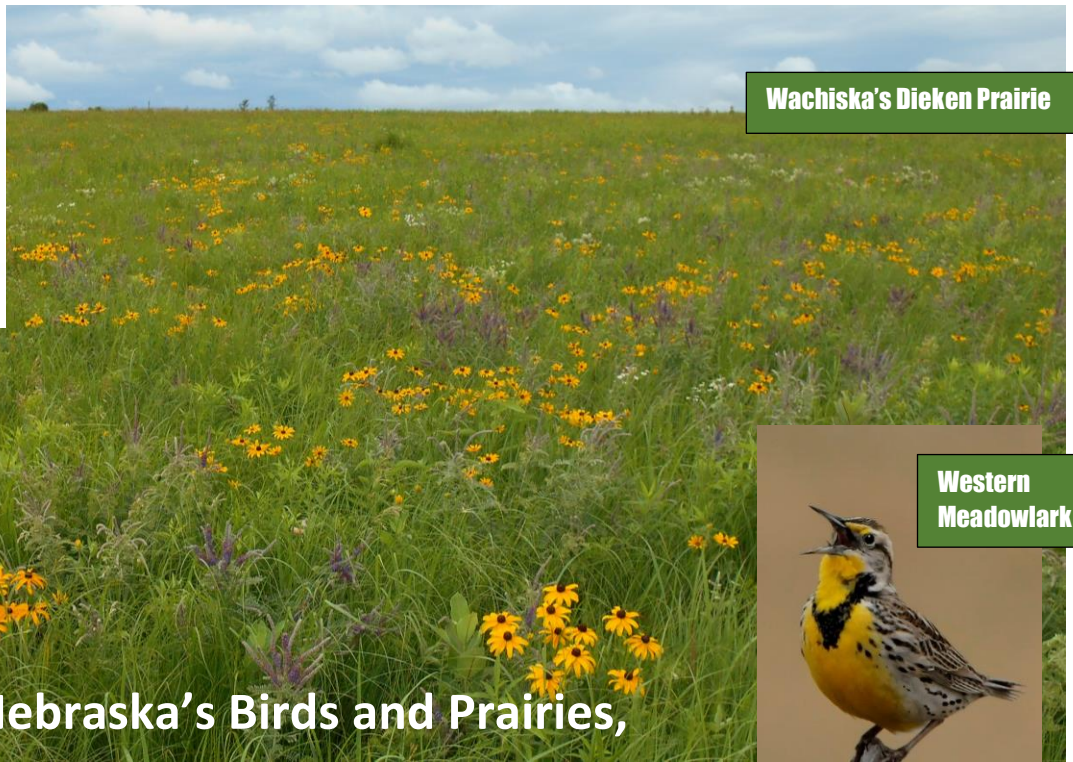




Wachiska  
Audubon Society



Wachiska's Dieken Prairie

## Dear Friend of Nebraska's Birds and Prairies,

Birds around the world are in nothing short of a full-blown crisis. National Audubon reports we've lost more than a quarter of North American birds in the last 50 years, with steep declines even in traditionally abundant birds.

Here in Nebraska, we face a similar crisis, not only losing birds, but losing the tallgrass prairie habitat that is critical to the survival of many birds, butterflies, plants, and insects that rely on prairies for nesting, migration...and survival.

For the past 40 years, Wachiska Audubon Society volunteers have made a substantial impact in Southeast Nebraska. Wachiska now protects nearly 1,000 acres of tallgrass prairie both through direct ownership and through the monitoring of 23 conservation easements on prairies owned by others. But this prairie habitat, while protected, is still threatened. Wachiska's many management responsibilities (detailed on the back cover), long met by volunteers alone, have grown to the extent that we have determined through a year-long review we must hire a professional Prairie Habitat Manager to continue to meet our many responsibilities.

In 2020, Wachiska will be finalizing plans to hire a Prairie Habitat Manager and applying for grants to support the cost of this position (more on that on the next page). While we have been anticipating and fundraising for this effort for several years, we have a year-end goal of raising \$30,000 specifically to be used as grant-matching funds in 2020.

**That's why we're asking, urging, appealing to you to take immediate action by making a special donation. By giving a year-end contribution before our December 31<sup>st</sup> deadline, you can make a difference at a time when Southeast Nebraska's birds and prairies have never needed you more.**

