We will continue our birding walks on the second Saturaday of the month, meeting at Sojourner Truth Park at 8 am. Birding the park and then departing from there to various birding locations.

No program in June.

JULY: A field trip to the Natural History Museum on the campus of the University of Kansas in Lawrence "Behind the Scenes" tour Tuesday, July 19th, depart Manhattan at 9 am (all day) car pool. More information in July newsletter.









AUGUST - no newsletter, no program

SEPTEMBER - Kick off the year with an Ice Cream at CALL HALL, and a Tour of K-State's bird collection with K-State ornithologist, Dr. Alice Boyle. DATE and Time TBD.

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter Vol. 50, No. 10, June 2022

#### Inside

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Pete Cohen

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pg. 4-10 What You Missed!

pg. 11 -Book Review:

The Invention of Nature Alexander von Humboldt's New World

#### **Upcoming Events**

Jun 7 -Board Meeting, 5:30 pm Manhattan Public Library
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE NFHAS BOARD

Jun 11 - Saturday morning Birding 8 am, DEPART from Sojourner Truth Park

July 5- Board Meeting, 5:30 pm Manhattan Public Library
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE NFHAS BOARD

July 19 - Field trip to KU Natural HIstory Museum Behind the Scenes tour see above



# Skylight plus Pete Cohen

In 1955 H. Allen Smith put forth a book titled *The Age of the Tail* with which he imagined that on a certain day all humans began being born with a tail. The first few were unsurprisingly treated with scorn and abuse, but as their numbers increased gradually the tables were turned, and new forms of clothing, seating, methods, and more became the norm.

I was reminded of that when reading a feature in the *Economist* about the current state of robotics. Particularly at the mention of the condition in warehouses where automatons twice the size of refrigerators move about gathering goods off shelves at about 8 mph. Humans entering those areas wear vests armed with an electronic ability to ward off those behemoths from smashing into them.

As robots expand their operations into public streets and other areas it's easy to imagine pedestrians especially becoming needful of carrying some similar protective device. Absent-minded persons, and very cautious ones, might opt to have some pacemaker-like implant, just to be sure they were always guarded, and such procedures would no doubt be called robotomies. Nothing would be perfectly fail-safe, though, for one thing because electronic contraptions seem to have bugs, like people do. And it might be possible for hackers to gain access to their wavelengths to demand a donation or else their device would become inactive or operate in reverse.

Because of this kind of high tech, insurance company actuaries likely have new learning curves ahead of them, and policy writers will have to reconsider their wordings, for instance, how to define "driver". This aspect is already in progress as Merck & Co., a pharmaceutical, has succeeded in a New Jersey court claiming recompense for damage incurred by a cyber attack that was involved with international tensions. Insurance policies have long excluded liability for damage caused by acts of war. English law has long regarded one aspect of a valid contract to be "mutuality"—meaning the parties were talking about the same things. And the court in this Merck case ruled that "war" was mutually regarded only as certain kinds of acts of physical violence when the policy was agreed to.

The magazine's feature also made me consider that I have known a flesh-and-blood robot: a rancher friend who augmented his income each hunting season by filing the deer permits of several customers, who

lashed the carcasses to their vehicles' fenders and drove off triumphantly. Orion, our celestial hunter, would likely disapprove, but he doesn't start to show until after, or late in, many big game hunting seasons.

For June planetary parties continue to be well-attended though mainly in the wee and dawn twilight hours. They will be particularly noteworthy in the second half of the month, when as the planets rise they'll gradually form a string of beads stretched at a slight angle low above the horizon. They'll be in the same order as they are distant from the Sun; from lower left to upper right: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn.

For evening hours there hopefully will be good nights to view the summery constellations. The long, undulating, brightly lit body of Scorpius will be occupying the lower part of the southern sky, with the barely visible stars of his claws (now considered as being the constellation Libra) proceeding his clearly defined head as they gradually shift westward. Positioned above that head, like a large out-of-season ski cap, are the dim yet see-able stars of Ophiuchus, the Snake-bearer. The stars of the Snake he's holding stretch from Aquila the Eagle (with bright star Altair, half in and out of the Milky Way) leftward/eastward, to rise rightward/westward toward the fairly distinct backward "C" of Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown. Just to the left of which is the crunched square of Hercules' body, with his spidery arms and legs extending from each corner.

The long body of Cygnus the Swan, with his widespread wings will be soaring down the Milky Way, just above Aquila, while just to the east of his beak the bright blue star, Vega, will mark the presence of Lyra the Lyre Bird.

