



Prairie Wings

Fall Winter 2004

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Audubon of Kansas is a Leader in Efforts to Protect the Flint Hills

Prior to the spring of 2002 few people were aware that the Flint Hills were being targeted by more than a dozen developers who hoped to transform major portions of the Flint Hills and America's last tallgrass prairie landscapes into sprawling industrial scale windpower complexes with gigantic turbines, construction roads, trenches and aircraft warning lights. Audubon of Kansas launched an effort to gather as much information as possible regarding the expected impact on Prairie-chickens and other grassland and migratory birds, inform our members and the public. From the beginning our guiding light has been to work in partnership with others who share a commitment to protect and conserve prairie resources.

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AOK Strives to Make Kansas Safe for Whooping Cranes

On every occasion during the past 20 years when the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks proposed expansion and liberalization of Sandhill Crane hunting seasons in Kansas, we have stressed the importance of protecting other species of waterbirds--particularly endangered Whooping Cranes. Whoopers migrate through the state at the same time and use many of the same habitats as Sandhill Cranes.

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Trails Offer Opportunities for Discovery

Exactly two hundred years ago Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark ventured into northeastern Kansas and beyond up the Missouri River in what has been celebrated as the Corps of Discovery. From their perspective, and the viewpoint of the sponsoring United States government, they discovered numerous plants and animals new to recorded science, and passages for travel. From the perspectives of native Americans who inhabited the areas explored, most plants and animals were already known--many were used for food, fur, lore or medicinal purposes--and the passages had been used for hundreds of years. Life was

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\$10,000 contribution in 2002 and \$5,000 in 2003 to empower Audubon of Kansas to develop the Kansas Birding and Natural Heritage Trails system and other conservation education programs. The foundation also contributed surplus office furniture used jointly in an office established in Topeka with the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

MARK V. HEITZ, AMVESTORS FINANCIAL CORPORATION

\$10,000 contribution in 2003 as part of a three year pledge to empower Audubon of Kansas to develop and to sponsor the Kansas Birding and Natural Heritage Trails system and website.

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*Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to
play in and pray in, where nature may heal and
give strength to body and soul alike.*

John Muir, The Yosemite

**Staff Listing
page 27**



**TALLGRASS
SURGICAL CENTER**

This edition of Prairie Wings is underwritten by the generous support of the Tallgrass Surgical Center, Robert T. McElroy Building, 6th and Wanamaker Road, Topeka. 787-272-8807





December 2004

Dear Audubon of Kansas Friend,

When it comes to an effective presence for conservation of birds and wildlife, prairies and other native habitats, Audubon of Kansas does more with less. With a staff of only one full-time professional conservation leader and a couple of part-time office and student assistants, Audubon of Kansas has set the pace on the most prominent issues jeopardizing natural ecosystems and wildlife in Kansas.

The articles in this newsletter provide a general overview of several AOK initiatives, but the breadth and depth of Audubon of Kansas is even more impressive when you consider our staffing level and limited budget. We hope you will add Audubon of Kansas to your list of charities for 2004 and the future. We need your help to continue to be the organization you can count on to be ever present with a strong voice for stewardship of Greater and Lesser Prairie-chickens, Whooping Cranes, Bell's Vireos and other species that are threatened by greed, governmental mismanagement and misguided programs turned upside down.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send a gift of \$5,000, \$1,000, \$500, \$100 or whatever you can comfortably afford at this time. No gift is too large or too small to make a meaningful contribution to our overall effort. We value all supporters as members and donors of Audubon of Kansas.

With a highly experienced conservationist on the cutting edge, backed up by an influential board of trustees and a grassroots network of dedicated residents throughout the state, AOK launched a campaign in 2002 to develop support for protection of the last expanses of tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills. This has required incredible vigilance and involvement at every level of county and state government, and with the media.

The most rewarding aspects are the friends we make for conservation and Audubon, with the partnerships we forge and the results we jointly achieve. Without AOK's insight, active involvement and outreach, many of the issues that AOK has raised during the past several years would not have been on the public's radar early enough to allow citizen involvement and corrective action by agencies or elected officials.

Examples of these issues include protection of the Flint Hills, spraying of native grasslands with your tax dollars, and improvement of highway roadside management. Audubon of Kansas also provides unparalleled leadership and credibility to prevent needless threats posed in our state to endangered Whooping Cranes, and indefensible proposals to allow shooting of Greater Prairie-chickens from September 15 to January 31.

We will continue to work for you to advocate the type of wildlife conservation and habitat management that is in the best interest of the resources and all stakeholders. Our universe of stakeholders includes wildlife and nature enthusiasts, hunters and non-hunters alike, urban/suburban/rural residents, as well as ranch and farm landowners.

Although we are proud of our achievements, we are most pleased to boast that all of our initiatives have become partnership ventures. We are listing all of our financial supporters at the \$50 level and above in our newsletter but we value members at all levels and regard you all as Audubon Family. We are pleased to have helped create Protect the Flint Hills and Tallgrass Ranchers, and to now simply serve as one of several organizations devoted to this compelling cause. We are inspired by all who step forward and contribute time and talent to both controversial issues and congenial opportunities—such as efforts to promote the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of nature.

Please become a supportive member of Audubon of Kansas today. Send your contribution to help this important work. A donation/membership envelope is provided.

Sincerely,

Dick Seaton

Dick Seaton
Chairman, Executive Committee
Board of Trustees

Robert McElroy

Robert McElroy
Chairman, Development Committee
Board of Trustees

Audubon of Kansas is a Leader in Efforts to

Protect the Flint Hills

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"Prairie resources" as we view them are not just stand alone natural and ecological resources. The presence of tallgrass prairie flora and fauna depend upon both natural design and rangeland management in this working landscape. Prairie landscapes are also important as cultural and pastoral elements of our Kansas countryside. Historical and contemporary features alike contribute to the cultural fabric of this landscape. Prairie landscapes are the essence of traditional ranching and a modern way of life. Prairie landscapes are more than scenic—they provide year round inspiration for residents who choose to live here, not only the families with a land-based legacy but others as well who are attracted to these hills. The Flint Hills provides a treasure for rural communities within a region that is striving to develop experiential tourism and recreational opportunities. The Flint Hills region encompasses prairie landscapes that promise to become the natural "signature landscape" of Kansas.

Although midwesterners are traditionally reluctant to step forward to declare their allegiance to preservation, this issue is changing private and public discourse in many rural areas. Residents are increasingly willing to attend meetings and join with others to defend the natural environment and pastoral settings that surround their ranches, farms, homes and communities. In that respect the current controversies over industrial windpower development of the Flint Hills may, in the end, prove to be a blessing in disguise for prairie preservation in the state of Kansas.

This love for the land and "sense of place" has been the catalyst that has motivated people from all walks of life to step forward and add their voices and influence to the increasing quest by many of us to protect the Flint Hills—and other prairie landscapes throughout Kansas. One of the most rewarding elements of involvement in this issue is the opportunity for ranchers and rural home owners, small town business leaders and corporate CEOs, wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts, attorneys and educators, medical professionals and financial managers, to all work together in collaboration and/or independently in complementary ways to achieve a common goal. As in nature, and communities, there is strength in diversity.

In the spring of 2002, Audubon of Kansas took the initiative and our concerns were featured in a front page article on the front page of the Sunday June 23, 2002 edition of the Wichita Eagle. Coverage of Audubon of Kansas' advocacy for protection of the Flint Hills, and that of other partners in this struggle, has continued in many other newspapers and forums—including a recent Wall Street Journal article on October 14.

We developed a comprehensive position paper on the subject (see "www.AudubonofKansas.org") to share with all parties and presented it to the second *Kansas windpower promotional conference* that fall. We have widely distributed that along with a poster featuring the scenic splendor of the Flint Hills with text applauding landowners who practice management practices that preserve many elements of prairie. In July 2002 we detailed the threat in our annual direct mail appeal letter to Audubon members throughout the state. Here are the two opening paragraphs:

Tens of thousands of acres of the last spectacular prairie landscapes in Kansas—and the natural integrity of prairie ecosystems—are threatened by a potential tsunami of industrial scale wind turbine complexes that will tower with blades 350 to 560 feet high. Developers are looking to exploit some of Kansas' most cherished landscapes—first and foremost the pristine and scenic prairies of the Flint Hills.

One advocate has suggested that very large-scale developments (hundreds of gigawatts of output) could be located in this part of the country because "environmental, aesthetic, and economic considerations..." are not important factors in the Great Plains. Audubon of Kansas intends to counter that misconception in every possible venue, while making the case for protecting important ecological, cultural and aesthetic resources. We need your help.

We have certainly lived up to that promise. The Flint Hills and "prairie cause" has consistently received 40 hours out of our 60 hour work weeks during the past 30 months, and several members of the AOK board of trustees have volunteered countless hours and numerous days to county planning meetings and/or the Wind & Prairie Task Force established by Governor Sebelius.

Virtually everyone interested in wildlife conservation and prairie preservation who has been in contact with Audubon of Kansas has indicated support for our approach and collective dedication. Although Audubon of Kansas has been and will continue to be an important pillar in the structure of this campaign, the awesome breadth and depth of leadership from other rural residents and ranchers, and organizations new and established, has made the prospect of successes after success a reality for Kansas.

First, landowners and community leaders in Butler and Chase counties formed the foundation to establish **Protect the Flint Hills** and it soon expanded to include a tireless group of folks working as an ever expanding network during the past two years. And, in September of last year another complementary and influential group took form in Topeka and Wabaunsee County and immediately expanded to include **"Tallgrass Ranchers--landowners, families and friends"** throughout the Flint Hills. Audubon leaders have been honored to be a part of both organizations from the beginning.

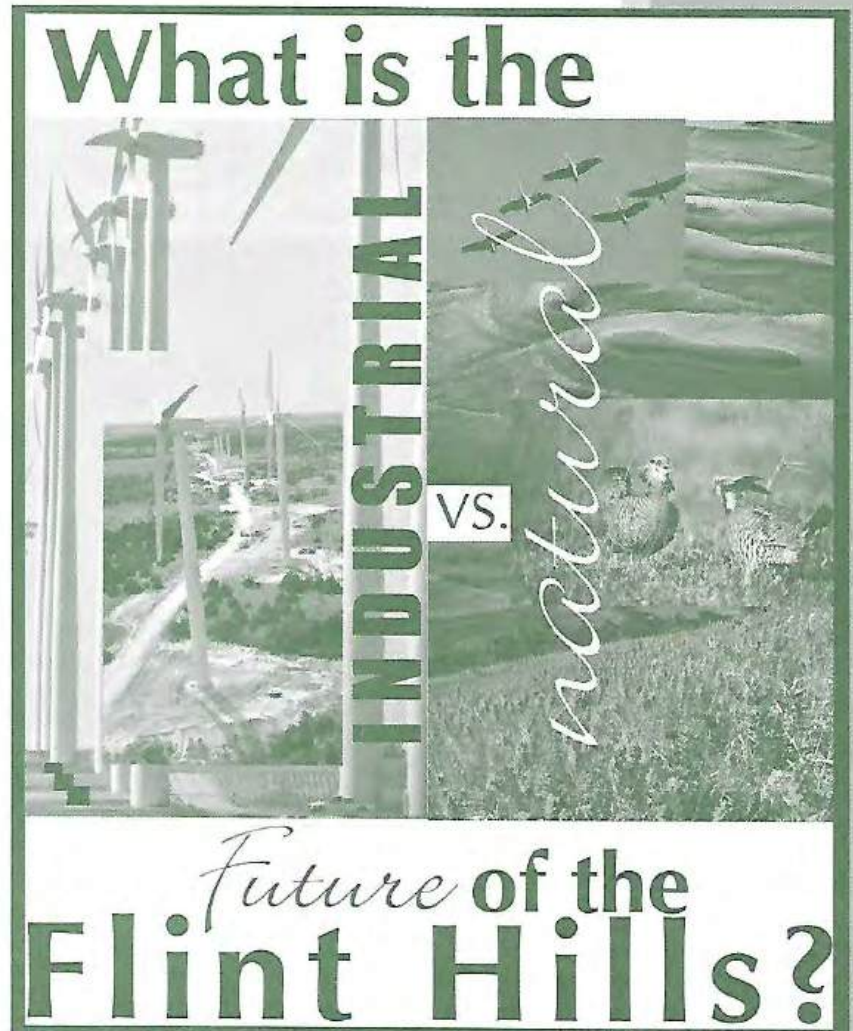
Staff of The Nature Conservancy have contributed substantial expertise and commitment to the campaign to save the Flint Hills, and the Wildlife Management Institute and Kansas Wildlife Federation joined the team.

