

A Bird's Eye View

Audubon Society of Omaha
A Chapter of National Audubon Society



Volume 29, No. 9 November 2000

Nebraska's Dynamic Landscape:

A Photographic Study
By Clem Klaphake

At the November 9 general meeting, Jim Stubbendieck will discuss the ever-changing landscape in Nebraska. He selected 60-to-130-year-old photographs of our state's landscape, then traveled to rephotograph the same sites. During his talk, he will point out the changes; some dramatic and discuss the causes of these changes.

Jim's talk will concentrate on the state's rural areas. Photographs depict sites throughout the state, with more in northern and western Nebraska.

Looking at old photos of the Sand Hills and contrasting them to retakes of the same sites today truly shows a different landscape. Even Chimney Rock looks very different today when contrasted with photos from 1898.

In an article by David Ochsner titled "Frozen Images of a Fluid Landscape," Stubbendieck is quoted as saying, "In early accounts of the Sand Hills, there were so many descriptions about vast stretches of sand; a homesteader near Bassett said he could walk on bare sand all the way to town without stepping on a single blade of grass."

Jim said, "The most notable thing I learned from gathering the photos is that they debunk the myth that Nebraska has fewer trees and the land has been overgrazed." Only two photos show a loss of trees, both from forest

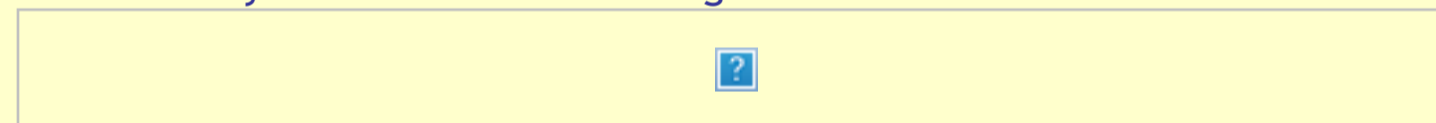
fires; all other photos depict larger and thicker stands of trees today.

Since 1997 Jim has been Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies at UNL. He is Professor of Rangeland Ecology in the School of Natural Resource Sciences at UNL and a Research Associate in the Division of Botany at the State Museum. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from the UNL and his PH.D. from Texas A & M University.

Jim is the author or co-author of nine books, including *North American Range Plants* and *Weeds of Nebraska and the Great Plains*, 107 journal articles, 7 chapters of books and 164 abstracts.

Join us at 7:30 p.m. in the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances Street, to hear Jim talk about fleeting images of the past and of places lost.

A short business meeting will follow the program, concluding with coffee, cookies and conversation. Field guides for many nature-related topics, T-shirts and other items will be for sale before and after the program. It is not too early to consider Christmas gifts!



Waterfowl at DeSoto NWR; November 18 Field Trip

Frost in the air, a certain feeling in the blood; that's fall. And for our birders, that means ducks and of course Snow Geese.

To aid you in waterfowl viewing, Jerry Toll will lead a field trip to DeSoto NWR on Saturday, November 18. We are to meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Visitor Center.

The wind could be brisk, the air could be frigid, so dress warm. Also, bring something hot to drink. Field guides and a scope, if you have one, along

November Events

1 (Wed) Board Meeting

6 (Mon) Conserv/Legisl Meeting

9 (Thur) General Meeting

with binoculars, are advised. Bring a friendly 1/2 participants are not limited to members. We hope to see you there.

15 (Wed) Naturestudy

18 (Sat) Field Trip

Christmas Bird Counts:

Omaha Area - December 16

DeSoto - December 17



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Scholarly Notes

by Eric Scholar



Al Gore on the Environment

Last month presented the environmental views of George W. Bush. This month will give those of Vice-President Al Gore. Much of this material was excerpted from the candidate's web page and from a recent article that appeared in the *Audubon* magazine.

Finally, he mentions his work to preserve some of our natural treasures by fighting for full funding of the Lands Legacy Initiative by protecting some of America's environmental treasures, including the Florida Everglades and Arctic NWR. He maintains that as Vice President, he has worked to protect America's rivers and forests as well as forests and biodiversity around the world through various initiatives.

Gore wants to expand wilderness areas and national monument designations in sensitive federal areas now underprotected. He supports the current moratorium on road building in 43 million acres of our national forests and wants to expand the proposal to ban new timber sales in the original areas as well as Alaska's Tongass.

