

Christmas Bird Count Circles in the Western Hemisphere



The data collected by observers over the past century allow researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years.

National Audubon Society Website:
<http://web4.audubon.org/bird/cbc/history.html>
<http://web4.audubon.org/bird/cbc/howebchelpsbirds.html>

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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 41, No. 4 ~December 2012

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Upcoming Events

Dec 3 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan

Dec 10 - Saturday Birding 8 a.m.
Meet Sojourner Truth Park

Dec 14 - Olsburg CBC (785-468-3587)
Dec 15 - Manhattan CBC (see pg.4)
Dec 16 - Wakefield CBC - Chuck Otte

Dec 15 - Deadline for Prairie Falcon articles

Jan 5 - Eagle Day - Tuttle Creek

Jan 7 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Throughout the past humans have divided up our continent in various ways, starting it seems with the imprecise metes and bounds

of the original tribes. Then came the merchants and politicians from overseas with their surveyors who struggled to draw exact lines regardless of the topography encountered. In 1981, Joel Garreau, then a journalist, later a Professor of Law, Culture, and Values at Arizona State, published The Nine Nations of North America, asserting that there were that many regions, each with a distinctive weave of power and influence; they each had a different prism through which they viewed the world.

“Kansas City” he envisioned as the capital of the Breadbasket Region, extending from central Texas north through the prairie country to Hudson Bay. “Mexamerica” lay to the south and west. “Ectopia” ran narrowly from “San Francisco” up the Pacific coast. “Dixie” was everything south and east of a line from East Texas through central Missouri to Norfolk, Virginia. Above it, “The Foundry’s” embrace spread from the industrial west shore of Lake Michigan to Lake Champlain, halting to allow a slender northeast coast area to retain the name of New England. “Quebec” extended into the Arctic. The vast remaining expanse was thickly T-shaped, extending from Nome to Quebec and southward to include everything between the prairies and “Ectopia” down through the “Canyonlands,” and was gracelessly labeled as the “Empty Quarter.”

More recently what we call 50 states is being partitioned into twenty “domains,” under the direction of the National Ecological Observatory Network. Accent ecological, for NEON’s purpose, according to an account in the *Economist* (Aug. 25th) is to monitor our terrestrial environment on a scale equal to that being applied to space. How do the parts of this environment interact? What causes have what effects? What’s going on around us? (And by extension, what should we be doing?)

Each domain will have a core set of sensors that can be expected to remain in place undisturbed for 30 years, while two other sets will be periodically relocated, placing sensors in the air, in the ground, and in streams, 15,000 in all, to obtain 500 kinds of data, including meteorological conditions, soil nutrition, etc., augmented by annual aircraft surveys.

The Konza Prairie Biological Station here is anticipated to be the core site for the Prairie Peninsula domain, encompassing most of the Flint Hills, northward into southern Minnesota and eastward into Indiana. Western Kansas is in the Central Plains domain with a core site planned for the Pawnee Grasslands of northern Colorado. John Briggs, director of the Konza Station, expects installation here in 2013-14. The full array is to be in place in 2016, with headquarters at Boulder, Colorado.

According to the *Economist*, Congress is funding the project with \$434M, “the price of a modest space probe,” to set it up, with an annual operating budget of \$80M. And for those who are companionable with really big numbers, the project is projected to provide 200 terabytes of data annually, or four times the amount the Hubble telescope delivered in its first two decades (a terabyte is 10 to the 12th power). The devil, it seems, will be in interpreting the details, and that could put those political boundaries under a new light.

So, what’s with all the lights and bytes up in space for this month? The Geminid meteor shower will have a Moonless sky from evening on the 13th, but will have to compete all night with Jupiter, which will be closest to Earth the 1st, its brightest on the 2nd, dancing with the Moon the 24-25th, hosted by Taurus the Bull. The Moon has some pre-dawn visits: with Virgo’s star Spica the 9th, with Saturn (to its left) and Venus (below) the 10th, more closely with Venus the 11th with Mercury faintly beneath them. Evenings it passes to the right of Leo’s Regulus the 5th, and right of Mars 14th. All the while, the brightest star, Sirius, will be traveling across the southern sky every night. Winter arrives at 5a12 the 21st. The Moon is new the 13th at 2a42, full the 28th at 4a21.

