

Wild Bird Habitat Store

March Newsletter - 2023

South Lincoln
In the Alamo Plaza
56th & Hwy 2
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 420-2553

North Lincoln
4900 Dudley St
2 Blks South of Holdrege
Lincoln, NE 68504
(402) 464-4055

Omaha
Jarrison Village Mall
168th & Harrison
Omaha, NE 68136
(402) 504-4450

www.wildbirdhabitatstore.com



Spring bird migration
Don't miss this big event

March Bird Notes:

- March begins spring migration for many birds
- Over 500,000 Sandhill Cranes will spend six weeks on the Platte River.
- March snowstorms can be problematic for birds.
- Suet will be in big demand for the remainder of winter, and even more so from March to August during the nesting season.
- Goldfinches will be flocking to thistle feeders & males will show their breeding plumage.
- If you choose to plant for wildlife this spring begin planning now. Carroll Henderson's book "Landscaping for Wildlife" is a great resource and available at Wild Bird Habitat Store.
- We've seen late snows, and many northern winter birds. Species
- Time to clean out nest boxes, make repairs to them, or add a new bird house.
- After a quiet winter it's let the singing begin.

Coming in May, 2023
The Nebraska Bird Bowl
A Big Month in Nebraska

5 categories for birders
Beginner to Expert
Prizes in each category
WATCH FOR DETAILS



Set-up a FREE eBird Account
Find where the birds are in your area. Submit a checklist of the birds you see. & more at
<http://ebird.org>

IDENTIFY BIRDS EASILY
Download for FREE on tablets, phones, & PCs

- **Merlin Bird ID & Merlin Photo ID**
<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>
- **Audubon Bird Guide & Bird ID Wizard**
<https://www.audubon.org/app>
- **BirdNet - Identify by bird calls**
<https://birdnet.cornell.edu/>
- **Picture Bird (Subscription) Photo ID & Calls at**
picture bird identifier app

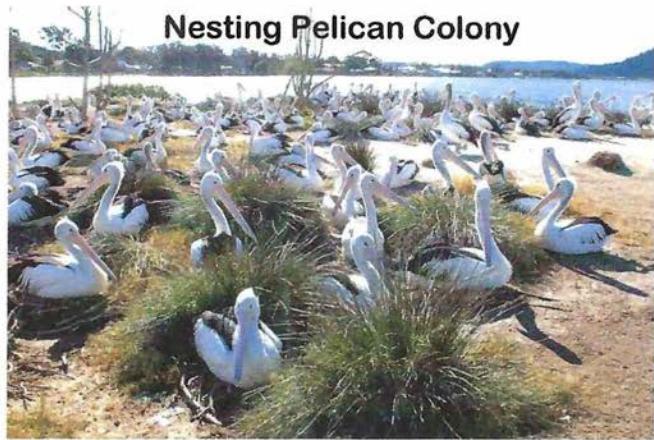


American White Pelican

The American White Pelican is one of the largest birds of North America measuring a little over 5 feet in length with a wingspan that can exceed 9 feet, the second largest wingspan of any North American bird. They are heavy reaching weights of 16 to 20 pounds, but in flight they are fluid and graceful and can soar as majestically as any broad winged bird.

White Pelicans are slightly larger than their cousins the Brown Pelican which is found along the Gulf Coast and up the Atlantic and Pacific waterways. The male and female look exactly alike with the male being the larger of the two. They are mostly white only showing the black primary and outer secondary feathers of their large wings when in flight. The juvenile pelicans are similar to the adult except for the dirty grayish markings on the head and back along with having a grey bill. The legs and feet are a bright orange. They have such a distinctive and unique appearance it makes identification relatively easy. However on occasion White Pelicans have been mistaken for Whooping Cranes when migrating high above in a loose V-formation or soaring on thermals.

White Pelicans breed in colonies on isolated islands of freshwater lakes in the upper Great Plains of the US and Canada and the mountain west. Wintering along the coasts they only breed on these inland freshwater lakes. They forage for food in large marshes, lakes, and sloughs along rivers that may be as far as thirty miles from the nest site. The nest is a depression scratched out among the loose stones and vegetation with the same debris lining the bottom of the nest where two white eggs will be laid. The parents will share the duties of incubating the eggs using their feet to keep the eggs warm due to the lack of a brood patch on their belly. After the hatch both adults will again share the parental responsibility of feeding and caring for the young. In the fall they will begin their retreat south where they will spend the winter on the Pacific and Gulf of Mexico coasts from central California and Florida south to Panama.



