

CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

Officers 2018

Co-Presidents

Dr. Don Gentry
Meredyth Gentry
308-436-2495
dmgentry@gmail.com

Vice President

-Programs
Tim Lane
308-586-1277
telane63@yahoo.com

Secretary -Field Trips

Alice Kenitz
308-436-2959
akenitz@prairieweb.com

Treasurer-Editor

-Field Trips
Kathy De Lara
308-631-2792
renosmom@charter.net

Board of Directors

Donna Davey
308-632-5767
donna@cddavey.com

Rod & Marie Smith
308-631-0674
mlou_smith@yahoo.com

Amber Schiltz
402-310-6137
Amber.schiltz
@birdconservancy.org

www.WildcatAudubon.org

[www.facebook.com/
WildcatAudubon](http://www.facebook.com/WildcatAudubon)

Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

For many birders (myself included) the Christmas Bird Count is a highlight of the year. Each count location picks its own date between December 14 and January 5. This year we scheduled the Scottsbluff Count for December 29, the day before the Lake McConaughy count in hopes that a few birders from eastern Nebraska would want to participate in both counts. We did have two birders from the Omaha area and one from Fremont, so that scheduling did help us this year.

The local count is sponsored by the Wildcat Audubon Society and is one of more than 2500 held in the Western Hemisphere and sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The Scottsbluff Count had 9 observers in the field plus one watching at a feeder. Nationally, more than 72,000 volunteer observers were expected to take part. This is the 118th year for the CBC which is held annually between December 14 and January 5. The Scottsbluff CBC found 52 species and 14,512 individual birds—average for Scottsbluff is 48 species. Each count is held within a 15-mile diameter circle and an attempt is made to count each individual in that circle. Scottsbluff's circle diameter is near Dome Rock.

This is the first time a Greater Yellowlegs has been seen on the Scottsbluff CBC. This is a small shorebird that spends summers in Alaska and Canada and winters along the US coast, in southern states, and in Mexico. Song Sparrows (18) and Rough-legged Hawks (14) were seen in unusually high numbers. During Count Week (the three days before and three days after the count day), six additional species were seen. These were Cooper's Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, Common Grackle, and Red Crossbill. Additional species identified include ; Cackling Goose 12, Canada Goose 3409, Gadwall 2, American Wigeon 624, Mallard 4174, Northern Shoveler 13, Northern Pintail 23, Ring-necked Duck 55, Lesser Scaup 2, Common Goldeneye 85, Ring-necked Pheasant 4, Great Blue Heron 2, Bald Eagle 21, Northern Harrier 4, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 8, Ferruginous Hawk 2, raptor sp. 1, buteo sp. 1, American Coot 1, Killdeer 1, Wilson's Snipe 4, Rock Pigeon 573, Eurasian Collared-Dove 1359, Mourning Dove 5, Great Horned Owl 1, Belted Kingfisher 2, Downy Woodpecker 4, Northern Flicker 34, American Kestrel 17, Prairie Falcon 2, Northern Shrike 1, Blue Jay 55, Black-billed Magpie 7, American Crow 2, Horned Lark 527, Black-capped Chickadee 3, Red-breasted Nuthatch 8, Pygmy Nuthatch 2, Townsend's Solitaire 3, American Robin 181, European Starling 1654, American Tree Sparrow 298, White-crowned Sparrow 176, Dark-eyed junco 275, Red-winged Blackbird 141, Western Meadowlark 16, Meadowlark sp. 15, House Finch 80, Pine Siskin 83, American Goldfinch 27, and House Sparrow 478.

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival & Viewing

The Audubon Nebraska Crane Festival will take place March 22-25, 2018, bringing together hundreds of crane lovers from around the country to Kearney, Nebraska, to interact with a wide range of environmental speakers, take part in incredible birding trips, and, best of all, experience the world's largest gathering of Sandhill Cranes! For more information on the festival or to register go to <http://ne.audubon.org/birds/crane-festival>

Each spring around 600,000 Sandhill Cranes congregate on Nebraska's Platte River in what has been hailed America's Great Migration. For over 40 years Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary has been working to protect and improve the river and surrounding habitat for the cranes and other birds who depend on it to survive.

