

# Alsop Bird Sanctuary It's time to plant!

We have waited a long time for the first major planting at the Alsop property. Please set aside some time Sunday afternoon, Sept. 11 and/or Monday morning, Sept 12, to help plant along the west 1/3 of the property. This area is the front row to the drive-by traffic and will look good by next spring if we plant now. Of course, it will look even better next fall.

**Sunday, Sept. 11 - 1p.m. - 4p.m. & Monday, Sept 12 - from 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.** It is grandparent's day on Sunday so bring the grandchildren!

- 1.) Tasks that do not take big muscles are: plant small plants and pull small weeds. A knee pad or short chair, a hand digging tool, and garden gloves are all the equipment needed.
- 2.) Tasks that take adult muscles are: Dig holes about 8 inches wide and 8 inches deep. Manage the hose to water. Bring your favorite shovel. Extra shovels available. Garden gloves.
- 3.) Tasks that take strong muscles: Move stones, Dig out turf grass. A dolly for stone transportation will be available. Leather gloves. Your favorite shovel.

Most of the work on this planting effort will fall under task number 1 in difficulty. Please stop by for a while on either day. Drinking water will be provided. If you can't plant, cookies are welcome. Stop by and say Hi.

If rained out Sun and Mon. We will plant on Wed., Sept.14, 8-11 and 12N to 5.

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



## prairie falcon

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Newsletter

Vol. 45, No.1 ~ September 2016

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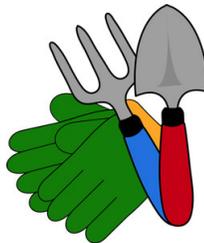
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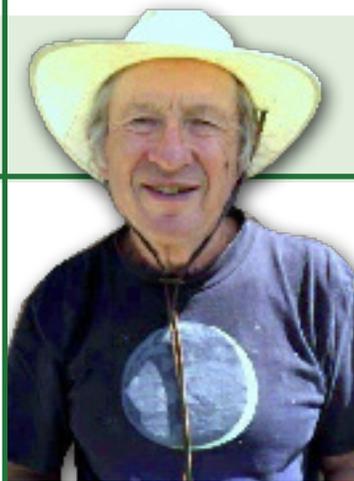
### Upcoming Events

Sept 10 Sat. Morning Birding  
8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

Sept. 11-12- ALSOP Planting- see above

Sept 12- Board Meeting 6 p.m.  
Home of Tom & MJ Morgan





## Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

Herewith some follow-up to the solar eclipse discussion in the last issue, beginning with the fact that we have such events because we have a moon. According to current thought, as mentioned incidentally

in an August 6<sup>th</sup> Science News article, we have a moon because during its first half billion years of existence (4 1/2 to 4 billion years ago) the Earth was in a “shooting gallery” of unassociated agglomerates zooming about. One of which banged into the Earth and “spalled off enough debris” to form the Moon.

That coalesced debris, though caught in a constant orbit around the Earth, it seems has been moving further away ever since. It’s presently separating from us at the rate of about an inch and a half (about 4 cm.) yearly. Thus, there was a time when it was so close that every solar eclipse would’ve been a total blot-out, and there will come a time when it’s so far away that its shadow will be too small for any total eclipse.

For us in between, it happened that that spalled off debris came together at 1/390<sup>th</sup> the size of the Sun, and it happens that now its distance is 1/390<sup>th</sup> of that to the Sun, so the two now appear of equal size in the sky. Thus, the Moon can obscure just the main disk of the Sun, its photosphere, making possible in our time the surrounding coronal display that is the main draw of total eclipses, both for scientific and purely visual purposes.

One Greek astronomer, Hipparchus, after observing a total eclipse in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century b.c.e, and learning that only a 4/5ths eclipse had been visible in Alexandria, deduced that the eclipsing shadow was solely that of the Moon, and from that figured the distance to, and the size of, the Moon. A century earlier, another Greek, Aristarchus, had done the same starting from a lunar eclipse. Both results were accurate, though of course not precise.

As a side note, Aristarchus posited a solar-centered universe (long before Copernicus) while Hipparchus held to the geo-centric view that became dominant through the succeeding centuries. While, for centuries before and after those two, many people in different places saw and reported total eclipses. And it was by mining and collating those reports, in particular by Edmund Halley (he who predicted the return of what we call Halley’s

comet) around 1700, that it was discovered that things did not comport with straight forward calculations. That those reported eclipses had been observed well to the east of where they would be mathematically expected, that the Earth wasn’t bringing its topography around as fast as would be expected, that its rotation has been slowing. The current figure appears to put the length of each day (lod) as increasing by 1.7 milliseconds per century, a figure that can have cumulative effects, involving the gradual separation of the Moon, and is arrived at by factoring in the drag of tidal movements, the expansion of the Earth’s atmosphere during summer seasons, the conservation of angular momentum within a system, and other very technical applications. A concise description of which can be sought in a book titled Eclipse, by Duncan Steel (Headline Book Publishing, London, 1999).

