



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry– Galligar

Audubon Chapter

Officers 2013 - 2015

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April 2015

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## NEW FAMILY AT WOOD'S EDGE.....

Andra Stefanoni

It's not uncommon for my husband, our two sons or me to run inside and shout to the others, "Come outside and look!"

A few years ago, it was the appearance of a just-fledged juvenile barred owl right in the middle of the front yard of the two acres we call Woods Edge. It was 6:30 a.m. and summertime, but we roused the boys from their slumber and it paid off: They got to sit just a few feet away from the young raptor for upwards of 30 minutes, and I got several photographs.

Last summer, it was the sighting of a fawn that had just emerged from the woods. We barely made it out to see it before it wandered back into the shadows — but again, I got photographs.

In March, it was a flock of wild turkeys that had come very near our house just as a thunderstorm began. Throwing caution to the wind, Brad grabbed his turkey call and our sons and I got rain-splattered in an effort to see them in full strut and hear them gobble. I was rewarded by getting a short video clip of the springtime display.



And then, just as April began, Brad ran inside and shouted: "Come outside and look!" He had spied a hen wood duck fly out of the

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter wood duck box we'd installed in our wetland a few years ago. We've fledged two nests of babies, but, being the reclusive ducks they are, we had caught just glimpses of them. He knew I wanted a photo, and he knew that mama would be out of the box for about 15 minutes — the time it takes her to fly off to the woods and stretch her wings a

bit after sitting on eggs all day. I grabbed my camera and the longer of my two lenses and went to the porch of our backyard cabin to settle into a wicker chair and wait.

As with hunting, time and patience are everything when attempting to get a photo of wildlife. On a trip through the Peruvian Amazon in South America years ago, I went through eight cassettes of film to get just a few seconds worth of a lizard darting through the leaf litter and a macaw flying over the canopy.

Staying completely still and keeping one eye trained on the horizon — or in this case, the woods — and one on your camera eyepiece also are key. I knew I would have just a moment to snap a few frames before she went into the box, as wood ducks typically don't dally long. Just as my eyes were beginning to cross and my arm grew numb, the hen and her drake quietly and without fanfare splashed down on the water. I snapped away and kept snapping when the hen flew up to the box and then disappeared inside in just three frames,



leaving behind only water stains on the box front.

The showy drake spent perhaps 10 or 15 more sec-

onds on the water — I like to believe he was making sure she was settled in for the night — and then flew off to the woods to do whatever it is drakes do at sundown. The images I will add to my wildlife scrapbook, and the experience to my growing list of outdoor memories. They are irreplaceable.

Editor's Note: Follow the outdoor adventures of Andra and her family via her new blog, "At Woods Edge," at [www.atwoodsedge.net](http://www.atwoodsedge.net), and at Facebook/[atwoodsedgelife.com](http://atwoodsedgelife.com)

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

**April 30 — "Monarchs, Milkweed, and You" by Karen Garver and Katherine Spigarelli, both of whom are Missouri Master Naturalists. Learn about the migration of monarchs from Mexico to Canada and the challenges involved. Milkweed seeds will be offered so that you can attract monarchs.**

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

**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 p.m.  
**Minutes:** Recognized as sent by e-mail.  
**Treasurer's Report (Liz):** Checking account balance of \$5,091.22.  
**Herp Cages:** Delia has received sufficient funds to begin drawing up plans and start building; we presented her with a check for \$1,000.  
**Next Meeting:** Program will be on monarch butterflies; Megan has secured a speaker for May's picnic.  
**Publicity:** same distribution as previously. Steve suggested that our chapter contribute \$50 during KRPS's pledge drive. Moved, seconded, approved.  
**Ground Feeders:** Bob has made a prototype and has parts cut out for 25. He received advice from us on his demo model.  
**Gifts for Presenters:** We are almost out of T-shirts and bags. It was suggested that we give birdhouses. Also, discussion ensued concerning a method of attaching our chapter logos on the houses. Wayne will check with the PSU printing department to determine their possibilities.  
**Field Trips:** Probably the Ford place for April, and a date will be determined for the postponed trip to the Stefanoni acreage.  
**Protocol Project:** Diane has submitted her description of duties. Wayne urged the rest of us to do the same.  
**Nomination of Officers:** The bylaws state that the slate must be determined at the March meeting. All current officers agreed to serve next year, and perhaps we can add a program cochairman. Slate accepted by the board.  
 Meeting adjourned at 6:45.

**Financial Statement**  
**Liz Mangile, Treasurer**

**Apr 2015**

Beginning balance-----	\$5099.06
<i>Debits</i>	
Newsletter-----	\$ 7.84
Ending balance-----	\$5091.22

**March Meeting Presenter**  
**Larry Herbert**



It is safe to make the assumption that almost everyone likes and is fascinated by bluebirds, and we are blessed to have several experienced and expert observers in the area. Larry Herbert, Joplin resident, member of the Ozark Gateway Audubon Society, and a holder of a Master's Degree in biology from Emporia

State University, shared many of his observations and knowledge gained through his decades of banding, feeding, taking notes, and maintaining bluebird trails.

