



the prairie falcon

VOL. 30, No. 8
APRIL 2002

APRIL PROGRAM
April 17

“Saving the World’s Birds:
Current Strategies for the
Avian Ark”

Dusty Becker

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

Saving the world’s birds: Current Strategies for the Avian Ark Dusty Becker

How quickly is avian biodiversity being lost?

How do conservationists set priorities for protecting birds?

Dr. Dusty Becker will provide you with an overview of the science behind global strategies for bird conservation and introduce you to a few ideas of her own. Dr. Becker is currently on the faculty at Kansas State University.

Before each program, we invite our speakers to join us for an informal dinner and discussion. Feel free to join us this month at the Gold Fork at 5:45 PM. The program begins at 7:30 PM, 1014 Throckmorton, NE corner of Denison and Claflin. Refreshments are served after every meeting. All meetings are open to the public.

Field Trips

BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Join us Saturday, April 13th 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 LEECH
- 3 PLANT OF THE MONTH
- 3 BOOMING PRAIRE CHICKENS
- 4 SKYLIGHT
- 5 WINGS & WETLANDS

CONTRIBUTORS:

DRU CLARKE
PETE COHEN
THOMAS MORGAN
DAN THALMANN

UPCOMING DATES:

Apr 13 Beginning Birding 8 AM
Ackert Parking Lot

Apr 17 Wed. 5:45 PM DINNER
7:30 PM - PROGRAM
1014 Throckmorton, KSU
NE corner Denison/Claflin

Apr 27 BIRDATHON
Call 539-0483

PRINTED BY
CLAFLIN BOOKS & COPIES
MANHATTAN, KS



**A LONG STORY ABOUT A (LOVELY) LEECH
OR A SHORT STORY ABOUT ONE LEECH CHOICES**

Dru Clarke

The kick screen was weighed down with a slime of dropped leaves and hairy algae as the fourth graders hauled it to a level place on the bank of Blackjack Creek. Immediately they kneeled, bent over the screen, forceps poised to grasp anything that moved, to be transferred to a water-filled ice cube tray. Our purpose: to assess the quality of the creek by doing a macroinvertebrate index, and then, to create a more permanent “reference collection” for the creek. Larvae of caddisfly, mayfly, blackfly, blood-red midges and adult aquatic sowbugs began to fill the tray. A last leaf was turned over, and a leech clung to its slippery surface. Slid into its cubicle, it sensed a change in its surroundings and reared its body like a periscope. Suctioning itself to the bottom, it accorded its way around the confines of this strange white “room.” The kids shrieked with joy, awe, and horror, stereotypes running amuck. (“Aagghh ... careful! It’ll suck your blood!”) I assured them that this was a vegetarian leech (“How do YOU know?” “Well, it was on a leaf, wasn’t it?”) and they calmed down to watch in fascination its insinuating movements. Soon, other enticements - eating watercress, hauling an abandoned bike from the creek bed - took them away and interest in the leech waned. Usually I “released” all of the captured macros, but in this case, no collection had been made for this site; the teacher and her students could use them for future reference if some were preserved for identification. Sometimes we make tough choices.

In a hurry, after a class later that night, I stuck the jar in Bluemont Hall’s science education’s refrigerator. I retrieved it several days later, and found the water - and the macros in it - frozen solid, so I stuck it in a nearby microwave oven to thaw it quickly. Several minutes later, I was delicately tweezing the collection into their individual jars, filled with alcohol and water, neatly labeled with their common names, the creek source, and the date. A gliding movement in the bottom of the collection jar caught my eye: the leech was alive and, seemingly, well, unscathed by its freezing and thawing! I dumped the contents into a pie pan and there the leech continued its exploratory (freedom-seeking?) behavior, squeeze-boxing its finely segmented body to a full four centimeters, looking for all its worth like a thin slice of liver. I was amazed and humbled by its grit: this often reviled sliver of life clung tenaciously to it, refusing to give up and die. I put it in my hand and felt a slightly pleasant sensation on my palm as its crept along my life line, seeking what? The way home? Warmth? Light? Sympathy? Its personal jar was labeled and waiting. I hesitated, then dumped the contents, rinsed it, and filled it with the thawed creek water. I tweezed the now frantically squirming leech into the jar, twisted on the lid, then strode - reference shoebox collection under my arm - to my car and drove home.

After dinner, I peeked into the shoebox and hunted the leech’s jar. It had climbed to the top and was huddled inside the lid. (Was it trying to unscrew it?) Enough of this!