As landowners and friends shared information, it soon became clear that the gathering threat was greater than most imagined. Some developers were contacting landowners for leases and working at as many as eight or ten sites, and they envisioned projects that would each consume 6,000 to 10,000 acres for construction of 70 to 170 turbines. Nearly two dozen "sites" have been in various stages of promotion by developers. They are all in competition and the promotional frenzy reminds one of the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889.

Although it is recognized that the existing transmission system cannot accommodate this many projects, promoters hope to be early in line or ready to demand expansion of the grid. The rush for land leases has been motivated by corporations looking to cash in on federal tax credits. Prospecting developers get leases and contracts ready to go and then hope to collect as much as 15 million dollars profit just to transfer ownership. The prospect of ongoing profits from massive federal subsidies, and the exemption from Kansas property taxes, has driven developers to hire a stable of lobbyists in Topeka, and "invest" in organizations and elected officials at both the state and county levels who can add to their influence.

Although we all favor "renewable energy" in sustainable forms and with appropriate siting, astronomical profits from tax credits are virtually the only thing driving industrial windpower development. Far

more would be accomplished to benefit people at every level and life on this planet if tax credits of this magnitude were directed by Congress to energy conservation and efficiency. The stakes are high for Flint Hills prairies and other unique landscapes throughout the country.



Tallgrass prairie is the most altered ecosystem in North America.

Tragically only 3 to 5 percent of the historical tallgrass remains in any form on the continent. In terms of threatened biomes, tallgrass prairie is the North American continent equivalent of the once vast tropical rain forests that have been devastated in places such as Madagascar. The Flint Hills contain approximately two-thirds of all the remaining resource of unplowed tallgrass prairie, and is the only area with landscape expanses of tallgrass prairie.

Fortunately, Governor Kathleen Sebelius recognizes and has clearly stated that tallgrass prairie resources and landscapes are "a true treasure of national and international proportion, and as Kansans we fully understand we are the stewards of this treasure."

In December 2003 she appointed a Wind and Prairie Task Force to "thoroughly examine and consider all of the key issues involved and recommend fundamental guidelines, principles, and best practices that can be utilized by local governments, landowners, project developers, and other interested stakeholders to site future wind energy projects...." A tremendous compilation of information and a series of recommendations were included in the report published June 6, 2004. It is available at www.kansasenergy.org/sercc_wptf.htm. Two distinct options were developed by the Task Force, but a vote was never taken to see which had the support of the majority of the membership.



Option A:--Management of Wind Development to Conserve Grasslands of Statewide Importance promotes serious commitments to preservation of the Flint Hills/Tallgrass Prairie by avoiding commercial windpower developments in the areas with a preponderance of native prairie, and with a seven mile buffer to protect the area's ecological integrity and incredible beauty. This option was prepared by five members of the conservation community and Tallgrass Ranchers on the Task Force--Dick Seaton, Scott Ritchie, Alan Pollom, Rose Bacon and Jan Jantzen, as designated in the report.

Option B:--Finding Common Ground in the Flint Hills was designed "as a compromise approach" and it recommends "preserving ecologically significant and sensitive areas of Tallgrass Prairie" AND promotion of commercial windpower development in the region without a moratorium and with few restraints to impede development other than county zoning. Option B was prepared by a representative of the commercial wind industry, a county development and zoning director, and possibly a co-chair of the Task Force. However, those authors chose to not be identified in the report.

One positive aspect of both options was a recommendation that the State should map the remaining untitled native grasslands to identify areas that should receive additional consideration, and possibly attention during the 2005 legislative session. Governor Sebelius has asked developers to hold off on developments in the Flint Hills until the State of Kansas can develop policies for concurrently protecting prairie and encouraging development in more appropriate areas.

A copy of the recent map showing areas with 90 percent or more intact tallgrass prairie landscape is provided as an illustration. It will be an incredible victory for conservation if this area is protected from subsidized industrial windpower development. We believe, however, that landscapes with 50 to 90 percent prairie may be just as important ecologically because the native rangelands and hay meadows within these areas are usually managed in a heterogeneous fashion. Hay meadows within these landscapes often provide sanctuary for rare prairie plants and associated fauna.

Residents and landowners in Wabaunsee County, including leaders of Tallgrass Ranchers, worked diligently for most of a year to obtain recognition of the county's Comprehensive Plan as a guide to a decision on this contentious issue. That plan recommends protection of the pastoral and natural character of the county, and recommends restriction of industrial development from agricultural areas. On June 28th, they were successful when the Wabaunsee County Commissioners voted 2-1 to prohibit industrial Wind Energy Conversion Systems as a permitted use in Wabaunsee County.

The basis of the motion was that Commercial Wind Energy Conversion Systems would not be in the best interests of the general welfare of the County as a whole. In light of the historical, existing and anticipated land uses in the County, they would adversely affect the County as a whole. They would be incompatible with the rural, agricultural, and scenic character of the County. They would be detrimental to property values and opportunities for agricultural and nature based tourism.

As residents of Riley County and leaders of Audubon of Kansas, Dick Seaton and I have attended every Riley County Planning Committee and County Commission meeting dealing with the subject during the past year. Our goal has been to help develop model regulations that will effectively guide development proposals away from unfragmented prairie landscapes and sensitive environmental and scenic areas. In addition, we specifically advocated language that will empower landowners surrounding proposals to have sufficient notification and protest petition rights. Nearly 150 people attended a public hearing on the regulations and 80 percent of the fifty

speakers expressed support for strong regulations, or alternatively a prohibition, of industrial scale development. An excellent set of regulations advanced, but provisions designed to protect the interests of adjacent landowners were deleted at the last minute when two commissioners caved to the advocacy of developers and the Kansas Farm Bureau working on behalf of landowners with leases.

In parallel efforts, many of us have worked diligently in other Flint Hills counties to obtain improved zoning regulations. We are hopeful that the best elements of regulations developed in Riley County will be the basis for regulations in other counties throughout Kansas—along with addition of provisions to protect adjacent landowners. Unfortunately, Chase and Morris Counties in the heart of the Flint Hills do not have any zoning regulations of any kind. Thus, the property values of rural residents and resources of public interest are afforded no standing by the counties, and developers can proceed at will wherever they can obtain a lease.

At this point, however, development in the Flint Hills has been held at bay by a combination of other factors. Most notably, investors will not finance just any developer's scheme, and certainly not without a purchase agreement from a utility. We are all grateful that Westar, Kansas City Power and Light, and utilities have not signed any purchase agreements with developers who have seriously flawed and environmentally destructive projects. We are also grateful that Governor Sebelius has asked companies to refrain from development in the Flint Hills and prairie landscapes to allow the state time to develop recommendations and potential state protocols.

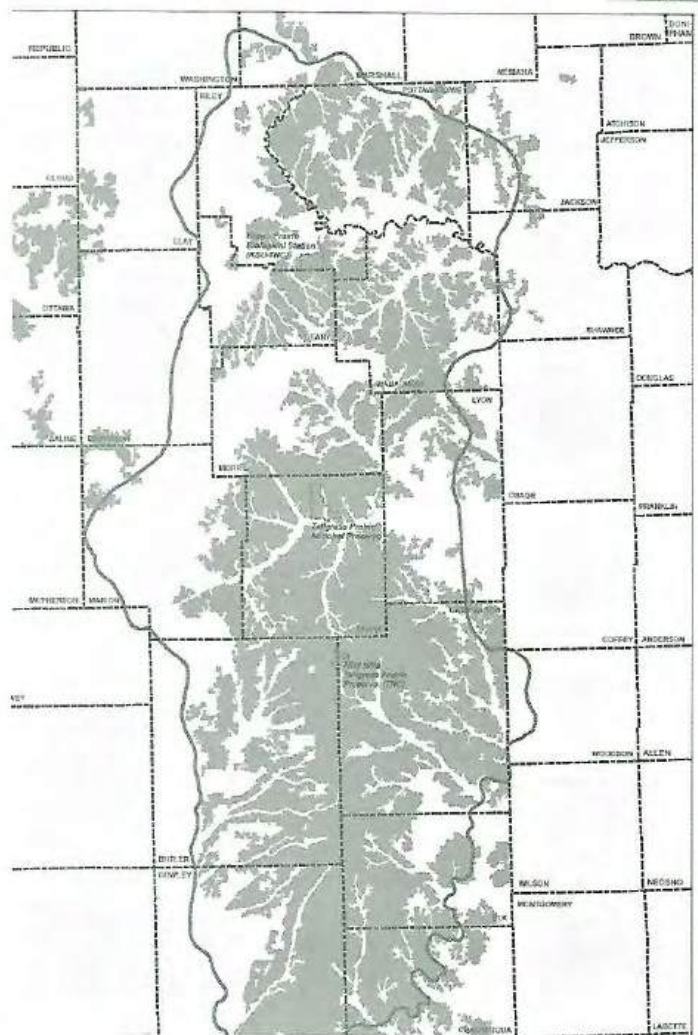
Aside from the expected impact of these projects on Prairie-chickens, bird conservation has not been a major consideration. Windpower developers, advocacy associations and "ornithologists" on the payroll of the companies minimize bird collision mortalities at every opportunity. This is coupled with the fact that most facilities are inadequately monitored to recover dead birds before they are taken by scavengers in order to determine the magnitude of the problem.

Fortunately there are a number of ornithologists worldwide who are willing to speak up for bird conservation. One of those is Mark Duchamp of Spain who has provided information and a website to demonstrate that the bird massacres at Altamont California and Tarifa are not necessarily exceptions, but the tip of the iceberg. As he indicates, wind turbines are killing "millions of birds worldwide, many of them on the endangered list". For more information go to: http://www.iberica2000.org/documents/EOLICA/1_windfarms_Compilation_of_birdkill_statistics.doc

We trust that the Flint Hills will not become a killing field for migrating birds. Golden Plovers, Upland Sandpipers, several species of raptors and many other birds are attracted to and migrate over this island of prairie. In a 30 mph wind the tip of the rotor blades travel at 150 mph.

Looking back over the past two and half years, it is remarkable that so much has been achieved. The last several million acres of native tallgrass prairie remaining in America are still intact and have not been subjugated to severe industrial impacts. We still have all of the remaining expanses that have been recently mapped, and these landscapes are worthy of fighting for and saving. Please continue to join us in this campaign.

Flint Hills Ecoregion with 90-100% Intact Tallgrass Prairie Landscape



Flint Hills Opportunities Await Leadership

By Ron Klataske

We like to think in terms of positive alternatives and long-term outcomes when dealing with conservation challenges. Our first order of business is to corral the stampede of developers and spare the Flint Hills the prospect of sprawling industrial windpower complexes.

At the same time, all stakeholders need to work together to advance strategies that will preserve prairie landscapes. This is the only way we can be assured that expanses of tallgrass prairie, pastoral ranch scenes, and prairie life in many forms will be present for future generations.

The challenge facing ranch landowners, elected officials, community leaders and other residents who enjoy the Flint Hills is to proceed with determination to advance strategies that will reward landowners for good stewardship. In addition, we need to expand economies based on the attraction of this unique American landscape in ways that support local communities and entrepreneurial activities, enhance quality of life amenities for all residents, and create a culture of conservation with support from a public that is increasingly appreciative of these hills and prairies.

National Heritage Area (NHA) Designation a Possibility

In the fall of 2003 we researched the subject and then recommended to leaders of Tallgrass Ranchers that designation of the Flint Hills as a National Heritage Area would have the potential of complementing all of our efforts.

Our view is that recognition of the Flint Hills as a National Heritage Area (NHA) would elevate the stature of the region as a traditional native range-land ranching area, as an area with a rich heritage of limestone construction and rural communities that are an integral part of this heritage (e.g. cattle pens, railheads, courthouses, main streets like Cottonwood Falls, Peabody and Florence). Other historical features including the Santa Fe Trail with emphasis on Council Grove, and the Oregon Trail and Pony Express historical sites in the northern Flint Hills, further underscore the cultural heritage of the area. NHA recognition could help to serve as a framework for broader public support for Flint Hills ranching and ranching stewardship activities and benefit conservation easement programs envisioned by the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance, the Kansas Livestock Association, and both the USDA Grassland

Reserve Program and complementary programs of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Blue Ridge Initiative proposal for NHA status is based on the concept of saving cultural traditions. A broad spectrum of culture in the counties along the Blue Ridge Parkway (from music, art, crafts, farming and the way of life) is inspired by the beauty of the landscape. The philosophy of the initiative of the counties is that the rural quality of the landscape is important.