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary invites nature enthusiasts, bird lovers, and photographers to witness this migration from viewing blinds strategically placed along the Platte River. Viewings are scheduled daily from March 5 through April 10, last approximately two hours, and are led by trained guides. Walking distances to the viewing blinds range from 1/4 to 1/2 mile over relatively level terrain, with a portion of the walk occurring during low light conditions (before sunrise/after sunset).

Reservations can be made by calling 308-468-5282 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. CST, Monday through Friday or online at <http://rowe.audubon.org/visit/sandhill-crane-viewing-rowe-sanctuary> If you would like to bring children or a member of your party has ambulatory issues, please contact us at 308-468-5282 for options.

You can witness the spectacle via the live Crane Cam. From the beginning of March through mid-April, a camera on the Platte River provides outstanding views of Sandhill Cranes roosting by the thousands in the shallow water. The best time to watch the cranes on the Crane Cam is early morning, starting from first light to well after sunrise, and from late afternoon until dark. During the day, cranes feed in local farm fields and wet meadows. They return to the river to spend the night on sandbars, secure from predators. <http://rowe.audubon.org/crane-cam>



Sandhill
found in

Sandhill Cranes

Photo by Marie Smith

Cranes can also be
Scotts Bluff County

late February to early April. They may be seen in the fields and pastures around the lakes or at Lake Alice or Winter's Creek Lake. You may have to drive around for a while or go out a few times to find them. We have seen as many as 5000 on the ground at a time, or just a few flying over. We will have a field trip on March 24th to look for them. If you would like to join us there is more information on the events page.

How To Use eBird

Article taken in part from Audubon.org

Since its launch in 2002, eBird has revolutionized the way birders worldwide report and share their observations. A joint project by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, eBird is a free online program that allows birders to track their sightings and search in real-time.

eBird now has more than 100,000 active users, and participation is growing at the dizzying rate of about 40 percent per year. The result is a rich database on bird abundance and distribution that is available to all.

To join the citizen science revolution, all you need is a username (it's free and easy to create an account). There is no "profile and you can't contact other users through the site. Once you're in, eBird is all about one thing: uploading checklists of birds you've encountered in the field, with enough scientific precision that those observations can feed into one massive, searchable database.

The concept is simple. Anytime you go birding in a specific place (like your backyard, or a park, or a local hotspot), you keep track of the birds you see there—*all* of them, not just the unusual ones. You tally how many birds you saw of each species, remember how long you spent birding, and note how far you traveled. Back at home, you visit the eBird website, click on "Submit Observations," indicate where you were, and type in your numbers. Once you get the hang of it, entering a checklist takes just a minute or two. With a smartphone app you can even submit sightings to eBird straight from the field. It keeps track of how far you have traveled and how many minutes you have been birding.

The fun stuff happens when those checklists begin piling up. For starters, the site automatically keeps track of all your personal lists—a life list, a county year list, and almost any other list you can imagine—under "My eBird." You can summarize your sightings in a nearly infinite number of ways.

Anyone can search the entire database on eBird's website (no login necessary). There's more than enough to explore: Which bird species were seen this week at a hotspot? Where have Snowy Owls have been seen? Merely click on "Explore Data," and you're off and running.

People who regularly use eBird often say that it has changed the way they go birding. When every sighting counts on a checklist, the common species become more interesting. eBird focuses less on rarities (though it offers tools for reporting unusual sightings) than on the big picture, which is quite a satisfying way to look at birds.

The best place to start is the eBird Quick Start Guide. The Getting Started page answers most questions about how to use the site.

What are you waiting for? Go for it—and welcome to birding in the new millennium!



Northern Cardinal west of Scottsbluff photo by Kathy DeLara

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies 2018 Birding Events

Wildcat Hills Bioblitz

July 20 - 21

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies is facilitating this fun citizen science event, where anyone interested in nature and the outdoors can team up with natural resource professionals and help inventory all species found at Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area!

Wildcat Hills Bird Banding Station

August 27 - October 12

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, in partnership with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, facilitates a bird banding station during the fall migration season. This station serves to better our understanding of migration through science, and provides a unique educational field trip opportunity for nearly 800 Nebraska students every year. The banding station operates most days during the week in the mornings, and is open to the public.