## DECEMBER GOAL: RAISE \$30,000

**To build our Prairie Management Fund, specifically to use as grant-matching funds needed in 2020.**



Western Meadowlark



Western Prairie Fringed Orchid on Dieken Prairie

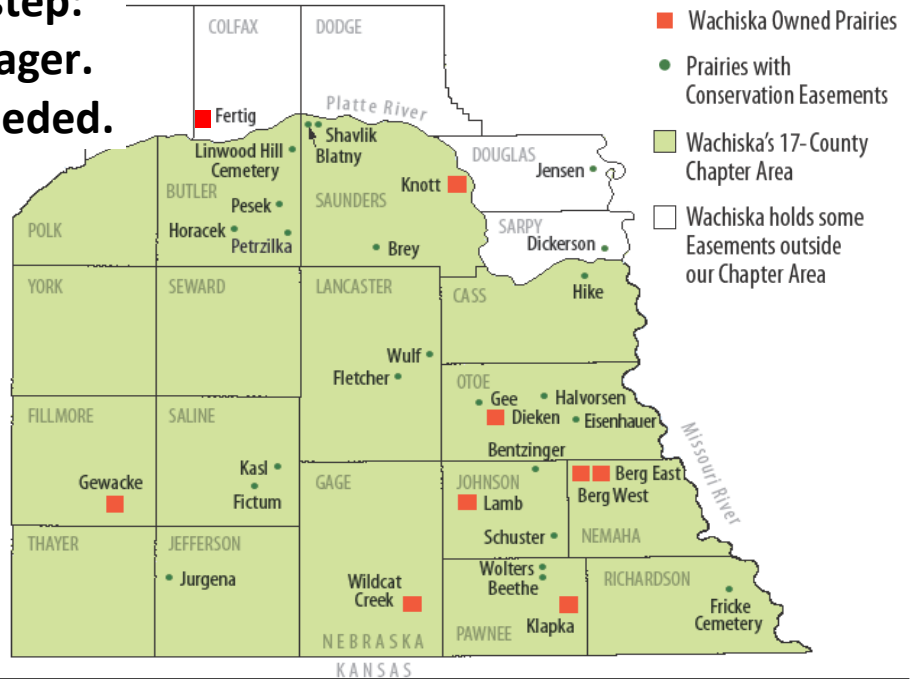


Giant Swallowtail on Klapka Prairie

# We're finally taking the big step: Hiring a Prairie Habitat Manager. Your donation is urgently needed.

In 2018, the Wachiska Board of Directors authorized the formation of a temporary committee, the Prairie Conservation Review Committee (PCRC), tasked with reviewing how Wachiska will continue to meet the growing responsibilities we have managing both the nine prairies we own and the 23 other prairies on which Wachiska monitors and enforces conservation easements.

The full PCRC met in March and November of 2019, and sub-committees detailed our responsibilities and investigated management options. Meetings with potential partners—National Audubon, Spring Creek Prairie, local NRDs, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Prairie Plains Resource Institute, Lauritzen Gardens, and many individuals associated with our prairies—clarified our options.



The prairies owned by Wachiska and the prairie conservation easements we monitor and enforce are spread over a 16-county area in Southeast Nebraska. Currently, Wachiska volunteers drive thousands of miles and donate hundreds of hours each year, a volunteer effort which is not sustainable as our responsibilities grow.

The outcome of this year's work is clear; to responsibly meet our obligations, Wachiska must supplement our volunteer prairie management with additional contracted services, including hiring a Prairie Habitat Manager.

Work has begun on:

- Writing the Prairie Habitat Manager job description
- Developing a three-year budget for all contracted work
- Identifying and applying for grants to support this effort

## Our goal this month is to raise \$30,000

to build our Prairie Management Fund specifically to be used as grant-matching funds in 2020. Potential funders need to know that Wachiska supporters care about and back this effort, and your donation is crucial. Please use the enclosed reply envelope to mail your year-end donation or use PayPal or credit card online at [www.WachiskaAudubon.org](http://www.WachiskaAudubon.org)

Please note *Prairie Preservation* on your donation.



Wachiska Audubon has received funding from a variety of organizations and our ability to show the support of our community and provide matching funding is key to continued support!

If you have any questions about Wachiska's Prairie Preservation efforts, how funds are being used, or ways to give, you may call Donor Development Chair Elizabeth Nelson at 402-770-3485.



Ironweed

*"Since [our] very beginning, Wachiska has made use of NET funds to protect native prairies. The long-term goal is to make these kinds of grasslands available in every county in Southeastern Nebraska. Much more needs to be done. Hopefully NET will be able to continue this work for the next 25 years."*

From The Nebraska Environmental Trust 2018 Annual Report



**Wachiska**  
Audubon Society

*Wachiska Audubon Society's vision: To share the experience and love of nature—that life may flourish in all its natural diversity*

# The Babbling Brook

*Our 46th Year of Protecting Nature 1973 - 2019*

**DECEMBER 2019**

**Volume 28 - Issue 12**

**Annual Holiday Potluck — Thursday, December 12, 6:00 p.m., Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street, Lincoln**

## Platte Basin Timelapse: A Watershed in Motion

*by Michael Forsberg and cast*

The Platte Basin Timelapse project (PBT) has been in motion since early 2011. PBT is a long-term documentary project using time-lapse and traditional photography and multimedia storytelling to educate people about where Nebraska's water comes from and what it means to live in a watershed.



**Mike Forsberg**

In this ensemble presentation, conservation photographer and co-founder **Mike Forsberg** will first reflect on PBT as it approaches its 10-year mark. **Mike Farrell**, long-time Lincoln conservation leader and photographer, will share his thoughts. UNL graduate students **Grant Reiner**, **Ethan Freese**, and **Brooke Talbott** will each show their own projects working in collaboration with PBT. Grant will present his multimedia work from western Nebraska's Wildcat Hills. Ethan's multimedia work is from the Prairie Corridor along Haines Branch, and Brooke will explain her work on Marsh Wren, a saline wetland restoration project just north of Lincoln.



**Grant Reiner**

At the Platte Basin Timelapse, we are trying to mentor and grow the next

generation of conservation storytellers here in Nebraska. Our world needs them now more than ever. Join us as we share the wild beauty of Nebraska as seen through their eyes, and why it all matters.



**Ethan Freese**

The Platte Basin Timelapse project tells stories of the Platte River Basin using innovative multimedia content. The long-term documentary project uses more than 60 time-lapse camera systems placed throughout the 90,000 square-mile basin, from its headwaters in the Colorado Rockies to the river's confluence with the Missouri River on Nebraska's eastern border.



**Brooke Talbott**

**These are stories of our most precious resource: water.**

Join Wachiska and the crew of

PBT at our annual holiday potluck and silent auction on **Thursday, December 12**, at the Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street, in Lincoln. We'll gather at **6:00 p.m.** to begin with our potluck supper, so bring a favorite dish or two to share along with your own table service, including a cup or glass and serving utensils for your shared food. Drinks will be provided. There is no cost and reservations are not needed. If you cannot make the potluck supper, the multimedia photography program will begin around 7:30 p.m.



