



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Nov/Dec 2024 / Issue 3

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## SPERRY-GALLIGAR AUDUBON BIRD SEED SALE

Friday, Dec. 6, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and  
Saturday, Dec 7, 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Dane and Linda Shultz, owners of the Blue Ribbon Farm & Home Store, 1103 E 4th St., Pittsburg, KS are providing black oil sunflower seed, wild bird seed and niger (thistle). They will give 15% of the proceeds from all these birdseed sales those days to Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter.

Please thank the Shultz's for their support. What a great time to stock up on your bird seed for the winter...and...some for friends and family! (Hint: Blue Ribbon also has suet cakes and feeders that make dandy gifts.)

## Next Program

Thursday, 7:00  
December 5  
Yates 102  
Pittsburg State Univ

“They’re Back:  
Aquatic Species  
Reintroductions in  
Kansas” by Trevor  
Starks, KS Dept.  
Wildlife & Parks.

For the first time in  
over 30 years alligator  
snapping turtles are  
back in the Neosho  
River. Come learn  
about this aquatic  
species story and  
other successes.

## Read about our Prothonotary Warbler Project on Page 4



Photo by C. Ford

260 Prothonotary Warbler Bird Boxes to be placed in Southeast Kansas Riparian Woods by Pittsburg State University Biology Graduate Student.



Photo by S. Ford

Bird boxes constructed by Sperry-Galligar Audubon Members, using Bob Mangile's constructed jigs. (Left to right— Graduate Student: Gabe McClain; Audubon Members: Steve Ford, Wayne Bockelman, and Bob Mangile, Cindy Ford not pictured)

## Board Minutes...Steve Ford

\*\* The meeting, starting at 6:00 pm in PSU's Heckert-Wells' third floor lounge, was attended by the usual gang of cutthroats, save for Andy George who had a family commitment: Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy Ford, Steve Ford, Kathy Fox, Elizabeth Mangile, Robert Mangile, Diane McCallum. Wayne and Megan vied for who was in charge - entertaining but ugly.

\*\* Minutes from the previous board meeting were approved.

\*\* Liz reported a checking account of \$4,756.05.

\*\* Megan is working out speakers, which will include KDWP's Trevor Starks in Dec. speaking on aquatic reintroductions in Kansas. His focus will be alligator snapping turtles. The Jan. speaker will be MDC's Meagan Duffy Yates. Her topic will be Missouri's turkey decline. Tonight's speaker was to be Kristi Laughlin from the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma discussing several environmental initiatives, but she contracted Covid and had to cancel suddenly. Megan worked hard all day to find a stand-in, settling on a video, but ultimately, worked out a joint meeting with PSU's student chapter of the Wildlife Society who, as luck would have it, had invited a speaker, Victoria Gaa, from KDWP to talk to students about summer opportunities in helping do wildlife surveys.

\*\*A discussion on sparsely-attended fall bird walks led to suggestions that locations for the walks be diversified. A Saturday, November 9 "walk" will take place at the Fox residence off west Hwy 126, 8:00 am.

\*\* Once again Blue Ribbon Farm and Home will donate 15% of bird seed sales on Dec. 6 and 7 to SG Audubon. Thanks to Bob for coordinating with Dane and Linda Shultz at Blue Ribbon.

\*\* Construction of prothonotary warbler boxes in Bob's garage will begin shortly. We're going to build at least 200, maybe more. Grad student Gabe McClain will eventually distribute them in several appropriate sites and study their use in nesting.

\*\* We briefly discussed developing the option of paying annual dues online, but blessedly the discussion was tabled for lack of time. Wayne is investigating.

## Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

### November 2024

Beginning Balance ..... \$ 4479.32

Credits: Memberships

Ending Balance ..... \$ 4756.05

CD not included in report

## Notes from Audubon of Kansas Zoom Kansas Wind Farms

Cindy and I sat in on a Zoom meeting October 15. Zack Pistora, State Legislative Director and lobbyist for the Sierra Club discussed wind turbines in Kansas. Other than noticing how they are sprouting across the land and seeing a lot of negative signs recently along Crawford County highways, I'm afraid I haven't kept up with the issues. I certainly didn't know this — wind turbines are the number one source of electricity in Kasas. Twenty years ago coal provided 70%, but is down to 30%. (Solar provides far less.) There are some 45 wind farms in the state in 36 counties. Most are on agricultural land including cropland/pasture and cause little disruption in farming practices, and in fact can significantly enhance a farm's profits. Wind companies lease land and insist the landowners sign non-disclosure agreements, so the general public is kept in the dark, so to speak, regarding specific lease agreements, but between Zack and Jackie Augustine of Audubon of Kansas the numbers ranged from \$5,000 to \$10,000 or even \$15,000 annually.

Of course environmentalists applaud the clean energy resulting from wind farms and the considerable savings in water used to run them compared to fossil fuel generators, but are concerned with negative environmental effects surrounding their placement. Jackie noted that they don't belong near wetlands or large rivers due to the numbers of birds, especially migratory and T&E species found in these areas,

Cont. on Page 3

## October PROGRAM SUMMARY by Steve Ford



Photo by R. Mangile

October's meeting was a bit rocky in the making, but Vice President/Program Director Megan Corrigan pulled a rabbit from the hat and made it a success. The original speaker, Kristi Laughlin, from the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma contracted a rather nasty case of Covid and had to cancel at the last minute. As it happened, PSU's student chapter of the Wildlife Society was hosting Victoria Gaa from Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) to speak to wildlife students on the same night, so the two clubs met jointly and collared the same speaker - a serendipitous two-fer one might say - although Ms. Gaa confronted a bigger audience than she probably bargained for.

Victoria is a biologist in the Environmental Services section of KDWP, concentrating on doing summer terrestrial surveys for a variety of species for which Kansas has an interest. One of her focuses this summer has been on a tiny threatened snake called the New Mexican Thread Snake, a relatively rare inhabitant of the Red Hills of southcentral Kansas and on the Kansas Threatened Species list. Her team found thirteen. (Interestingly they pulled one alive from the mouth of a Woodhouse's toad. How lucky can a little snake be!)

Much of her illustrated presentation discussed the many techniques used in field surveys, which the young students and we older specimens alike found informative and interesting. For example, a "drift fence" is a long mesh fence along which small animals such as toads, small snakes, and mice come across and are obliged to travel along (drift) until they fall into a bucket. The surveyer simply checks the bucket periodically.

Victoria impressed on the students that the paid summer activity of a survey crew is invaluable experience and a great resume-builder for a future field biologist, not to mention an important service to KDWP and all conservation-oriented Kansans. Most terrestrial critters are nocturnal, so the job requires getting out late or getting up early to find them. Snow-heads like me that bed down shortly after dinner need not apply.

There was a nice crowd. The Q & A brought good talk, always a sign that folks were interested.

### Kansas Wind Farms, (Cont. from Page 2)

nor do they belong in native prairies where they can be disruptive to prairie chickens, particularly the sensitive lesser prairie chicken.

I was surprised to learn that after 20 years of wind farms in Kansas there are few definitive studies of their effects on birds and bats, although such studies are underway. There are mitigating means of dealing with some negative situations. For example, the red lights that festoon the night sky of wind farms can be turned off most of the time, only lighting up when a plane approaches within three miles, and manufacturers are experimenting with ultra-violet lights and various colored paints that might help protect birds and bats. Most of these practices are not yet implemented in Kansas.

I asked Zack to speculate as to why all the negative roadside signs. Of course nobody likes to look at a landscape bristling with wind turbines even though they are a source of clean energy, and I may be cynical, but I doubt that the sign owners are overly concerned about the damage to birds and bats. He said he's aware of misinformation being peddled and suspects a good bit of politics. If I get the chance I'll ask someone with a sign to explain.



