



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Jan 2025 / Issue 4

OFFICERS

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

BOARD SUPPORT

Newsletter Editor
Cindy Ford
cford@pittstate.edu

Web Master
Bob Mangile
sperry-galligar.com

Membership
Diane McCallum
dmccallum11@cox.net

Next Program

Thursday, 7:00
January 30
Yates 102

Pittsburg State Univ

“Missouri’s Turkey Habitat Initiative” by Meagan Duffee-Yates. She will discuss why turkeys are in decline in MO & KS. Learn why turkeys need to survive their first 14 days after the hatch and how habitat can be improved for this beloved species.

The Mittened and Gracious Hand of Lady Winter

Steve Ford

I’ve been a Midwesterner all my life and am used to it. Well, OK, I did live in coastal southern California for a couple of years, thanks to Uncle Sam. For a while I even had an apartment with an ocean view and the surf to fall asleep by. Alright, *alright* I had a surfboard too and maybe a motorcycle. I lived *in* California, but was not *of* California. As the calendar turned, yet the climate stayed beautifully mediterranean I found myself astride my Suzuki easy riding for the cool mountains. Not to ski, just to absorb. See some change. See some snow.

I was a rugged kid I guess. Not in a street tough kind of way, but my friends and I just weathered the weather without much thought. On garage basketball courts we would shovel the snow and ice as best we could and play. We learned the precise temperature at which it was just warm enough so our hands would not stay numb. Fourteen degrees. Sure, it was painfully cold for 20 minutes, but fine once we could feel the ball. And our shooting improved. Needless to say my parents did not hover. “Tough it or die, just be home by dinner.”

I softened as I aged, or maybe it was an accumulation of winter savvy. Two years working at a northern wildlife area taught me how to dress for weeks of constant snow, ice, and sub-zero wind chills. As luck would have it my field work at Purdue included the worst winter weather Indiana had experienced in a hundred years. Snow lay over fence posts for much of two winters. Fortunately my wildlife job prepared me well for the dress code. My first Christmas Bird Count was trekking alone (dumb) aside the frozen Wabash River. At dawn it was too cold to turn the focus knob of my binoculars. Eventually I saw birds, but it was not a long list.

Cindy and I were living in an old frame farmhouse. We’d been married only a short time, and were driving around in a rusty Datsun. Big mistake in winter, even with chains. Long story short, we got caught in quite a serious blizzard (fatal to a man 15 miles away). Midnight, isolated on a long country road, drifts too much for the Datsun, and blackout horizontal winds far too dangerous to negotiate on foot. The only time I ever felt we might be in life-threatening trouble. But here we are with a good story.

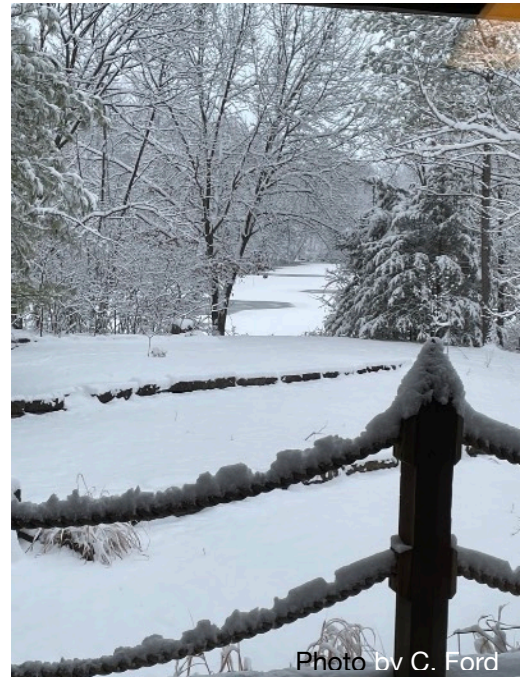


Photo by C. Ford

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Board Minutes...Steve Ford

President Andy George called the board to order at 6:00 p.m. in the third floor lounge of Heckert-Wells Hall. All members attended: Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy Ford, Steve Ford, Kathy Fox, Andy George, Elizabeth Mangile, Robert Mangile, Diane McCallum.

