



the prairie falcon

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January 21
7 p.m.

*AT MANHATTAN LIBRARY

"The High Plains
Aquifer:
Is it sustainable?"
Lee Allison, Kansas
Geological Survey

NORTHERN FLINT HILLS AUDUBON SOCIETY,

P.O. Box 1932, MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1932

The High Plains Aquifer: Is It Sustainable?

M. Lee Allison, Kansas Geological Survey, University of Kansas

Lee Allison is State Geologist of Kansas and Director of the Kansas Geological Survey. He was appointed chair of the State Energy Resources Coordination Council by the Governor of Kansas in 2002. He serves on the Kansas Water Authority and is the founder of the High Plains Aquifer Coalition.

The High Plains aquifer is the most widespread blanket sand and gravel aquifer in the nation. It encompasses one of the major agricultural regions in the world and underlies 174,000 square miles, including parts of eight states – New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, and South Dakota.

Approximately 2.3 million people live within the High Plains, and the aquifer supplies drinking water for 82 percent of them. Agriculture, however, represents both the dominant land and water use in the region (94 percent of ground water withdrawals from the aquifer are for irrigation). *(continued on page 3)*

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN TIME AND PLACE!
MANHATTAN LIBRARY, 7 p.m. Jan. 21st.

Before each program, we invite our speakers to join us for an informal dinner and discussion. Feel free to join us this month at Golden Wok at 5:30 p.m. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. All meetings are open to the public.

Field Trips

BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Join us Saturday, Jan. 10th 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 AM. Birders of every age and interest level are welcomed. Children are especially encouraged to attend. Call Dave Rintoul or e-mail him at drintoul@ksu.edu for more information.

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UPCOMING DATES:

- Jan 3 Eagle Day
Meet 9a.m., Tuttle Creek
Corps of Engineers Office
- Jan 10 Beginning Birding, 8 a.m.
Ackert/Durland Parking Lot
- Jan 10 Olsburg CBC see pg. 5
- Jan 21 PROGRAM: note changes
*Dinner 5:30 p.m.
*Program 7:00 p.m.
*At Manhattan Library

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MANHATTAN, KS



An ice storm has gripped the Northeast today. Our weather is mild, even sweet, in contrast. I glance out the wavy-glass windows of the old rock house, looking at - as if at an interesting stranger for the first time - the outside landscape I had just come in from. At first glance, there is not much I see. I look again and the Sun, in that split second, has angled lower in the sky; its rays are reflected in a blanket of ember glow from the north pasture that slopes gently upward to a rim of limestone. It seems there is a fire within, each grass blade aflame. The trees embroidering the creek between here and the "fire" are all twisted and tangled, every trunk and limb revealed in utter nakedness, just the season when the rest of us are nestling in, bundling up, and buttoning down. Trees are tough, but are they smart? If they were they'd head south with the birds who were out of here a month ago. I am warm and feeling safe inside after my walk at dusk.

My walk took me on the west-running overgrown lane, beyond the barn, into a cacophony of barred owls' brazen bravado. Their tenor and alto chuckles rang in and out like a round, all taking note of each others' location, and health, and status. Buffeted by surround-sound, I stood still. My eyes - searching for owls - caught a limb swaying heavily. Something bowed it - a forearm of impatient air? Squinting, I focused on the reflective mass: a cluster of fan-

like leaves, ready to be shed, caught the quickening breeze, cooled it. The owls eluded the lowering Sun. Their calls, an audible blaze, marked time.

A gust shivered the trees behind me, then shouldered by and bullied those in the slough ahead. Every limb bent and exhaled. Something broke and ran, camouflaged by the sounding trees. I held my breath, and felt an atavistic fear and knew this was what unnamed, unfamiliar landscapes elicited in earlier natives. The "flight or fight" response, only one hundred yards from home. I began to chill. Scanning what circled me, I wanted very much to run, but held my ground, like a curled, recumbent fawn, safe as long as I was still. The wind ebbed. I exhaled.

Glad to be alone, so no one could mark my timidity, I turned back, describing a crooked rectangle in my route. Not really alone, for the dogs trotted ahead, sniffing, urinating, marking what they trotted to and sniffed. Blazing their trail. Did they smell my fear? Piss on it?

Cleared, bare soil - arenas about a foot or two in diameter - places where leaves should be, but somehow, in some way, have been removed. Places where something had stood or crouched and watched. Or, a floor created by a dervish whirling in arabesques in the fallen leaves? A blaze whose meaning was unknown to me.

Animal trails followed the

fence-line, sometimes. Other times they meandered like a kid-thrown rope, in unpredictable directions, following rock outcroppings, running straight through wild rye grass, ducking under thorny limbs, dodging thick clumps of buckbrush and gooseberry, following some other being's internal compass. I followed a convoluted one and passed a tree with bright, polished bark - a blaze betraying some creature's penchant for rubbing - and ended up back on the lane where my walk had begun. Each species to his own. Now the path to home is certain.

