



Close Encounters...With a Mountain Lion?

By Nancy Leonard

It's a fact that we share this planet not only with each other but also with the thousands of diverse species of mammals, insects, birds and reptiles that make up the earth's web of life. We often speak of the niches that a species inhabits. Some species thrive in dry climates, others in cold temperatures, still others in high altitudes. But man, with the aid of technology, is able to live in nearly all climates and landscapes. As a result, we have spread into virtually every corner of the earth, bringing us into intimate contact with other species that compete for similar resources.

As cities sprawl outward, taking over land that was once agricultural or forested, clashes have become common. From the benign examples of deer and rabbits munching on landscaping to black bears roaming through neighborhoods looking for garbage scraps, wild animals are our close neighbors.

Here in Nebraska, mountain lions have become our newest urban immigrants. In the past 15 years, there have been numerous confirmed sightings of mountains lions in the state. How do you know if the large catlike animal

that you glimpsed running through the trees was a mountain lion? What should you do if you see one sharing your jogging trails? What does the future hold for our relationship with this beautiful and usually elusive creature?

Join us on Thursday, February 9, at 7:30 p.m. to hear Sam Wilson of Nebraska Game and Parks talk about mountain lions. Bring your questions and any possible sightings to the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances Street (one block south of 45th & Center). A brief business meeting will follow the program. The evening will conclude with a social hour. Non-members are welcome.

Up

By Clem Klaphake

February field trips are always difficult to plan. As I am submitting this in late January for the February issue of *The Meadowlark*, all of the local lakes are ice-free. Will they be that way on Saturday, February 18, when the ASO is planning a field trip? I'm betting they will be, based on the kind of winter we are having.

If the lakes are not open, we will journey to other

"hot" winter spots. I will have a trip planned for whatever the weather may bring us on the 18th.

We will meet under the tall electrical power tower in the southeast corner parking lot of Southroads at 8:00 a.m. Bring snacks if you want, but we will be near eating places by noon. Dress for the weather.

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration March 17-19

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Current Currents

By Elliott Bedows

Isn't it nice outside again. But why??

Winters aren't what they used to be, even compared to five or six years ago, and for those of us who have to shovel our driveways to get to work after a four-inch overnight dump of the white stuff, that is just fine. We'd rather have rain. Certainly those late night/early morning dog walks are much more manageable, if not enjoyable, when the temperatures hover around 30 degrees above, rather than wind chills of 30 below. It's late January as I write this, and we've had six 50 degree days already this month; two more are predicted for this upcoming week. Nice. Sort of.

This editorial is inspired by two things I read today. First, National Audubon issued a survey for Chapter leaders, and global warming was one of their 'hot button' items. Second, I read an article in

temperatures in various regions, and/or increasing extremes in weather patterns. This is what we are witnessing statewide and worldwide.

The world mostly agrees that something needs to be done about global warming and climate change. The first stumbling block has been agreement on a framework. In 1988 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created by the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization to assess the scientific knowledge on global warming. The IPCC concluded in 1990 that there was broad international consensus that climate change was human-induced. That report led the way to an international convention for climate change, the United Nations Framework

this February's National Geographic entitled "Meltdown in the Alps," predicting that the retreating snow line would have a devastating effect on one of Europe's largest winter vacation areas and industries. Why? Because global warming is impacting our entire planet.

The drought we are currently experiencing in Nebraska, especially in the western half of the state, is due less to a drop in the amount of precipitation we are receiving than as a result of the precipitation we do receive evaporating in the excessive winter temperatures. After all, statewide, the average rainfall is less than one inch per month from November through March. I have already implicated global warming as a factor in hurricane severity (last November's column), but more subtle changes are impacting us. A ride along the routes that harbored shallow ponds and lakes that have now turned to mud or grassy fields should tell us that the elevated temperatures we experience, both winter and summer, are destroying our wetlands and ultimately draining our aquifers.

Our climate is clearly changing and the earth is warming up. There is now overwhelming scientific consensus that it is human-induced. With global warming on the increase and species and their habitats on the decrease, chances for ecosystems to adapt naturally are diminishing. Many agree that climate change may be one of the greatest threats facing the planet. Recent years show increasing

Convention on Climate Change, signed by over 150 countries at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

A growing concern from developing countries is the need for public participation and awareness of global warming negotiations' effect on populations and poor countries. The impacts of climate change will be felt on the world's poorest countries the most. In some cases, climate changes have already affected some small island nations. Climate justice, equity and sustainable development are all important parts of this debate often left out of mainstream discourse. Equal rights to the atmosphere for all humans and equity within and between nations are paramount. An agreed principle of the Summit was that of common but different responsibilities.

