



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Mar 2024 / Issue 6

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Diane McCallum

## Next Program

Thursday, 7:00  
March 28  
Yates Hall 102  
PSU Campus

“Adventures in  
Wildlife  
Rehabilitation” by  
Sally Imhof,  
Mulberry, KS. Sally  
will highlight some  
of her experiences  
with wounded birds  
and mammals in her  
thirty years of doing  
wildlife  
rehabilitation in  
southeast Kansas.

## LATE EVENING, EARLY SPRING by Steve Ford

I lived in southern California for two years, and though the Mediterranean climate along the coast was enjoyable and great for motorcycle riding and surfing, being a Midwestern boy I missed the changing seasons. I’m not a fan of our lengthening hot, humid summers, but I really don’t mind winter, with its subtle Andrew Wyeth colors, and what I call coffee weather. Extreme winters can be uncomfortable, but around here those are becoming rare. A fine fall day is glorious, and is bookended by our current season: early spring.

Defining the boundaries of the early spring subseason is hard. I suppose everyone has their criteria, but for me it is generally that time when the juncos are still around and leaves are yet to pop on the trees, but the stark gray woods are illuminated almost alarmingly with near neon redbud blossoms. Oh— gardeners like the “happy” little daffodils, but I figure planted early spring flowers are a form of cheating. Often the overly optimistic dafs get their come-uppance anyway via late frosts. (A more pernicious artificial sign of the season these days are the white blossoms of all the Bradford pear trees. They’re detrimental weeds, however showy they may be.)

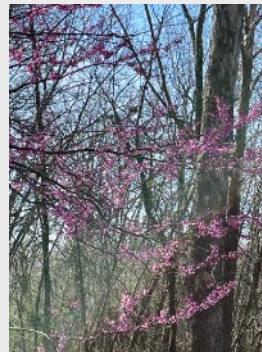
I always look forward to the sounds of spring, but they always sneak up on me. I’m slogging along with muddy boots and suddenly become aware of a leopard frog belching out a weak,

rubbery call from a distant puddle, and . . . “Hey, it’s spring!” Last week I happened to catch a call I had forgotten to anticipate - the “peeent, peeent” buzz of a displaying woodcock. For several evenings, from about 7:30 to a little after 8:00, the hope of hearing woodcocks have called Cindy and me to sit on the edge of a raised garden bed near an opening we call “the meadow.” We listen to the sounds of late evening, early spring.

As we begin our evening adventures the cardinals and Carolina wrens finish their day’s songs, and titmice flutter around the dark trees and shrubs finding roosts for the night. Barred owls continue an occasional “who cooks for you?” For some reason we don’t get a lot of great horned owls on our place, but sometimes we hear one from half a mile north in a neighbor’s hedgerow. Wood ducks may squeal over a strip pit, and occasionally a distant Canada goose reminds me of an old Tennessee Ernie Ford song, “The Wild Goose.”

The herps call more or less all day, but seem to get more animated in the evening. Possibly the cooler air and diminished wind and bird call makes them more prominent in the soundscape. Leopard frogs are still the most numerous, sounding like balloons being rubbed on a forearm, but as the days pass the “finger-on-a-comb” song of the tiny chorus frogs become more abundant. Just in the last couple of days we’ve started hearing the bell-like trills of American toads. They will eventually take over - the term cacophony comes to mind.

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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 :** January minutes were approved

**Treasurer's Report** – We have \$5445

**Annual Report for Audubon** – Andy has turned it in and received feedback that it was acceptable. We should receive our annual financial allocation from National Audubon.

**Monthly Meetings:** February program will be Ann Tanner from Olathe presenting "Prothonotary Warblers- Swamp Candles in Kansas". We will try to reschedule Jeff Cantrell for next year. March – Sally Imhoff will present "Adventures in Wildlife Rehabilitation". April – Max and Eweleen Good will present "Conservation is not for Sissies." May – at the picnic Jesse Gilmore from K-State Wildcat Extension will present "Foraging Edible Backyard Plants."

**Bird Walks:** The March bird walk will be at Bone Creek Lake.

**Marais de Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge** contacted us to invite us to attend their open house April 27.

**Outreach:** Pittsburg's Earth Day event will be Saturday April 20<sup>th</sup> at 11 AM and we are signed up. Some ideas of interactive kid-friendly activities and photo opportunities were suggested.

**Photo Exhibit at Root** – The photo exhibit subcommittee has arranged with Root to have a display in September and presented proposed rules and a selection process, which the board discussed and accepted. Invitations to submit photos will be sent out by email to everyone on the email list, but submissions will only be accepted from current members. Submissions will be displayed at the picnic for members to have input on which photos are included in the exhibit.

**Audubon of Kansas** – Steve and Cindy attended a Zoom meeting and learned the following:

- \* Springfield, MO, Audubon has worked with students at Missouri State University and now the university has an active student Birders Club.
- \* New Chapter in Hays called Sunflower Audubon.
- \* National Audubon has a goal to double their membership in the next years

## Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

### March 2024

Beginning Balance ..... \$ 5458.00

#### Debits

Jan Newsletter .....\$ 6.01

Feb Newsletter..... 6.30

#### Credits

Memberships .....\$105.00

Ending Balance ..... \$ 5550.69

**(CONT FROM PAGE 1)** We've never heard spring peepers on the place, but they've grown rather common in many areas around us and are calling now. It is still too early in the season for snores of crawfish frogs and trills of the fat little charismatic gray treefrogs that hug window glass near porch lights waiting for moths. We'll soon hear cricket frogs sounding like pebbles being clicked together, but Mr. bullfrog won't offer his "jug-o'-rum" until early summer.



