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News From the Flock, Vol. 2016 Issue 5

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

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NEWS FROM THE FLOCK...

Newsletter of the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Sperry- Galligar
Audubon Chapter
Officers 2015 - 2017

President:

Wayne Bockelman

Vice President:

Megan Corrigan

Secretary

Barb Robins

Treasurer

Liz Mangile

Newsletter Editor

Cindy Ford

cford@pittstate.edu

May 2016

VOLUME 2016 ISSUE 5

Eye Witness

With all the deer around here you'd think it would almost be dangerous to walk in the woods this time of year for fear of falling over—and onto—all of the newly shed antlers. I've not found it so. I have found "sheds", but never when actively looking for them, so I've developed a new strategy. I walk for miles through the woods whistling Dixie, looking at sticks, leaves, mole hills, and spring wildflowers, but definitely NOT looking for sheds. No sir!

This clever technique paid off the other day, or so it seemed. I'd been walking for some time, humming the theme to Goldfinger, and assiduously not looking for anything, especially antlers, when I (accidentally mind you) spotted a deer carcass on the banks of Limestone Creek which runs through out farm. Although at some distance and on the opposite bank I could see through binoculars that the slightly curved carcass was not fresh, as the reddish-gray pelage was rather matted. I was gratified to see a "rack" with at least four or five tines. While thinking about what tools I'd need to retrieve the antlers or maybe even the entire skull (I had done this a couple of years ago in a very similar situation) I moved down the creek to get another look to fix the location in my mind for when I returned with the tools. After that second look from a different vantage I decided that since the

dead deer was not going anywhere I might as well finish my stroll. I walked a ways more and, feeling a bit smug that my not-really-looking strategy had borne fruit, I wanted another look at my trophy and maybe get a better count on the number of points on the antlers.

So I looked again, but alas my find was gone! I scoured the opposite bank through binoculars for several seconds. Gone. How could this be? ...until I came to realize that in its place was a slightly curved, reddish-gray, highly textured, very deer-looking log, on one end of which was a small pile of short branches looking all the world like...well, you get the picture.



Can one feel embarrassed even though alone? Trust me, one can, but I figure it was really not my fault. It was cruel trick Mother Nature played on an old codger who, clever strategy be

damned, indeed badly wanted to see something. That said, she made up for it just a few minutes later. Eat your heart out, my birding friends, for just for a brief moment, amidst the flickering shadows on the shaggy trunk of a sycamore tree (and yes, at some distance), Mother allowed me to spot—are you ready?—an ivory-billed woodpecker! Right here in Crawford County! I'm sure! I'm pretty sure!

Steve Ford

The Sperry-Galligar Audubon Chapter is holding a picnic at 1800 North Japan, Pittsburg, KS on May 26th.

May 26 — "Cassowaries: Guardians of the Forest" by Minaar Bailey. Maria has conducted extensive research on emus and emu farming and is the co-author of The Emu Farmer's Handbook. She has also raised ostriches. We are looking forward to her presentation on cassowaries, another one of the big birds, at our annual Sperry-Galligar picnic.

To receive an e-newsletter: send your e-mail address to Cindy Ford, Editor.

Board Meeting Highlights

Barb Robins, Secretary

Attending: Mavis Benner, Wayne Bockelman, Megan Corrigan, Cindy & Steve Ford, Delia Lister, Bob & Liz Mangile,

Diane McCallum, Barb Robins, Emmett & Ruth Sullivan.

Call To Order (Wayne): 6:00 p.m.

Minutes (Barb): Read and approved.

Treasurer's Report (Liz): Checking account balance of \$5,656.57.

Tonight's Program: Trent Kling, "Edible Native Fruits, Nuts, and Berries".

Next Month's Program: The May picnic, with Maria Minnaar Bailey and "Cassowaries: Guardians of the Forest". Dinner starts at 6:00. Liz checked on area chicken prices; Wal-Mart still has the lowest by \$30.

The board agreed to have her continue to purchase from there.

