

May 2006

Volume 35 Issue 5

ASO is a Chapter

*of the National
Audubon Society*

*Serving Eastern
Nebraska*

and Western Iowa

Flora and Fauna of the Sandhills at Spring Banquet

By Clem
Klaphake

What birder/naturalist or naturalist/birder who has experienced the Nebraska Sandhills doesn't have a lasting impression burned into one's psyche of what a prairie might have looked and sounded like centuries ago? Could any self-respecting birder traveling through the Sandhills not want to return again and again? Despite the many times I go there every year, I never tire of this great open expanse called the Sandhills, or even think of not returning.

Stephen R. Jones, author of *The Last Prairie: A Sandhills Journal*, writes, "Recently, I stood on a wind-sculpted ridge with a friend, a Native American holy man, admiring the surrounding countryside and reflecting on its hypnotic appeal. 'The Sandhills,' he said, 'is the most sacred of all places. It's where our spirit goes to rest when we die.' As we stood there with the wind whipping through our hair and nothing visible but grass, water, and sky, I knew his words were true." A quote I often find very comforting and close.

There is no place like the Nebraska Sandhills, its biological and geological characteristics, and history anywhere else in North America, or maybe the world. If any of you reading this have never been there, it is a place

you should consider visiting at least once if you have any interest or concern for the native prairies and grasslands.

On May 11, at the annual Audubon Society of Omaha banquet held at Johnny's Cafe on L Street, Ruth Green will be showing photos and discussing some of the natural history of the Sandhills, including birdlife, plants, mammals, and reptiles. Ruth has been involved in bird identification, bird banding, Elderhostel programs, and photography for more years than she probably would want me to indicate. She has been frequently quoted in local newspaper articles and national publications on birding issues. In recent years she has dedicated more of her time to photography and Elderhostel programs during the Sandhill Crane migration and at Halsey, Nebraska.

Please join us for a 6:00 p.m. social gathering and 7:00 p.m. dinner. In addition to the speaker, photo contest entries will be displayed with prizes awarded. A Service Award will be presented.

The deadline for receiving your banquet reservation is May 5, so please send in yours without delay. A form is provided on page 7 of this issue. Call Laurine at 451-3647 for information.

DeSoto Spring Count

Saturday, May 6

Coordinating this Count is Bob Barry of the DeSoto Refuge, who is asking for help on Saturday, May 6. The count begins at 8:00 a.m. and runs to 4:30 p.m. You may choose to count for one-half day or a full day. To sign up, contact Bob at 642-5404, bob_barry@fws.gov, or just come out to join the group.

Meet at the Refuge Administration Office near the main entrance.

Sarpy County Bird Count

Saturday, May 13

On Saturday, May 13, the annual Sarpy County Bird Count will be held, coordinated by Clem Klaphake.

Participants are needed and welcome, regardless of level of birding skills, so please contact Clem, 292-2276, if you can help.

You may count for a half or a full day. Starting time is 8:00 a.m.; we will finish about 5:00 p.m.

Current Currents

By Elliott Bedows

Just What is Victoria's (Dirty) Secret?

A couple of weeks ago, I received a request to lead our ASO charges in protest against the actions of Victoria's Secret, a well-known and established franchise specializing in lingerie and other erotic clothing items. I sort of rolled my eyes at first; after all, our Chapter is here to promote environmental awareness through education with a special focus on birds, so why get involved with what people choose to wear? Well, it turns out the complaints surrounding Victoria's Secret's actions had nothing to do with their product line, but rather had a legitimate ecological basis. Let me explain.

With the assistance of our Chapter's own Kathy Schwery, I learned the following. In March of 2003 an advocacy group called ForestEthics kicked off a Catalog Campaign naming the 'Dirty Half-Dozen' catalog distributors who collectively produce over a billion catalogs a year using timber from our highly endangered pristine boreal forests.

I'm sure that as bird enthusiasts, you'd like to know the importance of this forest ecosystem. Nearly one-third of all North American migratory songbirds and some 40% of North American waterfowl depend on a healthy boreal forest for nesting and breeding. Unfortunately, only about 8% of this forest is protected, and U.S. corporations are gobbling up the remaining 92% to produce things such as catalogs.

The interests representing the "Dirty Half-Dozen" were chosen precisely for their large circulations, as well as for their strong brand identity and massive purchasing power. They included Victoria's Secret, Sears/Lands End, J.C. Penney, L.L. Bean, J. Crew, and Williams-Sonoma.

