

# CAT PRINTS



*Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle*

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## Hummingbird Extravaganza

By Marie Smith

The summer of 2018 will go down as a record year for Hummingbirds at our house. It all began on July 9th with the first of many arrivals. First it was the Hummingbirds and then it was a wonderful flow of friends and new friends who came to see a poetic, almost magical mystery of creation. During the summer we had 77 days, 63 which were consecutive, of hummingbird. We were blessed by five different species including the Broad-Tailed, Calliope, Rufous, Ruby-throated and the Black-chinned hummingbirds. The Ruby-throated and Black-chinned both were out of their normal range, so they were a special treat.

There were days where we had a dozen or more hummingbirds chasing, swirling and fighting for dominance. It was only when there were mature males in the feeders, honeysuckle or butterfly bushes that it was obvious who was in charge.



Marie Smith Photo

The hummingbirds love to sit up high on dead branches to keep a close eye on their territory. From that vantage point many a war was staged. The sight of hummingbirds flying in a "J" pattern, wings whistling and whirling about was mesmerizing. Among the hummingbirds at the feeder we had a mature Rufous, Ruby-Throated and Black-Chinned, what a sight to see!

Through-out the summer we had guests come sit out on the deck, some for hours on end with binoculars and cameras in hand who came far and wide. We had guests from Oxford England, Iowa, Colorado and throughout Nebraska to name a few places.

Some of the plants used to attract hummingbirds include the honeysuckle, butterfly bushes, red bee-balm also known as monarda and red bird as well as putting out feeders with sugar water.

As an amateur photographer, I had an amazing time trying to capture the little beauties, sometimes successful sometimes not so much.

# Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

In 1985 the Boy Scouts of America celebrated it's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Gering's Troup 18 found a unique way to celebrate. For the annual spring scout show they provided all the materials (including sawing the wood to proper dimensions) for making 75 bluebird nesting boxes. Visitors to Troup 18's booth assembled the boxes. This was such a popular booth that they were asked to repeat it for the Jamboree in Greeley in the summer.

Wildcat Audubon Society's part was to figure out where these 150 bluebird boxes would be placed. There are 3 species of blue birds in the U.S.-- Western, Eastern and Mountain. Our hope was to attract Mountain Bluebirds, but we soon discovered that Eastern Bluebirds also nest in our Wildcat Hills. Not many areas of the country have the right habitat for two species, but our biologically unique Wildcat Hills seen to fit the bill. Bluebirds nest in cavities such as holes in trees.



Marie Smith Photo

In 1985 there was a pipe gate across Old Stage Hill Road on the Scottsbluff/Banner County line. We used that as our starting place for the boxes, going both north and south to where the roads meet Hiway 71. We also put boxes through the recreation area. Most boxes were attached to the fence posts around the buffalo pasture. Through the years as the boxes deteriorated in the sun and rain, new ones have been made by other scouts, Camp Fire Girls, school groups and private citizens.

We check the boxes annually to clean them out and to try to determine what species has used them. Most frequent species is House Wrens. We can't tell whether we have a Mountain Bluebird or Eastern Bluebird unless we see them going in and out of the box. Other species we know for sure have used the boxes are Black-capped Chickadee, Tree Swallow and Violet-green Swallow.

When the Wildcat Nature Center was built an interpretive panel about the bluebirds was placed on the east end of the parking lot. That sign faded through the years and was replaced this last year using funds from a memorial to the late Dean Drawbaugh.

I encourage you to take a summer drive in the Stage Hill area and look for our beautiful bluebirds.



# Young Birder Program from Thayer Birding Software

From the Thayer Birding Software email

“Any young birder in pre-K, grade school, middle school or high school will be able to **enter a special promotion code** that will let them download the new version 7.7 of Thayer’s Birds of North America at no cost.

**Special Promo Codes** are available at hundreds of birding, nature, education and conservation organization's web sites. Each organization has been assigned their own unique code by Thayer Birding Software - but any of them will work.

