



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

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

****Presentation****

April 24 — “Neosho National Fish Hatchery & Endangered Pallid Sturgeon”

**by Bruce Hallman,
Education Specialist**

Bruce will fill us in on the status of pallid sturgeons which are in need of assistance in increasing their numbers in the wild.

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

April 2014

VOLUME 2014 ISSUE 4

CROWS AND CONS

By Bob Mangile

As a kid I can recall when folks around the Pittsburg area would hunt crows. During the cold months I can recall seeing large numbers of crows - hundreds, perhaps thousands – congregated near Cow Creek before dark getting ready to head to their roosting area. This pre roosting gathering is called “staging” – they do not individually fly directly to the roost - which was in the heavily wooded areas along the creek. I can recall being on horseback and passing under a roost late one evening and flushing out a low roosting flock of crows from a tangle of vines. Scared me half to death! By the middle 1950’s or so those large flock of crows seemed to have disappeared in our area.

Folks that hunted crows knew that they were smart birds and often commented about their spooky awareness of when you were carrying a shotgun and their more approachable behavior when you were not. Finding a dead crow on the road was then and still is a rare site. (Studies reveal that crows are the smartest birds in the world.)

Everyone knew what a crow was and nobody question that. If you are a modern day bird watcher you might use the name American Crow, *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, but it was/is

the same bird. However, things have changed. About 15 years or so ago a different species of crow, the Fish Crow, *Corvus ossifragus*, began to extend their breeding range from the southeastern US into southeast Kansas. As the years



Fish Crow calling

passed they’ve extended their range across much of Kansas and into Nebraska. To the average public citizen both species of crow look alike so don’t be

conned! Even the more experienced birders might have trouble making a distinction between these two species. Crows seen in winter are not Fish Crows, they migrate south during the cold months.

Here are a few helpful tips on how Fish Crows differ from American Crows. Both species are black but the Fish Crow displays a more glossy purple, which is difficult to detect. They are substantially smaller than American Crows but is difficult to determine unless they are side by side. They are more often seen in small groups and are associated with streams and bodies of water. Their wings appear more pointed and their flight patterns are a bit more multidirectional and have faster wing beats. But the most reliable identification characteristic is their call. Most are familiar with the “caw, caw” call of the American Crow. The Fish Crow has a nasal sounding double noted call sometimes described as an “uh, uh”. And unlike American Crows they tend to fluff their throat feathers when calling - as seen by comparing the accompanying photos. It has been suggested that if you see a crow just ask it if it is an American Crow. If it answers back with “uh, uh” it is a Fish Crow! But be careful because both species can be seen in mixed flocks! **Watch and listen to a flock of Fish Crows at this link** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BokcwckrOXg>



Am. Crow calling

**Board Meeting Highlights
Barb Robins, Secretary**

Attending: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy & Steve Ford, Delia Lister, Bob & Liz Mangile, Diane McCallum, Barb Robins, Emmett & Ruth Sullivan.
Call To Order (Wayne): 6:00
Treasurer's Report (Liz): Checking account balance of \$4,231.59
 We have bluebird houses for sale again at Krimson Kultuur. Next month's presenter is Bruce Hallman, from the Neosho National Fish Hatchery.
 There was a round of applause for Cindy and her continuing production of excellent newsletters. She always needs contributions from us.
 Steve Ford reported on his and Cindy's participation in the PSU spring break ichthyology trip to Dauphin Island, led by Dr. James Triplett.
 We will take a field trip to Schermerhorn Park on April 12; meet on the north side of the mall parking lot at 8:00 a.m.
 Steve asked if we agreed to give away the three years' worth of photos submitted in our past photo contests; we did and suggested that he offer them first to the photographers who submitted them.
 National Audubon is sending e-mails concerning changes made to their policies and procedures. We should read them.
 Wayne commented that it's always good to have something on the table, where our bylaw revisions continue to rest.
 Meeting adjourned at 6:50.



**Financial Statement
Liz Mangile, Treasurer**

April 2014

Beginning Balance -----	\$4,238.89
Debits	
Newsletter Printing -----	\$ 7.30
Total Debits-----	\$ 7.30
Ending Balance -----	\$4,231.59

Many thanks to Mary Kilcher for the delicious refreshments at the March meeting.



**March Meeting Presenter
Ed Miller**



The mention of prehistoric animal relics usually brings to mind fossils of dinosaurs and ancient sea creatures. However, "prehistoric" in Kansas can extend to the advent of written history—the time of the white man's exploration and settlement. Ed Miller of KDWP&T brought that home to us in

his presentation, "Comparison of Freshwater Mussels from a Prehistoric Mussel Midden With Current Distribution in the Verdigris River, Kansas". He, members of the Kansas Anthropological Society, and volunteers had excavated a site along the Verdigris north of Independence that contained a hearth and a midden. Middens were the Native Americans' trash heaps; and this one contained 935 mussel shells, 24 species in all.

The objective of Ed's study was to date the shells and compare the percentage of mussel populations then and now. By the use of radiocarbon dating, it was determined that the shells were placed there from 3000 BP to 100 AD. Using a 2010 survey in the same area that yielded 4500 mussels sorted into 21 species, they were able to compare the contents of the ancient midden and present-day populations to find that only three species have been extirpated. Comparing the number in each species showed that some were fewer, some about the same, and others more. Ed speculated that those three species probably disappeared in the 19th century when Kansas was homesteaded.

