

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

Amphibians in Crisis

By Nancy Leonard

Frogs, toads, newts and salamanders have a place in our childhood memories and our folklore. Who hasn't enjoyed the chorus of frogs down by the creek, laughed at the adventures of Frog and Toad or grimaced when the witches' brew called for eye of newt?

Amphibians seem to be everywhere. There are nearly 6,000 recognized species of frogs, toads, newts and salamanders, living all around the globe and in various habitats and climates. Currently almost a third of the planet's amphibians are threatened with extinction. Indeed for every one mammal or bird species that is endangered, there are two endangered amphibian species.

Since 1980, an estimated 122 amphibian species may have gone extinct. This has had a ripple effect, as amphibians play a major role in controlling insect populations, provide a food supply for birds and other predators, and have important biotechnology potential. The now extinct Gastric Brooding frog of Australia could have had important implications for the treatment of ulcers. Other

species are being used to help treat specific conditions including cancer and aiding general medical research.

Amphibian specialists, conservation groups and zoos have formed the Amphibian Conservation Initiative. They have addressed the global declines by establishing facilities and training specialists in quarantine and captive breeding in order to release offspring back into the wild.

Our October speaker, Jessi Krebs, heads the Amphibian Conservation Initiative at our Henry Doorly Zoo. Jessi travels throughout Central America and Mexico looking for amphibians, assessing the habitat, and training staff in other locations on how to save amphibians.

Join us Thursday, October 11, 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (1 block so. of Center). A short business meeting will follow the talk, concluding with a social hour. Visitors are welcome!

ASO Field Trips for October

Sunday, Oct. 14: The DeSoto NWR "Big Sit":

Join us to observe birds and discover the Refuge from moonlight to sunlight and back to moonlight again during DeSoto's first-ever "Big Sit." We will be collecting data on all of the bird species we see or hear in a 17 foot circle. (No one has to sit in the circle for the entire 24 hours!) Bring binocs, field guides, food, beverages, flashlights, etc. The Big Sit circle will be located at the DeSoto Lake overlook on the Missouri Meander trail near the Visitor Center. For information or to volunteer time, contact Sue McDonald, Visitor Services Manager, 642-5403, or Sue_McDonald@fws.gov. ASO members are encouraged to participate whenever they can, particularly between 8:00 am and noon. For more on this national event, visit www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/funbirds/bigsit/bigsit.aspx
Saturday, Oct. 20: Sparrows and Pipits at Spring Creek Prairie Saturday, October 20

Led by Elliott Bedows, this trip will begin at 8:00

Bird Seed Orders Due Soon

By Kathleen Crawford-Rose

The deadline for bird seed orders is October 11; sale dates are October 27 and 28. Order forms have been mailed to all members and former customers.

If you would like extra order forms to share with friends and neighbors, call Carole & Dick Rasmussen at 731-3939 or Kathleen Crawford-Rose at 292-8912.

Again this year our supplier has warned us that prices are up and will skyrocket in late fall or early winter. Not because growing conditions have been poor in the Midwest but because the grain markets have been disrupted by the huge demand for corn by the Ethanol producers. Be sure to order extra seed at our low prices. Stanley, our seed buyer,

highly recommends it.

More hands are needed for loading the bags of seed for customers on October 27 & 28. Call Jerry Toll, 453-9239, coordinator of volunteers, to volunteer.

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Current Currents

By Elliott Bedows

Climate Changes Lives of Whalers in Alaska

On September 17, National Public Radio's Melissa Block revealed how climatic warming is changing the lives of the inhabitants of Lawrence Island. The Island is remote and treeless, floating in the Bering Sea 38 miles from Siberia and nearly 200 miles from the mainland of Alaska. It is inhabited by the Upik people who migrated from Siberia and settled on the island more than 2,000 years ago. This is Ms. Block's story.

There are two villages on St. Lawrence Island, each with a population of about 700. They first got electricity and telephone service in the 1970's. Some homes still have no running water. The people of St. Lawrence are subsistence hunters. They hunt walrus, seals and bowhead whales. They're given an annual quota for the whale catch.

