

Oklahoma Sierran

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Explore,
enjoy
and
protect
the
planet

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CRANES AND CONSERVATION

by Paul Moore Conservation Chair

Five years ago in October I took one of those solo car trips that are sometimes needed. I drove the backroads through Kansas to Nebraska, stopping in Grand Island to visit the Sturh Museum of the American Pioneer. The museum features history of 19th century settlement of the northern plains.

Held there is evidence that a lot has happened in 150 years. A landscape that once was dominated by grasses, bison and Native American nations has been replaced with cash economy communities, production agriculture and highways. Fortunes and families have been made and lost.

While there I also visited the Audubon Society's Rowe Sanctuary, located on the Platte River between Grand Island and Kearney. The Rowe is one of several staging areas stretched along the Platte that migrating sandhill cranes visit on their annual spring flight north to the arctic breeding

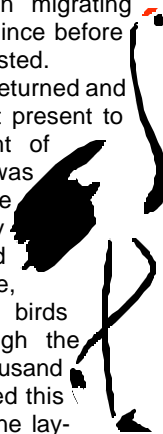
grounds. This is an event that has occurred for millions of years, a timeframe that dwarfs that addressed by the museum. Cranes have been migrating through this area since before the Platte River existed.

This spring I returned and although I was not present to witness the height of the migration, I was privileged to see enough. Eventually 300,000 cranes and as many, or more, other migratory birds would pass through the area. The few thousand that I saw presented this experience: Imagine laying on your back on a river bank looking into a rosy blue bowl of sky spattered with strings of flying cranes, geese, ducks and teal so dense that it appears to be a Jackson Pollock painting with the strands of color moving in all directions simultaneously. Add to that the variety of sounds of these fami-

lies of birds at a decibel level approaching a football stadium on Saturday and you might imagine the total experience that takes place at dawn and dusk during this migration.

Peter Matthiesen, in his wonderful new book, The Birds of Heaven, describes it this way:

"Here silver-brown bird legions forage in the stubble and green winter wheat behind the banks. No fewer than ten thousand cranes in sight at once, the crane clamor resounds through the closed windows of the car. Absorbing the silence of their mighty sound, we watch them for a long time without speaking, as one might watch storm surf from the dunes or a prairie fire. At sunset, the restless waves of feathered life overflow into the shallows and out along the bars, brown in one light, silver-gray a moment later. In hiding in a mesh-and-deadwood blind as we (Continued on Page 2)



2002 Legislative Update

by Susie Shields, Legislative Co-Chair

During the spring season, our Sierra Club bill tracking list is in a constant state of change making it nearly impossible to write an update for a newsletter that will take at least a month to be in your hands. For you die-hards who really want to know how our bills are doing on a regular basis, we are trying to keep updates on the Chapter website Keith Smith, our fantastic lobbyist, stays in shape by zooming around the halls of the Capitol keeping up with the fact-paced action. Sandra Rose, David Miller and Charles Wesner are our most dedicated vol-

unteer lobbyists who always show up to help Keith bombard legislators at the Capitol. We appreciate their efforts as well as that of the others who show up on occasion, such as Larry Swanson, Dolores Browning and Gloria Long.

Jeannine Hale, our committed bill analyzer, has been providing wonderful fact sheets on the bills such as HB 2895. David Franklin, our fabulous new webmaster, is uploading these fact sheets to our Chapter web site for your perusal. David has given the website a new look as well as continually keep-

ing it updated. This has really increased our outreach and visibility on important issues of concern. Check it out today!

At the local level, your Legislative Committee grassroots alert coordinators, Sandra Rose (Red Earth), Larry Shepard (Green Country) and Susie Shields (OKC), are working hard to acquire your e-mail addresses to include on our Capitol Action Network Activist Alert listserv. Information on important (not ALL of them) bills needing calls, e-mails (Continued on Page 2)

EPEC 2002 Campaign

by Jeannine Hale

This year's EPEC program once again focuses on water quality, but this time we have expanded our efforts. In addition to continuing our important work on agricultural pollution associated with animal wastes, we are also trying to fight major threats to SE Oklahoma streams associated with new dams, massive water withdrawals and secret deals to sell water to Texas.

