

Act Locally Now on Behalf of Birds

Member Comments Opposing TNVR Needed

On Tuesday evening, February 19th, the Lawrence City Commission will discuss a change to the city code dealing with domestic cats. The public can comment at the meeting or in writing beforehand. Under current code, it is not legal for cats to roam free. The proposed change would institute a Trap, Neuter, Vaccination, Release program to capture feral cats, neuter them and return them to the place they were found. Supposedly, benevolent people will feed and care for the resulting colonies of "community" cats. This may sound reasonable, but please read JAS's position statement on page 2 to understand why this practice is bad for wildlife, humans, and not truly humane for the cats who are at risk from all weathers, predation and cars.

The National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy both strongly advocate for keeping cats indoors and against TNVR. *This position is based on studies documenting the havoc free-roaming cats wreak on native wildlife.* Please take a moment to advocate for the best for birds and cats and let the Commission know that you oppose TNVR and why. Here's a link: <https://lawrenceks.org/commissioners/>.

THANK YOU!



Where Should We Have Our Programs?

The JAS Board is pondering the optimal place to hold our monthly programs and your opinion is needed. The two main choices are Baker Wetlands Discovery Center or Trinity Lutheran Church. But maybe you know a great place to suggest.

Please take the **extremely short** online survey so that we can make the choice preferred by the most members: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZVTVPPW>

Monday, February 25th If We Build It, Will They Come?

Can tallgrass prairie reconstruction
restore native bee communities?

Kansas has hundreds of native bee species which provide critical pollination services to our native tallgrass prairie wildflowers. Unfortunately, populations of bees worldwide are at risk of decline and extinction due to human-mediated threats. The tallgrass prairie ecosystem has been largely destroyed; that habitat loss is one of the most pressing threats to our native bees. Kathy Denning, PhD, our February speaker, will talk about the diversity and importance of native bees in Kansas, highlighting her findings from a three year study investigating whether tallgrass prairie reconstruction on former crop fields can reinstate communities of native bees in Kansas.

Kathy Denning received her BS in Biology from Creighton University (2007), an MS in Biology from University of Nebraska (2012) and her PhD from KU (2017). Over a span of more than 10 years, her research projects have focused on invasive species removal strategies (garlic mustard), the conservation of endangered orchids in Madagascar, and, most recently, the effects of habitat reconstruction on pollinator communities in tallgrass prairies. She is currently a program coordinator in KU's Office for Diversity in Science Training and looks forward to continuing her work on native pollinators.

Kathy Denning's presentation is co-sponsored by the Grassland Heritage Foundation. Our cooperation is emblematic of the interconnectedness of the natural world. Meaningful action to conserve or restore ecosystems requires consideration of the whole cycle of life, from soil organisms on up to top-of-the-food-chain predators. Birdlife is a component of virtually all ecosystems, including even oceans, but so are we and so are pollinators and other invertebrates. The more we know, the better our attempts at remediation. Join us on the 25th to learn something new!

~ Joyce Wolf, Program Chair

BYO Dinner with Kathy Denning: 5:00 p.m.
Merchant's. 746 Massachusetts Street.
Please let Joyce Wolf know if you will dine:
jarbwolf39@gmail.com or 785-887-6019.

Program: 7:00 pm. Trinity Lutheran Church
Fellowship Hall. 1245 New Hampshire.

Jayhawk Audubon Society Position Statement on Free-Roaming Feral, Stray, and Owned Domestic Cats

Jayhawk Audubon Society is the chapter of the National Audubon Society serving Lawrence, Douglas County, and surrounding communities in eastern Kansas. **Our mission** is to provide opportunities for greater understanding and appreciation of birds and other wildlife, to encourage sustainable practices, and to advocate for actions and policies which result in protection and preservation of intact ecological ecosystems.

Summary of Position

- Because free-roaming domestic cats prey on birds and other wildlife, Jayhawk Audubon Society opposes programs and practices that allow cats, whether feral, stray, or owned pets, to roam freely.
- Trap/Neuter/Vaccinate/Release (TNVR) programs targeted at feral cats in the city are unlawful according to the Lawrence city code. We oppose changing that code to allow TNVR programs in the city.

