



the prairie falcon

**VOL. 34, No.1
SEPT 2005**

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

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO A SPECIAL PERSON, **CLYDE FERGUSON**



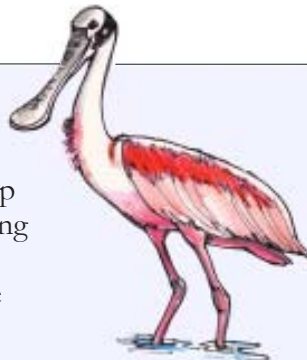
For years, Clyde has almost single-handedly, kept the Birdathon going! This fundraising effort has helped our chapter support various activities - bringing speakers like Michael Forsberg, buying binoculars and

birdbooks for youth, contributing to Bird conservation programs in South America, and helping to pay for this newsletter - to name a few.

So if you see Clyde around town, tell him **THANK YOU** for his amazing contributions to Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society.

WHAT did you SEE?

Doris Burnett spotted a **Roseate Spoonbill** at Fancy Creek, north of Randolph! First, in with a group of egrets, then a few days later with a group of Canada geese, which, by the way, were imitating the Spoonbill -- standing on one leg with their heads tucked under a wing. See a photo by Dave Rintoul at <http://ksbirds.org/Gallery.html>



NOTICE

The NFHAS Board Meetings are now being held at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month at the Bluestem Bistro in Aggieville (when available). Every NFHAS member is welcome to attend!

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CONTRIBUTORS:

DRU CLARKE
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UPCOMING DATES:

- SEPT 11 MOVIES ON THE GRASS
SEE pg. 7
- SEPT 15, 17, 20 "THE EXPEDITION TO FIND THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER: AN INSIDER'S TALE" by Timothy BARKSDALE, SEE pg. 2
FOR TIMES AND LOCATIONS
- SEPT 18 MOVIES ON THE GRASS
"Oil on Ice" SEE pg. 7
- SEPT 27 "THE RACE TO SAVE THE LORD God Bird," MEET AUTHOR Phil HOOSE, PRESENTED BY THE MANHATTAN Public LIBRARY
AT 7 p.m. SEE pg. 2
- OCT 8 BEGINNING BIRDING 8 a.m.
MEET ACKERT PARKING, KSU
- OCT 12 ORDER BIRDSEED DEADLINE
- OCT 15 NFHAS FULL MOON CAMPOUT
BIRD RUNNER REFUGE
SEE BOTTOM pg. 3
- OCT 22 PICKUP BIRDSEED SALE 8-12
- OCT 28 ANN ZIMMERMAN CONCERT
MORE INFO NEXT ISSUE

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MANHATTAN, KS**



“THE RACE TO SAVE THE LORD GOD BIRD”

Don't miss this presentation offered by our wonderful Manhattan Public Library!
Meet Phil Hoose – Author of “The Race to Save the Lord God Bird”

The **Manhattan Public Library** is honored to host a presentation by Phillip Hoose, author of the recently published book “The Race to Save the Lord God Bird.” He will speak at the library on **Tuesday, September 27th at 7 p.m.** Hoose will speak about the disappearance of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the recent sightings of this bird in eastern Arkansas.

A graduate of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, Hoose has been a staff member of the Nature Conservancy since 1977. Through the American Birding Association, he co-founded the Cuba Initiative, a fund to provide materials such as binoculars, field guides and art supplies to bird educators in Cuba. He is a widely acclaimed author of books, essays, stories and songs. His books include, “Hey Little Ant,” co-authored with his daughter Hannah, “We Were There Too! Young People in US History,” “It's Our World Too! and “Hoosiers: the Fabulous Basketball Life of Indiana.” School-aged children and adults will enjoy Hoose's presentation and the dramatic story about the legendary “Lord God Bird.” For more information call the library at 776-4741 or visit the library's events calendar at www.manhattan.lib.ks.us. Mr. Hoose's visit is sponsored by the Manhattan Library Association.

