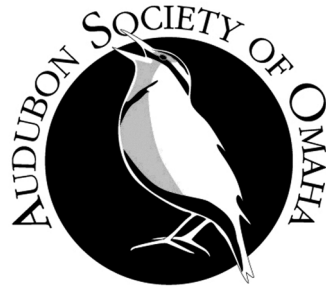


# The Meadowlark

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.

March-April, 2015  
Volume 44, Issue 2



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

## **Ecuador – Sky Island of Life March 12 meeting topic with Clem Klaphake presenting**

Ecuador straddles the backbone of South America. From the coastal mountains, through the High Andes to the headwaters of Amazonia it is as rich in species diversity as its neighbor to the north, Columbia, with whom this small country shares the claim of highest avian diversity in the world.

Our presenter, Clem Klaphake, will be discussing the birdlife, flora, fauna, architecture, culture and people he encountered while traveling in the country. The natural world will be the focus of his talk but the region has a rich and varied cultural history as well. This is the land of the Incas whose influence underlies the Spanish urban culture. Two-thirds of the human population lives in two of the largest cities, leaving the remainder of the country largely underdeveloped and populated primarily by indigenous peoples. Agriculture remains largely subsistent and traditional.

Clem Klaphake is a retired educator. Since retirement, he has devoted more time to birding,

birding trips and volunteering with Fontenelle Forest and conservation groups. He is a past president of Audubon Society of Omaha and currently sits on three committees of ASO's Board of Directors and chairs the Field Trip Committee.

In January we heard from Mace Hack about his journey to the Cauca Valley in Ecuador's neighbor to the north, Columbia. How fortunate we are to have world travelers

## **Get Wowed by Wood Warblers with Ty Smedes April 9**

*By Jerry Toll*

As I begin to write this article, it is a dreary February day. Images of spring in the woods come to mind filled with thoughts of the sounds and warmth and sights that begin in April as I contemplate the subject. I hear the downslurred whistle followed by a rising note of the first yellow-throated warbler of spring and see in my mind's eye the barely visible movement of it in the top of a sycamore tree. As the buds open and leaves emerge, northern parula's rising buzzy trill comes to mind. By May, the woods are awash in sound of warblers and other

**continued on page 3**

such as Clem and Mace within our midst whose knowledge and curiosity of the world is so ably expressed. Please come and experience vicariously with Clem through photos and stories his visit to Ecuador at the March 12th meeting at 7 pm at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church. The meeting place is located at 4444 Frances St., one block south of 45th and Center St. The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and concludes with a social hour and cookies. All are welcome!!

## **March Field Trip to Branched Oak Lake**

*by Clem Klaphake*

On Saturday March 28th the Audubon Society of Omaha will be going on a field trip to Branched Oak Lake (BOL) near Lincoln in Lancaster County. We hope to see a variety of water dependent bird species such as ducks, geese, possible Common Loons, grebes, coots, pelicans, and gulls. There also are likely to be some early passerine migrants such as Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Kinglets. Raptors are also likely to be on the move by that date. Larry Einemann of Lincoln will

**continued on page 4**

### NEW LOCATION FOR APRIL 9 GENERAL MEETING

If your car is like mine, it knows the way and will try to follow a familiar path to the Church at 4444 Frances on general meeting night. But unless you are careful to be in charge, your car could lead you to the wrong location to our April general meeting site. On Thursday, April 9, we will meet at the Field Club of Omaha, 3615 Woolworth Avenue, a short hop from our usual beat. From Center Street, go north 4 blocks to Woolworth; turn left to Field Club. Someone will be posted at the church for those who need to be rerouted. The March general meeting will be held at the Church, our usual site. We think you'll appreciate the Field Club and its amenities. Lots of parking, beautiful surroundings, familiar faces of friends. Same time: 7:00 p.m. Light hors d'oeuvres are included.

### Saving the Bees

Not long ago we were asking, "Why the bee die-offs?" A number of answers were given: Varroa mites, pathogens, and habitat degradation. All valid; but now research has revealed details about a scourge to pollinators to which we may be unwitting parties.

The culprit is identified as a product in insecticides used in our food production, in products on the shelves of countless stores around the country, and in flowering plants that are treated with the substance, including "bee-friendly" plants

that attract bees but also impair and kill them and other pollinators.

