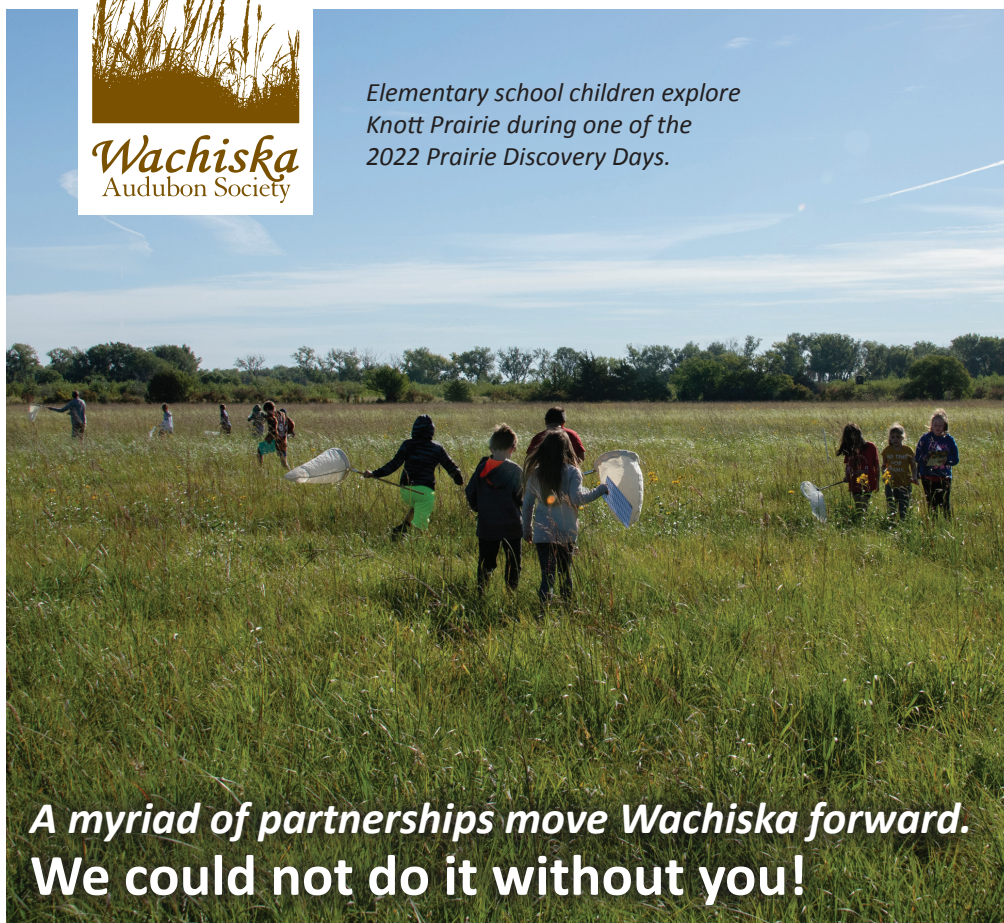
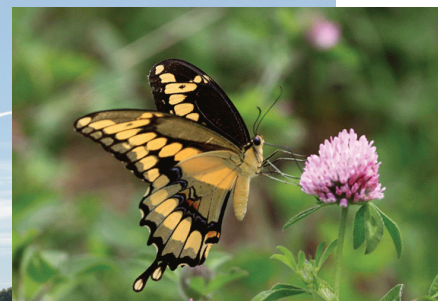




December 2022 *Babbling Brook* newsletter

Elementary school children explore Knott Prairie during one of the 2022 Prairie Discovery Days.



A myriad of partnerships move Wachiska forward. We could not do it without you!

Wow! 2023 is Wachiska Audubon's 50th anniversary year!

Wachiska has accomplished much over the years, from our early advocacy for the Niobrara and Platte river ecosystems, to our current efforts to preserve tallgrass prairie habitat and enhance connections between people and the natural world.

The intent of this article is to recognize and celebrate the many partners who help propel Wachiska forward and to encourage your partnership with Wachiska. With your help, we can connect with each other while protecting and enjoying the natural world around us.

Wachiska Volunteer Partners

1. Our Volunteers Each of the partnerships listed here has been inspired and enacted by Wachiska volunteers. Whether Board or committee members, Wachiska Friends, dedicated or occasional volunteers—none of what Wachiska does happens without the hundreds of people who support our chapter.

