



Meadowlark

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Silent summer: Observing birds in July and August

by *Conor Gearin*



Eastern Meadowlark by Phil Swanson

After the glorious morning choruses of spring, full of rich and varied voices, in summer the choir starts to thin out. Likely suspects that sing all day, such as cardinals and robins, keep singing, but others fall silent. For our resident breeding birds, that's because they're hard at work raising their young. They're putting all their energy into making sure the next generation makes it to adulthood — a full-time job, to say the least.

For many young songbirds, the riskiest stage of life isn't being an immobile egg or helpless chick. It's being a fledgling, the stage when a young bird is too big for the nest but still developing its flying skills and ability to catch its own dinner. If you see a bird at this stage, you might even think it just fell out of the nest and want to put it back. But fledgling birds, which have the full-body set of feathers that baby birds lack, are not helped by returning to the nest. Their job is to fumble around and figure out how to fend for themselves. Trying to "rescue" a fledgling could backfire by

(Continued on page 2)

Sign up for upcoming photography field trip and bluebird program

Photo Walk at Lake Cunningham

Saturday, July 26, 8-10 a.m.

Join nature photographer Sheila Glencer for a photo walk on a paved trail at Lake Cunningham. This trek will take participants on a scenic route mostly under tree cover not far from the water's edge. We will stop at a picnic area for a break and optional exploration along a short dirt trail before heading back. This photo walk is geared towards photographers with DSLR or mirrorless cameras. Wear comfortable shoes, bring plenty of water, a snack and your camera gear! Don't forget to wear sunscreen and bug spray. The total length of our walk will be slightly over two miles. Use Entrance 1 off of Lake Cunningham Road



Chimney Swift by Phil Swanson

to the parking area. Meet the group near the lighthouse promptly at 8 a.m. Restroom facilities available in the parking area near the lighthouse only. Space is limited to six participants, so please register at Audubon-Omaha.org.

Helping Bluebirds and Chimney Swifts

Thursday, August 14, 6-8 p.m.

Please join us to hear from Bluebirds Across Nebraska president, Sandy Seibert, and her husband Bill. Learn how climate change and habitat loss have affected bluebirds and chimney swifts — and what we can do to help. Bill and Sandy have worked to protect cavity nesting birds for more than 30 years. They will share their successes and challenges, and how you can get involved.

Please note: We have a new venue! Our programs are now held in the private dining room at Vincenzo's restaurant, 15701 Pacific Street. Enjoy food, drinks and conversations with fellow nature-lovers during the 6 p.m. social hour, followed by the program at 7 p.m. Our programs are free and open to the public. Attendance is limited, so please register at Audubon-Omaha.org.

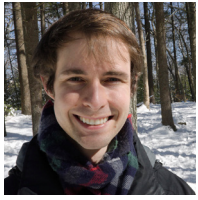
GREEN CORNER: HOW YOU CAN HELP WILDLIFE AT HOME
Conservation begins at home; each of us can help restore our unique ecosystem.

Two ways to keep it cool this summer

Protect nesting birds by checking trees before trimming. Even dead trees provide shade, shelter, food, and valuable habitat for wildlife.

Dump and refill bird baths regularly to prevent mosquito larvae. It's healthier for you and for the birds.
Keep it cool and fresh!

Field notes from the president *by Conor Gearin*



Dear readers,

Happy summer! As we welcome new ASO board members and officers, I want to take a moment to introduce myself and share some of the values that guide our leadership team.

Growing up in St. Louis, I had a sense for how precious native ecosystems are from an early age, thanks to my parents. Despite Missouri's heritage as a prairie state, very little tallgrass habitat remains. When I moved to Omaha in 2016 to study for my master's degree in biology at UNO, I was excited to learn about several grassland preserves just a short drive from downtown. I trained in the company of outstanding conservation biologists who cared deeply about understanding and protecting the unique grassland ecosystems all around us.

Since graduate school, I have focused on communicating how to take action to protect birds and other wildlife, including three years as the managing producer of *BirdNote Daily*, a public radio program and podcast. My participation in ASO is an extension of that goal to communicate and spread awareness. I believe effective action begins at the local level through community building.

