

NORTHERN Flint Hills Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 1972, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1972

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MANHATTAN, KS



**PROGRAM: April 16th, at 7:00 p.m. ACKERT HALL, RM. 324
“Wind for Schools” by Ruth Douglas Miller**

“Wind for Schools” is a program initiated by the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) in Colorado. Six states are included in the initial project.

The program has two thrusts: to increase understanding and acceptance of wind power among teachers and students at the K-12 level, (and through them, their communities) and to increase the number of wind applications engineering programs nationwide, to prepare young engineers to fill the industry’s rapidly growing workforce need.

These two goals will be accomplished by siting small (1.8-kw) wind turbines at 5 rural K-12 schools per year per state, and by having those installations overseen by college students and faculty at the state Wind Applications Center (WAC). In Kansas the WAC is Kansas State University. The Skystream turbines are ideal for home use, as they will make about \$30 worth of electricity per month on average in good wind areas. They are about 10-ft. in diameter and will go on 60 ft. poles.

Ruth Douglas Miller, Associate Professor, Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Kansas State University, and director of the Kansas WAC.



PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 36, No. 8 ~ April 2008

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Upcoming Events:

Apr. 3 NFHAS BOARD MTG
TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME - 6 p.m.

Apr. 12 SAT. BIRDING
8 A.M. MEET AT SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK

Apr. 16 PROGRAM: WIND FOR SCHOOLS
(SEE ABOVE) ACKERT 324, KSU
(CORNER OF DENNISON AND CLAFLIN)

MAY 1 NFHAS BOARD MTG
TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME - 6 p.m.

MAY 10 Spring Migratory Bird Count



SKYLIGHT PLUS PETE COHEN

By the law of compensation all benefits have equal and opposite downsides, and vice versa. The icy blasts of winter can pile up windbreak drifts and sweep the snow off the plains so that grazing can continue on the short grass that keeps its nutrients above ground despite the season. The cooling blossom-scented breezes of spring can whoop up into wild storms. All year round the winds engage in other activities, too: for one, they carry things. And in that regard an article in the *Washington Post's National Weekly Edition* for February 25th seems worth referring to, particularly for those who missed it.

Great dust clouds are hard to miss seeing, and a main thrust of the article is that many of these are not neighborly excursions. Much of the visible grit has traveled thousands of miles bringing along microscopic organisms and other detritus ranging from toxic chemicals to tiny bits of dried animal feces. An "alarming increase of asthma in children in the Caribbean" seems to be one result, engendering predictions that increased research capabilities will find "similar connections in the Southeast and Northwest United States." SARS and influenza are two other afflictions remarked upon as being transportable aloft.

The article reports that some of the particles with natural sources have been linked to annual meningitis outbreaks in Africa and silicosis there and in Kazakhstan. It says "authorities in Los Angeles estimate that one-quarter of the city's smog comes from China" and of course Korea and Japan are closer in line. Stanley A. Morain, who heads the Earth Data Analysis Center of the University of New Mexico is quoted: "You can actually see this bathtub ring around the Northern Hemisphere" when viewed from space.

Immigration checkpoints aren't much use against this situation. But the law of compensation continues in play, for apparently the same increased technological ability that has recognized the unexpected size of the problem can also provide a means of at least giving several days early warning before particularly virulent clouds, naked-eye visible or not, move

in. The World Meteorological Organization, a scientific arm of the United Nations, is described as at work on a global tracking system that one official foresees as becoming able to pinpoint the areas of enhanced danger by zip code.

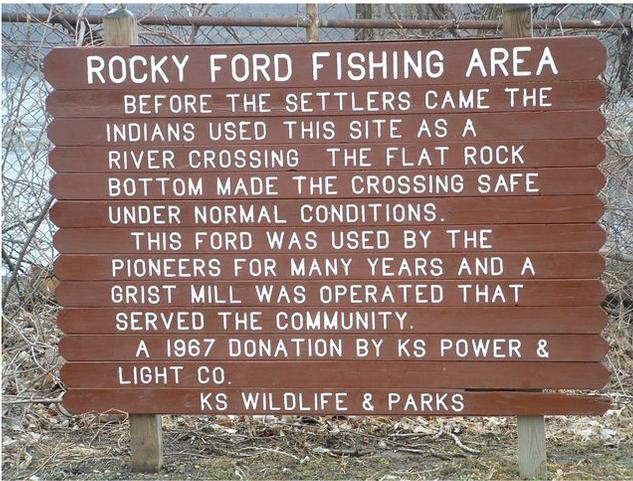
Notably this is all reactive. The article is not geared to discussing proactive means of reducing the dangers before they take wind, except it does warn that the dangers are currently very low on the political radar. Being a difficult problem it becomes thereby a hot potato.