The science conducted has found neonicotinoid (neonic, for your convenience) insecticides in plants sold at major retail stores. So in addition to the previously proven pollinator killers, neonic pesticides are widely used in pretreatments on crops including corn (nearly all of it) soy, wheat and canola seeds. The substance is taken up into the roots and throughout the plants, with its presence in pollen and nectar doing the most harm.

Bees die from direct ingestion of neonics but are also affected by lower levels. These levels cause the bees to become disoriented, unable to forage adequately, and suffer damage to their immune systems. Here's the sad truth: gardeners who plant bee-friendly flowers are often unwittingly poisoning the pollinators they hope to assist because the plants have been treated with neonics.

It is easy to check the label on pesticides for neonics when you shop, avoid buying them, read the label on products already in your home and take them to Under the Sink if they contain neonics. It is more difficult to determine which plants have been sprayed with neonics. Plants in a study that failed the neonics test have been traced to large garden centers throughout the nation including Lowe's, Walmart and Home Depot. Concerning those plants already in your yard, it hasn't been determined if the sprays wear off eventually or if they last.

Some welcome news is that starting this year, Home Depot, the largest retail seller of potted plants, is labeling which plants have been sprayed with neonics (one estimate is about 50% of those they sell). I have no information on Lowe's, Walmart, or the many small greenhouses and garden centers, but I hope to share that later with you.

The solution is a law in our state prohibiting the use of neonics. Some states have banned them: California, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Alaska and Vermont have beeprotective legislation. For us, notifying the sellers of the problem where it exists may be our only option at this time.

Check the insecticides in your possession and be a conscientious shopper of flowering plants this spring and next fall. Further, you can join Friends of the Earth U.S. Bee Action campaign ([www.BeeAction.org](http://www.BeeAction.org)) and sign a petition to garden retailers requesting them to stop selling nionic-treated plants and products containing neonics. Go to the above web site for the means to act in favor of bees as well as for gardening advice that favors bee survival. When shopping, if the offending products are on the shelves, ask that the manager be informed that you will not buy them.

### ASO Board of Directors News

In February a donation was made to the Nebraska Land Trust, which helps farmers and ranchers preserve their lands from development, in perpetuity. A focus of the Trust's work at the present is the Wildcat Hills and Pine Ridge areas of the state.

**Wowed by Warblers**  
*from page 1*

migrating passerines. I focus on my preoccupation with any spring birdsong that has the "ZZZZ" sound.

We are fortunate to have Des Moines-based nature photographer, Ty Smedes, join us again this April, just in time for our spring migration; he will bring his images front and center. He has spent countless hours in blinds and traveling to warbler migration traps for such as High Island in Texas to capture some of the finest images out there of these elusive woodland jewels. His presentation will include images of 35 species of eastern warblers, catching them in their daily lives singing, foraging for insects, bathing, and building nests. Migration dates and preferred migration habitat will be discussed along with some of his experiences in the Midwest and the rest of the country in a quest to photograph these glorious sprites during their spring migration.

His photos and articles have been published in major mag-

azines and books. He has published two books, "Capturing Iowa's Seasons" and "The Return of Iowa's Bald Eagles" which he will bring with him to the meeting along with matted prints of his photographic work. He is currently working on a third book. He has taught photography and has led nature photography tours to Yellowstone, Brazil and Africa. He returned in January from a month spent in the southern hemisphere exploring and capturing the imagery of Antarctica, The Falklands and South Georgia Islands.

Please plan on enjoying Ty's wonderful photos and experiences at our general meeting Thursday April 9th at 7 pm at the **Field Club clubhouse, located at 3615 Woolworth Ave. This is a different location from our usual meeting place.** Directions. Go to 36th and Center St and turn north for four blocks to Woolworth Avenue. Turn left into the Country Club. The program will be followed by a brief business meeting and social hour. Light hors d'oeuvres will be served. Everyone is most welcome and there is no cost.

**April Field Trip to Columbus, Nebraska**

*By Clem Klaphake*

On Saturday April 25th the Audubon Society of Omaha will be going on a field trip to the Lake North and Babcock Lake area near Columbus. The time and meeting place will be posted in the brief version (postcard) of the April Meadowlark. Early neo-tropical migrants should be starting to show up by that date. Stay tuned for more specific information.

