

We need YOU!

September is the beginning of the FHAS year. Usually we have nominations and election of officers in June, but for the past several years this has not happened.

Please consider volunteering for one of the following positions:

Vice President

Secretary

Board member at large:

Education Chair

Birdseed Chair

For more information contact Patricia Yeager or Cindy Jeffrey.
(contact info on back page.)

Note: There is no Newsletter in August

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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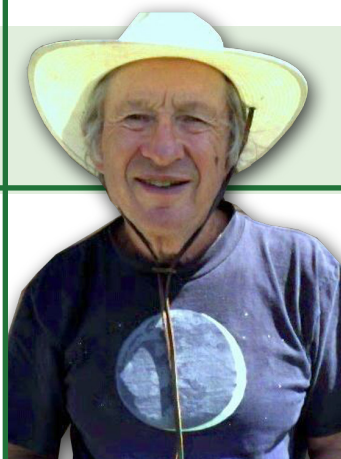
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Upcoming Events

Jul 7 - TUESDAY Board Meeting- 6:00 pm,
via Zoom. Contact a board member
to attend.

Aug 4- TUESDAY Board Meeting- 6:00 pm,
via Zoom. Contact a board member
to attend.



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

When I was a lot younger, librarians and various magazines and newspapers, then as now, would offer suggestions for summer reading. Yet I don't recall that any such list ever

included two widely read publications: the Montgomery (Monkey) Ward and Sears, Roebuck catalogs, which actually were in vogue year around, and each one, as I recall, arrived just once or twice a year.

Looking back I discover that in 1872 Aaron Montgomery Ward, then a traveling salesman, got the idea that his rural customers would respond to a list of a wider-than-locally-available array of goods, satisfaction guaranteed, that they could pick up at the railroad station. With \$1600 he began to provide same and by 1885 his books, each weighing four pounds, had 240 pages showing 10,000 items. In 1939, Robert L. May, a would-be novelist earning his way as a Ward ad copywriter, wrote a poem for a promotional booklet for children. It went over well and after WWII was set to music and cowboy singer Gene Autry recorded Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer to the tune of 25 million copies. (May's story is bitter-sweet: heavy debt from his wife's cancer death relieved by his being granted the rights to Rudolph.)

Meanwhile in 1886 or '88 (depending on sources) Richard Sears began what became his competing "Book of Bargains" by first offering jewelry and watches, and hiring Alvah C. Roebuck as repairer. The federal Postal Service chimed in by regarding the books as educational and providing a special low mailing rate. The late 19th century had its violent times in the U.S. and apparently the books had some burning incidents involving jealous zealous local merchants. Nonetheless they grew and grew.

That was then and this is now. The stories for both Montgomery Ward and Sears provide complicated case studies for students of economics, marketing, social change and likely several other disciplines. Montgomery Ward went defunct in June 2001, and Sears is not what it has been. But, in spades, they have not left a void for anyone in need of something to read—

***There exist in this world catamounts, catapults,
catacombs,
cataclysms, and cataracts,
While catalogs are the thing that our mailbox attracts.***

***Bound picture galleries pass through our small post
office
sometimes in a swarm.
It doesn't matter if the season is Christmas, Saint Val's,
or warm;***

Eight at one time is not beyond the norm.

***Brightly colored pictures of sugary confections,
And of T-shirts that read "Real men don't need to read direc-
tions".***

***And of ingenious mousetraps and of modular homes to con-
tain them;***

***Electric generators, and books about pets and how to train
them.***

***Such a great diversity—and yet by some design
Nearly all of their prices are for so many dollars,
plus ninety-nine.
we haul.***

***There's a cornucopia of catalogs, and I think we get them all.
Astonishing, miraculous, the variety of things that
human minds and hands can produce,
For which sufficient numbers of we the people find some use.***

***So much energy and creativity and chemicals and paper
have gone into the re-cycling***

Whatever we get in the mail, there'll be bright lights above all the clear nights of July and August. Venus will continue as an enthusiastic Evening Star in Gemini while Jupiter and Saturn will be up all night close together just behind the Teapot in Sagittarius, though Jupiter will separate a little eastward as time goes on. Mars will be the reddish point in Pisces, which is an autumnal evening constellation rising late in the evening to do its summer stint through the wee hours. Mercury will be glimmering low beneath Venus starting the last half of July.