2. Friends of Wachiska and Audubon Members As of mid-October, Wachiska has 939 National Audubon members and 339 local "Friends" members. Wachiska Friends have donated over \$14,000 so far this year!

3. Wachiska Donors For decades, our generous donors have supported Wachiska in ways large and small—from buying birdseed, to purchasing prairie tracts, to donating to our annual Birdathon. Thank you all!

Continued on page 2

Graphic Partners: Photo at top by Dakota Altman. Hawk photo by Elizabeth Nelson. Photos by Ross Scott: above, Swallowtail butterfly, Canada Anemone, Blazing Star Gayfeather; at left Lady Tresses Orchid. Graphic design by Reynold Peterson. Printing by The Printer.

Please be a Wachiska Partner:
Our goal this month is to raise \$60,000 to match our "spark" donor!
See back cover for details.

We could not do it without you! *Continued from page 1*

Prairie Preservation Partners

4. Prairie Landowners Over 25 years ago, the first prairie landowner asked Wachiska to be the monitor for a conservation easement they were creating. Since then, Wachiska has been named the monitor for 23 prairies. These landowners are among our most valuable partners in protecting tallgrass prairies.

5. Prairie Tenants The haying, grazing, and farming partners on Wachiska-owned prairies and land work with us to follow sound habitat preservation methods and generate revenue for maintaining our prairies.

Prairie Management Partners

6. Northern Prairies Land Trust Our management partner for Wachiska-owned prairies is Kent Pfeiffer of NPLT who annually prepares contracts with our hay, grazing, and crop tenants, plans and supervises prescribed burns, fights invasive species, and this year overseeded pollinator mix on 45 acres at Klapka Prairie.

7. Prairie Legacy Inc. In 2021, Wachiska hired Prairie Legacy to inspect the 23 prairies on which Wachiska monitors easements. Invasive species continue to be the number one threat with three-quarters of the prairies being invaded by brome and red clover. Now, and through 2025, Wachiska and Prairie Legacy, with support from a Nebraska Environmental Trust grant, are helping interested prairie owners more aggressively combat invasive species and improve the biodiversity of their lands by providing management input and small grants.

8. Tri-County Burn Association helps annually with prescribed burns.

9. State/NRD Forester Jay Seaton helped at Wachiska's Wildcat Creek Prairie identifying trees to save (oaks, hickory, and walnut) and which invasive trees and shrubs to remove.

Environmental Organization Partners

10. National Audubon Society Current Wachiska President Theresa Pella is a member of the National Audubon Society Board representing the Great Plains region, and helps us draw upon the many resources offered by National Audubon.

11. Nebraska Audubon works with Wachiska to advocate for a flowing Platte River, support climate smart solutions, and support legislative advocacy. Spring Creek Prairie, our local Audubon Center, supports our projects such as highlighting the value of native plants in our backyards. Wachiska helps protect Omaha Audubon Prairie and partners on other activities.

12. Friends of the Niobrara, Friends of Wilderness Park, Bluebirds Across Nebraska, and Raptor Conservation Alliance (formerly Raptor Recovery) were all originated by Wachiska members, and we continue to be involved with their activities.

13. Climate Concerns Wachiska joined First Plymouth Church in the "Faith to Forest" climate protection action to plant and care for trees in Lincoln. Many Wachiska members also support the Citizens' Climate Lobby both locally and in Washington, D.C.

Continued on page 6



Louis and Grace Bentzinger (third and fourth from right) give a tour of their prairie in 2015.



Prescribed burns, shown here on Klapka Prairie, help control invasive species.



Removing invasive trees and shrubs at Fertig Prairie.

All the photos on this page are by Ross Scott.



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 49th Year of Protecting Nature 1973 - 2022

DECEMBER 2022

Volume 31 - Issue 12

Wachiska Program and Holiday Social — Thursday, December 8, 7:00 p.m., Unitarian Church,
6300 A Street, and also via YouTube link: https://youtu.be/sGpsv_Snje8

The Twelve Birds of Christmas

by Jason “the Birdnerd” St. Sauver, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center

It is the holiday season again, and all across the upper plains, snow has started to fall, birds have migrated south either away from Nebraska or into the state, and holiday music is in the air. Almost everyone is familiar with the tune and the gifts given in the holiday classic “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” Many of those gifts are birds, from the pear-sitting partridge to swans a-swimming, but what if the whole song was about our feathered friends? Well, now it is!



