

**Thank you** to Mike Clarke for rototilling at the Alsop Bird Sanctuary. The walkway construction crew left a large bed of our top soil integrated with left over lime stone, sand and pebbles. Because of Mike's help it is all mixed together now so that I can get a shovel in it. We are hopeful that native plants will feel at home in this rocky soil and thrive.

**Thank you** to Kevin Fay who did the heavy lifting, root removal, and trench digging for the brick boarder between the lawn and garden. I followed placing the brick in sand along the trench. It is nearly finished at this writing. Speaking of bricks, there are about fifty more bricks to be carved. If yours is not in the walkway, don't fret.

Come by the corner of 17th and Laramie and check out the corner signage. We used a brass plaque on granite that was made 20 plus years ago. You'll need to park and walk over as the sign is flat. The city requires a clear line of sight because of heavy traffic on that corner.



It is that time of year when we plan for the next year and we need help from you our members.

**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO BECOME INVOLVED, JOIN THE BOARD!**

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 45, No. 10 ~ June 2017

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### Upcoming Events

Jun 5 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.  
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

June 4 -2017 Konza Prairie Wildflower Walk  
6:30 p.m., \$10/person – free to  
Friends of Konza Prairie members

Jun 10-Saturday Morning Birding  
8 am Sojourner Truth Park



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

The discussion below was intended for last month, but notice of an application for a fracking-related injection well to be drilled in the Flint Hills near Council Grove was more important. The proposed site was reported to be above the subsurface Nemaha Ridge, whose recently active fault lines run northeast. The Kansas Corporation Commission is taking public comments through June 15th.

Now, as is sung in the 1945 musical *Carousel*, “June is busting out all over”. While back in the March 21<sup>st</sup> issue of the *Manhattan Mercury*, at the end of an encomium following the death of the celebrated Chuck Berry, it was said that in 1977 NASA included a recording of the musician’s signature song, titled “Johnny B. Goode,” in its Voyager 1 spacecraft that went past Jupiter and Saturn and on to explore Uranus and Neptune, and is currently headed toward the farther distant realm of the constellation Camelopardalis (shown sometimes as *Camelopardus*).

I expect it’s a constellation that rarely gets a mention, despite its being one of the only six configurations that, because of the Earth’s tilt, can be seen whenever the northern sky is clear and dark, circling once around the North Star every calendar day-and-night, never setting nor rising. So I’ll take this opportunity to enlarge upon it, even though actually it scarcely needs enlargement, occupying as it does the roomy part of the sky between the more noticeable and familiar Cassiopeia, the sky’s “Queen”, and the Big Dipper.

The Big Dipper, be it remembered, is technically an “asteris” providing the haunch and tail of the full constellation called Ursa Major, the Big Bear. The foreparts of that Bear extend with modest brilliance toward Cassiopeia, but leave about three-fourths of that distance to Camelopardalis, whose stars are overall even more modest. Those that seem most find-able to me are in the half of the Bear-Queen span that’s nearest Cassiopeia.

Those stars describe a lengthy lower case letter “h”, with four stars making a long, more or less straight line pointing past Cassiopeia toward the North Star, and a shorter line of three stars closer to Cassiopeia marking the “bent knee” of the “h”.

However, what the German astronomer Jacob Bartsch saw in 1624 were two long legs and a longer neck of a *Camelopardalis*. He took the name from the one arrived at by earlier Greeks, who were at one time faced with the problem of giving a name to an unfamiliar creature of flesh and blood. It came from Africa with long legs like a camel, but what to make of the remarkable markings of its hair – all those orangey-tan-and-pale solidly interconnecting rectangles? They weren’t exactly spots, but the spray of rosettes on leopards was the closest kind of pattern they’d seen on an animal. Thus, when the Arabian giraffe had a representative go skyward it did so with a Greek name assigned by a German, which remains as such in the list of 88 constellations maintained by the International Astronomical Union.

During these coming June evenings, he will be inconspicuously arcing from east to west over Polaris while other stars, and planets, compete with the Moon for attention. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> the Moon, Jupiter, and the star, Spica, have pas-de-trois in Spica’s home constellation, Virgo. Jupiter is obviously the brighter dot, yet Spica participates.

