

# The Meadowlark

February 2010

Volume 39 Issue 2

ASO is a Chapter  
of the National Audubon  
Society

Serving Eastern  
Nebraska  
and Western Iowa

## Raptors Up Close

Most of us love the sight of hawks soaring high above or perching on poles, even when we can't identify them. Owls are intriguing because of their mysterious aura, haunting calls and swift, silent flight. A kestrel on a wire or hovering low over a field reveals its fine beauty of color and form.

On Thursday, February 11, our general meeting program will present live hawks, owls and an American Kestrel from local organizations. Licensed handlers will show the birds and inform us about their amazing adaptations that include their keen senses of sight and hearing.

A Great-horned Owl and Eastern Screech Owl (red phase) will be part of the program. Both owls had been hit by cars in Nebraska and were unable to be released back into the wild after they were rehabilitated. They are on Kip & Stacy Smith's (Wildlife Learning Encounters) permit and sponsored by Papio-Missouri River NRD for educational programs.

Sharing the program will be a Red-tailed Hawk (Harlan's subspecies), an Eastern Screech Owl (gray phase), and a Rough-legged Hawk. All three birds had physical injuries that prevented them from being released after they were rehabilitated. They are now on Fontenelle Nature Association's permit for use in

By Linda Dennis

school programs and public presentations.

Also appearing is an American Kestrel that is featured in programs at Fontenelle Forest, and is often at Neale Woods on Sunday afternoons in the spring and autumn when the Nature Center is open. She is fully flighted but not releasable because as a fledgling she was picked up and handled by people (and would approach humans for food). Being "imprinted," she hasn't the ability to survive in the wild.

If you would wish to have the Great-horned Owl and red-phase Screech-owl for a program, please contact Christy Jacobsen, Educational Specialist for Papio-Missouri NRD, at 315-1713. For the rest of the birds and a "Rappin' with Raptors" program, please contact Rick Schmid, Director of Education at Fontenelle Nature Association, 731-3140, Ext 239.

If you enjoy seeing and learning about these magnificent birds that are so important to our environment, join us at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (1 block south of 45th & Center), 7:30 P.M. Thursday, February 11.

A short business meeting follows the program, with coffee, cookies and a social hour to end the evening. Visitors are welcome, as are photographers!

## Owling Field Trip Friday, February 5

We will change things a bit for ASO's February 5 field trip as the target birds will all be owls. We will meet at 7:00 P.M. (not A.M.) on Friday (not Saturday), February 5, at the Hitchcock Nature Center Lodge, located 5 miles north of Crescent, IA, along the Old Lincoln Highway.

To get there, take the I-680 bridge east into Crescent, IA, if you are coming from the Nebraska

By Elliott Bedows

side; turn right for five miles and follow the signs to the reserve. There will be a \$2 fee per participant. The trip should only be a couple of hours in length, depending on the quality of the birding. Our leader will be Jim Meyer.

Warm clothing is essential. For details, call 451-3647.

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## Wind Power II

By Clem Klaphake

In the last issue of *The Meadowlark*, I ended my column promising I would have more to say about wind power. Well, since last month about a dozen articles have appeared in the *Omaha World-Herald* concerning wind power in Nebraska. Remember, I said, "Wind power is coming."

I want to discuss a side of the wind power issue that we are not likely to see in Nebraska, namely opposition from other energy sources. But our neighbor to the west has a real conflict going on over the pros and cons of wind power.

As you may or may not know, Wyoming is the number one coal-producing state in the nation and number three producer of natural gas. Therein lies the conflict.

I'm sure you all have heard or maybe even used the phrase, "Politics makes for strange bedfellows." Well, in Wyoming currently you can find CEO's of coal and natural gas companies suddenly siding up with their previous "enemies," GREENS and ENVIRONMENTALISTS who oppose (a topic for another column) wind turbines and transmissions lines in many locations.

One newspaper columnist wrote about a meeting in the Laramie area to discuss the county's position on allowing turbines to be sited in the following manner, "Over the next couple of hours, grizzled ranchers who on almost any other occasion, might spit before and after they say the word 'environmentalist,' stand up and tout the benefits of green energy. And then classic antigovernment, anti-regulation conservatives ask the county to bring down the hammer of regulation to save their beloved mountains from energy development. An employee of one of the biggest coal mines in the nation cautions against letting wind turbines go *unregulated*, the way coalbed methane did." A little confusing to an outsider?

The above meeting took place because the county planning commission was meeting to decide about a moratorium on industrial development in the more mountainous areas of the county in order to consider implementing wind-targeted zoning. (By the way, Wyoming is almost free of any zoning laws anywhere seen as government interference with individual rights.) There also has been the formation of a new but sizable group called the Northern Laramie Range Alliance. Its mission is to prevent "industrialization of the high country" by the wind industry. From what I have written so far, you can guess who helps support legally and financially this organization.