Leonard Apangalook, a 68-year-old Yupik man, lives in the town of Gambell. On his kitchen counter are 10 glass jars filled with salmon he caught, preserved and stored for the winter. Strips of walrus and seal meat hang on racks to dry outside. "I was born in a little cubicle of a house with two seal oil lamps. We were a very strong subsistence community, but times have changed now," Apangalook says.

During hunting season, Apangalook and the other men of the village walk down to the beach several times a day to check on the weather and the ice to see if it's safe to go out. The whale hunters sail out in wood-frame boats covered in walrus skin. When a whale is caught, the atmosphere in the village becomes electric with excitement. The school empties and everyone gathers at the beach to help with butchering. The whale meat and blubber are divided among the villagers and are then frozen for food in the winter months.

Documenting Change

As part of the hunt, Apangalook has kept a meticulous daily weather journal for 20 years. He pulls out a neat stack of bound volumes edged in gold. The

scribing wavy ice, shore fast ice, small cakes of ice, and thin ice overlapped like shingles. Branson Tungiyani is the general manager for the village of Gambell. He calls the Bering Sea his garden, but Tungiyani describes how changing weather is affecting the ice and the ocean.

"The weather has been crazy these last 10 years. Unexpected warming in the middle of wintertime, cooler temperatures in the springtime where it should be warm. The ice is getting thinner. Now we're seeing it come in what they call ice in January and one time February. So we believe what the scientists are saying that the ice is melting," Tungiyani says.

Perry Pungowiyi is the captain of a whaling crew in Savoonga, the other village on St. Lawrence Island. Pungowiyi and other subsistence hunters rely on ice because it acts like a big conveyor belt, bringing in walrus and seals. This spring, Pungowhi and his crew caught three bowhead whales—an unusually substantial catch. Pungowiyi's wife Adeline is a teacher's aide with Head Start. She says that last year the ice didn't come until December. "That was so, so surprising. Usually when I was growing up we'd start getting snow end of August, September, and we knew it was time to go back to school. And now it's just different. We won't get snow until December nowadays."

Climate change is not ending whaling, but it is causing shorter seasons and extreme, unpredictable weather. Less ice results in more dangerous seas because ice acts as a barrier from ocean swell. Now severe storms come in quickly and without warning.

The Loss of Life

An old cemetery overlooks the village of Gambell. The coffins are exposed above

journals reflect something the people of St. Lawrence Island see year after year —the ice is coming later in the year and retreating earlier. It is thinner and more flimsy, making it dangerous for hunting. Polar pack ice, ice that builds up over many years, has not been seen for eight years.

Studying ice is second nature to the people of St. Lawrence Island. There are 99 Yupik words for different kinds of ice. In a dictionary that Christopher Koonooka translated from Yupik to English, there are words de

ground, wedged in between gray boulders. Some are freshly painted, like the one for Leonard Ray Nowpakahok. The cross on his coffin says, "Young man, buckshot, bowhead whale rider." He was 11 years old when he died in 2005 in a whaling accident. The boy was out with his uncle and four others in a walrus-skin boat. They were towing in a 40-ton bowhead when the winds shifted. A storm came up fast and the boat capsized.

The crew radioed for help, but the seas were too rough. Four members of the crew drowned—including the mayor of Gambell, his 11-year-old daughter, Yolanda, and Leonard, his 11-year-old nephew. Near

Continued on page 3

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Mini horse rides for the lil' cowboys and cowgirls 11:00 to 1:00 and 2:00 to 4:00.

Hay rack Rides, Farm and Exotic Animal Visits, STARLAB planetarium, Raptor Presentations, Craft & Farmers Market, Raffles, Food Booths & more!

Visit the all-new Outdoor Nature Classroom!

Suggested donation at the gate: \$2. Proceeds to benefit Gifford Farm and The Gifford Farm Scholarship Fund, enabling Title 1 students to visit the farm at a discounted rate.

