

# Wings N Wetlands Festival

The Kansas Wetlands Education Center, along with Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks & Tourism, The Nature Conservancy, and the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau, hosts this 2-day birding festival every other year on odd numbered years.

This is the year- it is scheduled for **April 24-25, 2015**



The Wings N Wetlands Festival offers participants a unique opportunity to bird two of the best birding spots in the region, Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, as well as other area hot spots. The festival dates coincide with the historical peak of shorebird migration, and is sure to provide some excellent viewing of well over 150 species of birds. Paid registration for the festival includes three or four guided birding fieldtrips with transportation, workshops and seminars, breakfast, 2 dinners, and snacks. Events take place at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center at Cheyenne Bottoms and the Best Western Courtyard in Great Bend.

For more information and registration details contact the Kansas Wetlands Education Center at 1-877-243-9268.

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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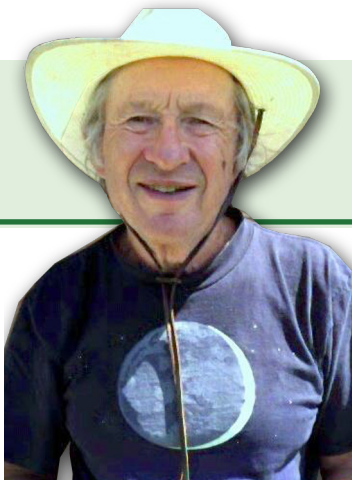
### Upcoming Events

**Apr 6 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.**  
Tom & MJ Morgan Home

**Apr 11 - Saturday Morning Birding**  
Meet at 8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

**Apr 24-25 - Wings N Wetlands Festival**  
see page 4

**May 4 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.**  
Tom & MJ Morgan Home



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

About 30,000 years ago some persons unknown carved into pieces of stone what debatably may have been the first human-constructed map. Meanwhile there seems a consensus that a 2500-year-old Babylonian cuneiform clay tablet represents an effort to transcribe some geographical content.

To capture the world, or parts of it, and depict it in graspable dimensions has long been a fascination, and those who've gone into it deeply will be ahead of me here. Yet others may be interested in some space-restricted preliminary results of belated curiosity-driven research.

In Eurasia, first mapping efforts seem to have been directed at locating the realms of the gods. Later it began to become more useful to take measurements of the palpable earth, and then to add among the lines drawn, notations of what lived among the lines, as well as indications of what may have been there and gone.

As it became obvious that the Earth was round, came the challenge of how to accurately curve the lines or best compromise them. This was done amid a world view that the basis of the universe was the circle. Everything was either spherical (a mass of circles) or going in circles. Eastward, the Chinese at one time saw things as being based on the square, perceiving a universe rather like a turtle, with the sky as a kind of domed carapace (top shell) and the flat-seeming Earth as the plastron (bottom shell), both of which have squarish plates, and they invented a grid of square components, locating various objects or concepts as existing in certain parts of certain squares.

Centuries later, with all kinds of measurements, from the proper weight of a loaf of bread, or the size of a bushel or barrel, etc., in disarray, the French sought to become the authority on standardizing such things in what they regarded as the world. Through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

their surveyors discovered the magic of triangulation and so the triangle took its place in vying to be the basic unit of mapmaking, and they produced maps drawn on a template that connected many, many triangles.

All such efforts have involved decisions on what data to adopt, which of it to be shown, to whom, and for what in return, and mapping projects still do. And from projecting onto stone, to bronze, to hides, to parchment, to paper, to computer screens – there remains the dilemma of how to show a spherical subject on a flat surface.

Meanwhile a map of non-human origin appears above us every clear night. The ancients pondered over what it is a map of, and it appears that, even though having obtained a lot more information, we are in our own way doing the same kind of pondering today.