It was interesting to hear about the dietary and utilitarian uses of mussels by our early native inhabitants, and it was gratifying to know that most of our native mussel species are persisting in spite of assaults by chemical pollutants and river siltation.

General Meeting Notes

Bird Sightings: Many Cardinals, Pileated Woodpecker, Turkey Vultures, Double-Crested Cormorant flock, Red-Shouldered Hawk.
 We will take a field trip to Schermerhorn on April 12; Jennifer Rader will lead a bird and wildflower walk. Meet on the north side of the mall parking lot at 8:00 a.m.

One our members, Donna Mansell, passed away earlier this month; we remembered her greatly enjoying the field trips.

There has been state legislation proposed to eliminate the ability to set aside land for perpetual conservation; Wayne urged us to write letters opposing that action. Vic Sullivan, Nature Conservancy board member and knowledgeable of the Kansas Heritage Trust work, explained the impact the legislation would have on plant and animal species in our state. Steve Ford also added comments. We will gather information and place it on our web site.

Kelly Kindscher's ethnobotany presentation at PSU, postponed from March 3, may be rescheduled; check the SGAS web site.

In April, all coins tossed in the mall's fountain will be donated to Nature Reach.

Steve has placed photographs from the past three photo contests on the front table and invited the contestants, then the rest of the members, to help themselves.

Barb Robins

Schermerhorn Field Trip Highlights Birds and Wildflowers

The weather was very cooperative when a group of 16 birders met at Schermerhorn Park on the morning of April 12. Nine SGAS members were joined by Bill and Vi Thorne of Parsons, Dave Hennessey and Phil O'Hare of Joplin. Jenn Rader led the group on a wildflower walk through the park that also included some good bird sightings. Among the flowers we admired were Pussy-toes, buttercups, spring beauty, rue anemone, may apples, bluets and hoary puccoon. We spotted a ribbon snake swimming in a creek and several butterflies. One of the highlights of the trip was watching fish crows building a nest. Despite a slow start in spotting birds, we ended up with almost thirty species seen or heard. These included parula warblers, a Louisiana waterthrush, red-headed woodpeckers, a black vulture, pine siskins, a chipping sparrow and white-throated sparrows. Afterward, the group met in the Southeast Kansas Nature Center to chat and enjoy some snacks. All in all, the weather was perfect and the trip was a success.

Diane McCallum



Notes from a Novice By Megan Corrigan



The Overland Park Arboretum has a special place in the middle called a Bird Watch that is great for beginners like me. It's a gray wooden playhouse, with glass windows on all sides, in the midst of a forest clearing surrounded by eight well-stocked bird feeders. Every direction you look there are birds coming and going, and you can get a really good look at them. Plus, they can't really notice you, because the house is just always there. For a novice like me, who still looks at northern cardinals and wonders how color like that is possible in nature and how they can be so un-camouflaged and yet so successful as a species, this was a lot of fun. The feeders were visited by lots of birds I already knew – cardinals, of course, and tufted titmice, chickadees (probably black-capped up there?), Downy woodpeckers, and juncos.

And on the ground there were a couple of sparrows, with their backs squarely towards us. Wayne's and my best chance for a new species at this point is a sparrow. There are still so many we haven't seen, and they tend to loiter long enough for us to figure out whether their beaks are pink or they have spots

or not on the chest or whether the tail is forked or whatever else we're supposed to look for. The ones I've seen stay poking around on the ground or in the bushes long enough for me to find the sparrow section in whatever field guide we have with us, and then look at them again and compare. Still, we have been foiled by little running sparrows that won't stay still and that are generally just all brown or flecked, but where there was nothing definite about them. Wayne and I watched birds like that last year for half an hour and still don't know quite what we saw.

But these two sparrows were bigger, seemed to have black and white on the head, and as they poked in the leaves they finally turned our way. Wow! They had yellow spots above their eyes! That was definitely something new for us. I thought there should certainly be something called a "yellow-eye-browed sparrow" in the field guide, since that seemed to be the clearest distinguishing mark, but no. It matched the picture of a white-throated sparrow, but I hadn't noticed the throat at all – I was just staring at the yellow spots. So I got the binoculars up again, and watched. These really were very cooperative sparrows, even though they had started with their backs to us. Soon enough they picked up their heads and we could see that they did indeed have white throats. And the field guide said that the yellow part was not called eyebrows, but that these birds have yellow lores. So not only did I get a new bird that day, but I got a new word too. So much fun!



Sightings.....



Who belongs to these feathers?



Answers will be in the May newsletter.

Send your newsletter articles, bird sightings, and nature notes to C. Ford by May 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**

Prairie Ethnobotany Presentation

Dr. Kelly Kindscher, University of Kansas, will talk about medicinal qualities of Kansas prairie plants. He will give the presentation Monday, April 21, at 7:00 in Yates 118. The public is invited to attend.

Are you a hummingbird watcher?

I know some of you enjoy watching hummingbirds, so I thought I'd send this along from National Audubon. If you don't want to click on the link below, go to this website: <http://www.hummingbirdsathome.org/> and scroll down to see the various options.

Diane McCallum

Visit

Krimson

Kultuur

Check out the bird houses and other great handmade items.

Book Signing

Diane McCallum will have a book signing for her latest novel, *Another Shot*, at the Pittsburg Hastings at 2806 N. Broadway on Saturday, April 26, from 1:00-3:00. Please stop by and say, "Hi."



**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.

