



# Meadowlark

NOV/DEC 2019  
VOL 48 ISSUE 6

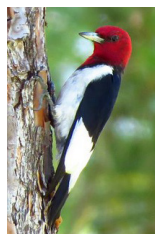
Published by Audubon Society of Omaha, a chapter of National Audubon Society since 1971

## Get a bird's-eye view of climate change report

DATA JUST RELEASED SHOW TWO-THIRDS OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS ARE AT RISK OF EXTINCTION FROM CLIMATE CHANGE

Be sure to catch Kristal Stoner's review of the recent update to the National Audubon Society's 2014 Climate Change Report at ASO's November Member Meeting, which will take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, November 14, in the Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center on the UNO Campus. Park in Lot E, directly north of the building. Tell the attendant that you are with the Audubon Society, and you will not have to pay to park.

Stoner, who serves as Executive Director for Audubon Nebraska, will describe how the updated report sheds more light on the impact of climate change on birds and the habitats they require to maintain healthy populations. The report's authors designed the update to offer a wide range of predictive data that clearly explain the potential effects of climate change on specific bird species at the county, state and national levels.



*Red-headed Woodpecker; one Nebraska bird showing decline*

In September, an analysis published in the journal *Science* documented a 29 percent decline in the number of birds in North America over the past half-century — that's nearly 3 billion fewer birds in just 50 years. ASO couldn't have picked a more timely topic. See you at the November meeting!

## 'Weather' and 'whether' are birds of a feather in late fall and early winter

by Clem Klaphake

Whether we see many birds and which species we see depends very much on the weather this time of year. Northern waterfowl start showing up ... if temperatures don't drop too low and local lakes don't freeze over. These northern waterfowl migrants can include Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, Common Mergansers, Lesser and Greater Scaup, and Ring-necked Ducks. Among their numbers also may be less common migrants, such as Black, Surf or White-winged Scoters or Long-tailed Ducks.



*Photo by Mike Benkis*



*Photo by Mike Benkis*

It also is that time of year when it is not uncommon to see Trumpeter Swans flock to nearby bodies of water, such as Carter Lake near the Omaha Airport. Lucky birders may even observe a couple of Tundra Swans in the mix. Other northern breeding birds that may drop by include the many sparrow species such as Harris's, White-throated, White-crowned, Fox, Leconte's, Nelson's, American Tree and Dark-eyed Juncos. A number of these will show up at backyard bird feeders. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers may also make an appearance.

What makes the season so special is that we normally don't see many of these birds in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa in warm weather. Resident species, such as the Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpecker, all will come to bird feeders to eat year-round.



*Photo by Mike Benkis*

### RIGHT HERE, RIGHT HOW: YOU CAN COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Time for November Sweater Weather

As the weather turns colder, put on a sweater or cuddle under a blanket before you turn up your thermostat.

#### Try Nicer De-icer this December

Stock up on chloride-free de-icer spray. It's safe for animals, non-toxic to plants and better for the watershed.

## ON THE HORIZON

# November:

### MEMBER MEETING

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14

**Speaker:** Kristal Stoner,  
Executive Director for  
Audubon Nebraska



**When:** 7-9 p.m.

**Where:** Weitz Community  
Center on the UNO Dodge Campus

**Who:** Members and the public (free)

### FIELD TRIP:

#### BIRDING SARPY COUNTY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16

SHADOW LAKE

**What:** Bird Sarpy County  
with Clem Klaphake



**When:** 8 a.m.-12 p.m.

**Where:** Rendezvous at  
Shadow Lake on the south  
side of Shadow Lake Shopping Center,  
at 72nd Street and Highway 370. Look  
for us in the parking area on the east  
end of Shadow Lake, south of Schram  
Road on Lakeview Drive. From there,  
we will work our way west to spot  
ducks, geese, sparrows and other winter  
migrants. Bring binoculars and spotting  
scopes (if you have one), and be sure to  
dress appropriately for the weather.

