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# The Meadowlark



April 2011

Volume 40 Issue 3

*ASO is a Chapter of the National  
Audubon Society Serving Eastern Nebraska  
and Western Iowa*

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## **April 14 General Meeting with Dan Cassidy**

Please join us for the meeting Thursday, April 14, 7:00 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (1 block south of 45th & Center). The program will be followed by a brief business meeting. The evening will conclude with a social hour and cookies.

Nonmembers are welcome!

At the meeting Dan Cassidy will be speaking about the new Master Plan for the Zoo including plans for the Rosenblatt site. He will also speak about some of the most recent animal comings and goings including, the elephant move to Cleveland, the birth of cheetah cubs and our African Wild Dog pups. He writes, "I was born and raised just about two miles from the Zoo and have worked here most of my adult life. I started at the Zoo one year after high school (1973) working part time while I earned a degree in Biology from UNO. I started at the ground level with boots on and a shovel in my hand. I have been working at the Zoo full time since 1978 in a variety of positions, always in the Animal Care Department. I am currently the General Curator

which is about as far as I can go. I oversee the entire the Animal Care Department including the Wildlife Safari Park near Ashland, Nebraska. My main interest has always been birds, but I spend the majority of my time these days dealing with mammal issues. It's a lot harder to ship an elephant than a toucan! I spend most of my day in the office on the phone or computer and rarely have to put my boots on. I have been fortunate in my career to have traveled to Africa four times, China twice, South East Asia, Peru, and Costa Rica, always keeping an eye out for new birds."

## **April Field Trip to Indian Cave State Park**

Take a trip on down to the deep south (of Nebraska) for a birding excursion during spring migration at Indian Cave State Park. Feel free to come down the evening before to listen for nightjars and owls. For this trip you will need to bring a lunch, sunscreen, water, or anything else you may think is necessary for a trip to Southern Nebraska. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. Saturday, April 30, at the main entrance to Indian Cave State Park. For details call Laurine at 451-3647.

**Justin Rink**

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## **Annual Spring Banquet May 12**

Mark the above date on your calendar and plan to join us Thursday, May 12, at Anthony's Steak House, 7220 F Street, Omaha, Nebraska.

Featured presenter is Craig Hensley, a longtime naturalist, bird bander and educator who will share with us his passion for the natural world.

The photo contest entries will be displayed. For the rules and other information, please see the item on page 3 of this issue and submit your photos.

The cocktail and social hour will begin at 6:00 p.m. followed by dinner at 7:00. Spouses and friends are welcome. A reservation form can be found on page 7 of this issue.

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# Postcard From the President

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Jer Toll

## **S**now Geese at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge: Where Did They Go?

With the coming of spring, I am rejuvenated by the sound of snow geese flying over my house. Remember the fall days that you could journey to DeSoto and see the lake white with snow geese? Since 2003, they no longer come to the refuge in numbers. What happened? Waterfowl, including snow geese, are highly adaptable to changes in habitat throughout their life-cycle. Keeping in mind that DeSoto NWR is just one possible stopover site during their migration, a number of factors contributed to changes in their migration patterns, but mostly it is related to the changing agricultural patterns that began in the 70's and 80's. The Corn Belt widened to the south into Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana and further north into North Dakota and southern Manitoba because of better seed and higher corn prices. Corn is a high-energy forage that allows them to efficiently put on fat reserves. Some flocks of snow geese began overwintering at higher latitudes like Missouri instead of the traditional flood plains of Louisiana. In the fall, after leaving their nesting grounds around Hudson Bay, they could now stage in Manitoba and the Dakotas because of the availability of corn for extended periods before heading south to the wintering grounds. They now had plenty of fat reserves and could afford to wait until November when snow

covers the corn fields forcing them to leave. Because they had fat reserves, strong arctic tailwinds requiring less expenditure of energy, and a shortened distance to the wintering grounds: they no longer needed as many stopover sites along the migration route, like DeSoto NWR, to complete their migration.

