

CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

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Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

We did the annual Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 19. The CBC is an annual event sponsored by the National Audubon Society in over 2000 places in the Western Hemisphere. Each count involves counting as many individual birds as possible within a 15-mile diameter circle. The center of the Scottsbluff circle is near Dome Rock. This is the 62nd year the Scottsbluff count has been done. There has been an average of 48.3 species. The count this year yielded 52 species and 9748 individuals. This is about 10,000 fewer individuals than in recent years, probably due to much decreased numbers of Canada Geese and Mallards. The Wildcat Hills Nature Center, usually a spot to find many finches, nuthatches, and chickadees is closed while an addition is being built. We were fortunate to have a clear day with little wind. There were several inches of snow on the ground which kept the walking to a minimum, so most of the counting was done from cars.

American Pipit is a new species for the count. Species seen in larger numbers than usual include Ring-necked Duck 71, Eurasian Collared-Dove 943, and White-crowned Sparrows 446.

Five species not seen on count day were seen on the 3 days before or the 3 days after December 19—Gadwall, Northern Harrier, White-winged Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Great Horned Owl. Other species identified include Cackling Goose 63, Canada Goose 2855, Wood Duck 1, American Wigeon 255, Mallard 461, Northern Shoveler 1, Northern Pintail 1, Red-head 8, Lesser Scaup 5, Common Goldeneye 86, Ring-necked Pheasant 29, Wild Turkey 4, Bald Eagle 5 adult and 5 immature, Sharp-shinned Hawk 4, Cooper's Hawk 2, Red-tailed Hawk 23, Ferruginous Hawk 2, Rough-legged Hawk 9, buteo species 6, American Kestrel 29, Prairie Falcon 1, American Coot 180, Killdeer 1, Rock Pigeon 528, Mourning Dove 9, Belted Kingfisher 8, Downy Woodpecker 6, Northern Flicker 29, Northern Shrike 1, Blue Jay 68, Black-billed Magpie 24, American Crow 2, Horned Lark 1058, Black-capped Chickadee 10, Red-breasted Nuthatch 3, Townsend's Solitaire 1, American Robin 272, European Starling 567, Cedar Waxwing 11, American Tree Sparrow 66, Song Sparrow 3, Dark-eyed Junco 338, Northern Cardinal 2, Red-winged Blackbird 390, meadowlark species 198, House Finch 170, Pine Siskin 115, American Goldfinch 74, and House Sparrow 288.

The CBC is always a special day for birders as it is one of the few times during the winter that we get together to look for birds. Other CBC's in western Nebraska include Harrison, Crawford, Lake McConaughy, and North Platte.

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival Set for March 2016
by Deb Hauswald, Audubon Nebraska

Audubon Nebraska is pleased to announce its 46th annual celebration of the sandhill crane migration, Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival. The Festival will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center in Kearney, March 17-20, and features a variety of birding excursions including guided half- and full-day trips to local birding hotspots, sunrise and sunset trips to crane viewing blinds along the Platte River at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, and an overnight outing to see prairie grouse.

Main speakers include acclaimed nature photographer Thomas Mangelsen; emeritus UNL professor and ornithologist Paul Johnsgard; and Brian Trusty, executive director of Audubon Texas. Other presenters will give information on a variety of nature-related topics. Two workshops on crane behavior will be presented, and the popular and family-oriented Wild Experience Room will return with hands-on activities for kids.

For registration and general festival information, visit nebraskacrane festival.org or call 402-797-2301. General crane viewing information can be found at rowe.audubon.org or by calling the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, 308-468-5282.

Recent Sightings



Above; Male and female Northern Cardinal seen in Kathy DeLara's yard east of Mitchell. They have been around for a couple of months. Below, Sharp-tailed Grouse and Merlin in Sioux County Jan. 1



HEY MR. GREEN FROM THE SIERRA MAGAZINE ‘Green Life Blog’

Hey Mr. Green. How many birds die from flying near wind turbines?

Nearly 600,000 birds a year get thwacked by turbines, and that toll could rise as more turbines are installed, says the American Bird Conservancy (ABC). Gruesome as this sounds, though, turbines' numbers are no match for the annual tolls of communications towers, which kill 6.8 million; power lines, which zap 175 million; windows, 300 million to a billion; and finally cats, which dispatch 1.3 to 4 billion birds a year. And that's not to mention the untold zillions that perish from habitat loss and climate change.

While the toll from turbines is far from a major cause of bird mortality, it's not negligible, so ABC and wind energy experts are working to reduce the rate. —**Bob Schildgen**

Hey Mr. Green, You've mentioned that wind turbines don't kill nearly as many birds as feral cats and collisions with windows, towers, and power lines. But how many birds get whacked by trucks and cars? Pesticides? Polluted water?

More than 4 million miles of U.S. roads make an expansive killing field for birds. It's hard to find anything much better than a ballpark estimate, because research into this form of bird mortality is not a terribly popular field. A recent analysis of the studies that have been done, published in the *Journal of Wildlife Conservation*, estimates avian traffic fatalities anywhere from 80 million to 380 million. But the level of uncertainty could be much greater, according to a recent article in *Biological Conservation*, which suggests that estimates are low by huge factor, because of “differences in carcass detectability and removal rates.” In other words, it's hard to detect a dead bird, and especially so if it's been removed from the site if impact. So undercounting is inevitable.

Some birds, such as the barn owl, are more susceptible to collision than other species. This is particularly unnerving. Barn owls do not deserve such a fate. I mean, if a billion invasive species, e.g., English sparrows or European starlings or rock doves (pigeons) are done in, it's more a blessing than a calamity. But to lose our wonderful barn owls? So let's hope that designers of those self-driving cars can not only discover a way to allow barn owls to escape.

