

As William Stafford wrote — “Are we waiting for a better moment?”

Why Support Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

– Excerpts from Mary Pipher’s remarks at *Tastes in the Tallgrass*

In Nebraska, Spring Creek Prairie is the land we can protect for future generations. Many of us grew up in areas where children could roam freely and play outside at night under the Milky Way. Those times outdoors at a creek or riding my bike along country roads or playing in woods are my happiest childhood memories.

The situation is very different for most children now. They don’t wander about alone or congregate with their friends in wild places. Their time is mostly indoors and structured by adults. They look at their cell phones and other electronic devices more than they look at the natural world. However, here at Spring Creek Prairie, they can experience much of what we experienced. At the schoolchildren events, I’ve seen kids run around beside themselves with joy, like puppies in the spring grass. I watched them net bugs and dragonflies and examine fungi and reptiles. I’ve sat with them as we all closed our eyes and listened to the calls of birds and insects. May their great-grandchildren enjoy similar days at this fine place.



We are fortunate to share the mission of saving places like Spring Creek Prairie, unbroken places that allow us to experience what the Lakota call The Big Mysterious, *Wakan Tanka*. Please consider expressing your gratitude by contributing to Spring Creek Prairie. Empower yourself to save what you love—so that you can enjoy it in your lifetime and offer it as a gift to future generations, not just of humans but to future generations of prairie chickens and katydids, monarchs and bobcats.

Blessed be Spring Creek Prairie.

Blessed be our Native American ancestors who lived on these prairies.

Blessed be our ancestors who came here from great distances.

Blessed be the bur oaks and the cottonwoods.

Blessed be the milkweed and the goldenrod.

Blessed be the lizard and the minnow.

Blessed be the monarch and the meadowlark.

Blessed be the deer and the coyote.

Blessed be the Audubon staff, the board members and all us who cherish this prairie.

Blessed be Mother Earth and Father Sky.

Blessed be the stars that will soon blink on. *Amen.*

Letter from the Center Director – Roger Furrer

December marks the start of our winter season, but that doesn't mean that life at Spring Creek Prairie comes to a stop. The trails remain open from sun up to sun down throughout the year. Winter hikes create new opportunities for exploring nature. American Tree Sparrows, Dark-Eyed Juncos, Red-Breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, Greater Prairie-Chickens, Northern Bobwhite, Brown Creepers, and Golden-Crowned Kinglets are just some of our winter residents that make for fun bird watching.



Snow on the ground creates opportunities for easily tracking deer, badgers, rabbits, or coyotes. Last year, a visitor tracking a rabbit trail found it came to a sudden end in a strange pattern of indentations in the snow. A little sleuthing led to the discovery that the indentations were the impressions of a raptor's wings left when the bird took off with its prey in its talons. In addition, animal scat is much easier to find in winter. While people can be a little squeamish about observing scat, it provides some great opportunities to learn about the diet and behaviors of our four-legged residents.

With the sun further south, long shadows cast by our prairie grasses or a gnarled bur oak in Wachiska Woods make beautiful patterns. Just observing a tree, its stark branches silhouetted against a gray winter sky, makes for a whole new way of seeing something that seemed so green and predictable in summer. So come out to the prairie and discover the vibrancy of winter.

Sincerely,

Roger Furrer



Letter from State Director - Marian Langan

Greetings!

As the end of 2014 draws near, we reflect on this year's activities. I don't have to do that for very long before I just have to say, "Wow, look what people can do when they work together." Thank each of you for your part in the conservation successes of this year. The result is that more kids are loving rivers and prairies, more habitat is protected for birds and other wildlife, and we have more of a chance that the beautiful habitat and birds that we love so much will survive into the future. The very tangible result of our inaction means destroyed habitat, fewer birds, and a much paler version of life for future children. Thank you in advance for your patience in the coming year when we ask for your time, talent, and treasure to help make sure this doesn't happen – we can and do make a difference.

Thank you and I hope you all enjoy the holidays!

