincing it to let loose. One of our sons tells of a time when he found himself standing three feet from an aroused bullsnake before the message his feet had sent to his brain was relayed on to tell him he'd stepped on it. Sue was not quite that fast when she stepped on a curled and sleeping bullsnake this May while hiking on the same ridge of our not-yet-hayed prairie. The snake just rose in an *en garde* position, but when I came to observe, it came directly at me, tongue a-flicker. It had no fangs but I didn't want it to mistake my leg for a bicycle tire, so we retreated, and probably wouldn't mention the event, except that four more occurred in the same month.

A week earlier I was hiking near the bottom of that ridge when I noticed what must have been the same snake--the same five-foot-length and healthy body--moving along in its own way about an arm's reach to one side. For about a dozen of my paces we traveled along together, then it angled closer heading

toward a plum patch. I paused and felt rather like a motorist letting a streamliner glide by in front of me, the sensation lacking only the sound of a diesel horn. Then a few days after Sue's jump the bullsnake and I met peacefully again, again only about an arm's reach (or a snake's strike) apart. Only that time I was heading east and it was heading west as if determined to get to Denver on time. In between times a black snake of similar size twice uncoiled and scooted out from beneath my descending foot and disappeared into the grass with scarcely more ripple than an arrow would have made.

My personal folklore tells me that bullsnakes and black snakes, like racers and the more brightly colored milk snakes, are more active than the venomous pit vipers and thus tend to starve the latter out of situations where more active hunting is required. So five such encounters in one month is at least a reassuring record, for those hiking acres now have even taller and denser vegetation.

Overhead, the celestial Snake is just supporting cast for this summer's show. The four brightest planets will be out partnering with some of the brightest stars. July 3rd the Moon has a duet with Jupiter for pre-dawn risers, and a performance with Taurus's bright red eye, Aldebaran, for the same audience on the 9th. That evening and the 10th Venus brazenly outshines bright Regulus in Leo, and that duo makes a trio with the Moon on the 13th. On the 15th the thickening Moon passes beneath Saturn (to the left) and reddish Mars (to the right) on its way to join Scorpio's reddish Antares (to its right) on the 21st.

Throughout August Venus, the gleam, Mars, the ruby, and just plain Saturn will be dancing close about each other with Virgo's brightest, Spica, as chaperon at a non-intrusive distance. The Moon joins the dance the 12th while angling to get close to Spica the 14th. On the 17th the Moon revisits Antares, and performs again with Jupiter, all night, on the 26th. StarDate notes that Venus will not be performing as high up as usual because of the relative tilt of orbits. And the Moon will bow out to let the Perseid meteor show have full stage the 11th-12th. In July Moon is new the 11th, 2p40, and full the 25th, 8p37. New in August the 9th, 10p08; full the 24th, 12p05.

© Peter Zachary Cohen

NO EASY PICKIN'S DRU CLARKE



I knew the wild strawberries were ripe when I saw Smokey's flanks. She's a big grey mare and her sides were streaked with rosy flourishes: she had been rolling in them. The berries were hard to miss: a perfect combination of moisture, temperature, light and pollinators (who fertilize the flowers so fruit is set) made the open prairie and ravines a red tufted cascading carpet. Spreading by runners (vegetatively) and not by seeds (which are vestigial on the surface of the berry), *Fragaria virginiana*, our wild strawberry, is one of the joys of rural life and maintaining native landscapes.

I don't work for anyone else in June because it is berry picking time. Usually it is wild black raspberries (back east it was wineberries but they didn't ripen until July), but this year's bonanza crop of strawberries was hard to pass up. The Native Americans believe that the strawberry is shaped like a heart because it symbolizes the love of the First Man and the First Woman. They call it the "heartberry" This is a good name for it as it requires a labor of love to harvest it. The picking is a backbreaking endeavor, requiring strong lumbar flexibility; it helps, too, if one needs to feel penitent about some character flaw in order to be in the proper self-flagellating frame of mind. I figure about an hour of labor, including picking and hulling, per cup of berries (and probably sweat, too). Not to mention the sweat bees and biting flies who attend this ritual.

Most of the berries covered an eroded ravine that dipped to the north off a high and flat piece of prairie. It had a full complement of rough-leaved dogwood and some sumac and an assortment of forbs, including catchaw sensitive brier that added a prickly element to the enterprise. I conned my husband into picking one morning, promising him something delicious for his help. The big dog had to come along and squished several large patches where

he lay. I even caught him eating some! We negotiated the berries by trying to stay on the meandering trails the horses had made on the hillside.

After about half an hour, a brown thrasher began scolding us from the branches of a dogwood. It was no more than a few feet away. My husband almost brushed with his hand a fist-sized thrasher chick, streaked like his parent, holding fast in the dense

underbrush. We politely moved our picking over to another rich patch, and the thrasher parent finally calmed down. Soon we heard its repetitive mimicking song (they can make several thousand different sounds). It was declaring that this was its habitat. A quintet of cowbirds, clinging to the upper boughs of a scraggly shrub, decided to check out the action, and they began "serenading" (if you could call it that) us as well. They moved on and I wondered if one had laid an

egg in the thrasher nest and that was why the chick was on the ground. We never did find the nest.

My guesstimate of labor per cup was correct as I measured our haul when we returned to the kitchen. Although small, the berries are fragrant and flavorful and I think worth the effort. There is a wood strawberry that resembles the wild strawberry, but its flower is yellow, not white, and it is relatively tasteless in comparison. Some of the ones we collected will become jam, while others will go into a strawberry-rhubarb pie or a cobbler. But we left plenty for the box turtles and whatever other wild life enjoys them.

