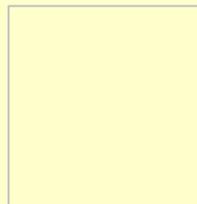


A Bird's Eye View



Audubon Society of Omaha
A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Volume 30, No. 2 February 2001

Eagles: Masters of the Sky

By Clem Klaphake

Due to aeronautical design, the eagle has been described as "master of the skies." No other bird symbolizes power more than the eagle. At our Thursday, February 8, general meeting, you will be able to watch the video entitled *Eagles: The Master of the Skies*.

In legends the eagle is to the birds what the lion has been to the beasts. Historians note that *Aquila chrysaetos* was the model for the eagle on the Roman legions' ensign and for the heraldic eagle on European coats-of-arms. *Aquila* is Latin for eagle; *chrysaetos* means golden.

In *The Raptor Almanac*, Scott Weidensaul writes, "Eagles have inspired more folk beliefs and legends than any other diurnal raptors. The idea of eagles carrying away children is embedded in European and Mediterranean culture, appearing in Greek myths, medieval manuscripts, nursery fables and religious teachings."

Was there a reason for these myths and legends to become established in cultural folklore? There probably was a time when babies and children could easily have been seen as prey by an eagle. As recently as 1,000 years ago, the New Zealand Haast's Eagle became extinct. It weighed up to 30 pounds, almost twice as much as the largest eagle (Harpy) today. The Harpy preys on monkeys and tree sloths. The Haast's Eagle primarily preyed on the now extinct giant flightless moas that stood from 4-10 feet tall. Do you think an eagle this size would be afraid of a human 4-5 feet tall? Probably not.

Why are eagles not considered hawks, or vice versa? Eagles are eagles simply because of their size, not taxonomic links. Eagles exist all over the world, but the only ones we are likely to see in North America are the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle. Europe by contrast has eight species; Africa and Asia have many more.

Louis Halle in *The Appreciation of Birds* notes that when observing a soaring eagle, "The beauty of the spectacle presented by the eagle resides in its illustration of natural law—the law of mechanics. The equation one intuitively apprehends as one observes the spectacle, has the balance of a work of art. Indeed, what one sees. . . is what one hears in the music of Bach, its combinations of rhythm and pitch to produce an overall balance."

The video includes eagles from across the globe. You will see the African Fish Eagle hunt Flamingos in Kenya in the same way that the Bald Eagle hunts Snow Geese here. There is breathtaking footage of two White-bellied Eagles of Malaysia locking talons and performing unbelievable cartwheels high above the rainforest.

Join us Thursday, February 8, 7:30 p.m., Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (1 block south of 45th & Center).

A short business meeting will follow the program concluding with coffee, cookies and conversation. Field guides for many nature-related topics, t-shirts and other items will be for sale before and after the program.

Too Cold to Hike?

Watch Birds Indoors (or Out)

on February Trip

Arctic NWR Program

Set for Feb. 15 in Omaha

A multi-media program on the Arctic

Our field trip Saturday, February 10, public Thursday, February 15, at the at Heron Haven (The Rookery) will focus on backyard birds. We will meet at 9:00 A.M. when Neal Ratzlaff will share his expertise on feeding, identifying, and reporting backyard birds.

NWR will be presented free to the Alaska, is home to a vast array of wildlife including polar bears, rare musk oxen, wolves, porcupine caribou and hundreds of thousands of migratory birds.

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Scholarly Notes

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Good News

From National

recently National Audubon's ef

ports have had some significant successes that are of interest to all.

A new Audubon Center has been dedicated at the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Naples, Florida. A boardwalk and a variety of educational facilities are included.

National also celebrated passage of the long-awaited Everglades Restoration Legislation by the U.S. Congress and companion legislation by the Florida legislature. This legislation, spearheaded by Florida's Audubon program, plans for total ecosystem restoration of this immense and valuable resource.

DwanDean Leach has faithfully provided a palate-pleasing dimension to our general meetings for many years. Dwan recruits persons to provide the cookies at the general meetings, makes the coffee and sets up the treats for us to enjoy. Thank you, Dwan.

