



Meadowlark

JAN/FEB 2025

VOL 54 ISSUE 1

Published by Audubon Society of Omaha, a chapter of National Audubon Society since 1971

Lively in Winter: Birds to look and listen for in January and February

By *Conor Gearin*

Winter: the least exciting time of year for birds, right? Well, it depends on the bird! Though most North American birds mate in the summer, many owls, including the Great Horned Owl, have it flipped. They pair up in the bleak midwinter, often with eggs in the nest before the end of January. Their young will hatch in early spring, then spend the warm months of the year under their parents' care, slowly learning to fly and hunt. The early hatching time gives them the chance to have a longer childhood than, say, Robin chicks, which are off and running on their own in just a couple of weeks.

What this means is lots of owl activity in January and February as they seek out mates and hunt prey to sustain their growing families. Barred Owl mates duetting at night, called "caterwauling," provides a singular soundtrack for midwinter. Males sing their "Who-cooks-for-you!" song, and females respond in a higher pitch. The pair wind each other up and make their calls more complex as they go; sometimes, several nearby Barred Owls join in, so that it sounds like a troop of monkeys has invaded the neighborhood. Listen for Barred Owls, Great Horned Owls and more at night. While it's easier to spot owls on winter days when the trees are bare, remember to keep your distance and give nesting owls plenty of space. Owls' tolerance for human visitors can vary, so err on the side of caution. The goal is to make sure they continue to share our cities with us and successfully raise their young.



Barred Owl, photo by Karen Kutx Smith

Other highlights of winter birding include massive flocks of Snow Geese in bare crop fields, along with Horned Larks dashing on the ground looking for waste grain. It's a great time to get a close look at waterfowl overwintering in our area.

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UPDATES TO ASO PRAIRIES

Led by our Natural Areas Stewardship Committee co-chairs, Kayla Johnson & Glenn Pollock, ASO continues to maintain and improve its two prairie preserves. The Glenn Pollock Prairie, located to the east of the North Omaha Airport, was burned in late fall 2024 to prevent the growth of woody plants and non-native species. Wildflower seeds donated by several people will be planted in the northwest corner of the site, which continues to be a focus for restoration efforts.

At Cuming City Cemetery, a native Loess Hills prairie located north of Blair, ASO is focused on removing woody species including sumac and dogwood that compete with prairie wildflowers and grasses. ASO has applied for grants to support this work, which requires the use of heavy equipment operated by qualified individuals.

The Glenn Pollock Prairie now features interpretive signs that will help guide visitors through the prairie and provide more information. ASO members are encouraged to visit both sites, enjoy the wildlife found there, and learn more about Nebraska's native ecosystems.

GREEN CORNER: HOW YOU CAN HELP WILDLIFE AT HOME

Conservation begins at home; each of us can help restore our unique ecosystem.

Cold Weather Composting

Composting is an eco-friendly way to recycle organic waste into nutrient-rich soil. During winter, avoid turning the compost pile to prevent disturbing hibernating wildlife and to maintain essential heat for decomposition. How's that for easy?

Try a Nicer De-icer

Make de-icing sidewalks and driveways eco-friendly by using alternatives to harmful chemicals.

Ash from a wood stove, sand, and sawdust are effective options. Naturally biodegradable, these will help avoid toxic runoff protecting plants, pets, and waterways.

ON THE HORIZON

January

MEMBERS PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9

What: Thinking Differently about Urban Habitats with Conor Gearin

When: 6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. program

Where: DJ's Dugout meeting room
777 N. 114th Street, Omaha

How: Register at Audubon-Omaha.org

Who: Members and the public (free)

FIELD TRIP

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

What: Snow Geese and other waterfowl at DeSoto. Enjoy the warmth of birding from inside the visitor center

When: 10 a.m. - Noon

Where: DeSoto Wildlife Refuge

1434 316th Lane, Missouri Valley, IA

How: Register at Audubon-Omaha.org

Who: Members and the public (free)

February

MEMBERS PROGRAM

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

What: Bird tracking with Motus

Glenn Pollock and Jerry Toll will speak about Motus and its amazing insights

When: 6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. program

Where: DJ's Dugout meeting room
777 N. 114th Street, Omaha

How: Register at Audubon-Omaha.org

Who: Members and the public (free)

FIELD TRIP

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

What: EZ Does it Urban Birding

Virginia Stauffer will lead a birding walk at a leisurely pace

When: 9-11 a.m.

