

## Nebraska Loves Cranes

It is a love affair as old as time— Sandhill Cranes and the Platte River. Fossils of cranes dating back more than eight million years have been found in Nebraska. They came on their way to their breeding grounds in the far North. Staying for weeks in the late winter and early spring, they ate in the fields and roosted in the river. The Platte provided nourishment for the trip and safety from predators.

Today the cranes still come to the Platte, nearly 600,000 in any given year. But now other voices also speak up for a share of the Platte. Agriculture, power, municipal and recreational uses all vie for a portion of the Platte's waters. It takes a lot of work and resources to ensure that the Platte River continues to nourish and nurture the Sandhill Cranes.

This is the mission of Rowe Sanctuary, to provide a place where the cranes can rest on their journey north and

By Nancy Leonard

at the same time to provide a place where people can connect to one of the greatest of nature's wildlife spectacles.

Every year Rowe welcomes thousands of visitors from around the planet. The viewing season is short, from the end of February until

Join us Thursday, February 14 to hear Brad Mellema, the Director of Rowe Sanctuary, speak about their work. He will have wonderful

So come hear him at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (one block south of Center). The program will begin at 7:00 p.m.

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### **Introductory Bird Identification Class**

**Saturdays: March 22,  
April 19 and May 3**

Time: 9:00 a.m. to noon

Location: Fontenelle Forest Nature  
Center

Fee: \$20 per person (covers all three  
sessions)

Ages: Adult - limited to 15 participants

Registration: Contact Clem Klaphake at  
292-2276 or ckavian@cox.net

Birding is the fastest growing  
recreational outdoor activity today, with  
over 50 million birders in the U.S. This  
class will help you learn how to identify

### **De Soto Field Trip Sat. Feb. 16**

The February field trip held Saturday, February 16, coincides with the Great Backyard Bird Count weekend. So while all of you are

Those who wish to bird from the warmth of the Nature Center overlooking the Missouri River, local woodlot and Refuge feeders, n

birds in your back yard, neighborhood, or when on vacation.

It will be taught by a member of the Audubon Society of Omaha and will include several local field trips. No prior knowledge or experience is required.

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## *Current Currents*

**By Elliott Bedows**

### **More On Counting Carbon Credits**

As indicated in my column last November, carbon credits (or CC's) are a form of energy currency used by governments who try to curb carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions in an attempt to limit the accumulation of this greenhouse gas, thereby limiting global warming. There are good and bad aspects to the trading of CC's.

On the plus side, there are many ways to limit the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that can be emitted into our atmosphere, and CC's are a legitimate, albeit imperfect, first step. After all (according to the Sept. 8, 2007 issue of *The Economist*), "Sixty percent of the world's carbon emissions come from the {human} environment."

According to the July 12, 2007 *Wall Street Journal*, "Inside Messy Reality of Cutting Power Plants' CO<sub>2</sub> Output," one-third of the U.S. contribution to that figure comes from coal-burning power plants. In fact, burning coal is about the single largest source of CO<sub>2</sub> pollution worldwide. But how CC's are applied is subject to politics, and the trade-offs may really not be all that attractive.

For one thing, it is very expensive to make coal-burning power plants emission friendly. The largest coal-burning facility in the U.S., American Electric Power (AEP), estimates that to convert its facilities to ones that can either capture carbon, bury it back in the soil, or use other means to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, will raise the rates for electricity between 12% and 50% to local customers.

So to delay putting these costly but effective measures into place, AEP has come up with a "solution" that really doesn't address the issue of CO<sub>2</sub> - emissions, but does address the issue of lowering CC's.

In one case, AEP cites the fact that methane, or natural gas, is twenty-one times more potent a greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub> on a weight-to-weight basis.

Because methane is a major component of cow manure, AEP is buying cattle facilities with the idea of putting large tarps over the cow excrement to collect the fecal matter, trapping the methane

about the amount the average auto generates annually. As of last summer, AEP had plans to establish 200 or more farms that would lower its CC's by over 600,000 CC's per year. And while that is only 4% of AEP's total annual output, it is still a significant number of CC's.

