



# the prairie falcon

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

## FULL MOON CAMPOUT AT BIRD RUNNER REFUGE



**MARK YOUR  
CALENDER  
FOR SAT. OCT.  
15<sup>TH</sup>**

Starting in the early evening, we will have a grass identification hike on the tallgrass prairie, a sunset hike and a cook-out and full moon campfire. You may bring your own dinner or we will provide bison burgers, camp beans, cole slaw and drinks for \$5. We will camp overnight in bring-your-own tents, and in the morning you are free to explore different areas of the refuge at your leisure. Bird Runner Refuge is a wildlife refuge established by Margy Stewart in Geary County, south of I-70 off McDowell Creek Road. We will provide directions upon sign-up. Please sign-up by e-mailing Judy Roe ([jroe@ksu.edu](mailto:jroe@ksu.edu)) or calling 785-539-5519



(SEE PG. 2)

**NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON  
SOCIETY PRESENTS  
ANN ZIMMERMAN, A BENEFIT CONCERT  
OCT. 28, 2005  
8 P.M. MANHATTAN ARTS CENTER,  
1520 POYNTZ AVE.**

**CAMPOUT OCT. 15  
CONCERT OCT. 28**

### INSIDE

- 2 ANN ZIMMERMAN CONCERT
- 3 RUNNING BUFFALO CLOVER
- 4 SKYLIGHT
- 6 TAKE NOTE

### CONTRIBUTORS:

PETE COHEN  
THOMAS MORGAN

### UPCOMING DATES:

- Oct 8 BEGINNING BIRDING  
Judy ROE - MEET AT ACKERT/  
DURLAND PARKING LOT,  
KSU 8A.M. - 11 A.M.
- Oct 12 ORDER BIRDSEED DEADLINE
- Oct 15 NFHAS Full Moon Campout  
Bird Runner Refuge
- Oct 22 PICKUP BIRDSEED SALE  
9A.M. - 12N UFM  
1221 THURSTON, MANHATTAN, KS
- Oct 28 ANN ZIMMERMAN CONCERT  
SEE PAGE 2

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## **ANN ZIMMERMAN**

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**NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY BENEFIT  
CONCERT, OCT. 28, 2005, 8 P.M.  
MANHATTAN ARTS CENTER, 1520 POYNTZ AVE.**

She sings the prairie into universal language, with her piano, guitar and that wonderful voice breezing its way into your heart. Kansas singer Ann Zimmerman examines the adventure, joy, tragedy and comedy of life, especially life on the windy plains. Just out with her third recording, "Blue Wild Indigo," and winner of the 2002 and 2003 Flint Hills Gathering songwriting contests, she has taken her Kansas style to New York, Seattle, Boston, Dallas and Alaska and turned each audience into her backup choir. Blending old and new folksongs, cabaret numbers, and her own creations, she masterfully grabs your ear and soon she has your mind, heart and funny bone as well.

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Benefit Concert, Manhattan Arts Center, Oct. 28, 2005, 8 p.m. Call 785-537-4420. Get your tickets now! This is always a sell-out. Tickets are available (\$18) at Clafin Bookstore, Dusty Bookshelf and Manhattan Arts Center.



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### **CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY AND AUDUBON LAUNCH NEW VERSION OF EBIRD**

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon announce the release of eBird 2.0, an updated version of the powerful Internet-based program currently used by thousands of birders. eBird is a free, user-friendly way for birders across North America to record, archive, and share their observations at any hour of the day. It is also an important tool for conservation, providing researchers with a comprehensive picture of the abundance and distribution of birds. The data come to life via eBird's colorful new interactive maps.

In addition to a completely new look and feel, eBird 2.0 has a streamlined data entry process and a suite of new output tools geared toward the interests of today's birders. On customized "My eBird" pages users can now view their life, state and county lists - all generated automatically as individual reports are entered.

Begun in 2002, eBird is growing and changing as it builds a strong base of dedicated observers. eBird already supplies data to researchers across the country, and new ways to extract and interpret information will increase its value as a tool for bird conservation. In the coming years, eBird may have a role to play farther south in gathering information in the Caribbean, Central and South America.

To view eBird 2.0, go to [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) <<http://www.ebird.org>>.



Running buffalo clover (*Trifolium stoloniferum*) is not an economically important clover. But for me, it is a symbol of the influences of unfettered migrations of wild herbivores. It symbolizes the power of the running buffalo.

