



Audubon

Spring Creek Prairie  
Audubon Center

# *The Prairie Sage*

FALL 2018

## Summer Camps Attract New as well as Seasoned Campers

*by Andrea Bornemeier, SCPAC Educator*

My first summer camp season at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center has drawn to a close. As the new seasonal educator, I have been leading most of the camps so Jason can focus on his expanded duties as the education director for both Spring Creek Prairie and Audubon Nebraska.

Again this year, in cooperation with the Lincoln Community Learning Centers, we hosted three weeks of summer camps with youngsters from Elliot, Brownell/Norwood Park, and Campbell elementary schools. Campbell was a new CLC this summer, with many English language learners, while this was the third summer for several Elliot campers.

The excited groups of kids spent twenty hours each week exploring the tallgrass prairie, catching pond critters, squealing at bugs, writing in journals, and creating beautiful posters of all we saw and learned. The wagon rides to the top of the prairie were a big hit each week — did you know you can see the capitol from up there? Two of the schools did service projects removing encroaching shrubs off the prairie. And this was an especially good year for ticks, so “Tick Talks” became a regular part of each day. (If anyone knows some good tick trivia, please send it to us.)

Wish you could go to summer camp again? Here are a couple of camp activities for you to try at home: Do you think you would make a good bird? Try making a nest out of grass and leaves that will hold three eggs! Or try to find a Dickcissel nest in 850 acres of tallgrass. We did!



*All of the fun pictured here was made possible by our wonderful individual, foundation, and corporate supporters. All of this great work could not be done without you!*

*(Top and bottom left photos courtesy of Civic Nebraska.)*



## Letter from the Director

*Glynnis Collins*

### **Programs and Events**

New events and programs are a great way to connect new people with our work here at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. To protect tallgrass prairie and the birds that depend on it, we need more people to join us in supporting the cause. In this issue of *The Prairie Sage*, we report on some recent new efforts, like Paws on the Prairie and Let's Go Birding Together (both page 5). Both programs have brought dozens of first-time visitors to the prairie.

Our summer camps (front page), now in their fourth year, saw students enrolled in summer programs with Lincoln's Community Learning Centers devoting a whole week to learning and fun in the outdoors. With a visit from Spring Creek Prairie staff to their site on Monday, then full-day visits to the prairie on Tuesday through Friday, these young people (generally elementary students) have the time to really connect with this special place.

With the start of a new fiscal year on July 1, we also saw transitions with our Stewardship Advisory Board (page 7). Three members left the board after completing two three-year terms, and now join our engaged group of board alumni. We're delighted to welcome three new board members, all of whom bring new expertise and enthusiasm to this group.

UNL graduate student Katie Lamke shares information about her ongoing project to survey wild bees at Spring Creek Prairie and



along the entire length of the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project area (page 6). Pollinators in general, and wild bees in particular, play a vital role for functioning natural habitats and a functioning food system. We'll share results of this research project in a future issue.

As we move into late summer and early fall, we are looking ahead to our busiest season for education and outreach programs. Prairie Immersion field trips for half of Lincoln Public Schools' fourth graders take place throughout September and October. Also coming up is Tastes in the Tallgrass (page 3), our annual fundraising dinner on September 16, and Fall Fest (page 4) on September 28. Are these events opportunities for you to introduce someone new to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center?

### **Center Director Transition**

As many of you already know, I will be leaving Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center at the end of September. I'll be pursuing other efforts that will allow me to spend more time with my family. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity over the past three years to work as part of this inspiring team of staff, board members, supporters, and partners in pursuit of such a worthy cause. I'll be remaining in Lincoln, and I'll continue to be a part of this community. I hope to see you soon at the prairie!

With gratitude,

Glynnis Collins  
Center Director

## Tallgrass Prairie Conservation

### Sponsorship Opportunities

Helping the prairie flourish, while creating a better habitat for grassland birds, is what our tallgrass prairie conservation program is all about. By conducting regular prescribed burns, removing invasive woody species and non-native plants and practicing systemic cattle grazing, the tallgrass prairie habitat is being strengthened and energized.

