

The Meadowlark

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.

September/October 2016
Volume 45, Issue 6



ASO is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving eastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

Photographer Alex Wiles to Speak at September 8th Meeting

Alex Wiles is a conservation photographer and environmental educator based out of Omaha, Nebraska. His interest in conservation initiatives takes him around the world where he documents the challenges faced by wildlife and the work of those who wish to protect it. Alex's program on September 8th will feature his travels to West Africa and New Zealand where he searched for lost frogs, scaled pangolins, and prehistoric reptiles known as tuatara. He will speak about his time in these countries and present images of the wildlife and conservation

projects he was involved with while there. To learn more about Alex and his photography, visit his website: awilesphoto.com. Following Alex's presentation, a short business meeting will be held followed by a social hour and cookies.

Come join us Thursday, September 8, at 7 p.m. - Weitz Community Engagement Center, room 230, on the UNO Dodge campus. Non-members are welcome and we encourage you to bring your friend to our meetings. If you have questions regarding directions, please call 402-451-3647.

BIRD SEED SALE OCTOBER 24 & 25

It is not too soon to be thinking about your bird seed order for this fall. Our supplier, Des Moines Feed, gives us their estimated fall prices the last week of August, and you will receive your order blank in mid September. Please consider ordering some Audubon seed products as the profits from this sale are used to fund many of our educational programs. **If you have friends or neighbors who might be interested, call or Email Kathleen Crawford-Rose (402-292-8912 or katcr@cox.net) with their names and addresses. You will also be able to download an order form from our web site at Audubon-Omaha.org after Sept. 6th.**

We will also be asking members for help with the numerous tasks involved with this sale. In Sept. we will need volunteers to help with the mailing, and on the delivery days we need volunteers for loading seed and for paper work. Please put these dates on your calendar and give Jerry Toll an Email geritol48@cox.net or phone call (402-453-9239) to let him know that you are available to assist with this major fundraiser.



Kaka, a type of parrot species found in New Zealand. Photographer Alex Wiles

Field Notes from the President: By Matt Miller

Greetings ASO members. My name is Matt Miller, a 30-year-old biologist from right here in Omaha, Nebraska. As a long-time outdoor enthusiast and conservationist, I am very happy to have the opportunity to be the president of an organization like the Audubon Society of Omaha. My first goal as president is to spend some time learning how I can make a lasting impression on our organization and have positive impact on the lands we use for hiking, canoeing, camping, hunting, fishing, and of course birding. With this new opportunity as president, I feel it's critical to build on what the organization already does well, in addition to looking for new avenues that will increase our community outreach and capacity to do great conservation.

The focus in my tenure as the ASO President begins by involving us in local and statewide projects that have lasting positive environmental impacts. Funding, outreach support, and on-the-ground conservation are all things that an environmental organization should be involved in. With a thousand-member base and a healthy financial foothold, our organization is perfectly poised to create positive changes towards our goals to better the environmental communities in Eastern Nebraska and Western Iowa.

When you are out birding, ask yourself, why do these birds use this area? What makes this area special? How does this space meet the needs of a given species? Food, water, space, and shelter are the four habitat components that attract animals to a general area. If one of these components is unbalanced, it affects the whole system, from the microbes in the soil up to the largest mammal. As you bird and explore, don't just look at the birds..... ask why are the birds

here, and why do they come back to this area every year (or perhaps even missing from an area)? When humans become more connected to their surroundings and gain a full understanding of how our ecosystems function (or don't function), I feel they find a sense of place and realize that humans are only one part of the system and can have positive and negative impacts with individual actions. It starts with knowledge and passion, and hopefully that leads to action. I want all members to know that I honor and respect ASO's foundation and dedication to conservation. Based on the list of names of past presidents, board members, and members, it's obvious this organization is made of up dedicated and knowledgeable people that care dearly about the environment.

As you may well know, many of our natural habitats are in a degraded state, they are in danger of encroachment and development, and/or are becoming even more fragmented. It isn't enough to simply love nature and wildlife, these conservation issues require our active involvement through education and outreach, along with getting our hands dirty to restore habitats such as prairies, woodlands, savannas, forests, and wetlands. I encourage and challenge all who read this to

get involved in any way you can. That may look like volunteering on a work day to remove invasive species, or picking up trash in a marsh or along a river, or even helping with youth birding field trips. Look for youth and adult birding trips; come to our speaker series to increase your knowledge base about environmental issues, and finally look for opportunities to help us with on-the-ground habitat and conservation work on our Audubon Prairie and other habitats. The opportunities are endless.