Then attention shifts into Ophiuchus, the large but dim constellation above Scorpius. There Saturn stands forth to the right of the Moon on the 9<sup>th</sup> before becoming, with its rings in full display, its closest and brightest for the year on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Further on, Venus, appearing as the Morning Star shifts from the left to the right of Moon in the dawns of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, while in between times the summer solstice occurs at 11p24 the night of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

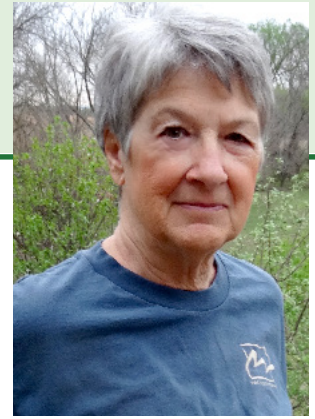
Meanwhile, springtime’s Leo the Lion with its bright star, Regulus, will be setting before midnight, but Boote’s gleaming Arcturus, moving ahead of the three leading lights of the summer triangle (Vega in Lyra, Deneb in Cygnus, Altair in Aquila), will all be sparkling high overhead through the nights.

The Moon will be full the 9<sup>th</sup> (8a10), new the 23<sup>rd</sup> (9p31).

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# The Welcome Immigrant

Dru Clarke



I drove up a narrow tree-shaded lane by which ran a shallow rivulet of clear water. At the end of the lane was a shanty of a house across from which was what looked like Don Quixote's horse, Rocinante, nibbling grass in an overgrown meadow. Behind the house was a grassy ridge with a pipe emerging from its summit, the near end of which spilled water into a holding tank that overflowed, feeding that stream beside the lane. I was there to meet and talk with Tess Turnbow, the keeper of the spring whose water spilled down the hillside, to get her story of what the spring meant to her. Her tale was one I would work into a paper I was writing for my Place Theory class at KSU taught by Dr. David Seamon.

Tess' story was one of salvation: she used to live in another place when she discovered she had cancer, and she was sure that the water supply to her house was the cause. She and her husband decided to move and found this remote site that just happened to be near a natural spring. They piped the water to the house and, miraculously, her cancer disappeared. (She died recently at the age of 90.) She insisted that when I presented my paper that I take a sample of the curative water to my classmates, and I did.

I visited her often even after the class was over, and once enlisted my son who was home for a visit to help me mow her lawn. One day, I looked more closely at the bright green leafy plants growing in the runoff from the spring and found, to my delight, that it was watercress. I remembered the plant from beds along the creek where I grew up in New Jersey, but hadn't seen it here except for in reaches of Kings Creek at Konza Prairie.

Not a native plant, watercress, a type of mustard, was brought here from Europe by settlers and later taken by soldiers who were to be stationed at western forts to plant in waterways along their routes and in the forts' gardens (there is a "garden cress" that can be planted without moving water). Tess' place was near Military Trail, the one used by soldiers who traveled from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley. Was it possible that they had indeed planted the first watercress flourishing now in this pristine water? It is well known that they replenished their water tanks at Blackjack Spring, in St. George, just a few miles west of Tess' spring. They may have camped or, at least, rested at her place.

Watercress has long been known for its curative powers. It is rich in Vitamin C, A, folic acid, calcium and iron. Hippocrates founded the first hospital on the

island of Kos in 400 B.C. and grew watercress in its natural springs, using it to treat disorders of the blood. It later became cultivated in Germany and England, and Captain James Cook is purported to have taken it on his voyages to prevent scurvy (in addition to other antiscorbutics, like limes). Some say it is an aphrodisiac, an enabler of boldness and wittiness, and remedy for insanity when mated with vinegar. The Victorians thought it would cure freckles, hiccups and toothache. During WWII, in England, watercress with a little vinegar, bread and butter substituted for the shortages of more traditional fare. Watercress sellers, often the very young girls and the very old crones, were at the poorest end of the food trade. As cress wilts rapidly, often yesterday's stalks were mixed with today's, the lot sold in penny bundles.

