

# September 21st Program



**5:30 pm**

**Kick off the year with Ice Cream Social at CALL Hall**

**Parking available in front and across the street at Dole Hall B11, after 5:00**

**See Map on page 6**

**6:30 pm**

**Tour of K-State's bird collection at Ackert Hall  
with K-State ornithologist, Dr. Alice Boyle.**

**From Call Hall (walk or drive)**

**Parking south of Ackert Lot A28, after 5:00 pm**



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

- Sept 6 Board Meeting, 5:30 pm Manhattan Public Library  
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE NFHAS BOARD
- Sept 10 - Sat. morning birding  
8:00 Depart from Sojourner Truth Park
- Sept 21 - 5:30 Call Hall for ice cream Social  
6:30 Ackert- Alice Boyle, KSU Bird collection



## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

With September on the doorstep October is next in line, and with it another baseball World Series also approaches. So I have to begin now with a two-part consideration of an article that appeared in this year's spring/summer edition of *Columbian*, published by Columbia U.'s Alumni Center. Its theme is the modern research seeking to better understand why athletes are so good at what they do—with the hope of not only improving our performances at work and play, but also including

our ability to make split-second decisions, and to find better treatments for mobility impairments due to accidents and diseases, such as Parkinson's.

The article's narrower focus is on responses to high stress situations, in this case the challenge taken on by baseball batters facing hard balls being flung at them at more or less 90 mph. At 90, the ball reaches the area of home plate in .4 of a second. The article says the human brain needs .2 of a second to message the muscles. Thus the batter has .2 of a second to decide whether or not to swing, and if so, where to. The thick part of the bat is about 2.5 inches in diameter; the ball to be met is 2.9 inches diameter. The article declares that two hundred muscles and six hundred joints would have to be coordinated in an attempt for one to meet the other.

The example given is that of a 29-year-old Columbia graduate who became, by his own account, physically scared-shaking as he walked forward to pinch-hit in the bottom half of the 10th inning in the seventh game of the 1991 World Series. With the score still 0-0, the host Minnesota Twins had loaded the bases with just one out. The Atlanta Braves fielders were all drawn in, hoping to grab any batted ball, at least in time to throw home to keep the winning run from scoring. Gene Larkin had a chance to hit one over their heads and allow the Series winning run to score; he had a chance to fail by hitting into an inning-squelching double play. He was in a fantasy situation, for real. And there were likely three kinds of possible pitches that would test him: a fast ball, a curve, or a slider.

He'd gone 1 for 6 in his prior attempts that Series. He'd been limbering up since the 5th inning. Then, also, by his own account, when he stepped into the familiar batter's box, amid the roar of the 55,000 excited people around him, and within TV view of millions, suddenly a great calm encased him. He felt certain he would not strike out. He expected and prepared for a fast ball—fortunately got it, knocked it over the heads of the fielders, with exhilaration following.

So, what about it? Many people have experienced, or achieved?, sudden calm effective action against dire stress. What's involved? The article offers some detailed insight, and a collation of opinions, for which there is no room here. Next time.

In September a main attraction will be Jupiter, rising about as bright as he can get in mid-evenings, and moving west for the rest of the nights. He'll be gleaming to the left and then above the Moon on the 10th and 11th. And for astronomers he's not same traveling spark observed, lo, these many centuries—not the hard-cored dense ball of metal and rock with a mass many times that of Earth. Instead, *StarDate* informs, the spaceship Juno (named for Jupiter's mythological wife) has been taking a closer account of the namesake husband, and reports that Jupiter's inner core is actually "spread out and mixed with lighter materials, like a slushball". The result, it's conjectured, of being hit eons ago by another planet perhaps 10 times the mass of Earth, which shattered his innards, mixing them with surrounding materials. Though at this distance, the naked eye does not quibble.

It—the naked eye—enjoys Saturn as well, who will be there, too, bright in his own way, though not a match for the Jovian spark. Saturn will be above and to the right of the Moon on the 7th and 8th. Mars, joining the scene closer to midnight, will be noted to the left of the Moon the 16th, with Taurus' red eye, Aldebaran, to the Moon's right, and on the 17th, El Nath, the tip of one of the Bull's long horns, will be to the Moon's left. Venus, bright though she is, will be a brief Morning Star, showing up in the east barely before the Sun takes over.

