

The majestic Bald Eagle is the only eagle unique to North America. The Golden Eagle occurs across the entire Northern Hemisphere. Eagle is a common name for many large birds of prey of the family Accipitridae; it belongs to several groups of birds that are not necessarily closely related to each other. Most of the 60 species of eagles are from Eurasia and Africa. Outside this area, just 14 species can be found – two in North America (Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles), nine in Central and South America, and three in Australia.

Two species of eagles can be found in Kansas. Bald Eagles fall in the category of “fish eagle” or “sea eagle.” Sea eagles or fish eagles take fish as a large part of their diets, either fresh or as carrion. Golden Eagles are a member of the “booted eagle” category. Booted eagles or “true eagles” have feathered tarsi (lower legs).

Haliaeetus leucocephalus (hali and aiētos mean “sea eagle,” and leuco and cephalos mean “white head”) Immature Bald Eagles don’t develop the characteristic white head and tail until they are between four and five years old.

Eagles have unusual eyes. They are very large in proportion to their heads and have extremely large pupils. Eagles’ eyes have a million light-sensitive cells per square mm of retina, five times more than a human’s 200,000. While humans see just three basic colors, eagles see five.

Bald Eagles make a very un-regal, high-pitched squeaking sound. In TV shows and movies, the loud, low scream of the Red-tailed Hawk is often dubbed over the image of an eagle on-screen.



A distinctive courtship and territorial behavior of the Bald Eagle is the “talon clasp” or “cartwheel display,” where two eagles grab each other’s talons high in the air and fall downward, spinning. The birds release one another only when they have almost hit the ground. Bald Eagles remain together in a monogamous relationship until one or the other of the pair dies.

We can see Bald Eagles all year round in Kansas, but they are most numerous in the winter. Walk near water and you will most likely see one or two. When walking near the river ponds, anywhere along the reservoir, or driving over the dam - keep your “eagle” eye open for these majestic birds.

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

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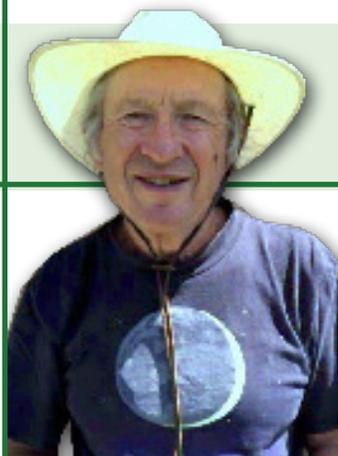
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Upcoming Events

Jan 5 - TUESDAY Board Meeting- 6:00 pm,
via Zoom. Contact a board member
to attend.

Sat. morning Birding- none in winter
Will begin in the Spring

Feb 2 - TUESDAY Board Meeting- 6:00 pm,
via Zoom. Contact a board member
to attend.



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Last month, motivated by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, I began a reporter's scan of the history of Western medical responses to human ailments, starting from a series of Great Courses lectures by Dr. Sherwin B. Nuland of Yale University.

Though last month's session ranged from the 5th century B.C.E. to the 16th C.E., my research found that central to that time span are recognized just two men. There was Hippocrates, the first person known to have rejected responses directed at warding off supernatural causes, and instead treating a patient as suffering from natural internal or behavioral imbalances. On these he based his procedures and potions and added an element of honesty and manner of dignity that apparently was significantly lacking at the time. His influence lasted a couple centuries but faded as his disciples "schismed."

His principles were resurrected in the 2nd century C.E. by Turkish-born Galen who added experimentation to his store of knowledge. However, there being a taboo against human dissection, he had to use other animals, and was thus led astray in certain ways. Nonetheless he was successful enough in his practice and forceful enough in his writings, that his approaches became the sometimes contentious but overall unyielding general standard of care until 1543.