If the expansion of the Corn Belt occurred by the end of the 80's why did it take snow geese until 2003 to stop visiting DeSoto NWR? During the 90's leading up to 2003, there was a dramatic increase in the number of snow geese visiting DeSoto. The number of geese varies from year to year but on average the flock more than doubled. The population of the interior lesser snow geese exploded because of increased survival during migration and winter. The weak link is their breeding ground. Snow geese are colonial throughout their life cycle. Their breeding colonies are geographically distinct; the colonies migrate together and winter together. As the flock became denser, foraging pressures on fragile sub arctic tundra increased decimating the plant community that takes decades to recover. Gosling survival rates decreased resulting in an increased adult to juvenile ratio in the flock over time. The flock that stops over in DeSoto NWR during the fall has nested along the west shores of Hudson Bay, specifically the La Perouse and McConnell region. As a consequence, as the traditional

foraging/breeding grounds became uninhabitable, the nesters relocated to the edges pioneering new territory and presumably merging with other flocks, in this case the Queen Maud Gulf colony. The traditional fall migration path of the Queen Maud Colony takes them through central Nebraska and the Rainwater Basin. Thus the most likely scenario is that with the merging of the colonies, the DeSoto Flock had adapted the route of the Queen Maud Gulf flock beginning in 2003. This is difficult to prove however since they typically don't stop in the Rainwater Basin in the fall but are seen flying over. Thus, neck collar evidence is hard to come by. The Hitchcock HawkWatch monitors the snow goose migration through the Missouri River Valley. When combined with DeSoto's records, only comparatively small numbers are seen migrating through the valley and most of them do not stop, that is until last fall. Toward the end of November 2010, Ryan Evans and I had a day where an estimated 600,000 snow geese went through the valley at the Hitchcock HawkWatch. Everywhere we looked the sky was filled with huge flocks of snow geese for three hours. DeSoto had hardly any of them visit that week. Given the forces at work, it seems unlikely that snow geese will return to DeSoto anytime soon. With a November day like that, it gives renewed hope. Snow geese will continue to adapt to change, we can only watch.



## Arctic Refuge Spring Migration Birding Challenge

Birds that breed in the Arctic Refuge has ranges that reach all 50 states and 6 continents.

How many can you find in your state?

**The Challenge** - Try to beat the reigning record of 87 species.

Recruit a team of up to six people.

Record your birds - by sight or sound, and mark it on the checklist. Pick one up from ASO at our general meeting. Or go to *AudubonAlaska.org*

Submit your checklist before midnight (Alaska time) May 31, 2011. Take your time and enjoy. You have the entire spring to scour the countryside.

Each member of 1st, 2nd & 3rd place teams will receive a prize. See the web site for details. Winners will be announced on June 15.

Questions? Call 451-3647.

### March Field Trip to Wehrspann and Beyond

Justin Rink led the trip to the Wehrspann Lake Area on March 19, finding the main body of the lake rather devoid of birds.

In the quieter coves of the lake they spotted eight species of waterfowl including a American Wigeon and a Pied-billed Grebe. A female Cooper's Hawk showed up, and on leaving, three or four Tree Swallows were swooping over the road.

The wetlands were more productive, with these species:  
Mallard

## Entries wanted for Photo Contest

by Eric Scholar

Audubon's photo contest will be held again this year, and entries are being sought. These will be on display at the Spring Banquet, May 12.

Contest categories are birds, wildflowers/fungi, animals, scenics/people in nature, and insects. Photos must be from nature - zoo shots and shots of pets are excluded. Entries are limited to two per person per category, may range in size from 8"x10" to 16"x20," and must be matted or framed. Alternate methods of framing and matting may also be acceptable if first discussed with Eric Scholar.

First, second and third place will be awarded in each category along with Best of Show. Most Popular will be voted on by members at the banquet.

You must be a member of ASO to enter the contest. Entries must be submitted by April 20, 2011. To make arrangements for delivering your photos, please call Eric Scholar at 402-551-5045.

Gadwall  
American Wigeon  
Northern Pintail  
Northern Shoveler  
Blue-winged Teal - 15  
Ring-necked Duck  
Greater Scaup - 4; 2 pairs, including a female with a white ear patch  
Lesser Scaup - 30  
Bufflehead - 7  
The Walnut Creek Recreation Area yielded flyover Wood Ducks, two Lesser Scaup and a few Redheads. Eurasian-collared doves were present and many

## Spring Bird Counts

### The DeSoto Spring Bird Count

The DeSoto Spring Bird Count will be held Sunday, May 1. We will meet at 8 am in front of the Refuge Administration Building near the north entrance off highway 30. Bring your lunch. The refuge has been busy flooding basins in anticipation of waterfowl and shorebird migrations. There has been an ongoing program to expand the available wetlands on the refuge and in recent years the program has been paying dividends. This is an opportunity to explore the refuge. Contact information:  
Steve Van Riper 712 642 5411  
[Steve\\_VanRiper@fws.gov](mailto:Steve_VanRiper@fws.gov)  
Jer Toll 402 453 9239

