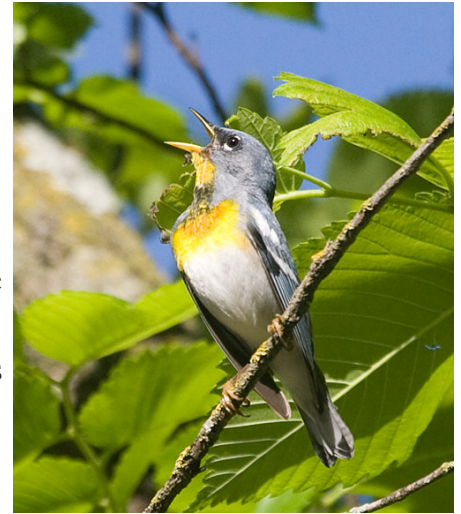


# Migratory Bird Day

The spring International Migratory Bird Day count will be held on Saturday, May 14. We have several parts of Riley County that were not covered last year, so if anyone wants an area or wants to join an existing group, please e-mail me at [jim.throne@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jim.throne@sbcglobal.net). The expectation is that you count all birds heard or seen in your assigned area, and provide a list to me with some trip information. I then compile the information for the county, and submit the list to eBird.org. Zealots like myself will be birding from dawn to dusk, and will also spend some time owling; but, others spend just part of the day birding. This is a great excuse to spend the day birding, so please consider joining us.

Jim Throne



*Northern Parula*

*Photo by Dave Rintoul*

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 39, No. 9 ~ May 2011

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### Upcoming Events

**May 9 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.**  
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

**May 14 - Spring Migratory Bird Count**  
Sat. Morning Birding 8 a.m.  
Meet at Sojourner Truth Park

**Jun. 5 - Wildflower Walk, Konza Prairie**  
6:30 p.m. (Non FOKP members \$10)

**Jun. 6 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.**  
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

**Jun. 14 - Sat. Morning Birding 8 a.m.**  
Meet at Sojourner Truth Park



## Skylight plus

### Pete Cohen

Last month I left the new steamboat New Orleans battling down the Mississippi despite the aftershocks of the great 1811 earthquake centered near New Madrid, Missouri, and I mentioned that simultaneously there were other serious vibrations at work, though not geologically, in sum making this year a notable bicentennial.

Those vibrations were in the making in 1763 when the British nominally won all the western territory of New France in America, and issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which attempted to decree a restrained, peaceful European occupation of the lands of the indigenous peoples west of the Appalachians. This hopeless edict was followed by a great flood of non-indigenous emigration into that fertile region.

Fertile though it was, those who took hold there began discovering that among the hardships and dangers of the frontier invasion, there was another devil among the details. To obtain further supplies and to get their produce to wider markets they had two muscle-powered choices. Wagons back over the rocky mountain roads, or rafts or keelboats down the Ohio-Mississippi artery. The current helped that way, but only one way, and it was a clogged, difficult artery, as was also mentioned. The cost of transportation was overburdening, and harsh economic times meant restless dissatisfaction, which started some contemplating the possibilities of separation from the eastern states and the opportunities that might come of association, or war, with Spain, whose lands were not far distant across the Mississippi, even after the Louisiana Purchase.

There remains speculation that Zebulon Pike, when he crossed these Flint Hills westward with two dozen men in 1806, was an agent for a possible cabal to include the former Vice President, Aaron

Burr, along with James Wilkinson, one-time Kentucky merchant, one-time general of the U.S. armies, and at that time the first governor of Louisiana Territory, who had been all the while receiving an annual retainer of \$3000 from Spain. Plus an Irishman, Harman Blennerhassett, who began stocking his Ohio island estate as an arsenal, with the first goal the establishment of an independent settlement across the Mississippi on the Washita.

Pike had been sent forth by Wilkinson, and took extreme risks to cross the Rockies in winter to enter the Spanish territory his orders told him to avoid. Some of his men suffered terribly, but were rescued by Spanish soldiers who happened to be in the area. Pike's contingent was arrested as spies, and then conducted, by Pike's account, toward Santa Fe with the enjoyment at every town encountered, of a fandango with the señoritas all in their best regalia. And then was given a grand tour of the conditions of northern Mexico as he was returned to the U.S. in Louisiana. Could some ambitious Spanish officials, far removed from Mexico City, have been interested in a high position in a domain that might reach from Kentucky to New Mexico? If so, they would be available as events moved toward 1811.

What will be most available in the sky this May is Saturn, in full vigor in Virgo all night long. A lone planet. The other four naked-eye-visible ones will be grouped low in the eastern horizon from the 9<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup>. Venus will naturally be the brightest to show in the dawn light with reticent Mercury lower yet to the right. Jupiter, less shy, will gradually move from Venus' lower left to upper right. Mars will be near Mercury but it may take binocs to see its tiny blush.

El Moon will be below and right of :Regulus of Leo the 10<sup>th</sup>, between Saturn (above) and Spica the 14<sup>th</sup>, above Scorpio's Antares the 17<sup>th</sup> and with Jupiter in the dawns of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. The Eta Aquarid meteor shower is due the 5<sup>th</sup>.

Moon will be new the 3rd at 1a51, and full the 17th at 6a09.