Gifts for Presenters: Wayne asked what we have been giving lately; Bob responded that he has given mostly bluebird houses.

Publicity: The Globe published the meeting notice two weeks ago; the Morning Sun announced it under the headline, "Produce Talk". Announced by KRPS a couple of weekends ago but not on their Calendar of Events. Usual e-mail reminders sent. Wayne suggested that next fall we might make visits to the offices responsible for announcements and thus give them our personal presence.

Refreshments: Barbara Sims and Mary Kate Sullivan.

Newsletters: Wayne again praised contributors and Cindy for a year of full-sized newsletters.

Election of Officers: Wayne will present the slate at tonight's meeting.

Field Trips: Suggestions were made, and Wayne will bring them to the members tonight.

Financial Statement

Liz Mangile, Treasurer

May 2016

Beginning balance	\$5801.45
Credits	
Local membership	\$ 15.00
Debits	
Newsletter	\$ 3.88
300 Stamps	\$141.00
Ending balance	\$5671.57

GOOD EATS

Barbara Sims and Mary Kate Sullivan
Thanks for the refreshments at the
April meeting.

April Meeting Presenter: Trent Kling



There is a lot of interest in eating healthier and more natural these days, but generally, people don't have a lot of knowledge concerning natural foods and their origins.

Trent Kling, who is in the PSU Department of Communications and owns and operates Kling Family Produce farm and orchards, came to fill

in some gaps for us and give us more appreciation for the wild and native (or not-so-native) plants growing around us. He termed trees and plants that have been here a very long time native, and ones that were brought here by immigrants and settlers, as wild. Coronado in 1541 found fruits and nuts in Kansas and Oklahoma comparable to ones he knew in Spain.

There are only a handful of fruiting trees in Kansas that we consider native, and they migrated from the eastern part of the U.S. to the eastern part of Kansas. Most Kansans outside Southeast Kansas are unfamiliar with the pawpaw tree, an understory tree that has blossoms smelling like rotten meat to attract flies and beetles for pollinators. The fruit's taste is similar to bananas and is a favorite of raccoons and possums. Red mulberry trees are considered native; black mulberries aren't. Trent explained the difference between Chickasaw and sand plums, and Kansas has a breeding program experimenting to develop more edible fruit. American persimmons, as most of us know by experience, can be very stringent if not harvested at the right moment. The persimmons we see in the grocery stores are almost always an exotic variety. The American black cherry tree produces a berry that is mostly inedible to humans but very beneficial to wildlife.

Other native edibles shown and discussed by Trent included ostrich fern, elderberry, golden currant, muscadine, wild strawberries, dandelions, and cattails.

Included in the wild category are blackberries, black mulberry, pecan, black walnut, crabapple, asparagus, and wild onion. (Some Oklahoma towns even have wild onion festivals!)

Many of our locally available wild and native edibles require some kind of special preparation before eating; Trent continually stressed that is unwise to roam down the trail and munch, even though you are certain that a plant is not poisonous. There are many species of plants and fungi that are deadly or harmful—remember the old jingle, "If it's not known, leave it alone!"

Barb Robins

Birds Sighted: Magnolia warbler, grosbeak, hummingbirds, orioles, brown thrasher, catbirds, pine siskins, Western kingbird, Carolina wren, Mississippi kite, Sandhill crane.

Refreshments were provided by Mary Kate Sullivan and Barbara Sims. The next meeting is our picnic—May 26 at 6:00, Homer Cole Center. Bring a side and your own dinner service. A signup sheet is going around. The speaker will be Maria Minnaar Bailey on cassowaries. President Bockelman announced the slate for officers and committee chairmen for next year: president, Wayne Bockelman; vice president and program chairman, Megan Corrigan (with assistance from Mavis Benner); treasurer, Liz Mangile; secretary, Barb Robins; newsletter editor, Cindy Ford; membership, Diane McCallum; refreshments coordinator, Liz Mangile; field trips, Delia Lister; Publicity, Bob Mangile;

