



Feb. 14-17th

February is the time of the
Great Backyard Bird Count!
All of you who have bird feeders,
this is your COUNT!

See page 4 for details

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 42, No. 6 ~ February 2014

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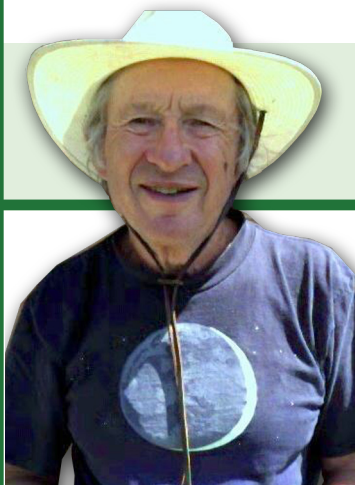
Upcoming Events

Feb. 3 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Feb. 8 - Saturday Morning Birding
Meet Sojourner Truth Park, 8 a.m.

Feb. 14-17 - Great Backyard Bird Count
See page 4

Mar. 3 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

As I write Old Man Winter has been relatively generous with his northern air and his snow crop this season, more so in some places than others, and sufficiently here that we were moved to think of snow ice cream. It was the first time in a long time so we thought we'd better refresh ourselves on the mix of ingredients, and may be find some new ideas.

One of our books, a 20th printing edition of "More-With-Less Cookbook," is comprised of Mennonite suggestions put together by Doris Jantzen Longacre, (Herald Press, Scottdale, PA.) and contains a recipe submitted by Betsey Zook of Leola, PA. The internet promptly provided several more. One of which, familycrafts.about.com was similar. We used its 1 cup of milk and 1/2 cup of sugar (instead of Ms. Zook's 1/2 cup of milk and 1 cup of sugar). Both agree on 1 tsp of vanilla; we added some extra, and decided they were right. Familycrafts was non-committal on the amount of snow needed; Ms. Zook called for 10 cups. We harvested a pail-full, mixed the shelf ingredients till the sugar was dissolved, then kept stirring while adding the snow—16 cups till we felt it had thickened properly. Since we used skim milk it was no more ice cream than oleo is butter. Nonetheless it churned into a substantial structure, and tastily made about ten servings.

I got to wondering if there were other comestibles with snow as an ingredient. Our library passed. The internet was more giving, however one had to scoop out the snow-this and snow-that that were just imaginative titles for custards and such. Else ways, I found mentions of dropping dollops of honey or maple syrup in snow so they would freeze into pieces of hard candy. Not what I was after, but how about snow pancakes?

From gypsy-willow.hubpages.com: 1 cup firmly packed dry snow; 1 cup flour; 1 to 1 1/2 cups milk; pinch of salt; butter or oil to fry.

Unfortunately my curiosity had been slow to get going. We no longer had the fresh dry snow that had been available for the ice cream. What we did have was clean and undisturbed and we dug beneath the surface, but it had been lying there for a while through a variety of temperature changes, so was not the same consistency. We went ahead with one cup of skim and, since it was experimental, decided to try whole wheat pastry flour. The result was thin firm disks, rather bland to taste, but good with nuts and maple syrup, and a sufficient breakfast for two.

Our source warned about an excess of bubbles, which we didn't have any. This has left a lot of questions, such as, what if we'd used different flours or whole milk, and different snow, or just plain water as ice shavings. The field is wide open.

If one had to dine on constellations I believe one would soon go hungry, for I can't think of any that could be served up as food. Unless one could contemplate Lepus the Rabbit leaping along under Orion's feet across the southern sky these nights, or the Major and Minor bears chasing each other's tails around the northern sky, et cetera.

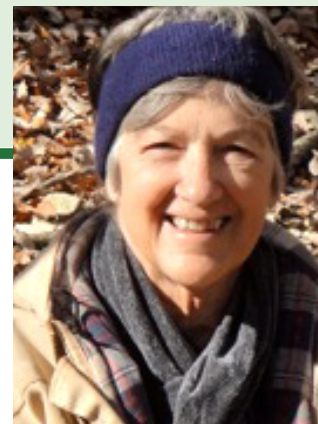
Starving eyes can feast on a thin slice of Moon and a dab of Mercury in the evening twilight of the 1st and 2nd, or rise early to feast on Venus who'll achieve her greatest brilliancy of the year rising in Sagittarius at the southerly end of the Milky Whey. Mars will be firing up brighter in Virgo's kitchen as we close the distance between us, starting the month appearing a little before midnight, then ever earlier. The main dinner party there will be on the 19th as the Moon comes along with Jupiter close above Mars' co-host: Virgo's main star, Spica. The Moon moves on to tell Saturn about it in the wee hours of the 22nd, and they'll proceed to get high together till they fade into the day.