In the 1960's prior to the regulation of pesticide use there was a significant decline in the numbers of White Pelicans. Since regulations went into effect the numbers of White Pelicans have reached about 100,000 in the wild with slight yearly increases. They are sensitive to human disturbances and may flush off the nest if frightened exposing the eggs to gulls and ravens. But the main threat to pelicans today is nest failure from flooding rains or prolonged drought, possibly a factor of climate change. Other threats include losses from entanglement in fishing gear, disturbances by boats, poaching, and human related habitat degradation.

White Pelicans can live up to 16 years with the recorded lifespan of a pelican in captivity exceeding 34 years. Unlike the Brown Pelican which will perform aerial dives into water to catch food, White Pelicans scoop up fish with their enormous bill at times making shallow dives. They are known to work as a cooperative group herding fish together to feast on with each bird consuming up to 4 pounds of fish every day. It has even been recorded that within these cooperative flocks blinded adult pelicans have been kept alive presumably by other members of the group providing food for them.

White Pelicans have traditionally migrated through Nebraska and were sighted by Lewis and Clark during the Corp of Discovery. On August 8, 1804, the expedition found a flock of several hundred white pelicans resting on a sandbar about two miles north of the mouth of Little Sioux River in present-day Burt or Thurston County, Nebraska, and Monona County, Iowa. One of these birds was shot and measured by Captain Lewis, and its throat pouch was determined to hold five gallons of water.



An estimate of 5,000 to 6,000 pelicans was seen the same day by Private Whitehouse. Pelicans were also seen on the return trip, September 4 and 5, 1806, near the mouth of the Vermillion River, and within the river stretch from present-day Burt to Dixon Counties, Nebraska. A few were shot on September 6

6 in what would become southern Burt County. Today a few white pelicans still use this dredged and highly channelized stretch of the Missouri River during migration to and from their North Dakota or Manitoba breeding grounds, but most migration now occurs in lakes and rivers farther west, where the waters are clearer and less swift.

Today White Pelicans are plentiful across all of Nebraska during the spring and fall bird migration from the Missouri River of eastern Nebraska to the marshes, lakes and prairie potholes in the state's western panhandle. In the spring, when weather allows, adult birds will push on north to their breeding grounds. Many non-breeding pelicans will remain on the lakes and reservoirs of central and western Nebraska for the summer. These are generally juvenile birds that won't reach sexual maturity until about four years of age. The juvenile birds that remain will form feeding groups of twelve or more working together to corral fish.



One of the largest concentrations of White Pelicans in Nebraska during the spring migration is at the Harlan County Reservoir in the south central part of the state along the Republican River. The pelicans begin to arrive in late February and early March. They will remain to hunt and feed until the second week in April when the adults will resume their trip north and the non-breeding birds will disperse in search of the summer's prairie lakes where fish are plentiful.

Viewing the thousands of White Pelicans at the Harlan County Reservoir, along with many other birds, is relatively easy. They can be observed from many shoreline locations and parking lots around the Harlan County Lake as well from the marinas, RV and camp grounds, and the many walking trails near the lake.

White Pelican Viewing

White Pelicans can be seen at many larger area lakes such as Branched Oak and Pawnee SRAs. Some of the best locations I've been to that are easily accessible for viewing large numbers of white pelicans is at Harlan County reservoir in Alama, NE and the Calamus reservoir by Burwell, NE across from Calamus Outfitters. Both are also excellent areas for many other bird species as well. These are remarkable birds that have not changed much over the past 30 million years.



Go for Nebraska's birding trifecta. American White Pelicans, Sandhill Cranes, and Greater Prairie Chickens. Birding Trifecta in Nebraska at <http://www.nebraskaspringbirding.com/>

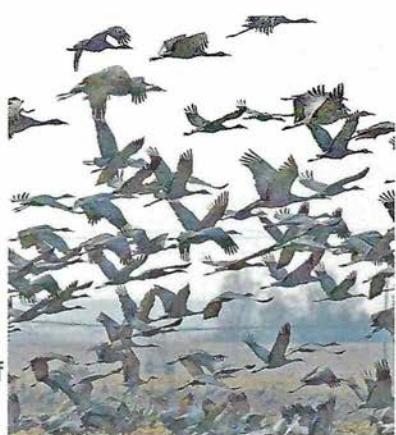


Sandhill Crane Viewing - When, Where & How

Are you thinking about taking the short drive west down Interstate 80 to view the Sandhill Crane migration this year? You say you've always wanted to but you aren't sure about the level of difficulty? The fact is it is a relatively easy to plan a trip west to see one of the largest animal migrations on the planet. The Sandhill Crane migration with record numbers near 600,000.

