



the prairie falcon

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NOVEMBER 2004

Nov 5, 2004
CONCERT

Nov. 17, 2004
"On Ancient Wings: The
Sandhill Cranes
of North America"
by Michael Forsberg

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

On Ancient Wings:
The Sandhill Cranes of North America
by Michael Forsberg
Cottonwood Room, KSU Union November 17, 2004 7:30 pm

If you attend just one program a year, this is the one. Michael Forsberg has condensed 1000 rolls of film, two file drawers jammed full of research, and 65,000 travel miles to 13 locations in four countries into this special multi-media presentation on the sandhill crane. Michael is a world-class nature photographer and writer, published in National Geographic magazine among many others. His just-released deluxe 168-page book on sandhill cranes will be available for purchase and signing at this event. This program is not to be missed!

Michael Forsberg grew up in Nebraska and works primarily in the prairies of the Great Plains. *On Ancient Wings* is the result of a five-year personal project on sandhill cranes. Mike's photographs have been published worldwide and have won awards in the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year competitions. His fine art photographic prints are found in private and public collections around the world.

Join our speaker at the Gold Fork Restaurant across Anderson Avenue from the Union at 5:45 p.m. for a more personal opportunity to meet one of America's foremost nature photographers.

Before each program, we invite our speakers to join us for an informal dinner and discussion. Feel free to join us this month at Gold Fork Restaurant at 5:45 p.m.. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. Refreshments are served after every meeting. All meetings are open to the public.

Field Trips

BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Join us Saturday, Nov. 13th 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. For more information call Patricia Yeager (776-9593) or e-mail her at pyky@flinthills.com.

INSIDE

- 2 HARVEST
- 3 SASSAFRAS HALLELUJAH
- 4 PRESERVING TALLGRASS PRAIRIE
- 5 SKYLIGHT
- 6 CONSERVE ENERGY
- 7 TAKE NOTE

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UPCOMING DATES:

- Nov 5 CONCERT Ann Zimmerman, Connie Dover & Friends
Manhattan Art Center, 8 p.m.
- Nov 13 Beginning Birding, 8 a.m.
Ackert/Durland Parking Lot
- Nov 17 Program 7:30 p.m.
Cottonwood Rm, KSU UNION
- Nov 20 2nd Bird Feed ORDER
Deadline
- Dec 4 2nd Bird Feed PICKUP
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
UFM, 1221 Thruston

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Half way to November, the acorns from the chinquapin oaks in the gallery forest bordering our north watershed have fallen. Through a combination of gravity and slope, they have accumulated in the now dry creek bed. Over a reach of more than 100 feet lay a flurry of dropped turkey feathers amidst a mash of turkey droppings. Entropy seemed to be at work, the downward spiral of ebbing energy, metaphorically speaking, ending in the bottom of the creek. But, things are not always as they appear.



Chinquapin Oak

In Spring and Summer, sunlight was harvested by the emerging chinquapin leaves. The foliage also sipped carbon dioxide from the air and water from the soil, transported upward by specialized tissues, defying gravity to dizzying heights. Through the magic of chlorophyll, that green catalytic converter, sugars were generated. These sugars nourished the oak's flowers and embryonic acorns which, when plump with flesh bulging inside their thin, brittle shells, succumbed to the same gravity and tumbled down the steep slope to the creek. Discovered by the turkey, they changed into meat, sinew, and feathers.

Today, my husband and I harvest dropped feathers; tomorrow, the turkey. The droppings of the turkey, rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, will fertilize struggling seedlings, offspring from tumbled acorns and assorted other seeds blown in by the wind, washed down by the infrequent rains, or dropped by wayward animals. Small pools will form behind the larger rocks in the stream bed, creating reservoirs from which the water will evaporate or seep slowly into the soil. The seedlings' roots will hold the soil, slowing erosion and the velocity of the water which would otherwise rush through the channel. A seed, wedged in a fracture of a rock, may split the rock as the seedling grows from it, and smaller rocks, then gravel, then smaller mineral particles will add to the fertility of the stream bed.