*Happy birding,
Yours in conservation,
Matt Miller*

Hummingbird Feeders: When to Remove in the Fall

Sheri Williamson, hummingbird researcher who spoke at the May 2016 Nebraska Ornithologists meeting in Kimball, NE, shared advice about when to remove hummingbird feeders in the fall.

The wisdom long shared was "Let the birds decide when to stop coming around."

However, with her extensive knowledge and continuing observation, she believes otherwise.

It seems that a laggard bird because of poor health and nutrition could be tempted to stick around to feed, leaving the decision to the feeder owner whether to trudge out into the cold and maybe snow to fill the feeders or remove them. Removing them late, when it's cold, could mean leaving the bird to an unkind fate. Not pleasant for bird or human.

So the word from the expert now is: remove the hummingbird feeders by the first frost.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

We are seeking a member who is interested in carrying out administrative duties on a very part time basis.

Some tasks are monthly, some are not.

Please contact ASO at 402-451-3647 about the duties involved in the paid administrative position and your interest in it.

September Field Trip to Platte River State Park

Come join us for our first fall field trip of the season on Saturday September 10th. We will be meeting at 8:30 a.m. at the Stone Creek parking lot (turn left at the entrance to the park and take

the first right into the parking lot) in Platte River State Park (PRSP). We will be looking at and for birds, butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies and any other insects. That time of year should be good for mi-

grating birds and insects that are trying to beat the onset of colder weather. Anyone is welcome to come and join us. For those who want to bring a lunch for after the morning walk, there are picnic tables for our use. If anyone is interested in pursuing more birds and insects in the afternoon, some of us may head over to Schramm SRA across the river from the park.

A Nebraska Game and Parks sticker is required on your vehicle for entry into the park. Depending on where you live, the most direct route to PRSP from the metro area is to take Hwy 50 to 1 mile south of Louisville and turn right onto Hwy 66 and follow it to the PRSP sign on the highway.

October Field Trip

Plans have not been finalized for the October 15th field trip, so please check our web site and/or facebook page by late September or early October for further information. As of now we will meet in the Papio-Missouri River NRD headquarters building parking lot at 8901 So. 154th St.,

Omaha (northwest corner of Wehrspann Lake) at 8:00 a.m. Where we go will depend on what and where birds are being seen at that time. We will also be mailing a brief notice about the field trip plans and other information. We hope you can join us for this trip.

October 13th Meeting to Feature Fontenelle Forest Conservation Team



Join the Fontenelle Forest Conservation team for a talk about the seen but unknown landscape that is Fontenelle Forest.

The FF team will describe the past, present, and future of oak woodland and savannas on Fontenelle Forest properties. Topics to be discussed will include invasive species, land management techniques, baseline data collection, and trails. Please join us on October 13 at 7 p.m. at the Weitz Community Engagement Center (room 201) on the UNO Dodge Campus.

A Treasure in our City: Glacier Creek Prairie

by Laurine Blankenau

September in the midlands gives us glorious days with sights and sounds saying fall is approaching. It is a tempting and rewarding time to be out in a prairie. A prairie here in our city.

You may have known it as Allwine Prairie; you may have hiked it. It is now known as Glacier Creek Prairie, recently expanded, named for and bearing soil left thousands of years ago as the glaciers melted.

Located at State Street and 148th (north side of street), it is a place to walk, enjoy and imagine. Imagine the time when there was no Omaha, no city. A time when it stretched to the horizon and hid a tall man (even a Shaquille O'Neal or Kareem A. J.) walking in its August summit. Maintained by fire and buffalo herds, coming back after being trampled, burned, or flooded. Now protected from development by generous donors, dedicated educators, students, and other caretakers.

In 1959 the original plot was named for its donors, Arthur and Antoinette Allwine, and given to the University of Nebraska, Omaha. In 1970 it grew to 170 acres in

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Omaha Youth Birding Group

by Tisha Johnson

The Purple Martin Roost site may still be active when you receive this newsletter. Our group will be meeting at UNMC, 42nd and Farnam, 7:30pm Saturday night September 10th. This is a true spectacle, Omaha is lucky to see such a natural phenomenon, and you don't have to pay a bunch for front row seats! Don't miss it! Contact Tisha Johnson at 402-885-0990 with any questions, or to RSVP for the field trips listed below.

As we enter a new season of field trips instead of always on Saturday mornings, we will occasionally have field trips on Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons to ensure the inclusion of more Youths.

