

The Meadowlark

**November
2002**

Volume 31 Issue 9

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

Gardening by Jan Riggenschach

It isn't yet the end of the year, but some of us will be dreaming of and planning improvements to our gardens next year when Jan Riggenschach speaks at Audubon's general meeting Thursday, November 14.

Jan is well known for her garden column in the *Omaha World-Herald*, which she has written for many years. Some of us have been clipping her articles for our personal reference. Now we have a chance to direct our questions to her in person.

Jan and her gardens have been featured in national home and gardening magazines. She has also published a handbook of gardening, which is popular with area Audubon members.

If you own a copy, it might be a good idea to bring it to the meeting and ask questions you may have about it.

Jan's flowers and grounds are a favorite of gardening enthusiasts who enjoy the charm of a beautiful, healthy garden. At her place they have the opportunity to see the results of her skill with flowers.

Jan conducts these tours, for groups only, in the spring and summer months.

Visitors are led on walks through many kinds of flowers grown in stunning colors and attractive designs. Along the way Jan shares information with tour members eager to try some of the flowers in their yards.

Besides the gardens, the property in

By Ed Higgins

cludes a wooded area with trails and prairie grasses with wildflowers. Most of these were planted by the Riggenschachs after they acquired the land.

We hope to see you for this rare chance to hear and learn from this fine gardener from our area of the country. We hope many of you will be able to

attend.

The meeting will be held at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances, 1 block south of 45th & Center, 7:30 P.M. Visitors are welcome.

After the program we will have a brief business meeting, followed by coffee, cookies and conversation.

DeSoto Refuge and More on November Trip

Washington County will be the focus of the November 23 field trip. Clem Klaphake will lead a trip start

By Clem Klaphake

We will meet at Neale Woods at 8:00 A.M. for those who want to car pool. Bring some snacks or lunch with you, and a hot drink. There are restaurants in Fort Calhoun and Blair if we decide that car lunches are insufficient or the weather is uncooperative for an open-air lunch.

DeSoto will be the primary birding



area. Depending on Nebraska/Iowa weather as well as weather to the north of us, the Snow Geese, other waterfowl, and Bald Eagles should be in abundance throughout this area. However, I make no guar

The day could be very chilly, so be prepared by dressing appropriately.

Call Clem Klaphake at 292-2276 for details.

antees of what will be seen.

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West Nile Virus

By Eric Scholar

In the past few months the West Nile virus and its effects have been in the news. It has caused death among humans (especially the elderly), horses, pets and other animals. It may have a potentially devastating effect on certain bird populations. Because of this concern, I will devote most of this column to providing some background information on the virus.

West Nile virus was first recognized in the U.S. in 1999 as the cause of severe and fatal human illness in metropolitan New York City. It is commonly found in Africa, West and Central Asia and the Middle East. It is not known how it was introduced into the U.S, but since its initial appearance, it has spread rapidly and by 2002 was found throughout the eastern half of the country.

The West Nile virus has now been found in 42 of the lower 48 states, as well as in four of Canada's 10 provinces. This past summer, it was reported in Nebraska. For its long-haul travel, the virus seems dependent on migratory birds. When these birds get infected just before taking

Most people who are infected with the virus will not develop symptoms. Some may become ill 3 to 15 days after the bite of an infected mosquito. Evidence suggests that a minority of infected persons will develop a mild illness with fever, headache, body aches, and sometimes skin rash and swollen glands.

There are no known long-term effects due to mild illness. It can, however, develop into a severe illness known as West Nile encephalitis.

Encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain that may be marked by headache, high fever, stiff neck, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremor, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis. A small number of cases have been fatal. Humans are only at risk of being infected with the virus when they are in areas where the virus is circulating in nature. In northern states this is during the summer months, but in southern states it may occur year round. The risk of encephalitis is higher for persons 50 years of age and older.

There is no specific therapy available for

off, they might still be infectious upon reaching their destination a few days later, ready to seed a new outbreak. Infected mosquitoes might occasionally hitch a ride on planes, trains or trucks and spark new outbreaks elsewhere.

infection with the West Nile virus. In the case of encephalitis, intensive supportive therapy such as hospitalization, i.v. fluids, respiratory support, prevention of secondary infections and good nursing care may be required.

