

The Meadowlark



Volume 32 Issue 1

**ASO is a Chapter of the National Audubon Society
serving Eastern Nebraska and Western Iowa**

January 2003



Tanzania Safari

**By Duane and Janice
Bright**

If you are suffering from the winter doldrums, how about going on a trip to the equator? Right on the equator, that is, and with no jet lag.

We spent an exciting two weeks last September traveling throughout northern Tanzania, East Africa. The trip was sponsored by the Alegent Health System and the Immanuel Charitable Foundation, which works in partnership with several hospitals, churches and a primary school in northern Tanzania.

Twelve persons, mostly medical personnel, transported one suitcase each of supplies for medical institutions and schools, to which the supplies were donated. This meant we each had

servation Area. We visited two rural areas and attended church services conducted in Swahili.

The highlight of the entire trip was the safari on the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Crater. While on safari we stayed at the Ndotu and Seronera lodges, which were four star-level accommodations, a very pleasant surprise. Lions, cheetahs, and dozens more species of animals were seen at close range. Duane added about 60 species of birds to his life list.

Included on the itinerary was a Masai village where traditional dances were performed and our group was welcomed into the Masai huts and primary school. Of course there were souvenirs to buy, which was encouraged

hike up to the Machame Gate, trailhead for trekkers to begin the ascent up Mt. Kilimanjaro. Nearly the entire time spent in Moshi, the mountain was visible in all its splendor.

The last evening in Tanzania included a photo session of Kilimanjaro at sunset, a beautiful conclusion to an unforgettable trip.

Duane and Janice will present their program at the January 9 general meeting, 7:30 P.M. at Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances (one block south of 44th & Center) for the meeting. Following the program, we will have a short business meeting, then a social hour of coffee, cookies and conversation.

Visitors are welcome.

an empty suitcase to fill since the Masai carry with souvenirs and gifts to spears. . bring home.

It was the dry season in Tanzania, lending itself to many good photo opportunities. The temperature never rose above 85 degrees nor went below 58. While in Tanzania, our home base was the Uhuru Lutheran Hostel in Moshi, which sits near the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

While in Moshi we traveled to two rural areas and attended two church services conducted in Swahili. We left our home base for two stays at the Lutheran Hostel in the small town of Karatu, a base for trips to and from the popular Ngorongoro Crater Con

Another fascinating side trip was to the Olduvai Gorge, famous as the site where in 1959 Mary Leakey discovered a 1.9 million-year-old ape-like fossil skull.

Other attractions were a coffee factory tour and large outdoor market where tanzanite, brightly colored fabrics, animal necklaces, ebony carved animals, masks and even Masai spears were popular purchases. Duane mentions they visited far too many souvenir shops.

Although our group didn't scale the famous peak, we did make a two-mile

Local Bird Watching

Field Trip

By Clem Klaphake

January is not usually an easy month to find a great number of bird species in Nebraska.

Our January 18 field trip will involve a number of local backyard feeders to see what may be hanging around in early 2003.

Continued on page 2

Scholarly Notes

By Eric Scholar

I want to bring you up to date on some issues that ASO or Audubon Nebraska have been involved in recently.

Heron Haven Committee - This committee, which has been dormant in past years, has been restructured with several additional members. They include the president (Eric Scholar), Ione Werthman, Garry Mick, Glenn Pollock, Paul Kardell, Lisa Peterson, Betty Allen, plus new members Elliott Bedows, Heron Haven Committee. This committee is relative to the vival rate compared to that of unvaccinated birds. The impetus for developing the vaccine was prompted by concern among zoos and captive breeding facilities for endangered and threatened species. Both wild bird populations and birds being bred for reintroduction to the wild could be severely affected by the West Nile virus. Leading the effort to develop the vaccine were the American Bird Conservancy and the American Zoo and

Kathy Schwery, Laurine Blankenau, and Jenny Henricksen.

Aquarium Association, supported by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund.

The committee plans to meet monthly or semimonthly to see that our home place is operating smoothly. Garry Mick drew up a plan for the basis of its operation and the committee is fine tuning it. The plan calls for consultation with the committee or at least with a three-member executive committee on all major renovations, additions and modifications. All major expenses must be approved by the committee.

