

The Meadowlark

May 2012

Volume 41 Issue 5

ASO is a Chapter

*of the National Audubon
Society*

*Serving Eastern Nebraska
and Western Iowa*

Annual Banquet Thursday, May 10 at Anthony's

On Thursday, May 10, ASO will hold its yearly banquet at Anthony's Steakhouse, 7220 F Street. All members, spouses, friends and visitors are welcome.

The cocktail and social hour will begin at 6:00 p.m. followed by dinner at 7:00. Please join us for this celebration that will include a display of the photo contest entries, announcements of winners, and a fine program about a year spent in the African nation of Namibia.

Please note that the deadline for receiving your reservations is Thursday, May 3. A reservation form is included on page 7 of this issue.

Larkin Powell of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will give a program on his experiences in Namibia where he and his family lived in 2009. The presentation will include photos of the country, its wildlife, and people. While there Powell taught at the Polytechnic of Namibia in the Department of Nature Conservation.

He states, "I was impressed that their curriculum is taught in the context of the economic power that their students will provide to their nation when they leave to work with wildlife and natural resources."

Ecotourism is the second-largest component of the Namibian economy. Powell interacted with many private and communal landowners while in Namibia, and he conducted surveys to assess how ecotourism affected values of wildlife.

Powell states that Namibia is a developing, young nation. He and his wife, Kelly, volunteered in orphanages and preschools during their year of residency. All conservation efforts in Namibia exist in the context of

high levels of poverty and political transition from the colonial period to post-apartheid.

He and Kelly will share photos of their experiences in Namibia to provide examples of the diversity of wildlife that attracts tourists to southern Africa.

They will introduce us, through their photos, to individuals who make portions of their living through ecotourism. He states, "I will provide some insights from my surveys and describe how these ideas might be transferred to Nebraska and the Great Plains.

Powell is a Professor of Conservation Biology/Animal Ecology at the School of Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska. He has done research on grassland and forest songbirds, pheasants, prairie chickens, Sandhill Cranes, and ducks and geese, as well as painted turtles and mountain lions. Much of his research takes place on private lands in the Sandhills or on private farmland enrolled in conservation reserve programs. He came to UNL in 2001.

Lilac-breasted Roller

Photo by Kelly Powell

Please join us for this fine program, social hour and dinner.

Saw-whet Owl Anecdotes by Jerry Toll

I began capturing and banding Saw-whet Owls in the fall of 2007 at Hitchcock Nature Center. When the first Saw-whet stumbled into our nets, I was hooked. They are just plain cute with their big bright yellow eyes and diminutive size, only 3-4 ounces. When our lights are shining on one, it will become almost catatonic, with sleepy eyes and little response to our manipulations. But take the bright light away and it will remind you that it is an owl.

I have been "footed" many times by these little guys. They have long upper legs but short lower legs that make it difficult to put on a band and keep their talons out of sensitive skin. Some Saw-whets have an uncanny ability to find my tender cuticles with their talons. Their owl-like feistiness is especially apparent if they have been captured more than once. These repeat customers let me know when I first reach for them in the net that they want no part of this process...again.

These are saw-whets that are remaining in the area, staging, for a few days or for weeks and are repeatedly attracted to the vocalization of their spring call we play to attract them. Saw-whets are generally considered semi-nomadic; in migration, they have no set winter destination. They are seeking available prey as a prime migration motivator.

Not a lot is known about their movements through the Great Plains and the Loess Hills of western Iowa where we band them. Their strictly nocturnal habits, lack of vocalizations outside of the breeding grounds, and cryptic roosting habit make this common wintering bird seem rare. Some of the questions we are attempting to answer by the banding efforts are: how common are Saw-whets in migration, how far south of here do they winter, and where do they originate?

Within two minutes, Purple Martins were using their new house that had just been installed at Levi Carter Park on Saturday, April 21st, during the Earth Day weekend.

