

**MANHATTAN'S ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
SATURDAY, DEC. 20, 2008**

**CONTACT DAVE
RINTOUL 785-532-
6615 OR EMAIL HIM
AT DRINTOUL@KSU.
EDU**



Manhattan Christmas Bird
Count Potluck - Senior Center
on 4th & Leavenworth.

Begins at 6:00 pm. Everyone is invited to bring a dish to share. Free will donation is also an option Contact Carla Bishop at 539-5129 or cbishop@ksu.edu, if you have questions or wish to help in the setting up of the supper.

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



PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 37, No. 4 ~ DECEMBER 2008

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Upcoming Events:

DEC. 4 -BOARD MEETING 6 p.m.
(TOM & MJ MORGAN HOME)

DEC. 6 - BirdSEED PICKUP UFM, 9-12N

DEC. 13 - MONTHLY BIRDING with DAVE RINTOUL
MEET SOJOURNER TRUTH PARK 8 A.M.

DEC. 20 - MANHATTAN CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

DEC. 22 - OLSBURG CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS

JAN. 6 - EAGLE DAYS, TUTTLE CREEK LAKE

JAN. 6 - BirdSEED ORDER DEADLINE

JAN. 17 - BirdSEED PICKUP UFM, 9-12N



A FINE GIFT AT THE DOOR

DRU CLARKE

The fish twisted feebly, its slimy, steel-colored skin coated with fine gravel and sand, appearing to be weary of this place. Our deck was an odd spot to find a dying fish; you'd associate a scene like this more with the deck of a boat, far out to sea. But Ulta, our three-legged cat (whom we refer to as our "marshmallow" because he is fluffy, soft and fat), had turned from (inept) bird stalking into a fisher cat: he outstretched one tentative paw and tapped the fish lightly, his eyes fixed on his prize catch. Not wanting the fish to die (on our doorstep), Mike retrieved the cat and brought him inside where he sat, looking out longingly.

We have a "catch and release" philosophy at our house, so I wetted a paper towel, slid past the cat, and picked up the now-quiet fish to return it to the creek just north of our house, hoping, as I padded quickly along, that it would revive. There was plenty of water in the creek this year, due to unusually wet conditions, but we had never seen a fish this big in it. It may have come from an upstream pond, or swum upstream from some deeper reaches along the creek on a neighbor's land.

The fish was a good size, about seven inches, firmly muscled and sleek, like a torpedo, with an under-slung mouth and smooth skin. If it had scales, they were minute and unrecognizable. An iridescent blue spot glowed at the base of its tail. It exhibited the fineness ratio beautifully: this is when the length

of the fish divided by its diameter lies somewhere below or above 4.5, the perfect equivalent of streamlined, high-efficiency swimming. Bluefin tuna, sailfish, marlin, and mackerel have it, as do orcas and other dolphin species: they are the speedsters of the aquatic realm. Here was a freshwater ace, and I hoped it would swim again.

When I place it in the cold water, it pumped its gills furiously and tried to swim upstream, but weakened from its ordeal, it floated to a leaf pack and stayed there. Clad only in my pajamas, I fled to the house, not knowing if it would recover.

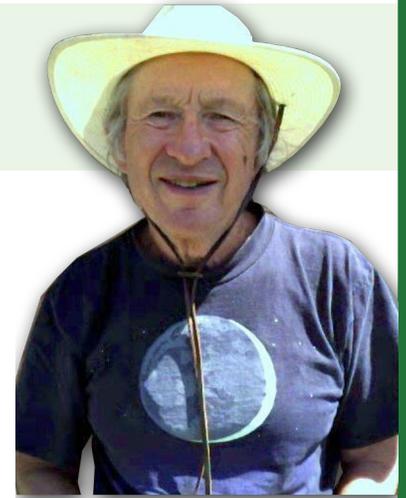
Inside, I looked at Ulta and shook my head. The companion cat is capable of providing warmth and solace: when tired, depressed, in pain, ill, or merely reflective, a person responds to the cat's presence. (When I herniated a disc in my back and couldn't sleep in a bed, I tried to get some rest in a recliner. Every night I was there, Matum, Ulta's athletic brother, would find my lap and warm my painful left side.) We know that oxytocin (a pleasure-producing hormone) levels rise when one strokes a cat. But, if one admires, enjoys, and yes, loves birds, the cat's appeal diminishes. So, maybe it is good when they turn to fishing – or, maybe not. Does it depend on what they catch?

