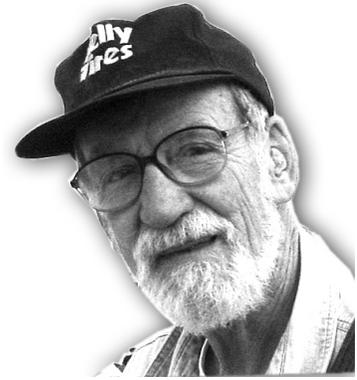


Birdathon 2014

Clyde Ferguson

It's time for our annual major fund-raising event, the NFHAS Birdathon. If you love the outdoors, spring weather and enjoy nature, join us in our quest to count as many bird species as possible in one 24-hour period. Funds raised will again be used to help with several local projects in Manhattan. A portion of the funds will go towards the Northeast Community Park (Northview), the butterfly garden at Sojourner Truth Park, and educational activities at Michel-Ross Preserve.

In the past, we (you, our sponsors) have donated Birdathon funds to the Washington Marlatt Park, the Rowe Sanctuary on the Platte River in Nebraska, and our El Salvador sister chapter. Many of our ongoing projects and activities, such as wildlife preservation, publication of the Prairie Falcon, and bringing in special speakers for our monthly program meeting are also partly funded with Birdathon funds. *(Go to page 3-4 for more info)*



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



prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 42, No. 8 ~April 2014

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Upcoming Events

Apr. 5 - Michel-Ross Preserve Cleanup
(see pg.7)

Apr. 7 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.
Home of Carla Bishop

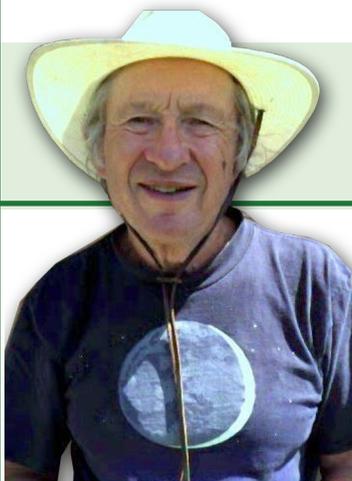
Apr. 12 - Saturday Morning Birding
Meet Sojourner Truth Park, 8 a.m.

Apr. 22 - Earth Day - Butterfly Garden
Spring Preparation (see pg.7)

Apr. 26-27 Annual Birdathon
See pgs. 3-4

May 5 - Board Meeting 6 p.m.

May 10 - Spring Migratory Bird Count
See pg.7



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Starting in the earliest grades I objected to the proposition that $1+1=2$. I had noticed that when one rivulet of rainwater on a windshield added to another rivulet the result was still one rivulet. The combined rivulet had twice as much water, but we had started with that much water to begin with, so to me nothing had been added, and I had seen $1+1$ resulting in 1.

Besides that, I was told that no number could begin with a zero. But this was in New York State and out-of-doors every bus or taxi I saw had a license plate beginning with O. People tried to excuse this by saying it was really the letter O, meaning "Omnibus," but that was meaningless where early grades didn't include Latin, so I was implanted with the feeling that mathematics could not be trusted.

Thus, I can sympathize with the botanical species whose fancy in springtime must turn to mathematical tables to learn how to arrange their various parts so that they will have the most seeds in their available space, or so each individual leaf in a cluster will get equal sunshine, etc. At least I've been hearing this for some time and this year I've decided to occasionally check, for example, to see whether the petals of coneflowers and daisies and the spirals of sunflower seedheads, and of pine cones and pineapples, when counted one way or another, will really dependably total one of the numbers in the Fibonacci lesson plan.

These go 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89...; once past the initial "1," each number being the sum of the two previous. And each neighboring pair, as they grow larger, having a relationship ever closely approaching 1:1.618. This has been referred to for the past 2500 years or so as the "Golden Ratio," because it, or an approximation of it, shows up in a lot of ways beyond the botanical.

But staying botanical for the moment, I did some checking with things at hand. Several banana cross-sections displayed three sections; apples, five. The base of a cauliflower had leaves

going five directions; the buttons of the crown were pentagonal, and arranged in five spirals. Then I came to two pineapples. With colored pins I traced the spirals of its scales and found eight going clockwise in one, counter-clockwise in the other. Alas, the reciprocal spirals on each, count and re-count as I could, always came out twelve, not the thirteen I've been led expect – so, two more pineapples. Both had eight spirals to the right, but only one had thirteen to the left. One had eleven and a half, with one spiral forking midway. But then, Nature seems to like variety, else I suspect all life on Earth would still consist of the primordial ooze.

There's another similar sequence, the Lucas numbers, that go 2,1,3,4,7,11,18, etc., that can also lead one into making any number of curious inspections, and mathematical information.

