



the prairie falcon

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November Program:

“You Don’t Need a Stream Team to Monitor”
Rhonda Janke

Nov. 20, 7:30
2024 Throckmorton



Note room change

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

November 20
7:30 PM, 2024 Throckmorton
“You Don’t Need a Stream Team to Monitor”
Rhonda Janke

The “River Friendly Farm Program,” sponsored by KSU and the Kansas Rural Center, offers farmers the opportunity to complete a farm self- assessment. The assessment tool evaluates practices according to “best management practice” standards, and includes soil conservation, pest management, nutrient management, and livestock and livestock waste management. A new project, offered in conjunction with the River Friendly Farm Program is “Citizen Science - Soil and Water Testing for Enhanced Natural Resource Stewardship.” It was originally envisioned as a soil and water test kit for farmers, so that they could self-monitor farm and field run-off, for important water quality variables like phosphorus, nitrogen, and E. coli, and atrazine.

However, it also has the potential to be used by adult citizen monitoring groups and individuals. Adult monitoring teams are now active in state-sponsored programs in Alabama (Alabama Water Watch) and Iowa (IOWATER). Is there interest in a similar program in Kansas? Stay tuned.....

The seminar will review the background of water monitoring efforts, briefly summarize the “testing the test kit” data, then discuss in more detail why some test are better than others, and how a person could get started monitoring in their own back-yard.

Rhonda Janke is on the faculty in the Dept. Horticulture, Forestry, and Recreation Resources at K-State.

Before each program, we invite our speakers to join us for an informal dinner and discussion. Feel free to join us this month at Chipotle Grill in Aggieville 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, Nov. 9th 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 for more information.

INSIDE

2 INSECT/TREE OF THE MONTH
3 SKYLIGHT

CONTRIBUTORS:

PETE COHEN
THOMAS MORGAN

UPCOMING DATES:

Nov 09 Beginning Birdwatching
Nov 16 FUND-RAISING CONCERT
8:00 PM Manhattan Arts Ctr
Ann Zimmerman,
Connie Dover, Kelly Werts,
Melissa Atchison
Nov 20 Stream Monitor
Wed. 5:45 PM DINNER
7:30 PM - PROGRAM
2024 Throckmorton, KSU
NE corner Denison/Claffin
Nov 23 2nd Bird Feed ORDER
Deadline
Dec 7 2nd Bird Feed PICKUP
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
UFM, 1221 Thurston

Note room change



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A woodpecker may chisel out chips of wood, and even a diminutive, downy woodpecker knows how to strike on one side and then the other as it chisels out a chip. This bird was not my role model, however, when I was a child. I watched Dad. His movements appeared effortless as his axe struck with a sharp sound. There was a cleanness to that sound that I have not heard since. I would give a lot to hear it again. Dad will never swing an axe as forcefully as when he was younger. He swings an axe with surprising accuracy, however, for an 83 year old man. The accuracy of a man's first swing is less critical than the accuracy of his second swing that actually frees a chip of wood. As a child, I'd watch Dad, and sure enough, his second stroke would free a deep, narrow chip.

It seems to me that Dad sometimes forgot that time should be an eternal moment of interesting sensations. He would remember his day on an assembly line that brought one partially-assembled car after another with mind-numbing speed. Late one afternoon, when I was still only a glimmer in his eye, he walked down to the creek. He began cutting down a grove of saplings. He sliced through one sapling with a single stroke. The sapling fell into a crotch of another tree. The sharp end kicked up, caught him under the chin, and sliced to his jawbone. He walked to the house with blood flowing on his neck and gave my mom a fright.

I don't know why, but she was reluctant to let me use an axe. One day, Uncle Odus set down his axe when I was around. I picked it up. He was amazed by my incompetence. Uncle Odus was a brother of Odessa, my Dad's mother. My Dad idolized him. I didn't realize how much Uncle

Odus had influenced my Dad, when I was a boy. I just knew that he knew all sorts of interesting things about the woods. He was born in the 1800s when an axe was an extremely important tool. Odus died one day. After he died, I found myself in the woods. I was holding an axe. I didn't think it through. I wanted to honor his memory somehow. But there are limits to logic. There are some things you feel in your toes, ankles, legs, abdomen, chest, shoulders, arms, and wrists, as you swing an axe. The breeze stirs the dead leaves and I seem to hear a raspy chuckle. I remember Odus sitting beside his wood stove, talking about a difficulty and chuckling with a dry sound that was both like and unlike the whispering of dry leaves. I grasp a wooden handle, feeling the contact between my skin and the handle. The nasal calls of a nuthatch starts to feel like breath I am taking into my chest. I'm part of it.

A beaver's teeth do not stop growing and must be worn down by cutting down trees. My teeth stopped growing a while ago and were never any good for cutting down trees. Instead I use an axe that has a symmetry with the flowing outline of its wooden handle and its curved cutting edges. I carry it on my right shoulder at an angle that positions the edges to the left of my neck. That's safer than placing an edge directly behind my neck where it could slide into my neck. With my hand an inch from the end of the handle, I exert only a minimal amount of pressure to keep it balanced.

A beaver has many abilities but can not choose the direction that it fells a tree. The tree will often fall towards a pond or a stream, but that's because the tree is heavier on the side which is most exposed to sunlight.

