

Ready to start birding with our group again?

Covid -19 restricted us from carpooling so we halted our bird walk on Saturday mornings for a year. Now that most of us are vaccinated, we are ready to start again but this time we would like to try a new approach.

Your Way/Your Day. Leadership is needed. If you are a birder and have a favorite birding area that you would be able and willing to lead a group to, **please volunteer** to do so. Here is how:

Step 1: Pick a month/day and time frame (remember to label it a.m. or p.m.)

Step 2: Name the place OR if parking is a problem, give the place name to Patricia and we will carpool to your location from our usual meeting place at Sojourner Truth Park.

Step 3: Let Cindy or Patricia know which month/date/time you would like to lead other birders and we will make up a calendar for the coming year.

Please do not hesitate to volunteer.

You do not need to be the best birder of the group. We are friends and will teach each other. If you are likely to be the best birder of the group, please share your knowledge with others.

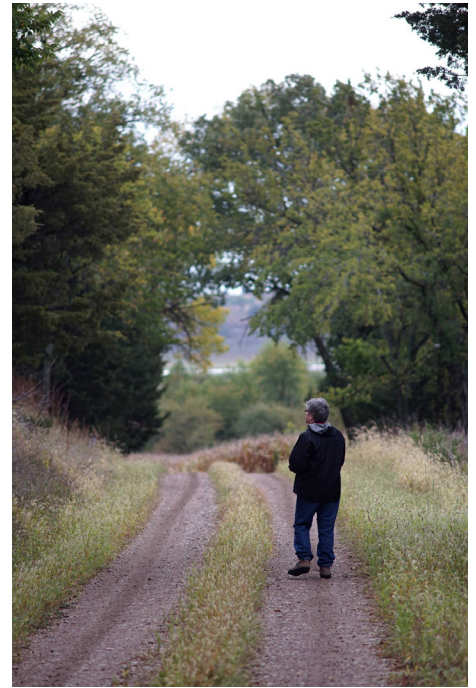


Photo by Jay Jeffrey

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 49, No. 10 June 2021

Inside

- pg. 2 Skylight
Pete Cohen
- pg. 3 Unmasking by Firelight
Dru Clarke
- pg. 4-5 Birdathon Report
Jim Koelliker
- pg. 6 SPARK BIRD,
50th Save the Date
- pg. 7 Self-guided tour #4
Crossword Puzzle #9 answers

Upcoming Events

June 1 - Tuesday Board Meeting - 6 p.m.

June 6 6:30pm at the stone barn of the **Konza Prairie** headquarters. **FOKP WILDFLOWER WALK** Groups of 10 people will be paired with a docent guide to hike the 1.5 mile Butterfly Hill trail (easy hike) Cost = \$10/person or free for FOKP members. No reservation necessary, just come out! Proceeds benefit the Friends of Konza Prairie

July -6 Board Meeting - 6 p.m.



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

On the table last month was mainly a book titled “The Sky Atlas,” by Edward Brooke-Hitching, that presents a chronological history of human response to the sky. It

does so in a way that echoes Ralph Waldo Emerson’s comment that “all history is biography” because some responses were identifiably led by certain identified individuals, a few of whom are more remembered than others. And responses that are known only by the cultures that embraced them were very likely to have been led by certain informed and active individuals.

So, because the whole seems a sum of separate biographies, I thought there might be a few with interesting ingredients that could be briefly noted. For example, Tycho Brahe. In the mid 1600s, when it seems the workings of the sky were still of great concern to a large percentage of people, he made a great many precise observations of the starscape. His naked eyes peered beyond a metallic nose that was replacing his original one, lost in a duel. That, I think is as interesting as finding different sources reporting the replacement was made of different metals. But what I find bizarre in juxtapose is that he spent nights, munificently supported by King Frederick II of Denmark, focusing on a highly rational task, and he spent a number of days defending his mother against accusations of witchcraft. (I read she eventually served over a year’s sentence, and died soon after.)