Bing Behrens of the Wild Bird Habitat Store, and I as a tepid assistant, finished its placement just north of the caretaker's house at Levi Carter Park. He pulled the rope to raise the "mini-castle" to its peak in the sky, thus establishing a new martin house. In the following moments, filled with sublime thrills for a bird watcher, I watched martins see the thing and fly close to take a look, with others immediately following. The first pioneer sat on a perch to peer into the potential new digs. The same birds had been "complaining" about the disturbance of their setting, but that was immediately changed. Further watching indicated the martins were appreciative of the East House. Shortly, females were also drawn to what was nearly immediately recognized as a suitable place to nest.

After a few more interludes of birdly movement, the magnificent martins were sitting on the housetop roost, landing upon the fine roost outside each ample, unfurnished apartment—no rent required—to determine if they should move. A few feet away at the West House, there was uncertainty. Martin mothers-to-be had been working hard to get their nest ready by bringing in nest material. Did they want to stay, or should they move to the new place? The behavior of the birds was readily apparent. Ignoring any anthropomorphic fallacies, there may have even been a "husband" trying to stay put while his mate kept looking to the east.

The East House was certainly much finer, offering more room, an individual roost out front, isolation from neighbors, and a completely new place, not a cleaned-out apartment used by many other previous tenants.

The West House has been present for an unknown number of years. The midday bird drama at Levi Carter Park took place because the martins didn't get a message about a new construct. Many others did, because this effort was successful only because of effort and focused intent.

The Audubon Society of Omaha board quickly approved purchase of the house. The Omaha Parks,

*Continued on
page 3*

What is the Phenology Network?

Sign Up to Help

As our climate changes, it becomes very important to track how plants and animals are responding, especially in terms of dates of migration or flowering, so that scientists can

One way to do this is to sign up at the National Phenology Network. Phenology refers to the timing of natural events around the seasons. Go to the website <http://www.usanpn.org>

The website tells you how to choose which species to observe, how to decide where to observe them, and other details. By searching by state or region, you can get lists of plants and animals to observe.

Please consider joining this network to help conserve our natural heritage.

Bob Fuchs, Conservation Chair.

As our climate changes, it becomes very important to track how plants and animals are responding, especially in terms of dates of migration or flowering, so that scientists can understand the effects of climate change. One way to do this is to sign up at the National Phenology Network. Phenology refers to the timing of natural events around the seasons. Go to the website <http://www.usanpn.org>. The website tells you how to choose which species to observe, how to decide where to observe them, and other details. By searching by state or region, you can get lists of plants and animals to observe. Please consider joining this network to help conserve our natural heritage.

Bob Fuchs, Conservation Chair.

Purple Martins,

Recreation and Public Property provided a letter of approval on Friday morning. The department was "pleased to support the efforts to enhance the habitat" of Purple Martins.

A multi-call process to the Diggers Hotline worked due to my expressing an emergency on Friday afternoon to get a clearance approval, as required by Nebraska legal statute.

This martin house was installed due to an obvious need first observed on Wednesday, April 18, when there were more martins at a house than the place could suitably provide.

ASO Student Art Contest

A crowd of over 400 people attended the 2012 Audubon Greater Omaha Student Art Contest - Show at Bellevue University on March 31. This year there were 349 entries (from Kindergarten through 12th grade) representing 45 different public, homeschools and

individuals and establishments for their time, support, and talents in making this show a great success. Thank you, all.

Collection and hanging of artwork :
Laurine Blankenau, Nelli Falzgraf,
Helen Bartee, Kathleen Rose, Babs
Padelford, Jo Bartikoski, Kit Murrin,
Jackie Scholar

private schools in the greater Omaha area. All students who entered the contest had their artwork displayed for viewing. It was a very festive and rewarding day for all those involved. Children and their families were excited to see their artwork in a show and also to receive the awards.

The drawings were of very high quality and included watercolors, oil paintings, collages, chalk, and crayon drawings. The categories for judging included Realism, Graphic Design, Cartooning and Fantasy. The cardinal and eagle were popular birds this year along with some unique endangered birds.