Where: Towl Park

9310 W. Center Rd., Omaha

How: Register at Audubon-Omaha.org

Who: Members and the public (free)

FIELD TRIP

SATURDAY, MARCH 1

What: Birding at Forest Lawn Cemetery

When: 9-11 a.m.

Where: 7909 Mormon Bridge Rd
Omaha, NE

How: Register at Audubon-Omaha.org

Who: Members and the public (free)

Field notes from the president *by Anne Maguire*



Happy New Year! I hope you had a chance to join us for some of our programs and birding field trips in 2024.

LOOKING BACK

Many of you enjoyed learning about backyard bird photography, pocket prairies, BirdNote and the Sandhill Crane migration. We heard about wild bird rescues by Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, welcomed the owls from Fontenelle Forest and

were awed by Dr. John O'Keefe's documentary film, *The Last Prairie*.

Our monthly field trips included viewing waterfowl at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge and Lake Manawa, an eagle nest watch, a guided tour of Heron Haven, and an evening grasslands birding walk at Glacier Creek Preserve. We saw a native wildlife habitat restoration project at Cottonwood Creek Preserve and observed Saw-whet Owl banding at Hitchcock Nature Center.

COMING UP

We are kicking off 2025 with our January program, "Thinking Differently about Urban Habitats." Discover how nature can thrive in the city and suburbs. Stay warm for our January field trip by watching waterfowl from the viewing room at DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge.

Attend our February program and learn how cutting-edge Motus technology helps researchers track individual birds around the Americas and Europe. Then join us on the first day of March for a brisk birding hike in Forest Lawn cemetery.

Are you new to birding, or a seasoned birder looking for a casual outing in a birding hot spot? Join us one Saturday each month at Towl Park, 93rd and West Center Road, for our EZ Does it Urban Birding series.

Keep informed on upcoming programs and field trips by reading our newsletter, following Audubon Society of Omaha on Facebook and Instagram, and visiting our website, Audubon-Omaha.org. All of our programs and field trips are free and open to the public.

I hope the new year brings you many new adventures — enjoying nature and getting involved with Audubon Society of Omaha.

The eyes have it — your photos

We love to see your wild bird photos! Please email them to audubonomaha@audubonomaha.org



Goldfinch, photo by Janet Denison



Cooper's Hawk, photo by Mary Clausen

CALLING ALL CREATIVE KIDS:

The 2025 Student Art Contest is here



We invite K-12 students to participate in the annual Student Art Contest held by Audubon Society of Omaha. Our goal is to introduce young people to birds

and promote the importance of wildlife in our community. This contest is free to enter and open to the public.

WHO: All K-12 students

WHAT: Original student artwork featuring birds. Many prizes will be awarded in these categories: Realism, Graphic Design, Cartooning, and Recycled.

HOW AND WHERE: Starting January 2, look for rules, entry forms and more at audubon-omaha.org under the Special Events tab.

ENTRY DEADLINES: Submit entries at the Audubon Society of Omaha office, located at 4339 S. 90th Street, on:

- Thursday, March 6, 3 - 6 p.m.
- Friday, March 7, 3 - 6 p.m.
- Saturday, March 8, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

ART SHOW AND AWARDS:

Saturday, April 26, the Art Show begins at noon, giving attendees an opportunity to view all artwork submitted. The Awards ceremony starts at 1 p.m. for grades K-4, at 2 p.m. for grades 5-8, and at 3 p.m. for grades 9-12. After each Awards Ceremony, student artists will take their art home.

