



Meadowlark

NOV/DEC 2022
VOL 51 ISSUE 5

Published by Audubon Society of Omaha, a chapter of National Audubon Society since 1971

Zoom in on Game & Parks' Updated Birding Website Nov. 10

by Bob Wells

Join Olivia Darugna, Watchable Wildlife Biologist at Nebraska Game and Parks, on Zoom at 7 p.m. Thursday, November 10, for an in-depth review of the commission's updated Nebraska Birding Guide website. Because Olivia is based in Kearney, we're offering this special opportunity to explore the site on Zoom for ASO's November members' meeting.



Beautifully designed and easy to navigate, this lushly updated comprehensive birding guide profiles more than 70 amazing birding locations across the state, from the Eastern tall-grass prairie along the Missouri River to mixed-grass prairies, the Sandhills and the Western short-grass prairie. The guide identifies notable birds and the best birding venues in each region, highlighting areas to visit and places to stay. It also offers updated pertinent information on birding in general.

Look for the registration link on the ASO website's Calendar to sign up for this educational November members' meeting. Access Nebraska Game & Parks' birding website at NEBirdingGuide.org.

Bird watching can be contagious!

by Anne Maguire

It was the summer of 2020. The COVID pandemic had just begun, and Erin Thoman, nurse practitioner and mother of four, was looking for ideas to keep her kids learning and excited at home.

A male Goldfinch in the backyard caught her attention. It was beautiful, and she wondered what it was and how she could attract more. Never having been a bird watcher, Thoman contacted nearby Wild Birds Habitat at 168th and Harrison and asked for some advice. That was the beginning of the family's transformation into "Bird Nerds."

Happy to support a small business, she followed their recommendations to get a Finch feeder and a Cardinal feeder. Then the birds arrived. Cardinals, House Finches, Sparrows, Robins, Blue Jays ... it was time to get more feeders!

The kids, ages 3-10 at the time, loved identifying the birds. Getting out the book, *Birds of Nebraska*, they learned the birds' species, their favorite foods, how big they got, and whether they were male or female. When they spotted a young Robin losing its feathers, they learned about molting.

Marley, the youngest, named all the Bluejays "Peanut" for their favorite food, while Liam, the oldest, calls Cardinals "Cardi B" after the rapper.

They discovered Blue Jays prefer shelled peanuts, which they bury in the backyard, much to the dismay of their dad, Jeff, who is a professional turf manager.

Thoman says, in addition to their more common bird visitors, they've seen Goldfinch, Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Barn Swallows, Baltimore Orioles, and, with the addition of a Hummingbird feeder, they've enjoyed the antics of their smallest guests. Today, their backyard bird buffet includes the Hummingbird feeder, two Cardinal feeders, two Finch feeders, two suet cages, and a jelly feeder. The most unusual bird they've spotted was a Bobwhite Quail.

Learning to identify bird calls keeps everyone alert when they walk the path in a nearby creek. They find the many varied calls of the Blue Jays fascinating, as well as the distinctive calls and sounds of the Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers.

"We've always been an outdoors-type family, but learning about birds has given us a whole new dimension and appreciation for nature," said Thoman.



Marley, Beckham and Ellie put peanuts out for the bluejays. Their homemade birdhouse hangs nearby.

ON THE HORIZON

November

FIELD TRIP

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4

What: Saw-whet Owl Banding

When: 7 - 9 p.m.

Where: Hitchcock Nature Center Barn, 27792 Ski Hill Loop, Honey Creek, IA

How: Register for this event at audubon-omaha.org. Registration is limited to 20 people, so sign up soon!

