



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

April 2022 / Issue 7

OFFICERS

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pittstate.edu

Web Master

Bob Mangile

[sperry-](http://sperry-galligar.com)

galligar.com

Membership

Diane McCallum

Next Program

Thursday, 7:00

April 28

Yates 102

PSU Campus

**"Amphibians
and Birds of SE
Kansas Mined
Lands"**

by

Emma

Buckhardt

and

Luke Headings

BIRD PICTURES

Steve Ford

I was enjoying my raisin bran at the breakfast table a couple of weeks ago and happened to look through the back door to the strip pit beyond the back yard. I saw two things I'd never seen in my twenty-five years of watching events there. We often see a double-crested cormorant or two in spring, but this morning there were some hundred of the jet black birds swimming, diving, splashing, flying in all directions just above the water. It was great, but to make things really special there was also a flock of about thirty snow-white pelicans mixed in! It was windy, so there was some chop to the water and as I looked east toward the direction of the morning sun the thousand wavelets were exploding with silver that coalesced into a solid glimmering sheet at the far end of the pit. Cheeks still buiging with raisins I grabbed my binoculars, and recalling Bob Gress's discussion of capturing exciting photos I did my aesthetic best to draw this glittering scene through the lenses of my binoculars, glasses, and eyeballs, and eventually to my softening brain where I tried to encapsule it forever. As I write this it's still a vivid picture. Bob would be proud.

The pelicans didn't stay long. A half-hour later I saw them lumber past my south windows in their bomber-squadron formation. I expected the cormorants to follow suit, but to our delight they hung around for a week (as did, for some reason, a couple of great egrets and

as many as six great blue herons. Cindy even thought she glimpsed an eagle.)

Watching this raucous bunch of cormorants for a full week was some fun. They would swim at considerable speed, their backs just barely above the surface, then dive for several seconds, occasionally coming up with a wriggling fish - which their colleagues would try to steal - then swallow it head first, the fish making a large lump in their orange gullets and snakey necks. Sometimes instead of diving they would simply float with their heads in the water for two or three seconds like a snorkeler. There was always a lot of splashing - does this confuse the fish? They would run along the surface to get airborne or sometimes just end the run by folding their wings to settle into a new spot. Occasionally they would "raft up," congregating into a rather tight grouping and swimming one direction for a while, then turning back to swim the opposite way, always with a few diving.

Their calls were a hoot, literally, plus rubbery whinnies, grunts, burps, and croaks - a regular in-law dinner party!

After a morning of fishing and otherwise cavorting many would scramble onto logs and low-hanging branches and spread their wings to dry, looking much like resting turkey vultures. Cormorants are necessarily heavy birds so as to decrease buoyancy underwater. There is little air between their feathers, so they eventually become rather waterlogged and require drying.

(Cont. on Page 4)

Board Minutes...Megan Corrigan

The Sperry-Galligar Audubon Board Meeting was held March 31, 2022. In attendance were Bob and Liz Mangile, Mavis Benner, Mary Jo Meier, Steve and Cindy Ford, Diane McCallum, Wayne Bockelman, and Megan Corrigan

Treasurer's Report – We have \$5609.70 in checking account

Membership – Many have not paid dues for our 2021-22 membership year. Membership renewal costs \$15 per household.

Newsletter – We welcome your photos or article contributions to the newsletter. Please send them to Cindy Ford at cford@gus.pittstate.edu

Bird Walks – Andy George will lead bird walks the first Saturday of every month. Watch your email for times and places to meet.

Program – April 28 “Birds and Amphibians on Mined Lands” by Emma Buckhardt and Luke Headings, PSU grad students. (Rescheduled from February.)

Proposed slate of officers for 2022-23 – President – Mary Jo Meier, Vice President – Andy George, Treasurer – Liz Mangile, Secretary – Megan Corrigan.

Earth Day – We will have a table at the Pittsburgh Earth Day celebration on 23 April from 11-3 at the Pritchett Pavillion. Stop by to see us!

May picnic – We will have our picnic at the Homer Cole Senior Center on May 19, (a week earlier than usual) and our speaker will be Rick Hines. We will provide chicken, please bring side dishes. We will request RSVP by email in advance of the picnic.

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

April, 2022

Beginning balance-----\$5668.50

Credits

Dues and birdhouses-----\$ 200.00

Nat'l Audubon vendor-----\$ 20.00

Nat'l Audubon deposit-----\$ 200.00

Total-----\$ 420.00

Debits

Stamps-----\$ 34.80

Newsletter-----\$ 4.00

Speaker-----\$ 150.00

Treats-----\$ 29.95

Sweatshirts-----\$ 200.00

Total-----\$ 418.75

Ending balance-----\$5669.75

ANNOUNCEMENT:

April 24 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Planting for Pollinators Program

The Pittsburgh Public Library will host a *Planting for Pollinators* program on Sunday, April 24 at 2:00 p.m. in the meeting room.