Westward and slightly south from the Crown, strongly glittering, will be the star, Arcturus, marking the tail of the kite-like arrangement of noticeable stars known as Bootes the Plowman. Northward will be the Big Dipper with the imaginary arc of its handle curving toward Arcturus and continuing south to the star, Spica, seeming quite alone, because the array called Virgo the Maiden is otherwise quite dim. While just above the far western horizon, springtime's Leo the Lion (backward question mark leading a smaller triangle) will be leaving the scene.

The Little Dipper will be swinging from Polaris, the North Star, that is about halfway between the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia's Queenly rocking chair. And halfway counterclockwise between the Queen and the Big Dipper will be the triangle-on-a-square known as Cepheus the King, if you can find him. Easily found, way down south again, just behind Scorpius, will be sparkling the stars of Sagittarius, some of which forming the famous Tea Kettle. There are various other named forms, of course; all for mention in a complete survey of the sky.

The Moon will be full the 14th at 6a52, and new the 28th at 9p52.

## **Friday**Dru Clarke



I believe we live with a very unusual bird. The National Audubon Society and its chapters champion the wild flock, but it would be a mistake to ignore some of our (sort of) domesticated feathered brethren, especially those who seem, well, rather remarkable. One in particular is Friday.

Friday was hatched out of a clutch of ten eggs, three of which survived to become tiny chicks. We initially had kept previous chicks and their mothers in a wire cage until one morning we found a rather intimidating black rat snake coiled within the cage, with a fat bulge in its gullet, preventing it from removing itself from said space. The mother hen huddled, terrified, in one corner of it. It was quite an ordeal to 'free' the satiated reptile, a task I prudently left to my (so annointed) intrepid husband. Friday's initial home was a finer mesh affair, and it proved successful in allowing him and his brothers to grow to a large enough size to run free.

These three chicks all became handsome roosters. one with a golden fall of feathers from his head down the nape of his neck. (He was my favorite.) A second sported gleaming green and black, and the third had a snowy white head and neck, with satiny tail feathers. This one became known as Friday: one by one, the other two disappeared, taken during the night by predators as none of the three would roost in the "poultry palace" my husband so caringly built for them. (The hens put themselves to bed at night.) Friday, however, proved to be a savvy fellow. Near the chicken castle (the palace's alternative name) were corrals with loafing sheds for our stallions, Kit, BeBe, Wildcat, and Pablo. Friday chose the inside panels of BeBe's stall to roost on at night. He and the horse would be beak to nose and we would find both together each morning. Even when it was 20 below a few winters ago, Friday maintained his evening ritual by bedding down with BeBe.

He must have grown up to the point where his hormones kicked in and he began hanging out with the hens daily. We can hear their squawking as he pins them to the ground, grasping their necks in his beak, and mounts them for a cloacal 'kiss' (an innocuous term for his irrepressible breeding). They have the run of our farm, spending part of their day by our back door, waiting for a dish of cat kibble, then preening and basking in the sun. In early evening, they return to the poultry palace to roost, Friday 'herding' them in, but always waiting outside for one particularly errant hen who is incorrigible, preferring the free range to close quarters. He even ventures down the lane to hunt for her, and being eventually successful, runs her in. (All the while, he is very quiet and does not chastise her for her behavior. But I'm sure I see a squinty and determined look in his eyes.)

I recently attended an author of children's books signing, most of her books being about farm animals. She had written one about a very stupid (her word) hen, summing up her opinion of chickens in general as about the dumbest animals on earth. I took the opportunity during the question and conversation session afterward to tell her and the attendees about Friday. She decided then and there to craft a new children's book about Friday, pairing him with her hen of dubious renown. So, my task is to take multiple photos of him, portraits and action shots, for her illustrator to work from. I can't wait to see him immortalized in words that show him to be a very remarkable bird.





Sojourner Truth Program BUTTERFLY GARDEN Report 2022 Jacque Staats

Sojourner Truth Park sits on approximately 3 acres at the corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Pottawattamie Streets in south Manhattan. This site was purchased by the Urban Renewal Agency in 1972 for community improvements. The park and its amenities were laid out and developed through a series of public meetings with area residents.

In 1996, spearheaded by Madonna Stallman, the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, in cooperation with the surrounding neighborhood, established a butterfly garden at the east end of the park, under a large Siberian elm tree. The butterfly Garden covers approximately 582 sq. ft.

