



# the prairie falcon

Vol. 31, No.07  
MARCH 2003

## MARCH PROGRAM:

CARBON SEQUESTRATION  
IN SOILS  
CHARLES RICE

MAR. 19, 7:30PM  
1014 THROCKMORTON

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

## CARBON SEQUESTRATION IN SOILS

Charles W. Rice, Professor Soil Microbiology, KSU

It has been estimated that 20-40% of targeted emission reductions can be met by agricultural soil carbon sequestration. Economic analysis suggest that soil carbon sequestration is among the most beneficial and cost effective options available for reducing greenhouse gases, particularly over the next 30 years until alternative energy sources are developed and become economic feasible. Recent estimates of the potential for U.S. agriculture, using existing technologies, are on the order of 75-200 MMT C per year.

Charles (Chuck) Rice is a Professor in the Department of Agronomy at Kansas State University. He earned his degrees from Northern Illinois University and the University of Kentucky. Dr. Rice teaches courses in soil microbiology and conducts research on soil carbon and nitrogen transformations in agricultural and grassland ecosystems and microbial ecology. He is currently advising or has advised 12 M.S. students, 14 Ph.D. students, and 6 post-doctorates. He has over 90 publications.

Dr. Rice currently serves as Director of the Kansas EPA-EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research) program and the Consortium for Agricultural Soils Mitigation of Greenhouse Gases. This consortium is a 10 institution organization to conduct research on the potential of agricultural soil to sequester carbon dioxide while providing benefits to producers.

**ATTENTION:** Please note that due to unforeseen circumstances, a couple of our programs have been shuffled -- \* Joe Collins will present the program for May 21st, and Paul Johnsgard will present the program for June 18th.

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

## Field Trips

### BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Join us Saturday, Mar. 8<sup>th</sup> and every second Saturday at 8 AM 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, 532-6663 or e-mail him at [drintoul@ksu.edu](mailto:drintoul@ksu.edu) for more information.

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## CONTRIBUTORS:

DRU CLARKE  
PETE COHEN  
THOMAS MORGAN  
DAVE RINTOUL (PHOTO)  
JACQUE STAATS

## UPCOMING DATES:

- Mar 5 NFHAS BOARD MEETING
- Mar 8 BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING  
8:00 AM  
Ackert Hall Parking Lot
- Mar 19 Carbon Sequestration  
in Soils  
Dinner 5:45 -Program 7:30  
1014 Throckmorton, KSU  
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## Seeing Red Dru Clarke

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I'm supposed to walk an hour a day. This is an impossible task unless I have something to look for and, hopefully, find. Today it will be reds. Not the obvious tree leaves that riot in autumn, but the reds you find underfoot and to shoulder height. One month and a week before winter solstice - mid November - and it's cool enough for reds to be doing their thing.

The color (and wavelength) red is next to the infrareds, the heat which the earth and its skin of vegetation give back, a secondary gift from our Sun. So the plants that hug the ground with their rosettes of leaves naturally are red in late fall, through the winter, and into early spring, when the Sun's rays are slanted and light energy so diffuse that the alchemy of changing light to heat is weakened.

Not all plants have this spectral strategy. Mullein, with its thick, fuzzy flannel whirl of leaves, has no need of red for it has found warmth by other means. I've seen it with a coverlet of snow tucking in its springy greenness. Other plants may have adaptations I don't know about.

I find what is left of dock. The small, inner leaves are still green, but the older, outer leaves are burgundy now, creating a blanket for the younger and more tender greens. Goosefoot or lamb's quarters' stems are red too, the leaves gone pale and fruits dark and dry. Smooth sumac, too, is red, its leaves claret, the new clusters of berries fuzzy and bright like St. Nick's festive suit, the old berries hard and rusty. Sumac's companion, rough-leaved dogwood, has naked umbels of white merlot, and the prairie rose, leaves of pumpkin red.

