



the prairie falcon

VOL. 34, No.8
APRIL 2006

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY, P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932

**NOTE: PROGRAM IS SECOND WED. THIS MONTH - WED.,
APRIL 12, 2006, 7:30 P.M. ACKERT HALL, RM. 324**

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S HANDHELD BIRDS: SERIOUS BIRDING MADE SIMPLE

Khara Strum, Graduate Student in Biology, studying shore birds.

National Geographic's "Handheld Birds" is the first ever North American multimedia software program to empower birders of all levels with easy-to-use, mobile and interactive referencing capabilities via a PDA. This robust application includes nearly four hours of premium-quality birdsong and call playback from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (CLO), more than 1,600 bird images and over 650 range maps from the National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America.

Search capabilities based on location (region, month, habitat), size, and color, allow the user to quickly refine their list of possibilities and enhance rapid bird identification. Once a bird is identified and bird sighting information recorded in the checklisting feature, the product allows for easy uploading of bird sighting information to eBird, a central repository of bird sightings at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Become a Citizen Scientist in this partnership between the public and professional scientists while having fun with this interactive, engaging resource.

Meet with our speaker at 5:45 p.m. at the Texas Star Cafe, 12th St. in Aggville, prior to the program.

FIELD TRIP

BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Tom Morgan joins **Patricia Yeager** on this month's Beginning Bird Walk (April 8) to help participants identify **trees and insects**. **Jacque Staats** is hosting the nature walk on her property west of Manhattan. The **spring migrants** should be coming through in full color and song. Patricia will help identify the **birds** by sight and song. Now is a great time for beginners and advanced birders to take their binoculars outside. **JOIN US** - meet at Ackert/Durland parking lot (south side of Ackert, SE of Denison/Claflin intersection)
April 8, 8 a.m. We will return by 11 a.m.

WED., APRIL 12, 2006,
7:30 P.M.
ACKERT HALL, RM. 324
KSU CAMPUS
SE CORNER OF DENISON &
CLAFLIN
(PARKING ON SOUTH SIDE OF
BUILDING IS OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC AFTER 5 P.M.)

INSIDE:

- 2 STARLING
- 3 GOURDS & JEWELRY BOXES
- 4 SKYLIGHT
- 5 TAKE NOTE

CONTRIBUTORS:

DRU CLARKE
PETE COHEN
THOMAS MORGAN

UPCOMING DATES:

- Apr 8 BEGINNING BIRDING**
MEET AT ACKERT/
DURLAND parking lot,
KSU 8A.M. - 11 A.M.
- Apr 12 PROGRAM: 7:30 p.m.**
ACKERT HALL, KSU RM. 324
"HANDHELD BIRDS"
KHARA STRUM
- Apr 22 EARTH DAY**
NATURE WALK, NE PARK
RESTORED PRAIRIE 6 p.m.
MEET AT PARKING LOT off of
KNOX LANE
- Apr 28-30 KANSAS BIRDING FESTIVAL**
Wakefield, KS
www.kansasbirdingfestival.org
- May 13 MIGRATORY BIRD COUNT**
Riley Co. - DAVE RINTOUL
POTT Co. - DORIS BURNETT
(577-2502)

PRINTED BY
CLAFLIN BOOKS & COPIES
MANHATTAN, KS



STARLINGS

All of the European Starlings found today in North America—and they number in the 200 million range—are descendants of approximately 100 birds introduced in New York City's Central Park in the early 1890s. A society dedicated to introducing into America all of the birds mentioned in the works of Shakespeare set these birds free. Today, European Starlings are seen from Alaska to Florida to northern Mexico.

The starling is a European native that breeds as far north as the British Isles, northern Norway, and Russia and as far south as northern Italy and southern France. The progress of this species in North America—with what may have been the first nest site under the eaves of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City—has been nothing short of spectacular. Wintering birds reached northern Florida by 1918, and breeding birds were found in Ontario and Maine by the 1920s. By the 1940s, this species reached the Pacific, and in the 1970s it was spotted in Alaska.

Starlings are associated with man-altered environments, foraging in open country on short, mown, or grazed grassland while avoiding woodlands, arid chaparral, and deserts. Starlings exploit a variety of food sources, taking invertebrates, fruits and berries, grain, and temporarily abundant food such as animal feed or garbage.

Cornell Ornithology Lab



© (Richard Crossley)/VIREO

Starling

Vulgar bird -

*Cloisonne jewel of jet black and green,
Coral, adobe, speckles of pearl,
Enameled loops of glimmering sheen.*

You sound absurd -

*Your syrinx issues mushy, gurgling, hissing chatter,
High, sliding whistles, and for that matter,
An occasional harsh rattle.*

You waddle, too, across the grass

*Like some middle-aged man, stodgy and crass:
Filled with hubris, on you prattle.*

A bird of Shakespeare's,

Brought from the Old World, here,

To fulfill some grandiose plan;

Instead, you - opportunistic alien -

Poured into an empty niche

Surviving wherever you land.

Do you remember where we first met?

It was New Jersey's piedmont,

Threshold to the continent.

And I liked your plump, scrunched shape

And satin feathers, all smooth and lambent.

