



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry– Galligar

Audubon Chapter

Officers 2011-2013

President:

Wayne Bockelman

Vice President:

Megan Corrigan

Secretary

Barb Robins

Treasurer

Liz Mangile

Newsletter Editor

Cindy Ford

cford@pittstate.edu

**March Meeting
Thursday, 7:00 p.m.
Yates 102
PSU**

****Presentation****

**Mar 27 — “Excavation of
Freshwater Mussels” by
Edwin Miller, KS Dept. of
Wildlife, Parks, & Tourism**

Ed will talk about the recent archaeological excavation of freshwater mussels near Kansas' Verdigris River where over 900 relic mussel valves were identified.

To receive an e-newsletter:
send your e-mail address to
Cindy Ford, Editor.

March 2014

VOLUME 2014 ISSUE 3

Spring Break PSU Biology Trip to the Gulf Coast

By Steve Ford

Last week over spring break a group of PSU Biology Dept. students and faculty embarked on an ichthyology



field trip to southern Mobile Bay, AL, staying at a developed barrier island called Dauphin Island. The trip was led by Dr. Jim Triplett, the last of many forays in his 30-



year career. The camping trip was cold and rainy early on, but the rain finally stopped and chilly but nice weather prevailed.

The coolness and the fact that too much rain diluted the salt-water led to a lot of empty fish nets, yet persistence and sampling a diversity of habitats eventually resulted in a good catch of fish—a trip record actually (54 species). One of the trip highlights was an afternoon on a trawler. Not only were a lot of fish caught—different species in the bay and open



ocean—but also a good-sized green sea turtle, which the boat crew said was rare. It was in good condition and soon returned to the sea.

Like the fishing, birding was a little slow, but persistence paid off. We camped next to an Audubon Preserve which “netted” some early migrating warblers, such as black-and-white, prothonotaries, and many hooded warblers.



Hooded warbler

Of course, the lakes and marshes yielded lots of herons and egrets, as well as some clapper and sora rails. Coastal areas were awash in laughing and herring gulls and brown pelicans. Close scrutiny resulted in a few willets, American oyster catchers,

Laughing gulls



Brown pelicans



American oystercatcher



ruddy turnstones, least sandpipers, sanderlings, and a black skimmer. Northern gannets were seen from the trawler as were royal, common, and Forster's terns.

The group spent the last afternoon in the glitzy congestion of New Orleans' French Quarter, with its great music, street art, food, and high energy—quite a contrast to the island atmosphere.



Steve and Cindy Ford accompanied the group to the Gulf to enjoy the natural history of the area. Apologies for the late Audubon Newsletter.

**Board Meeting Highlights
Barb Robins, Secretary**

Attending: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Bob & Liz Mangile, Diane McCallum, Barb Robins, Emmett & Ruth Sullivan,.

Call To Order (Wayne): 6:00 p.m.

Treasurer's Report (Liz): Checking account balance of \$4,228.89

Next Program: Ed Miller on freshwater mussels, ancient and modern.

Newsletter & Publicity: Thanks to contributors to this month's newsletter. We are getting good publicity on KRPS and in Morning Sun.

Last Field Trip: At least seven Short-Eared Owls sighted, some Northern Harriers.

Birdhouses: Krimson Kultuur has sold all but one; can we build some more?

Policies & Announcements from National: Diane has done a great job forwarding links.

SGAS Bylaws Revision: We will deal with it eventually.

Possible Community Projects: Putting nesting boxes in public places was discussed.

Other:

Mavis proposed that we donate \$50 to the Parsons, Kansas Purple Martin Rehabilitation Project. Moved, seconded, approved.

Bob gave a pigeon program to the chapter meeting in Joplin last week.

