
Uncovering Nebraska's Archaeological History

By Kathy Schwery



From the big game hunters to the Plains woodland tribes to more recent European settlers, many peoples have lived in Nebraska before us. The Nebraska State Historical Society, through its archaeological division, explores, preserves, enhances and interprets Nebraska's archaeological resources.

At the December general meeting, Rene Botts will share findings about the Historical Society's discoveries in Nebraska as well as the archaeological process. She will discuss the various sites throughout the state and explain human involvement in the process.

Ms. Botts, a native Nebraskan, has a B.S. in Anthropology from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and is pursuing a Master's degree in Museum Studies. For 17 years she was employed at the Midwest Archaeological Center in Lincoln, which conducts research for the National Park Service.

In 2001 Ms. Botts was named Curator of Anthropology and Archaeological Collections Manager for the Ne

braska State Historical Society. She issues site numbers for projects in the state and is charged with keeping track of site locations. She records information and creates catalogs of items found at sites.

Ms. Botts stressed that in order to protect them, information about the sites is not made public. This is important because the sites are part of the heritage of all Nebraskans.

Please join us for what promises to be an enjoyable evening as we learn more about the early history of Nebraska and about the process of uncovering that history.

The meeting will be held Thursday, December 11, 7:30 P.M., at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (one block south of 45th & Center). A brief business meeting will follow the presentation. Coffee, cookies and a social time will conclude

the evening.

Non-members are
welcome.

DeSoto Christmas Bird Count Dec. 20

Omaha Area Count December 27

For a change of pace after the holiday
hullabaloo, join us on one of the Bird Counts.
The DeSoto Count will

take place Saturday, December 20. Boyer
Chute is included in the areas to be covered.
Jerry Toll (453-9239) is the count coordinator.
Please contact him for details about starting
time and locations and other matters.

Betty Grenon will coordinate the Omaha Area
Count Saturday, December 27. The Count will
cover the quadrants listed below. To help,
simply contact one of the captains listed for
directions as to meeting place and time: Clem
Klaphake (292-2276), Fontenelle Forest;

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Nelli's Notes

By Nelli Falzgraf

Grass at NRD's Wetland

ASO and the Papio Missouri Natural
Resources District jointly purchased
Heron Haven in 1992. It is part of a 25-
acre wetland of the Papillion Creek, with
parcels owned by the City of Omaha,
NRD, and private land owners. The
NRD retained the deed for Heron Haven.
Hence there are no property taxes, and
ASO manages it to preserve it as a
wetland and for use as an educational
facility.

Years ago the wetland ponds were deep
enough to support fish and even fishing.
Because it is surrounded by
development, the wetland is subject to
runoff, silting, and invasion of nonnative
plants. In 2000 the ASO obtained grants

for private lands, and begin disposal site
discussions with the City of Omaha.

Halloween Heron Haven Surprise

In late October the Corps Project
Manager phoned me and told of their
legal assessment that ASO is not
qualified to sponsor the Heron Haven
Wetland Project.

On November 1, I received the legal
opinion, letters from ASO, Preliminary
Restoration and Management Plans, and
the Corps' Habitat Restoration and
Improvement Programs.

Pre-Thanksgiving Board Action

from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Nebraska Environmental Trust and contracted to remove rubble and deepen parts of Heron Haven.

Sediment has been deposited in much of the wetland, and the resulting shallower water levels are conducive to establishment of Asian Reed Canary Grass. The grass has taken over and is choking out endemic flora. This limited plant diversity and reduced food and shelter for invertebrates and the animals that depend on them, resulting in habitat less attractive to diverse populations of birds. We were told that if invasive grass continues to fill in the wetland, Heron Haven may evolve to a wet meadow, thus eliminating a wetland in Omaha.

Heron Haven Wetland Project

More than two years ago, ASO's Heron Haven volunteers wrote to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to initiate a partnership to dredge the wetland ponds to remove sediment and invasive grasses. The Project would cost \$1.3 million, and implementation would begin in 2004. ASO would sponsor the Project and provide 35% cost share. The NRD would be asked to assist with land acquisitions, and the Corps would plan and implement it.