Among the more important animal waste issues that we have been involved with this year is the phosphorus standard of 0.037 mg/l set by the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for scenic rivers. The Club has worked, along with the Scenic Rivers Commission and Save the Illinois River, to get a numeric standard set for several years and this is a major victory! The battle is not over, however, since efforts are underway at the Legislature to introduce a resolution to disapprove the standard. Even if it goes into effect, Arkansas cities that oppose the standard are threatening litigation.

In the next couple of years, we can expect to see EPA also get involved with setting nutrient standards for other waters in the state. We will definitely have to keep educating the public that numeric nutrient standards are an important and necessary tool for protection of water quality in Oklahoma and for the cleanup of impaired waters. Volunteers are needed to attend meetings at the Water Board and develop specific areas of expertise about soil phosphorus indices, litter disposal/transport options, and attend related meetings with state/federal agencies.

The Club and allies have demonstrated there is great strength in diversity and broad-based opposition to the water



other coalition partners. (See Legislative Update for list.)

Volunteers have worked to draft legislation, produce flyers and fact sheets, get postcards signed and make presentations to educate the public on the anticipated harm associated with the dams and massive water withdrawals. The Water Board has planned these withdrawals for the Kiamichi, Little River, Mountain Fork and other important Southeastern Oklahoma streams.

We have been exceptionally busy this year with legislation to establish a moratorium on the water sale, and our success in this area has been due to all of you who have helped with phone calls and lobbying at the Capitol. In addition to getting legislation introduced to impose a moratorium and require that proper preliminary studies are done, we have seen even the Governor soften his tone and agree that perhaps preliminary studies wouldn't be such a bad idea. Keep up the good work on spreading the word about this issue.

This year we are seeing proof that people across the state feel strongly about our streams and water quality. Now we have a great window of opportunity to get the public and Club members involved in protecting some of the streams they feel are especially important, such as the Glover River. I hope some of you will want to help out with producing an educational film about water quality, fish and wildlife, recreation and other values associated with some of our better known streams. Whatever your talent may be, please don't hesitate to call – you can be involved as much or as little as you decide, but remember every little bit helps! Call Jeannine at 918-227-2790 or email her at Jeannine.Hale@att.net for more info.

2002 Legislative Update

(Continued from Page 1)

or letters to legislators is distributed on this listserv. To sign up for this important alert system, go to website: www.oklahoma.sierraclub.org, click the **Get Connected** button on upper right of home page, then click on **#2 - Oklahoma Alerts**. This is a members only listserv, so you will need your membership number to sign up. If this is too complicated for you, send me your complete name and e-mail address at: sshields@cox.net. I will check your membership number and submit your name to the list owner, Tom Libby.

This year's top priority has been two bills putting some restraints on out-of-state water sales. The Club has joined with a coalition of unlikely partners (Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Cattlemen's Association, Oklahoma Independent Petroleum Association, Oklahoma Wildlife Federation, Oklahoma Family Farm Alliance and Southeastern Oklahoma Water Alliance) in support of HB 2895 by Representatives Pope and Blackburn and HJR 1038 offered by Rep. Mike Mass. We appreciate the members of our Capitol Action Network in their constant birddogging efforts to keep these bills alive.



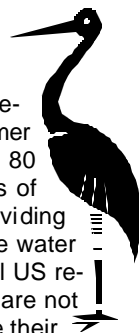
A big "thank you" to all of you who are already part of our Capitol Action Network. Without YOUR involvement, the Oklahoma Sierra Club will not succeed in our efforts to protect the environment. YOU can help us with this important effort by signing on to our electronic alert network.

Please don't wait . . . sign up now!!!

Cranes and Conservation (Continued from Page 1)

sky-darkening numbers and unearthly clamor, we lose ourselves, escaping into the roar that is bearing us away."