The Moon will also have conversations with Scorpius' reddish Antares the nights of the 2nd, 3rd, and 30th. In between he'll briefly pass over the lower part of Sagittarius' Teapot-like arrangement of stars the 5th, and by dawnlight visit the Gemini Twins the 20th, then Leo the Lion's Regulus the 23rd. Full the 10th (at 4a56), new the 25 (at 4p55). Autumn arrives officially the 22nd at 8p04 CDT.

## The Clearing

Dru Clarke



Berry picking leads me to the edges of woods that shoulder into the prairie grasses of our pastures. Five distinct woods, two flanking shallow creeks, but all bumping up against grazing acres, promise a sprinkling of 'black cap' (black raspberry) canes that in some years yield a wild bounty of tart-sweet fruits. Unlike blackberries and dewberries that have a hard core, these peel easily from the calyx, the cup of green sepals that hold the flower, when ripe. One must not be too eager to collect them as they exist usually in a cluster, and too much zeal in picking can lead to those beyond your fingertips to pop loose and fall into the detritus below, making it almost impossible to find them again. So, care and appreciation for each berry is required for a successful pick.

This year an area I hadn't explored before, as it is not on the long margin where woods meet prairie, I discovered quite by accident. It is hidden behind a notch in the pasture, beyond a natural aisle weaving through the trees that leads from the notch. Sunlight creates a dappling of mellow paleness on the understory and reveals the white undersides of the berry bushes that form a loose-linked ring around the edge of the clearing. The air is cool here, the breezes gentle, and the knocking call of the yellow-billed cuckoo – other than the dog's rummaging and snuffling through the brushy growth – is the only sound. Circular spots where the grass is pressed flat betray a nighttime bed from some larger animal, perhaps a deer or a reclusive cow readying to calve. The berries on the bushes are plump and glistening, and while not numerous, will make a tasty muffin.

Each of us has a place of solitude: this clearing could be one of those places. A special room at home, an arbor, tree house, chapel, or park bench might be yours. When I was a kid during the summertime we spent the weeks at Fanny Farm, thirteen acres of woody hillside footed by a rushing creek we had to ford through the shallows. The shaded lane stretched up to a two century old stone cottage, our summer home, once owned by a crusty artist named Ogden Kugler, a friend of my dad's. A north-facing slope of mature hemlock trees was a favored haunt as there was sparse undergrowth and it was like walking on a plush carpet but one made of moss and dwindling filigreed hemlock leaves. And here, there was no place for copperheads to hide. A fat, fairly flat-topped stump – to me, it seemed like a huge druid table – was my pulpit on



summer Sunday mornings. (I imagine that ruffed grouse cocks used it for their drumming.) I carried a worn, black leatherette-covered King James version bible I had been awarded for good attendance in my Methodist church Sunday school. Its tissue paper-thin pages were ivory colored, and the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm page was dogeared. Testament to my reverence for water, pastures, and valleys. (It's the only one I ever could remember.) I took my best friend there once, but I think she just thought I was weird. In my naive youth, I believed that prayer, especially in a serene, natural setting, was a good thing, and that it should be a regular behavior to yield the proper and right outcomes. Kansas, of course, has no hemlock groves, so we seek other places to do what we do when we are allowed some solitude. Prayer through the years has evolved into and through meditation to a simple stillness.

Today I think a lot more about passing than I used to, perhaps a function more of slowing down and not being able to do many things I used to be able to, things I took for granted. So, instead of hoping for a heaven(or hell) to end up in, I hope that my elements, the bits and pieces that came together to create my essence, will go where they will, helping to create some new form of life or lives, be it in mycelium fibers that break apart a stump or a feather in the returning yellow-billed cuckoo or one of its offspring, that I listen for every May. Or maybe a cluster of berries on a bush at the edge of a hidden clearing.

