



NEWS FROM THE FLOCK

April 2024 / Issue 7

OFFICERS

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Vice President
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Mary Jo Meier
Treasurer
Liz Mangile

BOARD SUPPORT

Newsletter Editor
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cford@pittstate.edu

Web Master
Bob Mangile
sperry-galligar.com

Membership
Diane McCallum

Next Program

Thursday, 7:00
April 25
Yates Hall 102
PSU Campus

"Conservation is Not for Sissies" by Max and Eweleen Good, Parsons, KS, who will discuss successes & failures in restoring prairies and wetlands on their 40-acre farm. They emphasize that it is not for the timid. Max, a professional photographer, will show beautiful slides of their endeavors.

On, On, You Fighting Trees!

Steve Ford

Name the professional basketball player . . .

- (1) He played college ball as a tree.
- (2) The tree is the subject of this article.
- (3) His college is the same as this newsletter contributor's, who couldn't hit a basket with a broom handle.
- (4) Drop an "s" from the player's name, and many books have been written about him. Mostly field guides.

Your guess is as good as mine why a college chooses a tree as a mascot - a gorilla is bad enough. At least a guy in a gorilla suit can ride around on a three-wheeler. That's tough if you're in a tree suit. "Fighting trees?!" Go figure. (Worse yet was my high school mascot, get this, a Red Streak. Sounds like the aftermath of a motorcycle accident.)

I'm playing for time. The answer is Larry Bird. He played for the Indiana State Sycamores.

Sycamores. There are lots to love about sycamores. They are popular despite their faults. As I sit writing on a very windy day the fluff from golf ball-size sycamore balls sweep past the window like snow, and have for days, with plenty more from where they came from. Cindy and I planted these trees in the backyard after we moved into our

house over thirty years ago. In fact they're really not great yard trees. The same wind that blows the balls snaps off the brittle limbs, little ones and otherwise, messing the yard and endangering dogs. Their leaves can be as big as catchers' mitts, and once they fall and get wet, they're going nowhere, so have to be raked, or preferably mulched if one is to have much grass next spring. Yet they are so picturesque, to us it's worth it. Cindy's father, visiting from the Nebraska panhandle years ago asked what's wrong with the bark. He thought our trees were diseased, but of course sycamore bark peels off like skin from a Spring Breaker, a look we, and many artists, find appealing (get it?).

Ironically beavers don't seem to bother them much, certainly not nearly as much as the lakeside pin oaks. Perhaps the thin bark and relatively soft wood doesn't provide enough resistance to sharpen their incisors. Nor is the wood of much value for the fireplace or in furniture-making, although it does not split readily, so has been used in butcher blocks like the old and very heavy one next to our stove.

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Board Minutes...Megan Corrigan

Attended: Andrew George, Steve Ford, Cindy Ford, Kathy Fox, Diane McCallum, Bob Mangile, Liz Mangile, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan

Minutes: February minutes were approved

Treasurer's Report: \$5534.89.

Upcoming Events –

Monthly Meetings: April – Max and Eweleen Good will present “Conservation is Not for Sissies.” May – at the picnic Jesse Gilmore from K-State Wildcat Extension will present “Foraging Edible Backyard Plants.”

Bird Walks: The April bird walk will be at Wilderness Park, but Andy may be out of town. If so, Wayne and Kathy will lead it.

Outreach: A Pittsburg Middle School teacher contacted Andy to see if we might be able to lead a program for their environmental club. Andy will clarify what they have in mind and ask what timeframe they are looking for. Several members are willing to go to the school to talk to the club.

Several ideas for Earth Day activities for kids are planned.

Photo Exhibit at Root – In response to feedback from members, it was decided to eliminate the requirement that the photos be from 2023-24. Older photos may be submitted.

Officers for 2024-25 – The following slate of officers was proposed: President – Andy George, Vice President – Megan Corrigan, Secretary – Steve Ford, Treasurer – Liz Mangile. We welcome other nominations for these positions. We would also welcome new board members at large. Voting will take place at the April meeting.

Treasurer Report...Liz Mangile

April 2024

Beginning Balance \$ 5459.89

Debits

Newsletter\$ 6.44

Credits

Memberships\$ 60.00

Birdhouse 15.00

ACH Deposit 7447 ..447.75

Deposit 20.00

Ending Balance \$ 6087.00

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In winter one can mark the course of a distant stream or river by the whitish run of sycamores in the otherwise dark riparian woods, but we have learned they are not limited to moist soil, and are one of the earlier successional species. Over twenty years ago we had several loads of limestone boulders hauled from a friend's new house site, and within the year sycamore saplings were sprouting from the pile. Big trees now. Still, they do like wet feet.

