

# CAT PRINTS



Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle

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## “My biggest birding blunders”

By Luke J Hamilton

In birding, Just as in everything else we can do in life, a good way to learn is by making mistakes. A better way to learn is to listen to other peoples mistakes. To that end, but mostly just to give you a good laugh, here is a partial list of my most embarrassing birding mistakes. My first-and also probably my most hilarious-blunder happened when I was birding a tree row near our house in the country near Harvard (which is a little town near Hastings). I was just starting to “birding by ear”, so every time I would hear a new call, I would attempt to find and ID the source for future reference. Anyway, as I was birding in that tree row I heard a very new sounding bird in one of the tree tops. But just as I went over to investigate, it suddenly stopped. After not hearing it for a while I moved on up the row. About half an hour later, On my way back to our house, I heard it again in the same place and this time I was determined to find that bird. So I got closer and closer to the tree trying to find the source of the mysterious on-and-off squeaking sound. I preceeded to stare up into the tree for over fifteen minutes before I realized what had happened. That on-and-off-squeaking-noise was being made by none other than ..... wait for it..... A dead branch. It was partially still attached and was swinging in the light breeze. So if you hear a on-and-off-squeaking-noise in a tree. Look for a dead branch before you start looking for a bird.

My second blunder came a few years later at a pond near Bridgeport NE. I had been scanning Canada Goose flocks all of that fall migration season to get a Snow Goose for Morrill Co. And so far I had had no luck. So as my mom and I were driving down the road and I saw a medium-sized white Anseriform on

on that pond my mind said SNOW GOOSE!!!!!! so I yelled “Mom head back to that pond there’s a SNOW GOOSE on it! My mom ( who has diligently encouraged and enabled my obsession with birds) then preceeded to drive a 1/4 mile to the next place were we could get off the road and turn around, go the 1/4 mile back. After she had pulled off the road we both whipped up our Binoculars and saw.....wait for it..... A domestic Goose. So if any of you ever see a medium-sized white Anseriform on a pond check to see if it has an orange bill before writing it off as a Snow Goose.

My most recent blunder, which happened only last November, was more of a technical error, but it is still funny. We were birding around Jailhouse and Courthouse rocks and I saw a medium-sized Buteo hawk with a dark band on it’s breast. Now I don’t know hawks very well so I jumped to the obvious conclusion: Swainson’s hawk, but it’s belly was mottled with brown, and it’s head had a lot of white all over it and when it flew I saw that it had heavy white speckling on it’s back.. However the picture of the Light Juvenile Swainson’s Hawk in the *Sibley Guide to Birds* fits that description very well. It was only after having several more experienced birders at a CBC look at me strangely and say something to the effect of “you saw a WHAT! hawk in November???” that I realized that what I saw was in fact.....wait for it..... a light adult Male Rough-legged Hawk. Now in my defense, if you look at the two pictures of them in the Sibley Guide they are Uncannily similar. The main difference is that the Swainee is here in the Summer and the Rough-legged is here in the winter. (cont. on page 2)

## My biggest birding blunders, continued

So if you ever see a medium-sized Buteo hawk with a dark chest band, white-streaked head and back, and a brown speckled belly. Stop a moment to consider if it is June or November.

Well, Those are my major blunders so far, and I am sure that there will be more, but with experience they will hopefully become less frequent and of a lesser caliber. But in birding as well as the rest of life, If we learn from our mistakes, they really aren't bad things at all.

*May your Warblers and Vireos  
sit still a little longer for you  
May your Sandpipers be  
forever in crisp plumage  
May the Rails come forth  
from the reeds for you  
And may your Empidonax  
Flycatchers always sing.  
May your Lifers be many  
and your Identification problems  
be few and temporary.*

Good Birding to all,  
Luke J. Hamilton

### PAPER OR PLASTIC?

Paper or Plastic?!? Neither!!  
Bring your bags with you! By taking reusable bags to the grocery, discount store, and mall, you can cut down on the 350 plastic bags the average American uses in one year or almost 23,000 in a lifetime. Plastic bags usage adds up to between 500 billion to a trillion bags per year worldwide. Re-cycle? Less than 1% are re-cycled, and it costs more to re-cycle than make new ones. Most used plastic bags end up in the ocean or blow throughout the land. When bags break down into toxic petro-polymers, they contaminate soil and waterways, enter the food chain, and are catastrophic to wildlife. China has banned the use of free plastic bags and will save 37 million barrels of oil a year. Yes, plastic is made from polyethylene, which is made from oil. The state of California is also considering banning plastic bags, several cities already do.

## Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

We had some nice birding outings in May and June. The planned field trip to Morrill County didn't happen because of the weather, but we lucked out for the rest of our trips. We were lucky to have planned the trip to Stateline Island south of Henry for early June so we got there before the floods. Probably the best birds at Stateline Island were Great-crested Flycatchers and Black-headed Grosbeaks.

