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### News From the Flock, Vol. 2007 Issue 7

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

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#### Recommended Citation

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society, "News From the Flock, Vol. 2007 Issue 7" (2007). *Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society Newsletters*. 47.

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# NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society  
Serving Crawford, Bourbon, and Cherokee Counties, Kansas

## SGAS Officers

2007-2008

### President:

Mavis Benner

### Vice President:

Jim Brumfield

### Secretary

Barb Robins

### Treasurer

Liz Mangile

OCTOBER 2007

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 7

## Crow Cams

The birds are renowned for their sophisticated tool-using ability, but until now, observing them in their natural habitat has proven difficult. But specially designed "crow-cams" fitted to the birds' tails have shed light on the creatures, recording some tool-use never seen before.

The research is reported in the journal *Science*. New Caledonian crows (*Corvus moneduloides*) are found on the South Pacific island of New Caledonia. They can use their bills to whittle twigs and leaves into bug-grabbing implements; some believe their tool-use is so advanced that it rivals that of some primates. But while these clever crows have been extensively studied in captivity, looking at their natural behavior in the wild is tricky.

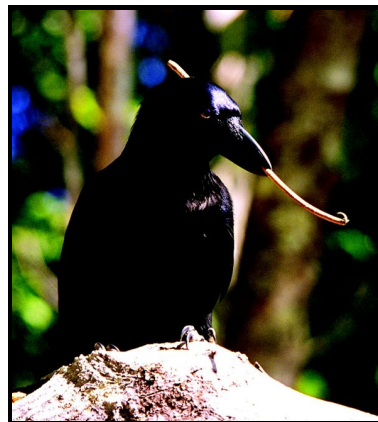
Christian Rutz, lead author of the paper from the Department of Zoology at the University of Oxford, UK, said: "These birds are notoriously difficult to study in the wild. "They are very sensitive to human disturbance and the terrain in New Caledonia is very mountainous and forested, so it is difficult to follow the birds." So the team came up with another approach. "Why not just stick a camera to a

crow, hitch a ride with it, and get a crow's-eye view of what is going on?" Dr Rutz said. Recent advances in mobile phone technology enabled the researchers to construct a camera that was small enough to attach to a crow's tail without impairing its movements. They attached the 14g (0.5oz) units - which also contained a radio tag to transmit location coordinates - to the tail feathers of 18 New Caledonian crows.

The footage, broadcasted to the researchers' custom-built receivers, provided the team with a unique insight into the crows' behavior - including some that had never been seen before. Dr Rutz told the BBC News website: "Before, we thought the crows targeted their tool use at fallen dead trees where they probe for grubs; but now we have observed them using tools on the ground - and that has never been

seen before. "We also filmed them doing this using a new type of tool, which was very surprising. We found them using grass stems - and that is interesting because these stems have very different physical properties from the sticks and leaves that we knew they use. "They are using the grass stems on the forest floor, probing the leaf litter, possibly

fishing for ants." The team is using its video footage to investigate why New Caledonian crows might have evolved their tool-using abilities. This species of crow is the only non-primate animal known to create and use new tools. Dr Rutz said:



## Calendar of Events

**Oct. 25th—"Wild Utah: America's Bedrock Wilderness by Bob Brister, Interregional Outreach Coordinator, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance**

**December 6th—TBA**

### MEETING TIME

We will begin our

meetings at

**7:30 P.M.**

**Yates Hall Room 102.  
On the last Thursday  
of the month**

## Crow Cams Continued...

"What were the ecological circumstances on this one particular island in the South Pacific that could have fostered the evolution of this behavior?"

One idea, he said, was that the behavior may have evolved in response to food shortages. "When we compared situations when the crows did and didn't

use tools, we found two pieces of supporting evidence for this," Dr Rutz said. "Firstly, the prey encounter rate was surprisingly small: for one hour of ground foraging a crow would only pick up eight tiny morsels of food - a blackbird in a garden would be taking up that many items a minute. That shows maybe foraging without tools is indeed

challenging in this habitat. "Secondly, when you compare the size of the food items they get with and without tools - when they don't use tools, the food items are very, very small indeed compared with the food items they extract with the tools. This again suggests maybe they need to use tools to gain access to this rich hidden food resource." The team says

its video tracking technique could be used to study other wild birds that are shy or live in inaccessible habitats. Dr Rutz added: "This technology could really change the way we study wild birds."