**Who:** Birders looking for a brisk  
walk, seasonal serenity and bird-seedy  
characters. Lunch will take place  
wherever we are when the urge strikes

# December:

### NO MEMBER MEETING

#### CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28

**What:** Annual Christmas Bird Count

**When:** Varies by team captain

**Where:** Teams are assigned to one of  
four different areas in Sarpy County

**Who:** Birders of all abilities

**How:** Register by emailing Rick Schmid  
at: [schmid\\_r@msn.com](mailto:schmid_r@msn.com)

**Food:** Pizza dinner provided for all  
participants at end of day when teams  
gather to tally results

# Field notes from the President

by Bob Wells, President, Audubon Society of Omaha

Within the last two weeks, two important new studies on the status of birds and their habitats have been published, one from the journal *Science* and one from the National Audubon Society.

The journal *Science* has published an exhaustive study of the bird population dynamic in the United States and Canada over the past 50 years. This retrospective study used data gathered from the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, Breeding Bird Surveys and eBird data. Researchers also were able to employ high-resolution weather radar to estimate bird populations. Data showed an overall decline of 2.9 billion birds since 1970. In addition to recognized known endangered species, this study tracked declines in several species of everyday backyard birds. Across-the-board declines in warbler species alone totaled 617 million birds. Blackbird species plummeted by 440 million birds. Even the lowly Starling, known to be a prolific breeder, declined by 49 percent.

While the authors of this study did not identify specific causes of this massive decline, others have mentioned the usual threats, such as the disappearance and fragmentation of bird habitats and increased use of pesticides, particularly neonicotinoids. In a very recent study, neonicotinoids were shown to disrupt bird behavior and interfere with the timing of bird migration.

Positive takeaways from this study show continuing increases in the number of Bald Eagles and Falcons. Falcon populations increased by 33 percent. The small warbler-like group of birds, Vireos, enjoyed a jump of 89 million, about 53 percent. Study authors could not understand why a species similar to warblers would have a large increase while warblers themselves would fall so precipitously. Improvements in the management of wetlands yielded the only habitat-based increase in bird species.

The National Audubon Society is recommending increased protection of bird-rich habitats — specifically the Great Lakes area and the Colorado River Basin. Other recommendations include keeping cats indoors to prevent them from preying on birds. The National Audubon Society has recommended addressing bird window strike problems with window strike decals and interior building lighting.

In addition to this important new study from the journal *Science*, the National Audubon Society released an update to its 2014 Climate Change Report on October 10. I was able to attend a webinar briefing on the update, and I can tell you there is a great deal of insightful, important information that you will want to see. I strongly urge you to participate in our November General Members' Meeting on the UNO campus, where Kristal Stoner, State Executive Director for the Audubon Society, will talk about the update in greater detail.

# The eyes have it — your photos

We need your bird photos! Please email them to [Meadow Lark at asopublisher@gmail.com](mailto:asopublisher@gmail.com)



Photo by Eric Scholar



Photo by Ryan Johnson

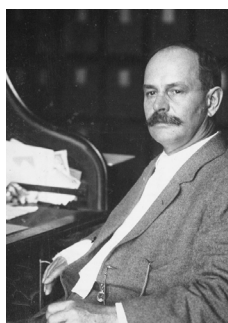


Photo by Phil Swanson

# Count yourself in on the Audubon Christmas Bird Count *by Rick Schmid*

## HOW IT BEGAN

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas “Side Hunt.” They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition: a “Christmas Bird Census” that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count (CBC).



*Ornithologist,  
Frank M. Chapman*

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

From December 14 through January 5 every year, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation action.

The data collected by observers over the past century enable Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and others to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys, such as the Breeding Bird Survey, the CBC provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed over the past hundred years. This long-term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitats, and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well.

