



# A Bird's Eye View

Audubon Society of Omaha

A Chapter of National Audubon Society



January 2002 Vol. 31 No. 1

## The World and Wonders of Antarctica

By Clem Klaphake

If we never get any snow or ice this winter, here is a chance to sit back and enjoy a slide presentation on research, wildlife, snow and ice without having to bundle up or even feel a cold wind in our faces. Kolene Krysl, the speaker for the January 10 meeting will show slides and discuss her two months of research in the McMurdo Sound of Antarctica.

Kolene's research involved the study of Weddell Seals (*Leptonychotes weddellii*) gathering in colonies to breed and give birth to pups. Several colonies in the McMurdo Sound area have been studied since 1960.

The team of researchers that Kolene worked with from the University of Minnesota were interested in whether the spacing of individual females in relation to access holes along the tidal cracks limits the number of pups that can be produced at a given colony.

With the new GPS technology and underwater television, much new information is being gathered about seal foraging behavior as well as how the females teach their pups to swim.

Kolene assisted in the use of GPS and underwater television to correlate the spatial distances of mother and pups on the surface of the colony with their underwater locations. Along with scientists from the University of Minnesota, two from the Oceanic Institute in Japan worked on this project.

In addition to the seal behavior research, Kolene will discuss such physical conditions as glaciers, icebergs, fast-ice, pack-ice, and sea-ice. She will show slides of other wildlife she encountered while doing research.

Kolene has been teaching both middle school and elementary science classes for the past 15 years. Six of those years were in California and the last seven in the Millard School Dis

trict. She received her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Nebraska-Kearney in 1987 and has worked on the study of *T. Bemachii*, an Antarctic fish, with Dr. David Petzel of Creighton University.

Join us for a trip WAY down under near the South Pole on Thursday, January 10, 7:30 pm, Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances—a great way to spend a January evening with friends and warm company.

The general public is invited. A short business meeting will follow the program, concluding with hot coffee, cookies and conversation.



## Birding at Backyard Feeders in January

Our next field trip will

By Dick Rasmussen

be held Saturday, January 12. Because of possible foul weather this time of year, we will stay close to home and visit some feeders in the area.

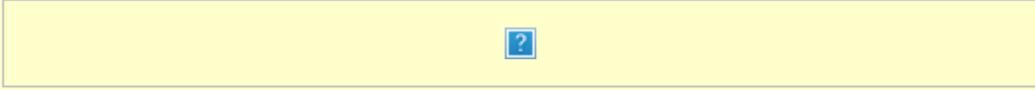
We will meet at the Fontenelle Forest Visitor Center at 8:00 a.m, view their feeder activity, and go on from

there. We'll assemble at 4503 South 16th St. around 11:30 a.m. and have lunch with Carole Rasmussen, who has agreed to serve us.

The feeding frenzy (at the feeders) usually gets underway about 11:45. Wear some warm clothing and bring binoculars and a hot beverage if you

wish. Questions or comments may be directed to Dick Rasmussen at 731-3939.

If you would like for us to visit your feeders or if you have any unusual birds coming to your feeders, please let me know.



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### Scholarly Notes

by Eric Scholar



## Nebraska Breedin

By Neal Ratzlaff

## Year-End Wrap-up

I will use this first column of the year to bring you up to date on a few items that occurred in the last few months of 2001 you may or may not be aware of.

First, the bird seed sale did very well this year. We made close to \$8,500, which was almost \$1,000 more than last year. Thanks are due the numerous people who put countless hours into making the sale a success.

Sally Hansen, Chairperson of the Sale, deserves special appreciation for bringing off this event so successfully. Duane Bright, Neal and Izen Ratzlaff, and Barbara Sennentz generously made their garage spaces available. Heron Haven was an additional pick-up site, thanks to all those who worked there. To Jerry Toll, deployer of volunteers, Nelli Falzgraf, Neal Ratzlaff, Laurine Blankenau, and all those who loaded and unloaded sacks of seed— thank you.

