



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

May 2025 / Issue 8

OFFICERS

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Andrew George
Vice President
Megan Corrigan
Secretary
Steve Ford
Treasurer
Liz Mangile

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sperry-galligar.com

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Diane McCallum
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Next Program

Thursday, 6:00
May 29
Homer Cole
Community Center
Pittsburg

Following the
ANNUAL PICNIC

a presentation will
be given by Nova
Clark, U.S. Fish &
Wildlife Service,
Marais des Cygnes,
Pleasanton

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Picnic

May 29, 6:00 p.m.

Homer Cole Community Center
Pittsburg

Club will provide fried chicken and iced tea

Bring a side dish

Bring your dish, silverware, and glass

BIRD BANDING AT THE PSU MONAHAN PROPERTY

Photos by Diane McCallum



Andy George hosted a bird banding session for Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter folks and Pittsburg State University students. A number of migratory birds were netted and tagged.

Board Minutes...Steve Ford

Meeting held in Heckerrt-Wells Hall, third floor lounge. Wayne officiated in the absence of president Andy and vice president Megan.

Present: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Cindy and Steve Ford, Kathy Fox, Elizabeth and Robert Mangile, Diane McCallum.

** April minutes were read and approved.

** Treasurer's report from Liz: \$5151.52, same as last month.

** Steve and Cindy reported on AOK Zoom meeting: Two new hires for AOK Brittany Squires to head up Events and Communication Coordination, Sam Richards as Protected Areas (sanctuaries) Manager. Special guest was Jacob Riggs from the K-State Bird Club who discussed eBird which is a diverse computer program designed to collect, share, and store a diversity of local birding information. For example, Merlin, a bird ID program is quite useful and fun, but not perfect. Jacob invited Kansas birders to contact him for information and help at jacobrigged@gmail.com or @ksu.edu or phone 913-215-0029. The next Zoom, May 31, will feature iNaturalist.

** Tonight's program, arranged by Megan, will be Purple Martins by Bill Warnes. The May 29 picnic program will be by Nova Clark, USFWS, topic TBD.

** Kansas Ornithological Society Annual meeting at PSU will be Sep 26-28.

** Bird walk and banding demonstration on Saturday, May 3. First the location was to be the Ford's, but later in the evening it was changed to the Monahan. Carpool from Yates, 8:00 am.

** Prothonotary warblers are starting to arrive in our area, boxes are up, data collection to start soon. Wasps are very common in empty boxes. Gabe will be contacted for a solution.

** S-G Aud will sign on to National Audubon's letter to congress (Diane will coordinate).

** Steve read letter from AOK requesting an Earth Day donation for their programs, especially prairie chickens. Our donation would be matched (Steve will make sure we're not too late - he later checked. We're good). The vote passed to donate \$250.

** Mavis saw a Mississippi kite.

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

Elections are tonight. The slate so far: President Andy George, Vice/Programs Megan Corrigan, Secretary Steve Ford, Treasurer Wayne Bockelman. Many thanks to Liz for her decades of service as former treasurer. We'll get her a cake or at least sugar-free cupcakes. She was stunned. Said she should have run to Mexico years ago.

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Elections

Elections were held at the April general meeting for next season's officers. They will take over officially after May's meeting (picnic).

President: Dr. Andy George

Vice President/Program Coordinator:
Megan Corrigan

Treasurer: Wayne Bockelman

Secretary: Dr. Steve Ford

Dr. Cindy Ford will remain as Newsletter Editor. Diane McCallum will remain as Membership Coordinator. Robert Mangile will remain as Web Master.

April PROGRAM SUMMARY by Steve Ford

“Purple Martins” by Bill Warnes

There are many dedicated K-State Master Naturalists in the Kansas City area. S-G Audubon was fortunate



enough to collar a good one for our April program, Bill Warnes who traveled to our territory with his wife. Bill offered an entertaining, informative, picture-packed program on a successful and growing program he started in Johnson County focused on purple martins, the largest of the swallows.

Martins are one of those animals with a natural and cultural history far too diverse to pack into a couple paragraphs. They of course have long been associated with people, starting with southern Indigenous People such as the Chocktaws and Chickasaws who attracted the very colonial birds with hollow gourds on tall poles in open fields. This is still a common sight in the south. Many folks try to attract them thinking they help control mosquitoes, but they really don't - there's not much meat on a mosquito, although if a martin happens to come across one high in the air during the day they won't pass it by. The birds

will eat about any insect they do come across on the wing, but moths, beetles, dragonflies - the larger, beefier fare are the most common.