As president, Gore claims he will seek to strengthen and fight attempts to weaken the Clean Water Act. He will increase funding for clean water programs, tighten standards, and ensure a more comprehensive watershed approach to improve water quality.

His Record As

Vice President

His Plans if Elected

Gore claims several accomplishments in the environmental field, most of them as part of the Clinton administration but also some while he was a senator.

According to Gore, during his vice presidency he

As to his future agenda, Gore plans to address several issues if elected. On the general topic of curtailing global warming and ensuring clean air, he supports ratification of the Kyoto protocol, which he helped negotiate. He supports the Energy Security and

He will continue to fight for increased funding for incentives for farmers who voluntarily adopt comprehensive plans to curb erosion and protect water supplies from pesticide and nutrient runoff. Gore plans to expand

helped strengthen Environmental Trust
clean fund.
protections, in
1997 approving this new \$150 billion
new clean air fund will help create a
standards for so cleaner environment by
and smog; these providing tax breaks
more stringent and other financial
standards could incentives for clean
prevent many and reliable sources of
premature deaths electricity and long-
a year and term greenhouse gas
improve the lives emissions.
of millions of
Americans who He continues to fight
suffer from for strong
respiratory environmental
illnesses. standards to reduce
soot and smog levels,
which were challenged
by other industry and are
now before the
Clinton's Supreme Court. He is
administration, an advocate of
worked to clean protection of the ozone
auto emissions layer through
promoting new continuing the
standards for phaseout and transition
passenger cars, away from ozone-
SUV's and light-depleting chemicals.
duty trucks. He
also states that Vice President Gore is a
they worked with strong advocate of
auto makers to preserving our public
develop fuel lands and national
efficient vehicles treasures.
and supported tax For this purpose he
credits for energy proposes building on a
efficiency. strong record of

Gore maintains preservation of open
that he helped spaces and protection
lead the for natural treasures.
administration's He supports full
safe drinking funding for our national
water initiatives, parks and plans to stop
strengthen the commercial
safe drinking exploitation of
water act, and environmentally
address global sensitive land.
warming and
international
challenges. While
a senator, he was
an original
cosponsor of the
Water Quality Act
of 1987.

The Vice President
takes credit for
contributing to
toxic waste clean-

up.



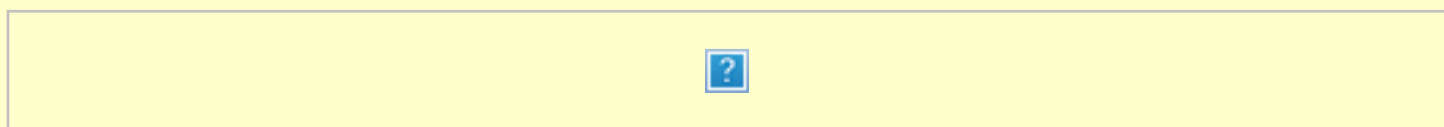
the Conservation
Reserve Program that
establishes protective
buffer strips along
waterways and to assist
farmers with
conservation and
environmental efforts.

Gore wants to expand
the moratorium on oil
and gas drilling off the
coasts of Florida and
California and make
sure no new drilling
takes place in these
sensitive areas. As
president, he will
uphold the moratorium
on new offshore leasing
through 2012 and
continue the ban on
new leasing in existing
national marine
sanctuaries.

Al Gore will continue to
advocate reforms of
the World Trade
Organization and new
measures to protect
the global
environment. He
believes trade
negotiations should
include both labor and
environmental
components in any
trade agreements.

Finally, he believes we
must carefully weigh
the risks and benefits
of genetically modified
organisms, particularly
with respect to food
safety and potential
environmental impacts.

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Waterfowl to be Timely Topic at Naturestudy November 15

By Nelli Falzgraf

Big, boldly-colored and beautiful. Compared with tiny passerines constantly flitting among trees, ducks and geese may just be right for laid-back birders, as well as others.

As winter descends, the northern breeding grounds Anatidae migrate to watersheds still free of ice and stocked with plants, insects, mollusks, and fish. Many aquatic birds along the central flyway stop to feed and rest at local lakes.

On Wednesday, Nov. 15, 7:00 p.m. at the Rookery, Heron Haven, Jerry Toll will help us identify waterfowl and discuss the DeSoto Snow Goose count. Please join us and bring slides or information, if you wish. The meeting is open to the public. For questions, call Jerry at 453-9239.

We will not meet in December. In anticipation of spring, we'll sneak a peek at wildflowers in January.