ForestEthics soon began negotiations with all six companies and convinced most of them to shift to recycled paper for the processing of their catalogs. Other industry giants who got wind of the campaign by ForestEthics also began to go "greener" with their advertising practices to avoid inevitable controversy. For example, after negotiating with ForestEthics, Dell Computer has adopted one of the most advanced environmental policies in the catalog industry. (FYI: I just got a new computer from Dell this past week.)

But Victoria's Secret wanted no part of this proposed change and has continued

campaign against Victoria's Secret and parent company, Limited Brands, for their leading role in forest destruction. Two years of investigative research has revealed a direct link between Victoria's Secret catalogs and the destruction of old growth and endangered forest in the Canadian boreal forest, the third largest forest wilderness in the world.

Victoria's Secret's paper usage is contributing to the demise of threatened mountain and woodland caribou herds in places like the Alberta foothills. The ForestEthics campaign includes demonstrations by grassroots environmental groups across the U.S. and advertisements and posters running in major cities across the country, challenging the retailer to use recycled and sustainably harvested paper and to stop using paper from the world's last remaining endangered forests. Victoria's Secret prints 395 million catalogs each year (that's over one million catalogs each day), predominantly on virgin paper from these endangered forests.

Having received on short notice a request to participate in ForestEthics' "action day," our Chapter is soliciting signatures on a petition against Victoria's Secret and other entities who use catalogs made of timber gathered from boreal forests. This petition has been made available at our Earth Day booth, and of course, I am writing to tell you that you should feel free (in fact I encourage you) to politely indicate to not only Victoria's Secret, but other such anti-green groups, that you'd be much more willing to buy their product(s) if they weren't endangering the planet.

For additional information, see the following websites: www.victoriadirtysecret.net or <http://forestethics.org/article.php?id=919> and you can contact Charlie Fredrick directly at 636-667-1077).

From the personal all the way to the global level, it is not what you do, but how you do it that makes the biggest impact!

And Lastly: One of my favorite on-line columns is entitled "Bird in the News" and is published, free of charge, by Devorah Bennu <birdologist@YAHOO.COM>. I highly recommend it. For a recent issue, browse <http://scienceblogs.com/grrlscientist/2006/04/birds_in_the_news_54_v2n5.php>

to destroy North American boreal forests for the production of their catalogs. On October 14, 2003, ForestEthics launched a national

Migratory Bird Day at Safari Park

We have been invited to staff a table at the Safari Park on Saturday, May 20, to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day. We need more volunteers to staff the event for Audubon. The event runs from 11:00 to 3:00. Hours open are 11:00 to 1:00. Please phone Laurine Blankenau if you can help: 451-3647.

ASO Birdathon 2006

The Birdathon is off to a good start, with a flyer and return envelope mailed to all members. This event is designed to combine the joy of birding with the need for fundraising to cover various costs.

Any birding trip will suffice, formal or informal, or members may choose to make an outright donation without regard to number of species seen.

If you wish to donate and no longer have the Birdathon flyer and return envelope, simply send a check to Laurine Blankenau, 3808 Grebe St, Omaha NE 68112.

We thank all for their contributions to date.

Terns & Plovers: How You Can Help

By Chris Thody

The Tern & Plover Conservation Partnership is seeking volunteers to help insure the survival of these species.

The Partnership studies and protects endangered Least Terns, threatened Piping Plovers, and other birds within the Platte River system. Members of the sand and gravel industry are some of our partners.

The birds' nest sites are on high, dry, barren midstream sandbars in their natural habitat. Having lost much of this habitat, the birds use sites at sand and gravel mines. The mines are most active in the birds' breeding season, necessitating working closely with the mine operators to protect the birds and resolve any conflicts with the industry. The success of the Partnership has been most gratifying, assuring the birds' reproductive success and saving the sand and gravel industry millions of

2006 `Friend of the Environment' Award to Jenny Henricksen

By Jackie Scholar

Congratulations to Jenny Henricksen of the Omaha Raptor Team for being voted to receive the 2006 Earth Day Omaha `Friend of the Environment' Award presented during the Earth Day celebration at Elmwood Park on Saturday, April 22.

This award is given annually by the Earth Day Coalition to an individual who has made a significant difference in protecting the environment. Jenny was cited for forming the Omaha Raptor Team and for her continued commitment to educating children and the public about raptors with live bird presentations. In accepting her award, Jenny thanked the volunteers who have helped the Raptor Team accomplish its mission.

Loess Hills Prairie Seminar

The 30th Anniversary celebration of the Loess Hills Prairie Seminar will take place June 2, 3 and 4, 2006. Various activities and talks are scheduled.

