



# THE PRAIRIE FALCON

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## Partners in Environmental Planning: Conflict, Consensus and Compromise

*Ockert Fourie*

Different groups and individuals have different interests and expectations of environmental planning and policy. The Audubon Society and other groups with similar goals, serve as custodians of our natural environment. The property rights of individuals, and the expectations and interests of the Community as a whole, are additional aspects that have to be taken into consideration. The different interest groups can make an important contribution to environmental planning and policy development, through a process of collaboration, consultation and partnership. Planners in the public sector are required to bring together all of these divergent community views and interests. They work toward attaining consensus, and to prevent or resolve conflict, when developing plans and policies and making decisions.

Ockert Fourie, Senior Planner in the Community Development Department for the City of Manhattan, is responsible for carrying out and supervising all aspects of long range planning, including research and analysis, the preparation of plans and plan updates, and coordinating the use and distribution of demographic and economic information.

Ockert worked for several years as an Exploration and Mining Geologist in South Africa. He obtained his Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning, and after 12 years as a planner in South Africa, relocated with his family to Canada, in 1986. In Canada, he worked as policy and research planner, with a particular focus on environmental planning. In 1998, Ockert expanded his experience to the United States and, before his present position, worked as planner for the City of Wilmington in North Carolina.

*Before each program we invite our speakers to join us for an informal dinner and discussion. Feel free to join us this month at Marco Polo Restorante. We will meet for dinner at 5:45 p.m. The program begins at 7:30 PM. Refreshments are served after every meeting. Please bring your own cup. All meetings are open to the public.*

**Wednesday, June 21, 2000**

**5:45 p.m. Preprogram Dinner with Guest Speaker -Marco Polo Restorante**

**7:30 p.m. Program, Rm. 1014, Throcknorton Hall**

### BEGINNING BIRDWATCHING WALK

Join us Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup> and every second Saturday at 8 a.m. in the Ackert/Durland parking lot on the KSU campus. We will carpool to a local birding hotspot, and should return by about 11 a.m. Birders of every age and interest level are welcomed; children are especially encouraged to attend. Call Dave Rintoul, 532-6663 or e-mail him at [drintoul@ksu.edu](mailto:drintoul@ksu.edu) for more information.

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## MAY BIRDING

DAVE RINTOUL

*"So the seasons passed, as the ages and the aeons had moved over the region, leaving the history of their moment behind in the Crinoidea of the great limestones. The later creatures vanished into their own stony graveyards, the sea monsters, the silurians, the mammoths and mastodons, the camel and the tiny Eohippus who, tiptoeing like a ballet girl through geologic ages, lost all his five toes but the center one as he grew into a horse, and vanished from the region that proved so friendly when he returned. And when he did come back it was not alone but bearing the carapaced, gold-seeking Spaniard up that ladder of streams that flowed across the Plains, for even this bearded, palefaced man, godlike in his self-created image, had to move from water to water as the buffalo moved, and the pursuing wolves and Indians."*

Mari Sandoz, *Love Song to the Plains* (1961)  
University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln NE

The gold-seeking Spaniard did not find the object of his desire in Kansas, but found something even more priceless. Water. The vast marshes of central Kansas, known, variously as Cibola, Quivera or Quivira, contained sights and sounds that even now fill the days and nights of early summer. Untold numbers of ducks, cranes, herons, terns and shorebirds used these marshes in the days of Coronado; small remnants of these multitudes can still amaze visitors there today. Since June is the peak of breeding bird activity in these marshes, this month's column will concentrate on the avifauna of Quivira NWR and the recently rededicated state wildlife refuge at nearby Cheyenne Bottoms. Hopefully you will get a chance to visit there this month, but, if not, this verbal tour will have to suffice.