For more information contact: Linda Knupp at 785.776.4171 ext. 129 or E-mail lknupp@manhattan.lib.ks.us

“THE EXPEDITION TO FIND THE IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER: AN INSIDER'S TALE' by TIMOTHY BARKSDALE”

presentations at the following locations:

SEPT 15TH

Pittsburg, KS, Crimson and Gold Ballroom, Student Union,
Pittsburg State University, 7-9 p.m. (\$5 per person donation appreciated).
Sperry-Galligar Audubon (Pittsburg)

SEPT 17TH

Burroughs Audubon Society and the Environmental Studies Program at UMKC are pleased to present the public lecture on Saturday, September 17th at 7 p.m. in Royall Hall on the UMKC campus. Suggested donation is \$5.00 and will benefit the Big Woods Conservation Partnership, a group committed to conserving the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and its habitat. The group includes The Nature Conservancy, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and Birdman Productions LLC, Mr. Barksdale's video production company.

Doors to Royall Hall will open at 6:30 and there is no reserved seating. Seating is limited to 450. In addition, t-shirts imprinted with an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, by local artist Ruth Osa, will be available for purchase. For more information, visit www.burroughs.org or email mail@burroughs.org

SEPT 20TH

Wichita, Great Plains Nature Center, 7:30 p.m. Wichita Audubon



“But everything else was motionless, dry as biscuit, on the brink of burning, hoarding final reservoirs of sap, trying to hold out till the rain returned, and Queen Anne’s lace lay dusty on the surface of the meadows like foam on a painted sea.”

This is from one of MJ’s favorite children’s books, *Tuck Everlasting*, by Natalie Babbitt (1975, Farrar Straus Giroux, NY).

One of my earliest memories is of Queen Anne’s lace covered with dust, and I saw a great deal of it while driving in Missouri this summer. Although my parents have been independent for many years, they have come to rely on their children this summer, and I have traveled to see them in Missouri. In the early morning of July 30th, I drove my wife, MJ, to the train station in Kansas City. I kissed her. And then as I watched her walk through the doorway towards the boarding platform, the world became a desert without any rain.

I had a single purpose. I met my sister, Kathy, in the driest landscape I had seen – a lawn of dusty, brown grass. Our parents had left this home on July 15th and moved into a house two blocks from my sister’s in Sedalia. For sixty years, they had lived in rural homes (in Benton & Platte County), accumulating things that might be useful someday. Now was the time to be liberated from the tyranny of possessions.

The auctioneer had given us beer flats that he had gotten from the liquor store, and we began filling these boxes with items that might be useful to someone. My sister had been working at this for two weeks, and when I returned to my home, she would continue filling boxes until I came back to help her on Aug. 4th.

I cursed as I reached the ragged end of my patience. Kathy and I learned more about each other’s strengths and weaknesses during this work than we had learned in all the previous experiences we had shared. On Friday, we brought in hired help, and ten people hauled the boxes into the yard.

On Aug. 6th, the auctioneers called for bids. Looking into the picture window of the living room, I was arrested by an image of my 86-year-old father, who is nearly blind and has other problems, as he sat in a folding chair with his elbows propped on the brickwork below the window, gazing out with eyes that saw an ending of a way of life. I doubt that he saw me, but there seemed to be an unspoken question in the very dourness of his expression. But hold out, if you can, Father, ‘til the rain.

MJ had been in Chicago visiting our daughters, but the previous evening, I had driven to the train station in La Plata, Missouri to meet her. After parking my van in a swirl of gravel dust, I heard the whistle blow. I had seen the train coming around the bend. It looked like an image in a movie. The rain was coming and I was whole.

MJ is from a somewhat different culture than mine and was seeing her first auction. After the bidding was over, she sat with the older auctioneer and asked him how he got started in this business. As he spoke about his childhood, today’s events became clearer. Larry (the auctioneer) understood Dad’s frugal nature. He had honored him by doing the best job he could.

I remembered the saying, “A people without history is like wind on the buffalo grass.” I remembered the localized droughts that had allowed buffalo grass to dominate this yard, taking over as less hardy grasses had succumbed. It appeared to be dormant, spending its sap with a frugality I could not hope to emulate. Deep down in its inner most structure, it was holding out till the rail.

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SAVE THE DAY.....