Thanks also to Steve Lamphere orders, sets up and sells the items in our general store, providing us with the field guides and other books we need to pursue our hobby. I know how heavy the boxes are that he lugs in and out of the church every month.

Ione Werthman deserves our gratitude for her extensive—and intensive—work. She works to keep us informed about conservation issues and what is happening in the Unicameral and in Washington.

She oversees and ensures that ASO's Heron Haven and the

Higgins, Clyde & Emma Johnson, Ruth Laverty, DwanDean Leach, Eunice Levisay, Don Maas, Elaine

All of the above are greatly appreciated and needed for ASO to function.

ASO Scholarship

Last month the Board approved a plan to provide a \$1,000 scholarship for an area college student majoring in environmental science.

If you have any suggestions or would like to serve on a committee to evaluate applicants, please let me know.

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National Audubon Rookery are functioning well, presents talks for groups in the city, teaches a session of Birding for Beginners each year, writes a monthly column for this newsletter, and works in many other areas for our Chapter. She serves on Audubon Nebraska's Board of Trustees and acts as a link between ASO and numerous other entities.

NAS is also involved in a major effort to increase its membership to 1% of the population by the year 2020.

The National Board recently approved a growth strategy, part of which is designed to encourage chapters to recruit new members.

So far 205 chapters have signed up to participate in the promotion, resulting in 1,500 new memberships as of December 7, 2000. National defines a member as any person who contributes \$20 or more to Audubon for any purpose, or any Chapter or "Friends Of" group affiliated with Audubon.

More Thank You's

In my December editorial I thanked several persons for services to Audubon. It is time to express our thanks to others who serve ASO.

Laurine Blankenau edits the newsletter and does the layout each month. **Larry Shackman**, in addition to assisting with management at Heron Haven, takes charge of the newsletter mailing each month.

The following persons assist or have assisted with folding and labeling the newsletters, some giving their time for many years. **Betty Allen, Jo Bartikoski, Louise Bates, Dot Bowman, Marge & Earl Collins, Nelli Falzgraf, Alfa Fiske, Sol Graetz, Don & Erma Graves, Sam & Essie Grill, Kathy Gross, Margaret Harm, Jenny Henricksen, Ed**

The Omaha Raptor Team

A Committee of ASO

It's All About Gulls at February 21 Nature Study

By Nelli Falzgraf

Perhaps you've noted the varied diet of many gulls—from marine fish to grains of food crops. The capacity to eat what's available is partly due to an unspecialized digestive system.

Unique to birds is a two-part stomach. The anterior glandular section secretes enzymes and hydrochloric acid that break down flesh and bones. It is very effective in specialized fish-eaters such as pelicans and mergansers. The posterior part is a muscular gizzard producing keratinous fluids that harden to horny plates (like our fingernails) to grind foods. It's well developed in herbivores like geese.

Omnivorous as are other gulls, Herring Gulls feeding on fish may move inland during summers and feed on rough, dry grass. The lining of their stomachs can temporarily harden, allowing them to sample a varied, seasonal or regional buffet.

Please join Joel Jorgensen to enjoy his comprehensive slides of these adaptive birds. Mr. Jorgensen has studied and photographed birds extensively and is the current Records Chair of the Nebraska Ornithological Union.

We'll meet at 7:00 p.m. Wed, Feb.21 at the Rookery, Heron Haven, 11809 Old Maple Road. Open to the public. Call 292-9687 for details.



Arctic NWR Program,

The long fight to protect the Refuge has recently become the environmental debate of the country. President Bush has promised to open the Refuge for oil drilling. The environmental community and anyone concerned about protecting the environment, human rights, or a long-term energy plan will be interested in this

We're into another year and anxiously waiting to see what new experiences we'll encounter. The team has so many hopes and aspirations for 2001, one being Heron Haven's Bird Garden. As many of you know, volunteers are working on converting the outside patio area of the Education Center to a bird sanctuary.

The Omaha Raptor Team's goal for part of that area is to have two outside aviaries for raptor displays. We were thrilled to obtain a challenge grant for funding and extremely generous private donations toward the matching funds.

