

December 2005
Volume 34 Issue 10

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

Support Your Local Audubon

By Nancy Leonard

By now everyone should have received an invitation to the December 8 reception at the Joslyn Art Museum. John Flicker, President of the National Audubon Society, and Dr. Paul Johnsgard, Professor Emeritus, University of Nebraska, will host the event and speak. The highlight of the event is the opportunity to see the recently acquired Audubon lithographs of North America's mammals. The purpose of the event is to raise money for Audubon's programs in Nebraska.

This is a very important fundraiser, and we are encouraging our members to attend. We will, therefore, not hold our normal December meeting on Dec. 8. Our normal monthly meetings will resume Thursday, January 12, 2006. Monies raised on December 8 will support Spring Creek Prairie, the Rowe Sanctuary, the Important Bird Areas program, and other programs. If you have been to Spring Creek Prairie, you know that exciting things are happening. They are building a new education building, continuing the restoration of the prairie, and continuing their well-attended programs which bring both children and adults back in touch with the singular beauties of the prairie landscape.

Rowe Sanctuary hosted more than 4,000 students last year. From first graders to law students, they came to learn about nature, conservation, and of course, the cranes. Rowe Sanctuary is the only place in central Nebraska that offers nature education. This past year Rowe added a critical mile of Platte River habitat to the sanctuary. This will protect the large roosting area that is visible from their main blind. In addition, Rowe is working on establishing a Master Naturalist program in Nebraska and considering organizing birding trips into the Sandhills during the non-crane season.

Exciting and important things are happening in the conservation and nature education fields in Nebraska. Audubon is essential to these efforts, but it can't be without your support. So come join your friends at the cocktail buffet on December 8 at the Joslyn Art Museum. Cost is \$25 per person, and there will be a cash bar. **RSVP by December 1 by calling 402/797/2301 or sending an email to Scp@audubon.org.** If you have any questions, please call Nancy Leonard at 402/330/3888. See you there!

Christmas Bird Count at DeSoto December 31

Omaha Area Count December 17

The DeSoto NWR Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 31, under the direction of Bob Barry at DeSoto. Starting time will be 8:00 A.M. Participants are asked to contact the quadrant captains directly. If unsure or indifferent to placement, contact Jerry Toll or Bob Barry.

Quadrant captains are **Hitchcock:** Jim Meyer - jimmeyer50@hotmail.com 537 9568; **DeSoto:** Bob Barry - Bob_barry@fws.gov 642-5404; **Fort Calhoun:** Sue Mattix - suemattix@cox.net 871 3314; **Boyer Chute**

Refuge: Jerry Toll - jertol@radiks.net 453-9239.

Volunteers for the DeSoto Refuge will meet at the Administration Building.

The Omaha Area Count of December 17 will cover four quadrants. Participants are asked to contact **Betty Grenon**, Count Coordinator (731-2383) to sign up for one of the four quadrants. The quadrants and leaders are **Fontenelle Forest:** Clem Klaphake; **Lake Manawa:** Loren Padelford; **Glenwood, Iowa:** Rick Schmid; and **Plattsmouth:** Sue Mattix.

Happenings

by Elliott Bedows

To Kill a `Sparrow-bird'

I don't know about you, but other than for spam, I am used to having my email box filled with requests for money, requests for letters to be written to our legislators on pertinent environmental issues, or verbiage on the location of interesting bird species recently seen.

But this past week has been an entirely different story; my email box is now filled with literally 100-plus reports concerning a group of Dutch entrepreneurs intent on setting a new Guinness Book of World Record for the number of falling dominoes. Accordingly, these people sent a news team in to cover this event. But to the dismay of all, a House Sparrow inadvertently got into the arena where the domino contest was being held and, regrettably, being scared, the Sparrow knocked over about 23,000 of the eventual 4.1 million dominoes.

Without hesitation, the sparrow was killed. Although this fact was initially disputed, the security guard who shot and killed the bird with an air rifle eventually said in a subsequent interview that he "just came in and shot the bird [because] using nets [to save the Sparrow] would have been too much of a risk [to the dominoes]."

The organizers defend their action by saying that "a lot of people have put in a lot of time organizing the event [and now] people are saying money (or greed) played an important role in the decision. This is an annual event in Holland, which started as an out-of-hand evening for some boys, but it has turned into a very commercial thing, which the TV Company tries to sell as a national event [to] keep the world record Dutch. . . It will be broadcast live in several countries, including Holland, and to the very large German market as well. Commercial prices are high around the event, so you could safely say money does play an important part in the decision."