More recently, my wife and I have been grateful to start introducing our two-year-old son to the natural world. I have already learned so much from him about how early relationships with nature begin with small moments in the backyard with a Mourning Dove pecking for seeds. That's partly why I see events like ASO's Student Art Show as crucial opportunities to connect young people to the world of birds.

ASO seeks to educate and inspire people to protect wildlife. We are a volunteer-led organization that depends on our members' generosity and enthusiasm. We accomplish our mission through free educational programs and field trips all over the metro area. We also support our student chapter, the UNO Conservation Society, in their on-campus efforts. We encourage members who think they might want to lead an event or volunteer with us to get in touch — visit our website, Audubon-Omaha.org, and click "**Get Involved.**"

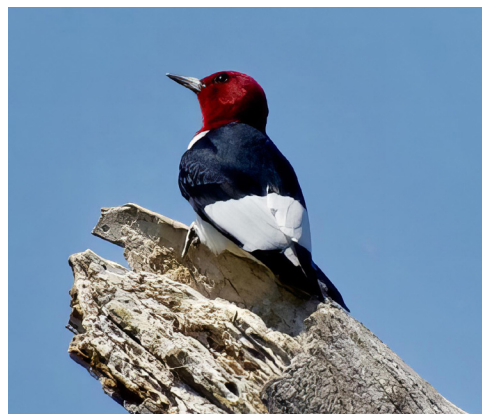
While we live in uncertain times, the National Audubon Society is clear about its commitments to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging. ASO shares those commitments. We believe the environmental movement is for everyone, especially those who have historically been excluded from it due to their backgrounds or identities. We are working to share our love for birds and all wildlife with the broadest community possible, and we invite you to join us in this effort.

The eyes have it — your photos

Send in your bird photos to audubonomaha@audubonomaha.org!



Barred Owl by Jennifer Dobey



Red-headed Woodpecker by Bob Tooley

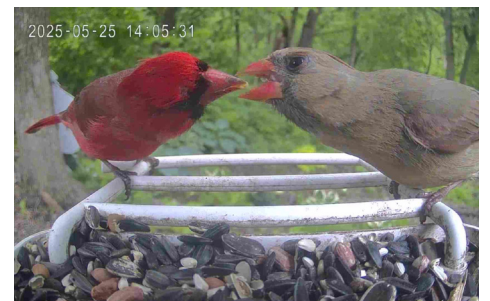
Observing birds in July and August

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causing the bird to depend on human care. Often, the parents of fledglings are standing by to help as needed, bringing food to supplement what their offspring manage to find on their own.

High summer is a great time to pay closer attention to the behavior of local birds, observing them caring for young, foraging for food, and eventually molting into fall plumage. The new set of spring feathers, bright and colorful for the breeding season, starts to look ragged by July and August. Many species get a new set of feathers to last them through the autumn journey south and overwintering.

Our grassland habitats are crucial breeding grounds for many native bird species. The Dickcissel, a cousin to the Northern Cardinal, sports a big beak, yellow bibs, and black chins on the males. Eastern and Western Meadowlarks both occur in the metro area. They're best distinguished by song, with the eastern species singing ascending notes that usually sound like the phrase "spring of the year," and the western species a mix of whistles and up-and-down warbling. Tiny Grasshopper Sparrows pop up on a grass-stalk to rattle out an insect-like song then run around on the ground like mice within the labyrinth of grass. Look for these birds at places such as our ASO prairies, Glacier Creek Preserve, and grassy areas such as dam embankments and the sides of the Keystone Trail.



Male Northern Cardinal offers food to his mate — feeder camera capture from Laura VonRoenn

Take the Bird-Friendly Backyard Tour!

by Anne Maguire



Photo by Phil Swanson

What are the secrets to making your backyard an irresistible attraction for birds? Imagine strolling through a natural habitat, surrounded by native flowers, trees and shrubs, teeming with dragonflies, butterflies, bees and other insects. Wild birds gather nest-building supplies from brush piles as they forage on plentiful seeds, berries and insects — vital food for their hatchlings. This is an urban oasis — a backyard birds love!

