

2026 BIRDATHON REPORT *May 2026*

Dear Friends,

The 42nd annual Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Birdathon, April 25-26, was the effort of seven teams who searched in an area generally centered on Manhattan. Our teams were very successful and found a total of 137 species, another new record. The third and fourth pages, Spring 2026 Birdathon Report, show those we found, the birders who reported their findings, and the local areas we all searched. We were blessed with seasonal weather and no muddy roads. The members of all the other teams who reported their species to me are shown at the bottom of Page 4 of this Report (*see page 4-5 of this newsletter*). This report is my effort to continue the more than 20-year effort to show the species found. This year my team, Koelliker, identified the 100 species in the '26 column, and the 37 additional species not found by my team, but found by at least one other team, are identified by "A." The row for each species shows the years that species was found in the previous twenty years.

Unusual species found this year are shown on the fifth page, Best Birds of 2026. Favorable conditions aided us in finding five species, Semipalmated Plover, Eastern Wood Pewee, White-Eyed Vireo, Yellow-Breasted Chat, and Scarlet Tanager, for the first time. Every year we miss several species that we expect to find. Our biggest misses are listed on that same page. I am thrilled with our results. I was happy my team Koelliker met my goal of finding 100. Unfortunately, my continuing this effort in now my eighth decade is getting more challenging. Many thanks to the other teams for their assistance in capturing the most complete picture of local species.

I have enjoyed working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge of the birding, but continuing to make this detailed report has become more than I can handle going forward. I do hope you find this last report from me both interesting and 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 Chapter's primary fund-raising activity. Last year over forty contributors generously donated more than \$3,000 that the chapter put to effective use to support our efforts in the area.

I am again asking you to support my team and/or the other teams who made this effort a success by completing the form on the last page of this report and sending it along with your check or cash to me, Jim Koelliker, 321 Fordham Rd., Manhattan, KS 66503 or directly to Birdathon NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932.

I hope you find this report interesting and useful. I look forward to your support of this 42nd Annual Birdathon!

(Full report pages 4-7) Also on our website: nfhas.org

Thank You!



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 53, No.10, June 2026

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Dru Clarke

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Cindy Jeffrey/Patricia Yeager

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Jim Koelliker

Upcoming Events

June 2 - Board Meeting, Manhattan Public Library
Study Room 1, at 5:30 pm

June 3, 10, 17, 24 Help @ Alsop Bird Sanctuary Garden
MLK Jr. Blvd and Laramie 8-10 am

June 28 - Birding
Last Sunday of the month 1:00 pm
Meet at Anneberg Pk. by the second shelter
near the pond



Leapin' Lizards

Dru Clarke

it and their kitchen. The fresh rectangles of stone of the six-foot-high wall begged for residents to move in. The first notable one was a male collared lizard, a welcome neighbor whom we hope soon would find a mate.

The nearest we had seen these colorful lizards was along our dirt road, bordered by a rock fence of an irregular iron-gray pitted form of limestone aesthetically lacking the bright white or cream shade of other kinds of limestone coveted for building. These lizards would sun themselves on warm days on the ledges, scurrying into niches when interlopers got too close. Courtship involves some enthusiastic bobbing of the head as he struts his stuff, showing off the colorful bluish green "collars" on his neck. If she acts interested (not quite sure what sign she gives, being unfamiliar with lizard acquiescence), he grasps her neck and maneuvers his back end beneath her and – voila! – mating occurs. Males are very territorial, lording it over several thousand square feet, and defend it vigorously. So, the fellow on the new retaining wall will more than likely 'own' it for his lifetime. The limestone fence along the road was originally part of a military road spur, connecting forts from the east with Fort Riley, after passing through what is now Pottawatomie County and Riley County and the settlement of Juniata just north of Manhattan. Imagine when the roadway was cleared and the rocks piled up, lizards quickly came to inhabit the myriad of crevices and must have provided some entertainment for passing troops.

Often in spring we see jet black, satin-skinned juvenile Great Plains skinks slinking around the foundation of our limestone house. At first, we thought they were a separate species of lizard, but then after reading Joseph T. Collins' epic guide "Amphibians and Reptiles in Kansas", we discovered they were the young of the mature lizard. The juveniles always look wet they are so shiny, with speckles on their heads and bright blue tails! Frighten them, and the tail breaks away, wriggling like another being, and effectively faking out a predator.

Occasionally we run into a snake-like creature that is really a lizard. This is the western slender glass lizard identified as a lizard by its eyelids and ear openings that snakes lack. As they seem to prefer tall grass, one often steps on, or

over, them before they move. If you do encounter one, restrain yourself by not touching it or trying to pick it up as it invariably will shed its tail – a full two thirds the length of the body! You would be so gobsmacked that the main body of the lizard could make a speedy getaway.