I announced to my husband that I would be back in a few minutes. He gave me a peculiar look as I tucked the leech in its bottle in my coat pocket and rummaged around for my car keys. Afraid of being questioned by some passerby, I took two of our dogs with me as “cover” and drove to town, crept across the main intersection, bumped over the railroad tracks, to a clearing near the sewage plant and the banks of Blackjack Creek. The van’s headlights were trained on the creek in a bright beam: I leaped from the driver’s seat, looked around furtively, then bee-lined - dogs in tow - for the creek’s edge where, with a flourish, I tossed the bottle’s contents into the dark water. I checked in the beam to see if the leech was gone, and, indeed, it was. Sometimes our choices are epiphanies.

In the world population of leeches, or even of the leech population of Blackjack Creek, the life of one probably will make no difference in the overall dynamics of the ecosystem. Maybe later that night, or in the weeks to come, that leech will become something’s dinner. But it made a difference to that one, and it made a difference to me. And I hope it will to the kids who hear this story someday.

Submitted by Dru Clarke, KSU graduate assistant in Sec. Ed.

(written about a true story during a Stream Shot stream health assessment sponsored by National Geographic Society, done with the fourth graders of St. George Elementary School, KS, and their teacher, Kathy Huntzinger; Kurt Pyle, Rock Creek High School; and Tish Simpson, Manhattan High School, KS.; and Kale Mann, Tish’s student teacher



The inner bark of the slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*) is a slippery, fragrant, mucilaginous substance that has been used as a poultice to seal wounds. The inner bark has also been chewed to soothe sore throats, and it is still used for that purpose. The Iroquois referred to this tree as “Oo-hoosk-ah,” meaning it slips.

It is known as the red elm because of its proportionately large amount of heartwood. In contrast, the American elm has a proportionately large amount of pale sapwood, and is known as the white elm. The wood of the slippery elm is easily split into firewood, in contrast to that of the American elm which is difficult to split. The branches of the slippery elm are weaker than those of the American elm, although they are

stronger than those of the Siberian elm. The slippery elm was sometimes used as a shade tree before the spread of Dutch elm disease, although it tends to be shorter than the American elm.

It usually occurs in the understory of a forest, but also grows as a shrub on dry hillsides. It seems to be getting shrubbier after the spread of Dutch elm disease. It is somewhat tolerant to Dutch elm disease, but often succumbs eventually. In Asia, ancient individuals are the ones that succumb, but the slippery elm is more susceptible than Asiatic elms and usually succumbs at a younger age. It usually survives long enough to scatter seed. Perhaps the true challenge faced by this elm is competition with introduced species and competition with new

hybrids that are more resistant to Dutch elm disease. This might continue for a few millennia before the slippery elm slips into extinction.

Deer strip the bark of the slippery elm occasionally, but I do not know whether they are soothing their sore throats. Deer do seem to enjoy browsing the twigs. Most of the slippery elms on my hillside are surviving, although they have a tendency to become unsightly as they become old. Most of the young ones have a rather picturesque growth form with their small branches appearing to be swept back by the prevailing wind like the hair of an adolescent child. I hope that the branches of the young ones will be combed by southerly breezes in the years to come.

© 2002 T.D. Morgan

Washington County Birding Event Apr. 5-7 Booming Prairie Chickens

The Kansas prairie has come alive for hundreds of years with the spring courtship dance of booming prairie chickens. Normally hidden among the tall prairie grasses, a new birding event in Washington County will allow visitors and tourists an up close opportunity to see the prairie chickens come out onto the open hilltops for their annual spring courtship display... an ancient dance that once occurred across the vast unbroken prairie of the Great Plains.

There are a variety of ecosystems in Washington County where three distinct geographic areas come together. The weekend will include a Friday evening check-in and fellowship at the historic former city hall in Washington. Birders and nature enthusiasts can get together and visit, swap stories and “enjoy Washington’s friendly people and peaceful lifestyle.”

The bulk of the activities will occur on Saturday with a pre-dawn trip to several surrounding sites to see prairie chickens booming and dancing. Blinds will be set up so visitors can watch at close range - ideal for photographers. After the morning trip, several tours to other ecosystem locations to birdwatch will take place, including the Washington County State Lake, the riparian areas along the Little Blue River and some pristine prairie sites including the northern tip of Kansas’ Flint Hills.

Breaks for breakfast and lunch in the community will allow visitors to sample the variety of fare Washington has available. On Saturday an evening banquet with a guest speaker, talking about the prairie and its birds is planned. Other entertainment will take place and some fun prizes will be awarded.

Sunday morning is a second opportunity to see prairie chickens booming before the weekend is complete. A small fee to help cover the banquet meal and the Friday evening event will be charged. The group believes the economic impact aspect of this “ecotourism” event is important to bring a new appreciation of nature and local wildlife. The event will likely become an annual event if it is received well. More information about the event is available on the City of Washington’s website, www.washingtonks.net. Pre-registration discount deadline is Mar. 18. To pre-register, call 785-325-2281.

