

The Meadowlark

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.

September-October, 2014
Volume 43, Issue 6



ASO is a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving eastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

Owls, Falcons and Hawks, Oh My!

Aerial predators of the day and night, known collectively as raptors, will be the presentation for the first ASO general meeting of the new season. The meeting time is 7 PM on September 11th. This is a program featuring live birds that you won't want to miss. Bring your camera.



Phil Swanson

Joining us will be a number of raptor species and the only human in the crew, Denise Lewis, Outreach Coordinator for Fontenelle Forest/Raptor Recovery. The raptors Denise

will be sharing with us are all birds that through illness, injury or human contact have been deemed unable to survive without human support and

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September Field Trip to Platte River State Park

Come join us for our first fall field trip of the season on Saturday September 13th. We will be meeting at 8:30 a.m. at the Stone Creek parking lot (turn left at the entrance and first right parking lot) in Platte River State Park (PRSP). Loren and Babs Padelford will be leading the group to identify anything that can fly – birds, butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, grasshoppers,

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**October Field Trip
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**Birding in Cuba
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BIRD SEED SALE October 18 & 19

It is not too soon to be thinking about your bird seed order for this fall. Our supplier, Des Moines Feed, gives us their estimated fall prices the last week of August and you will receive your order blank in mid September. Please consider ordering some Audubon Seed Products as the profits from this sale are used to fund many of our educational programs. If you have friends or neighbors who might be interested, call or Email Kathleen Crawford-Rose (292-8912 or katcr@cox.net) with their names and addresses.

We will also be asking members for help with the numerous tasks involved with this sale. On Sept. 9th we'll need volunteers to help with the mailing and on the delivery days we need volunteers for loading seed and paper work.

Please put these dates on your calendar and give Jerry Toll an Email geritol48@cox.net or phone call (402-453-9239) to let him know that you are available to assist with this major fund raiser.

Postings from the President: By Laurine Blankenau

Early September's trails can be quiet, breeding birds having left and few migrants making an appearance....a time to write about birds without listing ones I've found or hope to find on my hikes. For all of us, from novices to holders of enviable life lists, certain species strike a particularly deep response. An inexplicable but real fascination adheres to a species.

The reasons could be many. Striking associations, exquisite form, voice and plumage, or none of these. It could be a bird that seems to belong more closely than some with the world that lies beyond the human, past an invisible wall that separates us from them.

For me the Great-crested Flycatcher inhabits those regions – those other than mine. It appears when much-awaited spring starts to green up. Its grace of form, its voice, subtle marking and coloration make it special. It's a bird I hear more often than I see, and I never encounter it without awe for the wild nature so near and yet so different from mine.



Merlin

Phil Swanson

Another bird from the "other side" is the Merlin, a raptor I

don't often see and find difficult to identify. It has grace of form, powerful wingbeat and speed, and regrettably, it usually escapes from sight rapidly. It shares attributes of other raptors including remarkable engineering for dives and swift recovery from the dives. It shares its name with an ancient magician, an association that is accidental. But its appeal is one of power.

After Edgar Allan Poe, it's difficult to be indifferent to the raven. Maybe its reputation preceded Poe because of its intelligence, a liking for mischief, and a slightly sinister air. This leads me to mention the ravens' legendary home at the Tower of London. Here they are held in respect owing to a belief centuries old that if they were to leave, the Tower could crumble and the kingdom be in danger. Protection once allowed their numbers to increase until they became a problem, so now, I'm told, only six ravens are allowed to occupy the premises at any one time. But their coddling goes on. One bird has become so spoiled it sits on the gatekeeper's lap. I haven't researched the life span of ravens, but the Tower's birds probably live longer than those in the wild, where few are found sitting on someone's lap.

A bird whose appearance or voice never fails to call out a response from me is the cuckoo. I have heard Yellow-billed frequently this spring at Dodge Park and since then near my house (in Florence), much



Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Phil Swanson*

more often than in previous years. Because they are usually hidden in woods or on its edge, I find it special to see them. They possess a charm that goes beyond shape, sound, color or markings. I can attribute some of this feeling to our most treasured writer of the English language, who facetiously ascribed a foreboding meaning to the cuckoo's call.

