



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Feb 2024 / Issue 5

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Membership
Diane McCallum

Next Program

Thursday, 7:00
February 29
Yates Hall 102
PSU Campus

"Prothonotary Warblers, the Swamp Candles of Kansas" by Ann Tanner, Master Naturalist, Olathe, KS. She will share a citizen science program that has monitored these colorful and somewhat uncommon warblers for three years.

Suet Plus

Steve Ford

Trouble had found me. Cindy was paying for chicken feed in Blue Ribbon and chatting happily with Mary at the cash register about spraying peppermint on our Toyota's engine, a supposed foil for wire-gnawing pack rats. Me? I was alone, nose-in at the suet shelf, behind the tube feeders hanging from the ceiling like halves of beef, and the cute plastic wren houses mimicking parrots, fish, and shotgun shells. My trouble began with the wacko selection of crisply packaged suet cakes. Christmas trees look drab compared to the gay array of hard fat that confronted me. Oh I recall the early days of taking home a double handful of suet from the butcher's shop, sometimes free of charge, wrapped in sensible paper. I'd simply tear off pinky white chunks, moosh them into my homemade feeder, and stand back brother. So easy. I was happy. The birds were happy. For hours my hands were soft and smooth as pudding.

Now I'm forced to make onerous decisions: Hot Pepper Blend or Peanut Blend? Woodpecker Blend or Wild Bird Blend? Cherry Crunch, Zesty Orange, or Blueberry Twist? And for that afternoon pick-me-up? Nuts and Berry or Apple Snack?

In truth I know birds no more crave flavors than pigs crave pedicures. Nonetheless I found myself pondering at excruciating length which flavor, and worse, *combination* of flavors would be most appropriate. I even mused, why not boil up a pack? Make a nice bouillon for those special human occasions, anniversaries perhaps. But then which wine does one serve with Blueberry Twist? Trouble too much, and I was flying solo, for the talk up front was still of peppermint.

Blue Ribbon's packages are even printed half in French - unexpected in a Kansas farm store: *Facile a' ouvrir, sans salir* - Easy open, no mess. Yet most puzzling, on every package was a prominently pictured red-headed woodpecker. In all the years at home watching our two suet sites I've seen all our area's woodpeckers, even the giant pileated, hammering away at our suet . . . with one exception, the red-headed. So why feature on your fancy French suet cake the only woodpecker that doesn't eat suet? You might as well showcase a pelican. (OK, so I looked it up. Cornell says red-heads are attracted to suet. But I don't care what Cornell says. I know what I see. I know what I don't. And Cornell can mind its business.)



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Board Minutes...Megan Corrigan

Attended: Mavis Benner, Andrew George, Steve Ford, Cindy Ford, Kathy Fox, Diane McCallum, Bob Mangile, Liz Mangile, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan

Minutes : No minutes were taken from the December meeting

Treasurer's Report – We have \$5458

Upcoming Events – Monthly Meetings: February – Jeff Cantrell on the Ozark Chinquapin, March -Sally Imhoff on animal rehabilitation, April – Max and Eweleen Good on their prairie restoration project, May – picnic – speaker TBD – (suggestions welcome); **Bird Walks** – will continue the first Saturday of each month, destinations TBD, but every other walk will be a Wilderness Park. Fort Scott has invited us to hold a Bird Walk there; **Picnic:** May 30th. Kathy Fox will attend a Bluebird Academy in Kansas City and will scope out possible speakers who we could invite to the picnic; **Outreach:** Pittsburg's Earth Day event

Photo Exhibit at Root – Kathy Fox saw that Root is taking applications to host art on their walls for monthly exhibits and she suggested that SGAS could solicit nature photographs from members and display them there.

A motion was proposed and passed to form a committee to explore to possibility of putting together a photo display. Kathy Fox, Cindy Ford and Mavis Benner will serve on the committee.

Audubon of Kansas – Steve and Cindy attended a Zoom meeting and learned the following: Some other Audubon groups in Kansas have received funding from the Chickadee Checkoff for projects like a Chimney Swift Tower. If we had an idea for a project, we could apply for that funding. 48 libraries in Kansas are hosting birding backpacks for loan. The format for the annual report for national Audubon is changing this year. Andy George is working on the report.

