

# CAT PRINTS



*Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle*

## Officers 2014

### Co-Presidents

Dr. Don Gentry  
Meredyth Gentry  
308-436-2495  
drdon21@embarqmail.com

### Co-Vice Presidents

Donna Davey  
308-632-5767  
donna@cddavey.com  
Connie McKinney  
308-632-5153  
bcmckinney@charter.net

### Secretary –Field Trips

Alice Kenitz  
308-436-2959  
akenitz@prairieweb.com

### Treasurer–Editor

#### Field Trips

Kathy De Lara  
308-632-3047  
renosmom@charter.net

### Board of Directors

Chuck Davey  
308-632-5767

Ann Duey  
Field Trips  
308-632-3544  
dduey@actcom.net

Brad McKinney  
308-632-5153  
bcmckinney@charter.net

Ruben Siegfried  
308-436-7859  
rubens69341@yahoo.com

Rod & Marie Smith  
308-632-1973  
mlou\_smith@yahoo.com

Maggie Vinson  
Field Trips  
magdalena.vinson@rmbo.org

## Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

It has been a rather quiet winter as far as birding is concerned. Maybe it's because the weather has discouraged getting out to even look for interesting species. There are Steller's Jays in the Wildcat Hills again this year. There were as many as 7 last fall, but most of the winter there have been more like three. As of the middle of March, there is still an occasional bird around.

One of the mysteries of last fall and the winter has been the absence of Pine Siskins. There were none banded during the bird banding sessions at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center last September and October. Just a couple of years ago, they were the most numerous birds banded. At our home on the edge of the Wildcat Hills, we usually have 50 to 75 Pine Siskins visiting every day. This year we can find maybe 10 or 15 if we really search through the birds at our feeders.

One bird that seems to be more common than usual across the state this winter is the Rough-legged Hawk. In my opinion, this is one of our most beautiful hawks, especially when they are seen flying overhead. I think the underwing pattern of black and white is really spectacular. These relatively large hawks are seen in Nebraska only in winter.



Rough-legged Hawk Photo by Kathy DeLara

They winter over much of the continental United States except for the south and southeast. They are found in open fields, plains, and marshes. Breeding occurs in the far north and Arctic areas, including much of Alaska. Nests are on tundra escarpments.

Juncos are still common around feeders. I love these little guys, but I have to admit I start looking forward to seeing something besides juncos when we get into March. Spring is near, so keep your eyes and ears open for the possibilities.

## Interesting Sightings

- Brad and Connie McKinney have had a Golden-crowned Kinglet coming into their birdbath this winter
- 1500 Sandhill Cranes were seen off CR 27 along Seagull Rd, Lake Minatare Rd and CR E on March 15th by Kathy DeLara
- Many Snow Geese have been seen flying over, in corn fields and at Cochran Lake south of Melbeta the past few weeks.
- Bob and Kathy DeLara have had a male Cardinal in their yard off and one during the winter and one was reported at a home on River Road.
- A Mountain Chickadee was reported at Rod and Marie Smiths earlier in the winter.
- Stellar's Jays have been seen in the Wildcat Hills again this winter
- Pinyon Jays' are still being seen at a ranch south on Bridgeport this winter but not the large numbers seen last year. About 20 have been at the feeders this winter, there were over 80 last winter.
- Marie Smith found a small covey of five Chukar in Banner County on Wright's Gap Road



**Chukar Photo by Marie Smith**

## GREEN TIP

### TURN OFF THE LIGHTS!

How many times have I told you? Turn off the lights when you leave the room. Sometimes remembering to turn off the lights is easier said than done. It is another habit to get into if we are interested in saving energy (and money, too). Other energy-saving strategies are not turning lights on at all for as long as you can. How often I enter a room and switch on a light when it's not really needed. Let natural light in by opening curtains and blinds.

As of January 1, 2014, the traditional incandescent light bulbs, which emit 90% heat and only 10% light, are no longer available in stores. If you still are using incandescent light bulbs, consider switching to CFL's to save both energy and money. According to energy.gov, you will save approximately \$6 a year and as much as \$135 over its lifetime if you replace one 100-watt incandescent bulb with a CFL or LED light bulb. CFL's may cost more initially but last 10 to 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs. An added tip this website gave for CFL's is NOT to switch off the light if you will be returning to the room in less than 15 minutes. Switching CFL's off and on less frequently will extend the life of the bulb. All other types of light bulbs should be switched off as soon as possible, especially halogens, which are only a little more efficient than incandescent bulbs and much hotter.