Although the Natural Heritage program is administered by the National Park Service (NPS), it is not a land acquisition or regulatory process. It is a program that was simply given to NPS because local communities and members of Congress have been interested in creating Natural Heritage Areas and the program had to go somewhere! NPS has a "one person" office to coordinate the program in D.C., with some folks in NPS regional offices who are available to assist. Technical assistance is provided by the National Park Service regional office to local entities of government, and funding of up to a million dollars per year is provided to National Heritage Areas by Congress. Designation of a Natural Heritage Area does not involve land acquisition or land use control.

Each NHA can be tailored to highlight the cultural and natural features of a particular area. When we last checked, twenty three areas had been designated and there were bills in the 108th Congress to establish fourteen more, including Blue Ridge, Atchafalaya, Arabia Mountain and Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership. The closest National Heritage Area is the Silos and Smokestacks NHA in Iowa. It is primarily designed to enhance tourism and assist with preservation of cultural amenities and structures. The farm themes used by the partners involved try to bring the story of American Agriculture to life for visitors.

Kansas may have a compelling (and unique) opportunity to combine natural and cultural heritage features of national interest within the Flint Hills. However, support from rural communities, ranch landowners and others is essential. Independent of our exploratory efforts, Emily Hunter, a volunteer with the Flint Hills Resource Conservation & Development office in Strong City, was taking a similar path and sponsored several local meetings to share information about National Heritage Areas.

A number of people have expressed interest in the concept and the next step is for folks with diverse interests to form a network to work together to develop



an outreach plan and to address any questions or concerns that anyone may have. Let us know if you are interested. Leadership from one or more members of the Kansas Congressional Delegation will be essential.

The value of projecting Kansas to the world as "The Prairie State", and the merit of building pride in our heritage of native prairies within Kansas should not be overlooked.

A Renaissance is Needed for the Prairie Parkway

In 1967 the Kansas Legislature passed a bill establishing the Prairie Parkway extending south from the Pony Express Station near Hanover through the Flint Hills to Elgin. Elgin is near Sedan, a community that is striving to project a prairie heritage with help from Bill Kurtis. Only a few signs remain in place, and the state has neglected to replace others or develop the potential for this splendid route to capture tourism benefits for local communities and the State of Kansas. The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is one of the logical flagship attractions along the parkway, especially when a visitor center is established.

Audubon of Kansas, in partnership with KDOT and the Division of Tourism, is currently developing a statewide system of Kansas Birding and Natural Heritage Trails, including a **Tallgrass Prairie Birding and Natural Heritage Trail** closely following the "Prairie Parkway" route.

The portion of parkway between Cassoday and Council Grove has been designated as the Flint Hills Scenic Byway (a national recognition), and other routes in the region need to be considered.

Conservation Easement Programs are Key to Long-term Stewardship

In recognition of the declining acreage of native tallgrass prairie left on the continent, a creative federal/state "MARSHALL PLAN" needs to be developed to fund conservation easements and/or long term management agreements on some of the remaining prairie landscapes. An effort similar to (but far less expensive than) the program to restore the Everglades is needed. Congress has approved a billion dollar plan for the Everglades.

A broad coordinated program to acquire conservation easements could assist by combining new resources for the USDA administered Grassland Reserve Program, the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRLPR), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. State funding to cover a forth of the easement costs would leverage and greatly expand application of the FRLPR in Kansas, as it has in Colorado. Organizations that can accept donated conservation easements include the Kansas Livestock Association, The Nature Conservancy, Kansas Land Trust and Audubon of Kansas.

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Are Kansas Prairies In Good Hands With USDA?

While Conservationists Strive to Save Biodiversity of Prairies, USDA Again Funds Aerial Spraying of Herbicides on Prairie Rangelands

In the 1970s the U.S. Department of Agriculture promoted and funded stream channelization projects throughout the Midwest, transforming meandering streams fringed with riparian forests into straight ditches largely devoid of vegetation. Throughout the country, and especially in the "prairie pothole" section of the Dakotas and Mississippi Delta, the same agency promoted and used tax dollars to finance drainage of millions of acres of wetlands. Values for waterfowl and waterbirds, and flood prevention were ignored. In Kansas and Oklahoma alone, USDA promoted and funded aerial spraying of hundreds of thousands of acres of native prairie rangelands with herbicides. The same herbicides used to defoliate forests in Vietnam!

My mentor, Charles H. Callison, Executive Vice-President of the National Audubon Society, said at the time that Hugh Hammond Bennett, the first chief of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), would turn over in his grave if he knew. Bennett stressed in the 1930s that we must be "willing to work with instead of against our land..."

The conservation legacy of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was being turned upside down. Wildlife conservationists sometimes referred the agencies within USDA sponsoring these practices, as the "Agri Mafia". State and federal wildlife agencies were largely ignored by the more powerful USDA, their friends in Congress and associated lobbyists.

In the early 1970s I attended a County Conservation Awards meeting in a Kansas county and was astounded that the chairman of the county ASCS committee was proud of the fact that they had financed aerial spraying of 88,000 acres. The evidence was apparent throughout the county as gallery oak forests along upland waterways were transformed to cemeteries of "standing dead" trees. The chairman of the county committee was a herbicide dealer and he told me that 2,4-D was harmless. He indicated that he wouldn't be afraid to drink it. Aside from aquatic

life it probably didn't directly kill wildlife. That was his point. My concern, however, is the destruction and degrading of prairie, shrub and forest habitats.

An elderly friend with a small ranch along a scenic Flint Hills stream told me he didn't really want to spray the savanna of oaks on his steep slopes, but that he was pressured by the district conservationist to make the block of area to be treated more complete--and it would only cost him \$4 per acre. He said that

when the canopy oaks were killed they were soon replaced with more understory "brush" and cedars. That set the stage for more spraying and mechanical cutting.

As Regional Representative for the National Audubon Society, I prepared a letter sent from headquarters to USDA Secretary Earl Butz requesting a review of the practice and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Federal financing of broadcast herbicide spraying of native prairie rangelands in the central Great Plains soon declined

Opposition to stream channelization was also an "Audubon Priority" and it was substantially diminished after a Wisconsin Senator held high profile hearings. Various wildlife organizations launched campaigns to end USDA financing of wetland drainage and the 1970s ended with substantially improved stewardship of financial and natural resources.

In 1985 Congress passed a Farm Bill authorizing the Conservation Reserve Program and subsequent legislation has added the Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and the Environmental Quality Incentive Program which is designed to fund a wide range of conservation assistance practices. Additionally, many if not most of the professional staff at the county and state level within USDA are now dedicated to sound conservation practices. This change has been dramatic during the past three decades. It is a delight for most landowners to work with progressive professionals in county offices to achieve conservation goals. Responsibilities for the conservation mission of USDA are shared between the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, formerly SCS and ASCS.

A welcome paradigm shift has occurred at most levels, wherever politics and special interests do not trump public interests. In addition, the Kansas Technical Committee (KTC) expanded in



Kansas during the tenure of former USDA Secretary Dan Glickman. Prior to that time representation was almost exclusively from production agriculture. The expanded forum now includes representatives of several major wildlife conservation organizations. Pheasants Forever, Quail Unlimited, Audubon of Kansas and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks have been consistently represented.

I represent Audubon of Kansas perspectives on a diverse range of subjects and in greater detail addressed by the Subcommittees. Politics come into play in many capacities, however it is not obvious at the KTC level. Many members are there to represent their agencies, organizations or industries. They want to urge that funds are directed to specific types of projects that will support their agency's programs, organizational contract, or the agricultural producers they represent, along with related industrial perspectives. Federal funding is set at \$1.6 billion for EQIP for 2005, with \$36 million available in Kansas. Most programs are highly commendable, but this level of funding and camaraderie make it easy to accept practices that are questionable at best, destructive at worst.

Broadcast herbicide applications for "brush management" are funded under the GRAZING LANDS HEALTH category. It is often destructive, and it is antithetical to the whole concept of the "environmental quality incentive" program.

The KTC is advisory, thus final decisions for funding priorities and policies are made by the directors of the two agencies. The director of FSA is a political appointee. The director of NRCS is a career appointment. Professional staff in both agencies work to carry out directives from Washington and the administrators within the state.

Although opportunity is limited and it is not easy to be an outspoken critic of specific practices or programs at KTC meetings, the practice of funding broadcast application of herbicides on native grasslands has been a priority for my opposition. A number of members of the state technical committee agree that the practice is often used in an environmentally destructive way. It is especially destructive to wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

A section of native prairie may have 250 plant species, and an array of other forms of life associated with the habitat provided. Spraying with a combination of 2,4-d and Tordon may kill 225 of the plant species, leaving a grass monoculture. To qualify for cost share funding for grazing lands practices and incentive payments, landowners are often required to reduce shrub composition below 5% of the rangeland. All of this is done without any research to demonstrate short or long term impacts. Native legumes help to maintain soil fertility and sustainability of grazing lands. Forbs are nutritious at various stages and account for 15% to 25% of forage preferred by livestock.

Prairie habitat diversity containing a healthy mixture of grasses, forbs and shrubs is vital for food, nesting habitat and shelter for many wildlife species, including most grassland birds. Prairie-chicken chicks depend on the insects associate with diverse plants, and all aged birds depend year round

on seeds, fruits, berries, buds and leaves. Ornate Box Turtles, butterflies and pollinating insects all depend on prairie diversity. Bobwhite Quail and Bell's Vireos are among the many birds that depend greatly on shrubs for cover and/or nesting habitat.

Success Has Been Fleeting. In 2003 we succeeded in getting NRCS to reduce the cost share for broadcast spraying from 50% to 30%. Applications for herbicide applications declined. Then this summer we secured a recommendation at a KTC meeting to have the cost share for mechanical treatment increased to 70%. Mechanical cutting of invasive trees is more expensive and requires more work. A greater cost share is needed to tip the balance for this beneficial alternative. Mechanical cutting with stump treatment, spot spraying and controlled burning would accomplish management objectives without destroying major components of the prairie plant community. Unfortunately, NRCS reversed both decisions and the agency is now offering a flat 50% cost share on herbicide spraying and mechanical alternatives.



Field staff are asked to utilize aerial/broadcast spraying when other methods are not practical. That could be wherever there are hills, valleys, ravines or trees that limit ground spray equipment—virtually all overgrown rangelands in most counties. Applicants will want the least labor intensive, least expensive EQIP "quick fix".

There is very little opportunity for public oversight. In fact, members of the KTC who have asked for a breakdown of the acreages of native rangelands that have been sprayed with USDA assistance in recent years have been told they will have to wait until the information can be compiled.

Although USDA is influenced most by agricultural commodity lobbyists, other taxpayers can have influence if enough express their views to members of Congress, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture or the President. Letters-to-the-editor in local and statewide newspapers will also be helpful. Once the public is informed, Quail and Prairie-chicken hunters, wildlife and wildflower enthusiasts and other will join Audubon of Kansas in a quest to modify USDA's current approach. Our remaining native prairie grasslands need helping hands, not a handout for practices that strangle the diversity out of prairie plant communities, destroy biodiversity and degrade wildlife habitat.

—Ron Klataske



AOK Goes to Bat

By Ron Klatske

Early this year Mike Hayden, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, proposed lengthening the hunting seasons on both Lesser and Greater Prairie-chickens, and an earlier opener on quail in western Kansas. He wanted to run the season on Lesser Prairie-chickens from November 1 to January 31 and allow hunting of Greater Prairie-chickens from September 15 to January 31. His stated reasoning was that these changes would increase sales of licenses. However, Quail and Pheasant hunting/conservation organizations and western Kansas land-owners strongly objected to the idea of subjecting quail to added hunting pressure during the first week of the Pheasant season in western Kansas.

The stated reason for the proposal to open the Lesser Prairie-chicken season a month earlier was to

promote hunter recruitment. While this is a laudable goal, I believe there are far superior ways to recruit hunters. Another rationale for starting the Prairie-chicken season earlier than the regular season opener for pheasants was to motivate prospective hunters in western Kansas to get out sooner, and to give pheasant hunters an additional opportunity to take Lesser Prairie-chickens that flush when afield throughout the month of November.

Several years ago KDWP biologists moved the opener on Lesser Prairie-chickens back to December 1 because they were concerned that an earlier opener could subject the species to excessive shooting if it became popular for hunters who used to "tune up" their bird dogs and shooting skills in preparation for the pheasant season.

Audubon of Kansas, the Kansas Wildlife Federation and Dr. Robert J. Robel, professor emeritus in wildlife biology at KSU, presented statements at the June 24 commission meeting in Overland Park expressing biological and other concerns about proposed changes in the Prairie-chicken hunting seasons. Nobody spoke in favor of the framework changes for quail or Prairie-chicken seasons.