At its conception, a trellis, and seat were built and a limestone walkway was made to bisect the garden. Butterfly and pollinator friendly plants were introduced, including Pipevine at the base of the trellis and a wild grape at the NW corner of the garden. Other butterfly and pollinator friendly plants included Coneflowers, Crown Vetch, stinging nettle, Rudbeckia species, butterfly bush, Autumn Joy Sedum, asters, Missouri goldenrod, Rue and others. In addition, pollinator friendly annuals were planted along the garden edges each spring.

Twenty years later, in 2016 the NFHAS received a grant from Kansas Fish and Wildlife to do some much needed restoration of the garden. In the intervening years the garden had been overgrown with invasive opportunists such as elm seedlings, Queen Anne's lace, annual and perennial grasses, wild sunflowers, chickweed, goldenrod, along with massive overgrowth of the pipevine and grapevines, not just inhibiting growth but killing many of the preferred pollinator plants. The almost solid root mass of the undesirable plants precluded planting of annuals and choked out desirable plants. The trellis and walkway had also sustained damage as a result of vandalism. Led by the NFHAS, along with folks from KS Fish and Wildlife, the Weststar Green Team, Riley County Extension Master Gardeners and Manhattan Parks and Recreation the garden was essential dug up, with desirable plants being pulled and replanted and invasive plants removed. Native perennials were then purchased from the Dyke Arboretum in Heston and planted.

The garden was established and has been subsequently maintained to attract and feed not only adult butterflies but to also supply nutrients for their developing larvae. The flowering plants are selected for their nectar and their attraction to the adult butterflies. While some species of butterflies gravitate more toward certain plants, the flowers are not species specific.

Butterfly larvae food sources however, are species specific. One example is stinging nettle. One may wonder why in the world a garden would contain stinging nettle, because yes, it is bothersome to garden around. However, four of our earliest spring butterflies, the Red Admiral, the Painted Lady, the Question Mark and the Comma all lay their eggs only on nettle. The Pipevine, growing on the trellis is the single host plant for the Pipevine Butterfly larvae and common milkweed, which has been established in the NW corner of the garden, is essential for Monarch butterfly larvae. We have also recently planted a Spicebush in the north end of the garden as a host plant for the Spicebush butterfly. Perennials are added on an as needed basis and herbs are planted annually for larval food including dill, parsley and fennel for the Black Swallowtail.

As with all gardening projects, especially those containing perennials, the job is never done. Some plants take to a given spot, remain well-mannered and stay in their places; others become overexuberant and explode to fill every available space; still others languish and die, depending on soil, nutrient, sun and moisture conditions. The last couple of years has seen the removal of some of the large Missouri Goldenrod and Garden Phlox and a few of the Giant Asters. New to the space is the Spicebush, a second clump of Buddleia (butterfly bush), and a couple of Blue Mist Spirea and an Orange Butterfly Weed gifted by Susan Blackford. We've also added some perennial Blue Salvia near the walkway and an area of Walker's Low catmint and one of Red Monarda. An area of Yellow Coneflower was also planted last spring by the city. The area under and to the south of the Elm tree has been a continuing challenge due to elm roots and shade but we've finally been able to establish a bed of Columbine interspersed with Prickly Poppy and Violas (or Johnny-Jump Ups).

Still to be added this spring are the annual Zinnia, Red Hummingbird Salvia and, Lantana, all much loved by nectaring adults and the annual herbs for the Black Swallowtail larvae.

If anyone has an interest and would like more information about gardening for butterflies, please feel free to contact Jacque Staats. If you want to get your hands dirty, help is always welcome. Above all, if you are on the south side of Manhattan, please take a moment to sit and enjoy the serenity of the wonderfully calming Butterfly Garden at Sojourner Truth Park.



Northeast Park Report 2022 Jacque Staats

In 1997 Manhattan Parks and Recreation Department began a feasibility study for what would become the Northeast Community Park. In the late 1990s, the NFHAS, led by Jan Garton and Wayne Corn, and a group of interested citizens, presented a proposal to the City of Manhattan Parks Department for the creation of a "nature park" in a portion of Northeast Park to include a restored prairie on 28 acres of cultivated sorghum, a native tree woodlands along the west and south boundaries of the park, and a birding trail to run beside the old Blue River Channel at the southeast corner of the park. Working with the City of Manhattan Parks and Recreation Department, Westar Energy's Green Team and with funding thru the WalMart Clean Air and Clean Water Fund, members of the NFHAS were able to begin the establishment of the nature park.

In 2001 the 28-acre sorghum field restoration to prairie was begun by seeding with wild flowers and prairie grass, many of the seeds handpicked from nearby prairies by Audubon members. In 2002 the area was re-seeded using commercially acquired wildflower and grass seeds.

