



THE PRAIRIE FALCON[©] - JULY/AUG. 1998

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932

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JULY PROGRAM

ICE CREAM SOCIAL/APPRECIATION NIGHT

WED., JULY 15, 1998

7:30 PM TIL ???

SHELTER HOUSE #4

CORPS OF ENGINEERS AREA,

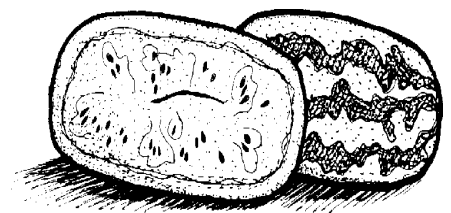
TUTTLE CREEK LAKE

All are invited for a summertime treat and get-together. Our special guests will be Ron Klataske and Janice Fink, formerly of the National Audubon Society's West Central Regional Office here in Manhattan. The officers and members of NFHAS would like to thank them for all the things that they have done for our chapter and other chapters throughout the region during the past decade. NFHAS will be providing the ice cream. Everyone is invited and asked to bring their own bowl and spoon and any special toppings, cookies, potato chips, etc. that they like with their ice cream. Shelter House #4 is the one overlooking the tubes from the east side. Any questions? Call Carla Bishop at 532-1859 (w) or 539-5129 (h). Hope to see you there!

Field Trips

Sat., July 11 — Beginning Birdwatching Walk — Join us this Saturday and the second Saturday of every month at 8 AM in the Ackert parking lot (Ackert is the building on the SE corner of Denison and Claflin) on the KSU campus. We will carpool to a local birding hotspot, and should return by about 11 AM. Birders of every age and interest level are welcomed; children are especially encouraged to attend. Call Patricia Yeager (776-9593) for more information.

Sun., July 26 — Frogs, turtles, bats, bugs, birds and BBQ — Field trip chairperson Patricia Yeager (and husband Kent) are hosting a barbecue at their home near lovely Lake Elbo east of Manhattan. Bring a potluck dish; the festivities start at 4 PM. Call Patricia at 776-9593 for information or for directions.



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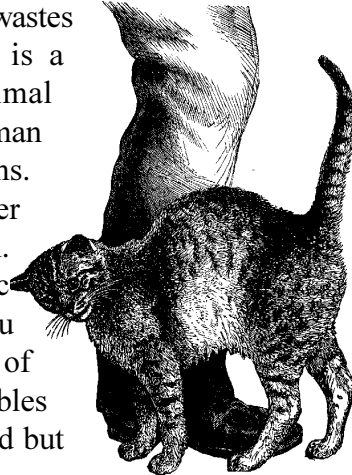
HEALTHFUL PRODUCTS FOR PETS

We have access to health foods, herbal medicines, and natural products-why shouldn't our pets? Supplying healthier alternatives for pets is a growing industry; sales in 1996 reached \$65 million.

The first step in natural pet care is better food. Most commercial foods contain mainly grain wastes and meat "by-products." This term is a euphemism for the remains of animal carcasses after they're processed for human food and include very unappetizing items. They can increase the chances of cancer and other diseases in pets that eat them. Several companies are marketing organic foods with and without meat, and you can make your own by mixing chunks of raw meat (but not ground) with vegetables and whole grains. Fish can be included but should be cooked to destroy parasites.

Litter also can be improved. Clay litters contain crystalline silica that produces dangerous dust. It can be breathed in by cats and humans and can cause lung disease. Clumpable clay litters pose another threat to cats. If they are ingested, they can expand in the intestines and cause dehydration and blockages. They should not be used for kittens. Better alternatives include wheat-based litter that is scoopable and biodegradable, odor-absorbing pellets made from recycled pine lumber waste, and litters made from recycled newspaper and wood pulp.

Most pets need flea control sometime during their lives. However, standard products are toxic and can contain such nasty ingredients as dichlorvos, diazinon, methyl bromide, and benzene. The Cancer Prevention Coalition has issued a warning against several flea collars. Users of flea products are at risk of neurological damage and leukemia, and pets are exposed not only during application but after, when they inhale fumes from a collar or lick sprays on their fur. One safer choice is a flea comb. Herbal shampoos, sprays, and collars also are available that contain oils such as citronella, eucalyptus, and pennyroyal. A dietary supplement of garlic and brewer's yeast produces body odors that repel



fleas (the report said nothing about effects on humans). Finally, an unusual spray contains microscopic nematodes that eat flea larvae.

