

A Local Resource

By Nancy Leonard

What is 402 square miles in area, spans three counties and encompasses 11 cities or towns? Some of its constituent parts are named Hell, Butter Flat, and Copper. If you guessed the Papillion Creek Watershed, you would be correct.

More than half a million people live in the watershed area. The headwaters originate in the agricultural landscape of Washington County, move through areas of light industrial and residential use, and finally flow through a fully urbanized landscape. As the waters flow, they pick up a variety of pollutants, depending on the local usage.

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality has listed the Papillion Creek as Sec. 303(d), "impaired waters." What impact does that have on the various groups that use the watershed? How is water quality monitored? What can be done to improve the quality?

Our March speaker, Marian Maas, is the Project director for the Papillion Creek Watershed Project which is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She has been involved with Papillion Creek water quality issues since the late 1990's when she designed, developed and implemented a water quality monitoring system for the area. Not only will she speak about the history and current status of the watershed but she will also have suggestions for ways in which we can become involved in improving water quality in our community.

Please join us March 8, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist Church, 4444 Frances Street (one block south of Center Street). There will be a short business meeting and social hour after the program. And as always, nonmembers are welcome. See you there!

Field Trip to Branched Oak Lake **March 24**

By Janis Paseka

A field trip to Branched Oak Lake will be held on Saturday, March 24, led by Janis & Don Paseka. We will meet at the parking lot, south end of the dam, southeast corner of the lake at 8:30 a.m. Because daylight savings time starts early this year (March 11), that will be an hour earlier sun time than usual.

If you wish to carpool, contact someone you think may want to go. The lake is northwest of Lincoln or 3 and a half miles north of

Malcolm, Nebraska. To reach the site, take I-80 to Exit 401, bear right (northwest) on Hwy 34; after 5 miles, turn right (north) on Hwy 79; go 5 miles and turn left (west) on Raymond Road; go 3 miles and bear right, then turn left into the parking lot at the south end of the dam, our meeting place.

Having a scope can be very useful in identifying birds on the lake. However, if you don't have one, we are all willing to share with you.

Dress appropriately for March weather. Bring snacks and a beverage if you wish. Wachiska Audubon members have been invited to join us, and Sue Guild of Wachiska has graciously invited the whole group to her house for lunch. She lives two miles west of the lake.

The Right Choices For Your Health

What You Need to Know About Foods

Consumers today face a wide array of food choices, but not all the choices are healthful. Because of the industrialization of agriculture, many of our foods contain genetically modified grains, meat from hogs and chickens which have been fed huge amounts of antibiotics, and vegetables and fruits sprayed with pesticides. However, there are options that will provide healthier sources of foods. We can choose to buy organic foods or those grown locally on farms and in gardens.

If your image of how food animals are raised is a bucolic picture of a farmhouse, a barn and pasture with all the animals happily grazing in the outdoors, your image is sadly outdated. Most food animals are raised in large-scale confinement facilities known as factory farms. Cattle are crowded into feedlots with thousands of other animals and are fed mostly grain, causing an increase in sickness in these animals. To combat disease, the cattle are given huge quantities of antibiotics. Poultry and hogs are raised in confined pens, with overcrowding, filth, and disease ever-present problems.

These animals are also fed antibiotics to speed growth and prevent disease. An estimated 70 percent of antibiotics and related drugs produced in this country are used for non-therapeutic purposes such as accelerating animal growth and compensating for overcrowded and unsanitary conditions on factory farms. Our nation's laws allow for very questionable foods to be fed to these factory-raised animals, ranging from rendered parts of other animals (including diseased animals), to plastic pellets, and even animal waste.

Livestock producers need to be encouraged to raise animals using more sustainable practices. Both the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization have stated that antibiotics should no longer be used to promote growth in food animals. Raising cattle on pasture lessens environmental damage and improves animals health, thus reducing the need for antibiotic use.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, several scientific studies have shown that the meat and milk from

By Kathy Schwery

hog farms, with their mountains of manure and dust, pesticides and herbicides, contribute to water and air pollution and create health hazards for workers and neighbors of these confined feeding operations.

A good solution to the problem of how to buy healthful beef, pork and chicken is to look for free range or organic labels on supermarket packages. Or you can find a nearby farm where you can buy organic eggs and meat products. We buy our eggs and pork products at one at 36th & Platteview Road.