Dan Thalmann



As preambled last month the coming mid-April to mid-May period will see four of our visible planets coming out to play all in Taurus' backyard before an early bedtime, as the largest, Jupiter, observes from a discrete distance like a brilliantly watchful nursemaid. Jupiter will start the evenings about halfway up the western sky at the leading edge of the Gemini constellation, while below in descending order will be a glowing Saturn, a dimming Mars, another brilliant gleam, Venus, and then an unusually visible Mercury, having a kind of Maypole dance, changing some positions as they go.

According to timetables in *Astronomy* and *Star & Telescope*: As they line up to begin, a waxing crescent Moon will pass among them, straightening their costumes: Venus' on April 14th, Mars' on the 15th, Saturn's on the 16th, and then a real close report to Jupiter on the 18th, while Mercury, having avoided inspection, will begin sneaking into the sky low behind him. By the 24th, when the Moon has passed on into evenings of near fullness in the east, the dance in the west really gets going.

Venus passes the Pleiades the 24th - 26th. A pursuing Mercury does the same the 29th- 30th, on its way to its greatest height of 14 degrees above the horizon on May 3rd (ten degrees being about the width of an extended fist). From the 3rd to the 10th (while the waning Moon leaves them darkness to play in) Venus, Mars and Saturn will be in a circle of 5 degrees diameter; on the 4th Mars will have shifted to be north of Saturn by just 2 degrees; on the 5th - 6th Venus and Saturn will be in a circle of 3 degrees diameter; on the 7th Venus will now be north of Saturn by 2.5 degrees; and on the 10th, in the most intimate of the movements, Venus and Mars (the deities of beauty and war) will be only three-tenths of a degree apart. Then beginning on the 14th of May the Moon will start revisiting the festivities for a few days as a brand new waxing crescent. As the saying says: "What goes around, comes around." (The moon is full April 26th, new May 12th.)

This sort of party occurs because the planets and the Moon all follow paths across the sky which are quite close together, and

which are close also to the ecliptic, the Sun's path. One could conjecture as to what dances we might see, if any, if they each swung about on varied routes. Our atmosphere adds special effects to the sky show, and I know of no natural law that says our imaginations can't have the same privilege. I emphasize I mean imaginary visions that leave no footprints up there; I don't mean satellites carrying illumined advertisements.

Meanwhile, the for-real stars will keep on shining with their own, non-reflected light. The brightest of them, Sirius, will wave good-bye in the west during the dances. Taurus' red eye, Aldebaran, will travel with the dancers. Capella in Auriga, the Charioteer, will race on till before midnight. Rigel, at the base of Leo's sickle will hunt into the early hours, while Arcturus and Spica, hauling warmer days in from the east, will also be worth noting.

© 2002 Peter Zachary Cohen

99 years ago --

Teddy Roosevelt proclaimed the first federal refuge — Pelican Island in Florida — on 14 Feb 1903.

For the next year and through 2003, there will be a series of events to focus on the National Wildlife Refuges and what they mean to Americans. The system has almost 40 million visitors a year, and refuges serve as important portals to birding, a great way to introduce large numbers of people to birds and to bird conservation.

Lots of events and activities are now being planned: Major celebration at Pelican Island this time next year, A big Smithsonian Institution exhibit in 2003, Zoo partnerships, Commemorative Postage Stamp(s), Media Promotions, Commemorative Books, Showcase Habitat Restoration Projects on many refuges, A high-profile National Refuge Centennial Commission. The National Wildlife Refuge Association will probably have some related information on their web site shortly: <http://www.refugenet.org>



MAY 3,4,5

Register now to enjoy a “natural” weekend of birding, education, networking, fabulous sunsets and fun! Bird watchers of every experience level will discover something wonderful at the Wings & Wetlands Weekend. Smack in the middle of the Central Flyway, this charming central Kansas town welcomes birders to two of the hottest birding sites in the world - Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge.

Friday, May3, 2002

- 1:00 pm Early Check-In and Registration.
- 2:00 pm Waterbird identification hints/tips - Gene Young
- 4:00 pm Quivira National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip.
- 7:00 pm Staging Area.
- 10:30 pm Get Some Sleep.

