



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

March 2026 / Issue 6

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Next Program

Thursday, 7:00
March 26, 2026
102 Yates Hall, PSU

“Pupal Fortresses:
Defenses against
Predation” by Dr.
Jamie Phelps, PSU
Biology Dept.
Moths and
butterflies are
immobile during
their cocoon stage.
Find out how they
protect themselves
from predators
during this
vulnerable time in
their life cycle.

Discover Western Kansas

Carly Rowton

As my family and I drove back from Colorado we did a little road trip and made a few stops on the way home.

First we stopped at the Sternberg Museum of Natural History. There were so many neat fossils! My kids enjoyed the woolly mammoth fossil and the rattlesnakes- they have 20 different species from all over. They have so many other live animal exhibits. Any dinosaur lover would love this place too.

Next we stopped at Cheyenne Bottoms and Kansas Wetlands Education Center. I was able to identify a few new birds for my list and was amazed at how many birds were there. It is a truly amazing place! I would like to go back during a better season and spend more time. Kansas Wetlands Education Center had such friendly and helpful workers. They also had live animal exhibits. A worker let my kids touch a snake, talked to them about the prairie dogs they have, and showed them a screech owl. They also have the coolest van. I think I need my car to look like it.

Lastly we stopped at Mushroom Rock State Park. It was a nice stop with rocks on both sides of the road. It had nice signage and was cool to learn about how the rocks formed.

Kansas has a lot to offer and we are excited as a family to find more Kansas adventures!



(L to R) Sights at Sternberg Museum, Cheyenne Bottoms, and Mushroom State Park

Board Minutes...Steve Ford

The Board met in the third floor H-W Lobby, 6:00 p.m., before the general meeting.

Attendance: Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy and Steve Ford, Kathy and Terry Fox, Andy George, Diane MacCallum.

Meeting called to order by President Andy.

Minutes of 1/29/26 approved.

Treasurer Wayne reported \$3,314.96 in checking.

Audubon of Kansas report: Steve reported he had recently resigned from AOK's board on good terms, and called for another volunteer from SG Aud to step in, as each of the Kansas Audubon chapters is entitled to membership on the board. He suggested SG Aud maintain a strong relationship with AOK because AOK does programming and advocacy for Kansas conservation that SG Aud members are not inclined to do on their own or on behalf of SG Aud. He read most of the minutes from the last AOK chapter meet-up (Fords were out of town) which focused on the newly developed Kansas Conservation Club. The KCC is designed to offer young adults, specifically ages 18-25, mechanisms by which to involve themselves in nature conservation. The Biology Department at PSU currently has a student chapter of The Wildlife Society, but there was some concern that recruitment for KCC members might vie for the same clientele as TWS. Andy is sponsor of TWS, and was aware of the KCC movement. He said he welcomed its presence. Although KCC and TWS perhaps share a similar potential clientele, TWS is focused on wildlife conservation, management, and research mostly on college campuses, whereas KCC is concerned with somewhat more broadly-based nature-themed programs, and are not necessarily restricted to college people.

Membership: Diane noted that some reports from National were still confusing. She will continue to send "Box" reports to board members. "*Members*" as reported from National pay dues. "*Supporters*" have contacted National for one reason or another, but have not paid dues. SG Aud will continue to send newsletters to *Members*, but not to *Supporters*. Diane suggested we continue to send newsletters to *Members* whose membership has expired. The board agreed.

Annual Report: Andy's working on it, and had a few questions for Wayne and the rest of the board.

Treasurer Report...Wayne Bockelman

No report.

AUDUBON OF KANSAS (AOK) Opportunity

Become more involved in protection of wildlife, including birds, and the habitats that support them by joining the Audubon of Kansas Board.

This state-wide organization's mission is to advocate for conservation of land and animals in order to give Kansans special places to be able to visit and to sway legislation to protect species.

There is an opening on the board currently for a representative from the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter. If you are interested, please contact

Dr. Jackie Augustine, Executive Director of AOK
jackie@audubonofkansas.org

For more information, talk with Steve Ford at the meeting who served temporarily on the board.

Minutes (cont.)

Speakers: Tonight (Feb) Dinosaurs and Birds, Megan Corrigan; Mar: Pupal Fortresses, Jamie Phelps; Apr: Open, but Peyton Kessler may be speaking about native plants. Megan's on the hunt; May: National Parks, Jackie Augustine. Megan noted she's working on acquiring Max McCoy to speak next year about his extensive travels on the Ark River. He'll do it for \$500, which seemed a bit steep for the board. Possibly we can do it in partnership with the public library. The SG Aud board stipulated the talk be given on campus, as Yates 102 is a much bigger room than the space that the library can offer. Megan will look into it.

