
The Meadowlark

September 2009

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ASO is a Chapter

of the National Audubon
Society

Serving Eastern Nebraska
and Western Iowa

Tracking Iowa's Breeding Birds

Over time, much can change in nature as in the rest of life. With that in mind, in 2008 the Iowa Ornithologists' Union undertook a project tracking the current ranges of Iowa's breeding birds. The project is the Second Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas, the first having been completed in 1995.

The current Atlas is off to a tremendous start because of volunteers across the state. The project will span five years of collecting data about the summer resident birds and is likely to reveal many changes. Species such as the Eurasian Collared-Dove, Henslow's Sparrow, and Great-tailed Grackle have expanded their range. As yet undiscovered breeders are sure to be added. Habitat gains and losses have obviously occurred. Reasons for bird distribution changes may be revealed.

The Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) needs volunteers, inviting everyone from beginning to expert birders to participate. Volunteering is a service and a chance to explore nearby or distant parts of Iowa and its birdlife.

This project will be the feature of our program for the general meeting on Thursday, September 10. Our speaker will be Breeding Bird Atlas Volunteer Coordinator Nikki Nagi, AmeriCorps member with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. She will share information about the BBA project.

Nagi holds a degree in Animal Ecology, Wildlife Management, from Iowa State University. She enjoys observing animals, promoting conservation, and learning how to make Iowa a better place for all of its inhabitants.

Join us Thursday, September 10, 7:30 p.m., at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (1 block south of 45th & Center Streets).

A brief business meeting will follow the program, concluding with a social hour, coffee and cookies. Nonmembers are welcome.

Field Trip Saturday, September 5

The "Everything that Flies" field trip will be held at Schramm Park Recreation Area on Saturday, September 5. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in front of the Aksarben Aquarium. We will hike the

Prairie Festival Sunday, August 30
ASO members recently received a card announcing the Prairie Festival on Sunday, August 30. Come and

experience a natural prairie when the grasses are at their tallest and the bird life and flora are still with us.

The site is Audubon's own prairie, and the event is an afternoon of opportunities for hikes led by experts on the special properties of prairies, the birds and flowers.

Ice tea, lemonade and cookies will be served.

For directions to the site or for other questions, call Eric Scholar, 551-5045, Laurine Blankenau, 451-3647.

hills in search of warblers and other migrants. We'll search the skies for raptors and the ponds and flowers for dragonflies and other insects.

Those wishing to continue on should bring a snack or lunch. After lunch we will continue to the hiking bridge over the Platte River. Last year we saw 10 species of shorebirds (including a Buff-breasted Sandpiper), a Peregrine Falcon, Franklin's Gulls and Black Terns.

Loren and Babs Padelford will lead the trip. For information call them at 292-5556.

Not All Is Lost Or Negative in Bird Conservation

By Clem Klaphake

In the birding world we hear a lot of negative news

and information about how birds are slowly disappearing, habitats are being lost and some species will be extinct in the near future. I have written about those issues and will continue to highlight many of them.

However, in the next two columns I would like to point out a few successes and reversals of decline that have occurred in maintaining or increasing some bird species. Much of this information is provided by the American Bird Conservancy, and the rest are my observations and experiences.

I'll start with our national symbol the Bald Eagle. Everyone can relate to this species and is probably aware of how big a comeback they have made (some have referred to it as a phoenix-like rise from less than 1,000 individuals in the

A number of us can observe nesting now without driving more than 4 miles from the Omaha metro area. Several of us were able to watch a pair build a nest and hatch 2 young that fledged in July, all just a stone's throw from the metro area. This spring the Baltimore Sun reported that two nesting Bald Eagles were evicted from their nest in an oak tree near a Maryland airport; they lost one egg. This is an airport not far from Baltimore that has had chronic problems with birds. Will they become nuisance birds??

A similar outcome and experience occurred with the Peregrine Falcon. Some differences obviously were that direct interventions were also used — namely captive breeding, hand raising, releasing to 'hack' sites, and literally supplying nesting sites in urban areas. Over 6,000 Peregrines have been released since 1974. In 1972 when DDT was banned, there were an estimated 324 American Peregrines remaining. By

lower 48 states in 1963 to over 10,000 breeding pairs today and a 10% annual population growth). Why? No one law or action but a number of actions were taken that contributed to their comeback.

