

Audubon  
Society of Omaha  
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ORGANIZATION  
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OMAHA, NEBRASKA  
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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

# the Meadowlark

NOV/DEC 2020  
VOL 49 ISSUE 5

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Zoom 101: ASO  
Goes Virtual

DIY Field Trips

Where the  
Birds Are

*Snow Goose, 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: 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: Jamie Meyer  
Executive Director, Audubon Nebraska:  
Kristal Stoner





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## How to ‘Zoom’ in to a meeting

by Lauren Robinson

It’s official: ASO member meetings will be held online for the foreseeable future. It might take some adjustment, but the learning curve will be worth it. Moving online, at least for the time being, allows us to reach a broader audience and to record our meetings. Meeting virtually allows viewers to tune in from anywhere, and, if watching a recorded meeting, at any time. Recorded meetings will be available on our new YouTube channel, and you can find them by typing this link into your browser: <https://bit.ly/AudubonOmahaYT>

If you are new to Zoom, here are step-by-step instructions for attending an online ASO event:

1. Type in <https://audubon-omaha.org/calendar-of-events/> into your web browser to get to our Calendar page.
2. Click on the event for which you wish to register. On the event page, click on the “Register Now” link.
3. Enter your name and email address and click “Register.” A Zoom meeting link will be sent to your email inbox.
4. At the time of the event, click on the link you’ve received in your inbox.
5. If you do not already have Zoom installed on your computer, you will be prompted to install it. Follow the instructions to install the software. Immediately after installing Zoom, you might need to re-click on the link in your email to join the meeting.
6. You’re in! Sit back and enjoy the event.

Most meetings allow you to type questions or comments into a live Chat Box. Instructions on how to use these features will be shared during each event. If you have any questions, please shoot us an email at [audubonomaha@gmail.com](mailto:audubonomaha@gmail.com). We look forward to meeting you online.

## Where the birds are: Birding in November and December *by Clem Klaphake*



*Eared Grebe, photo by Bobby Walz*

Prospects for sighting a wide variety of bird species this time of year are as unpredictable as the weather. Early cold spells could freeze over bodies of water and offer no refuge for waterfowl (especially for such northern migrants as Buffleheads, Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Goldeneyes, Ring-necked Ducks, three species of Scoters, and both Lesser and Greater Scaup, to name a few). If early ice fails to form on lakes, and open water persists, you may see Trumpeter and Tundra Swans, or any of the following: Double-crested Cormorants, Grebes (several different species), and Canada, Cackling, Snow, or White-fronted Geese.

Persevering passerines (that aren’t permanent residents) should be relatively easy to spot. Species to watch for include Dark-eyed Juncos, Harris’s Sparrows, Spotted Towhee, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Purple Finch (easily confused with our resident House Finch), and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Other seasonal visitors from Canada and Alaska often trek south for food, so be sure to keep an eye out for Common Redpolls, Evening Grosbeaks, White-winged and Red Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks and Bohemian Waxwings.



*Waxwing, photo by Mike Benkis*



*Bald Eagle, photo by Dietrich Huebert*

Drive into some rural areas and you might happen upon Lapland Longspurs and Horned Lark. Check telephone/ electrical poles or tree snags for perching, flying or soaring raptors, such as Rough-legged Hawks, Merlins, Prairie Falcons, Bald and Golden Eagles. You may even glimpse a Northern Goshawk.

Don’t miss this opportunity — some of these species only pass through our area when the weather turns cold! And, remember to follow nationwide Christmas Bird Counts, which are usually scheduled from December into early January.

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

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

#### No-Freeze November

Temperatures are falling, and that means our heating systems are about to work overtime to keep our homes cozy.

Give them a break and save energy by drawing your curtains after sundown to reduce heat loss through your windows.

#### De-light December

This holiday season, take a break from energy-zapping decorations and opt for wreaths, cornucopias, popcorn strings, etc.

If holiday lights are non-negotiable, make sure they are LED — they use less electricity than incandescent and last longer!

## ON THE HORIZON

# November

### MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

**Speaker:** Jason St. Sauver, Senior Manager, Education at Audubon Nebraska and Audubon Educator of the Year

**Topic:** Planning Plants for Birds

**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: TURKEY SEARCH ANY DAY YOU'RE FREE

**What:** Plan a different way for you and your bubble to enjoy Turkey(s) this year.

**Where:** Wild Turkeys are found at parks all over our area. Use the FREE Audubon phone app to see locations where they have been recently sighted.

**Who:** Anyone who likes gobblers

**Why:** Turkeys are fun to watch and photograph, but don't send us nudes!

**Note:** Don't get too close, Wild Turkeys can be aggressive if they feel threatened

# December:

### MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

**Speaker:** TBD. Check our website for details to come

**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: COOL KIDS

WHENEVER YOU FEEL LIKE IT

**What:** Bundle up kids or holiday guests and challenge them to find as many different birds as they can within 1 hour (or more if needed to cool down). Hold an awards ceremony with prizes like bird-seed or books. Snowballs optional.