Sun down, moon up, we are safe, for now, within their circles. The old window glass distorts the man in the moon into a fun house face: he grins and smirks in turn. He is laughing at me. But all we do - all we fear, all we love - is done within those circles, according to their celestial rhythms. We mark the days with personal rituals and the seasons with changing wardrobes.

I left no permanent blazes on my walk at dusk; rather, the land left its mark on me. My blazes have been on everything I've touched in my life: some have been heavy-handed, others gentle. But they endure. All I need to know is what each means and where each has led me. If they have been done with care, and well, walking into unknown landscapes and back out again will always be possible. They will show me the way and I won't be afraid.

© Winter 2002 Dru Clarke



When I visited our Michel-Ross Preserve in Manhattan, KS, this fall, many of the hop hornbeam fruits had fallen, creating an irregularly woven carpet of small, papery sacks which enclose the seeds. A hop hornbeam sapling had been cut down, perhaps by a young person who plays in the area. That is not a tragedy, since the mature trees had harvested much of the energy in the somewhat open canopy of the woods, and invested some of it in seeds. This species of tree is also abundant in the Maple Woods Preserve in Gladstone, MO. The hop hornbeam trees on the western edge of that preserve had an enormous number of seeds this year, because of the full exposure to sunlight, while trees within the old growth woods produced almost no seeds, due to the relative scarcity of harvestable energy.

Pestiferous bush honeysuckle is somewhat common at Maple Woods Preserve, but is present in much lower numbers than at Michel-Ross Preserve. It occurred to me that this might be due to increased competition for sunlight at Maple Woods. I later discovered that many volunteers had spent long hours trying to exterminate non-native honeysuckle at Maple Woods. Honeysuckle is a vigorous competitor, and its share of harvestable energy needs to be reduced, if other species are to have an opportunity to maintain their successful participation in the community of life. The presence of invasive plants is a fact. We can only try to manage the very worst problems, so that some semblance of balance is maintained. A patch of *Vinca* at the end of Canyon Drive at the Michel-Ross Preserve is also a problem that deserves monitoring and perhaps occasional control efforts. The area where *Vinca* comprises almost all of the ground cover is still localized. Our chapter has done a good job of removing litter from the edges of the preserve each year. This is necessary to keep it looking nice and to maintain public relations. We might also decide whether it is worth the investment of time to manage one or two of the invasives.

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The High Plains Aquifer: Is It Sustainable?

M. Lee Allison
Kansas Geological Survey
University of Kansas

JANUARY PROGRAM
AT MANHATTAN LIBRARY
7 p.m.

(continued from page 1)

The High Plains aquifer is the most intensely pumped aquifer in the United States, yielding about 30 percent of the nation's ground water used for irrigation. It is estimated that 5 trillion gallons of water are pumped from the aquifer each year, which, for comparison, is 10 times the average annual water use for New York City. Large-volume pumping from this aquifer has led to steadily declining water levels in the region, and the area faces critical water-related issues. No other major source of water is available for the region.

Although High Plains dry-land farming is possible, availability of "water on demand" from the aquifer has made abundant, reliable crop yields a reality. As a result, the region accounts for about 19 percent of total U.S. production of wheat and of cotton, 15 percent of our corn, and 3 percent of our sorghum. In addition, the region produces nearly 18 percent of U.S. beef and is rapidly becoming a center for hog and dairy industries. Those numbers alone should elevate concern about the sustainability of the aquifer from a regional to a national level.



As 2003 was the year of Mars, so 2004 is the year of Venus, at least for naked eye folk. But there may be some distractions if the naked eye drifts to the media headlines and if the Mars landings and close orbiting planned for either side of New Years (and so after this issue's deadline) have been successful. In that case, Mars may have shrunk to a third its apparent size of last summer, as Astronomy predicts, and become a brother-in-red-brilliance to Aldebaran in Taurus, with a magnitude IQ of .9, but the new information being sent back from there will likely light up a lot of people's attention-board.

Nonetheless out in the countryside, Venus will be gleaming in the SW through twilight and the early evening at her brightest magnitude, I'm told: -4, which, if my math is right, is about 100 times brighter than the lingering Mars. And because she apparently rarely gets much higher than a quarter up the sky, she's often been mistaken for a Martian spaceship coming in for a landing on Earth. This will be just the start of a year-long prominence, with evening shows almost till summer, then a brief vacation, then morning shows into winter. And the evening stints end with a grand Act One finale: a walk across the Sun, June 8th. Officially, a transit. In other words she's at inferior conjunction then, in line between Earth and Sun (and about half way between). And this time, because her orbit is inclined about 3 degrees, relative to the Sun's ecliptic path through the sky, brilliantly large Venus will suddenly become a tiny dark spot seen drifting across the Sun's lower realm, something she does about every 121 years and then again, eight years later, and then it's 121 again.

According to my sources we'll have to be up early and look quickly this time, for the transit will be ending just about sunrise. Europe and South America will see her better, but we'll have better seats when there she goes again in 2012.