Full Moon Campout at Bird Runner Refuge

SAT. OCT. 15th

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) or calling 785-539-5519



SUMMER BLUES

dru clarke

The fourth of July, normally a day of abandon and an excuse for inordinate celebration, was when we lost Ollie, one of our three foals. We found him after a brief but anxious search in the north pasture, led there by his mother, who simply stood and looked down at his prone, still body. We knew it was only a matter of time as he had been born severely and unalterably disabled, but he had shown his mettle and outlasted all of the predicted times of survival; the maximum of 72 hours - 3 days - stretched into 63 days, and we had high hopes of beating the odds. He had done all of the dear and cheerful things that foals, programmed as the horses they will become, do, and he had won our hearts, but his gift was not to last. While we were not surprised, we were profoundly saddened.

The day after the fourth of July was a welcome window of time: it was neither too hot nor too windy nor too wet, a Goldilocks sort of day, meant for trying out different things (no, a nap was out), creating and tasting a new dish (no, this meant cooking), or idling (yes, good choice). I usually camouflage my indolence (and sadness) by employing various guises. Today I would exercise the dogs by taking them for a swim and I would exercise by paddling my poke boat. And, try to get beyond the fourth.

The water in the pond was like old glass, wavy in part, but mostly smooth and unreddened so light illuminated submerged smartweed and gnawed-off trunks of trees long ago consumed by beavers. A few years back, they had built a lodge, and as we slid silently through the water, we could hear the sweet chirps of the kits from within. The splash of a paddle silenced them that day, and it is quiet today because they have moved on to new streams that need damming, at least, from their perspective. The lodge has collapsed into a pile of thick limbs, not unlike an abandoned homestead on the prairie.

Last week we flushed a green heron from its haunt beyond the lodge. It landed heavily, then hunkered down, on a low limb in a nearby tree. We left, and hoped it would return and take up residence where the beavers had previously made their home. Clots of detritus floated by, buoyed by the bubbles of

decay. Silt that once was suspended in the water had been snagged by microscopic filaments of algae and fungi, and spun into rusty brown coats of slime on every twig.* A carpet of the same origin trimmed the shoreline, creating a challenge for those going ashore. I avoided this as long as I could by navigating the far shore where horse mint and Indian hemp dogbane - their respective fragrances vaporizing in perfumed clouds that drifted across the water - shared the mud with false indigo bush. I tried to avoid drifting into the plants as, invariably, spiders would fall into the boat, spinning life-saving lines between my bare legs,

or scuttling toward would-be scuppers that turned out to be - alas! - footholds for my big feet. Today, I returned two spiders - one, a leggy and long-bodied citrus-colored fellow, the other, too small to describe well - to their watery digs, but I'm not sure they were the right ones.. They'll just have to sort this out for themselves.

The latest storms had threatened our spillway dam, but it had held, except much of the stabilizing gravel hauled in and the soft banks flanking its sides now lay below. On a fallen clod of soil were several pale triangles,

lined up in a neat row. I squinted to see them better. More fluttered in, bluer than those resting, and two browns cavorted nearby - butterflies - one of the species of blues who come to the prairie province in summer, "Summer blues." These were probably Melissa Blue, because my field guide's description most closely matches those I saw. The males are blue, the females, brown and orange. The blue males are often seen at puddles, ostensibly scarfing up rare salts (minerals) left behind by the evaporating water. They lay eggs where the larvae will be able to feed on the leaves of legumes, like wild alfalfa. Our pastures are filled with wild alfalfa, so these summer blues belong here. Life belongs here, and death, as well. There are times to celebrate, and times to mourn. The point, it seems to me, is that both should be done well.

Dru Clarke, fifth of July 2005

** These thin slimy layers are termed "biofilms" and are objects of study for aquatic biologists.*





Great Plains Nature Center near Wichita <http://www.gpnc.org/>

Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine photographer Mike Blair has a new personal website mikeblairoutdoors.com, that features a running journal of outdoor activities exclusive to Kansas. He posts a new entry every three or four days on subjects including birds, insects, ecosystems, geology, etc. Particularly, check out the recent posting “egret ballet,” a very unusual photo of a squabble at Quivira NWR. A number of bird-specific articles are also archived.

