

# Birdathon Results

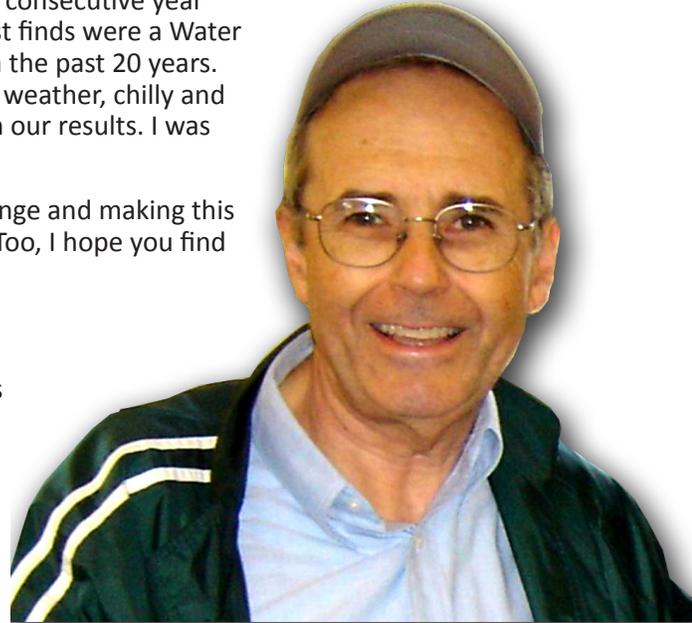
Jim Koelliker

The 38th annual Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Birdathon, April 22-23, was the effort of seven teams who searched an area generally centered on Manhattan. The members of our seven teams reported their species to me and are shown on page 4 and 5. This 2-page report is my effort to continue the more than 20-year effort to show the species found, 106 this year. On our website [nfhas.org](http://nfhas.org), under Bird Blog you can find the entire document of the past 20 year. Unusual species found this year are shown on page 4-5, and our Best Birds of 2023. The Fish crows continue to be found for the fourth consecutive year and they are now spread out rather widely in the area. Other best finds were a Water pipit, first timer, and four others found only five or fewer times in the past 20 years. Our biggest misses are listed on that same page. Considering the weather, chilly and generally windy, and other personal limitations, I am thrilled with our results. I was hoping to exceed one hundred.

I always enjoy working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge and making this detailed report helps me be even more aware of our local birds. Too, I hope you find this report interesting & informative.

Yes, this report is a request for your financial support for the Northern Flint Hills Chapter of the Audubon Society. This effort is our primary fund-raising activity. Last year over sixty contributors generously donated almost \$4,000 that the chapter put to effective use to support our efforts in the area.

I am again asking for your support for my team and/or any of the others who made this effort a success by completing the form on page 5 and sending it along with your check or cash to me, Jim Koelliker, at 3500 Mintons Lndg, Manhattan, KS 66503.



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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

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### Upcoming Events

- June 6 - Board meeting - 5:30 Public Library
- June 10 - Sat. morning birding  
8:00 am Depart from Sojourner Truth Park**



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

I think this column should take note of a movement in progress that can be approached by a number of routes, one being to Google 'Homegrown National Parks.' For some this will bring a recollection of the 'Victory Gardens' promoted during WW2 when various foodstuffs were rationed, and anyone with dirt a few inches deep, whether in a field, yard, or pot, was encouraged to plant something edible to help reduce the wartime shortages.

At that time the enemy involved was specific nations; the peril that the movement mentioned is rising against is global, around us as well as afar: the shrinking amount of biotic diversity. The alarm over this topic is not new, though the problems of the larger species seem to have been getting more wide attention than that of the less visible organisms. And there appears little an individual without a large fortune can do to help the big ones, but one can make a mark with, indeed, just a pot, regarding the tiny creatures that are essential to keeping the environment as we know it going.

The "**Homegrown National Parks**" title derives from the concept that national parks help preserve a native ecology and that individuals can create small parks in their own right.

Our yard, once prairie, features a variety of flora that survive our unnatural but needful periodic mowing. But variety is not necessarily diversity, because those plants are not of a kind to participate in the ecology of the natural surroundings. In that regard they occupy sterile space. Now we've added two small patches marked by surveyors' flags that we mow around. Broadcast there (and stomped in) are some seeds of *Gaillardia pulchella*, a native plant suffering from decreasing habitat. Hopefully their red and yellow flowers will arise, if not this year, then whenever right conditions obtain. And when they do they will potentially have a very active social life, attracting and offering sustenance to mobile native fauna who will connect them and thereby add them to other areas with native growth. If enough such polka dots occur in a region the effect will be cumulative.