This amazing birding software, for Windows or Mac computers, features the 1007 birds that have been seen in the continental U.S. and Canada. The software includes 6,586 color photos, 1,506 songs and calls, 552 video clips of the birds in action, 700 quizzes and much, much more, as shown here: <http://www.thayerbirding.com/v7-Features>

Why are we doing this? Because the company founder, Peter W. Thayer, decided that this would be the perfect way to celebrate his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

“Over the past 24 years I have heard from thousands of folks who told me how much this birding program meant to them. I have been overwhelmed by the kind words and feedback we have received from people who are now professional bird guides, ornithologists, college professors and wildlife managers. They told me they used our program when they were growing up to learn more about the birds around them...and they still use it today!”

Our favorite letters are from the kids, especially this one from 9 year-old William: “I was so excited we downloaded it the night I got it. I looked at pictures, watched videos, made lists and did quizzes until my parents made me go to bed. It is totally awesome!”

“My philosophy has always been that I just wanted to create a truly great birding program for me (the nine-year-old me as well as the seventy-year-old me of today). If anyone else wanted a copy - well, that was just a nice bonus! Thanks to hundreds of suggestions from users over the past 24 years, I think we did it!”

Now it is time to give back something to the birding community and to the millions of young birders (and potential young birders) who just need a spark to get them started on a life-long quest for knowledge about our natural world and the importance of preserving the habitat we still have. What better way than this to celebrate the year of the bird?”

Here is the link to the website <http://www.thayerbirding.com/>

**Wildcat Audubon young birder code is WildcatAudubonYoungBirder (no spaces)**

This is a great opportunity to get young people interested in birding.

Additional discounts available, see website

College and grad students can get a 50% discount by using the code STUDENT

Teachers can get a 50% discount by using the code TEACHER

Wildlife professionals can get a 50% discount by using the code WILDLIFE

## Calendar of Events 2018

**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 28, 2018**

### **Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count**

Meet at Arby's in Scottsbluff at 7:00am. Count sites will be assigned at this time. This is an all day count but help is appreciated for any amount of time. We will be back at Arby's around 1:00 for lunch then go back out in the afternoon. Feeder watchers within the count circle are also needed. Please let Alice know if you want to be a feeder watcher for the day. For more information contact Alice Kenitz at [akenitz@prairieweb.com](mailto:akenitz@prairieweb.com) or 308-436-2959

Here is a link to the map so see if you are within the circle to participate with the feeder watch. <https://noubirds.org/Activities/Maps/ScottsbluffCBCMap.pdf>

**January 19, 2019**

### **General Meeting and Program RWMC South Plaza Meeting Room at 7:30 pm.**

Amber Schiltz, educator for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, will have a presentation about the bird banding stations at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center and Chadron State Park

**February 15-18, 2018**

### **Great Backyard Bird Count (not a Wildcat Audubon event)**

Started in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time. For more info go to the website at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/about/>

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

**February 16, 2019**

### **General Meeting and Program RWMC South Plaza Meeting Room at 7:30 pm.**

Rescheduled from earlier dates. Ernie Griffiths will have his presentation on Bees and Honey production.

**March 16, 2019**

### **General Meeting and Program will be held at *\*\*The Legacy of the Plains\*\** 7:30 pm.**

The presentation will be given by Don Gentry and Marilyn Rahmig about Empire Wyoming. Empire was founded in 1908 by African American settlers who came from Nebraska to build a racially self-sufficient, politically autonomous community in the Equality State. Empire thrived for about a decade, but vanished from the map in the mid-1920s. There will be no charge for entry for the program.

**March 23, 2018**

### **Crane and Waterfowl Field Trip.**

Meet at Arby's in Scottsbluff at 8:00am. We will car pool to the lakes and surrounding area to look for birds. We should be back around 1:00

**April 20, 2019**

### **General Meeting and Program *\*\*Wild Cat Hills Nature Center\*\** 7:30 pm.**

Vance Nelson, curator of Fort Robinson will have a presentation about Fort Rob.



Rufous Hummingbird—Photo by Marie Smith

## *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

**If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter by mail please send in this form.**

**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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**There is no charge for the Cat Prints Subscription**  
**I would like to receive my newsletter by email \_\_\_\_\_**

If you would like to become a local member send \$5.00 to  
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