

CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

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Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

One of my great pleasures this winter has been to watch a flock of turkeys that visits my yard an average of a couple of days a week. There are 15-20 birds in the flock and I think most of them are males. Wild Turkeys were common across the country in pioneer times. In fact, Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our national emblem—he thought the Bald Eagle was “a bird of bad moral character....too lazy to fish for himself.” The turkey, though “vain and silly” was a bird of great courage.

When I was growing up in Gering in the 40’s and early 50’s, there were no Wild Turkeys here. They had been eliminated from much of the country by hunting and loss of habitat. Nebraska Game & Parks reintroduced them probably in the early 60’s. Other states also reintroduced them about that time. Today they are commonly seen along the river and in the hills and canyons.

Wild Turkeys are 36-48” long, with a wingspread of 4 to 5’. Males weigh about 16 lbs. and females are smaller at 9 lbs. Most of their body feathers appear black or even brown. But in the sun, they have a metallic sheen of green, blue, and red. The head and neck are ‘naked’ and the males (plus a few females) have a ‘beard’ of feathers growing out of the breast area.

Right now, the birds in my yard are either resting on the lawn or picking up food. They eat nuts, seeds, fruits, grass, grasshoppers, and even frogs. They scratch around to find food, and can really move the dirt. They can really make a dent in the grasshopper population in the late summer. One day we saw a turkey with a mouse in its beak!!!



Marie Smith Photo

I’m looking forward to spring when the males (toms) will be strutting and gobbling, trying to get the attention of the females. When they are strutting, their head and neck turns this incredible light blue color, accentuated by the red of the wattles. And then there is the ‘snood’. This is a tissue coming from just above the beak. It is red, and when the bird is

showing off for the ladies, it becomes several inches long (seems out of place to me).

So if you happen upon a flock of Wild Turkeys, stop and watch them. You will be entertained!!!

Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count Results

We had 6 participants in the field and 2 feeder watchers who counted 49 species on count day, December 14, 2019 and an additional 2 for count week. The tally:

Cackling Goose 110
Canada Goose 10146
Northern Shoveler 40
Gadwall 7
American Wigeon 49
Mallard 1354
Northern Pintail 13
Ring-necked Duck 31
Common Goldeneye 47
Hooded Merganser 1
Ring-necked Pheasant 1
Wild Turkey 18
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 139
Eurasian Collared-Dove 139
American Coot 1
Killdeer 2
Ring-billed Gull 1 Count Week
Northern Harrier 3
Cooper's Hawk 1
Bald Eagle 3
Red-tailed Hawk 12
Rough-legged Hawk 1
Great Horned Owl 2
Belted Kingfisher 3
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1 Count Week
Downy Woodpecker 3
Northern Flicker 14
 Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted) 2
 Northern Flicker (Orange-shafted) 2
American Kestrel 12
Prairie Falcon 1
Northern Shrike 1
Blue Jay 15
Black-billed Magpie 12
Black-capped Chickadee 5
Horned Lark 23
Red-breasted Nuthatch 8
Pygmy Nuthatch 3
Marsh Wren 1
European Starling 422
Townsend's Solitaire 4
American Robin 110
House Sparrow 219
House Finch 53
Pine Siskin 67
American Goldfinch 30
American Tree Sparrow 1
Dark-eyed Junco 28
 Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored) 69
 Dark-eyed Junco (Oregon) 38
 Dark-eyed Junco (Pink-sided) 5
White-crowned Sparrow 57
Song Sparrow 3
Meadowlark sp. 1
Red-winged Blackbird 81
Northern Cardinal 1

Counting is Caring: Join the Great Backyard Bird Count

Press Release

Show the wild birds some love by taking part in the 23rd [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (GBBC). This year's count begins on Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14, and continues through Monday, February 17. Volunteers from around the world count the birds they see for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, and then enter their checklists at [birdcount.org](#) or on e-Bird if you already use it.