**February Meeting Presenter
Andrew Burnett**



There is no in-between when it comes to the biology and management of purple martin colonies: you are either wholly dedicated, or you don't want to get involved. Andrew Burnett, who is a Parsons resident and a member of the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA), more than demonstrated to us that he is passionate about the birds and is more than willing to devote tremendous quantities of time to developing goals for a Purple Martin landlord, building and maintaining shelters, monitoring nests, studying habits, and even feeding martins when the cold weather denies them the insects they require to stay alive. In the last few years, Andrew has taken on the project of rehabilitating many houses built by a resident in the 1950s and has helped to maintain for Parsons the designation of "The Purple Martin Capital of Kansas."

Oral history tells us that Native Americans hung gourds for the migrating, nesting birds; and 19th-century pioneers built martin houses. Andrew was enthusiastic and eager to share details of choosing sites to attract colonies, checking nests for cleanliness and presence of predators, and keeping records of the number and progress of hatchlings. He showed examples of predator baffles and ways to prevent nonnative competitors (house sparrows and starlings) from nesting in the houses.

Andrew served as "mythbuster" and gave us the facts for lore we may have heard but is mostly false:

- Purple Martins aren't that great at decimating mosquito populations; the insects are only 0-3% of their diet.
- The "scouts" don't fly back south and inform their colleagues of nesting sites; they are merely birds who arrive earlier than the others.
- All birds don't return to the same site each year; only about 10% do.

At the conclusion of Andrew's presentation, PCMA member Tim Mangan spoke on his bird-banding activities and efforts to seek out Purple Martin landlords who wish to participate in banding studies. He shared results from his studies and offered to help people who wish to start a martin colony.

Barb Robins

**Financial Statement
Liz Mangile, Treasurer**

March 2014

Beginning Balance----- \$4,235.89

Debits

Purple martin rehab ----- \$ 50.00
Total Debits----- \$ 50.00

Credits

Local dues \$ 60.00
Total Credits----- \$ 60.00

Ending Balance----- \$4,238.89



Thank you to Cynthia Pfannenstiel and Katribna Inscore for great refreshments in February.

General Meeting Notes

Bird Sightings: Woodcock, Pileated Woodpecker.

Several people participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Dr. Snow announced that Kelly Kindscher, KU ethnobotanist, will give a talk on knowledge and uses of medicinal plants on March 3, Grubbs Hall 109, at 7 p.m.

Jen Rader, Director of SEK Nature Center, will lead a wildflower walk in Schermerhorn on April 12, time TBA. Next month's program will be given by Ed Miller on comparing prehistoric remains of freshwater mussels to present-day species.

We need one more volunteer for the next meeting.

Barb Robins

Donna Mansell, a regular member of our Sperry-Galligar Audubon Club, will be missed. She passed away March 6, 2014. Donna particularly enjoyed the bird field trips.



CRITTER CONNECTIONS by Bob Mangile

Water Turtles

There are 58 species of turtles found in the United States and Canada, 14 of which have been found in Kansas including two box turtles, six basking turtles, two soft-shelled turtles, two snapping turtles and two mud or musk turtles. However, some of these are not found in our southeast corner of Kansas and some are found only on rare occasions.



Most people are familiar with box turtles that are seen roaming fields and crossing roads. And those who have visited a pond or stream during a sunny day during the spring has probably seen basking turtles soaking up sunshine on a log in or near the water. But the turtle that has gained the most respect is the Common Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) because of its relatively large size and pugnacious disposition, i.e., they snap out at their victim and can deliver serious bite. Their top shell (called the carapace) can measure 10-14 inches long and they can weigh over 30

pounds. The largest one I've ever seen is in the photo at the left. (Its larger cousin, the Alligator Snapping Turtle, can weigh as much as 200 pounds and is a rare visitor in Kansas.)