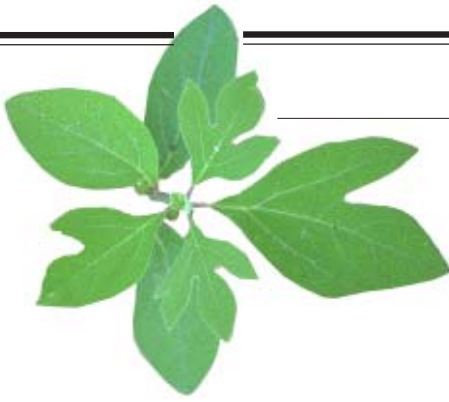
Turkey feathers will decorate our holiday wreath, and the bird from which they fell - round and glistening with drippings from its fat that once was acorn that was once sugars that were once carbon dioxide and water - will grace the center of our holiday table. What was once formless has taken form. We will feast on sunlight.

May your life be rich with small discoveries and plentiful harvests.



© Oct 17, 2004 Dru Clarke

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SASSAFRAS HALLELUJAH!

tom morgan



“Against the Indian summer sky, a tree lifts up its hands and testifies to glory, the glory of a blue October day. Yellow or orange, or blood-orange, or sometimes softest salmon pink, or blotched with bright vermilion, the leaves of the Sassafras prove that not all autumnal splendor is confined to the northern forests.”

By Donald Culross Peattie in A Natural History of trees of Eastern and Central North America.

When I read this to my sweet one, she said, “Peattie must have spent a lot of time in church. Lifting up your hands to testify is how the original Catholic worshipers expressed the Hallelujah, a central part of the Catholic liturgy. And all through the Middle Ages, this was expressed as a shout with the hands raised high and the fingers wide open, like a branching tree.”

And some leaves of a young sassafras are shaped like a mitten with a wide-open thumb. I cannot say whether these leaves are raised to testify, but when I see such a leaf, I will raise my hands with fingers open wide and savor the emotion. Hallelujah!

In moist, well-drained soil in northeastern Kansas, I suspect that sassafras could survive, although it sometimes develops chlorosis in basic soil. Sassafras is native to southeastern Kansas as well as much of the eastern USA. In addition to its mitten-shaped leaf, a young sassafras has two other types, a three-lobed leaf and a single-lobed leaf. I love to pluck a young, tender, single-lobed leaf from a branch and pop it into my mouth on a warm, dry day. It imparts a pure pleasure like no other as the taste gently stimulates the flow of saliva in my mouth. My fiancée, MJ, reading over my shoulder, says I must mention the root beer-like taste, ... although I don't think that those leaves taste like anything else I've ever experienced.

Dried sassafras leaves are traditionally added just before serving to thicken a bowl of Creole gumbo. Unfortunately, the dried leaves, that you obtain commercially, will have been subjected to a process that removes the safrole (which is reputed to be carcinogenic), and this diminishes the flavor. Although the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chippewa used dried sassafras leaves to flavor their stews since time immemorial, the popularity of sassafras products has experienced fluctuations ever since the advent of Europeans on this continent. An unabashed enthusiasm in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was followed by disillusionment when the

root bark oil proved unable to cure all of the ailments known to humanity. In the twentieth century, very high doses of safrole, the main component of the root bark extract, were found to be carcinogenic. A high percentage of the compounds that exist in nature are now known to be carcinogenic at such doses, however, and some people are beginning to accept that the effect of such doses provides no information about the safety of smaller doses. The popularity of sassafras products may continue to change, and I suspect that more people will begin to enjoy sassafras products again.

As I amble along a woodland trail in springtime, I savor the taste of a tender leaf and enjoy thinking that animals such as deer also savor the taste. I find none of this flavor in the leaves in early fall. Instead, I discover that the reddish stems (that once held the berries that the songbirds have greedily consumed) have an incredibly exquisite flavor, just waiting for liberation, as I chew the fibers, liberating that root beer-like taste. And MJ smiles now, as she reads over my shoulder.