Eric Scholar met with the NRD General Manager and volunteers and opened discussions with the ASO board, which approved it. Eric described the Corps Project objectives in the May 2002 newsletter.

In September 2002 the Heron Haven contact person signed an approval of the Corps' Project Management Plan. It identifies sponsor expectations and projects task schedules. ASO was to meet with the NRD in August 2003 to decide who will acquire lands, obtain appraisals

I provided Board members with copies of the Corps' legal assessment and all agreed that the chapter is not able to sponsor this project. For a project of this magnitude, the local sponsor must have the authority to obtain rights of way and disposal areas, condemn property, and levy taxes, as well as have sufficient revenues set aside to insure the completion of the \$1.3 million project.

The Board decided to write the NRD General Manager asking them to assume the role of sponsor of the Corps' dredging project, and to keep the Corps informed.

If you have comments or wish copies of any of the 30-plus page documents, please phone me in Bellevue.

Merry Christmas

At this writing, I am looking forward to an upcoming visit with our daughter and her husband in Rochester, Minnesota. We hope you'll enjoy sharing the Christmas season with family, friends, and birds.

December Events

1 (Mon) Conservation Meeting

3 (Wed) Board Meeting

11 (Thur) General Meeting

20 (Sat) DeSoto Xmas Count

27 (Sat) Omaha Area Xmas Count



Bird Seed Sale Volunteers - Thanks!

By Kathleen Crawford-Rose

customers who make this a success each year. We apologize if we miss anyone, but we want to recognize the workers who made the sale a success.

Head of it All — Neal Ratzlaff

Chief assistants — Carole & Dick Rasmussen, Jerry Toll, Kathleen Crawford-Rose

Computer program — Justin Stolen, Bart Jetter, Bill Swick

Mailing — Larry Shackman, Pauline Dickey, Marian Payton, Jean Warren, Marge & Earl Collins, Alpha Fiske, Louise Bates, Wanda Neaderhiser, Martha Massengale

Garages & Snacks — Neal & Izen Ratzlaff, Duane & Janice Bright, Barbara Sennentz

Distribution crew — Steve Lamphere, Eric Scholar, Mace Hack, Roy Rayner, David Nichols, Mark Aikin, Cal Wolf, Elliott Bedows, Mark Armstrong, Janis & Don Paseka, Jim McLochlin, Jo Bartikoski, Don Westling, Jim Davis, Philip Hahn, Justin & Jan Stolen, Ione Werthman, Dick & Carole Rasmussen, Jim & Collette Chiesa, Dick Gilson, Roland Barth, Clem Klaphake, Kathleen Crawford-Rose, Babs & Loren Padelford, Nelli & Randy Falzgraf.

New T-shirts for Sale

By Pauline Dickey

Orders are now being taken for T-shirts displaying the new meadowlark symbol. They will continue until 25-30 shirts have been ordered.

Sizes are S, M, L, XL, XXL (add \$1.50), XXXL (add \$3.00). Colors are white, bright yellow, black, heather gray, red, storm gray, ash (slightly lighter than heather gray), navy, orange, lime green, gold.

Available in short and long sleeves. Approximate prices will be \$15.00 and \$20.00. I have the catalog displaying the



Duane Bright, left, and Clem Klaphake take a break during their work at Duane's garagesite. Photo by Kathleen Crawford-Rose.

Our annual bird seed sale is over, and it was truly a group effort from start to finish. When all the bills are paid and the checks counted, we should clear approximately \$6,000. Thanks go out to all volunteers and

DeSoto Xmas Bird Count Dec 20,

Omaha Area Count Dec. 27

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Loren Padelford (292-5556), Lake Manawa; Neal Ratzlaff (397-0135), Glenwood, Iowa, area; and Sue Mattix (593-7433), Plattsmouth.

