

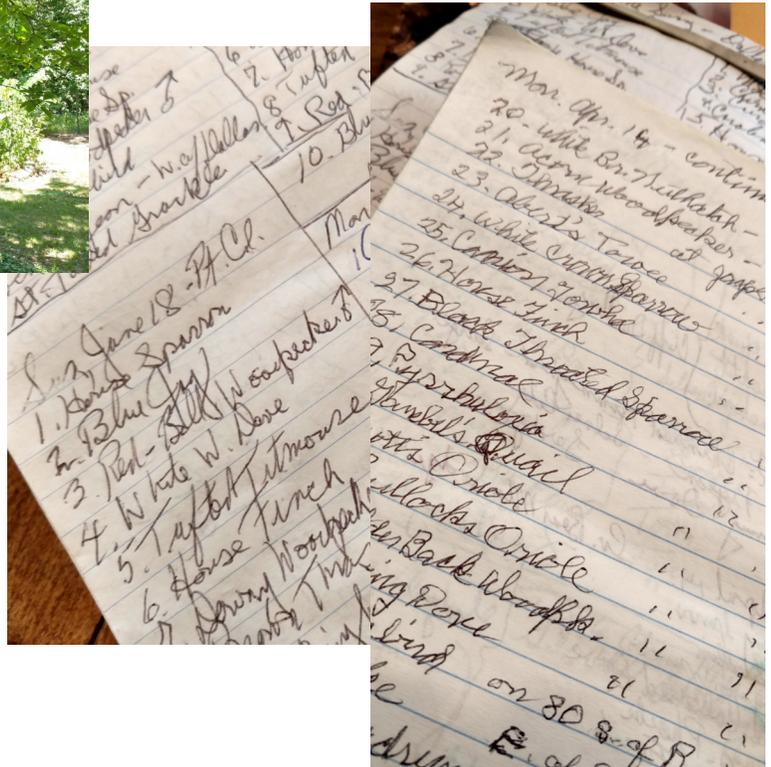


What's in your neighborhood?

Do you keep a list or journal of the birds in your backyard?

Clyde Ferguson does! He has kept a daily list for years.

Please share with us your birding "habit."



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

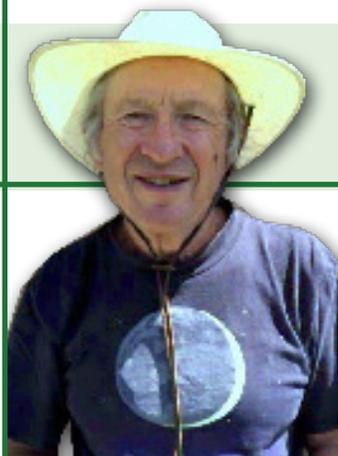
Vol. 49, No. 9 May 2021

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Upcoming Events

- May 4 - Tuesday Board Meeting - 6 p.m.
- May 8 - Spring Migratory Bird count in US and Canada
<https://www.migratorybirdday.org/>
- May 7 - noon Friday, to noon Sunday, May 9
The Kansas Ornithological Society's annual Spring Meeting is going to be digital again this year. Please feel free to contact Jeff Calhoun jeffcalhoun11@gmail.com with any questions about the KOS Birding Challenge or to sign up. The field trip sign-up sheet can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/3fvDUBY>



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Look at the sky. For a moment erase from your mind's eye any animate or inanimate (including atmospheric) items in sight; they aren't always there anyway. What's left is a

very smooth dome of various blue colors during the day, and one that at night is very dark but contains myriad bright points of light, some of which seem to sparkle. All of which seems very far beyond reach. What would you, as someone alive in prehistoric times, make of it

In a recent book titled "The Sky Atlas" (Chronicle Books LLC, San Francisco, 2019) Edward Brooke-Hitching begins at that point, and with text and a multitude of maps and diagrams, expresses a chronology of what humans have made of the sky through a number of millennia.

