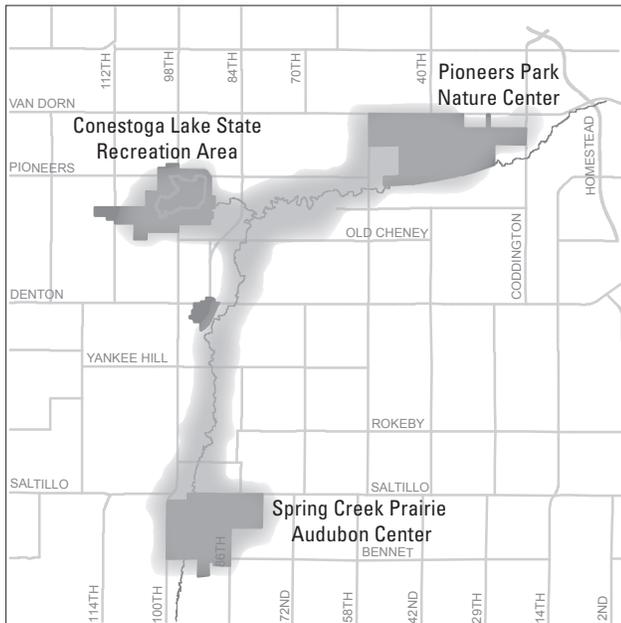


Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch Gains Momentum

Glynnis Collins, Center Director

At Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, we are thrilled to be partnering with the City of Lincoln and others in the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch, a 13-mile-long habitat corridor with multi-use trail. It will be a great community amenity and will introduce thousands of new people to Spring Creek Prairie and our conservation message.



Conceptual plan for the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch

The Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch was first conceptualized in the Lincoln and Lancaster County 2040 Comprehensive Plan as a corridor of native and restored tallgrass prairie spanning the area from Pioneer Park Nature Center to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. The corridor will also protect riparian areas, wetlands, and woodlands and will contain a multi-use recreational trail. This corridor will link two of the County's premier prairie education centers; provide habitat for grassland birds, pollinators, and other prairie wildlife; build upon the community's award-winning trail system; and celebrate the unique natural heritage of Nebraska.

Tallgrass prairie is one of the most threatened ecosystems in the U.S., with only 1% of what once covered vast swaths of the Great Plains remaining today. These prairies are the iconic landscape of Eastern Nebraska — our oceans and mountains

Support the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch!

Let the Lincoln City Council know by **December 18th** that you support the Prairie Corridor project.

You can contact the Lincoln City Council at (402) 441-7515, council@lincoln.ne.gov, or by mail at 555 S 10th St, Room 111, Lincoln, NE 68508.

A list of Council members and individual email addresses is at: <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/council/members.htm>

You can also express your support by attending the City Council public hearing.

When: December 18th beginning at 5:30 pm

Where: City Council Chambers at 555 S. 10th Street

— and we must work together to see that they are here to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Toward that end, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center, the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, the City of Lincoln, and the Lincoln Parks Foundation, along with over 20 other partners, have been working with willing landowners to preserve this habitat through purchase of land and easements in the area. The project has been funded primarily through grant and matching funds, including Nebraska Environmental Trust grants in 2013 and 2016. The project envisions a "priority area" of about 7,600 acres. At project inception, about 4,500 of these acres were already protected either through ownership or easement. Since the project kicked off in 2013, over 800 additional acres have been preserved, including nearly 90 acres of virgin prairie. Restoration and enhancement work has been undertaken on several of these properties with over 100 acres of

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farmland reseeded to high diversity tallgrass prairie, 80 acres of invasive red cedar trees removed, and additional activity undertaken to increase plant diversity and improve much needed habitat.

The project is now entering a new phase. The groundwork that has been laid over the past several years has established the foundation for the project moving forward. It's time to capitalize on that momentum and passion as we work to fully realize this vision for future generations.

