

Gardening Wisdom at Banquet

On Thursday, May 10th, Audubon members, spouses and friends gathered for a banquet marking the end of a year of activity with a buffet dinner at Johnny's Steakhouse on L Street.

Our program presenter was Jan Riegenbach, noted columnist, test gardener, and co-owner (with her husband) of gardens on her property near Glenwood, Iowa.

Jan's program focused on environmentally sound gardening that attracts birds and butterflies, along with pleasing the eye of the beholder. Many of us came away with the urge to try a new shrub or flower to grace our property and attract birds and butterflies.

The photo contest awards were given and all entries displayed. See page 6 of this issue for a list of the win

ners in various categories. We owe our thanks to Eric Scholar, organizer of the contest.

Summertime and the

ASO Garden Walk

By Jackie Scholar

Once again the Audubon Society of Omaha will sponsor a Garden Walk with a variety of beautiful and charming gardens just waiting to be seen. The walk will be held Sunday, July 1, from 12:30 until 5:00 p.m. (rain or shine). Brochures and directions will be available at each site. A donation of \$6.00 is requested; six gardens will be on view.

Picnic Sunday, August 26, at Gifford Farm

All ASO members are invited to a once-a-year gathering for a good time only on Sunday, August 26, at Gifford Farm in

The Nina and Patrick Swanson garden at 8717 Capitol Ave will feature prairie plants including grasses and flowering

Bellevue. Spouses and friends are invited. We will meet at 4:00 p.m. and expect to dine at about 4:45. Social time, including hiking, will be informal. The event will be indoors, but if you intend to hike in the grassy areas, we advise using insect spray (applied away from the dining area, we hope).

The meal will be pot luck, so please bring a dish of your choice, along with any necessary large serving pieces. Other utensils, dinner plates, glasses, cups, sodas, coffee and water will be provided by Audubon.

To reach Gifford Farm, from Bellevue Boulevard take Childs Road east which turns into Gifford Road. Continue east past the railroad tracks and the Fontenelle Wetlands Learning Center. Continue on the winding road to a picnic area and the Retreat House parking.

Call 451-3647 if you have questions.

plants such as prairie cinquefoil, compass plant, prairie ragwort, rosinweed and rattlesnake master.

Bill and Sandy Seibert at 2115 S. 114th St. designed their yard to be a haven for wildlife. It includes trees, shrubs, and vines that produce berries, nuts, cones, seeds, nectar or catkins. A variety of bird feeders, bird houses and a pond provide shelter and water year round.

Rick Kirschenbaum's garden at 12422 Rose Lane along Candlewood Lake has a cottage look. His goal is to have a yard with plants that provide color and interest with minimal care. Plants include salvia, coneflowers, grasses and daylilies. The garden has two water features

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Current Currents

By Elliott Bedows

Looking Toward the Next Round of Some of America's Upcoming Energy and Environmental **Issues**. I was reading an article in the May 31, 2007, *Wall Street Journal* entitled "Lousy Gas Mileage Persists," which documented that today's cars often get the same, or even worse, mileage than those built in the 1980's. The addition of safety features like air bags, anti-lock brakes, sidewall reinforcement, and others add substantial weight to cars. The writer stated that "[an] extra 100 pounds [of weight] in a vehicle may reduce your miles per gallon by as much as 2 percent." So the back of your SUV really is a bad place to store your lawn mower.

article thinks that I always play the "safe card," keep reading. CFL's are currently endorsed by the Sierra Club, OPPD, Flatwater Chapter (if not other chapters) of the U.S. Green Building Council, and even Mayor Fahey, to name a few.

So why am I saying "Whoa, back up the bus" to a product that has the potential to save the country billions of dollars a year

According to a June 6, 2007, report from CNN's on-line *Business Journal* (<http://money.netscape.cnn.com/>), at the same time that U.S. lawmakers are demanding better fuel efficiency, domestic automakers were organizing to persuade Congress to ease gas mileage requirements to keep U.S. automobiles more competitive to the domestic market.

So, while we fill up our automobile fuel tanks and pay over \$50, we should we should also be aware that there are powerful lobbies out there who really don't want to do anything about it.

Are Our Biofuels the Answer? Not likely! While cleaner auto emissions are certainly part of the global warming solution, how these programs are managed is a far more important issue. Once again, we have to be aware that there are special interest groups who want to sell us their product under the guise of being good for the planet.