**The Annual Sarpy County Spring Bird Count**

The Annual Sarpy County Spring Bird Count will be held on Saturday May 9th. The county is divided into four sections from Fontenelle Forest on the Missouri River in the east to the Platte River in the west in the Linoma Beach area. In between are two sections including Schramm Park SRA, Swanson Park, and Walnut Creek Lake Recreation Area. Counters will be needed and any help is appreciated. If you are interested in helping out all day or part of the day contact Clem Klaphake at 402-292-2276 or ckavian@cox.net

**BIRD IDENTIFICATION CLASS 2015**

*8:00a.m. – 12:00p.m.*

*\$25.00 for all 3 classes must be paid before the start of the first class*

**Part 1**

MARCH 7th. . . . . Wetland Learning Center

**Part 2**

APRIL 11th. . . . . Wetland Learning Center

**Part 3**

MAY 2nd. . . . . Fontenelle Forest Nature Center

With over 50 million 'birders' in the U.S., bird watching is the fastest growing outdoor activity today. Led by Clem Klaphake and Justin Rink, past presidents of the Audubon Society of Omaha, this class includes local field trips/walks designed to teach you how to identify the birds in your backyard or any other location you might encounter them, use of field guides and use of binoculars. No prior knowledge of bird identification is needed. If you are interested contact Clem Klaphake at 402-292-2276 or ckavian@cox.net to register. For ages 12 and up. The class is limited to 15 people.

**WE WILL BE A SPONSOR OF EARTH DAY THIS YEAR AND HAVE A BOOTH AT ELMWOOD PARK ON SATURDAY, APRIL 18. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO GREET THE PUBLIC AND ANSWER QUESTIONS RELATIVE TO CONSERVATION AND BIRDS, ETC. THE TIMES HAVE NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED YET, BUT WE WILL GET BACK TO YOU BEFORE APRIL.**

## March Field Trip

*from page 1*

be meeting us in the morning and guide us to where the best birding areas might be at that time of March. We will meet on the south end of the dam at BOL at 8:00 a.m.

It is about a 1 hour drive from the Omaha area to the BOL dam. There are several routes you can take to get there. This probably is the most direct: take I-80 to exit 401 - which is right on the north side of Lincoln - go north at the exit onto Hwy 34 for about 4 miles, then turn right onto Hwy 79 to W. Raymond Road where you turn left. Then drive 3 miles to where the road splits - take the right road which goes over the dam (these are all blacktop roads). Before you go over the dam turn left into the parking lot and then down to the dam. Rather than have all of us meet somewhere and caravan on the interstate, I'm leaving it up to individuals to find or form a carpool. Some of you may want to just bird for a half day and others all day. We will be on our own for lunch. The last couple of years we have stopped at a small café in Raymond for lunch.



*Phil Swanson*

## Election of ASO Board Members for 2015-2016

The annual election of ASO Board officers and directors will be held at the April general membership meeting. The ASO Nominating Committee and Board of Directors recommend the following slate of Board candidates to begin their terms on July 1, 2015:

*President*

**Tad Leeper**

*1st Vice President*

**Eric Scholar**

*2nd Vice President*

**Tisha Johnson**

*Treasurer*

**Betty Fullerton**

*Recording Secretary*

**Linda Dennis**

*Corresponding Secretary*

**Kathleen Crawford-Rose**

*Director*

**Bob Wells**

ASO members may contact any Board member with questions about the slate of candidates. Note: Nominations of board candidates may also be presented at the meeting, provided permission has been obtained from the nominee(s) ahead of time.

## DeSoto NWR Christmas Bird Count Held January 3

*by Jerry Toll*

Mild January weather conditions prevailed for the 18th DeSoto Christmas Bird Count, contributing to its success. Excellent coverage of the circle by the 23 participants involved, though, was the primary reason that 70 species and 33, 637 individual birds were counted on that day.