A compilation supper will be held at Betty Grenon's home, 1409 Childs Road, at 5:30 P.M. Please bring your tallies, stories, and a pot luck dish. For details, contact Betty at 731-2383.

colors. Please contact me if you have questions or want to check out colors.

Allow 2 to 2 1/2 weeks for delivery.
Payment is

You will likely spend much time on foot, so warm clothing, including footwear, is essential. Bring something hot to drink. Check with your captain whether to bring a lunch or be prepared to eat at a restaurant.

You need not be an expert to be helpful on the Count. The Count is a chance for you to learn from a skilled leader.



required at time of delivery. Order shirts via phone or email: Pauline Dickey: 932-8205, paulinedickey@cox.net. We would appreciate your support of this fundraising effort for ASO.

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Conservation/Legislative Action

Everything, Including the Kitchen Sink

By Ione Werthman

While congressional Democrats have been busy blocking the vote on some of President Bush's judicial nominees, Republican conferees (beholden to oil industry lobbyists?) have been hammering out negotiations on the final Energy Bill. It is said that the Bill of over 1,700 pages is so comprehensive that everyone in Congress will find parts to love and hate equally.

Ethanol and our corn farmers stand to be winners. The makers of the gasoline additive MTBE, which has been found to contaminate ground and drinking water, will also be winners. The Bill as now written will prevent legal action seeking damages based on the argument that MTBE is a defective product.

Over 28 states from New England to California have reported foul drinking water from leaks or spills into surface and ground water from MTBE. Twelve of those states have already filed suits

gressional delegates again and urge them to vote "No" on the Energy Bill. (**Editor's Note:** The last-minute block buys us some time, but we still need to write or phone our delegates.)

Clean Air?

From a Nov. 6, 2003, *New York Times* article comes the report of a change in enforcement policy of the Bush Administration that has led the EPA to drop investigations into 50 power plants for violations of the Clean Air Act. Growing out of a recommendation by Vice-President Cheney's energy task force, environmental groups and some Northeast states described the change as a major victory for the utility industry and a defeat for environmentalists. The latter had viewed the cases as the best way to require the companies to install billions of dollars of new pollution controls.

against MTBE manufacturers asking that MTBE makers help pay for water cleanup.

MTBE manufacturers, many based in Texas, argue that the product liability waiver is justified because MTBE would not be a problem if it were not gasoline spills or fuel leaking from damaged underground storage tanks. House Majority Leader Tom Delay, R-Texas, got the MTBE provision included in the Bill.

At a press conference November 14, Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) confirmed that House and Senate negotiators have decided to abandon attempts to include drilling in the Arctic NWR in the final Energy Bill conference report. Alaska's wilderness is still on the map! But for how long? Don't breathe a sigh of relief yet. Tomorrow is another day and the Bill has not yet been approved by the two Houses. Driven to achieve short-term profits, multinational corporations and powerful politicians can transform the fragile beauty of America's last wild place into an industrial zone unless we keep vigilant.

The remainder of the Energy Bill being considered still contains provisions that would effectively make oil drilling the dominant activity on millions of acres of public lands and coastlines. The Bill hands over public treasures for private profit while scrapping or delaying long-standing protections for clean air, clean water, and public health. It proposes to ease environmental rules of the Clean Water Act to promote this development on public lands and gives the oil, gas, coal and nuclear industries \$23 billion over 10 years in tax incentives and subsidies to assist them.

Everything in this Bill operates to foster President Bush's "Drill America First" policy. We need to contact our con

As usual, reports indicate that representatives of the utility industry have been among President Bush's biggest campaign donors. A change in the enforcement policies has been a top priority of the industry's lobbyists.

Under the old rules, power plants, oil refineries and industrial boilers that in modernizing increased harmful emissions generally were required to install more pollution controls. Under the new rules, the New Source Review Program, any renovation project costing less than 20% of the power-generating unit's value will be exempt. No pollution controls need to be added even if the project increases emissions.