Overview of the Problem

Free-roaming cats include feral cats, stray cats, and owned cats--pets. Feral cats are domestic cats that are wild--they live without human contact and human habitation. Stray cats are domestic cats that have been abandoned by humans and are living on their own. Other free-roaming cats include cats that are owned--pets--but allowed by humans outside of contained yards and off leashes and harnesses.

Free-roaming domestic cats, whether they are feral, stray, or owned, prey on small animals: native mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds.¹ It is estimated that in the United States, outdoor cats (feral, stray, and owned) kill 1.3 to 4 billion birds per year and 6.3 to 22.3 billion mammals per year.² 40% of the world's bird species are in decline, and of those species, 39% of them are threatened by invasive animals, including domestic cats.³ In addition feral and stray cats are reservoirs of disease for both pet cats and wildlife as well as humans. Diseases with high prevalence include feline leukemia virus, feline immunodeficiency virus, and feline infectious anemia (hemobartonellosis). Significantly the domestic cat is the definitive host for the protozoan parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* which can be transmitted to humans and is a significant concern for susceptible pregnant women in regard to in utero transmission of the infection to the fetus with possible resulting birth defects.

TNVR programs attempt to reduce the population size of free-roaming feral cats by trapping, neutering, and releasing them to their original environments. While these programs are considered humane in approach, models estimate that more than 70% of a population of feral cats must be spayed or neutered before the population will decline. Nor do they address the predation done to birds and other animals.

1. Hildreth et al. (2010).
2. Loss et al. (2013).
3. BirdLife International (2018).

Recommendations

1. We urge all cat owners to keep all cats indoors, in a safe enclosed outdoor structure, or on harness or leash if accompanied by a human.
2. We support programs to neuter/spay cats before reproductive age and to vaccinate and register cats.
3. We oppose "managed" outdoor cat colonies and TNVR programs.
4. We oppose the release of unwanted pet cats and feral cats into the wild.

References

- Audubon Society of Greater Denver. 2018. "Audubon Society of Greater Denver Policy on Free-Roaming Domestic and Feral Cats." Littleton, Colorado: Audubon Society of Greater Denver. <http://www.denveraudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ASGD-Policy-on-Free-Roaming-Cats-1.pdf>.
- (3) BirdLife International. 2018. "State of the World's Birds: Taking the Pulse of the Planet." Cambridge: BirdLife International.
- Black Swamp Bird Observatory. 2018. "Black Swamp Bird Observatory Position Statement on Feral and Free-Ranging Cats." Oak Harbor, Ohio: Black Swamp Bird Observatory. <http://www.bsbo.org/position-statement-on-feral-and-free-ranging-cats.html>.
- (1) Hildreth, Aaron M., Stephen M. Vantassel, and Scott E. Hygnstrom. 2010. "Feral Cats and Their Management." Lincoln: University of Nebraska Extension. <http://extensionpublications.unl.edu/assets/pdf/ec1781.pdf>.
- (2) Loss, Scott R., Tom Will, and Peter P. Marra. 2013. "The Impact of Free-Ranging Domestic Cats on Wildlife of the United States." Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report. Nature Communications 4:1396. doi: 10.1038/ncomms2380.

We would be happy to provide city staff with research data and reports from other cities about this issue. We urge the city to use its voice to encourage responsible cat ownership in Lawrence.

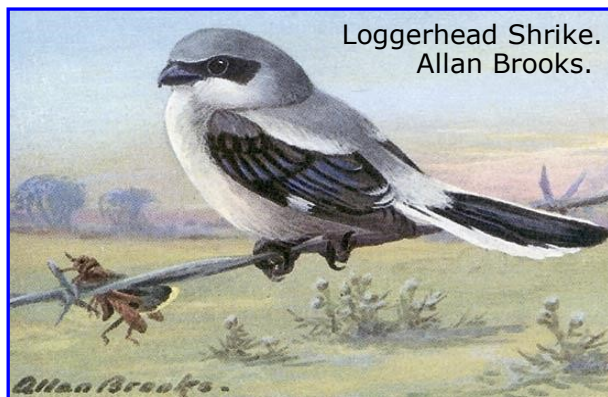
James F. Bresnahan, D.V.M.
President, for the Jayhawk Audubon Society Board

Correction

In January's Plants for Birds article about the prairie restoration workshops JAS has co-sponsored with the Grassland Heritage Foundation, your editor had a basic math brain-fade moment. Thinking it might be eye-opening to recast the numbers on the amount of native prairie left in Douglas County, I added a sentence to Jennifer Delisle's article saying that 99.95% of the original acres have been lost.

