

*Join us Wednesday, Sept 16TH, 7 p.m. at the  
Manhattan Public Library Auditorium  
"Gardening for Pollinators"*

*presented by  
Carla Bishop,  
Extension Master Gardener  
It's about birds, as well as flowers,  
bees, butterflies... oh my...*

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 44, No. 1 ~ September 2015

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### Upcoming Events

**Sept 3 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.**

Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

**Sept 12 - Saturday Morning Birding**

8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

**Sept 16 - Program: Gardening for  
Pollinators 7 p.m.  
Manhattan Public Library  
Auditorium**

**Sept 25-26-27 - Kansas Native Plant  
Society - Annual Wildflower**

Weekend see pg. 5

**Oct 1 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.**

Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

**Oct 2-4 Kansas Ornithological Meeting**  
see pg. 5 for more information



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

It seems that for every activity a tipping point obtains, and since there are likely a lot of

Kansans familiar with Minnesota's Lake Mille Lacs (Mill-Lack), one such point recently announced there should be of more than general interest here. In mid-season all walleye fishing there has been stopped--well, cold would not be the proper word.

What the state's Department of Natural Resources has determined to be a current sustainable annual yield of 40,000 lbs. has been reached. And one reason suggested for the reduced availability of walleye, is a reduced availability of prey species due to warming water. There are a little over 130,000 acres of water surface covering separated areas of mud flats and rocky deeps. A couple of small islands poke up, giving little opposition to the winds that sweep across its wide expanse and which have given rise to specially designed Mille Lacs boats. And it seems clear that what most fisherman use them for is to catch walleye "pike", which are really large perch.

It's not that there aren't other large, in fact larger, game fish, the real pikes- the northern pikes and in other lakes, the muskies, that will fight back. This preference for the unresisting, less boney and softer-fleshed walleye extends far beyond Mille Lacs and has been the source a number of management controversies, several involving Indian treaty rights. I've not been involved in the controversies, but I have had fifty years' experience on Minnesota waters north of Mille Lacs, and in the early stretch of those years was never surprised to have a ten to fifteen-pound walleye weigh down my line. A bother, since I was after the muskies and northern. Then, at least in my experience, and that of those I've spoken with, at some point some time ago began a steady decline, at first more in the size than the number, of fish being brought in from an outing. This was being blamed at the time on the effects of eutrophication from unregulated sewage disposal.

Mille Lacs is within easy reach of large people populations. Perhaps that contributes. In any case, for the walleye of Mille Lacs it's tipped to the point of being game-over for now. We shall see if this turns out to be a wake-up call, or the start of a trend.

The generality of people in this area should not need a wake-up call for the big event in the sky this month. This obtains because the Moon has an orbital path that it follows around the Earth that can be counted as one round every 27.3 days, if you measure by its appearance against the background of stars. Thus, this is its sidereal period.

But the Earth keeps moving, too, so it takes the Moon a couple extra days to catch up into the same position relative to Earth and Sun, i.e. from full to full, or new to new, or other positions in between. These 29.5 days are its synodic period.

At the same time the orbit brings the Moon to its nearest point to the Earth (perigee) once a month, likewise to its farthest (apogee). About a 30,000 mile difference.

Because these factors operate independently the Moon, at whatever phase, is sometimes a little brighter, or dimmer, than the average (with the tides responding as well). And eclipses occur at different (though predictable) times and places.

Additionally, the Moon's orbit brings it up vertically to the horizon in the north's springtime, but almost parallel to the horizon in the fall, thus we have several early rising full-to-nearly-full Moons in September (the harvest moon) and October (the hunters' moon).

Well--there's the idea that if you combine enough variety long enough you will eventually get uniformity, and on September 27<sup>th</sup> the Moon will be a) harvest moon full, b) at perigee, and c) being eclipsed, with sunlight leaking around through the Earth's atmosphere giving it a "blood Moon" color. The eastern half of the U.S. will get the full show. Here we'll have to be content with seeing it in progress as the Full Moon rises, as always, at sunset. Full at 9p50; new the 13<sup>th</sup> at 1a41.

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## Riparian Forests: Replacement or Restoration?

