

The Meadowlark

December 2010

Volume 39 Issue 10

ASO is a Chapter
of the National Audubon
Society

Serving Eastern Nebraska
and Western Iowa

Christmas Bird Counts for Ames, Nebraska, Omaha Area, and DeSoto Refuge/Boyer Chute Area

Replacing our usual monthly field trip are the three Christmas Bird Counts in our area.

Volunteers are relied upon to assist with the counts. Along with seasoned and expert birders, budding or aspiring birders are warmly encouraged to join the counts for the enjoyment, the learning experience, and for their help, which is important.

Ames, Nebraska, Count

This Count on Tuesday, December 14, will be in its sixth year. Ames is located six miles west of Fremont. The northern half of the Count is in Dodge County, and the southern half is in Saunders County.

To sign up, contact Don or Janis Paseka at 402-727-9229 or Paseka76@gmail.com for information about meeting time and place.

Omaha Area Count

To help with this Count on Saturday, December 18, please contact one of the quadrant leaders to sign up so they know who and how many to expect. State your preference for an area. Quadrant captains:

Clem Klaphake: ckavian@cox.net -
Fontenelle Forest & Bellevue
Rick Schmid: schmid_r@msn.com -
Glenwood, IA

Sue Mattix: suemattix@cox.net -
Plattsmouth

Or contact Betty Grenon:
grenon925@aol.com, 731-2383.

The Count begins at 8:00 a.m. Participants may count for a half or whole day or as their time permits. For the cold season and possible snow, warm

lotion supper will be held at the home of Betty Grenon.

DeSoto Refuge/Boyer Chute Count

Get a jump on your 2011 bird list by attending the DeSoto/Boyer Chute Christmas Count on January 2.

Meeting place and time are decided by the sector captains but are generally about 8:00 a.m. There are four sectors to the count, each with varied habitats.
DeSoto NWR - Don & Janis Paseka 727-9229

Hitchcock Nature Center - Sandy Reinkin 253-5760

Fort Calhoun - Sue Mattix 402-871-3314

Boyer Chute NWR - Jer Toll 453-9239

You may choose which sector you would like to bird by contacting the sector captains directly.

If you would like to be placed where you are needed most, contact Jer Toll 453-9239 or Steve Van Riper 642-5411.

We will tally the results at the Toll house and have a potluck. All are welcome for hot soup and recounting the highlights of the day.

No General Meeting in December

We will not hold our regular general meeting in December. Icy streets and snowstorms are possible-to-likely; Christmas parties and programs compete.

We look forward to seeing you Thursday, January 13, for our regular general meeting.

Note: The start time for general

clothing is essential, particularly warm footwear. Bring a hot drink and lunch if you wish, or join the group for lunch at a local restaurant.

Following the count, at 5:30 P.M. a potluck compi

meetings has been permanently changed to 7:00 P.M.

Postcard from the President

By Jer Toll

This morning I was reminded of something I had forgotten since becoming president of ASO. I have been wrapped up in the duties of office and forgot that being active in Audubon is at times just plain fun.

I joined the monthly field trip with leader Justin Rink to Forest Lawn Cemetery. We saw many interesting birds including a Scarlet Tanager that clearly forgot it should be in the tropics now. As we wandered past gravestones, we talked about trees and birds, the well-known persons buried there, and the coming winter.

I enjoyed catching up on the lives of old friends and meeting new ones. Happily, four of the fifteen people were joining us for the first time. Birding seems to bring together people from all walks of life and all levels of birding skill, sharing a common interest.

Christmas Bird Counts are like special field trips. Not only do we see birds, they are counted and the information then collected nationwide is used to track

changes in species populations. I try to do as many counts as I can, usually both the DeSoto and Omaha Counts and sometimes one or two more. I enjoy getting out of the house on a cold day, tramping around in wild places far from the hubris of city living, especially in places normally closed to the public, counting birds. And if I am lucky, later when we tally, I'll have stories about the day's adventure.

In spring I look forward to the ASO Student Art Contest. Students K-12 enter their drawings of birds. It is so much fun hanging all of the drawings! I never know what I will be seeing. The wide range in ages demonstrates differing skill levels, but their creativity transcends age. I have seen some highly imaginative images of birds that just grab me! Some are hilarious, particularly those of some of the younger artists; I am in awe of others' observational skills and their refined technique. Birds are not easy subjects to draw.

We invite all of you to join Audubon's fun events!

Proposed Pipeline Through the Sandhills

By Bob Fuchs

As you may have heard, a company called TransCanada is requesting permission to build a pipeline from the tar sands region of Alberta, Canada, through the United States to the Gulf coast for refining and shipping.

Of interest to Nebraskans is that the pipeline will carry crude oil across a very environmentally sensitive area of our state, the eastern portion of the Sandhills. Under the Sandhills lies the largest freshwater aquifer in the United

damage, including harm to migrating waterfowl which use waste ponds. Nor do they mention that TransCanada (a foreign corporation) has been sending letters to Nebraska landowners threatening use of eminent domain on those unwilling to cooperate.

Senator Mike Johanns of Nebraska has been persuaded to oppose hasty approval of the pipeline or at least

States, which serves as groundwater to supply water for drinking, for rivers and wildlife, and for agriculture. A leak of crude oil in this area could be devastating.

The pipeline will be buried underground, so leaks may not be discovered quickly. Contamination of the aquifer would thus contaminate wells for drinking water and irrigation and seep into area rivers. Groundwater is notoriously easy to contaminate but hard to clean up, as we know from the ongoing effort to clean up the groundwater in and around the weapons depot at Mead, Nebraska.

