



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry– Galligar

Audubon Chapter

Officers 2017 - 2019

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Megan Corrigan

**Treasurer**

Liz Mangile

**Newsletter Editor**

Cindy Ford

[cford@gus.pittstate.edu](mailto:cford@gus.pittstate.edu)

**February Meeting  
Thursday, 7:00 p.m.  
Yates 102  
Pittsburg State Univ  
\*\*Presentation\*\***

Feb 22..."From Black-footed Ferrets to Bobwhite Quail: Audubon of Kansas Conservation Advocacy and Sanctuaries" by Ron Klataske, Director of Audubon of Kansas. Get an update on some of our Kansas rare, unusual, and declining species. Find out what is being done to maintain their status and their habitats.

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

Feb 2018

VOLUME 2018 ISSUE 2

## IN SEARCH OF SHORT-EARED OWLS

By Wayne Bockelman

Short-eared Owls are fairly rare in this part of the country. We are lucky enough to live near an area that numbers of them like to visit each winter—sort of a summer vacation for them. A few miles south of Prairie State Park, just across the border in Missouri, is an area owned by Missouri Department of Conservation called Shawnee Trails. For a number of years it has consistently hosted a population of Short-eared Owls for a few months each winter.

Hoping to host a field trip for Sperry-Galligar Audubon, Megan and I took a reconnaissance trip to check out the area again this year. Our efforts rewarded us with a sighting of one Short-eared Owl.

But the experience was more than that.

It's surprisingly infrequent that we get away from the sounds of traffic—motors running, even tires on pavement. Seldom is it quiet enough to hear wind. On a prairie where the horizon is distant and level in all directions sounds can come from anywhere. Most often on this trip sounds seemed to come from behind me. As I turned, the rustling of clothing covered up the more distant sounds.

The howling coyotes could have been miles away. The yelping pups were much closer. Then there were the softer sounds—sparrows chirping—chips and chirps and chortles. I heard what sounded to me like a frog croaking, though I knew better. It's winter. Maybe an insect song—nope it's still winter. I felt that tinge of guilt—I ought to recognize those sounds. Oh, just give it up. Admit ignorance. Enjoy the music, I told myself.

Before dusk we thought we saw Harriers, or rather, the Northern Harrier hawk. They glide low above the prairie, following the contour of the landscape, up a bit over the rise, down again over the lowland. At least they flew like Harriers. And yes, they seemed to have long tails. Then, there it was, one turned sideways so we could see the white rump patch—definitely Harriers. One dove down to the ground, then lifted up again—maybe with a mouse or vole, maybe without.

As dusk gets darker and the Harriers disappear, Short-eared Owls come out to hunt. At least they have in past years. I remember the wait. It always seems like we aren't going to see any. We've been standing still too long without moving, and it's getting

cold. It hadn't seemed so cold before the sun went down, and we thought we'd dressed warmly enough. It seemed too dark to see anything. Yet, binoculars gather more light than our eyes can without them. Just above the horizon was still a glow through the binoculars, the silhouette of trees in the distance.

We had been listening for the owl's call. It's almost like a short dog bark. We had heard a few short sounds, but we weren't sure they were doggy enough. Then we heard it, a sound much more barky than any sound before.

We looked through our binoculars to the north and finally saw it—a Short-eared Owl flying toward us, a silhouette against the dusky sky. It flew not in a glide, but almost like a butterfly, in short bursts. It flew right towards us, then over us as we struggled to keep it in the field of our binoculars. Once I had lost it from the binocular field I quickly looked to the sky, but it was too dark for my naked eye—the owl disappeared in the darkness.

Megan and I aren't confident enough to lead a field trip where we may or may not see that owl.

The field to the south of where we stood had been burned recently to maintain prairie. The owls may have moved to happier hunting grounds. Dana Hoisington, Park Naturalist, told me he has seen more owls this year at the south edge of Prairie State Park property at the intersection of NN Highway and Central, marked by two prominent grain bins.

The Short-eared Owls may be heading back north any time now. Still, it takes less than two hours for a Pittsburg resident to make the drive to where they may be and stand long enough to get cold. Remember that there is more to the prairie than meets the eye. Sufficient silence to enjoy another aspect of the prairie is probably more likely in smaller groups. Back home, hot soup tastes better when one is cold and hungry.