DeSoto Goose Count

The annual goose count will be held on Wednesdays at DeSoto Refuge when the geese have congregated in sufficient numbers. That could be in early or late November.

If you want to help, call Jerry Toll (453-9239) or Mindy Sheets at the Refuge (642-4121, Ext 5405), to find out if we are counting during a particular week.



Scholarly Notes, Continued from page 2

For additional information on the Vice President's position, please see his web page, www.algore.com. I hope these excerpts have provided an accurate picture of the

The Omaha Raptor Team

A Committee of ASO



By Alison O'Connor

The Omaha Raptor Team is especially excited tentioned people, she about our November general meeting for two became habituated to reasons, the first being a female American Kestrel humans. Our male and the second a male American Kestrel. We will kestrel, who came introduce them and show the beautiful dimorphic from Iowa and just difference in this species.

Our female kestrel, shown here with Linda with Jenny Henricksen. Dennis, came from Salt Lake City and has been A first-year bird, he with us for a year. "Kidnapped" (in her view) by was probably blown well-in from his nest site, damaging his wing.

Watch the midday news on Channel 7, November 8, for a preview introduction to our little falcons. They look forward to meeting you in person Thursday, November 9.

By Jim McLochlin

ASO now has a strong web presence on the Internet, containing the latest Newsletter, Bird Calendars from previous issues, and more. Present on the Internet for three or more years, it now takes on an easier to remember and find URL (address) at "<http://audubon-omaha.org>". Just enter everything between the quotes in your web browser.

In the future, look for the web site to be much more, perhaps including

environmental positions of the two presidential candidates, allowing you to make an informed and intelligent choice in the election.

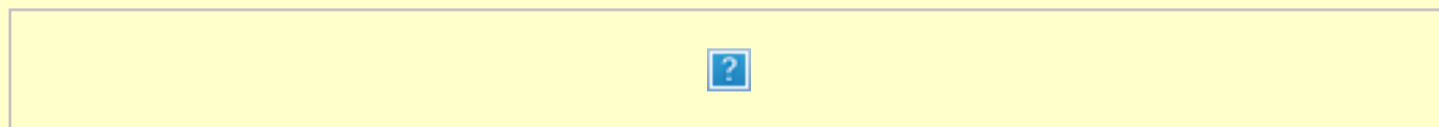
ordering of bird seed during our sale, past newsletters, information from the Omaha Raptor Team, and other items the ASO board deems appropriate.

The goal is to attract younger, more computer-oriented persons to join ASO so we can continue to grow and help conserve nature.

We welcome suggestions for improving our content and efficiency. Contact me at 933-0648 or by email at bluebirdbox@cox.net.



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Environmental/ Legislative Action By Ione Werthman



Local Vs.

Corporate Control?

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., in town

this month for a lecture at the Holiday Inn, stressed the point that the economy and environment are not at odds. "Good environmental policy is the same as good economic policy." Countries such as Russia, Turkey and Thailand, that have not invested in their environment, have become economic disasters.

And, he went on to say, "While many argue that environmental regulation should be a matter of 'local' control, it's not going to work out that way. The real outcome will be corporate control."

Local Control?

the world's population elevator operators in Iowa, where 40% of the shortages. I agree with StarLink was grown, Carmen Revenga of the World Resources Institute who says these findings are bad news for the environment and economy.

Local Control?

How do local controllers convince citizens to curb smog to meet the Clean Air standards? In an Oct. 25 *World-Herald* article, a citizen from Houston, Texas, said he would pack a sidearm if local officials try to ban before-noon use of gasoline-powered yard equipment in his suburb.

The offending proposition grew out of a federal mandate that requires the City of Houston to meet clean air standards by 2007. It's ironic that many in the city blame the Clinton-Gore

other corn may have been cross-pollinated from nearby fields of StarLink seed.

For the record: A recent news report of a large Scandinavian study again indicates many cancers are caused not by genes but by environmental factors; 1/2 our food, water and air and their contaminants.

Corporate Control

Recent headlines: '#2 and #3 oil companies in America'; 'Chevron/Texaco Create New Oil Giant'; 'Deal to buy IBP {the world's largest meatpacker} Reached' - a deal in which they

No local control came forth to stop the Sand Livestock and Enterprise Partners in Columbus, Nebraska. The company, with no permit from the Corps of Engineers, dug clay from a wetland to line their hog confinement lagoon, backfilling the wetland with fill material. EPA officials and the Clean Water Act were needed to restore the wetland.

administration of will share ownership blackmailing state with Archer Daniels officials into the smog-Midland Co.; `ConAgra, reduction plan. In the Second Largest reality, it was the 1990 Retail Food Supplier in Clean Air Act, signed by North America, adds President George Bush, Big Brands to Larder': the Governor's father, Seaboard Farms, that forced the changes. International Home Foods, and a host of others. Corporate control! More about this later!