Your generous support helps fund Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center's tallgrass prairie conservation program, while protecting this natural wonder for future generations.

## New Prairie Sponsorships

Do you know a business that would like to be a Spring Creek Prairie sponsor? New opportunities are available for local corporations to support our nature education programs, our tallgrass prairie conservation work, and Tastes in the Tallgrass, our annual fundraiser. (See page 3 for more on this great event)

There are lots of benefits with becoming a sponsor (the number and type depending on gift level), including advertising, free rental space, guided prairie tours, and more.

If you are interested in receiving a sponsorship pamphlet (pictured left), just write or call us.



# TASTED IN THE TALLGRASS

2018 | YEAR OF  
THE BIRD

Sunday, September 16 from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

\$135/person (Includes \$95 tax-deductible contribution)

Register at [springcreek.audubon.org](http://springcreek.audubon.org)



Join us for an evening of great food, lively entertainment, and live and silent auctions featuring a wide array of art, experiences, and surprises. All to raise funds that help pay for our education and habitat programs that connect people with our native landscape and encourage its conservation in eastern Nebraska.

Thanks to our sponsors:



## A Sampling of our Live Auction Items...

### Michael Forsberg Print

"King of the Booming Ground"

Wrapped Canvas Photograph

36" x 24"

Value \$800



### Audubon Hog Island Trip

Two all-inclusive tickets to Audubon's "Joy of the Birding" camp in Maine. Trip will take place June 2019. Room, meals, workshops, and boat trips included.

Value \$2,200

Donated by Audubon and the Friends of Hog Island



### Greater Prairie Chicken Trip with Calamus Outfitters

Take part in a spring grouse lek tour for two people in the beautiful Calamus River basin in the Nebraska Sandhills.



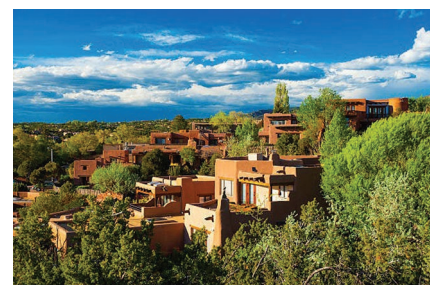
One night lodging, dinner, and breakfast included. Trip will take place April 15 – 30, 2019.

### Santa Fe Vacation

Seven-night stay for four people at private home outside Santa Fe, NM. Package includes \$50 gift certificate to L'Olivier restaurant, and admission for four and private tours of Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary and two museums.

Value \$1,500

Lodging donated by Mohamed and Deb Dahab



# FALL FEST

Twenty Years  
of Tallgrass!

Friday,  
September 28  
5 – 8 p.m.



Western Meadowlark  
Photo: G. Warrick

## Come celebrate the Year of the Bird & twenty years of prairie with us!

We are turning twenty and invite you and your family to join us for music, art, wagon rides, kids' activities, and free cake & custard! Fun for all ages.



\$5 Suggested  
Donation

Spring Creek Prairie  
Audubon Center  
11700 SW 100th St  
Denton, NE 68339  
402-797-2301

[Springcreekprairie.audubon.org](http://Springcreekprairie.audubon.org)

## Spring and Summer Habitat Work

by Ed Hubbs, SCPAC Habitat Program Manager

Another growing season is nearly in the books here at Spring Creek Prairie. For our conservation program that means shifting gears in the tasks to come, but first let's take a look back at some of the work that happened in the spring and summer. As always, our awesome habitat volunteers did amazing work to keep the prairie in top shape. We thank them for always answering the call.

Our calls to action this year emphasized fighting three different kinds of prairie invaders. The first was trash. Volunteers filled 12 trash bags from both sides of a three-mile stretch of SW 100th Street, one mile of which runs along the prairie. Though it may seem minor, trash can cause significant damage to our landscape and wildlife.