Who: Members and the public (free)

MEMBER PROGRAM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Topic: New and improved Nebraska Birding Guide website from Nebraska Game and Parks

Speaker: Olivia Darugna, Watchable Wildlife Biologist at Nebraska Game and Parks

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Computer, laptop or tablet

How: Register for this meeting at audubon-omaha.org. A link to join the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you

Who: Members and the public (free)

December

MEMBER PROGRAM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

Topic: The Ultimate Winter Bird Survey: Summary of the First Ever Christmas Bird Count Marathon

Speakers: Kelly McKay of the BioEco Research and Monitoring Center and Mark Roberts with Nahant Marsh

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Computer, laptop or tablet

How: Register for this meeting at audubon-omaha.org. A link to join the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you

Who: Members and the public (free)

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

INFORMATION COMING SOON

Please check ASO calendar of events in December at audubon-omaha.org and our social media for details.

Field notes from the President

by Christine Prescott, President



Imagine the potential when like-minded organizations collaborate for a greater impact! Our environment will always need stewardship and advocates; could we find greater strength and movement if our organizations worked together more? In September, we gathered board members from Wachiska Audubon and Audubon Society of Omaha with team members from Audubon Nebraska to discuss this partnership and the idea of creating a Nebraska Audubon Council.

We discussed what other states are doing and what different Audubon Councils look like around the country. Then we focused on Nebraska and talked about what our greatest natural resources and conservation challenges are. Next, we narrowed that focus even further to Audubon in Nebraska and discussed our organizational health, sustainability, strengths, and possible issues we should avoid. Excellent discussions and partnerships developed.

Your Audubon Society of Omaha is healthier than ever with a strong board of directors, committee members, and volunteers working to ensure the protection of our native ecosystems and the restoration of nature-friendly environments through environmental education and advocacy. ASO board members who attended are excited by the idea of a Nebraska Audubon Council and the support and advocacy that could emerge from it.



(front) Heidi Walz, Glenn Pollock, (back) Bob Wells, Christine Prescott, Michelle Foss and Kayla Johnson

The eyes have it – your photos



Cedar Waxwing by Lorraine Feldhausen



Northern Bobwhite by Colleen Childers

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count: Easy as 1-2-3

by *Bob Wells*

As Audubon Society of Omaha steps up preparations for the Omaha area's 2023 Christmas Bird Count, it's a good time to reflect on the fact that this year's count marks the 123rd in the history of the National Audubon Society.

The CBC evolved from traditional holiday "side hunts" conducted at the turn of the 20th century. Teams of hunters would compete to see which "side" could, quite literally, amass the largest pile of birds and other wild game species. Gradually, wildlife lovers, conservationists, and scientists grew increasingly concerned about the toll that side hunts were taking. By 1900, the National Audubon Society had cultivated a reputation as a preeminent conservation organization under the leadership of Frank Chapman, an ornithologist. Chapman proposed a new holiday tradition, a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds rather

than hunt them. The original CBC was modest, encompassing 25 locations ranging from Toronto, Ontario, to Pacific Grove, California, concentrated primarily in the Northeastern U.S. The combined initial census included 27 counters who identified 90 species of birds.

Audubon's modern annual CBC has expanded almost exponentially to include tens thousands of counters, working from approximately December 14 through January 5. CBC tradition trends toward the inclusive, involving everyone from birders with little or no experience to those who have participated in counts for 50 or more years. National and local Audubon chapters use CBC data to assess the health of bird populations and examine shifting bird ranges.

Our Omaha CBC consists of four quadrants in the Omaha area, headed by experienced birders who have often

supervised these count areas. These quadrant captains organize groups of volunteers and coordinate the count in each area. Specific bird count dates — usually on Saturdays, somewhere between December 14 and January 5 — are typically decided in November, with an eye toward strategically coordinating each area's count to maximize participation in counts taking place in multiple locations.

As soon as our ASO count date is selected, we will post the pertinent information on the ASO website and Facebook page. If you have questions, just ask me, Bob Wells, at rcwells@cox.net.

Please join us for our nation's oldest ongoing citizen science event, and remember that the CBC goes on regardless of weather. Dress appropriately and bring your binoculars!