You can easily pack a picnic lunch and make it a day trip and see tens of thousands of these 3 foot dinosaurs gliding through the skies of feeding and loafing in the surrounding fields. All the roads are well kept and easy to navigate. For a brochure full of information with route maps visit .

<https://nebraskaflyway.com/>. I have made it to Kearney for a half day of crane viewing and back home for dinner. Also check out Rowe Sanctuary at <https://rowe.audubon.org/>



Maybe you want to really emerge yourself in this spectacular migration of cranes and spend a night or two in the Crane Capital of the World. There are ample accommodations in Kearney, NE where anytime you step outside day or night you'll hear that of the Sandhill Cranes that will get in you blood and you'll return every year, often becoming an annual pilgrimage for many. After more than 30 years of trekking to the Central Platte River to witness this migration I get goose bumps every spring when I hear those welcoming calls.

So no matter if you want lodging, dinning, or both you'll have plenty of selections. Just visit

<https://visitkearney.org/sandhill-cranes/>.

You won't only find a guide to restaurants, lodging, and other activities and events, but plenty of Sandhill Crane information. And if you're just looking to grab and go for lunch or dinner, you'll find all of your favorite fast-food stops.

So take the plunge into the largest bird migration in the world along a 66 mile stretch of the Central Platte River. It's an easy adventure. A relaxing trip. Full of excitement And it has been happening relatively unchanged for millions of years.



If you have any questions Wild Bird Habitat has the crane brochures with a complete map. We can even help you plan a route to view the cranes. Just ask Eric or Dave

Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary's Crane Camera - Watch tens of thousand Sandhill Cranes return to the portion of the Platte River in Central Nebraska. They will roost in the river where they avoid predators, then leave in mass at dawn to return to the fields to feed. Watch it all as it happens, arriving to the river between 6PM and 9PM. The flocks depart the river in the morning between 6:30 am and 9am. Got to <https://explore.org/livecams/national-audubon-society/crane-camera> or just Google Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary's Crane Camera



Dave's March Bird Chatter

March is the beginning of one of the most spectacular and exciting times when it comes to watching birds. March starts the big push of spring bird migration. It starts this month with robins, blackbirds, meadowlarks, bluebirds and a host of early arrivers. Waterfowl from geese to a menagerie of ducks are on the move stopping at area lakes and ponds. Sandhill Cranes are returning to the Platte River in Central Nebraska for their six week stay as White Pelicans can be seen on reservoirs across the state as they wait for winter to subside to the north before moving into the Dakotas and Manitoba to begin the nesting season.



By mid-month we may start to see early arriving songbirds. These birds will be sporting their breeding plumage this time of year making them brighter, and easier to identify. Purple Martins will be arriving back at the houses used last year to raise families. Shore birds will start arriving in March. Nebraska plays host to a large diversity of shorebird species. Some will move on while, others will remain to nest. The Central Plaine's flyways, especially in Nebraska, is a mecca for shorebirds during migration, possibly one of the best on the continent for birders. Some of these shorebirds will travel to the high arctic to nest.

By March 20th one of my many favorite birds will return. The Turkey Vulture. They are such a fascinating creature with very unique adaptations. Warblers, Vireos, grassland sparrows will be returning, and this is just the beginning. The spring bird migration will continue through April, May, and into early June bringing orioles, hummingbirds, along with a second wave of various species of birds.

So, make a commitment to take short trips to area nature centers, lakes, prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Learn to identify those birds you can. Take photos. Watch them. Imagine the daunting journeys many of them are undertaking. I guarantee you'll return home inspired. You'll have a whole new appreciation for birds. You'll find yourself at ease from the connection you've made with nature.. And you will continue to contemplate the massive journeys these birds are on.

Wingtip: When you look for a bird species in a field guide or on an app, also look at the range map. Many of these birds, weighing from a half ounce to several pounds, will be traveling thousands of miles to nest only to repeat the journey back south in the fall.

As the nesting season draws nearer during March the winter flocks of birds will start to break up and return to their normal nesting territories. During the winter many of our resident birds form loose flocks and travel together, sometimes with other birds, in search of food, often staying together until this time of year.