The Cecil Best Birding Trail, in memory of Cecil Best a longtime member of the NFHAS, was also established during this time. Cecil was an active and enthusiastic participant in the Riley County Winter Bird Counts, the grass roots movement to "Save Cheyenne Bottoms", and chapter birdseed sales. He, along with Clyde Ferguson, initiated and spearheaded the NFHAS Birdathon. The trail was laid by Audubon members and along with the Westar Green Team, the viewing platform, bridge and benches along the trail were designed and built.

Beginning in 2003 planting of the native woodlands began along the east border of the park. Seventy- eight 2-gallon potted redbud, bur oak, swamp white oak, red oak and ash, acquired from the Lindsborg Regional Outgrowing Tree Station were planted along with 300 bare root trees and shrubs including bur oak, redbud, red oak, golden currant, green ash, choke cherry and wild plum that had been purchased from the Kansas Forest Service.

A year later, in the spring Of 2004, the LeAnder was put in to slow the flow of water running off the parking lot/brome grass area at the north end of the park, south to the old Blue River Channel. It consisted of hay bales crisscrossing the run-off ditch that were then held in place with green willow stakes harvested from the Tuttle Creek area. The thought was that the willow stakes would root, fastening the hay bays, further slowing the run-off. Some of the willows did take root and are currently growing in that drainage area. The same year an additional 60 red buds and bur oaks were planted along the Leander adjacent to the east fence.

The final planting for the native restoration was done on Earth Day 2006 when Audubon members and community volunteers planted 25 Black Walnuts and 15 Redbuds along the Cecil Best Trail.

Maintenance of the "natural areas of Northeast Park is ongoing. Shortly after the initial grass/forb seeding, the southwest corner of the prairie was invaded by Musk thistle that had to be removed. Burning of the prairie is done annually by the Riley County Volunteer Fire Department. It had been hoped that a rotation of burning and mowing could be established in order to encourage forb growth but having witnessed the burns, kiddos in the neighborhood took it upon themselves to burn the one year we didn't, so for safety's sake we are burning every spring. Invasion of the prairie by Calgary Pear is becoming a major problem and every few years after the annual burn, it is necessary to go in and manually remove the trees and treat the stumps. The burns just seem to make them mad. Areas where the Pear has established have been shown to become void of both wildlife and other plants, basically a sterile monoculture.

Anther invasive species of concern at NE Park is the non-native honeysuckle. Like the Calgary Pear, given the opportunity the honeysuckle will move into a space, outcompeting all other vegetation and forming a monoculture. Last year over 20 hours were spent cutting and treating the shrubs along the Cecil Best Trail. Both species, as well and Siberian Elm and Eastern Red Cedar seedlings are also removed regularly from the native tree woodland area.

Trail wash-outs and downed trees remain an ongoing concern along Cecil Best. A portion of the bridge railing was damaged during one of the windstorms last summer, the viewing platform sustained some damage and rains haves continued to washout portions of the trail. Many thanks to Patricia Yeager and her husband, Kent for ably remediating these issues. Patricia has also replaced a number of the damaged bluebird houses along the birding trail.

Northeast Park continues to be a nature haven among all of the city's parks. Usage of the park has been especially high in the past two years as so many other activities were curtailed. According to the Restoration Plan for Northeast Park as presented to the Manhattan Parks Department, "Our plan for the nature area will be one that satisfies people's need for nature and nature's need for space. This natural area will add variety and vitality to our park system and make NE Park a unique place for people of all ages



to enjoy the beauty and adventure of nature." Thanks to that vision and the efforts of the NFHAS since, I believe that their plan has been fully realized.

2022 Birdathon Report - Jim Koelliker

Many of you have received this report from Clyde Ferguson for the past 35 years and it was always amazing. I am trying to continue the legacy of Clyde and Cecil Best who started and managed the Birdathon for many years.

Jim Koelliker

The 37<sup>th</sup> annual Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Birdathon, April 23-24, was more like the first thirty-five. My team; Roma Lenehan, Michael Donnelly, and me; worked the main area and found 105 species while Patricia Yeager searched around Lake Elbo and surrounding and found 58 species and added four not found by my team to make up our total of 109 for 2022. The report shows the species found in **the '22 column in RED**.

Unusual species found this year are shown on the enclosed page of pictures. Both the Greater white-fronted goose and snow goose were at Tuttle Puddle for a second year. The fish crows continue to be found for the third consecutive year. Other best finds were a Rough-legged hawk, Merlin, Hudsonian godwit, Junco, and Palm warbler. Our biggest misses were American white pelican, Wilson's Phalarope, Ring-billed gull, and all the Goatsuckers. Considering the weather and other personal limitations, I am thrilled with our results. I was hoping to exceed one hundred.

