
**February
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**ASO is
a
Chapter**

**of the
National
Audubon
Society**

**Serving
Eastern
Nebraska**

**and
Western
Iowa**



Birds of the Sandhills

By Kathy Schwery

For many of us, the Sandhills county is one of our state's most treasured places. This vast region in north-central Nebraska possesses topography almost identical to that before present settlers arrived. As such it is home to a wide range of wildlife. Abundant lakes, marshes and potholes are habitat for many bird species. Wildflowers bloom profusely, and wildlife viewing opportunities are everywhere. Visitors find a magic allure in the silence and beauty of miles of uncluttered landscape. The Sandhills offer a rare chance to become more deeply attuned to the world of wild nature.

Our speaker for the February 12 general meeting, ASO member Ruth Green, will take us on a trip to the Sandhills region through her presentation. She will include general information about the history, culture and geography of the area. The program's highlight will be her slides of the birds of the region.

Winter Safari

Get out your winter safari clothes and be ready to enjoy a midwinter outing in the hills along the Platte River.

On Saturday, February 14, Clem Klaphake will lead a group of hardy winter ASO trekkers to the Henry Doorly Zoo Platte River Safari Park just off I-80 south of the Platte River. When driving from Omaha, take the Mahoney Sate Park exit (428) and turn left (to the east) on Hwy S13E until you see the Safari Park entrance on your left.

Normally this park is not open to the public in the winter months. We have permission to enter (no fee) and observe the raptors housed at the park, `bird' those areas that we are permitted to walk in, and observe the wolf pack in Wolf Valley.

We will meet at 9:00 A.M. at the Visitor Center at the entrance to Safari Park. Dress appropriately for mid-February weather. We will be outside for much of this trip. You can either carpool to the park or leave your vehicle in the parking lot at the Visitor Center and carpool into the park. What a great way to spend Valentine's Day morning.

Ruth's wildlife photos have won numerous prizes. Her bird slides reveal the skills she brings to her work with the camera.

A Master bander, Ruth bands birds at locations around the state including Schramm State Park on the first Saturday of

Upland Sandpiper

each month. She has held many offices in ASO. Now retired from teaching in the Bellevue school system, she currently teaches birding classes for Elderhostel, 'Becoming an Outdoors Woman' classes for Nebraska Game & Parks, and others. This spring she will begin giving Sandhill Crane tours.

Please join us on Thursday, February 12, 7:30 P.M, at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances Street (one block south of 45th & Center).

A brief business meeting will follow the program. The evening will conclude with coffee, cookies and a social time. Nonmembers are welcome.

Nelli's Notes

By Nelli Falzgraf

Recent Board Meetings

SEI installed security and re-keyed locks at the ASO building.

We selected Bland and Associates CPA's to account for the chapter. Their clients include the Hope Medical Outreach and Papio-Missouri NRD. **Mike Pruss**, who specializes in non-profits, has been retained to track funds, provide reports of budgeted and non-budgeted monies, and advise. The Board will continue to authorize, reimburse, and deposit.

The Nebraska Alliance for Conservation and Environmental Education meeting, organized by Marian Langan of Audubon Nebraska, was held at Fontenelle's Buffet Center. **Jenny Henricksen, Linda Dennis,** and

ASO Prairie Preserve

Almost six years ago our then Natural Areas Chairperson, **Glenn Pollock**, found a beautiful native tallgrass prairie northeast of 72nd Street and Highway 36. He obtained an Environmental Trust grant for the purchase of the land, one of the few prairie remnants in our area. He has been managing it to maintain and in one area restore native grasses and forbs.

Each spring Glenn and a dedicated crew use prescribed burns to control brome grass and other invasive plants and encourage native flora. During the growing season he led prairie enthusiasts to collect seeds from never-plowed areas while enjoying the rare experience of walking in waist-high

Bechara Embaid represented ASO.

The November-December Metropolitan Community College Birding for Beginners class was a success, with 13 students learning about birds. Thank you to **Ione Werthman, Clem Klaphake, Jenny Henricksen** and other members of the **Omaha Raptor Team**. Another class will be held Saturday mornings, January 31, through March 6 at the chapter headquarters, and signups are via Metro.

DeSoto and Omaha Christmas Bird Counts, organized by **Bob Barry, Jerry Toll, and Betty Grenon**, were held in December.

Fundraising has 2004 nature calendars and is taking orders for t-shirts (see item, next page). Chairperson **Pauline Dickey** organized a Christmas fundraising event at Mulhall's Nursery.

