

Sept. 9th, 6 p.m.

Our annual opening event-
the **Ice Cream Social**

This year we are meeting at our newest Bird Sanctuary-
The Inez Alsop Property

Come see how it is progressing, and enjoy some ice cream!

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

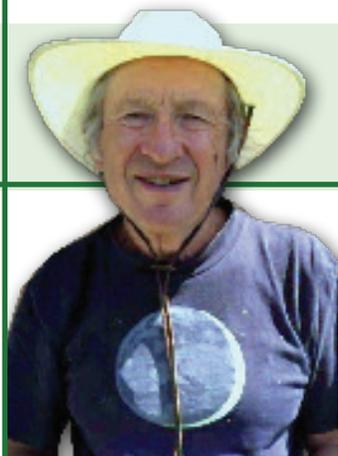
Vol. 47, No. 1 ~ September 2018

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Upcoming Events

- Sept. 4- Board Meeting- Manhattan Public Library
- Sept. 8- Saturday Morning Birding 8 am-11 am
Departing from Sojourner Truth Park
- Sept. 9 - Ice Cream Social at the ALSOP BIRD SANCTUARY
6 p.m. Check out our progress, 17th & Laramie
- Oct. 1- Board Meeting at Alsop Bird Sanctuary 6:00 p.m.



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

The autumn sky is back, and with it there are constellations that, despite the wide sky of the Flint Hills, we more wave at than observe. I call them our Peripherals because they are so far to the south of our particular latitude that they barely appear, some only partly, above edge of our horizon.

Even then they have to shine through a lot of low level atmosphere that is thicker than the air steeply overhead. Also, in the same way that a hawk passing directly over us has not the same shape as one seen gliding in the distance, those constellations do not conform to the way they are shown in pictures that give a view from underneath them.

The distance to the stars is much greater than to a hawk so the difference is much less, nonetheless one constellation, Piscis Austrinus, the Southern Fish, is a rather chubby specimen in diagrams, but to us from our angle its stars outline something more aquadynamic. Of all the Peripherals, we can locate this one the most easily because one of its stars, Fomalhaut, does come up above the ground haze and is so exceptionally bright, the 18th brightest in the sky, excluding the Sun. It's name means "mouth of the fish". The much lesser stars of its body make for us a oval loop westward below the gap between the dim stars of Aquarius and Capricorn, so Fomalhaut is pretty much a lone light low in the SW evenings. It gets close then closer to the Moon this month the 21st and 22nd.

There arises then the question of whether it's pronounced to rhyme with 'bought' or 'bout'. One can remember by locating the modestly shining Great Square of Pegasus high in the sky, and the dimmer, fuller loops of Aquarius just below, and then reciting,

*Two things are certain, and here's what's taught:
Low in the south glows Fomalhaut,
and the Southern Fish would be as naught
without the star called Fomalhaut.
It would scarcely be noted or even sought
if it lacked the star called Fomalhaut.
Look below Aquarius and if he's too dim,
Go up to Pegasus, get help from him.
Let the stars of his chest point you south;
they'll point through Aquarius to the Fish's mouth.*

When conditions allow, poking up below the Southern Fish will be a few stars, more or less as bright as the Fish's body, making a SW-NE line representing Grus, the Crane, one of the tall, thin wading kind of birds. It's a repetitive situation, but with some imagination, some suspense might be injected.

*If you happen to be far enough south,
and your sky is clear to the bottom.
You'll see some stars of Grus, the Crane,
Beneath the Southern Fish in the autumn.
A crane, as you know, is a tall narrow bird
that on long thin legs does its walking.
And Grus, who's keeping his head lifted up,
that close Southern Fish is stalking.
In fact every night Grus is there just below it,
And if enough nights keep passing by,
one night he might reach up and swallow it.*

Be that as it may, all the planets put in appearances this month and, except for Mercury, perform successive departures, with Venus, though getting ever brighter, showing lower and thus going down soonest. Steadily shining Jupiter in Libra keeps following Venus down through the evenings, passing below the Moon on the 13th. Saturn in Sagittarius maintains its best display and can look like a major star to the left of the Moon on the 16th, to its right on the 17th, setting all the while around midnight. Mars trims its special gleaming (the mostest till 2035) till at mid-month it simply matches the brightness of winter's Sirius, our brightest star, and sets in the wee hours. Mercury, the contrarian, rises in the first week's dawns, along with Leo's bright star Regulus.