On behalf of AOK, I stated that the idea of expanding the hunting season on Greater Prairie-chickens is indefensible and sends the wrong message regarding the State of Kansas' "stewardship" of this species. Likewise, the proposal to increase the season length on Lesser Prairie-chickens by an additional month was equally inappropriate for a bird listed as a "candidate species" under the federal endangered species program.

With modern agricultural practices Prairie-chicken populations have experienced devastating declines. This is true for the range and numbers of both Kansas species, and the now-endangered Attwater's Prairie Chicken in southeastern Texas. Prairie Chickens have declined even more markedly during the past 25 years in Kansas—one of the last strongholds of both Greater and Lesser Prairie-chickens. There are fewer and fewer habitats in the state that are of sufficiently high quality to be prospective sources for naturally repopulating Prairie-chickens into areas with declining populations.

Public perceptions and biological considerations are both important when designing hunting seasons. Hunter survey data does not suggest that hunting mortality is the overall statewide limiting factor on Greater Prairie-chicken

populations. Biologists acknowledge that the sample size of returned survey forms regarding the take on Lesser Prairie-chickens may be too small to be statistically valid. It is reasonable to assume that recent declines in Greater Prairie-chicken populations are due largely to habitat deterioration. In some areas this results from fragmentation associated with development and tree invasion, while in other areas it's the practice of annual burning and early intensive grazing practices on large blocks of rangeland. However, overall declines along with increasingly isolated populations add to our concern for the potential impact of any substantial additional mortality on local populations. It is conceivable that a combination of mortality factors could result in a

Citizen involvement is vital for progressive wildlife conservation.



For Better Prairie-Chicken Stewardship

coup de grace, a decisive finishing blow, for some isolated and genetically challenged populations.

There are a large number of Kansas citizens—hunters and non-hunters, ranch landowners and suburban residents alike—working hard on many fronts to build support for conservation of native grasslands vital as habitat for Prairie-chickens and trying in many other ways to directly benefit conservation of Prairie-chickens. If approved, we believe the secretary's proposals would have seriously undermined the campaign to build broad appreciation for the state's prairie and wildlife resources.

The seasons on Greater Prairie-chickens are already the longest of any upland gamebirds or migratory gamebirds in Kansas. This state's ultraliberal hunting seasons have even been used by consultants for industrial windpower development proposals in the Flint Hills to suggest that the State of Kansas has little concern for Prairie-chickens. If this proposal had been approved the Greater Prairie-chicken hunting season would be two weeks longer than even that permitted for shooting of Crows!

Ethical sportsmen and women do not want to contribute to cumulative mortality and they do not deserve to be blamed for unsustainable harvest or unrelated declines. We at AOK compliment landowners and hunters who "self regulate" the take in their areas. We will continue to request that members of the KDWP Commission provide leadership to support conservative stewardship for the benefit of wildlife resources and all wildlife constituents. Steve and Jacque Sundgrun of Rosalia are a great example of responsible stewardship. They extend hospitality to special friends who hunt Prairie-chickens just one weekend each fall on their ranch. It is a family tradition designed for fellowship and to demonstrate that they take pride in sustaining populations on their land with good management.

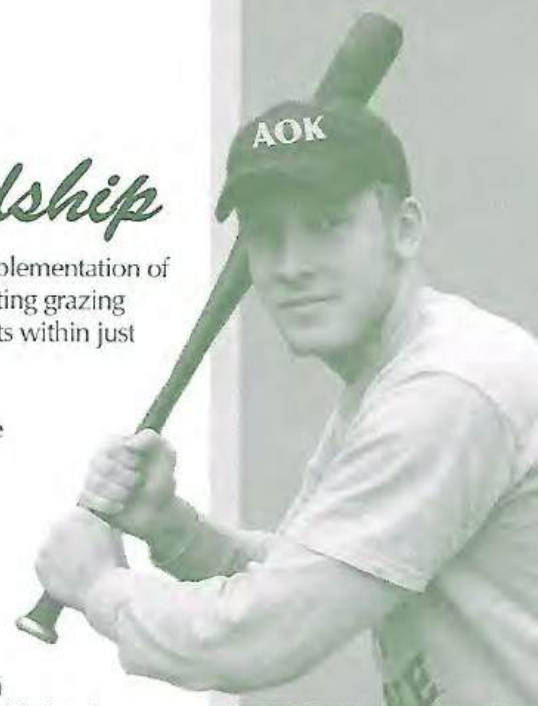
Most habitat enhancement programs require landowner cost sharing and management changes that may reduce income, at least while the rangeland is recovering. My family is among an increasing number of landowners who believe such programs are a good investment for conservation of prairie plant communities and grassland birds. In our case we have invested approximately ten thousand dollars on habitat enhancement on 1,100 acres. Practices

such as cutting of invasive trees, implementation of less-than-annual burning and adjusting grazing schedules can show favorable results within just a few years.

I indicated that it is difficult to make a state agency case for changes in regulations that have the potential of increasing mortality and adversely affecting local, regional or statewide populations of either Lesser or Greater Prairie Chickens. Because both of these Prairie-chickens are species "at risk" and in need of special conservation, several federal agencies are involved in the effort to devote funding and technical assistance to habitat improvement on private land. These include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, USDA's Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, some practices included in the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, and the Grassland Reserve (conservation easement) Program.

Following the KDWP presentation on the proposed season changes and opportunities for public statements at the commission meeting, one commissioner moved to advance the season changes "for discussion purposes." However, none of the other five commissioners present seconded the motion. Thus the proposals were dead for lack of a second and almost everyone present felt a sigh of relief. It was a victory for Prairie-chickens, conservation-minded sportsmen and other wildlife enthusiasts.

However, one final opportunity or obligation remains for us. We all need to thank members of the commission for not advancing this proposal. The names, addresses, and e-mail of current members are listed on the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks website. We encourage everyone to write to all seven commissioners thanking them for the commission's leadership on behalf of Prairie-chickens. The commission's action is a significant contribution toward the state's stewardship of Prairie-chickens and by extension, the Flint Hills and other prairie landscapes.



Join the Team

Hunting with my brother in 1971 when the season was much shorter.



Whooping Cranes Under Fire in Kansas

By Ron Klataske

Two Whooping Cranes Shot Near Quivira NWR On Opening Day Of Sandhill Crane Season

On every occasion during the past 20 years when the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) proposed expansion and liberalization of Sandhill Crane hunting seasons in Kansas, we have stressed the importance of protecting other species of waterbirds—particularly endangered Whooping Cranes. Whoopers migrate through the state at the same time and use many of the same habitats as Sandhill Cranes.

The first proposal for a Sandhill Crane season in Kansas was made in 1984 when then-Speaker of the Kansas House of Representative Mike Hayden requested that the department pursue a season. The plan that department staff proposed would have opened the entire state to Sandhill Crane hunting, even though Sandhill Cranes rarely venture into the eastern third of Kansas. Inclusion of that area would have only raised expectations of novice hunters, likely resulted in the shooting of herons and other wading birds—needlessly tarnishing the public image of ethical hunters, and undermining the department's reputation for wildlife stewardship. Audubon took its case to the commission, and Governor John Carlin asked the commission to table the proposal and go back to the drawing boards.

Later, in 1993 when a Sandhill Crane hunting season was first established by KDWP, it was limited to a portion of central and western Kansas. Several of our other recommendations were also adopted—including delay of legal shooting hours to a time later than "a half hour before sunrise". Shooting at dawn when it is barely light would have been an open invitation for disaster in terms of placing other species at risk. We recommended 8 or 9 a.m. to reduce the prospect of hunters mistaking Whooping Cranes for Sandhill Cranes. However, sunrise was selected by department staff and approved by the commission for shooting. Our continuing concern is that it is

often impossible to distinguish between the silhouettes of flying Sandhill Crane and Whooping Cranes at the "official time" of sunrise. It can be cloudy and dim, or birds can be silhouetted in the glare of a rising sun.

We also requested that the Sandhill Crane season not open until after mid November when most of the Whooping Cranes had passed through Kansas. KDWP staff argued that the peak of the Whooping Crane migration often occurs in late October and they were concerned that any delay would diminish hunting opportunities. They assured us that if Whoopers remained in the state an area would be temporarily closed and the public would be altered. Eleven whoopers were in the state for the opening of the first season, and an area near Quivira was closed that one time by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A "Contingency Plan for Federal-State Cooperative Protection of Whooping Cranes" was developed at the flyway level to identify "Hunting Hazard Situations" and accommodate local spot closures of hunting on "species that look similar to Whooping Cranes". The idea was to provide these endangered birds with protection from disturbance and hazardous situations during their arduous 2,000 mile migration. However, in the absence of reported shootings, the priority of KDWP has generally been to hope that whoopers fly on south without getting in harm's way or disrupting hunting opportunities.

This fall there were Whooping Cranes at the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge continuously from October 23 until November 6 when at least eighteen and probably twenty-two were recorded. A total of 59 utilized the refuge during that period. An additional six were utilizing the Cheyenne Bottoms Waterfowl Management Area near Great Bend at sunrise on November 6. Thus, approximately 10 % of the total Aransas/Wood Buffalo wild population was in Kan-



Whooping Cranes

sas on that morning. Sandhill Crane hunting is not allowed at Quivira, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service routinely closes the refuge to all hunting when Whooping Cranes are present.

Dave Hilley, Manager of Quivira NWR, and his staff are devoted to the welfare of Whooping Cranes at the refuge, and closely monitor the birds. However, it takes state involvement and considerable cooperation to close any of the surrounding land to Sandhill Crane hunting to serve as a buffer area. Although a group of Whooping Cranes had been leaving the refuge daily to feed in nearby fields, that safeguard was not implemented this year. No formal attempt was made to alert nearby landowners and hunters to the presence of whoopers.

It was a tragedy waiting to happen and two birds, nearly one percent of the population, were shot and wounded as a group of three birds flew west of the refuge. An even greater disaster could have occurred if the total gathering of eighteen to twenty-two had flown out to feed, and the birds at Cheyenne Bottoms flew to pools open to crane hunting. It was the opening day of the Sandhill Crane and goose season. Nearly 200,000 Sandhill Cranes and 300,000 geese were also in the area.

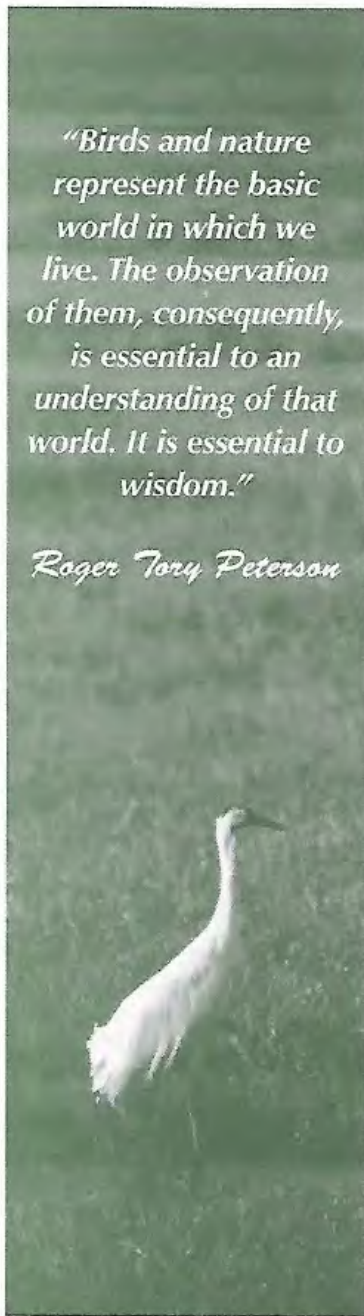
Landowners reported the injured Whooping Cranes in early afternoon. Both were driven by Quivira NWR staff to Manhattan where they were placed in the care of Dr. Jim Carpenter of Kansas State University. Dr. Carpenter is experienced with whooping cranes. He worked for a time as a veterinarian at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center.

The leg on one of the birds was hanging by a tendon and was amputated. It died four days later. The second bird had eleven shotgun pellets in its flesh and a fractured humerus in the wing with the bone exposed. Surgery was performed early Sunday by a surgical team and the bone was pinned back together. It will never again make the migration between the coastal marshes of Texas and the Northwestern Territories of Canada. Both were males.

The birds were reportedly fired on by two members of a party of seven adult hunters on land leased for hunting three miles west of the refuge. They told investigators that they mistook the identity of the three birds that approached from the east just after sunrise. They continued to hunt and left without reporting the mistake or the wounded birds.

"Birds and nature represent the basic world in which we live. The observation of them, consequently, is essential to an understanding of that world. It is essential to wisdom."

