

# CAT PRINTS



*Wildcat Audubon Society - Serving the Nebraska Panhandle*

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## Kenitz Corner

By Alice Kenitz

One of my favorite destinations for a field trip is Smith Lake which is north of Lakeside in Sheridan County. That was our destination on June 6. All of the spring and early summer moisture made the Sandhills especially lovely this year. Grasses were tall and water was abundant.

We found 84 species of birds. We were quite surprised about the numbers of a few of the species.

We found over 175 White-faced Ibis and one flock of Long-billed Curlews had 20-25 birds. Black-crowned Night-Herons were very cooperatively sitting on fence posts so that we all got good looks.



Black-crowned Night-heron by Kathy DeLara

A closer-to-home favorite is Wright's Gap in Banner County. I love to hear the chorus of singers early in the morning. Species such as Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos, Rock Wren, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat, Spotted Towhee, Blue Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, and American Goldfinch make a person happy to be out enjoying 'nature'. We ended that trip on June 13 with a stop at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center.



Kathy and I attended the Bioblitz at Oliver Lake west of Kimball on June 20. The activities began on the afternoon of June 19 and went for about 24 hours. Coordinator Alie Mayes of the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies had gathered experts from many fields to teach about bird watching, stars, bees, fishing, small mammals, insects and other areas. Alie hopes to do this again in the future, and I would highly recommend it to all (and especially to families).

Fall is upon us and many of the summer birds have left. Fall migrants such as various warbler species are now passing through. And the first juncos of the season have been seen in the Wildcat Hills. So be on the lookout for winter residents and, especially, for winter rarities such as Evening Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls.

Above photo taken along Wright's Gap Rd by Kathy DeLara

# Osprey Nesting in Nebraska

By Kathy DeLara



These three young Osprey were getting close to fledging from the nest west of Scottsbluff .  
This picture was taken by Kathy DeLara August 2, 2015

This was an interesting and exciting year for Osprey Nesting in Nebraska. In Scotts Bluff County we had two successful nesting, with each fledging 3 young. One at the Scottsbluff Sugar Factory and one at the nesting platform east of Scottsbluff near River Road and Hiway 92. A third nesting attempt near Spring Creek Road and Hiway 26, first observed on May 5th, was not successful.

I received an email on July 23rd from Tony Kruger about a large nest on the light pole at the Sugar Factory, when I stopped by to check it out the following Saturday I was surprised to find Osprey nesting there as they usually nest near rivers or lakes. These may have been the pair that attempted to nest on the lights at the baseball fields at Lacy Park the previous year. The fledging of these young are the first documented fledging of Osprey in Nebraska.

I stopped by the two nests almost daily for a couple of weeks from July 25th when I thought they were getting near fledging hoping to get a picture. On the 8th of August about 9:30 a.m. I saw the first Osprey fledge from the nest at the Sugar Factory, it flew around the nesting pole , then made a rather poor, but successful landing on some equipment too far away for a good picture . A second one flew a little way out from the nest and back. The third one on that nest didn't act like he wanted to try it.

The nest west of town, which I call the Riverside nest was first observed in 2011. The first pair attempted to nest on a power pole and, according to the electric company, one or both were electrocuted. The power company put up a nesting platform and a pair has been using it ever since. The following year the nest had two young, but a bad hail storm came through that June and must have killed the young as they were not seen after that. In 2015 there were 3 young which were still on the nest at 9am on August 8<sup>th</sup> . A few days later I saw one of the young from the Riverside nest sitting on a tree by the river with an adult watching over it. The other two were still on the nest at that time. I didn't have a chance to check on them for several days after that and they were all off the nest by then.

The first known nesting in Nebraska for the past 100 years was in 2008 when a pair attempted to nest on a power pole near Winter's Creek Lake. A nesting platform was installed for them and they nested on it for a few years, but no sign of them this year. There is also a nesting platform on the north side of Winter's Creek Lake that had some activity earlier but no nesting occurred on it or the one erected near the river bridge south of Mitchell.

