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# *The Meadowlark*

*ASO is a Chapter*

*of the National Audubon Society*

*Serving Eastern Nebraska  
and Western Iowa*

*January 2009*

*Volume 38 Issue 1*

## **Touring and Working in Costa Rica**

By Dennis Kingery

Audubon Society members will recall the program from January 2008 provided by Dennis and Karlene Kingery. They reviewed their various expedition experiences with the Earthwatch Institute and explained the organization's opportunities for involvement in scientific research around the world.

At that time they were preparing for another Earthwatch adventure in Costa Rica. "Costa Rica's Sustainable Coffee" was the research project they assisted during March 2008 at a tropical research station operated by the University of Georgia.

During the two-week work session, the Kingerys counted birds and insects, counted and collected fruits and flowers, measured trees, and collected data in many other ways. The work area was not far from the famed Monteverde and Santa Elena reserves, which they visited. In addition, they traveled the country for an extra week, touring national parks and other natural areas.

The Kingerys will return to relate their experiences in Costa Rica during the ASO meeting January 8, 2009. Since their return, Dennis has also researched coffee production as a major force in the international economy, and as a

## **January Feeder Watching**

### **Field Trip**

By Clem Klaphake

Because the weather is so unpredictable in January, I have set up a feeder watch in place of the usual field trip.

On Saturday, January 24th, we will start at 8:30 A.M. at Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue.

We will check out the feeders there and then move on to Kathleen Crawford-Rose's home in Bellevue (always good for a good number of species and good cookies).

We will move on south across the Platte River into Cass County and stop at Kathy Schwery's house.

In the past when we have done this, people have found it very enjoyable to observe birds while drinking coffee, tea or cider and chatting with fellow birders. Both Kathleen and Kathy have been excellent hosts for this event.

Good species we have seen on these feeder stops are Eastern Bluebirds, Carolina Wren, White-throated Sparrows, Hairy Woodpecker, Pine Siskin and Red-breasted Nuthatch. For those who wish to do some road birding (look for Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, etc.) we can also do that in the

worldwide ecological concern. The presentation will include background on the need for research on coffee production in a sustainable manner. Members will be able to examine the Earthwatch catalog of expeditions for 2009.

Join us at 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Method

afternoon.

Come join us for some cold weather birding and socializing. If you have questions, call Clem Klaphake at 292-2276.

ist Church, 4444 Frances Street (1 block south of 45th & Center). A brief business meeting will follow the program, with a social hour, coffee and cookies to conclude the evening.

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## **Birds of Prey as Indicators of Environmental Change**

By Clem  
Klaphake

We all have seen and admired the gracefulness, beauty, strength and charismatic features of birds of prey. Many people spend great amounts of time, money and effort observing and conserving them for future generations.

However, these admired creatures also play a very important role in most ecosystems. They are at the top of most ecosystems and have shown over and over again to be valuable indicators of change—albeit often catastrophic for them and for us.

Birds of prey act as an early warning system—just as guard dogs who bark, smoke alarms beep or weather forecasters warn of hurricanes—in regard to our environment. Because of their top position in the food chain and predatory behavior, they are sensitive to environmental change.

We are all familiar with the decline of the Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon in the 1960's and 70's due to the pesticide DDT. As a top predator, these birds were

in these countries in 2006. It appears that the vulture population is beginning to turn around.

The current concern and issue in the United States involves lead and the California Condors. Their numbers had declined to a few birds by the 1980's and were taken into captivity to help them survive as a species. After successfully breeding some of them in captivity, the researchers realized the prime killer of condors was lead poisoning.

Human health professionals have been trying to eliminate lead poisoning for over a hundred years because it also harms people.