Humans get West Nile virus by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds, which may circulate the virus in their blood for a few days. After an incubation period of ten days to two weeks, infected mosquitoes can then transmit the virus to humans and animals while biting to take blood. There the virus replicates and may or may not cause illness.

Some things one can do to help avoid contracting the virus is to avoid mosquito bites by applying repellent, wearing protective clothing, spraying clothing with repellents, and staying indoors between dusk and dawn, which is peak mosquito biting time. You can also avoid breeding mosquitoes by draining standing water.

Upcoming Election

West Nile virus is not spread from person to person. The main role that people play in contributing to the continuing cycle of the virus is by maintaining environments in which mosquitoes can lay eggs (e.g. standing water).

One other issue I will briefly mention is that with a low voter turnout predicted for the November election, I urge everyone to go out to vote and vote for candidates who support environmental issues that concern us.

This virus has already had a detrimental effect on many bird populations. People are worried that the virus could take a large toll on wild birds, including some endangered species. It has already killed at least 100,000 Crows, Blue Jays and other birds. It has been known to infect at least 120 North American species, from Black-capped Chickadees to Bald Eagles. Recovery centers report large numbers of Great-horned Owls suffering from the virus.

It is not clear whether wild birds need to be bitten by a virus-carrying mosquito to become infected. They might acquire the virus from each other or by eating tainted prey. Corvids such as crows seem most sensitive, while other birds such as gulls and pigeons have proved relatively resistant.



November Events

4 Conservation Meeting

6 Board Meeting

14 General Meeting

20 Nature Study

23 Field Trip

28 *Happy Holiday*

Warm Up to Fall With Fr. Hoffman's Waterfowl Study

By Nelli Falzgraf

A charter member of ASO, Fr. Thomas Hoffman was active in the Omaha Birding Club when members obtained chapter status with the National Audubon Society in 1971. The pioneer leaders framed the guidelines of how our organization functions and laid the foundations of educa

south along major routes such as the Missouri River corridor and DeSoto NWR.

How do waterfowl tolerate cold water? They are larger than passerines so don't lose heat as quickly. They have oily feathers that give them waterproofing and buoyancy

t

ional endeavors and responsible stewardship. Their vision inspired the fledgling environmental movement, and their character shaped the integrity of the chapter for years to come.



without adding much weight. The fatty acid, fat, and wax of oily secretions contain vitamin D. They are covered with

A theologian at Creighton University, Fr. Hoffman has taught in New Zealand and spent memorable hours studying birds at the Jesuit retreat in North Bend along the Platte River. He served as ASO's third

President, following Dick Resell and Loren Padelford; led Audubon Christmas and Spring Bird Counts; and provides the invocation at our annual Banquet.

heat-conserving, fluffy, down feathers—think down-filled comforters.

Please join Fr. Hoffman at 7:00 P.M. Wednesday, November 20, at the ASO office, 11809 Old Maple Road, to enjoy his presentation on waterfowl. The slide program is free and open to the public. For questions, call 292-9687.

The vessels carrying blood to and from their legs limit heat loss because arterial flow warms the incoming venous flow from their feet. Like many aquatic birds, ducks and geese store insulating fat under their skin—the reason for a drip pan while roasting a Thanksgiving goose.

As rivers and lakes begin to freeze and food supplies

Please warm up to fall with Fr. Hoffman's waterfowl study.

become unavailable, ducks and geese gather and migrate

Abundance of Sparrows on October Field Trip

A group of about twenty participants set out on October 19 to search for sparrows. The trip started in the morning

Clay-colored, LeConte's, White-throated, White-crowned, Lincoln's, Fox, Tree, Harris', Swamp, Field, and

at Neale Woods and moved on to Nathan's Lake. From there it was Boyer Chute for lunch, more birding and a fine hike.

They found sparrows in good numbers, thanks to the skilled guides among them and to the migrating birds. Nathan's Lake proved the most productive in a day that yielded 14 sparrow species—Song, Savannah, Chipping,

Junco— plus two Harriers and an Eagle.