Another probably successful nesting was two nearly fledged young observed by Joel Jorgensen on 22 July downstream of the Keystone Diversion Dam near Roscoe NE. You can read more about it on his blog at <http://neblandvm.outdoornebraska.gov/2015/07/ospreys-on-the-verge-of-success/>

Osprey nesting continued;

**Official accounts of Osprey breeding in Nebraska**  
**By Ross Silcock**

According to Bruner et al (1904), it formerly bred at least once along the Missouri River near Rockport on the Washington-Douglas Cos boundary (Ducey 1988).

The first modern breeding record was a nest under construction 15 May 2008 on a telephone pole at Winters Creek L, Scotts Bluff Co; two adults were in attendance. Part of the nest blew down in a storm 24 May, although the adults were still present 23 Jun (BG, SK, KD, AK). The nest was rebuilt in 2009, but was unsuccessful (KD). A single bird was in the area 22-23 May 2010 (AK), but the nest site was unoccupied (KD), although two adults were sitting on the ground east of Scottsbluff 12 Jun (KD). An adult was on the platform 15 May 2011, but the nest was partially destroyed, probably by wind (KD). The pair apparently rebuilt their wind-damaged nest and one was sitting on the nest late Jun (KD). The only activity at this site in 2012 was an adult and a young flighted bird of unknown provenance using one of the two platforms to feed 4 Aug (KD). Neither site was used during the summer for nesting (KD).

Also in spring 2011 there were an encouraging two additional nest attempts. A pair was building a nest on a power pole a mile west of Scottsbluff 15 Apr but apparently was electrocuted before 1 May (KD); the local power company then proceeded to install a 65-foot high pole and platform, and a new pair was present late in the reporting period (KD). This platform was in use again in 2012, with 2 young in the nest 19 Jun, but a severe hail storm appeared to have ended the attempt; one of the ads. looked "beat-up" later the same day, and only one ad. was there 8 Jul (KD).

The other 2011 nesting attempt was a pair building a nest on a platform near Keystone, Keith Co 21 Apr-1 May (JGJ, JJe); two birds were seen in the area 13 Jul (TJW), but the nest site itself was not checked. The platform was occupied again in 2012, with adults present 19 Jun (fide GW), but after relocation of the platform, re-nesting did not take place (GW).

A nest with two adults present was near Marina Landing, L McConaughy, 7 Aug 2012 (JGJ, LD).

Nesting attempts continued in 2013, but with little success. A single bird was carrying nest material to a new site across Winters Creek L from the established nest platform 24 Apr (KD); 2 birds were tending the platform site beginning 24 Apr, with one sitting on the nest 28 Apr (KD). Another new site is south of Mitchell, where a lone bird was seen 24 Apr (KD). The platform near Riverside Park, Scottsbluff had 2 birds in attendance 24 Apr (KD) and 21 May (WF). A power pole nest established just east of Lewellen last year was blown down by 21 May this year (WM, JGJ). The tree site along the north shore of L McConaughy appears to be abandoned (JGJ), and no reports were received from the Keystone platform site.

In 2015, nesting attempts continued apace in Scotts Bluff Co, where there were at least two active nests. One was at a regular site on River Road, Scottsbluff, where an ad. appeared 18 Apr and incubation was underway 9 May (KD, AK), and the other at a new site at the junction of Highway 26 and Sunflower Oil and Spring Creek Roads, where nest building was underway 5 May (KD). The nest platform near L Minatare only had minimal nest material 31 May (DT).

Exciting news, however, was a nesting attempt at Summit L, Burt Co, where a single bird was nest-building on a very tall cell phone tower 6 Jun 2013 (ScS fide JGJ); it was carrying a band indicating it was a bird hatched in South Dakota in 2008 (EDS fide JT). Two were present 17 Jun when copulation was observed (JT), and nest-building continued 19 Jun (ScS). The adult pair attended the nest until at least 14 Aug (CNK), with the male adding to the nest 2 Aug (JT), but no young were visible (CNK, WF), suggesting a lack of success. Three were at this site 2 May 2014, one with a blue marker indicative of a South Dakota stocking program origin (SS).

## Wildcat Weekends at the WCH Nature Center

A variety of programs will be offered at the Wildcat Hills Nature Center on the second Saturday of the month (\*unless otherwise noted) from May through December 2015.

**A valid 2015 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 on the website [ngpc.wildcat.hills@nebraska.gov](mailto:ngpc.wildcat.hills@nebraska.gov)

### **October 10, 2015 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 along a flashlight, hiking shoes and a sense of adventure.

