

The Meadowlark

December 2008

Volume 37 Issue 10

ASO is a Chapter

of the National Audubon
Society

Serving Eastern Nebraska
and Western Iowa

Christmas Bird Count Dates and Details

The Omaha Area and the DeSoto Refuge/Boyer Chute Christmas Bird Counts are looking for participants to join us and report on our winter bird populations.

The **Omaha area count date is Saturday, December 20**, under the direction of Betty Grenon, 731-2383. To count at the area of your preference, please contact one of the quadrant leaders to sign up so they know who and how many to expect.

Leaders and areas: Jim & Sandy Kovanda (731-8249) - Lake Manawa; Rick Schmidt (319-1828) - Glenwood, Ia; Clem Klaphake 292-2276 - Fontenelle Forest; Sue Mattix (871-3314) - Plattsmouth area.

The Count will begin at 8:00 A.M. Participants may count for a half or whole day or as their time permits. Everyone, regardless of birding skills, is invited and welcome.

Warm clothing is vital for the cold and possibly snow. Warm footwear is essential. Bring a hot drink and lunch if you wish, or join the group at a local restaurant.

Following the count, a pot luck dinner will be held at the home of Count Coordinator Betty Grenon (731-2383). The DeSoto Refuge/Boyer Chute Count will be held Saturday, December 27. If

General Meeting Break in December

It could be snowing, it could be icy. There will be parties and other programs around town that our members will not want to miss. Therefore ASO will not hold a general meeting in December.

Don't forget about us, though, and watch for an announcement of our regular meeting in January 2009. Save the date of Thursday, January 8, when Dennis and Karlene Kingery will relate their travel, work and adventures volunteering with EarthWatch, helping with research on projects in the field.

December Field Trip Replaced

Our regular December field trip will be replaced by the Christmas Bird Counts, detailed in the column, left. Join us to serve and use or hone your bird identification talents.

You will be joining other bird enthusiasts in the field, at lunch, and at the compilation pot-luck supper at the end of the day where you can warm up, tell stories of your birding finds, and learn of the statistics from other quadrants.

you would like to participate and you know which sector, please contact the sector leader. Fort Calhoun - Sue Mattix (871-3314) Hitchcock - Elliott Bedows (292-5017) DeSoto NWR - Don or Janis Paseka (727-9229) Boyer Chute NWR - Jerry Toll (453-9239). Otherwise, contact Jerry Toll to sign up.

Survival or Extinction?

By Clem
Klaphake

It seems there is an endless list of flora and fauna species that are just hanging by a thread for their continued existence. I could write a column every month from now until 2058 (I'm an optimist) about endangered or disappearing species and barely scratch the surface of the total number struggling just in North America alone.

One of those species is the Thick-billed Parrot that existed in Arizona until the 1920's when it disappeared completely from that state. Currently it lives in the wild only in Mexico, where its population probably is about 2,000 total birds.

The American Bird Conservancy is currently working with its Mexican partner group Pronatura Noreste to support land acquisition that has old-growth trees for nesting habitat in northwestern Mexico. It is these types of old-growth forests that the Thick-billed Parrot uses for nesting along with the Mexican Spotted Owl, Eared Trogon and Northern Goshawk.

Some of you may remember reading about the Thick-billed Parrot in Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*. He encountered the parrot while backpacking in the Sierra Madre Occidental in 1936, and decided the species represented the ecological spirit

So to compensate for a lack of nesting trees, the American Bird Conservancy is supporting Pronatura Noreste in placing 20 nesting boxes in large trees in the nesting area of the parrots, near the town of Madera. This past year in May, the parrots investigated the boxes, and three pairs decided they liked them well enough to move in. In July, nesting was confirmed in one of the boxes and suspected in two others. Not bad for the first year boxes were put out.

The Arizona Fish & Game Agency and the Sonoran Joint Venture have been planning to reintroduce the species to the Chiricahua Mountains in Arizona using parrots captured in the wild. An effort to reintroduce the Thick-billed Parrots to Arizona in the 1980's and 90's failed because the released captive-bred birds were unable to learn how to avoid the numerous predators in the area.