There is no better time to get involved because we are facing a bird emergency. In a study published by the journal [Science](#) last fall, scientists revealed a decline of more than one in four birds in the United States and Canada since 1970—**3 billion birds gone**. In addition to these steep declines, Audubon scientists projected a grim future for birds in [Survival By Degrees](#), a report showing nearly two-thirds of North America's bird species could disappear due to climate change. Birds from around the world are facing similar challenges and declines. Counting birds for science is one simple action that individuals can take to protect birds and the places where they live.

"In order to understand where birds are and how their numbers are changing, we need everybody's help," says the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Marshall Iliff, a leader of the [eBird program](#) which collects the GBBC data. "Without this information, scientists will not have enough data to show where birds are declining."



With more than 10,000 species in the world, it means all hands on deck to monitor birds found in backyards and neighborhoods as well as in suburban parks, wild areas, and cities.

"Birds are important because they're excellent indicators of the health of our ecosystems. Participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count is one of the easiest and best ways to help scientists understand how our changing climate may be affecting the world's bird-life," says Chad Wilsey, interim Chief Scientist for National Audubon Society. "All over the world people are paying more attention to our environment and how it's changing. There's a lot of bad news out there, but in just 15 minutes you can be part of a global solution to the crises birds and people are facing."

[GBBC Instructions](#)

Calendar of Events 2020

The meetings will be held at the new Platte Valley Bank Community Room at the corner of Platte Valley Drive and 11th Ave in Scottsbluff. This is just south west of the main bank. The main entrance and parking lot is on the south side of the building.

February 15, 2020

General Meeting and program, 7:30 pm at the Platte Valley Bank Community Room. Chaley Jensen, Nebraska Wildlife Education Coordinator for Bird Conservancy of the Rockies will have a presentation on the Wildcat Hills and Chadron State Parks 2019 bird banding.

March 14, 2020

Crane and Waterfowl Field Trip

Meet at Arby's at 8:00am, we should be back around 1:00.

March 21, 2020

General Meeting and program, 7:30 pm at the Platte Valley Bank Community Room. 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.

April 18, 2020

General Meeting and program, 7:30 pm at the Platte Valley Bank Community Room.

May 16, 2020

Table Mountain Field Trip

in Goshen County Wyoming
Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 7:00am. Bring a sack lunch and drinks.

June 6, 2020

Crescent Lake NWR Field Trip

Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6:00am. Bring a sack lunch and drinks, we will be back late.

June 20, 2020

Sioux County Grasslands Field Trip

Meet at RCI, 27th St & Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6:00am. Bring a sack lunch and drinks.

August 23, 2020

Wildcat Audubon Annual Picnic

5:00pm at the shelter in *Legion Park in Gering (NEW LOCATION)
Bring a covered dish and table service. Meat and drinks will be furnished.

September 12, 2020

Exit One, Kimball County Field Trip

Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 7am. We will be home late afternoon.

September 19, 2020

General Meeting and program, 7:30 pm at the Platte Valley Bank Community Room.

September 26, 2020

Scotts Bluff County Fall Bird Count

Meet at Arby's in Scottsbluff at 7:00 am. We will count birds within the county and should be back around 1:00pm for lunch and may go back out in the afternoon.

October 10, 2020

Waterfowl & Cranes Field Trip to local lakes, ponds and surrounding fields.

Meet at Arby's in Scottsbluff at 8:00am. We should be back around 1:00pm

October 19, 2020

General Meeting and program, 7:30 pm at the Platte Valley Bank Community Room.

November 16, 2020

General Meeting and program, 7:30 pm at the Platte Valley Bank Community Room.

December 14, 2020 (Monday)

Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count

Meet at Arby's in Scottsbluff at 7:00am
This is an all day count but we need help for any amount of time you have available. Feeder watchers are also needed within the circle. Contact Alice Kenitz for more information call 308-436-2959 or email her at akenitz@prairieweb.com

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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in this form with your membership payment.**

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