The banning of DDT in 1972 was a big first step. The person most responsible for this action was Rachel Carson, whose early warning was given in her book *Silent Spring* published in 1962. She never saw the fruition of her efforts through the banning of DDT because in 1964 she died of breast cancer.

Other actions taken to protect and help the Bald Eagle recover were the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Lacey Act and then the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1972. The ESA was extremely powerful in that it not only protected the eagles themselves but also the habitat, including potential future habitat, even if it was not occupied by eagles.

The rest is history in terms of the Bald Eagle. We see this clearly right here in Nebraska. Every year the number of nesting pairs in the state has been increasing.

1999 the Peregrine was removed from the ESA.

The lessons learned from the Peregrine projects are being applied to a number of other endangered raptors today. The Mauritius Kestrel, once considered the rarest bird in the world, has experienced a comeback. The same techniques are being applied to the Aplomado Falcon in Texas and on the Ted Turner Ranch in New Mexico, to the Orange-breasted Falcon in Belize, and to the Harpy Eagle in Panama and Belize.

It is comforting to recall these successes. Next month I will highlight a few more successes and works in progress.

Peregrine Falcon

By Daniel S. Kilby

Bird Seed Sale October 24 and 25

Each year at this time, preparations are made for the annual bird seed sale, and this year is no exception.

We will be asking you for help with the numerous tasks, some requiring strong muscles, others not.

The seed bags need to be unloaded at garage sites, and staffers need to be on hand on the dates of the sale for loading and paper work.

Hawkfest at Hitchcock Nature Center Saturday, September 26

Early fall in the Loess Hills is a beautiful time for an outing. For a fine outdoor activity, you may visit Hitchcock Nature Center on Saturday, September 26, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m, and be part of activities for the entire family.

Visitors have several choices of activities. They may go for a hike in the Hills with a guide who will point out birds and other sights. Sharp-eyed trained hawk watchers will be on hand to help locate raptors in the area. For close-up views, Raptor Recovery of Nebraska

Please put these dates on your calendar and give Jerry Toll an email (geritol48@cox.net) or call (453-9239) to let him know that you are available to assist with this major fundraiser.

You will receive your order blank in October. Please consider ordering some seed to support Audubon Omaha.

Ed: An article on pages 5 and 6 in this issue offers helpful advice on choosing the varieties of bird seed preferred by certain species. Also some tips on feeder types are included.

Audubon's Shop

We have a supply of tee shirts (children's and adult sizes), polos, caps and small crane sculptures, plus a few sweatshirts.

We have a few fine books for sale as well.

If you would like to purchase any of the items or to look them over, please phone Laurine at 451-3647.

Election at General Meeting

September 10

Because of a resignation, a new treasurer will be elected at the general meeting Thursday, September 10. The nominee is Patty Albright, former treasurer of ASO.

All members present are eligible to vote.

will give presentations with live hawks. Bird activities for children will be arranged.

Refreshments will be served. The cost is \$3.00 for adults; children under 5 are free.

The Hitchcock Center is located 5 miles north of Crescent, IA on Old Lincoln Highway.

For answers to any questions you may have, call Kelly at 328-5834.

Neale Woods Nature Center

To Reopen

Beginning Saturday, August 29, through Sunday, November 8, the Neale Woods Nature Center will be open on weekends from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturdays and 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sundays.

The first bird banding of autumn will be held from 9 to 12 on Saturday, September 26.

A raptor presentation will be held from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. Saturday, September 12.



Least
Bittern

By Steven
D'Amato
Least Bittern

Fall 2008 Raptor Banding Efforts Successful at Hitchcock Hawk Watch

(This replaces the item in the Summer Meadowlark which erroneously summarized the 2007 Banding report.)

What a difference a year makes. In its second year of operation, the Hitchcock raptor banding program attained its goal of capturing and banding over 100 raptors. This successful season was due to the congealing of the vision of the banding program and the whim of nature.

There was a continuous stream of volunteers, students, and visitors to the banding station. The volunteer banders were trained to assist in the operation, which increased the efficiency. We found that if one person trapped while the other processed the captures, then the capture rate increased. Two volunteers trained this season have been selected to become subpermittees for the 2009 season. Students from the raptor ecology class at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln visited on four occasions and experienced raptor field training first hand.