I went back to the creek after I had put on some warm clothes, and the fish had disappeared. I believe that it did survive and that once again it would show off its prowess in swimming. Fineness is a good concept, I think, especially when you find it in a gift at the door.

© 2008 Dru Clarke



SKYLIGHT PLUS PETE COHEN



*Here's to the stars that sparkle so bright,
Here's to the dark that's around them.
We admire each spark
But were it not for the dark
No one would ever have found them.*

Now comes December, sadly not welcomed by those who resonate with the blues singers who “hate to see that evening sun go down” or find that “nights are long, oh so long, on the prairie” (without someone to love). But those of us who can revel in celestial darkness have the year’s greatest feast, the longest nights, the chances to partake at the more normally convenient hours, provided we can find those areas where the feast is available. Areas becoming increasingly rare.

“Tis dearness only that give everything its value,” Thomas Paine observed in *The American Crisis*, by way of rousing the American colonists to rebellion. He was referring to FREEDOM (his capitals) but his observation can apply broadly. I think of the lady, a resident of Kansas City, who recently, upon hearing that I live in the rural Flint Hills, sighed wistfully, “You get to see the Milky Way.”

In fact, I do every cloudless night. It’s not really rare, yet like freedom I think it, with the essential darkness that hosts it, has a certain basic value that doesn’t diminish with repetition, but which can be enhanced by being repeatedly obscured by glarish or blank brightness. This may be mere personal attitude, but then, whence the attitude? I read variously credentialed reports of how darkness affects certain chemical responses in humans, as well as other organisms. Dark skies are, therefore, I would say a mind-altering substance that has thus far escaped widespread regulation because all of our “artificial” lighting thus far generally cuts off our responses before we have a chance to feel them.

So I wonder what if the effect of darkness were to gradually to become stronger because of all the increasing interim deprivation – the way a germ or drug can hit hardest those who have had the least experience with it. Supposing at some tipping point people were thus to become so unprepared for the jolts of night they encounter by happenstance that they thus become impelled to begin shooting-up on darkness? Sneaking out

to where the shadows fall for another fix of it. Outside of reducing the strain on our energy supplies, I wonder what other effects might occur.

I can recall when beyond Broadway a neon sign was an oddity – usually a small isolated glow modestly spelling out the name of a town’s diner. It was once thought, and more recently, that 1 and 2% bank interest was a thing of the past. So dim, too, may become fashionable again.

Meanwhile, December gets started with Venus, Jupiter, and the Moon forming a trio of darkness-enhanced brilliance in the SW after sunset. Full at its nearest distance for the year, this time it will glow without restraint on the 12th then outshine most of the Geminid meteor shower on the 13th. Regulus, at the bottom of Leo the Lion’s backward question mark, will pierce the darkness near the Moon on the 16th while Saturn dances ever earlier in the wee hours to be the bright spot near the Moon before midnight on the 17th. The more prominent Jupiter and the elusive Mercury will have a kind a Mutt and Jeff light show in the SW twilight glow the 28th and 29th, with Venus and the Moon having a unhidden affair the 30th and 31st, and again bright Sirius will cross the central meridian near midnight to mark our calendar’s new year.

The avian Summer Triangle of the Lyre Bird’s Vega, Cygnus the Swan’s Deneb, and Aquila the Eagle’s Altair will contrast with the northwestern evenings’ darkness as the last two slide down the Milky Way (with Vega a little northward out of the stream), while a rather lonely Fomalhaut, of the Southern Fish, will wink away low in the southwest. The winter solstice will occur at 6a04 on the 21st. and the Moon having been full on the 12th (at 10a37) will be new the 27th at 6a22.