We received our seeds from Margy Stewart who, with her husband, Ron Young, for the past 25 years have been managing their land for both biodiversity and grazing, preserving 250 acres of native uplands, while restoring 70 acres of former crop fields to a native polyculture that might one day approximate original bottomland prairie.

One time, when mobility-challenged herself, she spent evenings, camera ready, keeping company with the *Gaillardia* by the house, recording the visitations of butterflies, moths, bees, flies, fungus weevils, wing-capable ants, and other foragers, as well as their predators, and then researching their identities, establishing how even one small planting can help keep alive a native environment that is threatened to be overwhelmed by new introductions and new methods that do not interact.

A fuller account may be obtained by visiting her substack at <https://margystewart.substack.com/p/at-home-in-the-land-welcome-to-gaillardia>. There you can also subscribe for a continuing update.

Among the polka dots in the sky Venus continues to be outstanding, appearing aligned with the Gemini Twins in the evening dusk the 2nd, gleaming incrementally still brighter moving into Cancer the 4th, and achieving its maximum 4.7 magnitude brilliance entering Leo on the 30th. Northern summer arrives 9a58 CDT the 21st and that evening Venus, a dim Mars, and the Moon will be close together in a line as daylight fades.

The Moon will begin the month on the 1st almost hooked on a star named Zubenelgenube, whose Arabic name, as described here some months ago, identifies it as the southern claw of the Scorpion, though since insertion of Libra into the roster of constellations, it is considered the alpha star of that group. The Moon, at the full the 3rd, nearly bumps into Scorpius' brightest star, the reddish Antares.

On the 22nd the Moon will be to the right of Leo's Regulus with Venus and Mars to its lower right. Spica, the chief star of Virgo gets to visit with the Moon at nightfall the 27th, and Antares has another visit the 30th.

The Moon will be technically full the 3rd at 10p42, new the 17th at 11p37.

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# Along the Red Vermillion

Dru Clarke



A legacy exists beside the Red Vermillion, a rubble-bottomed river stretching from near Onaga where Clear Creek and the Big Nemaha join, south to its confluence with the Kansas River. A few miles north of that juncture lie the remains of fifty or more westward-bound settlers on the Oregon Trail who succumbed to the ravages of cholera, a water-borne bacterium that can kill in one day. Bound by chain link, once topped by razor wire, are two large and rough, and one small, stones marking three of the graves. More are buried on the hill to the east, according to local amateur historian Lauranell Stewart, 93-year-old matriarch of the Wamego Historical Museum. (Cholera spores remain in the soil for years, and grow when exposed to water, so it is unclear why the razor wire, placed to keep out marauding wildlife who might disturb the soil, was removed.)

The crossing of the river was by a toll bridge, originally built by a Potawatomi man, Charles Dean in 1853, then bought and managed by Louis Vieux, a Potawatomi Indian who was pivotal in the resolution of allotments for the tribe members who had been removed and resettled to the area. Originally from Wisconsin (near Milwaukee), his parents were Jacques Vieux (one of many spellings), a voyageur and fur trader, and Angelique Roy, granddaughter of Menominee chief Ahkenepoweh. Louis married Sha Note (known as Charlotte), daughter of Chesaugan, a headman of the St. Joseph band of Potawatomi. That family and many more had been forcibly removed from their northern territories, and from Indiana to Linn County, Kansas on a march known as the Trail of Death. Leaders were placed in cages drawn by their 'captors' so that their tribe members would follow to their destination.

Wagons meeting the river, before the bridge was built, were lowered by ropes down the steep banks, floated across, then hauled up on the opposite bank. Louis charged \$1 per wagon and made sometimes over \$300 a day. He built stables and a blacksmith shop and it became one of the main way stations along stagecoach routes. (It should be noted that there is a solid rock stretch upstream from the site of the bridge where it was possible for wagons to ford the stream when the flow was low.)

Near the southwest side of the Red Vermillion grew a magnificent American Elm tree, recognized in 1979 as the largest elm in the United States (it had been recognized earlier by the state of Kansas). It was a sapling in 1716 and lived through significant historical events in our nation, until its eventual demise caused by lightning strikes and subsequent vandalism. (It miraculously escaped Dutch Elm disease.) In its maturity, it reached a height of 99 feet, a crown spread of 133 feet, and a circumference of 23 feet 2 inches. In 1960 it took ten men, plus a portion of an eleventh, with arms outstretched to encircle the tree. Today a memorial has been established on its site, noting the passage of those who traveled on the Oregon Trail.