The banding station is looking forward to future cooperative efforts with UNL and others interested in using the banding station as a platform for raptor research. Raptor education outreach is a continuing goal of the banding station. There were numerous visitors invited to experience the process. During the annual Hawkfest at Hitchcock on September 27, we had the opportunity to show a captured Red-tailed Hawk and talk about its ecology and morphology to over 80 people gathered before releasing it.

Because the majority of raptors species banded at Hitchcock rely on frontal systems for their migration, weather patterns largely dictate the number of raptors that migrate past Hitchcock. This

By Jerry Toll

weather patterns played a role in making raptors available for capture this banding season.

This banding season, 5 species of raptors were captured, processed and released. The banding season lasted from September 5 until November 2 with 7-day-per-week coverage. Only 4 days were missed due to poor weather conditions during the season. Of the 105 captures during the season, 70 were Red-tailed Hawks. The majority of those were aged as HY (hatch-year) juveniles (57). The remaining 13 were aged as AHY (after-hatch year) adults. Gender cannot be definitely determined among redtails except during breeding season, but a few individuals were so large that they were most likely females. Four weighed in excess of 1400 grams and required a larger band size (7D). The majority of the captures were of the eastern *B. j. borealis* subspecies. Of those, 5 were identified as Krider's. Five of the western subspecies *B. j. calurus* were captured; all after October 8. Of those, there were 3 light morph, 1 rufous morph and 1 dark morph.

The Sharp-shinned Hawk capture rate was again a disappointment this season. Despite efforts to attain Starlings to use as lure birds at the beginning of the season, none were attained until October 19, well past the peak season of accipiters. Nonetheless, 22 gutsy Sharp-shinneds were attracted to the pigeon lure weighing more than they and were captured. There were more than double the attempts than were captured. Of those captured, 17 were HY juveniles and 4 were AHY non-juveniles. There were 7 males and 15 females.

Cooper's Hawks were more likely to be attracted to the pigeon lure; therefore, when compared to the ratio of Sharp-

season there were favorable conditions for the first time in 3 years. As an indication, the total raptors counted on the 2007 Hitchcock HawkWatch which ended December 20 of that year was about 9,273. During the 2008 season, that number was eclipsed by the 10th of November with 9,750. This despite the near collapse of the Swainson's Hawk migration past Hitchcock. Clearly,

shinned to Cooper's seen at the HawkWatch, there was a disproportionately larger number of captures of Cooper's (11), a ratio of 2:1 compared to the Hawk Watch's seasonal ratio of 5:1. Of those captured, 3 were HY juveniles, 3 were ASY

Cooper's Hawk

By Kirsten Munsen

Cont. on page 5

5

Raptor Banding, Cont.from

page 5

(after second year) and 5 were AHY (after hatch year). There were 5 males and 6 females.

Two species were added to the species capture list: a Merlin and a Swainson's Hawk. The Swainson's Hawk almost went undetected. Never having a Swainson's in hand before, I thought I had an intergrade eastern/western redtail. After documenting the unusual plumage and morphological characteristics and photographing it, I released it. When I saw it soaring, I knew what it was! I then had to backtrack and learn to look for those characteristics while the bird is in hand.

I wish to express my thanks to the Projects Committee of the Iowa Ornithologists Union for the financial support provided. This support, in part, made it possible for me to take the necessary 2 months away from work to operate the raptor banding station.

Attracting Birds to Your Yard

By Kathy Schwery

**Bird Seed
Choices**

Birding, as many Audubon members know, is a most rewarding hobby—some would even say an obsession— and a good way to bring many more birds into view in the back yard is by feeding them.

Over 100 species of birds supplement their natural diet with birdseed, suet, nectar or fruit obtained from feeders. Different birds choose different kinds of seeds and also need different kinds of feeders. With our Audubon Society of Omaha bird seed sale coming up October 24 and 25, the following summary of information on bird feeding from the National Audubon website may be useful.

