

The Meadowlark

The Audubon Society of Omaha is dedicated to the active promotion of environmental awareness to our



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

Nebraska's Wildcat Hills and Ray Boice- A Journey Through Time ASO General Meeting January 9th at 7pm
by Jerry Toll

The presenter for the Thursday January 9th meeting, Ray Boice, is no stranger to the beauty and uniqueness of the Wildcat Hills located south of Scottsbluff in the panhandle of Nebraska. This unique area in Nebraska is best known for its volcanic geology, Chimney Rock, and for being one of the best places in the world to find fossils from the Tertiary Period.

Ray and his wife Ann lived in Gering for 33 years less than 10 miles from the Hills and were core members of the Wildcat Audubon chapter. Ray played a large part in the establishment of the Wildcat Hills Nature Center by raising \$200,000 for the building fund. Long an advocate for the conservation of the Wildcat Hills, Ray took advantage of an opportunity to promote the Wildcat Hills.

PBS has a wonderful Nature Program called NatureScene-Travels with naturalist Rudy Mancke. Each segment would visit a biologically or geologically unique natural area, and the

audience would explore it with Rudy. For me, to watch the show was like walking Fontenelle Forest with Jim Fowler. Ray contacted the producers of the show and got them interested in doing a segment on the Wildcat Hills. It is that segment that Ray will introduce and show us. Ray will also be presenting a short feature about a fossil find that occurred two miles from Chimney Rock. The fossils inspired Nebraska poet-naturalist Loren Eiseley to pen one of his best know poems, The Innocent Assassins, which is featured in the video.

Experience the beauty of The Wildcat Hills of western Nebraska at the Audubon Society of Omaha general meeting Thursday, January 9th, at 7 pm at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (one block south of 45th and Center). The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour with cookies. Everyone is most welcome and there is no cost.



January Field Trip

On Saturday January 25th we will be checking out a couple of local backyards and bird feeders.
continued on page 5...

Crane Season Will Soon Be Here ASO General Meeting Thursday February 13th at 7:00 p.m

by Clem Klaphake

Doesn't the thought of hearing and seeing Sandhill Cranes in the Platte River Valley again this spring get your emotions moving? It does mine. As often as I observe this spring phenomenon I NEVER get tired of it or bored with it. For those of you who feel like I do, get ready, the wonder and symphony of cranes is again here.

Dr. Mary Harner of the Crane Trust near Grand Island told me recently, "During the past several winters, both Whooping Cranes and Sandhill Cranes have demonstrated unusual wintering distributions and migratory behavior within the central United States. Examples include the presence of nearly 5,000 Sandhill Cranes along the Platte River during the winter of 2011-2012 and the use of non-coastal habitats by Whooping Cranes during the winters of 2011-2013." Both of these behaviors had not been documented previously. This

continued on page 3...

Before I launch into my remarks for this month, I wish all of you a Happy New Year. I hope we will see you at events in 2014. We really are a cheery bunch, in spite of our often focusing on the ills that plague our environment and our fellow creatures, especially, of course, birds.

Speaking of birds, an enjoyable way to make your membership in Audubon work for you is to join our field trips where you'll be led by a guide who knows where to find the birds and how to help you find and identify them.

We have talented persons in our ranks willing to use their extraordinary skills leading trips around Omaha. If you enjoy birds at your feeders, you will enjoy others that frequent the woods and fields as well.

Last year a donation by ASO helped fund the prairie seed harvest for restoration at Hitchcock Nature Center. The seed is now ready for planting when the season is right. It was a rich harvest with the promise of returning a plot of land to prairie in the near future.

Wind Turbines' Effects on Humans

Most of us appreciate wind turbines, don't live near them, and drive past them firm in the conviction it is better to harness the renewable power of the wind than to extract limited supplies from the earth. We reserve our enthusiasm because of the distressing fact of bird and bat strikes. Now, however, we are hearing from those who live near wind turbines and know firsthand

what they can do to humans.

I am safely removed from wind farms. If I lived in the country near one, I'd be suffering from the unwanted noise the wind turbines create. It is a low-frequency sound assaulting the inner ear and continuously emitted as long as there is even a weak wind. Being inescapable, it inflicts damage to the psyche as well as the ear.

Like barking dogs, loud sound systems, and other unwanted noise, the wind turbine noise affects the ability to concentrate, rest and sleep. The inner ear's intolerance to low frequency sounds, especially if the exposure is unceasing, is documented. Resulting stress to the nervous system erodes health and endurance.

