February 2005 Volume 34 Issue 2

ASO is a Chapter

of the National Audubon Society

Serving Eastern Nebraska

and Western Iowa

February Field Trips Always Iffy

Birds of the Prairie

It is difficult to think of the

By Nancy Leonard

By Clem Klaphake

prairie without thinking of Due to the unpredictable weather in February, this month's field trip is never easy to the birds and other animals plan. We have had more February trips cancelled than in any other month. Some yearsthat call it home. Longthere is open water on area lakes, but other years everything is frozen over.

billed Curlews and

So Saturday, February 26 (fingers crossed), there will be a field trip to potentially `good'populate the Sand Hills; local birding areas. We will meet in the southeast corner of the Southroads ShoppingUpland Sandpipers and Mall in Bellevue at 8:00 a.m. (near the tall electric power pole). From there we willBurrowing Owls inhabit the most likely head south along the Platte River west to a couple of the state parks. If theremixed-grass prairies; is open water on any of the area lakes, I may modify this route to accommodateDickcissels and Henslow's possibilities of waterfowl and gull sightings.

Sparrows sing in the

Check the weather conditions for appropriate clothing (especially foot gear if it is cold_{Sparrows} and/or wet). Bring whatever snacks or drink you want, but we should be near an eating_{Buntings} place by noon for those who want to have lunch.

Sierra Club Sponsors Oil On Ice

The February event of the Missouri Valley Group Sierra Club is the award winningthrough them all, the documentary *Oil on Ice*. This provocative film connects the fate of the Arctic National Western Meadowlark flits. Wildlife Refuge to decisions America makes about energy policy, transportation choices, and other seemingly unrelated matters. Caught in the balance are the culture But the prairie is greatly and livelihood of the Gwich'in people and the migratory wildlife in this fragile Alaskan diminished, and the ecosystem.

Non-Sierra Club members are welcome to attend this event on Thursday, February 24,urgent one. Where will they 7:30 p.m, Sierra Club Office, 5170 Leavenworth St, Omaha. live when the prairies are

Information Contact: Cammy Watkins, 551-9480 or Camellia. Watkins@sierraclub.org How do we conserve prairie

othe birds and other animals sthat call it home. Longbilled Curlews and Grasshopper Sparrows populate the Sand Hills; gupland Sandpipers and

emixed-grass prairies;
Dickcissels and Henslow's
Sparrows sing in the
tallgrass prairies; Lark
Sparrows and Lark
Buntings flock in the
shortgrass prairies. Cassin's
Sparrows and Common
Nighthawks live in the

prairies,

and

sandsage

reBut the prairie is greatly and diminished, and the question of what will happen to its birds is an 4 urgent one. Where will they live when the prairies are gone or more fragmented? How do we conserve prairie birds when the prairie is gone?

Prof. John McCarty and his associates are working on these questions. Their lab at the University of Nebraska at Omaha is studying ways maximize to the conservation value of grassland habitat in an area heavily dominated agriculture. They are also studying how areas such as Allwine Prairie the Preserve, DeSoto NWR, and Boyer Chute can contribute to maintaining healthy populations of grassland birds.

McCarty is Director of Environmental Studies and Associate Professor of Biology at UNO. He earned his Ph.D. from Cornell University and has worked on topics ranging from the effects of chemical contaminants on breeding Tree Swallows to importance of fruit as a resource for wintering birds and to ecological effects of global climate change. Prior to moving to Omaha in 2001, he worked with the USDA's Forest Service and the EPA.

Please join us for what should be a very interesting Thursday, evening on February 10, at 7:30 p.m, Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (1 block south of 45th & Center). A short business meeting will follow the program, and the evening will conclude with coffee, cookies and socializing. Nonmembers are welcome.

Fontenelle Nature Association staff and volunteers will hold songbird banding (w

eather permitting) Saturday,

February 12, 9:00 a.m. - noon, at Hitchcock Wetlands Learning Center, 103 Camp Gifford Rd, Fontenelle Forest. Information Contact: Betty Grenon (731-3140) A small fee will be charged non-FNA members.