Dru Clarke

*(Due to "editor" error, the text for the article titled "Riparian" in last issue, was from an earlier article "Biscuit Wood." Here is the real "Riparian" story)*

Our small band of amateur researchers had just converged on the edge of the river, ready to deploy our kick nets to gather macroinvertebrates, aquatic young of insects, when in the distance we saw a fast-approaching cloud of dust. Out of the cloud emerged two riders on horseback, chaps flapping, all seemingly made of the dust, and they were riding hard toward us. Pulling up short, one, a slim, light-haired cowboy, leaning on his saddle horn, politely doffed his hat and drawled, "mornin', ma'm." Smiling at this improbable visit, I explained to him that we were collecting data for the GLOBE Program, an internationally recognized series of protocols, funded by NSF, to assess the state of the environment and that we had gained permission from the landowner. After an exchange of pleasantries, he, who had graduated from KSU in range management said, "Well, all raht, we were jes' out checkin' cattle. Have a good tahme!" and off they rode, this time at a slower pace.

This was on the famous and sprawling Pyramid Ranch – over 12,000 acres of short grass prairie laid down in the chalky limestone of Gove County in western Kansas – and a prairie river – the Smoky Hill – flows through it, east out of Colorado, eventually to join the Republican River near Junction City to create the Kansas River. Its banks were almost level with the shallow water's surface and were either bare or covered sparsely with short grass. As far as one could see the most obvious plant in bloom was yellow-flowered Prince's Plume, *Stanleya*, a beautiful but deadly forb that concentrates selenium in its tissues. Further east, the banks eventually become more sloped, and a photograph of it near Ellsworth, Kansas in 1847 shows tall deciduous trees – they look like elm and cottonwood – behind a herd of cattle at a crossing in the still shallow water.

Today, most rivers and creeks in the *eastern half* of our state have woody riparian vegetation, due, it seems, to the prevailing nature of our climate (primarily, its precipitation pattern). But was it so in the past, in pre-pioneer times? We know that the Wichita (who lived in the central part of Kansas) and the Pawnee, both of whom lived here over 500 years ago, built homes with logs and poles as frames, and the Kansa, over a 300 year period, set big logs in a circle, attaching pole rafters to the roof. "Logs" are ob-

tained from *big* trees. (There are log pole holes along Wildcat Creek in Manhattan.) The Cheyenne, who lived in *western* Kansas, used long poles to frame their tipis. Where did they get the wood? Possibly, as viewed by Zebulon Pike in 1806, from the "Big Timbers" area, a 60 mile reach up the Arkansas River along the present-day border of Kansas and Colorado. (Two other Big Timbers areas are documented: One, on the Smoky Hill River in Wallace County and another on the Republican River, south of McCook, Nebraska.) In winter, these tribes, and even bison, would seek out the protective low areas where trees and streams were. Piles of bones – both human and bison – tell this tale.

Many small tributaries were named for trees: Walnut (near Ness City); Hackberry (in Cheyenne County); Ash (near Great Bend); and Elm (in Marshall, Saline, and Bourbon Counties). Were these assigned through sentiment for familiar trees settlers knew further east, or were they namesakes for welcome wood found growing along those creeks? Notes from a surveying team from 1825 describe streams emptying into the Arkansas as 'well shaded by stands of hardwoods.' Francis Parkman, in his chapter "The Big Blue," from his journal/ book "The Oregon Trail," described: "Then I shouldered my way through the willows, tramping them down by main force, till I came to a wide stream of water, three inches deep, languidly creeping along over a bottom of sleek mud."

Several historical occurrences are thought to have contributed to the loss of forested riparian areas in the Great Plains: the Colorado Gold Rush (one trail ran along the Smoky Hill River) and the westward migration of white pioneers; the rise of the Plains horse culture and an accompanying rise in Native American population (at least, until the spread of insidious diseases brought by the 'new' settlers); and the advance of farming and stock-raising onto the Plains, with settlers gravitating to timber-rich bottomlands by rivers and creeks. While one wouldn't think Native Americans could have been



## Riparian Forests:

### Replacement or Restoration?

continued

partially responsible for this trend, Jacob Fowler in 1821 estimated that in a winter camp in the Big Timbers were a total of twenty thousand horses (in addition to providing shelter from blizzards, the trees yielded bark that was fed to them). Timber cut for fuel and crafting replacement parts for wagons increased pressure on existing riparian forests. Most riparian woodlands had been 'harvested' by the 1900's.

Today, some are attempting to "restore" riparian areas with just *native grasses* in the questionable and sketchily supported notion that "that is the way it was" in the past. While we may not know for sure the *extent* of forested riparian reaches, we do know that they existed in places where they don't now. And, they may exist now where they didn't before, but that may be due more to climate change than to any negligence on our part. Suppression of fire might be a contributing factor, but on sloped forested banks adjacent to streams, fire seldom penetrates or is successful in controlling wood. We can see that on our own small parcel of prairie/woodland. On a level surface, where there are no significant banks, a stream might meander along (as on the Smoky Hill River where we worked that summer day), and fire could race unabated all the way to the horizon. Woody growth wouldn't stand a chance.

