

CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

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Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

In the last newsletter, I neglected to thank all of those who worked so hard to make the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union spring meeting in May such a huge success. Thanks to all!!! Wildcat Audubon has quite a reputation at NOU for our delicious cookies!!

I was privileged to serve as 'scribe' for several days at the Bird Banding Station in September and early October. The station was a project of the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Nebraska Prairie Partners, Nebraska Game and Parks, and the Wildcat Hills Nature Center. It was held at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center.

There was also some banding done at Chadron State Park and Oliver Reservoir. Nancy Gobris from Estes Park and Georgia was the bander at the Nature Center, and I was very impressed with her work. She had set up more than a dozen nets behind the Nature Center. Various groups of primarily elementary school children visited the station and participated in a number of games and other activities related to birds.

It was interesting to watch the progression of migration. In early September, the most numerous birds were Spotted Towhees and Black-capped Chickadees. As time progressed there were no more towhees, and Pine Siskins became the most common species. Most of the chickadees were caught more than once, so there were no new ones by early October.

Nancy caught some unusual birds; Blackburnian Warbler, Pine Warbler, Townsend's Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Lesser Goldfinch, Red-naped Sapsucker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, and 2 individuals of the 'Solitary' Vireo complex. At least one of these vireos was probably a Cassin's Vireo, with the other probably being a Plumbeous Vireo.



One of the more unusual birds banded was this Pine Warbler

I was there one day when she caught a Sharp-shinned Hawk. It was a lot more docile than the sapsucker! All three species of nuthatch were banded; pygmy, red-breasted, and white-breasted. I couldn't believe how tiny the bodies of the Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were!! I was excited to see two Broad-winged Hawks fly over one day. Nancy banded birds from more than 30 species and banded over 250 individual birds. It was a fun experience for me.

We hope to see many of you at our winter and spring meetings and field trips.

<http://www.wyoneb.net/-delara/WildcatAudubon.htm>

Members Page

The Members Page will be a new feature in the Cat Prints newsletter to encourage members to tell their stories of birding adventures and interesting sightings. If you have a story or sighting that you would like to share please email it to me at renosmom@charter.net or mail to the address on the back of the newsletter.

We are always interested in unusual or interesting bird sightings so feel free to call or email Alice Kenitz, me or any of the members listed on the front of this newsletter. If you feel that the bird sighting is very unusual please call right away as others may like to see the bird and they usually don't stay around very long.

Unusual sightings;

On December 7th Ann Duey saw a Common Yellowthroat along the creek near their home . They are usually gone by early to mid October. There is only one other December record in Nebraska, in Lincoln on Dec.15, 2001. The next latest record is October 29th.

A Mute Swan has been seen swimming in the river off the Ave I bridge in Scottsbluff. This is probably a local bird that has escaped from it's pond.

Varied Thrushes have been seen around the past few years, one was out near Lake Minatare this fall so watch for them at your bird baths.

A Cardinal was seen in Morrill around the 1st of December.

The following story happened to me a couple years after I joined the Wildcat Audubon and before I truly realized that any bird can show up anywhere. If it would have been in the correct habitat I would have recognized it right away, but it took me a while to figure out just what it was, even when I was holding it. And for some reason I didn't think about taking a picture until after the bird was gone. I will never have that chance again, I'm sure.

Kathy DeLara, Editor

Virginia Rail in a Tree?

October 30, 1999, I had walked out to the mail box to get the newspaper and was walking back to the house when a bird, hanging upside down in a tree, caught my eye. It had a rusty colored breast and the first thing that I thought was a dead Robin hanging in the tree. After getting a little closer I immediately knew that it was not a Robin but was not sure what it was. It was hanging by one leg that was caught at the end of a branch just out of my reach. Then it blinked its eyes and I realized that it was not dead. I ran to the garage and got a ladder and unwound its leg from the twigs. I still don't know how it got caught that way but found out later that they migrate at night. The little guy was very lively, not at all weak like I thought it would be after hanging upside down for I don't know how long. His leg was just hanging so I thought it was probably broke.

We identified the bird as a Virginia Rail. What he was doing in the tree is anyone's guess. It's amazing how a bird feels when you are holding it in your hand. His feathers were very soft, more like down than feathers, and very light weight. I put him in a dog crate on the kitchen table, not knowing what I was going to do with him now. I gave him some water, and was surprised that he actually drank some. He seemed in good condition except for the leg.