DNR Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program. Brush removal beginning at 9:00 a.m. Friday—
<Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us>
Training in Nature Mapping; Silent Auction—items related to prairies, nature, or the Loess Hills - Cherri Archerat <mccb@longlines.com>;
Prairie Pioneer Cemetery Tour led by Glenn Pollock <pollockg@radiks.net>

dollars.

Volunteers are needed to carry out this work, monitoring the birds, putting up and taking down electric predator exclusion fences, making, erecting and removing mylar flagging, and other tasks. Volunteers may work only a few or many hours a season—all are appreciated.

If you can volunteer, contact Chris Thody, 402-472-8741, or cthody2@unl.edu> A training session will be

held Tuesday,
May 9, 7-9
pm, Girl



Scout Building, 2121 So 44th St. Returning volunteers need come only to fill out paperwork and receive updates.



Hummingbirds Plan Meals?

Every so often, it seem, we hear about some animal that turns out to be far smarter than previously believed. Now it's the turn of the tiny hummingbird, at least the Rufous, and most likely its relatives.

This from Chhandra Bewtra to Yahoo, which serious birders log into for updates and to report their findings. The journal *Current Biology* reported on research finding that the hummers have the ability to plan regarding their food sources. The studies were made in Britain and in the Canadian Rockies. For a creature weighing 20 grams and possessing a tiny brain, this is impressive.

Susan Healy of the University of Edinburgh stated, "Hummingbirds that defend territories of many flowers remember which flower they have recently emptied." The birds not only could recall where certain flowers were, but also when they last sipped nectar from those flowers. These two abilities were hitherto believed to be present in humans but not other creatures.

Eight artificial flowers were used in the experiment,

By Laurine Blankenau

with four filled every 10 minutes and the other four filled every 20 minutes. The hummers kept track of the schedules and returned sooner to the "flowers" replenished after 10 minutes. The birds amazed the researchers with their skills at timing their feedings.

Our curiosity usually craves an explanation of extraordinary-seeming phenomena, and here it is. The Rufous covers 2,000 miles in migration from Canada to Mexico, and returns in the spring.. The conclusion is that the birds' brains developed to aid in such lengthy travel routes when time and energy saved or wasted finding food could be critical.

Henry Beston was right in saying, "The animals shall not be measured by man" (*The Outermost House*). But the fascinating facts about the tiny hummers' habits are pleasing reminders of our ties to the rest of nature, even these gorgeous-colored beauties as they hover, "hum," and flit from flower to flower to sustain their marvelous mechanism of flight.

Connect With Nature in Maine

In midcoast Maine's beautiful Muscongus Bay, on a 330-acre island, lies Audubon Camp, Hog Island. Every summer since 1936, sessions for adults, educators, young people and families have been led by some of the most respected naturalists and environmental educators in the nation.

Campers wake to a chorus of woodland birds and lobster boats puttering in the bay. Later they explore the island's forests, meadows and tide pools. As the evening sun sets, presentations are given by special guests.

At Hog Island Audubon Camp, they are away from it all. Campers love the natural setting and rustic buildings. Rooms have two twin beds; dorms are an alternative. Shared baths. Meals are delicious, served family style.

Maine coast. Tide-pool ecology, forest & field ecology, seabird-colony management, and butterfly biology are some topics. Among the first programs to fill.

Workshop for Educators July 9-15 \$1,000. Celebrated children's author Lynne Cherry is special guests of this session for those wishing to incorporate environmental education into their teaching. A beautiful rejuvenating natural setting. Field trips, boat cruises, workshops, ideas and material to take home.

People & Place: Cultural and Natural History of Midcoast Maine July 16-22 \$1,000. Experience and learn about the Maine coast. See evidence of prehistoric settlements and the sea's interaction with a rugged shore. Field trips, boat tours,

Field Ornithology June 25-July 1, \$1,050.

Bird walks, studies in breeding biology, migration, bird song, reseach and conservation. Field trips off island to seabird colonies. Much more. Leaders include Kenn Kaufmann, Steve Kress, and other nationally known ornithologists.

Naturalizing by Kayak Session I July 16-22 \$1,200; Session II August 28-31 \$695.

No better way to absorb wildlife and shoreline of the Maine coast then by sea kayak. Experienced kayak guides and naturalists to lead you. Visit other isands for looks at harbor seals, bald eagles, osprey, and other bird life. All experience levels welcome.

Natural History of the Maine Coast July 2-8 \$1,050

A comprehensive natural history overview of the

Continued on page 6

A Win for the Arctic, Losses

For Others

The House Budget Committee has earned our gratitude for omitting Arctic NWR drilling from its latest resolution. At the same time, our hopes were deflated by the following cuts in environmental spending.

