



# Meadowlark

NOV/DEC 2021  
VOL 50 ISSUE 5

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## It's Back! The Audubon Christmas Bird Count

### HOW IT BEGAN

Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer of the Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition: a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

From December 14 through January 5 every year, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in the effort.

The data collected by observers over the past century enable Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and others to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys, such as the Breeding Bird Survey, the CBC provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed over the past hundred years. This long-term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitats, and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well.

### HOW LOCAL BIRDERS HELP

For almost 60 years there has been an Omaha CBC every year (except 2021). Formal records and data for the Omaha CBC date back to December

## Your early winter birding guide

by Scott Bradley

Weather helps determine which birds visit this time of year. Once lakes freeze, waterfowl must move farther south to find food in open water. On open lakes, however, look for late waterfowl migrants, such as Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, Lesser Scaup, and Ring-necked Ducks. Less common waterfowl migrants can include Long-tailed Ducks, Greater Scaup, Surf Scoters, and White-winged Scoters. Often, flocks of Trumpeter Swans—and, occasionally, less common Tundra Swans, linger in open water.

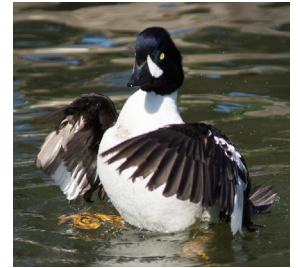


Photo by Nate Rathbun



Photo by Mary Clausen

Watch for regular winter residents to arrive now, as well. Count Dark-eyed Juncos, Harris's Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and Red-breasted Nuthatches among their number. If we are lucky, Purple Finch, Crossbills, or a Bohemian Waxwing may swing by.

A drive through the country should yield several raptor species, including Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, and Rough-legged Hawks. Less common rural winter raptors include Snowy Owls, Merlins, and Prairie Falcons. You may see flocks of Horned Larks gather on gravel roads after snow is cleared, eating grit from the roadside. Sometimes, Lapland Longspurs or Snow Bunting will join the Horned Larks, or form a pure flock.



Photo by Phil Swanson

### RIGHT HERE, RIGHT HOW: YOU CAN COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

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

#### Get Cookin' in November

Before fixin' the fixins, assemble all of your ingredients. Going back and forth, opening and closing your fridge and freezer doors, wastes energy. And, don't use a pot or pan smaller than your burner.

Cook efficiently!

#### Turn Up Your Socks Appeal in December

Heat rises, so floors 'freeze' first. Wearing socks or slippers can keep you from reaching for the thermostat when the weather outside is frightful.

*Continued on page 4*

## ON THE HORIZON

# November

### MEMBER PROGRAM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11

**Speaker:** Rick Schmid, super birder

**Topic:** Waterfowl ID presentation will focus on North American waterfowl, including swans, geese and ducks with tips to help distinguish confusing, look-alike species.

**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)

# December

### MEMBER PROGRAM

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

**Speaker:** Stephen Brenner, Nongame Bird Biologist, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

**Topic:** “Fat and the Migration South for Songbirds through Eastern Nebraska.”

Songbirds travel thousands of miles to their wintering grounds during the fall, and they need to accumulate adequate fat reserves while on stopover to fuel these incredible journeys. This talk will explore habitat quality and songbirds use of possible stopover sites in eastern Nebraska using bird banding data.

**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)

### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

INFORMATION COMING SOON

*Please check ASO calendar of events in December at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) and our social media for details.*

# President's Letter: Understanding the impact of easements *by Christine Jacobsen, President*

As of September 1st, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) started accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Many may not know the importance of conservation and agricultural easements, so I thought I would share some insight into what they are and how important they can be to conservation and agriculture.

An Agricultural Conservation Easement is a voluntary legal contract between a landowner and an organization (either nonprofit or government entity) that the owner

restricts future uses of their land, and relies on the organization to monitor and enforce the easement's provisions. The main goal of ACEP is to prevent agriculture land from being converted to non-agricultural uses and to restore and protect wetlands and wildlife habitat. In urban areas, these easements can protect open space and provide a buffer for wetlands, or prairie remnants. These easements can also provide space for natural areas, parks, and trail systems.

Here in Nebraska, less than 1% (.35%) of land is under agricultural and conservation land easement. This amounts to 176,066 total acres. On average, Nebraska only adds about 5000 acres of land easement per year. The Lower Platte South NRD and the City of Lincoln is currently protecting waterways with conservation easements as Lincoln develops on the south side of the city. The Nebraska Land Trust has been instrumental in protecting property from any parties that want to develop, or mine these easements. Two

great examples of Nebraska Land Trust projects are The Sisters of Mercy site along the Platte River, and the Chapek land in Washington County (<https://www.nelandtrust.org/914-2/>). Throughout the United States easements are consistently viewed as a way to achieve conservation objectives, and not take the land off the tax roll or out of agricultural production.

