



# the prairie falcon

**VOL. 30, No. 11**  
**JULY 2002**

No newsletter in August  
Deadline for Sept issue is  
Aug. 15th

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

## **THAT TIME OF YEAR**

Here is your Board for the coming year - 2002-2003:

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## **INSIDE**

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## **CONTRIBUTORS:**

DRU CLARKE

PETE COHEN

JANGARTON

THOMASMORGAN

## **UPCOMING DATES:**

**Jul 13 Beginning Birdwatching**

**ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!**

## **Field Trips**

### **BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK**

Join us Saturday, July 13<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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Finally, the Bush administration has conceded that “Greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth’s atmosphere as a result of human (my emphasis) activities, causing global mean surface air temperatures and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise,” in a report by the EPA to the United Nations in late May.

The report says that average temperatures in the contiguous U.S. will rise 5 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit during this century. It goes on to say that some highly sensitive ecosystems, such as Rocky Mountain meadows and coastal barrier islands will likely disappear. And that forest regions in the Southeastern U.S. could see major species shifts or major changes in growth patterns. Drought conditions and changing areas of snowfall are possible in the West, Northwest and Alaska. A sea level rise of 19 inches would flood many coastal cities, and leave them much more vulnerable to storm and tide damage.

Well. Here is a threat more insidious and far-reaching than localized terrorism — and the United States, at least it’s government and industries, is looking to voluntary measures to win the day. The administration fears the impact on the economy if mandatory restrictions in greenhouse gas emissions are ordered, failing utterly to comprehend the disastrous economic AND ecological impacts if climate change is left unchallenged.

The report indicates that humans can adapt to the changing conditions, claiming “Health impacts (of more heat waves) can be ameliorated through such measures as the increased availability of air conditioning.” Yep. That’s what it said. Of course, producing the energy to provide the cool air will only add to the greenhouse emissions, not to mention the effect of heat on the people who actually work outside. And while wildlife tries to find shade and

water, perhaps they will be comforted by knowing that they might suffer less if they could just afford some air conditioning.

But it isn’t just government and industry at fault. We citizens have done a very poor job of telling our representatives that climate change matters — enormously. A November 2000 survey showed that two-thirds of Americans believe we should protect the environment “regardless of cost,” but at election time, the environment was ranked near the bottom of important issues. Only 2 percent of those surveyed said they made their presidential choice based on the environment.

If that doesn’t change, if people making decisions don’t grasp the life-threatening consequences of inaction, ~~if we don’t help them make the connections~~, then the world we leave behind will have fewer possibilities and less hope than ours.

The report is available online at [www.epa.gov/globalwarming/publications/car/](http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming/publications/car/)

*2002 Jan Garton*



*“When the shade begins to be heavy and the midges fill the woods, and when the western sky is a curtain of black nimbus slashed by the jagged scimitar of lightning, when the wood thrush seldom sings except after rain and instead the rain crow, our American cuckoo, stutters his weary, descending song - an odor steals upon the moist and heavy air, unbelievably sweet and penetrating. It is an odor that comes from no bed of stocks, no honeysuckle. More piercing, yet less drugging, than orange blossoms, it is wafted, sometimes as much as a mile, from the flowers of the Linden.”*

Donald Culross Peattie,

“A Natural History of Trees of Eastern & Central North America,” 1966.

During the last two years, the flowers of the linden trees attracted many kinds of butterflies including swallowtails (black, tiger, and zebra), blues (spring azure and eastern-tailed), skippers (silver spotted, an unidentified dusky wing, and another unidentified species), monarch, hackberry butterfly, snout butterfly, cabbage butterfly, and brush-footed butterflies (great spangled fritillary, silvery checkerspot, pearl crescent, question mark, mourning cloak, red admiral, painted lady, and American painted lady which is now officially known as painted beauty). The number of individual butterflies was 30-to-100-fold lower this year than last year. The species that were less abundant (mourning cloak, painted beauty, painted lady, and snout butterfly) migrate into our area or are already present as adults in our area during early springtime and may have been affected by cold temperatures in early springtime.

There were no butterflies on lindens on June 2nd, because the nectar flow began later this year

than the previous year, but I saw a red admiral on June 3rd. While waiting for more butterflies, I watched the bumble bees, and was amazed by the diversity of bumble bees that pollinated the linden.

