



 Audubon NEBRASKA

2017 Annual Report

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Why Audubon Nebraska?

Audubon is working in Nebraska and around the world because we care about the future of this beautiful world, the animals, and the people that live in it. Everyone's lives will be diminished if we lose our wild places and creatures. Many birds are in serious trouble; rivers and streams need care. Grasslands of the Great Plains are a remnant of what they once were. Animals that rely on grasslands need caring stewards. Audubon engages people with personal experiences in nature to promote a love of our natural world that translates into hope.

You are what hope looks like to the wild places and all the creatures in them.

Mission Statements

The mission of **Audubon Nebraska** is to conserve and restore our state's natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

The mission of **Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary** is to conserve and restore the Platte River ecosystem, focusing on cranes, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

The mission of **Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center** is to conserve and restore the tallgrass prairie ecosystem including birds, other wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

A Hero's Tribute

Marian was a great friend, a tremendous leader, and an amazing conservationist. She was a respected leader for conservation in Nebraska for over 17 years. She was highly regarded by all of her colleagues in Audubon throughout the country, and in the conservation community in Nebraska and beyond.

Marian's legacy at Audubon will live on far into the future. Beginning her career as the state education director, her passion for education and conservation led her to move Audubon Nebraska's education programs to engage people in a personal way with nature. These individual experiences create connections to our natural world and create a will to take action to protect it. Her vision and leadership created the conservation education direction that Audubon continues to follow in Nebraska with great success. Through these efforts thousands of children have learned about tallgrass prairie, wetlands, the Platte River, all the birds and other animals that depend on them, and much more.

Marian continued her Audubon journey by taking on the role of director of the newly formed Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. As director, she led the efforts to build the visitor center as a destination for people to connect to nature and our disappearing tallgrass prairie. Her guidance and passion

has created a celebrated destination in southeast Nebraska and enabled Audubon to protect, restore, and expand the tallgrass prairie habitat near Lincoln and throughout eastern Nebraska.

Marian's final position with Audubon was as executive director of Audubon Nebraska. Her skills and leadership moved this organization to have increased impact both locally and nationally. Her tireless work on conservation issues related to energy, water, grassland protection, and more have ensured that the protection of our natural treasures are supported far into the future. Beyond our state borders, Marian provided leadership and guidance to Audubon's hemispheric approach to protect birds across their migration routes in the Central Flyway.

Marian had a love for learning and was skilled at bringing people together around a common vision. She shaped the Audubon program in Nebraska into the model it is today. The staff, volunteers, supporters, and members of Audubon will forever be grateful for her impact.

Memorials that were designated to a fund in tribute of Marian's vision for Audubon Nebraska will be used for internships in education and conservation as well as advancing staff knowledge in these programs.



Message from our State Chair

Greetings to Audubon members and friends of Audubon.



Photo credit: Valerie Cuppens

As Nebraskans, we are so fortunate to be in our nation's Central Flyway and experience the great diversity of bird life that travels through our state on their seasonal migrations. It has long been one of Audubon's goals that more people have an opportunity to experience wildlife events and not segregate areas for wildlife apart from us. To achieve this goal, Audubon has built two education centers in Nebraska, Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon and Spring Creek Prairie south of Denton, as doorways to such experiences. Each Nebraska center provides a different "voice" that echoes "Nebraska". Rowe as the voice of the Platte River system, its waters, and wildlife. And the prairie voice of Spring Creek Prairie with its waving grasses and wind-swept rolling terrain.

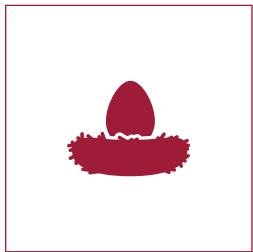
Taking part in Audubon experiences in Nebraska can provide the "Awe" moments in March and April of Sandhill Cranes lifting off the Platte River in an explosion of wings as an eagle makes an early morning flight.

Or the "History" moment in a fall walk through the towering bluestem following the Oregon Trail Cutoff wagon ruts at Spring Creek Prairie. It's all about connecting to the natural world and discovering, or perhaps rediscovering, the habitat and many bird species that call Nebraska their home. Whether your preference is the glory of a crane landing in a fire red sunset on the Platte or a Meadowlark song welcoming you to the prairie, no one should miss these experiences. At Audubon Nebraska, we welcome you and please bring family and friends.

Additionally, 2018 is the "Year of The Bird" so it just seems right to connect to the birds of Nebraska through hearing their songs and seeing them at our centers. Come join us and celebrate our Nebraska bird heritage and help us sustain it as a legacy that we can leave to the next generation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard J. Vierk".