Here we are talking about spring bird migration, but winter weather may be far from over. March can produce some significant snows across the Central Great Plains and Midwest. These storms can create problems for the early migrants to our area covering food, grit, reducing the availability of water.

It is longer daylight hours which triggers the urge for migration and start moving north to breed. If a sudden snowstorm erupts during March, or if the weather is rainy and cold, those early migrants that only feed on insects may retreat south as far as they need to go to locate food. No one knows for sure if that is the case or not. Some of these insectivorous birds may just die from lack of food. The one exception is the Tree Swallow. This aerial acrobat that catches insects on the wing can survive on seeds in early spring.

Those birds that arrive in late winter and early spring are vulnerable to late winter storms. For example, Sandhill Cranes have been known to perish by the hundreds when caught in a Nebraska March blizzard. All we can do for many of these birds is hope for the best. Last year a March ice storm in the southern states took a heavy toll on bluebirds. In the late nineties a March ice storm proved fatal to thousands of Purple Martins.

If we get a March snowstorm keep the feeders well stocked, supply some grit for the birds, and make sure open water is available. Now is as good a time as any to purchase a bird bath heater or replace the one that just doesn't work as good as when it was new. All bird bath heaters and de-icers, as well as all our heated bird baths will be on sale the month of March. You will probably get some use out of them yet this year and will be ready to go next winter.

If you feel you have had fewer Goldfinches at your Nyjer thistle feeders than in previous years, that is all about to change. We have been enjoying the Northern population of Goldfinch over the winter months. Our resident Goldfinch, many who drift south for the winter, will be returning this month, usually by the second week of March. It is easy to double the population at the feeders with their return. March is the month when the olive drab feathers of the male Goldfinch will be replaced with the bright canary yellow feathers. At first the male Goldfinch will appear blotchy until the full beauty of his breeding plumage is revealed. It will be May before the northern populations we have enjoyed follow the dandelion bloom back to their breeding territories. March might be a good time to add another thistle feeder to avoid over-crowding. I am pleased that many goldfinch will feed on Nutra safflower, some preferring it over the Nyjer thistle seed. Having both of these seeds available and even hulled sunflower seeds provides a variety for birds to choose from.

Occasionally a customer asks where are all the birds. In fact, I am a bit puzzled by the few birds I have had at the feeders over the past few weeks. The lack of birds at someone's bird feeders this time of year can be somewhat of a mystery. I am not sure if anyone has the correct answer as to why birds abandon our offerings in what seems to be a well-protected area with plenty of their favorite types of food. It could be a persistent hawk on a daily patrol, a roaming cat, or just a coincidence. Lack of heavy snows this winter has left natural foods available, and birds will take advantage of those resources. Backyard bird feeders only provide about 30% of a bird's diet. But it may remain a mystery why sometimes birds abandon our bird feeders for periods of time until we start thinking like birds. Usually these "dry spells" of few birds at your feeders only last a short while.

One thing is for certain. These natural foods that have been available with the lack of snow cover are rapidly being depleted. As natural food plots become harder to find the birds will retreat back to the feeders. Afterall, it will take an entire growing season before natural foods become plentiful again. This is all the more reason to maintain a bird feeder, or several bird feeders, all year round.

Bird populations and distribution is not static. Populations rise and fall. Birds can disperse and move great distances at a moment's notice. Maybe it was the long periods of extreme winds blowing from the north across the Great Plains that carried many birds further south. Birds will utilize tail winds to migrate as it takes much less effort and conserves energy. Did they sense the impending record cold temperatures that were to grip the majority of the Northern States, so they went further south? With all that is known about birds there is still many unanswered questions. They are such remarkable

YEAR END CLOSEOUT

- ◆ Bird Bath De-Icers
- ◆ All Heat Bird Baths

15% OFF



For those birds coming to our backyard bird feeders March is a month of transition. Winter is slowly releasing its grip and birds are beginning to search out nesting territories. So, keep the bird feeders well stocked. Bird's interest in suet will increase. You'll see shifts in the distribution of birds at your feeders. Birds have a lot to get ready for as the seasons change and your offerings will be a welcomed.

So keep a field guide and binoculars handy. I have them at home and carry them with me where ever Linda and I go. **There are 969 birds species on the bird checklist of North America. 467 of those bird species are on Nebraska's bird checklist with more than 200 of those bird species breeding in the state.** As you see there are year round birding opportunities in Nebraska. Plus at anytime, anywhere, a wandering off course vagrant just might appear in your area. Maybe right in your backyard. This is what draws people to birding. The variety. The challenge. The beauty. The fact that birds have called earth home for millions of years.