Jason St. Sauver

Join Jason “the Birdnerd” at Wachiska’s final public presentation of 2022 for *The Twelve BIRDS of Christmas*. St. Sauver, senior education manager with Audubon Great Plains at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center (SCPAC), will share stories, sounds, and holiday anecdotes about avian species from the song as well as identifying birds in those lyrics that seem NOT to be about birds—a light, humorous, fun evening to kick off the holidays.

St. Sauver has worked for the National Audubon Society for nearly 10 years, both here in Nebraska and earlier in Texas, as

well as having a career with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and on stage as a performer in New York City before that. He recently was awarded the Nebraska Natural Legacy Education Award for his work creating a more inclusive and impactful birding and conservation community around Nebraska. Jason is also the coordinator of the Lincoln Area Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and encourages everyone to join him on Sunday, December 18, to help continue the 123 years of community science counting birds across the city. (See details for the CBC on page 4.)

Following the program, the Board will give a brief overview of what, with your support, the Chapter has achieved during 2022.

Join Wachiska on **Thursday, December 8, at 7:00 p.m.** for this program. We are now meeting in person again at the Unitarian Church, 6300 A Street, in Lincoln. A holiday social gathering will follow the program. Attendees are asked to bring a dozen of your favorite cookies or snacks to share. This free public presentation will also be live streamed on YouTube at https://youtu.be/sGpsv_Snje8. Copy this link into your browser before the program begins. No registration will be necessary.

Calendar

December

- 5 Education Committee via Zoom, 6:00 p.m.
- 8 Holiday Party social gathering following “The Twelve Birds of Christmas” program by Jason St. Sauver, Unitarian Church, 6300 A St., 7:00 p.m.
- 12 Newsletter deadline (early due to Christmas holiday), 5:00 p.m.
- 12 Conservation Committee via Zoom, 6:30 p.m.
- 18 Lincoln Area Christmas Bird Count all day; contact Jason at SCPAC (page 4)
- 20 Board Meeting via Zoom, 7:00 p.m.



A partridge NOT in a pear tree! Gray Partridge
by Mark Williams/Audubon Photography Awards

Executive Director's Message

by Mark Brohman

As the year wraps up, we can look back on all the successes we have had: Tour the Wild Side, Earth Day, Prairie Discovery Days, Nature Nights, Second Saturday Seed Collections, field trips, partnering with Northern Prairies Land Trust, getting NET and Watchable Wildlife grants, two successful birdseed sales, Birdathon, and more. We have a wonderful organization, and I'm so proud to be part of it.



We have our new 2023 Board. Of the eleven positions, six are new Board members and five are returning. Over half of the Board members are younger than 50 and over half are females. The Wachiska Board has had gender equity for years, but this may be the youngest overall Board ever. The membership not only seated the new Board but passed updates to our bylaws at last month's general meeting.

As I complete my first year as executive director, it has been my privilege to work with such a great group of people. From the Board, Friends members, and volunteers, to our support staff of Arlys and Nancy, everyone has been a pleasure to work with this year. Next year while we celebrate Wachiska's 50th Anniversary, we want to highlight the many great things that have been accomplished and the wonderful people who have made it all possible. If you have an historical, funny, or out-of-the-ordinary story about Wachiska, send it to Arlys or me, and we might just use it over the next year. I know there are some great stories out there. I'm looking forward to another productive year.

123 Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count

One final plea for birders to help us count birds in the Lincoln area during the Christmas Bird Count to be held on Sunday, December 18. We'd love to have you join us to count—whether in the field, your neighborhood park, during our accessible and stationary count with Birdability Captain Cassandra Dean, or watching your own feeders. Everyone is welcome to join in, beginners and experts alike. There are lots of birds to see and count: woodpeckers and sparrows, hawks and eagles, and waterfowl if the lakes and streams remain flowing. Also, there are usually a few unexpected surprises lurking in the woods.

Contact Jason at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center (SCPAC) for more information and to sign up: scp@audubon.org; 402-797-2301. Read more about Audubon's long-running community science project at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

Maria Martin Bachman

by Richard Peterson

Maria Bachman may have been the most influential woman of the American nineteenth century for her watercolors and scientific illustrations.