** Previous board minutes approved.

** Treasury stands at \$5,026.51, not counting CDs.

** Future speakers were discussed: Jan, Meagan Duffy Yates on Missouri turkeys; Feb, Megan will ask John Imhoff to postpone his talk on guiding hunters until next year and invite Christy Laughlin to speak about environmental initiatives of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. Christy had to drop her talk in October due to a bout with Covid, and Megan said she really wanted to talk to us this year; Mar, Jeff Cantrell on Ozark Chinquapins; Apr, Bill Warnes on purple martins of the Amazon; May will be the last Thursday and has been traditionally a picnic at Homer Cole. Bob will make reservations. No speaker yet. Possibly recent bird assessment via banding, geolocators, etc.

** Andy's bird walks will be on hold until spring. A winter owl prowl and maybe a last minute woodcock viewing at the Ford's this spring were discussed.

** The 125th Christmas Bird Count was discussed. Our Minedland Count will be Jan 1 as usual. Meet in McCune at 7 a.m. unless you've made previous arrangements. Andy will coordinate and compile. CBC Parsons Dec 19, Prairie State Park Jan 3.

** Bird Seed Sale at Blue Ribbon Fri Dec 6, Sat Dec 7. Owners Dane and Linda Shultz will donate 15% of seed sales to us.

** Gabe McClain's prothonotary Master's project (under Dr. George) will start going afield shortly with some 260 boxes we built. Most will be attached to trees, a few on posts. Bob thinks we should retrieve left-over lumber for future projects. None on the horizon just yet.

** Andy discussed bird banding in our region, including the possibility of enlisting some more or less long-term banders (students too temporary). No conclusions regarding banders.

** (FYI the board voted previously via email to reimburse the Ford's for \$140 they spent on preservative for Gabe's bird boxes.)

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

January 2025

Beginning Balance \$5212.50

Credits

Memberships \$ 15.00

Debits

Web Site \$518.72

Ending Balance \$4708.78

Cont. from Page 1

Another winter story or series of stories is the result of the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Society insisting always on having its annual conference (1) in December, and (2) in a northern state, Minnesota for example, or Wisconsin or Michigan, or even Canada for crumb sake. My white-knuckled colleagues and I have ferried many a van full of nervous students over hundreds of miles of terribly icy, snowy, nighttime highways to and from these things. One 80-mile stretch from Indianapolis west through Terre Haute was my worst driving experience ever - some thirty cars and trucks were tilted up, a few completely belly-up like road-killed turtles, along the berm of I-70.

But for *the most part* I like the Midwestern style of winter. It ain't fall, mind, but it's satisfying. It's usually - usually - not too long or devastating as to cause great sighs of resignation. More often it evokes pleasant Currier and Ives-type experiences, helps us to slow down, take a breath, appreciate a fragrant fireplace or two, a flock of migratory snow geese, kids with sleds and hills, minimalist landscapes in restrained Andrew Wyeth colors. And coffee. And woolens. (Cindy knits.) It *will* sting you, yes, if you're not prepared, but mostly a Midwestern winter is accommodating, refreshing, and somehow sentimental - you know, candlelight-through-the-sycamores.

Anticipate Spring if you must. Court that beguiling Miss with your restless half-hidden seed catalogs. I prefer to let her slumber a bit longer, and that goes for her dusty cousin, Summer, who overstays her welcome. Me? I'll cleave to my cardigan and hold a while longer the mittened and gracious hand of Lady Winter.

December PROGRAM SUMMARY by Steve Ford

Photo by R. Mangle



Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' Trevor Starks spoke about the activities of a relatively recent addition to KDWP, the Aquatic Species Recovery Program, which he heads. His presentation was packed with interesting information about the needs of various Kansas fish and mussels, and one charismatic reptile, the alligator snapping turtle. We in southeast Kansas are used to an abundance of accessible public land via the some 15,000 acres of Minedland Wildlife Area, but in fact Kansas rates 49th among the 50 states for accessible public land and water. This severely limits access to waters for conservation work unless land-owners are amenable. Although many Kansas landowners are skeptical of government, Trevor indicated when they are convinced that state conservation projects won't interfere in any way with their farming and ranching activities, the vast majority allow aquatic

conservation projects to proceed on their property.

Some of the historic problems leading to threatened and endangered species in Kansas rivers and streams, as well as extinctions, include various forms of pollution (siltation and chemicals from agriculture and mining), past mussel extraction for buttons, loss of water flow, and severe loss of long runs of streams and rivers due to low-head dams, such as old mill dams and dams to impound water for municipalities. Many current species in need of conservation require long, unimpeded runs of waterways for adequate reproduction. These problems are improving, but it's a slow process.