Volunteers Ensure Fall Bird Seed Sale Success

by *Betty and John Fullerton, ASO Bird Seed Sale Chairs*

"Thank you for putting on such a great bird seed sale!" "You have products and quantities I can't find anywhere else." "Thanks so much for doing this!" We sincerely appreciate comments such as these from our loyal Audubon Society of Omaha (ASO) bird seed customers.

Thanks to 276 ASO patrons, we sold 45,000 pounds of quality bird seed totaling \$56,410 and raised over \$10,000 to support local conservation efforts and education. We gained 32 new participants and had nine customers who ordered more than \$500. Thank you also to those who did not buy bird seed but who did support ASO by making cash donations totaling \$1,435.

Our 30+ amazing, dedicated volunteers are deeply appreciated. Helping unload the seed delivery, load customers' orders and make deliveries were: Charlie, Steven & Andrew Callison; Roger Carroll; Mark Cave; Jeff Cleve; Jim Commers; Kathleen Crawford-Rose; Shannon Engberg; Christine Fullerton; Phil Heywood; Tim Kautzman; Blair & Luke Laddusaw; Anne & Jim Maguire; Andy Miller; Chris Olson; Jaeyeon Park; John Pollack; Christine Prescott; Greg Prorock; Julia Rawnsley; Duane & Kathy Schwery; Melissa Sitze; Coleen Stice; Ashleigh Stolman; and Bob Wells.

Thanks to Virginia Stauffer for managing our website and Duane Schwery for managing our mailing lists. Providing food were Amy Campagna, Michelle Foss, Christine Prescott, Virginia Stauffer and Bob Wells.

Watch your email inbox in January for information about our Winter Bird Seed Sale.



Current ASO president, Christine Prescott, loads birdseed for Audubon Society of Omaha's 1st presidents, Loren and Babs Paddleford

ASO Board of Directors Update



SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIP

Kyle Finley led a small but intrepid group through the rain to tour the UNO Indigenous Garden. Kyle, one of the garden's founders, gave an overview of the Native American history that shaped the garden and its plantings of wildflowers and medicinal plants.

2023 STUDENT ART CONTEST AND SHOW NEEDS YOUR HELP

The 2023 Student Art Contest and Show will be held live and in-person at Creighton's Harper Hall next April. Because we are expecting hundreds of entries from around our area we will need extra help with this popular community event. There are several opportunities to choose from, such as: logging in student entries, packaging prizes, hanging student artwork for the show and greeting students and their families. If you like art and kids and can help, please contact Virginia Stauffer at vstauffer1@yahoo.com.

WELCOME OUR NEW ADMIN

Julia Rawnsley has agreed to take on the responsibilities and tasks that keep our organization running smoothly. She officially starts in November. We hope you can meet Julia, who has volunteered for several ASO events this year.

Shape the future of ASO...

... by nominating officers and directors! It's time to start our annual search for board members for the July 2022 - June 2023 term, and we need your help!

We are seeking nominations for board members to fill a two-year term, starting July 1, 2023. A position on the board entails 2-10 hours per month of participation. We are looking for someone with initiative and optimism. Board members are expected to assist with Audubon activities or initiate new projects. Individuals with backgrounds in property law, real estate, or finance are especially encouraged to apply.

All members of Audubon Society of Omaha are welcome — and encouraged — to submit nominations for leadership positions. If you are interested or know someone who has leadership qualities and supports ASO's mission and vision, let us know. Please make sure you have permission from your nominee before submitting his/her name.

Not sure what's involved? Visit the ASO website under "Who We Are: Board Members." Scroll to "Interested in Becoming a Board Member?" Click the link to learn more. Each Director (Board Member) serves two years.

ASO will have at least two board positions up for reelection this year. ASO may have additional positions open if any current Directors opt to run for an Officer position or opt not to run for reelection.

