

The Meadowlark

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*Serving Eastern Nebraska
and Western Iowa*

Bluebirds Across Nebraska

That small, delicate symbol of happiness for some of us, the Eastern Bluebird, exerts an undeniable appeal because of its beauty and until recently, its rarity in our area.

As with other birds, it did experience serious declines in the last century. Then came organized efforts to restore its numbers to a sustainable level. One of those efforts was an organization, Bluebirds Across Nebraska (BAN), begun in 1993 by 24 persons in the Lincoln area who became aware of the declining population of the Eastern Bluebird in our state. The organization is one of many across North America to save the bluebird.

At our November general meeting Sandy Seibert, President of BAN, will speak about the organization, its methods and successes, which has a system of trails in Douglas County. These trails of nesting boxes are monitored by volunteers who maintain records of nesting, egg-laying, hatching and fledging. The tasks are pleasant and rewarding, being conducted in natural areas and giving the satisfaction of knowing they help

to secure the survival of the species. Thanks to the work of BAN members, the bluebird population is recovering its rightful place in nature.

Sandy Seibert has served as President of BAN since 2003. She also serves as Membership Chairperson and Douglas County Coordinator for BAN. She maintains her own bluebird trail at Schramm State Recreation Area and has fledged around 100 bluebirds from 28 boxes annually since 1994.

In 1992 Sandy opened Backyard Birds, a nature store in Omaha.

Please join us for the meeting and program at 7:00 p.m. Thursday, November 11, at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances Street (1 block south of 45th & Center).

A brief business meeting will follow the program, and a social hour with cookies and conversation will conclude the evening. Nonmembers are welcome.

November 20 Field Trip to Forest Lawn Cemetery

Join Justin Rink on Saturday, November 20, for a trip around one of his favorite winter birding places in the Omaha area — Forest Lawn Cemetery.

We will be searching mainly for finches, though several other species are also possible. Pine Siskins and Red Crossbills have been known to frequent the area.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Forest Lawn Cemetery parking lot located along Mormon Bridge Road.

Be prepared with warm clothing and optics. If you have questions, call 451-3647.

Christmas Bird Count Dates Announced

The Ames, Nebraska, Count will be held Tuesday, December 14.

Saturday, December 18, has been chosen for the Omaha area Christmas Bird Count.

The DeSoto NWR/Boyer Chute Count will be held Sunday, January 2.

Complete information for the three Counts will be provided in the December *Meadowlark*.

Coming before our membership that lives in Iowa in the November 2nd election will be **Measure 1**, called the **Iowa Outdoor Recreation and Trust Fund Amendment**. The Iowa legislature passed the amendment each of the last two sessions to get it on the ballot. The source of the funding would come from the next time that the Iowa Legislature meets. Currently, Iowa uses less than 1% of its fiscal resources for natural resources, the lowest rate among surrounding states. Nebraska has 3% of its fiscal resources available by constitutional provision. Under the amendment, 13% of the funds would be made available to not-for-profits like the Loess Hills Alliance and Nature Conservancy in the form of conservation partnerships. Within the Audubon Society of Omaha's membership area, local county conservation boards would benefit by increased funding for resource enhancement, environmental education, and other conservation programs.

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The other day, I was on I-680 in Iowa on my way to the Hitchcock Nature Center to put in a day of banding birds of prey. Cruising along at the speed limit, I noticed a ball of fire in the sky. The other day, I was on I-680 in Iowa on my way to the Hitchcock Nature Center to put in a day of banding birds of prey. Cruising along at the speed limit, I noticed a ball of fire in the sky.

Project FeederWatch 2010-2011

Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey of birds reported at feeders in backyards and other sites, begins November 13 and runs through April 8.

The Project is sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Anyone interested in birds can participate. All skill levels are welcome.

Here's how it works. FeederWatchers periodically count the highest number of individuals in a species they see *in view* at one time. A participant chooses an area he/she can consistently observe through your chosen count days. Specific instructions about count days and other information can be obtained at feederwatch@cornell.edu, 1 800-843-2473.

The data gathered help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. The results are regularly published in scientific journals and shared with ornithologists and bird lovers nationwide. The counts submitted by each participant ensure that the birds or lack of them are represented in the publications.

Complete instructions and any other information is available at ProjectFeederWatch.com. A fee of \$15 a Research Kit, calendar, bird ID poster, staff support, and a year-end report. Participants' fees support the Project.

Another Kind of Store

One man's trash is another's..... The point here is that it doesn't have to be trashed. In midtown Omaha there is a store with a myriad of items for the home that have been donated rather than discarded rather than sold for next to nothing at a garage sale. These donations are then sold for a low cost to bargain hunters.