## HOW IT'S HELPED

Here are just a few ways in which Christmas Bird Count data have contributed to our understanding of the threats facing bird populations:

- Audubon's 2014 Climate Change Report is a comprehensive, first-of-its kind study that predicts how climate change could affect the ranges of 588 North American birds. Of the 588 North American bird species Audubon studied, more than half are likely to be in trouble. Our models indicate that 314 species will lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has included Audubon's climate change work from CBC data as one of 26 indicators of climate change in its 2012 report.
- In 2007, CBC data were instrumental in the development of Audubon's Common Birds in Decline Report, which revealed that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past 40 years.

## HOW LOCAL BIRDERS HELP

Formal records and data for the Omaha CBC date back to December 29, 1963, although there may have been some CBCs in the Omaha area prior to that. Since 1963 there has been an Omaha CBC every year

## HOW IT'S DONE

Per CBC guidelines, the Omaha count area encompasses a circle 15 miles in diameter, centered at the Base Lake south of Bellevue. The circle is divided into four quadrants, with a captain and team of counters assigned to each. The 4 quadrants are:

### 1. BELLEVUE

*(includes Fontenelle Forest)*

### 2. PLATTSMOUTH

*(includes Schilling WMA)*

### 3. LAKE MANAWA, IOWA

### 4. GLENWOOD, IOWA

*(between Glenwood and Missouri River)*

There are opportunities for participants to count morning-only, afternoon-only or all day. Quadrant captains usually start counting shortly after dawn and continue until their quadrants are sufficiently covered, normally by mid- to late afternoon. Counters take breaks during the day and usually stop for lunch. One member of each team is designated as the recorder, and s/he records time spent counting, miles driven and walked, and name/number of each species found. At day's end, results from all quadrants are compiled during a pizza dinner.

People of all ages and birding abilities are welcome to participate in the count. Inexperienced counters are always placed with experienced leaders. Each person participating in the CBC should bring binoculars and dress for the weather. Some groups spend a lot of time hiking, while others spend more time in the car. Counters are assigned to groups according to their preferences for hiking versus riding.

The goal is to find as many birds and as many different species as possible ... and to have an enjoyable day afield with fellow bird enthusiasts.

The 2019 Omaha CBC will be held on Saturday, December 28, 2019. To register to participate, email Rick Schmid at: [schmid\\_r@msn.com](mailto:schmid_r@msn.com)

## HISTORICAL RECORDS FOR THE OMAHA CBC



### NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL BIRDS

**LOWEST: 3,131**

**HIGHEST: 280,782**

**MEDIAN: 12,976**



### NUMBER OF SPECIES

**LOWEST: 42**

**HIGHEST: 83**

**MEDIAN: 61**



# Holiday gifts for birders, bird brains (and birds)

*Please note: Prices reflect research at press time. They may change.*

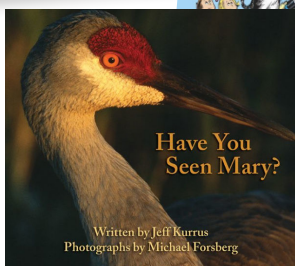
## FOR THE NEIGHBORS:

Introduce feathered friends to your neighbors and co-workers. Take some of your newly acquired, gourmet bird seed and re-package it in up-cycled containers such as jelly jars or brown paper bags. Create custom labels with feeding instructions and use last year's greeting cards to make gift tags. Cost determined by how much seed you give and how crafty you feel.



## FOR CHILDREN AGES 5-8:

Children's books about birds that we recommend include *Nerdy Birdy* by Aaron Reynolds, *Have You Seen Mary?* by Nebraska author Jeff Kurrus and *Fine Feathered Friends* by Dr. Seuss. Available at most online bookstores. Cost: \$9-\$12.



## FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

Membership in the National Audubon Society. It includes a bi-monthly color magazine with in-depth birding information, updates and environmental news. And it provides funding to help bird science all over the world. Also includes automatic membership in Audubon Society of Omaha. Great for those who are beginning their bird journey. Go to [Audubon.org](http://Audubon.org) for gift membership details. Cost: \$30 per year.