WHY AN ART CONTEST? Studies show that drawing is superior to activities such as reading or writing because students process information in multiple ways: visually, kinesthetically and semantically. A focus on birds provides teachers, parents and students an opportunity to discuss conservation of our environment, which helps birds and all wildlife.

WANNA HELP? There are many tasks we need volunteers' help with to hold this event. Please consider volunteering to:

- Collect and organize art
 - Wrap and package prizes
 - Hang student artwork for the Show
 - Help with hosting the Art Show
- To volunteer, please contact Sarah Shepherd at sshepherd@audubonomaha.org. If you have questions, contact us at vstauffer@audubonomaha.org.

Lively in Winter: Birds to look and listen for in January and February

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(top) Canada Goose and (front) Cackling Goose, photo by Bill Bossman

If you want to work on discriminating the smaller Cackling Goose from the larger Canada Goose, check out Walnut Creek Lake and other local water bodies where they are reliably found.

And if you're not interested in enduring the cold and wind for "fun," fear not. The winter months are also the peak time for bird feeding. Bird activity

can wax and wane at feeders, so don't get too discouraged by a slow day or two. Cold weather makes birds eager for an easy meal of seeds or suet, leading to great bird diversity you can enjoy from behind a window with a hot beverage. Remember to keep your feeders free of disease by cleaning with diluted bleach at least once a week. This can prevent the spread of conjunctivitis, salmonella, and other illnesses that can spread among songbird flocks in winter.

In our local parks and backyards, look and listen for mixed-species groups of songbirds banding together to find food in the winter. Often following the lead of a chickadee or titmouse, these tiny birds have what it takes to find sustenance when the temps are in the teens and a harsh wind is blowing.

Find a tougher Nebraskan than that — I dare ya.

Highlights of January & February birds

WATERFOWL

- Snow Goose
- Cackling Goose
- Trumpeter Swan
- Common Goldeneye
- Hooded Merganser
- Common Merganser
- Ruddy Duck

RAPTORS

- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Cooper's Hawk
- Bald Eagle
- Great Horned Owl
- Barred Owl

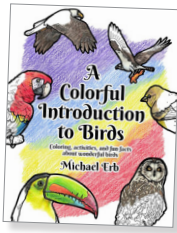
LANDBIRDS

- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Brown Creeper
- Winter Wren
- Pine Siskin
- Snow Bunting
- Harris's Sparrow

BOOK REVIEW:

A Colorful Introduction to Birds

By *Conor Gearin*



The spectacular feathers of birds make them a frequent choice for coloring pages. But how many coloring books also teach you about the hows and whys of bird plumage? Michael Erb's coloring book, *A Colorful Introduction to Birds*, provides a fun and engaging way for people of all ages to learn more about the diversity of birdlife through coloring, word searches, and crosswords.

Erb, who is a climatology professor and a birder, has included many fascinating facts about bird feathers, abilities, and conservation alongside the biologically accurate outlines of birds. He writes with a light touch about scientific topics, allowing people at any level of bird knowledge to find this book enjoyable. Some of the species featured will be familiar from around Omaha, such as the Yellow Warbler and Cliff Swallow. But others draw from the incredible array of hues found among the world's birds, such as the Collared Sunbird, Blue-footed Booby, and Scarlet Macaw. And it's not all about bright primary colors: Erb devotes a full page to the humble Turkey Vulture and its impressive abilities of flight, digestion, and smell.

Many people first experience birds as a pop of color in the landscape, then are driven to learn more. Erb's coloring book celebrates bird plumages and provides a way for people to enjoy the amazing appearances of birds from the comfort of home. The book ends with an observation log and suggestions for ways to get started with birding to help kick off a reader's learning journey, making the book a great classroom activity.

A Colorful Introduction to Birds and two other coloring books by Erb are available for purchase online from Amazon. Free printable activity pages are available on his website, colorbird.org.

Winter bird seed sale starts January 7

Our semiannual bird seed sales not only keep your feathered friends flourishing, they fund Audubon Omaha's educational programs and conservation activities and are our primary fundraisers. Here's a look ahead at our 2025 Winter Bird Seed Sale and a look back at our 2024 Fall Bird Seed Sale.