Some in the power industry, many power plants, and even Congress are warming up to another solution. That is going back to the age of nuclear energy. They argue, as they did in the past, that the nuclear option is clean and safer now than ever.

That may be true, but safer than it was historically needs to include the accidents at Three Mile Island and at Chernobyl, as well as what to do with the spent fuel. Currently, there is not enough adequate space to bury the spent fuel. Add to this the fact that the plutonium generated is the very thing nuclear weapons are made from.

The industries' answer is that there will be space available by the time it's needed. [Yeah, like from where?] Also they don't address the arms issue, which is a very serious oversight given the political tensions currently building between the U.S. and Iraq and Korea over that very topic.

Admittedly, the newer nuclear plants do incorporate a safer design into their construction and are becoming increasingly cheaper and cleaner to operate than their predecessors of the previous generation. But nuclear advocates still fail to even begin to address the nuclear power plant's other problems alluded to above.

and burning it to release CO<sub>2</sub> and water. In doing so, AEP is able to cash in on a lot of CC's.

How many? A large (1,330 lb.) cow emits enough methane annually that burning it negates five tons of CC's,

Conservationists worldwide are clamoring for more conservation and less fuel usage across the board. But both the U.S. and most emerging countries (including China and India) want to increase, not decrease, their annual energy usage. So while the outlook currently looks bleak in the short term, Congress and other world leaders are admittedly beginning to gain a grip on the magnitude of the global warming situation.

As they say, "Necessity is the mother of invention," or in this case, solutions. And boy, is a mother of a solution exactly what we need right now to get a handle on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and global warming!

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## **Rivers and Wildlife Celebration March 14-16**

The Rivers and Wildlife Celebration will be held Friday-Sunday, March 14-16. Rowe Sanctuary and the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation (NPABC) will host the Celebration at the Holiday Inn, Kearney. Also the Science Symposium of the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation will be held on Friday, March 14.

Featured speakers of the weekend are Robert Bateman, wildlife artist; Donald Kroodsma, author of "The Singing Life of Birds"; and James Mallman, President of Watchable Wildlife, Inc.

Field trips are offered, along with classes and sessions. A country store and silent auction are included. All ages will find something to their liking.

For a registration brochure or more information: Audubon Nebraska, Box 117, Denton NE 68339; 402/797-2301; Nebraska@audubon.org; www.Nebraska.audubon.org. Pay by Feb. 29 for reduced costs. For information about crane viewing, contact Rowe Sanctuary at 308/468-5282; or www.rowesanctuary.org

## **New at Rivers & Wildlife Chapter Workshop Friday, Mar. 14**

New this year is an Audubon Chapter Workshop, "Taking Action for Birds in a Changing Climate," to be held on Friday, March 14, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. hosted by Rowe Sanctuary. The workshop is open to all Audubon chapter members and the general public. Set against the backdrop of the Crane symposium, those attending the Chapter Workshop will be able to explore a number of topics including Chapter development, Important Bird Areas, Audubon's science programs, and

## **Volunteers Needed!!!**

### **ASO Greater Omaha Student Art Contest Sat, March 29**

**By Jackie Scholar**

For the past several years, the Audubon Society of Omaha has encouraged the children of Greater Omaha to learn about the birds of the Midwest by sponsoring the Student Art Contest.

This year the event will take place on March 29 at Bellevue University's Gordon Lozier Center in Bellevue, NE. Children from Kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible to participate.

All artwork will be displayed from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. on March 29. Awards will be given based on creativity, realism and technique. The awards ceremony will take place at 2:00 p.m. Rules and other details are posted on the Audubon website: www.audubon-omaha.org.

Volunteers are needed to help stage this event. This is a great way to get to know other Audubon members and to contribute to the educational mission of the Audubon Society. Volunteers are needed for the following activities:

Receiving of the artwork at the Audubon Office - Center Mall Friday, February 22 4:00 - 6:00 p.m Saturday, February 23 10:00 a.m-4:00 p.m  
Hanging of the artwork at Bellevue University Friday, March 28 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Staffing tables during the showing of the artwork at Bellevue University Saturday, March 29 10:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Any help will be greatly appreciated! We can't be successful without your help. Contact Jackie at 551-5045 or jbscholar@cox.net

harnessing the power of Chapter resources.

