

The Meadowlark

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



September - October 2013
Volume 42; Issue 7

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

Please note the change in publication schedule of The Meadowlark effective Sept 1, 2013.

It will be published bi-monthly: **Sept-Oct, Nov-Dec, Jan-Feb, Mar-Apr, May-June and July-Aug.** Phone 402-451-3647 for information.

September 12 General Meeting: The Farm Bill Before Congress – Its Impact on America

Any form of the Farm Bill up for renewal before Congress will have a far-ranging impact on the economic outlook for our country, especially the Midwest farm states. Nebraska and Iowa’s economies are inextricably tied to farming and were a major factor in keeping the economy of Omaha/Council Bluffs strong during the recent recession. At the time of this writing, with Congress in recess, each chamber has passed widely disparate versions of the Bill which will need to be reconciled before final passage.

Our speaker for the September 12 meeting, Traci Bruckner, has been following the progress of the Farm Bill in her capacity as Assistant Director of Policy for

The Center for Rural Affairs, located in Lyons, Nebraska. The mission of CFRA is “To establish strong rural communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship, and genuine opportunity for all while engaging people in decisions that affect the quality of their lives and the future of their communities.” For 40 years they have been advocating for a balanced approach to land stewardship and a vibrant rural economy.
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October 10 General Meeting: A Photographic Safari to Botsana with Ty Smedes

Ty Smedes will join us once again after leading his fifth visit to Africa photographing wildlife. Here is what he has to say about his presentation. “We will view images of Africa and learn about Botswana in a very intimate way and will see birds and mammals with young, catching prey, and interacting in fascinating ways. Best mammals include elephant, lion, leopard, cape buffalo, hippo, African wild cat, and the rare and elusive wild dog.

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**September Field Trip to Schramm Park SRA
September 14**

Come join us for our first fall field trip of the season on Saturday, September 14. We will be meeting at 8:00 a.m. at the Ak-Sar-Ben Aquarium parking lot. Loren and Babs Padelford will be leading the group to identify anything that can fly – birds, butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, grasshoppers, bees and any other insects.

This should be a great trip with birds migrating and insects peaking in numbers before the
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October Field Trip

Plans have not been finalized for the October field trip, so please check our web site by mid-to-late September for the information.

Look for the scrolling bar with the date, time and place of the field trip. Our web address is audubon-omaha.org.

We will also be **mailing** a notice about the field trip plans and other information to arrive at your home around October 1.

We hope you can join us for this trip.

Where We've Been, Where We're Going

By Laurine Blankenau

It seems a good time to inform readers of some of our recent actions, how we have lived up to our ideal of conserving natural areas in our community, and how we have used the funds entrusted to us. To preserve the health of our own site, the Audubon Prairie, a portion of the prairie is burned about every three years, if the weather allows it. Management of the burn has been turned over from a qualified, efficient, volunteer team—passing the torch, if I may use the phrase—to a paid, professional company. The burns will continue to be carried out under the authority of our prairie manager.

“Have You Seen Mary?” a recently published children’s book—Mary being a sandhill crane—by Jeff Kurrus with photos by Michael Forsberg, was presented to the libraries of all elementary Omaha Public Schools through a purchase by Audubon. The book describes the lives and behavior of sandhill cranes and their spectacular stop and migration through our state each spring. Teachers and students have thanked us for the gift of the book and its information about the cranes’ visit and stay in our state. Some students and their families surely are or will be inspired to visit central Nebraska to view, enjoy and appreciate the cranes.

Well worth a visit if you haven’t been there, Spring Creek Prairie is a large tract of tallgrass prairie

former ranchland south of Denton (west of Lincoln). Now owned by Audubon, the site has hiking trails, prairie grasses, the creek, woodlands and marks of a wagon trail. It has habitat for an increasingly small population of grassland birds as well as other species. Its appeal to birders is obvious. Greater prairie chickens, bobolinks, LeConte’s sparrows, uplandsandpipers, Sprague’s pipits and Smith’s longspurs have been sighted.