Thus, in Wyoming much of the resistance to wind power comes from the fossil fuel industry and the politics it bankrolls. Fossil fuels production is huge in Wyoming.

A reporter in the *High Country News* stated, "Severance taxes and royalties from these industries keep the state's government, schools and other services afloat. In an indirect and sometimes convoluted way, wind power threatens that old-school energy dynamic."

This past August at a symposium on wind energy at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Aaron Clark, an advisor to the governor, said candidly, "We can't let wind development hurt the state's revenue stream from extractive minerals."

Some of the biggest political donations by these fossil fuel CEOs have gone to candidates who are absolutely anti-regulation by government. Many of their large donations went to organizations like the Mountain States Legal Foundation, a Denver-based property-rights, anti-environmental regulation group — former Interior Secretaries Gale Norton and James Watt were members. Former Vice-President Dick Cheney has also been a supporter of this organization.

However, ranchers who might also be anti-regulation see great potential in developing wind energy on their ranches. They can make lots of money. Wind developers usually pay a signing bonus, rent fees during the testing phase, and a payment during construction.

Once the turbines start producing electricity, the cash flow is pretty stable for years. A turbine can net a landowner \$4,000 for every megawatt per year. That could amount to as much as \$55,000 per year per section of land owned (640 acres).

Wyoming ranches are often measured by the thousands of acres, so some landowners stand to make hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. Thus, many ranchers are at odds with the coal, oil and natural gas industries, but are not necessarily with the environmentalists either because they don't want any regulation of the wind power industry.

It is always interesting how a state next door can have such different economic circumstances, views and politics. More on wind power in the next issue of *The Meadowlark*.

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**Presented by The Omaha Press Club Educational Noon Forum Series**

**"Alternative Energy in Nebraska"**

*Thursday, Feb*

If you have been wondering about the future of wind power, solar power, biofuels and the whole question of alternative energy in Nebraska, you will have the opportunity to get some questions answered at the monthly Omaha Press Club Educational Forum on February 18.

energy. Please join us to learn more about it.

The forum begins immediately at noon. The cost is \$15.00 per person. This includes lunch, served during the program.

For reservations call 345-8008, by February 17. Reservations must be accompanied by OPC member number or credit card number.

Cancellations require 24-hour notice. Or email [jeanie@opc.omhcoxmail.com](mailto:jeanie@opc.omhcoxmail.com). Guests and nonmembers welcome. Validated parking.

The Nebraska Energy office is finalizing its plan for the development of alternative energy in Nebraska that will be completed by the end of January. The plan will include policy recommendations that will be presented to state officials and the governor's office for final approval.

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Presenting information about the plan will be Neil Moseman, Director of the State Energy Office. Also making formal remarks will be Robert Byrnes, owner and CEO of Nebraska Renewable Energy Systems. Mr. Byrnes has been involved in the development of renewable energy legislation and policy and has begun numerous renewable energy businesses and projects throughout Nebraska. Also on the panel to help answer questions from the audience will be Dave Cingman, a staff member of the Nebraska Energy Office.

By Jackie Scholar

Please mark April 10 on your calendar, as that is the date for the Audubon Society of Omaha's Greater Omaha Student Art Contest.

The contest is open to entrants from kindergarten through high school age. Last year we had some excellent artwork presented. Det

We expect another great turnout and need volunteers to help receive the art work, set it up, or greet

The release of this report should provide momentum as Nebraska moves forward in the field of renewable

**Introductory Bird**

**Identification Class**

Saturdays: March 13, April 10, & May 1

8:00 A.M. - Noon - Fontenelle Forest Center

\$20 fee includes all three sessions

For ages 12 and older

Registration required: Contact Clem Klaphake

at 292-2276 or [ckavian@cox.net](mailto:ckavian@cox.net)

This class is limited to 15 participants

With over 50 million `birders' in the U.S., bird watching is the fastest-growing

outdoor activity today.

This three-part class, led by Audubon Society of Omaha President Clem Klaphake, includes local field trips and instruction on identifying birds everywhere. No prior knowledge of bird identification is needed.

**Feeder Watching Field Trip**

Despite the "unfriendly," dark, foggy, dreary day Saturday January 16, Clem Klaphake led 10 ASO members on a bird feeder obser

ASO is thankful to Kathleen and Bob Rose and Duane and Kathy Schwery for opening their homes and providing great snacks. Aft

### Omaha Area Christmas Bird Count

The Omaha CBC was held on December 19, 2009. Despite snow and frozen waters, we had 31 people in the field and at feeders to compile 68 species, plus one count week species. Weather was below freezing, but with gentle winds, our people mushed through the snow

where they could. Nothing new this year, although the Trumpeter Swan was a rarity. Several species were at low counts of "1." High counts were recorded for turkeys, Cackling Goose, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Collared-Dove, and White-crowned Sparrows. The entire list follows:

Total Individuals 10,652 Total species 68

### DeSoto/Boyer Chute Christmas Bird Count

The count, scheduled for December 27, was postponed to December 30 because of the Christmas day blizzard which left behind an additional foot of snow, high drifts and numerous closed trails and roads. Despite the delay, none of the Refuge and Park trails were open, which left us little to survey but from the roads and a few feeders.