SPERRY-GALLIGAR Audubon Happenings

CRITTER CONNECTIONS by Bob Mangile

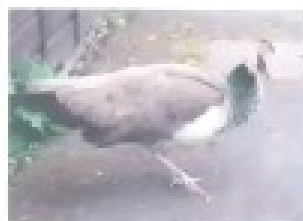
Some time ago an Audubon member asked me why one of her chickens started crowing like a rooster. Did the hen change sexes to become a rooster? What I suggested that might have happened received a bizarre reaction. Was it something entirely unheard of? Not quite! So let's have some fun. OK?

Probably everyone knows the difference between a rooster and a hen by its appearance. But sometimes Nature can produce some incomprehensible results. Back in the late 1940's I recall a boy claiming that his family had a rooster that laid eggs – and he took a lot of ribbing over that, too! Every rural family had chickens and everyone knew that couldn't be the case. Please read on!

To over simplify, barring exceptions and without getting technical, the sex of most warm-blooded animals is determined by the inheritance of chromosomes – 50% from each parent. In most bird species (but not all, e.g., some raptors) the females have a single ovary on its left side. But at the embryonic stage of development there are the beginnings of sex organs (gonads) on both sides. If the genetic makeup of the embryo dictates that it will be a female (in birds) the development of the gonad on the left side develops into an ovary, which inhibits the development of the gonad on the right side. If it were to be a male both gonads would have developed into testes. Interesting stuff!

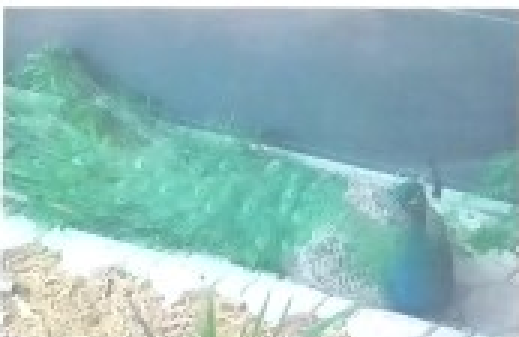
Now back to the rooster that laid eggs and the hen that crows! If an adult female chicken develops a problem, e.g., disease, ovarian tumor or old age, causing the ovary to quit producing estrogen, her testosterone level increases and the dormant gonad on the right side is switched on and develops into an "ovotestes", i.e., having both testicular and ovarian aspects. **Testosterone is the hormone that produces male characteristics** and the hen will grow rooster plumage, crow, develop spurs and it might even produce sperm but as far as I am aware they are not known to fertilize eggs. The degree of transformation to male characteristics can vary with the individual. So the boy's family rooster didn't really lay eggs but instead the hen that laid the eggs looked and behaved like a rooster and no longer laid eggs. Now that is a real piece of work produced by Nature. Huh?

(See photos below.)



Left: Adult male Peafowl or Peacock.

Right: Adult female Peafowl or Peahen.



Left: An 18-year-old Peahen that quit laying eggs at the age of 14, then began molting in male plumage. However, it never spread its tail like an adult Peacock. The resulting plumage is not due to a genetic condition but rather a hormonal condition.

Sightings.....



Oh, Those Brown Birds



Brown thrasher



Fox sparrow



Swainson's thrush

Send your newsletter articles, bird sightings, and nature notes to C. Ford by Aug. 10.

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

For first-time National Audubon membership, send \$20.00 and become a member of both organizations, receive 6 copies of Audubon Magazine annually and 8 copies of Sperry-Galligar Newsletter. Please make your check to: Sperry-Galligar Audubon.

____ YES I wish to become a FIRST-TIME member of National Audubon and Sperry-Galligar Audubon. (\$20.00).

For only local or renewal membership, send \$15.00 for membership of Sperry-Galligar Audubon and receive the 8 newsletters per year informing you of all our local activities. Please make your check to: Sperry-Galligar Audubon

____ YES I wish to become a RENEWING member of the local chapter (\$15.00).

Future National Audubon renewals: Send Audubon mailer forms directly to National.