Adding to the planets will be the bolder summer stars. Taurus's red eye, Aldebaran, will shine close to Venus July 13th and to the Moon as well the 16th-17th, then again near the Moon on August 13th. Antares, the red eye of Scorpius, will be to the right of the Moon August 2nd, and to the left August 25th. Spica, sort of the navel of Virgo, will add its light near the Moon in the evenings of July 25th-26th and August 22nd.

Besides these will be the Summer Triangle of bluish Vega in Lyra the Lyre Bird just to the west of the Milky Way, white Deneb at the tail of Cygnus the Swan amid the starry path, and Altair in Aquila the Eagle further south at the Milky Way's eastern edge. The Moon, routinely modifying its presence will be full for July 4th at 11p44 and for August 3rd at 10a59; new July 20th at 12p33, August 18th at 9p42. It will join the Perseid meteor shower just before midnight August 11th.

The Big Picture

Dru Clarke



The grain in the cattle trough suddenly became animated, precariously close to Eleanor's chomping jaws. A tiny bird – obviously a nestling – emerged, flapping its wings erratically. A quick rescue revealed a grey and buff bit of fluff, with a barely discernible tuft on its head. Jays raucously dove through the treetops and no adult lookalike birds were visible anywhere. I scanned the branches looking for a nest and couldn't find one. What to do: I knew the mantra. Nearly half of nestlings and fledglings die from predation, storms, and starvation. Taking them in and trying to raise/save them is verboten or, at least, ill-advised and, of course, courting heartbreak. Pragmatic and objective ecologists and ornithologists – John Zimmerman is rolling his eyes right now- tell us that it is counterproductive, not the way of Nature. In the Big Picture, the loss of one is no big deal. But it is a different picture when one is confronted with the choice of “letting Nature take its course” or making an attempt to flatten the curve, change the outcome in that picture.

Looking at that gaping face with its vestigial sprigs of down, wide eyes like shiny beads, and twiggy legs and feet clinched it: it needed a quick intervention to give it a chance. Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism prohibited the release of wildlife now due to lack of knowledge of how the corona virus affects these species and potential transmission to humans. Northeast Wildlife Rehab gave good advice about feeding (Milford Nature Center was closed) and we had an ample supply of dry cat chow we could soak and offer with tweezers. Dehydration was a concern, but the moistened pellets probably would avoid that. I found an old mailbox I lined with cloth and my husband configured a piece of hardware wire to cover the opening to allow air to circulate and to keep our cats and the resident raccoon out. (We brought it inside at night and placed it in the bathtub.) Later we switched to a pet carrier outfitted with a twig so it could learn to perch. Luckily, Tuffy – we identified it as a titmouse- slept through the night and had to be roused in the morning to be fed. The second day it responded to my voice by making baby bird cheeps that, in time, became a variety of bigger bird calls. It would make vocalizations so softly, barely perceptible, and without opening its mouth that it seemed like it was comforting itself, a soothing whimpering sort of sound. (It usually did this after it ate a piece or two of chow while I was holding it in my hand.) The online information said that nestlings of this age (we guessed it was about two to three weeks old) eat every two to four hours, but I found that it got hungry, or at least insisted on being fed or kept company, every hour or so. The most it ate at one time was four pieces, but it usually ate two. Red worms I dug out of the manure pile were ignored, but freshly subdued house flies were examined, then eagerly gulped down.

It flew the third day and liked to land on the shower caddy or on the towel rack, eventually launching itself from my finger onto my chest and clamoring up to my shoulder for a better view. Smooth surfaces were problematic and Tuffy had its share of tumbles into the tub or onto the floor. I had to make sure the toilet seat was down (my husband uses the other bathroom!) and that there was no water left in the sink. It tried to fly into the mirror – did it think it was a window?- so I had to help it back to its carrier perch where it immediately got quiet.