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# KU Natural History Museum, Behind the Scenes tour

Merry Bower



DRY collection  
Ornithologist Mark Robbins,  
Ornithology Collection  
Manager



Six people made the trip to KU’s Natural History Museum (Dyche Hall) on July 19, 2022, for a behind-the-scenes glimpse of some of the many specimens housed there. (The Museum is part of the KU Biodiversity Institute’s collection of 10-million-plus specimens housed in Dyche Hall and six other buildings.) We were shown birds from the museum’s “dry”-preserved collections—including extinct species such as the ivory-billed woodpecker, Imperial woodpecker (world’s largest and possibly extinct), carolina parakeet, and more. We were also shown specimens from the museum’s “wet” collections (ethanol-preserved fish, reptiles, and amphibians). Because of the research value of specimens, data about each are cataloged in a database (including identity, location and date collected, and DNA samples in some cases) and specimens may be loaned out to qualified researchers.

Attendees also had time to see some of the public exhibits, including the panorama of North American wildlife from the 1893 World’s Fair; the taxidermied horse Comanche, the only survivor on the U.S. Cavalry side in the Battle of Little Bighorn; and the Silvisaurus dinosaur mounted over the museum’s entrance.



If you haven’t visited KU’s Natural History Museum, you might want to check it out. In a February 2022 survey of the 30 best natural history museums in the U.S., KU ranked 4th (just behind Harvard, Drexel, and Yale):

[https://www.bestcollegereviews.org/features/amazing-natural-history-](https://www.bestcollegereviews.org/features/amazing-natural-history)

WET collection:  
Andy Bentley,  
Ichthyology collection manage



# VOLUNTEER

Perhaps being on the board or a committee chairman is too much of a commitment. So we would like to offer an alternative way to **help our Audubon Chapter.**

## Here are some short-term tasks:

Unload and / or distribute **birdseed** from our sale in November (contact Patricia)

**Help occasionally with Gardens:** Alsop Bird Sanctuary (Patricia Yeager), Butterfly Garden (Jaqui Staats)

**Plan one activity** or program for our members (2022 -October, November, 2023 -January, February, March, April, May, June.)

December is the month of Christmas Bird counts - would you like to volunteer to help with the **Manhattan chili supper** at the end of that count?

**SIGN Maintenance:** Several of our signs - need repair. Trail signs

**Bluebird trails:** Want to learn what maintaining a blue bird trail is all about?

**Attorney:** Club needs help lessening property tax burden of the Manhattan property it owns.

**Metal artist:** Large garden trellis needed and other display opportunities.

**Deck builder:** Boardwalk needed over rough areas on nature trail.

## OTHER - longer- term needs:

**Greeter:** Do you enjoy meeting others and listening to birding stories? Person needed to welcome those attending NFHAS programs. Duties include having coffee and cookies at program. Cookie Bakers: baking 2 or 3 dozen cookies

**Nature teacher for children:** Do you love children and birds? Experience teaching youngsters is invaluable to our group. Arrange one event or a regular group meeting. Create a children's program you would enjoy.

**Social Media** - help with Facebook, Instagram, print ads, radio spots?

**Secretary:** Keep minutes at board meetings. Send minutes to board members via e-mail after meeting. Send courtesy notes on occasion, for example, thank you notes, sympathy notes and congratulations cards.

