

JULY 19th, 2022 - FIELD TRIP

Join us for a field trip to the KU Natural History Museum. **We will meet on the south side of the Manhattan Mall (south of theater) parking lot and leave at 8:30 , carpooling to Lawrence.** Our **“behind the scenes” tour is scheduled for 10:30 -11:30 with Megan Sims** from the Vertebrate Paleontology Division. Then we can also look around other exhibits. We will lunch somewhere in Lawrence, and return by approximately 4:00 pm. PLEASE let me know if you are coming (cinraney@ksu.edu or 785-565-3326).



KU Natural History Museum



AUGUST - no newsletter, no program

SEPTEMBER - Kick off the year with Ice Cream at CALL HALL, and a Tour of K-State’s bird collection with K-State ornithologist, Dr. Alice Boyle. **SAVE THE DATE: Sept. 21st**, Ice cream at 5:30, tour 6:30 pm at Acker Hall, KSU. (more info in Sept. newsletter and online nfhas.org).

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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Upcoming Events

- July 5 -Board Meeting, 5:30 pm Manhattan Public Library
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE NFHAS BOARD
- July 9 - Saturday morning Birding
8 am, DEPART from Sojourner Truth Park
- July 19 - Field trip to KU Natural History Museum
Behind the Scenes tour see above
- AUG - no meeting or program
- Sept Board Meeting, 5:30 pm Manhattan Public Library
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE NFHAS BOARD



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Wikipedia informs me that 120 years ago publishers kept rejecting a song by George Evans and Ren Shields. The publishers said public interest would not last past the summer season. But an actress friend, Blanche Ring, got the song into a Broadway musical titled "The Defender" that ran through July and August of 1902. It begins,

There's a time in each year
That we always hold dear,
Good old summer time;
With the birds in the trees-es,
And sweet-scented breezes,
Good old summer time...

Then it gets rolling with,

...In the good old summer time,
In the good old summer time,
Strolling thro' the shady lanes
With your baby mine...

Audiences began singing along and the song popularly outlasted the play by decades. It's been sung in major films, a Mickey Mouse cartoon, in a 1975 ad for Off insect repellent, by Pearl Bailey in a 1978 Muppet performance, and along the way someone was bound to spoof it. That turned out to be Laurel and Hardy in 1930, singing it amid a blizzard in a piece titled "Below Zero". The tune provided for a Baylor University football song. I haven't made a further study, but expect it's heard only now and then these days as popular music has forsaken songs with melody. As Alfred Lord Tennyson put it: "After many a summer dies the swan."

A sampling of other reflections on summer could include a statement by the 19th century American/British author, Henry James, that to him "summer afternoon" were the two most beautiful words in the English language. Differently impressed, the poet, John Keats, made mention of "the murmurous haunt of flies on a summer's eve", and closer to our times, an American poet, Richard Wilbur, reported that "up in his room by artificial light / my father paints the summer". Closer to James' celebratory tone, and about 700 years earlier, Walther von der Vogelweide, a lyric singer of the Middle Ages, rhymed, "Now the summer came to pass / and

flowers through the grass / joyously sprang / while all the tribes of birds sang."

In 1546 another English author, John Heywood, wrote in a book of his own proverbs that "one swallow maketh not a summer." Bartlett's Familiar Quotations credits the historian, Plutarch, in the first century c.e. with crediting Antiphanes, an Athenian comic of some 400 years earlier, with coming up with the story of a time when it was so cold that spoken words congealed in mid-air and thawed out with great cacophony during the following summer. In 1954 c.e. the then well-known French writer, Albert Camus, perhaps recalling surviving the German WWII occupation of France, declared encouragingly that "in the depth of winter I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer", Back in the 19th century and less soberly, a wholly American Emily Dickinson was delighted that "inebriate of air am I—and debauchee of dew—reeling through endless summer days..." Bartlett offers a bundle more references to summer. I'll leave off with something Robert Louis Stevenson I suspect had more fun writing than creating "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". From a time before electric lighting, it goes: "In winter I get up at night / and dress by yellow candlelight. / In summer, quite the other way, I have to go to bed by day."