Accessories for pet care haven't been ignored. One company recycles soda bottle caps to make food bowls. Recycled cardboard is used to make a pet carrier and a cat scratching post. Organic bedding can eliminate common skin problems in pets. Hemp is used for collars, leashes, bones, and other toys. It's much safer than nylon threading, because it breaks down and is digested if the animal swallows it. Homeopathic medicines are available for many ailments, from arthritis to ear infections.

Free catalogs of natural pet products can be ordered from the following toll-free numbers: Pet Sage (800) PET-HLTH, Whiskers (800) WHISKERS, and Wow-Bow (800) 326-0230.
Source: *E. The Environmental Magazine*. IX(3). 1998.

SAVING TIGERS

In the Chinese calendar, 1998 is the Year of the Tiger. It's an appropriate time to renew efforts to save this endangered animal. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has initiated a fund-raising program and action plan to tackle such problems as poaching, illegal trade, and destruction of habitat. Poaching has intensified with the increasing demand for tiger bone products, ironically, for use in Chinese medicine.

Investigators have found that more than half of the retail stores in Chinatown districts in major US cities are selling products made from endangered species, especially tiger and rhinoceros. As many as 150,000 medicines containing materials from these species may be sold each year in the US. Obviously, illegal trade of tiger products is an international problem.

The WWF is trying to close down US markets by working with communities to decrease consumer demand and seeking tougher law enforcement, better technology to identify illegal products, and new federal laws to prevent sale of products made from endangered species.

Source: *Focus* 20(2). 1998.

— Eileen Schofield Barkley

FLOAT TRIPS PLANNED FOR FALL

September 26th & 27th (Sat and/or Sun) - Friends of the Kaw - 4th Annual -Day-Float trip - Kansas River - Lawrence Area. For Details & Registration Forms, call Mollie Mangerich at (785) 841-8655 or P.O. Box 1612, Lawrence, KS 66044. Rental boats will be available with advance registration. Also see the 1998 KCA Trips Page on the KANSAS PADDLER Home Page at the URL

<http://www.kansas.net/~tjhittle>

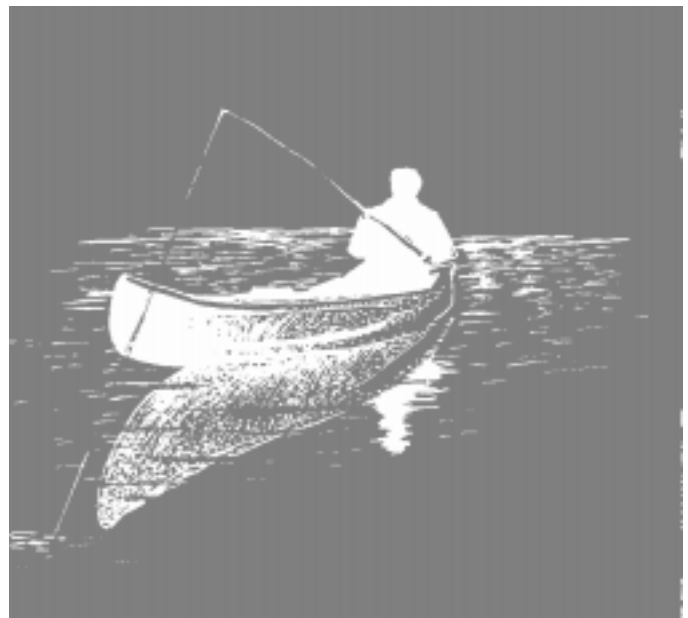
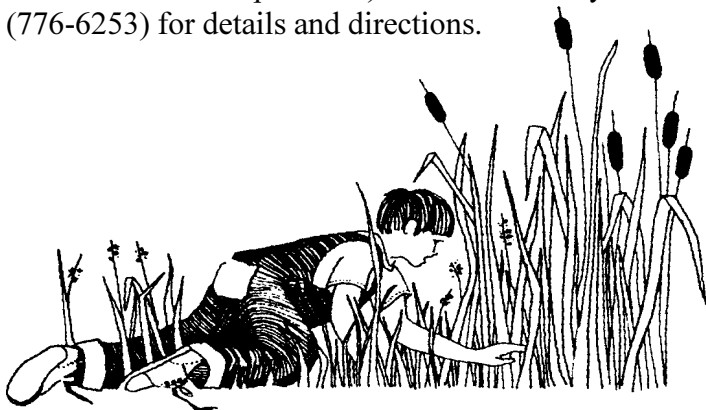
October 10 & 11 (Sat and/or Sun) - Friends of the Kaw - 4th Annual -Day-Float trip - Kansas River - Manhattan & Wamego Area. For Details & Registration Forms, call T.J. Hittle (785) 539-7772 or P.O. Box 83; Manhattan, KS 66505-0083. Rental boats will be available with advance registration. Also see the 1998 KCA Trips Page on the KANSAS PADDLER Home Page (address above)