Next, our efforts focused on two different kind of plant invaders. Many noxious musk thistles were dug out of the ground, and then we removed various woody trees and shrubs that try to crowd out and steal nutrients from our native prairie grasses and flowers. Prescribed burns, an annual prairie ritual overseen by our band of pyromaniacs, were conducted on four separate days. Individuals and students helped supplement the work of our group volunteer days and, when combined, accounted for about 500 volunteer hours of great work.

While the type of work changes as the seasons progress, there is no shortage of tasks. A few of the tasks the conservation program looks forward to accomplishing this fall and winter are conducting prescribed prairie burns and burning tree piles, moving cattle to new pastures, maintaining vehicles and equipment, and planning and preparing for future grazing, haying, and prescribed burn rotations.

## Watching the Wildlife

by Jason St. Sauver, SCPAC Education Director

Our monarch community science project continues again for another season. Staff and volunteers will monitor the number of monarch eggs, larvae, and adults seen in and around our butterfly garden each week through September.

So far, more monarchs are being recorded than in previous years. The photo to the right shows four monarch chrysalises and one emerged adult on the roof underhang and brick siding on the center's residential house.

In July, staff and volunteers finished another breeding season of recording numbers and kinds of prairie birds seen all over our property. Our thanks to Shari Schwartz and Ruthie Stearns for their expert identification skills.



Many Henslow's sparrows were  
once again seen this summer.  
(photo by Joshua Clark)





## “Let’s Go Birding Together” Goes Nationwide

In 2017, Jason “the Birdnerd” St. Sauver started a project as part of National Audubon’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiative. As an outreach effort to Lincoln’s LGBTQIA+ community — and as a play on the abbreviation — Jason called the project “Let’s Go Birding Together” and, together with a local partner, Outlinc, hosted many new visitors to the prairie for a fun and informal bird walk.

This year, Jason and other staff members from National Audubon expanded the project nationwide, and LGBT walks and events were held all across the country in June to celebrate Pride month. Walks were held at Seward Park Audubon Center in Seattle; New York City’s Central Park; Grange Insurance Audubon Center in Columbus, OH; and Debs Park Audubon Center in Los Angeles, and were hosted by staff, Audubon chapters, and local

birders. Here at Spring Creek Prairie, we held two more birding events bringing more new friends, members, and volunteers to Audubon and helping us expand our place in the community as a place for everyone to find their own connection to nature.



## Paws on the Prairie... WOOF!

Our inaugural PAWS on the PRAIRIE finally took place in July. Originally rained (snowed) out back in April, the weather looked suspect again the night before the event, but the morning dawned clear and crisp and we welcomed over 50 people to the event — over half of which were new visitors to the center — and over 30 dogs, one cat, and a guinea pig!

Planned with our partners at the Capital Humane Society, the event was a great opportunity to open up just a portion of our tallgrass trails to dogs for one morning while getting the opportunity to meet new friends — both two- and four-legged. But the program also gave the partner organizations the

opportunity to educate our visitors about the reasons why dogs are not usually allowed at our center, as well as the importance of keeping pets on leash for pet and wildlife safety.

Big thanks to the Capital Humane Society and the Lincoln Running Company for providing prizes for our finale — a pet parade (photo below) which saw our fuzzy friends all dressed up in nature-themed costumes. And we are pleased to announce that, due to its success and furry-fun levels, this event is planned to become an annual tradition on the prairie.



## Wild Bee Research in the Prairie

by Katie Lamke - UNL Bee Lab,  
Dept. of Entomology

Pollinators are a vital component in the maintenance of biodiversity and play a key role in providing necessary ecosystem services. Approximately 35% of the global food production relies on animal pollination, and 80% of wild plants rely on insect pollination, most of which is provided by bees.