And that set off a flurry of protests from around the globe. In the Netherlands, where the incident happened, the House Sparrow is a fully protected species since its numbers have declined by more than 50% over the last decade as they have throughout Europe.

On November 16 the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*, reported that the Dutch Animal Protection Society is looking into this incident. In fact, the Dutch Animal

Protection Society began investigating the claim the very next day. The Society plans to submit the case to prosecutors. Even our own ESPN - the largest sports network in North America - reported (and I personally read this account) that "the Dutch television show claimed to have knocked down a chain of more than 4.1 million dominoes Friday in a new world record, but organizers conceded the event was overshadowed by the earlier shooting of an errant sparrow. The sparrow was killed by an exterminator with an air rifle on Monday after it knocked down 23,000 dominoes. The killing was seen by many as an overreaction and angered animal rights and bird protection groups. Endemol, the TV firm which organized the event, defended the killing, saying more than 100 people had worked for more than a month setting up the dominoes."

Oh.....that certainly justifies the killing of a bird. Or, as Norway's Eddie Chapman summed it up, "The [endangered] status of the bird should not be entered into the discussion. It is irrelevant if the bird is endangered or not. A live creature should not be killed for this reason. Someone asked if people involved in creating the record attempt, who by accident knocked some stones over as well, also should be shot." (Good point, Eddie.)

Research has proven that House Sparrow populations have declined up to 50% or more in some areas of Europe. If things progress at this rate, then the American population could be vital to the future survival of the species. While we do not need House Sparrows yet, what we do need is to find out why populations are crashing. Could it be pollution?

An important fact to remember is that during the breeding season, House Sparrows only feed their young insects during the first few weeks, thereby doing a good job of keeping the balance regarding insect populations. Though its contribution may be relatively small, it certainly plays a part in keeping a balance in nature, as do all species.

In today's world of climate change and vanishing forests, I think that any national company, such as the TV

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Birdathon 2005

Professionals, Participants,

Planners and Partners

By Bechara Embaid

It is that time of the year again when we count on ASO family and members to support their favorite projects while having fun counting birds.

Since Birdathon 2004, a lot of things have taken place, including many ASO decisions made that have been conducted in a highly professional and participatory environment. Planning the future course of ASO was our ultimate priority.

The Birdathon contributions will go to fund our traditional projects and committees: the Prairie, the Education programs, Field Trips, Conservation, Art Contest, and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*, which are heavily reliant upon membership contributions.

This year the Birdathon will take place during the month of December. We will feature birds counted during the traditional Christmas Count. You will receive a flyer detailing the projects alluded to above during the early part of December 2005.

However, if you wish to contribute at this time, please send your tax deductible donation to Bechara Embaid, 3218 No. 120th Court, Apt 221, Omaha NE 68164. **Make checks payable to the Audubon Society of Omaha.** Any help will be appreciated.

Are you tired of unnecessary renewal notices and disturbed by the knowledge that the mailings consume precious forests? National Audubon wants to help. To eliminate such notices, simply call 800-274-4201 and sign up for Audubon's Paper Free Renewal.

Instead of mailing you renewal reminders, National Audubon will automatically renew your membership each year.

You'll simply receive a bill, as with a newspaper subscription. Of course, you can cancel at any time.

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A total of 32 species were seen. They included 1 Great Egret, 5 Great Blue Herons, 4 goose species, Bald Eagles, Belted Kingfisher, and a Red-tailed Hawk.

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Sparrow, *Continued from page*
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Company in the Netherlands, should think twice about what consequences are involved in setting a world record in something so useless as 4 million dominoes falling over. Either way, it appears that the human credo is becoming, "I'm all for respecting life, so long as I'm not inconvenienced in the process."

"The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still voice within."

— Mahatma Gandhi

Sig

Peace and the Environment — How Are They Related?

From *World Ark*

By Laurine Blankenau

The first African woman and the first environmentalist to win the Nobel Peace Prize (2004) is an inspiration to those in both the cause of peace and the struggle to protect our environment. The logic of the two ideals driving the recipient, native Kenyan Wangari Maathai, is clear.

How are trees and peace related? The answer was stated by the Nobel Committee. "Peace on Earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment. Maathai stands at the front of the fight to promote ecologically viable social, economic and cultural development in Kenya and in Africa. She has taken a holistic approach to sustainable development that embraces democracy, human rights and women's rights in particular. She thinks globally and acts locally."

On the way to her "green" accomplishments and recognition, Maathai earned disbelief and scorn, including that of the President of her country. Despite the struggle, she eventually founded the Green Belt Movement that has promoted the planting of 30 million trees "and counting."

