



**ICE CREAM SOCIAL & BUTTERFLY GARDEN WALK**  
**SUNDAY, SEPT. 14, 2 P.M.**  
**SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK**

NORTHERN Flint Hills Audubon Society,  
P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932



## **prairie falcon**

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER

**Vol. 37, No. 1 ~ SEPTEMBER 2008**

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### **Upcoming Events:**

SEPT. 6 BUTTERFLY GARDEN CLEANUP 8:30 A.M.  
SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK

SEPT. 13 MONTHLY BIRDING  
MEET SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK 8 A.M.

SEPT. 14 ICE CREAM SOCIAL/BUTTERFLY GARDEN  
2 P.M. SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK

SEPT. 30 BIRDSEED ORDER DEADLINE  
(LAST YEAR'S SEEDS)

OCT. 2 -BOARD MEETING 6 P.M.  
TOM & MJ MORGAN'S HOME



## SKYLIGHT PLUS PETE COHEN

September's remarks I conceive as a necessary preface to October, as I begin in the belief that it was Ben

Franklin who, after expressing a hope that the new US Constitution would last, added that "but nothing is certain in this world but death and taxes." Perhaps it was for the sake of word-economy, feeling that his point had been made, that he did not specify a third certainty – change.

In the coming month the seasons, at an as yet to be determined rate, will be changing, and so will history. It may seem paradoxical that history, which is supposed to be the record of the unchangeable past, should alter. Barring some break-through in time-travel, the Rubaiyat should be correct in saying that "the Moving Finger writes; and, having writ" neither "Piety nor Wit...nor all your Tears (can) wash out a Word of it".

This doubtless applies to certain points in the lives of individuals, but for the past in general, the Moving Finger seems to be kept busy by an Erasing Thumb; what was put forth as history once is so no more.

For example, we still have a holiday celebrating, as I was told in school, Columbus' discovery of America. And my textbooks then bemoaned how the deserving fellow had been shoved aside so that the westward lands could be named for a johnny-come-afterwards, Amerigo Vespucci. There was no mention of Richard Amerike, an Englishman who sponsored an exploration by Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot) that reached the shores of what's now North America in 1497. Since the first mention of the name "America" seems to date from a map by Martin Waldseemüller in 1507, there are some who would say that the Brit had been written-in instead of Columbus and Amerigo.

Then there was the other information that began appearing, that the Norse had been teasing at these shores since the year 1000 or before. More recently one can read in a book titled "Cod" (by Mark Kurlansky, Penguin Books, 1997) how the Basques,

perhaps catching wind of what the Norse were doing, arrived sometime after, but well before Ferdinand and Isabella's envoy.

In any case Columbus did discover America. No matter that other humans had been here before and others were here to meet him. It was new to him. The task had not been easy and has had distinctly far-reaching effects. Besides it's common for people to find enjoyment and/or purpose in celebrating accomplishments they had nothing to do with. So at the present time, by some chance, the "Moving Finger" insists on underlining his life with a holiday and not a couple continents.

Furthermore, I've become aware that Columbus was not quite the gullible soul my school textbooks made him out to be for believing he had actually reached Cathay (China). There seems to have been for some time, and even more so recently, references to different pieces of evidence that the Chinese had navigated to the "New World" and left their imprints 70 years before he arrived. It is evidence that the "Moving Finger" seems to have written, and is still writing, for an oddly subdued audience. But I think this part of its changing story is worth taking note of, next time.

Meanwhile (by The Old Farmer's Almanac) if you go to a high hill, or south to Texas, you may be able to see "brilliant Venus, bright Mercury, dim Mars, and the Moon, all meet in the West about 40 minutes after sunset," on September 1st. All the rest of the month the lingering bright spark in the sky will be Jupiter, setting with Sagittarius closer and closer to 11 p.m. Undaunted by autumn's approach, the summer triangle of Deneb (the Swan's tail in the Milky Way), blue Vega in Lyra north of the Milk, and Altair in Aquila, south of the flow, will linger into the wee hours. Southeast from Altair, low along a clear horizon, lonely and bright will be Fomalhaut, the mouth of the Southern Fish, and just south of an imaginary line between those two stars will be the cheerily broad, but quite faint, "smile in the sky," the saucer shaped constellation, Capricorn the Goat, so-named possibly because such are climbing-inclined creatures, and through him will the Sun climb back northward in the sky later on. Full Moon 15th, 4a13; New 29th, 3a12.

