



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Feb 2023 / Issue 2

## OFFICERS

President

Mary Jo Meier

Vice President

Andrew George

Secretary

Megan Corrigan

Treasurer

Liz Mangile

## BOARD SUPPORT

Newsletter Editor

Cindy Ford

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

Web Master

Bob Mangile

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

Membership

Diane McCallum

## Next Program

Thursday, 7:00

February 23

Yates Hall 102

PSU Campus

Andrew Braun and

Dana Hoisington

will talk about

nature programs at

Prairie State Park,

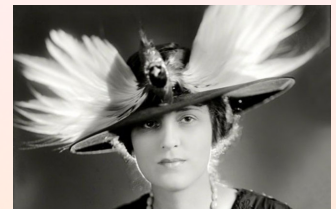
Missouri

## Four and Twenty Blackbirds...

It seems when it comes to birds we are prone to counting them: How many robins? — how many species? — how many birds needed in pie? Birds have been a fascination for us in many ways. We have enjoyed their beauty, sounds, behavior, and even their taste.

Because they are somewhat elusive, birds were first observed by trapping them to place them in cages to study. (You may have noticed Victorian bird cages in antique stores.) John James Audubon in the 1800s shot many of his bird subjects for the famously detailed paintings. (How better way to get all of the colors and patterns in feathers!).

Fashion in the early 1900s included women's hats. The rage was to decorate the hats with elegant feathers from birds, like egrets. As you can imagine this trend placed great pressure on wild populations.



For centuries, people have sampled wild birds for meals. Julie Hartley, a former member of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter, was perusing some old British cookbooks and found some interesting recipes: plover pie, lark aspic, heron pudding, deviled swan, and starling pie.

The early railroad companies in this country also needed a count of birds for the luxury of serving wild game for passengers. Therefore, market hunters were needed to shoot boat loads of ducks for the railroad chefs.

With stricter conservation laws, these practices were tightened to only hunting certain bird species in regulated seasons. Today no migratory birds can be shot, sold, or possessed legally, except designated game species and introduced species, like house sparrows and European starlings. Even picking up feathers or nests of birds is illegal.

In the late 1800s a change in how to enjoy birds occurred. A New York naturalist, Florence Merriam Bailey, encouraged her students at Smith College to observe birds through opera glasses. This strategy became more popular when she published the first bird field guide in 1889. Now we count birds through binoculars using one of many bird field guides.

As a response to decreasing populations of birds to fashion and feast, George Bird Grinnell founded the Audubon Society in 1905 with protection of water birds, like egrets and herons, as a priority on the conservation list.

We are still counting birds today through Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, Backyard Birding Censuses, Motus, and others. Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie has gone out of vogue. Cindy Ford

### THRUSH, TO ROAST

Thrushes need no additions in cooking. They are of delicate flavour and are best plain roasted.

Pluck, draw and truss the birds, sprinkle very lightly inside and out with salt and pepper. Brush well all over with melted butter (do not use any strong flavoured meat dripping). Wrap each bird in oiled greaseproof paper and roast quickly from 20 to 25 minutes. Dress each bird on a hot slice of buttered toast, garnish with watercress and send to table with a gravy made from the swillings of the pan in which the birds and giblets were roasted.

## Board Minutes...Megan Corrigan

January 26, 2023 ... Minutes by Wayne Bockelman  
**Attended:** Mary Jo Meier, Mavis Benner, Andrew George, Steve Ford, Cindy Ford, Diane McCallum, Bob Mangile, Liz Mangile, Wayne Bockelman

**Minutes** from the December meeting were read by Cindy and approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** We have \$4923.78 in checking.

**Upcoming Events:** February 4 – Bird Walk at Bone Creek Reservoir; February 23 meeting – Andrew Braun/Dana Hoisington, Prairie State Park; March 30 meeting — Jenn Rader, Director of the SEK Nature Center; April 22—Earth Day; April 27 meeting – Rick Hines, Amazon travels; May 18 picnic, Christine Brodsky — Wildlife cameras for monitoring mammals. Bird Walks: Dr. George reported that thirteen people attended the December walk at Wilderness Park and six the January walk at Lester Davis Forest south of Tall Grass Prairie State park in Missouri. Species numbers observed has declined on these winter walks. The February 4th walk will be at Bone Creek Reservoir. A Long-tailed Duck has been seen there recently.

