



Meadowlark

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Happy Bird Year: Birds you can see in January and February *by Scott Bradley, Director*

I always enjoy birding in January and February because I get to start a new year bird list, and I'm anxious to see what I'm lucky enough to find! Suddenly, even birds I see in my backyard are exciting. I can set up a feeder and it won't be long before Cardinals and Blue Jays are regular visitors. Next, I put suet or mixed nuts on a platform feeder and start seeing Northern Flickers, Red-bellied



Downy Woodpecker, photo by Dietrich Huebert

Woodpeckers, Downy Woodpeckers, and Hairy Woodpeckers. Chickadees, Goldfinches, White-breasted Nuthatches, and Red-breasted Nuthatches seem to enjoy seed, suet and mixed tree nuts. The nuts keep them busy as they fly back and forth, grab a nut and then crack it against nearby trees. Remember to look for other birds in the background, such as Brown Creepers and several species of wintering sparrow species, including White-throated, Harris, American Tree, and Spotted Towhees. They like to clean up the seed others leave behind.

An exciting 2021 prospect for avid birders is a chance to see a rare finch. This winter has brought an irregular irruption of birds that are more common to the North, and we hope to see: Red Crossbills, White-winged Crossbills, Common Redpolls, Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak, and Pine Grosbeak in higher than normal numbers. These finches are known to be highly nomadic,



Red Crossbill, photo by U.S. Forest Service

and good places to watch for them include: bird feeders, parks with box elder seeds, and cemeteries with large-mixed pines full of cones. A good cemetery to bird locally is Forest Lawn. While there, watch for Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Pine Siskins. If the Purple Finch still evades your new year list, try Fontenelle Forest, especially near the Wetlands, Child's Hollow and the Krimlovsky Tract (at Neale Woods). Need an excuse to bird further out? Try Pawnee Lake near Lincoln.

Another winter favorite is the Long-eared Owl, often spotted at reservoirs, such as Prairie Queen, Lake Cunningham, and Summit Lake. Check thick groves of cedars and pines for owls and owl pellets from the mice/voles they've eaten. If you're lucky, you may find or hear a Saw-whet Owl. While

at these locations, I often see: White-throated Sparrows, American Tree Sparrows and, if lucky, a Spotted Towhee. Look for piles of wood, or "sparrow piles" as birders call them, to see if you can find other sparrows.

I also enjoy birding from my car during these months – it is much warmer. I look for Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, Rough-legged Hawks, Merlins (a species of falcon), and Prairie Falcons.

Another bird to find in winter is the Snow Bunting. They may be spotted in country



Snow Bunting, photo by NPS/ J. Mills

fields, but also frequent rocky shores like Pawnee Lake near Lincoln and Lake Babcock near Columbus.

I hope this information helps you find birds for your new 2021 list, but don't forget to keep an eye on the e-Bird mobile dashboard for birding hot spots, species observed, and rare birds recently found. It is a great way to find birds missing from your list and to share what you have found with others!

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT HOW: YOU CAN COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE
Conservation begins at home; each of us can help restore our unique ecosystem.

Just Unplug January

Santa gift you new electronics this year? Be sure to unplug them when they aren't in use. Studies show that many devices, including laptops, appliances and chargers, consume energy even while idling.

Forgo the Plastic February

Ditch straws. Embrace glass food containers. Plastic takes hundreds of years to decompose, and much of it can't be recycled. Find creative ideas for limiting plastic waste online.

ON THE HORIZON

January

MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

Speaker: Robert Wells, President
Audubon Society of Omaha

Topic: Great Backyard Bird Count

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Computer, laptop, tablet or phone, in your setting of choice

How: Register for our Zoom meeting at our website (see calendar). You will then receive an email with instructions.

Who: Members and the public (free)

DIY FIELD DAY: BIRDING BY CAR

ANY DAY YOU'RE FREE

What: See birds, stay warm

Where: Parks with good roads

Who: People who get cold outside

Why: A great way to catch a glimpse of winter visitors without catching cold.

Note: Please pull over and stop the car before picking up the binoculars

February

MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Speaker: UNO's Audubon
Conservation Student Chapter

Topic: Projects and plans

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Computer, laptop, tablet or phone, in your setting of choice

How: Register for our Zoom meeting at our website (see calendar). You will then receive an email with instructions.

Who: Members and the public (free)

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

FRIDAY FEB. 12–MONDAY FEB. 15

What: 24th annual bird count conducted all over the United States.

Where: Your backyard

How: Count for as little as 15 minutes in your own backyard to help expand our understanding of birds. Visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and educational resources. Bird populations are shifting and changing; your report can show the effects warm weather patterns have on bird movement around the country.