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# Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Bird Seed Sale

**ORDERS must be received by SEPT. 30, 2008**

**PICK UP is Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

**UFM, 1221 Thurston, Manhattan**

**If interested in helping unload the truck, come at 8 a.m.,  
or volunteer to help during the morning of pickup -  
contact Annie (below).**

**Return your order forms with your checks to:**

**Annie Baker**

**116 Parkview Dr.**

**Junction City, KS 66441**

**Phone 785-375-4633**

**Make checks payable to:**

**Northern Flint Hills**

**Audubon Society**

**or NFHAS for short**

## Bird Seed Sale Product Descriptions:

**BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS** are attractive to more species of birds than are striped sunflower seeds. They also supply more energy per pound than striped sunflower seeds.

**STRIPED SUNFLOWER SEEDS** contain larger hearts than black oil sunflower seeds and are particularly suitable for larger songbirds.

**SAFFLOWER** is a favorite with Cardinals and squirrels really do not like it.

**MILLET** is liked by Mourning Doves, Song Sparrows, White Throated Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, White Crown Sparrows, Red Wing Blackbirds, House Finches, Pine Siskins, and Quail.

**FLINT HILLS FEAST** is our premium bird seed mix: 30 % black oil sunflower seed, 20 % striped sunflower seed, and 50 % white proso millet with no milo or fillers.

**NIGER THISTLE** is very attractive to gold finches and all other finches that are here over the winter. Niger is excellent for tube feeders.

**SUNFLOWER SEED CHIPS** are high in energy and can be used in tube feeders. These are especially liked by pine siskins.

**CHEAP CHEEP MIX** is less expensive but still attractive to many species. It is 40 % cracked corn, 40 % white proso millet, 20 % black oil sunflower and no milo or fillers.

**SUPER FORMULA FINCH MIX** is a less expensive option for tube feeders than 100% Niger thistle. It consists of 70% sunflower chips and 30% niger thistle. This is very popular with most tube feeding species.

**SUET CAKES**, in addition to having high calorie beef fat which helps birds maintain body heat in cold winter months as the main ingredient, have other nutritious ingredients.

**PEANUT PICKOUTS** are chunks of peanut hearts and are very attractive to woodpeckers.

**MEDIUM CHOP** is chopped corn kernels- especially good for ground-feeding birds.

## **Quality Seed, Easy Handling**

The products we offer are high quality seeds. Our mixes were created to satisfy the needs of local bird populations at reasonable costs. We have tried to make it easy for you to purchase the amount of seed you want without having to handle heavy, awkward bags. Our seed comes in 10, 25, and 50 pound bags. We try to obtain the seed in paper bags whenever possible.

## **Sales Support Local Chapter Activities**

As with all of our fund-raising activities, proceeds from our seed and store sales go toward supporting the educational and conservation projects of the local chapter. All of our labor is voluntary. Taxes are included in the price of our seed. Even though we are a not-for-profit organization, we are required to pay tax on any retail sales. Any additional donation you may wish to include with your order is appreciated.

PICK UP - Saturday, Oct, 11, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at UFM, 1221 Thurston

DESCRIPTION	SIZE	COST EACH	QTY	TOTAL COST
Sunflower chips	10lb	\$14.00		
Sunflower chips	25lb	\$32.00		
Sunflower chips	50lb	\$62.00		
Corn on the cob	10lb	\$6.25		
Corn on the cob	25lb	\$12.00		
Finch Mix	10lb	\$16.25		
Finch Mix	25lb	\$38.50		
Finch Mix	50lb	\$75.00		
Med. corn chop	25lb	\$10.50		
Med. corn chop	50lb	\$19.00		
Peanut pick-outs	10lb	\$15.25		
Peanut pick-outs	25lb	\$34.25		
Red Millet	10lb	\$8.00		
Red Millet	25lb	\$16.25		
Red Millet	50lb	\$29.25		
Safflower seed	10lb	\$11.25		
Safflower seed	25lb	\$26.00		
Safflower seed	50lb	\$50.00		
Suet cakes <small>peanut butter, berry,</small>	11oz	\$1.50		
Suet cakes <small>or regular</small>	11oz	\$1.50		
Sunflower (black)	10lb	\$6.75		
Sunflower (black)	25lb	\$15.75		
Sunflower (black)	50lb	\$30.00		
Sunflower (striped)	10lb	\$7.25		
Sunflower (striped)	25lb	\$18.75		
Sunflower (striped)	50lb	\$36.00		
Thistle seed	10lb	\$21.00		
Thistle seed	25lb	\$47.50		
White millet	10lb	\$4.25		
White millet	25lb	\$10.50		
White millet	50lb	\$19.25		
Cheap cheep mix	10lb	\$5.00		
Cheap cheep mix	25lb	\$11.75		
Cheap cheep mix	50lb	\$21.75		
Flint Hills feast	10lb	\$6.00		
Flint Hills feast	25lb	\$14.50		
Flint Hills feast	50lb	\$27.50		
Super Finch mix	10lb	\$16.25		
Super Finch mix	25lb	\$37.50		