Meanwhile some stars of summer linger on, with the Summer Triangle of Vega in Lyra the Lyre Bird, Deneb as the taillight of Cygnus the Swan, and Altair on the hunched back of Altair the Eagle in view till midnight.

The autumn equinox occurs at 8p54 the 22nd. The Moon is darkly new at 1p01 the 9th, full at 9p52 the 24th.

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“There are an infinite number of truths in living things.” Roger Bacon, 13th century, quoted in Michael Pye’s “The Edge of the World” (A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe)

Truths Dru Clarke



A gritty shard of gravel shifted in the lane under the cedar tree. An ovoid shape, dull grey and shaggy, crept forward. A polished mahogany head, working slowly back and forth, dragged onward its vulnerable but encased body, mouthing brittle bits of cedar leaves as it proceeded, and added them with silken threads to its bag. The bagworm, the larva of a moth, was a vision of stolid persistence. After the caterpillars pupate, only the males develop wings, so the females are destined to be ‘home’ (or bag) bound: some emerge to mate and lay eggs; some are bred by males who extend their abdomens into the bag of the female; others, reproducing parthenogenetically (that is, without benefit of a male), die in their bags with the young emerging from her desiccated body. Nature finds a way.

On this same lane lay the body of a monarch butterfly, sans abdomen. A bird took the fattest and tenderest portion, leaving the elegant wings unscathed, still attached to the thorax. This monarch may have fattened itself as a larva on the milkweed plants we’ve nurtured on the south side of our implement shed, hollyhocks giving way to the more delectable monarch food. A host of other insects – beetles, bugs, and assorted other orders – also nibble on the milkweed, and the milkweed bug, like the monarch, undergoes a long-distance migration. Except for the monarch, little is known about arthropod migrations. A few years ago, we witnessed swarms of green darner dragonflies swirling over our deck before they flew southward toward the Kansas River and beyond. Last year, an irruption of painted ladies, a delicate species of butterfly, generated awe here in Kansas and other midwestern states as masses of them fluttered above our roadways and fields. Windshields and roads were slick with their smashed bodies. Evidently conditions aligned themselves just so in Canada, where they originated, to lead to a population explosion and, hence, their diaspora.

Back on our lane a young and inexperienced garter snake had grasped the hind leg of an equally young and inexperienced toad who was considerably more rotund than the open maw of the slender fellow. It occurred to me that neither one would emerge from this trial unharmed: the toad, with its three free legs, tried to gain purchase on the grass and the gravel while the snake held on for dear life to what it thought was going to be a hearty meal. I took a stick and held aloft the snake, toad dangling and flailing from the garter’s jaws: gravity solved the problem and the toad bounced once on the ground and hopped off. The snake, let down gently and back on a solid surface, looked after the toad, then- I swear!- decided to call it a day and slid off in the opposite direction. This entire encounter brought back the memory of a spectacle when I was a kid.

At our summer place in the New Jersey Highlands, two girders served as a bridge across a creek that ran in front of the house. One day I was crossing the bridge and I looked down into the then dry creek bed and a copperhead snake had caught and begun to eat a huge toad. The front end of the toad – head and forelegs – stuck out from the snake’s mouth and it looked for all purposes like a single freakish animal: I was sure I had discovered a new species! I yelled for my dad who came, looked, and revealed the truth of what was happening. I didn’t stick around to witness the finale.