By the sixth day it was apparent that it was ready to be set free. It attempted to squeeze through the small spaces in the carrier door and I feared it would injure itself. Its tummy was nicely rounded – I never could feel the crop- and it had its last meal after noon. An early storm had cleared and the day had warmed with a soft breeze. I tucked Tuffy in my hoodie pocket (where it rode on its first trip to captivity) and walked to a grove of trees with low branches near a loafing shed. I tucked it onto a branch in a patch of sunlight where it sat silently as it looked all around. For just a moment I turned to look at something behind me and when I turned back, Tuffy was gone. I scanned the trees and couldn't see it anywhere.

While doing chores later my husband noticed a lot of 'small birds' - he was sure they were titmice- on the ground near the manure pile in front of the loafing shed that were running back and forth. The branch where I let Tuffy go was only a few feet from all this activity. I'd like to think that Tuffy was reunited with his fellow nestlings and parents (parents often feed their fledglings for days, even weeks, after they leave the nest) even after a week apart from them. If it survives – how likely that will be is moot – perhaps it'll grow up, migrate, then return next year. Yes, it's a romantic notion but maybe, just maybe, in the Big Picture it made a difference to this one bit of animated fluff, just one small bird who had a strong will to live. And two humans who couldn't “let Nature take its course.” Maybe this is where compassionate intelligence shows itself.

Footnote: At chore time, on the day of the little bird's freedom, we heard for the first time since we've lived here a wood thrush singing from the riparian woods. That song has always brought feelings of joy to me as I heard it as a child when my family stayed at our summer home in the New Jersey Highlands. It was a welcome home.

© 2020 Dru (and Mike) Clarke



2020 Birdathon

Jim Koelliker & Clyde Ferguson

Dear Friend,

This 2020 version, the 35th annual, of the Birdathon was most unusual because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing necessity. So, instead of having just a main team searching together, we instead enlisted ten individuals to search and report their individual results. It was a tremendous effort and the result was positive identification of 125 species, listed on the next page. As I write this report I am especially gratified about the dedication and effort we all mustered together to make this year the second best ever for the 125 species we found and that is well above the average of 113.

Of special interest to me are those 38 species that were identified by only one observer. While most of them are not so unusual based on results from earlier years, a few are quite unusual. The fish crow was the first ever reported. Ten others have been found less than 25% of the years include bufflehead duck, red-breasted merganser duck, red-shouldered hawk, common snipe, Caspian tern, ruby-throated hummingbird, loggerhead shrike, yellow-throated vireo, indigo bunting, and dickcissel. If you are not familiar with these, you can review them on the enclosed sheet with an image of each.

I always enjoy working on this Birdathon because I like the challenge and making this detailed report makes even more aware of our local birds. Too, I hope you find this report interesting and informative.

Yes, this report is a request for your financial support for the Northern Flint Hills Chapter of the Audubon Society. This effort is our primary fund-raising activity. Last year nearly 100 contributors generously contributed almost \$3,000 that the chapter put to good use to support our efforts in the area.

I am again asking for your support by completing the section below, tearing it off, and sending it along with your check or cash to me at 3500 Mintons Lndg, Manhattan, KS 66503.

-----**-RETURN THIS PORTION WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTION-**-----

Please print your information Remember: A contribution of \$15.00 or more provides you a year's access to The Prairie Falcon!

Name _____

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Yes, please send a message to me to view full-color issue of Prairie Falcon to my E-mail address:

Make your check payable to the NFHAS and mail it to me, along with this section:

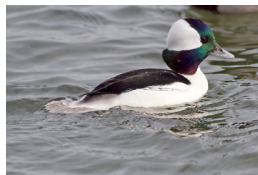
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785-776-4915 koellik@sbcglobal.net

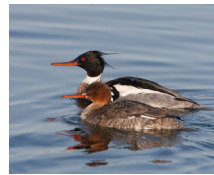
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Fish Crow – 1st Time Found