For our customers in Manhattan (IN-TOWN only) we offer a local delivery service — please check the box below and include \$5.00 with your order. Thank you for your order and your support. We need volunteers to help the day of pickup - if interested - contact Annie Baker - (address & phone on front of form).

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

☐ DELIVERY (in-town) \$5.00

SUBTOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_



## SURVEY RESULTS

TOM & MJ MORGAN



After months of interesting reading and compilation, we are finally able to share the broad trends of membership revealed by our survey. We attached a one-page questionnaire to our bird seed order form back in the fall of 2007. Nearly forty customers returned the survey (thank you!) Here is what we learned about the diverse people who make up the NFHAS membership:

*How long have you belonged to NFHAS?* 75% have belonged more than ten years, 25% less than ten.

*Are you a skilled, intermediate, or beginning birder?* 13% identified themselves as skilled, 45% as intermediate, and 42% as beginning birders. Of all the birders, 63% state that they typically watch birds without binoculars, while 20% use binoculars regularly. This question was not clearly worded, for we had several answers such as “birds must be close at hand” or “only for feeder watching,” etc.

97% of the people returning the survey stated that they feed birds, and 50% stated that they maintain a bird house.

*What time of day do you prefer to go birding?* Eight respondents preferred to bird in the morning (some mentioned “the crack of dawn”), one preferred sunset, nine preferred either morning or evening, and one preferred “the wrong time.”

*Do you enjoy watching other animals?* 86% of survey responders stated they enjoy watching wildlife other than birds.

*Do you enjoy identifying wildflowers and trees?* 86% of the survey responders stated that they enjoy identifying plants, while 72% enjoy gardening. 47% mentioned that they often travel expressly to observe nature.

*Demographics:* 42% of responders are employed full-time, 3% work part time, and 53% are retired or between jobs. Of people noting they had leisure time during a certain season, few had time during spring or fall, but about equal numbers of people had more time in summer or winter.

Overall trends suggested by answers to questions about birding events: most members prefer weekend mornings for birding outings. Eight a.m. seems to be the preferred time to start a birding event. Responders gave many good, specific ideas for events or outings that NFHAS could sponsor. These include the following:

Squaw Creek NWR

Konza Prairie – several suggestions for this, including Konza Wildflowers in June

Talk suggestions: Kansas Land Trust, Dyck Arboretum – prairie windows project

Trip to Baker Wetlands in Lawrence

Cheyenne Bottoms, nature places near K.C. or Topeka,

Workshop to build birdhouses, trip to see sandhill cranes

Quivera for shorebirds

Spring warbler hunt

Backyard birdfeeding, animals of the Konza (Joe Collins is great)

Finally, we include here some of the passionate answers written to the question,

*“What do you like best about the Flint Hill Region?”* The Prairie Falcon will be printing some of these reflections from time to time, so be watching.

“Hidden secrets, geology, unique Kansas treasure!”

“Wide vistas!”

“Hill terrain with few visual reminders of the modern world.”

“No one knows how great it is.”

“Evening light on the hills, the moments before dawn.”

“It is one of the most beautiful places on the face of the earth (and I have been to some 55 countries).”

“Wind without debris....”

“Cultural and natural landscapes....”

“Open spaces...bird density.”

“Everything.”

