
January 2005
Volume 34 Issue 1



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

Coffee, Rolls and
Bird Feeder Watching

By Clem

Klaphake

The ASO January 22 field trip will involve a morning of casual and calm bird feeder watching. The weather in January can be very unpredictable, and finding birds can be difficult. So why not join us for some backyard bird observations in the warm comfort of someone's home.

We will meet at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center in Bellevue at 8:00 a.m. as our first stop and a place to set up a carpool. One of the homes we will be stopping at has always been a gold mine for species varieties (Evening Grosbeak six weeks ago, Pileated Woodpecker last spring, Cooper's Hawk, Barred Owls, Carolina Wrens, who knows?)

As you birders know, there never is a guarantee of a particular species sighting when you plan a trip four weeks in advance. Another place we will stop is new to this field trip this year and is located in Cass County just south of the Platte River south of Bellevue.

Come along and enjoy birding at its finest - warm, nourishing camaraderie and always the hope of a rare winter visitor.

Pheasants Forever Convention Jan 14-16

Omaha Raptor Team Booth Needs
Volunteers

Jenny Henriksen, Omaha Raptor Team Chairperson, is asking for persons to help at the National Pheasants Forever Convention at the Quest Center January 14 - 16.

The volunteers will be asked to take photos of children standing next to a live raptor held by a Team member (photographic expertise not needed).

Help is needed as 25,000 people will be attending, which could mean lots of photo ops for little ones. Over 400 retail booths and 6 educational booths will be set up.

Wildflowers in January

By Neal Ratzlaff

Plan to escape winter's grip for a few moments and join us at the ASO meeting January 13 for a presentation of wildflowers.

Roland Barth and Neal Ratzlaff, authors of the recently published book *Field Guide to Wildflowers of Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods*, will be the speakers.

They will discuss just how the idea to produce a book developed as well as the personal and practical considerations which influenced its content and appearance.

Brief comments on the organization of the book and tips on how to use it will be followed by a sampling of wildflower photos.

They will include the authors' favorite woodland and prairie wildflower images selected from a combined total of over 15,000 digital photos obtained in the course of over 300 separate visits to Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods during the two-year project period.

As their book bio states, Roland and Neal, the Colonel and the Doc, seem like an odd couple. Roland is an immigrant from Germany who served in the U.S. Air Force as a meteorologist while Neal is a native Nebraskan and retired radiologist.

Both, however, share a deep and abiding interest in nature and are no strangers to the Audubon Society of Omaha, each having served a term as chapter President. It seems that nature, specifically "flower power," brought them together for this collaborative effort in their "golden years."

Join us on Thursday, January 13, at 7:30 PM, at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (1 block south of 45th & Center). A short business meeting will follow the program, and the evening will conclude with coffee, cookies and a social time. Nonmembers are welcome.

By Nelli Falzgraf

Nelli's Notes

In September of 2004, National Audubon sent us a document, Ad Hoc Chapter Committee Recommendations. This document was intended to open discussions on a range of solutions to recent challenges Chapters and National face.

I am summarizing National's concerns and their recommendations.

National states they are renewing their commitment to operating in a true partnership and mutual respect. In such an environment, every part of Audubon would be able to realize its full potential and contribute to our shared mission, which is "to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and earth's biological diversity." National Audubon seeks in this document to clarify the nature of a true partnership.

Problem statement: While Chapters are seen as a critical part of the Audubon Network, the promise of the Chapter-National relationship and leverage has yet to be maximized to accomplish our shared mission. Also, a perception has emerged that a competition exists between State Offices, Centers and Chapters, distracting us from our mission. National proposes to renew commitment to a collaborative relationship, focusing on membership, communication, fundraising, use of the "Audubon" name, and pilot projects.