Agriculture and Conservation Easements benefit both the private landowners, and the general public. Habitat restorations can be costly projects, difficult for landowners to accomplish on their own. Entering

In Nebraska, less than 1% of land is under agricultural and conservation land easement

into an easement helps the landowner achieve their projects, and be financially compensated. The general public also benefits as scenic views, wildlife habitat, water quality and historic sites are protected from development, fragmentations, and degradation.

A great article by Joanna Pope of the NRCS tells the story of how a Cherry County family protected their land from development and in-turn protected this scenic area near the Niobrara River:

*Pope, J. 2011. Home on the Range – Permanently. Nebraska Natural Resources Conservation Service. [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2\\_028123.pdf](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2_028123.pdf)*

These easements are just one way we can work in Nebraska to protect our scenic landscapes, rivers, wildlife, prairies, forests, and historic sites for future generations. Keep abreast of additional information about conservation easements on the Nebraska Audubon website: [ne.audubon.org/conservation/conservation-easements](http://ne.audubon.org/conservation/conservation-easements)

# Fall bird seed sale report

Betty and John Fullerton, ASO Bird Sale Chairs

Our Fall 2021 sale was a great success even though seed prices were higher due to drought conditions. Thanks to 252 customers, we sold over 41,657 pounds of quality bird seed totaling \$45,942 and raised over \$10,000 to support local conservation efforts and education. And we gained 23 new customers this time. Thank you for your donations, which totaled \$1,620.

Our 30+ amazing volunteers are deeply appreciated. Duane Schwery provided management of our mailing lists while Taylor Daniels provided website management.

Helping to unload the seed delivery, load customers' orders and make deliveries were Scott Bradley, Charlie & Andrew Callison, Roger Carroll, Mark Cave, Jim & Jeanette Commers, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Ken Czyz, Michelle Foss, Mace Hack, Christine & Joe Jacobsen, Tim Kautzman, Andy Miller, Matt Miller, David Nichols, Chris Olson, John Pollack, Greg Prorock, Michael Shaffer, Duane & Kathy Schwery, Melissa Sitze and Bob Wells. Providing food for the volunteers were Amy Campagna, Mark Cave, Anne Maguire, Katy Simmons, Virginia Stauffer and Bob Wells.



Jim and Jeanette Commers load a customer's order

# Shape the future of ASO: nominate officers and directors

It is time to start our annual search for Board Members for the July 2021/June 2022 term, and we need your help! All members of Audubon Society of Omaha are welcomed 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 and information.

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

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.

# 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)



Blue Jay, photo by Jennifer Novak-Haar



Merlin, photo by Kadyann Hatfield



American White Pelicans, photo by Dietrich Huebert

**NOMINATIONS ARE DUE BY NOVEMBER 22, 2021**

Please send the name, phone number and email address of anyone you would like to nominate to [AudubonOmaha@gmail.com](mailto:AudubonOmaha@gmail.com) even if its YOU!

# Christmas Bird Count

Continued from page 1

29, 1963, although there may have been prior CBCs in the Omaha area.

## HOW IT'S DONE

Per CBC guidelines, the Omaha count area encompasses a circle 15 miles in diameter, centered at the Base Lake south of Bellevue. The circle is divided into four quadrants, with a captain and team of counters assigned to each.

There are opportunities for participants to count morning-only, afternoon-only or all day. Quadrant captains usually start counting shortly after dawn and continue until their quadrants are sufficiently covered, normally by mid- to late afternoon. Counters take breaks during the day and usually stop for lunch. One member of each team, designated as the recorder, records time spent counting, miles driven and walked, and name/number of each species found. At day's end, results from all quadrants are compiled during a pizza dinner.

**People of all ages and birding abilities are welcome** to participate in the count. Inexperienced counters are always placed with experienced leaders. Each person participating in the CBC should bring binoculars and dress for the weather. Some groups spend a lot of time hiking, while others spend more time in the car. Counters are assigned to groups according to their preference for hiking versus riding.

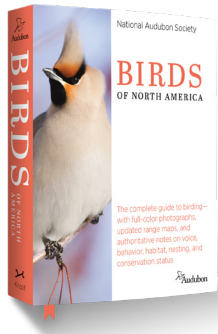
The goal is to find as many birds and as many different species as possible ... and to have an enjoyable day afield with fellow bird enthusiasts.

## DOWN FOR THE COUNT?

Beginning December, check the Calendar of Events page at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) and our social media for updates with details about date, times and how to participate.