Chadron State Park Bioblitz

September 14 - 15

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For more information contact

Amber Schiltz

Nebraska Wildlife Education Coordinator

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

4502 Avenue I, Scottsbluff, NE 69361

Office- (308)633-1013

amber.schiltz@birdconservancy.org

Wildcat Weekends

The Wildcat Hills Nature Center is pleased to offer Wildcat Weekends! A variety of programs will be offered at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center on the second Saturday of the month (*unless otherwise noted). Best of all, most programs are FREE! A valid 2018 Nebraska State Park permit is required. For more information about these events or to register (when applicable), contact the Nature Center at 308-436-3777 or ngpc.wildcat.hills@nebraska.gov

March 10, 2018 at 10:00am

Wildlife and Watercolors

Come along and show your artistic side! Try your hand at watercolor painting, while enjoying nature. Pre-register by March 3. Cost for this program will be \$10 to cover supplies.

April 14, 2018 at 10:00am

Powerful Pollinators!

Search for pollinators pollinator garden. Learn about their amazing adaptations and interesting life cycles!

*May 19, 2018

Wildlands Day/Free Park Entry Day

Join us for a bird hike, wildflower walk, kids crafts and much more! Park permits are not required for this event!

*Friday, June 8, 2018 at 7:00pm

Wildflower Walk

Celebrate Nebraska Wildflower week with a 1 mile Wildflower Walk.

July 14, 2018 at 9:00am

Bighorn Sheep Hike (1-3 miles)

Come along and learn about their amazing adaptations and research being conducted

*August 4, 2018 at 8:00pm

Going Batty! Tag along as we explore the winged mammals of the night, bats!

September 8, 2018 at 7:00-11:00am

Birds and Bagels

We will learn about research being done in the area, common migratory birds and even take a short .57 mile hike

For more info and events check out the flyer at

<http://calendar.outdoornebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-Wildcat-Weekends-Flyer.pdf>

Calendar of Events 2018

March 17, 2018

General Meeting and Program will be held at the ****Legacy of the Plains Museum** at 7:30 pm. In conjunction with Legacy we will have a program by Humanities Nebraska speaker Jody Lamb on the History of Farming

March 24, 2018

Waterfowl field trip to the local lakes and ponds. Meet at Arby's Scottsbluff at 8am. We should be back in town at 1:00pm.

April 21, 2018

General Meeting and Program will be held at the ****Wildcat Hills Nature Center** at 7:30pm. Educator Amanda Filipi from the Nature Center will have a presentation on 'A Day in the Life of an Outdoor Educator'

May 12, 2018

Grassland Birds field trip in Scotts Bluff & Sioux Counties. Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6am. We will be looking for longspurs, sparrows and other grassland birds. We should be back in town around 1:00pm

May 26, 2018

Scotts Bluff Spring Bird Count

Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6am. We will be back in town around 1:00 and might go back out in the afternoon to continue the count.

June 2, 2018

Cascade Springs-Cascade Falls SD Field Trip

Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6am. Bring a sack lunch and water, we will be back late afternoon. Please RSVP for this trip.

June 16, 2018

Smith Lake-Walgren Lake Field Trip

Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6am. Bring a sack lunch and water. Will be back late afternoon. Please RSVP for this trip

June 30, 2018

Wrights Gap-Hubbards Gap Field Trip
Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6am, we should be back in town around 1:00pm

August 12, 2018

Wildcat Audubon Annual Picnic
Gardner Park picnic shelter at 5pm
Bring a covered dish and table service.
Meat and drinks will be furnished.

September 1, 2018

Eastern Wyoming Field Trip
Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6:00am.
More information on this trip later.

September 15, 2018

General Meeting and Program TBA

September 22, 2018

Scotts Bluff County Fall Bird Count

Meet at Arby's, Scottsbluff at 7:00am

October 20, 2018

Waterfowl and Crane Field Trip

Meet at Arby's, Scottsbluff at 8:00am, we will be back in town around 1:00pm

October 20, 2018

General Meeting and Program TBA

November 17, 2018

General Meeting and Program will be held at the RWMC South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Rescheduled from earlier dates. Ernie Griffiths will have his presentation on Bees and Honey production.

December

Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count date and time to be decided later

***Our meetings, field trips and events
are free and open to the public***

Join the Wildcat Audubon Society

Membership dues are only \$5.00 per year and due in January

Your dollars help pay for CatPrints newsletter, Public Education and other projects through out the year

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**If you want to have it sent to you by email, send an email with "CatPrints Newsletter"
in subject line to Kathy DeLara at renosmom@charter.net**



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c/o Kathy DeLara
170188 Spring Creek Road
Mitchell, NE 69357-5319