The Lincoln Parks Foundation has convened a Prairie Corridor Cabinet, made up of 16 community members who are involved in important community development and environmental work. Chaired by Michael Forsberg, this Cabinet will continue to spread the word about the project and provide resources and guidance

in realizing the vision. Additional individuals have been identified to serve as Resource Group members for the project. These are community members who have particular knowledge or interest that could be valuable in the areas of education, natural resources, land and easements, economic development, and trails. These Resource Groups may be called upon to advise and guide the project, according to their interest and expertise, as it develops.

In the near term, the Lincoln City Council will be holding a public hearing to consider multiple items relating to this project, including a long-term Cooperation Agreement between the City of Lincoln and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. See below for hearing details and ways to express your support for the project.

Letter from the Director

Glynnis Collins

As the seasons change and a new year approaches, I'd like to thank you for your commitment to tallgrass prairie conservation. You've supported another year of growth and improvement — of our prairie, our programs, and our organization. I hope you enjoy an unusual format for our year-end review on p5.



Habitat Management

The prairie, especially near the visitors center, was particularly beautiful this summer and fall. Habitat Manager Ed Hubbs included areas close to the building in his spring burning rotation. With a great team of volunteers, it went off without a hitch. July rains came at just the right time for our native grasses to really flourish in the burned areas, and we had a great display for schoolchildren and other visitors (like Tastes in the Tallgrass guests, p4).

Habitat volunteers were essential to conduct safe and effective prescribed burns, and to control the spread of invasive musk thistle and other plants. Four summer student interns were especially helpful with controlling shrubs and managing the cattle that graze different areas of the prairie as part of our habitat management.

A new Geographic Information System will make planning our habitat work more efficient and will make it much easier to keep track of the effects of our activities on plants and birds.

Education and Outreach

This year, Community Education Director Jason St. Sauver worked with new partners to offer new and more programs, with the particular goal of reaching "beyond the choir" and connecting with new and more diverse audiences.

His "The B's" program in May saw a weekend of nature walks, workshops, and beer tasting, both here at the prairie and in town, that saw us working with old partners like the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, and developing new relationships, such as with Blue Blood Brewery. Over 80 people enjoyed last February's "For the Birds" cabaret, an afternoon of top notch bird-themed musical performances. This summer we hosted a running club's trail run — we hope to see more of that community here in the future.

Along with the new, we carried on with our core youth education programs, helped tremendously by the presence of our first seasonal educator, Andrea Bornemeier (p 6). Hundreds of students participated in camp programs this summer, many of them for daily visits over the course of a week through our partnership with Lincoln's Community Learning Centers. As usual, our late August through October schedule was filled with Prairie Immersion field trips. One of our volunteer Discovery Leaders who helped with Prairie Immersion this year shares her story on p7.

* * *

Next year marks the twentieth anniversary of Audubon's purchase of the O'Brien Ranch, what is now Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. I look forward to a year of reflection on how far we have come in restoring a precious piece of Eastern Nebraska's native landscape, and to ambitious projects, like the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor (cover story), by which we can increase our impact.

We've done amazing things together, and we'll continue to work together for birds, wildlife, and future generations.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glynnis Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Glynnis Collins
Center Director

Instilling a Sense of Wonder, One Fourth Grader at a Time

Ashley Alred, Volunteer Discovery Leader

As soon as I step out of the car and my feet hit the familiar gravel of the Spring Creek Prairie parking lot, a welcome feeling of calm washes over me. I pause for a moment to take in the surroundings: breathe in the crisp morning air, hear the tinkling melody of the songbirds, and admire how the once striking greens, blues, and yellows of the summer prairie have faded to the relaxed, equally beautiful brown fall hues. Soon though, the air is to be filled with the sights and sounds of something quite different: the bubbling chatter of exuberant fourth graders eager to explore the prairie ecosystem.

Through the Prairie Immersion program, fourth-grade students from all over Lincoln travel to Spring Creek Prairie each fall to learn about the wildlife, plants, and history of Nebraska's tallgrass prairie. As a Discovery Leader, I am part of a team of volunteers who have the joy of sharing the endless wonders of the prairie with new students each week.