Roger Tory Peterson



Following the shooting a lone whooper lingered at the refuge without flying for a week. Otherwise "she" acted normal and fed in a marshy area. Although the hunters reported firing on the three birds, it isn't known if the third bird sustained any injuries. By November 18 the bird had joined Sandhill Cranes on occasion and was presumed to be a whooper that showed up at Cheyenne Bottoms.

Prior to migration and the shooting of the two birds the number of Whooping Cranes in the Aransas/Wood Buffalo wild population was estimated to be 193 adults with 40 young.

Quivira always receives high Whooping Crane usage and is Critical Habitat. Tom Stehn, Whooping Crane Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is determined to work closely with the State of Kansas so that a better job is done implementing safeguards outlined in the Contingency Plan and convene an interagency meeting to consider other strategies for protection of the birds. As he has indicated, "Quivira NWR is one of the absolute most important migration stopover areas for whooping cranes, and they need to receive 100% protection both on the refuge and in surrounding areas." Audubon of Kansas will be supportive of this initiative, and we are actively advocating strategies designed to prevent this from happening again.

Our current strategy is to strongly advocate a series of changes. First, the Sandhill Crane hunting season should not open prior to November 15, and daily shooting hours should not open prior to 9 a.m. Cheyenne Bottoms and other wetland areas that are used for roosting and loafing by Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Cranes should not be open to Sandhill

protecting

Crane shooting. An adequate buffer around Quivira, Cheyenne Bottoms and other areas should be closed to Sandhill Crane hunting when Whooping Cranes are present.



Crane shooting at the wetland roost sites can drive them from an area, thus imposing additional stress on incredible birds that travel from nesting grounds in northern Canada, Alaska and even eastern Siberia to winter in Texas and northern Mexico. If sanctuary is provided at roosting areas they will probably stay in Kansas longer. Closure of major wetlands to crane hunting will also reduce the risk of hunters mistakenly shooting other long-legged, long-necked wading birds—including herons, egrets, bitterns and ibises—that depend on wetland habitats.

If implemented, these measures would shift Sandhill Crane shooting to agricultural fields where wading birds are less likely to occur. Part of the justification for establishment and expansion of Sandhill Crane hunting has been to reduce perceived damage that the birds may cause when they concentrate on wheat

fields. State and federal biologists generally agree that the mid-continental population of Sandhill Cranes can sustain a level of hunting, but that doesn't apply to Whoopers and other species. Sportsmen generally agree that field hunting from blinds with decoys is the most acceptable way to hunt Sandhill Cranes.

If leadership from KDWP is not soon forthcoming, Audubon of Kansas and the Kansas Ornithological Society should initiate efforts to work directly with hunting organizations and individual crane hunters to develop solutions. We already have the problems identified. One of our foundation goals is to work "in partnership with hunters, anglers, and others interested in Kansas wildlife."

Because Sandhill Crane concentrations, and crane hunting in Kansas, occur in the same geographic area as the migratory path of Whooping Cranes, additional educational initiatives combined with hunting regulations needs to be implemented. The "special permits" required should be accompanied with educational material illustrating identifying characteristics of similar species—and details on the potential consequences of shooting Whooping Cranes and other protected species.

Sandhill Crane permits should be handled similar to the permits issued for Wild Turkey hunting. A hunter

can take total of six annually. However, all require tags that are then affixed to the leg of each bird killed. If the department issued tags for Sandhill Cranes, a season limit sheet of six would appear to be a reasonable adjustment. Although the department increased the Sandhill Crane bag limit from two to three birds per day in 2003, we will recommend resumption of a two-bird daily limit. Individual hunters should be encouraged to concentrate on taking a modest number of birds, and regulations should discourage the inclination of groups with hunting leases at the edge of refuges to take as many as they can, day after day, from passing flocks.

If KDWP is going to promote annual hunting seasons on Sandhill Cranes the agency needs to incorporate regulations that are broadly acceptable—as well as biologically sound. A paradigm shift is called for in KDWP stewardship in this instance to benefit wildlife resources for the enjoyment of all. The consistent presence of whoopers and the gathering of Sandhill Cranes at Quivira would make it an excellent site for a late October Crane Festival and build pride in Kansas as a destination for wildlife watching. Cranes are a major attraction at the Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico, and they attract thousands of people to the central Platte River in Nebraska every March.

Collectively, all or most of the measures listed above could dramatically reduce the risk of Whooping Cranes being killed in Kansas. We welcome your support and ideas—including suggestions for advancement or modification of the above proposals. The most influential letter that citizens can write is to Governor Kathleen Sebelius. If requested, the governor's office will share letters with KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden and the seven appointed commissioners who oversee regulation changes.

Dallas Man Sentenced To 6 Months In Federal Prison For Killing A Whooping Crane

United States Attorney Jane J. Boyle announced earlier this year that Dallas resident, Donald W. Jones, was sentenced on May 14, 2004 by the Honorable Jerry Buchmeyer, United States Senior District Judge, to six months imprisonment and ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine, following his guilty plea in February 2004 to transporting wildlife taken and possessed in violation of law, in violation of 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(a)(1) and 3373(d)(2). Jones was also ordered to surrender all hunting privileges in the United States.

Jones admitted that on November 14, 2003, he knowingly transported various species of migratory birds, including a Whooping Crane, a Gadwall, a Blue-winged Teal and a Northern Shoveler, when he knew the wildlife was taken and possessed in violation of law, specifically the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

**A new day has begun
on the crane marsh....
Our ability to perceive
quality in nature begins,
as in art, with the pretty.
It expands through successive
stages of the beautiful
to values as yet uncaptured
by language. The quality
of cranes lies, I think,
in this higher gamut,
as yet beyond the reach
of words.**

**-Aldo Leopold, A Sand
County Almanac,
1949**

Jones admitted that on November 14, 2003, a day that the regular Texas waterfowl hunting season was closed, he was duck hunting at Lake Bardwell in Ellis County, Texas. Lake Bardwell lies in an area of Texas closed to Sandhill Crane hunting to protect migrating whoopers.

At approximately 6:30 p.m., a Texas Game Warden (TGW) contacted Jones as Jones was preparing his boat and truck to depart from Lake Bardwell. In response to the TGW's questions about what wildlife had been taken, Jones volunteered that he had killed three ducks. The TGW then observed a Blue-winged Teal, a hen Shoveler, and a Gadwall in the front of

Jones' boat. The TGW asked Jones if he had killed any other wildlife, and Jones responded, "No." The TGW then began to examine various bags inside Jones' boat and truck and discovered a zippered bag containing a dead whooping crane underneath a piece of camouflage burlap. When questioned, Jones responded that he had always wanted to shoot a Sandhill Crane and admitted that he shot the Whooping Crane by mistake, believing it to be a Sandhill Crane.

One may contact Governor Kathleen Sebelius regarding this or other subjects by e-mail from the website ks.gov/governor.org, by calling constituent services at 785-296-3232 or mail at the State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Ave., Topeka, KS 66612-1590.

NEWS FLASH

22 November 2004

Governor Issues Statement on Balancing Conservation Efforts and Wind Energy Development

Topeka – Governor Kathleen Sebelius today commented on recommendations given to her by a Cabinet team for balancing conservation efforts in the Flint Hills and development of wind energy.

The recommendations, contained in a letter received by the Governor late last week, call for establishment of a "Heart of the Flint Hills Area" to ensure the continued protection of tallgrass prairie in the designated area, which is bounded by US 24 Highway on the north; K-77 on the west; US 400 on the south; and K-99 and K-4 on the east. The Cabinet team also recommended that the Governor reissue her call to developers and landowners to exercise voluntary restraint in the identified area until counties in the area can develop local guidelines to govern the development of wind energy and until alternative economic development strategies can be identified.

In addition to the development of conservation easements and other land protection mechanisms, the Cabinet team recommended restraint on wind energy development until the Kansas Department of Commerce completes an assessment to identify economic development strategies that affected counties and landowners could pursue, including evaluating the role of wind energy in the Flint Hills.

"These common sense recommendations provide us with a workable strategy for continuing to protect the tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills and assisting affected landowners while also encouraging the rapid development of wind energy in appropriate areas of the state," Governor Sebelius said. "Accordingly, I renew my request for parties in the designated Flint Hills area to exercise restraint and patience as we continue to work to balance the conservation and economic development needs of the region."

Both the Governor and Allison, the Governor's energy advisor, urged wind energy developers to move quickly on projects outside of Heart of the Flint Hills Area.

"Developers pursuing projects outside of the designated area who have been waiting for a signal from the administration now have it and should proceed accordingly so they can benefit from federal tax credits," Allison said.

The Kansas Energy Council is expected to finalize and forward to Governor Sebelius a package of wind development incentives at its meeting tomorrow. The Governor will use the recommendations from the Energy Council and her Cabinet team to design an overall strategy for developing Kansas' wind energy potential while preserving the agricultural heritage and conserving critical ecosystems in the Heart of the Flint Hills.

To view a map of the Heart of the Flint Hills Area, go to the KEC web-site www.kansasenergy.org or www.kansasenergy.org/KEC/FH-maps.html.

Audubon of Kansas compliments Governor Kathleen Sebelius for her efforts during the past year to seek ways to protect tallgrass prairie, and now for her initiative to protect the "Heart of the Flint Hills Area". We are hopeful that residents, legislators and county officials across the state will rally to provide support. Additionally, we will urge that provisions to protect intact prairie landscapes throughout the state, and major migratory flyways—including those focused on Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira—will be implemented. Tragically, a developer is already pushing to develop nearly 40,000 acres in the beautiful southern Flint Hills prairie landscapes just south of this area.

Kansas Birding and Natural Heritage Trails Offer Opportunities for Discovery

continued from page 1

dependent on a thorough knowledge of one's environment. Along the way, most of the native Americans encountered were willing to share local knowledge and participate in the visitors' sense of discovery.



Lewis and Clark reenactment along the Missouri River.

It is always pleasant to have a sense of discovery, and to enhance one's knowledge of nature, culture and places to travel. All this can be experienced close to home, in one's community, nearby counties and throughout the state of Kansas. With this in mind, Audubon of Kansas has been working on a system of four Birding and Natural Heritage Trails extending from north to south across Kansas. Each of the highway routes chosen interconnects scores of sites worthy as a day's destination, along with loops and spurs "off the beaten path".

Many established residents take their surroundings for granted and seldom visit natural and cultural attractions in their own area unless prompted by hosting friends. The best tour I have made of Fort Riley was when Bill Browning came to Manhattan and expressed a desire to see the expansive grasslands within the military reservation. New residents often set the standards for local and statewide exploration. That has certainly been the case with 'Hoogy' and Carol Hoogheem since they retired and moved to Odgen from Massachusetts in 1989. They have visited all the birding spots, dined in the best small town cafes and made friends all around Kansas.

The website devoted to this project, www.kansasbirdingtrails.org, will be up and running with

most of the sites for the Tallgrass "Prairie Parkway" Birding and Natural Heritage Trail by early January. Although the Flint Hills are featured in EXPLORE AMERICA books published by Reader's Digest, few Kansas residents or visitors have devoted multiple weekends to discovering the diversity of nature, along with interesting sites and communities within these prairie hills. The same applies to other regions of Kansas with intact native grasslands, forests, streams and restored wetlands.

The second trail to be completed and posted on the website will feature eastern Kansas, including the terrain along the Missouri River where Corps hunters encountered but couldn't get within shooting range of Bison. In July 1804 Clark surveyed the landscape surrounding present-day Leavenworth where the plains were covered with "Leek green grass", shrub thickets covered with delicious fruit in every direction, and where "nature appears to have exerted herself to butify the senery by the variety of flours . . . which strikes & profumes the Sensation." The Forest Prairie Edge Birding and Natural Heritage Trail parallels the Missouri River and then extends south beyond Pittsburg.

Other trails that we are working on include the Central Wetlands & Prairie Birding and Natural Heritage Trail and the Shortgrass & Sandsage Prairie Birding and Natural Heritage trail in central and western Kansas, respectively. Readers of PRAIRIE WINGS can continue to assist AOK with this project by contacting us to review the list of sites that we have prepared for each trail and offering insight or more details on any sites, areas or touring routes that are or should be included.



*"Two roads diverged and I—
I took the one less traveled by."*

*wrote poet Robert Frost in
The Road Not Taken.*



More Contributors

Supporters (\$50-\$99)

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Joli Winer and Cecil Sweeny
Sarah Woellhof
Deanne and Earl Wright
Mark and Amy Wulfemeyer
Dewey Ziegler
Peabody State Bank

Thank You!

