

NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry– Galligar

Audubon Chapter

Officers 2019 - 2021

President:

Steve Ford

Vice President:

Mary Jo Meier

Secretary

Christine Brodsky

Treasurer

Liz Mangile

Newsletter Editor

Cindy Ford

cford@gus.pittstate.edu

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

December 5 — "Recent Upgrades and Activities in the T.M. Sperry Herbarium" by Dr. Neil Snow, Associate Professor of Botany and the Director of the T.M. Sperry Herbarium at Pittsburg State University. He specializes in plant systematics and plant identification. A tour of the Herbarium will follow his talk..

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

Dec 2019

VOLUME 2019 ISSUE 8

A Bird in the Hand

Steve Ford

We're all familiar with that disheartening thump on our windows that means a bird we've tried to welcome to our feeders and gardens has probably met its death. A short time back a particularly heavy thump on our window was that of a yellow-billed cuckoo, killed instantly. As distressing as its death was, we considered it at least as an opportunity to admire its plumage up close and to refresh our acquaintance with the species.

Yellow-billed cuckoos are more common than the casual observer might think. Although they are not feeder birds or even much attracted to gardens, if you spend an hour or so at the edge of a brushy woods or Osage orange hedgerow in summer you're practically guaranteed to at least hear a cuckoo's "culp, culp, culp . . ." (a cuckoo clock mimics the European cuckoo more than our North American species). Actually seeing one is more of a challenge. Not that they don't fly around, but when they do it's in a straight line across a small opening, and on landing in a tree they move very little. If you can follow their flight to where they perch you can usually get a good look at the handsome features of this mourning dove-sized bird.

When I see a bird, I like to recall the John James Audubon painting if I can. Audubon's rendering of the yellow-billed cuckoo is quite striking, showing two animated birds – a dorsal and ventral view – in a pawpaw tree. Audubon had a genius not only for portraying the important identifying visual elements of a species, but also for showcasing behavior and habitat. The shades of brown of the pawpaw fruits in the painting direct the viewer's attention to the bronze and cinnamon colors of the birds.



The leaves have been chewed by caterpillars, which are part of the cuckoo diet. Together, the leaves, feathers, and wings are an explosion of movement centered by an explosion of sorts of the several fruits coming at the viewer. What a great painting of a bird that can be appreciated in many ways! Perhaps the poor bird's death at our window was not totally in vain.

No meeting in November. Enjoy your Thanksgiving day and come to the next meeting Thursday, December 5th.

6:00 Board Meeting Highlights Christine Brodsky, Secretary

In attendance: Steve and Cindy Ford, Bob and Liz Mangile, Delia Lister, Wayne Bockelman, Diane McCallum, Mavis Benner, Mary Jo Meier

Call to Order—Steve Ford

*Treasurer Report—Liz reported \$3512.61

* September Minutes—Read by Cindy for Christine; Delia Lister will take minutes for Christine this month

* Speakers—Mary Jo

Tonight—Karen Smith and Christine Kline from Burroughs Audubon in Blue Springs, KS

Next Month (December 5, 2019)—Neil Snow, PSU Herbarium, with an herbarium tour after presentation

* Speaker honorarium — Mary Jo

Mavis moved, Bob seconded to give the program chair the authority to provide up to \$100 to speakers who request an honorarium. If the request is above, the board will be contacted via email for confirmation

* Earth Day Table—Steve

Cindy and Mary Jo will work together on the design of the display panel.

Trifold Display Panel—We have one already that belongs to PSU. We should purchase one that belongs to Sperry-Galligar Audubon

Mary Jo moved, Mavis seconded that Steve and Cindy order a display board at a cost of about \$150.00

* Painting Bird Boxes—Steve

Steve painted about half the bird boxes. Mavis will paint some additional. Boxes are \$12.00 each. Thanks to Bob and Liz for hosting the assembly party.

* Other

24 people attended the Hatchery Tour at Crawford State Park. Planting went well at the Walt DeGruson Memorial Garden.

