



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

October 2025 / Issue 2

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Next Program

Thursday, 7:00
October 30
102 Yates Hall, PSU

“Shadows in the Caves: The Gray Bat” by Braidy Hunt, PSU graduate student. This federally endangered species occurs in Pittsburg and surrounding area. Learn more about this unique mammal and find out how Braidy is tracking their seasonal migration.

Fall Prescribed Burn a Great Success? Ehhhh . . .

Prescribed burns or controlled burns have long been a staple in the tool kit of wildlife land management. Pound-for-pound they are relatively inexpensive and easier compared to herbiciding and mowing (at least once the appropriate equipment is purchased). Of course training and recognition of proper weather conditions are important. Most wildlife species respond well to appropriate fire regimens, ground-nesting game birds for example. Fire is a part of most natural terrestrial ecosystems. Suppressing it, especially in regions where it naturally occurs frequently such as the Mediterranean ecosystems of California can be disastrous.

Prescribed burns can be done any time of the year, but most occur in spring. That said, fall burning has some advantages, including helping to control the noxious weed, *Sericea lespedeza*. We thought we’d give it a try on our place.

We hadn’t burned for awhile at the Ford farm so it took a long time getting our equipment together and making sure it worked: a leaf blower, water tank/spray unit, drip torch, flappers, rakes, plus our ATV. It took nearly two days mowing fire lanes and raking the heavy duff from them. This was particularly important around two pairs of large wooden power poles—we have nightmares about them catching fire.

Finally we enlisted the always fine help of Logan Martin, the private lands biologist from Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, who is a prescribed burn expert, and who has the right equipment.

This was not our first controlled burn rodeo, but we’re always nervous initially. As it turned out we need not have used up a good worry or gone to so much trouble. We tried to light up four different fields, but while all started with flaming promise they all spluttered to smoky failures to one degree or another. We later mowed the same areas, which knocks down the vegetation, kills it and thus allows it to dry. When conditions of wind and humidity are right we may try again. If success still alludes us we’ll have to wait until spring.

Steve Ford



Logan Martin



Board Minutes...Steve Ford

The board met September 25 at 6:30 pm, 3rd floor lounge, Heckert-Wells Hall, PSU, prior to the general meeting in Yates 102. Attending: Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy and Steve Ford, Kathy Fox, Andy George (Pres), Elizabeth and Robert Mangile, Diane McCallum.

Planning Meeting Minutes (8/25/25) were approved.

Wayne reported \$2,634.93 in checking plus \$15,712.86 CD (total \$18,347.79). CD renewed at 3.7% at Arvest. He reminded us we receive \$447.75 annually from National Audubon Society (NAS). Nobody knows how this figure was arrived at.

Diane said NAS is processing a new membership roster system to include Members and Supporters. More forthcoming.

Online payment committee - Megan, Wayne, Andy - said we're already with Zelle by way of our checking account with Commerce. Megan reviewed other options. Vote passed to adopt Paypal. Cost for chapter is 1.99% + \$0.49 per transaction.

Board is considering a change in dues: \$15 for a single membership or \$20 per household. This would not go into effect this year.

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter received a thank you letter from Audubon of Kansas (AOK) for our recent \$2,000 donation for land management equipment.

Brief AOK Zoom meeting report from Steve: Exec. Dir. Jackie Augustine noted the lesser prairie chicken recently tentatively delisted as Threatened and Endangered (two populations). She despairs of doors opened to oil and gas companies will lead to extinction. Baker Wetland near Lawrence threatened by imminent development of athletic complex on private land next door. Activity and lights will disturb wildlife. Write support letter to Baker Wetlands.

Jackie briefly testified at last Friday's Crawford Co. Commission meeting regarding potential wind turbine and solar field impact on wildlife.

Treasurer Report...Wayne Bockelman

Time to renew your dues.

See Wayne Bockelman at the meeting to update your membership.

Note:

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter will not meet in November because of the Thanksgiving holiday. Next meeting will be December 4.