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The Walking Stick Dru Clarke



“What’s that?” asked the inquisitive child who skipped along beside me. “What’s what?” I looked down at his bouncing head. “That stick!” he said. “It’s a walking stick. I use it to help me walk better.” I explained that I had “bad” knees and it helped me balance and move more strongly. He seemed satisfied with that, but then I noticed him foraging around in the brush: soon he came up with a crooked, partially decayed twig with peeling bark that he promptly put to use helping him walk. Several other children noticed this, and before long a trail of tousled heads jounced along, their little arms brandishing an assortment of twigs, branches, and even broken mullein stems. They were learning the function of a hiking aid.

Off and on, I’ve used a walking stick to help me negotiate our up and down land. My first was a gift from a friend who retrieved it from a passing sale: its storied history began with the previous owner – a local character named Charlie Myers- discovering it on a sand bar in the Kansas River. He gave it to his mother, a friend of mine, and when she died, he gave it to me. It – we think a branch of catalpa – was crafted by the elements and was worn to a satin finish by constant use. Beautiful as it was, it was too short for me, causing me to bend at an awkward angle. So, it has a special corner by our entrance, reminding us of these dear folks.

Since then, I’ve scoured the woods looking for the perfect walking stick, but usually when I’ve found it, I leave it leaning against a wall or forgotten on the ground when I’ve been distracted by some phenomenon. Joe, an irrepressible Konza docent, is a reliable source of sturdy mulberry sticks, the wood a diluted streaky pink and maroon, like a roan horse’s coat, reminiscent, too, of the purple color of the fruit. One was split along the top and the foot so I reinforced these with a tie-dyed pattern of duct tape. More ornate walking stick handles are gold or silver, ivory, porcelain or glass with a foot or ferrule of metal (in icy climates, sometimes a cleat is attached to the ferrule). Mostly, “wild” sticks, felled from self-pruning trees, are branched and too long or have twiglets attached, so some modification is in order. My husband is artful in doing this for me, as I usually break them awkwardly at the wrong length and make them useless.

My favorites are the ones with gnarled heads or handholds that resemble fierce beasts, real or imagined. A collection of them is propped against the house. I’ve used them to help me climb steep slopes, probe ground burrows and tree holes, break ice, measure water depth and estimate tree heights, feel for firm footing, whack low lying branches and brush away abandoned spider webs, and fend off hungry horses.



This adult female gorilla in Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, northern Congo, uses a branch as a walking stick to gauge the water’s depth, All PLOS content is published under the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC-BY),

Walking sticks are not the same as canes. Originally, canes were made of rattan, and were flexible and light in weight. (When Charles Sumner, a member of the U.S. Congress, criticized two members for the Kansas –Nebraska Act, a relative of one of the men retaliated by beating him senseless in the Senate chamber with a walking cane, it wasn’t a “caning” in the original sense of the word. It was, well... a sticking.)

So, walking sticks can be weapons as well. It has occurred to me that I might encounter something more lethal than a hungry horse on my walks, so the stick is an additional comfort. Dr. Mortimer, in *Hound of the Baskervilles*, owned a “penang lawyer” made from the *Licuala*, a fan palm native to the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, a stick supposedly used to assassinate enemies. Now that’s a knobkerry if ever there was one! (I wonder if it could have subdued the huge hound.)

Other crafted uses of walking sticks can be as a seat (with an inserted tripod), storage of valuables, and tipping containers. With winter coming on, having a flask on a stick is a welcome notion. A hand strap might keep me from leaving one behind, but I find the added bracelet annoying and a distraction from the smooth, firm grip on a well-rounded knob.



Walking stick with built in flask. Published in 1923, now in Public domain

Walking sticks *should* be used in the hand opposite the weak or injured side so weight can be shifted to the stick rather than the weak side, but many of us need to use our dominant hands which can diminish the effectiveness of the stick as an aid.