700 Camp Gifford Rd, Bellevue, NE 69005

(From Fort Crook Road & Southroads Mall in Bellevue, go east on Childs Road until it becomes Camp Gifford Road. Continue east 1.2 miles through Fontenelle Forest to G

Gifford Farm 2007 Fall Festival

Oct 6 & 7

Saturday 10 - 4 and Sunday 11 - 4

Come on Down to the Farm for a Day of Old Fashioned Fun!

Mini horse rides for the lil' cowboys and cowgirls 11:00 to 1:00 and 2:00 to 4:00.

Hay rack Rides, Farm and Exotic Animal Visits, STARLAB planetarium, Raptor Presentations, Craft & Farmers Market, Raffles, Food Booths & more!

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Climate Change, *Continued from page 2*

Leonard's casket is another freshly painted casket covered with bright plastic flowers. Friends have left mementos—a penny, some pebbles, a necklace—on the cross.

The Future

"I think we're on the verge of great success or great failure," says Merle Apassingok, standing next to his whaling boat near the beach in Gambell. "We're literally in between

Apassingok sees a generation of young people who can't speak the native language of Yupik, and whose taste for chicken nuggets and pizza has replaced the taste for native, a very deep connection....I think that connection, that deep connection with the animals. You know, it's not just nutrition, it's not just ceremonial, it's not just religious. That's

Alaska Update

Alaska is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, and this abundance, especially in the oil and timber industries, leads to exploitation of the environment.

Because Alaska is home to or provides breeding grounds for so many of our birds and an amazing variety of other animals as well, the National Audubon Society and other environmental groups are concentrating much of their efforts on protecting the habitat of these creatures. Recently, several issues have been the focus of those efforts.

By Kathy Schwery

election next year.

Previously, in September of 2006, after hundreds of thousands of protests were filed with the Interior Department, a federal judge halted sales of oil and gas leases in the Teshekpuk Lake area. The judge ruled that environmental impacts had not been sufficiently examined.

But in the months that followed, heedless of the arguments from environmental groups, the Bureau of

After years of contentious debate over the U.S. Forest Service's management of the Tongass Forest in southeastern Alaska, it was amazing to see a really good settlement agreement emerge this spring.

Through the agreement between conservation groups and the Forest Service, the most important undeveloped areas of the Tongass will be protected while supplying lumber for the timber mills. The compromise allows some breathing room for the timber industry and other users of the forest, such as tourism businesses, subsistence and recreation, while the Forest Service works out a new management plan for the Tongass.

The Forest Service and the timber industry had, for many years, vastly overstated the amount of lumber needed to supply mills. This led to hundreds of miles of new logging roads being built through pristine forest areas. Opposition to logging in the Tongass has been growing each year, with tourism industries and hunting and fishing groups becoming more vocal. It's good news that important areas of this huge temperate rain forest will be safeguarded while a new plan for its management is being readied.

In the Teshekpuk Lake area in far northern Alaska, caribou and polar bears have been given another reprieve from the oil and gas drilling that was to take place in their habitat. Last week the federal government's plan to lease more of the area surrounding the Lake to oil and gas companies was put on hold. Because of court orders, the next lease sale will not be held until after the presidential

Land Management reissued the same plan for opening the area to gas and oil development.

It is very good news that court orders have now put on hold oil and gas leases for this area. Teshekpuk Lake, the largest freshwater body in the state, contains critical habitat for caribou, migrating birds and other wildlife, and in turn, the Inupiat Eskimos depend on these creatures for their subsistence lifestyle.

The most widely discussed of the Arctic issues is that of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. In early January, Rep. Ed Markey (Democrat) and Rep. Jim Ramstad (Republican) introduced a bill to make the Arctic NWR a permanent wilderness. The bill has 140 cosponsors and is currently in committee.

If it were to pass, which is probable in the House but doubtful in the Senate, President Bush would not sign the bill because he is committed to opening the Refuge to oil drilling. However, momentum is being built up toward eventual passage, and when a more environmentally friendly administration comes to power, it should be possible to guarantee that the Arctic Refuge does receive permanent protection.