On Saturday, July 12, Audubon Society of Omaha members will welcome visitors to their amazing bird-friendly backyards. From 8 a.m. to noon, these homeowner-naturalists will share their experience and tips to help you create a nature preserve in your own yard. See the possibilities! The tour is free and open to the public.

Roger and Cathy Carroll

417 N 38th Avenue, 68131

It all started with a single bird feeder in his steeply sloped urban yard in the Joslyn Castle neighborhood. Roger enjoyed watching the birds and wondered how to get them to build nests. He learned that insects were key, and began looking for native plants to attract pollinators.

Roger is self-taught and made mistakes along the way, but he is now a master gardener with Douglas County Extension Service and a director on the ASO board. He thoughtfully labeled each plant in his yard with the scientific

and common names for each species.

Today, the single bird feeder has become 11 feeders and three bird baths, providing plenty of excitement. Roger reports: “We have seen a covey of quail in this yard, a rafter of turkey, a red fox, Sharp-shinned Hawks, the normal nursery of raccoon. We have seen a passel of opossum, Common Nighthawks, goldfinch, Brown Creeper, White-breasted Nuthatch, and most of the woodpecker species near here.” Roger adds, “While some people enjoy watching sports on TV, I enjoy watching the action in my backyard.”

Phil and Linda Swanson

600 Hogan Drive, Papillion 68046

While their neighbors call it “The Bird Sanctuary” and their birder friends named it “The WarblerYard,” Phil and Linda simply say, “The Backyard.” But it’s definitely not a “normal” backyard. Hidden in the Tara Heights neighborhood just east of 84th street, this backyard is a hotspot for an amazing variety of birds: 172 species at last count!

Phil, who is an avid birder and photographer, provides all the amenities birds are searching for: native trees and ferns that bring in the bugs and provide shelter, bird feeders, and a pond with running water all year round — which Phil credits for “bringing in the birds.”

Warblers are especially fond of the accommodations! Since putting in the pond in the early 1990s, Phil has spot-

ted 27 warbler species. Phil has hosted the same nesting pair of Gray Catbirds, an uncommon nesting bird in the city, for the past five years.

Phil is a long-time ASO member and has served on the board of directors. The corner lot, located on the northeast corner of Hogan Drive and Beadle Avenue, has easy access by parking on the east side of Beadle (facing north) and walking into the backyard from there.

Tom and Louann Neneman

7212 N 76th Street, 68122

“As wild as possible” is how Tom describes his suburban backyard in northwest Omaha. An always-flowing stream bubbles up from the aquifer a mile north of his home and makes its way through his backyard before feeding into the Little Papio Creek.

For the past 15 years, he and Louann have been on a mission to plant a wide variety of native grasses, sunflowers, berry bushes, and pollinators to enhance the natural haven for wildlife. If a tree dies, they leave it standing for the woodpeckers. They also leave the dandelions, which provide early spring sustenance for bees and birds. Visitors to their backyard include mink, raccoons, coyotes, fox, Wood Ducks, Great Blue Herons and countless other species of wild birds. Tom explains, “The creek is essential, the birds come back — they remember.”

Tom has served on ASO’s habitat committee and attended numerous board meetings to advocate for native habitat and community engagement. Tom’s passion helped inspire the Bird-Friendly Backyard Tour!

Neal and Deb Ratzlaff

536 Brentwood Road, Omaha 68114

This heavily treed backyard just north of Countryside Village is a popular stop for wild birds. Native plants, bird feeders and bird baths invite wildlife into the shady retreat.

Neal, an avid birder, joined ASO in 1972. He is a past president and has remained very active in the chapter throughout the years. Thirty-five years ago, he co-founded our birdseed sale (ASO’s primary fundraiser). You may have been to Neal’s house in the past — to pick up birdseed orders from his garage.

Neal humbly claims his backyard is “nothing special”. The birds beg to differ!