As you know, this is our major fundraiser of the year, and we greatly appreciate the help.



During the summer and fall, seeds were collected from Audubon's Prairie Preserve, formerly known as Jensen Prairie. About 75 pounds of seeds were hand collected, and about 750 pounds of seeds were harvested with a combine.

The seeds were hand sown by two volunteers on about three acres of the old field north of the virgin prairie. The goal is to expand the

This past spring we conducted a controlled burn, which resulted in many flowers blooming for the first time in years, among them Turk's Cap Lily, a prized wildflower beauty.

Next year we will need volunteers to help control the weeds and collect seed in early summer. Many thanks to Glenn Pollock and the people who helped him maintain the prairie.



At Heron Haven a flood control project with the help of a \$10,000 grant has been initiated by lone Werthman with the help of Larry Shackman and Paul Kardell.



## Birding for the Beginner Class Starts January 19

By lone Werthman

A six-week "Birding for the Beginner" class will be offered again to the public through Metro Community College.

Starting January 19, the classes will be held at Heron Haven, 11809 Old Maple Road, each Saturday morning, 9:00-12:00.

Following the six-week session, a three-week, more advanced course on warblers and shorebirds will be offered. ASO members Eunice Levisay, Betty Allen, Clem Klaphake, Jenny Henricksen, Ruth Green and lone Werthman will conduct the classes.

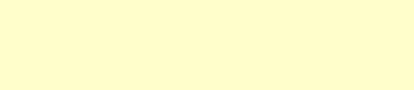
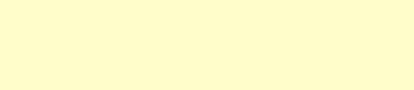
Registration must be made through Metro Community College after January 1 when their non-credit class schedule is available.

You may now purchase the which provides breeding ran 191 species identified as br author has included addition and habitat use.

Significant valuable data on provided when available, information from neighboring

The Atlas was sponsored joint Nebraska Game and Parks C coordinator and author comp volunteers. Funding and in publication of the book possi

Price from Steve Lamphere a will be the same.To order by Nebraska Ornithologists Libra W-436 Nebraska Hall, Lincoln



3 (Thur) Evening with Bird Cl

7 (Mon) Conservation Meeting

area of the prairie to a total of 12 acres. This spring 3 acres were planted with a drill using seed collected last year. Many hours were also spent removing weeds.

9 (Wed) Board Meeting

10 (Thur) General Meeting

12 (Sat) Field Trip

16 (Wed) Nature Study

19 (Sat) Metro Birding Class B



## The Omaha Raptor Team

A Committee of ASO

By Alison O'Connor

The Omaha Raptor Team has finished another successful year of programs and public appearances, and we are most grateful to all the people and organizations who helped support us. Without the donations we receive, we can't keep our feathered educators fed and housed.

Speaking of housing, we had a bit of a dream come true in 2001. We obtained a matching grant from the Scott Foundation for \$2,500. In turn, an anonymous Audubon donor matched the grant.

These funds, combined with some from other donations, allowed us to have two outside aviaries built at Heron Haven. We hope to offer people the chance to see raptors at the end of their

This past year it cost over \$3,000 to feed our birds. We spent another \$2,500 on housing.

This doesn't take into account our other operating costs. It would take a lot of programs to support these expenses. It is the private donations we receive that are so necessary for our continued success.

If we have had the good fortune of meeting you or educating your children or grandchildren, please remember that very moment when you came face to face with our raptors.

Keep in mind the wide-eyed excitement from the children recounting what they learned about our feathered friends. The Omaha Raptor Team certainly

## Water, Water Everywhere, But Not a Drop to Drink .....Maybe Not

By Nelli Falzgraf

Drinking seawater could be lethal for ocean-living birds if they didn't eliminate excess salts, yet seabirds such as petrels and some gulls can drink water that is 3 percent salt and not become dehydrated. These and other marine birds have nasal glands between the eyes that can excrete fluids with salt content as high as 5 percent.