Experiencing Wildlife While Hunting

By Bill Browning

Saturday afternoon I took my deer rifle to my favorite stand which is actually just an old coyote den (It fits my rump and provides a little level shelf for my legs.) high on a hill of prairie grass that looks west down to a wooded stream—I think you know the place, about a mile southeast from our house.

The stand is a hundred and fifty feet above the stream and just across the creek from where I planted an acre of wheat. The distance to the wheat is 300 yards—way too long for a shot, but great viewing range.

It warmed to about 50 degrees and in the full sun with only a slight southeast breeze, about as comfortable as it gets sitting on a Kansas hill in December. I was dressed warmly.

After half an hour I heard some whistling or shrieking to my south where a wooded draw runs down to the creek. I scanned the area and saw no movement, but about 10 minutes later saw a huge bird sitting atop a cottonwood snag. Visibility in that direction was difficult because of the sun's angle. I looked at the bird through my binoculars. The light was that kind of suffused yellow glow that filmmakers used to go for. In the background of the cottonwood I could make out a coyote loping toward me. The bird sat in the tree for half an hour and flew away while I was watching the deer below me. I didn't see it in flight.

The deer watching was great. I had sat down about 3:30 and there were already deer on the wheat—finally as many as ten does and three different bucks. I watched them drift up and down the field and finally a flock of eleven tom turkeys walked out among them (turkeys love wheat) and they all grazed together—the two species taking no note of each other.

The afternoon drifted along like this. Four times I very plainly heard the whistle of the Santa Fe freight trains as they passed through Cassoday twenty miles west of me. It was that kind of day.

At dusk the toms flew up to a roost next to the creek and the best buck of the day, a very balanced ten pointer, stood up from his brushy bedding area below me and walked away from me

into the woods. Before dark an eight point with a very white rack appeared across the draw south of me and laid down in the grass for half an hour before being joined by a doe before disappearing east over the hill.

I hunted the same location the next morning but arrived too early so I laid on my back in the grass watching the stars slowly fade. The turkeys left their roost about as soon as there was any visibility and again milled about through the deer. It was a record number of deer for this stand that morning—23 does and fawns along with three bucks. Nine of the does were traveling as a herd, apparently badly spooked by something that happened way east of me. I watched them traveling intently to the west, finally disappearing into our big open pastures southwest of our ranchhouse—a place I would consider to be a very secure protected location for them.

On my way out of the pasture I saw a large bird again, this time perched atop a high pole gate. Its head was a bronzy color. After a few seconds of perusing him with my binoculars he took off revealing the very discrete under-wing patches of a juvenile golden eagle—a rare sight in Greenwood County, only the second time I have seen one in 27 years of living here.

Having once or twice used a predator call to trick coyotes into approaching me, I put things together this way: The noise I heard the afternoon before was the eagle capturing a cottontail. The coyote heard it too and came running.



Enjoying Wildlife

Coldwater Birding, May 7

Reserve May 7, 2005 for a great time in the Red Hills of southcentral Kansas around Coldwater. Community leaders will again be sponsoring a Birding Festival in conjunction with other events in the community. One couldn't ask for better hospitality. Committee women Clara Louthan, Johnita Stalcup and Evelyn Reed make birders feel at home. In 2002 that included the special treat of seeing a beautiful Painted Redstart at Coldwater Lake. Lunch will be served at Deer Trail Camp, and the plan is to visit the Turner Ranch and possibly end the day with a Hog Roast in the ground at Louthan farm. E-mail a note of interest to "Bud & Clara Louthan" <louthan@giantcomm.net>

Sam, The Birdman

By Martha Seaton

A birdman named Sam on Ambergris Caye (key) heard the call of a yellow-throated euphonia.

"He calls for his mate: They're always a pair. The wind from a hurricane must have blown him this far. Do you hear? Over there! Whoee! Whoee!" Sam answered a call, he was sure would bring the bird nearer to all.

But we didn't hear. We could only see in the tippy top of a sea-grape tree, a roadside hawk as big as an owl. "Look high! Up there!" We exclaimed with a "Wow!" when a yellow throat flashed just beneath in the air.

"Bravo for you! I was unaware!" said Birdman Sam as he scratched his ear.

Sam the birdman from Crooked Tree, now heard the call of a great kiskadee for a thicket of three gumbo limbo trees. And he happily tromped to the place he was sure the sound came from while we spoke not a word. A few twigs cracked and a wing-flap flew nearly causing Sam to fly away too, towards that sound we wished we could hear.

But a glance to the sky instead brought "Three Cheers!" when white Pelicans in a victory V bid us "Good Day" as they tipped toward the sea.

"I almost missed that!" shouted Sam with surprise. "It's plain to see who here is using his eyes."

We next followed Sam to the edge of a wood where a secretive ovenbird hid and we stood the longest time watching for telltale signs: an eye-ring or crown, till a catbird flew by. It was black as a crow but somehow more blue and it didn't meow like we wanted it to. But a white-fronted parrot that screeched from a cage had us happily checking our guide for the page where we read "wood edges".

"Yes!" we hollered "That's it!"

While Sam beckoned us back with a "Pwik, pwik, pwik."

It must have been noon when we walked through a yard where bright clothes on lines and bushes of flowers captured all our attention except for a dog whose barking and growling oddly frightened no bird.

Neither "Warbler!" nor "Grosbeak!" nor "Thrush!" nor "Chat!" Sam rushed right in towards a deep shady patch, when one of us reached for a pen from her sack:

"I've forgotten my backpack! Behind in the jeep! My glasses! My field guide!" We all sped to see. But before we arrived we saw Sam coming back with the culprit beside him; he'd followed his tracks.

Just read the sand prints of this jail-looking bird. You and the judge will hear this one for sure!"

Birdman Sam—the best in Belize—walked along dikes between lakes filled with reeds where plovers and herons and egrets and snipes dipped down to nibble what came into sight. He thought he heard antshrikes and crakes, yes, and coots while we watched the water and wished we had boots when we crossed over wide reptile trails on the ridge. As the sun set, our hopes set—alone!—not with his. He fearlessly followed a shy cuckoo's "Gaw" down mudslope to briar while we stood way to far to see what lay hiding down there in the brush.

When "Snap!" a crocodile missed an ibis, which took to the heavens we wished we could fly,

"The mangrove cuckoo!" was Sam's crowning cry."

**"And a glossy ibis!
My, oh my!"**



A Gray Catbird in Belize in winter may be this same bird along a Kansas roadside in summer!



Dick and Martha Seaton

Bob McElroy

Bob wrote two previous newsletter columns under the title **"A view from the Prairie"** based on his family's heritage in western Kansas. As a surgeon he has also traveled throughout the world, served three years in the Ethiopian bush, and has since regularly traveled to Haiti, performing life saving surgery at every turn. He traveled most recently to Nicaragua and we requested this article.

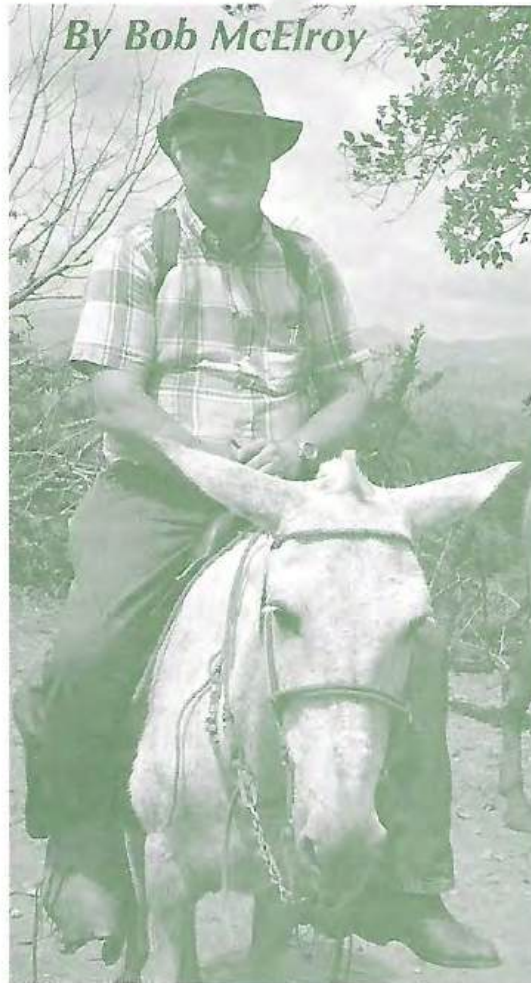
Nicaragua

A trip to Batalete

By Bob McElroy

In February 2003 I had the opportunity to spend ten days in Nicaragua. A portion of the time was spent diving at Little Corn Island forty-five miles off the eastern Nicaraguan coast, and five days were spent visiting remote medical stations in the mountainous interior of northern Nicaragua. An organization called Provoidenic, which runs or supervises a series of thirty-two medical stations in remote portions of Nicaragua where there are no other medical or governmental service was the initiator of this visit. Many stations are beyond the road and reached only by mule, and most of the people they serve live in rural poverty of various degrees of severity. The medical stations or clinics are usually initiated by villages that ask Provoidenic to help them organize themselves into forming a committee of village leaders, who then become a governing board of sorts. This board then appoints a health promoter, who comes to Managua for nine to ten weeks of intensive training in public health, childhood nutrition, infant rehydration, sanitary wells and privies, and so forth. Needless to say, these promoters are highly motivated and intelligent - even if many can barely read and write.

We were almost five hours out of Managua when we pulled off the road near a tin roofed house



with racks of drying coffee, a line of small Nicaraguan horses, and a few mules. Two men were shelling coffee beans with a wooden mortar and pestle of exactly the same design I had seen in rural Africa. We were standing on a ridge overlooking a long valley that sloped away to the north, and there were moderately sized rock-ribbed mountains or monoliths punctuating the horizon. There were deep valleys filled with tall, broad-leaved trees - many with limbs covered by vines and bromeliads - and Spanish moss hung from tall, bearded oaks. Carlos, a Provoidenic supervisor and our guide, pointed to Batalete - our destination seven kilometers away that was visible with its red roofed school. Within half an hour, the pack

animals were loaded and I was pointed to a mule, who stoically allowed a large Norte Americano to climb onto his back, and we headed down the steep muddy trail.

Despite the tall trees, we were in cattle country that is progressively being torn out of the forest. Nicaragua has lost half of its forest to deforestation because of conversion to pastures for cows, and these areas are well defined by barbed wire fences with wooden posts set close together. Many of the posts, if left unattended, will sprout branches and require frequent trimming to keep

the fence line from turning into a row of trees. At the bottom of the valley we forded a small stream where a massive tree stands guard. I was told that it was a balsa tree, and it was completely embraced by the multiple arms of a strangler fig. Flocks of a small, greenish, parrot-like bird called a blue rumped parrotlet would fill a tree with noise and activity and just as quickly disappear. Turkey vultures would circle endlessly in the sky, and twice during the day I saw them joined by the spectacular swallow tailed kite - the vultures equal in soaring and staying aloft without apparent effort. I began to regret not bringing a Central American bird book as many of these birds were later positively identified from a reference in the Topeka library.

Batalete is a collection of a few houses, a clinic, a church and a school clustered on the side of a hill. It was a surprise that the clinic had running water, including a shower and flush toilet. The water and school have come since the community organized itself for the clinic, discovering through group action what could be done to improve living conditions. The children appeared healthy and well fed despite their apparent poverty, and a group of seven to ten year olds were playing baseball in an empty cow lot without a bat or gloves. The batter threw the ball in the air and hit it with an over hand swing, and then ran the bases - if not thrown out - while watching carefully where he stepped. The children argued loudly over who was safe or out. These poor kids, how underprivileged they were not to have computer games or TV.

The clinic was filled with patients seeing the health promoter who, despite his very limited training, appeared to give appropriate treatment or advice. We were asked to see a three-year-old child who had a swollen face, abdomen and ankles and who had had a high fever several weeks ago accompanied by a rash. My guess was glomerulonephritis following scarlet fever, but no lab was available and he was given antibiotics empirically. Later, the health promoters reported to the Provodenic supervisors and to the director the number of patients seen, homes visited, vaccinations given, sanitary wells dug, chickens distributed, etc. Their dramatic results belie the idea that years of medical school are necessary to make a difference.

In the morning, my friend from Pasadena gave a lecture on asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia and

I talked on the care of abscess and lacerations, being careful to remember who I was talking to. They were especially eager to practice suturing with the laceration kits I had brought.

