

October 2005

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The World of Insects

By Nancy Leonard

It's a tough life being an insect! On the one hand, insects pollinate flowers; provide a food source for some nomadic peoples; make honey, an important food; and are critical to the circulation of organic matter in our environment. Some ancient civilizations honored the bee by placing its image on their coins. On the other hand, insects compete with us for food, sometimes devouring entire crops that people depend on; they transmit disease to people and plants; and seem to provoke an instinctive revulsion in most people. Many people today honor insects with a fly swatter or bug spray.

Why is it that we, who are so worried about species' extinction and the preservation of biodiversity, don't care about insects?

Dr. James Hillman, in a classic essay entitled "Why we hate bugs," suggests that the existence of a bee hive with 50,000 bees, an ant colony of more than half a million ants, and a world in which there are more than one million beetle species makes us, as human beings, feel small and insignificant.

Secondly, there is the "monstrosity" of bugs. Their physical features seem more unlike ours than the features of most mammals. Finally, their existence on such a different physical scale than ours, like "Lilliputians in our larger world," has led them to evolve very different behavioral and morphological strategies to survive. Their systems of organization and even their lifespans seem unfathomable and alien to us.

Our speakers, Loren and Babs Padelford, have spent the last few years poking around in the world of insects. They have seen some interesting characters and observed some fascinating behaviors.

Audubon's Spring Creek Prairie will be the destination of our October 8 field trip, led by Elliott Bedows.

We will meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Prairie and bird the entire morning. Kevin Poague of Audubon Nebraska will meet us there, co-leader.

For the Omaha contingent, we will meet at 6:30 A.M. at the south end of Southroads Mall (usual spot) and carpool from there, leaving for the Train SRA. Depending on the start time of the Husker football game, which is still TBA, we may visit or avoid various locations within the area.

Hope to see many of you there. Please bring a lunch if you plan to bird past noon.

More hands are needed for unloading the bags of bird seed which will be delivered on October 15.

Please give Jerry Toll a call at 453-9239 if you can help us with this task.

Join us Thursday, October 13, 2005, 7:30 p.m. at the Hanscom Park Methodist church, 4444 Frances Street (one block south of the intersection of Frances and Southroads).

We will have a short business meeting after the presentation, with coffee, cookies and a social hour to follow. Nonmembers are welcome.

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Continued next column

Hiking and Birding

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by Elliott Bedows

To eat or not to eat.....that is the question.

With the world's focus on the catastrophic devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina and in light of the black eye given lawmakers in D.C. by the anti-environmental policies ruling the U.S. Gulf Coast in the last half of the 20th C, it might come as no surprise that an independent research laboratory at the University of North Carolina, Sept. 15 (this year) found mercury toxicity in fish.

After all, earlier in the same week, CNN revealed that the EPA warned that New Orleans `drinking' water contained at least ten times the acceptable levels of Coliform bacteria and toxic lead in its water. Oil pollution in the water was so extreme that the EPA didn't bother to assess how extensive were the levels of petroleum and its by-products.

The problem - or surprise - is that the mercury-containing fish (according to Libby Quaid of the Associated Press) were **not** those found in, or anywhere near, the Big Easy. Rather, the findings were released following a study conducted in a number of stores of major food chains in Chicago, Illinois.

A *Chicago Sun Times* headline read, "Store-bought Swordfish Contained Mercury Levels Above the Legal Limit in a Study Released. . .by Environmental Groups." The *Times* article states that elevated mercury concentrations {were found] in 24 swordfish samples from major supermarket chains within the Windy City. (see: <http://www.kwqe.com/Global/story.asp?S+3854707> for further details)

Jackie Savitz of the advocacy group Oceana (see: <http://www.oceans.org>) declared, "Americans have a right to know what's in their food, and posting warning signs in grocery stores where these fish are sold is a simple, commonsense solution that fulfills that right." The federal government still advises pregnant women, nursing mothers and young children to avoid fish with high levels of mercury, e.g. shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish. The problem is that although elevated mercury levels have been linked to learning disabilities and developmental delays in children, and to heart, nervous system and kidney damage in adults, it is also widely accepted that eating fish has proven health benefits.

