

MARCH 15, 2008: ROAD TRIP!

A full day of birdwatching at **Cheyenne Bottoms & Quivira National Wildlife Refuge**, Saturday, March 15. Sign up by March 7th.

Tentative plans include an early morning start, leave Manhattan about 7:00 a.m., birding at Cheyenne Bottoms, lunch in Great Bend, the afternoon at Quivira, returning to Manhattan in the evening.



Contact Carla Bishop at 785-532-1858 (w), 785-539-5129 (h), or cbishop@ksu.edu, by Mar. 7th so we can plan the transportation. Also don't forget to bring your binocs, snacks, water and dress in layers.

photos by Dave Rintoul

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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MARK THESE DATES!

Upcoming Events:

MAR. 4 NFHAS Board Mtg,
TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME - 6 p.m.

MAR. 8 SAT. BIRDING
8 A.M. MEET AT SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK

MAR. 7 SIGN-UP for CHEYENNE BOTTOMS Trip

MAR. 15 CHEYENNE BOTTOMS Day Trip

Apr. 3 NFHAS Board Mtg

Apr. 12 SAT. BIRDING
8 A.M. MEET AT SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK



SKYLIGHT PLUS PETE COHEN

Since January I've been mentioning some women who have contributed to astronomy, starting with the vaguely reported personage known as En Hedu'anna of circa 2354 BCE and arriving in the early 1900s with Henrietta Swan Leavitt who stood out among the number of women employed doing tedious calculations that men could not manage, and who did even more. Now, I need to retrace those millennia to acknowledge some of the women I by-passed in setting the overall scene.

A website (distinguishedwomen.com/subject/astrono.html) gives brief mention to a lady named Aganice, circa 1878 BCE, who in the court of one of the Egyptian Pharaohs named, Sesotris, computed the positions of planets in hieroglyphics.

Meanwhile, the website also mentions Aglaonike, who lived in Greece sometime in the 1st-3rd centuries BCE, and who, among other women of the era, obtained the ability to predict eclipses. This was a sufficiently arcane talent that Plato referred to her as a sorceress, nor apparently was she shy about claiming credit for such powers, and did so apparently without ill repercussions, which is noteworthy because of the story that follows.

Hypatia (c.370-415 CE) was the daughter of Theon, one of the learned men of Alexandria, Egypt. He apparently taught her a great many things which she applied to geometry, with some spill-over into astronomy, both of which she began to teach, whether shyly or otherwise is not given. Nonetheless, in this era Christianity was starting to dominate the religions of the region, and it's reported that Hypatia, being a friend of the unconverted, was one day uncharitably murdered by a mob in the streets.

The Dark Ages go by and the Middle Ages grow old before I discover Marie Cunitz (1610-1664) translating and usefully simplifying the complicated use of logarithms by Johannes Kepler, and I've read that for several centuries her translations were the only ones available to other scientists.

Then there came Mme. Nichole-Reine Lepaute (1723-1788), another of the female humanoid computers, who produced charts and tables, providing information otherwise unavailable and having long use. She worked on calculations for predictions of eclipses and the return of Halley's comet in aid of Joseph Lalande, a Frenchman who contributed to astronomy both as a scientist and populizer. She also helped her husband, at the time France's royal clockmaker, with a table of oscillations per unit of time for pendula of various lengths. These, I've read, were published under his name for reasons perhaps politic.

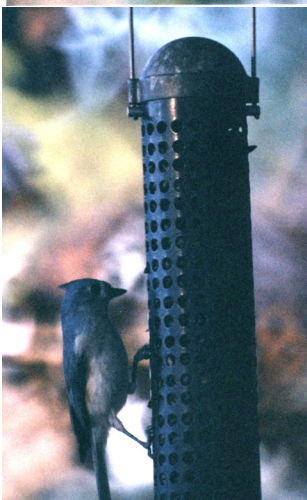
For her part, Venus all but disappears from the sky, being barely up in the west in the dawn light. Mercury is nearby on the 5th, catch him if you can. Saturn, contrarily is out all night in Leo, on the end of a line with the Moon and Leo's bright star Regulus on the 18th. He gradually dims some in turning his rings to us edgewise. Mars is brighter but is high overhead at dark, in Gemini, then sets between 3a30 and 4a30 or so and also dims a bit as the month ages. Jupiter, in Sagittarius, rises generally just a little after Mars sets on the other side of the sky.