Collaboration and Partnership: National's goal is to strengthen the Audubon's Grassroots Network to form a strong community presence for protection of birds and wildlife. If the Audubon Network "can first *envision* and then *implement* a true, strong, mutually supportive partnership between Chapters and National. . .we will be able to create an environment of mutual respect, trust and confidence." One part of the network should not succeed at another's expense, but involve more and more persons to champion birds and the habitat supporting them.

Ad Hoc Chapter Task Force Vision and Guiding Principles: "Strengthen the distinctive grassroots network and reinforce the partnership between members, Chapters, staff, and the Board to promote effective conservation at local, state, regional, and national levels."

education, and grassroots advocacy.

3. Align and integrate the methods and goals of Chapters, State Offices and Centers to best engage people in their areas in Audubon projects.

4. Broaden circle of Audubon supporters and add to financial resources to facilitate work of Audubon Grassroots Network.

5. Actively promote endorsement of all Network partners, inside and outside of the Audubon community.

Develop a Greater Chapter-NAS Partnership:

1. Three core elements must be shared in partnership between National and Chapters:

· Common Mission: Recognize that we hold this in common.

· Shared Values: These include leadership in conservation, collaboration among all partners in the Audubon community, respect and integrity in how we interact with each other and in our public advocacy and education.

· Protect "Audubon" Trademark: "The power of the Audubon name is our most valued asset. We must protect the Audubon logo and name from unauthorized use and enhance the Audubon name for our mutual good."

2. Chapters and State Offices are encouraged to engage in joint fundraising for shared projects when possible.

3. State Offices are the means for Audubon funds support to Chapters and other assistance.

4. Each State Office and Chapter being unique, flexible methods are critical when they work together, set priorities and allocate funding.

5. Greater involvement of National and State board members with Chapters will improve communication, aid in mutual understanding, and build trust.

6. Partnership projects "model best practices and demonstrate successful collaborative relationships between State programs and Chapters."

Promote Conservation Outcomes:

1. Promote conservation work in our

1. Build on the strengths, expertise and shared missions of our Chapters, Centers, and State Offices to carry out our collective conservation priorities.
2. Help Chapters serve as local leaders in conservation,
2. Use Partnership projects to accomplish conservation outcomes. Demonstrate new and better approaches for working together.
3. All levels of Audubon (local, state, national) play a valued role in carrying out Audubon's ambitious conservation goals.

Continued on page 3

Recommendations for Implementation

The Committee believes dues share is ineffective in achieving goals of Audubon.

Financial support from National to Chapters should be tied to Chapter conservation and programmatic goals and accomplishments.

Each State/Chapter service will allocate funds to Chapters based on Chapter applications.

Nonfinancial support in fundraising, training, capacity building and partnership may be provided by National.

Service Support: The Ad Hoc Committee recommends these actions be implemented in State Programs.

Communication: State Office staff visit Chapters' meetings and activities. They communicate with Chapter leaders, offering news of the office's programs and activities.

Leadership: State staff work with Chapter leaders. Revamp Chapter Leader Guide to help with development, planning, and other forms of assistance.

Conservation: Develop a strategy to work on conservation public policy issues and create a statewide agenda to prioritize national and state policy issues, develop advocacy training, and integrate priorities into long-term planning.

Education: Coordinate programs and activities.

Training: Coordinate training programs or workshops in fundraising, membership, planning, media development, or other areas.

More of this document will be summarized and cited in next month's issue. Meanwhile, Happy New Year to each of our members. I hope many of you will be inspired to join us in 2005, on field trips, at our general meetings, social gatherings, or any special events.

New Program Series at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

In response to public requests, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center is offering two series of programs on nature journaling beginning in January. The first, "A Tribute to the Prairie Seasons: Nature Journaling for Adults," will be offered on one Saturday in each of the four seasons. The dates are January 22, May 7, July 23, and October 8.

The second series, for children and adults, is "Reflections on a Prairie Year: Nature Journaling Activities for All Ages," offered on one Saturday each season: January 29, May 21, July 30, and November 5.