With disdain, they told me to shun you -

You didn't 'belong': your blood wasn't blue,

No native, you - were we, the people, more so, then?

Now, in Kansas, we meet again;

Can I turn away, not offer you at least a neutral eye?

Go on - Act like a clown, fluff your feathers,

Show your down, and turn more round;

Canary beak, orange leg,

Cloisonne bird - Lay me just one Faberge egg.

Dru Clarke



GOURDS & JEWELRY BOXES

TOM MORGAN



Containers made from bottle gourds were prized, particularly before the advent of clay pottery. These gourds were used as drinking glasses, water bottles, and other kinds of containers. At some point, people realized that gourds can serve as durable bird houses. This gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*) has been grown as a crop for 10,000 years or more.

Gourds dug up by archaeologists in Florida have been dated to 8,100 years ago, and gourds discovered in Mexico were about 9,900 years old. A recent study (PNAS 102:18315-18320) of the DNA of the bottle gourd showed that this gourd was brought to America from Asia. It is impossible to know with certainty that people brought the gourd from Asia, since the gourd can float for a year, retaining its viable seeds, while the north Pacific current could have brought it to the west coast of our continent.

The wild gourds in the genus *Lagenaria* are African. The wild gourd has a thin rind that quickly decays, releasing its seeds. In contrast, the domesticated gourd has a much thicker rind which is more resistant to decay. The domesticated bottle gourd is unable to survive without people, who release the seeds from their imprisonment within the gourd. It seems possible, though unlikely, that someone would have found one of the gourds that washed up on the west coast and released its seeds.

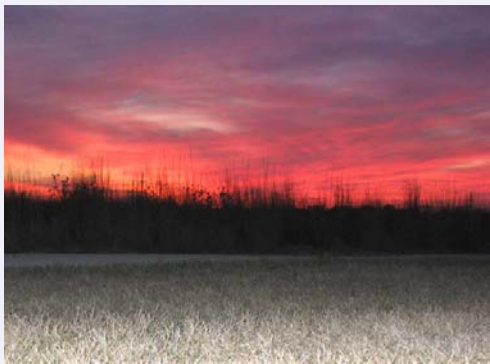
Other studies have shown that domesticated dogs immigrated from Asia, and the dog owners also immigrated from Asia. It is tempting to think that people brought with them their valuable dogs and

their bottle gourds. The bottle gourd appears to have been domesticated twice. The first time it was brought into Asia and then to America. The second time, it was brought into Europe and then to America, where the varieties of bottle gourds brought by the Europeans almost totally replaced the varieties that have been grown here for many thousands of years. This also occurred with the domesticated dogs in America. The breeds of dogs that were introduced by Europeans replaced the dogs that had lived here for thousands of years.

Well, regardless of the details of the intricate history of gourds, they are wondrous crops with their musky scent and night-blooming flowers or so I've been told. I have a packet of seeds, just waiting to be opened, and instructions. Sow the seeds in a mound or little hill and thin to three plants per hill. When the vines are about ten feet long, pinch off the tip of the runners, so they will send out side branches on which female flowers will grow.

Last summer, while shopping in the city where I went to college, my wife and I enjoyed the beautiful craft work in a well known shop in downtown Columbia, Missouri. I could not afford to buy my wife the \$800 jewelry box that she admired, but I did buy her a beautiful bottle gourd that had a doorway cut for a wren. I hung this gourd from a tree, a few steps from our back door. I hope that jewels will inhabit the gourd and please my sweetie with their constant stream of chuckling song.

© 2006 Thomas Morgan



RESCHEDULED: NATURE WALK APRIL 22 - 6 P.M. - Northeast Park

**The Nature Walk that was "snowed" out is now an
EARTH DAY Nature Walk! Please join us!**

Directions to NE Park: Go east on Allen Road off of Tuttle Creek Blvd. This turns into Knox Lane and the Northeast Park entrance is on the right. We will gather near the picnic shelter near the parking lot and then walk around the Audubon's Restored Prairie (about one mile on a circular path).

JUDY ROE



Many moons ago, while in the Army, I spent a year in El Paso, Texas. During that time the various moons diligently conducted their changing full-to-new routines, but during the days the sun's appearances went from dependable to unceasing. A fellow in our outfit, from Illinois, was charmed by this and vowed to settle there, while I began to feel as one who was undergoing a celestial third-degree interrogation, to say nothing of the 100+ degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. Carefully I would look westward at the bare fluted rocks that gave the Organ mountains their name, and never could I detect amid those vertical ridges the slightest tremor or wriggle of discomfort. I regarded them as the "Stoic" mountains.

Now this past winter I had occasion to visit in Arizona, and echoes of that El Paso year joined me. I was told Tucson's sky had delivered no moisture for four months and despite escorting a few pretty clouds showed no intention to change. In Flagstaff, a sign in an outdoors supply store announced that, in late February, "We're giving up on winter," and an accompanying display of summer backpacking equipment proved it. Though above 7000 feet they apparently had had no more snow than in the one shot that we were given in our neck of the Flint Hills.