Marian Langan



Winter Wander-Land

Visit Spring Creek Prairie to explore the winter prairie. Not all life is hibernating during the winter, check out what might be stirring in the new year. Winter on the prairie can be a wonderful time to discover some of Mother Nature's best-kept secrets. Don your warmest winter togs and come explore some of the prairie's more remote areas. Learn why winter is an important, even essential, part of the cycle of life in Nebraska.



Prairie Immersion 2014

2014 was another successful year for our Prairie Immersion program. Over 1,470 4th grade students from Lincoln Public Schools were given the opportunity to experience the prairie on field trips incorporating prairie history, scientific investigations, and language arts activities. The goals are for students to develop a better understanding of Nebraska's natural and human history, a better appreciation of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, and a keener sense of the importance of conserving prairie.



Students took part in hands-on investigations including insect sweeping and plant adaptation studies. They discovered first-hand the qualities of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem and adaptations that help plants and animals survive on the prairie, as well as experienced what life on the prairie would have been like over 150 years ago.

Prairie immersion is supported by funding from the Hugo A. and Thelma Aspegren Charitable Trust and the Foundation for the Lincoln Public Schools, and is a partnership with Pioneers Park Nature Center.

Reaching these students could not have been accomplished without the dedicated team of volunteer Discovery Leaders. They facilitated the students' experiences while demonstrating good technique in data collection, modeling good observation skills, and giving encouraging, respectful responses to ideas and solutions, all while keeping the students engaged and enthusiastic. We send out a huge thank you to the 2014 team of Prairie Immersion Discovery Leaders:



- Paul Canny
- Barbara DiBernard
- Emilie Ellingson
- Judy Greenwald
- James Hoke
- Barb Hoppe Johnson
- Bruce Johnson
- Sue Kirkpatrick
- Adrian Olivera
- Jane Reinkordt
- Malia Robinson
- Ruthie Stearns
- Peg Tilgner
- Chris Thody
- Moni Usasz

We'd also like to thank the following volunteers for helping at our front desk during school tours: Bill and Trudy Adams, Mary Klein, and Rob Wikel.

Message from SCPAC's Stewardship Board

I would like to take a moment to tell you what our Stewardship Board does. The governance of Spring Creek Prairie, as with all Audubon Centers, belongs with the National Audubon Society board. The responsibilities of the Stewardship Board for Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center are to develop policy and programming. We also review fiscal matters and assist with fund development as well as friend-raising. Lastly, we are responsible with the state director for the supervision of the Center director. We do this work through our committee structure and meet quarterly as a board. All this with 25 dedicated community volunteers.



One of the priorities for the Stewardship Board this year is renewing our strategic plan for the next 3 to 5 year period. We want to make sure we are fulfilling our mission and utilizing our resources to the best of our abilities.

There is much changing around the Center: demographics, climate change, conservation methods, and population growth in nearby communities are just some of the big picture items. Additionally, we are working with the City of Lincoln and other partners to plan the prairie corridor connecting Pioneers Park and Spring Creek Prairie.

Finally, I am grateful for all the time, energy, enthusiasm and resources everyone offers SCPAC. There is no way we could accomplish what we do without partners like you.

Gratefully,
Lana Flagtvet

*Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
Stewardship Board President*

CONTACT US:

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

If you would like to receive *The Prairie Sage* electronically, write scp@audubon.org or call (402) 797-2301.

PHONE: (402) 797-2301

EMAIL: scp@audubon.org

WEBSITE: springcreekprairie.org

FLICKR: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/scpac/>

Also find us on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

TASTES IN THE TALLGRASS RECAP

On September 28, 200 supporters of the conservation work at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center gathered at one long table for the 7th annual Tastes in the Tallgrass dinner and auction. Supporters were treated to the musical talents of the Lightening Bugs, enjoyed delicious food prepared by Tastefully Yours and gorgeous views of the tallgrass prairie. At the end of the evening \$41,000 was raised in support of Spring Creek Prairie's habitat management and environmental education initiatives.

A special thank you to the event chairs, Jenni Lesoing-Lucs and Cindy Morris, and the entire event committee.