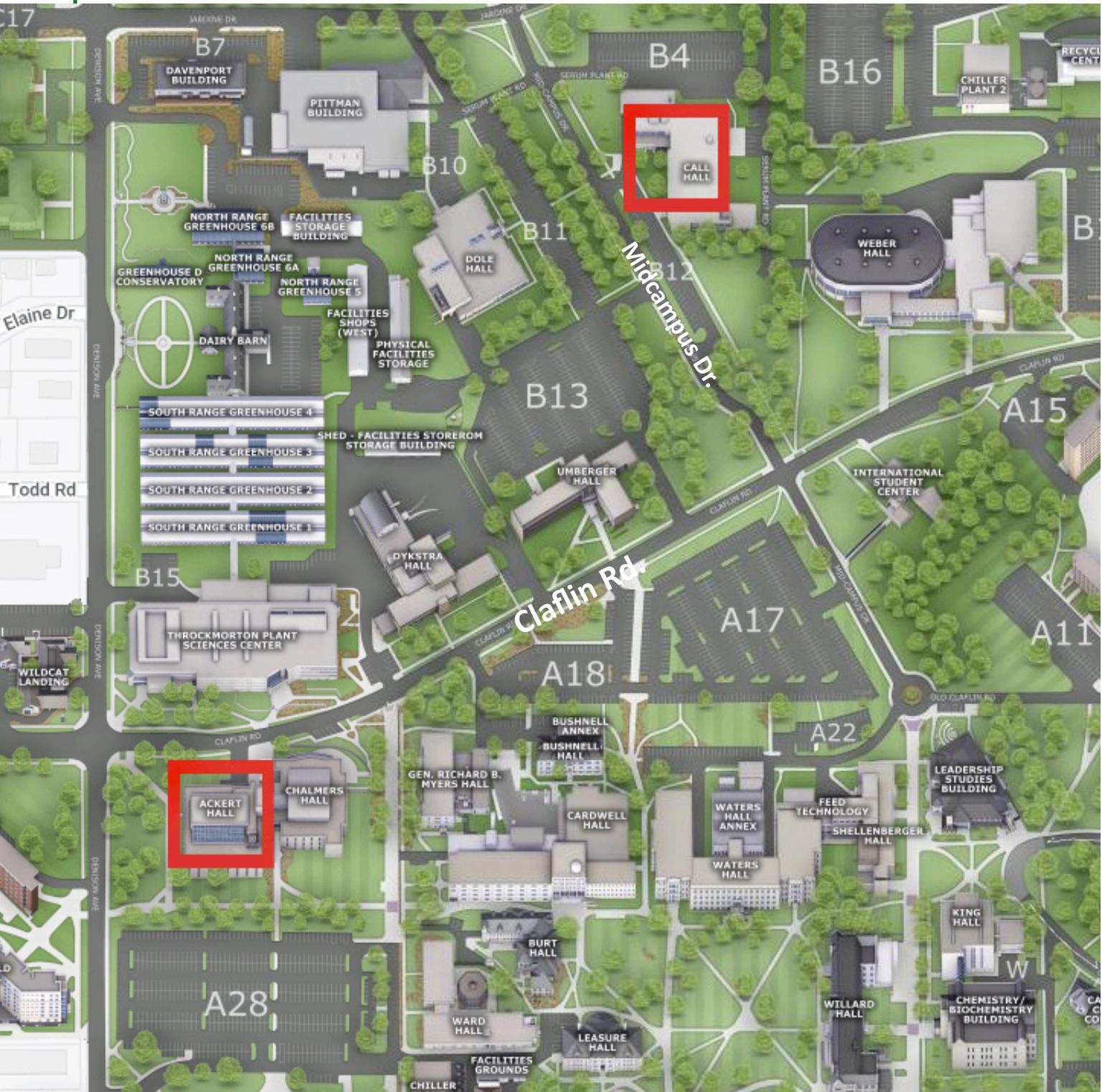
**Historian:** Collect stories from members, old Prairie Falcons, etc. We would like to compile the stories.

**Commission Meeting:** Attend and let Board know of any issues we need to consider.

**Migratory Bird Count Leader:** We have in the past done this count, but have not had anyone take on this role in the past few years. Must be available on the second Saturday in May. More information for anyone interested. It is similar to the Christmas Bird Count.

**Birdseed Sale Coordinator:** Contact wholesaler for prices, create order form, schedule order deadline and pickup dates.

# MAP of K-State Campus





## Kansas Motus Network taking flight

Dr. Alice Boyle, Kansas State University

That meadowlark singing out at your favorite local birding spot... Where does it go in the winter? Does it hang out in one of the big flocks we sometimes find in the winter, or do “our” birds go further south, only to be replaced by more northerly relatives? Is the one that was here last year the same as the one here this summer? Imagine if your local birds sent you an email when they came back in the spring! Or maybe the babies raised this year could send you an email when they pick a spot to raise their own brood next spring? Does that sound preposterous? It shouldn't. That is exactly what we hope to achieve soon in Eastern Kansas.