People have attracted them for many decades with fancy wooden boxes with many rooms and later metal boxes. I remember Bill Brewer in Parsons starting a campaign there in the 1990s that led to houses being erected all over town and leading to Parsons being known as the "Purple Martin Capital of Kansas." Andy Burnett still oversees that worthy conservation effort.

Our speaker noted that attracting martins is not as difficult as people may think, but one has to do his/her homework. Competition from other birds, especially starlings is a concern. Bill showed pictures and brought examples of new-style artificial gourds with anti-starling baffles which work very well, but are pricey if purchased in appropriate numbers. Predators such as raccoons, black rat snakes, and owls have to be dealt with, but there are ways. But dealing with some of the challenges entice some people to take the plunge and reap the rewards of watching these great birds. Bill has established large colonies in several parks in KC, and has attracted quite a crowd of assistants to help. He says, like many avian species, purple martins are declining due to habitat loss and pesticides, but they seem to be holding their own in the eastern Kansas / western Missouri area. He's not sure why, but of course conservation efforts like his can't hurt.

Hearing from folks who are doing things on behalf of wildlife conservation is warming, no?

AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK



Spring brings out many woodland wildflowers in the Ozarkian woods where Emmett Sullivan prowls with his camera. Take for instance this wild geranium in prime bloom.



Spring migration provided Kathy Fox a good view of a Blackburnian Warbler in her neighborhood.





Happenings in Southeast KS

Sightings...



Cowbirds and Prothonotaries

Steve Ford

Our prothonotary warbler (PROW) nest in our back porch bluebird box was abandoned after an afternoon of building - and this after we ran off a pair of actual bluebirds and a chickadee thank you very much. But a few days later we noticed another box just feet from our strip pit was being used by a PROW pair. After that nest building stopped we found one egg. By now there may be more, possibly 5-6. We're reluctant to disturb the nest very often. We also found brown-headed cowbirds. Certainly around our sunflower feeder and the backyard in general, but also close to and sometimes perching on the Prow nest box (also an old bluebird box).

Now being a red-blooded, red-capped, red-faced MAGA man I wanted to shoot those — — — s with my 12-gauge which I clean nightly just after Fox News, but Cindy reminded me that that would be illegal, since cowbirds are native species protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. I reminded her that Real Americans were no longer required to abide by the rule of law, and started to load up. She said even so I might be deported to Louisiana, or worse, Texas, which gave me pause.

If you're not familiar with cowbirds, they are obligate brood parasites, meaning in order to reproduce they have to lay their eggs in the nest of other species. Many other species. It goes back to the Ice Age days when they depended on migratory ungulates, particularly bison, so they left their eggs with stationary species along the trail while mom and dad hung with the big guys. Red-wing blackbirds for example are favorites and certainly plentiful, but also many warblers (including PROWS, vireos, and flycatchers, some of which are no longer plentiful. Cowbirds lay more eggs each season than most other birds - dozens. Their eggs hatch before those of the host species, and the young - often larger than the young of the host species - cause the death of the host's nestlings by various means. Most hosts just shrug it off. What's up with them? I'm glad my folks, Jack and Betty, were not so apathetic or I might have been soles up in the sandbox. It grinds my grits, but Professor Google says it's nature's way, and it's best just to crack a Blatz and let it slide.

How about removing the offending egg? Nope. Mother Nature and the Gov'ment says not without your permit. Go kill a coyote if you're itching to "remove" something without your Federal paperwork.

BUT WAIT! Won't the 1.5 inch hole in the bluebird box be small enough to deter the intruders? Some maybe, but not all. How about the smaller hole of a righteous Prow box? Probably. Other enemies? Well that's another story. We'll just have to look the other way when Messers rat snake and raccoon come calling, and put our trust in the balance of nature, if such a thing still exists, or else expensive predator guards. We're just talking cowbirds here. I don't like it either, but we just have to let them be.

Have a great summer. Where's my surfboard?



**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**

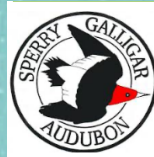
Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____



EVENTS & ETC.

Carly Rowton spotted these two elusive animals in her pasture this spring.



Coyote



Common Snipe

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.