In addition to the noise, the "shadow flicker," made by the sun on the turbine's blades, has a strobing effect on the ground that can inflict harmful stress upon the eye and nervous system.

Those who live near large wind farms attest to psychological ills from the noise that penetrates the stillness of the night and every hour of every day when there is even a soft breeze. Mental energies are depleted, concentration suffers, physical energies are decreased and energy for brain activity is depleted. Reports in scientific literature of persons made ill by low-frequency sounds have long appeared. Recently the number of those afflicted has increased. The blame, no surprise, is placed on the increasing number of wind

turbines. Several physicians from England, Ontario, and New Zealand have compiled a set of adverse health problems among those living near industrial-scale wind turbines, but the sound from one or two turbines nearby can be heard depending on the direction and velocity of the wind.

Symptoms, some I already referred to, include sleep disturbance, headache, tinnitus, ear pressure, dizziness, vertigo, nausea, visual blurring, racing heartbeat, irritability, problems with concentration and memory, and panic episodes with sensations of internal pulsation or quivering. These can arise while awake or asleep. The shadow flicker's toll on human vision is documented. With time, exposure to the low frequency sounds of the turbines may damage human hearing.

Some persons have sold their homes and moved to escape wind farms, after which the problems disappear, attesting to the problems' legitimacy.

Can the turbine's blades be made of material that doesn't produce the low-frequency sound? Maybe some change could be made, but a sound will be produced without relevance to the material. There is some talk of "feathering" the edges of the blades to soften the sound. Whether or not this will alter the sound's effects hasn't been determined.

Wind energy is not an unmixed blessing. An increased size and number of wind farms, which is likely to occur, will continue to plague those who live near them.

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival Set for March

by Chris Thody, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center



Sandhill Cranes by Don Brockmeier

Nebraska is home to one of the most amazing and spectacular wildlife migration phenomena in the world – the sandhill crane migration. Over eighty percent of the world's population of lesser sandhill cranes (approximately 500,000-600,000) use the Platte River and adjacent fields to rest and refuel before continuing north to their nesting grounds in the northern U.S., Canada, and Siberia.

Audubon Nebraska is pleased to announce its 44th annual celebration of the sandhill crane migration, Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival (formerly known as the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration). The Festival will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center in Kearney, March 20-23, and features a variety of birding excursions including guided half- and full-day trips to local birding hotspots, sunrise and sunset trips to crane viewing blinds along the Platte River at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, and an overnight outing to see prairie grouse.

Main speakers include Gary Langham, Chief Scientist of the National Audubon Society; and Brian "Fox" Ellis of Foxtails International. Other presenters will give information on a variety of nature-related topics. Workshops on crane behavior and nature photography will be presented. And the popular and family-oriented Wild Experience Room will return with hands-on activities for kids, a live raptor show, and a live snake show.

For registration and general festival information, visit nebraskacranefestival.org or call 402-797-2301. You can also visit us on Facebook. For crane viewing information, visit rowe.audubon.org or call the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, 308-468-5282.

Crane Season

continued from page 1...

makes me very curious to hear what Mary has to say about this deviation of behavior.

At our February 13 general meeting, Dr. Harner will discuss the implications of these unusual patterns and how these patterns may influence conservation practices. Also, she will discuss what this means for future research of both of these crane species.

Dr. Mary Harner is the Director of Science at the Crane Trust, a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and maintenance of critical habitat for Whooping Cranes, Sandhill Cranes and other migratory birds along the Platte River. Mary received a PhD from the University of New Mexico, a MS in Environmental Studies from the University of Montana, and a BS in Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology from Tulane University.

Dr. Harner's research is rooted in the ecology of large rivers and their floodplains, as well as the migratory behavior of cranes, especially their habitat associations at migration stopover sites.

Come join us for an informative talk on Thursday February 13th at 7:00 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances Street (one block south of 45th & Center). Visitors are welcome. Cookies and conversation will be available after the meeting.