## THE KNOTTED SNAKE

DRU CLARKE

Lawn mowing requires prior reconnaissance: broken limbs from the winter ice storm continue to fall and lurk in the fast-growing grass. Near the path by the creek, a sinuous anomaly – not bumpy but scaly – struck me as odd; stooping to seize it, I froze in mid-reach. A slender racer, its lime-skin green back and washed-out yellow belly, was topsy-turvy, upside down, a fist-sized knot mid-body. Its head was more compressed than normal, mouth slightly agape, fixed in a strained appearance – a grimace expressed during a struggle. Although dead, it was so perfect in its symmetry that I wondered if such a posture was the motivation for creating knotted snake jewelry – rings and pendants – and the ‘snake knot’, especially popular in Eastern culture. Gingerly, I tried to lift it off the grass with a forked stick, but it had the grass so tenaciously entwined in its knot that it could not be pried loose. Then I noticed its raked tail: a foot-long gash, as if slit by a sharp blade, revealed its tormentor.



*Coluber constrictor*, the racer, was the species. Racers hunt along streams (they like to eat frogs), so that is probably why I found it near our creek. According to a field guide, it does not constrict (as its species name implies) its prey, but may hold it with its body. But as for self-preservation, its constrictor genes kick in and it, in desperation, grips like a fist whatever will give it purchase. More than likely a raptor (unsuccessful) tried to capture it. We once found a five-foot long dead pilot black snake on our roof. At first I thought someone had tossed it up there as a joke, then it dawned on me that someone or something had let it drop. I've seen hawks flying high with writhing snakes clenched in their talons: they – the snakes – do not submit easily. So I am fairly sure our racer was evidence of an unsuccessful hunt. It is too bad she didn't live through the experience.

I left the knotted snake where I found it, and mowed a wide path around it. When the dogs found it, lured by the smell of its decomposing body, I was finally able to slip it out of the grass it had clung to and place it in higher weeds where I didn't mow. Something moved what remained of it back to the lawn where eventually all that was left was a thin satin ribbon of skin, a pliant, soft, and somehow pathetic remnant of a once sleek speedster.

Recently a friend gave me a belt buckle in the image of a looped serpent. Perhaps the artist who created it witnessed a similar phenomenon. I hope hers lived to race again.

© 2008 Dru Clarke  
photo by Dru Clarke



## TAKE NOTE

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2008 - 09

Sept. 6 or 7 – Butterfly Garden Cleanup 8:30 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park  
Sept. 13 – Monthly birding 8 a.m. Meet at Sojourner Truth Park  
Sept. 14 – Ice Cream Social/Butterfly Garden - 2 p.m. Sojourner Truth Park  
Sept. 30 – Birdseed ORDER Deadline

Oct. 11 – Birdseed PICKUP  
Oct. 13 -- Monthly birding -Sat. morning 8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park  
Oct. 25/26 noon – 5 p.m. SPOOKTACULAR – at Sunset zoo (volunteers needed)

Nov. 8 – Monthly birding, meet 8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park  
Nov. 19 – Bob Gress (Great Plains Nature Center, author of Kansas Birds and Birding Hot Spots)  
\*7:30 p.m. Douglas Center,  
Nov. 25 – Birdseed ORDER Deadline (this year's seed & prices)

Dec. 6 – Birdseed PICKUP  
Dec. 20 – Manhattan's Annual Christmas Bird Census (Dave Rintoul)

Jan. 3 – Eagle Day – Tuttle Creek Corps of Eng.  
Jan. 6 – Birdseed ORDER Deadline  
Jan. 17 – Birdseed PICKUP

Feb. 7 – 2nd Backyard Birdfeeder Tour (Patricia Yeager, coordinator)  
Feb. 14 – Monthly birding (TBA)

Mar. 3 – Birdseed ORDER Deadline  
Mar. 7 – Field trip to Cheyenne Bottoms (Carla Bishop, coordinator)  
Mar. 14 – Birdseed PICKUP

Apr. TBA Earth Day  
Apr. TBA Michel Ross walk/cleanup  
Apr. Birdathon (Clyde Ferguson, coordinator)

May 9 – Migratory Bird count day

June – Annual Planning Meeting  
June/July – Annual Audit

Aug – Annual Report for National Audubon

#### Officers for 2008-2009:

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Mark Your Calendar:  
Sept. 14, 2 p.m.  
Ice Cream Social & Butterfly Garden  
tour, Sojourner Truth Park

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Also available on-line at [www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html](http://www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html)

**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](mailto: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](mailto:list_serve@ksu.edu)> and join in the discussions.

#### NFHAS Board

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Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email @

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