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works is now holding hearings on a new Clear Skies initiative (dubbed the Clean Skies Pollution plan). A phone call, fax, or email urging them to oppose attempts to weaken or delay implementation of the Clean Air Act would greatly help. The Capitol Hill switchboard is 202-224-3121.

Words to Inspire, by Mardy Murie: "Wilderness itself is the basis of all our civilization. I wonder if we have enough reverence for life to concede to wilderness the right to live on?" America and its wilderness lost a matchless champion last month with her death at age 101. Wilderness for her was not avocation or abstraction. It was a life. And she leaves us with this message: "I hope the United States of America is not so rich that she can afford to let these wildernesses pass by, or so poor that she cannot afford to keep them."

Through her books and leadership in American land pro

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In the Nick of Time - Bermuda Petrel Rescued Again

The November 10 issue of the *Washington Post* carried a dramatic account of the harried Bermuda Petrel, or Cahow, as it is also known. Rick Weiss, Post staff writer, tells the story.

The birds began arriving in late October on small stony Bermuda islets to find their homes and, before long, engage in their mating rituals.

The event is always a thrilling one for Bermudans. It was especially triumphant this year, when disaster loomed so darkly.

The islands, the only nesting places where the birds are safe from predators, are too rocky for the birds to dig their burrows. So the Bermuda government built concrete burrows for the Cahows. But in September Hurricane Fabrian washed the "condos" out to sea.

It looked very bad for the petrels after the hurricane. They were due to return in a few weeks.

"It's very possible we would have lost the species," said Jeremy Madeiros, field naturalist with the Bermuda Conservation Department. "Their backs were to the ocean, so to speak."

A crash reconstruction program was begun with volunteers' help. According to Weiss, "Divers rescued 40-pound pieces of swept-away Cahow housing from depths of as much as 50 feet.

Others braved eight-foot swells in small boats to deliver 4,000 pounds of wet cement to the islets, a bucket at a time, so the condos could be rebuilt."

During the first week of November, the birds began arriving. Just in time, the new burrows were being completed by volunteers who hurriedly left, leaving the condos to the returning birds. The Cahows moved into their new homes. Bermuda's precious petrel was saved.

Judging from fossil finds, the birds once numbered about a million. But in the past

By Laurine Blankenau

Not until 1951 were a few of the Cahows discovered to have survived, and a recovery effort brought the birds' numbers from 18 pairs to 63 pairs in forty years. Then came a new threat, that of DDT, which again reduced the population. A program run by the state of Bermuda brought about another recovery. Today about 70 pairs survive.

Weiss describes them as "white and gray aerobatic birds with long, pointed wings and romantic dark eyes." Weighing slightly over a pound, they have three-foot wingspans and are able to soar without wing flaps for several hours. They are great divers as well, reaching speeds of 40 mph or more and pulling up just atop the waves where the winds enable them to climb before making another dive.

"They make such fearsome noises," said Ned Brinkley, editor in chief of the *Journal of North American Birds*. "But they are incredible aerialists, supreme in the air. Even during stormy weather, they engage in these high-speed chases with antiphonal calling back and forth."

Very few sightings have been made of the birds at sea. Weiss says that these include "some sightings off the coast of the Carolinas and at least one in the Azores, suggesting the birds may fan out across much of the North Atlantic."

It isn't known if the birds, that mate for life, spend their time at sea as a pair. They mate on the wing and spend weeks out at sea before coming ashore to nest. They will raise their one chick "only if the burrow is completely dark, even at midday." The male and female share nesting duties.

For several weeks after hatching, their babies remain in the burrows. "Finally, one night, they come out and stare at the stars for hours on end as though hypnotized," Weiss states. It is speculated that this enables the immature

300 years, the birds' path has been perilous. Weiss relates that in the 1500's Spanish sailors visited Bermuda but failed to colonize it. According to tradition, the frightful call of the petrel scared away the sailors, who believed the islands were inhabited by demons. The call, made in mating flights at night, is described by Weiss as "low, guttural moans followed by high-pitched wailings."