Our woodcock begins his lilting twitter in the sky about 7:45, when it's almost too dark to read a watch. We have to be very quiet and alert to hear it, as it's

some distance to the west. (My wife accuses me of selective hearing - I can hear the woodcock, but sometimes not her.) Usually around 8:00 the coyotes and our dogs start an argument, so that ends the session.

Tree leaves and the insects that depend on them are close at hand, followed shortly by that annual milestone for birders, the migration of spring warblers. With them spring will be sprung in earnest.

## February PROGRAM RECAP by Steve Ford



It's silly to try to pick a "Most Beautiful Bird", but the prothonotary warbler is surely a marcher in that parade. Ann Tanner's enthusiastic February 29th presentation sparkled with slide after slide of this beauty that seems to be lit by its own batteries. Ann said some of this glow is the context of habitat. It's termed "swamp candle" because its vivid gold color lights up the dark swampy environs it favors.

Ann's a member of the Buoroughts Audubon chapter in Kansas City, is on the board of Audubon of Kansas, and is a Master Naturalist. One of her many endeavors is the heading up of a team of citizen scientists in Kansas that is collecting information on PROWs (an abbreviation for pronthonotary warblers). Our own Kathy Fox is on the team, and contributed information and great photos to the talk.

PROWs are in decline due to habitat loss and cowbirds (as nest parasites) both in the eastern U.S. where it nests, and in its winter ranges in Colombia and Venezuela. Eastern Kansas is fortunate in being in its range - if barely - so we can help. It responds well to wooden (not PVC) bluebird-style boxes, placed five to six feet high near water and brushy woods. The holes in bluebird boxes are typically 1 1/2 inches in diameter, but 1 1/4 is better for PROWs. Clean out your box after each nesting. Of course tree cavities, particularly in bald cypress, are its native nesting sites.

In our area PROWs will often have two broods of five per summer, the much brighter males exhibiting strong nest-site fidelity, that is, re-nesting in the same location in subsequent years. Listen for their distinct, monotone "sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet" song in spring, then put out those boxes. *We can help, so help!!!* Let Kathy know of your success.



### March Bird Walk

Andrew George led a bird walk at Bone Creek Lake on Saturday, March 2nd. These 17 birds were seen or heard: American Coot, Bald Eagle, Blue Jay, Bufflehead, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Double-crested Cormorant, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Phoebe, Greater/Lesser Scaup, House Sparrow, Killdeer, Northern Cardinal, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Ruddy Duck, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Grebe sp. Ten people were in attendance: Andy George, Brady, Chris, Clarissa, Dennis, Emily, Jacob, Mathew, Sally, and Wayne. **Report by Wayne Bockelman**

### March Bird Banding

(Andy George)

Ford Farm, Crawford County, March 16/17.  
Banded: White-throated Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Brown Thrasher, Carolina Chickadee,

Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Song Sparrow, and Spotted Towhee.

*This gives a sample of the diversity of species in the area right now.*



**FOX SPARROW** Photo by Andy George



# AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK

## Emmett Sullivan Photos



Rough Green Snake  
Galena, April 2022



Common Snapping Turtle  
Cherokee Co., July, 2022

## Kathy Fox Photos



Red Fox  
Crawford Co., March 7, 2024



Eastern Bluebird  
Crawford Co., March 6, 2024



## Sightings...



### Eleven Small Snakes in Kansas

Bob Mangile

Have you ever known a person who will simply observe a snake? Probably not! Most people either try to kill it or run away as fast as they can. It all seems so senseless if you are a person who likes snakes and there are many that do. There are 42 different species of snakes in Kansas. Eleven of them, about 25%, are very small – from 8 to 15 inches or so. They can be found beneath a rock, a board or a log – but who looks for them? If someone stumbles onto one of these small species it might be called a baby snake.

My guess is that most only know a few names for snakes. If a snake is seen in your yard or garden it is called a Garden Snake; if it is black it is called a Black Snake and those seen by fishermen are often called Cottonmouths. Of course Copperhead and Rattlesnake are on the lips of many folks, too. Well, this can be an endless discussion so I'll move on!

Did you know that some snakes lay eggs and some give birth to live young? In the egg-layers, called oviparous, the eggs hatch “outside” the body. Livebearers called, ovoviviparous, give birth to live young that hatch “inside” the body. Six of the small snakes include New Mexico Thread or Blind Snake, Ground Snake, Flathead Snake, Plains Blackhead Snake, Western Worm Snake & Ringneck Snake are egg-layers. Five are livebearers include Brown Snake, Redbelly Snake, Lined Snake, Rough Earth Snake & Smooth Earth Snake. And if all eleven were placed in a quart jar full of dried leaves they would be difficult to see. And by the way some of them are quite pretty too!

Check out the following link to see photos and details of all the snakes in Kansas.

<https://gpnc.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2018/02/KS-Snakes.pdf>

You have to be very observant to spot these small snakes. They are a treat to find.



Lined Snake



Brown Snake

### Photos from the Kansas Herpetofaunal Atlas



Western Worm Snake



Flathead Snake



**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 \_\_\_\_\_



## EVENTS & ETC.

### Photo Exhibit Planned

Sperry-Galligar Audubon website has details for those members in the chapter who take pictures of birds and other wildlife.

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.

**Share your great photos!**

### **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.