

The Meadowlark

The Audubon Society of Omaha is dedicated to the active promotion of environmental awareness to our community through education, conservation and enjoyment of our natural heritage, especially birds.

November/December, 2015
Volume 44, Issue 8



ASO is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving eastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

JOIN US AT FONTENELLE FOREST NOVEMBER 12TH Program: Jeff Kurrus

by Kathleen Crawford-Rose

How do we adults help our children learn about the natural world that surrounds them?

Our November speaker has published two beautiful photo story books that make the wildlife of Nebraska come alive for young people.

Jeff Kurrus is an author, photographer, and editor living in Gretna, Nebraska. After college he spent seven years as a freelance writer for various regional and national publications. Kurrus is also an award-winning photographer and editor of NEBRASKAland Magazine, where he has been a full-time staffer for nearly 10 years.

He collaborated with NEBRASKAland Contributing Editor and professional photographer, Michael Forsberg on the children's picture book *Have You Seen Mary?* in 2013. *Have You Seen Mary?*, the photo-story of a sand hill crane searching for his mate during migration, was

a Golden Sower Award finalist. Kurrus' most recent book, *The Tale of Jacob Swift*, the photo-story of a young swift fox in western Nebraska, debuted in September of 2014. Rob Palmer, a professional nature photographer from Colorado, collaborated on the photos for *Jacob Swift*.

Kurrus spends most of his time outdoors with friends and family, and his passions include bass and northern pike fishing and whitetail deer hunting.

His beautiful photo story books will be available for purchase and autographing after the meeting.

Our Audubon branch has donated copies of his books to elementary school libraries in Omaha and the surrounding suburb cities.

Please join us on November 12, at 7:00, at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center in Bellevue, Nebraska for Jeff Kurrus' presentation.

Area Lakes Are Destination of the November Field Trip

By Clem Klaphake

For the Saturday, November 14th, ASO field trip we will be visiting area lakes to see what birds may have arrived from the north. Should the weather be such that the lakes are frozen over, we will go to plan "B" after meeting at the same starting location listed below.

We will first meet in Sarpy County at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot on the east side of Walnut Creek Lake near Papillion. That location is south of State Highway 370 on 96th Street. After birding there we will go on to Prairie Queen Recreation area and then Wehrspann Lake. Depending on what we are seeing, and/or what others have been reporting locally, we may check out some of the Omaha lakes.

For more information contact Clem Klaphake at: 402-292-2276 or ckavian@cox.net



Red-Fox Sparrow Phil Swanson

Field Notes from the President: By Tad Leeper

Hello again fellow Audubon Society of Omaha members. My President's column in this issue of the Meadowlark newsletter has two focus areas: 1) ASO's Financial Stewardship, and 2) Nature-Deficit Disorder.

First, be assured the ASO Board of Directors has been hard at work wisely investing your ASO financial contributions in several worthwhile natural wildlife conservation initiatives.

Over a period of many years, ASO has been fortunate to accumulate significant operating funds via bequests, other donations, fund raising activities, membership dues and investment income. Your ASO Board continually seeks to identify unique conservation opportunities in the Omaha metro area (and beyond) which merit ASO's financial support.

Thus far in 2015, the ASO Board has contributed significant funds in support of several important and natural resource conservation projects. Most significantly, ASO made a substantial financial gift to the University of Nebraska Foundation to help UNO acquire a tract of prairie adjacent to the Glacier Creek Preserve in northwest Omaha. Your Board also contributed financially to Audubon Nebraska's state-wide conservation advocacy initiatives. Other recent ASO financial contributions included grants to the Earth Day Omaha Coalition, a Northern Saw-whet Owl research project, and the Boy Scouts Mid-America Council. The Boy Scout grant provided 'start-up' funds to launch the Save Our American Resources (SOAR) conservation program. ASO's financial support of these worthy conservation initiatives were made possible by your generosity and ongoing commitment and support of the Audubon Society of Omaha.