In the 1970's the Corps of Engineers planned to build a dam on the Red Vermillion that would have created a reservoir covering 130,00 acres of rich bottomland. The cholera cemetery, the elm, and the Louis Vieux cemetery where he, his relatives, and others are buried would have been impacted (though not drowned) by the construction. My students and I, through a Conservation Science and Society class project, did an environmental impact statement whose data we took to county meetings set up by U.S. representative Jim Jeffries. The residents of the Vermillion valley rallied and formed an association that joined us in our efforts to save the watershed's environmental, historical, and agricultural riches. Whether our efforts paid off or not, the dam was deauthorized in the early '80s. (We'd like to think we had something to do with that.)

Today, revisiting the sites aroused nostalgia and respect for all those who passed by, settled, or perished. At the foot of the hill where the Vieux cemetery is, lies, tucked in, a stone cave, a perfectly arched structure, shelter perhaps for early settlers. In front is

a metal-covered stand to hold a guest book. Several years ago, an old book, worn and tattered and water-marked, I rescued and gave to the director of public works for safekeeping. In it were names from all over the world, people retracing the Oregon Trail or re-establishing connections with relatives who may have passed this way. I replaced it with two others; they were still there, four years later. Again, visitors came from all over. Happily, the sites are still there to visit, to be humbled by, and to marvel over. They are not under an opaque lake to be merely wondered about. And, too, while the champion elm is no longer there to watch over passersby, its offspring – six, to be exact – form a protective arc at the edge of the field flanking the memorial. The legacy is alive and well.



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# Birdathon Results

Jim Koelliker

## 2023 Birdathon Composite Species Report, April 22 and 23 TOTAL = 106

In addition to my party, Koelliker, six other parties reported their efforts to find species in a general area from north to Olsburg, south to White City, east to Lake Elbo and west to Keats. Weather was very chilly and windy.

Koelliker, Hawes & Donnelly  
Yeager, Blackford & Fay  
Taylor & Jeffrey  
Johnson  
Starts  
Hebert  
Bower

Koelliker, Hawes & Donnelly  
Yeager, Blackford & Fay  
Taylor & Jeffrey  
Johnson  
Starts  
Hebert  
Bower

Loons & Grebes							
Pied-billed Grebe	K						
Pelicans & Cormorants							
Double-crested Cormorant	K	Y	T	J			
Wading Birds							
Great Blue Heron	K	Y	T	J		H	
Great Egret	K		T				
Snowy Egret	K		T	J			
White-faced Ibis				J			
Waterfowl							
Canada Goose	K	Y	T	J			
Wood Duck	K		T	J			
Green-Winged Teal	K	Y	T				
Mallard		Y					
Blue-winged Teal	K	Y	T	J		H	
Northern Shoveler	K		T	J			
Gadwall	K		T				
Ring-necked Duck	K						
Diurnal Raptors							
Turkey Vulture	K	Y	T	J	S	H	
Osprey	K		T			H	
Bald Eagle	K		T				
Northern Harrier		Y	T				
Sharp-Shinned Hawk			T				
Cooper's Hawk	K				S		
Red-Shouldered Hawk			T		S		
Swainson's Hawk			T			H	
Red-Tailed Hawk	K	Y	T	J	S	H	
American Kestrel		Y	T	J			
Fowl							
Greater Prairie-Chicken	K		T				
Wild Turkey	K	Y	T	J	S	H	
Northern Bobwhite	K		T				
Marsh Birds							
American Coot	K	Y	T	J			
Shorebirds							
Killdeer	K	Y	T				
American Avocet	K	Y		J			
Greater Yellowlegs	K						
Lesser Yellowlegs	K	Y		J			
Upland Sandpiper	K					H	
Pectoral Sandpiper	K	Y		J			
Gulls & Terns							
Franklin's Gull	K	Y	T				
Bonaparte's Gull				J			
Ring-billed Gull	K	Y					
Doves & Cuckoos							
Rock Dove (Pigeon)	K						
Mourning Dove	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B
Eurasian Collared Dove	K	Y	T			H	
Owls							
Great Horned Owl	K						
Barred Owl	K	Y	T				
Goatsuckers, Swifts, Hummingbirds & Kingfishers							
Common Poor-Will	K						
Whip-Poor-Will	K						
Chimney Swift		Y					
Belted Kingfisher	K	Y	T				
Woodpeckers							
Red-Headed Woodpecker	K	Y					
Red-Bellied Woodpecker	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B