As interesting and important as are the Neosho mucklets, Ouchita kidneyshells, redspot chubs, and Topeka shiners, the star of the night was the alligator snapping turtle. They are primarily a southern species, but restricted flow from Oklahoma streams caused their extirpation from Kansas (although it seems everybody whose ever seen a Kansas snapping turtle wants to call it an alligator snapping turtle, but no.) The only one confirmed in Kansas for many years was seen crossing a road, probably looking to nest on the banks of a creek (unusual) near the Neosho River in 1991. It was tagged, but eventually lost. Forty dinner-plate-size alligator snappers from Oklahoma were released back into the Neosho just a few weeks ago in three different sites, one being on Sperry-Galligar Audubon member, Richard Hines' property. All were radio-tagged and will be monitored. More will be released in the future.

Trevor said that it takes these turtles about ten years to grow to "dinner plate size," so a release program is a long-term affair, but they have to be that large to escape predation from raccoons and river otters. Alligator snappers, like the common snapping turtles, spend nearly all their life in the water, the older ones being primarily scavengers. Younger turtles more aggressively seek prey, such as fish (they have a worm-like tongue that attracts smaller fish) and even smaller turtles. Despite their fearsome, prehistoric appearance, they are less aggressive and somewhat less agile than the common snappers, yet "friendly" is probably not the appropriate term for their disposition. Nonetheless, it's great to welcome them back to our waters.

BIRDS FLOCK TO SEED FROM Blue Ribbon Farm and Feed Store.

Thank you to Dane and Linda Shultz for helping us earn 15% sales of black oil sunflower seed in early December.

We appreciate the partnership.



Photos by C. Ford

125th Year of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

Each winter within two weeks of Christmas, birders volunteer their time to contribute to the world's longest running community conservation project. First started in 1900, CBCs have now been established in 20 countries all across the western hemisphere. Participants range from novice to expert birders, and the data they collect contributes to invaluable research on bird populations and trends.

Per tradition, the Southeast Kansas Minedlands CBC was held on January 1st. Despite lower participation than usual (only seven people showed up), we had an above-average species list of 72 for the day. This marks the sixth-highest species count in the count's 35-year history. When standardized by effort (i.e., total hours spent birding), this count yielded 3.6 species per hour —the all-time high! This number is partially inflated by the smaller number of participants, which meant each hour of effort contributed more heavily to the species total.

No new species were added to the count this year, but uncommon species (observed five or fewer times in the count's history) included Hooded Merganser and Winter Wren. Record high numbers were reported for several species, including Hooded Merganser (2), Killdeer (35), Merlin (2), Brown Thrasher (3), Yellow-rumped Warbler (72), and White-throated Sparrow (136).

As always, special thanks to all of the volunteer birders who make the CBC possible! Participants: Andrew Burnett, Andrew George, Chad Gardner, Cindy Ford, Delia Lister, Hilary Shepard, Timothy Tarkelly

Canada Goose	147	Downy Woodpecker	17	Yellow-rumped Warbler	72
Gadwall	4	Hairy Woodpecker	5	American Tree Sparrow	3
Mallard	40	Northern Flicker	58	Field Sparrow	5
Ring-necked Duck	21	Pileated Woodpecker	5	Fox Sparrow	11
Hooded Merganser	2	American Kestrel	29	Dark-eyed Junco	254
Northern Bobwhite	3	Merlin	2	White-crowned Sparrow	190
Pied-billed Grebe	6	Loggerhead Shrike	11	Harris's Sparrow	54
Double-crested Cormorant	11	Blue Jay	155	White-throated Sparrow	136
Great Blue Heron	9	American Crow	124	Savannah Sparrow	25
Northern Harrier	9	Horned Lark	135	Song Sparrow	87
Cooper's Hawk	1	Carolina Chickadee	75	Lincoln's Sparrow	1
Bald Eagle	12	Tufted Titmouse	28	Swamp Sparrow	20
Red-shouldered Hawk	9	White-breasted Nuthatch	15	Spotted Towhee	2
Red-tailed Hawk	67	Brown Creeper	2	Northern Cardinal	100
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Winter Wren	1	Red-winged Blackbird	241
Killdeer	35	Carolina Wren	22	Western Meadowlark	10
Feral Pigeon	10	Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	Eastern Meadowlark	269
Eurasian Collared-Dove	9	Eastern Bluebird	42	Rusty Blackbird	3
Mourning Dove	29	American Robin	131	Common Grackle	2
Barred Owl	3	Brown Thrasher	3	Brown-headed Cowbird	70
Belted Kingfisher	2	Northern Mockingbird	17	House Finch	2
Red-headed Woodpecker	21	European Starling	338	Purple Finch	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	50	Cedar Waxwing	52	American Goldfinch	46
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	3	Lapland Longspur	19	House Sparrow	30
<i>Total species: 72</i>		<i>Total individuals: 3936</i>			

AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK

Emmett Sullivan Photo

Emmett took this photo last spring. These wildflowers often cover entire fields making them glow red.