Although it is gradually – one might say surreptitiously – gliding further away in the celestial dance hall, the Moon will still be joining the party through September, moving around the gather of Mars, Saturn, and Antares the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, while the Great Square of Pegasus, tilted more as a diamond, rises in the evening sky. It then has early morning affairs, appearing the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> below the star Aldebaran, as Taurus, a winter constellation, begins some advance peeking up.

The Moon will be above Leo’s Regulus just ahead of daylight the 27<sup>th</sup>, and below it the 28<sup>th</sup>, while Mercury, if given a low horizon shines below the Moon. Mercury will be doing its gliding just to the upper left of the Moon the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Usually this column is concerned with what can be viewed by the unaided eye, but since Neptune will be in a prime viewing position, it seems worth mentioning that those with a telescope or very strong binoculars may be able to find it in the SE evenings among the very dim stars of Aquarius; they outline what might be a skin water bag with its bent-down nozzle end to westward.

Neptune will be in Aquarius awhile, for it takes it 164 of our years to make one revolution around the Sun. Meanwhile quite visible Mars will be shifting position at a noticeable pace, separating from Saturn and Antares in Scorpius, and moving into Ophiuchus, the Snake-bearer, whose stars form a sizable kind of eastward tilted tower above the Scorpion.

Official autumn will arrive with the equinox at 9a21 the 22<sup>nd</sup>, after the Moon, new at 4a03 on the 1st swells to the full Harvest Moon at 2p05 on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

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## Cecil Best Birding Trail at Northeast Park Construction Notice

Jacque Staats

The Cecil Best Birding Trail will be closed for a period of time in either early to mid-September or late October while the City of Manhattan installs a drainage pipe from property to the north, under the trail, to the old Blue River Channel to the south. The city's forestry crew will be trimming or removing some limbs along the trail in order for them to get their equipment into the location of the culvert. They also will be removing trees on City property within the swath of the culvert.

For your safety, and the safety of the city workers, please heed the signs indicating that the trail is closed. We are working closely with the city to expedite the construction process and to then return the trail to its native character.



## Vagrant or pioneer?

### Scientific American article

Long dismissed as accidental tourists, birds that turn up outside their normal ranges may instead be pioneers  
By Lesley Evans Ogden on August 19, 2016

Birds that show up outside of their normal range—vagrants or accidentals, as they are known, have long fascinated birdwatchers. Wildlife tours of the Alaskan archipelago, for example, lure customers with the possibility of sighting exotic vagrants like the Eurasian common cuckoo. Now scientists are beginning to consider the possibility that these misplaced birds might be more than curiosities, exploring the question of whether vagrants could provide clues about future bird distributions as climate shifts.

(Interesting- go to this website for the rest of the article

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/vagrant-birds-may-portend-species-distribution-in-climate-changed-world/>



## Celebrating Places

Dru Clarke

Energized by the relentless heat, and encouraged by a willing mate to escape to cooler places, in late July I headed north from the Flint Hills to a neighboring state, Nebraska, then west to Wyoming where a relative had a cabin in the Snowy Range. I wanted to explore byways and avoid the speedier interstate, so I followed a meandering route with little traffic.

From the Midlands in Central Nebraska to the Wyoming border lies a dazzling number of saved places: after miles of corn and soybeans, watered by pivot irrigation; hog farms and feed lots; and the ‘whoosh, whoosh’ of wind turbines above the soft rustling of corn leaf blades, Ashfall Fossil Beds lay partially revealed on a high ridge. So moving was the preservation of a mother rhino’s pelvic bones, with a baby about to be born, its life abruptly ended by the ash that fell and suffocated its mother. A volcanic hot spot moving from Idaho, now under Yellowstone, and headed northeast, spewed ash carried by the wind as far as the waterhole that became a graveyard for dozens of species. It is a national natural landmark and managed as a state historical park.

