



# Meadowlark

celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> year

MAY/JUNE 2022

VOL 51 ISSUE 3

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## Join us May 12 for enlightening research on sandhillcranes

by Bob Wells

Power lines span the Platte River at Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon, creating a deadly



Photo by Mike Benkis

hazard to the approximately 450,000 Sandhill Cranes migrating through Central Nebraska.

Amanda Hegg, a Conservation Program Associate at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, will present original research she and research partners Cody Wagner and Dave Baasch, an endangered species specialist at the Crane Trust, conducted in March 2021. The trio posited that shining ultraviolet light on the power lines could enable cranes to see them more clearly and avoid life-threatening or debilitating collisions. Although ultraviolet light is largely invisible to humans, birds have the ability to see into the ultraviolet spectrum. The results of their experimental mitigation efforts were impressive – when ultraviolet light illuminated the power lines, collisions plummeted by 88 percent, compared to when the lights were turned off.

Learn more about this important research project by joining Amanda on Zoom, Thursday, May 12, at 7 p.m. Look for a registration link to be posted on Audubon Society of Omaha's Facebook page and our online calendar.

## Spring into birding in May and June

by Scott Bradley

Birders often regard May as their favorite time of year. The sun warms the soil, and it just feels right to be outside as everything comes back to life. Plus, great numbers and varieties of our favorite migrating birds return from their winter retreat. Be prepared to be patient and persistent, and embrace a sense of adventure to find these treasured migrants. Watch eBird for recent reports, grab your binoculars and bug spray, and go find some birds!

Migrant traps (locations that attract wild birds) around town are great places to frequent when looking for migrating passerines. Omaha is situated with great habitat for migrating passerines within the Missouri Valley riparian area, providing an oasis in the agricultural lands surrounding us. In April, we see thrushes, kinglets, sparrows, and Yellow-rumped Warblers. In May, neotropical migrants arrive, including colorful birds, such as warblers, tanagers, and orioles.

While there is great habitat everywhere, including your backyard, some places are more popular than others. This is a short list, but is not all inclusive:

- **TOWL PARK**
- **FONTENELLE FOREST NATURE CENTER**
- **FONTENELLE FOREST WETLANDS**
- **WALNUT GROVE PARK**
- **CHALCO HILLS** (In particular, survey trees and scrub areas around the water's edge, the trails behind the sediment trap just South of Highway 370, and the nature trail section near the Chalco Hills Pioneer Homestead — Google Map it.)

May also brings migrating shorebirds, a unique family of birds known for long bills used to probe mud flats and flooded fields for snails, worms, etc. It is helpful to have a scope to view shorebirds because they are usually in a distant field, come in a variety of sizes, and take experience to identify accurately. Popular locations for shorebirds include the sediment traps of local lakes, in particular, Chalco Hills, Lake Wanahoo, and N.P. Dodge Park's northernmost section near the muddy water's edge before arriving at the slips on the marina.

Migration subsides in June, and breeding birds emerge. Look for Robins, Chickadees, Indigo Buntings, Tufted Titmouse, and many more at the same migrant traps and area parks.



Photo by Ron Hiatt



Photo by Bobby Walz



Photo by Phil Swanson

## ON THE HORIZON

# May

### MEMBER PROGRAM

THURSDAY, MAY 12

**Speaker:** Amanda Hegg, Conservation Program Associate, Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

**Topic:** “Making Power Lines Safer for Sandhill Cranes.”

**When:** 7 p.m.

**Where:** Computer, laptop or tablet

**How:** Register for this meeting at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org). A link to join the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you

**Who:** Members and the public (free)

### JUNE – AUGUST PROGRAMS

#### SUMMER SCHOOL FOR BIRDERS

While Audubon Omaha doesn't offer programs during the summer, you can continue your birding and conservation education with Wachiska Audubon Society (Lincoln, Neb.). The chapter offers educational programs on the second Thursday of the month. Omaha Audubon members are welcome to attend their Zoom meetings. To see upcoming programs and register for the meetings visit: [WachiskaAudubon.org](http://WachiskaAudubon.org). We'll be back in September!

## Field notes from the President

by Christine Jacobsen, President, Audubon Society of Omaha



2021-2022 has been a year of learning, changing and growing for Audubon Society of Omaha. While we are still holding board meetings and monthly programming via Zoom, we've seen a return of our in-person group field trips, the collective for youth after-school programs, and increased interest in our bird seed sales and Student Art Contest and online show. I hope we will host more in-person meetings and events the further we move into 2022.

I've spent the better part of this year learning what it means to be president of this great organization, and how we can best lead it into the future. We will continue to focus

our efforts on protecting and managing our natural resources and addressing habitat, waterway, and climate issues by collaborating with Wachiska Audubon, Audubon Nebraska and legislators. I'd love to see us build our membership and volunteer base and become even more active in our community. One of the ways we will do this is by developing a strategic plan to ensure that the organization, the prairies we protect, and the programs we provide will continue.