Nevertheless, the stick is an item of conversation and can be a pleasant means of striking up dialogue among folks. The children on the walk soon discarded their makeshift sticks, animated by things new and different they encountered on the trail. Yet they learned of a useful tool that did not have to be purchased or plugged in, and they walked easier on the earth because of it.

©Dru Clarke November 2012

Get Ready for CBC

There are six quasi-independent groups covering our CBC circle (centered at Anderson Hall, see map); if you wish to join one of these groups, please call the group leader at the numbers listed at right. If you can't make up your mind, ask me (Dave Rintoul at 532-6663 or drintoul@ksu.edu) and I will try to get you hooked up with a group. The count commences at dawn and ends at dusk (unless you are part of a group counting owls). The count numbers are compiled and stories are swapped at a chili dinner

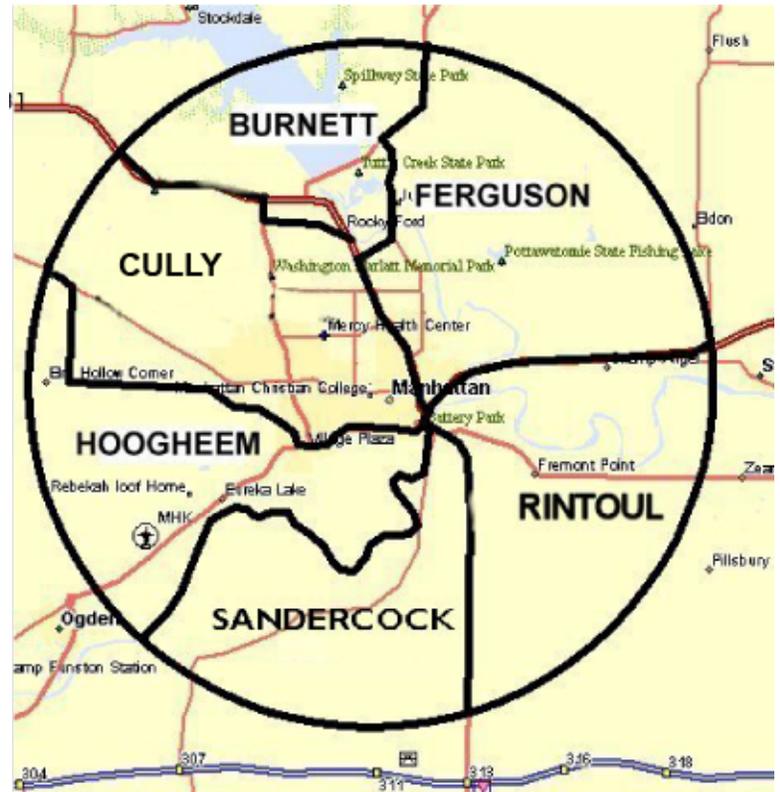
I would also like to ask our readers who live within the Manhattan CBC area to plan to count the birds at their feeders that day and pass the count results along to me. If you would like to do that, please contact me using email (drintoul@ksu.edu), phone (785-532-6663 days, 537-4143 evenings), or snail-mail (Dave Rintoul, 2818 Tatarax Drive, 66502-1971) and I will send you some brief instructions and a checklist. After the count day, you will need to send that information back to me as quickly as possible so that I can add it to the count results.

Manhattan CBC Compilation Dinner -- Chili Supper

Join the NFHAS and fellow birders for a potluck supper at 6 p.m., Dec. 15, at the Seniors Service Center, 412 Leavenworth, Manhattan. Feel free to bring a dish to share. Free-will donations to NFHAS are welcome. We encourage you to bring your own tableware to help us reduce the amount of trash.