“What do you think this is?” My husband, looking like the proverbial Cheshire cat, proffered a stem with a chubby, 4-inch long, milk chocolate-colored caterpillar on it. Its sides were decorated with large ivory circlets, like portholes. It was so unusual that I took a photo and posted it, thinking folks would just appreciate its comic look. It turns out that it was the larva of a satellite sphinx moth, found in the southwest U.S., not here. When would the adult have laid the egg that became this marvelous tricked out tootsie roll? Recent verbal fisticuffs with a climate change denier – he thinks it’s a conspiracy of scientists to garner grants and money to line their pockets – may end with evidence of life’s seeming limitless ability to adapt, to know being ‘at home’ may not be where it used to be, that new landscapes can answer basic needs. Put back where it was found, it was gone in the morning.

Now, a fox squirrel is scolding our cat, and all of the birds have gone quiet. Our big dog is on the couch, snoring, occasionally dreaming. All living things, sentient and feeling, hold truths we can only guess at, or maybe know and understand superficially. These truths are all around us, and we are – or should be – in awe of all of them.



© 2018 Dru Clarke, July-Aug

BIRDATHON 2018 REPORT

Jim Koelliker

Birdathon THANK YOU

For Clyde Ferguson and me, along with a small number of dedicated birders, the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Birdathon, the last Saturday-Sunday of April, is an exciting but tiring time every year. We work hard to identify as many different bird species in the area as possible in just a 24-hour period. As I reported in the July-August edition of the Prairie Falcon, we positively identified 123 species this year. After we have recovered and gotten everyone's individual reports, it takes me several days to complete our written report about the results of the Birdathon. I do get much satisfaction from preparing that report for our contributors.

Then, we are ready to contact our supporters to convince, cajole, etc. them to make their donation to the NFHAS. Clyde, one of the two original founders of the Birdathon, gives our results directly to several friends and mails our report to nearly 50 past and potential supporters. He writes a personal note on every one of those letters! Me, I give about ten reports personally to my friends and I send another ten or so via email. Finally, you likely saw our report in the last issue of the Prairie Falcon. So, our efforts to collect donations have been going on for more than three months.

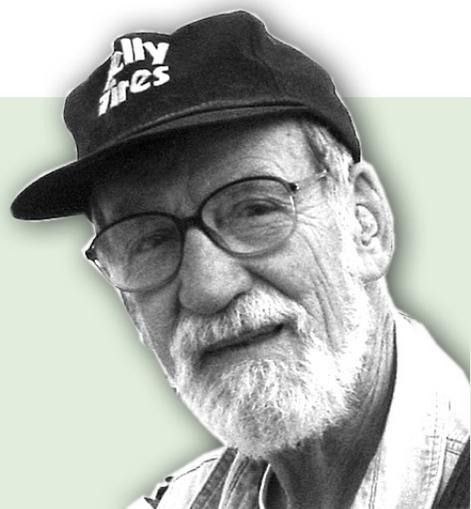
We are very happy to report that the total responses this year have produced a new record in both number of contributions and amount. **As of August 8, we have received more than 60 contributions that total nearly \$3,200!!!** Clyde's 34 years of effort and experience always makes him the greatest collector of funds and contributions. Me – my supporters have been growing slowly.

Finally, I am gratified by the response from you, the readers of the Prairie Falcon. At least eight of our contributions have come from you. Thanks to each and every one of you for your support this year. If this year is like the past, we will likely get several more contributions during the year to add to our totals.

One of the important aspects of this effort is that the NFHAS chapter is using the donations we receive to support important efforts we carry out to help with conservation and education about birds and the environment. Patricia Yeager, our dedicated Chapter president, has prepared a report in this issue to describe how the Chapter has and is using the contributions that you have given to support our programs.

Again, thank you to all who have supported the Birdathon. It is never too late to help with your contribution, too

Jim Koelliker



Where does the Birdathon money go?