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

The wonders of butterfly-watching

Article and Photos by Sheila Glencer

“Beautiful and graceful, varied and enchanting, small but approachable, butterflies lead you to the sunny side of life. And everyone deserves a little sunshine.”

— Jeffery Glassberg (*founder and president of North American Butterfly Association*)

Butterfly watching or “butterflying” is a relaxing, family-friendly activity that can be enjoyed in backyards, parks and other outdoor spaces. Butterflies come in vibrant colors, vary in shape and are active during the daylight hours. Nebraska is home to more than 200 different butterfly species to identify or simply enjoy in the moment.

In our region, butterflies are most commonly observed from May to August on bright, sunny days with no more than a light breeze. They are most active from 9:30 a.m. to noon and again from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. To fly, they need a body temperature of around 85°F. If the temperatures are cooler, butterflies can be found stationary, basking in the sunshine to warm up. In extreme heat, butterflies seek out shade.

Butterflies are nearsighted and can only see clearly up to 10-12 feet. They are sensitive to colors, patterns and ultraviolet light. Many flowers have ultraviolet patterns visible to butterflies. Some butterfly species have unique ultraviolet markings on their wings to help attract and identify a mate. They see up and down, forward and backward, and to the sides all at the same time with their compound eyes. Try not to cast your shadow on a butterfly while observing them — they might sense it as a threat and fly away!

Butterflies have taste receptors on their feet. When they land on a flower, they can sense right away if the flower has any nectar on which to feed. If there’s no nectar, the butterfly will fly to the next flower. Female butterflies also use their feet to help choose a tasty host plant to feed hungry caterpillars before laying her eggs.

Butterfly wings are transparent. The thin wing membrane is covered with tiny scales layered like shingles on a roof. Some of the scales contain pigment of their own, but much of the color and patterns are a result of light reflected from the scales. As butterflies age, the scales might rub or fall off, revealing the clear membrane underneath.

To get started on a wonderful butterflyflying adventure of your own, try these local spaces:

- Papillion Butterfly Garden
- Heron Haven Wildlife Sanctuary
- Pacific Preserve

Great Spangled Fritillary

Fritillaries are a group of butterflies that lack claws on their front legs. Since females only mate once, the male who sees her first, wins!



Painted Lady Butterfly

This butterfly is the most widely distributed butterfly in the world, found on every continent except Antarctica and South America. They can fly up to 30 miles per hour!



Cabbage White Butterfly

Common white butterfly native to Europe and Asia. Accidentally introduced to North America in the 1860s and often viewed as a pest. Males patrol for females near host plants.



Eastern Black Swallowtail

Male butterflies secure a territory and chase other males away. Male Black Swallowtails are black with prominent yellow markings and very little blue while females (left) are black with small yellow spots and more blue.

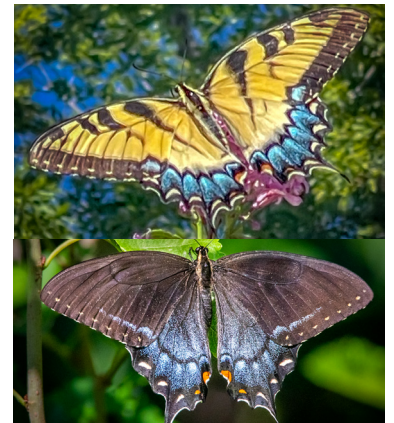
Monarch

Monarchs are the only butterfly that completes a round trip migration; however, the trip is not completed by one butterfly. Multiple generations contribute to the completion of the trip of up to 6,000 miles!



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

Female Eastern Swallowtails range in color from yellow to black. The black form resembles the Pipevine Swallowtail (which tastes bad to predators) and may be an example of deceptive coloring, also known as mimicry, which is used to confuse predators.

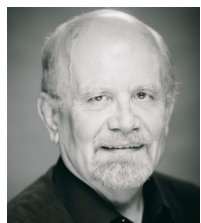


Meet our new board members!