WINTER 2025 SALE Running low on bird seed? Want to help your feathered friends through spring migration? Check our website January 7 through February 12 to see our wide selection of the highest quality bird seed available and then place your order for pickup on February 22.

Anyone who has purchased bird seed from ASO in the past – and included their email address – will get an email from us with an order form. As usual, we don't mail order forms for the Winter Sale.

TWO WAYS TO SHOP:

1. Order online at our website audubon-omaha.org using a credit or debit card.
2. Mail your completed order form (available on the website) with a check.

ORDERS ARE DUE FEBRUARY 12 and will be ready for pickup on Saturday, February 22, from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at ASO's office/warehouse at 4339 South 90th Street in Omaha.

If you have questions, call John or Betty Fullerton at 402-493-4362 or 402-957-5901. If you need an order form, please email birdseedsale@audubonomaha.org

WE NEED YOU to join our crew of amiable volunteers to fill orders and lift and load bags of bird seed. Please contact John Fullerton at 402-493-4362(h) or 402-957-5901 or birdseedsale@audubonomaha.org, if you can help with our fundraiser.

FALL 2024 SALE SUCCESS Thanks to the customers who ordered bird seed during Audubon Omaha's fall sale. 41,150 pounds of quality bird seed were distributed to 260 loyal customer-supporters who, in turn, distributed them to appreciative birds in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. Sales totaled \$52,415, raising \$16,016 to fund local education and conservation efforts. Thank you for \$1,751 in donations.

THANKS FOR THE HELP This endeavor couldn't be accomplished without our dedicated volunteers who worked in the warehouse, made deliveries, or brought refreshments. Volunteers: Bennett Amdor, Ainsley Anderson, Andrew Callison, Jo Bartikoski, Ruth Bentzinger, Roger Carroll, Mark Cave, Amy Campagna, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Alistair Cullum and Katy Simmons, Ken Czyx, Kyle Finley, Conor Gearin, Steve Geddes, Mark Harberg, Marilou Jasnoch, Kayla Johnson, Tim Kautzman, Anne and Jim Maguire, P.J. McDonnell, Andy Miller and Melissa Sitze, Trevor Pellerite, Greg Prorok, Julia Rawnsley, Joshua Sheldon, Sarah Shepherd, Virginia Stauffer and Bob Wells.



Front P.J. McDonnell, Andrew Callison, Bob Wells, Bennett Amdor
Back: Roger Carroll, Steve Geddes, Virginia Stauffer, Betty Fullerton

- *Betty and John Fullerton,*
Bird Seed Committee Co-Chairs

Tracking our flying friends’ ‘Motus’ operandi *by Dan Murphy*

Motus, from the Latin for “movement or motion,” inspires the mission, methods and means behind a collaborative international strategy for tracking and conserving small, flying, migratory animals, including birds, bats and large insects.

Motus, the organization, operates under the auspices of Motus Central at Birds Canada, that country’s national bird conservation leader. Motus, the network, deploys thousands of technological tools to enable a community of researchers, educators, organizations and committed individuals to scientifically track, deliver and analyze data describing the movements of flying animals across North and South America and Europe. Motus is designed to:

- Enable conservation through data that optimize decision-making
- Build community through a strong international network of shared values, rooted at the local level
- Pioneer science through a collaborative system that powers advancements in movement ecology
- Innovate technological integration through industry-leading standards that focus on getting the right data to the right users at the right time

HOW DOES MOTUS WORK? Researchers attach small radio transmitters to individual birds, bats and insects in much the same way as they band birds for identification. A network of Motus stations established at strategic locations across each hemisphere tracks the animals’ movements. Typically, tags ping Motus stations within a radius of approximately 20 kilometers (just over 12 miles).

Accurate tracking and data-gathering rely on a network comprising thousands of stations over extensive geographic areas. Currently:

- 34 countries host 2,058 Motus receiver stations;
- and, 2,712 Motus partners and collaborators have tagged 50,630 animals comprising 402 species and have initiated or completed 869 projects to date, generating 214 publications to drive conservation efforts.