You may have heard radio commercials extolling the virtues of the pipeline in that it will mean jobs for Nebraska and free us from use of non-North American oil. What they don't mention is that jobs would be mostly temporary and that the method of extraction of oil from tar sands results in great environmental

require a rerouting away from the Sandhills area. Senator Nelson has indicated that he has similar concerns. Governor Heineman has stated that the pipeline is not a Nebraska issue, so he will not oppose it. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has to give approval for the pipeline, since it crosses our border with Canada. She has not yet made a decision but stated that she is inclined toward approval.

If you are concerned about the Keystone XL pipeline and its route across our Sandhills aquifer, you can find more information from these websites: nebraskawildlife.org/policy_Keystone or boldnebraska.org/pipeline-background:resources

Editor's Note: Senator Johanns encourages us to contact the State Department website with our concerns: www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov. or write to Elizabeth Orlando, Keystone XL Project Manager, U.S. Department of State, OES/ENV Room 2657, Washington, DC 20520.

Field Report From National Audubon's President

True to his word to go out and meet members across the country, David Yarnold, President of National Audubon, set out on a month-long "Boots on the Ground" trip where he met chapter and state leaders and staff who impressed him, in his words, with their knowledge and passion.

A few of our President's stops and visits are shared here. Who knows, he may visit Nebraska one day and meet some of us.

Yarnold begins with his home state of California, welcomed by the sounds of familiar birds such as Rock Wrens and ravens. Along the Lower Arroyo Seco, he found California Towhees (just two miles from the Rose Bowl).

Golden Gate Audubon's work at restoring wetlands a short distance from the famous Bridge was matched by other restorations nearby that he calls "heroic," that of preserving dunes habitat for Snowy Plovers, a species in delicate balance.

South of Sacramento, guided by a

citizen scientists, backhoe operators and shop owners connected with people across the U.S. who wanted to come to the Gulf to assist. Audubon did put 2,000 people to work, but too few roles to fill meant others were called back home. These persons are now a new "supercharged. . .battalion of volunteers who will dedicate themselves to preserving America's flyways."

The experience of seeing the destruction on the Gulf converted one 70-something man who said, "This experience has changed my life. I didn't really get the connection between birds, their lands, and the need to move away from fossil fuels—but now I do."

Boots on the Ground took Yarnold south of the border with his search for tales of devoted conservationists and birders. While in Veracruz he met a 22-year-old who "methodically measures and weighs birds six days a week at a remote hawk-banding station atop rolling dunes." The young man "has three studs or rings in each ear, a lightning bolt carved into his gelled hair, and a flame for birds in his

chapter team, he saw 48 species of birds and was shown how restored habitat benefited bird populations. Much of this habitat was in rice fields.

He visited what he described as some of Audubon's crown jewels: the Rainey Preserve in Louisiana, Beidler Forest in South Carolina, and Bobcat Ranch near Sacramento. After meeting its Audubon chapter's dynamic mover and shaker, Meryl Redisch, he understands why Portland is a major force for conservation in Oregon.

Audubon's partnership with Toyota (we were told of their \$20 million grant to National Audubon some time ago) via the TogetherGreen program has engaged hundreds of volunteers on Project Protho in South Carolina. These have persuaded nearby landowners to save the nesting sites of the Prothonotary Warbler in farmlands. This bird needs the low brush in the agricultural areas which through TogetherGreen can mean the better breeding successes for this beautiful bird and its survival.

Yarnold describes meeting young volunteers, one a 17-year-old Young Birder of the Year, who was asked why he was so passionate about birding. His reply was for "the knowledge."

Not surprisingly, the most dramatic stories may be those coming from the aftermath of the BP disaster. So many volunteered—34,500 answered Audubon's call—that 20,000 were called back home. Teachers,

heart." Yarnold said nothing prepared him for his visit to the River of Raptors in Veracruz, his last visit of the trip. He had chosen a "peak moment—possibly 20,000 birds formed up in. . .five tornados of migration and took my breath away.

"Behind me, atop a hotel. . .spotters clicked their counters, registering birds by the hundreds. Clicking with both thumbs, the counters rattled away, churning through nearly 200,000 birds on October 14. A good day, the best of the week."

At a celebration in the tiny town housing the observatory run by Pronatura, Audubon's BirdLife International partner, 14 ranchers were honored for setting aside more than 3,000 acres for woodlands restoration and saving night roosts for the raptors.

The ranchers' leader said, "The day my daughter, Tonalli, was born I said to myself that I could continue to make a little money off my land or I could find a new, better way to make a higher income from the land. I'm going to build a business for ecotourism. And we will harvest some of the trees for wood pellets."

Yarnold ended by inviting readers' comments.

One answer: "David, you now need to stop at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary near Kearney, Nebraska, in the spring to see a world class migration of cranes seen nowhere else in the world."

Signed: Clem Klaphake, Bellevue, NE.

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202 456-1111

Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510;
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225-3121

In Memory of Ray Strong

The Audubon Society of Omaha
notes the recent death of Ray
Strong, a long-time member who is
remembered fondly by many of us.

Ray served as 2nd Vice-President in

National Audubon & Local Chapter

(1st & 2nd Year \$20)

Make check payable to National Audubon Society Mail to Audubon
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Memorials

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

When sending a gift, please identify the person you wish to
memorialize and the name and address of the person to the notified.

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha, P.O. Box 3542, Omaha NE
68103-

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

1979. He and his late wife, Joyce, served on the publication committee for years. He volunteered at Fontenelle Forest and was a member of the Walking Club. Both of the Strongs were fans and supporters of the Omaha Symphony.

402-731-9869.



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6548

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