Understanding Climate Change – Part 3

By John Pollack

Last time, we saw that much of the uncertainty about how much climate change to expect from rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is due to the multiple effects of water. Warmer temperatures from higher carbon dioxide increase the water vapor in the atmosphere and decrease ice and snow. Both directly amplify the warming. However, increasing water vapor and varying weather patterns also change the distribution of clouds. Clouds can cause either warming or cooling, depending on their height, their latitude, and even the season. To complicate matters further, human pollution and biogenic substances can both produce aerosols – small solid or liquid particles that can encourage the development of clouds. These processes are hard to measure, and our relatively weak knowledge of clouds and aerosols contributes a lot to the uncertainty.

Because of the immense complexity of the various interactions that affect climate – going far beyond what I’ve described – it is not possible to make good unassisted estimates of how all these factors fit together. Instead, for the last four decades, climate scientists have embarked on a coordinated program of observations, climate “experiments” through computer models, and gathering as much information as we can about past climate changes. The most robust results of this research have been

summarized in a series of detailed reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The fifth IPCC report is in the process of being finalized, and can be viewed at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>. The IPCC is a true international effort, supported by the United Nations and the World Meteorological Organization.

This combined research approach is quite powerful. It’s what gives climate scientists such high confidence that our increasing carbon dioxide will indeed produce strong global warming, and shows signs of already doing so. You may be wondering how it’s possible to do “experiments” with climate models. A model is a computer representation of the various physical processes going on in the atmosphere and oceans, of the same general type used to predict weather. It will also include a selection of slower processes, such as vegetation changes and melting arctic ice, which can result from climate change. There is an immense menu of processes to choose from, and the models take a long time to run, even on a supercomputer. One general approach is to try including different processes. Another is to give different strengths to various interactions, constrained by observations. The results must also be in reasonable agreement with observed weather and climate for present conditions. If not, the processes giving rise to the most uncertainty are targeted for more observation and research. This is currently the case for the cloud and aerosol issue.

In addition to current climate, these models must produce good results for the past century or so, when good weather records are available. The rising temperatures of the past century cannot be accounted for without also including rising carbon dioxide levels. Recent warming is not a natural cycle! Geological records of past climate are also crucial, because they shed further light on how different climate interactions took place under conditions we can’t directly observe. This helps keep the climate models grounded in reality. One of the most important outcomes of this approach was the multinational decision to undertake several grueling and expensive expeditions to drill through miles of ice in interior Antarctica. The results were unequivocal: past temperatures were linked to carbon dioxide levels in much the way the climate models indicated.

What do the current generation of several dozen major climate models indicate about our future? The IPCC tackles this question by considering standardized emissions scenarios for carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and providing estimates of the probability of various outcomes. Remember that these reports are a consensus, so they don’t incorporate new or controversial research. This can be important. For example, estimates of sea level rise have been increasing as researchers find more mechanisms that can lead to

continued on page 5...

5

Understanding Climate Change

by John Pollack

continued from page 4...

more rapid melting in Greenland and Antarctica. On the other hand, the estimates of global warming have been fairly stable, ranging from about 2 to 4.5 degrees Celsius (about 3.6 to 8 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2100 if carbon dioxide is doubled from pre-industrial levels to around 550 parts per million. This is the path we are headed on if we don't take aggressive action very soon to limit fossil fuel burning, but do so in a few decades. The scenarios that assume we burn most of the carbon that can be extracted are even worse.

It is also important to consider that the warming process does not end at 2100, unless we aggressively limit fossil fuel burning very soon. The rise in sea level continues beyond 2300, even if the carbon dioxide concentration is stabilized. This is because the oceans slowly absorb large amounts of heat, and some of this heat will contribute to melting parts of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets.

Next time, we'll look more at the consequences of global warming, and the limits to our knowledge.



January Field Trip

continued from page 1...

We will meet at Fontenelle Forest Nature Center on Bellevue Boulevard at 8:30 a.m. We will

check the feeders there and then caravan to Bob and Kathleen Rose's house (always a treat for a good variety of winter feeder birds here and good coffee and cider). From there we will drive to Duane and Kathy Schwery's house just across the Platte River in Cass County. The Schwerys always have great up-close birds on their back deck and great munchies and drinks. Come join us for a few hours of winter bird watching and social camaraderie. Everyone is welcome.



February Field Trip

A notice will be sent out by post card as to whether there will be a February field trip. The weather is rather unpredictable in that month, there probably will be no open water and temperatures may be very low.

Clem



MAC Boy Scouts Resource Roundup 2013

By Nelli Falzgraf

The ASO was invited to the Mid-America Council's University of Scouting event at Boys Town on Saturday, November 2. It's for scout leaders of Nebraska, Iowa and South Dakota.