The Wildcat Audubon Society was having their annual bird seed sale that day and I was going to go help for a while that morning. I hoped that someone there would had a idea of what to do. I loaded the bird up in the van, covered the crate with a blanket I headed to town. Brad McKinney was the only one there, when I showed him the bird it was walking on the leg that I was sure was broke and seemed to be just fine. Not wanting to leave him in the crate any longer I took the rail to a wetland area not far away, carried him over to the edge of the weeds and put him on the ground. He took off running towards the waters edge and into the cattails like nothing had ever happened to him. Hopefully he was able to finish his migration that fall and had a good winter in Mexico or where ever his destination may have been.

Rivers and Wildlife Celebration

The Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, presented by Audubon Nebraska, Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, and the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation, will be held Friday, Saturday and Sunday, March 20-22, 2009, in Kearney.

Timed to coincide with the annual migration of 500,000 sandhill cranes and millions of waterfowl through central Nebraska, this annual wildlife festival is for anyone interested in experiencing one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on Earth and learning more about the natural world in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

Featured speakers for this year's event are:

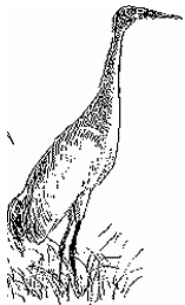
Pete Dunne – Author and birding expert from Cape May Bird Observatory

Joel Sartore – *National Geographic* photographer

Felipe Chavez-Ramirez – Director, Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust



Field trips to the best birding hotspots in the area are led by local birding experts throughout the festival. The highlight is a full-day birding trip with Pete Dunne on Sunday, March 22. Other full-day and half-day trips will take place on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday to the Rainwater Basin and other migration stopovers. Tours may also include stops at local prairie-chicken booming grounds and prairie dog towns.



There will also be trips to viewing blinds along the Platte River at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary at sunrise and sunset. Witnessing Sandhill cranes leave from and return to the River up close is an event no birder should miss. Field trips have limited space, so participants are encouraged to register early.

Other conference highlights include Brian "Fox" Ellis, who portrays John James Audubon; a photography workshop with Randy Hampton and Joel Sartore; a free crane behavior class; and lots more.

Ray Boice, founder of SOAR, Longs Peak Council BSA and Jim Schmitt, Chair of Tree Plant, FT Robinson will be presenting a workshop on Boy Scouts of America (BSA) – a National Resource: SOAR (Save Our American Resources) encourages Scouts to participate in community beautification and conservation projects. Over 600 projects have been completed and over 350,000+ trees have been planted at Ft Robinson. SOAR will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in April 2009.

To obtain a registration brochure, call or write Audubon Nebraska, P.O. Box 117, Denton, NE 68339; 402/797-2301; Nebraska@audubon.org. Brochures can also be downloaded at www.Nebraska.audubon.org.

Additional crane viewing information can be obtained from Rowe Sanctuary, 308/468-5282; www.rowesanctuary.org.

If you have never been to central Nebraska to see the cranes it's well worth the trip.

Witschy films to be shown

Many 'oldtimers' will remember the late Roy and Maud Witschy. In the late 1950's, 1960's and early 1970's, Roy was locally famous for his wonderful wildlife movies. At that time we were all so impressed by the wildlife movies made by Walt Disney and shown in the movie theaters. Maybe we were all prejudiced, but we thought Roy's films were every bit as good as those Disney films!!! Witschys had a camper on a pickup that they lived in while they traveled around the US--even to Alaska--and recorded wildlife. (Maud called it her 'car house'.) After Roy and Maud had both died, their daughters, Evelyn Lyons and Susan Kautz, donated most of the films to the Wildcat Audubon Society. There wasn't a good place to store them, so, at the suggestion of Jack Preston, they were donated to the Nebraska State Historical Society. In return, the Historical Society agreed to put (for a small fee) six of the films on DVDs for Wildcat Audubon to have available to show for programs, etc. Some of these six films have sound, but some are silent. Unfortunately, we've been unable to find narrations for the silent films. When we show these films, we'll probably be able to identify the species seen in the films, but not the stories to go with the filming. We're excited to have these DVDs and to be able to show them at our meetings occasionally.

FAIR-TRADE PRODUCTS

Regular Coffee	\$8
Decaf Coffee	\$9
Earl Grey Tea (24bags)	\$4
Green Tea (24bags)	\$4
Hot Cocoa Mix	\$6
Milk Chocolate Bar	\$3
Dk Choc with Almonds Bar	\$3
Very Dark Chocolate Bar	\$3

The coffee and cocoa are shade grown products. All products are organically grown and Fair Trade Certified™ including the sugar used in the chocolate products.

