

Wichita Audubon



Volume 36 No. 1 June/July/August 2001

CNC Upcoming Programs

Saturday, June 9

Butterfly Walk

11:00 am to 12 noon

Check out the butterflies that make Chaplin Nature Center their home. Question mark, Admirals, and an abundance of Hackberry butterflies will be on our top ten list. Butterfly nets will be available to get a closer look at these wonderful creatures.

Saturday, July 21

Water Exploration

1:00 to 2:30 pm

Cool off this summer and explore the life in a pond and creek. With the use of collecting equipment, participants can try to catch a variety of aquatic insects, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. Learn about these creatures and be ready to get wet and muddy.

Saturday, August 11

Star and Meteor Watch

9:30 to 11:00 pm

Learn to identify the summer constellations and find the summer triangle. We'll use a telescope to search for double stars, globular clusters and other galaxies. With some luck we may see a meteor or two from the Perseids.



June Annual Picnic

Wichita Audubon has had a picnic the third Tuesday in July since the dawn of time, but attendance has dwindled the last couple of years because the temperature has been over 100. So this year we're moving the picnic to June when it will hopefully be a little cooler.

Come one, come all, invite your family and friends. The annual picnic will be held on Tuesday, June 19th 6:30 p.m. at the large picnic shelter at Chisholm Creek Park (Oliver street entrance). Bring your own service and a covered dish or dessert to share. Iced Tea will be served to help cool off the summer evening, or bring your own beverage.

Thank you,
Laura Groeneweg - Hospitality

New Officers

The following officers were elected at the May meeting. Their term of office will begin July 1.

President: Patty Marlett

Vice-President: Kevin Groeneweg

Treasurer: Duane Delong

Secretary: Julia Hoppes

Director (3 yr term): Barbara Millar

Director (3 yr term): Carol Cumberland

Director (1 yr term): Merle Manlove

Coming Events

June 9

Butterfly Walk at Chaplin Nature Center, 11 am to noon.

June 9

Walk With Wildlife at Chisholm Creek Park. This Wichita Wild event is supported by volunteers from WAS. View Kansas wildlife along a leisurely one mile hike. For more info call the Great Plains Nature Center, 683-5499.

June 19

Annual picnic 6:30 pm Chisholm Creek Park

July 21

Water Exploration at Chaplin Nature Center, 1 to 2:30 pm

August 11

Star and Meteor Watch at Chaplin Nature Center, 9:30 pm to 11:00 pm

For more information about any Chaplin Nature Center programs call Shawn Silliman at 620-442-4133, or e-mail cnc@wichitaaudubon.org.

Birdathon!

Thanks to all who donated and helped. We have raised over \$2000 so far with Birdathon to help support CNC operations. The CNC team found 122 species and raised \$1183. The Painted Buntings found 136 species and raised \$770.

Rex Herndon Receives 2001 Meritorious Service Award

Rex Herndon was awarded the Wichita Audubon Society's Meritorious Service Award during the May 2001 meeting. The award was presented by President Carol Cumberland in recognition of many years of service given to the Chaplin Nature Center. Rex has been a member of the Wichita Audubon Society since November 1985. He immediately volunteered at the Chaplin Nature Center, and has been a key member of the Nature Center Committee since that time.

He was elected as a board Director, and became Chairman of the Nature Center Committee in July 1989. Construction of the new Visitor's Center was scheduled to begin in June. The day before the truck with the materials for the project arrived, our Naturalist, Gerald Wiens, suffered an injury to his shoulder that required surgery and hospitalization. Rex

immediately took charge of unloading and organizing the materials at the construction site. He also enlisted the help of three of his colleagues in the Arkansas City school system to form a construction crew. With Gerald as the General Contractor, Rex as Foreman, and three school teachers, the building was completed for the Grand Opening and Dedication ceremonies on September 30, 1989. Rex and his crew were paid very modest wages for their skilled and enthusiastic labor which resulted in major cost savings. Rex donated the entire amount of his wages back to the Nature Center.

He served as Chair or Co-Chair of the Nature Center Committee 1994-2000. During the summer months of 1996 the position of Naturalist became vacant, and Rex again volunteered much of his time keeping the Nature Center open and in

operation until a new Naturalist could be hired.

Because of Rex's love for the environment, nature education and wildlife conservation have become an integral part of the science curriculum taught in the Arkansas City school system. He has been teaching for more than 20 years. During his tenure with USD 470 he chaired the district's elementary science committee which developed the elementary science curriculum that won the "Kansas Excellence in Science" award for Arkansas City Public schools. The curriculum includes outdoor education sessions at the Chaplin Nature Center.

Rex is now a principal in USD 470 with responsibilities much broader than a single classroom, however he continues to promote the CNC. The Chaplin Nature Center has reaped many benefits from his contacts with USD 470 and the Arkansas City community.

Rex is always available and the first to volunteer his services the loan of his tools and equipment in times of need. After flooding or strong winds he is first on the scene to help clear the trails or repair damage.