A long time before that, about 2300 b.c.e., a priestess, Edheduanna, was living in Ur (now part of southern Iraq) midway amid various turmoils in the Sumerian 200-year era. Other priestesses also wrote poems and hymns in cuneiform but hers apparently had special influence on the arrangement of the deities as believed then, but just why she is considered by some as the world’s first published author would take more scholarship than is practical here.

Writing in the 4th century b.c.e., Aristotle provided the name of a 6th century b.c.e. Grecian, Thales of Miletus, whom he considered the founder of a philosophy, joined by Pythagoras and others, that diverted from the mythology of divine sources to theories based on calculated studies of the natural world.

In Aristotle’s time there was also Eudoxus, described as an impoverished fellow who traveled from what is now Turkey to Egypt to Greece and home again, funded by friends, and feeding an apparently widespread hunger for understanding the mysteries above them. His math

perceived, among other things, 27 concentric spheres made of ether by which the planets (sometimes in reverse motion), and the Sun and Moon, circled the Earth, with a ‘prime mover’ replacing Zeus. He so impressed the king of Macedonia that someone named Aratus was commissioned to set his work into verse, which, widely copied, survives as his original work does not.

A hundred and fifty years later the perceptions of Hipparchus rise like shining peaks above the clouds obscuring his personal being, though he seems to have spent most of his life on the island of Rhodes. There his math corrected some of Eudoxes’ and led him toward a finding that the paths of the planets were actually elliptical, a line of thought he abandoned for it contradicted the then unforgiving truth that all of the universe, in its purity, was circular. It was thus left to Johannes Kepler, nearly 1800 years later, relying heavily on Brahe’s precise observations, to provide today’s truth.

Then sometime between 100 and 200 c.e. in Roman-ruled Alexandria, Egypt, Claudius Ptolemy gathered the centuries of wisdom preceding him into four separate notable presentations about astronomy, geography, astrology, and music. His book we know as “The Almagest” became the leading astronomical almanac of that much of the sky as was known in those days, preserving the geocentric view of things. The Earth, after all, seemed the most stable item in the universe. Until, just before his death in 1543, Nicolaus Copernicus published his book, titled (in translation) “On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres.”

Among those spheres in the coming month, Venus will continue gleaming as the Evening Star. On the 11th she’ll be left of Old Man Moon who will be bright as a thin crescent with the rest of him glowing with earthshine. So, “The Old Farmer’s Almanac” predicts. On the early evening of the 13th the mixed-lit Moon will be just above a dim reddish Mars, nearby to the lower right of which will be Pollux and Castor, the Gemini Twins. Venus will be midway between them, but much lower. StarDate informs that while Pollux seems a single star, Castor (the higher one) is really a group of six.

Jupiter and Saturn will be rising around midnight with the Moon at different positions near them near dawn the 27th-29th. In the meantime, Regulus in Leo will be close to the Moon the 15th, Spica in Virgo the 19th, Antares of Scorpius the 22nd. An annular solar eclipse will be visible across northeastern North America the 10th and the vernal equinox will occur the 20th at 10p32 CDT. Moon new st 5a53 on that 10th, and full the 24th at 1p40.

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Unmasked by Firelight

Dru Clarke



Celebrating the first officially sanctioned unmasking (Thursday May 13 2021) friends came to our farm to toast with, first, a cocktail, then, giant marshmallows created for just such a warming occasion. We started on our deck, with one friend looking skyward the entire time as the sun set lower. He drew our attention to chimney swifts circling round and round, swooping to catch airborne insects. The blue jays had gone quiet after intense daylight activity: they, and the titmice, seem to have rebounded from earlier years' death-dealing West Nile virus, and their boisterousness is again welcome. The swifts nest in the chimney that vents the propane stove and we hadn't shut it down yet so we weren't sure where they were roosting now, if at all. (They ostensibly do everything in the air – eat, sleep, mate, except when nesting.) Come summer we'll hear their constant chittering as they attend their chicks.