At the 1997 Conference of Parties II (COP3), Kyoto, Japan, the Kyoto Conference on climate change took place. Developed countries agreed to specific targets for cutting their emissions of greenhouse gases. A general framework was defined, with specifics to be detailed over the next few years, known as the Kyoto Protocol. The U.S. proposed to just stabilize emissions and not cut them, while the European Union called for a 15% cut. In the end there was a trade-off, and industrialized countries were committed to an overall reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases to 5.1% below 1990 levels for the period 2008-2012. (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in its 1990 report that a 60% reduction in emissions was needed.) As with following COP meetings, there was enormous media propaganda by affected big businesses

Rivers and Wildlife Celebration March 17-19

Audubon Nebraska, Rowe Sanctuary and Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation present the 2006 Rivers and Wildlife Celebration at the Holiday Inn in Kearney, Friday - Sunday, March 17-19.

The conference timing is perfect for enjoying the return of the Sandhill Cranes. Highlights are trips to the blinds, morning and evening, where as many as half a million of the birds gather. Field trips to see the Prairie Chickens executing their dances will be held as well as trips to the Rainwater Basin and other local areas.

Noted speakers will deliver programs. Bobby Harrison, award-winning nature photographer, speaker, educator and writer, will present "**Obsessed with the Ivory-billed Woodpecker**" on Friday evening at 8:30 p.m. Other speakers of note will be presenting. During the day Friday and Saturday, sessions on other topics will be held. Craig Hensley, who formerly served as Fontenelle Forest naturalist, will present "**Flights of Fancy: Children and our Feathered Friends**" on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday morning, Dr. Paul Johns

gard will present "**The Galapagos Islands 170 Years after Darwin**," followed by the manager of Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary, Louisiana, speaking on the timely topic of "**Hurricanes and Other Challenges of Audubon Sanctuary Life**."

To reserve a room at the Holiday Inn, call early (a block of rooms is reserved until February 12): 1-800-248-4460 (in Nebraska) or 1-308-237-5971 (outside Nebraska). For the discounted rate of \$70 for single, 2-4 persons \$75, be sure to say you are attending the conference. Nearby motels are the Hampton Inn 1-800-HAMPTON or 308-234-3400; and the Wingate 1 800-228-1000 or 308-237-4400.

For a complete schedule and other information about the conference, call 402-797-2301 (Audubon Nebraska). To register and receive the lowest rates, do so before February 28. For information about crane viewing before or after the conference, call Rowe Sanctuary, **308-468-5282**.

For your convenience, a Registration Form is included on Page 7 of this issue.

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Volunteers Needed!!!

Student Art Contest

By Jackie Scholar

and countries such as the U.S. who were openly hostile to the treaty. In fact, soon after George Bush came to power, he opposed the Kyoto Protocol because the U.S. plus a few other countries and many large corporations feared the threat to their economy and profits and the realization that they have been primary contributors to the problem.

One way suggested for tackling climate change and warming has been the use of "Carbon Sinks" to soak up carbon dioxide. To aid in this, reforestation, or

The Audubon Society of Omaha will once again sponsor the Art Contest for students K through 12. As part of the Audubon's mission to educate, participants have been asked to learn about a Midwestern bird (of their choice) and then draw it (freehand) in its native habitat. They may use a range of media—colored pencil, ink, marker, watercolor, tempera paint, pastels, etc.

Students must also report on the time of

planting of new forests, has been suggested, a popular strategy for the logging industry and nations with large forest interests. While there may be some potential in this solution, it cannot be effective on its own because it legitimizes continued destruction of old-growth and pristine forests which are rich ecosystems with established biodiversity base (albeit shrinking now) that naturally maintain the environment (at no cost). Creating new forest areas would require the creation of entire ecosystems. It is also a quick fix that doesn't tackle the root causes and does not lead to or promote actual emissions reduction. It was agreed that the poor countries had pressing and basic needs to eradicate poverty and that it would be unfair to put emissions restrictions on these countries when it is the rich countries

year the bird is in the Midwest and also the common foods eaten by the

Continued on page 4

causing the problems. Nonetheless, some poor countries have already started to make emissions reductions, showing that the rich countries can do it as well.

No matter how it is done, the impact of global warming will affect life on the planet at every level. If we do not act soon, a runaway greenhouse effect may be our penalty for having abused the natural systems that have protected our planet for so many thousands of years.