## eBird

**Global tools for birders, critical data for science**

Consider entering your bird sightings on the eBird website at <http://ebird.org/>

- **Record the birds you see**
- **Keep track of your bird lists**
- **Explore dynamic maps and graphs**
- **Share your sightings and join the eBird community**
- **Contribute to science and conservation**

# Calendar of Events 2014

## March 22 2014

**Birding to the lakes and ponds** for crane and waterfowl. Meet at Arby's in Scottsbluff at 8am. We should be back around 1pm

## April 5, 2014

We will be joining the **Watchable Wildlife Tour in Kimball County** to look for Mountain Plovers and ground nesting birds. Meet at Fresh Foods Grocery in Gering at 6:45 am or the Kimball Welcome Center at 7:45am. Please RSVP for this trip

## April 26, 2014 (note change in date)

**General Meeting and Program** at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Connie McKinney will give her program "Off The Beaten Path" on areas you might not see in National and State Parks

## May 10, 2014

**Scotts Bluff County Spring Bird Count.** Meet at the RCI building at 27<sup>th</sup> and Ave I in Scottsbluff at 6am, we will come back into town for lunch and may continue the count in the afternoon.

## May 31, 2014

**Banner County Field Trip.** Meet at the Fresh Foods Grocery in Gering at 6am, we should be back at 1pm

## June 7, 2014

**Gilbert Baker WMA in Sioux County Field Trip** and other areas as time allows. Bring a sack lunch or we may eat in Harrison. Meet at the RCI building, 27<sup>th</sup> and Ave I, Scottsbluff at 6am. Please RSVP for this trip

## June 21, 2014

**Crescent Lake NWR Field Trip.** This will be an all day trip, bring a sack lunch, drinks and snacks. Meet at Fresh Food Grocery in Gering at 6am. Please RSVP for this trip

## August 10, 2014

**Audubon Annual Picnic** will be held at Rod and Marie Smiths at 5:30pm. Bring a covered dish, table service and lawn chair. Please RSVP as Smith's will be providing the meat and drinks

## September 13, 2014

**Scotts Bluff County Fall Bird Count**, meet at 8am at Arby's in Scottsbluff.

This is also the **Public Bird Banding Day at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center.** They start banding early and continue throughout the morning.

This is a free event but a park permit is required.

## September 20, 2014

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

## September 27-28, 2014

**Weekend trip to the Rocky Mountain National Park** for an Owl Seminar and Banding of Boreal & Saw-whet Owls and more. The price for the seminar and banding is \$35 per person. Space is limited to 16 people. Please let us know if you are interested in attending as we have to pay 50% down for them to hold the day for us. For information please contact someone on the field trip committee and visit the website at

[http://www.rmna.org/rmna.cfm?](http://www.rmna.org/rmna.cfm?Page=docs/5023_owl_banding_rashid.htm)

[Page=docs/5023\\_owl\\_banding\\_rashid.htm](http://www.rmna.org/rmna.cfm?Page=docs/5023_owl_banding_rashid.htm)

**Please RSVP Kathy at [renosmom@charter.net](mailto:renosmom@charter.net)** if you plan to attend. This is the trip that we had planned for last year and couldn't go because of the flooding in Colorado.)

## October 18, 2014

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

## October 25, 2014

**Waterfowl and Cranes Field Trip.** Meet at Arby's at 8am. We will bird the lakes and ponds and should be back around 1pm

## November 15, 2014

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

## December 20, 2014

**Scotts Bluff County Christmas Bird Count.**

Meet at Arby's at 6:30am. For more information contact Alice Kenitz at [akenitz@prairieweb.com](mailto:akenitz@prairieweb.com)

## *Join the Wildcat Audubon Society*

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Your dollars help pay for CatPrints newsletter, Public Education and other projects through out the year

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### **Wildcat Audubon Society**

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