Jim Becic, Environmental Coordinator of the NRD, addressed the Board on the 1992 Wetland Site Program and the 1992 NRD-ASO Agreement, and announced that the NRD will sponsor the US Corps of Engineers project to rid invasive grass that is choking out native plants at the wetland parcels we manage for the NRD. A Corps-NRD feasibility study has begun and will determine detailed plans and costs before implementation and funding.

The Audubon Society of Omaha extends its sympathy to Steve Lamphere on the death of his mother, who passed away on November 27, 2003.

bluestems, milkweeds, or other prairie plants. The seeds are resown in the once-cultivated portion to restore the land to endemic plants that once dominated eastern Nebraska. The work of gathering seeds may sound difficult, but it is really quite easy and pleasant. No need for backbreaking bending—the plants truly are tall. Resowing involves scattering and strewing, nothing like planting your backyard garden.

Recently Glenn found that a development is planned for land next to our prairie. He wrote to the Omaha Planning Board about the prairie being the first conservation easement in Douglas County, concerns about prescribed burns adjacent to a development, and silting from construction that could damage one of the few remaining tallgrass prairies in our area. While prairies are rare, most of us would agree that developments abound and dominate our urban landscapes.

If you could help with grassroots efforts to preserve our prairie by writing letters or attending the Omaha Planning Board hearings, please contact Glenn at pollock@radiks.net or 571-6230. Also, if you are willing to help with prescribed burns or seed collection and dispersal, Glenn would appreciate your help.

Calendar

Feb 2 (Mon) Legisl/Conservation Meeting

Feb 4 (Wed) Board Meeting

Feb 12 (Thur) General Meeting

Feb 14 (Sat) Field Trip to Safari Park

Feb 13-16 (Fri-Mon) Backyard Bird Count

Mar 19-21 Rivers & Wildlife Celebration

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration March 19-21

If you have never attended a R&W Celebration, you could be in for a fine treat. Our beloved Sandhill Cranes will show up, the Prairie Chickens too, and National Audubon/ Audubon Nebraska will host this annual event in Kearney at the Holiday Inn, March 19-21.

The conference begins with field trips on Friday, March 19, to the blinds at Rowe Sanctuary to view the cranes, farther afield to see the famed dance of the Prairie Chickens, to Funk Lagoon, Harlan County Reservoir, and others later in the day. Throughout the day, sessions will be held with speakers, and a nature writing workshop will be led by an author-editor.

Activities continue Saturday with field trips, speakers, and a nature journaling workshop. An evening banquet's featured speaker will be Al Batt, writer, speaker, storyteller, and humorist who has been named Birder of the Year by Wild Bird magazine. More field trips and talks are offered on Sunday morning. The conference ends at noon.

Omaha Raptor Team

A Committee of ASO

By Sherry Seibert

Go Ahead, Make My Day!

A country store offers paintings, photographs, binoculars and scopes, and other items Saturday and Sunday.

If you register before February 28, the costs are reduced, so you are advised to contact Audubon Nebraska soon: (402) 466-1220; www.Nebraska.audubon.org; or nebraska@audubon.org. for a complete schedule and costs.

Lodging is available at the Holiday Inn where a block of rooms is reserved until February 12. Overflow accommodations are available at the nearby Hampton Inn and Wingate Motel. Kearney is packed with activities all weekend, so motel rooms all over town will fill up fast.

Holiday Inn: single \$66; 2-4 persons, \$71; kids free. In Nebraska call 1-800-248-4460; outside Nebraska call 1-308-237-5971. Hampton Inn 1-800-HAMPTON; 1-308-234-3400. Wingate Motel 1-800-228-1000; 1-308-237-4400.

Hurry! Hurry!

Order Your Beautiful ASO Shirts

By Pauline Dickey

We have changed the contract for ASO shirts with the new logo to a company more user friendly. We will place an order as soon as 20 shirts have been ordered. Price will be \$10 for short sleeve, \$14 for long sleeve; tax included. You have these choices:

Long sleeve or short sleeve

100% cotton or 50/50 cotton-synthetic blend

The Omaha Raptor Team had a very busy 2003. Our feathered educators were pretty well worn out by the end of the year after performing in 192 programs. Lucy, the Burrowing Owl pictured above, was ready for a much-deserved break.

Although we were sad to say goodbye to two of our dedicated volunteers, Alison O'Connor and Carolyn Beavers, who moved out of state, we are looking forward to an exciting year full of new faces and lots of programs in 2004.

Size: short sleeve S-4XL; long sleeve: S-2XL

Short sleeve- 2XL add \$1.20; 3XL & 4XL add 1.54

Long sleeve- 2XL add \$1.22.

