



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Sept 2023 / Issue 1

## OFFICERS

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Vice President  
Megan Corrigan  
Secretary  
Mary Jo Meier  
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  
September 28  
Yates Hall 102  
PSU Campus

“Safe Passage for  
Migrating Birds” by  
Krystal Anton,  
Johnson County  
Community College.  
She will give tips to  
decreasing mortality  
of birds, both at  
home and in your  
community.

## BIRD BANDING 101

with Andy George



Mist net—used to catch flying birds



Andy George (rt.) with student volunteers



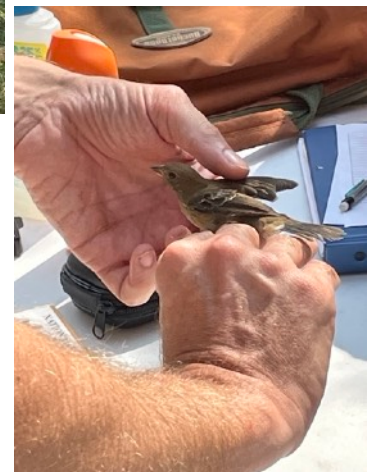
Immature indigo bunting



Bands are sized to bird's leg



Bird banding equipment



Measuring wing, beak, tail



Release

Mist netting catches birds not often seen when vegetation is dense. The birds are handled only a short time to reduce stress. Species and measurements are recorded.

Photos by Cindy Ford

## Board Minutes...Mary Jo Meier

**Planning Meeting**, Sunday, Aug 20, 2:00 p.m.

In attendance: Andy George, Steve & Cindy Ford, Mary Jo Meier, Bob & Liz Mangile, Diane McCallum, Wayne Bockelman, Kathy Fox

**Committees** include Field Trips: Andy George; Membership: Diane McCallum, Liz Mangile, Mavis Benner; Newsletter: Cindy & Steve Ford; Programs: Megan Corrigan; Publicity: Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Bob Mangile; Education/Conservation: Kathy Fox, Delia Lister, Andy George, Mary Jo Meier, Steve Ford

**FY25 Goals:** (1) Maintain and/or increase membership, (2) Update Facebook/Web/social presence, (3) Billing options, (4) Participate in Audubon of Kansas

**Programs:** Megan Corrigan has lined up nearly all of the monthly programs for the year with the first program scheduled for September 28.

**Special events** will include the Audubon Bird Seed Sale the first week of December, Christmas Bird Count on New Year's Day, and the Earth Day Celebration in April, 2024. Additional ideas for special events may include a bird banding opportunity, owl prowl, Birding 101 for young people and newbies to birding, a photography workshop or exhibit.

**Club supplies** are distributed among members.

Bird houses: Steve Ford, Bob Mangile

Coffee urn/coffee cups: Steve & Cindy Ford

Brochures/display board: Wayne Bockelman & Megan Corrigan

T-shirts/sweatshirts: Steve & Cindy Ford

1 Box of paper goods: Andy George

Audubon of Kansas requested funds for prescribed burning equipment that they are planning to use for management of natural areas in the state. Sperry-Galligar voted to donate \$1,000.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00

## Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

Beginning balance .....\$5558.78

Credit

Book donated by Megan & Wayne. \$ 25.00

Sold to Von Soosten

Ending balance.....\$5583.78

## Images of our Annual May Picnic — 2023



**Local DUES: \$15**

Mail your check or find Liz Mangile at the next meeting to continue your membership.





Photo by Bob Mangile

They say it is impossible to prove a negative, but Dr. Christine Brodsky and her graduate research assistants Jenell de la Peña and Daniel Benson have come close. They set out to help to determine whether there are still spotted skunks in Kansas and what habitats they favor. They heard people's many vivid memories of seeing 'civet cats,' 'tree skunks' or 'weasel skunks' around their farm buildings in the past, but not recently.