This tree's wood has a faint aroma, and was used to construct bedsteads which were believed to promote restful sleep. The wood is rot resistant, and was used for constructing windowsills. On October 3rd, I enjoyed the colorful foliage of the young sassafras trees that grew profusely beside a trail in Illinois on a steep bluff above the flood plain of the Mississippi. The beauty of that profusion of colorful foliage made me think of a ladder made of sassafras that my father often climbed to reach the haymow when I was a child. And sassafras has now provided a ladder on which nature has climbed into my soul. As I mentioned this to MJ, I wanted to savor all the nuances, all the realities of sassafras, and all the nuances, all the realities of love. I wanted to testify.

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Nov. 2004 pg 3



PRESERVING TALL GRASS PRAIRIE ONE STEP AT A TIME

charlie griffin

The Kansas Land Trust, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a Flint Hills landowner, is pleased to announce an opportunity to protect more than 200 acres of the Flint Hills. We are reaching out to conservationists across our state who understand the value of this unique ecosystem and want to be a part of this effort to preserve our native prairie forever.

The oldest land trust in our state devoted entirely to conserving Kansas lands, the Kansas Land Trust is prepared to work with landowners and others to protect scenic and biological treasures. KLT currently holds a conservation easement on Flint Hills land adjacent to the Konza Preserve. Now with your help, we have an opportunity to protect an additional parcel northwest of Manhattan.

The Kansas Land Trust, the property owner, and the United States Department of Agriculture will be working together to protect 205 acres of Flint Hills tallgrass prairie. Of the total easement value, the landowner and KLT must contribute twenty-five percent each, and the USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) will match that total. This means that every dollar we contribute to this project is matched by two dollars from USDA and an easement value donation from the landowner of one more dollar. Collaborative efforts like this, joining government, non-profit, and individual support are the growing trend for large landscape protection. When we combine our resources, we can complete so much more of this important work.

The land parcel is all native tall grass prairie, with the exception of the immediate home and farmstead. The hilly Flint Hills pastureland consists of upper grass covered highlands with a central creek drainage with mixed timber, meadows and a 3 acre pond. The land was grazed by cattle continuously "as far back as anyone in the neighborhood remembers," conceivably since the 1800's. It's not been grazed the past four seasons, offering a period of recovery and haying off the top meadows for brush control. And of course, like

much of the pasture in the Flint Hills, the land has been burned in the spring most years.

As the landowners, Charlie Griffin and Denise Wyrick, said, "We're nurtured in so many ways by this land, so we also feel a responsibility in return. The raging debate about wind energy development through the Flint Hills heightened our understanding of the difficulty of preserving that sacredness beyond the immediate reach of our ownership, finances, and political influence. The notion of a conservation easement suddenly offered a clear and obvious approach to ensure that this land could remain as prairie in its native state regardless of other development in the area. While we might not be able to control what happens in the region and what happens on others' land, there was no need to feel helpless about preservation and protection of our own land. It simply takes a clear decision that it is important and worthwhile."

KLT invites Audubon members to join Charlie Griffin and Denise Wyrick on Saturday, November 6, and Sunday, November 7, for two events. On Saturday evening, from 6:30 to 8:30, we'll be hosting a wine and cheese reception and viewing an art show at the Strecker-Nelson Gallery in downtown Manhattan, upstairs at 406 1/2 Poyntz Avenue. At 10 a.m. Sunday morning, we invite you to join us for a prairie walk with KLT President and prairie expert Dr. Kelly Kindscher to visit the parcel of land that we are working to preserve. A map to the site will be available at the Saturday reception, or you can contact Charlie at 785-532-2025, cgriffin@ksu.edu.

Please join Kansas Land Trust in our efforts to preserve these spectacular and soothing landscapes. The 200-acre parcel we are raising funds for today is just our first effort to leverage federal funding for protection of this important ecosystem.

Charlie Griffin





Vaughn Monroe, whose voice seemed deep in a tight throat, sang very popularly of a cowpoke who saw in a dark and stormy sky a stampeding herd of red-eyed cattle – “Their brands were still on fire and their hooves were made of steel” – being chased in endless futility by a crowd of gaunt sweat-soaked “Ghost Riders in the Sky,” one of whom shouted to him that unless he changed his ways such would be his fate.