Spindly-legged, chicken-sized birds zigzagged ahead of the SUV on the rutted pasture road, undecided about where to duck for cover. Their confusion made me think that they seldom saw humans and their machines in this 5000-acre sanctuary, the Hutton Ranch, flanking the Niobrara River in the Sand Hills of Nebraska. Mixed grass prairie and riparian woodlands create a benign and welcome refuge for many species, like these young sharp-tailed grouse and the wary sentinel prairie dog – *la petit chien* – who squatted on a mound of soil in a special area designed for its reintroduction, fenced off from the rest of the sanctuary. The ranch belonged to Harold Hutton, a native whose homestead still stands in the woods by the river, author of “Doc Middleton” (of the famed Outlaw Trail) and “The River that Runs,” an homage to what is now the Niobrara Scenic Riverway. Ironic as it seems, the ranch was preserved as a wildlife sanctuary by Audubon of Kansas (motivated by an opportunity to save grasslands /prairie beyond political boundaries).

Before crossing the Niobrara, I climbed over a barbed wire fence (the gate was jammed) into the Fred Thomas Wildlife Refuge, where a herd of very large Angus cattle watched me curiously. In a break in the trees, I stood on a bluff and saw the shining, meandering river and the hills beyond rising up like a shaken sheet. (I quietly thanked Fred for his writing for the Omaha World-Herald and his defense of the environment.) Further west, along Rte. 12, is Smith Falls State Park, an unexpected tumble of water into a stream, winding through a

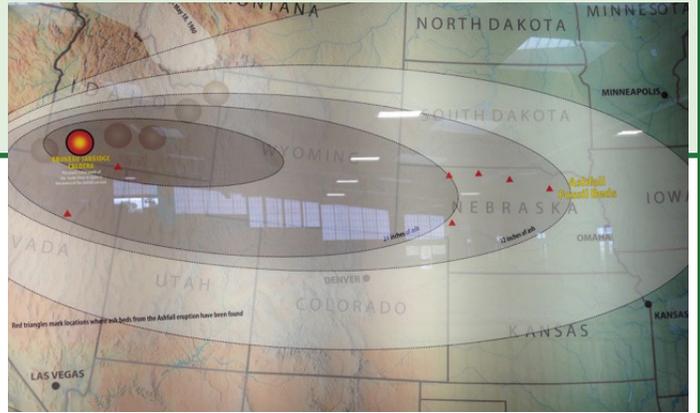
slender gorge wooded with birch, that replenishes the Niobrara. The hostess, a weathered rancher, staffs the visitor center on weekends so she can get to “socialize”: she posed – after stubbing out her cigarette – for a photo on the deck behind which stood a proud basswood tree. Along this route and back to Rte. 20 lay Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge (managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service), the Niobrara River Scenic Riverway (NPS), Valentine NWR, Fort Robinson (a state park), Oglala National Grassland (a national reserve), and Legend Buttes beyond which one can make out the dark shadows of the Nebraska National Forest, the largest human-planted forest in the U.S. Just west of Fort Robinson is the recently dedicated (2015) Cheyenne Breakout Monument. Created with sacred pipestone, the color reminding one of dried blood, and topped with the morning star (the name of their chief), the monolith, on each of its four sides, records the history of the resistance of the Northern Cheyenne to resettlement on a reservation in Oklahoma. Below are several pure white teepees, perhaps offering shelter to the spirits of those who died after the breakout. The wind swirling around the monument seemed to whisper “never forget.” Who could, after being here?

This year we are celebrating “the best we have to offer,” the founding anniversary of our national parks, yet all around us are those places so familiar to us that they are often taken for granted, but significant nonetheless to someone who cares for them. In Nebraska, a hidden waterfall, a prehistoric graveyard, voodoo landforms, undulating dunes and grasslands, a completely manmade forest, a long forgotten trail and a tearful reminder of our inhumanity and eventual repentance. In Kansas, near home, a new signpost commemorating the grave of a pioneer woman and a spur of the military trail was erected by a fellowship of men who research, locate and remind us, by signage, of the importance of time and place and the folks who lived then and there. A butterfly garden, a tiny plot of native plants in a busy urban setting, a linear park in a forgotten corner of a town, a distant wetland fiercely championed by some who recognized its value: all special places protected by ordinary people. National parks are like megafauna: the elephants and bison, huge and in-your-face, and impossible to ignore, imploring preservation. But close to home, like many of those places in our neighboring state, are those special places we care for, that emotionally connect us to the past, the land, and each other: the whole of life. May all places prosper.