The actual figure should have been 99.50%, given that there only 0.5% of the original acres remain. I apologize and want to emphasize that this was my mistake, not Jennifer's, who is an excellent field scientist, and a whiz at GPS and all sorts of numerical work.

~ Susan Iversen, newsletter editor



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Want to Monitor an Eagle's Nest?

Excellent, because now you can! Mike Watkins, long-time eagle watcher/expert, needs monitors for this year's nesting season to cover known, existing Bald Eagle nests in northeast Kansas. To volunteer with Bald Eagle Nest Watch or ask questions, contact Mike: baldeagle1a@sbcglobal.net or 785-393-1597.

P.S. An astounding 63—yes, 63!—Bald Eagles were seen scoping out the ducks at Clinton Lake Marina on Jan. 25! (from KSBIRDS listserv)

Results of the 2018 Lawrence Christmas Bird Count—the 75th!

Thirty-two (plus six at feeders) participants, in 10 parties, found **95 species** on 15 December 2018, on the occasion of the 119th National Audubon Christmas Bird Count and the 75th Lawrence Christmas Bird Count. Although we didn't find 100 species, a number in the high 90s always makes for a great count. The last few years have been an incredible run for the count with 100 or more species recorded in six of the last nine years. This year was a very good effort by all involved.

We recorded 32+ species of waterfowl and other water birds missing only a few birds in that category. We missed Wood Duck, American Black Duck, and Ruddy Duck, but added a new duck species for the count = **Surf Scoter!**

In general, even though the number of species was fairly high, the number of individuals per species was lower than the previous year, with some exceptions. We set an all-time record high count for Greater White-fronted Goose (27), tied last year's high (18) for Red-shouldered Hawk, and White-throated Sparrow (115).

Other unusual species were Red-breasted Merganser, Long-tailed Duck (count week only!), Virginia Rail, Thayer's Gull, Loggerhead Shrike (seen only once since 2012), American Pipit, Savannah Sparrow, Field Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, and Baltimore Oriole (count week only!). Notable misses this year include Northern Bobwhite, Rough-legged Hawk, Killdeer (count week only!), Red-headed Woodpecker, Lincoln's Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, and Rusty Blackbird. Also, one of the worst misses as of late: Eastern Screech-Owl.

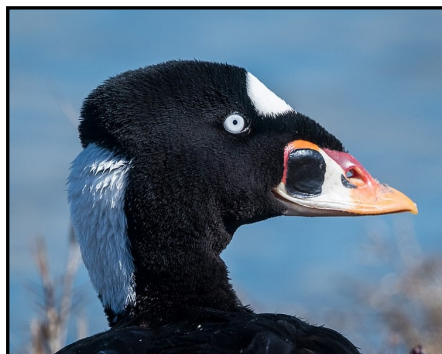
Thanks to all of this year's participants and to the Baker Wetlands Discovery Center for providing us with a place to hold the compilation dinner. Hope to see you all again next year for the 120th National Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

The complete list that follows on page 4 has the unusual species and/or unusually high individual numbers underlined and/or highlighted.