© 2008 Peter Zachary Cohen

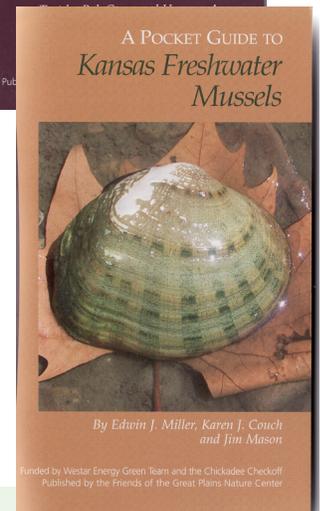
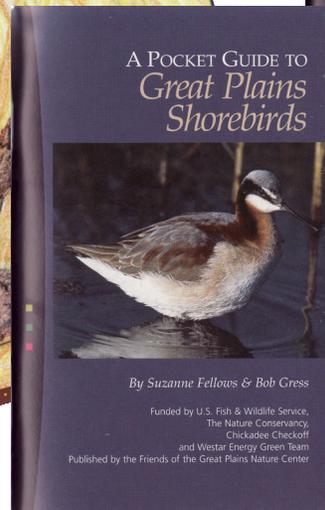
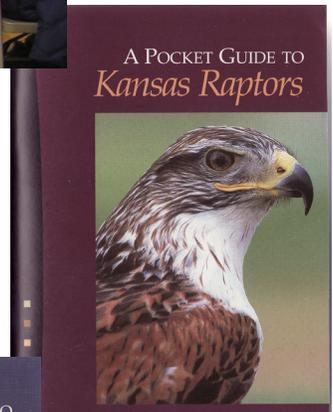
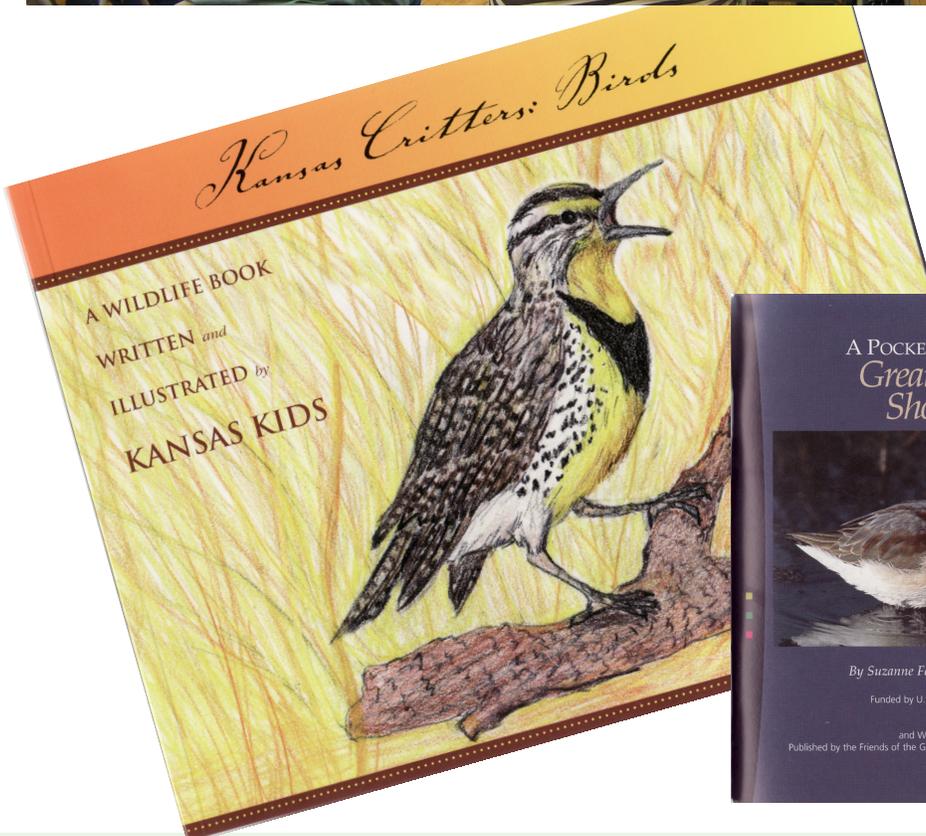
GREAT PLAINS NATURE CENTER

DIR. BOB GRESS

If you missed last month's program, featuring Bob Gress - you really missed a great program. His slide show was beautiful and his talk informative and entertaining.

He also had "free" posters, and booklets (see below) that are published for the Great Plains Nature Center. Go online to <http://www.gpnc.org> and you will find all sorts of information - including directions. So the next time you are thinking about a day trip or going to Wichita - stop by. The Koch Habitat Hall is a must see.

THANK YOU Bob for the wonderful program.





Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Bird Seed Sale

ORDERS must be received by Jan. 6, 2009

PICK UP is Saturday, Jan. 17, 2009, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

UFM, 1221 Thurston, Manhattan

If interested in helping unload the truck, come at 8 a.m., or volunteer to help during the morning of pickup - contact Annie (below).

