



The Merlin

This photo is by Dave Rintoul, his first sighting of the season, Sept. 10, 2021

These small birds were popular among female royalty when falconry was prevalent during Medieval times. Some of the more famous owners of these birds included Mary Queen of Scots and Catherine the Great. They hunted skylarks using their Merlin

Instead of building their own nests, these birds like to usurp the nests of other large birds. They like to take up residence in old crow or hawk nests. Because of this, they actually never build their own nests!

Very few birds of prey work together while hunting. One of the few species that hunts as a group is the Harris hawk. Merlins are also part of this exclusive cooperative hunting club. Unlike Harris hawks, which hunt in family groups containing several members, Merlins usually hunt in pairs.

Some of the different ecosystems that they thrive in include grasslands, meadows, marshes, deserts, coastlines, and steppes. They do use forested areas while breeding, and usually choose coniferous, or pine, forest.

In North America, they live in Alaska and Canada during the summer, and migrate into the United States and Mexico, as well as Central and northern South America. In Eurasia, they live primarily in Russia and northern portions of Europe during the summer, and migrate south over the winter.

Like all falcons, these birds are carnivores and only eat meat. Their favorite prey is small species of birds, which they usually catch while flying. In fact, the vast majority of their diet consists of birds. Some of their most common prey items include sparrows, ptarmigans, finches, larks, grouse, and more. They also hunt for insects, lizards, frogs, mice, rats, rabbits, and other small animals.

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 50, No. 2, October 2021

Inside

pg. 2 Skylight

Pete Cohen

pg. 3 Umami

Dru Clarke

pg. 4-5 Bird Seed SALE

pg. 6 BIRDING - Manhattan Parks

pg. 7 - 50th COUNTDOWN

Upcoming Events

Oct. 5 - Board Meeting - 5:30 pm
Sojourner Truth Park

Oct. 9 - Monthly Bird Walk 8 am. Northeast Park Picnic Shelter

Oct. 26 - Birdseed SALE ORDER DEADLINE

Nov. 7 - Birdseed PICKUP 9:30am-3 pm

**2041 Pillsbury Dr. (Stone house across Highway 177
from Piano Store)**

Nov. 2 -Board Meeting - 5:30 pm
Sojourner Truth Park



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

For any who may have escaped notice, a widely reviewed book came onto the front burner this summer that apparently strikes

a gong similar to the one struck in 1962 by Rachel Carlson's "Silent Spring", only with a different focus as explained by its full title: "The Brilliant Abyss: Exploring the Majestic Hidden Life of the Deep Ocean, and the Looming Threat That Imperils It".

'Tis said that the seabeds below the reach of sunlight comprise 95% of Earth's habitat, supporting creatures bizarrely different than those nearer to and on the surface. It reports that abyssal research is catching up with deep sea mining and other exploitations that are disrupting those environments, including the water currents, in ways that endanger the planet as a whole, and that take place out of all but specialized view. What effect this book will have remains to be seen.

And as to seeing, there is the situation of dragonflies, those small frail, iridescent creatures with the dual set of wings. A short piece in the July 23rd The Week reported on a certain species whose males have black wing markings in various patterns that are involved in attracting females, but with a warming climate the heat absorbent black was raising insects' body temperature as much as 3.5 degrees F. So more males were appearing with less melatonin, making their diaphanous wings much less visible to potential mates. Hence fewer dragonflies to gobble up mosquitoes and less prey for predators of dragonflies. Besides, dragonfly eggs, which require unpolluted water, hatch into nymphs that provide a voracious predator factor in their own environments. The swift dragonflies are harder to research than the more gently moving butterflies while a reduction in their number could ripple results that also remain to be seen.

Looking further ahead, a CBS news report tells of a wobble in the Moon's orbit that puts it, the Earth, and the Sun in certain juxtapositions on an 18.6 year cycle. The results are periods of increased high tides and and lower low tides alternating with times of

lower high tides and higher low tides. Though in the past the variations were of little import, with the seas incrementally rising, the report said that NOAA, in 2019, counted 600 floods in the U.S. caused by those high tides. And with a warming climate raising the seas further, the agency figures that by the mid-2030s the U.S. the tides will be coming for breakfast, lunch, or dinner daily along the eastern seaboard plus Hawaii and Guam.

Such ecological scenarios, like the arboreal one mentioned in September, seem in muted yet endless supply. One merely has to peek about to uncover them, And then go figure what to do about them.