Guiding students through the prairie is always an adventure. You know there's something enchanting about the prairie when you barely move two feet down the trail before kids shout that they found something amazing. Have they found a painted turtle laying eggs? A newborn fawn nestled in the grass? A breathtaking snake sunning in the path? No, it's not usually these grand sightings, although they indeed happen on occasion. Rather, they're likely pointing out the fluffy "cotton" of the milkweed; the tiny, orange, checkered beetles clustered on a sunflower; or the curious "purple pineapple plant" (which is the alternative name for thistle, in case you weren't aware). The kids find magic in the smallest things! Few of these students are able to enjoy natural areas like the prairie on



Discovery Leader Ashley Alred

a regular basis — this may indeed be their first exposure — so, the seemingly insignificant things that even the leaders might overlook are actually mesmerizing discoveries waiting for the fourth graders to unveil. Seeing the world through their eyes is so exciting!

Teaching these classes has been like a giant act of sharing. I facilitate fun lessons where kids lead their own discoveries and engage in meaningful learning, while I soak up the infectious joy and laughter that the prairie brings out in them. My career path has been winding these past few years, and the simple act of volunteering as a Discovery Leader once a week this fall has confirmed my passion for a career in environmental education. I feel that cultivating in youth a connection to nature is one of the ultimate ways to serve our world, and I thank Spring Creek Prairie for providing this rewarding opportunity to do so. The prairie is alive with vibrant color, mysterious sounds, and an altogether captivating energy that creates a truly unique and special learning experience for all.

Ending 2017 with a Win-Win

Mari Lane Gewecke, Board Chair

As the year comes to an end, there are many opportunities for making a gift to your favorite tallgrass prairie!

Matching

If your company matches employee donations, you can double both your gift and the impact you make in conserving the earth's biological diversity through tallgrass prairie.

Appreciated Stock

Gifts of appreciated stock give you a tax break and a charitable contribution, and help Spring Creek Prairie continue our mission to conserve and restore the natural ecosystem.

Gifts of IRA

If you are 70½ or older and have an IRA, you can transfer the IRA to Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center — tax free — and support our efforts to help children experience nature with all their senses.

Start a Recurring Gift

A convenient and easy way to give is to set up an automatic monthly donation with a credit card or bank account. The giving is painless, and you will make a lasting contribution and provide Spring Creek Prairie with a steady stream of revenue.

Cash

Oh yes! Gifts by check or credit card are always welcome and appreciated. You can even donate online at springcreekprairie.audubon.org.

A gift of cash, securities, or other assets before the end of the year can provide you with significant tax deductions as well as the satisfaction that comes from making a difference for birds, other wildlife, and their habitats.

We thank you for your support!

Tremendous "Tastes!"

Our 2017 Tastes in the Tallgrass fundraiser was a huge success. Raising over \$40,000 for our education and conservation programs, it was the second-most profitable in the event's ten-year history. Our gratitude and thanks go to event co-chairs Chris Zygielbaum and Kim Morock.

Our prairie was looking especially lovely this year. Spring burns near the visitor center followed up with some well-timed July rains had the big bluestem showing off its spectacular height, eight-to-ten feet high, making a particularly bold impression to guests as to what they are supporting.

Lively musical numbers from the Lightning Bugs (featuring our own Jason "the Birdnerd" St. Sauver) had toes tapping. Jason also emcee'd, keeping the energy going during the short program and into the rousing live auction with auctioneer Tom Bassett that ended the evening.

We're grateful to the auction committee, chaired by our stewardship board secretary Deb Dahab. Thanks to their planning and creativity, and all the wonderful people and organizations who donated to the live and silent auctions.

Thanks to all of you who supported the event. **And mark your calendars for next year's Tastes, Sunday, September 16, 2018, as we mark Spring Creek Prairie's 20th anniversary!**



(L to R) Jim Pipher, Reynold Peterson, and Steve Hanson — the Lightning Bugs — having a good time entertaining the crowd.



Attitude on Food of Omaha provided a delicious meal.



Guests enjoyed beautiful weather and great company while supporting tallgrass conservation!



A beautiful auction item.



