

“RAIN TO RECREATION”

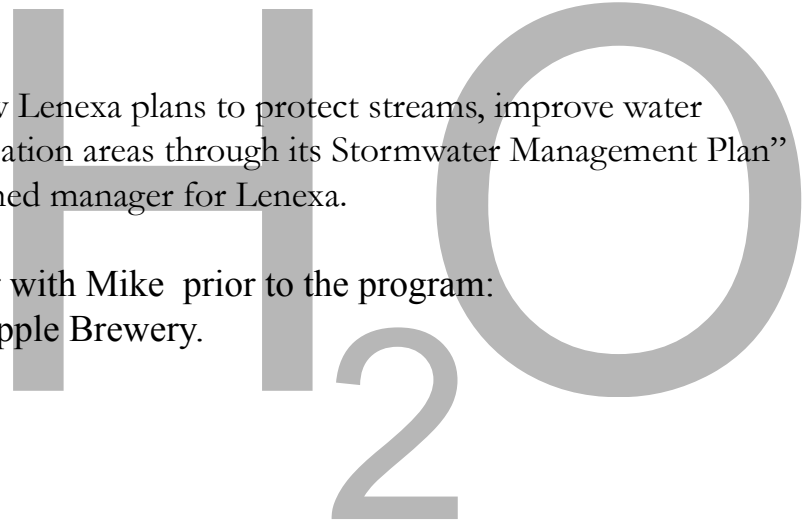
MIKE BEEZHOLD

FEBRUARY 21, 2007

7:00 P.M. MANHATTAN PUBLIC LIBRARY
AUDITORIUM, 2ND FLOOR

Rain to Recreation - How Lenexa plans to protect streams, improve water quality, and provide recreation areas through its Stormwater Management Plan” Mike Beezhold is watershed manager for Lenexa.

Please join us for dinner with Mike prior to the program:
5:45 p.m. at the Little Apple Brewery.



NORTHERN Flint Hills Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 1972, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1972



PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 35, No. 6 ~ FEBRUARY 2007

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DRU CLARKE

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PETE COHEN

5- TAKE NOTE:

Upcoming Events:

- FEB. 1 NFHAS BOARD MTG. 7:00 p.m.
HOME OF TOM & MJ MORGAN
- FEB. 10 NO BEGINNING BIRDING THIS MONTH
- FEB. 21 “RAIN TO RECREATION” A SUCCESS STORY
of civic planning and healthy water
Mike BEEZHOLD, MANHATTAN PUBLIC LIBRARY
- MAR. 1 NFHAS BOARD MTG. 7:00 p.m.
HOME OF TOM & MJ MORGAN
- MAR. 10 BEGINNING BIRDING, MEET AT
ACKERT PARKING LOT AT 8 A.M.
- MAR. - APRIL MIGRATION TIME FOR
WATERFOWL AND SANDHILL CRANES

SNOW ANGELS

DRU CLARKE



Finally – a skiff of snow! It covers the prairie that for all the world had looked like boiled wool, its tangled threads of fibrous grasses catching the flakes in its matrix. It looks, well...pretty, but we are thankful, too, for the moisture it will give when a thaw allows it to replenish the parched soil.

I drive more slowly over country roads after a snow, not just because there are treacherous patches



that challenge even expert drivers, but to see better the tracks left by itinerant animals who follow and cross these manmade trails. They seem to appreciate at least this intrusion into their habitat, for roads eliminate obstructions and smooth the way. Country roads are revealed as virtual freeways for fellow travelers after a snow.

One winter – the one in which I set up the motion-sensing cameras – I made casts of every track I could find in the snow. I'd have containers of water and plaster

of Paris and assorted utensils for stirring, pouring, and shaping stashed in my van. I finally gave it up after the container of powder spilled, then got wet on the carpet, but I still went out of my way to look for tracks: it provided a reason to “waste time” outside.

Most tracks were linear, purposeful, directional: straight to a water source or to potential shelter. Some stopped abruptly, the track maker plucked from above. Remembering the species (or at least, class or genus) I count among them raccoon, coyote, opossum, fox, pack rat (the “glitter weaver” who festoons its nest with bright objects), squirrel, deer, turkey, mouse or vole (with tail trails as well), assorted small birds, and bobcat. This last one made the hair stand up on my neck. One odd “track” found at the base of one of my mounted cameras looked more like a snow angel than a footprint, and it was, indeed, from a sort of snow angel. When I had the film developed, a barred owl stared into the camera lens from a splayed posture in the snow. It had probably been after prey and crashed, then sprawled in the white drift with its wings unfurled.

Occasionally I find really huge snow angels, created by an itchy-hided horse who has been rolling and scratching on the cool substrate.

Driving in town, I once passed a yard where an entire family had lain in the snow and swished their arms and legs to create a whole line of angels. They ranged in size from very large to very small. It made me smile.

So, while we may curse big snows, appreciate the moisture and the opportunity to go out into it and make snow angels. It will make even those who grouse at the snow smile when they see them.

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WINTER FINDS



Snowy Owl, Ft. Riley, Nov. 2006



“I observed the snowy owl off of old Hwy 82 on Ft. Riley - sitting on a partial housing structure that was made for troop training purposes. The owl allowed me to sneak within 50 yards of it to take the pictures... It was a fall burn area mostly void of significant vegetation. The owl flew about 200 yards away and sat on a fence post for about the next 20 minutes.” Jason Harrold, Ft. Riley Game Warden.



