



Representatives of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society and the Riley County Extension Master Gardeners, as a result of their ongoing efforts to provide habitat for and encourage awareness of the plight of the Monarchs, were present at the City Commission Meeting on May 3 and received a proclamation from Mayor Karen McCulloh declaring Manhattan part of the national "Monarch Butterfly Initiative". Accepting the proclamation were Patricia Yeager, Laura Hall and Gregg Eystone.

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

Jun 6 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.

Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Jun 11- Sat. Morning Birding

8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

Jun 18- Picnic Potluck- Butterfly Garden

Sojourner Truth Park- 6:00 p.m.

See page 4 for more information



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

For a change of pace from four months of considering four facets of climate change, a/k/a global warming, I repeat here some thoughts that occurred during the winds that blew in between our April rains, and which, when this comes to print, will either be continuing or worth remembering.

What can please like a soft-moving breeze?
What joy can compare with a breath of fresh air?
Yet sometimes we find so much on our mind
that we don't become aware
till the breeze starts to blow,
and lets us know
it has some place to go,
and feels the need
to stir up its speed,
to shake and to shove
from below and above.
Then distractions subside,
as with attention applied,
we're no longer busied, blasé, or aloof,
watching the shingles fly off from the roof.

And so if you sometimes become blue,
wait for the chance to see treetops dance.
Then come over here any time of the year,
and your mood we'll entrance
as our breeze turns to wind
that's quite disciplined,
at the art it performs
during various storms.
The glides and swoops,
the tumbling loops
will dazzle your eyes,
your spirits will rise.
There's no greater joy, and we have the proof,
than watching shingles fly off from the roof.

And though the sky at night can seem literally above such turbulence there's been discovered, a solar wind, so-called, blowing up there, emitted from the Sun, the understanding of which requires a working knowledge of positive and negative particles, heat, magnetic fields, etc., a full grasp of which remains a work in progress. And while that "wind" apparently gets little amusement from tickling up sedate shingles, it does provide the auroral light shows of both the northern and southern hemisphere, stirs up comet tails while directing them constantly away from the Sun, while threatening to disrupt not only the electrical workings of launched spacecraft, but also, if someday given enough oomph, the whole earthbound grid of a human civilization as dependent on ready electricity as rivers are upon gravity. Be that as it may, Mars, having had a cresting of brilliance last month continues sparkling red enough to seem sometime like an aircraft (but one that doesn't seem to be going anywhere), in Libra, just ahead (westward) of Scorpius. On the 3rd, with the Moon standing aside, Saturn takes a turn of having a cresting of brilliance, its rings flared outward for us, and it will keep shining brightly a little behind Mars and unmistakable amid the lower reaches of Ophiuchus, the Snake-Bearer. This is a large, shy constellation shaped rather like a compromise between a balloon and a turret, located just above bolder Scorpius. Mars and Saturn will pass overhead all night, while Jupiter, brighter than them both, will shine through the gloaming and set a little past midnight, keeping company with Leo the Lion. On the 9th the Moon will visit with Leo's bright star, Regulus, moving by the 11th to neighbor Jupiter, then to travel above Mars the 16th and Saturn the 18th. In between, on the 17th, with the three planets it should provide one point of a diamond in the sky, with Jupiter still the brightest of the three, Mars the reddest, and Saturn's point distinctly present. The Moon will be new the 4th. Summer will officially arrive 5p34 the 20th, just after the Moon reaches full at 2 minutes after 6 that morning.

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SKIN(S)

Dru Clarke



We had stopped by the Kansas Wildlife and Parks (and Tourism!) office in Topeka to pick up the latest pocket field guides – stream fishes was one – my husband at the year's end gives to kids who ride his school bus, but were distracted from the selections by another display.

The circular rack, like those in upscale boutiques, was hung, shoulder high, with skins, all taken from native wildlife. Hesitantly, I moved around the rack, touching, stroking each one in turn. Bobcat, raccoon, coyote, opossum, badger, skunk, mink, river otter, muskrat, and beaver. Two of bobcat. (Why two?) Each one, identified by signature markings, its pelage still animated by the spirit of the animal. My fingers plunged into the underfur, through the guard and awn hairs that protected it, and I understood why our ancestors made clothing from them.

Skin, an integument unique to vertebrates, replaces the exoskeleton and shells of other animals, the invertebrates. Skin is multilayered, strata laced with blood vessels, nerves, and assorted glands. In many mammals, oil and sweat glands give skin added properties above those of protection from pathogens and as a barrier to water loss. (Those without sweat glands cool their bodies by a variety of other means.)

Skin insulates and helps, as sweat does, regulate our temperature. Erectile muscles in skin can raise or lower hairs: watch your arm hairs when you shiver! See a bird fluff up its feathers. Check out your flushed cheeks when you exercise strenuously: capillaries dilate, bringing hot blood close to the interface between skin and the ambient environment, allowing it to dissipate heat.