Wading birds dominate the scene for the first-time visitor to these marshes. Great Blue Herons, Black-crowned Night-herons, and White-faced Ibis are common summer residents. Few visitors to Cheyenne Bottoms will forget the grating squawk of a Black-crowned Night-heron lifting off from a fishing site along the refuge pools. Great Egrets, Little

Blue Herons and Snowy Egrets can also be found. Cattle Egrets, confined to the Old World in the days of Coronado, are increasingly common sights here in the summer. A closer look will reveal large numbers of more cryptic waders. American Bitterns are abundant at Quivira NWR, and their smaller cousins, the Least Bitterns, can also be readily seen in June as they fly to and fro bringing food to their nestlings. Tricolored Herons (formerly known as Louisiana Herons) are unusual but almost regular in May or June. Last year a Reddish Egret showed up at Cheyenne Bottoms, providing the first Kansas record for this Gulf Coast species. Even smaller marsh birds like King Rail, Virginia Rail, and Sora can be seen (or heard) frequently. One of the more elusive birds in North America, the Black Rail, breeds annually in a hay meadow at the northwest corner of Quivira. This same meadow, recently purchased by the USFWS, also hosts Kansas' only known breeding population of Bobolinks.

Terns are another common sight over the marshlands of Central Kansas this month. Black Terns, a true "prairie-type" tern, spend the summers at Cheyenne Bottoms raising young. The endangered interior Least Tern has had some breeding success at Quivira in recent years, thanks in large part to nesting islands engineered by Dr. Roger Boyd, and built by volunteers from the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society. Forster's Terns also breed sporadically in these marshes, and a couple of years ago some astute Kansas birders found a Gull-billed Tern at Quivira, providing another first state record for another Gulf Coast species. Gulls generally breed further north than Kansas, but the flood season of 1993 induced some Franklin's Gulls to stay and raise young at Cheyenne Bottoms. Occasionally some American White Pelicans spend the summer at Cheyenne Bottoms, and in recent years Western Grebes have been seen with young.

Another unforgettable sight at Cheyenne Bottoms is the large number of swallows. Rough-winged, Barn, and Cliff Swallows are easily found, and their numbers increase throughout the summer. Unfortunately, this abundance of avian predators of flying insects is tightly correlated with an abundance of flying insect prey. Mosquitoes are a fact of life in marshes, and these are no exception. Be prepared to donate a little blood, but remember it is going for a good cause, since the mosquitoes will eventually help to feed the birds!

The raucous cacophony of Yellow-headed Blackbirds mixed with great-tailed grackles adds an indelible aural overlay to this whole scene. There are few birds whose vocal outbursts can match the Great-tailed Grackle, but the out-of-tune short wave radio screeches and whinnies of a Yellow-headed Blackbird provides some pretty stiff competition. Even now I



can shut my eyes and imagine the smells, sounds and visions of these marshes. If you have never been there, or haven't been back in a while, June is the month to make this pilgrimage. You probably won't find any gold, or even any Spanish chain mail, but you will be amply rewarded nonetheless. © 2000 Dave Rintoul

National Audubon Society has entered into partnership agreement with Natural Wonders, the science and nature specialty store. During months of May and June, Audubon brochures will be available in all 182 stores, and members will receive a 15% discount. [naturalwonders.com](http://naturalwonders.com)



**At Pompeii the Romans built gardens next to almost every inn, restaurant, and private residence, most possessing the same basic elements: artfully spaced trees and shrubs, beds of herbs and flowers, pools and fountains, and domestic statuary. When the courtyards were too small to hold much of a garden, their owners painted attractive pictures of plants and animals on the enclosure walls—in open geometric assemblages. Japanese gardens, dating from the Heian period of the ninth to twelfth centuries (and hence ultimately Chinese in origin), similarly emphasize the orderly arrangement of trees and shrubs, open space, and streams and ponds. The trees have been continuously bred and pruned to resemble those of the tropical savanna in height and crown shape. The dimensions are so close as to make it seem that some unconscious force has been at work to turn Asiatic pines and other northern species into African acacias.**

E. O. Wilson, "Biophilia," 1984, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

After the above passage, the author mentions an early trip through Texas. "When Captain R. B. Marcy, on a United States government expedition through the southern plains in 1849, encountered the land around the headwaters of the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, he declared it to be 'as beautiful a country for eight miles as I ever beheld.' 'It was a perfectly level grassy glade, and covered with a growth of large mesquite trees at uniform distances, standing with great regularity, and presenting more the appearance of an immense peach orchard than a wilderness.'"