For example, the American Heart Association advises people to eat fish at least twice a week, and the FDA and EPA advise even at-risk people to eat up to 12 ounces or about two meals per week, of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury, such as shrimp, salmon, pollock, catfish and canned light tuna.

While the FDA says to limit albacore or "white" tuna to one meal per week because it contains higher levels of mercury, albacore tuna is preferred by many environmentalists because it helps save the lives of dolphins otherwise trapped in tuna nets. How are we to know which fish are safe to eat?

There appears to be a silver lining in this dark cloud. Recent news is encouraging. "The issue of asking supermarkets to provide information at the store level {is gaining momentum, in fact} is something companies are either engaged in doing or in the process of doing," said Karen Brown, Senior VP of the Food Market Institute. "Certainly, we would support that. We also would not be opposed to increased testing by the FDA," Brown added.

Traces of mercury have been found in nearly all fish and shellfish. Released through industrial pollution, mercury falls and accumulates in streams and oceans as methylmercury.

Methylmercury, in turn, builds up in fish and shellfish as they feed, in some types more than others. So the FDA can take legal action to remove a product from the market if mercury levels exceed that limit, as did recent samples from Maine and Rhode Island that contained double the federal limit for mercury. But what is a poor environmentally conscious, yet scientifically uninformed individual to do on a daily basis while shopping for dinner?

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. Might it be that the greatest natural disaster in United States history finally opened some bureaucratic eyes in Washington to the facts that the Earth is a fragile, albeit resilient planet that needs to have its biosystems, both human and nonhuman, respected and protected if its inhabitants are to survive? That poisoning of our oceans, drilling for oil in our most fragile ecosystems, and

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Trumpeter Swan Restoration: Meeting October 20-22 in Council Bluffs

On the above dates, biologists, wildlife managers, conservationists, wetland owners and swan enthusiasts will meet to discuss restoration of Trumpeter Swans to their native Midwest habitats.

The progress and challenges plus long-term restoration vision will be discussed, as well as updates on state and provincial restoration programs. Also addressed will be the struggle to establish secure migrations to suitable southern locations.

Speakers will address issues regarding Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast populations of Trumpeters, as well as Mute and Tundra Swans. Post-conference options to view swans in Iowa and Minnesota are offered.

Registration for the meeting will be held from 7:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday, October 20. From 5:30 to 7:00 pm a reception will be held, followed by a work session, 8:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 21, events include a swan release and field trip to Loess Hills and DeSoto NWR with lunch at Hitchcock Nature Center.

On Saturday numerous events, including a presentation of draft migration plan, will culminate in a banquet at 6:00 p.m. for \$20 per person.

Accommodations are available at the Holiday Inn, Ameristar, 1-800-HOLIDAY.

To register and for more information, contact Madeleine Linck, Trumpeter Swan Society, 3800 County Rd 24, Maple Plain, MN 55359. Ph 763-694-7851, ttss@threeriversparkdistrict.org> The cost is \$70 per person (not including the banquet cost of \$20) for the full conference. For other options, please contact Ms. Linck. Make check payable to The Trumpeter Swan Society.

Schramm Park Field Trip Results

The September 17 field trip attracted 19 participants tracking the migrating and resident birds. The weather started out with a wind that picked up as the day progressed.

Forty-three species were recorded, with these highlights:

Nashville Warbler

Yellow-rumped Warbler

Scarlet Tanager (A female, only 10 feet away)

Warbling, Yellow-throated, and Blue-headed Vireo

Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Cackling Goose

Nominee for Board Position

Pauline Dickey has been nominated for the office of Corresponding Secretary, a position which is now vacant.

In keeping with the provisions of our by-laws, a vote will be taken at the November 10 general meeting. All members attending are eligible to vote.

Wanted - Volunteers for Pleasant Work

Each month through the year (minus June and August), a group of volunteers meet to help with mailing the *Meadowlark*, ASO's newsletter.

We are now seeking volunteers to assist us and would appreciate your help. The work is super-easy, usually lasting from 1:00 p.m. until 2:30. The company is pleasant. Attendance each month is not required.

We meet at our new office at the Center Mall, 42nd & Center Streets, 1st floor. Covered parking and security at the Mall are provided.

