



Meadowlark

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Celebrate National Hummingbird Day

by Rebecca Carrillo



Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Scott Schryver

The first Saturday of every September is National Hummingbird Day — this year, it falls on September 5. It's a great day to learn more about these tiny birds, where we can find them in Nebraska, and how they contribute to our ecosystems. There is surprising diversity among hummingbirds: 366 species are found throughout the Americas. Although there aren't nearly as many species recorded in Nebraska, there are still a few hummingbirds you can spot in your backyard.

For Nebraskans, the most common hummingbird is the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. These hummingbirds breed in eastern North America and migrate from Canada, through Nebraska, to the warm weather of Mexico and Central America. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds begin to migrate through Nebraska as early as May and pass through in the fall as late as October. Their fall migration peaks in early to mid-September. If you spot a hummingbird and want to identify it, there are a few things you can look for. Adult Ruby-throated hummingbirds are easy to spot by their green, emerald feathers. The males have a vibrant red throat, hence the name

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Delve into birding at our fall programs

All about birding: How to get started

September 10

Have you ever wanted to get a little more involved in birding but weren't sure where to begin? Well, begin with us! ASO Board Member Bill Bossman and President Conor Gearin will share their guidance on your first batch of local birds to know, tips for how to confidently identify birds, technology and equipment suggestions, and ethical considerations as you get started. There's a place in the birding world for people of all ages and backgrounds! Come join us for this program to make the start of your birding journey even more enjoyable.



ASO birding trip at Glacier Creek Preserve, 2024

Book your seat to our destination birding program

October 8

Join us on October 8 for a virtual birding trip to Costa Rica, one of the world's premier birdwatching destinations. Located on the Central American land bridge connecting North and South America, Costa Rica is home to more than 900 species of birds in an area one-third the size of Nebraska!

Experience the vibrant colors and beauty of birds you will never see in Nebraska through the artistic eyes of Ben Placzek, an award-winning professional photographer.

Whether you're an experienced destination birder, or a homebody who prefers to see amazing sights without traveling, be sure to enjoy an evening of adventure in the private meeting room at DJ's Dugout, 777 N 114th Street.

At our monthly programs, our social hour begins at 6 p.m., with food and drinks available for purchase, followed by the program at 7 p.m. Book your free tickets at [Audubon-Omaha.org/Calendar-of-events/](https://audubon-omaha.org/Calendar-of-events/)!

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

Enjoy autumn with the birds

Choose natural décor such as gourds, corn husks, hay bales, branches and berries instead of lifelike plastic decorations that can confuse wildlife.

Give your pumpkin a second life! Add a stick perch, fill it with a little birdseed, and hang it up for a backyard bird buffet! Take it down before it rots.

Field notes from the president

Everything happens at once

by *Conor Gearin*

This July, my family took a trip to Milwaukee. The evening we arrived, we took a walk to the shore. My three-year-old and his cousin ran around a park, hunting for flowers and other treasures. My mom and I soon spotted a Caspian Tern, with its signature big red bill, foraging for fish in the shallows of Lake Michigan. At the same time, the horizon was strangely hazy, and we smelled something odd — a tarry, smoky scent. This was our first whiff of the massive smoke-banks that would roll into the Upper Midwest, breaking records for worst air quality in multiple cities. We'd spend the next couple days indoors.

All these things — the kids frolick-

ing, the smoke moving in, the Caspian Tern over the water — happened at once. How to make sense of it all together? It struck me as a microcosm of our times: so much good and so much bad that it's hard to take stock and say what it all means. It was clear we were getting an in-person taste of what it means for Canada's boreal forests to be drier, hotter, and burn more easily due to climate change. Those conditions have consequences for people hundreds or even thousands of miles away.

We made the most of our trip, having the kids run around indoors, playing music, and going to museums. In a couple of days, the smoke cleared as rapidly as it had arrived, leaving behind clear skies and superb air quality. The shift in the atmosphere was bizarre to

witness from a beach south of Milwaukee: people swimming in the light surf and kids building sandcastles seemed unimaginable a couple days before.

There are days when the intense contrasts and contradictions of our times stand out more than others. We hope that they don't happen on vacation, but you never know. In reflecting on the trip, I've been thinking about how for life to feel full and complete, I need to feel like I am both 1) part of the solution and working to make things better 2) connected to people, places, and things that support me. I need a balance between the two. For many people, birds are one of the connections that provides daily support, in small ways and big ones. I keep thinking about that effortlessly graceful Caspian Tern searching the shallows for fish, cruising above the shore with distant smoke on the horizon. Birds help us make it through the hard times. Let's do our best to help them, too.

Celebrate National Hummingbird Day

(Continued from page 1)

'Ruby-throated'.

Another migratory hummingbird spotted most often in Western Nebraska is the Rufous Hummingbird. This hummingbird appears in the late summer months through the fall. The male Rufous Hummingbird is easily identifiable by its rusty orange feathers and orange-red neck. The Broad-tailed, Calliope, and Costa's Hummingbirds are rare sights in Nebraska, but have been recorded during fall migration as well.