Overhead, Mars is off-stage behind the Sun this month. But on the early evening of the 9th, Venus, in a bright phase, will be within the claws of Scorpius with a crescent Moon swinging above and the Scorpion's bright reddish star, Antares to her left. She should be close to Antares the 15th through 17th before moving up into the large arena of sky outlined by the stars of Ophiuchus, the Snake-Bearer.

The Moon's social life begins on the 3rd with an early morn visit to Leo's bright star, Regulus. Then after his rendezvous with Venus he'll be amid the stars Capricornus, the Sea-Goat, to form triangles with Jupiter and Saturn the 13th and 15th. Saturn will be upper left the first night, Jupiter upper right the third night, and the Moon between on the middle 14th. He'll be passing Aldebaran, the red eye of Taurus the 23rd, on the way to a mid-evening close encounter with the star, El Nath, which serves both as the tip of the Bull's long upper horn, and as a corner of the constellation of Auriga, the Charioteer. Though the latter is shaped like home-plate, Claudia Ptolemy named it in his book, The Almagest, long before baseball came into being.

As to Capricornus, various myths describe a creature, either genuinely or conveniently a goat, jumping into the water and developing a fishtail to escape various enemies. (Which seems a rather simple and refreshing tactic.) Then Regulus and the Moon revisit on the 30th.

The Moon will be new the 8th at 6a05, full the 20th at 8a57, after which its continuing brightness will wash out the Orionid meteor shower.

© 2021 Peter Zachary Cohen

Umami

Dru Clarke



Driving up a woodland trail to locate errant calves we spotted an anomaly in the woods: a series of white shelves climbing on what appeared to be a dead tree. Initially I dismissed them as bracket fungi, but was puzzled by their bright whiteness. To my amazement and delight, they turned out to be oyster mushrooms, *Pleurotus ostreatus*, a sp. I first met as a kid roaming the highland woods of New Jersey. Here, they were enjoying the support and nutrition of an unimpressive dead elm, the only tree in this neck of the woods to sport this delectable fungus.

The summer before college, I was hired as a mother's helper (a sort of nanny) by a well-to-do Princeton family, and my job entailed keeping their two children – a boy and a girl – out of trouble for the summer. I don't remember them at all (except they were blonde and well-behaved), but I liked their dad, Dickey, who worked at Educational Testing Service. Their home was tucked into a mixed woodland and I spent many hours walking among the trees and one day I found a trove of what I then identified as angel wings (*Pleurocybella porrigens*): Dickey was transported with joy when he found out I was saute'ing them for dinner. (They may have been oyster mushrooms which are fleshier, are found on deciduous wood, and grow year round: these grew during the summer.) But I liked the idea of their being angel wings, a more ethereal name.

I collected several pounds of the oysters – their odor is reminiscent of shellfish and earth- and cleaned them of myriad tiny black beetles: the mushrooms were fresh and young enough not to have fallen into decay. I'm not sure what wildlife feeds on them other than some insects, but I have seen box turtles munching on a *Russula*, the rose-colored sp. of gilled mushroom. I did some up with browned butter and grass-fed strip steaks and endured a strong dose of umami, that fifth sensory taste "the essence of deliciousness".

Umami was identified first by Kikunae Ikeda over a century ago after tasting kombu dashi, a seaweed dish. Chemically it is glutamic acid (MSG) and it in combination with ribonucleotides (basic building blocks of RNA) can create a taste experience that lingers long after the meal is completed. It creates a feeling of mouth fullness as well as a (pleasant) tongue coating sensation, a balanced but complex taste. We've all had a meal at some point in time that has been memorable for its richness: that is the essence of umami.

Shortly after the discovery of these edibles, we found another growth of them on the stump of an enormous elm that had been cut down. These 'shelves' were truly huge, perhaps eight to ten inches across, and they were tough and rubbery, certainly beyond collecting for eating, although they are edible when young.

A gilled mushroom that seems unusually abundant this year is the poisonous *Amanita*. Its body erupts from an egg-shaped sac and its cap retains scab-like pieces of that as well as a remnant ring around the stalk from a veil that covers the gills before it breaks. We have a fairy ring of them in our east meadow and the cows fastidiously avoid each one. Some in this family are edible but caution should prevail as there are many look-a-likes. It is best to avoid them unless you are a true expert.

Years ago, I collected fresh puffballs that before they turn to the spore stage yield steak-like, dense, meaty slices, another often overlooked delicacy. One should peel off the tough outer layer to expose the spongy white flesh.