**6:00 Board Meeting Highlights**  
**Megan Corrigan, Secretary**

**Attending:** Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Chistine Brodsky, Megan Corrigan, Cindy & Steve Ford, Delia Lister, Bob & Liz Mangile, Diane McCallum, Emmett & Ruth Sullivan

**December Minutes:** Read and approved.

**Treasurer's Report (Liz):** \$8421.36.

**Birdseed Sale:** Raised \$764.67. We ended at 4pm and will probably do so in the future.

**February Program:** Ron Klataske, Executive Director of Audubon of Kansas, "From Black-footed Ferrets to Bobwhite Quail: Audubon of Kansas Conservation Advocacy and Sanctuaries."

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act:** A recent legal opinion found that companies are not responsible for the accidental or incidental death of migratory birds, reversing precedent and reducing incentive for companies to implement precautions and best management practices to reduce incidental bird deaths. House Resolution 4239 would make this change permanent. National Audubon invited our chapter to address the incidental take of birds under the MBTA." **Motion Passed:** to sign the letter on behalf of our chapter.

**DeGruson Memorial:** The new KDWPT building at the old quail farm is complete, but lacks landscaping. Board members and members of the DeGruson family will visit the new building and talk to Dave Jenkins about the possibility of contributing to native vegetation/habitat improvement, and having the donation be matched by grant funds.

**Possible Field Trips:** We hope to offer a spring field trip to Cherokee Lowlands, south of Big Brutus. Reports indicate it is rich with birds during migration.

**Financial Statement**  
**Liz Mangile, Treasurer**  
**February 2018**

Beginning balance-----	\$6966.64
Debit	
Newsletter-----	\$ 3.85
Feed Sale-----	\$1310.10
Sales tax for feed sale-----	\$ 183.98
Newsletter-----	\$ 3.85
Cash box-----	\$ 100.00
Total-----	\$1601.78
Credit	
T-shirts-----	\$ 220.00
Feed sale/2 memberships/\$100.00 cash box----	\$2388.75
Nat'l Audubon payment-----	\$ 447.75
Total-----	\$3056.50
Ending balance-----	\$8421.3

**Presenters: Katie McMurry, David Hollie, and Michael Barnes**



Three Pittsburg State grad students who are doing research specifically on birds filled us in on their projects.

Katie McMurry spent the summer visiting the back yards of 47 willing human residents in Pittsburg, documenting bird species, butterfly species, ground cover,

canopy cover, tree trunk diameter and other variables. Diversity of bird and butterfly species indicate habitat quality, even in urban areas. Among the most common birds she found in Pittsburg backyards were European Starlings, American Robins and Northern Cardinals. Among the most common butterflies were Eastern Tailed Blues, Painted Ladies and Fiery Skippers. All totaled, she documented 47 species of birds and 27 species of butterflies. The next stage of her research will be trying to tease out whether any of the other variables she documented (vegetation, canopy, etc.) correlate to higher bird and butterfly diversity. If so, McMurray can share the 'secret' of what makes a backyard good habitat. Katie's major professor is Assistant Professor Christine Brodsky.

The other two students, Michael Barnes and David Hollie, have gone well beyond backyard birding. Barnes banded and tracked birds in 3 states before arriving at PSU. In Tennessee he followed Golden-winged Warbler fledglings, in Oklahoma he looked at Northern Bobwhites and their interaction with predators, and in New Mexico he studied the diet and survival of Scaled and Gambel's Quail. Hollie, originally from Georgia, helped study Roseate Terns in Cape Cod, Superb Fairywrens in Australia, and worked with the Nature Conservancy in California to monitor shorebirds.

Barnes and Hollie came to Pitt State for the chance to participate in the Missouri Ozark Forest Ecosystem Project under Assistant Professor Andrew George. The project, coordinated by the Missouri Department of Conservation, started in 1991 and is planned to continue for a century. Nine study sites in Southeastern Missouri include tracts that have been clear-cut, some that have been selectively logged, and some that have not been logged, and the overall goal is to determine how forest management techniques affect ecological communities. Barnes and Hollie will look specifically at birds and nesting success. Their research could inform future forest management practices.

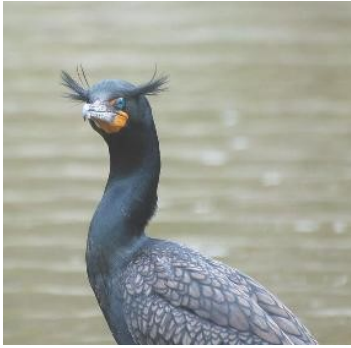
**Megan Corrigan**

CHECK OUT DIANE McCALLUM'S ARTICLE ON THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT ON THE **BONUS PAGE**.

