

Exhibits to Tell Prairie's Story

Exciting changes are coming to our education center! New interpretive exhibits will be installed in the Ethel S. Abbott Grand Prairie Hall. **Mark your calendars for the grand opening on the weekend of October 17-18.** Visit our website, www.springcreekprairie.org, for updates.

The exhibits will highlight the fact that prairie is a vital part of the life of modern Nebraska. Visitors will be able to use touch screens, a high magnification video camera, and an interactive map table to explore the plant and animal life on the prairie. Research taking place at Spring Creek Prairie and the successful conservation efforts of our neighbors are also featured.

The displays go beyond life on the prairie to examine how prairie inspires people to create. The work of Nebraska State Poet Twyla Hansen and internationally recognized wildlife photographer Michael Forsberg are featured in a section called "Inspired by the Prairie."

"The entire idea of the exhibits, from the physical design to the content, is to move people out into the living prairie

itself," says Jamie Kelley, Community Education Director. "Each section of the exhibits will have ideas for activities people can do. Discovery backpacks full of activities can be checked out at the front desk. The exhibits and our backpacks were designed in conjunction with each other. The exhibits showcase amazing things that are going on out on the prairie, and our visitors can check out a backpack with activities they are interested in to have an even richer outdoor experience."

The exhibits are being designed with InterActive Group of Columbus, Ohio. For making the exhibits possible, special thanks go out to the **Lancaster County Visitors Improvement Fund, Lincoln Community Foundation, Elizabeth Rubendall Foundation Charitable Trust, Peter Kiewit Foundation, Abel Foundation, Humanities Nebraska, National Audubon Society/Toyota TogetherGreen program, and J.A. Woollam Foundation.** Thanks as well to **Tom Bouse** for doing all of the videography, to the **Fredrickson Family** for the seating area, and to all the special people featured in the exhibits who volunteered their time.

Annual Prairie Bird Surveys

Birders will continue to conduct annual surveys on our prairie to document grassland bird response to our land management. Volunteers and staff walk transects and record the numbers and locations of prairie birds such as grasshopper sparrows, dickcissels, upland sandpipers, meadowlarks, bobolinks, and Henslow's sparrows. The occurrence or absence of these species will help us judge the impact of our prairie management on these birds. Then, our strategies can be strengthened to better suit the needs of these important species. (Meadowlark photo by Gordon Warrick.)

Thanks to volunteer birders **John Carlini** and **Shari Schwartz**, and **Ruthie Stearns**. If you are interested in helping with our bird surveys in future years, write scp@audubon.org.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Conservation, Connection, Community.

Sometimes when folks ask what Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center is all about, we use these three words to capture the essence of what this place has come to mean for many people.

When a load of students pile off the bus all blurry-eyed first thing in the morning, it is not unusual for their guard to be up. “What is this place?” But as they start exploring, that jaded cool gives way to excitement about finding a bird’s nest, or six different kinds of flowers pushing out of the ground, or some amazing scat. And the connection happens. And then there are the moments when a student looks out across the prairie and you can see ideas and thoughts from the day tumbling and twisting in her mind. You know the conservation message is taking root.

The crews that come to work the prescribed burns come with conservation work in mind. They are serious and work carefully to clear another section of prairie, set back invasive species and help remove the past growth which can shade out this year’s seedlings. But the process of working side by side — the satisfaction of a job accomplished, making a tangible contribution to the conservation of the tallgrass — sows the seeds of community.

And across Nebraska and beyond, there is a community of people who are connected to Spring Creek Prairie. They are making the connections which support the complex community of birds, grasses, forbs, and people. We are grateful for every connection in this diverse community.

Roger Jurek

Thank You, Prairie Supporters!