In each session, participants will explore a different journaling technique while experiencing the ever-changing beauty of the Prairie. Programs will have indoor and outdoor time to practice new techniques and for "solo" nature encounters. Persons may register for the series or for the session of their choice. Winter, spring, and autumn sessions will run from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Summer sessions will run from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

The first session, January 22, "Tribute to a Prairie Winter: Nature Journaling for Adults," will be facilitated by local writer Amy Plettner-Lind.

Spring Creek Prairie staff will facilitate the first session of "Reflections on a Prairie Winter: Nature Journaling for All Ages," January 29. Participants need to bring a sack lunch. Writing materials will be provided, but participants are welcome to bring their own journals.

Fee is \$8 per adult per session (ages 16 and older); \$5 per child per session. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Space is limited to 15 persons each session. Participants should dress appropriately for the weather.

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center is located 20 minutes southwest of Lincoln (follow SW 98th Street south from Denton for three miles). For more

ASO Office Building Closed

The Audubon Society of Omaha Rookery building at 11809 Old Maple Rd was inspected and determined to have structural and mold problems.

A copy of the Inspection Report was sent to the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, property owner. The NRD and the ASO agreed it would be safer for volunteers and visitors to close the building until the ASO Board discuss and explore options.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Please feel free to visit the adjacent wetland, also owned by the

NRD. For questions, please contact Nelli Falzgraf (292-9687), Jenny Henricksen (895-5487), or Laurine Blankenau (451-3647).

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Conservation/Legislative Action

By Ione Werthman

A New Year, New Vigor, But -

The old issues just won't go away. It's time to get back in the saddle to see what we can do in the next four years to finally get rights right. President Bush is wasting no time in moving ahead with his environmental agenda. The holidays are over for us too!

Alaska - President Bush has again made drilling in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic NWR a top priority for the new Congress in January. Because Republicans hold a majority in both houses of congress and many members most likely received funding from big oil, it is payback time.

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic NWR is the most abundant and threatened region of the Refuge. Not only the breeding grounds for millions of migratory birds, it is the denning grounds for polar bear mothers and cubs, the birthing grounds for over 129,000 Porcupine River caribou, and for 20,000 years it has been sacred land to the Gwitch'in people.

Though I will probably never have the chance to visit the area, just knowing there is a place where wildlife can roam free, where the noise of the modern world doesn't intrude, is worth fighting for. The President, with all of his bible quoting, should realize that this public legacy land, created by a power beyond human comprehension, is worth more than six months of oil ten years from now.

Big Oil wants to open up "only" 2,000 acres to drilling, but no mention has been made of the roads, pipelines and gravel mines that would spread across the Plain to complete the project. (The 2,000 acres aren't in one corner.) Some have likened the process to building 1,500 football fields, each with a drilling

(R-MO) and John Olver (D-MA) are working on a similar bill. Let your congressmen know where you stand on this issue and ask them to tell you their positions and why.

Mercury - Mercury is being pumped into our environment by industries, threatening public health, while the government is passing all rules of control and prevention of pollution to industry. Mercury is highly toxic and linked to many serious physical and central nervous system disorders. According to a recent report of the EPA in *Waterkeeper* 2004 Fall issue, 630,000 infants born in 2005 will harbor unsafe levels of mercury. Each year four times as many children are impacted by mercury poisoning than by all other birth defects combined.

One study found that 1/70 of a teaspoon of pure mercury is enough to contaminate a 25-acre lake. By 2003, 45 states had issued mercury advisories for fresh water fish. EPA reports that a predatory fish can have more than one million times the mercury found in the surrounding water. (Think what happens to fish-eating birds.) For more information, go to www.waterkeeper.org/mercury.

Mercury emissions are spewed by coal plants. The EPA reports that more than one-third of our lakes and a quarter of our rivers are under mercury fish advisories, a figure that would be higher if the nation's other waterways were tested, which budget cutbacks made impossible.