They are not considered champion wildlife trees. There's little food value, and their open branching doesn't provide a lot of thick cover for songbird nests, although herons like this kind of tall openness for their large stick nests. As well, several cavity nesters use sycamores. Lots of wildlife artists, including Audubon, have included sycamores in paintings of the cavity-nesting wood duck. A while back I couldn't resist pinching a fox squirrel's tail as it - carelessly I thought - hung out of a low hollow in a sycamore's trunk. Baltimore orioles like them for their pendulous nests, like the one we had just feet from our back porch a few years ago. (We had a clear view of a marauding black rat snake and the drama of the parents).

The old trees can be huge, dramatic, and quite hollow. All ages are charismatic and just plain fun. Maybe not a bad mascot after all. Go sycamores!

Earth Day 2024

Saturday, April 20, 11 – 3
Pritchett Pavilion Park, Pittsburg

Join us at our table or stop by to say hello. We will have items to sell, kid activities, and bird information.

Drop off your photo exhibit entry!

February PROGRAM RECAP by Steve Ford



Sally Imhof headed up a presentation by the SEK Rehabbers Coalition at the March 28 meeting. Sally and her hard-working crew of four (one couldn't make it), took us through what's behind the scene when a concerned citizen calls and asks, "What do I do with the injured owl, opossum, raccoon . . . (You name the bird, mammal, or snake.) . . . that I just found by my fence?" The short answer is - leave it alone. They emphasize that it's best to leave the animal where it is discovered. Typically it will be a young animal that has NOT been abandoned by its mother or a chick that has fallen from a nest.

If the animal is vulnerable maybe the animal needs to be moved. If the animal is obviously injured, contact the rehabbers as soon as possible to insure that the injured animal can be properly handled, fed the correct food, or otherwise treated. It is illegal for non-licensed citizens to possess a wild animal for more than twenty-four hours. One of the rehabbers will try to drive to your location and pick it up. Then they will try to rehabilitate the animal and eventually release it back to the wild.

It can be a complicated process, depending on the animal(s) involved and the circumstances, but Sally, who is licensed by both the state and federal government, has seen it all in her over thirty years of good work.

The group's growing list of patients has included those noted above, plus skunks, coyotes, mourning doves, mallards, nighthawks, Mississippi, black vultures, red-shouldered hawks, fawns, fox squirrels, bats, armadillos, a snowy owl, a pelican, bobcats, and others, both as adults and often young. While animal care and release is the priority, the group says educating the members of the public about wildlife is nearly as important.

dedicated as the coalition is, no one gets paid for their efforts, so they must garner funds for food and other supplies from the community—such as gas for miles and miles of transportation— not to mention digging into their own pockets for supplies. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has no financial stake in rehab efforts, nor does any organized funding source. It's all a labor of love.

The group had lots of great pictures, anecdotes, and information that stimulated many questions - always indicative of an interesting program. Thanks Sally *et al.*

KDWP and your veterinarian can put you in touch with a rehabber, or you can call them directly: Sally Imhof (Arma) 620-719-7394; Ivy and Angie Gatton (Parsons) 620-820-1601; Jessi Thumel (Thayer) 620-212-2704; Leann Moore (Pittsburg) 620-719-9639. If you have a soft spot in your heart for wild animals, there are many ways to help out this crew.

Wilderness Park Bird Walk April 6, 2024, 9 Observers

Observations

2 Canada geese
1 Double-crested cormorant (Flyover)
5 Turkey vultures
1 Red-tailed hawk
2 Red-bellied woodpeckers
2 Downy woodpeckers
6 American crows
4 Fish crows
4 Carolina chickadees
17 Tufted titmouse
2 Barn swallow
3 Ruby-crowned kinglet
1 White-breasted nuthatch
4 Blue-gray gnatcatchers
6 Carolina wrens
10 American goldfinches
4 White-throated sparrows
15 Red-winged blackbirds (Flyover)
4 Brown-headed cowbirds
2 Common grackles
6 Louisiana waterthrushes
6 Northern parulas
2 Yellow-rumped warblers
17 Northern cardinals

Total: 24 Species; 126 Individuals
Recorded by Kathy Fox

AUDUBON ARTISTIC NOTEBOOK

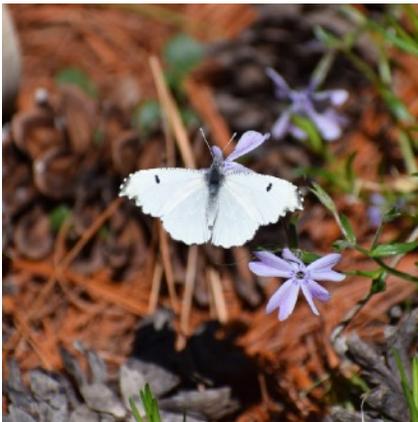
Emmett Sullivan Photos

Indian Paintbrush

A semi-parasitic plant appears in masses in meadows during spring in southeast Kansas. The color varies from deep orange/red to orange/yellow. Some years produce spectacular displays that can be viewed while driving by prairies.