Among those 2,058 receiver stations are two in the Omaha area — one on the grounds of Glacier Creek Preserve at 148th and State Streets in Bennington, and one at the Hitchcock Nature Center in Honey Creek, Iowa, which has received financial support from Audubon Society of Omaha. Looking ahead, new Motus tracking stations are in the works at Henry Doorly Zoo and Offutt Air Force Base. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is formulating plans for five additional Motus operations, while the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is targeting three more stations along the Missouri River. All of these focused conservation efforts harken back to the unique qualities of the Motus Wildlife Tracking System.

WHAT MAKES MOTUS UNIQUE? First, the system’s lightweight tracking tools can be attached safely to research subjects. The telemetry is exceptional, allowing observers to track movement accurately over time and space. Establishing and operating a tracking infrastructure is affordable, which promotes equity among research participants. And, finally, individual contributions are magnified through a community of people working to achieve common objectives.

WHY SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT — AND SUPPORT — MOTUS?

Find out by upgrading your modus operandi and participating in Audubon Society of Omaha’s February 13 program, where you can hear about the discoveries this cutting-edge wildlife tracking system has already uncovered and learn how ASO’s own Glenn Pollock and Jerry Toll are working to enhance the promise of Motus technology in the Midlands. (*sources include: motus.org*)

RESOURCES & INFO:

HOW TO JOIN/RENEW/UPDATE

Join or renew your membership online at Audubon-Omaha.org and select “Get Involved.” Save paper and avoid confusion. Your membership with National Audubon automatically makes you a member of Audubon Society of Omaha.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Please call National Audubon toll-free at 1-844-428-3826, or send an email to audubon@emailcustomerservice.com

STAY CONNECTED

Join our email list at Audubon-Omaha.org under “Get Involved.”

BEQUESTS & GIFTS

A bequest to Audubon Society of Omaha is a gift to those who will succeed us and secure our natural heritage. Want to honor a loved one and help ASO’s local conservation and education efforts? You can make a donation anytime at audubon-omaha.org OR you can mail your check along with the name and address of the person to be notified to:

Audubon Society of Omaha
P.O. Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!

Can you lift as much as 50 pounds without hurting yourself? The ASO birdseed sale needs volunteers for four-hour shifts on three different days. Please contact John Fullerton at 402-493-4362 (h), 402-957-5901 (c) or efullerton00@gmail.com if you can help with this major fundraiser. We can’t do it without help from our members and fellow bird feeders.

TAKE ACTION Big things are happening, so communicate with your elected officials. Go to Audubon-Omaha.org for links to contact info.

INJURED BIRD?

Raptors: Call 866-888-7261 to speak to a Raptor Conservation Alliance volunteer. Non-raptor: Call Nebraska Wildlife Rehab at 402-234-2473.

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Society of Omaha
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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

the Meadowlark

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VOL 54 ISSUE 1

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Artwork by Lennon M.
2024 Best of Show, recycled category

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.

CONTACT US AT:

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  Find us on Facebook and Instagram.

ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Anne Maguire
Past President: Christine Prescott
1st Vice President: Conor Gearin
2nd Vice President: Bennett Amdor
Treasurer: Melissa Sitze
Secretary: Virginia Stauffer

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Amy Campagna
Roger Carroll
Kyle Finley
Betty Fullerton
Steve Geddes
Trevor Pellerite
Katy Simmons
Open vacancy

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Finance: Melissa Sitze
Fundraising and Bird Seed Sale:
Elizabeth and John Fullerton
Habitat: Steve Geddes
Legislative Affairs: Trevor Pellerite
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Membership: Duane & Kathy Schwery
Natural Areas Stewardship:
Kayla Johnson & Glenn Pollock
Nominating: Bennett Amdor
Program: Anne Maguire
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ASO Administrator: Sarah Shepherd
Executive Director, Audubon Great Plains:
Kristal Stoner

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