If you can help, please call Laurine Blankenau, 451-3647.

Happenings, Continued from page 2

cutting our forests are not for our betterment, but rather that the cost of repairing the resulting environmental damage far exceeds the monetary gains temporarily enjoyed. Gains that are not uniformly distributed!

While I want to be clearly understood that I feel the deepest sorrow for the victims of our recent Gulf Coast disaster, I also believe this catastrophe was not only overdue but will likely be repeated many times over as the human population expands, as the planet continues to warm, and as we methodically destroy our environmental buffer zones. Maybe it's time to mobilize for some grassroots action against environmental stupidity. Simply stated, "The solution to pollution is dilution" no longer applies.

One last thought from the lighter side

A mother was telling her little girl what her own childhood was like: "We used to skate outside on a pond. I had a swing made from a tire; it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods."

The little girl was wide-eyed, taking this in. At last she said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner"!

Thanks to our leaders, Babs and Loren Padelford, for their time and their guidance.

What Katrina Revealed

Hurricane Katrina has been, first and foremost, a human disaster—a seemingly endless tale of suffering marked by lives lost, communities dispersed and families torn asunder. Our hearts go out to the hundreds of thousands of displaced people who are now struggling to piece some semblance of their lives back together.

As the flood waters begin receding, Americans are also beginning to gain some much-needed perspective on our fragile place in the natural world. Few events in our lifetime have revealed so dramatically the deep interconnectedness between people and nature.

Hurricane Katrina destroyed more than human lives and homes. She also blew away a decade's worth of denial about major environmental problems that confront America.

Katrina destroyed the fantasy that we can blithely go on increasing our dangerous dependence on oil—whether imported or domestic. Our oil-addicted economy is just too vulnerable to supply disruptions, as anyone who filled up their gas tank last week discovered. The solution is NOT to drill and destroy the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—or our beautiful coastlines—as many in Congress are now suggesting. Drilling in the Arctic would not have any impact on gas prices until 2025, and even then it would only reduce prices at the pump by a trivial 1.5 cents per gallon. The only way out of this mess is to reduce our appetite for oil by improving the fuel economy of our vehicles (which consume 40 percent of our oil) and by relying on smarter, cleaner and renewable ways to power our economy.

Katrina also exposed the fiction that we can dredge, bulldoze and fill millions of acres of coastal wetlands without paying a price. Wetland ecosystems are Mother Nature's perfect buffer against catastrophic storm surges. Destroy that buffer and you destroy the last line of defense, not only for New Orleans but for a host of other American cities. In this case, as in so many others, what's good for the wildlife of coastal America is also indispensable to its people. We are part of nature.

Katrina demolished the pretense that we needn't reckon with global warming. While no single hurricane can be directly linked to global warming, climate scientists agree that we are entering an

oil refineries and other industrial threats to human health are most often sited next to low-income minority communities. The rest of America regularly averts its eyes from this injustice. But with the poorest neighborhood of New Orleans drowning in a hazardous sea of fuel, sewage and chemicals, it's hard not to notice just which of our citizens are paying the ultimate price.

Our challenge is making sure our leaders take away the right lessons from this disaster and respond with real solutions, not with the old ways of thinking or business-as-usual giveaways to well-connected industries.

There's an old proverb that says, "If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging." Getting our leaders to stop digging will be a tall order. But with more hurricanes sure to follow in Katrina's wake, we have no choice but to dedicate ourselves to the task at hand.

Excerpted from article by John Adams, President,

Natural Resources Defense Council

A Letter from Senator Nelson

It is important from time to time to take the pulse of our elected representatives and equally important to convey the resulting information to their constituents.

On the issue of State Wildlife Grants Program funding, a letter addressed to Elliott Bedows, ASO President, shares with us the Senator's welcome words.

The Senator stated that funding for the program is "essential to fulfilling shared federal-state responsibility for conserving our nation's wildlife."

Senator Nelson declared that he, along with several of his colleagues, contacted the Chair and Ranking Member of the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee Interior & Related Agencies, to urge providing a minimum of \$85 million for the program.

