

# 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.



April 2013  
Volume 42; Issue 4

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

## May Banquet and Insect Planet Presentation

The banquet will be held on **Thursday, May 9**, at Anthony's Steakhouse, 7220 F Street. For your enjoyment, Loren and Babs Padelford will present a program entitled "Insect Planet." Their extensive knowledge and photo expertise promise a fine presentation.

A cocktail and social hour will begin at 6:00 pm followed by dinner at 7:00. Spouses and friends are welcome.

A reservation form is included on page 5 of this issue. **Deadline for our receiving the reservations is Friday, May 3.**

We hope to see you at the banquet! For more information, please call 402-451-3647."

## April General Meeting: April 11th Falcons, Owls, and Hawks Up-close

By Jer Toll

We welcome back for their third visit in four years the educational raptors of Raptor Recovery Nebraska and their friend and

advocate, Denise Lewis. The April 11<sup>th</sup> general meeting will feature a variety of raptors who through injuries or human imprinting are not able to be returned to the wild. Denise will discuss what makes each species unique while holding them, the challenges they face, and what each of us can do to help preserve them in the wild. Raptor Recovery Nebraska has a national reputation of a relatively high reintroduction rate. RRN is a nonprofit organization who for 37 years has relied solely on income from donations, memberships, and educational programs. This program offers an opportunity to see up-close those birds you typically see at a distance or hear calling at night and rarely see. Photography is permitted.

Bring your camera and plan to attend this interesting program at our general meeting **Thursday, April 11th, at 7 pm** at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (one block south of 45<sup>th</sup> and Center).

The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour with cookies. Everyone is welcome to attend and there is no cost.

**Bring your dead batteries of all kinds, print cartridges**

**and no-longer-useable small electronics for recycling to the meeting.**

## Earth Day 2013 - April 20- Elmwood Park

The Audubon Society of Omaha will sponsor a booth at the annual Greater Omaha celebration of Earth Day which will be held on Saturday, April 20 in Elmwood Park from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. We will need volunteers to greet the public and answer questions they might have about birds, birding, and habitat. Any help would be appreciated. It is a great way to spend Earth Day. Email Jackie at [jbschola@cox.net](mailto:jbschola@cox.net) or call Jackie at 402 551-5045.

## Field Trip to Indian Cave Park April 27

The April field trip will be held Saturday, the 27th, at Indian Cave State Park.

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the front parking lot of the Park.

Bring a lunch, optics and appropriate clothing for the weather.

## Gardening Can Be For The Birds

by Jamie Vann

Every year spring fills my mind with visions of lettuce sprouting, carrots growing in the soil, peas vining up the trellis, and tomatoes starting their journey toward the ripe bounty of summer and fall. Planning a garden is almost more fun than actually planting the garden, and certainly less work.

New gardening techniques and gardening books fill one of my bookshelves. I like to try new things each year; this year I am adding mint, and trying chamomile again. Some things just don't work the first time. I only have a small balcony, but I can fill it with planters and bins, containers and this year I am adding grow bags. I even have a goal and dream of owning a small farm someday. Spring is also a time when the birds make themselves heard. The barred owl calling has caused me to wake up more than once this past week, and the flocks of robins visiting my balcony have made me appreciate the richness of their rose breasts and the yellow orange of their beaks against the brown feathers.

What would the birds want if they could garden? Well, maybe the owls wouldn't be too interested, but I try to imagine life as a bird. Their needs are simple; water, shelter from storms: a place to hide from predators, a place to nest, a place to perch, and food.

When planting a garden why not make it bird friendly. Many people have bird feeders, some even have a bird bath. Add a

currant bush and it will provide fruit and seeds, you should have plenty to make delicious currant jam or pie and plenty for the birds to enjoy. The same is true of one of my favorite trees, the juneberry. It is a summertime favorite to watch the juneberry and when they are ripe to eat my fill. The birds always seem to beat me to the trees, they know when the berries are ripe, but I always manage to get plenty and share them with others as well. Honeysuckle has an enticing smell, the memory of sucking nectar from their flowers brings back a childhood of sunshine and bare feet, and it might bring hummingbirds to your yard to enjoy their nectar too. Tall grasses provide seeds for the birds in the fall and winter, and don't forget a winterberry or something to keep the robins happy when all the insects are gone.

While you are thinking about the birds you might consider providing them with a safer haven from cats and coons. Plant thorny bushes like gooseberries and raspberries around the perimeter of the area you are trying to create for the birds. They provide fruit you can share with the birds and a thorny place to get away from larger predators.

Remember, when you are planning, birds like an open space to look out for predators, so don't plant the entire area densely. Leave an open area of around 10 feet around the bird bath, then plant your shrubs and trees for them to perch on.