## FOR THE SPOILED BIRD:

A heated birdbath! Perfect for our winter and spring weather conditions. Many styles are available for deck mounting, freestanding or sitting on the ground. Keeps water from freezing so birds can drink what they need without the trouble of having to set out water every four hours. Requires an outdoor electrical outlet and extension cord. Available at [Wild Birds Unlimited](http://Wild Birds Unlimited) or at [Bestnest.com](http://Bestnest.com). Cost: \$65 and up.

## FOR THE CUDDLER:

Audubon Birds with sound by Wild Republic. These plush songbirds accurately sing their own songs. Available in over 30 different birds, from Bluebirds to Woodpeckers, these stuffed toys are incredibly popular with children of all ages. (I had to buy one for my husband after giving them as prizes to students.) Cute, cuddly and chirpy, they also make good gifts for shut-ins or get-wells. Available online at [Stuffed Safari](http://Stuffed Safari) (search for Audubon Birds) or at the Fontenelle Forest gift shop. Cost: \$9-\$12 each.



## FOR THE COFFEE TABLE SET:

Audubon Birds of America: The Audubon Society Baby Elephant Folio. Give a new printing of this classic edition of John James Audubon's masterwork. Although the illustrations were created in the 17th century, they are timeless and worthy of display or casual browsing in any well-appointed home. Available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Cost: \$166, new. On a budget, give the Kindle version for \$10. Or download FREE high-resolution digital files to print at home and frame. Go to [Audubon.org](http://Audubon.org).



# ASO Prairies offer cool visits in cold weather

by Glenn Pollock

Warm up to the opportunities cooler weather presents for visits to our Audubon and Cuming City Cemetery Prairies.

November is a good time to visit a prairie and collect a few seeds to spruce up your yard with beautiful native grasses. Big bluestem and Indian grasses grow well in most lawns in the Omaha area. These tall grasses are well behaved and make great landscaping plants. They even remain colorful through the winter.

Caring for your seeds over the winter is

critical. These seeds will not germinate in the spring unless you give them a cold treatment during cold weather. Just find a cold place in your garage or on your back porch and put the seeds in a metal container with a tight lid to protect them from critters, which will eat them.



Rare Sand Milkweed at ASO Prairie.  
Photo by Glenn Pollock

Our prairies can be incredibly colorful and really put on a good show in November and December. After the first snow, colors literally jump out at you. Winter landscapes create stunning photo opps, so be sure to keep your camera—and cold weather gear—ready.

## Board of Directors recap

by Shannon Engberg, Secretary

**SEPTEMBER MEMBERS' MEETING:** During her “Plants, Pollinators and People” presentation, Xerces Society’s Jennifer Hopwood described the widespread declines of invertebrates and the importance of native insect habitat conservation for bees and butterflies. Planting for pollinators is crucial, she said, emphasizing that every garden is important. Hopwood urged gardeners to plant a mix of native, nectar-rich flowers all season, noting that pollinators appreciate a steady supply of food. Visit Xerces Society’s online pollinator resources for info.

**DIRECTOR AND OFFICER ELECTIONS:** Three new members of ASO’s Board of Directors were elected during the September meeting: Megan Deichert (with Keep Nebraska Beautiful), Christine Jacobsen (Director of Education at Lauritzen Gardens), and Kayla Johnson (restoration biologist at Fontenelle Forest). On a related note, ASO Second Vice President Virginia Stauffer formed a nominating committee for the 2020/21 term for ASO leaders, which the board approved. Committee members are Kathy Schwery, Jackie Scholar, Shannon Engberg, and Helen Bartee.

**UNO CAMPUS AUDUBON CHAPTER INITIATIVE:** ASO is addressing the National Audubon Society’s goal of increasing college and university student participation through its UNO Campus Audubon Chapter Initiative, led by Bob Wells and Kayla Johnson. ASO is creating a new partnership with UNO professors and ornithologists, Dr. John McCarty and Dr. LaReesa Wolfenbarger, which may involve assisting with UNO’s spring semester Ornithology classes.