When Congress amended the Clean Air Act in 1990 requiring power plants to reduce toxic emissions, energy lobbyists forced a reprieve until a "study of human health effects" was made.

station, all across the Plain. And what about oil spills? Keep your letters going to our Congress. (See addresses on Page 7 of this issue.)

Global Warming - Again the Arctic is the "hot spot" in global warming. Some of the most severe warming trends on earth are taking place in the Arctic with the melting of the Greenland ice cap and other glaciers, as well as erosion and rising seawater in coastal villages. Even the decimation of northern forests by foreign insect invasions is jeopardizing the balance of nature.

Since Russia has ratified the Kyoto Protocol, the world is ready to commit to ushering in the age of carbon limits and climate stabilization, but it is doing so without the United States. The President has insisted on volunteer, not mandatory, participation. Senators McCain and Lieberman have been working on a Climate Stewardship Act, with the positive vote of 43 senators this past year in favor of their Global Warming Bill. Rep. Wayne Gilchrest

That study, released in 1998, was unmistakable. "Mercury emissions from electric utility steam-generating units are considered a threat to public health and the environment" and warranted strict regulation under the Clean Water Act.

However, in 2004 the EPA proposed a mercury reduction rule allowing the industry to conduct business as usual. Michael Leavitt, EPA administrator, said, "The agency is charged with writing a mercury regulation that works for an entire industry."

Said Zachary Corrigan, Staff Attorney, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, in *Waterkeeper* Fall 2004 issue, "Amazingly, this administration, as they have in so many other instances, wants the American people to place their public health, welfare and trust in industry's hands when history has clearly shown that this industry's leaders do not have the public's best interests in mind."

Continued on page 5

Cleaner, Greener Home Improvement

With the holidays behind us and heating bills rising, you may be looking for an opportunity to make your living space beautiful and functional but also more energy-efficient and more conducive to good health. Here are some ways to "green up" your next home improvement project.

Construction. Many remodeling materials contain toxic chemicals that have the potential to cause health problems and environmental damage. Consider these alternatives:

Paint. The Environmental Protection Agency advises caution when using products such as paints that contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs); exposure to these compounds can cause eye, nose and throat irritation, headaches, and nausea. Nearly all major paint manufacturers offer low-or zero-VOC water-based paints that are compatible to conventional paints in terms of price and durability.

Wood. Since the EPA banned the sale of pressure-treated wood containing arsenic, a known carcinogen, lumber manufacturers now treat wood with other chemicals. To avoid chemical exposure altogether, use untreated redwood or cedar (which are naturally pest-and decay-resistant), plastic lumber, or wood-plastic composite lumber. For interior woodwork, use sustainably harvested wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

sources such as old houses and barns, are good choices for hardwood floors because they lessen the burden on our nation's forests. Other attractive, sustainable flooring materials include bamboo, natural linoleum, tile, and cork. If you prefer carpeting, choose natural fibers (such as non-mothproofed wool, jute, or sisal) over synthetic fibers, which are primarily made from fossil fuel-based chemicals.

Efficiency. Improving the energy and water efficiency of your home will reduce your consumption of natural resources and lower your utility bills. Here are some suggestions:

Fixtures. Replace old toilets, showerheads, and faucets with water-saving models. Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lights, which use up to 75 percent less energy but provide the same amount of light.

Insulation. Insulate attics, basements, and crawlspaces

to help retain heat. Seal air leaks around doors, windows, and fireplaces, and replace old windows with Energy Star-abeled models.

Wrapping your hot water heater with insulation improves heat retention as well.

For more information, contact U.S. Department of Energy-Energy Savers Portal,



Plywood and particleboard. These composite wood boards are often manufactured using formaldehyde adhesives. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulates the use of formaldehyde - a suspected carcinogen - in industrial settings, but there are no such regulations for residential use. Green Seal provides a list of fiberboard manufacturers that use alternative materials.

www.eere.energy.gov/energy_savers/ or
www.healthyhomedesigns.com/articles

Flooring. FSC-certified wood, or wood salvaged from

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration March 18-20

The cranes may not even be thinking of moving north yet, but we can turn our calendars to March and note the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration dates, along with the return of the Sandhill Cranes.