With the heat of the day or the heat of a fire, a shady riparian forest would offer a welcome retreat, and cool the water as well. A straight trunk could serve as a fine backrest for the contemplative or the weary, while the trees' roots unconsciously work to hold precious soil in place and slow its erosion. Riparian forests deserve our appreciation and our protection.

Dru Clarke

© March 15, 2015

Note: Several sources informed this essay, the chief one being "Historical evidence of riparian forests in the Great Plains and how that knowledge can aid with restoration and management." by Elliot West, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Greg Ruark, USDA's National Agroforestry Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. A second source was a 2005 Kansas Forest Service bulletin. The mentioned photo of the Smoky Hill River at Ellsworth (1845) can be viewed at Old West Photo Prints on-line.



### A pair of nesting Mississippi Kites near Keats

Jacque Staats

*"... circling overhead, you know that odd mix of hesitancy and dash that makes its flight so delightful."*

*"... hang in air as if suspended, or soar as if there were nothing in the world to do but soar,"*

*"The prey is most often grasshoppers, cicadas, dragonflies, and other large insects, ..."*

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org>



## 67th Meeting of Kansas Ornithological Society

October 2 - 4, 2015

Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas



Friday, October 2

7- 9 p.m. Social at ESU's Ross Natural History Reservation

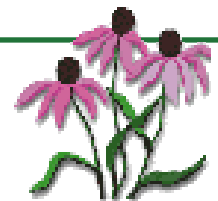
Saturday, October 3 (times tentative)

**Guest speaker: Noppadol Paothong** is a staff photographer at the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). Nop spent 12 years photographing grassland grouse. This work is documented in the award winning book, "Save The Last Dance". You can view some of Nop's work at <http://www.nopnatureimages.com/> You will find Nop's presentation to be stunning and entertaining yet somewhat poignant as he discusses the sad state of declining grassland grouse numbers.

### Registration

The meeting registration fee is \$25. The Saturday evening banquet is \$20. The Sunday box lunch is \$8. Registration fee is waived for students 25 and under. Registrations must be received by September 25th to be included in meal counts. No refunds for cancellations after September 25th. Registration form and more information can be found at the following website.

[http://www.ksbirds.org/kos/Fall2015/2015\\_KOS\\_Fall.htm](http://www.ksbirds.org/kos/Fall2015/2015_KOS_Fall.htm)



2015 Annual Wildflower Weekend (AWW)

**37th Annual Wildflower Weekend** • Manhattan, KS • September 25-26-27, 2015

KNPS members exploring the Red Hills at the 2014 Annual Wildflower Weekend. Anyone who has attended the AWW in the past knows it is the highlight of the year for those who love native plants and enjoy being around people with the same passion. This year's theme is: "Flint Hills Landscapes"

Outings to diverse sites in the area are planned for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. You will have the chance to botanize at Konza Prairie, enjoy views of Tuttle Creek Lake, and visit a prairie restoration.

Our speakers, Kelly Roccaforte, PhD candidate at the University of Kansas, and Shelly Wiggam, PhD candidate at Kansas State University, will discuss their prairie pollinator research projects.

Returning members look forward to these traditional activities: presentation of Annual Awards, the display of outstanding pictures in the Photo Contest, and the fun of placing bids and winning items in the Silent Auction.

[http://www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org/aww\\_2015.php](http://www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org/aww_2015.php)

## *We remember Donna*

*It is with deepest regret that we report the passing of our friend, Donna Roper, fellow birder, secretary, and much more. We will miss her.*

Donna's contribution and participation in NFHAS will be greatly missed. Her enthusiasm for learning about birds energized me to keep going on our quest to be better birders and stewards of their habitat.

One could count on Donna. As secretary, she would attend our board meetings and take the notes regularly even though she traveled frequently to archeological sites and meetings. Often she would send the minutes back to her fellow board members from her travels.

She was a photographer. I looked forward to pictures of birds she often sent to me. Sometimes she wanted help to ID them and other times they were a nice shot she simply wanted to share.

She was regularly at the Saturday morning bird walk and could always fill-in the gaps between birds with intelligent conversation. Information about historical Pawnee culture would often enhance our morning outings. All this being so, I will miss her most because she was a loyal and supportive friend.