State funding for expanding public land and open space is denied through a deep cut - 40% - in the Land and Conservation Water Fund. Funding to assist states for protecting parks and wilderness areas is denied. Protection for vulnerable wildlife is reduced.

So it is "once more to the phones" to contact Representative Lee Terry (402 397-9944) or (202) 225-4155; U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C. 20515.

Mr. Terry should be asked to (1) Oppose House Conference Resolution 376 because of its cuts to environmental spending, (2) support the Spratt Alternative, which would restore critical funding and (3) oppose reinstating Arctic Refuge drilling into the final House Budget Bill.

Network for Environmental Issues

We are often requested to speak up, write, phone, or send an email message to express our opinion on some environmental or social justice issue. Some requests arrive from online networks asking that we state our opinions through an organization that will pass on our message. These may raise questions about their legitimacy or whether they distribute subscriber lists

Remembering One of Ours

By Laurine Blankenau

The Audubon Society of Omaha remembers Betty Allen, longtime member who died recently after a short illness.

Throughout her working life, Betty practiced nursing, coming to Omaha and ASO from Tulsa, Oklahoma, to join the staff of the Douglas County Health Department. Earlier in life she worked through a church doing medical work in the Philippines among the very poor. Undaunted by hardship, to serve the people, she traveled in difficult terrain, on horseback when other means were not available.

Betty's long-standing and warmest interests were birds, butterflies, prairies, and other gifts of nature which she both studied and pursued in the field. Her considerable and wide travels focused on ecotourism, birding, and photography, a hobby she devoted mostly to wildlife subjects and scenery.

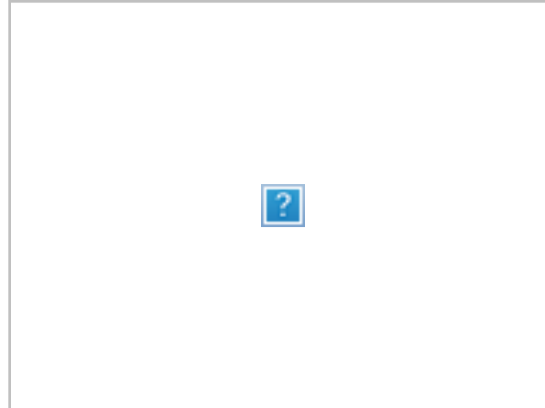
Betty's strong spirit and sense of adventure were an asset to ASO and a driving force in her life. Illness and pain deterred her at times, but a will and love of life sustained her through physical difficulties. Shortly before her death she completed a course in Master Gardening. Her plan was to volunteer with Douglas County Extension Office answering the public's inquiries.

During her tenure with us, she served on the Board of Directors as President, First Vice-President, Director, and on several committees.

Many of us in Audubon valued her friendship. She will be remembered for this and for her ardent dedication to nature and its wonders.

to other organizations.

Some sites with a good reputation/record connected by an e-network are The Rainforest Site, The Hunger Site, The Child Health Site, The Literacy Site, The Animal Rescue Site, and The Breast Cancer Site.



Each site is sponsored by several nationally known businesses. By simply clicking a link to each site, visitors can 'save' a few square feet of endangered rainforest, buy a cup of food for a hungry person, or make a similar choice —at no cost to the person visiting the site.

The site was originally set up several years ago and has been serving environmental interests as well as the others mentioned above.

The URL to The Rainforest Site is www.therainforestsites.com. This site is in turn linked to all of the related sites.

Connect with Nature in Maine, *Continued from page 4*

A Maine Island Experience August 20-26 \$985

Leave behind the busy tourist route for a week on a beautiful island. Walk trails along the shore, explore tide pools, search forest for colorful warblers, visit a seabird colony, learn about marine life; meet others with what Rachel Carson called "a sense of wonder" about the coast.

Om on the Island: A Yoga Retreat. August 28-31 \$395. Deepen your connection to nature through Kripalu yoga with a well-balanced mix of yoga postures, breathing, and meditation, along with enjoyment of the forest and shore. An unbeatable way to relax. Sunset cruise and other chances to observe wildlife. Yoga beginners are welcome.

Bird Migration and Conservation September 10-16 \$985. Five full days studying bird migration and conservation. Travel to local migration hot spots such as blueberry barrens, shorebird-attracting tidal marsh at Weskeag, and Monhegan Island, an outstanding migrant trap. Lectures, discussions, slides on identifying and conserving birds. Led by Scott Weidensaul, bird author, photographer and artist, as well as Kenn Kaufman and others.