Whether common species or rare, hummingbirds in Nebraska depend on a variety of food sources. Many native plants in Nebraska provide nectar to hummingbirds, such as beebalm, goldenrod, jewelweed, and milkweed.



Rufous Hummingbird by Michelle Prevost

Planting native flowers in your backyard can help provide a food source for hummingbirds and other pollinators. Like butterflies or bees, hummingbirds also pollinate plants and contribute to the health of our ecosystem. In addition to nectar, they eat small insects like gnats and mosquitoes, which are an important source of protein in their diet.

Although hummingbirds are small, they play an important role in nature.

National Hummingbird Day is a great reminder to appreciate these unique birds, not just for their beauty but also for their contributions to the world around us.

Stay tuned for fall field trips!

We will add more field trips & events to our calendar for the fall months soon. Check our online schedule (Audubon-Omaha.org/calendar-of-events) and follow us on Facebook and Instagram for the latest updates!

ASO's Fall Bird Seed Sale is here!

Orders due Wednesday, October 14

Do you feed birds? Would you like to contribute to the financial success of the Audubon Society of Omaha? Your orders and donations during the Fall and Winter Bird Seed Sales are Audubon Omaha's main fundraiser for education and conservation activities. We offer a wide range of bird seed mixes and sizes at reasonable prices.

The fall sale starts Thursday, September 10, and ends Wednesday, October 14. Orders will be ready for pick-up at our warehouse at 4339 S. 90th St. on Saturday, October 24, during the hours of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and on Sunday, October 25, from noon to 3 p.m. All sales are pre-order only.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTIONS

Cardinal Mixture

Millet base with added milo, cracked corn, peanut chips and 20% sunflower by volume.

Des Moines Standard Mixture

Higher quality basic mix with millet base, cracked corn, oat groats, peanut pieces and 40% sunflower seeds by volume. No milo.

Des Moines Classic Mixture

Basic ingredients same as Des Moines Standard, except sunflower is a 50/50 mix of seeds and hearts and it also contains safflower. Attracts the widest variety of seed-eating birds.

Des Moines Deluxe Mixture

Same as Des Moines Classic, except that it contains more peanuts and hulled sunflower hearts.

Des Moines Regal Mixture

A premium blend of sunflower hearts, shelled peanuts (50%), safflower seed, raisins and a protein-vitamin supplement.

Sunflower Seed, Black Oil

Smaller, more nutritious seeds preferred by most winter birds.

In early September, ASO will mail an order form to all members and past customers for the fall sale. You can place your order by mail (please allow one week). OR, you can order and pay by credit card on ASO's website, audubon-omaha.org. If you are new to birding or want some expert advice, there are articles from National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology with ideas about attracting and feeding birds on ASO's website under the Special Events/Bird Seed Sale tab.

If you have friends or neighbors who would like to be added to the mailing list, contact John and Betty Fullerton at 402-493-4362(h) or 402-957-5901(c)

or send their names and addresses in an email to birdseedsale@audubonomaha.org. Or you could send them a link to the birdseed sale page on our website.

Volunteers are needed

Join our crew of amiable volunteers helping to fill orders and lift and load bags of bird seed during the fall seed sale on Saturday, October 24, and Sunday, October 25. Please contact John Fullerton at 402-957-5901, Sarah Shepherd at 402-445-4138 or email birdseedsale@audubonomaha.org, if you are able to help with this major fundraiser.



White-breasted Nuthatch by Eric Scholar

Sunflower Hearts

Fine hearts are finely ground seeds suitable for mixing with nyjer in a thistle feeder, if desired. Medium hearts average about 1/3 the size of whole hearts. Coarse hearts are larger pieces.

Nyjer

Loved by finches.

Nyjer & Fine Hearts

Blended at 50/50 ratio for easy flow through finch feeders. Both seed types are re-cleaned by Des Moines Feed before packaging to enhance the mix's appeal to finches, chickadees & nuthatches.

Rich & Tweet

Nutritious, no-mess mixture with dried raisins and cherries. Contains 50% peanut hearts and pieces. It is designed to attract fruit-eaters such as robins, thrushes and other ground feeders.

Woodpecker Gourmet

A blend that is full of nuts. Contains almonds, other tree nuts, pumpkinseeds and raisins.

Bushy Tail Treat

A mix of peanuts, sunflower, whole corn, raisins, pumpkin seed and feed pellets that will tempt any squirrel's palate!

Peanut Treat Suet

A mix of rendered beef suet and roasted, chopped peanuts for woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees.

Cracked Corn and Ear Corn

Peanuts

In the Shell and Without Shells

Safflower

Nutrasaff

Hulled safflower seed. Higher in protein and oil with less mess.

Thank you — From the Bird Seed Sale Committee and all of us at Audubon Society of Omaha!