Strategic Planning - The ASO Board has decided to hold a strategic planning session next February in order to set our goals for the next few years. By knowing our goals, we can determine what type of fundraising is necessary to achieve them. We will probably have this meeting in February 2003 on a Saturday, If you have an interest in helping us plan for the future, please let me know.

Fundraising - At our November board meeting, Dave Sands and Chris Sommerich from Audubon Nebraska talked to us about fundraising. They discussed various aspects of the process and gave us several ideas as to how to go about it. One suggestion was that a well-articulated mission is important in fundraising. We appreciate their suggestions and will use them as guidelines for planning.

Audubon Nebraska - On the state level the new Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary was slated for completion in early December of 2002. The building will provide space for education, exhibit areas and a small gift shop. It will also house Rowe staff and volunteers. Many of us remember the old building near the viewing area for the cranes. This will be a great improvement for all.

Update on West Nile Virus - Last month I wrote about the West Nile Virus. I recently received new information on that disease. Efforts to

Many Thanks - This being the beginning of a new year, I want to thank all members of the board who have put in many hours volunteering on various projects during the last year.

I especially thank Sally Hansen for successfully running the bird seed sale, which was our major fundraiser last year. Also I thank Betsy Haas, who works behind the scenes. Betsy has been helping ASO with membership lists since March 2001. Lately she has been inputting data for membership. This is a tedious job. We thank her very much.

Field Trip, Continued from Page 1

Last January we had White-winged Crossbills and a Pine Warbler in the metro area.

At this time a couple of people have offered their back yards for viewing. Ruth Green has also offered to do some banding for us that morning.

As we get close to January 18, I will try to add any other good back yards with interesting birds that may be showing up at feeders.

We will meet at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center at 8:00 A.M. on Saturday, January 18. I would appreciate any information about unusual sightings in back yards up until the 28th. Call 292-2276.

Upcoming Events

Jan 6 (Mon) Conservation Meeting

8 (Wed) Board Meeting

9 (Thur) General Meeting

18 (Sat) Field Trip - Local Feeders

develop a West Nile vaccine for birds have had encouraging results from first round trials completed by the Center for Disease Control in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Laboratory tests have resulted in a 60% increased sur

18 Birding Class Begins

Feb 14-17 Backyard Bird Count

2003 Rivers & Wildlife Celebration

The 33rd annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration will take place Friday through Sunday noon, March 14-16 at the Holiday Inn in Kearney.

The event brings together outdoor enthusiasts from around the globe to celebrate the remarkable migration of cranes, ducks, geese, and other birds for which Central Nebraska is world-famous. Speakers, wildlife tours, merchandise sales, and more are all part of a fun and educational weekend.

Main Speakers

Terry Tempest Williams is well known for her book *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, which is now regarded as a classic in American nature writing. Her recent book, *Red: Patience and Passion in the Desert*, traces her lifelong love of and commitment to the desert.

In 1991 *Newsweek* identified Williams as someone likely to make a "consideration impact on the political, economic, and environmental issues facing the western states this decade." She was recently inducted to the Rachel Carson Honor Roll and received the National Wildlife Federation's Conservation Award for Special Achievement.

Mangelsen, and his latest, *Spirit of the Rockies: The Mountain Lions of Jackson Hole*. His images have been exhibited in museums across the United States, Canada, and Europe and are available exclusively at his Images of Nature galleries.

Field Trips

The conference is timed to coincide with the spectacular migration through central Nebraska of half a million sandhill cranes, along with millions of ducks, geese, and other water birds. Sunrise and sunset trips to blinds to see the cranes roosting on the Platte are always popular. If you have not seen the cranes from river blinds, both morning and evening trips are highly recommended, as each gives different distinct experiences. Guided tours to Funk Lagoon and Harlan County Reservoir are planned, as are visits to local prairie chicken booming grounds.