Mail to:

**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society
816 E. Atkinson Ave
Pittsburg, Kansas 66762**

Please Print



Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Phone _____

e-mail address _____

**Events &
Miscellany**



**Annual May
Chapter Picnic**

Mark your calendars for the
Sperry-Galligar Audubon
Indoor Picnic and Program on
May 26.

Chicken will be provided by the club.
Bring a covered dish, plates, cup, and
silverware.

PLEASE LET US KNOW
HOW MANY ARE

**Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society
Newsletter**
816 Atkinson Ave.
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.)
7:00 pm to 9 pm, in Room 102, Yates Hall.
PSU Campus, Pittsburg, KS.
Refreshments served. Guests welcome.



Visit our website:

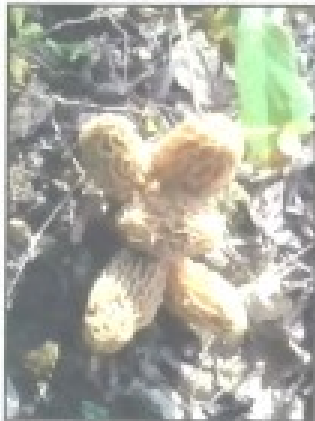
<http://sperry-galligar.com/>

**Attention All
Members**

Pay membership dues in September. 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.

BONUS PAGE

MOREL MAN



They say heaven to a Hoosier is bouncing a basketball around the Indianapolis 500 while looking for morel mushrooms. As an old Hoosier I'd say that's about right, but my problem is I do far more looking for morels, than finding. My problem, but not Jason Manderscheid's. Jason is the 33-year-old greenhouse manager and a landscaper at Pittsburg State University who is passionate – I'll refrain from the term obsessive – about all things morel. He studies how to find them, cook them, preserve them, and as a woodworker, he carves them with extreme realism AND as an artist, paints them. (I think if he were just a little more religious he could create them out of lead!)

For most of his life Jason has been a careful observer of the variables of the wild-growing morel. He's honed finding them to both an art and science, the result of which is he finds bounty enough to last him all year. He starts the season with an Easter egg hunt with his two young daughters, after which they head to the woods. He hunts nearly every day of the season, often taking time off from work to hunt the sponge-head down to dusk. Soil temperature and moisture, slope, and habitat are considered. He says the old wives' tale about finding morels around elm trees is, in fact, true, but other trees are of interest too – ash, apple, even cedars are worth attention. (He says he spends as much time looking up for the right trees, as down). Loamy soils are best, but morels can be found in numbers in all soils, including clay and mined land soils, given the proper conditions, even along road ditches. Another tip, if you have a particular dislike of ticks, wait until a down-pour. Ticks don't seem to be as prevalent. If you don't want to hunt morels in the rain, well, you just haven't tasted morels.

Jason doesn't hunt mushrooms commercially, at least not much, although he does have some ideas for the future. He indicates there are those who make thousands of dollars annually selling them to restaurants, groceries, and individuals.

He preserves many morels via dehydration, and says after they rehydrate they taste every bit as good as fresh. He cooks them every way imaginable, but is particularly proud of his soups (If this essay is printed, it means I've exchanged it for a promised bowl of soup!)

I actually met Jason via my interest in wood carving. From just a few feet away his deeply incised mushroom carvings simply cannot be told from the real thing. I've purchased several for gifts. In addition to the morel facsimiles themselves, he carves beautiful morel-head walking sticks from crape myrtle wood from discarded campus shrubs. He has a booth at Pittsburg's bluegrass festival, and will probably visit my old stomping grounds in southern Indiana next spring for the Brown County Mushroom Festival, near Nashville.

We're trying to snag Jason for an Audubon program prior to next year's season. Contact him for carvings at 620-704-2993. (Please, unless you're his daughters, do not try to follow him around in the woods!)

Steve Ford

Jason's carved morels