He notes that the written record begins over 5000 years ago with Sumerian cuneiform carvings, although unearthed artifacts reveal that at least some prior peoples recorded on hides and in other ways the position of the stars as they would have been in their times, with notable accuracy. How they reacted to them otherwise apparently does not show.

The author indicates that at the time of the Sumerians the sky was regarded, in one way, as a realm of freely moving, active supernatural beings and influences. (Imaginations that, it seems to me, unsurprisingly, consisted of modifications of terrestrial experience.) And at the same time the sky's actual appearances were recognized as providing measurements of time.

As time went on, imaginations evolved as ever more attention was given to patterns in the observations and there became an increasing determination to measure everything available to the senses with ever greater precision. The roundness of the Earth was demonstrated, so that some considered it as a globe immersed in an ocean, others believed it a vertical cylinder with the known surface being the round lid at its top. Etc.

Maps appeared showing the movements of the planets and stars as occurring on structural pathways that so densely filled the sky with solid geometry that it became obvious that comets could not pass through, and thus comets, the northern lights, and rainbows became regarded as necessarily being terrestrial emissions occurring below the Sky.

All the while, speculations ran as to what source powered all the movements observed, and as to what source created the universe in the first place. Along came the telescope and Christian theology became more involved as an Earth-centered universe changed into a sun- or heliocentric one and the study of the sky morphed from geometry into astronomy. Brooke-Hitching reports that Muslim astronomers had a problem in that the Koran states that only God can predict the future, but they could predict certain events far into the future. He states that demonstrations of their mathematics kept them in good standing.

Of course, not everyone has been or is involved in sky-centered calculations. Though a minority, numerous separate individual intellects have guided what has been proposed through the millennia, enhancing Ralph Waldo Emerson's comment that "all history is biography". Brooke-Hitching's account points out that certain individuals are more remembered than others in this story. For later.

Ahead in May both the evenings and the early hours will have views on offer, though the latter will draw the headlines as, for the western part of the U.S., the Moon performs a total eclipse as it sets the 28th. By "StarDate" the show begins at 4a45 and lasts until 7a51, however this time there'll be only seventeen minutes of totality starting at 6a10. The Moon's orbit around the Earth is at a slight angle vis-a-vis the planet's axis, otherwise we could have (ho-hum) a full eclipse every month. The eastern part of the country will see the Moon go down before the eclipse is complete.

Otherwise in the early hours, Saturn and Jupiter continue their near-each-other travels, rising ever earlier in the few hours past midnight, with the Moon joining the party the 4th and 5th. The Eta Aquarid meteor may add in for the 5th.

Venus begins another run as the Evening Star, low and setting early, to start. Meanwhile while the usually illusive Mercury acts sprightly all month, shining below Venus the 1st, but by the 12th glittering above Venus and the Moon, cozying up to the Moon the 13th, an extended fist and a half high above the WNW horizon. It nearly touches Venus in the twilight of the 28th. Mars, not to be forgotten, will be setting around midnight during May, to be seen upper left of the Moon on the 15th. The Moon will be new the 11th at 2 p.m. And full for its eclipse the 28th.

Opening the Shutters

Dru Clarke



Before the pandemic hit, I put down a sizable deposit for a Victor Emanuel Nature Tour to Georgia and the Caucasus Mountains to occur from September 23 through October 3 of this year (2021). The timing coincides with the fall migration of European and Asian birds, many funneling through the corridor of valleys and rifts between the peaks. Millennia ago, my (and probably most of your) ancestors walked this landscape from Africa and the Mideast to eventually people the European and Asian landmass. Several were Ashkenazi women, their mitochondrial DNA being replicated and passed along in long threads, stitching my life to theirs in a fabric that stretched far beyond. I wanted to walk where they did, to feel the solid earth and see the changing terrain as they did.