Visitors from afar

Birds to look and listen for in the fall

By *Conor Gearin*



Franklin's Gull by Michael Klotz

Despite being the most landlocked state in the union, Nebraska is full of seabirds, especially during migration. Franklin's Gulls are a Great Plains specialty. Breeding in ponds from South Dakota to the prairie provinces of Canada, large flocks move through the Omaha metro area in spring and fall. In spring, they wear the pink belly plumage that gives them the nickname, 'Rosy Gull.' The coloration probably comes from their diet — wintering on South America's western coast, they spend months eating crustaceans that contain carotenoid pigments. It's a treat to see a flock of these gulls sporting their rosy bellies around Omaha in April or May on their way north. In autumn, when they pass back through Nebraska and Iowa on their return trip, the carotenoid pigments in their feathers will have broken down over the course of the summer, leaving them with a faint pinkish cast at most. But the migratory flocks will also have something new: the young of the year making their first autumn journey south. You can tell the young ones apart from full adults by their lighter-colored plumage: gray hoods on their heads instead of dark black, and light brownish upper wings rather than dark

gray. In other words, birds' feathers tell a story about their life stage and where they've been.

Forster's Tern is another seabird that breeds in the prairie region, including in northeastern Nebraska. In nonbreeding plumage, they have a black eyepatch and a black bill. September

is the tail end of its migration through our area — most of them pass through in August — but it's still worth a look over the skies of larger lakes and reservoirs around town. While you're at it, keep your eyes peeled for Caspian Terns



Forster's Tern by Andy Reago & Chrissy McClarren

(check for a big red bill and a grayish cap), Black Terns (dark gray back and wings), and if you're rather lucky, Common Terns (note the contrasting white forehead and dark cap). You're nearly guaranteed to see Ring-billed Gulls anywhere near water and many spots not near water, especially landfills or wherever free food is found. But as fall progresses, also look for the larger American Herring Gull with a little red

Highlights of September-October Birds

Waterbirds

- Northern Shoveler
- Gadwall
- Northern Pintail
- Green-winged Teal
- Pied-billed Grebe

Shorebirds

- Wilson's Snipe
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Lesser Yellowlegs
- Least Sandpiper
- Pectoral Sandpiper

Seabirds

- Franklin's Gull
- American Herring Gull
- Black Tern
- Caspian Tern
- Forster's Tern

Landbirds

- Broad-winged Hawk
- Swainson's Hawk
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Least Flycatcher
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Swainson's Thrush
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- LeConte's Sparrow

spot near the tip of its bill, and listen for their distinctive call — a yelp that sounds like “keow!” and is often used in movie soundtracks to signify that we're near the beach.

Fall is time for landbird migration, too — warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and more — but consider appreciating Omaha's seabird species this fall in addition to all the migrating songbirds. Gulls, terns and shorebirds speak to landlocked Nebraska's strong connections with coasts far, far away. For the latest forecasts of bird migration in our area, visit BirdCast.info to see what species might appear in our neighborhoods and when migratory movements will hit peak numbers. And be sure to keep the lights out at night so birds can navigate by the moon and stars.

The eyes have it: your photos

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

Right: House Finch
by Mark Schubert



Ten Birds That Changed the World by Stephen Moss

Book review by Bill Bossman



Wild Turkey by Bill Bossman

Birds have been at the center of human activity throughout history. Whether it is egret feathers on ladies' hats, pigeons carrying messages in war time, eagles emblazoned on national emblems, or turkeys ending their lives on Thanksgiving platters, birds sometimes seem to be at the center of everything. In *Ten Birds That Changed the World*, (Basic Books, 2023) author Stephen Moss takes us on a journey across centuries, examining how human life has been impacted by birds. The author has carefully chosen ten different types of birds from nearly every continent to illustrate how birds have changed life on our planet. What he reveals is not always pretty. From war, to agriculture, to evolutionary biology, to fashion and food, birds are at the middle of it all.

The author is a British writer, environmentalist, and television producer. The book reflects his roots in the U.K. — it takes a while for an American reader to become accustomed to his spell-

ing, word usage, and worldview. However, one is soon lost in his narrative of not only how birds changed the world, but more importantly, how humans have changed the lives of birds and the environment, which supports both avians and humans. He writes of the dodo, a bird driven to extinction in the 17th century, "It's easy to think that as a result of the extinction of the dodo, we are now sadder and wiser, but there's a lot of evidence to suggest that we are merely sadder and better informed."

Is there a path from being "merely sadder and better informed" to using that sadness and that access to information to actually do something to change humanity's destruction of the environment that supports both birds and humans? *Ten Birds That Changed the World* does not provide an easy solution, nor does it really provide hope that easy solutions are on the horizon. What the author does is to present the reader with historic stories of ravens, pigeons, turkeys, dodos, finches, cormorants, egrets, eagles, sparrows, and penguins and their struggles to survive in a world dominated by humans. Some of those birds have adapted successfully. Others struggle to hold on. Some have disappeared entirely. The ending of the story for both birds and humans is still being written. Hopefully, learning the histories of these ten birds will motivate us to help add a few chapters to that story as we work toward that hopeful happy ending.

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 ASO.

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? Eager to share your talents and time for a good cause? Consider serving on our board of directors or joining one of our committees! We are searching for enthusiastic people to help us with our Student Art Contest, Bird Seed Sales, leading programs/field trips and more. Email cgearin@audubonomaha.org for more info.

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

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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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and Instagram.

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