Who: Citizen scientists and families

Field notes from the President

by Bob Wells, President, Audubon Society of Omaha

As we finish a year like no other, it is time to reflect and look to the future.

Despite its chaos and isolation, 2020 was both busy and productive for the Audubon Society of Omaha.



UNO Audubon Conservation Chapter field day

Late in 2019, with help from UNO and faculty advisor Dr. John McCarty, ASO organized the first Audubon Conservation Student Chapter in Nebraska. Open to all UNO students, the new chapter draws a majority of its members from the Department of Environmental Science.

Establishing and nurturing Audubon chapters on college and university campuses is a priority for National Audubon, which worked with ASO and UNO's nascent chapter to secure grants to jump-start activities and programming. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has hindered the chapter's ability to meet in person and conduct some activities, students have adapted admirably to Zoom meetings and, with the aid of the Fontenelle Forest Land Management team, planned a large planting in conjunction with a land management project this December.

In September 2020, ASO relocated from the Center Mall to a new facility in central Omaha, consolidating its office with a new warehouse space. ASO's primary fundraiser for the past 40 years has been the biannual Bird Seed Sale. In the past, gracious volunteers have provided their garage space to house, store and deliver the purchased seed. But it made sense to move from the three garage sites into a single central space that would increase



New office with bird-strike-proof windows

efficiencies and ease delivery of the seed. Combined with a substantial marketing effort promoting the Fall Sale — featuring a strategic focus on ASO's Facebook followers that enabled our message to reach a large number of new people — the increased warehouse capacity helped us generate the largest sale in recent years. And volunteers responded by helping deliver the large volume of seed over two days.

Another adaptation we've made to ensure organizational continuity and member engagement is the use of the Zoom platform to facilitate in-person Monthly General Meetings. With the help of several volunteers and board members, ASO conducted monthly Zoom meetings this fall from a number of presenters. ASO also has created a new YouTube channel that allows the public to view these recorded programs and, eventually, other videos, as well.

Thanks to all of our volunteers and board members for stepping up and making smooth and effective transitions in all of these efforts. When the restrictions are lifted, we will plan an Open House for all members and volunteers to introduce our new office. Until then, stay connected and stay safe!

Turn birding for kids into child's play

by Grace Gaard, Director

As social distancing and masks continue to be part of our everyday routine, it's a great time to be intentional about finding joy right where we are. Birds can be a true inspiration for this, and moments invested in nature provide many health benefits.

Wintry weather offers the perfect excuse to bundle up the kids and take a walk in the cold air, listening carefully for some of our feathered winter visitors. This calls on our five senses, gives us a break from screens, and engages learners of all ages in scientific observation.

For many children, school has looked quite different this year, and many have had to adapt to learning remotely. While this has presented challenges, it has also created opportunities for other important forms of learning. From backyard bird watching to nature exploration, we can connect to nature anywhere!

And for those days we need to hunker down? Take advantage of a variety of resources to bring learning and discovery indoors. Creating your own backyard nature guide, engineering a bird's nest from couch cushions, or watching a nature documentary are all fun things we can do from home.

Create your own backyard nature guide; sample page created and illustrated by Grace Gaard.

The 2021 Student Art Contest is also a good activity designed to spark a young person's interest in nature and the natural sciences.

Here are some fantastic online resources for both children and adults that offer Nebraska-specific lessons and activities related to birds:

NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

outdoornebraska.gov/wildlifeeducation
outdoornebraska.gov/onlineeducation

BIRDS OF NEBRASKA

birds.outdoornebraska.gov

NEBRASKA BIRD MONTH

nebraskabirdmonth.org

NEBRASKA BIRD LIBRARY

nebraskabirdlibrary.org

PROJECT BEAK

projectbeak.org

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

feederwatch.org
allaboutbirds.org/cams/cornell-lab-feederwatch
academy.allaboutbirds.org/learning-games

NEBRASKA 4-H

4h.unl.edu/virtual-home-learning

It's virtually time:

2021 STUDENT ART CONTEST



Meadowlark by William C., 8th grade

Children learn by creating artwork focused on a specific subject. That's why Audubon Society of Omaha holds a Student Art Contest and Show each spring. Educating our community about birds and our unique ecosystem is part of our organization's mission, so this event is a win-win for reaching new birders.

This year, to promote public safety and respect concerns about large public gatherings, we are holding the 2021 Art Contest and Show entirely online. Starting January 4, look for rules, entry forms and instructions at audubon-omaha.org under Special Events. Electronic entries are due March 1, uploaded to our website with your entry form.

The Art "Show" will also be virtual this year. Starting April 5, 2021, we will display artwork from every student entering the contest (grades K through 12) in an online gallery for each grade. These galleries will be viewable on ASO's website through April 30.