Galen Pittman, Lawrence CBC compiler

Species List for the 2018 Lawrence Christmas Bird Count

Greater White-fronted Goose – **27**
 Snow Goose - 48
 Ross's Goose - 2
 Cackling Goose - 158
 Canada Goose - 3320
 Gadwall – 230
 American Wigeon – 36
 Mallard – 1800
 Northern Shoveler – 36
 Northern Pintail – 1
Green-winged Teal – 32
 Canvasback - 1
 Redhead – 3
 Ring-necked Duck – 11
 Lesser Scaup – 1
Surf Scoter -1 (New for the count)



Male Surf Scoter .
 By Becky Matsubara.
 Wikimedia Commons

Long-tailed Duck (count week only)
 Bufflehead – 41
 Common Goldeneye – 1500
 Hooded Merganser – 149
 Common Merganser – 92
Red-breasted Merganser – 2
 Wild Turkey – 47
 Pied-billed Grebe – 3
 American white Pelican - 4
 Double-crested Cormorant – 2
 Great Blue Heron – 25
 Bald Eagle – 61
 Adult - (35)
 Immature – (26)
 Northern Harrier – 11
 Sharp-shinned Hawk – 4
 Cooper's Hawk – 7
 Red-shouldered Hawk – **18**
 Red-tailed Hawk – 113
Virginia Rail -1
 American Kestrel – 14
Prairie Falcon – 1
 American Coot – 8
 Killdeer (count week only)
 Ring-billed Gull – 1330
 Herring Gull – 13
Thayer's Gull (Iceland Gull) -1

Eurasian Collared-Dove – 10
 Mourning Dove – 170
 Great Horned Owl – 14
 Barred Owl – 14
Long-eared Owl -1
 Short-eared Owl (count week only)
 Belted Kingfisher – 14
 Red-bellied Woodpecker – 73
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – 6
 Downy Woodpecker – 95
 Hairy Woodpecker – 10
 Northern Flicker – 68
 Pileated Woodpecker – 6
Loggerhead Shrike -1
 Blue Jay – 110
 American Crow – 239
 Horned Lark – 100
 Black-capped Chickadee – 226
 Tufted Titmouse – 122
 Red-breasted Nuthatch – 11
 White-breasted Nuthatch – 74
 Brown Creeper – 10
 Carolina Wren – 83
 Winter Wren -1
 Golden-crowned Kinglet – 9
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet – 3
 Eastern Bluebird – 160
 Hermit Thrush – 2
 American Robin – 149
 Northern Mockingbird – 18
 European Starling – 1095
American Pipit - 2
 Cedar Waxwing – 167
 Yellow-rumped Warbler – 61
 Spotted Towhee – 3
 American Tree Sparrow – 292
 Field sparrow - 1
 Savannah Sparrow – 9
LeConte's Sparrow – 5
 Fox Sparrow – 7
 Song Sparrow – 131
Chipping Sparrow (count week only)
 Swamp Sparrow – 23
 White-throated Sparrow -- **115**
 Harris's Sparrow – 135
 White-crowned Sparrow – 25
 Dark-eyed Junco – 770
 Northern Cardinal – 285
 Red-winged Blackbird – 285
 Eastern Meadowlark – 22
 Western Meadowlark – 4
Sturnella, spp. – 104
 Common Grackle – 1
 Brown-headed Cowbird – 6
Baltimore Oriole (count week only)
 Purple Finch -- 17
 House Finch – 126
 American Goldfinch – 163
 House Sparrow – 160



Long-eared Owl. John Gould.
Birds of Great Britain. 1873

Beautiful Perry Lake CBC 12/16/18

Our weather had been 10-20 degrees below normal in November and then it became 10-20 degrees above normal in December. The day of our CBC the high temperature was 58, almost 20 degrees above normal, with clear, sunny skies and no wind.

Our count and others in Kansas held on the same weekend had the same results - well below normal total numbers of birds with well below normal total individuals. 81 species and 17,624 individual birds were found. Commonly seen birds were not seen, or very few in numbers.

Our Bald Eagle count was higher than normal at 86 as was the number of White-throated Sparrows at 72. We had a new bird for the count: a Barrow's Goldeneye in with a big raft of Common Goldeneyes. The count total for Common Goldeneyes was 2,294. "A good time was had by all" despite the lack of bird species and total number of birds.

~ Bunnie Watkins
 Compiler

Thank you for Buying Our Seeds, Feeders and Books, Because...

when you make that extra effort to order and pick up seed at one of our sales, you're funding Eagles Day, the Learning About Nature program, Natural History Museum Scholarships, Plants for Birds initiatives, out-of-town speakers, the free Monarch tagging event, and the printing and distribution of this newsletter. We do realize that it is an active, thoughtful choice on your part to support JAS conservation and education activities.