### Annual Sarpy County Spring Bird Count

The Annual Sarpy County Spring Bird Count will be held on Saturday, May 14th. This is a count we have been doing for over 10 years. The county is divided into sectors - 1. Fontenelle Forest and adjacent areas, 2. The center part of the county west of Fontenelle to Hwy. 50 3. Schramm SRA and surrounding area and 4. west of I-80 to the Platte River. One person is responsible for each of these areas. If you are interested in participating contact Clem Klaphake (403-292-2276) and he will assign you to one of these 4 areas.

singing Eastern Meadowlarks.

Lake Zorinsky was teeming with Ring-billed Gulls with three American White Pelicans among them, and six duck species. At the "phantom lake," 144th & F, a handful of Lesser Scaup were present.

## Earth Day Omaha 2011

### *Earth Day Every Day - Get in the Spirit!*

The 2011 Earth Day Omaha Celebration will be held on Saturday, April 23 at Elmwood Park from 11 am – 4 pm. The theme of this year's event is "Earth Day Every Day". Earth Day Omaha is the region's premier Earth Day event and involves educational and entertainment activities for all ages. Its goal is to reach thousands of individuals teaching them how to be more responsible, eco-friendly and committed to a more sustainable lifestyle. Last year over 8,000 people attended. Individuals who ride their bike will have a staffed bicycle parking lot.

As before there will be vendors, environmental and educational activities, speakers, organizational booths, music and food. More information can be found at [www.earthdayomaha.com](http://www.earthdayomaha.com).

The Audubon Society of Omaha, a sponsor of Earth Day, will have a booth set up and is asking for volunteers to help greet the public, distribute pertinent reading material, and answer any questions they might have relative to birds and other environmental issues. Any help would be appreciated.

Please contact Jackie Scholar at 402-551-5045 for information or to volunteer.



Above Audubon Society Art Contest Judges Don Westling, Shelly Bartek, Paula Wallace and Jo Bartikoski

### **Audubon Society of Omaha student art contest**

Students in the Greater Omaha Metropolitan Area grades K-12 including home schooled children submitted 231 entries for the 2011 Art Contest.

The awards ceremony will be held at 2:00 p.m. April 2, at Bellevue University. Last year more than 400 persons attended, including the proud winners, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters and teachers.



Judges Don, Shelly and Paula in action!

We are grateful to the judges of the contest. We are impressed with the quality of the entries. Prizes awarded are Merit and Excellence for each grade.

**Everyone is invited to the awards ceremony to enjoy the entries which are displayed from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on April 2.**

### **Remembering Edith Wilson**

The Audubon Society of Omaha extends its condolences to the family of Edith Wilson, former member, who died on March 15.

Edith is remembered fondly by her friends and associated. She and her husband, Sid, were active birders and participated in ASO chapter activities and the NOU.

A Memorial Service will be held in the near future. Memorials should go to The National Audubon Society.

## Spotlight On Nature ---- White Fawn

### Lily

ERIC M. SCHOLAR



White Fawn Lily

At the end of March and beginning of April a person walking in the woods in this area will start to notice the first appearance of spring wildflowers. First the leaves are seen and then the flowers. Among the earliest to bloom are spring beauty, dutchman's breeches, bloodroot and white fawn lily. I want to focus this article on the white fawn lily although any of these four flowers are prominent early in the spring.

The white fawn lily is also known as adder's tongue, deer tongue, dogtooth violet and white trout lily as well as others. Its scientific name is *Erythronium albidum*. It is found in rich moist woodlands, especially in bottom lands with open woods. In Nebraska it grows in oak forests in far eastern portions of the state. It blooms March through May and colonies of the plant may be extensive. It is in the Lily family and is not a violet as one of its

names implies. Paired leaves as much as 8 inches long and 1 ½ inches wide come from a mostly underground stem. The leaves are lance shaped and smooth almost shiny. Young leaves are often spotted with brown. The name trout lily is said to be derived from the spotted leaves, reminiscent of the speckled skin of a trout. It generally grows in groups of dozens to hundreds of plants. Each plant ranges from 4-10 inches high. The leaves lack teeth in the margins and curve in a graceful arc. The shape of the leaves probably accounts for the names adder's tongue and deer tongue. For the first 2-3 years only a tiny single leaf is produced. Then in the next 2 or 3 years a larger leaf is produced. Then 2 leaves are formed. A plant may not flower until the plant is 6-7 years old and always after 2 leaves are produced. The flower is white and up to 1 inch wide. The petals and sepals are strongly bent over (reflexed) at flowering.