Think about what you would like if you were a bird, look at the space you have available, plan to use native species, and by all means plant berries you will enjoy as well. Nature provides in abundance most years. Now let's follow her example and provide an abundance for the birds we share space with.

Maybe, after I have things arranged to share my garden with the birds, I should start thinking about what I will plant for the butterflies...

Within  
a few weeks  
now Draba, the  
smallest flower that  
blows, will sprinkle every  
sandy place with small  
blooms. He who hopes for  
spring with upturned eye  
never sees so small a thing as  
Draba. He who despairs of  
spring with downcast eye steps  
on it, unknowingly. He who  
searches for spring with his  
knees in the mud finds it, in  
abundance.

**Aldo Leopold, A  
Sand County  
Almanac**

### **Spring Bird Count at DeSoto and Boyer Chute Scheduled for May 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.**

Both the DeSoto and Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuges have undergone considerable change since the 2011 flood. Annuals have largely replaced the planted grasslands this past growing season and were a haven for wintering sparrows and finches. The Refuges have made a concerted effort to provide wetlands for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. It all adds up to a fun spring count.

As in past spring counts, counting is restricted to the refuges. The refuges use the information to determine avian usage.

Lunch will probably be at the picnic tables. Hope for a rainless day! Meet at 8 am at the DeSoto Visitor Center on May 4<sup>th</sup>. If enough people are willing, Boyer Chute NWR will have a count on Sunday May 5<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Jer Toll in advance for the Boyer Count.

For more information contact Jer Toll at 402-453-9239

### **The Annual Sarpy County Spring Bird Count Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>**

The Annual Sarpy County Spring Bird Count will be held on

Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>. The county is divided into four sections from Fontenelle Forest on the Missouri River in the east to the Platte River in the west in the Linoma Beach area. In between are two sections including Schramm Park SRA, Swanson Park, and Walnut Creek Lake Recreation Area.

Counters will be needed and any help is appreciated. If you are interested in helping out all day or part of the day contact Clem Klaphake at 402-292-2276 or [ckavian@cox.net](mailto:ckavian@cox.net)

### **Coming Soon: Spring 2013**

Hummingbirds at Home is a brand new citizen science initiative from Audubon. The project will help scientists understand how climate change, flowering patterns and feeding by people are impacting hummingbirds.

On the Hummingbirds at Home website you can track, report on and follow the spring hummingbird migration in real time. And, a free mobile app makes it easy to report sightings, share photos and learn more about these remarkable birds.

You can participate at any level – from reporting a single sighting to documenting hummingbird activity in your community throughout the life of the project. Help us document the hummingbirds journey and direct change in the future to ensure

these incredible birds do not disappear.

The National Audubon Society

### **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

### **Bequests**

**A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will succeed us; a gift**

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

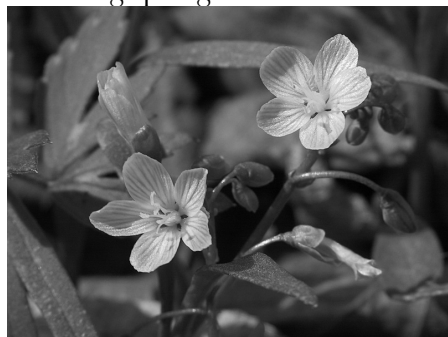


**Raptor Recovery  
Nebraska™**

## Spotlight on Nature: Spring Beauty

by Eric Scholar

Spring is just around the corner. The blooming of this plant along with a few others is a sign that spring is here. Spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) is one of the earliest plants that bloom in the woodlands of Eastern Nebraska and nearby areas. It is often seen along with bloodroot, Dutchman's breeches and fawn lily (dog's tooth violet) in the early spring. It is found throughout Nebraska and Iowa in the rich soils of moist open woodlands. The plants may be scattered but often occur in patches. Several wooded upland trails of Fontenelle Forest are covered with this plant which blooms from March to May and disappears in late June. Although it disappears by late June, the tubers lay dormant, deep in the soil, awaiting an early start the following spring.



*spring beauty by Neal Ratzlaff*

Spring beauty is a native perennial plant about 3-6" tall with a flowering stem and a pair of opposite leaves about half way up on the stem and some basal leaves. The petals are white with fine pink stripes that vary from pale pink to bright pink. The flowers are less than an inch across. The flowers open up on

warm sunny days, and close during cloudy weather or at night. They are more or less erect while open, but nod downward while closed. The blooming period occurs from mid - to late spring and lasts about a month. The flowers have a pleasant odor. The stem is light green or slightly reddish green and rather watery in texture. The fruit is a short 3 valved capsule containing several tiny black seeds. The leaves are 3 to 6 inches long and of varying widths. The root system consists of a small dark tuber. These tubers probably account for the names wild potato and ground nut which are its alternate names. Bundles of fibrous rootlets branch from the tuber. The plant spreads by reseeding itself, and can become abundant in some areas. It is a member of the Portulacaceae family, a family of succulent plants which also include the portulaca and bitterroot plants. Spring beauty can survive more environmental degradation than most spring blooming woodland species, including occasional grazing by cattle and partial clearing of trees. This is one reason why it is still commonly seen.

