



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry- Galligar

Audubon Chapter

Officers 2013 - 2015

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Dec 2014

VOLUME 2014 ISSUE 8

Requiem for the Passenger Pigeon

One hundred years ago, the last passenger pigeon died in the Cincinnati Zoo. Martha, the last captive pigeon, was the very last bird of its species. This year is the anniversary of the demise of this species.

Passenger pigeons may have been the most numerous of any species of bird in North America, with flocks "darkening the sky", as mentioned in several accounts of the birds. It is unbelievable to think that the flocks would be so dense as to change lighting, but, in addition, the flocks apparently were consistently in the skies several days at a time when they moved in these flocks and spread out several miles. The only comparison we have today is a flock of blackbirds flying in their extended flocks during the fall. However, the blackbird flocks fall dramatically short of the spectacle that the passenger pigeons presented.

The pigeons were a ready and popular source of food for native Americans and for early settlers. With more and more people interested in game



PASSENGER PIGEON (*Columba migratoria*)
Hager, 1866, *Illustrations of Birds, Fishes, and Reptiles*
Reproduced from the *Atlas of Audubon Birds*

species, market hunters killed thousands of the birds for commercial markets. (There were no bag limits at that time.) Much of the fresh pigeon meat was transported by train to markets in the eastern part of the U.S. where the demand was high. Passenger pigeons were easily hunted because they would land on the ground in large groups. Nets could be flung over the flock, capturing nearly all of them in the group. Alcohol-soaked grains were also used by the hunters to "slow down" the pigeons for easier capture. Even living confidence "decoys" (tied pigeons) were used to encourage the pigeons to land in a particular area where they would be trapped.

With this kind of pressure on the passenger pigeon populations and lack of understanding about the life cycles of the birds, the flocks dwindled. People neglected to connect the fact that only one egg is laid per year, which means that the population is slow to grow in numbers. The market hunters were taking too many birds so that the pigeon populations could not keep up. As the markets were more difficult to satiate, passenger pigeons went out of vogue. There were too few of them anymore. Finally, Martha was the novelty passenger pigeon on view at the zoo until she died at 29 years of age in 1914.

We will never see passenger pigeons flying in our skies, but, hopefully, we have learned how to better protect the bird species we do have today.

Cindy Ford

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

Dec. 4 — "Discovering Viviparous Quadrupeds along the Missouri River with John James Audubon"
By Chris Pistole, Education Director at Wildcat Glades Conservation & Audubon Center.

Travel back to 1843 as Chris re-enacts Audubon's travels along the Missouri River seeking specimens for his paintings.

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

Flocks of Birds



Snow Geese in V Formation



Starlings (Blackbirds) Swarming



Hawks Kettling

Board Meeting Highlights
Barb Robins, Secretary

Attending: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy & Steve Ford, Delia Lister, Bob & Liz Mangile, Diane McCallum, Jennifer Rader, Barb Robins, Emmett & Ruth Sullivan,.

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

Treasurer's Report (Liz): Financial report is in the latest newsletter.

State ECO-MEET: Jennifer Rader, regional coordinator for the Greenbush area, outlined the competitive activities and answered questions. She requested that SGAS sponsor scholarships given to the winning team next year; it was moved, seconded, and approved that we donate \$400 (\$100 to each winning team member.) We suggested to Jennifer that she explore the possibility of brief presentations at our future general meetings by one or more of the ECO-MEET participants.

Speaker Expenses: A resolution authorizing Megan to offer reimbursements to tonight's and future speakers as she deems appropriate was moved, second, and approved.

Next Month's Speaker: Chris Pistole has been scheduled.

Birdseed Sale, December 6: The usual preparations have been set in motion by Bob. Steve assured us that we have enough birdhouses to sell without making more this year.

Photography Workshop: Steve has scheduled a photojournalist to conduct one on November 22. Discussion followed, and we agreed that a limit of 20 and a registration fee of \$10 to cover lunch is appropriate; the location will be the Nature Reach Reserve, and times will be announced.

CD Renewal: Liz needed a second signature for a CD renewal on November 4; Wayne obliged.
 Meeting adjourned at 6:45.

Financial Statement
Liz Mangile, Treasurer

Nov 2014

Beginning balance-----	\$ 3,999.52
Debit	
National Membership	\$ 20.00
Newsletter Printing	\$ 7.34
Speaker Fee	\$ 50.00
Donation to KS Eco-Meet	\$ 400.00
Total-----	\$ 477.34
Credit	
Local dues	\$ 80.00
Total-----	\$ 80.00
Ending balance-----	\$ 3,602.18

October Meeting Presenter
Scott Newman



By now, almost all of us are aware of the consequences of introducing nonnative species to an established ecosystem. Scott Newland, curator of birds at the Sedgwick County Zoo, made us realize even more what a huge impact only a single species can have on many populations of native species over a wide area.