Rich Vierk
State Advisory Board Chair
Audubon Nebraska

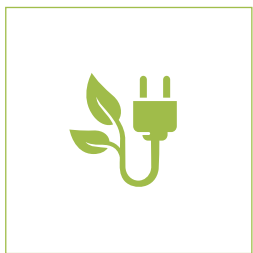


Conservation Strategies

At Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, we use science to inform our actions in order to achieve our conservation mission. The integration of annual breeding bird surveys is a prime example of a project that takes into consideration what the birds tell us, in order to modify our conservation actions. This adaptive management approach ensures that our management plans create the desired benefit for the wildlife that depend on our habitats.



Thousands of elementary-age schoolchildren visit Audubon Nebraska's two centers each year. Students explore and research the prairie plants & wildlife to become connected to nature.



Climate Change

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center and Rowe Sanctuary continue their community-based science projects.

Staff and volunteers monitor monarch butterfly populations by measuring milkweed plant densities and recording numbers of monarch eggs, caterpillars, and adults. The more we know about these incredible insects, the more we can help them on their migratory path.

Data is also collected during summer breeding bird surveys and winter

participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count. These numbers give us a snapshot of bird use and help us evaluate the effectiveness of management activities in our respective landscapes. They also feed into larger, national databases where they can be used to analyze the effects of climate change on species abundance and range distributions. More information about National Audubon's climate work is at audubon.org/conservation/climate-initiative.



Scientists, staff, and volunteers survey fish populations the year following the release of Plains Topminnows at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary.



Audubon has been protecting the Platte River for cranes, wildlife, and people for over 47 years.



Water

In 2016, Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary was awarded a total of \$133,761 from the Environmental Protection Agency and Nebraska Environmental Trust to create an educational wetland at the new Kearney Senior High School. Planning began immediately for the construction of the wetland and engaged 70 high school students as part of a wetland ambassador volunteer group.

On Earth Day 2017, Rowe Sanctuary collaborated on a BioBlitz at the future site of the wetland. Over 43 students and community members attended and helped identify the existing species already at the wetland. Habitat management skills workshops have been hosted at Rowe Sanctuary to introduce students to invasive plant control methods such as chopping thistles and cutting trees.



Haying and grazing are important management tools for prairie diversity and also provide income for our conservation programs.



Working Lands

Both Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center are living ecosystems, sustaining a wide variety of life, not just birds but also mammals, insects, and plants. Audubon Nebraska champions the use of prescribed fire to the benefit of native grasslands from the local level. Both sanctuaries have successfully implemented

prescribed fire on their respective properties and in the neighboring landscape. Spring Creek Prairie works with nearby private landowners, while Rowe Sanctuary works in cooperation with non-profit partners on the Platte River.

Through a partnership with Pheasants Forever, Rowe Sanctuary provides annual prescribed burn training for staff, volunteers, and interested private landowners. Ed Hubbs, habitat program manager at Spring Creek Prairie, participates on the Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council and serves as president of the Tri-County Prescribed Burn Association. Spring Creek Prairie burned 90 acres in spring 2017, incorporating it into the habitat and grazing management. Rowe Sanctuary burned approximately 55 acres.



Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center host a wide variety of community outreach events every year. This past year we welcomed visitors to both centers for bird walks, poetry readings, book signings, firefly picnics, and holiday open houses. The exciting total solar eclipse brought people from around the world to both centers to view this extraordinary event. From guided nature walks to citizen science projects, there are opportunities for everyone to enjoy a personal experience with nature.



Bird-Friendly Communities

We are proud to host one of the longest-running wildlife celebrations in the nation, Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival. Kearney provides a central location for attendees from across the country to interact with a wide range of environmental speakers, take part in incredible

birding trips, and, best of all, experience the world's largest gathering of Sandhill Cranes. National and local speakers present on a variety of wildlife and conservation topics.

The sold out 2017 Festival featured keynote speaker Jane Alexander, Tony award-winning actress and author of "Wild Things, Wild Places"; Iliana Pena, Director of Conservation from Audubon Texas; and Matt Anderson, Audubon's Vice President of Climate Change.

Dates are set for next year, March 21-24, 2019. Details at nebraskacranefestival.org.



In addition to celebrating its 21st year of summer camps, Rowe Sanctuary collaborated with Girls Inc. and Native Futures, introducing three girls and three boys to conservation management. At Rowe, students controlled invasive plant species, monitored grassland bird numbers, and took part in day-to-day nature center duties.

In addition to Rowe, the groups visited conservation sites owned by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Arbor Day Foundation, Abbott Family Ranch, Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, and the University of Nebraska.



Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center collaborated with the Community Learning Centers in Lincoln to host seven weeks of summer camps. For many of the 150 youth in these programs, this was their first experience connecting with nature.