For much more about gulls, please join Rick Schmid on Wednesday, January 16, 7:00 p.m. at the Rookery next to Heron Haven, to learn more about gulls.

Rick has served several years as program and field trip chair for the Birding Club. Grab your bird guide and join us. Questions? 292-9687.

## A Fine Winter's Eve with the Birding Club

You are invited to join the Fontenelle Nature Association Birding Club for a festive evening at the Forest Learning Center 7 p.m. Thursday, January 3. A friendly fire, a heartwarming video entitled "Arctic Dance: the Life of Mardi Murie," hot drinks, yummy desserts, and hearty conversation will be featured.

It's a super kickoff for the new year, if you videotape the Rose Bowl game. For questions call Howard Mattix, 896-0352, or Nelli Falzgraf, 292-9687.

guided hike.

appreciates your thoughtfulness and continued support.

The year 2001 brought three new educational birds to the team, and with these new aviaries, we hope we may acquire one or two more birds. The Omaha Raptor Team's outlook incorporates some great ideas for the public, but we need continued support.

We wish you all the best for 2002!

### Birdline

For an update on the sightings in the state, call 292-5325.

Report your sightings after listening to the tape.

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### Environmental/ Legislative Action By lone Werthman

[?]

### Pest or Protected Non-Game Species?

It was a joy to read in a recent *World-Herald* story that citizens in Lynch, Nebraska, population 269, along the Missouri River in the northern part of the state, are capitalizing on Lewis and Clark's discovery of prairie dogs in their area. They hope to promote the Old Baldy prairie dog town outside of Lynch as a tourist attraction.

The North American 140 wildlife species. Great Plains, home to The Black-footed the prairie dogs, birds, Ferret, Burrowing Owl, bison, elk and many and many other species, was once depend on the once one of the most huge prairie dog towns magnificent grasslands for food and shelter. in the world, containing the largest aggregation At the urging of the of wildlife outside of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the eleven Africa. states within the

But it has been so historic prairie dog carved up, plowed range have now joined under and paved over, together as an that today it is among Interstate Conservation the most degraded Team to develop range-ecosystems in North wide standards to America. Ninety-nine protect the prairie dog percent of America's and prevent it from tallgrass prairies and being federally listed. 70% of the mixed and Each state is working shortgrass prairies have out its conservation been destroyed. If plan.

nothing is done, these prairies and this wildlife Nebraska's efforts to could soon disappear protect the prairie dogs forever. have been slow and emotional. Until 1994,

Early settlers were Nebraska law required shortsighted, giving prairie dogs to be little thought to the exterminated.

plants and animals of the prairie, plowing it Now the law permits

In 1999 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service announced it would conduct a study to determine whether the Black-tailed Prairie Dog should be listed as a threatened non-game species.

Information the Agency received in 2000 indicated that 5 billion of these prairie dogs

once burrowed and stood watch over more than 100 million acres of prairie. Today's estimates are that less than 10 million of these animals survive on no more than 750,000 acres.

Some say that 10 million of the critters are more than enough, but others respond that when America was discovered, there were over 3 billion-plus Passenger Pigeons, which went extinct in 1914.

It will be impossible to save the Black-footed Ferret, already endangered, if the prairie dog is wiped out. The Prairie Dog is the ferret's basic food source.

The Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Mountain Plover, Ferruginous Hawk, Burrowing Owl, and a host of other species all have two things in common—the loss of their grassland habitat and the possibility of the label "threatened and endangered." The ferret and the Mountain Plover already carry this label while the others are about to have it added.

to raise wheat, corn and cattle. As a result, over the last century, prairie dogs have been pushed off 99% of the land they historically occupied. In the eleven states within the historic ranges of the prairie dog, these were considered rodents and obnoxious vermin and were killed by the billions through poisoning and recreational shooting. The early settlers didn't understand that the burrows made by the prairie dogs helped turn and aerate the soil like a rotary tiller does in a garden. They didn't know that a prairie dog ecosystem contains more diversity and density of succulent plants than a prairie without prairie dogs. Through time, however, it has been proven that domestic cattle now inhabiting most of the prairie prefer to graze in prairie dog towns because of the healthy plant diversity and density. Prairie dogs do not destroy the range; they are part of its regeneration. Pioneers didn't realize that the prairie dog was a keystone species, holding the prairie web of life together and supporting and attracting more than

prairie dog towns under very limited voluntary landowner conditions. Governor Johanns has called for a rodent count before subscribing to any state conservation plan.