**Birdseed Sale:** Again this year Dane & Linda Shultz at Blue Ribbon Farm & Home donated 15% of their birdseed sales on December 2-3 to Sperry-Galligar Audubon. It amounted to \$420.

**Thank You Letters** were received from people and organizations to which Sperry-Galligar made contributions—Sally Imhoff's rehabilitation center, the Motus Project for a bird tracking receiver, KRPS for sponsoring Bird Note.

**AOK:** President Mary Jo Meier attended an Audubon of Kansas meeting held by Executive Director Jackie Augustine by way of Zoom.

**Report to National:** Mary Jo said that she had completed the annual report to National Audubon due January 31, a requirement for our chapter before receiving its funding. The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

## Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

### Financial Report ... February 2023

Beginning balance-----\$ 4932.65

#### CREDIT

Membership-----\$ 70.00

Membership-----\$ 50.00

Total-----\$ 120.00

#### DEBIT

Newsletter-----\$ 8.87

Total-----\$ 8.87

Ending balance-----\$ 5043.78

## OF INTEREST...

Bob Mangile found two news articles about unusual observations:

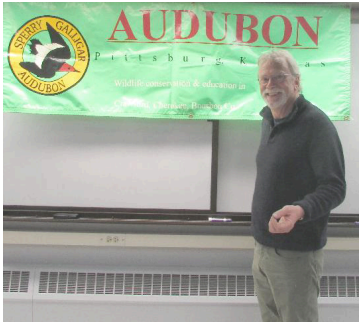
In California a house inspector was checking a clogged chimney when he discovered 700 pounds of acorns that had been hoarded by an acorn woodpecker. The woodpecker had been stashing the acorns for two to five years. Now the chimney works again...

Bob also found this photo showing an unusual fish. This golden largemouth bass was caught in Virginia. It is an extremely rare albino fish, considered one in a million catch. The fisherman took a picture and returned it to the water.



## JANUARY PROGRAM RECAP by Wayne Bockelman

### Ed Miller: Thirty Years of Digging Mussels in Southeast Kansas



For naturalists who most often enjoy the sight of birds, it's hard to know what to expect from a presentation on freshwater mussels. They don't fly, they don't sing. They are seldom seen and never heard. They are, quite literally, most often stuck in the mud. If and when we refer to them at all, most of us usually just call them clams. But here are names of a few species of Kansas mussels. There's the pimpleback, the paper pondshell, and the pink heelsplitter.

Clams and mussels are filter-feeders, living on micro-organisms suspended in the water. Ed Miller showed photos of two aquaria with murky water. The water containing mussels cleared up in a few hours because of their feeding. A single clam can filter from 5 to 8 gallons of water per day. The other aquarium stayed murky with inorganic material deposited into the substrate. Most species live in moving water where new food is continually flowing past.

Ed Miller has been studying mussels in the rivers of southeast Kansas for over thirty years -- in the Neosho, the Marais des Cygnes, the Verdigris, and Spring Rivers. Over the years more than a hundred volunteers have joined him in wading rivers trying to avoid stepping on a pink heelsplitter. They have found as many as 149 mussels in one square meter of riverbed and have found as many as twelve different species in a single square meter. The washboard mussel found in the Neosho River can grow to the size of a dinner plate, weigh six pounds, and live for 120 years.

Fact is, the southeastern United States has the greatest diversity of mussel species in the world. Southeast Kansas is in the westernmost part of that range. Some species inhabit very restricted ranges. The Neosho Mucket is found in only a seven-mile stretch of the Spring River at Turkey Creek. Elsewhere one might find the Wabash pigtoe, the Ouichita kidneyshell, or the pistolgrip.

Such a limited range brings up another question: How might an animal that doesn't swim, that lives in mud or gravel substrate, expand its range -- especially upstream? An answer: Try hitchhiking. Indeed, most freshwater mussels have a parasitic larval stage, called a glochidium, that attaches itself to the gills of a fish for further development. A number of mussel species even produce a caterpillar-like lure to attract their host fish when larvae are ready to be released. As a fish tries to eat the lure, the mussel releases its offspring which attach to the gills of the attacker. Many mussels require a specific fish host for development -- if the fish becomes rare, so does mussel reproduction. They require young fish, since the host usually becomes immune after once being parasitized. When glochidia have finished developing, they drop off the gills of the fish as tiny, juvenile mussels to continue their growth.