*Patricia Yeager*

On November 23, 2013, four of us made a day-trip to Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, and Donna wrote an excellent account of our visit for the January 2014 *Prairie Falcon*. She noted that the day was cold but that the heater in my car kept us warm, which was an exceedingly gracious statement. The high that day was 23 and the windows in the back seat repeatedly frosted over. I stopped in Falls City, NE, that morning and bought a small ice-scraper that Donna and Kathleen used continuously throughout the day- without even complaining- while up front, Patricia and I had the benefit of the defroster.

It really was a good trip, but any trip with Donna was fun and enlivened by her wit and pithy comments. Sometimes she was more contemplative. On December 29, 2013, Donna emailed me about her disappointment at so few eagles at Tuttle Creek, especially compared to the previous year. "But at least there were a few; a winter without the eagles would be a sad winter."

Our lives without Donna will likewise be sad, but our memories are all good. I am grateful I had the chance to know Donna Roper and count her my friend.

*Eve Parks*



# ALSOP Bird Sanctuary UPDATE

It may look like there is nothing happening at the Alsop bird sanctuary lot at 17th and Laramie, but nothing could be further from the truth. The stage we are in now is clearing the land of all vegetation that we do not want in the garden.

**HELP WANTED:** Please go to the lot WITH A SHOVEL anytime you wish to get some exercise, blow off steam, feel compelled to do something for your fellow man, help me out and DIG OUT CRAB GRASS and any other vegetation.

Unless someone wants to get real ambitious, we are leaving the lawn around the edge to deal with next year. Please go dig (not more than 18 inches deep, as there is buried cable on the SW quarter) anytime. I will be working on it too.

We can do this! Planting is planned for October.

## Bird ID Skills: How to Learn Bird Songs and Calls Five Tips for Beginners

The **Cornell** Lab of Ornithology

**Watch and listen** - When you see a bird singing, the connection between bird and song tends to stick in your mind.

**Learn from an expert** - It's much harder to learn bird songs from scratch than to have a fellow bird watcher point them out to you. Check for a nearby bird club or Audubon chapter and join a field trip.

**Listen to recordings** - Start by listening to recordings of birds you see often. Play them often to make the sounds stick. Our online bird guide has more than 600 sounds you can listen to, with thousands more available in a searchable format at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library. You can also purchase regional audio guides produced by the Macaulay Library.

**Say it to yourself** - Some songs almost sound like words – who can mistake the Barred Owl's "Who cooks for you all?" Mnemonics can make a song a snap to remember. Barred Owl's "Who cooks for you?"

**Details, details, details** - Break the song apart into its different qualities, including rhythm, pitch, tone, and repetition. As you listen to the birds around you and study the recordings, try placing the songs in different categories as shown below.

**How to Listen to a Song** - When you first listen to a dawn chorus in full swing, the sheer onslaught of bird song can be overwhelming. How does anyone start to pick apart the chirps, whistles, and trills that are echoing out of the woods? The answer, of course, is to concentrate on one bird at a time – and that approach holds true when you're trying to learn individual songs, too. Don't try to memorize each entire song you hear. Instead, focus on one quality of the sound at a time. Many birds have a characteristic rhythm, pitch, or tone to their song. Once you zero in on it, you'll have a better sense of the bird's identity. When you combine these characters, you can narrow things down even further. Here are a few examples:

**Rhythm** - Get used to a bird's characteristic tempo. Marsh Wrens sing in a hurry, while White-throated Sparrows are much more leisurely. Fast and jumbled: Marsh Wren, Slow and leisurely: White-throated Sparrow

**Pitch** - Most birds sing in a characteristic range, with smaller birds (like the Cedar Waxwing) typically having higher voices and larger birds (like the Common Raven) usually having deeper voices. Many bird songs change pitch, as in the Prairie Warbler's rising, buzzy song or the Canyon Wren's sweet descending whistles. Some birds are distinctive for having steady voices, like the Chipping Sparrow's trill.

**Repetition** - Some birds characteristically repeat syllables or phrases before moving on to a new sound. Northern Mockingbirds do this many times in a row. Though Brown Thrashers sound similar, they typically repeat only twice.

**Tone** - The tone of a bird's song is sometimes hard to describe, but it can be very distinctive. To begin with, pay attention to whether a bird's voice is a clear whistle, harsh or scratchy, liquid and flute-like, or a clear trill. If you can remember the quality of a bird's voice, it can give you a clue to the bird's identity even if the bird doesn't sing the same notes every time before changing to a new syllable.



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

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