

The Natural Enquirer



FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Volume 12, Issue 1

Fall Semester, 2013

Kansas Ornithological Society's Avian Conservationist of the Year: Dr. Elmer J. Finck

The KOS's Avian Conservationist of the Year Award is given to an individual for making significant contributions to bird conservation and/or education. Nominations are made for outstanding work in bird conservation, through the management or preservation of habitats, education or research. A nominee may be any professional, volunteer, educator or other person that has accomplished significant contributions in any of the areas listed. The accomplishment should reflect a long-time commitment to bird conservation and/or education within the State of Kansas. This award was started in 2005, and is presented during the fall annual meeting.

Dr. Greg Farley's nomination letter for Dr. Finck included the following comments: "I am honored to nominate Dr. Elmer Finck, Professor and Chair of Biological Sciences at Fort Hays State University, for this prestigious award. During his 35 years working as a biologist in Kansas, Elmer has made - and continues to make - impressive contributions in the areas of basic and applied research, publication, professional editing and leadership, and undergraduate and graduate student education in his areas of expertise. The following highlights reflect aspects of his career at Kansas State University as a graduate student and postdoctoral researcher, Emporia State University as a faculty member, and Fort Hays State University as department chair.

"Elmer has conducted extensive research in ornithology and wildlife biology in the state, specifically studies on grassland birds, mammals and other aspects of prairie ecology. He has published in a wide variety of respected professional journals, providing novel contributions to our understanding of an ecosystem central to the Kansas ethos. A closer look at his professional history reveals a classically trained ecologist; his academic background includes degrees in mathematics, plant ecology and avian ecology. The majority of contemporary university biologists usually have a far more limited range of academic experiences, and, one could argue, a proportionately limited perspective. Among Elmer's strengths is an ability to see the importance of within species details and small-scale interactions, while simultaneously understanding how seemingly minute pieces connect to produce systems-level phenomena."



Inside this issue:

Presentations	2	Grad Student News	5
Publications	3	Science Day	6
Alumni news	4	KWEC News	7

Presentations:

Central Plains Society of Mammalogists, University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg, MO, October 11-12, 2013:

Oyster, J. H., E. J. Finck, and M. S. Peek. Distance sampling as a technique to monitor pronghorn in Kansas.

Pounds, S. R., K. Miller, B. Herauf, and M. J. Shaughnessy. New records of small mammals from prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) towns in southwestern North Dakota.

Zinke, B. M., and E. J. Finck. Comparison of small mammal communities in ephemeral wetlands and wet meadows during drought.

Elizabeth Bainbridge was elected to the Webmaster position on the Board of Governors for CPSM. The FHSU Department of Biological Sciences currently has two graduate students as sitting board members in the society (Elizabeth Bainbridge, Webmaster, and **Brian Zinke**, Student Member-at-large).

Geological Society of America, Denver, CO, October 27-30, 2013:

Cost, I. An unusual cervical vertebral column of a plesiosaur from the Kiowa Shale with a note on preservation.

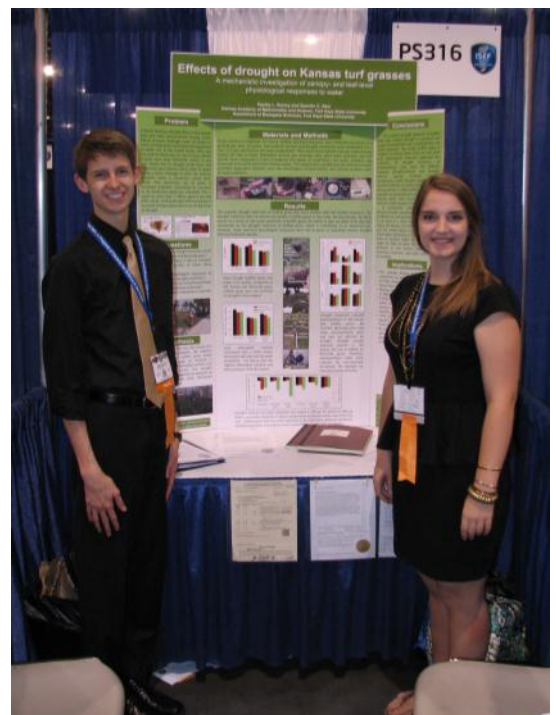
Kansas Ornithological Society, Washburn University, Topeka, KS, September 20-22, 2013:

Helms, C. J., J. J. LaFantasie, G. H. Farley, and R. L. Penner. Effects of grazing treatments on nest success of wet meadow breeding birds at Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve, Barton County, KS.

Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, Phoenix, AZ, May 12-17, 2013:

Disney, H. L., Q. C. Aker, and B. R. Maricle. Effects of drought on Kansas turf grasses.

Quentin Aker and **Hayley Disney** at the ISEF, Phoenix, AZ (Photograph by Brian Maricle)



Publications:

Olsen, J.T., K.L. Caudle, L.C. Johnson, S.G. Baer, and B.R. Maricle. 2013. Environmental and genetic variation in leaf anatomy among populations of *Andropogon gerardii* (Poaceae) along a precipitation gradient. *American Journal of Botany* 100:1957-1968.

Sekavec, J. G., W. T. Moore, and E. T. Gillock. 2013. Chlorhexidine resistance in a gram-negative bacterium isolated from an aquatic source. *Journal of Environmental Science and Health Part A* 48:1829-1834.



Joanna Fay's Human Biology class practiced drawing organ systems in "Sidewalk Anatomy", west of Albertson Hall, November 6, 2013.

The Winner! →



Alumni news:

Katie Talbott (M.S. '12) was hired as **BioDiscovery Project Coordinator at the Minnesota Zoo**. Katie's primary responsibility will be to help develop the project and begin its implementation. The goals of the project include documenting the wildlife living on the zoo property, evaluating the effects of the habitat management plan on native biodiversity, helping develop social media outlets to attract volunteers, engaging the public through wildlife photography, and developing a citizen science program aimed at helping the public understand and appreciate local wildlife. Congratulations Katie!



Congratulations to **Justin Kerby II** (B.S. '11, M.S. '13) on his acceptance into the University of Kansas Medical School.

Former ornithology class student **Gabe Bever** (M.S. in Geology/Paleontology, '01) was co-author of a paper published in *Nature*: Balanoff, A. M., G. S. Bever, T. B. Rowe, and M. A. Norell. 2013. Evolutionary origins of the avian brain. *Nature* 501:93-96.

This article provided CT-scan evidence that some non-avian dinosaurs had brains at least as large as *Archaeopteryx*; therefore, brainpower necessary for flight evolved prior to the ability to fly.

Great egret in Logan Co., KS. Photograph by Ian Cost

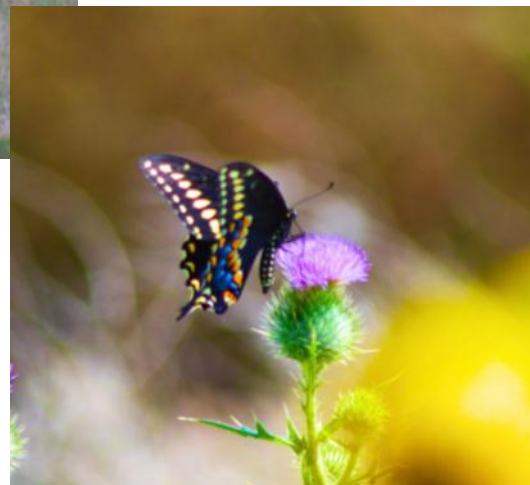


Graduate students completing their oral examinations this semester:

Ian Cost Nina Luna Frances Owen Jared Oyster Ryan Shofner



Pronghorn in Logan County, KS (above)



Swallowtail butterfly on thistle (right)

Photographs by Ian Cost

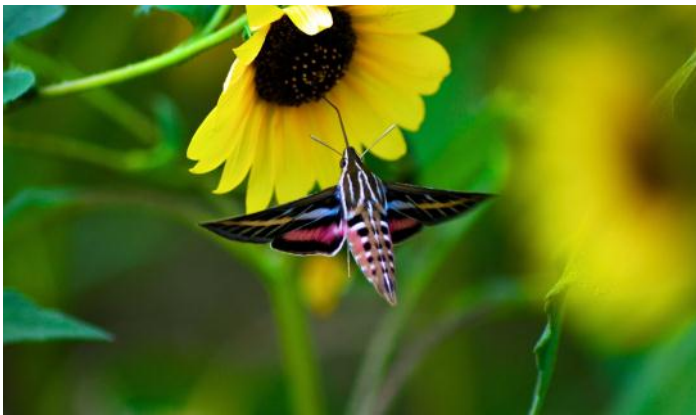


Dr. Elmer Finck, professor of biological sciences and department chair, is awarded the **President's Distinguished Service Award** by FHSU President Edward Hammond, December 9, 2013.