**Mike Farrell**

**A silent auction will be ongoing throughout the evening, so bring your checkbook and pick up some fine gifts and relics. If you have items to donate for the auction, contact the Wachiska office right away.**

### Calendar

#### December

- 2 Education Committee, Wachiska office, 6:00 p.m.
- 9 Conservation Committee, Wachiska office, 5:30 p.m.
- 12 Annual Holiday Potluck, Unitarian Church, 6:00 p.m.; program by Michael Forsberg & cast on Platte Basin Timelapse; ongoing silent auction
- 13 Newsletter submission deadline, Wachiska office, 5:00 p.m. (note date due to holidays)
- 17 Board Meeting, Wachiska office, 7:00 p.m.
- 19 Legislation Committee, DaVinci's, 11th & G sts., 6:00 p.m.
- 28 Lincoln Area Christmas Bird Count (page 2)



## Field Trip

by John Carlini, Field Trip Chair

### October Field Trip Report A Treat for Tree Huggers

by John Carlini and Shari Schwartz

It's hard to imagine anyone else in our area who has as much knowledge about trees, along with a determined passion to advocate on their behalf, as Richard Sutton who led a captivating tour at Maxwell Arboretum on the October field trip. Dr. Sutton shared a wealth of information ranging from interesting facts about different species, to how to select the appropriate trees for challenging urban soil conditions, to the history behind some of the individual trees featured in the arboretum. He encouraged us to urge our city leaders and Council members to devote more resources towards filling the backlog of trees that need to be planted in Lincoln. Some of the trees we viewed were adorned with rich fall colors, while others were hopping with a diversity of birds on what turned out to be a lovely sunny morning.



European Linden

### Next Steps Toward Wachiska's Future

by Theresa Pella, Vice President

The August 2019 *Babbling Brook* included an article summarizing input the Board received during the June Open Forum to help prepare for a strategic planning session to be held in early 2020. Progress continues as the Board researches potential grants that could help offset related expenses. Recently, a \$2,500 grant from the Lincoln Community Foundation was received. An application to National Audubon through the Audubon in Action program has been submitted as well as additional applications to a couple of local foundations. As we eagerly await news, a request for proposal to hire a strategic planning consultant is being drafted for release in December.

Wachiska's current vision statement appears on the front page of every *Babbling Brook*: "To share the experience and love of nature—that life may flourish in all its natural diversity." Members, Friends of Wachiska, peers, and community, as the future moves closer, take a moment to look back and let the Board know where you think Wachiska has been successful, as well as what you believe the organization should be doing 10 years from now, why, and what it will take to get there. You can email your thoughts and ideas to me at [pella\\_t@yahoo.com](mailto:pella_t@yahoo.com).

## 120th Christmas Bird Count Just Around the Corner

by Jason St. Sauver, Director of Education & Outreach  
Audubon Nebraska

The Christmas Bird Count is celebrating its 120th season this winter from December 14 to January 5. This is the longest-running community science project in and around Nebraska. We have 11 circles being counted across the state including our very own Lincoln circle which will be counted on **Saturday, December 28**. The counting team will meet at 8:00 a.m. at Pioneers Park Nature Center and split up from there to parks and neighborhoods all around Lincoln. At 5:30 p.m. there will be a social event for all counters at the Unitarian Church to report on sightings and enjoy food and conversation. I will be the count's coordinator this year, so if you are looking to help out and count, email [jstsauver@audubon.org](mailto:jstsauver@audubon.org).



Community Science is a project that everyone in the community can take part in and enjoy, and the Christmas Bird Count is no different. All are welcome to join the fun. We'll have a special shorter count around Pioneers Park Nature Center especially for families wanting to participate with young birders. Also, no need to be an experienced bird expert, we can match you up with a team that can help you count and learn. And, if you don't have your own binoculars, let us know and we can loan you some.

The Christmas Bird Count is a long-standing way for volunteer community members to help scientists know how our bird populations are doing. With recent climate reports showing our feathered friends to be in real trouble, there is no better time than now to get involved in this community science effort.

For more about the history of the Christmas Bird Count, check out the National Audubon Society's website at [audubon.org/cbc](http://audubon.org/cbc), and we hope to see you on Saturday, December 28!

### Olympic Birdfest this Spring

Olympic Birdfest 2020 will take place April 17-19. Enjoy guided birding trips, boat tours, live auction, raffle, gala banquet, and more. The featured speaker will be Scott Pearson, researcher in ecology, marine biology, and zoology at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Join our festival pre-trip: a three-day, two-night birding/sightseeing cruise of the San Juan Islands April 14-16, or extend your festival with the Neah Bay post-trip on April 19-21, three days exploring northwest coastal Washington. To learn more and register, visit [www.olympicbirdfest.org](http://www.olympicbirdfest.org).



White-breasted  
Nuthatch



**Crane Festival 2020**

We're excited to invite you to participate in Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival on March 20 - 21, 2020. In its 50th year, it brings together crane lovers from around the country to Kearney. Join us to enjoy 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!

To learn more about the festival's line-up of exciting concurrent sessions and field trips, visit Audubon Nebraska's festival page. Registration fee for this year's festival is \$150/adult, \$60/student, and \$20/child. Festival registration provides Saturday breakfast, lunch, and evening banquet plus access to all speakers and concurrent sessions. All field trips must be purchased separately. Registration will go live for the general public December 9, so reserve your spot before time runs out! If you have trouble with the registration system, call Spring Creek Prairie at 402-797-2301 and ask for Kevin.