In mid-November of this year, I was at the Crane Festival at Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico. While there, I visited with the ranch manager for the Armendaris Ranch, which abuts Bosque del Apache. It is one of Ted Turner's largest pieces of land (600 square miles) that encompasses an entire mountain range. He told me that about a year ago, he was sitting at the kitchen table early in the morning having a cup of coffee when he saw a parrot outside the

of the region. His finding was published in the ornithological journal *The Raven*.

The reasons for this species' declines are the same old litany of threats we hear regarding so many other species.

Trapping for the pet trade, hunting and logging of the forests in the Sierra Madre Occidental of western Mexico and southeast Arizona are the main culprits. This mountain range was once (not that long ago) forested with large conifers.

Logging has removed large trees that provide nesting cavities for the parrots, which cannot excavate their own holes. Breeding doesn't take place because they cannot find a place to nest. Less than 1% of the old growth forest remains intact in the Sierra Madre Occidental.

window. He first made sure what he was looking at and then checked to see if it had any bands or markings of being a captive bird. Finding none, he notified the Audubon Society in Albuquerque. It was quickly identified as a wild Thick-billed Parrot. It stayed on the ranch for about 4 weeks. During that time, hundreds of birders came to see it, including ones from 10 different countries.

So maybe there is hope that the parrots may return to the southwest part of the United States—on their own or with the help of humans. The only other native parrot species of North America was the Carolina Parakeet, and they are extinct.

Bird Seed Sale Volunteers —Thanks!

By Kathleen Crawford-Rose

Our annual bird seed sale is over, and it was truly a group effort from start to finish. When all the bills are paid and the checks counted, we should clear approximately \$5,000.00.

Thanks go out to all the volunteers and customers who make this sale a success each year. We apologize if we miss anyone, but we would really like to recognize the workers who made this sale a success.

Head-of-it-all: Neal Ratzlaff

Chief Assistants: Carole & Dick Rasmussen, Jerry Toll, Kathleen Crawford-Rose
Computer Program: Bill Swick

Computer Backup: Duane Schwery
Mailing: Laurine Blankenau, Pauline Dickey, Eunice Levisay, Carole & Dick Rasmussen, Wanda Neaderhiser, Essie

Rose, Denny Davis, Fritz Davis, Nelli and Randy Falzgraf, Jonas Grundman, Clem Klaphake, Jim McLochlin, David Nichols, Eric Scholar, Jim & Collette Chiesa, Babs & Loren Padelford, Don & Jan Paseka, Gary Peterson, Duane Schwery and Don Westling.

The author of the above article, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, does not mention the extent of the work she and her Co-Chair, Carole Rasmussen, contribute to this our

Grill, Kathy Schwery, Jo Bartikoski and Kathleen Crawford-Rose

Garages and snacks: Neal Ratzlaff, Duane & Janice Bright, and Eunice Levisay
Distribution crew (loading and unloading the seed): Jerry Toll, Crew Chief; Jo Bartikoski, Elliott Bedows, Laurine Blankenau, Kathleen Crawford-

Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs

By Laurine Blankenau

major fundraiser. Therefore, I will enlighten our members about the service they perform for ASO. Their work pays for our programs, office rental and a myriad of other expenses. Kathleen and Carole avoid trumpeting their work, saying Neal Ratzlaff, Dick Rasmussen and Jerry Toll deserve equal credit.

Carole and Kathleen have officially Co-Chaired the Bird Seed Sale this year and the previous five years. They take charge of purchasing the bird seed from the purveyors, promoting the sale, seeking new customers, mailing order forms, processing orders, working with garage owners, arranging for delivery of bird seed, and probably a lot more I'm forgetting.

In the name of all of us in the Audubon Society of Omaha, thank you Bird Seed Sale Chairs Kathleen and Carole (as well as Neal, Dick and Jerry).

Scouting Event at Boys Town

By Nelli Falzgraf

The ASO participated in our first *University of Scouting Midway* event at Boys Town on November 8 and was pleased that scouting staff invited us to return next year. Other nature groups included Gifford Farm, Raptor Recovery Nebraska, and Arbor Day Foundation.

The event featured scouting staff and organizations that provide information for troop leaders or work with scouts to help boys earn badges. We brought information for a bird study badge for Boy Scouts and informed participants of our upcoming Art Contest, which may interest Cub Scouts. Hopefully, Audubon brochures and others, our website, and program information in newsletters could be resources to scout leaders looking for troop activities.