Generous donors who made this evening possible include: Ameritas; William H. Browne III; Calamus Outfitters and the Switzer Family; Dana Cole and the Fishing Education Foundation, Christie and Pete Dionisopoulos; Ervin Dixon; Cindy Doné; Dave and Emilie Ellingson; Emyprean Ales and Lazlo's; Michael Farrell; Finke Gardens and Nursery; Connie Finn; Board Chair Lana and Lon Flagtwet; Michael Forsberg; Deb Hauswald; Cliff Hollestelle; Greg Hurlbut and Prairie Preserve Beef; Andrew Jewell; John Janovy; Mari Lane Gewecke; Ashley Olson; The Oven; Tom and Sue Tallman; Chris Taylor; UNL Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences – Fayrene Hamouz; Bruce Wendorff; The Willa Cather Foundation; Steve Wilson and Ducks Unlimited; Tom and Patti Yaussi; Jay Yost and Wade Link, Kaley House Bed and Breakfast; and Mary Zicafoose. Auctioneer Bruce Wright fielded the bids.



Twilight on the Tallgrass

Over **200** people attended the annual Twilight on the Tallgrass prairie festival and enjoyed the fall prairie on a beautiful but chilly September evening. Various activities were set up along the trails creating a Prairie Discovery Loop. Activities included exploring wetlands, catching insects, building kites, and bird banding. Thank you to all of our presenters and volunteers: Trudy Adams, Colleen Babcock, Betsy Baxendale, Bill Baxendale, Fred Baxendale, Kaylee Baxendale, Linda Brown, Kait Chapman, Bill Clemente, Stephanie Endrulat, Paul Johnsgard, Michelle Johnson, Josef Kren, Lorraine Leiser, Andy Matz, Natalie Matz, Arnold Mendenhall, Schyler Miller, Alicia Mullarkey, Owen Mullarkey, David Murphy, Haley Oser, Travis Prochaska, Malia Robinson, Kenny Roche, Dawn Sikora, Dave Taylor, Pat Wikel, and Rob Wikel.

A huge thank you also goes out to our main presenter, John T. Price, who stuck around to sign copies of his book; Culver's, who provided frozen custard for the festival concession; and Dave Krenk, who set up the audio and organized the performances by the Nebraska Chapter of Nashville Songwriters.



New Discoveries

The prairie is full of surprises and we are always finding interesting things we haven't seen before. A recent brush and tree removal project brought to light this great limestone bridge that spans Spring Creek along the south end of the prairie.

If anyone has information to share or might be willing to do a little research it would be great to know more about the bridge and its history.



They're Here! New Exhibits

Do you enjoy trails for hiking at Spring Creek Prairie? Do the colors of blooming wildflowers inspire your creativity? Has the prairie taught you something? From students on school field trips to early morning birders and photographers, the prairie has something to offer everyone who visits.

Come visit the new interactive exhibits in the Ethel S. Abbott Grand Prairie Hall at Spring Creek Prairie. The exhibits are divided into themes: Conserving the Prairie, Inspired by the Prairie, Living on the Prairie, Studying the Prairie, Taking a Closer Look, and On the Trail. Just like the prairie, the exhibits offer something for everyone. Don't forget to check out a Discovery Pack before hitting the trails. These packs compliment the exhibits and allow visitors to explore the prairie through the eyes of an artist, a botanist, a burrowing animal, an ornithologist, a photographer, and a writer. Packs can be checked out for free with admission.



THE ABC'S OF A GOOD WILL

Everyone agrees that having a will is important. And having a "good" will is even better. A will should be legally binding, up-to-date, easily amended, a true reflection of your wishes, and provide you with peace of mind.

A good will is accurate. It will follow all legal requirements of your state, it is prepared and signed according to those requirements, and it outlines how your estate should be distributed. A good will provides for the guardianship of your children and the transfer of business interests, it states any other final declarations you want or need to make, and it covers any other important matters that may be needed.

A good will is benevolent. A good will does well. It addresses the needs of your spouse, your children, and other dependents. It provides for the needs of anyone who is in your circle of responsibility.



It may also provide for charitable organizations that reflect your values and address causes you support.

A good will is current — this cannot be stressed enough. Your will should be updated as needed to reflect changing circumstances. Changes constantly occur in the tax laws, in your family situation, in your financial situation. Many professionals recommend reviewing your will annually to ensure that it is up to date.