Cost estimates for the aviaries are conservatively at \$7,000 to \$7,500. We have quite a ways to go but are most grateful for every type of assistance. Kind donors Ed and Gay Gruttemeyer have donated through

Continued from page 1

unique opportunity to learn more about this last great wilderness area.

Efforts are underway in Congress to protect the Refuge permanently by making it a federal Wilderness area, and Nebraska's new Senator, Ben Nelson, holds one of seven undecided key votes to help make this happen. Join us February 15 to learn more.

our Feathered Friend Fund. In turn, the team presented program grandchildren Taylor and Kendyl, pictured here with volunteers Lucy the Bu and me. Our deadline for completion of the facilities is October, and we're c Omaha Raptor Team and Heron Haven will have a unique Bird Garden.

Finally, I wish to thank a very special volunteer, Fireball, our red-phased S We had a difficult end to 2000, when Fireball passed away a few days before She came to us as an adult and we realized she was well in years. She wa best volunteers, and our audiences loved her.

Our special thoughts to Sherry Seibert and Lisa Bough.



February Field Trip,

Continued from page 1

Environmental/ Legislative Action By Ione Werthman

I Think I've Had It!

There are only so many hours in a day to accomplish what I would like to do for Audubon, and when I read that the Nebraska Legislature has introduced 848 bills this session, I find it simply overwhelming.

We need some good members to act as monitors for some of these bills.

Care to assist? Take your pick of one or two of the bills. So far I have put question marks on the following:

LBs 37/176/709: Changes or clarifies eminent domain powers of government.

LB 126: Limits public notification of hearings under the EPA concerning air, water, or land quality.

LB 129: Eliminates a project cost limit of \$17 million for the Department of Natural Resources and ties into the proposed sales tax increase being promoted by the Association of Natural Resources Districts to add more dollars to Natural Resources funding.

LB 628: Regulates Will dredge and fill materials under EPA. Republican President George Bush become the anti-environmentalist in the

LB 765: Pertains to runoff water. James Watt tradition, or will he reclaim the prestige of Republican heritage and take the lead in his administration to follow in the footsteps of two of his fellow Republican Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon?

A Nebraska Cattlemen's influenced bill will be for statewide funding for the APHIS/Wildlife Service program. This program was formerly the Animal Damage Control, which focused on killing prairie dogs, coyotes and other wildlife. Roosevelt, who called himself a natural historian, preservationist and conservative as well as a sportsman, by the time his term was over had increased to 150,832,665 the number of acres of federal land for preservation, including 157 national forests formed with congress' consent.

After analyzing the 848 bills, I decided that another topic most likely to surface concerns water banking and/or water leasing. Keep tuned! It was Republican Richard Nixon who signed the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act and established the Environmental Protection Agency.

New Is In! Old Is Out!

Republican George W. Bush is in. Democrat Bill Clinton is out.

A stretch of the mighty Missouri River's least altered portion—the Missouri Breaks— was designated a National Monument by President Join us the first Monday of each month— February 5, March 5, and April 2 at 7:30 p.m. at our Audubon Office, Heron Haven, 11809 Old Maple Road, for our

LB 130: Provides for the private take of publicly owned flora and fauna for private wildlife management operations. It clarifies the authority the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission conservation officers have to enforce traffic laws.

LB 135: Changes groundwater management control and allocation provisions by NRDs.

LB 173: Changes tax exemptions for some public property.

LB 182: Changes quorum provision for the Niobrara Council.

LB 404: Provides for a task force and a study covering groundwater and surface water.

LB 472: Relates to groundwater transfers.

Clinton's executive order in the last days of his administration.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge did not make his list. However, since The Arctic NWR is a federal Refuge, it already has legislative protective status, which is higher than that conferred to monuments.

Legislation from the Carter administration specifically states that oil drilling is prohibited unless Congress decrees differently.

Now a movement is underway to put the label of "Wilderness" on the Refuge to permanently protect it from oil drilling.

See story, Page 1, for program on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coming to Omaha February 15.

legislative/conservation action meetings to keep abreast of these developments nationally, state-wide and locally.