Wild strawberry runners streak like veins over bare soil, marking the way to thimbles of tangy fruit in late spring. The runners are colored like the unripe berry, teasing us into anticipation.

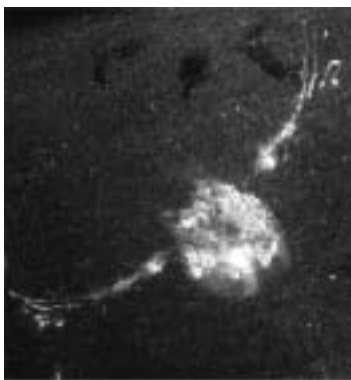
The pokeweed by the well has dropped its inky blue-red sacs, smashed into a royal purple smear on ground and stone. On the hide of a dark sorrel horse, it looks like dried blood and can give the owner a fright unless the origin is discovered.

Everywhere, buckbrush (also known as coralberry) colors the understory of the open woodland. Its fuchsia clusters of miniature beads nestle between twin leaves strung on knee-high twiggy bushes. The exact shade of buckbrush fruits seems to depend upon a host of variables: exposure to sunlight, moisture content, orientation, age.

My favorite winter red is the tomato red of bittersweet with its woody orange husk, its three petal-like parts cradling its plump prize. It twines around saplings and up trees and hangs from the house eaves. A bluebird with its complementary indigo seems to belong here, perched jauntily on the vine, the baby 'love apple' dwarfing its beak, an exotic portrait on the prairie.

On another walk in early spring, I'll find rosettes of purple poppy mallow and dandelion leaves. For now, this hour has stretched into two, and I feel limber and warm - warm as red.

© 2003 Dru Clarke



**EASTERN Screech-Owl "dustprint" on plate glass window of the home of Doris and Bill Burnett, Pottawatomie County, Kansas**

**© 2003 Photo by Dave Rintoul**

***(No owls were harmed in the making of this picture ... )***

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## The Hollow Tree

*"Viewed from the air, the floodplain of Gladden Valley looks like a vast desert of sand, a paradise lost, except for one short section, where sycamores hug the banks and the streambed narrows, curving in graceful undulations through a canopy of green." Kathy Love, "Paradise Lost,"*

*Missouri Conservationist, Aug. 1990, p. 30-34.*

Lorene and Kenneth Dalrymple planted sycamores along their stretch of Gladden Creek. They planted thousands of sycamores during the last four decades of their time together. Their labor will be forgotten by society. But centuries from now, when the massive sycamores have become hollow giants, yellow-throated warblers will be singing in their canopies. Chimney swifts will be nesting in their hollow trunks. Their roots will be protecting the stream banks.

In 1808 in Ohio, a party of men on horseback rode into a large, hollow sycamore. Thirteen men rode their horses inside the sycamore. The fourteenth horse was skittish and did not enter, although the riders claimed there was room for two more. American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) is the most massive tree in the eastern part of the country. They typically become hollow when they're a century old, although they continue growing for three or four more centuries. These hollow trees are structurally sound, because it is very difficult to split their wood.

Many a woodsman has wintered in a such a tree. And other critters have used them. Wood ducks have hatched from their eggs in hollow ones that leaned out over a creek, and when those hatchlings finally became fledglings, they touched down in that deep pool of water.

Some people claim that a sycamore is untidy and unsuitable for a manicured lawn. I don't know as that matters one way or another. All I know is it's mighty fine to walk down into the valley and see the white bark of a sycamore against the gray sky. A sycamore is nearly always dropping things, such as sheets of bark, but it doesn't drop its seeds until springtime arrives. Then the seeds, with their little fringe of hairs, are adrift off on a breeze. They're a settling down, as like as not, in moving water that carries them a bit, then pushes them up on a mud flat. There is not a much better location to be than on a bit of moist ground in the springtime. I believe I've talked myself into it my own self. Like me, a sycamore likes muddy ground during early springtime.