For example, using corn to make ethanol is quite inefficient compared to, say, using another plant source such as a native wild grass like the switchgrass used in the highly successful Brazilian ethanol-based fuel production.

But American farmers won't get rich selling "weeds." Ironically, while the corn itself and the excessive water required to grow the corn for biofuels aid farmers in eastern Nebraska, both the corn and water are necessary to and in short supply for the ranchers in the west trying to grow cattle.

Sounds like we won't need to get into a fight over water rights with our neighboring states; we are setting the table for that battle locally.

Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFL's): Are They Really That Good? Just in case anybody (still) reading this

in energy costs, including an average of \$30 in energy costs per bulb used, and which may last up to ten times as long as our current incandescent option?

Simple! These bulbs contain mercury, one of the most toxic heavy metals known, and the widespread use of CFL's could cause a dramatic increase in the levels of environmental mercury. For the use of CFL's to be the true boon to our society they are touted to be, there is an absolute need to have an *efficient plan* for recycling these bulbs. But, while the number of folks and organizations jumping on the bandwagon for their use is rapidly rising, the number of same promoting CFL recycling are nearly nonexistent.

Here is a classic case of where an ounce of prevention will prevent the need for a ton of cure.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Preliminary Report

Some news for those of you who reported birds on the GBBC this year.

Count participants from the U.S. and Canada sent in 81,193 checklists, surpassing the earlier record of 61,049. Also record-breaking were the 11,082,048 birds reported during the February count.

For more results and to view some of the 5,000 photos, you may access www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

This year's count was noted in a number of media articles and broadcasts. To see a *USA Today* article mentioning some results of global climate change along with photos, access www.usatoday.com/weather/climate/globalwarming/2007-03-18-birds-winter_N.htm.

There's more! You can help scientists learn how birds use urban habitats this spring and summer. Simply conduct a 10-minute bird watch for 15 focal species. Learn the details at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's "Celebrate Urban Birds." web site: www.urbanbirds.org/celebration. Report your sightings at www.ebird.org

Birdathon Continues

Remembering Sam Grill

By Laurine Blankenau

On Tuesday, May 15, Audubon member Sam Grill died after a long illness. We extend our deep sympathy to his wife, Essie, and other family members.

Beyond his long service to Audubon, any tribute must include comments about Sam's personal qualities.

He displayed the manners of a true gentleman, being unfailingly polite in dealing with his fellows.

His gentle, soft-spoken manner belied a strength that was present but failed to intrude. He could be persuasive, but whatever the convictions he professed and defended, his was never a rancorous voice.

I remember meeting Sam on my first field trip with Audubon in 1984. Until his illness made it impossible, he was a familiar presence on subsequent field trips, bird counts, at official programs and social events. His service to Audubon included holding the positions of director and publicity chair and volunteering for projects large and small.

For many, the absence of one so much a part of us is deeply felt.

Garden Walk, Continued from page 1

which attract birds and other living creatures to his yard.

Dennis and Karlene Kingery's garden at 5632 Miami St. provides a different experience in that they grow many vegetables, some of which are unusual: edible soybeans, garbanzo beans, purple

In the May issue we announced the spring Birdathon which helps fund the programs and projects of ASO, more important than ever as we face serious challenges to the stability of our world, for wildlife and humans.

This year's Birdathon coincided with the Spring Bird Counts held at DeSoto NWR and at sites in Sarpy County, with a donor choosing an amount - 15¢, 20¢ or other, based on the number of species tallied in either Count: 138 species, Sarpy Count, and 122 species, DeSoto. Alternately, your own bird count or a donation of your choice may be made.

If you wish to donate and have not yet done so, the form below may be included with a donation. You will receive acknowledgment and thanks in the near future.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution to the Audubon Society of Omaha to help promote its mission of education and conservation.

A specified amount of \$_____ or _____ per species seen.

I prefer my contribution be applied to:

___ Natural areas protection

___ Educational programs.

___ Area of greatest need.

Name_____

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Make checks payable to Audubon Society of Omaha. Mail to Laurine Blankenau, 3808 Grebe, Omaha 68112.

Our Clean-up Crew at Work

carrots, purple lettuce, and leeks. Their garden also has a variety of edible berries and prairie plants.