## A Partnership to Light the Woods

Steve Ford

You're familiar with that bright golden bird called the prothonotary warbler. Ann Tanner spoke to the chapter a while back about them, and some of our members, Kathy Fox for example, see them nesting near their homes. Unfortunately in many areas of their range in the eastern and midwestern U.S. their abundance is declining due to habitat loss. That habitat is wooded areas near lakes and creeks. There has been a movement of sorts to help them recover. I say "of sorts" because much of the interest is directed at simply keeping track of them, and when possible finding their nests and monitoring their success.

Fortunately prothonotaries nest in cavities, mostly tree cavities of course, but other cavities too (open pipes), They don't seem to be terribly shy of human activity. Some other birds are cavity-nesters, but not as many as one might think. Providing artificial cavities for troubled species has long been a conservation tool. Bluebirds and wood ducks have recovered very well as the result of what must be millions of nest boxes made and distributed by conservation agencies and private organizations and individuals. Giant Canada geese, once on the verge of extinction, now prosper because of artificial nesting platforms, plus aggressive management techniques and hunting regulations. Purple martin houses are well-known. Our chapter has made hundreds of bluebird boxes to sell and to give to speakers.

So, with cavity-nesting as part of the prothonotary natural history strategy, and the fact that southeast Kansas holds a lot of good habitat via many miles of wooded "edge" provided by strip pits, and with our history of bluebird boxes, it seemed logical for S-G Audubon to become aggressive in its conservation efforts and build nest boxes for "the swamp candle." But building bluebird boxes and getting them into the hands of conservation-minded citizens to distribute on their own properties is one thing, building enough warbler boxes to make a difference and spreading them throughout appropriate habitat in southeast Kansas is quite another. How to do it?

We're doing it as a partnership with the Pittsburg State University Biology Department. S-G Audubon provides the boxes, PSU provides the manpower to get them into the woods, addressing conservation and natural history questions in the process.

Bob Mangile sweet-talked a local (anonymous) private firm into donating an abundance of great one-inch-thick boards. (We don't know the species of wood. It may not be from North America.) Actually this firm didn't need much sweet-talking. They've been donating wood for bluebird boxes for years and was happy to help. We thank them mightily, even if we cannot name them. The boards were a perfect width right off the palate, and were even painted dark brown, just right for the woods. Bob cut them to appropriate length. He made some jigs so the boxes could be efficiently mass-produced in his garage, and a gang of elves got to work - Bob himself as Santa, graduate student Gabe McClain, Wayne Bockelman, Cindy Ford, and me. Liz Mangile coordinated lunches.

Over several days we made 260 sturdy boxes, using two-inch staples (Gabe purchased the big staple gun), and water resistant construction glue. The door can be swung open for inspection, and locked down against raccoons. All were dipped in eco-friendly preservative. It's the biggest conservation project the chapter has done in its 22-year history. We think a conservative value of the boxes would be about \$5,000. And we have plenty of lumber left over!

Gabe, working on a two-year Master's study under Andy George at PSU, will enlist a crew of students to help distribute and monitor the boxes. He wants to have them in the woods attached to trees (mostly) by March. His preliminary plan is to compare landscapes (in addition to strip pits he wants to place boxes in other sites, such as the Bone Creek reservoir north of Pittsburg), monitor several aspects of nesting, predation, competition, hole size in the door (1 1/4" vs 1 3/4"), specific site location, etc. With lots of variables it's important to have a lot of nest boxes. After Gabe's research perhaps some short-term undergrad studies would be useful. At any rate the boxes should be sturdy enough to last for several more years, illuminating our woodlands with swamp candles.

# AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK

## Emmett Sullivan Photo

Emmett recently won first in the Kansas Native Plant Society contest with this beautiful photo.



