



the prairie falcon

Vol. 34, No.3
Nov 2005

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

**JOIN IN THE "FUN" KEEPING
THE MICHEL-ROSS AUDUBON NATURE
PRESERVE CLEAN!**

The annual roadside cleanup of the Michel-Ross Audubon Nature Preserve is planned for Saturday, November 5th at 1 p.m.

We meet at the old Elks building parking lot, 2605 Stagg Hill Road. Don't forget to bring a couple of sturdy trash bags. If someone has a pickup truck to haul the trash to the transfer station, please contact Jan at 539-3004 or jrexcoyote@aol.com.

FIELD TRIP

BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Join us Saturday, Nov. 12th and every second Saturday at 8 a.m. in the Ackert/Durland parking lot on the KSU campus. We will carpool to a local birding hotspot and should return by about 11 a.m. Birders of every age and interest level are welcomed. Children are especially encouraged to attend.

Nov. 5, 2005
MICHEL-ROSS
AUDUBON NATURE
PRESERVE
CLEANUP

INSIDE

- 2 BODY PARTS
- 3 AUTUMN HUES
- 4 SKYLIGHT
- 5 TAKE NOTE

CONTRIBUTORS:

DRU CLARKE
PETE COHEN
THOMAS MORGAN

UPCOMING DATES:

- NOV 5 MICHEL-ROSS
AUDUBON NATURE
PRESERVE CLEANUP
- NOV 12 BEGINNING BIRDING
MEET AT ACKERT/
DURLAND PARKING LOT,
KSU 8A.M. - 11 A.M.
- NOV 23 ORDER BIRDSEED
DEADLINE
- DEC 3 PICKUP BIRDSEED
SALE 9A.M. - 12N
UFM 1221 THURSTON,
MANHATTAN, KS
- DEC 3 CELEBRATE THE TALL
GRASS PRAIRIE
MCDOWELL CREEK
COMMUNITY CENTER
(SEE PG. 5)
- DEC 16 OLSBURG CBC
- DEC 17 MANHATTAN
CHRISTMAS BIRD
CENSUS (MORE INFO IN
DEC. ISSUE)

PRINTED BY
CLAFLIN BOOKS & COPIES
MANHATTAN, KS



BODY PARTS

DRU CLARKE

The gobbler sidled slyly and surreptitiously into our milling group, then, to our amazement, began to shimmy and shake. His glowing, iridescent wings, stiffened in a flamenco dancer's posture, vibrated sensuously, wing feathers quivering and sounding like dozens of tiny, tinny tuning forks struck simultaneously. He did a tight tango, strutting straight ahead, making tight quick turns, in the arena created by his surprised audience. His engorged caruncles – nodules on his neck – burst with blood, his snood flipped and flopped like a burlesque queen's boa, stuck to his beak. This was better than bison, I thought, but said nothing aloud. We were here to check out one man's efforts to preserve the American bison on his slice of prairie in Alta Vista, Kansas, and instead, a tame North American wild turkey was upstaging them. Who expected an oversexed, misguided tom turkey to play warm up for us while the less cooperative bison lolled some distance away? The tom was proximate and hugely entertaining.

No one seemed to know what the long, worm-like fleshy thing was that hung down from the base of his beak, so I raced to "google" turkeys when I got home. (I also called a friend who hunts turkey, and he didn't know either, and he is pretty smart.) So I discovered it was called a "snood." About a week later, I ran into Marilena Ferguson, the illustrious Clyde Ferguson's lovely wife (both of whom had been in the group who witnessed the mincing turkey) in a local lunch place, and told her the "thingy" on the turkey's head was a snood. She turned to her friends, and they began giggling. I was clueless, but thought it must be really dirty for them to be carrying on so. A "snood," they chimed, was the net that was placed over long hair that had been tucked up in the nape of the neck by women in an, er...well...earlier time in our history. I, being recently eligible for social security, did not remember this.

