



People and Wildlife: An Anthropologist's Journey to Namibia ~ Ryan Klataske

Wednesday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.
Manhattan Public Library, Auditorium

African wildlife face an array of formidable threats, from habitat loss and fragmentation to human-wildlife conflict and illegal trafficking. Similar threats to wildlife exist around the world. Fortunately, in southern Africa, groups of people are working together to manage and conserve wildlife and natural resources in innovative ways. For the past decade, anthropologist Dr. Ryan Klataske has studied wildlife management and conservation in Namibia, documenting these important efforts and the intersecting issues of ranching, race, land, and livelihoods. This talk will provide a broad, publicly accessible introduction to Namibia, including its people, history, wildlife, and the lessons it can teach us about conservation and community in the Great Plains. Vivid photography will compliment stories about living and working for over a year with a wide variety of people including landowners, farmworkers, resettlement farmers, indigenous people, hunters and tourists, government officials, and representatives of various NGOs.

Dr. Ryan Klataske is a cultural anthropologist and conservationist. He teaches anthropology at Kansas State University and works for Audubon of Kansas, a nonprofit conservation organization.

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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Inside

pg. 2-Skylight
Pete Cohen

pg. 3-Cascading
Dru Clarke

pg. 4- Snow birds

pg. 5-Eagle Scout Project

Upcoming Events

Any warm day in February - consider walking Stagg Hill property and take a trash bag to help keep litter picked up.

Feb. 4- Board Meeting 6 p.m. Friend's Room,
Manhattan Public Library

Feb. 9- Sat. Morning Birding - Weather permitting
(ice, or wind over 15 mph and temp below 25 cancels)
8 a.m. Sojourner Truth Park

Feb. 13- People and Wildlife - Namibia 7 p.m.
by Ryan Klataske, Manhattan Public Library
(see above)



Skylight plus

Pete Cohen

lapse of ages.” However, a note quotes Darwin’s son as saying his father later reduced “ages” to “fifty years”.

That note appears in one of the brand-new books to come my way this season, titled “Darwin Comes to Town--How the Urban Jungle Drives Evolution”, driving it at an increasingly wider spread and faster pace than Darwin might have imagined. (Picador, New York, 2018)

The author, Menno Schilthuizen, a professor of evolutionary biology at Holland’s Leiden University, declares “I consider human cities as fully natural phenomena”, as natural as beaver dams, and particularly exciting from an ecological perspective. Especially as the human species that builds these constructs consumes “one quarter of the food the world’s plants produce and half of all the freshwater run-off”.

Though he focuses mostly on the larger urban and suburban entities, he records that plant species usually found along ocean shores have been adapting to life along inland highways that receive winter salting, and that Mary Bomberger-Brown and Charles Brown have been monitoring cliff swallows in Nebraska since 1982 finding, when they started, that most birds had wingspreads of about 10.8 cm. But as time passed and as some birds deserted natural cliffs for new highway bridges, the wings of mist-netted living birds at the bridges grew shorter by 2 mm./decade, while the wings of road killed birds averaged about a half cm. longer. Further, the numbers of dead birds found fell by 90% while the traffic remained stable or slightly increased. Shorter wings, being more maneuverable, combined with modern day machines, and perhaps some learned (and taught?) behavior seemed to be providing an evolutionary effect.

Back in the metropolises, Schilthuizen tells that both native and foreign flora and fauna have been colonizing the cracks, cornices, concrete facades, as well as the manicured parks and decaying reaches of the cities, with the greater variety appearing in the more upscale areas, that presumably have a more traveled population. Some adaptation has been required and produced. Some pigeons have managed to shunt poisonous chemicals harmlessly into their wing feathers, darkening their pelage and thus making them less visible to predators against their gray environment. Whiter and darker toned peppered moths, being observed surviving better amid complementary backgrounds, reinforce the implications.

In a twist, I read that small marooned populations (white mice in the parks of New York City isolated by a jungle of buildings and pavement; bobcats in the freeway-laced Los Angeles area) have in a short period of time evolved different characteristics specific to their locations. This to me echoes what Darwin found among the Galapagos finches, and is not too surprising as I understand certain livestock growers have been involved for a long time in a practice called ‘linebreeding’. Small populations and rigorous isolation seem key ingredients to weed out the bad outcomes and avoid the long-term degradation that can come from inbreeding.

In sum, the staterooms on the ark called Earth are being constantly re-decorated, with the passengers constantly variegating, some in place while others go global. Some of the changes are reaching into different DNAs in ways I’m not competent to describe. But there are more interesting explanations and examples in the book.

That the objects in space are constantly changing, in composition and/or relative positions I think has become common knowledge. Though Darwin’s original comment seems applicable to our nightly sky, at least as far as the “fixed” stars are concerned.

Those main, bright winter constellations will be as usual in full bloom center stage with Canis Major (The Big Dog, whose white eye, Sirius, is the brightest star we can see) a little behind and below the full form of Orion, whose modestly showing right arm is raised high overhead. It’s brandishing a club if you go along with the general consensus that he represents a hunter in action. But this year again he seems to me a batter at the plate, with the Big Dog crouched behind him as a catcher.

Taurus, with his bright red eye in his V-shaped face (called the Hyades) seems a glaring pitcher on the mound in front of and a little above Orion, and the two stars high above the Hyades seem raised arms, ready to throw, instead of the tips of a bull’s horns. Occasionally a meteorite will take the part of fast ball, a passing aircraft that of a change-up.