Maria Martin was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1796. Little is known of her early years, but she was well read in literature, French, and German and possessed an interest in music, art, and natural science. In 1827, at the age of 32, she and her mother moved to

near Columbia, South Carolina, and lived with Maria's ailing sister, Harriet, and her husband, the Reverend John Bachman. Maria oversaw the religious and moral education of her sister's nine children. As fate would have it, Harriet died of consumption two years later, and Maria became the de facto matriarch of the Bachman household. She then married her brother-in-law, Reverend Bachman (b 1790 - d 1874) who was also a naturalist who wrote or edited much of the text for the books of John James Audubon. Maria accompanied John Bachman on several of his field excursions, including one trip to Niagara Falls where she learned how to make accurate scientific descriptions and drawings of plants and animals. Maria met Audubon in 1831.

Audubon recognized her talent for drawing and tutored her in expanding her range of natural subjects. Audubon supplied her with paint brushes and other art supplies. Soon trees, shrubs, flowers, and other botanical backgrounds were mastered. She was especially good at life-like insects. The Audubon and Bachman families became even closer when two of Bachman's daughters married two of Audubon's sons.

Maria contributed many of the background paintings for Audubon's *The Birds of America* (1831 - 1839). Over the course of five years Martin assisted on volumes 2 and 4 of the book. Included was the rare franklinia for Bachman's warbler and the azaleas and butterflies accompanying Swainson's warbler. Audubon painted the birds and Maria would finish the composition with detailed natural settings or simple habitats. Of the 435 pictures in this work, more than 50 include drawings of insects (butterflies, moths, and caterpillars) as well as birds. Audubon had three principal assistants during this time and Maria was the only woman. She was paid little for her work. Audubon credited her with nine illustrations, but it is thought she contributed to at least 30. She also contributed to *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America* (1845 - 1848) and provided illustrations for John Holbrook's book on *North American Herpetology*. Audubon named one variety of hairy woodpecker (*Picus martiniae*) as Maria's Woodpecker in her honor.

Maria Bachman died in 1863 during the Civil War. (Sherman's taking of Atlanta and his march to the sea was a year away.) Maria is buried in Ebenezer Lutheran Cemetery in Columbia, South Carolina.

Climate Change Update

by Marilyn McNabb

Intense rain events caused by climate change have prompted several studies and policy recommendations for the City of Lincoln. The most detailed analysis is “Recommendations Report for the Salt Creek Floodplain Resiliency Study” by Olsson Associates, <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/LTU/LTU-Projects/WSM/Salt-Creek-Resiliency/Final-Report>. This study was the basis for recommendations in the 2020 Climate Action Plan Draft in October 2020, <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/files/sharedassets/public/projects-programs-amp-initiatives/resilient-lincoln/documents/2020-Ink-climate-action-plan-draft.pdf> (see pp. 60 - 66). That report was the basis for the City Council’s adoption in March 2021 of the 2021 - 2027 Climate Action Plan, <https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/files/sharedassets/public/projects-programs-amp-initiatives/resilient-lincoln/documents/climate-action-plan.pdf>.

On December 12, beginning at 3:00 p.m., the Lincoln City Council will hold a public hearing on amendments to City regulations that would increase flood protections. Contact the City Council to show strong support for the amendments.

Developers and others want the City to wait for a study “that evaluates the potential cost and benefits of the regulations and outlines potential structural changes that could lower the floodplain (think dams or berms or detention ponds),” https://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/city-proposes-changes-to-floodplain-regulations-a-process-critics-say-must-first-be-balanced-with/article_a2bebaba-45d7-5e47-b4da-216f5d58b464.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share.

Do we need another study on structural changes? Here's what the October 2020 Climate Action Plan Draft summarizing the Olsson Report says about structural fixes: “The study modeled structural flood risk reduction measures (e.g., dams) to see what types of infrastructure would be needed to reduce flood risk along Salt Creek. Analysis found that even if 16 dams were built within the Salt Creek tributary sub-basins, these dams would not be enough to prevent flooding based on the current flood hazard data, let alone future climate projections. The existing Salt Creek levee systems are not accredited by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide protection during the one percent annual chance flood event, and an investment to bring levees to accreditation level would be immense. Additionally, this investment would not have a positive cost-benefit ratio, which would make these changes to the levees ineligible for federal funds” (p. 65). Climate change is here: Lincoln already experienced the intense rain of May 2015—approximately a 1-in-1,000-year event (p. 60).