Other news/business: Feb 28, Burroughs Aud presents prothonotary warbler webinar with Gabe McClain; Mar 14, In The Garden Nursery will offer outreach event with civic groups. SG Aud is invited to have a booth. Cindy will check with owner, John; Apr 25, Greenbush has invited SG Aud to an outreach event there. Andy will offer a bird walk and/or banding demo. Andy will be gone for March meeting. VP Megan will officiate. Adjourned.



Photo by C. Ford

How Birds Became Dinosaurs and Vice Versa

Megan Corrigan’s subtitle of this talk was “What the Fossils, Feathers, and Genes Finally Made Clear.” Professor-For-A-Night Megan said in her advertising poster “We will trace key discoveries that have helped advance the understanding of bird evolution.”

Friends, this was a refreshing digression from a standard Bird ‘n Bunny Audubon program. Yes, it was a program on birds . . . but was it? I thought I knew a sparrow from a stegosaurus, but now I’m not so sure. Megan may postulate that all the fossils, feathers, and genes that now inundate our museums and labs have made things clear, but a few in her audience may beg to differ. What made her enthusiastic and well-illustrated program particularly interesting to this advanced mammal (or am I?) was the “tracing the key discoveries” part.

I keenly recall nerding my way through the musty library as a kid, searching for dinosaur books to plagiarize for school reports and “discovering” a “missing link” between reptiles and birds—the famous fossil, *Archaeopteryx*, half reptile with teeth, long bony tail, and claws on its wings; half bird, with unmistakable feathers, including long primary feathers. Eventually I even bought a plastic replica of this fossil and used it in my classes. Case closed—a branch of reptiles became birds, while another branch became dinosaurs (and crocodiles), which—the dinosaurs anyway—became extinct thanks to the nuclear winter caused by a large asteroid colliding with Earth some 65 million years ago. I got an A on my fourth grade report and moved on to kickball at recess. *Archaeopteryx* was just one of many key discoveries Megan guided us through.

“But wait!” said Megan. “Not so fast, buster” (She actually said “buster”.) Lots of newly found fossils in China and advances in medical imaging applied to fossils say the case is far from closed. Birds are indeed dinosaurs. Many dinos had feathers (probably for insulation) and many were endothermic (warm blooded) like birds, and lived in cold climates where cold blooded reptiles could not normally live. But wait again! Just because anatomical structures may look similar in different critters does not necessarily imply the different beasts are related. A concept called *convergent evolution*, says that similar environments often lead to similar looking structures, and relationships be damned (I’m pretty sure she said “damn”).

Alan Feduccia, one of the leading paleontologists working on the dino-bird question, says even though we do have much more information to go on since *Archaeopteryx*, the convergent evolution phenomenon throws so many monkey wrenches into the discussion that it is impossible at this point to say for sure what is the relationship between birds and dinos. He, for one, is not prepared to say that birds are dinosaurs. Not yet anyway.

So, lots of weeds to wade into, but Megan did a great—and fun—job in the effort. She generated many questions, and richly deserved her thank you bird box. Excuse me, dinosaur box.*

*Please refer to the PBS Nova program *Dinobirds*, February 2025, for more on this interesting and still hotly debated subject.

PHOTOGRAPHERS' NOTEBOOK

Kathy Fox Photos



Flicker and Pileated Woodpecker Enjoying Delicacies of a Stump



Comma Butterfly on Red Cedar

Carly Rowton Photos



The Rowton's Posing with Mosasaur Fossil, Sternberg Museum, Hays, KS



Pintails at Cheyenne Bottoms



Happenings in Southeast KS

Sightings...



A Reader's Worry

Steve Ford

It's the Vernal Equinox, the first day of spring. This is Cindy's and my favorite holiday because we're pagans. She celebrated it this year by meeting her sister—a Baptist—for lunch in Joplin. I celebrated by not joining them, and by sitting with a book on the back porch. At least I tried to read it.

I should have learned long ago that this time of year it's hard to concentrate on reading anything on the porch more engrossing than a hardware store flier. It's the birds. They are just too distracting, especially in early spring when they are starting to sing their nuptials, and especially still when I hear songs I know I'm supposed to know, that I knew last year, but know not now. Ya know? If I just keep listening and thinking and listening and thinking . . . Swainson's thrush? Summer tanager? Blue grosbeak? How is one to read Proust with such diversion?

But I was trying (alright, not Proust), when I heard what I reasonably believed to be a rubber pig—a rather loud, echoing, elastic snore through the woods close to the strip pit. Now Cindy will hide for hours in the woods and make noises just to scare me, but I knew she had gone to see sister Patty at (maybe?) Chubby Cheese, so it had to be something else.