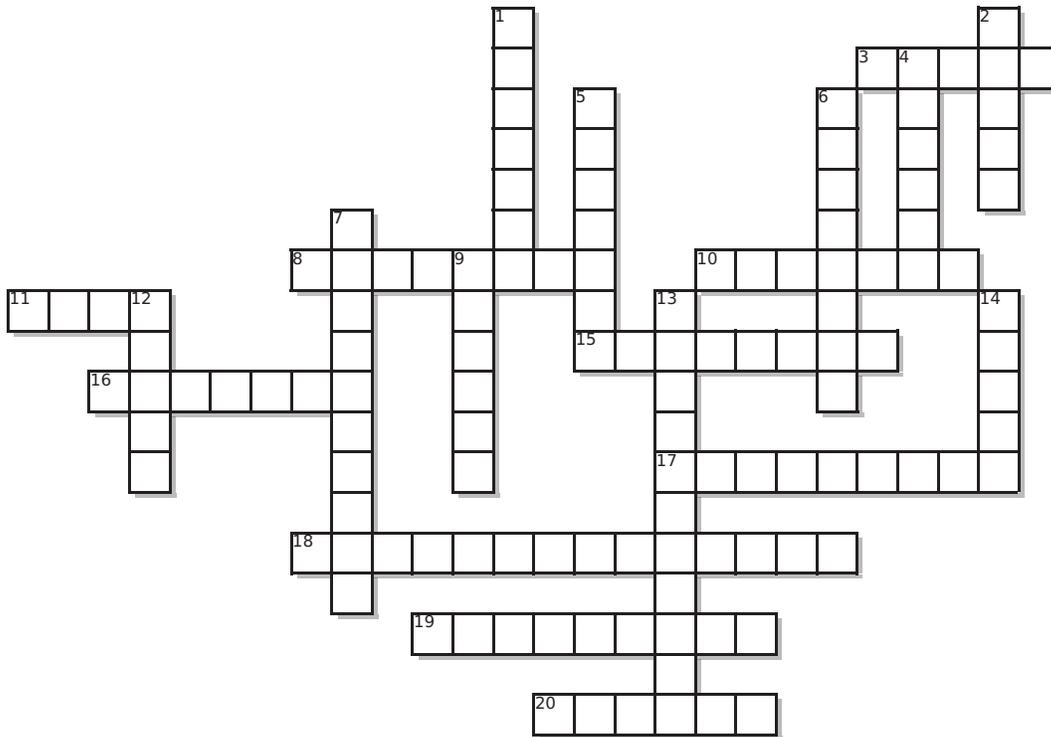
Refreshments ready to be poured.

All photos by Linda Jones. Thank you, Linda!

A Spring Creek Year in Review

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

Have you been keeping up with The Prairie Sage throughout 2017? If so, puzzling out some of the year's highlights should be a snap! IF you need a little help, the solution is on page 7. Thank you for another great year of connecting people with nature and preserving Nebraska's native tallgrass prairie!



ACROSS

- 3 Our "Words 4 Birds" program happened during this month, in celebration of National Poetry Month
- 8 "Let's Go Birding _____" (LGBT outreach project)s
- 10 Sun blocker; or, our most attended event on the prairie, ever!
- 11 Ed's favorite management tool, used on 90 acres in 2017
- 15 Our first seasonal _____, Andrea, helped with all sorts of education programs.
- 16 2017 marked our most successful Give to _____ Day
- 17 The type of prairie that grows along Spring Creek
- 18 One who is frightened of the tallgrass, or, live one released on the prairie this year — paper one made for us by local artist Meghan Stratman
- 19 Nebraska Statewide _____ (The B's event partner last spring)
- 20 Experience-gathering student, four of whom helped out in prairie management this past summer