Strong winds disrupted the odor plume each day, and the aroma must be present to attract the butterflies from a distance. On June 11th, a thunderstorm missed Manhattan, but the wind removed the aroma so completely that I was unable to detect it even when I sniffed individual blossoms. A monarch repeatedly tried to find flowers on a tree of a different species which already had long seed pods hanging from its branches. Another monarch waited patiently on a leaf, as if waiting for informative stimuli.

Two days later, I encountered the fragrance when I was at least ten yards away. When I approached the canopy and sniffed, I was nearly unbalanced as I jerked back from the overpowering stimulus. I soon saw seven species of butterflies. Richard Beeman told

me that he experienced something similar as he was bicycling home that evening. He momentarily thought he had regained his sensitivity to fragrance, as he encountered the fragrance of a linden, which became his fountain of youth, as he revisited his boyhood passion for watching butterflies.

About one third of the little leaf lindens had finished blooming when I wrote this on June 15th, even though most of the American lindens were just starting to bloom. The fragrance of the American linden seems distinctive. If a blend of aromas that makes up a fragrance can be compared to a chorus, the chorus of this linden has fewer sopranos and more altos. The chorus seems deeper and richer. In the wild, these natives do not invest their resources in a mass flowering every year. But when they do invest their resources, they throw a party for every pollinator in the neighborhood and advertise it far and wide.

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Birds range widely, so it's relevant here that a group in Oklahoma City is gathering \$250,000 to build one or two 100-ft. towers, from which one or two beams of green light—called “Beacon(s) of Hope”—would be raised nightly, with the goal that they would be visible to a height of 4000-ft. above ground. To me this would be an unwarranted private seizure of sky territory that belongs to all. A kind of “taking” in reverse. So I found myself in a very friendly 50-minute phone conversation with Hershel Lamirand, one of the leading proponents.

He assured me the tower(s) would be decorative, and located downtown on the grounds of the 300-acre multi-faceted Health Center, just off the busy intersection of I-40/I-35. Thus he envisions the towers by day and the beams by night giving both the Center and the city a defining gateway and identity-cum-tourist attraction in the way he believes the Gateway Arch does for St. Louis.

He quotes a local observatory director advising astronomers that if they want to improve local viewing conditions they should work on reducing general city lighting, that such beams would add little to the present brightness. Mr. Lamirand suggests that such a landmark would be a guide-on for people trying to reach the Center in emergencies. To what extent it might also be a motorists' distraction we didn't discuss.

Our conversation did range far, and I don't doubt he takes pleasure in the ducks nesting along the creek by his house, as well as in other outdoor aspects of his state.

Yet, while the FAA has apparently been consulted about the plan, to the date of our talk no naturalist had.

To the possibility that a quarter million dollars (plus an endowment for power and maintenance) could bring more tangible hope in other ways, i.g. scholarships, he responded that Oklahoma has many state-rooted scholarship sources, and he works to raise funds for them, too. But such is not this group's mission.

I didn't know at the time how far a 4000-ft vertical shaft can be seen. Pythagoras and a younger friend now have helped me compute that on level unobstructed terrain it would be 78 miles, or within a circle of 185 sq. mi. Central Oklahoma has elevations and obstructions that would reduce those figures, but there would still be many windows and vistas in which Mr. Lamirand's group would hang their creation every non-foggy night, whether people wanted it there or not. His view of this intrusion, as I understood it, was to offer a comparison to new skyscraper buildings rising in a city, and to say that Oklahoma has no laws protecting the concept of a property's right to natural light and air.

Mine has not been the only commentary. One negative letter reached the daily Oklahoman from Australia, and Mr. Lamirand told me he's had disagreements locally generated. Anyone with responses of their own, pro or con, can reach Mr. Lamirand at his office at the Center: 800 Research Pkwy - Ste 400, Oklahoma City 73104; (405)

271-2200. The Oklahoman address: PO Box 25125,, 73125; (405) 475-3311. The city's Chamber of Commerce is not involved, yet Jill Nees, Mgr. of Public Relations and Image Development, might have an interest in public reaction: 123 Park Ave., 73102, (405) 297-8990, <jness@okcchamber.com>

Meanwhile, recall that the Prairie Falcon will be taking its usual August respite, but from higher than 4000-ft. the Perseids will be making their usual appearance and this year the Moon will bow out early. The night of August 12-13 should be the peak, with an average of one a minute, with again the best chance of fireballs near dawn. *Astronomy* says the nights either side should be 20% as good, and for other pre-dawn delights suggests Comet Wirtanen; on its 5.4-yr. swing, it should be traveling through the western half of Gemini the latter half of August. Jupiter should return in time to bear witness, to the lower left of Saturn who'll be rising between 2 and 3AM and shifting from Taurus into Orion's raised arm.