Return your order forms with your checks to:

Annie Baker

116 Parkview Dr.

Junction City, KS 66441

Phone 785-375-4633

Make checks payable to:

Northern Flint Hills

Audubon Society

or **NFHAS** for short

Bird Seed Sale Product Descriptions:

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEEDS are attractive to more species of birds than are striped sunflower seeds.

They also supply more energy per pound than striped sunflower seeds.

STRIPED SUNFLOWER SEEDS contain larger hearts than black oil sunflower seeds and are particularly suitable for larger songbirds.

SAFFLOWER is a favorite with Cardinals and squirrels really do not like it.

MILLET is liked by Mourning Doves, Song Sparrows, White Throated Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, White Crown Sparrows, Red Wing Blackbirds, House Finches, Pine Siskins, and Quail.

FLINT HILLS FEAST is our premium bird seed mix: 30 % black oil sunflower seed, 20 % striped sunflower seed, and 50 % white proso millet with no milo or fillers.

NIGER THISTLE is very attractive to gold finches and all other finches that are here over the winter. Niger is excellent for tube feeders.

SUNFLOWER SEED CHIPS are high in energy and can be used in tube feeders. These are especially liked by pine siskins.

CHEAP CHEEP MIX is less expensive but still attractive to many species. It is 40 % cracked corn, 40 % white proso millet, 20 % black oil sunflower and no milo or fillers.

SUPER FORMULA FINCH MIX is a less expensive option for tube feeders than 100% Niger thistle. It consists of 70% sunflower chips and 30% niger thistle. This is very popular with most tube feeding species.

SUET CAKES, in addition to having high calorie beef fat which helps birds maintain body heat in cold winter months as the main ingredient, have other nutritious ingredients.

PEANUT PICKOUTS are chunks of peanut hearts and are very attractive to woodpeckers.

MEDIUM CHOP is chopped corn kernels- especially good for ground-feeding birds.

Quality Seed, Easy Handling

The products we offer are high quality seeds. Our mixes were created to satisfy the needs of local bird populations at reasonable costs. We have tried to make it easy for you to purchase the amount of seed you want without having to handle heavy, awkward bags. Our seed comes in 10, 25, and 50 pound bags. We try to obtain the seed in paper bags whenever possible.

Sales Support Local Chapter Activities

As with all of our fund-raising activities, proceeds from our seed and store sales go toward supporting the educational and conservation projects of the local chapter. All of our labor is voluntary. Taxes are included in the price of our seed. Even though we are a not-for-profit organization, we are required to pay tax on any retail sales. Any additional donation you may wish to include with your order is appreciated.

PICK UP - Saturday, Jan. 17, 2009 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at UFM, 1221 Thurston

| DESCRIPTION | SIZE | COST EACH | QTY | TOTAL COST |
|---|------|-----------|-----|------------|
| Sunflower chips | 10lb | \$14.00 | | |
| Sunflower chips | 25lb | \$32.00 | | |
| Sunflower chips | 50lb | \$62.00 | | |
| Corn on the cob | 10lb | \$6.25 | | |
| Corn on the cob | 25lb | \$12.00 | | |
| Finch Mix | 10lb | \$16.25 | | |
| Finch Mix | 25lb | \$38.50 | | |
| Finch Mix | 50lb | \$75.00 | | |
| Med. corn chop | 25lb | \$10.50 | | |
| Med. corn chop | 50lb | \$19.00 | | |
| Peanut pick-outs | 10lb | \$15.25 | | |
| Peanut pick-outs | 25lb | \$34.25 | | |
| Red Millet | 10lb | \$8.00 | | |
| Red Millet | 25lb | \$16.25 | | |
| Red Millet | 50lb | \$29.25 | | |
| Safflower seed | 10lb | \$11.25 | | |
| Safflower seed | 25lb | \$26.00 | | |
| Safflower seed | 50lb | \$50.00 | | |
| Suet cakes <small>peanut butter, berry,</small> | 11oz | \$1.50 | | |
| Suet cakes <small>or regular</small> | 11oz | \$1.50 | | |
| Sunflower (black) | 10lb | \$6.75 | | |
| Sunflower (black) | 25lb | \$15.75 | | |
| Sunflower (black) | 50lb | \$30.00 | | |
| Sunflower (striped) | 10lb | \$7.25 | | |
| Sunflower (striped) | 25lb | \$18.75 | | |
| Sunflower (striped) | 50lb | \$36.00 | | |
| Thistle seed | 10lb | \$21.00 | | |
| Thistle seed | 25lb | \$47.50 | | |
| White millet | 10lb | \$4.25 | | |
| White millet | 25lb | \$10.50 | | |
| White millet | 50lb | \$19.25 | | |
| Cheap cheep mix | 10lb | \$5.00 | | |
| Cheap cheep mix | 25lb | \$11.75 | | |
| Cheap cheep mix | 50lb | \$21.75 | | |
| Flint Hills feast | 10lb | \$6.00 | | |
| Flint Hills feast | 25lb | \$14.50 | | |
| Flint Hills feast | 50lb | \$27.50 | | |
| Super Finch mix | 10lb | \$16.25 | | |
| Super Finch mix | 25lb | \$37.50 | | |