On April 4<sup>th</sup> for us that map will be blurred and blotted-out as a lunar eclipse begins at 4a01 CDT and ends at 8a45 CDT with totality lasting only for a few minutes starting at 6a58. Through the month Venus will be appearing ever higher at nightfall, just below the Pleiades (Taurus' shoulder) the 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, and eye-to-eye with Aldebaran (the Bull's eye) the 15<sup>th</sup>, neighboring with the Moon the 21<sup>st</sup>. Though you won't see it, the Venus Express probe that arrived there from Europe in 2006 has run out of fuel and shut down after penetrating an atmosphere composed mostly of CO<sub>2</sub>, 90 times denser than Earth's, to find active volcanoes and evidence of extinct lakes of H<sub>2</sub>O.

As Venus sinks westward through the evenings, Jupiter, starting high above, will be following, nearly halving the distance between them by month's end, to duet with the Moon the 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>. Saturn will be rising in Scorpio before midnight. Mercury should become visible in the western dusk the 23<sup>rd</sup>, being near the Pleiades the 30<sup>th</sup>. Mars is on leave behind the Sun. The modest Lyrid meteor shower is expected to peak the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Moon full the 4<sup>th</sup> at 7a06, and new the 18<sup>th</sup> at 1p57.

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## A Little Gray, but Extraordinary Bird

Dru Clarke



Little gray puffs of fluff hopped across our yard: the welcome winter 'snow bird,' the junco. We never paid much attention to them, even though they were the most abundant of winter's bird population, eclipsing nuthatches, titmice, chickadees, woodpeckers, and cardinals in number. Then, one morning, we saw a junco with pink flanks: not just buff, but pink! It was probably an adult female dark-eyed, but it was so strikingly different from the expected slate-gray, that our interest was immediately piqued.

Unsure of our ability to determine its identity, I went to the Internet and several bird guides, the latter confusing us even more. The Junco Project, led by ornithologist Ellen Ketterson, based at Indiana University, proved rich and provocative, a virtual treasure trove of revelations about this extraordinary bird. Why is the junco such a perfect species for research, especially in the field of evolutionary biology?

Ketterson cites their tameness, their propensity to nest on or near the ground – a researcher does not have to climb trees! – their ability to thrive in a captive situation, and their insularity – they are usually found where they are expected to be.

Wonderfully crafted videos describing the history of experimentation and contemporary research on the junco, available on the site, show how, for example, Rowan discovered that changing photoperiod governs mating behavior (he measured gonad size). Today, Borja Milo, of the Museum of Natural History of Madrid, and beefy but convivial Mexican colleague Pau Aleixandre, found the branches of a genealogical "bush" of six juncos linked to the yellow-eyed species of Mexico through mitochondrial DNA. Milo, who closely resembles the handsome actor, Armand Assante, was easy to look at and listen to as he described trekking to the top of Guadalupe Island, a volcanic peak punching out of the Pacific, a day's cruise from Ensenada in Baja, to capture and assay the Guadalupe junco. Living in the remnant stands of cypress, oak, and pine forest, diminished by herds of goats (now extirpated) that had been brought to the island to feed visiting sailors and fishermen, the endemic population survives on the seeds in the cones of the



Photo by Dave Rintoul

conifers. Wildfires threaten these remaining stands of trees, and the existence of this unlikely group of birds. How did they get to this remote island in the first place? Through analyzing samples of its blood for a component of mtDNA (cytochrome oxidase for you who need to know), the Guadalupe junco, with a dark eye, is closely related to the Guatemala junco, with a yellow eye. Though it seems counterintuitive, eye and plumage color do not always foretell close lineage.

One of the most fascinating videos in the series was of the juncos who live on the campus of the University of San Diego, discovered first by an eight-year old girl out birding with her dad, an anthropologist and avid birder. He patiently explained to her that the juncos wouldn't be there now (July) as they would be on Mount Laguna, east of the city, nesting. She insisted, and when he looked through the binoculars discovered that she was, indeed, correct. These campus juncos do not migrate and have evolved behaviors that allow them to thrive in an urban environment: they have "street smarts." One notable change is that their song is of a higher frequency than their mountain counterparts: it can be heard above the city soundscape. The other behaviors you can find out for yourself by going to the Junco Project site. I couldn't deprive you of that pleasure of discovery.

