



The Prairie Sage

SPRING 2018

Year of the Bird!

Jason "the Birdnerd" St. Sauver, Community Education Director

2018 may be the Year of the Dog on the Chinese calendar, but as far as the National Audubon Society and our partners National Geographic, BirdLife International, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology are concerned, it is the YEAR OF THE BIRD! This year marks the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the most powerful and important bird-protection law ever passed.

Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts proclaimed 2018 Year of the Bird statewide. In honor of this milestone, nature lovers around Nebraska, and the world, are joining forces to celebrate the Year of the Bird and commit to protecting birds today and for the next hundred years.

To join in the fun, start off by visiting birdyourworld.org and taking the pledge to do at least one thing for birds each month of 2018, from participating in bird counts and bird celebrations, to planting native plants for birds, taking a child birding, or reducing the amount of plastic you use. Each month of the year has a call to action that is easy, fun, and an important way to help us help birds all year long.

So get ready, #BirdYourWorld, and enjoy 2018 as the YEAR OF THE BIRD!

Year of the Bird — Calls to Action!

June

Skip the Plastic. Say "no" to plastic bags, straws, and water bottles, and commit to recycling your household plastics.

July

Take a Child to Nature. Introduce a child to nature and build their love for wild animals and landscapes. A single encounter with a bird can spark a lifelong passion.

August

Discover Your Parks. Find a local place to observe birds by exploring recreational trails, city parks, state parks, national parks, wildlife refuges, forests, and other sanctuaries. Help protect these havens for people and birds.

September

Help birds on Their Journey. Turn off lights at night and make your windows bird-friendly.



Letter from the Director

Glynnis Collins

Each spring in *The Prairie Sage*, we list our past year's donors as a way to recognize and publicly thank those of you who have provided essential financial support to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. We raise all of our operating funds locally, and therefore we couldn't exist without the support of these donors who provide the majority of our revenue each year.

It takes so many generous people to keep the prairie healthy and thriving. Those who provide financial gifts are supporting the salaries of our professional staff, allowing us to pay property taxes, and helping us purchase equipment and supplies. All these pieces come together to protect this special place and our peerless educational programs that connect people with nature.

To those donors whose names are listed on pages 4-5, I thank you again!

If you haven't made a financial contribution to Spring Creek Prairie, or haven't in a while, I hope what you see in these



pages may inspire you to do so in 2018. Audubon's Year of the Bird (see cover page) is providing opportunities throughout the year for people to connect with birds and take concrete actions to help them each month. We partner with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on the Regional Conservation Partnership Project to further conservation beyond our 850 acres. The program helps landowners throughout our region improve habitat on private lands (see page 6). Varied programs listed on page 8 and on our website provide opportunities for friends as well as new audiences to visit the prairie and connect or re-connect with nature.

Finally, I urge you to check out the inspiring ode on page 7 from Teagan D., written during last year's Words for Birds poetry-writing workshop. Written about the younger program participants who broke off from the adult group to work with their own leader, to me Teagan's poem captures so much of what is inspiring about our work here all year long.

With warm regards,

Glynnis Collins
Center Director



**Official 2018
Nebraska Passport Stop**

Prairie Again Featured in Tourism Promotion

Spring Creek Prairie is once again proud to be named one of the stops on the 2018 Nebraska Passport tour, and we look forward to welcoming the passport travelers. Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary is also a stop this year.

The purpose of the Nebraska Passport Program is to help travelers discover Nebraska's hidden gems, offering a wide variety of travel adventure stops, including museums, parks, restaurants, wineries, retail stores, and more. The program runs from May 1 to September 30. There is no fee to participate, and no purchase necessary to receive Passport stamps at the Passport stops.

Discover more at <http://nebraskapassport.com/>!



Sue Kirkpatrick (far right) and Adrian Olivera (next to Sue), SCPAC board members, help conduct a prescribed burn in late March.



*One of the exciting birding discoveries this spring was the presence of several Soras in our upper pond. These wetland waders are common migrants, but some have stayed through mid-May, which means they may nest among the reeds and cattails.
(Photo by Roberta Blair)*



Spring Creek Prairie is a proud sponsor of "BirdNote," a two-minute radio show that combines rich sounds with engaging stories to illustrate the amazing lives of birds and give listeners a momentary respite from the news of the day.