Invite your favorite students to create and enter original artwork featuring birds. Even if their school is not participating, we welcome their entries and encourage our members to support their creative efforts related to birds of the Midwest or endangered bird species.

Artwork is judged for Excellence or Merit in these categories: Realism, Graphic Design, Cartooning and Recycled. Ribbons and prizes will be awarded to winners in each grade.

Contact Virginia at vstauffer1@yahoo.com if you have any questions.



The eyes have it – your photos

Email photos to asopublisher@gmail.com



Barred Owl photo by Karen Kutz Smith



Sandhill Cranes photo by Michelle Harder

Good deeds through seeds – Winter sale starts

Running low on bird seed? Want to help your feathered friends through spring migration?

Stock up at Audubon Society of Omaha's Winter Bird Seed Sale. Be sure to place your order no later than **Wednesday, February 10**, and pick it up Saturday, February 20.

We will email an order form by January 7 to all previous customers who gave us their email address. If we don't have your email address, please email fullertonj@cox.net. Or, you can download the order form at <http://audubon-omaha.org/> after January 7. If you have questions, please call John or Betty Fullerton at 402-493-4362 or 402-957-5901.

40th Anniversary Fall Bird Seed Sale — More than 26 tons of fun!

by Betty and John Fullerton, ASO Bird Sale Co-chairs

Thanks to all of the 335 customers who made our 40th Fall Bird Seed Sale a success at our new office and warehouse location at 4339 S. 90th Street. We sold 52,300 pounds of bird seed, totaling \$45,479, nearly doubling the average of the past six years. Your orders of 1,275 bags and 680 cakes of suet was enough to fill one semi-trailer, plus an additional delivery truck! Of those 335 customers, 124 (37%) were new. Welcome! Twenty-two customers made an extra donation for contact-less delivery by our STRONG volunteers.

Your orders of the high-quality seed will provide a net profit of more than \$10,000 in vital support of ASO's education and conservation programs. Thank you also for your additional donations, which totaled \$2,196!

Our 50 amazing volunteers (13 new this year) are deeply appreciated. They include a mailing crew of Jo Bartikoski, Mark Cave, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Nelli Falzgraf, Janie Fuller, Betty & John Fullerton, Kathy Schwery and Don Westling. Duane Schwery managed our mailing lists, while Candy Gorton managed our website. Anne Maguire, Lauren Robinson and Heidi Walz coordinated our marketing efforts. Record-keeping was handled by Betty & John Fullerton. Mark Cave took on logistics. And Virginia Stauffer helmed graphics.

Helping to unload the seed delivery, load customers' orders and make deliveries were Ruth Bentzinger, Scott Bradley, Charlie & Andrew Callison, Mark Cave, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Ken Czyz, Meagan Deichert, Michelle Foss, John & Betty Fullerton, Allen & Kadynn Hatfield, Christine, Hannah & Joe Jacobsen, Michaela Johnson, Tim Kautzman, Wendell Kuhlman, Jessica McAdams, Andy Miller, Matt Miller, David Nichols, Chris Olson, John Pollack, Greg Prorock, Al Reyer, Michael Shaffer, Duane & Kathy Schwery, Melissa Sitze, Coleen Stice, Noah Sundberg, Jerry Toll, Heidi & Bobby Walz, Bob Wells, and Mary Kay & Mike Wolf.

Providing food for volunteers were Elizabeth Chalen, Meagan Deichert, Michelle Foss, John & Betty Fullerton, Grace Gaard, Michaela Johnson, Anne Maguire and Bob Wells.

Kudos to Neal Ratzlaff, who helped publicize the sale through his interview with Marjie Ducey in the Sunday, October 4, Omaha World-Herald.



Top row, left to right; our full warehouse; Bobby Walz, Melissa Sitze, Bob Wells, Mark Cave. Bottom row, left to right Tim Kautzman, John Fullerton, Meagan Deichert; John Fullerton, Mark Cave, Betty Fullerton and Kathleen Crawford-Rose. Not shown: smiles under the masks.

Stayin' alive: Prairie mammals in winter

by Glenn Pollock

“So what do they eat in the winter?” That was a question I was asked about the small mammals that live on the prairie. Because there are several, I thought I would tell you about three small critters that live at Audubon Prairie.

Let's start with Deer Mice. These resourceful guys start looking for a winter home in September, as many people who have homes in a rural area will testify to. These mice will find a sheltered place to store food. One of the places at Audubon Prairie Deer Mice find is my John Deere tractor. Although I cover the tractor with a canvas in winter, I still have to remove empty walnut shells and nesting materials from the recesses of the machine in the spring.