Enjoy good food, good companionship, and find out how this year's count compares to previous years. If you have any questions on what to bring for the supper or want to help setup, please call Carla Bishop, 539-5129 or 532-1858 or email: cbishop@ksu.edu

54th Manhattan Christmas Bird Count Dec. 15, 2012

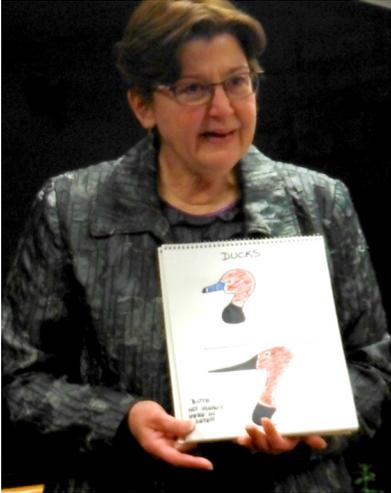


Dave Rintoul 532-0104 or 537-4143
Clyde Ferguson 539-4856
Jack Cully 532-6534
Hoogy Hoogheem 539-7080
Doris Burnett 537-2502
Brett Sandercock 532-0120

For other area CBC, check Chuck Otte's list on the Kansas Ornithological Society Website: <http://ksbirds.org/kos/2012CBC.htm>

Olsburg CBC is Dec. 14, meet at dawn at the Kaffe Hus on Main Street,
Gary Jeffrey - gjeffrey@twinvalley.net or cinraney@k-state.edu or 785.468.3587,
ALSO Dec. 16 - Wakefield - Chuck Otte - otte2@cox.net 785.238.8800

A refresher course by Patricia



President Patricia Yeager



Jim Koelliker

Patricia put us through our paces with her “homemade” flash cards! They were really helpful, concentrating on the diagnostic marks.

We also watched a few videos of several species. And Eve - the high-tech member of the group, looked up some species on her IPAD.

It was good to see Clyde attend, albeit still in a cam boot! But getting around.



Clyde Ferguson

How did you start? Please send me your story! cinraney@k-state.edu or 15850 Galilee Rd. Olsburg, KS 66520

Others who were quizzed by Patricia:
Marilena Ferguson
Ann Feyerharm
Kevin Fay
Cindy Jeffrey



Eve....

TOUR OF HOMES!

Well birding homes anyway.

We are planning our February event - the return of the Bird Feeder Tour! So we need volunteers who are willing to share their “backyard.” Please contact: Patricia Yeager - pyky@flinthills.com 776-9593 if you are interested in being one of the stops on the morning tour.