Open all night will be the summer-bright Milky Way, from overhead down south through Sagittarius' teapot, whose handle, *StarDate* predicts, the waxing gibbous Moon will highlight for you August 18. Venus, setting earlier each night, will be almost touching Spica after sundown August 31, and a low Mercury might be spotted right after sunset September 1. Full Moons: July 24, August 22; new, August 8, September 6.



When I was about a decade old, my Aunt Lola made my cousins and me matching dirndl skirts. She was my favorite aunt, not only because she was famous for being the model for the Pertussin Cough Syrup bottle (she had bright blue eyes, high cheek bones, and a slim, chiseled nose), and made great sweet potatoes with marshmallows, but she always saw something feminine in my tomboy persona and was determined to cultivate it. Cousin Willette's skirt was white with pink; Lolita's, white with turquoise; mine, white with blue, more precisely, morning glory blue, as I came to call it. The skirt seemed to have miles of fabric, all pulled together by a wide waistband, and hemmed by a foot-wide border of morning glory flowers on their twining vines. I loved that skirt and wore it only for special occasions. It took a whole afternoon to find a blouse that would complement it and finally settled on a puffy-sleeved one with an elasticized scoop neck that could be worn on, or off, the shoulders. It was very bohemian for a ten-year old and I was transformed into something exotic when I wore that magic combination.

Several years before my Aunt Lola died at age eighty-six, she sent me a letter with a separate envelope tucked inside. I peeked inside and saw what looked like tiny peppercorns: morning glory seeds! My childhood skirt danced again in my head, and I vowed to plant the seeds in a special place. The skirt - a prescient gift given again a half century later to me, in a new environment, half a continent away - would manifest itself in organic fashion, this time, twining on a

fence instead of around my legs. Luckily, we live in the country: why that should make a difference, we found out in the following year.

I planted some seeds at the base of the chain link enclosure that surrounds our grain bins, and others along the chicken wire that pretends to keep our hens in. If they grew, I would see them each time I helped with chores, those tasks so much easier to do with that shocking blue to greet me. More seeds I took to the "farm" (where our mare band is) and scattered them around the corrals. That year, Aunt Lola's morning glories rioted. The reason, I suppose, is the utter dark that descends on these places each night. In order to be glorious in the morning hours, they need a restful, omnipresent lack of light for, at least, several uninterrupted hours. Morning glories thrive because of the night.

Some morning glories sprung up without benefit of vertical support and crept in a mass - a flowery protist or earthly blue-green supernova - carpeting a full quadrant of barnyard, assiduously avoided by my husband's mowing his paths to the stabled horses. Others twined through the wire and around the posts. A few even erupted at the entrance to the south pasture, although they weren't deliberately planted there. The leaves, like fleur de lis and moonseed melded, resemble a coat of arms icon; if the dark wanted a standard to herald its importance, it would be the morning glory's leaves. Surely night-loving blooms, like night-blooming cereus, might do, but they are tropical and exotic to our understanding. Morning glory is "of our place,"

a compelling life form to give us reason to protect the dark.

On a summer outing to Konza Prairie, stars, planets, and satellites emerged as the light fled the sky and we were able to imagine from the strew, personal, as well as commonly recognized luminaries named by ancient observers. Islands of landlocked light identified by our guide gave place to our position on earth. Fortunately, most were far enough away not to interfere with our sensory delight in viewing this seldom clearly seen panorama in the night sky.

At home, we have no night lights, no pulsing mercury vapor glare that electric companies encourage rural folks to erect (at a "nominal" or "no" cost) to "protect" themselves from sneaking intruders and bold predators. Because we can see our way to the house, with its dim and shaded lights, we live at some risk from intruders, predators, and the dark. But we do have morning glories.

Why can't we keep our lights turned to earth? Just a little forethought would allow night to work its magic, without compromising our safety. And morning glories would have an even chance to brighten our paths, decorate our fences, and reclaim their rightful place as gifts from the dark for the daylight hours. Maybe, too, like that dirndl skirt, they could dance again where they haven't been allowed to, and bring back fond childhood memories, when night was dark and day filled with sunlight.

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Dedicated to the fond  
memory of my Aunt Lola



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