All of this research on a bird I've always taken for granted has opened my eyes to its remarkable success. It is akin in its potential for revealing truths in evolutionary biology to the cichlids in the Rift Valley lakes of Africa and the finches of the Galapagos, and is even more geographically expansive in its diversity, be they races, subspecies or species. They have already seen females and males of different types mate and raise young. And, the hybrids are fertile.

Ellen Ketterson waxes eloquent when she talks about the junco: her face becomes radiant and her eyes light up with a joy as she reminisces over a forty-plus year career studying and, yes, falling in love with a small, gray bird. It is very much like a marriage that lasts and continues to satisfy through the years. May their surprises continue to unfold. And maybe some day we'll learn the identity of the bird with the pink flanks we saw in our yard.

Dru Clarke, ©March 5, 2015



# Alsop Bird Sanctuary Landscape Plan

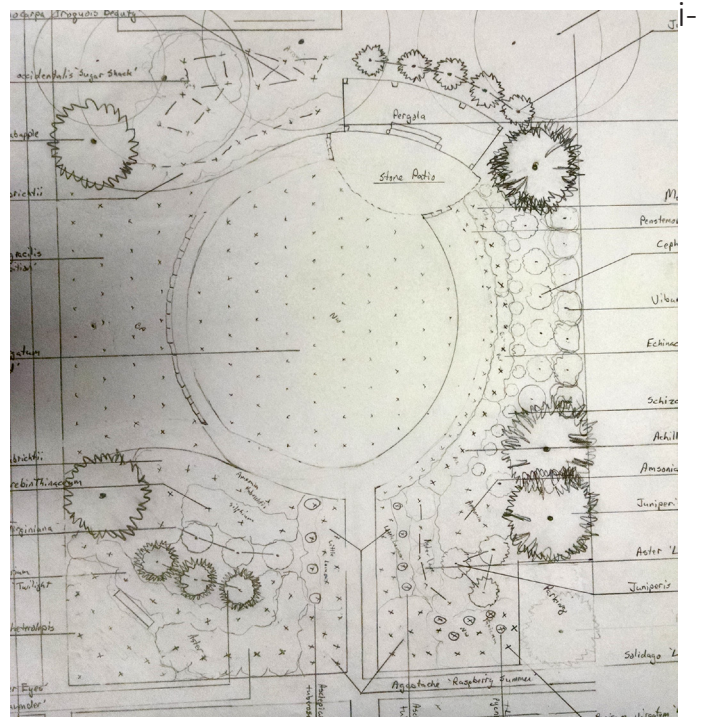


Jim Koelliker, Scott Vogt of Dyck Arboretum, and Patricia Yeager look over the proposal for the Alsop Bird Sanctuary. Native plants, a raised center bed, a walkway, a sitting area, and low maintenance - we have a plan! This may not be the FINAL plan, but it is close to it.

This spring we will haul in new top soil and grade the lot. We will then make a summer of controlling weeds and creating the hardscape for the lot.

Planting native plants is going to be a big event weekend in September. Note: Native plants do not like fertilizer or compost. Landscaping with natives is a slower and different process than regular landscaping so please be patient and do not work on the property without coordinating your efforts with Patricia Yeager, [pyky@flinthills.com](mailto:pyky@flinthills.com) 776-9593

A stone pathway is planned for handicap accessibility to seating and the pergola. Other paths are planned to be gravel at this time. If you want to contribute to the pathway, for a \$100.00 contribution we will have your name carved in a stone in the walkway. Please send donations to Carla Bishop, treas. P.O. Box 1932 Manhattan, KS 66505. Make sure to note that it is a stone pathway contribution and give an example of exactly how you want your engraving to read.



## Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge & Pawnee Indian Museum State Historic Site Field Trip

Thank you to Carla Bishop for coordinating the field trip to Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge. It was a long, windy and dusty trip but we saw and heard Sandhill Cranes up close. Pintails and green winged teal were abundant. Donna Roper's guidance on side trip to Pawnee Indian Village was a treat as well. Thanks to Carla's scheduling all went as planned and 14 participants had a good time.

Thanks to Kevin Fay, A.J. Jacobsen and Patricia Yeager for driving the caravan.

photos by Donna Roper



The Pawnee Indian Museum State Historic Site at Republic, KS is the remains of a Pawnee Indian village occupied in the period from about 1775 to 1802. Portions of it were excavated in 1949, some other parts of it in 1965-1968, and there has been some limited work in recent years, beginning in 2008.