THE FEATHER ATLAS

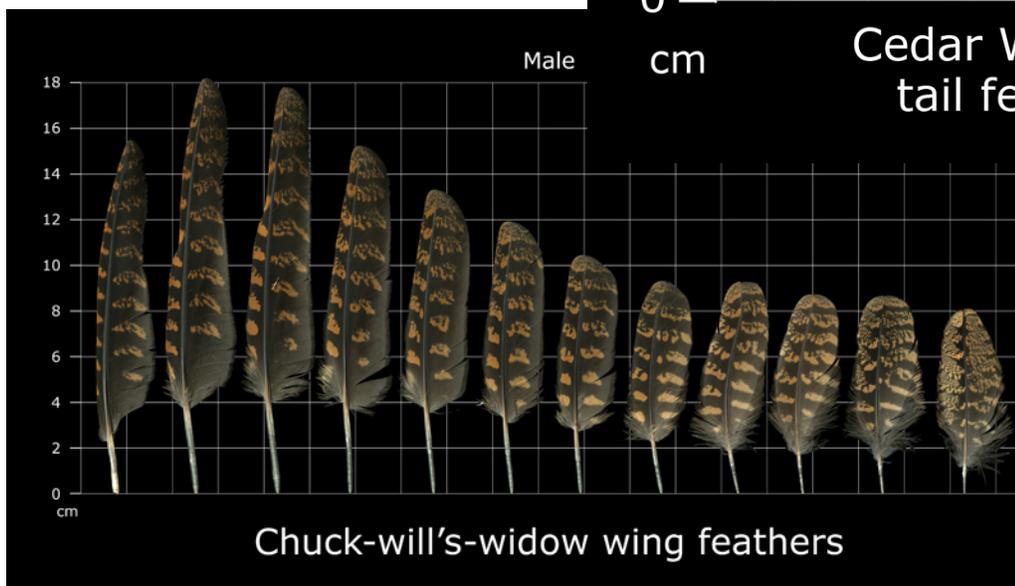
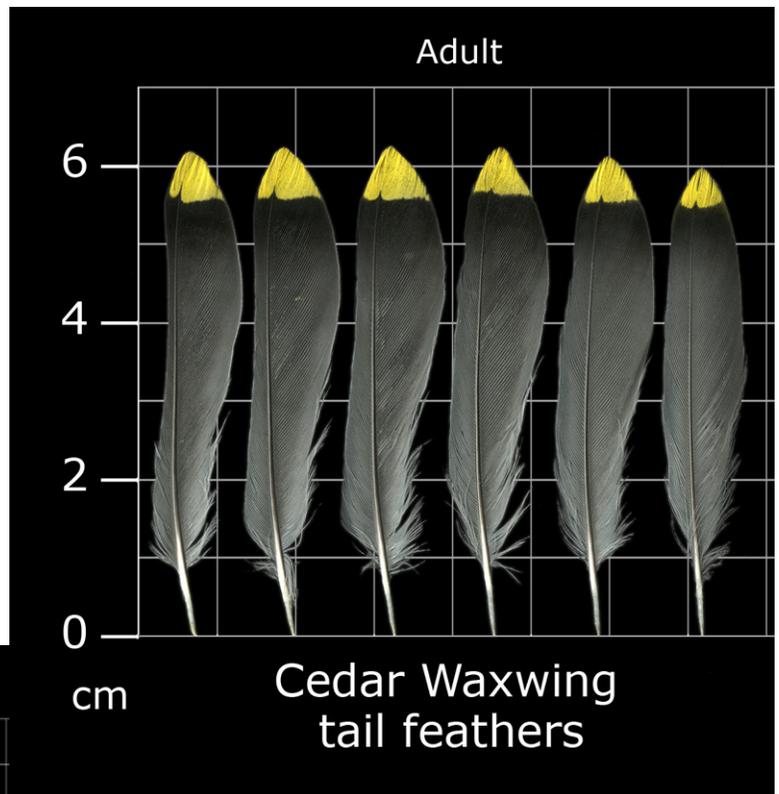
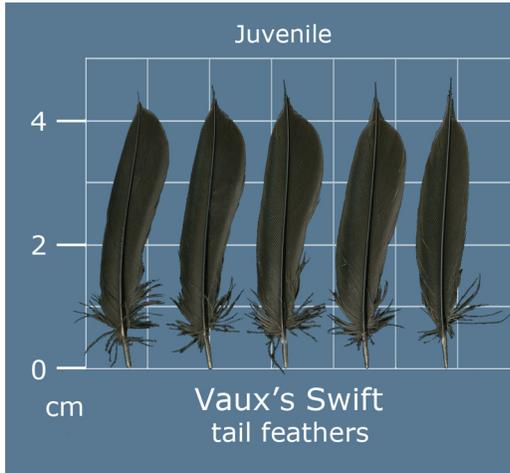
FLIGHT FEATHERS OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

<http://www.lab.fws.gov/fa/index.php>



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Find a feather you can't identify?
Check out this website. - the search is easy
and the images are all high resolution scans.





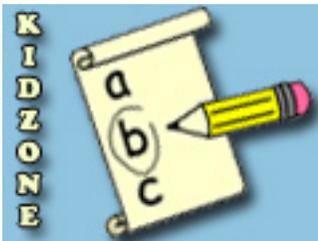
The **Cornell Lab**  of Ornithology
Exploring and Conserving Nature

Fill out the form on this website and get this calendar free.

The calendar was created for the 2012-13 season of Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey of birds at feeders across the U.S. and Canada, to help participants keep track of count days.

Through this special offer, we are making the calendar available to visitors of our All About Birds website.

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1189>
or google all about birds



ALSO - visit All About Birds Kidzone!

<http://www.kidzone.ws/animals/birds1.htm>

What makes a bird different from other animals?

Visit us online
nfhas.org

E-Newsletter: If you wish to opt out of the “paper” Prairie Falcon newsletter and get it on-line as a pdf - send your name and email address to Jacques Staats - staats@wildblue.net





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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, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are also handled by the National Audubon Society. 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 discussions.

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