

# “PRAIRIE CHICKEN BOOMING”

’Tis the season for Greater Prairie Chickens to return to their leks and find a mate. The dancing and prancing is a “must see” for any birder and you don’t have to travel far to see them! They are right here in the Flint Hills.

The Konza Prairie Biological Station has a blind on a lek, and visitors (accompanied by a docent) are invited to watch this display. You must make a reservation as space in the blind is limited. You will meet early, before sunrise, to be in place in the blind before the birds come in and stay until they have flushed. (Anyone arriving without a reservation will not be allowed to visit the lek.)

**The Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is sponsoring the first 20 members to make a reservation through Konza Prairie during the week of Saturday, March 24th through Friday March 30th.**

**Don’t miss this great opportunity “right in our own backyard!” See page 3**

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



## PRAIRIE FALCON

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER

Vol. 35, No. 7 ~ MARCH 2007

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NANCY CRENSHAW-MILLER

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### Upcoming Events:

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  
WATERFOWL AND SANDHILL CRANES  
AND PRAIRIE CHICKENS

HEADSUP -

April 28-29 - ANNUAL BIRDATHON  
May 12 is MIGRATORY BIRD COUNT

## CRANES, PRAIRIE CHICKENS, AND SAGE GROUSE



March and into April is the height of the migration for waterfowl - and especially Sandhills Cranes! If you have never been to the Platte River during their stopover, you are missing an incredible sight - a birding "must do." There are several ways to do it, but quietly watching from a blind - seeing them wake up early in the morning is awesome. Check out The Rowe Sanctuary or Crane Meadows Nature Center:

### Rowe Sanctuary Crane Viewing 2007

<http://www.rowsanctuary.org/viewing>

Reservations can be made by calling between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. CST, M - F, starting January 2nd, 2007.

To make reservations or if you have questions, please call 308-468-5282.

Every morning and evening from Saturday, March 3 through Sunday, April 8.

(Note: Please call for availability during the Rivers & Wildlife Celebration, which will be held March 16 - 18.)

### Fees:

\$20.00/person (price does not include tax)

Payment must be made in advance by check or credit card (Visa or Master Card only) - Cancellations are refundable up to 48 hours prior to the trip.

### Crane Meadows Nature Center

9325 S. Alda Road

Wood River, NE 68883

Phone: 308-382-1820

Fax: 308-382-4522

E-mail: [info@cranemeadows.org](mailto:info@cranemeadows.org)

Location: South side of the Alda interchange (exit 305) on Interstate 80

Open: Monday through Friday - 9 to 5

Saturdays - 10 to 4

Spring migration (March 1 to April 7th) - 8am to 6 pm

Admission:

Visitor Center: FREE (donations welcomed)

Crane Meadows grounds: \$3.50 (includes tax)

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### The 37th annual RIVERS AND WILDLIFE CELEBRATION

Audubon Nebraska

Friday - Sunday, March 16-18, 2007

Holiday Inn, Kearney, Nebraska

### Featured speakers:

Bruce Babbitt, Former U.S. Sec. of the Interior;

John Acorn, Television's "Acorn, The Nature Nut" as seen on the Discovery Channel and Animal Planet

Scott Hereford, wildlife biologist, Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge.

Crane viewing along the Platte at Rowe Sanctuary

Rainwater Basin (wetlands hosting migrating waterfowl)

Half-day and full-day trips to local birding hotspots

For more information: write Audubon Nebraska, P.O. Box 117, Denton, NE 68339, or call 402-797-2301  
email: [nebraska@audubon.org](mailto:nebraska@audubon.org), or visit their website [www.nebraskabirds.org](http://www.nebraskabirds.org))

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Anyone interested in going to Colorado to see Sage Grouse? Patricia has been looking at a working ranch that offers trips, and gives Audubon members a 5% discount and an additional 5% discount for groups over nine. If you are interested contact Patricia (776-9593).





**AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN SEE FROM THE  
SEAT OF A TRACTOR  
NANCY CRENSHAW-MILLER**

The first involves the American crow. That big, black bird that depicts evil in stories and movies. As I was swathing our best field of alfalfa I watched as a lone crow flew back and forth over the uncut alfalfa. This was a bit surprising as normally the scavengers that appear while we cut hay usually scour the part of the field that has been swathed, looking for hapless victims of the cutter bar.