By Nelli Falzgraf

Nelli's Notes

In the January Meadowlark, I excerpted **Optional Shared Membership** and summarized some of National Audubon's Ad Hoc Chapter Committee • NAS recruits National members and Recommendations. In this issue I am chapters recruit chapter members providing the remaining portion of this document for our members' better • Both NAS and Chapters choose understanding of National's concerns whether or not to provide membership, their recommendations and addressing these concerns.

Audubon Membership:

be clearly explained and easily carried out.

- conservation work.
- A Chapter's critical role is to provide Separate Membership members with education and the chance for involvement and action.
- Both Chapters and National may determine benefits to members.
- Give-and-take between Chapters and chapter-recruited sharing members recruiting, National in member/donor names, fundraising and communications is a key part of building • Neither NAS nor Chapters share strong relationship.

- for benefits and services to members recruited by the other.
- Both make each other's membership lists liberally available to the other for Guiding Principles: This policy should conservation programs and activities.
- Both make each other's membership lists available to the other at least once • Chapters are key partners in Audubon's yearly to solicit donations for programs. purposes of engaging people to carry out Each may withhold certain names if these are cultivated for special purposes.

- Both NAS and Chapters recruit members
- NAS-recruited members are not members of local Chapters, nor are members NAS
- membership revenue
- All parts of the Audubon network No obligation to either to make should be given the opportunity and membership lists available, but lists may

incentives to solicit memberships.

• We will be mindful of and respect • Where list sharing occurs, members' members' needs and wants and what part names would be shared electronically of Audubon they wish to support. Services.

Membership Recommendations:

- 1. Anyone who supports NAS or a Chapter or participates in a program is Guiding Principles: counted part of Audubon's network.
- 2. Donors of a certain amount of money funding and number of donors available to an Audubon entity will receive to all Audubon entities. benefits. Donors of a threshold amount to NAS are members of NAS.
- 3. Chapters may solicit donations from NAS members and others for additional • A commitment to conservation is the benefits with an associated cost (a common bond among all levels of regular newsletter, program fees, etc).
- 4. "Free chapter membership" as a play a valued role in our ambitious benefit in National recruitment and conservation goals. renewal will be discontinued. Chapters are encouraged to change the name of Ideals for Implementation "Chapter-only Members" to "Chapter Supporters" or "Chapter Members."

Membership Structure for Chapters:

The Task Force will seek more input about options for membership, allowing chapters to choose between the fundraising and support programs for following:

Automatic Joint Membership

- Both NAS and Chapters recruit National members; there are no Chapter • Encourage Audubon Board and senior members
- Both NAS and Chapters provide benefits and services to members recruited by the other
- Both NAS and Chapters have regular access to the other's membership names.

through State Offices or Chapter

Fund Raising Guidelines

be traded with mutual consent.

- We all work to increase amount of
- We give the donor choices and clear options for giving
- Audubon. We must reinforce that message and that all levels of Audubon

- Institutionalize the process of periodic communication about fundraising efforts
- Reference the Texas model (described Appendix IV)* of collaborative other states with state offices
- Encourage full disclosure about options for giving through bequests
- staff to attend Chapter fund-raising events and endorse Chapter programs
- Promote collaborative fundraising around key/joint conservation projects.

Continued on page 3

Nelli's Notes, Continued from page 2

Longer-term goals

- Long-term commitment to a mutually reinforcing message
- Establish Chapter-National Task Force to address additional solutions (include membership and fundraising staff from Audubon and Chapter representatives)
- Institutionalize all of above

Partnership Projects - Designed to

- Create opportunities between Chapters, States Offices, Centers, Chapter Services or other entities
- various activities

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration

Friday-Sunday, March 18-20

The 35th annual Rivers & Wildlife Celebration will be held Friday through Sunday noon, Mar 18-20 in Kearney. Coordinated by Audubon Nebraska and Rowe Sanctuary, Audubon's Celebration is timed to coincide with the world-renowned migration of over half a million Sandhill Cranes and millions of waterfowl through central Nebraska. Wildlife enthusiasts from around the world travel to the RWC ech year for a weekend of field trips, talks, demonstrations, merchandise sales, and more.