Congratulations Dr. Finck!



Nicole Martin was awarded a **\$1000 undergraduate student research grant** from the Kansas Academy of Science for the following project: "Effect of sulfide toxicity on cytochrome c oxidase activity in plant mitochondria."



Hummingbird moth in Logan County

Black-crowned night heron at Cheyenne Bottoms



Photographs by Ian Cost

High School students examine skulls (below) and aquatic invertebrates (right) on **Science Day** (November 18, 2013) in the Department of Biological Sciences. Photographs by Samantha Horacek.





FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY'S
**KANSAS WETLANDS
EDUCATION CENTER**

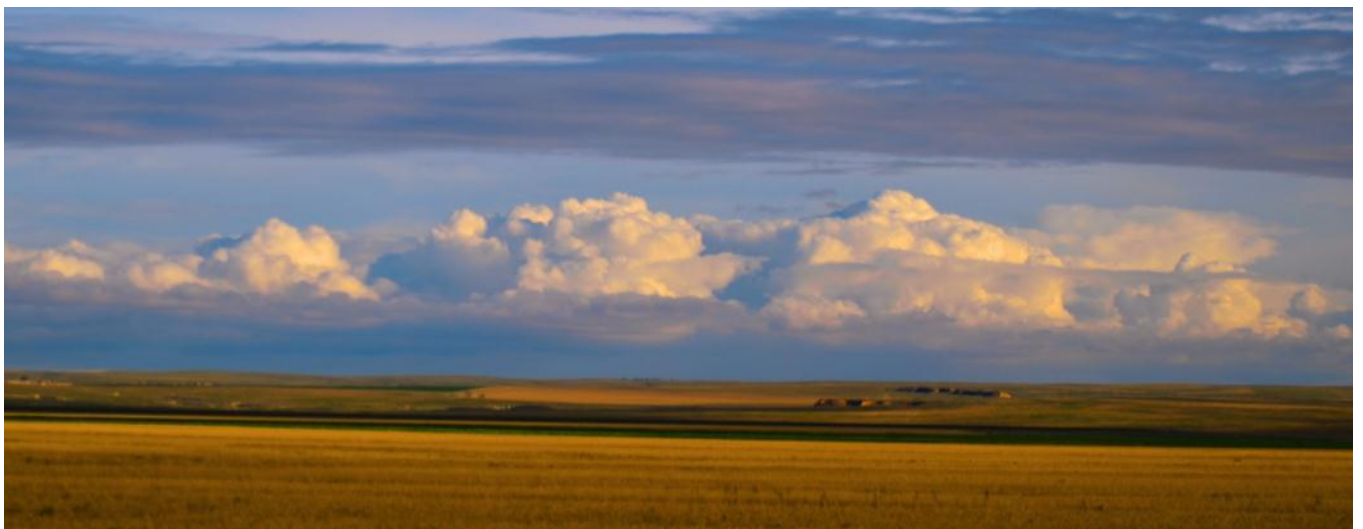
Kansas Wetlands Education Center conducted a “Mad About Monarchs” event on September 14, 2013. Over 150 people participated in capturing, tagging, and releasing monarch butterflies as part of the Monarch Watch program.



Photographs courtesy of
KSWetlandsCenter on flickr

Sarah Bailey (B.S. '13) helps children learn about wildlife at the KWEC

Photograph by Ian Cost





Biology major and Kansas Academy of Math and Science (KAMS) graduate **Jennifer Snyder** (above) holds a black-capped chickadee at the Biology Department's bird-banding station, October 3, 2013. Below, a banded mourning warbler waits to be released.



Graduate student **Jeff Carter** (below) examines a blue jay at the Biology Department's bird-banding station, October 3, 2013.



Photographs by Ian Cost



600 Park Street
Hays, KS 67601
Phone: 785-628-4214

We're on the Web!
www.fhsu.edu/biology

We're on  Facebook!