



# the prairie falcon

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

## RESULTS OF 2006 SPRING MIGRATORY BIRD CENSUS FOR POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY

We had 151 species this year as compared to 133 species for the last two years. We did not add any new species to the county this year but in the past two years we had added 4 species-Va. Rail, Black-bellied Plover, Mourning Warbler and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.

If anyone wants a copy of the count list, send me your address(snail mail) and I will drop you a copy. As most of you know there is no longer anyone in Kansas who collects this data so it is sent to an ebird file. Several states still have an official count and compiler. When Dave Rintoul stopped collecting the data he encouraged county compilers to continue and to send the results to ebird for future accessing. With those thoughts do you consider this a count that we should continue? I am on the fence with my thoughts so I am looking for you input.

Thanks to all who participated this year for all your many hours in the field.

Doris Burnett  
Manhattan, Ks  
Pottawatomie County

Check out the Butterfly Garden at Sojourner Park - it is beautiful, and you might see monarchs, fritillaries, checkerspots, crescents, coppers, etc...  
THANK YOU Susan Blackford for all your hard work.

Also, take a walk on the Cecil Best Trail and into NE Park, where all kinds of wildflowers are blooming!

### VISIT OUR WEBSITE

[www.k-state.edu/audubon](http://www.k-state.edu/audubon)  
to view a color version of this newsletter

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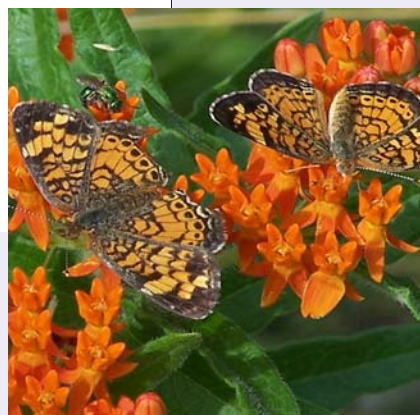
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### CONTRIBUTORS:

DRU CLARKE  
PETE COHEN  
THOMAS MORGAN

### UPCOMING DATES:

NO NEWSLETTER IN AUGUST - LOOK FOR SEPT NEWSLETTER WITH OPENING YEAR EVENT



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## UKAI BIRD

DRU CLARKE

Our pond is full again, thanks to spring rains. The itinerant great blue heron has chosen our neighbor's pond this year, but we had another welcome but decidedly unusual bird arrive in its place. Commonly known as the double crested cormorant, *Phalacrocorax auritus* streamed like a frigate across the broadest reach of the pond as I stood on shore, not quite believing what I was seeing. I prefer its former name, *Corvis marinus*, which means the "sea crow," more appropriate to its habit of cruising over the water and its reliance on that habitat for survival. The common name, "cormorant," is believed to be a (French) corruption of *Corvis marinus*.

As a youngster the first cormorant I learned about was the flightless species native to the Galapagos Islands. Naturally, I extrapolated from that knowledge to cormorants in general and thought that the bird, wherever it was found or whatever its species, was anchored to ground or water. People construct their knowledge based on experiences, so one can imagine the shift of paradigm when I saw my first airborne cormorant.

These are truly odd birds who bend or break the rules established for their feathered kin. Riding low in the water, like a ship



sunk to its gunwales, is due to extra ballast: its bones are dense, not hollow like most birds, which enables them to sink like waterlogged cargo. With one eye open as they drift downward, they can fake out prey and strike quickly with snake-like necks and long,

hooked beaks. They lack the preening gland that waterproofs feathers, so after a dive they must perch and outstretch their wings to air dry before they can fly.