Excellent refreshments were provided by Linda Phipps and Christine Brodsky.

## HAPPENINGS IN SOUTHEAST KANSAS

### Double-crested Cormorant



Not often have I had an unpleasant experience with birds but I recall one in particular involving one of the six species of Cormorants in North America, i.e., a Double-crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*). Around 1980 a lady called and said she was given my name and wanted to know if I would tend an injured big black bird. If I recall correctly her name was Helen Gray and she worked for the city of Pittsburg - possibly with the animal shelter. I could not think of too many "big black birds" but I agreed to take the bird. That was not a wise decision! She delivered an injured Double-crested Cormorant and the fun began. It had a large hooked beak and was hostile.

Cormorants are relatives of Gannets, Boobies and Pelicans and they eat fish so we had to catch plenty of fish to keep it alive. This undertaking was fraught with problems. Firstly, the bird was about 30 inches long and weighed about 3.5 pounds and my cage was a bit small. It was ill mannered and pugnacious. I had to catch fish daily. (A sunfish the size of one's hand was swallowed without a problem.) The use of heavy gloves was necessary to avoid that hooked beak while getting the bird out of the cage to force feed it fish. The area around the cage smelled terrible. Being a water bird I would hose down the bird and the surrounding regularly – but the smell prevailed.

This went on for about a week or so and during one feeding session, while being careful to protect my eyes, it grabbed my arm, making painful puncture wounds. And at that moment I decided the bird had to go! Upon its release in a pit north of Frontenac it made a feeble attempt to fly but couldn't; however, it was at home on the water and probably managed to catch enough fish to survive for a while. They swim with their webbed feet which have all four toes webbed (totipalmate) – unlike ducks that have their forward toes webbed and their rear toes free (palmate).



Notes: During the past few decades their populations have increased to such numbers that they are considered a threat to fishing stocks. The raised feathers behind their eyes are only visible during the breeding season which give rise to their name, i.e., Double-crested. The crests are white in cormorants from the northwest and Alaska and black in other regions. They are known to live as long as 22 years. ### **Bob Mangile**



### EMMETT'S PIC OF THE MONTH

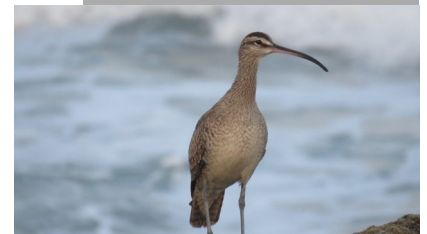
#### Hen of the Woods

These fungi are about the size of a dinner plate. Not only is this a deliciously choice mushroom, but it's also known to have many health benefits. Just make sure you know what kind of mushroom you're dealing with before you use it

### Sightings.....



Quiz Bird



Delia Lister took the photo of this bird while visiting the Monterey, CA area.

It does not occur in our area, but a close relative, the long-billed curlew, does.

Can you guess the name of the bird? The answer will be revealed at the next meeting.

Check out her article about Monterey on the BONUS PAGE.

**Send your newsletter articles, bird sightings, and nature notes to C. Ford by Mar. 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**  
816 E. Atkinson Ave  
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762



Please Print

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Events & Miscellany**



**Take Note: BirdNote**

If you listen to KRPS in the mornings, you may have heard their new occasional segment, Bird Note, (after which Sperry Galligar programs are sometimes mentioned). If not, it's worth seeking out on the internet. These two minute free podcasts share information about local and exotic birds in bite-sized daily morsels.

Who knew sandgrouse carry water to their young on their belly feathers? Or that finches use their tongues to get at the meat of a sunflower seed, while chickadees have to hammer one seed at a time on a branch? Or that there are parrots and parakeets in Indonesia that sleep hanging upside-down?

If you'd enjoy some tidbits of bird knowledge on a regular basis, check out birdnote.org.