Have you considered including us in your will? The correct way to list us in your estate plans is: The National Audubon Society, Inc., a not-for-profit environmental organization with its principal offices located in New York City, NY, for the permanent endowment of Audubon Nebraska/Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center programs.

If you would like additional information on wills and estate planning, please contact Melissa Filipi, Director of Philanthropy at mfilipi@audubon.org or (402) 797-2301.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are many ways that you can help us fulfill our mission of conserving the tallgrass prairie by engaging people in our natural and cultural resources. Support of all types makes such a difference, with your help we can make the world a better place!

- Become a volunteer. Our volunteers are an important part of our successes. There are many opportunities available that can fit in to any schedule. We're happy to play "matchmaker" and find the perfect volunteer opportunity for your interests, skills, and time!
- Tell your friends and family about us! Raising awareness of our work opens many doors, and introduces a new group of volunteers, donors, and supporters to our mission.
- Donate. We rely on the generous support of our donors for the work that we do. We do not receive funding from any national organization. All money raised here, stays here. You can return a gift in the envelope provided, visit our website to donate online, or stop by our Education Center to make a gift in person.
- Commemorate a life event with a gift in honor or memory of friends, family, or occasions.
- Take a look at our wish list on page 8 for additional gift ideas.
- Become a monthly donor. You can provide regular, ongoing support for our work by visiting our web site, springcreekprairie.org.
- Include us in your estate plans. Several simple, flexible, tax-advantaged options can benefit your heirs and Spring Creek Prairie at the same time.

IT'S BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR STOCKS

Did your portfolio increase in value this year? Donating appreciated securities enables you to support Audubon while conserving cash for other uses, and helps you avoid capital gains tax on the appreciation. Donated shares must be appreciated in value and owned for longer than one year.

It is important to note that the legal date – and value – of your gift depends on when Audubon receives it, not when you instruct your

broker to make the transaction. If you would like to make a gift of stock, have your broker contact Raji Mosa at (212) 979-3167 or rmosa@audubon.org. And, don't forget to call us at (402) 797-2301 to let us know your gift is on the way!

You can also use appreciated stocks to fund a larger gift that will pay you an income for life. Please call Shari Kolding at (512) 236-9076 for more details.

Volunteer Shout Outs!

Discovery Leaders for Spring Programs are needed. If you enjoy exploring the prairie and facilitating hands-on learning for children, then you are the ideal Discovery Leader for school programs at Spring Creek Prairie. Starting in April school groups will be scheduled during the week between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm. Spring Creek Prairie is seeking motivated individuals who are passionate about nature to become volunteer Discovery Leaders. To learn more about leader training and other volunteer opportunities, send a note regarding your interest with your contact information to SCP@audubon.org.

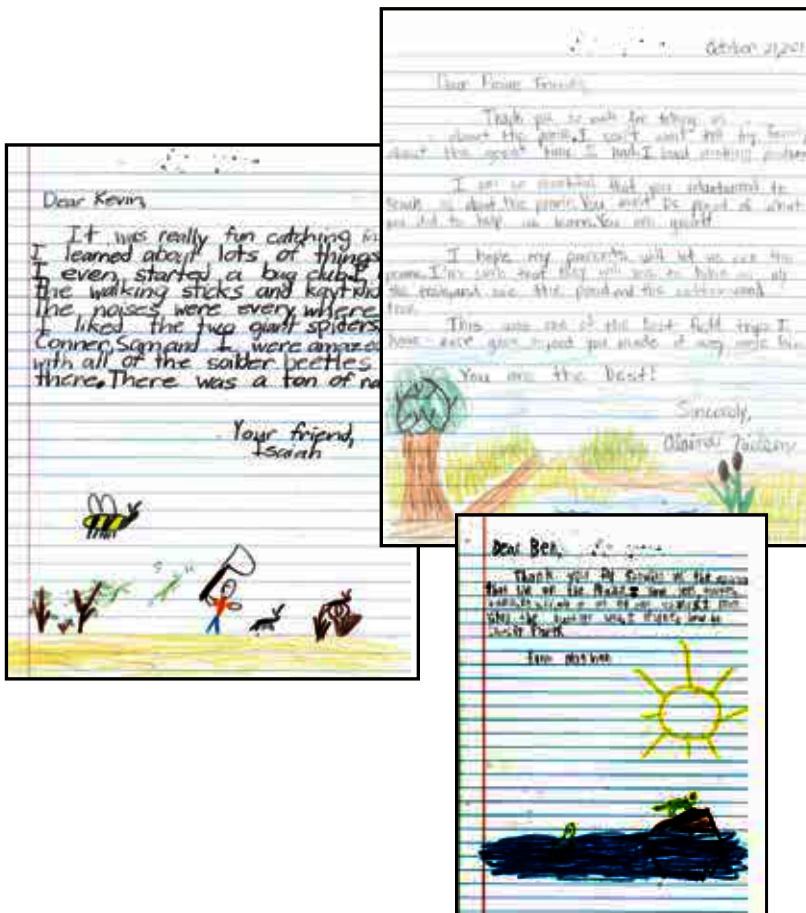
Volunteer time for education and public programs totaled **542** hours – a value of **\$10,910** so far in 2014. Thank you to volunteers who have helped with education programs and outreach this past year!