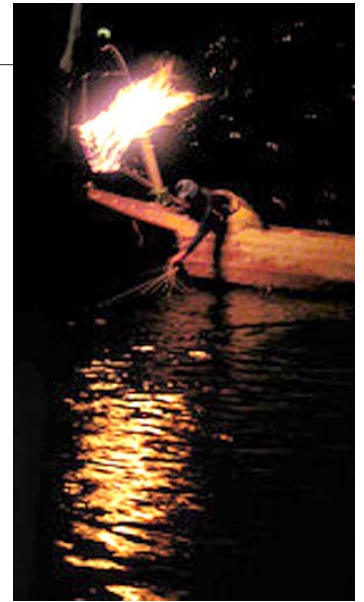


When they do fly, they do so in formation like geese, but are silent. Their primary diet of fish led to their becoming indentured servants of Japanese cormorant fishermen who tether them with leather leashes and metal collars, allowing them to fish after being dropped over the side of the boat. An "usho," or fisherman, may handle ten or twelve cormorants at a time. On boats brightly lit by fires carried in baskets on deck, the fishermen call "hou, hou!" as they slide through the water behind the flotilla of birds. The neck ring keeps them from swallowing their catch, so when brought back aboard, the fish are easily regurgitated from the birds' crops. As payment, each cormorant receives a fish for its night's work. This fishing tradition is called "ukai." In the wild a cormorant may live five years, but as a ukai bird, it may live twenty.

The "double crested" descriptor of this cormorant (there is a Great cormorant and an olivaceous cormorant in North America as well) refers to a mostly elusive punk "do" on its head: these crests are seldom seen. But the species can be identified by its throat pouch color (yellow) and its size (up to 35").

The reason for there being only one on our pond is a puzzle, but it may have been a young bird who somehow went astray from its flock. Sukey, my dog, and I paddled the poke boat well away from where it cruised, although it would fly to the other end of the pond as we moved across that invisible but definite boundary into its territory.

The last day I saw it, it had been roosting on a high branch of a dead elm next to the pond, exploding from it as I crossed into its perceived safe zone. It was conducting reconnaissance of the pond when I left, and I never saw it again. I hope it found Tuttle (Creek Reservoir) and its cormorant brothers and sisters, who, untethered, are fishing there now. "Hou, hou!" good ukai bird.



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## CRAVING MULBERRIES

TOM MORGAN



“When I brought this warm mulberry crunch to the table, everyone was blown away. Not just dessert, but a warm, delicious dessert and I think we all sensed a certain coming together over that dessert – giving up our cranky, hot, exhausted feelings... that dessert changed my life and my expectations.”

*By Seth Bixby Daugherty in “Cooking From the Heart: 100 Great American Chefs Share Recipes They Cherish” (A Share Our Strength Book to Fight Hunger), ed. by Michael Rosen (New York: Broadway Books, 2003)*

Oh, how my mouth watered when I read Seth’s recipe for this mulberry dessert, his experiences gathering the berries, and the reactions of his companions. Yes, as Seth discovered, mulberry has what is needed, when we need it. The mulberries have lots of water, when birds need water, when other creatures, like us, need water. We are a part of this, part of nature. The moist fruit is part of us. We part of it. This particular berry is so rich in moisture, and yet it stains our fingers; its hues become part of us. It enriches us with mysterious pigments that would protect us from the insults of tumultuous living. And so like a bird, I dip my beak; I touch my lips to the moistness. I savor it all greedily, quickly, as the abundant moisture smoothes away all my rough edges.



This berry is not the most delicately flavored, not the most sophisticated, but neither am I. This berry is what I need at this very instant. Ah, the woodchuck longs for these berries, just like me. We all want them, this very instant.

But I would not place an unripe, unpalatable berry on my tongue. The unripe berry contains hallucinogens. What creature would eat a hallucinogenic berry, when he could get inebriated on the real thing, on life itself? Like every creature, I’m greedy for the essence, for what the mulberry reminds me of boyhood, of the greedy reaching out to nature.

Yes, with my fingers stained with juice, I’ll stand under the tree, yelling, Nature, Nature, Nature, I love you.