The fall Prairie Immersion program engaged 1,200 fourth graders from Lincoln Public Schools in learning about eastern Nebraska's native landscape, the tallgrass prairie. The center developed new partnerships, including the Let's Go Birding Together project that tapped into Lincoln's LGBT community, and expanded work with existing partners such as Pioneers Park Nature Center, Xerces Society, Lower Platte South NRD, and the Lincoln Earth Day coalition.

In Our Communities



The valuable conservation work completed at Rowe Sanctuary and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center would not be possible without our dedicated volunteer corps. In 2016-2017, individuals provided 12,530 hours to support our conservation and education staff.

In addition to regular volunteers, four students aged 12-21 helped Spring Creek Prairie staff with habitat management through the summer. Rowe Sanctuary partnered with volunteers from Integrated Life Choices, an organization that works with Individuals with disabilities. These volunteers visited Rowe weekly and completed a variety of outdoor and indoor tasks.

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We would also like to thank all of our donors, at every level, for their support. We are fortunate to say, there simply are too many of you to list here!

We sincerely apologize if your name doesn't appear on this list and should. Please contact our office so we can correct our records.

Audubon Nebraska Financials

Revenues, Gains, and Other Support

Gifts, Grants, Bequests	\$ 943,795
Investment Income	267,591
Earned Income and Other Revenue.	386,763

Total Revenues, Gains, and Other Support . . \$ 1,598,149

Expenses

Education and Community Outreach	\$ 735,149
Habitat Management.	703,186
Advocacy	159,814

