

CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

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Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

Too often I think we spend too much time running from place to place looking for another species of bird. In doing that, we miss some fascinating animal behavior!!! Just after Christmas I was witness to one of those episodes of fascinating animal behavior.

One of the feeders in our backyard (made by my husband) is a cylinder with wood on the top and bottom and hail screen making the rest of it. The screen is of the perfect size for birds to be able to pull black-oil sunflower seeds through it. It is about 4 inches in diameter and 18 inches tall.

When I looked out that morning there was a bird inside the feeder, trying to figure out how to fly out. When I finally sat down to study the situation, I discovered the bird was a Northern Shrike!! Apparently the lid had come off the feeder. At one point another Northern Shrike lit on top of the same feeder and quickly flew off; it was fun to see 2 together.

Another time when I looked out the shrike looked like it was eating a little bird or mouse or something. So I'm wondering if the little bird got in the feeder and the shrike followed it in.

As you may know, the shrike is a predatory songbird, so I don't think it would have been attracted to the sunflower seeds. I knew I didn't have the physical capabilities of getting to the feeder and rescuing the bird, but I knew my daughter-in-law and my grandson would be arriving soon.

When they arrived, they took the feeder down, laid it on its side, and the shrike finally figured out how to get out. The first thing it did was eat a little snow and then it flew off. An interesting show!!! So keep your eyes and ears open.



Photo by Andrea Woodward

Wildcat Hills Nature Center

The park has remained open throughout the construction process, but the Nature Center has been closed since September 2015. The \$2.375 million expansion more than doubled the size of the structure and will bring additional exhibits and multipurpose space when complete finished. Staff have moved into their new office, but the building exhibits and other public spaces of the facility won't be ready for a few months. Come on out to learn about the renovations, take a short tour of the new facility and to visit the birds that call the Wildcat Hills home. The current hours are Monday through Friday, 8am-4pm

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 2017 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

April 8, 2017 at 9:00am MDT *Happy Birthday Nebraska!*

Join us to celebrate Nebraska's 150th year of statehood! Take part in this fun birthday party with activities, fun statehood facts and even Nebraska themed snacks.

***May 20, 2017** *Wildcat Hills Wildlands Day/Free Park Entry Day*

Take part in several great activities going on throughout this day-long celebration! Join us for a bird hike, wildflower walk, bighorn sheep tour, kids crafts and more! Park permits are not required for this event!

June 10, 2017 at 9:00am MDT *Wildflower Walk*

Celebrate Nebraska Wildflower week with a Wildflower Walk. Uncover many of the area flowers in bloom and discover key characteristics for identifying. Please bring water and hiking shoes.

July 11, 2017 at 9:00am MDT *Bighorn Sheep Hike*

Let's find the mysterious and secretive creature of the Wildcat Hills, the bighorn Sheep. Come along and learn about their amazing adaptations and research being conducted. Depending on their location, this may be a long and hot hike. Please bring water and hiking shoes.

***August 19, 2017 at 9:00am MDT** *Gear up for the Great American Solar Eclipse*

Did you know that on Monday, August 21, parts of Nebraska will witness a total solar eclipse?! Come along to learn about this once in a lifetime event and safe viewing opportunities!

September 9, 2017 at 9:00am MDT *Feathered Friends*

Uncover the birds that call the Wildcat Hills home! We will learn about research being done in the area, common migratory birds and even take a short hike. Bring your hiking shoes and be prepared to take flight!

October 14, 2017 at 7:00 pm MDT *Howl in the Hills Night Hike*

Experience the Wildcat Hills like never before, at night! Discover all the creatures that go bump in the night during our hike! It is sure to be a 'howling' good time! Please bring a flashlight, hiking shoes and a sense of adventure. Please pre-register by October 6, 2017 for this event.

****Friday, November 3, 2017 at 7:00pm MST** *Wildlife and Watercolors*

Come along and show your artistic side! Try your hand at watercolor painting, while enjoying nature at the Wildcat Hills. Please pre-register by October 27, 2017 for this event at 308-436-3777. Cost for this program will be \$10 to cover the cost of supplies. Light refreshments will be served.

December 9, 2017 at 9:00am MST *Nature's Gifts: Decorations from the Great Outdoors*

Come and help us create garland feeders, bird feeders and fun nature ornaments that will dress up the Nature Center and your own homes for the winter season!

Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count

The annual Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count was held on December 20. Christmas Bird Counts are held throughout the United States and Canada and in many places in Latin America, as well. Each count tries to count each bird within a 15-mile diameter. The center of the local circle is near Dome Rock. This is the 63rd year the local count has been held. Local birders counted 60 species and 22,783 individual birds. One additional species (Northern Cardinal) was seen during the week of the count, but not on count day. Several species were seen in unusually high numbers—Lesser Scaup 85, Bufflehead 15, Hooded Merganser 10, Rough-legged Hawk 14, Eurasian Collared-Dove 1450, and Pygmy Nuthatch 10. Other species observed were Snow Goose 5, Cackling Goose 99, Canada Goose 10776, Wood Duck 5, Gadwall 8, American Wigeon 35, Mallard 6642, Northern Shoveler 55, Northern Pintail 13, Green-winged Teal 3, Redhead 20, Ring-necked Duck 41, Greater Scaup 1, Common Goldeneye 127, Ring-necked Pheasant 7, Bald Eagle 6 adult, 1 immature, Northern Harrier 2, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Cooper's Hawk 2, Red-tailed Hawk 3, Ferruginous Hawk 1, buteo species 2, Golden Eagle 1 adult, American Coot 75, Wilson's Snipe 1, Rock Pigeon 255, Mourning Dove 37, White-winged Dove 1, Great Horned Owl 3, Belted Kingfisher 2, Downy Woodpecker 7, Hairy Woodpecker 1, Northern Flicker 14, Red-shafted Flicker 1, Yellow-shafted Flicker 3, Orange-shafted Flicker 5, American Kestrel 28, Prairie Falcon 1, Northern Shrike 2, Blue Jay 99, Black-billed Magpie 15, American Crow 1, Horned Lark 35, Townsend's Solitaire 17, American Robin 142, European Starling 1146, Cedar Waxwing 6, American Tree Sparrow 74, Song Sparrow 4, White-crowned Sparrow 268, Dark-eyed Junco 97, Oregon Junco 29, Slate-colored Junco 84, Pink-sided Junco 15, White-winged Junco 2, Gray-headed Junco 1, Red-winged Blackbird 21, Meadowlark sp. 7, House Finch 134, Red Crossbill 1, Pine Siskin 4, American Goldfinch 268, and House Sparrow 437.

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival

The Audubon Nebraska Crane Festival will be held March 16-19, 2017 at the Holiday Inn, Kearney, Nebraska

On-line registration has begun at <http://ne.audubon.org/birds/crane-festival-registration>

In its 47th year, Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival brings 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!

The Saturday night banquet speaker will be actress and author Jane Alexander. In addition, the festival will also feature Iliana Pena, Director of Conservation from Audubon Texas; and Matt Anderson, Audubon's Vice President of Climate Change.

The website will be updated with the festival's line-up of exciting concurrent sessions, field trips, and more. Stay tuned.

To receive periodic e-mail updates on festival news and activities, please email nebraska@audubon.org.

If you can't make the festival but still want to see the Sandhill Cranes, call Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, (308) 468-5282, to learn about more crane viewing options.

Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 20th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2017. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information.

Agate Fossil Beds National Monument is planning an event for the GBBC but plans haven't been finalized so watch for the announcement.

Scotts Bluff National Monument will not be having an official event this year but if you do count birds on the monument property that weekend enter it for that location.

Events 2017 (cont)

January 21, 2017

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

The program will be by Amber Schiltz, Nebraska Wildlife Education Coordinator with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. She will be giving us a presentation on all of their different programs and their impact here in the panhandle where they reach 1 in 3 school children.

February 17-20, 2017

Great Backyard Bird Count

see article on this page

February 18, 2017

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

March 18, 2017

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

March 18, 2017

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

Rick and Suzanne Myers will give a presentation on their October trip to Iceland. It was their first "overseas" event, but the 8 days were filled with new adventures, exciting experiences and, of course, plenty of photographic images.

April TBA

We are working on a field trip to see Prairie Chickens at a lek, more info on this later.

April 22, 2017 *note date & location change*

General Meeting and Program will be held at the newly renovated ***Wildcat Hills Nature Center*** at 7:30pm. A Nebraska park sticker is required. Park Superintendent Gary Shoemaker will give a presentation on the new renovated Wildcat Hills Nature Center and give us a tour of the facility.

Calendar of Events 2017

May 13, 2017

Field trip to Crow Valley in the Pawnee National Grasslands in Colorado. Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6:00am. This will be an all day trip, bring a picnic lunch and drinks.

May 27, 2017

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.

June 3, 2017

Field Trip to Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6:00am. This is an all day field trip, bring a picnic lunch and drinks. We will be home late

June 3, 2017

Field Trip to Morrill County. Meet at Fresh Foods in Gering at 6:00am. We will bird around Facus Springs and the Redington area and should be back around 1:00

June 23-24, 2017

Bird Conservancy of the Rockies BioBlitz at Oliver Reservoir in Kimball. For more information contact Amber Schiltz 308-633-1013

August 13, 2017

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. Meat and drinks will be furnished.

September 2-5 (Labor Day Weekend)

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

September 2, 2017

Field Trip to Sowbelly Canyon and Gilbert Baker WMA in Sioux County. Meet at RCI, 27th & Ave I at 6:00am. This will be an all day trip, we will have lunch in Harrison.

September 16, 2017

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

September 23, 2017

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.

October 21, 2017

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

October 21, 2017

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

November 18, 2017

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

December 2017 or January 2018 TBA

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

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

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