In July Mercury drops out of this summer's planetary show after the 4th, Venus remains the Morning Star, while the rest shift to late and middle of night appearances. *The Old Farmer's Almanac* predicts that Saturn will start rising in the east around 11p00, with Jupiter, in Pisces, following about an hour later; Mars, growing brighter, will come up in Aries around 2a00. They'll see the dawn come while on high. The Moon's schedule has him visiting Leo's Regulus the 2nd-3rd, Virgo's Spica at first dark the 6th-7th, then the hard-to-see Zubenelgenubi (once a claw of Scorpius but now part of Libra) the 8th. Next, Scorpius' Antares the 10th, Saturn the 14-15th, Jupiter the 18th-19th, Mars the 21st-22nd, Taurus' Aldebaran the 23rd-24th, and Venus the 26th-27th.

In August in the dawnlight from the 1st to 3rd a bright Mars will be halfway between a low bright Venus and a faraway high bright Jupiter. Saturn rises an hour earlier, becoming its brightest for the year on the 14th, while the Moon spends time with Jupiter. The Moon will be close to Mars the 19th, and as a crescent hang around Venus the 25th-26th. Besides that, the Moon will be back near Spica the 3rd, Antares the 6th-7th, and will rise with Saturn the 11th, before washing out the Perseid meteor shower the 12th. Then it makes dawn appearances, with Aldebaran the 20th, and Venus the 25th, before another visit with Spica at nightfall the 30th. It will be full July 13th (1p38) and August 11th (8p36), new July 28 (12p55) and August 23 (3a17)

On the Verge

Dru Clarke



Driving home with groceries along our remote gravel road, a burst of color caught my eye. After unloading, we took the dogs and walked the road and found the source: a platter-size growth of rosy verbena, opportunistically gripping the verge, where gravel, soil and detritus had accumulated. Its blooms were startling in both their profusion and siting. Marveling at its tenacity and brilliance, we reminisced over other surprising finds we had encountered through the years on the verge of our country, mostly untended roads.

The blue flax that defiantly sent up slender stems with sky blue tender flowers grew along our neighbor's stretch of our shared road. An attempt to transplant it to an analogous (we thought) site along our graveled lane failed miserably, and we have scouted since then for more of these and other prairie forbs in order to mark their locations in the hope of exerting some form of protection for them.

One plant we have tended for about a decade is Solomon's Seal, a delicate woodland species with bell-like pairs of ivory flowers suspended beneath slender, grass-like leaves. Fortunately, it grows on a several foot high bank near a forbidding tree stump where the county mower can't reach or shear off its stems. We visit it weekly after it sends up its shoots and tend it like a memorial until after it blooms.

Another forb, leafed out but not blooming yet, growing near the road where county spraying would reach (each year I ask them to NOT spray along our property), caught my eye last year. On it crawled a tiny, needle-thin yellow and black striped caterpillar, a monarch larva! The plant did not resemble a milkweed (it was unlike any *Asclepias* I was familiar with), so is it possible that monarchs are opportunistic when it comes to laying eggs on other plants? If that is true, spraying and mowing would only limit their larval food sources and nectaring possibilities for the adults. Insect species in general in Kansas and other states have diminished precipitously in recent years and they are key pollinators for our crops and many native plants. (For example, it has been estimated that wild species of bees are 80 times more important than exotic honey bees for pollination.)

Ash trees spring up in the drainage off our road and reach three feet high by early June. Their satiny green compound leaves gently sway in the slightest breeze. This tree, we have mourned the loss of through the devastating effects of the emerald ash borer, so any new saplings are a welcome sight. Thought to have arrived from Asia via packing materials on ships entering the Great Lakes, the insect has wreaked havoc on ash trees throughout many

states. Infected trees have to be destroyed (even our university campus trees). Should the county continue to mow our verge, these promising young trees will be gone.