For the continuing cost of managing Spring Creek Prairie, ASO contributed funds matched by National Audubon through a challenge grant they received. This year we contributed a partial amount of the funds to pay a lobbyist to represent conservation concerns at the state legislature. At the conclusion of the year, we were given a summary of the results of lobbying. Two bills supported and successfully passed into law are (1) a change of powers and duties of the Game & Parks Commission and (2) a measure creating the Water Sustainability Project Task Force. Other bills are being monitored or bracketed for a later date. The work by Audubon’s lobbyist will be ongoing.

Audubon donated to the Hitchcock Nature Center north of Crescent, Iowa, for conservation works, research into the area’s plant and animal wildlife, and more recently for restoring native prairie on highly erodible lands of a new acquisition. Funding was made to the Raptor Banding

Station at Hitchcock sometime this year.

ASO’s accomplishments go beyond funding. Officers and others have lent their time and voices to address issues. One success involved opposing a plan for a large housing tract near Audubon Prairie which posed threats to the site. Members informed and worked with the Planning Board about the resulting erosion, runoff, and interference with burning that would occur. The plan was revised, the number of houses proposed was reduced, and solutions to runoff problems were insured.

The above is but one example of service by officers, other board members, and still others who work for the well-being of ASO for preserving our natural places. They arrange for speakers at monthly meetings, lead field trips, keep the books, teach birding classes, manage the bird seed sale, keep track of our membership, contact the media, plan events such as the prairie festival, track and report on finances, see that the Meadowlark is printed, and inform us on conservation topics.

We will continue contributing to the health of our area’s natural treasures, including birds. You are invited to meet us at any of our events and learn about issues that affect us all. Birders, backyard only or otherwise, may discover fascinating facts about birds and where to find them. And enjoy it all with us.

BIRD SEED Sale October 19 & 20

It is not too soon to be thinking about your bird seed order for this fall. Our supplier, Des Moines Feed, gives us their estimated fall prices the last week of August and you will receive your order blank in mid September. Please consider ordering some Audubon Seed Products as the profits from this sale are used to fund many of our educational programs. If you have friends or neighbors who might be interested, call or Email Kathleen Crawford-Rose (292-8912 or katcr@cox.net) with their names and addresses.

We will also be asking members for help with the numerous tasks involved with this sale. On Sept. 11th we'll need volunteers to help with the mailing and on the delivery days we need volunteers for loading seed and paper work. Please put these dates on your calendar and give Jerry Toll an Email geritol48@cox.net or phone call (402-453-9239) to let him know that you are available to assist with this major fund raiser.



September 12 General Meeting: The Farm Bill Before Congress – Its Impact on America

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The new Farm Bill will have a major impact on how land will be preserved and used, energy and water conservation, the rural economy, and how Americans treat the less fortunate. Current and past Farm Bills tied the Food

Stamp Program to the Farm Bill, virtually insuring its passage. The House version up for renewal has separated the Food Stamp Program from the Bill. The continuing rising percentage of Americans living below the poverty line, which Food Stamps are tied to, has the Senate worried and concerned that if the issue does not remain tied to the Farm Bill, it will not be adequately addressed.

Please plan to attend this informative program at our general meeting Thursday, September 12, at 7:00 pm at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (one block south of 45th & Center).

The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour with cookies. Everyone is welcome to attend, and there is no cost.

Note: Please do NOT bring recyclables to the meeting this time. The recycling organization we were working with has gone belly up. We are looking for another recycler.



October 10 General Meeting: A Photographic Safari to Botsana with Ty Smedes

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“Botswana’s bird life is fantastic, offering a dazzling number of species which are very viewable, and with many bird images captured from boats plying the Chobe River and the winding

channels of Botswana’s famed Okavango Delta.

“If you would like to see and learn more about Botswana’s fabulous birds and mammals than what you will ever see on TV, please join us for an entertaining evening.”

Smedes’ photos and articles have been published in major magazines and books. He has published two books, “Capturing Iowa’s Seasons” and “The Return of Iowa’s Bald Eagles,” which he will bring with him to the meeting along with matted prints of his photographic work. He has taught photography and has led nature photography tours to Yellowstone, sites in Brazil, and the subject of his presentation, Africa.