The Nebraska plan, so far, is based on the voluntary participation of willing landowners with an incentive program built in as compensation.

The plan allows continued control of prairie dogs by poisoning and recreational shooting, but only with a permit. It recognizes prairie dogs as a wildlife species with primary management authority by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission rather than as a "pest" under the Department of Agriculture, Weed and Pest District.

If no Nebraska plan is put forth that adequately protects the prairie dog and the prairie dog is eventually federally listed as endangered, primary responsibilities for management of the species will be transferred from the state to U.S. Fish & Wildlife, and federal law will take precedence. Landowners will then lose the ability to control prairie dogs on their property.

**Continued on page 5**



## Great Backyard Bird Count

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology seeks persons to join in the Great Backyard Bird Count February 15-18, 2001.

## Amendments to be Voted in February

In May 2001, an amendment was presented to the Board by Laurine Blankenau

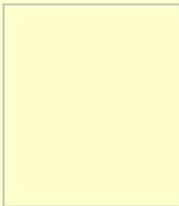
The procedure is to count the birds you see at your backyard feeder, local park, or other area and log them into the BirdSource database, managed by the Lab and National Audubon Society at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). You'll find maps, graphs, bird bios and song, materials for teachers, and past Great Backyard Bird Count results.

Help find out which birds are where and know that your information is added to this important database!

If you do not have web access, you may wish to ask a friend to process your findings for you, or try your local library.

No fees, no registration necessary. All the instructions you need are provided

on the web site.



## Prairie Dogs, Continued from page 4

Join us for more conservation and legislative news in 2002, starting Monday, January 7. The state legislature will be in session and Congress, as always, will keep us on our toes.

Meetings are held at Heron Haven, the Audubon Office, 11809 Old Maple Road, 7:30 p.m.

the procedure to be followed if ASO wishes to terminate its affiliation with the National Audubon Society. **Actual termination was not discussed or recommended by the Board.**

After the amendment appeared in the Summer 2001 issue of the newsletter preparatory to a vote at the general meeting, comments from members were received, and the amendment was withdrawn and returned to the Bylaws Committee for revision.

This revised amendment and two others will be voted at the February general meeting. All members present are eligible to vote.

**Constitution. Article III: Section 1 Discontinuance** (added to the Constitution)

The Society reserves the right to terminate its Chapter status on six month's notice, given in writing to the National Audubon Society. A two-thirds majority of elected Board members voting by secret ballot in favor of termination is required.

If the Board approves of termination, a special general meeting will be held for all members on the subject of termination. After this meeting, ballots will be mailed to all Chapter members, to be returned within thirty days to a Post Office box to be retrieved by the president and a vice-president and remain unopened until counted by and in the presence of a minimum of the president, a vice-president, and the recording secretary.

The Society will terminate its chapter status with National Audubon when not less

The Audubon Society of Omaha retains its membership with the Audubon Society of Omaha, which will not be affected by the Audubon Society. After termination of the Chapter, the Chapter choosing membership in both the National Audubon Society of Omaha shall be determined by the organization.

**Article II: Section 3 Dissolution** (ceasing to exist)

added after final sentence, paragraph 2, for the purpose of dissolve the Chapter status shall be made by a two-thirds vote of members present at any regularly called meeting. A quorum is present and notice is given fifteen days in advance in the Society newsletter sent to all members.

**Bylaws: Article XI: Revised** (underlined phrases)

The constitution and bylaws, with the exception of Article XI Discontinuance, may be amended by a majority vote of members present at any regularly called meeting. Notice of amendments are given by mail or in the Society newsletter.