Original story by Rebecca Morelle  
Science reporter, BBC News  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/science/nature/7027923.stm>

## Submitted By John Hartley

## General Meeting Minutes

President Mavis Benner welcomed everyone and announced our intentions to have the annual bird seed sale (December 8) and a float in the Christmas Parade (November 26). She wanted members to think about making craft items or baked goods to donate to the sale.

Members reported interesting bird sightings in the form of red-breasted nuthatch, scissor-tailed flycatcher, and yellow-billed cuckoos, to name a few.

Delia Lister reported that the Nature Reach work day on September 15 was a success, in spite of the afternoon rain. Westar Green team and HHC Contractors almost finished the raptor cages; SGAS mem-

bers helped clean up the grounds; by December, there will be money to finish the building; and landscaping and painting will be done in the spring.

A new feature, "Wing Tips", was launched this meeting the form of a ten-minute report by Martha Price on purple martins. She gave an informative and attractively illustrated presentation; everyone learned something they didn't know about martins, including the facts that they don't eat mosquitoes, they don't send scouts ahead of time, and we should keep the houses open through August to accommodate late departures.

John Hartley announced a field trip in the form of the Prairie State Park's nocturnal program on Saturday,

September 29. SGAS members will meet an hour early at the Gayfeather Trail to try to see, among other species, Henslow's sparrows and sedge wrens.

On October 20, interested members can meet at Applebee's at 7:45 a.m. to go to Steve and Cindy Ford's estate to look for fall lingerers and winter early birds.

On November 10 or 17 at the Pittsburg Public Library, SGAS will present a program on winter bird feeding. John would like to have 2 or 3 volunteers to make 10-minute presentations.

The door prize was won by Alice Stratton. Eats and drinks were provided by Carol Newcomb and Barb Robins respectively.

## By Barb Robins

Our feature program was knowledgeably presented by Dr. Stephen Timme from the PSU Department of Biology and was entitled, "Dauphin Island and the Dauphin Island Sea Lab." Dr. Timme has been teaching summer biology courses at the sea lab since 1986. Fourteen miles long, the island contains several ecosystems and habitats associated with barrier islands, as well as the unique features of a historic fort, prehistoric shell mounds, an Audubon bird sanctuary with trails and an alligator, and the sea lab.

October 25's meeting will feature a program by Bob Brist.



## BLUEBIRD NESTING 2007

This year we fledged a total of **303 bluebirds** from **133 nest boxes**! All of the information has been sent to KDWP and if you would like to see a detailed list of this year's results please visit the following website:

<http://www.apexcorp.com/%7Ermangile/Sgas/Bluebrd.html>

Now is the time to get ready for next year... start cleaning and re-pairing all of those boxes!



## Water Monitoring Project

Liz Mangile, John Hartley and Bob Mangile have been monitoring streams and lakes in Crawford County, KS as participants in the World Water Monitoring Day that runs from September 18th to October 18th.

The crew received a free monitoring kit at the Neosho Basin Water meeting held at the Southeast Kansas Nature Center at Schermerhorn Park. The kit has enough materials to monitor 50 sites, measuring the pH (acidity), DO (dissolved oxygen),

turbidity (clarity) and temperature of the water.

So far, over 30 sites have been monitored in Crawford County, primarily the three branches of Cow Creek. Data is entered directly into a data base via the internet. This program is intended to increase public awareness and involvement in the protection of water quality. More can be learned at following website:

<http://worldwatermonitoringday.org/>

## by Bob Mangile

## Board Meeting Minutes

By Barb Robins

**Attending:** M. Benner, S. Ford, J. and J. Hartley, D. Lister, B. and L. Mangile, D. McCallum, C. Newcomb, B. Robins, S. Kandt (Guest)

**Call To Order:** Done so by President Benner at 5:45 p.m.

**Minutes from August Meeting:** Approved as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report (Liz):** Balance of \$6864.68. We received \$98.15 from Bob Hurt's birdhouse plans income.