Nor Oaks Communal Garden at 10205 No. 29th Court in the Ponca Hills offers a lovely shade garden created through the efforts of Don Smith. Intermingled with the many hostas and wildflowers are picnic and lookout areas. This garden has changed quite a bit from its last appearance on the ASO garden walk.

Joel and Cleone Sebek's garden at 2411 So 126th St has trails, several water features, many hostas and even many more caladiums. All are in a setting with a bridge and stream effect and exciting garden appointments such as egrets bouncing in the wind.

Master Gardeners of Douglas County Extension will be on hand to answer questions about gardening.

Volunteers are still needed to help at each of the gardens. Please call Jackie at 551-5045, Laurine at 451-3647 or Nelli, 292-9687 with any questions.

On two beautiful Saturday mornings, a clean-up crew rose early to enjoy the sun, cool temps and pleasant breezes and clean up some unsightly trash. The cleanups took place May 19 and June 9 along the Papio Creek, Al Veys Sports Complex and 60th Street north of Harrison.

Thanks to the crew who labored on these projects: Marian Maas, Pauline Dickey, Karlene Kingery, Ruth Demarest, Kathy Schwery, Nelli Falzgraf and Laurine Blankenau, and to Keep Omaha Beautiful for supplying trash bags and gloves.

Vanishing Bees a Peril to Humans

By Kathy Schwery

In a mysterious phenomenon called "colony collapse disorder," millions of honeybees are flying off to find nectar and pollen and never returning to their hives. This baffling and alarming die-off of bees is happening throughout the United States, Canada, Brazil and parts of Europe. While beekeepers in this country have had losses in certain regions of the country before, this affliction is happening throughout the entire United States. On the East Coast

as birds.

Albert Einstein wrote, "If the bee disappeared off the face of the globe, then man would have only four years of life left. No more bees, no more pollination, no more plants, no more animals, no more man."

Bees are critically important to helping provide people with a varied and tasty diet. In their current crisis, they could

and Texas, beekeepers report losses of more than 70% while the range is 30 to 60% on the West Coast.

Beginning last fall, beekeepers reported that when they opened their hives, no worker bees were found—just newborns and a queen. The workers had simply disappeared, usually in a span of one to three weeks. The sudden mysterious losses highlight the fact that honeybees are a critical link in the long process of getting fruits and vegetables to markets and to our dinner tables.

Scientists and beekeepers are puzzled as to the cause of colony collapse disorder. Some suspected causes are parasites, a virus, pesticides or bacteria, or possibly a combination of these factors. Because bees are gregarious by nature, they are exposed to many different ailments that their insect relatives might have.

Suburban sprawl has made it difficult for bees to find places where they can forage for nectar in order to stay healthy during the pollination season. It has been noted that bees won't fly near cell phones, and some scientists have suggested that the electromagnetic signals possibly interfere with the bees' ability to navigate.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of bees. They don't just make honey; they pollinate nearly 100 of our tastiest crops. Bees are responsible for 80% of the pollination of our insect-pollinated plants. A Cornell University study estimates that honeybees annually pollinate more than \$14 billion worth of seeds and crops in the United States, mostly fruits, vegetables and nuts. The American Beekeeping Institute states that bees are responsible for pollinating one-third of the human diet. Even cattle, which feed on alfalfa, depend on bees.

While scientists search for answers to the question of what is happening to honeybees, there are things all of us can do to help these busy pollinators. We can grow flowering plants that they can use. We should avoid using insecticides, especially when flowers are blooming. In a move that would help the world around us to be healthier, we can give up all pesticide use. Encouraging land

use a helping hand from humans.

In Memory of Izen Ratzlaff

By Roland Barth

Audubon members were represented in good numbers at a memorial service for Izen Ratzlaff was held at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Omaha June 2. She had finally lost her four-year battle with cancer.

Izen had become an accomplished birder, tired of staying home alone while the "Good Ol' Boys" (Neal, Duane Bright, Dick Rasmussen and I) bragged about having so much fun on our birding forays to Arizona, Texas and elsewhere. She really enjoyed being around Audubon birders, especially during trips to New Zealand, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago.

Izen grew up in Valentine and married Neal in 1961 after graduating from Nebraska Methodist School of Nursing. In 1964 with young child Mark in tow, she joined Dr. Neal to practice nursing at his side in the war-torn Republic of Congo, Africa, for two years. Here she was infected by very nasty parasites which tormented her on and off for the rest of her life.