Being secretive and uncommon, Black-billed Cuckoos elude me, however much I try to find them. In early summer I usually hear one somewhere in the shrubbery or trees just beyond my back yard, but never see it there and rarely hear it more than once or twice in the season. Nonetheless, it is an important part of the thrill of the warm months, an iconic wild creature whose voice fits its name so perfectly.

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Postings

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Subtle patterns of plumage, even that of many sparrows, pleases me nearly as much as a Scarlet Tanager's, plus I feel rewarded for identifying them because they challenge me. The Fox Sparrow, the Harris', Lincoln's, White-crowned, Swamp and Lark Sparrows are visual and aural delights.



Common Loon Phil Swanson

Why is a loon crazy? Some of you know the answer. Maybe it's the name's similarity to "lunacy," a word unrelated to the bird but attached to it. The loon, in fact, invokes anything but madness, calling up remote northern lakes and woods: primeval, longed-for nature we encounter too rarely. Its haunting, shivery call thrills a hearer. Its offbeat beauty – sleek head and neck and scaly patterned but graceful body – is suited to its ancient origin. Its evolutionary ascent ("descent" seems inappropriate here) from a purported (I don't disbelieve it) crawly ancestor is the process of evolution performing beautifully.

Each of my readers could come up with a list of birds or other wild creatures that have special meaning for them. These, simply, are some of mine.

October Field Trip

Plans have not been finalized for the October 25th field trip, so please check our web site and/or face book page by mid to late September for further information. As of now we will meet in the Pappio-Missouri River NRD headquarters building at 8901 S. 154th St., Omaha (northwest corner of Wehrspann Lake) at 8:00 a.m. Where we go will depend on what and where birds are being seen at that time. We will also be **mailing** a brief notice about the field trip plans and other information.

We hope you can join us for this trip.

Owls, Falcons and Hawks from page 1

have been trained to be educational birds that tolerate human presence.

Denise will talk about each bird's story, how they came to be with FFRR, their ecology and what FFRR is doing to protect, rehabilitate and educate about raptors. Raptor Recovery Nebraska has been doing this important work with raptors for close to 38 years. After having merged with Fontenelle Forest recently to form FFRR, The organization is poised to continue the work for generations to come.

So bring your cameras with you (including flash) and join us Thursday, September 11th, at 7 PM at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St, one block south of 45th and Center to see, photograph and hear live raptors up close.

The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and concludes with time to meet friends and make new ones. Treats will be served.

All are welcome.

September Field Trip from page 1

bees, and any other insects. This should be a great trip with birds migrating and insects peaking in numbers before the colder fall weather sets in. Anyone and everyone is welcome to join us. For those who want to bring a lunch for after the morning walk, there are picnic tables for our use. For those interested in exploring more in the area in the afternoon, some of us may be stopping at Schramm SRA across the river from the park.

A Nebraska Game and Parks sticker is required on your vehicle for entry into the park. Depending on where you live, the most direct route to PRSP from the metro area is to take highway 50 to 1 mile south of Louisville and turn right onto highway 66 and follow it to the PRSP sign.

Hope to see you on the 13th. For questions call Clem Klaphake, 402-292-2276.



ASO, Other Nebraska Birders Win National Championship Again

A team called the Flatwater Seekers comprising six Nebraskans again won first place in an annual contest of birding skills. The team competed in the Great American Arctic Birding Challenge that pitted them against birders of all of the lower 48 states.

The procedure is to count all of the birds that breed in Alaska and that cross Nebraska during their spring migration between March 1st and June 1st, the duration of the count period. Possible total count is 214 species: the team identified 122 species of the migrants.

Omaha team members were Clem Klaphake (compiler) and Justin Rink. Other members were Mark Brogie of Creighton, NE, TJ Walker of North Platte, Kathy DeLara of Mitchell, NE, and Michael Willison of Lincoln.

This was the third year for Clem and Justin. Congratulations to all six members of the team.



Birding in Cuba

by Clem Klaphake

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to go birding in Cuba? There is that big Caribbean island so close to Florida, yet so difficult to get there for the past 55 years.