© Dru Clarke June 2010



INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY RESULTS

JIM THRONE

Saturday, May 8th, was a beautiful day for the count. It was cool (38°) and then windy early, but it was 60°, calmer, and sunny by noon.

We had another good year for sparrows, with counts of 793 chipping, 23 clay-colored, 2 vesper, 162 lark, 73 savannah, 4 grasshopper, 1 LeConte's, 7 song, 7 Lincoln's, 12 white-throated, 248 white-crowned, and 165 Harris'. We didn't count any cuckoos the last two years, so it was nice to see and hear several of them in the Ashland Bottoms area. Warblers are always a pleasure to see and hear, and we counted Tennessee, orange-crowned, Nashville, yellow, yellow-rumped, myrtle, black-and-white, Wilson's, Louisiana waterthrushes, northern parulas, and American redstarts. We counted 8 rose-breasted grosbeaks, a beautiful bird, and a lazuli bunting, which we don't see on the count most years. People who stayed for owling heard barred, screech, and great-horned owls along with whip-poor-wills and chuck-will's-widows. Total number of species counted was 138, with a total of 5,599 birds.

We had eight groups participating: Frank and Cheryl Arthur; Jim and Leslie Campbell; Jim Koelliker, Lowell Johnson, Marla and Nathan Shoemaker, and Mike and Nikki Strobe; Beth Montelone; Jack Oviatt and Mark Hollingsworth; Jim and Janet Throne; and Patricia Yeager, Kevin Fay, Kathleen Jones, Nancy Miller, and Jacque Staats. I want to thank everyone who participated this year, and please contact me if you'd like to participate in one of these groups or form your own group next year.

Jim Throne, jim.throne@sbcglobal.net

WHAT ARE YOU SEEING?

Members are invited - encouraged! - to share their birding experiences: favorite bird, what you're seeing now, what did you see on a trip? Please contact Cindy Jeffrey - cinraney@k-state.edu, or call after 5 p.m. 785-468-3587 (home).



Mexican Long-tongued bats - Arizona,
photo by Dave Rintoul

Dave has finally
grown feathers!

Headress from
opera in Manaus,
Brazil!

*Photo courtesy of
Whitney Messecar*



WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE NFHAS? LOTS!!

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO OUR PLEA FOR HELP!!!

Thank you to **Donna Rober** for stepping forward to become our new Secretary.

Thank you to **Susan Pusker** for stepping forward to take over Treasurer duties.

Thank you to **Joe Mosier** for cleaning up the the Cecil Best Trail, thank you "mosein Joe."

Now -- any one out there interested in the Butterfly Garden?

We have inherited a trust that is the stewardship of a real estate property. Unfortunately, the first trust holders were not responsible stewards of the trust and that left us with a condemned house full of junk that we needed to clear out and a house to demolish. The next step is to create a pleasant bird sanctuary at the location. (Inez's will makes it quite clear that the property cannot be sold by the trustees.)

A great big thank you to the volunteers Donna Roper, Dru and Mike Clarke, Jacque Staats and Dick Oberst, Kevin Fay, Amy Rintoul, Kent Yeager, Clyde and Marilena Ferguson and Carla Bishop for working on the Inez Alsop Bird Sanctuary project.

Two industrial sized dumpsters were filled and hauled off. This house de-junking was a yucky, un-airconditioned job but with this congenial crew we made it through.

Our neighbors at the Holiday Inn are so happy that we are making a park at this location that the management is maintaining the lawn currently and has committed to maintaining the park should we desire them to.

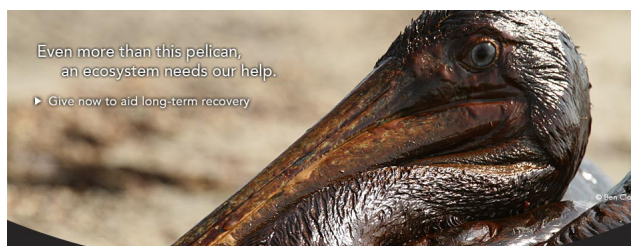
Other ways to help with this project are: 1. accept as many loads of laundry as you will and donate them to your favorite charity after you have cleaned them. Call Patricia 776-9593 and I will deliver laundry to your doorstep. 2. Look through your house and donate anything except clothing to the auction. I hope to have the auction in August. It will be necessary to keep the item(s) at your house until just before the auction. This will help fund the project. We are also using some money that Inez donated to Northern Flint Hills Audubon 20 years ago. The time has finally come to make a bird sanctuary she would be proud of.

Patricia Yeager, President

Cornell Lab of Ornithology has received more than 207,000 reports of birds from Gulf Coast states since May 4, including 12 species observed with oiled plumage. These data will be used to help in immediate and long-term recovery efforts.

Visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology website - for the latest on the oil spill:
www.birds.cornell.edu/netcommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1478

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Exploring and Conserving Nature



Even more than this pelican,
an ecosystem needs our help.
► Give now to aid long-term recovery



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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
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Membership Information: Introductory memberships - \$20/yr., then basic, renewal membership is \$35/yr. When you join the National Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society. You will receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine in addition to the Prairie Falcon newsletter. New membership applications should be sent to National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are also handled by the National Audubon Society. Questions about membership? Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org. Website is www.audubon.org.

Subscription Information: If you do not want to receive the national magazine, but still want to be involved in NFHAS 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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Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email:

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