



Serving the  
South Loup River Valley

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

(USPS 032480)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2016

VOLUME 99, NUMBER 30

# The Arnold Sentinel



A group of trumpeter swans feed on remnants of dryland corn in a field southeast of Arnold last week. The observance of these swans in the Arnold area is growing as they come from their nesting grounds in the Sandhills to overwinter on the South Loup River. (Sally Hilderbrant photo)

## Trumpeter Swan Population Growing in the Area

Eighty-nine trumpeter swans were counted feeding on remnants of dryland corn in a field southeast of Arnold last Wednesday, and according to Dave Hilderbrant, who did the count, there are more.

"We saw a banded swan earlier, and it wasn't in the flock that day," said Hilderbrant, whose wife Sally photographed the spectacular sight, as the swans fed and then went into flight.

Hilderbrant reported his count to Nebraska Game & Parks Conservation Officer Ray Dierking, who in turn reported to Mark Vrtiska, Waterfowl Program Manager.

"We just flew over Arnold on Monday (January 4), and didn't see a thing," said Vrtiska.

"We've been doing a project on swans putting GPS collars on to track them. Last year, one of the birds that we marked ended up on the South Loup. We always kind of thought they were there, and now it's back. We had no idea there were that many in that part of the world."

Vrtiska said that from the air, they are mainly looking at rivers, and if the swans are out feeding, they may not catch them.

"That's why we have people on the ground looking. It's not a major surprise, but it's good to know they are using that part of the river or world," he said.

The trumpeter swan is the heaviest living bird native to North America, and it is also

the largest extant species of waterfowl with a wingspan that may exceed 10 feet. It is also the heaviest bird or animal capable of flight. It's presence in a region is a good indicator of water or wetland quality.

Vrtiska explained that all of the swans nest in Nebraska in the Sandhills. They nest on Sandhills lakes and marshes, raise up their cygnets, and move around locally. When the lakes and marshes freeze up in the winter, the swans go to the wintering areas. Concentrations of swans are found on several rivers, including the Loup, Dismal, Calamus, Snake, Niobrara and North Platte. All of these systems are mostly spring fed, so they stay open. In the spring and summer, the swans

go back to the Sandhills to nest.

"They are coming from the Sandhills straight north of Arnold is what we're guessing," said Vrtiska. "The banded one came from Arthur County."

The mid-winter waterfowl survey began last week to monitor the population status of different species of birds in the state. Vrtiska said from what they can see from past counts, the swan population is slowly growing.

"Swans are one of those species that are an indicator of water or wetland quality," said Vrtiska. "You won't see them using poor or degraded wetlands. They need aquatic vegetation to feed on."

The trumpeter mates for life and lays two to seven eggs. The most Vrtiska has seen with one pair is five. The young are grayish in color, and at maturity turn white. In the wild, the swans have lived to at least 24 years. The young may have as little as 40 percent of survival due to various disturbances.

"We have one (that was banded) that left the state, which was interesting, but most generally they are year-round residents of Nebraska," said Vrtiska. "From our interactions with ranchers and landowners - down to the last person - they value and really like their swans. In terms of a value of just being able to observe them, it's really high."

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the trumpeter swan was hunted heavily, for game or meat, for the soft swanskins used in powder puffs and for their quills and feathers. By 1933, fewer than 70 wild trumpeters were known to exist and extinction seemed imminent until surprising news came from a 1950s aerial survey of Alaska's Copper River where several thousand trumpeters were discovered. Careful reintroductions into the swan's historical range by wildlife agencies and the Trumpeter Swan Society gradually restored the North American wild population to over 46,000 birds by 2010.

## Rare Earthquake Felt in Arnold

Vicky Gracey said it felt like a truck had hit her house in the north part of Arnold last Monday at 10:04 a.m.

"The windows were shaking and the dishes were rattling in the hutch!" she said.

Just a few miles west of town, one resident said her hanging plants started swinging back and forth.

Residents had several stories to tell, including hearing loud rumblings and popping noises in buildings, after feeling the affects of a 3.5-magnitude earthquake that was felt across Custer County and as far away as Grand Island.

The small earthquake caused no damage to structures, and is a mystery to geologists who cannot locate faults in the county.

## 2015 Baby Pics Needed for Feature

Calling all babies! *The Sentinel's* annual "Babies" feature will be appearing soon. The feature is open to any baby born in 2015. Photos and information, including baby's name, date of birth, parents and grandparents, may be submitted directly to *The Sentinel* office, mailed to PO Box 136, Arnold NE 69120, or e-mailed to: [arnoldsentinel@gpcom.net](mailto:arnoldsentinel@gpcom.net).

A large number of babies were born in the school district in 2015, and *The Sentinel* is hoping that everyone will help spread the word to new parents about the feature. Deadline to submit has been moved to Wednesday, January 20.

## Letters Sought for Alumni News New Directory will be Published

The Arnold Alumni Association is making preparations for the 2016 reunion, with board members Chelsea Knight Hershey, Betty Halstead Yeargain, Kenneth and Patty Purcell Goodenow, Dru Smith Magill, Debbie Bean Brosius, April Mills Tickle, Darlene Hagler Rimpley, Josh Magill and Gary and Merri Jo Rosentrater Halstead planning the banquet and program.

*The Alumni News* will be mailed out prior to the reunion, and letters from alumni - especially those from honored class members - are welcome to be submitted up to March 15.