Throughout the world there are an estimated 20,000 species of bees, and about 4,000 reside here in North America. Among them we see great diversity in size, color, nesting preference, and degrees of social behavior. For example, the smallest known bee, *Perdita minima*, is two millimeters in length; the largest, *Megachile pluto*, reaches 1.5 inches. The color variations of bees are vast, ranging from bright metallic blues and greens to vibrant hair patterns made up of yellow, orange and red.

In an effort to support and promote healthy pollinator communities locally, the Prairie Corridor project has collaborated with the University of Nebraska- Lincoln's School of Natural Resources to carry out research. The 13-mile Corridor is Lincoln's newest greenway and trails along the Haines Branch of Salt Creek connecting Pioneers Park, Conestoga Lake, and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Approximately half the land included in the corridor is considered tallgrass prairie. It is estimated only one to four percent of tallgrass prairie remains, and a key stressor to this ecoregion is the decline in pollinators.

Being the fortunate graduate student chosen to take on the pollinator research, it has become my job to frolic the lengths of the Prairie Corridor — net in hand — in search of wild bees. Throughout the corridor I sample 20 different plots, representing prairies under various land management techniques, for plant-pollinator interactions. During 2017 and 2018, sampling occurs every two weeks from April to October and consists of surveys of flowering plants and wild bees. Collecting this data will allow us to analyze potential flower preference displayed by wild bees, locate patterns between flowering-



A common wild bee in Nebraska, a brown-belted bumble bee visits a purple prairie clover. Photo by Katie Lamke.

plant communities and land management techniques in relation to bee communities, and increase our foundational knowledge regarding bee species found in Nebraska. The research findings will aid in the design and management of prairie reconstruction and provide recommendations to improve the health of pollinator communities.

When looking at diversity, not abundance, of the 2017 surveys, a total of 75 flowering plant species and 43 wild bee species were observed throughout the corridor. Of those 75 plants, only 33 of them were visited by wild bees. Looking at Spring Creek Prairie alone, which accounts for 4/20 plots, 26 out of 55 flowering plant species were visited by a total of 28 wild bee species. The plants most visited by bee were Canada goldenrod, bee balm, and whorled milkweed.

This summer's surveys are well underway, and I look forward to seeing what results the final dataset will produce later this year. The research is on track to be completed by May 2019. For more information on the Prairie Corridor project, visit [prairiecorridor.org](http://prairiecorridor.org).

## One New Program and an Old Favorite Returns

(See the Events section of our website for registration details.)

### BIRD is the WORD

Monday, Oct. 15, 7:00 pm

Do you know what a timberdoodle is? Ever wonder how the Mourning Dove got its name? Find out the answers to these and other bird trivia conundrums during this fact-filled and fun-filled evening with our resident birdnerd, Jason.

### By Nature's Design

Saturdays, Nov. 3 & 10, 3:00 pm

Amy Plettner, SCPAC's caretaker, and former education director Deb Hauswald will help participants develop new ways of looking at the world by learning reoccurring shapes and patterns in nature. Discover Mother Nature's form and function through the use of analogy with simple tools, observation techniques, and your own curiosity.



## Board of Directors Update

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center's Stewardship Advisory Board assists with policy and program development, fiscal review, fundraising, and other organizational priorities. This summer we welcomed three new members to the board, as we thanked three departing members for their service over the past six years.

Judy Dougherty and Scott Stuckey of Lincoln, and Jeff Hagaman of Crete, all completed two three-year terms on our advisory board on June 30. They now join our board alumni group, members of whom continue to stay involved and support Spring Creek Prairie's mission and continued growth.

***New members joining the board as of July 1 are John Becker, John Heineman, and Chris Sommerich, all of Lincoln.***

John J. Becker retired from a 31-year career with the Lincoln Police Department in 2016. He and his wife have a small farm within two miles of Spring Creek Prairie where they practice many of the bird- and wildlife-friendly management practices that we do here. According to John, "We have seen the results of proper land management to serve future generations on our own small piece of land and look forward to preserving the prairie at Spring Creek Prairie for many future generations to enjoy." John also serves to honor the memory of longtime Board member and Spring Creek Prairie advocate Lana Flagtwet.