Featured speakers this year include Michael Forsberg, award-winning nature photographer author; and Julie • Offer Chapters a means to underwrite Zickefoose, acclaimed nature history writer and artist; and George Archibald, one of the world's crane authorities &

- Encourage Chapters and State Offices co-founder of the International Crane to fund raise together for cooperative Foundation. ventures
- Strengthen common ties within workshop, "Keeping a Nature Journal," Audubon family

Five priority Chapter issues identified workshop fee is \$75 per person. Space is by Chapter leaders as their top limited. concerns:

- 1. Communication 2. Financial support presentation, "Then, Now, and Future of for Chapters
- 3. Membership 4. Chapter governance 5. Chapter/Center Partnerships 6. Integrated Chapters and State Office Program 7. **Education Partnerships**

Partnership Chapter-National Measures of Success

How is National-Chapter partnership furthering the mission of the organization as stated in the Strategic Plan? How is the partnership succeeding in meeting the goals and objectives of the Chapters, along the Platte River allow up-close National State Programs, and organization. (Discussed in appendix VI)*

Certification

As detailed in the 2001 Audubon Chapter Policy, in order to maintain its status as a certified Audubon Chapter, each Chapter has the responsibility to ensure that its programs reflect the Essential Elements of a chapter and to submit an Annual Report by a specified date to its State Office or Chapter Service Office. New approaches to collaboration discussed herein including partnership projects, new forms of financial support through grants, and evaluating measures of success may require changes in Chapter Certification, such as

- 1. Addition of simple grant proposal for financial support
- 2. An agreement regarding the sharing and use of members' names
- 3. Evaluation form on performance and success of partnership with State-Chapter Services-National Audubon Society

*Further explanations are included in Appendices. If space permits these may be summarized in the March issue.

Julie will also present a special at the Iain Nicolson Center at Rowe Sanctuary Friday, March 19. The

On Saturday morning an important the Platte River," will take place at the Holiday Inn, Kearney. Three experts on the Platte will discuss historical conservation issues related to the River and how conservationists today fit into the future of preserving this special and invaluable Nebraska resource. A panel disat will follow; accept questions and comments from the audience will be

The highlights of the weekend, of course, are the birds, with many opportunities to witness them. Blinds viewing at sunrise and sunset. Guides will lead trips to view waterfowl, and trips to a Prairie Chicken lek and prairie dog towns are planned.

Call or write Audubon Nebraska, Box 117, Denton NE 68339 (402) 797-2301 -2304 (fax); nebraska@audubon.org; www.Nebraska.audubon.org. For crane viewing info, call or write Rowe Sanctuary, 44450 Elm Island Rd, Gibbon NE 68840; (308) 468-5282, - 5267 (fax); rowe@nctc.net; www.rowesanctuary.org



February Events

accepted.

- 2 (Wed) Board Meeting
- 10 (Thur) General Meeting
- 12 (Sat) Bird Banding Fontenelle 12 (Sat) Spring Creek Prairie Family Program
- 18-21 (Fri Mon) Great Backyard **Bird Count**
- 24 (Thur) Oil on Ice Film
- 26 (Sat) Field Trip to local sites

Project FeederWatch -

A New Partnership for Raptor Conservation Studies

Excerpted from Birding Magazine By Tad Leeper

raptor-migration data—all irregularly, some of it contradictory begs for comprehensive, standardized analysis across the continent.