As Ed Miller studied mussels over the years, he measured many population fluctuations. Generally, numbers have been increasing in southeast Kansas, while further east many populations are decreasing. After this past year's drought he anticipates a decline in some numbers for coming years, though nowhere so severely as during the drought of the 1950s when the Neosho River was reduced to non-flowing pools. Still, nothing compares to the population loss that has occurred in the past due to habitat destruction and over-harvesting.

The town of Neodesha at the confluence of the Verdigris and Fall Rivers is the site of the first oil refinery in the mid-continent oil field of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, built in 1897 (before the Nellie Johnstone well in Bartlesville or Spindletop discovery in Texas). In 1918 the Coffeyville Journal reported the Verdigris River catching fire.

In the early 20th century, buttons for shirts and dresses were made from the mother-of-pearl of mussel shells. Started in Iowa, shell harvesting spread westward once mussel beds along the Mississippi River had been depleted. Button factories were located in Kansas along the Neosho River at Iola, Oswego, and Chetopa. In Iola alone, eighteen tons of shells were processed in one week of 1922.

By the 1960s the Japanese began buying shells for the purpose of making cultured pearls. Spheres were milled from the mother-of-pearl shells and implanted into pearl oysters. A total of 2.3 million pounds of shells were exported from Kansas to international markets -- primarily shells of the monkeyface, the threeridge, and the mapleleaf. Shell exports were discontinued in 2003 when Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks placed a moratorium on commercial harvesting.

Today, among others, the rabbitsfoot, the rock pocketbook, and the threehorn wartyback have all survived drought, harvesting, and the fire of 1918.



# Happenings in Southeast KS

## Sightings...



Bald Eagle  
Photo taken by Emmett Sullivan



Black Vulture  
Photo taken by David Mangile

Emmett Sullivan lives in West Mineral, KS, and takes photos around Cherokee County.

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Bob Mangile and David Mangile live in Pittsburg and enjoy observing birds in the area.

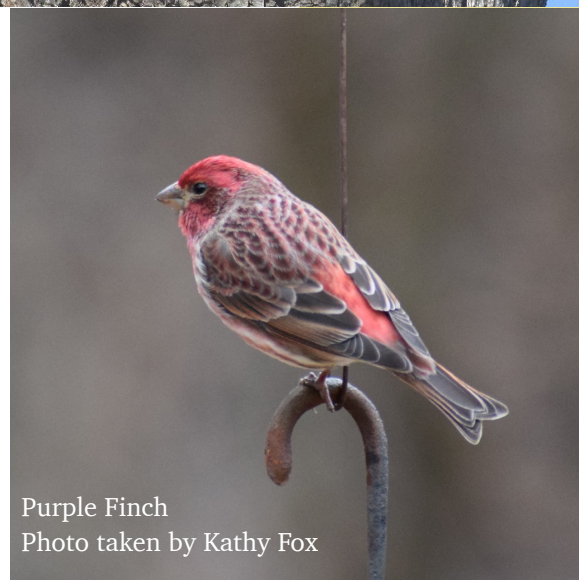


Great Horned Owl  
Photo taken by Bob Mangile



Brown Creeper  
Photo taken by Kathy Fox

Kathy Fox takes pictures west of Pittsburg, KS, on her nature farm, Terrapin Ridge.



Purple Finch  
Photo taken by Kathy Fox



**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**

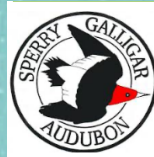
Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

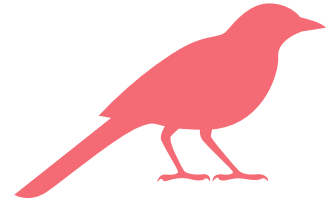
## EVENTS & ETC.

### Bluebird Reminder

Bob Mangile is reminding those who have bluebird boxes: It is "Clean-up Time."

Bluebirds will nest more readily in a clean box. Take out any old nesting material or other debris. Repair the box if necessary.

Watch for bluebird activity later this spring.



**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.