In 1993, I saw acacia trees in east Africa. The next spring, I traveled to Big Bend National Park in Texas and saw mesquite trees, which are quite similar to acacia trees. I fell in love with their graceful shapes: their light green canopies, their often curving trunks, and even their thorns which seem to add more character. Their tough wood can have unique grain patterns and may be orange or red or reddish brown. When I drove through Uvalde, I saw a sign for a shop which had furniture constructed from this wood. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to stop. Someday, I may see the unique grain patterns, but if a few such desires remain unsatisfied, I will

continue to feel that the world is mysterious.

Mesquite trees do not usually grow large enough to be used for lumber, so their wood is mainly used for firewood. The smoke imparts a wonderful flavor to barbecued food, but I know nothing about it, other than what was imparted by the traces of barbecued meals that became part of me. When visiting my parents in Missouri, I have often pushed rough, locally sawn walnut, cherry, and oak through a thickness planer, and seen the newly-revealed grain. I believe that beautiful grain is produced by a tree which has a hard-bitten character, as if its character has been expressed in the fibers of its being. I do not have the dedication to woodworking that my great Uncle Odus had, so I will never know whether it is possible for the creativity of the tree and the man to merge and become one, as the man savors the act of shaping the wood in his heart.

For me, mesquite trees are mysterious memories from Texas or perhaps from the savannas of Africa. The mystery within my heart makes it more exciting, and I have returned four times to Texas to look down on regularly spaced mesquite trees. Mesquite trees bloom in mid-spring, and if conditions are right, they bloom an additional time or two, and their seeds mature in late summer. I picked up the seed pods one year. The following spring, a bruchid beetle emerged from the seeds. These seeds are poisonous to beetles that usually feed on stored grain, but no one knows what causes the toxicity. The beetle which usually feeds on mesquite seeds has evolved to tolerate the toxic constituent in one of the tight linkages between beetles and trees that has spanned many millennia of unrecorded history. Tight linkages between critters and trees warm my heart somehow. The mesquite tree is one of the most popular nesting sites for many species of birds in central Texas. Apparently the thorns help protect the nestlings. Many species of birds eat both blossoms and seeds. Gambel's and scaled quail eat blossoms in spring and summer, and seeds in fall and winter. Kangaroo rats and javalena eagerly hunt for the seeds. Kangaroo rats often dig a burrow under the protection of the mesquite tree, and

javalenas often bed down in a thickets of mesquite. Thickets are wonderful places for black-tailed jackrabbits, which can obtain half of their food from bark and foliage of this tree.

Several large animals once existed in close relationships with mesquite trees during the Pleistocene era. As they fed on bark and foliage, they surely destroyed some trees, but as they fed on the seed pods, they dispersed the seeds. Such creatures were lost long ago, although some similar creatures continue to survive in Africa. The largest creature with a fondness for mesquite foliage is now a jackrabbit. Extinction events, like the one at the end of the Pleistocene era, extinguish many of the linkages between forms of life, but I can still admire the incredible jackrabbit, and most of all, the tree itself. After livestock were introduced, mesquite thickets became more common. Horses, cattle, and other livestock have a fondness for the seed pods which are about one fourth sugar. The livestock dispersed the seeds along the stage routes and the trails used for cattle drives. Mesquite grew as far north as southwestern Oklahoma originally. It now grows in most of Oklahoma and in southern Kansas. It has not become common in Kansas thus far, because cold weather kills the top of the tree. Honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) is the type of mesquite that is found in Kansas, Oklahoma, and much of Texas. "Honey" refers to sugar which is located mainly in the center of the pod between the seeds. These pods were often used to make a bread that was an important food for many tribes of Native Americans. None-the-less, we have never meddled with the character of this tough tree. It has never experienced "death by domestication" so I can dream of regularly-spaced trees that are independent of people. Even so, when I see a formal garden, I will understand that the gardener and I share the same emotion. Some gardeners have more culture than I have, but perhaps at heart, we both long to sit on a hillside safe from our enemies and look down on a utopia of regularly-spaced plants from the distant past.