Bufflehead



Red-breasted Merganser



Common Snipe



Red-shouldered Hawk

Best Birds of 2020 Found Less Than 25% of the Last 20 Years



Indigo Bunting



Caspian Tern



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Dickcissel



Loggerhead Shrike



Yellow-throated Vireo

OBSERVERS: Lowell Johnson, north of Manhattan to Tuttle Creek; Michael Donnelly, north of Manhattan to Pott #2; Jim Koelliker, Manhattan to Milford Reservoir; Clyde Ferguson, his backyard; Scott Taylor, west Manhattan parks and Konza Trail; Patricia Yeager, Lake Elbo, and east and south of Manhattan; Jill Haukos, Wamego area; Jacque Staats and Dick Oberst, Hidden Valley west of Manhattan; Roma Lenehan & Susan Slapnick, long-time helpers, Madison, WI area because they could not travel for the event; Maria Ferguson, I-70 on way in from Denver;

Common Loon	2	Northern Bobwhite	5	Common Poor-Will	1	Western Meadowlark	2
Pied-billed Grebe	2	American Coot	1	Chuck-Will's-Widow	1	Yellow-Headed Blackbird	4
American White Pelican	1	Killdeer	6	Whip-Poor-Will	1	Great-Tailed Grackle	1
Double-crested Cormorant	4	Greater Yellowlegs	2	Ruby-Throated Hummingbird	1	Common Grackle	7
Great Blue Heron	6	Lesser Yellowlegs	3	Belted Kingfisher	2	Brown-Headed Cowbird	8
Green-Backed Heron	1	Spotted Sandpiper	2	Red-Headed Woodpecker	2	House Finch	7
White-Faced Ibis	1	Upland Sandpiper	2	Red-Bellied Woodpecker	7	American Goldfinch	8
Canada Goose	6	Pectoral Sandpiper	2	Pileated Woodpecker	2	Purple Martin	3
Wood Duck	5	Common Snipe	1	Downy Woodpecker	7	Tree Swallow	4
Green-Winged Teal	1	Yellow-Throated Vireo	1	Hairy Woodpecker	3	N. Rough-Winged Swallow	3
Blue-winged Teal	5	Warbling Vireo	1	Northern Flicker	3	Blue Jay	7
Northern Shoveler	4	Orange-Crowned Warbler	3	Eastern Phoebe	7	American Crow	6
Gadwall	4	Northern Parula	3	Great Crested Flycatcher	2	Fish Crow	1
Redhead	2	Yellow Warbler	1	Western Kingbird	2	Black-capped Chickadee	7
Ring-necked Duck	1	Yellow-Rumped Warbler	5	Eastern Kingbird	1	Tufted Titmouse	8
Lesser Scaup	2	Palm Warbler	2	Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher	1	White-Breasted Nuthatch	4
Bufflehead	1	Louisiana Waterthrush	1	Horned Lark	2	Carolina Wren	8
Common Merganser	1	Summer Tanager	2	Spotted Towhee	1	House Wren	4
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Northern Cardinal	8	Chipping Sparrow	7	Ruby-Crowned Kinglet	3
Ruddy Duck	1	Indigo Bunting	1	Clay-Colored Sparrow	1	Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher	4
Turkey Vulture	8	Dickcissel	1	Field Sparrow	5	Eastern Bluebird	7
Bald Eagle	2	Franklin's Gull	4	Lark Sparrow	5	American Robin	8
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	1	Bonaparte's Gull	3	Savannah Sparrow	4	Gray Catbird	2
Cooper's Hawk	1	Ring-billed Gull	4	Grasshopper Sparrow	2	Northern Mockingbird	1
Red-Shouldered Hawk	1	Caspian Tern	1	Song Sparrow	1	Brown Thrasher	7
Swainson's Hawk	3	Forster's Tern	2	Lincoln's Sparrow	4	Cedar Waxwing	3
Red-Tailed Hawk	7	Rock Dove (Pigeon)	5	White-throated Sparrow	5	Loggerhead Shrike	1
American Kestrel	5	Mourning Dove	7	White-crowned Sparrow	1	European Starling	7
Ring-Necked Pheasant	2	Eurasian Collared Dove	4	Harris' Sparrow	7		
Greater Prairie-Chicken	1	Great Horned Owl	1	Red-Winged Blackbird	7		
Wild Turkey	6	Barred Owl	6	Eastern Meadowlark	5		



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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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WE NEED YOU!

PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

Contact Patricia Yeager if interested, and watch our website and newsletter for time and day of meeting.

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