The question confronting condor researchers was, "Where are they getting the lead from?" After years of studying condor feeding behavior and hunter activity, it has been determined that the source is coming mainly from the remains of animals contaminated with fragments of lead bullets. This same

receiving heavy doses of the chemical, which interfered with their calcium metabolism and caused their eggshells to become overly thin. After a couple of decades of this exposure, these birds' reproductive rates became negative, and their numbers dropped dramatically. Rachel Carson took note of this early warning in her 1962 book, *Silent Spring*.

Recent studies also have shown that early childhood exposure to DDT and its derivative from 1945 through the 1960's is linked to a fivefold increased risk of breast cancer in women who are now in their 50's and 60's, mainly the baby boomer generation.

Another recent example of birds of prey acting as an early warning of environmental change were Asian vultures in India, Pakistan and Nepal. Trace amounts of pharmaceutical residue picked up in trace amounts from cattle carcasses caused renal failure in the vultures. The drug being used by veterinarians to treat cattle was Diclofenac. The drug was quickly outlawed

research now shows there may be a risk to people who eat venison, a risk no one in a hundred years of shooting with high-powered rifles had ever imagined.

The level of risk to humans hasn't been determined yet, but it has certainly got the attention of health professionals. The Centers for Disease Control completed a study in North Dakota this summer to see if people who eat hunter-killed venison have higher blood lead levels than those who don't. The results are not in yet.

These are three examples of how birds of prey have acted as watch dogs or early warning systems of our environment: Peregrine Falcon/Bald Eagle/Asian vultures, and the California Condor. (The Peregrine Fund of Boise, Idaho, is the source for some of this information.)

The next question is, "What can we do about eliminating the lead poisoning problem?" See the February issue of *The Meadowlark*.

## **Rivers & Wildlife Celebration in March**

Audubon Nebraska presents the 39th annual Rivers & Wildlife Celebration, to be held in Kearney Friday-Sunday, March 20-22, 2009. The Celebration is timed to coincide with the annual migration of 500,000 Sandhill Cranes and millions of waterfowl through central Nebraska.

Featured speakers will be Pete Dunne, author and birding expert from Cape May Bird Observatory; Joel Sartore, *National Geographic* photographer; and Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, Director, Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust.

## **Great Backyard Bird Count Dates Approach**

The Great Backyard Bird Count held annually is nearing. The 2009 dates are Friday through Monday, February 13 - 16. Each year more of you are getting the bug to count birds for the record, to be citizen scientists for our birds. And your counting counts!

The need is to take at least 15 minutes (longer if you wish) in as many places and on as many days—one, two, three or all four—of the count as you wish. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time - in your backyard, at a park or another site. A

Field trips to birding hotspots in the area are led by experts throughout the festival. The highlight is a full-day birding trip with Pete Dunne on Sunday, March 22. Full-day and half-day trips will be led Thursday through Saturday to the Rainwater Basin and other migration stopovers. Tours may include stops at Prairie Chicken booming grounds and prairie dog towns. Trips to viewing blinds along the Platte at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary at sunrise and sunset are led. (Participants are urged to register early - space is limited.) A photography workshop with Joel Sartore and Randy Hampton and more conference attractions are scheduled.

To register, contact Audubon Nebraska, Box 117, Denton NE 68339, 402-797-2301; [Nebraska@audubon.org](mailto:Nebraska@audubon.org) or to download brochures. For more crane viewing information, contact Rowe Sanctuary, 308/468-5282; [www.rowesanctuary.org](http://www.rowesanctuary.org)

### **For Your Indoor Birding Pleasure**

For the cold months or any time of year, some products can bring songs and sightings into your home and aid your IDing skills. One is "Birds, Birds, Birds: An Indoor Birdwatching Field Trip" by John Feith, with beautiful action photography and songs of eastern birds— not just a few, but a lot.

A narrator gives us mnemonics, one being the Barred Owl's "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you-all." She adds birds' names that mimic their calls or songs, such as "Chuck-Will's-Widow" and the less obvious "Willet, willet, willet." The DVD is available through Wild Birds Unlimited.