An immense array of North American lin, and Peregrine Falcon at both eastern sites since 1976 and in the counts of Broad-winged Hawk and Peregrine Falcon at both w

disconnected, much of it sampled In contrast, Hussell said, "Recent declines in Northern Harrier, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks at Hawk Mountain, American

With much more analysis and many more sites, the partnership aims to provide wildlife managers and environmental policy-make

The Ferruginous Hawk might be

declining at some locations and increasing in others. Are those real differences, or sampling artifacts? The Hawk Broad-winged might decreasing in the East, but apparent increases have been noticed along the western periphery of its migratory route. Are those true population changes, or shifts in distribution? The American Kestrel might be declining severely throughout the East. Why is its status often unclear in other regions?

Recent raptor population studies have raised those and many more questions that lack adequate answers. Everyone agrees that such trends must be verified in extensive samples from many migration sites, analyzed over various time periods, and interpreted on local, regional, and continental scales to conservation efforts should be directed.

A significant new venture points toward filling such gaps in knowledge. It is a research partnership announced in 2004, which unites the Hawk Migration Association of North America, the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, and HawkWatch International in a project called the Raptor Population Index. The ultimate goal of this ambitious effort is to compile and analyze migration data from a network of more than 100 count sites across the continent. To fund it, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has provided a challenge grant that is being matched by contributions from other foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Managers of the partnership described trend analyses by David J.T. Hussell, one of the team's leaders, as "the backbone of the project's scientific credentials." An expert on the use of migration counts to monitor bird populations, Hussell has already made preliminary analyses of data from two hawkwatches in the East (Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania and Cape May in New Jersey) and two in the West (the Goschute Mountains in Nevada and the Manzano Mountains in New Mexico).

Among his initial findings are significant increases in the annual autumn counts of Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Mer-

be lin, and Peregrine Falcon at both eastern sites since 1976 and in the counts of Broad-winged Hawk and Peregrine Falcon at both w In contrast, Hussell said, "Recent declines in Northern Harrier, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks at Hawk Mountain, American

With much more analysis and many more sites, the partnership aims to provide wildlife managers and environmental policy-make

In the January *Meadowlark* i tem, "No Bird Left Behind," the 2005 Backyard Bird Count was featured, with more information pro The Count, sponsored by National Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will take place February 18 through 21 all over N determine where and for which species The method is to record the highest number of each species seen during a particular outing, on any day or on several days of the C

In 2004, 43,000 Checklists were received by the Cornell Lab, reporting 555 species and more than four million individuals.

DeSoto Christmas Count Results

By Jerry Toll The 2004 DeSoto/Boyer Chute CBC on Sunday, December 19, was located in the Missouri River valley between Omaha and Missouri Valley, IA. We had