Students and their families were greeted by ASO members. Jerry Toll, President of ASO, welcomed the crowd and described some of the activities of ASO. He also personally shook hands with each award winner. Laurine Blankenau, Jackie Scholar and Kit Murrin helped with the awards ceremony. Awards of Excellence and Merit in the various categories were presented to students in each grade level at the Awards ceremony.

Best of Show for High School went to : **Megan Rhoades** of North High Magnet High School

Imani Free of the Alpha School
Best of Show for Middle School (7-8th) went to:
Kara Pelster of St. Robert Bellarmine

Tom White of St. Pius/Leo X
Nick Lesac of Mission Middle School

Best of Show for Elementary School (4-6th) went to: **Jeffrey Froiland** of Boyd Elementary
Emily Anthone of St. Margaret Mary

Sara Fogarty of Two Springs Elementary
Best of Show for Elementary School (K-3) went to: **Anna Ervin** of St. Patrick Elementary
Taylor Tonjes of Picotte Elementary

The Audubon Society is grateful to the following

Greeting the Public—Awards Ceremony:
Laurine Blankenau, Jerry Toll, Kit Murrin, Jackie Scholar

Photography: Eric Scholar

Fontenelle Forest Association
Bellevue University Staff, Maintenance

Jim McLochlin : ASO Art Contest website
Judges: Marlene McCann, Kit Murrin, Jackie Scholar
Participating Art Teachers and Classroom Teachers
Parents of the participating students

Cont. on next page

Great Backyard Bird Count 2012

The news is in with statistics and records. Total species reported were 624; individuals: 17,382,205. The web site has lots more details, accessible at gbbceNewsletter. Winners of the photo contest, along with others in the photo gallery, are shown. In short, a wealth of information is available.

Meanwhile, here are a few facts. No surprise about Snowy Owls that the

Tanager in Williamsburg, Virginia, and a Broad-billed Hummingbird in Oviedo, Florida. More Eastern Bluebirds and Ruby-crowned Kinglets reported than ever.

Pacific Northwest & Rocky Mountains: For rare winter appearances, an American Redstart in Oregon, Bullocks Oriole in Washington State, an Indigo Bunting in Idaho, and a Harris' Sparrow in British Columbia.

Mid-Atlantic, East-Central, Northeast, Great Lakes, Allegheny, & Atlantic Canada Regions: Pine Siskin numbers in the southern parts of the region could be said to make up for declines elsewhere.

North-Central & Mid-Central Regions: Pine Siskins made

irruptions into the Great Plains as far south as Kansas, and into the Pacific Northwest was the largest ever. Redpolls had a similar greater-than-ever irruption into some parts of the area. Tree Swallow numbers exploded in Florida. In the town of Ruskin (just east of St. Petersburg), the sky went black with flocks estimated at over 1 million.

Many species were counted farther north than ever: open water was a factor: ducks, Pied-bill Grebes, Kingfishers and others in the Canadian provinces bordering the Great Lakes. Great-tailed Grackles' range and numbers have expanded. Tundra Swan numbers were 3,735 compared to 222 last year; two million Snow Geese estimated at Squaw Creek in Missouri.

On March 12 both a White-winged and a Red Crossbill were seen and photographed in a yard in Hudson, Ohio. On April 2, a Gray-crowned Rosy Finch was seen at Booneville, New York - the second one ever confirmed in the state.

The Cornell Lab invites you to report any day of the year through the eBird project. Go to eBird.org and give the Lab the benefit of your numbers and sightings as the year progresses.

Project Feederwatch 2010-2011

From Manitoba came a count of 800 Snow Buntings on January 1 and over 400 on other days. Good for area bird seed sales. At their peak, the buntings ate 50 to 60 pounds of white millet daily.

In British Columbia, an invasion of Evening Grosbeaks, with some days close to 200. Common Redpolls at feeders in New Brunswick were estimated at more than 1,000 individuals. More than 95% of feeders in this province reported Redpolls. Seventy Rusty Blackbirds appeared in an Ontario back yard.

