

Chile: Land of Birds and Scenery

By Clem Klaphake

Did you ever have a fantasy of what birder's heaven might be like or where it might be? The speakers at the November 9th meeting might give you some clues as to where you should look or consider going to find it.

Birding from northern Chile to southern Chile (2700 miles) would be the same as birding from San Francisco to New York or from Edinburgh, Scotland, to Baghdad. Not only is Chile a great place for birding, but it also has some of the most spectacular scenery found anywhere in the world.

How many countries have an ocean as a continuous border that is also 2700 miles in length—and doesn't freeze over as in some large countries in the northern hemisphere? From one of the driest places (the Atacama Desert) in the world (only Antarctica is drier) and with flamingoes at the Peruvian border to penguins at the stormy Strait of Magellan at Cape Horn, Chile is a land of diverse climate and geography. Also part of Chile are the Andes, a mountain range that is still rising and that contains more than 50 active volcanic peaks.

Dick and Sharon Stilwell of Des Moines, who have trav

eled and birded in numerous South and Central American countries, will be the speakers at the November 9th general meeting. They recently returned from a field-guide-led birding trip to Chile that covered the country from north to south. As part of this journey, they were also on a pelagic trip to the rich waters of the Humboldt current off the coast of Chile to observe sea birds.

Dick Stilwell is retired from his R & D position with Maytag, and Sharon has retired from her position as Test Kitchen Director for Better Homes and Gardens Magazine. Dick is also an accomplished photographer and will present us with some wonderful photos of Chile and its birdlife and scenery.

Please join us for the trip of a lifetime on Thursday, November 9, at 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (one block south of Center and 45th Street). As always, visitors are welcome. A short business meeting and social time will follow the program.

Field Trip to Hitchcock Nature Center November 18

The ASO November field trip will be to Hitchcock Nature Center located 5 miles north of Crescent, Iowa, on the old Lincoln Highway. Follow the signs through Crescent. It will be held Saturday, November 18, from 10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

That is about peak time for the Bald Eagles to be flying, but I can make no guarantees because their migration movements largely depend on weather patterns.

There is a \$2 entry fee per car. The lodge is under renovation, so facilities may be limited. There should be a place to get warm, and indoor bathroom facilities should be available by then. Hot drinks will be provided.

Program on Saving Alaska's Birds and the Arctic NWR Fri, Nov. 3

Paul Conrad of the Alaska Coalition will present a program on preserving the Birds of the Arctic coastal plain and the Arctic Natl. Wildlife Refuge and relate how hybrid cars tie in to saving Arctic birds.

The talk will be held at Bellevue Univ. Student Center, 7:00 p.m. Fri, Nov. 3. Bellevue Univ's Dept. of Natural Science and ASO are co-sponsors. Directions to the site: Take Hwy 75 to Cornhusker exit, go east to Galvin Rd and take a right past the library, Durham Adm. Bldg & parking lot to the light at Lloyd St. Turn right, go to 4-way stop sign, turn right onto campus. Follow the road around past Student Ctr and park in the large lot. For a view of buildings, go to www.bellevue.edu

Current Currents

By Elliott Bedows

Is Automotive Corporate Intellect an Oxymoron....

Or Are We to Blame?

On October 23, 2006, the Associated Press reported that "Ford Motor Company's blue oval continued to bleed red ink in the third quarter, with the company posting a \$5.8 billion loss due to sagging North American sales and huge costs associated with a massive restructuring plan. It was the largest quarterly loss in more than 14 years for the nation's second-biggest automaker, and company officials predicted things would get worse in the fourth quarter as market share drops and Ford pays for further plant closures to bring its manufacturing in line with owner demand for its products." What were these people thinking?

Didn't something like this happen to then third-biggest automaker, Chrysler, when they decided that building larger, less fuel-efficient vehicles was the way to go—and then, oops—the 1974 oil crisis sent them seeking Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. What were those people thinking?

The 1974 spike likely caught some people off guard, but by now it is no secret that oil prices are going to continue to skyrocket unless we manage to have hurricane-free seasons, like this one, on a regular basis. Not too likely. The current (as of October 23) "easing" of crude oil prices down to \$58 USD per gallon is still twice the \$29 USD per gallon we were looking at two years ago. Wouldn't you suppose that people who run U.S. automotive mega-corporations for a living would have figured out that you need to build smaller and more efficient vehicles? Other companies have (Honda, Toyota, Hyundai, et al).