The root system is a bulb which sends out long shoots which form new plants. Colonies of leaves appear 2-4 weeks before the flowers appear. The bulbs are up to 1 ½ inch in diameter and were a source of food for many Indian tribes who ate them raw, boiled or roasted. Small burrowing animals

of the woodlands also depend on these bulbs for food.



White Fawn Lily leaves  
by Neal Ratzlaff

If the flower and 2 leaves are picked, the plant dies, in its short growing season it cannot produce new leaves to replenish the food reserves in the bulb. Such food storage is needed for the plant to overwinter and send up new growth in the spring.

A close relative of the white fawn lily is the prairie fawn lily (*E. mesoleucrum*) which is found mostly in prairies. Its flowers are also white. As the name implies, it is native to moist tall grass prairies. Its leaves, unlike that of white fawn lily, are not spotted with brown. It also does not spread by stolons or above ground stems. Due to the loss and degradation of native grasslands, the prairie fawn lily is now rare in Nebraska and elsewhere.

# Latest News on the Proposed Keystone XL Pipeline

By Jane Wilson

In case you hadn't heard, a company called TransCanada wants to build a pipeline carrying toxic tar sand oil from northern Alberta, Canada, all the way down to refineries on the Gulf of Mexico, where it will be shipped to the highest bidder. It will pass right through the eastern side of Nebraska's unique and fragile Sand Hills in places where the water table (the Ogallala Aquifer) is very near the surface, if not ON the surface during certain times of the year. It's called the Keystone XL, and opposition to it is growing. Concerned Nebraskans from all walks of life have come together to protect our land, water and economic activity.

Pipeline opponents have been busy since last summer, holding press conferences and meeting with landowners, attending weekly rallies on busy street corners as well as a rally on the steps of the State Capitol, meeting with legislators, holding an education and action forum in Lincoln and testifying at a public hearing at the State Capitol, not to mention coordinating radio and bus bench advertising campaigns and dressing up as an oil spill at the time-honored Ground Hog Prom in Omaha. Their efforts have paid off.

Recently, a delegation of 11 Nebraskans traveled to Washington, D.C. to talk to their Congressmen and members of the EPA and State Department about their valid concerns. Perhaps for the first time, the State Dept. (who makes the decision about whether or not to approve the pipeline), heard from farmers and ranchers whose

livelihoods are threatened by this risky pipeline. Likely due to their concerns and the catastrophic oil spills in the Gulf and Michigan last year, the State Department announced there would be a Supplemental EIS (Environmental Impact Statement), to be released in mid-April of this year.

Once released, the public will have 45 days to submit comments on the Supplemental EIS in order to provide interested parties and the public the maximum opportunity to give input on this important project. Once the comment period ends, the State Dept. will host a public meeting in D.C., after which the decision will be made about whether building the Keystone XL is in the best interest of our country...

As for what is in the best interest of Nebraska (besides stopping the pipeline or at least moving it away from the Sand Hills), laws regulating oil pipelines would be good. Nebraska currently has NO laws on the books to protect our water, land and citizens. Over 70% of Nebraskans want assurance that when an oil pipeline goes into the ground and cuts through our main source of clean drinking water, there better be some basic safety measures in place. State Senators Dubas, Harr and Sullivan submitted bills that would do just that. Sen. Dubas's bill, LB 340, would require pipeline companies that transport hazardous liquids to apply for a permit through the Public Service

Commission. Sen. Harr's bill, 578, sets up a trust to protect landowners if there's a leak or the pipeline is abandoned, and Sen. Sullivan's bill, LB 629, would require pipeline companies to restore the land or pay the landowners if they can't. The Natural Resources Committee heard testimony on these bills during a 6.5-hour public hearing at which countless Nebraskans spoke in favor of the measures. Unfortunately, the bills are stalled in committee.

NOW is the time to contact the members of the NRC and ask them to move these bills to the floor for a full debate — and to remind them it is their DUTY to protect our natural resources for the good of all Nebraskans and all the creatures who call this place home. (<http://news.legislature.ne.gov/nat/>) It is NOT their job to cater to foreign corporations who bully our landowners and threaten eminent domain.