Please plan to enjoy Ty’s wonderful photos and experiences at our general meeting Thursday, October 10, at 7:00 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (one block south of 45th & Center).

The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour with cookies. Everyone is most welcome. There is no cost.

Volunteer Wanted

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

**Please call
402-451-3647.**

Understanding Climate Change – Part 1

By John Pollack

Audubon Society members already have a fairly deep understanding of environmental issues. I am writing this series to help you increase your knowledge of climate change, how it is likely to play out over time, and how it will interact with the biosphere, including birds.

While there are many causes of climate change, humanity is the primary cause of the changes we are facing - especially our ever-rising demand for fossil fuels. This leads us first to a discussion of the greenhouse effect, where some surprises may await you.

The “greenhouse effect” is the name that has been given to the mechanism that allows the Earth to retain heat in excess of what would be expected of a planet with no atmosphere. Heat is transferred from the Sun to the Earth as electromagnetic radiation. This comes in packets of energy. When these energy packets hit something, they can be absorbed, reflected, or pass right through. When this radiant energy penetrates to the ground, some of it is reflected back toward space, but some is converted to heat. This heat will be radiated back toward space. The greenhouse effect comes in here, as atmospheric gases absorb some energy before it can be radiated away into space. An effective greenhouse gas is a good absorber.

To understand climate change, we will also need to consider what fraction of the incoming solar energy gets reflected back to space, instead of being absorbed. Some of it will be reflected by such things as clouds or haze. Some of the energy reaching the ground will also be reflected back at the surface. Fresh snow reflects about 90% of sunlight back, and ice above 60%. On the other hand, water only reflects about 5%, and dry land about 15%. Earth's overall reflectivity is about 15%.

To continue, 99% of the dry air consists of gases with near zero greenhouse activity. I will focus on three “minor” gases with major greenhouse effects. They vary in concentration, persistence in the atmosphere, and potency as greenhouse gases. Methane and carbon dioxide are two effective greenhouse gases. Under current conditions, methane is roughly 50 times as potent a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide. However, there is much less of it. Current methane concentrations are less than 2 parts per million (ppm) contrasted to 400 ppm for carbon dioxide. Also, methane persists for an average of about 20 years, double the amount of water vapor. This means that methane is hard to accumulate; the more you put in the atmosphere, the more it breaks down. Carbon dioxide, on the other hand, persists for hundreds of years. Approximately half of the excess CO₂ we produce ends up in the atmosphere, but the rest is absorbed by the oceans and biosphere. It can be cycled from these reservoirs back into the

atmosphere for millennia. Carbon dioxide has been accumulating as the result of human activity. The present concentration of 400 ppm has been rising fast, due to fossil fuel burning. To get an idea of how large this is, natural CO₂ levels varied between 180 and 300 ppm over the last 800,000 years, and were around 310 ppm as recently as 1960. Since then, they have increased 32%.

Astute readers have already noticed that I referred to “dry” air. Water vapor is our most important greenhouse gas. It has an average persistence time of about 10 days, but is quickly replaced by evaporation from the ground, vegetation, or the essentially inexhaustible supply from the ocean. It is perceptible to us as “humidity” and is an excellent absorber of the heat which the Earth radiates back toward space. This makes it a strong greenhouse gas.

Water vapor concentration is quite variable, from a small amount up to 3 percent, and is very sensitive to temperature. As a rule, for every 20 degrees F of warming, the air can hold double the amount of water vapor. Concentration increases rapidly as the temperature rises.

It is extremely important to realize that any greenhouse warming will be magnified by the resulting increase in water vapor. The role of water is quite complex, and will be the subject of the next installment. It allows our wonderful planet to be home to life, but also makes life much more interesting for meteorologists!

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Good News for the Arctic Seas

by Kathy Schwery

In what is possibly the best news for the environment in years, several oil companies have postponed their plans to drill in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas off the coast of Alaska.