Community programs – We are considering hosting a family birding program at a community site – maybe the Pittsburg Public Library. We would like to combine it with a walk where attendees use binoculars to look at birds.

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

January 2024

Beginning Balance \$ 5458.00
Credit\$20.00

Ending Balance \$ 5478.00

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It bothered me late into the night, but I finally figured it out. The company, "Suet Plus" out of Minneapolis, displays the red-headed woodpecker for the same reason Sperry-Galligar Audubon chose it as our mascot twenty-three years ago in Roger and Ann Willis's living room. Its bold patches of black, white, and red show up brightly, even if printed in black-and- white, exactly why Colorado chose the lark bunting as its state bird. While our woodpecker is not particularly rare, it is unusual enough to be noticed - with delight - when

it does appear. Plus there's history. It likes open, park-like woods, especially if the trees are old and large and well-suited for nesting cavities. The savannah-type bur oak habitat common around here in pre-settlement times must have favored them

considerably. Presently our low-lying mature pecan groves are perfect, although since the red-head is noted for extreme population fluctuations, it is sometimes temporarily uncommon. And finally JJ Audubon would have liked our choice. His rendering shows five birds, including three nestlings. The flying adult is our mascot.

So my concerns led to revelations. Still bothered, but not bewildered as they say. I'd prefer not to disclose my final choices of suet other than to say they were carefully considered. And so far, so good with the pack rats. No more whittled wires, and our car smells like a big stick of fresh chewing gum.



January PROGRAM RECAP by Steve Ford



Kyle Steinert from Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks presented a dense, information-packed program at the January 25th general meeting in Yates 102. He is the Assistant Manager at the Farlington Fish Hatchery and Kansas Aquatic Biodiversity Center (KABC) located about five miles north of Girard. You may remember our chapter had a field trip there a couple of years ago.

Kyle's program outlined the history of the Farlington site itself and went on to discuss many of its activities - and there are many indeed. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service first operated the hatchery in the 1940s, but Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks took over in 1971. It is one of four hatcheries in Kansas, the others being at Mead in western Kansas, Pratt, and Milford Hatchery near Junction City. While each center is similar to some extent, each has its unique features as well. The Farlington site is fifty acres in size, and now has thirty shallow ponds. Usually on hand is a full-time staff of four, with more seasonal help during the summer.

Several game fish including several species of sunfish (e.g. red-ears), channel catfish, and the hybrids called wipers are propagated and reared and eventually released to public waters. No trout are reared at Farlington. Although in years past private landowners could have their ponds stocked, that program has been discontinued. Landowners are encouraged to contact various farm stores that are periodically visited by private hatcheries. Call Farlington for deliveries near you.

Unique to Farlington is the Kansas Aquatic Biodiversity Center (KABC), opened in 2018. The state is losing, or in danger of losing several aquatic species, including fish, mussels, and others, turtles for example, via habitat degradation and loss, low water, and habitat fragmentation coupled with the vagaries of a given species' life cycle - particularly acute with mussels, which require specific fish as intermediate hosts to complete their life cycles. The KABC is designed to address this problem by various means, including research, propagation of species and serving as a temporary refuge. The plains minnow - a western species - is an example of a fish that, while formerly common, is now threatened in Kansas. The Farlington team is working hard to improve the means to propagate them so they can eventually be released into Kansas streams.

Kyle had some great slides and short videos, especially of mussel life cycles. In these times of environmental stress, work with aquatic fauna is often touch and go, but quite important for the health of the natural communities of Kansas waterways. There were many questions.



Happenings in Southeast KS

Sightings...



Emmett Sullivan

This diamond-backed water snake will be found near streams or lakes on warm days this spring.



Kathy Fox

These three birds have shown up at her feeder in the last couple weeks.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



Pine Siskin



American Tree Sparrow

**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.

Photo Exhibit Planned

Sperry-Galligar Audubon will have information soon for those members in the chapter who take pictures of birds and other animals.

Ten 8X10 printed quality photographs will be exhibited at Root Coffee House, Pittsburg, in September.

Up to 5 entries per person—either in “Birds” or “Other Native Animals” categories, taken during 2023 and 2024 in the four-state area.

Deadline is the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Picnic in May. Members will help select 10 prints for Exhibit Committee to review.

More details to come!

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.