By that time human dissection had gradually become more tolerated, and in that year a Flemish medical student at the University of Padua, Andreas Vesalius, at the age of 28, published a book that translates as "On the Workings of the Human Body" that—against headwinds—corrected some of Galen's mistakes, added new information, and began an era in which further experimentations were used to combat skepticisms. In 1628 William Harvey proved how blood circulated. In 1705 Giovanni Morgagni encountered and medically described a case of appendicitis, confirming a mention of the appendix and its inflammability made by Leonardo da Vinci in 1505 that had gone unnoticed.

The practice of doing autopsies thus grew, revealing the value of tapping and touching the living body for the resonance and feel of the inner organs, as in modern physical exams. This approach was greatly aided in 1816 when Rene Laennec, a physician and accomplished flute-maker who was shy at putting his ear to a woman's chest, observed two playing children talking to each other through a hollow stick, and invented the stethoscope.

The stethoscope is diagnostic. When surgical action is required comes the need to keep the patient as motionless as possible against the pain. But the history of anesthetic is so long and complicated that I can only note for chronological mention that Professor Nuland relates that an operation performed on October 16, 1846, using what we simply call 'ether', "began the era of modern surgery".

By then it had been discovered that humans were composed of cells, and Rudolf Virchow, of Germany, introduced

in the mid-1800s "the concept that disease was caused by the pathological change in a previously normal cell". At the same time, I'm told, at least many surgeons believed that their general 45% mortality rate was the result of oxidation resulting from air contact with the flesh they worked on. The germ theory of disease, the proof that micro-organisms were at work, demonstrated by Robert Koch, Louis Pasteur, and others, was able to overcome that idea, and eventually (also amid surrounding skepticism) brought to the fore the concepts of cleanliness and sterilization, to improve the goal from anti-sepsis to no sepsis.

Meanwhile the practice of inoculation, which had begun in antiquity in Asia and Africa, moved into the Western battle against disease, most notably historically when Edward Jenner in 1796 noticed that while the hands of milkmaids exhibited the pustules associated with cowpox, dairying people seemed immune to the then prevalent smallpox, of which cowpox is a milder form. Thus, began his 'vaccinations', so named because 'vacca' is one Latin word for 'cow'. (His term is now being used synonymously with 'inoculation', which arose from that procedure's similarity to grafting the eye-like bud of one plant into another. It is not related to 'innocuous', so is spelled with only one 'n'.)

Now our medicine has moved on to vaccines that don't require dead components of the enemy, to successful organ transplants, and more. And with particle physicists parsing the sub-atomic structure of the universe, which includes that of organisms and their genetic parts, given a chance the story seems to have a long way yet to go.

Apparently unaffected, our celestial objects continue decorating—clouds willing—the long winter darks. This includes the brief appearance of the Quadrantid meteor shower in the early hours of the 4th. Other nights the usual suspects will be on parade, with the modest-to-meek fall constellations sliding down in the west through the evenings.

The long cross of Cygnus the Swan will most noticeably dive first, followed by the lumpy outline of Aquarius below the Great Square of Pegasus. The long reach of the Cetus the Whale (slightly fattened in the middle) will sink next. Then the longer lazy-V string of stars called Pisces; then the two shallow lateral arcs of Andromeda will be pulled under by the last star of Pegasus' Square. All gone by midnight, leaving the brighter winter crew in command of the sky.

Foremost among them the strongly belted Orion the Hunter, with his right arm raised will confront from dusk to dawn the retreating Taurus the Bull, whose red eye, Aldebaran, will gleam in the V of stars called the Hyades. Below the Hunter, Lepus the Rabbit will be clearly bounding, ahead of Canis Major (the Big Dog) who will come up on hindlegs with the sky's brightest star, Sirius, as his right eye. The long rectangle of the Gemini Twins will be just above and behind Orion's raised arm, and above them the star Capella will glow at one corner of the pentagon shape of Auriga the Charioteer.

Jupiter and Saturn will continue their close companionship in the evening twilights. Venus will be bright in the pre-dawns, joined by a crescent Moon on the 11th. The Moon will stay out of picture the 13th (new at 11p00) but try, not quite successfully, to own it all later on, growing to be full 28th (technically at 1p16).