Through the Kennedy Foundation, Maathai was educated in the biological science in the United States, first at Mt. St. Scholastica in Atchison Kansas, and later at the University of Pittsburgh, ultimately earning a doctorate. Here in the United States, she says she was given "a completely different horizon, a different perception, and. . .some values that I have tried to share. . ." In 1974 during her husband's campaign for a Kenyan parliament seat, she took up the issue of deforestation as she heard repeated problems stated: lack of jobs, for one. As a beginning, Maathai proposed a tree-planting project.

Becoming part of Kenya's environmental movement and the National Council of Women of Kenya, she heard accounts of malnutrition, the need to walk great distances for water, badly eroded soil that resulted in a desert, no wood for cooking or building, lack of animal fodder, lack of work and income.

"Maathai, the scientist, saw these as symptoms and looked past the symptoms for the disease. The disease was environmental degradation, deforestation." She knew that the "disease" caused people to fight over resources that have been degraded, scarce, or nonexistent.

For example, conflicts exist between farming interests and grazing interests. The "cure" is sustainable and proper management such as Matthai's tree-planting projects which protect the soil and water, provide fruit trees for food, and trees for fodder.

One immediate benefit for workers is paid labor for tree planting. Later, income is earned from harvesting the trees for fuel, construction or fruit. Matthai's inspired project, the Green Belt Movement, has attracted the interested and curious from other nations to her country.

On the road to success, Matthai endured arrests, beatings, public condemnations and scorn. Her worthy project, persistence and accomplishments richly deserved one of the world's finest honors.

For the complete article from the November/December *World Ark*, a publication of Heifer International, contact www.heiferfoundation.org.

The Heifer Foundation gives aid to the needy around the world by providing the means to earn income from planting and raising trees or raising their own animals — "the gift of self-reliance."

Sign up for Project FeederWatch

We invite you to help scientists monitor changes in feeder bird populations by counting birds throughout the winter as part of Project FeederWatch. Participants count birds at their feeders as often as once a week from November through April and submit counts online or on paper data forms. Long-term monitoring programs such as FeederWatch are important for identifying and targeting research and conservation efforts.

FeederWatchers receive a research kit that includes a handbook, a bird identification poster, a calendar, and an instruction booklet. Participants also receive an annual subscription to BirdScope. The program costs \$15 (\$12 for Lab members).

Sign up today at the FeederWatch web site: www.birds.cornell.edu/PFW or call 800 843-2473. All participants are welcome!

Sign up Now for Project FeederWatch

ambassador for the count— you can choose your level of involvement.

You could put up posters, forward email messages to friends and list serves, send press releases to your newspaper, host a GBBC workshop, or encourage libraries and nature centers to make computers available for participants to enter data.

We'll provide the information and the rest is up to you! To become an ambassador and receive a packet from us by mail, write to Jennifer Smith at jls39@cornell.edu. Type GBBC in the subject line. I Include your name, address, phone #, email address, interviews OK or no interviews. (If you would like to be available for interviews by reporters, type OK; if not, type No Interviews.

Watch for more information on the GBBC in the coming months!

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

U.S. Senate, Washington DC
20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-
0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246;
Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address:
7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Chuck Hagel

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.
20510-2705

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

Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry

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

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

Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

Representative Jeff Fortenberry

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

Phone: (202) 225-4806

Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln,
NE 68509

Audubon Society

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The *Audubon Magazine**(see below, chapter-only membership)
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

Chapter-only Membership: \$15

(No National Audubon Magazine)

Make check payable to Audubon Society of Omaha

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

19612 Ridgeway Road

Plattsmouth NE 68048

PO 3

7XCH

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

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



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

Bequests

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

Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103-05

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

Elected Officers:

President Elliott Bedows.....292-5017

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Field Trip Clem Klaphake.....292-2276

Finance Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

Standing Committee Chairpersons, cont.

Program Nancy Leonard.....330-3888

Publication Laurine Blankenau.....451-3647

Publicity Jackie Scholar.....551-5045

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Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939

Speakers Bureau Eunice Levisay.....393-0545

Historian Kathleen Rose.....292-8912

Birdathon Chair Bechara Embaid,,,,,965-9598

ASO State Board Rep. Mace Hack.....934-5040

NAS Board Member Ione Werthman..... 493-0373

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.

Fund Raising Mace Hack.....934-5040

Hospitality DwanDean Leach.....346-5769

Membership Kathy Schwery.....296-4788

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

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