Wanted

Volunteers to help three hours one day a week to answer the phone at the ASO office and greet visitors who want information or want to visit our trails. The hours can be very flexible. Call 445-4138.



Audubon at Work

By lone Werthman

Friends of the Niobrara

Bechara Embaid and I represented ASO at a general meeting of Friends of the Niobrara Sunday, January 14, in Malcolm, NE. Attending were Paul Hedren, National Parks Superintendent of the Niobrara National Scenic River and members of other environmental groups in the state.

Update: In 1991, 57 miles of the Niobrara

Cranes and Wildlife Celebration

Coming to Kearney March 16-18

Audubon Nebraska and the Rowe Sanctuary will present events and speakers of note at the conference Friday through Sunday, March 16-18, at the Holiday Inn, Kearney.

Among the presenters and/or field trip leaders are: Michael Forsberg, Nebraska photographer recognized for his photos of the cranes and Great Plains scenery; Pete Dunne, Director of the Cape May Observatory and renowned field birder and author;

A Junior Audubon program for children will be held for ages 6-12.

Field trips to view the cranes, waterfowl, shorebirds, other early migrants, and Prairie Chickens will be held. New trip sites for all ages are the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument and Cabela's.

Make reservations early at the Holiday Inn where a block of rooms has been reserved until February 16: 1-800-248-4460 (be sure to say you are attending the celebration).

Nearby is the Hampton Inn, 1-800-HAMPTON, and other lodging is available in Kearney.

Conference fees are \$75/adult (before Feb. 28, \$85 after); \$65/student (\$75); \$25/child (under 18; \$35).

Call Audubon Nebraska, 402-797-2301 for more information; for field trips and cranes, call the Rowe Sanctuary 1-308-468-5282.

was designated a National Scenic River. In 1996, the National Park Service completed a general management plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the river.

In 1998 a lawsuit was filed against the Park Service for allowing the River to be managed only by a "council consisting of local landholders, business owners and politicians." The Park Service was ruled against and ordered to prepare a new management plan and EIS.

In a separate suit, the Park Service was challenged for the manner in which it had determined the boundaries for the Scenic River and ordered to redraw the boundaries. The new plan, now in the scoping stage, and a draft EIS should be ready for review by early summer, and the final plan should be completed this year.

Included in the new plan are specifics of the "paleo" resources component, which has been enlarged and defined. The biological resources' uniqueness, verified by recognized authorities, will be shown. The boundaries of the 24,430 acres will be documented. Local, state and national historical values will be itemized.

In place to help the Park Service are zoning laws enacted by all four counties across the landscape, a new partner state review council with veto

power, and support by the Nature Conservancy and others.

If you would like to join Friends of the Niobrara or receive updates on the river planning, please call the Audubon Office for a form to complete and send to the Park Service.

James Harris, President, International Crane Foundation; Ed Carlson, Director, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary; Paul Johnsgard, Ornithologist; and John Hansen of Turner ranches.



Stolley Prairie

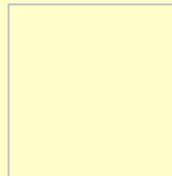
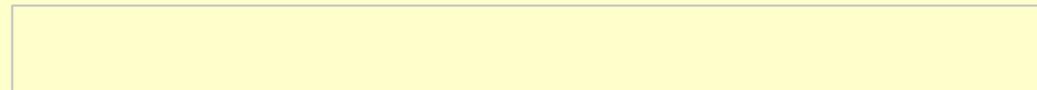
A meeting between ASO, the City of Omaha Parks Department, and Douglas County Roads Department has cleared some of ASO's objections to a four-lane road on 168th Street adjoining Stolley Prairie, which ASO leased for 15 years to save it from development.

A 17-foot easement was obtained from the developer on the west in critical areas near the prairie, so the road could be moved to the west to minimize impact. Space has been saved by omitting a sidewalk next to the prairie.

Buffalo grass will be planted along the street right-of-way to minimize mowing until the four-lane road goes in several years from now. Grading will be done this spring for the four lanes, but only three lanes will be built this year. No brome, which is invasive, will be planted. Native grasses

will be planted on the upgrade slope beyond the mowing range. Construction machines will not be permitted to park or turn around on the road next to the prairie.