© 2006 Thomas Morgan



**ANOTHER MILKWEED, WITH A GREY COPPER (I THINK).**

**BUTTERFLY MILKWEED -- WITH PEARL CRESCENTS, CHECKERSPOTS AND A GREY COPPER**





In Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" the character, Nanki-Poo, sings of "a summer of roses and wine." There are, of course, also summers of games and swimming, gardening and mowing, backyard barbecues and fairs, and there are likely countless other such pairings specific to individuals of many species.

Summer is also the time when the aging flowers of spring become background for the pre-autumn appearances of snow-on-the-mountain and asters, when the population of mosquitoes and ticks eases, and when township roads get either too darn dusty or spray up too much mud. Speaking of which, this summer marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Interstate Highway system, whose first mile was laid over by St. Louis.

The *Old Farmer's Almanac* reports it now comprises 1% of the total road mileage in the U.S. and carries 20% of the traffic (though I wonder how accurately one can determine how many vehicles move on the backways – extrapolating fuel usage v. actual traffic counts?). The *Almanac* also has a picture of General Motors' Futurama exhibit that was one of the two wonders I remember from the 1939 World's Fair. One had to ride on already existing parkways to get there, yet its depiction and prediction of stoplight and stop-sign free, multi-lanes and cloverleaf intersections spreading from coast to coast was impressive. It went overboard, though, expecting that before now vehicles would travel collision-free (protected from each other by radio-operated mutual repulsion) and could go across the nation in a day, i.e. at racing speeds.

The other thing I remember was being startled by being snatched about by my father, who felt I'd gotten obliviously too close to one of the elephants giving rides to fairgoers and walking among us pedestrians while doing so, each presumably under the control of a mahout also aboard – another impressive form of transportation.

In the sky this year it will be basically a summer of the Moon and Jupiter, though not totally. Through July and August, Venus' appearances ahead of the dawn will become ever briefer with some

notable occasions. *StarDate* tells that on July 2<sup>nd</sup> she'll be almost between Aldebaran (Taurus' orange eye) and the Pleiades, rather outshining them. Wait till August 20<sup>th</sup> and just before sunrise your eyes can travel in a slight arc down from the Gemini Twins (Castor above Pollux) to the crescent moon, to Venus, then to returning Saturn and Mercury closer to the horizon. The Moon will be close to those two on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Saturn will be above Mercury as they slide toward near pass, or conjunction, on the 26<sup>th</sup>. It could be dicey viewing, since Saturn, more notable than Mercury has only one-fiftieth the brightness of Venus.

Meanwhile, dim Mars will be setting ever earlier in the evening twilight but on July 27<sup>th</sup> you might catch it making the middle of a three-some between a newly appearing Moon and Leo's Regulus on a left-to-right downward slant. For much of the Solar System it could be a summer of binoculars and telescopes, except, as mentioned, for the Moon and Jupiter. The latter, though setting an hour before midnight by the end of August, rides brightly through the evenings, above the Moon on July 5<sup>th</sup>, and below it August 1<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