Last spring, I spoke to an enthusiastic NFHAS audience about my dreams and plans for a network of “automated telemetry” towers to study bird movements in Eastern Kansas. This technology exists. It involves tagging birds with little backpacks, and receiver stations placed in strategic locations where we hope to detect birds. The receiver stations have antennae that detect the signals from the tags within a ~10 mile radius, transmit that information to a very basic little computer, and then the information gets pinged to a central database where it is accessible to researchers and others, instantly... And if you set the alerts, the bird sends you an email! The Motus ([www.motus.org](http://www.motus.org)) initiative started in Ontario, Canada, has spread over much of North America and beyond. Most folks currently use Motus to study the really long-distance migrations of birds and bats. However, there is so much more potential for this technology that could fill really important information relevant to our local grassland birds.

Why are grassland birds different? They are, in a word, flaky. They don't do what “proper” migrants do. Once they select a breeding site their first year as adults, your “typical” migrant returns to that site, territory, or even tree, year after year. Chances are that the orioles in my yard this year were the very same ones that were here last year and the year before. But not so, the sneaky little grassland birds. They may attempt a nest or two at, say, Top of the World park this year, but about 80% of them are go somewhere completely different next year. They even move substantial distances between nesting attempts within the same summer! This makes getting information necessary to conserve them REALLY hard for us biologists. Here are three reasons why:

- (1) Extremely difficult to estimate how many individuals that die each year vs. those that simply go elsewhere.
- (2) A basic conservation need is to understand what land management is the best for a population.
- (3) Grassland birds are tanking. I have seen it, and you might have seen it too. Of all the birds in North America, the grassland-dependent ones are disappearing fastest. When birds form more or less discrete populations, we can compare how those different populations are doing and figure out what is different about the places where they are doing well vs. the places where they are declining (and then do something about it!). However, if our “populations” are constantly mixing and merging because of all that movement, that approach is not possible. It is hard to know where to prioritize conservation action and \$.

For these reasons and more, I and colleagues within Kansas (Dr. William Jensen, Emporia State; Dr. Andrew George, Pittsburg State) are working hard to establish a much denser network of Motus receivers in the state, starting with Eastern Kansas. Building upon the first few installed by Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, we are working with landowners to identify suitable sites, fundraising to install those stations, and helping provide training to entities who have committed to installing a receiver at their site. As of mid-August, there are 9 operational receivers in the state, four about to be installed, and six more planned with funding committed (19 total). My goal is to get one in each county in Eastern Kansas in the next couple of years! We are in the process of identifying suitable sites, seeking funding or donations to make them a reality, and prioritizing where we most need to the towers to meet our research objectives. Of particular interest to the Norther Flint Hills Audubon group, there is an existing structure on the property of chapter member's home with easy-to-access power and wifi. The total cost of equipment, installation, and a fixed amount for maintenance of the whole network for a receiver with that infrastructure in place amounts to approximately \$8500. If you are interested in this project, you can learn more about the motus network generally at <https://motus.org/> or more about the Kansas motus initiative at <https://www.kansasmotus.net/>.

If you or a group of chapter members are interested in making a financial contribution to help make this dream a reality, then you may contact me (Alice: [aboyle@ksu.edu](mailto:aboyle@ksu.edu)) or follow instructions here <https://www.kansasmotus.net/contribute/> to make a tax-deductible donation.



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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.

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Also available online at [nfhas.org](http://nfhas.org)

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](mailto:join@audubon.org). Website is [www.audubon.org](http://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](http://nfhas.org)

**WE NEED YOU!** PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

### NFHAS Board

President: [Patricia Yeager](mailto:pyeagerbirder@gmail.com) - [pyeagerbirder@gmail.com](mailto:pyeagerbirder@gmail.com) 776-9593  
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AOK Representative: [Cindy Jeffrey](mailto:cinraney@ksu.edu) - [cinraney@ksu.edu](mailto:cinraney@ksu.edu) 565-3326  
At-large: Susan Blackford, Kevin Fay

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