



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

May 2026 / Issue 8

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Next Program

Thursday, 6:00
May 28, 2026
Homer Cole Senior
Center, Pittsburg

“Adventures in National Parks” by Dr. Jackie Augustine, Audubon of Kansas Executive Director. Jackie has traveled to several national parks in the past few years. Enjoy her trips vicariously through beautiful pictures and anecdotes.

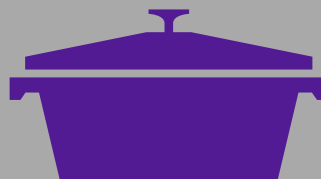
Annual Members May Picnic

The Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter Annual Picnic will be held Thursday, May 28th at 6:00 p.m. The dinner will be held at Homer Cole Community Center, northeast of Walmart on Joplin Street.

Fried chicken, bread, and iced tea will be provided by the chapter. To fill out the meal, bring a side dish of vegetables, salads, or desserts. Please bring a serving spoon for your side dish. Also please bring your own plate, glass, and silverware.

There will be a sign-up sheet for attendance at the upcoming meeting or call/email Bob Mangile to make a reservation by Wednesday, May 27. We need a count of attendees so that we know how much chicken to buy.

Come for a social evening and a great presentation! We will have an interesting program on personal experiences of Dr. Jackie Augustine, Audubon of Kansas Executive Director, who visited several national parks.



The May picnic will be the last meeting until September. Enjoy birding over the summer.

Board Minutes...Steve Ford

6:00, April 30, Heckert-Wells Third Floor Lounge.
Present: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy and Steve Ford, Kathy and Terry Fox, Andy George (Pres), Diane McCallum, Austin Stapleton (and family - welcome).

** The board meeting was called to order by Andy.

** March minutes approved.

** Treasurer's report (Wayne): \$4,013.99 +CD.

** Audubon of Kansas: Steve and Cindy reported from a recent Zoom meeting that Ann Tanner, President of Burroughs Audubon (KC), discussed partnerships of local chapters with other countries to conserve and educate about birds of common interest. Burroughs is in the early stages of partnering with Colombia concerning our mutual interest in prothonotary warblers—they nest in our area (among other locations in eastern North America) and migrate to Colombia to winter, mostly in coastal mangrove forests. She invited other chapters to join with Burroughs. (Chapters could go their own way with species and countries). Such partnerships would probably include financial commitments from chapters. This is a program of the National Audubon Society. We will stay abreast of further information for future discussion.

** A slate of nominees for next season's officers and staff was discussed and finalized. Pres: Andy George for one more year; Vice Pres: Megan Corrigan (includes Program Coordinator with promises from board members to help); Treasurer: Kathy Fox; Sec: Steve Ford; Newsletter: Cindy Ford; Membership: Diane McCallum. A new staff position was developed, Communication Director: Wayne Bockelman. (Wayne will write a description of the position but it includes ensuring the speaker has the wherewithal to deliver a good program in Yates 102). *This slate was voted on (with other nominees called for by the members at the general meeting), and passed unanimously by acclimation. Who'd have thought?!*

Treasurer Report...Wayne Bockelman

No report.

Please consider joining the Sperry-Galligar Chapter Board. We meet at 6:00 p.m. before each monthly meeting. You would be very helpful in setting direction for our chapter. Be more active.

Minutes (cont.)

** Tonight's speaker is Peyton Kessler, "Pop-up Gardens." For the May picnic at Homer Cole, Jackie Augustine, Director of Audubon of Kansas, will discuss her visits to many of the country's national parks. For the picnic Steve and Cindy will get the chicken and tea from WalMart (coordinating with the Mangile's). As usual attendees will be asked to provide a side dish and bring their own table service. The picnic will begin at 6:00. Members only please.

** Andy reported on a good turnout at the recent 50th anniversary celebration at the Greenbush education consortium, St. Paul. Andy, Kathy, Wayne, and Megan attended and led bird hikes for the numerous kids and adults who attended. Andy demonstrated bird banding.

** There was a brief discussion that recognized the fact that the same SG Audubon people were always filling the positions of officers and support, albeit just trading hats occasionally. We need some new blood on the board and some new ideas to breathe life into the chapter. The annual planning meeting of the board will be held a bit earlier, maybe late July or early August (at Kathy and Terry's house) to discuss this. Be thinking. Be recruiting.



A former biology student of both Cindy and me—and yes, she got a job anyway—Peyton Kessler gave an enthusiastic, information-packed program in April entitled *Pollinator Pop-up Gardens*. Peyton is a nurse and the hard-

working head of the Cherokee County Health Department, but is perhaps just as well known to plant enthusiasts as owner of Peyton's Potting Shed, Oswego, Kansas. She's a native plant expert. Her passion is helping people develop small "pop-up" gardens in their yards, especially those gardens that attract and conserve pollinating insects— butterflies, bees, moths, and others. It's an important passion because increasing habitat loss and constant pesticide use has caused the serious decline of these incredibly beneficial insects. The precipitous fall of the monarch butterfly and honey bees are perhaps the best known examples.