©2011 Peter Zachary Cohen

# Greening Up

## Dru Clarke



Pushing limber branches of cedars aside, we bent and maneuvered gingerly as we moved along a deer trail, looking for drops, antlers shed by whitetail bucks. A tuft of new grass in a round of eroding soil had been clipped neatly by the teeth of a horse. How they find this late winter sprouting is a mystery. And what stimulates it is even a deeper one: perhaps the lengthening daylight, as subtle as it is, is enough. The deer had left frills of frayed bark and cambium on the tips of dogwood and sumac and buck brush, the tender terminal buds offering sustenance until a full greening up emerges. Everywhere, the grasses were readying themselves, pumped up by pooling warmth. An archive of satellite images of the Appalachians greening up through spring and early summer reveals exquisite portraits of macro-environments, but a walk like this one to “ground truth” Earth’s places gives meaning and a “sense” to them.

On the pond, three wood ducks rose up, disturbed by our shuffling footfalls and exclamations of surprise. Our neighbor to the west has a woodland pond, the surrounding trees outfitted with nesting boxes for these ornate beauties. Their coming to our pond for a visit was neighborly in itself. Everywhere, birds were courting: in late January, we saw great horned owls couple in the early morning hours in a tall walnut tree at the edge of our meadow. (The “checking out”—silent and still—was inordinately long compared to the actual mating, which was only a few seconds.) Cardinals—it seems several males to every female – are flitting about, and bluebirds call with abandon.

It is now early April, and we have been to Washington D.C. as the blossoms on the Yoshino cherry trees, given as a present by the Japanese, were to burst into bloom. (The original trees, given in the 1870s, were found to be diseased and had to be burned, so these were from others given in 1912.) The tidal basin in front of the Jefferson Memorial was wreathed in a froth of drifting pink. Spring comes

sooner on the coast— it is, after all, a maritime climate, tempered by the more constant temperature of the ocean nearby—and it was about to set in. As we walked the path rimming the basin where grew some of the original trees, today gnarled and wizened by age, we thought about the horror of the devastating earthquake and ensuing tsunami that plunged the Japanese and their spring into a time of deep despair: this week’s cover of *the New Yorker*, cherry blossoms morphed into glowing pink nuclear icons, took my breath away when I saw it. At home, our cherry trees’ buds are tightly bound, leery of the season’s vagaries that are not to be trusted. But, at Arlington National Cemetery, the mockingbirds were back: one lighted on a navy captain’s gravestone and spread its wings in grace, capturing the sun’s midday warmth. I watched it for a while, and it seemed to be regarding me quizzically. There are some who come back to the edge of our land and nest in the scrubby trees that have grown there, but I haven’t heard them yet. Research shows that mockingbirds recognize individual peoples’ faces among thousands: I wonder if the Arlington bird would give me a nod if I returned?

Today, I walked the same path through the woods to the pond that we took weeks ago. Gooseberry leaves, tiny scalloped rosettes of green, are fully out, but the coral berry (buck brush) is more reticent, its leaves tiny nubbins protruding from the twigs. Everything else seems to be holding its breath, waiting for some unseen or unheard signal. Could it be the chorus frog calling from a wet place? This year, even more than ever after a brutal winter, spring will be welcome, in this place we are coming to know.

© Dru Clarke April 2011



# Whooping Cranes in Texas

Tom & MJ Mogan



Looks like an impressionist painting!



MJ and I took a spring break in Texas a few weeks ago. We took a whooping crane tour on Captain Tommy Moore's Skimmer, a shallow-draft boat well-suited for getting close to birds in Aransas Bay. After just a few heartbeats on the open water, the moment arrived. A mated pair of cranes and their grown up baby patrolled a wetland for scarce food, as our 45-foot long boat nudged against the bank. After the outboard engines were turned off, the relative silence informed me. Yes, it won't get much better than this. We focused binoculars on the tall, stately, white birds. I snapped photos with an antiquated camera, focusing on the slow ballet of the whooping cranes' movements. I stepped over to a spotting scope and focused. Suddenly I was in the wetland with them. I was one of them, feeling the wind rustling the downy white and the short plumes. This was why I had come. This was the purpose of my lungs breathing air. I was with them!

Comfortable woven afghans draped the seats, and free wine was provided in tiny cups, and there was bright sun. Captain Moore's Skimmer bounced on the crests, like a stone skipping across the bay. Vroooooom! For a second, our spirits skipped free.

## Take note

**“No matter how “green” a building is in using recyclable building materials, addressing energy conservation, hydrology, and erosion, it is not “green” to me if it kills birds, unintended victims that are the result of strikes against clear panes with habitat visible on the other side, or against reflective panes offering an illusion of the facing habitat and sky.” -- Daniel Klem Jr.**

### **Migratory birds run afoul of green buildings**

**Conservation groups urge building owners to adopt avian-friendly designs**

**April 13, 2011 | By Sheryl DeVore, Tribune reporter**

[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-04-13/news/ct-x-c-fbi-birds-20110413\\_1\\_migratory-birds-annette-prince-bird-friendly](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-04-13/news/ct-x-c-fbi-birds-20110413_1_migratory-birds-annette-prince-bird-friendly)

### **Ornilux Bird Safe Glass: A Solution for Bird Friendly Architecture**

<http://www.green-buildings.com/content/781780-ornilux-bird-safe-glass-collision-friendly-architecture>



Start thinking **NOW** about being on the NFHAS board. We meet once a month. Planning for the new year is at the **JUNE** meeting. So if you have ideas **BRING THEM** to the June meeting or contact a board member.

**E-Newsletter:** If you wish to opt out of the “paper” Prairie Falcon newsletter and get it on-line as a pdf - send your name and email address to Jacques Staats - [staats@wildblue.net](mailto:staats@wildblue.net)





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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](mailto:join@audubon.org). Website is [www.audubon.org](http://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](mailto:list_serve@ksu.edu)> and join in the discussions.

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