



# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

Feb 2025 / Issue 5

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## Next Program

Thursday, 7:00  
February 27  
Yates 102

Pittsburg State Univ

“Protecting Natural Resources among Neighbors to the South” by Kristi Laughlin, Director of Environmental/Land Management Department of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma. Topics include water quality monitoring of Spring River, restoration activities, and establishing pollinator habitat along Highway 10.

## Nestbox Academy

Six Sperry-Galligar Audubon members attended a mini-conference in Olathe, KS, called Nestbox Academy on Saturday, February 1. The keynote speaker was Dr. Jackie Augustine, Director of Audubon of Kansas.

She outlined some sobering statistics on bird losses - 3 billion lost since 1970 - why they occurred, and what is being done to stem the tide. Habitat loss, free-roaming domestic cats, collision with windows, pesticides/herbicides, and climate change (droughts, etc.) are key to losses. While there is enough doom and gloom to go around, Jackie noted some success stories - so we can't give up. One of my favorite groups of birds, the woodpeckers are doing OK. Legislation curtailing certain pesticides such as DDT in the 1970s led to the comeback of bald eagles and several other raptors. Widespread conservation efforts by government and private organizations and citizens in the late 1900s returned good numbers of waterfowl.

Six presentations following Jackie focused on bluebirds, purple martins, kestrels, predator control at nest boxes, prothonotary warblers, and habitat conservation in the Kansas City park system.

About 150 people attended, mostly from the KC area. Curmudgeon that I am I don't know what I was expecting from the 3 1/2 hour session, but was pleasantly surprised. We learned much and had a good time - the tango lessons were great. Cindy and I will probably attend next year, and invite you to make the trip. Kathy and Terry Fox, Andy George, and grad student, Gabe McClain, attended as well. (Gabe had a poster on his prothonotary warbler project for which our chapter provided the nest boxes.)

**Steve Ford**

*(See Page 4 for more details on Nestbox Academy)*

## Board Minutes...Steve Ford

All board members were present: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy Ford, Steve Ford, Kathy Fox, Andy George, Elizabeth Mangile, Robert Mangile, Diane McCallum.

\*\* President Andy called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Treasurer's report (Liz): Checking account balance \$4,705.24. Bob noted that among other business, the 3 year fee for both the web site and the domain site was paid. Its total was \$518.72.

\*\* AOK Report (Steve/Cindy): AOK is seeking to hire two new positions, Kansas Protected Areas Manager (sanctuaries) and Events and Communications Manager. (We bumped into Director, Jackie Augustine, at a conference and learned that many applications for both positions have been received. No decisions yet.)

\*\* Topics for discussion at future meet-ups (Zooms): Feb 19—Nature Adventurepacks update, March 19—Using iNaturalist, April 16—Using eBird. We noted AOK was seeking a board member from southeast Kansas, particularly from our chapter to represent us. Failing to find a representative would mean AOK would have to change its numbers constituting a quorum. Andy will speak briefly to that in the general meeting (which he did).

\*\* Megan reported upcoming speakers: Feb 27 —Protecting Our Planet: Environmental Initiatives of the Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma (Kristi Laughlin), Mar 27 —Re-establishing the Ozark Chinquapin (Jeff Cantrell), Apr 24—Purple Martins of the Amazon (Bill Warnes), May picnic - open (Fords will root around for speakers at the Nestbox Academy this weekend (We did.)

\*\* Events: Nestbox Academy in Olathe Feb 1, The 28th Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 14.

\*\* Steve will offer used bluebird boxes for free at general meeting (Some were taken).

\*\* Andy reported a 3-day banding effort recently: Monahan: 13 species, 30 individuals, Choteau Creek (Montgomery Co.): 13 species, 57 individuals, Motus tags on 5 Harris's sparrows.

## Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

### WoodCock Pop-up Viewing

Woodcocks may start displaying at the end of February which starts their mating season. At dawn and dusk the males fly high over a low meadow and emit a particularly distinctive flight pattern and call as they descend.