So who am I to talk? After all, I drive a 1995 Ford Explorer that gets an average of 18.5 mpg. Well, my buggy has 140,000 miles on it now and is showing signs that it may need to be replaced before too long. But with what? I do a lot of bird surveys that require off-road capabilities, and I don't want to squeeze into a small car that will wreck my already compromised back. The extra bit of steel in front of me is reassuring as I cross over Hwy 480 to North 75, cutting across 5 lanes of speeding traffic each morning on my way to work. Truth is, I love my car and would want to replace it with something just like it with better fuel efficiency. The technology is out there (see Honda, Toyota, Saturn, et al). These cars are not going to get 50 mph like Toyota's Prius, but 25-30 mph is becoming the norm for new, somewhat downsized SUVs. So, what were those people at Ford thinking? Admittedly,

Ford does manufacture the Escape Hybrid, 31 mpg highway, but that's not sufficient to save the company which decided that building bigger F-150's and Explorer spin-offs was a better idea than updating its all-time best selling vehicle, the Taurus, which is due to go out of production at the end of this year.

According to the Dow Jones newsletter, "MarketWatch," {that while} "the world's big automakers will venture deeper into the world of hybrid carmaking for the 2007 model year, many still are reluctant to make a big commitment to this relatively untested market. Builders on both sides of the Pacific say customer demand has yet to shake out on the vehicles that purport to offer better gas mileage and cleaner emissions." While there are waiting lists for the Toyota's Prius, most companies still have cold feet about getting into the more fuel efficient markets. Why?

The reason some carmakers are treading softly is that in most cases, mileage benefits aren't enough to offset a premium that can total as much as \$8,000 for hybrid cars. And those aren't windfalls, manufacturers contend, because it's more expensive to put both a gas and electric engine in each car. That means until hybrid buying and production reach a critical mass, it is unlikely that consumer prices will come down—which is projected to be years away. Why isn't there such a critical mass? Is it because too many Americans don't care if they drop \$75 each time they fill up at the pump? Not if the (lack of) profit lines of Ford and GM are any indication.

So why aren't more fuel efficient cars being built by automakers worldwide to lure enough buyers to buy cheaper fuel-efficient vehicles when we know it's just a matter of time until global demand will drive crude oil prices skyward? Why don't people demand that more fuel efficient vehicles become the industry standard to bring down the cost of cars that will save them money at the pump? What are we thinking?

Make Your Voice Heard

on Election Day!

You are all urged to help elect those committed to the environmental cause on issues vital to preserving our wildlife and wild places. The Endangered Species Act has been under siege, and drilling in the Arctic NWR is likely to be the subject of legislation again in Congress. Study the candidates' records. Your vote counts!

The Platte River Needs Nebraska's Help

By Kathy Schwery

Governor Dave Heineman is to make a decision soon regarding Nebraska's participation in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program.

Growing out of an agreement signed in 1997 by the governors of Nebraska, Wyoming, and Colorado and the Secretary of the Interior, this longtime recovery program for the Platte has taken nearly a decade to be developed.

al habitat

The plan, which would restore and protect critical habitat along the Platte, has been approved by the Governors of Wyoming and Colorado.

The original agreement had two main purposes:

1. To develop and implement a Platte River Recovery Implementation Program to maintain, improve and conserve habitat for four endangered and threatened species that use the Platte River in Nebraska: Whooping Crane, Least Tern, Piping Plover, and Pallid Sturgeon.
2. To enable existing and new water users in the Platte River basin to proceed without additional ESA requirements for the four target species.

The Platte is a river in need of help. Recent drought, overuse by competing interests, and vegetation which fills the channels all contribute to the problems of the river. The Endangered Species Act has been the catalyst for action to protect the Platte, but everyone would benefit from this plan to improve the river.

If Nebraska agrees to become part of the Platte River Improvement Program, one of the thorniest issues to be decided has to do with irrigation. In 1997, when Nebraska signed the original agreement, the state promised not to add any more irrigated acres or if it did, to compensate for their impact in reducing the amount of water in the river.

Since 1997, an additional 500,000 irrigated acres have been added in the Platte basin. Irrigators do not want their wells shut down, and they also do not think they should have to bear the brunt of the cost of compensation for the additional irrigated acres. However, in an *Omaha World-Herald* article, Governor Heineman questioned whether the state has the responsibility to pay for the impact of those additional acres.

Cooperative efforts of various environmental organizations, power and irrigation districts, and government agencies have resulted in the development and improvement of more than 20,000 acres along the Platte. Partnerships among landowners, the Nature Conservancy and the Game and Parks Commission are protecting many more acres.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program is the best plan to further improve the health of the river, providing not only environmental benefits but economic ones as well. It is important for Nebraska to join the coalition to improve the Platte.

Cleanup at Standing Bear Lake

By Laurine Blankenau

In keeping with our respect for the earth and for a clean environment, we are scheduling a cleanup at Standing Bear Lake at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, November 11.

Trash bags and gloves will be supplied by Keep Omaha Beautiful. ASO will provide sodas, water, and cookies. If you can help, you need to contact me at 451-3647. Be sure to leave your phone number so we can reach you if we have to cancel because of weather.