## Cookie Bakers Are Appreciated

*by Cheryl Moncure, Hospitality Chair*

A heartfelt thank you to those who provided delicious cookies shared at our general meetings this past year. Our volunteer list has been shrinking the past few years, so new bakers are needed and welcome! If you can donate cookies in 2020, call me at 402-488-0036. You can even choose the month(s) you wish!



Thanks to these folks for treats in 2019:

Dennis King  
Bob Boyce  
Mascha Miedaner  
Cheryl Moncure  
Judi Cook  
Joe Francis

Judy Gibson  
Camy Svoboda  
Betty Safranek  
Starla Schleicher  
Joyce Vannier  
Audrey Rousek

## Gray Ghost

*by Richard Peterson*

Today it's called the northern harrier and before that the marsh hawk. It's in the Family Accipitridae, scientific name: *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*. Parts of Europe and Asia are home to a conspecific relative, *C. c. cyaneus*, commonly called the hen harrier.

Raptors never fail to hold my attention. Not for their size or distinctive plumage, but that they always seem to be in control, and in very close proximity to their next meal. In Nebraska during the summer months, these birds are readily seen in northern Garden County, southern Sheridan, and Cherry counties where there are extensive marshes.



**Northern Harrier**

An owl-like facial disk and a white patch on the rump set this raptor apart. It is 16" - 24" long, with a wingspan of 38" - 48". It hunts over open fields, grasslands, moist meadows, and weedy ditches and has been seen hunting on the edge of grass fires. They commonly stand on the ground but also perch on

elevated clumps of earth, low vegetation, or fence posts. The northern harrier may be confused with the rough-legged hawk which does not course low over fields but hunts from a perch or by hovering. Perched juveniles may be confused with the northern goshawk and Swainson's hawk.

Northern harriers are aerial hunters at low altitude, not soaring overhead like many raptors. They rely on acute hearing and vision, again owl-like. They fly slow and low (usually under 20 feet), flapping and gliding, then quartering back and forth over low vegetation. Although active during the day, they are more so during the crepuscular hours, and they may suspend hunting all together when it's hot. They feed on small mammals, frogs, voles, rats, snakes, small birds, large insects, and carrion. Although *Microtus* voles are a favorite in parts of its range, small prairie birds seem to be a favorite of the male. Ducklings also make easy pickings.

Harriers breed throughout the northern part of the U.S. and Canada. The nest is built on the ground, is up to 30 inches in diameter, and is constructed of twigs, sticks, and grass. Frequently they are gregarious, semi-colonial, if you will. As many as six nests have been spotted in a square mile. They are one of the few raptors where males mate with more than one female. Nesting on the ground leaves them open to predation on their eggs and nestlings by skunks, raccoons, foxes, badgers, crows, ravens, coyotes, owls, and domestic dogs. I wish they could figure out how to nest somewhere else, like in a tree along a water course. Migration is at high altitudes, sometimes at night, to the southern U.S., Mexico, and Central America.

## Pumpkin Bird Feeder Makes a Happy Harvest for Birds

(from National Audubon's website)

Halloween, harvest festivals, and general autumnal celebrations lead to an abundance of everyone's fall favorite: pumpkins. While you partake in pumpkin spice lattes, why not share some gourd indulgences with the birds? This bird feeder is the perfect use of an extra or post-trick-or-treat pumpkin.

### Materials:

- Small- to medium-sized pumpkin, up to 10 pounds
- Small sticks
- Twine or rope
- Birdseed



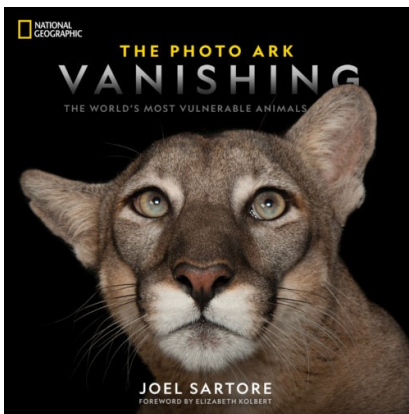
### Steps:

1. Cut the pumpkin in half.
2. Scoop out the seeds, leaving a hollow inside with 1/2-inch thick shell wall.
3. Insert two sticks across the open pumpkin to create perches for the birds.
4. Knot two lengths of rope together at the center and tack the knot to the bottom of the pumpkin feeder. Hang the other ends of the rope in your chosen feeder location.
5. Fill with birdseed.

## Latest Photo Ark Book Available

Joel Sartore's quest to photograph all the animal species under human care celebrates its 15th year with a glorious and heart-wrenching collection of photographs in his latest book, *The Photo Ark Vanishing: The World's Most Vulnerable Animals*.

The animals featured in these pages are either destined for extinction or already are extinct in the wild but still alive today, thanks to the dedication of heroic groups committed to their continued survival. From the majestic Sumatran rhinoceros to the tiny Salt Creek tiger beetle, the photographs bring us eye-to-eye with the kaleidoscopic diversity of shapes, colors, personalities, and attitudes of the animal world.



Order online at <https://www.joelsartore.com/store/>.

All proceeds will go directly to funding the Photo Ark Project.