I would like you all to help me welcome our newest board members, Kyle Finley, Nicholas Romero, and Ashleigh Stohlman. I look forward to working with them and the entire board over the next year to develop and execute the strategic plan that will guide us into the future.

## Celebrating our 50th year!

Audubon Society of Omaha is still going strong, thanks to all members who have volunteered to get involved. From serving on the board, leading field trips, helping with the bird seed sale and student art contest, and serving on committees, our community has come together to help ensure our natural environment is preserved for generations to come. Thanks to all who have helped to build this worthwhile organization.

## The eyes have it – your photos

We need your bird photos! Please email them to Meadow Lark at [asopublisher@gmail.com](mailto:asopublisher@gmail.com)



Flicker, Photo by Jennifer Dobey



American Redstart, Photo by Kellie Hayden



Eastern Bluebird, Photo by Larry Frame



Common Redpoll & Pine Siskins, Photo by Mary Clausen

# How our ongoing drought could impact local Audubon prairies *by Glenn Pollock*

Just how dry is it? At the end of February, 98 percent of Nebraska was officially in drought, up from 33 percent at the beginning of this winter. These U.S. Drought Monitor figures, published in a recent Omaha World-Herald article, underscore the seriousness of the situation. At press time, the paper noted that Nebraska had suffered the fourth-driest winter on record, and that data released by the National Centers for Environmental Information show that the lower 48 states, taken together, registered the twelfth-driest winter in the 127 years records have been kept. Around here, we've witnessed a brushfire on I-80 and dry-as-a-bone soil everywhere.

So, people have been asking, "How will the ongoing drought affect our Audubon Prairies?" The answer is, at this point, we just don't know.

But we can look to history to glean insights into where we might be headed. The conditions we're seeing now are nothing like the Dust Bowl days of 1931-1940 that withered fields across the Central and Western United States from Kansas and Colorado south to Texas and New Mexico. It's important to remember that the land has, for the most part, survived and recovered, as it has done many times over the past 20,000 years. J.E. Weaver, who served as a plant ecology professor at the University of Nebraska from 1917 to 1952, wrote extensively on prairie ecology, including the drought of 1931-1940. After co-authoring the first American ecology textbook just before the drought began, he studied the effects of the drought on prairie vegetation. The good news, of course, is that prairie life persevered. The bad news is that much of the vegetation that thrived during the drought years was invasive. In fact, some prairie lands lost up to 75 percent of their plant cover.

Because today's conditions are not as severe as those of the Dust Bowl days, our prairies will pull through. What does concern me, however, is that newer, stronger and more invasive plants have been introduced to our area – plants that were not present in the 1930s. I'm particularly concerned about the 3.5 acres of restoration planting we did last year. Restoration projects achieve optimal results with greater-than-average rainfall. With minimal snow cover and little in the near-term forecast to indicate sufficient precipitation is in store, we will need to be keep an even sharper eye on our prairies to help them thrive in the years ahead.



*Cedar Waxwing, Photo by Lorraine Feldhausen*



*American Robin, Photo by Richard Thies*



*Juvenile Bald Eagle, Photo by Vicky Havelka*

## A FRIENDLY REMINDER

# Avian flu is back; keep birds healthy with clean feeders

*by Lauren Robinson*

To ensure your tiny feathered tourists (and, of course, honorable residents) are convening at disease-free feeding zones, you'll need to make cleaning your feeders a routine occurrence.

Cleaning frequency can differ depending on the type of feeder as well as the weather. Hummingbird feeders need more frequent cleaning, approximately every 3-5 days, sooner if the water begins to look cloudy. Plastic tube feeders with small feeding holes can trap moisture and speed up mold growth, especially with the help of summer heat and rain.

As a general rule, most non-hummingbird feeders need cleaning every couple of weeks. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology recommends either taking the feeder apart and putting it in the dishwasher on a hot setting or hand-washing it with soap and boiling water or with a bleach solution, no more than 1 part bleach to 9 parts water.

Jason St. Sauver, education director at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center in Denton, Nebraska, says he prefers to use natural ingredients, such as distilled white vinegar or apple cider vinegar, with up to a 1-to-1 vinegar-to-water ratio.

After washing, be sure to rinse the feeder thoroughly and allow it to dry completely.

Wildlife specialists across the country have been working around the clock to deduce the cause of the illness affecting birds across the U.S..

Still, we encourage you to maintain a watchful eye. If you notice birds in your backyard with swollen or crusty eyes and exhibiting odd behavior, call Nebraska Game and Parks at (402) 471-0641 or Audubon Nebraska at (402) 797-2301.

