

The Meadowlark



October 2012

Volume 41; Issue 8

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

October Field Trip

Join Justin Rink on Saturday, Oct 13th for a trip to Spring Creek Prairie.

We will be scouring the grounds for Sprague's Pipit, fall grassland sparrows, and Smith's Longspur, (if we are fortunate enough) and anything else that may be migrating through. Meet at the Spring Creek Prairie Visitor's Center at 9:00am. Be sure to bring warm clothes, a hat, and optics.

October General Meeting: Missouri River Flood Recovery - Ecosystem Perspective

By Jerry Toll

The flooding that occurred throughout much of the summer of 2011 within the Missouri River basin remains close to the surface in our memories. The economic impact was devastating to the farms and cities within the path of the floodwaters. In the aftermath, farmsteads needed to be rebuilt or abandoned, flood-

control dikes repaired, millions of trees died and continue to die, topsoil was lost and the biota of the soil was changed. At the DeSoto and Boyer Chute Wildlife Refuges, the management practice of the past 50 years has been undone and they are starting fresh with a new perspective. This brings us to the topic of our October 11th general meeting. Was the flooding detrimental to the river basin from an ecosystem perspective?

Our speaker, Ruth Bentzinger, is an Environmental Resource Specialist with the Army Corp of Engineers who has been working on the Corps' Missouri River Recovery Program before the flooding began. She will be discussing her work documenting the changes the flooding has caused and how those changes have affected the Corps environmental management of the river in three program areas. (1) Emergent sandbar habitat-which includes managing sandbars for Least Terns and Piping Plovers. (2) Shallow water habitat-which covers spawning areas for the fisheries particularly Pallid

Sturgeon. (3) Cottonwood regeneration program-which provides terrestrial and avian species habitat.

Ruth Bentzinger has been with the Army Corp of Engineers for three years. Previously, she worked at private consulting firms for 10 years primarily performing environmental assessment studies on projects such as the Pawnee Lake Restoration Project.

Please join us for our general meeting, Thursday, October 11, at 7 pm at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Francis Street (one block south of 45th and Center). The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour with cookies. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Bring your dead batteries and no-longer-usable small electronic components for recycling to the meeting. Have you been wondering how to recycle all of those dead AAA-D batteries? Bring them on October 11th for recycling. More to come in the November newsletter!

Creepy Crossbills and Spooky Siskins: Birding In Cemeteries

Well, it's October, the month of ghosts and goblins, the supernatural, and things that go bump in the night. So what better month to discuss birding in cemeteries? To most, a cemetery is simply a location to bury the dead and pay our last respects. To birders, however, a cemetery can be a treasure trove chock-full of various species due to a diversity of different flora in this unique habitat.

Most cemeteries are quite old, and many around the Omaha area date back to the Victorian Era. Because of this, several of the saplings that were planted around these burial grounds have reached the century mark or beyond. At certain times of the year, these mature trees bear ripe cones or fruits that attract a myriad of species.

A certain kind of tree that is associated with cemeteries is the conifer. These species range from pine, spruce, cedar, fir, and hemlock. Many northern bird species find these trees very attractive. This pertains especially to White-winged and Red Crossbills (so called because their bills are actually crossed to extract seeds out of

cones), as well as Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls. During some winters when these species fly south due to a poor cone crop year in their native boreal and mixed forest, a cemetery may be one of the only locations to find some of these "winter finches." However, crossbills especially can be quite silent, and sometimes the light cracking of cones is the only indication of their presence. Red Crossbills seem to be partial to pine such as Jack Pine, whereas the White-winged Crossbills prefer a diet of spruce cones. Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls can sometimes be seen clamoring about and comically hanging upside-down on pine cones as well. During the winter of 2006, Hillcrest Cemetery was the only reliable location for White-winged Crossbill in Omaha.



pine siskin

In some instances, the habitat is suitable for breeding. In Forest Lawn Cemetery for example,

Red-breasted Nuthatches, a northerly species, have been witnessed in July. These birds, rare summer residents in the Omaha area, probably successfully nested within the century-old spruce of this unique-to-Omaha habitat. Pine Siskins have also been observed carrying nesting materials at this location in April one year. Undoubtedly these birds were breeding.

However it's not just finches that find cemeteries accommodating. Further west, many good warbler species have been observed in these areas. In some areas, a cemetery may hold the only trees for miles around, such as in the sandhills. Uncommon warbler species found in these western migrant havens include Hooded, Townsends, Black-throated Gray, Black-throated Blue, and a few others that most people would not generally associate with Nebraska. Several of these more westerly cemeteries are perched on hills, and would be the first swaths of greenery a passing migrant would see. At Forest Lawn Cemetery a Townsend's Solitaire, (a mountain thrush that migrates to lower elevations during the

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BIRD SEED ORDERS DUE SOON

The deadline for bird seed orders is October 10th; seed pickup dates are October 20th and 21st. Order forms have been mailed to all members and previous customers. If you would like extra order forms to share with friends and neighbors, please call Carole and Dick Rasmussen at 731-3939 or Kathleen Crawford-Rose at 292-8912. You can also find order blanks on our Audubon web site, Audubon-omaha.com

Des Moines Feed, our supplier, has given us bad news again this year. The weather in the southern U.S. has been too hot for crops and the weather in the midland's states has been too dry. Corn and millet and peanut prices are at an all time high and expected to stay that way. If there is an early freeze, prices may go even higher. At this time the Black Oil Sunflower crop looks good and prices are lower than last fall. If you have had good luck feeding safflower seed to your birds, you might want to use more of it this year as its price has stayed fairly level.

More hands are needed for loading the bags of seed for customers on Oct. 20th & 21st. Make a three hour commitment to our major Audubon fundraising project. Call Jerry Toll, 453-9239, coordinator of volunteers, to volunteer.