In the south creek of our land I found a cress that closely resembled watercress, but it had a darker, more deeply veined leaf. I tried it, but found it peppery to a fault, almost bitterly so. This must be 'fool's cress' which I later found out is poisonous. Fortunately, I only tasted a torn bit of leaf. (The peppery flavor of watercress is from benzyl mustard oil, not to be confused with sulfur mustard, a synthetic organic compound found in mustard gas.)

Watercress likes clear, clean (unpolluted), slow-moving, but not still water. Gathering it from the wild should be done with caution as a snail who enjoys eating watercress can transmit liver flukes to humans. It is conjectured that in the past, watercress gathered from typhoid-laden water may have aided the disease's spread. And, there is always the possibility of ingesting Giardia. So wash your cress in a mild, disinfecting solution before you eat it.

I don't know if the spring's water cured Tess' cancer, but she believed it, and survived many years after its remission. There is something to be said for the curative powers of pure water and the things that grow in it. Watercress – one of those things – is a welcome immigrant to this land, and we are better off for its presence.

© 2017 Dru Clarke, April 26

# 2017 April Birdathon

Jim Koelliker and Clyde Ferguson

## BIRDATHON 2017 REPORT AND REQUEST FOR YOUR SUPPORT

May 2017

Dear Friends,

I was again privileged to be a part of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society's 2017 Birdathon. I helped Clyde Ferguson to compile our report for you, our supporters or potential supporters. This was Clyde's 33th year and my 25th year to have a part! Each year on the last Saturday-Sunday of April a group of 4 to 8 dedicated birders scour the area to identify as many different species as we can in a 24-hour period. This year we found a total of 115 species. The report shows members of this year's team along with where we searched for species and the conditions we encountered. Our total of 115 was slightly above our previous 10-year average of 111 and we did so despite challenging weather.

The six the best sightings we found this year are shown on page 7. The top four were 1st ever ones and the bottom two were our best in the shorebird and waterfowl categories!

I have enjoyed working on this Birdathon and I hope you, too, find our report interesting and informative. Truly, finding so many wonderful species in our area is a great joy for me.

Yes, this report is my request for your financial support for our, NORTHERN FLINT HILLS Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our chapter uses the contributions to the BIRDATHON as its primary fund-raising activity. Last year our nearly 100 contributors gave our team very generous support. We received almost \$2,800 that was put to good use to support our environmental and natural heritage locally and through outreach efforts.

I have greatly appreciated the support you and others have contributed to our past efforts and for the work of our chapter can do with your support. Our supporters of record have usually backed our efforts at a rate of at least 10 cents per specie identified, but if you contribute \$15.00 or more our local chapter will send you our newsletter, The Prairie Falcon, for a year. Please use enclosed contribution sheet to fill out and send us along with your check. Please indicate your preference for receiving the newsletter in the mail or with an e-mail. I recommend the e-mail because it is in color! We are not able to take credit cards. Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Your cancelled check will serve as your receipt, unless your donation is more than \$250.

Sincerely,



Jim Koelliker

..... **Return This Portion With Your Contribution** .....

### BIRDATHON 2017

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\_\_\_ 0.15 (\$17.25); \_\_\_ 0.20 (\$23.00);

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Make your **check** payable to the NFHAS and mail it to me, along with this page:

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Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Jim Koelliker and Clyde Ferguson

June 2017 Prairie Falcon p. 5



# 2017 April Birdathon

Jim Koelliker and Clyde Ferguson

BIRDS OF THE NORTHERN FLINT HILLS																	Spring 2017 Birdathon Report																	From Clyde Ferguson Page 2/2																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																
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## 2017 April Birdathon

Jim Koelliker and Clyde Ferguson

### ***Best Birds of 2017***



**Pileated  
Woodpecker**



**Common Tern**



**Ruby-Throated  
Hummingbird**



**Hudsonian Godwit**



**Long-Billed  
Dowitchers**



**Red-breasted Merganser**



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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  
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