It's the Habitat, Stupid

For the record: Wetlands are extremely valuable in filtering pollution from our water. The World Resources Institute of Washington, D.C. recently reported in the October 12 *Omaha World-Herald* that half the world's wetlands were lost in the 20th century. These areas have been converted to agricultural and urban use or are contaminated. Dams, diversions and canals fragment 60 percent of the world's largest rivers, trapping runoff and sediments.

Local Control?

Government food officials have ordered Kraft Foods to shut down production of taco shells at one plant and recall all taco shells already on the market. These products contain a variety of genetically engineered corn unapproved for human consumption.

An article in the Oct. 16 *Newsweek*, "Cloning the Endangered," tells of scientists cloning endangered species, the latest a gaur from India and Southeast Asia. The host is an ordinary cow named Bessie from Iowa.

Bessie's first cloned endangered species offspring will be Noah. Noah will be so-named because, as stated in *Scientific American*, "He will be just the first creature up the ramp of the ark of endangered species." While a handful of scientists are applying the most advanced technology to reproduce one endangered species at a time, hundreds more are becoming

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Conservation/Legislative Action,

November Bird Calendar

Continued from page 4

By Babs Padelford

extinct because of habitat loss. Will Noah exist as a wild gaur in Iowa cornfields? Or because of the loss of his natural habitat, will he become a domesticated cow? We could save ourselves a lot of problems if we concentrated on saving habitats!

November brings concentrations of waterfowl and, possibly, some of

Missouri River 1/2

the rarer gulls. Following is a partial list of birds that can be found in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

Call the Nebraska Birdline (292-5325) for the latest sightings and locations and to report your findings.

Loons: Look for Common, Red-throated (rare), and Pacific (rare) at Lake Manawa, Cunningham Lake, Standing Bear and Carter Lake until lakes freeze.

Waterfowl: Numbers of Ross' Geese are increasing and can usually be found with large flocks of snow Geese at DeSoto NWR.

Look for the more unusual species of ducks, i.e. Greater Scaup, Oldsquaw, Black, Surf and White-winged Scoters, any time until lakes freeze.

Bald Eagles arrive with concentrations of ducks and geese. Some remain around the Platte and Missouri Rivers all winter.

Gulls: Bonaparte's, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. More unusual 1/2 Thayer's, California, Iceland, Glaucous, Black-legged Kittiwake.

Also possible are rarities such as Lesser and Great Black-backed and Ross' Gulls.

Lake Manawa, Cunningham Lake and Carter Lake are best places for gulls in the Omaha area. Branched Oak Lake and Pawnee Lake near Lincoln are better for unusual species.

Northern Shrike replaces Loggerhead Shrike and remains for the winter.

Lapland Langspurs can be found with flocks of Horned Larks, usually just after a snowfall.

The best place to see longspurs is in fields east of DeSoto NWR.

Winter Finches: Purple Finch and Pine Siskin. More unusual species, i.e. Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll, Evening Grosbeak and Pine Grosbeak, are irruptive migrants and unpredictable.

Look for in cemeteries and at feeders.

Oldsquaw

Northern Shrike

Birds and Fish Win One

Thanks to all who called President Clinton asking him to veto the Energy and Water Bill. This Bill contained a rider that would have stopped the Missouri River spring rise water flow plan and jeopardize the survival of our three threatened and endangered species. After the veto of the \$23.6 billion Bill, Republicans conceded defeat and dropped the rider, lacking the votes for an override.

As proposed by U. S. Fish & Wildlife and endorsed by conservation groups, the plan would raise spring flows below Gavin's Point Dam to boost spawning, drop flow levels in the summer to create bird and fish breeding habitat. It would also make the river more accessible for small recreation boats downstream and larger recreation boats upstream in the larger lakes behind the dams.