The Park is accessible from Fort Street, about two blocks west of 134th Avenue (opposite the Hillsborough entrance sign). After entering the Park (north side of

Fort), follow the sign to the boat ramp area for parking and to meet with the group.

If foul weather seems to be a problem, please call me (Laurine). We hope you can help.

Xmas Bird Count Dates

Onaha Area - Saturday,
December 16

DeSoto - Saturday, December
23

Ames - Saturday, December
30

October Field Trip One to Remember

By Elliott Bedows

My question is this. If you schedule a field trip and no one shows up, is it still a field trip? Even if there are some really good sightings?

Let me start with the "lowlights."

1) This was the first time ever for me that **NOBODY EXCEPT THE LEADERS** (me, Sue Guild of Wachiska, and Kevin Poague) showed up. As I sat in the Southroads parking lot and waited 10 extra minutes in blowing rain, I would have called off the trip had I not committed to meet others at Spring Creek Prairie. Sue and Kevin expressed the same sentiments. In fact, Kevin decided not to venture out with Sue and me, opting to go home rather than be pelted in the face with micro ice balls in 30 mph winds. (For you who watched the NE-TX game, things had cleared up considerably by game time, but the morning was really rough!)

2) Including sightings at Pawnee Lake, the total number of individuals of waterfowl, shorebird, warbler and grouse species was **ZERO**. Had it not been for three Goldfinches, finches would have made that list too. But of the few people who did bird Pawnee that day, I appeared to be the only one who missed the Black Scoter sighting <S>. More eyes might have helped!

But there were also highlights. Hundreds upon hundreds of sparrows were flying around, mostly Harris' and Dark-eyed Juncoes, but the vast majority stayed low and out of sight in the tall grass except to quickly fly past or scurry through the grass. Those we did see are really minimum in

number compared to what must have been there.

Towhee sp (2)

American Tree Sparrow (1)

Field Sparrow (3)

Savannah Sparrow (6)

LeConte's (3) Including two about as close as I've ever seen them, just several feet away.

Fox Sparrow (1)

Song Sparrow (10+)

Lincoln's Sparrow (4)

Swamp Sparrow (1)

White-throated Sparrow (2)

White-crowned Sparrow (8)

Harris' Sparrow (dozens)

Dark-eyed Junco (dozens)

These 13 sparrow species are actually pretty close to the norm (14-15) seen on our annual trip.

Also seen were Sprague's Pipit (3) and

Northern Harrier (m,f). I presume these were the pair that have been hunting at Spring Creek Prairie for quite some time.

And, lastly, just before I left nearly frozen after two hours and after Sue had left an hour earlier, an adult Golden Eagle circled over

The only bird of note at Pawnee Lake was a Horned Grebe.

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A Wrong and Right Way to Dispose of Prescription Drugs

By Laurine Blankenau

National Audubon warns us not to toss unused prescription drugs into the toilet or trash because they can damage the environment.

They can do harm because they are not filtered out at treatment plants and can thus harm the good bacteria used by treatment plants to kill hazardous microorganisms. The drugs pose a threat

Thursday 9:00 - 6:30, and Saturday 9:00 - 1:00. They are not available Monday and Tuesday. Under the Sink accepts numerous other

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Kathleen Crawford-Rose, ASO Historian, would like photos of our activities for the history scrapbook.

to birds and other wildlife that rely on these water sources and cause risks to us as well.

So, where do you dispose of outdated or unused prescription drugs if not in your home? Some pharmacies and hospitals will collect and dispose of hazardous medicines. A convenient site nearby is **Under the Sink, 4001 So. 120th St**, which handles the disposal of these and other hazardous substances. Your items will be taken by appointment only. Phone 444-7465 Wednesday and Friday 9:00 - 5:00,

Recently she has not received any photos/records of our field trips, Spring Banquets, Garden Walks, or other events. These would

Addresses to Remember

President George W. Bush
The White House, 1600
Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington D.C. 20500-0001
Comments: 202-456-1111; fax:
202-456-2993

Senator Ben Nelson
U.S. Senate, Washington DC
20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-
0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246;
Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address:
7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Chuck Hagel
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.
20510-2705
Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax: (202)
224-5213
Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry
U.S. House of
Representatives, Washington, DC
20515
Phone: (202) 225-4155 ; Fax: (202)
226-5452

Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944
Representative Jeff Fortenberry
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515
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Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman
Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln,
NE 68509
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succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

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1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183

Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-5555

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives.

When sending your 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 68103-0542

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



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Phone: 451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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The Meadowlark is published monthly September through May, plus a summer issue. The newsletter may be accessed on our web site, <http://audubon-omaha.org>

Send address changes to Kathy Schwery, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048.

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