

# Wichita Audubon



Volume 43 No. 5 January/February 2009

## JANUARY MEETING

The first program of the new year will be presented by Dan Mulhern, Endangered Species Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dan will be giving us and update on the Black-footed Ferrets which were reintroduced last year in Logan County, as well as the status of other endangered species. The ferrets continue to generate lots of controversy in western Kansas, so there is human drama in this story, too. Dan's program will be presented on Tuesday, January 20, 7:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Nature Center.

You can also join Dan and other members for dinner at 5:45 p.m. at Jason's Deli in Bradley Fair, 21st and Rock Road.

## FEBRUARY MEETING

Our February meeting will be a trip to the past. Phil Thomas, a professor of history at Wichita State University, will take us back two hundred years to describe the natural history encountered by the Lewis and Clark Expedition. As the new American nation began to define its future and the territories which it possessed and desired, Thomas Jefferson realized that it was important to learn more of those lands that lay beyond the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The Corps of Discovery, and Meriwether Lewis in particular, was charged with making scientific observations and records of that which they observed as they marched westward to the Pacific. Lewis' observations became the first significant record of the natural history of the American West. Dr. Thomas's presentation will be Tuesday, February 17, 7:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Nature Center.

You can join Dr. Thomas and other members for dinner at **Doc Green's, 10096 E. 13th, in the Waterfront at 5:45 p.m. Note that this is a new location.**

## CNC UPCOMING PROGRAMS

### **January 31 and February 7, Saturday 10 a.m. to noon**

Mid-winter is a great time to see Bald Eagles in Kansas. Since they mostly eat fish, eagles move south in winter searching for open water. We will take a one and a half mile hike down to the Arkansas River to search for our national bird. If you have binoculars, bring them. The nature center has some binoculars to loan and will provide a spotting scope.

## COMING EVENTS

### **January 20**

Regular meeting, "The Status of the Black-footed Ferret and Other Endangered Species in Kansas," by Dan Mulhern. 7:30 pm. at the Great Plains Nature Center.

### **January 25**

Wichita Area Mystery Trip. Trip will depart the Kings-X at 21st and Amidon at 7:30 a.m. Leader: Cheryl Miller, [avian67226@gmail.com](mailto:avian67226@gmail.com)

### **January 31**

Eagle Watch at Chaplin Nature Center, 10 a.m. - noon.

### **February 7**

Eagle Watch at Chaplin Nature Center, 10 a.m. - noon.

### **February 17**

Regular Meeting, "The Natural History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," by Dr. Phil Thomas, 7:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Nature Center.

### **February 23-26**

Extended field trip to the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Leaders: Patty Marlett, 942-2164, [pmarlett@mac.com](mailto:pmarlett@mac.com); Kevin Groeneweg, 687-4268, [kgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kgroeneweg@sbcglobal.net); Pete Janzen, 832-0182, [pete.janzen@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pete.janzen@sbcglobal.net)



For more information about any Chaplin Nature Center programs call Shawn Silliman at 620-442-4133, or e-mail [cnc@wichitaudubon.org](mailto:cnc@wichitaudubon.org). CNC is located 3 miles west of Arkansas City on Hwy 166, north 2 miles on 21st Rd, east 0.6 miles on 272nd Rd.

## **RIVERS AND WILDLIFE CELEBRATION**

Audubon Nebraska presents the 39th annual Rivers and Wildlife Celebration, to be held Friday-Sunday, March 20-22, 2009, in Kearney. Timed to coincide with the annual migration of 500,000 sandhill cranes and millions of waterfowl through central Nebraska, this annual wildlife festival is for anyone interested in experiencing one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on Earth and learning more about the natural world in a friendly and informal atmosphere.

Featured speakers for this year's event are:

Pete Dunne – Author and birding expert from Cape May Bird Observatory

Joel Sartore – National Geographic photographer

Felipe Chavez-Ramirez – Director, Platte River Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust

Field trips to the best birding hotspots in the area are led by local birding experts throughout the festival. The highlight is a full-day birding trip with Pete Dunne on Sunday, March 22. Other full-day and half-day trips will take place on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday to the Rainwater Basin and other migration stopovers. There will also be trips to viewing blinds along the Platte River at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary at sunrise and sunset. To obtain a registration brochure, call or write Audubon Nebraska, P.O. Box 117, Denton, NE 68339; 402/797-2301; [Nebraska@audubon.org](mailto:Nebraska@audubon.org). Brochures can also be downloaded at [www.Nebraska.audubon.org](http://www.Nebraska.audubon.org).

## **GRANT RECEIVED**

The Wichita Audubon Society has received a grant of \$14,400 from the Kansas Health Foundation in support of our nature education programs at Chaplin Nature Center. CNC was established because of an abiding belief that a connection to the natural world was an essential part of human physical and mental health. We are pleased to have that affirmed by this gift, and are excited by the opportunities it presents to continue our efforts.



