
The Meadowlark

September 2008

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ASO is a Chapter

*of the National Audubon
Society*

*Serving Eastern Nebraska
and Western Iowa*

Elegant Birds of Prey - Live Raptors at General Meeting

By Linda Dennis and Nancy Williams

Linda Dennis and Nancy Williams, working together to provide interesting programs for our general meetings, have invited Denise Lewis of Raptor Recovery Nebraska (RRN), Inc, to our Thursday, September 11, general meeting. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances St (1 block south of W. Center St).

Denise will show a few non-releasable education birds of prey and let us know what's been happening at RRN.

Transporting since 1999, she now coordinates the all-volunteer relay team in Eastern Nebraska, six members of which reside in Omaha. Many more dedicated, trained and licensed transporters reside statewide.

With this network, injured birds are quickly transported to Raptor Recovery's Center near Lincoln or to the nearest rehabilitator.

Now in its 33rd year, Raptor Recovery has seen over 7,000 raptors and has been credited with one of the highest national release rates, approximately 50%.

Come for an enjoyable evening, learning about and seeing live raptors.

A brief ASO business meeting will follow the program, along with an opportunity to socialize and enjoy refreshments.

Nancy and Linda would appreciate hearing from you regarding any upcoming programs you would like to see.

Field Trip to Schramm State Park

Sunday, September 7

On Sunday, September 7, Loren and Babs Padelford will lead a trip to Schramm State Park entitled "Anything That Flies." We will attempt to identify as many bird, butterfly, dragonfly and insect species as possible.

After lunch we will look for shorebirds, so if you wish to continue, bring a lunch.

Plan to meet at the Aquarium building, 8:00 a.m. A state park permit is required, so please consider carpooling with someone who has a sticker if you do not, or buy a one-day permit.

If you have questions or need directions, call 292-5556 or email lpdlfrd@cox.net

Bird Seed Sale

October 25 & 26

By Kathleen Crawford-Rose

It is not too soon to be thinking about your bird seed order for this fall. Many of us discovered this year that when we ran out of our initial October feed supply, the prices for seed had skyrocketed.

Our supplier gives us his estimated fall prices the last week of August, and you will receive your order blank in mid-September.

Please consider ordering some Audubon seed

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By Clem Klaphake

Issues concerning the environment are usually not clearly cut and dried or presented in black-and-white. Yet we often feel as if we have to take a very strong position pro or con. I would like to illustrate a current example in the bird world.

As many of you know, the Barred Owl has been increasing its geographic range westward and is intruding into the Spotted Owl's habitat of the Pacific Northwest. Not only is it intruding, it is pushing this 'threatened' species out or is killing them. What to do? Do we take the side of the Spotted Owl? Or the Barred Owl? Or do nothing and assume it is nature taking its course?

In the Pacific Northwest (northern California, Oregon, Washington and southern British Columbia) this is a very real dilemma, and action is being taken with a lot of controversy, as is to be expected. The two owls look somewhat alike except that the Barred Owl is more aggressive, is 15% bigger, their young hatch earlier, and the number of young produced is larger. In addition, the Barred Owl is less particular about its prey and habitat (Spotted Owls only live in old-growth forests.) This expansion of the Barred Owl's range has happened only since the 1970's.

So far scientific studies show the Spotted Owl numbers continue to drop every year. Research biologist Lowell Diller says, "Biologists in the field know without a doubt that the Barred Owls are having an effect on Spotted Owls. Maybe you don't know the mechanics—did they kill them? Did they drive them out? But it is clear they disappeared."

To further complicate this dilemma is the fact that old-growth habitat has been disappearing due to logging. In addition are the recent forest fires that have destroyed large chunks of these forests and the recent discovery of the "sudden oak" disease that infects the Spotted Owl's favorite trees, namely Douglas fir, grand fir and coastal redwoods. And finally the West Nile virus can be very deadly on all owl species.

Thus, what to do? Some feel too much emphasis is being put on the Barred Owl's intrusion. Others focus on habitat loss and poor national forest management. One of the plans put forth by the USFWS and the USDA is to eliminate Barred Owls (by shooting them with shotguns at night) on an experimental basis. This has been done experimentally, and more Spotted Owls showed up where they had been prior to the appearance of Barred Owls.

In this short essay, I have just barely scratched the surface of one example of an environmental dilemma that we all will have to deal with at some time. Bob Salinger, Conservation Director for the Audubon Society of Portland, is caught in the middle of this dilemma. He also is a raptor rehabber, which makes this situation even more sensitive.

When someone asked him how it was possible to even think about shooting Barred Owls, he replied, "It's your right to say, 'Don't kill Barred Owls'....but by doing that, you may be making a decision to allow another species to go extinct."

Bird Seed Sale, Cont. from page 1

products as the profits from this sale are used to fund many of our educational programs. If you have friends or neighbors who might be interested, call or email Kathleen Crawford-Rose (292-8912) or katcr@cox.net with their names and addresses.