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Niobrara River



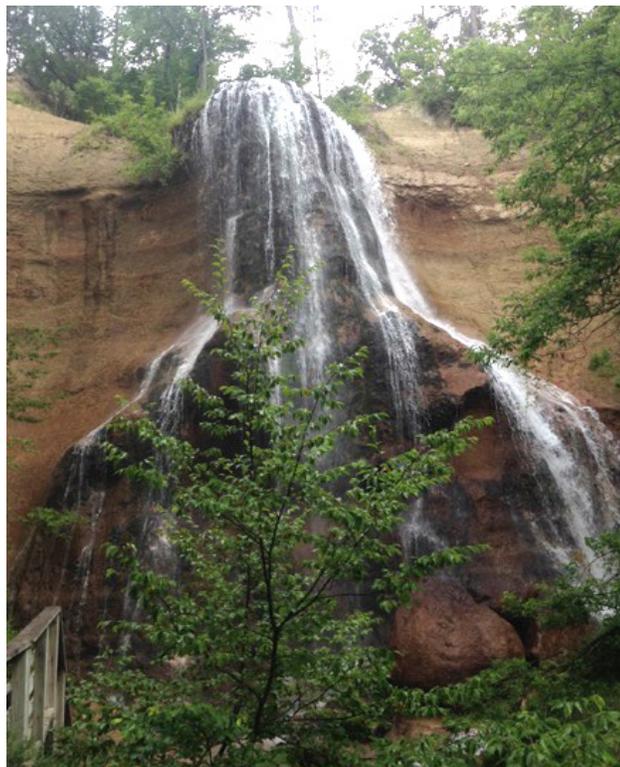
Schematic of ash dispersion



Rhino mother's pelvis with unborn baby rhino



Ashfall Fossil Beds



Smith Falls



Cheyenne Breakout Monument

FIELD TRIP to  
Cheyenne Bottoms  
and Quivira

AWESOME TRIP



Susan Blackford



Cheyenne Bottoms Visitor's Center

Clyde Ferguson



Katherine Jones, Patricia Yeager, Doris Burnett



Thanks Doris for bringing two spotting scopes



Corine Anderson, Patricia Yeager, Doris Burnett, Clyde Ferguson



# FIELD TRIP to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira

Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira - July 23-24, 2016  
(most of the birds we saw)

Canada Goose  
Blue winged Teal  
Redhead  
Canvasback  
Ruddy Duck  
Wild Turkey  
Northern Bobwhite  
American Coot  
Common Loon  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Mississippi Kite  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
American White Pelican  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Snowy Egret  
Cattle Egret  
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron  
White-faced Ibis  
Turkey Vulture  
Ring-billed Gull  
Franklin's Gull  
Kildeer  
Black-necked Stilt  
American Avocet

Spotted Sandpiper  
Willet  
Lesser Yellow legs  
Marbled Godwit  
Semipalmated Sandpiper  
Western Sandpiper  
Least Sandpiper  
Solitary Sandpiper  
Upland Sandpiper  
Baird's Sandpiper  
Stilt Sandpiper  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Stilt Sandpiper  
Snowy Plover  
Black Tern  
Forester's Tern  
Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
Burrowing Owl  
Great Horned Owl  
Chimney Swift  
Tree Swallow  
Cliff Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Common Yellowthroat  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Common Yellowthroat

Red-winged Blackbird  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
Red-headed woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Great-crested Flycatcher  
Eastern Kingbird  
Western Kingbird  
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
Bell's Vireo  
European Starling  
Indigo Bunting  
Dickcissel  
Western Meadowlark  
Great-tailed Grackle  
Common Grackle  
Orchard Oriole  
Baltimore Oriole  
American Goldfinch  
Carolina Wren  
Chipping Sparrow  
Field Sparrow  
Lark Sparrow  
House Sparrow  
Grasshopper Sparrow  
Rock Pigeon  
Eurasian Collared Dove  
Mourning Dove

Thanks to Patricia for making the sleeping and eating arrangements and driving one of the vehicles. Thanks to Doris Burnett for driving and guiding and bringing the scopes!

## Bed and Breakfast in Stafford





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

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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)  
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President: Patricia Yeager - [pyeagerbirder@gmail.com](mailto:pyeagerbirder@gmail.com) 776-9593  
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Fieldtrips: Patricia Yeager, Kevin Fay 776-9593  
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Contacts for Your Elected Representatives ( anytime) Write, call or email: Governor Sam Brownback: 2nd Floor, State Capital Bldg., Topeka , KS 66612. KS Senator or Representative: State Capital Bldg., Topeka, KS 66612. Ph# (during session only) Senate - 785-296-7300. House - 785-296-7500. U.S. Senator Roberts <[Roberts@senate.gov](mailto:Roberts@senate.gov)> U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510. Jerry Moran U.S. Capital Switchboard 202-224-3121.