Featured speakers are John Cecil, IBA National Program Dir; Tom Bancroft, Chief Scientist & VP at Natl. Audubon; Chris Canfield, VP & Exec. Dir. of Audubon North Carolina; Genevieve Thompson, VP & Exec. Dir., Audubon Dakota; Karen Orenstein, National Outreach Coordinator; and Lynn Tennefoss, VP of State Programs & Chapter Services.

Registration is required. Cost of the day is \$20 per person, including lunch. Enrollment deadline is March 7. For more information or to register, visit [www.audubon.org/states/ne](http://www.audubon.org/states/ne) or call Audubon Nebraska, 402 -797-2301.

### **Wachiska Winterfest**

Date: Sunday, February 10, 3:00 p.m.  
Location: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church 3825 Wildbriar Lane, Lincoln (1 block north of Intersection of So 40th St & Old Cheney Rd) \$5/person; refreshments; books for sale/signing. Featuring author Jonis Agee, nature writer John Janovy, Jr, and photographer Chris Helzer.

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## **Cool Cities Campaign**

### **Solving Global Warming One City at a Time**

#### **By Pat Fuller**

Solving global warming one city at a time is more than just a slogan. Right now cities are taking action and putting solutions to work. One of the brightest lights of this movement is the U.S. Climate Protection Agreement, which was the inspiration for the Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign.

Initiated by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels in February 2005, the U.S. Climate Protection Agreement as of January 2008 has been signed by 755 mayors representing over 76 million citizens in 51 states and the District of Columbia. These mayors have pledged to reduce global warming carbon dioxide pollution in their cities to 7% below 1990 levels by 2012 (the same reductions and target date called for under the Kyoto Treaty).

Many of these Cool Cities leaders are moving forward with innovative energy solutions that cut our dependence on foreign oil, benefit public health, and save taxpayer dollars. The Cool Cities strategy is to use the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to achieve two important goals:

n Get cities (and eventually states and the federal government) to take action with smart energy solutions that reduce global warming emissions

n Energize, support, and build volunteer activism and influence.

Omaha's Mayor Fahey signed the climate protection agreement two years ago. Since then the Green Omaha Coalition (GOC) was founded. Their mission is to promote a healthy, sustainable community through

**Learning Green Education Council** - an organizing group working with local school districts and universities to infuse sustainable education into curricula and green operations in educational facilities.

**Green Neighborhood Council** - providing venue for neighborhood associations, homeowners, and nonprofit groups committed to educating residential neighborhoods on the collective benefits of sustainable home ownership.

**Green Business Council** - a resource for local businesses of all sizes and functions for greening business operations, products and services. It will include chambers of commerce and economic development boards throughout the area.

**Design and Construction Council** - a collaborative effort among design and construction professionals to increase awareness among the construction community through educational programs and resource development.

For more information about the Green Omaha Coalition, go to [www.greenomahacoalition.org](http://www.greenomahacoalition.org).

In Council Bluffs Mayor Hanafan was approached last June to sign the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, and an environmental forum was held in October for the City Council candidates to express their opinions regarding the proposed agreement. On January 14 the issue was again brought before the Mayor and City Council, but no firm commitment has been made. To encourage support of the Cool Cities

partnerships, policy, and smart solutions. The GOC intends to accomplish its mission through leadership and coalition building with public and private sector entities. It would like to foster collaboration with key stakeholders in the community and accelerate the adoption of green practices, policies, and programs. The following councils have been established.

**Public Agency Council** - a forum for local municipalities and public utility groups to collaborate on green initiatives to include those for buildings. They work to create green standards, share information, and support each others' programs and initiatives.

initiative in Council Bluffs, please write or call Mayor Hanafan at 209 Pearl Street, Council Bluffs IA 51503 (712) 323-4601.

The Cool Cities concept is also being adopted by the faith community in a campaign called "Cool Congregations." Members of Broadway United Methodist Church in Council Bluffs are helping parishioners and other congregations reduce carbon emissions in an effort to curb the effects of global warming.