A lesser sum, \$72 million, was approved, the final sum allocated was \$68.5 million. Senator Nelson said the

epoch of warming oceans, rising sea number is less than last year's amount.
levels and much more intense storms.

We know full well what kind of The bill was signed into law by
pollution controls are required to reverse President Bush August 22, 2005.

this trend. If we don't act, Katrina will be The Audubon Society of Omaha thanks
our future. You can't say she didn't warn Senator Ben Nelson for his support of
us. funding to conserve our wildlife.

Finally, Katrina tore the lid off one of
our nation's most shameful truths: that
petrochemical plants, toxic waste sites,

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Binoculars, Scopes for Latin America

We can help bird life in the tropics and the northern hemisphere by donating binoculars, scopes, tripods, field guides, backpacks and other tools to programs in Latin America and Caribbean countries through Birders Exchange. Items must be in good working condition. If you prefer, a monetary donation would be appreciated. All donations are tax deductible.

For those working to conserve birds and who lack the resources to purchase optics or other items, your unused equipment will be most useful.

For more information, contact www.americanbirding.org/bex, or 1-800-850-BIRD, bex@aba.org.

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Addresses to Remember

President George W. Bush

The White House, 1600
Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington D.C. 20500-0001

Comments: 202-456-1111; fax:
202-456-2993

Senator Ben Nelson

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

Senator Chuck Hagel

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

Phone: (202) 224-4224; Fax: (202)
224-5213

Omaha phone: (402) 758-8981

Representative Lee Terry

U.S. House of
Representatives, Washington, DC
20515

Phone: (202) 225-4155 ; Fax: (202)
226-5452

Audubon Society

Membership Application

The *Audubon Magazine**(see below, chapter-only membership)
and your membership card will be sent to this address:

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Street_____

City_____State_____

Zip Code_____Phone:_____

Email:_____

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(1st & 2nd Year \$20)

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Make check payable to Audubon Society of Omaha

Mail to Audubon Society of Omaha

19612 Ridgeway Road

Plattsmouth NE 68048

PO 3

7XCH

Omaha phone: (402) 397-9944

Representative Jeff Fortenberry

U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-4806

Lincoln phone: (402) 438-1598

Governor Dave Heineman

Capitol Bldg, Box 94848 Lincoln,
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.



**The Audubon Society of
Omaha extends its sympathy
to Bill Cornell on the death
of his wife, Rita, on
September 21.**

**Rita served as Education
Chair in the mid-1990's. Bill
served as Director during the
same period and continued
to work on environmental
issues thereafter.**

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

Bequests

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

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

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

Elected Officers:

President Elliott Bedows.....292-5017

**1st Vice President Jackie
Scholar.....551-5045**

**2nd Vice President Laurine
Blankenau.....451-3647**

Treasurer Patty Albright.....323-1966

**Past President Nelli Falzgraf.....292-
9687**

**Recording Secretary Linda
Dennis.....733-6548**

Standing _____ Committee Chairpersons, cont.

Program Nancy Leonard.....330-3888

**Publication Laurine
Blankenau.....451-3647**

Publicity Jackie Scholar.....551-5045

Other Activities:

**Bird Seed Sale Co-Chairs Kathleen Rose..... 292-
8912**

Carol Rasmussen.....731-3939

**Elected Directors Jenny
Henricksen.....895-5487**

Mace Hack.....934-5040

Mark Armstrong.....292-9770

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**Sharon Draper.....572-4026 Tad
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**Field Trip Clem Klaphake.....292-
2276**

Finance Nelli Falzgraf.....292-9687

**Fund Raising Mace Hack.....934-
5040**

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5769**

**Membership Kathy Schwery.....296-
4788**

**Natural Areas Mgt. Eric
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**Omaha Raptor Team Jenny
Henricksen.....895-5487**

Speakers Bureau Eunice Levisay.....393-0545

Historian Kathleen Rose.....292-8912

Birdathon Chair Bechara Embaid,,,,,965-9598

ASO State Board Rep. Mace Hack.....934-5040

NAS Board Member Ione Werthman..... 493-0373

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Send address changes to Kathy Schwery, 19612 Ridgeway Road, Plattsmouth NE 68048.

Audubon Society of Omaha

P. O. Box 3542

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