## Winter Programs at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

by Kevin Poague, Operations Manager  
Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

Winter Solstice Yoga Workshop – Saturday, December 21, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Winter is a natural time to allow ourselves a moment to be still and turn our attention inward—making time to move into the New Year with intention. Join Brienne Bayer as we honor the transition from fall to winter with a peaceful practice combining intention setting, deeply relaxing Yin postures (including the use of seasonal essential oils), and a guided meditation to center the body and mind. Bring a yoga mat, water bottle, and dress in comfortable clothing (preferably in layers). Warm apple cider will be served following the practice. \$20/person. Space is limited, no walk-ins. Online registration is required. Purchase tickets at our Events page at <https://springcreek.audubon.org/>. More about Brienne Bayer at [roamingomyoga.com](http://roamingomyoga.com).

Winter Walkabout – Saturday, January 4, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Our first exploration of the prairie in the New Year! Join us for this leisurely stroll through the winter tallgrass looking for animal tracks and chat about what birds and beasts do to survive the winter. Free admission (donations welcome).

NOTE: Spring Creek Prairie will be closed Thursday and Friday, November 28 - 29 (Thanksgiving) and December 25 - January 1. We will reopen with regular hours on January 2, 2020. Call 402-797-2301 for information.

## Save Those Unwanted Calendars

Again this time of year Wachiska is collecting and recycling unwanted calendars. We've found that many of our members receive sometimes dozens of calendars from various places. Bring them to the Wachiska office or to a general meeting, and we'll see that a school or nursing home gets them. Oftentimes our own members see a title or topic that catches their eye and take those home.

New calendars you get for next year are shared with local retirement and nursing homes; local schools and day cares use the old ones from previous years to cut out the pictures and stories. At the beginning of 2019, over 300 calendars were recycled in this way.

May we suggest that you contact your neighborhood schools to see if they are interested in either your old or new calendars.

Thank you in advance for helping recycle in these ways.

# Climate Change Update

by Marilyn McNabb

The Fall *Audubon* magazine with the great gray owl on the cover has a theme: “Birds Can’t Fight Climate Change. WE CAN.” It is devoted to the new report “Survival by Degrees: 389 Species on the Brink” and what action we can take. If you don’t receive *Audubon* magazine, you can find almost everything in this issue on the national Audubon website. Click on the magnifying glass/search icon and type in “Start Here! Your Guide to Climate Action” for many excellent ideas.

Audubon CEO/President David Yarnold writes that the “Survival by Degrees” report using far more data than Audubon’s first report five years ago, finds that nearly two-thirds of the species studied are vulnerable to extinction due to climate change. Yarnold writes “It’s crucial that we do two things: (1) protect the places that birds need now and into the future, and (2) address the root causes of climate change.” On that second point, he notes that “increasingly we’re seeing Republicans joining Democrats in the search for climate solutions” in Washington.

National Audubon strongly supports the BEST Act which calls for investment in research and development in Better Energy Storage Technology. BEST now has 19 bipartisan cosponsors in the Senate and 38 in the House. Given Congressman Fortenberry’s strong support for renewable energy, it seems like a no-brainer for him. Go to the National Audubon website and at the top click on “Take Action” and then “Protect Birds from Climate Change” for a quick way to write and send Jeff Fortenberry a message about BEST. Ask him to co-sponsor as has Representative Don Bacon (Omaha representative).

In October a new Senate caucus was announced to “seek bipartisan solutions to address the climate challenge.” In *The Hill*, Senator Mike Braun, R-IN, and Senator Chris Coon, D-DE, wrote they were launching “the Senate Climate Solutions Caucus, a bipartisan group of senators who, like the Americans we serve, believe Congress should play a central role in guiding America’s 21st-century energy economy and addressing the challenge of a changing climate. Our caucus seeks to take the politics out of this important issue.” In November they were joined by Democrats from Colorado and New Hampshire and Republicans from South Carolina, Arkansas, and Utah plus an Independent from Maine. New members will be admitted in bipartisan pairs, following the pattern set by the similar House caucus.

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More young people are leading climate efforts. Last year a student-led campaign resulted in Doane University divesting from fossil fuel holdings in its endowment. In November a campus-wide vote at Creighton University produced 85.8 percent support for gradual divestment of fossil fuels holdings and no new purchases. The president of Creighton rejected the student proposal, set up a new committee, and scheduled a

forum in January. His explanation was “It is important that the University follows a disciplined investment approach in its endowment, with a broad diversification strategy designed to achieve long-term returns.” The likelihood and wisdom of long-term returns from fossil fuels will no doubt continue to be questioned by Creighton students, climate scientists, and many market analysts.

## Does this Issue of *The Babbling Brook* Look Different?

This month, this newsletter is larger and the wrap-around is in full color! A dozen volunteers along with the editor and printer have worked for over a month to work out the added details.

If you have not been receiving *The Babbling Brook* every month, check page 6 of this special issue to learn how to become a Friend of Wachiska. All Friends and National Audubon members are receiving this end-of-year issue; however, only Friends get the newsletter monthly. Become a Friend and don’t miss a thing!

## Ferguson House Holiday Tours and Open House

The Nebraska Environmental Trust will host a holiday open house at the historic Ferguson House on Sunday, December 8, in conjunction with the Tree Lighting Ceremony at the State Capitol. Also open will be the Thomas P. Kennard House located on the east side of the Ferguson House. The public is invited to visit and tour the 108-year-old Renaissance Revival Ferguson House from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. There is no charge to tour either house on that day. Limited parking can be found behind the Ferguson House, but street parking is available along 16th and H streets.

For history buffs, the Ferguson House is one of the finest examples of Second Renaissance Revival architecture and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The staff of the Nebraska Environmental Trust occupies the second floor of the Ferguson House located at 700 South 16th Street in downtown Lincoln just across the street to the southeast of the State Capitol Building.

