



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Feb 2022/ Issue 5

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cford@gus.pittstate.edu

Web Master

Bob Mangile

sperry-galligar.com

Membership

Diane McCallum

Next Program

Thursday, 7:00

February 24

Yates 102

PSU Campus

"Birds & Amphibians on Kansas Mined Lands"

Emma Buckhardt & Luke Headings, PSU Graduate Students in Biology

It IS a Jungle Out There

Steve Ford

I've never lost my fascination for the adaptations animals have for their place in nature, but often I'm reminded they're not perfect. While rambling along Limestone Creek shortly after the extreme cold snap of late February some of these imperfections came to light.

The stage was set via my Twilight Zone mind in my observation as to how depressed the entire landscape seemed to be, literally mashed down due to a week of snow and subzero temperatures. Leaves on the woodland floor were too flattened to blow in the breeze, and grasses were too matted to sway. Things were quiet and frankly a little eerie. Add to this several dead birds. Some juncos, a song sparrow, and a yellow-shafted flicker, all with sternal keels - those projections on the breast bone - that were sharp to the touch, indicative of deteriorated muscles, which is indicative of starvation. Delia Lister had recently mentioned that she'd had a call from a fellow who, along with some neighbors, found several red-headed woodpeckers in the snow with the same condition; no other woodpeckers, just red-heads. Sad, but interesting. What about them may have made them particularly vulnerable to the frigid, snowy week?

In the woods near our house our dogs alerted us to, of all things, an injured snow goose huddled in the snow. Snow geese of course are not woodland species, and how it got there short of floundering out of the sky we have no idea. Our dogs left it alone, and in fact they kind of guarded it, but it became more and more moribund over the next three days until at last it came up missing. No predator tracks, dogs or otherwise.

On a lighter note, on a jaunt shortly after most of the snow had melted I found the armadillos seemed to have made it through the cold all right. I hadn't seen any sign of them previously, so I assume they just burrowed in for the duration, but they and opossums are southern species and sometimes don't fair well in extreme cold. Their thin ears and pointy hairless tails tend to get frostbitten. I didn't see any opossums, but the two armadillos seemed fine. I'm afraid I startled one so that in scurrying away it ran headlong into a tree. Sorry buddy.

In a similar vein while I was watching a great blue heron flying down the curvy, wooded creek, it was also watching *me*, and ran into an overhanging vine with its wing with such force to sound a loud crash and ignite a small explosion of bark. It recovered to continue its evident perilous flight along the congested waterway. It occurred to me that it's more typical - and safer - haunts in the marshes and lakesides were frozen solid, and the big bird had to take to Plan B along the creeks to find at least a little open water.



Board Minutes...Megan Corrigan

NO BOARD MINUTES TO REPORT

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

February 2022

Beginning Balance -----\$ 5229.34

Credits

Check not cashed-----\$ 60.00

Memberships-----\$ 70.00

Deposit from National-----\$ 447.75

Voided Check-----\$ 6.38

Debits

Speaker Fees-----\$ 159.45

New Checks-----\$ 75.00

Newsletter Printing-----\$ 5.77

Service Charge-----\$ 9.00

Ending Balance-----\$ 5607.50

Oddities in Animal Genetics

Bob Mangile recently reported a couple of odd incidences in the birds in this area. Amee Simons sent Bob a picture of a YELLOW cardinal that she saw west of PSU in January. "This is an unusual condition called xanthochroism that occurs occasionally in cardinal populations. A mutated gene blocks the bird's ability to process carotene," Bob said.

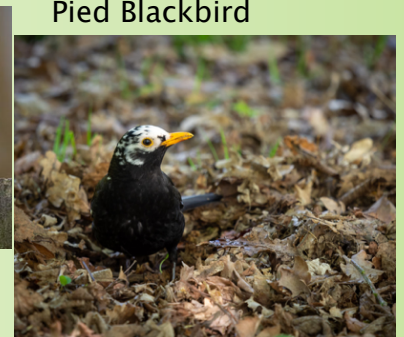
If that was not enough of an oddity, he was looking out at his bird feeder in January and noticed a rusty blackbird that was pied on the face. This is a patch of white feathers that should be colored. The technical term for this condition is leucistic.

Of course albinism is a completely white animal (with red eyes). Is that sighting next?

Examples of the oddities are to the right.



Northern Cardinal



Pied Blackbird

Past Audubon Meeting Program

NO PROGRAM IN JANUARY

Article cont. from page 1

Fox squirrels are *supposed* to be a bit more at home in the woods, but I've seen more than one slip on a high branch and fall some distance - and with some embarrassment I would think - to the leafy forest floor. (I've never seen their somewhat more agile and more arboreal gray squirrel cousins fall.)