Georgia hosts several unique and entirely different eco-systems, ranging from subtropical along the Black Sea coast, to alpine tundra high in the Caucasus Mountains, to arid desert to the east along the Caspian Sea. All are easily accessed from the capital, Tbilisi, tucked into a valley with a formidable backdrop of mountains, and while this is billed as a nature tour it is strongly cultural as well, with excursions to architectural, artistic, historical, and archeological treasures. The music, vocals akin to throat singing, is startlingly hypnotic and entirely original to the region. Our guide, a renowned birder, is also an expert on this musical genre.

The big draw for me to the birding possibilities is the chance of spotting a lammergeier, also known as the bearded vulture, soaring on the thermals above the peaks. *Gypaetus barbatus* has an undeserved negative reputation for preying on lambs (in German, its name means 'lamb vulture') and was supposed to have murdered Aeschylus by mistaking his bald head for a rock upon which it dropped a tortoise. Lammergeiers DO drop objects on rocks, but these objects are bones. When, as all vultures do, they seek out carcasses, but these swoop in to carry off the



bones, not the flesh (unless they have young to which they feed that). The small carcass bones are immediately swallowed – strong digestive juices turn them to mush – while the larger bones, like those of the leg, are carried far up into the air, then dropped on rocks to expose the nutritious marrow. An odd but decidedly salutary behavior of the lammergeier is bathing in iron oxide- rich sulfur springs. The residue left on the body is a red-bronze bloom which is thought to thwart bacteria. On the nest, the anointed parents rub their doused feathers on the young and the unhatched eggs. (Another theory is that the behavior is showing off: these springs are found only among the high peaks, so any bird clever enough to find them is 'special'. I'll go with the cleansing idea as that seems pretty smart too.)

Misunderstood by humans, the lammergeier suffered enormous losses to its population – it became extinct in the Alps – through hunting and poisoning until conservationists from different organizations founded a captive breeding program that eventually led to the International Bearded Vulture Monitoring Project. An inspired and effective experiment conducted by a Lesotho village chief helped to mend the lammergeier image there: for several days he put his sheep in an enclosure close to where the bird nested on the cliffs. The sheep remained unharmed by the birds. He then removed the sheep and replaced them with bones which the birds collected. This village is now participating in one of Africa's most successful conservation programs. The worldwide population is difficult to know as they live at high altitudes, so the estimate is from 1300 to 6700, a wide range indeed.

What really sealed my decision, other than the chance to see the lammergeier, was my memory of the taste of the Georgian bread *khachapuri*, first eaten in a small restaurant in St. Petersburg, Russia, a few years ago. My friend, Larisa Vorontsov from Voronezh, had flown up to spend just one day with me and we finished our day together by eating Georgian food. The bread left an indelible imprint on my taste buds and I yearn to taste it where it originated. Georgia, a former Soviet republic, known as the fatherland of Stalin, is also reputed to produce fine wines, not lost on my palate. There are exclusive tours dedicated to viticulture, the vineyards, and wine tasting, but that experience is already included in my tour.

A month ago, Georgia had an eight day quarantine upon entering the country, but a recent posting said that anyone with a document showing complete vaccination could enter and travel freely. I haven't yet gotten confirmation from VENT, but am hopeful to be able to unshutter my life and travel once again.

If I am able to go, barring any untoward event, I promise to click the shutter on my camera and get some photos worth sharing, maybe at a NFHAS meeting? Passport ready, fingers crossed.

Note: I sold several head of cattle to help pay for this trip. While it was hard to let them go, I think they went to rich pastures and I'll have a rich experience to share when I return. If not, at least I got to write about it to titillate your minds!

© 2021 Dru Clarke

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 involment 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.

THANK YOU!

The weather cooperated as Susan Blackford, Jacque Staats, Patti Kline and Patricia Yeager picked up trash from the Stagg Hill Rd side of the Michel-Ross Preserve. A mystery person or persons has been keeping the other side's entrance clean. We are grateful to all who help keep the preserve clean of trash!