*Students explore a fallen log at CNC.*

### **2008-2009 WAS Officers**

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	Duane DeLong	684-7456	<a href="mailto:dwdelong@earthlink.net">dwdelong@earthlink.net</a>
	Catherine Lewis	681-3362	<a href="mailto:thexchange@cox.net">thexchange@cox.net</a>

#### Committee Chairs

Newsletter	Patty Marlett	942-2164	<a href="mailto:pmarlett@mac.com">pmarlett@mac.com</a>
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### **WWW.WICHITAAUDUBON.ORG**

E-mail any officer: [was@wichitaaudubon.org](mailto:was@wichitaaudubon.org)

Send address changes to Sister Patricia Stanley, 6739 Perryton, Wichita, KS 67226  
[pstanley@csjwichita.org](mailto:pstanley@csjwichita.org)

## **BIRD SEED SALE**

Help support Wichita Audubon and Chaplin Nature Center by buying your bird seed from us. We offer high quality seed, delivered to your home (within Wichita City limits.) Please submit your order by **Thursday, January 15.**

The seed will be delivered on

**Saturday, January 24**

25 lbs Black Oil Sunflower - \$14

25 lbs Audubon Mix - \$12

Sunflower seed is now \$1 less due to a slight decrease in our cost from the supplier.

Order by phone, mail or E-mail.

Call Carol Cumberland at 685-4867 or [carol.cumberland@swbell.net](mailto:carol.cumberland@swbell.net)

Mail: Wichita Audubon Society, PO Box 47607, Wichita, KS 67201.

## **MAKE YOUR BACKYARD A GOOD HABITAT**

It may be the dead of winter, but spring will come, and now is a good time to think about making your yard more bird friendly.

The needs of birds aren't much different than our own. Food and water are absolute basics, but so is shelter or cover to serve as protection from the weather and a safe place to raise a family. Provide these fundamental elements in your backyard habitat, and you will attract numerous visitors.

### **FOOD**

Many backyard birds are insect eaters, but will supplement their diet with nuts, seeds, fruit, or nectar, depending on the species. Increase the array of foods you offer, and you will increase the diversity of birds you will attract and support.

Nothing beats natural, native vegetation to feed the birds of your area. Native plants have co-evolved with native birds, so they are more likely to provide the right size food and the right amount of nutrients at just the right time of year. So plant a variety of native plants and in a combination that supplies food year-round. Also, simply the way you maintain your garden can supply additional food sources. For instance, leaves raked into your garden bed and under shrubs can provide foraging areas for ground-feeding birds such as sparrows.

### **WATER**

All birds need water for drinking and for bathing. By providing a clean, fresh source, you will attract more

species than will visit bird feeders. If you have a natural water source on your property, such as a stream or wetland, enhance its attractiveness and wildlife value by protecting and restoring native plant species and allowing the vegetation along the banks to grow high to create a buffer zone.

Bird Baths are a simple, popular way to provide water, with endless designs available at garden centers and wild bird supply stores. The sides should incline gently to a depth of no more than two to three inches. The surface should be rough for better footing. To protect vulnerable bathing birds from lurking predators, locate the bath some distance from cover, about 15 feet is a good distance. Change the water every few days and keep the bath scrubbed clean. Birds are attracted to the sound of running water and a drip or misting feature will increase the number of visitors. Water heaters will keep the water free of ice during winter months in colder climates.

The creation of a pond will take some work but, done well, they can attract many species. Ponds for birds should be shallow, with gently sloping shorelines.

### **NESTING**

Birds will remain in your habitat during the breeding season if they have places to nest and raise young. Different species have different requirements. Some nest in cavities, many others in

open nests found on ledges or in a tree crotch, and others nest on the ground. Get to know which species are likely to nest in your area and provide the appropriate habitat or structure.

Native trees and shrubs provide good nesting areas for many species, from those that nest in holes to those that create cup-shaped nests in the crotches of branches to those that build nests at the tops of the canopy. Where safety permits, allow snags — dead trees — to remain standing. Woodpeckers and others excavate the rotting wood looking for insects; the resulting holes are used by cavity-nesting birds.

Nest boxes make a wonderful addition to a yard, allowing you to easily watch a family raise its young. Wrens, swallows, bluebirds, Purple Martins, chickadees, and titmice are some of the species that readily use nest boxes. Identify the species of bird you'd like to attract to determine the correct size of the entrance hole needed. You may want to consider erecting a shelf-style structure for species such as robins and phoebes. Nest boxes should be mounted on a pole, fence post, or tree. Height of the nest depends on the species. For most backyard cavity nesters, a height of at least five feet is recommended. Ventilation and drainage holes are necessary, as is access to the interior to allow periodic cleaning. Baffles and

*continued on page 4*

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**Make Your Backyard a Good Habitat, continued from page 3**

metal guards to deter predators are encouraged. You can assist birds in building their nests by supplying some of the materials they seek, such as twigs; short lengths of string, yarn, and thread; cotton; hair brushed from a pet; and sphagnum moss. Leave the offerings in a tray or in an onion net bag hung from a tree.

**SHELTER**

Birds need places where they can hide from predators and inclement weather. Trees, shrubs, meadows, and even rock walls provide such shelter.

Native trees and shrubs of different densities and heights give birds places of retreat and safety. In winter,

evergreens, hedgerows, and dense thickets offer critical cover. Place feeding stations close enough to vegetation so that birds can make a quick escape but far enough to allow for a wide visual field for watching possible threats.



If your yard is lacking appropriate shelter for wildlife, create a brush pile from fallen branches and leaves. Or toss your discarded Christmas tree a few feet away from the feeder, far enough so that a lurking cat can't pounce from behind it but close enough for the birds to find speedy cover. A dry stone wall, with its nooks and crannies, or simply small piles of rocks can also provide hiding spots, as can a pile of logs. You can also erect boxes designed specifically for roosting, with the entrance hole near the bottom so that heat doesn't escape. Mount the box in a sheltered area, preferably facing south.