Very few species were missed that usually appear on the count. Ten species of waterfowl were seen; most notable were 41 trumpeter swans, almost triple the previous record count from last year. Bald eagles continued to recover and become more common during the count, setting a new record high of 81 with about 1/4 of those being sub-adults. Hairy woodpeckers recorded the second highest count. Ten species of sparrows were seen including fox, Lincoln, swamp, and record high counts of tree sparrows. Northern cardinal tied the existing record and meadowlarks set a new record by nearly 100 over the previous one. The flood of 2011 in the Missouri River bottoms continues to keep the ring-necked pheasant population very low. Nine northern bobwhite made an appearance after an eight-year hiatus. Missed was sharp-shinned hawk for the first time in 16 years. Flickers were a record low: 13. A lone common redpoll was seen.

**DESOTO SPRING  
COUNT DATE:  
SATURDAY, MAY 2.  
MORE INFORMATION  
WILL BE GIVEN IN  
THE APRIL ISSUE.**

## Announcing: Birdathon 2015

On Saturday, May 9, birders and non-birders alike can join Audubon in counting species. The date is perfect, at or near the height of migration of birds returning from the south to nest or to cross Nebraska to northern nesting grounds. Warblers, flycatchers, shorebirds, tanagers, orioles, cuckoos, sparrows (other than "house"), gnatcatchers, gulls and others will be spotted by those out on the trails for the Sarpy County Count. The Count is an annual event conducted across the country to track the population of our birds.

The Birdathon 2015 will also be a method of gaining funding we, as a non-profit organization, must earn. It is good enjoyment for the trackers out in the field, who would be there anyway, birdathon or not. For others, it is a means of supporting and enjoying the expertise and labors of the trackers.

Here's how it works: you decide on the amount per bird you wish to pledge: \$.10, \$.20, \$.50 or more, times the number of birds seen or heard on the count day. Or simply decide on a sum to donate and remit the total amount to ASO.

You will find a convenient Birdathon donation form in the April Meadowlark, at our April general meeting, or on our web site, [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org). For answers to questions, call 402-451-3647.

***We greatly appreciate any donation  
you choose to make.  
Your contribution is tax deductible.***

## 2015 Audubon Student Art Contest and Show- April 11

The Audubon Society of Omaha Student Art Show - 2015 will take place on Saturday, April 11 at the Bellevue University Gordon Lozier Center, 1000 Galvin Rd. South, Bellevue, NE. The artwork of all students entering the contest (grades K through 12) will be on display from 12:00 noon until 3:30 pm that day. An awards ceremony will occur at 2:00 pm. A live raptor will be present between 1:00 and 1:45 for viewing.

The artwork features student drawings of birds found in the Midwest or of endangered birds throughout the world. The artwork is judged for Excellence or Merit in 3 categories: Realistic, Graphic design, or Cartooning.

This event draws a large number of entries and needs volunteers to help with the collection, judging, and hanging of entries, as well as help with greeting students and their families and friends on the day of the show. If you are free and would like to help it would be greatly appreciated.

### Collection of Artwork in the ASO office

Friday, Feb. 27  
4:00 – 6:00 pm

Saturday, Feb. 28  
10:00 – 3:00

### Hanging of artwork at Bellevue University

Friday, April 10  
9:30 am till noon

### Help with hosting the show

Saturday, April 11  
12:30 pm- 2:00

Please contact Jackie Scholar at [jbscholar@cox.net](mailto:jbscholar@cox.net) or 402-551-5045 or Laurine Blankenau at 402 451-3647 if you can help.

**ASO member Clem Klaphake, volunteer Teacher Naturalist at Fontenelle Forest, holds Aero the Peregrine Falcon. Aero is a resident non-releasable raptor used for education at the Forest.**



Photo by Jim Vavak

## Hummingbirds at Home: Audubon's Newest Citizen Science Program

Watching hummingbirds is a favorite pastime for many birders and gardeners alike. These aerial wonders are fascinating and endearing as they flit about and feed on flowers and at feeders, visiting our yards and parks on their migration journeys during the spring.

Their small size belies their toughness – many hummingbirds migrate long distances and must eat several times their weight in nectar daily to stay alive. Their accelerated metabolism may keep hummingbirds moving at impressive speeds, but also means they live on the edge, consistently within hours of starving to death if they don't find food.