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## TREE OF THE MONTH

TOM MORGAN



But come the middle of June after it has gone to all of the trouble of growing its leaves, it doesn't take to having its feet wet at all. And another thing, after it gets done shedding sections of bark, its got about the thinnest bark of any tree. It doesn't have the bark on when it comes to tolerating a fire. Here in our part of the tallgrass prairie though, we're near the creeks feeding into the Kaw. We've got a bit of everything. We're on the western edge of the range of the American sycamore.

A while ago people cut down the sycamores. I reckon they had a use for them. Nothing wrong with sawing up a little lumber, but they shouldn't have taken them all. That happened about a century ago, and that's long enough for some of the youngsters to begin ripening into something useful.

When it comes to old ones, some people, I'm not naming any names, should have a bit more tolerance. And then, if an old, untidy bachelor gets chased out by someone wielding a vacuum cleaner, he can find a hollow one. I reckon he could find one leaning out over a creek just a bit, and if he felt like fishing, he could toss a line out. A hollow one would be close to paradise. © 2003 T.D. Morgan

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### "Winged Migration" a film by Jacques Perrin

Opening in selected theatres in the U.S. April 18th - but this website is a very nice preview...

<http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html>



Ready for Spring flowers? Check out this website -- by Mike Haddock, Agriculture Librarian, KSU

**Kansas Wildflowers & Grasses**  
[www.lib.ksu.edu/wildflowers](http://www.lib.ksu.edu/wildflowers)

Beautiful photos, sorted by color or time of blooming, plus all sorts of other information.



## SKYLIGHT

PETE COHEN

As mentioned in times past, pausing to gaze upon the sky engenders thoughts, and one recent one rises from finding myself – in the Feb. issue – in company with a notice of a group whose aim seems to be to “protect” cats and the rest of the world by having all cats either confined indoors or condemned. Food for thought, yet I wouldn’t want to be thought in favor thereof.

Once, we let our cat population lapse and very soon pack rats and mice were ripping our vehicle wiring along with other depredations. Traps were too sedentary, daily checks under the hood were insufficient, the snakes who came to help were too easily satisfied. We restored our strictly outdoors feline fence line and things are back in balance. Off duty they frolic over the lawn as exuberantly as young lambs and confining such agility ever indoors seems cruelty to me. We still have two annual swallow nests on the open porch and a colorful array of other birds who’re not above swooping down to share the cats’ water and in winter any crumbs the cats miss. So by that group’s logic I should be campaigning to let all cats roam free.

Also, I mistrust sources who speak in euphemisms like “humane removal”. What happens—for better or worse – to the individuals after the removal? I think that ought to be spelled out. Then there’s the expression, “danger to public health”, a very wide category that can include pack rats (whose nests harbor the flying blood sucking cone noses, a variety of which in other latitudes carries Chagas disease) and horses (great distributors of tetanus). People with certain allergies can find a cat-

infested house a health hazard, and I’ve heard that even birds will lug around a vermin or pathogen or two. I wonder how the health hazard from feral cats compares with the health hazard from the rodents they help control. It doesn’t seem surprising if there are certain situations where it’s cats that are out of balance, where the locals would be wise to get after them. But I think the struggle against chemical pollution, drunk drivers, killers of convenience store attendants, and the problems of our energy situation, can better use any thought or money given to hounding every Mehitabel to the garbage scow and fostering Persian Kitties, perfumed and fair.

Perhaps the group’s inspired by the celestial segregation of cats and birds. This season the cats have the field in the evening: Leo the Large Lion (he of the prominent backwards questionmark for head and chest and forepaws, and trailing right triangle for hindquarters), preceded a little above and forward by little noticed Leo Minor, who is in turn a little behind and below the Lynx. Not till those three are leaving in the wee hours do the birds appear: first the little Lyre Bird with bright Vega, then the spread wings and long neck of Cygnus the Swan flying down the Milky Way, then, further down, Aquila the Eagle with Altair marking the east, the bright point of a wide flattened triangle that’s half in, half out of the Milky Way’s trailing edge. Of these creatures, Leo Minor and the Lynx are social upstarts, lacking any mythological pedigree.