Predators are seldom the efficient, steely-eyed killers we'd like to think, despite their scary behavior. On feeding day snakes in the Nature Reach lab commonly take two or three shots at white mice dropped into their cages before they are successful. I once spent a pleasant hour in a lawn chair on a Georgia barrier island beach watching an osprey plunge into the sea from considerable height time and time again, and never saw it come up with a fish. A whole *lot* of work for no reward, despite all the special tools of the trade.

Nature is just a tough place to make a living. Watching animals try, and sometimes fail, adds spice to an observer's day.

BIRDING FIELDTRIP
8:00 a.m.
Wilderness Park
March 5, 2022

(Both photos from internet sources)



Happenings in Southeast KS

Recent Wilderness Park Bird Field Trip

As hard as it was getting out of a warm bed and into the cold and snowy woods of Wilderness Park Saturday, February 5, it was - as these things usually are - worth it.



Dr. Andy George led the trip that included five of his students (actually one was a spouse) and a sleepy Audubon member. One of the first birds seen was a bald eagle flying over the woods. Other highlights were an eastern towhee, hermit thrush, and brown

thrasher, all surprising this time of year. Wilderness Park is always strong on red-headed woodpeckers, but red-bellieds and northern flickers were common too. The woods were quiet except for the considerable noise a group makes crunching its way in snow, but periodic stops and careful listening and looking brought a total of thirty species, including a brown creeper, white-breasted nuthatch, and a belted kingfisher, even though Cow Creek was almost totally frozen.

A quick stop at the sewage lagoons just west of the park revealed some hundred or so Canada geese, the smaller cackling geese, and a few white-fronted geese, all standing on ice. In the few pools of open water we saw a mixed flock of roughly sixty shovelers and ring-neck ducks.

It was good chatting with the group. Grad student, Mary Marine, and her husband, Alex, are accomplished birders who have spotted several unusual birds in our area. Alex saw a peregrine falcon over the lagoons a few weeks ago.

Andy will be leading trips to various locations the first Saturday of the next few months, and invites Audubon folks to join in. Watch the web site. Thanks, Andy.

Steve Ford

BLUEBIRD CONSERVATION

It has been a year since last February's brutal cold decimated the region's bluebird population, and unfortunately it hasn't recovered yet. One of our chapter's mandates is wildlife conservation. As it happens - well it didn't just happen, did it? - S-G Audubon is well-stocked with beautiful bluebird boxes for sale cheap, only \$15. You can't buy the lumber for that price! Please, buy a couple and help our bluebirds.

Sightings...



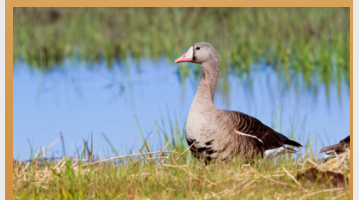
Three Similar Geese: Note Differences



Canada goose



Cackling goose



White-fronted goose

Send your newsletter articles, bird sightings, and nature notes to C. Ford by Mar 10.

cford@gus.pittstate.edu

Application for Membership Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

For first-time National Audubon membership: send \$20.00 and become a member of both organizations, receive 4 copies of Audubon Magazine annually and 8 copies of Sperry-Galligar Newsletter. Please make your check to: National Audubon Society.

_____ Yes, I wish to become a **FIRST-TIME** member of National Audubon and Sperry-Galligar Audubon. (\$20.00)

For only local renewal membership, send \$15.00 for membership in 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 Audubon Society.

Please print and mail to:

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society
816 E. Atkinson Ave.
Pittsburg, KS 66762

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Meetings are held the last Thursday of the month...7:00 p.m. to 9 p.m., Room 102, Yates Hall, PSU Campus, Pittsburg, KS.

No meetings in June, July, or August. (November/December meeting date to be announced.)

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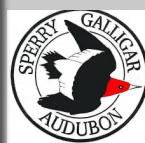
Events & Etc.

DUES

Please pay your membership dues for this year. Send a check to the address at the left or see Liz Mangile at the next meeting. Your dues help the chapter get funding from National Audubon.

Sperry-Galligar Audubon T-shirts

Support your Audubon Chapter by buying and wearing a specially designed t-shirt. They will be at the meeting for \$12.00



ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS. Pay membership dues in September. Please consider paying local membership dues. Our chapter receives 100% of the local dues only. You can subscribe to both local and national. Either way you get the newsletter.