A lizard few of us in this region have seen is the Texas horned lizard, colloquially called the 'horny toad.' First of all, it is not an amphibian (as toads, salamanders, and frogs are) but a true lizard. Secondly, it is not particularly 'horny', unless you are referring to its pointy, rough body scales and spines protruding from behind its head. If any lizard could be dubbed 'adorable', this is the one as it grows no bigger than 4" and could easily fit into your pocket. It resembles a miniature chubby dinosaur. When molested, however, it can squirt blood from its eyes, a somewhat unnerving behavior that would give one pause. They are extremely difficult to maintain in captivity, so it is best to leave them in their preferred habitat, arid and sparsely vegetated spaces. We've encountered them basking on the summit of the nature trail on Konza Prairie, so if you are hiking there on a bright summer day, look for them.

This year, we were glad to see our toads were making a comeback. The chorus frogs are singing blithely and the cricket frogs are also creating a pleasant racket. Amphibians have taken a big hit in recent decades, so we are doing what we can to preserve habitat for them. The reptiles seem to be faring better, evidenced by the collared lizard on our son's retaining wall. We are eager to see if he finds a mate and what the young will look like.



Photos by Dan Whiting

© 2026 June Dru Clarke

Field Trip - Quivira & Cheyenne Bottoms

For those of you who didn't come on this field trip, you missed an amazing weekend of birding at these two international wetlands!

The weather was perfect, the lodging great, and Patricia's husband's spaghetti sauce delicious.

My photos aren't great, but there were hundreds of Yellow-headed blackbirds, Black-bellied whistling ducks (were at a pond in Ellinwood city park), and we saw at least 50 blacknecked Stilts.

Canada geese

Snow geese with some blues – 30 or so crossing the road

Black-bellied Whistling ducks (city park Ellinwood) 15 or so

Gadwall

Mallard

Northern Shovelers

Green-winged teal

Cinnamon teal (2)

Pintail (2)

Scaup 2

Merganser

Ruddy duck

Western grebe

American coots 100s

Pelicans

Cormorants

GBH

Great Egrets

Snowy egret

Osprey

Bonapart

Franklin

Ringbill

Northern Harrier

Red-tailed hawks

Kestrel

White faced ibis

Snowy plover

Semipalmated plover

Killdeer

Sora (heard song 3x)

Black-necked Stilt (50+)

American Avocets

Greater yellowlegs

Lesser yellowlegs

Willet

Whimbrel

Hudsonian Godwit

Semipalmated sandpiper

Baird Sandpiper

White-rumped sandpiper

Spotted sandpiper

Long-billed dowager

Wilson's Phalaropes 100s

Pheasants 2

Turkeys 15-20

Western Kingbird

Scissor-tailed flycatcher

Mourning dove

Eurasian collared dove

Redheaded woodpecker

Red-bellied woodpecker

Bank Swallow

Barn Swallow

Eastern Phoebe

Common yellowthroat

Bluebirds

Robins

Cedar Waxwings

Tree sparrow

Chipping sparrow

Lark sparrow

Savannah sparrow

White-crowned sparrow

Red-winged blackbirds

Yellow-headed blackbird (100s)

Grackles

Brown-headed cowbirds

Dickcissel

Turkey vulture

Indigo bunting



End of a long but great day of birding!



**Semipalmated Plover—
1st time found**



Blackpoll Warbler – 2nd time found



**White-eyed Vireo –
1st time found**



**Eastern Wood-Pee-wee –
1st time found**

Best Birds of 2026

Biggest misses this year: *Clay-colored Sparrow*, *Western Meadowlark*, and *Gadwall*

2026 Birdathon Composite Species Report, April 25 and 26 ALL TOTAL - 137

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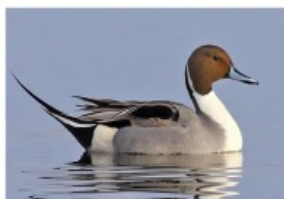
Best Birds of 2026

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2026 Birdathon
Jim Koelliker



Yellow-Breasted Chat – 1st time found



**Northern Pintail –
2nd time found**



Scarlet Tanager – 1st time found



Kentucky Warbler – 2nd time found

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2026 Birdathon report
Jim Koelliker

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Or Birdathon, NFHAS P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932

BIRDS OF THE NORTHERN FLINT HILLS SPECIES

202620252024202320222021202020192018201720162015201420132012201120102009200820072006