Fruits and vegetables are sprayed with huge quantities of pesticides, which creates a health concern for consumers. The Environmental Working Group says our pesticide exposure can be reduced by 90% if we buy organic varieties of 12 fruits and vegetables, which it labels the "dirty dozen." Apples, bell peppers, celery, peaches, pears, imported grapes, cherries, nectarines, potatoes, raspberries, spinach and strawberries are the foods we are encouraged to buy in the organic produce section of our supermarkets or at fresh food markets. Cost is a factor in buying organic foods, but if these are bought in season at fresh food markets, prices are more competitive.

Biotechnology companies have, in the past decade, produced genetically engineered crops. Primarily corn, but also soybeans and cotton have been altered to control insects and weeds. Because millions of acres of these crops are now grown, small amounts of genetically engineered ingredients show up in a majority of processed food products. According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, most foods, including the vast majority of fruits and vegetables, grains and nuts, remain unaltered. Eight engineered foods are currently allowed in U.S. grocery stores, but as of now, only papaya and canola are available. Engineered fish are being considered by U.S. regulators. Scientists are concerned that engineered foods might harm people's health or the environment, and because of this concern, European nations have attempted to ban them. Some engineered crops might contaminate the food supply with drugs or kill beneficial insects,

pasture-raised animals are higher in fats that contribute to the health of humans. Factory poultry and

while engineered fish could possibly alter native ecosystems, causing wild populations to become extinct.

Continued on page 3

Intro Bird Identification Classes Begin March 24

Learn how to identify the birds in your back yard, neighborhood or when on vacation. With over 50 million birders in the U.S, this recreational activity is also the fastest growing outdoor activity today.

This class will be led/taught by Clem Klaphake of the Audubon Society of Omaha and includes several local field trips. No prior knowledge of bird identification is needed.

The class will meet on the following four Saturdays: March 24th, April 7th and 21st, and May 5th. The class will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in the Buffett Forest Learning Center at Fontenelle Forest. There will be short field trips each time the class meets.

The class is limited to 15 participants. Cost is \$20.00. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. To sign up, contact Clem Klaphake at ckavian@cox.net or 292-2276.

Volunteers Needed for Earth Day!!!

The Audubon Society of Omaha will have a booth distributing information about birds and conservation at the Earth Day Celebration in Elmwood Park on Saturday, April 21, from 12:00 noon until 6:00 p.m. Earth Day is being sponsored by Whole Foods Market, The Reader, and The Papio Missouri NRD and is presented by the Earth Day Coalition of which ASO is a member.

Would you consider giving some of your time on that day to answer questions that people have about birds and conservation issues?

The event draws thousands of people and serves a worthwhile purpose. Please call Jackie Scholar at 551-5045 if you can help with the booth for any amount of time on that day.

Volunteers Needed!!!

ASO Greater Omaha Student Art Contest Saturday April 14, 2007

By Jackie Scholar

Once again the Audubon Society of Omaha will sponsor the Greater Omaha Student Art Contest to encourage children to learn about the birds of the Midwest by reading about them and drawing a particular bird.

Children from Kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible to participate. The event will again be held in the Bellevue University Gordon Lozier Center in Bellevue, NE, from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., on April 14. The awards ceremony will take place at 2:00 p.m. Rules and other details are posted on the Audubon website: www.audubon-omaha.org

Volunteers are needed to put on this event which drew about 300 people last year. This is a great way to get to know other Audubon members and to contribute to ASO. Volunteers are needed for the following activities:

1. Receiving the artwork at the Audubon Office - Center Mall

Friday, March 9 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 10 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

2. Judging the artwork for each grade level. At Bellevue University

Monday, March 12 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

3. Hanging the artwork at Bellevue University

Friday, April 13 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

4. Manning tables during the showing of the artwork at Bellevue University

Saturday, April 14 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Any help will be greatly appreciated! We can't be successful without your help. Call Jackie Scholar at 551-5045 or email her at Jackie@bellevue.edu

Right Choices,

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Volunteer Wanted

Sales of organic foods have been increasing 20% every year in the past decade, and it's easy to see why. Organic foods are guaranteed to be free of pesticides, fertilizer, hormones, antibiotics and genetically modified organisms. As more and more consumers switch to healthier foods, producers will need to respond by raising animals and crops in ways that benefit both the environment and humans.

We are looking for someone to take charge of serving the coffee and cookies at the general meetings. These duties could be shared among two or three members. Cookies will be provided by others.

If you are able to spend a short time helping with this service, please contact Laurine Blankenau at 451-3647.

By Nancy Leonard

Ogallala Blue - Water and Life on the High Plains

Water and life; life and water. The words are so intertwined that they seem like a compound word: "waterlife" or "lifewater." Indeed, life cannot exist without water. On Earth life originated in the seas, and when we search other planets for signs of life, we look first for evidence of ancient oceans. Early civilizations grew up in the great river valleys of Mesopotamia. Pioneers crossing unknown lands had to find water, or their journeys ended in death. Many settlers saw their dreams go up in dust when the rains did not come. Water, not gold or diamonds, is the most valuable resource on the planet.