To order contact Ann Duey at 632-3544, or dduey@actcom.net or contact any WAS Member.

Cat Prints Subscription Membership Information

**Attention Local Members
Your 2009 dues are due
January 1st.**

If you wish to receive a copy of the Cat Prints Newsletter, and haven't already done so, please send in the subscription form on the back page. Mark the box if you would like a printed copy mailed to you or if you would like to help lower the expenses of postage and printing and have it emailed to you instead.

If you would like to sign up for the emailed version you can send an e-mail to Kathy at renosmom@charter.net Please put "Cat Prints Newsletter" in the subject line of your e-mail so it doesn't get deleted. **Remember, if you decide that you want a printed copy you can just print it from your computer at home.**

The current newsletter and previous ones are available on our website at www.wyoneb.net/-delara/WildcatAudubon.htm

New and renewed members since the last newsletter;

Randy & Kris Schmidt
Tia Fulk-Schawe

If you would like to join Wildcat Audubon see the form on the back of this newsletter

RECYCLE

Bring your aluminum cans to any Wildcat Audubon event or meeting

The prepaid envelopes for the ink cartridge recycling have been discontinued.

Please bring your cartridges to the meetings, we will no longer be paid for the ones sent in the envelopes, but they will still be recycled by the company.

Proceeds from your recycling will help pay for Audubon Adventures in local schools.

Calendar of Events Fall 2008

December 20th

Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count

Meet at Arby's at 6:30am, this is an all day count, we will come back to town for lunch then continue in the afternoon until about 4pm. You can count all day or for any amount of time you are available. We also need feeder watchers within the 15 mile count circle which centered near Dome Rock (CR 20 and CR P) and includes all of Scottsbluff and Gering. Also report any interesting sightings within the circle 3 days before and after the count which can be added as count week species.

Contact Alice Kenitz at 308-436-2959 or email akenitz@prairieweb.com for more information or if you would like to be a feeder watcher.

December 27th & 28th

Crawford and Harrison Christmas Bird Count

The **Crawford CBC** will be held Saturday December 27, 2008. Meet at the Snack Shop (301 Main St) in downtown Crawford at 8 AM to assign routes. Please contact Bruce or Donna Walgren if you can help so they can prioritize routes, etc.

The **Harrison CBC** will be held on Sunday December 28th. For more details on either count or for hotel info please contact Bruce or Donna Walgren
307-234-7455 Piranga@bresnan.net

January 3rd

Lake McConaughy Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, January 3, 2009.

Meet Friday night at Valentino's Pizza in Ogalala at 6 p.m. for area assignments. If you want to help but can't make it Friday night or for more information please contact Steve Dinsmore 515-294-1348 cootjr@iastate.edu

*Visitors are always welcome
at any of the meetings, programs, field trips
or other Audubon events*

January 17th

General Meeting, 7:30 pm at RWMC South Plaza Meeting Room.

Program will be Mary Bomberger Brown of the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership (TPCP).

The TPCP studies and protects the endangered Interior Least Terns and threatened Piping Plovers and will be celebrating it's 10th anniversary in 2009. They have expanded their research and monitoring programs in 2008 and Mary will be bringing us up-to-date on what they have been doing. Brad & Connie McKinney will have refreshments for us.

February 21st

General Meeting, 7:30 pm at RWMC South Plaza Meeting Room. Alice Kenitz will be showing some of the Roy and Maud Witschy wildlife films. See story on facing page. Lee & Alice Kentiz will bring refreshments.

February 13th-16th

2009 Great Backyard Bird Count. Count birds in your yard, town or any park or natural area and enter your results, on the web site. For information go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>

March 21st

General Meeting, 7:30 pm at RWMC South Plaza Meeting Room. For our program James Dahl will be Exploring the secrets of Isle Royale National Park with us. Due to Isle Royale's biological and ecological uniqueness, it was designated as an International Biosphere Reserve in 1980. Ninety-nine percent of this archipelago remains a wilderness area. It is world renowned for its long term wolf/ moose predator/prey study.

March 20th –22nd

Rivers and Wildlife Conference, Kearney
See article on page 3

Join the Wildcat Audubon Society

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

Your dollars help pay for Audubon Adventures in local schools, CatPrints newsletter,
Beginner Birding Classes, Public Education and other projects

**If you would like to continue to receive the newsletter please mail this form or
email Kathy DeLara at renosmom@charter.net**



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