Professor Mike Haddock is Agriculture Subject Specialist and Chair of the Sciences Department at Kansas State University Libraries. This site contains information and more than 1700 identification photos for some 430 species of forbs, grasses, sedges, rushes, and woody plants that are found growing in Kansas. All photographs were taken by Mike Haddock unless otherwise noted. They may be used for educational purposes but may not be downloaded for commercial use, i.e. to derive profit for yourself or your employer. Author of a book titled “Wildflowers and Grasses of Kansas: A Field Guide” published by the University Press of Kansas in April 2005. Go to:
www.kansaspress.ku.edu/hadwil.html

BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4164950.stm>
Climate change is affecting both bird numbers in the UK and where they live, according to a new report. Experts say new figures - like those which show wading birds are moving eastwards - reveal the true impact of changes such as milder winters. Ornithologists predict warmer weather could threaten some species, while also attracting new ones to Britain. The study is by a range of groups including the RSPB, English Nature and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

In August, members of Congress that will be casting deciding votes will be back home talking with their constituents – like you! All Audubon chapters and Audubon members around the country will be using this opportunity to weigh in with their members of Congress and fight at this critical time for one of the most pristine places left in America! Log on to Audubon’s special “Protect the Arctic” website – accessed via www.audubon.org , or contact Desiree Groves in Audubon’s public policy office in Washington, DC at 202-861-2242, x. 3038 (dgroves@audubon.org) to find out more about how you can help!



If you have an idea or want to submit an article for the Prairie Falcon, the **deadline is the 15th of the month** for the following month’s issue. Mail to Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520 or email cinraney@ksu.edu



'Tis the season when we Northern Hemispherians anticipate the annual joys known as the Harvest Moon – that is, three or four nights running with a significant and long-lasting Lunar presence. The Full Moon now, as always, becomes visible to us head-on at sunset. But the fact that the Moon travels the same direction as we're spinning combined with the angle of the Moon's path relative to the Earth's tilt, provides that the Moon is traveling nearly parallel to our horizon these days. When we spin around through the daylight to overtake it again, for a day or two either side of Full, it's still pretty close to the horizon at sunset, and looking pumpkin plump there. By contrast, the Moon's path is steep to our horizon in March. Then, just the night before Full, the Moon is already high and looking small by dark, an hour and 20 minutes of possible moonlight missed. And on the very next day past full, there's been an hour and 20 minutes of dark before it rises. Coming up now, during the time of the Harvest Moon, each rising around the Full will be only a little over 20 minutes later. Timing, as they say, counts for a lot.

Many astronomers don't grow poetic about the Full Moon, because its brightness blurs the rest of the sky, and when we're face-to-face its features don't provide many shadows for use in various calibrations. Meanwhile in its May 28th issue, *The Economist*, focused on one aspect of the Moon, regardless of its phases, that astronomers are going to have to focus on, and the rest of us should. There is apparently a tug-of-war between people interested in emphasizing returning people to the Moon, and those who would give first priority to probing deeper into space. I saw a T-shirt during the summer declaring, "Go back to the Moon and stay!"

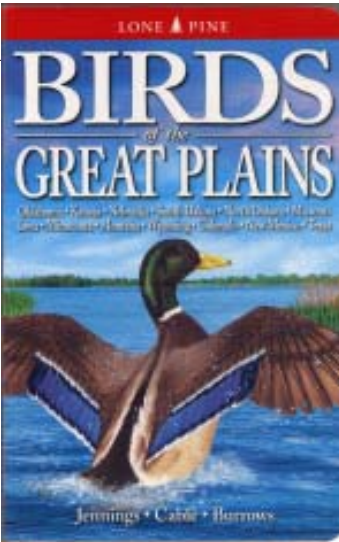
While both sides extol the scientific benefits to be gained by their proposals, the magazine suggested that those who would wear that T-shirt, which would include the current Administration, really have in mind the commercial exploitation of the Moon for its mineral resources and as a platform from which to offer other services. And they are probably right in saying that unanticipated and useful devices might result from such manipulation. On the other hand, better telescopes discovering more and

more of the universe could provide us with much more information, and give a better idea of how to prepare for the future, including how to detect objects that might be on a collision course with Earth in time to do something about them. And would cost a great deal less, leaving more funds for other pursuits. Likely for non-experts choosing sides will be as intuitive as betting on horses, but this could be a very important race.