And so it was. Eventually from around the dog-leg of the pit it cruised, then another, then another until a flotilla of some two dozen cormorants emerged with their proud heads high held as if they'd just sneaked through the Straits of Hormuz. Somehow two dozen became 60. I don't know how. The word just seemed to spread: good fishin' at Ford's pit?

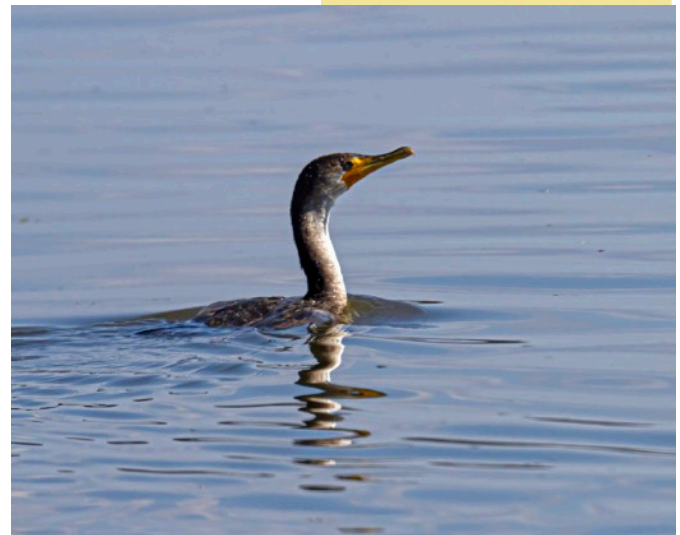
It developed into quite a party. Some bore only their snaky necks above the water line, like periscopes, but all were swimming with gusto; grunting, squeaking, squawking and bleating, and to my eye anyway, having a good time of it.

A few would splatter along the surface—plish-plash-plish-plash—leaving a fleeting line of white-water tracks, flapping and fighting to get airborne. Others would rare up, chest out, to stand on the surface slapping it hard repeatedly with their strong wings as if to say “Hey, get a load of this handsome fellow!” Some emerged from a dive with a fish in the beak, extending their long gullets to swallow it quickly before a jealous neighbor could steal it. I even saw one fold its wings from some 10 feet high and plunge into the water like an osprey: “Hold my beer; watch this!”

A great blue heron that had been a wallflower near the bank flew up and over the revelers so low I thought it might thump one in the head with its dangling feet. I didn't see it land, but as it made no effort to gain height I think it did. I wonder if herons take advantage of cormorants' stirring up small fish? I bet they do. The stately great blue was quite a contrast with the crazy cormorants.

Watching this commotion was fun enough, but the splashy racket spilling out from this herd was a riot. When I closed my eyes to listen I had to chuckle.

It was a bright, warm morning, this equinox, and lots of other “happy” birds danced through the trees, chasing and pecking, jousting and singing. My reading didn't go well. As the leaves are not even out yet I fear it will get worse.



Application for Membership Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

For **FIRST-TIME** National Audubon Society membership, send \$20.00 online or by mail **directly** to National Audubon Society. You will receive 4 copies of the Audubon Magazine annually and 8 copies of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter Newsletter.

Be sure to include the code, **J-10** on your check to indicate in which Audubon chapter you belong and your **e-mail**.

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For local membership **ONLY** pay \$15.00 to Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter and receive 8 newsletters per year informing you of all our local activities. You may pay in person at a meeting by cash or check or send a check by mail or online through Paypal.

Be sure to include the code, **J-10** on your Paypal transmission. Find Paypal on the Sperry-Galligar website or Facebook page.

.....Cut Here.....

To mail a check, please print and send to:

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter
205 W. Euclid
Pittsburg, KS. 66762

_____ Yes, I wish to become a member of the local chapter. (\$15)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____



Sperry- Galligar Audubon Society

Meetings are held the last Thursday of the month:
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Room 102 Yates Hall
Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, KS.

November/December meeting dates combined typically the first week in December. No meetings in June, July, or August.

EVENTS & ETC.

RECOMMENDED BOOK

If you are interested in tracking the history of native prairies on the decline and the plants and animals associated with them, read the informative new non-fiction book called:

Sea of Grass: The Conquest, Ruin and Redemption of Nature on the American Prairie
by
Dave Hage and Josephine Marcotty



Please submit articles or photos to the newsletter editor by the 10th of each month.

Next submission date:
APRIL 10. Send to:
cford@pittstate.edu

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 Sperry-Galligar Newsletter.