**Old Business:**

**Library Program (John)** Date is set for Nov. 10; John will check to see if it can be moved to Nov. 17. Carol will do posters. John will ask for volunteers and have a meeting with them to plan presentations; he will present it at next board meeting.

**Seed Sale:** Dec. 8 at the mall has been confirmed with them. Mavis will ask for item donations and will distribute sign-up sheet at the November meeting. Steve will make posters. Can we get possible media coverage on media and TV shows?

**Birdhouse Project (Bob & Steve):** Bob has discussed acquiring free materials again with Chuck Delp at the recycling center, but he still hasn't responded. As soon as he does, the project can go forward.

**Float for Christmas Parade, Nov. 26:** Ideas for a theme were discussed. We need to think further and e-mail each other before the next meeting. Carol will provide the trailer.

**New Business:**

**Promo/Ed Handout Items (Bob):** We can get bookmarks printed at New Horizons for

\$30 per thousand, calendars for \$70 per 500. After discussion, it was moved (Liz), seconded (Carol), and passed that we get 1,000 bookmarks printed and distribute them to see how it goes. Bob and Mavis will decide the content.

**Nature Reach (Delia):** The raptor cages are almost finished; by Dec., the new lab will be finished with 25,000 support from PSU administration. She showed a design for the "donor tree" to be hung outside the center to display donors' names on leaves. There will be different donor levels. Would SGAS be willing to send persons donating at least \$50 a year's worth of newsletters? It was moved (John), seconded (Julie), and passed that we are.

**CD Request (Bob):** Upon the suggestion that Liz transfer a total of \$3,000 of our treasury into two separate CDs to earn interest, it was moved (Julie), seconded (John), and passed that she do so.

**IRS Form 990N (Mangiles):** Our organization must file this form by May 15, 2008. They will do it.

**Snake for Schermerhorn (Julie):** Can we buy a milk snake for SEK Nature Center at \$129? Bob suggested that other species might be easier to maintain and volunteered to find a native species in the wild for them. Also, Bob wondered if Linda Phipps would like to have a pull-down projector donated to the center. He will ask her.

**Barn Owl Box (Mavis):** She directed the board to think of an appropriate site to place one. Meeting adjourned shortly after 7:00.

**Don't Forget!!!**

Due to conflict with Thanksgiving and Christmas, the November and December meetings have been combined, and will be held on December 6, 2007

**WANTED:**

Persons to give "Wing Tips"



Just to keep our focus on birds a little, each meeting before the main program speaker, a member, who volunteers or who is *gently* persuaded will give a brief presentation, just 5 or 10 minutes. The volunteer can choose a bird and give the description for identification, describe the birds call, tell about its behavior, its nest, what it eats, any facts that seem interesting. The presenter can show a picture or what ever they choose to share with the group. There are a lot of birds so we can do this a long time. The volunteer can chose their favorite bird or one that interests them or one that is

**Featured Bird coming in November...**

*Wile E. Coyote would be out of a job if these birds*



A field trip to ...  
"Beaver Bottoms"  
A.K.A. The Ford Farm

Date:

Saturday, October 20th.

Departure Time:

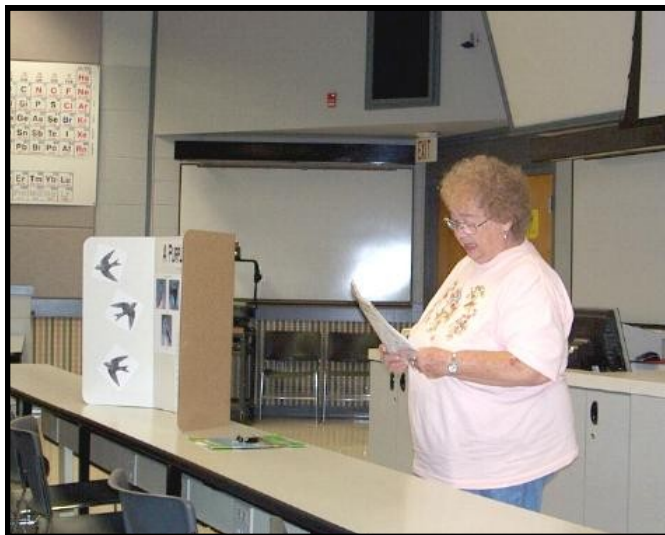
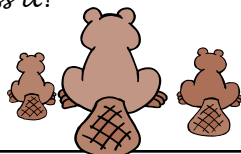
8:00am