While the Moon is prepping for its big show, Jupiter and Venus, as noted last time, will be very close in the evening twilight September 1st, and not stray too far apart for over a week after – Venus the brighter. Sharp eyes might catch Mercury just below the last sliver of the waning Moon in the dawn of the 2nd. The returning Moon then joins Venus and Jupiter on the evening of the 6th, with Spica below Venus. And then there's Mars, whose redness is glowing stronger toward a close pass later in the fall. Rising before 11 p.m. on the 1st, *The Old Farmer's Almanac* says it will be up before 10 p.m. at mid-month, whereupon it will stop its apparent eastward motion and begin to retrograde westward as Earth travels on its inner orbit. Aries will be the host constellation. Saturn will appear in the wee hours, rising from about 4 a.m. to a little before 2a30 as the month moves along. It will be between the Moon and Procyon, the Little Dog star, on the 28th.

Just as significantly, and perhaps more so to the ancients, will be the Great Square of Pegasus, turned up like a diamond, and occupying a lot of the eastern sky as darkness settles in early September. Gradually – as we lose 3 minutes of daylight each night—it will be up earlier, and the gown-like shape of Andromeda's stars will sweep away to the NW starting at the left corner of the diamond. And as the nights continue Perseus, like a large Greek letter "pi" in the Milky Way, will also be up by dark, just beyond Andromeda's hem. These are the leaders of the autumn parade. They both announce and keep time of its passage. When Pegasus arrives, so high each evening that the Square begins setting at midnight, winter is officially at hand.

New Moon, September 3rd, 1p45; full, 17th, 9p01. Autumn equinox, 5p23, 22nd.



BOOK REVIEW by ANN FEYERHARM
BIRDS OF THE GREAT PLAINS

Bob JENNING, Ted T. CABLE. ROGER BURROWS

At long last someone's been listening to the frustrations of birders trying to find information about a bird! This book is a must for birding book bags. A compliment to field guides. No one guide can have it all: pictures of each bird in all of its coloring and age stages, habitat info, range, songs, nesting and feeding habits and a handy size to carry into the field, so a book bag is part of the sport.

Simply put, we can readily access a depth of information about a bird in question. The reference guide keeps me from thumbing through the entire book while trying to nail down a species whose family pedigree I've currently forgotten. And all those species that have never graced the Great Plains are conveniently omitted. I need to know what other species are "look or sound-a-likes." And the checklist is an additional plus.

The illustrations and names are large enough to see (for those who need reading glasses and left them home). The interesting habits and history of a particular species will pique the curiosity of my beginning birder grandchildren. And what other guide has a glossary of terms? The appendix is appreciated, although it is generally the territory of more experienced birders, who can identify these "fringe" species. The identification of birding sites in the Great Plains is most helpful in regional travel. However, the map on the back cover showing the boundaries covered by this book, might have included key towns. And speaking of covers, hopefully this one will take the wear and tear of pocket-stuffing, car hood-sitting, and an occasional rain storm. Thanks, authors, for your well-thought through book on the joy of birding!

"... a pelican can hold over 3 gallons of water and fish, which is about two to three times as much as its stomach can hold. This impressive feat inspired Dixon Lanier Merrit to quip, 'A wonderful bird is the pelican, his bill can hold more than his belican!'"

(page 79)

Ann Feyerharm (NFHAS member)

FREE MOVIES
judy ROE

The Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is co-sponsoring "Movies on the Grass," with other local and campus organizations. A free outdoor film series held outside the Hale Library (southside) on Sunday evenings in September and October. Movies will be 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.

Sept. 11 - Hotel Rwanda

Sept. 18 Oil on Ice (NFHAS provides this movie)

Sept 25 - Occupation Dreamland

Oct. 9 - Mardi Gras: Made in China

Oct. 16 - Education of Shelby Knox

"Oil on Ice" is an exploration of the politics of drilling in the Arctic Refuge and will coincide with a key vote on the budget bill in Washington, DC in September. There may also a presentation by Nathan Small of the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance about Otero Mesa, a large (million acre) wild grassland that is also threatened by drilling. Updates to the schedule may be found at 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.

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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