A day ago, two doe and their fawns at dawn browsed in our east meadow, adjacent to the mostly untended road. I have scared up a napping fawn in the tall prairie cord grass that grows in the wet places in the verge along this road. Quail often have exploded from the cover of the verge on similar jaunts, and turkey hens find the verge optimum places to establish nests for their globular eggs.

Spraying and mowing destroy these mostly untended places. There is hardly any traffic — maybe a car, an ATV, and a truck or two a day — that pass by, so danger to motorists is minimal or non-existent. It is the time and place to request that these practices cease, or, at least, be severely limited in scope. Our wild companions are on the verge.



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Welcome our new Treasurer

Introducing our new treasurer: Jane Withee Hebert

Jane and her husband, Damien Hebert, live on an old farmstead in west-central Morris county. They care for livestock and pets and enjoy all the various wildlife and birds.

Jane grew up in Manhattan and has lived in the area since 1956. She started birding in the mid 70s. Besides birdwatching her interests include needlepoint, quiltmaking, reading and xeriscape gardening.

We are thrilled to have her join the board as our new treasurer.



Lilac-breasted Roller in the rain
Tanzania, photo by Dave Rintoul

NOTICE

Due to increases in printing and postage, we are forced to raise our subscription fee for the Prairie Falcon newsletter. It will now be \$20/yr. See back cover.

It has been \$15/yr. for over 20 years.

There has been severe weather this past month, some causing damage and loss - obviously to the some of the trees and buildings around us, and hopefully no one was injured. Pets are surely effected, some get "freaked out!" Many hide. All animals have ways to cope.

What about small birds?



Perching birds have a special mechanism in their foot anatomy that causes their feet to hold tight to their perches even in high winds.

All About Birds

Different birds use different ways to wait out a storm. Birds that normally roost in a cavity—such as chickadees, small owls, woodpeckers—hide out in their cavity. They may also use roost boxes. Sometimes more than a dozen birds will pile into a single box to conserve heat.

Birds that roost on branches, such as jays, sparrows, cardinals, crows, etc, tend to perch on a thick branch very close to the trunk on the side most protected from wind and rain. When these songbirds (also called "perching birds") are relaxed, their feet grasp automatically, so they can sleep while tightly clasping the branch.

Ducks, herons, and other birds that sleep on or near the water tend to find as sheltered a spot as possible—many swimmers stay out in the open water, and waders tend to gather near some debris or vegetation that protects them from at least some of the rain and wind.



<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-do-tornadoes-affect-birds>

Sensing the storm

Birds are lucky in that they can detect minute pressure shifts before unusual weather arrives. However, Kenn Kaufman, Audubon field editor and author, believes that our feathered friends are worse at predicting tornadoes than we are because the twisters move so fast and are so localized. "Humans have more advanced warning than birds do because we have the nightly news," he says. There is one thing that birds can do more effectively than us, though, he says—escape. The assumption is that "a lot of birds get out of the way," he says; "they have enough sense" to leave.

In the tornado's path

Like hurricanes—which can actually spawn twisters—tornadoes are hugely destructive and can flatten things in their paths even more severely. "The intense concentration of habitat destruction that occurs undoubtedly makes a difference in bird habitat," Kaufman says. Trees where birds nest are ripped from the ground, and debris from shredded structures and vegetation obscures underground burrows. Any birds caught up in the storm are presumably killed—although there is no real way of measuring wildlife deaths after a storm. Bodies are hard to find amid the debris, and over long distances in the rural areas where tornadoes often strike. Furthermore, to gain a real grasp of the mortality, experts would require pre-tornado wildlife census against which to compare the numbers of surviving individuals after the storm—a rarity.



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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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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 97194, Washington, D.C. 20090. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society and include the code C4ZJ040Z.*

Questions about membership Call 1-800-274-4201 or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org. Website is www.audubon.org.

NFHAS 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 \$20/yr.** Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, and mail to: **Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS, 66505-1932**

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society website:

nfhas.org

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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