



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

May 2024 / Issue 8

OFFICERS

President
Andrew George
Vice President
Megan Corrigan
Secretary
Mary Jo Meier
Treasurer
Liz Mangile

BOARD SUPPORT

Newsletter Editor
Cindy Ford
cford@pittstate.edu

Web Master
Bob Mangile
sperry-galligar.com

Membership
Diane McCallum

Next Program

Thursday, 6:00
May 30
Homer Cole Center
Pittsburg, KS

Annual May Picnic
and Program

“Foraging Edible
Backyard Plants” by
Jesse Gilmore from
Kansas State Wildcat
Extension Office

Ease up on Yard Care and Enjoy the Birds

Summer Complaint: “Can’t lounge on the back porch. Gotta go mow the lawn. Gotta go mow the lawn for umpteen weeks...”

While driving around the countryside, I see acres of mown lawns around a lone house and feel sorry for the owners because they are constantly on their mowers during hot humid summer days. These areas look like our image of what a park should look like. How do they have time to sit on their back porches to watch birds? Come to think of it, would there be very many birds in that large mown lawn to watch anyway?

The concept of open lawns came from British landscapers in the 1700s. Think of Downton Abbey: boxy house with nothing but lawn surrounding it. This type of landscape was a sign of wealth because it was expensive and time-consuming to maintain and distinctive from the natural landscape of the area away from the estate. Do you think the owners of the mansion did the mowing? No!

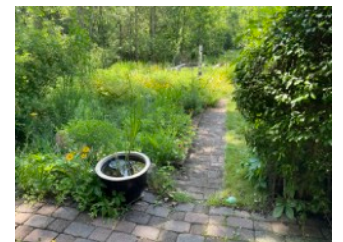
This custom has endured to present day but transcended to most of our city yards (where there are strict regulations to mow the lawn). Parks, corporations, schools, almost everywhere—even houses in the country have large mown lawns. It has become part of summer. I recognize, however, that in towns there is a safety issue with unkempt yards, around here we try to keep pests (like ticks and chiggers) at bay by mowing, and there is an aesthetic element in that the yard cannot be just abandoned.

There is a compromise, however. Why not mow part of the yard and establish native plants in other parts? This has several advantages: Fewer hours mowing, having plants that do not require constant attention like applying fertilizers and herbicides, adjusting the vegetation to climate change, and especially bringing in birds within proximity to the porch where you want to sit and watch birds come to you!

I enjoy gardening but I have never been successful in establishing a ruglike lawn. So I decided a number of years ago to take out some of the lawn and plant a mix of native plants with a sprinkling of favorite garden plants adjacent to the house. We still have lawn areas but mow fewer patches than before. We do not baby our lawn but instead mow what is there.

The result has been more time spent on our back porch watching birds and even having to duck while birds take a shortcut under the porch roof while we are watching them. Every year we have more species nesting on or close to the house: prothonotary warblers in a bluebird box on the porch post, Carolina wrens in our upside down canoe, eastern phoebes along the porch roof, cardinals in the vines, catbirds in the shrubs.

Bird watching at its best: comfortable chair, iced tea in hand, binoculars at the ready... **Cindy Ford**



Board Minutes...Megan Corrigan

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

Minutes : March minutes were approved

Treasurer's Report – We have \$6034

Earth Day – We had two tables at Earth Day, a photo cut-out board made by Steve and painted by Kathy, a kids game organized by Megan and Wayne, and bluebird houses, ant moats, pocket guides, T-shirts and sweatshirts sold by Steve and Cindy. We made \$130, and had 22 kids play our game, 28 adults enter our drawing, and 14 people request to be added to our email list.

Monthly Meetings: May – At our picnic Jesse Gilmore from K-State Wildcat Extension will present “Foraging Edible Backyard Plants.” WE need folks to RSVP so we know how much chicken to buy.

Bird Walks: The May bird walk will be at Wilderness Park.

Photo Exhibit at Root – We will accept submissions up until our picnic.

Pittsburg Community Middle School invitation – Andy contacted them to request more information about what they are looking for and we have not heard back yet.

Officers for next year – The following slate was proposed and approved - President – Andy George, Vice President – Megan Corrigan, Secretary – Steve Ford, Treasurer – Liz Mangile

PHOTO EXHIBIT

To enter: bring your 8 x 10 photo to the picnic.

Ten of the submitted photos will be on display at Root Coffeehouse in September.