If there are sightings of woodcock displays at the Ford Farm, an announcement will be made on social media and the Sperry-Galligar website. The timing will be impromptu since the sightings are never guaranteed. Watch the internet for notices of sightings and an invitation to come view an evening display.



## January PROGRAM SUMMARY by Steve Ford



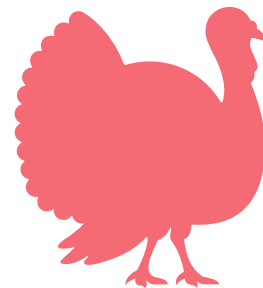
Photo by R. Mangile

Meagan Duffee Yates from the Missouri Department of Conservation (and a former Sperry-Galligar Audubon President and PSU graduate) offered a fast-paced, enthusiastic program. Judging from the many questions, it generated considerable interest. Turkeys were once gone or nearly so from much of the Midwest through the 1950s. Habitat restoration, succession of grasslands into woodlands, and reintroductions led to their recovery starting in the 1970s and 80s. Their heyday in the 1990s to about 2000 led to a surge in hunting popularity (and the incorrect blame placed on them by some for the decline in bobwhite quail). Their abundance has fallen significantly since that time. The cause, as in most serious wildlife declines, is due to habitat loss.

Meagan reminded us that there are many aspects to habitat. She indicated that the decline in turkeys is specifically

due to lack of nesting and brood-rearing habitat. Good nest habitat includes edges of open native grasses (but not the tall grasses) mixed with a bit of brush, especially thorny vegetation such as greenbrier. "Edges" should be feathered or wide, mixed edges, not sharp, such as a fencerow between a woods and a field. Sharp edges attract predators, chief among which are raccoons. Good brood habitat is open forbs about 1 1/2 - 2 feet high with a closed "canopy." Eggs, once all are laid, take 28 days to hatch. The chicks or poults can fly to safety within 14 days of hatching, but are vulnerable until then to predators and hypothermia from rains. An open canopy woods, recently burned, but with the vegetative structure noted above is ideal. Fescue or heavy, tall native grasses are not appropriate.

Management regimens that include burning and the herbiciding of noxious weeds is called for. Since eastern wild turkeys have large home ranges, 6,000 - 8,000 acres, coordination with several interested neighbors is important. In Missouri various kinds of crews to help a landowner with burning and herbiciding are available. It's not so easy in Kansas.



# Nestbox Academy in Olathe Kansas.

by Kathy Fox

As a birder and vigilant nestbox owner, I have learned a lot from Kansas Birding, Sialis.org, Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society and the Johnson County Master Naturalist Nestbox Academy in Olathe Kansas.

Passing helpful information to others interested in the success of native birds occupying a nestbox in your yard or on your property helps all involved, especially the native birds that drew us to put up that nestbox in the first place.

This is the third year that the Johnson County Master Naturalist program hosted a Nestbox Academy. Last year I was invited to attend because I participated as a Citizen Scientist in a Prothonotary Warbler Study, through Master Naturalist Ann Tanner of the Friends of Burroughs Audubon Chapter. Seeing a post about Prothonotary Warblers using nestboxes on the Kansas Birding Facebook page, and at the time having a Prothonotary Warbler pair using one of my nestboxes, we connected. She was a great contact to have as I watched and recorded what I observed through the nesting to flight cycle of these beautiful birds. Since that connection, and Ann Tanner speaking with us at one of our Sperry-Galligar meetings last spring, more connections were made in our area and our Audubon chapter.

Our invitation (my husband and I) and attendance this year was highlighted with attendance by several local celebrities: PSU Graduate student for Dr. Andrew George, Gabe McClain and his Prothonotary Warbler Nestbox Study here in SE Kansas who had a display in the lobby highlighting his plan. That information was also shared in the conference talk by Ann Tanner, Peeking on the Prothonotary. Our current chapter president, Dr. Andy George, ornithologist and licensed bander, and founding chapter members and favorite educators, Drs. Steve and Cindy Ford, also 2024 Citizen Scientists for the Prothonotary Warbler Study, were among the 170 in attendance this year.