Obviously, this is NOT the time to rest on our laurels. These next few months are critical in getting the word out and getting people involved like never before. Every little thing we do helps, and there's no time like the present to make a difference.

So write some letters, attend an event and talk, talk talk about this threat to the Good Life.

Go to <http://www.boldnebraska.org/pipelineactionguide> for more ideas.

**Let's keep it up so we can beat this thing!**

**Addresses to Remember**

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202-456-1111

Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; 202-224-6551  
fax 202-228-0012; Lincoln phone: 402-437-5246;

Omaha phone: 402-391-3411;

Omaha address: 7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Michael Johanns

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 202-224-4224

Lincoln: 402 476-1400

100 Centennial Mall N Rm 294, Lincoln NE 68508-3803

Representative Lee Terry

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515

Phone: 202-225-4155; Fax: 202-226-5452

Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St, Omaha 68154

Omaha phone: 402-397-9944

Representative Jeff Fortenberry

House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515

Phone: -202-225-4806

Lincoln phone: 402-438-1598

Lincoln Address:

Governor Dave Heineman

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln, NE 68509

Phone: 402-471-2244; Fax: 402-471-6031

Mayor Jim Suttle

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

We offer two choices of membership: one includes membership in National Audubon as well as in our local chapter, receiving the *Audubon Magazine* and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. A portion of the dues is returned to our local chapter.

The other choice is local membership only: this includes receiving *The Meadowlark* and participation in all of our local activities. Dues all go to our chapter.

**Membership in the National Audubon Society**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Membership (1st & 2nd Year) \$20  
Make check payable to National Audubon Society**

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha  
19612 Ridgeway Road

**Membership in The 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 COZCP030Z

Please send all changes of address to [djschw@windstream.com](mailto:djschw@windstream.com)

**Banquet Reservation**

Anthony's Steakhouse  
7220 F Street, Omaha, NE

Thursday, May 12. Cash Bar 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Number & Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose: \_\_\_\_\_ \$23 Top Sirloin 8 oz. \_\_\_\_\_ \$19 Trout Almondine \_\_\_\_\_ \$19 Chicken Breast Rosemary

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ persons

Make check payable to Audubon Society of Omaha and mail to: Helen Bartee, 521 Beverly Drive, Omaha Ne 68114.

Reservations must be received by **May 5**.

Audubon Society of Omaha Mailing Address: P.O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103 - 0542

Phone: 402-451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

Office: 1941 So. 42nd Street, Omaha, NE 68105

Elected Officers:

|                           |                   |          |
|---------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| President                 | Jerry Toll        | 453-9239 |
| 1st Vice President        | Jackie Scholar    | 551-5045 |
| 2nd Vice President        | Linda Dennis      | 733-6548 |
| Past President            | Clem Klaphake     | 292-2276 |
| Treasurer                 | Vacant            |          |
| Recording Sec'y           | Laurine Blankenau | 451-3647 |
| Corres. Sec'y             | Kathleen Rose     | 292-8912 |
| <u>Elected Directors:</u> | Jamie Vann        | 733-1891 |
|                           | Elliott Bedows    | 292-5017 |
|                           | Phil Swanson      | 339-7928 |
|                           | Helen Bartee      | 391-3386 |
|                           | Jason McMeen      | 445-8279 |

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

|                   |                   |              |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Conservation      | Bob Fuchs         | 553-8242     |
| Education         | Clem Klaphake     | 292-2276     |
| Field Trip        | Justin Rink       | 904-415-8279 |
| Finance           | Nelli Falzgraf    | 292-9687     |
| Fund Raising      | Vacant            |              |
| Membership        | Kathy Schwery     | 296-4788     |
| Program           | Linda Dennis      | 733-6548     |
|                   | Nancy Williams    | 291-8580     |
| Natural Areas Mgt | Eric Scholar      | 551-5045     |
| Publication       | Laurine Blankenau | 451-3647     |
| Publicity         | Jackie Scholar    | 551-5045     |

Other Activities:

|                       |                 |              |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Bird Seed Sale Chairs | Kathleen Rose   | 292-8912     |
|                       | Carol Rasmussen | 731-3939     |
| Speakers Bureau       | Eunice Levisay  | 393-0545     |
| NAS Board Member      | Peter Cannon    | 608-251-1276 |

*The Meadowlark* is published monthly  
September through May, plus a summer issue. The  
newsletter may be accessed on our website, [http://  
audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org)

Send address changes to Kathy Schwery,  
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