
The Meadowlark

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*ASO is a Chapter
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Atlas

By Nancy Leonard

According to the dictionary “atlas” has several meanings. Atlas was a Titan who bore the weight of the heavens on his shoulders; an atlas is a collection of maps, tables and charts illustrating any subject; an atlas is anyone who bears a great burden. Our speaker for our February meeting combines the latter two of those definitions.

Wayne Mollhoff bears the burden of Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project. In the early 1980s Wayne volunteered to coordinate the first atlas. Starting from scratch he designated the methods and sites for data collection, and designed the data sheets and wrote instructions for collecting data. Funding had to be obtained as well as volunteers. There were 443 survey blocs to be manned, and when he couldn't find them, he “volunteered” himself. Wayne also served as editor of the atlas, writing almost 200 species descriptions as well as the other

narrative material. When the six-year study was published in 2001 it was a “bible” for Nebraska birders.

Now he is doing it again. As Wayne told me, “populations and breeding ranges of birds are constantly changing, and one of the most valuable tools available to biologists is a state atlas project.” He will talk to us about what an atlas is, why they are useful and some of the changes he is seeing in bird populations since the first atlas project. Join us for what is sure to be a very interesting talk about the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project on Thursday, February 8, 2007. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (one block south of Center Street). The program will be followed by a short business meeting and a social time. As always, non-members are welcome. Come and hear the latest information about Nebraska's breeding bird populations.

Election at April General Meeting

ASO Bylaws prescribe the nominating process, and the 2nd Vice President serves as Nominating Chair. Next fiscal year's nominees for elected positions were recruited by committee members Jackie Scholar, Roland Barth, Patty Albright, Jerry Toll, Linda Dennis, Tad Leeper, and Nelli Falzgraf.

Election of officers and directors shall take place after the 7:30 PM Thursday, April 12 General Meeting Program at Hanscom Park United Methodist Church. Audubon members at the meeting are eligible to vote. The slate of candidates consists of incumbents and new nominees:

Elliott Bedows for President; Jackie Scholar for 1st Vice President; Nelli Falzgraf for 2nd Vice President; Fritz Davis

for Treasurer; Urban Lehner for Recording Secretary; Pauline Dickey for Corresponding Secretary; Jerry Toll for Director; Nancy Williams for Director; Urban Lehner for Director; Patty Albright for Director.

Terms for officers are one year and for director, two years. Next fiscal year, Eric Scholar and Nancy Leonard will be serving the second year of their two-year director terms, so won't be elected now.

Please mark your calendar for a great April 12 program, election of officers and directors who'll start July 1, 2007, and excellent company and conversation.

Ethanol Revisited

By Kathy Schwery

Since writing the column about ethanol production which appeared in the December issue of the Meadowlark, I have read three recent articles on this subject which contain additional information I would like to share.

The Center for Rural Affairs newsletter cites these adverse effects of ethanol production:

Increased use of pesticides and yield enhancing seeds. More pesticide use would harm birds and animals, as well as humans, and most probably increase the “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico.

Taking land out of Conservation Reserve Programs to plant corn on it, thus reducing the amount of habitat for animals and birds. Grassland birds are already suffering because of huge habitat losses and this would further decrease their numbers.

Much higher corn prices, which will increase the cost of foods made from corn.

A 51 cents a gallon subsidy paid for by taxpayers. If this subsidy went to beginning farmers or family farmers, that would be helpful, but proposals to site new ethanol plants next to huge feedlots means profits will go to corporations.

In regard to land being taken out of the Conservation Reserve Program, the Center for Rural Affairs author suggests there should be financial incentives for farmers to leave parts of fields in contour grass strips, windbreaks and grass waterways. If ethanol is made from grasses and crop residue, this would leave the fields stripped of habitat, but with some planning and research now, perhaps the focus could be on planting a resource conservation crop such as alfalfa for ethanol. Tax credits could be used much more effectively to achieve desired outcomes, by applying them only to farming methods which harvest grasses at times which do not affect wildlife as well as those methods which leave crop residue to prevent soil erosion.

The final point this article discusses is food shortages caused by increased corn ethanol production. The author mentions that prolonged drought could contribute to this problem and states that some grain should be held off the markets in case of severe

food shortages.