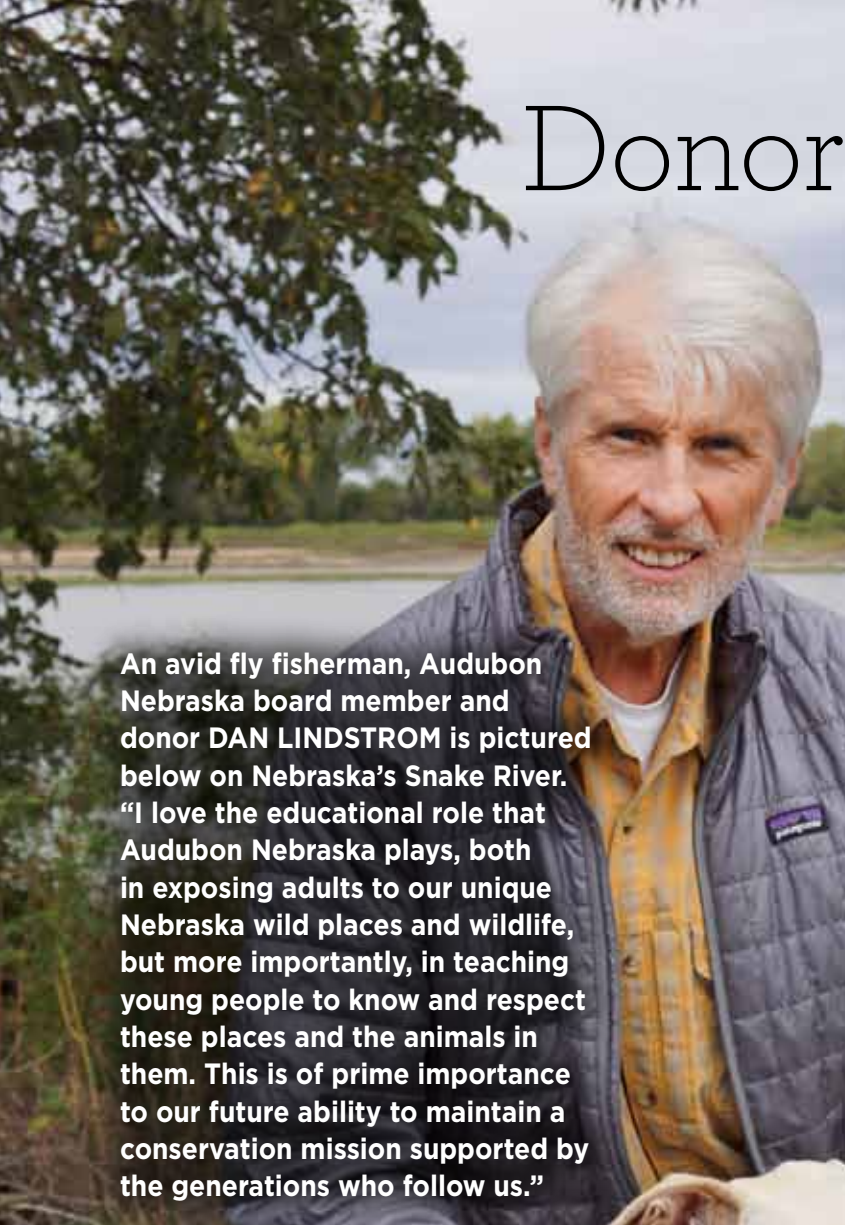
Total Expenses \$ 1,598,149



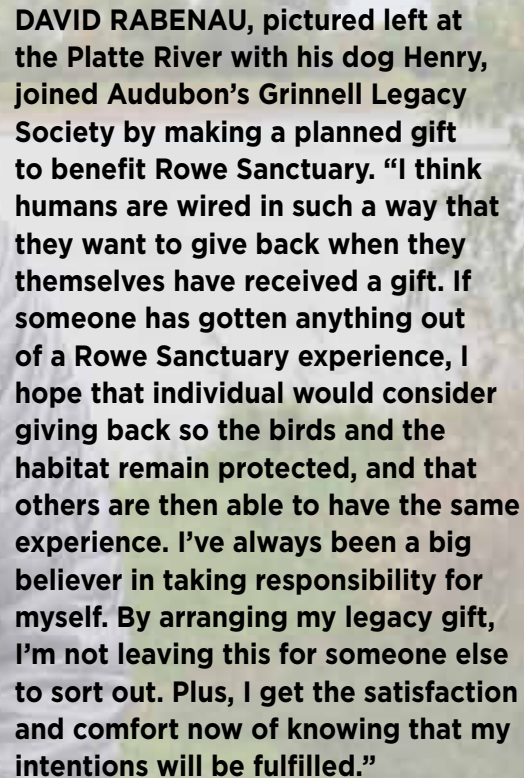
To support a cause that has been important in your life, please consider a gift to Audubon Nebraska, Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary, or Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. You can honor a family member by making a tribute gift in your will or other estate plans. The Grinnell Legacy Society honors our members and friends who have generously included Audubon in their estate plans. If you would like to learn how you can leave a legacy, or if you have already included Audubon in your plans, please contact us (information on page 15).



Donor Stories



An avid fly fisherman, Audubon Nebraska board member and donor **DAN LINDSTROM** is pictured below on Nebraska's Snake River. "I love the educational role that Audubon Nebraska plays, both in exposing adults to our unique Nebraska wild places and wildlife, but more importantly, in teaching young people to know and respect these places and the animals in them. This is of prime importance to our future ability to maintain a conservation mission supported by the generations who follow us."



DAVID RABENAU, pictured left at the Platte River with his dog Henry, joined Audubon's Grinnell Legacy Society by making a planned gift to benefit Rowe Sanctuary. "I think humans are wired in such a way that they want to give back when they themselves have received a gift. If someone has gotten anything out of a Rowe Sanctuary experience, I hope that individual would consider giving back so the birds and the habitat remain protected, and that others are then able to have the same experience. I've always been a big believer in taking responsibility for myself. By arranging my legacy gift, I'm not leaving this for someone else to sort out. Plus, I get the satisfaction and comfort now of knowing that my intentions will be fulfilled."



MATT AND LORI ASHMORE, owners of Eagle Printing and Sign in Lincoln, are business sponsors of Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. "We both have a deep appreciation for experiencing and preserving wild places like Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, and we want to share that passion with our daughters. Spring Creek Prairie is uniquely important for giving people the opportunity to experience a native tallgrass prairie and understand our natural history. Audubon provides us a great opportunity to support something we are passionate about, and we do so proudly."

Audubon Directory



National Audubon Society

225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
212-979-3000
www.audubon.org



11700 SW 100 Street
Denton, NE 68339
402-797-2301
ne.audubon.org



44450 Elm Island Road
Gibbon, NE 68840
308-468-5282
rowe.audubon.org



11700 SW 100 Street
PO Box 117
Denton, NE 68339
402-797-2301
springcreekprairie.audubon.org

Audubon Society of Omaha

PO Box 3542
Omaha, NE 68103
402-445-4138
Nebraska Bird Line 402-721-5487
audubon-omaha.org

Big Bend Audubon Society

PO Box 1575
Kearney, NE 68848
www.audubon.org/chapters/big-bend-audubon-society

Wachiska Audubon Society

4547 Calvert Street, Suite 10
Lincoln, NE 68506
402-486-4846
office@wachiskaaudubon.org
www.wachiskaaudubon.org

Wildcat Audubon Society

170188 Spring Creek Road
Mitchell, NE 69357
www.wyoneb.net/-delara/WildcatAudubon





Audubon Nebraska is a proud member of Community Services Fund, an organization of nonprofit agencies improving the quality of life throughout Nebraska by preserving resources, expanding knowledge, encouraging creativity, and protecting rights. Look for Community Services Fund in your next worksite giving campaign to designate your donation to Audubon Nebraska. Donations may also be designated for Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary or Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center by contacting nebraska@audubon.org. For more information about Community Services Fund and worksite giving, visit www.CommunityServicesFund.org.



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Who is Audubon Nebraska?

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Cody Wagner, *Habitat and Outreach Program Assistant*
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Ed Hubbs, *Habitat Program Manager*
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