If you're southern horizon is low, March evenings are a good time to look for a hard to find constellation named *Puppis*. It's just below the bright stars of *Canis Major*, the Big Dog trailing just behind *Orion* with its bright eye, Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. The Big Dog offers an easy place of beginning, yet *Puppis* doesn't refer to puppies. Instead, try to find some mild stars forming the outline of a distant (or miniature) ship whose bow is almost directly south of Sirius, and whose hull extends back eastward into Milky Way where its raised aft "poop" deck provides its name.

Spring returns at 12a48 on the 20th, almost in sync with the full Moon on the 21st, at 1p40. The Moon is new on the 7th at 11a14.

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BIRDING



The Monthly Birding Fieldtrip met on a cold clear Saturday morning. We decided to drive the back roads of western Pottawatomie County. The world was made of American Crows on this day. They were everywhere, in the fields, in the trees, and in the air. Now I know where they go when they leave their roosting spots in my neighborhood at dawn.

One of our goals was to see a Barred Owl that is “always there” on a certain road. This particular morning it decided to sleep in and missed its appointment with us. We carried on and saw the usual assortment of Tree Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos. One stop near a very nice bridge over Elbo Creek, yielded Eastern Bluebirds, Meadowlarks, Yellow-shafted Flickers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Blue Jays. We also saw Red-tailed Hawks. We kept a lookout for Greater Prairie Chickens as it seemed prime habitat, but they too had better places to be. We made a final stop at Lake Elbo and got a nice look at a lone male Common Goldeneye. We had used up our time and we returned to Sojourner Truth Park.

The Monthly Birding Fieldtrip takes place on the second Saturday of the month. We meet at 8:00 am at Sojourner Truth Park on Pottawatomie Avenue between 10th and 12th Streets (near Howie’s Recycling). Birders of all levels are welcome. We will go to some local birding hotspot. Wear appropriate clothing, but no strenuous activity is involved, just some light hiking. We will return to Sojourner Truth Park by 11:00 a.m.

Kevin Fay (photos by Kevin Fay)

SYNCHRONICITY

The Palace Hotel was painted a light blue, a shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron, causing the bird to declare its position against any background.” Stephen Crane

These were the opening words of the short story “The Blue Hotel.” I was assigned to read it my first semester at KSU in English Composition I. I was feeling disputatious and decided to take offense to this description and made a big deal about how silly I thought it was. It is one of those “cringe” memories for me. I am sure I made a poor impression on the instructor and class.

Fast forward fifteen years and I am on a NFHAS bird watching trip to Quivera Wildlife Refuge. We spotted a Common Moorhen (then called Common Gallinule) swimming in the cattails very near the shore. It stood up out of the water and we were all struck by the bright yellow-green color of its legs. Today we would call it “neon.” I immediately thought back to Stephen Crane and saw it was possible to be struck by the color of a bird’s legs. This remains my only sighting of a Common Moorhen.

Since my first semester of college I have reread “The Blue Hotel” several times. It is very good and concerns individual versus collective responsibility, in a tale set in frontier Nebraska. It was published in 1890 so I feel Stephen Crane was foreseeing one of the great themes of the twentieth century.

I did an internet search and found that the story had been adapted for television by PBS in 1977. I missed it then but found it now on DVD. It is a good production and very true to original story.

In March I plan to go on the NFHAS fieldtrip to the Quivera Refuge and I hope to glimpse again a Common Moorhen.

Kevin Fay



BIRDFEEDER OPEN HOUSE - THANK YOU!

Thank you to Dru and Mike Clarke, Kelly and Craig Phillips, Tami and Tom Yeager for letting us include their homes on the birdfeeder open house tour. Your hospitality was enjoyed by all! Marge and Tom Muenzenberger, with Jacque Staats assistance, hosted the breakfast in their spacious, lovely home. Doris and Bill Burnett and their very helpful neighbors prepared a wonderful southwestern soup for lunch at the Burnett's home. Many compliments have been received for the day's activities and there were smiles on the faces of all 35 participants.

I want to thank all of you for making this a joyful "birding" event!

Patricia Yeager, President

VISIT THIS WEBSITE TO FIND BILL THOMPSON'S "TOP 10 BIRD FEEDING MYTHS"

http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/backyard_birds/top_ten/bill_top_10_myths.aspx

No. 10. Feeders Keep Birds From Migrating. If this were true, we'd have hummingbirds and orioles clinging to our feeders all winter long. Birds migrate when their natural internal "clocks" give them the urge to migrate. Migration is driven by instinct and external factors such as sunlight and weather, not by the availability of sunflower seed or food at feeders. One thing to note is that birds need extra food during migration, so it's a nice idea to keep your feeders stocked in case a hungry migrant plops down in your yard looking for food.

