

The Meadowlark

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.

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ASO is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving eastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

ASO, FFA Hosting Special Event April 4

Rick Wright, an expert guide with WINGS, as well as a philosopher writer and historian, will present Prophets of Woe and Mischance: Night Thoughts on Night Owls on April 4 at 7 p.m. at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center.



Owls are as mysterious as they are engaging, and even today owls haven't given up all of their secrets. What we know about

these oddly shaped and eerily vocal night denizens is the product of centuries of study and speculation. Join Wright on a journey through the lore and legend of these secretive birds and the scientists who've pieced together the realities of an owl's life—realities sometimes no less weird than the myths.

This special program is free, and will be presented in addition to our regular meeting on April 10. In addition to his presentation, Wright will lead a bird walk the next day, April 5, from 7:30 a.m. to noon. The walk will be limited to the first 15 people who make a reservation. Call 402-445-4138.

New Lauritzen Gardens Initiatives the Topic at March 13 Meeting

As we'll find out at our March 13 General Meeting, Lauritzen Gardens is more than its formal gardens. The organization has developed a conservation program

with local, regional and national scope.

Recently, the Gardens launched a new initiative aimed at supporting conservation efforts onsite and across the Great Plains. Jim Locklear, director of conservation, will talk about these efforts in rare plant research focused on sandsage prairie-clover, a plant found in southwest Nebraska. The Gardens' efforts take a multi-pronged approach, including seed banking, natural areas management, restoration and conservation education.

Jim is in his fifth year at Lauritzen Gardens, having worked previously at the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Kansas, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Morton Arboretum in Illinois.

The program will start at 7 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St., located one block south of 45th and Center streets. Everyone's welcome, and there is no cost.

Postings from the President: By Laurine Blankenau

Make Yours a Truly Green Lawn

The perfect lawn has been many a homeowner's ideal for decades, costing large amounts of time, energy and money. We wage war year after year on creeping charlie, dandelions and crab grass. We mow every week from April into fall. We water to keep it green. We pay for other lawn services to keep it dense and healthy.

Yet a yard's upkeep can be easier on the owner. Also, although not usually considered a habitat for wildlife, it can become a friendlier place for the species we love to live with. In some warm and arid parts of the country, lawns have become too water-hungry and have been greatly reduced in size or replaced with appropriate desert plants and attractive rocky decor. Here, where watering isn't limited yet or maybe never will be, yards can be partially or wholly converted to bird-and-butterfly-welcoming, native and easier-to-maintain shrubs, small trees, and wildflowers more attractive than the typical lawn. Many require no supplemental fertilizer and a minimum of pesticides.

For example, trees of medium size take up space, add beauty and attract birds. Some bear berries, bloom in the spring and are beloved by the insects and the

birds that feed on them. Midsize native Nebraskans include dogwoods, serviceberry and viburnum, and others can be discovered via research.

When my new tree hadn't grown much, an arborist told me it was suffocating in mulch. For a tree to thrive, the base of it should not be surrounded by heavy mulch. If Greenhouse X adds a hill of dirt as mulch, rake it away so the area around the tree is nearly flat, except for what is very close to the tree. Rocks placed around the roots for visual effect or for mulch are harmful as well.

General planting tips are available from the Nebraska Arboretum, 402-472-2971, or Douglas County Extension Office, 402-444-7804, which has printed information for the taking and master gardeners to answer questions. You may wish to unleash your own aesthetic talents, but if not, hiring a landscape gardener can be productive. Be sure to emphasize *native plants*. A few native flowering ones are butterfly bush, dill, butterfly milkweed, coneflowers, penstemon, leadplant, Fremont's clematis, Mongolian gold clematis, woodland phlox and bee balm. Many aid butterfly populations, plus add color and beauty. As always, check on sun or shade, and on watering needs for any plants.

Don't buy "prairie in a can" or "wildflowers in a can" found at big box stores or others because these don't live up to their promise. They are mixtures of nonnatives that won't return after one year. For advice, contact Nebraska Native Plant Society.

While native grasses can replace a lawn and add beauty and interest year-round, there is fire danger for the tall and spreading kind. If you live in the city, where burning is not allowed, these need to be mowed in the fall. A sickle bar mower also may be needed. The Nebraska Arboretum can provide information. Or contact the Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association at www.nnla.org or 402-390-7101. Another site to contact is www.plants.usda.gov.

Such a drastic yard makeover likely will require a major conversion for some of us, but it's worth remembering that up to a point, insects and pathogens can be viewed part of a natural ecosystem. Remember that when working with living nature, there is no such thing as a finished product. Differences in light, temperature and growth of plantings mean your yard will always be changing.