The museum is built on the location of one of the earth lodges that served as the mode of housing in this village. The superstructure is decayed, but the footprint shows where structural elements were placed, retains the lodge's hearth, and overall shows how one of these houses was built.



Additional remains outside the museum building are the locations of other lodges. A portion of a fortification surrounding the village also is visible. The Pawnee lived in their villages in the spring and fall, at which time they were engaged in agriculture, with corn as a primary crop. The other seasons, they left the village and traveled to the south and west to hunt bison.

Exhibits in the museum tell more about Pawnee lifeways and show some of the types of both native and trade objects that they used.

**Donna Roper**



# Book Review

Cindy Jeffrey

For all of you who have enjoyed Dru Clarke's essays over the years, here is your chance to read them again, all in one book! Of course, Dru has not stopped writing, so there will be another book in the future, I am sure.

In the foreword of "Clearing By Noon" Dru (a native of the East Coast) tells us how her love of this "unrelieved sea of grass" was not instantaneous but rather an evolution. I can relate - but in reverse- travelling through New England or the southern states, I feel very claustrophobic. I long for a wide-open vista.

*"But the prairie entices us to stand on one of its pillowed hilltops and wait for, even confront it: there is time to run for cover, or to see if it will clear by noon."*

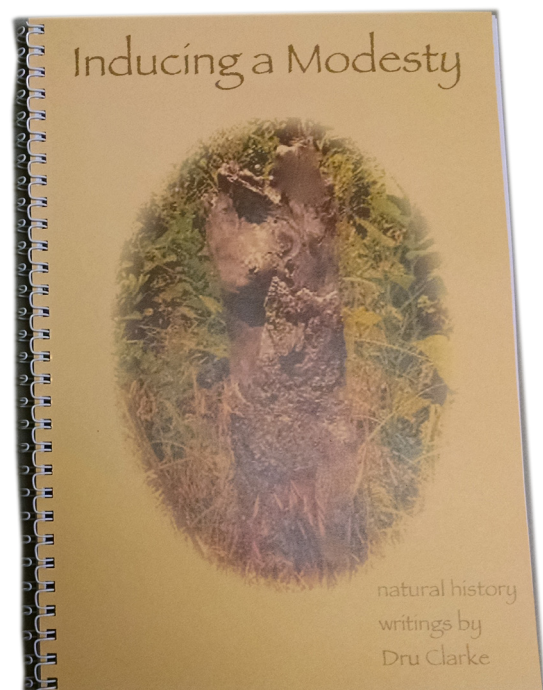
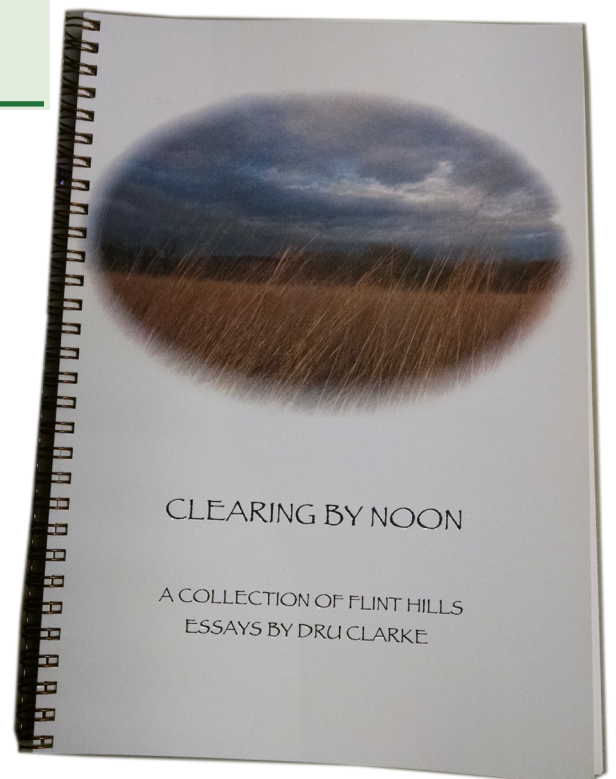
For someone who did not grow up on the prairie, she sure appreciates it and sees it with the fresh eyes and ears of a child. All of her stories come from a deep curiosity about all things in the natural world- animate and inanimate. It is that curiosity and her ability to see things most of us never notice that make her stories so, well, personal. She makes a rock a thing of mystery and her story about mud took me back to my childhood.