School Program Wrap - up!

In all, **6,673** people have been reached through Spring Creek Prairie programs (public, school, or other event) since January!

Prairie Immersion, the LPS 4th grade science and social studies program, brought **1,470** students to Spring Creek Prairie this fall.

CLC Partnership Growing! – This past summer, **47** youth from area summer programs including Arnold Community Learning Center, the Malone Center, and the Air Park Rec Center participated in a pilot for a multi-day summer camp program at Spring Creek Prairie. Because of the success of the pilot program, Spring Creek Prairie is moving to the next phase to expand numbers and work with more sites. During summer 2015, Spring Creek Prairie will hold summer day camps for multiple community learning centers from Lincoln: Clinton, Hartley, Elliot, Belmont, West Lincoln, McPhee, Everett, and Arnold. Students from these sites will spend time at Spring Creek Prairie learning about wetlands, woodlands, and prairie.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Great Backyard Bird Count

Friday through Monday, February 13 – 16

Take part in the nationwide bird survey. Information at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival

March 19 – 22, Kearney, NE

Experience the world - famous sandhill crane migration with fellow crane lovers from around the country. Festival details at <http://nebraskacrane festival.org/>.

Prairie Club

Saturday, March 28, 10 am – 12 noon

Saturday, April 25, 10 am – 12 noon

Join the Prairie Club. This club meets on a monthly basis and is open to anyone wanting to explore and learn more about the tallgrass prairie. Activities are geared toward middle school students and the majority of meetings will take place outdoors. Prairie Club is sponsored by Doane College. There is no cost to participate, and all members must complete a registration form.



Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center bid a reluctant good bye to Community Education Director Jamie Kelley in November. Jamie's talents and leadership were greatly appreciated guiding our education programs and community outreach activities. We are grateful for her vision and leadership in our school programs and weekend activities. We wish her success in her new endeavors.



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11700 SW 100th Street
 P.O. Box 117
 Denton, NE 68339
 Phone: (402) 797-2301 (-2304/fax)
 scp@audubon.org
 http://springcreekprairie.audubon.org

Open Monday - Friday 9 - 5; Saturday - Sunday 1 - 5

All year, except major holidays

Admission charge; Tuesdays free

Roger Furrer – Director
 Ben Mullarkey – Habitat Program Manager
 Kevin Poague – Operations Manager/Important Bird Areas Coordinator
 Amy Plettner – Caretaker

Audubon Nebraska

Marian Langan – Executive Director
 Melissa Filipi – Director of Philanthropy
 Carey Collingham - Corporate and Foundation Coordinator
 Cindy Houlden – Donor Relations Coordinator

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Spring Creek Prairie Wish List

Flora of Nebraska, Robert Kaul et. al.,
 2nd (new) edition. Available at a discount at the
 UNL Maps and More Store

Heavy duty, 14 foot steel tube gates

Metal detector

Truckload of river rock to extend the
 permanent fire break around center

Pop-up tents

Coolers (rectangular)

Extension cords

Trail Camera

\$5 million Endowment