After their return to Omaha, Izen attained a degree in Fine Arts & Art History at UNO. Her creations included drawing, painting, doing ceramics and welded steel.

She enjoyed travel to the end, especially when visiting museums. Recently we cruised the Baltic with the Ratzlaffs where visiting the Hermitage in St. Petersburg was a highlight for her. Last year she dragged Neal up and down Italy to see everything she might have studied in her art books.

Continued on page 5

management policies that use bee-friendly vegetation would help not only the bees but also other wildlife such

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DeSoto Bird Count

By Jerry Toll

The DeSoto NWR held their annual spring count Saturday, May 5. Nine participants surveyed in thunderstorm conditions in the morning and strong winds in the P.M.

Still, a strong species count total of **122** was seen. Despite recent years of strong shorebird counts, the wetlands were high and weedy this year, contributing to lower shorebird numbers. Waterfowl diversity was low and no gulls or terns were seen.

The passerines were, however, abundant and diverse. There were still plenty of sparrows around, with 11 species counted. Harris' Sparrow was the third most abundant species of the count. Although it was difficult to locate most, 14 species of warblers were seen.

The rarest find of the day was a **Golden-winged Warbler** that took one-half hour to locate after being heard. The big miss of the day was American Crow—not a single one was counted.

Editor: Steve Van Riper of DeSoto submitted a final report. A few species of likely interest to our readers follows.

Shorebirds: Common Snipe (2), Hudsonian Godwit ((3), Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary, Least, Baird's & Semipalmated Sandpiper

Thrushes: Wood, Swainson's & Hermit

Warblers: Orange-crowned, Tennessee, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Palm, Blackpoll, Black & White, & American Redstart

Earth Day at Park

Earth Day was held at Elmwood Park on Saturday, April 21, from noon to 5:00 P.M. A large crowd of visitors came and went through the park among organizations' booths.

ASO members met the public with information about bird sightings, bird feeding, Audubon's focus, and about joining Audubon, with gratifying interest from those who stopped by.

Staffers were Jackie Scholar, organizer of the event; Nelli Falzgraf, Ruth Demarest, Pauline Dickey, Jerry Toll, Jan Stanton and Laurine Blankenau.

We owe our thanks especially to Jackie for making the event a success. Thanks also to the others who worked throughout the day.

Nelli Falzgraf, left, and Ruth Demarest, right, fight a mostly successful battle against the wind to keep our umbrella in place. The photo appeared in the Sunday, April 22, *World-Herald*.

Audubon at Zoo

Sparrows: Lark, Savannah, Song, Lincoln's, Chipping, Clay-colored, Field, White-throated, White-crowned, Harris' (111), House

Others: Sora (7) Black-crowned Night-Heron (2) Bobolink (2) Scarlet Tanager (1)

Exploration Day

In Memory, Continued from page 4

She was around for years at the Ratzlaff garage during the Bird Seed Sale, hosting volunteers with food, drink and a smile. Above all, we remember Izen as a kind person, active in many humanitarian efforts. She recently hosted an extended refugee family, supporting them in many ways to help them settle into our community.

In German (and Jiddish as well) there is a word I think describes her best. She was a real "Mensch" - a real human being. What better epitaph is there?

On Saturday, April 28, ASO staffed a table at the Henry Doorly Zoo Exploration Day to reach out to the public with our message of conservation and the need to preserve bird habitat.

To many, Audubon means birds, which performed for the public's pleasure in their striking plumage and with their mellifluous songs via a DVD. Conservation literature was available to the many who stopped by.

Patty Albright organized the event; assisting were Nelli Falzgraf and Laurine Blankenau. Thanks to Patty, Nelli and Laurine for their work.

Omaha Raptor Team's Farewell

All members of the Omaha Raptor Team would like to thank the Audubon Society of Omaha, Papio-Missouri NRD, the public and private schools, scouts, day cares, churches, senior centers and the many other organizations who made it possible for us to provide educational programs with our birds of prey.

We will miss you all, especially Jim Fowler and Peter Gros during their visits and Kip and Stacy Smith of Wildlife Encounters in Gretna, who we teamed up with. We surely had fun traveling around with the birds to schools, events and, of

Sarpy County Bird Count

By Clem Klaphake

The day was warm and sunny, producing a total of **138** species tallied (heard and/or seen). The totals for each sector: were Fontenelle Forest 91; Schramm SRA 73; Western Sarpy County 90; Central Sarpy Co.unity 93.