Birding in Cemeteries

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winter) was spotted in early 2008. This bird, though a common winter visitor in Western Nebraska, is quite uncommon further east.

Raptors such as owls rely on cemeteries as a stop-over location, or a place to roost. Tiny Saw-whet Owls often conceal themselves fairly low in thick evergreen foliage such as cedar or juniper. Larger species such as Long-eared Owls, partial to pines, keep closer to the trunk and use camouflage while roosting. Some species such as Cooper's Hawks and Merlins also utilize the grounds of the cemetery due to there being no lack of small birds to prey upon.

So the next time you drive into a cemetery, don't just admire the tombstones, mausoleums, and monoliths. Be sure to keep your ears open, grab your optics, and watch for movement within those century-old evergreens



September Field Trip Results

As the subject implies, I led a trip to Fontenelle Forest (Sarpy Co.) on the morning of the 15th. It was an interesting

conglomeration of summer, fall, and late fall birds including seven (7) warblers. We also has a Fontenelle woodpecker slam and kept to the lowlands. A few of the 64 species encountered included...

- 1 Osprey
- 1 Cooper's Hawk
- 1 Peregrine Falcon
- 1 Falcon sp. (possibly Merlin, observed rump view).
- 2 R-t Hummingbird
- 1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (juv. bird) (FOS)
- 2 Pileated Woodpecker (At least one bird seen quite well by all participants. Very actively communicating.)
- 1 Alder Flycatcher
- 1 Willow Flycatcher
- 2 "Traill's" Flycatcher (Appeared to show intermediate characteristics of both species. Not vocalizing.)
- 1 Least Flycatcher
- 1 Blue-headed Vireo
- 3 Tufted Titmouse
- 1 Red-breasted Nuthatch (Heard along Stream Trail near confluence with Walking Club Tr.)
- 1 Brown Creeper (FOS)
- 2 Marsh Wren
- 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 13 Swainson's Thrush
- 2 Orange-crowned Warbler (had FOS the evening prior.)
- 17 Nashville Warbler
- 1 Northern Parula (1st fall female).

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September field trip continued...

-3 Yellow Warbler
 -1 Black-throated Green Warbler
 -2 Yellow-throated Warbler
 (Observed in trees near observation deck.)
 -2 Wilson's Warbler
 -1 Clay-colored Sparrow (FOS)
 -1 Scarlet Tanager
 -8 R-b Grosbeak
 -7 Indigo Bunting-2 Pine Siskin
 (One heard in flight over Walking Club Trail. The other one observed was on Stream Trail loosely associating with a flock of Am. Goldfinches).

The previous afternoon (9/14) I scouted around at Fontenelle mainly in the uplands. The uplands were rather dead, however the lowlands had a few species. A couple of species not observed the next morning included an Ovenbird (FOS) and two (2) Lincoln's Sparrows (FOS).

The PINE SISKIN was once again heard at Mercer Woods during the evening of the 15th.



Wastecap Nebraska Summit

The Wastecap Nebraska Sustainability Summit is to be held in Omaha and Lincoln. The Omaha segment includes a free public presentation by Auden Schendler, a businessman and author of "Getting Green

Done." Although a major focus is corporate involvement in sustainability, all are invited to hear Schendler's stories from the front lines of the sustainability revolution.

The Omaha portion of the program is at Mammel Hall on the UNO campus, October 9 at 7:00 p.m.



If you can't reuse or repair an item, do you ever really own it? Do you ever really own it? Do you ever develop the sense of pride and proprietorship that comes from maintaining an object in fine working order?

We invest something of ourselves in our material world, which in turn reflects who we are. In the era of disposability that plastic has helped us foster, we have increasingly invested ourselves in objects that have no real meaning in our lives. We think of disposable lighters as conveniences -- which they indisputably are; ask any smoker or backyard-barbecue chef -- and yet we don't think much about the tradeoffs that that convenience entails.

— **Susan Freinkel, *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story***



NOU Meeting

NOU will be meeting jointly with the Inland Bird banding Association Friday Oct 26 to Sunday October 28. The meeting will be held at Fontenelle Forest and will include field trips, banding, a banquet and a program. If you are a non-member and wish to join, please contact Betty Grenon, 402-731-2383 or grenon925@aol.com

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



**Raptor Recovery
 Nebraska™**

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 phone: 402-437-5246;

Omaha phone: 402-391-3411;

Omaha address: 7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Michael Johanns

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 202-224-4224

Lincoln: 402 476-1400

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 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: 402-471-6031

Mayor Jim Suttle

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

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

We offer two choices of membership: one includes membership in National Audubon as well as in our local chapter, receiving the *Audubon* Magazine and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. A portion of the dues is returned to our local chapter.

The other choice is local membership only: this includes receiving *The Meadowlark* and participation in all of our local activities. Dues all go to our chapter.

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19612 Ridgeway Road

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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 - 0542

Phone: 402-451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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

Elected Officers:

President	Justin Rink	904-415-3282
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2nd Vice President	Lauren Blankenau	451-3647
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	Elliott Bedows	292-5017
	Jonas Grundman	216-5413
	Bob Fuchs	553-8242
	Tad Leeper	593-8508
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Education	Clem Klaphake	292-2276
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Natural Areas Mgt	Eric Scholar	551-5045
Publication	Laurine Blankenau	451-3647
	Jamie Vann	733-1891
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Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs	Kathleen Rose	292-8912
	Carol Rasmussen	731-3939
Speakers Bureau	Eunice Levisay	393-0545
Historian	Eric Scholar	551-5045
NAS Board Member	Peter Cannon	608-251-1276

The Meadowlark is published monthly
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audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org)

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