For our customers in **Manhattan (IN-TOWN only)** we offer a local delivery service — please check the box below and include \$5.00 with your order. Thank you for your order and your support. **We need volunteers to help the day of pickup - if interested - contact Annie Baker - (address & phone on front of form).**

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

 PHONE # _____
 Email _____

DELIVERY (in-town) \$5.00
 SUBTOTAL _____
 DONATION _____
 TOTAL _____

TAKE NOTE



MONTHLY SATURDAY MORNING BIRDING

Patricia Yeager leads: Three dads and four hardy wolf scouts (this is Boy Scout language for 7&8 year olds) joined four Northern Flint Hills Audubon members for our monthly bird walk on Nov. 8th, despite the fact that it was windy and cold (33-35 degrees F). We supplied each scout with binoculars for

the morning and I gave a brief lesson on how to use them. Then off we went. We had no more left our vehicles at the river access area off highway 24 (near Griffith Lumber) when a Bald Eagle displaying full adult plumage flew over. Next we stopped under the bridge and took note of the abandon cave swallow nests that will again be full of swallows in the spring.

We then walked along the river to encounter Northern Flint Hill Audubon's blue bird trail. We opened one blue bird nest box to look inside. No wintering Eastern Blue Birds were wintering in our 7 boxes. The binoculars supplied prior to our departure proved useful when we spotted a cooperative American Kestrel which sat on a power line above linear trail and stayed put while the kids approached. Two red-tailed hawks and one dark phase unconfirmed hawk species graced us with their presence near the juncture of our prairie restoration area and the Cecil Best trail. Since our scout lesson included nests, we drove out to Lake Elbo where I knew of several Baltimore oriole nests near my yard. Fishing line was incorporated in the construction of two of them. Visible from my yard were American Robins, a Blue Jay, a King Fisher, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, a White-breasted Nuthatch, a Tufted Titmouse, a Yellow-shafted Flicker and a Red bellied Woodpecker. As our outing ended we welcomed the warmth of the solar heat in the car and appreciated the warmth of the people we had spent the morning with.

NEXT Monthly Sat. morning birding: Dec. 13th with Dave Rintoul leading.

Patricia Yeager

National Audubon Society - The 109th Christmas Bird Count: Citizen Science in Action

From December 14, 2008 through January 5, 2009, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas will take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists will head out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house in the middle of winter.
<http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/>

LOCAL AREA CBCs:

Saturday, December 20, 2008 - Manhattan Dave Rintoul drintoul@ksu.edu 785.532.6615

Sunday, December 21, 2008 - Wakefield Chuck Otte otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

Monday, December 22, 2008 - Olsburg Gary Jeffrey gjeffrey@twinvalley.net 785.468.3587

Sunday, December 28, 2008 - Junction City Chuck Otte otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

For more Kansas Christmas Bird Counts, go to the Kansas Ornithological Society's website for CBC:
<http://ksbirds.org/2008CBC.htm>



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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
Also available on-line at www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html

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.

NFHAS Board

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| Butterfly Garden | Susan Blackford | | |
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| Fieldtrips: | Patricia Yeager, Kevin Fay | | 776-9593 |
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| Audubon of Kansas Trustee: | Hoogy Hoogheem | | |

Contacts for Your Elected Representatives (anytime) Write, call or email @
Governor Kathleen Sebelius: 2nd Floor, State Capital Bldg, Topeka , KS 66612. Kansas Senator or Representative _____: State Capital Bldg, Topeka, KS 66612. Ph# (during session only) Senate - 785-296-7300. House - 785-296-7500. U.S. Senator Roberts <Roberts@senate.gov> U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510. or Brownback <Brownback@senate.gov> U.S. Capital Switchboard 202-224-3121. President G.W. Bush - The White House, Washington, DC 20500.