In Fontenelle the only place to see were American Bittern, Great Horned & Barred Owls, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Parula, both Waterthrushes, Yellow-throated, Chestnut-sided &

course, Mutual of Omaha. It was an honor to house and work with our educational birds, and it was difficult giving it up. But circumstances changed in the lives of our human educators in our all-volunteer organization. And so the birds have been placed into the best organizations and situations available for them.

Elvis, Burrowing Owl (on "permanent loan" from Henry Doorly Zoo) was returned to them.

Lucy, Burrowing Owl, is with Kin's HawkQuest in Colorado.

Spike, Eastern Screech Owl, was also placed at HawkQuest, to the delight of Carolyn, a former ORT educator who went to work with them soon after she and her husband relocated to Colorado.

Fred, our famous Red-tailed Hawk, is helping the other birds at MacBride Raptor Project in Iowa provide 300 programs a year. (We thought our 200 annual programs was a busy schedule.)

Harley, Barred Owl, is at Kay Neumann's S.O.A.R (Save Our Avian Resources) in Iowa. Kay is a Master Falconer as well as Executive Director of S.O.A.R.

Melody, American Kestrel, is truly enjoying the Iowa life with Helen Harvey, a falconer friend of Kay's. She has flown free (with her transmitter harness on and her buddy nearby to protect her). Helen has worked a miracle, turning a fully flighted 7-year-old imprinted educational bird into a hunting falconer's bird. You can read about Melody and Helen's adventures at <http://dovesabove.com/Hawk/Melody.html>

Thank you again for your support and good wishes. We hope you continue to enjoy observing and learning more about birds of prey. Your involvement in supporting organizations that help preserve their habitat is important so their place and beauty in this world will be appreciated for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Linda Dennis

Kentucky Warblers, White-crowned Sparrow & Black-headed Grosbeak.
Elliott Bedows, Compiler.

In Central Sarpy Co, only place to see: Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Bobwhite Quail, Cooper's Hawk, American Avocet, Dunlin, White-rumped & Baird's Sandpiper and Orange-crowned Warbler.
Clem Klaphake, Compiler.

In Schramm SRA, only place to see: Gadwall, Philadelphia Vireo, Connecticut Warbler, Great Egret, Bald Eagle and Vesper Sparrow.
Loren & Babs Padelford, Compilers.

In Western Sarpy County, only place to see: Lesser Scaup, Western Grebe, American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Piping Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Eurasian-collared Dove, Bank Swallow, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Harris' and Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, and Magnolia Warbler.
Rich Schmid, Compiler. Dick Rasmussen added species to three of the above areas (not Fontenelle Forest).

As you can see from the above list, you never know which of your sightings, common or rare, may not be seen by anyone else.

Thanks to everyone who participated.
Overall compiler, Clem Klaphake

Winners of the Photo Contest

Congratulations to those who were awarded prizes in the photo contest: **Most popular** photo, voted by those present, was "Soaring Eagle" by Jim Hughes. **Best in Show** prize went to Pat Mingarelli for her close-up of a Sandhill Crane. The five other categories and winners were:

Birds: 1st and 2nd place Pat Mingarelli; 3rd place Jim Hughes. **Scenics and people in nature:** Heidi Dedan: 1st prize, Ruth Green 2nd and 3rd prizes. **Insects:** 1st prize - Mike Cameron; 2nd Kathleen Rose; 3rd Jim Hughes. **Animals:** 1st - Pat Mingarelli; 2nd Essie

Grill; 3rd Heidi Dedan. **Flowers:** 1st place - Ruth Green; 2nd place Heidi Dedan; 3rd place Essie Grill.

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Audubon Society

Membership Application

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Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202-456-1111; fax:
202-456-2993

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U.S. Senate, Washington DC
20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-
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Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address:
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Senator Chuck Hagel

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Omaha Address: 9900 Nicholas St,
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Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax: (202)
224-5213

Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry

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Plattsmouth NE 68048

PO 3

7XCH

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.

Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St,
Omaha 68154
Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha, P. O. Box 3542
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If you find an
injured bird of prey,
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A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will
succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

**Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha
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