Rex has been a key member of the CNC Birdathon teams, which consistently raise more money than any other WAS Birdathon team. He is most deserving of this recognition for his many years of meritorious service to the Wichita Audubon Society and the Chaplin Nature Center. Without his services the CNC would not enjoy the success it does today. Congratulate Rex for receiving this honor, and THANKS for your generous continuing volunteer work for the Chaplin Nature Center.

by John Wherry

2000-2001 WAS Officers

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Birding In Kansas

"Listening in the woods at twilight to the twirling notes of the wood thrush, I was happy in the thought that as long as he sings at sunset, the deadest season of summer is not yet upon the airs.

Something of spring will linger when he comes forth in the cool of the day to spin a bit of magic for the weary. Cool, cool, and tranquil, he drops his notes into the evening, distilling peace. One can never hear the thrush without feeling an intense sense of solitude. Whitman has made this feeling immortal; but it comes to us all, long before we are old enough to read Whitman."

Donald Culross Peattie, An Almanac for Moderns, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York 1935

Whitman's eulogy for Abraham Lincoln "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" contains these lines, referenced above:

*"Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding
the settlements,
Sings by himself a song."*

And solitary they seem, at least in Kansas. A wood thrush has found its way to the tiny woodlot behind my house in Manhattan. He sings his glorious notes every morning to greet the sun, and again in the evening for vespers. But his goal is not to remain solitary! He, and others like him, would prefer the company of another, in order to give the world the next generation of elegant weavers of "twirling notes." This month is the month of baby birds, as all manner of birds settle in for the hectic pace of incubating, feeding, fledging, and perhaps starting it over again next month.

Despite the attentions of their parents, some baby birds (like some human offspring) can't seem to stay on task. When your task is merely to sit still and get fed every few minutes, that doesn't seem too difficult. But lots of them will tumble out of nests early, to be found by outdoor cats, vehicles, or perhaps by humans. If you see a bird that is obviously not ready to leave the nest, and if you can find (and reach) the nest, it is usually best to return it immediately. Don't worry about the myth that the parents can "smell human scent" on their offspring and thus will abandon it. Most birds have a pathetic sense of smell, and none will abandon a baby simply because you have handled it. Ironically, the local bird with the best olfactory sense is the Turkey Vulture, which must make its everyday dining experiences even more aesthetically pleasing...

Later in the month, you may find baby birds begging from the ground or from a low branch, and might assume that the parents have abandoned them. Please restrain the urge to grab them and head to the zoo or rehab shelter with them. Usually the parent bird is nearby, watching to make sure that you (a large vicious predator in its eyes) leave the premises so that it can feed

the fledgling. Nests get crowded, birds leave before they can really fly, and parents will still feed them outside the nest. Obviously if you see one in harm's way (e.g. in the middle of a busy street), you should remove it to a nearby bush or tree. But not too far, or the parents might have a hard time relocating it for the next feeding!

Finally, you may encounter ignoramuses who decide that a bird has built its nest in the "wrong place". Lots of shopowners destroy barn swallow nests every year in Kansas, despite the fact that it is a violation of state and federal laws to do so. There are no lethal human diseases associated with bird nests, so there are no health reasons to remove them while the birds are occupying the site. If you see this, and can pin down the owner or manager, tell them that it is illegal to do so, and that you will take your business elsewhere if they cannot abide having birds coexist with them. Birds have only one or two windows of reproductive opportunity per year, and surely we humans can grant them that brief time before we feel we must "tidy up" after them. We really don't own the earth, or even small pieces of it; we need to learn to share again. Or all the wood thrushes will indeed be "solitary."

Dave Rintoul



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Update on Blackbird Poisonings

In the last newsletter we reported on The US Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services campaign to reduce the number of blackbirds that roost at Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in response to complaints from feedlot owners. A poison called DRC-1339 was used at up to 10 feed lots in the area. Wildlife Services plans to apply poison annually, killing a total of 4 million birds a year, including 3 million starlings, 1 million red-winged blackbirds, 50,000 each of common grackles, brown-headed cowbirds, great-tailed grackles, and Brewer's blackbirds.

The following was reported in the April issue of "Eagle Eyes", a National Audubon Society newsletter for conservation activists:

"The U.S. Department of Agriculture is using poison to kill blackbird populations, in order to reduce the

consumption of sunflower seed crops. Last year Audubon won a temporary halt to the killings that impacted a number of bird species in South Dakota."

"However, recent Associated Press reports said that the USDA is poisoning thousands of blackbirds, grackles and starlings in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Kansas and other Midwestern states."

"Local Kansas residents, for example, have complained to authorities about thousands of dead birds blanketing their yards."

"While it is now too late to do anything about the poisonings this spring, Audubon will make every effort to eliminate this program and halt future poisonings."

You can find our more about the Audubon campaign at:
www.audubon.org/campaign/blackbird/index.html.

Chisholm Creek Cleanup

This spring saw another successful cleanup of Chisholm Creek Park as fourteen Audubon members showed up to lend a hand. One group worked the area along Woodlawn and found a lot of trash, including some rather large items. Another group scoured the roadside along 29th Street. A third group cleaned up the two parking lots off of Oliver, and the neighboring trails. By 11:00 am the park was looking pretty spiffy again. Those who participated were Rebecca Aldridge, Sherry Brewer, Carol and Hal Cumberland, Tom Gray, Paul Hobelman, Kris Jackson, Patty Marlett, Ann and Steve Starch, Tammy Troutman, Doug Unruh, Lowell Wilder, and Doreen Womack. Thanks to all of you!

Paul Hobelman