Jesse Gilmore, Wildcat Extension District Agent, will discuss the best plants to put in gardens and landscapes that will attract various types of pollinators, including bees, butterflies, wasps, and hummingbirds.

Attendees will have a chance to win a gift certificate from a local gardening center. The program is free and open to the public.

<https://pplonline.org/event/planting-for-pollinators-program/>

March Program Synopsis by Megan Corrigan

Photographing Birds



Bob Gress, our March speaker, co-authored and took photos for The Guide to Kansas Birds. He regaled us with exquisite photos, and then explained

the work and pleasure that goes into producing them. Photographing birds was Bob's pandemic therapy. We were privileged to be his first in-person presentation since the start of the pandemic.

Bob showed us his camera, lenses, tripod, flash set-ups, and his trusty beanbag for stability. Bob has a few different blinds he uses to get close to birds, and he claims his most useful blind is his vehicle, because birds perceive vehicles as part of the landscape.

Bob's nemesis bird was the black rail, a bird best photographed at night in wetlands. He hoped he would eventually stumble on one, but didn't and then needed a photo for a book project. They can be found, albeit with difficulty, at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. He got special permission to be there at night, to use a flash, and to use sound recordings to attract black rails. He donned hip waders and slathered himself in Deet, put on a red headlamp and headed into the marsh. The first year he tried, he only got the back of a bird.

The next year he tramped a 10-foot pad in the marsh and put the speaker under it in a plastic bag. He learned that timing matters, and that this would only work if the rails were at the height of the breeding season. In all, he took 6 trips, spending three nights from dusk to dawn trying to photograph a black rail before, at 3AM one fateful night, he finally got lucky, and got a beautiful photo. Since then, he has been asked by National Geographic to guide others

to find black rails, but he respectfully declines.

Bob has had an easier time solving a few other challenges. He avoids red-eye by having the flash located a foot above the camera body. He has a collection of picturesque perches he can attach atop ugly metal fence posts to attract perching birds that will improve the final photos. And he has been known to use his car headlights and to sneak up on a bird in the dark for a photo.

Most of what makes Bob's photos so amazing is the time he spends waiting for the right image. He considers the background of the photo and prefers a blue sky background to a white sky. He will spend hours waiting for a bird to perform some everyday action, like eating a fish, or preening so he can catch the action. He will lay down in mud to get a photo of a drinking bird at eye level. He will take dozens of photos trying to catch just the right shade of feather iridescence.

Bob spends about as much time editing and deleting photos as taking them. He will crop images or adjust color saturation or contrast, but he never adds or subtracts anything digitally. Bob loves the challenge of getting just the right image, but he is realistic about what makes a successful bird photographer. If you are enjoying yourself and learning more about birds, you are a successful bird photographer whether or not any of your photos end up being published.

Bob isn't even sure he would define himself as a successful photographer, because about 99% of his images get thrown away. People who saw those might judge him to be mediocre at best. His best advice is to boldly throw away most of your images and just share the top 1%. That way folks will quickly come to believe that you, too, are an amazing photographer. We are grateful to Bob for coming to Pittsburg to share his secrets with us.



Happenings in Southeast KS

BIRD PICTURES (Cont. from Page 1)

One afternoon we heard a commotion in the garden immediately behind the house, and were quite surprised to find a cormorant there. They cannot gain flight from the ground, so our three dogs were having a good time harrassing it (although it was holding its own.). I ran out to contend with the dogs and to shoe the bird the some fifty yards toward the pit. It was mostly downhill and it didn't really seem to need shoeing. The large bird flapping its wings plus myself flapping my own arms at it while also trying to fend off the barking dogs must have made quite a scene. Anyway, we all made it, and the cormorant immediately dived under the water. How it became grounded in the garden I cannot guess.

A sweet week of birding.

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ACTIVE TIME IN SPRING FOR BIRDS

Bob Estes visited with Bob Mangile and took the owl pictures in Bob's front yard. Bob Estes took the nest pics close to Farlington Lake.



Great Horned Owls



Bald Eagle on Nest



Sightings...



Emmett's Pics



This red-tailed hawk was spotted at the Neosho Wildlife Area near St. Paul, KS. This hawk is very common in southeast Kansas, partly because we have many cotton rats, one of their favorite prey.

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

cford@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.)

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

Events & Etc.

Birding Field Trip planned for first Saturday in May, After birding, the group is invited to view Sally Imhof's new raptor enclosure. Sperry-Galligar Audubon provided Sally with a grant to help construct the raptor flight pen. Come see. Contact Andy George (620-235-4030) for details of where to meet for the bird walk outing.

Stop by the Sperry-Galligar Audubon table at the Earth Day Fair, Saturday, April 23
9:00 - 3:00



Pritchett Pavilion
2nd and Main,
Pittsburg

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.