The Audubon Guide to the Night Sky lets you know that around 1687 Johannes Hevelius looked at an area of modest stars the ancients simply regarded as

‘unformed’, and formed them into rather jagged sharp-cornered shapes, Leo Minor getting his name by proximity, the Lynx because it would take some one “lynx-eyed” to see it. Sad to say, through all the ages none of these have achieved free-roaming status. At least as far as we can notice in our era. they ever repeat the same pathways, ever about four minutes earlier each night.

Then keep that lynx-eye to look for Vesta, the brightest asteroid, which should be visible about 30 days either side of March 26<sup>th</sup> when it will be at opposition (to the Sun, ergo at its brightest). A technical star map would be handy to find it as it moves westward between Virgo and the little gather of mild stars called Coma Berenices, behind Large Leo. (Coma Berenices means Berenice’s Hair, and I read that they once were considered to be the tuft of the Lion’s tail.) Astronomy suggests using binoculars to locate the shine, then enjoying it naked-eye.

More noticeable and just as enjoyable should be Mercury at its best evening showing around April 1<sup>st</sup>, dimming toward the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Old Farmer’s Almanac says look for a small ruddy star in the twilight about 10 to 15 degrees above the horizon, and StarDate adds that the Moon will be just to Mercury’s left on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, after being to the lower right of brightening Mars on March 24<sup>th</sup>. . This planet-friendly Moon will be with Saturn on April 7<sup>th</sup> and sail overhead with Jupiter, nearby to eastward, on the 10<sup>th</sup>. . Meanwhile spring in the sky will arrive naturally at 7 PM CST March 20<sup>th</sup>, and manmade daylight savings time will go into effect 2AM April 6<sup>th</sup>. . Full Moon, March 18<sup>th</sup>, new, April 1<sup>st</sup>.

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## PLANT A TREE

JACQUE STAATS

TAKE NOTE



The Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, in conjunction with the City of Manhattan, has been involved with the prairie restoration and woodland/arboretum development in the Northeast Park.

Initial tree planting will commence this spring and we could use your help!!! We hope to put in 200-300 trees and shrubs along the eastern edge of the park. We could use help spreading mulch, staking rabbit protective tubes, watering and planting.

**NO EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY!!!!**

The actual planting date will be weather dependent but should occur in mid to late March or early April. If you think you might have time to help, please contact Jacque Staats at 537-3664 and leave your name and phone number. We will contact you when a definite planting date has been set.

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**OUR BOOTH at CARDEN SHOW, THANKS to John Tatarko for again, organizing the volunteers and setting up the booth. More thanks to all the volunteers and a report next month.**

**Hoogy and Carol at our booth at the Garden Show, Feb. 22, 2003.**



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### **Prairie Chicken Booming Konza Prairie Biological Station**

**The Konza Prairie Biological Station (KPBS) is taking reservations for its Prairie Chicken Blind for March 15 to April 15, 2003.** Viewing the courtship behavior of the Greater Prairie Chickens will be allowed with a guide assigned by KPBS with a charge of \$10.00/person. The blind will accommodate nine persons plus a guide. Smaller groups will share the blind with others.

Groups with special agendas, such as photography, should make this clear at the time of reserving the blind. No flash equipment is allowed. Professional photographers require special permission from the Director and a site fee will be assessed. Details of where to meet and times will be given when you make your reservation. In general, we meet at 4:30 AM before the time change at the beginning of April and at 5:00 AM during Daylight Savings Time in order to enter the blind before light.

Each group should plan to remain in the blind until approximately 8:00 AM when the birds have finished courting. We will not disturb the lek before this time unless the birds have already flushed. Please wear wool or other soft fabric outer clothes. The newer high tech materials are very noisy and disrupt the experience of hearing the incredible call of the males.

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



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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](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 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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