This species is one of nearly 300 in its genus, *Trifolium*. Similar to the non-native, white clover (*Trifolium repens*), this clover has compound leaves with three leaflets and has white flower heads. Unlike white clover, which invades unfertilized lawns, this clover appears unable to form a symbiosis with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. It can form root nodules, however, which must have been able to harbor symbiotes in some previous era. It inhabits rich soils where symbiotes would be of little or no value.

The megafauna may have dispersed its seed. When buffalo ate its delicious foliage, they ingested its seed-filled fruit heads. And the acid of their digestive system probably dissolved much of its seed coat, allowing the seed to germinate. Like other people who roamed pastures during their childhood, I've noticed that cattle don't graze heavily next to their dung piles, allowing the plants that grow around the edges of those piles to flourish.

Scientists who have documented the steady encroachment of brush into the tallgrass prairie are puzzled by the forces which must have maintained this prairie. Some of these scientists have begun to suspect, that in addition to the effects of fire and grazing, the creation of heterogeneity by wild herds of herbivores is the missing factor in the maintenance of the prairie. The bison sometimes bypassed areas of grass which would later fuel a fire to cleanse the grassland. And sometimes, of course, the herds would graze an area heavily.

What does this have to do with the subject? I seem to hear the drumming of hooves tearing loose divots of sod, creating bare ground which remains after the herds have disappeared into the distance. Running buffalo clover is an inhabitant of the edge between woodland and grassland, an ecotone where it thrives in occasionally disturbed habitat enriched by manure. It tolerates little competition, perhaps because it depended on the occasional passage of herds to graze down its competitors. It also seems to be adapted to survive herbivory and trampling, because it produces runners that set down roots when in contact with soil, thus forming a new portion of itself that can survive independently if cleaved asunder by a hoof.

This endangered species occurred in eastern Kansas and in some portions of Nebraska, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Missouri. There are no remaining populations in Kansas, Nebraska, Arkansas or Illinois. But it still exists. And my wife, MJ, has written, "We noticed this clover in a garden at Swope Park Zoo in Kansas City. Among the other more expected and well-known prairie plants, such as leadplant, purple coneflower, and the tall, sun-warmed grasses turning amber at summer's end, the humble leaves of *Trifolium stoloniferum* caught my eye. It was well past the moment of blossoming, and no round white florescences nestled among the dark green, three-leaved stems to tell me I had spotted a clover. Unless I read the sign, I would not have known at first glance that an endangered clover was hiding at the edges of this habitat. We searched for it in several places but concluded it preferred the edges, the transition zone where it peeped out from below the taller plants."

When I touched its humble leaflets, I seemed to contact something startling, something adapted to herds of large herbivores. I myself felt humbled. In 1775 a visitor in the Kentucky Bluegrass region happened into an area "within a mile of the large buffalo road that ran from Sand Lick to Stamping Ground." About the "trampled lick and in the broad buffalo path," he wrote, "the [soil] was adorned ... with great patches of fine white clover ..."

I felt a resonance to this history. I imagined a tenuous linkage to an even wilder prehistory. I recalled that a short-haired mammoth grazed the grasslands until a short while ago (13,000 years ago which seems only a while ago when one considers relationships). I stared at the leaflets. Yes, you've seen a lot, leaflets of three. You've seen wonders I can't imagine. But you're here close to my fingertips.

The genetic diversity within a population seems to be low for this endangered species, and its vigor could be increased by hybridizing individuals from different populations. Unfortunately, this type of approach is usually considered a desperate, last resort by conservationists. The draft recovery plan for this species can be downloaded from <http://midwest.fws.gov/Endangered>. And comments on the plan which are received by Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> will be considered by the Fish and Wildlife Service.



The July/August issue of the University of Texas' *StarDate* featured an article reporting, among other things, how in the 1700s the British explorer James Cook was astonished to find that natives of New Zealand, Tahiti, and Hawaii, though separated by thousands of miles of open water, spoke the same language. How, without his kind of ships and navigational instruments, had they communicated with each other? Later anthropologists have found evidence of defined trading patterns among many islands widely separated in the vast Pacific. The watercraft that made that possible is another subject; the focus here is on how they were able to disappear over the horizon and find their way from place to place and back again.

It's no longer news that they learned to read the patterns of wind and waves, clouds and birds, and the stars, and read them so well that even under partly cloudy skies the position of one visible star would tell them the position of those unseen. It's not surprising that they began such learning in early childhood, or that not every child could master the requirements, no more than will every child today who takes piano lessons qualify for the concert stage.