The Prairie Voles like to remain active on the prairie by making shallow underground nests and making paths through the grasses under the snow. Each year after the snow melts I find signs of the race track the voles have made under the snow. They appear to keep busy in the winter and seem to have a taste for *Liatris* bulbs, which I personally disapprove of. By the way, Prairie Voles are monogamist.

Now the next, and I think the best, way to survive winter is to sleep through it. We have a small mouse-like critter



*Meadow Jumping Mouse, *Zapus hudsonius**

called the Meadow Jumping Mouse. It looks somewhat like a Kangaroo Rat but is not related. It's small with a tail longer than its body and jumps from one place to another like a toad or frog. Chances of seeing them are rare because they're nocturnal, but I've seen them at Audubon prairie at least five times. They do jump like frogs and are light brown to orange on the belly. You might only see an orange flash among the grass.

This mouse sleeps underground through the winter. Beginning in October it hibernates until early spring. Apparently, it's not safe to be a Meadow Jumping Mouse. The average female will have at least three litters of five offspring each year, but about only 10% will survive.

I hope you're lucky and can meet one of our rare residents of the Audubon Prairie – just keep looking down for a jumping orange flash.

RESOURCES & INFO:

HOW TO JOIN/RENEW/UPDATE

Join or renew your membership online at audubon-omaha.org and select “Get Involved.” Save paper and avoid confusion.

Your membership with National Audubon automatically makes you a member of Audubon Society of Omaha.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Please call National Audubon toll-free at 1-844-428-3826, or send an email to audubon@emailcustomerservice.com

STAY CONNECTED

Join our email list at audubon-omaha.org under “Get Involved” and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

BEQUESTS & GIFTS

A bequest to Audubon Society of Omaha is a gift to those who will succeed us and secure our natural heritage.

Want to send a gift on behalf of someone? Mail your check along with the name and address of the person to be notified to:

Audubon Society of Omaha
P.O. Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103
We'll send them a thank-you note letting them know of your gift.

VOLUNTEER

Our pledge to volunteers is to use your resources responsibly for the purposes of conservation through habitat management and education.

Want to help with the next bird seed sale? Email John at FullertonJ@cox.net for more info.

TAKE ACTION

Big things are happening, so communicate with your elected officials. Go to audubon-omaha.org for links to contact info for each.

INJURED BIRD?

Raptors: Call 866-888-7261 to speak to a Raptor Recovery volunteer.

Non-raptor: Call Nebraska Wildlife Rehab at 402-234-2473.

Board Recap – Thank you edition

by Heidi Walz, Director

BIRD SEED SUCCESS A huge thank you to Betty & John Fullerton and their bird seed committee. This year's main sale was a huge success and their masterful plan led to two smooth days of customer pick-ups at the new office / warehouse location. Betty & John – you are the best!

MARKETING COMMITTEE The Marketing Committee wants to share a shout-out to volunteer committee member Lauren Robinson. She reached out wanting to offer her time and talents to ASO, and she has been a huge asset to our committee. Thank you, Lauren – we appreciate you and are glad to have you on the ASO team.

FEARLESS LEADER As our current President, Bob Wells, has been jumping through hoops (some on fire) over the past eight months as ASO has dealt with staffing changes, a new office, Covid-cancelled field trips and special events, and a bigger-than-ever bird seed sale in addition to all of his usual leadership duties (not to mention all of his volunteer hours at Hitchcock Hawk Watch and the Raptor Woodland Refuge). Bob – we are lucky to have you leading us. Thank you for all the extra hours this year!

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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

the Meadowlark

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Blue Jay, photo by Dietrich Huebert

The Audubon Society of Omaha is dedicated to the active promotion of environmental awareness to our community through education, conservation, and enjoyment of our natural heritage, especially birds.

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ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Bob Wells
Past President: Matt Miller
1st Vice President: Christine Jacobsen
2nd Vice President: Meagan Deichert
Treasurer: Betty Fullerton
Secretary: Shannon Engberg

ELECTED DIRECTORS

Scott Bradley	Mark Cave
Elizabeth Chalen	Michelle Foss
Grace Gaard	Michaela Johnson
Anne Maguire	Heidi Walz

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Art Contest: Virginia Stauffer
Education: Elizabeth Chalen
Finance: Betty Fullerton
Fundraising: Anne Maguire
Grant Review: Shannon Engberg
Legislative Affairs: Bob Fuchs
Marketing and Outreach: Anne Maguire
Membership: Kathy Schwery
Natural Areas Management: Glenn Pollock
Nominating: Megan Diechert
Program: Bob Wells
Bird Seed Sale: John & Betty Fullerton
ASO Administrator: Taylor Daniels
Executive Director, Audubon Nebraska:
Kristal Stoner



Find us on Facebook,
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