Wagner’s 1843 opera, *Der fliegende Hollander* makes use of another weather-borne omen sometimes observed aloft, that of the sailing ship, The Flying Dutchman. Its wind-bedeveled captain swore impiously that he would beat his way around the Cape of Good Hope even if it took an eternity, and now he is being set to the task.

In other words the eyes can see more above us than the finest of modern instruments can detect. One of the grimmest of such visions occurs in Ambrose Bierce’s short story, “The Horseman in the Sky”. The setting is the family-splitting Civil War, in which an embattled young soldier on one side (it does not matter which) shoots his mounted officer father on the other. The father is high on embankment when hit, and the shift of his weight pulls the horse off the narrow trail. The skylighted silhouette of horse and rider comes plummeting toward the soldier.

In searching for something cheerier one might come first on the sight of handsome Perseus dropping out of the sky to rescue Princess Andromeda from the sea monster. She has been chained on the coast by her parents, Queen Cassiopeia and King Cepheus, as a necessary sacrifice to save their kingdom from a flooding ordained by the sea nymphs, enraged at Cassiopeia’s brag that she was the most beautiful of creatures. Perseus carries with him the head of Medusa with its petrifying stare in tact. He has recently used a mirrored shield to protect himself while severing it, and now he uses the head to turn the monster to stone, and slashes Andromeda’s chains with his golden sword. At the same time, Medusa’s dripping

blood, coming in contact with Poseidon (ruler of the sea), immediately engenders the birth of the winged horse, Pegasus, so that all three can fly off safely together. A macabre romance at best, but at least it ends upbeat.

A more recent myth began by combining such supernatural powers into the muscles and eyes of Superman, whose red cape goes streaking across the sky in the service not only of rescue, but also justice.

And now another of the recent, and cheerier, visions has begun reappearing, earlier and earlier in a kind of marketing precession. “On Donner, and Blitzen...” Meanwhile on view throughout the autumn are nearly all the actors in the story of Andromeda’s rescue. In stellar reality the Great Square of Pegasus’ body, spans about a fist and a half of sky overhead these evenings. From the Square’s upper left star Andromeda’s narrow gown spreads in a curve further left where it comes in contact with the more sparkly and more ambiguous Square-sized array of Perseus, fully immersed in the Milky Way. Cassiopeia is the obvious W in the Milky Way further north. She is looking toward the much dimmer Cepheus who is a square topped by a triangle, whose apex is not far from Polaris. And looking now downward from Andromeda, past the brief Ram, Aries, and past the faint Pisces stretched under both she and Pegasus, we come, near the horizon, to another long reach of mostly dim stars that make up Cetus the Whale, a/k/a sea monster. These latter creatures are so tenuous that for further details, sky maps would save a great deal of words and time. Regards other phenomena, *StarDate* advises that bright Altair can be located, high above the Moon November 15th, and sharp eyes may find Mercury in the SW evening twilight of the 20th. The Leonids compete with a half Moon November 17th, and the Geminids as usual should be at their best from early evening to dawn December 13th -14th. Venus is a constant dawn skymark, very close to Mars on December 5-7th, with Jupiter (in Virgo) and the Moon also pairing up in the 7th’s dawn. Saturn will be evening-prominent in Gemini. New Moon November 26th, full December 11th.



CONSERVE ENERGY

jan garton

According to the Energy Star website, if all American households replaced their five most heavily used incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient lights, it would be like taking 8 million cars off the road for a year – or closing down 21 power plants. The benefit? Keeping more than 1 trillion pounds of global warming gases out of the air.

What a waste! The standard incandescent bulb (which hasn't changed significantly since Thomas Edison invented it) wastes 90 percent of the energy it uses producing unwanted heat.

What's a watt? Surprise! It's not a measure of light output, but of energy used (1/746 horsepower). Look at the lumens if you want to find out how much light a bulb produces.

