

Audubon Society of Central Oklahoma

2008, Volume 2

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KITE FLIGHT NEWSLETTER



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Editor: Jane Cunningham

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www.oklahomaaudubon.org

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Letter from the President

DEAR MEMBER:

The first quarter of 2008 has brought us good fortune in that we now have a full interim board. We are extremely happy to welcome all our new Directors (see above, right). This makes our chapter even stronger. All board members will be officially voted in at our next general meeting, which will be held on April 8th. We greatly appreciate their commitment to our mission.

We are diligently working on developing more chapter special events this year along with fund-raisers, to help sustain our chapter. We will announce these events and projects to come in later newsletters and online at www.oklahomaaudubon.org.

Also by the time you get this newsletter, we had a booth at the 2008 Edmond Arbor Day Festival, which was held on March 29th. Last year we raised \$90 for the chapter in the 3 hour event. It was fun, and was a good way to spread our message, and talk about our Lake Hefner conservation project.

Early this year, I went to Casady Middle School and gave a presentation to their

Jane Cunningham - President/Treasurer

Adrienne Holmes - Vice President

Carole Straughn - Secretary

Dr. Chris Butler - Director

Mark Sherwin - Director

Dawn Holt - Director

Joe Vaughan - Director

Dale Birchett - Director

Jim Orebaugh - Director

Dr. David Elmendorf - Project Advisor

conservation club at noon time. I showed a DVD about the history of National Audubon, and talked to them about our Lake Hefner project.

It is surprising to me that so many people I meet still think that Audubon is just about birds. We constantly have to explain that Audubon is about conservation. That is, chapters of National Audubon are about conservation. We also constantly get confused with the Oklahoma City Audubon group, which is not a chapter of National Audubon. They have many expert birders.

Remember, National Audubon was formed to "engage millions of people of all ages, and backgrounds in conservation"

I hope that you enjoy this newsletter and can help spread the word. Did you know our membership is growing? Apparently, more people are realizing that they should support conservational efforts of non-profit organizations. Thank you!

Warm Regards,

Jane Cunningham



Past Events

We had our Lake Hefner Project groundbreaking ceremony on Saturday, March 5th. It was made-to-order weather....just a beautiful morning.

Speakers were Rev. Harold Straughn, who brought in the spiritual aspect of the project, Wendel Whisenhunt, Director of City Parks and Recreation, Martha Burger, Sr. Vice President of Human and Corporate Resources from Chesapeake Energy, Cheyenne Chief Gordon Yellowman who blessed the land in his Native American tongue, Brian Dougherty from the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Dr. Bill Radke, ornithologist and Provost of University of Central Oklahoma, and Johnson Bridgwater, our wonderful volunteer landscape designer who also is the Director of Conservation Outreach for Wildshare International Inc.

We especially would like to thank Chesapeake Energy and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation for their generous grants supporting the project.



Household Environmental Impact Calculator....try it!

LowImpactLiving.com, the largest green home improvement site online, has launched a groundbreaking new Household Impact Calculator and rating system. When used, this will help individuals understand their environmental impact and chart a course to a more eco-friendly home and lifestyle.

The online calculator allows you to input information about their dwelling, consumption habits, (e.g., dwelling square footage, power use, miles driven, etc.), and the results are a full picture of

your environmental impact. It calculates not only carbon emissions, (or "carbon footprint as it is called), but ALL environmental impacts – including energy use, water consumption, trash production, urban run-off production and more. It is the most comprehensive environmental impact calculator available online according to the latest environmental news.

OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Let me introduce you to them....



We now have a nice slate of board members to be officially voted in at our upcoming general meeting. I would like to introduce them to you. (I will not introduce myself our Carole Straughn, our trusty Secretary, who we had an article on in our last newsletter.)

Dr. Christopher (Chris) Butler, a popular teacher, has been an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) since 2005. His specialty is in avian metapopulation dynamics and related topics. His research experience includes the effects of logging on bird biodiversity in Wisconsin and Minnesota, and additionally has used Global Information Systems (GIS) to determine if global warming has affected bird migration in New York and Massachusetts. He has designed/created a website on bird families at www.eeb.cornell.edu/winkler/botw/Main.html. Chris

accepted our invitation to serve on the board because "as an ornithologist, I'm concerned about habitat fragmentation, and I was impressed that this chapter of National Audubon was taking the initiative to begin a habitat restoration project. I thought that my input might be useful in helping guide this project, as well as any future projects that might involve birds."