We will also be asking members for help with the numerous tasks, some requiring strong muscles, others not.

The seed bags need to be unloaded at garage sites, and staffers need to be on hand on the dates of the sale for loading and paper work.

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

Please note. To clear up some misunderstanding: The Friends of Heron Haven Bird Seed sale is not part of Audubon's sale.

Will Our Drinking Water Be Safe?

Later this fall, Metropolitan Utilities District is set to begin supplying water to Omaha from its new Platte well field, but will that water be safe to drink?

By Kathy Schwery

been pressing the Corps to study a wider area and to make these reports public.

Just two miles southwest of the new well field, the groundwater and surface water are contaminated by military chemicals. These chemicals are found at the former Nebraska Ordnance Plant at Mead, which was listed as a Superfund site beginning in 1990. Most worrisome among the contaminants are trichloroethylene (TCE), a very potent human carcinogen, and the explosive RDX, which is a possible human carcinogen.

When Metropolitan Utilities District began planning for the Platte well field, it applied for and received a Section 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. The permit acknowledges that pumping of water from this well field may cause pollutants from the Mead site to move, thus contaminating Omaha drinking water.

In the permit, MUD asked for the right to pump approximately 50 million gallons per day annual average, which then would allow them to pump 100 million gallons per day in the peak summer months.

What would happen as a result of this additional amount of pumping is unknown, and thus of concern to Omaha residents as well as neighbors of this site. One hundred million gallons per day is about 40% of MUD's water capacity. This would represent a significant amount that could become contaminated.

Responsibility for cleanup at the Mead site rests with the Corps of Engineers. Instead of using methods to clean up the site in 20 years, which Nebraska state policy requires, the Corps instead chose cleanup operations which will continue for more than 100 years. Monitoring wells have been set up to test for contaminants and to map how far they have spread.

Area residents and Omaha citizens, understandably nervous about the safety of their water supply, have

According to minutes from the Regulatory Advisory Board, whose members deal with pollution issues at the Mead site, the Corps of Engineers has not yet fully documented the nature and the extent of dangerous chemicals in the water. In October 2007, a Corps spokesman at an RAB meeting expressed surprise that the contamination was not contained in just three areas, stating that its cleanup was not as effective as originally thought. The Corps also said it was surprised to learn that TCE was found in groundwater that supposedly contained only explosives.

It is distressing that the Corps appears to be using delaying tactics instead of making steady progress toward containing the contamination. A reading of the meeting minutes shows a lack of response to citizen requests for documents and maps, and years of "modeling" the problem and studying it when what is needed is immediate action.

The Environmental Protection Agency wrote the Corps in the fall of 2007 to say that the "remedy used is not containing the contaminated groundwater and not meeting final target groundwater cleanup goals, so the remedy is not working effectively." The Corps now states that the contamination will not be contained until 2011, three years after pumping begins. This seems totally unacceptable.

Citizens of Omaha should be concerned about the safety of water coming from the new well field. Metropolitan Utilities District and the Army Corps of Engineers need to explain why the contamination from the Ordnance Plant next to the well field is still not contained although the area was identified as a Superfund site 17 years ago.

MUD should explain why it is going to pump water

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Will Our Drinking Water Be Safe, *Cont. from p. 3*

from the area for three years before the pollutants will supposedly be controlled. If pumping causes the chemicals to move closer to the wells or to enter the water supply, Omaha residents will be in danger. The results of all testing done by MUD and the Corps of Engineers need to be made public so everyone can be aware of possible dangers to our drinking water. Nothing is so

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The results of all testing done by MUD and the Corps of Engineers need to be made public so everyone can be aware of possible dangers to our drinking water. Nothing is so

On Saturday, September 27, the Hitchcock Nature Center will hold a Hawkfest beginning at 1:00 p.m.

The event will include live hawk demonstrations by Raptor Recovery Nebraska. Banded raptors will be released. Activities for children will be offered, as well as refreshments.

The Hitchcock Nature Center is located 5 miles north of Crescent, IA, off Old Lincoln Highway.

A gentleman from Fremont, no longer able to use his birdfeeders, is offering them free to anyone interested.

He will meet you halfway between Omaha and Fremont. Contact John A. Haslam

108 Lakeshore Drive

Fremont NE 68025

402-727-9179.

Audubon Society

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If you find an
injured bird of
prey, please
contact a Raptor
Recovery Center
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The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates
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
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A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will
succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

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Send address changes to Kathy

**Recording Sec'y Urban Lehner.....
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where the Wood Thrush forever
sings, where the hours are early
morning hours, and there is dew on
the grass, and the day is forever
unproved.

Henry David Thoreau

**One swallow does not make a summer,
but one skein of geese, cleaving the
murk of a March thaw, is the spring.**

Aldo Leopold