Spring beauty is known to be insect pollinated. Various kinds of bees visit the flowers, including honey bees, bumblebees, and halictid bees (such as the green metallic bees). Many flies also visit the flowers, including syrphid flies, the giant Bee fly, carrion flies, and muscid flies. Less often, various butterflies and skippers visit the flowers. These insects are usually seeking nectar; some of the bees also collect pollen.

The starchy tubers of spring beauty can be eaten raw or boiled as a potato substitute. Their flavor is bland, and is often described as resembling chestnuts. In his book *"Stalking The Wild Asparagus"* Euell Gibbons wrote about eating them daily if not twice a day for several weeks. He said: *"We tried them fried, mashed, in salads, and cooked with peas, like new potatoes. All these ways were completely successful, but, as regular fare, we preferred them just boiled 'in the jackets.' My friend grew so fond of this food that he was afraid he would experience withdrawal symptoms when the supply was exhausted."*



*spring beauty by Neal Ratzlaff*

While Gibbon's friend thought they tasted like potatoes Gibbons thought they were sweeter, closer to chestnuts in flavor. The small roots, or fleshy taproots, as well as the leaves of several species were eaten by the natives of this area. The leaves can be eaten fresh, added to salads or used as greens. Rodents and other animals dig and eat the tubers. The plant is somewhat delicate and digging the bulbs or persistent picking of the flowers will destroy the plants. For all these reasons keep a lookout for this plant as you shrug off the winter blues and start to head outside this spring.

**Addresses to Remember**

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington D.C. 20500-0001  
Comments: 202-456-1111

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

Senator Deb Fischer

825 B Hart, Senate Office Building, Washington D.C.  
20510 Washington Phone: 202-224-6551  
Lincoln: 440 No. 8th St, Suite 120, Lincoln NE 68508  
Lincoln phone: 402-441-4600

Omaha: 11819 Miracle Hills Dr, Suite 205, Omaha, NE  
68154 Omaha phone: 402-391-3411.

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 Audubon Society of Omaha only**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check for \$20 payable to Audubon Society of Omaha**

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha  
19612 Ridgeway Road  
Plattsmouth, NE 68048 COZCP030Z

**Membership in the National Audubon Society**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha  
19612 Ridgeway Road  
Plattsmouth, NE 68048 COZCP030Z

**Banquet Reservation Form**

Anthony's Steakhouse, 7220 F St, Omaha NE  
Thursday, May 9, Cash Bar 6:00 pm Dinner 7:00 pm

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose: \_\_\_\$24 Top Sirloin \_\_\_\$21 Chicken Breast Rosemary \_\_\_\$21 Pasta Primavera

Enclosed is \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ persons. Make check payable to Audubon Society of Omaha.

Mail to Helen Barte, 521 Beverly Dr, Omaha NE 68114 **Reservations must be received by May 3.**

Audubon Society of  
Omaha  
P.O. Box 3542  
Omaha, NE 68103 --0542

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
**Omaha, Nebraska**  
**Permit No. 79**

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	Justin Rink	904-415-3282
1st Vice President	Jackie Scholar	551-5045
2nd Vice President	Laurine Blankenau	451-3647
Past President	Jerry Toll	453-9239
Treasurer	Dennis Kingery	556-9082
Recording Sec'y	Nelli Falzgraf	292-9687
Corres. Sec'y	Ann Boice	315-1884

Elected Directors:

Jamie Vann	733-1891
Elliott Bedows	292-5017
Jonas Grundman	216-5413
Bob Fuchs	553-8242
Tad Leeper	670-5919
Eric Scholar	551-5045

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	Jerry Toll	453-9239
Natural Areas Mgt	Eric Scholar	551-5045
Publication	Jamie Vann	733-1891
	Laurine Blankenau	451-3647
Publicity	Jackie Scholar	551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs	Kathleen Rose	292-8912
	Carole Rasmussen	731-3939
Speakers Bureau	Eunice Levisay	393-0545
Historian	Eric Scholar	551-5045
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,  
19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048 or  
e-mail [djschw@windstream.com](mailto:djschw@windstream.com).