In the last newsletter, we included an article by **Dawn Holt**. Dawn, also from UCO, has taught computer science for over 20 years, full time since 2001. She has worked in the industry as a Systems Programmer and Sensor R&D Engineer. She has earned many degrees including a Masters in Education, Physics (emphasis on computer science), Business Administration, and Landscape Architecture. Dawn has long been interested in animal welfare and conservation, and has been a member of various groups such as The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, The Oklahoma Horticultural society, and the Sierra Club. Dawn decided to become a board member to "participate with like-minded people in trying to slow or reverse the degeneration and exploitation of our natural wonders, (animal, vegetable, and mineral), and by so doing, focus on the more optimistic side of some pretty dark possibilities that increasingly seem to be at hand at the global scale."

Mark Sherwin, a senior level biology student at UCO who was a Staff Sergeant in the United States Army has also joined us as a new board member. We met him at a local StepItUp" Global Warming Event last year. He is very interested in conservation and ornithology along with being a very world-minded individual. Mark is on our Lake Hefner Project Planning Committee, and has volunteered in various ways to help with this conservation project. He is serving on our board because he wanted to offer his

leadership skills and knowledge to recruit students and others to help with The Lake Hefner project.

Jim Orebaugh, owner of Dovecote Bird Control Services in Edmond, uses non-lethal methods to help people manage wildlife that comes in conflict with humans in an urban setting. He started his company 12 years ago after an early retirement from the technology industry. Jim also chairs The Oklahoma chapter of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives), which is part of a national nonprofit group "dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of the nation's small businesses." www.okcscore.org Jim accepted a board position because his interactions with common urban birds whetted his curiosity to learn more about birds. Jim also serves on our Lake Hefner Project Planning Committee.

Dale Birchett, is a partner and C.O.O. of Associated Aero Service at Wiley Post, repairing and modifying business aircraft. Dale is an independent thinker, with a driving curiosity that led him to amass 180 undergraduate hours in literature, anthropology, physics, and mathematics. Since 1990, Dale has worked for many progressive causes focusing on ecology. Dale also serves on the board of Friends of Lake Hefner and was instrumental in helping develop that organization succeeding in getting the city's Lake Hefner Master Plan rewritten to support conservation of the area. Dale believes that he shares like beliefs with our mission, locally and globally. "I liken the world bird population to "coal mine canaries" for indications of the state and health of the biosphere. The birds should not only be watched, studied and conserved; they should be appreciated for their sacrifice in the face of mismanagement of the planet".

Dr. Joe Vaughan, now retired, taught biology at UCO for 27 years. Joe has done research in Mexico, Central America, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan, publishing in several scientific journals. Joe has a diversified background, having been in the United States Army, with a B.S. in Range animal husbandry and his masters in biology, and his doctoral work in botany. Joe was attracted to The Audubon Society of Central Oklahoma when he was invited by Adrienne Holmes to attend Dr. Bill Radke's (UCO Provost and V.P. of Academic Affairs) presentation of his trip to the Antarctic at our general meeting. Joe was on the faculty committee that recommended Bill to teach ornithology at UCO. He wants to serve on our board because "I love the outdoors and I have time".

Welcome to all our new board members!

Our Lake Hefner Conservation Project.....UPDATE

To Recap: In early 2007, as we stood at the "mitigation wetland ponds" on the northeast corner of Lake Hefner looking at the lack of birds there, we started talking about what we could do to improve the area for birds and wildlife.

The wheels starting turning.....who could we call to find out if we can do something to help the environment for wildlife around the lake? We wanted to plant native trees and shrubs, and try to restore an area to a more natural state. Through many phone calls, and 3/4ths of a year of e-mails, meetings, and revising agreements, we finally came up with the area for our project, and a final renewable agreement with The City of Oklahoma City.