We have long become accustomed to carpets of golf course-style lawns, devoid of any naturalness. We plant gardens that may be pretty, but along with our lawn, require fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, much water, and often just too much work. And they do little for wildlife conservation.

Why not have pretty AND help nature AND in the long run save ourselves some work AND get closer to Heaven because we've done the right thing? How? Plant native plants, that is, species of plants that grow naturally in our area, that have evolved in our climate and soil, that grow best without fertilizer, and that don't often need our finicky intervention with pesticides and herbicides. Instead of fighting nature, go with it. Peyton can help you get started. She WANTS to help you get started.

She organized her program into three parts: soil, light, moisture. First, assess your landscape for those things. Why plant sun-loving plants in the shade? Why plant upland plants in a swale?

Soil: Most natives like well-drained soil. You probably don't have that. You can, however, develop it with a bit of added sand and river rock. Don't fertilize. Natives like poor soil. Rich soil invites competition with unwanted plants. No chemicals. Leaf mulch only. Leave the fancy bark mulch at the nursery.

Light: Ask someone like Peyton which natives are suited for sunny or shady areas of your yard. See guides. Buy local plants as best you can.

Moisture: A water bucket with a few holes in the bottom soaks the ground slowly and deeply. First year plants will require more water as their (eventual) deep roots develop. After that they will require little water that they don't get from rain.

Shape, size, color, seasons of plants all matter to the insects you're attracting, and to the overall attractiveness of your garden.

Hey, it's illegal to dig up native plants growing along the highway without a permit! You can't get at their deep roots anyway. Leave it to KDOT to do the killing via their mowing, herbicides, and love of fescue.

What to plant? Monarch favorites are the milkweeds: common, swamp, butterfly, purple, showy, green. Other plants for various insects: dill, parsley, rue, zinnias, goldenrod, senna, black-eyed susan, aster, pea plants. Leave your common blue violets alone.

Where can I find these? Ozark Soul Natives, Missouri Wildflower Nursery at the Shoal Creek Conservation Area, May 23 plant sale in Joplin, local greenhouses and nurseries, and Peyton's Potting Shed in Oswego. For larger areas and for those that need revamping from fescue and other grasses and invasives, check with the local private lands biologists from Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Logan Martin, for example). They can help with advice, seed, equipment.

Start small if you're new. Convert your non-native garden slowly. Be patient.

It was good to see Peyton again. Cindy and I are proud of her dedication. Let her help you do right in your garden.

A great program. Thirty-two enjoyed it.

PHOTOGRAPHERS' NOTEBOOK

Kathy Fox Photos

Thank you, Kathy, for contributing beautiful photos of wildlife (particularly birds) during this past year of newsletters. Kathy has her camera close by as she observes nature activities at her slice of natural paradise just outside of Pittsburg.



Orchard Oriole



Green Antelope Milkweed

PHOTOGRAPHERS' NOTEBOOK

Emmett Sullivan Photos

Thank you, Emmett, for a steady stream of beautiful wildflowers and wildlife photos. With an adventurous spirit, a camera and pickup truck, Emmett records the natural world of southeast Kansas.



Ruellia or Wild Petunia, Schermerhorn Park



Brown-eyed Susan, Schermerhorn Park



Indian Paintbrush, Labette County



Happenings in Southeast KS

Sightings...



Spring Friends

Steve Ford

Cindy and I like to sit on our back porch and compare last spring to this. We're always glad to welcome home old migratory friends—the catbirds, cuckoos, orioles, the summer tanagers, indigo buntings, and also to watch our stay-at-homes gen up for breeding and nesting, the males of several species feeding their betrothed (at Purdue I soon learned the way to Cindy's heart was a cinnamon roll). Our drab winter goldfinches now sparkle through the spring garden in their nuptial plumage like flying coreopsis blossoms, and our less colorful, but charismatic phoebes, which used to depart over the winter, and great-crested flycatchers (which still do) are calling and snatching flying insects.

But comparatively we don't have as many hummers this year. Conversely, more white-breasted nuthatches "yank, yank" around the suet feeder, the suet cakes disappearing more quickly this year than last mostly at the hands of many downy and red-bellied woodpeckers (Did you know they even had hands?). This year we didn't hear the beloved song of the wood thrush that typically stops by briefly, nor have we yet seen the handsome Swainson's thrush hopping along the low rock wall under the pines. We almost never see rose-breasted grosbeaks, but this spring a pair has been a daily regular at the seed feeder for nearly a month. Don't they have to have a nest somewhere?

We always anticipate the ascending "zeeeeeeee-up!" of parula warblers along Limestone Creek, but have been particularly interested in the behavior of prothonotary warblers for the last two or three years, given the chapter's involvement in their conservation and research. For two years they have nested successfully in a bluebird box on our back porch (and were unsuccessful in a box on the edge of our strip pit, thanks to a parasitic cowbird and later a black rat snake). As optimistic as we were earlier this spring for these same boxes, we've been disappointed. Prothonotaries (PROWs) did start a nest on the porch, quit for a week, then continued to complete it, but then did not lay eggs. Fickle, no? PROW singing around the house this year exceeds that of last year, but we've seen no tangible results of this perceived population increase. Cindy saw a pair frequent the porch on the east side of the garage near the house, so we immediately put up a box. That *same day* they started building a nest (see photo), but never finished it. We put up another box to replace an old wren box near the chicken yard, but the only tenant has been a gray tree frog who basks proudly at the door of his expansive—for a tree frog—new home (photo).