The incandescent-CFL equation. CFLs (compact fluorescent bulbs) use about a quarter to a third of the watts that incandescent bulbs do to produce the same amount of light. So if you're replacing a 75 watt incandescent, look for a 20 to 25 watt CFL. To confirm that the light output is the same, compare the lumens listed on the packages. And CFLs don't have any of the disadvantages associated with fluorescents from the old days. They turn on instantly, don't buzz or flicker, come in a range of light tones (including the warmer tone associated with incandescent bulbs) and screw into standard light fixtures.

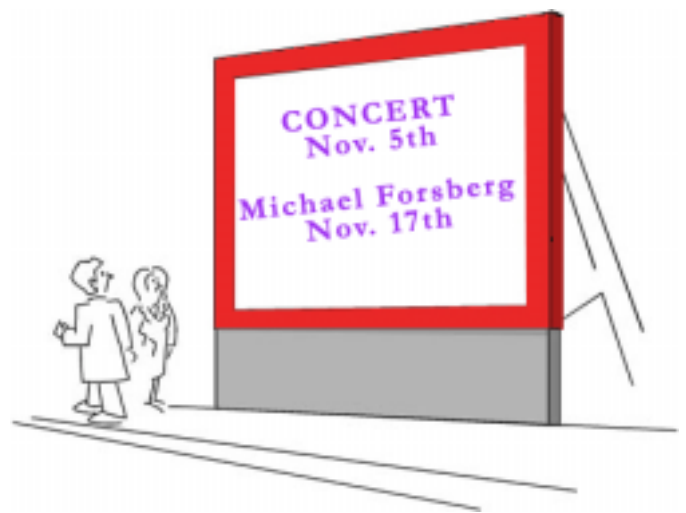
Cheaper in the long run. Though more expensive to purchase than incandescent bulbs, CFLs save money in the end because they use one-fourth the energy of incandescents and last four to six times longer. You only need to replace them every four to ten years.

DON'T MISS THESE TWO EVENTS!

**Nov. 5th - Another Great Concert -
with Ann Zimmerman, Connie Dover
& Friends, at the Manhattan Art
Center, 8 p.m.**



Pine Needle
Basket
RAFFLE PRIZE



**THEN on Nov. 17th -
Our program features renowned
photographer Michael Forsberg -
a wonderful presentation
focused on Cranes -
Cottonwood Room at the KSU
Union at 7:30 p.m.**





BUTTERFLY GARDEN in NEED

Our Butterfly Garden in Sojourner Park!! **Fall cleanup** - scheduled for Nov. 14th. Madonna Stallmann has for five years nurtured this lovely garden into a wonderful butterfly respite - she is no longer able to care for it, and we are looking for “Friends of the Butterfly Garden” to help keep it going. Are you one?

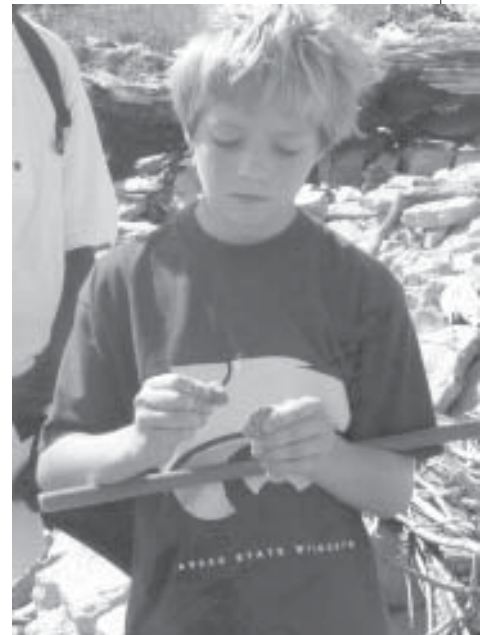
Join us at 1 p.m on Nov. 14th, and volunteer!

Look interesting? Call Richard Pitts at 776-1234 for information on other family outdoor activities & educational activities for kids.

Images from the Sept. 18th Family Campout!



Look what I found! Is this a fossil? Can I keep it?



Entomologist Bobby Brown talking about identifying butterflies

Wonder Workshop
Richard Pitts



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Michael Forsberg
Cottonwood Rm
KSU Union 7:30 p.m.

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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 Listserve. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to this address <listserv@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions!

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