You and I can choose. So we should use this gift. I scrutinize the tree's branches. It seems heavier on the south side. Now I rub a dead leaf between my fingers and watch as the wind blows away the fragments. I follow the fragments to the south side of the tree and begin chopping into the trunk. I chop a cut that is wide enough that the upper and lower edges will not touch until the tree has completed much of its fall. I keep chopping until I have severed a third of its cross section. I scan the landscape, and I plot escape routes. I cut down a cedar that was blocking one route.

I begin cutting a narrow cut on the north side of the tree. A drop of sweat gets into my eye. I hear the rustling of leaves that are gating shifting beams of sunlight. The breeze reaches through my cotton shirt and touches the sweat between my shoulders, feeling like the touch of ice. As I finish my cut, I leave a two inch thick section that will bend like a hinge. Now I can drive in wedges, and can pull on a rope that is tied to a branch, but before I can begin either of these actions, a gust of the wind touches the canopy.

My heart leaps in my chest, as if I must now act to save my life. The tree hits the earth. I become aware of light shining through motes of dust. The light illuminates a seedling. And I kneel beside this evidence of renewal. Like an elephant that has pushed over a tree, I am connected to a cycle that brings renewed vigor. Unlike an elephant, I can wonder whether I have strengthened or weakened the cycle. The use of axes has consequences that require weighing of consequences, now more than ever, in this world with more than six billion people.



This memorable image opening of Alfred Lord Noyes' "The Highwayman," is sometimes reversed. Clouds become ships, passing overhead like flotillas of clippers, caravels, canoes, and coracles, spectrally lit by a St. Elmo's Fire of moonlight, or auroral display. Sometimes the clouds drop anchor, arranging themselves into extravagant landscapes of cliffs, canyons, coteaus, and layered countrysides for the eye to explore. Then, when the Moon or aurora depart they provide that heavy, weightless darkness in which one's imagination is free to construct its images without outer prompting.

Then there are clouds that seem to glow without prompting – pearly-white with changing tints of blue and silver, and in some pictures hints of twilight rose and orange. They might be mistaken for auroral displays but for their cirrus-like spread. They apparently were first observed for a few years in the 1880s, around the time Krakatoa's huge eruption, then reported again in the 1920s, with increasing frequency since the 1960s, suggesting they are another warning that human induced conditions for serious climate change are now persisting high above us for longer than Krakatoa's. I'm told these "noctilucent clouds" form 50 miles above us (thunderheads taller than 5-6 miles are supergiants), in a region

where the thin air grows warmer with altitude largely because of UV absorption by ozone. Sparse waves of warm atmospheric moisture rising there trigger complicated reactions, whereby cold spots are created and the moisture condenses onto dust and/or ion particles. Only in summer does this happen, and because of the great height expect to see these clouds from Earth only from dim twilight a short ways into night darkness when the Sun is 6-16 degrees below the horizon, and when you're located between 45 and 60 degrees latitude. The Sun's brightness or Earth's shadow blots them out otherwise. But if ever you see something like this, it shouldn't be hard to find scientists eager for your description.

So the sky doesn't have to be a-glitter to be fascinating (especially in droughty periods). Nonetheless there are specific times when clouds would do us a big favor by literally evaporating. For example, the upcoming nights of Nov. 17-18 till dawn on the 19th, when the Leonid meteor shower is again predicted to give a vigorous performance before retiring into a 30 year period of meekness. There are estimates of up to 25,000 meteors/hour.

Another example involves the night of Dec. 13-14 when the

Geminids are expected to do their annual gig. Once more the early morning hours are called the best, though last year, with the Leonids, our best (fog abbreviated) views came quite spectacularly at midnight. A third example, below the equator, will be on Dec. 4th when the path of a total solar eclipse will reach from southern Africa across the Indian Ocean to western Australia. The longest totality – 2 1/2 minutes – should occur through Angola southeastward where, alas, it will be the rainy season. Most likely dry Australia should have about 30 seconds.

In between those times, anyone suffering from cloud deprivation might find compensation joining brilliant Venus for breakfast, starting about 5a45, Nov. 11th and earlier thereafter as she achieves her greatest brilliance Dec. 4th in a moonless sky. A twinkling Spica and dim Mars will be her companions to upper right. StarDate suggests viewing the Moon and Saturn as they nudge closer together through the night of Nov. 21st, and the Moon and Jupiter as they more properly keep their distance Nov. 25th. Highly light-sensitive folk will be aware of a slight penumbral eclipse of the Moon for about 45 minutes around 7p45 Nov. 19th when the Moon will be full. New, Dec. 4th.

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SEMINAR ON PESTICIDES

You are invited to attend the upcoming seminar "**Pesticides and International Migratory Bird Conservation**" by Mike Hooper of Texas Tech University. He has worked extensively on the impacts of contaminants on neotropical migrants, including some high profile work on Swainson's Hawks and Dickcissels. An overview of some of these issues and his recent research can be found as a PDF file at: www.ksu.edu/bsanderc/temp/hooper.pdf

Please feel free to attend the talk held from 4:00-5:00 PM in Room 221 of Ackert Hall, (on the northwest corner of campus) **November 8, 2002.**

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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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