# Student artists draw inspiration from the birds

by Virginia Stauffer,

Chair, Student Art Contest and Show

The 2022 Audubon Society of Omaha's Student Art Contest was bigger than last year with almost 600 entries from 20+ schools and 20+ households. Students employed a wide variety of techniques and the results are delightfully imaginative.

Shown here are the winners of Best of Show – a small representation of the entries. All student artwork submitted is on view in virtual galleries at our website: [auducon-omaha.org](http://auducon-omaha.org) in the Special Events section. We hope you will take a few minutes to “tour” all of the galleries as there is much to delight and surprise. Judges awarded more than 400 prizes for Excellence and Merit.

Special thanks to the Art Show committee: Lauren Robinson, Jackie Scholar, and Katy Simmons. Thanks to our judges, Anne Maguire, Marlene McCann, Kit Murrin, Jackie Scholar, Jason St. Sauver, and. Jaye Welch.

Most of all, thanks to the students, teachers and parents who made the art happen and then uploaded it online. We couldn't do it without you.



Liam C., American Robin  
BEST OF SHOW K-4: Realism



Daniel R., Tufted Titmouse  
BEST OF SHOW K-4: Realism



Anushree P., Golden-winged Warbler  
BEST OF SHOW 5-8: Realism



Noah C., American Robin  
BEST OF SHOW 5-8: Realism



McKaylee H., Scissor-tailed Flycatcher  
BEST OF SHOW 9-12: Realism



Eliana C., Barn Owl  
BEST OF SHOW 9-12: Realism



Ethan D., Gr...  
BEST OF SH...



Felix V, Barn Owl  
BEST OF SHOW K-4: Graphic Design



Brooklyn M., Meadowlark  
BEST OF SHOW K-4: Recycled



Ellise B., Western Meadowlark  
BEST OF SHOW K-4: Cartooning



Joah D., Baltimore Oriole  
BEST OF SHOW 5-8: Graphic Design



Kylie F., Lady Gouldian Finch  
BEST OF SHOW 5-8: Recycled



Andie B., Meadowlark  
BEST OF SHOW 5-8: Cartooning



Jareth D., Barn Owl  
BEST OF SHOW 5-8: Graphic Design



Aaron F., Cardinal  
BEST OF SHOW 9-12: Recycled



Alex C., Multicolored Tanager  
BEST OF SHOW 9-12: Cartooning



Greater Green Leafbird  
BEST OF SHOW 9-12: Graphic Design

# Tons of fun for everyone – especially our feathered friends *by Betty Fullerton*

Audubon Society of Omaha's Winter Bird Seed Sale is providing more than 10 tons of seed (that's 600 bags across 153 orders totaling 21,300 pounds) to area birds. Revenue from this major fundraiser supports ASO's local conservation and education programs.

Many thanks to everyone who purchased seed and to our friendly flock of volunteers who helped unload the truck Friday, February

19, worked inside or outside to distribute seed Saturday February 19, delivered seed, or provided food for our efforts, including: Stephen Callison, Roger Carroll, Mark Cave, Jim Commers, Shannon Engberg, Tim Kautzman, Anne and Jim Maguire, Andy Miller and Melissa Sitze, David Nichols, John Pollock, Duane and Kathy Schwery, Katy Simmons, Virginia Stauffer, and Bob Wells. Remember that ASO

also sells bird seed in the fall, and that we're always looking for volunteers for future sales. Seed handlers do need to be able to lift 40-50-seed bags and be available on pickup and/or delivery days. If you can help with this important project, please contact Bird Seed Co-Chairs Betty and John Fullerton at 402-493-4362 (H), 402-957-5901 (M), or efullerton00@gmail.com.



Loading orders Saturday morning were: back row, L to R, Shannon Engberg, Mark Cave, and Melissa Sitze; and, front row, L to R, Andy Miller, Jim Commers and Bob Wells.

# Officers elected to 2022-23 board of directors

Each year Audubon Society of Omaha elects or re-elects officers and directors. Here are the results for the term that starts July 1, 2022:

**PRESIDENT:** Current President Christine Jacobsen will continue to serve as president with guidance from Robert Wells. Christine is the Director of Education at Lauritzen Gardens.

**1ST VICE PRESIDENT:** Former board member and 2nd Vice President, Michaela Johnson will be serving as 1st Vice President.

**2ND VICE PRESIDENT:** This position is currently open. The board is recruiting members who would like to be more involved with leadership.

**TREASURER:** Michelle Foss, will continue her duties as Treasurer. Michelle holds a Bachelor of Science, Environmental Science, degree from SUNY Albany and is the Director of Resource Stewardship, at Fontenelle Forest.

**SECRETARY:** Anne Maguire, Chairman of the Fundraising Committee and Publisher of the Meadowlark, will continue as secretary.