Colors: Short sleeve: white, natural, ash, athletic heather, khaki, light blue, yellow, black, burgundy, forest green, gold jade, kelly green, navy, orange, purple, red, royal blue

Long sleeve: white, ash, athletic heather, black, forest green, navy, red, royal blue.

I will bring the catalog displaying the colors to the February General Meeting and possibly the ASO Board meeting. You may call me with your order. I am willing to receive orders by email but have been disturbed by unwanted messages from outside organizations which have used my address. Call me at 932-8205, or look through past newsletter issues if you want to use email.

But don't delay; order your new shirt today!

By Ione Werthman

Conservation/Legislative Action

Back in the Saddle Again

Yes, I know the title dates me. However, the meaning is still apropos. We're back in the saddle again with all kinds of legislative action proposals now that Christmas, New Year celebrations and

The Bill cleverly omits drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and offers a few tax incentives for wind solar power, but these are so overshadowed by the 101 (my guesstimate) measures that will damage the environment and, at the same time, add billions to the national

our football bowl games are all over. While our State Unicameral (hopefully) will be in session only until April 15 this term, Congress is back at muddying the waters for most of the year, and with the Iowa Caucuses over, the 2004 election year is now officially underway. Let's hope our ride will be productive as well as enjoyable.

President Bush is again taking the lead with his questionable tricks. Besides sidestepping Congress' two years of filibustering his federal judge appointments, Bush appointed Judge Charles Pickering to the federal appeals court while Congress was out of session. Such appointments, I have since learned, are valid only until the 2005 Congress takes office.

Also on the day before Christmas Eve, Bush released the news that he was removing prohibitions on logging and mining from 9.3 million acres of the Tongass National Forest in Alaska—prohibitions that were put in place under Clinton's administration. These moves will certainly restart partisan wrangling that will cover most issues in the congressional \$373 billion package of overdue spending bills for fiscal 2004.

And as we already know, included in this \$373 billion-plus spending package bill is the disastrous Energy Bill, which was put on hold in Congress before Christmas. Giving short shrift to energy conservation and efficiency in favor of more oil dependency, air pollution and global warming, it is particularly disappointing to see that the Energy Bill does virtually nothing to address fuel standards for cars and SUVs. It prevents the EPA from applying the Clean Air Act to certain cities with severe air pollution problems and lets communities off the hook from tackling these serious air pollution problems.

The bill also establishes oil and gas development as the dominant use of federal public lands, opens national parks to the construction of electricity transmission lines, subsidizes with taxpayer dollars to create more energy

debt.

Please write, telephone or fax Senators Nelson, Hagel, Harkin and Grassley again as soon as possible. Senator Nelson, in his letter to me last December, said that he voted for the Energy Bill the first time because the measure promotes the use of Ethanol, made from Nebraska Corn. (One reason for, 100 reasons against the environment.) I believe congress should start over! If you write a letter, send it to the local office rather than to Washington. The security there delays letters beyond reason. Addresses and phone numbers can be found on page 7 of the newsletter.

In our State Unicameral, new bills are rapidly being introduced, and public hearings are going on as I write. Nebraska Lottery funds are again being targeted to the tune of \$2 million a year to bail out the 136-year-old State Fair. Senator Chris Beutler is offering an alternative measure to replace term limits for our state senators. Both of these bills will go on the November ballot if passed by the Unicameral.

Also out gathering signatures for a November ballot vote are gambling interests wanting to put casinos throughout our state. Several other groups are seeking petition signatures to repeal LB 775, the Employment and Investment Growth Act.

Have you ever wondered about the details of LB 775? According to what I have read, LB 775 reduces or eliminates, in secret, a corporation's property, income, sales and use tax liabilities, with review only by the Nebraska Department of Revenue. The Department's decisions cannot be reviewed by the public or state lawmakers.

The law prohibits anyone from learning which Nebraska corporations benefit from the law and by how much. Corporations were required to hire more people, but nothing was said as to what wages were to be paid to these employees.

It has also been reported that sales tax

industries such as coal, oil and nuclear plants, and exempts polluters from core provisions of the clean air and water laws. refunds to businesses in 2000 totaled \$80 million. Has anyone mentioned lately how short we are in the state coffers?

Continued on page 5

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Conservation/Legislation Action,
Continued from page 4

As I See it - A Letter to ASO Members

While last July I was regionally elected as candidate to the National Board, the title was made official when the proxies for the National Audubon Board of Directors election were counted on December 6.

Of course, this now means I have a great responsibility for the next three years to serve all of our Audubon chapters throughout the country, and I must thank ASO for submitting my name.