Upcoming Field Trips

Sat., September 24th, 10:00am, visit a rare ecosystem, the tall-grass prairie, at *Glacier Creek Preserve*.

Fri., October 7th, 5:30pm, Birding the trails at *Fontenelle Forest*, plus a tour of the *NEW Raptor Refuge*.

Future Field Trips - dates to be determined.

From the tower at *Hitchcock Nature Center*, the fall raptor migration takes the stage.

Hike and bird the trails of *Neale Woods*. This property, located in the Missouri River Flyway, is north of the Mormon Bridge. Habitat is largely upland forest, with a remnant of restored prairie.

HITCHCOCK HAWKWATCH

September 1 starts the Hawkwatch season at Hitchcock Nature Center, near Crescent, Iowa, about 10 miles north of the Omaha metro area. The program, which has been in existence for over 20 years, runs from September 1 to December 20 each year.

Hawkwatch utilizes volunteer birders to identify and count migrating raptors that use the Loess Hills corridor thermals to fly south. The raptors and other migrating birds are able to conserve energy by using these thermals to "coast." This is a great citizen science opportunity for anyone interested in birds. You don't need to be an expert. The tower has 360 degree visibility and an extra



pair of eyes is always welcome. You can learn the birds; it takes consistency and time.

Every day there is a volunteer with binoculars and sometimes a spotting scope on the 45 foot tower at Hitchcock. The usual hours are 10 am to 4 pm unless it's raining. (Birds don't fly in the rain). There is also a paid Hawkwatcher who compiles the data and fills in

during the week when no volunteers are available. Some of the raptors seen from the tower are: eagles, redtailed hawks, Merlins, peregrine falcons, Swainson's hawks, Mississippi kites, sharp shinned hawks, turkey vultures, plus pelicans, geese, ducks, song birds and dragonflies.

It's unpredictable what will pass overhead, but the company is always fun and informative and the view is spectacular! For more information about Hawkwatch at Hitchcock, please contact Clem Klaphake at ckavian@cox.net

OSPREY photo taken on the tower at Hitchcock by Ryan Johnson

Treasure in our City

an area needing seeding to form mixed-grass prairie. Flowers were added followed by birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and other animal life it attracted.

Growth continued. Next to Allwine Prairie lay 83 acres that were added, thanks to funds from the Environmental Trust, Papio-Missouri NRD and UNO. This addition allowed the prairie to meet the Big Papillion River and form yet another part of the site, the Papio Tract. Although purchased in 2009, the area is still undergoing restoration. Eventually it will contain wetlands and a stream along with the prairie.

In 2012 the prairie earned its present name: Glacier Creek Preserve, so named for the glacial till - gravelly soil left by glaciers thousands of years ago. In 2013 it grew again, and in October 2015 it reached the present total of 424 acres. The Nebraska Environmental Trust and Barbi Hayes were the two major donors for this acquisition. The Audubon Society of Omaha also donated.

About 15 years ago I helped with seed gathering at then-Allwine Prairie. One leaf we were told to place between our teeth and rub back and forth left numbness in my tongue and gums and

was known to be used by Native Americans for toothache. It was one of the plant-based medicines used before drugstores popped up in Omaha. We've often heard that prairies should be preserved for lots of reasons, one being that native plants have as-yet-undiscovered values, values earlier people may have discovered.

Some homeowners I know have been inspired to replace trees or other plants of shallower roots with prairie grasses and their greater biomass to stabilize the area or crowd out undesirables. The grasses' deep, massive roots enabling them to survive the centuries serve in urban areas.

We know that most of the once-vast prairies have been plowed under and built over, but Glacier Creek Prairie was saved. Along with the grasses and other living creatures that inhabit it, we are the beneficiaries. We are invited to enjoy a hike on a trail through the grasses, and depending on the season - its flowers, butterflies, small mammals and other creatures.

The prairie is accessible from dawn to dusk. A barn remains on the site and is used for environmental education and research, for classes, and to test results of

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the explorations of the life forms being studied. For visitors wishing to have access to the barn, during working hours call 402-595-1175 (Preserve Office) to set up an appointment. Or email Preserve Director Dr. Tom Bragg tbragg@unomaha.edu or unoglaciercreek@unomaha.edu. Calls or emails will be forwarded to him.

A sign with trails marked is on the door. Check it out before you set out on your explorations of the prairie.

Hikers, photographers, day-dreamers and prairie aficionados are attracted to the prairie for wandering or drinking in the allure of grasslands.