We enjoyed Larry's enthusiasm and inimitable style of presenting little as well as universally known facts of bluebird history, life, and behavior, such as:

- The female builds the nest and does all the incubating. (Only the female is equipped with a brood patch.)
- The average clutch is 4 to 6 eggs.
- Bluebirds can lay white as well as blue eggs, but one female will always lay the same color. If there are both blue and white eggs in the same nest, two females have been involved.
- The range of a pair is usually 2 to 3 acres.
- The successful nesting rate is about 58%.
- Wasps may build nests in bluebird boxes and can kill a bird with a single sting.
- Fastening the box to a pole with U-bolts and greasing the pole will deter snakes.
- The proper box hole dimension is 1 1/2 inches.
- There are two schools of thought on removing the old nests in boxes vs. leaving them alone; research

indicates that removing them has no impact on the fledging rate. Larry has built hundreds of boxes over the years; and he has built and maintained bluebird trails, one near Baxter Springs. Currently he is monitoring 40 boxes. He has watched nesting birds closely and has compiled many statistics.

During the 1970s, Larry stated, bluebirds suffered a major decline in numbers, mostly due to loss of habitat, i.e. removing dead trees that provide nesting cavities. With a surge of interest in building houses and trails in the 1980s to the present, the bluebird population has recovered. Thanks to devoted enthusiasts like Larry and others, bluebirds should continue to entertain us and add beauty to our lives.

Barb Robins



**HIGHLIGHTS OF MEETING**

**Bird Sightings:** Loggerhead Shrike, Short-eared Owls, Great Blue Heron nests.

**Field Trips:** The one to Shawnee Trail Conservation Area yielded at least 9 Short-eared Owls. We were pleased to view Donna Smith's beautiful photos of them. Watch your e-mail for trips to the Ford Farm and Brad Stefanoni's land.

**150-Bird Pin** was earned by Mary Packard.

**THANK YOU,**  
 Leann Webb & Mary Tersinar,  
**FOR THE**  
**GREAT REFRESHMENTS.**



## Always Something to See When Outdoors

### Critter Connections - The Broad-headed Skink by Bob Mangile

Of the 13 species of lizards that occur in Kansas seven species are classified as "skinks" - having elongated bodies with smooth shiny-scaled bodies and short limbs. **The broad-headed skink, *Plestiodon laticeps***, one of the largest skinks in Kansas, attains a total length of 6-11 inches - half of which is the tail. They are commonly found throughout the forested areas of the south-eastern US but in Kansas they are listed as "threatened", found only in the forested areas of extreme eastern tier of counties. They prefer forested areas but can be found in urban areas with suitable habitat. They readily climb trees and are considered partially arboreal.

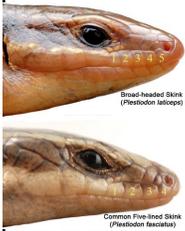


Male Skink

Female Skink

About 20 years ago I found females of this species in a bucket of mealworms in my garage, on the walls of my basement and roaming my concrete patio. Thinking that this species is very secretive and probably present in unexpected areas I began creating favorable habitat on my property, e.g., stacks of firewood logs, upright posts gathered around a tree, large rock piles and brush piles. And it seemed to have worked! Over the years I've seen and photographed adults (see photos above) in various places on my property but interestingly, I've never observed juveniles until last year (2014). I've also encountered this species on several occasions in Cherokee and Crawford Counties

A cousin to this species, **the common five-lined skink, *Plestiodon fasciatus***, is a much smaller skink but is nearly identical in appearance and is difficult to distinguish from its larger cousin. The most reliable way to distinguish them is to count the labial scales on the upper lip between the nostril and the eye. The broad-headed has **five** and the common five-lined has **four**. (Photo at left from the Virginia Herpetological Society.) **Notes:** Skinks have the ability to lose their tail when attacked but it can be grown back. They are active during the day (diurnal). Females lay and guard up to 15 eggs until they hatch in September. ###



Broad-headed Skink (*Plestiodon laticeps*)

Common Five-lined Skink (*Plestiodon fasciatus*)

### Who Dunit?



On **March 21st** I took a beautiful sunrise hike at the PSU Natural History Reserve. To my delight the woods were full of birds singing in Spring. I had a surprise encounter with a drake wood duck (the duck was just as surprised as I was to see him), found various mushrooms, pieces of a three-toed box turtle shell, and a pile of turkey feathers. The find of the morning, though, was an ill-placed goose nest. In total I found four eggs that had likely just been preyed upon overnight. My guess is a raccoon. Anyone else have any ideas?  
Delia Lister

### Black and White of Nature

Color phases occur naturally in some species. Fox squirrels are normally a rusty red, but can be white in some populations and black in other populations. Eastern screech owls will be a red phase and a gray phase. This is different from albinism which is an anomaly in the genetics. Michael Vena photographed this albino American robin which appears pale in color.



### Sightings.....



### Our Most Colorful Birds



Indigo bunting



Wood duck



Ruby-throated hummingbird

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**

**Spy on an Osprey**

A webcam has been set up at an osprey nest for you to view family life in the nest. See what is happening at:  
<http://mclivetech.com/ospreycam/>



**Native Plant Sales this Spring**

Springfield Nature Center—April 4  
Wildcat Glades Nature Center—May 23

**FIELD TRIP**

A birding field trip at the Ford Farm is planned for Saturday, April 25th at 9:00. We will walk on grass trails around the farm looking for spring migrants. Parking is limited, so car pooling is recommended. Directions to the farm are provided on the Sperry-Galligar Audubon website



**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.