The Iain Nicolson Audubon Center

The long-envisioned dream of an Audubon education center has come true. This new facility, set along the beautiful Platte River at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary, is the second largest

Dr. Carl Safina has been close to the sea all his life, as a fisherman, a seabird scientist and a voice for restoration of abundance and vitality in the oceans. As Audubon's Vice President for Marine Conservation and founder of Audubon Living Oceans, he is dedicated to elevating the public profile of marine and fisheries issues. He is the author of the acclaimed *Song for the Blue Ocean*, and is a regular contributor to *Audubon* magazine.

Devoted to a lifetime of documenting the natural world, **Thomas D. Mangelsen** is one of the world's premier nature photographers. With a career spanning more than 25 years, Tom's passionate vision allows him to create works of a delicate nature, solid knowledge, and a commitment to the preservation of the wild world. Tom's books include *Images of Nature: The Photography of Thomas D.*

straw bale-constructed building in the United States. It will provide indoor classroom, educational displays, conference rooms, a viewing area of the river, and much more.

Special field trips will be offered during the RWC for conference goers to see Rowe and the new building.

Registration is \$80 per adult before Feb.28, \$90 after. Students are \$70/\$80, children 6 to 28 are \$30/\$40, and kids under 5 are free. Field trips and special programs are extra; space limited. Registration materials can be ordered from Audubon Nebraska, (402) 797-2301, or nebraska@audubon.org. For crane viewing information, call Rowe Sanctuary, (308) 468-5282.

Birding for the Beginner Class Begins January 18

A non-credit course, Birding for the Beginner, will be offered through Metro Community College on Saturdays, January 18 - March 8, and March 22 - 29. The interrupted schedule is necessary to allow both students and instructors to attend Audubon Nebraska's Rivers & Wildlife Celebration in Kearney.

The class will cover bird identification through field marks, size, shape, behavior and habitat, and much more.

The last two weeks of the class will focus on spring migrants—warblers, shorebirds, and on birding hot spots in our area.

Classes run from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon at the Audubon Office at Heron Haven, 11809 Old Maple Road.

To register, call Metro Community College at 738-4520.

Call the Audubon Office, 445-4138, for additional information.

By Ione Werthman

So What's Next?

What are Audubon Activists supposed to do for the next four weeks now that the third special session of the Unicameral has adjourned sine die - until January, and the 107th U.S. Congress has closed up shop? *We need to tell President Bush to also take a vacation!*

Not waiting for Congress, the President has announced plans to reduce wildfires in our national forests (which he claims are fueled by overgrowth) by speeding up the cutting of trees and brush. This directive will not only thoroughly rewrite the rules issued by President Clinton in November 2000 but also put less emphasis on protecting birds and wildlife. Bush has also announced changes to ease the Clean Air rules to allow utilities, refiners and manufacturers to avoid installing expensive new antipollution equipment when modernizing plants.

He has signed papers to allow Mexican trucks to travel across America beyond the 20-mile commercial border zones where Mexican rigs currently transfer their cargo to U.S. trucks. A moratorium of 1982 banned these trucks from the U.S. because of our regulations on emissions. Bush said his decision complies with a provision of NAFTA. Who's paying for the upkeep of our roads? Want to hear more about NAFTA rules? Call the Audubon Office (445-4138) and we'll schedule a round of video showings at our Education Center, Heron Haven.

Since Congress failed to pass an energy bill last session, in January we will again be faced with such formidable topics as drilling in the Arctic NWR. The Kerry-Hollings-McCain amendment to the Energy Bill, requiring car makers to meet new fuel-economy standards of 36 miles per gallon by 2015, was trashed in the last Congressional session. This

"Organic" Takes on New Meaning

Good News Department - As of October 21, citizens can now find new government organic USDA stamps on some of our food packages. Although organic farms now provide less than 2% of the nation's food supply and take up less than 1% of cropland, according to an article from the Organic Farming Research Foundation in the Sept. 20 2002 *Newsweek*,

"Organic farms are flourishing as never before. Nearly 40 % of U.S. consumers now reach occasionally for something labeled "organic," and sales are expected to top \$11 billion this year. Even conglomerates as big as Heinz and General Mills are now launching or buying organic lines and selling them in mainstream supermarkets."