Cool Congregations is part of a nationwide effort to organize a meaningful new dimension to faith stewardship. Interested congregants make a faith-based pledge to reduce their contribution to global warming by taking energy efficient actions, often saving money in the pro

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## Omaha Area Xmas Count

By Betty Grenon

The Omaha Area Christmas Count day tallied 71 species, with an additional 3 species during count week.

The count of 71 was our second highest species count in 45 years.

After postponing one day due to the snow storm, we had a pleasant day with passable roads. Most of the still water was frozen, and we had 2 to 4 inches of snow on the ground. Twenty-four counters were able to make it on the postponed date compared to our usual 30 plus.

We had only one new species this year, the Eurasian Collared-Dove. No other species required documentation.

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## Helping Wildlife: Check-Off

Nebraskans are urged to consider donating all or a portion of their state tax refund to the Nongame and Endangered Special Fund. Donations may also be made at any time throughout the year. All donations are fully tax deductible.

The check-off is the main source of state funding to conserving nongame species. The Fund is spent for diverse species of both animals and plants.

Look for the Peregrine Falcon symbol near the bottom of your state tax form. Or donate anytime at [www.outdoornebraska.org/](http://www.outdoornebraska.org/), or mail to Nebraska Game & Parks, P. O. Box

## Numbers for DeSoto/Boyer CBC

By Jerry Toll, Compiler

The DeSoto/Boyer Chute CBC was held December 23 under clear skies, winds NW at 10-20mph with gusts to 30, crusted snow cover 3 to 6 inches, and temperatures between 15-26 F.

The count straddles the Missouri River and parts of Harrison and Pottawattomie Counties in Iowa, and Washington and Douglas Counties in Nebraska.

Fifteen participants located 54 species plus 3 count-week species and 9,038 individuals. Strong winds and very little open water made locating birds difficult.

### Highlights

8 species of waterfowl including 3 swan (sp) seen in flight

7 species of raptors including a

single Rough-leg, and a Merlin seen in count week

1 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

1 Common Redpoll seen

during count week

### High numbers

Eurasian Collared Dove

Red-breasted Nuthatch

Dark-eyed Junco

Meadowlark sp.

### Low numbers

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## Winterfest, Continued from page 3`

Jonis Agee, author of novels, short fiction and poetry, teaches creative writing and 20th century fiction at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In her latest novel, "The River Wife," John James Audubon appears during a bird-sketching trip.

John Janovy, Jr, Professor of Biological Sciences at UNL, is the author of "Keith County Journal," "Yellowlegs," "Back in Keith County," "Dunwoody Point," and "Teaching in Eden." He explains nature from the details of the tiniest parasite to the grandest cosmic speculations.

Chris Helzer combines photography with stories about the ecology and interactions in prairies and how they may or may not fall apart as they get smaller and more isolated.

American Crow

A single Robin

Purple Finch

A single Pine Siskin

Missed though usually present

Any gulls

Belted Kingfisher

Carolina Wren

Yellow-rumped Warbler

White-throated Sparrow

Lapland Longspur - largely absent in the area

Snow Bunting

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Winter is no mere absence. It is a presence, with beauty and meaning.

Anonymous

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## Connect With Nature Through Backyard Bird Count in February

You are asked to participate in an annual event combining enjoyment with a service in the cause of science and conservation.

From Friday through Monday, February 15-18, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) will be held. The purpose is to count the number of each bird species you see in your yard, at a park, or wherever you choose to do the count. Watch and count for a minimum of 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. The results should be tallied and then sent to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The Lab conducts the GBBC.

In February of 2007, GBBC participants broke records for the number of birds reported. The stats are 11,082,387 individuals reported; 613 species, and 81,203 checklists submitted.

The information you compile may trigger conservation work when populations are discovered to be in trouble. There is some good news too. For example, Hooded Merganser numbers are on the rise. This pleases many who treasure the sight of one of these handsome, showy ducks in the fall. Conversely, the decline in Northern Pintails means fewer sightings of this graceful duck.