SPARK BIRD

NEW feature: What bird (or event) led you to become a birder or appreciator of nature in general? Stories will also be on our website in the "Bird Blog" section. <https://www.nfhas.org/bird-blog.cfm>

From Dave Rintoul "As a kid growing up in western KS, where MIKI were abundant summertime presences.

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*

The Mississippi Kite makes a streamlined silhouette as it careens through the sky on the hunt for small prey, or dive-bombs intruders that come too close to its nest tree.

After rearing their chicks they fly all the way to central South America for the winter.



Photo by Dave Rintoul

Updated Website nfhas.org

Visit our updated website nfhas.org for what's happening and upcoming events. See the Prairie Falcon newsletter in color, and visit the Bird Blog!

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society website. The browser address bar displays 'nfhas.org/index.cfm'. The website has a yellow header with the organization's logo and navigation links: 'Welcome', 'Where to Look', 'Bird Blog', 'Resources', and 'Membership'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the header is a large banner image of a sunset over rolling green hills, with the text 'Welcome to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society' centered over it. Below the banner are three featured images: a red cardinal perched on a branch with the caption 'Getting Started', a prairie falcon in flight with the caption 'The Prairie Falcon', and a bald eagle in flight with the caption 'Bird Blog'. At the bottom of the page, there are two columns: 'NFHAS NEWS' and 'UPCOMING EVENTS'. The 'NFHAS NEWS' section lists several items with dates and includes a 'View All Articles' button. The 'UPCOMING EVENTS' section lists dates and times for meetings and birdathons, including a 'View Entire Calendar' button and a 'Screenshot' label.

nfhas.org/index.cfm

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Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society

Welcome Where to Look Bird Blog Resources Membership

Welcome to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society

Getting Started

The Prairie Falcon

Bird Blog

NFHAS NEWS

2021 Birdathon. April 25

KOS Spring Meeting: Noon Friday-May 7 thru noon Sunday-May 9

Michell-Ross CLEANUP

Bird Flight Patterns and Music - watch the trailer

In memoriam: John Zimmerman

[View All Articles](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

4/24/21-4/26/21
Annual Birdathon Please see the April issue of the Prairie Falcon

5/4/21 6:00pm
NFHAS Board Meeting

5/7/21-5/9/21
KOS Spring Meeting: Noon Friday-May 7 thru noon Sunday-May 9

6/1/21 6:00pm
NFHAS Board Meeting

[View Entire Calendar](#)

Screenshot

Crossword Puzzle #9

Patricia Yeager

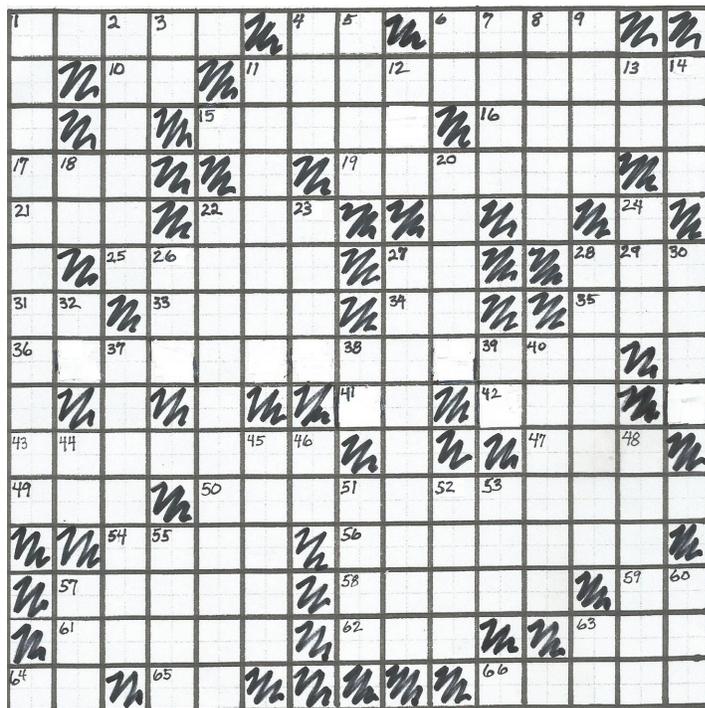
Crossword Puzzle #9

Across:

1. Southern U.S. tree nut
4. Page
6. American Tree Sparrow (code)
10. Alabama
11. A wood warbler with striped head that migrates through KS
15. A larger woodpecker that beginning birders can confuse with a Downy
16. Tighten
17. The first name of the mother of 7 sons one of which was a U.S president from Kansas
19. Bird species that makes hanging nests
21. What the head does when one is agreeable or tired
22. Text apology
25. Manhattan KS is the little one
27. Veterans Administration
28. Female
31. Battle boats
33. Stars want to be / Birds often do not want to be
34. Sound of indifference
35. Fish eggs
36. Harbinger of KS spring found near streams and gutters
41. Informal hello
42. Bernadette Peters hit song of 1980 ____ Whiz
43. Last name of naturalist author who wrote Sand County Almanac (1949)
47. Hallucinogenic drug
49. Four-wheeler
50. Many birds flying as one
54. Ideal garden
56. Flat area at high altitude
57. Silver in Spanish
58. A species of Grebe
59. Silicon
61. Flower that blooms in the fall whether wild or cultivated
68. Slang for marijuana grown by hydroponics
63. Him is to male and ____ is to female
64. Expression of hurt
65. Antireflective (abbr.)
66. Dinosaurs among us

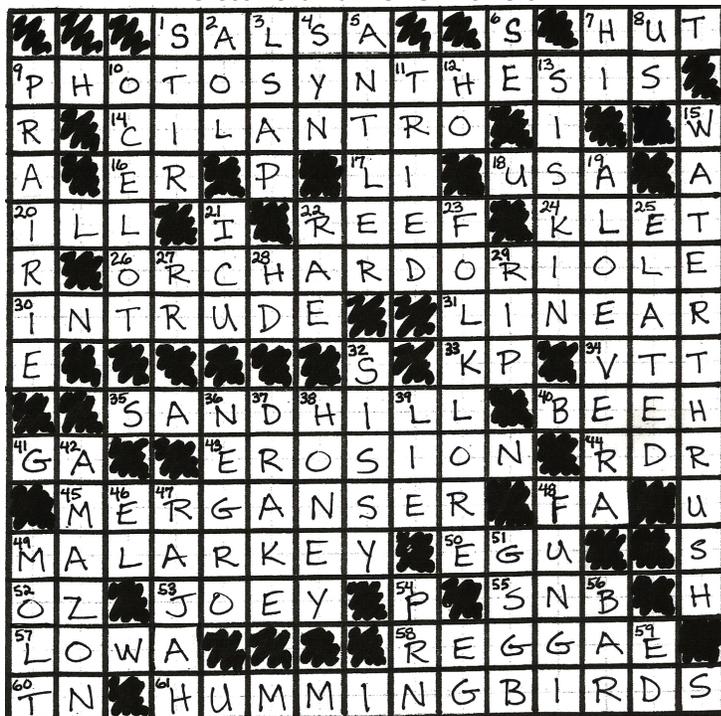
Down:

1. A tufted bird's name that means silky black robe
2. An abundant goose in KS that as recently as 1980 did not nest here
3. Aluminum (abbr.)
4. Hawaiian starchy food staple
5. Greater Roadrunner (code)
6. First 2 vowels of the alphabet
7. A Mexican fast food
8. Lovely water bird that has a black and white neck and pink legs
9. A warbler named for the trees it favors. A KS migrant
11. Kansas Birds states that 43 species have been observed in Kansas. What is it?
12. Million years
13. North Carolina
14. General Headquarters
18. Both brides and grooms say this word
20. ID
22. Automotive instrument
23. Tennessee
24. A zodiac constellation
26. Pacific standard time
27. Birding is a hazard for this kind of accident if you are not very careful.
28. Fragrant summer flower grown from bulbs and frequently found in floral arrangements
30. Merlin (code)
32. tantalum
37. What a gardener does
38. Acid/Alkaline
39. for example
40. A widespread Kingfisher in KS
44. A 1982 movie character that wanted to go home
45. Having to do with the moon



46. Title of those who have earning a PHD
48. The state of becoming thoroughly wet
51. Master of Physical Education
52. A drink of flavored powder sugar, water and cordial
53. Past tense of eat
55. Researchers acquire this
57. Repeat this twice and you have the name of a native fruit tree
60. This year every earner has to report by a month later to this agency
63. Hour