The JAS board says *"Thank you, loyal members!"*

We're also so, so grateful to the members who faithfully show up to work the seed sales: unloading trucks, advising you which seeds to buy, loading your car, helping you pick out a feeder, ordering informational books with gorgeous illustrations to feed your curiosity, and taking care of the money. This year's volunteers were Dana Adkins-Heljeson, Gary Anderson, Jim Bresnahan, Dave Chaffee, Pam Chaffee, Jennifer Delisle, Bill Dodd, Phyllis Fantini, Chuck Herman, Susan Iversen, Wayne Kennedy, Rick Lysen, Joyce Wolf, & Ron Wolf.

What a crew! They're so good we ought to make a YouTube video on how to hold a fabulous seed sale. Music: "Rockin' Robin" ("all the little birds on Jaybird street"), or maybe "Three Little Birds" ("three little birds pitch by my doorstep singin' sweet songs of melodies pure and true" by Bob Marley)? Might have to polish our dance moves just a tad though...

Thanks to all for a fine seed sale season!
~Linda Lips, Seed Sale Chair



Catherine Clark

◆ Have Your Say on Land Use and Development in the County ◆

Plan 2040, the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Lawrence and unincorporated Douglas County is now under review. This plan, the replacement for the current Horizon 2020, will guide future local land use decisions. The next Planning Commission meeting, on Monday, Feb 25, will concern Chapter 6: Natural Resources.

Review the draft plan at this link:

<https://lawrenceks.org/pds/comp-plan/> .

Send comments about issues important to you to: CompPlanUpdate@lawrenceks.org, or call the Planning Office at (785) 832-3150. .

Contact Jennifer Delisle at jdelisle@ku.edu if you'd like to know more about how you can contribute to this vision of our next twenty years!

~ Jennifer Delisle, JAS Treasurer and Plants for Birds Committee

A New Feeder Bird: Red-shouldered Hawk

A Red-shouldered Hawk is visiting Jeff Hansen's feeders. And not necessarily to pick off the smaller birds flocking there. Jeff puts food on a platform feeder for the hawk—invasive starlings or house sparrows he traps and euthanizes when they try to use his nest boxes—and the hawk comes right in. So handsome.



Red-shouldered Hawk. Paul Fenwick eBird.

Audubon of Kansas 2018 Successes

Audubon of Kansas has major 2018 successes to celebrate even as we prepare for more achievements in 2019. Here are five efforts we're proud of:

1. Adding three new Kansas properties to AOK's system of wildlife sanctuaries
2. Protecting prairie dogs & wildlife dependent on them
3. Establishing a team of attorneys to defend Quivira National Wildlife Refuge's water rights
4. Organizing the first annual "Celebration of Cranes" at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge
5. Advocating on behalf of wildlife

In 2019, AOK plans to improve conditions for wildlife by:

1. Working with state legislators to repeal antiquated 19th century extinction statutes that mandate land owners to eradicate prairie dogs--and with them all dependent wildlife--on their land.
2. Pressing the KS Dept. of Agriculture and KDOT to implement control strategies to halt the spread of invasive Old World Bluestems. These noxious plants threaten to destroy native prairies and rangelands.
3. Encouraging KDOT—which has made great strides in planting of native grasses and wildflowers, and diminishing unnecessary mowing—to make further improvements in stewardship of the 150,000 acres of vegetated roadside right-of-way to improve habitat for beneficial pollinating insects (including Monarch Butterflies) and birds.
4. Working diligently to make certain that critically important water flows to the Quivira NWR are restored to reflect the refuge's senior water right.

And, please plan to join us as we sponsor a week-end "Celebration of Cranes" at the refuge on November 1-3, 2019.