Kathy Fox Photos



Falcate Orangetip Butterfly

Outside the Fox home, landing on a wild phlox, often called Sweet William.



Eastern Meadowlark

This bird was calling outside Pittsburg, distinguished from Western Meadowlark by the call.

Carly Rowtan



Black-billed Magpie

Spotted in Garden of the Gods, Colorado, while Carly was on spring break in March.





A CREW DROPS IN TO FISH

Steve Ford

What fun! As I write, fifty yards east is a flock of over a hundred double-crested cormorants feeding in my strip pit. I've been watching them from the back porch all afternoon. The narrowness of the lake confines them and allows me a good look. It's a circus.

Of course it's serious to them, but I have to laugh. For one thing they've been moving as a group all day, east and around the dog-leg, then back west toward the house. A round trip of about half an hour. Over and over. If I were them, I'd get bored with all the back-and-forth "Daddy, are we there yet?" traveling, but evidently the seafood and lively companionship are worth it. It's a non-stop portable pool party of splashing and diving, grunting and groaning; an elbows flying, day-long Easter-egg grab to see who can surface with the most fish. It's exhausting, but a hoot to watch on the usually placid little lake.

We all enjoy nature in our own way. I like to try to link observations in context with wider ecological implications, plus I simply enjoy finding beauty in a natural scene.



For example, the splashing. These birds can't get enough. They splash by landing and splash by taking off - pounding along the surface and flapping their wings in a panic like Mama caught them smoking. Mostly they're skimming the surface for only a few tens of feet. Why bother? The majority of the uproar though is via the vigorous beating of wings on the surface of the water. Splash, splash, splash. At any given time I'd estimate some 20% of the birds are so-engaged. Why? It has to take a significant amount of energy, plus wear and tear on feathers. My guess is that it disturbs and confuses the fish - I can imagine what all this frolic must look like from under water - making it easier for the birds that are diving to see and catch their muddled prey, ultimately netting a profit of energy to the group. Maybe the

constant mini-migrations have a similar effect. Are they driving and concentrating the fish? Cormorants are members of the pelican order, and pelicans are known for their communal driving behavior.

In my afternoon of watching I noticed that as the large, dense flock of cormorants moved up and back along the pit, so did two great blue herons, but of course keeping to the shallow bank. Once I saw a heron take a fish within seconds of landing next to the seemingly chaotic flock. I'm not worried about my lake becoming fished out. All the fish I saw were 5-6 inches, and probably green sunfish, bluegill, and crappie. It likely needs the thinning.

The diving cormorants came up empty-handed most of the time (This is true of most predatory behavior.), but occasionally when one is successful, bobbing to the surface holding its gleaming prize overhead, it has to swallow it immediately because its friends are there to snatch it away. I even saw a cormorant try to steal a fish from one of the herons. What hutzpa! And it doesn't take long for the head-first fish to get down the hatch, bulging the bird's long neck all the way.

All the grunting, moaning, flapping, and splatter is quite a racket when the flock is near. I suppose if one had to listen to the commotion all the time it would get old, but I have to say for the afternoon it was an unexpected and welcomed spring concert. To boot, the dark flock produced a sparkling white-water show the entire sunny day. Toward evening the birds finally quieted down and many of them eventually flew away. I don't know where they spent the night. As it turned out, the party was relatively short-lived. Only about half the flock returned the following day, and the day after that all were gone. A pair of wood ducks had the lake to themselves. Maybe it was my imagination, but they seem relieved.

**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**

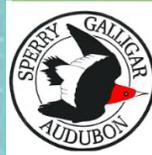
Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____



EVENTS & ETC.

Photo Exhibit Planned

Sperry-Galligar Audubon website has details for those members in the chapter who take pictures of birds and other wildlife.

Ten 8X10 printed quality photographs will be exhibited at Root Coffee House, Pittsburg, in September.

Up to 5 entries per person—either in “Birds” or “Other Native Animals” categories, taken in the four-state area.

Deadline is the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Picnic in May. Members will help select 10 prints for Exhibit Committee to review.

Share your great photos!

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.