To live such high-energy lifestyles hummingbirds must sync their migration and nesting times with the flowering of nectar-bearing plants. Climate change threatens to throw off this delicate balance, with unknown repercussions for hummingbirds. We know that scientific research will be essential for helping us understand how climate change is affecting hummingbirds and for learning what we can do about it. But it's not that simple. Collecting the necessary scientific data across large areas is difficult and costly.

Since the spring of 2013, over 9,200 volunteers have shared over 26,000 observations of feeding hummingbirds with Audubon through our newest citizen science program, Hummingbirds at Home. The purpose of this innovative program is to gather data that will help us better understand how changing flowering patterns and supple-

mental feeding by people relate to the timing of hummingbird migration and breeding success, and how hummingbirds are impacted by feeders, non-native nectar sources in gardens, shifting flowering times, and climate change.

Since nectar is a critical resource for hummingbirds, fueling their ability to breed after migration, Audubon's Hummingbirds at Home program asks people to document what flowering plants the hummingbirds are feeding on in their backyards as well as whether hummingbird feeders are supplied and used. The ultimate goal of Hummingbirds at Home will be to develop a series of region-specific recommendations to help humming-

bird lovers make their gardens and "patches" better stocked with nutrient-rich nectar sources, especially during the critical post-migration and breeding seasons.

In this family-friendly program, participants log hummingbird sightings and the flowering plants or feeders they visit online and with free mobile technology or via desktop computers. Participants can record surveys of their yards, as well as logging how often hummingbirds visit their nectar foods. As sightings are reported, participants can also view hummingbird sightings on the website in near real time!

To learn more about this exciting citizen science project, go to [www.hummingbirdsathome.org](http://www.hummingbirdsathome.org).

### BIRD SEED SALE VOLUNTEERS—THANKS!!



Thanks go out to all the volunteers and customers who made our fifth winter bird seed sale a success. We increased the pounds of seed sold slightly over last year and had a wonderful sunny day to visit with all our birding friends. We apologize if we miss anyone but we would really like to recognize our great volunteer staff.

**Neal Ratzlaff:** Garage master and chief consultant.

**Jer Toll:** Delivery and distribution, volunteer coordinator.

**Carole and Dick Rasmussen, Kathleen Crawford-Rose:** Chief paper pushers.

**Jim McLochlin:** Web Master

**Jonas Grundman:** Facebook

Distribution crew: **Elliott Bedows, Betty and John Fullerton, Neal Ratzlaff, Larry Sekyra and Jer Toll.**

## 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 Ben Sasse**, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510; Phone: 202-224-4224; Lincoln Phone: 402-476-1400

**Representative Brad Ashford**, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515; Phone: 202-225-4155

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

**Governor Pete Ricketts**, Capitol Bldg, Lincoln, NE 68509; Phone: 402-471-2244

**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.

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**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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### Membership in Audubon Society of Omaha only

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
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

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

Audubon Society of Omaha  
P.O. Box 3542  
Omaha NE 68103-0542

Non-Profit Organization  
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Phone: 451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>  
Office: 1941 S. 42nd St., Omaha NE 68105

**Elected Officers:**

President Laurine Blankenau – 451-3647  
1st Vice President Dennis Kingery – 556-9082  
2nd Vice President Tad Leeper – 670-5919  
Past President Justin Rink – 904-415-3282  
Treasurer Betty Fullerton – 493-4362  
Recording Sec’y Nelli Falzgraf – 292-9687  
Corres. Sec’y Linda Dennis – 733-6548

Elected Directors:

Eric Scholar – 551-5045  
Jonas Grundman – 216-5413  
Elliott Bedows – 292-5017  
Bob Fuchs – 553-8242  
Helen Bartee – 657-3845  
Gary Peterson – 553-3597

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

Conservation Bob Fuchs – 553-8242  
Education Clem Klaphake – 292-2276  
Field Trip Clem Klaphake – 292-2276  
Finance Nelli Falzgraf – 292-9687  
Membership Kathy Schwery – 296-4788

Program Jerry Toll – 453-9239

Natural Areas Mgt Eric Scholar – 551-5045

Publication Gary Peterson – 553-3597

Publicity Jackie Scholar – 551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Chairs

Kathleen Rose – 292-8912

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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January - February, March - April, May - June, July -  
August, September - October, November - December.

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

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Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048, or  
email: [djschw@windstream.net](mailto:djschw@windstream.net).