Spotted skunks are charismatic creatures that can lift their entire tail and hindquarters into the air and walk on their hands to warn (or amuse) predators before they spray (worth googling if you have never seen it). Kansas has the Plains Spotted Skunk, which used to be abundant in the 1930's and 40's but is now so rare that Kansas designated it 'threatened' in 1987. It is under review to be listed as endangered at the federal level, but more data is needed.

Brodsky's team built on past KDWP research and put up 600 motion-activated cameras in 18 Kansas counties deemed to be the most likely spotted skunk habitat. They left the cameras up for a month in March when spotted skunks are active, with pungent cans of sardines as bait. They targeted hardwood forests, pastures, and grasslands. The cameras got millions of images, which were analyzed and automatically labeled using software from Reconn AI. There was not a single image of a spotted skunk.

The most recent confirmed sightings of spotted skunks in Kansas were in Gray County in

2022, 2019 and 2017. There have been only seven sightings in total at 1355 monitored locations since 2016, all in Gray County along the Arkansas River. There was one sighting in February, 2023, in Jackson County, a county not covered by Brodsky's project, that got a lot of media attention for its rarity, but some question that sighting.

Overall, Brodsky concluded that the spotted skunk is now quite rare in Kansas. There are many theories as to why. Much of their habitat has been converted to agriculture or eliminated; they prefer brushy habitat with dense woody debris and fallen logs. Also, the widespread use of pesticides has led to a decline in the insects that spotted skunks feed on. While Brodsky's study cannot determine the cause of the decline, the fact that none were found supports the need to take conservation measures to protect those that are left.

During the search for spotted skunks, cameras captured images of badgers, striped skunks, bobcats, raccoons, opossums, ground squirrels, and, out in Finney County, even a pronghorn antelope. For the most part, the usual suspects. The cameras were motion triggered, taking three photos at short intervals, thus they also had hundreds of thousands of images of quivering blades of grass. The team was grateful to Michigan Aerospace Corporation who agreed to use these millions of images to test their Reconn AI automatic labeling software free of charge. Some of what they found was notable.

Kansas has a list of "Species in Need of Conservation" (SINC) and three mammals on the list were photographed – The Swift Fox, the Gray Fox, and the Southern Flying Squirrel. While these three species are considered by the IUCN to be species of "Least Concern," they are not common in Kansas.

All of the findings from Brodsky's team will go to KDWP, who funded the research, and the findings will inform KDWP's conservation priorities.



## BAITING DEER IN KANSAS

Steve Ford

On Thursday, August 17, in PSU's Bicknell Center I was standing before the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Commission speaking my mind about user's fees for public lands, which I favor. I was the first to speak at the meeting because I had an "in" with one of the commissioners (Lister). I kept to my allotted five minutes. I spoke with elegance and passion. I received no applause. The standing-room-only crowd was not there to hear about use fees, they wanted baiting. Most speakers favored it, and all spoke over their time. They got applause.

Baiting is the practice of dumping piles of corn on the landscape to attract deer to shoot from nearby blinds. It is not legal on public land in Kansas, nor on private land in many states, but it is allowable in Kansas. The KDWP commission is considering restricting it on private lands however, and that has become quite contentious, more so than I ever thought, as evidenced by the rancor and lack of civility by a few at the meeting. The main issue - but not the only one - is that it is thought to be an important factor in the spread of chronic wasting disease, CWD, a contagious, viral malady fatal to deer. It has not been found in humans, but there are concerns it might cross over. Baiting concentrates deer and other wildlife.