The show's mission: Birds connect us with the joy and wonder of nature. By telling vivid, sound-rich stories about birds and the challenges they face, BirdNote inspires listeners to care about the natural world – and take steps to protect it.

Listen to it each weekday morning at 9:00 am CST on NET radio or on-line anytime.

Free Third Tuesday Bird Walks

Spring bird migration is always one of the most exciting times of the year! Get in on the fun on one of our free guided bird walks, held every third Tuesday, April through October, from 8:00 to 10:00 am.

Join an experienced birder and lots of friends to find all sorts of species. Binoculars and field guides will be available.



11TH ANNUAL

Tastes

IN THE

Tallgrass

Save
Sunday, September 16, 2018
 4:00 to 7:00 P.M.
 Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
 Denton, Nebraska

**Funding hope for birds,
 wildlife and future generations.**

2017 DONORS - THANK YOU!

TALLGRASS PRAIRIE SOCIETY

The Tallgrass Prairie Society is a group of individual contributors whose generous annual support of \$500 or more honors our natural and cultural prairie history. We are grateful for their vision and their gifts. This generous support ensures the legacy of the tallgrass prairie will live on for future generations.

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If You Want More Wildlife, Habitat Management is the Key!

By Eric Zach, Ag Program Manager, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Has your grassland or pasture become a stagnant monoculture of smooth brome? Do you notice fewer songbirds, pheasants, or bobwhite quail? Maybe eastern red-cedar has invaded and robbed you of income. You're in luck, there is a program that can help you!



The Grassland Bird Initiative is a partnership between Audubon Nebraska, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Pheasants Forever providing cost share of up to 75 percent for habitat improvements. Through this initiative, project partners provide financial and technical assistance to landowners to improve habitat for grassland birds such as Northern Bobwhite and Greater Prairie-Chicken. Eligible lands include cropland, rangeland, pastureland, and odd areas.

Grasslands require regular management in order to maintain a diversity of plant and animal species. Bill Glenn, a landowner in Jefferson County, is utilizing the program to install fence for a rotational grazing system and to implement prescribed burning. Bill says, "This program was good for helping me get fire on the ground and a good program to help promote habitat."

The opportunities to help improve or create new grasslands are nearly endless. The Grassland Bird Initiative is administered through an Environmental Quality Incentives Program contract through NRCS. This initiative uses a threshold ranking system, which means successful landowners can get approval quickly and begin work in a timely manner.

Landowners in the following counties are eligible: Franklin, Furnas, Gage, Harlan, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Nuckolls, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Saline, Thayer, and Webster.

The initiative includes numerous practices to help landowners with their unique situations. Here are a few management practices:

Prescribed Fire - use prescribed fire to remove unwanted eastern red-cedar and increase diversity.

Tree Removal - mechanical removal of trees is a great way to renovate a grassland especially when followed up by prescribed fire.

Cropland Conversion - converting areas that are hard to farm adds habitat to the landscape.

Grazing Infrastructure - well-thought-out fencing and watering systems can improve both your bottom line and wildlife habitat.

Pollinator Plantings - high-diverse grassland plantings that include species flowering throughout the growing season are essential pollinator habitat.

Let us help you clear those unwanted trees, plant pollinator habitat, and in general attract more wildlife to your property. Those interested should contact a local NRCS office or Ed Hubbs at Spring Creek Prairie, (402) 797-2301. Don't delay, funding is limited!



Jason's Birdnerd Big Day

As part of the Year of the Bird (see page 1), Jason spent all of May 5 searching for every bird species he could find in the Lincoln area. He finished with a spectacular 130 species! Some of the more uncommon birds found were a Common Loon, Summer Tanager, Henslow's Sparrow, and a White-faced Ibis.

Jason raised over \$600 from friends and colleagues who donated money for each species seen to his education supply fund. Thanks to all! And it's not too late to add to his total. Go on-line at our website and donate, or send us a check, signifying Jason's Big Day in the memo line. Thanks for your help in providing quality education materials.

An Open-Letter-Ode to the Children on the Hill Writing Poems

Dear Children,
Dear Hill,
Dear Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
Dear Poets
of the Prairie,

I am writing to tell you
how important you are.

Dear children poets, fresh eyes, spring
green hearts penning words on spring
green grass,
Once the pioneers cultivated tallgrass
prairie into rowcrop corn
now your generation's pioneers cultivate
tallgrass prairie into
sweetcrop verse.