A sky that is reluctant to blink, let alone cry a little, is as confronting as a person with the same habit. Things dry up and I was reminded of the concept of hell presented in Jean-Paul Sartre's play, "No Exit." He described a hotel room sans windows, mirrors, available water, and lighted without shadows. The only way one could get an extended view of oneself was from one's reflection in the eyes of other people in the room; your image of your self depended upon them. At least the desert provides shadows. So if this spring's skies fill with tumults of clouds and rain, and in the surging streams "the footless boulders leap" (to use Kipling's phrase), I will wave to myself in the resultant puddles and recall the El Paso alternative.

By waving upward on clear April nights, you will obtain at least a winking reply from Jupiter who should be up by about 10 p.m. and Venus should add sparkingly to the comraderie before dawn. Mars has lost much of its late sparkle, remaining barely a match of red for the red eye of Taurus, which with Orion's clear stars are sinking westward toward their summer vacation.

The moon sidles past, just above Saturn on the 6th and gets close enough to Jupiter to trade glows on the 10th, before the two become traveling companions on the 14th. Meanwhile on the 12th the moon passes above Spica while bright Arcturus stands off to the left. On the 16th it seeks the rouged friendship of Antares, and though reduced to scarcely a sliver, boldly dances with Venus low in the dawn of the 24th. By month's end the tilt of their movements gives the moon high ear-tips made of faint Mars to the left and bright white Capella to the right. Saturn is raised above the Geminis as they go feet-forward toward the horizon, with Procyon (of the slim Little Dog constellation) pacing along beneath Saturn. As to Mercury it winks briefly on the 8th, very low westward from Venus in the dawn.

The chief date for the Lyrid meteor shower, producing usually a little, but occasionally a lot, is April 22nd. The little Lyre Bird, or just a plain instrumental Lyre, if you prefer, should sail into the sky about 9 p.m. that evening and reach the meridian, it's highest point, about 4 a.m. It can be found just ahead of the left wing of Cygnus as the large Swan points quite noticeably southward down the Milky Way. In theory, the meteor viewing should get best after midnight because then we'll start spinning forward into the Earth's path, rather than coming up from behind as in the hours prior, and be where more comet dust is being encountered (like moving into the engine of a train going around a curve after riding in a car behind). However when it comes to flocks of meteors, the scenery along on this route is unpredictable.



NORTHEAST PARK BRIDGE DEDICATION

April 24th, 6 p.m.

Recognition will also be given to all who contributed:

Parks staff, Public Works staff, Midwest Concrete, Planning Section Staff and Westar Green Team.

Eddie Eastes, Park Superintendent, City of Manhattan, Parks and Rec. Dept.
1101 Fremont, Manhattan, KS 66502-5400



And check out the new inserts for the kiosks near the Restored Prairie.

“FRIENDS OF WILDCAT CREEK” has formed as an informal organization dedicated to the wellbeing of Wildcat Creek. . Contact Donna Schenck-Hamlin if you are interested.



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



Printed on 100% post-
consumer recycled
paper

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 662
Manhattan, KS 66502

Return Service Requested

Published monthly (except August) by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society
Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520 (cinrancy@ksu.edu)
Also available on the World Wide Web at the URL <http://www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html>

Subscription Information:

Introductory memberships - \$20 per year; then basic membership is \$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. Membership Renewals are handled by the National Audubon Society and should not be sent to NFHAS. Questions about membership? Call toll-free, 1-800-274-4201, or email the National Audubon Society join@audubon.org.

If you do not want to receive the national magazine, but still want to be involved in our local activities, you may subscribe to the **PRAIRIE FALCON** newsletter for \$15 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 HOTLINE: For information on Kansas Birds, subscribe to the Kansas Bird Listserv. Send this message **<subscribe KSBIRD-L>** to this address **<listserv@ksu.edu>** and join in the discussions!

NFHAS Board

President:	Judy Roe	539-5519
Vice President:	Cindy Jeffrey	468-3587
Secretary:		
Treasurer:	Jan Garton	539-3004

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership:	Carla Bishop	539-5129
Program:		
Conservation:		
Northeast Park	Jacque Staats	
Education:	Madonna Stallmann	
	Richard Pitts	
Fieldtrips:	Patricia Yeager	776-9593
Land Preservation:	Jan Garton	539-3004
Public Outreach:	Dolly Gudder	537-4102
Newsletter:	Cindy Jeffrey	468-3587
At-Large Board Members:	John Tatarko, Ingrid Neitfeld, Paul Weidhaas	

Audubon of Kansas Trustee: Hoogy Hoogheem

Addresses & Phone numbers of Your Elected Representatives (anytime)

Write ✉ - or call ☎

Governor Kathleen Sebelius: 2nd Floor, State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612. Kansas Senator or Representative _____: State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612, Ph.# (during session only) - Senate: 785-296-7300, House: 785-296-7500. Senator Roberts <http://roberts.senate.gov> or Brownback: US Senate, Washington DC 20510. Representative _____: US House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515. U.S. Capitol Switchboard : 202-224-3121. President G.W. Bush, 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 WWW at <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/aa/> To find out who represents you go to: www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/mylegis