The Moon is full on the 14th at 7p53, and it never does get to renew itself before short February closes shop.

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Twitching Down Under

Dru Clarke



I've been virtual "twitching" (Down Under's term for birdwatching) with Dave Rintoul's postings of his photographic finds while in New Zealand. I am particularly curious about the diversity of the avian (and other) wild life and how it compares with those species noted in Sir Joseph Banks' journal kept while he was the botanist with Captain Cook's first voyage on the *Endeavour* to the Pacific Ocean.

On October 5, 1769, Banks noted Port Egmont hens, a skua, the southern counterpart of the northern jaeger, a bird that preys on chicks and eggs of other birds, and knew intuitively that land must be near. (The crew had also collected wood and barnacles and seaweed that holds fast to the bottom in shallow waters.)

The ship's surgeon's boy, Nick, sighted land (New Zealand) on October 6, 1769: Cook had promised the first to see it would be given an extra ration of rum, but we don't know if the boy received it. Banks made lengthy observations of the landscape, the unusually tattooed and painted natives, species of fish and marine mammals (he remarked especially on the *Grampus*, or pilot whale, which he called a "fish") and seabirds (albatrosses, shearwaters, pintados, penguins) they encountered, but he stated that "of birds there are not many species, and none perhaps except the Gannet the same as those of Europe." This conclusion he made was probably because he was limited to the ship's anchorage and short forays onto coastal margins to collect specimens. He wrote: "There are however ducks and shags (cormorants)....both which we eat and accounted good food...hawks, owls and quails differing but little at first sight from those of Europe, and several small birds that sing much more melodiously than any I have heard." The latter he had no names for, as they more than likely were endemic to New Zealand or found only in the Australasian region. One may have been the bellbird (?).

His account of the penguins is sweet: "Sr Jno Narbourough Penguins, which are truly what the French call Nuance, between birds and fishes, as their feathers, especially on their wings, differ little from scales; and their wings themselves, which they use only in diving and by no means in attempting (sic) to fly or even accelerate their motion on the surface of the water, might thence almost as properly be called fins."

Other birds of note were "brownish birds pursuing fish, a little bit

bigger than a pigeon": "a whole flock would follow the fish who swam fast along: they continually plunged themselves under water and soon rose again in another place, so that the whole flock vanished sometimes...". There were the "sea pies," birds with red bills and red feet (our oystercatchers). One intriguing entry was: "While Mr. Spring was drawing on the Island he saw a most strange bird fly over his head; he described it as large as a kite and brown like one, his tail however was of so enormous a [length] that he at first took it for a flock of small birds after him. He who is a grave thinking man (Mr. Spring) and is not at all given to telling wonderful stories says he judg'd it to be at least yards in length." (Oct. 28, 1769) Tropic birds have long, flowing tails, but they are white, aren't they?

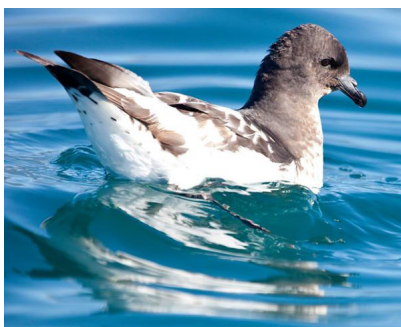
On January 12 1770 they were sailing along the coast, abreast of a great hill wrapped up in clouds. From Banks' journal of that day: "The country (sic) beyond it appeared very pleasant and fertile, the sides of the hills sloping gradually (sic); with our glass we could distinguish many white lumps in companies of 50 or 60 together which were probably either stones or tufts of grass but bore much the same resemblance of flocks of sheep." Could this have been a colony of gannets nesting, or a species of penguin- perhaps the crested? - known to nest on hillsides?

No moas – they were wiped out by the time of Cook's voyages – or kakapos or kiwis are mentioned in his entries, although he may have seen some of their feathers as adornments on the Maori. Natives worldwide have unwittingly driven many species to the brink of extinction, and sometimes over it.

We can be grateful for the photographic talents of Dave and his generosity in sharing what he encountered in New Zealand, and yet be informed, too, by the journal of Sir Joseph Banks who preceded him by two hundred and forty five years! Now, what do you think was that strange bird with the yards-long tail?