Pataricia Yeager

Any time you see Jim Koelliker or Clyde Ferguson, please thank them for their dedication over the years to raise funds for Northern Flint Hills Audubon. The Birdathon is the main source of funding for our yearly known expenses. What are those expenses? Dry as they may be, property taxes need to be paid on our Manhattan urban green spaces (almost 30 acres) also, trails and edges must be mowed according to city regulations.

An extraordinary contribution of talent is made voluntarily by Cindy Jeffrey to create a newsletter for us each month. Postage for those newsletters mailed to some is a luxury we can offer to our members who need it or prefer the relaxation a tactile page provides.

Although all the labor, tools and gas used to upkeep our 2 gardens are provided by volunteers headed up by Jacque Staats and myself, soil restoring compost, mulch, plants, water and trash hauling adds to our financial needs. Bluebird houses are built and maintained voluntarily thanks to Kevin Fay and Greg Wurst. Liability insurance for all our public endeavors is paid yearly.

So now the possibilities:

Let's help fund minivans for Eagle Days' education.

We can say, "OK".

Let's bring in a speaker that inspires and enlightens us. Who are you thinking of ?

Let's rent the room. Let's advertise it.

We can say, "OK

Let's organize a bird trip to _____. Let's rent a van and go.

We can say," OK.

In other words, we can dream and make interesting, purposeful things happen.

All this is to say **thank you** for your financial contributions. It takes a great deal of stress out of our chapter decisions. After all, we have important things to do.

Most sincerely,
Patricia Yeager, president

****We still need people - Do you find yourself wanting figures and percentages? We need you for our next treasurer. Please volunteer.***

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Board member at large:

Education Chair

Birdseed Chair

AOK Audubon of Kansas

Cindy Jeffrey, NFHAS Chapter Rep

AOK's new 2018 *Prairie Wings* magazine is now available - I can send you a complimentary copy (just email me at cinraney@ksu.edu) However, to subscribe, simply make a donation of any size to AOK at audubonofkansas.org. From then on you will automatically receive *Prairie Wings* as new issues are published."



Visit the AOK website at audubonofkansas.org

It is being updated and will have a new look and more updates and content, but you can still find links to the all the Kansas Audubon Chapters and check out what they are doing. You can find past *Prairie Wings*, and the new one will be uploaded soon to read online or download.

Exciting Young Birder

Austin Roe



[Birding Big Life](#)

Hello, my name is Austin Roe, I am currently a junior at Kansas State University studying Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation. During the Summer of 2017, I worked for the Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project (MOFEP) bird crew. On the MOFEP crew, we conducted point counts in forest stands that are being harvested in different ways to see how they may affect bird populations. This is where I first started learning how to identify birds by both sight and sound. I have also helped mist net and band birds on the Konza Prairie. Most importantly, I am an avid eBirder.

A lot of people ask me, "Why would you count birds?" Which gives me the opportunity to inform them on how you can go birding anywhere and anytime and how it can help to support conservation.

Birds are all around us and I think it's really fun to see how a species can be in two totally different environments during the same time of the year.

My long-term birding goal is to go birding in all 50 states. So far, I am up to six, and they haven't always been the most productive outings. So, if you like my posts and have a great birding spot in your area that I should check out, don't be afraid to let me hear about it.

I encourage people to get out and go birding, but also to try taking a friend with you and teach them how to identify birds. You might be amazed at how much you can share with someone and how much you can learn by teaching them about birds that you might identify every day.

I also encourage you to teach a child about birding. It's always great to get young people interested in any outdoor activity, especially one that is educational and can help to get people involved in conservation.

You may have heard of a birding big year. It's a challenge that you can set for yourself, or to compete against other birders and try to observe as many species as you can.

So, come join me as I try and live my [Birding Big Life](#).

Austin Roe

Check out Austin's Blog [Birding Big Life](#).



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WE NEED YOU!

PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

The Board meets on the first Monday of each month. The meetings usually last about an hour.

Vice President

Secretary

Treasurer

Board member at large:

Education Chair

Birdseed Chair

NFHAS Board

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AOK Representative: Cindy Jeffrey
At-large: Susan Blackford

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