Meanwhile up in the not-so-pristine sky this month *The Old Farmer's Almanac* thinks Mercury will be showing itself a little more than the width of an extended fist above the western horizon during the evening twilight on the 6th, with a crescent Moon nearby. As the Moon goes about its changes, Mercury will gradually become dimmer through the rest of the month, fading out on the 26th.

Saturn will be soaring above at nightfall, just above the Moon on the 12th. *StarDate* expects it to engage in a little triplet dance with the Moon and Regulus (the bright star at the base of Leo's sickle) on the 14 and 15th. Regulus will be the Moon's near partner on the first dance, and Saturn the next night. Meanwhile Mars will be at eye level westward come darkness in *Cancer* and on the 22-24th will be passing in front of the Beehive Cluster, a test for naked eyes, binocs work better.

A glowing Jupiter will rise in the dawn at month's start, and be up close to midnight by month's end, the Moon's single partner on the 26th and 27th. Venus will be having a private conference with the Sun so will not be available. But the Lyriad meteor shower (the remains of a comet called Thatcher) will do battle with the moonlight on the 21st. *Lyra* the Lyre Bird is the little ukelele of stars with bright blueish Vega shining along its brief neck. It will be rising early in the northeast soon followed by the long wingspread figure of *Cygnus* the Swan soaring down the Milky Way. Showers are hard to predict, but not a lot are expected, and those not till pre-dawn. Moon new 10p55 the 5th, full 5a25 the 20th, just a day before the shower.

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BIRDING

KEVIN FAY

Three of us met on clear and cold morning for the monthly birding trip. We decided to see what Rocky Ford was like and set out. I had not been there in a long time. It was the first time I had seen the big pile of rubble on private land just outside of the wildlife area. It is pretty impressive and reminds me of the Twin Buttes in southeast Colorado. I think it deserves a name. We saw some gulls and ducks on the river.

We then found a path Patricia had heard about that connected to the new state camping sites in the Tuttle Puddle area. I had not been in this area for a long time either so it was all new. We saw the usual woodland birds and arrived in the new camping area. We reminisced about the good old days when one could almost always come here for outdoor activity even when the rest of the area was busy.

We walked a little further past what is now called “Willow Lake” and looked at the distant trees in the Tuttle Puddle area. We spotted two Bald Eagles. This was the highlight of the trip.

We were rather chilled at this point and Susan Blackford invited us to her house as a final stop to warm up and do some feeder watching. Susan has a real nice place on the north side of town and it was quite thrilling to watch the great feeder activity in her backyard.

We had used up our time and even gone over little so we returned to Sojourner Truth Park and bade farewell to another fun monthly birding outing.

The Monthly Birding Trip takes place on the second Saturday of the month. We meet at 8:00 am at Sojourner Truth Park on Pottawatomie Street between 10th and 12th Streets (near Honie’s Recycling). Birders of all levels are welcome. We will go to some local birding hotspot. Wear appropriate clothing but no strenuous activity is involved, just some light hiking. We will return to Sojourner Truth Park by 11:00 am.

Kevin Fay
photos by Patricia Yeager



A CAUTIONARY FABLE

Once there was a fellow named Kevin. He was a member of the American consumer society but he did his best to be conscientious and lessen his impact on the environment. One thing that bothered him was ever accumulating plastic shopping bags in his house. He made an effort to carry a canvas tote bag and to hand carry items if possible. He gave bags to the thrift store for reuse and found new uses for them around the house. Still they continued to accumulate.

He heard about a place in the Show-Me State that took plastic bags for actual recycling. He had a trip planned and it was right on his route so he decided to load up his car with plastic bags, Kevin was a heavy packer to begin with so by the time he had his luggage and plastic bags packed the car was quite full. He packed very carefully compressing the plastic bags and tucking them in every nook and cranny.

He set out on his trip and the plastic bags began to relax and occupy even more space and to add to the space problem he was driving into a low pressure system so the bags expanded even more. By this time Kevin was quite packed in but he was stubborn and continued on.

Now the car came to a bridge that was under reconstruction and the road became rough and the speed limit dropped greatly. Unbeknownst to Kevin the plastic bags were restricting his feet and when he went to apply the brakes he could not. He then hit a bump sharply and the impact triggered the safety airbags. The sudden expansion where there was no space to hold it caused the windows to shatter and blow out and knocked Kevin out cold.

We don’t know what happened next. I like to think that the emergency teams arrived quickly and Kevin was able to recover from the accident. But it does not really matter. The lesson of this fable is the same. We as a society really need to look at this plastic bag situation and find a solution.

Kevin Fay

FIELD TRIP

Carla Bishop organized the March Fieldtrip to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Area. She had been watching the weather nervously and it promised to be chilly with a northerly wind but quite doable so she gave the trip a “go” early in the week. The steady cold rain in Manhattan the night before tested our faith in the weather prediction.