The Nebraska Arboretum cautions, "Don't expect perfection in your landscape. Be willing to put up with some rough edges."

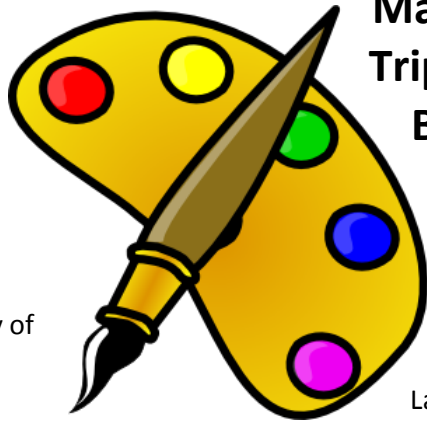
Audubon Student Art Contest and Show March 29

The Audubon Society of Omaha Student Art Show - 2014 will be held March 29 at Bellevue University's Lozier Center. The artwork of all students entering the contest will be on display from noon until 3:30 p.m. An awards ceremony will occur at 2 p.m.

The artwork features student drawings of birds found in the Midwest or of endangered birds throughout the world. The artwork is judged for excellence or merit in three categories: Realistic, Graphic design or Cartooning.

We expect a large crowd, and we need volunteers to answer questions about Audubon or birds, and to greet the guests. If you would like to help out for an hour or so, your assistance would be appreciated.

Contact Jackie Scholar at jbscholar@cox.net, or contact her at 402-551-5045, or contact Laurine Blankenau at 402 451-3647.



March Field Trip Site is Branched Oak Lake

By Clem Klaphake

We will be heading to Branched Oak Lake near Lincoln on March 29. We hope to see a variety of water-dependent bird species, such as ducks, geese, grebes, coots, pelicans, gulls and possibly common loons. There also are likely to be some early passerine migrants, such as eastern phoebes, yellow-rumped warblers and kinglets. Raptors also should be on the move by that date. Larry Einemann of Lincoln will be meeting us in the morning and guide us to the best birding areas. We will meet on the south end of the dam at Branched Oak at 8 a.m.

It is about an hour drive from the Omaha area to the Branched Oak dam. There are several routes you can take to get there. The most direct way is I-80 to exit 401, which is right on the north side of Lincoln, then go north at the exit onto U.S. Highway 34 for about four miles, then turn right onto State Highway 79 to West Raymond Road, where you turn left. Then drive three miles to where the road splits – take the right road, which goes over the dam (these are all blacktop roads). Before you go over the dam, turn left into the parking lot and then down to the dam. Rather than

have all of us meet somewhere and caravan on the interstate, I'm leaving it up to individuals to find or form a carpool. Some of you may want to just bird for a half day and others all day. We will be on our own for lunch. (The last couple of years we have stopped at a small café in Raymond for lunch.)

SAVE THE DATES

April 10 – The speaker for our April General Meeting will be Duane Hovorka, executive director of The Nebraska Wildlife Federation. Stay tuned for details.

May 3 – The DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge will hold its annual spring bird count. Contact Jerry Toll for more information at 402-312-1635.

May 16-18 – The Nebraska and Iowa Ornithologists Unions will hold a joint spring meeting at Fontenelle Forest.

April Field Trip to Cass County State Parks

Louisville SRA and Platte River State Park will be our field trip destinations on April 26. Early neotropical migrants should be starting to show up by that date. Stay tuned for more details.

Celebrate Rowe Sanctuary's 40th Anniversary

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary will celebrate 40 years of success conserving the Platte River on March 15. Anniversary activities will showcase the accomplishments and the people behind the work. A special welcome will be given to all past, present and future supporters, volunteers, chapter members and staff members who have helped build the sanctuary's legacy. A reception begins at 2 p.m., and a formal program begins at 2:30 p.m.

The anniversary celebration will continue with a gourmet evening event at the Museum of Nebraska Art, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The Iain Nicolson Audubon Center and Rowe Sanctuary Stewardship Board invites everyone to join them for special presentations by Michael Forsberg, noted wildlife photographer; Don Welch, poet; and a special personal video message from Jane Goodall. The cost for the celebration dinner is \$75 per person. To reserve your place, please contact 308-468-5282.

For more information, please visit www.rowe.audubon.org or call 308-468-5282.

Board Nominees Set for 2014-15

The annual election of officers and directors will be held at our April general meeting. The slate of candidates to begin their terms July 1 is listed below.