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June in the Flint Hills offers constellations by day as well as by night. This is the season when wildflowers go rampant across hayfields and along roadsides. There are not only milky ways but orange juice ways, and ways the color of blueberry wine and raspberry jam, and galaxies where various colors intermingle. In our area the patterns are never the same. I presume seeds blow in or are birded in from elsewhere and that varying weather produces ground-level mini-climates that help some species to prosper one year and not another. But whatever the annual details, the result is the epitome of the term "Elysian Fields."

Then each evening, despite the best efforts of the primroses, all such decorations fade and the flowers of the sky reappear with colors that are only scattered pinpoints in the dark. Rootless, stemless, leafless, they're constantly changing their grouped positions, yet basically into predictable locations at predictable times, and they do not seem to be in competition one with another for space and nutrition. Their competition with the moon for your attention is modulated by the moon's waxing and waning, which could be pointed out to children (and to boorish adults) as a model of the good behavior of taking turns.

Perhaps if viewed from space through high-powered lens, our June ground flowers would appear as a supernova explosion, for they do not last. By early July the white yucca arrays will

have turned to interesting but muted pods and the other colors will be thinning.

Regardless of this progression, Jupiter and Saturn will have begun rising in the dawn, and the summer solstice will occur at 8p48 CDT on June 20<sup>th</sup>, whereupon our daylight will begin shortening again though normally the warm-up begun in spring will continue to accumulate several moons more.

Early on the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> a low waning moon will align with Jupiter and Saturn (Jupiter the brighter, Saturn in the middle), then on the 29<sup>th</sup> an even thinner moon will be below Jupiter and the trio will form a pattern between the Pleiades above and Aldebaran near the horizon. These latter two represent the shoulder and bright eye of Taurus the Bull and this "Taurid zone" reminds everyone that fall and winter are not as far off as may seem.

The moon will be invisibly new, and thus the stars at full bloom all night, on July 1<sup>st</sup>. On the evening of the 4<sup>th</sup> a sharp waxing tip will be just above Regulus, the bright star of Leo. On the 8<sup>th</sup> a half moon will be just above Spica in Virgo. In its growing gibbous phase on the 12<sup>th</sup> it'll be between red Antares of Scorpio, below, and Ophiuchus, the Snake Handler, above.

Ophiuchus appears snake in hand. What I see as his chest and head are formed by a rather spacious outline of stars in the shape of an umbrella tent. The snake, Serpens, passes across his waist or the base of the tent. I find it most clearly

recognized by four stars grouped in two pairs, in a line that's at a somewhat upward angle, left to right. The right-most pair are actually beyond Ophiuchus and are part of a line of stars that soon curves sharply upward, designated as Serpens Caput, or Snake's Head. A matching curve of stars rises to our left of Ophiuchus and is known as Serpens Cauda (Tail).

From my understanding of the story, Ophiuchus, whose other name is Aesculapius, was a physician, including being ship's surgeon on the Argus, who healed by the power of harp music and other means, and is thus associated with a serpent because serpents were considered to be sources of knowledge and healing and/or regeneration. Witness the serpents present on the Caduceus, the medical profession's symbol today.

Regardless of the Serpent's position on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the moon will pass almost directly through the heart of the earth's shadow producing an unusually dark and lengthy eclipse (107 minutes of totality). However you'll have to go to the Rockies and beyond for even a partial glimpse, and to Hawaii to see it all.

Meanwhile, too, from late in June through mid-July an asteroid named Vesta is expected to pass left to right at a downward slant through the upper part of Sagittarius. At 335 miles long with a highly reflective surface it's expected to shine just within the range of naked eye vision.

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## What kinds of programs do you want? Ideas for the next year? COME!