## Investment Committee Seeks Persons

If you have experience in investment decisions, you and others are invited to serve on our Committee.

Please contact Nelli Falzgraf, 292-9687 if you are interested.

than fifteen percent of the chapter members returned their ballots and, of those, not less than a two-thirds majority voted in favor of termination. Six months after the notice to National Audubon, all allocation of dues by the National Society to this Society will cease.



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## American Citizens are Saving the World's Birds

By John Bianchi, National Audubon Society

An international program that works with private citizens to successfully protect millions of migrating birds worldwide received its U.S. kickoff on November 29, 2001.

Officials at Audubon, the organization leading the Important Bird Areas Program (IBA) in the U.S, launched the initiative with events across the country, highlighting land critical to the survival of birds and the individuals who help identify these unique places.

Audubon made available its first list of selected Global IBA nominations at [http://www.audubon.org/news/release/iba\\_list.html](http://www.audubon.org/news/release/iba_list.html).

Global IBAs are places of international importance in communities across America and around the world, nominated by local people. The program is coordinated on a worldwide basis by Bird Life International, headquartered in Cambridge, England. Audubon is the Bird Life International Partner for the United States.

IBA recognition helps protect places

that are vital to the survival of birds. "America's birds are in trouble, and this is a chance for individuals to make a difference," said John Flicker, Audubon President and CEO. "Through stressing action by people at the local level, the IBA program offers ordinary Americans an opportunity to protect globally important places and help save the birds that use them from decline and extinction."

Audubon seeks a grassroots approach to protecting land for birds and people. The IBA program uses local volunteers to find important bird habitat.

Once identified, these sites' continued health is assured by local land managers and landowners. The program imposes no regulations, restrictions, or costs. Private lands can be nominated for inclusion only if the owner is in full agreement.

mon," said Frank Gill, Audubon Senior Vice-President for Science. "Migrating birds do not recognize borders; they are the ultimate goodwill ambassadors. The IBA program is a way to join people and communities to protect these irreplaceable national treasures."

Audubon's IBA program is a unique international effort. Thousands of citizen volunteers and scientists in local communities have been and continue to be the foundation for the program. Their hard work and dedication lead to the identification and nomination of areas critical for birds.

President Bush is urging all Americans to make a difference in their own communities as a way to help the country flourish during this challenging time. The IBA program gives Americans an opportunity to celebrate their own communities—and

The program imposes no controls but joins Americans with citizens worldwide who care about protecting natural resources for the good of birds and people.

Nominated sites will be rigorously reviewed by leading scientists and then endorsed by Bird Life International.

"IBA designation is a good thing for the world, the country, and for your community," said Michael Rands, President of Bird Life International. "Proximity to an IBA tells visitors that you live in a great place. You can help tell the rest of the country and world by enrolling in this program as an Audubon volunteer."

Many birds that use U.S. flyways spend parts of each year in Canada, Mexico, and Latin American countries.

"Birds are something all Americans, indeed all people, have in com

protect our national resources. "You don't have to go to your Congressman, mayor, or town council to do this," continued Flicker. "IBA is a people-centered program that relies on everyday citizens to nominate local places and take the lead on conservation efforts."

Gill said the Audubon IBA program has already identified 1,200 sites in 40 U.S. states for designation as Important Bird Areas. Audubon will have programs underway for 2002 in all 50 states, with over 3,000 sites designated.

If you find an injured bird of prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-734-6817 or 402-731-9869.



## Notes from Nature

By Jerry Toll



Simplify! Simplify! With this admonition, the first stirrings of the American conservation movement was launched. Henry David Thoreau, influenced by the philosophy of Emerson, began his experiment in the woods of Massachusetts in 1845. In 1854 he published *Walden, A Life in the Woods*,

sequently the publishing of *Walden* barely made a ripple in the publishing pond. Yet *Walden* is now the most reprinted work of any pre-civil war American author.

Being a product of the sixties, I read all of the popular classics of the time. *Walden* struck a chord with me. Making a concerted effort to simplify my life by not letting materialism rule my actions seemed desirable.