Wachiska encourages our members to take advantage of this open house to show our gratitude for the Trust’s support which our chapter has received over the years.

## Bad Weather Policy During Winter Months

If Lincoln Public Schools cancel classes due to inclement weather on the day of Wachiska’s general meeting/program, Wachiska will follow LPS’s lead and cancel, too. A notice will be posted on KLKN TV’s cancellation list which scrolls across the TV screen.

## Public Officials

### **President Donald Trump**

1600 Pennsylvania Av NW, Washington DC 20500-0001  
Comment line: 202-456-1111  
Phone: 202-456-1414 Fax: 202-456-2461  
E-mail at website: <http://whitehouse.gov/contact>

### **Senator Ben Sasse**

1128 Lincoln Mall Ste 305, Lincoln NE 68508  
Lincoln phone: 402-476-1400 Fax: 402-476-0605  
Wash. DC phone: 202-224-4224 Fax: 202-224-5213  
E-mail at website: <http://sasse.senate.gov>

### **Senator Deb Fischer**

440 N 8<sup>th</sup> St Ste 120, Lincoln NE 68508  
Lincoln phone: 402-441-4600 Fax: 402-476-8753  
Wash. DC phone: 202-224-6551 Fax: 202-228-0012  
E-mail at website: <http://fischer.senate.gov>

### **Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (1<sup>st</sup> District)**

301 S 13<sup>th</sup> St Ste 100, Lincoln NE 68508-2537  
Lincoln phone: 402-438-1598  
Wash. DC phone: 202-225-4806 Fax: 202-225-5686  
E-mail at website: <http://fortenberry.house.gov>

### **Congressman Don Bacon (2<sup>nd</sup> District)**

13906 Gold Cir Ste 101, Omaha NE 68144  
Omaha phone: 888-221-7452  
Wash. DC phone: 202-225-4155 Fax: 202-226-5452  
E-mail at website: <https://bacon.house.gov>

### **Congressman Adrian Smith (3<sup>rd</sup> District)**

416 Valley View Dr Ste 600, Scottsbluff NE 69361  
Scottsbluff phone: 308-633-6333 Fax: 308-633-6335  
Wash. DC phone: 202-225-6435 Fax: 202-225-0207  
E-mail at website: <http://adriansmith.house.gov>

### **Capitol Hill Switchboard**

888-436-8427 or 202-224-3121

### **Governor Pete Ricketts**

Capitol Bldg, PO Box 94848, Lincoln NE 68509-4848  
Phone: 402-471-2244 Fax: 402-471-6031  
E-mail at website: <http://governor.nebraska.gov>

### **State Senator \_\_\_\_\_**

District \_\_\_\_ State Capitol, PO Box 94604, Lincoln, NE 68509-4604

### **State Capitol Switchboard**

402-471-2311

### **Lancaster County Commissioners**

County-City Bldg, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> St Rm 110, Lincoln NE 68508  
Phone: 402-441-7447 Fax: 402-441-6301  
E-mail: [commish@lancaster.ne.gov](mailto:commish@lancaster.ne.gov)

### **Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird**

County-City Bldg, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> St Rm 301, Lincoln NE 68508-2828  
Phone: 402-441-7511 Fax: 402-441-7120  
E-mail: [mayor@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:mayor@lincoln.ne.gov)

### **Lincoln City Council**

402-441-7515  
E-mail: [council@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:council@lincoln.ne.gov)

### **Lincoln Journal Star**

Letters to the editor, 926 P St, Lincoln NE 68508  
E-mail: [oped@journalstar.com](mailto:oped@journalstar.com)

## **Join now! Become a Friend of Wachiska Audubon Society!**

This local chapter membership provides you with voting privileges and access to all our events, programs, and committees, **plus 100 percent of your membership donation goes directly to the Wachiska chapter. In addition, Friend members receive our monthly newsletter, *The Babbling Brook*, in their choice of print or electronic form.**

### **Friends of Wachiska (local membership)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_ \$25 Individual/Friend
- \_\_\_ \$35 Family Friend
- \_\_\_ \$50 Black-capped Chickadee Friend
- \_\_\_ \$100 Northern Cardinal Friend
- \_\_\_ \$250 Western Meadowlark Friend
- \_\_\_ \$500 Bald Eagle Friend
- \_\_\_ \$1000 Peregrine Falcon Friend

Select the level of support that is right for you and make your check payable to **Wachiska Audubon Society**. All funds will remain with our local chapter and are tax deductible. Mail to:

Wachiska Audubon Society  
Attention: Membership Committee  
4547 Calvert St Ste 10  
Lincoln NE 68506-5643



**American Goldfinches**

\_\_\_ **I prefer to receive my newsletter by email.**

Please note: If you are already a member of National Audubon Society (NAS) you automatically become a member of Wachiska, but not a Wachiska Friend member. Only Wachiska Friends receive the printed newsletter each month. If you wish to join NAS or receive *Audubon* magazine, please contact the National Audubon Society directly.

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## Cornell Laboratory's eBird App

### Track your lists

What's your latest life bird? What bird lists do you care about? eBird tallies them for you and archives your photos and sounds—all for free.

### Find more birds

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## We're Thankful for Our Flock

As we look toward the holidays ahead, we can't help but reflect on all we're thankful for in 2019. It's simple: you, our dedicated members, advocates, chapters leaders, volunteers, and staff who make all the work we do possible.

This year, Audubon's efforts have led to some incredible wins for birds, particularly in the arena of state protections and habitat conservation. The introduction of two major bills to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, an essential drought contingency plan for the Colorado River Basin, and the ongoing fight to defend our most powerful bird-protection law, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act—to name just a few.

