

February Feeder Tour

Saturday, Feb. 28th 8:30-12n

RSVP by Feb.25th 913-215-0029

Five of our members have volunteered to invite us into their homes and see the birds that come to their feeders.

We begin at Jacob Riggs, 805 Ratone. He will have breakfast for us at 8:30 am. This is where you will get a map of the other four homes and carpools organized.

NOTE: Please mind your feet so you don't track mud/snow into our hosts' homes, and if you have a cold or the sniffles, please stay home.

Wishing you all a variety of birds at your feeders!



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 53, No. 6, February 2026

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Upcoming Events

Feb. 3 - Board Meeting 5:30
Manhattan Public Library Study room #1

Feb. 14 - Sat. Morning Birding
Meet at Sojourner Truth Park,
departs for birding at 9:00 am

Feb. 25 - RSVP Feeder Tour - Jacob Riggs
913-215-0029

Feb. 28 - Feeder Tour
8:30-12noon



Night Visitor

Dru Clarke

I feed Umbra, a velvet black feral cat, on our deck after the dogs have had their last sojourn of the evening. She is arrestingly lovely, but untouchable, although decidedly at home in what she has claimed as her territory. But a night visitor takes over once she has had her fill. Cleaning the bowls and gleaning the edible bits scattered about, our resident opossum* appears.

Our ranch takes its name from Possum Hollow, a draw north and adjacent to Hopkins Creek, where previous neighbors used to party on Saturday nights, leaving cleanup until the next morning. When they arrived a troop of possums had already begun the task, gorging on crumbs of chips and buns, bits of hot dogs and burgers, assorted leftovers no one bothered to carry home. (Without humans to leave scraps about, they eat insects, ticks, and assorted creepy crawly creatures they can catch.) Wrappers and discarded containers were left for the hungover humans to remove. There was an outhouse, painted a leafy green, perhaps to blend in with the foliage of the soaring sycamore trees that bordered the hollow, and a dilapidated drystone wall, once serving as a barrier to livestock roaming either out of the hollow or falling into the creek. We've stopped people on several occasions from stealing the stones of the wall and it stands today as an aesthetic memorial to the past. Our home is close enough to this landmark that we adopted its name as our own.

Our possum spends most of the day under our deck, where it is safe from our curious dogs who sniff it through the spaces between the boards. One evening, our lab, let out for one last pee, came nose to nose with it, and dog and possum simply sniffed one another, noses nearly touching. There was no aggression on either animal's part, an unannounced truce apparent to each one. The possum merely turned and waddled ever so slowly away, back to its dark chamber beneath the deck.

We don't know the gender of our possum, but are hoping it is a female who bears lima bean size young that attach to her teats within the folds of her pouch. As they mature, they'll ride around on her, clinging to her soft fur, eventually gaining their independence. Our possum is one of nearly 100 species and they are the only marsupials in the Americas. Opossums have been on Earth for about 50 million years and are true survivors despite their somewhat offputting appearance and slow getaway speed. (When they have been run down by one of our dogs, they curl up and pretend to 'die'. I always check them to see if indeed they do succumb, but invariably, in time, they get up and amble off. A very clever defense that probably evolved over eons,

even before our canine pets.) They do make a variety of weird sounds, one like an old crone laughing, a hissing like a reptile, chirps, and catlike growls. We think some of the unidentifiable sounds we sometimes hear at night might be utterances of a night foraging possum.

George Jones, the incomparable country singer, was known as the Possum because of his beady eyes and upturned nose, eerily resembling the animal. (It has been said that people often resemble the pets they care for, but I don't think George ever had a pet possum.) Folks have written songs about the possum, my favorite one out of Australia by the ABC singers written for Aussie kids. Another by Mighty Orq called "The Possum" has some great guitar licks (and is a fitting homage to our backyard companion).

Possums don't live very long, maybe two or three years, but ours will have a good life as long as it lives with us. May it eat every tick that it comes upon and have a brood of young to carry on.

Dru Clarke January 2026

* Opossum may be more correct, but most folks shorten it to possum, so I've used both spellings here to satisfy everyone



Photo by Tony Alter

Things to do!

Things to do in February and March:

Make a Bluebird house (we need some to replace old ones on a few of our trails)

Cleanout nest boxes

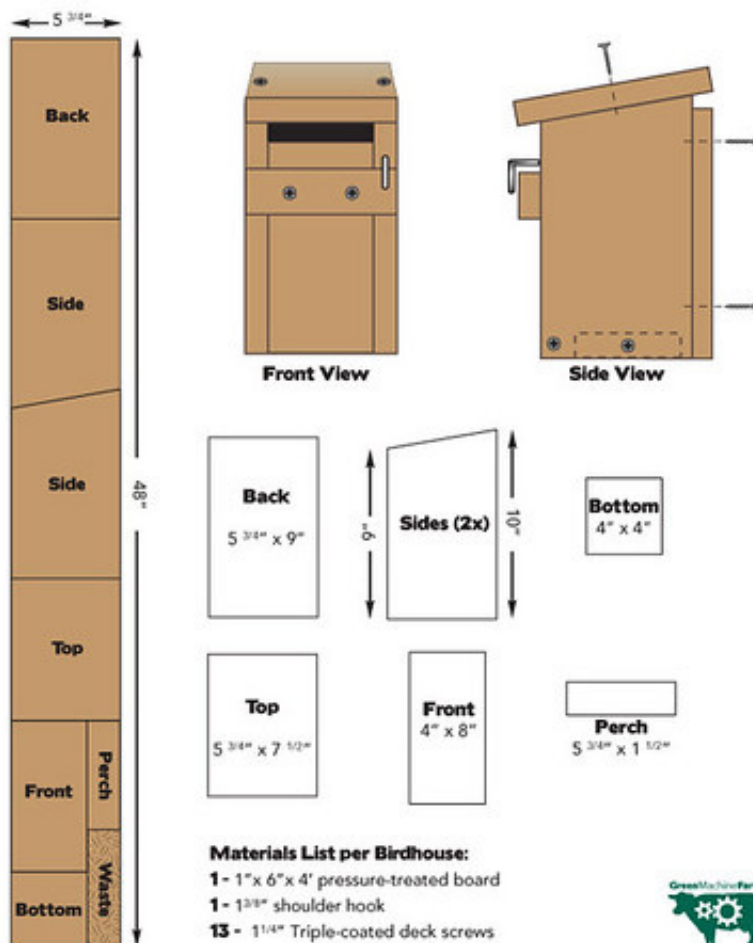
Listen for Prairie Chicken leks

Look for owl nests (especially Great-horned owls heads sticking up over another bird's large leftover nest)

Learn/Review bird songs for spring migrants

AND Mike Haddock just announced a new updated look to his Kansas Wildflowers and Grasses website! Check it out: <https://kswildflower.org/>

Birdhouse for Bluebirds



Use untreated 3/4-inch wood (like cedar or cypress) with a 4x4 or 4x5.5-inch floor, a 1 1/2-inch entrance hole (or 1-9/16" for mountain/western bluebirds) 6-10 inches from the floor, and no perch, ensuring ventilation and drainage holes, plus a hinged side or roof for easy monitoring.

Place boxes in open areas facing east, mounted on metal posts 4-5 feet high to deter predators like squirrels and sparrows.



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Audubon Society
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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.

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Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon
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WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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