We met at the Target parking lot. Our trip had become a convoy of five vehicles. The rental van procured by Carla for the trip and four more parties that wanted to accompany us and for various reasons would depart from the trip and not return to Manhattan that night. So a total of fifteen of us set out at seven a.m. for Cheyenne Bottoms.

I ended up driving the lead van for the tour (look in dictionary under irony). After some miscues we arrived at Cheyenne Bottoms around 9:45 a.m. Because of this year’s abundant rainfall there is at present much water at Cheyenne Bottoms in sharp contrast to what has seemed normal for the last few years. It was so nice to see all of the units full of water and there were lots of birds. We saw White Pelicans, American Coots, and Shovelers in great number. There were also Buffleheads, Double-crested Cormorants and Canada Geese.

The Lodge in Hoisington had heard about our trip and suggested their restaurant as a lunch stop. We then went there and had a fine very modestly priced meal. The Saturday special was breakfast anytime which delighted many of the group.

After lunch one of our convoy departed and the remaining four vehicles set out for Quivira Wildlife Refuge. Again our lead driver (me) took a somewhat curious route to Quivira but we arrived at about 3:00 pm. Quivira, too, had abundant water but the roads were open. The weather by now was not so chilly. We saw Great Blue Herons, American Coots, Shovelers, Buffleheads, and Canada Geese. We arrived at the Great Wildlife Loup on the north end. There we saw many more ducks and near the end large flocks of Snow Geese began to move in. We spotted a group of four Tundra Swans. They are very elegant and the two remaining parties were happy to see them.

One of the hopes of our trip was to see Sandhill Cranes on their northerly migration. Once we heard very faint and distant calls that sounded like Sandhill Canes but we listened carefully and searched intently but did not spot any Sandhill Cranes. It would have been great to see some but we had a great trip nonetheless.

At this point we decided to return to Manhattan to get back at a reasonable time.

Carla Bishop deserves a special thank you for organizing this trip. The participants on this trip were all wonderful and I want to thank them. They deserve special recognition for enduring my driving without a single discouraging word.

**Note from Carla - Kevin, too, deserves a special thank you for driving, setting up the spotting scope, and sharing his knowledge of birds. It was a very fun Saturday.*

BUTTERFLY GARDEN

Garden season is upon us. If you would like to help with the butterfly garden please contact Susan at sjb0166@hotmail.com or 785-537-6252 and I’ll put you on the notification list for work days. I try to make most work sessions only last for 2 or 3 hours, but you don’t have to stay the entire time - just work as long as you feel like it. It’s a fun way to get some fresh air and exercise and socialize! If you prefer more solitary gardening, I need people to adopt a patch of garden and weed it occasionally. The patch can be any size you are willing to do and any amount of effort you want to put into it. I’ll show you which plants are not weeds.

A great big THANK YOU goes out to all of the people who helped last year: Patricia Yeager, Jodi Whittier, Anne Cully, Jacque Staats, Dick Oberst, and Kevin Fay (I apologize if I missed anyone). Also a THANK YOU to Pat Freeman for donating some heath asters, fennel and columbine plants! Another THANK YOU goes to the City of Manhattan Parks Dept. for the new sign and fixing the water hydrant.

Susan Blackford

BIRDSEED SALE FUNDRAISER A SUCCESS



Patricia Yeager, Judy Roe, Annie Baker

Carla Bishop



Correction: During our annual birdseed sale fundraiser, members helped raise over \$5,957.50 in seed and delivery fees, including an additional \$275.30 in donations. After expenses, NFHAS profited \$ 1,684.96.

Thank you! from Konza Prairie

Each spring, the Konza Environmental Education Program (KEEP) offers guided tours to view the Greater Prairie Chicken from an observation blind on Konza Prairie. Through ports in the seated blind, visitors come within ten to fifty feet of five to fifteen birds. Visitors learn about the bird's courtship behavior, Konza Prairie research at the lek, grassland bird conservation and prairie natural history. Since 2001, 588 visitors have experienced the 'booming' of this signature tallgrass prairie species on Konza Prairie.

This spring NFHAS granted funds to support the renovation of Konza Prairie's observation blind, including installation of a floor, replacement of rotting plywood siding and roof, and purchase of paint, an indoor heater and bench cushions.

The Konza Environmental Education Program would like to thank NFHAS for its support.

Dr. Valerie Wright, Environmental Educator/Naturalist, Konza Prairie Biological Station

APRIL 25-27, 2008: BI-ANNUAL KANSAS BIRDING FESTIVAL

Wakefield, Kansas (Home of the Wetlands). More information will be forthcoming.
www.kansasbirdingfestival.org



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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.

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> and join in the discussions.

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