While also mostly opposed to the expansion of ethanol plants across our nation, Manfred Kroger, a food scientist at Penn State University, focuses on a different objection to these plants. Writing in a World-Herald column, he states that the United States is running out of water and the escalating diversion of water for ethanol production is a serious and growing problem. According to Kroger, it takes four gallons of water to make one gallon of ethanol and an average plant requires 750,000 gallons of water a day. No one is monitoring aquifers to ensure that ethanol producers do not overtap fragile underground water supplies. With the Great Plains in the midst of a prolonged drought, and the number of ethanol plants doubling every 17 months, we need to ask whether overpumping of aquifers for irrigation and ethanol production is worth the risk of food and water shortages. Mr. Kroger suggests that corn-based ethanol is not a sustainable technology and if our country would improve gasoline mileage for vehicles, we would see the same economic and environmental benefits without depleting our groundwater resources.

An international consortium of scientists recently released a report about the effects of ethanol production on food supplies and corn prices. The scientists see many areas of concern as ethanol production increases. Poor countries around the world that use corn as a food staple will have to compete for supplies taken by ethanol production. In some areas of our country, the ethanol industry is already using up all the available supplies of corn, which puts pressure on livestock producers. Another area of concern to these scientists is how best to increase corn yields without causing harm to the environment from chemicals.

As we can see from the issues raised in all of these articles, increased ethanol production must be accompanied by responsible university research, better management of our water resources, and closer monitoring of ethanol projects. In the rush to build ethanol plants in this country, we also must not lose sight of the fact that much higher fuel economy standards on all vehicles would greatly increase our energy security without the accompanying problems associated with ethanol production.

Personal Solutions – What You Can Do About Global Warming

Global warming being a current hot topic (pardon the pun), you may have heard some of this advice. As with other lifestyle changes, a bit of repeating may be needed, and it is better to ponder changes than to indulge in frustration over what others are doing and not doing. So decide to adopt one or several of the methods to do your part in reducing harm to our world. The advice that follows is taken from the Union of Concerned Scientists' postings.

Americans' per capita emissions of heat-trapping gases is 5.6 tons – more than double the amount of western Europeans. We can make choices to reduce our families global warming impact. Smart choices and energy-efficient products may require an investment up front but often pay you back in energy savings in a couple of years. A few to remember:

The car you drive: the most important personal climate decision. When you buy your next car, look for the one with the best fuel economy in its class. Each gallon of gas you use releases 25 pounds of heat-trapping carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere. Better gas mileage not only reduces global warming, but will also save you thousands of dollars at the pump over the life of the vehicle. Compare the fuel economy of the cars you're considering and look for new technologies like hybrid engines.

Look for Energy Star. When it is time to replace appliances, look for the Energy Star label (refrigerators, freezers, furnaces, air conditioners and water heaters use the most energy). These items may cost a bit more initially, but the energy savings will pay back the extra investment in a couple of years. If each household in the U.S. replaced its existing appliances with the most efficient models, we would save \$15 billion in energy costs and eliminate 175 million tons of heat-trapping gases.

Unplug a freezer. One of the quickest ways to reduce energy use: unplug the extra refrigerator or freezer you rarely use (except for holidays and parties). This can reduce a family's carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 10 percent. (Did any of you think of this?)

Get a home energy audit. Take advantage of the free

home energy audits offered by many utilities. Simple measures such as installing a programmable thermostat to replace your old dial unit or sealing and insulating heating and cooling ducts can reduce a typical family's carbon emissions by about 5 percent.

Light bulbs matter. If every household in the U.S. replaced one regular light bulb with an energy-saving model, we could reduce global warming pollution by more than 90 billion pounds over the life of the bulbs; the same as taking 6.3 million cars off the road. So replace your incandescent bulbs with more efficient compact fluorescents, which now come in all shapes and sizes. You'll be cutting back on heat-trapping pollution and saving money on your electric bills and light bulbs.

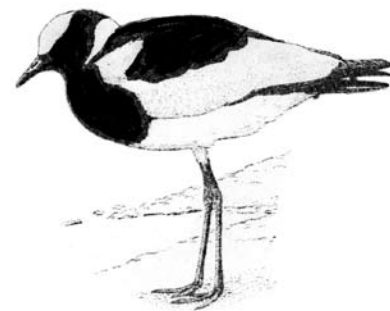
Rivers & Wildlife Celebration

What a great way to welcome the spring! If you haven't done so yet, make your reservation soon for the annual Rivers & Wildlife Celebration in Kearney, March 16-18. Rooms at the conference site (at a reduced rate for those attending the conference) fill up early, so contact one of the sites below to insure space. Nearby motels are also available.

View the Sandhill Cranes at the blinds and from the roadsides, join field trips to see the Prairie Chickens on their leks, visit sites for migrating waterfowl, or travel to other local sites.

Renowned speakers will give programs at a banquet and other events throughout the weekend.

For more information about the event or to make room reservations (best to do this soon), contact nebraska@audubon.org; www.Nebraska.audubon.org or call (402) 797-2301. For crane viewing info, contact Rowe Sanctuary at (308) 468-5282, www.rowesanctuary.org.



Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 16-19

The January Meadowlark carried an item about the GBBC, with information about signing up and reporting.

The sponsors are Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society.

The rules are easy: count one or more days in any area: your yard, a park, woods, or other. Simply count the highest number of each species you see in an outing or a sitting, and enter the tally at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Omaha Christmas Count

by Betty Grenon

The Omaha count was held on Dec. 16 with very mild weather and lots of open water, which certainly helped our count. We had 64 species on the day of the count and a total of 15,264 individuals. With the "count week" birds, which include any different species seen three days before and three days after the count date, we added another 8 species. Our highest count day results were 74 in 1999. Thirty-three counters helped out; 30 in the field and 3 at feeders. There were not many highs or lows or unusual birds, unless you consider our biggie, the Slaty-backed Gull. That bird stayed around until Christmas Day and gave many birders from surrounding states a life bird.

More feeder watchers will be needed next year as much of our Nebraska area is being constantly developed and we are losing much of the rural habitat that we had originally.

You can access fascinating information about reports from your area or others about the prevalence of winter birds.

Have an enjoyable time while you perform a valuable service tracking the populations of birds. You do not need expert skills to participate. You will be given all of the information you will need at the above web address.



Green Art Exhibit Continues Through Feb. 28

The Enviro-conscious art exhibit, free and open to the public, opened January 6 and continues through February 28.

It will include artwork involving recycling of materials and works that form a springboard to spur conversation or action on environmental topics and issues.

Hours are M-F 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. and Sat 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. It is free and open to the public.

The exhibit will be held at the Bellevue University auditorium. For information call the Art Gallery, 293-2048, or Jackie Scholar at 293-3790.

Introductory Bird Identification Class

Learn how to identify the birds in your backyard, neighborhood or when on vacation. With over 50 million birders in the U.S. this recreational activity is also the fastest growing outdoor activity today. This class will be led/taught by Clem Klaphake of the Audubon Society of Omaha and includes several local field trips. No prior knowledge of bird identification is needed.

The class will meet on the following four Saturdays: March 24th, April 7th and 21st, and May 5th. The class will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon at the Buffett Forest Learning Center at Fontenelle Forest. There will be short field trips each time the class meets. The class is limited to 15 participants. Cost is \$20.00. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. To sign up contact Clem Klaphake at ckavian@cox.net or 292-2276.

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
Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax: (202) 224-5213
Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4155; Fax: (202) 226-5452
Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

Representative Jeff Fortenberry
U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC
20515
Phone: (202) 225-4806
Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman
Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln, NE 68509
Phone: (402) 471-2244; Fax: 471-6031

Mayor Mike Fahey
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183
Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-5555

Audubon Society Membership Application

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

Name _____

Street _____

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

Bequests

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

Memorials

The Audubon Society of Omaha
greatly appreciates the memorials it
receives.

When sending your gift, please iden-
tify 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.



Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha 68103-05
Phone: 451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

Elected Officers:

President ----- Elliott Bedows.....292-5017
1st Vice President ----- Jackie Scholar.....551-5045
2nd Vice President ----- Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687
Treasurer ----- Patty Albright.....323-1966
Past President ----- Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687
Corresponding
Secretary ----- Pauline Dickey.....932-8205

Elected Directors ----- Laurine Blankenau.....451-3647
Linda Dennis.....733-6548
Mace Hack.....934-5040
Urban Lehner.....330-3888
Nancy Leonard.....330-3888
Eric Scholar.....551-5045

Standing Committee Chairpersons:

Conservation Mace Hack.....934-5040
Education Clem Klaphake.....292-2276
Field Trip ----- Elliott Bedows.....292-5017
Finance ----- Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687
Fund Raising ----- Mace Hack.....934-5040
Hospitality ----- DwanDean Leach.....346-5769
Membership ----- Kathy Schwery.....296-4788

Standing Committee Chairpersons, cont.

Natural Areas Mgt. ----- Eric Scholar.....551-5045
Omaha Raptor Team --- Jenny Henricksen...895-5487
Program ----- Nancy Leonard.....330-3888
Publication ----- Laurine Blankenau.....451-3647
Publicity ----- Jackie Scholar.....551-5045

Other Activities:

Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs Kathleen Rose..... 292-8912
----- Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939
Speakers Bureau ----- Eunice Levisay.....393-0545
Historian ----- Kathleen Rose.....292-8912
ASO State Board Rep. --- Mace Hack.....934-5040
NAS Board Member ---

The Meadowlark is published monthly September through May, plus a summer issue. The newsletter may be accessed on our web site, <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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