**Where:** Any accessible park or backyard with feeders

**Who:** Birders who need to get out of the house

# Field notes from the President

by Bob Wells, President, Audubon Society of Omaha

In the current era of our faltering pandemic-ravaged economy, one industry is thriving. Backyard bird feeding and watching is booming. During the second quarter of 2020 the national economy shrank an all-time record 9.5%. The backyard bird feeding sector expanded by a reported 50-80%.

The most recent data for backyard birding from 2018 showed that \$4 billion was spent nationally on bird feeding and watching. This includes \$3.8 billion on bird seed alone. Recent surveys of bird seed stores nationally reflect a 50-80% increase in sales of bird-related seed, feeders and accessories. People who have been longtime feeders of birds are filling their feeders more frequently while newcomers, realizing the joy and tranquility of watching and feeding birds, are investing in feeders, the seed to fill them and binoculars and field guides to watch the feeder activity.

Socially distant, homebound Americans are noticing the influx of birds in their own yards. A regionally moderate winter helped more birds survive. Drought conditions in many areas helped drive birds to home feeders and watering stations. This further helped more birds survive and thrive in the the 2020 spring migration and summer. Bird seed companies have been designated as essential industries, allowing them to continue through the pandemic. The increase in seed demand has put some pressure on the seed companies and also the feeder manufacturers, but that demand has largely been met. Bird stores in many areas have remained open and offered touchless sale and delivery of seeds to respond to the demand for seed.

Locally here in Omaha, two of my favorite bird stores, For the Birds at 84th and Fredrick, and Wild Birds Unlimited in Rockbrook Village, have remained open and able to respond to the demands of increased feeding and the many new people who are just discovering the joys of bird feeding. Please remember those who help us continue to enjoy bird feeding in the time of home confinement and social distancing. There is no better activity for this time of solitude.

**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](https://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 experience, and you will help local conservation efforts. Thank you!

## 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)



Fox Sparrow, photo by Elizabeth Winter



Cardinal, photo by Colleen Childers



# Tall or small, see them all at the Prairie

by Glenn Pollock

Depending on when you visit a prairie, you'll see one of two seasonal sentinels that bookend the year — Pasqueflowers in the spring or Downy Gentians in the fall.



*Pasqueflower, photo by Glenn Pollock*

Although they're not related, Pasqueflowers and Downy Gentians share a few characteristics. Both herald the seasons in which they grow. They are close in size, and their blooms have a similar appearance. Both tolerate frost and adapt to wide variances in temperature. Although their similarities are purely coincidental, comparing the two species side by side, as you can do in these photos, can be fun.

Finding Downy Gentians among their towering neighbors, such as Big Bluestem grasses, can be difficult, however. Even in the face of this summer's low rainfall,

Big Bluestem grasses reached heights over six feet. Be sure to visit the Prairie, despite the drought, because you'll still see just how lush our prairie can be.

Looking carefully among these giant grasses, you may be rewarded by the sight of downright gorgeous 8-inch high Downy Gentians — *gentiana puberula* — showing off stunning blue blooms.



*Downy Gentian, photo by Glenn Pollock*

These hardy flowers can survive frost, so you might even glimpse a bit of blue in October. Their seeds remind me of ground pepper. To germinate, Downy Gentian seeds must lie uncovered on the ground, which means the species is not abundant. In addition, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to grow this wildflower in an urban garden (believe me, I've tried, without success).

## Board of Directors recap *by Heidi Walz, Director*

**VIRTUAL EVENTS** While bird-watching and bird-feeding are fabulous, socially-distant pandemic activities, in-person Audubon meetings are not! After several cancelled member meetings, we were able to arrange our first two virtual gatherings. The September meeting was led by restoration biologist Michelle Foss. She discussed restoration efforts at Fontenelle Forest and ASO prairies. In October, ASO President Bob Wells presented “Bird Feeding Benefits and Basics.” If you missed either of those programs, you can watch recordings on our YouTube channel at this address: <https://bit.ly/AudubonOmahaYT>

**BIRD SEED MARKETING EFFORT** The marketing committee pulled together a robust plan to promote our 40th Anniversary Bird Seed Sale. The plan helped to secure a story in the Omaha World Herald, over 100 new Facebook page followers, many newsletter and social media shares from other wildlife and conservation partners and a record number of first-time customers.

**NEW OFFICE NOTES** Special thanks to those who helped move our home base to our new digs near 90th & L. Custom-made “bird strike-proof” coverings have been installed on the windows to save our new feathered neighbors.

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC)** - At this time National Audubon Society is discouraging, but not canceling, local CBC activities. They have asked that chapter's considering having a count, wait until after November 15th to make a final decision. At this time the Omaha Chapter is leaning towards NOT hosting a count. Stay tuned to our website, social media or feel free to email for updates mid-November.

## RESOURCES & INFO:

### HOW TO JOIN/RENEW/UPDATE

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

### STAY CONNECTED

Join our email list at [audubon-omaha.org](http://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

Volunteer your time to help your local Audubon Chapter with office tasks, land management, and other programs.

Our pledge to volunteers is we will use your resources responsibly – for the purposes of conservation through habitat management and nature education, including the Student Art Contest and Show. See the “Get Involved” section of our website, [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org)

### 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.