Best of all, items are kept out of the landfill. The place is Restore, located at 1003 So. 24th Street. Step inside and you will find loads of lighting fixtures, porcelain tile (new and good quality), kitchen appliances large and small, bath fixtures large and small, doors, knobs, handles, and others.

All profits from sales at Restore go to Habitat for Humanity. Pickup service is available for large items.

To conserve our spaces and keep discards out of the landfill, consider donating them to Restore, 934-1033.

Spring Creek Prairie Field Trip

By Laurine Blankenau

The day was among the season's most glorious for the field trip at Spring Creek Prairie Saturday, October 16. The grasses were colorful and the birds were abundant. Justin Rink was our trip leader. Nine persons made up the group, including four from Lincoln.

This partial list gives our finds of notables and others.

LeConte's Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow

Vesper Sparrow

Fox Sparrow

Chipping Sparrow

Clay-colored Sparrow

Song Sparrow

Lincoln's Sparrow

Harris' Sparrow

Field Sparrow

White-throated Sparrow

Sprague's Pipit (heard)

Lesser Yellowlegs

Prairie Chicken (Greater)

Double-crested Cormorant

Hairy Woodpecker

Downy Woodpecker

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Northern Flicker

Dark-eyed Junco

Northern Harrier

Red-tailed Hawk

Eastern Towhee

Spotted Towhee

Orange-crowned Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Cont. from page 2

Postcard from the President,

turn around and take a second look, but knowing that I kept a raptor from lying along the side of the road, suffering and dying perhaps for days, is enough no matter the outcome for the redtail. The nice folks at Raptor Recovery Nebraska have been doing this work for 34 years.

Lead, Wildlife and Humans

By Kathy Schwery

Most of us are familiar with the recovery story of the American Condor, an iconic bird that was so near extinction in the 1980's that the last nine birds had to be captured. By 1995, enough birds had been raised in a captive breeding program that condors were being released into the wild. Now there are more than 180 wild condors, mostly in the California and Arizona area. However, a serious threat to their continued recovery is the ingestion of lead from scavenged animals shot with lead ammunition.

Lead is an extremely toxic element, and it is entering the food chain not only through ammunition but also through lead fishing tackle. At least 75 wild bird species, including Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, ravens and condors, ingest lead through spent ammunition and suffer deadly consequences. Swans, ducks, geese and loons ingest spent lead pellets or lost fishing sinkers, thinking they are grit or food.

In the United States, 3,000 tons of lead are shot into the environment by hunting every year, another 80,000 tons are released at shooting ranges, and 4,000 tons are lost in ponds and streams as fishing lures and sinkers. The Center for Biological Diversity, source of these statistics, also says that an estimated 10 to 20 million birds and other animals die each year from subsequent lead poisoning.

Lead ammunition poses a threat to humans too, if they consume lead-shot game. Recent studies showed that depending on the species and recipe used, 20 percent to 87 percent of cooked game meat showed dangerous levels of lead. In some states, venison donated to feed the hungry had to be recalled because of too much lead contamination.

According to *Science Daily*, the problem of contamination by lead bullets has a rather simple solution: nontoxic bullets. Hunters need to use this safer ammunition, not only for their own health but also for the welfare of wild birds which might ingest these pellets. In Nebraska, waterfowl hunters are already required to use steel shot if they are hunting on public land.

The Center for Biological Diversity began a "Get the Lead Out" campaign in 1994, pushing for a nontoxic ammunition requirement for hunting throughout the California Condor's range. In 2007 the California legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger approved a bill requiring lead-free ammunition for use in all of the condor's southern and central California range.

More recently, the Center expanded its Get the Lead Out Campaign to protect condors in Utah and Arizona, as well as other wildlife across the country. In Arizona alone, at least 15 reintroduced condors have died from lead poisoning since 1992, and hundreds of condor lead poisoning incidents have required emergency treatment.

Organizing a coalition of conservation, hunting and veterinary groups, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a petition with the Environmental Protection Agency on August 3, 2010, requesting the EPA to require nontoxic ammunition for all hunting and fishing nationwide.

On August 27 the EPA denied the portion of the petition relating to lead ammunition because the agency said it does not have the legal authority to regulate this type of product. It is continuing to evaluate the petition request regarding fishing sinkers. American Bird Conservancy Vice President Darin Schroeder, whose group helped file the nontoxic ammunition petition, says, "It is disappointing to see this country's top environmental agency simply walk away from the preventable poisoning of birds and other wildlife."

The Center for Biological Diversity plans to continue its anti-lead campaign. In the past two decades, lead has been removed from paint, pipes, and other sources. It seems that requiring the use of nontoxic ammunition and fishing tackle would be a wise decision in order to protect the health of the magnificent condor and other wild birds, as well as that of hunters themselves.

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