

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.



February 2013

Volume 42; Issue 2

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

February 14th General Meeting Double-crested Cormorant: Emerging scourge or misunderstood marvel of nature?

Presenters: Lauren Dinan and Joel Jorgensen

Summary: Double-crested Cormorants are increasingly controversial because they feed on fish, competing with humans for a valuable resource. Besides competing for the sport fishery, they have been documented as having an impact on commercial hatcheries and fish farms.

Double-crested cormorants are thriving. Their population has been rising in recent decades. Fishing and aquaculture interests have advocated population reductions, but the species is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. A bill was even introduced in Congress in 2012 to pave the way for population reduction.

Are cormorants causing problems to the Nebraska fishery industry? In the fall of 2012, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission conducted a survey to answer that

question and this presentation will discuss what they have learned.

Joel Jorgensen is a native Nebraskan originally from Blair. He received Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He has held the position of Nongame Bird Program Manager at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for the past seven years.

Lauren Dinan is a native Nebraskan originally from Doniphan. She received her bachelor's degree from Southeast Missouri State University in May 2011. She currently works at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commissions as a Nongame Bird Biologist.

Please plan to attend this interesting program at our general meeting **Thursday, February 14th, at 7 pm** at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (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 and there is no cost. **Bring your dead batteries of all kinds, print cartridges and no-longer-useable small**

electronics for recycling to the meeting.

MIDWINTER BIRD SEED SALE

The end is near! The last date to order more birdseed is February 6th so get your order in now. Audubon is having an Email Bird Seed Sale with pickup delivery date on February 16th, 2013. The only pickup site will be Neal Ratzlaff's garage near 84th and Brentwood.

If you have questions or need an order form, you can send us a message at katcr@cox.net or download the order form from the Audubon-Omaha.org website. This has been a great year for visiting seed eaters, so load up now on niger seed and sunflower hearts to keep your finch feeders full.

February Field Trip

The next field trip will be at Boyer Chute NWR looking for Redpolls and Sparrows.

We will meet at the entrance to Boyer Chute on Saturday, February 9th at 9am.

Be sure to bring optics and clothes suitable for cold weather.

Good shoes or boots will also be needed as it could be snowy or muddy.

Volume 1- Carter Lake

By Justin Rink

This year I'm going to take a slightly different slant on these presidential articles. Every month I will be spotlighting a different birding spot in close proximity to Omaha that may produce good species or respectable numbers. So with that said, let's get started....

Carter Lake: Many people have heard of it, but only a handful have birded it. Straddling the state line between Nebraska and Iowa, this oxbow lake (once part of the Missouri River) has been used as a recreation area for decades. It is also a great place to scan for waterfowl, even during the cold, snowy winter months. You may be thinking, ducks in winter, yeah right. The truth is that Carter Lake has always had open water areas due to aeration piped in below the surface. This keeps the water moving and ice-free. This in turn is a magnet to migratory and wintering waterfowl. No less than twenty-one species of waterfowl were observed wintering on the lake during the abnormally mild winter of 2012. Some of these birds were present in large numbers such as Canvasback, Redheads, and Ring-necked Ducks. Other species that people generally don't associate with winter in Nebraska included large quantities of American Coots, a few American Wigeon, as well as Ruddy Ducks, Hooded Mergansers and Pied-billed Grebes.

This year, however, a trio of Trumpeter Swans has been present since early January. The large-bodied white birds have attracted a myriad of admirers from Nebraska and Iowa, and even the local newspaper. This winter the number of birds seems a bit lower than last, but numbers and species are prone to fluctuate.

In years past an aeration system in a different location attracted many species of gulls. Laridphiles were thrilled to find far-northern gulls such as Thayer's, Glaucous, and Iceland utilizing this water source. They, unfortunately, have not been observed again for many years.

Spring is also migration time for several waterfowl species. The close proximity to the river attracts many migrants such as Ruddy Ducks, Blue and Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Loons, Eared Grebes, and Forster's Terns. Last spring a young female Long-tailed Duck spent a few weeks in a raft of Lesser Scaup. In April 2011 a birder discovered a Common Gallinule (at the time Common Moorhen) within a large American Coot flock. This is not a common eastern Nebraska migrant.