By Boyer Chute time the temperatures had warmed up from the chillier morning, making our hike here a fine fall experience. A smattering of woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and lots of Yellow-rumps were seen in the woods and grasses.

Elliott Bedows led the trip that tied into his Naturestudy sparrow identification program October 17.

Christmas Bird Count Dates

The annual DeSoto Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 14. Jerry Toll will be organizing the Count.

The Omaha Area Christmas Count has been set for Saturday, December 21. Betty Grenon will be in charge of the Count again this year.

Details for both Counts will appear in the next issue.

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



Legislative Action

Clean Water Act - 30 Years Old - What were you doing 30 years ago? In 1972, our Audubon Society of Omaha was just a fledgling society, having one year earlier changed from the Bird Club. I was busy adjusting to urban life in Omaha with five children. Thirty years ago in Congress, one of the most successful environmental laws in the country was passed. The Clean Water Act promised to protect and restore our nation's rivers and coastal waters,

By Ione Werthman
a join press conference in Lincoln with members of the Sierra Club, Nebraska Wildlife Federation, and the Farmers Union. Each group told of the projects and progress they have been making to protect our quality of water, our wetlands and wildlife habitat. They emphasized that by working together, we can more effectively accomplish our common goals in keeping our water clean.

making them safe for us to swim in, to fish in, and for life to thrive in.

A national goal was to eliminate all pollution by 1985. Thanks to that Act, some rivers such as the Cuayahoga in Ohio no longer burn, and some once-dead waters such as Lake Erie now support wildlife and fishing. Though 1985 has come and gone, some of our waters are not as yet safe for our birds, wildlife, or for humans.

We believe Congress' intent in 1972, as the law has been interpreted for most of the intervening time, meant protection for all waters in our country. However, interpretations of the specifics on "isolated, nonnavigable waters not directly connected to our rivers," called wetlands, prairie potholes, swamps, marshes or inland basins have created controversies between developers; environmental groups; farmers; and also the EPA and Corps of Engineers, the agencies designated to carry out the law.

In January of this year, the Supreme Court joined in the controversy by creating a legal loophole that removes protection for a third of this nation's wetlands, leaving them vulnerable to both physical destruction and discharges of pollutants. In February President Bush added to the mess by announcing his rule changes to the Clean Water Act. These would make it much easier for companies to discharge industrial waste into our waters. According to the President and Court, wetlands such as Heron Haven need not be protected and are considered worthless.

Fortunately, Congress, after the elections, is considering proposals to reverse the Bush and Supreme Court decisions. The first bill, the Clean Water Protection Act, would prohibit industrial waste dumping into streams, lakes, rivers, coastal areas or wetlands.

The second Bill, the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act, will reinstate federal protection for isolated wetlands that control flooding and filter pollutants

Nebraska Environmental Round Table
- The foregoing reminded me that a few years ago at the prodding of State Senator Chris Beutler, some twenty-plus environmental/conservation organizations in Nebraska met and discussed our need to share our views, interests, knowledge, talents and work together for the betterment of the environment of Nebraska.

As a result, the Nebraska Environmental Round Table (of which I am a board member) is now officially sanctioned by the State of Nebraska. The group has applied for its 501(c)(3) status from the IRS. I know Senator Beutler is saying under his breath, "It's about time!"

In my September column I said that the Governor and State Legislature broke faith with Nebraskans when they raided the Environmental Trust Fund of \$2.8 million to help pay for the state budget shortage. Now prominent hunting, fishing, environmental, conservation and recycling groups have organized as the Keep our Trust Coalition to help protect the rest of the Trust funds from being diverted by the Legislature.

Meeting weekly, the group leaders are planning a statewide campaign to remind the citizens of Nebraska (and state senators) that the Nebraska lottery initiative in 1992 was sold to us on the promise that profits would be used exclusively for education and conservation efforts. The Coalition also is making plans to close the loophole in the constitution at the 2004 ballot box, if necessary.

To date, over \$54 million has gone to fund conservation and environmental projects in Nebraska through grants from the Trust. The Audubon Society of Omaha has received over \$300,000 of these grants. Our 13-acre native prairie would not be ours if the Trust had not paid the whole bill. At Heron Haven many of our restoration projects have been partially funded by the Trust. The Trust has been extremely good to Audubon.

from the water, making it safe for birds, wildlife and humans. I will keep you posted.