* Meeting adjourned at 6:41pm

FINANCIAL STATEMENT November 2019 Liz Mangile, Treasurer

Beginning balance-----\$3398.60

Credits

Dues and donation-----\$140.00

Dues and donation-----\$116.00

Total-----\$ 256.00

Debits

Dues for Kent Dorsey-----\$ 20.00

Newsletter-----\$ 5.99

Total-----\$ 25.99

Ending balance-----\$3628.61

September Presenters: Karen Smith and Christine Kline



*Burroughs Audubon's Finest
Attributes: Conservation, Nature
History
Library, and Wings over Weston*

Karen Smith was a Biology teacher in Shawnee Mission, KS. She became involved with Audubon after she retired. Burroughs Audubon Nature Center. They have a Natural

History Library that has over 2500 books. Books were a collection of Esther O'Conner. This type of collection is second only to New York Audubon Library. They have a program taught by "Bonnie the Biologist" who is a former Biologist with MDC. They also have many events and programs including a free Bird Banding program provided by the Missouri River Bird Observatory. Other programs they have include many land preservation/conservation/restoration projects, a Motus Wildlife Tracking System, and Conservation Ranching Program.



Christine Kline has been there since 2008. She started watching backyard birds and got involved by attending a local Audubon meeting. In 2010 Burroughs Audubon partnered with Missouri State Parks and created "Wings Over Weston" which would become a birding festival. It is the largest one-day birding festival in the entire Midwest. They have a day designed specifically for children and have 200-300 fourth grade students (and parents/teachers) on the day of the event. They have 600-900 on the festival day. The 10th annual festival will be in 2020. She ended the program with a 10 minute slide show about the festival.

Next Wings over Weston is May 2, 2020. SGAS is invited to participate by providing a booth.

Delia Lister

Bob and Liz Mangile hosted a bluebird box building workshop in their garage in October. These boxes are a special design that Bob has engineered. The assembly crew was Bob, Wayne Bockelman, Cindy and Steve Ford. Liz made some excellent pizza for sustenance of the workers.

These bluebird boxes will be sold for \$12.00 apiece. Find one to take home at the next meeting or at the Bird Seed Sale on December 7.



HAPPENINGS IN SOUTHEAST KANSAS

FARLINGTON FISH HATCHERY FIELD TRIP

On a crisp, sunny October day, a group of Sperry-Galligar Audubon 24 members and guests met at the Farlington Fish Hatchery to get a tour of the facilities. Various fish species are raised in several fish hatcheries around Kansas in order to provide stock for ponds and rivers. (Kansans are known for their love of fishing.)



Josh Jagels and Dan Mosier, both Fisheries Biologists, hosted our tour Saturday, October 12th. Josh gave us a preview of their newest program for raising alligator snapping turtles. These turtles are extremely rare in Kansas. Many people think that the snapping turtles in their ponds or crossing the roads are alligator snapping turtles, but those turtles are com-



mon snapping turtles. Alligator snapping turtles must live in large rivers. Yes, the two species look similar, but the alligator is larger than the common as an adult. An alligator snapping turtle is fairly sluggish and can be found on the bottom of a river where it uses its red tongue to lure prey into its mouth. The tanks that

you see in the pictures are designed to provide the habitat conditions to rear the turtles from hatchlings to when they will be released.

Eastern Kansas is rich in mussels, some of which are endangered. Josh and Dan had a display of the many species that can be found in the state. Some of them have colorful names: monkeyface, fat mucket, pimpleback, heel splitter, and others. Our eastern streams are favorite habitats for many of these mussels where they filter water when they feed. Most mussels are dependent on fish since the larva must parasitize certain fish species. The tiny larvae will most likely cling to the gills of the fish and then drop off when mature. There is a decline in population of some of the species because of water pollution.

The zebra mussel has become well known because it is an invasive species that has been found in several large lakes in Kansas. This mussel is a serious problem because it grows very rapidly and displaces the native species. Management of the zebra mussel may involve draining a lake to kill the mussels and cautioning boaters to thoroughly clean their boats before traveling to a different area.

(Article written by Cindy Ford. Thanks to Bob Mangile and Diane McCallum for photos.)



Sightings.....



EMMETT'S PICS



Spotted jewelweed or Touch-me-not

Habitat: moist woods, wet roadside ditches. The curved spur holds the nectar. Ruby-throated hummingbirds and bumble bees pollinate this plant. Some say that the sap will neutralize poison ivy.

Found in
NW Cherokee Co. KS,
Sept. 15, 2019.

Check out the Bonus Page for one more article.

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
816 E. Atkinson Ave
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762**

Please Print



Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

e-mail address _____

**Events &
Miscellany**



AUDUBON BIRD SEED SALE

Mark your calendars for the annual Sperry-Galligar Bird Seed Sale which will be held **Saturday, December 7** from 9:00 to 4:00. The truck will be parked on the west side of the mall on Centennial. Pick up seed there, but don't forget to visit the table at the entrance of the mall where you can find bird houses, gifts, and treats.