To participate, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). You can download identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps and other information on over 500 species. Bird photos are submitted for an online photo gallery and contest for those interested in competing.

## Cool Cities, Continued from page 5`

cess. Participants calculate their carbon footprint, find ways to reduce it, and learn how to save energy in their church.

Broadway Methodist will host a training workshop for congregations in the Omaha and Council Bluffs area. To participate, contact Maria Huggins, Broadway United Methodist Church at 712-323-7221.

## Cute Predators & Their Prey

By Laurine Blankenau

I love them both: Cats and birds. Cats make wonderful pets because they are cuddly, amusing and independent. They don't require daily walks, and they're uncommonly neat, washing more often than Blanche Dubois or Lady Macbeth. Their hunting prowess reminds us of their magnificent but fearsome relatives, the big cats. Domestic cats let man "pet the tiger."

The unhappy truth, though, is that out of sympathy, house cats are often allowed to roam out of doors where they are devastating to our bird populations. Whether declawed or not, cats have phenomenal hunting skills and can pounce stealthily upon an adult bird preoccupied

with feeding in the grass, or easily upon a downed baby bird.

Certainly, feral cats are responsible for much bird predation, but lovable pets share the blame for backyard problems that make our yards unfriendly and dangerous for the birds we want to see and entice to our feeders.

In one proven study, Juncos rose to the top of the list of birds most affected by cat predation. I have seen a feral cat sneaking up on the Juncos in my yard

## Cool Cities, Continued from page 5`

and believe other research could mirror the same results as the above study. Pine Siskins, species we too seldom see, follow a short way down the list, with common backyard birds featuring prominently. Blue Jays, House Finches, Song Sparrows, Goldfinches, Tufted Titmice, Chickadees and Cardinals are not as commonly taken but their numbers taken countrywide are high.

Combined with window strikes, pesticides and herbicides, back yards often harbor a serious predator in the adorable (at least to a number of us) house cat whose domestication has not diminished its remarkable talents for dealing with prey, including those with wings.

The cat is a versatile creature. If confined, it can adapt to the most luxurious surroundings of a home. It may choose the best chair in the house. Or it may occupy a window seat watching birds and stalking in its imagination. When bored, cats simply sleep.

If we want birds at our feeders, we need to prevent cats from lurking thereabouts waiting for their chance, however cruel it might seem to deprive the pet of its freedom to roam as its inclination takes it.

**Audubon Society**

Membership Application

**Addresses to Remember**

President George W. Bush

The White House, 1600  
Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202-456-1111; fax:  
202-456-2993

Senator Ben Nelson

U.S. Senate, Washington DC  
20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-  
0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246;  
Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address:  
7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Senator Chuck Hagel

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C.  
20510-2705

Omaha Address: 9900 Nicholas St,  
Suite 325,

Omaha 68114

Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax: (202)  
224-5213

Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry

U.S. House of

The *Audubon Magazine* and your membership card will be sent to this address:

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City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Membership**

**National Audubon & Local Chapter**

**(1st & 2nd Year \$20)**

**Make check payable to National Audubon Society**

**Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha**

**19612 Ridgeway Road**

**Plattsmouth NE 68048**

**PO 3**

**7XCH**

**Memorials**

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates

Representatives, Washington, DC  
20515

Phone: (202) 225-4155 ; Fax: (202)  
226-5452

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Omaha 68154

Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

Representative Jeff Fortenberry

U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC 20515 Phone:  
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the memorials it receives.

When sending your 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 68103-0542

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



## Bequests

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

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**Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha  
68103-0542**

**Phone: 451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>**

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**Publication Laurine Blankenau.....451-3647**

**Publicity Jackie Scholar.....551-5045**

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**Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939**

**Speakers Bureau Eunice Levisay.....393-0545**

**Historian Kathleen Rose.....292-8912**

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<http://audubon-omaha.org>*

Send address changes to Kathy  
Schwery, 19612 Ridgeway Road,  
Plattsmouth NE 68048.

**Field Trip Elliott Bedows.....292-5017**

**Finance Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687**

**Fund Raising**

**Membership Kathy Schwery.....296-  
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