As I watched him flying with his head hanging lower than his body and turning his head first right then left it occurred to me that this crow actually was covering the field in a loose grid. First flying north, then turning east for a short distance and turning back and flying south. I suppose he was flying over the size of an area that he could cover completely with his sharp eyes and in this grid pattern eventually was able to survey the whole field in sections.

I hadn't been swathing long before a hen turkey flew up next to my swather and the fact that she sat tight

until the last minute indicated she had a nest in the alfalfa. I had traveled about thirty yards when that old crow landed in the cut area of the alfalfa field nearly adjacent to where mama turkey had emerged. As I watched, the crow walked into the alfalfa field and a few seconds later I saw him fly out of the field carrying a whole turkey egg in his beak.

Since the majority of the egg was below his bill I surmised he must have stabbed the egg with his bill then put his lower mandible inside the egg and the upper mandible on the outside thus making the egg easy to carry away. With the hole he stabbed into the egg on top he wasn't going to lose the liquid inside the egg which is what he was after.

As I rounded the field I watched him fly back and head into the same area where I'm sure he was after another of the turkey's eggs. This time I didn't see him leave the field again. Maybe he just ate the other eggs on the spot since I was so far away by then he wouldn't have felt threatened by me.  
Nancy Crenshaw-Miller

This year, the **Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society is sponsoring the first 20 members to make a Greater Prairie Chicken viewing reservation through the Konza Prairie during the week of Saturday March 24th through Friday March 30th.**

You read correctly - the NFHAS will pay the reservation fee (\$15/person) for the first 20 members (including immediate family members) Our special offer is for the week of Saturday March 24th through Friday March 30th only.

Reservations are first come, first serve, so please call as soon as possible to reserve your spot. (Anyone arriving without a reservation will not be allowed to visit the lek.)

For more information or to make a reservation, please call Dr. Valerie Wright, Environmental Educator/Naturalist, KPBS, or Annie Baker, Education Assistant at 785/587-0381 or e-mail Annie, [bunny@ksu.edu](mailto:bunny@ksu.edu).



It's come to me on the Internet only recently; perhaps you've received it earlier – a lovely picture titled “A Polar Sunset.” It shows a thin yet extremely large U-shaped crescent Moon, looking something like the remnant smile of the cat in *Alice in Wonderland* after the rest of the cat had faded away. Beneath the U in the picture a much smaller, hazy Sun is seen low above an Arctic shore, all in restful shades of pale blue.

There are, however, a few things amiss. One of the grand cosmic coincidences is that the Sun and Moon appear the same size in our sky, which made for great confusion among early – yet brilliant – astronomers, and still makes possible beautiful and study-useful effects during full eclipses of the Sun. Besides, an optical illusion makes objects appear larger at the horizon than when sailing high and lonely in space. Yet, in the picture the Sun seems tiny compared to the Moon's grin, and does so even though it's closer to the horizon. Furthermore, Bruce Tarog of KU's Department of Physics and Astronomy assures me the orientation could never occur.

It's a lovely hoax and for extras, when considering still further, one finds that the word “hoax” is itself a hoax. One definition of the Latin word “hoc” is “actual.” So some time ago, when Latin was more commonly a part of educational endeavors and therefore more likely to be understood, some folks with a product to sell would give it a name, or a description, beginning with “hoc.” Say, “Hoc Lana,” whether or not it was really made of wool. Magicians enlarged the practice more musically, creating “hocus-pocus,” and thus the more staid word “hoax” results, meaning exactly the opposite of its root.

Now here are some “hoc” predictions for the March ahead.

The Moon and Saturn will be the drum majors starting it off on the 1<sup>st</sup>, already up and frolicking in the east when darkness settles. *StarDate* suggests you might enjoy watching the separation

between them change from hour to hour. The Moon then puffs up to full on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and gets fully eclipsed, at least for those folks east of the Mississippi. Here in the tallgrass, we'll see it rise when it's past total eclipse but noticeably partial, with the performance ending shortly after 7 p.m., leaving the rest of Saturday night full of moonlight.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> the Moon, waning, will nonetheless be a useful marker for finding Spica, the bright star amid the fainter array known as Virgo.