For additional information, please contact:
T.J. Hittle / P.O. Box 83 / Manhattan, KS. 66505-0083
voice: (785) 539-7772 fax: (785) 539-6050

— T.J. Hittle

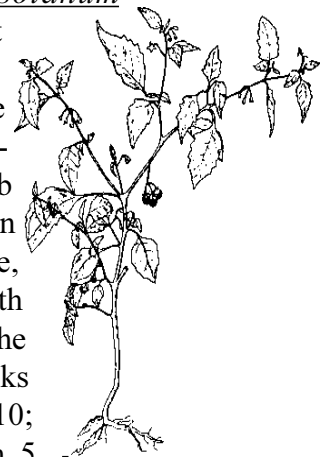
PLANNING FOR NEW MANHATTAN PARK

We need your ideas to help plan the Northeast Community Park. As part of the information-gathering process, we will hold a planning party for the Prairie Restoration and Arboretum sections of this newly approved Manhattan park. The planning meeting will be held on **Saturday, August 1**, at 3 PM at Leann Harrell's house. A potluck dinner will follow (meat/soy and drinks will be provided). Please call Wayne Corn (776-6253) for details and directions.



PLANT OF THE MONTH

Black nightshade (*Solanum ptycanthum*) of the Nightshade Family (Solanaceae) blooms in mid to late summer. It's an erect or drooping, branched, perennial herb that grows to about 2 feet in height. Leaves are alternate, egg-shaped, and pale green with lobed or toothed margins. The small flowers are borne on stalks in drooping clusters of 2 to 10; each one is star-shaped with 5 fused, white petals and a group of yellow stamens in the center. Fruits are round, dark purple to black berries.



This plant grows along roadsides and in open woods, fields, and gardens.

Previously used names for black nightshade are *S. americanum* and *S. nigrum*. It's considered a weed and, like many members of Nightshade Family, it contains toxic alkaloids. Ingesting the leaves and unripe berries can cause headache, stomachache, vomiting, and more severe symptoms. The completely ripe berries are supposed to be edible if boiled in jam or pie filling. The heat destroys the small amount of solanine that they contain. However, cultivated relatives with guaranteed edible fruits are available, if you really want to try cooking with nightshades.

—Eileen Schofield Barkley

The **PRAIRIE FALCON** will soon have a different look, as two of our long-time contributors will soon be riding off into the sunset (or sunrise, actually). In the winter of 1998/99 Eileen Schofield Barkley will be leaving town to join her husband Ted as he retires and then takes up new responsibilities in Texas. Eileen has written the Environmental Notes column for many years, and also contributes the informative Plant of the Month columns in those months when plants are actually blooming in Kansas. As an editor, I appreciate her diligence and her ability to meet a deadline; she will be sorely missed!

And this month also marks the retirement of the Acerbic and Anonymous Answer Person, who has contributed answers for the Burning Birding Questions for many years, at least during those months in which someone sent in a question. Although many people have accused me (!) of being the AAP, and although I have not tried too hard to dissuade them, the real AAP prefers to remain anonymous even in retirement, and I will respect those wishes. The AAP's straight-shooting answers often perplexed and even outraged the questioners, but you have to admit, they usually made you see the world in a slightly different light once you got past your dismay. But no more. As questions have dwindled (in quantity, if not quality), and as retirement approaches, the AAP has shelved the acid-dipped pen and the well-thumbed copy of "The Life of St. Francis." Personally, I know that I will miss these columns, and I know that I am not alone.