President - Laurine Blankenau
1st VP - Dennis Kingery
2nd VP - Tad Leeper
Treasurer - Betty Fullerton
Recording Secretary - Nelli Falzgraf
Corresponding Secretary - Linda Dennis
Director - Eric Scholar
Director - Jonas Grundman
Director - Bob Fuchs
Director - Gary Peterson

Please note: Eric Scholar, Jonas Grundman and Bob Fuchs are nominees for a second two-year Director term.

Nominations can be presented at the meeting, provided permission has been obtained from the nominee.

The Emerald Ash Borer's Coming

Unless the emerald ash borer is stopped or slowed by prolonged cold weather, its arrival here could come soon.

That's because as of Feb. 10, the borer had made it as far west as Creston, Iowa, according to Graham Herbst of the Nebraska Forest Service.

We need to be alert for its invasion. Watch for signs of decline in your tree; note that it may take two or three years for symptoms to appear. When this happens, cut (and protect) branch samples for diagnosis by a qualified person. It is extremely important to prevent spreading the infestation.

If the tree is infested for only a season or two, it may be treatable, with applications repeated annually or biannually. For information about treatments, contact Mark Harrell of the Nebraska Forest Service at 402-472-6635. Do not dispose any infested wood yourself. Also, do not drag it across yours or another's property. For instructions, contact Jeffrey Marker of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture at jeffrey.d.marker@aphis.usda.gov.

You can get useful brochures from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and from the Nebraska Forest Service. In addition, an identification guide with photos is available at www.emeraldashborer.info or 1-866-322-4512.

Understanding Climate Change: By John Pollack

Last time, we talked about how climate modeling fits into an international research program to understand climate. The consensus results of this research were summarized in periodic reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The fifth IPCC report can be viewed at <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/>. A graph of expected temperature trajectories for different carbon emissions scenarios is shown at http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg1/graphics/WGI_AR5_FigSPM-10.jpg

There are several important aspects to these global warming projections. First, the total amount of warming mostly depends on the total amount of cumulative carbon emissions. Fossil fuel cutbacks now provide long-term benefits. Second, there is still uncertainty in any temperature projection, but a major increase is nearly certain. Finally, even the most restrictive emissions scenario (RCP 2.6) will result in warming of close to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. We show few signs of serious cutting, so the Earth is likely to reach the 2-degree “danger zone” sometime after 2050, and keep going. What does this mean? The 2-degree limit is an estimate of the amount of warming that occurred naturally in the last

warm interglacial cycle, about 120,000 years ago. The Earth was warmer back then due to a combination of an orbital orientation that allowed polar summers to be warmer than present, along with carbon dioxide levels a little higher than pre-industrial levels. During that period, there was an abrupt sea level rise from about 6 feet higher than present to 20 feet higher, in only a few centuries. This resulted from the rapid melting of a major chunk of the Greenland Ice Sheet, with another large contribution from melting Antarctic ice. This means we are in danger of going past a natural tipping point, one that allows much more rapid ice-sheet melting than we’ve seen so far. Other hazardous climate feedbacks could occur with warming beyond this tipping point. These include the release of large amounts of carbon stored in permafrost soils, or large amounts of methane trapped in frozen sediments, amplifying greenhouse warming even further.

Cutting back emissions will allow us more time before we reach the danger zone, and also allow natural systems to do more adjusting to rapid climate changes. These changes are real, and expected to accelerate, but they will not occur smoothly. This is because

there are many different interactions that affect weather and climate, with many smaller cycles and tipping points. For example, the best-known of these is the El Nino – La Nina oscillation. Climate skeptics like to point out that the average surface temperature has risen very little since 1998. In fact, 1998 marked the most intense El Nino of the 20th century. Warm ocean water covered the equatorial Pacific Ocean, and resulted in a spike of warming globally. Since then, we’ve been in a prolonged period, during which cool La Nina conditions prevailed in the eastern and central Pacific. What happened to the expected warming? There is now good evidence that the excess heat from greenhouse warming is being stored in the depths of the ocean, rather than manifesting strongly at the surface. This is a temporary situation, and will reverse when the next El Nino occurs. There is also evidence that warming subsurface ocean temperatures are helping to melt the coastal fringes of both the Greenland and the Antarctic ice sheets, as well as the floating ice cover in the Arctic Ocean. Of course, the effects of climate change will vary according to location.