"The amount of letters submitted each year keeps dwindling - most likely because people keep up through social media now," said Janet Larreau, *Alumni News* editor. "Letters are traditionally a big part of the paper and keep it interesting. The number of letters also determine the size of the paper, which we don't want to see grow smaller."

Letters may be mailed to Alumni Secretary Patty Goodenow at PO Box 21, Arnold NE 69120, or e-mailed to *The Arnold Sentinel* at [arnoldsentinel@gpcom.net](mailto:arnoldsentinel@gpcom.net) with the subject line Alumni Letter. Honored class members, who are organizing their reunion, are asked to request letters from their classmates to submit for the paper.

A new Alumni Directory will be published in early 2017. Although that seems like a long time, the work on it has begun. Addresses must be updated and confirmed, *The Sentinel* will begin the first setting during the summer, proofreading will be done during early fall, and corrections will be made. The directory will go to press in January 2017.

Help is needed! Someone from each class needs to update that classes' addresses. If you can help or have new addresses for any graduate, please call Darlene Rimpley at 848-2527.

## Superintendent Completes Academic Journey

Arnold Public School's first female superintendent should appropriately be called "Doctor" now, but she is certain it will take time for everyone to adjust to the change.

Dawn Lewis earned her new title in December of 2015, when she received a Doctor of Education degree from the Graduate Studies program at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. She was recognized on stage in a Hooding Ceremony that welcomed her into the fold of those who have already earned the degree. "Hooding" her were her advisor and other professors who played a role in her journey to degree completion.

The long "journey" required juggling husband Clint, and four kids, Sully (18), Stella (12), Stokely (9) and Sofie (7), and her duties as then-principal of APS.

"I had a lot of support from home," she said. "The kids got used to me having homework all of the time, and it seems like everything I completed assignments for fit perfectly into my professional practice, so it never really seemed like work, but more like research for the job."

The final push came this summer and fall, as she was busy writing and re-writing her dissertation to finish in time to graduate in December.

"This was a priority of mine, since both my advisor and my son will graduate in May, and I really felt the need to finish up and be able to focus on other things in the spring," she said.

Dr. Lewis received a Master's Degree from Dakota Wesleyan University in 2008 and her Ed. Specialist degree from Wayne State College in 2010, finishing just prior to beginning her first role as principal at Arnold. Those degrees allowed her to become certified to be a principal and superintendent.

She began working on her doctorate at UNL after applying

for acceptance in the Fall of 2011. Her first course began in the Spring of 2012.

The university analyzed her transcripts from prior degrees and determined a program of studies that included 54 credit hours of course work and dissertation. The final 18 months of the degree was spent in "candidacy," which means that the course work is nearly all finished, the student has passed a series of comprehensive exams, and all that is left to complete is the dissertation.

The dissertation is a comprehensive study that either builds upon prior research or introduces a new study, and has many components, including a Proposal, a review of the existing literature in the field, which can be supported by the study and help convince the student's doctoral committee of professors that the study is of value.

A doctoral committee consists of four university professors, all with doctorates themselves, who agree to approve the student's study, guide them through the process and determine whether the student's finished project is worthy of the completed degree.

She began her dissertation work by taking a course to learn the process, and then taking credit hours to produce her proposal, obtain approval and complete her study. Her project was approved last December 2014, which gave her the nod to go ahead with her research. She wrote mainly legislative history of the laws that shape the School Employees Retirement Systems in Nebraska, including that for Class V schools.

Dr. Lewis said when she began her doctorate, she was asked to declare her intent. There were two choices: The PhD in Education vs. the Ed.D (Doctor of Education).

"The two vary mainly in the application of the course



Dawn Lewis (center) walks with other graduates at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's commencement held in December. The shared superintendent of Arnold and Callaway schools received her Doctorate degree that day and was "Hooded." (Courtesy photo)

work," she said. "The Ed.D degree is more aligned with the needs and the research that a practitioner or a practicing superintendent might need, and the PhD in Education is more dedicated to the needs of those who see themselves in the future role that requires immersion in research, such as that of a university professor. For obvious reasons, I chose the Ed.D."

Dr. Lewis utilized UNL's distance program, but traveled to Lincoln about twice a year to participate in courses or seminars, and to meet with her advisor face-to-face.

"This was important to me to have an actual relationship with her, so when I really needed her assistance, she could recall important information that we had discussed in person," she said. "I also took the opportunity to visit with her at many of our administrative meetings and functions."

She said it has always been her goal to eventually earn a doctorate, but only for the past five years. Up to that point, she had not really considered it as a reasonable goal, since there aren't many online programs,

and traveling to achieve the degree was out of the question with her work and family.

"UNL made it possible, and I appreciate the many people that developed their distance program to make this dream reality," she said.

Now that it's all over, Dr. Lewis, who serves as superintendent of both Arnold and Callaway schools, said she feels relieved, relaxed and able to focus her attention where it is needed elsewhere without the division of administrator and student at the same time. But this self-described "academic geek" - who is believed to be the first Arnold superintendent of either gender to hold a doctorate - is having some mixed emotions.

"It also feels strange to know that it is the end of the road for my education," she said. "I like all aspects of school, and academics are high on my list of priorities; my own and my kids, and all of the kids in our schools. However, we know life is the real education and that never ends!"