When I was not in the clinic, I scanned the hillside for birds. There were numerous humming birds and small creepers among the branches. I thought the robin-sized bird with a bright orange chest must have been one of the varieties of trogon, and the small back bird with a red rump was a scarlet rumped tanager. I also distinctly heard a tufted titmouse. In the evening, I wandered up onto a ridge overlooking a wooded valley and was rewarded by the deep throated barking of a troop of howler monkeys. After a supper of rice and beans, the third time for the day, we were invited to a church service in the local Catholic church. The small cement brick church had a

A ripple of hope



Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope...

~Robert F. Kennedy

packed dirt floor and was quite dark except for a half dozen finger candles placed along the wall. The songs were all sung standing and with excellent guitar accompaniment, and a lay "administrator of the word" talked about grace, redemption, forgiveness and love. It was as if we had returned to a first century church.

The next morning, as we rode back to the road, the clouds covered the hills and the trees glistened with moisture. The birds were in full voice and I saw a large, black flapping bird with a long, colored bill that must have been a keel billed toucan. At the road, I climbed off of the mule with regret that the trip was nearly over. What a beautiful land. What gracious people. What problems there are, but what promise exists.

If you live near Leavenworth, Emporia or in central Kansas

Local Audubon Chapters Need You, Please Apply!

Three local Audubon chapters in Kansas are looking for additional leadership. The rewards of volunteer chapter leadership are extensive. It is an ideal way for you to utilize leadership and organizational skills. Chapter leaders invariably expand their friendships, and broaden their knowledge of nature, conservation issues and their community. They help organize and enjoy events, educational meetings and field trips.

Obviously, all eleven local Audubon Societies in Kansas, and AOK, always welcome additional active members and po-

tential leaders. In our partnership role, we at AOK want to use this opportunity to assist local leaders with recruitment in central Kansas (including the greater Great Bend/Hutchinson area), the Emporia area, and in counties along the Missouri River including Leavenworth and nearby communities.

If you are interested in assisting please send us an e-mail at aok@audubonofkansas.org and we will share it with local leaders and get back to you. Your involvement and leadership, and your contribution of time and talent will be greatly appreciated.



Chapter News

Wichita Audubon Society Celebrating 50th with a BioBlitz and Ken Kaufman

The Wichita Audubon Society celebrated its 50th anniversary with a weekend of events September 25-26. Our special guest was Kenn Kaufman, noted author, speaker, birder, and alumnus of Wichita Audubon. At Chaplin Nature Center we held a BioBlitz - an intense 24 hour survey to identify as many species of living things as we could.

Scientists from numerous disciplines helped out.

Caleb Morse of the Kansas Biological Survey found 40 species of lichens! Birding was a little slow, but Ken Kaufman, Gene Young, Jeff Cox and Kevin Groeneweg located 74 species. Craig Freeman, Charlie Hunter and David Van Tassel found 275 species of plants, including 23 county records and one state record. Travis Taggart and Curtis Schmidt from the Sternberg Museum with Eddie Stegall and Riley Kemmer found 13 species of herps and 7 species of mammals. Scott Campbell from the Kansas Biological Survey and students from Southwestern College seined and trapped 20 species of fish. Roy Beckemeyer identified 164 species of invertebrates. The total count was 547 species.

On Saturday the public was invited to our Fall Nature Day where they watched the scientists in action, saw some specimens that had been found, and helped tag Monarch butterflies. Saturday evening we held a banquet at the Wichita Art Museum, with Kenn Kaufman as the speaker. Kenn talked about the plight of so many of our birds, and the need for birders to reach out and share our love of nature with a larger public. A slide show of pictures from the last fifty years showed on the screen as members reminisced about all the good times. The weekend concluded with about 35 people birding with Kenn on a beautiful Sunday morning at Chisholm Creek Park.

--Patty Marlett



Jayhawk Audubon Society Sponsors Eagles Day Event January 23...

Plan to Attend the 9th Annual Eagles Day in Lawrence, Sunday, January 23, 2005. The Jayhawk Audubon Society will again sponsor this major conservation and educational event focused on Bald Eagles. Begun in 1997, each year the event draws nearly 25 participating organizations including: non-profit groups, city, state and federal agencies and business co-sponsors. There will be lots of hands-on activities for kids as well as presentations each hour beginning 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. There will be live Golden and Bald Eagles, other wildlife, and numerous displays for the entire family to enjoy. Program Presenters will talk about banding Bald Eagles in Kansas; Eagles and other Raptors; and Native American Songs and Dances. The event will be held in Building 21 of the Douglas County Fairgrounds.

...And Rallies Protection For Haskell/Baker Wetlands

After years of involvement in the public hearings concerning alignments of the South Lawrence Trafficway (SLT), the Jayhawk Audubon Society (JAS) Board recently voted to join other plaintiffs in appealing the decision of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The USACE selected a route called the "32B" alignment, which will not only put the Trafficway through the Haskell/Baker Wetlands, but it also proposes to move 31st Street south of its current location and through the wetlands. When all lanes of the two roadways are built, it would put up to 10 lanes of traffic through the Wetlands.

For many years JAS cooperated with Baker University and others to co-sponsor an annual Wetlands Field Day. Each year at the end of April, hundreds of people came from across the state to experience the Wetlands and participate in the variety of educational activities offered by numerous groups and agencies. JAS believes that this amount of disruption, fill, noise, and potential pollution associated with the highway will cause irreparable harm to the Wetlands. Among of the principal concerns are the loss of the wetland wildlife habitat acres, the extensive loss of the educational value of the wetlands during and after the road construction, and the tenuous nature of wetlands mitigation.

From the outset, JAS's position has consistently been to not oppose the concept of the SLT, but rather, to insist that the KS Department of Transportation genuinely and honestly give serious and thorough consideration of a south of the river (the Wakarusa River) alignment. JAS's first comments to this effect were filed in 1987. Unfortunately, because KDOT

never adequately addressed this option during the intervening years, significant additional residential dwellings have been built in this area.

Other litigants involved in the appeal include the four indigenous tribes of Kansas, and other organizations devoted to preserving Baker Wetlands. The lawsuit may be filed in federal district court soon.

--Joyce Wolf

Smoky Hills Audubon Chapter Builds Observation Blind

The Smoky Hills Audubon Chapter has been constructing an observation blind at our sanctuary over the last five years. The blind is located at the upper end of our pond, and from it one can view most of the water surface and shoreline. It is set on timber piers with the deck about four feet above the ground and there are windows on each of the seven sides to allow for good views of the ducks and geese, shore birds, muskrats, water turtles, frogs, trees, sunrises and sunsets.

The blind was designed by Jay Bailey, a long time Audubon member, and the piers and deck were built by Jay and his buddies in 1998. In 2000 the walls and roof were constructed, and in 2001 the stairs, railings, and red shingle roof were added by Troy Schmidt and his scout helpers of Troop 5 in Salina. Ian Wing and his scout helpers added a fir siding over the chipboard walls and also boxed in the window and door trim.

The latest work on this project occurred this spring when members of our chapter applied a waterproofing stain to the siding and trim. It has been nice to have so many volunteers helping with the building. Although we do not yet have any closers for the windows or door to keep out the rain and snow, we are sure enjoying the wonderful views.

--Marge Streckfus



Reinstates Spillway to Maintain Man-made Wetland

Monday, August 23rd was a RED LETTER DAY for the Smoky Hills Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary. Chapter leaders and conservation friends were finally able to replace the undermined, cracked, broken and collapsed concrete slabs on the spillway. The washed out tunnels under the slabs were successfully filled with a "Flowable Concrete" up to two feet thick. Then, reinforced concrete averaging 5 1/2 inches thick topped the "new" spillway off.

Audubon members Ray Lear, Charlie May, and Bob Highgate assisted sanctuary committee chairman Harold Lear with the concrete pour. Nancy Highgate was the "official observer" and was able to go down the slope to the spillway floor on her new hip with the aid of a walker.

Dianne Dir, District Conservationist of **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (NRCS), enlisted six people from the NRCS and Saline County Conservation District to help with the "heavy lifting" including the shoveling, screening and troweling of the pour.

Burroughs Audubon Society Salutes Gas-Electric Escape, and Joins Apollo Alliance

Burroughs Audubon Society of Greater Kansas City was pleased to take part in a press conference commending Ford Motor Company on the production of the first gas-electric hybrid sport-utility vehicle (SUV), the Ford Escape, near Ford Motor's Claycomo, MO manufacturing plant on Wednesday, August 4th. Our vice-president, Jill DeWitt, made a brief statement to the press expressing our group's congratulations to Ford for attempting to market a more energy efficient and cleaner running vehicle. Another facet of the press conference was the announcement, locally, of an exciting new coalition of environmental groups, urban leaders and labor unions called the Apollo Alliance. Integrating environmental preservation with U.S. job protections is the focus of the Apollo Alliance, which is seeking to create 3 million new green jobs and end U.S. dependence on foreign oil within 10 years. Burroughs is proud of our conservation focus, as a cleaner environment, through thoughtful means, ultimately equates with helping save the birds and habitats we all love!

Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society Launches 28 Acre Prairie Restoration in Park

Surveys conducted by the city of Manhattan and public response in meetings have shown that there is a growing public interest in outdoor, nature related activities. With the purchase by Manhattan of an eighty-acre field (now Northeast Park), an opportunity arose to incorporate this type of "natural area" into a public space. Individuals interested in wildlife and wildlife habitat formed a group to initiate the planning and development of this natural area. This group, consisting of FHAS members, neighbors of the new park and other interested persons, developed a plan for restoration of the prairie and development of a wildlife woodlands in the southeast quarter of the park. The goal was to initiate

the process and coordinate efforts with the city for development of this site. The plan was presented to the Manhattan Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and subsequently accepted by the Manhattan Parks Board.

In 2002, the Northern Flint Hills chapter of the Audubon Society reseeded 28 acres of an old milo field in Northeast Park. Native grasses and wildflowers were planted and many volunteer hours were spent weeding out annual pests such as cockle-burr and musk thistle.

Initiated by a memorial fund, the NFHAS also developed the Cecil Best Birding trail in Northeast Park through a riparian area along the old Blue River channel. The forest restoration area being developed follows the park's eastern boundary and is a continuation of existing riparian woodland containing the birding trail. This area has been planted with a mixture of approximately 360 native trees and shrubs, providing not only an excellent transition between existing woodlands and the newly seeded prairie, but also prime habitat for migrating and local birds as well as other native wildlife.

Topeka Chapter Builds Partnerships

Topeka Audubon Society leaders take pride in the chapter's partnerships with other organizations and agencies to support local conservation and environmental efforts. AOK Board Members Paul Willis and Evelyn Davis have served for two years with a local community partnership working on a natural resource plan for Shawnee County. Other Audubon members have worked with Topeka Public Works to offer public guidance in the development of the Garfield Wetlands, a "green" city stormwater management project. The Topeka Parks & Recreation Department has also requested and welcomed recommendations from TAS for restoring/enhancing native grass areas in city parks. The chapter provides monetary support to Stone Nature Center and some members volunteer assistance. Stone Nature Center is a wildlife rehabilitation facility as well as an educational facility and is used by Topeka and surrounding area schools.

Wings N Wetlands Weekend **Great Bend, April 29 - May 1, 2005**

Register now to enjoy a "natural" weekend of birding, education, networking, fabulous sunsets, and fun! Bird watchers of every experience level will discover something wonderful.

For more information, Great Bend Convention & Visitors Bureau, 620-792-2750, or information@visitgreatbend.com **Website:** www.visitgreatbend.com/wnw2005 (download registration)

Meet Audubon Staff



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Scott Morrill, Office Manager
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LeAnn Bauman, Graphic Designer;
Ryan Klataske
KSU Student Assistants

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LeAnn Bauman

LeAnn Bauman is responsible for the great design of this publication. She is also doing the graphic design for the new Birding and Natural Heritage Trails foldout guide and website. LeAnn is a senior in graphic design and photography at Kansas State University. She currently works with Audubon of Kansas on a part time basis and is scheduled to graduate in December.

Her design expertise and enthusiasm for outdoor activities has been a great asset to AOK. She enjoys all aspects of photography and hiking in her spare time. LeAnn also has an avid interest in other cultures. She has pursued this interest through such active endeavors as karate, ballet and yoga as well as through attending plays and eating at ethnic restaurants. LeAnn is a native of Sabetha, where she grew up on a dairy farm, noted for registered Brown Swiss, with three sisters.



LeAnn Bauman

Scott Morrill

Audubon of Kansas has a new part-time office manager and administrative assistant. Scott Morrill joined the staff on November 15th and he will normally work in the office on weekday afternoons 1:30 to 5 p.m. Scott will assist with membership services, communication, outreach, and office management.