## GREEN CORNER: HOW YOU CAN COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

*Conservation begins at home; each of us can help restore our unique ecosystem.*

### Shop Local May

Your groceries often travel hundreds or even thousands of miles before reaching your shopping cart. Shop your local farmers' market to cut back on carbon emissions from food transportation.

### Picnic Responsibly June

As the weather warms and you venture outside this summer, pack reusable utensils and dishware rather than single-use paper or plastic products to limit waste and inadvertent litter.



Maura D., Eastern Meadowlark  
2022 MEADOWLARK AWARD

# New board members offer fresh ideas and new perspectives

by Michaela Johnson, 2nd Vice President and Nominating Committee Chair

At Audubon Society of Omaha's March board of directors meeting, the board voted in three new directors. These ambitious, young conservationists will bring fresh ideas and new perspectives to expand ASO's reach and impact within our community and native habitat. We are excited to welcome Ashleigh Stohلمان, Nick Romero, and Kyle Finley to our Board of Directors.

**ASHLEIGH STOHLMAN** is a founding member of the UNO Audubon Student Conservation Chapter. She served a full executive term as its Treasurer, and now leads the Fundraising Committee. Graduating this May with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and a Chemistry minor, she is excited to continue her work through the Audubon Society of Omaha chapter. Through Conservation Nebraska and various management roles, she has grown to be an effective leader. Her connection to UNO will be instrumental in enhancing our opportunities to collaborate and engage with young professionals.

**NICK ROMERO** is a motivated and energetic law student at Creighton University, passionate about environmental policy. He has bachelor's degrees in both Political Science and International Relations, with a minor in Business Administration. He also serves as Co-President of the Latino Law Students Association and as the Financial Coordinator of Business Law Society. His dedication to creative collaboration is inspiring and will undoubtedly be a tremendous asset toward increasing our community's environmental awareness and understanding.

**KYLE FINLEY** is a brilliant individual with a diverse array of interests. He is currently pursuing

a master's degree in IT Innovation and Biomechanics. He has bachelor's degrees from UNO in both Native American Studies and Computer Engineering/Information Assurance. He currently works as the CEO of Quantum Electro Dynamics and is a Research Assistant at UNO. He volunteers his talents to several organizations through graphic design, website development, and video and audio production. At UNO, he participates in several volunteer groups, including the Intertribal Student Council, Project Achieve — Students Against Hunger, and many more. Finally, he serves as the lead for the UNO Native Garden Project, an on-campus garden that includes unique native plants, many of which are of special significance to Native peoples. Through the use of native plants, this garden serves as a prime example for our urban Audubon chapter by creating a micro-habitat for birds and pollinators in a city environment.

The entire board is eager to get to know these new champions of conservation. Their official terms last two years and will begin July 1, 2022. The search for leaders in conservation never ends. If you or someone you know may be interested in future opportunities to serve on the board, please reach out to [mjohnson@fontenelleforest.org](mailto:mjohnson@fontenelleforest.org)



Ivory-bellied Nuthatch, Photo by Molly Beck

## RESOURCES & INFO:

### HOW TO JOIN/RENEW/UPDATE

Join or renew your membership online at [auduon-omaha.org](http://auduon-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](mailto:audubon@emailcustomerservice.com)

### STAY CONNECTED

Join our email list at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) under "Get Involved."

### 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.

### YOU SHOP, AMAZON GIVES

0.5% of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice, including Audubon Society of Omaha. When you shop on Amazon, use this address: [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and login to your account as usual. In the account info section, there's a link to enter the non-profit of your choice. It's a win-win-win; there's no extra cost, you get the same convenient shopping, and you'll help local conservation efforts.

**TAKE ACTION** Big things are happening, so communicate with your elected officials. Go to [audubon-omaha.org](http://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.

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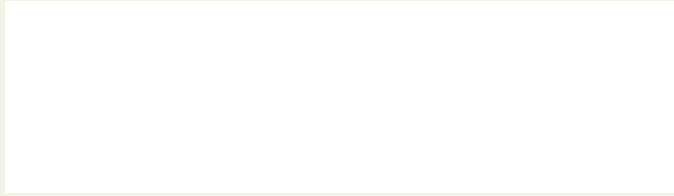
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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

the Meadowlark

celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> year

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*Photo by Ron Hiatt*

*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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website: audubon-omaha.org  
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**ELECTED OFFICERS**

President: Christine Jacobsen  
Past President: Bob Wells  
1st Vice President: Virginia Stauffer  
2nd Vice President: Michaela Johnson  
Treasurer: Michelle Foss  
Secretary: Anne Maguire

**ELECTED DIRECTORS**

Scott Bradley      Lauren Robinson  
Amy Campagna      Katy Simmons  
Mark Cave      Heidi Walz  
Grace Gaard

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