As a grassroots member of Audubon for the past 30 years, I find there are issues that need to be addressed by the National Board: issues that have been voiced in the past few years by others across the nation. Dues share to chapters, which are scheduled to expire on June 30 of this year, weighs heavily on the mind. Some would like to see the reinstatement of regional congresses throughout the country and believe we need to restore a true partnership between the independent chapters and the National Audubon Society on decisions that affect chapters. I have my work cut out for me.

Carol Browner, former head of the EPA during the Clinton Administration, has now become Chair of the National Audubon Board

ASO Members Authors of Wildflower Field Guide

By Laurine Blankenau

Two of ASO's ex-presidents have completed and sent to press a field guide to the wildflowers in Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods, to be out in April. The two are Roland Barth and Neal Ratzlaff.

Roland and Neal, both ardent students of nature, photographed 250 species of wildflowers and wrote the text with clear and captivating descriptions, plus locations of the plants. They include traditional lore of Native Americans and European settlers regarding the flowers' medicinal and other properties.

The work will be published in *A Field Guide to Wildflowers of Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods*. Having had a preliminary look at the book, I can promise it has everything a reader wishes in a wildflower field guide—fine quality photos for easy identification, where and when to find the plants, and intriguing facts about the flowers' special properties, purported and proven. The beauty of the photos will appeal to anyone who picks up the guide.

Posters bearing some of the book's photos will be on display at the Buffett Learning Center, Fontenelle Forest, during April and May. A book signing event is planned for April 3 when the book will be for sale. It is destined to be

of Directors. As I write, I am packed and ready to attend my first board meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. More reports will be forthcoming.

Join us for our next Conservation/Legislation Action Committee meeting, weather permitting, of course. Monday, February 2, 7:30 P.M, Audubon Office, 11809 Old Maple Road.

Help Needed for Butterfly Garden

Yes, I know it's February, and we just had a giant snowstorm, but as the seed catalog companies say, this is the month our fancies turn to gardening.

If you have seen the Butterfly Garden at Heron Haven, you know it is a beautiful addition to the property. And you know that work is required to maintain its beauty during the growing season.

At present the garden is cared for by Eunice Levisay, who could use some help. Please call Eunice at 393-0545 if you can be of assistance.

a favorite trail and armchair companion for wildflower fanciers and hikers of the trails of Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods. ASO proudly commends Neal and Roland for their success.

Recently Fontenelle Forest conferred upon the authors the Jonas and Gifford Awards for service to their organization. Both have enduring associations with the Forest and have spent years exploring the sites. Neal has volunteered for many years and served on the board.

The Audubon Society of Omaha remembers Gladys Johnson, who died recently. Once an active member of Audubon she is remembered fondly by those who knew her.

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Great Backyard Bird Count

You have a chance this month to become a citizen scientist for our birds. You can do this by taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count held February 13-

Snapshot of Backyard Bird Count 2003 Findings

Almost 50,000 checklists were

16. Every bird enthusiast in North America is needed to count for the birds. Your bird list can help answer questions about the health of our bird populations.

Everyone's contribution is important, whether you identify, count, and report the 5 species coming to your backyard feeder or the 75 species you see during a day's outing to a productive birding spot.

Here's what you do: Count the birds in your back yard, local park, or other natural area on any or all of the four count days. Watch your feeders or take a short walk in your neighborhood. For each species you see, record the highest number of individuals that you observe at any one time during your count. Don't add a bird every time you see one at your feeder; you could be counting the same individual.

Watch the birds for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate. We recommend watching for a little longer, so you can get a good sense of what birds are in your area.

Enter your count on line at www.birdsource.org and use your State/Province Checklist to submit your highest counts for that day.

View your results. After you've entered your count for the day, visit our Maproom and see results from across the continent.

If you do not have internet access, ask a friend to help you or visit your local library.

In 2003, citizen scientists like you submitted almost 50,000 checklists totaling more than four million birds of 512 species. Remember, your count makes a difference!

Omaha Area Christmas Bird Count

Betty Grenon reports on the December 27 count as being quite slow. The mild winter may have been a cause; other reasons were known only to the birds. We did have a generous number of



submitted for last February's Backyard Bird Count across North America last year, totaling more than four million birds of 512 species.

The event documented a regional decline of the American Crow, a victim perhaps of West Nile virus. The crows were reported in alarmingly fewer numbers in Illinois and Ohio, where West Nile had a strong presence. Crows are particularly vulnerable to the virus.