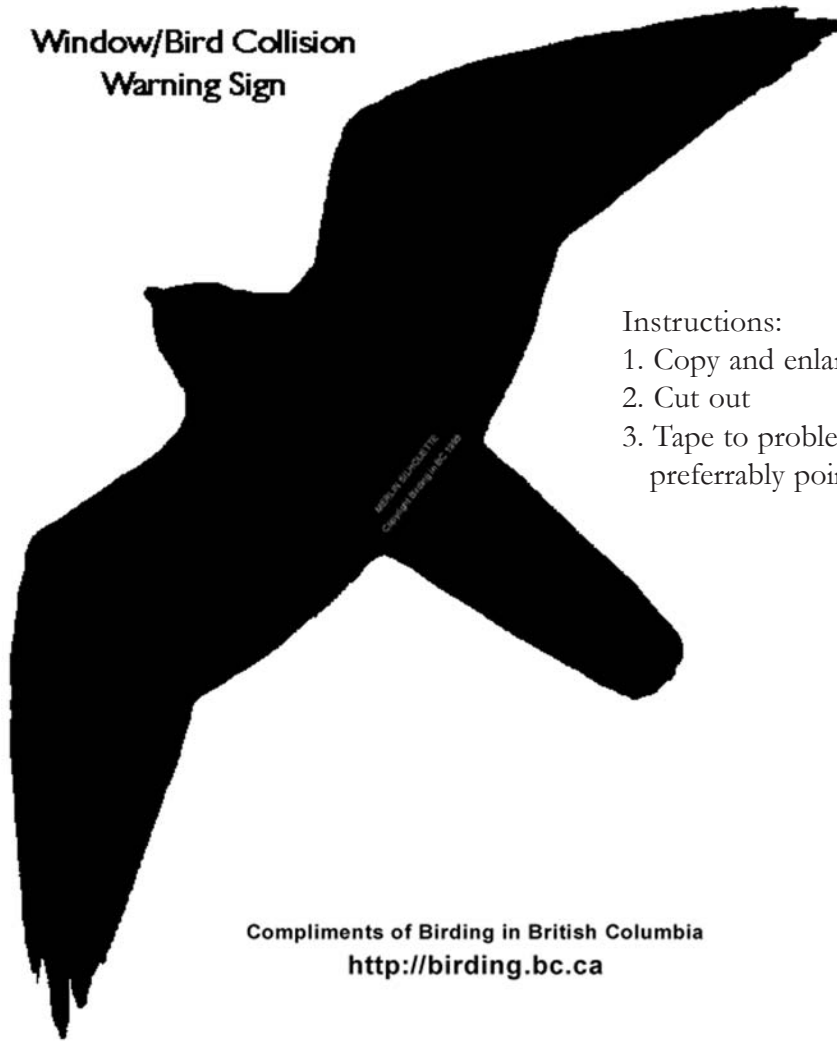
The Moon goes beneath Scorpio's Antares on July 7<sup>th</sup>, then plays leapfrog with the star on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, traveling to its right the one night, then to its left the next. On August 11-13, in a plump gibbous stage, it'll provide an unhandy milky background for spying the meteors of the Perseid shower. Fortunately, for anyone as interested in gem-like beauty as blips of action, bluish Vega should still be visible through the Moon-haze, crossing the midpoint high above about midnight as July begins and about four minutes earlier each night thereafter. And distinct, yellowish Arcturus, in Bootes, can be found as usual by diving off the end of the Big Dipper's handle, though by the end of August it will be setting about an hour before midnight.

The Moon will be new July 24<sup>th</sup> (11p31) and August 23<sup>rd</sup> (2p10); full August 9<sup>th</sup> (5a54).

© 2006 Peter Zachary Cohen



### Window/Bird Collision Warning Sign



#### Instructions:

1. Copy and enlarge
2. Cut out
3. Tape to problem window  
preferably pointing down, as if diving

Compliments of Birding in British Columbia  
<http://birding.bc.ca>

#### TIPS FOR PREVENTING WINDOW/BIRD COLLISIONS

- Keep your windows dirty. The reason the birds fly into windows is because they see the reflections in the glass and don't know about the concept of "glass windows." They think they can fly to whatever is reflected, and then hit the window. Dirt reduces reflections.
- Put a screen on the window.
- Thumb tack shade cloth over the window. Shade cloth can be bought at hardware stores or garden centers. It's a plastic mesh that is easy for you to see through and will keep the windows from having reflections.
- Thumb tack string diagonally across the windows, from corner to corner. Do this for all corners. Then tie strips of cloth or surveyor's tape (colored plastic strips) to the string so that the ends flutter in the wind. You are creating a scarecrow effect on the window.
- Relocate any birdfeeders and houses further from the house so the birds do not see their reflections as much.
- Remember it is NOT what is inside your house that is causing the problem. Keeping your blinds or shades drawn, or putting up a curtain inside will not solve the problem. Changing whatever is inside will not reduce the reflection on the outside. The birds are seeing the reflection of the sky, clouds, trees, birdfeeders, and other things outside. They think they can fly to those things, not realizing there is only a window.



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