On October 23, in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, I enthusiastically participated in

To celebrate this ten-year anniversary of the Environmental Trust Fund, all recipients of grants are coming together for a thank-you party in Lincoln on November 9. All state senators have been invited.

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Omaha Raptor Team - A Committee of ASO

Because I haven't submitted articles for awhile, many of you may have thought the Omaha Raptor Team disappeared! Quite the contrary. Thankfully, we've been busier than ever.

- By Alison O'Connor

Our summer came and went faster than any I can remember. Our summer schedule kept everyone on the team very busy, and by the time August rolled around, not only our human but also our feathered volunteers were grateful for a couple of weeks reprieve.

Some of our most unusual programs this past summer were a series of appearances at two of the local Great Western Bank branches.

A New Service from ASO

They decided to have wildlife educational programs available for their customers, and our team was invited. Pictured here is Jenny Henricksen, whose husband, David, works for Great Western Bank. Jenny, of course, is accompanied by Fred, our Red-tailed Hawk. I'm pictured with Skye, our Peregrine Falcon.

We greatly appreciated the opportunity presented us by our friends at the bank.

Finally, I'd like to welcome three new wonderful volunteers to the Omaha Raptor Team family.....Ed Gruttemeyer, Bill Seibert, and Carolyn Beavers. I feel blessed with these three, as they have been willing to stand in the background for at least the last year and learn what it takes to be an ORT volunteer. And their professionalism shows!

Legislative Action, Continued from page 4

ASO at Work - Each year National Audubon creates a booklet for Congressmen listing Audubon's priorities for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) monies. These monies are received from companies doing offshore drilling in America and earmarked for wildlife refuges to acquire and protect our dwindling natural habitats.

This year ASO was offered the opportunity by National Audubon to supply the necessary information to its priority list for a refuge in our area. We chose to help boost funding for Boyer Chute. When the 2004 LWCF funding is up for hearings in Congress, we will ask you to call our senators and representatives to add your endorsement.

Join us for our Legislative/Conservation meeting Monday, Nov. 4, 7:30 P.M. at the Audubon Office, 11809 Old Maple Road. Keep abreast of upcoming legislation nationally, state wide, and locally.

Recent months in our economy have given pause to all of us to consider how to best set a course for financial security.

With this in mind, the Audubon Society of Omaha is making available to our members only a valuable service, a free private consultation with professionals in the financial industry, and a customized financial profile that will help you plan for the future.

This is a new benefit that is part of your Audubon membership. There is no cost to you. Your certificate is included in this newsletter.

We thank you for your support of the Audubon Society, and we will continue to look for ways to provide increased benefits of your membership.

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Salt Creek Tiger Beetle

By Jerry Toll

On May 27 of this year I learned of an endangered insect from an article in the *Omaha World-Herald*. *Cincindela nevadica lincolniana*, or salt creek tiger beetle, is a subspecies of tiger beetle found only in four small remaining wetlands in the Salt Creek drainage near Lincoln.

It is found nowhere else in the world. Its closest relative, *C.n.knausi*, is located in western Nebraska. The primary widespread population of *nevadica* salt-loving tiger beetles can be found from Alberta, Canada, throughout the Great Basin and south to northern Mexico.

According to Steve Spomer, an entomologist with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, *lincolniana* is restricted to and reliant upon a diminished habitat. This includes the saline flats remaining by Capitol Beach in Lincoln, two separate populations near north 27th Street, including Cracker Barrel Marsh, and a fourth population SE of Ceresco.

Only about 10% of the pre-settlement salt marsh remains, which has precipitated the decline of *lincolniana*. This tiger beetle most likely never had a large population because its specialized habitat is small and isolated.

Restricted to a specialized saline habitat, it evolved to exploit a niche that other tiger beetles could not inhabit. The saline soil conditions found in the Salt Creek watershed have created an isolated community of plants and animals that is unique to the region.