Meanwhile in the brightness sweepstakes above in April the Solar System takes win (Moon), place (Venus), and show (Jupiter), and even the top also-ran (Mars). Also a notable dimness as the shining-est asteroid, Vesta, becomes vaguely naked-eye visible halfway between Arcturus and Spica. (Remember, you arc from of the Big Dipper's handle to Arcturus and on down to Spica.)

Mars will be brighter than Sirius, seen in the middle between the Moon and Orion's sparkling right shoulder, Betelgeuse, on the 5th. On the 8th it's to be in opposition to (fully reflective of) the Sun and on the big night of the 14th-15th it makes its closest pass to us this go-round (some 50M miles away) ganging up with the full Moon on Spica, then the Moon does a fade-away, a complete eclipse, beginning about an hour after midnight.

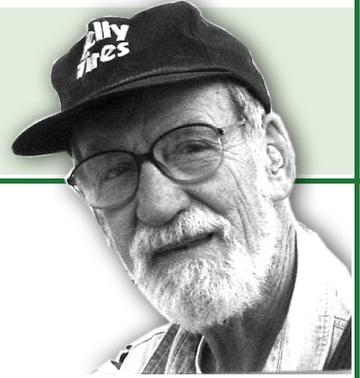
Not to be forgotten, Saturn rises very close to Mars late in the evening of the 16th. Venus accompanies the Moon into the dawn on the 25th and 26th. The Moon's notable companion on the 3rd is Aldebaran; Antares the 18th and 19th.

Then there's the Lyrid meteor shower the 21st and the Moon that was completely full at 2a42 that 15th is completely out the 29th, new at 1a14.

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Birdathon 2014

Clyde Ferguson



HOW DO YOU DO IT?

It's simple. Collect pledges from your friends, contacts, or enemies to pay so much for each bird species that you can count within the 24-hour period of April 27-28. The pledges do not have to be large; dimes, quarters and dollars add up quickly when many participate. Encourage your sponsors to pledge 20 or 25 cents per species spotted and you'll be surprised how much money you can raise with five or ten sponsors. If your sponsors want to pledge a set amount, that works great also.

We encourage you to make this a family outing. Go out and bird for 24 hours beginning sometime on April 26th. It's OK, for example, to bird from 10:00 a.m. on April 27th until 10:00 a.m. on April 28th. Report your findings to your sponsor and collect your pledges (often the difficult part). Send the money, names and addresses to Clyde Ferguson, 2140 College Hts. Rd., Manhattan, KS 66502. You just might surprise yourself with how many species you can identify. If you do not want to go out alone, or don't feel you can ID birds well enough, call me (Clyde) and I will put you with a group.

If you cannot join in the fun of going out yourself, you can still collect names and pledges and one of the members who will be going out can be your "designated counter." We call this a super-sponsor (not that any of our sponsors aren't super in our eyes). If you have a friend that is going out to count, ask him or her to be your eyes.

If you do not know anyone going out, contact Clyde Ferguson (539-4856), or any NFHAS board member (see the back page of your newsletter for contact information), or just send a note to: Birdathon NFHAS, PO Box 1932, Manhattan KS 66505, and we will find someone to count for you. We'll provide a list of the species counted and you can collect the pledges based on that list. On average, we see between 90 and 110 species on a good trip.

Don't forget you can be a sponsor yourself. Make your pledge to a friend or relative who is going to be a counter or super-sponsor. If none of our counters or super-sponsors contacts you, send a note or this form with your pledge and

we will add you to our list of sponsors. If you prefer, send a lump sum donation c/o of the Birdathon to the address above. We're easy, we accept donations in almost any form.

Those donating \$15 or more may receive a one year's subscription to the Prairie Falcon (if requested on the form). Our normal subscription price is \$15 and the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise additional funds. Your donations and the donations of your sponsors are a tax deductible contribution.

Please join us if you can and if you can't, please help us support the preservation of nature.

Clyde Ferguson, Birdathon Chair

APRIL 26-27
Contact Chair
CLYDE FERGUSON
785-539-4856

Tipping Point

Dru Clarke



“Tipping point: when one tiny, seemingly insignificant event puts into motion an entire set of events that become significant, momentous, widespread.”

Malcolm Gladwell in his book coined the term to mean the event that leads to trends (as in shoes or best sellers), but to me, it can be that one thing that leads to a demise.

Saying goodbye to an old friend is difficult under the best circumstances. Mary Kelly, a mare we'd foaled twenty years ago, afflicted with EPM (equine protozoal meningitis) for seventeen years of her life that robbed her of her equilibrium and her cognitive edge (even after months of intense treatment), succumbed to life's assaults v – having reached her tipping point – this Monday evening. The KSU equine vets, especially Dr. Chris Blevins (bless him), made her passing quick and kind, for which we were endlessly grateful. Thankfully, too, the temperature remains below freezing and hopefully will until we can prepare a grave for her in the north pasture where the ground is level enough to work.