Hermit Thrush 1*

European Starling 4,511

Cedar Waxwing 35

American Tree Sparrow 795

excellent coverage this year with 23 Song Sparrow 13 participants in 10 groups. The lake at DeSoto Refuge was largely frozen, Harris Sparrow 6 keeping down the waterfowl tally. Frigid Sparrow Species 11 temperatures with below zero windchills in the morning kept it interesting. Dark-eyed Junco 796 Snow Goose 365 Oregon subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco 2 Canada Goose 2,079 Lapland Longspur 3 Trumpeter Swan 6 Northern Cardinal 173 Mallard 2,504 Red-winged Blackbird 125 Common Goldeneye 68 Purple Finch 9 Common Mergansser 2 House Finch 33 Duck Species 96 American Goldfinch 231 Bald Eagle 49 adult; 31 immature House Sparrow 394 Northern Harrier 4 Species: 54; Individuals 18,462 Sharp-shinned Hawk 2 *First time for this count, both species found in Cooper's Hawk 1 Pottawattomie County, IA. Red-tailed Hawk 62 Compiler: Bob Barry, Biologist, DeSoto NWR Rough-legged Hawk 2 Hermit Thrush 1* Golden Eagle 1 European Starling 4,511 Cedar Waxwing 35 American Kestrel 13 American Tree Sparrow 795 Merlin 1 Song Sparrow 13 Harris Sparrow 6 Sparrow Species 11 Ring-necked Pheasant 25 Dark-eyed Junco 796 Wild Turkey 444 Oregon subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco 2 Lapland Longspur 3 Rock Piegon 288 Northern Cardinal 173 Red-winged Blackbird 125 Mourning Dove 1 Purple Finch 9 House Finch 33 Screech Owl 8 American Goldfinch 231 House Sparrow 394 Great Horned Owl 6 Species: 54; Individuals 18,462 Barred Owl 6 *First time for this count, both species found in Pottawattomie County, IA. Belted Kingfisher 2 Compiler: Bob Barry, Biologist, DeSoto NWR Red-bellied Woodpecker 88 Hermit Thrush 1* Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1 European Starling 4,511 Downy Woodpecker 112 Cedar Waxwing 35 Northern Flicker, yellow-shafted 138 American Tree Sparrow 795 Northern Flicker, red-shafted 1 Song Sparrow 13 Northern Shrike 1 Harris Sparrow 6 Blue Jay 88 Sparrow Species 11 American Crow 171 Dark-eyed Junco 796 Horned Lark 411 Oregon subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco 2 Black-capped Chickadee 187 Lapland Longspur 3 **Tufted Titmouse 14** Northern Cardinal 173 White-breasted Nuthatch 77 Red-winged Blackbird 125 Brown Creeper 5 Purple Finch 9 Golden-crowned Kinglet 33 House Finch 33 Townsend's Solitaire 1* American Goldfinch 231 Eastern Bluebird 53 House Sparrow 394

Hermit Thrush 1*
European Starling 4,511
Cedar Waxwing 35
American Tree Sparrow 795
Song Sparrow 13

Song Sparrow 13
Harris Sparrow 6
Sparrow Species 11
Dark-eyed Junco 796
Oregon subspecies of

Oregon subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco 2

Lapland Longspur 3
Northern Cardinal 173
Red-winged Blackbird 125
Purple Finch 9
House Finch 33

House Finch 33
American Goldfinch 231
House Sparrow 394

Species: 54; Individuals 18,462

*First time for this count, both species found in

Pottawattomie County, IA.

Compiler: Bob Barry, Biologist, DeSoto NWR

American Robin 3,847

Species: 54; Individuals 18,462

*First time for this count, both species found in

Pottawattomie County, IA.

Compiler: Bob Barry, Biologist, DeSoto NWR

Omaha Christmas Count Results

By Betty Grenon

The **Omaha Christmas Bird Count** had a very mild day on December 18 for our 32 counters. No precipitation and even som water partially open. We tallied a total of 17,661 birds of 62 species with another 2 reported during count week.

We had nothing unusual that we haven't had before, except possibly the identification of the newly split species of Cackling Goos We did have a high count of 34 Eastern Bluebirds and an uncommon Mockingbird, Merlin, and a Trumpeter Swan. All other numbers were within our normal range.



6

Pest Control Without Risks

According to the received wisdom of the ages, February is the month when gardeners' fancies turn to flowers, when Shake off the Winter Blahs...... seed catalogs arrive and imaginations run riot.

earlier if not, the Union of Concerned Audubon Center. Scientists has some advice of a practical upon gardens.

Protection Agency will not approve through grade 6. pesticides that can harm humans or the environment. Answer: False.