Officer positions are the leadership team of the board. Each Officer serves one year and can opt for reelection as long as a term limit has not been reached. Officer positions include: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. Outside of official board positions, Audubon also has some exceptional working committees looking for dedicated volunteers. Our committees consist of teams of Audubon members and board members who collaborate to accomplish specific objectives within our greater conservation mission. A few of our committees include Natural Resources, Marketing, Legislation, Events, and Nominating. These committees are a great way to begin your involvement with ASO's Board of Directors.

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. It is only through our countless volunteers that this vital work is possible.

Nominations are due by Saturday, November 26, 2022. For applications and inquiries, please contact Audubon Society of Omaha's nominating committee at nominating@audubonomaha.org

GREEN CORNER: YOU CAN COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE
Conservation begins at home; each of us can help conserve our unique ecosystem.

Leave the leaves November

Help insects survive and thrive during winter months and offer birds a rich food source for their spring arrival. Can't leave the whole yard unraked? Use shredded leaves as mulch in flower beds, gardens and tree rings, or compost.

Decorating for December

This year buy a **live** potted tree that can be planted after the holidays. Evergreens are a natural choice, but if you don't have space consider getting a tropical tree to stay indoors.
Tip: Dig a hole for your tree before the soil is frozen solid.

Audubon Prairie Wetland takes on new life *by Anne Maguire*



From left to right, Volunteers Matt Miller, Kyle Finley and Glenn Pollock examine the progress of the wetlands restoration project.

Despite this summer's drought, volunteers have worked on the wetlands area of The Audubon Prairie to restore the pond and make it inviting as a Blue Heron feeding station.

The first challenge was to rid the pond of goldfish, which had torn up the bottom of the pond and dirtied the water. Goldfish are an invasive species that multiply rapidly. Fifteen years ago, a neighbor adjoining the prairie dumped three goldfish he no longer wanted into the pond. When ASO cleared the pond, they had multiplied to thousands.

Glenn Pollock, Natural Areas Co-chair for ASO, cautions everyone who decides they don't want their pet goldfish to give them to a friend or

humanely euthanize them rather than put them in nearby creeks, rivers or ponds. They are a hardy species that can even survive a flush down the toilet, invading our water systems.

With the goldfish gone from the pond, the water cleared and native water plants began to grow. Nebraska Wildlife Rehab placed three native painted turtles in the pond. One of them was a female with eggs, so we may have more turtles in the future. The pond is also home to a healthy population of frogs, which are a favorite food for Great Blue Heron.

A winter with above normal precipitation will allow us to do more extensive restoration next year.



From left to right, painted turtle, northern leopard frog and Great Blue Heron, photo by Bobby Walz.

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."

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 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 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.

Audubon
Society of Omaha
P.O. Box 3542
Omaha, NE 68103
audubon-omaha.org

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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

the **Meadowlark** NOV/DEC 2022
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CONTACT US AT:

P.O. Box 3542
Omaha, NE 68103-3542
402-445-4138
website: audubon-omaha.org
email: audubonomaha@gmail.com

   Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Christine Prescott
Past President: Bob Wells
1st Vice President: Michaela Johnson
2nd Vice President: Open
Treasurer: Michelle Foss
Secretary: Anne Maguire

ELECTED DIRECTORS

Amy Campagna
Mark Cave
Kyle Finley
Grace Gaard
Nick Romero
Katy Simmons
Ashleigh Stohlman
Heidi Walz

Photo by Karen Kutz Smith

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Art Contest: Virginia Stauffer
Education: Amy Campagna
Finance: Michelle Foss
Fundraising: Betty Fullerton
Grant Review: Michaela Johnson
Legislative Affairs: Christine Prescott
Marketing and Outreach: Heidi Walz
Membership: Kathy Schwery
Natural Areas Management: Glenn Pollock
Nominating: Michaela Johnson
Program: Amy Campagna
Bird Seed Sale: John & Betty Fullerton
ASO Administrator: Julia Rawnsley
Executive Director, Audubon Nebraska:
Kristal Stoner