Your Board of Directors appreciates the trust you've placed in them to be good stewards of the organization's finances.

Now, let's turn our attention to another important topic - "Nature-Deficit Disorder."

This term was coined several years ago by Richard Louv, author of the ground-breaking book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. The author's central premise is this: The ever-growing number of indoor electronic-based activities, along with highly-structured youth sports programs, have denied a generation (or more) of young people a close, abiding connection to the natural world. Previous generations of young people (including many of us) spent much of their free time working and playing outdoors and otherwise engaged in unstructured, outdoor activities. As a result of spending much time outside during our youth, many of us (who are old enough to carry an AARP membership card) acquired a love of the natural world - and continue to find inspiration and comfort via the wonders of nature.

Unfortunately, among many of today's young people, a lack of connection to nature manifests itself in detrimental ways. One the most concerning impacts is a wide-spread FEAR of the natural world itself. People fear what they do not know and

understand. Many of today's youth actually fear dirt, germs, and even wild animal attacks.

I am pleased to note for several years, ASO has taken proactive steps to combat nature-deficit disorder through a number of initiatives specifically targeting young people.

ASO's annual Student Art Show and Contest features young people's depictions of the natural world. Our new monthly youth birding field trips are another means to actively and safely engage young people in the great outdoors. ASO also has a long-time partnership with the Boy Scouts Mid-American Council and recently helped to fund the new SOAR program for Scouts.

In a future Meadowlark column, I plan to share specific actions suggested by Richard Louv and others to engage kids and families in nature activities.

Finally, I invite you to add your name to our newly-created ASO Volunteer List. ASO members on the Volunteer List will be contacted to help out when the ASO Board identifies emergent, short-term needs for extra assistance. Contact any ASO Board member to add your name to the ASO Volunteer List. As always, I welcome your ideas, suggestions and questions with the goal of continuing to move our conservation mission forward in the coming year.

Thank you!

"If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."

— Rachel Carson

DeSoto Christmas Bird Count Date Set For Monday, December 28th

By Jerry Toll

We will be trying something new this year. The DeSoto Christmas Bird Count will be on a weekday between Christmas and New Year. Monday December 28th we will be scouring the countryside for avian life at such great birding locations as DeSoto NWR, Boyer Chute NWR, Neale Woods Nature Center, Hitchcock Nature Center, Wilson Island

State Park, N. P. Dodge Park and Hummel Park. ALL within the count circle. Then we will meet at the Schmid-Toll house for soup, warm drinks and count the birds and recount the day.

Contacts

DeSoto NWR
Don and Janis Paseka
paseka76@gmail.com

Hitchcock Nature Center
Sandy Reinken
crazylady0@AOL.com

Boyer Chute NWR
Jerry Toll
geritol48@cox.net

Fort Calhoun to be announced.

DeSoto NWR CBC coordinator
Veronica Kelly
712-388-4800

**Don't know where to go?
Ask Jerry Toll!**



Omaha Area Xmas Bird Count

By Betty Grenon

The 116th running of the Omaha national/international Christmas Bird Count will be held on December 19th, 2015. Contrary to its name it is held in Bellevue within a 15 mile diameter circle centered on the Base Lake east of Offutt AFB. The circle is divided into quadrants, two on the Iowa side and two in Nebraska. We have 4 area captains and accept as many volunteers as possible to give good coverage to the area.

So if you have never joined us, please consider it this year. We accept newbies and will put you with experienced counters. You can count a half or full day with vigorous, gentle hiking or even mostly car birding. And maybe as good as the birds, we retire to 1409 Childs Road in Bellevue about 5 pm for a potluck supper and an accounting of our effort for the day.

To make signing up easier, please just contact me and I will make arrangements with the captains who will then contact you directly with more information. This is now free of cost to you.