This spring, we hosted more than 950 students from 10 area schools from Syracuse, Seward, Crete, Sutton, Bennet, Fairbury, Central City, Elkhorn, Wilber-Clatonia, and Lincoln. Thank you to the following volunteers who helped with these and public programs this spring: **Bill Adams, Lilly Blase, Barbara DiBernard, Bill Edwards, Emilie Ellingson, John Janovy, Barbara Hoppe Johnson, Bobby Kelley, Mary Klein, Edith Meints, Jane Reinkordt, Patty Spitzer, Ruthie Stearns, Chris Thody, Peg Tilgner, Moni Usasz, and Rob Wikel.**

A special thank you to our prescribed burn crew (see photo below of crew member setting a burn). We had 14 individuals donate almost 150 hours of their time to during April and May. The weather wasn’t very cooperative, but we were still able to complete burns on over 160 acres of prairie. Burning is a critical tool in our tallgrass prairie management; we could not be successful without the dedication of our volunteers.

Big thanks also go to:

* Thirteen students and 2 parents from Pius X High School, who helped with invasive tree and shrub removal as well as a trail improvement project.

* Twenty-two members of Theta Phi

Alpha Sorority, who as part of the UNL Big Event volunteer day removed trash from three miles of road ditches leading to the prairie.

* Five students from Doane College planted and mulched native plum shrubs as part of their Stop Day activities.

* Almost 100 students and adults from the Lincoln Public Schools Science Focus Program added a one-hour service project to their day of learning and helped us clean up our natural play area and remove invasive shrubs and trees from one of our springs.

* Fourteen scouts and volunteers helped **Aiden Pace** improve our trail system as part of his Eagle Scout project.

Thanks also to the following people for their kind donations:

Tom Bouse for office equipment.

Brad Elder for farm equipment.

Brad and Jeanne Johnson for education materials.

Kay Kottas for prairie plants.

Board member **Arnold Mendenhall** for a new solar panel.

Malia Robinson for a new weather alert radio.

Congratulations to our Lincoln Picture to Win contest winners, **Sandra Reddish** and **Lisa Woerly**.



Programs

Details at www.springcreekprairie.org.
Register by e-mail (scp@audubon.org) or 402-797-2301. Class sizes limited. Payment collected on day of program; checks and credit cards accepted.

Firefly Picnic

Friday, July 11 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Participants will take a short hike to enjoy the summer sunset on the prairie. A light snack will be provided. Please bring a blanket to sit to watch the sunset. A great outing designed for adult/child teams.

After sunset we will explore the trails and discover the magic of fireflies. \$6/adult-child team, \$2/extra team member.

Butterfly Count

Saturday, July 12 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Take part in the annual butterfly count sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association. After an hour-long introductory slide show at Pioneers Park Nature Center, participants will then disperse to the count areas. No need to be an expert, an experienced guide accompanies each group.

The count involves walking about 2 hours and covering 2 to 3 miles. \$5/person. Register by July 9 by contacting Pioneers Park Nature Center, 402-441-7895.

Moth Night

Saturday, July 26 7:00 p.m.

Come explore the amazing diversity of moths at Moth Night, hosted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Insect Science Club. Family-friendly activities will focus on the identification of common moth families and how to attract them, all while illustrating their role in our environment.

A donation of \$5 per family is suggested. More information at <http://nationalmothweek.org>.

Moonlight Ramble

Saturday, August 9 7:30-10:00 p.m.

Explore the prairie, woods, and pond under an almost-full moon during this popular evening stroll. Recommended for adults and children 8 and over.
\$5/person.

For the Calendar



Discovery Leader Training

Discover the joy of leading kids in outdoor learning. If you enjoy...

- playing outside,
- exploring nature,
- discovering new things,
- learning about the prairie,
- going on adventures,

and you enjoy the company of kids, then you are the perfect candidate to become a Discovery Leader! Join us on **Saturday, July 26, from 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.** for a Discovery Leader workshop. Learn how to engage kids in nature and how you can help with Spring Creek Prairie's school programs. Veteran Discovery Leaders are encouraged to attend this workshop as a refresher for the fall programs.

Twilight on the Tallgrass

Save the date for our annual prairie festival, Twilight on the Tallgrass, which will take place **Saturday, September 13, from 5:00-10:00 p.m.** You won't want to miss this annual family-friendly event showcasing the beautiful autumn tallgrass prairie.