DOWN

- 1 Insect monitored on milkweed plants
- 2 "For the _____" (cabaret music event held in February)
- 4 Spring Creek Prairie is part of National Audubon Society's _____ for the bird habitat in landscaping
- 5 1,200 Lincoln Public Schools 4th grade student explored the tallgrass during the _____ immersion program
- 6 The Haines Beach Prairie _____ (Spring Creek Prairie is partnering with the City of Lincoln and others on this future hike/bike trail)
- 7 Unpaid, dedicated supporters who helped Spring Creek Prairie pick up trash, pull thistles, explore with kids, and more!
- 9 Short name for our annual fundraising dinner, which made over \$40,000!
- 12 Community science database of bird sightings from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- 13 Invasive "poker" pulled and dug by staff and volunteers
- 14 Lincoln's Community Learning Centers partner with us to provide students with these week-long summer programs

New Exhibit for Birds and Birdwatchers

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

We're excited to announce a new exhibit soon to be added in the Grand Prairie Hall at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center: an eBird Trail Tracker kiosk! The kiosk is a touch-screen interactive computer that visitors of all ages can use to enter bird sightings, learn about birds, and more.

eBird has been around since 2002. A project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, it is a database of bird sightings from all over the world. The data have been used by birders and scientists alike and, along with Christmas Bird Count data, are key in the climate change plans for the National Audubon Society. The interface is simple and easy, and the data are easily accessible in many report formats.

The kiosk will be a fun and informative way for visitors to use eBird, but it will be much more than a bird sightings computer. The kiosk will also work as an interactive field guide with information about our local bird species – from pictures and range maps to sounds and descriptions. And, most exciting, the kiosk will allow the user to put a point on the Spring Creek Prairie trail map to show other users where they saw a certain bird. For example, someone spots a Greater Prairie-Chicken on a stroll through the tall grass. When the person comes back in from their walk, the sighting can be entered into the kiosk and the location marked on the trail map. Then, the next visitors who stop through can use the kiosk to see not only what birds are being seen, but where they were seen!

The kiosk will be used for education programs as well, such as the Christmas Bird Count for Kids, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and seasonal bird walks throughout the year.

Come check out the kiosk in the New Year!



Jason is so excited about our new eBird Trail Tracker!



Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival

March 22–25, 2018

Bringing together hundreds of crane lovers from around the country to Kearney, Nebraska, 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!

ne.audubon.org/birds/crane-festival



Welcome, Brad!

This November, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center welcomed a new Development Coordinator, Brad Anderson. Brad has been a supporter and frequent visitor to the prairie for many years. Regular readers may remember his poem about viewing the solar eclipse here that was published in the last issue of The Prairie Sage.

Brad comes to us with a deep experience in sales for Windstream. He is also an experienced and successful advocate for good causes, having twice won Lincoln United Way's Speaker of the Year award.

We're delighted to have someone with Brad's skill set and deep connection with the prairie and our mission on the team. I look forward to introducing him to many of you in the coming months.



*Development Coordinator
Brad Anderson*

Thank you, Andrea!

Glynnis Collins, Center Director

Thanks to a generous gift, this fall we were able to hire a temporary seasonal educator to assist Jason St. Sauver during our education program's busiest season. Andrea Bornemeier joined us in August and finished her three-month term in November.

Andrea came to us having recently retired from a career with the National Parks Service. Her most recent post was at Homestead National Monument in Beatrice. For Andrea, the seasonal educator position was a chance to get back to her passion – connecting young people with the natural world. This is how her career with the National Parks Service started, but she was quickly promoted out of the field and into administrative positions.

Andrea was a perfect match for our needs – her experience meant she was ready to go from day one, day one being the day of the total solar eclipse and the unexpectedly large crowd who came to the prairie to view it. Her help was critical during Prairie Immersion, the 9-week program that had almost 1,200 Lincoln Public Schools fourth graders attending a field trip at Spring Creek Prairie. With Andrea teaching every day, Jason was able to take more time to observe the program in progress and check in with the teachers. This helped him provide more feedback to the volunteer Discovery Leaders, identify ways to improve training, and respond to input from the teachers.

Andrea also helped with many other activities on our fall calendar: planning for Taste in the Tallgrass and our fall festival, creating new activities for existing programs and events, and reviewing the general supplies inventory and restocking after the busy summer and fall field trip seasons.

While we miss her daily presence at the center already, we are looking forward to seeing her regularly as a returning volunteer!