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A Murder (of crows)

Dru Clarke



Photo by Dave Rintoul



The raucous calls reverberated through the trees like the demons of hell had been freed. It sounded like something important was being protested, and the protest was erupting into a riot. In the upper limbs I expected to see dozens of birds, but there were only four. Four crows having a huge argument. They must have sensed me and the dog at some point, and all four flew about 100 yards to another stand of trees. There, two more crows joined them – now six – and the racket reached new heights. Then, maybe needing more room, loftier limbs, a flurry of wings took them to yet a new grove where their numbers increased to more than a dozen. The sounds varied from loud high-pitched squawks from it seemed all of them at once, to short monologues from one bird, or two, sparring in crow dialect. Suddenly, all was quiet. The dog had trotted toward them but was still a distance away: one crow sounded the alarm call, a distinctive, short vocalization a lot like a raspy bark. Done twice. Quiet again. By some unseen signal, all the birds lifted from the trees and were gone. Had they reached some detente? Anointed a new king or queen? Concluded a wake?

Once before, I witnessed a congregation of crows who gathered in our high pasture around a dead crow. They encircled it by walking around, jabbering mournfully. None touched it but they behaved with what appeared to be reverence. After they left, I examined the dead bird and saw that its wing feathers were ragged, its body dusty. This must have been a crow funeral that others have written about.

The American crow, in the family of corvids, including the larger (and shaggier) raven, the jays, the magpies, is a remarkable bird. An American Indian legend says it was once the most colorful of all birds, and that the other birds, being all black, were jealous. The crow, being of a magnanimous nature, gave each bird one of its colors until it was left only with black. It is a pre-eminently social bird, sometimes numbering in the tens of thousands, but seldom, if ever, solitary. The young often stay with their parents to help raise

subsequent offspring. Rarely orphaned, crows raised by humans form strong bonds with them and even when separated from them over long periods of time, recognize individual faces and respond positively to them. But faces they associate with previous negative experiences they avoid.*

How the term ‘murder’ for a congregation of crows originated is ambiguous. But it probably never had anything to do with dealing death. Some purists object to the use of alternative, albeit colorful, descriptors of groups of birds and other animals, although most world cultures have their idiosyncratic terms for native species. It seems almost prosaic to call a group of crows a ‘flock’: it lacks panache.

We never see crows on or under our feeders, nor cleaning up the spilled grain from the cow or horse troughs, although the quail and turkey are not shy about that. Yet, they’ll fly miles to snack and, it seems to socialize, on harvested fields where they can strut up and down the rows and see in all directions. And, in small cliques, they work the dumpsters in parking lots, consuming our leftover fries and buns. They are fun to watch giving wary glances, stepping measuredly and selecting prime morsels. When I encounter them in this environment, I can’t help but think of the pair of jackdaws (Eurasian crow relatives) standing on the sill of a palatial estate’s window in Austria, pecking vigorously on the pane. They occasionally would pause and peer at me gazing at them, imploring me to open the window. It seemed they felt entitled to be residents within the regal quarters. And, if intelligence is fairly rewarded, why wouldn’t that be their right? It was more intriguing, and rewarding to me, to watch the jackdaws than to ogle the accumulated riches and opulence of the residence.

*Dr. John Marzluff’s research on crows

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Crossword Puzzle #5

Patricia Yeager

Across:

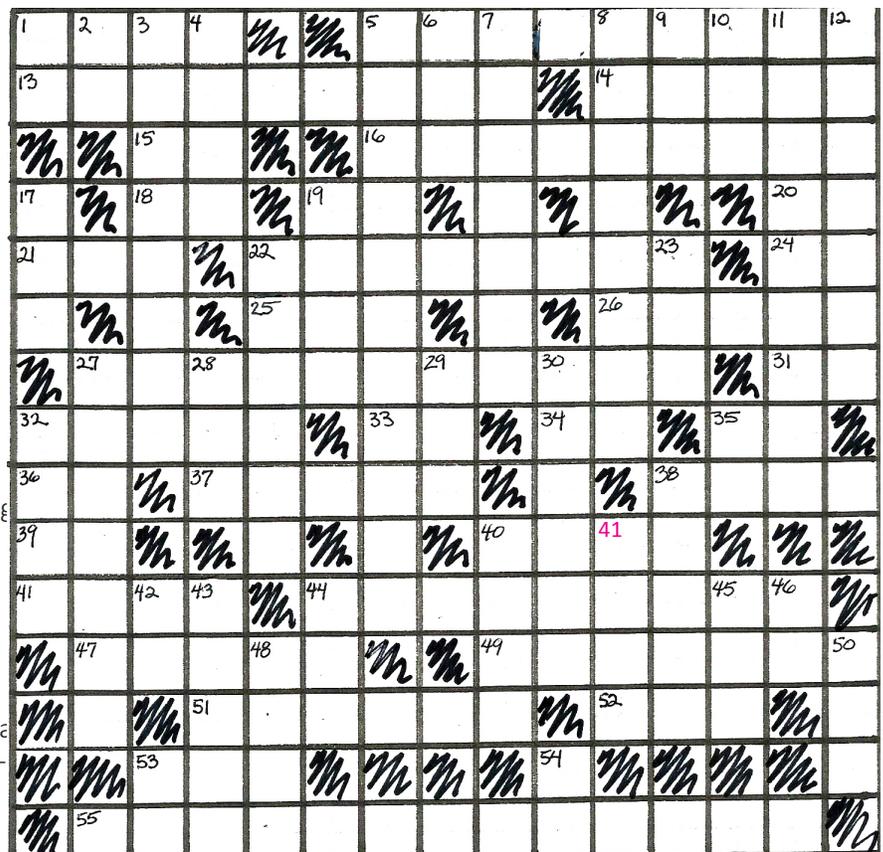
1. Mourning Dove (alpha code)
5. Predates backpack
13. Spinning bird
14. Cupid is an _____ r
15. Right side
16. What a remodeler does
18. Kitchen duty
19. Indiana
20. Connecticut
21. Fish eggs
22. Prayer
24. Gamers' lingo
25. Autism spectrum disorder
26. First sound of the witchdoctor's spell (song)
27. One of the buteos that exhibit polymorphism
31. Riley Co.
32. Diving sea duck
33. Revised statutes
34. Osmium
35. Iron
36. United Nations
37. Covid-19 symptom
38. Empidonax that migrates through KS. _____ r
39. Science
40. Brits say wild. We say water.
41. This and _____.
44. Urban or rural pigeon eater
47. Cattle, Great, Snowy
49. Bird's perspective
51. Migration is one kind of
52. Butterfly trap
53. One Asian cuisine
55. Same as clue 27 across

Down:

1. Military Police
2. Ohio
3. Junco
4. Olive-sided sparrow (alpha code)
5. This lobed toed KS migrant is blk and wht in fall and rust/gray/gold in spring
6. A primate
7. Deer hunter's reward
8. Birding all day requires lunch or you may become _____.
9. Gun rights group.
10. Pretend
11. Common name of plant also called guinea hen flower sometimes used in naturalized re-planted areas and rock gardens
12. Smallest falcon
17. Hairstyle (slang)

19. Illinois
22. This owl's song sounds like Who-cooks-for-you
23. Large accipiter of the North. ___ hawk
27. Gold, purple, house
28. Rule enforcer
29. Israel
30. Study of bird eggs
32. Starling (alpha code)
35. Florida
38. Birding makes you feel glad to be _____
40. Tolls
41. Small bird
42. Agriculture
43. Key word of slogan accompanied by snake image
44. Paid Time Off
45. Measure of one candle's light
46. Electrical Engineer
48. Red sign
50. Intelligent humor (hint: sounds like a flycatcher is calling)
53. Tellurium
54. Field guides help to ___ species.

Crossword Puzzle #5





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Audubon Society
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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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