It is not just waterfowl that enjoy the comforts of Carter Lake. Bald Eagles frequently line the largest trees along the water's edge looking for a meal during the winter months. Later in the year, you may find Double-crested

Cormorants occupying the same trees. During migration, Osprey may circle overhead. Great Blue and Green Herons can often be seen in spring and summer stalking the edges of the lake. During dry periods, one may also find an assortment of shorebirds along the bank. Migrating and wintering sparrows such as White-throated and Harris's enjoy the brush piles and weedy areas. The large Cottonwoods found throughout Levi Carter Park and vicinity can also be good for migratory passerines such as various flycatchers, warblers and vireos.

The next time you have cabin fever, itching for some winter waterfowl, or just want to break in that new scope, make the short drive out to Carter Lake.

There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace. To avoid the first danger, one should plant a garden, preferably where there is no grocer to confuse the issue. To avoid the second, one should lay a split of good oak on the andirons, preferably where there is no furnace, and let it warm your shins while a February blizzard tosses the trees outside.

Excerpt from the chapter "February" in *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold

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Bird Identification Class

8:00a.m. – 12:00p.m.

\$25.00 for all 3 classes

Part 1MARCH 16th

Wetlands Learning Center Fontenelle Forest

Part 2APRIL 13th

Wetlands Learning Center Fontenelle Forest

Part 3MAY 4th

Wetlands Learning Center Fontenelle Forest

With over 50 million 'birders' in the U.S., bird watching is the fastest growing outdoor activity today. Led by Clem Klaphake and Justin Rink, past president and current president respectively, of the Audubon Society of Omaha, this class includes local field trips designed to teach you how to identify the birds in your backyard or any other location you might encounter them, use of field guides and use of binoculars. No prior knowledge of bird identification is needed. If you are interested, contact Clem Klaphake at 402-292-2276 or ckavian@cox.net to register. For ages 12 and up. The class is limited to 15 people.

HELP IS NEEDED

Help is needed for the ASO Student Art Contest! This very successful and rewarding community event requires a lot of volunteer time in order to be a success. Can you volunteer a few hours of your time to help with one of the following activities for the Art Contest? Friday, February 23rd from 4:00 until 6:00 PM help receive the artwork at the ASO office in the Center Mall. Saturday, February 24th from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM help receive the artwork at the ASO office in the Center Mall. (You can help as much as you want.) Early in March you can help with the judging of the artwork. Friday, April 5th between 9:00 AM and noon help set up the artwork at Bellevue University. Saturday, April 6th from noon until 3:00 PM greet the families, teachers, and children for viewing artwork.

Please contact Jackie Scholar @ 402 551 5045 or jbscholar@cox.net if you can help.

Omaha Christmas Bird Count Results

The 50th Omaha CBC was held on December 15th with very mild weather with some mist and drizzle. All the water was open, allowing a higher occurrence of waterfowl species. A slightly lower number of observers (25) than our usual still managed to find 75 species, the second highest count ever. Four additional species were seen during count week: Northern Shoveler, Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Shrike, and a singing Western Meadowlark. Several species recorded high count numbers:

Canada Goose	10,283
Canvasback	19
Pileated Woodpecker	5
Carolina Wren	48
Spotted Towhee	6
Harris' Sparrow	217
Fox Sparrow	8

Perhaps the most unusual bird was the Prairie Falcon, seen on the Iowa side in the Lake Manawa quadrant. This is only

the second time for this visitor, the first being in 1990.

Betty Grenon
Compiler

DeSoto/Boyer Chute Christmas Bird Count Results

By Jerry Toll

The DeSoto/Boyer Chute CBC was held Saturday, December 29th under near perfect conditions for the late count. Light winds and plenty of sunshine aided the 15 field birders and one feeder/watcher to have the highest species diversity in the 16 year history of the current count circle: 73 species with 2 count week species, which blew the previous high count of 69 set in 1999 out of the water. The number of individuals seen, however, was the second lowest total at 7,357, due largely to frozen lakes and streams with the

continued on page 4...

The 43rd annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration: Nebraska's Crane Festival

March 21-24, 2013

Holiday Inn - Kearney, Nebraska

For more information:

Nebraskacranefestival.org/
402-797-2301

- Hundreds of thousands of sandhill cranes - experience one of the great wildlife migrations on Earth!
- Dan O'Brien — Wildlife biologist, author, and falconer
- Noppadol Paothong — Photographer, author
- Rowe Sanctuary's crane viewing blinds on the Platte River
- Field trips to area birding hotspots - Prairie grouse, cranes, geese, and more
- Family-friendly Wild Experience Room & crane behavior class

Registration available in early January 2013: Call, write, or go on-line:
Audubon Nebraska, P.O. Box 117,
Denton, NE 68339;
402-797-2301; ne.audubon.org

Crane viewing reservations: [Rowe Sanctuary](http://RoweSanctuary), 44450 Elm Island Road, Gibbon, NE 68840;
308-468-5282

Laredo, TX Birding Festival

We cordially invite the members of the Audubon Society of

Omaha to attend our 2013 Laredo Birding Festival, scheduled for February 6-9. We have a terrific line-up of events and trips that feature the best of our birding hotspots and scenic South Texas ranches. Don't miss the opportunity to spot our prized bird, the White-Collared Seedeater, and hundreds of other avian beauties that nest throughout our unique river ecosystem.