This amazing spectacle takes place in a context that is very unlikely. The Platte River is the old pathway for the Oregon Trail. Towns sprung up along the trail, developed into agricultural centers and are now evolving into rural-consumer communities dependent on the intensive transportation systems that weave through the roosting grounds. Interstate 80 parallels the Platte River only a mile or two north. The old agricultural economy supported the migrations with acres of waste grain left on the ground for the birds, who are frantically gaining weight for the long flight to the arctic, and by providing undeveloped land. However, the water needs of the upstream communities have had a negative impact, reducing the water flow of the Platte to 30% of its natural flow. This quandary is now complicated by the sprawl phenomena typical of all US regions as agricultural land that is developed into suburban residences and services. Although threatened, the cranes are not likely to be ignored in Nebraska. They have many advocates including those in the business community that appreciate their unique attraction to a relatively remote destination. However, they are a vivid reminder for us of the delicate nature of our coexistence with the ancient natural world. Nowhere is the contrast, and the stakes, more clearly illustrated than along the Platte River.



THE SECRET LIFE OF COFFEE

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality encouraged citizens to examine and rethink their consumption habits during the first Oklahoma Use Less Stuff Week held from April 18-24, 2002. This article examines the entire journey our morning coffee makes on its way to our cup." The following information is provided by John C. Ryan from his book, Stuff--The Secret Lives of Everyday Things (adapted to Oklahoma).

One cup of coffee takes 100 beans that grew in Columbia on a small mountain farm cleared of forest systems for cattle ranching and coffee and fruit trees. Pesticides were necessary due to the removal of birds and other insect eaters. The beans were picked by hand, the pulp was removed (2 pounds per pound of beans) and dumped into the Cauca River where it consumed oxygen needed by fish.

The beans were dried in the sun and shipped to New Orleans on a freighter made in Japan from Korean steel made from iron mined in Australia and fueled by Venezuelan oil. In New Orleans, the beans were roasted with oven burning natural gas from Texas—then packaged in four-layer bags made of polyethylene, nylon, aluminum foil and polyester. Finally, they were trucked to a warehouse in Oklahoma City or Tulsa and delivered by a smaller truck to your neighborhood grocery.

The beans were carried out in a sealed, wax-lined paper bag and a large brown paper sack made at unbleached kraft paper mills in Oregon. One gallon of gasoline was burned during the twenty-mile round trip to the market.

Before we could conjure up our brew, we needed a grinder. We measured beans into a disposable plastic scoop molded in New Jersey and spooned it into a grinder which was assembled in China from imported steel, aluminum, copper and plastic parts and powered by electricity generated at Ross Dam on the Skagit River in the Washington Cascades. We dumped the ground coffee into a gold-plated mesh filter made in Switzerland of German steel and Russian gold and put it into a plastic and steel drip coffeemaker

Oh, yes! We had to use water for our brew. Eight ounces of tap water from a processing plant was poured into a coffee pot. Originally the water came from Lake Atoka where it was pumped around 150 miles to Oklahoma City consumers. The pump was probably pow-

ered by a coal-fired electricity generating plant in Muskogee, with the coal transported to Oklahoma from Wyoming. An element heated the water to more than 200° F with power generated by an OG&E gas-fired power plant. The hot water seeped through the ground coffee and dissolved some of its oils and solids. The brew trickled into a glass carafe and was poured into a mug made in Taiwan. Later, we washed the mug using two more gallons of water.

If you used cream, you stirred in one ounce of it from a grain-fed dairy cow in Union City. The cow liked to wade into a stream and drink and graze on streamside grasses and willows, so the water got warmer and muddier, making life difficult for the sunfish and bass living in the stream. The two teaspoons of sugar you measured out came from cane fields (former sawgrass marshes) in Florida. Water that used to flow across these marshes and into the Everglades now drains into canals and is sent directly to the ocean or irrigates fields, where it picks up nutrients and pesticides. Populations of all vertebrates—from turtles to storks—have fallen 75 to 95 percent in Everglades National Park.

When examining the waste involved, we found that the cow's manure was rich in nitrogen and phosphorus. Since the soils of the cow pasture were unable to absorb all the manure, it washed up into the stream when it rained, fertilizing algae which absorbed oxygen from the water. Two hours later, your body metabolized the coffee and most of the water and nutrients were passed into the Oklahoma City sewer system where it was mixed with other organic and inorganic waste. They then traveled under the streets of the city to Oklahoma City's sewage treatment plant on the North Canadian River in Jones where the solids were filtered, concentrated, digested and sterilized with screens, settling tanks, bacteria and chlorine. An engineer deemed the sewage sludge clean enough for agriculture and a trucker hauled it to pulpwood tree farms for use as fertilizer and soil conditioner. A pipe carried the treated liquids a mile into the North Canadian River.