On humans, the skin around the eyes is the thinnest (0.5 mm) and thickest (4 mm) on the palms and the soles of the feet. My husband says this is why boxers bleed so profusely when punched in the face: skin on bone ruptures easily. Our thin-skinned horses bleed copiously from flesh wounds, and they respond kinetically at the slightest touch. One would think by looking at elephants that their skin was thick, and it is on their trunk's embouchure, but behind their ears it is as thin as paper, and elsewhere on their bodies, they feel every fly. Rhinos do have thick skin, but it hangs in folds, giving it the appearance of armor.

Scales, on reptiles, and feathers, on birds, made of β keratins (think hair and fingernails) augment the protective nature of their respective skins. They, in turn, shed and replace scaly skin and worn feathers as they grow or molt. When I look at the nugget-like skin on our chickens' legs I see their reptilian cousins strutting around.

Fish have mucus glands in their skin, which is not only protective against toxins (the mucus itself is sometimes toxic), but hydrodynamic, allowing them to slip-slide away and through your hands. Dolphins, elegant marine mammals, have skin that actually absorbs water; as they swim, it is like water moving through water. Poetry in motion (also known as, scientifically speaking, laminar flow!)

Eels, which are fish, and snakes use their skins like an external tendon to generate the propulsion needed to sine-wave through their environment. A few minutes ago, I frightened a green snake who "swam" across our deck, made an infinity symbol, then seeped between the planks to the dark space beneath. Real life physics.

Skin color in most vertebrates is due to not only the presence of melanin, but its orientation in cells of the skin. Animals without melanin possess chromatophores, color cells, that allow them to change color according to mood or the environment. When exposed to sunlight, our skin makes Vitamin D, critical to our health. (I wonder what the application of sunblock does to this process?) Without D, we suffer from rickets, and women with deformed pelvises frequently died in childbirth. My grandmother had parenthetical legs that looked as if she'd spent years in the saddle, but produced four children anyway.

A truly welcome gift skin gives us is that of touch. A feathery touch tickles the sole of your foot, the pressure of lips in a soft kiss, or a hand pressing on the small of your back, fingers gripping your arm, a pat on the cheek: all tell us about some intention or imminent change. I feel the different textures of the furred skins hanging on the rack in the wildlife office. All are artfully tanned, soft and supple, and they emit no odors. The softest, though, are the muskrat and the beaver. Is it because they spend time immersed in water and by doing so, avoid much of the hardship associated with terrestrial living? In touching these skins, I remembered my students' response during the marine science lab with study skins of sea and shore birds loaned to me by John Zimmerman, an ornithology professor: in sketching them and recording salient features provided by reference materials and their own observations, they handled each with such reverence and care, some stroking them gently from head to foot. E.O. Wilson would call it "biophilia." That, and a sense of wonder. It is good to be reminded that it still exists in us.



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POTLUCK PICNIC

Sojourner Truth Park

Mark your calendar!

JUNE 18th, 6:00 p.m.

Join us at Sojourner Truth Park

GREET

and eat at the potluck picnic,

EXPLORE

the “renovated” Butterfly Garden!

BIRD

along linear trail



Please bring something to share for the picnic and your own dishes/utensils, we will provide ice tea.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

This most widely distributed and abundant swallow in the world is familiar to birders and nonbirders.



Glistening cobalt blue above and tawny below, Barn Swallows dart gracefully over fields, barnyards, and open water in search of flying insect prey. Look for the long, deeply forked tail that streams out behind this agile flyer and sets it apart from all other North American swallows. Barn Swallows often cruise low, flying just a few inches above the ground or water. True to their name, they build their cup-shaped mud nests almost exclusively on human-made structures.

Barn Swallows don't come to seed or suet feeders, but they may take ground-up eggshells or oyster shells placed on an open platform feeder. If you have a suitable outbuilding, leaving a door or window open can encourage Barn Swallows to build a nest inside. Providing a source of mud will also help with nest building. Barn Swallows may use artificial nest cups attached to an appropriate surface.

Consider putting up a nest box to attract a breeding pair. Make sure you put it up well before breeding season. Attach a guard to keep predators from raiding eggs and young. Find out more about nest boxes on our Attract Birds pages. You'll find plans for building a nest box of the appropriate size on our All About Birdhouses site.

Sojourner Truth Butterfly Garden Rehabilitation Project Jacque Staats



Many *thanks* to all who helped May 10 with the Sojourner Truth Butterfly Garden Rehabilitation! We had participants from Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society (Gary Haden, Jacque Staats, Dick Oberst, Susan Blackford), Riley County Extension Master Gardeners (Laura Hall), Westar Green Team (Eric Johnson, Ben Postlethwait, Monica Shaffer), US Fish and Wildlife Service (Jason Luginbill, Michael Disney, Vernon Tabor, Chris O'Meila, Gibran Suleiman) and the City of Manhattan Parks Department (J. David Maddox, Dave Allen, Greg Waugh).

It was truly a collaborative effort.





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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, 66505-1932
RARE BIRD HOTLINE: For information on Kansas Birds, subscribe to the Kansas Bird Listserve. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to <listserve@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions.

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