With more fights to come in 2020, we are proud to represent a network of diverse and inspiring individuals who stop at nothing to do what's right for the birds we all love. **Thank you, from our flock to yours, for all you do to protect the world we share.**

*(Editor's Note: The above statements come from National Audubon and also reflect the sentiments of your local chapter, Wachiska Audubon. There is much more to do. Happy holidays!)*

## WACHISKA AUDUBON LEADERS - 2019

### OFFICERS

|                               |                            |              |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| President.....                | *Stu Luttich (Geneva)..... | 402-759-3597 |
| Vice President.....           | *Theresa Pella.....        | 512-585-1511 |
| Recording Secretary .....     | *Cathy Shaner.....         | 402-421-1652 |
| Treasurer .....               | *Mary Rogge.....           | 402-488-1342 |
| Immediate Past President..... | *Gary Fehr.....            | 402-570-4382 |

### STANDING COMMITTEES/POSITIONS

|  |                                |                         |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Director at Large.....                 | *vacant .....                  |                         |
| Director at Large.....                 | *Terry Stentz .....            | 402-202-8819            |
| Director at Large.....                 | *Melinda Varley .....          | 402-416-4111            |
| Conservation.....                      | *Ross Scott (Roca) .....       | 402-202-1523            |
| Education.....                         | *Tim Knott .....               | 402-483-5656            |
| Field Trips .....                      | John Carlini .....             | 402-475-7275            |
|  | *Lana Novak .....              | 402-475-8693            |
| Hospitality.....                       | Cheryl Moncure.....            | 402-488-0036            |
| Legislation.....                       | *Bruce Kennedy (Malcolm) ..... | 402-796-2114            |
|  | *vacant .....                  |                         |
| Membership .....                       | *Jami Nelson .....             | 402-488-1598            |
| Monthly Programs/General Meetings..... | Arlys Reitan .....             | WAS office 402-486-4846 |
| Newsletter Editor .....                | Arlys Reitan .....             | WAS office 402-486-4846 |
| Population/Environment .....           | *Mary King .....               | 402-570-3295            |
| Publicity/Public Relations.....        | Arlys Reitan .....             | WAS office 402-486-4846 |

\*Denotes Board member

### OTHER ASSOCIATES

|  |                             |              |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Bird Questions .....                               | Kevin Poague.....           | 402-797-2301 |
| Facebook Coordinator.....                          | Benjamin Vogt.....          | 402-499-5851 |
| Raptor Recovery .....                              | Betsy Finch (Elmwood) ..... | 402-994-2009 |
| Executive Director Audubon Nebraska.....           | *Kristal Stoner .....       | 402-797-2301 |
| Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center Director ..... | Meghan Sittler .....        | 402-797-2301 |
| Webmaster .....                                    | Roxanne Smith .....         | 402-477-1319 |
| Donor Development.....                             | Elizabeth Nelson.....       | 402-770-3485 |
| Bookkeeper.....                                    | Nancy Hamer.....            | 402-499-1306 |

## Remember Wachiska Audubon When Shopping Online

Every time you order from Amazon, please consider logging into [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). Make Wachiska Audubon Society your permanent designee for a five percent (5%) discount on whatever you purchase at no extra cost to you.

***Wachiska Audubon Society's financial records are available for examination in the office.***

### A Gift to the Future

A bequest to Wachiska Audubon Society is a gift to future generations enabling our natural heritage to continue. For wills, trusts, and gifts, our legal name is **Wachiska Audubon Society**. Our Federal Tax ID number is **51-0229888**.

# Wachiska prairies are a valuable resource for researchers, students, ecologists, and the general public.

- **Research** – The University of Nebraska uses Wachiska prairies for research on Eastern Gama Grass, prairie nematodes, and a variety of other projects.
- **Education** – Biology classes from Central Community College in Columbus use Wachiska’s Fertig Prairie for annual botany field trips while our Prairie Discovery Days bring over 100 fourth graders to our prairies each year to learn about Nebraska history and ecology, Native American culture, and to study native insects, plants, and prairie birds.
- **Seed Collecting** – Wachiska organizes seed collecting days to support reseeding of other prairies, as a fundraising activity, and simply to bring people out to enjoy the experience of being on the prairie.
- **Nature Appreciation** – The Wachiska-owned prairies are open to the public, well signed, and promoted to encourage visitation.



Wachiska’s Annual Prairie Discovery Days on Knott Prairie

Your continued support of Wachiska’s Prairie Management Fund will assure that our prairies are properly preserved and available for generations to come.

No matter how you give, Wachiska invests wisely.

The Nebraska Community Foundation and the Lincoln Community Foundation both support Wachiska. These organizations hold and invest the funds donated to support Wachiska’s outreach, education, and prairie preservation efforts as well as our general operations.

These foundations gladly provide free professional advice to donors on the variety of ways to give, many of which offer significant tax advantages.

Shell-leaf Penstemon on Fertig Prairie



### Current donations

- Memorials in the name of a loved one
- IRA Required Minimum Distributions
- Charitable IRA rollovers
- Stocks, bonds, or mutual funds

### Donations from your estate

- Bequest – name Wachiska Audubon Society in your will or trust
- IRA or Life insurance – name Wachiska as your beneficiary
- Life Estate with remainder interest

More information about how donations are invested and managed is available by contacting the Wachiska Audubon Society office.