The research emanating from this episode stimulated me into further etymological prying, and I found out about *furculus* as well. Now, this sounded

really dirty to me, but it wasn't. It is the correct name for the sternum (breastbone) found on birds, or, at least, on turkeys. I have a whole wigwam of *furculus*, saved from deceased (baked, broiled, or otherwise grilled) birds in a woven basket and I keep them for special occasions, those times when I need to wish for something really great. Some times I give them away to folks who need a really good wish. Was I going to be daunted in my search for the REALLY dirty word that I lusted for now? Well, I didn't find it, but I did finally discover the name of something that I have always thought was one of the most sensual parts of the human body: are you ready for this?



This "place," more than a "part," is that wonderful indentation beneath the pharynx, and just above the sternum in the human species. It colors slightly with a blush, and pulsates with excitement when something wonderful is about to happen. It looks somehow incomplete or as if a nonessential piece of tissue has evolved away, to leave a space like a large thumbprint. It is inviting in

its soft hollowness, perfectly placed like a punctuation mark to accentuate the human neck and join the clavicles. It is the suprasternal notch, and I am one of the few who know its name. The suprasternal notch – it rolls off your tongue like cream with graham crackers and delights in being whispered. I love to share its name with people. They begin to stare at one another's (notches), as if discovering its existence for the first time. I imagine they are changed forever, privy to a bodily wonder previously unknown to them.

See what one amorous turkey started? May your quest for learning other obscure body parts be as satisfying and, well... as sensual. (As for the bison, they were pretty neat, too. Now that I think about it, I wonder if they have some cool parts to discover?)

© Dru Clarke, 2005



*“Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!”*

From Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem, “Ode to the West Wind,” published in 1820.

The reddish orange leaf, that leaf with spirit fierce, be thou me. When the the wind buffets, I will hold! And though in sadness (even though detached from my weak point, an abscission layer), I will drift on the eddies, displaying brave colors.

All tree leaves are periodically shed, even those of evergreen trees. The leaf has a dangerous task, harnessing the energy of the sunlight. This task damages the leaf. For a tree, it is easier to accept the obsolescence of its photosynthetic structures and recycle their components, rather than repair them. But the mystery of colorful leaves is an enduring one which will inspire poems and dreams and even inspire science as long as mankind exists. The red leaf inspires all.

The accepted wisdom is that the removal of the green pigment (the chlorophyll) unmasks the pure yellow pigments (carotenoids). And some leaves work diligently to make additional pigments (anthocyanins) that give us the gift of incredibly beautiful orange, red, and purple colors. The anthocyanins, are synthesized in response to sunlight.

The sunlit surfaces of the leaves of sugar maple become orange, while more shaded leaves become yellow. When a leaf prepares to die, sunlight signals it to synthesize enzymes which make anthocyanins. And the continuing process of photosynthesis provides photosynthate, the sugar that forms part of an anthocyanin.

Why should a leaf work diligently to produce anthocyanin? Often, it doesn’t matter to me. I passionately love those colors. But like many people, I also enjoy the sense of accomplishment in understanding natural driving forces. I love all of it. I love the mystery and also love the struggle to uncover nuances of the truth.

There are many speculations that might explain why a leaf synthesizes anthocyanin, and most

of these have at least some experimental support. These ideas don’t appear to be mutually exclusive. I enjoy thinking that several of these hypotheses might be at least partially true.

Trees that don’t have symbiotic partners which fix atmospheric nitrogen must recover some of the nitrogen from the chlorophyll molecule. And trees that are experiencing nitrogen deficiency might try to recover more of the nitrogen more quickly from chlorophyll than other trees. When some of the chlorophyll molecules have been degraded and some remain functional, the leaf is vulnerable to being damaged by excessive sunlight. The leaf responds to this by synthesizing anthocyanins, which absorb sunlight and serve as antioxidants.

The abscission layer (a weakened place where the petiole will eventually detach from the tree) prevents transport of sugar, trapping sugar inside the leaf, and stimulating the synthesis of more anthocyanin. The intensity of the coloration could be a signal. The tree might be warning its enemies, “I’ve got wealth to spend on powerful weapons.” And as a policeman, Dirty Harry, says, “Go ahead, make my day.”