A recently filed lawsuit on behalf of the polar bears in the Arctic area could have a bearing on attempts to open this area to oil and gas drilling. Several environmental organizations have filed suit against the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Secretary of the Interior, stating that regulations allowing drilling in sensitive polar bear habitat have not taken into account the additional threat of global warming. Because polar bears den on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge, a favorable ruling in

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A Beautiful Day at Schramm Park

By Babs & Loren Padelford

Eleven participants in the "Anything That Flies" field trip at Schramm Park September 8 enjoyed a beautiful day. Forty-six species of birds were seen or heard around the park and on the river.

Photos by Eric Scholar.

Highlights at the park were Green Heron (3), Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Phoebe, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-throated, Blue-headed & Warbling Vireos, 2 Red-

breasted Nuthatches, Carolina Wren, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler and Baltimore Orioles.

Those who stayed after lunch walked out on the hike-bike bridge on the Platte River where we observed an American Avocet. A Bald Eagle was seen from the hike-bike bridge by one of the party.

Six species of butterflies were



Robber Flies

spotted by the observers, highlighted by Giant Swallowtail. Blue-fronted Dancer was one of the four species of odonates identified.



Stinkhorn Mushroom Seen

Near Aquarium

Alaska Update, Continued from page 4

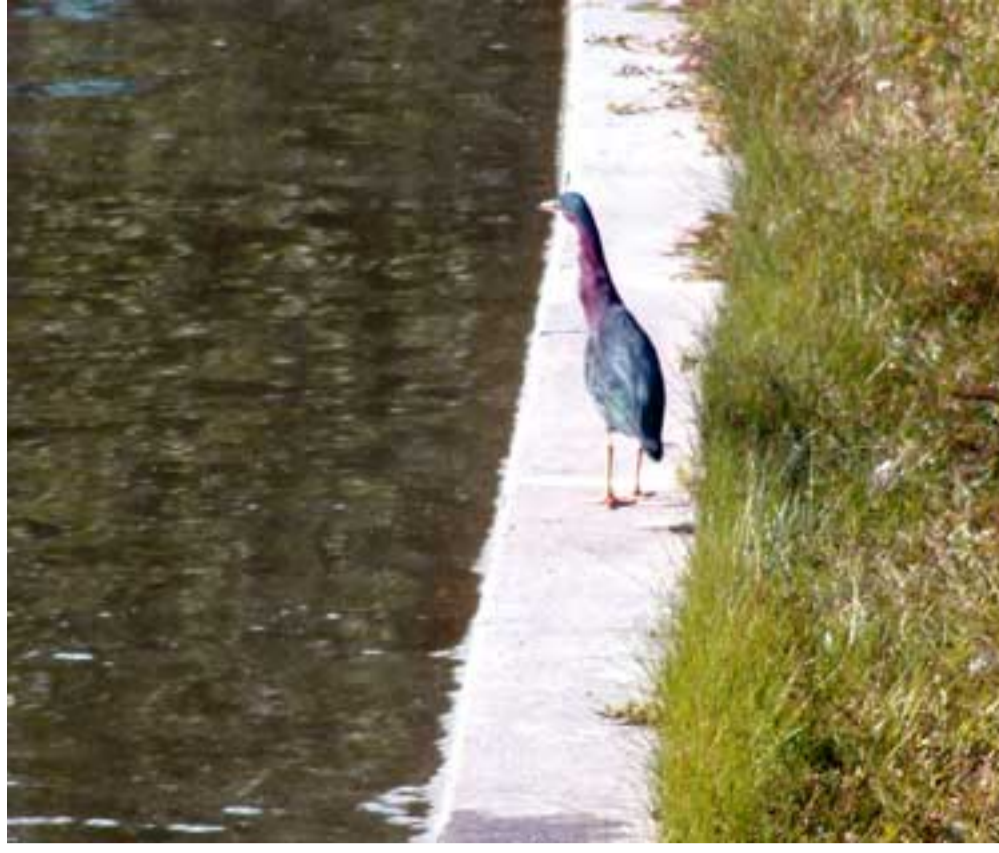
this case would affect attempts to open the area to gas and oil drilling.