The EPA allows pesticides to "unreasonable risk to man or the 2301. environment"—the operative word being air and water, harm wildlife (including 98th Street south out of Denton for three miles). endangered species), increase the risk for serious health problems in humans, and lead to pesticide-resistant pests.

inexpensive, and friendly pest control options for the home gardener. The easiest and most straightforward is to prevent pests from slugs. getting into your garden in the first place. Choose plants (such as catnip and As with conventional pesticides, marigolds) that repel certain pests, or natural pest control products have others (such as sweet alyssum and dill) the potential to harm beneficial that attract pest-eating insects. Ask your insects as well as pests, so neighborhood garden shop which plants use them only as needed. work best against the local pest

Snug as a Bug Family Program at

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

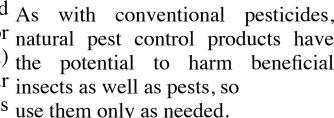
On Saturday, February 12, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, families can find relief from cabin To help when reality sets in, let us say fever by participating in a fun and educational about mid-summer, if we're lucky, or program, "Snug as a Bug," at Spring Creek Prairie

nature to help us control which life Activities will include a short hike, weather forms we want in our flower beds. So permitting, and an indoor investigation session. clip the following and be ready for the Using magnifiers, microscopes, and mindful bugs which may be lying in wait to prey techniques, participants will probe through leaf litter and logs to discover a variety of spineless wonders. This program is designed for adult/child True or False: The Environmental teams and is appropriate for children kindergarten

Fee is \$6.00 for adults, \$4.00 for children 12 and under. Children must be accompanied by an adult. be Space is limited. Preregistration required by Feb. registered as long as there is no 8. To obtain more information, call (402) 797-

"unreasonable." Conventional, EPA- Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center is located approved pesticides can still pollute our twenty minutes southwest of Lincoln (follow SW

Ö Make your own non-toxic There are, however, many effective, pesticides, such as a spray bottle environmentally filled with a mix of liquid soap, hot pepper sauce, garlic, and water. A dish of beer will attract snails and





population. And, since pests and disease For more information: thrive in decayed plant matter, it also helps to keep your garden tidy. **EPA - Pesticides**: Health and Safety

If your garden is already infested, turn to www.epa.gov/pesticides/health/human.htm one of the many natural pest control items already on the market.

Ö Sprays containing pungent substances (garlic, pepper), oils (neem oil, citrus oil), or soaps that repel insects and can be applied directly to plants or soil.

Beneficial creatures such miniwasps, nematodes, and ladybugs (ed. note: the native variety) that attack in pests. Or build a bat box or birdhouse to attract another type of pest-eater.

Ö Pathogens including certain fungi, bacteria, and viruses that infect specific pests.

Ö Pheromones (natural or symthetic) that draw various insect species into traps or disrupt their mating cycles.

Ö Noise generators that irritate pests and keep them away.

You can also try homemade pest control:

Ö Drench plants with strong sprays of water from your hose.

Ö Pick pests directly off plants by hand.

EPA - Pesticides: Controlling Pests

www.epa.gov/pesticides/controlling/garden.htm

ATTRA-Companion Planting

www.attra.org/attra-pub/complant.html

Beyond Pesticides: Least Toxic Control of Pests Home and Garden. the www.beyhondpesticides.org/alternatives/factsheets

Extremely Green Gardening Company— Organic Pest Control Guide. www.extremelygreen.com/pestcontrolguide.cfm

Addresses to Remember

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Washington D.C. 20500-0001

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Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246; Omaha 391-3411: Omaha address: 7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Chuck Hagel

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510-2705

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Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-4155; Fax: (202) 226-5452

Audubon Society

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The Audubon Magazine*(see below, chapter-only membership) and your membership card will be sent to this address:

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Street	
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PO 3

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Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Michael Johanns

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln, NE 68509

Phone: (402) 471-2244; Fax: 471-

6031

Mayor Mike Fahey

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183

Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-

5555

Winter's Gifts

If you find an injured bird of prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-731-9869.



Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives.

When sending your gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize and the name and address of the person to be notified.

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

P. O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103-0342

Bequests

A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103-0542

Office Building and Heron Haven Wetland: 11809 Old Maple Road, Omaha 68164

Phone: 445-4138 - http://audubon-omaha.org Elected Officers:

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Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs Kathleen Rose, 123 Bellevue Blvd So, Bellevue 68005 292-8912			
Carol Rasmussen, 4503 So. 16th St, Omaha 68107 731-3939			
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