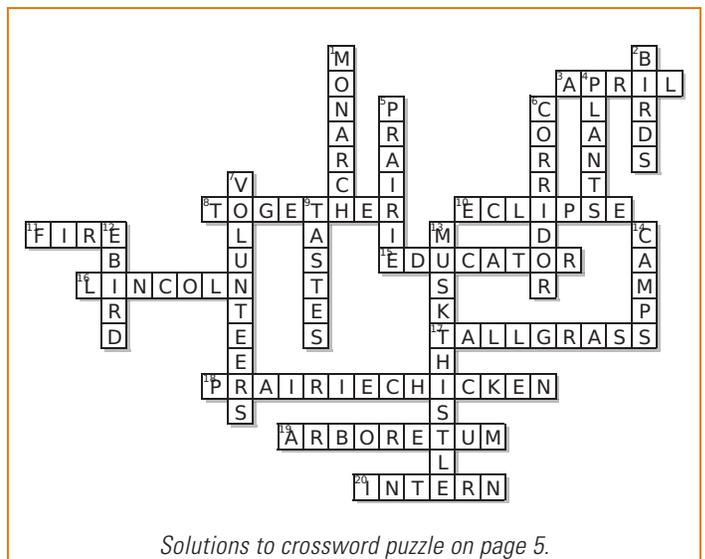


*Seasonal Educator
Andrea Bornemeier*

Ode To Spring Creek Prairie

Oh Spring Creek, my most beloved prairie.
Your rocky glacial remains remind me
of history present now. Your purple flowers
hide low along the path's edge away
from the bruising wind. Oh, the wind,
what makes this state livable in summer,
where I wonder if the bird songs go as far
as you blow. Your heat on my forehead
warning me, warming me,
impacts the dry brown clay. Your owls
invisible, ask me who I am. My cooling
tea reminds me of last summer's baking
days, only quenched by such foreign ice
cold water bottles. Even the beetles
were intrigued. A hint of
a scent of toast, I won't describe
like a fine wine, where the buttering
sun reminds me of your last
year's black burn, your rebirth
Spring Creek, your rebirth.
Your shrub branches jail the sky,
almost at arms' length, and I am
curious if your old dry winter
grass, still bedded down from the weight
of the season, welcomes the new green.
As I almost climb to the top
of your distant hilly curves,
I wonder when I will return,
when I will see
your rippled earth again.

Vicky MacDonald Harris
April 2017



Solutions to crossword puzzle on page 5.

Upcoming Events at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Thursday, December 28

Saturday, January 6

Saturday, January 27

Friday, February 16

Saturday, February 17

Sunday, February 18

March 22 – 25

CBC4Kids! (Xmas Bird Count for Kids), 10 – 12 noon

Winter Walkabout, 2 – 3:30 pm

Snug-as-a-Bug, 10 – 12 noon *

Great Backyard Bird Count, 10 – 12 noon

Great Backyard Bird Count, 10 – 12 noon

eBird Workshops, 1 – 2:30 (kids/families); 3 – 4:30 (adults)

Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival (Kearney) *

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)

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.

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

Amy Plettner - Caretaker

Brad Anderson - Development Coordinator

Stewardship Board

Brianne Bayer

Bruce Johnson

Cindy Morris

Judy Carter

Sue Kirkpatrick

Adrian Olivera

Deb Dahab

Mari Lane Gewecke

Scott Stuckey

Judy Dougherty

Liz Lange

Tom Tallman

Jeff Hagaman

Jenni Lesoing-Lucs

Larry Williams

Jeff Jewell

Marilyn Moore

Audubon Nebraska Staff

Bill Taddicken - Interim Director

Wish List

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

Clover Point-of-Sale system for gift shop

Nest/feeder camera

Hardhat with hearing protection for chain-sawing

Post hole digger

Hedge clippers (2 or more)

Fencing pliers (2 or more)

Head lamp (2 or more)

Culvert for a low water crossing

Water tank for cattle

Boot cleaner station (please call for requested model)

New roof for caretaker house

CONTACT US:

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Denton, NE 68339

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

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.