Moving to the fire pit where I had lit the twiggy pile overlaid with fresh-cut cedar logs, the fire was flaming hot and bright as we skewered our marshmallows. A few years back, our son and grandson who had come to visit sat with us on the same logs around a fire when we heard an eerie, high-pitched cry so close that we felt a communal shiver. It turned out to be a vixen fox who seemed startled by our presence. Tonight, though, we heard a panoply of other sounds, some of which I had heard before but did not know the origin of. Thankfully, our friends are reliable and gifted birders who know voices as well as visual cues of birds and tonight they revealed their identities. First was a series of coarse, loud cries, those of the great crested flycatcher. I had seen a pair darting erratically through the sky being chased by a much smaller bird who was evidently ticked off by them and their given tyrannical behavior. But I didn't know they favored our woodland for a nocturnal sleepover. (The next morning I saw one flying through the canopy of trees by the creek.) After the first burnt marshmallow, we heard the soft piping of a saw-whet owl. We had heard it before but have never spotted it, nor do we expect to. The barred and great horned owls did not betray themselves, giving the stage tonight to this tiny and elusive fellow. Our friend with the great ears shushed us to listen again for a poor will who called from afar. The nightjars are among my favorite birds, being camouflaged with their autumnally hued feathers, making them cryptically colored, their 'cuddly' appearance, and moth-like flight. And their voices are unlike any others: they evoke a dark, summer night lit only by fireflies and laden with humid air that softly touches the skin. Their voices are just like that.

A horse rattled his food bowl to let us know he was still there, and a mother cow softly called to her new calf in the corral. As if on cue, a chorus of coyotes rose up, encircling us with their cries, signaling the approaching climax to a fine



evening. My last toasted marshmallow ended up on the dog's back as he maneuvered close with another stick to toss. The fire was just embers now and friends' faces, lit by the dying firelight, shone with smiles, so welcome to see after so long a year without them. We lingered by their cars for a while, told them to drive safely, and waved goodbye. We promised to do this again, soon.

I opened the windows to the bedroom in the hope of hearing again some of the sounds we thrilled at as we sat around the fire. As I drifted off to sleep, I heard only the dog snoring, his back sticky with the remains of a burnt marshmallow.



© 2021 Dru Clarke May 16

2021 Birdathon 98 species

Jim Koelliker & Clyde Ferguson

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society 2021 BIRDATHON REPORT AND REQUEST FOR YOUR SUPPORT

May 2021

Many of you have received this report from Clyde Ferguson for the past 35 years.

Clyde has asked me to make this report for him, too. Clyde celebrated his 90th last June.

Dear Friend,

The 36th annual Birdathon was more like the first 34. We had three teams working the area and two others who added to the species. The Ferguson team consisted of Clyde working his 36th from his home watching his feeders, 22 species, and his son, Bob, and his family who found 23 more species in the areas nearby. My team, Koelliker, included Lowell Johnson and Mike Kanost and we scoured the area plus Carole Ann Harbers watched her feeder. My team added 38 unique species to the overall total of 98 species. Patricia Yeager, worked alone at Lake Elbo and surrounding areas and added 10 additional to the total. Scott Taylor found four additional species and finally, Jacque Staats reported the first rubythroated hummingbird siting of the year. It was a tremendous effort, and the result was positive identification of 98 species that are found in our area.

The complete list of species can be found on the website nfhas.org. The report shows the species found in the '21 column in RED and the letter there represents the team credited with finding that species.

Unusual species found this year are shown on the next page. Both the Ross's goose and snow goose were the firsts ever. This was only the second year that a fish crow was found. The same is true for a pair of Prairie Falcons. The American Avocet was found for only the third time.

Unfortunately, we missed a number of species that we had found nearly every year in the last 20 – Greater Prairie Chicken, Northern Bobwhite, Wilson's Phalarope, Western Kingbird, N. Rough-Winged Swallow, Warbling Vireo, Orange-Crowned Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Baltimore Oriole. Just a few days make a big difference in the appearance of many migrants in our area.