As always, field trips to view the cranes at dawn and dusk, to Prairie Chicken Leks, Rainwater Basin, and more are offered. Excellent speakers have been engaged, including Nebraska's own Michael Forsberg, photographer and author. Lodging in Kearney is readily available. Rooms will be

set aside at the Holiday Inn where the event will be held.

Complete information will be offered in the February issue of the *Meadowlark*. New this year is a Crane Behavior workshop Friday and Saturday afternoons. Both will include evening viewing. To register for the workshop, early sign-up will be needed.

Registration should be possible in mid-January. To register early, call the State Office, 402 466-1220, or write to 5000 Central Park Dr, Suite 101, Lincoln 68504.

The 8th annual Great Backyard Bird Count will once again be sweeping the nation during the weekend of February 18-21. This year's theme is "North America's Great Backyard," chosen as a way to celebrate the beauty of birds found across the continent. Everyone is invited to go out and count for the birds.

People across the continent are encouraged to participate in the GBBC and report over the Internet as part of the Count, one of the world's largest volunteer efforts of its kind. In addition to its research study, the GBBC allows people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate the beauty of birds and provide vital information about North America's Birds.

People are asked to count the birds around them by going out during any or all of the Count days and keep track of the highest numbers of each bird species they see. People can then report their sightings over the Internet at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

A "backyard" is anywhere you happen to be: a schoolyard, local park, balcony of a high rise or a wildlife refuge. Participants and their families are encouraged to visit their local national refuge, national forest, national park, and other federal lands, in addition to

Excerpts from a Press Release

Instructions for reporting may be found at the above web site. The local library's internet service can be used, if necessary, or a Wi

The February 2004 Count revealed intriguing results. More than 4 million birds were counted, with 555 species, making it the mos

Reports were sent from 50 states and all but one Canadian province, Nunavut. From Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest Territories

More fascinating information on the 2004 Count can be found at www.birdsource.org/gbbc

Please help with this important project researching the bird populations of our continent. And who knows, you might find something

their own back yards.

Families are encouraged to participate because kids are the future caretakers of the environment. The GBBC is a terrific way to nurture their inborn curiosity and nature. Taking part takes as little or as much time as persons wish.

Instructions for reporting may be found at the above web site. The local library's internet service can be used, if necessary, or a Wi-Fi connection. The February 2004 Count revealed intriguing results. More than 4 million birds were counted, with 555 species, making it the most successful yet. Reports were sent from 50 states and all but one Canadian province, Nunavut. From Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest Territories. More fascinating information on the 2004 Count can be found at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. Please help with this important project researching the bird populations of our continent. And who knows, you might find something new.

Vincent Bluffs Preserve

Conservation/Legislation Continued from page 4

Receives Grants

By Glenn Pollock

With this type of pollution control, a new relatively clean plant might not use all of its pollution credits (rights to dump mercury in the air).

Stay tuned!

The Vincent Bluffs Preserve in Council Bluffs has received two grants. One grant was from REAP (Resource Enhancement and Protection) from the Iowa State Government via the Iowa DNR for \$200,000. The grant is for purchasing 10 more acres and for restoration.

Also, for the same project, the Iowa West Foundation awarded the Preserve \$50,000.

The Loess Hills Preservation Society manages the site and will direct the restoration. The Loess Hills Preservation Society was assisted in its beginning by ASO.

Addresses to Remember

Audubon Society

President George W. Bush

Membership Application

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

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

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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

Email: _____

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5555

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 68103-0342

Bequests

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

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



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You are alone in the woods. There is solace and safety there. I know that our ancestors were born there. We are home.

Jenean Hornbuckle, Cherokee

2000