I froze a few bags of the oysters and plan to share them with our grandson who is visiting this fall: he is a top-notch chef who should be able to create a mouth-watering dish with them. And we'll pay homage to the newly appreciated dead elm who hosted them. Umami, everyone!



Bird seed SALE 2021

Northern Flint Hills



Audubon Society
Manhattan, Kansas

ORDER by Oct. 26, 2021

Send completed form and payment to:
NFHAS
P.O. Box 1932
Manhattan, KS 66505

PICKUP: Sunday, Nov. 7, 2021 -9:30 am - 3 pm

2041 Pillsbury Dr. (Stone house across Highway 177 from Piano Store)
Drive through and we will load your vehicle
Masks Required

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

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED CHIPS are high in energy and can be used in tube feeders. It is especially liked by pine Siskins. Hulled sunflower seed is consumed by a variety of birds, large- and small-beaked.

FINCH MIX consists of 50% sunflower chips and 50% thistle seed.

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

MEDIUM CHOP is chopped corn, a little finer and cleaned.

PEANUT PICKOUTS are chunks of peanut hearts and are very attractive to woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, titmice, jays, wrens, and more.

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

SUET CAKES, in addition to having other nutritious ingredients, the main ingredient is high calorie beef fat. It helps birds maintain body heat in cold winter months. Bird seed, berries and peanut butter are mixed in with suet. Enjoy woodpeckers, wrens, nuthatches, and chickadees.

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS are the preferred seed of many small feeder birds and attractive to more species than are striped sunflower seeds. Black oil supplies more energy per pound than striped.

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

THISTLE SEED is very attractive to Gold Finches and all other finches that are here over winter. It is excellent for tube feeders.

WHITE MILLET is a favorite of most small-beaked ground-feeding birds; Red millet is also readily eaten. Quail, doves, juncos, sparrows, towhees, cowbirds, and red-winged blackbirds are attracted to millet.

(Taken from Audubon At Home Bird Feeding Basics, <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/>)

Sales Support Local Chapter Activities

As with all of our fund-raising activities, proceeds from our seed 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.

2021 Order Form

Manhattan Flint Hills Audubon Fall 2021			
Black oil sunflower	OUR PRICE	Number of bags	Total
10	\$10.43		
25	\$23.03		
50	\$41.90		
striped sunflower			
10	\$16.90		
25	\$25.83		
50	\$47.53		
flint hills feast			
10	\$10.43		
25	\$22.33		
50	\$41.93		
cheap cheap mix			
10	\$8.33		
25	\$17.43		
50	\$32.13		
sunflower chips			
10	\$16.73		
25	\$37.03		
thistle			
10	\$19.53		
25	\$42.63		
finch mix			
10	\$18.13		
25	\$40.53		
safflower			
10	\$14.63		
25	\$32.13		
white millet			
10	\$8.33		
25	\$17.43		
50	\$32.13		
red millet			
10	\$9.73		
25	\$22.33		
50	\$41.93		
peanut pickouts (shelled peanuts)			
10	\$18.13		
25	\$39.83		
medium corn chop			
25	\$5.53		
50	\$11.13		
suet cake			
ea	\$1.61		
TOTAL			

Delivery service available within Manhattan City limits for additional \$5

COMPLETE and return with payment:	SUBTOTAL
NAME	DELIVERY
ADDRESS	DONATION
PHONE	TOTAL
EMAIL	Checks payable to:
	Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society
	Or NFHAS

Monthly Bird Walk: City Parks

Patricia Yeager



Saturday morning birding -

THANKS to Lowell for leading last months birding.

This month's birding will be at **Northeast Park**, meeting at the picnic shelter.

If you would like to lead, contact Patricia - pyeagerbirder@gmail.com 776-9593

2021-2022 Project

Birds of Manhattan City Parks

We plan to **develop a checklist of birds in the Manhattan city parks** and it will take all of us to make the list complete. This will be a worthwhile contribution of Northern Flint Hill Audubon to the city and spread the joy of birding. It will also add value to parks in our city and help persuade city commissioners to keep and consider preserving green spaces as the city grows.

To Participate

Pick a city park or trail in Manhattan. Bird it a minimum of once a month and keep a list of the species that you see or hear. Please let me (pyeagerbirder@gmail.com) know that you have taken on this project and which park(s) is your choice. If you are unable to make this large of commitment, please submit your bird list any time you are in a city park. All lists are helpful.

Label the list thus: Your name, the park name, date. Send your list to my e-mail, please, and I will submit it to the blog on our website nfhas.org.