I always enjoy working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge and making this detailed report makes me even more aware of our local birds. Too, I hope you find this report interesting & informative.

Yes, this report is a request for your financial support for the Northern Flint Hills Chapter of the Audubon Society. This effort is our primary fund-raising activity. Last year nearly 100 contributors generously contributed almost \$3,600 that the chapter put to good use to support our efforts in the area. I am again asking for your support by completing the section below, tearing it off, and sending it along with your check or cash to me, Jim Koelliker, at 3500 Mintons Lndg, Manhattan, KS 66503.

-----RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTION-----

Please print your information

Remember: A contribution of \$15.00 or more provides you a year's access to The Prairie Falcon!

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Address _____

_____ Yes, I/ we want The Prairie Falcon newsletter.

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I/ we are contributing - (Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law)

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to Jim Koelliker, 3500 Mintons Lndg, Manhattan, KS 66503

785-776-4915 koellik@sbcglobal.net

2021 Birdathon 98 species

Jim Koelliker & Clyde Ferguson



Fish Crow – 2nd Time Found,
but they are now here often.



Ross's Goose – 1st Time Found and with Canada
Goose. Pictures by Lowell Johnson

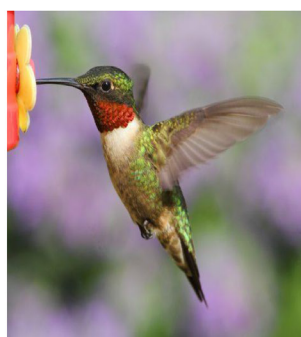


American Avocet – 3rd Time Found

Best Birds of 2021

Others found less often in the past 30 years, but not shown:

Merlin, 5th; Red-Shouldered Hawk, 4th; Chestnut-Sided Warbler, 2nd



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird;
7th time found, but 5th in a row.



Snow Goose – 1st Time Found and with Canada Goose.
Pictures by Lowell Johnson



Prairie Falcon – 2nd Time Found

The complete list of species can be found on the website <https://www.nfhas.org/> The report shows the species found in the '21 column in RED and the letter there represents the team credited with finding that species.

WELCOME!



WITH CHUCK OTTE

Brought to you by the Basehor Community Library

Be a Better Birder

Wonderful presentation by
Chuck Otte.

Don't miss it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztr8eTBLJdw>

NFHAS 50 years Save the Date Dec. 5, 2021

This is Volume 49 of the Prairie Falcon - come September it will be Volume 50!

The Northern Fiint Hills Audubon Society will celebrate 50 years.

We are planning a celebration the fifth of December, with the first President of NFHAS, Parry Conway joining us. We are still in the planning stage so **please join us prepare** - anyone interested in being on the committee PLEASE contact one of the board members. Photos, old newsletters, memories of field trips, programs, are all welcomed! Any history you have we will treasure.

We know many of you were past officers, chairs of committees. So please let us know your involvement and memories.

Were you involved with creating the Prairie in Northeast Park, the Butterfly Garden, Cecil Best Trail, Mitchl-Ross Preserve? I have only been around for 25 years - so I feel like a newcomer.

Don't delay, do it now. Decemeber will be here before you know it.

10
20
30
40
50
YEARS

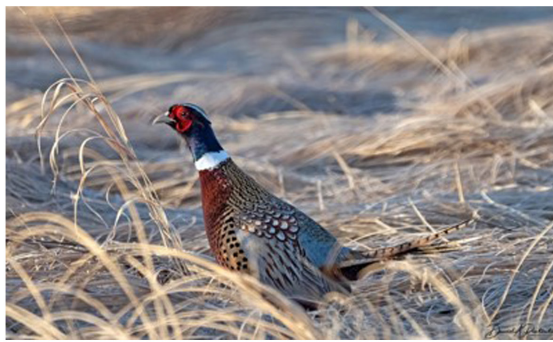
SPARK BIRD

Jim Koelliker:

Cecil Best and I were both faculty members in Civil Engineering and we had a big outdoor project that took us to inspect small dams in the late 80s.