Meeting Place:

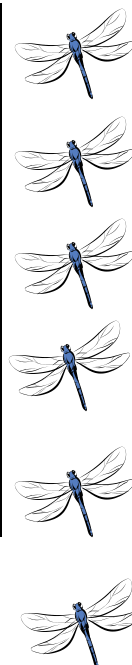
Applebee's by Wal-Mart



Join us for a walk on the Ford farm west of Cherokee to look for fall birds, late summer hold-outs and early winter arrivals. It's a great place to enjoy nature so don't miss it!



Be sure to tell Martha Price (above) great job on her Purple Martin talk at the September meeting. We all learned a little something about these insect eaters!



**Application for Membership**  
**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society**

For an introductory rate of \$20.00 you will become a member of both organizations, receive 4 copies of Audubon Magazine annually and the Sperry-Galligar Newsletter.

For rate of \$15.00 you will become a member of Sperry-Galligar Audubon and receive the regular 8 newsletters per year informing you of all our local activities.

If you wish to join the National as well as the Local Chapter : Please make your check out to: National Audubon Society

If you wish to join just the Local Sperry Galligar Audubon : Please make your check out to Sperry Galligar Audubon.

And mail to:

**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 205**  
**Pittsburg, Kansas 66762-0205**

- ☐ YES I wish to become a member, of both organizations (\$20.00)  
☐ YES I wish to become a member of the local chapter only (\$15.00)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Chapter Code: J 10 7XCH



**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**  
**By Liz Mangile**

**Starting Balance** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$6917.88**

**CREDITS:**

Donation Julie Hartley \_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00

Membership \_\_\_\_\_ \$15.00

5 Books (Compact Guide to Ks. Birds) \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$75.00**

**DEBITS:**

Stamps for Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ \$41.00

September Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ \$22.00

Money for 2 CD's for SGAS \_\_\_\_\_ \$3000.00

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$3063.00**

**A Great Night Out**  
**By Liz Mangile**



Ten enthusiastic SGAS members met at Prairie State Park for an evening of great fun and learning. First we walked a trail at the north end of the park and saw a Sedge Wren along with a few other common birds found on the prairie. It was a beautiful night for a walk.

After that we headed on in to the Visitors Center and met up with 10 more members of SGAS along with about 100 other people for what turned out to be a very interesting evening. The event was called "Prairie Promenade." There were five stations that we visited and at each station was a storyteller dressed up and telling us about animals, reptiles, mammals and birds that we might see at night on the prairie. After we did all of this we were entertained by our own Delia Lister and one of the owls from Nature Reach. They also gave us a snack and drinks. Everyone had a fabulous time and it was a great way to spend a Saturday night.



**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society**

**Newsletter**

**P.O. Box 205**

**Pittsburg, KS 66762**

**Meetings are held the last Thursday of the month. No meetings in June July, or August. (Nov/Dec meeting date to be announced) From 7:30 pm to 9 pm, in Room 102, Yates Hall. PSU Campus, Pittsburg, Kansas. Refreshments served and Guests Welcome.**

Articles for submission may be sent to  
**SGAS Newsletter editor-**

**Delia Lister**

**delialister@hotmail.com OR dalister@pittstate.edu**

**Published monthly**

**Next Deadline is May 6, 2007**



**Attention All  
Members**

If this box is checked, our records indicate that your membership has expired. Please consider paying local membership dues. Our chapter receives 100% of the local Dues only. HOWEVER, you can subscribe to both. Either way you get the newsletter