Another product, the Cornell Lab's "Guide to Birds of North America," is available from [www.thayerbirding.com](http://www.thayerbirding.com) or a local store and can be installed on your computer. It contains photos and songs, information on migration, a variety of quizzes, a list manager, and other useful content.

separate list should be kept for each new day and more than one if you count in separate locations in a day.

On the web site [birdsource.org/gbbc](http://birdsource.org/gbbc), in the FAQ section, you can receive answers to questions such as "How do I know if I'm counting the same birds over and over?" When the count is over, your results are to be entered through the web page by March 1. You may want to print their form out ahead of time to help you gather the information needed.

If you recruit others to join and help, that would be appreciated. Spreading the word is important. Flyers are available at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc)

### **Save Trees: Avoid Mail-in**

#### **Renewal Notices From Audubon**

There's a way to avoid Audubon renewal notices in the mail. Simply call 800-274-4201 and request automatic renewal. You will receive a bill but no more notices of the expiration date or requests for renewal.

The Audubon Society of Omaha remembers with fondness DwanDean Leach, who passed away recently.

Dwan was well-known to many of us through her presence at events. In the 1990's she served on the Board as Treasurer and later held the position of Hospitality Chair, serving coffee and cookies at our general meetings for several years.

Through the years, civic and other local organizations were an important part of her life.

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## Threats to the Great Lakes Region

The Great Lakes watershed, containing 95 percent of our nation's fresh water, is one of the most significant ecosystems in the world. This region is home to many of Audubon's Important Bird Areas, serving as habitat to more than 400 bird species. The Great Lakes also provide fresh drinking water for the area's nearly 42 million people, as well as recreation, transportation and economic benefits. For all of these reasons, the health of the Great Lakes is critically important.

Invasive species, toxic and nutrient pollution, and destruction of habitat are all threats to the Great Lakes region. Diversion of water is another serious threat. National Audubon has become involved in a campaign to restore the Great Lakes. According to their website, Audubon will focus on bird and wildlife habitat restoration and protection of open spaces adjacent to the Great Lakes wetlands. Audubon also is committed to obtaining increased funding for this restoration campaign.

Water removal is one of the primary threats facing the Great Lakes. These lakes contain 20% of the world's fresh water, and as water shortages happen more frequently around the globe, it is important to prevent diversion of water from this region. In 2005 the governors of eight states bordering the Great Lakes, as well as the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario, signed a Basin Compact to prevent water from being shipped out of the Great Lakes area. This agreement came about after a Canadian company announced that it wanted to ship water in tankers from Lake Ontario to Asia.

Another major threat to the health of the Lakes comes from the more than 160 aquatic invasive species found in the

By Kathy Schwery

numerous Important Bird Areas in the Great Lakes area.

Increased production of corn ethanol has the potential to cause harm to the Great Lakes region in several ways. There are currently 39 ethanol production facilities in the area with another 28 being built or expanded. While there is some benefit from corn ethanol in that it lessens our nation's dependence on foreign oil, it also has harmful consequences. A Corps of Engineers study showing the impacts of ethanol production on the Great Lakes region listed increased use of water, loss of Conservation Reserve Program habitat, loading of the water with nutrients and toxic chemicals from corn production, and increased soil erosion as negative consequences of ethanol production.

Of the five Great Lakes, Lake Erie faces many serious challenges. Its coastal wetlands support the largest diversity of plants and animals, but over 90% of those wetlands have been lost. Toxic pollutants building up in the Lake are making those waters unsafe for swimming, the fish unsafe to eat, and the habitat unfit for wildlife. According to a National Audubon Society fact sheet about Lake Erie, in recent summers there have been more than 400 beach closings because of sewage overflows. Urgent action is needed to protect the valuable resources around Lake Erie.