The Northwest Park scheduled for the area will be strictly a hiking trail along the Papio. No soccer, baseball, swimming, tennis, or you name it. The Park goes east from the new 168th & Dodge interchange to Blondo. Three-fourths of the previously farmed area will be restored to native prairie. It's an exciting concept!



If you find an injured bird of prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-734-6817 or 402-731-9869.

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Christmas Counts Carry on Despite Bitter Cold

Omaha Area. By Betty Grenon. Scheduled for December 16, the Omaha Area Count was delayed until December 23 because of weather. The birders (fewer because of the delay and weather), braving heavy snow and severe cold, counted 59 species and 6,561 individuals.

While these were average totals, we had species highs of Turkeys, 144; and Great-tailed Grackles, 121. An uncommon species for the day was a Common Snipe.

Thanks to those who helped with the Count.

DeSoto/Boyer Chute. By Jerry Toll. The second year for this Count was completed on December 17. A total of 62 species fell from last year's 72, and total individuals dropped to 7,163 from 18,131 last year, with weather probably a major factor.

Weeks of bitter cold before the Count contrasted with the mild fall weather that lingered until just before count week last year, with most Nebraska Counts lower this year.

The most influential environmental factor was the near absence of open water. This year we tallied only 4 species of waterfowl compared to 12 last year. If we count the other water-related species found last year, we have the difference in species count between the 2 years. Individual waterfowl species dropped 88% compared to only a 15% drop for all other individuals.

Some interesting aspects of the Count include a large number of Rough-legged Hawks (14); 3 Short-eared Owls. a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the Fort Calhoun sector; 4

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White-crowned Sparrows and a Fox Sparrow on the DeSoto. We also counted an Eastern Phoebe, a Merlin, and a Spotted Towhee in the Hiton sector. We counted exactly 77 Red-tailed Hawks both this year and last.

Thanks to those who assisted with

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Memorials

In Memory of Ken Seger

Carol Shapter George & Betty Kieser

Doris Pilsek Kathleen Nielsen

Donald and Marian Laub Jim Knappenberger

Clyde and Emma Johnson

Kestrel Nest Monitors

In Memory of Margaret Seger

Margaret Struyk Donald and Marian Laub
Needed by March 4

Donald L. Gill Mr. and Mrs. Frank Boess
With spring approaching, kestrels will soon be looking for
Auklets' Omaha Area Kestrel Nesting Project and Betty Kieser
nest boxes.

don and Carol Goldapp
Our first outing is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, March 4, w
Volunteers need enthusiasm only, but the ability to climb a ladder

For more information, please call Cal Wolf at 333-8888
at 731-8249.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Deaver

In Memory of Ronald Halldorson

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Deaver

In Memory of Stewart Gilinsky

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Gallagher

In Memory of Esther Dillman

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Deaver

[In Memory of Maxine Burrows](#)

Ken and Kristen Burrows

Sue and Mark Hoffman

[In Memory of George Bogard](#)

Douglas and Sally Casey Lois Pearson

Robert and Garalene Corbin

[In Memory of Les and Cindy Lieurance](#)

John and Susan Owens

No Computer? Use This Easy Way to Report Backya

If you do not have computer access, you may report your Backya sightings to Robert and Kathleen Rose, 402-292-8912. The count for each sighting you can count for one day or four. You may phone in your data within four days.

Birdline

For an update on the sightings in the state, call 292- 5325.

Report your sightings after listening to the tape.

Notes from Nature

By Jerry Toll

Eastern Screen Owls

Eastern Screech Owls, although common, are rarely detected and thus underrepresented or absent in general bird surveys. Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) conducted in June cannot be used to determine the health of screech owl populations. The BBS is designed to detect species that are easily seen or heard during daylight hours. Screech owls require survey techniques specifically designed to detect them.

For two years I have done Breeding Owl

mands of breeding, the suburbs provided a steady supply of prey birds of the same species. The trees planted in the suburbs also provided more nesting and roosting cavities than in equal-sized plots found in rural areas.