Tastes in the Tallgrass

Our annual outdoor dinner fund-raiser will take place **Sunday, September 28, from 3:30-7:30 p.m.** Write us to be put on our mailing list for an invitation.

Prairie Club

Our Prairie Club is looking for new members who are excited to spend time outside and explore nature. No age limits or other requirements.

The Club's fall kickoff will be **Saturday, August 30 at 10:00 a.m.** To learn more or to join, contact Jamie Kelley, 402-797-2301 or jkelly@audubon.org.

If you would like to receive *The Prairie Sage* by e-mail, write scp@audubon.org or call 402/797-2301.

New Property Update

The process is already underway to restore the 47 acres acquired last fall back to tallgrass prairie. Located on the south edge of our property, the parcel is mostly unplowed, but invasive trees such as black locust, Siberian elm, and white mulberry have moved in, degrading the tallgrass prairie habitat.

Tree encroachment negatively affects the prairie by changing the native plant community and altering the grassland habitat structure in which prairie birds and animals evolved and prosper in. Natural processes such as fire would have kept trees at bay historically, but once fire was largely removed from the landscape, trees were able to invade.

With the help of funds we received from a habitat program administered by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in conjunction with the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, we were able to move quickly to start removing trees after closing on the new property. As you can see in the photos below, the work resulted in a much more open prairie landscape. The property will rest this year to see how the plant community responds to the tree removal, and we will assess it again in the fall. Base line bird and plant surveys were done last summer and we will follow-up with surveys this year and see how the grassland birds are responding to our current management.

A management plan will then be put in place to continue to manage the habitat for grassland birds and to improve the quality of the prairie.

We have come a long way in a short time, but there is still work to be done. We are removing most of the remaining buildings and will continue to control invasive species and remove any small trees that were missed. It may take time to improve the quality of the tallgrass prairie on the new property, but we are headed in the right direction.



(These pictures of the new property were taken at the same location. The left photo was taken before tree removal, and the right photo after.)

In the Winter 2014 issue of *The Prairie Sage*, we reported on our purchase of 47 acres of prairie just south of the Center. (Donors to this project were listed in that newsletter.) After the issue's publication, we received official notification of a donation from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, which finalized the fund-raising for the

property. We thank the Trust for their continued support of our tallgrass prairie conservation efforts.

The Nebraska Legislature created the Nebraska Environmental Trust in 1992. Using revenue from the Nebraska Lottery, the Trust has provided over \$213 million in grants to over 1,600 projects across the state.

Anyone – citizens, organizations, communities, and businesses – can apply for funding to protect habitat, improve water quality, and establish recycling programs in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust works to preserve, protect, and restore our natural resources for future generations.

Barrels of Appreciation

The end of April wrapped up the sixth year of the City of Lincoln's Artistic Rain Barrel Program.

This year, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center was selected to be the recipient of the rain barrel donations. After 25 local artists painted barrels with a prairie theme, the barrels were displayed throughout SouthPointe Pavilions.

The painted barrels were available for a donation during April, and several are still for sale in Spring Creek Prairie's gift shop and on-line.

Our thanks to Ellen Wright, from the City of Lincoln Watershed Management Division, for being the program lead.



Frequently Asked Question: "Can We Bring Dogs/Pets to Spring Creek Prairie?"

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center is home to a variety of grassland birds. Many of these birds spend most of their time on the ground, making nests on the ground or in grasses close to the soil. For this reason we cannot allow people to bring dogs or other pets, except service animals, to the prairie.

We love all animals, but even a dog on a leash can disturb or harm a nesting bird. We appreciate your cooperation.

Prairie Destination in Lincoln's Passport Program

Once again, Spring Creek Prairie is one of the locations in Lincoln's "Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown" promotion. Have your passport stamped on your next prairie visit.

There's more information at <http://www.lincoln.org/play/be-a-tourist>.

THINK OF YOUR
BEQUEST TO AUDUBON
AS AN INVESTMENT.