Another species of turtle that can deliver a vicious bite is the Spiny Soft-shelled Turtle (*Apalone spinifer*). It has spiny tubercles on the anterior edge of its upper shell – a characteristic not found on its more westerly Kansas cousin the Smooth Soft-shell Turtle. Unique in many aspects this species (sometimes called leatherbacks) has a leather-like



shell or covering, is flattened – like a pancake – and can easily out swim and catch fish. When caught on a fishing line they fight like a large fish. The largest specimen collected in Kansas had a shell length of 20.5 inches and weighed over 30 pounds. If recollection serves me correctly the largest one I've ever seen was a gravid female that had a shell length of 19 inches and its carapace is probably in the PSU collection. In the photo at the left Carol Newcomb holds a large Spiny Soft-shelled Turtle that we found crossing the road at the Neosho Wildlife Area, near St. Paul, KS during a March 31, 2007 SGAS field trip. The photo at the right shows the bottom shell (called the plastron) depicting the soft covering.



Another unique and seldom seen but common species is the Common Musk Turtle (*Sternotherus odoratus*) - sometimes called Stinkpot Turtle because it can produce a smelly musk when handled. It is shy and seldom ventures far from water, therefore, are probably unknown to most. It can reach four inches in length and are said to live 50 years in captivity. The tiny baby Stinkpot Turtle held in my fingers was photographed on May 13, 2005 and still survives in a Southeast Kansas Nature Center aquarium. ###



Sightings.....



Yellow Spring Warblers



Yellow warbler



Prothonotary warbler



Northern parula



Yellow-rumped warbler

Send your newsletter articles, bird sightings, and nature notes to C. Ford by Apr. 10.

**Application for Membership
Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society**

For first-time National Audubon membership, send \$20.00 and become a member of both organizations, receive 6 copies of Audubon Magazine annually and 8 copies of Sperry-Galligar Newsletter. *Please make your check to: Sperry-Galligar Audubon.*

YES I wish to become a FIRST-TIME member of National Audubon and Sperry-Galligar Audubon. (\$20.00).

For only local or renewal membership, send \$15.00 for membership of Sperry-Galligar Audubon and receive the 8 newsletters per year informing you of all our local activities. *Please make your check to: Sperry-Galligar Audubon*

YES I wish to become a RENEWING member of the local chapter (\$15.00).

Future National Audubon renewals: Send Audubon mailer forms directly to National.

Mail to:
Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society
P.O. Box 205
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762-0205



Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

e-mail address _____



**Events,
&
Miscellany**

2014 SUMMER DAY CAMP



The annual Nature Reach Summer Day camp for those students who have completed 1st-3rd grade will be held June 16-20th from 9am to 12pm each day. If you would like to volunteer one or all days please let me know. I can always use a little extra help. We will have a 15 student maximum. If you know a student who might enjoy spending the week learning about nature feel free to call (620) 235-4727 or contact me via email dlistler@pittstate.edu. Spaces are already filling up! There will be a 4th/5th grade camp in August, but we are still pulling the final details together.

Audubon Recommends Movie

Have you heard about the movie "The Birder's Guide to Everything" yet? I keep getting news about it from National Audubon Society. (Here's an article: <http://mag.audubon.org/articles/living/new-film-birders-guide-everything-puts-teens-spotlight>)

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>Here's the trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cup5DCy3cP0>

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Diane McCallum

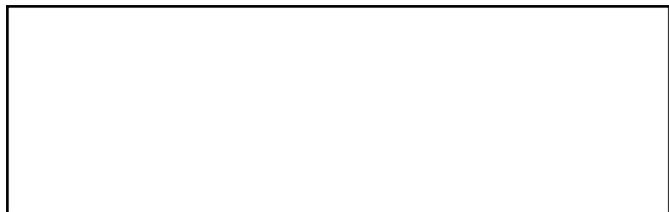


**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society
Newsletter**
P.O. Box 205
Pittsburg, KS 66762
Meetings are held the last Thursday of the month. No meetings in June July, or August. (Nov/Dec meeting date to be announced) From 7:00 pm to 9 pm, in Room 102, Yates Hall. PSU Campus, Pittsburg, KS. Refreshments served and Guests Welcome.



Visit our website:

<http://sperry-galligar.com/>



**Attention All
Members**

Pay membership dues in September. Please consider paying local membership dues. Our chapter receives 100% of the local dues only. HOWEVER, you can subscribe to both. Either way you get the newsletter.