*The Old Farmer's Almanac* notes that Venus will travel on from Pisces into Aries at mid-month, bright in the west at sundown and setting about 8p30. She will seem pretty much alone in her travels, for the two fish of Pisces swim over a lot of sky but their “scales” don't shine much, and though the main stars of Aries are bolder, there are only three or four of them in a short bent line, as was discussed last time. To me they suggest that Venus will have the company of a shrimp rather than a ram. But maybe that's because we have raised sheep, and the rams we knew made their presence known much more prominently.

Jupiter will lumber up about 2 a.m. as the month starts, rousing by about 1 by month's end. He'll still be in Ophiuchus, and those who immersed themselves in this column for January might recall that a smattering of Latin serves there to tell the “caput” from the “cauda” of the serpent that Grecian healer is holding.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> Saturn and the Moon will have another night's revel together, with Regulus (at the bottom of Leo's sickle) to their lower left. Mars, it seems, will remain a dim announcement of the coming dawn, slightly above and to the right of the speck of light that will be Mercury.

Daylight Savings Time muscles in at 2 a.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup>, which means that the vernal equinox will occur for us at 7p07 on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Full Moon on the 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5p17; new on the 18<sup>th</sup> at 9p43.



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## TAKE NOTE

Rain to Recreation program, Feb. 21, 2007

Our program last Feb. 21<sup>st</sup> featured Mike Beezhold, the watershed manager for Lenexa. Among the attendees were some members of the Vision 2025 committee, an urban planning professor and students, biology students, Konza Prairie docents, City Parks and Recreation and storm water personnel, Riley County conservation district personnel and Northern Flint Hills Audubon members.

Mr. Beezhold was extraordinarily knowledgeable on the subject of storm water management and its practical application to improve green spaces within an urban setting. He showed how this is done and how it also improves the rivers and streams and the water quality for man, plants, and wildlife. And saves the taxpayers money in the long run.

Topics included how Lenexa's ongoing project is financed and how the citizenry accept it to the point of advocacy. He showed diverse landscape plans that meet the needs of areas from parks to drainage ditches. We also heard about some of the "lessons learned," from planting choices to innovative new water penetrable paving.

A lively discussion would have follow but since the library closed at 9:00 p.m., the discussion was limited to what could flow out into the parking lot this beautiful evening.

For more information about on this topic go to [www.raintorecreation.org](http://www.raintorecreation.org)

*Patricia Yeager*

Thank you Susan Blackford, for buying a book for the Manhattan Public Library in honor of the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society. The book is (appropriately for Susan - who cares for the Butterfly Garden)

*"Chrysalis*

Maria Sibylla Merian

*and the Secrets of Metamorphosis?"*

Go check it out!



### SAVE THE DAY - ANNUAL BIRDATHON

Mark your calendars now for the annual Birdathon. Clyde Ferguson has set the date for April 28-29.

The goal is to see/hear as many bird species as possible in 24 hours. Prior to the date, find persons to donate a nickel, dime, quarter, or dollar per species. It is then collected after the count. Those who want to participate start gathering donor names now.

If you collect donors, but cannot do the count call me (Clyde Ferguson), we will work it out. More information will be in the April issue of this newsletter.

### STILL NEED HELP!

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

THANK YOU to Annie Baker, who has agreed to take over the Bird Seed Sales!!!

Please contact Patricia Yeager at 776-9593.



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**Subscription Information:** Introductory memberships - \$20/yr., then basic membership is \$35/yr. 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 newsletter. New membership applications may be sent to Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan, KS 66505-1932. Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Membership renewals are handled by the National Audubon Society and should not be sent to the NFHAS. Questions about membership? Call 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/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 Listserve. Send this message <subscribe KSBIRD-L> to <[list\\_serve@ksu.edu](mailto:list_serve@ksu.edu)> and join in the discussions.

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Contacts for Your Elected Representatives ( anytime) Write, call or email @  
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