"Inducing a Modesty" is a second book of essays by Dru. Most of these have not appeared in print before. It, too, has stories that bring back my childhood and remind me to appreciate the present.

From "Snow Angels" to the poem "Route 36 Sunset" (my favorites), these stories will enlighten and brighten your day.

from Canaire in the Creek,

*"That they are the true harbingers of the arrival of spring - and not the neotropical avian migrants, better known as songbirds - may be a bitter pill to swallow for hardcore birders, but if we consider them - the anurans - precursors of the more sublime cohort of song, then we might embrace them more lovingly, or, at least, with more respect and humility."*



## Help Wanted -

Stuff to do....

### *Butterfly Garden Sojourner Truth Park*

**Thank you to Jacque Staats** for coordinating with Michael Disney at Fish and Wildlife in an effort to revamp our butterfly garden. The butterfly garden was established April 20 1996 according to some old NFHAS notes that I found. It is time for a revamp. Are you willing to volunteer a few days to watering or pulling weeds in our newly revamped garden this summer? Let me know. Patricia Yeager 776-9593 or e-mail pyky@flinthills.com

### *Carnahan Creek Bluebird Trail*

A big **THANK YOU to Kevin Fay** for building 11 bluebird boxes for the Carnahan trail. He and Patricia Yeager put them up on Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup> replacing older ones that might date back to the 80s. Patricia found a post they missed, and the next week she found a old bluebird box in her garage and hung it on the empty post Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. Bird activity (poop) was on the top of 9 of the boxes on the 15<sup>th</sup> so we expect nests this spring. Kevin also built nest boxes as needed for the Stagg Hill golf course trail that he monitors with Hoogy Hoogheem.

Manager wanted: This **bluebird trail of 12 houses at the Carnahan Area at Tuttle Creek Lake** needs a manager. Experience not needed. Work your own hours, put in as little effort or as much as you will enjoy. Call Patricia 776-9593 or e-mail pyky@flinthills.com.

### *Adopt a Highway*

Michael Clarke has done the liaison work with KDOT to find out what it takes to become a participant in the Adopt a Highway program. If a crew from Northern Flint Hills Audubon would pick up trash along a 1 mile stretch of highway, KDOT puts up a sign with NFHAS name on it recognizing our contribution. The commitment is that we clean up the outside roadbeds only of the highway 3 times a year for 2 years. We can do that can't we? The mile up for adoption is HWY 24 between mile marker 322 and 321, which starts about the new Danker Roofing Building and ends at Lake Elbo Rd. We hope for a pool of 10 names to call on. Will you be one of them? If so, please call and leave a message at 776-9593 or e-mail pyky@flinthills.com.

### *Thank you*

Eve Parks is moving to Georgia to care for her parents. We want to wish her well, and **thank her** for all the weeding, guiding day trips, birding expertise and general moral support. Keep in touch!



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### *Review of Dru's two books*

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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)  
Also available on-line at [www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html](http://www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html)

Membership Information: Introductory memberships - \$20/yr., then basic, renewal membership is \$35/yr. When you join the National Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society. You will receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine in addition to the Prairie Falcon newsletter. New membership applications should be sent to National Audubon Society, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are also handled by the National Audubon Society. Questions about membership? Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society [join@audubon.org](mailto:join@audubon.org). Website is [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

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, 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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Audubon of Kansas Trustee: Michael Donnelly

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KS Senator or Representative: State Capital Bldg, Topeka, KS 66612. Ph# (during session only) Senate - 785-296-7300. House - 785-296-7500. U.S. Senator Roberts <[Roberts@senate.gov](mailto:Roberts@senate.gov)> U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510.