On Thursday, October 9th, our speaker will be Dennis Thompson of Des Moines, Iowa, who will be sharing his birding experience (along with many photos) in Cuba in 2013. Denny and Cecille, his wife, joined 11 other birders, two guides and one liaison to bird primarily in the western part of Cuba for 11 days.

There are 28 endemic bird species in Cuba, and this birding group was able to see 26 of them (including the world's smallest bird, the Bee Hummingbird). In addition to the birding, they were able to visit two UNESCO World Heritage sites – Camaguey and Old Havana.

Denny has been birding for well over 30 years and been active in a number of birding organizations. He currently is the vice-president of the Iowa Ornithologist's Union (IOU), has been a past president of IOU and has served in several roles with Des Moines Audubon. He has led field trips for over 25 years and has been the Audubon Christmas Bird Count compiler for Des Moines for over 20 years.

Denny has birded throughout the U.S., but has focused primarily on the Neotropic species the last fifteen years. He also has visited seven other countries on birding trips.

So if you want to learn more about the birds of Cuba, how to get permission to visit Cuba, and what the culture is like today, come to our meeting on October 9th. Denny will share his experiences with us and let us decide for ourselves as to what is 'good', 'bad' or benign.

Experience birding in Cuba at the Audubon Society of Omaha general meeting Thursday, October 9th, at 7:00 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (one block south of 45th and Center).

The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour with cookies. Everyone is most welcome and there is no cost.

If You Find a Banded Bird

Millions of birds are wearing leg bands that carry data. If you find a banded bird, contact the National Biological Service, Bird Banding Laboratory, at 1 800 327 2263 or reportband.gov. You will be asked how you obtained the band (found the bird dead, etc.) where you found it, and more. This is important information for tracking bird populations.

Addresses to Remember

President Barack Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20500-0001, Comments: 202-456-1111

Senator Deb Fischer, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-6551; Fax: 202-228-1325; Lincoln Phone: 402-441-4600; Omaha Phone: 402-391-3411; Omaha Address: 11819 Miracle Drive 68154

Senator Michael Johanns, U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-4224, Lincoln Phone: 402-476-1400, Lincoln Address: 100 Centennial Mall N. Rm. 294, Lincoln NE 68508-3803

Representative Lee Terry, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515, Phone: 202-225-4155; Fax: 202-226-5452, Omaha Phone: 402-397-9944, Omaha Address: 11717 Burt St., Omaha 68154

Representative Jeff Fortenberry, House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515, Phone: 202-225-4806; Lincoln Phone: 402-438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman, Capitol Bldg., Box 94848 Lincoln, NE 68509, Phone: 402-471-2244; Fax: 402-471-6031

Mayor Jean Stothert, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center 1819 Farnam St., Omaha NE 68183, Phone: 402-444-5000 Hot Line: 402-444-5555

Lincoln Capitol Switchboard: 402-471-2311

Washington Capitol Switchboard

Senate: 202-224-3121; **House:** 202-225-3121

Bequests

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

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives. When sending a gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize, and the name and address of the person to be notified. Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha, P.O. Box 3542, Omaha NE

Memberships

We offer two choices of membership:

1. Includes membership in National Audubon as well as in our local chapter. It includes receiving the *Audubon Magazine* and our newsletter, *The Meadowlark*. A portion of your dues is returned to our local chapter.
2. Is a local membership that includes receiving *The Meadowlark* and participation in all of our local activities. All dues go to our chapter.

Membership in the National Audubon Society and in the Audubon Society of Omaha

Name _____
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Introductory Membership (1st & 2 year) \$20 Make check payable to: National Audubon Society. Mail to: Audubon Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 422248, Palm Coast, FL 32142-6718

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Zip _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____

Make check for \$20 payable to: Audubon Society of Omaha. Mail to: Audubon Society of Omaha, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth, NE 68048



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

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Elected Officers:

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Field Trip Clem Klaphake – 292-2276
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Other Activities:

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Carol Rasmussen – 731-3939

Speakers Bureau – Eunice Levisay – 393-0545

Historian -- Eric Scholar – 551-5045

NAS Board Member – Michele Crist – 208-863-1918

Pan-Flyway Director – Karim al-Khafaji

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August, September - October, November - December.

The newsletter may be accessed on our website,
<http://audubon-omaha.org>

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