Rivers, lakes, streams and glaciers are visible to us daily. But large amounts of water exist below the surface of the land, stored in aquifers or water-bearing beds of permeable rock. The largest aquifer in the United States is the Ogallala aquifer which lies underneath parts of eight states, from South Dakota to Texas, and contains enough water to make nine Lake Eries.

Ogallala Blue by William Ashworth tells the story of this amazing underground river of water. The aquifer was formed by the retreating sheets of ice. Layers of permeable rock store the waters in saturated layers that vary in depth from 10 feet to more than 1,000 feet. During much of our prehistory, people used the water as it emerged from underground in the form of springs or creeks. Thirteen thousand years ago someone in New Mexico got the idea of digging in the ground to find the water, and the first well was dug.

Underground water systems are a complicated mix of saturation, withdrawal, leakage and recharge, all of which vary according to the local geology. The author goes into these in possibly more detail than most readers want. But the best part of the book is when the reader gets into the car with Ashworth and goes on a road trip to

Helping Wildlife With Check-Off

Nebraskans are urged to consider donating all or a portion of their state tax refund to the Nongame and Endangered Species Fund. Donations may also be made at any time throughout the year (see below).

The check-off is the main source of state funding used to conserve nongame species. The Fund is used for monitoring, researching, managing and conserving such diverse species as Bald Eagles, river otters, western prairie fringed orchids, and blowout pestemon.

The tax check-off is also a source for Nebraska's Natural Legacy Plan which was formed to proactively conserve wildlife before they become rare and more costly to protect.

In recent years Congress has increased funding to states for conserving nongame species, but most funding requires that states contribute up to 50 percent in matching funds. Without funds like the check-off, some federal funding would not be available to Nebraska.

Look for the Peregrine Falcon symbol near the bottom of your state tax form. You can donate throughout the year online at www.outdoornebraska.org/. Or mail a donation to Nongame & Endangered Species Fund, Nebraska Game & Parks, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503-0370. All donations are fully tax deductible. deepest portion. He lays out the history of irrigation in the high plains, starting with the basic wells and canals, to deep-well centrifugal pumps, and finally center pivots. As technology "improves," farmers become more and more dependent on underground water for irrigation. Some even resent rain because it interferes with their programmed watering schedule.

The final part of the book looks at ways

investigate the aquifer and the people who depend on it. The trip starts in Oklahoma at the Optima Dam recreation area, a \$46 million Corps of Engineers project. The dam sits there, 3 miles long, 120 feet high, holding back a puddle of water. The rest of the book is a journey to find out where the water has gone.

Ashworth compiles an interesting assortment of characters from ranchers and farmers to geologists and hydrologists. He travels all over the aquifer, spending a lot of time in Nebraska, which sits atop the largest and

different states are dealing with the decline in the water supply and with the impact it will have on their economies. It asks some hard questions. Who owns the water? Is water a public good? Should the supply be privatized? Should water for nonessential purposes cost more than water for drinking and food production? There is much to think about in this book. I recommend it.

American Robins frequently visit FeederWatch yards in search of fruiting shrubs and water. Nearly 61% of FeederWatchers in the center of the continent reported robins, the
Another species attracted by fruit in the winter is the Eastern Bluebird. Although still not common in the region in winter, bluebirds are being seen by more FeederWatchers e
.As in much of North America, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawk reports are continuing to increase. These bird-eating hawks may be wintering farther north in response to a
House Sparrows and European Starlings are being seen less often at FeederWatch locations in the region—participants reported both species at a record-low percentage of lo

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Hitchcock Hawkwatch Season Notes for Fall 2006

The faithful hawkwatchers worked from the last two weeks of August through December 20 in many winds and weathers at the Hitchcock Nature Center to track the species' numbers and patterns of appearance. The report, summarized here, was made and submitted by Mark Orsag.

The results were less stellar than last year, the volume declining to 61% of the record-setting 2005 season. Weather and wind patterns played a part, altering the flight patterns. Frequent weak cold fronts seemed to produce a broad-front migration. With wind almost constantly at their backs, migrant raptors may have had little reason to concentrate, stage or even to use the Loess Hills. The birds were regularly spotted all over the sky. Groups, kettles, and streams of birds regularly occurring most years were rare.