Call Patricia to volunteer to help get the Alsop property ready Fall and Winter!

From the January 1988 Prairie Falcon

BIRDERS BLOOPERS

TRUE TALES THAT ARE HARD TO BELIEVE

A former U.S. cabinet member is not worried about acid rain. Where fields are alkaline, he says, "a little acid rain helps to neutralize the soil."

A physician shot a 320-pound black bear and presented the pelt to a politician "as a demonstration of his concern for the environment."

A dolphin mistaken for an armed North Korean spy was shot dead by South Korean soldiers. The latter were praised by their commander!

The official seal of the U.S. Department of The Interior, an American buffalo facing left was redesigned by James G. Watt. It now faces right!

After agreeing to let the Air Force use almost 75% of a wildlife range in Nevada for bombing exercises, a Wildlife Service official said, "We feel the animals are in safe hands."

Aristotle believed that swallows passed the winter buried in heaps at the bottoms of rivers.

A Kansas high school chose a falcon as the school emblem, but when depicted, the mascot has broad wings and resembles a red-tailed hawk!

A newspaper advertisement had an illustration of a red-tailed hawk labeled "bluebird."

Some Audubon members mistook the sounds of spring peeper frogs for nocturnal bird song!

Some Audubon members camped on the Platte River in Nebraska. They had seen so many sandhill cranes that they suddenly became very interested in trying to distinguish eastern from western meadowlarks by sight. It's not often when sandhill cranes are that boring.

A sandhill crane was reported locally. It turned out to be an immature yellow-crowned night heron!

An Audubon member claims that the television show *Dallas* is not filmed in Texas, but on the West coast. How does he know? Calls of California quail are often heard in many outdoor scenes!●

Neil Schanker

NFHAS
50
YEARS

CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR UPDATES: nfhas.org





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

Return Service Requested

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 662
Manhattan, KS 66502



PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND "SAVING CHEYENNE BOTTOMS"

The Kansas Audubon Council and Kansas Wildlife Federation are sponsoring SAVING CHEYENNE BOTTOMS, a one-day conference at Great Bend on Saturday, September 22.

Conference participants will learn about Colorado's impact on the Arkansas River, what water supplies exist above and below ground around Great Bend, what the state water plan will mean to wildlife and wildlife habitat in Kansas, and why Cheyenne Bottoms is so vital. Persons from Kansas Plan and Game will explain in detail the problems confronting the Bottoms, and propose some alternatives to improve the situation.

Highlighting the program is Les Greenwalt, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service until James Watt dismissed him; he'll talk about Cheyenne Bottoms from a national perspective. Legislators Ron Fox and Jim Hurrell will give insights in how the Legislature works and how to be effective in working with the legislature.



Other events surrounding SAVING CHEYENNE BOTTOMS will be a Friday evening folk fest for those who arrive early, and a Sunday morning field trip to Salina National Wildlife Refuge for those who stay over. A Saturday afternoon tour of the Bottoms and the diversion dam on the Ark River will be scheduled if enough people are interested.

Registration is \$1.00 per person. There are limited camping facilities available nearby, or a list of Great Bend motels and prices will be sent to participants after registering.

We wildlife enthusiasts have an opportunity to speak out for one of our favorite areas, and if we don't go to it, who will? Please plan to attend SAVING CHEYENNE BOTTOMS--and bring a friend! Send in your registration today!

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.

Also available online at nfhas.org

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

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, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society and include the code C4ZJ040Z. Questions about membership Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org. Website is 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, 66505-1932

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

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

NFHAS Board

President: [Patricia Yeager](mailto:pyeagerbirder@gmail.com) - pyeagerbirder@gmail.com 776-9593
Vice Pres.
Secretary:
Treasurer: Patty Kline - pjcline23101@gmail.com

COMMITTEE Chairs:

Membership: Jacque Staats
Programs: Kevin Fay
Butterfly Garden & Northeast Park : Jacque Staats
Alsop Property: Patricia Yeager - pyeagerbirder@gmail.com 776-9593

Education:

Bird Seed Sales:

Newsletter: [Cindy Jeffrey](mailto:cinraney@ksu.edu) - cinraney@ksu.edu 565-3326
Fieldtrips: Patricia Yeager, Kevin Fay 776-9593
AOK Representative: Cindy Jeffrey
At-large: Susan Blackford

Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email: Governor: 2nd Floor, State Capital Bldg., Topeka , KS 66612. 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> U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510. Jerry Moran U.S. Capital Switchboard 202-224-3121.