John Heineman is a retired educator and education administrator who spent the bulk of his career at Lincoln High School. He has served on Spring Creek Prairie's Education Committee for the past year, helping to expand and diversify our education and outreach programs. His love for birds goes back to his childhood seeing prairie-chickens and white pelicans in southeast Nebraska. "They inspired a wonder for the out of doors and the need of conservation for wild places. I hope others can find this at Spring Creek Prairie, too."



Chris Sommerich is currently the executive director of Humanities Nebraska, but back in the early 2000's, he was Spring Creek Prairie's development associate. His children have grown up visiting the prairie, and photos of their younger selves still grace some of our exhibits and promotional materials. "Spring Creek Prairie has been a special place to my family for many years," says Chris, "our community is fortunate to have such a gem, and I look forward to helping out any way I can."



## The Big Sit!

**Sunday, October 14 — all day**

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event whose object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within 24 hours within an imaginary circle 17 feet in diameter. Join our resident birdnerd, Jason, for an hour or the whole day and learn what fall birds can be seen at the prairie. Bring a picnic/treats to share if you wish. Free admission, no registration needed. Binoculars available.



## Visitor Center Available for Rent

Don't forget about Spring Creek Prairie when you are planning your next get-together. Our meeting room is available year-round, seven days a week during regular business hours, and the entire visitor center can be rented after hours.

The center is a beautiful destination for your wedding and reception, business retreat, or education workshop. Amenities include use of the kitchen, projector, and wi-fi.

Write or call us for information on availability and prices.

# Upcoming Events at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

**Sunday, September 16**

**Friday, September 28**

**Sunday, October 14**

**Monday, October 15**

**Tuesday, October 16**

**Saturday, November 3**

**Friday, November 9**

**Saturday, November 10**

**Sunday, December 2**

Tastes in the Tallgrass, 4 – 7 pm

FALL FEST: Twenty Years of Tallgrass, 5 – 8 pm

The Big Sit!, All day

BIRD is the WORD, 7 – 8:30 pm

Third Tuesday Bird Walk, 8 – 10 am

By Nature's Design workshop, 3 – 5 pm

Nocturnal November, 7 – 8:30 pm

By Nature's Design workshop, 3 – 5 pm

Holiday Open House, 1 – 4 pm

*For additional information and events, visit [springcreek.audubon.org](http://springcreek.audubon.org)*

**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

## Stewardship Board

Brianne Bayer

Bruce Johnson

Cindy Morris

John Becker

Sue Kirkpatrick

Adrian Olivera

Judy Carter

Mari Lane Gewecke

Chris Sommerich

Deb Dahab

Liz Lange

Tom Tallman

John Heineman

Jenni Lesoing-Lucs

Jeff Jewell

Marilyn Moore

## Audubon Nebraska Staff

Bill Taddicken - Interim Director

Autumn Taddicken - Director of Development

## Admission

**SCPAC Supporters (\$50+)**

**FREE**

**Adults**

**\$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.*

Nest/Feeder camera

Large hammer - 14-inch or longer handle (2)

Hedge clippers (2 or more)

Pick and tweezer set

Circular saw and battery

Tow rope (2)

Water tank for cattle

Boot cleaner station (please call for requested model)

Old t-shirts, towels, sheets, etc., for rags

## CONTACT US:

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center  
11700 SW 100th St.  
P.O. Box 117  
Denton, NE 68339

To receive this newsletter electronically, let us know at [scp@audubon.org](mailto:scp@audubon.org); (402) 797-2301.

**PHONE:** (402) 797-2301

**EMAIL:** [scp@audubon.org](mailto:scp@audubon.org)

**WEBSITE:** [springcreek.audubon.org](http://springcreek.audubon.org)

**FIND US ON:**



**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.