The article went on to give the details of the relationship of some stars to some islands, but what struck me most was the thought of what a special situation those pathless pathfinders, going back 1000 and perhaps 3000 years, were in, as they carefully observed the stars. Consider modern day travelers and other risk takers, say farmers and Wall Street traders. All can perform on the basis of a huge amount of information, derived from a world-wide and an even cosmic view, with at least a purported understanding of how the visible universe mechanically works. And yet unless we're working directly with space, most of us depend almost entirely on information that is subject to all kind of mechanical or human error, to which the stars are not. Their workings simply would not change significantly enough to disrupt the expectations of those ancient mariners. From our knowledge of physics we regard that to be a reasonable supposition, but on what basis could they have supposed so? Were the wind patterns and bird populations always so

exact as to offer no suggestion that things can change? How sure did they feel that stars would be as expected tomorrow night. I wonder what they said about that?

And I wonder if the satisfactions they felt – in addition to the relief – when an aimed-for island appeared on the wavy horizon were as great as I think they must have been. It is one thing to get from here to there with the use of road signs and maps and things we can touch and manipulate. I think to do so by utilizing things so ineffably distant, that are not particularly there for our use but part of some grander scheme, is quite another. I've had miniscule experiences of the kind – trying to guide a canoe, on moonless nights, to the proper opening in reed beds guarding a darkly wooded shore. And of course many others of us have had much more heightened experiences than that. But we've had them within the context of modern information. Guiding by the stars without that information, must've been something different altogether.

Unless you plan to be in Spain or Africa on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, when an annular eclipse of the sun will occur, the most different item in the sky this month is likely to be the re-blossoming of Mars, as it rises ever earlier in the evening, in Aries. Brighter than any star, it will come up a half hour after the early rising Hunter's Moon, still plump one day after full, whereupon the two will parade across the sky together. Indeed, Mars had a similar notoriety a couple of years ago, when we came several millions miles closer than the 43M that will separate us now. As a prelude this time, you might discern a slight bite out of the full Moon on the 17<sup>th</sup>, from a partial eclipse at its mostest, about 7 a.m. Thinking back to evening: Capella will be a white brightness in the NE. while whiter and brighter Venus, brighter even than Mars, settles early in Libra in the west.

As to the other wanderers, Mercury will be briefly visible low in the west as Jupiter sets ever earlier, disappearing on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Saturn keeps coming up in the wee hours, to the lower right of the Moon on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Moon is at New October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3p28 to eclipse the Sun; and shows Full to be partially eclipsed on the 17<sup>th</sup>, at 7a14.



## “MY TALLGRASS JOURNEY WITH GORDON PARKS”

Oct. 5-8 Ft. Scott Community College

Gordon Parks Celebration of Culture and Diversity

On Friday, Oct. 7 10:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. “My tallgrass Journey With Gordon Parks” Patricia DuBose Duncan will read her essay “Gordon Parks and Kansas” and show photographs she took when she was commissioned as a guide for Gordon Parks when he was photographing the tallgrass prairie for Life magazine in 1979. Academic Building Round Room, free.

<http://www.gordonparkscenter.org>

### BEGINNING BIRDING ALERT!

We need leaders!! Please think about volunteering for one (or more) months this year. You get to pick the location to go birding. It's just one Saturday! Always the second Saturday of the month. October is already filled - Judy Roe will lead on Oct. 8th. Call Cindy Jeffrey 785-468-3587 or email [cinraney@ksu.edu](mailto:cinraney@ksu.edu) and reserve a Saturday that fits your schedule - Introduce birding to someone new!

### ENJOY THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY MIGRATION



Check out our Butterfly Garden at Sojourner Park, cared for by Susan Blackford.

### FREE MOVIES JUDY ROE

A free outdoor film series is held outside the Hale Library (southside) on Sunday evenings in September and October. The Flint Hills Audubon Society is one of the sponsors. Movies are shown on a large projection screen, with seating on the grass of the Coffman Commons. Discussions will follow each movie showing and tables with information will be provided by each group sponsoring a movie.

You may also purchase a T-shirt with “Movies on the Grass” on the front and our Audubon logo on the back from “Threads” in Aggieville. The NFHAS will receive \$5.50 of the \$18.50 price.

**Oct. 9 - Mardi Gras: Made in China**

**Oct. 16 - Education of Shelby Knox**

Updates to the schedule may be found at [www.ksu.edu/amnestyintl/movies.htm](http://www.ksu.edu/amnestyintl/movies.htm)



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**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](mailto: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!

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**Addresses & Phone numbers of Your Elected Representatives (anytime)**

**Write** ✉ - or call ☎

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