**Your donations are fully tax deductible as allowed by law.**

*Wachiska was chartered in 1973 as an independent chapter of the National Audubon Society and is a qualified 501(c)(3) Charitable Organization, Federal  
TIN 51-0229888.*



**Blazing Star Liatris on Knott Prairie**

## Wachiska protects rare tallgrass prairies—critical habitat for many threatened species.

For over 40 years Wachiska volunteers have worked to preserve rapidly disappearing tallgrass prairie in Southeast Nebraska. Wachiska-protected prairies have been recognized as critical habitat for rare plant species, as refuge for prairie-dependent butterflies, bees, and insects, and as important nesting and migration habitat for grassland bird species.

Dr. Kay Kottas, botanist and president of Prairie Legacy, Inc., has completed species surveys on many of our prairies, using a system of assigned C values (Coefficient of Conservatism), with higher values indicating plants that are less tolerant of disturbance to their native habitat. Among the findings of Dr. Kottas and others:

- Over 150 prairie plant species have been identified on Knott Prairie near Yutan, including the rare Canada Lousewort (C9) and Liatris Ligulistylis (C10) which are found almost nowhere else in Nebraska. This 21-acre prairie also provides nesting and migration habitat for Bobolinks, a declining prairie bird species prioritized in National Audubon’s recent “North American Grasslands and Birds Report.”
- Wildcat Creek Prairie (32 acres) is home to three rare species, Northern Dewberry, Finger Coreopsis and Prairie Parsley with C values of 7 to 10. Wildcat is also a haven for Regal Fritillary butterflies, a rare and beautiful species almost extinct east of the Mississippi River.



**Bobolink**



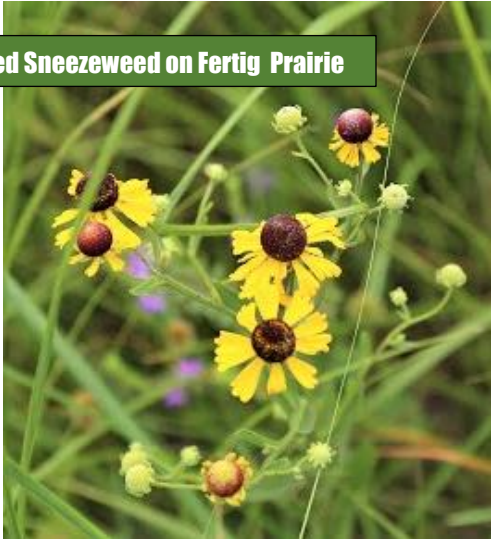
**Rough Gayfeather on Dieken Prairie**

Dr. Robert Kaul of UNL, identifies Wachiska’s Fertig Prairie (43 acres) as “one of the best remaining wet meadow prairies in the eastern Platte River Valley.” Large populations of Tall Gayfeather, Sullivant’s Milkweed, and other plants attract migrating Monarchs and other butterflies. Purple-headed Sneezeweed has been found here and nowhere else in Nebraska. Because of its plant diversity and wet meadow qualities, Fertig provides important nesting and migration habitat for Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, LeConte’s Sparrows, and other prairie birds.

These are examples from just three of the 32 Wachiska-protected prairies.

## Your financial support is critical to the continued protection of these prairie habitats and the many threatened birds and plants which depend on prairies for their survival.

*Thank you to the many Wachiska member photographers who contributed photos to this piece; Ross Scott, Tim Knott, John Carlini, Bruce Wendorff, Elizabeth Nelson, and perhaps others who have added photos to our files over the years.*



**Purple-headed Sneezeweed on Fertig Prairie**

**Butterfly Milkweed on Wildcat Prairie**



## Wachiska Audubon Society

4547 Calvert St Ste 10 - Lincoln NE 68506-5643

402-486-4846 -office@WachiskaAudubon.org-www.WachiskaAudubon.org

## The work of protecting prairies never ends.

It is tempting to think that just because Wachiska owns a prairie, or holds a conservation easement on prairie land, our work is done. Actually, our work never ends.

Most of the prairies we protect are surrounded by cropland—exposed to wind-blown herbicides, attacked by uncontrolled invasive plants, damaged by extreme weather. When new owners acquire prairies protected by conservation easements we monitor and enforce, we provide guidance to maintain the land per easement definitions.

Spread over a 16-county area in Southeast Nebraska, Wachiska volunteers drive thousands of miles and donate hundreds of hours each year to:

- **Conduct ecological inspections** identifying native species and invasives.
- **Control weeds** by burning and selective spraying.
- **Manage haying and grazing** with habitat preservation as our priority.
- **Maintain fences**, water tanks, access routes, drainage, etc.
- **Arrange and manage grants** from state, federal, and private agencies for property management and improvements.
- **Monitor and enforce** to assure easement requirements and boundaries are in compliance, grazing and use guidelines are followed, and that the overall ecological health and integrity of the prairie is being maintained .
- **Visit and communicate with owners and tenants** to provide education and guidance on prairie management best practices and conservation easement compliance.
- **Pursue legal defense** of the conservation easements, where and if necessary.

## These efforts must continue in perpetuity, which is a long time!

To assure we meet these responsibilities, Wachiska has decided to hire a Prairie Habitat Manager (see the first pages of this flyer for details). To do so, we need your support now.

## DECEMBER GOAL: RAISE \$30,000

to support our Prairie Management Fund and to hire a Prairie Habitat Manager. Reaffirm your commitment to birds, prairies, and Wachiska's Prairie Preservation efforts with a special, tax-deductible contribution today.

**Use the enclosed reply envelope to mail your year-end donation or use PayPal or credit card online at [www.WachiskaAudubon.org](http://www.WachiskaAudubon.org)**

Please note *Prairie Preservation* on your donation.



**Burning on Klapka Prairie**



**Gayfeather Harvesting, Annual Fundraising Event**