An executive order by President Bush formed the Great Lakes Regional Collaborative, which has prepared the Great Lakes Restoration Plan. This massive plan, similar in scope to those for the Chesapeake Bay area and the Everglades, will focus on four areas:

Great Lakes region. Zebra mussels, sea lampreys, and other species are currently causing environmental and economic consequences to the ecosystem. These nonnative creatures compete with native fish for food and habitat space, sometimes eat the eggs of native species, and cost millions of dollars for eradication attempts. Losses to the sport and commercial fishing industries have been significant. Another invasive species, the Asian carp, would be harmful if it reached the Great Lakes. Funding is needed for the completion and operation of electric barriers to keep Asian carp from getting into the Lake. Common reed phragmites threaten

Removal of toxic hot spots in lakes and rivers

Stopping sewage dumping into lakes

Restoration of 550,000 acres of wetlands and 330,000 acres of buffer strips

• Controlling invasive species.

The problem in the Great Lakes region are serious, and the health of the Lakes is critical to everything that depends on them. The Audubon Society continues to lead efforts to restore this ecosystem so that its ecological, economic and recreational benefits can be preserved. It will take everyone working together, as well as a strong national commitment to the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes Basin, in order to accomplish the goals of the Restoration Plan.

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## Addresses to Remember

President George W. Bush

The White House, 1600  
Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202-456-1111; fax:  
202-456-2993

Jan. 21 - President Barak Obama

Capitol Hill Switchboard - 202-224-  
3121

or 800-247-2971

Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC  
20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-  
0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246;

## Audubon Society

### Membership Application

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introductory Membership

### National Audubon & Local Chapter

(1st & 2nd Year \$20)

Make check payable to National Audubon Society

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address:  
7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

**19612 Ridgeway Road**

**Plattsmouth NE 68048**

Senator Michael Johanns

**PO 3  
7XCH**

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.

Lincoln Capitol Switchboard:

402 471-2311

Representative Lee Terry

U.S. House of  
Representatives, Washington, DC  
20515

Phone: (202) 225-4155 ; Fax: (202)  
226-5452

Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St,  
Omaha 68154

Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

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: 471-  
6031

Mayor Mike Fahey

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183

Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-  
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 NE 68103-0542

**Nomination Deadline for Regional  
Directors**

**to National Audubon Board**

## **Bequests**

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

The deadline for nominations for National Audubon Board Regional Member, Central Region, is January 31, 2009. The following states are included in this Region: Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

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



Chapters are to present nominees to National by that date. For information on the procedure to be followed, call 292-2276.

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**Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha  
68103-0542**

**Phone: 451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>**

**Elected Officers:**

**President Clem Klaphake 292-2276**

**1st Vice President Urban Lehner 330-3888**

**2nd Vice President Nelli Falzgraf.....  
292-9687**

**Past President Elliott Bedows.....292-5017**

**Treasurer Fritz Davis..... 391-4945**

**Recording Sec'y Urban Lehner.....  
330-3888**

**Corresponding Sec'y Kathleen Rose....  
292-8912**

**Elected Directors Linda Dennis.....  
733-6548**

**Jackie Scholar.....551-5045 Eric  
Scholar..... 551-5045**

**Nancy Williams.....291-8580**

**Jerry Toll..... 453-9239**

**David Crawford....884-1660**

**Standing Committee Chairpersons:**

*The Meadowlark* is published monthly September through May, plus a summer issue. 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.



**Conservation Bob Fuchs..... 553-8242**

**Education Clem Klaphake.....292-2276**

**Field Trip Elliott Bedows.....292-5017**

**Finance Nelli Falzgraf..... ..292-9687**

**Fund Raising**

**Membership Kathy Schwery..... 296-4788**

**Program ----- Linda Dennis.....  
733-6548**

**Nancy Williams.... 291-8580**

**Natural Areas Mgt. Eric Scholar.....  
551-5045**

**Publication Laurine Blankenau. 451-3647**

**Publicity Jackie Scholar..... 551-5045**

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