Scott is a Manhattan native and he served for six years as the Executive Director of Manhattan Main Street, a downtown revitalization organization with ties to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For the past five years Scott has worked as the Operations Manager for a group of family owned retail businesses. In the early 1990's Scott worked in television advertising and he has been a production assistant on the Bill Snyder Show since 1991. Scott is a graduate of York (NE) College and he attended Kansas State University while majoring in Business Administration.

Scott and his wife Melissa have a 5-year old son named Brent and a 2-year old daughter named Maggie.



Scott Morrill

The following is a reprint of the text provided by the Kansas Wildlife Federation when presenting the award noted in February 2003:

Conservationist of the Year

Throughout his career, Ron Klataske has been a relentless advocate for wildlife. As Associate Editor for Wyoming Wildlife, West Central Regional Vice President of the National Audubon Society, and now Executive Director of Audubon of Kansas, Ron has spent thirty-four years working for sound wildlife programs, environmental policies, and wildlife-friendly farm programs at the statewide, regional and national levels. He developed proposals to establish a Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve on a willing-seller, willing buyer basis, first with the Barnard Ranch in Oklahoma in 1983 and then with the Spring Hill (Z-Bar) Ranch in Chase County in 1989.

Ron has always been dedicated to preservation of the Flint Hills. He is currently promoting various strategies to reward and support the good stewardship of landowners. He has produced a wonderful poster of the Flint Hills, reminding us of the fact that they are among the last remnants of the tallgrass prairie on the North American continent.

He has effectively drawn public attention to issues about windpower development proposals. He was the first to sound the alarm about the potential detrimental impact on prairie chickens. An authoritative report has now projected that windpower facilities will adversely effect prairie chickens.

With the support of a diverse board and Audubon chapter, Ron has directed a successful organization focusing on grassland conservation initiatives, prairie preservation, development of birding/nature tourism trails throughout Kansas, and improved management of highway roadsides.

Ron's work in Nebraska included establishment of an Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary along the Platte River and wildlife festival. He spearheaded defeat of several projects that would have drastically dewatered

the river. He lead other protection efforts including major work getting the Niobrara River in northern Nebraska designated as a national scenic river. Audubon of Kansas is now establishing an endowed 4,500 acre wildlife sanctuary along the Niobrara River.

Ron and Carol were among the first Kansans to place a conservation easement on native prairie in the Flint Hills. Wildlife conservation is an equal priority with livestock grazing and other practices on the 1,175 acres of their land—an example being an effort to reestablish a small colony of prairie dogs near a historical town location eradicated decades earlier. The Klataskes also foster the hunting heritage by hosting father-daughter turkey hunts and other sportsmen/sportswomen activities.



Wishing to share credit, Ron knows the value of partnerships and attributes all of which he attributes his successes. With respect to this effective approach and his personal lifelong dedication to wildlife, it is an honor for the Kansas Wildlife Federation to recognize Ron Klataske as the Kansas Conservationist of the Year for 2002.

PRAIRIE WINGS is published by Audubon of Kansas, Inc. Two editions are planned in 2005. Layout and graphic design is the work of LeAnn Bauman. Additional assistance provided by Linda Vescio, Scott Morrill and Ryan Klataske. Unless otherwise indicated photography provided by Ron Klataske. Photos from Nicaragua provided by Bob McElroy; photos on pages 24-25 the work of LeAnn Bauman, Patty Marlett and Harold Lear. Photos of Jenny Sundgren Baker and Colleen Dorothy Foote provided by the families. Photo illustration on page 24 features LeAnn, Ryan Klataske and Rachael Strouts.

The Audubon Family, Conservation Community and Friends

By Ron Klataske



Bell's Vireo

Jenny Sundgren Baker *1979 - 2003*

When we recently reprinted the "PROTECT THE FLINT HILLS" poster, we dedicated it to "the memory of Jenny Sundgren Baker and her love for Flint Hills land and wildlife."

As expressed by her parents Steve and Jacque Sundgren of Rosalia, Jenny's house was on the ranch, but her home was on the land. Her spirit was much like the wildflowers that grew in her garden and it matched the openness of the prairies. She might have been considered as "un-harnessed" as the wind by many.

She followed in the family's footsteps of generations of love for the land and wildlife, and the ranching way of life. She once said when she was little, "I feel closest to God when I'm checking cows with Dad in the pastures." Like her parents, she was devoted to protection of the Flint Hills and conservation of wildlife.

Active in 4-H and valedictorian of her high school class of 1997, Jenny went on to KSU for a degree in psychology and business and a minor in gerontology. She married Shane Baker and became Administer of Vintage Place retirement home in Derby. At age 24 Jenny had many dimensions of dedication to friends young and old, and family. Some of us got to know Jenny as she frequently accompanied her parents to meetings considering the fate of the Flint Hills in Butler County. We can only contemplate the many ways that Jenny might have contributed in the future to our world of ranching culture, conservation, elder care, friends and family.



Colleen Dorothy Foote 1979 - 2004

Colleen Dorothy Foote, 24, Bucyrus, KS, passed away May 6, 2004. She was born December 19, 1979, in Kansas City, MO, to Robert and Gail (Niehaus) Foote. She graduated from St. Thomas Aquinas High School in 1998, and from Kansas State University in 2002. She was a member of the Delta Delta Delta sorority. She was to be married on May 15, 2004, at Queen of the Holy Rosary to Justin Stein of Salina, KS. Colleen was best known for her smile, her wit, her ability to take charge, her courage, her class, and above all, her faith in God.

Her parents, Bob and Gail Foote recently acquired the 10,000 acre "Aye Ranch" southeast of Manhattan. The property will be in good hands, and it will become a signature element of the family's cattle operation. Prior to this purchase, the Foote family became involved in Tallgrass Ranchers and the effort by other ranch landowners and friends to preserve the existing character of the Flint Hills. We met and were impressed by Colleen at the recent Wind and Prairie Task Force public comment meeting in Manhattan. Such involvement is a reflection of this entire family's support for traditional stewardship values.



Lou Christiansen 1936 - 2004.

When it came to the Niobrara River, Lou was always there, whether he was speaking out against the Norden Dam as a member of Save The Niobrara River Association, arranging and guiding canoe trips on the river for reporters and dignitaries, working at booths at the State Fair, or speaking out for scenic river designation. On his outfitting trips down the river, Lou never missed a chance to point out to canoers the awesome beauty and unique qualities of the Niobrara and the need for people to get involved to protect it. Lou's last involvement was as President of Friends of the Niobrara, Inc.

As pointed out by our friend Bruce Kennedy of Malcolm, NE: "We have lost another great advocate for the Niobrara River. We feel sadness and detachment. But I can assure you that these great ones such as Connie Bowen, Loren Wilson, Loring Kuhre, Fred Thomas, Franklin and Lillie Egelhoff, and now Lou Christiansen, did not leave without first instilling in us their appreciation, their sense of involvement, and their vision for this wonderful river valley."

Lou was our good friend. He made at least three trips to Washington D.C. to help lobby for National Scenic River Designation for the 76 mile stretch of the Niobrara from Valentine to Newport. He worked tirelessly for what he believed in—the river and his friends.

In June of 1995 Lou, Fred Thomas, former Omaha World Herald Environmental Editor, Peter A.A. Berle, President of the National Audubon Society at the time, and I shared our dream of canoeing together from the headwaters of the Niobrara as it leaves Wyoming to its confluence with the Missouri. My dream remains to have Peter come back out and to do that trip, now in honor of Lou and Fred. Ideally, others will join us, maybe in the spring of 06.



Lou Christiansen (right) out conoeing with Peter A. A. Burley (left).

Invitation Red Buffalo Ranch

Patty Horton of Sedan and Audubon of Kansas are teaming up to offer a fun-filled day of birding and other touring activities at the Red Buffalo Ranch just west of Sedan on Saturday, April 30th, 2005. Patty manages activities associated with the Butcher Falls Nature Center on the Red Buffalo Ranch, a 5,000 acre ranch owned by Bill Kurtis. Nearly four miles of maintained trails are available. They cross the Middle Caney River twice in this very unique cross-timbers region. This blend of rivers, prairie and riparian forests provides a rich habitat for many unusual species of plants and a strong migration of birds should be evident on the last day of April in southern Kansas.

It's not hard to find Belted Kingfishers patrolling the streams, gliding noisily past an occasional Spotted Sandpiper or a pair of Wood Ducks. In the treetops near the charming River Cabin a patient birder is sure to spot the Northern Parula Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Indigo Buntings and/or Great-Crested Flycatcher. Participants will be invited to explore all or part of the trail system individually or with a guide. Others may enjoy focusing in on the comfort of a wrap-around porch on the newly constructed visitor's building that overlooks Butcher Falls. The gift shop inside serves Lost Trail Root Beer floats and brisket sandwiches.

A land-rover ride will be offered to see a very large eagle nest, and participants can also take a horse for (mule) drawn wagon ride to Prairiehenge, the rock sculpture created by noted Kansas artist Stan Herd.

For registrants who arrive on Friday or want to stay until Sunday, a total of eight very comfortable and inviting rooms are available in Ranch Guest House, The River Cabin and The Livery B&B. These accommodations and ranch activities have been featured in the New York Times and the CBS Morning News. The Red Buffalo goal is to enhance the "prairie experience" for all visitors. Other lodging and camping options are available in nearby communities.

We will also be birding at other nearby hotspots during the day, including the Sedan City Lakes featured in the Tallgrass "Prairie Parkway" Birding and Natural Heritage Trail. In fact, late April would be a great time to take the trail and tour other sites en route to and from Sedan—a community that is working toward a renaissance with historical renovations, and antique, art and gift shops.

The only costs at the ranch will be \$5 for wagon tours and \$7.50 for lunch. The special lodging rate for all accommodations on the ranch is \$40 per person based on double occupancy. Rooms with queen beds will be \$65 for two people. Reservations are on a first come basis. Make reservations by calling Patty at 888-522-5089 (toll free), e-mail: rbgift@ksok.biz. The website is www.theredbuffalo.com

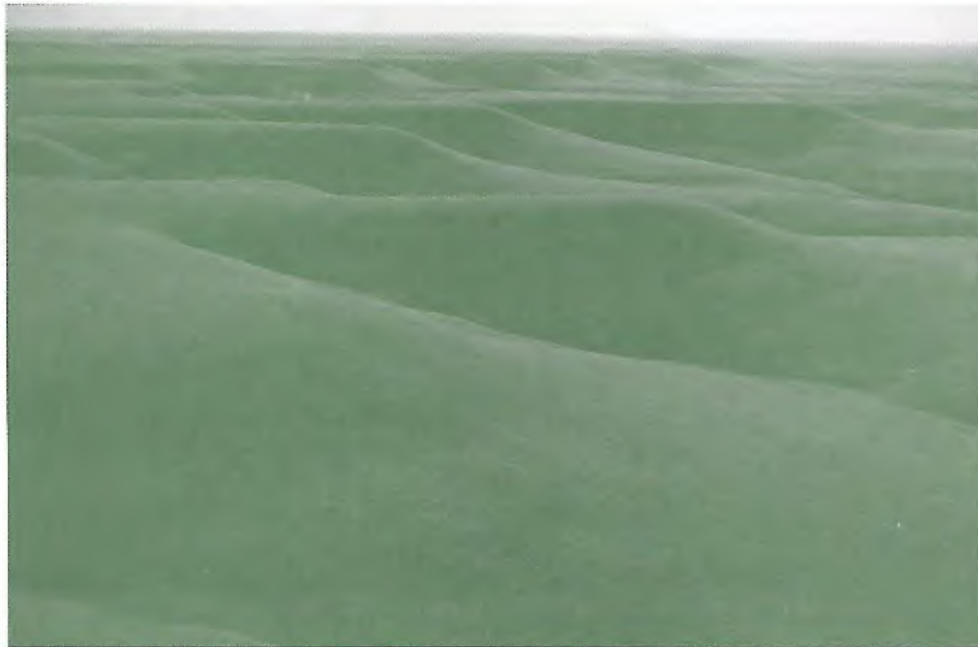


As a service to members and supporters and to create additional partnerships, Audubon of Kansas welcomes opportunities to co-sponsor nature appreciation and conservation related events of regional or statewide interest with other organizations, nature centers and resource agencies, communities and business leaders--and of course local Audubon chapters.



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Posters Featuring a Beautiful View of the Flint Hills Prairie Landscape (with a photo taken near Beaumont), and Brochures Featuring Native Wildflowers, Grasses and Shrubs are Available for all Occasions

Please let us know if you have a booth at any event or want to make posters available to others at any meeting. We can provide a supply for you and your friends. It is important that we do all we can to educate, enlighten and empower others about the importance of preserving our remaining native prairie landscapes.