Dear Hill, Prairie Bird, Pond Duck, Winter Grass,
Please come alive for the poet children.
Sing to them,
lend them words for the plucking
draw them in, tell them secrets,
lend your muse.

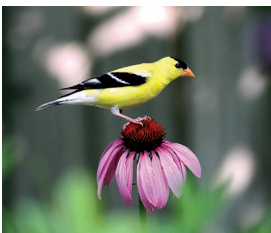
Dear Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center,
Thank you
for lending to me
childpoet eyes
for an afternoon,
for hosting the prairie
setting a stage
for her verse.

Wind blowing hair, shirt, grass past my vision: verse one.
Wind coming down the hill from the direction
of the young poets: verse two.
Wind pushing through cracked car windows sailing
me home over a sea of Nebraska prairie: verse three.
Wind gusting birdsong into my dreams tonight: verse four.

Dear Fellow Poets (who were
also once children and
for today at least
are again with
the prairiehost as mother),
Carry with you
back to New York, to Alabama
to stormy Beatrice
the knowledge that you
once served as audience
to the quiet noise
of the prairie.
Let her visit you again
and hold her
like a child
on a hill.

Teagan D, written during 2017 Words for Birds

Plants for Birds



American Goldfinch
Photo by Will Stuart

National Audubon Society's Plants for Birds initiative continues as a priority in 2018, and here at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center we are lucky to collaborate with Nebraska Wesleyan and Sarah Young, a communications studies student at NWU.

Sarah is finishing her final credits for her major by helping us with an outreach project about Audubon's Plants for Birds database. She is working with local garden centers and nurseries, as well as contacting area schools about programming in their gardens and schoolyard habitats.

The project is providing the schools and nurseries with outreach materials for their staff and customers to learn more about planting native trees, shrubs, and other plants that benefit birds and pollinators. Also, Audubon staff are able to provide presentations and consultations on keeping southeast Nebraska filled with bird-friendly communities.

There is lots more information at the National Audubon society website:

<http://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>.

Upcoming Events at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Monday, June 18

Tuesday, June 19

Wednesday, June 20

Saturday, June 23

Saturday, June 30

Tuesday, July 17

Saturday, July 28

Tuesday, August 21

POLLINATOR WEEK: Starting Your Native Garden, 7 pm *

Third Tuesday Bird Walk, 8 – 10 am

POLLINATOR WEEK: Bugs & Brews, 6:30 pm *

Firefly Family Picnic, 7:30 – 9:30 pm *

Firefly Family Picnic, 7:30 – 9:30 pm *

Third Tuesday Bird Walk, 8 – 10 am

Paws on the Prairie, 10 am – 12 noon

Third Tuesday Bird Walk, 8 – 10 am

For additional information and events, visit springcreekprairie.audubon.org

** Program fee*

Trails - *Open daily sunrise to sunset*

Visitor Center

Open Monday – Friday 9 – 5

Saturday – Sunday 1 – 5

All year (except major holidays)

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center Staff

Glynnis Collins - Director

Jason "the Birdnerd" St. Sauver - Community Education Director

Kevin Poague - Operations Manager

Ed Hubbs - Habitat Program Manager

Brad Anderson - Development Coordinator

Andrea Bornemeier - Educator

Amy Plettner - Caretaker

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SCPAC Supporters (\$50+)

FREE

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\$4

Seniors (60+)

\$3

Students

\$3

Ages 6 – 17

\$3

Ages 5 & Under

FREE

Tuesdays

FREE

Members of National Audubon Society and Wachiska Audubon Society receive \$1 off admission.

Wish List

In the giving spirit? Review the list below of items to make your favorite prairie even better.

Youth binoculars - 10x25

19-inch Panama-style drip torch

Hardhat with hearing protection

Hedge clippers (2 or more)

Pick and tweezer set

Circular saw

Tow rope (2)

Water tank for cattle

Boot cleaner station (please call for requested model)

Buckets of various sizes

CONTACT US:

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To receive The Prairie Sage electronically, let us know at scp@audubon.org; (402) 797-2301.

PHONE: (402) 797-2301

EMAIL: scp@audubon.org

WEBSITE: springcreekprairie.audubon.org

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Looking for a place to host an event? Remember Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center when planning business meetings, wedding and anniversary receptions, and other get-togethers.