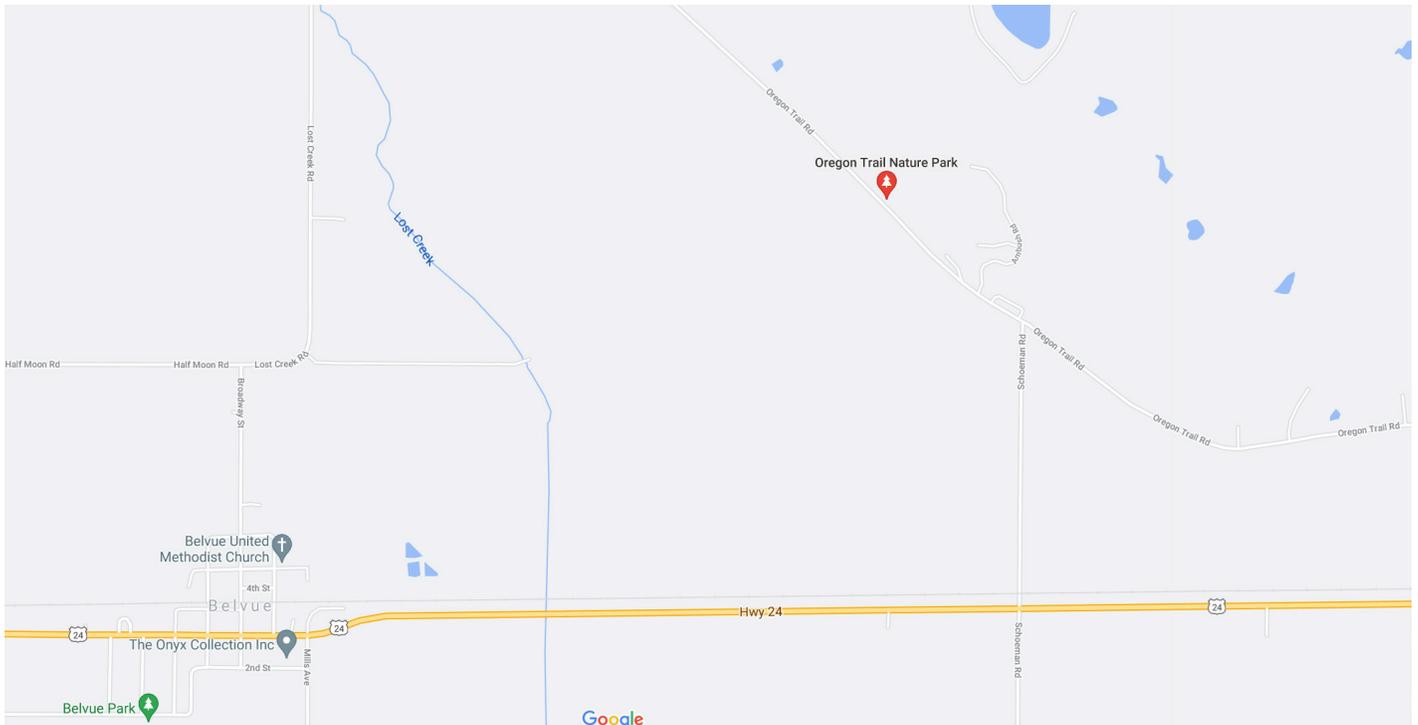
Crossword Puzzle #8 Answers



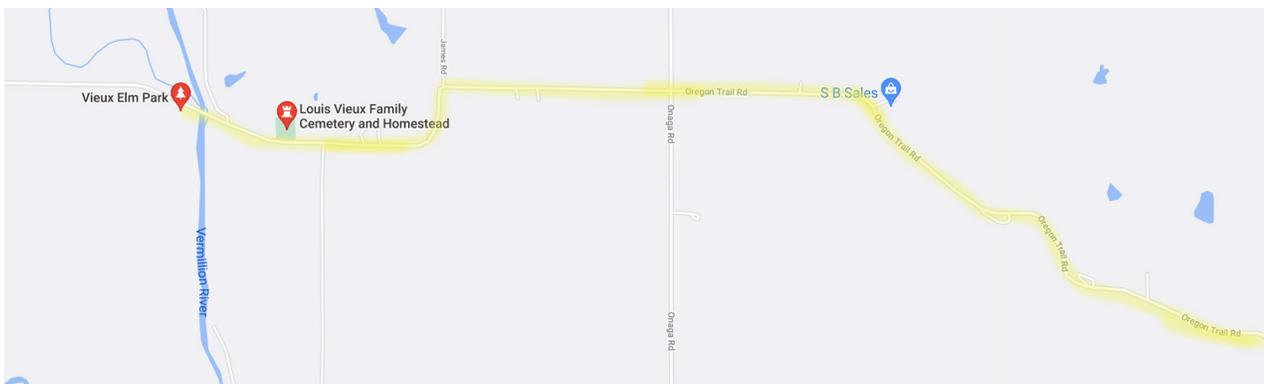
Self-guided Tour #3



This month's Birding Day trip is to the **Craig Burdett-Jesse Henson Memorial Park**, which was previously known as the **Oregon Trail Nature Park**. Head East on Highway 24 through Wamego and on towards and through Belvue to Schoeman Road (about 8 miles from the intersection of Highways 24 & 99 in Wamego). There is a red, two story house on the right just before Schoeman Road. (This is the same intersection as for last month's Bolton Day Trip.) Turn North (left). You will almost immediately cross some railroad tracks and continue about a mile to Oregon Trail Road. Turn West (left) and go another mile to the park entrance on the north side of the road. You will notice a silo painted with frontier/wagon train scenes. There are some facilities here including a covered pavilion with picnic tables and restrooms. The restrooms are not always open. There are also short hiking/nature trails The steep trail ends overlooking a Evergy Center lake which might be covered by snow geese parts of the year.



Want to extend your trip? Turn to the West (right) as you leave the Park. Continue west 1.4 miles to Lost Creek Road (a "T" intersection). Turn North (right) and continue 1.7 miles to a "Y" intersection. Go to the left onto Oregon Trail Road. You will cross Omega Road (which is paved) and at the next intersection go South (left). At 4.2 miles from the Park you will find the Louis Vieux Cemetary which features several items, including a picnic table and the entrance way, made out of railroad parts. At 4.4 miles from the Park you will find the remains of the Louis Vieux Elm. Not much remains except for a historical marker. This was a champion elm tree that had died many years ago leaving a massive stump until vandals burned it. The easiest way to return to Highway 24 is to turn around and head east to Omega Road and turn South (right). See the March issue of the newsletter for eating and picnic places in the Belvue area.





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

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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 <list_serve@ksu.edu> and join in the

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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