Visit our website to learn more about AOK and consider joining us to support the work:

<https://www.audubonofkansas.org/joindonate/>

~Ron Klataske, Executive Director
Audubon of Kansas

► Natural areas and historic sites ◀ of southwest Douglas County

Kansas Biological Survey Forum
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2019, 10AM – 12PM
Marion Springs Event Center
316 E 900 Rd., Baldwin City, Kansas

Join a discussion about the history and future of the southwest corner of Douglas County. Local Tammy Lamb lives on land homesteaded by her great-grandfather and will share family history. KBS will tell how the landscape has changed since pioneer settlement, with a focus on native prairies and woodlands. Participants will be invited to share stories about the land and visions for the future of this area.

Questions? Contact Jennifer Delisle: jdelisle@ku.edu.
Informational handouts about resources available to help private landowners manage and protect their prairies and woodlands will be available.
<https://tinyurl.com/y7j59kra>

Eyes to the Skies ♦ Birding Events

- 2/9: Shawnee State Fishing & Lake/Banner Creek Lake
8a—3p. Topeka Audubon. See below for contacts.
- 2/15 to 2/18: Great Backyard Bird Count. Count birds
In your backyard, or anywhere you are, and
your data will help researchers know the
state of birds and plan conservation efforts.
Sign up at: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>
- 2/23: Bird Pony Creek Lake & Brown County with Topeka
Audubon. 7a - 2p. Questions: Debby 785-220-6515.
<http://www.topekaaudubonsociety.org/calendar>
- 2/23: Bird Clinton and Perry Lakes. Burroughs Audubon.
<http://burroughs.org/its-free/field-trips-programs/>
contact Mark: markeland@kc.rr.com or 816-590-
9814. Check website in case of cancellation.
- 2/26: Woodcock Walk Warren Nature Area. 6:15p - 7:15p.
Topeka Audubon. See above for contact info.
- 3/7: Woodcock/Owl Walk at Shawnee State Fishing
Lake. 6:15p - 7:15p. Topeka Audubon. See above.

Look Ahead to Out of Town Events

- 3/21 to 3/24: Nebraska Crane Festival. Kearney, NE
Crane viewing trips, speakers. Must register:
<http://ne.audubon.org/birds/crane-festival>
Topeka & Burroughs Audubon also have trips
Scheduled to see the cranes. See websites.
- 5/3 to 5/4: Wings & Wetlands Festival. Multiple guided
field trips to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira
NWR during peak shorebird migration. Also
Prairie-chicken lek trips. Registration and
Schedule at nature.org/wingsandwetlands
- 5/10-5/12: Kansas Ornithological Society Spring Trip.
Details not yet available, but it will be in the
east central part of the state. Check back to:
<http://ksbirds.org/>