There was very little open water besides the Missouri River. Despite the lowest species and individual numbers in the 13-year history of the count, it was more productive than anticipated.

Twelve counters spent the day driving in the cold with limited visibility and on and off flurries. Fifty-one species plus 2 count-week species were seen. The previous low count was 54 in 2007. There were 4,984 in

By Jerry Toll  
dividuals counted. The previous low individual count was 7,429 in 1998. A record high count was set for Ring-necked Pheasant: 386 (previous record 340 in 2000) and Brown-headed Cowbirds: 181 (previous record 20 in 2001). The American Crow population continues to recover with above average numbers recorded. Record lows for species that regularly occur each year were set for Mallard: 2 (previous 152) and Common Goldeneye: 13 (previous 15). Eastern Bluebirds were at their lowest numbers in 8 years, and only 2 American Robins were seen despite last year's huge number (4,018) and large numbers locally present before the two December storms. Second lowest numbers were recorded for Yellow-shafted Flicker, American Tree Sparrow, and American Goldfinch.

### Rivers and Wildlife Celebration March 18-21

By Betty Grenon

It isn't too late to sign up for the Rivers and Wildlife Celebration March 18-21, 2010, in Kearney.

Events include guided field trips, workshops, a family fun room, and daily visits to river blinds operated by Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary for up-close views of cranes roosting on the Platte River.

Local and national speakers will present information on a variety of wildlife and conservation topics. Main speakers are Scott Weidensaul, author of more than two dozen natural history books, Mike Forsberg, nature photographer and author of *Great Plains: America's Lingering Wild*; Ron Klataske, Executive Director of Audubon of Kansas; and Chris Wood, eBird Project Leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Local environmental organizations will have information booths and hands-on activities on Saturday.

For registration materials, contact [www.nebraska.audubon.org](http://www.nebraska.audubon.org) or Audubon Nebraska to be put on the mailing list: [Nebraska@audubon.org](mailto:Nebraska@audubon.org); 402/797-2301.

For crane viewing information, contact Rowe Sanctuary, 308/468-5282; [www.rowesanctuary.org](http://www.rowesanctuary.org).

### Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15

It's almost time to join the nationwide citizen science project known as the Great Backyard Bird Count.

What could be less burdensome than counting birds in your backyard, a park or

homes. There's no need to be concerned about your skills or lack of them. An ability to identify even a few species can be helpful in alerting researchers about how populations

All of the information you will need can be found at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) or [gbbc@cornell.edu](mailto:gbbc@cornell.edu) or Audubon at [citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org).

You will be joining thousands of birders across

elsewhere to contribute to research on winter bird population numbers? This is the only way to gather important data on private territory, near  
are changing their locations and how numbers are changing.  
the country assisting in important research.  
Good birding and enjoy the time you spend on the Count.  
If you haven't participated in the past, instructions are easy to find.

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## Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama  
The White House, 1600  
Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington D.C. 20500-0001  
Comments: 202 456-1111

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 Michael Johanns  
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 202  
224-4224  
Lincoln: 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 Jim Suttle  
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center  
1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183  
Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-  
5555  
Lincoln Capitol Switchboard: 402

## 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

19612 Ridgeway Road

Plattsmouth NE 68048

**C9ZCP030Z**

## 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

Washington Capitol Switchboard

Senate: 202 224-3121; House: 202  
225-3121

**Bequests**

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

Small things are hardest to  
believe -

A redpoll snatching drops  
from an icicle.

From *Winter in Vermont*

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>**

**Office: 1941 So. 42nd Street, Omaha NE 68105**

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2276**

**1st Vice President Jerry Toll.....  
453-9239**

**2nd Vice President Linda  
Dennis..... 733-6548 Past President  
Elliott Bedows..... 292-5017**

**Treasurer Patty Albright 323-1966  
Recording Sec'y Laurine Blankenau..  
451-3647**

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

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551-5045**

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

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

**Phil Swanson..... 339-7928**

**Helen Bartee..... 391-3386**

**Jason McMeen..... 445-8279**

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8242 Education Clem Klaphake.....  
292-2276**

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

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

**Fund Raising Vacant**

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

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**Publication Laurine Blankenau. 451-3647**

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