Royal Dutch Shell Oil was the first to put off its plans after a series of accidents and incidents showed how unprepared it was. Conoco Phillips and the Norwegian company Stato also said they were suspending their operations. The oil companies did so because they will need more time to meet new Interior Department regulatory requirements and because they underestimated the difficulty of drilling in the Arctic. The halt in drilling gives the environmental community time to try to stop this ill-advised endeavor.

There are many reasons why drilling in the Arctic Seas is harmful and dangerous. The weather is brutal. Storms with hurricane force winds can whip up 20 to 40 foot seas. It is dark for half the year and temperatures drop to 40 below zero. Oil spills would be difficult or impossible to clean up under these conditions. Both the U. S. Geological Survey and the Coast Guard have said it is unclear whether oil spill countermeasures can be used in the Arctic and have questioned the ability of the Coast Guard to respond to spills.

Another huge concern if drilling were to take place in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas is how birds and wildlife might be affected. The Seas are home to half this nation's polar bears. Drilling would take place only 15 miles from the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, where many of these polar bears have dens. And, as National Audubon President David Yarnold said in Audubon Magazine last July, "The unspoiled Arctic is critical like nowhere else to the future of our wild birds. Hundreds of species of birds from all four major flyways arrive in the Arctic every spring to raise their young."

From the very beginning, Shell Oil's efforts to drill for oil in the Arctic have been plagued by accidents, equipment mishaps and violations. Shell had designed a containment dome which was to be used in the event of oil spills. According to a National Resources Defense Council article, that dome was "crushed like a beer can" in the relatively calm waters off the coast of Washington State during a test of the structure. There is no way it could have withstood the harsh conditions in the Arctic.

The NRDC article goes on to list Shell Oil's other mistakes and near disasters. From this report, it is clear that Shell Oil is woefully unprepared for drilling in the punishing Arctic environment. The company was cited for numerous safety violations on its drillship, the Noble Discoverer, among them improper propulsion

for Arctic weather, and multiple fire hazards. Its spill containment barge also had safety violations. In an especially embarrassing accident, Shell Oil lost one of its drilling vessels, the Kulluk, which ran aground near Alaska's Kodiak Island. The rig was carrying 150,000 gallons of fuel and petroleum products when it broke free from its towropes, and after days of struggle, ended up on Sitalidak Island. According to National Audubon, Sitalidak Island has been designated an Important Bird Area, where more than 100,000 birds overwinter and 180,000 nest in the summer.

All the major environmental organizations, including National Audubon, have expressed strong opposition to Shell Oil and the other companies' plans to drill in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. Members of Audubon and other groups have been asked to contact President Obama and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, requesting that final approval for this project be denied. Perhaps there is still time, during the hiatus in drilling, to convince the Obama administration that it needs to put a permanent stop to any drilling in the Arctic Seas.

Thank You, Meadowlark Volunteers

By Laurine Blankenau

A group of volunteers who perform a routine but vital task deserve recognition for saving ASO costs each year. They fold, label & tab the Meadowlark month after month without too many gripes and mostly good cheer. We hear about bird sightings and travel, with occasional jokes added. Some come in, work silently, and leave without a break between arrival and departure.

The faithful crew includes Dot Bowman, Marge & Earl Collins, Ruth Demarest, Pauline Dickey, Alpha Fiske, Tom & Nancy Gallagher, Essie Grill, Karlene Kingery, Ida Leitner, Eunice Levisay, Richard & Carole Rasmussen, Kathleen Rose, Jean Schmid, and Anna Winans.

Thanks to all of them for their reliable help and good spirits.

My apologies if I missed anyone. Your work is appreciated.



Nebraska Ornithologists Meet Sept 20-22

The Prairie Winds Community Center in Bridgeport, Nebraska, will be the site for the Nebraska Ornithologists' meeting September 20-22, 2013.

The meeting will start Friday evening and will include a good variety of field trips through the day on Saturday and on Sunday morning.

Sites include Crescent Lake NWR, Oliver Reservoir, Wildcat Hills Nature Center, and Scottsbluff County hotspots, Morrill County for Pinyon Jays and other western specialties, and Courthouse and Jail House Rock areas.