The chapter appreciates volunteers who set up the event, provided information, and staffed: Jackie Scholar, Laurine Blankenau, Nancy Williams, and Nelli Falzgraf.

By Laurine Blankenau

Although the heartland has been spared the devastation others have felt from storms, floods and fires during 2008. Nevertheless, warnings are sent out about changes none of us wish for. Science-based projections for the Midwest, namely Iowa, about creeping climate change and the means of confronting the problems before they become more severe.

The current model for climate change in Iowa predicts the state's weather to grow warmer and drier. Summers are expected to lengthen and heat up, with reduced rainfall. Iowa will not change its name to Kansas, but by 2030 Iowa is predicted to have the weather Kansas experiences at the present, with comparable temperatures and rainfall. By the same calculations, Iowa summers will be even warmer by the end of the century, much like the state of Mississippi. Regarding winters, the change will be less noticeable, with Iowa resembling present northern Kansas. These changes don't sound disastrous, but humans and wildlife will be affected, and adaptations may be difficult.

A complete reversal of the undesirable trend is not possible because heat-trapped gases in the atmosphere will continue to give us warmer, drier weather for more years than we care to contemplate. But additional harm can be averted.

A report by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), the source for the above information, recommends steps to save energy and contribute to cleaner air and water. Some of these can mean new jobs. Every step taken now will improve the world our survivors inhabit.

Most recommendations are for power plants, vehicles, the state legislature, cities, and farm operations. Lower fuel emissions for vehicles, mass transit for Iowa's cities, tree planting on marginal lands, and agriculture-based renewable energy projects are recommended in some detail.

More research-based information can be found on the web about climate change

The Nebraska Native Plant Society, founded in 2007, holds monthly programs and field trips. These are free and open to the public. Upcoming programs are posted to their web site www.unl.edu/nebnps/NNPSindex.html.

There is more information on the web site, including plant lists from previous field trips and additional printable membership forms.

The 2008 Officers are Elaine Nowick, Chairperson; Eric Scholar, Vice Chair; David Sutherland, Secretary/Treasurer; Alison Krohn, Board Member; Robert Kaul, Board Member.

Some previous talks and field trips:

Griffith Prairie, Burchard Lake, Ponca State Park

Erythronium Viewing at Madigan Prairie

Waubonsie State Park Winter Tree ID Workshop

Macrofungi of Nebraska: Edible and Poisonous

Wild Seasons: Gathering and Cooking Wild Plants of the Great Plains, Lincoln Salt Marshes

Membership in the Nebraska Native Plant Society is open to anyone with an interest in native plants of the state. Mail the application, below, to the treasurer with your \$10.00 annual dues.

Nebraska Native Plant Society

and its impact on the economy, people and their well-being, jobs, the scenery and recreation. More is available, too, about the means of slowing down climate change. To view this information, go to www.ucs.org

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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

Senator Ben Nelson

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fax 202-228-0012; Lincoln:
402-437-5246; Omaha 391-
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Senator Chuck Hagel

U.S. Senate, Washington,
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Omaha Address: 9900
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Omaha 68114

Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax:
(202) 224-5213

Omaha phone: (402) 758-
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Representative Lee Terry
U.S. House of
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Make check payable to National Audubon Society

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Plattsmouth NE 68048

PO 3

7XCH

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

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Fax: (202) 226-5452

,Omaha NE 68103-0542

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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

Tips for Thrift

- For energy and \$ savings, if you have an extra refrigerator or a freezer that is used for backup when your relatives are in town or you are throwing a party, unplugging it while it stands idle is a good idea. These appliances use a surprising amount of energy, up to ten percent of total household energy use.

- To reduce energy use at the source: buy liquid, not powdered, laundry detergent. The liquid variety requires less energy during production than the powdered variety.

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

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

Elected Officers:

President Clem Klaphake 292-2276

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**2nd Vice President Nelli Falzgraf.....
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Past President Elliott Bedows.....292-5017

Treasurer Fritz Davis..... 391-4945

**Recording Sec'y Urban Lehner.....
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Field Trip Elliott Bedows.....292-5017

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

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Membership Kathy Schwery..... 296-4788

Program ----- Linda Dennis.....

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