HERE IS ONE OF THE
DIVIDENDS:

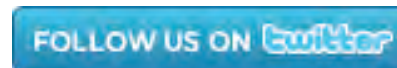


Please support our conservation work with a bequest in your will, or naming Spring Creek Prairie as a beneficiary of your retirement plan assets.

We suggest the following wording:

"I bequeath \$_____ (or _____% of my residuary estate) to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, a program of the National Audubon Society, a not-for-profit environmental conservation organization, with its principal offices located in New York, NY."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
Spring Creek Prairie at scp@audubon.org or call Melissa Filipi, Director of Philanthropy, Audubon Nebraska, 402/797-2301.



NEEDS LIST

Adobe Creative Suite software Jumper cables
Chain saw chaps/helmet Parabolic microphone
Vacuums (cordless) LCD Projector
Truckload of river rock
High diversity prairie seed mixes
Volunteers to mow, tend butterfly garden, remove
invasive plants from prairie
Gift cards from local businesses selling sporting goods,
home improvement items, arts and crafts, office
supplies, etc.

ULTIMATE WISH LIST

\$5 million endowment
Barrier-free improved trails

Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center Donors

Please consider joining these generous donors whose support sustains this special prairie. You can help. Thank you for being part of our mission!

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

\$10,000 and above

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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. We hope that you will consider joining them. You can help make tallgrass prairie not only our history, but our legacy.

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\$10,000 and above
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Prairie Star

\$5,000-\$9,999
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The support and recognition of all our donors is important to us. Space limitations require gift recognition to begin at the \$35 membership level. Please let us know of any missing names so corrections can be made in the next issue.

Admission/Membership

Daily Admission

| | |
|------------------|------|
| SCPAC Members | FREE |
| Adults | \$4 |
| Seniors (60+) | \$3 |
| Students | \$3 |
| Ages 6-17 | \$3 |
| Ages 5 and under | FREE |
| Tuesdays | FREE |

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

Annual Membership Levels

\$35 - Individual \$60 - Family
 SCPAC members receive:

- Unlimited free access to visitor center.
- Unlimited access to walking trails.
- 10% off gift shop purchases.
- Invites to special programs/events.

Member levels include an initial one-year membership to National Audubon Society and an initial full year of *Audubon* magazine. (Subsequent National Audubon memberships require separate donation to NAS.)

Dec 2013

Join Us on the Prairie!

I want to support the conservation and education programs at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center with a donation of:

\$500 _____ \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$60 _____ \$35 _____ Other _____
 (Gifts \$35 and above qualify for an individual membership; gifts \$60 and above qualify for a family membership. Donate easily and safely on-line at springcreekprairie.org.)

Total gift: \$ _____ (Check payable to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center)

Card # (MC/Visa) _____ Exp. date _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

- I do not want my name to be acknowledged in print materials.
 I do not want the National Audubon Society to add my name to its membership list it sends to carefully selected organizations whose mailings I might find of interest.

Send completed form to Spring Creek Prairie, P.O. Box 117, Denton, NE 68339



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 scp@audubon.org
 http://springcreekprairie.audubon.org

Open: Mon.-Fri. 9-5
 Sat.-Sun. 1-5
 All year, except major holidays
 Admission charge; Tuesdays free

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 Habitat Program Manager: Ben Mullarkey
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CALENDAR

| <u>JULY</u> | | <u>AUGUST (CONT'D)</u> | |
|---------------|---|------------------------|--|
| 11 | FIREFLY PICNIC | 30 | PRAIRIE CLUB |
| 12 | BUTTERFLY COUNT (PIONEERS PARK NATURE CENTER) | | <u>SEPTEMBER</u> |
| 26 | DISCOVERY LEADER TRAINING | 13 | TWILIGHT ON THE TALLGRASS |
| 26 | MOTH NIGHT | 28 | TASTES IN THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE CLUB |
| <u>AUGUST</u> | | <u>OCTOBER</u> | |
| 9 | MOONLIGHT RAMBLE | | |
| 28 | STEWARDSHIP BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING | 17-18 | EXHIBITS GRAND OPENING |
| 29 | FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS/STRATEGIC PLANNING | | |



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