Be that as it may all the planets will be brightening. Venus, becoming the Evening Star in Capricorn at mid-month will do a slide-by with Saturn the 18th-20th. Much larger but much more distant of the two, Saturn will have its rings outspread but as it passes, to the right of Venus, from being the lower to the higher of the pair, still, I’m told, it will seem only about 1 percent as bright. Jupiter will be noticeably glowing white rising from a little after to a little before midnight, about two hours ahead of the red sparkle of Mars. During a few first evening twilights, Mercury will seem a small star low in the west, then will be gone. The Moon has a run-of-the-mill schedule, entering and leaving the month in dawn hours, visiting to the left of Spica in Virgo the 22nd. New at 3p04 the 4th, full at 9a54 the 19th.

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Cascading

Dru Clarke



California fires and the ensuing human and environmental losses reminded me of what we encountered hiking a few years ago in the High Tatra Mountains (a rib of the Carpathians) in Slovakia. (Most of this range is in Poland, but we were in Slovakia's Tatra National Park.) The park is renowned as habitat for the capercaillie, an iconic grouse, and the unusual Tatra chamois, a goat-antelope species. An individual capercaillie is said to need 550 hectares (1 hectare = 2.47 acres) and a viable population between 250- 500 square kilometers of natural forest. A recent study published in *Landscape Ecology* found that suitable habitat for the bird has decreased by 85% in Central and Eastern Europe. Ironically, while the capercaillie has a varied diet of berries, seeds and bugs, in the winter it subsists on pine needles, the pine being a dominant tree in these native forests. *

In November 2004 a Tatra bora, a windstorm of 230 km per hour (143 mph), scoured a path 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) wide and 40 kilometers (25 miles) long where we walked, leveling trees, leaving a raw skin of soil. Years before, on the Florida Panhandle coast where I had traveled with a group of Coastal Studies students, we witnessed a swath of trees down – resembling a giant's game of pick-up-sticks – the result of a waterspout, a tornado-like column of water, that had come ashore. The Tatra's downed trees were prime fodder for the bark beetle, and then, after clearing out about half of the deadwood, erosion was exacerbated by heavy rains that followed. The next July, the height of the tourist season and the main source of income for locals, a forest fire burnt 230 hectares. (Fast forward: This past summer heavy rains and subsequent flooding created more havoc and loss.) How eerie the similarities of the two region's calamities.

A few years after the Tatra bora, baby pine trees, slender saplings and an abundance of early succession plants began to heal the scarred slopes. Wild raspberry bushes – a delicacy relished by the resident bears – grew in copses off the rugged and minimally maintained trails. I penetrated one thicket and found all the berries had been picked: I hadn't seen the scuffled tracks that betrayed its earlier visitor. We quickened our pace down the mountain, anxiously casting our eyes about for our berry-picking competition.

Notwithstanding the optimistic growth, experts estimate it will be 100 years before the forest is restored. Forests are not grasslands: their responses to fire are diametrically opposite (with certain exceptions of some pines whose cones open to release seeds only after being exposed to extreme heat). Our native grasses prosper after fire incinerates old growth, leaving a blackened blanket of ash that warms in spring sunshine. Recent devastating fires in southwestern Kansas and neighboring Oklahoma would seem to defy this: but these were not prescribed and controlled burns,

and approached megafire status, exacting heartbreaking loss of livestock and wildlife and infrastructure. (On Ted Turner's bison ranch, many bison rounded up and corralled died from smoke inhalation, but those that remained free went to a prairie dog colony and survived.) But forests do come back, however slowly they may seem to impatient humans.

We know now (and have known for a long time) that overall suppression of fires that would clear tinder and deadwood from large tracts of forest is an untenable option, that a fire can do what is

not humanly possible in maintaining the health of the forest. California's forests and chaparral will return, but will the people who wish to live in close proximity to them have the foresight to plan for the forces of nature that will prevail, build accordingly, and know that the interface between human dwellings and primal forest is tenuous and fragile?

* California's northern forests are habitat for the sooty grouse, a subspecies of the blue grouse, that also consumes pine needles in winter months. The dusky grouse, the other subspecies, lives in the Rockies.



By sighmanb - Capercaillie, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37126213>

Snow ----- snow birds



Dark-eyed Juncos are neat, even flashy little sparrows that flit about forest floors of the western mountains and Canada, then flood the rest of North America for winter. They're easy to recognize by their crisp (though extremely variable) markings and the bright white tail feathers they habitually flash in flight. One of the most abundant forest birds of North America, you'll see juncos on woodland walks as well as in flocks at your feeders or on the ground beneath them.

The Dark-eyed Junco is one of the most common birds in North America and can be found across the continent, from Alaska to Mexico, from California to New York. A recent estimate set the junco's total population at approximately 630 million individuals.



Junco photos by Dave Rintoul

THANK YOU! Eagle Scout Project



Scouts from Manhattan Boy Scout Troop 75 and several friends and family volunteered to refurbish the bird watching platform on the Cecil Best Birdwatching Trail. The project was lead by Sheridan Bach, who was completing his Eagle Scout Project. The group of volunteers provided 102 hours of labor to restore the platform. Several visitors to the trail and platform expressed their interest and offered their thanks for the effort to maintain the trail.

Volunteers included

Josh Flickinger-Boy Scout

Nathan Williams-Boy Scout

Sheridan Bach-Boy Scout

Eric Williams-Adult Scout Leader

Mason Garren

Ethan Garren

Bryan Butell

Christian Webb

Tory Bach

Jim Bach and

3 Members of the Emporia State University Circle K Club-Collegiate Chapter of Kiwanis



When recycling at Howie's remember that if you are depositing aluminum cans, you can donate to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society- but you must go into the office and tell them it is for NFHAS.



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PLEASE consider joining our NFHAS Board.

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