Greater Prairie Chicken Viewing

Greater Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse both occur in the grasslands of Central Nebraska. Greater Prairie Chickens are more common and have increased significantly in recent years. Each spring, these native prairie birds gather on courtship grounds called "leks." Males arrive before dawn and put on an amazing display of foot-stomping and resonant booming calls created by inflating yellow-orange air sacs on the side of their necks. Fights often break out between males in competition for females that show up on the lek.

Courtship starts in early March and can last well into May. Activity starts before first light and often continues for two to three hours after sunrise. A less vigorous peak of activity often occurs around sunset. Finding an active lek is difficult - and since most of Nebraska is private property, it is not recommended that visitors search for these birds without assistance. For information, contact the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary at 877-855-2951. For other prairie chicken viewing opportunities contact:

- Calamus Outfitters - Burwell, NE / calamusoutfitters.com (308) 346-4697
- Big Blue Ranch & Lodge - Burchard, NE / bigblueranch.com (402) 865-4335
- The Sandhills Motel and Glidden Canoe Rental- Mullen, NE / sandhillsmotel.com (308) 278-6167
- Prairie Chicken Dance Tours - McCook, NE / prairiechickendancetours.com (308) 345-1200



Where do you want to go birding in Nebraska?

- birdtrail.outdoornebraska.gov
- nebraskametrobirdingtrails.com
- nebraskaflyway.com
- noubirds.org



**Enjoy Bird Migration More With
10% OFF Vortex Binoculars**
Binoculars & Spotting Scopes
Unlimited LIFETIME warranty
Available at the Wild Bird Habitat Store

Page 7

Coming this April

The Nebraska State
Bluebird Conference
at Mahoney State Park
Watch for Details





Wildlife Rescue Team Inc.

Join the team and help rehabilitate injured and orphaned birds and other wildlife for release back into the wild. Volunteers needed! Will train. Contact the Wildlife Rescue Team at: Can't volunteer? Make a donation or become a sponsor. Your help is needed.

Purple Martin Houses

**10% OFF
During March**

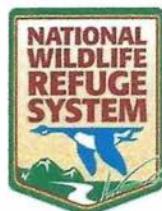
Do you have the habitat?

• Free consultation



Ask us for more information

See millions of snow geese, dozens of Bald Eagles & Trumpeter Swans, and many waterfowl species at www.fws.gov/refuge/loess-bluffs. See it all from the comfort of your car on the well maintained auto-tour drive



In 12 months the Raptor Conservation Alliance (RCA) of Nebraska has recovered and treated 30 Bald Eagles suffering from lead poisoning, collisions, and other injuries. An eagle can live 25 years on average, but they face many perils. In 2022 alone the RCA treated more than 500 hawks, falcons, owls, and other birds of prey and 2023 is starting off to be a busy year. It is all volunteers committed to this effort with food and supplies purchased through donations. Food alone while these birds are in the raptor hospital recovering can cost more than \$30,000 every three to four months. If you come across an injured raptor please call (866) 888-7261. You can also make a donation online at rcabirds.org / on the RCA's Facebook page / by mail to Raptor Conservation Alliance P.O. Box 223 Eagle, Nebraska 68347, or drop your donation off at any Wild Bird Habitat Store



Arnie's Corner

Arnie's Pet Food Store

arniespetfoods.com

**Where we care as much
about your pets
as we do our own!**

**The World's Best Dog Chew
Earth Animal No-Hide® Chews**

- 100% free of rawhide
- Healthier than rawhide
- More digestible
- Helps maintain healthy teeth & gums
- Made with high quality human grade ingre-



Any Size / Any Flavor

20% OFF

A word about Dog Food Manufacturers

Most major brand dog foods are produced by 3 corporate conglomerates such as Nestle's, Mars, and Protcor & Gamble. They spend hundreds of millions of dollars marketing their pet foods. Their focus is more on their bottom line than the quality of the pet foods they manufacture. For your pet's health learn to read ingredient labels and know why those ingredients are in your pet's food and where they are sourced from. These mega corporations continually lobby the FDA to lower quality pet food standards and to allow providing misleading information to consumers to increase profits. These companies regularly make efforts to buy out top rated family owned pet food producers who provide safe, all natural, high quality pet foods in an attempt to eliminate competition.

At Arnie's Pet Food Stores we only offer top rated, high in quality all natural pet foods with no misleading information. Tell your friends about us. Their pets will be glad you did.