We watch a pair of PROWs every day. They seldom are far from each other, the brilliant golden male often singing his strident "chesh, chesh, chesh." We even see them at the suet feeder. You'd think they have a nest somewhere near, but so far they just seem to act like a pair of teenagers at a carnival. Life is sweet and seemingly wanting of responsibility.

Spring is still verdant and fresh, but a long summer looms, its effect on natural cycles like bird reproduction impossible to predict. The paradox is that the ecological devastation of southeast Kansas coal mining might, in its subsequent landscape of lakes and woods, mitigate somewhat for potentially hot, dry summers. As the politicians like to say, we'll just have to wait and see. As birders like to say, hope is the thing with feathers.



C Ford



C Ford

Formerly a small orchard, the view from my easy chair is now an impenetrable jungle. The dogs pass through it gingerly in winter when a bit of sun may penetrate, but in lush summer they fold their ears and step around it. *Skulk* around it. I'm not sure but something happened to them in there in the past. And they're big dogs. Bold dogs. A hole gapes in that dank gloom where once was a chair, a chair where my wife sat reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or I don't remember, *To Kill . . .* something. The gape is freshened periodically, leaving odors of earth and whatever rendered the freshening. Whatever, gentle reader, rendered the freshening.

At any rate it makes for good birding.

Now like all those of virtue we feed birds in winter. Charged with sunflower seeds the tube feeder dangles on a shepherd's hook on the east side of the garden, the part that appears to have been explored by man. We attract the usual: titmice, chickadees, cardinals. Around the corner of the porch the suet feeder draws various woodpeckers. You get the same at your place.

Cindy was peering into the "orchard" (we'll call it) and noticed a bird we've not seen there before, and in fact don't see often even in the far latitudes of the property—a brown creeper. The name sounds ominous doesn't it? Indeed it seems to fit the eerie environs of our garden's No Man's Land: "BEWAAARE, FOR THERE BELURKS THE CREEPER!" In fact it's a sprite smaller than a sparrow. It does "creep" actively over the bark of trees probing for insects with its slim decurved beak, but unlike woodpeckers it does not drill. It's drab brown plumage hides it so effectively that were it not for its active scampering around on the trunk you'd be hard pressed to see it at all. Its call is weak and little heard.

So we were glad to spot it, an old acquaintance visiting from taller timber. But why on a crabapple tree and not a big-barreled tree in a mature woods, its more common haunt?

We took a shot at an explanation. Two days earlier we spied another "bark gleaner," also one we hadn't seen for awhile, but for which we have plenty of evidence in the jungle—a yellow-bellied sapsucker. (I'll admit I'm challenged in speaking this bird's name on a cold day when my lips are numb. Droolers like "sucksabber," "sabsooter," "yellow-bellied thakthubber" come to mind.) It is a woodpecker, but not as common as the others, so it's always a pleasant surprise. It's distinguished by a vertical white stripe on its wings when its on the trunk, and a belly of pale yellow.

The plentiful—and unmistakable—evidence referred to above is the almost artificially regular grid of little holes it leaves in the bark of smooth-barked trees. It seems as if this grid of holes, which can be extensive, could damage the tree, but it rarely does. Sap oozes from these small wounds, and the sapsucker, well, sucks it up. Small insects also get stuck, and so provide a ready protein snack. Other birds-o'-the-bark take advantage of these sugar-stuck treats as well, once the sapsucker leaves; white-breasted nuthatches for example, and our wee friend, the brown creeper.

Mr. creeper primarily enjoys the insect largess of the larger and more furrowed trees, but I wonder if he might just keep his eye out for sapsuckers and follow them around to freeload occasionally. We didn't notice our creeper until after the sapsucker had come and gone. I've suspected Cindy of similar behavior. For example, in time I detect a growing lightness in a bag of lime-flavored chips after I'd hidden it in the pantry.

My bird preferences gravitate towards the specialists; those that in form, function, and habitat occupy nature's metaphorical crannies. These are not the most common of species, not your feeder birds, which makes glimpsing them all the more fun, especially in catching them prowling and hiding, sneaking and CREEPING upward and around the shadowed and sapped netherworlds of a foresworn garden.



K Fox Creeper



S Ford



K Fox Sapsucker

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.

Native Plant Sales

Visit some native plant nurseries to create your own pollinator garden.

Peyton's Potting Shed
peytonspottingshed@gmail.com

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**Shoal Creek Conservation
Education Center, Joplin**
May 23
10:00 - 2:00



Please submit articles or photos to the newsletter editor by the 10th of each month. Next submission date: **SEPT 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.