Go to the website to read about the following 9 myths!

No. 9. Bird Feeding Is Really Bad/Good for Birds.

No. 8. Birds Will Starve if You Stop Feeding in Winter.

No. 7. The Mixed Seed at the Grocery Store Is Bad.

No. 6. Birds Won't Eat Milo.

No. 5. Blackbirds/Squirrels Won't Eat Safflower Seed.

No. 4. There's Only One Hummingbird Species Found East of the Rocky Mountains.

No. 3. Red Dye in Hummer Food Is Bad.

No. 2. Perches on Hummer Feeders Are Bad.

No. 1. This Feeder Is 100% Squirrel Proof!

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXHIBITS AUDUBON'S ENDANGERED BIRDS

New York-The New-York Historical Society will briefly showcase Audubon art depicting some of today's endangered bird species-then pack it up for a decade.

The exhibit, Audubon's Aviary: Portraits of Endangered Species, will run from February 8 through March 16 and display several of Audubon's original watercolors, including the Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Bluebird, Bald Eagle, and Whooping Crane.

Because of the pictures' sensitivity to light, the New-York Historical Society can only display them briefly every 10 years before they are returned to storage. The society laments that some of these birds may be extinct before the next exhibition.

Visit the following website to see the displayed portraits, complete with MP3s of each bird's call, https://www.nyhistory.org/web/default.php?section=exhibits_collections&page=exhibit_detail&id=2434283

BIRDSEED SALE FUNDRAISER A SUCCESS

The Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society (NFHAS) thanks its members for their support during our annual birdseed sale fundraiser. Members helped raise over \$5,957.50 including an additional \$275.30 in donations. Here's the recap by the number: Members placed nearly 90 birdseed orders during three seed sales, held in November, December and February. Nineteen volunteers dispensed over 500 bags of seed, totaling 9000 pounds, and 200 suet cakes. The most popular mixes, by far, were Black Oil Sunflower, Flint Hills Feast and Cheap Cheep, as well as Nutty Butter suet cakes. NFHAS recognizes Tarwater Farm and Home Supply for supplying the birdseed and the UFM for providing the seed sale location.

A big Thank You to NFHAS volunteers – Carla Bishop, Walter Dodds, Kevin Fay, Marge Muenzenburger, Dick Oberst, Judy Roe, Leo Schell, Jacque Staats, and Madonna Stallman.

Annie Baker, Coordinator

STILL TIME: “PRAIRIE CHICKEN BOOMING”

March 15 - April 20, 2008

It is almost that time of year – when the Greater Prairie Chickens return to their leks and find a mate. The dancing and prancing is a “must see” for any birder and you don't have to travel far to see them! They are right here in the Flint Hills. The Konza Prairie Biological Station has a blind on a lek, and visitors (accompanied by a docent) are invited to watch this display. You must make a reservation as space in the blind is limited. You will meet early, before sunrise, to be in place in the blind before the birds come in and stay until they have flushed (approx. 3 hrs. so dress warmly and please use the restroom before joining the group).

Again this year, the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is sponsoring the first 20 members to make a Greater Prairie Chicken viewing reservation through the Konza Prairie March 15 through April 20. You read correctly - the NFHAS will pay the reservation fee (\$15/person) for the first 20 members (including guests - if you want to bring a friend). Reservations must be made in advance and are first come, first serve, so please call as soon as possible to reserve your spot. To make a reservation, call the Konza Prairie Education Office, (785)587-0381 or e-mail keepkonza@ksu.edu. Visit the Konza Environmental Education Program website for detailed reservation information and observation guidelines: <http://www.k-state.edu/konza/keep/visit/blind.htm>

APRIL 25-27, 2008: BI-ANNUAL KANSAS BIRDING FESTIVAL

Wakefield, Kansas (Home of the Wetlands). More information will be forthcoming.
www.kansasbirdingfestival.org



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Subscription Information: Introductory memberships - \$20/yr., then basic membership is \$35/yr. When you join the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the National Audubon Society and receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine in addition to the Prairie Falcon newsletter. New membership applications may be sent to Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are handled by the National Audubon Society and should not be sent to the NFHAS. Questions about membership? Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org.

If you do not want to receive the national magazine, but still want to be involved in our 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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