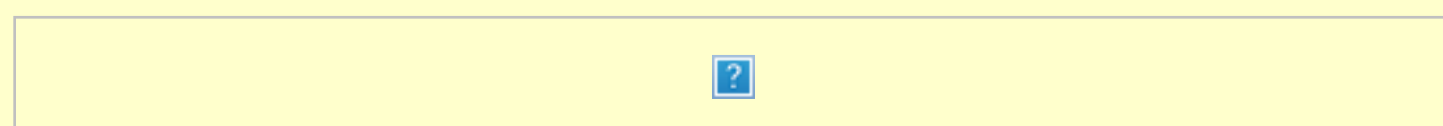
Join us for our next Conservation/Legislative Action meetings at 7:30 p.m., November 6 and December 4 at the ASO Office, 11809 Old Maple Road.

Birdline



For an update on the sightings in the state, call 292- 5325.

Report your sightings after listening to the tape.



Notes from Nature

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November Hitchcock Raptor Primer

A Quick and Easy Guide to Identifying Probable Species in Flight

By Mark Orsag and Jerry Toll

This guide will not focus on the details of plumage, which can be found in any field guide, but on some of the other keys used by hawk watchers in making identification.

The **Red-tailed Hawk** is the most abundant species at Hitchcock during October and November. A large, familiar stocky buteo, it soars with its wings in a shallow "V" that starts, not at the shoulder, but at the wrists.

Identification problems at Hitchcock involving this species usually revolve around one of the many and highly variable Red-tailed subspecies.

Distinguishing the dark Harlans Red-tailed from the dark-morph Rough-legged Hawk is probably the most difficult problem faced by hawk watchers at Hitchcock.

The **Rough-legged Hawk** is similar in size and shape to the Red-tail, but somewhat lankier. The wingbeat is more deliberate and deeper, but slower and less powerful. While most Buteos seen in November will be Red-tails, a few will be Rough-legs.

Look for a dark band at the terminus of the otherwise whitish tail and a dark patch on the wrist that contrasts with an otherwise light-colored

less common of the two.

Distinguishing between these two accipiters has always been and remains one of the chief preoccupations of North American hawk watchers.

The Sharp-shinned often soars or glides with its wings thrust forward, making it appear at first glance to be very small-headed or headless. Its larger cousin, the Cooper's Hawk, has a rounded tail and shows its head while soaring.

The Shin usually flaps in short quick bursts, the Cooper's with a stiffer, more driving wingbeat.

The **Northern Harrier** has been named the "Great Fooler of the Unway" by East Coast hawk watchers. This is a slim bird with long somewhat narrow wings and a very long tail.

When soaring, flapping, or gliding up high, the Northern Harrier can prove particularly baffling to hawk watching beginners.

The hawk generally soars with its wings held in a strong "V" and glides in a similar posture or with its wings held flat.

Look for intermittent wing strokes during gliding. The Northern Harrier's wing beat has a slow but rhythmic

Bald Eagles can hold their wings in a number of different postures when gliding or soaring. One particularly diagnostic habit is for the bird to soar with its wing tips curled downward.

The Bald Eagle's wingbeat accentuates the upstroke, while Golden Eagle's power stroke is the down beat. The Bald Eagle's head also extends farther beyond the leading edge of the wing when in flight, giving the appearance of being larger.

The small **American Kestrel** is one of the few species posting poor numbers so far this year at Hitchcock. This small falcon's migration also peaks in September. However, a few trickle through in November and December.

American Kestrels display pointed wings, a buoyant and wandering flight style, and a long and often broadly flared tail when soaring. Confusion is possible with both the Sharp-shinned Hawk and the American Kestrel's much less common close relative, the Merlin.

These are six species probably at Hitchcock on any fairly favorable November day. On a good day, we ought to see at least one of the following less common species: Northern Goshawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden Eagle, Merlin or Prairie Falcon.

If you find an injured bird of prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-734-6817 or 402-731-9869.

underwing. It soars and snapping cadence. with a shallow "V" at It is fairly common at both the shoulder and Hitchcock in October and the wrist. and November.

The **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and **Cooper's Hawk** are small accipiters with short rounded wings (that distinguish them from similarly sized falcons with pointed wings) and a proportionately long tail. The **Bald Eagle**, our national symbol, is a huge raptor. Adult Bald Eagles have diagnostic white heads and tails and are easily identified from distances. Identifying dark immatures is more difficult. At Hitchcock, these individuals can easily be confused with the much less common Golden Eagle.

Sharp-shinned Hawks are very common migrants at Hitchcock in September and October, and a few continue through in November. Cooper's Hawk migration peaks somewhat earlier than Sharp-shinned and is by far the



Audubon at Work - October

By lone Werthman



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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.

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