Betty Grenon, Omaha CBC
Compiler, 402-731-2383
grenono925@aol.com

Omaha Youth Birding Group

By Bob Wells

The Audubon youth birding group enjoyed a wonderful morning at Hitchcock Nature Center as guests of the Hawk-Watch on Saturday, September 26th. We helped count migrating raptors from the 40-foot observation tower, and thanks to Jerry Toll, got to observe and release captured raptors after banding. All attendees wish to thank Jerry and Ryan for a wonderful and informative morning.

Upcoming trips for the fall and winter months include a Saturday, November 14th, trip to Carter Lake. We will meet at the parking lot on the north end of the lake opposite Eppley Airport at 8:45. We hope to see waterfowl and some hunting bald eagles.

We will volunteer for the Annual Omaha Christmas Bird Count on December 19th. The Christmas Bird Counts are longstanding annual counts that contribute to understanding trends in bird population around the US and help call attention to threatened species. The Omaha Count takes place at various locations around the Metro area. Specific information regarding places and times will be forthcoming.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ASO BOARD ELECTION

A special election to fill a newly vacant Audubon Society of Omaha Board Director position will be conducted at the November 12 monthly ASO general membership meeting. The ASO Bylaws require Board member vacancies to be filled by a general membership election.

In accordance with the Bylaws, the ASO Board recommends that Sarah Miller's name be placed in nomination at the November 12 general meeting as a candidate for the vacant Director position. Sarah is well qualified for the Director role. She works as a wetland scientist in the environmental field and has performed numerous migratory bird surveys and other natural resources studies. Sarah would be a great addition to the Board of Directors. Contact ASO President Tad Leeper if you have questions about the upcoming special election scheduled for the November 12th general meeting.

In Memory of Roland Barth

By Nelli Falzgraf

Former ASO president Roland Barth died September 21 following a brief illness. After retiring from the Air Force, Roland turned some of his attention to nature and conservation. He was new to birding when he met Neal Ratzlaff. Later, they and others organized “big trips” to Texas and Arizona to look for birds beyond the Midwest.

Roland served as ASO president 1992/1994 and was a strong and effective leader. As finance chair in the early 1990's, Roland had the foresight to take a large 1991/1992 bequest for the chapter to start our investment account. This provided a stable platform for funds to be overseen by a professional investment agent.

He was an avid photographer who started with birds and later added plants, which led to his co-authoring two books, “Field Guide to Wildflowers – Fontenelle Forest & Neale Woods Nature Centers” (2004), and “Field Guide to Trees, Shrubs, Woody Vines, Grasses, Sedges and Rushes--Fontenelle Forest & Neale Woods Nature Centers” (2007).

Roland initiated the popular Nature Search on Fontenelle's website and worked behind the scene to coordinate software connections. Sometimes we see critters outdoors but don't have a field guide handy. Nature Search is an efficient means to identify plants and animals seen at the Forest or the Woods by using a smart

phone to log onto the site and compare a sighting with photos and descriptions of organisms on Nature Search already identified and researched by local experts.

In 2009 Roland was inducted into the New Jersey Institute of Technology Athletics Hall of Fame for his achievements in soccer and fencing. He helped the soccer team place in the 1959 NAIA national tournament, earned All-American honors, and was invited to try out for the Pan-American Games U.S. national team. He was also a three-year standout in fencing and led his team to first-place in its conference while winning a silver medal individually.

He earned a bachelor of science degree from NJIT and later a master of science from the University of Utah. He served 30 years as an Air Force meteorologist and retired in the rank of Colonel. He served in the Vietnam War and was awarded the Bronze Star and the Legion of Merit award. Other decorations include two Defense Meritorious Service Medals and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

Roland is survived by his wife Ingrid, son, daughter, and grandchildren. His remains were flown to Arlington National Cemetery for interment. The family has requested that any memorial donations go to Fontenelle Forest or Lauritzen Gardens.

Information for this article was from Roland's birding and Audubon friends, Omaha World-Herald obituary, and Air Weather Association notice.