**2020 Audubon
Christmas Bird Count**

The annual Sperry-Galligar Christmas Bird Count will be held **New Year's Day**.

Meet at Farm to Market in McCune at **7:00 a.m.** for some early morning coffee or breakfast before heading out to count birds all day in Cherokee County.

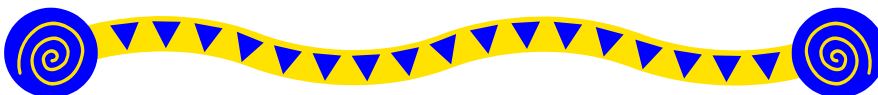
Several people can go together in a car to observe and count birds in a specified area. Bring binoculars and a bird field guide book. This is a good way to learn more about winter birds.

**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

This article is a remembrance of birds in a different time period. Please note that today, wild birds are protected by federal laws where permits are needed to keep wild birds, nests, and feathers. Because of these laws, we have many species of birds to observe. If a bird is in need of rearing or has injuries, wildlife rehab experts are available to take the birds. Our chapter has donated funds just this last year to a wildlife rehabber near Pittsburg. Sally Imhof maintains permits, caging, and contacts to get the necessary care for wild birds.

Tweetol the Owl by Shelia Hensley



I grew up on a farm just south of McCune. My parents were both school teachers and we also lived on a farm. Living on a farm brings many joys and surprises and my two brothers and I enjoyed the benefits of my Dad's pleasure in bringing home various offerings of nature after being in the field all day. I remember bunnies, frogs, turtles, various kinds of insects and even snakes (the safe kind) tucked away in the tool box of the tractor waiting for us to see, touch and learn. They were always treated kindly and released.

But then, one fine spring day he brought home a downy ball of fluff that had a shrill scream and two big eyes. It was a baby barred owl that had been found in the creek bed. We quickly discerned it was hungry and Dad told us to open a can of Strongheart dog food. We started feeding this owl with a fork and he faithfully swallowed every bite until half the can was empty. And then the whole can! He could wrap his talons around a broomstick and he learned that we were his benefactors and quickly bonded with us. He seemed to learn our voices and he was never afraid of our friends. If we wore heavy gloves that went up to our elbow we could hold him, or rather he wrapped his talons around our gloved arms, and feed him.

For the days and weeks following, while he was on the broom handle, and after he had eaten, we liked to move the broom handle up and down slowly and see his wing span that he was developing. We thought we were teaching him to fly. Maybe we were!

We named him Tweetol.

He outgrew our utility room and so he started living in our double garage. At feeding time, if he was in the rafters, all we had to do was tap the can of dog food and he would swoop down beside us if we had something for him to land on and inhale the can of dog food. Then he graduated to the barn. The barn was quite a ways from the house. But not too far for Tweetol to fly to us and land on the clothesline post awaiting his basic dog food diet. All we had to do was stand on the back porch, tap the can of dog food and then we would hear him screech and watch him flap his wings and swoop down to us. That image does not escape from my memory.



My Dad was a Vocational Agriculture Teacher and loved learning and sharing about nature and one of the things he told us about Barred Owls is that they make several different sounds. One of them seems to be "Who-Cooks-For You" and/or "Who-Cooks-For-You-All". We noticed that Tweetol had many different calls.

Tweetol also expanded his palate and began catching mice for himself. His friends were the sparrows. The baths he took, mimicking the sparrows, were in mud puddles in the summer out in the driveway in front of the barn. He would get his feathers soaked and was unable to fly until he dried out. Often, when his feathers were dry, he would dive bomb the cat. We had Tweetol for about three years. And then one hot summer he disappeared.

I was keeping a journal at the time and the entries were sad because of all the trees and neighbors barns that we searched, did not turn up our Tweetol. But we comforted ourselves with the thought that he had flown far away.

Several days after he disappeared, while I was sitting up on the top row of bales of hay (this was when hay was rectangle bales—not those big round bales that stay in the field), I saw something floating in the water tank outside of the barn. We had failed to have a floating piece of wood in the tank, which would have probably saved his life. He evidently got in for a drink or a bath and could not get out. Poor Tweetol had met his end. But what a grand time we had with that downy ball of fluff!