Another suggestion might be considered. A colorful tree might be saying, “Look at me, my pockets are empty; I’ve got barely enough nitrogen, and if you attack me, you’re gonna starve.” This is only my own speculation. But the scientists in this area are examining many hypotheses critically and attempting to marshal experimental support. And they have shown that more colorful mountain birch trees experience less damage from insects the following spring. If an embattled tree could contemplate its autumnal hues, perhaps it would echo Shelley’s poetry... “Be thou, Spirit fierce, My spirit!”



SKYLIGHT

PETE COHEN

Alas for those who like who like to go out on a chilly night in November and hope for a good meteor shower from the Leonids – the Moon will be largely there, too, this year, on the night of the 17th into the 18th's dawn, and as you know he does not care to share. Besides we're about 25 years from the next expected every-33-year Leonid extravaganza. But there is a way for all diehards to keep pepped up while out there, anyway, waiting for that rare fireball so bright it might tear a hole in the moonlight, as two of them did before midnight of Leonid eve a few years ago. They can sing this ragtime tune, inspired in part by Tom Lehrer, who switched from teaching Ivy League math to touching ivory keys on the concert stage.

*Get yourself a coat with a collar,
A hat and gloves and don't spare the dollar,
'Cause you're going to wanna be,
You're going to have to be,
Warm if you're going to see What you'll be out to see,
Hoping that there will be
Bright flashes that you can bag,
Doing the Leonid, doing the Leonid,
Doing the Leonid Ra-aa-g*

*Check the date inside an almanac,
Leave your 'scope home in its haversack,
You're going to wanna aim
Faster than it can aim,
This is a quicker game,
Neck-needs-to-swivel game,
Never gets played the same,
Playing celestial tag,
Doing the Leonid, doing the Leonid,
Doing the Leonid ra-aa-g.*

*Staying out there hour after hour
Hoping that you will have a great shower,
'Cause there are no baits to buy
To lure those flashes by;
Keep up a roving eye,
Sleepless and restless eye,
Ready to give that cry:
"I saw one!" Oh, what a brag;
Doing the Leonid, doing the Leonid,
Doing the Leonid ra-aa-g!*

Meanwhile in the east these evenings Aldebaran, the gleaming star-eye of Taurus will be keep coming up burning red hot, but Mars, with light borrowed interest-free from the Sun, will be redly outshining it by a lot. Further NE Capella, the big star of pentagonal Auriga, will still have his white smile glistening, but Mars will still be brighter. At the end of the first week of November Mars will be opposite from the Sun to us, so will rise at sunset and soar till dawn. Way out west Venus will be brighter than any of them at nightfall, but will quit the game and sink away early each evening. *StarDate* says that with binoculars you might spy Mercury very shyly beneath Venus early in the month. At mid-month Mars and the Moon will go eye-to-face in the brightness competition as they cross the sky near each other. Then on the 21st the Moon changes company, rising with Saturn. Jupiter returns to the scene in the early hours near the waning crescent Moon at month's end. Moon is new November 1st, 8p25, full the 15th, 7p57.

© 2005 Peter Zachary Cohen

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR BIRD RESEARCH IN ECUADOR

Want to be part of a scientific expedition and see fantastic birds up close in Ecuador this holiday? Join Dr. Dusti Becker on her expedition to an Ecuador cloud forest and be an Earthwatch volunteer helping her gather data on the birds at the study site for a long term research project. See <http://www.earthwatch.org/expeditions/becker.html> for more information.

Teams run from Dec 28, 2005 - Jan 10, 2006 and Jan 15-28, 2006.



**CARLA BISHOP WITH SOME
"TALL" GRASS**



A WALK IN THE MOONLIT PRAIRIE



THE FLINT HILLS NEAR MARGY STEWART'S

**LITTLE
BLUESTEM**



JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE TALL GRASS PRAIRIE

Friends of McDowell Creek fundraiser:
Bison Chili Supper, Live Music, Barn Dance,
Poetry, Art Auction, and Story-Telling.
SAT., DEC. 3, 2005, 4-10 p.m.,
at McDowell Creek Community Center (3 miles south of I-70, Exit
307, on Lower McDowell Creek Rd., at junction with Old Hwy. 18).
For more information, contact Margy Stewart, 776-8852 or
zzstew@flinthills.com



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