Even with this hard winter ground, life continues in the soil itself and under the snow as well. Voles, shrews and mice are active in the warmer niches where snow meets the base of a tree or a large boulder and in the interface between the bottom of the snow and the ground where it stays right at the freezing point, 32 degrees F. A slight warming trend can melt the snow, transforming it into its water phase which runs down into the tunnels and nests where these animals traveled and slept. They don't deal with this well and may die from hypothermia. Or, if a warming is followed by a hard freeze, they might freeze in the tunnels and nests that have turned to ice.

Owls, we know, can hear extraordinarily well and can locate the tiny creatures as they weave their way beneath the snow. I found the impression of a pair of wings and a small muss in the snow in our east meadow, powdery evidence, like a lifted fingerprint, of its success. Tucker, our Chessie, pounced up and down, up and down, up and down, like a pronging antelope, in the snow between our corrals. He uncovered an Eastern mole and mouthed it until it gave up from fright. Moles eat primarily earthworms and I wondered if it had been feasting in its larder – they can stow over a thousand worms in one – when the dog struck. (Moles secrete saliva that contains a toxin that paralyzes earthworms, so they can save them up for a wintry day. They squeeze the worms between their

front paws peculiarly adapted with two thumbs – the extra one is a transformed wrist bone – to rid the worm's gut of soil. Who knew moles could be squeamish.)

Or, maybe, it was just out for a crawl, gaining some relief from cabin fever.

Even beneath the ground in winter, life goes on at a rapid pace. Microbes – fungi, bacteria and assorted other microscopic beasts – utilize nitrogen and break down plant matter that is part of the soil. It has been estimated that over 50% of the carbon dioxide that is delivered to the atmosphere occurs during the winter – that would be the product of respiration, if my biology serves me correctly. Should those microbes' activities be affected adversely, say, from environmental toxins – a new tipping point might be reached. Who or what would be harmed, who or what would be benefitted?

I found a whole dead white-footed mouse on top of the snow. Its fur appeared to be matted and its tiny mouth was open, legs splayed, lying on its back. Close to the house, but not presented as a gift at the door – just there, tipped into oblivion by some event.

One of our old Red Star hens died the day after Mary Kelly did. She often spent time in the run with Mary Kelly and probably pecked at the grains of mash the mare dribbled from her mouth. She hadn't flown up to the night roost for several days, so I picked her up, wrapped her in my faux fur scarf, and brought her into the house and put her in the bathtub with a soft fleece blanket. By mid-morning she was gone. I asked my husband if we could bury her with Mary Kelly. We don't know if they shared any sort of bond, but it would make me feel better about losing them so close together in time.

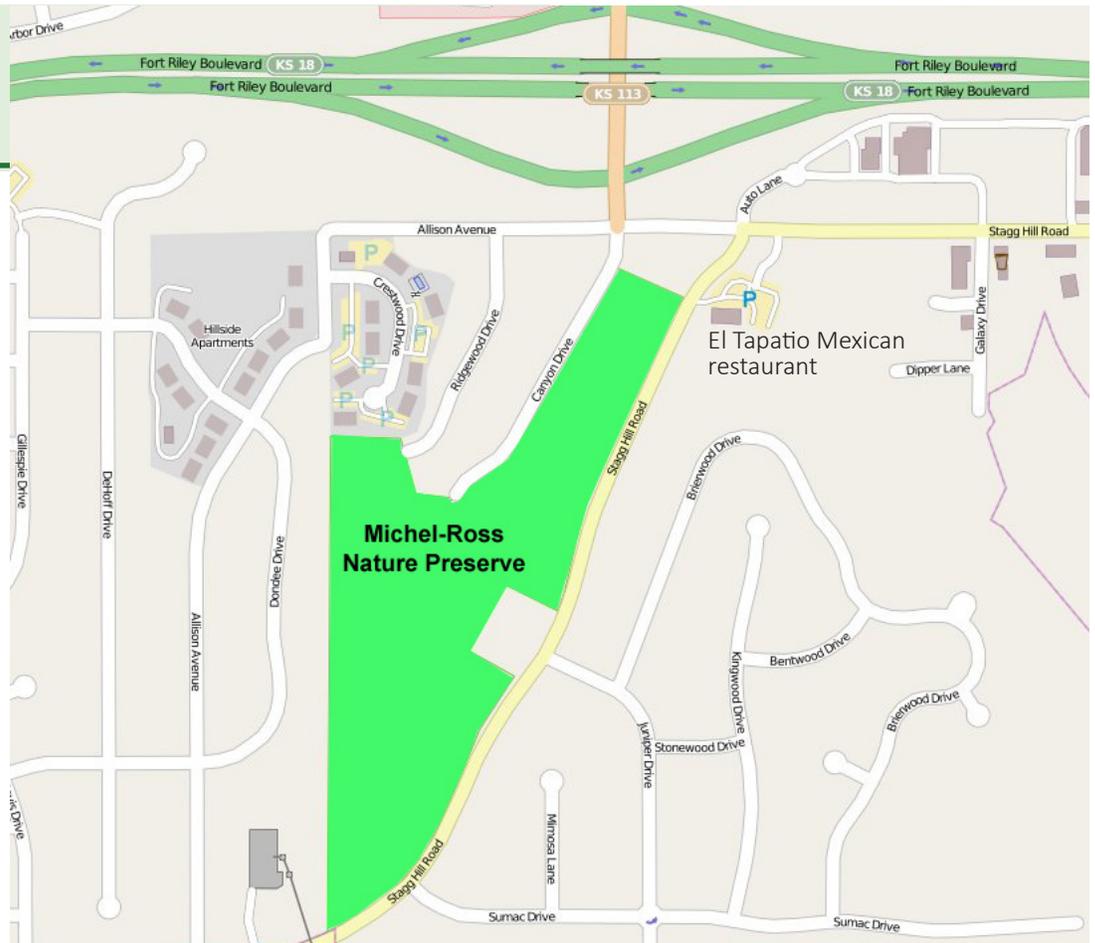
This winter has been long and hard on many. I'll be looking for the tipping point when winter ends and spring is finally here.