Cecil was a birder and helped me get hooked because he collected a bird list every day we were out and he patiently helped me get to know more species.

My spark birds are red-breasted nuthatch, pheasant, and sandhill cranes.



Photos by Dave Rintoul

Self-guided Tour #4



Westar (Evergy) Wildlife Areas:

Head East on Highway 24 toward Wamego and Belvue. At about 6.4 miles east from the Wamego intersection of Highways 24 & 99 turn North (left) at Broadway Street in Belvue (there is a brown Wildlife Area sign). Continue north a short distance until you get to the "T" intersection of Half Moon Rd and turn East (right) There is a white sign on the fence pointing the way. The road will curve and then go north again as Lost Creek Road. Continue going North about 3 miles to the first KDWPT parking lot.

The second parking area is about 1.5 miles North of the first parking area. Each parking area has an informational kiosk but no facilities. Habitats for both areas include ungrazed/unhayed tallgrass prairie, hayed tallgrass prairie, streams, riparian woodlands, and crop fields. There are service roads that can be used as hiking trails for parts of the areas. At the second parking area, the wildlife area includes land on the east side of the road which has a stand of cedars near the top of the hill. There are pocket wetlands east of the cedars. Be careful where you step, some are hard to see until you are standing in the water. Hunting is allowed at both areas so be sure to wear your hunter orange during hunting seasons.

If you are at the Craig Burdett - Jesse Henson Memorial Park (aka Oregon Trail Park) from May's Birding Day trip, at the exit turn West (right) and continue to Lost Creek Road. Turn North (right) onto Lost Creek Road and continue about 2.3 miles to the first wildlife area parking lot on the west side of the road and another 1.5 miles North to the 2nd parking area.

See the March issue of the newsletter for eating and picnic places in the Belvue area.

Crossword Puzzle #9 answers

1	P	E	2	C	3	A	N	4	P	5	G	6	A	7	T	8	S	9	P	10	N	11	N
H	12	A	L	13	W	O	R	14	M	E	A	T	I	15	N	16	G	17	A	18	N	19	H
A	20	N	21	H	22	A	I	23	R	24	Y	25	C	26	I	27	N	28	C	29	H	30	Q
31	I	32	D	33	A	34	R	35	O	36	R	37	I	38	O	39	L	40	E	41	Q	42	N
43	N	44	O	45	D	46	S	47	B	48	T	49	D	50	T	51	L	52	N	53	L	54	N
55	O	56	A	57	P	58	P	59	L	60	E	61	V	62	A	63	F	64	E	65	M	66	N
67	P	68	T	69	S	70	E	71	E	72	N	73	E	74	H	75	R	76	O	77	E	78	N
79	E	80	A	81	S	82	T	83	E	84	R	85	N	86	P	87	H	88	O	89	E	90	R
91	P	92	H	93	D	94	H	95	I	96	G	97	E	98	E	99	L	100	N	101	L	102	N
103	L	104	E	105	O	106	P	107	O	108	L	109	D	110	C	111	L	112	S	113	D	114	N
115	A	116	T	117	V	118	M	119	U	120	R	121	M	122	U	123	R	124	A	125	T	126	N
127	N	128	E	129	D	130	E	131	N	132	P	133	L	134	A	135	T	136	E	137	A	138	N
139	N	140	P	141	L	142	A	143	T	144	A	145	E	146	A	147	R	148	E	149	D	150	N
151	N	152	A	153	S	154	T	155	E	156	R	157	D	158	R	159	O	160	N	161	H	162	E
163	O	164	W	165	A	166	R	167	N	168	N	169	N	170	N	171	N	172	N	173	B	174	I
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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.

Also available online at 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, 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 <listserve@ksu.edu> and join in the

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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