Indian Paintbrush

Kathy Fox Photos

Kathy is checking up on her feathered neighbors...



Turkey



Dark-eyed Junco



Happenings in Southeast KS

Sightings...



Critter Connections: **Nest vs. Dens** by Bob Mangile

For most people the word “nest” implies a bird nest – usually constructed of grass or twigs where birds incubate their eggs. But by searching the Internet for the word “nest” you may be surprised to find it at the end of a long list of defining terms. Generally speaking, a bird’s nest is not their home but rather a place to lay eggs and rear their young. Once fledged the young do not return to live in the nest, however, some adult breeding birds will re-use the old nest to raise more offspring. My comments in this article are just an overview of bird nests and will not likely withstand the “how about” and “yeah buts”!

Unlike many land mammals that live in dens, birds may lay their eggs in a wide variety of places. Bald Eagles make huge nests and will keep adding to previous nests until they might collapse of their own weight. Hummingbirds make small nest about the size of a golf ball. Carolina Wrens have nested in various places in my garage for many consecutive years, some years using the old nests with minor modifications. Some species, like owls and vultures, do not make a nest but usurp old nests of other birds or lay on flat surfaces, i.e. a ledge, the crotch of a tree or barn attic floor. Nighthawks and Killdeer lay eggs directly on the ground or rock covered driveways. And woodpeckers chisel out holes in trees. The Asian Palm Swift glues its eggs in a tiny nest on palm leaves that are sometimes upside down in the wind – a unique nesting place for sure. Chimney Swifts construct nests on the inside walls of a chimney or hollow log. Even more interesting – the male Jacanas can carry their eggs under their wings to a new location. And the Megapods lay their eggs in a very large mound that is similar to a compost pile and allow the generated heat to hatch their eggs – very much like Alligators.

Unlike a nest, a “den” might be considered a home for many mammals, usually burrowed two to four feet, or much more, below ground and used to give birth and raise their young as well as a shelter from extreme temperatures and enemies. Underground winter temperatures are similar to cave temperatures, i.e., around 50-60 degrees Fahrenheit, depending on latitude. Unlike birds, the den owners, e.g., prairie dogs, woodchucks, foxes and beavers, come out to forage for food and return to the den. When threatened they dash to the safety of their den. Birds do not return to their old nest for safety but simply fly away!

There is not a “one size fits all” situation. Beavers, muskrats and wood rats make large above ground lodges. Harvest mice construct a compact round nest of grass above ground in sticks or weeds. Many tree squirrels reside in tree hollows or nests made of sticks and leaves – but not in burrows. And some bird’s nest in burrows, too, e.g. Burrowing Owls! And strange as it may seem the White Tern lays its egg directly on a bare tree branch. Also, some bird species are parasitic nesters, i.e., they lay their eggs in other bird species’ nests and those foster parents raise the young. Talk about freeloaders! Search the Internet for some of these birds’ nesting behaviors to enlighten yourself on what constitutes a “nest”.



White Fairy-Tern nest/egg



Chimney Swift nest



Harvest Mouse nest



Prairie Dog at den

Photos from 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**

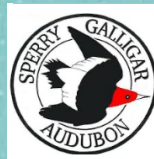
Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____



Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society
816 E. Atkinson Ave.
Pittsburg, KS 66762

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.)

EVENTS & ETC.

Steve Ford has a dozen gently used bluebird boxes from the Monahan property to give away. They are weathered, but still sturdy. See Steve Ford at the meeting.

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Learn more about prothonotary warblers at Nestbox Academy, Feb 1, 9 to 12:30 in Olathe, KS. Contact Ann Tanner (atanner@me.com) to register.

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Get involved with Audubon of Kansas by joining the executive board to represent Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter. A board member is responsible for attending up to three meetings and one event and donating \$ or providing in-kind skills. Contact Cindy or Steve Ford for more information.

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.