My belief is that the main product of the proposed study would be delay. The City’s proposals will lessen the damage of intense rainstorms and should be in effect as soon as possible. One of the important changes the City proposes is to increase

“freeboard” from one foot to two feet. Freeboard is the distance between predicted floodwater level and the lowest floor of a building. This protection is needed because the City’s floodplain maps are out of date due to climate change.

Some environmentalists have proposed an approach toward flood control in Lincoln that would involve working ag lands in the whole Salt Creek watershed basin. It would expand water retention capacity and enhance soil health. According to the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, every one percent increase in soil organic matter can result in up to 20,000 gallons of available soil water (retention capacity) per acre.

Remember to contact City Council members about this important issue at council@lincoln.ne.gov; 402-441-7515.

Staff Opening at SCPAC

Due to the retirement of Andrea Bornemeier, the position of education coordinator is open at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center (SCPAC) located west of Denton, Nebraska. This person will assist in the development and implementation of the environmental, public, and volunteer programs. The focus will be school programs including outdoor field trips, classroom visits, coordinating and running a summer day camp program with the Lincoln Community Learning Centers, and assisting in planning community programs and events for families and adult participants, including community science projects, both at the Center and in local communities. The education coordinator will serve as the primary point of contact for volunteers, lead volunteer recruitment and communication, plan and lead volunteer workdays, trainings, and related activities.

For detailed information, check SCPAC’s website, <https://springcreek.audubon.org> or contact 402-797-2301; scp@audubon.org.

Memorials Received

With the passing of Orville Hill, Arlys Reitan’s father, Wachiska received memorials from the following members and Friends. Arlys and Ken have requested that these gifts be included in the funding of the executive director’s position for next year. Mr. Hill and Mark Brohman visited via phone a few times when Arlys was not in the office to take her dad’s call.

Heartfelt thanks to the following for their memorial donations: Mark Brohman, Linda Brown, Nancy Hamer, Tim Knott, Stu Luttich, Marilyn McNabb, Arnold and Agnes Mendenhall, Elizabeth and Daniel Nelson, Theresa Pella, Kris and Tom Powers, Ross Scott, Lyle and Joyce Vannier, and Dwayne Wilson.

“Where there is great love, there are always miracles.”
-- Willa Cather

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We could not do it without you! *Continued from page 2*

Environmental Organization Partners

14. Pheasants Forever wildlife biologists have made site visits to Wachiska prairies to assess invasive species and help with prescribed burns.

15. Ducks Unlimited partners with Wachiska on migratory bird and habitat matters as well as legislative issues.

Community and School Partners

16. UNL Earth Day Wachiska volunteers promote the value of prairies, the importance of soil and the living compounds in soil, and how birds and other wildlife depend on wetland, forest, and prairie habitats.

17. City of Lincoln Wachiska is an often-called-upon partner for the City of Lincoln, advocating for the preservation of natural areas such as Nine-Mile Prairie and Wilderness Park and provides input into the Comprehensive Plan, the Haines Branch Corridor project, and the siting of new developments and utilities.

18. The Green Sanctuary Committee at the Unitarian Church offers space for Wachiska's monthly meetings.

19. Tour the Wild Side event and **Library Gardens** showcase urban areas where native plants support pollinators and other wild creatures.

20. Lincoln Libraries Bird Habitat and Feeding A years-long collaboration between Wachiska Audubon, Spring Creek Prairie Audubon, and Wild Bird Habitat Store created bird feeding stations and provides birdseed to four Lincoln Public Libraries. An effort is underway to expand and create native bird habitats on library grounds complete with trees, shrubs and water sources to attract more birds and other wildlife.

21. Nature Nights In 2022, the Lower Platte South NRD hosted eight events at various elementary schools reaching over 1,000 students and adults. One of a number of participating organizations, Wachiska volunteers make presentations on soils and soil biology.

Continued on page 7



Students explore soil and soil biology at the Wachiska exhibit at Nature Night.



Wildcat Creek Tallgrass Prairie was dedicated in 2022 to Ernie Rousek, an early prairie conservationist and longtime Wachiska member who volunteered uncountable hours over several decades to establish and maintain Wachiska's tallgrass prairie preservation efforts.