### **\*November 7, 2015 at 9:00am MST**

#### *Oh Deer*

Bound on over to explore our deer friends that call the Wildcat Hills home.

Discover the different species, habitat needs and cool adaptations of these majestic creatures!

### **December 12, 2015 at 9:00am MST**

#### *Nature's Gifts: Decorations from the Great Outdoors*

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

This fun program is complete with hot chocolate and cookies.

Please pre-register by December 4, 2015 for this event at 308-436-3777.

## Sandhill Crane Migration

From The Chicken Dance Trail newsletter/blog by T.J. Walker

### **Spring vs Fall Migration**

Most of you have heard of, read about and probably even observed the spring migration of Sandhill Cranes. It is an amazing spectacle, no doubt about it. So why don't you hear about the fall migration of Sandhill Cranes? There are many reasons for that. First of all, the fall movements of Sandhill Cranes are far less predictable and can take place anytime from early October to December. They also are less predictable on where they will show up.

Finally, the main reason you hear so little about their migration in the fall, is that they do not hang around or concentrate in large numbers. In fact, in the fall Sandhill Cranes use the Platte River system very little and are probably more likely to be found in playa wetlands (shallow wetlands in cropland or grassland areas), rain-water basins or even the shallow upper ends of some of our larger reservoirs.

In the spring, the cranes are here for weeks at a time, spending the nights on the shallow Platte River and feeding and fattening up for reproductive efforts. In the fall, they have one goal, which is to get to their wintering areas in New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. If conditions are good for migration, and the wind is at their back, some of them likely complete their southward journey from Canada and Alaska in a matter of a few days. They migrate so high to take advantage of those upper level tailwinds and are literally just specks in the sky as they go over Nebraska. (To read the entire article go to the Chicken Dance Website listed below.)

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This is a very cool website for info on birding in south west/south central Nebraska. Make sure you check it out.

<http://www.chickendancetrail.com/>

# Calendar of Events 2015

**October 10, 2015**

(\*\*NOTE DATE CHANGE\*\*)

**General Meeting and Program** at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program will be giving by a biologist from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. they will present a program on nongame species such as the river otter and the kit fox and how their niche fits into nature's big picture.

**October 10, 2015**

(\*\*NOTE DATE CHANGE\*\*)

**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 21, 2015**

**General Meeting and Program** at the Regional West Medical Center South Plaza meeting room at 7:30 pm. Program: An archeologist from the U.S. Forest Service will give a presentation on the Hudson Meng Buffalo Kill Site. He will cover some of their significant finds and the history of the site.

**December 19, 2015**

**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](mailto: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*

For meeting information contact Don & Meredyth Gentry [drdon21@embarqmail.com](mailto:drdon21@embarqmail.com) 308-436-2495

If you would like to do a program for us contact Donna or Chuck Davey at 308-632-5767

To report bird sightings or for field trip information:  
Alice Kenitz [akenitz@prairieweb.com](mailto:akenitz@prairieweb.com) 308-436-2959  
Kathy DeLara [renosmom@charter.net](mailto:renosmom@charter.net) 308-631-2792

## **Interesting Sightings from the Wildcat Hills**

**Banding Station** includes the recapture of the Northern Saw-whet Owl that was banded last year, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes, Lesser Goldfinch, Gray Catbird, Dusky Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lazuli Bunting, Townsend's Solitaire, Cedar Waxwing, Mountain Bluebird, White-crowned Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak and others. Lots of Junco's are coming in since they started banding in early September.

## **GREEN TIP**

### Green Window Washing

Housecleaning often includes window washing, especially after the miller moths have migrated on to cooler climes and fall rains have settled the dust. Here's how to clean windows with no fierce solvents and minimal cash:

- \*Wash windows with water and white vinegar about ½ cup vinegar to a gallon of water.
- \*For seriously dirty windows, use a squirt of liquid detergent in a bucket of warm water and follow with a rinse of vinegar and water.
- \*Newsprint has a reputation as a window cleaner, but it's better to leave it in the recycling bin and use two clean, lint-free rags, one for wiping and one for drying.
- \*For outdoor windows, use a squeegee to get the windows dry quickly, the key to avoiding streaks.

## *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

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