Almost time to set out bird feeders for winter.

**Get birdseed at
Blue Ribbon Farm Store
Pittsburg**

**Fri, December 5, 9:00 - 5:00
Sat, December 6, 9:00 - 12:00**

A percentage of black oil bird seed sales will be donated to the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter.

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

Steve Ford



Photo by R. Mangile

We always like to have a particularly strong program to start out our Audubon year, and September’s presentation did not disappoint. Tyler Rafter drove all the way from Salina to give us a double scoop of dense, enthusiastic information about ring-necked pheasants and northern bobwhite quail. He’s the Kansas Coordinator for the conservation group *Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever*, essentially a combined national gamebird organization with chapters throughout Kansas. Thirty-five people attended—many new faces. They had lots of questions.

Tyler covered much ground regarding the biology and management of these iconic grassland birds. It was interesting to compare them. Pheasants are naturalized (from China), and inhabit midgrass landscapes in central and western Kansas, whereas bobwhites are natives of more eastern longitudes, and

favor more brushy, “edgy” habitat in addition to blocks of bunchy native grasses and forbs. Quail used to be quite plentiful and a mainstay of farmland hunting, but removal of fencerows, wooded draws, and Osage orange hedgerows to allow for ever-growing sizes of homogeneous cropfields and fescue pastures led to the bobwhite’s near elimination in all but highly managed areas.

He stressed over and over that while many natural and man-made considerations can be involved in quail population abundance in any given year—predation (feral cats can be a serious problem), hunting pressure (not a serious problem), and weather extremes. By far the greatest factor is proper habitat. Good habitat can mediate many potentially negative circumstances. Stocking of birds is an expensive and ineffective long-term management strategy. So are attempts to eliminate natural predators and providing concentrated artificial foods, although a row or two of corn or milo left next to a weedy fencerow is helpful.

Fun facts: yes, there are more turkeys and fewer quail than years ago, but this is a result of changing habitat, NOT turkey predation on quail. A flock of quail is a *covey*, a loose grouping of pheasants is a *bouquet*; when a male pheasant circles a small attractive plot of food to impress a watching female, this behavior is termed *tidbitting*; when flushed, a covey of quail will only fly a softball’s throw away; brushpiles in a grassy field at these distances are termed “*covey headquarters*” and are a good management strategy.

Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever partners with many other conservation groups and secures sizeable grants from many sources in order to serve landowners on the ground and to provide education and advocacy. Tyler noted that while PF/QF is not a major force yet in southeast Kansas, the group is working on it. If you have questions about these two species, contact Tyler at 760 S. Broadway Blvd., Salina, KS 67401; 641-344-5570; trafter@pheasantsforever.org

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Ashland or Bust

Since our retirement Cindy and I don't travel around Kansas much. I'm not sure why, we just don't. My recent membership on the AOK board—Cindy is alternate—has changed that a bit. We just got back from a meeting in Ashland which is waaaaay the hell out West in Clark county. I swear I could smell the Pacific.

Charmer that I am I'm not really a people person, but I have enjoyed meeting the board members. They're a dedicated, accomplished group of folks, all smarter than me, and I'm proud to rub elbows with them until they edge away. The agenda included housekeeping concerns, policies, news, etc. AOK is growing in its advocacy, conservation, and educational activities, and is on firm financial ground. Sperry-Galligar Audubon needs to maintain its association.

The meeting itself lasted only a few hours, but being so far away Cindy and I decided to make a long weekend of it, and rented a B and B for a couple of nights. She found a small, isolated cabin waaaaay the hell out on the prairie, no other house in sight despite a day's ride to the horizon in every direction. Two young Percheron horses were friendly neighbors. The owner, one Mike, whom we never met, named the cabin The Whispering Bison. It had its charms including several murals and framed paintings of western and nature-oriented themes—trout, bears, frontiersmen, bison—well-rendered by his talented wife. Out back was a rack to hang your deer for butchering if deer hunting was your thing. The Welcome Book noted what to do if bitten by a rattlesnake.