Once again we concentrated on the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas II. Probably the best birds of the summer were nesting Lesser Goldfinches in Wrights' Gap in Banner County. I believe this is the first time this species has been documented to nest in Nebraska. Cordilleran Flycatcher was also a nice bird for that trip. Kathy DeLara showed us a yucca blossom with 2 little yucca moths that are necessary to pollinate that plant. And we studied a road-killed Western Kingbird and the brilliant orange-red spot on top of its head--a field mark that is rarely seen on a live bird. We found a beautiful Barn Owl in a barn in Scotts Bluff County.

On our trip to the Scotts Bluff County part of the Stage Hill area, we found a lot of digger bees on a low-traffic gravel road. We were happy to find Dickcissels on that trip. A Northern Mockingbird was seen in the same area later in the day.

The spring NOU meeting at Chadron was a lot of fun. That Saturday morning was very wet and rainy and the roads were very muddy. So we had to change all of our Saturday field trip plans. But we had some unusual and very cooperative birds--Lewis's Woodpecker, Baird's Sparrow, Evening Grosbeaks, and nesting Pinyon Jays. The fall NOU meeting will be September 24-26 at McCook. If you are interested in going, please contact Kathy DeLara.

Hummingbirds are just starting to arrive in the area. That is always fun!!!! Before we know it the summer birds will be leaving and migrants and winter birds will be arriving. We have several fall trips planned and we hope to see many of you on them.

### RECYCLE

Bring your aluminum cans to any Wildcat Audubon event or meeting. Please bring your ink jet 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 recycling are used for community education.

# Calendar of Events Fall/Winter 2010

**August 22nd \*\*\*Please note change in date\*\*\***

**Annual Picnic** will be held at Dave & Ann Duey's, 90152 Enterprise Dr. Scottsbluff at 5:00 pm. Bring a covered dish and table service, drinks will be provided

**September 11th**

**Breakfast at Wind Springs Ranch**

David and Helen Hughson will be our hosts for breakfast and birding at the ranch. Meet at the RCI parking lot (27th St & Ave I) at 7:00 am to join the carpool.

**September 18th**

**Scotts Bluff County Fall Bird Count**

Meet at Arby's at 7:00 am for our annual fall bird count.

**September 18th**

**General Meeting** at the RWMC South Plaza meeting room, 7:30 pm.

"Beautiful sand beaches, snow capped mountains, 2000 year old trees, sky blue water teeming with seabirds, caldera lakes, and every shade of green you can imagine and more. These are some of the wonderful sights we saw as we toured New Zealand in search of its fantastic birds. There were ancient birds like the New Zealand Rock Wren that hardly has a tail and kiwis that have evolved to almost not be a bird. Some endemic birds like the Stitchbird, Rifleman, and Saddleback are being protected and are growing in numbers. Seeing and hearing them is almost a religious experience. The seabirds are a true highlight. Over 75% of the world's seabird species are seen near New Zealand. Many of these can be viewed on short day trips out to the waters off the New Zealand mainland. There you can see albatrosses with 12 foot wingspans or the New Zealand Storm-petrel, a bird once thought extinct but now rediscovered after being unseen for 150 years."

Phil Swanson (Papillion NE) along with Ross Silcock (Tabor IA), will share all this and more as they takes us on a journey through New Zealand; a journey Phil took on a Ross Silcock ([www.rosssilcock.com](http://www.rosssilcock.com)) led birding tour of New Zealand birds in 2009.

**October 16th**

**General Meeting** at the RWMC South Plaza meeting room, 7:30 pm.

Buffalo Bruce and the staff of Western Nebraska Resources Council will be giving a talk relating to native ASPEN communities & ecology within Nebraska. They will be covering biological diversity; importance for birds; general locations, health, and types. This discussion will also address how Global Climate Change is affecting these rare ecosystems. Suggestions on enhancing system health will be given for land managers.

**October 23rd**

**Fall Waterfowl Field Trip**

Meet at Arby's at 7:00 am. We will be birding the local lakes and ponds for waterfowl and other birds. We should be back by 1:00

**November 20th**

**General Meeting** at the RWMC South Plaza meeting room, 7:30 pm.

Rod & Marie Smith and Helen Hughson will give a program on the birds of Panama with lots of pictures taken by the Smith's on a recent trip.

**December 18th**

**Scottsbluff Christmas Bird Count**

Meet at Arby's at 6:00 am

*All of our meetings, field trips and other events are free and open to the public. For more information contact a board member listed on the front page of the newsletter*

If you would like to be added to our email reminder list for meetings or field trips send an email to [renosmom@charter.net](mailto:renosmom@charter.net), put **Wildcat Audubon** in the subject line and mention which list you would like to be included on.

## 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**



Wildcat Audubon Society  
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**There is no charge for the Cat Prints Subscription**  
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If you would like to become a local member send \$5.00 to

Wildcat Audubon % Kathy DeLara  
170188 Spring Creek Rd, Mitchell, NE 69357

NL-0710



### Wildcat Audubon Society

c/o Kathy DeLara  
170188 Spring Creek Road  
Mitchell, NE 69357-5319

**Please Note Date Change for the Wildcat Audubon Picnic  
August 22nd, 5pm, see inside for more information**