Help Needed for Endangered Species Act

By Kathy Schwery

The all-out assault on our nation's environmental laws continues. In late September, the House of Representatives passed a bill sponsored by Congressman Richard Pombo (Rep-Cal) which will significantly weaken the Endangered Species Act.

As we know, it was the ESA that enabled Americans to bring back the condor, the Bald Eagle, and the gray wolf from the brink of extinction. Among the harmful provisions of this new bill are the elimination of all critical habitat protections for endangered species and a requirement that developers receive payoffs from the Interior Department if they are unable to proceed with a project which would be harmful to the environment.

provisions would allow politicians instead of scientists to make decisions about scientific data.

Now the Senate is set to debate a similar bill, introduced by Senator Crapo, a Republican from Idaho. In the coming weeks, congressional action will begin on this bill.

Please call or write Senators Nelson and Hagel and ask them to vote against this attempt to weaken the Endangered Species Act. (See Page 6 of this issue for their addresses and phone numbers.) The ESA has worked well for over 30 years. It's been one of our most successful laws for protecting biodiversity and has been instrumental in saving our most vulnerable birds and wildlife.

One critical habitat protection used successfully in Nebraska resulted in the acquisition by the Platte River Trust of 10,000 acres of riparian habitat for Whooping Cranes. Rep. Pombo's bill, which drastically changes this nation's ability to conserve endangered wildlife and their habitat, contains provisions that seriously weaken recovery plans such as that protecting the cranes. Some of the bill's

In these exciting days when the Ivory-billed Woodpecker has been seen again after it was thought to be extinct, wouldn't it be sad if we lost the ability to protect this magnificent bird because the Endangered Species Act itself becomes extinct?

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Art Contest,

bird. Prizes will be awarded for each grade level for realistic rendering and for graphic design. The winning artworks will be on display at Bellevue University's Gordon Lozier Center, 1000 Galvin Road South, Bellevue, NE, on Saturday, March 25. Awardees will be given their prizes at an Awards Ceremony at 2:00 p.m. that day. The Omaha Raptor Team will be on hand.

Volunteers will be needed for various activities. If you can help at any of the following times, please contact Jackie Scholar at 551-5045 or Jackie@bellevue.edu.

1. Helping with the receiving and labeling of artwork at the Audubon Office in the Center Mall —

Friday, Feb. 24 from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 25 from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

2. Setting up the art work at Bellevue University

Friday, Mar. 24 from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

3. Staffing an information table and greeting the public

Saturday, Mar. 25 from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Introductory Bird

Identification Class

By Clem Klaphake

Learn how to identify the birds in your back yard, neighborhood, or when on vacation. With over 50 million `birders' in the U.S., this recreational activity is also the fastest growing outdoor activity today. This class will be led/taught by Audubon Society of Omaha members and includes several local field trips. No prior knowledge of bird identification is needed.

The class will meet on four consecutive Saturdays, April 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Buffett Forest Learning Center at Fontenelle Forest. Cost is \$15.00. To sign up, contact Clem Klaphake, 292-2276, or ckavian@cox.net.

Backyard Bird Count Feb 17-20

Don't forget this important means of tracking birds in our area - the Great Backyard Bird Count of 2006, an exercise in citizen science. Anyone from beginner to expert can count and report birds seen anywhere (almost anywhere - excepting the zoo aviary) including a park or refuge if one's back yard is nonproductive.

Note the simple rules: report the highest number of each bird species seen together at one time. Participants perform a valuable service in compiling information about our bird populations, their range, decline or increase, or unusual species in unexpected places. This year awards will be given to local areas providing the most checklists, reporting the largest number of species, or the highest total number of birds..

A photo contest will be held based on bird photos taken during the event and submitted for posting on the GBBC gallery. Winners names will be published.

To report numbers, participants should access www.birdsource.org/gbbc .

For information about the count or the photo contest, contact cornellbirds@cornell.edu or 800 843-2473.

DeSoto/Boyer Christmas Count Results

By Jerry Toll

The DeSoto/Boyer Chute CBC was held December 31 under near ideal weather conditions, partly cloudy skies with a light wind prevailed, and temperatures reached the mid-forties.

We had 15 participants, including ASO members Clem Klaphake, Steve Lamphere, Sue Mattix, Jim Meyer, Janis and Don Paseka, Jerry Toll, and Pat Williams.

We recorded 57 species and 9,897 individuals, a fairly average count. There were no rare or unusual sightings. The Snowy Owl that had been seen in the area in December was not located.

The frigid weather early in December lowered the waterfowl count and drove lingering late migrants south. The subsequent warm-up and snowless count day made finding open country birds difficult. There was only one Horned Lark and no Lapland Longspurs or Snow Buntings.