Another Arctic issue that bears watching is the recent opening to gas and oil drilling of Bristol Bay, which is just west of the Aleutian chain. President Bush, Sr, had imposed a moratorium on drilling in this area, and President Clinton extended that rule until 2012. But

In attempts to save the Arctic area from destruction and exploitation by timber and oil industries, some battles are being won, while others still need our attention. It is gratifying to see public opinion changing and to see recreation and tourism industries joining environmental groups in efforts to protect Alaska's special places.

In Alaska, more than in any other state, Mother Nature herself is making it all too clear that, where the environment is concerned, the future cannot be business as usual.

recently the current administration lifted the moratorium. Bristol Bay is a very high quality salmon fishery area, and oil spills would create great risk to the environment, wildlife and the local community.



Green Heron

seen at the Ponds

The storage space in some homes is "home" to half-used containers of undesirable-for-the-garbage can contents, some things the owners thought they might use at some time in the future. But the longer the items sit there, the less desirable they are.

Dread not, because there is a place you can drive right over to that uses all of the right methods of disposal.

The place is **UndertheSink** and is much better than under your sink because they safely and properly dispose of products labeled with any of the following words: Caution, Warning, Danger, Poison, Flammable, Volatile, Caustic, or Corrosive. For items they cannot accept, they can offer alternative solutions.

Accepted items include aerosol cans, garden chemicals, fluorescent bulbs, rechargeable batteries, rust removers, spray paint, wallpaper remover, cleaning products, syringes, mercury devices, medicines, personal care products, thermostats concrete cleaners or etchers, metal polish, rat, mouse or gopher poison, pool chemicals, and others.

Among items not accepted are business-related waste, infectious wastes, asbestos, smoke detectors, alkaline batteries, electronics, tires and appliances. Call ahead (you must make an appointment anyway) to find out if an item can be accepted.

You are asked to keep products in their original containers (or know what they are, if possible), place

them in a box so they remain upright, and maintain the box in a level place in your vehicle. Put leaking containers in a heavy plastic bag.

Go directly to the facility after packing your vehicle. Don't run errands, go to work, or park your vehicle in the sun while the chemicals are being processed.

Park your vehicle under their canopy and wait for someone to attend to you.

Drop-off is by appointment only. Call UnderTheSink at 444-7465. Hours are Wednesday and Friday 9-5, Thursday 9-:6:30, Saturday 9-12.

Now that glass is no longer picked up at the curb, to recycle it, you can go to **Scrap Central** at 8518 Blondo. They also accept metal. A problem can exist for persons living in apartments or for small businesses that do not have recycling pickup. **CARE Recycling**, 8518 Blondo, is a good option for those who do not have a recycling pickup service.

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Making Your Yard a Certified Wildlife Habitat™

The National Wildlife Federation is seeking gardeners willing for their property to be classified as NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat™.

Most homeowners are also owners of green spaces suitable for wildlife habitat — trees for nesting and shelter, vines, berry-bearing bushes for nutrients, leafy areas for foraging. Additions or changes may be desirable for luring greater numbers and varieties of colorful and/or tuneful creatures to the yard.

Creating your own NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat™ is easy to do. From backyards to balconies, all you need is to provide four essential elements to make your garden space wildlife friendly: food, water, cover and places to raise young. Your yard can then attract birds, butterflies, and other small (benign) creatures.

As of September 19, there were only 5,000 more willing gardeners needed for NWF to reach their goal of

100,000 participants. They urge you to certify today.

You will receive a free NWF membership including a full year's subscription to the National Wildlife magazine plus their quarterly newsletter.

Your name will join others in NWF's Registry of certified habitats in recognition of your willingness to create a wildlife-friendly yard.

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Audubon Society

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Comments: 202-456-1111; fax:
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20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-
0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246;
Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address:
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Senator Chuck Hagel

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Representative Jeff Fortenberry U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 Phone: (202) 225-4806

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Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-5555

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

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



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A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

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The Meadowlark is published
monthly September through May,
plus a summer issue. The newsletter
may be accessed on our web site,
<http://audubon-omaha.org>

Nancy Williams. 291-8580

Jerry Toll..... . 453-9239

Patty Albright.... 323-1966

Send address changes to Kathy
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