A talk on nighthawks on Saturday evening will be given by Rick Wright of eBird fame.

If you are a member, don't forget this weekend of fine birding opportunities and the chance meet up with fellow birders. New memberships are obtainable from Betty Grenon, 402-731-2383.

Deadline for reservations is September 13. For more information, go to nou.birds.org/



ASO, Other Nebraska Birders Win National Championship

A team termed the Flatwater Seekers comprising six Nebraskans won first place in an annual contest of birding skills. The team competed in the Great American Arctic Birding Challenge that pitted them against birders in all of the lower 48 states.

The procedure is to count all of the birds that breed in Alaska and that cross Nebraska during their migration, which occurs between March 1 and June 1, the duration of the count time. Possible total count is 213 species; the team identified 126 species of the migrants.

Omaha team members were Jerry Toll, Clem Klaphake and Justin

Rink. Out state members were Mark Brogie of Creighton (about 50 mi north of Norfolk), T. J. Walker, North Platte, and Kathy DeLara of Mitchell (northwest of Scottsbluff).

This was the second year for Jerry, Clem and Justin to compete. Congratulations to all six of the team for their win,



September Field Trip to Schramm Park SRA September 14

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colder fall weather sets in. Anyone and everyone is welcome to join us.

For those who want to bring a lunch after the morning walk, there are picnic tables for our use. For those who are interested in exploring more in the area, some of us will be walking across the Platte River on the hike/bike bridge that connects Sarpy and Cass Counties.

A Nebraska Game and Parks sticker is required on your vehicle for entry to the park. If you have not been to Schramm, there are two routes to choose from: take Exit 432 off I-80 and go south on Hwy 31 for about 5 miles. Or take Exit 440 off I-80, go south on Hwy 50 about 9 miles, turn right onto Hwy 31 just before you cross the Platte, and follow it to Schramm Park.

Hope to see you on the 14th. For questions, call Clem Klaphake, 402-292-2276.

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
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

100 Centennial Mall N Rm 294, Lincoln NE 68508-3803

Senator Deb Fischer

825 B Hart, Senate Office Building, Washington D.C.
20510 Washington Phone: 202-224-6551

Lincoln: 440 No. 8th St, Suite 120, Lincoln NE 68508
Lincoln phone: 402-441-4600

Omaha: 11819 Miracle Hills Dr, Suite 205, Omaha, NE
68154 Omaha phone: 402-391-3411.

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

Representative Jeff Fortenberry

House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515
Phone: -202-225-4806

Lincoln phone: 402-438-1598

Lincoln Address:

Governor Dave Heineman

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln, NE 68509
Phone: 402-471-2244; Fax: 402-471-6031

Mayor Jim Suttle

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183

Phone: 402-444-5000 Hot Line: 402-444-5555

Lincoln Capitol Switchboard: 402-471-2311

Washington Capitol Switchboard

Senate: 202-224-3121; House: 202-225-3121

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

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

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Introductory Membership (1st & 2nd Year) \$20 Make check payable to National Audubon Society

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha
19612 Ridgeway Road
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19612 Ridgeway Road
Plattsmouth, NE 68048 COZCP030Z

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.

Audubon Society of Omaha

P.O. Box 3542

Omaha, NE 68103--0542

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Elected Officers:

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	Elliott Bedows	292-5017
	Bob Fuchs	553-8242
	Helen Bartee	657-3845
	Jamie Vann	733-1891

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Membership	Kathy Schwery	296-4788
Program	Jerry Toll	453-9239
Natural Areas Mgt	Eric Scholar	551-5045
Publication	Jamie Vann	733-1891
	Laurine Blankenau	451-3647
Publicity	Jackie Scholar	551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs	Kathleen Rose	292-8912
	Carole Rasmussen	731-3939
Speakers Bureau	Eunice Levisay	393-0545
Historian	Eric Scholar	551-5045
NAS Board Member	Peter Cannon	608-251-1276

Six issues of The Meadowlark are published annually: January - February, March - April, May - June, July - August, September - October, and November -December. The newsletter may be accessed on our web site, <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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