SWALLOWS

Purple Martin

Tree Swallow

N. Rough-Winged Swallow

Bank Swallow

Cliff Swallow

Barn Swallow

JAYS & CROWS

Blue Jay

Black-Billed Magpie

American Crow

Fish Crow

TITMICE, NUTHATCHES & CREEPERS

Black-capped Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse

Red-Breasted Nuthatch

White-Breasted Nuthatch

Brown Creeper

WRENS

Carolina Wren

Bewick's Wren

House Wren

Winter Wren

Sedge Wren

Marsh Wren

KINGLETS & GNATCATHERS

Golden-Crowned Kinglet

Ruby-Crowned Kinglet

Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher

THRUSHERS

Eastern Bluebird

Mountain Bluebird

Townsend's Solitaire

Veery

Gray-Cheeked Thrush

Swainson's Thrush

Hermit Thrush

Wood Thrush

American Robin

THRASHERS (MIMIC THRUSHERS)

Gray Catbird

Northern Mockingbird

Brown Thrasher

PIPITS, WAXWINGS, SHRIKES & STARLINGS

Water Pipit

Sprague's Pipit

Bohemian Waxwing

Cedar Waxwing

Northern Shrike

Loggerhead Shrike

European Starling

VIREOS

White-Eyed Vireo

Bell's Vireo

Solitary Vireo

Yellow-Throated Vireo

Warbling Vireo

Philadelphia Vireo

Red-Eyed Vireo

WOOD WARBLERS

Tennessee Warbler

Orange-Crowned Warbler

Nashville Warbler

Northern Parula

Yellow Warbler

Chestnut-Sided Warbler

Magnolia Warbler

Cape May Warbler

Yellow-Rumped Warbler

Townsend's Warbler

Black-throated Green Warbler

Blackburnian Warbler

Yellow-Throated Warbler

Pine Warbler

Palm Warbler

Bay-Breasted Warbler

Blackpoll Warbler

Cerulean Warbler

Black-and-White Warbler

American Redstart

Prothonotary Warbler

Ovenbird

Northern Waterthrush

Louisiana Waterthrush

Kentucky Warbler

Mourning Warbler

Common Yellowthroat

Wilson's Warbler

Canada Warbler

Yellow-Breasted Chat

TANAGERS

Summer Tanager

Scarlet Tanager

GROSBEAKS & BUNTINGS

Northern Cardinal

Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

Black-Headed Grosbeak

Blue Grosbeak

Lazuli Bunting

Indigo Bunting

Painted Bunting

Dickcissel

Sparrows

Eastern Towhee

Spotted Towhee

Rufous-Crowned Sparrow

American Tree Sparrow

Chipping Sparrow

Clay-Colored Sparrow

Field Sparrow

Vesper Sparrow

Lark Sparrow

Lark Bunting

Savannah Sparrow

Baird's Sparrow

Grasshopper Sparrow

Henslow's Sparrow

Le Conte's Sparrow

Fox Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Lincoln's Sparrow

Swamp Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

Harris' Sparrow

Dark-eyed Junco

McCown's Longspur

Lapland Longspur

Smith's Longspur

Chestnut-Collared Longspur

Snow Bunting

BLACKBIRDS, MEADOWLARKS & ORIOLES

Bobolink

Red-Winged Blackbird

Eastern Meadowlark

Western Meadowlark

Yellow-Headed Blackbird

Rusty Blackbird

Brewer's Blackbird

Great-Tailed Grackle

Common Grackle

Brown-Headed Cowbird

Orchard Oriole

Baltimore Oriole

FINCHES

Pine Grosbeak

Purple Finch

House Finch

Red Crossbill

Pine Siskin

American Goldfinch

Evening Grosbeak

House Sparrow

TOTAL SPECIES

137

202620252024202320222021202020192018201720162015201420132012201120102009200820072006

My team: Jim Koeliker, Mike Kanost and Tom Shields. Carole Ann Harbers watched a feeder at 321 Fordham Rd. In all we found 100 species. The 2026 total count was 137 species, another new record, thanks to having seven local parties scouring the area and cooperative weather.

TOTAL KOELLIKER TEAM EFFORT: Driving Miles: ~171 , ~14 hours Walking Miles: ~1, ~1 hours Feeder Watching (HR): ~3

We searched in much of Manhattan, Tuttle Puddle, Pott #2 State Lake, south side of Konza, Geary Co State Lake and return drive below plus watching several feeders.

The other six parties contributed 37 additional species not found by the Koeliker team to the total results. Individuals included Patricia Yeager, Merry Bower, Scott Taylor, Jay Jeffery, Jacque Staatz, Dick Oberst, Jacob Riggs and Catherine Long. In total we searched much of Riley and Pottawatomie Counties and some of the southern parts of Geary County.

From Jim Koeliker Page 2/2

202620252024202320222021202020192018201720162015201420132012201120102009200820072006



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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.

Published monthly (except August) by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society.
Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
Also available online at nfhas.org

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