Looking back on my adult life, I find

in volume. This watch is no Duluth. We don't get 32,000 Broad-wing Hawks going through in a day. But we do have a number of days in October over 100, still pretty exciting.

Those clear days before a frost carrying north winds can be a lot of fun. And there is no better place to observe the changing fall season or watch the sun go down than Hitchcock Nature Area.

On behalf of Mark Orsag and Sue Mattix, who organize this all-volunteer watch, I want to thank all of the ASO members who each fall have given generously of their time (I know you do it because it's fun, but thanks just the same). I also invite everyone to come to Hitchcock next fall when the hawks are flying.

recounting the philosophical revelations and enjoyment of nature he found during his experience.

He advocated living close to nature, taking from it only what was needed. During his time at Walden Pond, he was largely self-reliant. He built a simple home, raised his own food, fished and traded labor or produce for what few essentials he could not provide for himself.

He advocated minimizing one's labor to only the essentials in order to devote more time to reading and expanding one's intellect. He knew that this lifestyle was not for everyone. He himself was only able to remain at Walden Pond for a few years. Yet, according to his biographers, he recounts this time as the happiest of his life.

Thoreau's writings are of value to contemporary living, not in his adherence to self-reliance but in the stewardship and quality of life that were by-products of that lifestyle.

In line with his intellectual contemporaries, he observed nature from a scientific standpoint. He conducted experiments, recorded observations, and added to scientific knowledge. Yet he saw the spiritual in nature and considered both the spiritual and intellectual as equal parts of his nature.

Thoreau was very much alone in his thinking. He saw the excesses of the time: empire building based on exploitation of resources without regard to stewardship. He saw a better way. He marched to a different drummer. Con

that this ideal was usually the measuring stick I used to guide my actions. Thoreau's suggestion to simplify our lives, to walk softly upon the earth, is as applicable to our complex lives as it was to his.

Douglas H. Strong recounts the contributions made by Thoreau and other historical leaders of the conservation movement in *Dreamers and Defenders: American Conservationists*, published by the University of Nebraska Press.

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The hawk watch at Hitchcock Nature Area is winding down as of this writing. There are only two days left until counting ends. It doesn't look as if we will be getting the 19 species of raptors we had in the previous year. However, we have seen 18 species, only missing Red-shouldered Hawk as one of the species very likely to be seen during the watch.

Hitchcock Hawkwatch is considered one of the most species-diverse hawkwatches in the country.

This happens because we straddle the divide between raptor species found in the east and those in the west. Very little is known about hawk migration through the Great Plains. Hitchcock is helping to expand our knowledge in this area.

What we have in diversity, we lose

By Betty Grenon

The mild weather and totally open water created an average CBC for Omaha (65 species) on Dec. 15 but provided several high count species and two new ones for count day: Bufflehead (33), seen twice before in count week, and Franklin's Gull (150). I also had a call about a flock of Franklin's Gulls seen at about 105th & Pacific in a mowed field. There may have been more than one flock.

High counts in 39 years were Hooded Merganser 21, Ruddy Duck 327, Ring-billed Gull 798, Herring Gull 5, American Crow 758, Cedar Waxwing 295. We found the Red-shouldered Hawk, dandelions and a few Sulphur butterflies.

In all 39 years of the Count, we've had a total of 132 species.



## Christmas Bird Count: How Did We Do?



### National Audubon Society

Membership Application

The *Audubon Magazine* and your membership card will be sent to this address:

Name

Street

City State



### Memorials

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

When sending your gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize. Please also give the name and address of the person to be notified.

### 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, 11809 Old Maple Road, Omaha  
68164

Phone: 445-4138 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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2nd Vice President Nelli Falzgraf, 414 Ridgewood Dr, Bellevue 68124  
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Bird Seed Sale Sally Hansen, 2330 Bel Court #12, Omaha 68144 334-2329

Historian Kathleen Rose, 123 Bellevue Blvd So, Bellevue 68005 292-8912

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