Wild Columbine

## Kathy Fox Photos

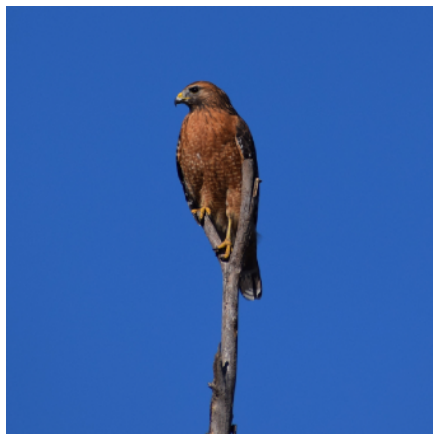
Favorite Photos from her Collection.....



Golden-crowned Kinglet in crabapple



Young White-tailed Deer



Red-shouldered Hawk



Brown Thrasher



## Happenings in Southeast KS

### Sightings...



### You Had to Walk Sideways

Steve Ford

My wife, Cindy, grew up in the spiteful wind of the Nebraska panhandle. She never really got used to it. She says her mother, Ellen, was chronically nervous because of it. We were visiting shortly before we got married, and Cindy suggested we go for a bike ride. Looking back she must have been nuts. She must have been thinking of that scene from *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* where Sundance (Robert Redford) and his fiancée (Katherine Ross) gleefully romped with their bikes to “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ On My Head” before travelling to Bolivia where Sundance would die, but being a gullible Hoosier I said something like “okie dokie, sweetie,” and off we sailed - gleefully - in an easterly direction. Fun stuff. Then we turned around into a nightmare, like we were peddling up a sand hill dragging a mattress. I knew what Sundance must have felt with a buttoffull of bullets. When we finally wobbled back into Ellen’s kitchen she smiled pleasantly at me, but I could see out of the corner of my eye that she was pursing her lips at her daughter and shaking her head as if to say “you’re about to marry an idiot.”

Here in southeast Kansas the wind usually is not a serious consideration, although truckers and vacationers with slab-sided recreational vehicles might differ. Recently it was so fierce that as I sat on the back porch I could hardly turn the pages of my National Geographic. It didn’t just come “a’ whistlin’ ‘cross the plain,” it thundered through my woods at 40 mph for two days. And from several directions: from the old hedgerow on the west, the pines and sycamores in the backyard, and the oaks and cottonwoods on the berm across the pit. It circled my house like a wild pack roaring in several renditions of rage.

This was the second day of Big Wind, and through the trees newly shorn of autumn leaves my views had expanded considerably. I could see more of the strip pit. Its surface was a kaleidoscope of exploding rosettes, instantly rent trails, and shoals rough enough to sand skin, or so it seemed. I had visions of my wood ducks and kingfishers frantically hugging branches with their wings. I’d mown the leaves in my yard just days ago, but by evening it was full again, with the addition of an impressive debris field of sticks. The one hairy great pyrenees that opted to weather the wind we renamed “Fluffy.” As she braved the gauntlet of billowing, swirling trees she was a white rat in a square dance.

Shortly before we both retreated into the house for a lungfull of tame air a red-tailed hawk soared low *under* the trees in the backyard, evidently ducking as much of the gale as possible. Red-tails are no longer common in our personal skies because of expanding woods. Rather the water- and woods-loving red-shouldered hawks have replaced them, so it was a treat to catch a close glimpse of the big guy, harried as he was.

I recall a movie years ago called *How the West Was Won*. One of its musical scores had these lyrics regarding pioneers crossing the great plains:

“ . . . Where the wind blows so hard you have to walk sideways  
to keep from flyin.’  
I’m going to leave this endless prairie  
or die from tryin.”

I don’t know about the last part, but for those who wanted to keep a hat anywhere near their head the other day...well, it was murder.





**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**

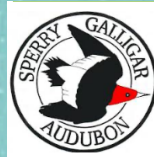
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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



**EVENTS & ETC.**

**Remember to Pay  
Chapter Dues**

See Liz Mangile at our next meeting to pay your annual chapter dues: \$15



"Snail" photographed by Diane McCallum

**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.