Sessions for Teens and Youth are also available:

Coastal Maine Bird Studies Ages 14-17
June 25-July 1;

backed Woodpecker, a host of warblers, Atlantic Puffin, Razorbill, Common Murre, Arctic Tern. Limited to 10 persons.

Borestone Mountain Weekend August 18-21 Ellitsville, \$425. Stay in historic lodges accessible only by boat or on foot. Hike to Borestone's bare granite summit, canoe and swim in mountain ponds, or just relax.

Grand Manan: Queen of the Fundy Isles August 24-28. From Black's Harbor, New Brunswick \$650; \$200 single supplement See whales and pelagic birds, Leach's Storm Petrels and Black Guillemots.

Wings of Autumn on Monhegan
September 22-25. From New Harbor. \$450; singles add \$185. Resting place for migrants moving along the coast. Scores of warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, woodpeckers, hawks and falcons.

Volunteer opportunities on charming and scenic Hog Island include lending a hand with building or grounds maintenance, office support, education, photography, biological surveys, hospitality, special events, and more. Nominal fee for overnight volunteers. Contact camp director Seth Benz at 207 338 4948 or sbenz@maineaudubon.org

Custom programs and tours may be arranged for your family, business, or group for day, overnight, or all week in early June or any time September

Coastal Maine Natural History for
Teens, ages 14-17 July 2-8

through mid-October.

Coastal Kayaking Adventure, ages 14-
17 July 10-15 or July 25-29

Find out more through
camps@maineaudubon.org or 1 888 325
5261, Ext. 215.

Youth Camp ages 11-13 July 30-August
5

A financial aid application is available
through the email address for educators
and chapter personnel.

**Non-working/studying vacations are
also offered. Lodging and food (some
or all) are included in the prices. Brief
descriptions follow.**

**Exploring the Maine Coast by
Schooner, June 11-17, from Camden
\$875.** Daily trips ashore with Audubon
naturalists to see birds, hike trails, and
photograph.

**Birding Downeast Maine July 7-10,
from Bangor \$525; singles add \$160.**
Target species include Black-

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



Memorials

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

When sending your 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

Addresses to Remember

President George W. Bush

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202-456-1111; fax: 202-456-2993

Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246; Omaha 391-3411;
Omaha address: 7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Chuck Hagel

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510-2705

Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax: (202) 224-5213

Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-4155 ; Fax: (202) 226-5452

Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

Representative Jeff Fortenberry

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-4806

Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln, NE 68509

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Banquet Reservation

Johnny's Steakhouse on L Street

Thurs. May 11 Cash Bar 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Name Thurs. May 11 Cash Bar 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m. Thurs. May 11 Cash Bar 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Name

Address

Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ persons

The cost is \$20.00 per person. Make check payable to

ASO and mail to Laurine Blankenau, 3808 Grebe, Omaha 68112.

Reservations must be received by May 5.

Bequests

A bequest to Audubon is a gift to secure our future. We need your help to succeed us; a gift to secure our future.

When the Pleiades and the stars no longer a part of the heavens, when the very flesh and bone, marrow and marrow kind of cosmic outlaw, have been completely and integrally destroyed, the birthright of a true human being is lost.

Henry Beston, The Outermost House

Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103-05

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

Elected Officers:

President Elliott Bedows.....292-5017

1st Vice President Jackie Scholar.....551-5045

2nd Vice President Laurine Blankenau.....451-3647

Treasurer Patty Albright.....323-1966

Past President Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

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Mace Hack.....934-5040

Mark Armstrong.....292-9770

Urban Lehner.....330-3888

Sharon Draper.....572-4026 Tad Leeper.....593-8508

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Standing Committee Chairpersons, cont.

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Omaha Raptor Team Jenny Henricksen.....895-5487

Program Nancy Leonard.....330-3888

Publication Laurine Blankenau.....451-3647

Publicity Jackie Scholar.....551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs Kathleen Rose..... 292-8912

Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939

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

Historian Kathleen Rose.....292-8912

Birdathon Chair Bechara Embaid,,,,,965-9598

ASO State Board Rep. Mace Hack.....934-5040

NAS Board Member Ione Werthman..... 493-0373

The Meadowlark is published monthly September through May, plus a summer issue. The newsletter may be accessed on our web site,

Conservation

<http://audubon-omaha.org>

Education Clem Klaphake.....292-2276

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

Field Trip Clem Klaphake.....292-2276

Finance Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

Fund Raising Mace Hack.....934-5040

Hospitality DwanDean Leach.....346-5769

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