©Dru Clarke, Jan. 2014

Source: The Endeavour Journal of Sir Joseph Banks, The Echo Library, 2006



Cape Pigeon, aka Cape Petrel, aka Pintado
photo by Dave Rintoul

Get Geared Up For the Great Backyard Bird Count!

Bird watchers around the world needed to gather crucial data

New York, N.Y. and Ithaca, N.Y.—From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17, 2014. Anyone anywhere in the world can count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://www.cornell.edu/ornithology) and the [National Audubon Society](http://www.audubon.org) with partner [Bird Studies Canada](http://www.birdstudiescanada.org).



*Snowy Owl by Diane McAllister,
2013 GBBC*

“People who care about birds can change the world,” said Audubon chief scientist Gary Langham. “Technology has made it possible for people everywhere to unite around a shared love of birds and a commitment to protecting them.”

In North America, GBBC participants will add their data to help define the magnitude of a dramatic irruption of magnificent Snowy Owls. Bird watchers will also be on the lookout for the invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove to see if it has expanded its range again. GBBC observations may help show whether or not numbers of American Crows will continue to rebound after being hit hard by the West Nile virus and whether more insect-eating species are showing up in new areas, possibly because of changing climate.

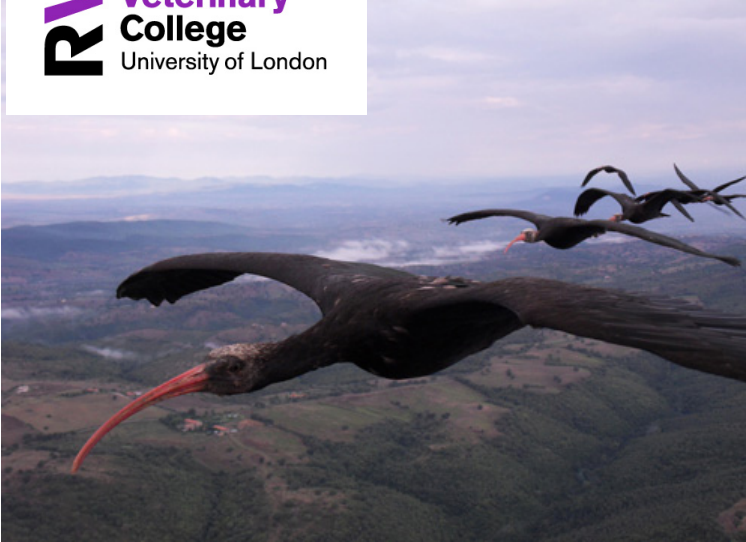
Last year’s Great Backyard Bird Count shattered records after going global for the first time, thanks to integration with the [eBird](http://ebird.org) online checklist program launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab and Audubon. Participants reported their bird sightings from all 7 continents, including 111 countries and independent territories. More than 34.5 million birds and 3,610 species were recorded—nearly one-third of the world’s total bird species documented in just four days.

“This is a milestone for citizen science in so many respects—number of species, diversity of countries involved, total participants, and number of individual birds recorded. We hope this is just the start of something far larger, engaging the whole world in creating a detailed annual snapshot of how all our planet’s birds are faring as the years go by,” said Cornell Lab director Dr. John Fitzpatrick.

About the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth’s biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Cornell Lab’s website at www.birds.cornell.edu.

Take Note



Ibises flying in formation (photo credit: Mark Unsöld)

New research proves that birds in V formation arrange themselves in aerodynamically optimum positions

Groundbreaking Royal Veterinary College research, which appears on the front cover of the journal Nature, proves for the first time that birds flying in a distinctive V formation strategically position themselves in aerodynamically optimum positions, and experience positive aerodynamic interactions that maximize upwash ("good air") capture. Go to the either of the following websites to read more.

<http://www.rvc.ac.uk/News/PressReleases/pr1401-birds-flying-in-V-formation.cfm>
http://www.nature.com/nature/current_issue.html

"IMHO, the Red-billed Gull (aka Silver Gull, *Larus novaehollandiae*, or tarāpunga) is one of the most handsome gull species on the planet."

~ Dave Rintoul



E-Newsletter:

If you wish to opt out of the "paper" Prairie Falcon newsletter and get it on-line as a pdf - send your name and email address to Jacque Staats - staats@wildblue.net

AND don't forget to check our website nfhas.org



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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, 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. 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 <listserve@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions.

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