So the 27th year of the **PRAIRIE FALCON** will be marked by these departures. Hopefully it will also be marked by the uncovering of other writing talents among our members. If you have a hankering to see your name in print, and can write a monthly, bimonthly, or even just plain irregular column that is relevant to the goals of the NFHAS, I'd like to hear from you (phone # on back page, email drintoul@ksu.edu). Don't be shy, and don't be discouraged; please think of it as a chance to carve your own special niche in the world. Columns on gardening, birding, cooking, environmental concerns, butterflies, astronomy, weather, or **anything else** you might be interested in would be welcomed. Please let me hear from you, so that the **PRAIRIE FALCON** continues to evolve, and so that all of our members can benefit from the expertise and talents of each other.

Last month you heard about the conflicts in Barton County KS, revolving around citizen opposition to corporate piggeries. You might recall that Cheyenne Bottoms, as well as the water supply for people living in western and central KS, are threatened by a mega-hog processing plant (and associated hog-raising facilities). An organized citizens group (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources, or POWER) has formed in Great Bend. The group is comprised of concerned citizens, who care about protecting their environment and their quality of life.

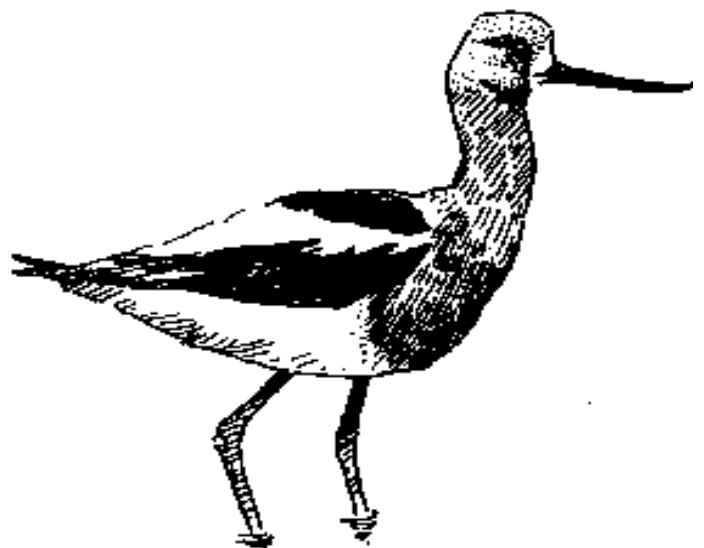
Immediate concerns include local elections. Seven candidates have filed for Barton Co. Commissioner. P.O.W.E.R. is supporting Frank McKinney, a family farmer and former Barton Co. Community College Trustee. In another example of the ability of "economic development" interests to subvert the democratic process, one of the winning write-in candidates for the Great Bend City Commission has already resigned, citing harassment, at both his and his wife's place of employment, by pro-pig citizens.

Donations are welcome to help support these causes, back candidates and pay legal fees. They may be sent to:

P.O.W.E.R.

P.O. Box 623

Great Bend, KS 67530



"The tallgrass prairie stirs our imagination not because it is empty but because it is vast. It challenges any Ptolemaic misconception that humans are the center of the universe. A rancher mending fences in the Flint Hills is a dot against the sky, like the man depicted in a Chinese landscape painting is a diminutive part within the whole panorama of mountains and streams. The unspeakable scale of distance — as far as the eye can see and then farther still — challenges the utmost abilities of the mind. Kansas is a zone beyond the peopled horizon and beyond all time where only the best part of the human spirit walks, touching both earth and sky at once."

Denise Low, Touching the Sky, (1994) Penthe Publishing, Lawrence KS.

We who live in the Flint Hills, truly one of the "Last Great Places on Earth." often take this place for granted. So much prairie, so much sky; the commonplace becomes the unseen and unappreciated. It takes a poet's touch to remind us of the beauty that surrounds us, or a walk through the tall grass, or a vista from a roadway somewhere south of Alma. Take the time this month to get out, and breathe in the richness that comes from a climax ecosystem in the prime of its growing season.