I always enjoy working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge and making this detailed report helps me be even more aware of our local birds. Too, I hope you find this report interesting & informative. Again, I have included results for the past 20 years that you might find interesting to see what species have been here consistently as well as infrequently.

<u>Yes, this report is a request for your financial support</u> for the Northern Flint Hills Chapter of the Audubon Society. This effort is our primary fund-raising activity. Last year over sixty contributors generously donated almost \$4,000 that the chapter put to effective use to support our efforts in the area.



Fish Crow – 3<sup>rd</sup> time found, but they are now here often.



Greater whitefronted Goose – 2<sup>nd</sup> time found



Snow Goose – 2<sup>nd</sup> time found



Rough-legged Hawk – 1st time found

These two are likely partially disabled singles.

### **Best Birds of 2022**



Merlin - 4th time found



Hudsonian Godwit -2<sup>nd</sup> time found



Biggest misses this year: American white pelican, Wilson's

Junco – 3<sup>rd</sup> time found, usually departed by now



Palm Warbler – 4<sup>th</sup> time found, arriving earlier now

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Alsop Bird Sanctuary 2022 Patricia Yeager

How the Alsop Bird Sanctuary Garden came to be.

Because I (Patricia Yeager) was president of Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society in May of 2010, I received a call from the Riley County Counselor. I was informed that the NFHAS was the next trustee listed to care for the property at 1646 Laramie - should we accept it. There was a matter of approximately \$13,000 in back property taxes due and, after paid, it was ours.

The property was formerly owned by Inez Alsop, a history professor at Kansas State University. It had been the responsibility of the first trustee since her death about 25 years prior. Also, upon her death, she gave NFHAS \$25,000.00 which we wisely invested. Our 8 board members in 2010 agreed that it would be appropriate to pay the back taxes with Inez's money, after all, and create a green space on the site.

Because my grandmother and Inez were friends since their high school days, I had been acquainted with Inez. I had heard the story that she would not sell her property to the hotel at any price because some of her siblings lived on that block near her and also that she tended to the wild birds in the area by feeding, watering and rehabilitating the wounded or abandoned birds. She loved the birds. And it was her wish that it remain a sanctuary for birds.

A few of us then set about establishing the garden. That is another chapter.

2013











2019



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# WHAT YOU MISSED! Cecil Best Trail - today and yesterday













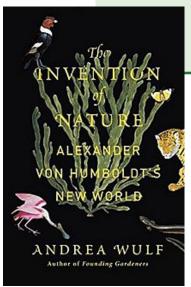




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Alexander von Humbolt 1843



#### **Book Review**

The Invention of Nature
Alexander von Humboldt's New World

The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World is a nonfiction book released in 2015, by the historian Andrea Wulf about the Prussian naturalist, explorer and geographer Alexander von Humboldt.

The book follows Humboldt from his early childhood and travels through Europe as a young man to his journey through Latin America and his return to Europe. Wulf makes the case that Humboldt synthesized knowledge from many different fields to form a vision of nature as one interconnected system, that would go on to influence scientists, activists and the public.



#### Kansas Motus Alice Boyle

Alice Boyle gave a presentation about this project at the March meeting (click this link for a recording of the talk <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISJP8Qm1CEs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISJP8Qm1CEs</a>) and is hoping that Audubon chapters or individuals will consider sponsoring a tower or tags. You can learn more about the project here: <a href="https://www.kansasmotus.net">https://www.kansasmotus.net</a>

For all those interested in contributing to the project, send a check to: The Division of Biology, Kansas State University, Accounting Office, 104 Ackert Hall, 1717 Claflin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66506.



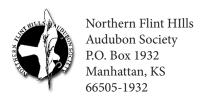
photo by Alice Boyle

Please write on the check "Kansas Motus" and enclose your name, contact info, and any additional instructions you have.

Alternatively, an account is being set up with the K-State Foundation so if folks want to make a tax-deductible donation (minus the 5% overhead), contact Alice Boyle or check the KansasMotus webpage

(https://www.kansasmotus.net) in 1-2 weeks for a link and further instructions."

#### Return Service Requested



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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/ vr. then basic renewal membership is \$35/vr. When you join the National Audubon Society, you automatically becomea 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 **97194, Washington, D.C. 20090.** Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society and include the code C4ZJ040Z.

Questions about membershipCall 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

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society website:

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**WE NEED YOU!** PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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