NFHAS - yearly planning meeting is scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. in Throckmorton Hall, Room 1013, across from the lecture hall where the general meeting is each month. You are invited to attend, OR pass your ideas on to one of the members of the board - listed on the back page.

**NFHAS  
PLANNING MEETING**



RESTORATION JOURNAL - REVISITED

In the January Newsletter, Wayne Corn wrote his final article in his Restoration journal Series. He said he would be back in the sprint, but , alas, there have been no Wayne Corn sightings. As a part of the Northeast Park Prairie restoration /Birding Trail team, I thought I would bring you up-to-date.

The NFHAS Conservation Committee is involved in many projects, one of which is the Northeast Park and the plan is to have a committee member contribute an article on his/her project each month.

Our project is a restored prairie in the south third of the 80-acre field, east of the Dix Addition, which was purchased by the city for a park. Over the course of this past winter, we went through the city government's final approval process with the City Commission. Our offer was also to establish a birding trail connecting the southern part of the park with the Linear Trail. We completed the process of having the trail named "The Cecil Best Birding Trail" in honor of one of our chapter's active members.

Early this spring workers planted additional vegetation along the trail to enhance wildlife habitat and those plantings will continue. Bird houses for cavity nesters were put up and a preliminary mowing of the trail was done. We plan to put benches along the trail and are working out details for a necessary bridge. A fall dedication is planned.

Meanwhile, we are planning a cover drop for the field into which we will plant a mixture of native flowering forbes and grasses. We plan to work with the Northview Elementary School as much as possible to use this planting as an educational tool and to help the children feel a part of the project.

Additionally, maybe next year, we will create a wet meadow utilizing the drainage from the north part of the park and we will plant a small section of the woodland called for in the park master plan.

A big THANKS to all the people who have helped in all the various ways so far. Anyone wanting to get involved can call me, Leann Harrell, at 494-2556. By the time my "turn" comes around again for an article in the Prairie Falcon it will be fun to see show much we have accomplished.

*Leann Harrell*

RESTORATION JOURNAL  
REVISITED

This is the time of year when "old" board members recommit, retire, etc. and new members are recruited by our recruitment chair, Leann Harrell. The year 2000/2001 begins with several new committee members.

NFHAS

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**Subscriptions Information:**

Introductory memberships- \$20 per year; then basic membership is - \$35 annually. When you join the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, you automatically become a member of the National Audubon Society and receive the bimonthly Audubon magazine, in addition to the **PRAIRIE FALCON**. New membership applications may be sent to NFHAS at the address below; make checks payable to the National Audubon Society. Renewals of membership are handled by the National Audubon Society and should not be sent to NFHAS. Questions about membership call toll-free, 1-800-274-4201, or email the National Audubon Society [join@audubon.org](mailto:join@audubon.org).

Nonmembers may subscribe to the **PRAIRIE FALCON** newsletter for \$10 per year. Make checks payable to the Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society, and mail to: Treasurer, NFHAS, P.O. Box 1932, Manhattan KS 66505-1932.

**RARE BIRD HOTLINE**

**Kansas (statewide): 316-229-2777**  
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**Nebraska (statewide): 402-292-5325**

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**Addresses & Phone numbers of Your Elected Representatives**

**Write ✉ - or call ☎ (anytime)**

Governor Bill Graves: 2nd Floor, State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612. Kansas Senator or Representative \_\_\_\_\_: State Capitol Bldg., Topeka KS 66612, Ph.# (during session only) - Senate: 913-296-7300, House: 913-296-7500. Senator Roberts or Brownback: US Senate, Washington DC 20510. Representative \_\_\_\_\_: US House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515. U.S. Capitol Switchboard : 202-224-3121. President Bill Clinton, The White House, Washington DC 20500. Information about progress of a particular piece of legislation can be obtained by calling the following numbers: In Topeka - 800-432-3924; in Washington - 202-225-1772. Audubon Action Line - **800-659-2622**, or get the latest on WWW at <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/aa/>