Bring your camera, your binoculars, a friend or family members on a glorious late summer or early fall day and explore the Glacier Creek Prairie to take in its rare and special qualities.



Hoary Puccoon

Eric Scholar

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500-0001, Comments: 202-456-1111

Senator Deb Fischer, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-6551; Fax: 202-228-1325; Lincoln Phone: 402-441-4600; Omaha Phone: 402-391-3411; Omaha Address: 11819 Miracle Drive 68154

Senator Ben Sasse, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-4224; Lincoln Phone: 402-476-1400

Representative Brad Ashford, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; Phone: 202-225-4155

Representative Jeff Fortenberry, House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515, Phone: 202-225-4806; Lincoln Phone: 402-438-1598

Governor Pete Ricketts, Capitol Bldg, Lincoln, NE 68509; Phone: 402-471-2244

Mayor Jean Stothert, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center 1819 Farnam St., Omaha NE 68183, Phone: 402-444-5000 Hot Line: 402-444-5555

Lincoln Capitol Switchboard: 402-471-2311

Washington Capitol Switchboard

Senate: 202-224-3121; **House:** 202-225-3121

Bequests

A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives. When sending a gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize, and the name and address of the person to be notified. Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha, P.O. Box 3542, Omaha NE

DONATE DIRECTLY FROM IRA, TAX-FREE

IRA owners age 70-1/2 or older are able to make a direct transfer of a distribution from their IRA trustee to a qualified charity, up to 100,000 annually. This amount is not taxable and may be excluded from the IRA owner's taxable income. If this is done, no additional tax deduction is available for these funds. Contact 402-505-9494 for more information. (Be sure to discuss with your professional tax preparer)

Memberships

We offer two choices of membership:

1. Includes membership in National Audubon as well as in our local chapter. It includes receiving the *Audubon Magazine* and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. A portion of your dues is returned to our local chapter.
2. Is a local membership that includes receiving *The Meadowlark* and participation in all of our local activities. All dues go to our chapter.

Membership in the National Audubon Society and in the Audubon Society of Omaha

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

Zip Code _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

Introductory Membership \$20

Make check payable to: National Audubon Society. Mail to: National Audubon Society, Inc., 225 Varick Street, 7th Floor, New York, New York 10014

National Memberships renewed after September 30th, 2016 need to be sent to the following address: Audubon Society of Omaha, P. O. Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103-3542

Membership in Audubon Society of Omaha only

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

Make check for \$20 payable to: Audubon Society of Omaha. Mail to: Audubon Society of Omaha, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth, NE 68048



If you find an injured bird of prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery volunteer at 402-731-9869.

Audubon Society of Omaha
P.O. Box 3542
Omaha NE 68103-3542

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Phone: 402-451-3647 – omahaaudubon.org

Office: 1941 S. 42nd St., Omaha NE 68105

Elected Officers:

President Matt Miller – 681-4625
1st Vice President Laurine Blankenau – 451-3647
2nd Vice President Tisha Johnson – 885-0990
Past President Tad Leeper – 670-5919
Treasurer Betty Fullerton – 493-4362
Recording Sec’y Linda Dennis – 733-6548
Corres. Sec’y Kathleen Rose – 292-8912

Elected Directors:

Bob Wells – 393-4683
Helen Bartee – 657-3845
Sarah Miller – 908-9678
Alex Wiles – 559-349-7359
Shannon Engberg – 402-598-2127
Galyn Langer – 402-595-8543

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

Conservation Bob Fuchs – 553-8242
Education Clem Klaphake – 292-2276
Field Trip Clem Klaphake – 292-2276
Finance Nelli Falzgraf – 292-9687
Membership Kathy Schwery – 296-4788
Natural Areas Management Glenn Pollock – 571-6230

Program – Alex Wiles 559-349-7359
Publication Helen Bartee – 657-3845
Publicity Jackie Scholar – 551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs
Kathleen Rose – 292-8912
Carol Rasmussen – 731-3939
Historian – Eric Scholar – 551-5045
Exec. Dir., Audubon Nebr. – Marian Langan – 402-797-2301
ASO Administrator –
NAS Board Member – Michele Crist – 208-863-1918
Pan-Flyway Director – Karim al-Khafaji

Six issues of *The Meadowlark* are published annually:
January - February, March - April, May - June, July -
August, September - October, November - December.

The newsletter may be accessed on our website,
<http://audubon-omaha.org>

Send address changes to: Kathy Schwery, 19612
Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048, or
email: djschw@windstream.net.