Screech owls have a variety of vocalizations, each with a purpose. The single-tone trill is used primarily by the male, particularly during courtship and nesting in February and March. It is a bonding signal to coordinate family movements.

In February, during

slurred, fast, slow, long, or short, and can be used in combinations.

Screech owls also hoot, bark, and screech in increasing response to perceived danger.

I have not heard these but have seen bill clapping, a fear response common to all owls.

Gehlbach observed that Eastern Screech Owl calling is related to the gibbous cycle of the moon. The frequency and persistence of calls is greater when the moon is more than half full and greatest when the moon is full. These

Surveys at DeSoto NWR in March and April and have learned a few things, but did not feel confident in the information gathered. The survey method is in need of refinement this year. I thought I would share some of the interesting tidbits about screech owl behavior that I learned during the research.

Gehlbach's "The Eastern Screech Owl" was a comprehensive 10-year study of a population in Central Texas. In comparing study plots in both rural and suburban areas, he found that the screech owl populations in suburban areas were more dense and stable than in rural areas.

During late winter months when surviving is most precarious due to diminished prey and the higher de

courtship, the male will begin the single-note trill shortly before sunset and repeat it about once a minute for the next two hours. By March, when nesting begins, it is reduced to one-half hour but with a 15-second interval.

The female, who is the quieter of the two during courtship, picks up the slack during nesting and fledging. She uses the descending trill that is characteristically a nest-site territoriality defensive signal. She alerts the mate and fledglings to the possibility of danger and advertises to other screech owls that this is her home range.

Loud songs are by individuals of both sexes that are widely separated. Muted versions are by family members that are close to one another. Both trills have variations that can be

phenomena have also been documented in Western Screech Owls, Saw-whet Owls and Boreal Owls.

Last month I asked the questions: Which bird has the largest eye, and why is it a bird? Which bird has the smallest eye of any bird?

The answers to these questions will be given in next month's column.



Chip Davis Bird Song CD Available for Your Enjoyment

American Gramophone has produced a CD intended for passive listening entitled "Ambience - Bird Song."

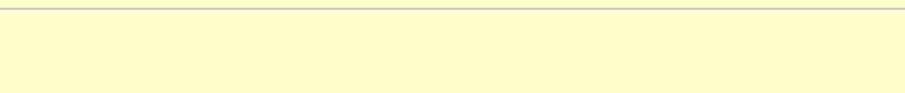
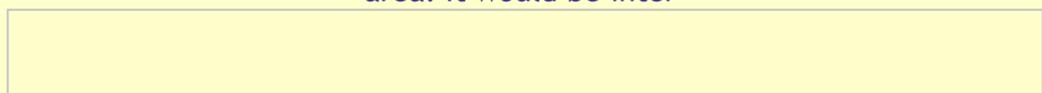
The sounds on the CD were produced by recordings of bird songs mixed with compositions by Chip Davis. The birds were recorded in mid-May in Davis' back yard in the Ponca Hills in Omaha.

By Loren and Babs Padelford
The CD brings the exuberance of spring bird songs into your living room. As we listened to the CD, we compiled a list of 23 species of birds that we identified.

This is a unique offering because the bird songs on the CD are likely to be heard on a spring walk in Fontenelle Forest, Neale Woods, or other wooded habitat in our area. It would be inter

esting to see how many species others can identify on this new recording by Chip Davis.

The CD sells for \$14.98 at American Gramophone, 9130 Mormon Bridge Road and 5001 So. 36th St, 8-5, M-F. For information on its upcoming availability at other locations, call their customer service number, 1-800-446-6860.



National Audubon Society

Membership Application

The *Audubon Magazine* and your membership card will be sent to this address:

Name

Street

City State

Zip Code

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates your gift and receives.

When sending your gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize. Please also give the name and address of the person to be notified.

Introductory Membership

(1st & 2nd Year) - \$20

Renewals: 3rd Year - \$25;

4th Year - \$30 thereafter

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A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who wish to support the Society's work.

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11809 Old Maple Road

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NAS Board Member Dave Tylka, tylka@postnet.com

Omaha NE 68164