Megan Corrigan

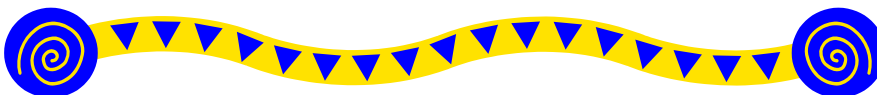


**JOIN US FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

**NEW SPERRY-GALLIGAR T-SHIRTS**

Steve Ford will have Sperry-Galligar t-shirts at the next meeting....only \$10.00.

**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society Newsletter**  
816 Atkinson Ave.  
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.)  
7:00 pm to 9 pm, in Room 102, Yates Hall.  
PSU Campus, Pittsburg, KS.  
Refreshments served. 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.

## BONUS PAGE

### SUPPORT FOR THE MIGRATORY BIRD TREAT ACT

As most of you know, in the early 1900s, the use of the breeding plumage of several bird species in hats and other fashion accessories led to the slaughter of large numbers of birds. Several conservation organizations, including the National Audubon Society, were founded in response.

Due in part to lobbying by the National Audubon Society and other conservation groups, the United States and Canada signed the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) in 1918 to end the killing of birds for fashion and other commercial uses. In addition to protecting migratory birds, the act encouraged the establishment of refuges and the monitoring of bird populations. According to All About Birds, "The act was an early landmark in conservation, at a time when birds were under intense hunting pressure and many of the public still regarded nature as inexhaustible." (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/what-is-the-migratory-bird-treaty-act/>) Amendments to the act have added Mexico, Japan and Russia.

Recently the Trump administration and members of Congress have tried to lessen the impact of the MBTA by declaring that incidental killings of birds by industry are not covered by the act, or this provision will not be enforced, as well as other changes meant to reduce its effectiveness in protecting birds.

In January of this year, the National Audubon Society sent out an email alert to the board members of their local chapters, explaining the threat and requesting that the chapters sign on to a letter that urges Congress to keep the protections of the MBTA intact. Sperry-Galligar was one of the more than 300 chapters that responded by signing on.

Our chapter has spoken in defense of the MBTA and the birds.

Diane McCallum

### A Visit to Monterey Bay Aquarium By Delia Lister



If you had asked me a year ago what nature center or aquarium was at the top of my "bucket list" to see (but probably would never get to see), I instantly would have said The Monterey Bay Aquarium. If you do a Google search for "best aquariums in the world" Monterey Bay will no doubt be on the list. The aquarium sits right on the shore of what is arguably the most spectacular National Marine

Sanctuary in the US. Its largest tank has 1.2 million gallons of water, and features fish from ocean sunfish and yellowfin tuna to a massive school of sardines. PBS's Nature Series did a documentary called *Saving Otter 501* a new years ago, and it remains my favorite wildlife documentary to show in my Environmental Life Science course to this day. The aquarium's sea otter rehabilitation program is second to none. I could go on and on.

Last summer I was fortunate enough to be selected to be part of an environmental education leadership team through a grant provided by the EPA and the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). We met in West Virginia in June and were supposed to follow up at the NAAEE conference in Puerto Rico in the Fall. As you might have guessed, this conference was cancelled due to a hurricane.

While I'm sad I didn't get a chance to visit Puerto Rico, the plan was shifted to meet in Pacific Grove, California in January...just a twenty-minute ride to Monterey! You can imagine I was doing a few cartwheels in my office when I found out that visiting the aquarium was a possibility. With some scheduling adjustments, I did indeed get a flight out one day early to visit the aquarium and do a little sightseeing along the famed Cannery Row.

Rarely in life do things exceed all expectations a person builds up in his or her head, but the aquarium did not disappoint. Another leadership participant as well as a friend whom I hadn't seen since high school were all able to meet up and spend the day together. We were able to see many feedings throughout the day, and had a chance to see a behind the scenes tour of jellyfish. In all my visits to various nature centers and aquaria I have never seen such well-designed exhibits. Their conservation messaging could not have been more on point. I felt like a little kid racing from exhibit to exhibit. We spent close to seven hours at the aquarium, and probably could have spent another seven or more. We also made the most of our extra day by taking an early morning run along Del Monte Beach (and of course wildlife watching on the run) before the aquarium opened, and watching surfers that evening at Lover's Point Park. We finally made it Asilomar State Park in Pacific Grove (Also a quite stunning place) later in the evening for the dinner and opening of the



workshop. Needless to say, I think I was asleep before my head hit the pillow that night... but I don't think the day could have been more perfect. If you ever get a chance to go to Monterey, I guarantee you will not be disappointed!