So Many Ways to Indulge Your Love of Nature at Any Age

- 2/9: Kaw Valley Seed Fair. 9a-3p. Douglas Cty Fair
Grounds. 2120 Harper. Free. Bring seeds to share
& baggies to take other's seeds home. Exhibitors.
- 2/9: Midwest Photography Conference. 9a - 4p. River-
Front Center, Leavenworth, KS. Wayne Rhodus, JAS
member and fine photographer, will show his bird &
plant photos & speak on native plant gardening to
attract birds. Also Noppadol Paothong of prairie
grouse fame and Patrick Nabors, Rainforest Jewels.
www.facebook.com/MidwestPhotographyConference/
- 2/9: Collections Up Close: Fungi. KU Nat. Hist. Museum.
Specimens from backroom collections. 12p - 1:30p.
- 2/13: Wee Walks at the Wetlands: Hoppy Val Day. 10-11a
& 2/14: 5 & under (adult must stay; older sibs welcome.)
Free. Must register: email mglade@bakeru.edu or
785-594-4703. Baker Wetlands Discovery Center.
- 2/16: **KAW VALLEY EAGLES DAY: NEW DATE!**
- 2/17: Plant the Prairie. Wetlands Discovery Center. 1-4p.
Make a seed bomb from clay & native prairie seeds.
We'll throw them into our prairie to germinate and
grow into beautiful native flowers. All ages come and
go event. Free! But please register in advance:
785-594-4703 or email mglade@bakeru.edu.
- 2/20: Habitat Restoration at the Baker Wetlands. Science
On Tap. 7:30-9p. Roger Boyd. Free State Brewing
Company. 636 Mass St.
- 2/21-2/22: School's Out Wild Things Camp. Prairie Park
Nature Ctr. Ages 8-10. \$. Must register:
<https://lawrenceks.org/lprd/ppnc/programs/>
Call 832-7980 for more information.
- 2/24: Stargazing. Astronomy Assoc. of Lawrence. 7pm
Meeting followed by stargazing if clear. Free &
public welcome. Baker Wetlands Discovery Ctr.
- 2/25: Native Bees & Prairie Restoration. JAS program.
7pm. Trinity Lutheran Fellowship Hall. See page 1.
- 2/25: Plan 2040 Natural Resources Chapter. Douglas Cty
Planning Commission. 6:30p, City Hall. See page 5.
- 3/1: The Wild and Scenic Film Festival. A benefit for
The Friends of the Kaw at Liberty Hall. A very
worthy cause. Get tickets and info here:
<https://tinyurl.com/y8zy7zpk> Limited free student
tickets are available thanks to the Westar Green
Team: email your request to info@kansasriver.org.
- 3/2: Collections Up Close: Beetles. KU Nat. Hist. Museum
Specimens from backroom collections. 12 - 1:30p.
- 3/3: Nature's Creations for Kids & Families. Prairie Park
Nature Center. 2 p - 3:30p. Ages 6 - 99. \$. Must
register: <https://lawrenceks.org/lprd/ppnc/programs/>
- 3/4: Kaw Valley Bluebird Association Spring Meeting.
Public welcome. 7p at Redeemer Lutheran Church.
2700 Lawrence Avenue. Come and learn about
bluebirds and bluebird trails.

You Are Invited to Join the Nature Book Club

And you have plenty of time to finish your book before the next meeting! The club meets quarterly on the Wednesday at the change of season, at the library. The next meeting is on the Spring Equinox, March 20, from 6:30 - 8:00 p in Library Meeting Room A.

Read a nature-connected book, fiction or nonfiction, and come ready to discuss it with the group. It can be your latest read or a favorite book to share that is related to nature or the environment. Group leaders, Jake Vail & Shirley Braunlich, will also share recommendations.

An RSVP is helpful, but not required. If you have questions contact Shirley: sbraunlich@jplks.org

Cheers! Shirley & Jake

Learning About Nature Project at Potter Lake.

I prepared 14 KU Field Ecology students to make follow-up presentations to 7th grade students at West who went on our fall Potter Lake field trips. 4 teams will meet with multiple classes. This is an addition to the project we've wanted to do for several years but didn't have resources.

West teachers were excited by the offer and suggested KU students not only do a brief follow-up on the field trip but also share why they've chosen to pursue a background in science and career paths. KU students will help 7th graders realize the array of options for careers involving science and why it's important to get involved right now in classes, organizations, events, and volunteer opportunities that will build their experience in the area of science that interests them. Most of these opportunities would also increase their knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of nature, whether they want a science career or not.

I asked each team to share that *science is about a way of thinking and anyone can develop their ability to look at the world from a science-based perspective. It's not a mysterious approach to life available to only a few people.* They're also going to briefly explore 7th graders' perceptions of nature (enjoyment, fear, excitement, boredom...), how they came to see it that way, and how they might go about changing it if they want to be more comfortable in natural environments.

The field trip activities at Potter Lake are designed, in large part, to support the environmental science standards for seventh grade. Career awareness is also a curriculum standard for 7th grade. The LANP and its partners are providing public schools with significant support for their required curriculum, in addition to connecting young people with nature and increasing their interest in science.

~Sandy Sanders, Education Chair

Plants for Birds Grant Proposal

The Plants for Birds Committee, Lynn Byczynski and Jennifer Delisle, has submitted a grant proposal to National Audubon for an ambitious outreach project to promote greater use of native plants in area gardens.

Project overview

Actions will include:

- 1) Restoring to native plants a five-acre brome field at Lawrence Nature Park, in the heart of the developing west side of Lawrence;
- 2) Holding a gardening workshop for developers, landscapers, and homeowners to demonstrate how to create beautiful gardens with native plants;
- 3) Collaborating with partners on a National Prairie Day event to promote awareness of the birds and other wildlife that depend on the tallgrass prairie; free native plants will be distributed for home gardens.