Audubon of Kansas Executive Director, Jackie Augustine, presented the first session talk for all attending on Three Billion Lost and What To Do About It. The next two sessions had six different speakers to choose from, American Kestrel Project by Jim Walton, Bluebird Monitoring Training by JC Cowden (Mary Gillespie), Conservation of Bird Habitat by Matt Garrett, Nestbox Predator Control by Jack Corrigan, Peeking on the Prothonotary by Ann Tanner and Uncovering the Mystery of the Purple Martin Migration by Bill Warnes. Great topics that fit into a well-organized morning conference.

This event, held on Saturday, February 1, was opened to the public this year. I highly recommend attending if given the chance in the future! The Johnson County Master Naturalists put on a well-organized, easily accessible, friendly, like-minded gathering full of information/handouts and connections for greater awareness of our cavity nesting species. And for us, the scenic drive offered a chance to bird there and back! We counted 25 hawks along the drive there, lots of ducks in the waters along the Marais des Cygnes area, saw three Hooded Mergansers and two Ring-billed Gulls at the rest stop, and a flock of a dozen Wild Turkey in a field that highlighted the drive home! Fun ending to a great day of bird learning!

Here is a link to the slides from the presentations that were given and handouts available!  
[Nestbox Academy](#)  
K-State Research and Extension Johnson County, Master Naturalist Bluebird Academy, After Event

# AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK

## Emmett Sullivan Photo

Bald Eagles have become a more common sight in southeastern Kansas, thanks to conservation of the species.



## Kathy Fox Photo

Prothonotary Warbler chicks in Kathy's nestbox near her home. She is expecting the male to choose the same nestbox this year. The pair often nest in the same location.





### A Charlie Harper in the Backyard

Some may be familiar with the late popular wildlife artist, Charles Harper. His serigraphs are clear, cartoonish, clever and funny. We sometimes see them on greeting cards and holiday cards. One of my favorites shows a dense flock of flying redwing blackbirds. Just that, nothing else but a few leaves. Spotches of black each with a spot of scarlet. One has to smile.

I looked out the window at our snowy feeding station recently and



was immediately reminded of that painting. We've had numbers of cardinals since the cold snap, then redwings - two, then three, five, ten, etc., but today there were at least 30 cardinals and maybe 75 redwings near shoulder to scarlet shoulder, all in the space of a large bathroom. The background was just a few bare shrubs and bright white snow on the

ground and falling. The birds of course flapped, battled, bickered, and fought. They skirmished, scrapped, squabbled, and swore. They confronted, contended, clashed, and encountered. They quarrelled. They tusseled, and two of them tumbled. And yes, they differed of opinion. Charlie Harper would be pleased.

Don't get me started on the finches, juncos, sparrows, and jays.

But what about bird flu? Despite the melee, songbirds are not as susceptible to bird flu as some other groups, waterfowl for example. Poultry too are vulnerable (thus the rising cost of eggs). Cindy has chickens and just acquired a few more, so I'm afraid the fracas in our backyard is going to be toned down. She does keep the hens a good distance from the songbird station. They are mostly confined to the coop where she feeds and waters them.

I'll loan you a butterfly net if you need blackbirds. Bring your hard-hat.

**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**

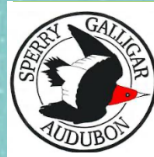
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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



**EVENTS & ETC.**

**Two Bares**

Two bears (they're a pair)  
on the prairie  
Bore down on bare  
Bonney and Barry.  
Now bones be a  
bleachin' -  
The moral we're  
teachin' -  
Be wary of bare?  
Oh so very!

Steve Ford

**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.)

**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.