The sailors did release pigs upon Bermuda as food for shipwrecked persons, creating the first damage to the species. Settlers, along with their animals, brought still more harm in the 1600's. For 300 years the petrel was believed to be extinct.

birds to map their location.

They then depart for three to five years at sea, after which they return to Bermuda to mate. With amazing accuracy they land only a few yards from the burrows where they were hatched.

Today the Bermuda Petrel is still critically endangered. Plans are to add housing on nearby islands to bring their numbers to a safer level. So that the fearful cry of the Cahow continues to sound over Bermuda.

This fall, its cry surely rings sweet.

New Headgear For Jenny

By Bechara Embaid

On Monday, September 8, Omaha Raptor Team members Jenny Henricksen, Linda Dennis and Sherry Seibert gave a live bird show at the Phoeni-

man, was awarded several medals of honor for fighting as a U.S. soldier the Nazis in Anzio.

At the start of the program, I introduced the ORT. I happen to be the Vice President of the Phoenician Club. I mentioned the thousands-years-old birding traditions of the Middle East that include falconry.

To add a folkloric touch, Jenny Henricksen wore a Middle Eastern head scarf. Fred the Red-tailed Hawk did not mind, but the Kestrel freaked out. Needless to say, the ORT presentation was spectacular, and they proved once again to be great ambassadors for conservation and education.

At the end of the presentation, Jenny decided to get even with me and made me wear the scarf—a bit of equal rights.

Our next show is scheduled for November 29 with the Arab American Heritage Society where ORT will give a bilingual live bird presentation. Jenny agreed to wear a traditional dress for the occasion.

c

ian Club of Omaha's monthly meeting.

The Club is a nonprofit organization founded in 1936 by Middle Eastern men and women to promote the understanding, enjoyment and conservation of the Middle Eastern heritage by cultivating fellowship and

fostering charitable projects. The Club also participates in fundraising events for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital founded by Danny Thomas.

One member, Gilbert Gibreal, a 90+-year-old gentle

Birding CDs For Almost Everyone

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Thayer Birding Software created Guide to Birds of North America version 3, featuring 2,788 color photos and songs for 708 species. Ninety video clips are included, to help identify unfamiliar birds. Simply select the color, size, habitat or location of your bird and the program shows everything that matches the description. Numerous quizzes are arranged into several categories from easy to difficult, multiple choice or other.

Some features of this software require an internet connection and registration. The CD can be shared with others for a 30-day free trial.

Another series is titled "Our Birds - State & Province series," each state or province with about 265 species regularly seen there. Again, with color photos, songs, range maps, and much more. An ID Wizard lets you enter colors, size, habitat and location to bring up photos of all the birds matching your description. Petey the Parrot will pronounce each bird's common and scientific name. Quizzes and comparisons of two birds side by side are included.

On the agenda for future dates are presentations to the Hispanic population. Good job, ORT!

Newest of the series, "Our Birds - Birds of My Region," lets you select any one state or province or one of 10 regions of North America, all on one CD.



See a store for a description of other versions or a complete printout (John Eveleth of Wild Bird Haven in Florence provided this info). Or phone me, Laurine, at 451-3647.

(Provided by your editor for your gift buying convenience.)

Conservation/Legislation, *Continued from page 4*

tection, she came to champion ...the Alaska National Interest Lands Act and the Arctic NWR. A glittering array of awards has honored her inspirational life.: the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Wildlife Federation's J. N. Ding Darling Conservationist of the Year award, and the Wilderness Society's Robert Marshall Conservation Award. Her ranch home is now the Murie Center dedicated to the example she set us all. (*from the Wilderness Society and Buffalo Bruce*)

Join us for our first Conservation meeting next year—Jan. 5, ASO office, 7:30 P.M. Merry Christmas!.

P.S. Have you ordered the new digital binoculars now on the market? Will wonders never end!

Addresses to Remember

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The Audubon Society of
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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.



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

**Audubon Society of Omaha, 11809 Old Maple Road,
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