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

April 2024

Beginning Balance \$ 6087.00

Debits

Postage \$. 68.00

Credits

Memberships\$ 30.00

Earth Day Sales 135.00

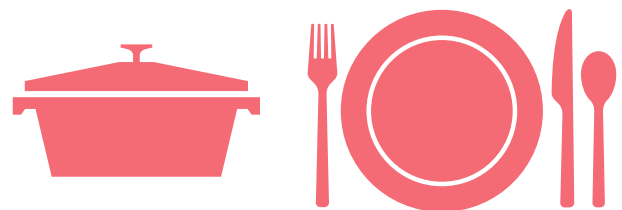
Ending Balance \$ 6184.00

SPERRY-GALLIGAR AUDUBON PICNIC TIME

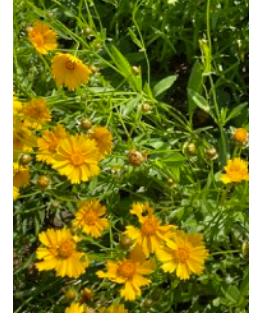
Thursday, May 30, 6:00
Homer Cole Community Center
3003 N Joplin
Pittsburg, KS

Fried chicken will be provided
Bring a covered dish
Bring your table service
(plate, cup, silverware)
Include an appetite

A program will follow the picnic dinner.



April PROGRAM SUMMARY by Megan Corrigan



It seems counter-intuitive that to restore land to its natural state requires endless work and funds. Shouldn't you be able to just leave it alone and it will on its own revert to its natural state? My city yard here in Pittsburg seems to want to revert to tallgrass prairie in just weeks if I don't mow it and the brick sidewalk is in constant danger of being overgrown. The house next door was for sale for a couple months and a veritable forest of maple saplings sprung up in their back yard. It just doesn't seem like getting land back to what it was should be that hard.

But it is, and we heard about that in this month's program. Max and Ewleleen Good in Parsons have spent thirty years restoring their land to a prairie and a wetland. They have partnered with government agencies and non-profits and have planted native grass seeds and native forbs that cost as much as a mind blowing \$200 an ounce (and here I thought eggs were getting expensive!). Along the way they have had some ups and downs.

They planted buckets of exorbitant seeds of forbs, and then the next year not many of the perennials came up. They thought they had failed. But eventually they learned some of the perennials take a few years to establish roots before sending up a flower. They also got advice to build some micro-depressions, bathtub to room sized micro-depressions, to slow down the water. And here's where it started to make sense to me that just leaving things alone won't restore prairie to what it was in the past. Because in the past, what we today call micro-depressions were, I'm guessing, called bison wallows. And these days there are not a lot of bison roaming around to make wallows, so, in their absence, we humans have to build micro-depressions.

It has been eight years since they planted all those forbs, and at this point almost everything they planted has come up. They now have 210 plant species including American bluehearts and wild hyacinth which have high coefficients of conservatism, meaning they are only found in high quality prairies. But it's still a ton of work! Invasive species like *Sericea lespedeza*, which was only introduced in Kansas in the 1930's would crowd out the native species if it weren't controlled and woody species like juniper would overgrow the prairie if it weren't controlled periodically by fire.

Happily, all this work has paid dividends in biodiversity. Max and Eweleen have counted 176 species of birds, 23 different reptiles and amphibians, 22 mammals and 25 fish. They don't count the insect species, but there are plenty. Max is a photographer, and he has gorgeous photos of his flora and fauna. It's clear that their restoration project involves tremendous labor, but it's a labor of love and it was a treat to learn about it.

*Many thanks to contributors to the newsletter this year:
Steve Ford, Megan Corrigan, Bob Mangile, Liz Mangile,
Emmett Sullivan, Kathy Fox, Wayne Bockelman*

AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK

Emmett Sullivan

Northern Shovelers

Photo taken at Neosho Wildlife Area near St. Paul, April 5, 2024. These ducks are migratory in eastern Kansas but nest in far western Kansas.



Kathy Fox Photos



Baltimore Oriole

This male can be lured to fruit near the house. Listen for their clear distinctive song.



Bobcat

Bobcats are common in this area but are very secretive and elusive animals,



Virginia Opossum

Very common but unusual to see female carrying young.



Happenings in Southeast KS

Sightings...



Prothonotary Warbler Watch on the Back Porch Cindy & Steve Ford

In the last few years there has been increasing interest in prothonotary warblers in Kansas since this is the northern part of their range and the populations tend to be declining.

We have been fortunate to have a pair of prothonotary warblers choose to nest in a Sperry-Galligar bluebird box on a post supporting our back deck. It is easy to watch activity from our deck chairs. We watched them build the nest over about a week's time and then lay six eggs. We are now waiting for the hatch and then the continuous feeding of chicks. Hopefully all six eggs will successfully fledge. They may even choose to use the bluebird box for their second nest of the season.

One of the best ways to bring birds to your yard is to landscape with native plants.

Consider introducing not only wildflowers, but also shrubs and vines to give cover, nesting opportunities, and food.

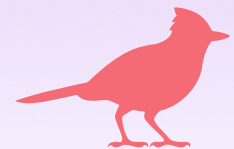
Check out the native plant sale on
May 25
10:00 - 2:00
at Shoal Creek Conservation Area,
Joplin, MO



Three photos by C. Ford



Internet



**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**

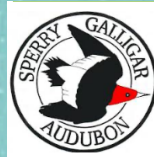
Name _____

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 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.