Many of those who spoke in opposition to a ban on baiting have

commercial interests, some controlling many thousands of acres. Hunters, both from Kansas and out-of state, pay them to hunt over bait. Some cited it was important to introduce kids to hunting by upping their chances of bagging a deer at a bait station. Others said disabled veterans deserved similar opportunities. One speaker said "the bureaucrats at KDWP had no right to restrict what landowners do on private ground." My thoughts are this. By law wild game animals are owned by all the people of Kansas, not just hunters, not just landowners (waterfowl is owned by all Americans). Concentrating game via baiting is not ecological. In Hunter Education classes I teach the primary purpose of hunting is the enjoyment of the outdoors, and should be practiced via the ethical concept termed "fair chase." Certainly the anticipation of shooting a game animal, and yes occasionally being successful, is a big part of hunting, but equating success *only* with harvesting game is inappropriate. Friends and family, hunting equipment, experiences, shooting itself (including much practice), friendly competition, tasty meals of game, tradition, learning about habitat and behavior of wild animals - *that* is proper hunting.

If you want to bait, practice by following this scenerio: (1) tie a goat to a stake, (2) climb a tree or a step ladder, (3) shoot the goat, (4) brag to your friends about your hunting prowess.

## Sightings...



## CELEBRATION OF CRANES

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Save the Date

November 3-4  
Quivera National  
Wildlife Refuge,  
KS

Register & get  
more information  
at  
[audubonofkansas.org](http://audubonofkansas.org)

If you have not had a  
chance to see and  
hear sandhill cranes  
and sneak a view of  
whooping cranes, this  
is a great opportunity.

### Fall Bird Walk Schedule

October 14 (2nd Saturday of month): SE Nature Center, Galena

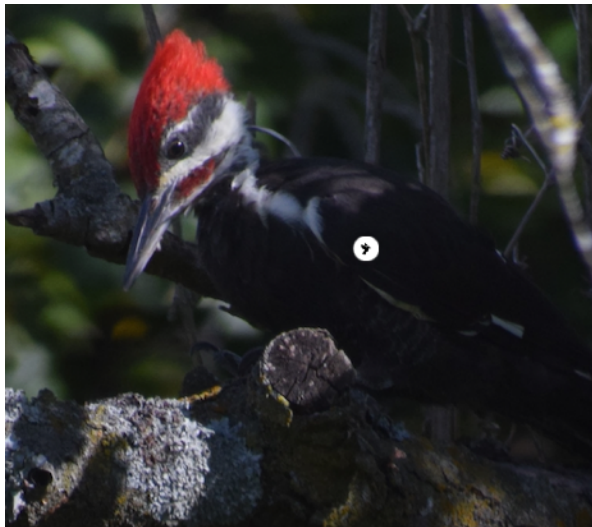
November 11 (2nd Saturday of month): Bone Creek Reservoir, Farlington

## Audubon Artistic Notebook



**Photo taken by Emmett Sullivan**

Elephant's Foot (*Elephantopus carolinianus*)  
Named for the shape of the basal leaves, this plant grows in shade. This photo was taken at Southeast Kansas Nature Center, Galena, KS



Pileated Woodpecker



Red-eyed Vireo

**Photos by Kathy Fox—taken near her Pittsburg country home**

### A Maid With A Mucket

(Thanks to Ed Miller we know  
some crazy names  
of mussels. With much license  
I penned this limerick.)

Sorry, S. Ford

There once was a maid with a mucket.  
It was golden and sold in Nantucket.  
"If I hurry and hustle,  
I'll get rich mining mussel,"  
Cried the maid with a spade and a bucket.



**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**

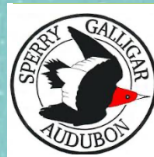
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_



**SEND ALL CHECKS TO SPERRY-GALLIGAR AUDUBON**

## EVENTS & ETC.

### Bird Walk

**September 2, 2023**

Wilderness Park

Leaders: Wayne

Bockelman and Megan Corrigan

7 attendees

16 species seen

Fish Crow

Northern Cardinal

American Crow

Red-eyed Vireo

Tufted Titmouse

Carolina Chickadee

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker

Canada Goose

White-eyed Vireo

Blue Jay

Eastern Wood Pewee

Baltimore Oriole

Carolina Wren

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

### 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

**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.