Note: EPM is transmitted through possum manure. Many horses harbor the organism and show no signs of illness. Mary Kelly, was not one of the fortunate ones, but she lived a life longer than anyone could have hoped for.

© 2014 Dru Clarke
March 5, 2014

Michel-Ross Nature Preserve

West Manhattan Stagg Hill Rd.



<http://www.openstreetmap.org/way/136812192#map=15/39.1631/-96.6051>

Handy chart! Print it out in color

ADULT GULLS
Matrix of Winter Gulls in Utah
UTAHBIRDERS.COM

	MEGU	RBGU	CAGU	LBBG	ICGU	THGU	HERG	WEGU	GLWG	GLGU
	MEW	RING-BILED	CALIFORNIA	LESSER BLACK-BACKED	ICELAND	THAYER'S	HERRING	WESTERN	GLAUCOUS-WINGED	GLAUCOUS
SIZE average length	 17"	 18"	 20"	 21"	 22"	 23"	 25"	 25"	 26"	 27"
PRIMARY COLOR wing tips	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black
MANTLE COLOR the back	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Dark Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray	Dark Gray	Light Gray	Light Gray
LEG COLOR average color	Yellow-Green	Yellow-Green	Yellow-Green	Yellow-Green	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink	Pink
IRIS COLOR eye color	Dark Brown	Yellow	Dark Brown	Yellow	Dark Brown	Dark Brown	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Brown	Yellow
BILL SIZE relative bulkiness										

Take Note



May 10, 2014

International Migratory Bird Count

The spring International Migratory Bird Day count will be held on Saturday, May 10. There are several parts of Riley County that were not covered last year, so if anyone wants an area or wants to join an existing group, please e-mail me at jf3campbell@att.net.

The expectation is that you identify and count all birds heard or seen in your assigned area, and provide a list to me with some trip information. I will then compile the information for the county, and submit the list to eBird.org. This is a great excuse to spend the day birding, and hopefully it will feel like spring by then, so please consider joining us.

Jim Campbell

SPRING CLEANING

Michel-Ross Preserve: Sat. afternoon 2:30 to 4:00, April 5th - Rain date Sunday April 6th, same time 2:30 to 4:00. See map - meet in parking lot of El Tapatio Mexican restaurant (BTW, they have a good chicken soup). Trash Bags and water will be provided. Help for any amount of time will be appreciated. If you cannot make it on these days, please enjoy the preserve another day this month on your own and take a trash bag and work gloves with you. Help NFHAS keep our preserve clean and green.

Butterfly Garden: Time to get the butterfly garden at Sojourner-Truth weeded, trimmed up and ready to grow a beautiful oasis for the pollinators. Please bring gloves and your favorite garden tools to the garden on **Earth Day, Tuesday April 22**. Bring a sack supper and meet at the shelter at 5:30. Drinks will be provided. We will tend the garden at about 6:30 p.m.-7:30p.m. When we all pitch in it is fun and fast and has fantastic results.

Photo by Dave Rintoul



They'll come again to the apple tree,--
Robin and all the rest,--
When the orchard branches are fair to see
In the snow of blossoms dressed,
And the prettiest thing in the world will be
The building of the nest.

- Mrs. M.E. Sangster, Bird World, 1898



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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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