Bad News Department - The article continues by reporting that non-organic farmers are applying three times as much (pesticide) chemicals as they were forty years ago, to kill the same pests. Not only that, they use herbicides on weeds, fungicides on fungi, rodenticides on field mice and gophers, avicides on fruit-eating birds and molluscides on snails.

Pesticides now kill 67 million American birds each year, and the Mississippi River dumps enough synthetic fertilizer in the Gulf to maintain a 760-mile wide dead zone too clogged with algae to support fish.

On that note, need we repeat, it has been proven that the herbicide Atrazine scrambles frog sex organs. It demasculinizes tadpoles, turning them into hermaphrodites with both male and female sexual characteristics and can lower the male hormone testosterone in sexually mature male frogs as much as tenfold, to levels lower than those in normal female frogs.

would have saved one million barrels of oil per day by 2016.

Bush has now rubber-stamped the proposal of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommending three fuel economy increases for light trucks and SUVs of 0.5 miles per gallon over three years, starting with 2005 models.

Fortunately Honda, Toyota and Nissan continue to make the most environmentally friendly vehicles and are pushing the buttons to prod GM, Ford and Daimler-Chrysler to catch up. As reported by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Ford has climbed one notch in their environmental ratings with its fuel-efficient SUVs. And, according to the Environmental Defense Organization, FedEx, the world's largest express transportation company, has developed and is testing a new hybrid diesel-electric delivery truck that will improve fuel economy by 50% while cutting smog-forming pollutants by 90%. The truck should be ready by 2004.

Two articles appeared this month in the *Omaha World-Herald*, the first reporting that research by Univ. of California-Berkeley professors have found feminized male leopard frogs in Polk and Clinton Counties in Iowa.

The second reports that Univ. of Missouri-Columbia researchers conducted a study offering the first convincing evidence that rural men living in Midwest communities where farm chemicals are widely used had semen of significantly poorer quality than men from urban areas. The researchers believe agricultural chemicals may explain the difference.

Maybe birds aren't the only barometers of what is wrong with our environment. An organic ethic could very well be the key to human survival.

Join us for our conservation/legislative meetings each month. The next two years are going to be challenging nationally, state-wide and locally. Next meeting is January 6, 7:30 p.m., 11809 Old Maple Road, Heron Haven.

Omaha Raptor Team - A Committee of ASO

- By Alison O'Connor

Great Backyard Bird Count 2003

While you are enjoying the winter birds in your back yard or favorite local birding spot, you may also count them for the Great Backyard Bird Count which will take place Friday through Monday, February 14-17.

The statistics are to be sent to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at their web site, www.birdsource.org.

If you wish, you may forward your info to a helpful Audubon member who will enter the data for you. Details of counting and reporting will be forthcoming in the

Addresses to Remember

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Senator Chuck Hagel

U.S. Senate, Washington,

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The *Audubon Magazine** (see below,
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Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

February issue of *The Meadowlark*.

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11809 Old Maple Road

Screech Owl Tops DeSoto List

By Clem Klaphake

Sixteen ASO members attended the November 23 trip to DeSoto Wildlife Refuge led by Clem Klaphake. The weather was great, lots of birds were seen, and everyone had a good time. The number of species wasn't too high (41), but there was a good mix of waterfowl, raptors and passerines.

The best bird probably was the Eastern Screech Owl outside the Refuge visitor center. The second best was the small covey (13) of Bob White Quail that was flushed along the road at Boyer Chute.

A few other interesting species were Cedar Waxwings, a dark morph Red-tailed Hawk, male and female Hooded Mergansers, and Sharp-shinned Hawk.

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Bequests

A bequest to Audubon is a gift to those who will succeed us; a gift to secure our natural heritage.

Memorials

If you find an injured bird of prey,

The Audubon Society of Omaha greatly appreciates the memorials it receives.

please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-734-6817 or 402-731-9869.

When sending your gift, please identify the person you wish to memorialize. Please also give the name and address of the person to be notified.



Birdline

For an update on the sightings in the state, call 292-5325.

Report your sightings after listening to the tape.

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Phone: 445-4138 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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