Continued on next page

Overall, the global circulation of the oceans and atmosphere act to transport excess heat away from the tropics. The polar regions receive extra heat from lower latitudes and radiate it out to space. The middle latitudes are a transition zone, resembling the polar regions in the winter and the tropics in the summer. The long-term result is that global warming tends to be amplified in the arctic, compared to the tropics. Because of their much greater capacity to store energy, the oceans also warm more slowly than land masses. Warming also pushes the tropical zone away from the equator, expanding the warm season at higher latitudes.

The energy exchange between low and high latitudes is mediated by the jet stream and migrating storm systems. The well-publicized “polar vortex” is a permanent part of this energy exchange. It reached media attention after dipping unusually far south over North America this winter. Such fluctuations have occurred in the past, and were frequent features of the winters in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, the same pattern didn’t set as many records this time, as the air coming down from the arctic today simply isn’t as cold as in prior decades.

The evidence is strong that this warming pattern will continue, slower over the tropics and the oceans, faster over continents and especially over the arctic. However, the situation is much more complex with storm systems, and the precipitation they generate. There are a lot of misperceptions about the somewhat murky relationship between climate change and storminess. I’ll examine this next time.

Thanks to Bird Seed Sale Volunteers

We should clear \$4,500 on our 32nd annual bird seed sale. Thanks to all the volunteers and customers who made this sale such a success.

We apologize if we miss anyone, but we would really like to recognize this year’s sale workers: Head-of-it-all – Neal Ratzlaff; Chief assistants – Carole and Dick Rasmussen, Jerry Toll, Kathleen Crawford-Rose; Computer Backup & Labels – Duane Schwery; Web Master – Jim McLochlin; Mailing – Helen Bartee, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Nelli Falzgraff, Essie Grill, Eunice Levisay, Carole and Dick Rasmussen, Kathy Schwery; Garages – Neal Ratzlaff, Bob and Kathleen Rose.

Distribution crew (Loading the seed) – Jerry Toll (Crew Chief); Jo Bartikowski, Laurine Blankenau, Dolan Collins, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Jonas Grundman, Mace Hack, Tim Kautzman, Clem Klaphake, Wendell Kuhlman, Eunice Levisay, Maria McIntosh, Jim McLochlin, Loren & Babs Padelford, John Pollack, Justin Rink, Bob Rose, Al Reyer, Duane Schwery, Eric Scholar, Larry Sekyra and Don Westling.

Thanks also go out to all the volunteers and customers who made our fourth winter bird seed sale a success. (We increased both our number of customers and the pounds of seed sold.)

The same folks we thanked for the fall sale get our gratitude again, along with Elliott Bedows.

Another Garage, Please

We’re always planning for the next bird seed sale, and our committee needs to add an additional garage distribution site for October’s sale. Preferably, the location needs to be north of Dodge, west of 680, east of 144th and south of Ames. If you live in this area and would like more information about this volunteer opportunity, please call Jerry Toll at 402-312-1635 or Neal Ratzlaff at 402-397-0135.

Addresses to Remember

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

Senator Deb Fischer, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-6551; Fax: 202-228-1325; Lincoln Phone: 402-441-4600; Omaha Phone: 402-391-3411; Omaha Address: 11819 Miracle Drive 68154

Senator Michael Johanns, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-4224, Lincoln Phone: 402-476-1400, Lincoln Address: 100 Centennial Mall N. Rm. 294, Lincoln NE 68508-3803

Representative Lee Terry, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, Phone: 202-225-4155; Fax: 202-226-5452, Omaha Phone: 402-397-9944, Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St., Omaha 68154

Representative Jeff Fortenberry, 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, Phone: 402-471-2244; Fax: 402-471-6031

Mayor Jean Stothert, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center 1819 Farnam St., Omaha NE 68183, Phone: 402-444-5000 Hot Line: 402-444-5555

Lincoln Capitol Switchboard: 402-471-2311

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.

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives. When sending a 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.

Memberships

We offer two choices of membership:

1. Includes membership in National Audubon as well as in our local chapter. It includes receiving the *Audubon Magazine* and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. A portion of your dues is returned to our local chapter.
2. Is a local membership that includes receiving *The Meadowlark* and participation in all of our local activities. All dues go to our chapter.

Membership in the National Audubon Society and in the Audubon Society of Omaha

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Zip Code _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____

Introductory Membership (1st & 2 year) \$20

Make check payable to: National Audubon Society

Mail to: Audubon Society of Omaha, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 678048 COZCP030Z

Membership in Audubon Society of Omaha only

Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____
Zip _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____

Make check for \$20 payable to: Audubon Society of Omaha.

Mail to: Audubon Society of Omaha, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth, NE 68048



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