Part of Scott's job is to work on various wildlife conservation projects around the globe, and for the last few years he has been concentrating on the massive problems arising from the accidental introduction of the brown tree snake to the island of Guam by the U. S. military supply ships during 1947-1953. As a result, 9 of 14 bird species were eradicated. The Mariana Avifauna Conservation (MAC) group was formed to study and alleviate the snake's vast destruction. Scott's participation involves observing, cataloging, and translocating various species to affected Northern Mariana islands whose endemic species are critically endangered. Part of the project, of course, is trapping brown tree snakes (great numbers have been reduced since 2004.)

Scott showed us scenic images of the islands as well as the bird species that have been affected. He explained islands' unique species evolution processes and why they are particularly susceptible to environmental change and human intervention. Birds especially have evolved differently on various Northern Mariana islands, and no one yet knows why. Much experimentation and observation must be done to ensure that translocating birds to other islands does not taint or eradicate existing endemic species.

Is the program working? Yes, in the case of the Bridled White-eye on Saragon Island—each year since 2008, MAC's surveys have indicated numbers have increased. The year 2015 will see an increase in the number of birds transported to other islands. Also, education efforts of increasing, and Scott presents programs to island 3rd-5th graders in the hope of making them aware how important their native species are to their culture.

Thankfully, many species will be rescued and will continue to enrich lives due to the efforts of MAC and Scott's efforts.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Ann and Steve Meats, of the local beekeepers association, were present to offer members honey for sale.

Birds: Mostly the usual backyard birds were spotted this month. Local dues are coming in; please renew for the current year if you haven't already. You may also join the national organization if you wish, or opt for either President Wayne Bockelman noted that all members had received a postcard notification of a bylaws revision vote tonight. He called for such; the changes were unanimously approved. Earlier tonight, the board officially agreed to donate \$400 to award scholarships to the winning team at the ECO-MEET, to be held at Greenbush next year headed by Jennifer Rader. Our birdseed sale is December 6. Please sign up tonight to serve as a volunteer. Also, please bring craft and bake sale items to the mall the day of the sale.

Critter Connections by Bob Mangile

Kansas has three species of rabbits: Eastern Cottontail, Desert Cottontail, Swamp Rabbit, and two species of hares: White-tailed Jackrabbit and Black-tailed Jackrabbit. When someone from southeast Kansas mentions seeing a rabbit it is almost always the Eastern Cottontail, Sylvilagus floridanus. Black-tailed Jackrabbits, Lepus californicus, are not so common these days but I used to see them in Crawford County in my younger days. The Swamp Rabbit, Sylvilagus aquaticus, is seldom seen or recognized because they look like a larger version of the Eastern Cottontail but display a black peppering in their fur. They live in swampy stream habitat and are found only in Crawford, Cherokee and Labette counties in KS. They swim and dive well and are reported to submerge in water with only their nose above water when evading predators. Desert Cottontails, Sylvilagus audubonii, and White-tailed Jackrabbits, Lepus townsendii, are found in the western portion of our state.

Lagomorphs, the name for rabbits and hares, (Order of Lagomorpha) are unique among



Eastern Cottontail
(2-4 pounds)

Swamp Rabbit
(3-6 pounds)

Black-tailed Jackrabbit
(4-8 pounds)

mammals in that the females are larger than the males. They are **not rodents**, having four incisors in their upper jaw - not two, like rodents. Hares are larger than rabbits and their young are born with opened eyes and covered with hair in contrast to rabbits that are born with closed eyes and without hair (naked). Domesticated rabbits are varieties of the European Rabbit, Oryctolagus cuniculus, and are commonly kept for food and as pets. Hares have not been domesticated. The male rabbit is called a buck, the female a doe. A young hare is called a leveret and a young rabbit is called a kitten (commonly called a bunny).

Interesting Note: Unlike most other mammals, lagomorphs produce two types of droppings, i.e., fecal pellets and **cecotropes**. The latter are produced by a process called "hindgut fermentation" in a region of the rabbit's digestive tract called the **cecum** - the blind-end pouch located at the junction of the small and large intestines - and they are eaten as they exit the anus. Cecotropes are not feces. They are nutrient-packed dietary items essential to a rabbit's good health and are eaten as they exit the anus. In fact, rabbits deprived of their cecotropes will eventually succumb to malnutrition. ###

THANK YOU,
Carol Newcomb & Cindy Ford
FOR THE OCTOBER REFRESHMENTS.



Sightings.....



Have you seen anything like these birds? They are best observed during the fall.



CYCLONES



THUNDERBIRDS



JAYHAWKS

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

Annual Audubon Bird Seed Sale

We will have our annual birdseed sale Saturday, December 6, 2014, from 9am - 5pm, at Pittsburg's Meadowbrook Mall. Prices will be exactly the same as last year so plan to stock up on your winter supply of birdseed at our sale. OK? And mention it to your friends, too.

There will be bags of bird seed for sale in the large truck parked on the west parking lot and an inside booth at the front of the mall with food and craft items. All of these items make excellent Christmas presents (hint, hint).



Sperry-Galligar Club Dues:

Have you paid your dues for this year? If not, please contact Liz or Bob Mangile. All memberships expired in September.

Share your holidays with the birds. Feed them treats.



**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.