We saw a deer but didn't shoot at it. We did harvest what we later came to agree was a female pheasant. We were driving about 65 mph, both gazing to the side at the open prairie as one does when a big brownish bird smashed into our windshield. We drove on for another couple of miles debating the bird's identity—maybe a prairie chicken? It became one of those itching questions, so we turned around and drove back to find the deceased, but never did. In the meantime Cindy saw a male pheasant strutting along the road, so with that evidence we voted on pheasant. Case closed.

The next morning we were supposed to go on a field trip, but were late due to a miscommunication. We drove ourselves on out to a vast cattle operation called the Gardiner Ranch, but couldn't find the group. We were reluctant to go on an extended search over the Great Plains in our Corolla, so returned to Ashland and drank coffee in the town's only restaurant. It was a converted church and was also a bar. It was nice.

The group finally returned and we had the meeting in the community center, a converted bank. It was nice too. We were supposed to go on another field trip after the meeting, but were told a 4-wheel drive vehicle, preferably with a high clearance, was advisable, so we begged off. We know from experience the Corolla couldn't clear a road-killed skunk. We were invited to go with others, but I'm not a people person. We had dinner in the church/restaurant/bar, returned to the Whispering Bison, enjoyed the sunset, then watched Tom Selleck movies. It was nice.

Steve Ford





Happenings in Southeast KS

Audubon of Kansas Discusses Alternative Energy at Crawford County Commission

As one grump from the audience at the September 19 Crawford County Commission meeting elegantly stated, “We don’t need no windmills.” This was all he said, then sat down. Driving through the county it’s hard to miss the roadside signs that disparage the establishment of commercial wind and solar energy, yet as another party voiced, naysayers tend to be louder than those in favor of issues. So.

It’s hard to know what people in Crawford County want. Only 7.6 per cent of them (adults) returned a recent zoning issue survey, and many of those respondents didn’t answer all the questions. The results of the survey were first disclosed at this meeting. To the question *Do you favor the development of commercial wind and solar energy?* the response was: No 55% Yes 35%.

There is currently a moratorium on building commercial wind and solar units in this southeast Kansas county. Considerably more conversation is forthcoming and perhaps more focused surveys.

Dr. Jackie Augustine, Executive Director of AOK, offered a brief and balanced testimonial regarding the issues of alternative energy, and distributed a fact sheet to the commissioners and members of the audience. Her comments did not raise any discussion at the formal meeting, but several people wanted to talk with her outside the doors of the commission room and later outside of the courthouse itself. I got the impression she got people’s attention with environmental information about which they may not have been aware. Zoning for turbines and solar fields is far from settled in Crawford County.

Steve Ford



Dr. Jackie Augustine, Executive Director of AOK, speaking to the Crawford County Commission.

Sightings...



Signs of Winter: Avian Behavior

Hummingbirds are gone.

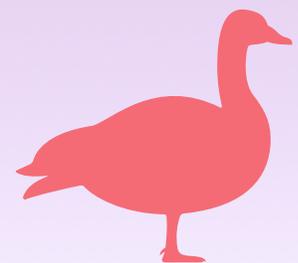
Blackbirds are gathered in large flocks.

Woodpeckers are more visible and audible.

Geese are flying in V’s overhead.

Hawks are gathering nest material.

Fewer sightings of backyard birds.



**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**

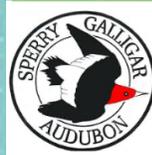
Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____



EVENTS & ETC.

**Kansas Ornithological
Society Meeting**

Andy George reported that the statewide bird organization met in Pittsburg this year with presentations and fieldtrips. Gabe McClain won Best Student Presentation for his work on prothonotary warblers. Two species sightings of note were: Nashville warbler and Philadelphia vireo.

Please submit articles or photos to the newsletter editor by the 10th of each month. Next submission date: **November 10**
Send to: cford@pittstate.edu
Thanks.

**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.