The purpose of the event is two-fold: to provide organizational training for troop leaders and resources for scout activities. We brought copies of the Boy Scouts Bird Study badge requirements

and handouts to help identify birds.

We're pleased that scout leaders enjoyed our fine DVD of singing birds of woodlands and prairies, noticed the diversity of migratory birds of the Americas on our poster, and picked up Audubon Adventures and other nature brochures.

Outdoor presenters included the Henry Doorly Zoo, Strategic Air & Space Museum, National Weather Service, Canfield's Sporting Goods, Backwoods, and many scouting and camping organizations.

ASO staffers were Nelli Falzgraf and Laurine Blankenau.



Great New FeederWatch Website

by Project Feeder Watch

Our team just relaunched the [Project FeederWatch](#) website with some great new features: a nifty [Common Feeder Birds tool](#) to help you find out which birds to expect and what foods they like; revamped [Tricky Bird ID pages](#); a better way to [send us photos](#); and cool ways to [look at your data](#).

[Project FeederWatch](#) is a fun and easy citizen-science project. Participants watch their feeders roughly two days per week and report their counts online.

More details on how to join are on-line at <http://feederwatch.org>.

An Invitation to The Laredo Birding Festival

We cordially invite you to attend our 2014 Laredo Birding Festival, scheduled for February 5-8.

We have a terrific line-up of events and trips that feature the best of our birding hotspots and scenic South Texas ranches.

Don't miss the opportunity to spot our prized bird, the White-collared Seedeater, and hundreds of other avian beauties that nest throughout our unique river ecosystem.

Two new trips for this festival are "Laredo Classic: Bird till You Drop" and "Birding by Boat".

For more information and details on the 2014 event, visit us online at www.laredobirdingfestival.com. Follow this link to our registration page: <http://laredobirdingfestival.com/?id=17&/Registration-2014>

Should you have any questions, please call us at (956) 718-1063 or email us at laredobirdingfestival@rgisc.org.

Two New Bird Cams to Get You Ready for FeederWatch

Project FeederWatch starts its new season this Saturday, November 9. To get ready, check out our two new live-streaming Bird Cams—set up at feeders [in Manitouwadge, Ontario](#), and right here [outside our Visitor](#)

[Center](#). Check out the great winter birds already on display in Canada, including Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, and Gray Jays. You'll also see goldfinches, woodpeckers, and the last of the fall colors outside our offices here in Ithaca, New York. [Watch the cams.](#)



October Field Trip to Boyer Chute

Saturday October 26th Clem Klaphake led 9 ASO members on the Boyer Chute birding field trip. The weather was a bit brisk in the morning, but became very comfortable by noon. Highlights of the trip were the following sightings:

Hooded Mergansers

American Avocet
Bonaparte's Gulls
Bald Eagles (adult and immature)
Red-tailed Hawk (1 Harlan's)
Orange-crowned Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Eastern Towhee
American Tree Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
Harris's Sparrow
Dark-eyed Juncos



November Field Trip

On Saturday November 16th Clem Klaphake led a group of 11 ASO members looking for birds in the Forest Lawn Cemetery in

north Omaha. No rare or northern migrants were found.

Highlights included Brown Creeper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, Harris's Sparrow, Barred Owl and a Carolina Wren heard. From the cemetery part of the group drove to Cunningham Lake. As was the case with many other lakes in eastern Nebraska on this date, almost no ducks, grebes, or herons were to be found. Best bird here was a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Volunteer Wanted

For interesting and rewarding work editing The Meadowlark. We publish six issues annually. Training will be provided.

Please call 402-451-3647.



I
wanted
to know the
name of every stone
and flower and insect
and bird and beast. I
wanted to know where
it got its color, where it
got its life - but there
was
no one to
tell me.

George Washington Carver

Addresses to Remember

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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

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20510 Washington Phone: 202-224-6551

Lincoln: 440 No. 8th St, Suite 120, Lincoln NE 68508
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Omaha: 11819 Miracle Hills Dr, Suite 205, Omaha, NE
68154 Omaha phone: 402-391-3411.

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

Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St, Omaha 68154
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Representative Jeff Fortenberry

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Phone: -202-225-4806

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Mayor Jim Suttle

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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,
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Bequests

A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

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

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Send address changes to Kathy Schwery, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048 or email djschw@windstream.net