We had 3 new count records set: Eastern Bluebirds 95 (old record 86); Song Sparrow 23 (old record 14); and Purple Finch 75 (old record 34).

We had 3 second place records: Red-tailed Hawk 98 (count record 105); Black-capped Chickadee 214 (count record 405); and White-breasted Nuthatch 108 (count record 113). Also counted were 2 Long-eared Owls.

January Field Trip

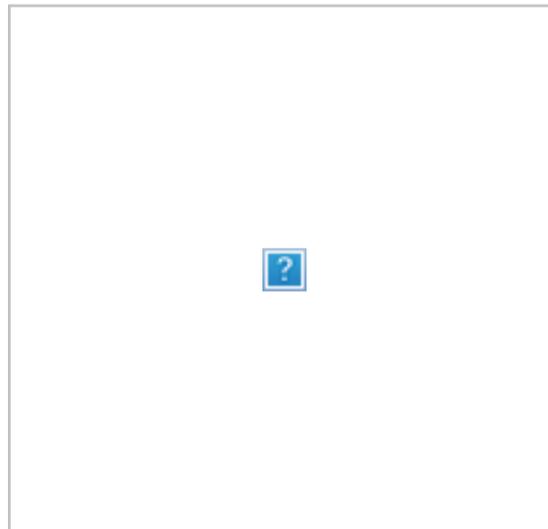
Fourteen ASO members, led by Clem Klaphake, stopped by three home bird feeder stations on January 21.

Best birds seen were a block of Eastern Bluebirds,
Brown Creeper,

Candidates for Board Positions

White-throated Sparrow, good numbers of Cardinals, Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, Dark-eyed Juncoes, Tufted Titmouse and three woodpecker species.

A big thank you to Kathleen Rose, Kathy Schwery, and Jim Davis for being such gracious hosts and allowing us into your homes.



Nominating Committee has submitted the following slate of candidates for the election to be held at the April general meeting. Their terms would begin July 1 2006.

President:
Elliott Bedows,
incumbent

1st Vice-President -
Jackie Scholar,
incumbent

2nd Vice-President -
Nelli Falzgraf

Treasurer -
Patty Albright,
incumbent

Recording Secretary -
Kay Strong

Corresponding Secretary -
Pauline Dickey,
incumbent

Directors -
Eric Scholar
and Nancy Leonard

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

Phone: (202) 225-4806

Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln,

Audubon Society

Membership Application

The *Audubon Magazine** (see below, chapter-only membership)
and your membership card will be sent to this address:

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

Zip Code _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Introductory Membership

National Audubon & Local Chapter

(1st & 2nd Year \$20)

Make check payable to National Audubon Society

Chapter-only Membership: \$15

(No National Audubon Magazine)

Make check payable to Audubon Society of Omaha

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

19612 Ridgeway Road

Plattsmouth NE 68048

PO 3

7XCH

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

Mayor Mike Fahey

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183

Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-5555

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



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 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

Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103-05

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

Elected Officers:

President Elliott Bedows....292-5017

1st Vice President Jackie Scholar....551-5045

2nd Vice President Laurine Blankenau....451-3647

Treasurer Patty Albright....323-1966

Standing Committee Chairpersons, cont.

Natural Areas Mgt. Eric Scholar.....551-5045

Omaha Raptor Team Jenny Henricksen.....895-5487

Program Nancy Leonard.....330-3888

Publication Laurine Blankenau....451-3647

Past President Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

Publicity Jackie Scholar.....551-5045
Other Activities:

Recording Secretary Linda Dennis.....733-6548

Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs Kathleen Rose..... 292-8912

Corresponding

Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939

Secretary Pauline Dickey.....932-8205 **Speakers Bureau Eunice Levisay.....393-0545**

Elected Directors Jenny Henricksen.....895-5487

Historian Kathleen Rose.....292-8912

Mace Hack.....934-5040

Birdathon Chair Bechara Embaid,,,,,965-9598

Mark Armstrong.....292-9770

ASO State Board Rep. Mace Hack.....934-5040

Urban Lehner.....330-3888

NAS Board Member Ione Werthman..... 493-0373

Sharon Draper.....572-4026 **Tad Leeper.....593-8508**

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>

Standing Committee Chairpersons:
Conservation Tad Leeper.....593-8508

Education Brian Jensen.....333-6375

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

Field Trip Clem Klaphake.....292-2276

Finance Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

Fund Raising Mace Hack.....934-5040

Hospitality DwanDean Leach.....346-5769

Membership Kathy Schwery.....296-4788

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