Regionally in the U.S: Southwest & California: Bullock's Oriole in Colorado, in Arizona, a Varied Thrush and Harris' Sparrow; in California, a Clay-colored Sparrow.

Southeast & South-Central Regions: a Rufous Hummingbird in Tallahassee, Florida; a Western

the top 25 list. Special for winter: a Summer Tanager here in Nebraska, a Brown Thrasher stayed over in Manitoba, and a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in Creighton, Saskatchewan. In Western New York, a Lewis' Woodpecker overwintered in a back yard - the fifth confirmed record of the species in the state.

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

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 the notified.

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha,

P.O. Box 3542, Omaha NE 68103-0542.

One of Ours on TV

On Thursday, April 19, Clem Klaphake participated in an item about Fontenelle Forest on "Sarpy County Spotlight," Channel 3. Clem held the resident Barred Owl and informed the viewing audience about the owl, its special hearing and head-rotating abilities, and why it is kept at the Forest.

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202 456-1111

We offer two choices to our members: membership in National Audubon plus our local chapter, including the *Audubon Magazine* and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. We receive a portion of your dues.

We also offer local membership only that includes receipt of our

Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510;
202-224-6551;

fax 202-228-0012; Lincoln phone
#402-437-5246;

Omaha phone #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,
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Representative Lee Terry

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Representatives, Washington, DC
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Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St,
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Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

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Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202)
225-4806

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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
471-2311

Washington Capitol Switchboard

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

Banquet Reservation

Anthony's Steakhouse 7220 F Street, Omaha NE
Thursday, May 10 Cash Bar 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Name _____

Address: _____ Phone
Address: Address:

Please choose: — — — \$24 Top Sirloin 8 oz

_____ \$21 Trout Almondine

_____ \$21 Chicken Breast Rosemary

_____ \$17 Pasta Primavera

newsletter and participation
in our local activities. We
receive all of the dues. Dues
from this membership are all
applied to our chapter.

Membership in the National Audubon Society

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State ____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Introductory Membership (1st Year \$20)

Make check payable to National Audubon Society Mail
to Audubon Society of Omaha

19612 Ridgeway Road

Plattsmouth NE 678048 COZCP030Z

Please send all changes of address to
djschw@windstream.net

Bequests

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

Enclosed is _____ for _____ persons.

Make check payable to Audubon Society of Omaha and mail to:

Helen Bartee, 521 Beverly Dr, Omaha NE 68114

Deadline is May 3

**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

Elected Officers:

Other Activities:

**President Jerry Toll..... 453-
9239 1st Vice President Jackie
Scholar..... 551-5045**

Bird Seed Sale Chairs

Kathleen Rose.....292-8912

**2nd Vice President Linda
Dennis..... 733-6548 Past
President Clem Klaphake..... 292-
2276**

Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939

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

Historian Eric Scholar.....551-5045

**Treasurer Dennis Kingery..... 556-
9082**

NAS Board Member Peter Cannon.. 608-251-1276

**Recording Sec'y Laurine Blankenau..
451-3647**

**Acting Corres. Sec'y Ann
Boice..... 315-1884**

The Meadowlark is published
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may be accessed on our web site,
<http://audubon-omaha.org>

**Elected Directors: Jamie Vann.....
733-1891**

Send address changes to Kathy
Schwery, 19612 Ridgeway Road,
Plattsmouth NE 68048.

Justin Rink..... 904-415-3282

Elliott Bedows..... 292-5017

Kathleen Rose..... 292-8912

Helen Bartee..... 391-3386

Jonas Grundman.... 216-5413

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

**Conservation Bob Fuchs.....
553-8242 Education Clem
Klaphake..... 292-2276**

**Field Trip Justin Rink.....904-415-
3282**

Finance Nelli Falzgraf..... 292-9687

Fund Raising Vacant

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

Program Clem Klaphake 292-2276

**Natural Areas Mgt Eric
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