In May, ASO elected four new members to its board of directors who each begin a two-year term of service in July. Additionally, the board elected its executive officers for the 2025-2026 fiscal year:

- **President:** Conor Gearin
- **1st Vice President:** Mark Harberg
- **2nd Vice President:** Bennett Amdor
- **Treasurer:** Melissa Sitze
- **Secretary:** Katy Simmons

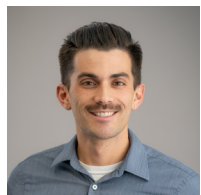
Meet our four new board members below!



Bill Bossman

Bill Bossman, a native of Ponca and a graduate of Midland University, moved back to Nebraska four years ago after retiring from a long legal career. While living in South Dakota, Bill served on the boards of a local Audubon chapter and the statewide birding association. He has written articles about birds for several publications, and enjoys helping to ignite a passion for birds in others. He looks

forward to leading field trips and bird walks in the Omaha area, especially for those who are just getting acquainted with the world of birds.



Derek Comba

Derek, while new to the Audubon Society of Omaha, is very excited for this opportunity to serve on the board. He has worked his entire professional career in the nonprofit sector, has a master's degree in Nonprofit Administration from UNO, and looks forward to bringing his knowledge to this role. In his free time, Derek

enjoys traveling, working out, reading and spending time outdoors. In the spring and summer, you can usually find Derek outside looking for birds or working in his pollinator-friendly garden.



Sheila Glencer

Sheila is a pharmacist and former hiking club organizer/leader. She brings a unique blend of science and outdoor experience to the Audubon Society of Omaha. In addition, she is an amateur nature photographer with a focus on birds and other wildlife. Sheila is conservation-minded and encourages outdoor activities for all ages. "I am excited to contribute my time and expertise to promote envi-

ronmental awareness, the preservation of wild spaces and support educational opportunities with our local Audubon community," she says. Additional hobbies include music/art appreciation, hiking, biking and reading.



Mark Harberg

Mark received his BS degree in Natural Resources from the University of Nebraska in 1979 and his MS degree in Aquatic Ecology in 1983 from South Dakota State University. He began his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Minnesota and then with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Nebraska. He started working with the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Omaha

office, conducting environmental compliance activities and developing aquatic habitat restoration projects along the Missouri River. He worked in supervisory positions related to these activities in the Corps Albuquerque, Dallas, and Fort Worth offices. He returned to the Omaha office in 2010 where he became Program Manager for the Missouri River Recovery Program, which sought to improve habitat for the endangered Pallid Sturgeon, Interior Least Tern and Piping Plover along the Missouri River. He retired in 2021 and continues to pursue his lifelong interests in birdwatching, upland bird hunting, fishing, and gardening.

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 want you – to volunteer

Have you ever been told you're a leader? Or do you want to be a leader? How about leading a birding field trip to the destination of your choice? Please contact Sarah Shepherd at sshepherd@audubonomaha.org and let us know you're interested in getting involved with your local Audubon chapter.

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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STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

the Meadowlark

JUL/AUG 2025
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*Photo: Indigo Bunting
by Bob Tooley*

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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Omaha, NE 68103-3542
402-445-4138
website: Audubon-Omaha.org
email: audubonomaha@audubonomaha.org

Elected Officers

President: Conor Gearin
Past President: Anne Maguire
1st Vice President: Mark Harberg
2nd Vice President: Bennett Amdor
Treasurer: Melissa Sitze
Secretary: Katy Simmons

Elected directors

Bill Bossman
Roger Carroll
Derek Comba
Kyle Finley
Betty Fullerton
Sheila Glencer
Katy Simmons

Committee Chairpersons

DEIB: Bennett Amdor
Education/Field Trips: Sheila Glencer
Finance: Melissa Sitze
Fundraising and Bird Seed Sale:
Elizabeth and John Fullerton
Legislative Affairs: Mark Harberg &
Bennett Amdor
Marketing and Outreach: Conor Gearin
Membership: Duane & Kathy Schwery
Natural Areas Stewardship: Glenn Pollock
Nominating: Bennett Amdor
Program: Anne Maguire
Student Art Contest: Virginia Stauffer
ASO Administrator: Sarah Shepherd
Executive Director, Audubon Great Plains:
Kristal Stoner



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