Audubon Nebraska: People Helping Birds

By Marian Langan,
Executive Director

As we prepared our Annual Report this year, I had an opportunity to reflect on the past year. After sixteen years of working for Audubon, I continue to be amazed at how much we accomplish when we work together. With each step forward, working hand in hand on our mission, I realize how much farther we can go. Together, we can rise to meet the growing challenges we face from the thirst for land and water in our society, uncertainty regarding climate change, and the need for time outdoors that so many of us feel and that is a necessary part of being human.

We have accomplished so much in Nebraska. Your support has helped us advance our mission. It has helped birds and people thrive in our communities. Our impact has grown each year for many years because each year more people get involved, more people decide to take action for causes that are important in their lives.

Together, we have increased our efforts to conserve bird habitat in our native prairies, rivers, and wetlands across Nebraska.

Visit **Nebraska.audubon.org** to see what you helped make possible. Just click on the annual report picture when it rotates past. (Our fiscal year is July-June, making that our “year.”) Thank you for caring enough to make a difference.

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500-0001, Comments: 202-456-1111

Senator Deb Fischer, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-6551; Fax: 202-228-1325; Lincoln Phone: 402-441-4600; Omaha Phone: 402-391-3411; Omaha Address: 11819 Miracle Drive 68154

Senator Ben Sasse, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-4224; Lincoln Phone: 402-476-1400

Representative Brad Ashford, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; Phone: 202-225-4155

Representative Jeff Fortenberry, House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515, Phone: 202-225-4806; Lincoln Phone: 402-438-1598

Governor Pete Ricketts, Capitol Bldg, Lincoln, NE 68509; Phone: 402-471-2244

Mayor Jean Stothert, 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

Bequests

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

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives. When sending a gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize, and the name and address of the person to be notified. Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha, P.O. Box 3542, Omaha NE

Memberships

We offer two choices of membership:

1. Includes membership in National Audubon as well as in our local chapter. It includes receiving the *Audubon Magazine* and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. A portion of your dues is returned to our local chapter.
2. Is a local membership that includes receiving *The Meadowlark* and participation in all of our local activities. All dues go to our chapter.

Membership in the National Audubon Society and in the Audubon Society of Omaha

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Zip Code _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____

Introductory Membership (1st & 2 year) \$20 Make check payable to: National Audubon Society. Mail to: National Audubon Society, Inc., 225 Varick Street, 7th Floor, New York, New York 10014

Membership in Audubon Society of Omaha only

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Zip _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____

Make check for \$20 payable to: Audubon Society of Omaha. Mail to: Audubon Society of Omaha, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth, NE 68048



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

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Office: 1941 S. 42nd St., Omaha NE 68105

Elected Officers:

President Tad Leeper – 670-5919
1st Vice President Eric Scholar – 551-5045
2nd Vice President Tisha Johnson – 885-0990
Past President Laurine Blankenau – 451-3647
Treasurer Betty Fullerton – 493-4362
Recording Sec’y Linda Dennis – 733-6548
Corres. Sec’y Kathleen Rose – 292-8912

Elected Directors:

Jonas Grundman – 216-5413
Bob Wells – 393-4683
Bob Fuchs – 553-8242
Helen Bartee – 657-3845
Matt Miller – 681-4625

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

Conservation Bob Fuchs – 553-8242
Education Clem Klaphake – 292-2276
Field Trip Clem Klaphake – 292-2276
Finance Nelli Falzgraf – 292-9687
Membership Kathy Schwery – 296-4788
Natural Areas Management Glenn Pollock – 571-6230

Program Jerry Toll – 453-9239

Publication Helen Bartee – 657-3845

Publicity Jackie Scholar – 551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs

Kathleen Rose – 292-8912

Carol Rasmussen – 731-3939

Speakers Bureau – Eunice Levisay – 393-0545

Historian -- Eric Scholar – 551-5045

NAS Board Member – Michele Crist – 208-863-1918

Pan-Flyway Director – Karim al-Khafaji

Six issues of *The Meadowlark* are published annually:
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August, September - October, November - December.

The newsletter may be accessed on our website,
<http://audubon-omaha.org>

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