With a life cycle of two years in the larval stage, three weeks as a pupa, and less than seven weeks in early summer as a reproducing adult that lays only 20-30 eggs, this predacious insect must rely on tenacity to overcome its slow

more upland and/or mesic conditions. Additionally, *lincolniana* seems unable to emigrate between the fragmented populations, further weakening the genetic diversity and making it more vulnerable to extinction.

This summer Bill Allgeier, who works with Spomer, did a mark and recapture study on one of the populations. The preliminary result is that none of those marked adult beetles were found more than a few hundred feet away from their own population center.

Another finding this summer, according to Steve Spomer, is that the continuing drought may actually be aiding the *lincolniana* population. He speculates that more salt pans were exposed by drying the marshes, thus providing more habitat.

Since the study began, the population has ranged between 300 to 600 mature adults counted per year. This year the count was over 700 adults.

Not enough is known about the various stages of the life cycle to understand the effects on survivability through the various stages. This could give researchers an insight into how to increase reproductive efficiency, thus increasing the population size.

The survival of *lincolniana* is in jeopardy. Human development by both direct and indirect encroachment is the greatest concern. Housing and small businesses are springing up near and will soon engulf the environs if protection is not forthcoming. Fresh water runoff from parking lots can lessen the salinity of Salt Creek. These factors, combined with a low reproductive rate and a very low fragmented population, make *lincolniana* highly vulnerable to extinction.

reproductive rate. As yet researchers do not know why this survival strategy works.

Lincolniana is further restricted to the specific type of saline conditions it inhabits. It prefers exposed, moist salty pans. Other tiger beetles with which it competes prefer

Currently the salt creek tiger beetle is on the list of Nebraska endangered species, providing a measure of protection. A federal listing has been applied for. A decision was supposed to be rendered in June, but the decision is still pending in Washington.

Nebraska and Missouri Present Lewis & Clark Series

The Nebraska Humanities Council is collaborating with the Missouri Humanities Council (NHC) and Omaha Parks & Recreation Department to present a series of programs commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Six Monday evening programs were scheduled for the series, entitled "Journeys: American Travels and Encounters." Free and open to the public, the 90 minute programs

begin at 7 P.M. at the Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha's Botanical Center, 100 Bancroft Street. Three of the programs were given in October. Three will be presented in November.

On November 4 Dr. Richard Frueling reviews the state of medicine 200 years ago and the medical treatments used by Lewis and Clark in "Medical Care on the Lewis and Clark Voyage of Discovery."

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Beetle,

A Nebraska native, Fruehling has been in family practice in Grand Island since 1980. A member of the NHC Speakers Bureau, he also is on the faculty of Hastings College.

On November 11 Ben Sherman presents the provocative program, "The Legacy of William

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

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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Clark: Exploitation, Displacement and Devastation." Sherman, an Ogalala Sioux and Director of the nonprofit Western American Indian Chamber in Denver, contends that after the expedition was completed, Clark manipulated friendships with Indians to take huge parts of their homelands.

On November 18 Hal Stearns explores "Special Journeys" on the Missouri River, including those of Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery, Nebraska poet laureate John G. Neihardt, and Stearns himself. Stearns is a historian for many tour groups that follow the Lewis and Clark Trail and is a member of the NHC and Montana Humanities Council speakers bureaus.

In a partnership that includes a team of Indian tribal advisors, museum, library, science and art educators, and the Kansas and Iowa Humanities Councils, similar programs observing the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition will be presented in Missouri, Kansas and Iowa communities within 100 miles of the Missouri River.

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Wild Kingdom Returns

After a long absence, Mutual of Omaha has brought back its popular Wild Kingdom shows. Those who have not yet discovered the series may want to know which shows are yet to be aired.

Birdline

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

Report your sightings after listening to the tape.

The shows premiere on Animal Planet at 7:00 p.m. Central Standard Time, Tuesdays, with additional showings throughout the week. Six one-hour programs have been scheduled, two of which ran in October. If you missed these, you can still see

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 to be notified.

"Black Mamba," which will premiere November 12. "Almighty Amphibians," "Dune," and "Venom" are scheduled for dates in 2003. Titles are subject to change. Consult your tv guide for listings in your area.

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