Jays & Crows							
Blue Jay	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B
American Crow	K	Y	T	J	S	H	
Fish Crow	K		T				
Titmice, Nuthatches & Creepers							
Black-capped Chickadee	K	Y	T		S	H	B
Tufted Titmouse	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B
Red-Breasted Nuthatch							B
White-Breasted Nuthatch	K	Y	T		S		B
Wrens							
Carolina Wren	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B
House Wren	K						
Kinglets & Gnatcatchers							
Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher	K	Y	T				
Thrushes							
Eastern Bluebird	K	Y	T	J	S		
American Robin	K	Y	T	J	S		
Thrashers (Mimic Thrushes)							
Gray Catbird	K						
Northern Mockingbird						H	
Brown Thrasher	K	Y	T				
Pipits, Waxwings, Shrikes & Starlings							
Water Pipit			T				
Cedar Waxwing		Y		J	S	H	
European Starling	K	Y	T	J		H	
Vireos							
Yellow-Throated Vireo			T				
Wood Warblers							
Northern Parula	K	Y	T			H	
Yellow-Rumped Warbler	K	Y	T				
Louisiana Waterthrush			T				
Tanagers							
Summer Tanager	K						
Grosbeaks & Buntings							
Northern Cardinal	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B
Indigo Bunting		Y					
Sparrows							
Spotted Towhee	K	Y	T				
Chipping Sparrow	K	Y	T	J			
Field Sparrow	K		T				
Vesper Sparrow			T	J			
Lark Sparrow	K	Y		J			
Savannah Sparrow	K	Y	T	J			
Grasshopper Sparrow		Y					
Song Sparrow			T	J			
Lincoln's Sparrow			T	J			
White-throated Sparrow	K	Y	T	J			
White-crowned Sparrow	K		T				
Harris' Sparrow	K	Y	T	J	S	H	
Blackbirds, Meadowlarks & Orioles							
Red-Winged Blackbird	K	Y	T	J		H	
Eastern Meadowlark	K	Y	T	J	S	H	
Western Meadowlark		Y					
Yellow-Headed Blackbird	K	Y					
Common Grackle	K	Y	T	J		H	
Brown-Headed Cowbird	K	Y	T	J			
Finches							
House Finch	K	Y	T	J	S	H	B
American Goldfinch	K		T	J	S		B
House Sparrow							
House Sparrow	K	Y		J		H	

Pileated Woodpecker			T		S		
Downy Woodpecker	K	Y	T		S		B
Hairy Woodpecker		Y					
Northern Flicker	K	Y	T	J			
<b>Flycatchers</b>							
Eastern Phoebe	K		T	J	S	H	
Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher			T			H	
<b>Larks</b>							
Horned Lark	K		T				
<b>Swallows</b>							
Purple Martin		Y		J			
Tree Swallow	K	Y	T	J			
N. Rough-Winged Swallow	K	Y					
Cliff Swallow	K		T	J			
Barn Swallow	K	Y	T				

Total by Party =		81	63	73	48	24	29	12
		<b>106 = TOTAL</b>						
Participants (Party) -- Alphabetically		e-mail	Telephone					
Susan Blackford (Y)								
Merry Bower (B)		mdbower@ksu.edu	feeder watcher					
Michael Donnelly (K)		donnelly@ksu.edu						
Kevin Fay (Y)								
Jane Withee Hebert (n)		jwhebert@icloud.com						
Carole Ann Harbers, for Koelliker		cazh61@hotmail.com	feeder watcher					
Joe Hawes (K)		joe.mem1@gmail.com						
Jay Jeffrey (T)								
Lowell Johnson (J)		ljohnson@ksu.edu						
Jim Koelliker (K)		koellik@sbcglobal.net						
Jacque Staats (S)								
Scott Taylor (T)		staylor@pheasantsforever.org						
Patricia Yeager (Y)		pyeagerbirder@gmail.com						
Estimated Total Effort		Mile Hours (estimated totals for all effort)						
By Car		210 14.5 All between about 9 a.m.						
On Foot:		8 12.0 Saturday until 9 a.m.						
Other -- feeder watching		0 7.0 Sunday morning						
Total		218 33.5						
Owling		1 (all before or after daylight)						



**Fish Crow – 4th time found, but they are now here often.**



**Water Pipit – 1st time found**



**Snowy Egret – 4th time found**

## Best Birds of 2023

*Biggest misses this year: American white pelican, Ruddy duck, Spotted sandpiper, Warbling vireo, Orange-crowned warbler, plus Eastern and western kingbirds.*



**American Avocet – 4th time found**



**Pileated Woodpecker – 5th time found**



**White-faced Ibis – 3rd time found**

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