The "big days" of 2004 and 2005 and the "big days" that didn't happen in 2006 accounted for the difference between the poor season this year and the outstanding results of the last two seasons. The stretches of southerly wind days and/or days without a cold front failed to produce the memorable days in 2006. Coverage hours were slightly below the average due to rainouts and poor visibility. Two fewer species were recorded. The Black Vulture and Mississippi Kite were absent.

Species Account

Turkey Vulture - 2,021	Ferruginous Hawk - 1: a juvenile light morph
Osprey - 73	
Bald Eagle - 729	Golden Eagle - 9
Northern Harrier - 36: a	American Kestrel - 107: a

National Audubon Regional Board Member

A. Peter Cannon, Jr., has been elected to the National Audubon Board as Regional Director for the Central Region, which includes Nebraska.

Mr. Cannon, of Madison, Wisconsin, served a year as NAS Board Representative from the Great Lakes Region before both Minnesota and Wisconsin were realigned with our Central Region. The realignment boosted our Region from 60 chapters with 26,000 members to 77 chapters with 47,000 members.

Rivers & Wildlife Celebration March 16-18

The Rivers & Wildlife Celebration in Kearney will be held Friday, March 16, through Sunday, March 18, at the Holiday

strong total	continued decline over the years	Inn, Kearney.
Sharp-shinned Hawk - 957	Merlin - 27: Taiga and Prairie	Field trips to the cranes, Rainwater Basin, and Prairie Chicken leks are scheduled. Speakers of note include Bruce Babbitt, former U.S. Secretary of the Interior.
Cooper's Hawk - 211: slightly more than 2005 number	Peregrine Falcon - 31	
Northern Goshawk - 5: 2005 total 3 birds	Prairie Falcon - 4	
Red-shouldered Hawk - 6: early (August) push of immatures. Breeding activity somewhere nearby?	Special thanks are owed to hawkwatchers Bret Ford, Chad Graeve, Kelly Herek, Tina Popson, Aaron Brees, Fritz Davis, Bob Fuchs, Jori and Stan How, Kim Jarvis, Clem Klaphake, Don & Shirley Maas, Sue Mattix, Jason McMeen, Jim Meyer, Wayne Nicholas, Mark Orsag, Babs & Loren Padelford, Don & Janis Paseka, Richard Pouchard, Sandy & Jean Reinkin, Scott Ross, Jim Sinclair, Mark Tarlton, Jerry Toll and Pat Williams	For more information or to register, contact Spring Creek Prairie at scp_audubon.org or (402) 797-2301 (_2394.fax).
Broad-winged Hawk - 466: 4 dark-morph		
Swainson's Hawk - 1,075		
Red-tailed Hawk - 3,836: 9 Krider's, 32 Harlan's, 1 Harlan's light morph, 32 western dark morphs, 6 western rufous morphs, and 10 dark-morph indeterminates. Total was above the four-year average and a new record high of 631 occurred on October 11.	And thanks to everyone else who visited the Hitchcock Nature Center and participated in the 2006 Hawkwatch.	
Rough-legged Hawk - 20: whole flight somewhat late		

Addresses to Remember

Audubon Society

President George W. Bush

Membership Application

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW

The *Audubon Magazine* and your membership card will be sent to this address:

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U.S. Senate, Washington DC 20510; 202-224-6551; fax 202-228-0012; Lincoln: 402-437-5246; Omaha 391-3411; Omaha address: 7602 Pacific St, #205, 68114

Email: _____

Introductory Membership

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Senator Chuck Hagel

(1st & 2nd Year \$20)

U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510-2705

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NE 68509

Phone: (402) 471-2244; Fax: 471-6031

Mayor Mike Fahey

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

1819 Farnam St, Omaha NE 68183

Phone: 444-5000 Hot Line: 444-5555

If you find an injured bird of prey, please contact a Raptor Recovery Center volunteer at 402-731-9869.



Spring Creek Prairie Awards

Congratulations to Marian Langan, Director of the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, who was named Professional of the Year by the Nebraska Wildlife Society.

Other awards made to Spring Creek Prairie were the ACE 2006 staff team award presented by National Audubon and the Tributary Award presented by the Lower Plattte South Natural Resources District.

Bequests

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

Memorials

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

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

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

P. O. Box 3542

Omaha NE 68103-0542

**Audubon Society of Omaha, Mailing Address: P. O. Box 3542, Omaha
68103-05**

Phone: 451-3647 - <http://audubon-omaha.org>

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Publicity Jackie Scholar.....551-5045

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The Meadowlark is published
monthly September through May,
plus a summer issue. The newsletter
may be accessed on our web site,
<http://audubon-omaha.org>

Field Trip Elliott Bedows.....292-5017

Finance Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

Send address changes to Kathy
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