**CUMING CITY CEMETERY UPDATE:** Restoration plans are beginning to take shape at ASO’s Cuming City Cemetery property. Shrub removal will take place soon, with help from contractors.

**ASO EDUCATION PROGRAM:** Programming for the 2019-20 school year is under way. Education Committee Chair Elizabeth Chalen said that fall field trips have been lined up.

## RESOURCES & INFO:

### HOW TO JOIN/RENEW/UPDATE

Join or renew your membership online at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) and select “Get Involved.” Save paper and avoid confusion.

Your membership with National Audubon automatically makes you a member of Audubon Society of Omaha.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Please call National Audubon toll-free at 1-844-428-3826, or send an email to [audubon@emailcustomerservice.com](mailto:audubon@emailcustomerservice.com)

### STAY CONNECTED

Sign up to get our email at [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) under “Get Involved.”

### BEQUESTS & GIFTS

A bequest to Audubon Society of Omaha is a gift to those who will succeed us, a gift to secure our natural heritage.

Want to send a gift on behalf of someone? Mail your gift along with the name and address of the person to be notified:

Audubon Society of Omaha  
PO Box 3542, Omaha, NE 68103  
We’ll send them a thank-you note letting them know of your gift.

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS:

We need volunteers for our 2020 Student Art Contest and Show. There are a wide variety of dates and times available. Contact Virginia Stauffer at [vstauffer1@yahoo.com](mailto:vstauffer1@yahoo.com)

We need volunteers to help clear invasive plants and collect seeds at our prairie preserves. Contact Glenn Pollock at [pollockg@cox.net](mailto:pollockg@cox.net).

### TAKE ACTION

Big things are happening, so communicate with your elected officials. Go to [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org) for links to contact info for each.

### INJURED BIRD?

Raptors: Call 866-888-7261 to speak to a Raptor Recovery volunteer.

Non-raptor: Call Nebraska Wildlife Rehab at (402) 234-2473.



Audubon  
Society of Omaha  
P.O. Box 3542  
Omaha, NE 68103  
audubon-omaha.org

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
OMAHA, NEBRASKA  
PERMIT NO. 79

STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

# the Meadowlark

NOV/DEC 2019  
VOL 48 ISSUE 6

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Climate  
Change News

Meetings  
& Field Trips

Christmas  
Bird Count

Holiday Gift  
Ideas

*Photo by Mike Benkis*

*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.*

### CONTACT US AT:

P.O. Box 3542  
Omaha, NE 68103-3542  
402-445-4138  
website: [audubon-omaha.org](http://audubon-omaha.org)  
email: [audubonomaha@gmail.com](mailto:audubonomaha@gmail.com)

### ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Bob Wells  
Past President: Matt Miller  
1st Vice President: Jackie Scholar  
2nd Vice President: Virginia Stauffer  
Treasurer: Betty Fullerton  
Secretary: Shannon Engberg

### ELECTED DIRECTORS

Ruth Bentzinger  
Mark Cave  
Elizabeth Chalen  
Grace Gaard  
Meagan Deichert  
Christine Jacobsen  
Michaela Johnson  
Anne Maguire

### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Art Contest: Virginia Stauffer  
Education: Elizabeth Chalen  
Finance: Betty Fullerton  
Fundraising: Anne Maguire  
Grant Review: Shannon Engberg  
Legislative Affairs: Bob Fuchs  
Marketing and Outreach: Anne Maguire  
Membership: Kathy Schwery  
Natural Areas Management:  
Glenn Pollock  
Nominating: Virginia Stauffer  
Program: Bob Wells  
Bird Seed Sale: John & Betty Fullerton  
ASO Administrator: Candace Gorton  
Executive Director, Audubon Nebraska:  
Kristal Stoner