We could not do it without you! *Continued from page 6*

Community and School Partners

22. Prairie Discovery Days In 2022, Wachiska hosted nearly 250 students and teachers from elementary schools in three counties on visits to Wachiska prairies where they learned about insects, plants, and soils along with the history, paleontology, and archeology of the areas.

23. Prairie Seed Collections The Second Saturday Seeds collecting events on Wachiska prairies help preserve and share valuable flora.

24. Native Partnerships Wachiska supports Reconciliation Rising and other indigenous advocacy. This year, Wachiska helped celebrate the establishment of Otoe-Missouria Day when tribal members, Lincoln's mayor and other city officials, and many Wachiska members gathered at Knott Prairie.

Funding Partnerships

25. Give to Lincoln Day Since its inception, Wachiska has joined in the Lincoln Community Foundation's Give to Lincoln Day. In 2022, community members generously donated over \$20,000 to support Wachiska's ongoing operations.

26. Nebraska Environmental Trust is a longtime partner with Wachiska, providing matching funds for many of our past prairie purchases. In 2022, Wachiska received a three-year, nearly \$150,000 NET grant to support our Prairie Habitat Management Program, making possible some of the projects listed here.

27. Nebraska Game & Parks supports Wachiska prairies by conducting plant inventories, providing pollinator overseeding, offering grants, and this year removing invasive trees at Wildcat Creek and Fertig prairies through the Prairie Legacy Program.

28. NRD's Lower Platte South, Lower Platte North, and Nemaha NRD's support Wachiska with grants for invasive species control and other projects.

29. USDA/NRCS/FSA with CRP, EQIP, and WHIP contracts provide Wachiska with cost-share assistance for seeding, water development, cross fencing, grazing management, and prescribed burns.

30. Give Nebraska educates companies and their employees about member non-profits and enables employee donations by setting up automatic payroll deductions.

31. Wachiska Donors Again, Wachiska depends upon and is perpetually grateful for the many donors who support Wachiska.

Wachiska's Investment Partner

32. Lincoln Community Foundation Wachiska carefully invests donated funds until such time as they can be used for prairie purchases, environmental advocacy activities, or to support the core operations of Wachiska Audubon. All donations are held in Socially-Environmentally-Governmentally (SEG) green investment funds.



2022 Prairie Discovery Days involved nearly 250 students and teachers.



Seed collecting is a regular fall Wachiska activity.



Tribal members celebrate Otoe-Missouria Day at Knott Prairie.

All photos above taken by Ross Scott, Wachiska Conservation Committee Chair



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402-486-4846

Your donations spark the joy of discovery!

Over the years, Wachiska has been the beneficiary of many generous donor partnerships. This fall, an anonymous donor provided Wachiska with a \$60,000 “spark” donation. The donor said they were excited (sparked!) when Mark Brohman was hired as Wachiska’s first executive director and expressed confidence that Mark can help lead Wachiska into the future. They encouraged Wachiska to use this gift to spark an additional \$60,000 in donations.

Help us reach our challenge goal of \$60,000

We are asking you to confirm your partnership with Wachiska by donating before the end of the year. Please use the coupon below or **donate online at www.WachiskaAudubon.org.**

Scan the QR code (at right) to start your online donation.



SCAN ME



Idea: Direct your IRA Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) to Wachiska and you won't pay taxes on the distributed amount.

Our partners at the Lincoln Community Foundation can answer questions about this and other ways to give. Call LCF at 402-474-2345 and ask for Chip DeBuse.



Top photo by Dakota Altman, Hawk by Bruce Wendorff, Butterfly Milkweed and Daisy Fleabane by Ross Scott, Purple Finch by Elizabeth Nelson.

Other ways to give:

Current donations

- Memorials for a loved one
- Charitable IRA rollovers
- Stocks, bonds, or mutual funds

Donations from your estate

- Bequest – name Wachiska Audubon Society in your will
- Name Wachiska Audubon Society as beneficiary on any IRA, life insurance, bank, or investment account

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 Tax ID #51-0229888.

Yes! I'm a Wachiska Partner! My donation is enclosed for:

\$6 \$60 \$600 \$6,000 Other \$ _____

Please make your check and mail to:
Wachiska Audubon Society
4546 Calvert Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68506-5643

Please have someone from the Lincoln Community Foundation contact me about RMD rollover donations, bequest options, or other ways to give.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____