The area chosen is located at the South end of Lake Hefner, extending from the intersection of Portland Avenue and South Lake Hefner Drive, (the entrance into Stars and Stripes Park), all the way almost to Lake Hefner Parkway. The total area is approximately 8.5+ acres.

The other challenge was to put together a volunteer base to accomplish the project. Luckily, we contacted Johnson Bridgwater, a landscape designer, currently working for The Department of Transportation. Johnson is the owner-operator of Earthworks, and Director of conservation Outreach for Wildshare International Inc. He has 19 years of landscape management experience including residential, commercial, and ecological design. Johnson has designed Phase 1 of our project, and

plans to continue with us throughout the project. How lucky is that?

Carole Straughn, our Secretary, realized that we needed to build our volunteer base, so she and I went on a mission to bring in new people. With Carole's experience and involvement with the local Sierra Club, and their conservation group, we gained more interest and eventually gained some new members wanting to make a difference. And again, how lucky is that?

The Update: Before our groundbreaking ceremony, we moved in some big, beautiful native Oklahoma boulders purchased locally from Minnick Materials. We also received a donated Oklahoma Redbud from Precure Nursery. We used that tree in our groundbreaking ceremony.

After our groundbreaking ceremony, we moved quickly to get our native prairie grass area seeded. Thanks to Johnson for the hard work! And very recently, we have installed half of our Phase 1 shrubs and trees by the boulders. It is starting to look good. We will now concentrate on watering and developing the educational signage, then this Fall we will plant the other half of Phase 1.

The Future: We have more area to fill with native species. We are considering adding a labyrinth, a birding trail, and other landscaping additions to make it a better place for wildlife and a fun and educational place for people to learn about conservation. We hope to leave something meaningful for future generations to come. Thanks continually go to Chesapeake Energy and The Oklahoma City Community Foundation for their generous grants towards this project!!!



Forest Conservation in Port Louis, Madagascar

Are you constantly seeing all the news about the negative impacts of humans on the earth? Want to hear about something positive that is being done?

The Indian Ocean island of Madagascar has reduced the destruction of its protected forests eight-fold as it is preserving its unique wildlife and earning more from tourists.

Notably, this island is home to hundreds of species of chameleons, lemurs, birds, and the magnificent Baobab tree. The 4th largest island aims to keep 10% of its surface as nature reserves.

Satellite images indicate deforestation has fallen in those areas to 0.1% per year of existing forest from 0.8% in the 1990s.

In 2003, their President vowed to ramp up environmental protection combining tree-planting, community involvement, and the extension of reserves. All of those efforts have contributed to the positive effect on their land.

More than 90% of the mammals that inhabit Madagascar can only be found there and nowhere else.

Their Environmental and Tourism Minister states, "we have a unique biodiversity. Eighty percent of our species are endemic." Our neighboring countries cannot compete with us in this respect. "We are going to sell this to tourists."

Scientists say deforestation in the tropics causes about 20% of all man-made carbon dioxide emissions and preserving what is left of them is crucial because they soak up enormous amounts of gas responsible for the bulk of global warming.

Madagascar's forests are small by comparison with those of Brazil or Indonesia, but they have almost as much variety of species of animals and plants. Madagascar broke away from the rest of Africa around 160 million years ago, leaving its flora and fauna to evolve in isolation.

Perhaps more countries and islands will get on this bandwagon!!!!



2008 Chapter Meeting Schedule

Presentations:

April 8 – Dr. Donald Winslow will discuss his research on the effect of fires on prairie birds.

Grassland bird response to fire in fields managed for cattle forage

Habitat change is the most important factor affecting biological populations. Anthropogenic habitat change has endangered many species. However, ecosystems can often be quite dynamic, and some species are adapted to habitat change. The prairie communities of the Great Plains have been influenced by fire and grazing since the last glacial retreat.

May 13 - Slide show of Alaskan Trip with music

Please come meet with us!!!

Place: Mayflower Church, located at 3901 NW 63rd, (West of Portland Avenue)

Time: 7 PM - 7:30 PM - Meet n' Greet

Meeting begins at 7:30 PM

Refreshments and snacks will be served



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