Saturday, May4, 2002

- 4:45 am Birders Breakfast. Get ready for Quivira.
- 5:30 am Quivira National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip.
- 11:00 am Dedication: Quivira National Wildlife Refuge as a Wetland of International Importance by the U.S. National Ramsar Committee.
- 12:00 pm Lunch. Enjoy a lovely lunch in the beautiful Quivira Refuge.
- 2:00 pm Break-Out Sessions. Choose your favorite and learn something!
Wetland Bird Photo Techniques. World-class nature photographer Bob Gress
Feathered Friends. A live pelican makes Pat Silovsky's presentation fly.
- 3:00 pm Health Break. Fuel up for the afternoon with snacks & drinks.
- 3:15 pm Break-Out Sessions. Choose another topic
Waterbird Identification. Tricks of the trade from shorebird expert Gene Young
Hummingbird Habitats. Don Kazmaier will show you how to attract hummers.
- 5:30 pm Cheyenne Bottoms Field Trip. Thousands of marsh birds and a glorious sunset.
- 6:30 pm Registration & Information. For late arrivals.
- 7:30 pm Prairie **Fiesta!** Enjoy a spicy evening with bird lists, birds of the day, field trip briefings, food, exhibits, entertainment and the finals of the bird calling contest.

Sunday, May5, 2002

- 5:15 am Grab & Go Breakfast. Grab a granola bar and your first cup of coffee.
- 6:00 am Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area & Cheyenne Bottoms Nature Conservancy Preserve
- 9:30 am Continental Breakfast. They'll welcome you at Cheyenne Bottoms Headquarters.
- 11:00 am Return from field trip.
- 12:00 pm Thanks For Spending The Weekend With Us! Check out and good byes

For More Information: Phone - 620.792.2750 E-Mail - cwb@greatbend.com

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN!!

The NFHAS Nominating Committee will soon begin to develop a slate of candidates to fill vacancies on the Board for the coming year. New members begin their terms at the June Board meeting. All Board members serve for a one-year term and may succeed themselves. Current officers, committee chairs and at-large members are listed on the back of this publication.

Please call or E-mail us by April 15th with your suggestions for persons interested in joining the Board. We need your help! Elections will be held at the General meeting on May 15, 2002. Thank you.
The Nominating Committee:

Ann Feyerharm, Chair	Cindy Jeffrey	Earl Allen	Patricia Yeager
Afey@kansas.net	cinraney@ksu.edu		
539-0483	468-3587	537-4457	776-9593

FYI: Submit Newsletter articles by 15th of month to Cindy Jeffrey, 128 Dole Hall, KSU, or 15850 Galilee Rd, Olsburg, KS 66520, or email to cinraney@ksu.edu MAILING: contact Carla Bishop 539-5129



Northern Flint Hills
Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1932
Manhattan, KS
66505-1932



Printed on 100% post-
consumer recycled paper

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 662
Manhattan, KS 66505

Return Service Requested

Published monthly (except August) by the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society

Edited by Cindy Jeffrey, 15850 Galilee Rd., Olsburg, KS 66520 (cinraney@ksu.edu)
Also available on the World Wide Web at the URL <http://www.ksu.edu/audubon/falcon.html>

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. Renewals of membership 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.

Nonmembers 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.

For information on KS birds, subscribe to the KS Bird listserv. Send this message (subscribe KSBIRD-L) to this address (listserv@ksu.edu) and join in the discussions!

NFHAS Board:

President:	Hoogy Hoogheem	(539-7080)
Vice President:	Dave Rintoul	(537-0781)
Secretary:	Eloise Thomas	(456-8519)
Treasurer:	Jan Garton	(539-3004)

Committee Chairs

Conservation:	Karen Garrett	kgarrett@ksu.edu
Education:	Katie Fritz	(776-4233)
	Jan McNeil	(776-3894)
Program:	Judy Roe	(539-5519)
Fieldtrips:	Dave Rintoul	(537-0781)
	Patricia Yeager	(776-9593)
Recruitment:	Leann Harrell	(494-2556)
Membership:	Carla Bishop	(539-5129)
Finance:	Ann Feyerharm	(539-0483)
Public Outreach:	Dolly Gudder	(537-4102)
Land Preservation:	Paul Weidhaas	(539-4805)
Newsletter:	Cindy Jeffrey	(468-3587)
At-Large Board Members:	Dusty Becker, John Tatarko, Alicia Opheim, Earl Allen	

Addresses & Phone numbers of Your Elected Representatives- Write or call (anytime)

Governor Bill Graves: 2nd Floor, State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612. Kansas Senator or Representative _____: State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612, Ph.# (during session only) - Senate: 913-296-7300, House: 913-296-7500. Senator Roberts or Brownback: US Senate, Washington DC 20510. Representative _____: US House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515. U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121. President W. Bush, The White House, Washington DC 20500. Information about progress of a particular piece of legislation can be obtained by calling the following numbers: In Topeka - 800-432-3924; in Washington - 202-225-1772. Audubon Action Line - 800-659-2622, or get the latest on WWW at <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/aa/>