# Audubon holiday gift guide 2021

by Lauren Robinson



## Guide to Birds of North America

National Audubon Society

All levels of birders will appreciate the all-new National Audubon Society Guide to Birds

of North America. Updated in 2021 for the first time in decades, this classic reference work is the most comprehensive and authoritative guide to the birds of North America. The update also includes the most recent information on conservation status and the effects of climate change on our feathered friends. Cost: \$30.49

## Finch Enamelware Mug

Bird Collective

This winter, gift your favorite coffee (or hot chocolate) drinker a mug with a cause. The Finch Enamelware Mug features cheerful illustrations of an Evening Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, and Common Redpoll. Bonus: With every purchase of this mug, Bird Collective will donate 20% of profits to The Finch Research Network (FiRN) as it works to grow our understanding of these birds. Cost: \$22.50



## Standard Issue 8x25 Waterproof Binoculars

Nocs Provisions

Nocs Provisions' Standard Issue Binoculars are both compact and affordable — perfect for travel or stashing in the glove compartment for spur-of-the-moment birding. These waterproof and fog-proof binoculars with scratch-proof lenses come in eight different modern colors so that you can personalize the gadget for the birder in question. Cost: \$95

## Window Feeder Wild Birds Unlimited

Know someone with limited green space or someone who'd simply love to get up close and personal with their backyard visitors? The Window Feeder from Wild Birds Unlimited affixes directly to a window pane with suction cups. Great for seed blends, peanuts and safflower, this feeder is easy to fill, easy to clean, and backed with a limited lifetime guarantee. Bird food not included. Cost: \$35.99



## Audubon Birding Adventures for Kids: Activities and Ideas for Watching, Feeding, and Housing Our Feathered Friends

Elissa Ruth Wolfson, Margaret A. Barker, National Audubon Society

This engaging, educational book from the National Audubon Society is geared for our youngest bird enthusiasts. With numerous color photos and expert advice, kids can learn about the habits of North America's most popular songbirds, as well as how to observe them, how to create safe and welcoming environments for them, and how to construct easy and safe species-appropriate birdhouses and feeders for common birds. Cost: \$10.00



## Membership to National Audubon Society

Still stumped? Give an annual membership that includes the award-winning magazine, Audubon. Cost: \$30

# For the love of prairies *by Anne Maguire*

Growing up near Dennison, Iowa, Glenn Pollock has always taken a keen interest in the natural world. After serving in the military in the late 60s, Glenn moved to Omaha to finish his education and start his 30-year career in bio-medical engineering. He also joined the Audubon Society, and began his lifelong passion — finding, protecting and restoring native prairies.

Glenn volunteered at Fontenelle Forest in the early 70s, under then-director Eric Volden. He began going to conferences and learning from people who knew about native prairies. Then he “kept finding prairies.”

In 1999, the Audubon Society of Omaha obtained the Audubon Prairie with guidance from Glenn and another member, the late Ione Werthman. They helped secure funding to purchase and protect the seven-acre virgin prairie on the Jensen farm at 69th and Bennington Road, as well as the adjoining 10-acre brome field. Over the years, Glenn has converted seven acres of the brome grass to native prairie. He is in the process of restoring the remaining 3.5 acres, using seed from the dozens of prairie plant species he cultivates in his own backyard.

Glenn has spent nearly 50 years saving native prairies, including King Cemetery prairie near his hometown in

Iowa, the 40-acre Vincent Bluff prairie in Council Bluffs, and the Cumming City Cemetery prairie north of Blair, which is also owned by ASO.

As he reflects on the success of the past, he worries about the future. “We don’t know how to make soil, but prairies know how to make some of the richest soil on earth. Prairies need protection from people who don’t know what they are and want to make money by plowing them under and planting corn or turning them into a development. Once they’re gone, they’re gone.” He also sees climate change as a threat to healthy prairies. “Warmer temperatures and more nitrogen in rainwater invite the growth of invasive species.”

Glenn wonders, too, who will carry on after he is gone. He is eager to share his knowledge with those who want to learn more about prairies. He writes a regular prairie update column in the *Meadowlark* and hopes it encourages birders to walk in the prairie, which is always open to visitors. He recently purchased an ATV to help him get around the Audubon prairie. He welcomes anyone to ride along with him and experience an ecosystem of plants, birds, mammals and insects that has been there for thousands of years ... and hopefully thousands more.



*To experience the wonders of a native prairie with Glenn Pollock, email [pollockg@cox.net](mailto:pollockg@cox.net)*

## 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.

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 2021  
VOL 50 ISSUE 5

*Photo by Mike Benkis*

*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.*

**CONTACT US AT:**

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   Find us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**ELECTED OFFICERS**

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

**ELECTED DIRECTORS**

Scott Bradley  
Amy Campagna  
Mark Cave  
Grace Gaard  
Michaela Johnson  
Lauren Robinson  
Katy Simmons  
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: Elizabeth Chalen  
Program: Bob Wells  
Bird Seed Sale: John & Betty Fullerton  
ASO Administrator: Jamie Meyer  
Executive Director, Audubon Nebraska:  
Kristal Stoner