Black oil sunflower seed is the preferred seed of many small feeder birds, although large-beaked birds will eat striped sunflower seeds. Hulled sunflower seed attracts woodpeckers, finches, goldfinches, titmice, juncos, doves, grosbeaks, chickadees, cardinals, nuthatches and grackles. A hopper feeder is a good way to dispense sunflower seeds, but tube feeders with large ports also work well.

Safflower seed is a favorite of cardinals, grosbeaks, sparrows and doves. One of the benefits of safflower

seed is that usually squirrels, House Sparrows and grackles do not eat it. I find that the new hulled safflower seed is preferred even over black oil sunflower by most of the birds visiting our feeders. Grosbeaks, titmice, chickadees, cardinals, woodpeckers and nuthatches all come to our safflower feeders. This seed can be placed in hopper or tube feeders, but using a cover over the feeder is a good idea to prevent moldy, wet seed.

Thistle seed or niger is the favorite food of goldfinches, House Finches and Common Redpolls. Woodpeckers also eat niger, and during the summer Indigo Buntings frequent our niger feeders. Thistle seed can be placed in tube feeders, with metal ports so that squirrels cannot get to it. I also have good luck with the thistle sock feeder, a mesh cloth bag which is filled with seed.

Peanuts, which can be placed in a metal mesh tube feeder, attract woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Carolina Wrens, kinglets, warblers, jays and starlings. Suet is eaten by most of the same birds who choose peanuts. Place the suet in a

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Attracting Birds, Cont. from page 5

special 'cage' feeder or a mesh bag. If starlings are a problem, purchase a special suet feeder in which the suet

predators cannot surprise birds. Having multiple feeders cuts down on the crowding which makes birds more vulnerable to disease. And finally, providing a source of water is very important for the birds using your feeding stations.

Bird feeding can benefit birds and also provide great bird watching from your own back yard. Not only is it a good hobby, it helps the natural environment and is a wonderful way to connect with

can be reached only from the bottom.

Other types of seed that are sometimes fed to birds are cracked corn and millet. Both will attract ground-feeding birds such as doves, juncos, sparrows, jays and towhees, as well as cowbirds and blackbirds. If you feed birds throughout the summer, providing fruit, jelly and nectar will draw orioles, robins, and hummingbirds. Make your own sugar solution with one part sugar to four parts water and bring to a boil to dissolve the sugar.

The Right Feeders

Bird feeding stores carry a bewildering array of feeders. If choosing just one feeder for your backyard, it should be a tube feeder with metal ports to deter squirrels. Tube feeders can hold thistle, safflower or sunflower seeds. Some tube feeders have adjustable ports for different kinds of seeds.

Hopper feeders are very popular and work well. With a roof over the top, these keep several pounds of mixed seed dry. As the seed is eaten, more seed is dispensed,

nature.

Downy
Woodpecker
By Rosemary
Gilbert Bell

Birders' Exchange:

Used Optics and Books
The American Birding Association sponsors a program to make used birding equipment and field guides available to birders across the Americas.

"Sharing tools, saving birds," is the motto of Birders' Exchange, so that good optics and books may be reused without a cost to the donor.

Birders' Exchange will package and mail the items for you. If you have items to donate, send them to American Birding Association, Birders' Exchange Appeal, 4945 N 30th Street Ste 200, Colorado Springs CO 80919-3151.

and some hopper feeders are weighted to keep out squirrels or unwanted, larger birds.

For ground feeding birds, a screen-bottomed low table is a good choice. Seed is kept up off the ground, and some of these tray tables also have covers to keep the seed dry. The disadvantage of low feeders is that squirrels, deer and other animals can get to them.

Cloth mesh bags for niger seed, metal mesh tubes for peanuts and suet holders will bring in birds which may not use other feeders.

Birds are more likely to visit your yard if you offer a safe, healthy habitat. Keep bird seed fresh and dry, and clean bird feeders regularly. Place feeders at safe distances from your windows so birds do not collide with windows when coming or going. Feeders should be at least 12 feet from bushes so cats and other

Northern Flicker

By Kirsten Munsen

American Robin

sBy Steven
D'Amato

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202 456-1111

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 Michael Johanns

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 202 224-4224

Lincoln: 402 471-2311

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

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Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

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



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NE 68509

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6031

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A bequest to Audubon
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will succeed us; a gift
to secure our natural
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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
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