Sleeping Canada geese on the lower ponds -
Tuttle Creek State Park, Jan. 20, 2007



Tuttle Creek Reservoir, near the outlet tubes,
Jan. 17, 2007

The “easy” finds!

It seems that few things are ever fully discovered. The remains of a ship (over 500 feet long) that went down off the Greek island of Antikythera over 2000 years ago, was found by a sponge diver in 1900. Most prominent among its cargo were marble and bronze statues, but several months later an archaeologist noted something interesting amid the rest of the salvage, and an encrusted piece of junk soon became known as the Antikythera Mechanism and, with the improvement of investigative tools, has been the subject of periodic revelations ever since. An international conference on the item was held this past autumn.

In a small cabinet, about the size of a shoe box, have been gradually found a variety of gears, now to the number of 30, exquisitely formed and arranged to be able to describe the appearance of the sky for any date forward or backward, including the occurrences of eclipses and allowing for the Moon's elliptical orbit and its Metonic cycle.

Every 19 years, the equivalent of 235 lunar months, the Moon's phases begin to occur again on the same dates – this was discerned about 2500 years ago by an Athenian astronomer named Meton, and is an observation now used by more than one religion for dating rituals.

According to the Washington Post's recent story on the Mechanism, the arrangement has been found to use a number of epicyclical gears – turning around centers that themselves travel in larger cycles – and experts believe it must have been but one of a number of such devices manufactured at the time. An arrangement of epicycles was used by Claudius Ptolemy two or three hundred years later to diagram his concept of the cosmos.

So what remains to be discovered in this case are more of such mechanisms, an understanding of their source, an explanation of why they ceased to appear, and a better grasp of the social conditions which engendered them. It seems very likely that sky happenings were much more a part of the lives of people then than now, and what differences might have flowed from that? Are there relationships within the Mechanism that haven't been decoded yet?

From other sources, it seems what the Antikythera Mechanism would tell us about the coming month is this: Saturn rules. Even though it will be canted edgewise to us, and therefore won't appear as bright as can be, it will be up from dusk to dawn. On the 1st it will be notable beneath the Moon (with the Gemini Twins notable above the Moon, and the star Procyon off to the right). On the 2nd Saturn will be above the Moon and *StarDate* tells us (as I don't think the Mechanism could) that Saturn will be 3100 times further away than the Moon, and Leo's main star, Regulus, which will be below the Moon, will be glowing from 600,000 times farther than Saturn. At the other end of February, on the 28th, the Gemini Twins, the Moon, Saturn, and Regulus will appear lined up vertically in the eastern sky 90 minutes after sunset.

Meanwhile, Venus will be the evening star, hanging around ever later in the west, and crossing from Aquarius into Pisces in the process. On the 19th Venus will have a notable visit with the Moon (though from 600 times further away).

For the first twelve days of the month, according to *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, Mercury will be visible between Venus and western horizon – Venus will be setting from about 7p30 to 8 pm during that time. On the 11th Jupiter will be to the Moon's left with Scorpio's Antares between them, and on the 14th Mars will be present but hard to find about 10 degrees (about the width of an extended fist) to the Moon's left in the dawn light.

Aries, though part of the Zodiac, is essentially a small constellation of only three easily detectable stars so doesn't draw much mention, thus it's a pleasure to report it could be find-able to the Moon's upper right on the 21st. Aries extends only about 15 degrees across the sky (a fist and a half). It's main three stars make a bent line, the brightest much closer to the one to its right than to the left.

Full moon 12a45 the 2nd (night of the 1st); new 11a14 the 17th.



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CATS



INDOORS

Each year, millions of cats are run over by cars, mauled by dogs, poisoned and lost. Hundreds of millions of birds and small mammals are killed annually by free-roaming cats. The suffering of both cats and birds is all the more tragic because it is so unnecessary.

Today's cat owners face an important decision: "Should I keep my cat indoors?" For your cat's sake, and that of the birds and other wildlife in your neighborhood, the answer to that question must be "yes!"

A descendant of the wild cat of Africa and southwestern Asia, the domestic cat instinctively hunts and captures prey. However, wildlife in the Western Hemisphere did not evolve in the presence of a small, abundant predator like the domestic cat, and thus did not develop defenses against them. Cats were introduced in North America by European immigrants only a few hundred years ago.

While cats may instinctively hunt wildlife, it is clear that they are not adapted to life in the wild as are our native wild cats like the bobcat and mountain lion. Outdoor domestic cat populations are most commonly found in and around human settlements; most do not survive without direct or indirect support by humans. They are in this way very different from native predators.

Keeping Cats Indoors is for the Cats.

<http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/>

<http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/brochure/brochure.htm>

STILL NEED HELP!

Vacancies on our Board - Treasurer, Program chair, Education Chair, and Conservation Chair.

There will be

NO BIRDSEED SALE IN FEBRUARY

due to no one available to take the orders. SO still need someone to take over the Birdseed Sales (taking orders and ordering the seed for pickup.) This only occurs three times during the year -- in October, December, and again in February. Volunteers help on the day of pickup.

Please contact Patricia Yeager at 776-9593.



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Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520. (cinraney@ksu.edu)
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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/yr. Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, and mail to: Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS, 66502-1932.

RARE BIRD HOTLINE: For information on Kansas Birds, subscribe to the Kansas Bird Listserv. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to <list_serve@ksu.edu> and join in the discussions.

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