A major goal of the project is to influence new homeowners in newer areas of town like West Lawrence, and developers and commercial landscapers working there. By educating them about the importance of native plants to birds we hope to inspire them to use native plants in their landscapes.



Northern Bobwhite, an iconic grassland species which declined 85% between 1966 and 2014 in large part due to habitat loss.

"Save the Date" and plan now to attend our National Prairie Day Celebration on Saturday, June 1, 2019. This is also National Trails Day and we will partner with many other organizations. There will be booths and activities. For background on National Prairie Day: <https://nationalprairieday.org/>

Letters From Eden: A Year at Home, in the Woods

By Julie Zickefoose

Reviewed by McKay Stangler

Every few months I like to write not about a new book, but about an older one some readers may have missed. This month we turn our attention to a volume by Julie Zickefoose, a prolific writer and illustrator. Zickefoose began her career as a nature illustrator, turning only later to essays, and her books are stocked with her remarkably brilliant and vibrant paintings of birds and nature scenes.

The delightful *Letters From Eden* chronicles a year spent watching birds and other forms of life around her home in southern Ohio. The title itself is a charmingly bold statement, asserting as it does that any place we watch birds can be our own private paradise. Few may think of southern Ohio as Eden, but surely many would also omit our own Kaw Valley from that list. And yet, when I spotted the bright flash of a meadowlark last week along I-70 east of Lawrence, it sure seemed for a moment that the expulsion from Eden never took place. What better proof of paradise than a meadowlark?

The personal memoir lends itself well to the seasonal format, and here Zickefoose works her way through the year by focusing on different birds within seasonal sections. Winter includes robins and grosbeaks, spring features phoebes and swallows, house wrens and mourning doves flit their way through summer, and vultures and cardinals fly in for fall.

The book is not limited to birds, however: frogs, snakes, backyard chickens, box turtles, and sundry other backyard visitors hop and crawl their way through the pages of the book. Zickefoose is an amicable guide, and like the best nature writers she stakes out the strategic middle ground between helpful explanation and sheer wonderment.

The appearance of the brown thrasher, for example—an incredible creature whose song is among the most complex of any bird, with each portion sung twice for the benefit of our musically impoverished souls—reminds Zickefoose that her father called it “the planting bird,” for when the thrasher shows up it is time to plant the peas. For Zickefoose it is a profound moment of connection between family history and backyard visitors:

“I swiveled my scope onto the hidden thrasher and drank him in. He had a rusty back, pure burnt sienna; a gray cheek; a long, strong bill; an eye the color of egg yolk. He sat still, tail drooping, turning his head mechanically, sending out his message. And I felt my blood stir and begin to reach my weary brain. It was time to plant the peas. I laughed aloud and hurtled down the stairs to find my work gloves.”

In a section on starlings, she acknowledges the great ills wreaked by invasive species, and yet like many of us also admits: “I really *like* starlings. I love their rambling songs, coming from speckled flocks in the tops of maples in the crisp air of fall. I like the fact that they would think to include a mushy hot pepper or a fresh flower in their messy nests. I love the oily mix of green and purple, blue and black that runs through their spiky plumage, and the delicate touch of turquoise that paints the base of their yellow bills in spring. Find me another wild bird that can call out in my son’s voice...”

This is precisely what the best nature writers do: even in the face of all the evidence telling us to believe something, who can resist the pure beauty offered by something like the starling? Tell me all the dismal facts you want about invasive species: I’m still no less enchanted by those beautiful birds with their astonishing murmurations.

Beauty is exactly what we need in our cold world, and is exactly what Zickefoose delivers in this wonderful book. Her paintings are remarkably vivid and full of life, even when they are sad: see the bullfrog consuming the chipping sparrow, for example. When you tire of the charade that is contemporary art, with its endless paeans to subversion and destruction, just gaze upon Zickefoose’s simple hummingbird, jade green with bright ruby throat, and dream of Eden. Better yet: look around and see it.



Robins foraging.
By Julie Zickefoose

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