Meanwhile it may be interesting to reflect that because Venus' orbit lies between us and the Sun we see her in phases, like the Moon. When she's nearest us, and not that in line with the Sun, her

shadowed side is not so provocative. When her full face is toward us, she's at superior conjunction, again in line with us and the Sun but on the far side, so she's much farther away. So it's when she's at her elongations – 90 degrees to the left or right – that we see her half lit – in a non-alcoholic way, of course. And in those near phases when she's partially lighted ever less each night as she moves closer from one elongation to inferior conjunction, then gradually lighted ever more as she continues, moving away to the opposite elongation, she appears at her brightest, even though we never see more than half of her and most often less. What we do see, shining so silvery strong, I'm told, is a cloak of sulfuric acid.

This reminds me of the photographer I met once, who did a lot of fashion work, and who told me how his two daughters were so often after him to get them the wherewithal to look like the women in his pictures, and how he kept trying to tell them that nobody looks like that, not even the women he photographed. As the saying goes: Sic transit gloria Venus.

As to other denizens of the upward deep, Jupiter, no dimwit himself, and undeterred by Venus's scintillation in the west, will be rising about 9 p.m. in mid-January, ever earlier to about 7 p.m. mid-February, in the company of Leo. And Saturn will continue to keep his rings as fully displayed as male turkey does his wings, rising even earlier and claiming attention throughout the night, in Gemini. Early in December, with our binoculars braced against a porch post, we were able to see the silvery elongation they gave his shine, so it should be even better now. Mars, despite any publicity, will continue fading away in the small confines of Aries, while Mercury sneaks the briefest of peaks above the horizon preparing to throw shyness to the winds, in his modest way, in mid-March. Old Man Moon, sayeth The Old Farmer's Almanac, will be adopting his own crescent mode and dancing in conjunction with Venus on January 24th, Mars on the 27th. New come January 21st, full February 6th.

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ABOUT THE SFI

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a deceptive marketing scheme developed by the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA)-the most powerful timber trade association in the world-for its member companies, including the largest loggers in the United States and Canada and the largest wholesale distributors of global wood products. Members of the governing board of the SFI, the Sustainable Forestry Board, have been appointed by the AF&PA. And 82% of SFI's funding comes from AF&PA members.

The SFI program was launched in 1994, and the SFI label was created in 2002 in response to public concerns about the US logging industry's poor environmental performance. Participation in the SFI is a condition for membership in the AF&PA..

The public expects that a company's participation in an ecolabeling program such as the SFI means that its products come from environmentally and socially responsible sources. Consumers should be able to trust that endangered forests are protected, human rights are respected, and forest practices are truly sustainable. Americans care about preserving endangered forests, and would be shocked to know that some of America's biggest destroyers of endangered forests are giving themselves a green stamp of approval in the form of SFI certification.

The average consumer isn't alone in expecting credibility and accountability from environmental certification. That is why so few groups outside of the logging industry recognize the legitimacy of the SFI's certification and labeling program. For example, the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED)-green building rating system gives credit for green building practices, including use of sustainable certified wood, but it does not recognize the SFI. Similarly, nearly 80 international signatories to "A Common Vision for Transforming the Paper Industry, Striving for Environmental and Social Sustainability" do not acknowledge the SFI as a viable paper certification program. And corporate leaders ranging from IKEA to The Home Depot to Kinko's don't recognize SFI certified products, preferring the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) instead.

Has the SFI made improvements? Yes. The SFI's "cut a tree, plant a tree" model of forestry is making sure the logging industry sustains fiber flow but does nothing to sustain forest ecosystems. The SFI does not protect old growth forests, does not protect roadless areas and U.S. public lands, does not protect forests from

conversion to tree-farms and urban sprawl, does not adequately restrict clearcutting, and does not consistently protect and help recover imperiled species. And this is just the beginning of the list.

From a social perspective, the SFI does not honor workers' rights to organize, nor does the SFI mandate consultation with indigenous communities, much less respect their rights. In fact, Canada's National Aboriginal Forestry Association does not support the SFI and has communicated its serious misgivings about current SFI certified operations.

With all of these problems, it's no wonder that the SFI is pursuing a multimillion-dollar advertising campaign to convince consumers that its certification program and ecolabel are truly sustainable. Just when you thought it was safe to trust ecolabeling, the SFI comes along and undermines years of work by environmentalists and scientists around the world.

The SFI is certified deception.

For information on LEED, go to leedbuilding.org.

For the Common Vision for Transforming the Paper Industry, go to <http://www.conservatree.com/paper/Choose/commonvision.shtml>

(from: <http://www.dontbuysfi.com/home/>) Submitted by Jan Garton

THE OLSBURG CBC WAS

POSTPONED DUE TO A DEATH IN THE FAMILY, IT HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR **JAN. 10, 2004**. MEET AT THE RANDOLPH CAFE AT 7 A.M. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL GARY JEFFREY 785-486-3587 OR EMAIL GJEFFREY@KANSAS.NET

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Subscription Informtion:

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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