Please find more information and details on the 2013 event, or visit us online at www.laredobirdingfestival.com.

Should you have any questions, please call us at (956) 718-1063 or email us at laredobirdingfestival@rgisc.org.

DeSoto/Boyer Chute CBC results

continued from page 3 ...

Missouri River heavily iced in the morning.

Highlights:

Waterfowl - Pintail, Lesser Scaup, Canvasback, and Bufflehead, all rare to encounter

7 species of diurnal raptors

5 species of owl - including Saw-whet and Long-eared

6 species of woodpecker - including Red-headed and Pileated

4 Northern Shrike, a high count

8 Carolina Wren, also a high count

1 Winter Wren

2 Hermit Thrush

Eastern and Spotted Towhees

10 species of sparrows including 19 Fox, a high count, 74 Song, another high count, 19 White-throated, 27 White-crowned, a high count, 207 Harris, a high count, and 1 Savannah, a first for the count

59 Snow Bunting, high count

1 Purple Finch

239 Common Redpoll, (this is not a typo) the next highest record is 9!

78 Pine Siskin, a high record
Count week - Snow Geese and Merlin.

After the Missouri River flood of 2011 DeSoto and Boyer Chute Refuges were largely under water. In 2012 these flooded areas produced an explosion of sunflowers, mainly brown-eyed susans, accounting for the presence of late sparrows and winter finches.

Thanks to the 15 birders whose skill and passion made the day enjoyable and successful.

Great Backyard Bird Count is Going Global

Participate in the first worldwide Great Backyard Bird Count Friday, February 15th through Monday February 18th, 2013. GBBC is combining forces with eBird to make it possible for people all over the world to participate. This will allow global access, more precise locations, year round access to bird sightings, better visualization with interactive maps, the ability to go back and make corrections, and making it so you don't have to enter your data twice. Go to www.ebird.org to get started.

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington D.C. 20500-0001
Comments: 202-456-1111

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

Senator Deb Fischer

825 B Hart, Senate Office Building, Washington D.C.
20510 Washington Phone: 202-224-6551

Lincoln: 440 No. 8th St, Suite 120, Lincoln NE 68508
Lincoln phone: 402-441-4600

Omaha: 11819 Miracle Hills Dr, Suite 205, Omaha, NE
68154 Omaha phone: 402-391-3411.

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

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.

Membership in the National Audubon Society

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Introductory Membership (1st & 2nd Year) \$20 Make check payable to National Audubon Society

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha
19612 Ridgeway Road
Plattsmouth, NE 68048 COZCP030Z

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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.

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

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
1st Vice President	Jackie Scholar	551-5045
2nd Vice President	Laurine Blankenau	451-3647
Past President	Jerry Toll	453-9239
Treasurer	Dennis Kingery	556-9082
Recording Sec'y	Nelli Falzgraf	292-9687
Corres. Sec'y	Ann Boice	315-1884
<u>Elected Directors:</u>	Jamie Vann	733-1891
	Elliott Bedows	292-5017
	Jonas Grundman	216-5413
	Bob Fuchs	553-8242
	Tad Leeper	670-5919
	Eric Scholar	551-5045

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

Conservation	Bob Fuchs	553-8242
Education	Clem Klaphake	292-2276
Field Trip	Justin Rink	904-415-8279
Finance	Nelli Falzgraf	292-9687
Fund Raising	Vacant	
Membership	Kathy Schwery	296-4788
Program	Jerry Toll	453-9239
Natural Areas Mgt	Eric Scholar	551-5045
Publication	Jamie Vann	733-1891
	Laurine Blankenau	451-3647
Publicity	Jackie Scholar	551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs	Kathleen Rose	292-8912
	Carole 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
September through May, plus a summer issue. The
newsletter may be accessed on our website, [http://
audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org)

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19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048 or
e-mail djschw@windstream.com.

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