Increases were shown in other species. More Dark-eyed Juncos were reported than had been counted since 2000. A massive snowstorm hitting the eastern seaboard may have driven birds to feeders in high numbers and held some early migrants farther south, compared to previous years. Among them may have been Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark and American Woodcock.

In the West, Mountain Bluebirds were reported farther south than the year before, and all of the Rosy Finches (Black, Gray-crowned, Brown-capped) were documented farther north. In previous years, GBBC maps of Eurasian Collared-Dove, which reached Florida in the 1980's, showed the species spreading quickly northwestward. Last year's maps show no change, suggesting a slowdown in expansion of the range.

This year participation by novice and expert birders alike will help us determine how this winter compares to last, and what it reflects about our bird populations. Frank Gill, Audubon's Director of Science, asks every birder to participate: "The Great Backyard Bird Count has become an important means of gathering data to help birds, but it can't happen unless people take part. Whether you're a novice or an expert, we

counters. Forty helpful birders showed need you to help us help birds." up. Thanks, all!

Of the 60 species tallied, no new ones made the list. We had two record highs: Eastern Bluebirds 61, Herring Gulls 13. House Sparrows hit a record low: 433. Ring-necked Pheasant tied with one other year for a low of 1 bird.

Two hybrid Greater White-fronted Geese/Canadas were tallied. Some of these have been previously seen.

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

Audubon Society

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The *Audubon Magazine** (see below,

chapter-only membership) and your

membership card will be sent to this address:

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Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

11809 Old Maple Road

Omaha NE 68164

Representative Lee Terry

PO 3

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

7XCH

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Omaha phone: (402) 397-
9944

Representative Douglas
Bereuter

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

Phone: (202) 225-4806; fax
(202) 225-5686

Lincoln phone: (402) 438-
1598

Governor Michael Johanns

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848
Lincoln, NE 68509

Phone: (402) 471-2244; Fax:
471-6031

Mayor Mike Fahey

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE
68183

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.
Please also give the name
and address of the person

Bequests

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

to be notified.



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,
Omaha 68164**

Phone: 445-4138 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

Elected Officers:

President Nelli Falzgraf, 414 Ridgewood Dr, Bellevue 68005 292-9687

1st Vice President Elliott Bedows, 309 Greenbrier Ct, Bellevue 68005 292-5017

2nd Vice President Laurine Blankenau, 3808 Grebe, Omaha 68112 451-3647

Treasurer Vacant

Past President Eric Scholar, 5012 Nicholas St, Omaha 68132 551-5045

Recording Secretary Linda Dennis, 1011 Homer St, Omaha 68107 733-6548

Elected Directors Jackie Scholar, 5012 Nicholas St, Omaha 68132 551-5045

Mace Hack, 1735 So. 87th St, Omaha 68124 934-5040

Mark Armstrong, 12741 Forestdale Dr, Omaha 68123 292-9770

Bob Fuchs, 1113 Dillon Dr, Omaha 68132 553-8242

Sharon Draper, 6220 Kansas Ave, Omaha 68104 572-4026

Clem Klaphake, 707 Garden Ave, Bellevue 68005 292-2276

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Conservation Ione Werthman, 11649 Burt St, #011, Omaha 68154 493-0373

Education Brian Jensen, 12430 Bel Drive, Omaha NE 68144 333-6375

Field Trip Clem Klaphake, 707 Garden Ave, Bellevue 68005 292-2276

Finance Nelli Falzgraf, 414 Ridgewood Dr, Bellevue 68005 292-9687

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**Membership Bechara Embaid, 3218 No. 120th Court Apt. 221, Omaha 68164
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Omaha Raptor Team Jenny Henricksen, 4845 So 167 Ave 68135 895-5487

Program Ed Higgins, 3717 No 93rd St, Omaha 68134 572-1957

Publication Laurine Blankenau, 3808 Grebe, Omaha 68112 451-3647

Publicity Kathy Schwery, 3616 So 96th St, Omaha 68124 397-7343

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Naturestudy Vacant

**Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs Kathleen Rose, 123 Bellevue Blvd So, Bellevue
68005 292- 8912**

Carol Rasmussen, 4503 So. 16th St, Omaha 68107 731-3939

Historian Kathleen Rose, 123 Bellevue Blvd So, Bellevue 68005 292-8912

**Audubon Nebr Director Don Helmuth, 5000 Central Park Dr, Suit 101 Lincoln
402 466-1220**

ASO State Board Rep. Mace Hack, 1735 So. 87th St, Omaha 68124 934-5040

**NAS Board Member Ione Werthman, 11640 Burt St, #011, Omaha 68154 493-
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