July and August in Kansas are relatively slow birding times, but some interesting birds still manage to wander through. Early to mid-July is usually very slow, very hot, and is best reserved for eating watermelon, drinking iced tea, watching thunderheads, and taking it easy. That is usually what the birds are doing too. Most species that have only one brood per season will have fledged those babies by mid-July, and will now be occupied with molting, fattening up for the return migration in the fall, and generally trying to stay cool. Molting birds, along with the transient and often unique plumages of juvenile birds, can account for some interesting identification problems this month. If you see some puzzling bird, you may not be able to identify it, because that plumage isn't in any of your standard field guides. So watch its behavior, concentrate on the non-feathered parts (what is the shape of the beak, what color is the eye, etc.) and see if you can learn something new about what is most likely a very common bird. But if you can't figure it out, don't worry about it. Even the professional birders know that there are some birds that they will never identify for sure.

Uncommon birds also can come to Kansas in the mid-late summer period. Hurricanes in the Gulf can blow some

very interesting things to Kansas, and post-breeding dispersal of young and old birds will often bring some vagrants to the state. The only records of Magnificent Frigatebird in the state are from July and August; undoubtedly these dagger-winged coastal marauders (once I heard them described as "barn swallows on steroids"), blown off course by hurricane winds, are extremely confused by corn fields and wheat stubble. White Ibis can appear here as well, and July or August seem to be the best time to find one in Kansas. Another Gulf Coast specialty, the Wood Stork, can also wander up to Kansas in summer. One was seen at Marais des Cygnes in July of 1975.

Other birds have even more regular and interesting habits. Sedge Wrens, which commonly breed in wet meadows earlier in the season north and east of Kansas, come back to the state from July to September. The males build dummy nests, and sing incessantly, in the cordgrass swales of the northern Flint Hills prairies. However, no late-summer eggs or nestlings have been observed in Kansas (although there are late-season breeding records from Nebraska). This peculiar phenology remains unexplained, but it is reproducible, so look and listen for Sedge Wrens along prairie streams this year, and see if you can be the first to find late-summer eggs or nestlings in Kansas. It will be a good excuse to get out for a walk in one of the Last Great Places on Earth.

Later in July, and throughout August, shorebirds will be passing through Kansas. The earliest migrants are generally adults who failed to reproduce this year, and will often still be in bright breeding plumage. Later migrants will be adults who have "abandoned" their young in the Arctic in order to get a head start on migration. Later in the year, and even into September, the duller-plumaged juveniles will pass through, navigating over vast distances with only their instincts to guide them. Hopefully this realization will help you respect these little "bird-brains" a bit more, and wish them Godspeed on their maiden voyage across the earth and sky.

--Dave Rintoul

(willet photo by D.A. Rintoul)



Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society
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Subscription Information

Introductory memberships are available for \$20 per year; after that a basic membership is available for \$35 annually. When you join the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the National Audubon Society and receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine, in addition to the **PRAIRIE FALCON**. New membership applications may be sent to NFHAS at the address below; make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Renewals of membership are handled by the National Audubon Society and should not be sent to NFHAS. Questions about membership can be answered by calling a toll-free number, 1-800-274-4201, or by electronic mail to Betsy Hax at the National Audubon Society (bhax@audubon.org).

Nonmembers may subscribe to the **PRAIRIE FALCON** newsletter for \$10 per year. Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, and mail to: Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan KS 66505-1932.

RARE BIRD ALERT HOTLINES

Kansas (statewide): 316-229-2777

Kansas City Area (incl. W. MO): 785-342-2473

Nebraska (statewide): 402-292-5325

NFHAS Officers and Board Members 1998-9

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Jan Allen, Phoebe Samelson, Beth Tatarko, John Tatarko,
Gerald Weins

(* - Kansas Audubon Council representatives)

Addresses and Phone numbers of Your Elected Representatives - Write or call anytime

Governor Bill Graves: 2nd Floor, State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612 ♦ Kansas Senator or Representative _____: State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612, Phone numbers (during session only) - Senate: 913-296-7300, House: 913-296-7500 ♦ Senator Roberts or Brownback: US Senate, Washington DC 20510 ♦ Representative _____: US House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515 ♦ US Capitol Switchboard : 202-224-3121 ♦

President Bill Clinton, The White House, Washington DC 20500 ♦ Information about progress of a particular piece of legislation can be obtained by calling the following numbers: In Topeka - 800-432-3924; in Washington - 202-225-1772; Audubon Action Line - 800-659-2622, or get the latest on the WWW at <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/aa/>