As for mortality from pesticides, a standard estimate has been 72 million. But this number is even less reliable, because the effects of hundreds of pesticides are so difficult to analyze. Also, there is probably a secondary mortality factor, in that some species of birds perish because their main food source, insects, is wiped out by pesticides. A hundred-page study by the American Bird Conservancy does not attempt an estimate, but analyzes in great detail the hazards of pesticides to birds, especially the types of neonicotinoids that implicated in the massive die-off of bees. The report says that the EPA's methods of assessing toxicity to birds from these poisons are too simple or too superficial to give an accurate evaluation.

As for mortality from pollution, well, with dozens of kinds, from oil spills in the water to light pollution in the air, that I'm not even prepared to make a guess.—**Bob Schildgen**

For more Green Life Blogs go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/green-life>

Great Backyard Bird Count

The 19th annual GBBC is taking place worldwide February 12 through 15. Information gathered and reported online at birdcount.org will help scientists track changes in bird distribution, some of which may be traced to El Niño storms and unusual weather patterns. With the El Niño weather phenomenon warming Pacific waters to temperatures matching the highest ever recorded, participants in the [2016 Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (GBBC), may be in for a few surprises.

Great Backyard Bird Count at Scotts Bluff National Monument Friday and Saturday, February 12 & 13. Meet at the visitors center at 8:00 each day.

Great Backyard Bird Count at Agate Fossil Beds on Saturday February 13

Agate Fossil Beds National Monument and the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies will join in presenting a fun Great Backyard Bird Count event on Saturday February 13, 2016. From 10:00am through 12:00pm, Alie Mayes of the Bird Conservancy will talk about the goals of this annual, nationwide activity and will take participants outside to show how to find and identify birds in your own backyard. Although this particular event is geared to children and families, everyone is welcome to participate. There will also be educational games and the opportunity to craft your own pinecone bird feeder to take home. Other educational materials will also be shared.

Meet at the Agate Fossil Beds Visitor Center. Please contact them at (308) 668-2211, 436-9760 or agfo_ranger_activities@nps.gov for more information

For more information on the Great Backyard Bird Count and how to count the birds in your own backyard or favorite birding place go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

Events 2016 (cont)

February 12 & 13, 2016

Great Backyard Bird Count Event

Scotts Bluff National Monument 8:00am (this is not an Audubon Field Trip)

February 13, 2016

GBBC Field Trip to Agate Fossil Beds. Meet at Arby's at 8:00am for breakfast then we will car pool to Agate for their event from 10-noon.

February 13, 2016 (NOTE DATE CHANGE)

General Meeting and Program at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program will be presented by Loren Pospisil of the Chimney Rock Visitor Center.

"The Role of Dogs in Plains Indian Culture"
Historians have often told the story of the role of horses in Plains Indian culture. But the horse is a relative newcomer on the plains. For thousands of years, Native Americans relied on dogs as their major beast of burden. Loren will tell the story of this important relationship.

March 19, 2016

Field Trip to local lakes and ponds for migrating waterfowl and other birds. Meet at Arby's at 8:00am. We should be back by 1:00.

March 19, 2016

General Meeting and Program at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program TBA

April 9, 2016

Field Trip to Kimball County for Mountain

Plovers and Owls. Meet at Fresh Foods at 7:00am. The day of this trip could be moved depending on the plovers migration time and weather.

April 16, 2016

General Meeting and Program at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program TBA

Calendar of Events 2016

April 23, 2016

Field Trip to Lake McConaughy. Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6:00am. Bring a sack lunch and drinks. We will be home late afternoon.

May 14, 2016

Scotts Bluff County Spring Bird Count

Meet at RCI, 27th and Ave I, at 6:00am. We will be back in town about 1:00 and may go back out in the afternoon.

May 20-22, 2016

NOU will be held in Kimball this spring. For more information go to NOUBirds.org

June 11, 2016

Field Trip Carter Canyon area. Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 7:00am. We should be back around 1:00

June 18, 2016

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies BioBlitz at Oliver Reservoir in Kimball.

Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6:00 am. This is a two day event, we will only go on Saturday. More information will be available later

August 14, 2016

Annual Audubon Picnic will be held at 5:00pm at Gardener Park in Gering at the shelter. Bring a covered dish, table service and a lawn chair. Drinks will be furnished.

September 3-5 (Labor Day Weekend)

Bird Banding open to the public at Chadron State Park (not an Audubon field trip)

September 10-11, 2016

Field Trip to the Black Hills. Please let Kathy DeLara know if you would like to go on this trip. We will make plans as a group once we know who all is going. Brad and Connie McKinney will host a cookout for us on Saturday evening.

September 17, 2016

Scotts Bluff County Fall Bird Count. Meet at Arby's at 7am, we should be back in town by 1:00 and may go out again in the afternoon.

September 17, 2016

General Meeting and Program at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program TBA

October 15, 2016

General Meeting and Program at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program TBA

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

October 29, 2016

Waterfowl and Cranes Field Trip. Meet at Arby's at 8am. We will bird the lakes and ponds looking for migrating water fowl and fields around the lakes to look for Sandhill Crane We should be back to town around 1pm

November 19, 2016

General Meeting and Program at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program TBA

December 17, 2016

Scotts Bluff County Christmas Bird Count. Meet at Arby's 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.

For more information contact Alice Kenitz at akenitz@prairieweb.com or 308-436-2959

We do not have a meeting in December

Join the Wildcat Audubon Society

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