Coffee is the world's second largest legal export commodity (after oil) and is the second largest source of foreign exchange for developing nations. The United States drinks about one-fifth of the world's coffee. If you drink two cups a day, you'll down 24 gallons of java this

year, made from 18 pounds of beans. Colombian farms have 12 coffee trees growing to support your personal addiction. Farmers will apply 11 pounds of fertilizers and a few ounces of pesticides to the trees this year. And, Columbia's rivers will swell with 43 pounds of coffee pulp stripped from your beans.

Okay, you don't want to give up coffee--What can you do? Cut back on drinking coffee—it stains your teeth and makes you jumpy anyway. (And nobody likes coffee breath, either!) Buy shade coffee. Coffee grown under the shade of mixed trees requires few or no chemical inputs; the leaf litter replenishes soil nutrients and the variety of tree species benefits birds and discourages pest outbreaks. Many brands of shade coffee—often labeled as organic or cooperatively produced—are available.



MARCH WINDOW NEEDS YOU!!!

Last month you received a special letter from former Oklahoma Sierra Club Chair, Chris Corbett. That letter highlighted the chapter's environmental successes last year and our goals for this year.

Thanks to you we have been very successful in raising environmental awareness in Oklahoma and defending and advancing our cause at the state capitol. We can't let up now! Chris has asked for your continued financial support to follow up on our successes.

Please give generously.

It is mainly through the once a year fund appeal that we are able to be the potent voice for the environment that we have become. All of the money you send to this appeal stays right here in Oklahoma, primarily for the State Legislative Program. Please help us continue to be a strong voice for you and Oklahoma's environment.

—Charles Wesner
Fundraising Chair



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OKLAHOMA CHAPTER SUPPORTS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROJECTS

by Susie Shields, Environmental Education Chair

The Oklahoma Chapter does not have any stand-alone environmental education programs (except the ICO Outings, which is an "immersion" EE project). However, we are instrumental in the success of many projects by providing needed funding. The following projects are included.

ECO-MOTION. We are a sponsor of Eco-Motion, a mobile environmental education program which involves community volunteers in an all-day EE event for elementary students. Edison, the brightly painted bus carrying the program's operators, appears primarily in rural communities. Contact: Gina Lagaly, <Eco-Motion@worldnet.att.net>

ECO SUMMIT. In September 2001, the fourth annual ECO Summit for high school environmental clubs was held at Connors State College "Field of Dreams". The ECO Summit, a teaching campout, is hosted by the Oklahoma Association for Envi-



ronmental Education (OKAEE) and sponsored by the Sierra Club and OK County Conservation District.. <www.okaee.org>

EE EXPO-We are annually a sponsor of the Environmental Education Expo held in February. This event, primarily for teachers, is hosted by OKAEE.

EIS@I-40. We provided funding to a science teacher at Jackson Middle School in OKC to purchase equipment for her student project to monitor the environmental impacts of moving I-40 into their school district area. Contact: Jennifer Lynch: <sonicasonica@yahoo.com>

ENVIRONMENTOR. This is a newsletter primarily for teachers. It is mailed to 3500 educators statewide. We have been providing the bulk mail permit with postage and mailing service three times per year. Back issues can be found at: <www.okaee.org>. To be included on the mailing list, contact editor: <susie.shields@deq.state.ok.us>.



ENVIROTHON. We annually sponsor the statewide Envirothon, a competition for high school students on natural resources. Topics covered are: soils, forestry, aquatics, wildlife and a topic of the year. Claremore High School, the 2002 winner, will represent Oklahoma in the National Envirothon this summer.

GREENING YOUR SCHOOLYARD. Ten copies of this excellent resource book by Green Teacher Magazine were purchased and are available for loaning to teachers planning outdoor classrooms. Contact Susie Shields to borrow one: <shields@cox.net>.

OK SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK. We are a supporting sponsor of this fledgling group and are helping with the first conference to be held May 10, 2002. <www.oksustainability.org>

TRASH POSTER CONTEST. We annually sponsor the Keep This Land Grand poster contest for students in grades K-12. Sierra Club is printed on 38,000 posters and calendars sent to schools and libraries throughout the state.